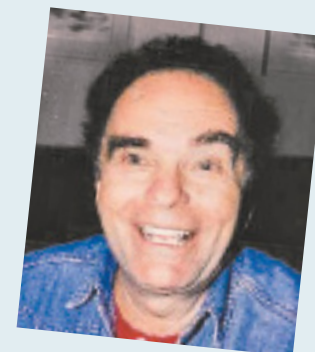




Aura Levin Lipski\*

# Rows Of Cyclamen In Red And Purple



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



\***Aura Levin Lipski** is a songwriter, singer and concert artist who has performed with international stars Ray Charles, Yehoram Gaon, Ran Eliran, Yaffa Yarkoni, Dudu Fisher and Tzvika Pik. Her songs have been broadcast on Australian and Israeli radio, and have been choreographed and performed at Dance Festivals in South America, Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia. In Melbourne she has welcomed friends Ehud Manor, Avi Toledano and David Broza as honored guests to her home.

## Aura Levin Lipski

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

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

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

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

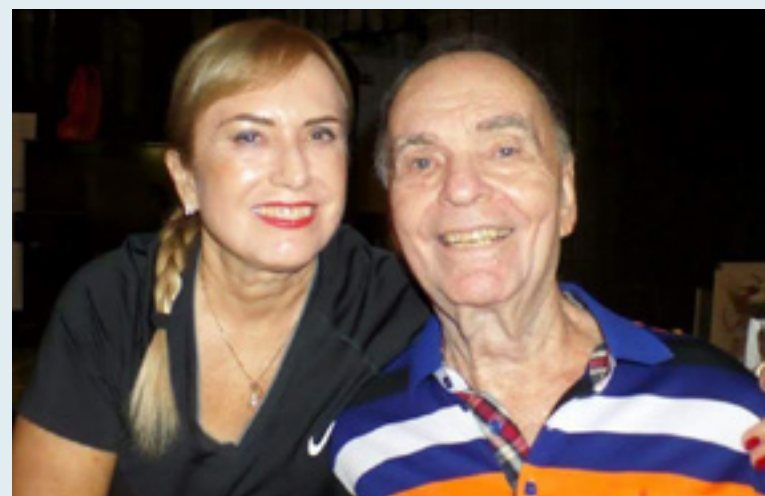
Another fast forward, to 2016. I'm on a visit to Israel, working on my websites with my brilliant friend and wonderful dancer, **Eli Shilo** of Jerusalem.

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

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

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

But it didn't end with the performances. The



*Yoav and Rakefet Ashriel*

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

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

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

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

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

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



*Tribute concert to Yoav Ashriel*

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