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# Royalties for Folk Dances - Yes or No?



Karmiel Dance Festival, the second day, 2017

## A Survey of Readers and Their Reactions

**"These rights exist, and they are the realization of the right to property and freedom of occupation. They are not something that we can decide if we want or don't want to pay for them."**

"Copyright": a payment for the use of something that someone else authored/composed/created. It is a mechanism initiated by democratic regimes out of respect for the creators and to permit them to take pleasure from their creations (large or small). These rights exist, and they are the realization of the right to property and freedom of occupation. They are not something that we can decide if we want or don't want to pay for them. The holders of copyrights for songs and musical compositions (and yes, for dances) can't use these rights individually. It is only through an organization that unites all those who are interested (like ACUM for poets and composers). Dance choreographers do not yet have this possibility.

Legally, "copyrights" are given to all those who compose/make something that many other people use and enjoy. In return, money is paid for their use. It doesn't matter if this is a long and complicated symphony or a song that is played on the radio or some dance steps that don't ever change.

A detailed article can be found in [Volume 109 here](#).

"Copyrights" for music used in public places are generally paid annually by municipalities, community centers, universities, coffee houses, restaurants and any other institution that plays music for their patrons all year round. Folk dances should be paid for in a similar manner and preferably through ACUM.

**The following are some of the responses to my article and to my internet survey:**

### ACUM: Welcomes the initiative

*In years past, several attempts were made to permit the creators of folk dances (choreographers) to become members of ACUM and to defend their rights to "copyright" protection. Unfortunately, these attempts were not successful.*

Once again, ACUM will gladly meet with the representatives of the choreographers and discuss the matter in order to add folk dances to the database of creations protected by ACUM. Thus, royalties could be collected for the use of the dances and the songs and transferred to the creators.

At your service for any matter...



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**ACUM: "It doesn't matter if this is a long and complicated symphony or a song that is played on the radio or some dance steps that don't ever change."**

**Moshiko:**  
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## Moshiko HaLevy: Royalties for Choreographers – No, and No!!

Folk dances are choreographed with the intention of bequeathing them to the people. No other country has set such a precedent, i.e., payment to choreographers!!

The choreographers of popular dances in Israel are invited to teach them in other countries and are paid well for their work. They earn with dignity. Here we're not talking about one trip a year. I am acquainted with and know a good number of choreographers who are invited abroad several times a year and they earn good money.

Over the years, we created a format, (I was one of the founders), and most of the choreographers gained from it. It's true that we choreographed the dances, but the dancers themselves helped to promote them.

The moment it's decided to pay royalties to the choreographers, we will lose our sacred purpose of "developing a dance culture" and we will witness the opening of an industry to choreograph dances in the same way that moving pictures suddenly appear. Dozens of choreographers will seek royalties.

I don't know where the idea to pay royalties to choreographers came from and what the cause was for this kind of thinking. From the beginning, the choreographers were interested in being recognized by the dancers and not in order to receive some kind of prize. If successful, the choreographer received respect and appreciation, which are more important than the amount of money he/she might have received from a body like ACUM.

Dear friends, personally I totally object to the idea of royalties for choreographers. In spite of the fact that the number of dances I have choreographed can earn me a very respectable sum, I'd rather not lose respect because of money.



## The Dancers Organization (Irgun HaRokdim): Under no circumstances!

*The world of folk dance needs the continuation of creativity in order to refresh and to renew itself. But everything needs to be done in moderation. Unfortunately, both active choreographers and those who aren't quite as active have choreographed hundreds of new dances every year. The background behind this is mainly to become known and to reach as large a dance audience as possible. And here begins a web of pressures on the genuine choreographers to teach new dances, even if their quality and level aren't so high.*

*Today, even before the thoughts of royalties, we've reached a point where dancers are unable to move from one dance session to another because the repertoire is different at each session.*

*To our sorrow, there is no mechanism of regulation and sorting which would lessen and determine the number of new dances that the field can handle each year.*

*The issue of royalties will only increase the destructive process that we are now witnessing. In addition, it will significantly increase the number of new dance creations. We need to remember and to remind people that folk dance is meant to be a type of cultural activity for the people that connects various parts of the country and the world. Slowly but surely, folk dances have turned into a source of infinite financial income. And the dance community is paying the price.*

*If this proposal is accepted, it can be assumed that in addition to the entrance fee to the dance sessions - which is already too high - the dancers will have to bear the expense for the royalties.*

*In our opinion, there are many insoluble legal problems here (dances are not songs and they aren't heard as are songs). There are also financial and organizational aspects to the matter of copyright, for example, for all dances that have been choreographed until now and made public, with the intention of using them freely by the entire population.*

*We disagree with the proposal which may make life better for several choreographers but will cause great destruction and harm to the tens of thousands of dancers in Israel and around the world and will bring about the destruction of the entire field.*

Sincerely, **Irgun HaRokdim** (The Dancers Organization)

## The Survey

The anonymous online survey included 330 readers who responded separately in Israel and abroad. Many even took the trouble of adding their own opinions, an indication that this is important to them. Our thanks to all of you who wrote to us. I was touched by the concern that you demonstrated. Everything is interesting, but it's impossible to present all of the responses. I have therefore chosen the most interesting ones (see below).

### 198 Readers in Israel Responded to the Survey

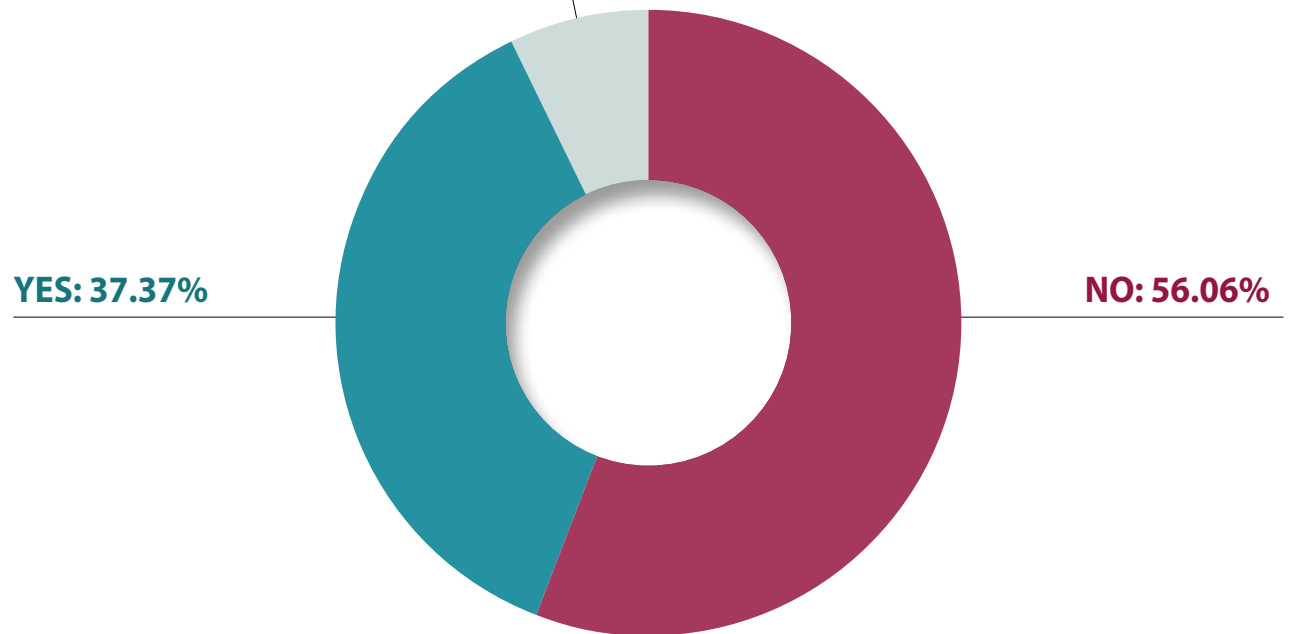
Most were against the idea – 56% opposed, 37% were in favor and 7% had no opinion on the matter. 60% didn't bother to read the article.

**"Today, even before the thoughts of royalties, we've reached a point where dancers are unable to move from one dance session to another because the repertoire is different at each session."**

Among the responders, only 40% read the article as opposed to 60% who didn't bother to read it.

### In your opinion, should we progress to the regulation of royalties for use in folk dances [198 responders]

**NO OPINION: 6.57%**



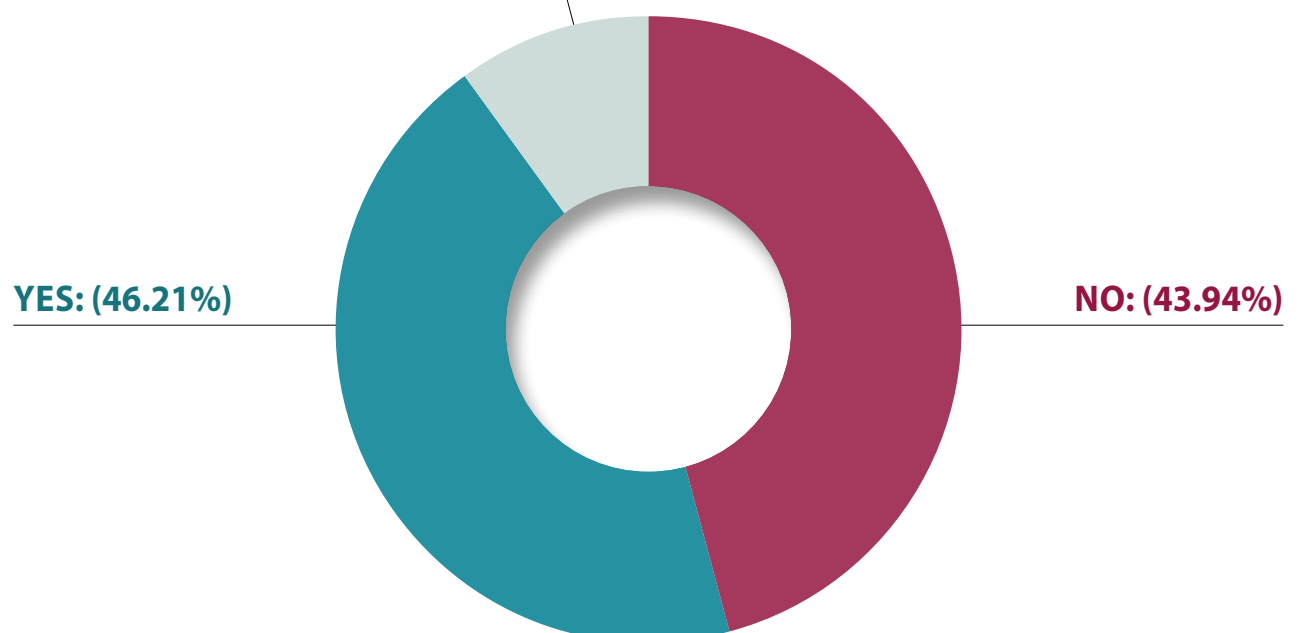
**There is more awareness of the need for royalties outside of Israel. It should also be noted that voters who are dancers abroad were more serious about the question and took the time to read the article.**

### 132 Readers Abroad Responded to the Survey

Here the score was basically tied: 46% were in favor of the idea, 44% were opposed to it and 10% had no opinion. Of those who responded to the article, 56% indicated that they had read the article and 44% indicated that they had not.

### Do you think that an arrangement of royalties for the use of folk dances should be promoted? [132 responders]

**NO OPINION: (9.85%)**





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There is more awareness of the need for royalties outside of Israel. It should also be noted that voters who are dancers abroad were more serious about the question and took the time to read the article.

I would like to change two terms when we deal with the subject (and this isn't just semantics):

1. Instead of "Yotzer – Creator" I suggest the word "Choreographer", "Rikudai", "Composer".
2. Instead of "Markidim – Dance Leaders" I suggest "Madrichim – Instructors" (as it was in the past).

**Here are some of the responses I've received:**

- If we start with royalties, dancing will become more "political", commercial and uglier than what it is today. There's not a lot of money in it and, in my opinion, the change will only make the situation worse.
- Choreographers deserve royalties no less than poets, lyricists and composers who do receive royalties. The choreographers have worked hard and there's no reason for them not to enjoy the fruits of their work over the years.
- How can you pay royalties for a Yemenite step, or a Mayim step? In most of the dances 90% of the steps already exist (are copied) from previous dances.
- In my opinion, every choreographer, just as any other service provider, should receive compensation for his/her work that we use.
- This will make certain dance leaders/instructors who are choreographers use only their own dances.
- You're looking for trouble and causing chaos.
- In my opinion, dance leaders will raise the entrance fee in order to cover the royalties to choreographers; many dancers will think twice and change their financial priorities.
- There should be such a mechanism for folk dances.
- It is desirable for choreographers to be considered equal to other creative people. In the long run, this will be good for everyone.
- In any event, this field is declining and new people are not joining. To make a living as a choreographer is not easy. So, the question is, if the field is declining, why make matters worse? I suggest a nominal sum and not a high one.



**"First of all, the 'dance leaders', most of whom act only as DJs, should announce the name of the dance and the name of the choreographer(s) before each dance. Very few of them use a projector and a screen which in itself is recognition of the choreographer.**

- A dance is a creative work, just as others are, and there's no reason for the choreographer not to receive compensation.
- There are already too many new dances. If they receive royalties they'll want to choreograph more of them.
- First of all, the "dance leaders", most of whom act only as DJs, should announce the name of the dance and the name of the choreographer(s) before each dance. Very few of them use a projector and a screen which in itself is recognition of the choreographer. Secondly, it will place an additional burden on the dancers who already pay an entrance fee of 30-50 shekels [in Israel], which is robbery. And third, do the dance leaders pay ACUM to play the music, as is paid by event halls?
- In addition, will there be an equal distribution of the songs among the choreographers or will this be a hostile takeover, as usual?




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- Many artists find it difficult to make a living. If the royalties will help them, then it's worthwhile and a worthy initiative.
- I have no problem with it. But the payment has to come from the dance leaders and not from the dancers who already pay 35 shekels [in Israel].
- I'm for it, but the mechanism for the pricing must be transparent, fair and accurate to a reasonable degree.
- Regulating royalties will promote the supervision of dances, thus encouraging the choreographing of quality dances.
- The choreography of a dance is an artistic creation that we all enjoy. Those choreographers who contributed most of their working years to enriching our culture and our quality of

life, who choreographed dances that we dance again and again – they certainly deserve a significant income from their creations - especially as they grow older.

- For many years the dance leaders paid no attention to copyright and, without limitations, used the various recordings of songs according to the dance. Thus, it is now clear to me that a royalty arrangement should not be created for the use of folk dances.
- There should be royalties. But, as with every product (as good as it may be and as well known, or the opposite), but only after creating a proven measure of its quantitative use (above a certain level) for a period of at least two years and not royalties for something that is here today and gone tomorrow.
- Whoever works and makes the effort to build “something from nothing” deserves compensation. What’s more, other people enjoy his/her product.
- The great investment in choreographing a dance (especially one of quality) demands this!!
- Intellectual property must be protected by law and my husband and I must be legally compensated.
- Congratulations.
- Royalties will take this wonderful field of the real Eretz Yisrael - Land of Israel - to another place that, in the end, will cause the field to collapse. This is a lose-lose-lose situation. In the end we will all lose: the choreographers, the dance leaders and the dancers.
- Unnecessary! The average level of the dances is quite low. There are too many dances that we learn, and after a short time, they disappear. The world of folk dancing is similar to Babel. There are dance leaders who promote their own dances ahead of dances by other choreographers.

It’s unnecessary to do something as serious as providing royalties for folk dances. In this field, little Israel separates us from other nations. There are 10,000 folk dances, most of which are unknown and never danced. We are record breakers in the world of “confusion” in a field which should be very respectable, but for the most part has become a low and illogical place.

- Folk dances are a necessary part of a culture. There’s no need to put sticks in their wheels to make things difficult. It should all be free, transparent and open in all the parks and in places accessible to everyone. The government must finance the folk dance culture from a very early age. Everyone involved in the field should engage in it for free, and with a feeling of being on a mission with great love. 



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