

רוקדים

מגזין לריקודי עם ומחול

NIRKODA



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ארגון המדריכים
והיוצרים לריקודים עם
IFD Organization of
Instructors & Choreographers

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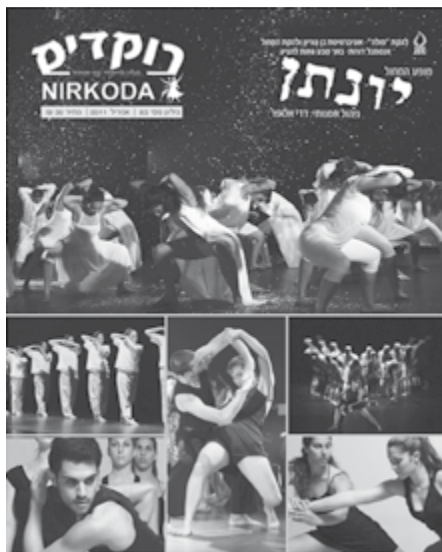
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The Story Behind the Dance



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Dear Readers,

The release [by the School of Communication, Ariel University Center of Samaria] to the media of a recording of an interview with the illustrious singer, Yehoram Gaon, about "oriental music" created a storm that did not pass over Israeli folk dance. [In the interview, he spoke about the Mediterranean genre of Israeli music and remarked that the lyrics and music of current Mizrahi songs are of an inferior quality.]

I believe that the song is the most important part of the dance forms; probably, about 90% of the success of a dance is due to the song. It is no wonder that choreographers hurry to register songs under their names, with the Organization of Israeli Folk Dance Instructors and Choreographers, even before they start to do any actual choreography for a particular song. They know that the song is the key to the success of the dance, mainly the melody and the rhythm. Do the choreographers listen to the lyrics? Do the lyrics affect them?

As expected, some people thought that Gaon's statements were racist and prejudicial. Instead of ignoring the generalizations that Gaon had made and facing reality, they angrily lashed out against the remarks, but more so against the person who had made them.

Well, everyone is not Yehoram Gaon, who can dare to express himself that way. The question is whether we have anyone within the field of Israeli folk dance who would dare to say that, "The king is naked?" Is there someone who is credible enough to clearly and loudly state what others only say in private? Would anyone dare point out and warn against the banality of most dances, their lack of inspiration and the similarity between dances?

Is every rhythmic song worthy of having a dance choreographed to it? Are songs such as, "Ani Ohev Ota Ve'He Barcha Mimeni (I love her and she ran away from me...)" compatible with the category of folk dance or should folk dances be based on a national message, i.e., connected to the land, the history and to Jewish and Israeli culture? Does the title "Israeli dance" solve the dilemma between what is available and what is desirable?

In other words, when will our own Yehoram Gaon arise?

In this issue:

■ **Ruth Eshel** writes about **the points of connection and detachment between styles of dance in Israel**, the encounter between dance for the stage and ethnic dance choreographies expressed by various folk dance troupes. Some questions and objections are raised by the attempt of folk dance troupes to perform in an international and contemporary style, instead of using more Jewish culture and ethnic sources. ■ **Oren Halali** writes about folk dance on stage. We are introduced to the Hoffman family, the people behind the successful **Mechola Dance Center**, and to the story of their dance troupes. ■ **Ilana Ashkenazi** writes about **Yair Binu's** monthly dance session, which takes place on the last Friday of the month at in **Kibbutz Ginegar** – nostalgia dances, welcoming Shabbat and where folk dances are woven into the atmosphere of yesteryear in Emek Yizrael (the Jezreel Valley). ■ **Danny Ben Shalom** tells us about the **summer course for dancers and instructors** who reside outside of Israel that is conducted by the Organization of Israeli Folk Dance Instructors and Choreographers and the Karmiel Festival. This year, the course will be celebrating its 10th anniversary and is gaining more fans and more participants from abroad. Good luck again this year! ■ **The Dance of the Month – Ilan**, by **Elad Shtamer**. This dance has gained great popularity, first in countries abroad and, now, also in Israel.

Happy Dancing!

Yaron Meishar, Ruth Goodman and Danny Uziel – Editors



Yaron Meishar



Ruth Goodman



Danny Uziel

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Points of Connection and Detachment



Ruth Eshel*

Courtesy of Machol Achshav
[Dance Today – the Dance Magazine of Israel]



Rina Nikova, *The Yemenite Ballet*

The relationship between Concert Dance (Artistic dance) and Ethnic Dance in Israel has undergone many changes. During the Period of the early Yishuv¹ there was cross fertilization between these two dance genres, however, after the State was established, stage dance and the ethnic dance started to separate. This article seeks to track the key points of connection, detachment and the possibility of rapprochement between these two genres from the perspective of a person who grew up on dance for the stage.

Before continuing, several clarifications are required regarding the meaning of terms used in the article. The term “ethnic dance” serves as an umbrella covering all dance expressions responding to the needs of a society, whose members have common genetic, linguistic and cultural relations, with a special emphasis on cultural tradition (Kealiinohomoku, 1983). According to Bahat (2004, pp.28-32), this relates to the widest dance foundation from which several dance categories diverge: ritual dance, folk dance, social dance and concert dance. Concert dance is located at the upper edge of the pyramid, artistically speaking.

Connecting during the Yishuv Period [prior to 1948]

The source of the close ties between concert dance and ethnic dance in the Yishuv period lies in the artistic concept, *ausdruckstanz* [(German) expressionist dance or central European dance; the translation of the term is “Dance of Expression”], that the artists brought with them from Europe upon immigrating to Israel. Expressionist dance artists had rejected classical ballet with all its components, arguing that this type of dance represented concepts common to the old world. On the other hand, they appreciated performances by ethnic soloists who performed in Europe between the two World Wars. In their eyes, these represented the genuine traditions of a nation reinforced in the 19th century following the national struggles for independence in Europe, known as the “Spring of Nations”.

The technical ability level of the expressionist dancers was not high and relied considerably on their talent, musicality and natural ability. Therefore, the ethnic dancers’ ability and the

* Dr. Ruth Eshel – Dance researcher, choreographer and dancer. Performed dance recitals (1977-1986), author of the book, “Dancing with the dream – the development of artistic dance in Israel, 1920-1964. Co-editor, magazine, *Machol be-Yisrael (Israel Dance)* with Giora Manor (1998-1991); Editor, *Machol Achshav (Dance Today)* 1993-2006 and co-editor, since 2008, with Dr. Henya Rottenberg. Dance critic, *Ha'aretz* daily, since 1991. Artistic director and choreographer of the Ethiopian dance groups, *Eskesta* and *Beta*.

rich movement vocabulary of this genre were appreciated because of the conspicuously poor movement vocabulary at the beginning of *ausdruckstanz*. Although *ausdruckstanz* was considered *avant-garde*, the artists integrated ethnic dances into their repertoire.

The dancer and choreographer **Ruth St. Denis** created her repertoire with the inspiration of exotic ethnical cultures. **Rudolf Von Laban**, dance theorist and teacher, claimed that part of the *ausdruckstanz* artists' role was to create "movement choirs" [i.e., for a group of people - a choir] instead of traditional folk dances. He created amateur mass performances on topics related to trade unions, and all this in the "spirit of the period" (Manor, 1978, p. 33). Moreover, classical ballet also integrated ethnic dance into the works created by **Marius Petipa** at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Even **Serge Diaghilev's** daring repertoire had signs of ethnic inspiration. Some great ballet schools had a folkloric studies track, known as character dance.

The dance artists who immigrated to Israel during the period of the Yishuv brought along the approach that encouraged the relationship between concert and ethnic dance. The practical expression of this approach was in the aspiration to create a Hebrew dance with its various components – i.e., concert Hebrew dance using the components of folk dance. The choreographers searched for sources of inspiration and turned to the small Yemenite community and the local Arabs. Their way of life, which seemed to have remained still and unchanged in time, ignited their imagination. The Jews of Yemenite origin were identified as continuing the Jewish history, interrupted by Exile 2000 years earlier, whereas the admiration for the "noble" Orientals was affected by the European Orientalism.

The repertoire of the concert and classical ballet artists included ethnic dances. A well-known dance, for instance, was *Vodka* (estimated date, the beginning of the 30's) by **Gertrud Kraus**. The ballet dancer, **Mia Arbatova** performed Russian, Spanish and Oriental dances. A prominent example of concert dance based on Yemenite folk movement was **Rina Nikova's** company, "Biblical Ballet," where young dances of Yemenite origin performed. Despite the dominant Yemenite ethnic component, the group was considered part of the modern dance activity in the Yishuv, and participated in first national competition for professional dancers held in 1937.² At the same time, the dance artists in the Yishuv, **Leah Bergstein and Yardena Cohen**, being the most prominent among them, contributed to creating

new holiday pageants related to the land. Some of these pageant dances were adopted by the people and became folk dances.

Detachment

The cross fertilization between concert and ethnic dance ended after the establishment of the State. The separation between the two genres was related to demographic changes occurring during the early years of the State and the transformation in concert dance. During the Yishuv period, most of the Jewish population came from Central and Eastern Europe and shared the Ashkenazi cultural core. However, following the War of Independence and the establishment of the State, there was a massive immigration of Mizrahi (Eastern) Jews, expelled from the Arab countries, which changed the demographic balance between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews. This massive immigration was compounded by the immigration of the survivors from Europe and the immigration from the United States and other English speaking countries.

Thus, the assembly of Jews from all over the world in Israel aggravated the problem of trying to create Hebrew cultural assimilation in the country. In an attempt to tackle this problem, the policy of the "melting pot" was formulated in which the view was that the heritage of each community was not to be preserved in order to create a common core for all the communities. Out of this core, it was hoped, that an Israeli culture would be created.³ With the background



Leah Bergstein

“As the professional modern dance in Israel was loosing interest in ethnic dance it was also moving further away from the Israeli folk dances”

of this policy, which sought to weaken the uniqueness of each community and strengthen the common core, the enthusiasm for ethnic and oriental dance faded away as representing in appearance and culture the Jews of ancient Israel. The phenomenon of denigrating tradition and feeling ashamed, characterized a considerable part of the immigrant population that desired to expedite the process of their becoming Israelis. On the other hand, there were also immigrants who wanted to preserve the traditions on which they were raised and felt at home with.

The second significant change which occurred in Israel is the transformation of concert dance. Ausdruckstanz declined and, instead, American dance in the **Martha Graham** style was gradually adopted, providing the dancers a stylized movement lexicon and a training methodology. The ambition to professionalize on a universal level was a top priority of the “new” concert dance, whereas the aspiration to create Machol Ivri (Hebrew Dance) was postponed.⁴ Furthermore, associating with the ethnic was perceived as a disadvantage, which might color the dance work with localism and provinciality, while the dance artists were striving for the peak of the international art summit.

Inbal Dance Theatre

With the background of the demographic and artistic revolution and the “Melting Pot” policy during Israel’s early years, Inbal Dance Theatre was established by **Sara Levi Tanai**. This was an example of creating a modern dance theatre nourished on ethnic materials. The ethnic dance characteristic of the Jews of Yemen created a rich lexicon of dance movement onstage as well as a personal expression. However, an analysis of her dramatic works, like the Book of Ruth (1961), points out Graham’s influence in terms of character design and narrative development.

In my opinion, the timing of the establishment of the company created new opportunities yet it also closed others. The young country’s relations with the United States, for instance, led to the establishment of the American Fund for Institutions in Israel (later called the America Israel Cultural Foundation), which initiated the visit to Israel by the choreographer, **Jerome Robbins** (1951). With his recommendation, the Fund began supporting Inbal, the first group that was able to work as a professional group in the years when there was no government support for concert dance.

On the one hand, establishing an ethnically based group was contrary to the concept of the “melting pot”. It is possible to understand that during the Yishuv period, the Biblical Ballet

of Nikova and the ethnically inspired dances produced by her colleagues were welcomed by all strata of society and the national institutions.

On the other hand, after the State was established, a group identified with an ethnic community, even a dance group engaging in concert dance (there were many arguments regarding the question as to whether Inbal was a folklore group or not, and what were its objectives),⁵ was a deviation from the declared policy of the “melting pot”. Moreover, it was precisely Inbal’s great success during its tours abroad, as the first representative of the dance in Israel, which intensified the ambivalent attitude towards it. The pride its success evoked was accompanied by the annoyance that a troupe identified by a specific ethnic group was representing Israel’s dance abroad, precisely during the years that the young state desired to project unity and not division and multiple cultures.

The detachment between Inbal Dance Theatre and the modern dance community in Israel was a two-way estrangement. The troupe was composed of dancers and a choreographer of Yemenite origin. Tanai was nourished on the creativity of her Yemenite dancers, their body language, the movement materials and its quality, and succeeded in expressing their special ethnic aspect. The choreographic simplicity of the works Inbal presented stemmed not only from artistic considerations of essence and clarity, which **Levy-Tanai** was blessed with, but it also matched the dancers’ technical qualifications.

On the one hand, Inbal withdrew into itself and even maintained that there was ethnic discrimination (Toledano, 2005, pp. 21-32). On the other hand, many of the dancers who were not members of the community could not find a supported professional framework (until the establishment of Batsheva in 1964, and this too with private and not governmental support), and regarded Inbal as the only troupe with monetary support enabling it to act in a professional manner.

Inbal benefitted from conditions that were not available to other modern dance companies which were in deep financial crisis. Many newspaper articles were published with headlines such as, “Dance, the neglected sector,” “Artistic dance in Israel – no man’s land” (Eshel, 2001, p.103).

Israeli Dance for the Stage

As the professional modern dance in Israel was loosing interest in ethnic dance it was also moving further away from the Israeli folk dances. In the 50’s there was acceleration in the creation of folk dances, from which **Yonathan**



“Gown of Stones” by Ruthi Eshel



“Diapered Branches” by Ruthi Eshel



“Nefas” by Ruthi Eshel, the dancer: Maayan Raskay, Beta Group. Photo: Ofer Zvulun

Karmon created, what is called in the slang of the creators of folk dances, “Israeli dance for the stage”. Karmon developed a dance style designated for the stage in which he integrated the basic elements of the Israeli folk dance typical of that period (step bend, skip, run, etc.) and movement elements from Israel’s ethnic communities. In addition, he incorporated in his work jumps, like grand jeté, turns, like chaîné, grand battement, attitude and balancé. Karmon had also a great influence in directing the perception of using space. Through the years, generations of choreographers emerged, most of who had been his students, developing this dance direction in their own way, however, not all of them were blessed with Karmon’s talent.

The question may be asked, “Why movements, identified with classical ballet were interwoven into ‘Israeli dance for the stage’”. Ostensibly, Ausdruckstanz was a more natural partner for cooperation and enrichment. In my opinion, I believe that the reason lies in the fact that Ausdruckstanz was the source from which the afore-mentioned basic materials were retrieved. Ausdruckstanz was unable to provide the new and significant movement lexicon, beyond what it had already provided. The additional potential partner for enrichment was Graham’s modern dance, which in fact was rich in movement materials but its style bore the creator’s personal imprint.

Thus, elements of the classical ballet movement lexicon found their way into the “Israeli dance for the stage”.

Furthermore, it should be noted that Karmon studied dance with **Gertrud Kraus** and **Mia Arbatova** and his artistic career began in concert dance, turned to folk dance and from there he came to “Israeli dance for the stage”.

An additional aspect of the combination between folk dance and ballet was the habit, already popular in the 50’s, of giving young girls ballet lessons as part of their cultural enrichment. Most of them had no aspirations of becoming professional dancers, some were not talented enough but many were attracted to the stage. Folk dance groups provided a framework for these ambitions and gained public appreciation. Representative Folk Dance groups were established in the framework of a municipal or a regional authority granting the dancers the joy of dancing and the pleasure of exposure in the limelight. It was also a way of seeing the world, by participating in the many tours taken by the groups, representing the “new” Israeli.

Frequently, the professional kernel of these groups was built around those dancers who had acquired basic knowledge of classical ballet and dancers who had studied jazz. In the 70’s, jazz became very popular in Israel following the success of the **Shimon Braun**’s

"It has now been ninety years since Baruch Agadati, the pioneer of concert dance in Israel, turned to the appeal of Jewish ethnic traditions, Ashkenazi and Mizrachi, as a source for a new movement lexicon"



Barak Marshall: "Monger". Photo: Ron Biran



Barak Marshall : "Aunt Leah". Photo: Eskaff

Jazz Plus Dance Company (1969-1972) and the international prestige of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater. [Alvin Ailey founded the dance company in 1958 in an attempt meet the needs of the many African-American dancers who were not accepted to other troupes because of the color of their skin. In 1972 Ailey visited Israel and taught Bat Dor dancers two of his works.]

The young dancers, who had acquired elementary technique in artistic dance, to improve the technical level of their groups, became teachers, gave lessons and created their own teaching methods. Out of these young people emerged a considerable number of choreographers who created "folk dances" for the masses and also "Israeli dance for the stage" for the representative groups. In both cases they specialized in working with amateurs. Some members of these groups reached the professional modern dance companies, which were always in need of male dancers. On the other hand, the representative choreographers for the folk dance groups, who desired to work with professional dancers and companies, encountered difficulties, stemming from the lack of appreciation of their artistic skills.

Where did this lack of appreciation, the disrespect, stem from? It appears that the more the choreographers of the "Israeli dance for the stage" integrated movement elements identified with modern and classical dance, as well as trendy folk dances from various nations, and the greater the tendency of the staged show to have a "wow factor," the more disrespect there was for the work. While the borrowed movement elements from modern dance and classical ballet seemed exciting, engaging and creative to the dancers

and the choreographers operating in the field of "Israeli dance for the stage", who regarded it as a mark of "professionalism", the professional concert dance artists saw things in a different light. The borrowed and familiar movement elements, performed by amateurs, left no impression on them. Furthermore, professional choreographers, particularly in the postmodern dance genre, wanted to keep their distance from familiar movement patterns, each trying to express a personal voice and imprint a specific movement mark.

Recently, the choreography of the "Israeli dance for the stage" has become more complex and the level of the dancers has risen, however, the movement language, which is at the core of the matter, seems like a strange hodge-podge of modern dance with eclectic movement elements. Sometimes it is expressive or entertaining, and has some bearing, generally superficial, to folklore. Many of the choreographers in the field also lack good taste. Choosing a theme or a title for a dance, related to Israel, or relying on a music written by an Israeli composer and sung in Hebrew, cannot replace an original movement lexicon.

Nevertheless, the achievement of these choreographers or the activity of these groups should not be underestimated. They have created a phenomenon, which might be unique to Israel, where thousands of amateur youngsters [mostly teens] are dancing at folk dance events and in the representative folk dance groups with passion and love of dance, to the sounds of Israeli songs, and all that in an era when the Internet and other temptations are at our threshold. This is a wonderful

phenomenon that must be preserved and fostered while encouraging good taste. Nevertheless, this is, most probably, not the artistic product the pioneers of folk dance and the “Israeli dance for the stage” dreamt of. One should distinguish between the educational phenomenon of thousands of youngsters dancing and being ostentatious in the creating of “Israeli dance for the stage”.

Beginning of rapprochement between the professional dance and the ethnic dance

While the disinterest of professional dance in folk dance and “Israeli dance for the stage” has not changed over time, one may occasionally locate exceptions, here and there, to an interest in ethnic dance. It seems this trend is increasing, though very slowly. **Moshe Efrati** adopted quite unusual movement elements from Sephardic Jewish culture in some of the dances he has created. A prominent example is *Camina y Tourna* (1992), a dance created to mark the quincentenary of the expulsion of Jews from Spain and their endless wandering throughout the generations.

Liat Dror and **Nir Ben Gal** were pioneers when they started combining belly dances in their choreographies, for instance in *Donkeys* (1989), *Inta Omri* (1994) and *Dance of Nothing* (1999). They did not incorporate conventional belly dance, as part of an international trend which has accelerated in the world, but as part of a

genuine effort toward integration with the East.

Dror and **Ben Gal** regard belly dance as movement material belonging to the location we live in and this approach was reinforced by the couple’s relocating to the desert and dissociating themselves from the entire show that is associated with belly dancing, such as the female dancer’s costume.

Dror and **Ben Gal**’s international prestige contributed to the concert dance artists change in attitude towards ethnic dance. **Barak Marshall**, in his works, combined motifs of Hassidic Dance, Yemenite dance and Pop while **Ilana Cohen** of Inbal continued creating dances using the company’s movement lexicon.

Renana Raz has recently created *Kazuaria*, a work inspired by the spirit of the traditional Druze Debka Folklore while the author of this article works with members of the Ethiopian community [Eskesta and Beta dance troupes]. The Inbal Dance Theatre, under a new management, directed by **Dr. Razi Amitai**, has taken a new path: talented choreographers, identified with concert dance, will be invited to create dances inspired by ethnic dance. There were great hopes that the Karmiel Festival, which brings together various communities, would also succeed in creating an encounter between the genres. At the Karmiel Festival, the various genres share the same location while each maintains its independence.

The festival is not proactive in initiating nor provide space for dialogue between the concert



Deborah Bertonoff : “People’s Memories”



Renana Raz: “Kazuaria”. Photo: Avi Nathan

dancers, which are currently flourishing in Israel and who reveal a much greater curiosity and awareness, than in the past, of the ethnic material treasures of the communities, folk dance and the Israeli dance for the stage, which despite its success in drawing thousands of people into the dancing circles has reached a dead end from the artistic point of view.

Apparently there is no escape from the need for a clear definition of objectives: either the creation of folk dance, designated for the masses, or the development of concert dance for selected professional dancers, inspired by ethnic dance. There is no contradiction in being open to influences, no matter how varied they may be, provided that the objectives are clear, the professional knowledge exists and, primarily, good taste is preserved. (Interview with Bahat, 2008.) It has now been ninety years since **Baruch**

Agadati, the pioneer of concert dance in Israel, turned to the appeal of Jewish ethnic traditions, Ashkenazi and Mizrahi, as a source for a new movement lexicon.

As it is well known, **Agadati's** name is also associated with the first Israeli folk dance.⁶ Since then, concert dance, ethnic dance of the various communities and folk dance have come a long way and the awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of each genre has increased. Now, with the new tools of the current world, with the technical and budgetary ability that had not previously existed, the time has come for a renewed connection.



Baruch Agadati

Notes

- 1 The Yishuv period - the early Jewish settlements in Israel before the establishment of the State of Israel.
- 2 Nikova established and directed the dance group. Nikova, who had emigrated from Russia and was not a member of the Yemenite community, must have facilitated its integration in the 30's and the 40's as part of the dance for the stage. On the other hand, in the 50's and henceforth, the fact that a Yemenite group was headed by a non-member of that community strengthened its image as an Oriental group.
- 3 The perception of the "melting pot" did, in fact, threaten the conservation, revival and dissemination of the Eastern communities' ethnic dances. Already at the end of the 40's, Gurit Kadman, the musician Dr. Esther Gerson-Kiwi, and

the literature researcher Yehudah Ratzabi acted for their preservation and documentation. Therefore, Kadman was ahead of her time and contributed to the growth of a multi-cultural society. According to Ronen (2000), affected by Kadman's activity, the [ethnic] community dances contributed to the Israeli folk dances, so that each one of them could feel they were "his own".

- 4 In 1951, the American choreographer Jerome Robbins came to Israel. With regard to the aspiration to create Makhol Yisraeli (Israeli dance), he wrote in the report to the American Fund for Israeli Institutions (later on, this became the America Israel Cultural Foundation) that the Israeli dancer must assimilate the techniques of classical ballet and modern dance, master these techniques and other, "Till they no longer seem strange and hostile. Only then will you reach the stage where you may make your own experiments, grow and develop".
- 5 Regarding the many arguments about Inbal's mission, read about the 1975 discussion. Toledano, *A Story of A Company*, pp. 161-162.
- 6 The folk dance, called Horah Agadati, was created by Gurit Kadman, based on the elements found in Baruch Agadati's solo dance. Kadman asked the composer Alexander Uriyah Boscovitch (1907-1964), to compose the music for the dance.

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Oren Halali

Translation:
Benny Levy

Her Voice Ascends and is Heard

Let's Meet Mechola

Representative dance troupes, dance schools, classes in various styles of dance, training for dance teachers and young choreographers, production of unique performances, participation in large productions that are seen on TV and involve thousands of dancers from all over the country.

Indeed, it sounds like there are tens of different organizations or institutions for production and dance. In actuality, this is only one entity, professional and unique in the landscape of the Israeli dance. In one word – this is “Mechola”.

Mechola is undoubtedly one of the most successful dance schools in Israel. It has four branches: in Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, Ramat HaSharon and in Ganei Tikvah. Each branch has two performing dance troupes, one in Israeli dance and another in Jazz dance. In addition, dance classes are offered for beginners through the most advanced students in many dance styles.

The owners and operators of **Mechola** are members of the Hoffman family. I was curious to know how members from one family became so successful, what motivated them, how they run this business and what plans they have for the future. For this information, I met with **Shuki Hoffman** and her son, **Yaniv**, who are the artistic directors of Mechola.

As a 14-year-old dancer in the Bauer Jerusalem Dance School Troupe, she remembered participating in dance festivals with other local dance groups. At that time, Jerusalem had been an active and exciting city for dance and held the lead in Israeli dance for the stage. Even then, **Shuki** was artistic director and choreographer for the dance troupe Hora Yerushalayim (Hora Jerusalem), a well-known company in the world of Israeli Dance, as well as a charismatic and talented choreographer. Shuki had an influence on Hora Yerushalayim as well as on almost every dance production in the city. In addition, she inspired young choreographers locally and from abroad.

After working 12 years with “Hora Yerushalayim”, **Shuki** resigned her position to establish **Mechola**.

Shuki: “My husband, **Shlomi**, and I grew up together in the youth movements in Jerusalem. He was an accordionist and I was a dancer. This is how we were attracted to Hora Yerushalayim. We worked hard and achieved until one day, very innocently, I felt that we could go no further. We were looking to do something new, with depth and a different idea.

“When we established **Mechola**, we weren’t thinking beyond a dance studio. We thought and believed that if it was good, it would succeed. We chose the best teachers: **Silvia Duran, Gabi Bar, Shimon Brown, Rose Sobol** and others. All the dancers followed us and within a month, Mechola became a success.”

Yaniv, then a 12-year-old and a dancer in the Hora Yerushalayim Children’s Dance Troupe [Hora Efrachim], adds: “Back then, there was no high quality dance studio in Jerusalem, similar to that of Bat-Dor in Tel Aviv, where all dance styles were taught. This is the model that we had in mind. In the brochures, we mentioned mirrors and dressing rooms. Today, these are considered standard; however, back then, mirrors and dressing rooms were installed in only the elite and well-known facilities and this brought us lots of dancers.”

Over the years, **Mechola** expanded and opened six branches in Jerusalem neighborhoods and community centers. Even the Hora Yerushalayim Dance Troupes were motivated to expand into



Hoffmann family. From left to right: Shlomi, Shuki, Yael, Yaniv and Dorit. Photo. Raanan Cohen, courtesy “Maariv”

various neighborhoods. Back then, Jerusalem was a city of dance and there was enough room for these two large institutions as well as for many other dance troupes and small dance schools.

Meanwhile, the Hoffman children did well in the field of dance in their own right, too. Noa, the youngest daughter, graduated from Jerusalem Academy High School with honors and, while in the military, was known as an outstanding dancer. **Yael**, the middle child, completed a four-year program of study at Seminar HaKibbutzim [Kibbutzim College of Education] and **Yaniv**, the eldest son, was a leading dancer with professional dance companies such as the Fresco Dance Group, the company of **Ido Tadmor**, and with **Yair Vardi**, who picked eight professional dancers for a special project with the London Academy of Dance, for The Suzanne Dellal Center for the Arts in Tel Aviv. Yaniv's wife, **Dorit**, whom he met when she was dancing at **Mechola**, dances with the renowned troupe, Mayumana.

In response to my question, "*How did you continue and expand outside Jerusalem?*" **Shuki** replied. "After **Dorit** and **Yaniv** moved to Tel Aviv, Shlomi and I considered ways to enable them to be independent in the dance field. In 2003, we established **Mechola Ramat Aviv**, which is our branch in Tel Aviv. This was not easy because **Mechola** was not a familiar institution in Tel Aviv. We picked a good location that was adjacent to the Ramat Aviv Mall, we invested in a lot of publicity and, with hard work, we have managed to establish a viable branch with many dancers. After the activity in this branch became stable, we established the branch in Ramat HaSharon followed by another in Ganey Tikvah."



Mechola Group, Jerusalem. Phot. Louise Green

Today, **Mechola** is managed by all members of the Hoffman family. I could not provide titles for the various roles. "Everybody does everything," says Shuki and Yaniv. Nevertheless, Shuki and Yaniv are the leaders in the artistic area. Shlomi is the CEO; he is the head of business strategy, planning and development. Dorit, in addition to her involvement in dance choreography, heads graphic design and musical editing. Additionally, along with Yaniv, she is co-director of the branches in Tel Aviv and Ramat HaSharon. Shuki and Shlomi are the directors of the branches in Jerusalem and Ganey Tikvah.

Yael, recently married, organized dance troupes and **Mechola** extensions. She is the choreographer and artistic director. In addition, she successfully manages the dance department in the city of Herzliya. And Noa is a leading **Mechola** dancer. For every event, the entire family joins forces and they function as a cohesive production crew.

Through the years, the **Mechola** dancers and troupes have participated in many productions. They performed seven times at the annual evening torch-lighting ceremony held on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem which is the closing event of Yom

Hazikaron (Memorial Day) and the opening ceremony for Yom Ha'atzma'ut (Independence Day). They have also performed many times at Binyanei HaUma [International Convention Centre Jerusalem] alongside professional troupes like Tararam [Hebrew for Commotion, an Israeli music, theatre and dance group] and [the band] Shakatak, as well as in the opening and closing nights of the Maccabiah, in the Karmiel Dance Festivals and performances abroad. This includes receiving invitations to prestigious festivals in various places abroad, like the Festival of Dijon.

Tzvika Hadar and **Yoav Tzafir** of the channel 2 Israeli TV show "Nolad Lirkod" [Born to Dance] visited **Mechola** in order to film a promotional clip for the show. The opening theme was the development of dance in Israel - from the [the folk beginnings] Hora to the development of professional dance. To their surprise, they found that **Mechola** dancers



Mechola Group, Jerusalem. Phot. Mel Brikman

Tzvika Hadar and Yoav Tzafir of the channel 2 Israeli TV show "Nolad Lirkod" [Born to Dance] visited Mechola in order to film a promotional clip for the show. To their surprise, they found that Mechola dancers performed at a very high level. This is how Yaniv Hoffman was selected to participate as a choreographer for the TV show.



Noa Hofmann - the lead dancer in Mechola. Photo: Oren Menzura



Yaniv and Dorit. Phot. Louise Green

performed at a very high level. This is how **Yaniv Hoffman**, the only person from Israeli dance, was selected to participate as a choreographer for the TV show. In addition, four out of the twelve finalists were dancers from **Mechola**.

"Within a very short time, the exposure on TV brought us lots of dancers," says Yaniv. "However, in the long run, the show had some negative implications for the field of dance. With a greater demand for dancers in professional productions, the field has become commercialized; the dancers have followed the money and abandoned the dance troupes which offered considerably less of a challenge to the dancers."

"So, what's next?" I ask. "What are the future plans of Mechola?"

"Shuki and Shlomi - it is Jerusalem," says **Yaniv**. "Unfortunately, Jerusalem is no longer a leader in dance as it had been and the organizations concerned about dance have closed. I am very concerned about the future of dance in Jerusalem. Today, **Mechola** is doing better in the central part of Israel. Shuki and Shlomi left Jerusalem for Tel Aviv. We have received offers to open branches in other cities; instead of expanding, we prefer reinforce what we have so far."

"How else is it possible to advance in the field of Israeli dance for stage?" I asked.

Shuki and Yaniv looked at me with shining faces. "Always innovate, break old habits; don't rely only on the past but emphasize what is possible in the future. Israeli folklore is still in the process of development; it wouldn't be correct to close its borders. There is a lot of room for innovation and development. You have got to keep it open."

"**Mechola** does contemporary Israeli dance. In order to keep the dancers interested and

challenged, it is important to add stimulating and innovative touches to the folklore style of dancing," Shuki adds.

"The **Mechola** dancers are on a very high professional level. Some practice for as much as eight hours a day. For their efforts, they deserve to be recognized. Sometimes I feel that they do not receive adequate media and television exposure."

"What are your wishes for the Israeli dance field?"

"I wish for it to find its definition, not to be closed and restricted; also that we would know how to develop and advance the level of the dancers," says Yaniv. Shuki adds, "So that there will be an able professional leader in the field who specifically targets the dancers and the troupes to enable them to achieve the skills necessary to perform on stage, which is the goal of all the dancers and troupes."

"And what do you wish for yourselves?"

Shuki responded, "I would love to receive the opportunity to produce the opening night performance at the Karmiel Festival. The stage is huge, the dance troupes, the audience...to me it seems like an exciting challenge."

Finally, (what else), I ask Shuki about the children and I ask Yaniv about his mother.

Yaniv answered, "[She is my] number one teacher and the source of my inspiration."

Shuki states, "The children and the family strengthen me and push me forward."

The truth of the matter, my readers, on a personal note, I really like **Mechola** very much. I love the beauty of what it is doing and its contribution to Israeli dance, in festivals and events around the country. My wish for the **Mechola** family is immortality. May **Mechola** continue to advance and develop and to continue to be one of the most beautiful, exciting and challenging troupes in Israeli dance and dance, in general.

Oneg Shabbat in Kibbutz Ginegar

Ilana Ashkenazi; Translation: Benny Levy



Sanctification of Shabat in yemenite version. From left: Yair, Yankele, Seadia, Benzi, Moshe and Michel



Kabalat Shabat with accordions

Today's media cover the contemporary new westernized Israeli culture. It is the culture of the moment. Most of it is rooted in the western American culture.

We tend to forget, and the younger generations hardly know, the roots of our Israeli culture and what it has drawn upon and developed from. These complex roots include the entire lifestyle - language, literature, poetry, ideology, ethnicity, and more. From this, Israeli folk dances also started and developed. The folk dances, by definition, were popular and reflected the way of life of our unique country [Israel] that is comprised of a wide variety of people who have come from different countries and have brought with them from their homelands their own ethnic elements and hopes, which were then incorporated to create something original in Israel. Our activity in Ginegar seeks to retain and preserve the roots of these elements.

The Oneg Shabbat dance session is led by the instructor, **Yair Binu**, is a nostalgia dance session. Here, we do those songs and dances which some among us (old-timers) had done years ago and want to continue to do. Also, we were requested to and have actually succeeded in attracting additional new dancers, as well as a younger crowd, who are now introduced to these songs, dances, and their background through encounters with the veteran dance choreographers

at the session who explain the why of the dance creation and what they wanted to express.

Just like it had been back then, the atmosphere is also important. When dancing in a circle, hands are joined, eyes make contact and there is a feeling of connection between people through the dance.

We chose **Kibbutz Ginegar** in the Jezreel Valley [Emek Yizre'el] because we wanted the place to express the spirit of this special evening. This valley was at the forefront of the Zionist settlement of the land and around it a whole culture of songs and dances evolved that eventually spread throughout Israel. These works reflected the unique atmosphere in the valley and also created the image as a leader for the renewal of Israeli culture. We wanted to integrate this into what we do, i.e., to have today... that which was. Dancing, in the full meaning of the term, that we know and believe we will also continue to dance into the next generation.

We have named this evening "**Oneg Shabbat**," and aside from the dances, we bring content which provides additional value.

During the evening we gather for about an hour for singing Israeli folk songs that are accompanied by some of our dancing friends who play musical instruments - accordions, flutes, darbukas (drums) etc., and accompanied by slides and then readings of selected excerpts



Dancing in the circle

on culture, Judaism, holidays, etc., as related to the time or to current events. Then we do an Israeli Kabbalat Shabbat (Welcoming the Sabbath) that is led by the veteran choreographers. These choreographers come to every meeting; they are the ones who created laid the foundations of Israeli folk dancing. Through their choreography, they created and built the cornerstones of Israeli culture, in general, and they are the heart and the spirit of our evenings.

This monthly dance session, held on Friday afternoon, attracts dancers from all over Israel, who truly love every piece of the beautiful land of Israel. Most of the dancers are elderly, but some of them are in their 20's and 30's. They come from Ashdod and Be'er Sheva in the south, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and the central parts of Israel, as well as from the northern part of Israel like Kiryat Shmona, Yesod HaMa'aleh, Snir [Kibbutz in the Hula Valley near Kiryat Shmona], and other places. They come as singles or couples, parents, children and grandparents who usually tell their children and grandchildren, "Every week you're with us for every Friday night Shabbat dinner, but on the last Friday of the month, we are in Ginegar!"

Sometimes only one person of the couple who attends is the folk dancer. The other one enjoys the music and the atmosphere. Over time, the dancers initiated a custom to bring along food to share and volunteers help arrange a long large table filled with good tasty food thus making it a potluck dinner party after Kabbalat Shabbat. In this part of the evening, for about 20-30 minutes, people dance to the tunes of the 1960's including some old line dances to complete the celebration.

[This is a] Friday night out for all ages, based on folk dancing, content, values, lots of love and atmosphere. Here is one excerpt that

we read at one of our meetings. (In Hebrew, this rhymes – B. L.):

When we searched for a perfect place for the folk dancing session

No surprise, we thought about The [Jezreel] Valley. And after we searched in every kibbutz and village Immediately we were captured by Ginegar's magic.

We sat down to write the first invitation Inviting dancers to the session.

And automatically, the hand wrote the phrase, "From Beit Alfa to Nahalal." [Lyrics of the famous song, Shir HaEmek – B.L.]

Because we already knew back then, what everyone knows today

That here we found the perfect place

To dance those same wonderful dances

To their melodies we also hear the lyrics,

And all together – the dance, the song, and the melody

Describe the beautiful and beloved Land of Israel.

Back then, we were a small group but persistent.

We wanted that dance session to succeed.

Though we believed in what we did and were dedicated

There were also fears, concerns and uncertainty.

But apart from the love of the old and beautiful Israeli dances

Which was the catalyst for more meetings

With us we had Eliyahu Gamliel, who always came with a drum and a flute,

Who served as a teacher and, like a shepherd, led us.

With us we had Bentzi Tiram and Yankele Levy

Their dances appealed to our heart and our feet were captured by their magic

Yonatan Gabai and Moshe Telem made guest appearances

And enduring beloved Sedi (Se'adyah Amishai) was always there to cheer

*Marco Ben Shimon in the center of the circle
Without exception, he never missed our dance
session.*

*All loved us and truly cared about us
They gave us the respect, pleasure and joy to
dance with them
And together to continue, preserve and keep
Their generation's beautiful legacy.*

*Although we were a small and limited group
Here the atmosphere was delightful and amazing
We had memorable Shabbat evenings
With choreographers, friends and guests
Music, song, and stories
Integrated into the best and most beautiful dances.*

*And every month since then, we are already
accustomed
To host in Ginegar, instructors and choreographers.
And we have had with us all the big names
Who have choreographed our marvelous dances
This wonderful evening is dedicated to honor
them and their dances.
For this, people from all over Israel have
gathered here.
And every month when we come here, it is a new
experience for us
From the green mountain (HaHar HaYarok) road,
toward our fields (Al Sadeinu).*

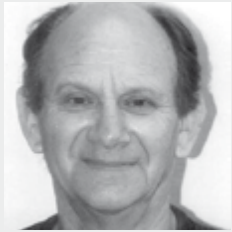
*And when we come to my valley (Emek Sheli)
And smell the fragrant rose,
Then each of us knows
That rest has come to the weary worker (Ba'ah
Menucha LaYage'a).*

*And when evening and night falls upon the field
and forest (Al Sadeh VaYa'ar)
We gather to sing of the beautiful land of Israel
We never forget and always remember
Who choreographed those dances and from
where they come
And how they make our lives a bit more beautiful
And all of us here, in appreciation, heartily
applaud!*

*But you, the dancing friends
You, who persistently keep returning,
In all weather – blazing summer heat and, like
today, soggy rain
Don't give up: your hands are not weak
Gather here on the last Friday of the month
Do what is so important for us
Revive and experience the Israeli spirit in singing
and dancing
Carry away the creations of the great pioneers
and choreographers
And to you, we say again and again, thanks and
lots of love
Because you are central, the beating heart and soul.*



Elyahu Gamliel in Kabalat Shabat



Dany Benshalom



Ruthi Slann

For information contact the course director, **Dany Benshalom**, Tel/fax +972-4-6346851; mobile:+972-50-7296800; e-mail: dbenshalom@013.net.il or Skype: [dbenshalom](https://www.skype.com/user/dbenshalom) or the assistant course director, **Ruthi Slann**, mobile: +1-864-650-2009 or e-mail: kibbutz@slann.com or go to Karmiel Festival's web site: www.karmiefestival.co.il/course.php

Summer Course for Foreign Teachers and Dancers of Israeli Folk Dance in Karmiel, Israel

An Invitation to a Unique Experience

The world of Israeli Folk Dance (IFD) is wide and friendly. The days of Israeli folk Dance only within Israel are long gone. Thousands of dancers world wide, Jews and non Jews alike, have an incredible and wonderful thing in common: Love for Israel, and for a special energetic cultural activity, Israeli Folk Dance. Since the creation of the Karmiel Festival in 1988, it has been the wish of thousands of dance lovers to come to Israel and attend this amazing event.

Nine years ago, The Association of Folk Dance Instructors and Choreographers in Israel and Abroad (Irgun Hamarkidim Vehachoreographim Lerikudai Am beyisrael Uvatfutso), in cooperation with the Karmiel Festival administration, established the "Karmiel Dance Festival Summer Course" for foreign teachers and dancers of Israeli Folk Dance. **Dany Benshalom** was asked to lead the course and has been the course director from its start [2002]. This special ten day course brings together dance leaders and dancers from all over the world to personally meet and learn from choreographers who volunteer their time and effort, to have a taste of Israeli evening dance sessions (Harkadot) and, of course, to participate in the Karmiel Festival. Our participants have come from countries as far as Japan, Taiwan, Australia, and New Zealand. Also from all over Europe: Finland, England, France, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Serbia, Romania, Hungary, Germany, Czech Republic, Italy and Turkey as well as from North and South America: Canada, USA, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina. Many of them return year after year, to quench their thirst for close contact with Israel's choreographers, to dance side by side with Israelis in evening Harkadot and to meet old friends and make new ones. To date, we have had more than 300 participants. These are our best ambassadors. They go back to their countries and spread the love for Israel and their

knowledge of Israeli Folk Dance, thus making it a very popular activity and enriching Jewish culture in their congregations. The certificate they receive at the end of the course enables them to become IFD teachers and leaders in their communities abroad.

The Karmiel Dance Festival administration, its administrative director, **Aharon Solomon**, and its artistic director, **Shlomo Maman**, have been instrumental and helpful in this worthwhile project and have partially subsidized it both financially and physically. However, most of the financial burden falls on the participants themselves. Many are young IFD leaders from South America and Eastern Europe who struggle to obtain the means and depend on scholarships to assist them. Two years ago, a scholarship fund for the Karmiel Summer course was established and a few generous donations have helped several participants. Donations will be gratefully accepted. Please contact **Debbie Meitin** by e-mail at dmeitin@cfl.rr.com if you wish to be a sponsor through the scholarship fund.

The course participants have enjoyed the many choreographers who have donated their time and who have come to teach. To date we've had: **Avi Amsalem, Avi Levi, Avi Peretz, Avner Naim, Boni Piha, David Ben-Naim, Dudu Barzilai, Eli Segal, Eliyahu Gamliel, Eran Biton, Eyal Eliyahu, Eyal Ozeri, Gadi Biton, Israel Yakovee, Levi Bar-Gil, Meir Shem-Tov, Moshe Telem, Moshe "Moshiko" Itzchak-Halevy, Moti Alfassy Z"L, Rafi Ziv, Roni Siman-Tov, Seadia Amishai, Sagi Azran, Sefi Aviv, Shlomo Maman, Shmulik Gov-Ari, Victor Gabai, Yankale Levi, Yaron Alfassy, Yaron Ben-Simchon, Yaron Malichi, Israel Shabtai and Israel Shiker.**

The course participants have sent feedback and here are some comments. **Alex Huber** writes: "As a 3 year veteran of the Summer Course for



Shlomo Maman teaching

foreign teachers and students, I found it to be the best way to participate in the Karmiel Festival festivities. The first 7 days were spent getting immersed in Israeli Folk Dancing i.e., learning the signature dances from the best teachers and choreographers; learning different styles; learning about the global phenomenon called Israeli Folk Dancing, and nightly, at the most famous and high energy dance sessions all over Israel, getting to practice what we learned during the day and more. As a reward – for dessert for being prepared for 7 days – we get to fully, and completely participate in the entire Karmiel Festival without having to concern oneself

with room and board. Some [participants] have actually gotten to perform on stage, either at the dance competition or at the finale of the festival. These 10 days of IFD celebration for \$950.00 is a steal when compared to other dance camps around the world!!!”

Lili Rose and Rita Blint from “Machol [Israeli Dancing Club]” in Melbourne, Australia, who will be joining us this summer for the third time, had some interesting comments: “We are always looking for somewhere in the world to dance over our winter in Australia and where the climate is warm/hot. Not only is Israel the perfect choice but it allows us the possibility of indulging in Israeli dancing which is our passion. We love the course and meeting the participants who travel from all parts the world to become like a family for 10 days dancing, eating, sleeping and just following what we all love to do-dancing. We get to meet the creators of many of our favorite dances and speak with them and learn with them in a unique closed classroom where the intensity of getting steps right is mixed in with laughter and humor and fluctuations in temperature from the hot sticky outside to the absolutely freezing entry into an air conditioned studio - where once the group starts dancing seems to heat up so quickly (probably from all the enthusiasm). The food is always first class and delicious, plentiful and kosher and vegetarians are catered provided. Pulling together to make all the time scheduling work is challenging and the transportation to various dance venues all over the country with buses is organized and the possibility to dance



Foreign Teachers with Rafi Ziv

every night and all day is appreciated. We come back for more and bring others with us. It is an Israeli dancing experience not to be missed. The accommodations can be quite rough - not the Karmiel Absorption Centre which is lovely - but other places where the horsehair mattresses and cold showers have you wondering about your motivations. But it is all part of the Israeli experience. Dancing on the beach at night in Haifa, the marathon before Karmiel, the sense of belonging, coming from the other side of the world and getting out on that dance floor and dancing the same dances and together is a fantastic wonderful happy feeling. Actually, for us now, it is like coming home when we come back to Israel. Thanks Dany and Ruthy for making the Karmiel Summer Course one of the highlights of our dancing life that we look forward to and remember with such fondness. It's the laughter, the heat, the dancing, the

characters you meet, the whole mix that makes Karmiel/Israel so special. If you haven't been yet, then you are missing out."

In an interview, the artistic director of the Karmiel Festival, **Shlomo Maman** said that he was an enthusiastic supporter of the course since its inception ten years ago. Maman labels this project, "An Israeli Folk Dance Camp," like the folk dance camps abroad, and adds that this is the ultimate camp in its importance. Shlomo explains that the unique importance of the course comes from the direct interaction between the participants and the choreographers. The participants come out of the course not only the best ambassadors of IFD in the world, but they go back to their communities with a higher added value of their experience and become more professional in their ability to share their knowledge. He praises highly the Israeli choreographers who volunteer their talent and give their time and knowledge to this important project.

Israel Yakovee, who comes to Karmiel every year, and has been teaching the course several times, has written with his very positive feedback from the perspective of the choreographer "... This is the course that every Israeli Folk Dance teacher and dancer in the world should come to Karmiel and take part in..."

2011 will celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Summer Course. We already have commitments from many participants from all over the globe to join us, and we invite you to come and take part in this unique experience or, in **Shlomo Maman's** words: "Israeli Folk dance at its best". It will be an unforgettable, fun and dynamic 10 days of non stop dancing, learning and networking with leading choreographers and with participants from world over.

See you this summer, July 4-15 2011

Shalom, and keep on dancing,

Dany Benschalom and Ruthy Slann



Saadia Amishay (in the centre) with Danny BenShalom (in the left)



ILAN

The Story Behind the Dance

Dance: **Elad Shtamer**
 Music: **Yochanan Shapiro**
 Lyrics: **Mekorot**

Ilawn*
 Ilawn, ilawn, ilawn
 Bamaw avorechewaw?
 Bamaw, bamaw,
 avorechewaw?
 Sheyihyu peiroysechaw
 mesukin?
 Harei peiroysechaw
 mesukin.
 Sheyehei tzilchaw
 naw'eh –
 Tzilchaw naw'eh.
 Harei tzilchaw naw'eh –
 Tzilchaw naw'eh.
 Ela, ela yehi ratzon
 Ela yehi ratzon.
 Shekaw! neti'os
 Shenot'im mimchaw –
 Yihiyu k'moyschaw.

* The song is sung with the Ashkenazi Hebrew pronunciation, and we have transliterated it as sung. The singer, **Yaakov Shwekey**, is an Orthodox Jewish American recording artist and performer. His father is of Egyptian and Syrian Sephardic heritage and his mother is from an Ashkenazic background.

About two years ago, I heard the song [Ilan] on **Yaakov Shwekey's** album, "Ad B'li Dai." Since I was immediately "hooked" by **Yochanan Shapiro's** music and the powerful arrangement, I decided to look into the meaning of the words. The lyrics are taken from the Babylonian Talmud Tractate Ta'anit, page 5 b.

In this Tractate, Rabbi Nachman asks Rabbi Yitzchak for his blessing before they part. Rabbi Yitzchak replies – Let me tell you a parable. A man was traveling in the desert. He was hungry, weary and thirsty and he came upon a tree whose fruits were sweet, its shade pleasant, and a stream of water flowed beneath it. He ate of its fruit, drank of the water, and rested under its shade. When he was about to leave, he said: Tree, O tree, with what shall I bless you? Shall I say, 'May your fruits be sweet'? They are sweet already. That your shade be pleasant? It is already pleasant. That a stream of water may flow beneath you? Lo, a stream of water already flows beneath you. Therefore I say, 'May it be G-d's will that all the shoots planted from you will be like you.' And so it is also with you. With what shall I bless you? With the knowledge of Torah? You already possess it. With riches? You are already rich. With children? You have children already. Hence I say, 'May it be G-d's will that your offspring be like you.'

This benediction turned out to be better than all the blessings. Through the dance, I tried to express the meaning of the words:

← The lyrics to the song are:

Part One: The forward and backward movements represent a tree swaying in the wind.

Part Two: The beginning of the dilemma – how will I bless the tree? We enter and retreat from the circle; we move from side to side and then turn in place searching for the appropriate benediction.

Part Three: Moving forward into the center of the circle while the hands are raised symbolizes growth and reflects the growth of other trees in response to the image of the blessed tree.

Part Four: Expresses the tranquility reached after the realization that he had found the ultimate blessing and he continues on his way.

Elad Shtamer, son of Elimelech z"l and Miriam, was born in 1984 in Haifa. At age 6, he began Israeli folk dance at school and also at his father's dance sessions. Once he developed a special interest in dance, he joined the performing dance group in school.

As a youngster, he danced for about 12 years in Lehakat Hamachol Hayitzugit Shel Iriyat Haifa, the municipal performing dance troupe of Haifa, under the artistic director **Barry Avidan**, which represented Israel at dance festivals abroad. He started to teach folk dance at age 13 in his father's dance sessions. Together they ran the dance sessions while his father provided guidance and taught him the secrets of the profession. After graduation from high-school, his father became ill and was no longer able to lead the dance sessions. At this time, Elad took over his father's dance sessions and ran them by himself.

When his father passed away, after Elad's military service, he decided to continue only with the traditional dance session held on Fridays at Sportan Haifa; this was where, twenty years before, he had taken his first dance steps. He chose to continue to maintain this particular dance session since he had been enchanted by the unique atmosphere created by "Dancing before Shabbat" and the special repertoire of dances that were done.

Today, Elad is still teaching at Sportan Haifa and he works collaboratively with Yaron Carmel in dance sessions in the Chof Ha'Carmel Regional Council as well as with **Gadi Bitton** in Kfar Saba and Tel Aviv. This is the reason why Elad is integrated into and works in rotation with the other dance instructors at the Sportek Herzliya, on Saturday workshops and at dance sessions abroad.

Elad explains that, from a very young age, he had the desire to create and two years ago he started to choreograph Israeli folk dances and to present them to the Israeli folk dance community. He graduated with honors from the Israeli folk dance course given at Tel Aviv University.

Singer: Yaakov Shwekey

Meter: 3/4

Formation: Circle, hands free

PART I Face CCW

1-3 Step R fwd, rock back onto L, step R fwd while raising arms forward with palms down.

4-6 Waltz step fwd with L,R,L while lowering arms.

7-12 Repeat 1-6.

13-15 Face center. With arms raised sideward, balance: R to rt., L behind R, R fwd in place.

16-18 L to left, R across L, back on L. [Pasa doble arms: Left arm is lifted on ct. 16, right arm crosses in front of the body on count 17.]

19-21 Full turn rt. with R,L,R moving CCW on the line of the circle.

22-24 L behind R, R to rt., L across R.

25-48 Face CCW: Repeat 1-24.

PART II Face Center.

1-3 Sway R-L, touch R heel fwd.

4-6 Step R fwd, rock back onto L, step R fwd.

7-9 Waltz step fwd to center with L,R,L.

10-12 ½ turn to rt. in place with R,L,R to end facing out of circle.

13-18 Repeat counts 7-12 and end facing center.

19-21 Moving into center: ½ turn to left with L,R,L to face out of circle.

22-24 With both arms raised overhead, make a 1-½ turn to rt. moving out of center with one waltz step R,L,R to end facing center. [The turn = step R to begin the turn, step L while pivoting on ball of left foot, step R.]

25-48 Repeat 1-24 with opposite footwork and turning to the direction of the free foot. (Sway L,R, etc.)

49-51 Sway R-L., close R next to left (no weight).

PART III Face Center

1-3 Step R to rt., L across R, step back in place on R.

4-6 Turn left on the line of the circle with a waltz step L,R,L.

7-12 Double tcherkessiya, with pasa double arms, beginning with R across L, step back in place on L, step R to right side and repeat movement to opposite side starting with L across R.

13-15 Moving into center: Step R fwd. Full turn left toward center with two steps L,R.

16-18 Continuing to move forward: Step L fwd. Step R across L, step L across R while raising arms above head with wrists crossed (tree image).

19-21 Balance: R to rt., L behind R, R fwd in place.

22-24 ½ turn left to left side with L,R,L to end facing out of circle.

25-48 With back to center, repeat 1-24 and end facing center.

PART IV Face Center.

1-3 Balance: R to rt., L behind R, R fwd in place.

4-6 Repeat counts 1-3 with opposite footwork and direction.

7-9 Sway R-L, touch R heel fwd.

10-12 Brush R fwd (10), around to rt. side while pivoting on L to face CCW (11), touch rt. toes slightly fwd of L (12).

In the second repetition of the dance:

Part III is done twice.

Part IV: Repeat counts 1-12 but bring R behind L and remain facing center.

Instructions notated by **Honey Goldfein** 

Tree
Tree, tree, o tree
With what shall I bless you?
With what, with what, shall
I bless you?
Shall I wish for your fruits to
be sweet?
Behold, your fruits are
sweet.
For your shade to be
pleasant?
Your shade is already
pleasant.
Behold, your shade is
pleasant –
Your shade is pleasant.
And so, may it be G-d's will
May it be G-d's will
That all the shoots
That are planted from you -
Will become just like you.

Song transliteration,
translation and text notes
by **Malka Tischler**

10 YEAR CELEBRATION AND REUNION 2002-2011

SUMMER COURSE

For Foreign Teachers and Dancers of Israeli Folk Dance



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המרכזים
הרביעוניים
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- Accommodation HB (camp style).
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- One day of sightseeing.
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- Every participant will get a one year membership in Rokdim Club with up to 50% discount on Rokdim products.
- Certificate of participation awarded.
- Schedule is tentative, and subject to change.

Course, accommodation & fees:

- \$950 (\$850 for returning participants).
- Fees include: 7 day course and 3 festival days, half board accommodations, transportation to and from airport as well as day/evening trips.
- Registration must be accompanied by a \$200 deposit and sent by **May 10, 2011**.

By bank transfer: Account name: "Amutat Festival"

To: Bank Hapoalim swift poalilit 12/747 Account: #504660

Address: Hagalil St. # 10 - Karmiel 20100

Or by special arrangement with Dany Benshalom

- Individual insurance is recommended.
- **A minimum of 25 participants is required for the course.**



Course Participants 2010

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