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By Donald Hutera / 4 STARS

YESTERDAY at Sadler's Wells, London

Fresh out of dance school, the budding choreographer Jasmin Vardimon went into the Israeli Army for two years. Her job was to draw up psychological profiles of new recruits. That experience has been put to good use in her subsequent career. Her observations of human behaviour are sharp and unsparing.

Vardimon's new touring show Yesterday is about memories, but aesthetic rather than personal ones. During the decade that she has headed her own UK-based company, her interest in physical theatre has increased alongside the scale of her ambitions. Packed tight with striking images and fierce, sometimes funny and rarely tender actions, this production is both a distillation and an edgy, extremely clever refashioning of much of the work she has made to date.

Scenes from past performances have been shuffled about, as if in a vivid, unpredictable dream, and fairly seamlessly sewn together by Vardimon and the designer Guy Bar-Amotz. They have split the back wall into strips of paper which, when the eight-strong cast isn't slipping through it, serves as a projection screen. The visual element is lent further emphasis by a smaller, wheeled screen used fleetingly but ingeniously for animations, shadow play and painting with light.

Physically the dominant tone is aggression, a quality that Vardimon's fighting-fit dancers embody with just the right amount of ironic detachment. In an episode of brutal black comedy Mafalda Deville repeatedly attacks the long, sturdy Luke Burrough with a pillow as he delivers a lecture on how to combat a nameless disease. Later Christine Gouzelis, an unexpectedly nymphomaniacal blonde, turns Tim Casson's jogger into her dog.

Throughout Vardimon segues between depicting the pitfalls of male-female relations and a wider social malaise. The latter culminates with a bare-chested Burrough spouting neo-Nazi philosophies into a megaphone as the others stumble and swerve at every swipe of his crude flag. In such a violent context the few quieter, saner moments are especially welcome, as when YunKrung Song, seated before a tiny video camera, uses a black marker to trace a line down her body. Simultaneously seen behind her in close-up, Song's private handiwork is odd and surprisingly touching.