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NIRKODA

Magazine No 102 | January 2020

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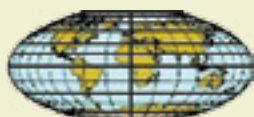
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Israeli Dance Institute Press Release

Maurice Stone, founder and Chairman of the Israeli Dance Institute, has been awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday honours' list for services to "dance and community cohesion".

For over 40 years Maurice has worked tirelessly to promote Israeli dance worldwide, particularly reaching out to emerging Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, and to non-Jewish groups to enhance their understanding of Judaism and Israel. The Institute, a registered charity, has created unique programmes for children & youth, providing invaluable resources for teaching about Judaism and Israel for teachers and youth leaders.

Here in the UK, the Institute has, over many years welcomed thousands of people to weekly dance classes and performing troupes for all ages. These troupes perform at high profile Jewish events, Simchas, synagogues, and care homes and represent the Jewish community in interfaith contexts.



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Dear Readers,

We're transitioning to digital...

This is the first issue of "Rokdim-Nirkoda" that is not being printed on paper, but only in a digital version. The world is changing at a dizzying pace and so we too must adapt to changes. We really wanted to continue producing the magazine in print. We see the importance of holding something tangible in your hands as well as keeping it in the library.

Books are still released in print and most daily newspapers continue to produce a printed version together with the digital version. That is how we produced the previous two issues. We also support the "sustainability" of the earth and realize that any extra paper inevitably "contributes" to deforestation and environmental pollution.

We are also aware that some of our subscribers do not use the Internet at all and for them we may not be available right now. We apologize in advance but for us, in reality, this is a necessity. At the same time, we are looking for ways to make the magazine digitally available to everyone and we will keep you informed.

Given all the above, in the end, the economic factor has tipped the scales. We do not have the financial capability to produce and send a printed magazine by mail and hence, the only choice for us is this digital magazine.

We are proud that our magazines have an honored place at the **National Library of Israel, the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance, the Dance Library of Israel** in Tel Aviv and the [Widener Memorial] **Library at Harvard University** in Cambridge, Massachusetts. We are sure that these sites can hold digital versions as well, and that other public places will also keep these magazines. For us, producing this magazine is a cultural and an historical asset to the folk dance world and we will make every effort to ensure its continuation.

In this issue:

5 [The Carpenter, The Choreographer and The Carved Dance](#) / *David Ben-Asher / Shani Karni Aduculesi* • A few months ago, we lost **Yankele Dekel z"l, from the vatikim – old timers generation. **David Ben Asher** had the opportunity to meet him at his home and hear, in his own words, about his various dance and other activities through the years.**

10 [In Memoriam](#) / *Dr. Dan Ronen z"l (March 17, 1933–January 2, 2020) / Shlomo Maman*

11 [The Debka Of My Life](#) / *Heli Livneh / Shani Karni Aduculesi* • **Heli Livneh (who has joined our team of writers) met with **Moshe Eskayo** for a comprehensive and witty repartee with a dear, energetic man who transmitted the Israeli spirit through his dance camps in the USA and thanks to him we have the production of high quality recordings until today.**

20 [The 2019 Dance Awards At The Karmiel Festival](#) / *David Ben-Asher / Ruth Goodman and Benny Levy*

24 [Ashdodance Festival / A Glorious Celebration of Dance and Song](#) / *David Ben-Asher / Ruth Goodman and Benny Levy* • **David Ben Asher, who "dances at all the festivals", attended and was impressed by the dance awards ceremony at the Karmiel Festival and the various events at the Ashdod Festival, especially, the "Tribute to Veteran Dancers".**

28 [Simply People / They Also Dance In Poland...](#) / *Maya Geva / Shani Karni Aduculesi* **Maya Geva attended a dance camp in Poland with instructor **Michal Bachar** and brings her impressions to us.**

31 [Little Stories from Long Ago...](#) / *Chapter 3: Memories / Tzipora Dagan / Ruth Goodman* **Tzipora Dagan (the sister of **Yankele Dekel z"l**) gives us a nostalgic glimpse of the past.**

34 [Izun \(Balance\) / The First Place Winner at the 2019 Karmiel Festival](#) / *Translation: Ruth Goodman* • The Dance of the Month is devoted to the dance, "Izun – Balance", by **Galia Boaron that took first place in the choreography competition at the 2019 Karmiel Festival.**

39 [Alex's Experiences](#) / *Alex Huber* • This time is about "Those Were the Days" – **Nourit Grinfeld's monthly nostalgia dance session as it celebrates its sixth anniversary and its many fans.**

Happy reading and dancing,

Yaron Meishar, Ruth Goodman and Danny Uziel – Editors



Yaron Meishar



Ruth Goodman



Danny Uziel



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■ **Editors:**

Yaron Meishar, Ruth Goodman, Danny Uziel

■ **Associate Editorial Staff –**

Nirkoda: Shani Karni Aduculesi, Judy Fixler, Honey Goldfein, Benny Levy, Ruth Schoenberg

■ **Design:** Anna Kadary

■ **Editorial Office:**

Rokdim, 96/35 Moshe Dayan Rd., Tel Aviv 67320

Tel: 972-52-5620447,

Fax: 972-3-5614651

Email: rokdim@rokdim.co.il

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

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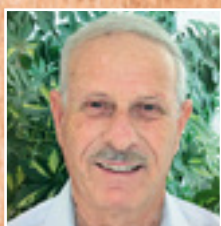
ברמיאל. מרכז החיים בנליל



The Carpenter, The Choreographer and The Carved Dance

From the great Dalia Festivals, through performances of impressive choreographies across Israel, to participation in festivals throughout the world, years of instruction in Russia and other countries and wood carving as a carpentry expert.

Yankele Dekel – a unique character within Israel's dance heritage.



David Ben-Asher

Translation:

Shani Karni Aduculesi

Photos:

David Ben-Asher
and family album

I enter the Dekel family home in Hofit [in central Israel on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, near Netanya], and at first glance, surrounding me is a wonderful gallery with dozens of carved wooden sculptures, different shapes, different sizes, figurines, the work of an artist. Upon further observation, I discover the thread that connects all the sculpted wooden figures – something dynamic, flowing, eye catching and captivating.

After the explanation by **Zohara**, his wife, and the in depth explanations of Yankele himself, I realize the unique artistic message of the wooden works scattered about the walls, dressers, closets, tables, display cabinets, in every corner of the house. The message is consistent and unique – all the perfectly carved characters are characterized by one main motif – movement and dance.

At once, I am exposed to this unique artistic combination, this dual sided artist, **Yankele Dekel** by name, the art of sculpting along with the art of dance, the essence of his personality and his purpose in life.

And indeed, the story of Yankele's life and creations is an inseparable mixture of two art forms. Supposedly, there is no connection between them, however, here is the proof that the connection exists and it is strong and firm and has accompanied him through 70 years of creation. "I always dreamed of being a carpenter, I always dreamed of being a dancer", Yankele says about himself in a special interview for this article.

These dreams – the essence of his life, making them come true – is the essence of his creations.

The story begins in 1936, at Shenkin Street in Tel-Aviv. The son of parents, both doctors, who had come from Warsaw, to a neat 4 room house, "high society" of those days. The continuation of Dekel's life is an ongoing nomadic saga, integrating into the diversity of Israeli life, experiencing difficulties and frustrations, beauty and elevation, struggling and coping, failures and successes – a paradigm of a view of the country, in every sense of the word.

*Today, Yankele lives in Hofit and is married to Zohara, who is also a folk dance instructor, the father of **Na'ama, Tzachi and Michal** – all of whom have danced in his troupe, the grandfather of 10 grandchildren and a great grandfather of two great grandchildren.*



Yankele and Zohara Dekel with his carved figurines



Boys and girls from Lehakat Emek Hefer in "The Tcherkessia" – from a pioneer dance medley



□ 15 years – 10 stations in life – Yankele tells us:

When I was 5, my father left home, my sister **Tzipora** joined the Palmach, and I was left with my grandparents. I had a difficult childhood. When I was 9, my father past away and it was decided to remove me from the house. Since then, I've moved between different Kibbutzim and institutes as a child and a teenager. At first I was sent to a school of HaOved HaTzioni (The Zionist Worker) in Magdiel [a Youth Aliya boarding school]. I was placed with a group of children who were all new immigrants, holocaust survivors. I was the only Sabra. Perhaps because of that, I got chocolate from the security guards at the place. Disconnected from the family and burdened with loneliness, I cried a lot at night.

From there, I was transferred to Kibbutz Ramat David for two years. It was good there. Every day I traveled to Gvat by a two mule carriage to bring bread to the Kibbutz. From there I was transferred to Ben Shemen Bet (now known as "Neurim") – then to training at Kibbutz Hatzerim [west of Be'er Sheva in the south] and Ma'agan Michael [on the coast between Haifa and Hadera]. At a young age, I had already dreamed of being a carpenter. At Ma'agan Michael I taught youth groups "Galim" and "Havatzet" and there I discovered my second dream – to be a dancer.

In 1952, I went for the first time to a folk dance instructors course at the Histadrut directed by **Tirtza Hodes**. Along with **Yonatan Gabay, Dan Ronen** and **Yankele Levy** I was certified as an instructor, with a proper certificate. Beforehand, at Neurim, I studied carpentry and so, at the same time, I made my life's dreams come true – carpentry and dancing.

I joined the Nahal Brigade of the United Kibbutz, at the fortified settlement, Ktzi'ot [overlooking the al-Auja junction]. As part of Nahal, I attended a folk dance

instructor course at Bayt Daras (a Nahal farm school). While in Nahal, I began demonstrating my dance talents by organizing parties, shows, entertainment nights, camp fires, trips, dance sessions for the members, organizing holiday events and all cultural activities. I continued this for years in Ma'agan Michael, becoming more and professional every year.

My work assignment at the Kibbutz in fishing did not match my aspirations and skills, which led me to leave for a new life with my two loves – dance and carpentry.

In continuation of my cultural activity, as part of my choreographic work at the Hefer Valley Regional Council, I was exposed to my third love, who became my first love – **Zohara Belfer** – who became my wife and the mother of my three children.

Eventually I moved to Hofit, where I live in my well-kept home until today.

For dozens of years Yankele has been at the center of folk dance in Israel and around the world. His large scale track record includes stage shows and choreographies, the founding and directing of the "Emek Hefer" dance troupe for 30 years, dance performances at national events, on the main stages in festivals and in mass



Naama Dekel Shetrit in a Shabbat scene – A Sabbath in the Village, performed by the Emek Hefer Dance Troupe to the melody "Yarda Ha' Shabbat – The Sabbath Descends"



Lehakat Emek Hefer girls, including Naama, in a dance from the scene – Orcha Bamidbar, depicting camels

dance sessions. He created popular folk dances. He was involved in Zionist educational activities throughout the world, and mainly in The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) along with the Jews of the post-Soviet Republic and other countries. Included were training courses in the fields of choreography, music, singing, drumming, set design, lighting, sound, costumes, holidays, sources and ethnic dances. He is an oracle in the field of dance. There is not enough room in this article to include all that he has accomplished.

□ **Yankele, tell us about your choreographies**

At the Ma'agan Michael Kibbutz, in honor of the 'Day of the Sea' holiday, we performed the dance scene, "The Fishermen". The dance was performed on a stage in a fish pond and then also on a barge in the Kishon Port [the Kishon River estuary to the Mediterranean] and at the Dalia Dance Festival". At the Youth Village "Ne'urim", I organized dancing and evening activities for Friday night activities and holidays. With them I put on a show for the (Israeli military) Gadna (youth battalions) parade with 64 dancers, a show marking 30 years of the Youth Aliyah, in an assembly at Heichal HaTarbut [also known in English as the Culture Palace, officially the Charles Bronfman Auditorium in Tel Aviv], and a dance scene of "Kibbutz Galuyot – The Ingathering of the Exiles" into Israel with 80 dancers.

In 1959, at the initiative of **Zohara** and the council's chair, **Haim Ben Tzvi**, I founded the "Emek Hefer" dance troupe. I had been the director and the instructor of the troupe for 30 years. The manager of the troupe was **Yosef Sharf** preceded by **Naftaly Ben Sira** and music director **Shabtai Safra**. The images in my choreography mainly expressed rural life, work, agriculture, and the joy of creation.



Yankele Dekel playing the tambourine (tof miriam) with the Second Emek Hefer Troupe in 1962



Zohara and Yankele Dekel at Binyanei Ha'Uma with the dancers from Leahkat Emek Hefer's dance, "HaChalutzim HaTze'irim – The Young Pioneers", together with the veteran pioneer – David Ben-Gurion

Some of the important staged creations for the Emek Hefer troupe were Befat Hakfar – On the Outskirts of the Village, in 1961 on the occasion of the settlement's 50th anniversary. In this dance, the boys symbolize the field machines – the harvester and the combine [today, the combine harvester, or simply combine, is a machine designed to efficiently harvest a variety of grain crops] and the girls are the reaped harvested sheaves. In the first scene, "Ha'rishonim – The First [Settlers/Pioneers]", I staged the First Aliyah with Cherkessiya, Polka and Kozachok, and in another dance scene there was an emphasis on ethnic dances – Hassidic, Yemenite, Romanian, American, Russian, Turkish".

At another event I used **Rivka Shturman's** dance, 'Debka Gilboa', where I staged the men from Emek Hefer [the Sharon plain in central Israel] looking up to conquer the mountain and retreating down the mountain, the pioneering story within the dance. For the Dance Festival in Tzemach [southern part of the Sea of Galilee – the Kinneret] I did a choreography of war; this too is part of our lives.



Yankele Dekel and Amira Sapurim in the dance "Gozi Li"

At once, I am exposed to this unique artistic combination, this dual sided artist, Yankele Dekel by name, the art of sculpting along with the art of dance, the essence of his personality and his purpose in life.



Lehakat Emek Hefer performing in Germany

During my life, I choreographed 40 dance scenes for the stage. A number of staged dances became folk dances, among them are dances which are danced until today: Hora Chefer, Eglei Tal, Am Segula, Mal'u Asamenu Bar, Ba'goren Be'leil Levana and Hora Secharchoret.

I produced shows in Israel from north to south. In 1962 we put on a show at the International Convention Centre – Binyanei Ha'Uma which was seen by the greatest leaders. In 1968, we performed the show "Ha'rishonim" on the central stage at the Dance Festival/Conference in Kibbutz Dalia [in the Ephraim Mountains]. Here I was the choreographer of the agricultural suite, where as part of it, we danced "Mal'u Asamenu Bar" on 5 stages. In the 80's we performed in Siegen, Germany (the 'twin' valley of Emek Hefer). There we performed the dance scenes: "Me'galut Le'geula – From Exile to Redemption", "Havu Levenim – Bring Bricks Over and "Mi'Shut Ba'aretz – Wandering the Country".

Two hundred dancers, musicians and singers. took part in the legendary Emek Hefer troupe where I emphasized the experiences in the land of Israel – children's games, work, water, the building of the land, tradition, the ingathering of immigrants to Israel, holidays in Israel and more. The Emek Hefer troupe is the crowning glory of my choreographic work.

Other productions I've done:

- Tzur Moshe's [a moshav in central Israel] 40th celebration – a show performed on 3 stages with 150 dancers.
- For the municipality of Givatayim, I put together an entire evening of dance, song, music, presenting and hosting along with the municipality troupe. The troupe also performed in the Netherlands together with an IDF [The Israel Defense Forces] delegation.

- Artistic work in Netanya, Hadera, Givatayim and Neve Hadassah.
- The Omer celebration at Kibbutz Shoval [in southern Israel] and holiday celebrations all over Emek Hefer.
- A special show for ORT Israel at the ORT International convention held at the Dan Hotel in Tel-Aviv.
- In 1968, at the Dalia Dance Festival, under the direction of **Shulamit Bat-Dori**, I presented a choreography of a dance scene of the pioneers on 5 stages, and had a solo role in the dance, "Mal'u Asamenu Bar".

For 20 years I took part in teaching at the folk dance instructors course, among them at Wingate with **Nina Orad**, as well as courses in Tel-Aviv, Haifa, Afula, Jerusalem, Givat Washington (also known as Beit Raban) [that initially served as an educational establishment for young Holocaust survivors and now has a secondary school, a midrasha, an ulpan and an academic college], Hakibbutz Hameuchad and more".



Yankele with one of his dance sculptures

□ Yankele, tell us something about your work overseas, in distant places

In 1957 I was a dancer in the Israeli delegation that went to the Youth Festival in Moscow. It was still during the Iron Curtain era, and the meeting with Jews of Silence [those who secretly practiced Judaism] was a very emotional experience for me. We met, quite secretly, with Jews both inside and outside of the synagogue. They literally kissed my feet as a Jew who came from the holy land. **Ze'ev Havatzelet z'l**, who was in charge of this delegation, had selected the top candidates out of 400. I, as mentioned, was one of them. Back then it was a great honor. We wore white shirts which looked like a white stain next to the Aron Ha'kodesh (the Holy Ark holding the Torah)



Yankele Dekel solo at the end of the Kozachok – in a pioneer dance scene

where we distributed 100 prayer kits to the local Jews. We were told that thousands were waiting outside, wanting to touch us. I remember one Jew who came, shook hands with the delegation members and died on the spot. It was a difficult experience.

I also went to the 1959 Youth Festival in Vienna as a dancer with the Israeli delegation. (Full disclosure: the writer of this article also participated in the same festival as a volleyball player on the Israeli team. D.B.A). As a dancer, I also went with delegations to France, The Netherlands, Germany and Belarus.

In Minsk, I directed a month long seminar for the youth of Na'ale (i.e., youth who make aliyah before their parents), for youth from Belarus and the Pribaltika [The Baltic states, also known as the Baltic countries] and afterwards these youth of Na'ale came to Israel to study in high school, receive a diploma and join the army.

□ Tell us about your big zionist mission

In the 90's, my wife **Zohara**, who is also a certified folk dance instructor, and I went on an important mission to The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Initiated by Lishkat Ha'kesher (The Liaison Bureau) [an Israeli governmental liaison organization that maintained contact with Jews living in the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War and encouraged aliyah, i.e., immigration to Israel] with **Yasha (Ya'akov Yasha Kedmi)** at its head, we were invited to instruct dance teachers and leaders to train them for the study of Israeli folk dancing in schools and centers in Israel, and so for eight years around the Tishrei [first month of the Hebrew calendar] holidays – Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot - and at Passover time we mentored hundreds of students and teachers from dance academies during these eight years of this activity. We taught them 40 basic dances with Russian translation. In each seminar there were about 85 students who participated and so we trained about 800 instructors, including how to mount choreographies and arrange Israeli holiday celebrations”.

On one of the trips, we found Zohara's father's house in the city of Sataniv [a town in Khmelnytskyi Oblast] in the Ukraine, a very emotional experience. We also discovered the ruined and neglected [16th century] synagogue, which was beautifully restored by a wealthy man in the community with a sense of history. We saw this as a national mission of utmost importance. After

the seminars, the apprentice instructors went to Jewish communities across The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and brought something meaningful from the culture of Israel to our brethren there. Later on we travelled to the far east of Siberia, to the Kamchatka Peninsula [Russian Far East] and to west Odessa – we started a dancing school in The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) [in Eurasia]”.

□ And carpentry, the art of sculpting, Yankele?

I started as a carpentry teacher and later on I received a scholarship from the German Histadrut [German Confederation of Trade Unions] for a carpentry course in Germany. I continued progressing up to the coordinator of the carpentry department at ORT [an organization that promotes education and training in communities worldwide], a role I filled for several years with much love. With time I was drawn to the art of wood and artistic carving. For years I did it as a principal hobby in my life. Naturally I aimed the themes of my creations to my second love and specialty – dance. Here, look at my sculptures, which express not only the dance movement, but also the sensations, their physical and mental state. Here, for example, in sculpture I express pioneers who are tired from working, in a hunched hold but with relaxation and joy of life with Mother Nature. (Anna: put a picture here) In this way I found the perfect integration between my dance skills and my carving skills. This is my heritage of the land of Israel which I love so much and to the people of Israel in which I invested so much of my life's experiences”.

For 12 years, the home of Yankele and Zohara was the gathering place for about 100 folk dance veteran instructors, who every year celebrated Tu B'Av – The Holiday of Love, in a social gathering where they played music, sang, told stories and, of course, danced the cultural heritage which is so dear to this group.

Yankele Dekel's contributions to the Israeli culture in Israel and spreading it among the diaspora Jews, puts him in line with the most important cultural influencers of the State of Israel.

The **Rokdim-Nirkoda** Staff
Shares in the sorrow of the **Dekel family**
Upon the death of **Yankele z"l**
May his memory be a blessing

“We taught them 40 basic dances with Russian translation. In each seminar there were about 85 students who participated and so we trained about 800 instructors, including how to mount choreographies and arrange Israeli holiday celebrations”.

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Dan Ronen z"l (March 17, 1933 – January 2, 2020)

Shlomo Maman



Dan was one of the founding fathers of Israeli folk dance in Israel. He dedicated his life to Israeli dance both in Israel and around the world and was one of the founders of the "Karmiel Dance Festival". Dan was deeply connected to the folk dance movement. He cultivated and preserved the folklore and heritage of Israeli and ethnic dance, was the author of the book "Folk Dance in Israel" and wrote many articles on Israeli dance. He spent many years in public and voluntary activities, founded and established "Lehakat Hastudentim Shel Yerushalayim – The Jerusalem Student Performing Troupe", and he was always engaged in the big question: Israeli folk dance – where is it heading?


Dan, for us, was the ultimate host [MC] at all the dance performances in the country. He always demonstrated great professionalism in introducing performances of dance troupes, performances for tourists and at national dance festivals such as the gathering at Tzemach, the Karmiel Festival and others. Dan spiced up his introductions with many quotes from biblical sources, the sayings of the sages of the Mishna and the Talmud, and with a sense of humor that was so characteristic of him. Along with the audience, he also participated in community singing as he accompanied them with accordion playing. His contribution to the folk dance movement and to Israeli dance was tremendous. As a pedagogical consultant to three Ministers of Education and as Head of the Department of Culture, Dan was

This magazine, "Rokdim-Nirkoda", is also indebted to **Dr. Dan Ronen** for his great assistance in his role as Head of the Department of Culture. This magazine has been distributed to many public libraries throughout Israel and the support we have received from the Department of Education for these subscriptions has been a great help to us.

Yaron Meishar, Ruth Goodman, Danny Uziel,
Editors

our representative and spokesperson at the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Dan was a partner in major projects undertaken in cooperation with the Histadrut Executive Committee, headed by the former Directors of the Dance Department **Tirza Hodes, Bracha Dudai z"l**, and **Rina Meir**. In his extensive activities he served as Chairman of the Israel Ballet, Director of Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design and Chairman of CIOFF (International Association of Folklore Festivals in Israel and abroad). Despite the titles and his many distinguished roles, Dan was a gentle and humble man who spoke to everyone at eye level. It was always possible to consult with him about any subject. He personally helped me a lot in various areas, especially when we gave awards to recognize important artists and creators at the "Karmiel Festival" or the "Rokdim Aviv BeRehovot – Spring Dance Festival in Rechovot". Dan, in his own special way, knew how to summarize their great work in short sentences that focused attention on their tremendous contribution to Israeli culture and dance.

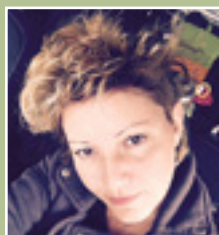
While I have humbly been representing instructors, dance leaders (markidim), choreographers and dance creators, this is the time to pay tribute to his many years of activity and support of us and to his building and shaping of the folk dance movement as a leading and important dance movement in Israel. His passing is a great loss to Israeli dance in general and to the Israeli folk dance movement in particular. May his memory be a blessing forever. 

"ROKDIM-NIRKODA" editors and staff
Bow their heads and share in the sorrow of the
extended **Ronen family**
together with the mourners of the Israeli folk dance
movement in Israel and throughout the world
Upon the death of

Dr. Dan Ronen z"l

May his memory be a blessing

The Debka Of My Life



Heli Livneh

Translation:

Shani Karni Aduculesi

As I approached the café where Moshe and I were to meet in Jerusalem, from afar, distinctly standing out from all the diners was an adult figure, dressed in a plaid buttoned shirt, tailored cigar pants and a clean-shaven face. His head was covered with whitish curls that were cloud-like as seen at the end of the winter and a neat mustache that made me confident that, even from afar, indeed this was **Moshe Eskayo**. Moshe was sitting on a chair in the café and waiting. He looked like the type of person who, in older age, hides behind an old curtain with countless refreshing and intriguing stories about his life. "Oh, here she comes!" He rose at once and called to me. His blue mischievous eyes smiled at me and I could see immediately that his older appearance is only a cover story for a young man, mischievous and energetic, as we all know him, a guy who has his whole life ahead of him.

When **Moshe Eskayo** heard the special Arabic

tune on a highway in the USA, he immediately stopped on the side of the road and within twenty minutes he had almost finished creating "Debka Keff – Fun Debka". But then, a police car suddenly stopped alongside him. An American police officer stepped out of his car and came towards him, fully equipped and with an eloquent accent loudly asked him, "Why are you dancing on the road, man?" The officer took his notebook out of his pocket and immediately gave Moshe a ticket and a summons to appear in court.

"The day of judgement arrived and I had to show up in court", Eskayo says. "Something made me take the dance music recording of 'Debka Keff' to court. I wanted the judge himself to feel the great urge I had in those moments when I danced on the side of the highway. When my trial started, the same officer who had stopped me said to the judge: 'This man was dancing on the highway!' The judge turned to me, looked at me and gave me permission to speak. I asked him to play the music, and without much talk, I danced to the sounds of my Debka and argued to the judge: 'Should I get a ticket just because I was dancing?' Much to my surprise, the judge who saw the dance, accepted my arguments on the subject".

Moshe was born in 1931 and grew up in Zichron Tuvia, now part of the Nachlaot neighborhood in Jerusalem, after his family had moved from the Old City. Moshe spoke in Ladino until he went to "gan" (preschool) where he learned Hebrew.

"My mother was born in Israel but her family is from the Atlas [Maghreb] Mountains [across northwestern Africa, spanning Morocco, Algeria

Moshe in front of his childhood home in Zichron Tuvia, Jerusalem



and Tunisia]. My father was also born in Israel and his family is from Monastir (Bitola), [Southern Serbia, Yugoslavia] which today is Macedonia. When I was born, I was called Moise by everyone, but in my early years of life, I took a piece of glass, put it in my mouth and swallowed it. My life hung by a thread. In those terrifying moments, my life was saved and, for that reason, they gave me additional names and since then, I was called: **Moshe Nissim Eskayo**. And indeed, during my life a number of miracles [nissim] have happened to me. We are seven brothers and one brother died several years ago. All my other brothers live in Israel".



Moshe dances with his wife, Ann (Chana)

□ How did you get to the world of dance?

I studied at the "Alliance" [secondary] school together with **Yossi Banai**, z"l, who was my best friend. How I loved Yossi! I really miss him since he passed away. I used to walk around a lot in the Machane Yehuda Shuk [market located in Jerusalem] with Yossi, my good friend. Yossi's mother lived on the second floor in a house at the center of the shuk. When she wanted to shop for groceries, she would arrange it through the window. She would yell to the greengrocer [British for a retailer of fruit and vegetables]: "Shimon, are my vegetables ready?!" At one point in his life, Yossi wanted to relocate her from the shuk to a place that was less crowded, but she strongly refused.

When I was a child, I loved playing soccer and I didn't dance. When I was 15, I joined the Scout Movement [Tsofim] in Jerusalem, and every Saturday night we had a dance night and played



Moshe leads the debka

a game called: "Who is that girl who turns around the circle?" In this game, everyone stands and claps to the sound of the music. Each person who enters the center of the circle chooses a partner to take their place in the center and so on. We danced the "Hora" for hours; danced and sweated with joy and the "Hora" was an integral part of the Scout Movement routine.

One night at the scouts, on a day of a dance session, a sweet girl named Tikva approached me and wanted to dance the Krakowiak with me. I, who was a very shy boy who had only danced the Hora and never danced with a girl before, agreed to Tikva's request and we danced together. That night I couldn't stop dancing with her. I felt as if I was in a dream. Till this day I remember that initial innocent contact with her. That entire evening, I felt wonderful! It was then that I decided to seriously study dance.



That's how we danced "Hora Keff"

"In my life, I've seen many dance troupes dancing the debka. I fell in love with this dance style. To me, the debka is a very powerful dance. It is something that creates a very strong atmosphere. The debka is a very masculine and stylized dance".

I started studying ballet with **Rina Nikova**, the classical ballet pioneer in Israel. Nikova was the ballet mistress at the Palestine Opera, directed the ballet company of the Israeli Opera, and founded the "Biblical Ballet" [which was based on Yemenite folklore] and the "Jerusalem Biblical and Folk Ballet – Jerusalem Ballet of Bible and Folklore", and she combined classical ballet with Yemenite steps. At some point, the company traveled to South Africa to perform. Then I went to France. There I studied jazz and modern dance. For a short period in France, I watched performances by **Juki (Yakov) Arkin** [1933-1996]. Arkin was a mime, dancer, choreographer and an Israeli actor. He was among the first graduates of "Lahakat Pikud Merkaz – Central Command Band", studied acting at **Moshe Halevi's** drama studio and mime with **Shaika Ophir**, z"l. I always wanted to get more and more experience in dance, in all kinds of styles. I wanted someone professional to teach me".

□ *Which style of dance are you particularly fond of?*

I think I'm best at debka dances. This is also my greatest love.

□ *How did you actually get from ballet to debkas?*

I always loved to listen to Arabic music. My mother danced in an Arabic style home, to the sounds of Arabic music, and my father



Moshe dances with Yankele Levy Z"l.

would sit and play the drum while my mother danced. That's how I grew up. On the radio, on Kol Israel, for only half an hour, there were broadcasts once a week of beautiful Arabic music. Everything I absorbed in my childhood from the music, from home, brought me to love debka dances. I have choreographed about twenty debka dances that are being danced today around the world. In my life, I've seen many dance troupes dancing the debka. I fell in love with this dance style. To me, the debka is a very powerful dance. It is something that creates a very strong atmosphere. The debka is a very masculine and stylized dance.

■ THE METAMORPHOSIS OF A DANCE...

□ *Moshe:*

People dance to the sounds [of the music] of the dances I've created but few know the stories behind the songs. For instance, I choreographed "Debka Ramot" after my daughter, **Irit**, moved to the Ramot neighborhood in Jerusalem. One day a dance session participant came to me and told me that, one of the main reasons she has



Instructing at Camp Bitnua in Eilat

continued to dance is thanks to the existence of the dance, "Debka Ramot". And indeed, to this day, it is relevant at all dance session.

I have another dance, named: "Ilu Tziporim". People were accustomed to me choreographing mainly debkas to Arabic songs, and then I choreographed the dance, "Ilu Tziporim". One day a dancer came to me after I had choreographed the dance and told me: "Finally you've created a dance to an Israeli song..." but what he didn't know is that, the song "Ilu Tziporim" was translated [in 1978] from the French (Si Les Oiseaux) to Hebrew by **Naomi Shemer** [1930-2004] and it isn't exactly Israeli...

With "Debka Gid", I have bit of a painful story... I choreographed it at my home in the USA. The day I started choreographing "Debka Gid", all was going well. Step by step, I felt that I was creating the right dance... but one moment after performing some movement with my leg, I suddenly heard a "pop!" Some kind of loud noise, as if something was torn in my leg. I had almost finished the dance... but after an examination, I found out that I had torn a tendon [gid] in my leg and therefore, I named this dance: "Debka Gid"...

□ *Tell me a little about the camps you established in the USA*

I had folk dance camps: I always thought that "I discovered America!" I felt a true sense of mission because I had sent many new immigrants to Eretz Yisrael – the Land of Israel through the Jewish Agency. They got married here in Israel and, thanks to me, they remained here and started raising families. With all

Moshe with Eileen Weinstock



Moshe Eskayo instructs the dancers

modesty, my camps in the USA were a household name. People didn't want to go home. Each camp was between three days to a week; some camps were even two weeks long.

Each camp had an organized program and choreographers and dance session leaders would come to teach: **Shlomo Maman, Moshe Telem, Meir Shem-Tov, Avner Naim** and many others. They came and "premiered" their dances, teaching them even before anyone had ever seen the dance. The best instructor that I had at that time, in my opinion, was **Eileen Weinstock**. Beyond her gracefulness, inner and outer beauty, she knew how to teach and explain the dances very well and correctly. At times I had choreographed a dance and I couldn't remember the steps... Eileen immediately corrected me and reminded me what to do...

□ *A propos of women in folk dance, who do you think this world belongs to?*

It does not belong to anyone. While it is true that professionally there weren't many women who taught, I personally felt that they didn't have sufficient daring and courage to do it. I don't know why, even though they did have the talent and the ability to dance well. I'm all for women choreographing dances and the more the better. We are a democracy!

□ *Tell me about your creative process*

To me, first of all, there is the music, but I had a number of dances which I created without



Moshe dances "Tfilat Michal" with his younger daughter, Michal

having any music at all. It was only after I had choreographed the entire dance that a composer wrote the music for me. "Debka Oud" for example, is such a dance. I choreographed the step sequences and **Shlomo Shai** composed the music. The guy who played "Debka Oud" was actually from Armenia.

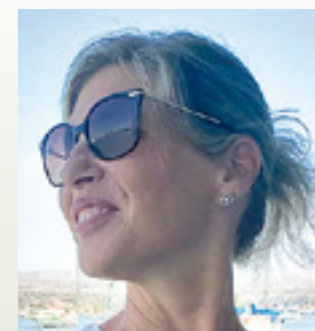
When I first hear music that I like, I think of a new dance and slowly it crystallizes in me. The dance style I like and choreograph is difficult and complex. It is important to me that the dance will have a certain style and fit each one of the sounds that we hear. I don't want to just 'shove in' a clap with no good reason for such a clap. The steps have to relate one to another. One step has to be suitable and connected to the following step. For example, I would never choreograph a dance with a Yemenite step followed by a Romanian step. It would never happen. And if I have any criticism on the contemporary creative process, it is that today creators can easily 'fall' into this place of a lack of compatibility between one step and another or the addition of unnecessary elements.

■ FAMILY AND FRIENDS TELL US:

■ Irit Eskayo Vaknin, Moshe's daughter:

I was born in 1965 in the USA. My parents were married there and we lived in Manhattan [New York City]. My father came from Israel in 1961 and married my mother in 1963. They met at the 92nd Street 'Y' dance session in Manhattan, which is still ongoing today. From

a very young age, my sister [Michal] and I were involved in all the camps and dance sessions. Aba [Dad] started holding the camps in 1968 as folk dance weekends and in 1972 he started holding longer camps which sometimes ran for ten days.



At the end of the seventies, he started to hold exclusively Israeli folk dance camps. [This was after he ran International Folkdance Camps.] What was special about the camps was that choreographers would come from the Balkans, Romania, Russia, Mexico, literally from all over the world, and would teach the dances themselves. The camps were a type of "hishtalmut", a continuing education program. Many dance session leaders came to learn the dances directly from the choreographers and returned to their own dance sessions to teach them. That's actually how the dances were disseminated.

At camp, there were talent nights with performances and there were afternoons where they danced in ethnic costumes; everything was very colorful. There were music classes with drumming on a darbuka [a single head membranophone with a goblet shaped body] and flute playing and the choreographers who came from these countries, Bulgaria for example, had brought along with them original [vinyl] records and costumes which they sold at the camp. There were also dance troupes that volunteered to perform for the atmosphere. There was a great sense of unity. Every year there was a different T-shirt, unique to the camp.

Aba had a kiosk [canteen] where he made falafel and hummus. All was handmade by him. There was one year when Aba cooked everything for everyone for three entire days, just because he didn't like the food at the place. The camps were held at children's summer camps in the suburbs, next to a lake in which we could swim and surrounded by a pastoral forest. At a winter camp, we used to skate on the ice of the frozen lake. It was snowy and beautiful. It was an amazing experience.

□ *How was this experience for you as a child?*

When I was young, I waited from camp to camp. I actually counted the days. My sister and I just waited for it to come. It was an attraction for us. We helped a lot in the preparations for the camp and we really loved to dance. My mother was also an integral part. Mom was concerned about all the bureaucracy involved in registering all the people who came. We did everything on our own. Dad even designed the flyers by himself. When they came back from the printer, we would put the invitations in the envelopes ourselves and send them off to their destinations. It was a family project. There was never a paid staff or secretary.

These are my main childhood memories. These were our vacations. We were involved, carried, hung, worked and felt very important. All the people who helped Aba through the years are still in contact with him to this day.

□ *Aba Moshe and Irit?*

I admired Aba, his creativity and dances. To this day, his dances are considered special and different from other dances. They are complex and have a lot of thought invested in them. When I came to Israel in 1983, I taught his dances at many dance sessions and hishtalmut/continuing education programs. My father greatly influenced me. Throughout the years, I mainly taught children and youth in different kinds of programs. I trained dance troupes in Jerusalem and Modi'in, created children's dances and when I had made 'aliyah', I danced with 'Horah Yerushalayim' [performing troupe].

When I had moments of crises, Aba always helped me. He worries about me. Even today, when I am 50, he wants me to call when I reach my destination. Until recently, when he was 80, Aba would come to Israel and go dancing until four in the morning. He would regularly go to Karmiel. About five years ago, Aba came to 'Camp Bitnua' produced by Gadi Bitton, so my husband Moti, our four daughters and I went to stay with him at camp in Eilat. The experience was amazing. We enjoyed and



Moshe with his granddaughter, Ayla

danced his dances; they did a whole evening, including a panel and a slideshow presentation, in his honor".

My mother died eight years ago. [Ann Helene Weinstein Eskayo, November 20, 1940 – February 19, 2011.] She was an American Jew. When my mom was a teenager, she came to work on a kibbutz and fell in love with Israel. She went folk dancing and that's where she met my father. My mother had a dream to immigrate to Israel [i.e., make 'aliyah'], which she never fulfilled. She was very Zionist and loved Israel very much. She loved the army and the country. Folk dancing was her path to this emotional place".

My parents separated when I was 25. My mother was diagnosed with Parkinson's when she was 50 and moved west, to live in Phoenix, Arizona. At the end, she succumbed to cancer when she was 70. Ima was very helpful and supportive of dad. My father is an artist and creator and she dealt with all administrative matters and authorities in English. My mom loved this world so much. Dancing was her entire world after her children and grandchildren.

■ **Ayla Sasson** (the daughter of the choreographer and dance instructor, **Yoram Sasson**, and Moshe Eskayo's granddaughter):

"Saba (grandpa), you see? When there are two blue check marks, it means he read your message," Ayla explained patiently to her grandfather, Moshe,

"This is a memory I will never forget. I played the dance; we all went into the circle and danced around Moshe. To this day, I vividly remember the expression of joy spreading across his face. There was a special bond, since it is rare for all of us to dance this dance together".



the technical features of his phone. They both sat together in Ayla's room on his last visit to Israel. Eskayo looked at Ayla, his granddaughter, with his blue eyes, glazed and full of emotion and pride and

patiently listened to her explanation, and she continued: "And when you want to send a picture to Ima, you have to click here on the camera icon to add it, okay Saba?" Ayla said, smiling at him. They will both forever remember how, over the years, they went together to dance sessions and marathons when he visited Israel. Moshe used to watch Ayla dancing and floating in the circle and great pride enveloped it all. Especially when she danced to the sounds [of the music] of the dances he choreographed. "This is my continuing lineage", he always thought to himself.

Saba lived in New York before my mother was born. To me, he was always the 'grandpa from the USA'. When I was young, he used to come more frequently to see his young grandchildren as much as he could. Saba always came with suitcases full of beautiful gifts, all sorts of things that we didn't have in Israel then; we were the whole world to Saba and Savta (grandma).

Saba loved playing with us and fooling around because he is such an entertainer. He would come to my kindergarten and school parties and, despite the distance, we were always very close. Saba is a very easygoing person, with a great sense of humor, and folk dance is the field that has occupied the biggest place in his life. It is his livelihood and the essence of his life. Everything revolved around dance and folk dancing. Together we went to many dance sessions in Israel, and he would look at me as I was dancing and he was very proud of me, especially when I was dancing his dances. I am his connection to folk dance in the family.

■ **Avner Naim (Choreographer, Session Leader Instructor and Radio Broadcaster)**

I met Moshe in the early eighties through his

dances. Only later, I found out that he is from Jerusalem like I am. This is how the initial connection between us was created. When I began choreographing dances in 1990, Moshe loved them and every year he invited me to his camps.



□ **In your opinion, how were Eskayo's camps?**

Hora Keff was the biggest camp in the world. There was nothing like it. It was a household name. "Hora Keff" included dancers from all over the world. I attended these camps as a choreographer along with **Shlomo Maman, Meir Shem Tov, Gadi Bitton, Naftaly Kadosh, Moshiko Halevy, Dani Dassa, Israel Yakovee, Shlomo Bachar** and others... I think I attended about 15 camps. Every year.

The connection between me and Moshe was our simplicity. Although Eskayo has his "craziness" and complexities in his dances, all positive of course, there is also a great deal of beautiful simplicity. In addition, we both grew up on the same style of music: Arabic and Oriental [Middle Eastern]. Our first conversation was when we asked each other: "Do you know that song or this one?..." That's how we connected. Moshe has a very good sense of humor. We had many conversations about which dances would succeed in the long run and which would not.

As part of the camps, Moshe tried to "drive the camp crazy" with a special dance that he had choreographed for that year, and so it was: once "Hora Keff", a year later "Pnei Malach", "Tagidi" and others..."

□ **Tell me about Moshe Eskayo the man, the friend.**

Moshe is a friend to me. I think that because I am a choreographer that is what he most related to. We went everywhere together: marathons, dance sessions, camps. Moshe is just a simple person, very talented, and professionally, he is influenced by many types of music, mainly Balkan and Arabic music. We both have a very

"When I first hear music that I like, I think of a new dance and slowly it crystallizes in me. The dance style I like and choreograph is difficult and complex. It is important to me that the dance will have a certain style and fit each one of the sounds that we hear."

cynical sense of humor and it has created a very good bond between us. In the 1950's and 60's, choreographers, such as **Moshe Eskayo** or **Moshiko Halevy**, were not readily accepted. Eskayo's style is Oriental/Mizrachit [Middle Eastern] which was not accepted here in Israel. At that time, **Rivka Shturman**, **Gurit Kadman**, were at the forefront, and the establishment that controlled folk dance belonged to the workers movement [the Histadrut] and was greatly influenced by Eastern European music. Eskayo brought with him the Middle Eastern style and it was hard to digest it, in spite of the obvious great talent. In addition, Moshe had left Israel [moving to the USA], and there was some criticism about that.

□ *And you must have had shared experiences.*

Once, during a very cold winter, we were shopping in New York City and bought coffee at one of the cafes in the area. The streets there are big and busy and we wanted to cross; there were two lanes and a big traffic island in the middle. Moshe suddenly crossed the first lane very quickly without me, while holding the coffee in his hand; when he stopped, the traffic light for the drivers on his right turned red. One of the drivers probably thought Moshe was a beggar, and tossed a coin into his coffee cup and drove away... Some thirty years have since passed, and to this day, I laugh every time I remember it.

Another day in New York, at the beginning of the '90's, during the time of video and audio cassettes, I wanted to buy a VCR. Moshe and I walked around the stores together looking for a high quality device for me. Suddenly, someone approached and offered to sell us a VCR, claiming that the devices in the store were very expensive. The guy's offer was \$100. We checked the box and it looked good. I asked Moshe: "Do you think it's worth \$100?" Moshe nodded his head affirmatively and we returned home. When we arrived, we opened the box and slowly started to unpack it. One wrapping paper after the other, after the other... lots and lots of wrapping paper, until we were left with a black panel, small and narrow, with only hand glued buttons...

■ **Yaron Meishar** (the webmaster of the 'Rokdim' website and editor of "Rokdim-Nirkoda" Magazine)

I met Moshe for the first time at "Hora Camp" in New York in 1979. [In 1981, it became "Hora-Shalom".] From this camp, I brought the dance "Bakramim" (In the Vineyards) back to Israel. I taught it on a Monday at Moshe Telem's session at the University. I swear I taught it exactly like the original. I have no idea why, in Israel, it is danced incorrectly...



In the early 80's, when I started setting up the folk dance recording library, I became familiar with the recordings that Moshe produced and which were at a very high standard in comparison with recordings produced by others and definitely in comparison to the "White Records" (which were edited copies produced from copying the original recordings). Moshe was very strict about having high quality recordings for his choreographed dances, some of which also had different choreographies that are danced in Israel (e.g., Ha'yoshevet Ba'ganim, Debka Oud, Al Gmali).

Moshe was rightfully upset that his recording of the music for "Debka Oud", which was written especially for him, was taken and used for another dance choreography in Israel (that is different from the one danced in the USA).

Through the years, we've had many encounters and I even came to "Hora Keff" twice as Moshe's guest, and not as a choreographer. These camps had participants of all ages, from children to seniors. Some of them were session instructors (madrachim) from around the world. The camp site was lakeside, in the heart of a forest, in beautiful small log cabins. There was magic in this place. We were cut off from the rest of the world. The atmosphere reminded me of the kibbutz of old. There were self-served meals, sitting on long wooden benches, falafel and Israeli food.

Even though I didn't come to teach, Moshe took





care of me in a room within the instructors' cabin so that I would feel better, and he also allowed me to present and sell the Rokdim Magazine and the videotapes that preceded the DVD.

I remember that every night we continued dancing even though we were supposed to finish, and a kind of spontaneous "ritual" developed in order to prevent the music from stopping. In my opinion, the nightly dance sessions were the heart of the camp and gave the participants real "keff" (fun). The harkadot were full of energy, joy of dancing and with a warm and friendly atmosphere. The circle dances were always danced while holding hands.

There was an excellent collaboration between us in the recording of the dances and in the first discs (CD's) he produced as part of the "Keff" series. At his request, there were quite a few recordings which I sent him, on digital tape (DAT) – dances that Moshe wanted for discs and which he did not have the original.

■ Yaron Carmel (choreographer and instructor)



I've known **Moshe Eskayo** for 20 years already. In 1999, I was at the "Hilula" camp in the USA for the first time. It was **Gadi Bitton and Miriam Handler's** camp and Moshe was also there.

Since that camp, I've been exposed to all of his dances, including those we don't dance here in Israel. I became very attached to him as well as to **Eileen Weinstock**, and I have always had great respect for both of them. Over the years, as I've grown and became a professional, I've always allowed myself to invite him to my sessions in Israel. Today Moshe is amazingly dealing with his age and maturity. Despite the passing years, which naturally makes it harder on the body, Moshe Eskayo creates a special magic when he is inside the circle. It does not matter if I play his simplest or his most complex dances; he always goes into the center of the circle

and dances, and when he feels that he has had enough, he finds a way to make the group dancing around him laugh. Moshe has always made sure to say nice and kind words to me, and that has made me stronger. This is actually how our "romance" started.

At one of the times I hosted Moshe, about four years ago, we danced together: **Moshe Eskayo, Avner Naim, Mimi Kogen, Elad Shtamer** and I. At some point, Moshe asked that I play his dance, "Shir Hachatuna – The Wedding Song". This is a memory I will never forget. I played the dance; we all went into the circle and danced around Moshe. To this day, I vividly remember the expression of joy spreading across his face. There was a special bond, since it is rare for all of us to dance this dance together. For me and for all of us, these were moments of transcendence. There was an atmosphere of real magic.

■ And on a personal note from the author

"Pnei Malach (Yaldati)", "Ilu Tziporim", "Ma Avarech", "Debka Keff", "Debka Ramot", "Debka Gid", "Shir Hachatuna", "Tfilat Michal", "Liya", "Chanita" – these are just part of the rich dance repertoire by choreographer, Moshe Eskayo. Over the years, Moshe has taken care to plant his flower seeds in our garden. And our garden has become colorful and beautiful and each flower has a different character and a distinct wonderful scent. And we, the dancers, have made sure to water and preserve this beautiful garden in all the dance sessions and we will continue to do so. Thank you, Moshe. 🌱

The dances Moshe choreographed:

<https://www.rokdim.co.il/#/SearchResults/Eskayo%20Moshe>



David Ben-Asher

Translation:

Ruth Goodman and
Benny Levy

Photos:

David Ben-Asher

The 2019 Dance Awards at The Karmiel Festival

This year, the Karmiel Dance Festival celebrated its 32nd birthday. The festival changed its form, changed its outlook, replaced and substituted the key players, but is still kicking and is here to stay... There is no doubt that this festival has revolutionized the image of folk and folkloristic dance in the cultural experience of the State of Israel. Being popular in the worldview puts everyone on an equal footing and therefore hundreds of thousands can find their place as either participants or spectators at this festival.

The Folk Dance section of the Ministry of Culture and Sports has conferred, for a second year, the Israeli Dance Awards and, this time, as part of the Karmiel Festival; (last year the ceremony took place at the Ashdodance Festival, when the awards were funded by the Ashdod Municipality).

□ Gadi Bitton, the section chair, explains:

In the State of Israel, awards are given in various fields, such as the Israel Defense Prize, the Education Prize, the Economic, Academic, the Sports Awards, the Environmental, Nature Conservation, Vocalist Prizes, and others. And for that matter, the time has come to elevate the importance of folk dance and it does indeed hold a place of honor among hundreds of thousands of citizens of the state.

Just as we honor the singer of the year, composer of the year, film of the year (Ophir Awards, [colloquially known as the Israeli Oscars]), play of the year, etc., so it is appropriate to honor the creators in the folk dance field, and so we did. In the years to come, the same will be done. We chose the Karmiel Festival as the perfect place to conduct the ceremony, which was very appropriate, the beginning of a worthy and beautiful tradition.



Gadi Bitton and Moshiko Halevy

□ Chair of the Judging Committee, choreographer Oren Halaly, explains the way the criteria are set and the judging procedure:

First, we thoroughly dealt with a way to carefully determine the categories, in order for them to express a wide range of areas, and to present as many nominees for the awards as possible. We then set criteria for each of the 18 categories, the prerequisites for submitting a candidate, and the characteristics for making the judgment. We set up two preliminary screening committees, one for the field of folk dance, and the other, for the field of Israeli dance performing troupes.

After the initial sorting, several candidates in each category reached the final stage; of these, the final winners in each category were selected by two additional judging committees. In total, hundreds of names of candidates had been submitted. Of these, about 70 reached the final stage, and of them, as mentioned, there were 18 award recipients, one for each category.

□ And the recipients of the awards were

Oren Halaly, Chair of
the Judging Committee



Singer: Anna Aronov

1. Folk Dance:

Circle Dance: "Libi – My Heart" by **Yuval Maayan Tabashi**,

Couple Dance: "Al Ktzot Ha'Etzba'ot – On Your Fingertips" by **Shlomo Maman**,

Markid (male dance instructor) of the Year: **Avi Amsalem**,

Markida (female dance instructor) of the Year: **Pnina Klein**,

Markid Yeladim (children's dance instructor) of the Year: **Dr. Levi Bargil**,

Markida (dance instructor for women only) of the Year: **Etti Mauda**,

Taglit (new discovery) of the Year: **Tamir Scherzer**,
Creative Achievement Award: **Avner Naim**,
Exposure of Israeli Dance on the International Level:
Moshe Eskayo,
Lifetime Achievement: **Yoav Ashriel**.

2. Dance for the Stage:

Ethnic Dance: "Mashav Ruach Yam Tichoni – The Mediterranean Breeze" by **Itzik Cohen**,

Circle Dance: "Rega Aviv – A Spring Moment" by **Liran Zacharia Amir**,

Efrochim (children's) Dance: "Chutim Shel Geshem – Strings of Rain" by **Eden Cohen Seri**,

Contemporary Israeli Dance: "Agada Yapanit – A Japanese Legend" by **Lior Tavori**,

Music Adaptation: **Pini Shpigler**,
Troupe Manager: **Shula Schmidek**,

Taglit (new discovery) of the Year: **Doron Guetta**,
Lifetime Achievement: **Dr. Dan Ronen z"l**.

■ ACUM Award to Moshiko Halevy

ACUM [a non-profit corporation administrating the copyrights of authors, composers and music publishers in Israel] Chief Executive Officer (CEO), **Yorik Ben David**, gave a special award for musical compositions for folk dance music to dance leader [markid], composer and choreographer, **Moshiko Halevy** (87 years of age). Moshiko, who has a long history in the field of folk dance, composed most of the music for the hundreds of dances



Dance session on the tennis courts at the Karmiel Festival



Mexican troupe at the Karmiel Festival

he choreographed. Moshiko has choreographed more than 160 dances which, over the years, have become inalienable assets of Israeli folk dance. The ceremony was led by the talented, whimsical and well-known dancer, Anna Aronov, accompanied by presentations about the personal story of the winners. Dance troupes performed during the ceremony that was held with the presence of family members of the winners and the dance community in Israel and abroad.

■ Folk Dance Competition

The Award Winners of the Folk Dance Choreography Competition:

1. "Izun – Balance" by **Galia Boaron**,
2. "At Doma Li – You Resemble Me" by **Pnina Klein**,
3. "Medabrim B'Sheket – Talking Quietly" by **Ilai Szpiezak**.

■ Choreography for the Stage Competition

1. "Im Nedah Le'ehov – If We Knew How to Love": Representative Dance Troupe from Misgav, choreographed by **Deganit Rom**,
2. "HaNigun – The Melody": The Karmeit Machol Dance Troupe [The Karmiel Dance Company]

from Karmiel and Synopsis Tiveria [Tiberias], choreography by **Doron Guetta**,

3. "Chana'le Hitbalbela – Chana'le Got Confused": Tzivei Machol [Colors of Dance] Troupe from Hadera, choreography by **Itzik Cohen**.

At the festival's closing harkada [dance session], a parade of the most beloved dances of 2019 took place. During this session, as the dances were announced, a number of the singers of the songs for the dances appeared and performed. The selections were made in a survey on the internet that had been distributed worldwide. These were the most beloved and most frequently danced dances, according to the votes for the dance parade:

Circle Dances:

1. Beresheet – In the Beginning", choreographed by Ilai **Szpiezak** and **Sharon Elkaslassy**,
2. "Libi – My Heart", choreographed by **Yuval Maayan Tabashi**,
3. "Aneni – Answer Me" by **Michael Barzelai**,
4. "HaYechida – The Unit" by **Yuval Maayan Tabashi**,
5. "Mishehu Iti Kan – Someone is Here With Me", choreography by **Almog Ben Ami** and **Michael Barzelai**,

6. "Ve'eem Tavo'ee Elay – And If You Come to Me", choreography by **Gadi Bitton**,
7. "Silichi Li Yalda – Forgive me, Young Lady", choreography by **Shmulik Gov-Ari**,
8. "Arba Onot – Four Seasons", choreography by **Gadi Bitton**,
9. "Shuvi Le'Beitech – Return to Your Home", choreography by **Tamir Scherzer**,
10. "Linshom Ktzat – Breathe a Little", choreography by **Dudu Barzilay**.

Couple/Partner Dances:

1. "Shkufim – Transparent", choreography by **Gadi Bitton**,
2. "Palavra (Palabra in Portuguese) – Show Off", choreography by **Avi Levy**,
3. "Hayinu Shnayim – We Were Two", choreography by **Sagi Azran**,
4. "Al Ktzot Ha'Etzba'ot - On Your Fingertips", choreography by **Shlomo Maman**,
5. "Ahava Zo Hapoenta – This Love is the Point", choreography by **Sagi Azran**,
6. "Chatzayim – Halves", choreography by **Rafi Ziv**,
7. "Balev – In the Heart", choreography by **Gadi Bitton**,
8. "Isha Sheli – My Wife", choreography by **Yaron Carmel**,
9. "Shuv LeEhov – To Love Again", choreography by **Itzik Ben Dahan**,
10. "Prachim Bamidbar – Desert Flowers", choreography by **Sagi Azran**,

Line Dances:

1. "Toy" (sung by Netta Barzilai in the 2018 Eurovision contest), choreography by **Elad Shtamer**,
2. "Tekalali – Te Ka Lali Shpirt [Albanian – Lali has you (in the) spirit]", choreography by **Eyal Eliyahu**,
3. "Colombiana", choreography by **Hadari Jibli** [17th Festival Choref, Porto Alegre, Brazil 11/2018].

■ A Special Tribute to Shlomo Maman

An exciting event took place on the closing night, at the conclusion of the closing show – a surprise prepared by the show's producer, **Liat Katz-Farhan**, for **Shlomo Maman**, the festival's artistic director. Veteran dancers [vatikim], who had formerly


danced in Shlomo's troupes, performed the best of Shlomo's dances for the stage that he created throughout the years for his dance troupes.

At the conclusion, **Lital Maman**, honoring her father, sang with a great deal of emotion and talent the song, "Rokedet [Dancing]", to **Naomi Shemer's** melody with lyrics written especially for this event by **Adi Gabay-Lev**.

The mayor paid a special tribute to Shlomo together with enthusiastic applause by the thousands of viewers in the huge crowd. Surprisingly, it was a ceremony in honor of **Shlomo Maman's** concluding his role as the festival's artistic director for the past 20 years. There is no doubt that, throughout the years, Shlomo has made an indelible mark on the design of the festival's character and its content, as well as in the choreographic design of the hundreds of shows performed by many troupes on the festival stage. Respect and appreciation for the talented, influential and modest creator – **Shlomo Maman**.



Mayor of Karmiel, Moshe Kuninsky

This festival is the first led by the new Mayor, **Moshe Kuninsky** [11/2018], who stepped into the big shoes of the former veteran Mayor, **Adi Eldar**. It is evident that the new mayor is already hopping [going from place to place], with confident dance steps and with youthful enthusiasm, among the many festival events. In his words of greeting to the thousands of spectators, he invites everyone to attend the 33rd festival to be held next year, starting June 30, 2020. 



David Ben-Asher

Translation:

Ruth Goodman and
Benny Levy

Photos:

David Ben-Asher

Ashdodance Festival

A Glorious Celebration of Dance and Song



A group picture including many of the founders

- Four intoxicating days of dance and song at the Ashdodance Festival.
- A special tribute to the founders – an exciting gathering of the veteran dance leaders and choreographers in Israel.
- The Mayor: “Avi Levy kept pushing the idea and now we are on the world map”.

Something new is in the air – refreshing, young, vibrant, fresh, smiling, the atmosphere of mass crowds – geared for folk dancers, yet professionally produced. Ashdod’s Third Dance Festival has already been set in the dance enthusiast’s mind as another event where they can fulfill all their dance aspirations by watching the best stage performances and personally attending the boundless mass open dance sessions.

Tens of thousands, and with cautious estimation over one hundred thousand, took part in the thrilling experience that lasted for four ecstatic days. People came from all over Israel, as well as from many parts of the world, to be part of the great famous celebration of Israeli dance, song, and great food in Ashdod. The festival also included some serious enlightening symposiums, workshops, children’s sessions and even a cool breeze to make everyone comfortable.

□ **Mayor Yechiel Lasri in an interview for “Rokdim-Nirkoda”**

Ashdod is a beautiful and well-maintained city

and we are a cultural superpower. We present 22 festivals a year in different fields. The Dance Festival is one of our top two prominent festivals and it is the largest. This is our way of nurturing the quality of life of the city’s residents – a key component of the municipality’s agenda.

Part of our educational values is the character of Ashdod. Our population consists of individuals from 99 countries of origin, a multicultural, diverse and creative city. The cultural richness and beauty of the area is the story of the city. Our dance festival is an initiative of the head of dance department, Avi Levy, who conceived of the idea 15 years ago. Over the years, he kept pushing me for this major project. There were doubts and hesitations about the possibility of producing an event of this magnitude. Finally, as you can see for yourself, it exceeded beyond all expectations. This, of course, also gives momentum to Ashdod’s international exposure. Many dancers come from abroad and enjoy themselves here. Indeed, this festival has already been established



Ashdod Mayor, Yechiel Lasri

as a tradition, and we will continue presenting it with its great creativity.

■ Nonstop Dance and Song

The two amphitheater shows (with 8,000 sold out seats) were based on the exciting combination of dance and song. The central theme of the shows was Jewish-Israeli, presented through spectacular choreographies by the best producers and choreographers, accompanied by a live orchestra of 20 musicians. The opening night included 1800 dancers in a show called "Mazal Tov". **Irit Anavai** was MC with special guests, **Miri Mesika** and the standup comedian, **Hadar Levy**. The dance groups expressed the best of its joys in our traditional Jewish life experiences. The Creative Directors of the show were **Shuki, Yaniv** and **Dorit Hoffman, Yossi Attar, Itay Hemo** and **Avi Levy**.

The closing show was called "Edges" – musical

worlds on one stage. This was a multicultural celebration with 1,500 dancers from Israel's leading dance troupes and a live orchestra; music from East and West, sacred and secular, rock and pop, liturgical and Israeli classics. **Avner Naim** was the MC for the show "Prisoners" with choreography by **Lior Tavori** and **Liran Michaeli** and produced by **Itay Hemo** and **Yossi Attar**. This show included Israel's leading singers – **Berry Sakharof, Shiri Maimon, Dikla [Dore], Riki Gal, Avner Gadassi, Rivka Zohar, Gusto, Orit Atar, Shimon Buskila** and conductor, **Tom Cohen**.

There were many extremely elegant events at this festival. For example, Lehakat Kamea – Kamea Dance Company; a tribute performance to **Shlomo Gronich** [composer, singer, songwriter, arranger, and choral conductor]; "A Dance Is Born" competition; integrated [dancers with and without special needs] in performances on one stage; Lehakat Mechola premiered, "Orientation"; a choreography competition; a Greek taverna; a wheelchair dance performance; a Flamenco show; Lehakat 30+ – performing troupes of age 30+; the performer, [pop singer] **Rotem Cohen**; two symposiums; nightly mass harkadot [open sessions] until 5:00 am.

Dance instructor, **Ronit Zohar** initiated and organized a special experience of a morning dance session for 400 children from various schools in the city of Ashdod, including special education students.



Dancers from abroad at the Ashdod Mayor's reception



Lehakat Cholit wins the "Rikud Nolad – A Dance Is Born" competition



400 children from Ashdod together at a dance session

Something new is in the air – refreshing, young, vibrant, fresh, smiling, the atmosphere of mass crowds – geared for folk dancers, yet professionally produced.



Thousands of dancers in the Keshatot Arena

■ A Special Tribute to The Founders

It is precisely this young and innovative festival that found it fitting to honor and show appreciation to the esteemed vatikim [veterans] (dance instructors and choreographers), the pioneering founders who, decades ago, created this unique cultural infrastructure for the people of Israel – Israeli folk dance. Those vatikim whose past record shows hundreds of dances that are still danced to this day, and numerous staged dances both in Israel and around the world, were honored in a tribute accompanied by a moving speech by the festival director, **Avi Levy**.

Avi spoke of his history as a choreographer and instructor and how profoundly these mentors influenced him and others in the field. Avi pointed out that **Moshe Telem** was the person who came up with the idea of this conference. **Ronit Zohar**, led the vatikim on tour of Ashdod seaport where they sat together for a special festive dinner, were awarded gold badges and given VIP seating at all the shows.

Each one of the founders has his own reputation. With pats on the shoulders and hugs, it was like an old timer's reunion of childhood friends, now 80-90 years of age, who had met countless times

in the past on the wooden dance floors or even back when dancing was outdoors on rough sand or indoors on concrete floors. Of course, some of the folk dance founders are no longer with us and in nostalgic memory their names were also mentioned

The participants of the founding conference were: **Danny and Noga Benshalom, Hilik Carmeli, Yehuda Emanuel, Itche Gil, Sarah Gutman, Tzvi Hillman, Tirtza Hodess, Izraela Kahana, Edna Kaveh, Rina Meir, Aviva Uri, Ruthy Pardess, Raya Spivak, Chaim Shiryon, and Moshe Telem.**

Those who were also invited but were unable to attend for various reasons: **Saadia Amishai, Musa Ashkenazi, Ruthy Ashkenazi, Dan Biron, Yoav Ashriel, Yankele Dekel z"l, Moshiko Halevy, Ayala Goren Kadman, Dr. Dan Ronen z"l, Raya Spivak, Israel Yakovee.**

Moshe Telem and **Raya Spivak**, participants in the meeting, told me about the continuity of the dance movement, the influence of the founding generation on today's dance leaders and the sense of friendship shared among the veteran dancers.

□ **Moshe Telem**, who also presented a successful workshop as part of the festival, stated:



Lehakat Mechola in "Orientation"

We can say that our influence on what is going on today is extremely negligible. Today we want to renew something in an American-style or use Greek, Turkish, or Arabic music. We lost the thoughts about an Israeli culture and folklore. The "Israeli" component has not been maintained. Back then the Organization of Instructors held workshops to keep a unified repertoire for all dance sessions in Israel. This is not the case today when the repertoire has been fragmented among the sessions which is the cause of the alienation among the dance groups in Israel.

This meeting is a purely social gathering honoring the veterans but it has no impact on what comes next. Today we are not "Am Roked – A Dancing Nation" but rather, we are five or more nations. The new generation does not know how to raise the next generation. Once upon a time, we the instructors and dance leaders of the country, met at the sessions of **Shalom Amar z"l** and **Yankele Dekel z"l** – a cohesive group for decades. There was more humanity and respect for each other. Perhaps this gathering of ours will have an influence on the next generation of dance leaders that will encourage mutual support and bringing back something of the folk style of the past".

□ ***Raya Spivak distinguishes between "the founders and "the vatikim":***

"The conference did not really reflect the founders, who are the older generation of participants at this conference. The vatikim, in my opinion, may still affect our new generation of folk dances.

However, it is important that this meeting will be of a practical nature, something beyond an excellent social gathering. There is a disconnect between the 'past' and the 'present' and this gap needs to be bridged. This was utilized by the founders based upon their experience and knowledge, and their historical contribution in the field of music and movement."

At the meeting, a group of girls joyfully performed the dance "Niguno Shel Yossi – Yossi's Melody." This dance was choreographed by **Raya Spivak** to a melody composed by her late husband, **Yossi Spivak**, the "music man", who had composed many tunes of prominent folk dances in the country. Raya said that the inspiration for this dance as well as her others (Vaynikehu, Ma Navu, Noldad'ti L'Shalom, Ten Li Et Hayom Haze) came from **Gurit Kadman** who is considered as the "Mother of Israeli Folk Dance in Israel"

Therefore, a seemingly nostalgic social gathering has also become a conceptually valuable discussion, as this is deeply ingrained in the souls of the veteran choreographers of their generation.

■ **A Dance is Born – Everything Is New**

[As a result of the] "A Dance is Born" [new dance] competition, dances that have been choreographed will probably be given a place of honor at the dance sessions around the country in the coming year. The three [choreographers] whose dances were chosen as best by the distinguished judges received cash prizes of between NIS 3,000 and NIS 15,000.

First place went to choreographer **Liran Michaeli** for the dance "Hora Gaya" and demonstrated by Lehakat Cholit. Second place went to choreographer **Shulamit Rada** for the dance "Nigun Simcha" demonstrated by random dancers. Third place was awarded to choreographer **Tamir Shalev** for the dance "He Lo Tavo" demonstrated by random dancers. Congratulations to the winners.

The producers of the competition were **Yaron Ben Simchon** and **Shuli Gelberg**.

And after such a festival, we are obviously looking forward to July 2020.





Maya Geva

Translation:

Shani Karni Aduculesi

SIMPLY PEOPLE

They Also Dance In Poland...

Israeli folk dancing in Poland? In Warsaw? For non-Jewish Polish people? Apparently, yes. They have a folk dance session which has been active for more than twenty years. My friend, **Michal Bachar**, was invited to lead a dance workshop there in November 2018 and I accompanied her.

This is the tenth workshop taking place in Warsaw. Not that I ever thought of traveling to Warsaw but, life provided me with this opportunity, so why not, and in general, it is an excellent opportunity for me to learn the beautiful dances of **Moshe Yitzchak Halevy**, a.k.a. **Moshiko**, Debkas and Yemenite style dances as they had requested.

We arrive, a bit nervous about what it would be like, and which dances they knew and which they do not, and all in a completely foreign country, strangers, but folk dancing is a type of common language that breaks the ice pretty quickly.

The workshop began on a Friday and ended on a Sunday afternoon. When we arrive on Friday, the hall is prepared with an Israeli flag, a refreshment table with candles and challot (challah bread). The only Jewish woman in the dance group is the one

who conducts Kiddush [a blessing recited over wine or grape juice to sanctify the Shabbat and Jewish holidays].

The sight is astonishing to me; standing next to me are non-Jewish Polish people who appreciate and respect Jewish-Israeli tradition and culture, our folk dances; they dance with us in a circle and are smiling and it makes



me wonder. They dance to the sounds of "Ashrei Ha'ish", "Yedid Nefesh", "Melech Ha'olam", "Ivri Anochi – I'm a Jew and I'm Proud", songs with a distinct Jewish significance and it immediately makes me think. Although they do not sing the words like me, I assume they do not understand them, however, they do not miss the steps.

Michal teaches "Zakariya (Zechariah)", Moshiko's dance, a unique debka style dance which has a playful part for the group leader, and I again think that Moshiko is a genius. The Polish group dances accurately and beautifully; they play the game and laugh. Later in the course of the workshop, Michal teaches "Ha'helech – The Wanderer" and tells the story behind its creation; and when you understand it, then it's much more interesting to dance it! She also teaches "Gamliel" and "Ode Ya – I'll Thank God" and for each dance, she explains the story behind it if there is one.

In addition to the dances of the past, there are also contemporary dances such as "Ho'lech Al Ha'mayim – Walking on Water" by **Oren Bachar**, "Ratz Elayich – Run to You" by **Nurit Melamed**, and in general, her repertoire ranges between old and new, Yemenite and the beautiful Land of Israel, with the proper transitions.

Simply People

(Lyrics and music: **Udi Damari**)

The whole world exists and breaths and stands,
Only thanks to such innocent people,
Pure souls, who only want to give,
To repair and build,
To light up life.
The world exists and breaths and stands,
Only thanks to such simple people,
Real people, really and truly,
Simply people.

[For complete lyrics, see:

<https://shironet.mako.co.il/artist?type=lyrics&lang=1&prfid=32&wrkid=48064>]



I introduced myself to **Aga** [Agnieszka], a young woman who started folk dancing only a month ago and had already joined the workshop: "So how did you get to this activity and actually come here to dance"?, I ask. It turns out that, as a young girl she once saw Israeli folk dancing at a dance festival where there was a small folk dance session. The idea was on her mind for several years and about a month ago she went online and searched for Israeli folk dancing in Warsaw and found Grupa Tańca Izraelskiego "Snunit" [the Israeli Dance Group "Snunit" meaning "swallow", in Hebrew] and joined the dancers.

She tells me to my surprise, that she started learning Hebrew because she wanted to understand the words and titles of the names of the songs... and she is not the only one.

So at the end, they will understand and be able to sing the words; I think to myself, and this brings me back to the question of what is it that the Polish dancers are seeking in Israeli folk dancing and Israeli culture?

Monika Leszczyńska [the first Polish instructor of Israeli dance], who has led the group [since 1998], is a movement therapist who works in a clinic with schizophrenics, but twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays, she is involved with the folk dance sessions. Each time they meet, they dance for about two and a half hours.

The session was established in Warsaw in 1995 under the leadership of **Tova Gross**. [The leader of the current group states, "The founder of the group was **Yossi Erez** from JDC". He was a "A Polish-born Jew who made aliyah with his family in 1947 and served as an Israeli Army psychiatrist... (and) as the Polish representative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee." Source: "Polish Jewry's New Independence" by **Steve Lipman**, The New York Jewish Week, April 30, 2008, <https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/polish-jewry-new-independence/>]. Tova was later replaced by Jacqueline **Mitchell-Baryłko**, and then by **Elisheva**



Shaul [who worked for the Sochnut – JewishAgency] and other instructors who came and went for three years and finally, for the past twenty years, it has been under the leadership of Monika.

They have a lovely group of women dancers – **Julita, Kinga, Izabela** and **Ivona** who welcomed us warmly. “It is hard for me to explain why I am involved in folk dancing but I have a strong affinity for Israeli culture”, says Monika, who feels she

is Jewish. She studied at the University and wrote a paper on anti-Semitism, then studied Yiddish and Hebrew. Again, I am deeply moved by the concern and interest in Israel.

When I try again to understand in depth the source of this interest, beyond that folk dancing is a physical activity and a social gathering, Monika tells me that these dances are of additional significance to her because of Poland’s history and past in connection to the Jewish people.

I am spellbound watching this one hundred percent Polish young woman who loves Israel, speaks fluent Hebrew and reads books in Hebrew. She dances barefoot and feels Jewish and Israeli even though she hadn’t visited Israel in the past twenty years. Monika feels so connected that she chose to teach the dance “Pashut Anashim” (Simply People) by **Nurit Melamed** as part of the workshop and she explains that its words touched her.

The last day of the workshop marked Poland’s National Independence Day. We arrive at the hall and receive a Polish flag. The Polish dancers sing their anthem and one of them tells me that she is happy that particularly on Poland’s Independence Day we are here, dancing Israeli dances. In celebration of the event, Michal plays the partner dance, “Mazurka”, and everyone joyously dances.


This workshop was also attended by dancers from outside of Poland, **Michael** from London, a few more friends from The Czech Republic and a



couple of young women from Germany. In all of this wonderful group that is dancing with us, there is a Jewish minority. Unbelievable! The majority is not Jewish, and they connect with the folk dances of a small country in the Middle East. I would expect they would connect to songs, words and traditions of their own people, but though they do not understand ours yet, they dance with enthusiasm... a phenomenon.

When I continue to ask people about the reason for their participation in [Israeli folk] dancing, they do not really have any answers. They smile. They simply love the Israeli folk dances without any explanations; they just want to feel connected, that they belong.

At the workshop, Michal taught eleven beautiful dances and played a varied repertoire, some of which were known and some of which were less known. They loved the freshness and variety of the dances provided to them. At the end of the workshop, Michal was thanked and acknowledged for her professional, infused with humor, pleasant and clear instruction, “one of the best they had” in their words.

Michal came to teach and I came to learn about them, which became apparent to me during my stay there. When I looked from the sidelines at the group dancing, I thought to myself that it doesn’t matter what and who and why – Jews or Polish Christians, they dance because they are simply... people. 

When I looked from the sidelines at the group dancing, I thought to myself that it doesn’t matter what and who and why – Jews or Polish Christians, they dance because they are simply... people.



Tzipora Dagan

Translation:
Ruth Goodman

Little Stories from Long Ago...

Chapter 3: Memories*

The War of Independence was over. The State of Israel has been established. The country absorbed many immigrants from the detention camps in Cyprus and large waves of immigrants coming to Israel, especially from the Middle Eastern countries. Israel – a post-war country, was poor, hurting and wounded. A settlement with a population of about half a million inhabitants absorbed twice the number of new immigrants. But despite all this, we did not stop dancing!

Israeli folk dances spread to all the settlements in the country and new dances were created. Some were circle dances and others, couples dances, which were also danced in circles. Dancing in lines [open circles as in debkas] only started after we learned and got to know the “debka” dances. The new songs and dances were an expression of the nature that began to blossom around us; there were also dances and songs that expressed love and others were songs for Shabbat and holidays. The folk dances expanded initially in the kibbutzim and in the pioneering youth movements, but soon spread to all the settlements in the country and simultaneously, the course sessions for instructors increased. These courses were an impetus for the dissemination of folk dances and brought a lot of attention to dance performances in various ceremonies, especially those that were celebrated outdoors in the fields.

□ *When did the “debka” dances become integrated into Israeli folk dance?*

The turning point and development of styles in folk dance began following the introduction of the

Yemenite dance steps, which were also integrated into the creation of the new dances. Similarly, there was the influence of the Arab “debka” dances, which led to dancing in lines [open circles] as well. The power expressed in their “debka” steps and their rhythms, which were new to us, was quickly absorbed and integrated into the folk dance evenings, as if they were “our” dances from long ago.

We first encountered “debka” dances at the Dalia dance gatherings. At these gatherings, dancers from Arab villages were also invited and they performed the debka dances. I remember well how we sat on the ground of the slope in the Dalia Wadi and we smirked a little at the sight of the debka dances that were foreign to us and seemed “an endless monotonous dance”. But after they started teaching debka dances in courses for folk dance instructors, we fell in love and even enjoyed dancing debkas.

Two debka dances that I remember as being the first that we danced – “Debka Druz” (<https://rokdin.co.il/#/Dance/5abd2379db5332913c8b45b6>) which appeared together with the first Israeli



Boys and girls dancing a debka together

Source:

http://tziporadagan.blogspot.com/2016/07/blog-post_19.htm

* From the blog of Tzipora Dagan, one of the first folk dance instructors in Israel and the sister of Yankele Dekel z”l, known to many as a dancer and the choreographer of “Hora Chefer”.

debka, "Ozi V'Zimrat Yah". (<https://rokdim.co.il/#/Dance/5abd2397db533231398b4f6b>)

New instructors arose, flourished and became known in addition to **Gurit Kadman** and **Rivka Shturman** that have already been mentioned. Among them are **Yonatan Karmon, Tirza Hodes, Yoav Ashriel, Ze'ev Chavatzet, Shalom Hermon, Yuzu, Tamar Alyagor, Yankele Dekel** and others. Performing troupes and dance performances also began to flourish. No more dresses made from old sheets and no more "embroidery" stripes painted on strips of cloth ripped from tattered sheets.

In retrospect, it can be said that the "Karmiel Dance Festivals" as they are today, are no longer just "Israeli folk dance" festivals like those that were held in Dalia. But rather dance festivals with a wide variety of dance groups from Israel and abroad, performing a variety of dances in different styles including folk dances from other countries.

In the spring of 1948, the citizens of the state of Israel were requested to Hebraize their family surnames instead of their "Diaspora names", as the words of **Ben Gurion's** appeal to the nation stated. On Sunday, in the sixth month of the Hebrew calendar (Adar), in 1948 (March 2, 1948), a clerk came to the kibbutz to arrange for a document for each person, in which a new Israeli surname was specified. Some chose ridiculous or humorous names such as: Agasi (of Pear), Tapuchi (of Apple) or Avatichi (of Watermelon). But some chose more serious names related to their workplace or profession or those which related to the nature surrounding them. But there were also those who chose as their new surnames, the names of Israeli folk dances!!



Shavuot festival in Kibbutz Ma'agan Michael



Bringing the first fruits

■ The Family Is Expanding

Towards the end of the War of Independence, our eldest son, **Uzi Dagan**, was born. We thought of choosing a name that would be Israeli, and maybe even related to biblical sources. But two other aspects influenced the choice of the name. One was connected to the time when we were in the Palmach [the underground army of the Yishuv (Jewish community) during the period of the British Mandate for Palestine].

After the "Black Sabbath" [Operation Agatha (Saturday, June 29, 1946) sometimes called Black Sabbath or Black Saturday because it began on the Jewish Sabbath], when the British seized the database of names of all Palmach members, we received fake IDs, with fake names that everyone chose for themselves. My husband's underground name was "Uzi Klein". We decided to commemorate the underground name and gave our eldest son the name, Uzi. But there was also another dance related reason. At the time, there was a popular debka dance, "Ozi V'Zimrat Yah". We loved dancing it, and so the decision was made and our eldest son received the name, Uzi Dagan.

Summer, 1952. The years passed by and a second son was born to us. Again, we debated the question, which name to choose? This time, too, we faced the same considerations and chose the name **Erez**. The phrase "Im Ba'arazim Nafla Shalhevet – "If the Cedars caught fire" appears in the sources. The cedar tree is known as a beautiful and exquisite tree, which was even brought from Lebanon to build the Temple.

"The power expressed in their "debka" steps and their rhythms, which were new to us, was quickly absorbed and integrated into the folk dance evenings, as if they were "our" dances from long ago."

The dance, "Im Ba'arazim", was also popular in those days. But there was another reason why I wanted to perpetuate that name. I wanted to preserve being the soloist in the performing group in this couples dance that **Rivka Shturman** had choreographed and prepared for us, for a party we had for our induction into the Palmach in 1945. That's how the decision came down and our second son was named **Erez Dagan**.

Two children / and two names/
Two songs/ and two dances/
And both are also from traditional sources/
And from the beautiful and renewed Land of Israel!

■ Dances In The Fields

The following is a collection of photographs from the Harvest and the Omer festivals and Chag Ha'asif and Shavuot holidays in Kibbutz Ma'agan Michael, at the ceremonies that I organized in the years that I was the dance instructor at the kibbutz. Generations of dancers are integrated at the Omer Holiday Ceremony at Kibbutz Maagan Michael.

Folk dance grew and flourished. The kibbutzim began to celebrate various nature holidays in the fields and organized ceremonies in which the songs and dances that were specifically connected to

the holiday events were combined with familiar dances that we were already dancing. Particularly noteworthy were the nature ceremonies related to the holidays: – the Omer Festival ["The Counting of the Omer" the forty-nine days that starts with an offering of a sheaf of ripe grain that occurs on the eve of the first day of Passover,] the Shepherds Holiday, the Festival of the First Fruits [(Hagigat Ha'Bikkurim) that takes place during the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) and marks the peak of the first grain harvest and the first ripe fruits. There are seven species mentioned in the Bible – wheat, barley, vines, pomegranates, olive trees, fig trees, and honey; Deut. 8:8.] the Water Festival [Simchat Beit Ha'Sho'evah], the Sheepshearing Festival [Chag Ha'Gez] and more.

Below are some dance pictures from these holiday ceremonies, which I had prepared during my years of being a dance instructor at the kibbutz.

In the nature ceremonies, dances specifically connected to the holiday event were combined with folk dances that were already being danced. It can be said that the dreams of the first settlers have come to fruition. And we can happily say that we also have traditional folk songs and dances today!

"Israeli folk dances spread to all the settlements in the country and new dances were created. Some were circle dances and others, couples dances, which were also danced in circles."



Couples dance in the evening breeze on a harvested field



Dancers in a field



Shavuot Festival in Kibbutz Ma'agan Michael



Dancers in a field



IZUN

(Balance)

The First Place Winner at the 2019 Karmiel Festival

Translation:
Ruth Schoenberg

Galia Boaron was born and still resides in Bat Yam, located on an amazing stretch of beach. She is a daughter in an eight-person family, the sixth of the six children in the household. She is married to Yossi and the mother of four wonderful children.

She has been working for the Ministry of Education as a kindergarten teacher for about 17 years. She holds a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education, with a specialization in "child development". In the past, she was a "catchball" coach and a player in the Mamant League – Mothers' League. [Catchball is a social sport started in Israel that combines sports with social activity. it is a team ball game resembling volleyball. See: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/48a224_f0d34f967c484db5a2aa869c8b0c7cc1.pdf].

She is a Pilates instructor, working with "Yad Labanim" [an organization dedicated to commemorating the fallen soldiers in Israel's wars and helping the bereaved families]. She is also a folk dance instructor.

Galia:

As a child, when I was about 6 years old, there was just a single folk dance club at which the entire neighborhood danced. The instructor was **Pnina Aran** (with whom I am still in good contact to this day). [For thirty years, she led the year round Saturday night Israeli folk dancing on the boardwalk in Bat Yam.]

It seems to me that I eagerly awaited this class. I loved listening to the sound of the music, to dance, and to meet all the people in the neighborhood – kids, young people and adults.

Afterwards, in addition to this 'chug'/class, I continued to dance during the school breaks and went dancing at the neighborhood "matnas"/



"I realized that my biggest dream was to transform the daily agenda of the kindergarten and change it into a dance studio / dance with changes in the physical structure of the kindergarten classroom."

community center until about the age of 16. From the age of 12 to 15, I also did jazz dancing.

At the age of 17, I stopped dancing and left the dance field for the sake of my studies, the army, marriage and children. Then the thing happened that changed my life tremendously and for that I am grateful every day.

Three years ago, the Municipality of Bat Yam issued an appeal to the city's kindergarten teachers to join a project called, "Sailing Forward". This came after the city had won an Education Award on the subject of Personalized Education. The aim of the project was to put a spotlight on the kindergarten teachers and provide them with assistance by a team that would lead and guide them. The project would include professional guidance while changing the climate of the kindergarten class; the learning space would change accordingly and the teacher would respond by using an area of expertise in which she was strong and wanted to bring into the kindergarten class.

I submitted a proposal for a project called, "Movement and Music as Developers and Promoters of Cognitive Skills". I had wanted to introduce my professional knowledge, following a research paper that I had done on "Brain Development in Young Children with the Assistance of Movement and Music". This research work showed that absorption, memory and all cognitive, motor, emotional and social areas are enhanced/improved with the help of dance - movement and music.

After conversations with a life coach who guided me, I realized that my biggest dream was to transform the daily agenda of the kindergarten and change it into a dance studio / dance with changes in the physical structure of the kindergarten classroom.

Following this project, I decided to enroll in a "Folk Dance Instructors Course", administered by **Gadi Bitton**, in order to have the required knowledge to teach the children. At the same time, I started to go dancing and learn the dance repertoire. My dance session was led by **Asher Oshri** in the Bat Yam Country Club. Asher was with me throughout. I did my internship training with him and to this day he has remained my "mentor". During this time, I was exposed to the spectacular world of



folk dance and I met amazing people who made me fall in love with this area anew.

After completing the course, I realized that I lacked the appropriate knowledge for the children with whom I work, ages 3-10. I signed up for another course, "Folk Dancing for Young Children", taught by the talented choreographer and instructor, **Dr. Levi Bar Gil**. Through his style of instruction, I understood that I had to teach simple, repetitive movements to the kindergarten students.

The folk dance project, "The Dancing Kindergarten", was successful and began to take hold of the Bat Yam children. I taught dancing to the kindergarten children throughout the year. Whenever I taught a new topic, the children were exposed to the dance that fit the theme or was appropriate for the occasion.

My dancing with the kindergarten caught on and gained momentum. The children who came as new immigrants from Russia, Turkey and Ethiopia participated and found a common language even though they did not speak Hebrew. Even delegation from abroad came to the class to observe the project in action.

Later, at the beginning of the following year, I did a workshop for all kindergarten teachers and teaching assistants in the city of Bat Yam, on the topic of "Skill Development Combined with Movement and Music in Kindergarten". At the 70th Independence Day Celebration for the State of Israel, all the children of the city of Bat Yam danced to the music that they had learned throughout the year.

A year later, I continued teaching folk dance in

school for children in grades five and six and began working in the evenings as a dance instructor for Gadi Bitton and in the mornings as a folk dance instructor for retired seniors.

About the dance, Izun (Balance), Galia says:

This song has a very beautiful and different rhythm. It starts slowly and then the tempo changes. It has a hip-hop beat, a hora. It has many rhythms from different parts of the world.

The words spoke to me. The song talks about how in life we need to be in balance, not everything is black or white, religious or secular, at work or during free time. A song that gives the person who is listening to it a lot of material for thought.

Since this was a time when I was looking for a way to diversify, innovate and challenge the professional field that I had chosen – teaching; the song “Izun – Balance” made me realize that the dancing and creating choreography for the dance, blossomed in my mind, the spirit of joy and achievement was in my body and work, and made me fall in love again with my work and my life.

To my delight, the dance, “Izun – Balance”, took First Place in the Choreography Competition at the Karmiel Dance Festival. This occasion really excited me and has proven to me the belief that when a person dreams, persists and believes... there is no doubt he/she can surely go far. “If you will it, it is no dream” [Theodor Herzl].

Since winning, I have been exposed to a large audience of dancers and instructors who have invited me to teach the dance throughout the country. I am currently awaiting invitations from abroad, and I’m currently working on a new dance. My message to the nation... Dance must be taught from early childhood, in every kindergarten and every school from first to twelfth grade. Everyone will benefit - children, parents, educators.

Dream – Touch – Create...and most importantly: dance and thus give yourself a gift for life. **Rabbi Nachman of Breslov**, [also known as Reb Nachman of Bratslav] said: “One must dance at least one dance every day, whether in action or in thought”.

Izun

Dance: Galia Boaron

Formation: Circle

Structure: Three parts and one transition

Meter: 4/4

Part A: Face CCW, hands free.

- 1-2 Two steps fwd: R,L.
- 3&4 Step-tog-step fwd: RLR.
- 5&6 While moving slightly fwd on line of circle: Step L to left towards center and slightly fwd, cross R behind L, step L fwd.
- 7&8 Repeat counts 5&6 with opposite footwork, i.e.: Step R to rt. away from center and slightly fwd, cross L behind R, step R fwd.
- 9-10 Step L fwd, lift R in an arc over L and step on R across L.
- 11&12 Quick Yem L bwd. [step back L, back R, fwd L].
- 13-14 Step on R to rt. to face out of center, close L next to R with both knees bent and tapping thighs twice with both hands.

- 15-16 Step on L to left to face center, close R next to L while clapping hands with arms fwd at waist level.

Part B: Face center, hands begin in front and joined [from the clap above].

- 1&2 Brush R fwd lifting rt. foot knee high, leap onto R in place, step L fwd and release hands.
- 3&4& With hands extended sideward: Jump on both feet with feet apart and turn so that rt. shoulder is toward center (“sit”) to face CW, hop back onto L to face center, step back on R, step L fwd in place. [Note: this is a “tcherkessia” pattern.]
- 5&6& Moving fwd into center: Two heel-steps: R,L.
- 7&8 With rt. shoulder center: Sway R, sway L to face out of center and close R next to L while clapping hands at chest height with arms extended fwd in front of body.
- 9-16 Repeat the pattern of Part B counts 1-8 moving out of center to end facing center.

“One must dance at least one dance every day, whether in action or in thought”.

"The dance, Izun – Balance", took First Place in the Choreography Competition at the Karmiel Dance Festival. This occasion really excited me and has proven to me the belief that when a person dreams, persists and believes... there is no doubt he/she can surely go far."

Part C: (Chorus) Face center, hands free.

- 1 Jump ("sit) with feet apart and arms lifted sideward.
- 2& With arms raised upward, turn CCW (to left) while moving on the line of the circle with two hops on R to end facing CCW.
- 3&4 Three steps fwd while lowering arms: L,R,L.
- 5-8 Face center. Yem. R while extending rt. arm to rt. side; Yem. L while extending left arm to left side.
- 9&10 Moving into center: Step R fwd while turning rt. shoulder to center, cross L behind R continuing to move toward center, step R in place.
- 11&12 Moving out of center with arms extended to the sides: Step-tog-step LRL turning left to and end facing center.
- 13-14 Moving toward center: Step R fwd crossing over L, step L fwd crossing over R.
- 15&16 Continue moving into center: Step-tog-step RLR fwd while arms circle fwd, upward, back around, fwd and upward.
- 17-18 Two steps bwd toward line of circle with arms remaining raised: L,R.
- 19&20 Turn left moving toward line of circle and lowering arms: Step-tog-step LRL.
- 21&22 Face center. Sway R-L, close R next to L while clapping hands with arms extended fwd.

Repeat Part C

Repeat Parts A and B

Transition: Move CW.

- 1&2& Double time mayim step beginning with R over L [cross, side, cross behind, side].
- 3&4& Continue to move CW on the line of the circle with 4 steps and turning CW (to rt. – backwards turn) on the balls of the feet beginning with R fwd, leap onto L with arms raised overhead, two steps R,L.
- 5&6 Continue CW: Cross R over L, L to left to face center, step R bwd to turn rt. to face CCW.
- 7&8 Yem. L bwd.
- 9&10 Moving CCW on the line of the circle: R to rt. side, L behind R, R to rt. and face out of center.

- 11&12 Continue moving CCW: L to left, R behind L, L to left pivoting left to face center.
- 13&14 With left hand overhead and rt. hand toward center: Cross R over L, step L back in place, step R to rt and face out of center.
- 15&16 With rt. hand overhead and left hand out of center: Cross L over R, step R back in place, step L to left and face center while lowering hand.
- 17&18 Face center. Sway R-L, close R next to L while clapping hands with arms extended fwd.

Repeat Part C twice with a change at the end of the second repetition as follows:

21-24 Yem R, Yem. L.

25 Step R fwd toward center while raising arms straight upward and overhead.

Dance notation by **Ruth Goodman**



Izun – Balance

Lyrics, music and singer: **Hanan Ben Ari**

I suspect that I've become mediocre
 Just at a time that I thought I had
 Improved in a non-temporary way
 Reality showed up and awakened my memory
 I am a human, from dust I came and to dust I
 will return
 The wind blowing through me is cool
 In any situation that I try to keep my groove
 I am either a beat too early or a beat too late

Chorus:

I need direction, balance
 In order to escape the degeneration



Dosage
 Between essence-spirit-soul
 Between the will to do
 Fire-Wind-Water- Earth
 Between reverence and love

 You need direction, balance
 In order to escape the atrophy degeneration
 Dosage
 Between essence-spirit-soul
 Between the will to do
 Fire-Wind-Water-Earth
 Between reverence and love

 Is it possible to be holy
 And remain normal?
 To be free
 Without doing anything I feel like
 To mature
 And remain all in?
 To rationalize committing suicide for a dream
 To find compassion in the repetitious routine
 To put on a disguise and remember the purpose
 To create punk-hip-hop and keep the beat
 And still call it Jewish music?

 From all the Diaspora I had come from
 You could create one continent
 Afghanistan, Hungary and Iran which is arming itself
 I want unity
 Changing opposites into couples
 But in order for it to be pleasurable

 Chorus:
 I need direction, balance
 In order to escape the degeneration

Dosage
 Between essence-spirit-soul
 Between the will to do
 Fire-Wind-Water- Earth
 Between reverence and love
 You need direction, balance
 In order to escape the atrophy degeneration
 Dosage
 Between essence-spirit-soul
 Between the will to do
 Fire-Wind-Water-Earth
 Between reverence and love

 The soul is not a sucker
 And what you thought you had saved
 With time it (the soul) will collect a mortgage size
 interest
 Balance your strength
 Control the heart with the mind
 And then you will be able to be free
 And flow
 And dream

 You need to be hospitalized
 Quickly
 Bro, don't be bummed out
 Move
 From sadness to joy
 From cessation to action
 Exit the chaos
 From slavery to redemption

 You must be hospitalized
 Quickly
 Bro, don't be bummed out
 Move
 From sadness to joy
 From cessation to achievement
 Exit the chaos

 This world
 Next world
 From slavery to redemption

 Song lyrics translation by **Judy Fixler**



ALEX'S EXPERIENCES

Alex Huber documents important Israeli folk dance events with his camera

"Hayu Yamim" (Those Were The Days) A Monthly Nostalgia Night with Nourit Grinfeld in Nordia

I arrived at the monthly session (Harkada) in Nordia [a moshav shitufi in central Israel] on Tuesday evening at sunset. I parked and walked towards the dance hall. The entrance hall was arranged in a French bistro style, with checkered tablecloths, small vases and candles... Already at the entrance there is a special atmosphere. I turn right, into the hall... I arrived early... they just started dancing...

Wow! What a respectful reference to the first creators and dance leaders (markidim). An entire wall is covered with 16 photos of the pioneers with a few words about each. On the right there is a wall decorated with "HAPPY BIRTHDAY" the Sixth Anniversary of "Hayu Yamim".

Nurit watches the door and approaches every dancer that comes in and receives him/her with a warm welcome. It's still early, but the atmosphere inside is an indication of things to come. There is already a circle of dancers holding hands, smiling and singing.

Before long, dancers coming from all over Israel, totally fill up the dance floor for the magic that happens here once a month for the past six years. Nurit who grew up with the old dances, chooses the repertoire very carefully. You see that she did her homework and the dance session was carefully planned. The variety is great and special. The dance session is built on dances that are always danced and some that are not. These dances evoke nostalgia for the "good old" days.

Nurit radiates love for the many dancers and the dancers respond similarly. The dance session is lively and joyful consistently, Nurit honors the vatikim/veterans that come to the dance session. Vatikim like **Sedi (Se'adia Amishai), Marco Ben Shimon, Moshe Telem**, and others. This time, in honor of the party, Nurit invites a guest artist – the singer, **Itamar Cohen**, whose songs "Rachel", "Ballada HaMa'ayin" and others, are an invaluable asset of Israeli folk dance.

At one point, when Nurit was on the stage, I looked at her face as she was watching the dancing crowd. I could see a huge smile on her face and moisture in her eyes – the excitement about what was going on on the dance floor. She seems to understand that she is doing something good.



Here is the proof that we are 6 years old



Nurit demonstrating with Se'adia Amishai



Nurit, Yoav, Aliza and others

Alex's Experiences



Grinfelds are dancing



Sefi, Lior and Udi



Nurit with Moshe Telem



Line dancing too!



From left: Edit, Orly, Eyal, Ro'i, Orpaz and Neta



Singing together



From left: Mickey Huber, Yael Yakobi, Gil'ad Tzeiri and Ada Aharon