

## Experiences Through the Eye of the Camera



**Yaron Carmel**

**Translation: Dena Matmon**

# “Kmo Az – Like It Was Then”

## Nostalgia Marathons

**A**s someone who started dancing at the age of 10 in Zichron Ya'akov and the surrounding area, I was exposed to dance marathons even then. This exposure in the 80s, and at such a young age, made an impression on me and left me with a special love for these songs and dances.

As a child, and later as a youth, I absorbed much of my heritage. The dance instructors didn't neglect the old dances, the international dances or the line dances and, in effect, this is how my repertoire of dances grew and remained stored in my head and in my feet.

Discussions about “what was” always took place and always made me curious to know what would happen if I could, just once, enter a time machine and run dance sessions exactly like they did then. To draw from the general dance list those dances that were truly danced in the 80s, especially at marathons, and to play and lead them all night.

At one time, **Elad Shtamer** taught with me at

the Meirav Center, and we would find ourselves sitting and reflecting on nostalgia, on what existed at the time.

And so, I decided to give it a go, to try. I created a list of dances and contacted a folk dance orchestra from Ramat HaShofet conducted by **Amos Stein**. We started rehearsals, and already at that point I started to get excited; I felt that I was reliving history.

I was always on good terms with **Saraleh Sharon** and together we decided to try and add community singing before the start of the dance session.

Once I understood that this was the product, we proceeded to choose a date, to advertise and do some marketing. It was agreed that the most suitable location from the perspective of ease of travel for dancers throughout the country would be the Meirav Center on the Carmel Coast.

I scheduled the first “Kmo Az” marathon for Friday, January 22nd, 2016.



We had no idea what to expect. At 8:00 pm we had four people who came for the community singing with Saraleh, but within only ten minutes, the cultural hall of the Meirav Center was full, with hundreds of dancers who came to sing before the marathon. The windows were fogged up, there was great joy; we sang and even danced a little.

At 9:30 pm, it was the orchestra's turn to play for our entertainment and to lead us in the dancing. It took us a few minutes until we realized the extent of the reconstruction. The orchestra played for close to two hours, from “Harmonica” to “Shalom Al Yisrael”, circle dances, partner dances and line dances.

After that, we danced until early daylight to recorded music from the list we worked so hard to prepare.

The credit for the name “Kmo Az” I must share with Yael Twito. During one of our many trips together, I told her about my idea. We started to sing Shlomo Artzi's song “Kmo Az - Like It Was Then”, and we both understood that this was the right name.

On the first evening, we had close to 900 dancers, choreographers, instructors and Israeli folk dance and song enthusiasts.





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And so, I continued every January to hold a marathon well into Friday night. Because of pressure from the dancers, I started a summer version as well, also a Friday night marathon.

During this period of the Swords of Iron War, I'm uncomfortable preparing a Friday community song and dance evening with an orchestra. I therefore changed the "Kmo Az" to a Saturday evening dance session – just come and dance – no special attractions like an orchestra, refreshments and an all-night marathon. When the cannons of war will once again be quiet, I will return to the tradition of

the Friday evening marathon, including an orchestra and community singing.

This year, for the first time, we decided to hold the marathon in a northern location, at "Navon Hall" in Kiryat Motzkin where **Almog Ben Ami** and I hold our main northern Thursday evening dance session – "Extreme Thursday". The next session will take place on Saturday evening, March 2nd, 2024.

In conclusion, the magic of this dance session was and always will be holding on to nostalgia and to those dances that we danced and grew up on.





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