

רוקדים

מגזין לריקודי עם ומחול

NIRKODA



עמותת ארגון המדריכים
והיוצרים לריקודי עם



Vol 106 | July 2021 | **VIP** Members



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Dear Readers,

We had just started to return to a normal routine and now the coronavirus, with more infectious variants, is threatening to stop us again. We hope we will be able to continue dancing even with limitations. All of us should take care of ourselves because that is the most important thing.

The "festival wheels" are already in motion, but the threat of the pandemic is ever present. While the Karmiel Festival was able to take place as scheduled, from July 27-29, concerns still loom over dance weekends and special events including the Ashdodance Festival, currently scheduled from August 16-19. We hope that they will be able to take place as planned.

The "[Rokdim-Nirkoda](#)" website, which opened less than a year ago, continues to develop with a loyal and attentive programmer to whom we owe our gratitude. Thank you very much **Amnon Ben David**! We will continue to develop and publish all the articles from previous magazines, but it will take much more than an entire year.

Here and now is the time to mention and thank each one of you, our subscribers, for your support and encouragement. Your [VIP](#) subscription is the driving force. Thank you all!

In this issue of the magazine there are a variety of very interesting articles:

- [Michael Mero](#) speaks with **Yaniv Hoffman** – the second generation of talented Hoffman choreographers. Yaniv turns to new and innovative directions and brings a flavor of modern – professional dance to Lehakot Mehola (the Mehola Dance Troupes). Not only does he know how to dance, but also to think, speak, explain and reason. It is worth reading.
- Half a year ago, we lost [Dov Zeira](#) z"l, the founder and owner of the HaTaklit-Haifa Record Company. Dov was a close friend. At heart, he was a man of culture who combined Israeli folk dance culture with business. Both folk dance and Israeli culture were extremely important to him. Dov supported and greatly assisted in obtaining permissions from the record companies for the musical edits we use for folk dancing. May his memory be for a blessing.
- [Yeahbit](#) – Anyone who is not familiar with this recent trend is invited to read **Danielle Shkop's** article on a new style in "folk dance"? Or maybe in "Zumba"? The folk dances that started with "shoulder to shoulder" circles, moved to circle dances with hands held and then to "individuals in a circle". Now we have a new style – a "fitness party" (Yeahbit). Will this trend hurt folk dance as we have known and dreamed about or will it bring back retired dancers and perhaps attract new dancers into the fold?
- **David Ben Asher** speaks with [Raya Spivak](#), of the founders' generation, who has been deeply involved with folk dance for children. In recent years we have been making great efforts to interview as many people as possible who have been active in and influenced the folk dance field. It is incumbent upon us to give them a platform and make their voices heard.
- **David Ben Asher** has also taken a peek and became enthusiastic about the activities of [Yossi Tfilin](#), who has worked with the visually impaired for many years and has enabled them to become part of the Israeli folk dance community and experience the joy. Well done!
- This time, our "Dance of the Month" is "Chafetz Chayim" by [Orly Shemesh](#). Who Orly is, how the dance was created, the song lyrics and the dance steps – are all in this section.
- "[Alex's Experiences](#)" this time is about an extraordinary event – the milestone birthday celebration (80 years) to honor **Moshe Telem**. Hundreds of dancers came to embrace Moshe, to dance with him and the dance orchestra, and to greet, cheer and recall the beautiful days of Caesarea, the harkadot (dance sessions) at Tel Aviv and Bar Ilan Universities and all the wonderful activities that had been organized by the "Rishpon Farmer".

Enjoy your reading,

Yaron Meishar, Ruth Goodman, Danny Uziel – Editors



Yaron Meishar



Ruth Goodman



Danny Uziel



Vol. No. 106 | August 2021

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■ Publisher:

"Rokdim-Nirkoda" – Rokdim in association with the Israeli Dance Institute Inc. (IDI), U.S.A., President: Robert Levine, Chairman: Ted Comet

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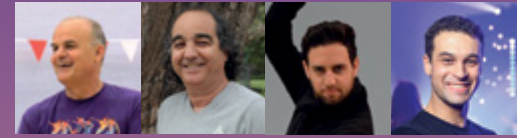
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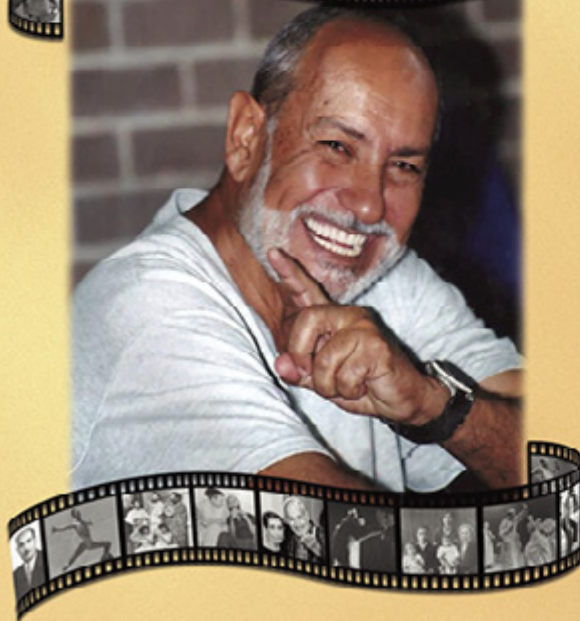
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Moshiko's Autobiography

Moshe (Moshiko) Itzhak-Halevy

Dancing Against the Flow



Moshe Itzhak-Halevy (Moshiko) was born in 1932 in the Manshiye area, to parents who emigrated from Yemen.

At 17 he discovered dance in all its varieties – he studied at Mia Arbatova's dance school and was counted among the founders of the first dance troupe in the IDF, as well as a primary dancer in the "Li La Lo" and "Do Re Mi" theaters. He later joined the Inbal troupe as a dancer and participated in its success in Israel and worldwide.

Moshiko established the HaPaamonim troupe and served as artistic director to the minority troupes. In the early '70s he was an assistant to Sara Levi-Tanai in Inbal. After Inbal, Moshiko traveled to the United States where he worked until his return to Israel in 1990, with 240 dances he'd composed under his belt, as well as a large number of melodies.

"Dancing Against The Flow" is Moshiko's personal and professional story, written by his own hand, the life story of a man whose early circumstances and many pitfalls not only withheld the promise of success, but challenged him to give up his dream. His talent and optimism ultimately led to the fulfillment of his dream and his success both in Israel and around the world.

To this day Israeli folk dances fill Moshiko's life with dance, choreography, writing and composing. Moshiko is one of the most respected and popular creators in the field of Israeli folk dances, which continues to evolve on a daily basis, and he continues to bestow his love and talent upon the general public with tremendous energy.

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**Michael Mero**

Translation:
Ruth Goodman and
Tzipi Shragai

Dancing Israeliness



Michael Mero in a conversation with Yaniv Hoffman

**Yaniv Hoffman**

Hello Yaniv Hoffman. Is it true to say that you were born into the dance world?

Yes, I was born to dance. I was born to a dancer and choreographer mother and an accordionist father. They worked with the Hora Yerushalayim dance troupe and became the directors of the troupe and of Beit Hamusica in Jerusalem. My mother was in charge of dance in Jerusalem. In 1988, they fulfilled their vision and opened "Mehola," a large dance school in town. In my childhood years, I danced in "Hora Yerushalayim". When I grew up, I transferred to dance in "Mehola". From the age of 18, I have worked, danced, taught and choreographed for "Mehola". There I also met my wife, **Dorit**. My sisters **Yael** and **Noa** work and dance in "Mehola" and this is the story in brief.

Does this mean that not only you, but the entire family, is centered around dance? Beautiful. Now tell us about the work that you do.

Look, I grew up with Israeli dance, in "Hora Yerushalayim", to a mother who is an Israeli dance priestess. But "Hora Yerushalayim" has always been considered a dance troupe with a high level of

technique. It is also the "cushion" on which my mother grew up. She always appreciated and worshiped **Yonatan Karmon**, who was the first to introduce a lot of technique to Israeli dance for the stage. That's what he developed and that was his goal.

When my mother, **Shuki Hoffman**, opened "Mehola", she introduced a lot of technique to the classes, including modern dance and classical ballet. Truthfully, this was done in order to excel and not to remain in a somewhat amateurish place, perhaps simpler, and perhaps more for the masses. Yes, also to professionalize the technical capabilities. The moment you become professional, the desires, aspirations and demands of the dancers are raised, both by the dancers and those who teach them. Because once you are educated and knowledgeable about the body, you work very much on the body; so it is not sufficient for you to do just a "mayim step" or "debka step". You are looking for things that are more innovative, more varied, more difficult, more challenging.

The people working with high-level dancers are, among other things, constantly required to further challenge them. That's what it seems that my mother

Michael Mero

felt in those years. She always had the best dance troupes in the country from the aspect of technique. It has been well-known that for years "Mehola" was the leader of the "scene" in the Israeli dance field, and whoever danced in "Mehola" was considered to have a very, very high level of technique.

As Shuki's children, we continued on that path as we grew up. This includes both me and my wife Dorit, who I met in "Mehola", as well as my younger sisters, Yael and Noa, and all the other teachers who are dancers who have become choreographers over the years – everyone went through this track of "being a professional dancer". Therefore, the directions we go in are always filled with lots of modern and contemporary dance.

There is always this affinity, the leap from Israeli dance; I don't know whether to call it folkloric, because it is not folklore, but Israeli, modern and contemporary dance. Why is it Israeli? For all kinds of reasons. Not just because it contains folk dance steps. It can be the themes, it can be the costumes, it can be the songs and it can be something in the orientation that feels Israeli. First and foremost, it is the very fact that we are Israelis, living as Israelis and feeling Israeli. It can be a dance about the tensions that exist, the terrorist attacks, very "Eretz



Yaniv, his wife Dorit and his mother Shuki



Guy Hoffman – the next generation

Yisrael" things, landscapes and trips. So even if it does not follow in a hora step, it is nonetheless born as an Israeli creation.

This is exactly what I want to ask you: What is Israeli dance? What is our folklore, heritage and culture?

At the panel discussion that was held at the Ashdodance Festival this past summer [2019], I was asked if, when I perform abroad with my troupe and my dance, would they know that we are from Israel? Would they feel that it is Israeli? My answer was unequivocally, "yes". And then there was some objection from people who said something like this: "You don't create folklore. What you do is not Israeli folklore". So, I told them, "Okay, this is what you say when you're in Israel. But, when they see us there, they know that we are Israelis, they know that the dance is Israeli". So they asked me: "If you turn the music off and put it on mute, will they still know that the dance is Israeli"? Listen, it's like with any other nation. If you eliminate the music and take off the costumes, I also don't know if you



Yaniv Hoffman in "Katzir – Harvest". Photo: Tomer Halperin

Michael Mero

We are the generation that made a transition from "collective" to "me". Shlomo Artzi said this, but I really like it. With the songs he grew up on, it was always about "Them" in the beginning, and after that, "We". Now the generation says "I and I"



would know which nation it comes from. Obviously the whole set of components is important, but yes there is something Israeli about me. I can say that with all that is contemporary, relative to this genre – and I am considered to be very contemporary – there is still always a connection to the subject. For example, the dance that won at the Karmiel Festival with four dance awards is called, "El Ir Avanim – To A City Of Stones". The dance tells about Jerusalem. I grew up in Jerusalem at the time of terrorist attacks and tension, between holy and

mundane, between powerful and eternal to the daily grind. The dance is built the same way. The dance is not folklore; it has drumming, lifts and leaps. These are things that are more technically advanced. Together with this, it has won all the prizes and it felt like an Israeli dance to the extent that they chose it for the torch lighting ceremony on Mount Herzl. It was in 2002 or thereabouts. I'm trying to say that the subjects I choose to do, e.g., a dance about Jerusalem and its daily life, what's more Israeli than that? If someone claims it is not Israeli dance because it is not folklore, there is a problem with the thesis, with this approach. Did I answer your question? Or didn't I?

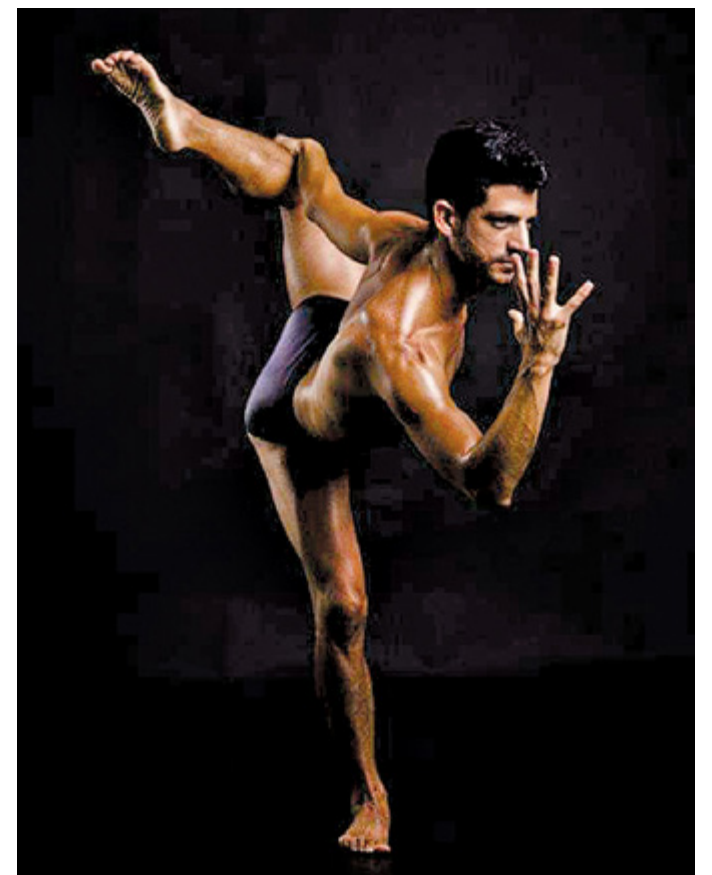
I just want to hear your position because it is very interesting. You are actually saying that "what I experience here is my Israeliness".

True, you said it nicely. Add to it one's self. We are the generation that made a transition from "collective" to "me". **Shlomo Artzi** said this, but I really like it. With the songs he grew up on, it was always about "Them" in the beginning, and after that, "We". Now the generation says "I and I": I feel, I write, I speak.

It's the same in dance. It's okay, you don't have to resist it. If we take the hora dances of yesteryear,



During a rehearsal. Photo: Dorit Hoffman



Yaniv shows how to dance. Photo: Elad David

Michael Mero



Photo: Tomer Halperin

then there was one of "Us". Circles and hands and lines and everything is very collective; there is almost no individuality at all. In contemporary dance, which is also international, not only ours, there is a lot of individuality. The themes have become personal as well; it's between him and her, him and him, her and her, it makes no difference. These are matters of emotions, of feelings, of things that came from the modern dance world, no doubt. Add to this the Israeli sound and song. For example, this year I did a show called "Orientatzia". It is a show that takes contemporary dance choreographed to oriental music. As

soon as you take oriental music, it probably changes how you build the dance. It directs you in a certain way. I wanted to make a connection, not go to the authentic ethnic place. I wanted to create contemporary dance with oriental music and it came out very, very interesting.

The show was so successful at the Ashdodance Festival that they had already invited it to more theaters. So if it succeeds, then there's an indication here that it has an audience and that it might also be good. This is also something that has come up in the panel in Ashdod. Someone

said, "Are we deceiving the audience when we say it's a folkloric dance"? I never called it a folkloric dance troupe, on the contrary. I don't want to be there because I don't like templates and I don't like characterizations. I am Lehakat "Mehola". Lehakat "Mehola" performs Israeli contemporary dance. Within this, I always, out of my respect for folklore, also interweave ethnic, authentic or folkloristic works. The "Orientatzia" show, for example, had some four reconstructions of ethnic works, including one that my mother did in 1980. Calculate it, it's been about forty years. I always give respect to the restorations as well; we have a lot of respect for the restorations.

You clarify your position in an interesting way. You are born into a certain reality. When you started at Hora Yerushalayim, you started with the familiar folk dances and today you say something has happened to us in society and it's very interesting. We've moved from "I am in a collective" to "I am". How do you feel about that? Do you long for what you did in past years, for what you grew up with in the past?

First of all, I'm a person who very much values nostalgia. I'm a collector. I keep all my albums, photos and videos and I upload a lot of memories on Facebook. I have albums from all the years. Not



Michael Mero

The moment you become professional, the desires, aspirations and demands of the dancers are raised, both by the dancers and those who teach them. Because once you are educated and knowledgeable about the body, you work very much on the body; so it is not sufficient for you to do just a "mayim step" or "debka step".



Photo: Tomer Halperin



Photo: Office of the President

everyone is so sentimental about their history and their private and non-private past. I am the one who safeguards everything for my parents. My mom always asks me about when an event took place and I always know what to tell her. I place a lot of value on the past and on history. At the same time, I am a person who is very much inclined to move forward and not stagnate. I keep thinking ahead about how to renew, flow with progress. That is to say, I look at it in the opposite way of what had been said in the panel discussion.

If an excellent troupe like Mehola manages to preserve folklore works at a very high level of performance, it is actually flattering to folklore and makes people who appreciate "Mehola" for its being contemporary, be exposed to folklore; not to be considered archaic. Many times, the young

audience who watches folklore troupes or attends folklore discussions, as it was at the Ashdodance panel, tells me: "What is this boring thing? Come on, let's move forward". That's how they look at it. When they watch a show of "Mehola" they don't look at it that way. That precisely is the victory. To bring in the folklore, and to make it accessible to the young folks. This is because it is accessed at a very, very high level. Do not keep it as it was in the past, but rather, make it attractive and contemporary for today. To me, that's exactly the task. If all kinds of people who are trying to revive folklore would understand this issue which was also discussed on the panel: "Let's help us revive". First of all, why the need to revive? If it needs to be revived, it is a sign that it is dead. And if it dies, one must try to understand why it died. It may be that the way to revive it is the one that kills it.

I want to quote to you things that Yigal Alon said: "If a people is not knowledgeable about its past, its present is shallow and its future is unclear". What you are saying is that you are utilizing the past.

I'm totally there. I think I very, very much preserve the past and respect the past. I just find attractive ways to bring it to the younger generation so that they want to be there as well. I don't want to force them to be there. I want them to want to be there. "Mehola" is a large network of dance schools operating in four cities. There are several hundred students in each city. Each year there are about 2,000 students in the network. For us, Israeli dance is a must. This is in contrast to other places where only

Michael Mero

those who are registered in an Israeli dance troupe dance Israeli dance. In Lehakat "Mehola", students are committed to folklore. Every student who enrolls in Mehola also learns Israeli dance, folklore, and there is always a niche for the hora and hora style dances. They learn it together with classical ballet technique, modern dance technique and hip-hop technique. This makes them very versatile dancers and dancers who learn to love Israeli folklore. This is about a large mass of young dancers and not about some thirty dancers, let's say it humorously, who chose to study Israeli folklore. To me that is the achievement. So it's true that we don't have one distinct folklore troupe that does only folklore, but to me, we get it from somewhere else and with much greater value.


Yaniv Hoffman, would you agree with the concluding sentence: "I preserve the past but also build the future"?"

Great, you said it great. I'll conclude that just last year I did a huge production called "Rokdim Shuki". I took all my mother's forty years of creations, brought together all the past and present dancers of "Mehola", including "Hora" graduates, and restored our sixteen best works. It was a celebration to work on these dances and to perform them in large halls at the Karmiel Cultural Hall, the Smolarz Theater [Smolarz Auditorium] and the Performing Arts



*From the work "Gam Banim Rokdim - Boys Also Dance".
Choreography: Yaniv Hoffman. Photo: Dorit Hoffman*

Hall in Herzliya. There were hundreds of people who came to watch the show and it went on YouTube and was documented in videos. If this is not conservation, then what is? Forty years of high quality Israeli folklore creation, on a high technical level. We worked hard on it. I took all my modern dancers, "Mehola" dancers of today and for an entire year, they all danced only Israeli folklore out of respect for "Rokdim Shuki". That's exactly it. I have no doubt that I respect the past but constantly connect it to the future generation.

Yaniv Hoffman – What I wish for you is to dance, rejoice and do good for yourself and for others. 

Last year I did a huge production called "Rokdim Shuki". I took all my mother's forty years of creations, brought together all the past and present dancers of "Mehola", including "Hora" graduates, and restored our sixteen best works.



"Yemei Teshuva - Days of Repentance". Photo: Dorit Hoffman



Yaron Meishar
Translation:
Ruth Goodman

Industry And Culture That Go Hand In Hand

A Salute to Dov Zeira ז"ל

Dov Zeira, who founded and managed the "HaTaklit-Haifa" Record Company and was an active member of the Israeli Record Federation – IFPI, passed away in January 2021.

Dov, a dear friend of mine, was an industrialist and a man of culture who produced folk dance records and helped to legally arrange the music recordings we produced for folk dance, in the face of the major record companies, music recordings that we use for folk dance to this day. This article is dedicated to him and to his work.



Dov Zeira 3.19.1931 - 1.20.2021

The 1970s and 1980s were years of flourishing and prosperity for the music industry on vinyl records (black plastic records). These are the large records, "long playing", at 33.33 revolutions per minute. Remember? The music from these records was copied to recording devices on magnetic reels and later, on cassette tapes that were used by us in folk dance.

Everyone knew the big record companies "NMC", "Hed Arzi", "Phonokol", "Isradisk", "Eastronics" and others, but there were also smaller companies, including the "HaTaklit-Haifa" company. We, in folk dance, loved the recorded music and the possibility of using songs played on the airwaves; therefore, dances were choreographed to the sounds of these songs.

The dances created then were choreographed to the original music only and not to the musical arrangements. It was therefore necessary to omit the transition passages, beautiful as they were, to arrange a proper introduction to the dance, to adjust the song speed to enable dancing to

its tunes and to have all the dance music edited together on a record or tape designed to work in the dance sessions. This involved different singers, from various record companies. All of this was to suit the needs of the evolving folk dance movement.

These edits were not in line with the rules and policies of the various record companies. They did not understand the need and did not agree to these necessary changes.

These were days of flourishing for "white records" (i.e., records made from the original recordings and sold in workshops abroad) and "workshop tapes" that were also produced in Israel, without licenses and without royalties to ACUM and the record companies but created great momentum for the development of Israeli folk dance.

At first there were a few attempts to release folk dance records by companies - "CBS" (later "NMC"), "Makolit" and possibly others.

Dov Zeira ז"ל, the owner of the HaTaklit-Haifa Record Company, produced a number of small

Ol first met
Dov Zeira at
"HaTaklit", a
large 3 story
record store
on Bograshov
Street in Tel
Aviv, where
recordings made
by all the record
companies were
sold.

Yaron Meishar



Dov Zeira's HaTaklit Library

records (speed of 45 revolutions per minute) together with **Nahum Heiman** and the **Gilboa Quintet (Amos Aloni**, lead on flute), which were suitable for folk dancing, but it wasn't enough. The company also produced most of the records of Lehakat Ha'Gevatron, many of whose wonderful renditions were for folk dances.

In the 1970s, **Yonatan Gabay** z"l suggested to **Dov Zeira** that he record special arrangements for the folk dance classes that had begun to flourish. Together they produced five special records in the "Hava Nirkoda" series with 67 dances performed by the "Amos Aloni Orchestra" (Musicians: **Amos Aloni** – flute; **Eli Gertler** – bass guitar; **Manolo Kleinez** – guitar; **Yitzhak Gelber** – accordion; **Asa Gavrieli** – drums). These recordings are used by us to this day for many of our basic dances, among them: Hora Nirkoda, Hora Medura, Tzadik Katamar, Al Tira and many others (see attached list).

In the early '80s, when the "Folk Dance Recording Center" (now "Rokdim") was established, I realized that I needed to obtain licenses and signed agreements with ACUM (the copyright holders of the songs) and the record companies that own the soundtrack. After the first groundbreaking agreement with Eastronics (a big thank you to **Mr. Noah Eitan** who was the CEO at the time and created this breakthrough), I started switching

between the CEOs of the various companies, to sign the same agreement with everyone. It was a very difficult and complicated task ...

I first met **Dov Zeira** at "HaTaklit", a large 3 story record store on Bograshov Street in Tel Aviv, where recordings made by all the record companies were sold. I made an appointment by phone with Dov, who in those days divided his time between Tel Aviv and Haifa, and on the appointed day I arrived at his office and presented him with the "exceptional" and special agreement I had signed by then with "Eastronics" and "Hed Arzi".

Dov asked: "What's in it for me? Why agree to something that on the face of it seems not to be in accordance with the usual rules and really has no economic potential for record companies?" And the truth - how many such tapes can you sell?

The core of the rationale I presented was that folk dance is an integral part of our culture that takes place "under the radar" and needs to be allowed to take place in a legal and orderly manner. Dov was convinced and an agreement was signed with the "HaTaklit" Record Company as well.

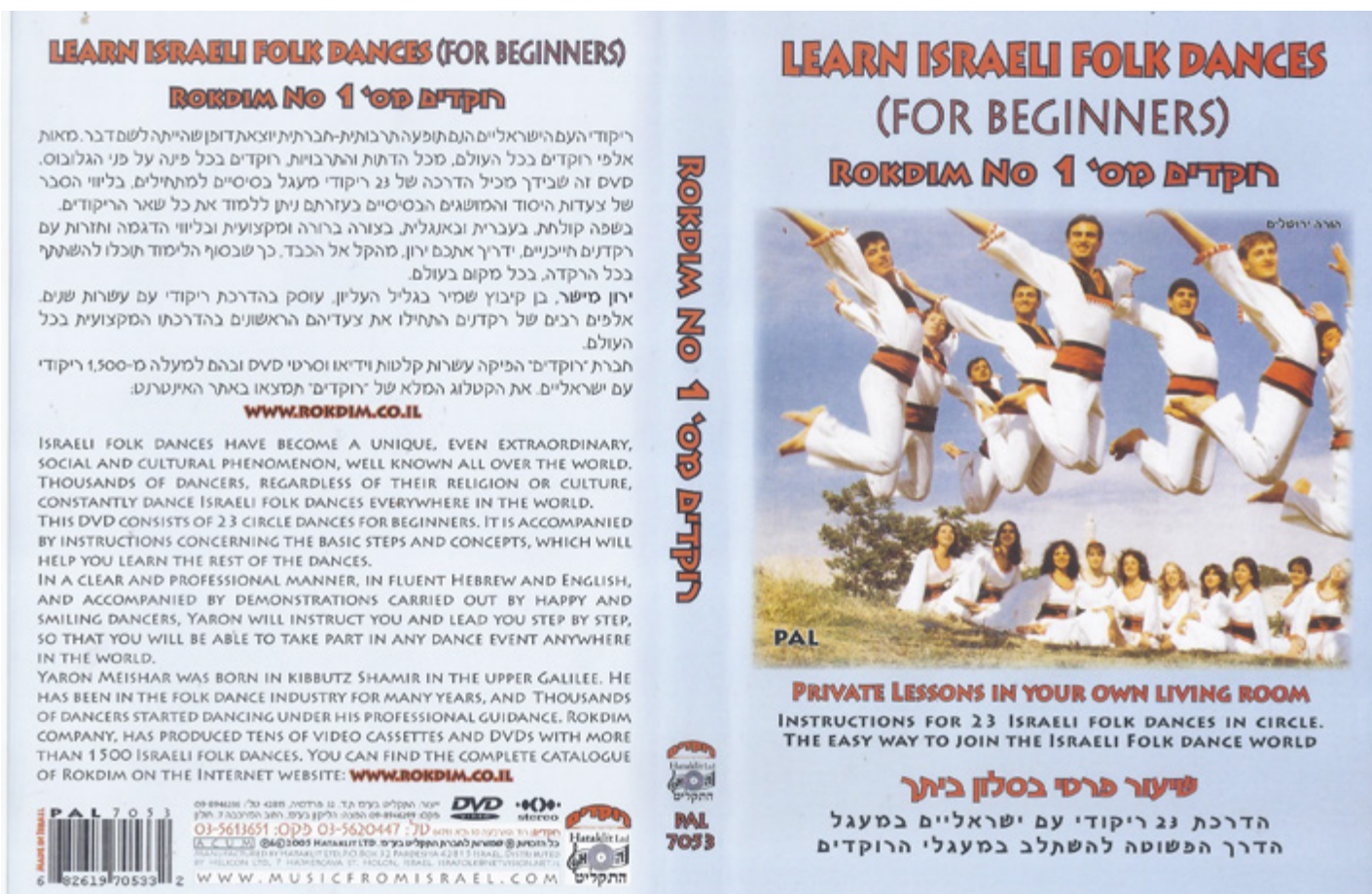
Along the way there were many more bumps and difficulties, especially when we started producing discs (CDs) instead of cassettes and when the record companies desired to make a significant profit from this industry, without a real understanding of the field. This led to the closure of the "Rokdim" store and the discontinuation of dance discs and videos.

To my delight, the break was short. We started discussions to re-regulate the field. The rapid development shifted the center of gravity and



Dov Zeira with Effi Netzer and Ran Eliran

Yaron Meishar



DVD - Beginner Circle Dances produced by HaTaklit

recordings to the Internet (as they exist today) and new agreements were needed.

Dov wholeheartedly supported a special arrangement for us and tried to convince all his friends in the Israeli Record Federation to approve the agreements. Dov took me to his friend **Itzik Alsich**, the owner of Helicon, to persuade him as well to agree to distribute folk dance music in this way. The approval was given only verbally, because signing such a thing was too complicated (editing of the transition sections, speed changes, etc.). To this day, the "Helicon" company cooperates with us and approves the "Rodkim" videos with its music, to be on YouTube.

Dov loved our field and spoke on behalf of the folk dance movement at IFPI board meetings and with key figures in the music industry, such as **Pnina Edri** from NMC and many others.

The collaboration between us was mutual and together with **Shlomo Maman** we helped him many times in various productions and his activities on the Internet. Dov loved the Land of Israel and its landscapes and liked to include them on the covers of records and CDs he produced; there

were pictures of dance groups in the landscapes of the Jezreel Valley and the whole of the Land of Israel. Dance troupe footage also appeared on DVDs he produced.

Dov received from me the flagship product of "Rokdim" – a DVD and an audio CD of beginner dances ("Rokdim" number 1), so that it could be distributed in stores. The set was indeed sold in stores and I even came across it at the duty-free shop at Ben Gurion Airport.

Dov produced a special CD of folk dances with all the Gevatron songs to which dances had been choreographed. I did the professional edits for these dances for him.

On one occasion I received a request from a client in Japan for the production of 1,000 folk dance CDs, with a fixed dance list. There was no chance I would get licenses for such a thing, so I passed the order to Dov and he obtained all the licenses from the record companies. I edited the music for him and he produced the series and sold it to them.

Many times I helped Dov identify recordings on YouTube that he was not sure if they were from


Dov loved the Land of Israel and its landscapes and liked to include them on the covers of records and CDs he produced; there were pictures of dance groups in the landscapes of the Jezreel Valley and the whole of the Land of Israel.

Yaron Meishar

his records. (His recordings are recorded in his name on YouTube and the royalties go to him.) Just recently he asked me to identify two complete CDs that were put up for sale on Amazon under the name of another company. I listened to all the songs and found the record numbers on which these recordings had first come out so that he could obtain ownership of them.

In 2011, an article was published in "Rokdim-Nirkoda" titled, "Creating a Culture is Not Trivial". Kol Yisrael's culture reporter, **Miri Krimolovsky**, had interviewed Dov at his home and we gained a beautiful article:

<http://magazines.rokdim.co.il/showartphp?lang=en&artid=146>

May his memory be for a blessing. 

List of dances on HaTaklit's Hava Nirkoda records

Song (Dance) Name	Record Name
Hine Ma Tov	Hava Nirkoda 1
Merkava	Hava Nirkoda 1
Mazurka	Hava Nirkoda 1
Hora Neurim	Hava Nirkoda 1
Ez Va'Keves	Hava Nirkoda 1
Hora Nirkoda	Hava Nirkoda 1
Cherkesiya Kfula	Hava Nirkoda 1
Nigun Atik	Hava Nirkoda 1
Kuma Echa	Hava Nirkoda 1
Debka Harel	Hava Nirkoda 1
Korobushka	Hava Nirkoda 1
Bat Ha'Karnel	Hava Nirkoda 1
Krakoviak	Hava Nirkoda 1
Ha'Macho Ha'Yevani	Hava Nirkoda 1
Aleksandrova	Hava Nirkoda 1
Erev Ba	Hava Nirkoda 1
Ta'am Ha'Man	Hava Nirkoda 2
Al Tira	Hava Nirkoda 2
Ha'Roa'a Ha'Ktana	Hava Nirkoda 2
Simchu Na	Hava Nirkoda 2
Mala'ch Mi'Sulam Ya'akov	Hava Nirkoda 2
Hora Medura	Hava Nirkoda 2
Hava Netze Ba'Machol	Hava Nirkoda 2
Tzadik Ke'Tamar	Hava Nirkoda 2
Rov Berachot	Hava Nirkoda 2
Shalom Al Israel	Hava Nirkoda 2
Simchat He'Amel	Hava Nirkoda 2
Niguno Shel Yosi	Hava Nirkoda 2
Yemin U'Smol	Hava Nirkoda 3
Hine Lanu Nigun Yesh	Hava Nirkoda 3
Ha'Kotzrim	Hava Nirkoda 3
Va'Ynikehu	Hava Nirkoda 3
Yedid Nefesh	Hava Nirkoda 3
Mi Ytneni Of	Hava Nirkoda 3

Song (Dance) Name	Record Name
Nitzanim Nireu Ba'Aretz	Hava Nirkoda 3
Sisu Et Yerushalaeim	Hava Nirkoda 3
Sovevuni	Hava Nirkoda 3
Od Yishama	Hava Nirkoda 3
Sisu Ve'Simchu	Hava Nirkoda 3
Yevarechecha	Hava Nirkoda 3
Kalu Raglaim	Hava Nirkoda 3
Debka Ud	Hava Nirkoda 4
Sham Hari Golan	Hava Nirkoda 4
Aneim Zmirot	Hava Nirkoda 4
Beit Chalomotai	Hava Nirkoda 4
Bat Harim	Hava Nirkoda 4
Gozi Li	Hava Nirkoda 4
Debka Gilboa	Hava Nirkoda 4
Kumi Uri	Hava Nirkoda 4
Har Va'Kar	Hava Nirkoda 4
Hora Ha'Bika'a	Hava Nirkoda 4
Hora Chedera	Hava Nirkoda 4
Koreim Lanu La'Lechet	Hava Nirkoda 4
Mezare israel	Hava Nirkoda 5
Yesh Et La'Amal	Hava Nirkoda 5
Ki Tina,m	Hava Nirkoda 5
Va'Yeven Uziahu	Hava Nirkoda 5
Eim Hupalnu	Hava Nirkoda 5
Eiti Mi'Levanon	Hava Nirkoda 5
Siru Ha'Shir	Hava Nirkoda 5
Shir Sameach	Hava Nirkoda 5
Ve'Shuv Eitchem	Hava Nirkoda 5
Zemer Eikarim	Hava Nirkoda 5
Dodi Li	Hava Nirkoda 5
Me'Emek Le'Giva'a	Hava Nirkoda 5
Zeme Lach	Hava Nirkoda 5
Debka Chamor	Hava Nirkoda 5



Danielle Shkop

Translation:
Dena Matmon



YEAHBIT – An Israeli Fitness Party

A New Dance Sport Comes Into Being



You've certainly come across the term "Yeahbit" at least once. "Yeahbit, isn't that some kind of exercise?" "I think it has something to do with folk dancing..." "Yeahbit, is that for kids or for adults?"

So, let's straighten things out – What is Yeahbit? Yeahbit = An Israeli fitness party.

A Yeahbit activity is an aerobic workout with high BPM (beats per minute) of about 45 minutes in duration. It is conducted with a background of a special remix of Israeli music from the world of folk dance. The workout integrates steps from well-known folk dances with aerobic exercises, muscle strengthening and body building at various levels of difficulty, all at the discretion of the trainer. Like we said – a party!

A Yeahbit session includes 12 songs. Each workout begins with a song for warming up and ends with one to relax the muscles. The movements in each song have a set pattern, part aerobic and part "dance" (based on a known folk dance). This pattern repeats for the length of the song. The set pattern enables the trainee to quickly pick up the steps, without any previous experience.

The dances are divided into levels of difficulty: easy, intermediate, difficult and the workout is built from a combination of the three. Thus, there are three peaks to every workout. In this

way, the trainee will work hard but also give his/her body the time to rest during the activity. The purpose is to complete the workout with a feeling of achievement and with a smile.

An additional advantage of the method is the ability to improve and to make progress. The same exercises can occasionally be done a little bit better, a little bit stronger, with a higher level of intensity, thus adapting the workout to all levels and ages.

How did it all begin?

"I had this vision of creating something that would integrate folk dancing with aerobics, something suitable for a fitness gym," says **Gadi Bitton**, 55, a dance instructor, choreographer, Chair of Ha'Mador Le'Folklore Ve'Rikudei Am (the Department of Folklore and Folk Dance), Chair of Ha'Mador Le'Zemer Ivri B'Misrad Ha'Tarbut (the Hebrew Song Department of the Ministry of Culture), and the founder of the Yeahbit Method. He continues: "Yeahbit had been brewing in my mind for a long time. I went to many fitness studios and participated in many classes – kickboxing, aerobic dance, body-pump and others. I noticed that all of them used foreign music". In the framework of the new concept, Gadi introduced Israeli music into the world of fitness. As soon as the idea was crystallized in



Lilach Nimzar



Gadi Bitton

Danielle Shkop

Training...



his own mind, he turned to **Lilach Nimzar**, 34, an aerobics and fitness instructor as well as a dance teacher.

Folk dancing has been Lilach's hobby since she was a little girl; over the years she worked together with Gadi, in the building and filming of dances.

As a fitness trainer, Lilach leads aerobic dance workouts and integrates music that she loves from the folk dance world. She would combine strengthening exercises with dances and check on how her students reacted to the music and the movement. Gadi, who was working out in the same fitness studio, started to watch what was happening in the studio, and then, one day, he met with Lilach and told her of his idea.

The two started to work together, spending an entire year on the new project – forming a new company, finding investors, building exercises, etc.

And finally, three years ago, they put their new product on the market – Yeahbit!

Is it suitable for me?

Yeahbit is suitable for everyone: for folk dancers as well as for people who never in their lives stepped onto the dance floor. There's no need for previous experience. The method is suitable for young people and for adults, men and women, actually for anyone who loves Israeli music, dance and sports and who also wants some physical activity that he/she will enjoy.

Today there are three main programs:

Yeahbit Kids – geared for kindergarten through 12th grade.

Yeahbit Gold – geared for senior citizens.

And Yeahbit – geared for everyone else.

Each trainee can suit the exercises to his/her level, advancing and strengthening throughout the workout session. Every four months a new Yeahbit workout is added, with a new program that includes 12 new songs and dances. The instructors, who are spread throughout the entire country, introduce the new dances within the existing workout routines – a new dance or two at each session. In this way, the trainees continue

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to experience their success with familiar dances, while adding a variety of new dances to their repertoire.

However, over time, it has become clear that the marketing potential for Yeahbit is mostly for children. As opposed to previous years, all the trainers who took the Yeahbit instructors' course this year came from the world of children, one way or another. There seems to be a great thirst for new and innovative programs for children.

Unlike in gyms where it is difficult to introduce new areas of activity, there is great demand but little supply for the world of children. As a result of this, Yeahbit Kids was brought into the school system and was included in the curriculum budget. Many physical education teachers took advanced study classes in Yeahbit and they give classes to children, particularly as enrichment after regular school hours or as part of sports classes. Many cities are involved including Netanya, Kfar Saba, Herzlia, Tel Aviv, Modi'in and others.

In other countries, there seems to be a lack of Israeli material that is interesting enough to attract the children. Today, there's very little interest among Jewish children in folk dancing. Yeahbit, on the other hand, is attractive to them and evokes enthusiasm. There's a great demand, for instance in South America, among dozens of teachers who are interested in doing advanced study as instructors. Just after the outbreak of the coronavirus, Yeahbit instruction courses were supposed to begin in Argentina, Chicago and Los Angeles. The pandemic froze the situation. The aspiration is to resume preparations for opening these courses around the world as soon as the pandemic permits.

Instructors Explain

Michal Barak, 49, fitness instructor, Pilates teacher, TRX (Total Body Resistance Exercise) trainer and senior citizens instructor, talks about the Yeahbit workouts she has started to lead: "When I was first exposed to it – it excited me! I realized that it has unbelievable potential to connect people who love to dance with a physical

activity and Israeli music – it's the ultimate combination." From Michal's experience as a fitness trainer, the basic difficulty for people is to start doing a sports activity because "it doesn't interest me". But for those who are interested, Yeahbit accesses sport indirectly, in a pleasant and dance-like way, without the title of "sport". And along the way they dance, become stronger and enjoy.



Michal Barak

We asked Michal what is so unique about Yeahbit, as compared to other sport-dance classes (for example zumba, salsa, etc.). She replied that Yeahbit integrates every dance with strengthening exercises, as well as aerobics and dancing. It particularly integrates Israeli music from the folk dance world and creates an atmosphere full of energy – the feeling of an Israeli party.

In addition, the dances are constructed in a set pattern, so that occasionally the exercises can be executed more successfully, stronger and on a higher level, and just like folk dancing – in Yeahbit every song has its own dance. Thus, regardless of where you trained before, you can come to any Yeahbit workout session anywhere in the world and you will be familiar with the dances and the steps. Michal says that, "From a different perspective, you can say that Yeahbit is a more 'enjoyable' workout. Unlike strength and TRX exercises, for instance, people come to Yeahbit to enjoy themselves and to burn calories. There's no 'right' and 'wrong' – the important thing is to enjoy, keep moving and to dance. The workout is more accessible and pleasant, and less 'threatening'".

Lilach, who created the method, adds that as a trainer, the fun is watching the trainees over a period of time. When you keep exercising on a regular basis, you can see how people fall in love with it and can't stop.

The same exercises can occasionally be done a little bit better, a little bit stronger, with a higher level of intensity, thus adapting the workout to all levels and ages.

Danielle Shkop



Shai Goren

of sports and a healthy lifestyle. People are sweating when they complete the workout and they burn calories. But they enjoy it and they dance and develop their dance skills – it’s a combination of everything and people wait impatiently for the next class”.

I also want to participate!



Hani Pe'er

training for the last year. Hani doesn’t define herself as either a sports person or as a dancer. What attracted her first was the music, which reminded her of the folk dancing she did in high school and it revived her yearning for it.

She continues by saying that Yeahbit lets each individual train at his/her own level. Nobody compares themselves to others. Everyone comes to dance, to enjoy and to burn up calories - together.

“As for age”, Hani says, “the group always changes. Sometimes younger people come, sometimes older people, but I’m always comfortable with them and feel that I’m part of the group. The feeling is that it is dancing regardless of one’s age”.

Yeahbit instructors are, in two words – energy

Shai Goren, 21, fitness and Yeahbit trainer – formerly at Misgav and now in Tel Aviv, relates reactions of the trainees: “People are really enthusiastic about learning a new type of workout, especially now with all the awareness

chargers. This is the opinion of all the trainees we interviewed (each about his/her trainer). All the trainees describe an identical situation, with lighthearted, driven, motivated trainers who inspire an atmosphere of fun. It doesn’t matter if you’re 20 or 50. And that’s the essence of Yeahbit – a fitness party for everyone!

Hagit Sternberg, 48, trained regularly at the Misgav Country Club’s fitness sessions when someone told her about a new group with a new instructor. It took some time until she came to the first session, but from that moment on, she was hooked!

“As a woman who has been dancing zumba for almost 20 years, what drew me to Yeahbit was that I love Israeli music.” Hagit, who was a folk dancer in her youth, about 30 years ago, says that because of Yeahbit she was happy to start folk dancing again. “I come from Karmiel and every year I promise myself that I’ll return to dancing at the next dance festival. And every year, I’ve found another excuse not to do it. But this year I really plan to do it. Yeahbit reminded me how much I’ve missed it.”

Hagit does Yeahbit twice a week, “but if there was a session every day, I would go”.



Hagit Sternberg

How to Join?

So, if you’d like to be part of the next fad – the simplest way is to open “HOT VOD” [HOT Israeli television channel videos] and find an array of preset Yeahbit workouts. All you need to do is move the living room furniture and begin to workout at home.

Yeahbit also has an internet site, www.yeahbit.co.il, where you can purchase the workouts online. In the near future, a new site will open with an organized listing of all the locations where in person workout sessions with instructors will take place.

Are we likely to lose the folk dance crowd in favor of the Yeahbit world? Is there a fear that more harm than good would come to the world of folk dance? And isn't there fear that the means (i.e., Yeahbit) will eventually become the end?

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Of course, there are instructors all over the country who give private lessons. So, if you want to train with a friend – you can check the community centers/country clubs/studios/fitness clubs near your home and see if there are Yeahbit courses. If not, you can suggest that your fitness center start a course. They can contact Yeahbit through the Yeahbit website's homepage and it will help them find a suitable instructor.

Yeahbit = a continuation of folk dancing?

Alongside the enthusiasm for Yeahbit, there are also many questions about it.

One of them, which arose from various dance leaders, deals with the existence of "double dances", i.e., two dances choreographed to the same music. According to the regulations of Irgun HaMarkidim – The Folk Dance Leaders Organization, if a registered dance has been created to a melody, it is not permitted to create another dance to the same melody. In order to create a dance, the melody must first be registered on the organization's website, and only after receiving approval, the choreographer may choreograph a dance to this melody.

The question arises as to whether or not this regulation applies to Yeahbit. After all, in creating Yeahbit's dances, they are actually reworking a song that already has a dance and choreographing a new dance with the same steps arranged differently from the original.

Isn't that considered creating a new dance to a song that already has a dance?

Well, first of all, **Gadi Bitton**, the founder of the method, wants to make it clear that, practically speaking, it is possible to choreograph a dance to any melody, whether or not a dance has been created to it in the past. Moreover, under antitrust law, this must not be prevented especially in the arts.

That being the case, the decision not to create another dance to a melody that already had a dance, was made anyway. In the past, there had been cases that caused different groups in the

harkadot (dance sessions) to simultaneously dance different dances, which created confusion among the dancers. Therefore, the consent was obtained among the markidim (dance leaders), so that today it is unacceptable to create a dance to a melody that already has a dance, but legally – it is possible.

After this clarification, Gadi replied: Yeahbit dances fall under the category of "adapted dances". Just as we (the dance leaders) adapt dances for children or seniors, so I have adapted dances for the gym and for children. I have taken most of the steps from the original dances; instead of dancing them in a circle, I have arranged them in line formation. There are dances that have been adapted for dancers in wheelchairs, for example, that have many more "drastic" adjustments than the Yeahbit adjustments, in order for the dance to be done.

I think if we are interested in "spreading the word", there are many ways to do it; this one is more correct in my opinion. Anyone who works with children probably knows that today's children no longer like to dance in a circle; they do not connect to this form of dance. This is why I took Yeahbit in the direction of line dancing but kept to the basic steps of the original dance so that the trainees could later enter the dance circle and easily integrate since the steps are familiar. I think there is only a benefit here. People who may not have been exposed to folk dancing, will now be exposed to it [through Yeahbit]; later they will be able to easily join the dance circle. We have just added the contemporariness of sport, which is what interests the community today.

If there would be a new form of dance tomorrow, in which, for example, your dance is included with song and dance step changes, is this a legitimate act in your eyes? Even though your name would not be displayed in the context of the aforementioned dance?

I think that, if they would take my dance and add breakdance movements to it, and it is danced on the streets - I would be very pleased.

Each trainee can suit the exercises to his/her level, advancing and strengthening throughout the workout session. Every four months a new Yeahbit workout is added, with a new program that includes 12 new songs and dances.

Danielle Shkop

Despite using the music and steps from the world of folk dance, Yeahbit tends mainly to the world of sports and fitness. Another question arises: Are we likely to lose the folk dance crowd in favor of the Yeahbit world? Is there a fear that more harm than good would come to the world of folk dance? And isn't there fear that the means (i.e., Yeahbit) will eventually become the end?

Gadi responds: "The world is constantly in motion and changing; we need to change with it. If the world of folk dance is facing extinction, despite all our efforts, it is better to try to develop the field in a new direction, in order to keep, in some way, the dancers who may leave".


With this thought in mind, Gadi created the innovative fitness project, which incorporates Israeli folk dance. He explains: "The world of sports has conquered the world and that is why I started this project. We shouldn't be afraid. Yes, it is possible that people will move from folk dance to Yeahbit, but even if we get to this point, we will have benefitted. After all, those who want to leave folk dancing – will leave. In the new situation, we at least allow a person to choose an alternative that is close enough to remain associated with the field. Those who are tired of folk dancing can find pleasure in Yeahbit. But also vice versa, the circle of folk dance enthusiasts may gain a new audience of "fitness seekers".

As for the claim that Yeahbit will bring about the end of Israeli folk dance, Gadi replies that, over the years, many new fads were forsaken: international folk dances, salsa, lambada and others. What has helped Israeli folk dance to survive is renewal and innovation and Yeahbit might well help to preserve this culture.

Gadi hopes, despite the criticism, that the community of dancers will regard it as a recipe for success.

As for the claim that Yeahbit will bring about the end of Israeli folk dance, Gadi replies that, over the years, many new fads were forsaken: international folk dances, salsa, lambada and others. What has helped Israeli folk dance to survive is renewal and innovation and Yeahbit might well help to preserve this culture.

Today, however, it's difficult to examine these claims, as the coronavirus cut off the continuity of Yeahbit's development. But trainees who folk danced in the past say that Yeahbit has awakened a yearning in them and some have returned to Israeli folk dancing. Trainees who weren't familiar with folk dance say that Yeahbit exposed them to a new world and some of them have started to participate in sessions for beginners because of Yeahbit.

Apparently Yeahbit is bringing new blood to a new audience. Whether they join the dance sessions or sweat with Yeahbit, we the dancers can only win. And in the meantime – you are invited to burn some calories with Yeahbit! 

Contact information:

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E-mail: Seals@yeahbit.co.il

Telephone (in Israel): 054-7446227

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Yeahbit.co.il





David Ben Asher

Translation:

Ruth Goodman

Photos: David Ben Asher and Family Album

To Plow a Fallow Field and Reap Folklore

The Creative Dance and Song Duo – Raya and Yossi Spivak

Perhaps no other creative duo has been as prolific as this special couple, Raya in dance and the late Yossi in music, who have enriched the State of Israel and world Jewry. The story of Raya and “Niguno Shel Yossi” (“Yossi’s Melody”), about decades of joint creative work, is in the article before us.

Raya says:

Every person has his/her own identity. Every nation also has its own identity that includes the songs, melodies, traditional attire, food, customs and even dances. The history of folk dance in the State of Israel recognizes prominent personalities and figures who, before and after the establishment of the State, have contributed and been influential. There were individuals whose work contributed to the construction of our Israeli folk dance component here (in Israel).

Among the leaders were couples whose joint work reflected the connection between the song, the text and especially the melody and dance. There was mutual fertilization between the composer and the creator of the dance. We met **Leah Bergstein** at Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan with the composer **Matityahu Shelem**. **Tamar Alyagor** and **Gil Aldema** at the Hadassim Youth Village, **Rivka Shturman** and **Nira Chen** in Kibbutz Ein Harod and others.

Later, the creative couple, **Raya and Yossi Spivak** were added to the list. Their uniqueness was that they were a married couple. They created and worked together – Yossi in music and Raya in dance. They worked a lot for the folk dance movement, its development and preservation. For 65 years, Raya and Yossi have been an integral part of the folklore of dance and music.

I am conducting this interview at the Spivak couple's home in Holon. Raya's story is undoubtedly also related to Yossi, the musician who had been associated with the folk dance movement from its inception and for many years. Together they were a uniquely creative duo.

Raya tells us:

I was born in 1934. I spent my childhood, in the 1930s and 1940s, in the then North Tel Aviv. I studied at the grade school in the north and from there, I attended Ironi Dalet High School. At the age of 5, I had already started learning to dance with the great **Gertrud Kraus** and acted in the children's theater of the Teachers' Center. We performed at the Moghrabi Theatre.

The high school had a specialization in Israeli artistic expression and that's how I met the drama teacher, **Sara Levi-Tanai**, and **Tova Zimbel**, the teacher of Israeli dance. The music instructor



Raya Spivak



Raya and Yossi Spivak

David Ben Asher



Hishtalmut at Beit Poalei HaHistadrut



Raya Spivak Group

was **Yossi Spivak**. I danced in the high school performing troupe and that's how I met Sara Levi-Tanai in the drama class.

Upon graduating from high school, I enlisted in the IDF and was integrated into various and special training positions; I completed my service as an outstanding student. When I finished my military service, I married Yossi, the music instructor from high school, and immediately after the marriage, I returned to study dance.

As a child, I studied classical dance and its foundations with Gertrud, but in my adulthood, I was introduced to modern dance that was, at the time, in its infancy. I was exposed to Martha Graham, who had come to Israel, and was one of the founders of the modern dance movement in the world; I was fascinated. After the marriage, I met **Mrs. Hassia Levy-Agron**, who founded the Dance Academy in Jerusalem. I studied for a few years with Hassia as part of the Conservatory's group in Jerusalem. She is the one who helped me formulate a direction, clarified my understanding of dance and outlined my path as a teacher and creator.

How did you get into folk dancing?

While in school I had already met **Gurit Kadman**, who was the visionary of the idea and formulated our identity component through the folk dances of our country. As a child, I heard from her about the First Folk Dance Festival held at Dalia in 1944. I had already participated in the 1947 festival and had come with my parents. The festival continued

throughout the night because a curfew had been imposed by the British [through martial law].

What was first on your path to folk dance?

For me, my marriage to Yossi developed the direction towards folk dance. Yossi was already a well-known accordionist and accompanist; through him, I came to know Gurit well and later, other choreographers and dance personalities. They all worked with Yossi, who was considered to be a knowledgeable and prominent musician.

Gurit demanded from Yossi that I join in the work for the folk dance movement, which was in its infancy, and that I contribute my knowledge and skills. This is how she introduced me to **Tirza Hodes**, who ran the Histadrut's folk dance section for 40 years. I was fascinated by Tirza's vigor and her instincts. Gurit told her that I have a dance education and that she should take advantage of it.

Later, at Gurit's suggestion, I created a dance that was supposed to be folk in nature and maintain an Israeli style. Gurit's idea was for Yossi to write a melody that would be in a kind of Yemenite-Israeli style. (It was the time of the aliyot to Israel.) The year was 1956. Yossi wrote the music and I immediately connected to the melody and created corresponding movements for it that made a statement. **Sara Levi** admired Yossi's melody and Gurit loved the dance, but in her eyes, it lacked perfection because the melody had no lyrics. Yossi suggested that we look for a verse in the Bible. We turned to the comforting prophecy of the prophet Isaiah.

Prachim u'Levavot - Flowers and Hearts

The verse was, "Ma Navu Al He'Harim Raglei Hamevaser - How Pleasant On The Mountains Are The Feet Of The Messenger" (Isaiah 52:7). The words matched that period of time, just as it does today. I wanted it to be a dance that meandered in a snake-like pattern in order to accommodate many dancers. It ended up as a circle

dance. Gurit expressed her opinion and said, "This is a folk dance for the masses. It has both character and style".

The song was liked by many singers and musicians and was widely recorded. From then on, all my works were always by request and/or invitation, as was "Niguno Shel Yossi". This time, Gurit asked that it be in an Eastern European style, but Israeli. I wanted to create a circle dance but, to be more social, with couples in an alternating partner motif. I had the idea, then explained the structure I wanted to Yossi. Yossi did not even sit down next to the piano. He just took a piece of paper he found, made a "staff" (5 lines for musical notation), hummed and wrote a melody; and within 10 minutes, he said to me, "Take it!" On paper, Yossi had written down the notes and so we brought the melody and dance to the course for instructors.

Everyone was thrilled and Gurit was angry again: "There are no lyrics to the melody; it's a waste of a beautiful dance!" We quickly called Yossi's faithful friend, the musician Aharon Shefi, who knew and knows how to rhyme quickly and so a song was born, but it still remained untitled. Aharon and I immediately said that this song should be called, "HaNigun Shel Yossi – Yossi's Melody". Of course, Yossi Spivak, and thus the composition was completed.

The melody caught on immediately; the dance [now known as "Niguno Shel Yossi"] found its place, but the lyrics were left behind despite their appropriateness to the time. **Yehuda Emanuel** redeemed the song and recorded it with the lyrics. Here they are:

"How happy is Saba's (Grandpa's) heart
With a glass of schnapps
How a handful of tobacco
Elevates the soul of every bloke

Ay, ay, ay, ay
Let's raise a glass my friends
Another one – to life
And Am Yisrael Chai (the people of Israel live)"

I wanted the dance to express joy, openness, camaraderie and partnership through stylized simple steps based on walking, stamping, clapping hands and being folksy. Later, along the way, I created dances according to a special request or a specific need I faced for holidays, events, milestones, various situations and target populations. So it was with the dance, "Vaynikehu" ["Vaynikehu D'vash Misela – He Made Him To Suck Honey Out Of The Crag", Deuteronomy 32:13], created at the request of Gil, who turned to Yossi to save the tune because all the singers were making mistakes with the meter. Gil wrote it in mixed meter and people who sang it added another quarter

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For me, my marriage to Yossi developed the direction towards folk dance. Yossi was already a well-known accordionist and accompanist; through him, I came to know Gurit well and later, other choreographers and dance personalities. They all worked with Yossi, who was considered to be a knowledgeable and prominent musician.



beat to the tune. Gil got angry and requested, "Raya, do something!"

I created a dance in mixed meter. This is a special example of adhering to the melody and not the other way around. In every dance I tried to keep the original melody, the original rhythm, the character and not vice versa. I always wanted the steps to be simple for the sake of the folk quality.

An important dance of mine is, "Noladeti LaShalom – I Was Born For Peace", which was created at the onset of pop songs and was arranged especially for the recording. The musical accompaniment was stylized and with transitions. I decided to create a dance that would be Israeli-pop and exactly according to the melody, as written by **Uzi Hitman**, with the arrangement by **Matti Caspi**. The dance served as a backdrop for **Anwar Sadat's** arrival in Israel. The dance caught on and is danced by all: children, youth, adults and seniors.

Thus I created dances, out of thought and purpose, but I did not do much about it, as I turned to other channels of activity that would express our nation. It was important for me to develop our identity in dance folklore. For me, Tirza, Gurit and the wonderful framework of the Histadrut Cultural Center, were an inexhaustible fountain to promote and strengthen the importance of our special dance language, through proper expression, by

understanding the roots that make up the people, the country and culture.

Towards this end, I mobilized my skills and my energy. For many years, I worked alongside Tirza instructing in the Ulpanim (training for dance instructors), with Yossi contributing in his role as a music teacher and composer. Yossi also wrote two books on the relationship between music and folk dance.

Before holidays, we organized seminars with Tirza to preserve the style and characteristics of each holiday. My crowning achievement was creating a Central Dance Folklore Workshop. The goal was to impart knowledge about dance folklore, in general, as well as our part in the development of Israeli folk dance.

Raya, tell us about the landmarks in your folkdance work.

During my work, I developed various fields and I also established myself as an organizer, presenter and director of folklore events; I gained a lot of support. I directed and staged a special evening of dance and song in memory of **Emanuel Zamir** [among the founders of informal singing ensembles and public sing-alongs], in collaboration with **Ron Huldai**, Mayor of Tel Aviv; a special evening for **Gil Aldama** upon his receiving the Israel Prize [for Hebrew Song]; an evening to mark the 40th

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anniversary of the folk dance section, and an evening about the **Inbal Dance Theater** and **Gila Toledano**.

And the national projects you initiated, Raya?

In 1963, 25 years after the establishment of the State of Israel, the Ministry of Education requested that ceremonies be held for this event in schools, which led me to understand the need for folk dance to be included in the education system. I worked on this subject for almost five years and built a curriculum called, "Beit Sefer Roked – Dancing School". The conditions and possibilities seemed doable in order to institutionalize the subject area through physical education. I turned to the then Minister of Education, **Zevulun Hammer**, and I was privileged to receive backing and a budget from him. I went through all the districts in the country demonstrating school yard harkadot (group dancing) in every school. I published an instruction booklet for the 30th anniversary year of the State and during that year, I demonstrated a municipal ceremony with all the children of the city of Ashdod. The idea took hold throughout the country. Soon a generation of teachers arose who were enthusiastic about the idea and the annual conference of Beit Sefer Roked became a major event in many cities in the country.

During the Yom Kippur War, I was asked to

contribute to special education children in dance and movement, which later led me to work for this population. I got involved in working at AKIM institutions [the national organization that cares for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Israel] and services for the mentally challenged and special education. Thus, a powerful project was born that I am proud of. The project was recognized by a wonderful name, "Prachim u'Levavot - Flowers and Hearts".

The students, like flowers, ask everyone to open their hearts. I created a work plan, I harnessed Yossi and we disseminated the plan all over the country. I moved from one care center to another and mentored instructors and trainees; I created a method of work and built representative groups in the various settings that could go out into the community with a properly staged show. During 25 years, I established 21 dance groups from Tzfat to Dimona. Every year, we put on an impressive show and presented it at the Opera House - Performing Arts Center, in Tel Aviv. Later, I asked **Yonatan Karmon** [founder and] director of the Karmiel Dance Festival, for permission to bring Prachim u'Levavot groups to the festival where we also won special recognition and were integrated into Israeli folk dance.

The highlight of "Prachim u'Levavot" was



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participation abroad in an Arts Conference for the Exceptional. We won first place for the representation and performance. For me, it was a real lifetime achievement.

In the 1970s, I was invited to England to establish the idea of Beit Sefer Roked for the Jewish educational system there through a special organization that dealt with folk dance. The principals and teachers were very committed to the idea; I built activity programs for holidays and various study topics related to the people and the State of Israel, including the creation of instructional and musical materials.

From the beginning of my involvement in activities and creating for Israeli dance and song, I have had ideas which have characterized our people, the country and our culture here. The values, the meaning, the integration of generations, the shared joy and the feeling of "togetherness" have guided me all the way.

The project manager in England, **Maurice Stone**, an avid folk dancer, thought that success in England could expand and contribute to post-Stalinist Jewry in the Soviet Union. With time, the news about my work reached the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem and the United Jewish Appeal. And so, Yossi and I were invited to the USSR. The year was 1989.

We were invited to teach and bring the great message of the State of Israel to the Jewry of the USSR through dance. Therefore, I prepared a special work program that would fit the goal of creating closeness, learning about Israel and would contribute toward immigration to Israel. I called the program "Jewishness and Israeliness in Dance, Movement and Song". We brought along instructional booklets. Yossi took care of recorded music and, in our suitcases, we had hidden symbols of holidays and materials to deepen the learning.

In each of the venues, a concluding event was held in an impressive and exciting way.

Something special about the history of folk dance?

In 1994 at Karmiel, on the 50th anniversary of Kibbutz Dalia, I directed and staged a salute to the first dance festival that was held in 1944. It was a huge show with three stages, the Karmiel choir and with the best dance troupes in the country that had recreated dances and performances by the creators of that time. Children, teenagers and adults took part in this show. They danced and evoked the memories of the first composers and choreographers through songs and melodies and folk music groups like in those times.

Yossi directed the musical side and I, the staging. It was a final show with the original Dalia veterans who came to speak and share with the best veteran dancers. It was a salute to history under the auspices of Adi Eldar - the then Mayor of Karmiel.

Where do you think Israeli folk dance stands today?

From the beginning of my involvement in activities and creating for Israeli dance and song, I have had ideas which have characterized our people, the country and our culture here. The values, the meaning, the integration of generations, the shared joy and the feeling of "togetherness" have guided me all the way. Unfortunately, over time, something became a bit damaged. We saved little and lost a lot. Today it's not folklore; it's more entertainment. An escape from the tradition of true popular expression. It's not the values built by the founders; it's something else. In my time, if I was successful and contributed something from the belief in the identity of our folklore, and if through my activities I was able to put things into history, not only theoretical and nostalgic, but also into practical history, then I have achieved full satisfaction. And thank you to all the many I have known along the way. 🙌



David Ben-Asher

Photos:

David Ben-Asher

Translation:

Dena Matmon

Banishing the Darkness

The Blind Dancing Israeli Folk Dances

Chanukah, the holiday of lights for the people of Israel, is both literal as well as metaphorical for them. Those for whom the world is mostly in darkness because of their blindness, have found their special light on the dance floor. This phenomenon is unique to Israel and probably will not be found anywhere else in the world: The blind dancing Israeli folk dances. During the holiday, two effervescent and invigorating dance troupes joined the hundreds of people at the dance sessions of **Elad Shtamer** in Ra'anana and **Gadi Bitton** in Kfar Saba (during Chanukah 2019, before Corona). It was heartwarming to watch "Nigun Atik", "Eretz Eretz", "Erev Ba" and other dances from the Israeli repertoire being happily danced by both sighted and blind people together.

a dance, which are sometimes complicated, can be difficult even for those dancers who can see well; all the more so for people with limited vision. The instructors invest all their methodical skills and their personal attention in order to impart the skills needed to learn the dances. And the results – are amazing.

Our super-instructors, Elad and Gadi, each lead their integrated sessions of dancers, and it's often difficult to differentiate those with vision from the blind or those with limited vision. And the circle keeps moving and everyone is equal on the dance floor.

And here we have a double celebration. **Shimi**, who sees well with both eyes, noticed that **Chaya**,



Lehakat HaRakdanim Ha'Ivrim Dancers with Elad Shtamer

Two skilled dance instructors are responsible for this wonderful phenomenon – **Yossi Tfilin** and **Zohar Bartal**. They have been leading this special initiative with their full heart and soul for many years. They are assisted by sighted volunteers who work regularly with the blind and dance circle and couple dances with them. It's not as easy as it looks. Learning the steps of



Shimi and Chaya Ben Ami

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who is blind, was dancing next to him and he enjoyed watching her graceful steps. Love was born on the dance floor and the wedding, to everyone's delight, was very posh. Congratulations to the dancing couple.

Yossi Tfilin – Light for the Blind

There are very few instructors with the strength and motivation to undertake and devote themselves to this far from simple task – teaching the blind to dance. The prominent ones, perhaps the only ones today, are **Yossi Tfilin** and **Zohar Bartal**. Also outstanding in this field was **Orly Bar Or** z"l.

In an interview for “Rokdim-Nirkoda”, Yossi Tfilin tells us about his background of rich experiences:

I once worked in a school and I organized folk dancing for the children during Friday recesses. I noticed a girl who was sitting at the side clapping her hands in time with the music, however, she didn't join the circle of dancers. It became clear that the girl was blind and didn't dare to join the group. I approached her in an attempt to get her to join her friends. However, they pestered her and complained that she was slowing them down. I suggested to both her and to her mother that she learn the dances at home during the afternoon. To everyone's joy, this was very helpful and she became part of the dancing at school. This is where the “craziness” to devote myself to teaching the blind to dance began. I've now been active in this field for 26 years.

Yossi, tell us about the techniques, difficulties, successes and emotions:

It isn't easy to teach the blind to dance to the music and to execute the dance steps dictated by the choreographer. A blind person stands in front of me. I kneel on my knees and move his/her legs according to the steps of the dance. Or I put his/her hands in front of my face through which I demonstrate the step or the hand movements. For them, spatial orientation is difficult, especially when they're in a group and the steps to the dance demand that everyone moves in unison

and in the same direction. After the instruction, we start to implement the dance and here the sighted partners come into the picture: They help guide the transfer of weight from side to side in place or while turning, as well as turning in the correct direction. Sometimes, I alter something in one of the dances to suit obvious limitations. And this is how my students and I have reached such a good level of dance and movement.

Who are the people, how are things organized, the sessions, the performing troupes?

At present, I work in Netanya and in Herzliya. I founded dance sessions and dance troupes. Each session includes eight blind persons and eight sighted volunteers. We meet once a week to learn and to dance in a space that was allocated to us by the municipality. This



Yossi Tfilin

It's true that my dancers don't see the reactions of their audience but they hear the applause, the hand clapping and they feel the enthusiasm and emotion of the spectators surrounding them.



Wearing blue costumes is Yossi Tfilin's Lehakat Ha'Ivrim Performing Troupe



Wearing yellow are Zohar Bartal's Lehakat Ha'Ivrim dancers

David Ben-Asher



Lehakat Ha'Ivrim Dancers with Gadi Bitton

involves complicated logistics for commuting to the sessions. The cities help us and we receive some assistance from the Association For The Blind (Ha'Aguda LeMa'an Ha'Iver). The dancers pay a symbolic fee to participate. As mentioned in this interview, my ambition is to occasionally integrate the blind dancers into regular dance sessions with hundreds of dancers.

In time and as my creative abilities improved, I started a dance troupe for the blind following the example of the wheelchair dance troupes for the physically handicapped.

I prepared choreographies for performances and we performed at various venues such as Beit Loewenstein, assisted living facilities and at schools in Herzliya and Netanya, etc.

My dream had been to perform with the troupe at the Karmiel Festival and, indeed, we were invited to perform at the most prestigious of the events there – the opening performance of the festival. It's true that my dancers don't see the reactions of their audience but they hear the applause, the hand clapping and they feel the enthusiasm and emotion of the spectators surrounding them. It's impossible to describe in words.

This troupe includes the members of both dance groups for a joint performance.

So the question is, Yossi, if this is so great why don't more of the blind participate in this experience?

In Netanya there are about 700 visually impaired and blind people; in Herzliya there are about 200. During the years that I've been active, about 60 blind people have danced with me, most of them are of an advanced age. The answer to this question is simple – financing. The relevant institutions aren't aware of the importance of this work. There's no support from the Ministry of Welfare and very little from the municipalities. Herzliya supports us by providing rehearsal space and transportation but not enough to encourage more participants. The public is not aware of our needs and finding volunteers to accompany us isn't easy, even though the work they do is sacred. Maybe this article will wake up those who should be involved and make them pay attention to the vital needs of the blind population in Israel.

Yossi Tfilin, married with two children, lives in Netanya. He worked as a maintenance person and today he is retired. He is a born volunteer and has helped the needy all his life. He assisted at the "Tirat Ha'yeled" Institute, organized a large warehouse for clothing for the needy and organized food supplies to be brought to their homes. And this is just a partial list.

The enormous amount of work he has done with folk dancing for the blind, for 26 years, has been as a volunteer; his mission is evidence of his love for his fellow man.

Yossi was recently diagnosed with cancer and underwent four by-pass operations. Even in this difficult condition he hasn't stopped instructing and leading the blind. He says that he has no intention of stopping, despite his physical condition.

And we say – Who other than **Yossi Tfilin** is worthy of being selected to receive the President's Award for Volunteerism (Ot HaNassi Le'Hitnadvut)?

Who other than Yossi Tfilin is worthy of being selected to receive the President's Award for Volunteerism?



Dance of the Month

Chafetz Chayim – Desiring Life



Orly Shemesh

Translation:
Ruth Goodman

Orly Shemesh was born in Haifa in 1976. In 1983, her family moved to Karmiel, the "folk dance capital of Israel", from where her love of dance naturally developed. At an early age, she joined Lehakat Karmeil Karmiel (the Karmeil Karmiel Dance Troupe) and progressed to the youth and adult troupes under the leadership of choreographer **Dado Krauss**.

The magic she experienced in the Lehaka paved the way for Orly's love and desire to engage and focus on this field in her adult life as well.

At the age of 18, she was supposed to audition for the "Shalom Tel Aviv" Lehaka under the direction of **Gavri Levi** z"l, one of Israel's leading dance companies, but unfortunately, following a car accident, she had to give up on her dream. Following the accident, she thought she would never be able to return to dancing professionally.

In 2002, after several years in Tel Aviv and abroad, Orly returned to Kibbutz HaGoshrim, where she met her husband, and in 2004 established a home and family in Katzrin in the Golan Heights. Orly has two daughters – **Shahar** (16) and **Rotem** (13).

In 2009, at a Shavuot happening in Katzrin, a community harkada was held under the direction of **Haya Shifman** z"l. Orly relates: "There I felt how my desire and love for folk dance erupts like lava from a volcano and that nothing can withstand this desire".

Orly adds that alongside with chiropractic treatments, with which she dealt, and her integration as a dancer in the harkada of **Haya Shifman** z"l, her desire to study the subject and engage in it professionally was formed.

In 2010, Orly enrolled in a course for folk dance instructors at Campus Siim, Tel Aviv University under the direction of **Gadi Bitton** and from there in a choreography course.

From the moment she finished the course and received her instructor's certificate, Orly took an active part in the Karmiel and Ashdodance dance festivals, various marathons throughout the country and in Machol Aviv in 2015 in Belgium.

For several years now, Orly has been conducting sought-after and successful harkadot (dance sessions) for women – one in Tzfat (Safed) and the other in Kiryat Motzkin.

Precisely when Orly was at the peak of her momentum as an instructor, the coronavirus broke out and stopped everything. "I felt I had nowhere to expend my energies," she explains. "I realized that I must find a way to return to dance and preserve the knowledge of my dancers and therefore created a live Facebook broadcast system that gave dancers in Israel and around



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the world hope and the ability to preserve knowledge".

Concurrent with her work as a dance leader, Orly began choreographing new dances. To date, she has created 18 dances that have become part of the large repertoire of Israeli folk dance, and they are danced throughout the country and in many places around the world.

About "Chafetz Chayim" she says:

The dance, which was choreographed to a song by **Yardena Arazi**, was a great success

in Israel and around the world. The song was brought to my attention by one of my dancers from Tzfat – **Leah Mizrahi**, who called one morning and said: "Orly, you must check with Irgun HaMarkidim (the Association of Dance Leaders and Choreographers) to see if this song is taken. If not ... it is tailored just for you. And so it was.

A few hours after the song was registered in my name, and with the help of my good friend, **Amir Katz** in the editing of the song, the steps were born as if they came out of my womb.

Chafetz Chayim – Desiring Life

Lyrics: Rachel Shapira

Performed by: Yardena Arazi

I was seen camping in a fenced area
Was seen thirsty as a wanderer in the desert
Rain is about to fall
Rain is about to fall

In the terrible noise, I look up
Remembering the face of the man and the face of the girl
Rain is about to fall
Rain is about to fall
On cold mornings
Warm life lingers
On the narrow bridges
Meanings change directions

Desiring life in the strengthening wind
Desiring life between mudslide and heat-wave
All the seasons were given by Earth
And what Earth took terrifies me
Rain is about to fall
Rain is about to fall
In the terrible noise, I look up...
On the narrow bridges

The warm lives lean
Amongst the short poems
Completing final corrections

Desiring life in the strengthening wind
Desiring life in the strengthening wind

Chafetz Chayim – Notation of Dance Steps

Dance: Orly Shemesh

Music: Jaroslav Jakubowicz

Meter: 4/4

Formation: Circle

Part A: Face CCW

- 1-2 Step R fwd and rise up on toes.
- 3-6 Mayim / grapevine step: Cross L over R, step R to rt. to face center, cross L behind R, step R to rt. to face CCW.
- 7&8 Quick two-step fwd (step-tog-step) LRL.
- 9-10 $\frac{3}{4}$ turn rt. with two steps R, L moving fwd CCW to end facing center.
- 11-16 Open double tcherkessia step: Step R to rt., cross L over R, step back on R in place, step L to left, cross R over L, step back on L in place.
- 17-20 Step R to rt., cross L behind R, step R to rt. and pivot on R to make $\frac{1}{2}$ turn rt. to face out of center, brush L to left.
- 21-24 Step L to left, cross R behind L, step L to left and pivot to make $\frac{1}{4}$ turn left to face CCW, brush R fwd.
- 25-28 Step R fwd, step fwd onto L bending upper body slightly fwd, rock back onto R in place while straightening body, hold.
- 29-30 Step back on L, rock fwd onto R.
- 31-32 Quick two-step fwd (step-tog-step) LRL and face center.

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Part B: Face Center

- 1-4 Step R to rt., cross L behind R, step R to rt. making 1/4 turn rt. to face CCW (left shoulder to center), touch left toes next to R.
- 5-8 Move into center: Step L to left, cross R behind L, step L to left and face center.
- 9-12 (Facing center): Tcherkessia step: Step R fwd, rock back in place on L, step R bwd, rock fwd in place on L.
- 13-16 1/2 turn rt. moving fwd toward center with two steps R,L to face out of center (back to center); step bwd on R, rock fwd on L.
- 17-30 Repeat the pattern of counts 1-14 (Part B) moving out of center towards the circle line.
- 31-32 Face center: Sway R-L and face CW (in preparation for the following section).

Part C: Face CW

- 1-4 Move CW. Three steps fwd: R,L,R; pivot 1/2 turn rt. on R to face CCW.
- 5-8 Mayim step moving CCW crossing L over R (cross, side, behind, side).
- 9-10 Quick two-step fwd (step-tog-step) LRL.
- 11-12 Turn rt. moving fwd on the line of the circle with two steps: R,L to end facing center.
- 13-16 Face center: Sway R-L; cross R behind L, step L to left.
- 17-20 Mayim step moving CW beginning with R over L.
- 21-22 Cross R over L, pivot 1/2 turn rt. on R to face CCW.

- 23-26 Three steps bwd L,R,L, touch rt. toes next to L.
- 27-30 Open mayim step moving fwd CCW beginning with R to rt. (side, in front, side, behind).
- 31-32 Turn rt. with two steps: R, L to end facing center.

Part D: Face center

- 1-4 Three steps fwd toward center R,L,R; pivot 1/4 turn rt. to face CCW (left shoulder toward center).
- 5-8 Three steps bwd on the line of the circle L,R,L; touch rt. toes next to L.
- 9-12 Open mayim step moving fwd CCW beginning with R to rt. moving out of center.
- 13-16 Turn rt. on the line of the circle line with three steps R,L,R; cross L over R and pivot left to face center.
- 17-20 With arms raised: Sway R to rt., hold, sway L to left, hold.
- 21-24 Cross R over L, step L to left and pivot rt. to face CCW, step R bwd, lift L fwd.
- 25-28 Three steps fwd CCW: L,R,L; hold.
- 29-32 Moving fwd CCW: Turn rt. with three steps R,L,R, cross L over R.

Note: The second time through the dance, Part D repeats until the music ends. 🙌

**Dance notation by Ruth Goodman
and Ruth Schoenberg**



A few hours after the song was registered in my name, and with the help of my good friend, Amir Katz in the editing of the song, the steps were born as if they came out of my womb.



ALEX'S EXPERIENCES

Alex Huber documents important Israeli folk dance events with his camera

Moshe Telem Celebrates His Milestone 80th Birthday With The Dancers

From Moshe (Rabenu) to Moshe (Telem) – There is no one like Moshe... and indeed, Moshe Telem is a brand in our Israeli folk dance.

(Also see: <http://magazines.rokdim.co.il/showart.php?lang=en&artid=541>)

Moshe is known all over the world as the "Dancing Farmer", as his name (Telem) indicates – a brilliant combination of a rooted farmer who still works in the field and who has guided and led dancing for tens of thousands of dancers for over 40 years.

It's no wonder that on his milestone 80th birthday, Moshe celebrated with hundreds of his dancers who gathered together at Kibbutz HaOgen for a folk dance celebration accompanied by the legendary Ma'abarot Orchestra (with which he recorded hundreds of folk dances that we still use in dance sessions) and of course later on with recorded music conducted by **Eyal Karblenik** and **Moshe Oron**. ➔



Birthday cake with the famous mustache



In the center of the circle and in the center of things



With a mustache over and under the microphone – the mustache that has been the symbol of Moshe



With Aviva Gafni



Moshe roars at the dancers as in days gone by



With Yishai Meir and the clarinet



With Shlomo Maman




ALEX'S EXPERIENCES

Alex Huber documents important Israeli folk dance events with his camera

We all knew, almost all the dancers, if not by their names, then at least by their faces, and we were privileged to bring back beautiful memories from the time when we danced with Moshe in the large harkadot (dance sessions) at Tel Aviv and Bar Ilan Universities, in the big marathons.

We mostly remember the Friday-Saturday Kabbalat Shabbat gatherings in Caesarea with singing and camaraderie, the dancing on the porch of the Nautical Center, facing the Mediterranean waves until dawn, the watermelons he brought from the field and were eaten before we went to bed at dawn until we woke up to the sounds of **YuZju (Yosef) Inbar's** z"l flute and continued to dance almost until the end of Shabbat.

These were beautiful days for all of us ... 



Sarah and Shmulik Bar On, the organizers of the event, with the guest of honor



Moshe conducts the orchestra and directs the dancers as in the days of Caesarea



The smiles on the dancers' faces that says it all



Moshe leads the dancers as in those days



Those in wheelchairs also danced with us



With Moshe Oron in the center of the circle demonstrating a dance



Turning to the orchestra with the dancers in the background

Wow... what beautiful circles with dancers holding hands!



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