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The Man And The Legend



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Hora, 1974




HaDayagim, Pa'amey Aviv, Tel Aviv, 1972

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

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

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

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

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

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