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*An Evening with Liraz Cohen*

When I agreed to model for the Israeli Fashion Show with Liraz Cohen, I had minimal knowledge of the history of Israeli fashion or many contemporary Israeli designers. Eager for the opportunity to help out at such an intriguing event, I jumped at the chance to showcase clothes for Israeli fashion blogger Liraz Cohen not only for my own enjoyment, but also to help promote the wide array of events offered at the University of Rhode Island’s campus. Arriving at the fashion show’s auditorium with a tote bag of underclothes and shoe options, I could barely contain my excitement.

When Liraz Cohen arrived, her energy and charisma immediately filled the space. She wore a white sweater with a beautiful, almost-holographic skirt that shimmered with the muted colors of the rainbows, which was from the collection of a contemporary Israeli designer. Working with her as a model was delightful, as she had a cheerful attitude and knew exactly what she wanted. There were nine student models in all, and Liraz began assigning us outfits and designating places for us to change behind stage. I was handed blue shorts, a white button-down shirt, and a soft white hat with a small circular brim.

After the models had changed into their clothes, we went through a few run-throughs of the show, and by the time we had all the kinks worked out, the auditorium was already starting to fill. I was happy to see the space almost filled with people. All that was left to do was sit back and wait to walk the runway.

As the show began, Liraz used a projector to present informational slideshows on pieces of Israeli fashion, and then would present a model as a tangible example of the outfits. Each time a model walked across the stage there was much cheering from the audience. The show ran the gamut of Israeli fashion, from early in Israel’s history to the current year 2017. Liraz presented the lacy fineries of Tel Aviv, the tan and beige outfits of early farmers, and the popularity of camouflage throughout Israel’s history. My outfit was from 1948, an important year in Israel’s history; my blue shorts were significant since blue was a relatively new color in the clothing of that time period, but my white hat was the focal point of the outfit, which I was able to showcase through a model strut and animated gestures. Liraz detailed to the audience how the hat served not only to shade someone’s face from the sun but could also be used to wipe sweat from your brow, and it was washable. It was a fun way to blend small details into the larger history of Israeli fashion, showing not only aesthetics but the functionality of the clothes from that period.

Liraz ended the fashion show with a video from Tel Aviv fashion week, depicting Israel’s currently thriving and cutting-edge fashion industry. Modern Israeli fashion is shifting away from chain stores like Forever 21 and toward local boutiques, and Liraz described with a twinkle in her eye how you could turn down any street corner and find somewhere to shop. Her descriptions made me want to hop on a plane the first thing in the morning and experience it for myself.

The presentation ended with the models making a final walk across the stage, and as we took a bow, the audience erupted in applause. The show was a perfect way to bring educational information, cultural diversity, and student involvement together, and the audience and the models were able to experience first-hand how fashion has shaped and grown in Israel and came away with understanding that, as Mark Twain said, “Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.” Through community and fashion, Liraz Cohen created a wonderful evening that brought the importance of fashion in Israeli history to the limelight.

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