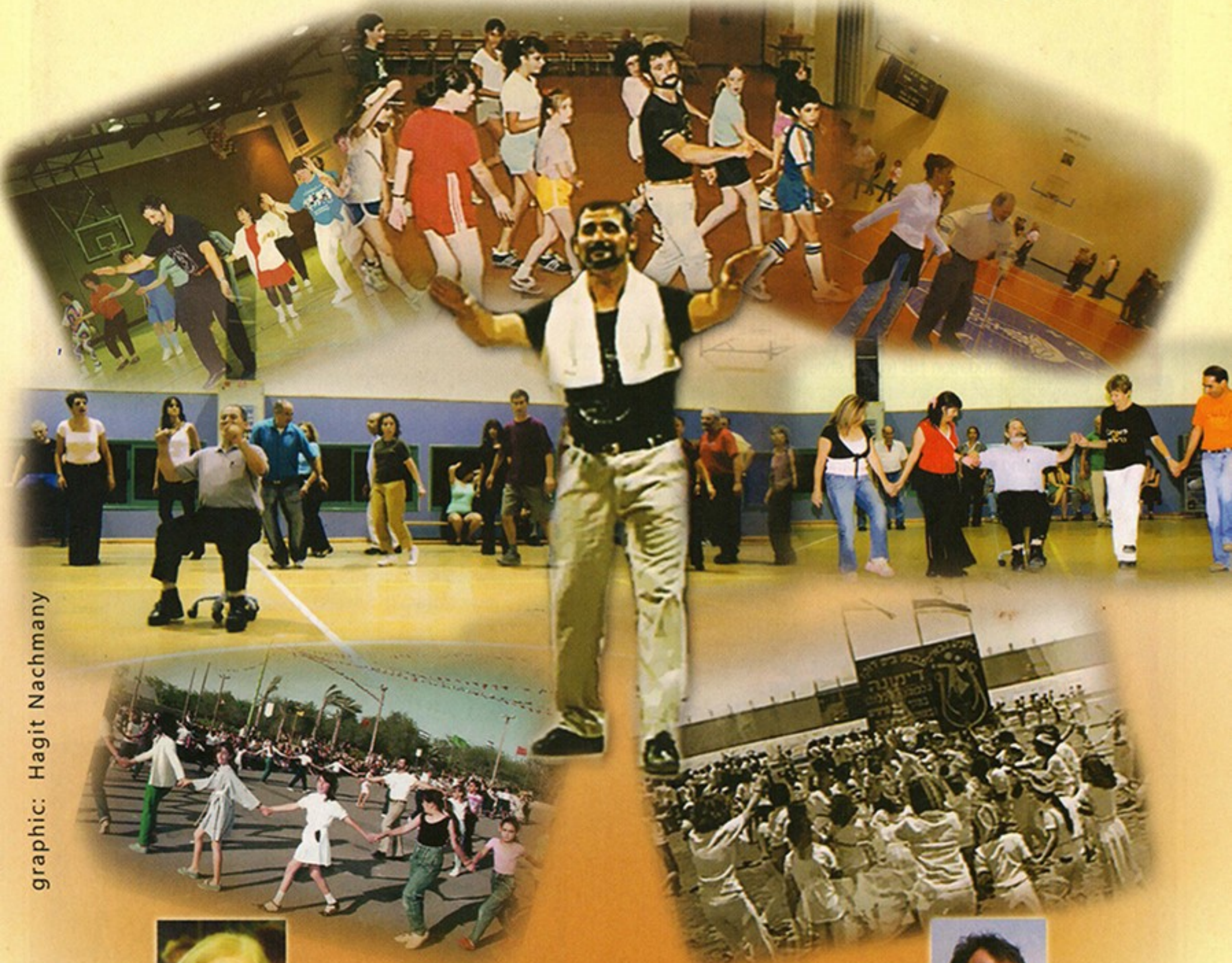


In Memory of
Mira Ashriel & Moti Elfasi

רוקדים
מגזין לריקודי עם ומחול
NIRKODA

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Mira Ashriel
07.1926 – 09.02.2008



Moti Elfasi
25.03.1942 – 25.02.2008

רוקדים

מגזין לריקודי עם ומחול

NIRKODA



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Yaron Meishar

Dear reader!

This Rokdim issue, our 75th, is devoted to the memory of our two dear friends who recently passed away: **Mira Ashriel** and **Moti Elfassi**. In this issue we want to enlighten a period of a few decades in which a very essential part of Israeli folk dances has been established and to which these two dear people have contributed a lot.

Mira Ashriel, Yoav's wife and partner, was a first class teacher of folk dances and a very dominant figure in the folk dance world for about six decades. Both she and her husband deserve the credit for shaping the character of

the Israeli folk dance movement in Israel and abroad. Thousands of dancers through many generations learnt and absorbed their great love for the Israeli folk dances and songs. Many choreographers started their careers in Mira and Ashriel's home and owe them their fame and recognition of their dances even today.

Mira passed away suddenly at the age of 81. Thousands of dancers and teachers will cherish her memory.

From here we extend our great love and appreciation to Mira (may she rest in peace) and to Yoav for their immense contribution to Israeli folk dancing.

Miri Krimolovski talked to Yoav and he told her about a long period of happy working together in harmony and love and of their unique way in the world of folk dances. You will be able to read about her impressions in the article "together".

Moti Elfassi, whom many saw at Mira's funeral shake hands with people who came to pay their respects, died suddenly after a short illness at the age of 66. Moti is interwoven in the cultural existence of the entire South. He left behind thousands of dancers from Dimona, Ber-Sheva, and the rest of the Negev who owe their first experience of the joy of folk-dancing to him and his well liked dances which are intertwined with simplicity, and innocence. His dances are a wonderful "shining memorial" to his life which was so suddenly extinguished. Blessed be his memory.

"The force of the spirit" by **Miri Krimolovski** is a conversation of a group of five friends who reminisce about Moti through many periods of his life and theirs, and tell us about him and his force of spirit. They are: **Yaron Elfassi**, his son, **Yoav Ashriel**, **Michael Barzilai**, and **Shlomo Maman**. Some other friends raised memories too and you will be able to read about them in this issue of the paper.

In the section "The dance of the month" we are bringing two dances: "Laila Laila" by **Yoav Ashriel** and "Shalom Lah Eretz Nehederet" by **Moti Elfassi**.

You will find the schedule of the dance sessions in the site "Rokdim" fully updated by the dance instructors.

Yaron Meishar editor

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By **Miri Krimolovski**



Mira Ashriel z'l

"The end was difficult and sudden," says Yoav sadly. "Mira got up in the morning, sang, washed the floor, cooked for the whole week, and felt great. All of a sudden I heard her screaming, 'Yoav!' from the bathroom and I heard her fall. When Rakefet and I arrived by ambulance at the hospital, we were told that this is what happens when there is a large hematoma in the brain. She was still conscious when she arrived at the hospital, but very quickly she fell into a coma. She remained unconscious for ten days"

Translation: Benjamin Levy

When entering the home of Mira and Yoav Ashriel, one can immediately understand that this is a house in which dancing has played an integral part. Filling every corner of the house, there are displays or hangings of statues, embroideries, paintings and drawings of figures of dancers. "This is all Mira," says Ashriel. "She was the living spirit behind it. She designed the house, cleaned, cooked - and created generations of lovers of Israeli folk dancing."

The love story and partnership of Mira and Yoav Ashriel is well known to folk dancers in Israel and abroad. Several years ago, they celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. Everyone knows that it is impossible to say just Mira Ashriel, much like it is impossible to say just Yoav Ashriel; it has always been Mira and

Together

Yoav Ashriel speaks about Mira z'l

Yoav Ashriel. This became symbolic of their togetherness.

It all began in the 1950's. In 1950, Yoav Glicksman, who had been born in Kibbutz Ramat David (in the Jezreel Valley), was a Staff Sergeant in a Nachal regiment. Years later, his grandfather would change their last name to Ashriel. Meanwhile, Glicksman was partnered with Ze'ev Chavatzelet, the head of the artistic department of the Nachal. Their special project was producing a quality performance of people from Nachal (an acronym for Noar Chalutzim Lochem, *Fighting Pioneer Youth*).

Chavatzelet, from Kibbutz Bet Alfa, was a charismatic person and a great innovator; he was the person who began the Nachal band and laid the groundwork for the Nachal Entertainment Troupes. He decided to produce a spectacular dance performance to showcase the artistic activities of Nachal.

Already familiar with the young Glicksman, Chavatzelet asked him to artistically direct and produce the show. Chavatzelet introduced Glicksman to an energetic young lady, the

beautiful Mira, who was a member of the Lahakat ha'Nachal.

Mira, of Tel Aviv, was a talented dancer and a member of the famous performing troupe that had the benefit of special talented artists like Yossi Banai, Yona Atari, and Geula Gil under the direction of Giora Manor, who later on became a researcher and dance critic. At that point, Mira wanted to leave the band. She had simply fallen in love with folk dancing and wanted to be an instructor.

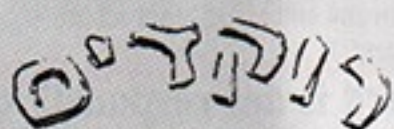
Yoav and Mira, who had been partnered to produce a show that successfully performed in Edison Hall in Jerusalem, fell in love. And, as they say, "the rest is history."

Mira Ashriel was born in north Tel Aviv. Her mother was born in Rehovot and is related to a family of the

historical movement, BILU [an acronym based on a verse from Isaiah (2:5), "Beit Ya'akov Lekhu Ve-nelkha/Let the house of Jacob go!"]. Her father was born in Crimea (northern coast of the Black Sea). As a child, he taught her Russian dances. She loved the magic of dance, loved dancing, and was precise with each and every



Mira and Yoav Ashriel - the wedding day



movement. After learning the secrets of dancing with her father, she began to dance with the youth movement of **Machanot Ha Olim**. Afterwards, she danced with a dance troupe of the **Hapoel Club Tel Aviv**, directed by **Gurit Kadman**.

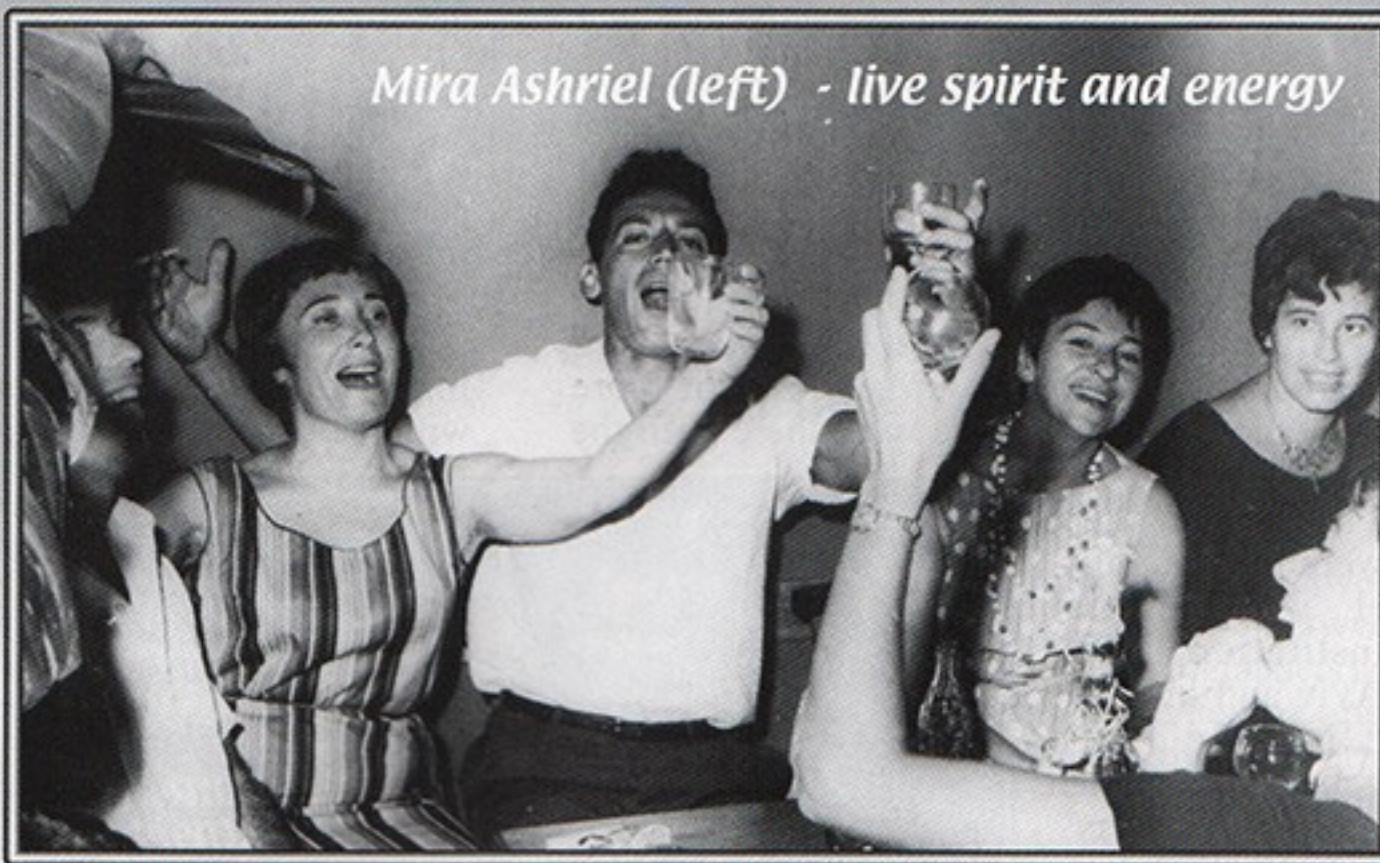
Two years after she met him, Mira brought Yoav to Hapoel. One day

she came to the club and simply said, "There is this individual, Yoav, who we should bring here and it would be great to have him teach." This is how Yoav started at Hapoel in the **Usishkin building**. By the way, that building still exists. Hapoel Tel Aviv was the biggest center for folk dancing activities. Clubs were formed there along with two dance troupes. Mira was a solo dancer. Eventually, her partner became **Danny Uziel**, who became a dance choreographer and instructor in the biggest weekly dance session in New York. "Mira and Danny were wonderful dancers and always received enthusiastic applause," Ashriel states.

A year afterwards, Mira and Yoav decided to marry. Their daughter, **Rakefet** was born a year later. She became the favorite of the dance group members and is now a physical education teacher at The **Wingate Institute**, Israel's National Centre for Physical Education and Sport (south of Netanya that is also known as Zinman College, Wingate Institute) and is also a member of Kibbutz Shefayim.

The dance troupe was very active. The Ashriel's produced a gala performance that was successfully presented at the **Habimah Theater**. **Ilka and Aviva**, along with the singer **Hanna Aroni**, played the music and did the singing. Later on, this show was performed all over Israel.

Thinking about those times, Yoav explains that the dance sessions were free. Charging a fee was an anathema in the opinion of patriotic Zionists and according to **Gurit Kadman**, activities such as folk dancing should be free of charge. Yoav received 2.5 Israeli pounds for an hour of instruction at Hapoel Tel Aviv. However, the Ashriel's wanted to raise the field to a higher and more



Mira Ashriel (left) - live spirit and energy

professional level.

A financial issue was in the background; the couple and their baby had been living with their in-laws. Eleven years after Rakefet was born, their son **Rotem** arrived. Yoav was working hard with dance sessions almost every evening; one in Hapoel, one in Hapoel Holon, Petach Tikva - there was a total of 13 weekly dance sessions.

Slowly they started with producing shows in different places. One of their first shows after they were released from their army service was held in Kibbutz Mishmarot (near Pardes Hanna). **Sasha**, the father of (singer/songwriter) **Meir Ariel**, invited Yoav to produce a show, for free, of course.

One reason Yoav disengaged from his kibbutz was that by nature he is an initiator. He wanted to do new things, and this led him to wanting his independence and the ability to produce by himself; this was not in line with the kibbutz ideals and philosophy.

Yoav related that, "When we were released from the army, Mira wanted to live in the Kibbutz; she would smile and say that this is why she married me. I did not want to remain on the kibbutz because I wanted to make it on my own. I wanted to create from scratch something of my own and to take the risks. The kibbutz members saw me as a traitor. Back then this was absolutely out of the ordinary."

In 1956, they also decided to leave Hapoel and to go out on their own. They started dance sessions in Tel Aviv. First, it was in the **Achad Ha'am School**. "We used to ride the bus from one place to another. **Yair Rosenblum** was our accordionist. I choreographed the dances, and Mira taught them.

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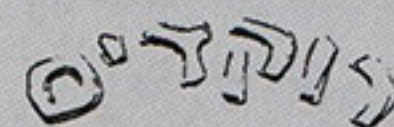
In the beginning, about 2,000 dancers attended. During the most successful years, about 30,000 dancers and spectators were at Rabin Square. Representatives of all the youth movements came to dance; dancers from every city, settlement and Kibbutz were there, and of course, tourists came to see that extraordinary phenomenon

❁



Mira Ashriel was the live spirit and energy of the Hishtalmuyot and taught at all of them.

She particularly taught the review of dances and those dances created by religiously observant choreographers who could not attend the workshops, such as Shoshana Kopelevitch and Chaim Shiryon



"Mira also instructed children and for the first time in history we opened a private studio for folk dancing with open registration. When I provided instruction, Mira collected the money, and vice versa. We were the first to conduct outdoor dance sessions where Mira created the high spirits and got the people to dance. Our last meaningful stop was the **Dubnov High School** where we had our sessions for more than 20 years. In fact, we were there until the school was closed. The dancers there were like a family. It was a real institution in Tel Aviv and in it, we nurtured generations of Tel Aviv folk dancers".

In 1959, while on a trip in Spain, Yoav saw a dance session being held at one of the city squares. "This provided me with the idea to conduct outdoor dance sessions. I went to the office in the municipality and suggested conducting open sessions in **Kikar Malkhei Israel** (later renamed **Rabin Square**, Kikar Rabin) in Tel Aviv. Mira was not thrilled about the idea. She did not like taking risks and starting new things. Initializing was my thing; she supported me only after I made a decision. The city official in charge disliked the idea and thought that no one would show up to dance outdoors." Ashriel insisted, requested an especially large stage, and so, from 1960 until 1970, on every Saturday night during the summer, Kikar Malkhei Israel was dancing and happy.

In the beginning, about 2,000 dancers attended. During the most successful years, about 30,000 dancers and spectators were there. Representatives of all the youth movements came to dance; dancers from every city, settlement and Kibbutz were there, and of course, tourists came to see that extraordinary phenomenon.

Mira, who had the more high spirited nature, danced with a partner **Tzion Nuriel** of the **Inbal dance troupe**. She danced on the stage but also offstage among the dancers. She got them all enthusiastic and was the dominant driving force at these events.

As a couple, the Ashriel's did not hesitate to tread into the most unexpected places. The City of the Youth, **Ir HaNoar**, was the most popular place for the youth of the 70's and a venue for stars like **Zvika Pik** and **Sassi Keshet**. The

place had quickly become another attractive place for folk dancing. In the spirit of that particular location, Yoav created the popular line dance "**Sugar**." Mira taught it and the participants loved it. Slowly they were able to introduce dances like **Kuma Echa** and **Hora Medura**.

The greatest innovation, and maybe the most important project begun by the couple was, without a doubt, the **Hishtalmuyot** - the dance

instructors' workshops. Until then, there were only a few of them and all were under the aegis of **Havaad Hapoel**, headed by **Gurit Kadman**.

Yoav and Mira began their own **Hishtalmuyot** in November 1968 in Ramat Gan. Among the dances taught were **Rakefet**, **Sharm A-Sheikh**,

in light of the euphoric days after the **Six Day War**, they even taught, **Nasser Mechakeh LeRabin** - Nasser is waiting for Rabin. **Tango Poquito**, **Marieta** and **Cowboy Mixer** were also taught; there were a total of 32 dances. Each participant received a pamphlet with carefully typed (on a typewriter) dance notes. Over the years, the two also published a pamphlet of terms used in dance notations. "Today it is all a hodgepodge, but then, we thought we were creating an Israeli folklore. This is what **Gurit Kadman** had inculcated to us and this is what we believed," says Ashriel. "We were looking to conduct it in a more professional way than was done by **Vaad Ha'Poel**. There were no

dance notes and I thought that whoever attends the **Hishtalmut** would like to have a pamphlet because you can't always recall the steps."

Mira had thought that this won't work and that people would not come. But Yoav insisted and, indeed, at that first **Hishtalmut** held in Ramat Gan, 100 instructors attended.

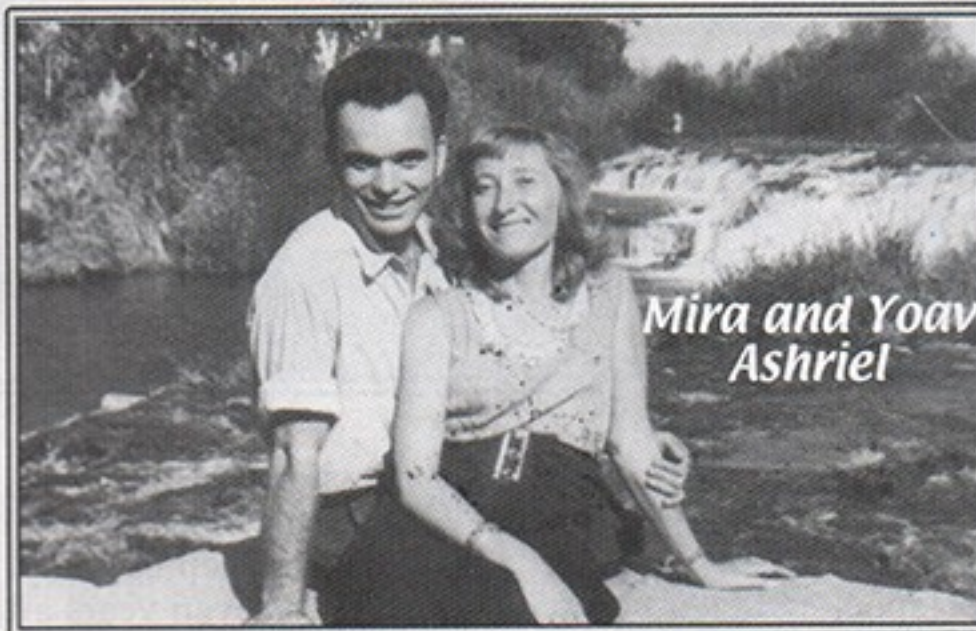
Each participant received both a pamphlet of the dance notes and a taped reel of the recorded music. Later on of course, cassette tapes were used. It is important to note that this was an innovation; up until this point, the music for dancing had been played by an accordionist at the session, but from then on, one could get a recording of the original music to be used at the dance sessions.

Mira was the live spirit and energy of the **Hishtalmuyot** and taught at all of them. She particularly taught the review of dances and



Young Mira Ashriel

Mira Ashriel was buried in the cemetery of Kibbutz Shefayim, where her children and grandchildren currently live and also the location where she had taught many Hishtalmuyot



Mira and Yoav Ashriel

Mira, who had the more high spirited nature, danced with a partner Tzion Nuriel of the Inbal dance troupe. She danced on the stage but also offstage among the dancers. She got them all enthusiastic and was the dominant driving force at these events



Rivka Sturman joined the Ashriels in many of their activities

those dances created by religiously observant choreographers who could not attend the workshops, such as, **Shoshana Kopelevitch** and **Chaim Shiryon**.

Another important role for Mira was to greet people as they entered the room. "Her connection with people and her charisma contributed a lot to those Hishtalmuyot," says Ashriel. In addition, he emphasizes, "people did what she told them. She had a presence. People loved her and her own special style."

The Hishtalmuyot were conducted for more than 30 years and this was the lifetime project of both of them. This project required

understanding and open-minded and joined the two in many of their activities. The number of participants was so large that they were compelled to work in two halls simultaneously to satisfy participants who came from as far away as Eilat in the south and from the Galilee in the north. This is also the reason that, later on, they moved this activity to the sports gymnasium in Kibbutz Shefayim.

❖

"It is amazing that while I had brain cancer years ago, she died so suddenly. Then, she really saved me, and now I could not save her"

❖



She is able to discipline people and motivate them into activity. Mira Ashriel

more work and presented more difficulties than just the teaching the dance sessions.

And, indeed, this was not easy. People started complaining that the two of them were commercializing the Israeli folklore and their biggest obstacle was the individuals of the Histadrut. They threatened to reduce the budget of their branch in Ramat Gan if they continued to allow the Ashriel's to use their facility. With no choice, the Ashriel's moved their activity to **WIZO Tel Aviv**. Another threatening letter arrived there as well. The Ashriel's eventually moved to **Merkaz Bikurei Ha'itim** in Tel Aviv. The individual in charge, **Uzi Adirm**, ignored the threatening phone calls to his office. The choreographer **Rivka Sturman** was

were already complaining that there were too many dances. In addition, several older dances were reviewed. Also included were various lectures on such topics as Jazz and African dances, for example.

The partnership of the two was well structured. Yoav was the initiator - he dealt with choreographing new dances and choreography for performances, dance notations and arranging the Hishtalmuyot. Mira was the implementation force. She danced with everybody, taught, and took the lead with public relations. In the beginning, Yoav even played the accordion while Mira provided the instruction.

At the beginning, when they were serving in the army, Mira would sometimes lead dance

All along, the two were kept on their toes while attempting to keep a balance between old and new, between new choreographers and the more senior ones, and also by discovering new talents. **Shlomo Maman** is perhaps considered as the most important choreographer that was discovered by the two, and later on, their discoveries included **Marco Ben Shimon**, **Avi Peretz**, **Yisrael Shiker**, **Roni Siman Tov**, **Avner Naim**, and others. Not only did they provide the stage for these choreographers but also directed and assisted them in the structuring of dances.

The workshops included 6-7 new dances. Back then individuals

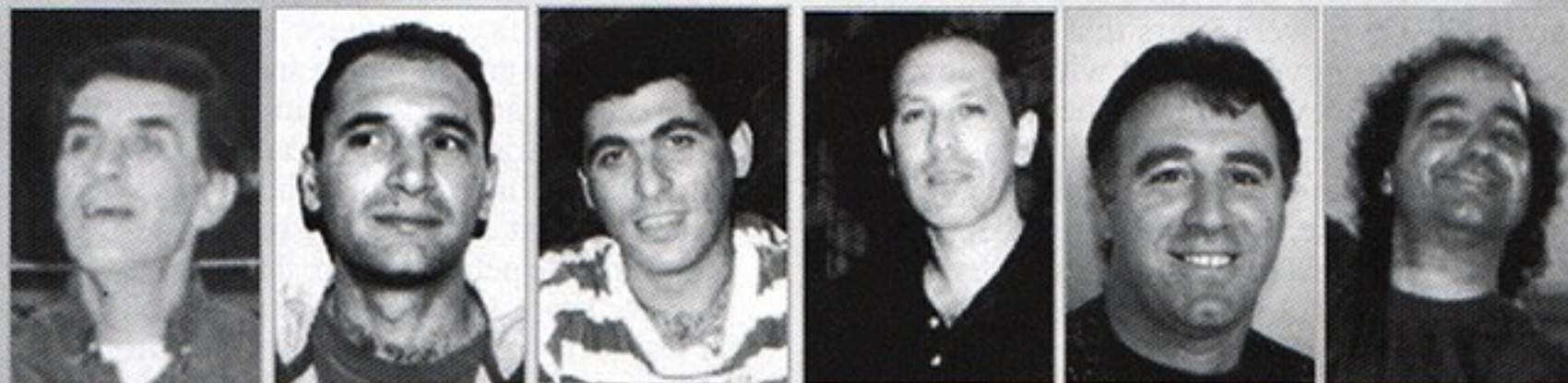


Mira and Yoav Ashriel - senior Israeli Folk Dances Instrucrors



At the beginning, when they were serving in the army, Mira would sometimes lead dance sessions for soldiers who had come wearing their heavy boots.

They were attentive to her instructions and danced with her like a herd following the shepherd. The master sergeant used to tell Yoav that Mira should have become a master sergeant because she is able to discipline people and motivate them into activity



The Ashriel's discoveries included (right to left) Shlomo Maman, Roni Siman Tov, Avi Peretz, Avner Naim, Yisrael Shiker, Marco Ben Shimon



sessions for soldiers who had come wearing their heavy boots. They were attentive to her instructions and danced with her like a herd following the shepherd. The master sergeant used to tell Yoav that Mira should have become a master sergeant because she is able to discipline people and motivate them into activity.

"Despite her somewhat tough sounding demeanor, she was actually extremely sensitive and emotional," says Yoav. "She would frequently get hurt and cry. This sensitivity came from her father, but externally, she

eventually, in the Country Club of the Bavli Housing. She taught until the late 90's when she was 70 years old, but in recent years, she was not happy. She did not like what she saw at dancing: the spatial distance between individuals, the fact that, in the circle, people do not hold hands and their movements were clumsy.

Mira loved really large movements involving the entire body, i.e., a dance that combined the body and soul. She was also upset about dances that seemed to be choreographed without thought, as Yoav said,

"about the funny steps put together." The atmosphere at dancing was not cultural, as it used to be, and people no longer sang as they danced. Mira would turn down the volume of the music on order to hear people singing during the dancing.

"The end was difficult and sudden," says Yoav sadly. "She got up in the morning,

sang, washed the floor, cooked for the whole week, and felt great. All of a sudden I heard her screaming, 'Yoav!' from the bathroom and I heard her fall. When Rakefet and I arrived by ambulance at the hospital, we were told that this is what happens when there is a large hematoma in the brain. She was still conscious when she arrived at the hospital, but very quickly she fell into a coma. She remained unconscious for ten days.

"She never took medicines or visited doctors. It is amazing that while I had brain cancer years ago, she died so suddenly. Then, she really saved me, and now I could not save her."

Mira Ashriel was buried in the cemetery of Kibbutz Shefayim, where her children and grandchildren currently live and also the location where she had taught many Hishtalmuyot. Hundreds of friends, dancers and choreographers came to the funeral and to the home where the mourners' sat afterwards, remembering and mourning the petite woman, the energetic blond, who, for years, was one of the most well thought of Israeli folk dance teachers in Israel.



MIRA AS ALWAYS FULL OF JOYFUL



Ze'ev Chavatzelet introduced Glicksman to an energetic young lady, the beautiful Mira

The greatest innovation, and maybe the most important project begun by the couple was, without a doubt, the Hishtalmuyot - the dance instructors' workshops

appeared firm and rigorously followed the rules. She was ethical and sought to have the sessions run in a respectful way.

"She would not stand for inappropriate attire and would comment to whoever dared, according to her sensitivity, to come dressed inappropriately. Additionally, she would not permit individuals to behave improperly in public," Yoav said jokingly. "As a general rule, she thought that this whole issue of sexually explicit behavior (i.e., making out in public) needed a face-lift."

As a couple, they frequently traveled abroad. "In the beginning, I was invited to teach my dances and she would accompany me. They so loved and admired her there that eventually I felt that I was there to accompany her."

For many years, Mira worked hard but she was also the classic housewife. She kept the house clean and neat. She would not allow Yoav to do any housework, "which makes things very difficult for me now that she is no longer around." There were years that she had dance sessions every evening, but without any help, she kept doing everything in the house. "When we finally got a housekeeper, she would get up early in morning, clean, wash the dishes and arrange the house, so that the housekeeper would not arrive to see a dirty house," says Yoav with a smile.

Mira started dance sessions in Tel Aviv at the Dubnov High School and at Lewinsky College, then at the Herzliya Hebrew High School (*HaGimnasia Halvrit Hertzelia*), and

Already familiar with the young Glicksman, Ze'ev Chavatzelet asked him to artistically direct and produce the show. Chavatzelet introduced Glicksman to an energetic young lady, the beautiful Mira, who was a member of the *Lahakat ha'Nachal*



By **Miri Krimolovski**

Translation: **Itzik and Diana Tzvi**

Whoever asks about **Moti Elfassi** will be answered with the same description - smiling, happy, forever optimistic, the man who

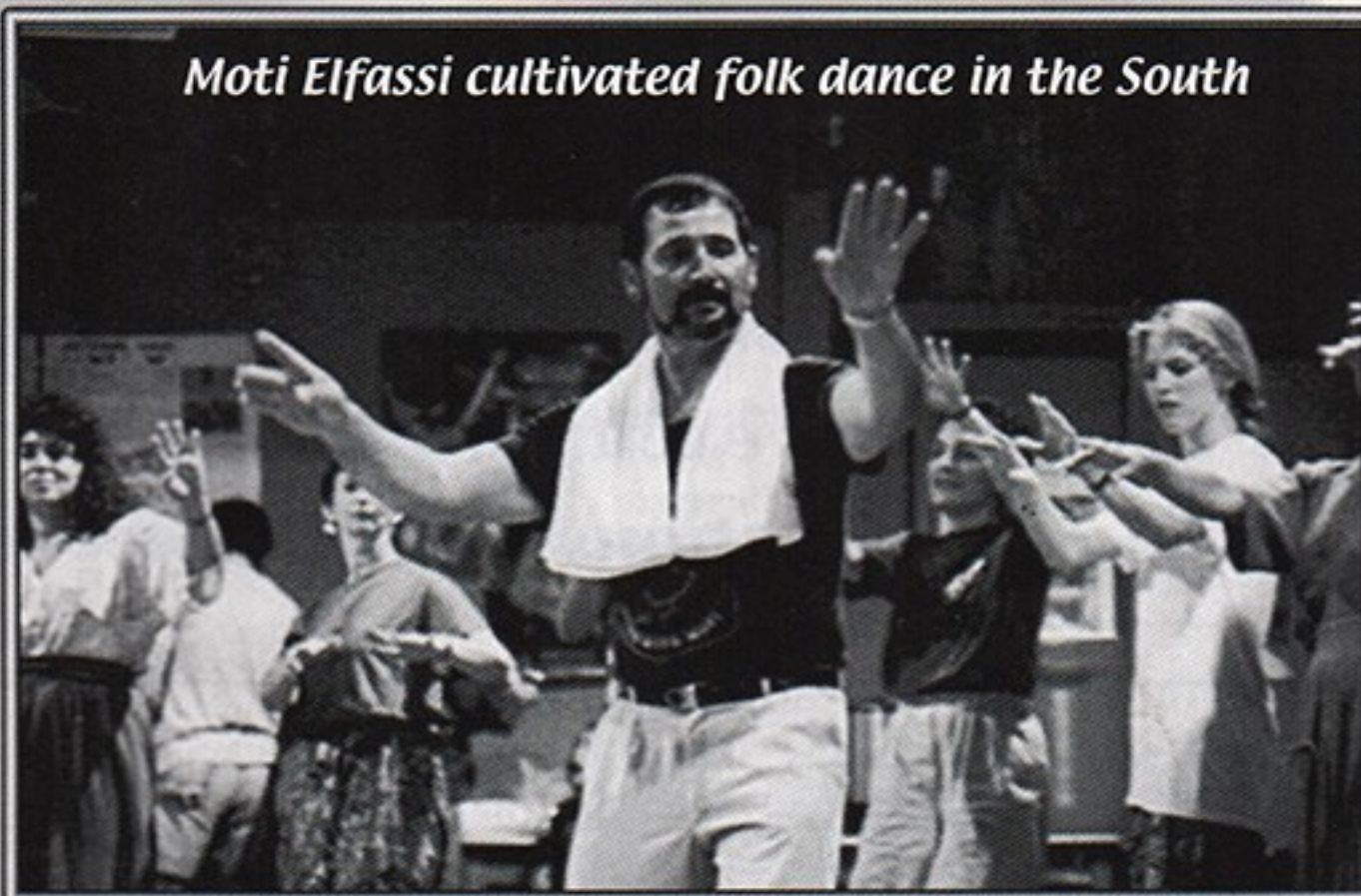
STRENGTH OF SPIRIT



Moti Elfassi z"l

In one of the festivals that he organized in Dimona, he fell and broke his leg. He was treated in the hospital but nevertheless the pain became worse. They operated on his leg but he developed an infection. When the pain didn't cease, they realized that they had left a rotten screw inside. The damage was already done and Moti unfortunately couldn't walk again as in the past

Moti Elfassi cultivated folk dance in the South



Moti Elfassi, The Man Who Teaches The South To Dance

loves dance with all his body, the man with the *chalil* (flute / shepherd's flute) and boundless energy. "He had a glint in his eyes and he always knew how to create a special atmosphere," said **Yoav Ashriel**. "He always had a smile on his lips," **Mishael Barzilai** will add. "A man who never had any problem with anyone, who worked in his part of the country - always a helpful and supportive person," says **Chaim Vaknine**. "A special and unique father, one who greatly loved Israeli folk dance," attests his son **Yaron Elfassi**.

"A very good friend in the fullest meaning of the word," emphasizes **Shlomo Maman**.

With the *shiva* (seven day period of mourning) having just ended after Moti's death, we have gathered together five dance teachers and choreographers, close friends of different ages, who worked with and appreciated Moti Elfassi very much. The dance teachers and choreographers wanted to express their feelings about the man they all loved: Moti's son **Yaron**, who continues his approach, **Yoav Ashriel**, the first to promote Moti in his *hishtalmuyot* (workshops for Israeli folk dance

teachers), **Mishael Barzilai** and **Shlomo Maman**, friends and colleagues, and **Chaim Vaknine**, a friend and Elfassi's successor to teaching dance courses in the south.

Before Moti Elfassi was a dancer, he was a musician. Many people knew Moti with his *chalil*. When he started to work with folk dance, music continued to flow through his veins, while playing the flute, drumming with a silver spoon

and with other percussion instruments, using his body, creating music out of nothing.

Everyone remembers the era when the "Old Guard" would meet for **Kabbalat Shabbat** or just a friendly gathering sitting around and singing. **Menachem Menachem**, **Bentzi Tiram**, **Yankele Levy**

(both the big and little "Yankeles") and **Mishael Barzilai**, when Moti and **Eliyahu Gamliel** were playing the *chalil*.

In the 1970's he even established an ensemble in Dimona, a musical group called **Sufa Bamidar** (Tempest in the Desert) whose famous song was **Kan Badarom** which quickly became an Israeli folk dance hit. More than anything, Moti Elfassi was known as the person who cultivated folk dance in the South.

The man who immigrated to Israel from Morocco, to nowhere, to the city of Dimona which in those days was a barren desert (the end of the 50s), in a few years succeeded in changing Dimona and the surrounding area into a blossoming field of Israeli folk dance. In addition to the adult folk dance classes that he established and directed,

In the 1970's Elfassi established an ensemble in Dimona, a musical group called **Sufa Bamidar** (Tempest in the Desert) whose famous song was **Kan Badarom** which quickly became an Israeli folk dance hit

he extensively developed "**Beit Hasefer Haroked - the dancing school**". He instructed generations of children, teenagers and adults and established the folklore organization in Dimona.

Maman wants to emphasize that Moti Elfassi

was most proud of the children's activities. "In the end of the 70s, Moti started to produce dance activities and major children's events in Dimona's stadiums. He was very proud of these activities and made sure to photograph and preserve everything."

Yaron, his son, talks about the way the children always wanted to dance in the advanced group, the more sophisticated group. "There is no

place that Abba wasn't active, elementary school, middle school, high school."

Moti Elfassi, who was born in Rabat, Morocco, immigrated to Israel when he was thirteen years old with **Aliyat HaNoar**. He went straight to a school, "**Hadassah Neurim**", in Sharon. The dance teacher then at this school was **Yankele Dekel** who "infected" Moti Elfassi as a young man with the folk dance "bug" forever. While he was in the army, Moti opened a folk dance session on his base. He completed the choreography course at the **Rubin Academy of Music and Dance at Hebrew University**. There at the Academy, he is remembered as a flute player. While at the University, he also took an international dance class with **Cyril Foreman** and **Shula Bareket**.

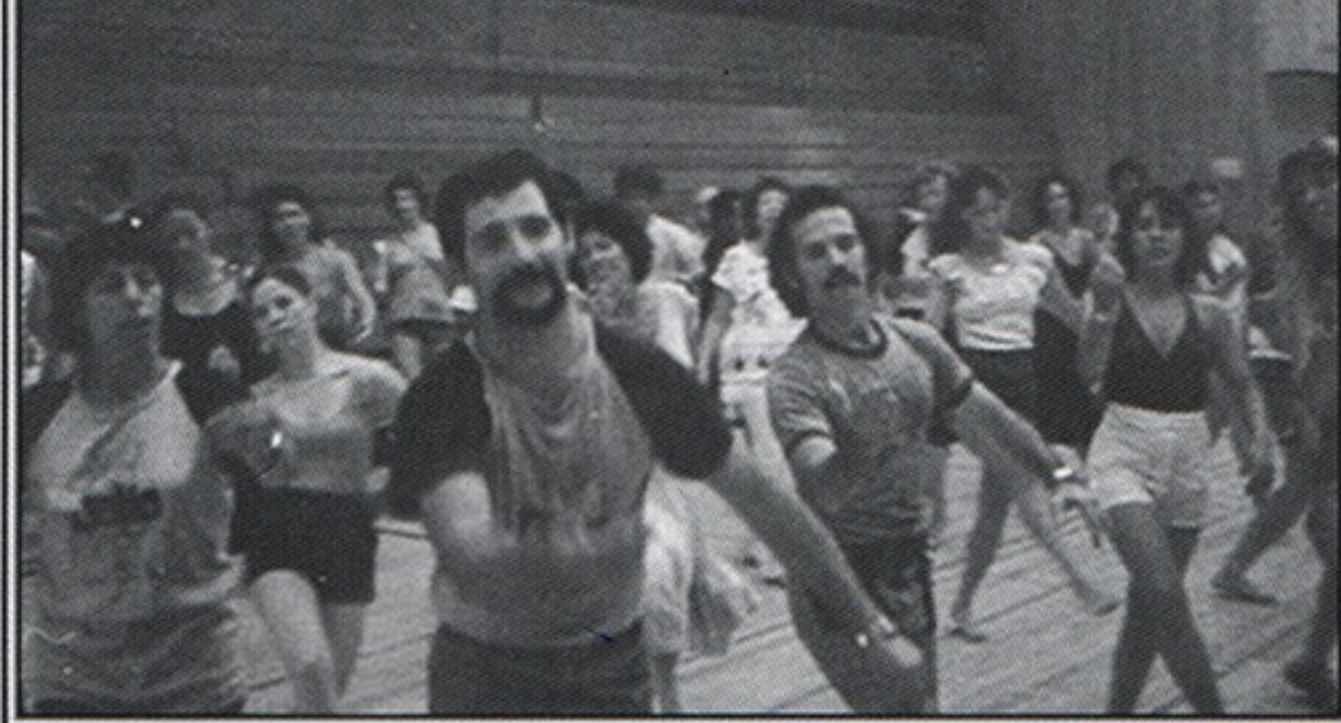
Elfassi started from almost nothing, but Chaim Vaknine, who directs the **Ulpan** for dance teachers in Beersheba, himself a successful teacher who "was raised at Moti Elfassi's knees," says that "people like Moti created a flourishing of dance in the suburbs."

Large and successful dance sessions started to appear in small places, in the kibbutzim and the moshavim in the area. In the center of the country, there were many small classes. In the suburbs, people sometimes would drive an hour to get to Moti's classes and in this way, his classes grew. Some

people who danced with him on Sundays in Dimona and also wanted to dance with him on Tuesdays did not hesitate to drive a full hour to dance with him again. A fellowship of friends came to dance with him from all over, from Beersheba, from Arad, from kibbutzim and moshavim."

Yoav Ashriel thinks Moti Elfassi found a way

Some people who danced with him on Sundays in Dimona and also wanted to dance with him on Tuesdays did not hesitate to drive a full hour to dance with him again. In the picture: Elfassi teaches abroad



to bring the center of the country to the south. "He never hesitated to bring choreographers and successful dance teachers from the central area and always made sure to be involved and up to date."

"His marathons were great," Shlomo Maman remembers. "In the beginning of the 80s, I was invited as a guest choreographer to a big marathon that he held in Ein Gedi. The hospitality in Rachel (his wife) and his house was unforgettable. He had a performing group and I was invited to work with them as a guest choreographer, on a friendly basis of course, not formally."

At this point, everyone wants to emphasize how different things were then and how everybody was working for free. "Moti also organized big festivals," says Maman. "I was bringing my groups to participate in his festivals for free. He used to take care of everything by himself, from where to sleep to the sandwiches."

Vaknine speaks about the past year, when Moti hosted eight groups from outside of Israel in Dimona. "He organized everything by himself, running from place to place on his scooter. They didn't have even one complaint. Everything was organized perfectly."

"Our house sometimes became a real hotel," says his son, Yaron. "One slept on

the living room floor, **Moshiko Halevy** once slept in my room, and so on. Everyone was having a great time together and they saw it as *shlichut*. I remember many groups standing in line for the shower near our stairs at home".

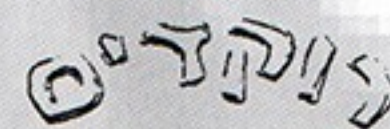
Yoav Ashriel indicates that the Shabbatot in Moti's house were unforgettable. "The meals were fit for a king. Rachel made excellent food,



Moti Elfassi ז"ל

With the 'shiva' (seven day period of mourning) having just ended after Moti's death, we have gathered together five dance teachers and choreographers, close friends of different ages, who worked with and appreciated Moti Elfassi very much

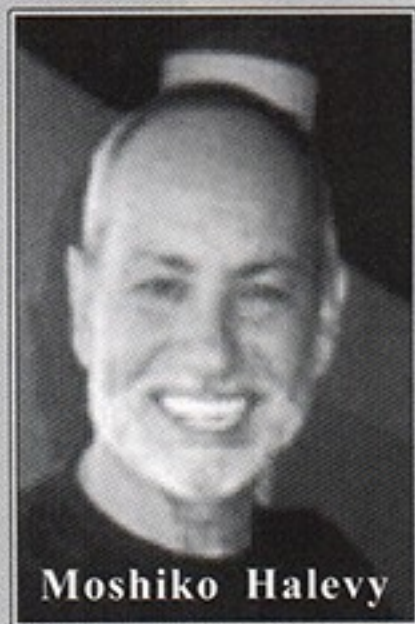
The past year, Moti hosted eight groups from outside of Israel in Dimona. "He organized everything by himself, running from place to place on his scooter. They didn't have even one complaint. Everything was organized perfectly"





Moti Elfassi z"l

The strong connection with the Ashriels continued as did Moti's dances: Kan Badarom, El Haderech, Hora Tzchok, Layla Badarom, etc.



Moshiko Halevy



"Nothing kept him from dancing, not even the disability," emphasized his son, Yaron

from couscous to the challot that she baked by herself. They made sure that we also had fun. Mira, my wife, z"l, was crazy about the Dead Sea, so of course Moti was happy to take her there. Usually, to get us to visit him, he drove all the way to us in Givatayim to bring us to Dimona and back".

There is no question that Vaknine is one of the important successors in the south. "I certainly owe him my work in this area. When I was a soldier, I once came with a girlfriend to his class in Ein HaShlosa. I was sitting in the corner. I was very shy. But the atmosphere was so special that I continued very discretely to come to his classes. After five years I really started to dance, in the beginning in his

classes, later also in marathons. After that I was also a student in his Ulpan in Beersheba, together with

his son Yaron. I was busy with studies, so I asked him if I could get to the Ulpan half an hour late, but he did not let me. He insisted that I do everything exactly as it should be done. I didn't have a choice; I had to be there on time."

His son Yaron, who also was a student in Moti's Ulpan said that it wasn't easy: "One day there was a music test in the Ulpan but the army didn't release me. I told that to my father, but he insisted that I be there otherwise he would fail me. He didn't want to play any

favorites." Elfassi was introduced as a choreographer through Yoav Ashriel's *hishtalmuyot* (workshops for Israeli folk dance teachers). In 1976, at the age of 36 when he already was a successful dance teacher, Moti decided to choreograph dances and he approached Ashriel for help in creating dances. "I would work them to the core to make sure the dance would be perfect from beginning to middle to end," says Ashriel with a smile. "His dance, **Al Kanfei Hakesef**, I accepted 'as is'. I didn't need to fix anything, it was amazing. The dancers loved the dance and it became a

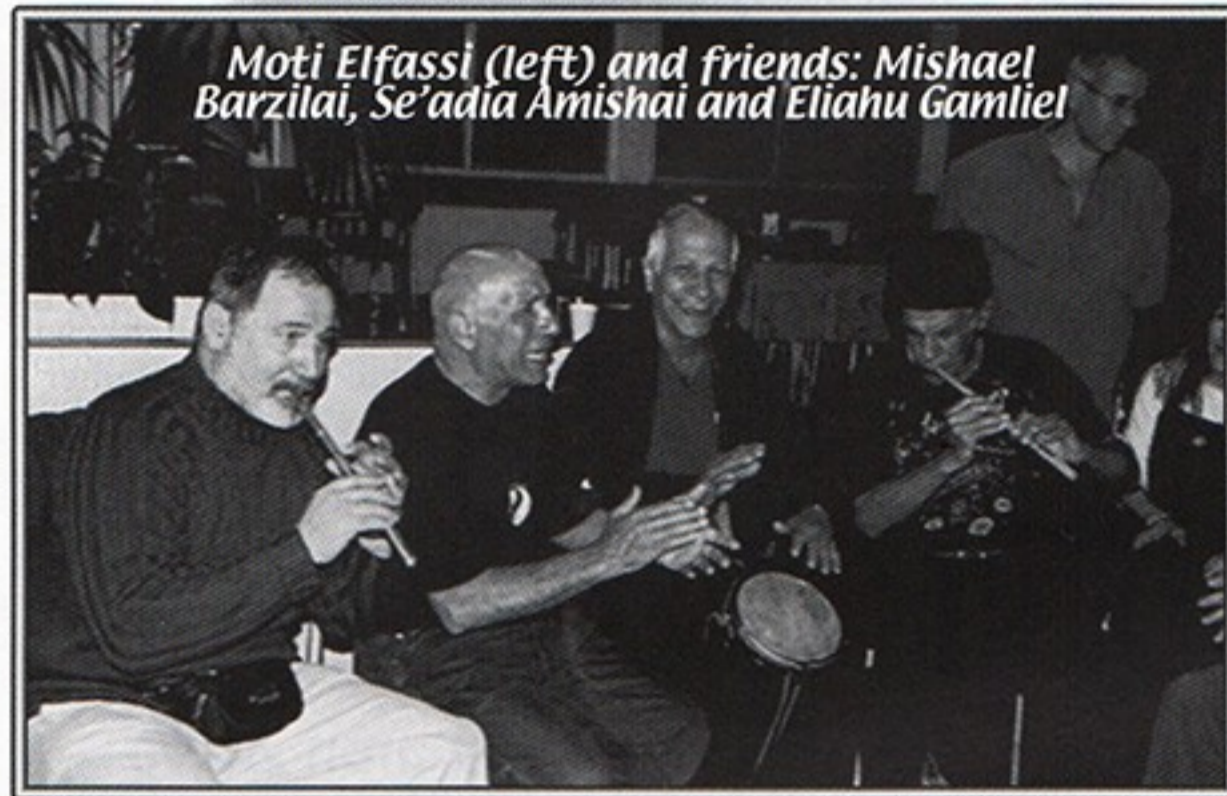
hit. Through to the present time, this dance is still popular, in sessions for beginners, advanced and even in teen sessions." The strong connection with the Ashriels continued as did Moti's dances: **Kan Badarom, El Haderech, Hora Tzchok, Layla Badarom, etc.**

Just as we have the "dancing school," we realize that there also exists a "dancing family," and Moti had a family like that. Everybody joined in - his wife, **Rachel, Iris his oldest, Yaron, Inbal and Oshrit**. Yaron began to dance in his father's class from the time he was six years old. When he grew up, he started teaching on his own before he had certification. His father would support him and drive him to any place. Yaron: "In the beginning, Abba used to give me two tapes with all the popular dances. But soon I told my father, 'Abba, it's not serious to go to a dance class with only two tapes' and this way I got all his tapes."

Just as we have the "dancing school," we realize that there also exists a "dancing family," and Moti had a family like that. Everybody joined in - his wife, Rachel, Iris his oldest, Yaron, Inbal and Oshrit

"Rachel, his mother, used to teach with him, (Rachel also had a teaching certificate), as did his sisters," Mishael says.

"When Abba used to go outside Israel, my mother and I substituted for him," says Yaron. "And when he returned, he went straight from the airport to the session. Abba loved what he did very much. There were days that he went to work at school at two in the morning, to the army base in the afternoon, and to the dance session at night. But he loved it. He never complained that he was tired."



Moti Elfassi (left) and friends: Mishael Barzilai, Se'adia Amishai and Eliahu Gamliel

Elfassi very much loved to teach outside of Israel. During the last years, he was invited to folk dance camps all over the world. He absolutely looked at that as *Shlichot* (work as an Israeli emissary). Yaron explained: "He loved to teach outside Israel and there were dances that he created with being outside of Israel in mind, such as **Shalom Lach Eretz Nehederet** (Shalom, Lovely Country). Two months ago he returned from the United States after more than a month and there too they especially liked this dance. This dance was an anthem for him and anytime that he came back from being outside of Israel, it was the first dance that he wanted to dance. Two weeks before he passed away he came to my class in Herzeliya. I played this dance for him and as always he was very excited."

Chaim Vaknine also remembered the connection to this special dance: "About a year ago he came to my class with his wheelchair and crutches and insisted on teaching **Shalom Lach Eretz Nehederet**. He taught it wonderfully, with barely any help with the crutches, but he had difficulty with the turn. After a while he called me and told me that he

invented a folding chair and that now he can make great turns. In one of the festivals that he

Moti Elfassi, who was born in Rabat, Morocco, immigrated to Israel when he was thirteen years old with Aliyat HaNoar. He went straight to a school, "Hadassah Neurim", in Sharon. The dance teacher then at this school was Yankele Dekel who "infected" Moti Elfassi as a young man with the folk dance "bug" forever

emphasized his son, Yaron. "Also with instruction, in both Israel and outside Israel, the message was that nothing can stop the dance, because it comes from inside. He saw it as more than *Shlichot* and always said it's not earning a living that's the important thing."

"He certainly didn't let his disability stop him," emphasized Vaknine. "A while ago I invited him to teach a group of young girls at the Ulpan that I direct in Beersheba. When he started teaching them, they began to cry. He looked at them and said: 'Don't cry! You will see that I'm not going to teach you mistakes!'. And of course it was like that. The next time he came to the Ulpan he asked that nobody help him with anything, the crutches flew and suddenly he didn't need them. He was easily teaching between eight and nine dances at the Ulpan".

Chaim Kaufman who organizes dance camps in New York said that Moti recently came to New York and was very successful there despite the crutches.

Few knew that in the last year Moti helped disabled people. "During the *shiva* I got a call from Dimona City Hall," said his son Yaron. "They told me how much Abba supported the disabled, how he helped them negotiate with services, how he represented them so that they could get the benefits they deserved. The **City Hall in Dimona** planned to send him to take a course in law school so that he could serve in an official

organized in Dimona, he fell and broke his leg. He was treated in the hospital but nevertheless the pain became worse. They operated on his leg but he developed an infection. When the pain didn't cease, they realized that they had left a rotten screw inside.

The damage was already done and Moti unfortunately couldn't walk again as in the past. But "Nothing kept him from dancing, not even the disability,"



Moti Elfassi z"l

Few knew that in the last year Moti helped disabled people. "During the *shiva* I got a call from Dimona City Hall," said his son Yaron. "They told me how much Abba supported the disabled, how he helped them negotiate with services, how he represented them so that they could get the benefits they deserved



"Moti always a helpful and supportive person," says Chaim Vaknine (left)

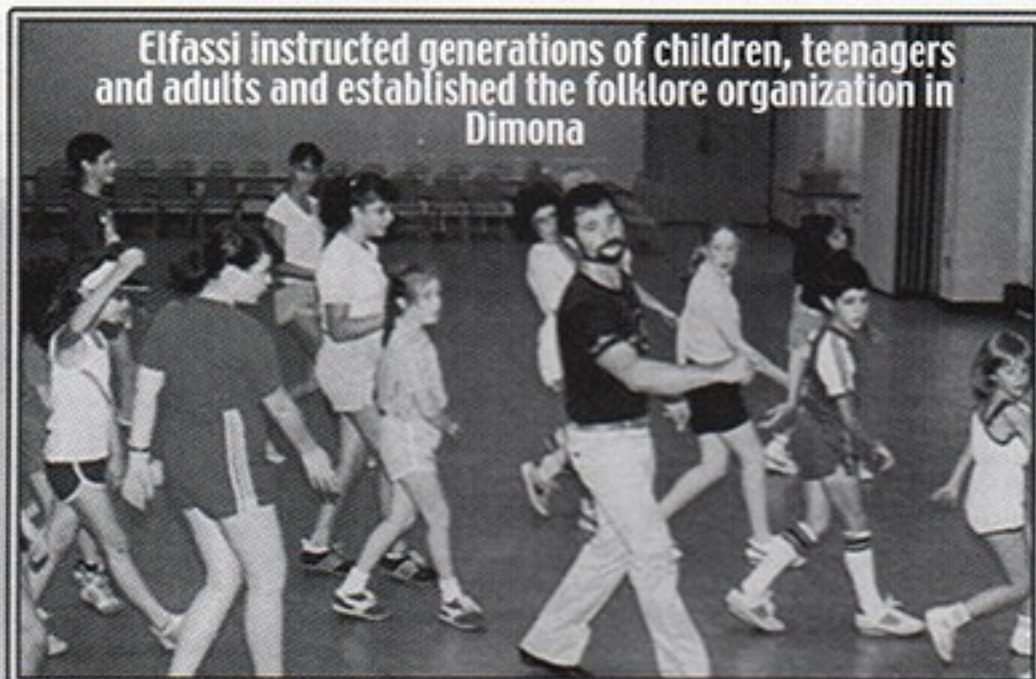




capacity. During the coming Passover he had also planned to make a Seder for fifty needy families”.

The same way that he led his life, with goodness, grace and a pleasant smile, is how he left this world. Two weeks before he died he came with a wheelchair to Mira Ashriel's funeral. A few days later he contracted a lung infection and developed complications. On Wednesday he was admitted to Soroca Hospital with a high fever.

Yaron: "He had difficulty breathing until Saturday morning. He was given oxygen and the fever went up and down. He was awake and always tried to speak to us a little. On Shabbat they decided to anesthetize him so he would not suffer. They took him to the emergency room. From Shabbat until Monday, the day he died, he did not wake up," Yaron added with sadness. "It was unexpected. He was a strong, optimistic person. My sister was also in the hospital giving birth. She had a chance to talk to him by phone and show him a picture of the baby via video but he didn't have a chance to know him."



Elfassi instructed generations of children, teenagers and adults and established the folklore organization in Dimona



Moti Elfassi z"l

whoever asks about Moti Elfassi will be answered with the same description - smiling, happy, forever optimistic

Hundreds of dancers came to his funeral and to the shiva. Most recently, Moti Elfassi and Yaron Meishar, editor of magazine rokdim, had planned to videotape and preserve all of Elfassi's dances that had never been filmed by Rokdim. Moti was so excited and promised that he would teach all the dances clearly despite his limited health. Meishar is sure that the project will go forward in the future and that Yaron Elfassi will be the one who will teach all of his father's dances.

In addition to the adult folk dance classes that Elfassi established and directed, he extensively developed "Beit Hasefer Haroked - the dancing school"

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A FLUTE IS SILENCED

Sounds of farewell to Moti Elfassi and his flute

“**M**oti Elfassi is no longer with us” is an awkward expression; it is like saying, “impossible.” The question “why?” is unexplainable, but with the answer of “that’s what it is.” It cannot be defined, though it says it all.

A farewell to Moti can be well described as in Moshe Tabenkin’s poem, “A Day and its Sorrow / A Day and its Abyss, A day and the Song of its Flute, A Song and its Day, A Song and its Flute, A Song and the Scratch of its Shadow.”

This is the nature of the world - death is part of life, and so is the pain of saying goodbye; especially when parting is not at its time.

Adam and Eve chose to eat from the forbidden fruit, and therefore were punished and sent out of the Garden of Eden to work the soil from which Adam was created. This was to prevent them from eating the fruit of the tree of life. Therefore, we do not know immortality. We are left with stories of the Bible. Heine refers to them as the medicine cabinet of the human being.

The painful fact is that Moti Elfassi is no longer with us. Moti was an example and the personification of the joy of life despite everything. He lived folk dance through every bit of his being. He was made like a stone from the rocks of the desert, overcoming pain, loving and being loved, a good friend, who used his flute as his mouth. Moti is no longer.

However, his deeds, his tunes, and the memories of his family and friends will continue to praise and eulogize him. Comfort comes from knowing that he lived his life to the fullest. He was able to make people happy, and this is a big Mitzvah. It has already been said that God, the Holy One, blessed be He, is destined to make a dance for the righteous people.

Moti sang, danced, and played music all his life. He rose from the desert - from Dimona. He so loved playing music, so loved dancing with all his senses. Notwithstanding the limits in his legs, he knew that dancing comes from within. As Rabbi Menachem Mendel said, “A true Jew is recognized by his steep bowing, silent screaming, and dancing without movement” and indeed, Moti danced through every state of being.

Moti and his dances, Moti and his flute are expressions of his full and deep identification with his roots, with the south, with the east,

with the Negev and the desert, with the shepherds, with the flute, and with Dimona. He was “Like a shepherd with his flute, the one who seals the Bible, the village, the landscape of his youth, and a nation is struck by his substance and his tunes.” (Emanuel Zamir).

Moti derived much pleasure when the words, “South, Negev, desert, Dimona, Beer Sheva, Eilat, Yerucham,” etc., were heard in dance halls, and he used to call out to everyone, “Come to me to the south.”

Years ago, at a city event in his honor, we wished him much good health. We believed that his name would protect him from any harm, because his name is “Mordechai.” This is a name imbued with luck that is connected to the holiday of Purim. The word Pur originated in the Acadian language and it is interpreted to mean a lucky stone. His last name, Elfassi, carries with it a rich cultural heritage of the Jews of Morocco, in the city of Fez.

All the wishing might have granted him some years, but did not stand up to the test of time. His death was sudden and not in its time. Moti was real, Moti

was like a flute, as in Leah Goldberg’s poem, “The flute is simple and gentle, and its voice is like the voice of the heart, the flute...”

We will accompany him with the Talmudic saying, “he who says songs in this world will be worthy to sing them in the next world too” (Sanhedrin Tractate) and with the belief that “Every person draws his heaven with his own facial brightness.”

❖

Moti Elfassi was like a flute, as in Leah Goldberg’s poem, “The flute is simple and gentle, and its voice is like the voice of the heart, the flute...”

❖



Moti Elfassi ז"ל

The painful fact is that Moti Elfassi is no longer with us. Moti was an example and the personification of the joy of life despite everything



נוקדים



Yoav Ashriel, at the age of 24, staged and produced a dance performance in which Mira Ashriel and Danny Uziel were the soloists ■ This was the first production of its kind in Israel and it was mounted for the first time in 1954 at Habima (Israel's major theatre in Tel Aviv) ■ Yoav continued to mount the show in cities throughout Israel ■ We are bringing you part of the printed program that Yoav wrote for this production ■ This section sheds some light on the roots of Israeli folk dance and its development

Introduction

Every nation and its dances, the tradition is passed from generation to generation. They were created out of the desire of human beings and a people to express themselves, their joys and sorrows, their loves and the enthusiasm derived from every event in life. All is expressed through dance: Preparing for war, the celebration of victory, praying for fertility and the exhilaration of blessings, happiness and sorrow, birth and death.

Folk dance generally originates from the village, from nature and from work, from shepherds and their playfulness, the fishermen and their dances, the harvesters, the wine makers, the farmers and their holiday dances. They created holiday festivals and celebrations to mark various occasions throughout the year. There were also historic holidays when every nation marks victory, independence or destruction. Each holiday had its own special dances. Each nation had its own distinctive style that derived from the lifestyle, climate and landscape, because the person and his dance is an expression of the style of his life and of those around him and he passes on the tradition of his dances to the next generation.

In Israel, because of the Diaspora and the dispersion of the Jewish people into exile, they were unable to preserve a

our country and the ingathering of exiles from the Diaspora, we have to blend and to create from the beginning a style of Israeli life. The desire to celebrate the agricultural holidays and the desire of the renewed nation to express itself

נשף שירה ומחול

יואב אשיריאל
 •
 מירא אשיריאל
 •
 דניאל זעלינג
 •
 חנוך חסון
 יוסף וילברט
 תלמה יפת
 נטלי זמרי

תוכן התוכנית מופיע באתר האינטרנט של תיאטרון חבמה

The inner cover page of the printed program of the production "Soiree, Singing and dance", Habima Theater, Tel-Aviv, July 1954

**SOIREE,
 SINGING
 AND DANCE**

homogeneous tradition and they could not create a traditional rooted lifestyle.

The natural, healthy mode of existence of those who securely reside in their land from biblical times was forgotten. The way of life changed in every place where they lived in the Diaspora. With the return to



THE COVER PAGE OF THE PRINTED PROGRAM "SOIREE, SINGING AND DANCE"



From Yoav Ashriel's Album



through dance, was an incentive for the creation of Israeli songs and dances in a new style. Our dances have not been passed down from generation to generation as is traditionally the case, rather they are only the buds, and experiments for a new creation. What will we dance? In what style? With what steps? What is the source from which will be able to draw the new creation? These are some of the problems that faced the early dance creators and the dance community in Israel.

We do also have some roots and special characteristics of our people. The dances that each Jewish tribe brought with it from exile, the dances of the neighboring peoples, the renewed land, landscape and climate, the spirit of the bible, our traditional holidays, all this gave us and gives us the inspiration for the non-stop creation of folk dances.

There isn't one single influence on a certain dance. There are many influences. The character of the dance creator also affects the style. We can say that every dance is a mix of all of these influences and sources that derive from the time in the Diaspora and the traditions of those lands in this country, with the climate and the special landscape of the renewed nation.

The Style of the Exiled Jew

This style was rejected during the beginning of the new immigration to Israel, which was just being established and renewed, in order to escape from the exile and style of the past. But it was a style that remained in every Jewish heart. We need not estrange ourselves from this style because it is one of the few authentic traditional Jewish styles. The **Sherle** was introduced in many kibbutzim as a wedding dance and the **Jewish Chassidic** style influenced many folk dances that were created in Israel.

The Yemenite Style

This has begun to influence the Israeli folk dance style, especially during last few years. It is also one of the few authentic Jewish styles of a Jewish tribe that did not assimilate. There is a lot of similarity between the Chassidic and Yemenite dances. The Yemenite style is the style of the Middle Eastern Jew, rich in steps, movements and formations - a non-stop source for the creation of new dances. The regular Yemenite step is especially recognizable in many Israeli dances.

The Hora

During the beginning of the immigration of the pioneers to Israel, and before we started to create new Israeli dances, we couldn't find any dance to express our joy and our sense of togetherness, except the **Romanian "Hora."** This style of dance has also influenced many new Israeli dances.

The Slavic Couple Dances

These came with the immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe. They have remained and are regarded as Israeli dances. Many of the new dances that were created here as well as the creators of the dances have been influenced by them.

The Arab Influence

The **debka** is a type of communal Arabic dance done by men and the movements are well suited to the place, the climate and the form of Arab society. All this was not a small influence on the Israeli debka, even though in Israel we dance with women as well as men.

The Influence of the Waltz

Its origin is that of a folk dance. It is recognizable in some of our dances in 3/4 rhythm



FOLK DANCES
'HAPOEL' Tel-Aviv

The Back Page of the Program "Soiree, Singing and Dance": Folk Dances: Hapoel Tel Aviv





Young Yoav Ashriel. Sheded huge light on the Israeli Folk Dance

with a light, flowing form.

The Influence of Ballroom Dance

The modern beat of today that is fashionable in every civilized country also influences our county and her dances. There are several dances that were created to bring in a specific group of people to folk dancing.

Biblical Influence

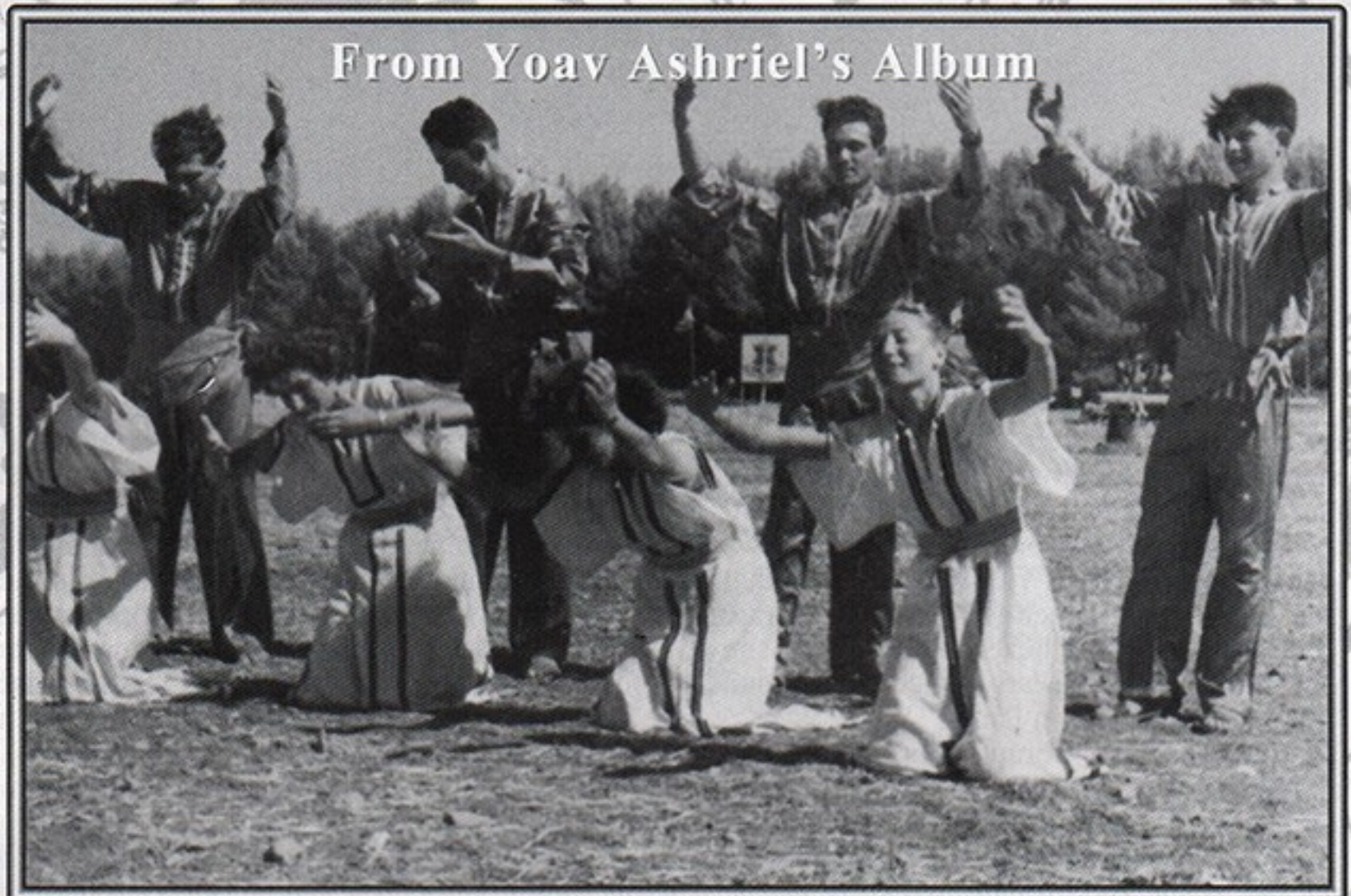
Many Israeli folk dances were influenced, especially by the love songs of the "Song of Songs" (Shir HaShirim).

The Pulse of Building the Country

Our country as a nation is being built and

Holiday Dances

From the holiday itself that is celebrated in the village, with its landscape, in the field and in the vineyard. **Dances of the sheaves** (omer) come with the beginning of spring when the crops begin to ripen and the fields are still green. The dance for **Tu Be'Av** is danced in the vineyards with dances that face each other in a game of love. The shepherds dance and amuse themselves with the completion of sheep shearing in the pasture next to the well. And the dance of "The Valley" (HaEmek) that expresses the landscape of the restored valley is danced with a background of the landscape of the Emek's green mountains. It is in the silent places of these dances, and not on the closed, restricted



renewed. The influence of the tempo of revival and building on the style of life also influences the numerous Israeli folk dances that are danced with energy, strength and an exciting rhythm.

Heroic Dances

The desire to express the joy of victory and heroism in the time of triumph and independence has influenced several Israeli folk dances that possess power, inner strength, pride and boundless joy.

The Landscape of the Country

It is well known that the landscape and climate are a strong influence on the form and style of folk dance in every country. A mountainous landscape or one that is low and spacious, desert or cold weather determines the form of dances and the style of movements. There is no doubt that the dance creators in Israel are greatly influenced by the land itself and the landscape that they see before them.

stage that makes it is difficult to transmit the natural, true and festive spirit.

The Performing Group

There are 24 members, it is not a professional group. It was created from the Israeli folk dance class of **HaPoel Tel Aviv**. These are amateur dancers, most of whom were born in Israel, who enjoy two evenings a week of Israeli folk dance and have succeeded to get into shape over time so that they are prepared for the evening of performance. In addition, the show includes another performing group, **Lehaka Bet** (Performing Group "B") which has also been selected from the special group for this evening. The Group and its performance strive to bring the public closer to the style that is created in Israel. Natural, healthy dance that expresses the spirit of the renewed land: a youthful, festive, proud and happy spirit. The dance that is able to unite, to lift and to encourage all inhabitants of the nation, all denominations and social classes.



MEMORIES OF MIRA ASHRIEL



By *Yishai Meir*

Translation: **Itzik and Diana Tzvi**

Distant memories: Thanks to you, **Mira Ashriel**, I'm part of Israeli folk dance. Thank you!

The year is 1958 and a small, plump boy, only ten years old is in fourth grade at the **Bialik School** in Holon. From my school to the city of **Rishon LeTzion** of today, there was endless sand. An acre of land at that time cost 100 lirot. In the winter we let air out of our bicycle tires and rode on the sand all the way to **Rishon LeTzion**. Those were days filled with many simple friendships. The only dance we knew was the **hora** which we danced for hours. Our homeroom teacher, **Esther Katzor**, came to class and announced that there would be

My daughter **Ya'ara Meir**, a soldier and dancer in the **Hora Afula troupe**, was killed a few years ago in an automobile accident. Give her regards from the dance family in Israel. We are waiting for you both to be with us at the **21st Karmiel Dance Festival** in the summer of 2008

close, don't be afraid!" And I, the one who almost went home out of fear, caught my breath, gathered all my courage and approached those running the audition. **Yoav Ashriel** (who appeared to me at that time to be so tall) and **Mira Ashriel** were there together with the **Bialik School gym teacher**. "Don't be afraid my son, I don't bite, and I can see that you are coordinated and have the potential to be a real dancer." That's what **Mira** said, and I, the little **Yishai**, overcame my fear - and the rest is history.

I have been active in the field of Israeli folklore since I was ten years old as a dancer on stage and as a dance teacher, choreographer and musician. During the 1970's, while I was studying music at **Tel Aviv University**, I attended the dance classes with you, **Mira**, and **Yoav** confident that you knew how to match partners with each other. I met my first girlfriend, a local city girl, thanks to you. My weekly schedule was planned around the wonderful dance classes held by you and **Yoav**.

In 1978, when I was a **Shaliach** from the **Jewish Agency** specializing in Israeli folklore in **Sao Paulo, Brazil**, I wrote you a letter and reminded you that "thanks to you I exist" - in Israeli dance, of course. Your reply came soon. You remembered that **Shmuel and Chava Daromi**, my grandparents, used to live across the street from the **Bialik School** and that sometimes I went there to bring coffee to you and **Yoav**.

Dear **Mira**, you are in a place that everyone says is a good place to be and I'm sure that even there in the clouds, you are at the center of everything. We'll

miss your image and again thank you.

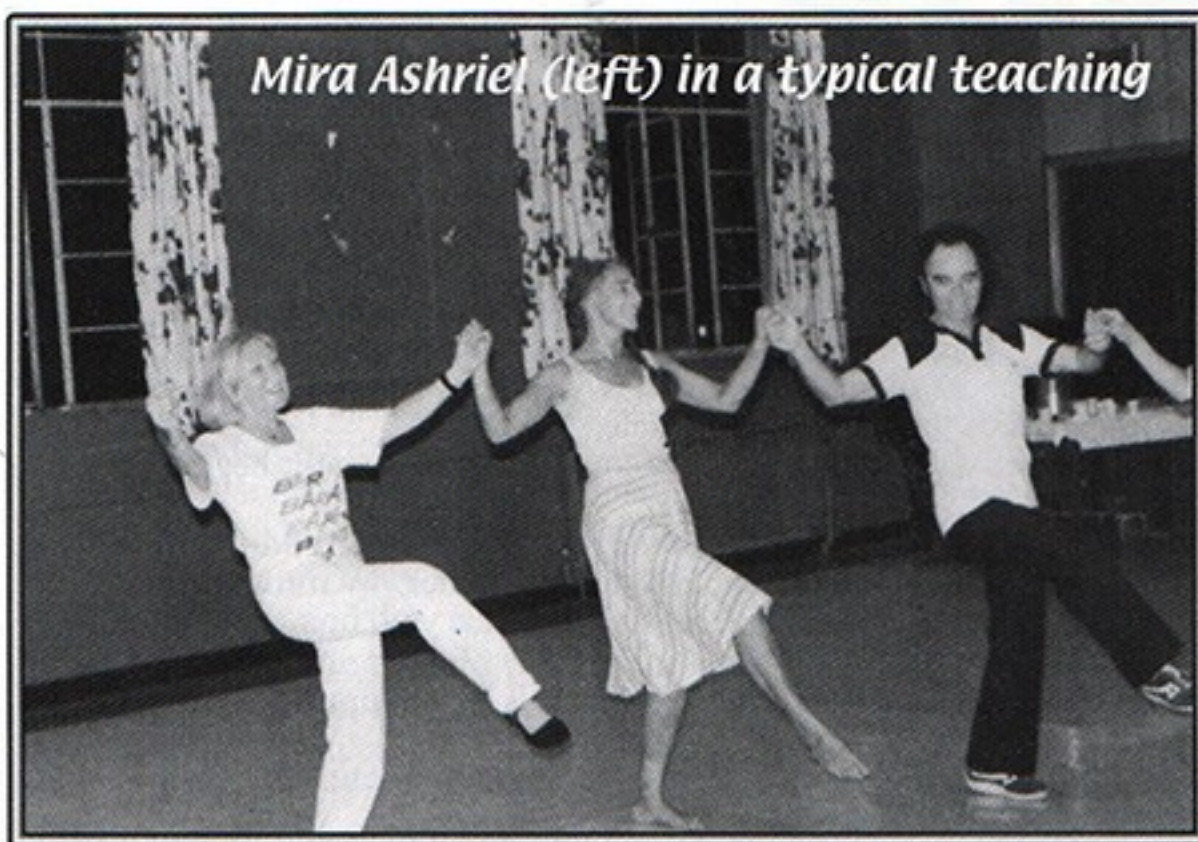
As you remember, **Mira**, my daughter **Ya'ara Meir**, a soldier and dancer in the **Hora Afula troupe**, was killed a few years ago in an automobile accident. Give her regards from the dance family in Israel. We are waiting for you both to be with us at the **21st Karmiel Dance Festival** in the summer of 2008.



Mira Ashriel z"l

"Don't be afraid my son, I don't bite, and I can see that you are coordinated and have the potential to be a real dancer."

That's what **Mira Ashriel** said, and I, the little **Yishai**, overcame my fear - and the rest is history



Mira Ashriel (left) in a typical teaching

tryouts the following Saturday for the citywide dance troupe of **Holon** with the famous choreographer, **Yoav Ashriel**. I was raised in a home filled with Israeli folklore in song and dance. I took it for granted that I would go to the citywide auditions. But I was scared. I arrived at the tryouts shaking all over - a small boy, shaking. A lovely woman was sitting there - **Mira Ashriel**. "Hey little guy," she said, "come

נוקדים





LAILA, LAILA

Choreographer **Yoav Ashriel**: "I have known the song 'Laila, Laila' since childhood. As a young boy in Kibbutz Ramat David (I was born there in 1930), the composer **Mordechai Ze'ira** had come to the kibbutz and taught this song as part of an evening program of community singing. It is a charming song that expresses much. It expresses the tranquility of the night and nonetheless, it is emotionally charged. Its melody is beautiful, flowing and playful.

"For years, I had been dreaming of choreographing a dance to it, but I did not feel mature enough to do so. For years, it was living in my imagination and I had been thinking a lot about it including specific movements, steps and a couple formation. When I started working on it, I tried to include all the emotions, the music and the rhythm. Without the usual waltz combinations, with movement and patterns, I tried to make it unique, flowing, interesting and varied while keeping it simple and familiar. (It is a folk dance.)

"I tried many variations together with my wife **Mira, z"l**, who was a wonderful dancer and showed a great understanding of the field. I tried to provide the finishing touches so that the result would be a well-structured dance that was expressive and interesting with serene and flowing movements. Initially, it was taught in 1978 at our workshop for instructors, a part of more than a 30-year series. Of course, I taught the dance with **Mira, z"l**".

Translation: Benjamin Levy

LAILA LAILA (Night, Night)

Dance: **Yoav Ashriel**
Music: **Mordechai Ze'ira**
Lyrics: **Natan Alterman**
Meter: **3/4**

Formation: **Couples in a circle facing CCW. Woman to right of M. M's step described. W uses opposite footwork.**

PART I - Face LOD with inside hands joined.

- 1-3 Begin with L: Waltz step diagonally fwd and slightly away from partner.
4-6 Begin R: Waltz step diagonally fwd and towards partner.
7-9 Release hands. Full turn left on the line of the circle: L,R,L while moving fwd. (W turns rt. with R,L,R.)
10-12 Rejoin inside hands facing LOD. Step fwd R onto bent knee, step L bwd in place and close R to left foot.
13-24 Repeat counts 1-12.

PART II - Facing LOD in varsouvienne position with hands held slightly above shoulder level.

- 1-3 Step fwd L, brush R fwd and step fwd R.
4-6 Repeat counts 1-3.
7-12 Full turn as a couple CCW with two waltz steps with M moving bwd in place and W moving fwd. (M begins with L and W with R.)

PART III - Face LOD, W slightly in front of M. Release rt. hands (left hands remain joined).

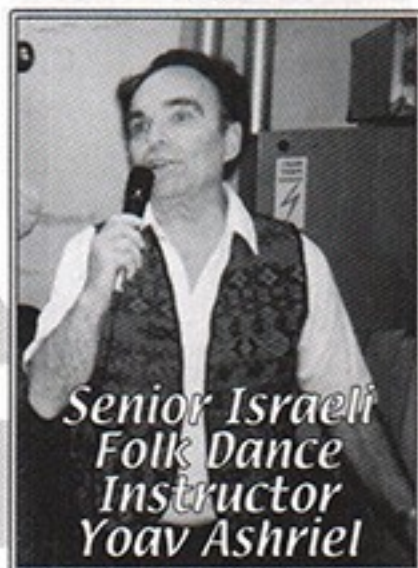
- 1-3 Wide waltz step to left (side, place, cross in front) to change places passing behind W while extending joined hands and looking at partner. (W: R to rt. - side, place, cross fwd). W passes in front of M towards the center of the circle.
4-6 Wide waltz step to rt. with M passing behind W to return to place. (W: begins with L to left side.)
7-9 Release hands and separate from partner. Moving RLOD, turn to end facing partner. M turns left with three steps L,R,L while moving toward center; W turns rt. with R,L,R.
10-12 Facing partner: Cross R over L, step L in place, step R to rt.
13-15 Waltz step fwd toward partner: L,R,L.
16-18 Face center. Full turn rt. moving CW with three steps R,L,R. (W turns left with L,R,L.)
19-21 Cross L over R, step R in place, step L to left to face CCW and join inside hands.
22-24 Face CCW: Waltz step fwd starting with R.

PART IV - Face LOD with inside hands joined.

- 1-3 Step fwd L, brush R fwd and step fwd R.
4-6 Repeat counts 1-3.
7-9 Waltz step fwd beginning with left foot.
10-12 Partners turn to face each other and join both hands sideward as weight is shifted onto R and the body is inclined slightly to the right side (W shifts weight onto L and leans left), hold.
13-18 Release hands. With two waltz steps describe a small circle by turning away from and returning to partner. M: moves CCW starting with L while W turns CW starting with R.
19-24 Face partner and join rt. hands with rt. shoulders adjacent. With two waltz steps, turn CW but end side by side facing LOD with inside hands joined.

Note: The song *Laila Laila* was written as a lullaby in 1948 for a show at Tel Aviv's *Li-La-Lo* theatre.

Song transliteration and translation: **Malka Tischler**



Senior Israeli
Folk Dance
Instructor
Yoav Ashriel

"For years, I had been dreaming of choreographing a dance to Laila Laila, but I did not feel mature enough to do so. Initially, it was taught in 1978 at our workshop for instructors, a part of more than a 30-year series. Of course, I taught the dance with **Mira, z"l**"



By **Ayalah Goren**

It's hard to be speaking in the past tense about someone whose personality represents life brimming with charm, one that is full of vigor and for whom dance is like the elixir of life. Her body language shows beyond a doubt that movement is the love of her life.

The strong bond between **Mira and Yoav Ashriel**, the way that both of them held and supported each other was a reflection of their mutual affinity for Israeli folk dance. Together they choreographed a myriad of dances in diverse styles and on a variety of themes for which Mira, demonstrating her humility, selflessly credited the man she loved. Mira, in her role as instructor, taught a multitude of people and through the medium of dance, brought endless excitement to scores of dancers. She instructed and taught the

MEMORIES OF MIRA

Ayalah Goren, Gurit Kadman's daughter, speaks about Mira Ashriel z"l

steps, movements and styles of the dances methodically and with clarity while keeping the attention of the dancers and bringing them boundless joy.

Mira and Yoav came to visit my mother, **Gurit Kadman**, at my house many times. Rather than getting advice from my mother about their life's work, I remember that their gatherings were accompanied by productive discussions that raised all of the serious concepts in existence pertaining to Israeli folk dance since its inception.

One summer, about ten years ago, I was fortunate enough to have been invited to teach at the Israeli folk dance camp, **Shorashim**, held in the United States. Mira and Yoav were the guest choreographers and they taught Yoav's dances. During the four days and four nights of the camp, all the participants were practically in ecstasy while Yoav was teaching and Mira was prompting him.

And what can be said about the exciting dance sessions held under the guidance and supervision of Mira and Yoav? We, the teaching staff and directors, enjoyed a crazy existence during the wee hours late at night after we had sent the campers to sleep and nobody was watching us. Those days with Mira and Yoav were genuinely fun, filled with a shared excitement

of dance. Who isn't familiar, appreciative and impressed by Yoav and Mira's dances and workshops? I used to attend and loved to participate in those workshops and to deeply inhale the warm, friendly atmosphere generated by Mira and Yoav. Mira showered her family with love, took pride in each family member and wished dearly to stay with them. They, of course, returned that love and admiration.

Mira certainly didn't leave us - not Yoav, her family, friends, students and dancers. She's in our hearts forever!

Blessed be her memory!



Mira Ashriel z"l

Mira Ashriel certainly didn't leave us - not Yoav her husband, her family, friends, students and dancers. She's in our hearts forever! Blessed be her memory!

Mira Ashriel and her husband Yoav



נוקדים

Vol. 75 April 2008

SHALOM LACH ERETZ NEHEDERET

Shalom To You, Lovely Country

Yaron Elfassi (the son of Moti Elfassi ז"ל) relates the story behind the dance: "In 1980 while returning from a European trip where I had been teaching dance, my father heard the song which began with the lyrics, 'I was in Paris and also in Rome' and then at the end of the chorus, 'And even sometimes in my travels, it is nice to wander but it is better to return home'.

"My father immediately made a connection with the lyrics and very much enjoyed the singing of Yehoram Gaon. Choreographing the dance was simple, intuitive and appropriate.

"When my father returned to Israel, the dance was taught at all his sessions and, ever since, each time he had returned from abroad, this was his opening dance in Israel.

"We selected the dance, 'Shalom Lach, Eretz Nehederet,' because prior to his death, my father and mother had returned from the United States. They were there for more than two months visiting sessions at which my father had been a guest teacher fifteen, twenty and thirty years ago. During his stay abroad, I had taught and reviewed the dance, 'Shalom Lach, Eretz Nehederet' and when my father returned, I was able to play the song and dance this dance with him. This had become a traditional greeting every time that

Moti Elfassi. "Shalom To You, Lovely Country"



my father returned from abroad." (Translation: Benjamin Levy)

SHALOM LACH ERETZ NEHEDERET - SHALOM TO YOU, LOVELY COUNTRY

Dance: **Moti Elfassi**
 Lyricist: **Ilan Goldhirsch (Hebrew)**
 Singer: **Yehoram Gaon (Hebrew)**
 Composer: **Steve Goodman "City of New Orleans" sung by Arlo Guthrie**
 Meter: **4/4**
 Formation: **Circle**

PART I - Face center

1-4 Open mayim beginning with R to rt. side.
 5-6 Sway R,L.
 7-8 Step R across L, L to left side.
 9-10 Step R across left and rise onto ball of rt. foot.
 11-12 Turn to left with two steps L,R.
 13-16 Yem. L.
 17-32 Repeat Part I.

PART II - Face CCW

1-4 Step fwd on R, step fwd on L while bending knees, rock back onto R and hold with L raised forward and knee bent.
 5-8 Three steps fwd L,R,L, hold.
 9-12 3/4 turn fwd to the rt. with three steps R,L,R and end facing center, hold.
 13-16 Yem. L and face CCW.
 17-20 Three steps fwd R,L,R pivoting left on the last step to end facing CW with with L raised forward and knee bent.
 21-24 Three steps fwd (CW) L,R,L hold.
 25-28 3/4 turn to the left in place with three steps R,L,R hold.
 29-32 (Face center) Yemenite L.

PART III - Face center

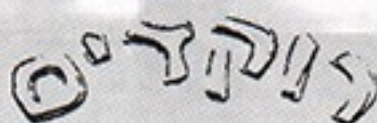
1-8 Repeat Part II counts 1-8 moving toward center.
 9-16 Two Yemenite steps R, L.
 17-20 Full turn to rt. with three steps R,L,R moving back toward the line of the circle, hold.
 21-24 Yem L bwd (back, back, fwd).
 25-32 Repeat counts 17-24 to end on the line of the circle facing center.

Instructions translated by **Honey Goldfein-Perry**



Dance of the Month

"We selected the dance, 'Shalom Lach, Eretz Nehederet,' because prior to his death, my father and mother had returned from the United States. They were there for more than two months visiting sessions at which my father had been a guest teacher fifteen, twenty and thirty years ago. During his stay abroad, I had taught and reviewed the dance, 'Shalom Lach, Eretz Nehederet' and when my father returned, I was able to play the song and dance this dance with him"



Dance of the Month

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ז	חן האהבה
ז	שמרי על עצמך
ז	רק את יודעת
מ	שבור את הקרח
מ	ילדה שלי
ז	נרקוד נשכח
ז	את ואני
ז	תגידי לי למה
מ	לו הייתי פיראט
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ז	אף פעם לא אומר
מ	שיר היונה
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מ	יש לי יומולדת
ז	מעיל אחד בגשם
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מ	שימני כחותם
מ	באנו להעיר ת'עיר
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מ	מי ברכב
ז	מחוגי הזמן
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Hoze Otach Muli	p
Lo Rak Biglal	p
Bein Orot Ha'Laiyla	c
Af Pa'am Lo Omer	p
Shir Ha'Yona	c
At Lo Mevina	p
Yesh Li Yom Huledet	c
Meil Echad Ba'Geshem	p
Kalaniyot	c
Cholem Alaeich	p
Ani Esh	p
Ad Elai	p
Simeni Ke'Chotam	c
Banu Le'Aeir Et Ha'Eir	c
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Ha'Chaiyal Sheli Chazar	c

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Be'Simla Aduma	c
Pa'am Ba'Chaiym	c
Zman Pzio't	p
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Shimri Al Azmech	p
Rak At Yoda'at	p
Shvor Et Ha'Kerach	c
Yalda Sheli	c
Nirkod Nishkach	p
At Va'Ani	p
Tagid Li Lama	p
Lu Ha'Yeti Pirat	c
Mechol Ha'Mitpachat	c
Eifo AT Ahuva	p
Debkat Ha'Shalom	c
Hora Chasidit	c
Eretz Zavot Chalav	c
Viva Espana	p

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