



Vol 113 | November 2023 | **VIP** Members

# Jim Gold International Folk Tours: 2024

Our trips are for folk dancers, non-dancers, and anyone with a love of travel and culture

[www.jimgold.com](http://www.jimgold.com)

## Middle East



### Egypt

**February 23-March 3, 2024**

Cairo, Nile River cruise, Luxor, Aswan

## North America



### Western Canada

**April 11-23, 2024**

Calgary, Banff, Vancouver

## The Balkans



### Albania, Greece, Macedonia, Kosovo

**May 22-June 3-5, 2024**

Tirana, Durres, Vlora Folk Festival, Kruja, Saranda, Berat, Lake Prespa, Ochrid, Kosovo

## Israel



**March 3-13, 2024**

Jerusalem, Masada, Tel Aviv, Galilee, Haifa, Safed, Golan Heights

## Eastern Canada



**June 28-July 10, 2024**

Montreal, Quebec, Saint John, Halifax, Charlottetown, and more

## Bulgaria and Black Sea Coast



**July 22-August 4, 4-8, 2024**

Sofia, Plovdiv, Bansko, Veliko Turnovo, Varna

**TOUR REGISTRATION: Reserve my place! \$200 per person deposit.**

Jim Gold International, Inc., 497 Cumberland Avenue, Teaneck, NJ 07666 U.S.A. (201) 836-0362

[www.jimgold.com](http://www.jimgold.com) / Email: [jimgold@jimgold.com](mailto:jimgold@jimgold.com)

# **We Will Remember October 7, 2023**

## **The Dancers and Instructors Bow our heads in memory of:**

- Those murdered in the towns bordering Gaza and throughout the State of Israel
- The heroic soldiers who fell in defense of the towns and the war against our enemies
  - And we long for the total and immediate return of all of those kidnapped

## **We are determined to strengthen:**

- The hearts and spirits of the families of the kidnapped
- The evacuated civilians who were torn from their homes in the South and the North
- The wonderful civilian organizations and civilians, all of whom are volunteering everywhere and in every possible way to do good

## **We applaud:**

The community of folk dance instructors who are volunteering in every way and are making every effort to bring joy to the civilians.

## **We Thank:**

To the dancers and instructors abroad for raising funds and for their heartwarming support.

Our hearts are with all of the Jewish communities around the world at this time when antisemitism and hatred of Israel are rearing their heads.

**WE WILL KEEP DANCING!**

## Dear Readers,

The State of Israel, and with it the entire people of Israel throughout the world, has gone through severe trauma that has not been seen since the Holocaust.

We are in the midst of a crisis, and no one knows when or how it will end. We [in Israel] know that we have a strong army, great citizens and a wonderful Israeli people all over the world. Together we will overcome and prevail – we have no other choice.

It is clear to all of us that what happened here is not what will be... Our lives have changed and will change in many ways. We still do not understand or have internalized the magnitude of the change.

We salute the many dance instructors who have volunteered to lead harkadot (dance sessions) in the hotels and centers where evacuated residents of the south and north were gathered. You are one of a kind and we are sure that in the coming weeks you will continue to do so.

How will the current situation affect the culture of folk dance? It is clear to us that we, the community of dancers in Israel and around the world, must do as much as we can to continue and uphold what we know how to do best – keep dancing!

The existence of the dances depends on the people who come back and dance them. We are aware of the discomfort expressed by some at the attempts to continue folk dance sessions during this time.

Returning to some sort of routine – while keeping in mind the devastating experience and recognizing that things are not the same anymore – is necessary for the sake of the dance community, for the preservation of the dances and for the sake of the entire nation of Israel.

We have a perpetual commitment to our current dancers in the present and a great commitment to future generations. We must preserve this culture in every possible way – a culture built with a lot of pain and effort.

All the articles in this issue were prepared before October 7, 2023, and we present them as they are.

The main article this time expresses the State of Israel's recognition of the culture of folk dance that deserves to be documented and preserved.

The **Yitzhak Navon** Prize – The Award named for the fifth President of Israel, for the **Preservation and Documentation of Folk Dance**, which I, **Yaron Meishar**, won is an award for all of us – the dancers and instructors - so that it is known that we have a commitment to the continued existence, development and preservation of this field.

Also in the issue:

- In "[Around the World](#)," **Matti Goldschmidt** writes to us about the history of our folk dances on the island of Taiwan.
- **Ronit Ben Shushan** writes about the dancer and choreographer, **Oren Braier**.
- [It Helps to Stay in Sync](#), by **Loui Tucker**, written in response to the survey on "Shnat Shmita – A Fallow (gap) Year", specifically to the article "Fallow the Fallow (Shmitat Shmitut)" that we published in the previous issue (#112).
- [The Dance of the Month](#) this time is "Balada Al Esterika – The Ballad of Esterika", a dance by **Marco Ben Shimon**.
- "[Experiences through the Eye of the Camera](#)" focusing on the "Nature Reserve" of dances by **Moshiko Halevy**.

Enjoy your reading,

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



Yaron Meishar



Ruth Goodman



Danny Uziel



Vol. No. 113 | November 2023

To Receive This Issue  
Please Press **VIP**

■ **Publisher:**  
"Rokdim-Nirkoda" – Rokdim in association with the Israeli Dance Institute Inc. (IDI), U.S.A., President: Robert Levine, Chairman: Ted Comet

■ **Editors:**  
Yaron Meishar, Ruth Goodman, Danny Uziel

■ **Editorial Staff:**  
Shani Karni Aduculesi, Judy Fixler, Honey Goldfein, Benny Levy, Ruth Schoenberg, Tzipi Shragai

■ **Graphic Design:** Anna Kadary

■ **Editorial Office:**  
Rokdim, 96/35 Moshe Dayan Rd.,  
Tel Aviv 67320  
Tel: 972-52-5620447,  
Fax: 972-3-5614651  
Email: [rokdim@rokdim.co.il](mailto:rokdim@rokdim.co.il)  
Website: <http://www.rokdim.co.il>

**SUBSCRIBE**

The World of Jim Gold International

**Jim Gold International Folk Tours: 2024**

Our trips are for folk dancers, non-dancers, and anyone with a love of travel and culture  
[www.jimgold.com](http://www.jimgold.com)

Middle East	North America	The Balkans
<b>Egypt</b> February 23-March 3, 2024 Cairo, Nile River cruise, Luxor, Aswan	<b>Western Canada</b> April 11-23, 2024 Calgary, Banff, Vancouver	<b>Albania, Greece, Macedonia, Kosovo</b> May 22-June 3-5, 2024 Tirana, Durres, Vlorë Folk Festival, Krupa, Saranda, Berat, Lake Prespa, Ohrid, Kosovo
<b>Israel!</b> March 3-13, 2024 Jerusalem, Masada, Tel Aviv, Gattise, Haifa, Safed, Golden Heights	<b>Eastern Canada</b> June 28-July 10, 2024 Montreal, Quebec, Saint John, Halifax, Charlottetown, and more	<b>Bulgaria and Black Sea Coast</b> July 22-August 4, 4-8, 2024 Sofia, Plovdiv, Bansko, Veliko Tarnovo, Varna

TOUR REGISTRATION: Reserve my place! \$200 per person deposit.  
Jim Gold International, Inc., 497 Cumberland Avenue, Teaneck, NJ 07666 U.S.A. (201) 836-0362  
[www.jimgold.com](http://www.jimgold.com) / Email: [jimgold@jimgold.com](mailto:jimgold@jimgold.com)

# מורה לריקוד, לתנועה, מחול

יש לנו בשבילך ביטוח לאחריות מקצועית

## הביטוח שלנו נותן לך:



ביטוח חבות  
מעבידים



ביטוח  
לרכוש



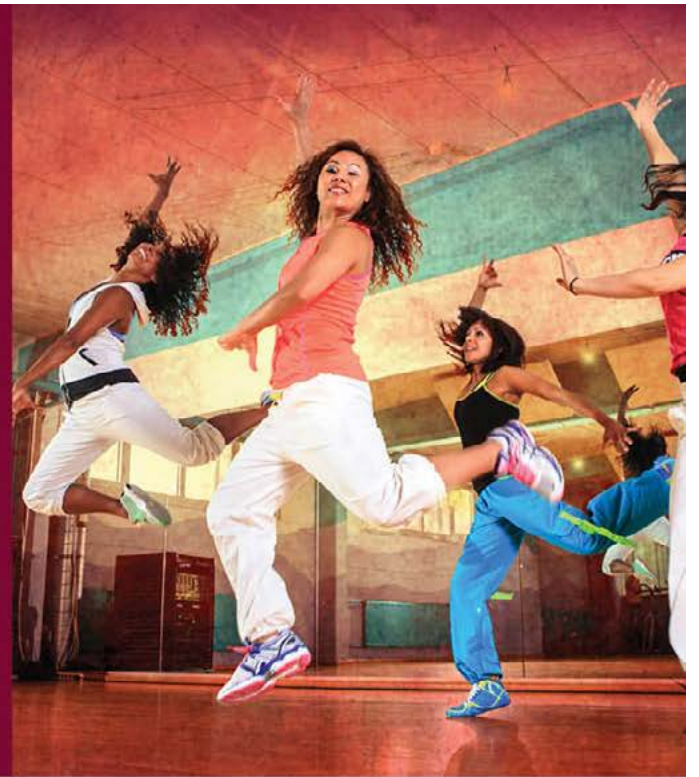
ביטוח אחריות  
מקצועית



ביטוח צד  
שלישי



ביטוח הגנה  
משפטית



### ביטוח ופיננסים

טלפון: 04-6388052 | [www.rap-bit.co.il](http://www.rap-bit.co.il)  
רחוב המייסדים 22, בנימינה



אנחנו מבטחים את העוסקים בתחום הריקוד המחול והתנועה כבר יותר מ-30 שנה  
לפרטים ולהצטרפות לתוכנית הביטוח המיוחדת שלנו פנו:

דביר רפ - 050-9789719, [dvirr@rap-bit.co.il](mailto:dvirr@rap-bit.co.il)

מאזן את הרפ בביטוח ובפיננסים (מאז 1978)



REGISTERED CHARITY  
NUMBER 279801

# Mechol Europa 2024

**BOOK**  
[INFO@IDI.ORG.UK](mailto:INFO@IDI.ORG.UK)  
[WWW.IDI.ORG.UK](http://WWW.IDI.ORG.UK)

UNIVERSITY  
OF SURREY

5-9  
AUGUST



**SHMULIK  
GOV'ARI**



**SHLOMO  
MAMAN**



**TAMIR  
SCHERZER**



**GABO  
MIRKIN**



**DADO  
KRAUS**



**Yael  
YA'AKOBI**



**The ceremony  
for the presentation of the award  
for the documentation and  
preservation of Israeli dance  
named for the late President of  
Israel, Yitzhak Navon z"l**



[Press here](#)



**David Ben-Asher**

Photographs:  
David Ben-Asher  
Translation:  
Dena Matmon

# The Prize for Preserving and Fostering Israeli Culture in the Field of Dance

**Presented by the President of Israel to  
Yaron Meishar and the Field of Folk Dance**

In a very impressive ceremony at Beit HaNassi (the Official Presidential Residence), **Isaac Herzog**, President of the State of Israel, presented **Yaron Meishar**, the editor of "Rokdim-Nirkoda" magazine, with the Yitzhak Navon Prize for the Preservation and Fostering of Israeli Culture in the Field of Dance. Watch here: <https://youtu.be/QqelDSXqR8Y>.

This is the fifth year that this prize has been presented by the President as an expression of gratitude for the work of those artists who have contributed to fostering Israeli culture, its dissemination and preservation. The prize is awarded to artists in various fields – dance, theater, literature, cinema, music, art and design.

Awards were given in seven areas of art this year: encouragement of creativity in the field of theater (the winner: **Hana Vazana Grunwald**); artists at the beginning of their careers (**Nir Strauss**), encouragement of creativity in the field of dance (**Yaron Meishar**), encouragement of creativity in the field of literature (**Baruch Pickel**), choreographers at the beginning of their careers (**Stav Struz**), writers of literature at the beginning of their careers (**Bruria Moskovich**), and life achievement prize (**Rina Yerushalmi**).

In explaining its reasoning, the Prize Committee wrote:

*Yaron Meishar is a dancer and folk dance instructor, a man with a vision and a man of action who, over the course of decades, initiated and established a huge enterprise called, "Rokdim," that documents and preserves the culture of Israeli folk dance. Meishar has filmed and presented to the world over 6,500 dances on video with the best instructors and choreographers. He founded "Rokdim-Nirkoda" magazine and he has already published over 100 editions; (this is Edition 113). He also established the "Rokdim" internet website, [www.rokdim.co.il](http://www.rokdim.co.il), with the purpose of making available all the information and tools that exist in the field of Israeli folk dance to dancers and instructors.*



**"I won the prize, but actually all of us have won it – our entire field of folk dance was awarded esteem, the first of its kind – from the cultural establishment in Israel and it reads: 'This culture is an asset!! An asset that deserves to be preserved and made accessible to whomever is interested'".**



*Erez Navon, Isaac Herzog, Yaron Meishar and Miki Zohar*

About 200 people, friends and family of the prize winners, filled the Events Hall at Beit HaNassi. After a fine reception and excellent refreshments, people filled the hall for an emotional and celebratory ceremony honoring all seven prize winners.

The audience in the hall rose to its feet and applauded the entrance of President **Isaac Herzog**, his wife **Michal**, and the Minister of Education and Culture, Mr. **Miki Zohar**.

The program started with a film of the life and personality of President **Yitzhak Navon** [April 9, 1921 – November 6, 2015], for whom the prize is named, emphasizing his unique contribution to culture, including, of course, his major theatrical work, "Bustan Sephardi – The Spanish Orchard". This was followed by the singer, **Lea Shabat**, who also sang two more songs during the course of the program.

### **The first speaker was President Isaac Herzog:**

"Each and every one of you, dear prize winners, has devoted your life to art, and through art, has fostered its humanism and Israeliness. Some of you have used your bodies and danced; some have used words and writing – literature, songs, plays and cinema. Some have done so through acting – in film and theater. But each and every one of you, in the tradition of President Navon, knows, deep in your body and your soul, that culture is always a bridge – a bridge between cultures, groups, and generations. It is a bridge that connects the recognition of common sense to the heart and the soul. All of you, our prize winners, represent the bridge of your work, every day and every hour.

I want to thank everyone involved in this work: to you my friend, Minister of Culture and Sport, Mr. Miki Zohar, to the devoted members of the Prize Committee, to the various other committees, and of course to you – the dear children and family of President Navon. I hope and pray that we will be privileged – in the spirit of Navon and that of the winners – to understand how the differences between us are a great gift, a real asset to us all. I hope we will recognize all the colors of the Israeli mosaic, that we will recognize in depth that the State of Israel would not be what it is, that Israeli society would not be what it could be, without all these various pieces. So, my best wishes to all of you and continued great success."

### **Miki Zohar, Minister of Culture and Sport, greeted the winners and the audience:**

"The secret of Israel is hidden in its special diversity and in its multiculturalism. Jews from every corner of the globe have come from varied and different cultures, but they are all one

*"Hundreds of people made the effort to inform me, by e-mail, WhatsApp and mostly, face to face, how much my instructions have helped them and that they were the clearest and most comprehensive instructions. That's the biggest compliment I could receive..."*



*President Isaac Herzog with Yaron Meishar*



*The winners*

People. I honor the prize winners for their work to preserve and to foster these many cultures that together form the special and exciting Israeli puzzle.

Navon nurtured the Ladino culture and the Eastern Jewish tradition. We are proud to present you with a prize for the encouragement

of creativity, that you – the prize winners – have contributed so much to its cultivation and preservation. Thank you in the name of the Government and thank you, Mr. President, for hosting this ceremony at your residence."

***Erez Navon, the son of Yitzhak Navon, fifth President of Israel, spoke of his father's legacy:***

"I stand here and speak about my father's home. I remember that, as a child, I played by that window in this house. Today I work to commemorate the work of my father, Yitzhak, and his legacy to the culture of Israeli society. The Chofetz (Hafetz) Haim ["Pursuer of Life" a book by Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan], in an actually prophetic discussion, referred to Israeli society as a guided discussion, not an instrument of destruction or distancing. Thus, he referred to my father, as President of this country. The play, "Bustan Sephardi," which my father wrote, expressed the Eastern Jewish culture that Abba [my father] fostered and developed and it is actually a reflection of the People of Israel as seen through Navon's eyes."

***Dr. Ruth Eshel, Chairperson of the Committee in the field of Dance, spoke on Choosing Yaron for this Honored Prize:***

"With me on the Committee for choosing the Winner for **Encouraging Creativity in the Field of Heritage** were the highly respected dancers and choreographers **Orly Portal** and **Shira Eviatar**. I was pleased to see Yaron Meishar's name on the list of candidates. I've been familiar with his work for several decades, familiar with his passion, his struggle to document and to preserve the folk dance legacy of our people. I found him to be the most appropriate candidate.

However, the question of principle was raised as the prize is for "creativity". Who is a creator? What is a creation? Are a creator and a creation, as accepted in today's world, limited only to the creator of a dance (choreographer) and the creation is the dance (choreography), or, as I claim, the editor of "Rokdim-Nirkoda" is a creator, and his publication is his creation, and his subject suits the subject of legacy.

***Dr. Ruth Eshel:***  
***"I was pleased to see Yaron Meishar's name on the list of candidates. I've been familiar with his work for several decades, familiar with his passion, his struggle to document and to preserve the folk dance legacy of our people."***



In both cases, the creator of the dance and the editor of the magazine, create something out of nothing. Both express through creative work, whether dances or magazine issues, their grasp of their world of art. Both demand a choice of selecting, of what to leave out and what to concede. Both demand creativity, devotion to a purpose and passion.

In addition to "Rokdim-Nirkoda" magazine, the "Rokdim" website should be mentioned, as a site with films and videos of thousands of folk dances which were produced. It contains a catalog with the details of every dance – all paid for out of Yaron's pocket, as he follows his vision and belief in the importance of his life's enterprise.

As opposed to the newer folk dances, most of which don't make it and disappear very quickly, Yaron's life's work to "document and preserve Israeli folk dances" will always remain an asset to the legacy of the dance creations.

I am very pleased that all the members of the dance committee decided to award Yaron Meishar this prize for creativity."



*Dr. Ruth Eshel, Yaron Meishar, Shlomo Maman and Heli Livneh*

### **Yaron's Performance Record – The Reason He Received This Prize (summary):**

Yaron took upon himself a national mission in the field of culture: to document and preserve the unique phenomenon of Israel – folk dance. There are other documentations, but Yaron's documentation has been a long-time project, comprehensive and detailed. The collection is easily accessible and is free of charge for everyone – an asset for generations to come.

At the beginning of the 1980s, and at enormous personal expense, Yaron established a home recording studio where he edited thousands of songs and prepared them to be used for the dances. These edited versions are still being used today, at least those that we still dance. Each dance included the instructions for the steps in "folk dance language" and every audio recording was accompanied by a booklet containing the instructions. Yaron was the first person to use the computer for digital editing and recording and in the 1990s, he consulted with choreographers and helped them to edit the songs used for new dances.

At the same time, he started the unending mission of filming and editing videos of dances. Almost every dance that was ever taught or danced in Israel is documented in the "Rokdim" collection.

With an investment of hundreds of thousands of shekels, Yaron has filmed hundreds of instructors and choreographers. In hundreds of the films, Yaron himself is teaching the dances with great methodical talent, to the pleasure of the students and for their benefit. He says: "Hundreds of people made the effort to inform me, by e-mail, WhatsApp and mostly, face to face, how much my instructions have helped them and that they were the clearest and most comprehensive instructions. That's the biggest compliment I could receive..."

**"The programming and maintenance of an internet site of this size costs thousands of shekels. Without the support of crowdfunding by the users, the site has no chance of continuing to exist."**

This enormous investment is the basis for a library of more than 6,500 filmed dances. The films for "Rokdim" are the only ones that present, in writing, all those dances with copyrights for the music, on the film itself as well as on the internet. These videos are the basis for instructors and dancers to learn the dances.

Yaron initiated and edited (and is still editing) "Rokdim-Nirkoda" magazine, presenting articles about Israeli dance through a variety of topics, mostly interviews with choreographers, and major event organizers (such as **Yoav Ashriel, Moshe Telem, Moshiko Halevy, Shlomo Maman, Gadi Bitton, Avi Levy** and many more).

One hundred and twelve editions have already been published and they are a great cultural asset. They are a treasure that includes dance events of the last 35 years, archival material that is priceless. Yaron dreams of the day when he will finish uploading all the articles from all the print media to the "Rokdim-Nirkoda" website, where people can search for articles by subject, author, key words and more.

In the articles that Yaron himself writes, he doesn't hesitate to address sensitive subjects in the field, like "advocating for the right of choreographers to receive royalties from users (just as song composers, lyricists and singers already receive or should receive)."

Yaron also offered and explained a revolutionary proposal to stop the flood of dancing – a "Shnat Shmita – A Fallow Year". In a poll he conducted, in which more than 1,300 people voted, more than 70% of voters supported his proposal.

Yaron was the one and only person who fought for legal standing for copyrights (recording companies and ACUM) and today he is still the only one (as far as I know) who pays royalties for dances that people purchase on the site. No one else fulfills this obligation.



*Yaron Meishar receiving the certificate and prize from President Herzog*

### **Yaron speaks:**

"I won the prize, but actually all of us have won it – our entire field of folk dance which was awarded esteem, the first of its kind – from the cultural establishment in Israel and it reads: 'This culture is an asset!!!! An asset that deserves to be preserved and made accessible to whomever is interested'.

I'm very proud to be here in this place. But I look toward the future and I worry: Who will follow in my footsteps? Who will continue to add material to the site and make it stronger; who will add videos and documentation? Who will continue to edit and produce "Rokdim-Nirkoda" magazine?

**The “Rokdim” dance archives are a never-ending job. You add dances, you add music and films. And where I really need help and cooperation is from all of the choreographers.**

The “Rokdim” dance archives are a never-ending job. You add dances, you add music and films. And where I really need help and cooperation is from all of the choreographers. They are the ones who can give the most exact information about a new/old dance and in the shortest period of time. They are the most capable to teach and to present their dances through the videos on the site. I hope that everyone understands this.

I have a dream... for each dance that is on the site, to add the words of the song, the steps of the dance, – the story of the dance. Unfortunately, the site as it currently stands will not permit this. I have a lot of material on the computer that needs to be uploaded to the site... I also have friends who are willing to do this on a voluntary basis. The site, however, isn't ready to accept all of this. The programming and maintenance of an internet site of this size costs thousands of shekels. Without the support of crowdfunding by the users, the site has no chance of continuing to exist.

“Rokdim-Nirkoda” magazine is 35 years old. In recent years, I've been able to fulfill my old dream and to use online publications (instead of printed ones). All of this was made possible through the fantastic programming work of **Amnon Ben David** from Jerusalem. The internet preservation and documentation site is [“Rokdim-Nirkoda”](#).

This year, I invested another 50,000 shekels to professionally redesign the website. It is still being worked on and hasn't yet been uploaded.

For 35 years there were six or seven attempts to connect/partner with companies and with individuals who thought (or hoped) that the magazine had financial potential. I won't mention names, but everyone dropped out when they saw that the dream of a lot of money was only a dream... In this place, a lot of money and a lot of time needs to be invested – with dedication and an obsession for perfection.

### **So Where Does the Money Come From?**

This is the problem, says Yaron. A day of filming costs more than 1,500 shekels. Editing the films costs about 120 shekels per dance and we have already gone through 3,000 shekels for a single day of filming. In addition to the financial cost, there are the hundreds of work hours involved in a day of filming and dozens of work hours per week for the maintenance and addition of data.



Yaron with President Herzog and cheering friends



*Lea Shabat accompanying the event with her songs*

### Sources of Finance:

1. Subscription + VIP through monthly payments.
2. Subscription + VIP yearly, something everyone can afford to do.
3. Supporters beyond the purchase of a subscription. See: <https://bit.ly/3G1suUz>
4. **Irgun HaMarkidim – The Instructors Organization** which supports us yearly with a respectable amount.

Let us hope that the lovers of dance, those who use the films and the services offered by these important websites and those who simply support this culture, will join as [VIP subscribers](#) and will help us continue to grow and develop."

## Our Cheering Friends

Some 20 friends, dancers, family members, fans, came especially to this ceremony in Jerusalem, to congratulate and join Yaron when receiving this prize.

### ***I asked the influencers and leaders of folk dance to give their opinion following receipt of the prize.***

#### **Shlomo Maman, choreographer, artistic director of dance festivals:**

"Yaron's joy with having been awarded this prize is the joy of all of us. Yaron has done so much work to document and preserve our folk dances. This involves a great deal of effort and a great deal of patience to work within many limitations and difficulties. Yaron has coped with them and works in a very respectful manner to overcome the many obstacles. We owe our thanks to Yaron. Because of him, our dance instructors and our dancers appear for the filming of the dances and help us to teach them.

Unfortunately, there isn't enough appreciation for the helpful work that is being done that really helps us all. Not everyone is aware of the effort, the investment and the contribution given to us by Yaron. Even I, when I need to teach one of my own dances after a long break, use Yaron's documentation to remember the steps that I myself had choreographed.

And unfortunately, Irgun HaMarkidim – the Instructors Organization, doesn't appreciate Yaron's contribution sufficiently. In my opinion, it should be much more supportive of his

work. It would be appropriate if every dance leader, every member of the Irgun HaMarkidim, would subscribe to "Rokdim-Nirkoda" Magazine. After all, it's their journal. This journal also interests the dancers themselves and should be the heritage of every dancer. And here, in Israel, the Government Ministry of Culture, found it correct to make this miracle happen in the field of folk dance. And this time it happened because of Yaron Meishar. Congratulations to Yaron, cheers to us all."

**Galit Edri, an advanced student of Yaron's, after the Instructors' Course, said:**

"I completed the Instructors Course and am now doing advanced study with Yaron. We have been teaching together, in one of his Tuesday sessions at Dizengoff Center in Tel Aviv, for more than six months.

I think he is one of the most upright people around. A real kibbutznik. Exact in his movements and the best teacher I could possibly ask for.

Although he isn't the most effusive, his dancers love and admire him. He gave me the privilege of working with him, to learn from him and to accompany him to this very important ceremony at Beit HaNassi."

**Eyal Ozeri, choreographer, instructor, active chairperson of the Instructors Organization:**

"Any activity that exposes this branch of folk dancing in Israel (which does not receive enough recognition in Israel), is extremely important. Yaron's receipt of this prize elevates our dances to the highest possible level, even up to the residence of the President of Israel. What a great blessing!

Yaron is worthy of this prize as he has invested days and nights to the task of documentation and collection of material which he produces. There is nothing that compares to this work in Israel or anywhere in the world. He should be registered in the Guinness Book of World Records for the amount of material he produces in the field of dance, as we all know.

As to your question concerning "Rokdim-Nirkoda" magazine, in my opinion every member



Yaron's friends came to show their support

of Irgun HaMarkidim should be subscribed to the publication, which contributes so much to us and, after all, we are part of the activity and get great enjoyment from it. This publication serves our purposes and should therefore be a part of us.

And thus, the field of folk dance has now been awarded government and state recognition and we – it is now our obligation to foster and to preserve this culture for the sake of future generations of Israelis.”

**Avi Levy, choreographer, instructor, artistic manager and initiator of the Ashdodance Festival:**

“I super congratulate Yaron on being awarded this prize. He deserves this honor. He is the only person in Israel and in the world who has so continuously preserved folk dances. He is caring and serious. He enlarges the folk dance movement and does tremendous work with the music, the correct adaptations, the instructions, the credits to the choreographers and the composers. This is a comprehensive and thorough preservation. There is no other kind. This is a piece of history.”

**Moshe Telem, choreographer, who has taught in many countries around the world:**

“Well done, Yaron. You have done wonderful work. Two facts: Don't double document dances (if it's been done in the past). We must avoid this kind of documentation as it hurts the original choreographers. As to your question: instructors don't need to be obligated to register for the site. Each one should do his thing. And something else: “Rokdim-Nirkoda” Magazine must appear in a printed version and not only on the internet. It won't hurt the lead writers for the magazine to invest some money and to help edit and publish a respectable printed version, as I did in the past.”

*“Unfortunately, there isn't enough appreciation for the helpful work that is being done that really helps us all. Not everyone is aware of the effort, the investment and the contribution given to us by Yaron. Even I, when I need to teach one of my own dances after a long break, use Yaron's documentation to remember the steps that I myself had choreographed.”*

**Nourit Grinfeld, choreographer, instructor, manager of various dance sessions, new, middle-of-the-road and nostalgia:**

“Yaron deserves to be presented with this award and recognized for his enormous documentation work. Personally, I help Yaron with his work on a daily basis. Because of him, I am progressing, being filmed, filming and documenting all the time. The documentation that Yaron is doing has helped all of the instructors in their work. As for Irgun HaMarkidim, as yet it isn't strong enough and there is no real connection between the organization, the site and the magazine that Yaron publishes.”

**Advocate Avi Peretz, past chairperson of the Folk Dance Instructors Organization, one of the outstanding choreographers and instructors of Israeli and international folk dance:**

“Yaron Meishar is worthy of receiving this prize for his work and his long-term investment

throughout the years to preserve and document folk dances – through writings, the filming of folk dances and interviewing the prominent personalities and choreographers who have contributed to the creation and expansion of the folk dance movement for so many years.

We must keep in mind that this is the personal initiative of one man, with no assistance, to which he has devoted his life.

The question is: What will the future bring? In my opinion, it is important that a government body or a museum or some other body will continue this important enterprise. This would be most welcome..

I myself am sure that Yaron deserves this prize. We have been friends for many years. Yaron's project is an important contribution to Israel and to the world in anything concerning the folk dance movement.

I wish Yaron good health and a long life. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors."

**Ora Arnon, past member of the Bat Dor Dance Company, dancer and choreographer:**

"If there wasn't someone who would do the work that Yaron has been doing, this country and its people would have lost an important part of its cultural legacy. Folk dances have been with us for over 100 years, including the period before the pioneers who established

## Kol HaKavod and Mazal Tov to Yaron Meishar!

The Rokdim-Nirkoda Editorial Staff and Board of Directors congratulates our wonderful **Yaron Meishar** on his receiving the prestigious Creative Encouragement Award, named for the late President of Israel, **Yitzhak Navon z"l**.

The awarding of this prize is recognition of Yaron's tremendous contribution to the documentation and preservation of the culture of Israeli Folk Dance.

For decades, Yaron has single-handedly and tirelessly worked to establish the extensive "Rokdim" enterprise, including the "Rokdim" website that provides a broad range of resources and information in the field of Israeli folk dance, as well as his founding of "Rokdim-Nirkoda" magazine.

We were so proud to see Yaron receive his award, presented by the President of Israel – **Isaac Herzog**, together with the Minister of Culture and Sport – **Miki Zohar** and **Erez Navon**, the son of Yitzhak Navon.

Video from the Awards Ceremony on August 8, 2023:

<https://youtu.be/QqelDSXqR8Y>





All Yarons' guests together. Standing from right: Advocate Yonatan Zvi (the lawyer of the Documentation and Preservation Association), Eyal Ozeri, Heli Livneh, Shlomo Maman, Galit Edri, Sarit Doron, Ruthi Yifat, Dr. Ruth Eshel, Inbal Yifat, Orli Shahar, Lucy Maman, Israela Kahane, Tzemach Ben Aharon. Kneeling from right: Oron Krymolowski-Meishar, Yaron Meishar, Liora Sagi, Miri Krymolowski

this country. And since then, thousands of dances have been choreographed to the music of thousands of Israeli songs of every sort. The documentation and preservation of this enterprise will also allow future generations to understand, and to know and enjoy the fruit of the dances of so many creative people. This is part of our people's culture. Good luck and thanks to Yaron Meishar for his life enterprise."

**Marco Ben Shimon, choreographer and dance instructor who created many dances that have become national assets:**

"I wish you all the best in all your endeavors. Well done, my friend Yaron. Please accept my warm wishes on being awarded the Yitzhak Navon Prize for preservation of our folk dance legacy of the last 40 years. You are definitely deserving of this prize for your thorough, consistent and dedicated work on the "Rokdim" website which serves us all so loyally. For all this, may you be blessed!" 🕺

---

**Marco Ben Shimon: "Well done, my friend Yaron. Please accept my warm wishes on being awarded the Yitzhak Navon Prize for preservation of our folk dance legacy of the last 40 years. You are definitely deserving of this prize for your thorough, consistent and dedicated work on the "Rokdim" website which serves us all so loyally. For all this, may you be blessed!"**

---



# The Yitzhak Navon Prize

For the Documentation and Preservation  
of Israeli Dance

Belongs To All Of Us



Are you an Israeli folk dance enthusiast? Is it important to you to preserve folk dances and pass them on to future generations?

**Come add your own brick and support the folk dance documentation project**

<https://www.rokdim.co.il/#/Shop/subscriptions>

**VIP**

Please support us  
Join us with your  
VIP subscription



Add a "little building block"

of your own to the walls  
of the documentation

and preservation  
building

VIP AVI

VIP

VIP DANIEL

VIP ETI

VIP MICHAL

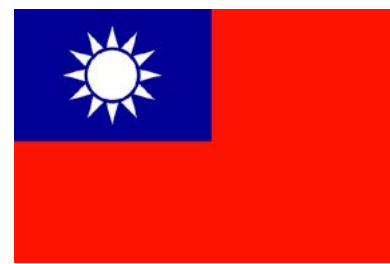
VIP SHLOMO



**Matti Goldschmidt**  
Photos: Matti Goldschmidt, Archive Israelisches Tanzhaus

*"The languages of the indigenous people of Taiwan were officially not allowed to be spoken, even the pure study of (ancient) Taiwanese history was forbidden."*

# From Seclusion to International Openness



Israeli folk dances in Taiwan

**W**ould one really have suspected that there was Israeli folk dance in Taiwan? I was going to find out this and a few other Jewish characteristics during my 25-day trip to Taiwan in March 2023. The country has about 24 million inhabitants and is about a quarter larger than Israel. In the preparation phase for my trip, I established contact with **Benjamin Schwall**, the president of the Taiwan Jewish Community (TJC) who had emigrated approximately thirty years ago from the USA, with four children and married to a Taiwanese woman. He regretted that his community, with about 150 permanent members, was far too small to hold a regular folk dance class. But he would be happy to hold a trial balloon class under my leadership. And so, on a Sunday in a park south of the Keelung River, the Dajia Riverside Park Pavilion, the first "open air" course was held with dances for beginners that included, for example, "Kuma Echa" (**Rivka Sturman**, 1945), "Tzadik Katamar" (**Yonathan Gaby**, 1965) or "Shabbat Matana" (**Uri Krieser**, 1992). Schwall provided a battery-powered amplification system as well as drinks. The fact that on the same day, the annual community Purim party was to take place at 5 p.m. and that a performance by an Israeli dance troupe, under the direction of choreographer **Sharon Eyal** was already scheduled at 2.30 p.m. in the National Theatre, may have been a couple of reasons why only about twenty participants attended this morning and ultimately it was an only one-time, two-hour course.

Among those present were also some (non-Jewish) Taiwanese who – rather by chance – heard about this event via Melbourne-based **Richelle Arber**. Over the Corona months, Arber had organized an online Zoom dance course and had been able to recruit, among others, **Chin Chin Tseng** (曾金金) and **Shingjiang Jessie Lue** (呂幸江) as participants from Taiwan. Both of them drew my attention to a weekly international folklore dance



Shingjiang Jessie Lue



Chin Chin Tseng

evening where Israeli dances would also be cultivated. As it turned out, in the course of the research, there is virtually no possibility of dancing exclusively Israeli dances in Taiwan. On the other hand, there are international folklore dance courses practically everywhere in the country, especially at the country's more than one hundred universities or institutions of higher learning, where Israeli dances are often overrepresented, at least quantitatively.

*"A few days before each meeting, An-Hsiang publishes a "playlist" together with links to the individual dances, so that these dances can be practiced at home by the participants-to-be before the actual dance class. On the dance evening itself, the planned song titles are played in the order provided, with the addition of the announcement of each dance title."*

The Kuo Min Tang (KMT), the Nationalist Party of China, essentially promoted Chinese culture and Mandarin as the Chinese language. The domain of this party was limited to Taiwan since 1949 after they were defeated by the communists. The languages of the indigenous people of Taiwan were officially not allowed to be spoken, even the pure study of (ancient) Taiwanese history was forbidden. Likewise, apart from the basic ban on assembly, dancing in general was considered "against morality". Since martial law was in force in Taiwan for 38 years, i.e. until the late 1980s, practically any "assembly" of several people was considered to be "unlawful" and thus impossible. It was always coupled with the fear of the rulers that meetings critical of the government might occur. The only way to legally assemble at the time was to cultivate (international) folk dancing, for which a first national dance event was organized in 1981, some six years before martial law ended. In the meantime, permanent dance circles had long since developed at many universities, even at high schools, which also included Israeli folk dances within the framework of being "international". It remains to be seen how these dances came to Taiwan, but presumably, one or the other was introduced by US-Americans who were in Taiwan for business or military reasons, usually only for a limited period of time. In any case, the name of Connecticut-born **Richard Crosby "Rickey" Holden** (1926-2017) should not be forgotten. In the 1950s, he



*First Folk Dances Festival, 1981*



*The session in an open air with Matti Goldschmidt. Top row, third from left: Benjamin Schwall, president of the Jewish Community in Taiwan*

*"The names of the dances are actually never reproduced in the original Hebrew version, but translated directly into Chinese. This goes so far that the average dancer does not at all know the original Hebrew titles. Nevertheless, the repertoire is somehow up to date: Dances that are popular in Israel right now are also widely known in Taiwan."*



Thursdays session with Chen-Chung

taught folkloric dances worldwide and is known to have included “Mayim Mayim” (**Else Dublon**, 1937), among several Israeli folk dances in his repertoire. It is a melody that is still extremely popular today, not only in Taiwan but especially in Japan.

For many years, **An-Hsiang** (余安祥) has been inviting people to dance four times a week, including two-hourly meetings on Thursdays in the Taipei neighborhood of Dingxi. This event should serve as the prototype of a typical folkloric dance evening in Taiwan. The dance circle has about 40 members who pay TWD 1,000 (= US \$ 33 or ILS 120) per trimester, i.e. for about thirteen to fourteen meetings. The hall itself, which could easily hold three times as many dancers, is provided by the municipality at highly reduced fees. A few days before each meeting, **An-Hsiang** publishes a “playlist” together with links to the individual dances, so that these dances can be practiced at home by the participants-to-be before the actual dance class. On the dance evening itself, the planned song titles are played in the order provided, with the addition of the announcement of each dance title. The names of the dances are actually never reproduced in the original Hebrew version, but translated directly into Chinese. This goes so far that the average dancer does not at all know the original Hebrew titles. Nevertheless, the repertoire is somehow up to date: Dances that are popular in Israel right now are also widely known in Taiwan. For example, my suggestion to teach “Kurdion” (**Shmulik Gov-Ari**, 2022) or “Mama Sheli” (**Nurit Melamed**, 2022) was unnecessary, since these dances had already long been familiar. They would have rather preferred something older and so I taught “Hallelujah” (**Boaz Cohen**, 2016) as well as my own choreography, “Shakharuth” (2005). The fact that in both cases the music came from Canada (**Leonard Cohen** and **Loreena McKennitt** respectively) was completely unintentional and a pure coincidence.

An-Hsiang, born in 1962, already had started with circle dances in high school, but according to his own words, he specializes in Balkan dances. He is supported by **Bi-Ying** (詹璧瑛), born in 1967, who started dancing mainly classical Chinese dances as a child. Quite consistently, she became a member of the local folk dance club during her university studies. Her Israeli-born future husband, who had a temporary job at the same university, was surprised one



Chen-Chung



Bi-Ying




An-Hsiang

*"Israeli folk dances are still cultivated today. In addition, there are on average, much simpler rhythms or beats of 2/4 or 4/4 compared to the 7/8 or 9/8 in many dances from the Balkans."*

day to hear Israeli songs coming from a sports hall. He went to investigate the source of the music and soon made the acquaintance of Bi-Ying. They married and lived in Israel for a couple of years. During this time, Bi-Ying specialized in Israeli folk dance. She not only completed a dance leader course in Tel Aviv and visited the Karmiel Dance Festival, among others, but also studied Hebrew, which she speaks much better than English. Her dance partner for many years has been **Chen-Chung** (吳振中), born in 1966, who also started doing circle dances at the university. In addition to his main job as a civil servant at the Ministry of Economy, he has been teaching not only Israeli but especially Balkan dances for many years.

Just about sixty kilometers southeast of Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, lies the city of Yilan (population 460,000). **Xu Wenhong**, his wife **Tsui-yen**, **Fang-chih Chen** and **Jiaxing Jiang** have been teaching and dancing at the local university for decades. As can be observed worldwide, younger dancers are also underrepresented here, even if **Lucia**, Jiaxing's daughter, has long since followed in her parents' dance footsteps and has already been able to build up her own fan community on the internet with Israeli folk dances such as "Shikor ve-lo mi-Yayin" (**Barry Avidan**, 1991) or "Katonti" (**Oren Ashkenazi**, 2012) via Youtube video clips.

For several decades, until the lifting of martial law, it was only possible for the inhabitants of Taiwan to find an insight into other countries and cultures through this kind of folkloric dancing. This side effect was certainly one of the criteria that Israeli folk dances are still cultivated today. In addition, there are on average, much simpler rhythms or beats of 2/4 or 4/4 compared to the 7/8 or 9/8 in many dances from the Balkans. Not only in Taiwan, certainly, the predominant and internationally well-received "schlager" music in Israeli folk dances, since around the year 2000, could be another criterion for having taken the dominant place in international folk dance circles as we can observe it today in Taiwan. 



**Ronit Ben Shushan**

Translation:  
Dena Matmon

**Oren Braier**

*"I told my brother that, 'I want to do that, too'. I had no clue about dance, but what I saw simply fascinated me and made me want to be a part of it."*

# Oren Braier - Choreographer and Dancer



## Introductory Interview

*Oren dancing solo with Lehakat Hakol Bamahol at Amphitheater Kiryat Motzkin, Independence Day, 2023*

**Oren Braier** moves within the dance world on a variety of levels. First and foremost, he is an active dancer. From time to time, he joins Israeli dance troupes (lehakot) as a dancer and performs Israeli dance as a soloist.

He is part of the duo, "Rak Laga'at – Dance2Touch," where he can express his personal and modern aspects of dance. He is the founder, choreographer and artistic director of Lehakat "Hakol Bamahol" ("All is Dance" Troupe) and within this framework, he is a dance teacher. He is also an instructor and dancer in Lehakat Salma – a Middle Eastern dance troupe that integrates artistic Arab folklore within it. In addition, he teaches at a school for special needs students, a position which often involves utilizing his creative abilities in his dance work.

### **Oren, do you remember a specific moment when you told yourself, "This is what I want to do?"**

My first memory is from when I was 5 years old, when my brother and I attended an Independence Day eve event at the Abba Hushi Center [or as nicknamed, "Beit Abba Hushi – Abba Hushi House"] in Haifa. We saw a group of dancers wearing blue shirts on a small raised stage. I told my brother that, "I want to do that, too". I had no clue about dance, but what I saw simply fascinated me and made me want to be a part of it.

I started at the age of 12 when I danced in a group called, "Hora Ilan" Haifa. I was exposed to dance up close when I was six years old when I first saw my father dancing. It was a couples dance with one person sitting in a wheelchair. At that time, this kind of dancing was new in Israel. It was imported from Germany and was originally intended for ballroom dancing, but Israel applied it to folk dance. My father would take me with him to the dance session (chug) and, as a child, I would play with the other dancers' children or just watch from the side.

At one of the rehearsals, I was asked to replace a young man who took sick before a performance. I danced with **Rivka Cohen** z"l, who is unfortunately no longer with us. I learned the choreography in one or two sessions and we performed at a big event at Beit Halochem in Tel Aviv. It was a good experience and I continued to dance with the group until I was 18. At about the age of 17 or 18 I was already dancing in **Barry Avidan's** dance troupes and after that, with **Rachel Waizman**.

My first opportunity to choreograph a dance was for three girls in wheelchairs. This attempt wasn't very successful, but thankfully, it gave me the opportunity to create a dance for Lehakat Hora Ilan to be performed at the Karmiel Festival. Together with **Adi Bandes**, who at that time danced with me in Rachel Waizman's group, we put together two songs and created a successful choreography that won compliments from the Karmiel events manager (**Leah Mishal**).

**And from here, you continued to other Israeli dance troupes?**

I danced in Barry Avidan's group in Haifa for about half a year. When I joined the group, everyone else was already acquainted. Unexpectedly, the person who paid me the most attention and tried to help me the most was the lead dancer. On one of the rehearsal days, I had a simultaneous performance in the auditorium with Lehakat Ilan and arrived late for the rehearsal that was also at Rothschild House in Haifa. I turned to Barry and he said, "Perform, finish and come here." At a time when the choreographer was "God" and lateness was unacceptable, I felt that Barry Avidan gave me a lot of credit. After about six months, I felt that I didn't fit socially with the dancers and I left the troupe.

I found my place in Rachel Waizman's troupe, a nice group that fascinated me, and I danced there for many years. At the same time, I danced with several other troupes: a bit with **Ze'ev Keren** in the Nazareth Iris Dance Group, a bit with **Dado Kraus** and a bit with **Shlomo Maman**. I also worked, studied, helped and filled in for missing dancers.

In 2002, I was Shlomo Maman's assistant and I trained his troupes in Kiryat Shmona. This was the turning point when I went from being a dancer to becoming an instructor. These were Maman's choreographies that I had learned and then taught to the dancers. Simultaneously, at about the age of 20, I taught folk dance at the Beit Sefer HaRoked in Karmiel, which brought me closer to working with schools. At the end of the sixth-grade school year, I did the entire process – the writing, the staging and the instruction. This was actually my growing process within the field of management, directing and production, alongside Israeli dance.

In the following years, I also taught dance at the Nazareth Iris, at Edna Bezalal's studio in Nahariya and at the Zevulun Regional Council. After accumulating knowledge and practical teaching skills, I felt the need for additional enrichment. I participated in a program founded by **Yonatan Karmon** at the Israel Dance Academy in Jerusalem and received a scholarship for excellence. Later on, I also applied for academic studies and a degree in teaching dance for which I earned a teaching certificate at Seminar HaKibbutzim [Kibbutzim College in Tel Aviv].

I never tried to fly too high in "Israeli Dance". Although I wanted to be in the significant arena of

**"As the dance duo called, 'Rak Laga'at', we combine the leg and the wheel, by connecting physical abilities to dance movements and a connection between two people."**



The duo "Rak Laga'at – Dance2Touch: Zehava Padnos with Oren. Photo: Doron Golan

**"I turned to Barry and he said, 'Perform, finish and come here.' At a time when the choreographer was 'God' and lateness was unacceptable, I felt that Barry Avidan gave me a lot of credit."**

choreographers, and I did get there several times, I always take a few steps back because I prefer the experience of what I create. There's something comfortable and personal in [that area] for me, so I don't feel the need to compete with anyone. In my opinion, there's room for everyone.

***The early experience with Lehakat Ilan Troupe led you not only into the world of Israeli dance but also to the founding of the duo "Rak Laga'at – Dance2Touch" together with the dancer, Zehava Padnos.***



*Oren with his father Yitzhak Braier after the Ilan Troupe performance at the festival*

Both of my parents were part of the polio disabled community whose active members in Israel all knew each other. My late mother and Zehava knew each other since childhood. As an athlete, Zehava would come to practice at ILAN and that's how we had the chance to meet there. [Note: ILAN – The Ilan Association, strives to enable people with physical disabilities to live meaningful and high-quality lives: <https://ilan-israel.co.il/en/>]. On one of the occasions, when she came as a customer to the photography store where I worked, I suggested that she join me as my dance partner in Lehakat Ilan.

We danced for a short time as part of the troupe and, at her request, we continued with more intensive practices. Since then, we've been dancing together for more than 20 years, during which time we presented three shows that ran throughout the country. As the dance duo called, "Rak Laga'at," we combine the leg and the wheel, by connecting physical abilities to dance movements and a connection between two people. We are highly respected and are booked for stage and television shows. The last one was "Got Talent",

in which we made it to the final show.

Modern dance gave me wings to move between movement and music, soul and meaning. Thanks to working with Zehava, these dreams have also come true.

***Before you reached the age of 30, you had gained diverse and comprehensive experience in the world of Israeli dance and had already founded your own troupe – "Hakol Bamachol – All is Dance". How was this idea born?***

In 2004, I started to manage the dance troupes at the Kiryat Ata Community Center. I was asked to substitute for the regular instructor and later, I was involved in organizing a trip to Canada for the dance troupes, the orchestra and the singing groups. The troupes participated in municipal events and we even won prizes in the competitions held there. There were children of various ages in the groups but no adults. The idea was born when I heard the mother of one of the dancers say that perhaps one day she would dance. This became a dream for me that needed to be realized.

In 2006 the director of the community center responded to my requests and agreed to permit me to establish an adult troupe. I received assistance from **Paula Malka**, who is a member of the dance troupe to this very



*The ceremony of laying the cornerstone for Beit Kessler, 1998. Oren with Rivka Cohen z"l*



*"Sometimes while I'm working, I move aside for a moment and try to execute the idea myself. I know what I can execute and what a dancer can execute, and I have to adjust."*

day. At first the troupe consisted of six women, with whom we worked whenever possible in a small, and social group. At the end of the year, they went up on stage in a show that was a fantastic experience for them and which moved me more than my work with young people.

This was the beginning of the "real" dance troupe, the one with which you can do things that go beyond anything anyone dreamed of. This is where I began my journey as a choreographer, with a deeper understanding of the essence of the troupe – "because it was possible and because the dancers made it possible". In comparison to the nature of working with children and the difficulty of pleasing them and getting results, with the adults I could do what I wanted.

**You are both a dancer and a choreographer. What skills of yours as a dancer do you take to your work as a choreographer? Where in the choreography is the dancer expressed?**

In my opinion, it is very difficult for a non-dancer to become a choreographer, even though such choreographers exist and some of them are also successful. Without dance experience, the choreographer will create more graphic things, which may be structurally more exact, but it won't have the imagination that a dancer understands and senses the significance of the bodily mechanics, the length of the movement, and many other important nuances. Sometimes while I'm working, I move aside for a moment and try to execute the idea myself. I know what I can execute and what a dancer can execute, and I have to adjust.

The ability to see the dancer comes when you have experience and you come from within the dance. When a dancer becomes a choreographer, his approach to dance will be better and his ability to see the dancer will be more focused. When a dancer dances at the beginning, under the guidance of a choreographer, he/she follows working methods, and this makes him think – what he would do differently or part of it he connects to most.

The actual dance is what made me want to be heard in the field. Beyond the fact that I am a dancer and can see the entire picture, I know that dancing in a group is not solo dancing. There are other rules that develop with time. You develop senses: Whether it's vision – perceiving the space correctly, or hearing – the musical understanding of the rhythms. You feel in your body what is right and what doesn't feel right. By knowing the movements of a dancer, you become a more holistic choreographer.



*Meholeley Kiryat Haim performing a Chassidic dance.  
Soloist: Oren Braier*



*Group photo with Polish troupe during the festival at Tomaszów*

*"If there is music, it pretty much dictates something. You can go with it, or against it, or move in syncopation. It is not just an accompaniment tool. It tells a story, and this is what gives meaning or significance to every movement. I really connect with music."*

### **What are your sources of inspiration? How is a dance born?**

If there is music, it pretty much dictates something. You can go with it, or against it, or move in syncopation. It is not just an accompaniment tool. It tells a story, and this is what gives meaning or significance to every movement. I really connect with music.

When there are no lyrics, I listen to music and imagine the theme that arises from it and begin to interweave it with my thoughts and experiences. I start researching the theme that comes up – I ask myself questions, write things down, look in the dictionary, create. I try to apply the story that has emerged from this music until I reach a point where I've connected my idea on the one hand with the music on the other in order to make a kind of collage.

When there are also lyrics, then there is a theme to connect to. I try to animate the story of the song in my head. What would I like to see within the words? What would I like to emphasize? What would I like to transmit to others from within the story? How would I sharpen the emphasis on a particular word? For instance, the word "mountain". How do I see a mountain? Each one of these things is a tool for movement. A movement score that follows the lyrics which creates an experience for you.

There are things that come from me. When I want to work on a particular topic, whether I'm looking for music or working without music. And then, after I put together the movement, I try to apply it to the existing music. For me, the tools of music and lyrics are an excellent basis for work.

### **Can you give an example of words or music that became a choreography?**

An example from last year is a dance to the song, "Balada LaChovesh – Ballad for a Medic", sung by **Yehoram Gaon**. You simply need to listen to the song that describes a very specific event or a particular moment in the midst of war. The song conveys a perfect description and you can close your eyes, imagine and listen to the song and then see a whole scene before your eyes. Movements immediately appeared before me that describe the moment and that connect to both the lyrics and the music.

In the dance, "Ha'Har Ha'Yarok – The Green Mountain", I wanted to see a big mountain, to see the winds blowing around the mountain and the way they affect its movement, as well as



*Hakol Bamahol in costumes for the dance "Ha'Har Ha'Yarok" at the Karmiel Festival, 2022*

*"The camaraderie is an important thing. At the same time, I tried to realize the dreams of the dancers. Everyone wants to be seen in the front row and to feel good about themselves during the dance."*

the story that's in the song. There are many nuances in the song that describe moments, and one can really feel them. I wanted to see the "togetherness" of the group versus the moment of a single person alone, a moment of love next to a moment of war.

The song talks about the cycle of life and it is divided into periods in our lifetime. In one of the sections of the song, I took the dance to a certain place of interpretation, and then one of the dancers said that the phrase refers to a different topic. So, along with my personal whims, I chose to go with the original meaning because if the writer meant something specific, I won't ignore it; I will just emphasize it through movement.



*Hakol Bamahol at Prague Festival, 2019*

### ***Is there something to cling to in the Israeli dances of the past, such as Hora dances?***

When I started to choreograph the dance, "Simchat Ha'Ma'a lot" (Shir L'Ma'a lot) – Happiness of the Ascents") I didn't really know the song or its significance. I didn't work from the [Biblical] sources; I didn't understand the significance of taking a song or music and actually verbalizing it to understand the interpretation, and I simply created movements. Someone enlightened me that it's not just about music and that this is a song of gratitude that is sung during Friday night [Shabbat] dinner.

After he explained the meaning of the words for me, I realized that the movements I created intuitively connected to the words. I made a few changes to emphasize the connection to the text of giving thanks to G-d and to the joy that intensified through the choreography. The dancers understood that they needed to express happiness. It was only after a year or two, when the dance was already being danced, that it dawned on me that the dancers also needed to know deep down why I created the dance and the meaning of the words. When a dancer understands the source, he creates a better connection to the movements and their execution.

### ***You say that you create the connection between the dancers and the dance by imparting an understanding of its content. In what other ways do you motivate and inspire the dancers in the troupe?***

My perception today, which began with the troupes in Kiryat Ata, is that we are speaking of work in a social setting. We made sure, along with the directors of the troupe, to arrange events and holiday celebrations, prepare quizzes or to go to someone's home to dance and we became more of a family group. This became the glue that preserved the quality of the dance group.

The camaraderie is an important thing. At the same time, I tried to realize the dreams of the dancers. Everyone wants to be seen in the front row and to feel good about themselves during the dance. The choreographies are always very varied so that a dancer in the back row will always find himself in the front row as well at some point. When you allow your dancers to do something they themselves don't believe they can do, when you give them a hand, they will take it and become empowered.

Another thing is to bring the joy of dance into the lesson. Many dancers become a kind of choreographer. They seem to live within the story and dance the story. You see it when

dancers understand technique, the movements and their meaning. Executing movements is indeed enjoyable, but it doesn't have the depth and the connection to what you are doing. It's important for the dancer to understand what it means to love to dance, to move from a place of knowledge. To understand what you are doing is literally life changing for me. When this concept of how to work with the dancers took shape, it raised the level of my choreographies as well as the experience for the dancers and the spectators.

***You haven't spoken about yourself and your personal characteristics in the context of motivating the dancers.***

This question should be addressed to the dancers – if I have charisma or certain abilities. The troupe, "Hakol Bamachol" gave me quite a platform and respect, as well as the name. This works in both directions – the moment they gave me motivation, I gave it back to them. When I come in devoid of energy, it seeps into the dancers, and vice versa. I look forward to working with them. We moved to once-a-week meetings and this is difficult for me because I'm on hold. Sometimes a fantasy hits me and I want to check it right away to see if it works and to "drop it on the dancers". There are many sleepless nights, with dreams and thoughts. And then I come to the once-a-week rehearsal and it ends too quickly. I don't have the time to do what I had planned, and I need to wait another week.

***So, I will add that you also entertain the members of the troupe with the impersonations you sometimes do, and that you also have acting talent, which, of course is reflected on stage, but also during rehearsals.***



Performance of Oren and Zehava at Yaron Carmel's harkada (dance session) in Afkim, 2014

This is part of the teaching and it does the job. It doesn't just stay with me because the group is with me. At a certain point, I realized that the people who work with me are not my dancers but my colleagues. They can express and say things that are important to consider. They are the ones who dance and who see things that I don't see when I'm not dancing with them. And this relates to the question about being both a dancer and a choreographer. To dance is to see things in the here and now; to navigate from the side is to lose the understanding of how to create something correctly. When you are part of the dancers – from the inside - you see something that can't be seen from the outside. It is a joint creation with the dancers. At the end of each year, I thank all the dancers for allowing me to create for them. The fact that they are with me is not taken for granted.

***Your work includes several unconventional components. Among other things, you dance and teach at Lehakat Salma – the Salma Troupe in Haifa which deals with folklore of the local Arab heritage. How do you view the integration of this dance into Israeli dance?***

To dance with Arab dancers is to learn a language. I learned a new language. What is it like to dance Debka or "Sharia" dance? In Middle Eastern dance, men have a very specific role. It's clear that there is a difference that is expressed in style. I noticed, for example, that in Arabic dance the footwork begins on the heel. I include a bit of modern dance and it's not easy for them to accept someone from the outside implementing changes. Pre'el Hesbon, the choreographer and artistic director of "Lehakat Salma", has included modern components into the traditional

*"We are all born dancers because we all move. I believe that we can all dance; but I don't believe that all of us can dance on stage, just as I don't believe an author can be a mechanic. Movement is a form of expression."*

style. She really respects the Arabic culture and music and gives it a place. At the same time, she incorporates more modern choreographies that are high quality and unique. I really appreciate the way she preserves the culture.

**Another unique aspect of your work is teaching movement to people with physical disabilities. You introduced dance with an autistic and blind young woman, which brought people to a very emotional place.**

The young woman, whose name is **Chai Hod**, already had some experience with ballroom dancing. When I met her for the first time I was a bit intimidated by the complexity of the task. At the same time, I utilized her knowledge of the waltz and of movement. I used this and then expanded on it. Later, as a school teacher, I had the opportunity to do therapeutic work with her that dealt with the term, "to resist". We had a very unique means of movement communication because we already knew how to trust each other.

**What magic do you use to turn people who have no dance background into dancers and to even put them on stage?**

The magic is very simple, and it is: "My belief in their ability". We are all born dancers because we all move. I believe that we can all dance; but I don't believe that all of us can dance on stage, just as I don't believe an author can be a mechanic. Movement is a form of expression. Just as with everything in life, we can practice, shape and perfect. Many of the people who have come to dance with me are not dancers. They have a certain ability that I work with and I challenge them to reach the precipice – whether in thinking, movement, understanding the space or teamwork. I try to develop their coordination, give them the vision of the stage, and the tools to cope with movement and with musical understanding.



*Meholeley Kiryat Haim in the dance "Hakol Patuach".  
Choreography: Shlomo Maman*

You have to remember that we are creating folk dance. In other countries, there are types of folklore that amount to standing on stage with some singing, some acting and some dancing. If I want to do this for "the folk", I must have people who are not dancers and who will transmit this feeling of dance that they have acquired. I believe that whoever wants to dance will dance. Sometimes people don't know that they are capable of this this and they don't develop it. It's always worth striving for advancement.

**What choreography do you dream of creating for Israeli dance?**

As a choreographer, I have many thoughts and melodies that I've put aside, and I tell myself that when I'm ready, I'll use them. There are things that I left and then returned to. I think that in order to work with certain melodies or creations, you need to be ready to deal with that piece. It's not that I can't create a choreography for it; it's that I wait until the lyrics are clear and ready for me, that I can to connect to the general idea of the song. Or, for the melody to speak to me and give me the idea for the theme.

My job is actually to connect either to the music or the movement or to my dance partner. I'm

***"This is the beauty of the creative process and I love it very much. The creation of a piece fills me no less than the dancing. Today it already fills me when I see my dancers performing. It's a more meaningful experience for me than actually being on the stage with them. Now I'm enjoying the best of both worlds and I hope to continue to do so even after the age of 70+."***

always happy to create something, especially other dance choreographies that I can connect to. When I see it and it kicks me in the stomach, I am moved to tears. This is the most amazing part of my work.

***Where do you see Israeli Folk Dance folklore in 30 years and where do you see yourself, then, as part of Israeli dance?***

It's not easy to guess where Israeli dance will be in another 30 years, because it is constantly changing beyond recognition. Moreover, I'm not sure that in five years we'll see the same Israeli dance that we see today. Today's dance is not the dance I was raised on. The music is changing and the way we work with dancers has also changed. In the past, for example, there was an orchestral ensemble that played at rehearsals and the choreographer would collaborate with them. Today, who has the budget to do such a thing?

What differentiates us from folklore troupes abroad is that they have a tradition that goes back years and generations. Most of the songs we work with today are old songs, some of which people aren't familiar with. And even if they do, they usually don't know what the meaning of the song is. In another era, songs will sound different; probably the dances will look different, too. Israeli dance will have undergone changes, and probably, in the end, we will miss what it used to be.

In the midst of all this, I believe that my "language" will remain. Maybe some variations will be added, but in the end, it's a part of me. I was raised on it and developed it, and I will continue to fine tune it and pass it on to my students.

At the same time, it is necessary to renew so that there will also be modern things that will suit the spirit of the times. I will probably find myself within "this whole thing", either dancing, or teaching, or watching from the sidelines and enjoying the experience.... I hope we enjoy the experience.

My dream is to succeed in dancing at any age, and if not, then to continue creating. It keeps the brain busy and sometimes an idea pops up in the shower. But this is the beauty of the creative process and I love it very much. The creation of a piece fills me no less than the dancing. Today it already fills me when I see my dancers performing. It's a more meaningful experience for me than actually being on the stage with them. Now I'm enjoying the best of both worlds and I hope to continue to do so even after the age of 70+.



***"In the midst of all this, I believe that my 'language' will remain. Maybe some variations will be added, but in the end, it's a part of me. I was raised on it and developed it, and I will continue to fine tune it and pass it on to my students."***



Loui Tucker\*



# It Helps to Stay in Sync

**Moving together through folk dance creates social bonds and makes us feel good!**

***Preface:** This article is in response to the article by Nir Orion that appeared in Rokdim-Nirkoda issue 112, "Fallow the Fallow (Shmitat Shmitut)", specifically to the section in which he wrote: "I don't find any basis for the claim that the enjoyment and satisfaction of dancing comes from moving together. The way I see it, the satisfaction of most of the dancers comes from the movement itself, and not necessarily from the uniform movement of all the dancers."*

**W**hat do folk dancing, crew rowing, and being in a marching band have in common? What is it about them that builds strong social ties and creates an enhanced sense of well-being? The answer is that they all involve doing things **in sync**!

A Let's Dance! reader tipped me off to an article that was in the October issue of Scientific American written by **Marta Zaraska** entitled, "Moving in Sync Creates Surprising Social Bonds among People – Dancing, rowing and even finger tapping in unison unleash powerful forces in the brain that drive good feelings". [<https://bit.ly/47nmP6R>]

The title fascinated me. It acknowledges that we humans are, for the most part, social creatures that like to form groups – from book clubs and sewing circles to houses of worship and political parties. We tend to hang out with people who are like us and enjoy what we enjoy. However, what this article seems to indicate is that, when we do whatever it is we do in our group in a **synchronized fashion**, it enhances the sense of well-being, connectedness, belonging, and loyalty to the group. If we don't know the group members well to begin with, our brain and body chemistry actually encourages us to bond with them.

It starts with the fact that our bodies are flooded with endorphins when we move strenuously.

\* **Loui Tucker** is a veteran Israeli folk dancer and session leader in the San Francisco Bay Area, USA. In 2017, she became the editor of "Let's Dance!" magazine (published by the Folk Dance Federation of California since 1944). The initial version of this article appeared in the October 2020 issue.

*"The camaraderie that is built is more than just "we share a common belief" (religion) or "we're working toward a common goal" (political parties). It binds us as a group wordlessly, effortlessly!"*

Anyone who runs, plays tennis, or has danced for a couple of hours knows that warm, fuzzy feeling you can get. The studies mentioned in the article seem to indicate that, when these activities involved **synchronized movements**, the effect of the endorphins is **enhanced**. If you run alone, or run in a group that moved randomly, the endorphins flow. If you run in sync with someone or with a group, you get a boost! Athletes who row with a crew get more of a boost than solo rowers. Dancers in a group that move together get more of a boost than solo dancers. (No mention was made of dancing alone in your home while you watch people dancing in Zoom squares). One experiment in particular showed that, when it comes to dancing, synchrony boosts the effects of endorphins far more than dissonant movements around the floor.

It was also noted that brain activity is different when synchronized activities are involved. Brain analysis in one study showed that non-synchronous activity activated just the **left** side of the brain, whereas synchrony activated both hemispheres of the brain. This suggests that synchrony is a far more complex behavior than simple movements and perhaps leads to a greater commitment to that activity. The camaraderie that is built is more than just "we share a common belief" (religion) or "we're working toward a common goal" (political parties). It binds us as a group wordlessly, effortlessly!

It is well-known how our bodies react to conflict and stressful situations: headaches, insomnia, ulcers, increased blood pressure, chest pain, even PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder]. Those reactions are part of the body's "fight or flight" response. If our body and brain react negatively to stress and conflict, it appears that they also reward and reinforce our efforts to build bridges and connect with others. When we are in sync – literally in step with others – we build a better, stronger community. 🙌



Yaron Meishar in a family dance session at the Jewish school, Laude-Reut, in Bucharest, Romania



*"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

"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."

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...

Experiences through the Eye of the Camera



# Nature Reserve

## Celebrating Moshiko Yitzhak Halevy's 91st Birthday

**Haim Zemach**

**Translation: Alex Huber**

When I started dancing Israeli folk dances, in my youth, I learned to appreciate the unique, diverse, rich and original works of **Moshe Yitzhak Halevy (Moshiko)**. I recognized his immeasurable contribution to this wonderful cultural activity and to Israeli Folk Dancing.

Over the years, I participated in most of the training seminars that Moshiko held in Israel. I included and taught many of his choreographies in the dance sessions I led. I did as much as I could to convey to the dancers the unique, original quality, diversity and cultural richness of his works.

I was very happy when, in 2009, Moshiko called me and told me that many dancers had approached him and asked him to open a class where they could focus on learning Moshiko's beloved and special dances. In their view, his dances were not accurately taught or danced in other sessions. They also asked him to incorporate a variety of his favorite dances by other choreographers. Moshiko asked me to join with him in opening the session and running its operation. Of course, I enthusiastically agreed.

The class operates every Wednesday of the first week of the month, between the hours of 8:30pm -11:45pm. The session is held in the Skating Hall at Beit Dani in Tel Aviv. During the evening, selected dances, from Moshiko's expansive repertoire of all times are danced. Moshiko occasionally teaches a new dance that he choreographed, or



*From left to right: Haim Zemach, Moshiko, Mimi Kogan, Naftali Chayat*

he reintroduces one of his old dances to help dancers refine their knowledge of the dance. This is one of the unique features of this session – that, at the request of the dancers, a choreographer of many years, highly experienced and so unique in his work, teaches or reviews his dances to help refine their movement.

Over the years, a group of die-hard fans has formed. This session hosts many instructors and choreographers from Israel and abroad. Each session is a celebration of body and soul. Special events and birthdays are celebrated as well.

Over the years, many instructors have participated in leading the



session, each time, by someone different.

Session leaders included: **Eyal Karabelnik, Haim Shtrikberger, Michal Bachar, Moshe Oron, Etti Mauda, Sharon Elkaslassy, Sagi Azran** and others.

You are all invited to join the WhatsApp group: <https://bit.ly/3sdZ0zt> and thus you can be informed of the fun of dancing and experiencing Moshiko Halevy and his dances.



# Experiences through the Eye of the Camera



Experiences through the Eye of the Camera

