

*"It's no wonder that the beautiful songs of the past have given me special inspiration and motivation to choreograph dances."*



## Dance of the Month

# Balada Al Esterika - The Ballad of Esterika

**Marco Ben Shimon**

**Translation: Ruth Goodman**

**M**arco Ben Shimon was born in Algiers on October 1, 1947 and at the age of two, emigrated to Israel – directly to Tzfat (Safed), where he acquired his education until he was drafted into the Israeli Army (IDF) in 1966.

After his military service, he studied and completed a bachelor's degree in teaching physical education at the Wingate Institute. In 1976, he began working as a teacher at Danziger High School in Kiryat Shmona.

Between the years 1977-1978, he began folk dancing at **Sefi Aviv's** sessions in the Galilee region, and in the Kiryat Shmona Dance Troupe under direction of **Seadia Amishai**.

In 1979, he graduated with honors from a folk dance instructors' course (Course Madrichim) in Tiberias and began working as a teacher in Kiryat Shmona.

In early 1981, he began choreographing dances. "Gan Ha'Shikmim – Sycamore Garden" was his first dance that was received with love. It was followed by additional dances such as "Leil Stav – Autumn Night", "Na'ama", "Lecha Ve'Alecha – For You and About You" and others... At the beginning of his career, he worked closely under the guidance of **Yoav Ashriel z"l**, who had organized training workshops (hishtalmuyot).

In 1981, he moved to Jerusalem, where he worked as a high school teacher and as a folk dance instructor.

In 1985, as part of a "sabbatical year", he completed his master's degree in education and physical education at Boston University in the United States.

Between the years of 1990-1997 he moved to Toronto, Canada, where he continued to work as a high school teacher in Jewish schools and as a folk dance instructor in local sessions. During his stay in Canada, he was invited to teach his dances in many camps and sessions throughout North America.

In 1997 he returned to Israel, to Jerusalem, and continued his work as a high school teacher and Israeli folk dance instructor in chugim (sessions). He also organized dance training courses

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for high school teachers at the Jerusalem District Ministry of Education, and he continued to choreograph many more dances.

In 2015, Marco retired, and he now lives in Pardes Hanna.

Marco's dances can be found on the Rokdim website: <https://bit.ly/3EPQ9GU>

### **About the dance, he says:**

It's no wonder that the beautiful songs of the past have given me special inspiration and motivation to choreograph dances. As such, many years ago, I was introduced to this charming old song, "The Ballad of Esterika and Don Yitzchak Abarbanel" that was performed by singer **Ofra Gluska** at the 1972 Oriental Song Festival. Recently, I heard it again and decided to choreograph the dance.

There is also the wonderful story about the leader of the Jews of Spain and Portugal during the expulsion from Spain, **Don Yitzchak Abarbanel** (Don Isaac Abravanel). Until he was expelled, he was a leading Portuguese philosopher and Minister of Finance.

The song tells about the honorable Don Yitzchak Abarbanel, whom all the great men tried to match with their daughters. He chose **Esterika**, a simple and beautiful Jewish girl, without a pedigree, with whom he fell in love.

For this charming folk song, I tried to choreograph a simple and catchy dance. To my delight, it was enthusiastically received in sessions throughout Israel.

Dance video: <https://bit.ly/3PR2zo5>

### **Balada Al Esterika**

#### **Dance Notation**

**Formation:** Partners in a circle

**Meter:**  $\frac{3}{4}$  (In the notation, each count represents one measure.)

**Structure:** One verse, two parts

Step notation is for M (men); W (women) uses opposite

**Part A:** Partners stand side by side facing CCW, W to the right of M, inside hands joined.

- 1 Moving fwd CCW: Three steps fwd beginning with the outside foot (M w/L, W w/R).
- 2 Without releasing hands, step fwd with the inside foot (M w/R, W w/L) and pivot toward partner to end facing CW with M's rt. and W's left hands raised (former inside hands) overhead and M's left and W's rt. hands joined low (1); Touch toes of the free foot (M's left and W's rt.) and hold (2-3).
- 3 Facing CW: Yem. L bwd. [W: Yem. R bwd.]
- 4 Release hands.  $\frac{1}{2}$  turn rt. (away from partner) with 3 steps, RLR to end facing



CCW in the opening position of the dance [W:  $\frac{1}{2}$  turn left w/ LRL].

- 5 Open waltz step fwd beginning with L.
- 6 M: Waltz step fwd beginning with R and turning to face W; W: Waltz step beginning with L turning left under joined hands (M's rt., W's left) and ending face to face with M.



7-8 Partners in waltz position turn together with 2 waltz steps rotating CW while moving fwd CCW along the circle line and ending in the opening position of the dance.

9-16 Repeat counts 1-8 to end with partners face to face, M with his back to center.

**Part B:** Partners face to face, M with back to center, hands joined and extended out to the sides.

1 M: Balance step (side, behind, in place) beginning with L [W: balance step R].

2 M: Balance step beginning with R while leading W as she turns left under his rt. hand joined with her left; W: Waltz step beginning with L turning left under her left hand joined with M's rt.

3 Repeat Part B count 1 (balance step).

4 W: Balance step beginning with L while leading M as he turns rt. under her left hand joined with his rt.; M: Waltz step beginning with R turning rt. under his rt. hand joined with W's left.

5 Partners face to face, M with back to center, hands joined and extended to the sides, moving CCW: M: Step L to the left side, step R behind L, step L to left. [W: R to rt., L behind R, R to rt.]

6 M: Step R across L (1), lift L to left side (2), hold (3). [W: L across R, lift R, hold.]

7 M: Step L behind R (1), R to rt. (2), Step L across R. [W: Step R behind L, L to left, R across L.]

8 Release hands. M:  $\frac{3}{4}$  turn rt. with a waltz step beginning with R to end facing CCW. W:  $\frac{3}{4}$  turn left with a waltz step beginning with L to end facing CCW.

9 With inside hands joined low: 3 steps fwd beginning with outside foot (M w/L, W w/R).

10 Release hands. M: Step R fwd while pivoting left to face center, back to back with W with rt. arm extended to rt. side at shoulder level (1); [W: Step L fwd while pivoting rt. to end back to back with M with left arm extended to left side at shoulder level]. Free arms are also extended to the sides at shoulder level. Hold (2-3).


11 Face CW: 3 steps fwd beginning with inside foot (M w/L, W w/R).

12 M: Step R fwd while pivoting left to face W, rt. arm extended to rt. side at shoulder level (1); [W: Step L fwd while pivoting rt. to face M with left arm extended to left side at shoulder level.] Free arms are also extended to the sides at shoulder level. Hold (2-3).

13 Three steps fwd beginning with the outside foot (M w/L, W w/R).

14 M: Step R fwd, L bwd in place, R fwd to face W; W: Step L fwd, R bwd in place, L fwd to face M.

15-16 Partners in waltz position turn together with 2 waltz steps rotating CW while moving fwd CCW along the circle line and ending in the opening position of the dance.

**Note:** The second time through the dance, Part B is repeated twice. 

**Instructions notated by Ruth Goodman and Ruth Schoenberg**

**Balada Al Esterika**Music: **Chaim Tzur**Lyrics: **Yossi Bachar**Singer: **Ofra Gluska****Lyrics transliteration**

HaShmu'a asta knafayim  
 Don Yitzchak Abarbanel  
 Matza ziyvug min hashamayim  
 Esterika Uziel  
 Nedunia eich timatze la  
 Ki aviha rak chayot  
 Kvar shanim kulam amru la  
 Lo yirtze bach af echad.

Chorus:

Mi mi'lel u'mi'pilel  
 She'Esterika ti'nase  
 Le'Don Yitzchak, Le'Don Ytizchak  
 Le'Don Yitzchak Abarbanel.

Don Yitzchak La'ir higi'a  
 Matbe'ot le'rov pizer  
 Gam divrei chochma hishmi'a  
 V'chol av acharav chizer  
 Be'pinat ha'shuk matza hu

Na'arat shcurat se'ar  
 Mikol bnot ha'ir yafa he  
 Rak ba Don Yitzchak yivchar.

Chorus (Mi mi'lel u'mi'pilel...)

Anuga he Esterika  
 Af afeha moradim  
 K'shenigash miyad hismika  
 B'fnei ben ha'ashirim  
 Habanot kulan kin'u ba  
 Eich matz'a shiduch mutzlach  
 Bat lelo yechus ra'u ba  
 She'af gever lo yikach.

Chorus (Mi mi'lel u'mi'pilel...)

Ve'hayom zo Esterika  
 Haposa'at la'chupah  
 Be'yad Don Ytizchak he'chzika  
 Ko zoheret ve'yafa  
 Chen ve'yofi hen lo hevel,  
 Ha'yechus eino chashuv  
 Don Yitzchak ve'Esterika  
 Zot hochichu shuv va'shuv.

Chorus (Mi mi'lel u'mi'pilel...)

**Balada Al Esterika****Lyrics translation**

The rumor has spread,  
 Don Yitzhak Abarbanel  
 Found a match made in heaven  
 Esterika Uziel  
 How will she find a dowry?  
 Her father is but a tailor  
 For years everyone told her  
 No one will want you.

Chorus:

Who have guessed, who would have thought  
 That Esterika would be married  
 To Don Yitzchak, to Don Yitzchak  
 To Don Yitzchak Abarbanel.

Don Yitzchak came to the city  
 Many coins he dispersed  
 He also spoke words of wisdom  
 And every father courted him  
 At a nook in the market he encountered  
 A dark-haired girl  
 The most beautiful of all the girls in town

was she

The only one that Don Yitzchak would choose.

Chorus: Who would have guessed...

Tender is Esterika  
 Her eyes are downcast  
 When he approached, she immediately blushed  
 Facing the wealthy heir  
 All the girls were jealous of her  
 How did she find such a successful match?  
 She was viewed as a daughter with no lineage  
 That no man would take.

Chorus: Who would have guessed...

And today it is Esterika  
 Walking down the aisle  
 In the hand of Don Yitzchak that she held  
 So radiant and beautiful  
 Grace and beauty are not only skin deep  
 Lineage is not important  
 Don Yitzchak and Esterika  
 Have proven it once and for all.

Chorus: Who would have guessed...