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Dancing My Motherhood

Dancing for babies in their mothers' carriers



Lital Maman
Photo: Liran Notik

"**H**ands hugging the baby, and a turn," **Lital** called out to the trainee mothers who came to the meeting at the studio in Marom Neve in Ramat Gan. Lital stroked the head of little **Alaia**, her own child, who sat comfortably in the carrier, feeling every movement her mother made, especially her heart beating to the rhythm of the Latin music that was playing.

Lital, as usual in class, stood first in front of the large mirrors that covered the walls of the spacious studio, looked through them at the young mothers who came to practice and smiled broadly at them. Lital's smile is a smile full of tenderness, but at the same time, with great maternal strength, a smile full of innocence that reminded me of my distant childhood, warm and enveloping, exactly the same way every mother wrapped her baby in a carrier. "If I can bring one smile a day to at least one mother, then I've done my part," Lital said.

The music resonated beautifully in the ears of all the mothers and their little babies. "Should Be Dancing" was the song that played in the background and pulled everyone into the rhythm. Hands and feet were released all at once throughout the studio space. Smiles appeared everywhere and there was a welcome sweat, one that is satisfying to the soul.

And then the magic happened... and with all the beauty of the many movements that took place there in the room... the babies in the carriers slowly began to fall asleep, one after the other, and experience a sweet sleep in the lap of a tired but joy-filled mother.

This is how Lital begins her day at the studio, and manages, with the help of her dancing skills and her graceful personality, to attract many trainees.

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How did it all start for you?

It all started in my mother’s womb. Mom told me that she worked, taught and danced, right up until the moment before she gave birth to me. Mom worked with the lehakot (performing dance groups) at the Karmiel Festival when she was 42 weeks pregnant with me. Both of my parents (**Lucy**, director of dance at Beit Barbur and a choreographer and **Shlomo**, a choreographer and former artistic director of the Karmiel Festival) are involved in the field and it was probably ingrained in me from infancy.

Lital says:

I started learning to dance ballet at the age of three. Over the years, I studied and specialized in the field of dance in other places. When I was six years old, I was already dancing at the Bat Dor School using the Royal Academy of Ballet method three times a week, and slowly, I added more days. When I was nine years old, I already appeared in the play: “The King of Siam” which ran all over the country and also starred **Eli Yatzpan, Tom Avni** and others.

When I graduated, I was accepted to study dance at the “Thelma Yellin” High School of the Arts. **David Dvir**, who at the time was the director of the program, knew my parents. He wanted me to come and study in the program that he directed. I was always attracted to acting as well and that’s why, in the afternoon, I studied at the school for young people run by **Orna Porat** and



Three generations of dancers: Lucy, Lital and Alaia



Nissan Nativ.

In the meantime, I participated in plays, acted and danced. At that time, I accompanied my father (**Shlomo Maman**) to harkadot (folk dance sessions) and danced there until the late hours of the night. I remember “catching” the folk dance bug when I was 16. Along with studying at Thelma Yellin, I danced almost every night.

When I joined the army, I served as a commander in an NCO (non-commissioned officer) educational course, and it was one of the best decisions I made, because it opened up a new world of production and entrepreneurship for me. After the army, I went to a summer camp in the United States, on behalf of the Jewish Agency, to teach folk dance. After

that, I participated as a dancer in Festigal. Later, I studied theater-dance and education for a bachelor's degree at the Seminar HaKibbutzim. As part of my internship studies there, I opened a dance program at an elementary school in Tel Aviv, where I taught dance. But something was nagging at me. I was missing the stage. I've always loved standing and acting on stage. So I decided to leave there and return to acting. I auditioned for the musical, "Sallah Shabati" and was accepted. After that, I also acted in the musical, "Chaplin" and in many Hanukkah plays. I felt that I was expressing what was true and accurate for me. In addition, I worked as a fitness and Pilates trainer at several studios.

Then COVID-19 hit us. During the Corona period, there was a long break in the field of acting. Actors sat idly at home and unemployed. They were waiting for everything to be over but they didn't really know when and what would happen. I decided to transmit fitness training from my home via Zoom. I established a fitness community that operated through Facebook. About 10,000 people joined the community. It was crazy. People were thirsty for it. I created a platform that suited so many people who just wanted to be on the move.

Slowly things got back on track. I returned to acting in my one-man show at Mediatheque in Holon called, "Butterflies in the Belly (Parpar BaBeten)", a theatrical show that also includes dance and is intended for the little ones. I present this show to this day.

Tell me a little about your family life.

I met my husband, **Gillan**, during the army and after ten years of friendship we got married. And we had our daughter, Alaia, about a year ago. Gillan and I love to travel around the world and Israel and we took a big trip to Hawaii when Alaia was still in the womb. We were looking for a name for her that connects to the experience we had there. Gillan is surfing the waves and I am sap-surfing (Stand Up Paddleboarding). "Alaia" is a special Hawaiian surfboard [made of wood that was used by Hawaiians in the late 19th century]. "Alaia" also means joy and happiness in the Basque language. Gillan has been a full and active partner in Alaia's upbringing. I am so happy that I have an amazing partner, who allows me so much space and freedom and wants me to succeed.



How do you manage to combine career and motherhood?

My career has been focused mainly on plays and musicals. I was drawn to the field of acting, but I always had a big question that I asked myself, "What will happen after I give birth? How will I combine motherhood, which I so desired, along with a career?" It was always important for me to fulfill myself, and the fear was real and present. When I was pregnant with Alaia, I didn't stop dancing, just like my own mom when she was pregnant with me. I have always believed that it is healthiest to bring movement into our lives, in any situation. This has many advantages.

After I gave birth to Alaia, I felt that I wanted her close to me and together with her, I wanted to flow into the world of dance and movement. I have continued to work, thanks to the help of Gillan and with the great help we have received from Gillan's (Joan and Aryeh) and my amazing parents.

When Alaia grew a little older, and also began to wiggle and dance, she brought me back to this innocent, primal dance, the one I had when I myself was little. Distant memories came to me. It's as if she managed to momentarily move aside the studies I had in seminary,



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my professional dance studies, and brought with her our pristine, primal, basic movement as human beings – the natural movement. And for me – I was nourished by it, by her, by everything she brought to me. My Alaia taught me to dance all over again.

How did you get into the field of dance for pregnant and postpartum mothers?

Even during the Corona period, when I was looking to continue the movement of life and not stop it, I took a course at the Gymnasium (the school for the certification of fitness and movement instructors) called, "Fitness Training for Pregnant and Postpartum Women". During the Corona period, pregnant women from all over the country approached me and wanted



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me to give them lessons on Zoom. That's how my initial connection to pregnant women and mothers who had recently given birth began.

When I myself was postpartum, I trained together with Alaia in Tel Aviv. I noticed that this kind of training was lacking here in Ramat Gan, so I decided to turn to the Ramat Gan municipality, for a project called Ramatganchik (the Ramat Gan municipality's program for parents and "little ones" from birth to age three) and this is how the initial contact between us was formed. Later, there was a demand for a different kind of movement and that's how "Dance Baby" was born! – these are parties for parents with babies in carriers.

In my classes we reach a crazy "high" and real intoxication through the combination of music and movement. Women come to me with their newborn baby, when it's in the carrier, and they're ready and want to unwind, dance, rejoice, smile and exercise, and in this short time of one lesson, we manage to transcend and make this entire day continue to be high-energy.

Women who have just given birth thirst for a for a little release, for a sense of freedom as well as for healthy physical activity, and they do not imagine that it is possible to reach these points of release and freedom, together with their baby, while he/she is attached to them in a carrier... And it really happens.


That magic does happen. We dance according to different and diverse styles of music (African, pop, Middle Eastern, hip-hop and more). I choreograph relatively simple dance pieces, so that each one will be able to move according to the movements, in the rhythm of the music.

In addition, I believe that every movement, whether it is dancing or even walking, affects the mind, improves the mood. This is especially true during such a sensitive period for the woman after childbirth. Personally, the movement kept me safe during this complex time.

The classes are open to everyone and are intended for both men and women. There are plenty of men who have taken a maternity leave and they also come to enjoy this dance class. However, I always emphasize that there is female empowerment in this, which allows every woman to return and feel her femininity through movement.

I try to have the class be combined with a lot of style. I always try to convey that we are allowed to be feminine, sexy and enjoy our life and external appearance. We are allowed to devour life, at the same time that our eyes are strained from fatigue and the grinding routines of life.

The classes bring additional benefits with them such as creating new bonds between mothers, while the babies relax in class and the vibrations tire them out and help them get a good sleep during the class itself. Mothers tell me about this first experience of theirs. They finish the class with a smile and are full of energy and strength for the rest of the day.

Being both a mother and a career woman is challenging and complex and I learn how to combine them every day. My goal in the classes is to allow mothers who have just given birth to feel that they can give themselves this gift, to allow mothers to believe in themselves, to love their bodies and simply let their souls be happy... 

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