

עמותת ארגון
המדריכים והיוצרים
לריקודי עם



משרד
התיירות
אשדוד



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נוקדים
מגזין לריקודי עם ומחול

NIRKODA

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עמותת ארגון
המדריכים והיוצרים
לריקודי עם



ASHDODANCE

2018

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Dear Readers,

“Rokdim-Nirkoda” #99 is before you in the customary printed format. We are making great strides in our efforts to transition to digital media while simultaneously working to obtain the funding to continue publishing printed issues.

With all due respect to the internet age – there is still a cultural and historical value to publishing a printed edition and having the presence of a printed publication in libraries and on your shelves.

We are grateful to those individuals who have donated funds to enable the publication of recent printed editions. We encourage the financial support of our readers to help ensure the printing of future issues.

This summer there will be two major dance festivals taking place in Israel: the **Karmiel Festival** and the **Ashdod Festival**. For both, we wish and hope for their great success, cooperation and mutual enrichment.

Thank you **Avi Levy** and the **Ashdod Festival** for your cooperation and your use of “Rokdim-Nirkoda” as a platform to reach you – the readers. Thank you very much!

Israeli folk dances are danced all over the world; it is important for us to know and read about what is happening in this field in every place and country and we are inviting you, the readers and instructors, to submit articles about the background, past and present, of Israeli folk dance as it is reflected in the city and country in which you are active.

On July 1st, a new “Rokdim” website will be launched replacing the one that was launched few months ago which did not fulfill many expectations. The “Rokdim” website is now jointly owned by the amazing **Tamir Scherzer**. Thank you Tamir for your time, patience and the hard work you invested in order for our dreams to become reality.

“Dancing on the 5th of Iyar and Welcoming the Sabbath – Rokdim Hey Be’Iyar Ve’mekablīm Et Ha’Shabat” was the main dance event in the celebrations of the anniversary of the State of Israel at 70. As an initiative by both the Ministry of Culture and Sport and **Gadi Bitton**, there were folk dance celebrations in 15 different centers throughout the country, attended by thousands of dancers and dozens of instructors and singers. At this event, we re-experienced the occasion of the declaration of independence of the State of Israel. Pictures from these 15 locations and the event itself can be seen and read about in this issue.

Also in this issue:

- The name **Yoav Ashriel** is known by everyone; **David Ben Asher** interviewed him about his ground breaking role in the evolution of Israeli folk dance and what we experience today.
- **Matti Goldschmidt, Judith Brin Ingber, and Jill Gellerman** have researched the sources of Israeli folk dance in Germany and Eastern Europe and how it has evolved in Eretz Yisrael.
- **Eti Arieli** writes about “The Light Within Dance”, a group of blind and sighted dancers, led for many years by **Zohar Bartal**. Well done!
- The Dance of the Month: “Tefilot – Prayers” by **Itzik Ben-Dahan**, is a beloved and successful dance which we chose to bring to you at this time.

Happy reading and dancing,
Yaron Meishar, Ruth Goodman and Danny Uziel – Editors.



Ruth Goodman



Danny Uziel



Yaron Meishar

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David Ben-Asher

Photos:

David Ben-Asher,
family album

Translation:

Ruth Schoenberg &
Shani Karni Aduculesi

Yoav Ashriel

Rebellious, Innovative, Breaks New Ground

The struggle over the nature of folk dance in Israel – the simplistic stage verses the exciting choreographies. The (boring) accordion verses recorded music. European folklore versus the authentic creativity from the Land of Israel. The dance establishment versus breakthrough innovation, and the focus of all this –

Yoav Ashriel, in a special interview for "Rokdim-Nirkoda".



“Just like the evolving of Israel, faltering and feeling its way along the path toward statehood, so was the course of our folk dance movement, finding its way among the pioneers of the Land of Israel as they searched for an alternative source of joy in a life of danger and poverty of the period. The pioneers were full of vitality and passion as they danced around the campfire, to the sounds of the garmoshka [or garmon, similar but substantially smaller than an accordion; a folk squeezebox], for a hora and another hora and yet another hora, and sometimes even an adventurous waltz or a gusty krakoviak or a polka in the sand.

“At the time, they were pioneers, especially in the kibbutzim, who nevertheless decided to motivate their friends toward a dance style that was more creative, interesting and challenging than the old fashioned hora steps, among them the mythological creators like **Rivka Sturman, Gurit Kadman, Sara Levi-Tanai** and others”.

“**Rivka Shturman**, for example, as a teacher of rhythmic, choreographed “Kuma Echa” and “Harmonica” in Ein Harod; **Gurit** sought a way to create an “Israeli folklore”, here in a few years what had taken generations for people of other countries. She went to different Jewish ethnic groups to find this folklore. At

the time, they also danced the “Sherele” but it was in couples, according to the custom of the gentiles; it came from Europe, so it was not accepted as our folklore”.

This monologue took place in a special interview for “Rokdim-Nirkoda” by a person who entered the folk dance field shortly after the founding generation; he glanced and was hurt, he admired and examined, he experienced and rebelled. He was a young kibbutznik named, **Yoav Ashriel**, who later on became a great dance leader. He became influential, a key developer, fighting for innovative approaches and he himself became a guru for generations of dance instructors and choreographers in the State of Israel.

Yoav Ashriel (87), tells a fascinating and enlightened life story:

“I was born in 1930 in Kibbutz Ramat David [northern Israel in the Jezreel Valley], to pioneer parents who lived in tents and wooden huts like other ambitious immigrants prior to the establishment of the State of Israel. We, the children, enjoyed our wonderful nurturing life; we had everything we needed and we lived in Beit HaYeladim [a communal house for children of the same age], where all children slept together, which I loved very much. My father, **Moshe**

David, was the culture coordinator of the Kibbutz, who organized holiday events and parties, which naturally influenced me. At the age of 12, I performed at parties and won a course called, ‘Lirkod B’Ivrit – Dancing in Hebrew’”.

“At age 17, I was invited to a folk dance course in Gvat [a kibbutz in northern Israel near Migdal HaEmek], in contrast to Gurit who opposed the participation of children, and within three days, we learned seven dances. I had already gotten an accordion and taught myself to play; I became an excellent accordionist”.

“At the age of 19, I enlisted in the army and did basic training for Nahal in Camp Schneller (now an orphanage) in Jerusalem. From there we moved to Camp 80 [Pardes Hanna-Karkur]. From there, I was sent to a training course where I became a platoon sergeant and, at the end of basic training, I offered to prepare a performance at the base. I gathered men and women soldiers from the Nahal troop, most of whom were new immigrants. I prepared a performance at the Edison Auditorium [which was a movie theater in the Zichron Moshe neighborhood] in Jerusalem, for the soldiers’ parents, the Nahal commander and **David Ben-Gurion**, who came especially for the big show. Back then, they wanted to prove to the parents the quality of the Nahal [an acronym of Noar Halutzi Lohem, literally, Fighting Pioneer Youth, and refers to a paramilitary Israeli group]. I had a certain background from my performances with **Ze’ev Havatzelet** at the World Federation of Democratic Youth and Students in Budapest [1949] with the Kibbutzim Troupe. The show in Jerusalem was a sensation in Israel”.

“**Ze’ev Havatzelet** had established a special cultural department at the time and assigned me to the dance field which I took very seriously, saying that, in this position, I would contribute more than just being another platoon sergeant for the state. I was stationed at Nahal headquarters in Jalil (Glilot), where I slept in one tent with **Dov (Dubi) Seltzer** [composer and conductor], in the Nahal group of the time, together with **Yona Atari** [musician], **Yosef (Yossi) Banai** [performer, singer, actor, and dramatist] and others,

including the beautiful, **Mira**, who later became my wife. During this period, dance courses were held by **Gurit Kadman** and **Sara Levi-Tanai**, with an emphasis on the Yemenite style. They taught dances that I had already criticized”.

And then, Yoav, did your rebellion actually begin with the conventions and style dictated by the Israeli dance choreographers at that time?

“Yes, I was only 20 when a strong argument ensued between me and the dance establishment. Kadman said that only folk dances will be integrated into performances; a dance on stage is as is, with the accordion and the familiar steps, and I said that it was boring for the audience and [the dances] should be varied by innovative choreographies that are not built on the existing dances. Moreover, every village in Europe has a folk orchestra and we have only an accordion; it is boring and lacks imagination”.

“**Ze’ev Havatzelet** supported this struggle and I began to implement my ideas and I prepared a show called, ‘Emek’, with 60 dancers based on a song by **[Marc] Lavry**, [1903-1967]. I prepared another performance for the Dalia Festival, ‘Magal Va’Cherev – The sickle and the sword’, with elements of war and work”.

“For the Nahal Brigade in Hulda, I performed with khaki costumes (which we changed into in a tent near the stage), with harvesting and fighting movements, to the melodies of **Dubi Seltzer**. **Ben-Gurion**, who was present there, was



Yoav Ashrieli (fifth right from the middle of the first line) with Yankele Eden among the participatings of a camp in USA

...”at the end of basic training, I offered to prepare a performance at the base. I gathered men and women soldiers from the Nahal troop, most of whom were new immigrants. I prepared a performance at the Edison Auditorium...”



Pa'amey Aviv dance group at the rehearsal, 1969

very enthusiastic about this performance. **Gurit Kadman** was really opposed to this style, which deviated far from conventional folk dance on the stage. **Tova Zimbal** [choreographer of Lech Lamidbar], who identified with my approach, did a sailor dance, and was criticized; she burst into tears. We held a demonstration on her behalf”.

And you, did you go on, despite the criticism of your innovative style?

“Yes, I continued on two levels, preparing performances and choreographing new folk dances; I gave a performance at Kibbutz Yotvata [in southern Israel] when it was established and also in Gonen [kibbutz in northern Israel], Nahal Oz [kibbutz in the northwestern part of the Negev desert close to the border with Gaza], etc. The audience should enjoy and even get excited. Also in London, with **Sassi Keshet** [an actor], the main thing is not just folk dance on the stage, because the audience will be bored. Kadman, as noted, was not enthusiastic about it, so I also choreographed, ‘Ta’am Haman’, for the kibbutz hachshara [training for kibbutz life] who were enthusiastic about it”.

“I choreographed more dances to fill an evening. I was influenced both from Europe and Spain, Hasidim and Yemenite; I was also influenced by the songs. During this period, the lively and talented **Gurit Kadman** initiated the famous Dalia conferences, in which I participated”.

About the start of Yoav’s national activity, he says:

“I started with a group at Hapoel Tel Aviv with **Vince**, where I founded a performing troupe [Tel Aviv HaPoel Dance Troupe] where I did the choreography and **Hanoch Hasson** (later the director of Kol Israel – Israel Broadcasting Authority) was the accordionist. I choreographed shepherd, fishermen and harvest dances with **Danny Uziel** and **Mira**; we brought the kibbutz to Tel Aviv, the village to the city. Today it sounds anachronistic but at that time, it was a big innovation. It sounds naïve but the audience loved it”.

“I was given the Habimah Theatre to organize a performance and I did it with **Elka** and **Aviva** [Hillel (Ilka) Raveh and his wife, Aviva], and the singer **Hanna Aroni** [also, Ahroni] and the costumes were designed by the famous painter [writer and poet], **Tzila Binder** [1919-1987]. I added musicians and the show ran with a series of performances in Haifa, Jerusalem and Afula. **Hanna Rovina** [Israeli actress who is often referred to as the ‘First Lady of Hebrew Theatre’] also came to my performance. The newspapers in 1951 generously praised it. In these performances, there was a combination of peaceful and stormy; a vastly diverse symphony”.

And with your continued successes, what happened with your conceptual struggles?

“So I choreographed, ‘Ez Vakeves - Goat and Sheep’ and Gurit objected, ‘That’s not the way it was in Europe’. That was in 1955. I said that we are not in Europe and, in Israel, we are shepherds and I too was a shepherd on the kibbutz and this has had an impact on our daily life. In this dance, I worked with my partner. The couple is happy with each other; we want to be together, everything with simple movements, to the songs of [composer] **Matityahu Shalem**, **Eliahu Gamliel** and others like them. I also choreographed ‘Erev Ba’, a circle dance, about which there is more to be said”.

And then, the exit to the threatening, challenging world, to the continuation of your professional struggles?

“The innocent kibbutz boy wanted to see the world, so I left the kibbutz and was considered a traitor to the pioneering socialist idea. It was a traumatic departure. I went to the Labor Office and was referred to the Institute for Education as a clerk in the Histadrut, which did not suit me. But, at the same time, I slowly entered the clique and was invited to a dance course to teach something. **Rivka Shturman, Gurit Kadman, Shalom Hermon** and **Ze’ev Havatzelet** were each given about one hour and I was barely able to teach one of my dances. Young people like **Shlomo Maman** did not succeed in breaking through the closed veterans’ system”.

“I continued on my own and had already introduced a revolutionary innovation – recording the accordion and then, my brazen audacity – a reel-to/open-reel audio tape recorder, a challenging innovation that was once again attacked and resisted by the old guard. I bought a tape recorder and recorded songs by singers like **Shoshana Damari** and others. I felt humiliated, despised and also a target of jealousy and envy. I fought and won sweeping encouragement from my wife, **Mira**, who was an important factor in the advancement of the revolutionary agenda that I was then leading”.

“Until then, all dances were accompanied by only an accordion, which was very boring. I was the first to introduce the use of recorded songs on the dance floor. [Up until then, all that was used was an accompanist, usually playing the accordion.] Imagine a dance session today without recorded music. It sounds hallucinatory but it was like that, and as I said, it was my battle to initiate such a dramatic change. At the age of 40, I slowly began to take my place in this field in Israel. Despite the harassment, the torpedoing, the objections by the establishment, I began to organize training courses of my own, I published professional pamphlets and, for the first time, dance descriptions. Yes, I was the first to use recorded music, revolutionary”.

And so, you are occupying your national place. And what were your actions to promote your messages, unconventional ideas?



With Avner Nayim broadcasting in Reshet Gimel

“It was not easy to go against the Histadrut establishment. I opened a session in the Ramat Gan Workers’ Council, I held training courses, and immediately, the directors of the hall received a threatening letter to close the place, to prevent the rebel, Ashriel, from working. I then went to the WIZO hall and there, too, they received a threatening letter from the Histadrut; while an external factor, it had an influence. But, I tried the Tel Aviv municipality in order to use the Bikurey Ha’Itim Hall. **Uzi Adoram** of the municipality actually supported me and did not pay attention to the threatening calls from the Histadrut”.

“I set up a performing troupe, and taught workshops and it continued for many years; thousands of instructors and dancers from all over the country were trained and instructed by me; I published booklets and made tapes and trained a new generation of dancers and choreographers”.

“**Shlomo Maman** came to me from the Inbal Troupe along with **Zion Nuriel**. He had a huge imagination but without any ideas about folk dance. I enlightened him, taught him every movement and ways to create until he [taught] his first dance, ‘Zemer Bagilboa’. I have ignited the creativity of **Tuvia Tishler, Moshe Telem, Avner Na’im, Marco Ben Shimon, Sefi** and others. Who knew them at all? I guided them, taught them, put them on the map, and still, all the time, under the angry eyes of the leaders of the old establishment”.

At that time, the well-known sessions/chugim

“I fought and won sweeping encouragement from my wife, Mira, who was an important factor in the advancement of the revolutionary agenda that I was then leading.”

flourished and their reputation preceded them, and Ashriel became an institution, to a large extent a guru for dancers and dance leaders throughout the country [Israel], and also throughout the world. A partial inventory is before us:

“The first class was in Tel Aviv on Ahad Ha’Am St., for many years in a dance studio with a monthly fee. The Dubnov session was every evening with my wife, **Mira**. Every day there were two sessions, Chanukah parties, Purim, performances, tiyulim [trips], recordings. A session was held at the Ramat Gan Workers Council at Shenkar. In Holon – classes for children and adults, 7:00 pm – midnight and also my performing dance group. At Tel Aviv University – a large session and a dance troupe. The Shefayim session [kibbutz north of Herzliya] – a large hall with loudspeakers; in the summer it was hot and cold in the winter, and a kibbutz performing dance troupe. A chug in Petah Tikva with a performing group and post army veterans, up to 1,000 dancers. Chugim in [kibbutzim] Ramat David and Gvat”.

The group of veteran dancers [vatikim] at Bikurei Ha’itim, under Yoav’s guidance, lasted for many years until the building was demolished two years ago when Yoav was 86. And also abroad: teaching in the USA – New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and in Paris, Germany, on the Danube and in other places.

The huge record of activities also includes a giant performance in Kfar Hess [a moshav in central Israel] with hundreds of dancers, at

Kibbutz Mishmarot with huge performances and at large conferences at various times. And, for many years, folk dance continuing education programs [hishtalmuyot] on Saturdays in Bikurei Ha’itim and then in Shfayim in which I helped and supported young folk dance creators. I was invited to intensive programs [ulpanim] by instructors and for guest appearances at the sessions of key instructors such as **Avner Naim, Yaron Carmel, Gadi Bitton, Avi Peretz, Roni Siman Tov, Moshe Telem and Shlomo Maman**.

At the Karmiel Festival, at [Yonatan] **Karmon**’s request, he led dancing for 4 years, [and] established the mass dance culture with the collaboration of creators and instructors from every country. He also served as a judge for competitions and performances at the festival.

Yoav has served as the Israeli emissary [shaliach] in Vienna among the DP camps after the Shoah, with harkadot and raising morale. In the Budapest Jewish community, he organized a collection of money to buy shoes for the needy of that period. “Barefoot people were dancing there,” says Yoav.

Yoav, your sessions at Dubnov were famous. What was so special about them, that they are remembered?

“It does not exist today, every day there was a session, every day, every week, at seven there are ‘beginners’ at nine the ‘advanced’. It was crowded, very crowded, the masses came. An intimate social atmosphere was created; they joined hands in a circle to dance, without any



Yoav Ashriel and Rakefet demonstrate in Genigur



“Why did anyone dare challenge the Histadrut monopoly? But I insisted, and this was my first private training, and then others came along and found a way to imitate me...”

monkey business, because that’s how you had to dance. And most importantly – only good dances, selected material, with no ‘schmaltz’ [without excessive embellishments]. Dances that were exciting, joyful, that kept us together; and also, the holidays and the shared trips to shape a brotherhood of dancers”.

And Kikar Malchey Yisrael [Kings of Israel Square] (today Rabin Square [in Tel Aviv])?

“I studied this abroad, dancing in the streets and in the squares. With **Mira**, my wife, we created this model. With the encouragement of Mayor ‘Chich’ [**Shlomo ‘Chich’ Lahat** the eighth mayor of Tel Aviv 1927-2014], a stage and lighting were set up. They told me there were 3,000 dancers in the square. Buses came from all over the country. And here, too, there was only good repertory material. It was a huge success. And **Mira**, was careful about every movement and along with her tremendous organizational ability, we all admired her”.

You mentioned the advanced studies you created, as an innovative model for that period. How was it accepted?

“Here too I came across resistance, especially from the institute which is ‘The Department of Folk Dance’ at the Histadrut. Why did anyone dare challenge the Histadrut monopoly? But I insisted, and this was my first private training,

and then others came along and found a way to imitate me, including **Michaël [Barzilay]** and **[Yehuda] Emanuel**, who organized their own seminars, separate from me. I did not see it as competition; on the contrary, I encouraged it because it contributed to the whole thing. My training sessions were held on Saturday morning until afternoon, where I taught 6 new dances and reviewed another 4 dances. Four such training courses a year were a revolution and contributed a great deal to the promotion of this field in Israel”.

Another specific question, Yoav, the order of the dancers in the session itself, circles, positions?

“In my session, there was strong discipline. It is customary that the good / knowledgeable dancers are dancing in the middle [of the circle], which will also provide a role model, if necessary. Today there is no discipline at all and everyone does what he/she wants. (It seems that in today’s sessions, the middle circle is characterized by individuals who lack skill and knowledge, in a kind of ambition to ridiculously stand out. DBA.)

Innovation and struggles

As mentioned, Ashriel’s focus in dance was the struggle for innovation. As an example, he

uses the dance that is so identified with him, “Erev Ba – Evening Comes”. He says that, in 1960, when he first taught the dance, **Gurit Kadman** stood in the center and denigrated it as: ‘kitsch and scribbled’! And Yoav commented on that, “I was looking for something quiet in a circle with a grapevine step [open mayim step], something other than a Yemenite step, and very different from the debka and running steps that were done in the folk dances of that time, something that expresses a special beauty”.

“I also made mistakes,” Yoav stresses here in the sensible interview. “For example, a dance, which is also very much identified with me, ‘Chad Mecherev [Shibolim] – Sharper Than the Sword’, which like many of my dances was accompanied by **Gil Aldema** [the composer of the music for the dance], is a bad dance. Yes, I made a lot of mistakes on the way to fame, in the path of my rebelliousness. But when you do something, the action is always accompanied by errors and mistakes”.

And now, Yoav, based on your many years, the wide range of your experience and also from the heights of your fame and glory, what can you tell us about today’s folk dance movement, of today’s dance creations, on the quantity and quality of dancers and creators, of course, the future?

“In my lifetime, I have choreographed about 300 dances, and in my estimation, 40 of them survive until today. That’s a lot. My first dance was ‘Ta’am Haman – Taste of Manna’ [1950] by the composer and poet **Yitzhak Eliyahu Navon**, who thanked me for it. [Navon was Turkish-Israeli (settled in Israel at the age of 70); 1859-1952.] [For nostalgia buffs, see the following website ([\[israel.html\]\(http://israel.html\)\) and watch Yoav and Mira, z”l dance, Ta’am Haman.\]](http://folkdancemusings.blogspot.com/2015/07/taam-haman-</p>
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“**Effi Netzer** also thanked me for the dance [to his music], ‘Korim Lanu La’Lechet – Call Us to Go,’ [Lyrics: **Yosi Gamzu**] which is popular to this day, and it shows something about the nature of these dances... Yes, a dance should be one that people will love and the choreographer should know what people like. That is why it is important to receive professional and practical criticism. There’s also a lot of self-criticism”.

“When a person dances, he needs emotional satisfaction; he has to be moved, love the steps, the music, the movement, the partner. The choreographer himself has to be moved by the melody and the dancer has to be enthusiastic, enjoy and get moved too”.

“The right movements are simple; the dance is simple and easy to dance; without balletic movements, but – not simplistic. Simple and not simplicity are the secret and the magic of a good dance. Technique is needed to create a dance; it is not just one step or another.”

“It is not right to flood the field with dance after dance; selectivity is desirable, and if the qualities I mentioned here do not take place in a dance, it is better not to bring it to the dance floor”.

So what’s going to happen, Yoav?

“For the material that is created, there needs to be a high cultural level, and also a style of rock rhythm for young people. In fact there is no single folklore today; there are all kinds of folklore even in the same country with the same people, so the dances should match the wishes of the people or society in which they are created. They should go back to holding hands, it is a social friendly test; otherwise, you can dance alone at home. The state has now existed for 70 years and I do not know where we are going with our Israeli dance – our folk dances. I am not so optimistic”.

I was looking for something quiet in a circle with a grapevine step, something other than a Yemenite step, and very different from the debka and running steps that were done in the folk dances of that time, something that expresses a special beauty





Eti Arieli

Translation:
Shani Kami Aduculesi



As soon as I entered the driveway of the “MARSHAL” Center (Multi-Service Center for the Blind) in Ramat Gan, I was drawn in by the cheerful sounds of the beautiful Israeli “Erez Yisrael” songs. A peek into the hall revealed a circle of enthusiastic dancers.

It wasn’t hard to recognize the instructor, **Zohar**. Tall and impressive wearing heeled shoes, instructing with commanding speech: “Four steps forward, cross behind, turn right, and forward...”

The group, which includes about twenty people, meets once a week on Mondays. This is a very unique group with an age range between fifty and seventy. Half of them have various levels of visual impairment - totally blind, accompanied by a guide dog; others are assisted by a guide cane. Some dancers arrive by foot, some by public transportation or are given a ride by the volunteers. The other half of the group of dancers is comprised of the volunteers who come to dance together with them.

The atmosphere is warm and family like,

characteristic of a group of people who have known each other for a long time; it is a positive and pleasant relationship. At first they gather for a cup of coffee, they prepare drinks for each other, already knowing their preferred drink and how much sugar to add, as they joke around and share their past week’s experiences.

This is where birthdays for friends are celebrated, where the celebrants have a wreath of flowers on their heads. They celebrate the coming holidays with songs and blessings. They know each other’s personal stories, the joys as well as the difficulties.

Zohar, the skillful and energetic instructor, is a special woman with a great amount of energy who is very accomplished. She is a physical education teacher and an athlete, a holistic medicine therapist: Shiatsu, Orthopedic Massage, Reflexology and more. She is the only person in Israel with a record of instructing wheelchair folk dancing for ten years and fifteen years of instructing the blind. She has instructed at the Karmiel Festival, groups in Haifa, Holon, Rishon LeZion and

now in Ramat Gan. She is a lively, open and welcoming woman.

Through the dance session, Zohar mentions, she has realized two abilities that are important to her – the ability to help and the ability to influence. Her tendency to be hyperactive and chatty has turned from being a weakness into power and, in this way, she finds fulfillment in her precious hobby, her “baby”.

After the initial meeting, we move to another room and dance. At first, organized in a circle, the members introduce themselves by name so that everyone knows who is

standing next to them and are positioned so that everyone is comfortable with those standing alongside them.

All the hands are joined, the legs perform the dance, the faces are glowing with happiness and excitement, and the friends cheerfully join in singing to the music. Dancing and jumping, turning and smiling.

In a cheerful, bouncy circle, the blind are dancing next to those who are sighted and those who are sighted are next to the blind, holding hands the entire time so that the visually impaired sense the movement, the rhythm, the direction and, in addition to hearing Zohar’s instructions, they hear the tapping sound of her heels on the floor. In this way, the other senses are activated and the dance flows and draws everyone in with enthusiasm and joy.

The joy and enthusiasm are evident in the special atmosphere. From conversations with the participants you can sense their joy in coming every week to this exciting social gathering of dancing together.

Doron Ben-Tzion, a blind man, comes to the center on his own several times a week and greatly enjoys a variety of activities, especially dance. After experiencing it twice, he fell in love with dancing and hasn’t missed any session since he began. He is aware of the fact that the volunteers play an essential role in the class.

Gadi Kupert, a volunteer who comes to dance with the blind, is a generous man who contributes in other fields as well, and is a veteran dancer. He notes that dancing in this class gives him immense satisfaction and enjoyment; he did not know how special it is until he experienced it himself. Although



In the circle the blind are dancing next to those who are sighted and those who are sighted are next to the blind; the entire time they are holding hands so that the visually impaired may sense the movement, the rhythm and the direction.



he also dances in other groups, here he feels a special joyful spirit.

Ruti Machluf, who had stopped dancing for many years due to visual problems, was surprised to hear that there are folk dance sessions shared by the blind and those who are sighted. A volunteer named **Rafi**, assists her and brings her to the MARSHAL Center every Monday. Ruti arrives to class with enthusiasm and is delighted to be part of this special group.

Arik Lubovich, who recently retired from his job and also volunteers in other places with people with autism and other types of handicaps in extreme sports, comes here with pleasure because “it warms his heart”. Arik says that this experience has changed the way he looks at life. Today he is aware of the difficulties that blind people have in both accessibility and mobility. He feels that he is contributing and he enjoys it very much.

Avner Giraffi, who also volunteers in other fields with youth, and helps families in distress, has been dancing for years including dancing with wheelchairs. He is excited every time he comes here and does so with love, joy, a sense of fulfillment and a smile on his face. At times he dances while closing his eyes in attempt to feel as the blind do.

Avner treats the blind on his side as if they can see. In his opinion, they see the soul of the person next to them.

Ela Vaya, who dances with her husband in classes of people who can see, says that if it wasn't for the volunteer who drives her to the group, she would not be able to come to dance with the group. When Ela dances, no one can recognize that she is blind. Her steps are accurate and her movement is confident. She senses the music and the dance with her entire body.

A sense of likable “dark humor” is present in this unique atmosphere; when I joined the circle and confessed that I was “confused with the steps”, the blind person holding my hand comforted me by saying: “Feel comfortable, I can't see”...

Each session ends with the tightening of the circle, people placing hands on each other's shoulders, swaying left and right to the rhythm and singing the song “Friends” with excitement: “One friend taught me how to sing, another friend taught me how to be joyful... From all my friends I received what is good; the smile was given to me by my closest friend”.

I join the embracing circle, emotional, with tears running down my face non-stop; my sight is blurry. What a wonderful group!! 🙌

I join the embracing circle, emotional, with tears running down my face non-stop; my sight is blurry. What a wonderful group!!

By:
Matti Goldschmidt,
Judith Brin Ingber
and Jill Gellerman

Celebrating in a Jewish Mode

Dance in Europe, the Yishuv and Israel

Yiddish Summer Weimar, or YSW, held in Weimar, Germany from July 15–August 12, 2017, was founded in 1999 by **Dr. Alan Bern** who is its artistic director. The curator for YSW was **Andreas Schmitges**. In their programming, Bern and Schmitges were interested in exploring the connections of the cultures of Europe, the Middle East, North and South America.

The special topic for 2017 was “The Other Israel: Seeing Unseen Diasporas.” As stated in the YSW brochure, “Israel today is also home to a kaleidoscope of displaced cultures from around the world. Yiddish culture, with its European heritage, is only one of these... this summer we will enter this amazing and complex intercultural universe.”

A full program of dance and music workshops, lectures and performances was offered. The week of dance workshops hinted at the diversity with Arabic Dabke taught by **Medhat Aldabaal**, Hasidic dance taught by **Jill Gellerman**, Yiddish dance taught by **Andreas Schmitges**, and early Israeli folk dances taught by **Judith Brin Ingber**.

Matti Goldschmidt wrote an article about YSW, reprinted below, followed by additional dance information written by **Jill Gellerman** and **Judith Brin Ingber**. Brin Ingber has also added reflections on her experience teaching dance workshops more recently at the Western Galilee College in Acre, Israel.



Matti Goldschmidt¹

Translated:
Debbie Nicol

The Multifaceted Nature of Israeli Folk Dance

The organizers of this year’s ‘Yiddish Summer’ in Weimar had asked themselves two very interesting and compelling questions: Which dance cultures besides the Hasidic and Arabic have had a significant influence on Israeli folk dance, and what is the role played here both in the past and present by Yiddish dance?

In addition, they aimed to discover – among other things – how Yiddish dance purportedly influenced “a whole wave of new Israeli dance choreographies in the 1930s and 1940s.”

From Biblical times straight through to the

present day, dance has been a fundamental component of Jewish socio-cultural development. In fact, Jews have always danced: think, for example, of the Israelites dancing around the golden calf (it’s not the dance itself that was deplorable, but the calf which was the object at the center of the dance) or of **Miriam**’s dance after the crossing of the Red Sea, described in Exodus.

Whilst church edicts as far back as the early Middle Ages placed substantial restrictions on Christians dancing, this only meant that

Jews – unaffected by such decrees – were able to fill the now-vacant niches. Until 1930 or thereabouts, the non-liturgical Jewish klezmer music (which dated from around the 15th century such as the Freylakh or Bulgar) was considered to be purely dance music.

Jews of the second and third Aliyah were primarily from Russia and Poland (waves of immigration to Palestine in 1904-1914 and in 1919-1923). They shone either in classic stage dance, like **Baruch Agadati** from Odessa, or they were folk dancers who brought folk dances from their former homes, such as the Polka, Rondo, or Krakowiak.

The hora, was originally from Rumania, and mutated into a simplified form, which became the Jewish Palestinian national dance. As early as the 1920s, festivities featuring these types of dances took place mainly, but not only, at Kibbutz Ben-Shemen near the town of Lod.

In the following two decades, immigrants especially from German-speaking countries were to shape the folk dance scene of Palestine, and later, Israel. In an article headlined Rikud Amami ('Folkloristic Dance'), in the 5 August 1938 newspaper edition of the trade-union daily Davar, **Gertrude (Gert) Kaufmann**, a native of Leipzig, called for the replacement of the Diaspora folk dances. Kaufmann, wanted new, indigenous dances to be created by the olim (immigrants) instead of those mainly Eastern European folk dances.

The usual cultural cornerstones of a nation in the European sense, including language, literature and theatre--all of this in the revived Hebrew tongue, plus new music and painting (the latter inspired primarily by Biblical themes), were now to be joined by dance.

In 1944, in the middle of the war, a national festival and conference on folk dance was held on a kibbutz

Until around 1940, the creative dance environment of the Jewish immigrants in British Mandate Palestine was limited to theatrical dance, primarily of expressionistic and expressive dance, especially by **Lea Bergstein, Gertrud Kraus**, and the **Orenstein** family, among others. At the

same time, however, performance dances were being choreographed in the secular environment of the kibbutz movement, performed mostly in fanciful Biblical costume and primarily inspired by the religious festivals of the Jewish calendar, such as the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot). The dance U'Shavtem Mayim, presented in June 1937 by **Else Dublon** (who had immigrated previously from Montabaur, Germany) with her performing troupe at Kibbutz Na'an, may be viewed as a prototype. Inspired by the discovery several months earlier – after years of searching – for a water source near the kibbutz, the song's lyrics were taken directly from the Bible: "Therefore you will draw water with rejoicing from the springs of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3).

Although it is no longer possible to determine with complete certainty exactly when Jewish immigrants actually created the first 'native' folk dances in the years after 1940, the consensus is that the birth of a national folk dance occurred no later than at the first (of a total of five) 'National Conference for Folk Dance' held at Kibbutz Dalia on 14-15 July 1944. Of course, in the first half of the 20th century, there could not yet be any 'Israeli' dances; rather, owing





Israeli couple dancing. From the cover of the book "Story of Folk Dances in [kibbutz] Dalia, by Ruti Ashkenazi

to their creation in Palestine, these dances were referred to as 'Palestinian' (by analogy with Greek dances from Greece).

On the other hand, the concept of 'Hebrew' dances indisputably existed – 'Hebrew' being used fairly frequently (at least in Hebrew) as a synonym for 'Jewish' during the later British Mandate period. Thus, for example, on the front page of Yediot Ahronot newspaper's 14 May 1948 issue – the day on which Israel declared its independence – one can read the expression "Hebrew fatherland" and the "Hebrew State" when referring to the proclamation of independence (issue no. 4030).²

The first generation of choreographers, consisting of artists such as **Rivka Sturman**, **Gurit Kadman** (a.k.a. G. Kaufmann), **Sara Levi-Tanai**, **Yardena Cohen**, **Tova Zimbel**, **Ze'ev Havatzelet** and **Shalom Hermon**, were bent on demonstrating, via the creation of new folk dances, a cultural independence found among practically all other nations.

Figuring among the works are the still-popular Hora Agadati, Kuma Echa, Hei Harmonika and

Machol Ovadya. To quote Kadman, the sources of modern Israeli folk dance should lie "in the soil, in work, and in the revitalization of the Jewish nation," while the song lyrics referred to the landscape of Palestine, to farming, and to ties to the land or comradeship.

Thus, although dance per se was paramount, it was still unquestionably essential to translate this art form into a unifying national cultural component. In the socialist and secular environment of the kibbutzim, religious texts and Biblical celebrations constituted the sole common cultural denominator of all immigrants, and were thus considered to be no more than the means to an end.

Hasidic and Yemenite Influences from Odessa and Sana'a

The only two ethnologically Jewish dance styles of the Diaspora certainly made their way into the new choreographies. Thus, to this day, Hasidic elements are still seen – if rather sporadically – in what is now called Israeli folk dance, although the SHERELE or Sher – performed at the second Festival for Folk Dance on Kibbutz Dalia on June 20, 1947 as 'Diaspora dances' – has largely fallen into oblivion.

For the Yemenite element, which choreographers from central European cultural circles saw as exotic, and believed to be most similar to the original Biblical dance steps, the story is quite different. Although Ozi VeZimrat Ya may not be very popular nowadays owing to its relative difficulty, it is nonetheless impossible to imagine contemporary Israeli folk dance without its 'Yemenite step' combination. Like Israel herself, Israeli folk dance – which was also influenced from the start by modern European Expressionist dance elements – is in constant flux: quite unlike the folk dances of other countries, whose purpose, by contrast, is to preserve old traditions unchanged.

Israeli folk dance would be non-existent in Germany without (non-Jewish) Germans

In Germany, it was only from around 1980 onwards that tentative attempts were made to



introduce Israeli folk dance in international folk dance circles, through contacts via the Netherlands, and the consequent invitation of Israeli folk dance choreographers including **Rivka Sturman** and **Moshiko Halevy**. The founding of the Israelisches Tanzhaus (ITH) in 1992 in Munich marked a turning point. Dedicated exclusively to the furtherance of Israeli folk dance, the ITH has to date invited over fifty different choreographers and dance masters from Israel, supplementing these workshops with organized trips to Israel focusing on hiking and folk dance.

Nowadays, many cities in Germany have, for the most part, small Israeli folk dance groups operating along fairly self-sufficient lines. As a curiosity, it may be noted here that there are virtually no Jewish participants among them: in Germany, Israeli folk dance would not exist, were it not for (non-Jewish) Germans.

But what, then, of the ‘Yiddish dance’ that the organizers of the Weimar Yiddish Summer speak of? Interestingly, this type of term is nowhere to be found in the literature – unlike, for example, Yiddish theatre/film, or Yiddish literature. Even the YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe (Gershon David Hundert ed., Yale University Press, 2008), growing out of the Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut founded in 1925 in Vilna (then Poland), and today based in New York City, is not familiar with this concept.

We would be intrigued to learn how a dance genre requiring the coinage of a new term – ‘Yiddish dance’ – found its way into a folk dance style that, during the period in question, namely 1930-1949, had been in existence less than two years under its mentioned name – here, Israeli dance – and which demonstrably had been referred to by the term ‘Palestinian’ for at most eight to ten years.

Further literature:

- Berk, Fred, ed., *Ha-Rikud, the Jewish Dance*, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1972
- Berk, Fred with Reimer, Susan, ed., *Machol Ha’am. Dance of the Jewish People*, American Zionist Youth Foundation, 1978
- Goldschmidt, Matti, *The Bible in Israeli Folk Dances*, Viersen, 2001
- Ingber, Judith Brin, ed., *Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance*, Wayne State University Press, 2011

Matti Goldschmidt’s footnotes:

- 1 As originally published in German in: *Folker* 20 (2017), no. 4, 62-64, under the title ‘Alles begann in Palästina – Der israelische Tanz in seinen Anfängen und dessen Vorläufer’ (‘It All Began in Palestine’).
- 2 Another example would be the first stamps issued by the State of Israel – already in stock right after the declaration of independence – which bore the words *Do’ar Ivri* (‘Hebrew Post’) in both Arabic and Hebrew.

Additional Relevant Information

At YSW 2017, curator **Andreas Schmitges** was very interested in tracing elements from Yiddish culture in the development of Israeli folk dance, but this proved to be a difficult task. The early creators were determined to turn away from European influences.

Before the establishment of the state of Israel, for example, soldiers of the Palmach went to **Rivka Sturman**, who was well known for her imaginative community dances at Kibbutz Ein Harod. The soldiers asked her to create a couple dance free of what they considered bourgeoisie ballroom influences

like the Viennese waltz. Sturman’s solution was to create *Dodi Li* which proved to be a beloved couple dance.

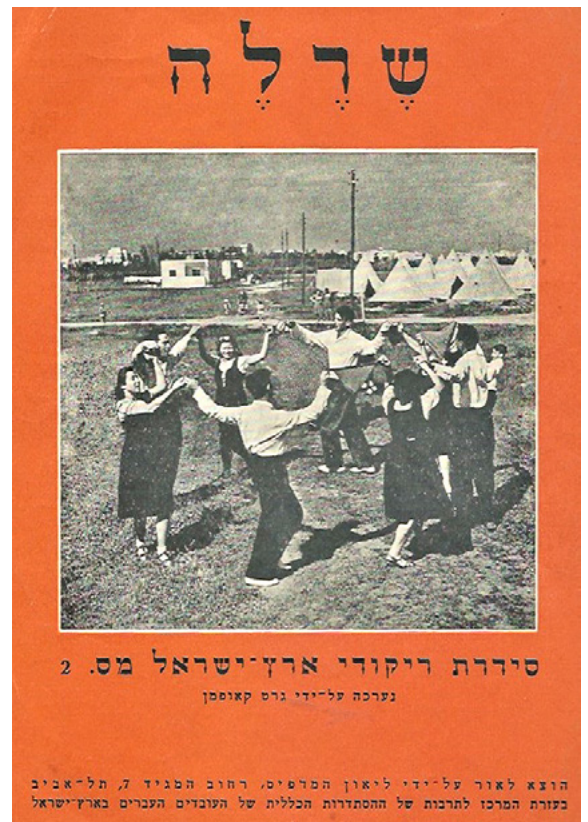
What about dances of the Yishuv, the Jewish community of pre-state Israel, and the influences from the European Jewish tradition? What could be seen from the Hasidic tradition, as Schmitges was hoping to establish?

Firstly, one could look to wedding dances because the whole Jewish community would dance after the Huppa ceremony. It didn’t matter to which Jewish community throughout the entire Jewish Diaspora you belonged – Yemenite,

Moroccan, Russian, German, in a Shtetl (small European town) or mellah (similar to a ghetto but this was a restricted Jewish neighborhood in Morocco) or other places. Wherever Jews have lived they have always danced at their Jewish weddings. All communities interpreted the Talmudic commentary about marriage in Tractate Ketubot (17a), where it says that Jews must dance to ensure the bride's happiness. Consequently, countless different dances have developed as Jews fulfilled that Talmudic requirement or mitzvah of dancing. Hence the community dances of Eastern European Jews in the wedding context are known as mitzva tanzn – not dances of good deeds, but dances that fulfill the mitzvah. One such dance was the Sherele.

It is fortunate that **Gert Kaufmann**, (later known as **Gurit Kadman**), created a series of brochures known as “The Palestine Folk Dance Series,” published in both English and Hebrew, which helped to disseminate these dances both in the Yishuv and abroad. The main influence from the European Jewish tradition, danced by less observant Jews, was the Sherele which **Gurit Kadman** documented in her Number 2, 1949 brochure simply entitled Sherele. Kadman describes the history, the music, and the form (including sketched figures) in three sections, made up of five or six different figures in each section. This was the dance recreated at YSW 2017 by Schmitges with the help of the other dance leaders.

Jill Gellerman, who has documented Hasidic dance styles of both women and men, also taught sher figures (shtern, keytsed merokdim, etc.) done by observant Jews, in order to situate Kadman's Sherele in the larger dance genre. Jill added that some early twentieth century sources mention the sher and related couple dances as only done in the religious community by women or girls alone. (See: Pauline Wengeroff, *Rememberings: The World of A Russian-Jewish Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, University Press of Maryland, 2000, page 98, and Mark Slobin, ed., *Old Jewish Folk Music: The Collections and Writings of*

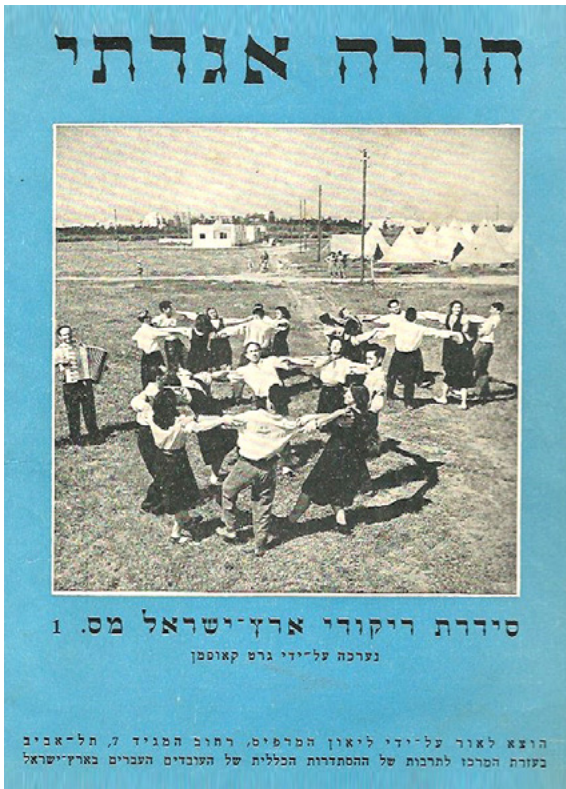


Moshe Beregovski, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982, page 533.)

Discussing the history of the sher, Jill quoted a letter written by the Yiddish folklorist **Shmuel Zanvl Pipe** in 1936: “The name ‘sherele’ is the diminutive form of the old ‘sher’ or ‘shir’ which used to be danced at weddings by two rows facing each other. While singing, the rows would come together and then move apart. ... similar to one of the old Polish national dances, the Polonaise.” (See: Diane K. Roskies and David G. Roskies, *The Shtetl Book*, Ktav, 1975, page 218; Shmuel Zanvel Pipe, *Yiddish Folksongs from Galicia*, edited by Dov and Meyer Noy, Folklore Research Center Studies, Vol. II, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1971 [in Hebrew/Yiddish].)

As evidence that an older form of sher danced in rows has persisted among Hasidim, Gellerman cites **Zvi Friedhaber**: “Where, one may ask, are the ‘Sher’ and the ‘Sherele’, both well-known, and commonly labeled as ‘Chassidic Dances’? These are clearly not real Chassidic dances. On the contrary, they are frowned upon by the whole orthodox community, as they have become mixed dances, danced by





men and women together. But there do exist ‘Sher’ dances danced by Yeshiva students in the form of row-dances.” (“Dramatization in Chassidic Dances”, Israel Dance 1983, edited by Giora Manor, Israel Dance Society, page 5. See also Jill Gellerman, “Keytsed Merokdim” in *Hasidic Dances in Ritual and Celebration: Unpublished Narrative Report prepared for National Endowment for the Humanities, Dance Notation Bureau, 1978, pages 102-119.*)

According to Gellerman, two related figures found in the sher and done in the Hasidic community as longways sets are directly connected to Israeli folk dances: Der hakhnoe tants, better known as iber un unter (over and under), is attributed to the righteous **Rebe Elimelekh of Lizensk** (d.1786 Poland) and is known in Israel as shmoyne shrotsim (“eight insects”). Der Valozhiner tants, a kadril from the Russian town of Volozhin, was the forerunner of the beloved Israeli partner dance Yesh Lanu Tayish (We Have a Goat) created for children by **Raaya Spivak**. For information on der hakhnoe tants, see Yaakov Mazor, “Hasidism: Dance,” *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, edited by Gershon David Hundert, Yale

University Press, 2008, page 680; Shlomo Stern, “Rebbe Elimelech’s Dance,” *Hamodia Magazine*, XII/550, March 12, 2009, pages 20-21; and Menashe Unger, Der ‘Hakhnoe-tants’ in “Di Farshidene Yiddishe Tents,” *Tog Morgen Journal*, August 12, 1959 [in Yiddish].

Contrary to Goldschmidt’s claim that the term “Yiddish dance”... is nowhere to be found in the literature,” Gellerman notes the use of the term in the writings of **Menashe Unger**, whose contributions on yiddishe tents were published in New York’s Jewish press, such as *Morgn Jhurnal* (Morning Journal) at least in the 1950s, if not earlier. Further references on der valozhiner tants and hakhnoe tants can be found in Isaac Rivkind, Chapter 3, “Conductor of Dancing”, in *Klezmorim (Jewish Folk Musicians): A Study in Cultural History*, Futuro Press, 1960, [in Hebrew, with English translation under Resources at www.yiddishdance.com]. See also Jill Gellerman, “Yesh Lanu Tayish (Bridge dance)” and “Rebe Elimelekh’s Tants (‘Over-and-Under’)” in *Hasidic Dances in Ritual and Celebration: Unpublished Narrative Report prepared for National Endowment for the Humanities, Dance Notation Bureau, 1978, pages 43-44, 119-125*; and Adrienne Greenbaum, David Goldfarb, Helen Winkler, and Steve Weintraub, “Yesh, yesh?” *Jewish Music List* jewish-music@lists.jmwc.org, *Jewish Music Digest*, Vol. 37:7, May 7, 2010.

In addition to the important “Palestine Folk Dance Series” brochures, **Gurit Kadman** established the Dance Festivals held at Kibbutz Dalia beginning in 1944, followed by festivals there in 1947, 1951, 1958 and 1968. (The final Dalia Festival was held on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Israeli independence.) These festivals stimulated the phenomenon of Israeli folk dance creation. It was rare at the festivals to show the folk dances that had come from the Diaspora, but an exception was indeed the Sherele. This dance was performed for the festival audience at the second Dalia Festival by a group of elderly European immigrant couples Kadman had brought from a Jewish home for the aged.



In the Yishuv, Kadman was a charismatic and forceful leader who inspired countless dancers, folk dance creators and choreographers to join the Israeli folk dance movement. An early site where Kadman taught folk dance was the Ben Shemen moshav, one of the first villages established on Jewish National Fund land. There was a farming component but it was most famous for its “Youth Village,” which began in 1906 as an orphanage for child victims from the Kishinev Pogrom in Imperial Russia. The director of the Youth Village and agricultural school, **Siegfried Lehmann**, invited Kadman to teach folk dancing for the Ben Shemen children’s program in the 1920s. This began a long connection between Ben Shemen and Kadman.

Before 1940, there were already key dance creations which became beloved folk dances. These included Hora Agadati. According to Kadman’s “Horra Agadati” [sic] Palestine Folk Dance Series Number 1, **Baruch Agadati** lived in a hut on the Tel Aviv seaside near the New Workers’ Ohel Theatre, [the Tent Theater Company of the Federation of Unions Theater]. The actors turned to Agadati, known as a painter and theatre dancer, to create a new group dance for them. They thought a group dance could be an excellent way to bring both audience and performers together after their performances. At their behest, in 1924, Agadati created just such a dance which became known as Hora Agadati. The Ohel theatre company popularized Agadati’s dance as they performed throughout the Yishuv. Kadman writes in her brochure that Agadati saw his dance being performed at the Dalia Festival in 1944 “hardly recognizing his creation though he says with deep pleasure, ‘Now it has become a real folk dance with a life of its own’.”

Jill Gellerman notes that the Ka’et Ensemble, a modern Israeli dance troupe of Orthodox Jewish men (seen in New York in the winter of 2018), took inspiration from the work of Baruch Agadati in creating their dance Heroes. In the 1920s, Agadati created dance portraits of Jews, which he performed in the Yishuv

and on tour in Europe, the United States, and South America. In his theatre dance Hasidic Ecstasy, Agadati portrayed a Hasidic Jew, complete with prayer shawl, causing much rabbinic scorn and criticism in the Yishuv.

Gellerman suggests that the persistent interest in Hasidic culture in the Yishuv during the 1920s was manifest in repeated theatrical productions of Ansky’s *The Dybbuk* by the Habima Theatre, in Hasidic folk tales as source material for other productions, and in literature, such as the stories by **Y. L. Peretz** and **S. Y. Agnon**. (See: Dalia Manor, *Art in Zion: The Genesis of Modern National Art in Jewish Palestine*, Routledge, 2005, pages 151-155.)

Gellerman cites **Anat Helman**, who argues: “Although the national elite that dominated most cultural activity in Tel Aviv promoted Hebrewness as opposed to Jewishness, Land-of-Israel as opposed to diasporic values, and secularism as opposed to religion, shades of the Jewish, the diasporic, and the religious entered through the back door, for instance in the form of Hasidic ... music.”



From left to right: Jill Gellerman, Alen Bern - the founder of YSW and Judith Brin Ingber in front of the original bauhaus Building of Arts



Judith Brin Ingber, in the middle of the circle, teaching students from theatre and dance courses in Western Galilee College – the dance “Water-Water”. In the foreground Danielle On from the kibbutz Geaton

Helman notes: “Secular Sabbath gatherings organized by **Chaim Nachman Bialik** (Oneg Shabbat) ... included public singing of Hasidic songs.” (See Anat Helman, “Was There Anything Particularly Jewish about ‘The First Hebrew City’?” in Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jonathan Karp, eds., *The Art of Being Jewish in Modern Times*, University Of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, page 120.)

Quoting **Dalia Manor**, Gellerman contends: “Hasidic dance was proudly credited as the continuation of the ancient dance in the Bible. Presenting Hasidic music and dance not as a product of a religious movement that had emerged in Eastern Europe but as a tradition that is rooted in the ancient, pre-diaspora origin of the nation marks another attempt to harness Jewish religious practices and folklore to Zionist ideals.”

By the 1950s, Gellerman concludes, one of the most prolific pioneers of Israeli folk dance, **Rivka Sturman**, was already drawing on the dances of the Hasidim as source material for her choreography. As part of Sturman’s search for connection with the ancient Hebrew tradition and ‘authentic’ Jewish folklore, for example, she created the Hasidic inspired Israeli folk dance *Zemer Atik*. Hasidic dancing then – whether in artistic production, literary discourse, or the real thing – was a key influence on Israeli dance, and

interest in Hasidic culture was fairly widespread in the Yishuv and after.

While the influence of Hasidic culture cannot be disputed, the influence of Expressionist trained European dancers is easier to trace in the development of Israeli folk dances. Well before the first Dalia Festival in 1944, many physical education teachers who had trained in the European Expressionist movement in their native Germany and Austria were creative in many Yishuv venues. There were original celebrations with dance in schools, kibbutzim and towns documented in the book by **Yaacov Shavit** and **Shoshana Sitton**, *Staging and Stagers in Modern Jewish Palestine: The Creation of Festive Lore in a New Culture, 1882-1948*, trans. by Chaya Naor, Wayne State University Press, 2004.

A case in point is the dance created before the Dalia Festivals, *Mayim, Mayim*. The development of the dance is contentious, with Kadman claiming in her *Palestine Folk Dance Series Number 3* that it was anonymously choreographed “as a real kibbutz creation of the new Jewish Palestine, born in Degania.” The controversy is documented in Chapter 6 of *Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance*, **Judith Brin Ingber**, ed., Wayne State University Press, 2011, page 166, note 19. We agree with Goldschmidt: Elsa Dublon created *Mayim, Mayim*.

In 1937, the dancers for Dublon’s work were members of Kibbutz Na’an. Finding water was indeed a reason to celebrate and the kibbutz had called on Dublon to create their water festival. The resulting *Mayim, Mayim* became the iconic dance of the Yishuv, also favored far beyond, by Zionists dancing in Europe and the US and wherever Jews wanted a connection to the Land of Israel.

One can see how Dublon inspired the kibbutz dancers to express flowing water from the very beginning of the dance with its four step phrase that from then on became known as the “*Mayim*” step. Afterwards, other folk dance creators often incorporated it into new dances, simply referring to the pattern as the “*Mayim*” step. Dublon explained her thinking in an interview by the dance historian **Zvi Friedhaber**. She said,



“Yehuda (Sharett) gave me his song and I made it into a whole ceremony. My dance began with (4) steps which I felt expressed waves of water. The next part, in which the dancers entered the circle, (surging forward and lifting their arms in unison) expressed the flowing of the water from the well... as I was choreographing for untrained dancers, I had to devise simple steps...” (see Zvi Friedhaber, *The Development of Folk Dance in Israel*, 1987/1988, p. 34). These effective gestures befit Dublon who was a professional European Expressive modern dancer trained by **Mary Wigman** in Germany. (See Patricia Stoeckemann, “Emigranten”, *tanzdrama magazin*, nr. 42, 3/1998, p. 24.)

Yardena Cohen is another important figure in the development of Israeli dance going back to the 1930s. Regarding the concept of Hebrew culture, mentioned in Goldschmidt’s article, Yardena Cohen, a native born Israeli, embodied the term Hebrew dance. She won first prize for her three original solos in the 1937 National Dance Contest held in Tel Aviv at Mugrabi Theatre ...searching for the most original Hebraic dance. The public could vote, encouraging the judging with such involved participation. (For more information, see Nina S. Spiegel “Embodying Hebrew Culture: Aesthetics, Athletics, and Dance in the Jewish Community of Mandate Palestine”, Wayne State University Press, 2013, pages 108-111.) Cohen’s dance studio was open to all children in Haifa regardless of religion; she had Muslim, Druze and Jewish dancers in a remarkably inclusive environment. Her festivals in the

Galilee kibbutzim often featured neighboring Druze and Muslim villagers. They could be seen in her celebrations for Kibbutz Ein Hashofet and Sha’ar HaAmakim. She often argued with Kadman that pageantry was not folk dance, but despite their disagreements, her dance *Machol Ovadia* and sections from her *Grape Harvest Pageant* were performed at the 1944 Dalia.

Gertud Kraus, another Expressionist modern European dancer, was a dance pioneer of the Yishuv whose works were popular and influential. Her company was often accompanied by the Palestine Philharmonic or seen in Habima Theatre productions. Her own training, charisma and imagination in Vienna were the underpinnings for her European career and her later influence.

In the 1944 Dalia Israeli Folk Dance Festival and afterwards, she also influenced folk dance including through her own company dance member **Yonatan Karmon**. (He chose to continue his dance career mainly in folk dance.)

The period of World War II caused much criticism of dance in the Yishuv, especially because many were critical of public dancing and celebration, aimed at the big folk festival planned for Kibbutz Dalia. It seemed horrible to some to dance as the Jews of Europe were being chased and murdered by the Nazis; also there was sorrow and frustration because the British were preventing European refugees from reaching Palestine. At the time, Kraus’s dance company performed her powerful “*Davka Dance*” (*davka* in Hebrew means ‘in spite of’). Kadman, with Kraus’s permission, called the entire Dalia Festival the *Davka Festival*, meaning that despite



Fans of Israeli folk dances dancing in sports hall (under the guidance of Sagi Azran, Munich, January 2012). Photo: Matti Goldsmidt



Many elements from Eastern Europe influenced Israeli dance (Revital Dance Company in the Second Horati Dance Camp in Quinns, NY, June 2017). Photo: Matti Goldsmidt

the tragedies, we will dance to express life.

Part of the excitement of the Davka Festival was seeing dances from all over the Yishuv which drew people from near and far. Several thousand traveled up into the Ephraim Mountains on dirt roads surprising everyone in the organization and in the kibbutz with the arriving numbers. Kadman knew of creators working throughout the Yishuv, and she had invited the creators to bring their dances both to teach them and to perform. Those invited included **Rivka Sturman** from Kibbutz Ein Harod and **Lea Bergstein** from Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan. There, Bergstein had already created many kinds of festivals, including her Hag Ha'omer pageant at Passover. One of her Omer dances, Shibolet b'Sadeh, reflected Bergstein's European Expressionist training. The dancers in a circle held their raised hands palm to palm swaying as if they were the waving stalks of grain in the field. Bergstein had arranged for musicians and the kibbutzniks to go out into the fields of ripening wheat to dance on a specially constructed stage. The audience sat and watched outdoors.

Tscheska [Zashka] Rosenthal at Kibbutz Gan Shmuel created her Hag Ha'asif pageant (which was shown at Dalia in 1947). For the first festival, **Sara Levi-Tanai** came from Kibbutz Ramat David and her kibbutz dancers performed her El Ginat Egoz, also singing to Levi-Tanai's

original song by the same name inspired by Solomon's Song of Songs. These women and others plus Ze'ev Havazelet were the respected folk dance creators of the early period.

Brin Ingber does not agree with **Matti Goldschmidt** that **Shalom Hermon** was part of the first generation of Israeli folk dance creators. Hermon was a student of both **Yardena Cohen** and **Gurit Kadman**, beginning his creative work after World War II, when he returned to the Yishuv from London. Hermon's contemporaries amongst Israeli folk dance creators were **Yoav Ashriel**, **Yonatan Karmon** and **Moshiko HaLevy**. It is worth noting that, with the exception of **Ze'ev Havatzelet**, the first generation was made up of women creators. From then on, the men became prominent with only a few women stand-outs. (See interviews with Israeli folk dance creators in Chapter 6, "Roots of Israeli Folk Dance", Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance, Judith Brin Ingber, ed., Wayne State University Press, 2011, pages 99-171.)

Brin Ingber confirms Goldschmidt's assertion that "Israeli folk dance would be non-existent in Germany without (non-Jewish) Germans." She had first-hand experience: of the 29 YSW workshop participants, perhaps only one was Jewish. But many of the students studied Israeli folk dance, and some even were teaching Israeli folk dance in their various hometowns.



One of the YSW Festival teachers was **Medhat Aldabaal**, a Syrian refugee dancer who is an expert in Dabke, the Arab traditional line dance. It turned out there was much overlapping with Dabke influences seen in the early Israeli folk dances. For example, there were shared six-count rhythmic phrases, jumps and quick stepping patterns. Gellerman confirmed that the dances of Hasidic men, while rooted in Eastern Europe, have also incorporated traditional Arabic, Druze, and Turkish elements in the Israeli context.


One of the wonderful things about folk dancing in whatever era is that it brings everyone together, exemplified by the historical dances in addition to the creative work by all the different students joining and sharing together.

These influences emerged in Hasidic horas and debkas even before 1948, in the unique dance traditions on the holiday of Lag B'omer in Meron, near the holy city of Safed. Gellerman added that local customs can be traced back to the Middle Ages involving pilgrimage of both Hasidic Jews and Druze on various festivals to the sites at Mount Meron believed to be the graves of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and his son. According to **Dalia Manor**, articles describing the festivities (hillula) and the dances of Ashkenazi Hasidim alongside "oriental" (Mizrahi) Jews and Arabs were published regularly in the press as early as 1908/9. Manor notes, "One of these articles ... recounts how the Ashkenazi Hasidim and the Sephardim practiced their... dances in separate groups. Eventually after a long ecstatic dance the groups united and danced together." (See *Art in Zion: The Genesis of Modern National Art in Jewish Palestine*, Routledge, 2005, page 150.)

At the invitation of Professor **Henia Rottenberg**, director of the Western Galilee College dance program in Acre, Israel, **Judith Brin Ingber** took Dabke variations she learned from **Medhat Aldabaal** at YSW with her when she taught a combined class of dance and theater students. Her December, 2017 class was her fourth year teaching the students, but this class was

a particularly special experience. It is relevant to explain who makes up the WGC student population, a complete mixture of citizens of the Galilee. Many of the Israeli students are first in their families to study in college; they come from small villages and nearby cities including Haifa and Acre, as well as kibbutzim. Some are Palestinian Muslim and some are Palestinian Catholics. Others are new Jewish immigrants from the Former Soviet Union and some are from Mizrahi families. In addition to their theatre and dance classroom studies, the students have other cooperative projects and performances which they have taken to community centers throughout the region. An example was a puppet show freed of dependence on any one language, making it enjoyable for Arabic or Hebrew speaking children.

Brin Ingber decided what had been offered in the YSW dance workshops in Germany could be appreciated by all in the class. It was timely to the WGC students to all learn the Dabke Arabic variations from Aldabaal which were a little different than those forms known in the Galilee by some of the Palestinian students. (One of the dance students, **Tamara Nikola**, directs her own Dabke dance group). It was also relevant for the entire class to learn early Israeli folk dances of the Yishuv such as Hora Agadati and Mayim, Mayim. Additionally, it was also instructive to learn the Israeli theatre dance history. The students traced how the Dabke steps influenced Israeli folk dance steps and how expressive modern dance elements were present in the early Israeli folk dances.

Of the 30 or so students in the room, no one knew both Arab Dabke and the particular Israeli folk dances. After learning the dances, the students worked in three different groups to come up with their own dances, taking steps and gestures from the repertory to create their own variations. It was a fine opportunity for sharing cultural traditions in addition to being great fun. One of the wonderful things about folk dancing in whatever era is that it brings everyone together, exemplified by the historical dances in addition to the creative work by all the different students joining and sharing together. 



Dance:
Itzik Ben Dahan

Translation:
Benny Levy

T'filot – Prayers

At age 23, Itzik began to folk dance with **Perry Shachaf** at Beit Oved [a moshav on the outskirts of Ness Ziona] and later with **Shimon David** at Givat Brenner [a kibbutz south of Rehovot]. After a number of years, he tried choreographing dances. His first dance was “Bishvil Ktzat Me’ahavatech – For a Bit of Your Love” [“Por Un Poco De Tu Amor”] – a couple dance to a song sung by the singer, Antonio.

Up until 2015, Itzik had served in the IDF for 28 years while pursuing his academic studies. He was jumping between two worlds – the tough and serious army routine and the fun and joy of dance.

Over that period of time, Itzik choreographed about 40 folk-dances. Some of them are still done in sessions. The circle dances “Yaldi Sheli – My Son” and “Yaldati Sheli – My Daughter”, were choreographed when his children were born and, of course, he has choreographed many other good dances.

Itzik collaborated with **Dudu Barzilay** on the dance “Nedivim – Generous” and with the singer **Ofer Lev** when he was choreographing the dance to his song, “Eich La’ga’t Be’Einayich – How to Touch your Eyes” which later became a very popular couple dance. Itzik was a co-lyricist with Ofer Lev on other songs such as “LeShanot Sidrei Olam – To Change the Order of the World” and “Bo Ti’hi’ye Same’ach – Come, Be Happy”.

In 2007, Itzik completed the folk dance instructors’ course. In practice, he began teaching only two years ago at the Yarka dance session together with **Benny Bar**. About one year ago, he opened another session with **Mazal Tomer** in Gedera.

Itzik says that it is very important for folk dancers to pursue a good foundation for dancing from the instructors. He feels that he received a firm foundation from his own instructors and therefore it is important to him to perform dances correctly and accurately.

As a choreographer, he has a great appreciation for the choreography of a dance and its performance and accuracy as the choreographer meant for the folk dancers to perform it. He sees the importance of hand and body movements, rhythm and meaning. Therefore, as an instructor, he tries to be very careful and accurate while teaching dances on the floor (because he too is a choreographer).

About the dance, “T’filot”, he relates:

One night, when I was returning from a trip to Jerusalem, I first heard the song, T’filot” by the singer **Shani Badichi**. Immediately, its rhythm fascinated me. Later that evening, I went online to search for the song using sentences I remembered: “Prayers ascend with the wind” and “we will have tranquility...”

I connected with these two simple requests and in choreographing the steps for this dance, I was looking to express the motion of the wind. The double stamping, for example, emphasizes the special rhythm of the song. The hand movements also have meaning in expressing a kind of prayer request upwards toward heaven.

I had excellent cooperation with the singer, Shani Badichi, who visited some of the dance sessions and performed the song live as the dancers performed the dance on the floor. This was a unique interaction between the audience of dancers, who showed their appreciation, and the singer.



Dance session with Itzik Ben Dahan

T'filot

Meter: 4/4

Formation: Circle, hands free

Part I: Face CCW

- 1-2 Step fwd: R, L.
- 3-4 Fwd: R-tog-R.
- 5-6 Full turn left on the circle line with two steps: L, R.
- 7-8 Fwd: L-tog-L and end facing center.
- 9 Stamp R, accented step R to rt. side.
- 10-12 Step L behind R, R to rt. side, cross L over R.
- 13-16 Repeat counts & 9-12.
- 17-32 Repeat counts 1-16.

Part II: Face Center

- 1-2 Moving fwd into center: R-tog-R.
- 3-4 Fwd: L-tog L.
- 5-6 Step fwd R while raising arms upward, rock back onto L lowering arms and facing CCW.
- 7-8 Sway R, sway L.
- 9-10 Step R to rt. side and hold while lifting arms upward (circling arms from in front of body, upward overhead, out and down to sides).
- 11-12 Moving sideward out of center: L behind R, R to rt. side, L across R while lowering arms.

- 13-14 Step R-pivoting 3/4 turn rt. to end facing center.
- 15-16 Yem. L bwd.
- 17-32 Repeat counts 1-16.

Part III: Face Center

- 1-2 Kick R heel fwd, step fwd R, L.
- 3-4 Step R fwd, rock back onto L turning rt. to face CCW.
- 5-6 Moving out of circle turning 3/4 rt.: R-tog-R to end facing center.
- 7-8 Yem. L.
- 9-10 Step R side and raise rt. arm to rt. side, sway back onto L
- 11-12 Moving on the line of the circle and lowering rt. arm: step R behind L, L to left, cross R over L.
- 13-16 Repeat counts 9-12 with opposite footwork and arm.
- 17-32 Repeat counts 1-16.

Part IV: Face Center

- 1-2 With elbows bent and palms facing fwd, move into center: R, L with hands moving sideward rt., left with each step.
- 3-4 Fwd: R-tog-R (continue hand motion sideward to rt.)
- 5-8 Continue toward center, repeat counts 1-4 with opposite footwork and hand direction.
- 9-10 Step R fwd while crossing hands at wrist [chest level], rock back on L lowering hands and face CCW.
- 11-12 Face slightly to rt. and move out of circle with R-tog-R.
- 13-14 Cross L over R, R to rt.
- 15-16 Continue moving towards line of circle in rhythm of step-tog-step: L behind R, R to rt., L over R. [Second time through the dance, end with a pivot left on L to face center.]

Repeat dance.

Repeat part II counts 1-16.

Step r fwd raising arms, hold. 🙌

Instructions notated by **Honey Goldfein**

T'filot
Lyrics, Music and Singer: Shanni Badichi

T'filot olot lemala im ha'ruach....
Hashana ti'hi'ye li a'hava, a'mok betoch haneshama
Ha'or sheba'ainayim, yadlik et hashamayim
Tomar li she'ani shelcha, ze kol ma she'ani tzricha
Otcha bein hayadayim, rak mechabek

T'filot olot lemala im haruach,
Ma at mevakeshet le'atzmech?
Mehashamayim, tnu lanu lanu'ach,
Hasha'na yihiye lanu shaket, yihiye lanu sha'ket

Hashana ti'hi'ye li a'hava, im a'chapes emtza et hatshuva
Ulai evne li bayit, al yad atzey hazayit
Dema'ot shel osher vesimcha,
Ze kol ma she'ani tzricha
Otcha bein hayadayim, rak mechabek

T'filot olot lemala im haruach,
Ma at mevakeshet le'atzmech?
Mehashamayim, tnu lanu lanu'ach,
Hasha'na yihiye lanu shaket, yihiye lanu sha'ket

T'filot olot lemala im haruach
Yihiye lanu sha'ket

One night,
when I was
returning
from a trip to
Jerusalem, I
first heard the
song, T'filot"
by the singer
Shani Badichi.
Immediately,
its rhythm
fascinated
me.



Prayers

Prayers ascend with the wind...
This year, I'll have love, deep in the soul
The light in my eyes will light up the sky
Tell me I am yours, that's all I need
You in my arms, just embracing

Prayers ascend with the wind
What are you asking for yourself?
From the heavens, give us rest
This year, we will have tranquility, we will have calm

This year I'll find love, if I search I'll find the answer
Perhaps I'll build my home, near the olive trees
Tears of joy and happiness
That's all I need
You in my arms, just embracing

Prayers ascend with the wind
What are you asking for yourself?
From the heavens, give us rest
This year, we will have tranquility, we will have calm

Prayers arise with the wind
This year we will have tranquility



DANCING ON THE 5TH OF IYAR AND WELCOMING THE SABBATH CELEBRATING THE 70TH YEAR OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL



Gadi Bitton

Gadi Bitton, the Artistic Director of the show, tells us about the dance events on Israeli Independence Day

Translation: Benny Levy

How can Israeli folk dancing become accessible to everyone? How can we attract a new generation of folk dancers? How can we bring folk dancing back to the people? These questions have plagued me for years...

For the first time since the folk dance movement began functioning, this year we were given an official opportunity for national recognition and exposure on the national stage. The production, "Dancing on the 5th of Iyar and Welcoming the Sabbath", was one of the five main events in the celebrations for the 70th Anniversary of Israel's independence.

At the beginning of the process, when the vision crystallized, my main idea was to touch people, get them excited and involve the general public and, rather than create an event for the regular folk dancers, make it a song and dance event that would be enjoyable for everyone.

Seventy years ago, when **David Ben-Gurion** declared the establishment of the State of Israel, the masses burst onto the streets and spontaneously formed circles and danced the Hora. This dance was a spontaneous expression of supreme joy. The dance united, as one, all the residents of the State. That's what we wanted to replicate exactly at this event.

It was important to me that as many dance instructors as possible would take part in the event and, indeed, 80 dance leaders participated in 15 different locations. Participation and joy surrounded all of us.

All the participants – the dance leaders, the singers, the dance troupes, the production team and all the partners in the project – gave it their all and the result – exceeded expectations. If we managed to touch the hearts of the people – our goal was reached.

If along the way we managed to bring more people into the circle of folk dancers, present folk dancing in the streets to all – adults, youth and children – then this is our blessing.

The Minister of Culture and Sport, **Miri Regev**, had initiated the event and defined it as one of the official events of 70th Anniversary of the State of Israel. The production was led by **Benda Productions** and **Dana Gorsky**, who worked with dozens of producers, suppliers, photographers, designers and others.

The event took place in 15 locations throughout the country; (see photos from each community). In preparation for the event, I choreographed a dance, "Yisrael Sheli – My Israel", which has already been danced all over the world. I tried to create a dance that would be appropriate for the mass audience of people who had never danced before. Yet, the dance had to be interesting enough for experienced folk dancers. Also, of no less importance, it is a dance whose movements capture the movements we all know from having seen the historical video clips from 1948, during which the population danced in the streets.

I hope and feel that the sense of national pride we created here has also permeated us, the dance instructors as well. For a long time, we have only been in competition with one another with nothing that connects us all. This event and its importance are now clear to the leaders of the State, who discovered how nice and important this field is within Israeli culture, and they will support it from now on.

I hope that we will continue to magnify the echoes created by the event – wherever each of us is located – and we should open more and more beginners' sessions. We should also introduce folk dancing in those areas where they might not have danced before, and continue to expand the circle of dancers.



Beit Gavriel



Alon Shvut



Dimona



Meitar

