

# רוקדים

מגזין לריקודי עם ומחול

## NIRKODA



עמותת ארגון המדריכים  
והיוצרים לריקודי עם



Vol 104 | October 2020

# The World of Jim Gold International



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## Dear Readers,

Just as this issue of the magazine was ready to be published, we were saddened to learn of the passing of **Yoav Ashriel** ז"ל, one of the pillars of our Israeli folk dance movement. "Rokdim-Nirkoda" salutes the man and his work. Included in this magazine is a parting tribute from his daughter, [Rakefet Ashriel](#).

On a positive note, we are pleased to announce that the dream has come true: <http://magazines.rokdim.co.il/> is online and you can now read all the articles on our new website.

We've started with crowdfunding and look forward to having all of you participate in the maintenance, development and especially the introduction of all the contents contained in all issues of "Rokdim-Nirkoda" and "Meidam" from 1987 to the present – 33 years of people, articles, research, events and experiences. (Many thanks to the programmer, **Amnon Ben David**!!).

At present, the site is just the building – the "home". The content itself will enter the site slowly. We have many months (at least a year) of work, scanning the pages of the magazines, editing them to the appropriate size, arranging them into individual articles and full issues, and uploading them to the site, as well as restoring the articles to text format. Lots of work. This is **the written history** of Israeli folk dance from the last 33 years and we hope that in the future we can also add a photo gallery by years as well as a collection of video articles. These materials are stored with me.

On the site, you will be able to view each issue in its entirety: you can search by the author / reporter, editor or translator, and especially, you can search for the desired subject matter of the article or issue number and the year of publication.

**We invite each and every one of you, those for whom this history and culture is important, to take part in the "crowdfunding" of this huge and important project.**

The Coronavirus crisis is upon us. We have never experienced such a crisis previously...and no one knows when we will return to our normal routine. The plague that is affecting the whole world shocks us tremendously. All over the world the dance sessions have also been impacted; some were cancelled, then returned in some countries in a modified format with many restrictions (we danced with masks), and in different parts of the world again returning to a total ban on any in person dance event.

Throughout the world, the situation has led to many creative initiatives by various dance leaders. People provided our dancers with rays of light and a little optimism in the darkness that fell upon all of us. Zoom dance sessions, world-wide "online marathons", hishtalmuyot (workshops) on Zoom and live dance events on Facebook and YouTube. Everything that is similar but not the "real thing", i.e., the in person contact between the dancers while dancing, but nevertheless, something. You can read about these initiatives and the attempts to find solutions, as well as about seeking financial assistance for instructors, that are contained in five different articles in this issue: [A Message from the Irgun](#), [A Message from the Mador](#), [Circle of Life](#), [Hora Corona](#), [Ra'anana Defeated Corona](#).

Congratulations to **Shuki Hoffman**, the artistic director of "Mehola", who has won another award – the **Rabinovich Foundation Award** on behalf of the Tel Aviv Municipality. A comprehensive interview with her by [David Ben Asher](#) is also in this issue.

[Dan Biron's 80th birthday](#) and a celebration for "Lehakat Hastudentim", interviews with [Ayalah Goren-Kadman](#), impressions from [Camp Bitnua 2019](#), the [Dance of the Month](#) – Bat Li Pitom (Suddenly You Came To Me) and the section, "[Alex's Experiences](#)", are all here in the issue before you.

Enjoy your reading,

**Yaron Meishar, Ruth Goodman and Danny Uziel** – Editors



Yaron Meishar



Ruth Goodman



Danny Uziel



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**Rakefet Ashriel**  
Translation:  
Ruth Goodman  
and Tzipi Shragai

# Parting Tribute To My Father

## Dearest Aba (Dad)!

I can't believe I'm never going to see your blue eyes again, your broad smile and the goodness in the light of your face. I can't hear your voice and I can't talk to you and tell you about your grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The last month when you were in the hospital was the hardest of my life. I just wanted you to come out of this alive, but apparently life is bigger than us. You meant so much to me and I did my best for you to come out of surgery and recover. I take solace in the fact that you did not suffer and merited to pass away as a tzadik because you were a truly righteous man.

Despite the fact that you were an innovator in your field, breaking with convention, so talented, a kind of artist, a genius in your field and never arrogant; you were always humble, always one of the people who had conversations at eye level. All human beings were equal in your eyes and that too, you passed on to us.

I have always been very attached to you, but since Ima (Mom) passed away, the bond between us has grown stronger. I cannot talk about you without referring to Ima as well. You two were as one entity; you were great parents to me and thanks to you, I was blessed with a happy childhood.

I was born and raised in a home where songs and dances were a routine of life. I grew up in a special home, an open and liberal home. We were always approached by young artists who you took under your wings to care for and nurture. I will not forget how you helped them put their dances together and you and Ima danced together with them in the living room of our house.

You and Ima completed each other and blended into one another harmoniously; Ima was the teacher, the graceful instructor while you were the choreographer and creator behind the dances.

At your funeral, the song "Yatzanu At – We Left Softly" was played; it was the last dance you created in memory of Ima who loved the song so much. This is the song that connects the two of you.

As a child, when I would come to the harkadot (dance sessions) of you and Ima and watched you dance together, I did not realize at the time how "great" and groundbreaking you were in your field; only when I grew up did I understand the meaning of your work – your art.

From a very young age, I was influenced by you and learned to dance. You invested a lot of time and effort in me and your desire has borne fruit. Some will say that it's in the genes and maybe it's the environmental impact in general and perhaps it is both factors together.

As a young girl I performed with dance groups in Europe, completed a folk dance instructors course given by the Va'ad HaPoel with honors and later became the object of your pride when I was a dancer in my own right at the "Bat Dor" Studio and then graduated with outstanding honors in teaching dance at Seminar HaKibbutzim.

I taught classical ballet, modern and jazz and after receiving two academic degrees, I was a lecturer at Wingate College. I cannot forget how you bragged about me in front of everyone noting the fact that your daughter teaches at Wingate.

You weren't an ordinary father like all the fathers. You were a special father, young, a friend who was fun to be with. Although you were completely immersed in developing your career as a choreographer, working with dance troupes, dance classes and huge dance sessions as well as a training center for instructors, you have always been dedicated to family, Ima and us, your children and grandchildren. You have always been very attentive and compromising in every way. What you have done for us was above and beyond; you have always invested in us – children and grandchildren – pampering us with trips, restaurants and entertainment.


You were a young and special grandfather, "the grandfather". For my children you were a significant figure in their lives and you often pampered them and spent time with them.

You were an open-minded father who was interested in a variety of areas that were not directly related to the folk dance profession. Areas such as: architecture, geography, history, music, culture and art and all out of interest, curiosity and self-learning. As a result, you had a big impact on me while on the trips we took together as a part of the family.

You loved traveling very much, as I know. At every opportunity, when you did not work, we would travel and spend time in different places in Israel and around the world. From those places you drew inspiration to create new dances. I so enjoyed traveling with you and hearing stories about the new places. Your knowledge was inexhaustible; you were literally a walking encyclopedia.

Whenever you would dance with me and demonstrate dances with me in the center of the circle, I would be in the clouds. I was so proud of you, because you were so special and unique. To me you were the perfect father on earth.

Aba, I say goodbye to you knowing that you are now in good hands. You are together with Ima and you both are taking care of each other. You and Ima are both in my heart forever and for all eternity. From my viewpoint, you are invincible.

My love for both of you is endless! 



*Yoav Ashriel*





David Ben-Asher

Photographs:  
David Ben-Asher  
and family album

Translation:  
Ruth Goodman and  
Tzipi Shragai

# Shuki Hoffman's Choreography of Life

## Winner of the Rabinovich Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award 2020

- Myriad of dance students across the country and even around the world
- Dozens of choreographies that have become classics
- Representation of Israel in State ceremonies and around the world
- Recipient of a Badge of Honor from Teddy Kollek, the legendary Mayor of Jerusalem
- Founder and leader of "Mehola" – one of the largest dance establishments in Israel
- Named as Yakir Yerushalaim (an Honorary Citizen of Jerusalem)
- Production of the choreography eight times for the torch lighting ceremony held on Mount Herzl
- And now – the Rabinovich Foundation Award for Lifetime Achievement
- Shuki Hoffman, one of the greatest Israeli dance Jerusalemites in our country.



Shuki Hoffman

Photo: Tomer Halperin

Sixty-eight years ago, **Shoshi**, possibly **Shoshana**, was born in Jerusalem. In eighth grade, she was nicknamed, "**Shuki**", the name which over the years became a brand in the field of Israeli dance; a nickname that stuck with a woman who woke up the Holy City and swept it with movement and dance that has reached new and fascinating heights.

Already in the ninth grade she knew who would accompany her with the sounds of his accordion, as well as in her private life. **Shlomi** has been her ultimate partner to this day.

Since then, for decades they have been the legendary couple that has brought the gospel of Israeli dance to the entire country and throughout the world, at numerous events and forums by presenting this culture to thousands of dance and song enthusiasts. There was a wonderful symbiosis between the movement and music skills of the couple, Shuki and Shlomi, and their followers even gave them the nickname "**Shluki**" (Shlomi and Shuki for fans of the genre).

In the early 1970s, while in the IDF at the army base BAHAD 8, Shuki, a graduate of Madassim (a course for sports instructors) served as a physical training instructor and an instructor of the HIBA, women soldiers serving in the police force. (Full disclosure:

the author of this article was the commander of this base.) Shlomi, in addition to being a tank crew member in the army, played the accordion as a cultural addition that was enjoyed by the members of his units.

Following the completion of a folk dance instructors course, Shuki began to instruct the children of the city of Jerusalem in both in within the schools and in the Tzofim (Scouts). Her choreographic skills were emerging and her first steps as a



Shuki and Shlomi Hoffman - "Shluki"



Shuki Hoffman. On the wall – her painting



Mehola at the Armon HaNatziv Promenade.  
Photo: Mehola Archive

choreographer were enthusiastically received by the city's school system. It was not long after that legendary Mayor **Teddy Kollek** rerouted her to the position of head of the municipality's dance section. This is where the Hoffman couple's life became tumultuous. They defined themselves as restless "workaholics". At the time, they had a hand in all the wide-ranging cultural activities in our capital city. There were graduation ceremonies of school classes, many performances, organization of local singing groups, work with **Lilith Nagar** on the black-and-white TV channel, management of the municipal orchestra by Shlomi and the overall management of "Hora Yerushalayim" which developed into a well-known and valued national troupe. In an exceptional manner, they received a special permit from Teddy to work as a married couple in the municipality; Teddy just wasn't willing to give up on both as contributors who had been giving above and beyond to the city's culture.

"Hora Yerushalayim" – the dance and song troupe was at the center of their work for the city. Both Shlomi, the manager, and Shuki, the choreographer, were in constant motion. This continued for about 16 years, with hundreds of performances around the country and at international festivals in many countries. **Teddy Kollek** crowned Shuki as an "outstanding employee in the municipality".

### The legendary Khan – another tier of the country's heritage

Concurrent with their work in the Jerusalem Municipality with "Hora Yerushalayim" and other activities in the

city, the "Shluki" couple made their unique folkloristic contributions. Every evening, literally every evening, an Israeli folklore performance took place in the Jerusalem Khan Theater, with its legendary **Hofni, Yaffa Yarkoni** and others, under the management of the entrepreneurial owner, **Eli Siton**.

There were hundreds of shows, even on Seder night and sometimes two shows in one evening. Thousands of tourists and masses of Israelis witnessed these folkloric performances with compact choreographies of Chassidic dance, Hora, Adama (the land), Oriental style, in which they made sure to present, first and foremost, the beautiful Israel.

For 10 years at the Khan there were productions to the glory of the capital of Israel. And from there came the "Yerushalayim Shel Zahav – Jerusalem of Gold" Club followed by the "Sabras" Project in [the Jerusalem] "YMCA", all for deepening the roots of the Israeli experience and the heritage of the land. In between, their eldest son, Yaniv emerged into the world.

### *So y-you can rest a little, Shuki? Relax on your laurels, enjoy the fruits of years of labor, a little quiet for the soul?*

You made me laugh. Me rest? Me sit quietly?! Anyone who knows me – I'm pepper. Doing and action is in my DNA. If I do not dance I paint, and if I do not paint then I sculpt, and if I do not sculpt then I design. Really, I look around and see beautiful sculptures made by her hands adorning her apartment overlooking the sea in the exclusive residential neighborhood in north Tel Aviv.

"You made me laugh. Me rest? Me sit quietly?! Anyone who knows me - I'm pepper. Doing and action is in my DNA. If I do not dance I paint, and if I do not paint then I sculpt, and if I do not sculpt then I design. After all, the essence of our artistic role is to excite and lead people with a spirit of doing and to reach new heights."



We were bombarded with students. From the very beginning in 1988, more than 1,000 children and adolescents of all ages were enrolled. The studio could not keep pace with the demand so we opened 5 branches, one after another, at community centers in the city of Jerusalem.

**Then Shuki adds:** After all, the essence of our artistic role is to excite and lead people with a spirit of doing and to reach new heights. So in my youth, I founded the "Bamot Chofshiot – Free Stages" project in the city, and projects to help struggling youth. Alongside these, I founded a folklore troupe whose motto is Israeli heritage alongside modernism and a high level of technology.

At the same time, in the citywide framework, the Shluki couple formed the municipal singing group with conductor **Yossi Debra**, along with an orchestra, choreographic staging by Shuki, special costumes and programs for the shows. Together, a large-scale artistic body was created. It is in fact a combination of the dance troupe "Hora Yerushalayim" together with a singing group as a basis for expansion along the way. In collaboration with **Bracha Dudai**, the late choreographer and instructor, the children's troupe "Hora Efrochim" was formed and with **Micha Ness**, "Hora Neurim" was formed. All were under one roof.

**An era was over.  
A new day was upon us.**

The very intense years of activity in the municipality led the Hoffman couple to rethink. After a long period of achievement, they decided to change direction towards an independent enterprise. They left working for the municipality, on good terms, and turned to their new life endeavor, i.e., opening



*From rehearsals at the "Mehola Merkaz" studio*

their own private studio. They found a special place in the German Colony in Jerusalem where they opened a studio featuring a variety of dance styles, which was then new in the capital. Classical ballet, modern, tap, flamenco, belly dance, ballroom, jazz and of course, folk dance and dances from the 60's were taught there. In biblical sources they found inspiration for the name "Mehola", a derivative of the word "Machol" and went with that.

**Shuki and Shlomi relate:** We were bombarded with students. From the very beginning, more than 1,000 children and adolescents of all ages were enrolled. The studio could not keep pace with the demand and so we opened 5 branches, one after another, at community centers in the city. We employed many teachers and I as the head teacher, directed the general operations and I was the artistic director of the school and of the adult troupe. At the same time, I made sure to keep in direct touch with all the young students along with their parents and families and that is what guides me in my work until today.



*Noa Hoffman, the youngest daughter. Photo: Or Danon*





Yael Hoffman

Later, we also expanded the field of operations to Mevaseret Zion and other locations in the country.

### A new era, a great challenge – the establishment of "Mehola"

In 1989 we felt ripe, the duo Shluki said. We set another new and challenging goal for ourselves – to establish a dance troupe at the highest level. It would in fact be a milestone and an aspiration for all students to follow suit. And the troupe really made a name for themselves. In honor of the millennium celebrations, in the year 2000, Shuki's troupe was invited to represent Israel at an international event held at Disneyland in Orlando. The many performances at this event revealed "Mehola" to be the ultimate ambassador of Israeli art and culture to the thousands of spectators who visited the place. As cultural ambassadors, we also represented Israel in Brazil, Denmark, Sweden, England, France and the United States.

The success of the troupe and the school was great; a few years later, we broke through the boundaries of Jerusalem and opened branches in other places in the country. We now have activities in various cities, with "Mehola" branches in Tel Aviv, Ramat Hasharon, Savyon, Givat Shmuel and Jerusalem. Over the years, thousands of female and male dance students from the age of 4 to upper teens have



Yaniv and Dorit Hoffman. Photo: Shlomi Perry

passed through these settings. During the 33 years of "Mehola"'s existence, tens of thousands of youth have passed through our doors, some of whom have reached extremely high levels of dance. Our trainees continued their journey in the best dance companies in the country – Batsheva, Mayumana, The Kibbutz Dance Company, Vertigo, Tararam, the Israeli Ballet, Inbal Pinto and in prestigious schools abroad.

At the same time, we have trained hundreds of instructors, some of whom are well-known in their field. Our son, **Yaniv**, met his wife, **Dorit**, in "Mehola", and as expected, they became instructors and later major artistic directors and choreographers in the network. They were later joined by their middle daughter, **Yael**, and then also **Noa**, their youngest daughter. And so it came to be that the entire family was dancing, teaching and choreographing. Yaniv and Dorit manage two of the successful branches of "Mehola" – the locations in Ramat Hasharon and Tel Aviv, after many years in which they artistically managed the "Mehola" troupes in Jerusalem. For many years we did the Torch Lighting ceremonies together, the "Taglit" and "Masa" ceremonies, the Maccabiah and others. Later, Yaeli also got involved and took over the management of the Kiryat Hayovel branch in Jerusalem and helped open the branch in Ramat Hasharon, where she still teaches. Noa, the youngest daughter, became a solo dancer in "Mehola". Like an icon on stage, today she is the professional director of all activities at the Givat Shmuel branch and



Hoffman family. Photo: Tomer Halperin



of the troupes in Ramat Hasharon and Tel Aviv. Over the years, we have established competitive tracks, winning many awards in both folklore and modern dance. But more importantly, we have developed teaching methods to build a school according to levels of knowledge, so that everyone, at every level, can find themselves and their place in the world of dance. We've invested the same resources for all ages and levels - shows, costumes, senior staff and more. This is the secret of the method.

Recently, Yaniv took over my role in managing the adult troupe which he has raised to new heights. Lehakat "Mehola" is known in Israel for its level and performances, and Yaniv's choreographies are a hallmark, along with the reconstructions of the material I constructed in those years. Old and new, side by side. We regularly perform at the Karmiel and Ashdodance Festivals.

Last year, I got to direct the opening show of Ashdodance and, alongside Dorit and Yaniv, we did a show called, "Mazal Tov – Our Joys". It was a celebration of Israeliness on the stage by troupes from all over the country.

Today, it is safe to say that "Mehola" is an extensive system in the field of Israeli dance and other styles. It is one of the largest in Israel, both in terms of the number of trainees and the professional level of our dance centers. We have dance groups for every age



*Photo: Dorit Hoffman*

group, including 5 representative troupes of high schoolers and graduates who perform at a very high level on a nationally recognized scale.

***You performed at the torch lighting ceremonies on Mount Herzl eight times with your spectacular choreographies – Shuki, Yaniv and Dorit – the "Hoffmans". What can you say about this and when will it happen again?***

I was chosen eight times to serve as the choreographer of the dance performances at the torch lighting ceremonies on the eve of Israel's Independence



*From the dance "Like a Lily", choreography: Shuki Hoffman. Photo: Tomer Halperin*





Mehola at the Karmiel Dance Festival. Photo: Eyal Yeynot



Photo: Tomer Halperin

Day, **Shuki says**. We brought about 300 dancers with innovative choreographies that matched the grandeur of the event. Every single time, we dedicated special thought according to the theme that the Ministry of Education set for that year.

Participating in this honored ceremony, of course, required a lot of rehearsals and endless preparations. All participants were Mehola dancers. We perceived the choreographies as a complex, creative and deep work of art; we had many rehearsals before the event and endless preparations. I am proud to have been a significant part of a State event of this magnitude.

In recent years, event producers have made changes to the concept and moved to focus more on pyrotechnics, fireworks and glitter, lasers and drones. This suited us less. We are more into the field of art and Israeliness. We may return to this, depending on the viewpoint of those in charge of this ceremony

### **There are no limits to what can be done**

Shuki's track record is rich and varied. She has produced evenings for the Karmiel Festival, choreographed for the Maccabiah ceremony, at events in Caesarea, directed performances for the Ministry of Education and more. She has given guest lectures at both the Jerusalem Academy and Wingate College, served as a judge at the Israel Festival as well as for various dance institutions. She gained international recognition when she was invited to international folklore competitions where she also won medals of honor.

As a guest choreographer, she has created choreographies for acclaimed troupes, including "Anachnu Kan", "Misgav", "Tzivei Machol Hadera", "Hora Ashkelon" as well as Jewish troupes in Brazil and England.

Lehakat "Mehola" won a silver medal at a competition in Dijon, France, first place in Cyprus, a run of a month of performances in China and England and at the Dromobil Festival in Canada; this is only a partial list.

Shuki's works have become inalienable assets in folklore and have been performed by well-known troupes in the country. Among her best-known works are "Hora Secharchoret", "Lo Tifga Bi Ein Ha'Ra", "Leyerushalayim", "MaOhf", "Trio" and others. Her work, "Adayin Kan", together with Shoshana Damari which was performed at the Karmiel Dance Festival, received The Dance of the Year Award from Amanut La'am – Arts for the People in 2006.

In 2017, her son Yaniv initiated the show, "Dancing Shuki – 40 Years of Creation", which was a festive show on the occasion of her 65th birthday. The show featured about 250 dancers from all over the country, dancing a variety of Shuki's works starting from when she began creating. And there also starred the whole family including the daughters, the bride, the son and even the grandchildren.

### **About your creative process**

**Well, as we have seen. Shuki multi-tasks. The "what" is indeed rich and varied. It's time to ask**



Photo: Or Danon





Shiri Rafael

*you something about the "how". How does the creative idea come about? What goes through your mind when building a dance sequence? How does group integration work? How do you choreograph?*

This is a question that is a bit difficult to answer as it is abstract and multifaceted, Shuki answers. There are those who create choreography. There are those who create on the spot when inspired by a muse, and unfortunately there are those who also those who copy from others. Of course, getting inspired is acceptable, also legitimate but there is a big difference between those who have innovated and introduced innovation and are original and those who just copy.

For me, it seems that things come from an inner vision. Something that is hard to explain. I think of a certain idea, go into a bubble, something internal comes to me, something spontaneous.

Sometimes it even comes to me in my dreams. It happens in an associative, flowing state, without prior preparation. This is a choreography creation with no formal limitations. I let my thoughts and feelings flow; in a sense, it might be something mystical. Sometimes, something comes into my mind at night, or in the car, or somewhere and then I ask my assistant to remember it so that it does not escape and be forgotten the next day. This is how other artists create while in a special mood and they do not even know how it comes to them.

Even with creating an entire show, I do not know exactly what the structure will be like; it comes about while creating with the large group that I work with.

My works may have become inalienable assets, an Israeli classic. I've created unique dances, such as to the song, Hava Nagila, with an innovative arrangement, where I created an oriental arrangement intertwined with jazz, a kind of modern oriental combination. Or, for example, in the original work "MaOhf" – Flight", I imagined the birds in white and so I created a language, a costume and music together with the talented **Menachem Koren-Menta**. (The costume design partners for "MaOhf" were **Leah Toren** and **Israel Shapira**.) On the other hand, when there is a work that is part of a set program, like the torch lighting ceremony, for example, I build the choreography with a lot of thought and early planning along with the design partners.

### "Mehola Merkaz" in Givat Shmuel as an innovative model in Israel

"Mehola" Givat Shmuel is one of the five centers of "Mehola" throughout the country. This is the newest studio in the network; it is a multidimensional center according to the method developed in "Mehola" by "the Hoffmans". This is reflected in the scope of styles, in the diversity of the population, in the inventories of the infrastructure and equipment, in



Photo: Tomer Halperin



At the Millennium Celebrations in 2000, Shuki's dance troupe was chosen from all the troupes in the country, by a special committee of dancers and the State Department, to represent Israel at an international event held at Disneyland in Orlando. The many performances at this event revealed "Mehola" to be the ultimate ambassador of Israeli art and culture ...



Photo: Tomer Halperin

the quality of the halls, in the professionalism of the instruction and the optimal organization.

**Shiri Rafael**, director of the Mehola Merkaz office in Givat Shmuel and a leading dancer in **Yaniv Hoffman's** adult "Mehola" troupe, says: We have a sophisticated and non-stop dance center at our disposal. Well-equipped dance halls, dance floors and other facilities required for a studio of this level. We focus on different dance styles – modern, jazz, classical ballet, contemporary Israeli, hip hop, and there are other areas as well.

After proving itself in "Mehola" Ramat Hasharon, we also established a competitive track here alongside an easier track that is also divided into knowledge levels – according to the general practice of the "Mehola" network. The students are from age 5 to twelfth grade, and this is how we operate on Sundays-Thursdays with unabated intensity.

The professional director and chief instructor at the branch is the youngest daughter, Noa who adds: The emphasis in today's dance is on a work style that combines modern technique with Israeli dance along with the classical style for holistic professional integrity.

The groups in Mehola are divided into the very young children (pitzkelach), young ones, middle schoolers and high schoolers. There are reserve troupes and representative troupes. In addition, there are various tracks such as – "Academic 1", "Track M", "Reserve", Track C, "Meholic", etc. Some train



Noa Hoffman. Photo: Or Danon

once a week and some are here up to 4-5 times per week, depending on the level and goal.

**Noa**, a former professional dancer at the Cameri Theater alongside well-known Israeli actors, served in the IDF as an outstanding dancer and will soon complete a bachelor's degree in dance at the Kibbutzim Seminary following in the footsteps of her older sister, Yael, who did so more than a decade ago.

Noa (who recently got married – Mazel Tov! congratulations!) explains: We admit to Mehol, in all its branches, those who are interested and suitable to pursue dance and are highly motivated. Our training requires a serious attitude and a strong will. It's not just a physical technique. In fact we have here an incubator for life, self and social discipline; one needs physical ability alongside emotional strength. They must learn to manage on their own. It is an education for maturity and it is seriousness, i.e., dealing with stressful situations and a willingness to accept criticism

Of course, not everyone is gifted with professional potential, but each of our students should exhaust their abilities and derive pleasure and benefit for life. They actually receive a cultural and personal asset that will accompany them for the rest of their lives. This is actually part of the method that we have developed at "Mehola" over the years by Shuki and Shlomi, the founding parents, and Yaniv and Dorit, who have continued on their path

in project development and management along with an innovative credo, "Ani Ma'amin – This is My Credo".

In the end, about 10% of the students will reach really professional levels and our studies provide them with the necessary tools to be involved with professional troupes, musicals, cinema and for participation in productions in Israel and abroad.

All branches of Mehola have a strict adherence to professional behavior alongside a value-based and social experience. We employ professional teachers, all of whom are certified and have dance degrees and are graduates of teacher training courses; additionally, many of them are outstanding dancers and Mehola graduates who have absorbed the language from an early age. Most of the instructors are professional-level dancers and are in fact the backbone of Lehakat "Mehola" – the most well-known adult troupe in the country.

*Well, how did you really build a dance project on such a scale? I asked Shlomi Hoffman, founder of Mehola and acting director of the new "Mehola Merkaz" branch in Givat Shmuel.*

It's a labor of years. Of course experience is an important component. It is a process of on the job

training and through the years we correct, improve and implement. After years in Jerusalem, we started to spread our wings and along with our children we have branched out, as mentioned, in five different centers. Such a concentration of dance students under one organizational roof is unparalleled in Israel and perhaps also in the world.

We, Shuki and I, consider "Mehola" a lifetime enterprise and our modest contribution to Israeli culture. The thousands of trainees during our decades of activity, and their success in life, are the awesome return for our great endeavor.

Our work is very, very diverse, not only in dance but as a school for life. Here you learn the meaning of discipline, coping with stress, competitiveness, ambition, sociability, self-confidence and achievement in all areas of life. Dance in itself is an asset for life.


### And for dessert – another prestigious award

Shuki was recently informed of her receiving the **Rabinovich Foundation Award** on behalf of the Tel Aviv Municipality. This is an important and prestigious award in the field of culture in Israel which also includes a financial grant. And so they wrote:

"Shuki has been involved in dance and choreography for over 40 years. The "Mehola" troupes under her artistic direction have won many awards and certificates from the founding of the school to the present day. The field of Israeli folklore was of great importance to the spread of Zionism, love of the country, settlement and the heritage of Israeli culture in Israel and in the Jewish communities around the world. Shuki has taught thousands of dancers in Israel and abroad about the unique Israeli folklore; she created and composed original and special works, with a folk orientation, along artistic lines combined with a story illustrated in every movement and staging.

"Folkloric dance is full of sweeping and erupting energy, with the use of space and composition that infects the audience. Thanks to her works and creations – she has spread the Israeli dance culture and the roots of the immigrations and the ethnic groups in Israel, the holidays as a source of authentic Israeli expression. From the very first moment her talent could be discerned as that of a unique creator and personality, combining art, accesibility, intelligence and energies – and all of these are intertwined with the nature of the Israeli dance of yore - which is still expressed in an exciting manner.

"Shuki has created her own unique Israeli style, which has left its mark on Israeli culture and dance, and she has blazed her path from folk art to professional and all encompassing art".

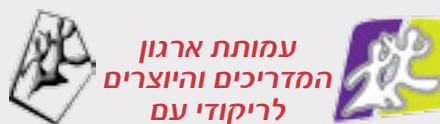
And so, even at the "young" age of Shuki and her husband Shlomi, it seems that their creative horizon continues to be the enterprise of their lives and for future generations to come. 

"Shuki has created her own unique Israeli style, which has left its mark on Israeli culture and dance, and she has blazed her path from folk art to professional and all encompassing art".





**Ilan Swisa,**  
Chair of the Irgun  
Translation:  
Ruth Goodman,  
Shani Aduculesi



# The Search for an Outline for Dance Sessions During Corona

A Message from the Chairman of the Irgun  
(Association of Folk Dance Instructors in Israel and Abroad)

**D**ue to the Coronavirus, we experienced a difficult year in both personal and mental aspects as well as economically; in addition to the physical and energetic aspects. Along the way, we lost a lot of things in many ways.

In the Irgun, we did everything we could in dealing with the relevant parties.

At the beginning of the crisis, on May 25, we turned to the Ministry of Culture to make an appointment. I was promised that: "We'll be in touch".

On June 1, I again contacted the Ministry of Culture (**Idan**, the spokesperson for **Hili Tropper**) and received no response. On June 7, I again contacted the Ministry of Culture and described the predicament of independent instructors and especially those for whom this is their main livelihood. In response, I was assured that the subject would be transferred to the Ministry of Health and that the issue was being dealt with. I was asked to send a proposal with an outline for the Harkadot (dance sessions).

That same day, June 7, I immediately sent an outline of a proposal for holding dance sessions, in accordance with the limitations that existed at the time, and that we committed to complying with all the procedures of the Ministry of Health. I requested an outline that had been approved for ballroom dancing. Idan, the spokesperson, was happy with the outline and said that he was in contact with the Chairman of the Folk Dance Section of the Ministry of Culture and that he would be sure to transmit the outline to the Minister of Culture to be dealt with and approved.

On June 13 (Saturday), when I realized that there

was still no answer, I turned to them again and, this time I asked again for the approval of the outline like that of the event halls – i.e., that would accommodate up to 250 dancers relative to the size of the venue or up to 70% of the size of the hall as shown in the business license. I argued that approval for only 50 dancers was not practical, certainly not financially. As mentioned above, an outline for 50 dancers was not approved by the Ministry of Culture/Folk Dance Section.

On June 14, I turned to them again and urgently asked for the Ministry of Culture's response. The answer – "When we get to it we will respond".

On June 19, Friday night, I again approached Idan, the spokesperson, this time through WhatsApp and with a notice about a demonstration of thousands of dancers and dance leaders: "We will not let you stop this tune". To my surprise, I received an immediate response and a promise that soon there will be approval for the opening of cinemas and theatres... which is irrelevant to us. Again I asked, "Why isn't anyone handling our outline?" The answer was: "Contact the Ministry of Health / Corona Committee in the Knesset..."

On June 21, I contacted the Ministry of Culture again and demanded an urgent meeting, regardless of who was responsible for what, in order to find out about compensation methods for independent dance leaders. I reached out again on the phone and received the answer in a voicemail message: "Your requests and all the pressure you are putting on us, are no longer pleasant. You need to be in

"...I received a written message that the office would take care of connecting us with "our Michal". To this day, I still don't know who Michal is... If it wasn't sad, it would definitely be funny..."



Karmiel Festival, 2003



touch with the Chairman of the Folk Dance Section of the Ministry of Culture".

On June 23rd, I was told that the Ministry of Culture was working with the Chairman of the Folk Dance Section of the Ministry of Culture and with **Galit**, the head of the Culture Section of the Ministry of Culture. And I received a written message that the office would take care of connecting us with "our Michal". To this day, I still don't know who Michal is... If it wasn't sad, it would definitely be funny... And again they told me that the Ministry of Health said that, "It is forbidden to touch and to dance and in folk dance you hold hands in a circle", thereby absolving themselves from dealing with our outline...

During this whole time, I had often reached out to the Chairman of the Folk Dance Section of the Ministry of Culture. From March 13, 2020 to July 28, 2020.

I reached out twelve times, i.e., on March 13, 14, 17, 18; April 24 and April 26 (demonstration in Rabin Square), June 1, 4, 8, 9, 14. An approval for a large gathering was then received. I was glad.

And then they postponed lifting the restrictions for a week – to June 21. On June 18, the Ministry of Culture promised that the emergency regulations would be amended, probably in a week's time... On June 19 we were told that we were not part of the framework of the solution. (How surprising...). On June 21, I again turned to the Folk Dance Section and also on July 28; by then I realized that there was no outline and probably there would not be one.

I would like to point out that there was cooperation on the part of the Folk Dance Section, except that when

push came to shove, there was no resolution... Our field is problematic because it uses all the prohibitions that exist in the regulations of the Ministry of Health.

As an organization, they approached us join to the protest... Of course, I agreed. We sent all the dance leaders forms for the participation in the protest of the stage personnel. Unfortunately, most of the active instructors didn't show up. We, a number of dance leaders came, probably the ones for whom it was very important. The purpose of the demonstration was to receive financial support from the Ministry of Culture to compensate the instructors and as an exit strategy from the crisis.

On June 1, I turned to the Ministry of Health and said, "Why is ballroom dancing approved and folk dancing not?" I was told: "Ballroom dancing is competitive and folk dancing is not, and therefore, the outline cannot be implemented for you".

Between June 1 and September 1, I contacted the Ministry of Health countless times while continuing to check the status of approvals for other sectors (such as banquet halls, restaurants, clubs, etc.); however, nothing was approved.

I didn't give up; then I went directly to a Member of the Knesset (Israeli Parliament), **Dr. Yifat Shasha-Biton**, Chair of the Corona Committee of the Knesset, and described the problem and the lack of response from all the above offices. She immediately put me in touch with **Nicole**, her personal assistant, who invited me to a Coronavirus meeting at the Knesset on June 23rd. The meeting for that day was cancelled due to an urgent tour with the Minister of Health



in hospitals and the meeting was rescheduled for Monday June 29 at 1:00 p.m.

At this committee meeting, as opposed to the others, we were given a place of honor and plenty of time to present our demands. Present on the committee were representatives from the Ministry of Health, Culture, Sport, Competitive Sports and other offices relevant for us as well as others who were not.

I introduced myself and all the Irgun's activities throughout all the years it existed (about 45 years). The way dance culture is passed down to future generations is by documenting and preserving dance history from 1928 to the present, holding dance festivals throughout the country, having weekend dance sessions for the general public, working with children, with the visually impaired, with special populations, dance sessions for those in wheelchairs, folk dancing, hishtalmuyot (workshops), supporting courses for dance leaders and of course, the important mission of our dance leaders abroad and the work that they do for the State of Israel.

I mentioned the difficulties in holding dance sessions these days, the difficult financial situation of members of our organization and the difficulty in obtaining a normal outline from the offices mentioned above.

I demanded both an immediate outline as well as compensation for instructors whose livelihoods were fatally damaged. I suggested an outline that would be good for everyone and I repeated over and over again that the issue must be dealt with at once. Also I demanded that we be defined as a competitive sport. At the conclusion of the meeting, the chairman of the committee determined that the Ministries of Culture and Health must immediately invite me to determine an outline. And guess what happened?

On June 30, I again reached out to them and looked for the authorities who were supposed to get back to me. I didn't get a response. I must say that, **Dr. Yifat-Shasha-Biton** has repeatedly tried to do everything for us including in the media.

I still have not given up and work extensively with the relevant offices to find a solution that is appropriate and legal as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, the Ministry of Culture and the Folk Dance Section were unable to find a logical and



*Dance session, Karmiel Festival, 2003*

reasonable outline for holding dance sessions. To my disappointment, the cooperation on the part of the Ministry was only in the promises; the execution was a big failure.

The only one who did act on behalf of the dance leaders and dancers in Israel has been **Dr. Shasha-Biton** and she is still working to find a suitable outline in which we, the dance leaders, can both satisfy our dancers and exist on a reasonable level. I promise and pledge that we in the Irgun have done and will continue to do everything including improve the personal situation of the instructors and ensure that everyone returns to their work by finding an outline for the dance sessions.

I'm glad that most of us have naturally come up with creative solutions to please our dancers and keep in touch with them on webcasts, Zoom and more... And we have brought happiness to dancers both in Israel and around the world. You're admirable. Finally, I and we as an organization are aware that we have all lost the source of our livelihood that, for a good part of us, this was our main source of income. But we shouldn't worry, because good things will come out of it too – both in thinking about the future and in our day-to-day dealings. It is precisely now that we need to be strong and grow out of this crisis in the hope of a better future and life.

On this occasion, I send my love and give strength to you all. At this time, I wish you and yours a Happy and Sweet New Year and that during this year we will discover how to embark on a new path that is also the "old path" but now, we will know how to appreciate it more and learn that nothing should be taken for granted. ✨

I'm glad that most of us have naturally come up with creative solutions to please our dancers and keep in touch with them on webcasts, Zoom and more... And we have brought happiness to dancers both in Israel and around the world. You're admirable.



Gadi Bitton

Translation:  
Ruth Goodman,  
Shani Aduculesi

# Mador Le'Rikudei Am – The Section For Folk Dance And Its Activities During The Coronavirus

As soon as the first closures and the severe restrictions that continued to be imposed upon us began, I, together with Irgun Ha'Markidim – the Association of Dance Leaders and Choreographers, with whom I was in contact, tried to unite everyone and to join in the organization of a demonstration that was initiated by those in the dance world to come in droves to Rabin Square. An impressive flashmob and speeches were planned for the demonstration.

Unfortunately, the response from the dance instructors for the demonstration was very poor; the turnout from regular dancers and stage choreographers was far greater at the demonstration. At this point, I understood the

attitude of the dance instructors in this struggle. Since I established the Mador Le'Rikudei Am – the Folk Dance Section at the Ministry of Culture, I've been very busy with trying to combine two elements – Israeli folk dance in sessions and Israeli folk dance for the stage, that is to say, I'm busy connecting the instructors and the choreographers which would yield significantly larger numbers as an entity and thus more power to deal with the authorities.

At the onset of Covid-19, with the problems in forming a government... I realized that there was no budget for us because the Mador was only established after the government was formed and the budget had not been approved... I understood

that, this year, there would be no budget framework for the Mador. I initiated a meeting with the Minister of Culture, **Mr. Hili Tropper**, and his advisor, **Ms. Michal Elran**; we tried to address two main issues. First, the writing of an outline for the Israeli dance world so that we could work during the Corona virus period. At the same time, the restrictions were tightened and we tried to set seven square meters for every person wherever there was a dance session.

Second, there was an attempt to establish a budget framework for the Mador as early as this year, 2020, and in this particular area we have gone through trials and tribulations and a long period of uncertainty.

After a while, I realized that no one was paying attention to us and that we would not get any assistance for returning to work. When I saw that this outline would also be dismissed every time with an unfair attitude toward us, I turned to **Roi Cohen**, Chairman of Lahav, an organization that unites many independent entities to deal with the authorities.

Together with a team of dance instructors, led by **Hila Menachem, Yaron Carmel** and **Tamir Scherzer**, we started to build a program; I united all the choreographers, who brought their representatives, and we held a large meeting with the head of Lahav to establish an association of active dance instructors and choreographers so that we could approach the establishment and request an outline at the time of the Coronavirus and receive social benefits from the State – a pension, furlough





and unemployment benefits. Why should we be denied money from the State and Social Security like all employees? And this is what we have been working on to this day.

At the moment, we are trying to do this in collaboration with **Ilan Swisa** and the Irgun, even though it is something that should be on the side of the Irgun because it is only for people actually working in the field so that they can set aside money for funds and insurance and pay the Irgun to take care of the needs of working dance leaders. Simply put – a professional organization. We are currently only in the process of establishing this body. This is an initiative that is still in the works.

Until I opened the Mador in the Ministry of Culture, only a few dance troupes from the outlying areas could be supported by virtue of their being in the periphery, but the whole field could not fit into this assistance framework.

The Mador was established to support the entire field and unite everyone and support three topics:

1. Ongoing support for performing dance troupes.
2. Events in the field of folk dance and Israeli dance for the stage.
3. Various initiatives and innovation.

All this, as previously stated, could not have happened this year, even though the government was formed; there was no State budget.

In fact, for three months I drove the head of the Cultural Administration, **Ms. Galit Wahba-Shasho**, and Chair of the Israeli Council of Culture and Art, **Mr. Yigal Amadi**, crazy; I even asked for an



*Gadi Bitton at the meeting with the Minister of Culture, Mr. Hili Tropper*

urgent Zoom meeting with the Israeli Council for Culture and Art. The meeting was held together with all the authorities and legal advisers. I brought up the impending disaster of the disbanded dance troupes and also asked for an additional amount so that new troupes could receive support as well as the folk dance events and initiatives and all the associations.

To my delight, the effort paid off and, just the day before Rosh Hashanah; a budget was approved for the Mador (it was slightly higher than last year) and an open call was issued in this regard (see attached) and all associations and bodies involved in the field that were interested in offering initiatives could apply for support.

Even new initiatives that have not been done before can receive support and that is unusual; that has not happened in the past. You can apply and request support and more in 2020; receipt is on the condition that the activity takes place in the current year. Good luck to all of us.

## Speeches at the Demonstration

### Dganit Rom:

On behalf of the Israeli dance troupes, on behalf of tens of thousands of choreographers, artistic directors, Israeli folk dance leaders, instructors, teachers, directors, on behalf of those who create the cultural mosaic of Israel every day, educating and designing entire generations according to a vision of values, built over many years. On behalf of all of us, I call out from this stage to the government, the Ministry of Culture and Sport – **Wake up!**

We who engage in Israeli dance, those who would have been here in two days, in Rabin Square, in Independence Day performances and on hundreds of other stages all over the country – we are the ones who bring beauty, joy, Israeliness at its best, preserve the folklore and roots of this country, we are the true color of The Beautiful Israel – maybe we will not exist anymore!!

We will not exist because the State has completely abandoned us.

Unfortunately, the response from the dance instructors for the demonstration was very poor; the turnout from regular dancers and stage choreographers was far greater at the demonstration.

We demand compensation from the State for:

1. Loss of wages for all those who are self-employed, with no unemployment benefits, with no help from banks, no tax repeal, and on the other hand, parents who have cancelled all their payments. The promises on paper speak of billions, in actuality, you don't see a shekel.

Corona crisis managers are constantly comparing us to other countries and are proud of our successes. It's time you evenly handed down the world's resources, billions of dollars, to all the entities that lost out due to the crisis. And especially with special grants to those involved with culture, so that they can persevere, **look, learn and get it done!!**

2. Compensation for the recipients of unpaid leave. After all the deductions, we don't even receive 50% of the wages. We demand that we be compensated for these losses.

3. We demand compensation for the dance halls that remain empty after huge sums have been invested in their construction, renovation, and amplification equipment. Payment continues for rent and property taxes, and there is no income, not even a shekel.

4. Compensation for the future to come: Even when we return to work, our clientele will not have enough money to pay.

Groups of 40-50 dancers will be reduced by half, at best. Dance sessions with 20-50 people will not financially be able to exist; salaries will be reduced; it will not be possible to pay the same



*Dganit Rom and Yaron Carmel*

wages to employees. The impending summer, the hot months of July and August, will leave many dancers at home. That is, two more months will go down the drain.

5. We demand compensation for the crazy projects prepared for this year!! All the entities spent hundreds of thousands of shekels on shows we worked on for about six months; huge festivals that we prepared for, such as the Karmiel Festival, Ashdod, Jerusalem, Eilat, Nahalal.

6. Israeli dance is the home and life's work for many and provides jobs for thousands of people in Israel! For those in the fields of music, video, lighting; for sound technicians, printers, costume and sewing designers, troupe managers and the list goes on. It is a human chain that can reach hundreds of thousands of people who are out of work and most importantly, without any compensation.

### **We demand to return to work and fast!**

If the laser hair removal salons can, hair stylists can, Ikea can, sports can, so can we!

We will not be the last in this food chain!! Let us open the dance halls, we will adhere to the rules, wash hands before and after, won't hold hands, will maintain social distancing.

The pre-schools are going back to activities – so can we. We will prevent mass gatherings and will work responsibly.

We ask for your unwavering support to be allowed



*Meeting with Lahav -*

*The Israel Chamber of Independent Organizations and Businesses*



to work sequentially from June continuing through July and August and to forgo the summer vacation. We cannot do it without your financial support!!

For the sake of our high school seniors, who will be joining the army and waiting to say goodbye to the home they grew up in, for our families, for our future generation, for our mental sanity and for that of our dancers, for the mental sanity of our country.

### In the Name of the Folk Dance Leaders in Israel – Yaron Carmel:

The world of Israeli folk dance, the world of folk dance is responsible for the sanity of tens of thousands in the country; it is the leisure culture, it is the community, the getting out of the house, the music and sport that they acquire. The dance leaders are the messengers who enable this oxygen for thousands of people.

The dance leaders are the people who make everyone happy; keeping them with the strength to get up in the morning and be the producers of the economy; without this, the economy will also be harmed and less effective.

A person who goes to work in the morning knowing that in the evening he/she will be dancing is a

more efficient person for the economy, more loving and loved for one's environment, more tolerant in one's home!! This responsibility is borne by the dance leaders. And it is worth noting – both in times of peace and in times of war.

When there are missiles in the north, the dance leaders in the center of the country and in the south invite the dancers as guests for the Harkadot (dance sessions); when there is a red alert in the south, the dance leaders in the center and in the north invite the dancers as guests for the Harkadot and sometimes this invitation comes with a place to stay. Folk dance is the mutual responsibility of the dance leaders.

During wartime, the dance leaders had lifted morale and led dancing even in the morning hours for the sanity of the population. And today, during the time of the Coronavirus, they lead dancing through online networks with a variety of variations and improvisations, to cheer everyone up.

They deserve to have the State return some recognition and support them even when returning to normal is not on the horizon. Some of us feel the rope tightening... And we're at the point before our necks will break. The distance is short to the situation where they would leave the field and not return to this important work and our mission. So government... **Wake up!!** 🙌



Picture from the demonstration

A person who goes to work in the morning knowing that in the evening he/she will be dancing is a more efficient person for the economy, more loving and loved for one's environment, more tolerant in one's home!! This responsibility is borne by the dance leaders. And it is worth noting – both in times of peace and in times of war.

# Circle Of Life



**Heli Livneh**

Translation:  
Ruth Goodman,  
Ruth Schoenberg

It was the last night. I was standing on the podium. Me and my computer, and it means the world to me. The Amps software vigorously played, and the songs flew by and ran in an unprecedented pursuit, one by one, at the request of the dancers. Songs that they love to dance together. It's been an hour or so since the beginning of my Harkada (dance session) and the dancers sailed all over the hall like a shipwreck across high waves. "You're coming??!" Pinchas called to me; the champion dancer, who changes his shirt three times during the evening. I pressed Play on "Shir Hame'a" (The Dance: Shavnu El Eretz Ha'avot – We Returned to the Land of the Fathers). I jumped from the podium to the dance floor in the direction of Pinchas to dance with everyone. I saw with my own eyes how circles immediately formed in exemplary order; circles that are so beautiful to see from a bird's eye view, enveloping each other. The inner little circle has always been waiting for me with the happy Itzik, Avinoam who is crazy about partner dances, and Yaffa, the energetic little beauty who hasn't missed any of my harkadot in the last thirty consecutive years.

I was filled with joy. It's my livelihood and also the dream I've always had ever since childhood when I danced in the small chug (after school activity) that was held at the community center in my neighborhood. The great human tapestry within the hall where I instructed was cross-stitched with loving and joyful human material... because that's who the dancers are. Always smiling, always opening the chambers of their hearts to you. And they were all entranced while drenched in sweat. Their palms clutched each other and not even for a moment did they let go.

The dancers who came to me every Tuesday leaving all their problems behind: leaving at home the thought that they have a doctor's appointment the next day, leaving worries about a grandson who had enlisted in a combat unit two days ago, and all

the projects they have to complete tomorrow... Just for a few hours... and these are hours of happiness.

It is the circle of life for every dance instructor and leader; a circle of life that returns in its beauty, glory and majesty every week... Every week... For my entire life. If I could just...

But this circle that every instructor or dancer needs, stops all at once. It stopped suddenly, without any warning... It reached us, too, the Coronavirus.

*I was interested to know how the dance leaders felt during the peak period of the Coronavirus. In fact, what does a dance leader do when suddenly the rug is pulled out from under their feet? What is the professional future as the dance leader sees it? And on a personal level, how did this not-so-simple period affect each of them?*

**Nourit Grinfeld, instructor and choreographer, the first to begin broadcasting:**

Indeed, I was the first to broadcast, but it was perfectly clear to me that all the instructors, each at their own pace, would act for our world, the world of folk dance. The idea of a live broadcast came about because I was supposed to have a dance session on Thursday and Saturday, and when I saw my flyers, on which I had diagonally written the word. \*cancelled\*, and when I received hundreds of messages from confused and disappointed dancers who feared what was to come, all of that made me think I had to do something... which would unite, gather and distract, at least for a brief period of time. But obviously, it went on a lot longer. I took two computers, connected with a huge high-volume sound system, and that's how I hit the road on Friday afternoon, live on Facebook. We, the dancers, celebrated together on Saturday night and the hundreds of responses warmed my heart.

*So you decided to keep going?*







*Dance Session with Nourit Grinfeld*

Little by little, I tried to upgrade and improve the broadcasts. Every night, I broadcasted with the tools I had. One day, I saw that **Dede Lusky** was technically assisting with a live broadcast for **Liora Slutsky**, who in those minutes was broadcasting from "Interadio," and I turned to him for help. On this occasion, I must point out that Dede's work during the Corona period, with the dozens of hours he devoted to each and every instructor who wanted to broadcast, was all done with unconditional love. Because that's Dede. Since then we have been in continuous contact, me and other instructors who broadcast, to help each other. There was a mutual commitment; everyone banded together for one good cause and I find that charming.

***How has the Corona period affected you in general and in your personal life?***

In general, this period has temporarily shifted my plans, but I am certainly not a fixated type. I go with the flow and get along with what I have. I took advantage of this period to become more professional and upgrade technically. I decided not to drown idly sitting in front of the television, and certainly not to start binge eating until I lost both my mind and shape. So I got up every morning, with a good shower and tight and nice jeans, and for three weeks in a row, I broadcast every night, until I felt that there were already enough broadcasts and that the dancers were in good hands. So then I relaxed a bit and I rediscovered how wonderful house cleaning is.

As for returning to the routine, of course there is

some concern. Today most folk dancers are older people. I have a feeling that after people have not danced for three months, they will not return to the dance floor anymore. But, it is yet to be seen, and we'll see what a new day brings.

Personally, I maintained closeness only with the immediate family and kept myself very busy, so the days... just pass by.

**Yair Harel, instructor and choreographer:**

The corona virus has arrived and will likely continue to be with us; we will need to learn how to live with it. This will force us to recalculate a course and make adjustments to the new situation. There is a colossal global problem here, of which folk dancing is a minute part. The Coronavirus has paralyzed us



*Dance Session with Yair Harel*

“I made sure to be attentive to the requests of the dancers who watched me and danced during the live broadcasts. I wanted to give an alternative and create as much of an energetic and happy atmosphere as possible”.

and has even forced us to rethink our plans. In the meantime, I take advantage of the time to learn and develop.

The folk dance field and those who work in it have suffered a severe blow, but I also see it as an opportunity to change, preserve and cultivate different things. I do think that the Association of Folk Dance Instructors in Israel and Abroad (Irgun Hamadrachim Ba'Aretz Uva'Olam), of which most of the instructors in Israel and around the world are members, should unite and assist the instructors in this new environment.

We should not underestimate the situation and should behave responsibly when the sessions resume. I would suggest dancing with gloves and masks, the use of sanitizers and, of course, keeping the required distance from each other. We must remember that many dancers are in the "at risk" group. It's hard for me to imagine that we will return to mass gatherings. The fact is that the festivals have all been cancelled. Woe onto us if there is a second outbreak of the virus here.

***You, Yair, are one of the instructors who broadcasts live, a dance session every week that lasts for hours. What motivated you to engage in such broadcasts?***

I have been broadcasting from home since the beginning of the Corona period for close to thirty live broadcasts and there will probably be more. I called my program, "Dancing Together with Yair Harel in Tivon". Each program lasts close to four full hours. Beyond the wonderful Israeli folk dance music, I prepare brainteasers, picante stories related to folk dance in general, ethical issues, honoring the choreographers and more. All broadcasts are free of charge. I spend hours preparing each dance session.

The great sense of giving and kindness that the broadcast brings to the dancers is my reward. It is also an opportunity for me to "meet" many dancers from this country (Israel) and around the world. For example, a dancer named **Hagar Hazan**, from San Diego in the United States wrote to me in the broadcast chat: "You've made the Coronavirus a gift for us".

In the training courses for dance instructors, where she taught, the late **Tamar Alyagor** said that folk dance instruction should be an addition to another profession, which must be acquired. In other words, do not put all your eggs in one basket. Throughout my working life, I have been a teacher. During the last decade, I have been working as an inspector at the Ministry of Education, in settlement education, in addition to my work as a folk dance instructor and choreographer; and that has contributed to my economic security.

During the Corona period, confinement at home allowed for quality family time. It forced me to stop and think about what is important and what is trivial and to know how to put things in the right proportion.

**Gila Solomon Levy, instructor and choreographer:**

When the coronavirus arrived, there was panic. The last dance session that I managed to lead took place on Thursday at the Bat Yam Country Club. I felt that the sky had fallen on



me. All at once my freedom, my soul and my breath were taken away. However, I remember saying to myself. "It will pass, it's a matter of time; it's going to take a while but just a little longer and we'll be back". At the same time, I thanked God that I had another profession through which I could make a living until the rage passes. Even so, it is not easy to make a living from just folk dancing, so now you have to grit your teeth and give thanks for what is there. Luckily, the damage to my livelihood was relatively small. I realized it would take a long time for us to get back to a normal routine, including mass and crowded dance sessions.

***Do you think that we will soon return to a full routine of dancing, of marathons?***

Looking back, when I watch the "pre-Corona" dance sessions, I can't believe we danced in sweaty crowds, even though the pleasure of dancing and the social connections were always something full and perfect. The feeling is that we are currently in

**"I decided to do what I love and not succumb to the situation that had arisen. I live broadcasted to the dancers, danced with them and tried to maintain my sanity and a routine".**





Gila Solomon Levy  
at her Dance Session

a parallel universe. Still, I believe that, in time, we will return to what it once was but with extreme care for personal hygiene. It is impossible to take away our freedom, our soul and our breath.

### ***And then you decided to broadcast live?***

To be honest, it started with the fact that every evening at 6:00 p.m., on Facebook, I shared and taught a dance in the beginner category using videos of beginner dances I had previously taught in my classes. I felt the need to preserve what we had learned and, at the same time, make folk dancing accessible to those who had never yet danced. It was a great opportunity to learn while remaining indoors. I received very positive feedback and every evening dancers waited for another video to come up.

### ***And then you decided to additionally broadcast when you dance yourself?***

I started broadcasting the dance sessions on Facebook while on the roof of my house and called them: "LiveBaGag (Live on the Roof)". These were the three-hour dance sessions, in which I combined beginner dances and a diverse repertoire from all time, including partner dances from all my dance sessions: Bat Yam Country Club, Azor Community Center and the open dance sessions on Saturdays on the Bat Yam promenade. I made sure to be attentive to the requests of the dancers who watched me and danced during the live broadcasts. I wanted to give an alternative and create as much of an energetic and happy atmosphere as possible. I wanted the dancers to come out from the Corona bubble to the joy of dancing for a few hours.

### ***What is required to broadcast from home?***

The preparations for these broadcasts required many hours of preparation before the broadcast: preparing the repertoire on the computer, rehearsing the dances myself before the broadcast in order to refine the steps, preparing the roof, decorating and creating a pleasant atmosphere for the viewing dancers and, of course, all the amplification equipment,

including video equipment, to ensure that the transmission runs smoothly and without glitches.

The compliments I received, the amount of views and shares by the dancers, my enjoyment and satisfaction after the broadcast were all worth it.

### ***How did this challenging period affect you personally?***

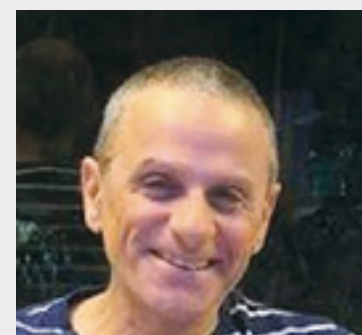
During the Corona period, I've tried to maintain a routine. In addition, besides dancing, I started adopting a fitness workout routine. Aside from being a folk dance instructor, I work in what's called, "essential work", so I went to work every day, so luckily I felt less of the shutdown. I embraced the opportunity to be more in the arms of the family. I learned that proportions are needed in life and the Coronavirus has taught us that. I learned that little is a lot, that modesty is a supreme value. I also learned that it is important to maintain the health of body and mind, and how lucky we are that dance is our healer. I enjoyed the simplicity, the peace and quiet. What I was mainly missing during the shutdown period was the meeting with my daughters, who live outside the house, meeting with my sisters and the meeting with my friends and dancers.

I realized about myself that I was more optimistic, strong, thoughtful, sensitive, creative, loving, and most of all, more grateful.

### **Victor Gabbay, Instructor and Choreographer:**

### ***How did you react when the Coronavirus reached our doorstep?***

At first, when the virus arrived, I could not imagine the extent of the global crisis and the implications for cultural and leisure life in the world. I was worried about the future of folk dancing, and personally,



about continuing my work in the field, because this is work that I love so much. On the other hand, I knew I would find a way to continue to lead dancing and bring joy to the community of dancers.

Social distancing was a real decisive factor. I

immediately realized that things would never be the same again. The Israeli dance community is a community that loves to dance and needs it very much. Therefore, in my opinion, they will continue to dance wherever possible in accordance with government guidelines. In my estimation, initially there will not be mass dance sessions and as many festivals as we like and are used to having, but only later on. I hope for a change for the better as soon as possible.

### ***How did you start broadcasting?***

At the beginning of the pandemic I was a little uncertain. I sat fascinated by the news. But very quickly I felt frustrated by sitting at home for prolonged periods of time and being inactive, so I decided to do what I love and not succumb to the situation that had arisen. I live broadcasted to the dancers, danced with them and tried to maintain my sanity and a routine.

So we were on the air, live, playing charades, To an audience that watched me, I introduced dances, some of which had been forgotten. We got to know dancers, choreographers and instructors and enriched our knowledge of the world of folk dance. I enjoyed making the dancers happy and doing something positive for them during such a difficult time, which had hurt many and me personally.

### ***Tell me about the impact on a personal level.***

During this time, I was at home a lot; for me, this was not at all routine. I am a very active person and sitting at home was very difficult for me. I missed the family and social gatherings; I missed the physical activity, the leisure culture, but mostly I missed the feeling of freedom.

The Corona period and shutdown we were in, made me rethink the rat race of our lives, and I realized that maybe we needed a moment of respite and a recalculation of the road ahead. To focus on what is important and not on the trivial.

### **Dede Lusky, instructor and choreographer:**

I so wanted it all to end and to get back to normal, but I think that nothing will return to the previous state we were in before the Coronavirus; and not just in folk dance. We have to recalculate a new course.

### ***Dede, did you also broadcast live to the dancing audience on Facebook?***

I started broadcasting to give pleasure to my dancers, wherever they are, and then I saw that more and more instructors had been broadcasting as well; it seemed to me already a bit conventional, so I decided it was just the time to pay tribute to the veteran choreographers, who had created dozens of wonderful dances over the years. I edited "specials" of choreographers on video (like **Moshiko Halevy, Meir Shem Tov, Rafi Ziv, Shmulik Gov-Ari**, and many other good ones), and it required my working many hours at home.



*Dance Session with Dede Lusky*

### ***What do you have to add about the impact of the period on a personal level?***

I really miss the day-to-day activities. I work a lot with schools, nursing homes, retiree dance sessions and dance sessions in general. On the other hand, I discovered that I have high technological capabilities. I discovered good friends and people. I was more exposed to new friends. I missed my immediate family, of course; I could not meet with my daughters or my grandchildren. But I rediscovered my wife...

### **Itzik Ben Dahan, instructor and choreographer:**

When the Coronavirus came to our doorstep, I was not really thinking about my professional future, since it was clear to me that it was a disease that, as it came, it would also pass and we would go back

**“On this occasion, I must point out that Dede’s work during the Corona period, with the dozens of hours he devoted to each and every instructor who wanted to broadcast, was all done with unconditional love”.**





to dancing. I thought to myself that the world of folk dance would change a bit and would actually come back to gradually renew. Dancers will forget the dances a bit and will have to review them. The first stage of reviewing will be accompanied by a polishing of dances. We will dance mainly in circles, and slowly, the partner dances will return and, at the end, we will return to a full routine.

***You moved to live broadcasts in which you and your partner dance together in the living room. What motivated you to initiate these broadcasts?***

First, it was a request that came from my audience of dancers. It was a way to keep in touch with them. They watched me and felt the connection. Beyond that, I had a sense of mission. I wanted to contribute something of myself to the dancers, and this was my way to show my gratitude to them for all the years they have loved me and have come to my classes.

It was important to me that we did not forget the dances, in preparation for the day we would return to dancing in the dance halls. The encouragement and compliments from the dancers in the live broadcasts spurred me on to continue broadcasting.

Professionally, I continued to work at my other occupation, which is not in the field of folk dance, so I have had less of the suffocating feeling that many have felt. Although during the shutdown the things we considered as basic were missing, such as cafes, cinemas and of course folk dance.



*Dance Session with Itzik Ben Dahan*

I was missing the hugs and kisses of family and friends. But overall, I felt good.

**Tzion Sahar, Instructor:**

My initial thought at the beginning of the period was that it was something temporary that would soon pass; however, reality slapped us in the face and things were different. Granted, if you have built a large and established dance session, the belief is that this session will come back eventually, and, in the end, you will not be hurt; but I did have thoughts in mind about smaller classes. It might be worthwhile for the instructor to rethink this as being a main occupation.



***What motivated you to broadcast live?***

I realized that I wanted to unite my dancers. I wanted to keep in constant contact and also maintain sanity in light of the shutdown. I eagerly awaited the broadcasts on Saturdays, and my message to the dancers was, that I am with them all the way and will not leave them. While broadcasting, there was a lot of correspondence with the dancers. New dancers who loved my live broadcasts were added, even those from other countries; I was flattered very much. My broadcasts lasted about three to four consecutive hours. For me, it was a refuge from solitude. I felt I was not alone, and all the dancers shared their hard feelings about the shutdown with me. Of course, while broadcasting, there were also lots of humorous moments. 🕺



*Dance Session with Tzion Sahar*

# Hora Corona

## Folk Dancing in the Days of Quarantine



**Danielle Shkop**

Translation:

Benny Levy and  
Ruth Goodman

One bright day, the world stopped turning. The malls closed, workplaces shut down and gatherings were banned. But for the dance community, the most painful thing was the stopping of dance sessions. Prior to the pandemic, dance sessions around the world were held daily, at all hours of the day and night and with participation of thousands of dancers and instructors; and then, in one moment, the light of our soul was taken from us, the dancers; our refuge, our heart.

Dealing with the new situation, ideas and solutions popped up like mushrooms after the rain. One by one, dance leaders around the world started using social media to keep in touch with the dancers and keep the perception of the dance sessions in their minds. This has been done through broadcasting live on Facebook as well as on Zoom, presenting a new program with edited content from the world of Israeli folk dance and even running a 24-hour world-wide marathon session.

### Facebook, Zoom and everything in between

Dance leader **Elad Shtamer**, 35, was one of many who broadcasted live on Facebook: "I did it, first of all, because I wanted to keep in touch with the dancers and give them the feeling that even though we were apart, we could still see each other". Shtamer started broadcasting to the audience soon after



*Elad Shtamer*



the ban. The audience would write comments and he would respond live to what they wrote – it was almost like being together at a real dance session.

**Ilai Szpiezak**, 29, a London-based dance leader, saw the broadcasts on Facebook, liked the idea and decided to broadcast too: "I believe we are the new generation and that we are committed to keeping the folk dance movement going". Considering those dancers from abroad who do not understand Hebrew encouraged him to broadcast in English. Since he did not know the Zoom platform well, he began to research and study, purchased the appropriate software and equipment and, over time, improved his broadcast.

As time passed, the live broadcasts have evolved. Similarly, both Shtamer and Szpiezak recount their journey. At first, they had played only the folk dance songs, as done on a radio broadcasts; but very quickly they realized that this type of broadcast was missing something, both for them and for the dancers. And therefore, they switched to broadcasting video recordings of dances from

Elad:  
"Suddenly there are collaborations that have no economic interests. Money was taken out of the equation and suddenly people are measured by other things."





various resources, such as, dance sessions, camps around the world, the Rokdim website and others.

Then, Szpiezak says, he began to dance himself to encourage the dancers to join him. Later on, he even began hosting various artists on the broadcast, who related their life stories and gave the audience a glimpse into new worlds that they had not known. Over time, dance leaders set their own type and format of the live online broadcasts, as well as a regular dance session schedule.

Szpiezak took it even further and branded his program as, "Harkalive", a blend of the two words, "harkada" and "live", which has become a new term in the world of Israeli folk dance. About the new situation that has arisen, Shtamer comments: "Suddenly there are collaborations that have no economic interests. Money was taken out of the equation and suddenly people are measured by other things. Both the dance leaders of huge dance sessions and leaders of smaller, family-like sessions are all at the same starting point – all are in the same boat, no matter how things were before".

At this time, the folk dancers no longer choose the sessions according to location, schedule and people. They choose watching live broadcasts according to the repertoire, the dance leader and the content. And suddenly, everyone is given an equal opportunity.

Another interesting point that Szpiezak brings up is that this period will leave a beautiful memory for the folk dance culture. In the past, people wrote books on the history of folk dance, while today, due to the Coronavirus, many videotaped interviews with old and new artists telling us about their lives and their impact on this culture are being recorded.

### *And what about the creation of new dances during this time?*

It is astonishing to find that even though they had the time to choreograph, Shtamer and Szpiezak both answered: "I have not choreographed any new dances during this entire period". They both felt that the artistic inspiration was not there. "When we can finally go back to normal dancing," says Shtamer, "there will be more room to do the familiar and loved dances. It will take a long time before we start teaching new dances again".

## Ulpan Bitnua

While most of the dance leaders broadcast the dance sessions live, one way or another, **Gadi Bitton**, 54, brought something a little different to the screen. He says that he is passionate about challenging himself with new and interesting things; he has the desire to think and do things outside of the box and learn something new himself. This was the main motivation for his work during this period. In addition, it was important for him to keep

Ilai:  
"I believe we are the new generation and that we are committed to keeping the folk dance movement going".



Behind the scenes of  
Ulpan Bitnua





*The Ulpan Bitnua team celebrates the final broadcast*

in touch with the dancers, so that they would not lose interest, and to continue to stoke the fire of love for dance within them.

Bitton launched his program, Ulpan Bitnua – Studio in Motion, during the first week of the crisis; he presented a two-and-a-half-hour pre-filmed program which, unlike other live broadcasts, included various segments from the world of dance – interviews with choreographers, background stories of dances, nostalgia and oldies, interviews with dance leaders from around the world and more. Between the segments were, of course, dances – alternating between circle and partner dances, with a repertoire of regular and special dances, and even an instructional workshop. The program aired three times a week; there were a total of 20 programs. The average broadcast had about 15,000 views from around the world. That number increased in the days following the live broadcast.

"After the first broadcast," Bitton says, "most of the audience reactions were that they wanted less talk and more dancing. I was a little offended, but very quickly it changed. Within the span of two programs, people realized what we were providing for them and their attitude changed".

In his opinion, anyone can play songs found on YouTube and dance at home. "But if we provide added value and spice up the broadcast with content – then the participants would dance with a smile, with satisfaction, and they benefit from it".

Bitton went even further; in one of the programs he presented a challenge to viewers – to choreograph a new dance to a specific song, and the chosen dance would be taught on the dance floor when we get back to a normal routine.

He produced the program with the help of an entire team of dance leaders, who voluntarily joined the mission and acted far beyond expectations: "The team that worked with me pushed forward and showed interest. Each and every one of them wanted to add something of their own so as to have a special and authentic part in the program".

### ***What will remain of this when we go back to the regular routine?***

In Bitton's opinion, what captures the audience in the end is content. Parts of the program can even get into the dance sessions if done carefully and in the right dose: "I feel like another channel has opened in my life," he says, "Maybe for the next holiday, instead of doing three events, I'll do one, and then, maybe an interesting online program around the same theme. Perhaps I can also broadcast the camp I run to dancers abroad. I do not know. But for sure, I will take something from it".

Like Shtamer and Szpiezak, Bitton has not choreographed any new dances during this period. "I usually don't have the time and I try to spend half an hour a day for choreographing new dances," he says. "Now, I have all the time in the world, but I did not come up with any new dances. Nothing has given me the desire to choreograph a dance."

According to him, a large part of his creative process comes from correspondence with the audience. In his mind, he pictures the moment of teaching on the dance floor and thinks of people's reactions: "On regular days there is a great deal of interaction with the audience, and now, in the Corona period, there are no interactions. I could not see any horizon at all."

Bitton choreographed only one dance during this period, in honor of Jerusalem Day.

### ***And what will happen next?***

Bitton's prediction is less than optimistic. The age of the dancers is a significant factor and, in his

**Gadi:**  
"If we provide added value and spice up the broadcast with content – then the participants would dance with a smile, with satisfaction, and they benefit from it."



opinion, it will take a long time until many folk dancers, especially the older ones, would leave their homes and congregate. In fact, new routines been created; people have found other ways to fill the void created during this period, and some may not return to the dance floor. According to him, the field of folk dance will suffer greatly from this crisis and it will take a long time to recover.

Despite this and perhaps precisely because of it, Bitton concludes the conversation with a quote from **Winston Churchill**: "Never waste a good crisis." He believes that from every major crisis it is possible to learn new things, improve existing things and rebuild better.

### Worldwide Marathon

Another special event we witnessed on Zoom, for the first time in history, was a worldwide folk dance marathon that lasted 24 hours.

The originator of this idea was **Phil Moss**, 68, a veteran dance leader who lives in Chicago, USA. Immediately after the Corona pandemic started, Moss began to host Zoom dance sessions for his dancers. The first session was attended by 100 people, and many were unable to join due to Zoom's space limit. For the second session, Moss purchased a license to accommodate 500 participants and allowed many more to join in. Occasionally, he approached other dance leaders around the United States to join his broadcast and to lead part of the session. These dance sessions were a great success, and it gave him an idea: "If we can do it here, why not do it around the world?"

Moss directs the "Machol Merkaz" Dance Camp, which takes place in Chicago every year. This year, in October, the markidim (dance leaders) who were expected to arrive from Israel were **Eran Bitton**, **Dror Davidi** and **Elad Shatmer**. Therefore, they were the first to be approached by Moss with the idea of mounting a 24-hour mass Zoom dance session, which would begin in the U.S. and travel across the globe through dance leaders from around the world, according to time zones. After the Israeli team expressed interest, Moss began to bring in other dance leaders who agreed to take part in the project. Moss planned a 24-hour schedule with



*Worldwide Marathon on Zoom*

dance leaders from the United States, Australia, Switzerland, France, England, Israel, South America, Canada and more.

The marathon was held during Chol Hamoed Passover, the day before the eve of the second half of the holiday, when the Israeli team was scheduled to dance most of the day. The day before the start of the marathon, the dancers discovered that due to the time differences, there was confusion in the dates and part of the marathon was expected to be broadcast exactly on the eve of the holiday in Israel. The Israeli dance leaders realized that they would not be able to lead at this time; therefore, Moss had to complete four more broadcast hours by dance leaders from around the world, and all this happened one day before the marathon was to begin. To his delight, with all the pressure, at this point, the response of the dance leaders around the world was so great that the problem was solved relatively quickly.

The marathon was crowned a huge success. Over 800 people danced and watched it simultaneously around the world. It is difficult to know the total number of participants over the course of 24 hours, but there is no doubt that it was thousands.

As for the sequel, Moss claims, he not only learned that people love to dance and love the "togetherness," they also love the international connection with each other. Dancers from all over the world joined his regular Zoom dance session and it made him think that there is room to broadcast the regular dance sessions as well when the routine gets back on track.



*Phil Moss*

On one subject there was a consensus among all the markidim (dance leaders). Economically, the makidim reported that there were many responses from the audience seeking to transfer payment for the broadcasts, but the dance leaders unanimously decided not to accept payment. "The economic condition of the dancers is no better than that of the dance leaders," said Bitton.

**Yaron Meishar**, director of the "Rokdim" website – the largest Israeli folk dance website in the world, also came to the aid of the dance leaders. In advance of the return to normal routines and the opening of dance sessions, Meishar expects that the need for advertising on the site will increase. "During this time, people have been very careful with money," he says, "so at this time, I decided to do promotions and give discounts to dance leaders who would like to advertise their dance sessions on the site".

On the same matter, **Ilan Suissa**, Chairman of Irgun HaMarkidim – the Israel Dance Instructors Association in Israel, said that, by virtue of his position, he felt he was responsible for taking care of the dance instructors' livelihood during this period: "We tried to find a solution. I spoke to **Gadi Bitton** and suggested that together we should turn to the Ministry of Culture to receive some support". Suissa tried to arrange for a financial grant from Irgun HaMarkidim for dance leaders who were in a more difficult financial situation, but unfortunately no action was successful. "The speed at which the dance sessions were closed surprised me", he says, "but when you realize that your destiny is in partnership with the whole world, not just with the State of Israel, there is not much for you to do".

On the other hand, in retrospect, the dance leaders say that, in addition to keeping in touch with the dancers and keeping the folk dances in our consciousness, all the projects they had, from small to large, mostly kept their sanity, which is what kept the dance leaders going during these difficult times without their livelihood.

## Virtual Dancing

*We saw that many viewers watched the broadcasts, but how many of them actually danced?*

The dance leaders claim that only about 20% of the audience actually danced at home simultaneously with the broadcasts. The rest just watched and listened to the songs, remembered the dances and mostly felt "together".

### *And what do the numbers say?*

An examination of the "Rokdim" website shows that during this Corona period, compared to the three months prior to it, there was an increase in the number of users of the website by about 70%. The number of views has also increased by almost twice as much as in the period before Corona.

The peak was in the middle the Corona period, in mid-April, when a kind of new life routine was created, but the end was still not in sight.

It is possible that part of the increase in visits to the site was due to the many dance sequences that Meishar uploaded to the site. He first built lists for his classes to view, which contained dances from the class repertoire so that they could practice at home. But after receiving enthusiastic responses from the audience, he increased and built lists for the general public on many topics such as: dances for the holidays, a trip in Israel, dancing in wheelchairs and others. The advantage of viewing lists over the broadcasts on social networks, is the viewer's ability to anticipate the order of the dances and switch between dances in the video sequence, as desired. "I had a lot more plans for themed sequences," he said, "but that's it; we're getting back to dancing". Currently, more than 50 different harkadot (dance sessions) can be viewed on the Rokdim website homepage: <https://www.rokdim.co.il/#/>

So far, we have heard responses from the side of the dance leaders. Now, let's see the side of the dancers.

The dancers-viewers can be classified into three main groups. Which group do you belong to?

### **1. A new family was born**

**Shmuel Shkop**, 65, and his wife Zahava, veteran dancers living in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, were among the devout and active viewers of the "Live" and Zoom broadcasts of the recent period.

**Phil:**  
"If we can do it here, why not do it around the world?"





Zehava and Shmulik Shkop

"As soon as the period began," says Shkop, "I realized it was going to be for a long time. We chose one room in the house and cleared out all the furniture. I set up a stand and built a system that connects the phone, computer and tablet to the TV. I set up two cameras for Zoom sessions knowing that this was going to be the main room of the house in the near future".

With time, Shkop and his wife got into a new routine; almost every day, from noon to 10:00 pm at night, their home life revolved around dancing. They already knew which dance leader was broadcasting and when, and formulated a regular schedule for themselves. Every day they would dress for the dance session, enter the "dance floor" room and continue to dance from session to session. Sometimes they even changed channels between two dance sessions at the same time (each time connecting a different device to the TV screen).

They also religiously watched "Ulpan Bitnua". At first, Shkop says, they were expecting more "regular" dancing, but over time they realized that the various contents were simply fascinating, even though they did not contain only dances as they had expected.

About the 24-hour marathon, he says, "It was just amazing! It was interesting and innovative." Aside from six hours of sleep, the marathon was broadcast on TV throughout the day and they danced as much as they could. Even when they were not dancing, they left the broadcast on, so that there would be a "dance atmosphere" at home.

"The feeling was that a new family has been born!" Shkop says, "all the dance leaders are in our living room every day. The feeling is as if we are friends, as if they also see us. Shkop says that during this period they were exposed to a whole world of excellent dance leaders they did not know, new choreographers and interesting interviews.

His greatest concern, and that of his fellow dancers

in the United States, is that online dancing will stop when the crisis passes: "There are not many dance sessions in our area, so the new world that has been created has filled our lives. We could dance every day with the best dance leaders in the world!"

## 2. The main thing is the social gathering

For **Reut Markles**, 42, the situation was different. Markles, a dancer who lives in Moshav Yevul, within the Eshkol Regional Council, belonged to the "viewing only" group: "I watched the broadcasts mainly to hear the music, to remember and to feel the atmosphere. The live broadcast conveyed an experience of a real encounter".



Reut Markles

The dance leaders responded to viewers' reactions on the air and it felt like there was a real conversation going on, like in the harkadot. On Zoom, Markles only attended meetings with her close friends. Here, too, the sessions did not include her actual dancing, but was mainly a social gathering, watching friends dance, hearing the music and feeling "together".

Since the interaction with the dance leader on screen was the significant thing that Markles was looking for, she initially had trouble connecting to



Reut Markles watches the broadcast

the pre-recorded broadcast of "Ulpan Bitnua" that was not broadcast live. But as broadcasts were added, she fell in love with the format, especially because of the special segments brought by the program, with content that gave added value.

Although she did not watch general dance sessions on Zoom, she was connected to the 24-hour marathon, almost non-stop: "It's nice to see people dancing live, and it was fun to hear the dance leaders talking among themselves and with the crowd". What was more special to Markels was seeing the different repertoire of dance leaders around the world: "It was nice to remember dances that are no longer danced in Israel, and to get to know new dances".

However, after about a month in this situation, Markels felt she had exhausted the experience. Live broadcasts became a burden and a new routine entered her life. The viewing time was shortened, the interest in the broadcasts diminished and the longing for the "real thing" grew.

### 3. "Just too painful"



Alon Haber

The third group of dancers is represented by **Alon Haber**, 45, a veteran dancer who has been dancing since the age of 18. Just a week after the closure began, Haber posted on Facebook: "My whole body aches. You feel it in your bones and muscles. The pain is unbearable." The pain felt by Haber would be felt by many "addicts" who had a regular twice a week habit for over 25 years, when it was abruptly cut off.

Haber vehemently refused to watch "Live" broadcasts, attend programs or take part in the Zoom dance sessions: "It just hurts too much," he says. "It felt so far away from reality. Dancing for me is a kind of freedom, the place to fly, not to think; it's like a drug for me. Dancing has the power of 'togetherness', the people around, the energy in the circle. Suddenly being alone at home with a small screen and dancing in a square, one meter by one meter, in the living room? There is no

energy there. On the contrary, it only increases the intensity of the pain and what we are missing".

This feeling did not subside throughout the period. Haber, who used to dance at least twice a week, does not remember such a long period in which he did not dance: "There is no situation in which two weeks passed without my going to dance at least once. Even when I was a soldier and when I flew abroad for work, I always looked for where there were dance sessions around. Now, after two months without dancing", Haber expresses his great frustration: "Not only can I not dance, I also do not know when I will ever be able to dance again." For Haber the existing substitutes do not deliver the goods because the "almost" hurts too much.

On one subject there was an interesting disagreement. The dance leaders and the Israeli dancers claimed that the dance community remained as it had been and did not feel any significant change. Each dance leader has remained more or less with their same group of dancers. In contrast, leaders and dancers from abroad actually have felt a significant rapprochement of the dance communities in Israel and around the world. Thanks to Corona and modern technology, dancers from around the world were able to dance at any dance session they desired, see distant friends and communicate on a daily basis despite the physical distance.

### And what happens now?


Well, at a good and successful time, we all hope that we will be facing the end of this period, and that we will be able to return to the dance floor very soon. We will celebrate at festivals, dance in camps and return to smiling on the dance floors!

But, will we see remnants of the period?

What will happen to the dance sessions – the number of dancers, the size of the dance floors, etc.?

When will we dance again hand in hand, and with partners?

And will we continue to see active broadcasts on social media?

So many questions remain; only time will tell. 



## Responses to the Internet Dancing

Collected by **Danielle Shkop**

Hi Phil,

I want to congratulate you for an excellent twenty-four hour Harkadah.

Thank you for organizing and orchestrating this event for the enjoyment of dancers around the world. In addition to a great selection of dances and Markidim, it was also a great testament to the power of dance and its ability to unite people from all places, time zones, and dancing proficiency.

The event brought relief and joy to many who are unable to enjoy their regular Israeli dancing, and gave us all a chance to see and communicate with old friends. This Harkadah put Chicago Israeli Dancing on the map in a big way.

As this Corona virus crisis is progressing, we are all getting accustomed to new ways of doing old things. I hope to see the end of closures and the ease of social distancing. It is reasonable to assume that this progress will differ between cities and states, and wish for the Chicago Israeli dancing to return to its regular programming at Beth Shalom soon.

When that happens, and given the exposure your program received today and from the weekly online Harkadot, I suggest that these normal sessions be broadcast as live events on the internet. That will allow those who are still in quarantine to partake in dancing and hopefully attract them to other events, such as Machol Merkaz.

As always, keep me in mind should you need any help. Stay healthy and safe.

LeHitraot at camp,

**Ophir**, Chicago

Thank you Ilai.

These Harkadot have been so meaningful during lockdown, this feeling part of a community, of sharing something we care for.

One can see you do it your heart. You are a special person i remember this from a camp in Venice and day after day you confirmed everything. Hope you will keep on doing some streaming even after all this.

**Claudia**, Italy

Dear Phil,

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your labor of love... I can't tell you how much difference it made in my life - feeling connected to my fellow dancers all over the world in this amazing folkdance family... It was glorious to be able to forget my troubles for 24 hours.

It's the first time since the pandemic that I slept 8 hours... though I regret missing dancing to do it! There are really no words to thank you properly...

todah, todah, todah

**Livia**, Toronto

Yaron,

Thanks for sending this!!

It must have been a tremendous amount of work to put all of this together!! Kol Hakavod!!

You always find a way to keep us connected and happy and dancing!!

We appreciate all you do!!

**Jackie Lowenstein**,  
Ramat Beit Shemesh

Dearest Ilai,

You express yourself so eloquently; you appear only to think of us. Your professionalism and your expertise have kept us thinking only of dancing and nothing else. You have kept us together as a community. You remind us that we must dance, sing, chat and laugh to enable us to temporarily put behind us the confusion and sadness of what has been happening in the world these last few weeks, Thank you Ilai, with all my heart for your smiles, your positivity, all for your hard work and your efforts. You make everything look so easy, but I know and I'm sure everyone knows and is aware of how much time you must spent planning each Harkada. I do hope you are ok and taking care of yourself as well as us.

**Susie**, London, UK



**David Ben Asher**

Photos:

David Ben Asher

Translation:

Ruth Goodman  
and Tzipi Shragai

# Ra'anana Defeated Corona

**R**a'anana is known as the folk dance capital in Israel. Some 10 sessions take place there, including those with the country's dance leaders: **Elad Shtamer, Avi Peretz and Nourit Grinfeld**. Many hundreds of dancers visit the city's dance halls every week, with the constant support of the sports director and of course, with the warm backing of the mayor. And voila!, Corona. Everything is shut down, the dance halls are closed, months of separation, yearning, the hopes and longings of all the folk dance addicts. Against this backdrop, a rather unique and presumptuous initiative has emerged. Folk dance in the time of Corona. Three regular dance addicts of this culture have worked and come up with a slightly crazy but groundbreaking idea. The three – **Mirit, Shalom and Shmulik Dagan** got together to do something.

## **Shmulik relates:**

We understood the limitations of the situation, but we wanted to do something to remind us of our good days on the dance floor. We met with the municipal officer and the mayor. The mayor gave us his blessing and even expressed a visible love for the idea. We're on our way.

**Shmulik Dagan** (70) indicates that he has been dancing for 50 years. In his profession, he is a senior construction supervisor and certified court expert. He is married to **Ronit** (the owner of Bergman's lighting), the father of three sons, and grandfather of seven. He has been a familiar figure in dance circles for decades.



*The Mayor of Ra'anana dancing with dance leader Nourit Grinfeld next to him*

## **What did you do, Shmulik, to realize the idea?**

We were looking for a place that would fit the special needs of the time limitations. We reached the train station parking lot and found that the place was suitable. Wide, comfortable, a good floor. Open space. We parked a car near the lot, played the dance music from the car and we cheerfully began to dance with in uplifted mood. We started





*Dancing at the train station*

this in early April, right in the midst of the closure, strictly adhering to the required procedures. We were eight people; it was good. Friends heard about it and the next time, 14 dancers arrived. We saw that it was good and that this improvised session was likely to attract more dance addicts and we were thinking of taking it a step further. We went to the very popular markida (dance leader) **Nourit Grinfeld**, in Metro West, that was of course shut down as well. Her readiness, together with her partner, **Ornan Cohen**, gave momentum to our special project. Nourit promoted this spontaneous session in WhatsApp and also brought all her professional equipment. The publicity (limited by the Coronavirus regulations) brought tremendous momentum. About 50 dancers had already arrived for the first session. We limited the number according to government directives, requiring masks and spaces of 6 feet between the dancers. These were cool and pleasant days. In time, the rumor was spread and widely circulated and these days, despite the great heat, we have reached about 100 dancers, and according to the response, the sky is the limit.

### ***And yet, Shmulik, Corona speaks, doesn't it?***

After all, the dancers are a fairly cohesive group and most of them know each other. Familiarity and proximity greatly reduce the risk of infection. Although the masks slid down a bit, and even if the distance was slightly shortened, things still seemed to be in control. Even partner dances have been allowed, given the improvised lighting that we had set up with a generator at 10 pm., and long live the magical atmosphere. I must emphasize that our entire initiative is without profit.

### ***And what's next?***

Israel Railways is resuming activity, which requires us to find an alternative location, perhaps a Ra'anana park. And if all goes well, we will all come back with great joy to the air-conditioned halls and parquet floors, for the benefit of all Rokdei Hasharon (all the dancers of the Sharon region). ✨

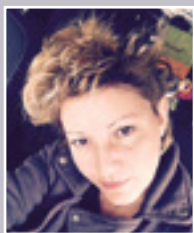
*We've understood the limitations of the situation, but we wanted to do something to remind us of our good days on the dance floor.*



*Before the Masks Age*







Heli Livneh

Translation:

Ruth Goodman  
and Tzipi Shragai

Every person has  
a name  
Given to him by  
God  
And given to him  
by his father and  
mother  
Everyone has a  
name  
That was given  
to him by his  
stature and way  
of smiling

Zelda Mishkovsky

# Every Person Has a Name

## Lehakat HaStudentim Shel Yerusalayim Celebrates Dan Biron's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday



Crowds of people slowly gathered in the lobby of the hall in Mevaseret Zion. All the distinguished guests came to celebrate **Dan Biron's** 80th birthday. Plates overflowing with the best of everything were placed on the tables for the distinguished guests who kept arriving and soon would eat their fill of the land's fish, milk and honey and all its bounty.

The conversations between the guests were not at all idle talk. These were conversations that delved into the depths of memories of the beautiful days they had spent together; what they all had in common was "**Lehakat HaStudentim Shel Yerushalayim** – The Jerusalem Student Performing Troupe" directed by **Dan Biron**, the troupe's director for many years, and now the musical director who had already become a legend for everyone. After a while, a sturdy, broad man entered the hall lobby with large and confident steps. His grey hair curls down to his shoulders. On his head is a hat in shades of brown. "Hello everyone" he thundered in a low and deep voice, befitting a man whose presence precedes our time. Between his slightly dry lips was pressed a cigarette seeking a light. This is Dan – **Dan Biron**; it is clear to him that his long number of years was only semantics and that an entire life is still ahead of him ...

By the time everyone entered the spacious studio from the narrow lobby and took their place, the entire band of musicians was already sitting on the edge of the stage and they began to play.

Immediately, the troupe's dancers leaped into the

center of the dance floor and started dancing, being drawn into a time machine to beautiful places and to the biggest festivals in the world in which they had participated as a performing troupe. The connection between them seemed natural and flowing; the smiles on their faces showed the enthusiastic audience how much fun they had while they had been in the troupe.

Lehakat HaStudentim Yerushalayim - The Jerusalem Student Troupe is a dance troupe which was founded in 1956 by a group of students from Jerusalem, headed by the late **Dr. Dan Ronen**. The troupe soon became one of the leading folklore ensembles in Israel. The troupe was considered the Ambassador of Culture and Folklore of the State of Israel when it was among the first troupes to represent the State of Israel at many festivals around the world and won dozens of awards.

The Lehaka focuses primarily on Israeli Jewish folklore. The troupe's repertoire is comprised of dances, songs and melodies of Israeli and Jewish folklore. The repertoire presents the ethnic folklore of Jewish communities from Yemen, Iran, Turkey, North Africa, the Balkans, Romania, Poland and the former Soviet Union. In addition, the show features Israeli works with a Mediterranean character and flavor.

The Lehaka's dances and songs are always accompanied by an orchestra of acoustic instruments.

### Dan's Bar – "Birman"

**Dan Biron** – that's the man's name. He is indeed tall and the way he smiles is determined by the sounds of his favorite passion – the accordion.

"Play something for me..." the woman with curly

Bottom from left:  
 Shuki Goshen – flute;  
 Roni Milo, Gideon Posen  
 and Yaakov Perry – trumpet;  
 Dan Biron – accordion; Uriel  
 Weinstein – flute;  
 Ilan Friedland, Uri Solomonovich  
 and Kobi Buzo – string  
 instruments;  
 Top right:  
 Eddie Sumiran – clarinet; Lior  
 Grossman – accordion; Amichai  
 Gibnet – violin.  
 Lehaka director and producer:  
 Itamar Madlal.  
 Musical Director: Dan Biron.  
 Among the troupe's  
 choreographers:  
 Prof. Micha Spiro, Yonatan  
 Karmon z"l, Yossi Madall and  
 Prof. Tamar Raz.



hair begged him; "Something good, old..." , she continued her request.

Dan took his guarded accordion out of its tight case by holding it with two firm palms. Dan's long fingers moved about on the accordion keys on one on one side, and on the tiny buttons on the other, and began to play with decisive precision.

Night. January. Jerusalem. Heavy rain rinsed and brushed the rectangular stones of this city and smoothed them even more. Moments earlier, I was on my way to "Dan's Bar" – "Birman" is its name. I entered the bar and was greeted by a live band of musicians. That evening a live band played, just like every night at a bar.

The bar walls are covered with works of art by the best painters in Israel in addition to rare items by talented artists from various fields. On the left side of the bar, a model sat on a high bar stool and in front of her, a group of people came who to sketch, listen to good music and drink something warm. To the right of the bar door sat two guys with thick beards wearing a shtreimel, a black yarmulke, who sang along with the band with typical ultra-Orthodox joy, to good American music. Among them sat **Dan Biron**, and he tells:

This place reflects me. When I retired, I decided I wanted to have a place that would have a live show

every night. Every day there is a different kind of music: Jazz, Mexican, Dixie Lite, a jam session and more. And on Thursdays, together with my band, I play Balkan music which I love very much. I'm a director, and my greatest excitement is when I'm planning something and it comes out exactly the way I wanted. That the decor, the recording technician and the accessories - everything will reach the optimum. I directed a lot of TV shows, such as: "Esek Hanahar Ha'adom" , "Gazoz" , "Od Lahit" , "Ad Pop" and others ...

#### **Family:**

Both me and **my wife Sari (Sari Raz** – the journalist, the radio and television personality. H.L.), are broadcasters. We have been broadcasting for more than sixty years. Before television, we worked in radio. Sari has been a broadcaster since the age of 16. We have been married for 55 years. I spent more time in editing rooms than at home. The children grew up into this world. They traveled with me and Sari all over the world.

My life has been constantly spent doing things. When I was a news reporter, I would bring a new story every day. You are busy all the time and do not have time for unnecessary contemplation.

My father, **Dr. Avraham Biron**, died fifty years ago. He immigrated to Israel from Ukraine when he





was one year old and lived all the rest of his life in Palestine, during the Turkish Mandate. My father was a veterinarian. He studied at Reali in Haifa. When he was 17, he graduated from school and by the age of 21, he had already received his doctorate. My father thoroughly knew twenty different languages. He was invited to translate. My father translated about forty science books from Russian into English.

When I was a child, among other things, I also experienced the War of Independence. My father was a fighter in Jerusalem at the time. I went through the childhood of a "siege boy." A siege boy eats everything. There wasn't any food

that was not eaten. At the time, only one bucket of water a day was used for the whole family. There were no eggs; We ate egg powder. There was no oil. They used everything – roots, chubeza and various plant leaves. To this day, the effects remain – I eat everything and do not waste water.

Nowadays I miss my mother very much. My mother and I were very close. She raised me and my younger brother who was two and a half years my junior. My brother was born hard of hearing and my mother cared for him with endless devotion. She was born in Germany; she was a teacher of crafts and Hebrew. She passed away three years ago at the age of 98 and a half. She would come to my bar frequently and prepare her own famous lemon pie here. My son learned how to prepare the lemon pie from her, but he always says that when he prepared the pie with her, it was perfect, and when he prepares it himself, it never comes out the same.

A lot of people would gather at my parents' house. Almost every week, friends of my father would come and sing songs in Russian accompanied by a mandolin and balalaika. As a child I already knew how to sing dozens of songs in Russian, but I did not understand the meaning of the words. I can still sing them today.

### ***Would you like to achieve something more?***

People always want more, but in general, when I look back, I do not understand how I could have accomplished everything that I did and I did a lot.

### ***You also ran for a political position...***

As for politics, I ran as the head of "Green Leaf." I'm actually pretty comfortable with the fact that I did not win, because then I would have had to hang out with lawyers and besides, it is music that I love... At that time, they came from everywhere to interview me and precisely in this way I received a great deal of exposure.

### ***Do you think there could be a replacement with your talent for the troupe?***

I wish someone would come forward and replace me. Unfortunately, there are not many high-level accordionists. As the troupe's musical director, I make sure that the music will best serve the dancers, and that the sounds represent the tastes, smells and colors of Israeli folklore. My specialty is Balkan music.

### ***Professor Tamar Raz, please tell us a little about yourself and how you came to dance in the Lehaka.***

When I was discharged from the army, I came to the auditions. My girlfriend auditioned, and I came too and was accepted. That was October 1988. I was just one of the dancers for four years and then I became the instructor and artistic director for over 15 years. During that time, I studied chemistry at the Hebrew University.

### ***Tell us something about the Lehaka.***

The Lehaka is a total complete family. We are in touch all the time and to this day, we remain very



**Dan is eighty years old and lives life to the fullest. After retiring, he opened a successful bar. He cultivates the music. He is constantly with young people and living life in a good way. Dan is a people person.**



The troupe's repertoire is comprised of dances, songs and melodies of Israeli and Jewish folklore. The repertoire presents the ethnic folklore of Jewish communities from Yemen, Iran, Turkey, North Africa, the Balkans, Romania, Poland and the former Soviet Union.

good friends. The members of the troupe will always come to help in a time of need and will remain my lifelong friends. We performed a lot all over the world and we also had performances of a special nature. For example, on one of the trips to Mexico, it turned out that we were going to appear in a prison, for the prisoners... I remember that they stamped us. We performed in the yard, played basketball with the inmates and then realized that we were actually performing in front of rapists, thieves and murderers.

Together we shared small and big experiences that make us laugh to this day. Throughout the years, everybody knows everyone else in the troupe. We also meet at "Birman" for every event that takes place. Dan invites everyone, and we are very connected.

Throughout the years and performances, we have always danced to live music. Even at rehearsals. We – the dancers and the troupe's orchestra are one and the same both in Israel and abroad. The dances that the Lehaka performs are vintage dances; some were created fifty years ago, such as "Yamin U'Smol", as well as more contemporary dances. The troupe also dances Balkan, Bulgarian and others. The Lehaka still exists and dances to this day. While the dancers are young, the orchestra has been maturing. The orchestra consists of almost the same musicians from then until now with changes here and there.

#### ***Tell us about Dan Biron, the man.***

Dan is a man of the people. He is a total friend with the character and spirit of the Lehaka. We always followed him. He does everything for us and we do

everything for him. Dan is such a funny, witty and smart man. He always says he's the only one who has read my doctoral dissertation... he molded the Lehaka into a family.

None of us ever made money from the Lehaka, ever. I never wanted to get paid. I did not want to pollute this world. I wanted to keep it nice and clean, and so did the entire Lehaka. No one gets paid. When the Lehaka makes money from performances, the money goes towards overseas performance trips. People join the Lehaka to dance for their soul and not for financial gain.

Most of the dancers in the Lehaka have danced for many years. They voluntarily spend at least seven-eight years in the troupe. This gives it a certain kind of power, a meaning. There's something very pure about it; it's always kept my innocence, my naivety.

There was also a lot of charm in traveling to festivals. Dan would stand up straight, and he's a very tall guy, and that would somehow magnetize the passersby. Everyone was drawn to us, to hear and see us. There was a special charisma. Everyone danced, played, sang and drank. Just a beautiful world. It maintained the innocence that had always been a part of me. There is something very powerful about this "togetherness" of ours. All Lehaka members are friends with no political differences or any differences at all. And Dan is a person you can always look to and learn from.

Dan is eighty years old and lives life to the fullest. After retiring, he opened a successful bar. He cultivates the music. He is constantly with young people and living life in a good way. Dan is a people person.





**Miri Krimolowski**  
Explores culture in  
Israel and the world

Translation:  
Ruth Goodman,  
Tzipi Shragai

# Mother and Daughter

## Gurit Kadman and Ayalah Goren-Kadman

### Two Views on Folk Dance

**Ayalah Goren-Kadman** is considered to be the first child of the Israeli folk dance "world". Having been born to **Gurit Kadman**, the "Mother of Israeli Folk Dance", she has breathed dance and danced her entire life. Today, from the height of her 90 plus years, she looks back but also forward, thinking that Israeli folk dances are not really Israeli, and hoping that the foundation of folk and ethnic dance established by her mother is nevertheless a milestone that has greatly influenced our culture.

**Goren-Kadman** was born in Vienna and grew up in Tel Aviv. In the early years, she studied at the school for the children of workers, which was later named for A. D. Gordon and known as the A.D. Gordon School. (Many know this school as a place on LaSalle Street and on Hayarkon Street but Ayalah wants to mention that when she was a student, it was the school on Bograshov Street, walking distance from her Bauhaus designed home on Rehov Shalag).

She later studied in Tichon Chadash High School (then on Hayarkon Street). "During the Second World War, we studied for exams and soldiers in the British Army came to see us. To this day, I remember the conversations with them," she says. "Back then", she emphasizes, "as a child who grew up in a home where the culture of a healthy mind and body were very important, I was aware of the subjects such as education and gymnastics. The culture of a 'healthy mind in a healthy body' was very significant in the German culture in which I grew up".

In the army, Ayalah served in a military troupe and was in a company that performed plays, music and dance. One of her friends was **Shmulik Segal**, who was



later an actor in the Habima Theater. After that, she completed **Lotte Kristler's** Physical Culture Seminar, worked as a physical therapist and studied dance with the greatest of them all – the legendary **Gertrud Kraus**, alongside a nice friend...**Yaffa Yarkoni**, who later became the renowned Israeli popular singer.

#### *Ayalah says:*

Gertrud's studio on Frug Street was a magical place. Gertrud, who spoke in German, started dancing at the age of 18. She was also a great pianist and she would even draw. She became like family. She would sit with us and paint dancing figures on napkins; I wish I had kept them. Gurit (Ayalah refers to her mother as Gurit rather than Mother. M.K.) eventually engaged in folk dance; I turned to ethnic dance. At the university, I studied anthropology, a field which has been very much related to my work in ethnic dance. Like Gurit, I often went into the field – to villages, to moshavim, to kibbutzim – and collected material. Of course, there has always been an environmental impact on ethnic dance everywhere in the Diaspora. It had the same effect on the folk dance field in Israel. Creators said to themselves: 'Let's create something that is affected by our own environment'. In this

**Note:** Following her interview for this article with Miri Krimolowski, Ayalah Goren-Kadman had a telephone conversation on August 31, 2020 with Judith Brin Ingber (J.B.I.) in which she provided additional information that has been included.



*Hora Agadati at a course for soldiers 1946*



*Hapoel Troupe 1947*



*Gurit Kadman - Shavu'ot in Kibbutz Sha'ar HaAmakim 1949*

way, for example, Bedouin motifs were used". I love folk dance, but I was very interested in Gurit's involvement in the field with the ethnic groups. For example, I loved the Yemenite jewelry. (Ayalah always wears this jewelry today, and despite her "Yeke" or German heritage, they look as if she was born with them. M.K.).

I began teaching in the Dance Department of the Academy established by **Hassia Levy**. The department has grown to become the Academy of Music and Dance at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. While Levy established the department, **Shalom Hermon**, then in the Ministry of Education, also pushed to have this department established. Hermon directed the Department of Physical Culture at the Ministry of Education and he was the one who had advised Hassia of how important it was to include the teaching of ethnic dance in the department as well.

I taught in this field for 25 years. The students really liked it and it has to be said that it was very

unusual compared to all the other subjects that were taught there; I was careful to bring people from the ethnic groups to speak in my classes and meeting with these people themselves was very significant in understanding this form of dance. Gurit was very pleased that it was included in the academy because finally, someone who was really involved in dance and creativity, was teaching ethnic dances. I mentored many generations of dancers who studied this important subject.

Today, Goren-Kadman lives in Tel Aviv with her husband, **Prof. Aryeh (Arthur /Artie) Goren**, formerly a Professor of History specializing in immigration at Columbia University in New York and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. They are the parents of two sons; the elder, **Avner**, is a pediatrician and the younger son, **Amos**, deals in venture capital investments. They are the grandparents of five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

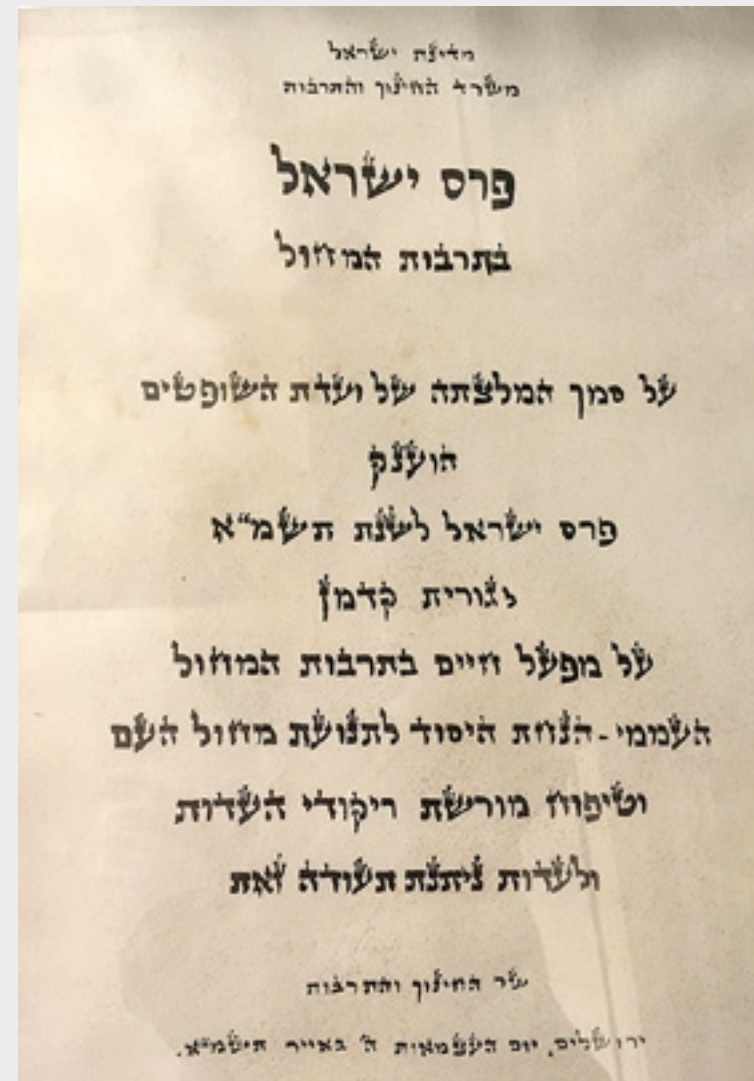
Gurit always said, "A nation without folk dance is not a nation". Gurit and I both believed that it was necessary to preserve the dances from abroad. Gurit thought that it was a culture of the people who did not need certificates and degrees. I thought and still think that the introduction of the field into the academy had increased its importance and also paid homage to the various ethnic groups that had preserved it. I am delighted that today we mark the Mimouna (a traditional North African Jewish feast held the day after Passover), the Saharana (a Kurdish festival held during the intermediary days of Sukkot) and the Sigid (an Ethiopian Jewish festival) at various festivals such as the Karmiel



Festival. I see Israeli choreographers who have been influenced by various ethnic motifs and this is an excellent natural process.

**Gurit Kadman (Gert Lowenstein Kaufman)**, Ayalah's mother, was born in 1897 into a secular Jewish family in Leipzig, Germany. She studied philosophy and psychology at the University of Leipzig and was determined to reach the Land of Israel. In the German Youth movement, Blau Weiss (Blue and White Zionist Group), she met **Leo Kaufman**. Together they immigrated to Pre-State Israel in 1920. With their new born baby, **Raphael**, they were among the first settlers of the Heftziba Farm (Moshav Heftziba). Later, with the Gdud HaAvoda labor battalion, they moved to Kibbutz Tel Yosef, where Gurit became acquainted with those dances that were danced in the working settlements. She was no stranger to the dance world because even in her youth in Germany she had begun investigating folklore. Before her Aliya, she also danced German folk dances and was involved with the Gymnastica Movement of Body Health. In addition, she enjoyed ice skating and gymnastics.

The subject of gymnastics and body development was brought by German immigrants. Best remembered is **Hilda Kesten**, a disciple of **Gertrud Kraus** and later a dancer and choreographer in her own right; (she is the mother of Theater Director **Miki Gurevich**). At the time, the Ministry of Education did not yet believe in gymnastics, so Gurit decided



Israel Prize awarded to Gurit Kadman, 1981

to establish a teacher training organization for gymnastics and that was... not easy at all. There were also movement lessons within the Gymnastica Body Health curriculum.

How did Gurit come to folk dance? I ask. "She was always interested in folklore. It is preserved because people preserve it precisely because it's not organized and not written anywhere". When I started to work in the field, I too understood this point and therefore, I went on a collecting expedition.

But if we return to Gurit, she was looking for something in addition to the physical subject, something that would unite the immigrants she had met who had come from all corners of the world to this country. "If we do not have folk dances because all the Jews were in exile, then folk dances have to be created", she emphasized. "There is no need to invent something out of nothing because we have sources, the Bible for instance".

When she began, she created very few dances.

"She was always interested in folklore. It is preserved because people preserve it precisely because it's not organized and not written anywhere".



Dance session on the roof





*Gurit Kadman, seated second from left at a ceremony, Dalia Festival 1958*

What she did, and it was very important, was to document. She documented them in films. From this documentation, many things were born. The exotic environment of the countries of their origin had influenced immigrants, even those who came from the Ashkenazi countries. It did not matter if the sources were from a Jewish environment; any environmental source would be appropriate. Thus was born, for example, the dance, "Debka Rafach". She would say, "You just have to organize it". She thought about a "Yeke" organization, says Ayalah, smiling. (Note: Though in the beginning Gurit championed the new dances created in kibbutzim, by the 1970s she had started the Israel Ethnic Dance Project with the Hebrew University Department of Folklore to document the ethnic dances brought to Israel. The project documentation included filming and interviewing elders from communities such as the Jews from the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, the Kurdish Jews and Yemenite Jews. J.B.I.)

Gurit was an extraordinary woman in all aspects of the way she lived, both professionally and personally. Even the name Kadman, that was changed from Kaufman, was invented by Gurit. She said, "Kadman and not Kadmon; we are not ancient. On the contrary I want to advance things", tells her daughter.

She shared her life, as noted, with Leo Kaufman, an economist and an expert on Israeli coinage. (His collection of coins was donated to the Haaretz Museum in Ramat Aviv, today known as the Eretz Israel Museum, for the establishment of the Coin Pavilion which is currently named for him.) With time, he became the head of the housing department in the Histadrut and the manager of Shikun Ovdim and that's when they also moved to Tel Aviv. But it was not only with Leo that she shared her life... In the same household, he lived happily with... two women. The second was Shulamit, a doctor by profession. For Raphael and Amnon, the two grown children of Gurit, were soon added two sisters: Avishag, the daughter of Shulamit and Leo and Ayalah, the youngest daughter of Gurit and Leo. They all lived in harmony and openly in their house in Tel Aviv.

"We made sure to maintain a healthy lifestyle at home", says Goren-Kadman, "My mother was very active. She taught swimming and gymnastics on the roof of our house on Shalag Street. The gymnastics lessons were conducted in the nude; it was part of the ideology of being a part of nature. Shulamit worked as a doctor, but also managed the house. It was a special house, no doubt. After World War II, Shulamit traveled to Greece where, as a doctor, she taught how to use microscopes and medical equipment". She left the management of the house that had been previously all on her shoulders to... Gurit. It wasn't easy".

Gurit lived folk dance and promoted the field in every way possible. In 1944, while teaching a first course for folk dance instructors at Seminar HaKibbutzim, she connected her students with musicians and dancers who worked in the kibbutzim, and thus the Dalia Dance Conference was founded. Together with the Department of Folklore at the Hebrew University, she established the project to cultivate ethnic dance and also established and worked in the folk dance department of the Histadrut. At the very beginning, the focus of folk dance was, of course, the working settlements, but it slowly moved to the cities and suddenly the urbanites became "the dance heroes". Later,





*Hora Agadati - Hapoel Tel Aviv class, 1951*

she also formed the "Hapoel" dance troupe. Ayalah conducted the course for instructors in Jerusalem and then she was joined by **Bracha Dudai**.

In 1981, Gurit was awarded the Israel Prize. It was during the period of **Menachem Begin**, but she said, "better late than never". (Note: The Kadmans were supporters of the Labor Party, not Begin's Likud party. -J.B.I.) For the rest of her life, she maintained a healthy lifestyle and passed away at the age of 91.

*"The folk dances today reflect the spirit of the time. Since the people decide, it is impossible to go against it."*

I ask: If Gurit was alive today, what would she say about today's folk dances? And Ayalah replies: It's interesting to think about it because during her life there were already those who said to her: "Everyone

thinks that they can create a dance. Let's set up a committee that will determine what is appropriate". It really irked her and she immediately said, "I will decide? The people will dance what is good for them; a committee will not help!" She continued and said that the people who create folk dances

need to have a foundation, some kind of a source. You must know how to build a dance, but should I make the decision?! We need to find places for the instruction of ethnic dances and some foundation for the dance of the Jewish people, wherever they are, and then it will percolate into the dance form called "folk dance". Gurit had a very democratic attitude toward this issue. "If they love it, then I like it too," she used to say. She was very advanced in her worldview as well as in her personal life. When the story began with Shulamit, someone told Leo that he should divorce Gurit. But Gurit said right away, "Why don't we add her to our household"?

And what do you think about the folk dances of today? I ask Ayalah. I call these people "patchers" because they just "put things together" without actual knowledge and therefore they are not creators. That's why I'm glad to be teaching at the Academy. I don't like that the dances have lost their Israeli character; we don't exactly know what it is. Today it's kind of a mish-mash. There is still a need to dance together; the "togetherness" still attracts people, but the problem is that there is no knowledge, there is only talent and that...is not enough. The folk dances today reflect the spirit of the time. Since the people decide, it is impossible to go against it. ✨





Matti Goldschmidt

Photographs:  
Matti Goldschmidt



Gadi Bitton



Yaron Carmel

# Camp Bitnua in Eilat

## The World's Largest Camp for Israeli Dance and Folklore

There is actually nothing new with the idea of a folk dance event lasting several days including overnight stays. In Israeli dance and folklore, Vienna born **Fred Berk** had already begun such events with his "Camp Blue Star" in North Carolina in 1961. This was the catalyst for additional major events in the United States including "Rikud Israeli Dance Camp" in California, and in New York, "Hora Shalom" and "Hora Keff". An example of a major event established outside of the United States was "Machol Europa" in 1978 with **Maurice Stone** in England.

Finally, in 2009, choreographer and dance master, **Gadi Bitton**, started an Israeli version called "Bitnua", literally "in motion". That it was relatively late, almost half a century after the first camp in the USA., was due to the fact that in Israel, quite unlike foreign countries, folk dance evenings can be found anywhere all over the country almost every day. Therefore, a dance event to be held over several days seemed hardly necessary. In the mid-1970s **Moshe Telem**, primarily a farmer, nevertheless had already started to organize dance weekends (Friday – Saturday) in Kibbutz Sdot Yam near Caesarea, which continued for approximately fifteen years. This was later followed by **Mishael Barzilay**. After a longer break, it seemed to be time to give something similar a chance. Consequently, Bitton began preparations for a new local camp twelve years ago (2008). The organizing team was not only interested in just dancing and folklore, but with a new concept; through concerts by popular musical artists the entire event would be lightened up over two-and-a-half days. Around 650 interested people responded to this first call.

After several successful years, the event was increased by one day and in 2019, the dance community was pleased to receive the announcement for the 11th event, from 23rd – 26th of October. According to

the organizers, around 3,000 participants took part in the event. Among them were over 100 from around the world from countries like Australia (11 participants), Austria, the Czech Republic, England, Finland, France (40), Germany, Hungary, Romania, Uruguay and the USA. By this list of countries alone, it is evident that Israeli folk dance has long since grown into a worldwide cultural phenomenon.

Camp Bitnua featured a total of 28 well known dance leaders from all over Israel. Due to space considerations in this article, only those who were already active in Munich or Pappenheim via the "Israelisches Tanzhaus" and thus better known in Germany are named here: **Michael Barzelai, Eran Bitton, Gadi Bitton, Yaron Carmel, Dror Davidi, Yaron Elfasy, Hila Mukdasi, Avner Naim, Tamir Scherzer, Yigal Triki** and **Yankale Ziv**. Although folk dance was the original and actual focus of the event, as **Gadi Bitton** told me, the personnel and infrastructural effort for the performance productions involved much more than for folk dance itself. It required an appropriate stage, sound technicians, seating arrangements for up to 3,000 guests (only camp participants were allowed in), lighting, and additional security management, etc. – you name it.



Note: The original article was published in German in November 2019 in the German publication, Jüdische Rundschau.





*Warming up before a performance at the pool*



*Dancers: Adi Israeli, Paloma Rafael and Moshe Ben Simon*

The dancing took place simultaneously on six dance floors, with the largest of these dance floors, according to **Yaron Carmel**, covering an area of 1,200 m<sup>2</sup> (12,916.69 sq. ft.), well over one dunam, covered by kind of a tent roof during the day in order to protect the dancers from the sun. At the end of October, Eilat continues to have summer temperatures of well over 30° C (86° F). The second largest dance floor, with a total of 800 m<sup>2</sup> (8,611.13 sq. ft.), was located in a makeshift hall with air conditioning, separated from the hotel complex. All dance floors had wooden panels so that they became a kind of sprung dance floor. From the perspective of dance, everyone was taken care of. Even though most of the participants were rather advanced, there were special classes for beginner and intermediate levels as well as for women only (for religious reasons). As everywhere in Israel, special consideration is given to dancers in wheelchairs who were provided with special dance classes. The individual dance sessions



*Performers: Yaron Carmel, Keren Oren and Almog Ben Ami*



*"Misgav" Dance Troupe*

were usually arranged according to certain themes, for example, hora or debka dances. A smaller dance floor was reserved for "nostalgia" dances", i.e., those from the early days of the State of Israel or even before its creation. Since not all participants stayed in the Hotel Sport, the center of the event, neighbouring hotels such as Laguna, Rivera, Royal Garden and King Shlomo, all of which belong to the Isrotel hotel chain were also occupied. On average, participants paid about 2,500 Israeli Shekels (ILS) or about 650 (\$720) for the total package. According to Bitton, the total budget of the event came to 5 million ILS (or € 1.28 / \$1.42 million); no public funds were used.

The vocal artists invited for Bitnua actually represented a veritable "who's who" of the Israeli music

That it was relatively late, almost half a century after the first camp in the USA., was due to the fact that in Israel, quite unlike foreign countries, folk dance evenings can be found anywhere all over the country almost every day





*Every evening we enjoyed several dance performances*

entertainment scene. In 2019, **Ariel Zilber**, a veteran of Israeli pop and co-founder of the rock band, "Tamuz", in 1974 together with **Shalom Chanoch**, appeared first. **Moshe Peretz**, the idol of Israeli teenagers, who has several gold and platinum albums, followed on Thursday. The first concert held on Friday featured **Boaz Sharabi**, who boasts over thirty record hits in his long career. Neglecting the fact that Israelis often tend to arrive late by half an hour or more, he started precisely at 5 o'clock in the afternoon in front of just a couple of spectators. For the Shabbat concert, actor and singer **Yehoram Gaon** came on stage. Since his mother tongue is Ladino, he is especially popular with Sephardic Jews. The approximately 3,000 spectators, both young and old, sang along to every single one of his songs. Before his performance, when he inquired if there was one or another of his songs to be danced to, the answer he received was that there are dances to almost all of his songs – a surprising fact at least for Gaon himself, as he told the audience. Israeli stars such as **Rita**, **Idan Raichel**, **Eyal Golan** and **Shlomi Shabbat** who had performed in previous years, should also be mentioned.

In addition, the organizers invited a total of seven performing dance troupes to present their choreographies at noon at the "pool party" or in the evening prior to the concerts. Apart from the overnight stay itself, all expenses for the dance performers, such as local transportation, meals and



*An open dance session*

admission to the dance activities at Bitnua were paid for by the organizers. The daily program was pleasant and relaxed and it was certainly impressive to observe that, even after midnight, there were more than a thousand avid Israeli folk dancers on the main dance floor. I don't want to forget to mention that on the last night there was a chance, at least for the very hard-core dancers, to dance until six in the morning. A Russian photographer and film crew comprised of three charming young ladies (**Alisa**, **Kateryna** and **Marina**) took a picture of anyone who requested it. As **Yaron Carmel**, coordinator of the dance program, told me, planning for the coming year already begins the day after the end of the current event. This means that in 2020, after the end of Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles), despite the coronavirus crisis, the 12th Camp Bitnua will be ready to go!



# Bat Li Pite'om

## Suddenly You Came To Me



**Dance: Dror Davidi**

Translation:

Ruth Goodman

Dance notation:

Ruth Goodman and

Ruth Schoenberg

**D**ror was born in Karmiel in July 1981 and currently lives in Pardes Hanna. He is married to **Hila**, his life partner, and is the father of **Noa, Yonatan** and **Ariel**.

He spent his childhood in Karmiel, a city that has instilling the love of dance for youth etched on its flag, and he, too, naturally joined the local dance troupe, "Karmeit Machol Karmiel" that was under the direction of **Dado Kraus**.

Dror tells us: "The lehakot (dance troupes) were a second home for me. They were my anchor. That's where I spent time, grew up, became a professional dancer and was shaped as a person. During this period, Dado was an important and formative figure for me. In those years, I was exposed to folk dance and I danced at the Karmiel Festival with **Yaron Carmel**, who over time became a significant figure in my life, a mentor and especially a lifelong friend".

His involvement in the lehakot ended with his enlistment into the army. The route he chose did not allow for the combination of the two. At the end of his military service, he went on a big trip in South America, and afterwards, he resumed dancing in harkadot (dance sessions) and began to teach with Yaron in the harkadot in Gan Shmuel and Misgav.

At the same time that he was teaching, Dror also studied business administration and international commerce at the Ruppin College (Academic Center). During that time, he moved his residence to the Hadera area. He raised a family that settled in Pardes Hanna.

Currently, he leads dancing in the Jordan Valley at Kibbutz Ashdot Ya'akov Ichud on Mondays, at Kibbutz Sdot Yam on Wednesdays and Motzei Shabbat in Tiberias.

### *About the dance he relates:*

Honestly, in all my years as a dance instructor, I have never choreographed a dance (other than a line dance called "Bata Lete"). I was completely content with this. In the dance sessions, I always chose to teach what seemed to me to be the most suitable and popular regardless of who was the choreographer.

Whenever I listened to a song that excited me, I imagined



what style of dance I would like it to be. Sometimes I was pretty close and sometimes I was far from reality. The path to choreographing the dance "Bat Li Pite'om – Suddenly You Came To Me" started with the connection to the song.

The song was written and composed by **Keren Peles** and she performs it in a duet with **Roni Alter**, a successful Israeli singer in Paris. Keren's parents, **Miri and Doron Peles**, dance with me in the Jordan Valley. Through them I was exposed to the song for the first time. Later that evening, on my way home from the dance session, I listened to the song in the car and when it reached the chorus I felt chills all over my body.

**Dror Davidi:**

<https://bit.ly/2Niqkok>

**The Dance:**

<https://bit.ly/3dlD342>

**The Sessions:**

<https://bit.ly/37KLR2i>

As the days went on, I found myself listening to the song over and over on each trip. Looking through the online listing of dances registered with the Organization of Dancers and Choreographers in Israel and in the World, I realized that the song was registered to **Gadi Bitton** and I felt the need to share with him the style of dance I would like him to choreograph for this song (humorously of course). The answer from Gadi was not late in coming but was surprising.

"Do you want to give it a try? To get started? I'm here for you to allay any fears you may have. Decide on either a verse or a chorus, a circle or partner dance; I'll take the other one".

This was an offer I could not refuse. He opened the door for me, offered cooperation and support; what could go wrong?? I'll give it a try.

I listened to the song again ... It was clear to me that we would choreograph a circle dance and I would be responsible for the chorus. From there it gained momentum; the movements came naturally and flowed from the soul to the body and to the dance floor.

Gadi and I met in the studio and discussed the connection between the parts of the dance. What would work better and what would not. Changes were made up until the last minute, right up to the

evening of teaching the dance. From then, in my opinion, within just a few weeks the dance was danced almost everywhere.

I think there was a perfect connection between a great composer, **Keren Peles**, to an excellent song that became a sort of world embracing national anthem at the time of the corona virus. All that magic we choreographed as a dance, which was not overly pretentious and aimed to be accessible to everyone and...voila! Here is "Bat Li Pite'om – Suddenly You Came To Me" – the dance of the month.

### *On a personal note:*

We are all at the apex of a very challenging era, with the corona virus and its consequences. After a long hiatus of about three months, the harkadot are slowly coming back, one step forward, two back; the mix is different, the number of dancers is different, the atmosphere is different... everything is different.

I am hopeful that soon we can all dance more freely together and I would love to share another new dance with the dancers which is also a collaboration with Gadi and again a duet by **Keren Peles** and this time, with **Eden Hason** – "Shemesh Tikanas – Sun Will Come In".

Looking forward to better days in the folk dance field and for all of us as a people.

## **Bat Li Pite'om – Suddenly You Came To Me** **Lyrics and Music: Keren Peles**

And the town became quiet,  
And the sky became covered with  
darkness,  
To the abyss.  
It was almost  
The twilight of my life,  
But all of a sudden, you came to me.

Chorus:  
Suddenly you came to me  
And you told me, "Come on,  
God is keeping a place at the end of  
the day  
For women like you".  
For naive people like me.  
I had almost sunk, but suddenly you  
came to me.

And much time has passed  
Since I began my journey,  
So far there are no regrets  
Because it was cloudy,  
And I had almost given up on the dream  
But suddenly you came to me.

Chorus: (Suddenly you came to me...)

And the town became quiet,  
And the sky became covered with darkness,  
To the abyss.  
It was almost  
The twilight of my life,  
But all of a sudden, you came to me.





**Notation of Dance Steps****Dance: Dror Davidi and Gadi Bitton****Lyrics: Keren Peles****Music: Gilad Shmueli and Keren Peles****Formation: Circle****Meter: 4/4****Part A:** Face CCW, hands free.

- 1-4 Moving fwd: Step-tog-step RLR, brush L fwd.  
 5-8 Tcherkessia step rocking fwd and bwd on L (step L fwd, R in place, step L bwd, R in place).  
 9-16 Repeat counts 1-8 with opposite footwork.  
 17-18 Moving fwd on the line of the circle: ½ turn rt. with two steps R,L to end facing CW.  
 19-20 Step bwd on R, rock fwd on L.  
 21-22 Stamp on R to rt. side towards the center of the circle and rise onto rt. toes while raising arms to the sides and upward; hold.  
 23-26 Cross L behind R towards the center of the circle, step R to rt.; cross L over R; step R bwd in place.  
 27-28 ¾ turn left moving away from center with two steps L,R to end facing center.  
 29-32 With hands crossed at wrists at chest level: Step-tog-step LRL bwd toward the line of the circle while pushing arms fwd and snapping fingers on counts 29 & 31, hold.

Repeat Part A

**Part B:** Face center, hands free.

- 1-2 Sway R-L.  
 3-4 Step on R to rt. while rising on toes; hold.  
 5-8 Cross L over R; step back on R in place; step L to left; hold.  
 9-12 Cross R over L; step L to left on the line of the circle pivoting ¼ turn rt. to end facing CCW; step R bwd while raising arms upward; hold.  
 13-16 Moving fwd CCW: Step-tog-step LRL while lowering arms, hold.  
 17-18 Sway R-L.  
 19-20 Cross R behind L; step L towards the center of the circle while pivoting ½ turn left on L. (End with rt. shoulder towards center facing CW.)  
 21-24 Sway onto R to rt. towards the center of the circle while extending rt. arm to the rt. side; hold; sway onto L to left while extending left arm to the left away from the center of the circle; hold.  
 25-32 Repeat the pattern of counts 17-24 moving out of center toward the line of the circle. (Begin facing CW with sway R-L; cross R behind L;


step L out of center while pivoting ½ turn left on L to end with left shoulder towards center facing CCW; slow sway R & L while extending corresponding arm to the side).

**Part C:** Face CCW, hands free.

- 1-4 Moving fwd on the line of the circle: Full turn rt. with three steps R,L,R; hold. (End facing CCW.)  
 5-6 Step L fwd CCW and rise on toes while extending left arm fwd and upward; hold.  
 7-8 Step R back in place; step L to left on the line of the circle to face center.  
 9-16 Repeat counts 1-8 beginning with a 1&¼ turn rt.  
 17-20 Step on R fwd toward the center of the circle while extending arms upward to rt. side; hold; step on L fwd toward the center of the circle with arms extended upward to left side; hold.  
 21-22 ½ turn rt. toward the center of the circle with two steps R,L to end with back to center.  
 23-24 Step back on R, rock fwd on L.  
 25-28 Moving out of center: Step-tog-step RLR and pivot ½ turn rt. on R to end facing center.  
 29-32 Moving bwd away from center: Step-tog-step bwd LRL towards the line of the circle while presenting arms fwd and bringing them out to the sides and bwd around the body to end with hands crossed behind the back.

**Part D:** Face CCW. Hands are crossed behind the back throughout this part.

- 1-4 Moving fwd on the line of the circle: Step-tog-step RLR moving fwd on a slight diagonal to the left toward center.  
 5-8 Repeat counts 1-4 with opposite footwork moving forward on a slight diagonal to the rt. away from center.  
 9-10 Step fwd on R, rock bwd on L.  
 11-12 Step back on R while turning to rt. so that back is to center; hold.  
 13-16 Moving CCW on the line of the circle: 1&¼ turn to left with four steps L,R,L,R. (End facing CCW.)  
 17-32 Repeat counts 1-16 with opposite footwork beginning with L moving diagonally out of center. (LRL diagonally to rt.; RLR diagonally to left; L fwd, R bwd, L bwd to face center; 1&¼ turn to rt. with R,L,R,L.)

**Ending:** After the second time through the dance, step fwd CCW on R. 

"I am hopeful that soon we can all dance more freely together and I would love to share another new dance"



## ALEX'S EXPERIENCES

Alex Huber documents important Israeli folk dance events with his camera

# Elad Shtamer: Retro Dances Inspired by His Father, Tutorials in the Karmiel Course and a Weekend At The Dead Sea



**E**lad Shtamer – dancer, instructor, choreographer, singer, musician, stand-up comedian and talented producer. He began dancing at the age of 13 in his father's, the late **Eli Shtamer**, dance sessions, and by the sea.



*Elad dances with his mother, Miki, at a Dead Sea dance weekend*

When he finished high school, his father fell ill and was unable to dance. During this time, Elad stepped into his father's shoes and conducted the dance sessions alone. Eli, the Elder, passed away in April 2008, and the young Shtamer continued his way of his leading this dance session.

In recent years Elad focused on three large dance sessions quite successfully. One in the "Aviv" sports hall in Raanana, one at Kibbutz Givat Haim (Meuchad) and most recently at Kibbutz Harel (circles only).

Elad produces an annual weekend at the Dead Sea, and runs the famous "Retro (Nostalgia-Middle of the road)" dance session 6 times a year. Elad produces an annual weekend at

the Dead Sea, and holds a "retro" dance session 6 times a year. In these dances he projects on a huge screen, photographs from the dances of his late father in which the dancers hear his voice and dance together with the dancers on the screen.

Elad is a highly sought-after instructor around the world as part of Israeli and international folk-dance camps and holds collaborations and marathons with dancers in Israel and around the world.

The photos are from the "Retro" dance, from the Dead Sea weekend and from the instructors' courses of the Karmiel Dance Festival.



*Elad leads the dancers*



*Elad in the center of a circle in Givat Haim*



*Elad leads the retro session in memory of his father, Eli Shtamer, in which the dancers hear Eli's voice*



ALEX'S EXPERIENCES



*Elad demonstrates a line dance*



*Michal Miller-Shtamer leads a line dance*



*Elad instructs with a smile*



*Course for dance instructors in 2015*



*Course for dance instructors in 2017*



*Course for dance instructors in 2012*







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