



Shosh Hodorov
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Translation:

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The "Alumim" of the Lehaka

Petach Tikva was very lucky to have **Yonatan Karmon**. It was from Petach Tikva that the exposure to Karmon's dance style originated.

In the early 1950s, in 1952, Lehakat HaGadna (Lehakat Alumim) was formed. **Elu Gutman** was the commanding officer. They wanted to give the youth something interesting and purposeful. At the age of 15-17, we were young, fresh, energetic and full of joy.

Yonatan was 23 years old at the beginning of his career, and Elu contacted him to come and direct us. We were all captivated by his charm, handsome movie star looks, great charisma and talent.

For about two years Yonatan taught us the entire "Torah". We learned new techniques and ballet, we danced "from the corner", we discovered a new world. There were rehearsals and performances from which Yonatan created "folk dances" with us like "Haro'a Haktana", "Al Tira", "Yamin U'Smol", "Mazurka" and many more. With time, all of these became folk dances for everyone – Israeli folk dances.

We admired him, loved him and danced for hours. We started at Beit HaHistadrut in Hapoel Hall and afterwards, at Beit HaNoar HaOved in Brenda and in Yad Lebanim. Friday afternoons into the night and Saturday all day – were our dancing days. Everyone who passed by outside and watched us, marveled at our determination and joy of life.

Yonatan had an ideal partner for the creation of dances, his first accordionist, **Dudik Hodorov**. Dudik had a rhythm in his playing that really bounced the dancers and perfectly matched Yonatan's rhythm and rhythmic dance styles. The great **Farag** photographed us. **Shmulik Zemach** was the coordinator of the troupe and the commander from the army was Elu.

Yonatan did everything, He planned, wrote, taught. We were like one big family, not just a performing troupe. Everyone helped as well as they could. The mother of one of the dancers sewed the costumes. We got ready for the first evening with two hours of dancing and singing.

Before the big evening, Yonatan became ill and spent the night at the house of one of the girls

and her mother treated him with a Yemenite soup.

Saturday night, August 30, 1954, was a milestone for the Lehaka for which we had been preparing for a long time. "Heichal" Hall was filled to capacity.

The evening was dedicated to Israeli dance with folk dances depicting Israeli life, experiences of the ethnic groups, Yemenite, Bukharian Slavic and Israeli holidays. We had a wonderful singer – **Mazal Shmor** together with **Hillel** and **Aviva**. It was an astonishing performance. The hall was packed and the newspapers were full of praise. It was a novelty: an entire evening of dancing and singing... Yonatan always said that it was his apex.

We performed everywhere, at all the important events of that time, in front of guests from abroad, officers, presidents, closed military events, immigrant communities, even in elections. A very important show was at the state celebration of Mekorot on July 20, 1955 for the "opening of the Yarkon-Negev national pipeline". It was a very impressive ceremony with government ministers, ambassadors from all over the world and Zionist lobbyists. The Folk Dance Section of the Arts Department at the Histadrut organized a dance conference. There were three conferences in November 1954 during Chol Hamoed Sukkot – in the North in Degania Aleph, in the Center of the country in Emek Chefer and in the South in Gvar'am.

Tirza Hodes wrote in a newspaper: "I do not intend to analyze the performance of every troupe, but I must emphasize the grandeur and beauty of 'Lehakat Alumim' from Petach Tikva, who accompanied us at all three of our conferences and surprised us all with the fresh spirit, in a performance that was cohesive and pleasant".

After Lehakat "Alumim", HaLehaka HaMerkazit of



Shosh Hodorov with Yonatan on the program of the Dalia Festival, 1958



Dudik and Shosh Hodorov with Yonatan Karmon

Shosh Hodorov

*Lehakot Alumim*

the Histadrut was established under the direction of Yonatan, of course.

The First Lehakot Karmon

On August 29, 1958, at Beit Tzionei America, auditions were held for a performance on the **Ed Sullivan** television show in the United States. **Ed Sullivan** came to Israel to select Israeli artists to perform on his show and then embark on a "coast to coast" tour for the United Jewish Appeal and other Jewish organizations.

Yonatan chose a group of boys and girls and sent us to the audition. The newspaper wrote that the dance troupe was the highlight of the evening. Of course, they chose us to represent Israel. This is how "Lehakot Karmon" was born.

The original plan did not include the troupe, but **Ed Sullivan** was so enthusiastic about us that he decided to invite us separately and signed a separate contract in which he would serve as manager. All the expenses were paid from his pocket. He stated that Yonatan had created his own style which demonstrated the simple charm and atmosphere created by the dances.

Yonatan, typically, took care of everything to the last detail. **Leah Fletcher** taught us manners and etiquette. They took us to the Arcadia Hotel for a gala dinner according to all the ceremonial rules. Maskit, [the national fashion symbol established by **Ruth Dayan**, then wife of **Moshe Dayan**], donated the proper dresses and high heeled shoes.

On November 2, 1958, in front of 50 million viewers, **Ed Sullivan** said: "This graceful, fresh and cheerful young group, Lehakot Karmon will be a sensation throughout America and


beyond". Indeed, it was. There were performances from coast to coast to show the Jewish communities and the general population the achievements of Israel in the arts. We appeared before all the Americans in Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington and more. The delegation stayed for about two weeks at each place. We made one appearance at each location. Accompanying us were **Itzhak Perlman** (violinist), **Ran and Nama** (singers) and others.

*Lehakot Karmon with Danny Kaye*

Israel was at the height of her popularity. We saw musicals at the beginning of their runs such as "West Side Story". We met backstage with famous artists, movie stars like **Danny Kaye** and **Esther Williams**, politicians and many important people.

After the tour with the delegation, Lehakot Karmon remained in the United States for additional performances. **Gedalia Shiva** was the organizer and manager and he took care of the shows. We were invited to one of the secret places in the city and our hosts were **Eddie Fisher** and **Elizabeth Taylor** who had kept their relationship a secret. We were an excellent and coherent group and we did everything together. Dudik and I were the only married couple, but with time, new couples were created: **Rochele Tasman** met **Dov Lautman**, **Odeda** with **Hovav Kruvi**, **Rochke and Kugel**, **Leah and Gavri Levi**. All of these couples remained together.

Yonatan then released his first record album produced by **Fred Hellerman** and **Gil Aldema**. The album was very successful and sold well in both the United States and Israel.

We lived in America for six months. We were on top: parties, receptions. This trip paved the way for all troupes that followed. We were able to come to the United States and perform in front of 50 million people thanks to **Yonatan Kamron**. 

Rehearsal with Yonatan