



Yoav's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, Karmiel

# רוקדים

מגזין לריקודי עם ומחול

## NIRKODA



עמותת ארגון המדריכים  
והיוצרים לריקודי עם



Vol 105 | February 2021 | VIP Members



Mira and Yoav

# Erev Ba



Yoav Ashriel  
8.27.1930-9.26.2020



Fishermen dance

Dear Readers,

A generation goes and a generation comes... the Israeli folk dance movement continues with talented young people. New generations of instructors and choreographers take their place on the "dance stage" and the field continues to develop and evolve.

After the first generation paved the way (**Gurit Kadman, Rivka Shturman, Tirza Hodes, Leah Bergstein, Ze'ev Chavatzelet** and many others), the second generation came, a generation that sometimes "rebelled" and paved new ways, often with criticism and objections by the first generation (just like today).

We see great importance in documentation, instruction and education in light of these generations because: "A nation that doesn't respect its past will have a dull present and an uncertain future" (**Yigal Allon** from the book, "Masach Shel Chol" <https://bit.ly/35fVx4X>).

Ten months ago, we lost **Yonatan Karmon** z"l, who broke new ground and shaped Israeli dance for the stage. We, at "Rokdim-Nirkoda", produced a special issue of the magazine as a tribute to his memory. Many people wrote about different periods in Yonatan's life and about their experiences with him.

Three months ago, sadly we also lost **Yoav Ashriel** z"l, who broke new ground in the area of Israeli folk dance through classes and dance sessions. This issue is dedicated to his memory for future generations to be able to read and gain knowledge about his great influence on our field.



Jerusalem of Gold, 1970

Every beginning instructor should become familiar with and learn about Yoav's influence. Yoav also choreographed many dances, some of which have been forgotten; those that are still danced today are considered our "inalienable assets". The list of Yoav's dances can be found on the "Rokdim" website: <https://bit.ly/3aVRMVU>

This edition is dedicated to stories about **Yoav**, from his childhood through his last days at the Mishan Senior Residence.

Many thanks to those friends who wrote their memories of him:

[Alex Huber](#), [Allen King](#) (USA), [Ami Gilad](#) (USA), [Aura Levin Lipski](#) (Australia), [Ayala \(Carmela\) Shlomo](#), [Chaya Eskayo](#), [Danny Uziel](#) (USA), [David Ben-Asher](#), [Dita Langlib](#), [Eli Ronen](#), [Esti Katz](#), [Gilad Eden-Tzaidi](#), [Judith Brin Ingber](#) (USA), [Lucy Maman](#), [Matti Goldschmidt](#) (Germany), [Meir Za'aror](#), [Moshe Pinkas](#), [Moshe Telem](#), [Nourit Grinfeld](#), [Orly Shachar](#), [Rika Kokus](#), [Roni Siman Tov](#), [Ruth Jacobson](#), [Shlomo Maman](#), [Shmulik Gov Ari](#), [Tal Yeversov](#), [Yair Harel](#), [Yehuda Emanuel](#), [Yoav Sidi](#).

Enjoy your reading,

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



Yaron Meishar



Ruth Goodman



Danny Uziel

Many choreographers were Yoav's apprentices, at the beginning of their careers and throughout the years. They learned much from him about how to "connect folk dance to the public". Yoav "invented" the "hishtalmuyot" – workshops for instructors and the ways to promote new dances during the last 20 years of the 20th century. He wrote descriptions and documented the steps for hundreds of dances, many of which are still danced to this day.



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The family album, Mekorot HaKibbutz, David Ben-Asher



Dita Langlib



Yoav and Dita, Ramat David, 2012

# His Frenetic, Rebellious Nature And His Dance Skills

## Yoav's Childhood In The Kibbutz And Its Impact On His Future Path

**Y**oav Ashriel was born (in 1930) on Kibbutz Ramat David (Einot) in the Jezreel Valley, where he spent his childhood and adolescence. Despite being a member of a kibbutz, with the distinct characteristics of the unique kibbutz figure of the 40s and 50s, in fact, **Yoav's** kibbutz period was quite short. Already at the beginning of his third decade of life, he had moved to Tel Aviv, however, according to the Kibbutz historians – a kibbutznik remained a kibbutznik.

**Yaron Meishar** and I traveled to visit **Yoav's** kibbutz to trace his childhood roots. Our destination was **Dita Langlib's** room on the outskirts of the kibbutz. We met with **Dita**, **Yoav's** best friend during his childhood and adolescence, about 80 years ago, and her daughter **Ronit**. We had a nostalgic conversation in which they shared **Yoav's** history on the kibbutz with us.

**Dita** defines herself as his closest friend during their childhood, even though she was one grade below him:

"We were just like a brother and sister", **Dita** said. "We ran around on the kibbutz barefoot, free and happy. We were children of a kibbutz, who grew up in the children's home, under the authority of idealistic educators, the guardians of the values of sharing and equality. We were a bit far from our parents, whom we met daily, for a few hours in the afternoon and evening. Even back then, I remember **Yoav** as a talented and creative child. At the age of 12 he invented a

card game of pairs (man-woman, male-female dog, male-female rabbit) where he drew the cards himself. **Yoav's** game became a hit in our group of children.

Another mischievous thing that we did, in complete secrecy as partners, was to brew 'medicinal ointments' – we put various juices into empty bottles and hid them in pits we had dug in the ground.

As mentioned, we were 'law-breaking' children, walking around on the hot sand and in the manure in the cow shed, with **Yoav** in the lead. I remember once we went up to the top of the water tower, in just our underwear and tank tops, and we swam in the water.

I'll tell you a secret; until the age of 12, we boys and girls showered together in the beit yeladim – children's home and no one thought of it as something immoral. Yes, we even slept in the same room until the end of high school; that was equality!

Yes, I loved **Yoav** very much; it was a true friendship. Now, I am 90 years old. Shortly before his death, I called to congratulate him on his 90th birthday. It was a conversation full of longing and uplifting memories".

Letter dated November 30, 1984, from **Yoav** to **Dita**:

### **Hello Dita**

*I was happy to hear from you on the phone and to renew old ties. I've remembered the beautiful childhood we had in Ramat David and everything related to it (without going into details ...).*

*As I promised, I am sending you a published booklet, with the description of the steps of*

David Ben-Asher

The youngster, Yoav, instilled a delightfully challenging spirit and a sense of elation in us to participate in a kind of show we had not known before.

the most well-known dances I created. This booklet has been translated into English and distributed in the dance groups and to dance instructors in the United States and Europe. I visited many of them during my occasional instructional tours around the world.

I have a warm place in my heart for Ramat David, the way of life there and the area. It cannot be removed from me. With all the changes that have taken place, all the problems of life, my personal development and that of the whole family, it is always with me.

I really miss you. If I do not visit, it is not out of disrespect or malice God forbid, but out of developing circumstances.

I really want to hear a little more and keep in touch. Warm regards from Mira and the entire family.

Warm regards. **Yoav**



The family in the kibbutz: Hannah, Moshe-David, Elyakim and Yoav Ashriel

**Rinka (Rina Shachar)**, "only" 85 years old, a few years younger than **Yoav**, and to this day, a member of Kibbutz Ramat David, recalls:

"When **Yoav** was 16 years old, he took it upon himself to lead a dance performance at a holiday event on the kibbutz. He gathered six girls, taught us the waltz rhythm and the dance steps he created for a one-time performance. For girls aged 11-12, it was a great feeling to stand on stage and perform in front of the kibbutz members. The youngster, **Yoav**, instilled a delightfully challenging spirit and a sense of elation in us to participate in a kind of show we had not known before. He had, at that time, already displayed the sparks of love for dance and choreographic creativity, which was a prelude to his immense future in the field of dance in Israel.

**Yoav's** father, **Moshe (Dovid) Glicksman**, was a director; he directed plays in kibbutzim and, from him, **Yoav** attained the love of stage and theatricality. **Yoav's** mother, **Hannah**, was also part of the educational system, from whom this special man arose.

On one occasion, **Yoav** returned from the army and choreographed a Shavuot show based on the song 'Shir HaEmek'. I, myself, participated in folk dancing as an adult, thanks to my first instructor, **Yoav Ashriel**".

### Kibbutzim Movement activities, the army and dance.

In **Dita's** modest room, on the table in the living room, is a display of documents, books, photos, letters; sort of a **Yoav Ashriel** exhibition. A beautiful collection, a memorial to a good friend and a special person with a rich past. Among the memorabilia are letters that present a picture of Kibbutz life and the problems faced by the Kibbutzim Movement and its influence on this youngster, **Yoav**.

Here is a letter written on an old typewriter, which testifies to the importance of the young **Yoav** in the eyes of the leadership of the Kibbutz Movement. The letter was sent to Kibbutz Ramat David from the Histadrut of HaNoar HaOved – the Secretariat (exact quote),



Yoav Ashriel's birth certificate

David Ben-Asher

To: Secretariat

Kibbutz Ramat David – Einot. May 9, 1949.

Dear Friend.

On April 3rd, we asked you to send your member, Yoav Glicksman, to be a leader at Noar HaOved. Since then, we have not received an answer. It is difficult for us to understand this attitude towards us, especially when the decision is based on our opinion and that of the Secretariat of the Kibbutzim Association. Yoav is also ready to go to work.

We revisited our decision and agreed to demand that he become a leader for Noar HaOved. We ask that you do not postpone your approval and allow Yoav to leave for work as soon as possible. With friendly greetings.

Secretariat of HaNoar HaOved. (The signature name is blurred.)

Copies:

Yoav Glicksman, Ramat David  
Kibbutz Association Secretariat



And here is another letter concerning **Yoav**, which testifies to his frenetic, rebellious nature and to his dance skills, even then. And did the kibbutz leadership's demand that **Yoav** be accepted as a leader in the Noar HaOved Movement?

A letter from the General Organization of

HaNoar Ha'Oved Movement – The Secretariat. Dated October 9, 1949. (authentic quote)

To the Secretariat of the Einot Group.

Ramat David

Dear Member.

After the return of your son, Yoav Glicksman, from the Democratic Youth Festival (Yoav performed there as a dancer. D.B.A.), we asked him to continue his work in the movement. Yoav informed us that he wanted to return home. We see no justification for stopping his work in the movement after a month and the special circumstances in the movement do not allow this. Like any other member who works, Yoav must bear the collective responsibility of the movement's workers. We demand that you insist that Yoav complete the period of work he had agreed to and fulfill his agreement. His claims, after listening to him, have not convinced us, and we are sure that this is a normal temporary crisis, and we insist that Yoav return to work, immediately.

Regards

Zeev Nechushtan. (With the stamp of the HaNoar HaOved Movement)

Copy: Yoav Glicksman, Einot



The above two official letters do testify to the power of the Kibbutz Movement of yesteryear,

The highlight of the event was a demonstration of four new dances presented by the dance troupe, "Pa'amei Machol", which had been formed two months before. It aimed to cultivate folk dances in a pure Israeli style, while avoiding copying foreign dance styles.

*David Ben-Asher*

to dictate and demand of its members to fulfill a mission unconditionally, and to the rebellious conduct of the young **Yoav** towards the system.

We do not know for sure if **Yoav** agreed to accept the dictates of the Movement and return to leading at HaNoar HaOved after having worked there, according to this letter, for only one month. Presumably, **Yoav**, who was then a little over 19 years old and had already been selected to perform at a festival abroad, did not agree to the kibbutz leadership's demand and did not return to be a youth leader in the HaNoar HaOved Movement.

According to the timeline, the youth leader story in the HaNoar HaOved Movement took place after his military service and probably shortly before **Yoav** left the kibbutz for a long career in the field of dance in Israel.



*The wedding, 1953*

On Wednesday, July 22, 1953, the 10th day of the month of Av 5713, an invitation for the wedding of **Mira** to **Yoav** was sent. It was handwritten and from (both sets of parents), **Shifra and Reuven Bezparozvani** and **Hannah and Moshe-David Ashriel**. The invitation was sent to friends, to attend the wedding of their children in the "Heichal Hamelacha Hall" in Tel Aviv.

It is not exactly clear when **Yoav** actually left the kibbutz, but in the IDF archives, I found out something about his activities in the 1950s. An article about **Yoav Ashriel** was published in the January 1958 issue of the magazine, "Bamachane Nahal", under the headline "Annual Dance Gala". Here are some excerpts from this article:

"Hundreds of people filled the room of the "Ahad Ha'am" School in Tel Aviv. Among them, a young and energetic man stood and gave feverish instructions, activating a team of young men and women who were the subject




*Yoav instructs at a course for madrichim in the Nahal*

of interest of the large audience. It was an annual amateur dance event that was held a week ago and evoked much interest.

...The highlight of the event was a demonstration of four new dances presented by the dance troupe, "Pa'amei Machol", which had been formed two months before. It aimed to cultivate folk dances in a pure Israeli style, while avoiding copying foreign dance styles. The director of the troupe is **Yoav Ashriel**. The dancers were former Ramat David residents, who set for themselves the goal of teaching and promoting Israeli folk dance through all possible avenues. For this year, about 700 people received letters of invitation sent by mail.

...**Yoav** also devoted his time to teaching folk dance in the working settlements (the kibbutzim and moshavim) claiming that the youth are looking for an original style in Israeli folk dance and remain indifferent to Slavic or American styles. He said that he himself finds his inspiration in the native born, Sabra, experience in the settlements, claiming that, "We will soon be able to reach greatness in 'our' style". This is the quote from the publication, "Bemachane Nahal".

As mentioned, the kibbutz chapter in **Yoav's** life was short, yet it was significant in his long life story. There is no doubt that the period of childhood and adolescence in the kibbutz influenced his work later in life and, of course, found its expression in his glorious dance body of work. 



Tal Yeversov  
Translation:  
Dena Matmon

# Our Yoav

**M**ira's Yoav, Yoav's Mira... that's how we referred to our aunt and uncle, the "family on my father's side". **Mira** was my father's aunt; the mothers were sisters so **Mira** and I were cousins. Our relationship was strong and close and we were always *the* family that was proudly invited to every event held in **Yoav's** honor. The family connection was actually double:



Yoav and Mira at Ron's Bar Mitzvah



Shavuot with the family

When my mother was very young, long before she met my father, she was a folk dance instructor and she had participated in one of **Yoav's** classes for instructors at the "Ahad Ha'am" School in Tel Aviv. Years later, when my parents met and were about to marry, **Yoav and Mira** were invited to meet the bride... and simultaneously both called out, "**Ayala?** Ayala was ours before she was yours...". For them my father was their cousin, but my mother was "ours from way back".

**Yoav and Mira** loved my grandmother, **Rivka**. For them, she was the beloved aunt and my father was the beloved cousin. They used to come to visit my grandmother almost every Saturday morning, with **Yoav** driving their silver Volkswagen Golf. The minute I saw their car through the window, I would run to my grandmother. We would all sit on the porch and talk and talk and listen to stories.

**Yoav** would pick citrus fruit from the trees while performing soft dance steps and **Mira** would make "noise". Somehow, the discussion would turn to a report about an exciting dance session, **Yoav's** new dance which they would then demonstrate on the porch (heel toe, heel toe), the experiences from a tour abroad or in Israel of **Yoav's** dance troupe; about **Rakefet**, about **Rotem**, the grandchildren, Kibbutz Shefayim and the dance sessions there.

Only one thing was missing... food! My family was known for its culinary talents and for setting a grand table with all the best available at every possible opportunity, but with the **Ashriels** it was different.

They don't eat. They must preserve their health and their lightness. (Otherwise, how can you dance?). You eat only to exist and then only something low in calories. I wouldn't dare eat near them since I would be scolded and lectured on correct and healthy nutrition.


I loved calling them at home and hearing the answering machine play "Tchol Hamitpachat – The Blue Handkerchief", the song that **Yoav** loved so much. I loved visiting them at their home at 54 Tyber Street in Givatayim. Once when I visited them, **Yoav** showed me the sketch of a new dance and how to notate dance instructions. It really is a language. (Until then, I thought that when you create a dance, you just remember it and that's it...).

I was always invited as an honored guest to the Saturday night dance sessions held at the Malchei Israel Square and, together with **Rotem**, we were asked to come up onto the stage to demonstrate the dances. After the session, we, the children, sat, with all the "grownups" at a sidewalk café at the London Ministore.

During the difficult period when **Yoav** became ill, **Rotem** (who was in the fourth grade) moved in to live with us for an unspecified period, so that **Mira** and **Rakefet** could be with **Yoav**. Despite the circumstances, this was cause for celebration and we have only good memories of this period of togetherness with **Rotem**.

Due to the nature of their work that was during the evenings (at dance sessions), **Mira and Yoav** didn't make it to family events and, as a child, I was very disappointed that they, who were closest to us, couldn't share in our happy occasions. The attached picture of them at my brother's bar mitzvah was literally very rare.

In the last years, after **Mira** passed away, my mother and I made sure to spend at least once a month with **Yoav** on Saturday morning at the Cinemateque, a sing-a-long morning with **Nach'tche Heiman** which sometimes included some of **Yoav's** dances. I was looking forward to this gathering, if only to meet **Yoav**.

I was privileged to have a special relationship with him – and, we were even born on the same date, August 27th. 



Matti Goldschmidt

Translation:  
Alex Huber

# His First Encounter With Folk Dance Had Changed His Life

## A conversation with Yoav Ashriel 23 years ago



Yoav Ashriel, January 1997  
Photo: Matti Goldschmidt

It was in January 1997 when I met **Yoav Ashriel** in Tel Aviv. Well, actually I met him already at least 15 years before, when I attended around 6 to 8 of his "Hishtalmuyot", dance sessions for dance instructors, in Kibbutz Shefayim from about 1980, when I still lived in Jerusalem. Since, I had moved to Munich (Germany), I got a hold of **Yoav's** phone number, called him, introduced myself as a dance instructor now living abroad and asked him if he would be interested in meeting me. At first, he seemed reluctant, questioning me if I could name one, just a single one of the dances he created. Of course, I could, and I proceeded to mention close to a dozen – such as "Erev Ba", "Mi Yitneni Ohf", "Bo be'Shalom" and "Klezmer", all dances which are part of my beginners' repertoire.

We met, on a sunny day in a café in Tel Aviv for close to three hours, talking about "God and the world" and certainly about dancing, my life,

and much more important, his way to Israeli folk dancing. Since I recorded our conversation, I can easily repeat **Yoav's** words. He was born in August 1930 in Kibbutz Ramat David. His, then 94-year old mother, **Hanna**, was born in Poland, still lived there, and his Austrian-born father was already deceased. Yoav vividly described life in his home kibbutz in the days before Israel's independence: Electricity did not exist yet at the kibbutz, and paved roads connecting the kibbutz to the "outside world" were still a dream. As a result, there was hardly any direct contact with people outside the kibbutz.

In 1947, **Yoav** was just 17 years old, when the kibbutz secretary approached him. The secretary received from "somewhere" a letter which offered a regional 3-day hishtalmut for "Rikuday-Am" under the leadership of **Gertrude Kaufman** (alias **Gurit Kadman**, 1897-1987). Gurit was born in Leipzig



*Ha'Rikud HaYevani (The Greek Dance), Lehakat Pa'amei Aviv of the Tel Aviv municipality, led by Yoav Ashriel.  
Photo: Israelisches Tanzhaus Archive*





*Rikud Ha'Dayagim (Fishermen's Dance), Lehakat Pa'amei Aviv of the Tel Aviv municipality, led by Yoav Ashriel. Photo: Israelisches Tanzhaus Archive*

(Germany) and moved to Palestine in 1920. No one ever heard about "Rikuday-Am" in this remote kibbutz. However, since **Yoav** played the accordion and was also a good athlete, the kibbutz secretary decided that **Yoav** would be the right person for the course and registered him together with a 15-year old girl comrade (unfortunately I forgot to ask him for the name of that girl). **Yoav's** initial resistance was quickly abandoned for the prospect of three days away from school.

Arriving at the course location, he was informed that participation was only possible from the age of 20. However, due to the late hour, a return trip on the same day was out of question. As the youngest dancing couple by far, the two youngsters were finally allowed to take part in the entire course and distinguished themselves as the most talented and best dancers. They learned eight dances, including dances like "Kuma Echa" and "Im Ba'Arazim". There were not many more dances at that time, as **Yoav** remarked smugly in a subsequent clause. This was probably due to the fact that in 1997 there was already an unmanageable number of dances and choreographies. For sure, back then, we were not able to foresee the flood of dances a quarter of a century later.

**Yoav** (then) **Glicksmann** openly declared that his first encounter with folk dance had changed his life. He instinctively felt that this new form of dance expressed the longing of the pioneers in Eretz Israel for a united Jewish-Eretz-Israeli people. He

began to organize dance performances for Jewish holidays in his kibbutz. At that time there were no "Ulpanim". So, at regular intervals, he attended advanced training courses hosted by the labor movement's "Histadrut." When Israel became independent in 1948, **Yoav** was drafted into the Nahal army division. His duties included, among others, the organization of all activities in the field of "Rikuday-Am". While serving he met his future wife **Mira**. They had two children. With modest pride **Yoav** told me that at one of his Nahal dance performances **David Ben-Gurion** was present. At the end of the performance Israel's first prime minister inquired about the name of the leading dancer, who, of course, was **Yoav** himself.

In 1950, while still serving in the military, **Glicksman** presented his first dance named "Ta'am Haman", a choreography much discussed at that time. **Yoav** intuitively countered arguments such as a "waltz rhythm" would not be suitable for a folk dance or that Yemenite steps in a couple dance to classical Central European music were definitely out of place: First, the music to "Ta'am Haman" was in 3/8 time, so there would be no similarity to a real waltz, and second, he was aware that many Jews in Israel had European as well as Yemenite cultural roots.

In his opinion, the homogeneity of the young Israeli society could only be reflected by the fusion of cultural elements. These are simple facts which one may or may not emotionally support, **Yoav** added.

In 1950, while still serving in the military, **Glicksman** presented his first dance named "Ta'am Haman", a choreography much discussed at that time.

Matti Goldschmidt

He could not really choreograph at all, as my interlocutor disarmingly continued. According to Yoav's own words, dance steps and movements come "just like that." I tried to interrupt Yoav's flow of words at this stage, since I believe that choreographies need more than just a bit of intuition. In vain! **Yoav** continued: Israel, at that time, was still separated from external influences, certainly due to the limited means of communication as compared to today. In this respect it was, as seen in a historical context – quite understandable for a people to create its own and therefore also new folklore. Consequently, it was not surprising that many of his early dances like "Ez Va'Keves" or "Pashtu Kvasim" (both 1953) and "Ha'Kormim" (1955) corresponded to the down-to-earth, agricultural pioneer ideal. For he had grown up in this environment, as did **Matityahu Shelem** (1904–1975), a founding member of Kibbutz Beit Alfa (1922), who composed the music for the three mentioned dances. It is noteworthy to mention that also others like **Rivka Shturman** (1903–2001), **Leah Bergstein** (1902–1989) and **Tzvi Friedhaber** (1935–2001) used **Shelem's** music for their choreographies.

In 1951, after being discharged from the army, **Yoav** turned his back on kibbutz life and settled in Tel Aviv. He changed his surname and Hebraicized Glicksmann into **Ashriel**. "Glück" in German means "luck" hence **Ashriel** or "osher" in Hebrew. At the time, with the active support of **Gurit Kadman**, he founded the largest Harkada (dance session) under the umbrella of the trade union's sports club Ha'Poel Tel Aviv. "Rikuday-Am" was not really a way of making a living at that time, and if so, only modestly and poorly. Yet, "Rikuday-Am" soon became his main occupation. Since no support was to be expected from any kibbutz for such a free spirit, for additional income, he started working as a secretary for the Histadrut, Israel's trade union. In addition to his efforts to advance regular Harkadot in the Greater Tel Aviv area, he visited South Africa, Hamburg and Kassel in Germany in 1968. He also came as a choreographer to the International Youth Festival in Vienna in 1959.

**Yoav's** dance activities, at that time, were mainly in the field of stage choreographies. Already in

the early 50s he managed two dance troupes. Today, many of his better-known circle dance choreographies entered the general folk-dance scene via the stage.

He placed special emphasis on new dance elements, such as the Arabic influence in "Debka Daluna" (1959) or different dance sequences for men and women in couple dances, such as in "Ez Va'Keves" (1953). Hotly disputed within the dance establishment at the time was "Erev Ba" (1960), which is now considered a classic. Some of the counter-arguments back then were: Such a slow and romantic melody can be nothing other than a couple dance. Moreover, it contained too many twists and turns, and in general: What does the topic of "love" have to do with genuine folklore! With obvious satisfaction he noticed, that **Rivka Shturman's** choreography for a couple dance to the same music was not accepted by the dance community. **Arie Levanon**, the composer of the song, thanked **Yoav** personally a few years later for the successful realization of his song. As a composer he still receives royalties. Royalties which as we know do not exist for choreographers until today. Other classics followed, such as "Hora Medura" (1963) or "Kor'im Lanu Lalechet" (1972).

In 1976, **Yoav**, together with **Tamar Alyagor** (1924–2013) and others, founded the "Irgun Ha'Madrichim". He did not go into details but told me that because of some "fundamental differences of opinion" in how to lead the organization he



Yoav and Mira Ashriel.

Photo: Israelisches Tanzhaus Archive

Hotly disputed within the dance establishment at the time was "Erev Ba" (1960), which is now considered a classic. Some of the counter-arguments back then were: Such a slow and romantic melody can be nothing other than a couple dance

Matti Goldschmidt

soon resigned. Just a few years later, in 1981, he started to organize his first "Hishtalmut" – where I first met him..

All in all, looking at the variety of Israeli folk dances, as they are presented in the mid-90s, one simply must filter out "the good elements." Since even among the old dances of the 1940s, for instance, we can determine good, less good, perhaps even bad ones. On the other hand, at least according to **Yoav** during my meeting with him, it is practically impossible to enjoy the present without the folkloric roots of the past. Which was certainly a clear side blow against a certain part of the dance participants, who want to exclusively concentrate on "modern dances", the "latest hits", so to speak. Can we nowadays talk about "Rikuday-Am" at all or would a new term be necessary? Such as the term "Israeli recreational dance" which, for example, was introduced long ago in the USA. **Yoav** concluded this topic with the statement that "in a liberal society, however free, cultural diversity may ultimately be more important than the enforcement of ideological boundaries."

We slowly came to the end of our dialogue. I turned his attention to an article about him, which was published in January 1978 in the American folk periodical "Viltis".


Back then, **Yoav** argued that only those dances should be recognized as Israeli folk dances, which were directly choreographed in Israel. Which in the 1990s would clearly exclude such names as **Moshiko Halevy, Moshe Eskayo, Israel Yakovee, Dani Dassa, Shlomo Bachar**, and many more. And what is valid for dance should also be applied to music. However, **Yoav** soon realized that practice had overtaken theory: Only some good years after he choreographed "Ba'Aviv At Tashuvi Chazara" (1972), performed in Hebrew by the Nahal vocal group, he had to realize that the original version of this song was sung in French by the well-known French-Armenian singer, **Charles Aznavour**. "I would like to be the last person who forcibly wants to oppose this development, as it exists today", **Yoav** literally expressed twenty years later. "Clinging too much to certain, yet controversial, provisions



*Yoav and Mira, wedding day 1953.  
Photo: Israelisches Tanzhaus Archive*

would, without any doubt, undesirably hinder the development of the Rikuday-Am scene in Israel".

In 1997, **Yoav** placed emphasis that dance steps and sequences are performed in a fluid and natural way, so that dancers simply enjoy dancing. All along **Yoav** rejected the so-called "championships" or any similar competition in the field of Rikuday-Am. Because those who absolutely want to distinguish themselves can do so in the well-known performance groups. He regularly met with a few colleagues, people such as **Shlomo Maman, Avner Naim, Tuvia Tishler** and **Roni Siman Tov**, in order to evaluate the current situation of Israeli Rikuday-Am. In the mid-90s **Yoav** saw his main task as supporting young choreographers in their work.

With the sun disappearing on the horizon our meeting was about to end. He left me a few older black and white photographs as a reminder. Unfortunately, this was the last time that I met **Yoav Ashriel** who I personally consider as one of the most important personalities in Israeli folk dance. 

“Clinging too much to certain, yet controversial, provisions would, without any doubt, undesirably hinder the development of the Rikuday-Am scene in Israel”.



Judith Brin Ingber  
Photos courtesy of  
Yoav Ashriel

# And They Shall Beat Their Swords Into Plowshares

## Interview with Yoav Ashriel

**Y**oav Ashriel was born **Yoav Glicksman** on August 27, 1930 and was raised on Kibbutz Ramat David, Eretz Yisrael. He married his dancing partner, **Mira** (who died in 2008).

**Ashriel** was one of the first creators to develop from the Histadrut-sponsored folk dance courses, although he became independent of the established system and was the first to run his own workshops for a fee, in turn encouraging others who worked outside the establishment, such as **Eliyahu Gamliel**, **Ya'ankele Levy**, **Benzi Tiram**, and later **Shlomo Maman**, **Roni Siman Tov**, and **Avi Peretz**. He taught and directed folk dance groups for the army, for the Tel Aviv municipality, for festivals, and for performances. His dances have wide appeal, and some that would otherwise have been downplayed in secular Israeli society are surprisingly successful, with themes about the beauty of the Sabbath (probably, *Likrat Shabbat* [Welcoming the Sabbath]) or *shtetl* life. He was such a successful dance leader that his outdoor evenings were the first to attract enormous crowds. His work was recognized in 1992 with the Cherished Folk Dancer Award from the Teachers Organization of Folk Dance, *Va'ad Ha-Poel* of the Histadrut, and the Ministry of Education and Culture. (By **Judith Brin Ingber** who wrote up the following):

For me, folk dances are created for the enjoyment of the dancers. At least that's how it has worked for me. I always made dances for my friends.

I'm from Kibbutz Ramat David, and I didn't know anything about dance until I was 17. I was a kibbutz kid who worked with the cows. At our kibbutz we didn't dance a great deal, but we sang. Once



Army dancers performing in works created by their fellow soldier Yoav Ashriel were hits at the Dalia Festival. 1951.

someone had given me an old accordion so I was one of those who accompanied the singing.

I was fairly good in sports too, so when the kibbutz received an invitation to send a couple to a course for folk dancing, it was natural that I was one of the two sent. At the course I met **Gurit Kadman**, who had come to teach us five dances. We were youth from many kibbutzim, and I remember we all loved it. Gurit opened my eyes. I remember exactly what she taught: *Hora Agadati*, *Sturman's Im Barazim*, a *sherele*, *Ze'ev Havatzelet's U-banu Batim*, *Bo Dodi*, and a rondo. It took a full day to learn them (now our experienced folk dancers could easily learn that in an hour) and afterward each couple went back to their respective kibbutz and taught what was learned. I played on my old accordion and found myself directing the kibbutz in dancing. I was immensely excited by it. Then I joined the army.

I was in Nahal, the part of the army that trains youth who intend to set up new border kibbutzim. **Ze'ev Havatzelet** came to start a performance group within Nahal, and he asked me to lead a course for folk dancers in Nahal. I asked how could I,

Judith Brin Ingber

when I barely knew the dances myself, but he was my officer and he said, "Do it," so I began. What developed was a course for soldiers to become folk dance leaders organized on the same principle as my own first introduction: each unit of Nahal sent a couple to learn the dances, and they in turn taught their own units.

I made a group from the Nahal soldiers and started creating dances for them too. We appeared at the Dalia Festival in 1951. We were eighty dancers. We used the newly created sickle and swords symbol for Nahal in our dance. I think this made a big impression to see young men and women holding swords that turned to plowshares and scythes as in the biblical prophecy. That year **Shoshana Damari** sang "Ta'am Haman," which became very popular, and I decided to make a dance to the music which meant so much to us. My dance *La-midbar* I created in the same way, using a popular melody. I knew that what the dancers loved they could execute well, and what is deeply felt and also expressive of the dancers can become material for folklore.

I left the army and became a folk dance leader for the Ha-Poel group of Tel Aviv, working there for seven years.

I never taught without creating dances and making performances. Maybe I've done sixty or seventy dances, [This was true in 1970 but by the time of this interview update in 2006, he had created some 200 dances] but they've always been for my group or my friends, not because of a certain holiday or for a special event. In 1953 I did *Ez Va-keves* [Goat

and Sheep] to a very popular song by **Mattityahu Shelem** with a Mizrahi feel, so beautiful to me, and somehow it had the atmosphere of the fields. The words made a distinction between shepherds and shepherdesses, so in the dance I separated the men and women. I think it was one of the first dances where we didn't do everything in unison. But it expressed something to us and therefore it worked.

Dances that are fluent, with one step leading you to the next, with music that catches you, are well loved. I think **Sara Levi-Tanai's** are especially like that, even if she only did three that became folk dances. They are a fantastic gift to us. **Rivka Sturman's** dances are also fluent and they make us want to dance. I think they are irresistible. Each moment counted, and each movement mattered to us because it spoke to us, which unfortunately is not what's happening in 2006 [this was the year of updating the original interview with Ashriel from 1972].

Israeli folk dance has changed. First it was European flavored and then Oriental spice was added. I actually learned the Yemenite step from **Rahel Nadav** [she created dances based on her own Yemenite background] at a Shavuot festival, maybe in 1949. I remember it was so hard for us to understand, for we were used to such big kicks and jumps. That's the way it has changed from the beginning for me – from something bold and bravura to a quiet joy of the heart. You know we Jews are a very serious people and we don't suddenly get up and jump. I think the dances must be felt with reason, then with so much feeling inside, it has to come out and be expressed in the movements. It's wrong to think all our folk dances are fiery ones.

The reasons for dancing are the key to the dances. It is too contrived to believe the way to get people dancing is to reconstruct old Jewish festivals. We live in a modern society and our dance must reflect this. I think folk dances become popular according to sentiment, not because of rules of teaching or programming or even because of the intentions of the creators.

Once, though, I purposely decided to create something with a quiet, calm atmosphere. Circle dances had always meant joyful, strong steps, and the form of the couple dance usually allowed for more peaceful, gentle movements. But I wanted the whole group to dance in a different mood, so in 1960 I took a lyrical popular song and I created *Erev Ba*. At first

I think it was one of the first dances where we didn't do everything in unison. But it expressed something to us and therefore it worked.



Yoav Ashriel used a fishermen theme, complete with nets, in his dance performance at the Dalia Festival in 1968.

Judith Brin Ingber



The popular Saturday night summer folk dancing sessions in Tel Aviv's City Square [now Rabin Square], the first organized urban outdoor Israeli folk dance event, were created by Yoav Ashriel. 1974

it was considered too sentimental, but it's still a favorite, and the whole circle dances in a gentle way.

The more I got involved, the more I realized we needed teaching tools. There weren't records but **Fred Berk** in New York was wonderful, and he encouraged me to start recording music and writing down the steps. I thought I could make clearer explanations than what was available in written form from the Histadrut. At Kibbutz Shefayim I offered a course and 300 came. We used film and we did serious work, and we talked about stage craft, and I didn't allow bickering or talking on the side and everyone got respect.

**By the 1970s, Ashriel said, the dancers in folk dance had changed.**

Those who do folk dance do it less spontaneously. Often the dancers have much performing experience, and certainly they know a large repertory. They might also know jazz, modern, and even ballet, unlike those at the beginning of the folk dance movement. I think I was considered a traitor for wanting to learn ballroom, jazz, and modern dance when I studied with **Ruth Harris** [an American who came to Israel in the 1960s and was one of the first to teach jazz] and others. Today I think all this training can make the folk dancers demand more complicated dances.

And forms change from what they once were. Maybe the original intent of the circle dance was to be done shoulder to shoulder, like *Hora Agadati*,

but our climate is too hot for such close proximity, so with experience, horas and fast dances have opened up in space.

**Ashriel speaks about going against the grain.**

I was criticized for making a dance of love in a circle instead of in a couple form, or creating a circle dance that incorporated turns which I was told will never work (now look how many there are in our folk dances!), dropping hands when everything had been danced with participants clasping hands. One of the other changes today, and I don't think it is a bad change, is the fact that rock and pop are entering into our folk dance. International folk dances, especially the Greek, are popular too. In our summer programs of folk dancing in the city square of Tel Aviv, sponsored by the municipality, you see our youth coming to do both rock and folk dance.

It started as a result of a trip I made to Spain, outside of Barcelona. I saw how people danced outside, and I thought the city square in front of Tel Aviv's city hall would be perfect. So, we started the summer sessions there, and by 1970 we had thousands coming, and buses of tourists would arrive just to see Israel dancing.

One can't escape from the fact that music on the radio and all around us has changed, but I think this combination adds to the folk dance itself. It reflects today's values. Very few village bands with accordions exist now – we have tape recorders, well, now its computer hookups to loudspeaker systems in the town squares like the Tel Aviv program I mentioned. I think that in the end, no matter where people dance, be it in the kibbutz or the city, if there is good music, then more dance is stimulated.

I use all forms rock, pop, international, traditional, as well as our own Israeli folk dance as I learned it and I believe it's all for the good. We can't freeze all the folk dances. In the beginning **Tova Tsimbel** made beautiful dances at Dalia, and we had almost an unbearable excitement there. I won't forget what it was like when I came with the army and we put down our blankets on the earth to try to sleep. Now, what is all that jumping and circling round and round on the floor of a huge sports arena about? It doesn't seem to say anything. But still, I know it's about change, because folk dance is something that's alive and continues to grow.

We live in a modern society and our dance must reflect this. I think folk dances become popular according to sentiment, not because of rules of teaching or programming or even because of the intentions of the creators.





Danny Uziel

# A Team That Complemented Each Other

I first met **Yoav Ashriel** in the early 1950's through **Mira**, (Yoav's future wife), who was a dancer in the chug (dance session) that **Gurit Kadman** had started at HaPoel Tel Aviv. **Mira** surprised us when she brought a friend to the chug that she knew from the Nahal dance groups, **Yoav Ashriel**. At that time, the vaticim (veteran dancers) taught newcomers, like me, dances that they knew from the early days; this included dances such as Kuma Echa, Harmonica, Im Ba'arazim and Dodi Li. Once in a while they would introduce a new dance from that time. With his extensive background in dance from the Nahal, **Yoav** took over leadership of the group. At first, he started by continuing with dances we already knew, and every two or three weeks, he would introduce a new dance that he himself had choreographed. When **Mira**, a dancer who was full of energy and the joy of life, demonstrated the dances, the picture completely changed. Yoav and **Mira's** method of teaching and their sheer love of dancing completely changed the atmosphere and more people joined the group. We became caught up with the excitement and the joyful atmosphere. **Mira** also encouraged us to sing the songs while

we danced. After a short period of time, Yoav started a performing group built on the group of vaticim that were there, together with some of the younger newcomers, and I was one of them. The rehearsals took place after the Open Session (chug). I was surprised when **Yoav** said to me, "Danny, you will be dancing with **Mira**". In 1954, Yoav created and produced a special event of dance and song with a live orchestra that was held

At one point, Yoav said to me, "Danny, it's time for you to start teaching too",



Yoav Ashriel with Danny Uziel



Danny Uziel and Mira Ashriel in a performance with HaPoel Tel Aviv, May 1953

*Danny Uziel*

at Habima Theatre, a major performance venue in Israel. The singers were **Ilka** and **Aviva**; **Mira** and I were the dance soloists. This experience connected me even more to **Yoav and Mira** who, during this time, got married. At first, **Yoav and Mira** lived with **Mira's** parents in Givatayim and I would travel there from Tel Aviv to rehearse with them – both the performance dances and **Yoav's** new folk dances. After a while, **Yoav and Mira** moved nearby to their own apartment in Givat Rambam. To make it easier to rehearse, I moved three houses away. From my kitchen, I could see their balcony and since we didn't have telephones, **Yoav and Mira** would wave to me to come over to rehearse! I was like a member of their family. When **Yoav and Mira** became parents to **Rakefet**, I became "Uncle Danny".

**Yoav and Mira** began to teach more sessions outside of HaPoel Tel Aviv. Almost every night, they taught different groups. At one point, **Yoav** said to me, "Danny, it's time for you to start teaching too", and he gave me his group at the Ayonot Agricultural School, about 10 miles from Ness Ziona and Rishon LeZion. A car would come to pick up both me and **Ami Gilad**, who was the accordionist and just 14 years old. This paved the way for **Yoav's** asking me to take over his session at HaPoel Tel Aviv where he worked as an employee when he decided to turn his occupation into a profession and become independent; he was the first to do so.

I left for the United States in 1961, but **Yoav** and I kept in touch on a regular basis. We spoke about




*Yoav Ashriel with Danny Uziel*



*Mira Ashriel with Danny Uziel in New York*

his sessions, performing groups, performances and hishtalmuyot (workshops for instructors) through which he encouraged and helped to develop young choreographers and to introduce their dances.

Yoav was truly a trailblazer both as a leader of dance sessions and of performing groups. I must emphasize that, aside from their being a couple as husband and wife, **Yoav and Mira** were a team that uniquely completed each other. **Yoav**, as a choreographer, gave us dances that have become classics and are national treasures while **Mira** provided us with the energy and spirit of each individual dance.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize how much I have appreciated both **Yoav and Mira's** encouragement for me to teach Israeli folk dance and to develop my own sessions which then became my life's passion. 



*Danny Uziel and Ruth Goodman with Yoav and Rakefet in Manhattan, 2008*



# Yoav – My Mentor, My Teacher



Ami Gilad

Translation:  
Judy Fixler

In the early 1950s, I was a teenager. Aside from being a student at the “Shevach” Vocational High School in Tel Aviv, I, as all youth of my age, was looking for cultural activities appropriate for our age group. Thus, I found myself involved in the Gadna movement [a pre-military youth program], where I was first exposed to a field I was unfamiliar with – Israeli folk dance.

I joined the circles, lines and couples; my feet quickly picked up the steps to each dance and, from then on, this ongoing activity became a “folk dance bug” that was powerfully attached to me. The love I developed for folk dancing became, as the saying goes: “The appetite grows with eating”. As I was looking for additional folk dance sessions, I found the sessions that took place at Beit HaPoel Tel Aviv, on Ussishkin Street, in northern Tel Aviv. To my great joy,

I discovered that these sessions, led by **Mira and Yoav Ashriel**, were the largest sessions in Israel. Every Tuesday, I danced for three full hours and my appetite grew for both the dances that were danced and those which were taught so remarkably by the **Ashriel duo**. When I found out that there was another session which took place in the courtyard of Café “Bustan”, near Dizengoff Square, this too was added to my itinerary; the joy and satisfaction were boundless.

When **Yoav Ashriel** found out that I play the accordion, he took me off the dance floor at Beit HaPoel in Tel Aviv, he then asked that I take the accordion and play a few dances. I passed the test with flying colors and, from then on, I was the accordionist in charge of accompanying all the sessions. While playing at those sessions, **Yoav** taught me the principles of

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*Ami plays his accordion for Yoav*

Ami Gilad

appropriate accompaniment, with the emphasis on the tempo required for each dance as well as the musical mood, the purpose of which is to inspire the dancers to create the matching atmosphere.

This was the start of my path to the "Folk Dance Accompaniment Learning" school which opened for me a rich and long-lasting career.

*When Yoav Ashriel found out that I play the accordion, he took me off the dance floor at Beit HaPoel in Tel Aviv, he then asked that I take the accordion and play a few dances.*

As I progressed in accompanying the dance sessions, I became attached to the dance troupe of HaPoel Tel Aviv for their rehearsals and performances. This troupe was the most popular and famous in Israel at that time and the name,

**Yoav Ashriel**, gained more significance from day to day. The popularity of the sessions at Beit HaPoel in Tel Aviv generated an idea to record a live dance session once a month that was intended for broadcast on "Kol Yisrael" under the name "LaRokdim Heidad – Hooray to the Dancers".

When the sessions at Beit HaPoel Tel Aviv were cancelled, **Yoav** moved his activities to the "Ahad Ha'am" School and later, to the "Dubnov" School, where for years, he and **Mira** ran the sessions several times a week.

In the meantime, the HaPoel Tel Aviv Troupe ended its performances; however, the void that was created did not last long. He then

organized the dance troupe, "Pa'amei Machol".

**Yoav Ashriel** directed this troupe; he created spectacular choreographies that were performed on many stages throughout Israel. With "Pa'amei Machol", **Yoav** enabled me to appear as a dancer in some of the troupe's performances and, of course, as an instrumentalist.



*Dance session at the Dubnov School, 1965*

As my induction into the military was getting closer, **Yoav** convinced me to go to the try outs for Lehakat Ha'Nahal. I listened to him and, after passing the try outs, was accepted into the troupe that, in those years, was considered the best of the military performing troupes.

**Mira Ashriel** also saw the inherent potential within me as an accordionist. I would accompany her to the "Ayanot" Agricultural School where she had run a weekly folk dance session.

This wonderful period opened other doors for me. Among them was accompanying the folk dance sessions that took place at Beit Lessin in Tel Aviv, led by **Tirza Hodes** and accompanying the Israeli representatives to the "Democratic Youth Festival" that took place in Austria's capital, Vienna.

When my name as an accordionist made its way to **Yonatan Karmon** ז"ל, I joined his troupe; with them, I went on trips for performances in Europe, the United States, Canada, Central and South America and South Africa.

My travels beyond the Israeli borders disengaged me from any activities with **Yoav**, but, throughout all those years, our personal contact remained intact.



*In Genigar*



Shlomo Maman  
Translation:  
Ruth Goodman

# My Teacher, Rabbi And Soulmate



**M**y first encounter with **Yoav** was in 1975, when I was a professional dancer in Lehkat Inbal – The Inbal Dance Company. **Tzion Nuriel**, who danced with me in the company, brought us together. I remember the meeting at the harkada (dance session) at the Dubnov school. **Yoav and Mira**, his wife, together led the session there. At the end of the harkada, I was left thrilled and excited. In my heart I felt that I was at the best harkada in the country.

**Tzion**, an excellent dancer, who was also the demonstrator for partner dances with **Mira**, saw some of my budding dance skills and offered to arrange a meeting with **Yoav**, where I could show my dance to him. I was immensely excited to meet the person who was the object of all our admiration – the dancers as well as the most important dance leaders and choreographers of that era. For us all, it was about the choreographer of "Hora Medura," "Hora Nirkoda," "Erev Ba," "Ez Vakeves," "Sovevuni" and many more good ones.

**Yoav** was able to immediately recognize the talents of good dancers and dance choreographers, who were then called "creators".

It is true that I came to him quite confused with a lot of dreams and ambitions, but **Yoav** helped to put my thoughts in order and even offered me a suggestion to join the Batsheva Dance Company. I was wondering how little me could be accepted into the Batsheva Dance Company. But **Yoav** made an appointment for me and we went together to a hall where the dance company had their rehearsals. It was exciting to see how **Yoav** was received by the dancers and management who, after a conversation with him, offered that I come to rehearsals as early as the following day. But, for some reason, I gave up on the idea.

At the beginning of my career as a creator, I introduced **Yoav** to the first dances I created: "Gvanim", "Zemer Ba'Gilboa" and others. **Yoav** carefully examined the dances, recognized that they had too much material in them, and drew my attention to the fact that each dance contained movement sequences for five dances. He said, "You need to narrow down each to one dance and save the rest of the ideas for other dances."

Working with him was not easy. He was pedantic and did not give up until the desired result was achieved. If he did not like the dance, he would send me home to improve it. Sometimes I improved the dance on the spot together with him. When we worked on the dance, he came up with good advice, reasons and compelling explanations as to why the dance was not good enough.

At times he focused on the musical section and sometimes he lingered and insisted that I address the content of the song. **Yoav** had a huge understanding and knowledge of music. More than once, I heard him play the accordion. I remember when I played him recordings of songs and melodies for my dances that I had recorded in the recording studio. He had an acute ear and could hear subtle inaccuracies, and the occasional places where the recording was off-key. Of course, I returned to the studio and corrected everything to his full satisfaction.

There were times that he would tell me that he was jealous of me for recording songs and arrangements that were a good fit for my dances. Once, when I again made recordings, I surprised him with recordings of songs for his dances: "Itach U'Biladayich", "El Borot Hamayim", "T'chol Hamitpachat" and others. That was the least that I could do for him.

It was important to **Yoav** that the dances be simple but not simplistic and, as much as possible, not too complex, along with a lot of creativity and reference to the melody, rhythm and content of the song. He emphasized to me, and to all the creators he



Mira and Yoav – a great love

## Shlomo Maman



worked with, that a dance must be constructed in a cyclical order. That is, every part of the dance will be repeated. This will make it easier for the dancers.

I, as well as the entire group of choreographers around him, had admiration, appreciation and reverence for him. I remember the first time I talked to him

on the phone; out of excitement, I swallowed the gum I was chewing at that moment and only then did I allow myself to talk to him.

**Lucy**, my ex-wife, and I came to him with the dance, "Shimri Li Al Hamangina". He watched us perform it and concluded that it was not a folk dance, but a performance dance. However, I would still teach it in the hishtalmut (workshop for instructors). And then he said: "If the dance is not accepted, at least we will have a beautiful performance." Needless to say, the dance has become one of the most danced dances in all sessions.

When he traveled with **Mira** to teach in camps all over the United States, they taught "Shimri Li Al Hamangina," with a slight change made by **Mira**, and the dance was indeed a great success there.

When I was invited to teach at "Hora Shalom" dance camp in New York, I first met **Danny Uziel**, a dance leader who greatly influenced the folk dance movement in the United States and raised many generations of dancers who continued his unique path of preserving Israeli dance in the Diaspora.

He told me about his special relationship with **Yoav and Mira**, beginning when he was **Mira's** dance partner and that he heard from them about

my dances. We were both a product of the beloved and esteemed **Yoav and Mira**; so we have closed the circle.

**Yoav** was one of the pioneers of hishtalmuyot (workshops for instructors) in the country. He nurtured and mentored many generations of choreographers, dance leaders and dancers. Every few months, he produced a workshop (hishtalmut) in which about six new dances were taught. In this context, he also included enrichment for instructors, either through lecturers or by having professional dancers and choreographers who taught different dance styles.

We, the choreographers, taught our new dances there. At the beginning of the journey, everyone who came to the hishtalmut paid an entrance fee, even if he /she was one of the choreographers presenting a dance in the hishtalmut. On one occasion, I came to the hishtalmut and attempted to pay at the entrance, but **Mira** informed me that I was not to pay; I was completely surprised. She told me that she heard from **Tzion Nuriel** that we did not receive a salary from Lehakat Inbal and that today, I was their guest. It moved me greatly to know how sensitive and considerate they were.

We were a cohesive group of choreographers who were his protégés. And with his encouragement, we created very successful dances that for years have become Israeli folk dance classics.

I will mention some of them: **Chaim Shiryon, Itzik Sa'ada, Avi Peretz, Israel Shiker, Avner Naim, Tuvia Tishler, Shmulik Gov Ari, Marco Ben Shimon, Sefi Aviv, Shoshana Kopolovitch, Moti Elfasi, Yankale Ziv, Bentzi Tiram**, me (your faithful servant) and many talented others.

I remember that **Yoav and Mira** told me, with great pride, about the successful huge dance sessions that were held every Saturday night in a square that

He emphasized to me, and to all the creators he worked with, that a dance must be constructed in a cyclical order. That is, every part of the dance will be repeated. This will make it easier for the dancers.

**Shlomo Maman**

*Mira and Yoav demonstrate a dance together*

was then called "Kikar Malchei Yisrael, and today "Kikar Rabin". They spoke about the masses of dancers, arriving by bus from all over the country, and that this was the highlight of the harkkadot in Tel Aviv.

### Israeli folk dance marathons

**Mira and Yoav** were among the first to introduce the Israeli dance world to Israeli folk dance marathons, which took place from evening until dawn. Each time, they took place in a different venue and eventually they settled at the Wingate Institute. There they had tremendous success. I, who was by **Yoav's** side at

the marathons, remember how he filled them with added content. He put in sections of community singing, performances by dance troupes, incorporated choreographers who taught their new dance and danced a group of their dances with all the dancers.

The dance leaders who led dancing in his marathons were carefully selected and were obliged to send a list of their favorite dances in advance. With all the lists he received from the dance leaders, he prepared an ordered playlist to prevent re-playing a dance.

It is worth noting that this was before the age of computers and sophisticated equipment that exists today. This was a huge success that has become an integral part of the diversity of dance sessions through the years and continues to this day.

When I taught "Zemer BaGilboa" at his hishtalmut, I remember that when instructors approached me they

looked at me as if I had come from another planet because of all the unique movements I incorporated into the dance. I was asked why I do not create simple and easy dances like "Hora Habika" by **Yankele Levy**, which was taught in the same course. I replied that my style is different from other styles and that I want to express that in my dances. I was sure that, together with **Yoav's** guidance and direction the dance would be well received in the harkkadot; indeed, the dance was received with enthusiasm both in Israel and around the world.

There were times when I taught more than one dance in the hishtalmut, when all the other choreographers taught only one. When they approached him with a request to teach more than one dance, he objected. And when they asked why he allows me and not them, he immediately replied: "I love **Shlomo**." It was his way of expressing appreciation towards me and expressing the special bond that was between us.

Over the years, he suggested that we produce the hishtalmuyot together. And indeed, we did so together for a few good years. **Yoav** guided and promoted many choreographers and dance leaders, but he always thought of the next generation and marked them for the future to come. More than once he told me, "Remember that the hishtalmuyot will be transferred to you when **Mira** and I retire." He said the same thing to **Yankale Ziv**, who replaced him at the dance sessions when he retired.

I remember being invited to teach my dance, "Gvanim", in the hishtalmut of the Mador Le'Rikudei Am (Folk Dance Section), which took place at Moshav Bitan Aharon. While instructing, the veteran instructors harassed me with unnecessary questions. **Yoav**



*Karmiel – Yoav at 80*



*Dayagim – Lehakat HaStudentim 2006*

*Shlomo Maman**Partnership at work*

entered the center of the circle, requested them to be quiet, and asked them to allow me to teach the dance in my own way and to be respectful on this occasion.

At every opportunity, "Derech Eretz – Respect" for education and culture was on his mind and it was important for him to instill this in the dancers, instructors, dance leaders and choreographers.

When I came across good individuals with special talents I turned to him. This was the case with **Shmulik Gov Ari**, one of the talented choreographers I introduced to **Yoav**.

One time, **Yoav** came to my home in Ramat Gan to work on my new dances for the hishtalmut. I arranged with **Shmulik** to arrive as soon as we finished so that he could demonstrate the dance, "Lechu Neranena", for him. We waited for about an hour and **Shmulik** did not arrive. After waiting some more, **Yoav** decided that he did not want to wait any longer and asked to leave. I escorted him out and at the crosswalk, we met **Shmulik** who had arrived by bus from the far north. (At that time, there were no mobile phones therefore no possibility to inform us of a delay.) **Shmulik** apologized because there were a lot of traffic jams. While **Yoav** was very angry with him, he was persuaded to come back to my house and to work with him on the dance. After working and polishing to **Yoav's** satisfaction, we achieved a very successful dance creation that was done in all classes and is one of the best we have in Israeli dance.

**Shmulik** later told me that if **Yoav** had not accepted him then, he would not have continued in this direction of creating folk dances.

As someone who has danced in all classes in the country, I went to almost every harkada and taught

my own dances. On one occasion, I taught my dance at a dance session of **Michaël Barzilai** before I taught it in **Yoav's** hishtalmut. When this came to **Yoav's** attention, he was very angry with me. He always insisted that the dances presented at the hishtalmut would receive their first appearance in the hishtalmut and only later would be presented in the chugim. After I taught the dance in the hishtalmut, **Yoav** turned to me at the end and said: "I do not like your bringing 'used dances' (dances that have already been introduced) to the hishtalmut." I was very hurt and I, who was in daily contact with him, refrained from calling him. **Yoav**, realizing that I was hurt, came to my house with a huge bouquet of flowers and apologized. This is the greatness of a person who knows how to admit his mistake, apologize and reconcile when he realizes he has offended someone.

**Lucy** and I became part of the **Ashriel's** household; we traveled with them on Saturdays on trips all over the country and along the way, we met with the greatest Israeli folk dance choreographers: **Yankele Levy, Bentzi Tiram** and others. On our wedding day at the "Mitzpor" hall in Tiberias, we were photographed all day as we walked around at various wedding photography sites. When we arrived late to the wedding ceremony, **Mira and Yoav**, who were like our second parents, were very angry and scolded us because they were not pleased that the guests had to wait so long for us.

We were like family. I remember that during the first Lebanon war, when I was drafted and sent to Lebanon as a paratrooper, **Lucy** was filled with anxiety and wanted to prevent me from going to war. **Yoav and Mira** took her to their home, supported her and provided her with peace of mind and relaxation.

In recent years, **Yoav** lived in an assisted living residence in Ramat Aviv. On one occasion, **Nourit Grinfeld** organized an evening in his honor at the venue. The residents there were exposed to his extensive and revered activities. **Yoav** was very happy and excited from this gesture that enabled all the friends and residents there to get to know and cherish his work.

One day, **Yoav** approached me to organize a show to mark his 85th birthday, in which we would dance and speak about his contribution to

I came to him quite confused with a lot of dreams and ambitions, but Yoav helped to put my thoughts in order and even offered me a suggestion to join the Batsheva Dance Company. I was wondering how little me could be accepted into the Batsheva Dance Company.

## Shlomo Maman

the folk dance movement and dance his dances. The initial intention was to hold a modest event at the Dance Library. But since the library was under renovation, we asked to hold it in the small hall of Lehakat Inbal. When that also proved impossible, I turned to the Givatayim Municipality and so, in cooperation with them, we produced a huge tribute to **Yoav** at the Givatayim Theater, which we called "Erev Ba". Performing that evening were the Givatayim dance troupes and the Tel Aviv student troupe. In addition, **Yizhar Cohen** and **Dafna Armoni**, the group of accordionists who played for **Yoav** through the years, including **Moshe Gerstein** and **Ami Gilad** who worked with **Yoav** at the beginning. Also, a group of dance leaders and dancers who danced some of Yoav's dances on the stage. All of this was under the guidance of Yoav's protégé, **Avner Naim**.

The hall was packed and many guests could not enter and had to wait until the end of the show to join in the harkada in the plaza outside the hall where we danced **Yoav's** beautiful dances. We never imaged such a success. Most importantly – **Yoav** was happy. I was glad to have the privilege of contributing in some small way to acknowledge this giant man who contributed so much to Israeli dance and to the community of dancers.

I never got to dance in one of the performing dance groups that he formed over the years; his work was extensive and began with "Rikud Ha'Emek" which he created for the Dalia Festival performed by soldiers from the Nahal. He later formed Lehakat HaPoel Tel Aviv, Lehakat Gadna Petah Tikva, Lehakat Hakibbutzim Ve'Hakvutzot, The Ramat Gan Workers' Council Troupe, Lehakat HaStudentim Tel Aviv (I have been the choreographer and artistic director of this troupe for about 30 years), and his crowning jewel, Lehakat "Pa'amei Aviv" of the Tel Aviv Municipality. I especially remember **Yoav's** fisherman's dance choreography, which I revived twice for my troupe's performances, including for the show in the amphitheater at the Karmiel Festival. This dance is a masterpiece of Israeli choreography at its best.

It is impossible to describe our folk dance movement



*Mira and Yoav Ashriel demonstrate a dance in Kfar Maccabia*

without **Yoav Ashriel**. He was one of the pioneers and mainstays of this movement. **Yoav** has made a significant contribution to promoting the culture of Israeli dance.

When **Mira** passed away, **Yoav** asked me to conduct the funeral as a religious/secular ceremony; and so it was. When **Yoav** passed away, I told the family about this request, and in consultation with them, it was decided that we would do it again in the same format. The funeral ceremony was very sad especially in light of the fact that thousands wanted to pay their last respects to him, but they were unable to attend the funeral due to the limitations set because of the coronavirus. However, despite these limitations, **Yoav** received the respect he deserved and was buried next to his wife, **Mira**, whom he loved so much, in the cemetery at Kibbutz Shefayim.

I'm hoping that we will return to normalcy and get rid of all the limitations of the plague and then we will hold a big event that will honor his memory and his tremendous contribution to Israeli dance.

**Yoav and Mira** were an integral part of my adult and professional life. Thanks to him, throughout I have believed in my abilities and I attribute a large part of my success to him. With love, admiration and much appreciation!



Yoav, realizing that I was hurt, came to my house with a huge bouquet of flowers and apologized. This is the greatness of a person who knows how to admit his mistake, apologize and reconcile when he realizes he has offended someone.



Roni Siman Tov

Translation:

Ruth Goodman and  
Judy Fixler

# Just One Original Idea Is Sufficient

## That's How I Started Choreographing Folk Dances

Spring 1981, Friday evening. The traditional marathon of **Mira and Yoav Ashriel** at Wingate. The sports hall was packed with dancers and filled with positive dance energies and joy...

My girlfriend (at the time), **Nira**, and I, who were still serving in the army, had been invited to the event by our friend, **Lucy Maman**, who we had known for a long time from folk dance classes and dance troupes. Between dances, **Lucy** introduced us to **Yoav**, who was focused on conducting the session. "Get to know each other..." she said and added, "**Yoav**, I recommend that you meet with them. **Roni** dances in 'Lehakat Karmon' and is also a dance choreographer..."

**Yoav** took my phone number and said, "I'll get in touch on Sunday". I thanked him and thought to myself that he was quite polite and that would be the end of it, as they say at the auditions, "Don't call us, we'll call you..."

To my surprise and delight, the following Sunday, **Yoav** called us at home. (In the 80s, there were not as yet mobile phones.) The conversation was very pleasant but quite short because the words simply got stuck in my throat... The giant of the generation is talking to me. **Yoav** invited me to meet him and we arranged for the meeting at the end of **Mira's** dance session at the Dubnov School. Needless to say, I



*Dance session at the Dubnov School, 1986*

was extremely excited about the upcoming meeting. On the evening of the meeting, **Yoav and Mira** welcomed us so warmly and showed extraordinary interest in us. From the very first moments we had the feeling of family closeness.

At the end of the dance session, after everyone had dispersed, **Yoav** asked us to present the dance... **Nira** and I presented, "Teivat HaZimra", sung by **Ofira Gluska and Lulik Levy**... we danced and danced and danced...

At one point, **Yoav** stopped the music and asked, "Are you willing to accept my critique?" "Certainly!", I replied. When I remember his words today, I smile and am filled with feelings of appreciation... But, at that time, I was very tense and anxious because after all, it was my first dance creation... and in waltz rhythm...

**Yoav**, calm but determined, said: "Young man, you created three dances! You don't have to put the whole world of dance into one dance... just one original idea is sufficient."

"Young man, you created three dances! You don't have to put the whole world of dance into one dance... just one original idea is sufficient..."



Roni Siman Tov

"...The dance should be structured in cycles of a verse and a chorus, and if the song requires it, another verse can be added. But we 'cook' the transition sections, that is to say, we edit to take out sections of the original song..."



*Dance session at the Dubnov School, 1986*

The dance should be structured in cycles of a verse and a chorus, and if the song requires it, another verse can be added. But we 'cook' the transition sections, that is to say, we edit to take out sections of the original song..."

The intention, of course, is to perform a musical edit in which sections [of the song], like the transition passages, are eliminated and only sections of the song itself remain for the dance, so that they fit into a regular dance cycle! In a calm voice, **Yoav** went on to say: "There is no need to drive the dancers crazy. As it is, they come after a day of work..."

I, who was stunned for a moment, did not know what to say! **Mira**, who was watching in the background, suddenly intervened and said, "Wait, but there are a lot of beautiful elements here". **Yoav** nodded and immediately came to my aid. After a minute of thought, he suggested that

I connect part of the first section with part of the second section, double them and then add the "third idea" in the chorus... "Good luck!" he added. For me, it was a lesson "on one foot", but an instructive lesson!

Thus was born a first dance, with difficult labor pains, but those which followed already



*Dance session at the Dubnov School, 1986*

“Yes, a tango. The song is completely Israeli. The lyrics are by Yossi Gamzu, the melody by Sasha Argov and the performance is by Yehoram Gaon. So basically, why not? Is there something more Israeli than that??”, I reasoned.



*Dance session at the Dubnov School, 1986*

emerged into the world with insights from the Maestro's school.

I cannot forget the first hishtalmut (teachers workshop) when we came to teach. **Yoav** introduced me to the veteran instructors... asked them not to be disruptive and also walked around the hall to make sure they would allow me to teach...

At the time, the veteran (vaticim) instructors did not accept the young choreographers sympathetically and sometimes even mocked them... **Yoav** said that, he himself, had experienced disruptions in his youth when he taught and therefore, implored the vaticim that, they must give the young people a chance!"

From then on, we shared a lot of work related meetings and exchanged professional opinions. Most of the meetings were held after the dance sessions and ended late at night. But, even at night, Tel Aviv is bustling with life, so we would often end the meetings with a "tzolelet – submarine", a desert drink made of chocolate milk that contains chocolate pieces that "dive" into the drink... **Mira**, like every "Yiddishe Mama", was the one who had invited us saying: "You are soldiers. I am paying!"

Later, when I came to **Yoav** with "Kayitz Al

Ha'lr", he was a little reluctant. "What? A tango in folk dance?" My girlfriend, **Nira**, who recommended the song with the different rhythm, and I, looked at him in wonder, but only for a moment. Together, we regained our composure and said, "Yes, a tango. The song is completely Israeli. The lyrics are by **Yossi Gamzu**, the melody by **Sasha Argov** and the performance is by **Yehoram Gaon**. So basically, why not? Is there something more Israeli than that??", I reasoned.

**Mira**, like a lioness protecting her cubs, immediately came to my defense and said, "You're right. **Yoav**, do not touch it! It's beautiful".

**Yoav** was silent for a moment and after a minute said: "You know? Even when I created 'Erev Ba', everyone told me I was crazy... so probably you should not be afraid and should go with your gut feeling..." Thus began the era of folk dances with a tango; later, when there were more works in this style, they were already easily accepted.

To **Yoav's** credit, it must be said that, despite the perception of the veteran leadership in the Mador Le'Rikudei Am (Folk Dance Section) then, it was time to embrace new ideas and move forward with the spirit of the era. That was the

Roni Siman Tov

way it was with "Masa Bein Kochavim" – the first Israeli folk dance in rock 'n' roll style.

*From Mira I learned the style of instruction, that is, how to get inside the dance, disassemble it so that the dancers could optimally absorb it, or as I like to call it, create "neurological engraving".*

**Yoav's** professional comments were wise. Sometimes, when he encountered a complex dance, he would say to the choreographer: "Think about it a little more. Sleep on it. Something better will surely come about". And I, in fear of hearing such a verdict from **Yoav**, would take the trouble and make the effort ahead of time, before meeting him. I would check myself over and over and make sure I had put enough thought into avoiding any obstacles in the dance.

The culmination of **Yoav's** openness and artistic sincerity was evident when I came to show him a dance called, "Shir Megaresh Et HaChoshech", and he said to me: "You know, I have a dance to this song. It's called, 'Gogoli'..." Out of shame and not knowing what to do with myself, I looked down and was silent. He then added, "But your dance is beautiful, and I will include it in the hishtalmut".

Today, in retrospect, I consider myself lucky to have gotten to know both **Mira and Yoav Ashriel** ז"ל. They opened the doors to the world of folk dance for me and many others. Among them, young choreographers also found an


open home there, and together with the veteran choreographers, we brought a wide variety of works to Israeli songs of all styles that have left their mark on Israeli dance.

From each of the **Ashriels**, I took "tools for life". From **Mira** I learned the style of instruction, that is, how to get inside the dance, disassemble it so that the dancers could optimally absorb it, or as I like to call it, create "neurological engraving". From **Yoav** I adopted the joy of creation. Adapt the steps to the style of the music and the rhythm; create a choreography that will allow for focusing on the music more than the steps and that will simply, "flow with the melody", as **Yoav** used to say...

It should be noted that, **Yoav** was a wizard in accurately notating dances, even before the coming of the video age. In each hishtalmut, he distributed a booklet to the instructors and choreographers containing the notations of the dances and even made sure to include a personal dedication...

During the many years in which I had the privilege of working with the **Ashriel** couple, I felt that **Mira and Yoav** loved my wife **Nira** very much and in a special way. May she have a long, healthy life. They opened their private home to us and **Yoav** even visited our home several times. It was always, "**Mira and Yoav**", "**Nira and Roni**"...

Apparently our relationship, both in life and in work, reminded them a bit of themselves and this, of course, made us very happy and allowed us to communicate "on the same wavelength"...

Thank you **Yoav and Mira Ashriel**. I miss you both. We will remember you forever! 



*From Yoav I adopted the joy of creation. Adapt the steps to the style of the music and the rhythm; create a choreography that will allow for focusing on the music more than the steps and that will simply, "flow with the melody", as Yoav used to say...*



Orly Shachar  
Translation:  
Alex Huber

# Demanded Absolute Perfection

When I first heard the name **Yoav Ashriel**, I was about ten years old. We used to dance Israeli folk dances during breaks at school. Alongside "Hora Medura", we danced "Debka Daluna" and "Sovevuni". In the Tzofim – Scout Movement, I also saw our instructors dancing couple dances. I was especially impressed by the dance, "Ez Va'keves". I was fascinated by the different steps done by the man and woman and the dramatic play between them. I was convinced that this was a dance for the stage. To this day, "Ez Va'keves" is perhaps the only dance in which there is such a dialogue and completely different roles within in it, for male and female.

When I was growing up, I danced at the University. I knew that at the Dubnov School, there was an Israeli folk dance class for advanced dancers, the experts, that was not open to everyone. I remember that once I and looked in through the windows at the Dubnov School. It looked like a completely different world from the dance sessions I knew from the Technion and the University. I

felt like I was watching a dance troupe. To me, the dancers looked serious, especially in the beautiful and precise couple dances; they were dressed a little differently, instead of jeans, there were flowing dresses. I felt it was a different league of dancing and I chose not to enter.

Later, I did enter the room. I entered as if it was a solemn temple. **Mira, Yoav's** wife, would look at the dancers with a critical eye, scolding anyone who was inaccurate and who dared to dance in the center and disturb the uniformity and beauty of the circle. I would quietly dance in the outer circle, striving to be precise. I was anxious. We did not approach the dance leaders. There was a distance and hierarchy among the dancers that required everyone to learn, know and reach some coveted and worthy goal of being "advanced", that is, not to stumble or copy. The feeling was less of dancing and more like rehearsals of a dance troupe in preparation for a performance. It was not easy to fit in. For me, I was still a "dance student" who "one day will arrive". There was a lot of material



*Ginegar "Nostalgia" session with Yair Bino and Ilana Ashkenazi*

*Orly Shachar*

to learn. Unlike today, it was clear to all of us that you do not jump the rungs of the ladder, even if you are a top dancer. To this day, I am convinced that those responsible for this approach, which is so lacking today, were **Yoav and Mira Ashriel**.

I have reached the required level of knowledge! In later years, I danced with **Yoav Ashriel** regularly at a harkada (dance session) held at the "Amsterdam" Sports Hall in Petah Tikva. This was a wonderful and special harkada that had a unique repertoire of Israeli folk dances that were danced only in this harkada. I'd look forward to it as the high point of the week. During those years, when I was a young mother, I only danced once a week. Who would believe? Once a week; I would wait for it all week ...

In those days, rumors began that **Yoav** was ill, and had undergone a difficult surgery and had stopped leading harkadot. It was not easy to deal with the rumors. We had a large, moving farewell harkada. I remember every moment of it. Dancing and thinking: "What? Really the last time?" There is nothing like Yoav's harkada. Yes, there were harkadot. But they are different. How good it was that it did not happen. **Yoav** overcame the illness and returned to us to dance with us for many more years, although the Amsterdam harkada did not return.

*I was especially impressed by the dance, "Ez Va'keves". I was fascinated by the different steps done by the man and woman and the dramatic play between them. I was convinced that this was a dance for the stage.*



*With Yankele Levy and Yoav*

Twelve years ago, I began my personal acquaintance with **Yoav**. It started thanks to my car and thanks to **Yudka Ben David**. Yudka, a veteran singer in the Campfire Group, danced with **Yoav** in his youth in a harkada that **Gurit Kadman** had taught. Both also participated in the "HaPoel Tel Aviv" Folk Dance Troupe and performed at the opening of the Dalia Festival in the dance, "SHERELE".

I was the driver. I would drive Yudka to the Jezreel Valley for various singing performances and Yudka brought his troupe mate, **Yoav Ashriel**. Along the way, they would tell stories about the troupe and especially the 'courtships' within the troupe including the adventures with the women and the performances. The stories were told with such delight that it made me jealous. They were full of youthful joy and laughter.

For those who, like me, are addicted to Israeli folk dance and to the songs of the Land of Israel, their stories sounded like the highs of the fulfillment of their youthful dreams. Love and reciprocity stories, lots of energy and, of course, dance and choreography. I would drive them both with great pride. One of the times when we traveled to the "Adom Atik" harkada in Jerusalem, a short video was made. I like to watch it from time to time and I especially remember the trip to the harkada, more than experience of the harkada itself.

I would also drive **Yoav** to Hararit, for a veteran dance leaders event that took place every year on Hanukkah at the home of **Ruthy Pardess**. It



*Dancing with Yoav*



The session "Shabbat Shel Shoshanim" in Holon. From left: Ruth Pardess, Yoav Ashriel, Rika Kokus, Asher Weizman, Orly Shachar

was a long drive during which long conversations developed about the world of Israeli folk dance in the past, and where it was heading. **Yoav** was very attached to the dances of the present and did not long for nostalgia like me and like many members of the nostalgia gang.

There was an attempt to bring back the dance "Tziununei Haderech" to the harkadot. This was a dance by **Yoav**, that never saw success. Angrily he claimed that its time was over.

I had a conversation with him about his dance to the wonderful song, "Siman She'Ata Tza'ir". For his part, he had no objection to having another dance choreographed to this song to replace his choreography. He was as honest and critical of his own dances as he was of the dances of others. He was not interested in returning unsuccessful dances to the harkadot.

I would also drive **Yoav** to various harkadot at which I demonstrated his dances with him. **Yoav** demanded complete perfection even when he himself had difficulty dancing. "I still have the know-how" he would repeat and criticize mistakes and style.

In 2016, a special tribute evening was held in his honor at the Givatayim Theater.

After the exciting evening, we went out to dance in the theater plaza. **Yoav**, who was towards the end of his eighties, did not intend to dance, but the Markida (Dance Leader) asked him to demonstrate his dance "T'chol Hamitpachat". With his eyes, **Yoav** "checked out" the various female dance leaders who were there and suddenly picked me. I was incredibly surprised; I experienced a "black out" and I tried to evade the invitation, but he insisted. He told me, "With you, I feel at home". Overall, I felt proud. I told young **Orly**, the one who peeked through the windows of the Dubnov School, that "She should rejoice in her achievements".

I was at "Camp Bitnua" in Eilat, where **Yoav** was invited as **Gadi Bitton's** guest of honor. Dozens of Eilat children came to the camp dressed in white and beautifully performed **Yoav Ashriel's** dances. At the end of their performance, they joined us in the dance circles. These were very exciting moments for all of us. For a moment we experienced the feeling of the beautiful Land of Israel of yesteryear. The one in which we grew up. While **Yoav** was excited, he kept his excitement in check. Ostensibly, this was a folk dance harkada, thus diminishing his personal part on this occasion.

The eternal "Erev Ba" will not be absent from any harkada in the future, even if, to Yoav's chagrin, it would be danced in couples. It is our job, as vatikim, to preserve the original version. Let us keep up the spirit of his work and keep longing for someone like him ...



Invitation poster to the evening in Yoav's honor,  
Givatayim Theater, 2016

In recent years, **Yoav** had conducted a harkada that took place once a month at "Bikurei Ha'Itim" in Tel Aviv. His veteran dancers, those who grew up with him like me, did not give up their presence at this harkada that always "brought" us back to the days of dancing in Petah Tikva and Shefayim. The all-too-unique repertoire was back at its best: Strose To Stroma, España Kani, Jealousy, Red Rose Tango, Blue Tango, Valse Le'Gal, Eretz Tropit Yaffa, and Line Dances: Sugar Sugar, 16 Tons; the list goes on.

**Yoav** nurtured international folk dances. He was always reminiscent about the past, when he was bored of recycling the small number of dances created in Israel. When he got tired of dependence on the accordion accompaniment, he insisted on introducing Israeli folk dances accompanied by musical recordings (on tape). There was much opposition to this from **Gurit Kadman**, **Tirza Hodes**, and Irgun HaMadrachim of the Histadrut (Dance Instructors Union). However, **Yoav** insisted.


From the distance of years gone by, it turned out he had won big. We have gained the rich world of Israeli folk dance. In this respect, it was clear that his spirit of innovation, going

against the flow and adhering to his principles, led to the world of folk dance becoming what it is today, despite the challenging wars he had to fight in the institutionalized folk dance world that existed in the past.

**Yoav** prepared for this monthly dance session. He carefully prepared a dance list and he would not easily agree to include additional dances in the repertoire. He knew with absolute certainty what was right for him and what was not. Even when a guest choreographer appeared, **Yoav** would sort their material and not agree to include in his repertoire those dances that he thought the community was unfamiliar with or were less successful in his eyes, even when everyone begged. In his harkadot he was the sole decision maker and he never compromised.

It is difficult to say goodbye to **Yoav Ashriel**. For someone like me, breathing folk dance from the day I knew what I want, he was and will always be one of the people who influenced my world. Choreographers of the middle generation rose to their prime only after receiving his approval. One after the other, they came as guests to the monthly harkada at "Bikurei Ha'Itim", all with a different yet similar story, about their first choreography that **Yoav** corrected, improved, or nixed. A story that was no different from the way he himself used to talk about his dance, "Erev Ba", and about **Gurit Kadman** who did not accept it as he had created it.

A generation goes, and a generation comes, and today we have talented young choreographers, yet, there is no figure like **Yoav** who is a "standard definer" whose stamp of approval can influence the quality of the creations. The face of the world of folk dance is changing and we are flowing with the changes. But it is clear that **Yoav's** "footprint" will always stay with us and influence the spirit of Israeli folk dance.

The eternal "Erev Ba" will not be absent from any harkada in the future, even if, to Yoav's chagrin, it would be danced in couples. It is our job, as vaticim, to preserve the original version. Let us keep up the spirit of his work and keep longing for someone like him... 

Yoav had won big. His spirit of innovation, going against the flow and adhering to his principles, led to the world of folk dance becoming what it is today, despite the challenging wars he had to fight in the institutionalized folk dance world that existed in the past.



**Yehuda Emanuel**  
Translation:  
**Dena Matmon**

# With Pride and Great Respect

**F**or me, to write about **Yoav** in the past tense is inconceivable. **Yoav** was an inseparable part of my childhood and my youth. **Yoav** engendered my love of the country, through wonderful songs and through dance. For me **Yoav** was always an exemplar, the scion of a generation that did the unbelievable: it built a state and within it, created a unique culture.

To express my feelings? I don't know how to express myself in words without sounding pathetic. So I'll say it simply. I loved **Yoav** and he will always have a warm place in my heart. I think about him a lot...

We first met at the Bialik School in Holon. That's when the flame was first ignited for my love of music, rhythm, movement and their combination and this has made me who I've become throughout my entire life. I will never stop thanking **Yoav** for this.

Eventually, I joined his dance troupe and appeared at the Dalia Dance Festival. Later on, when I was a soldier, I continued to appear with the troupe during furloughs at "The Theater Club". I continued in an instructors' course whose teachers included **Yoav**, of course, **Gurit Kadman**, **Tirza Hodes** and many other important choreographers and instructors. I'll never forget the final exam when I was asked to teach soldiers the dance, "Erev Ba", with no

musical accompaniment, except for me singing. In all modesty, I say that I think **Yoav** was very satisfied with me at that moment.

As time went on, our relationship became stronger. **Yoav** would play melodies for me over the phone and we would exchange opinions. I think he occasionally listened to my suggestions and I was greatly honored by this.

At one point, I took it upon myself to document on video the dances created by the great choreographers for the sake of future generations. Among them were those of **Shalom Hermon**, **Yankele Levy**, **Eliyahu Gamliel**, **Rivka Shturman**, **Yonatan Gabay**, **Tamar Alyaor**, **Bentzi Tiram**, **Moti Elfasi**, **Moshe Telem**, **Eli Ronen**, **Victor Gabbay**, **Avi Peretz**, **Chayim Shiryon**, **Marco Ben Shimon**, **Zvi Friedhaber**, **Ya'akov Kimchi**, **Moshe Eskayo**, **Dani Dassa**, **Danny Uziel with Ruth Goodman**, **Shlomo Bachar**, **Israel Yakovee**, **Yankele Dekel**, **Zvi Hillman**, **Shauli Rosenfeld** and others. Many of them consider this a lifetime enterprise, an important asset, a treasure that includes the body of work of an entire era and this will remain forever. I dedicated an important chapter of this project to **Yoav**. I clearly remember the day he turned to me and asked me to film all of his dances. I was proud of the trust he gave me and I worked with pride and great respect. Today there are three discs that contain all of **Yoav's** creations. I'm proud that I was chosen to be part of this project.

I also remember that on his last trip to the United States he asked me to film three dances that **Mira** had greatly loved, among them was "Yatzanu At", with the participation of his daughter, **Rakefet**. We set aside a full day to film this and I was very excited about doing it. I'm happy to have this memory. I will add that, for me, **Yoav** was and always will be not just a revered teacher and friend, but a story of Life. This is how I will always remember him.



"The Magnificent Seven" (from left): Yoav and Mira Ashriel, Yankele Levy, Rivka Shturman and Yehuda Helman, Tzemah 1970

I clearly remember the day he turned to me and asked me to film all of his dances. I was proud of the trust he gave me and I worked with pride and great respect.





**Yair Harel**  
Translation:  
**Dena Matmon**

# Flowing with the Music

I accumulated many experiences and interesting stories from **Yoav and Mira's** z"l hishtalmuyot (workshops for instructors) at Kibbutz Shefayim and later at the "Bikurei Ha'ltim" Center in Tel Aviv.

Many choreographers wanted to present and to teach their dances at the "Ashriel" hishtalmuyot. It's no secret that acceptance into the courses was difficult. The number of dances presented and taught was limited; the instructors were very carefully vetted so that they would be suitable for the courses and the songs and dances had to meet certain high standards. These hishtalmuyot were independently run by **Yoav**.

Participation was an experience and included activity, study and enjoyment. Both of them proudly conducted the hishtalmuyot which were the center of attraction for instructors from all over the country.

I was one of many instructors and choreographers who participated in the hishtalmuyot. From the very beginning, I was amazed at the professionalism, the quality and the precision of the dance instruction. At a later stage, I was very touched by the fact that people knew my name. **Mira**, "the strict one", called me "Yair'ke".

At the end of one of the hishtalmuyot, I gathered up my courage and went to **Yoav** and I told him: "**Yoav**, you choreographed the dance "The First Waltz"; I choreographed the "Second Waltz". Perhaps together, we'll choreograph "The Third Waltz"?"

**Yoav** turned to **Mira** and said to her: "We'll take **Yair** to work with us. He seems like a nice young man". The rest is history.

**Yoav** was a true professional. He understood the dance and the music. When I presented my dances before him, he sat down, watched, asked questions and sometimes said that some step should be different; in fact, he insisted on it. On the one hand, I needed to come ready and locked in on the dance I was to present.

On the other hand, I needed to be open to the changes that he suggested.

Before every one of these meetings, I had butterflies in my stomach. What will **Yoav** say? When I presented the couple dance "Rak Chiyuch Echad – Just One Smile", sung by **Yehoram Gaon**, **Yoav** insisted that in the second part of the dance, where there are two steps backward, it should be changed to two steps forward. I insisted that the movement needs to be backward. I asked him to come down from the stage where he was sitting and do the steps. **Yoav** came down, performed the movement and then agreed with me.

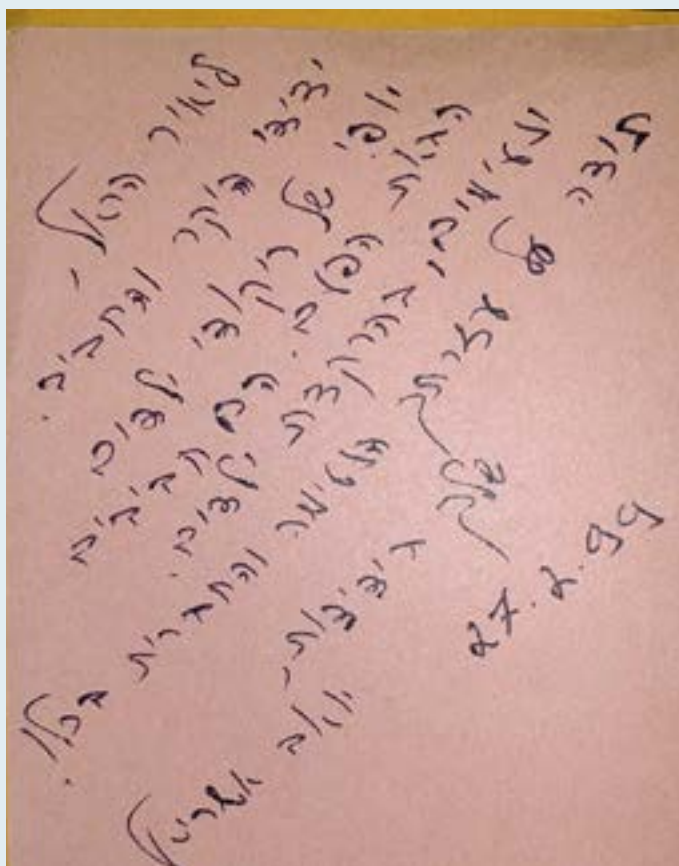
I had to defend my creations. His meticulous approach contributed to the quality of the dances. When there were doubts he said: "That's the way it is; creating a dance also hurts".

**Yoav** regularly invited instructors, myself included, to present their new dances to him. He decided

And I told him: "Yoav, you choreographed the dance "The First Waltz"; I choreographed the "Second Waltz", maybe together we'll choreograph "The Third Waltz"?"



The booklet "List of Terminologies" by Mira and Yoav Ashriel



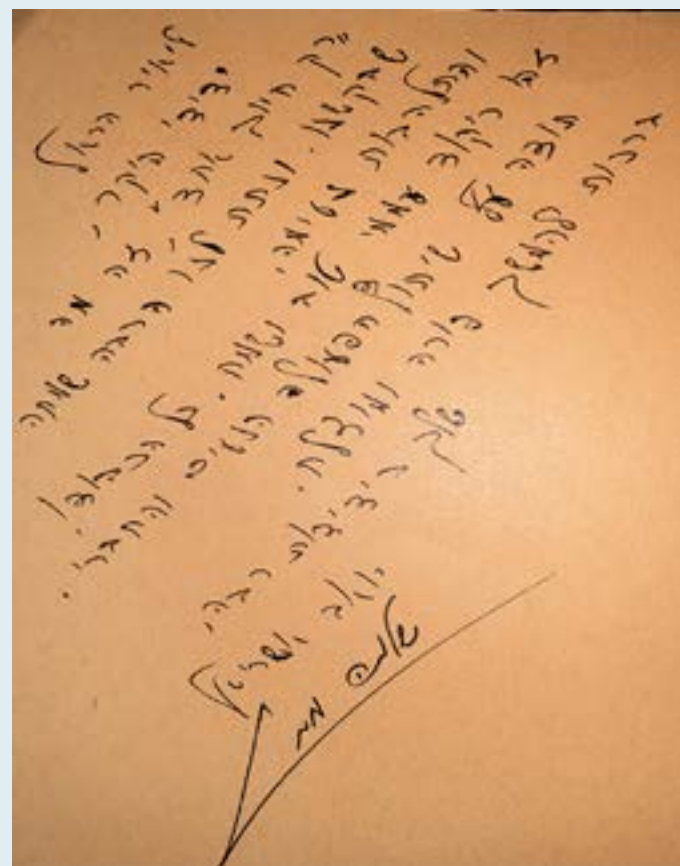
"Children Dances" – the dedication

on the spot, and very bluntly gave his opinion of the dance. If the dance was accepted, he wrote down the steps in his own special language, but very clearly. The notation of the dance included the steps, the hand holds, the counts, the directions, several words about the dance and the song, etc.

In 1992, **the Ashriels** published a booklet of terminologies connected to dance, the steps, positions, basic terminology, movement and music. This was to help instructors understand

the notation descriptions of dances in the booklets he produced, and to help them write their own. **Yoav** told me: "Notating the steps of a dance is important, just as it is important to write down the notes for a musical composition. Musical compositions are studied for hundreds of years and survive thanks to musical notation".

We also had some short but pleasant discussions. I remember our trips together



"Rak Chiyuch Echad – Just One Smile" – the dedication

on Fridays. I picked him up at his home and we drove to Moshav Hadid, to **Shmaryahu Hevni**, to edit and prepare cuts in melodies and songs so that they would suit the dances.

His support of instructors with whom he worked was priceless. You could say that he "built" us, directed us and contributed to our success.

**Yoav** had a special rhetoric of his own: "A dance should be simple but not simplistic", "The steps should flow with the music", "I'm not big; I'm my natural size", and others.

Folk dance for him was an ideology; he always took care to transfer this to those around him.

Among the dances that I choreographed and presented to him were "Yesh Li Chalom", "Rak Chiyuch Echad", "Shalosh Ahavotai", and at the "Dances for Children" hishtalmuyot: "Mazal Tov", "Eizeh Yom Sameach", and others.

At every hishtalmut, **Yoav** would present a booklet to each instructor, with a special dedication written to each of them. He put his personal touch on every choreographer with warm and moving words.

In my opinion, working with **Yoav Ashriel** was a dream come true. I felt as if I was in the vanguard of Israeli folk dancing. I was privileged!



Yair with Yoav Ashriel



**Moshe Telem**  
Translation:  
Dena Matmon

# He Gave Them A Stage

I met **Yoav Ashriel** for the first time 60 years ago at his folk dance session at the Ahad Ha'Am School in Tel Aviv. A friend of mine, from the moshav where I live, suggested that I join him, as I was just recovering from being wounded in the army and he thought this would be a good means of rehabilitation.

**Yoav** immediately saw my difficulties moving my legs and encouraged me to continue coming to dance. I agreed and I must say that because of him and his friendly approach to me, my rehabilitation went much faster.

Two years later, he invited me to join his dance troupe and a while after that he asked me to join the course he led for dance instructors.

Actually, we became the best of friends. The friendship wasn't only between the two of us, but included my late parents and later on, with my wife **Bracha**. **Yoav** and his wife **Mira** ז"ל, often visited with my parents at their farm and it became a family gathering.

**Yoav** was the first instructor to organize hishtalmuyot (folk dance workshops for instructors). He knew how to choose from among the dances that had been choreographed at the time, those



that had the characteristics of Israeli folklore. No more than eight dances were taught at each hishtalmut – workshop for instructors (which, unfortunately, is no longer the case).

The first dance that **Yoav** choreographed was "Ta'am Haman", which was widely acclaimed and is still danced today. Personally, I think that "Erev Ba", which Yoav also choreographed, is a real Israeli folk dance that is danced all over the world and is one of the best in the Israeli dance repertoire.

**Yoav** helped many young instructors become part of the world of instructors and choreographers. He gave them a stage at the hishtalmuyot that he organized. Among those he mentored was the wonderful and creative **Shlomo Maman**.

Over the years, **Yoav and Mira** greatly contributed to the development of the Israeli folk dance movement. Thanks to them a new generation of instructors, choreographers and dancers arose. Thanks to **Yoav** for his contributions to the world of Israeli folk dance. 



*Pa'amei Machol in Heichal HaTarbut, 1968*



Moshe Pinkas

Translation:  
Alex Huber

# Trailblazer, Leader And Innovator

**Y**oav Ashriel was, in my view, an educator, mentor, creator and a man of culture, a devoted family man, a friend and especially, a good soul.

He was always a pioneer, a leader and innovator, the first to incorporate line and international folk dances and tried to find new additions and directions for Israeli folk dance. Beyond being a choreographer of folk dances, **Yoav** knew how to identify and nurture young talent, give them a stage and help them advance using his vast experience in building a dance and its presentation.

At the beginning of my career as dance instructor, I bought a Sony tape recorder; when I saw that **Yoav** also used the same device, I was so proud. I know that **Yoav** did not part with the tape recordings and used them for many years after we all went digital, almost until he stopped leading dance sessions.

I remember the hishtalmyot (workshops for instructors) at "Bikurei Ha'Itim" in Tel Aviv, in the small, crowded hall that was filled to capacity. A Saturday that was a total celebration. Beyond meeting the dance instructors, my colleagues, we always had an expectation of something new and unusual; indeed, we received abundant innovations.

We also waited for breaks to grab "burekas" and cola and have a thorough discussion about the new dance we had just learned. **Yoav** had the ability to hold the "impatient" crowd of dance instructors, almost to the end without anyone leaving.

The arguments with **Mira** were also part of the experience. Although she "wore the pants", **Yoav** knew how to aim where he wanted with humor. In the end, everything stayed in the family.

The talent and ability to innovate and skip over the barriers of other institutions has opened a door for new creators and instructors who were fortunate to develop and become famous under **Yoav's** guidance.



*Yoav leading the session at Kikar Malchei Yisrael (today – Kikar Rabin) with Moshe Gerstein and Rotem on accordion.*

**Yoav** allowed every instructor to present something innovative while preserving the good old material. The real test was the survival of the new dances that were introduced.

He was the first, or at least among the first, who introduced innovations that today look like old nostalgia. Things like dancing without an accordionist and using recorded music, combining international folk dances and line dances in a harkada, holding private harkadot for a fee and incorporating guest instructors in the dance marathons he ran. **Yoav** became a symbol and a role model.

I first met **Yoav** at the harkada near the Fire House in Tel Aviv. I was still dreaming of being an "astronaut" and leading dancing for him in a marathon seemed even more farfetched than reaching the moon ...

The minutes when I had the opportunity to lead dancing in **Yoav's and Mira's** marathon at Wingate, were exciting and were considered by me the pinnacle of

The talent and ability to innovate and skip over the barriers of other institutions has opened a door for new creators and instructors who were fortunate to develop and become famous under Yoav's guidance.



Moshe Pinkas

respect and professional recognition at the time. Even if I was scheduled to lead the dancing at 5:00 am, I waited anxiously for it and of course, I argued over every dance that seemed to me to be important to hold the audience at that hour. A significant portion of the time was devoted to distributing flyers in the cars parked outside, where I advertised my upcoming marathon. It was clear that advertising at Wingate would carry the publicity to all dancers in the country. To win **Yoav's** announcement about the marathon I would be holding was an almost impossible task because the competition among the dance leaders to win was great.

I remember winning when **Yoav** whispered in my ear how many minutes were left before the move from circle to couple dances, so I could "get prepared" in time. I felt that it was a secret kept only for **Yoav's** close associates.

Generally speaking, receiving a good word from **Mira** was like getting a signature on a contract before the final agreement; that was **Yoav's** responsibility. The expectation to see the sunrise at a marathon was the domain of "those dancers who persevered the longest", and I was part of that group. The integration of the special couples section and the Balkan dances from **Yoav's** dance class graduates was also a challenge worth the effort.

I remember the excitement that surrounded me when I arrived at the harkada on Saturday night at the University of Haifa; in my bag was a new


dance that had been taught several hours earlier in Shefayim, at a seminar under the guidance and direction of **Yoav and Mira** and with the assistance of the rest of the family. Being the first in the Haifa area to teach a dance from Yoav's hishtalmut (especially since the dance was taught that day) brought invaluable pride.

I would have easily missed a day of study for it in the university, as **Yoav's** hishtalmuyot were sacred and became an institution. I participated in all of them. An instruction booklet, a recorded reel and later an invaluable cassette tape were assets. In those pre-"ROKDIM" days, the recording champion was **Shaulik Rosenfeld**, who received permission from Yoav to sell reels at the session.

**Yoav** knew how to encourage, assist, support, listen and give good advice. As a leader who was confident in himself, he was not afraid of cultivating good people around him. **Yoav** knew how to direct and encourage and enable people to get the best out of themselves.

I was privileged to work alongside him in creating the harkadot program at the Karmiel Dance Festival. Even then, the innovation, the expansion of dance themes, enrichment, a nostalgia corner, dancing with the choreographer, expanding the dance centers, a ballroom dance corner and more. All these were his initiatives and became an organic part of the infrastructure of the Karmiel Dance Festival.

At the time, **Yoav** entrusted me with the management of the ballroom dance stage that was then located in the city center. The excitement and devotion to the mission was above and beyond. At midnight, after the neighbors complained, a policeman arrived demanding us to stop because of the noise. I contacted headquarters and received permission to continue. It did not help; I was forced to spend the rest of the night at the Karmiel Police Station. I could not disappoint the community and **Yoav**.

**Yoav**, you were blessed for having such a loving and supportive family, for raising and nurturing generations of dancers and instructors, and I thank you for the privilege given me to get to know you closely and to "pour water on your hands" [to have been your devout student]. You will forever remain in our hearts. 



*Yoav's dance session at the Dubnov School, 1965*



Rika Kokus  
Translation:  
Dena Matmon

# The Public Yoav and the Private Yoav

I had to reorganize my thoughts and my emotions in order to write about **Yoav Ashriel** in the past tense. Finally some words came out of my heart and on to paper.

As far as I'm concerned, there are two **Yoavs** – the public **Yoav Ashriel** and the private **Yoav Ashriel** – my **Yoav**.

The public **Yoav** is a central figure who greatly contributed to the field of Israeli folk dance. His unforgettable hishtalmuyot (workshops for instructors) contributed to all instructors and to all dancers. His training and his mentoring of choreographers, at the beginning of their careers, left his mark on their choices, on the dances they created and on the heritage he has left for dancers. Also, there was **Yoav** of the dance troupes he established and that performed in Israel and abroad.

The veteran dancers among us will surely

remember the harkadot (open dance sessions) led by **Yoav and Mira** on Independence Day at Rabin Square (then Kikar Malchei Yisrael), and above all – the many dances that he choreographed over the years and that have become inalienable assets for all dance sessions (and not just nostalgia groups). I believe they will be danced for many years to come.

Then there was "**my private Yoav**" – the **Yoav** who rescued me from a crisis.

In my childhood and my youth, I danced in the folk dance group of HaNoar HaOved VeHaLomed (Working and Studying Youth Movement) in the then new immigrant city of Beit Shemesh. The day came when the family moved to Petah Tikva. At that time, the Beit Shemesh Youth Movement dance instructor said to me:

"You will not stop dancing. I'm sending you to one of the greatest dance instructors in Tel

The public Yoav is a central figure who greatly contributed to the field of Israeli folk dance. His unforgettable hishtalmuyot (workshops for instructors) contributed to all instructors and to all dancers.



Dance session in Petah Tikva



Yoav's dance sessions became a lifeline for me after my personal and family tragedy as well as the answer to having a hobby that became part of my very existence.

inseparable since then. **Yoav's** dance sessions became a lifeline for me after my personal and family tragedy as well as the answer to having a hobby that became part of my very existence.

I already miss the way he received me with a hug every time we met. I miss the hishtalmuyot for choreographers and instructors and the sessions where we danced together.

How I looked forward to celebrating his 90th birthday with him, just as we celebrated his 88th birthday. Unfortunately, we – and **Yoav** – weren't privileged to do this.

Personally, I was enriched by a significant personality who accompanied me in the most important and unforgettable moments of my life. He will continue to accompany me in all the years to come.

May his memory be for a blessing. 🙏



“You will not stop dancing. I'm sending you to one of the greatest dance instructors in Tel Aviv, Yoav Ashriel. Tell him that I sent you.”

Aviv, **Yoav Ashriel**. Tell him that I sent you. He teaches at the Ahad Ha'am School”.

And so on Wednesday, we moved to Petah Tikva and on Friday, a tragedy befell us: my brother, a Golani officer, fell in the course of duty in a retaliation operation. The grief that befell the family and me is indescribable.

Searching for **Yoav Ashriel's** dance sessions in that situation just wasn't realistic. In addition to that, I would have had to travel using three buses to reach the Ahad Ha'am School in Tel Aviv.

But, as a 13 year old girl, I decided to get there anyway. I managed to overcome all the obstacles; I took three buses and made it to the session in Tel Aviv. That was the moment that changed my life...

**Yoav** “absorbed” me into the group early on and our paths were



Shmulik Gov Ari  
Translation:  
Judy Fixler

# The Man And The Harkada

## (A Dancer Of Blessed Memory)

Leadership, charisma and expressive ability, to be in control under various circumstances are all characteristics that are difficult to learn and to be adept at. However, when an individual possesses these attributes, he is immediately recognized as a leader.

First tests of leadership: Do people follow you? Do you lead and form a public opinion? Do you bring about a change that will be accepted in the field in which you are active?

Undoubtedly, **Yoav** was that kind of a person – a professional leader, a human leader of quality that we don't see every day. There are very few people who were lucky enough to be accepted as leaders by their peers and he was one of those few. All the teachers and choreographers, who were active during that period drew inspiration from him, used his ability to disseminate dances, and acknowledged his professional leadership. Even those who criticized him knew to always add that he was a professional. There are those who said: "It was difficult with him and I say: "It would have been impossible without him".

His ability to assume responsibility, to change, direct and improve dances for choreographers from different backgrounds was known and it was

not always pleasant for those who experienced working with him.

Meeting with him always began with the same routine; there was a short talk peppered with a bit of history.

For example: "I went against the mainstream and choreographed 'Erev Ba' in spite of those who said: What is this, ballet? We are only interested in 'folk dances'". This is a story he often recounted during many meetings with him. His purpose was to encourage everyone who worked with him, not to be afraid and to dare to create non-standard things.

I never knew how our meetings would wind up. Would he be excited with my dance or will I have to "improve" it? One phrase that he kept repeating was: "Go work on it." In other words, you did something nice, but it was not good enough to enter "the best spot in town" to spread folk dances – "The hishtalmut (workshop for instructors) of **Yoav and Mira**".

My first meeting with him hit a road block, and, to my regret, it was not a pleasant one. I arrived late to the meeting because of traffic jams in northern Israel. **Shlomo Maman** did everything he could to have Yoav agree to meet with me in spite of the delay. **Yoav** was finally convinced and with obvious reluctance, watched the dance I presented to him and said: "That's what I'm wasting my time for?" He was not convinced that the dance was good enough to be presented at his hishtalmut. I wanted that with all my being, because if your dance was entered into **Yoav's** hishtalmut it meant "that you were recognized as a folk dance choreographer".



Leadership, charisma and expressive ability, to be in control under various circumstances are all characteristics that are difficult to learn and to be adept at. However, when an individual possesses these attributes, he is immediately recognized as a leader.



When he stood up and stretched, it was clear to me that he was interested in the dance. And if he exhibited restlessness in the way he sat, and moved from side to side, I knew there was no chance that he would agree to include the dance in the next hishtalmut.



Fortunately, **Shlomo** made a great effort to convince him that the dance was good and would become a hit. After a long discussion, **Yoav** said discontentedly: "Okay **Shlomo**, to you, I will listen", and included the dance in the hishtalmut.

In essence, I reveal, possibly for the first time, that because of **Sholomo's** intervention, to this day we are dancing, "Lechu Neranena"; this is a dance that crosses generations that I was lucky enough to choreograph and, with time, it became popular throughout the world.

Every meeting with **Yoav** was a unique experience. Everyone was assigned a time slot and had to wait his/her turn to meet with him. It was just like an appointment with a doctor, a psychologist or any other service provider.

He was like a Hassidic rabbi with no Hassidim [followers] but with a big audience, well renowned, without any certification, but with many approvals and success known to all. He was a very sensitive person however, he had a very sharp tongue when he wanted to express his opinion on any topic.

There is no doubt that, with all his being, he fulfilled his calling as a mentor who was sought out by everyone. The man loved, talked and breathed folk dance. I never knew if he would accept a dance I presented to him; if he would love it or reject it.

I, the unworthy, developed an awareness to the way he sat during our meetings when I came to present my new dances to him. I knew his body language well. When he stood up and stretched, it was clear to me that he was interested in the dance.

And if he exhibited restlessness in the way he sat, and moved from side to side, I knew there was no chance that he would agree to include the dance in the next hishtalmut. To my delight, I was lucky to have him stand and stretch to his full height when I presented my dances to him.

When the Israeli folk dance pantheon will be established, **Yoav Ashriel's** place will be in the front row. We are lucky to have been privileged to have a personality like him amongst us. 



Eli (Eliyau) Ronen  
Translation:  
Ruth Goodman

# Mutual Appreciation

**M**y longstanding friendship (of about 50 years), with **Yoav** and folk dance began on a Friday evening when I accompanied my brother to the "Ohel" Theater (near the Tel Aviv cinema). The evening, which combined folk dance with community singing, was led by the **Ashriel** couple; the first dance I learned was "Sigal", a dance choreographed by **Shauli Rosenfeld** (z"l). Since that day we, met every week at the harkada (dance session) at the Dubnov School in Tel Aviv.

As a student in the seventh and eighth grades at the Dubnov School, my parents had paid for the construction of a sports hall at the school; however, back then I did not imagine that later on I would start my dance career in this very hall.

When **Yoav** had to undergo [successful] brain surgery, **Mira** (**Yoav's** wife), asked me to come to help with the equipment as well as to bring her to the dance sessions. I was even asked to replace him at his dance session in Rishon LeZion. At that time, I also traveled with him to dance sessions where he was a guest choreographer in Givat Haviva and at other dance sessions.



Greeting card of thanks and appreciation for Yoav Ashriel



From the right: Yoav Ashriel, Danny Uziel and Eli Ronen



Yoav Ashriel (on the left) congratulates Avi Peretz on his being elected Chairman of the Irgun

In 1978, I showed **Yoav** my first dance, "Lifnot Erev – Towards Evening". He did not agree to accept it for his hishtalmut (workshop for teachers) because I had previously introduced this dance at a conference of the Mador LeRikudei Am – Folk Dance Section of the Histadrut, that was held two years earlier at "Ohalo" near the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee). Nonetheless, after another two years, the dance was presented at **Yoav's** hishtalmut.

I then showed **Yoav** the couple dance, "Geshem Yored – Rain Falls"), that he did not accept. He said that, "the dance begins with the inside foot and dances should not start with the inside foot...". My attempts to persuade him by providing examples of existing dances in which this occurs did help me.

There were dances of mine that **Yoav** accepted only after two or three years because I did not agree to change anything; in the end, **Yoav** agreed and received them as I had wanted without any changes, (e.g., "Shlosa Tranim La'Oniya – Three Masts for the Ship", "Sofa Shel Kayitz – End of Summer"), and there were dances that **Yoav** loved from the very first moment and accepted them immediately", e.g., "Hapaytan – The Poet", "Leil Aviv – Spring Evening" and Amru Li – They Told Me".

One of the most exciting moments I experienced with him was when he told me that the dance, "Ani Ve'Shiri – Me And My Song", "is a real folk dance that will last forever".

I would like to note that, during the past two decades, we had become very close. I was privileged that **Yoav** hosted me as a "guest choreographer" at his harkadot; indeed, I was deeply moved that he greatly appreciated me.



Chaya Eskayo  
Translation:  
Dena Matmon

# The Chemistry Between Us Was Wonderful



I was always in contact with **Yoav**, regularly calling him once every two weeks to ask how he was feeling and to go down memory lane. That's how it was before Rosh Hashana, 2020. I called to wish him a "Happy New Year" and "good health", but he didn't answer... in my heart of hearts I knew something was wrong, but I didn't want to believe that this was the end.

It's hard for me to think that I won't be able to call him anymore. His passing has left me very sad. But I feel that I was greatly privileged to have known one of the great choreographers and one of the mainstays of the Israeli folk dance movement.

I was 14 when I first met **Yoav** through a folk dance instructor who danced in his troupe. She recommended that I go to the studio (then it was called a studio) of **Yoav and Mira Ashriel**, located in the "Ahad Ha'am" School in Tel Aviv and met once a week.

The dance he taught at my first lesson was "Haro'ah Ha'ktana". I was on a high, with his lightness as he danced and led the dances. His unique movement style captivated me. From then on, I made every effort not to miss a class.

The chemistry between us was excellent and I demonstrated couple dances with him (actually




*Yoav Ashriel with Izhar Cohen*

up until five years ago, at the sessions for veteran dancers held at the "Bikurei Ha'Itim" Center in Tel Aviv). Later on, **Yoav** invited me to participate in the auditions for his troupe and I was accepted. For me this was the pinnacle – to be in the "Pa'amei Machol Dance Troupe". **Yair Rosenblum** ז"ל was the accordionist. We performed at many events, such as Independence Day celebrations, the Beauty Queen Ball, the Jerusalem Parade and more. This was a period that empowered me.

At the same time, I continued to dance in his groups and in the marathons, which is the highlight of folk dancing. And every time I dance one of his dances, I see his face before me. For instance, he choreographed "Yatzanu At", in memory of his wife, **Mira**, who loved that song very much. I was privileged to demonstrate the dance with him at every session at "Bikurei Ha'Itim".

One thing **Yoav** said to me remains with me to this day. When asked how old he was, he always answered: "I'm post army service". So, when people ask me the same question, I respond in the same way. In every conversation, we had joked about this.

It's hard for me to talk about **Yoav** in the past tense, but this is life.

May his memory be for a blessing. 

*I was on a high, with his lightness as he danced and led the dances. His unique movement style captivated me.*





Esti Katz  
Translation:  
Alex Huber

# Imagination And Passion

**A**s a teenager, there was a dance troupe in Givatayim and I, who was already dancing classical ballet, was given an audition and accepted into the troupe.

**Yoav**, "little big man" with a youthful appearance, arrives at the rehearsal. As he starts to direct the dancers, he unfolds for us the images he sees in his imagination... and suddenly, he becomes a "persona".

**Yoav** is full of energy, the joy of life, endless enthusiasm, creativity, musicality and with an imagination like that of a painter or photographer who sees images-pictures before his eyes. This is how he builds a choreography, piece by piece, already knowing what the costume will be for each, girls and boys. Each piece is an entire story – **Yoav** narrates and we are hypnotized.



*Rikud Ha'Emek, 1954*

With this story, we learn the choreography. Rehearsal after rehearsal... Fine-tuning, the gaze, the smile, the posture and a gentle gesture here or there. This is how **Yoav** aimed for the most subtle nuance. And so, throughout my youth, and shortly after I was released from the Nahal Troupe, I went back to dancing in **Yoav's** dance troupe.




*Pa'amei Aviv, 1969*

**Yoav Ashriel** – dance instructor, teacher, choreographer full of imagination and passion and love of the Land of Israel, music, movement and dance.

We received an excellent education from **Yoav** – things like precision, meeting a schedule, listening, perseverance, not giving in to difficulty, the desire for excellence and seriousness. Every rehearsal with him was a unique experience.

And I always thought that this man, the child in the body of an adult, would be with us forever, because he is timeless.

A big hug and a huge thank you, on your last journey from here to infinity. I will never forget you. 



*Yoav with the Beryozka Russian Dance Ensemble, 1961*



Ayala (Carmela)  
Shlomo

Translation:  
Ruth Goodman

# The Serious And Meticulous Approach

"**H**unters, go home" was the phrase I heard **Yoav** say at almost every folk dance class (chug) that took place at Shenkar College in Ramat Gan.

The class, for **Yoav**, was the place where they came to learn, to create Israeli folklore with an added cultural value and not a meeting place for the purpose of dating.

When I got home after class, it felt like I was returning home from school with homework and a commitment to also prepare for perhaps a surprise test next time.

It is impossible to talk about **Yoav** without talking about **Mira**, the woman who accompanied him. She was his friend, colleague and inspiration. For the dancers, **Mira** was the strictest and most daunting. Woe unto him who errs in the steps and all the more so if he dares to dance in the middle of the circle. **Yoav** was the gentle figure with a constant smile on his lips and with almost infinite patience.

I took my first steps in **Mira's** class at the Dubnov School. Then I joined **Yoav's** class at Shenkar



College, where I absorbed the love of dance, the serious and meticulous approach when it comes to steps, the hand hold, precise and meticulous instruction and observing each dancer together with providing personal attention. There, I experienced a veritable elation. They were my guiding light. From them I gained the knowledge of instruction and critical observation of each and every dance. Without any doubt I learned from the best, which was a serious stepping stone for me to the career of the following years. 🦿



*Mira instructs at the session to the sounds of an accordion*

**Yoav was the gentle figure with a constant smile on his lips and with almost infinite patience.**

# Optimistic and Warmhearted



Lucy Maman  
Translation:  
Ruth Goodman

I first met **Yoav and Mira Ashriel** in 1977 when I was 15 years old and was a substitute instructor for the dance troupe in Kiryat Motzkin. As part of my work, I had been sent to their hishtalmut (teacher training workshop) in Tel Aviv. This is where the connection between us first began to take shape. I came to the hishtalmut held at Bikurei Ha'Itim with my dear mother z"l.

One of the instructors who taught in the course was **Clara Volney**, a character dance instructor.

**Yoav and Mira** noticed me and asked me to stand forward and demonstrate the dance with her. This gesture thrilled me greatly and for years reminded me of the event and how much they were impressed by and appreciated the dedication and presence of my mother who accompanied me.

Our next meeting was when I came to them as **Shlomo Maman's** partner. We used to come **Yoav and Mira's** house with a new dance that had been created and was intended to be taught in the hishtalmut. Our arrival was always accompanied by our anticipation and reverence for their response and professional comments.

**Yoav** attached great importance to the connection between the lyrics, the melody and the dance steps.

These were supposed to blend in simply, naturally with inner

logic and in complete harmo-

ny. His advice was to be careful to create in this way. When I recall this and look at what is currently happening in the field of folk dance



*Mira and Yoav Ashriel with Lucy and Shlomo Maman at their wedding*

creation, I realize how much our field is lacking a professional mentor like we had with **Yoav**.

The hishtalmuyot were conducted in a very professional manner. Great and careful attention was paid to the content of the hishtalmuyot. Importance was given to the new dances taught by the various choreographers. Over the years, these dances have become classics and some of them have become inalienable assets of Israeli folk dance.

I really enjoyed coming to their home and hearing fascinating stories about the historical origins of Israeli dance in the country.

During one of the visits, **Mira** excitedly told me about the unforgettable performance of the Russian troupe, "Beryozka", in Israel. Her father accompanied the troupe as a translator from Russian into Hebrew. It was an experience that was engraved in her memory throughout the years.

*A couple who best combined their professional life with family life.*

Lucy Maman

**The Ashriels** were a couple who best combined their professional life with family life. I really appreciated the division of roles between them. **Mira** always made sure to have warm hospitality in their home, and **Yoav** always welcomed everyone warmly.

Later on, **Yoav** offered me to join him in his work with the Haifa Dance Troupe and, of course, I answered in the affirmative. The long taxi rides were a wonderful experience for me. They were accompanied by fascinating nostalgic stories, which I have been cherishing in my heart ever since. **Yoav** was a loyal laborer. He did his job with dedication and great talent.

Their home became a home for me and I felt like part of the family. For many years, I would take my daughter, **Lital**, to Kibbutz Shefayim, to visit my friend **Rakefet, Mira and Yoav's** daughter, at the home of Mira and **Yoav**, to celebrate family events and holidays, together with her amazing children, **Omer, Shibolet** and **Aluma**. (The names represent their connection to the land). I was exposed to the endless love of **Mira and Yoav** for their grandchildren who were at the center of their world.

Over the years we had formed a warm and loving friendship with much appreciation and mutual love. I had the privilege of spending many hours with them at dance sessions, marathons, hishtalmuyot and even family outings.

After the death of beloved **Mira**, I continued to keep in touch with **Yoav** who was always happy to hear my voice ("Lucinka" was what he called me) and would tell me that everything was fine. He even enthusiastically shared with me his mastery of advanced technology, when

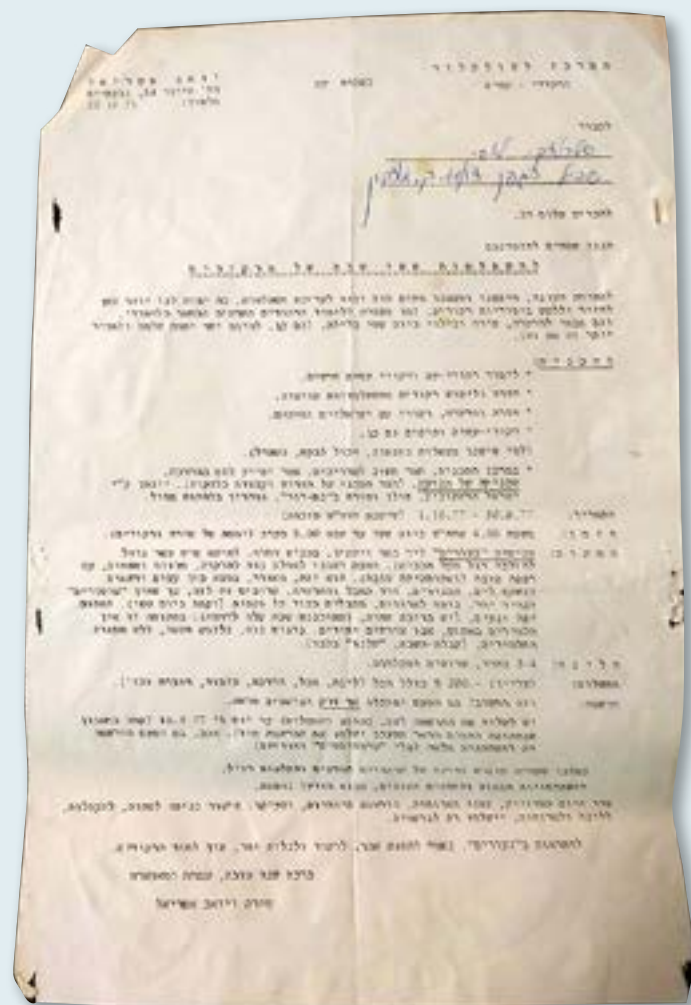
with the help of his grandson **Omer**, he enjoyed watching Russian folklore which he loved so much.

As an optimistic person, even when he moved to an assisted living residence, he would tell me that it was great there, and that he was very pleased with their attitude and the conditions.

**Yoav and Mira**, two people that were very dear to me. They were a unique couple, with mutual appreciation and admiration. There was an extra-ordinary connection between them that made me admire them and their amazing life's work that they built and made a tremendous contribution to Israeli dance.

I miss the wonderful and meaningful time I had with them and these memories will remain etched in my heart forever. 🙋

Their home became a home for me and I felt like part of the family



Invitation to the weekend hishtalmut



Meir Za'aror  
(Sintera)

Translation:  
Alex Huber

# The Man And The Legend



**Y**oav Ashriel the man, the legend, his charisma, as well as his organizational, management and mentoring skills. The man who has been leading the whole world in Israeli folk dance. Thanks to him, many dance leaders arose who lead harkadot (dance sessions) around the world.

In 1975, the Israeli Foreign Ministry decided to form an official dance troupe to represent Israel on a six-month performing tour of the United States and Canada. They searched for the best person for the prestigious position of troupe choreographer. They concluded that **Yoav Ashriel** was that person. Thus, the creation of the of the troupe called, "Pa'amei Aviv" began under the direction of **Dudu Topaz** z"l.

The troupe was accompanied by singers **Avi Toledano, Shoshana Damari, Rivka Zohar** and **Tzipi Zerenkin**. The musical management was

entrusted to the well-known **Shimon Cohen**; the stage director of the show was **Yoel Silberg**. **Yoav** approached me and asked me to join as a dancer in the troupe, for the trip and performances. I was undecided because I had just returned from two trips to Europe and was absent from the country twice for a period of five months. Eventually I agreed, and we started rehearsals at "Bikurei Ha'Itim" in Tel Aviv.

For five months there were rehearsals, four times a week, under the guidance of **Yoav**, and of course, with his choreographies. At the end of the rehearsal period, a general rehearsal was held – "The show before the trip".

**Uzi Adoram**, Chargé D'affaires for the Tel Aviv municipality, who also traveled with us, objected to my travelling with the troupe. He was afraid there would be "problems" with me. **Yoav** and **Yoel Silberg** said, "Without this man, there is no purpose for you to travel." **Yoav** told me in private... Eventually it turned out that I was the only one on the trip with whom they had no problems. At the end of the tour, I received a bouquet of flowers from **Uzi Adoram**.

**Yoav** did not travel with us due to medical reasons; he had "undergone surgery". It was a shame to be without him. We missed a huge chance to bask in his light for six months.

In the 1980s, Simca cars were released into the Israeli market. **Yoav** purchased such a brand new car. **Yoav** called me before the harkada at the Dubnov School and very excitedly said to me, "Come see the new car I bought..." He showed it to me and proceeded to carefully innumerate the qualities of the car.

Each time I came to the harkada, it was a special experience. I saw how **Yoav** explained and corrected every movement of the dance,



*Hora, 1974*






*HaDayagim, Pa'amey Aviv, Tel Aviv, 1972*

especially in the couple dances. I remember **Yankele Levy's** dance, "Ke'Shoshana Ben Ha'Chochim", the light jump in the dance that I learned to do correctly from **Yoav**.

Many times, after the harkada, **Yoav** would join us at a café. We would sit and discuss the way the harkada went and the way music had been changing. He was worried and bothered by the new music and songs used lately; he thought that they were not suitable for folk dance. From what is happening today, it looks like he was right.

In about 1990-92, **Yoav** was asked again to form a large representative dance company. Once more, I was invited to take part in rehearsals and participate in very major performances. We started rehearsals at Kibbutz Shefayim. **Yoav** had a nice relationship with the kibbutz. We worked for a few months and then started performing. It was a very big and beautiful troupe, yet, after a short period of time, the rehearsals were cancelled; due to the lack of a budget, the troupe's continued activity was cancelled. Again, to cancel a dance troupe under the guidance of **Yoav Ashriel** was a missed opportunity. It was a big loss.

I remember an important conversation with **Yoav** at one of his hishtalmuyot (advanced training workshops) for folk dance instructors. There were some instructors who interrupted and spoke. In a private conversation, **Yoav** told me: "I don't understand how people who are supposed to be instructors don't understand that it's disturbing..."

About a year ago, **Shlomo Maman** and I went to Ramat Aviv to visit **Yoav** at the assisted living residence where he lived for the past few years. It was very strange to see him not active on the dance floor, dancing and instructing. He looked good and was in a great mood. We sat together in the clubhouse. We talked about things. It is an experience to sit down with a man as renowned and important as he is and hear the many words of wisdom from him that only he had to share. He showed us his room and how he knows how to browse on the computer and do a lot of fascinating things. I suggested he have a Phillipine aide because it's very important, but he wasn't interested. He told us that every morning the room is called to check that everything is fine. **Shlomo** and I were very excited to be with him for two hours. 

Many times, after the harkada, Yoav would join us at a café. We would sit and discuss the way the harkada went and the way music had been changing. He was worried and bothered by the new music and songs used lately; he thought that they were not suitable for folk dance.



Aura Levin Lipski\*

# Rows Of Cyclamen In Red And Purple



**H**is daughter's name, **Rakefet**, is a snapshot of the essence of Israel. Rakefet is the Hebrew name for Israel's national flower, the Cyclamen.

I first saw fields of Cyclamen – Rakafot – as a child, when my family moved to Israel just a few months before the Six Day War in 1967. That was when Hebrew song and dance captured my imagination, and I have been held captive ever since.

Which is why the interview with the legendary **Yoav Ashriel** on the Israeli Folk Dancers Association website over a decade ago has been such an inspiration: "...a caring and sensitive man, one who is full of love, has a vision. Tens and even thousands of dancers and dance instructors have grown up with him and learned from him."

And here I am, from the other side of the world, recalling how the first dances which **Yoav Ashriel** created reflect the story of my childhood.

My parents (father from Lithuania, mother from China of Russian background) met and married in Israel.

My father was an engineer whose work took him to different places every two years. I was born in Australia. Through my life, I went to 10 schools in 7 cities in 4 countries on 3 continents.

Every time we moved anywhere around the world, my mother had a package cradled in her arms.

It contained her recordings. Her beloved Israeli music. By the folksingers who enriched our lives – **Theodore Bikel, Chava Alberstein, Yehoram Gaon**. And the great, pure voice of **Nechama Hendel**.

My mother never trusted the movers or anyone else with her records. Today we would call this 'hand luggage'!

That love and passion for Israel's language and culture, nurtured my childhood and teenage years.

So knowing that **Yoav Ashriel's** first created dance was Ta'am Haman, a song my mother sang to us, creates a very special connection to my heart.



\***Aura Levin Lipski** is a songwriter, singer and concert artist who has performed with international stars Ray Charles, Yehoram Gaon, Ran Eliran, Yaffa Yarkoni, Dudu Fisher and Tzvika Pik.

Her songs have been broadcast on Australian and Israeli radio, and have been choreographed and performed at Dance Festivals in South America, Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia. In Melbourne she has welcomed friends Ehud Manor, Avi Toledano and David Broza as honored guests to her home.

*Aura Levin Lipski*

All the great Hebrew songs, with the brilliant harmonies of **Nechama Hendel** and **Ran Eliran**, became part of me.

Fast forward to the era of Videotapes, and I would see **Yoav Ashriel** and hear his pedantic voice on the Hishtalmut sessions.

(For those who know me, I LOVE "pedantic"! It's a sign of passion and professionalism.)

During my childhood we spent three wonderful years living in Haifa. One night, walking home from Mercaz Hacarmel, I passed by Migrash Oranim and saw young people dancing, accompanied by an accordionist. I was mesmerised and hooked forever.

Another fast forward, to 2016. I'm on a visit to Israel, working on my websites with my brilliant friend and wonderful dancer, **Eli Shilo** of Jerusalem.

As soon as I found out that there was a tribute concert to **Yoav Ashriel** marking 65 years of his creativity, I dropped everything to get to Givatayim and join the celebrations.

Greeted very warmly by **Shlomo Maman** and other dance choreographer friends, the excitement began even before we went into the auditorium.

But the show was something else. So full of life, love, and celebration. The tributes, the music, the dancing, the production. All were just fabulous. An amazing evening.

But it didn't end with the performances. The



*Yoav and Rakefet Ashriel*

'after party' in some ways was just as memorable. Sitting outside the auditorium, late into the night, **Avner Naim, Roni Siman Tov, Shlomo Maman, Eli Shilo** and I celebrated together with **Yoav** and **Rakefet Ashriel**.

As I have found throughout my singing career, the truly great artists are often the most modest, and the most fun.

And so it was at Givatayim on that special night in 2016.

I began this reminiscence with Cyclamens, and I will end with them.

To Yoav's daughter: One day I hope that you'll have a chance to visit Australia and come to my garden. Lining the pathway are rows of red and purple Cyclamens.

So I thank you again, **Rakefet**, for inviting me to add my tribute to **Yoav**, your father, and my inspiration. 🦋



*Tribute concert to Yoav Ashriel*

That love and passion for Israel's language and culture, nurtured my childhood and teenage years.



Allen King

# Yoav and Mira Were a Team

In June 1980, **Mira and Yoav Ashriel** z"l were guest teachers at the eighth annual Israeli Folk Dance Institute in San Luis Obispo in California that was, at that time, the only west coast Israeli folk dance camp. This was the one opportunity for dancers from both northern and southern California to come together to dance and learn dances from a choreographer who came "all the way from Israel".

**Yoav and Mira** were a team. They taught all of his dances together, both circles and couples. We were used to learning from a single choreographer, but never from a "team" such as **Yoav and Mira**. One could tell how much they loved and adored each other, and how they would work together to make certain that the dancers learned the precise steps and the styling of each dance.

**Yoav** had a unique way to make all of the dancers feel comfortable as he taught us and filled the room with excitement as he taught a new dance or reviewed one that we were familiar with. He was also a demanding teacher, very particular about the how his dances were learned and danced. But, once we learned them, we could never dance them differently. They felt just right when we danced them. They were both simple and interesting at the same time. This was, and still is, a rare quality in Israeli folk dance.

**Yoav** had a commitment to combining the music and the steps into a story about daily life in Israel.

We experience the story every time we dance one of his dances. Some of the dances we learned that weekend were "Ad Or Ha'Boker", "Be'Lev Echad", "Ha'Shoshana Porachat" and "Kleyzmer".

Now, skip forward 28 years to the summer of 2008, when **Yoav Ashriel** made his last visit to the United States where he taught



Father and daughter – Yoav and Rakefet – dancing together

at the Hora Keff and Shorashim dance camps in New York. Yoav had been in California once before but had never had the opportunity to come as a tourist. I was able to host him for a special visit. He was 78 years old at that time, but his age did not prevent him from teaching at three dance sessions in the San Francisco area over the course of one week. Hundreds of dancers came to learn from a "vatik", a choreographer from the second generation of Israeli folk dance choreographers. It was wonderful to once again experience his teaching style, this time with his daughter **Rakefet**, as his partner. It recalled his teaching style with **Mira** z"l, his wife, from his earlier visits in 1980 and 1987.

**Yoav** loved California, especially his time in San Francisco, where he stayed at a boutique hotel near Union Square as the guest of **David Apfelbaum**, a strong supporter of Israel and friend to **David Ben-Gurion** and **David "Dado" Elazar**, the ninth Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces.

Many of his dances have stood the test of time and are now considered classics and representative of the spirit that can be evoked by dancing a truly great dance.

We will miss **Yoav** but his memory will live on in his dances. May his memory be a blessing.



Mira and Yoav Ashriel

They were both simple and interesting at the same time. This was, and still is, a rare quality in Israeli folk dance.



Gilad Eden-Tzaidi

Translation:  
Dena Matmon

# Proud Of The Generation Of Choreographers That He Groomed

**Y**oav was part of my life long before I actually met him. From the time I started dancing, he was with me every step of the way, in every movement, in every creation. I danced in his group at the Dubnov School in Tel Aviv. I took part in several of his hishtalmuyot (workshops for teachers) and I was privileged to also dance in his extra special nostalgia group at "Bikurei Ha'Itim" in Tel Aviv.

When **Yoav** asked me to review the dance, "Simlatech Ha'Shezura", for the group, no one was prouder than I was. The connection between us was immediate, even though we never worked together. **Yoav** was pleased that I promoted his dances, and I loved dancing "Strose To Stroma Sou" next to him.

At one point, **Yoav** confided in me that he was tired and wanted to retire. I protested. I couldn't imagine a month going by without having a quality dance session with him. I was very happy that his activities continued until the moment when it



was impossible to stop the Tel Aviv Municipality's "renewal" program: the demolition of "Bikurei Ha'Itim", the dance center building.

**Nourit Grinfeld** and I made sure to visit **Yoav** at the Mishan Senior Residence in Ramat Aviv. Every time we visited, over a cup of coffee and a piece of cheese cake, **Yoav** told us a little about himself, his days at Kibbutz Ramat David, his



Yoav told us the stories behind the "inalienable assets" that he left us. Every dance had its story. He told us about the dance sessions, performing groups, hishtalmuyot, and especially about his pride in the generation of choreographers that he had groomed.

Gilad Eden-Tzaidi



memories of **Gurit Kadman** ז"ל, with whom he danced in a course in 1947 and about "Ta'am Haman", the first dance he choreographed three years after that course.

**Yoav** told us the stories behind the "inalienable assets" that he left us. Every dance had its story. He told us about the dance sessions, performing groups, hishtalmuyot, and especially about his pride in the generation of choreographers that he had groomed.

For his 89th birthday, **Nourit** and I hesitated about preparing a program of his dances. We decided to have a folk dance evening with as many dancers as possible who knew and loved **Yoav**. Since then, with every phone call, he emphasized how

much he enjoyed that dance session. Between us, I don't know who enjoyed it more, **Yoav** or us, and we even talked about having another such evening in honor of his 90th birthday.

But these are coronavirus days and when I called to congratulate him, Rafeket had already taken him to the hospital.

Now **Yoav**, the choreographer, is dancing and teaching dance "Up There" ... and we are left to miss him and to tell him, "Thank you" for the dances, for the creativity and the wonderful dance culture that he has bequeathed to us all.

I had the privilege of knowing him and I acknowledge the privilege given to me to accompany him during his last days. I miss him. 🙋



**Nourit Grinfeld**  
Translation:  
**Ruth Goodman**

# That's How I Met Yoav

I met **Yoav Ashriel** as soon as I immigrated to Israel, while I was in first grade. At that time, I didn't really know the person, **Yoav**, but rather his dances. During the activity breaks, I danced "Hora Medura" and "Hora Nirkoda" and many others... In the 6th grade, I learned "Korim Lanu Lalechet" ...

I can't describe my acquaintance with **Yoav** the person as that of many years. Personally, I first met him about twenty years ago, when I accompanied my friend, **Marco Ben Shimon**, to Bikurei Ha'itim to film a dance he choreographed for an upcoming hishtalmut (workshop for instructors), so that **Yoav and Mira** would decide as to whether or not to include it in the hishtalmut, and maybe to work on it and introduce some changes to it. **Yoav** was sitting inside with **Mira** next to him and next to them, was the videographer.

All who came gathered outside in exemplary



From left: Nourit Yoav and Rakefet



From left: Nourit, Yoav and Gilad at Mishan



The invitation to "Nostalgia Evening" with Yoav at Nordia

I got to know Yoav, the person. We started talking. More accurately, Yoav spoke and I drank everything in. We had instant chemistry.

silence! When it was our turn, I went in with **Marco** and we were filmed. Then we sat at home biting our nails, waiting for the news from **Yoav** as to whether the dance was good enough and would be included in the hishtalmut.

In 2006, I met **Yoav and Mira** when they came to the Instructors Course where I was studying. Afterwards, when I began to lead dancing, **Yoav's** dances were, of course, starring in my harkada (dance session), and with the opening of my nostalgia harkada, the session fully blossomed.



About eight years ago, I met **Yoav** along with his daughter, **Rakefet**, during **Meir Shem Tov's** nostalgia weekend in Tel Hai. This is where the big turnaround came. I got to know **Yoav**, the person. We started talking. More accurately, **Yoav** spoke and I drank everything in. We had instant chemistry.

When we returned from the weekend, I had already invited him to be a guest at the nostalgia sessions in Nordia and, to my delight, **Yoav** was my guest several times until he decided that to hang up his dancing shoes.

When **Yoav** moved into an assisted living facility, we kept in close contact. Together with **Gilad Tzaidi**, we made sure to visit him at every opportunity. We would sit in the café in the assisted living facility and **Yoav** would sail through the stories and I... was filled with delight.

On one of the visits, I asked him if he thought we could organize a tribute evening at the assisted living facility in appreciation of his work. **Yoav** was delighted with the idea! We talked to the supervisor and from there until the realization of the event, the road was short. **Gilad** ran around and contacted the people he knew who were connected to **Yoav**. I dealt with the subject, the content and the dances.

The afternoon gathering was perfect and we were very happy that the event took place. For me, it was the culminating harkada for the lifetime achievement of **Yoav Ashriel**, the person, the mentor and the creator.

When **Shlomo Maman** read the eulogy at the cemetery, we all cried with him. "If there was no coronavirus," he said, "the cemetery would have been too narrow to accommodate all the people who would have come to pay their last respects to **Yoav**, the man, the creator and the mentor". **Yoav** touched many people throughout the world!

It was a great loss for us, for the world of folk dance, and for his dear family; especially for his daughter, **Rakefet**, who had been with him all along.

It is incumbent upon us to commemorate him with love. 🕊



It was a great loss for us, for the world of folk dance, and for his dear family; especially for his daughter, **Rakefet**, who had been with him all along.





Ruth Jacobson  
Translation:  
Dena Matmon

# On Friendship And Mutual Affection

I met **Yoav** as a child, when I came to Beit HaPoel which, at that time, was on Nachmani Street in Tel Aviv.

I danced at the regular folk dance sessions. As time went by, I followed him to the new HaPoel building on Ussishkin Street near the Yarkon River in Tel Aviv. Later on, I discovered that **Yoav** and my older brother were friends.

Afterwards, I started to work closely with **Yoav**, who was preparing the instruction booklet for the hishtalmuyot (workshops for instructors) he led, for print.

We worked together closely, and I won't deny that there were arguments and "disagreements". But actually, it was a work of friendship, appreciation and mutual affection.


The instruction booklets, that were given to each hishtalmut participant, were printed by the "Keren Printing Company" on Yehuda Halevi Street in Tel Aviv. We worked together for more than 30 years. We started out using a typewriter... hard to believe... if there was an error, the entire page needed to be retyped. At the beginning of the 1980s, we started to use a computer, and this reduced a lot of the pressure and sped up the work.



**Yoav** would bring his handwritten pages to me. After I had typed them, he would read them again and check the text very thoroughly, several times; he checked every letter and comma, every step and movement, making sure that it was exactly the way he wanted it. He also checked every illustration, and was careful to choose the appropriate placement for each picture. We worked crazily against the clock, under "moderate pressure" until... until the final product came off the press the way we wanted it.

There were periods when my partner, Alenka, and I worked up to the last minute. And on Friday evening, on our way home, we would have to stop at **Yoav's** house to bring him the hishtalmut booklet so that he could edit it the next day.

**Yoav** drove everyone crazy, but in spite of the pressure and the insanity, the respect, appreciation and affection between us helped us manage to overcome the pressures and we remained friends throughout all these years

Happy is the person whose love for his hobby becomes his profession and his way of earning a living. 



He would read them again and check the text very thoroughly, several times; he checked every letter and comma, every step and movement, making sure that it was exactly the way he wanted it.

# Ta'am Haman

## From the forward to Yoav Ashriel's dance notation booklet



**I** was born, raised and educated on Kibbutz Ramat David in the Jezreel Valley. My roots are here and it has influenced my creativity. For me, this is the most beautiful area in the country, at any time of the year and at any hour of the day.

I was first introduced to Israeli dance when I was 16 and participated in a folk dance course that took place in the area, under the guidance of **Gurit Kadman**. It is difficult to describe my enthusiasm for the dances, the atmosphere, the great momentum and the hopes at the beginning of the creation of Israeli folklore, the way of life and Israeli dances. This enthusiasm actually has continued to this day and it grows with time, with a deep connection and great love for the subject.

In my youth, I taught folk dance on the kibbutz and prepared performances for the holidays. While in the Nahal, I coached the Nahal dance troupe and its many performances, dance courses for instructors and many dance sessions. There I met **Mira**, who collaborated with me; she was an excellent instructor and a great dancer. Since then, we have been together as life partners and in every area, inspiring, assisting and actively participating in programs and mentoring.

After my release from the Nahal, I taught in many classes (chugim), at hishtalmuyot (workshops for instructors), and at many dance sessions for the general public at various events. I've set choreographies for many dance groups, for many performances both in Israel and abroad. Also, I've trained instructors and dancers abroad.

I've assisted veteran choreographers and newcomers in creating folk dances by polishing, notating and with their distribution. In addition, I've conducted hishtalmuyot for veteran instructors that I organized with **Mira**, along with providing instruction booklets of professional explanations and dance notations.

I started choreographing folk dances when I was released from the army. My first dance was "Ta'am

Haman", followed by many, many others. This booklet does not include all of them, but represents most of them, in the order in which they were created.

In my dances, I try to give expression to the feelings and experiences that have affected me. This includes the atmosphere of the kibbutz where I grew up, the pioneering communal life, the joys, the sadness and all the experiences that are shared together in the kibbutz. The landscape of the village, the fields and the nature of the Emek Valley, the Israeli atmosphere and experience, our pace of life, our special geographical (and human) landscape, and the climate of the changing seasons. The many sensations in our lives in the country, in every period. The many influences from every community in the country including song lyrics from the Bible and their special atmosphere. Our shared joy and the experience of dancing together. The partner dances, with the endless themes and variations between him and her.

All of these have an influence on how I create Israeli folk dances. However, the dances must be folk dances, simple and with flowing movements. The community that is dancing them should feel good about them and feel that they are expressing them faithfully.

Each dance has its unique shape, its own background, inspiration and special experience. They are influenced by a unique theme, melody and rhythm as well as the combination of movements, formations and steps. Each dance has its special story and the way it was created.

Thank you to my longtime friend, **Danny Uziel**, who urged and helped me in the publication of this booklet.

### Yoav Sidi tells us about the dance:

The partner dance, "Ta'am Haman", was choreographed in 1950.

The lyrics and melody of the song were written by **Yitzhak Eliyahu Navon**. (According to **Bracha Tzafira**, this is a Persian melody). **Yitzhak Navon**

Dance:

**Yoav Ashriel**

Translation:

**Ruth Goodman**

Dance notation:

**Ruth Schoenberg**



Yoav Ashriel with the accordion, 1947

was a Jewish-Turkish-Israeli poet who died in 1952. It is a love song with biblical words such as myrrh and cinnamon and the legendary "manna" which provided food to the Israelites the desert.

Another well-known song of his is "Nitzanei Shalom", to which **Yoav** also choreographed a partner dance.

**Yoav** took a folk dance instructors course in 1947. In 1950, he served in the Tzevet Havai Nahal. About "Ta'am Haman" he [Yoav] writes:

This is the first dance I choreographed; my intention was to present a calm, gentle and simple dance for couples. (This was something that was missing among the mostly fast paced dances at the time.) It combines a beautiful melody in the style of a Spanish romance in 3/8 meter rhythm with Yemenite steps and an Israeli atmosphere, with

light, simple and flowing movements. The steps in the two verses are identical to each other. In the first verse, they are performed with the couple facing counterclockwise with hands crossed in front (skater's position) and in the second verse, the partners face each other and repeat the step sequence.

Note: The term "verse", in folk dance notation, means that the melody repeats again but there is a change in the movements; in this dance the change is in the formation.

The musical meter of the song, as it appears in most of the existing notations is 3/4, but there are places where it is written in 3/8. In the musical arrangement, you can certainly hear the eighth notes (in the percussion of the drum). To make the movement slow and gentle, **Yoav** chose to perform each step in 3/8 and in the dance notation he writes each measure of 3/8 as one count.

The dance begins with a Yemenite step but without the hold and without the Yemenite style. That is, this is the first time that the Yemenite step included in a dance did not have its original Yemenite character but is more like a European "balance" step.

The structure of the dance is similar to international

folk dances in which there are basic steps that are danced once with couples in a circle and once in partners, and between the parts, there is chorus.

Prior to Ta'am Haman, dances which had the same idea (without the repeating chorus) were Or Chavatzalot and El Harahat choreographed by **Rivka Shturman**. Another dance by **Yoav** in the same style is Bat Tzurim.

It is an easy couple dance to perform and has both movements with the partner and also the adjacent couples while moving in double circles with partners facing; the men and women move in opposite directions. The position of the hands in the second verse of the dance is with a right hand hold (palms joined) while the man's left hand covers the back of the woman's right hand ("sandwich hold"); this is special and romantic but this does not appear in **Yoav's** notations! It may be that here, as in Hora Medura, **Yoav's** hand position was not included in the original notations but has become an integral and identifiable part of the dance through the years.

In one of the notations, **Yoav** added that the dance can also be danced to the melody of "Yaldati Me'Russia". According to the prevailing opinion at the time, it was possible to exchange dance melodies, which would have added interest to the dance but cast a shadow of doubt about the effect of the content of the song (love song) on the choreography.

The dance is a beautiful combination of East and West; the melody is Eastern and the style is European while the Yemenite steps that originated in Arab women's dances in Yemen changed character here and became Western. The dance is a lovely combination of close and intimate relationships with the partner as in social dancing which in this dance, includes the neighboring partner on either side.

It should be noted that in the first verse the boy does not "embrace" the girl at the hips nowadays (as is the case today in most dances); partners hold crossed hands in front (as in skater's position). It



may be typical of the more modest behavior that once was...

The dance has been danced to this day, mainly in nostalgia sessions, and has become, in the opinion of many, an inalienable asset of Israeli folk dance; it is undoubtedly the flagship dance of **Yoav Ashriel** who is considered one of the pillars of folk dance. Many of his dances have become folk dances, such as, Hora Medura, Hora Nirkoda, Kleyzmer, Layla Layla, Ez Vakeves.

### Ta'am Haman

**Formation:** Partners in a circle

**Structure:** Two verses, each verse has two sections followed by the chorus.

**Meter:** 3/8 – each measure of 3/8 is notated as one count.

#### Part I

Section A: Partners in a circle facing CCW, W to the right of M, hands joined in front in skater's position.

1&2 Yem. L.

3-4 Step fwd on R, rock back on L in a swinging motion with knees slightly bent.

5-6 Repeat counts 3-4 beginning with a rock fwd on R.

7&8 Yem. R.

9-16 Repeat Section A counts 1-8.

#### Section B

1&2 Step side-tog-side [LRL] moving left towards center of circle.

3&4 Brush right foot in front of left leg; bend/flex knee of left leg, straighten/extend left knee.

5-8 Repeat counts 1-4 with opposite footwork and direction (side-tog-side moving right out of center, brush L in front of R, bend and extend rt. knee).

9-16 Repeat Section B counts 1-8.

Chorus: Face CCW.

1&2 Yem. L.

3&4 Moving fwd in the circle: Step-tog-step fwd: RLR.

5-16 Repeat counts 1-4 three more times.

#### Part II

Section A: Partners face each other in a double circle with M's back to center; rt. hands joined at shoulder level, elbows bent. M's left hand covers the back of W's rt. hand.

1-16 Repeat Part I, Section A moving fwd/toward and back/away from partner.


#### Section B

1-4 M releases his left hand. Repeat the movements of Part I, Section B moving to the side. During the brush step, the bottom [sole of the front part] touches the sole of the diagonally opposite person. During the bending step, touch left hands with that same person.

5-8 Repeat counts 1-4. Release rt. hands. Left hands join during the sliding steps; use opposite footwork and direction.

9-16 Repeat Section B counts 1-8.

Chorus: Face CCW.

1-6 Same as in Part I. 



### Ta'am Haman – Taste of Manna

**Music and lyrics:**  
**Yitzhak Eliyahu Navon**

#### Verse 1

You're shape – a delicate form, sweet scented,  
wrapped in myrrh,  
Your lips are crimson,  
They speak wisdom, their taste is like manna.

#### Chorus:

The taste of manna, manna, manna,  
If told, it would be unbelievable.

#### Verse 2

Nectar, wine, milk and honey  
Won't quench my thirst, my palate is dry,  
When I will kiss your lips  
You will douse me with your delights.

#### Chorus

The taste of manna...

#### Verse 3

My song, please soar  
Like a dove to my innocent one.  
She's as bright as the sun,  
Accompanied by pleasant grace.

#### Chorus

The taste of manna...

**Yoav Sidi:**  
"The dance has been danced to this day, mainly in nostalgia sessions, and has become, in the opinion of many, an inalienable asset of Israeli folk dance; it is undoubtedly the flagship dance of Yoav Ashriel who is considered one of the pillars of folk dance."



# ALEX'S EXPERIENCES

## Alex Huber documents important Israeli folk dance events with his camera



# Dancing for Yoav

## With Nourit Grinfeld and Gilad Tzaidi

All photos were taken by the dancers who participated in the event



From left: Rakefet Ashriel, Eli Ronen, Shlomo Maman, Itzi Gil



Yoav at his best as in days gone by

When **Yoav** moved into an assisted living facility, we decided to visit him every few months to warm his heart and keep in touch. We would sit with him on Friday mornings, order coffee and cake and then let **Yoav** continue to relate his stories.

On one occasion, we asked him if they had a folk dance class here. His answer: "No! The residents here do not know anything about me and that I have a connection to folk dancing".

We said that this must be fixed. We asked that he refer us to the person in charge



From left: Chaim Shiryon, Tuvia Tishler, Eli Ronen




Shlomo Maman welcomes everyone

## ALEX'S EXPERIENCES

of entertainment. We wanted to hold an unforgettable evening in this residence for senior citizens, a kind of "This is Your Life" for **Yoav** with guests, dancers, choreographers and instructors who grew up with him. We arranged a meeting with her and together we set a date for the event: July 16, 2019 from 6:00–7:30 pm.

We started rolling things out. We set a dress code: blue and white (however, not everyone was disciplined...), and we wrote a post on Facebook and informed our dancers..

To our delight, there was a great response from everyone we approached. We recruited **Shlomo Arusi** to manage the sound and music. **Shlomo** had done that in past years at **Yoav's** dance sessions.

**Rakefet, Yoav's** daughter, cooperated with us. And the dancers who arrived brought amazing refreshments without us asking. And that's it! Together, we made it happen. 

About 60 dancers arrived.  
It was a magical evening.



All photos were taken by the dancers who participated in the event