

רוקדים

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NIRKODA

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# רוקדים

מגזין לריקודי עם ומחול

## NIRKODA



Vol. 76, July 2008, 30 nis

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<http://www.rokdim.co.il>



Yaron Meishar

Dear reader!

This issue (Rokdim Nirkoda No. 76, July 2008) comes to you along with the opening of Karmiel #21 and provides an opportunity for us to explore what has transpired in the Israeli folk dance world since Karmiel #1. We applaud the success of the Karmiel Festivals and the efforts of those on every continent who work to connect disparate communities into the global family of folk dancers.

We are mindful of the concern expressed by many dancers about the impact of the ever increasing number of dances that are being introduced. The internet age and the pressure of more and more dance camps has made the production of new dances an end in itself rather than an outgrowth of inspired creative expression. Many dancers are frustrated that the universal language of folk dance has been fragmented into a multitude of dialects that cloud the enjoyment of having a familiar repertoire of dances.

In this issue: **Harry Coriel's** article, "Irgun Harokdim" (The Dancers Association), addresses the need to preserve the roots of Israeli folk dance and to seek ways to control the quantity and quality of new dances through an organized voice.

We will be exploring the question of how to build and maintain a healthy environment for Israeli folk dance in future issues of Rokdim-Nirkoda and we welcome your thoughts on this subject.

Also in this issue are articles that shed light on the power of Israeli folk dance to affect us on many levels:

- "From Dan to Eilat," by **Yitzchak Vaknin**, explores how an incorporation of Israeli dances and songs into tours of various historical sites in Israel can lead to an enhanced appreciation of the experience.
- "Lomir Ale Tantsn - Let's All Dance," by **Helen Winkler**, enlightens us about the revival of Yiddish Dance and the heritage of Eastern European Jews.
- "Spring in Ashdod," by **Maya Geva**, introduces us to the cultural, artistic and educational values behind the creation of Avi Levy's Avivim dance group.

Pleasant Reading!

Yaron Meishar editor

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By **Maya Geva**

Translation: **Itzhak and Diana Tzvi**

music and bands; it even has a recording studio and a performance hall. The building is called **Monart Centre**, and it is also the home of the **Avivim dance troupe** under the direction and management of **Avi Levy**.

**Avi Levy -  
The Dream Interpreter**

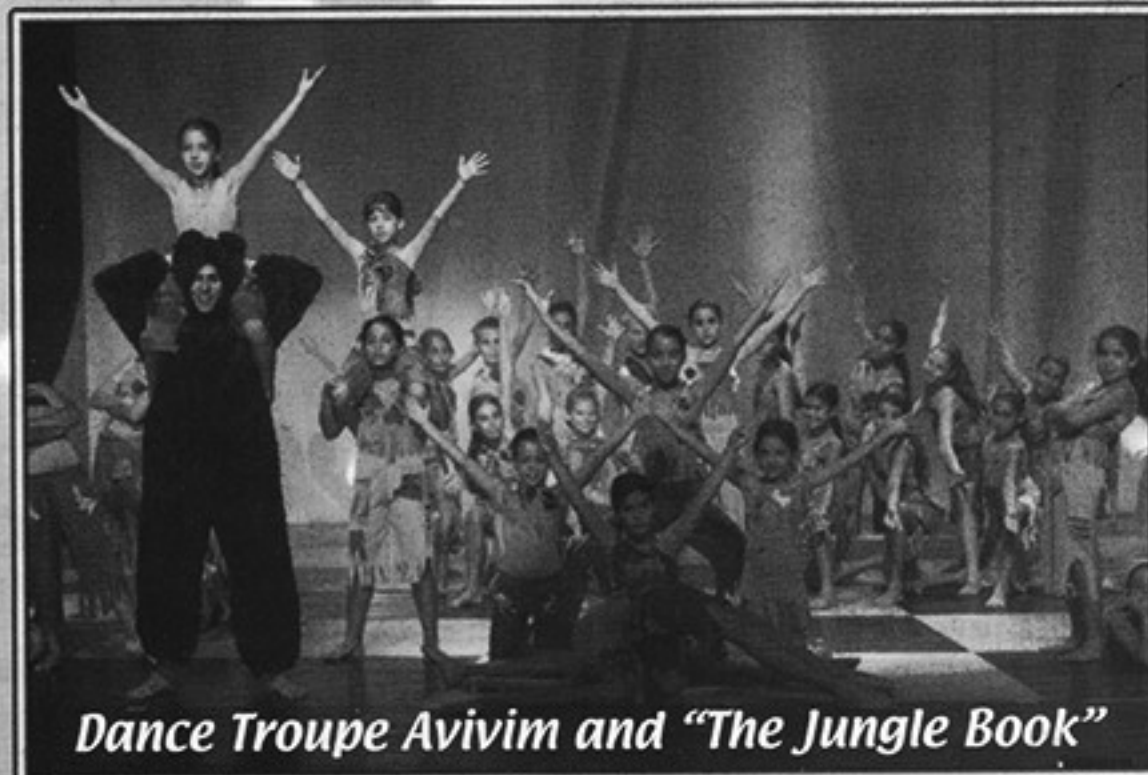
Big things start with tiny steps. Avi Levy's tiny steps began at the age of nine when he wanted to dance just like his sister who did Israeli folk dancing. His sister agreed to teach him and they went dancing together. Avi waited for the song to a dance that he knew to be played; once it had come on, he started to dance. The dance instructor asked that the little boy be removed from the dance floor. Avi left the dance

**T**oday, who doesn't want to dance? With all of the television shows like "So You Think You Can Dance" and "Dancing with the Stars," it seems as if kids no longer dream about being "super models" in Hollywood, but strive to be excellent dancers, dancers with all kinds of moves that cause other people to be envious of them. I went all the way to Ashdod to find people with dreams and average children who are very talented dancers.

The municipality of Ashdod put a lot of effort into constructing a beautiful and colorful building that is fully dedicated to art, dance,

# SPRINGS IN ASHDOD

In Ashdod grew-up one of the most impressive dance troupe - **Avivim** ❖ The troupe included 100 dancers and on stage they experience some of the most famous musicals: **Fiddler on the Roof, Hairspray, Chorus Line and Kazablan** ❖ And we still didn't mention their blessed activities to rehabilitate young trouble children ❖ **Well Done!**



*Dance Troupe Avivim and "The Jungle Book"*



The group that started its journey in 1999 included 100 dancers from the ages of 5-22.

Avivim has smaller dance groups around the city and, in total, they have 400 dancers. Jazz, modern, and of course folk are the styles of dance that are expected of the dance group

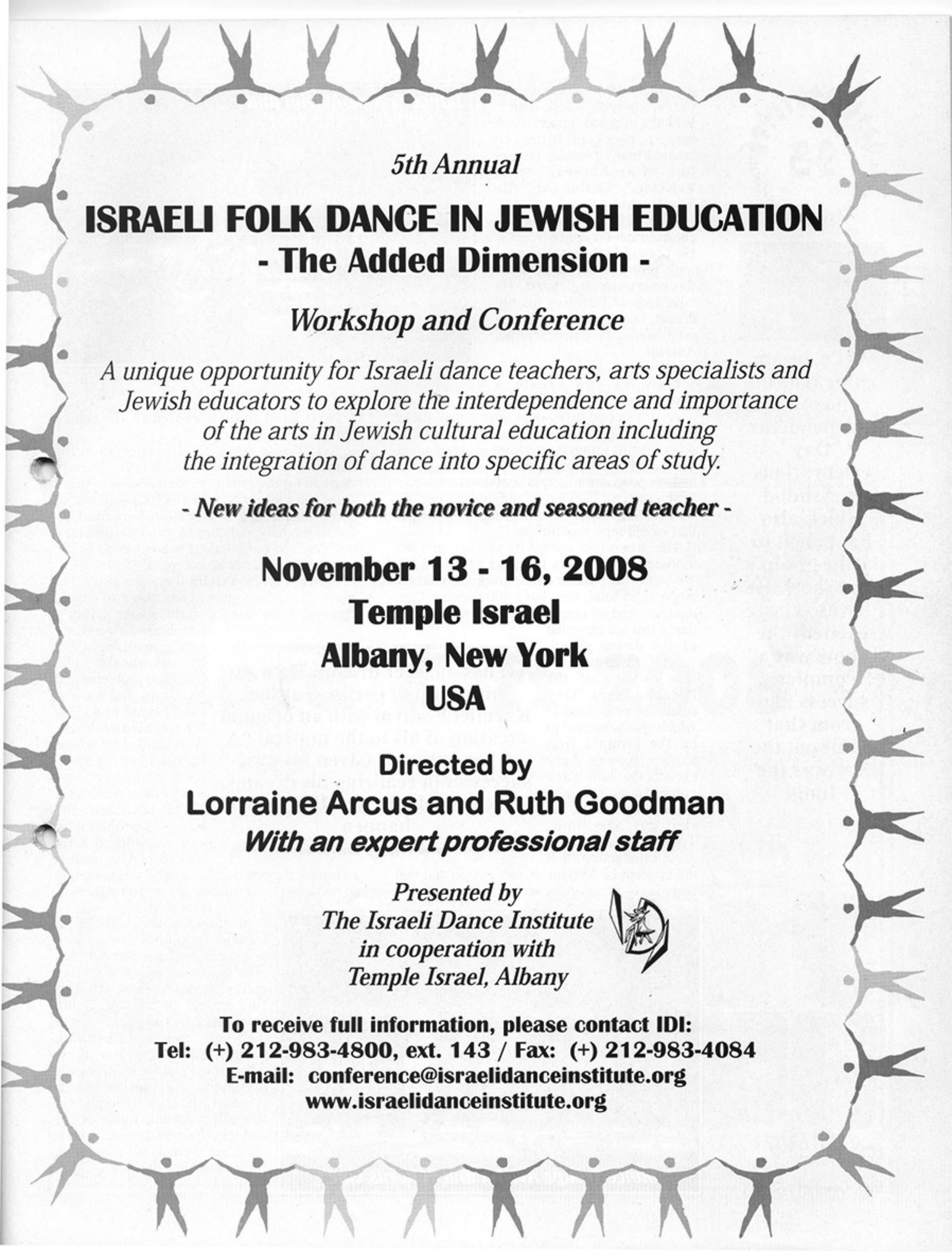
hall but didn't leave the dancing world.

This event propelled him to fully get into dancing. He got into folk dancing and knew the dances perfectly. Avi, who was born and raised in Ashdod, danced in the local dance groups (in Ashdod) also kept folk dancing as his main hobby.

One of his dreams was to meet the choreographer **Moshiko HaLevy**, whose dances he loved. This dream turned into a reality when the dancer and the choreographer met.

As Avi got older, his dreams





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**Avi's dream came true on one of the Independence Day celebrations in Ashdod which also happened to be the group's first show. He was very excited; the show was a complete success and from that point on, the sky was the limit**

got bigger. His next dream was to choreograph a folk dance. With the help and support of the dance teacher **Gadi Bitton**, he created many popular dances like "Casablanca," "Tof VeKinor," "Chabki Oti," "Ba Min Hashtika," etc.

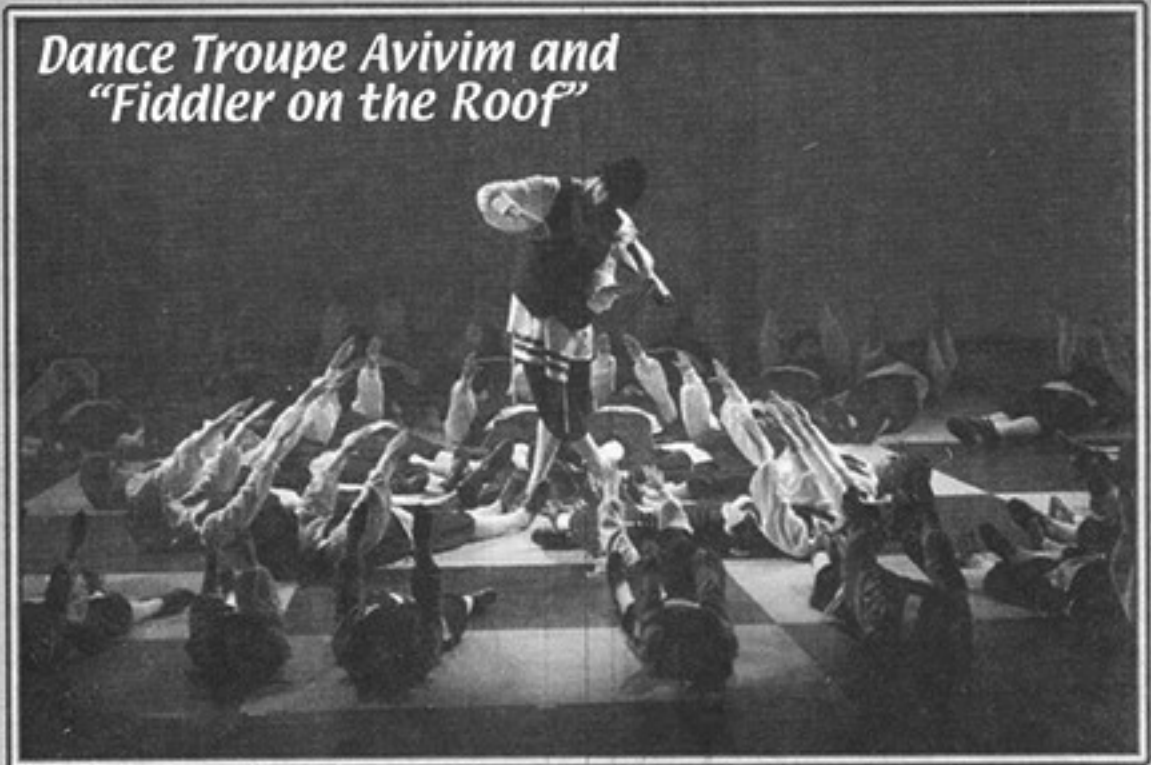
Another dream he had was to choreograph for dance troupes. His beautiful office is decorated with pictures of the **Avivim dance troupe** in concert. He talked about fulfilling his big dream, taking the plunge, and establishing the **dance troupe, Avivim.**

**How do you create a troupe?**

Avi: "I started to organize after school dance programs. These groups were mainly used as school dance groups to perform in ceremonies. We would take the individuals that would excel in these programs to continue at the youth clubs. When the city decided to support the groups, we transformed these dance groups into troupes that would represent the city."

The group that started its journey in 1999 included 100 dancers from the ages of 5-22. "Avivim" has smaller dance groups around the city and, in total, they have 400 dancers. Jazz, modern, and of course folk are the styles of dance that are expected of the dance group.

Avi's dream came true on one of the Independence Day celebrations in Ashdod which also happened to be the group's first show. He was very excited; the show was a complete success and from that point on, the sky was the limit. Today, he says with great satisfaction, that the concept of **Avivim** is recognized and that there is no compromise on talent.



**Dance Troupe Avivim and "Fiddler on the Roof"**

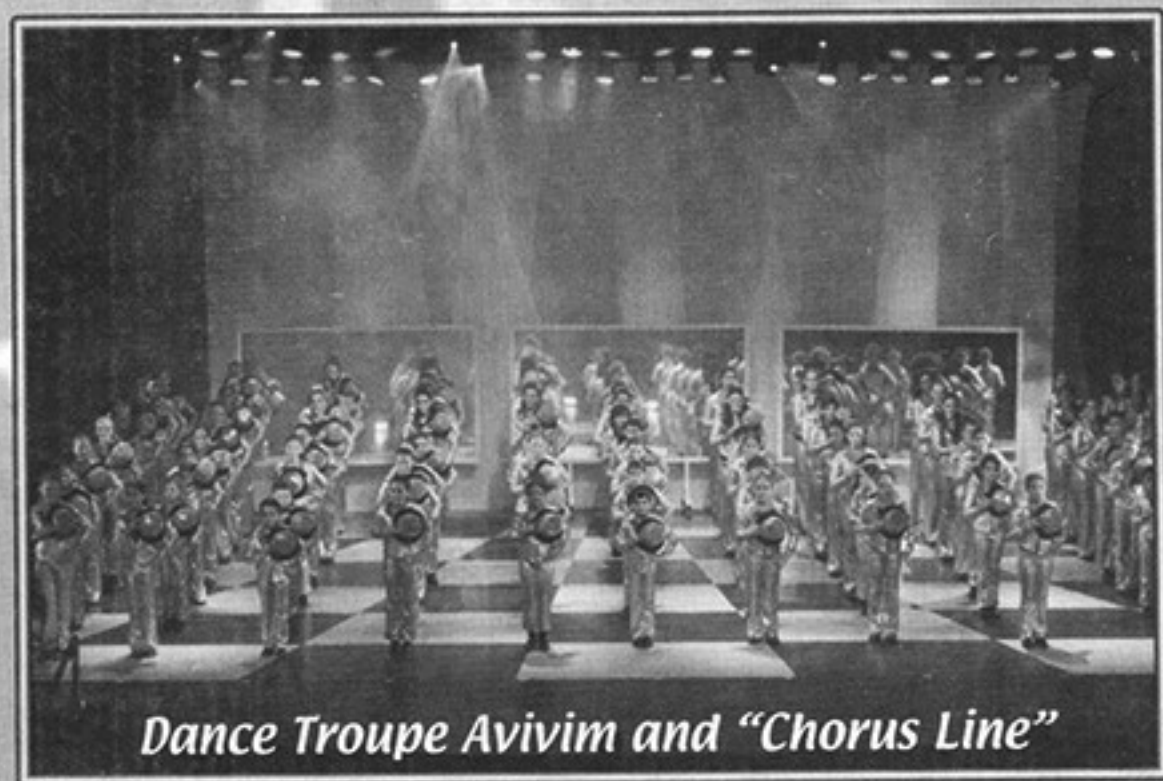
**Is it hard to be accepted to the dance troupe?**

Avi: "While every child is talented in his mother's eyes, not every child is sufficiently talented for the group. In young children (ages seven and eight), we look for talent, coordination, and a musical ear. If the children are fourteen and older, have not danced previously or they just don't have the talent needed to be in the group, they will not be accepted."

Either way, in **Avivim** there are also other cases of children who weren't born to dance. One example is of a child whose father's telephone conversation with a psychologist Avi had overheard. The child had problems and hardships and he was even placed in a class for troubled children. Avi decided to accept the child into the group for a trial period and saw it as a challenge: "In the talent area, the boy was problematic and we worked a lot with him. After his first rehearsal, the boy decided that he was not going to leave the group and he practiced really hard in order to succeed".

**Avi has another dream: He wants his group to perform at the Karmiel Festival with an original creation of his to the musical "A Chorus Line." Given his past successes in realizing his dreams, there is no doubt that this too will happen**

Since then, young children with learning disabilities in areas such as listening and concentrating and even those who are on drugs like methylphenidate (e.g., **Ritalin**) find a place in **Avivim**. Being surrounded by the group adds to their self-esteem and sometimes helps them to solve their educational and social problems even if they don't realize it. Avi: "A child who comes into a group that acts according to very clear and specific rules hopefully ends up using them in all aspects of life and not just dance".



**Dance Troupe Avivim and "Chorus Line"**



Are there people who fail? Is anyone expelled from the group?

Avi: "No one fails in Avivim. They are survivors. After the auditions, the children start a trial month in the group. Whoever succeeds in the areas of friendship, behavior, movement and who understand the concept of rehearsals will stay. Rehearsals take place twice a week and increase towards the date of a big show".

### Voices from the Heavens

The Avivim troupe is not just a dance group but is also used as a teaching tool for the children. It turns out that Avi Levy is very strict; it is not sufficient for him that his dancers will perform

wonderfully. He also

**Mor Egozi, a dancer in Avivim, 15 years old, had been injured in a car accident and was unconscious for a period of eight months. The first thing that she said once she woke up was how much she wanted to continue dancing**

wants them to excel in school. For that reason, he holds on to a copy of each dancer's report card. A child who dances in his group needs to know how to arrange his schedule so that he has time for both dancing and schoolwork. The parents also use the group as a reward and the children have to earn it.

Another way of looking at the group is through the story of **Mor Egozi**, a dancer in Avivim who is 15 years old and who had been injured in a car accident and was unconscious for a period of eight months. The first thing that she said once she woke up was how much she wanted to continue dancing. The group worked on a combined show called, "Voices from the Heavens," that was



*Mor Egozi - didn't stop to dance even she injured in a car accident and was unconscious for priod of 8 months*



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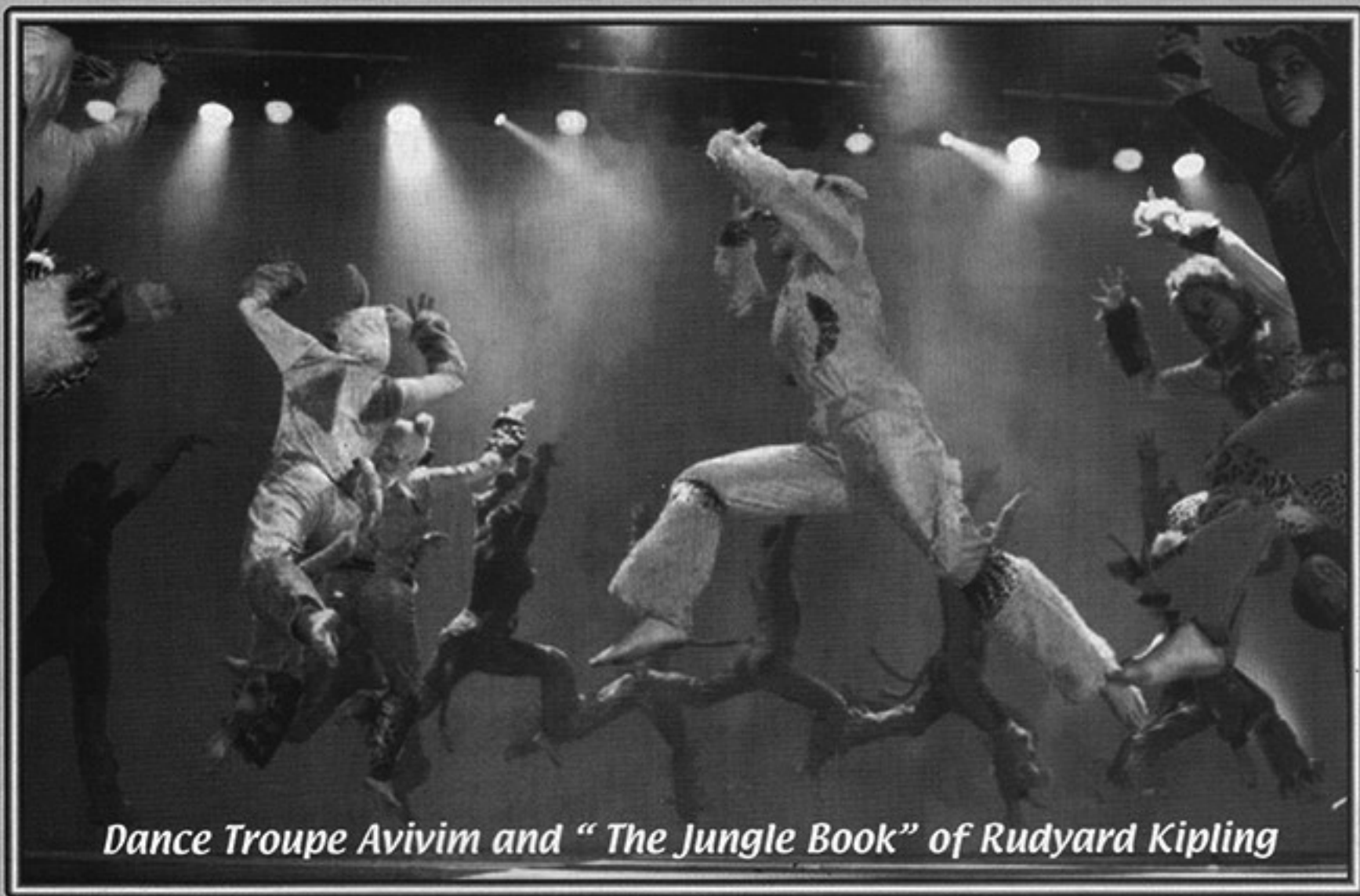
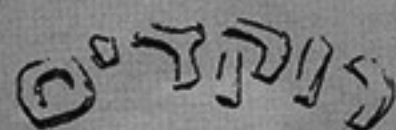
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The Avivim dancers don't have a great technique (i.e., the type of technique obtained from a life long study of classical ballet), but with all their hard work and their successful choreography, on the stage, they look like real professionals



*Dance Troupe Avivim and "The Jungle Book" of Rudyard Kipling*

dedicated to the captured and missing soldiers as well as to Mor's accident. The dancers also created a huge poster about the captured and missing soldiers and on the reverse side of the poster were Get Well Wishes for Mor. Mor has continued to be part of the group even though she is not a full-time dancer.

Avi: "We took Mor's situation and through it we tried to send a message to all of the teenagers and to take as many lessons from it as we could".

Additionally, there were schools that asked to see the show, "Voices from the Heavens" and Mor talks about her experience with the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

### Everyone is Equal

I peeked in at the dancers' warm-up and rehearsals. Most of the children had different colored Avivim shirts, and those without the shirts are newcomers, i.e., those who are still in their "trial" month. The shirts differentiate the age groups- green for the younger child, then white and orange. Each age group has its own color. The meaning behind these "uniforms," according to Avi, is so that everyone is equal and as one.

Avi: "In the beginning, children from all kinds of places came, some who were very well off and others not so well-to-do. The kids were

**It turns out that no one ever really leaves Avivim; the group is like one big family, they are very close. They don't want to leave the Avivim dancing world and especially Avi Levy, who everyone loves**

jealous of each other and parents came to me complaining that they can't deal with their children asking for things that they can't afford to buy. So I decided that the best solution would be the shirts".

I see a beautiful girl named Lee, a girl with diabetes; Avi is personally responsible

to make sure that there is a bottle of Coca Cola at rehearsals. Children with diabetes are in need of physical activity and that is why she is here. She tells me shyly that she has already been in the group for two years and really enjoys herself. And... she too has a dream. She wants to study at the **Thelma Yellin High School of the Arts** when she is older and that she wants to become a professional dancer. She doesn't get nervous when she is on stage, and for her, **Avivim** is just fun with friends and dancing. The door opens and she hears that the warm-ups are starting and she asks me if she could leave to join in the warm-ups, and I think to myself, "with this much ambition, she will definitely become a dance teacher."

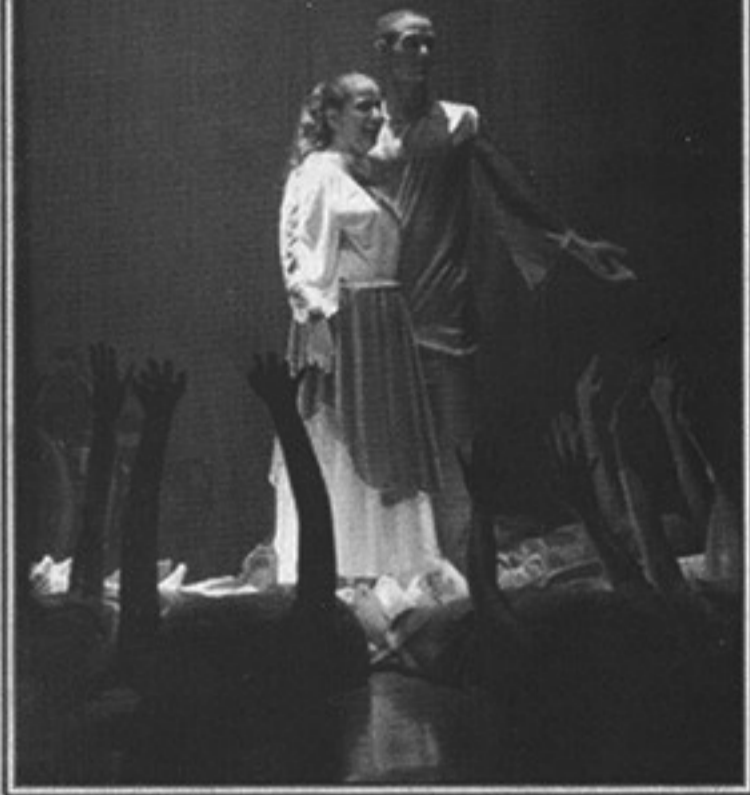
**Sharon**, a soldier in uniform, continually walks around the area. What do your army officers think?

Sharon: "They are very proud to know that they have a soldier who dances. They also release me to go with the group on trips out of the country".

It turns out that no one ever really leaves **Avivim**; the group is like one big family, they are very close. They don't want to leave the **Avivim** dancing world and especially Avi Levy, who everyone loves. The dance teachers are his



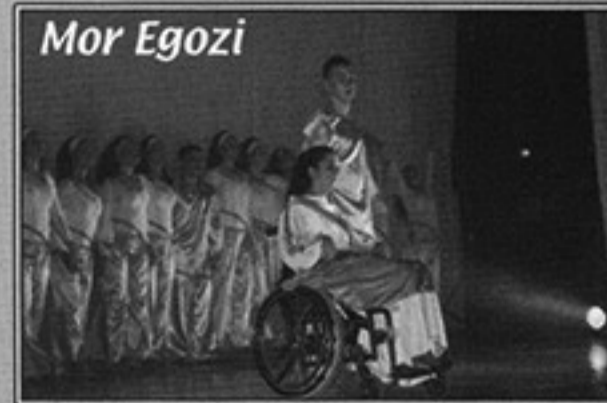
**Mor Egozi - didn't stop to dance even she injured in a car accident and was unconscious for priod of 8 months**



dancers, use his teaching techniques and know exactly what he expects of them. The young dancers also know what is expected of them and learn everything about the shows that they present - who was in it in at the beginning, who

wrote it, where it was presented and all of the theories behind it. And on stage, they experience all of the big musicals: "Fiddler on the Roof," "Kazablan," "Hairspray" and more. For each musical, Avi choreographed special dances. These musicals have brought the group to perform in other countries and in Israel - for example - the Karmiel Festival, where the Avivim dancers joined other dancers and put on a show that included 180 dancers in which they danced an Irish dance. At the end of the show, Avi heard someone from the audience say congratulations to the Irish group that managed to arrive from Ireland despite the security situation. To Avi, that was the greatest compliment that he could have received; his dancers were so good that people thought that they were actually an authentic Irish group.

The Avivim dancers don't have a great technique (i.e., the type of technique obtained from a life long study of classical ballet), but with all their hard work and their successful choreography, on the stage, they look like real professionals. Maybe that is the reason why Avi has another dream: He wants his group to perform at the Karmiel Festival with an original creation of his to the musical "A Chorus Line." Given his past successes in realizing his dreams, there is no doubt that this too will happen.



Mor Egozi

**The young dancers also know what is expected of them and learn everything about the shows that they present**

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# פסטיבל כרמיאל 21 Festival Karmiel

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תמונת פסטיבל כרמיאל 2008  
Pictures that will be in Festival Karmiel 2008

פסטיבל כרמיאל

Vol. 76 July 2008



# All About IRGUN HAROKDIM (THE DANCERS ASSOCIATION)

By **Harry Coriel**

Translation: Itzhak and Diana Tzvi



Adi Chabad, the president of Irgun Harokdim: "Folk dancing has become one of the most important symbols of the new Israeli culture. This hobby took hold in all segments of the population and connected everyone together"

"Irgun Harokdim? Oh, you are from Yaron Meishar's website?"

- No, we are not from Yaron Meishar's website.  
- www.Rokdim.co.il

"Irgun Harokdim? Do you teach dance?"

- No, we don't teach dance.

"Irgun Harokdim? Are you those who made problems at the Tel Aviv University?"

- Some founders of the organization were part of the strike against the Tel-Aviv University.

"Irgun Harokdim? What are you selling?"

- Only ideas.  
"Irgun Harokdim? Great, go get them!"

- Get whom? We support and are not against them.  
"Irgun Harokdim? What is it good for?"

- That is exactly what I was planning on explaining in this article.

\*\*\*

This is just a small portion of all the probing questions that I was asked in my many meetings with dancers from whom I had requested support for **Irgun Harokdim** (The Dancers Association).

Truth be told: we are talking about a strange group. This is a group of volunteer dancers who got together to form an organization and who took it upon themselves to work out problems that are related to Israeli folk dancing from the dancer's perspective.

We have come a long way since the idea for the organization first arose. We became an organization and visited the dance halls and events where we recruited sponsors and active members; we took an active part in the planning of the **Karmiel Festival**; we created committees to promote the mission of the organization; we initiated an internet website that would serve the dancing public and we took action in other

organizational areas.

## How exactly did everything actually get started?

In the first few years, folk dancing was only a hobby if not an ideology. However, in the last decade it changed from a culture to an actual business. This change also had a few side effects

including the following: a flood of new dances, an increase in the number of new dance teachers and new classes, a rise in the prices for the dance sessions (greater than what you would pay to buy a stock), and, as a result of this, folk

dancing changed from a pastime to a culture only for those people who are addicted to it.

Adi Chabad, the president of **Irgun Harokdim** had the following to say: "Folk dancing has become one of the most important symbols of the new Israeli culture. This hobby took hold in all segments of the population and connected everyone together. For years, many of the folk dancers were walking around with a feeling in the pit of their stomach that the folk dances were losing their uniqueness as a result of the many new dances, and unfortunately, there is no prophet at the gate to lead the way".

Adi continues: "If at one time we had been anxious about each new dance that was created and that then turned into the 'hot topic of the day' at the dance sessions, how much more so today do we look with real fear at each new dance that makes its way into the repertoire together with the hundreds of others that are produced each year. The concern of **Irgun Harokdim** about this and other areas turned into a question of when it is going to happen, for it was clear that this trend was inevitable...".

Although we didn't like all of the aspects, the straw that broke the camel's back was the rise in the price of admission at Tel-Aviv University in January 2007. On their own, dancers started to protest at the gates of the University and with advertisements in the media. As a result of these actions, there were negotiations that resulted in



the University agreeing to a small compromise in price alone. On May 2, 2007, a meeting was held where the leaders of the protesters decided to turn down the University's offer. At the meeting, it was also decided to create and register Irgun Harokdim as a nonprofit organization and where, for the first time, the goals of the organization were discussed and it could finally explain its purpose.

In the Israeli folk dance culture (as opposed to folk dance elsewhere), there are a few topics about which everyone has his own viewpoint as well as an overlap in many areas. The main players are: the choreographers, the dance leaders, the dance teachers and the dancers. The first three created an association to act on their behalf and it may also be their foremost professional organization; the dancers were excluded and there was no forum for them to express their own viewpoint. Therefore, **Irgun Harokdim** listed the following goals:

- To represent Israeli folk dancers in Israel and

fraternity and to introduce Israeli folk dancing into the various educational frameworks.

- To promote participation in Israeli folk dance clubs as a popular cultural activity and at an affordable price for all dancers, possibly by obtaining allocations from the national budget for these clubs or by consumer action in order to keep group and event fees reasonable, or by any other methods.

- To establish the **Dancers Association** (Irgun Harokdim) as a leading consumer entity to obtain discounts and benefits for the Israeli folk dancers.

- To cement the bond between Israeli folk dancers in Israel and in the Diaspora and to deal with the wider issues of Israeli Folk Dancing around the world.

❁

**Irgun Harokdim is convinced that with the cooperation of the dancers, the choreographers and the dance teachers will derive more enjoyment from the hobby of folk dancing and will ensure that the culture of Israeli folk dance will blossom and will be passed on to future generations**

❁

In the coming year, **Irgun Harokdim** plans on reaching the goals of preserving the tradition of folk dancing, working together with the mayor of Karmiel and the festival organization to improve the dancing conditions at the festival,

conducting a dialogue with the professional organization and an agreement regarding working together, continuing to recruit supporters and activists from within the dancers themselves, and creating a website that belongs to the organization and will provide services to the dancers and more.

Because the organization's programs are run by volunteers, I am also taking this opportunity to ask all dancers to contact us and volunteer as activists in the organization or through the organization's website: <http://www.harokdim.org/> or by sending e-mail to: [info@harokdim.org](mailto:info@harokdim.org)

**Chanan Rayman**, who has been a dancer for more than 40 years says: "The dancers have the will and the ability to improve; we, **Irgun Harokdim**, have the power (with the dancers help) to make it

happen".

**Irgun Harokdim** is convinced that with the cooperation of the dancers, the choreographers and the dance teachers will derive more enjoyment from the hobby of folk dancing and will ensure that the culture of Israeli folk dance will blossom and will be passed on to future generations.



*The top line from right to left: Chana Abramovitz, Irit Stern, Atara Tzur, Vered Minshari. In the middle line: Danny Gilor, Harry Coriel, Eitan Schmidt. Sitting: Chanan Raymon, Tzuri Asis, Shmuel Kremer, Adi Chabad, Yair Shachar, Gad Amit. missing: Uzi Sadeh*

abroad to various institutions and organizations, as needed, and to express the opinions about dance issues from the point of view of the dancers.

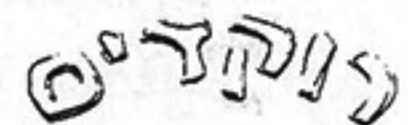
- To preserve the heritage and authenticity of Israeli folk dancing and to regulate the quality and quantity of new dances.

- To improve the dance environment and comfort level of the dancers at dance events; including air conditioning, volume levels of the music, insurance for the dancers, festivals, etc.

- To encourage young dancers to join the dance



**The straw that broke the camel's back was the rise in the price of admission at Tel-Aviv University in January 2007. On their own, dancers started to protest at the gates of the University and with advertisements in the media. As a result of these actions, there were negotiations that resulted in the University agreeing to a small compromise in price alone**





by **Helen Winkler**

**O**n December 9, 2007, an historic gathering took place in New York City. Entitled, "The Yiddish Dance Research Symposium, Defining Yiddish Dance: Secular, Sacred, Borrowed and Transformed." This first ever symposium

including dance. Israeli folk dancing filled the void and became the predominant folk dance form of today's world Jewish community.

Over the past three to four decades, klezmer music has enjoyed a comeback and there is an increasing interest in dancing when the music is played. Among scholars there is a desire to document the dances. However, most people no longer know the dances that go with klezmer dance tunes and there are few people alive today who even have distant memories of these dances. The New York symposium aimed to spearhead



# LOMMIR ALE TANTS'N

Reviving the Lost Art of Yiddish Dance



Helen Winkler

On December 9, 2007, an historic gathering took place in New York City. Entitled, "The Yiddish Dance Research Symposium." This first ever symposium brought together dancers, dance scholars, folklorists, musicians and ethnomusicologists

brought together dancers, dance scholars, folklorists, musicians and ethnomusicologists to review and look to the future of a genre called **Yiddish Dance**. The event was co-sponsored by the **Center for Traditional Music and Dance** and the **New York University Department of Performance Studies**.

The most frequent questions practitioners of Yiddish Dance are asked are, "What is Yiddish dance? Don't you mean Israeli folk dancing?". Briefly, Yiddish Dance is a term coined to describe the folk dances traditionally done by East European Jews to the accompaniment of klezmer music.

According to ethnomusicologist **Zev Feldman**, who presented at the symposium, the bulk of these dances flourished within Ashkenazic Jewish society from the 19th century until their disappearance by the time of WWII (1945).

The reasons for their virtual disappearance were many. The decline began with the modernization of Jews residing in Europe who were beginning to adopt popular dances of the day. The Shoah later annihilated most of those who knew the dances and destroyed the shtetls in which the dances were originally done. Jews who managed to emigrate from Europe became assimilated and often stopped participating in traditional Yiddish dance. Within Israel, cultural policies led to the suppression of Yiddish culture,

a movement to uncover new sources and bring more information about Yiddish dance into focus.

In today's language, Yiddish Dance, like folk dances in most cultures, could be described as a **dance fusion**. There were numerous influences, drawn from both internal and external cultural sources, which came together to create the various Yiddish dance genres. Many of the dances were improvised; however, the improvisation was within a particular stylistic constraint and was performed within the structures of each particular dance. The geographical source of the dances included Jewish communities in a region now bounded by today's borders of Ukraine, Poland, Belarus, Lithuania, Romania and Hungary.

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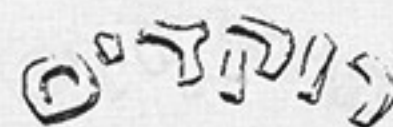
**Briefly, Yiddish Dance is a term coined to describe the folk dances traditionally done by East European Jews to the accompaniment of klezmer music**

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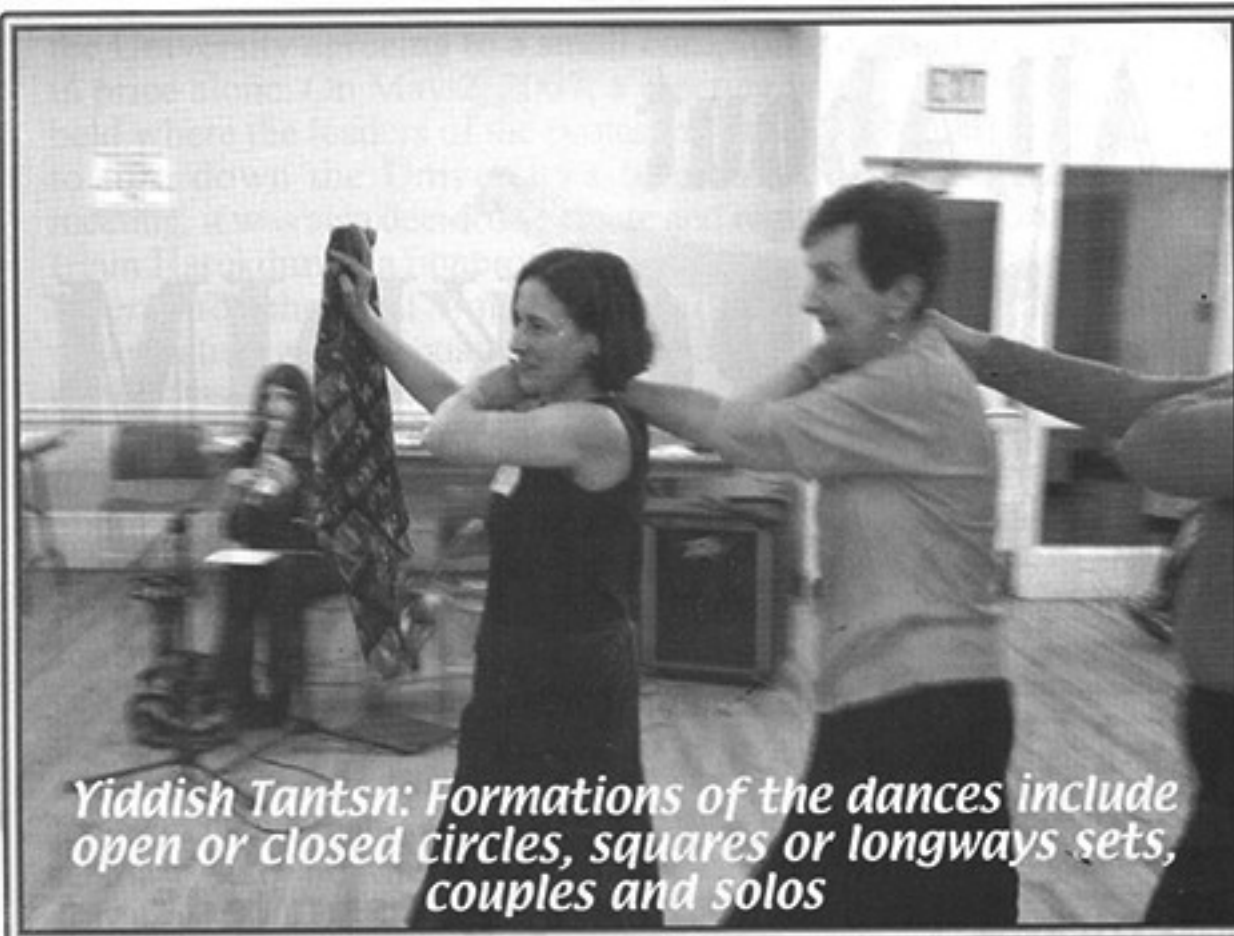
Although secular in nature, these dances were influenced by religious factors, most importantly by Chasidism. The dances were performed most often at weddings but were also a part of other community celebrations.

In addition, dances could be done in people's homes, accompanied by singing, and there were even some dance classes.

From a dancer's point of view, the improvisational nature of Yiddish dance is a feature that clearly sets it apart from Israeli folk dance. The inspiration and style of Yiddish Dance emanates from several different areas.







*Yiddish Tantsn: Formations of the dances include open or closed circles, squares or longways sets, couples and solos*

the Jewish community and by the community at large such as **Alexandrovsky**, **Csardas**, **Kolomeyke** and the list goes on. At this time, we don't really know if these dances as performed within the Jewish community were exactly the same as the versions done by the non-

**Freylekh** -

open or closed circles  
individuals or couples

**Sher** -

square formation  
four couple

**Broiges Tanz** -

pantomime dance  
two people

**Bulgar** -

circle dance

**Zhok** -

similar to the Israeli hora  
circle dance

**Alexandrovsky** -

based on a slow Romanian hora

**Csardas** -

danced by Jews and non-Jews

**Kolomeyke** -

danced by Jews and non-Jews

**YIDDISH  
TANTSN**



*The participants of "The Yiddish Dance Research symposium", December, 2007*

J e w s .  
There may be variants that differ.

At the symposium, an association of interested individuals called the "**Yiddish Dance Action Network**" was formed. This group strives to locate new information about Yiddish dance. These sources of information might include memories of the dances from elderly

women.

The core Yiddish dance is called the **Freylekh** which is done in an open or closed circle, with individuals or couples often moving into the centre of the circle to show off their steps and movements. The best known of the set dances is the **Sher**, done in a square formation by four couples.

Another popular dance was the **Broiges Tanz**, done by two people. It was a dance pantomime of a quarrel followed by reconciliation and dancing on into a freylekh. The **Bulgar** was usually a circle dance with steps that are very similar to the Israeli Hora. There was also a **Zhok** or slow hora, which is based on a slow Romanian circle dance and is completely different from the Israeli hora.

In addition, there were a number of so-called "**co-territorial dances**" which were done within

informants, old home movies of family simchas where the dances might have been done, written memoirs which include a discussion of dancing and any other sources that can be found.

People who have information to share or who wish to take part in this effort are invited to contact:

**Helen Winkler**

(E-mail: [winklerh@hotmail.com](mailto:winklerh@hotmail.com)) or Peter

**I. Rushefsky**, Executive Director, Center for Traditional Music and Dance, 32 Broadway, Suite 1314, New York, NY 10004;

E-mail: [prushefsky@ctmd.org](mailto:prushefsky@ctmd.org) or Tel: 212-571-1555 ext. 36; Fax: 212-571-9052.

Additional information about Yiddish dance can be found at: [www.yiddishdance.com](http://www.yiddishdance.com)



*Yiddish Tantsn:  
Besides  
solos dances -  
couple dances*

**THANKS**

I wish to thank **Pete Rushefsky**, **Erik Bendix** and **Dina Roginsky** for assisting with the production of this article.  
**Helen Winkler**





*Yiddish Tantsn: The handkerchief - common item*

**Within Israel, cultural policies led to the suppression of Yiddish culture, including dance. Israeli folk dancing filled the void and became the predominant folk dance form of today's world Jewish community**



picture: Michel Borzykowski

According to presenter LeeEllen Friedland, at the core of Yiddish dance there is an intimate dialogue between the dancers and the music, which traditionally was played live, rather than using recorded music. In addition there is an ongoing interplay between and among those who are dancing with each other. Historically, the movement style was an amalgam of numerous factors including Jewish gestures that originated in everyday life, *Yikhes* (social standing of the dancer), the age of the dancer and also the dance styles of the surrounding non-Jewish community.

Despite all these influences and constraints, the dances still left room for individual self

**In contrast to Israeli dance, where each melody has its own set choreographed dance, Yiddish dance is more generic. Individual dance genres can be performed to different melodies or various dances can be performed to one melody**

expression. These features led to a very vibrant and living dance style, which was dynamic and fresh each time that the dances were done.

In contrast to Israeli dance, where each melody has its own set choreographed dance, Yiddish dance is more generic. Individual dance genres can be performed to different melodies or various dances can be performed to one melody. There were no choreographers setting the steps in the

shtetls. However, there were sometimes dance leaders who taught and called the steps for some of the non-improvised dances. In any dance situation, it was possible for a dance to fluidly morph into a different formation and back again. Improvisations could even interrupt a more structured dance,

before possibly reverting to the original, or moving on to yet another dance. This fluidity is a predominant characteristic of Yiddish dancing.

Formations of the dances include open or closed circles, squares or longways sets, couples and solos. Depending on the level of religious observance within the community, the dances were either done separately by men and women or in mixed groups. In the latter situation, handkerchiefs were often used to prevent touching between men and



*Yiddish Tantsn: there is an intimate dialogue between the dancers and the music. On the left: Helen Winkler*



## By Yitzchak Vaknin

Translation: Itzhak and Diana Tzvi

As the final project for the **Ulpan LeMadrichim LeRikudei Am** (a course to become a folk dance teacher) in Jerusalem, I suggested a plan to combine tours around Israel with the teaching of Israeli folk dance and song.

### Why dance?

✓ Through Israeli folk dance instruction, we hope to present a certain type of culture, an

# TODAY FROM DAN TO EILAT

**Yitzchak Vaknin, an experienced tour guide, finished the course for folk dance instructors in Jerusalem last year ■ His final project combined songs and folk dances for use on guided tours ■ This article is part of that final project**

understanding of others and the need to respect someone who is different.

✓ By having a good time, dance draws individuals together both physically and emotionally. This closeness helps them to bond both as individuals and collectively as a group while strengthening their collective identities as Israelis.

✓ Through folk dancing, we can develop the dancer's talents and their ability to distinguish among all types of dances.

### Why song?

✓ On guided tours, the melody and the words of the songs help to transmit messages that connect and unite the participants.

✓ Sometimes a song sends a stronger message than any lecture or speech that is given throughout the tour.

From all of the above, we can conclude that the nation's songs and dances can assist a tour guide in doing a better job and providing him with the opportunity to more closely connect the tourists to Israeli culture.

In Jerusalem, I signed up for a course to

become a folk dance teacher so that I would be able to expand my own knowledge of Israeli folk dance. With the generous help of three instructors, **Bracha Dudai, Izraela Kahana, and Yael**, I learned many dances that belong to the classic repertoire as well as the history and stories behind these dances. Some of the dances that we were taught cannot be learned today in any other dance classes that are held either in Israel or anywhere else in the world.

During this course, I realized that folk dance and song provide me with great potential related to my work as a tour guide. The course opened a new window for me and expanded my outlook on Israeli history, culture, and folklore. I understood that there was an opportunity to expand my role as a tour guide and to include

### Al Giv'ot Sheikh Abreik

(On the Hills of Sheikh Abreik)

Lyrics: Alexander Penn  
Music: Mordechi Zeira

Adama, admati  
R'chuma at moti.  
Ruach rav charvonayich hirti'ach  
Arashtich li b'dam  
She'adam v'nadam  
Al giv'ot Sheikh Abreik v'Chartiya.  
Ah ... Chartiya!

Hamachol bagalim  
Y'agel igulim.  
Ori, shemesh, la'ad b'Chartiya.  
B'yomi v'leili  
Li yeibod amali.  
Al giv'ot Sheikh Abreik v'Chartiya.  
Ah ... Chartiya!

Kan tzamrot hazeitim  
M'zamrot: Zeh beiti.  
Even even tilchash: Hikartihu.  
Hera, hora sheli,  
Y'vulai mavshilim  
Al giv'ot Sheikh Abreik v'Chartiya.  
Ah ... Chartiya!

Bishvu'a lobata  
At shvuya li ata:  
Zeh halev et nidro lo yarti'a.  
Ki tzivani cheirut  
Ha'adam hapashut.  
Al giv'ot Sheikh Abreik v'Chartiya.  
Ah ... Chartiya!

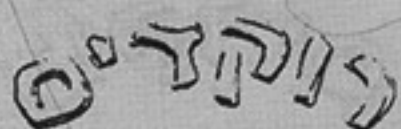
Land, my land  
Beloved unto my death!  
A great wind made your hot weather boil.  
I have betrothed you to me with blood  
That turned red and became still  
On the hills of Sheikh Abreik and Chartiya.  
Ah ... Chartiya!

The dance circles round in waves.  
Sun, shine forever in Chartiya.  
Day and night, my labor echoes back to me  
On the hills of Sheikh Abreik and Chartiya.  
Ah ... Chartiya!

Here the tops of the olive trees  
Sing: "This is my home!"  
Every stone will whisper it knows me.  
To the mountain, my bora  
My crops are ripening  
On the hills of Sheikh Abreik and Chartiya.  
Ah ... Chartiya!

With a burning oath  
You are now my captive.  
This heart will never recant its vow.  
For it has commanded to me  
The freedom of the common man  
On the hills of Sheikh Abreik and Chartiya.  
Ah ... Chartiya!

Song transliteration  
and translation:  
**Malka Tischler**



**Guided tour to Massada with folk dance teacher and choreographer Yaron Carmel**



a different touch to the tour. With dance, I could include many more experiences to enrich the tour in the areas of literature, culture, and history.

**In conclusion:** I learned a lot and was enriched by the Ulpan. The tools that I was given can be used to enhance my role and to provide joy to tourists. Tours around the country combined with Israeli folk dancing and song give a clearer picture of Israelis and the



uniqueness of Israeli culture.

Practically speaking, when you design a trip for tourists, historical events associated with specific sites in Israel could be enhanced through Israeli song and folk dance. To make this topic clearer, here are two examples:

## Trip to the north

One of the places that we visit is **Sheikh Abreik hill**, near present-day Kiryat Tivon, and the security monument. Here, I will combine

the historical story about **Alexander Zaid** (1886 - 1938) who was active in **Hashomer**, (The Watchman), the Yishuv's first armed organization and who settled with his family on Sheikh Abreik hill and was murdered during the terrible events of 1938. The song, "Al Giv'ot Sheikh Abreik" is dedicated to him and the dance ("Adama Admati") will also be taught at this time.

We will pause for a while near the bronze statue of Alexander Zaid on horseback and looking out at the Jezreel Valley, next to Beit

**She'arim National Park** near the town of Kiryat Tivon. The statue was sculpted by **David Polus**. The poem was written after Alexander Zaid was murdered and the Chartiya village was then destroyed; the only thing that remained was the grave of the Sheikh.

In 1959, choreographer **Se'adia Amishai** was impressed with the music (and especially by the words in the third stanza: "yevulai mavshilim" - the harvest was ready) and choreographed a dance that has a few movement elements of harvesting. Folk dances usually express happiness and this dance too conveys joy. There

is an interesting dichotomy worth noting. Our country is full of contradictions from which Israeli culture has arisen. The songs and dances are both parts of it.

The poet **Alexander Penn**, a contemporary of Alexander Zaid, wrote two poems in Zaid's memory; **Mordechi Zeira**

composed the music for both of them. The more famous of the two was "Al Giv'ot Sheikh Abreik" also known as "Adama, Admati". The less known one is "Shir Shel Zaid" sung by **Ofira Gluska**. The author **Eliezer Smoli**

**We can conclude that the nation's songs and dances can assist a tour guide in doing a better job and providing him with the opportunity to more closely connect the tourists to Israeli culture**



One of the most fascinating is the story of the song "Ohr Virushalayim," written and composed in 1972 by Yosef Sarig who was killed in the Yom Kippur War (1973)

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**Ohr Virushalayim**  
(Light and Jerusalem)  
Lyrics and music: Yosef Sarig

Hasheket shev tzoze'ach kan mishmei ha'erev  
K'v'yat d'ya me'al ha'y'bomet  
V'shemesh aduma nosheket, libat cheres  
El kapeset, ba'angafim v'hachomet

Ra'iti ir ofelet ohr  
V'hi ohr bishlal tze'ei bakeshet  
V'hi nogenet hi k'nevel ha'asur  
Ra'iti ir ofelet ohr

Hinei zachei batzel mitzein g'ot ha'orev  
Karev haeter k'olev el bashchomat  
Umot panov krizut, r'ov eini ha'ohr kein,  
E'feta nil'k'chu etai k'nil'omot

Ra'iti ir ofelet ohr...

Hidmatat ashmoret achruva nosheket  
Uv'k'fifat sh'chakim r'sis achruva machvir  
Ach shachar, kvar kipat zahav sheks odevet  
L'mage'v bacham, barach shel ohr tza'ir

Ra'iti ir ofelet ohr...

Silence again descends from the evening sky  
Like a bird of prey hovering over the depths  
And a red sun touches, like the flash of a sword,  
the mountain tops, the towers and the walls

I saw a city wrapped in light  
The city rises up in all the colors of the rainbow  
And plays within me like a ten-stringed lute  
I saw a city wrapped in light

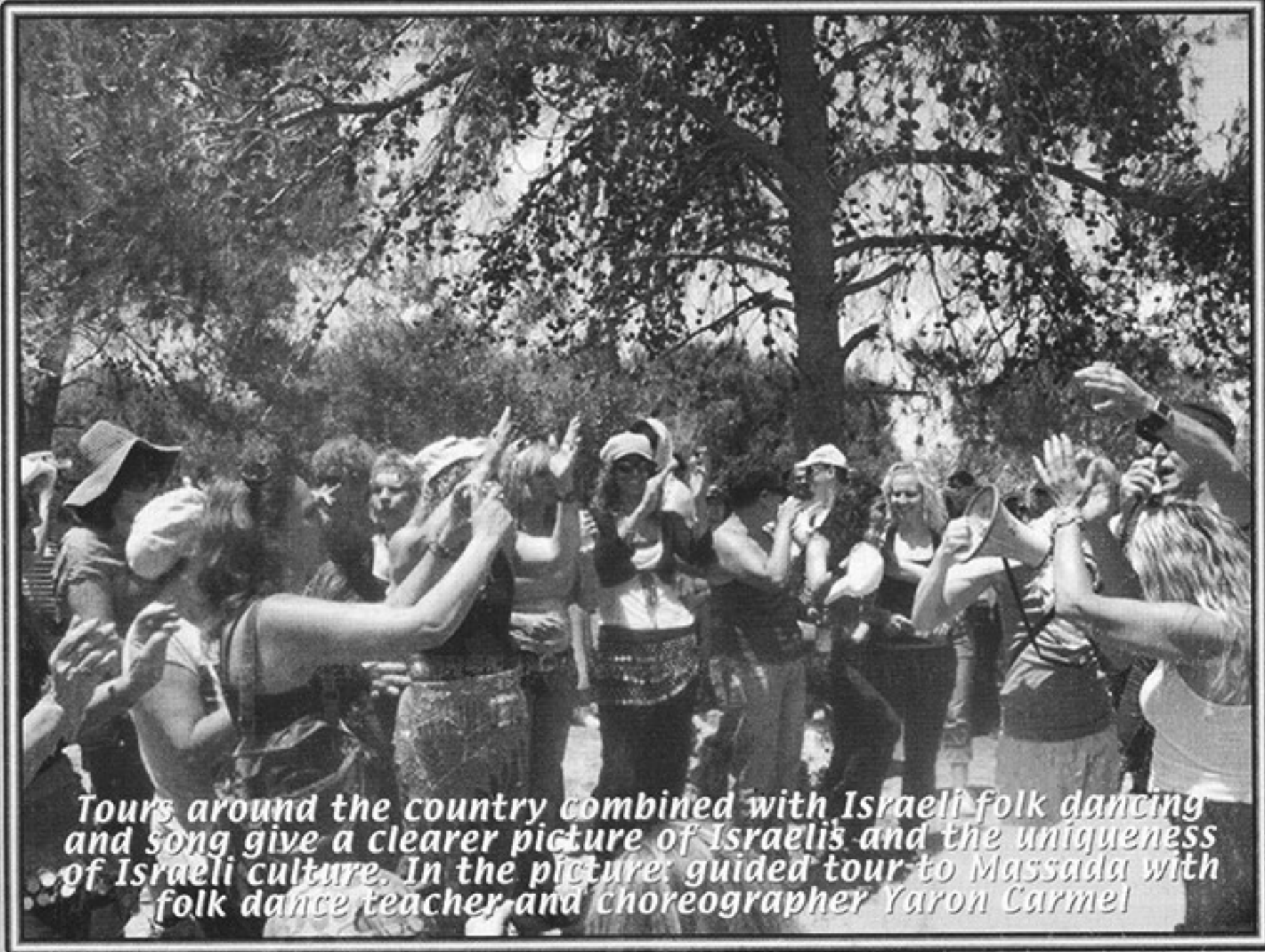
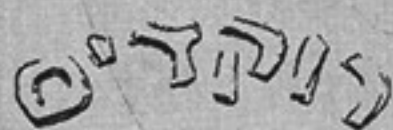
Behold, the shadow creeps slowly through the pine-covered hills  
Approaching the neighborhoods secretly, like a lover  
Facing it, ten thousand eyes of light wink, opening suddenly  
towards me with excitement

I saw a city wrapped in light...

In the silence of night's end, the city breathes  
And in the velvet sky, the last fragment becomes pale  
Just dawn, its golden dome is already turning red  
in the warm, soft touch of new light

I saw a city wrapped in light...

Song transliteration and translation  
**Malka Tischler**



*Tours around the country combined with Israeli folk dancing and song give a clearer picture of Israelis and the uniqueness of Israeli culture. In the picture: guided tour to Massada with folk dance teacher and choreographer Yaron Carmel*

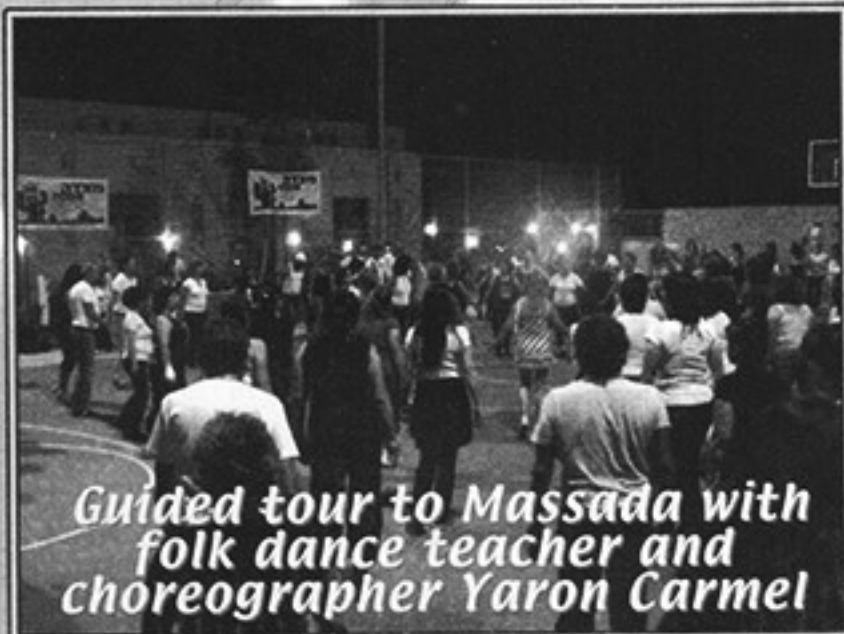
also wrote about the story in his book, "Anshei Bereshit" (1964).

**A trip to Jerusalem**

The tour guide will of course take a group to visit the walls of Jerusalem and its alleys and tell stories of its wars. One of the most fascinating is the story of the song "Ohr Virushalayim," written and composed in 1972 by Yosef Sarig who was killed in the Yom Kippur War.

Yosef Sarig was born in Kibbutz Beit Hashita on the 29th of Adar 1944. On the 14th of Tishrei 1973, he was killed in his tank during the war for the Golan Heights in the Chushniya area.

After he finished his army service, Sarig studied at a music school in Oranim (1967-1968), and subsequently divided his time between working in the kibbutz and teaching music at the local school and in music studios



*Guided tour to Massada with folk dance teacher and choreographer Yaron Carmel*

in the Harod and Beit She'an valleys. In addition to his musical activities, he worked year round in the kibbutz at all kinds of jobs. Sarig played the piano and the organ. His musical legacy includes more than 100 compositions, arrangements, orchestrations and more. He also wrote the music and lyrics to songs; one of these is "Ohr Virushalayim".

Shoshana Kopilevich was very taken with

**Yosef Sarig was born in Kibbutz Beit Hashita on the 29th of Adar 1944. On the 14th of Tishrei 1973, he was killed in his tank during the war for the Golan Heights in the Chushniya area**

the words and music of this song. In 1980, she choreographed a dance that has won her a special place with dancers from all generations. The dance gives the sense of "the stone construction of the Kotel" and of "walking on the walls". Physically connecting with and touching the Kotel are expressed through hand and body movements as when approaching and moving away (from the Wall).

These are just two examples of events from Israel's history in becoming a nation and in the fight for its existence that can enrich the experiences of the traveler and the tourist (both Israelis and foreigners) during the tour.



# נרקודים

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יום שלישי  
מרכז מיר"ב



יום ראשון  
גן שמואל



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23.5.2009



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