

Artist Mini-Grant Outcome – Fall 2019
“GagaLab in Tel Aviv, Israel Over Winter Break”
Zohar Ziff

OVERVIEW

Over winter break, I attended an 8-day dance workshop – “GagaLab” – in Tel Aviv, Israel. During this time I participated in daily Gaga technique classes, learned Batsheva Dance Company repertoire, and delved deeper into the Gaga technique with “methodics” classes. I intended to gain tools for choreography as well as expand my abilities as a dancer, and I have accomplished both. I will use this experience to guide my choreographic and performance processes for the Spring Dance Concert and subsequent performances.

COURSE REFLECTIONS

Gaga is an improvisational movement language developed by Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin and is used heavily within the internationally-acclaimed Batsheva Dance Company. Rather than focus on shape, Gaga encourages movement through layering sensation, imagery, and qualities. I and the other 80 participants from around the world began every day with an hour and fifteen minute Gaga class, led by former Batsheva Dance Company dancers. The class varies with instructor, but follows a general structure of modified pliés and tendus, shaking, balancing exercises, and playing with the amount of exertion needed for movement. During the subsequent two-hour long repertoire class, where I would learn choreography from Batsheva Dance Company, I was encouraged to apply concepts explored in the Gaga class. That way, set choreography became more textured and specific than a simple sequence of steps. The last class of the day was “methodics”, where instructors dived into a few specific images or concepts from Gaga. Some concepts included finding curves in our joints, moving with little or extreme effort, finding sources of movement from various “engines”, and opening “highways” that connect body parts. Those classes allowed me to explore an idea fully before applying that sensation to the next day’s Gaga technique class. Ohad Naharin taught four classes in total and sat with the group to share his experience and thought process when he invented Gaga. It was fascinating to hear about the development of a completely new movement vocabulary and his opinions on how dance practice should be conducted.

Instructors invited the GagaLab dancers to participate in “session” during the last few days. Session was an opportunity to repeat, alter, and improvise with the material we learned in repertory. It also allowed us to practice the repertory and apply concepts learned earlier in methodics. The environment of session was welcoming and inspiring, as I could watch different movers dance together in the space and make spontaneous choices based on each other. It was humbling being a part of this all-encompassing, educational, exploratory process with so many talented artists, and I found myself taking more risks and dancing at my physical extremes. As I

continue my dance education inside UVa's Dance Program, I will challenge myself and my choreography to meet those extremes and stay available to change and influence from others.

Many thanks to the Miller Arts Scholars Program for making this experience possible!

EXPENSES

<i>Item</i>	<i>Price</i>
GagaLab Tel Aviv Intensive	2800 Israeli shekels = \$790
Performance – An evening with Bosmat Nossan and Shahar Binyamini	70 Israeli shekels = \$20.25
Total	\$810.25

The grant funded \$500 of the total expenses, and I paid the remaining amount out-of-pocket.

PHOTOS

