



Ami Gilad

Translation:
Judy Fixler

Yoav – My Mentor, My Teacher

In the early 1950s, I was a teenager. Aside from being a student at the "Shevach" Vocational High School in Tel Aviv, I, as all youth of my age, was looking for cultural activities appropriate for our age group. Thus, I found myself involved in the Gadna movement [a pre-military youth program], where I was first exposed to a field I was unfamiliar with – Israeli folk dance.

I joined the circles, lines and couples; my feet quickly picked up the steps to each dance and, from then on, this ongoing activity became a "folk dance bug" that was powerfully attached to me. The love I developed for folk dancing became, as

the saying goes: "The appetite grows with eating". As I was looking for additional folk dance sessions, I found the sessions that took place at Beit HaPoel Tel Aviv, on Ussishkin Street, in northern Tel Aviv. To my great joy, I discovered that these sessions, led by **Mira and Yoav Ashriel**, were the largest sessions in Israel. Every Tuesday, I danced for three full hours and my appetite grew for both the dances that were danced and those which were taught so remarkably by

the **Ashriel duo**. When I found out that there was another session which took place in the courtyard of Café "Bustan", near Dizengoff Square, this too was added to my itinerary; the joy and satisfaction were boundless.

When **Yoav Ashriel** found out that I play the accordion, he took me off the dance floor at Beit HaPoel in Tel Aviv, he then asked that I take the accordion and play a few dances. I passed the test with flying colors and, from then on, I was the accordionist in charge of accompanying all the sessions. While playing at those sessions, **Yoav** taught me the principles of appropriate accompaniment, with the emphasis on the tempo required for each dance as well as the musical mood, the purpose of which is to inspire the dancers to create the matching atmosphere.

This was the start of my path to the "Folk Dance Accompaniment Learning" school which opened for me a rich and long-lasting career.

As I progressed in accompanying the dance sessions, I became attached to the dance troupe of HaPoel Tel Aviv for their rehearsals and performances. This troupe was the most popular and famous in Israel at that time and the name, **Yoav Ashriel**, gained more significance from day to day. The popularity of the sessions at Beit HaPoel in Tel Aviv generated an idea to record a live dance session once a month that was intended for broadcast on "Kol Yisrael" under the name "LaRokdim Heidad – Hooray to the Dancers".

When the sessions at Beit HaPoel Tel Aviv were cancelled, **Yoav** moved his activities to the "Ahad Ha'am" School and later, to the "Dubnov" School, where for years, he and **Mira** ran the sessions several times a week.

In the meantime, the HaPoel Tel Aviv Troupe ended its performances; however, the void that was created did not last long. He then organized the dance troupe, "Pa'amei Machol". **Yoav Ashriel** directed this troupe; he created spectacular choreographies that were performed on many stages



Dance session at the
Dubnov School, 1965



Ami plays his accordion for Yoav

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Yoav convinced me to go to the try outs for Lehakat Ha'Nahal. I listened to him and, after passing the try outs, was accepted into the troupe that, in those years, was considered the best of the military performing troupes.

Mira Ashriel also saw the inherent potential within me as an accordionist. I would accompany

throughout Israel. With "Pa'amei Machol", **Yoav** enabled me to appear as a dancer in some of the troupe's performances and, of course, as an instrumentalist.

As my induction into the military was getting closer,

her to the "Ayanot" Agricultural School where she had run a weekly folk dance session.

This wonderful period opened other doors for me. Among them was accompanying the folk dance sessions that took place at Beit Lessin in Tel Aviv, led by **Tirza Hodes** and accompanying the Israeli representatives to the "Democratic Youth Festival" that took place in Austria's capital, Vienna.

When my name as an accordionist made its way to **Yonatan Karmon** z"l, I joined his troupe; with them, I went on trips for performances in Europe, the United States, Canada, Central and South America and South Africa.

My travels beyond the Israeli borders disengaged me from any activities with **Yoav**, but, throughout all those years, our personal contact remained intact. 