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המשרד לפיתוח  
הפריפריה  
הנגב והגליל



מפעל הפיס



# רוקדים

מגזין לריקודי עם ומחול

NIRKODA



עמותת ארגון המדריכים  
ויוצרים לריקודי עם



Vol 108 | April 2022 | **VIP** Members

# Karmiel Dance Festival

## July 5-6-7, 2022

*This Celebration Cannot Be Stopped*



# פסטיבל

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### Karmiel Dance Festival

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Led by Lee Otterholt.  
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### POLAND June 8-21, 2022.

Led by Richard Schmidt.  
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### BULGARIA August 1-14, 2022

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Dear Readers,

With issue #108 of "Rokim- Nirkoda" magazine, we are with you again.

We wish to remind you that all the latest issues, as well as a substantial part of issues from years past, can be found on our historical Rokdim-Nirkoda website: <http://magazines.rokdim.co.il/?lang=en>.

You are invited to view those previous articles to remember and to learn about the history of Israeli folk dance. You can search for articles by topics of interest here: <https://bit.ly/3uu50RW>. Much historical documentation remains to be done. It is important work and we promise to continue doing it.

In this issue:

**Maya Geva Shapira** has written an article, "[Yoav's Archives](#)" about a home for Israeli folk dance, which **Yoav Sidi** dreams of establishing in Karmiel. He has an extensive collection of many Israeli folk dance historical items from days past that deserve to be viewed by the public. We look forward for this venture to grow to fruition. Israeli folk dance deserves to have a place where the past can come alive.

**Heli Livneh** heard from **Liora Slutsky** about her childhood, her path in the dance world and her extensive Israeli folk dance activities. Those who know Liora will enjoy learning new things about her and those who do not, should get to know her.

**Moti Alkis** has been an instructor and director of the "Ayalot Ha'Negev" dance troupe for decades. Moti was wounded in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Then he suffered from complications of jaundice, but he did not stop believing. For the last seven years he has been confined to a wheelchair, yet, he continues to believe and to create dances for his dance troupe. **Maya Geva** traveled south and heard his inspiring story directly from him.

**Naftali Hayat**, who choreographed the dance "Pa'amei Tamuz": (<https://bit.ly/3vm8mIO>) to a Kavkaz [Caucasus region] melody. He decided to trace the roots of Kavkaz melodies to which Israeli folk dances have been choreographed. Very Interesting.

**David Ben Asher** reviews several new books in the folk dance field:

a. **Dr. Shmuel Saadia**, Advocate, has done extensive research on songs we dance to and their connection to Jewish sources. It is a thick book with hundreds of songs-dances, their lyrics, the composers, quotes and explanations.

b. There are three new children's books by **Dr. Levi Bargil**, which present some of the dances he choreographed in a new experiential way. They include tools for teachers and a special experience for children.

**The Dance of the Month**, "Le'Ha'amin" by **Sharon Elkaslassy**, (<https://bit.ly/3guj6vM>) is the focus in this magazine issue. Here you can read and learn about Sharon the man, how he choreographed the dance as well as the dance steps with movements influenced by the song lyrics.

**The Camera's Experiences** – this time from the launch event of "Komuna-Tel Aviv" – **Hila Mukdasi**'s project to inspire the younger generation to participate in folk dance.

Enjoy your reading,

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



Yaron Meishar



Ruth Goodman



Danny Uziel



Vol. No. 108 | April 2022

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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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Maya Geva Shapira

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*Yoav is not only a collector who documents, catalogs and computerizes. He is also a dreamer. He has a vision about how to pass on the knowledge and culture to the next generation.*

# Yoav's Archives

## It's Time For Israeli Folk Dance To Have Its Own Museum



Anyone who participates in folk dance groups, attends the Karmiel Dance Festivals, sings the songs and doesn't miss a dance session is a person who loves folk dancing very much. He might love this activity so much that he even takes a course for folk dance instructors. However, there are people who love this field to the very fiber of their being and are totally dedicated to it. This describes **Yoav Sidi** whom I met at Kibbutz Kfar Hamaccabi. Yoav has several hobbies: chess, mind games, sports and music. He plays recorders, the flute, the accordion, piano, saxophone and clarinet and more. But his most beloved hobby eventually became his profession: folk dance.

His love for the field of folk dance started when Yoav was very young and in the Tzofim – the Scout youth movement. One of the youth movement activities was Israeli folk dancing. Along with all the youth movement people, Yoav went to the popular dance sessions led by **Bentzi Tiram** at Migrash Oranim. Later, he started dancing as part of his studies at Wingate Institute as a physical education teacher. He studied for two years at the Ulpan Madrichim LeRikudei Am (course for folk dance instructors) in Haifa then at Seminar Hakibbutzim and at the course for instructors of international folk dance in Jerusalem.

Yoav's love for this field and his curiosity intensified through the years and he began collecting items connected to folk dance. I found archival materials – photographs, cassette tapes, reels, 8mm films, hundreds (maybe thousands) of records, pamphlets of instructions for dances, shelves filled with books about folk dance written in Hebrew, Russian, German, instruction books with illustrations for teaching the steps, various musical instruments, a collection of shepherd's flutes (chalilim), sound equipment, video tapes and discs of folk dances, the tape used by **Yankale Ziv** when he taught, a pipe/recorder made by **Eliyahu Gamliel** that he took with him on hikes and turned into a flute, **Leah Bergstein's** tapes and many others that we saw in the past. In short, a truly rare collection. Things that need to be in a museum.

These are the physical findings. But together with this, Yoav also has a computerized archive of Israeli folk dances that were choreographed in the 1950s, including the song, who performed it, a picture of the choreographer, various performances and video clips of dance troupes. The computerized archive unified the many catalogs (**David Edery**, Rokdim website, Australian website, the Histadrut Workers Committee and more) into one catalog. He corrected things



that were correct in books but were incorrect in the catalogs. He went through all the record albums and added those songs that were missing in the catalogs that he found on recordings. This was the work of many hours, of digging, adjusting, gathering, and carefully searching for origins on the Internet and in books.

### **Where did the idea to preserve Israeli folk dances come from?**

During the work I was doing in the field, I discovered dances that had disappeared and have no documentation. I realized that what now exists needs to be preserved before it disappears as well and the songs and dances that that have been pushed into a corner could still be documented.

It's also a matter of personality. I have the characteristics of an archivist. I organize. I started by collecting recordings long before I had a phonograph. I have a collection of various musical instruments as well as a giant collection of musical notations and books of Israeli songs. For me, Israeli folk dancing is a hobby I have been nurturing, and my collections have become part of it.

### **What is Folk Dance?**

Yoav explains to me that the folk dances of today – the large harkadot (dance sessions) – are not folk dances at all, and he calls them “recreational dances”. According to the academic definition of folk dance, Israel does not have any folk dances. For authentic folk dances, the creator must be anonymous and the dance must continue without change from generation to generation (as it is in world folklore where culture is transferred naturally from father to son).

Here [in Israel] we can find a small number of such examples, Yoav explains, like Sherele, Simi Yadech, Cherkassiya, where the choreographers are unknown. But in most cases, the names of the choreographers are known and therefore the condition of anonymity doesn't exist. Since we want to have folk dances, just like every other nation, we have artificially created them. A folk dance must somehow symbolize the character of a people or the era in which the dance was created. It needs to have some added value in addition to its entertainment and the number of steps involved.

Israeli folk dance does have some characteristics that could help define it, such as: it is danced to the music of an Israeli folk song and, it is suitable for everyone, that is, one doesn't need to be a professional dancer in order to learn it. People will spontaneously start to dance it at all kinds of events without a professional dance instructor. The dance is danced based on the composition of the song and not during musical transitions. It can be accompanied by live music or singing.

## Maya Geva Shapira

Israeli and international folk dances were created for festivals, ceremonies, weddings and funerals and not for recreational purposes, as they are used here. The founders of the Israeli folk dance movement created dances so that we would be like other nations and not in order to become famous and be given the title of “choreographer”. Today in Israel, dances are created for entertainment. They change very often and are replaced by new ones.

Genuine folk dances are danced holding hands! It’s a natural instinct to hold hands even if it isn’t specifically mentioned. Hands have enormous strength, the power of “togetherness”, the extraordinary power of being part of a group. In addition to being part of the choreography that should be passed on to future generations, the holding of hands differentiates between the recreational dances with no hands held and international dances that connect and unite.

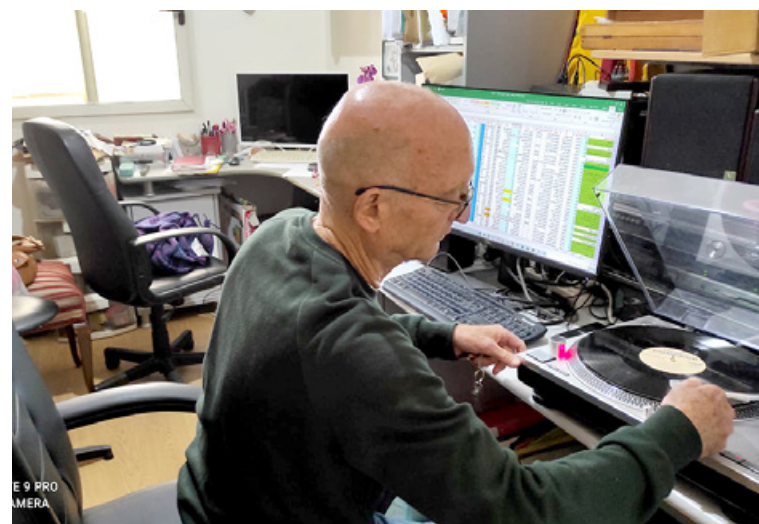
Examples of genuine folk dances: *Nigun Atik*, *Mayim Mayim*, *Lo Ahavti Dai*, *Hora Medura*, *Tzadik K’tamar*...

We’re in the warehouse and he suddenly pulls out a book by **Ze’ev Havatzelet**, “Mecholeinu Li Ve’Lach – Our Dances for You and Me”. He shows me that throughout the book the author wrestles with what folk dance is. In the past, people who dealt with this, like **Shalom Hermon** or **Rivka Shturman**, who searched for the language of Israeli folk dance, as well as **Ze’ev Havatzelet**, who researched the field, saw the importance of the values and significance of folk dance culture.

### Researching the Songs

Yoav branded himself as very knowledgeable about the dances, the songs and their origins. The history of the songs interested him as did the words of the songs and the composers. He tells me that *Debka Dal’una* is actually composed of two songs, the first being “*Dal’una*” and the second being “*Al Yadil*”. This song also has Hebrew words within which the name of the Arab tune is hidden.

*Misirlou* is an international folk dance with origins in the United States. The song itself has thousands of versions (Arabic, Turkish, Yiddish, Egyptian and others), and each one claims that it is the original. The Greek dance that we do to the melody of the song *Etz HaRimon* is actually *Misirlou*. The *Misirlou* tune became famous by being used in several films. And *Etz HaRimon* is originally a *Bucharan* dance, not Israeli at all. *Zemer Lach* is a Bulgarian song and *Simlatech Hashezura* is a Russian song that couldn’t be choreographed as an Israeli folk dance because it’s not an Israeli folk song. But this is what has actually happened.



*I would like to create a home where it would be possible to gather all the materials related to folk dance (including folk dance on stage) that can be displayed in one place: cassettes, discs, recordings, books, photographs, films, costumes, posters, equipment that went through various transformations over the years, musical instruments, etc.*

**How do you preserve Israeli Folk Dance?**

As one who loves folk dance but not recreational dance, Yoav instructs two Israeli folk dance groups (chugim). The goal of the first one is to document and to preserve dances. This group learns and dances special dances that are no longer part of the current regular folk dance session repertoire. This group is by invitation only and is free of charge. The members of the group also participate in filmed sessions and perform



in various productions at the Karmiel Dance Festival. The second group is based on dances from the first generation and international folk dances. People come to Yoav's groups from all over – Haifa, the Krayot, Timrat, Givat Ela, Karmiel, Nahariya, etc. In addition, Yoav thinks that a lot more needs to be done so that folk dance, by definition, will remain in our consciousness. First, a department should be founded within the Ministry of Education that would handle this. And second, there should be dance instructors who teach Israeli folk dance in the schools.


In addition, within the framework of the instructor training course at the Gordon College in Haifa, where Yoav teaches together with **Lior Cohen**, he passes on some of his knowledge to his students: stories about the dances, various recordings such as "Niguno Shel Yossi" – no one knows that this tune actually has lyrics.

The way to preserve what are by definition folk dances is through holiday ceremonies at the kibbutzim, where there are still traditional dance ceremonies every year for Chag HaMayim and for Chag HaOmer.

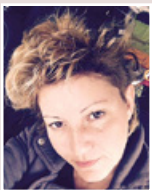
**The Vision**

Yoav is not only a collector who documents, catalogs and computerizes. He is also a dreamer. He has a vision about how to pass on the knowledge and culture to the next generation: "I would like to create a home where it would be possible to gather all the materials related to folk dance (including folk dance on stage) that can be displayed in one place: cassettes, discs, recordings, books, photographs, films, costumes, posters, equipment that went through various transformations over the years, musical instruments, etc. To this place, which would be a Folk Dance House, school children would come, and through lectures, workshops, and other activities, they would learn about the culture that was created here. This house would also have an archive and a museum with changing displays as well as halls large enough to accommodate activities of dance troupes, dance sessions, dance workshops and more."

This place would work together with other with other institutions that have material about folk dance such as the National Library, Beit Ariela, Zemreshet, the Yonatan Karmon Archives, "Rokdim" and others. The building is already in the advanced planning stages and soon it will be possible to begin the practical work.

Yoav dreams of a museum that would be active in the folk dance culture which has been dwindling through the years along with the advent of the Coronavirus. I wish him the fulfillment of his dream, for the betterment of us all. 

*Yoav branded himself as very knowledgeable about the dances, the songs and their origins. The history of the songs interested him as did the words of the songs and the composers.*



Heli Livneh

Translation:  
Dena Matmon

# A Teacher For Life

Interview with Liora Slutzky –  
Dancer, Instructor, Broadcaster,  
Skipper and... Friend



**M**y mother used to stand in the doorway of the room in the "Omna" orphanage where I was staying, look at me and cry. My mother could neither enter the room, get near me, nor pick me up into her arms and hug me. She wasn't able to smell the scent of my small and lean body. She didn't touch her lips to my cheek and she didn't kiss me. And I was only a one-year-old infant, but she never held me... because she had tuberculosis...

*This is how **Liora Slutzky**, the daughter of **Tulichka** and **Ya'acov Uri Licht**, began her life in Israel. Liora was born in May 1950. Her father, Ya'acov Uri, immigrated to Israel in 1936 and settled in Neve Sha'anana [a neighborhood in eastern] Haifa, together with his grandmother, Bubicha, and his uncles. They were among the founders of the Neve Sha'anana neighborhood.*

*Just before the outbreak of World War II, his grandmother implored and told him: "Go to Poland and take Tulichka, your cousin, as your wife. I want you to have a fictitious marriage with her, so that she can also immigrate to Israel. War is at our door and you must hurry." And so it was. My father married my mother, and they immigrated together to Israel.*

*To their good fortune, they managed to escape Poland moments before World War II broke out. When they boarded the ship and were still on deck, they heard the sound of artillery shells fired by the Germans who came to conquer Poland. Since this was a fictitious marriage, my father went out with other women; as yet, there wasn't any emotional commitment between my parents. However, in time, they fell in love. Mother became pregnant in 1949 and carried me, but then she became ill with tuberculosis.*

The pregnancy was difficult and there were always stories that Mother almost died during the delivery. But I only learned that she had had this terrible disease when I was 30 years old. The Poles don't talk a lot; they give out very little information.

There was an orphanage called "Omna" on Hanita Street in Neve Sha'anana. I was taken straight from the hospital to the orphanage because my mother couldn't take care of me and my father had to work.

*There was an orphanage called "Omna" on Hanita Street in Neve Sha'anana. I was taken straight from the hospital to the orphanage because my mother couldn't take care of me and my father had to work.*



## Heli Livneh

I stayed at "Omna" for about a year. The girl who took care of me was **Nira**. My mother wasn't allowed to get near me because of her continuing illness and the only one who came into my room was my father, and sometimes some distant relatives. On one such visit, my uncles came as well as my great-grandmother, the one who arranged the marriage between my parents. Mother's cousin got to know Nira, my caregiver, and they became close. They fell in love and married and dear Nira became part of the family. Even today I still call her "Ima Nira – Mama Nira". She was my first mother, the one who gave me warmth and love until I was a year old.

### Mother

My mother had a colder personality. My father gave me all the warmth. Only now do I understand that the "coldness" that I felt from her was because she suspected that I would catch tuberculosis from her. So, even if she was the warmest kind of person, she wasn't able to give me the warmth that I so needed.

Mother was traumatized. Try to imagine how a mother delivers a child and the child is immediately taken from her – she couldn't come near her child until she was healthy again...

When Mother recovered, she was left with emotional scars. She wouldn't even go for a chest x-ray, even though this was part of her follow-up treatment. The experience of the illness was very difficult for her. They told me that she would peek at me through a small slot in the door of my room and cry bitter tears. She was allowed to visit, but not to come near me, to touch me. And all these years I didn't know it. Now, in my later years, I understand the significance of all the obstacles.

When I grew up and Mother would talk to me about this and tell me about what happened, I grew angry at her. Angry because I wasn't told. And now, when I make an accounting of my life – I apologize to my mother. But, she is no longer alive.

### Father

My father was a very special person. He was infinitely and unendingly a giving person. He always worried about the entire family. At first, he worked in a quarry, then he was recruited to the Brigade and served in the British Army. Then in the '50s and even a little after, he went into a partnership in a ticket selling office in Haifa.



*Me and my father at "Omna"*



*Liora and her father*



*Liora in arms of her mother, Tula*

*My father was a very special person. He was infinitely and unendingly a giving person. He always worried about the entire family*



Ya'acov Uri with Levi Eshkol – in the '60s

*I was a good girl, a little mischievous, a little wild – but not a lot – and very shy. What was most noticeable was my sensitivity and lack of self-confidence. People thought I was a snob, but I was really just shy.*

Father worked in the ticket office with his very good friend, **Avraham Bogtir**. They began to work as impresarios. At a certain point, they decided to bring Cirque Medrano to Israel (from Paris). Afterwards, they brought "Paris on Ice". The business grew and in order to develop it even further, they decided to open an office in Tel Aviv. So, we moved from Neve Sha'anana to Jabotinsky Street in Tel Aviv.

My father and his partner had their office on the Hod Passage on Dizengoff Street. They continued to bring many artists from abroad. My father flew to Russia, received a balalaika as a gift and succeeded in bringing **Mstislav Rostropovich** the famous Russian cellist and conductor, to Israel. Later, he also brought **Jacques Brel**, **Sammy Davis Jr.**, **Miriam Makeba**, **The [Russian] Ballet On Ice**, and others.

My father was a loving, embracing person. He taught me to swim, to ride a bicycle, and to drive when I was 10 years old in Neve Sha'anana. He himself gave me driving lessons. He was the light of my life. And everyone who every worked with him – loved him very much.

My father was an honest and humble person. He succeeded under his own power and the family considered him to be well-off. He always helped the family financially. He was full of life. Wherever my father went – I went with him.



Celebrating with Neve Sha'anana school children



A newspaper article about my father

He gave me everything, even if I didn't ask for it. I was a good girl, a little mischievous, a little wild – but not a lot – and very shy. What was most noticeable was my sensitivity and lack of self-confidence. People thought I was a snob, but I was really just shy.

Internally, as a person, at times, I still feel a lack of confidence. I don't always believe that I did the very best. I'm a natural perfectionist.

## Heli Livneh



*During army service*



*Liora, the accordion and Yair*

And it's not easy to be an only child. I always wanted siblings. So instead, I adopted dogs, but my mother didn't want them. I was missing someone to be at home with me. Now, in my later years, I'm more aware. The Poles don't talk too much.

Since I'm an only child, I asked my parents to bring me a brother or a sister. My parents told me that I wasn't missing anything, and I always got what I wanted. But from my point of view, that didn't matter. Generally, Polish people don't give many explanations and thus, they didn't speak of the Holocaust. My

generation grew up without this knowledge and we had no idea what had happened. My mother decided that she is "erasing" the Polish language and I was spoken to at home either in Hebrew or in Yiddish. Fifteen years later, after the Eichmann Trial, they decided to talk about everything they had internalized.

## Folk Dancing

During that period, there was a great deal of folk dancing in northern Israel. It came from the kibbutzim in the north and spread out. And of course, Neve Sha'anun became part of this process. From the mid-1950s, **Shalom Hermon** together with **Yonatan Gabay**, produced and created the Haifa Dance Parade, every Yom Ha'Atzmaut – Independence Day. It was "the thing". An enormous event. And when it all started, I was still a little girl, maybe six years old.

My father knew both of them from our days in Haifa. Later on, my father produced this parade for years. Yonatan was the artistic director and it was done in cooperation with the Haifa Municipality and **Shmulik Bialik**, who had been the Director of the Haifa Municipality Cultural Department.

I started folk dancing in elementary school in Neve Sha'anun in Haifa. There were ceremonies on Shavuot and we happily danced in the streets. There was a holiday atmosphere. Then, we were drafted into the army. I served in the main medical unit. But at some point, when I was about 20 years old, I moved with the family to Tel Aviv and because of this move, I suffered a tremendous crisis. I didn't know anyone. Tel Aviv was a foreign city.

After the Army, I decided to study Physical Education at the Wingate Institute and after that, I returned to dancing. At Wingate, I met **Nina Orad**. At the beginning, Nina taught young children. After several years, she left the field and focussed on folk dancing and "gush" dancing. It was there that I got pulled in and returned to dancing.

I danced with **Yoav Ashriel** and **Talia Hirsch** and in general, I danced a lot. Until one day when I decided to retrain and study the field [of folk dance]. I studied at Nina Orad's Ulpan for Folk Dance Instructors. All over the country, courses for instructors ran for two years, but at Wingate, it was a one-year course, because those who studied there had already learned instructional methodology.

After I completed the course, I met with Nina. I called her "Ninotchka"... and she told me that I could join the team of instructors the following year. I didn't like this idea and told her that I

## Heli Livneh



*In Ulpan Wingate with Danny Shalmon*

didn't feel ready and that I couldn't do it. Once again, my lack of self-confidence. But Nina didn't give up and I joined.

Generally, I didn't dance in the center of the circle; it was only when I was asked to do so. I learned to disguise my lack of confidence, but to this day, I occasionally still find myself feeling that I do not belong.

My father was very famous and full of confidence, but I was never connected to the world of fame. I was even embarrassed to say that I was his daughter, and only because he was so well known. Perhaps because of this trait, I prefer to dance in groups with relatively few dancers and not in groups with hundreds and thousands of people. But when I do open up, it's another story...

When I first started to instruct, I was trembling. I started to speak, and I stuttered. I stopped and said to my students: "Wait a minute... I want you to understand one thing: I'm very shy and I ask you to be forgiving". So, when I started to teach, the ice was broken, and everything worked out well.

I can confess that I was a strict instructor, demanding and yelling when necessary. I learned a lot from Ninochka until, to my sorrow, she passed away.

I am a teacher. I am not a dance leader. She taught me slowly and introduced me to the world of management, almost without my realizing it. I was with her all the time. I brought her to Wingate and back again. She was like my second mother. Nina was short in stature, about 1.5 meters [under 5 feet], but she was distinguished and noble, my teacher for life, full of energy and with a heart of gold. Outwardly she was harsh, but inside she was soft as butter.

Later, I opened a folk dance chug (session) in Tzahala and additional chugim in Tel Aviv, but I always concentrated more on instruction at the Ulpan. I felt most comfortable there. I taught well and clearly, and it was important to me that my students properly learned the steps I demonstrated.

When **Nina Orad** knew that she was dying, she told me: "You will now run the Ulpan instead of me." And indeed, that is what happened. I changed the staff slightly. I recruited **Nitzi Polate**, **Sefi Aviv** and **Sefi Bar Lev**. I wanted to refresh the team. The examiners were **Tirza Hodes**, **Rina Meir**, **Tamar Alyagor** and **Shalom Hermon**. There were also guest choreographers like **Rivka Sturman** and **Shalom Hermon**. I am fortunate to have known that generation.

Then **Ruth Pardes** from Givat Washington turned to me and asked me to replace her. I worked there at the same time that I worked at Wingate, which was my home. At a certain point, the Wingate Institute opened an extension at Weisgal in Rehovot and they let me open an Ulpan there and to be responsible for it. I would go there and make sure things were running well. My main purpose was to turn out good instructors, with strong roots, who would grow and become excellent folk dance instructors. I taught many instructors, among them: **Hila Emauel**, **Oren Bachar**, **Gadi Bitton**, **Dede Lusky**, **Oren Ashkenazi**, **Asher Oshri**, **Smadar Assor**, **Yaron Ben Simhon**, **Yaron Malihi**, **Eitan Mizrahi**, **Eitan Tabib**, **Elad Perel**, **Nurit Melamed**, **Ran Hirsch**, **Revital Golan** and many other good people.

*She [Nina Orad] was like my second mother. Nina was short in stature, about 1.5 meters, but she was distinguished and noble, my teacher for life, full of energy and with a heart of gold. Outwardly she was harsh, but inside she was soft as butter*

*At a certain point, the Wingate Institute opened an extension at Weisgal in Rehovot and they let me open an Ulpan there and to be responsible for it. I would go there and make sure things were running well*

## Heli Livneh

Around the year 2000, **Gadi Bitton** told me that he wanted to open an Ulpan at Tel Aviv University and asked if I was willing to come and establish the Ulpan for him. I thought about it. I consulted with several people and was finally convinced when I realized that, recently, there were fewer and fewer students at the Wingate Ulpan. I wanted to continue to contribute to this field and do whatever I could for folk dancing as well as for my own soul; I agreed to his proposal.

### Interadio

In 2005, **Dorit Malul Mizrahi** and her sister opened an internet radio station, and I would listen to it. Then one day, Dorit asked me if I would like to broadcast on the station. I agreed to her request. In time, other broadcasters were added to the list: **Yom Tov Ochayon, Ayelet Bukai** and others. This was a fun period. But after a period of time, the station closed and in about 2006/7, I decided to reopen it. I called the station "Interadio".

**Danny Mizrahi** (z"l) joined me. He loved the old nostalgic dances. I also asked **Nurit Melamed** to come and broadcast. At the beginning, Danny and Nurit broadcasted. We were a good team. Danny helped me a lot. After a while he introduced his partner, **Osnat Edry**, and she also joined us, along with Ayelet Bukai and **Ola Levkovitz**.

I kept the radio station going until six years ago. I also opened a Facebook group with **Morgane Greidy** who was in charge of public relations. On one of the days she was there, we all travelled north to the instructor, **Chaya Shifman** (z"l) and we broadcasted from her dance chug. **Moshiko Halevy** also broadcasted on our radio station. Sometimes I would organize a staff meeting just so that we could all meet together... At the end of 2015, I decided to stop the radio broadcasts, as I was scheduled to be on my yacht for three months a year and couldn't do both things at the same time.

### And What about Dancing Today?

Today, I don't dance anymore. But when I started to broadcast again during Covid, the radio filled this void. My soul is attached to folk dancing, it always will be, and it will be with me until the day I die. It was very difficult for me to stop dancing. I remember that I used to come to the nostalgia group just to meet people. So, at the beginning of the Covid outbreak, I started to broadcast again. I worked day and night to prepare the radio show. The broadcasts on the radio station saved my life. I suddenly became acquainted with lots of people through the live broadcast chats on Facebook, people I'd never met before. Listeners from all over the world told me that they watched the many dance videos that I've recorded over the years on the "Rokdim" website. This really touched me.



*Danny Shalmon, Yankele Dekel and me at Ulpan Wingate*

### The Boat

I love the sea, despite the fact that in my childhood, I was traumatized by an incident at sea. When I was six years old, my parents registered me for a summer day camp in Gedera, a camp that belonged to a good friend of my father. At that time swimming was taught in the day camp by throwing the kids into the water before we knew how to swim. The day I was thrown

## Heli Livneh

in, I swallowed a lot of water. I became very sick with a high fever and the camp decided to send me home. This was a very traumatic experience for me.

But my father didn't give up. Despite my fear because of what had happened previously, he took me to the sea and taught me to swim using a different method. He was very clever. Later in life, I studied in a course to become a skipper [captain of a ship or boat]. We had friends who had access to a yacht. We sailed and I loved it very much. My dream was that I would have a yacht of my own that I could sail by myself.

One day, these same friends wanted to sell the yacht and came to me. I bought it and started to sail. I completely fell in love with it. I fell in love with going from place to place. I always searched to reach small islands surrounded by the enormous sea.

Sometimes, while sailing, unpleasant things happened. There were terrifying storms and waters that weren't calm. But my husband and I didn't give in and we sailed every summer. We set out to sail and then we would return home. At a certain point, when my husband Eitan retired, we sailed for a longer period, several months. We would come home just to see the grandchildren, the family.

### What Draws You to the Sea? To Sailing?

On the boat, I cut myself off. Generally, I'm very temperamental and pressured all the time. I take everything to heart. The boat actually gives me the peace and quiet that I need. I feel connected to my inner self. I reach a state of nirvana. I put on my earphones to listen to local music that I love, lie back in the cockpit or on the deck... and fall asleep. When I wake up in the morning, and while watching the sea and the sky, I do body stretches. The moment I love the most and wait for, is the moment that I'm on the boat, watching the sky and at the end of the day, finding a small island named Larus, in Greece. When I reach this island, I rent a bicycle and ride. The people on this island are wonderful and I really appreciate experiencing them. There's a special store there with cakes and ice cream. I order a cup of parfait and forget all my problems.

### On a Personal Note:

*I first met Liora through the instructional videos on the "Rokdim" website, the tall and slender woman in a skirt and leg warmers on her ankles. And in all of the instruction, she seemed as light as a feather, flowing from the air and coming down slowly, and landing lightly next to the known vase of flowers in the center of the circle that was being filmed. The tight and exact look of Liora is evidence of her exacting and clear instruction; always sticking closely to the steps of the original dance as choreographed, giving the feeling that here is an excellent instructor from whom we can learn so much.*

*And then I met Liora for this interview. She opened the door of her home to me as well as her heart. She permitted me to immediately see how big a heart she had and how exposed and open she is to the world. She was very frank telling me about what she and her family had experienced since she was a little girl. The story of Liora's life left me with an enormous impression of good Jews who immigrated to Israel and experienced personal hardships along with the financial successes of her father.*

*Thank you, dear Liora, for letting me into your world.*

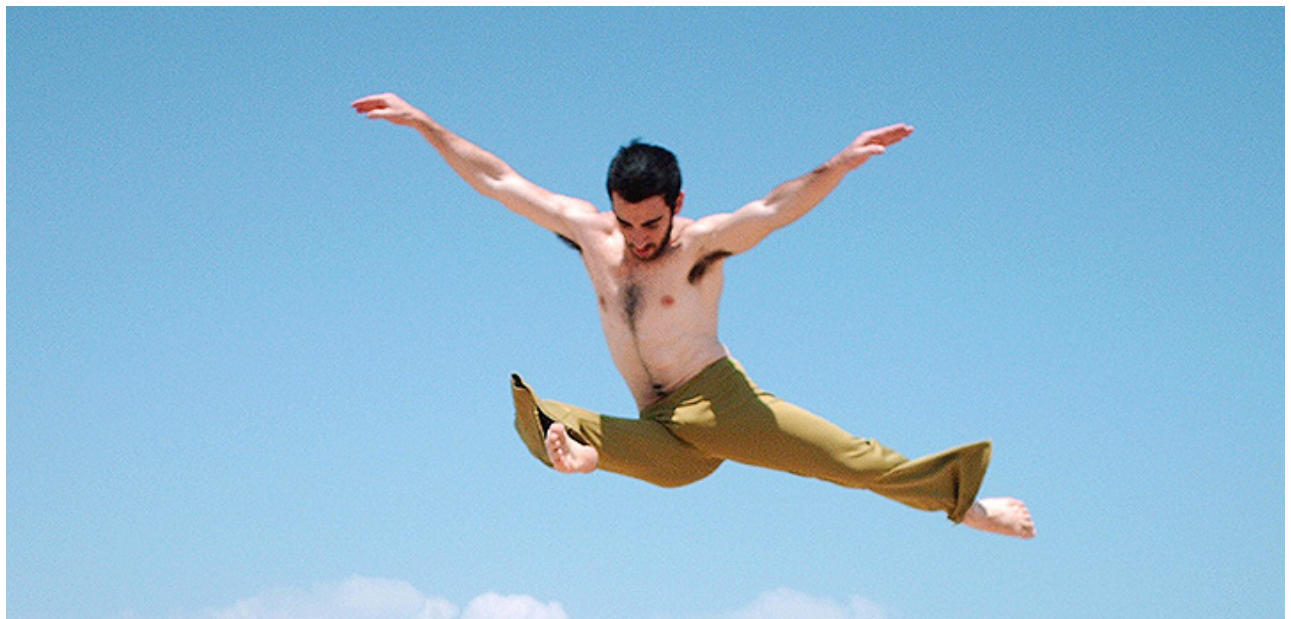


Liora dancing with her son Yonatan

*On the boat, I cut myself off. Generally, I'm very temperamental and pressured all the time. I take everything to heart. The boat actually gives me the peace and quiet that I need. I feel connected to my inner self. I reach a state of nirvana*

**Maya Geva Shapira**

Translation:  
Judy Fixler

*Itzik Saltzman, solo dancer of the the troupe at fly dance*

# Choreography on Wheels

**Moti Alkis** – choreographer and artistic director of  
Ayalot Ha'Negev for 41 years

**A**s an instructor of “Galgaldance” – a dance group of dancers seated in wheelchairs who dance with standing dancers – I closely know the disabled and their world, but this time, or to be more precise, I had a chance to meet someone new and special that I have never seen – a choreographer in a wheelchair – a 100% IDF disabled person.

A disabled choreographer teaching dancer without disabilities is not something usual. I was very curious and found myself traveling to Beer Sheva to meet **Moti Alkis**.

Moti, 66 years old, confined to a mobilized wheelchair, was born and lives in Beer Sheva. He served as a combat medic during the Yom Kippur War in a Camel Commando unit, founded by **Arik Sharon** – one of the commando units that suffered heavy losses – Shaked, Haruv, Egoz.

The Camel Unit sustained the line in Africa in the Ismailia Canal or the Al-Ismā'īliyyah Canal, (formerly known as the Sweet Water Canal which was dug by thousands of Egyptian fellahin to facilitate the construction of the Suez Canal). Their base was in Sinai, in the Mitla Pass, and from there they went out on their patrols and pursuits, using camels, helicopters, halftracks [a civilian or military vehicle with regular wheels at the front for steering and continuous tracks at the back to propel the vehicle and carry most of the load] and jeeps. They travelled from Ras Sedr in the Suez gulf to Jebel Ataqah and Mount Um Hashiba, to locate Egyptian intelligence units.

**Moti Alkis**

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During the course of the war, he was infected with hepatitis and hospitalized at Soroka Hospital. He was in a comma and was declared clinically dead. The battalion commander, Yigal Rozi z"l, summoned the head medical officer. All leaves in the Southern Command District were cancelled so that they could all come and donate blood for Moti.

The condition was fatal... a good friend of his mother's suggested using oil from **Rabbi Chaim Khuri** z"l of Beer Sheva, and rubbing it over Moti's body, in the hopes that the virtues of the rabbi will help bring him a fast cure from G-d. It is known that righteous people grant life in their death. Moti was declared a medical miracle and returned to life. It was a chance of about one in three million...

Complications from the hepatitis slowly developed into muscular dystrophy. Moti has been confined to a wheelchair for the past seven years, unable to stand, walk or dance.

### *How did you come to dance?*

With much love. After the war, I shared an apartment with the accordion player **Benny Mazoz**, who dragged me to folk dance sessions. One day I went with him to a session with **Yossi Abuhav** which was accompanied by the **Yossi Lev** Orchestra. I was turned on and caught the dance bug. I danced a lot; in 1979, I completed a course for folk dance instructors. It was conducted by Yossi Abuhav z"l and **Moti Alfasi** z"l.

I opened folk dance classes in schools for children and youth. I had thousands of dancers in Beer Sheva. In the competitions, "Bet Sefer Roked" [Dancing School], produced through the Ministry of Education by **Avner Daniel**, I always won top prizes with the following schools: "Moledet," "Re'ut," "Oran," "Korczak," "Degania," and "Achva," by holding hands, having the largest number of dancers, with precise dancing and keeping authenticity. I opened sessions for adults at the Beer Sheva Country Club, at Ben Gurion University, in kibbutzim in the south, in Ariel and in Samaria. All was out of Zionism and love for the land of Israel.

During the 80's and 90's, I produced and led folk dance marathons accompanied by orchestras from the Broadcasting Authority, led by **Amos Aloni**, **Oded**



*Stav, the soloist of the troupe at an amazing jeté. On the background a lake in North Carolina*



*Eden and Stav in duet on the background of lakes in North Carolina*

*A sense of rhythm, talent in movement and in dance, physical ability and leadership. The best [dancers] come to the troupes. The work of building up the dancers and their personalities is known to me.*



## Maya Geva Shapira

Shoham and a dance orchestra conducted by **Yossi Lev**; also, there were performance shows by dancers and singers.

The marathons were attended by dancers from all over Israel. They would begin at 20:30 [8:30 pm] and end at 8:00 in the morning. I hosted the leading choreographers/ dance leaders in Israel: **Moshiko Halevy, Moti Alfasi, Rafi Ziv, Ayalah Goren, Yonatan Gabai, Shlomo Maman, Bentzi Tiram, Mishael Barzilay, Yankele Levy, Eliyahu Gamiliel, Avi Peretz, Shalom Amar, Se'adia Amishai, Shmulik Gov Ari and Moshe Telem.**

I collaborated with all the dance instructors in Israel. The big marathon "Me'Hat'zafon LaNegev Be'Ahava" [From the North to the Negev with Love], which I produced with my friends **David Alfasi** and **Kobi Azulai** attracted 800 dancers from all over the country.

The folk dance, "Taba", which I created in 1989 and was taught in the **Mishael Barzilay** course, was created when Taba was returned to Egypt. <https://bit.ly3GBFdMx>

Except for **Yossi Abuhav**, no one knew about my muscular dystrophy. I ran dance sessions and marathons until I was no longer able to because of my medical condition.

How does one manage to dance and lead/teach dancing with muscular dystrophy?

I received high doses of steroids and various other treatments that helped me. All along the way the doctors asked me to stop, but I decided that I must dance many hours daily and I would not give in, not even for a second.

In 1979, at one of the marathons that I produced at the country club, **Yigal Peleg** z"l, the great producer, came over to me and suggested that, as a choreographer, I teach jazz style to Lehakat Ha'Snuniyot", the troupe that he managed. We appeared with the troupe throughout the country, but my great desire was to run a performing Israeli dance troupe - folklore and modern dance.

### "Ayalot Ha'Negev" dance troupe – a lifetime achievement

The troupe was created in 1980 and in 1983 I established a not-for-profit organization so that I would be able to receive support from the Beer Sheva Municipality, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Foreign Ministry and from donors and, of course, to be able to represent Israel throughout the world. The organization also enabled me to receive the use of a hall and gain entrance to the schools to recruit dancers.

The possibility of travelling abroad attracted the children, the youth and the adults who



*Tzllil and Andrey in modern dance at the gala performance in Beer Sheva*

*A dancer is formed from their head, from his/her mental and intellectual level, before you start working on the body, hands and feet. There is a need for proper conditions to nurture the dancers and a lot of empathy and love*



*Ayalot Ha'Negev (bogrim) at a park in the city Saged in Hungary*

came to dance in the troupe. I wanted to present Israel to the world from other aspects of culture and dance. From thousands of dancers, I chose only the best dancers. I understood that I need to start at the bottom and choose only those dancers with the appropriate qualifications to fit into representative troupes. Ayalot is comprised of the following groups: Efrochim (chicks), Ne'urim (youth), Studentim (students) and Bogrim (adults).

### **What are the criteria for acceptance to the troupe?**

The criteria are a sense of rhythm, talent in movement and in dance, physical ability and leadership.

The best [dancers] come to the troupes. I know how to work on building the dancers and their personalities. A dancer is formed from their head, from his/her mental and intellectual level, before you start working on the body, hands and feet. There is a need for proper conditions to nurture the dancers and a lot of empathy and love. During all these years, to this day, the dancers receive technique from classical and modern ballet teachers and from me.

Our Dance Center is a dance studio at the Moledet School in Beer Sheva, 15 x 10.5 meters [about 49 x 34 feet]. It has a special parquet dance floor, a piano for classical ballet, bars, mirrors, stage lights and sound amplification.

The Ayalot Ha'Negev dance troupe has represented Israel abroad after having been evaluated by the Interministerial Committee headed by **Dr. Dan Ronen** z"l, former chairman of CIOFF Israel and **Yosef Ben Yisrael**, manager of Maataf, [the Israeli center for popular culture and folklore] and the successors of **Shlomi Zion**. **Dr. Ronit Ronen** and **Yael Miro** are the successors of Dr. Dan Ronen.

Because of its high artistic level, the troupe was invited by festival managers, heads of [Jewish] communities, mayors and the heads of cultural exhibitions from all over the world.

## **Achievements**

1995 – The young dancers passed the exams of the Royal Academy in classical ballet and won the academy's national competition of all the schools in the country. They

*“I go with my heart, I go with my spirit”, says Alkis. “Our religion seeks peace. We don't want battles; peace, only peace!!”*

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won the following awards: First place, **Adva Yaish**; second place **Keren Shvarts** z"l who died of cancer.

1999 – The troupe was awarded first place at the International Dance Festival in Voron, France.

2005 – Lehakat Ha'Bogrim (the adult troupe) won first place, out of 22 countries, at the International Cultural Fair on the Spanish Riviera Costa del Sol in Spain. They were invited by the King of Morocco to perform at his palace and be his guest.

Lehakat "Ayalot Ha'Negev" returned adorned with praise and prizes from the international dance festival competition for children in Vladikavkaz, capital of Northern Ostia, in Russia, where it represented Israel. This festival is considered one of the most prestigious and important festivals in the world; 20 countries have participated in it. Along with Ayalot Ha'Negev, there were representative dance troupes from all around the Caucuses that are along the Russian perimeter.

The Beer Sheva troupe won 3rd place out of all the troupes which participated in the festival.

The troupe was invited by **Elyon Vilenchik**, general manager of the Israeli Center for Support of Children's Art, who chose this troupe from all the dance troupes in Israel to represent Israel in this festival. At the festival, the judging committee crowned the choreographer, Moti Alkis, as the leader in first place, for his artistic level.

At the opening of the closing event of the festival, Moti was invited to the stage to accept the prizes and was decorated for valor, for his courage as an IDF disabled person, for being a teacher in a wheelchair. He was called up to the stage a second time to distribute the medals of the IDF Disabled Persons' Organization to disabled children who are involved in the arts.

At the conclusion, the troupe danced again with the winning troupes and was filmed for Austria National Television and for five additional networks. The event was said to



*Ayalot Ha'Negev (bogrim) at a park in the city Saged in Hungary*



Soloists from Ayalot Ha'Negev Bogrim – Hay, Hanan, Shlomit and Marina in Hungary

be: an astounding, stirring performance of the Israelis; they stood out with their dances more than all the other troupes. Their performance was a promotion for Israel, something with a national nuance.

Before the festival opened the troupe was invited to the 70th Anniversary Ceremony celebrating the Russian army's victory over the Nazis. There the troupe viewed a spectacular parade of the Red Army – tanks, missiles, weapons and ammunition, photographs of the fallen in whose memory helium filled white balloons were flown, symbolizing the lost souls.

The parade manager, **Marina**, introduced Moti, who is a recognized IDF disabled person and a recipient of Israel's decoration of valor, to one of the Russian President Putin's deputies, and to the elite members of the Red Army – medal and ribbon wearing generals.

This same Lehakat Efrochim represented Israel in August 2016 in the competition at the International Dance Festival in Nessebar, Bulgaria. It won first place in choreography and the Grand Prize – the Gold Star, which is higher than first place. For modern dance and duets they achieved second and third place.

The last time, before Corona, in August 2018, **Dr. Dan Ronen**, chairman of CIOFF Israel, recommended that the adult troupe of "Ayalot Ha'Negev" along with an orchestra be invited to represent the State of Israel at the International Dance Festival, "Folkmoor", in North Carolina in the USA.

From an article by the journalist **Cory Vaillancourt**: "We want peace. The head of the Israeli delegation and choreographer of the troupe, advocates for harmony through dance. Alkis spent time in the Israeli armed forces, providing help for the wounded until he himself became an IDF disabled person. For the last three years he has been confined to a mechanized wheelchair, but this does not stop him from helping the troupe to continue to spread the message of peace through dance."

"I go with my heart, I go with my spirit", says Alkis. "Our religion seeks peace. We don't want battles; peace, only peace!!"

**Rolf Kaufman**, President of World CIOFF: "Lehakat Ayalot Ha'Negev representing Israel, is an excellent troupe. I was impressed by Moti Alkis, his leadership ability to guide the troupe and his professionalism, despite his physical limitations which confine him to the wheelchair."

**Dr. Dan Ronen**: "I enjoyed reading Rolf Kaufman's letter about the "Ayalot Ha'Negev" performance at the festival, praise to the troupe and to Moti Alkis. We are happy for your success and thank you for your efforts and for your contribution to promote

## Maya Geva Shapira

the good name of Israel and "CIOFF Israel." Let's hope for productive and inspiring collaboration."

### **Where does the inspiration come from? What is the creativity process?**

From everyday life, from my experiences; dance is in my soul, my spirit and my blood. I forget my disability the minute I begin working with the dancers and it helps me to cope with my disability in my daily life. The spirit overcomes the physical condition. The process is mental. Everything that goes through my brain is passed on to them directly; our state of concentration complements; I teach them my language.

**Anastasia Hefetz** is my assistant who knows my dances and understands my dance language. Through her, I pass on the artistic material. The young dancers imitate her dance steps, steps which I've worked on with her while arranging the choreography.

In the adult groups I have as my righthand, **Anatoly Shenfeld**, who is a modern and classical ballet instructor. He is a graduate of Ayalot Ha'Negev who graduated from the Dance Academy in Jerusalem. He dances, and, through him, I create the steps and the choreography.

On the day the doctors told me that I will no longer dance, I knew that I will dance in my mind. The talent for the art of dancing is from The Creator alone. No one taught me that. When I first started, I consulted with **Shalom Hermon**. I listened to his advice and implemented it in my work as a choreographer. The dancers accepted me as I am, in a wheelchair, they never stared at me or offended my dignity.

### **Tell us about the dancers you taught and where they are today?**

I have graduates, professional dancers, who are instructing and teaching professional dance.

**Chai Cohen** is a professional dancer and choreographer at the Beverley Hills School for the Arts. He has 350 students. He created the choreography for the ceremony when Obama was elected to the Presidency of the USA.

**Noam Segal** dances with a modern dance professional troupe in Marseille, and is going to Norway to audition for a professional modern dance troupe – one of the best in the world, whose instructor is **Shlomi Roimi** – choreographer and artistic director who had danced with Ayalot Ha'Negev and in the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company.

**Limor Buda**, teacher of the IDF disabled troupe at Beit Halochem in Beer Sheva.

**Dedi Alufar** and **Tzlil Harosh** created the SOL Dance Company, a professional modern dance troupe. They founded Beit Hamachol in Beer Sheva.

The rehearsal director [assistant to the artistic director] of the Kamea Company is **Eyal Ganon**, a graduate of Ayalot Ha'Negev.

In 2020, I contracted Corona and I was in very serious condition. I was in the Corona unit at the Soroka [University Medical Center] hospital for five weeks; miraculously I got out. With G-d's help and the rehabilitation center, "AleH Negev", I was rehabilitated and returned to my present condition thanks to the professional and devoted care I received. I was filmed for [Israel's television] Channel 13 news, representing the


*Anastasia Hefetz is my assistant who knows my dances and understands my dance language. Through her, I pass on the artistic material. The young dancers imitate her dance steps, steps which I've worked on with her while arranging the choreography.*

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rehabilitation center. I was interviewed along with the former Minister of Health, Yuli Edelstein, and Almog, the founder of the rehabilitation village.

This year, the 40th anniversary of Ayalot Ha'Negev, I will produce a unique dance production and restart the troupe anew after the Corona crisis and after five years in which I was not able to recruit new dancers from the schools.

The production, under the auspices and at the request of Beer Sheva's Mayor, Ruvik Danilovich, and his assistant Tzvika Cohen, and the general manager of Kivunim, Shlomi Numa, will be accompanied by the Israel Police Orchestra, at Mishkan Le'Omanuyot HaBama Beer Sheva. The participants in the event will be troupes and choreographers who grew up under my tutelage and who had danced with "Ayalot Ha'Negev". The production is planned for the end of 2022.

Moti is a warm-hearted friendly person; he has strong faith in the Almighty and optimism that drives him to create beautiful special dances from his wheelchair. 



*Moti at work with Anastasia and Arie*

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*Moti is a warm-hearted friendly person; he has strong faith in the Almighty and optimism that drives him to create beautiful special dances from his wheelchair.*

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Naftali Chayat \*

*Israeli dances have adopted music of numerous regions and communities, including Yemen, North Africa, as well as Ladino and Greek songs. We shall survey several Israeli dances that were influenced by the less-known music and dance traditions particular to the Caucasus region.*

# Music of the Caucasus in Israeli Dances

## Tunes from the Caucasus region and their influence on Israeli folk dances

The Caucasus region comprises mountain ranges that extend from north of Turkey, through Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia (Gruzia), up to the Chechen Republic of Russia situated in the North Caucasus in Eastern Europe, close to the Caspian Sea. Armenia and Georgia are Christian, while Turkey, Azerbaijan and Chechnya are Muslim. The region comprises numerous tribes, some of which had autonomous regions in the former USSR, such as Ossetia, Dagestan, Ingushetia, as well as tribes of Circassians and Lezgins. The tribes of the Caucasus region are known for their warrior spirit. Ottoman Turkey has deported groups of Circassians to the North of (future) Israel, where they settled in the villages of Kfar Kama and Reyhania.

Israeli dances have adopted music of numerous regions and communities, including Yemen and North Africa, as well as Ladino and Greek songs. We shall survey several Israeli dances that were influenced by the less-known music and dance traditions particular to the Caucasus region.



Map of the Caucasus region

\* Naftali Chayat emigrated from Lithuania (then USSR) at the age of 10 and retained the Russian language and interest in the culture of Soviet nations. Naftali participates in Israeli and Balkan dancing. In 2021 he completed the Israeli Folk Dance Instructors course, during which "Pa'amei Tamuz" was choreographed. Naftali plays flute and other musical instruments, and works in the field of electronic engineering.

## "HaRimon" and "Kad el Kad"

"HaRimon" (The Pomegranate, 1947) by **Zeev Chavatzelet** (<https://bit.ly/3zYLRtt>) and "Kad el Kad" (Jug-to-Jug, 1975) by **Yankele Levy** (<https://bit.ly/3GqvSXL>) were choreographed 25 years apart, so what do they have in common? It turns out that the tunes of both come from operas by **Uzeyir Hajibeyov**, a national Azerbaijani composer, who was a pioneer of opera in the Muslim world.

The tune of "HaRimon" originates from "Arshin Mal Alan", an opera from 1908 about a cloth peddler who wins the heart of his beloved. It became a highly successful musical film in 1945. We do not know whether the movie was shown in Israel, but **Yuval Chavatzelet** wrote me that probably his father, Zeev, heard it when he traveled to the USSR for an international gathering of Communist youth.



Scene from "Arshin Mal Alan"

The lyrics of the Israeli song ("HaMichtav – The Letter", written by **Didi Menosi** in the 50's) are not related to the original song, "Pulun Var?" (Do you have money?) – in which the female servant says to the male servant, "If you have money, I'll marry you", and he responds, "I do, I do!". The name of the dance is not related to either – it is said that **Zeev Chavatzelet** was impressed by the pomegranate tree he saw out his window.



Scene from "If Not This One, Then That One"



Yankele Levy leading "Kad el Kad"

*The Hebrew lyrics of "Eshkolit" praising love and youth, are in sharp contrast to the Armenian song, that praises a national hero who died in a Turkish prison, and calls for revenge.*



## Naftali Chayat

Finding the source of “Kad el Kad” is similar to a detective story, a thriller. I learned the dance in Iris Avner’s chug (dance session). I was intrigued as to why such a graceful dance to such lovely music is no longer danced. I was interested in the origin of the melody, and on various occasions, it was indicated as Turkish, Afghan, Persian or Bukhari. One day, I came to work early and began my day with playing a flute, including the tune of “Kad el Kad – Jug-to-Jug”, among others. Suddenly the office cleaner rushed to me and asked, “How do you know it? It’s a song from my childhood!” It turned out that she’s from Azerbaijan and the tune is from another of Hajibeyov’s operettas – “If Not This One, Then That One.” It is about a father selling his daughter in marriage to an old wealthy merchant and that she had heard the tune in her family.

The opera became a successful movie in 1956, a couple of years before the appearance of the Hebrew song. The Hebrew lyrics, written by **Moshe Giora Elimelech**, talk about the love and admiration of a girl and here too, the lyrics are unrelated to the original opera in which a girl and her servant prove to the old merchant that he wants to marry a young woman.

It is interesting that in the instructional video of “Kad el Kad” on “Rokdim” and also on the recording by “Lehakat Demol”, who perform the song, it is stated that the melody is Turkish. Unfortunately, **Yankele Levy** is no longer with us to ask, but **Yoav Sidi** and **Orly Shachar** stated that he had researched the melodies he used. Given that Hajibeyov had also incorporated folk melodies into his operas, and the whole area of Azerbaijan-Persia-Turkey is one cultural space, Yankele’s statement that the melody is Turkish is not entirely unfounded.

### “El Midbari – To the Desert”

This tune to the dance (1977) by **Bentzi Tiram** (<https://bit.ly/3GGc56R>) also originates in Azerbaijan. The lyrics of the Hebrew song, “Hod Midbari – Echo of the Desert”, sung by **Binyamin Avigal**, has nothing to do with the original that praises the workers in the oil industry – “We will take out the oil wherever it hides, in the depths of the earth or at the bottom of the sea, to quench the thirst of our homeland, Azerbaijan!” Here, too, the source of the Israeli song melody is noted as “folk” – one of the most prolific “composers” in history.

### “Eshkolit – Grapefruit”

The dance by **Dudu Edry** (1980) (<https://bit.ly/3qoo3Mv>) relates to **Zeev Chavatzelet**, who wrote the Hebrew lyrics – this time to an Armenian tune. The Hebrew lyrics, praising love and youth, are in sharp contrast to the Armenian song, that praises a national hero who died in a Turkish prison, and calls for revenge. How did Zeev Chavatzelet become aware of the tune? His son suspects that this is also related to his visit in the USSR.

According to Yoav Sidi, Zeev Chavatzelet and Lehakat Beit Alfa prepared three holiday dances for the second Dalia Festival (1947): “Chag”, “Eshkolit” and “HaRimon”, which were danced with fruit in their hands. He mentioned that the dance, “Har VaKar” by



Dudu Edry demonstrates “Eshkolit”

## Naftali Chayat

Chavatzelet is based on a Tatar melody – another ethnic group that extended from the Caucasus to Mongolia. It is likely that the oriental sound of the music of southern regions of the USSR appealed to Zeev.

### “Machol Gruzini”

The tune of “Machol Gruzini” (“Georgian dance”, 1991) of **Moshiko Itzhak-Halevy** (<https://bit.ly/3zSlrtu>) does not originate from Georgia – it was written by Moshiko. In his early years, Moshiko attended the ballet studio of **Mia Arbatova**, where he was exposed to folk dances, among them, the dances of the Caucasus such as Lezginka – a dance that expresses a warrior spirit that Moshiko infused into the energetic melody and into the dance.

### “Shir Megaresh et HaChoshech”

The dance (1992) by **Roni Siman Tov** (<https://bit.ly/3GrJr9i>) is based on a performance by **Chava Albertstein**, who also wrote the lyrics. The tune is from a Georgian song, “Gogoli Gogoli”, that talks about a man that will win the heart of the girl by being an outstanding laborer. The song was recorded in Israel by the “Kolan” quartet, as well as by the duo, “Hedva and David”. **Yoav Ashriel**, who was among the first to choreograph dances to songs with non-Hebrew lyrics, choreographed a partner dance to it in 1973, but it was abandoned in favor of **Roni Siman Tov’s** dance.

### “Debka Eilon” and “Pa’amei Tamuz”

We are entering the 21st century. **Ilan Swisa** choreographed “Debka Eilon” (<https://bit.ly/3Fr7K5Z>) in 2013 to a Circassian (Adyg, in their language) melody. The Circassian dance to this tune is called, “Leprissa”, a dance in Lezginka style.

Ilan told me that he has many Circassian friends from Reyhania and from Kfar Kama, which is close to Kfar Tavor, where he has a “harkada”, and that he was excited by their dances. Ilan’s dance borrows the energy and the style from the original dance, with hand movements and stomps. It is named after his son, **Eilon**. Although it has Israeli dance characteristics and is intended for the Israeli folk dance community, Ilan categorizes it as an international folk dance.

I hope you’ll forgive me for including the dance, “Pa’amei Tamuz” (<https://bit.ly/31TZfCz>), choreographed by me, **Naftali Chayat**, here. It was choreographed in 2021 as an assignment in the Israeli Folk Dance Instructors’ course. I’m not sure whether **Gadi Bitton**, when he suggested the melody, “Shalaho”, by musician **Erez Netz**, was aware of its Caucasian origin.

As I searched for musical variants, wedding movies from all over the Caucasus appeared! It turned out to be danced in Georgia, North Turkey, and Chechnya; it is considered a national dance in Armenia,



“Debka Eilon”



“Pa’amei Tamuz”

## Naftali Chayat


although the Azeri people claim it's theirs. In Israel it is very popular in the Georgian Jewish community, and it was even featured in the movie, "Chatuna Meucheret – Late Marriage", where **Moni Moshonov** dances to "Shalaho" at the Georgian-style wedding of his son. From the original dance, I borrowed the hand movements that symbolize an eagle, but otherwise, I consider it to be an Israeli dance based on the music of one of the Jewish communities. Some tell me it's an international dance, so it seems to provoke the never-ending dispute of, "What is an Israeli dance?"

### Summary

We have surveyed several Israeli dances, whose tunes from the Caucasus spread into the Israeli folk dance genre. Some have remained just melodies and others, where Hebrew lyrics were written, have become Israeli songs. It seems that the oriental style of the Caucasian melodies appealed to the Israeli songwriters, who often did not indicate the origin of the melody. The list of dances is likely to not be complete, and it does not cover adjacent regions such as Uzbekistan ("Mi Yitneni Ohf", "BeBukhara HaYafa", "Etz HaRimon", "Rikud HaKad", etc.). Other than the detective work of uncovering the origins of the melodies, it again raises the question of boundaries between the "Israeli" and the non-Israeli. Did "Eshkolit" become any less Israeli after we discovered its Armenian origin? Is the fact that "Shalaho" is popular in one of the communities in Israel makes "Paamei Tamuz" Israeli, or is it still international?

In any case, the music and dance of the Caucasus region have enriched the world of Israeli folk dance with quite a few beautiful dances that we can continue to enjoy.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank **Yoav Sidi, Orly Shachar, Yuval Chavazelet, Nir Dan, Meir Cohen, Ilan Swisa** and others, who added information and opinions of relevance in conversations, correspondence and discussion forums. 

### Links

Wikipedia article on the Caucasus (and the source of the map): <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caucasus>

Source of "HaRimon": <https://youtu.be/kYgVCX4Xiog>

Source of "Kad el Kad": [https://youtu.be/z\\_omnV0Oy7I?t=1775](https://youtu.be/z_omnV0Oy7I?t=1775);

Yankele Levy dancing: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=4357163179373&set=a.4357134698661>

Source of "Hod Midbari" – Echo of the Desert": <https://youtu.be/gUJySNKC8Pc>

Source of "Eshkolit": <https://youtu.be/c5V7VOJfNQ0> (Youtube channel of **Rachel Frohmann Komlosh**), <https://youtu.be/-NwV--NYUGc>

Circassian dance, "Leprissa": <https://youtu.be/AZ0iu1oUbDo>

"Gogoli Gogoli" performed by the "Kolan" quartet: <https://youtu.be/IVZJfIWJMrE>

"Shalaho" dance in the movie, "Late Marriage": [https://youtu.be/\\_Kgm-kliuKA?t=21](https://youtu.be/_Kgm-kliuKA?t=21)

Extensive list of Israeli songs and their international origin: <https://bit.ly/3nj98kT>

*We have surveyed several Israeli dances, whose tunes from the Caucasus spread into the Israeli folk dance genre. Some have remained just melodies and others, where Hebrew lyrics were written, have become Israeli songs.*



David Ben Asher

Translation:  
Alex Huber

*A unique book that deals with the connection between Israeli folk dances and the many aspects of Jewish tradition.*

## *Books, Ladies and Gentlemen, Books ...*

# On New Books Related To Folk Dance

### 1. Jewish inspired Israeli dance

Numerous books and countless articles have been written about Israeli folk dance, but to date, no such book has been written, exceptional in its power, content, and uniqueness in the extensive tractate of this field of dance.

Israeli folk dances are different and special compared to folk dances of the [other] countries of the world. Many debates and opinions among experts, present Israeli folk dance in a different light. There are those who dismiss their definition as folk dances and folklore and those who mark them as a trend that characterizes our country and transforms them into something 'unique-national-popular' that has the special identity of the renewed people of Israel.

There is the eclecticism and immense variety of dance steps, the variety of music, the songs, (including the use of international music), the movements, as if they do not have a national uniqueness. But perhaps it is this "lack of uniformity" that creates the uniqueness that can already be called folk dance and perhaps unique Israeli folklore.

To open this issue to other aspects, to add to the definition of our folk dances, the title "folk dance", this new book, "**Jewish inspired Israeli Dance**", adds another tier to make our dances something characteristic of the people residing in Zion [Israel].



Partners in writing. From left: Moshe Telem, Avigdor Kahalani, Shmuel Saadia, Moshiko Halevy and Avi Peretz



*Shmuel Saadia dancing along with Moshiko and Yaron Carmel on the evening of his book launching*

*“My book seeks to examine and present to the reader the connection and affinity between Israeli folk dance and Jewish heritage sources, including the Torah, the Prophets, the Scriptures, the Piyutim, the Prayers and the Psalms.”*

**Dr. Shmuel Saadia** is the author of the book. He is an attorney by profession and has himself been dancing for many years. In addition, he is an expert in human rights law and has published eight books. His record of extensive public activity includes membership in the Herzliya City Council.

This is, as mentioned, a unique book that deals with the connection between Israeli folk dance and many aspects of Jewish tradition. In addition to the professional content, the book also includes a record of the author’s personal acquaintances, to an astonishing network of connections with a host of public figures in the State of Israel.

Joining the professional consulting and editing team, in creative and personal reviews, were several choreographers and dance leaders in Israel. Among them: **Moshiko Halevy, Shlomo Maman, Moshe Telem, Avi Peretz, Lior Cohen**, and many others.

#### **Shmuel Saadia on the book:**

“My book seeks to examine and present to the reader the connection and affinity between Israeli folk dance and Jewish heritage sources, including the Torah, the Prophets, the Scriptures, the Piyutim, the Prayers and the Psalms.”

In the book you can find a comprehensive review of songs for which dances were created, whose origin is based in Jewish heritage. Sources such as The Song of Songs and Psalms, which provide richness as in an overflowing spring. All this while researching the question of whether the dance choreographers were influenced in the choice of the songs from the sources, and whether there is an affinity between the Jewish content and the dance movements. What is the cultural influence from the family home on the composition of the dances created?

The book examines how distinctly secular Jews such as **Yoav Ashriel** or **Moshe Telem**, were influenced by the sources despite having a secular worldview.

The book provides an extensive overview of the “generation of giants”, the founders of the folk dance movement and their connection to the magnificent Jewish heritage.

## David Ben Asher

A thick book, 705 pages long, full of examples and life stories. Shmuel Saadia takes a dance that is linked to a particular song and then links the lyrics to a passage from the sources. Thus, he connects the dance to quotes from the sources. And if he does not connect the dance, then he ties the song of the dance to the Jewish sources.

In dances for the stage by dance ensembles in Israel, the choreographers create folklore performances such as Harvest Dances, Farming Dances, Working the Land Dances, Jewish Wedding Dances, Chassidic Dances, Building the Country Dances, Arab Debka Dances, and dances depicting unique Israeli life. In these dances, the choreographers try to combine movements and staging that match the nature of the song as well as the lyrics with authentic backgrounds.

On the other hand, in folk dances for the public, a dance is created to a song. However, in most cases, there is no connection between the movements and the lyrics of the song. For this reason, even in this book, the author did not try to find a connection between the steps of a dance and Jewish heritage sources. The link the writer found is only between the lyrics to Jewish sources. The connection between a song and a dance is accidental; only the connection between a song and the sources is strong and interesting.

The choice of dances and songs in this book is consistent with the idea of the connections between the songs and the sources as well as the connections between the songs and the dance connected to them (but as mentioned, there is no connection between the dance and the sources).

In terms of the analysis and explanations of the songs and their connections with Jewish sources – the book is an important cultural asset. The author did well to add the dance dimension to these explanations, which adds a special touch to the content of the entire book.

### Examples:

The song: “Et Dodim Kala – The Time For Love Has Come”; Dance choreographer: **Moshiko Halevy**; Lyrics: **Rabbi Chaim Ben Sahel**; Melody: folk. Excerpts from the song: Et Dodim Kala / Boi L’Gani / Parcha HaGefen / Henetzu Rimonim / Chalaf Hageshem / HaStav Avar / Kumi Rayati / HaCheshek Gavar / ...

Following the song is an explanation: The lyrics of the song - a piyyut as a love song for the bride “correspond” with the Song of Songs and the atmosphere of spring and renewal based on the song: “Parcha Hagefen - The Vine is Blooming, Henetzu Harimonim – The

Pomegranate is Budding, Kumi Rayati – Arise My Love ” originated in “The Song of Songs” of King Solomon.

The song: “Mi Ha’Ish”; Dance choreographer – **Eliyahu Gamliel**; Composer – **Baruch Hayat**. The lyrics of the song: “Mi Ha’Ish HeChafetz Chayim / Ohev Yamim / Ohev Yamim, Lir’ot Tov / Netzor Leshoncha Meira / U’sfatecha Midaber Mirmah / Sur Mera V’aseh Tov / Bakesh Shalom Ve’Rodfehu - Who is the man who desires life / Loves days

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/ Loves days, to see good / Keep your tongue from evil / And your lips from speaking deceitfully / Turn away from evil and do good / Seek peace and pursue it”.

Explanation: The lyrics of the song are from Psalms, Chapter 34, verses 13-15, and attributed to King David. It is natural for it to find its way to the dance floor. This is what the sages say in Talmud Bavli (the Babylonian Talmud), Tractate Pesachim, page 117a: “With regard to all

songs and praise that David recited in the Book of Psalms, Rabbi Eliezer says: David said them about himself; Rabbi Yehoshua says: he said them about the community... LeDavid Mizmor (To David a Psalm) – teaches that the Shechina [the visible symbol of G-d’s presence in the tabernacle] came over him and then he spoke through poetry/song”. The song describes the character of a man who wants to avoid doing evil, do good and strive for peace.

And so Saadia brings in the book more than a hundred dances and songs with explanations and quotes from the Bible, the Talmud, and other sources. More than 80 dance choreographers receive credit in the book for dances they created, with the explanations attached to them. **Moshiko (Moshe Itzhak-Halevy), Moshe Telem, Shlomo Maman, Eliyahu Gamliel, Rivka Sturman, Sara Levi-Tanai, Yonatan Karmon, Shalom Hermon, Avi Peretz, Shalom Amar**, “star” with many of their dances.

Many others are reviewed in the book – including **Gadi Bitton, Gila Paz, Raya Spivak, Moshe Eskayo, Zvi Friedhaber, Zvi Hillman, Tuvia Tishler, Yaron Ben Simhon, Victor Gabbay, Giora Kadmon, Yankele Dekel, Avi Levy, Israel Shiker, Chayim Shiryon, Rafi Ziv, Mishael Barzilay, Avner Naim, Yehuda Emanuel, Eli Ronen, Marco Ben Shimon, Seadia Amishi, Shmulik Gov Ari, Zeev Havatzelet, Tamar Alyagor, Levi Bargil, Meir Shem Tov, Sefi Aviv, Shoshana Kopelovich, Vardit Hadad, Nourit Grinfeld, Pnina Klein, Yaron Elfasy, Ofer Alfasi, Eli Segal, Zion Ohayon, Yom Tov Ohayon, Miri Akuni, Eyal Ozeri, Shimon Asor, Barry Avidan, Kobi Michaeli, Batia Kronenberg, Shimon Shuker, Elad Shatmer, Yaron Carmel, Tamir Scherzer, Yankele Ziv, Naftaly Kadosh, Itzik Ben Dahan, Michael Barzelai, Dov Orbach** – partial list.

Each dance leader receives a bio, a color photograph and a sample of one or more dances from the repertoire he /she has choreographed.

A festive launch, with many guests, was held at Kibbutz HaOgen with the participation of Moshiko and [Moshe] Telem, MC’d by Yaron Carmel and Elad Shatmer.

Special greetings were sent for the event by President **Isaac (Yitzhak) Herzog, Benjamin Netanyahu** and other leaders of the country. A special blessing was made by former minister Avigdor Kahalani who composed songs for which dances were also created.

### **People in the life of Shmuel (Shmulik) Saadia**

Shmulik’s tapestry of acquaintances, as a public figure, includes the names of many of our country’s senior officials from a variety of roles and positions. People like prime ministers,

*Shmulik’s tapestry of acquaintances, as a public figure, includes the names of many of our country’s senior officials from a variety of roles and positions. People like prime ministers, ministers, mayors, poets, composers, various artists and more. An extensive chapter in the book brings pictures of Saadia’s many social and professional acquaintances, as well as quotes from the words of legal and intellectual figures in Israel.*

## David Ben Asher

ministers, mayors, poets, composers, various artists and more. An extensive chapter in the book brings pictures of Saadia's many social and professional acquaintances, as well as quotes from the words of legal and intellectual figures in Israel.

For example: Celebrities like the first poet, writer and author, **Yoram Taharlev** z"l; the hero of Israel, [Medal of Valor (1973) and Medal of Distinguished Service (1967)] **Avigdor Kahalani**; former Head of the Mossad, Maj. Gen. Res. **Danny Yatom**; former Chief Rabbi of Israel, **Meir Lau** (the father); Knesset Speaker, **Yariv Levin**; **The Parvarim**; singer, **Izhar Cohen**; Minister of Transportation, **Miri Regev**; Justice Minister, **Amir Ohana**; Israeli jurist, Yosef Harish; singer/musician, **Sagiv Cohen**; singer **Ruhama Raz**; Minister of Justice **Prof. David Libai**; President **Yitzhak ("Bougie") Herzog**; Prime Minister **Naftali Bennett**; former Prime Minister **Ehud Barak**; former Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu**; former Minister of Health **Dr. Efraim Sneh**; Dance troupes from Israel and around the world; former Minister of Education, **Amnon Rubinstein**; President, Reuven "Ruvli" Rivlin; Israeli linguist, **Dr. Avshalom Kor**; **Nadia Cohen** – widow of Mossad member, **Eli Cohen** z"l; Minister of Education, **Yoav Galant**; President of the Supreme Court of Israel, **Esther Hayut**; Attorney General, **Dr. Avichai Mandelblit**; Interior Minister, **Ayelet Shaked**; former Commander of the Navy, Maj. Gen. **Eliezer (Eli) Marom ("Chayni")**; former Defense Minister, **Binyamin "Fuad" Ben-Eliezer** z"l; Police Commissioner, **Roni Alsheikh**; former Head of the Mossad, **Yossi Cohen**; Economics Minister, **Prof. Shimon Shitrit**; former Minister of Defense, **Amir Peretz**; former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, **Meir Shamgar**; Mayor of Tel Aviv, **Ron Huldai**; former Minister of Finance, **Moshe Kahlon**; Knesset Member, **Orly Levy-Abekasis**; poet, [and 2015 recipient of the Israel Prize for Hebrew Literature and Poetry], **Erez Biton**; Brigadier General, **Effi Eitam**; [senior Israeli journalist], **Ya'akov Ahimeir**; Minister of Justice, **Gideon Sa'ar**; Minister of Foreign Affairs and Alternate Prime Minister, **Yair Lapid**; Author, **Eli Amir**; former Minister, **Yair Tzaban**; Journalist and economic correspondent, **Nehemia Shtrasler**; former Minister of Agriculture, Transportation, Intelligence, Foreign Affairs and Finance Minister, **Israel Katz**; Mayor of Karmiel, **Mr. Moshe Koninsky**; Chairman of the Histadrut, **Arnon Bar-David**; Mayors of: Ra'anana – **Mr. Chaim Broyde**, Herzliya – **Mr. Moshe Fadlon** and Hod HaSharon – **Mr. Hai Adiv**; Minister of Diaspora Affairs, **Dr. Nachman Shai**; **Motti Ashkenazi**; former President of the Supreme Court, **Ms. Dorit Beinisch**; former Minister of Justice and Finance, **Prof. Yaakov Neeman**, z"l; former President of the Supreme Court, **Miriam Naor**, z"l; Israeli lawyer and former Attorney General, **Yehuda Weinstein**; [former] President of the Supreme Court, **Prof. Aharon Barak**; former President of the Supreme Court, **Dr. Asher Grunis**; Minister of Internal Security, **Mr. Omer Barlev**; Minister of Environmental Protection, **Tamar Zandberg**; Commissioner of Israel Police, **Yaakov Shabtai**; an American-Israeli former professional basketball player and current goodwill ambassador of Israel, **Tal Brody**; current Prime Minister of Israel, **Naftali Bennett**; former member of Knesset, historian and novelist, **Michael Bar-Zohar** – and this is a partial list.

Also featured are photos of lesser, but of no less important, celebrities, including heads of charity associations, food associations for the needy, rabbis, police officers, judges, academics, additional dance leaders and choreographers, ambassadors and, of course, Shmulik's own family.



## 2. Three dance books for children

**Dr. Levi Bargil**, the “Doctor” of Children’s Dance, presents a unique work in his field of specialization - children’s dance books. For 35 years, Levi has been involved in this special field of dancing for children; it spans a wide range of sub-fields – writing a doctoral dissertation, guiding children, mentoring teachers and instructors, choreographing dances, professional guidance, and most recently, as previously mentioned, writing dance books for children.

In 2016, Bar-Gil published the book, “The Art of Teaching Children’s Dances” – Children’s dances in the pace of time. This is a comprehensive instruction book (192 pages) that deals with a variety of planning issues like, characteristics of the population, social climate, safety issues, lesson planning, learning and social experience, dealing with children with special needs, dance notation and methods of teaching, the characteristics of the different ages, and of course, the dances themselves with their social, mental, physical value.

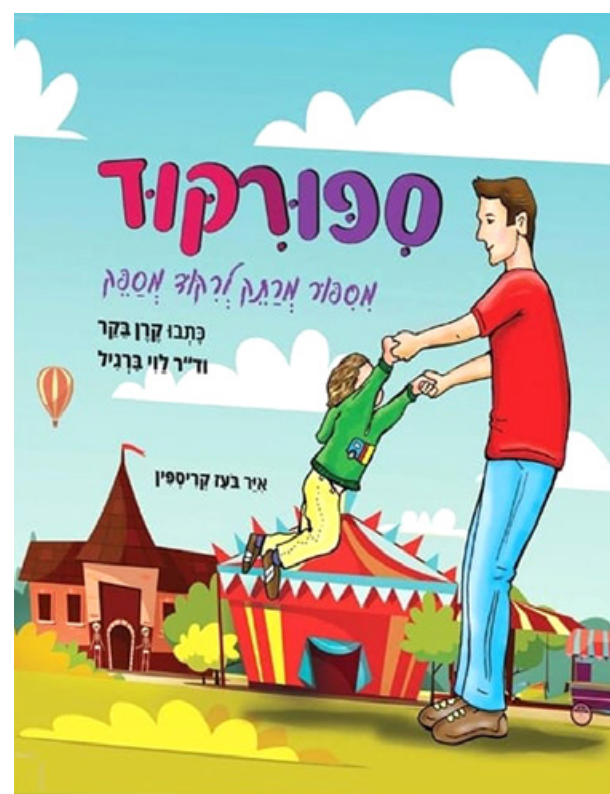
And now the three new books – Innovative and useful holistic work in thought and content.

### **Dr. Bar-Gil says:**

“This book, in the form of a children’s book, is illustrated and colorful, both educational and experiential in order to make the dance accessible to the child through all the senses. It is a tool for the dance leader and teacher to learn the dance”.

The first book is called “Sipurikud” (Storydance) – “From a Fascinating Story to a Satisfying Dance”. I wrote this book together with **Keren Becker** and the illustrator, **Boaz Crispin**. I took a familiar children’s song, for example, “Adon Chardon” (Mr. Lizard) by **Leah Naor and Nahum Heiman**. I took a section of the story which is read to children and added comments about what we learned from the story. The dance steps are described according to the rules of notating dance steps. Next to the text, on a separate page, there is a colorful drawing of the amusing lizard. On the page about the dance, there is a barcode linking to the song with a demonstration video of the dance accompanied by the original song adapted to the dance movements. The instructor can scan the barcode and can play the song on his/her cell phone. With the help of dancers, the author provides a demonstration of the dance steps. This complete combination of sight, hearing, movement, and color imparts happiness, joy, interest and pure pleasure.

The second book called: “RikuDiklumMishak” (Dance Recite Play), I wrote with **Dr. Edith Sulkin and Dr. Hannah Nitzan**, an expert in music and education. Here, too, I present a story,



The book of children dances: *Sipurikud* – Storydance

*This book, in the form of a children’s book, is illustrated and colorful, both educational and experiential, in order to make the dance accessible to the child through all the senses. It is a tool for the dance leader and teacher to learn the dance.*



*Dr. Levi Bargil and his books*

song, dance, and a barcode for watching the dance and listening to the song.

The third book is, "Dance Recite Play – Holidays Throughout the Year". It includes a dance for every holiday with its song, for example: "Rosh Hashanah" by **Naomi Shemer**; "BaSukkah Shelanu – In our Sukkah", by **Leah Naor and Moshe Wilensky** or "Kach Holchim HaShotlim – This is How the Planters March", for Tu B'Shvat."


**Levi Bargil** (60), is married to **Ayelet**, a professional dance teacher, and is father of two. He is a graduate of the Wingate Institute for Physical Education, and holds a Doctorate in Children's Dance. It is likely that he is the only one in Israel with such a doctorate, perhaps in the world. His specialization is in

reducing violence in schools through movement and dance, while building a positive social climate, using a unique model.

To date, he has choreographed about seven hundred children's dances that are taught in Israel and around the world. He is the founder of "Rokdim Begil". The company operates children's dance sessions in 150 kindergartens, from Ashkelon to Netanya, as well as in several elementary schools. It employs fifteen certified instructors who visit these schools once or twice a week. The program is approved by the Ministry of Education and operated by local authorities or by private kindergartens. It is possible to say that, in all my years of work, thousands of children have been exposed to our Israeli folk dances. They are perhaps the future that will ensure this cultural continuity in Israel.

Dr. Bargil's dances can be seen at this link: <https://bit.ly/3ByUPi8>

In Jewish communities around the world, children have been dancing his dances on Friday evenings, for 30 years. Levi speaks about a teaching visit to Brazil, when suddenly, while instructing the adults, 150 children entered the hall and performed two of his dances for him; it was a real performance.

He works at Wingate as a full-time lecturer for dance in preschool / early childhood and schools. He also is a lecturer for first-year folk dance students in Wingate. Recently, he has been teaching and choreographing dances for senior citizens in sheltered housing. He holds a dance session for adults in his hometown of Hod HaSharon and holds a weekly morning folk dance session in a park in Hod HaSharon for seniors. A fourth book for children's dances is on the way. 

# Le'Ha'amin – To Believe



**Sharon Elkaslassy**  
Translation:  
Ruth Schoenberg

**I'M** in my 40s. I've been dancing since I was about 13 years old; I'm a dance leader and facilitator of dance workshops around the world and a choreographer of dances for about 30 years...

I live in Melbourne, Australia and run three weekly classes through the Nirkoda-Melbourne Association. Once every two years, the association holds "Nirkoda Camp" in which the choreographers of dances from Israel participate.

While walking around the Ashdod beach as a youngster, I was drawn to folk dance and came across the free municipality harkadot (dance sessions) on the beach. I was fascinated by the combination of my very favorite Hebrew music along with a group of dancers performing the exact same steps as well as the fact that each song has its own different steps. I decided that I too wanted to take part in it; (as a young child, until then, I had been active in ballroom dance classes).

I started to attend beginner classes in Ashdod organized by the **Didi Dosh** z"l and **Jack Ochayon**. Slowly I began to learn and to fit in. I was thirsty to know and learn more and more, until I discovered that there was a folk dance shop at 10 Ha'Arba'a Street in Tel Aviv. Once in a while, I would go there and buy videotapes, so I could learn more and more... The first tape I purchased was of debka dances.

In the early 1990's, **Gadi Bitton** opened a chug in Ashdod and of course, I also joined this class. At the time, Gadi offered me to join him, as his helper, and thus learn and experience the role of a dance leader.

I was at his side for three years and learned a lot. I fell in love "with the craft" and a small spark ignited in me that began to burn within me – to choreograph my own dances.

In 1997, I choreographed my first dance – Yesh Li Koach L'Ham'shech – I Have Strength To Continue (to the song of **Boaz Sharabi**) under the guidance and direction of Gadi.

In 2000, I set out on my own and started to lead dancing in schools, afternoon classes and a small evening class in Ashdod. In 2009 I joined my good friend, **Sagi Azran**, and led dancing in a chug in Yehud. That year, I was one of the founders of "Ruach Ne'urim – Spirit of Youth" – a group that advocated bringing the young and the young at heart from all over the country into the folk dance movement; we held various events and workshops aimed at quickly integrating young people into folk dance with the repertoire and mainly, how to make them stay for the long term, what's called "the creation of the future generation".

In 2010, I went to a camp in Melbourne, Australia. I was "turned on" by the place and I decided to remain and live there. To this day I am active in the local folk dance movement in Melbourne, through the Nirkoda Association.

## Dance of the Month

My ideology as a dance leader – a combination of all styles from all times and at all levels. All the time, renewing and creating interest, while preserving and respecting the nostalgia dances we grew up on.

As a choreographer, I try to choreograph dances that will be relatively simple and “doable” for everyone, while creating an interesting part that has not been seen before, in order to differentiate that dance from the other existing dances and that would still be interesting for the dance community.

I especially enjoy when the song “guides” me through with words that can be translated into movement like “hug you”, “run” “pray” and more....

To date I have choreographed over 80 dances. I enjoy collaborating with other choreographers – in the sense of combining ideas and learning from one another.

My dances are here: <https://bit.ly/3tmlb4j>.

The last period, when we danced less and were at home more, was a time that brought many thoughts to me in the creative area. I lingered a lot on each and every song and searched for the “right step” without compromising; I can no longer wait for it to be behind us and share the new dances I have choreographed. See you on the dance floor!!!!

### About the dance

I received the song “Le’Ha’amin – To Believe” during the weekend prior to its release along with a recommendation that it would be a quiet, emotional and touching song. During the weekends, I usually try not to touch folk dance but to dedicate my time to the family. For sure, after releasing a few quiet dances, my desire was to do more upbeat and lively dances. After realizing that the singer of the song for **Doli & Penn** (the songwriters

and composers) this time, was my favorite singer, **Idan Raichel**, I decided not to wait and immediately listened to him sing and see if I would connect to it in terms of choreographing a dance.

Immediately upon my first hearing it, I was captivated by the perfect performance of **Idan Raichel** that also blended perfectly with the moving melody and lyrics that symbolize hope, especially during the difficult time we had (and are still going through) with the virus and everything surrounding it.

Within a few minutes, I was successful in putting together a simple dance pattern that flowed. My first priority was to choreograph a dance designed for all levels of dancers and one where the steps would “not interfere” with the flow of the song.

As I delved deeper into the lyrics, to my delight, I found



*In the center of a circle*

## Dance of the Month

that there were phrases in the song that can be translated into movements – which to me, as a dance choreographer, is very aesthetic and makes the dance even more special. In the original dance pattern that I choreographed, I incorporated movements until I was satisfied with the final result.

For example:

In the first part, in the phrase. “he is always waiting” – the dance flow stops and waits by performing a transfer of weight in place, before immediately preceding to the next part.

At the beginning of the chorus – “feel without touching” – the hands come out with a pause, as if wanting to “touch”...

During the chorus – “Hugged tightly in the hands” – The hands close diagonally to the chest in a hugging motion, before extending to finish the part.

To my delight, the final result was received with affection and appreciation in most harkadot (dance sessions) in Israel and the dance even spread around the world at dance sessions in South America, the United States, Europe and more ....

The dance: <https://bit.ly/3guj6vM>

### Le’Ha’amin – To Believe

Meter: 4/4

Formation: Circle

Structure: one verse, two parts

**Part A:** Hands free. Face and move CCW.

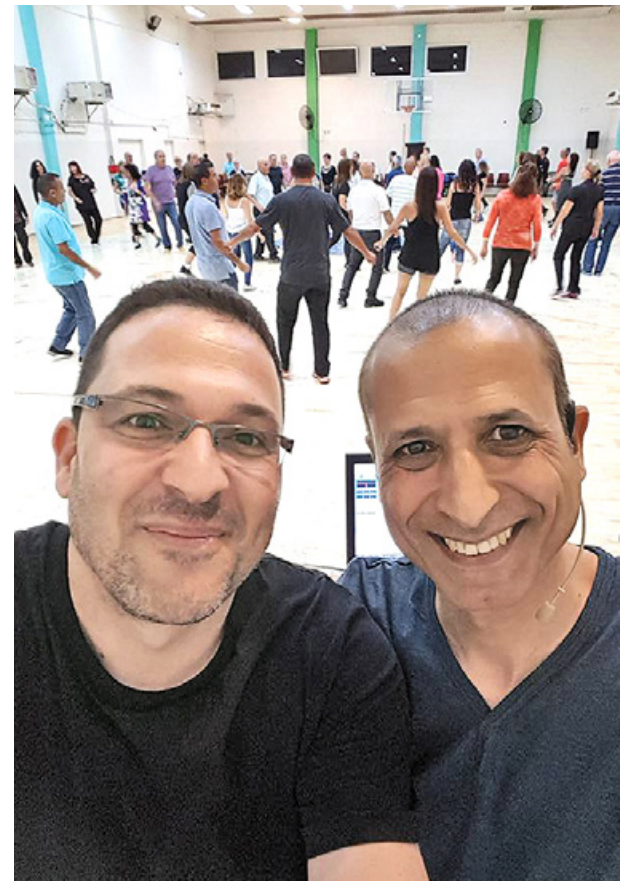
1-4 Begin with R: three steps forward: R, L, R; brush L fwd while raising both arms up.

5-8 Step L fwd; While lowering arms: step R back, step L back and lift Rt. knee; hold.

9-12 Step back on R, step L to left side to face center, cross R over L, step L back in place.

13-16 Full turn right on the line of the circle with two steps: R, L; sway: R-L.

17-19 Moving CCW on the line of the circle: step R to rt., cross L behind R, step R to rt. turning to the rt. to face out of center (back is to center).



Sharon Elkaslassy with Tamir Shalev

20-22 Continue moving CCW: Step L to left, cross R behind L, step L to left turning to the left to end facing center. (Note: counts 19-22 are like the beginning of the dance, “Eretz Eretz”.)

23-24 Sway: R, L.

25-28 Cross R over L to face CW and raise Rt. arm upwards, hold, step back on L lowering arm, step R to rt. to face center.

29-32 Cross L over R, hold; Moving fwd CCW on the line of the circle: Turn rt. with two steps R,L.

33-64 Repeat Part A, counts 1-32.

65-68 Face center. Sway: R, L. Close R next two L while clapping hands together in front of chest.

**Part B:** Face center; Move CCW.

*To my delight, the final result was received with affection and appreciation in most harkadot (dance sessions) in Israel and the dance even spread around the world at dance sessions in South America, the United States, Europe and more...*



Sharon Elkaslassy with  
Sagi Azran (from right)  
and Israel Shiker (from  
left)



Sharon Elkaslassy with  
Dudu Barzilay

## Dance of the Month

- 1-4 Sway: R,L,R while raising arms overhead (fwd, up and out to the sides) in a circular motion, hold.
- 5-8 Moving CCW: Cross L behind R, step R to right side, cross L over R, pivot left on L to end facing CW with right shoulder to center.
- 9-12 Two steps fwd: R,L and pivot on L to the rt. to end facing CCW (left shoulder to center); sway R to rt. while extending arms to rt. side (away from center), hold.
- 13-16 Full turn and a quarter left towards center of the circle with three steps: L,R,L. Hold.
- 17-20 Three steps fwd towards center of the circle beginning with R and pivot on rt. ½ turn to end facing out of center (back is to center). Hold.
- 21-24 Three steps bwd (continuing toward center): L,R,L while bringing hands in front of chest in a "hugging" motion. Hold.
- 25-28 Two steps forward moving out of center: R, L fwd; step fwd on R and pivot 1/2 turn left to face center; step L to left.
- 29-32 Cross R over L to left; step back on L in place; moving on the line of the circle 1&1/4 turn rt. with two steps: R,L.
- 33-64 Repeat Part B counts 1-32.
- Ending** – after 2nd time through the dance.
- 1-4 Repeat Part A counts 1-4.
- 5-8 Tcherkessia step: step fwd onto L, rock back onto R in place, step bwd onto L, rock fwd onto R.
- 9-10 Step L fwd, pivot on L to left to face center.
- 11-12 Close R next to L with knees slightly bent while crossing arms in front of body and snapping fingers. Hold.

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

## Le'Ha'amin – To Believe

Lyrics: **Dolev "Doli" Ram** and **Penn Hazut**

Composers: **Dolev Ram** and **Penn Hazut**

Singers: **Idan Raichel, Dolev Ram, Penn Hazut**

Everything that was here will change from  
tomorrow

Time will still repair everything that has  
already been broken and remains

There are those who keep the good near us  
He is always waiting

Everything that was here will change from  
tomorrow

If we try

Just believe without knowing

To feel without touching

To talk with your eyes

Even when I have nothing more to say

Liberate the moment

It is natural to be afraid of nature

Embrace tightly with your hands

Every moment before it's over

Everything that was here will change from  
tomorrow

Time will still repair everything that has  
already been broken and finished

All the prayers, the miracles in our lives  
Connect to this moment

Everything that was here will change from  
tomorrow

If we try

Just believe without knowing

To feel without touching

To talk with your eyes

Even when I have nothing more to say

Liberate the moment

It is natural to be afraid of nature

Embrace tightly in the hands

Every moment before it's over

# The Camera's Experiences

## Komuna

An initiative to inspire the younger generation to participate in folk dance

By: Hila Mukdasi; Photographer: Alisa Volosnikova

From the age of 8, thanks to my dear parents, I breathe the culture of folk dance and Israeli dance. At the age of 16, I was trained as a full-time instructor and since then, I have been teaching Israeli folk dance with great pride, in various settings both in Israel and around the world.

Over the years, I've noticed that the number of young people in the circle is small. A fear grew in me that this unique culture would completely disappear. This is a unique cultural phenomenon, with an intense power to connect diverse people in one social circle, full of energy, life, and joy; it moves me each and every time. I decided that I must act here and now to fulfill my dream: that all of Israel will dance.

In May 2017, concurrent with my university studies, I founded "Komuna" – the first project of its kind in the country. Its sole purpose is to connect young people through the world of folk dance and Israeli dance. In fact, it is a living and dynamic community that preserves Israeli culture in a creative and innovative way. It is a platform for young people to expand their social circles. Beyond that, members of the community "sharpen" their Israeli identity through it and, in an experiential way, cultivate a healthy lifestyle.

For the first time in Israel, many young people connect, enjoy and dance Israeli folk dances with sweeping energy in a family atmosphere. We hold weekly dance sessions and festive events with the participation of many young people from diverse backgrounds of Israeli society: students, new immigrants, religious and secular and even dancers from countries around the world. Komuna members continue to maintain their social connection outside of dance sessions in shared Shabbat meals, tours, volunteering and more.



Hanukkah candle lighting



Greetings from the Komuna staff and the founder, Hila Mukdasi, on the occasion of the opening of the new dance session and celebrating Hanukkah



Members of the Jerusalem Komuna arrived at the opening event in Tel Aviv

The project has been operating in Jerusalem for over four years. After impressive achievements such as: receiving the "Discovery of the Year" Award from the Ministry of Culture and Sports and articles that have been published about it in the media and on the television, there was an increased demand for Komuna to expand to the center of Israel. Therefore, the Komuna activities were expanded to Tel Aviv. **Melu Laniado**, a dear friend, and talented dance instructor, who emigrated from Argentina to Israel, joined the Komuna team. She leads the new community in Tel Aviv, hand in hand together with me.

On December 1, 2021, Komuna held an official opening event in the center of Tel Aviv. Over one hundred young people from the center of Israel participated. Most of those present, joining our ranks, are a "new generation" of Israeli folk dancers.

Here are photos from the exciting opening night in Tel Aviv. Photos full of light and colors, energy and new connections.

Spread the word and join the magic that Komuna creates every week anew!



# The Camera's Experiences



Holding hands in one circle as the grounds to connect members of Komuna



Circle dance with a traditional style of holding hands



Getting to know each other through line dancing



Line dancing



Young dancers join the circle and follow Hila in the center of the circle



It's common to see many boys on the dance floor



Abundant pleasure and joy erupts



Dedicated time during the dance session to connect with each other



New immigrants from around the world integrating into Israeli society through the culture of Israeli folk dance





# The Camera's Experiences



A veteran dancer helps to integrate new dancers



Dancing a rich and varied repertoire



Dancers smiling during partner dances



Dancers become acquainted thanks to Komuna



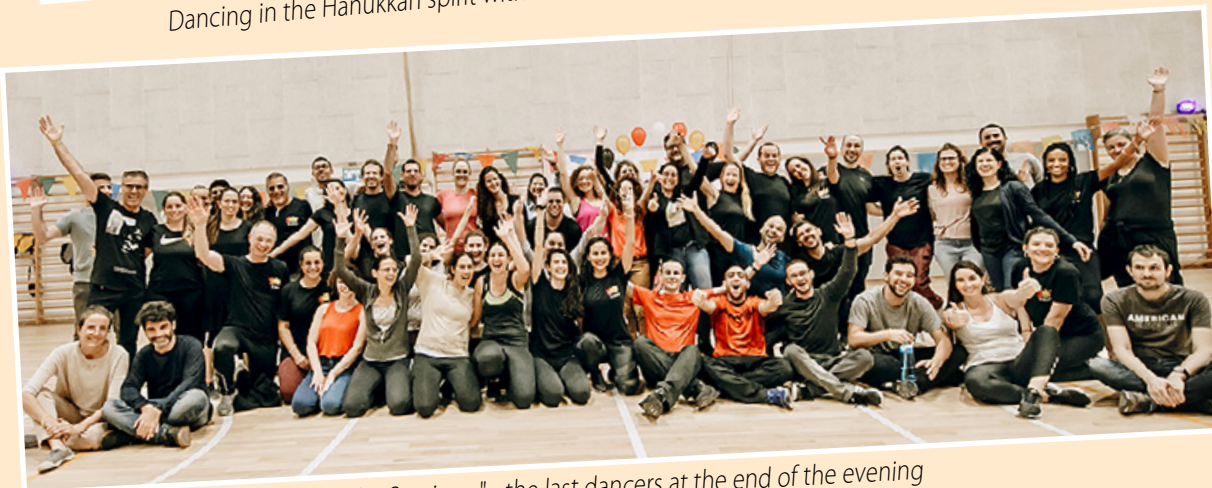
Partner dances



Dancing in the Hanukkah spirit with ultraviolet lighting



Closing dance of the evening



"The Survivors" - the last dancers at the end of the evening



Plentiful refreshments in the light of Hanukkah

