



Vol 114 | March 2024 | **VIP** Members

Jim Gold International Folk Tours 2024

Our trips are for folk dancers, non-dancers and anyone with a love of travel, culture, and adventure
www.jimgold.com

PERU with Nazca and Peruvian Amazon



May 22–June 3, 2024

Lima, Cusco, Machu Picchu, Puno, Sacred Valley, Lake Titicaca, Peruvian Amazon, Nazca extensions.

BULGARIA and Black Sea Coast



July 20-August 12

Sofia, Plovdiv, Bansko, Nessebar, Varna, Black Sea, Gela Folk Festival, Veliko Turnovo, Koprivshitsa Folk Festival.

IRELAND



August 3-15, 2024

Limerick, Galway, Connemara, Aran islands, Kerry, Cork, Blarney, Dublin.

GREECE



October 18-30, 2024

Athens, Nauplia, Sparta, Olympia, Delphi, Meteora, Thessaloniki.

**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

Email: jimgold@jimgold.com

Dear Readers,

In November 2023, magazine issue 113, we wrote:

The State of Israel – the entire nation of Israel, all over the world, has undergone severe trauma unprecedented since the Holocaust.

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

Indeed, the heavy feeling, the distress, the frustration, the rage and the feeling that this cannot continue. It all exists and burns inside of us.

We are trying to return to routines, but there is no "routine" when the hostages are still in Gaza (at the time of this publication – we hope that this will change soon).

Our friends abroad (outside of Israel), the dancers who identify with and support us with all their hearts and are experiencing the current wave of anti-Semitism, share in our pain.

Our classes and dance sessions (in Israel) have not returned to what they used to be, and who knows if they will return. The shadow of war and the hostages goes with us everywhere at every moment. This great crisis has led to many new dances that try to express what we have been through and are going through. What will remain of all this? Does everything really express something real or is there something else here?

In this issue:

- **"Follow Me = Copy-Paste"** about the new method of dance instruction, written by **Yaron Meishar**
- In **"Around the World"** we read about the activities of the **Stone** family in developing our Israeli folk dances in England and about their camp, "Machol Europa".
- A collection of great photos from the "Machol Europa" over the years, taken by **Mati Goldschmidt** in the article **"Cheers to Maurice and Susie Stone"**.
- **"A Man of Israeli Culture"**, written by **David Ben-Asher** who spoke with instructor and choreographer, **Roni Siman Tov**, the man who founded "Galgal Ba'Ma'agal – Wheel in a Circle," an esteemed choreographer and instructor.
- **The Dance of the Month** this time is "Mechakot" by **Michael Barzelai** who choreographed the dance in memory of **Yaniv Sarudi z"l**, who was murdered at the Nova party near Kibbutz Reim on October 7, 2023.
- **"Experiences Through the Eye of the Camera"** focuses on "Kmo Az – Like It Was Then", **Yaron Carmel's** nostalgia marathons.

Enjoy your reading,

Yaron Meishar, Ruth Goodman, Danny Uziel – Editors



Yaron Meishar



Ruth Goodman



Danny Uziel



Machol Europa 2010.
Performance workshop.
Photo:
Matti Goldschmidt



Vol. No. 114 | March 2024

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
Website: <http://www.rokdim.co.il>

SUBSCRIBE

The World of Jim Gold International

רוקדים
NIRKODA
מגזין לריקודי עם ומחול
Vol 114 | March 2024 | VIP Members

Jim Gold International Folk Tours 2024

Our trips are for folk dancers, non-dancers and anyone with a love of travel, culture, and adventure
www.jimgold.com

PERU with Nazca and Peruvian Amazon	BULGARIA and Black Sea Coast	IRELAND
 May 22-June 3, 2024 Lima, Cusco, Machu Picchu, Puno, Sacred Valley, Lake Titicaca, Peruvian Amazon, Nazca textensions.	 July 20-August 12 Sofia, Plovdiv, Bansko, Nessebar, Varna, Black Sea, Gola Folk Festival, Veliko Turnovo, Koprivshtitsa Folk Festival.	 August 3-15, 2024 Limerick, Galway, Connemara, Aran Islands, Kerry, Cork, Blarney, Dublin.

GREECE

October 18-30, 2024
Athens, Nauplia, Sparta, Olympia, Delphi, Meteora, Thessalonika.

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
Email: 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
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

מסלול את הרפ בביטוח ופיננסים (מאז 1978)



REGISTERED CHARITY
NUMBER 279801

Mechol Europa 2024

BOOK
INFO@IDI.ORG.UK
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 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



Yaron Meishar

Dancers don't have the patience to learn dances; therefore, many of them dance by "copy-paste".

Follow Me = Copy-Paste

Correctly "Calling" the Steps



Our permanent session, Tuesdays, Disengoff Center. To join the Group by Watsapp: <https://bit.ly/3EIHERI>

What dance will I teach this evening to the group that I lead?

This is a question facing every instructor two days, one day, and perhaps only two hours before the beginning of the session. What considerations does an instructor take into account when choosing what dance(s) to teach at the session?

- There is pressure from the dancers to teach the dance that was taught yesterday or the previous week at another dance session.
- Pressure from choreographers, who want the instructor to teach a dance today that they choreographed just "yesterday" or the previous week.
- I heard from other instructors that the dance caught on very well in their groups.
- I choreographed a new dance and I want to try it out on my community of dancers.
- "The majority wins". The dance is already being danced in many other places.
- The song is so pretty... (Have you tried to dance the dance? To understand the steps?).
- Your own understanding, as an instructor, of what's right for your group.

The last section is the important one, but it seems to me that in most cases, it's not in the place that it deserves. When I studied in an instructors' course in the seventies (then we were still called "instructors" and not "dance leaders"), we learned that the dance that we taught on a given week should be reviewed and retaught the following week as well. Maybe one of the dancers had missed a class, and even those who had learned it once could benefit from learning it again, making it more exact... who does that today?

There's no doubt that this is the correct way. I don't know if many of the instructors work this way today. I hope they still do. I know that some of them teach, in one evening, a circle dance and a couple dance. And if there's a need to review and re-teach a dance or two that were taught the previous week (as it should be), then we would have three or four breaks in the evening for instruction... and, as such, you don't get the chance to simply dance and enjoy.

Teaching Methods

a. The Old Method, the correct one

In the past a new dance was taught with great excitement, almost with reverence. A good amount of time was devoted to instruction and we repeated and polished the dance all the time. We never heard the instructor calm people down by saying: "Five more minutes and we're finished...", or "that's it! Another few steps... we are already at the end of the dance," or "two more minutes and we're done", or "just one more small section", and other such apologies, as if the dancers are suffering during the instruction and we must emphasize to them that the "suffering" is ending.

We learned and became familiar with the names of the steps and thus we had a "common language" with the instructor. The teaching was thorough. Each step or part of the dance was demonstrated once and sometimes even twice. Only after that were the dancers asked to dance, with the instructor and at a slower rhythm, the part of the dance that they had learned, after which they danced it faster.

The dancers tried to internalize the new steps, their proper order in dance, the overall structure of the dance – the division of the steps, the division into "verses" and the full structure – and in this way to learn and to remember the dance as it should be. And finally, after all the parts of the dance were learned, the full dance was **danced without music** accompanied by instruction. Where do we learn this way today?



Our permanent session, Tuesdays, Disengoff Center. To join the Group by Watsapp: <https://bit.ly/3EIHERI>

b. The New Method

Today, when the instructor demonstrates the part of the dance that he wants to teach, the dancers (impatiently) execute the steps with him/her even before they've actually seen them or understood the structure of the part [of the dance] that is supposed to be taught. So they aren't **learning**, they are **copying**.

Can one truly learn and internalize the steps of the dance, the general structure, the order of the parts this way? Of course not, but who cares?

Thus was born the "follow me" method and complete dances are danced through imitation.

Giving directions while the dance is an extremely important and assistive tool. Calling out the steps while actually doing them doesn't give the dancer the chance to be helped by instruction of this nature.

Calling the steps needs to be done so that the dancers will be led to the next step, to prepare them for what comes next.

Follow Me

The "follow me" method was born in the kindergartens. Someone wrote an entire "bible" based on imitation. The children don't learn rhythm, steps, parts of a dance and a whole dance. They learn "do as the teacher does" to see what he is doing and to imitate him. In my opinion, this is not the way to teach the younger generation, or anyone... but we'll leave the kindergartens for the moment.

Many dancers "spend" most of the evening of a dance session hastily copying others who may or may not know the dance as it should be danced... unfortunately I dance this way as well because I don't go out to dance every evening.

This is where the dance instructors come in. By "calling the steps" correctly, while dancing, they can help the dancers significantly. I know there are some instructors who do this correctly, but from my observations, many of them don't. Calling the steps needs to be done correctly. Giving directions while the dance is an extremely important and assistive tool. Calling out the steps while **actually doing them** doesn't give the dancer the chance to be helped by instruction of this nature. There's no opportunity to prepare and to execute the step if we describe what we are doing in real time, through actually doing it.

Counting out the rhythm (1,2,3,4...) and/or calling out "right, left, hold, right, left, right and again left, right" etc., doesn't really help the dancer. Most of the steps we use have names, and there is terminology that the dancers need to be familiar with and to understand. We should use this terminology.

When the instructor calls out "grapevine" while doing the steps, the dancers aren't actually using their brains and their thoughts to figure out what to do. They aren't internalizing the steps and their place within the complete composition of dance; rather, they are operating according to the "copy-paste" method. They won't learn to dance this way.

Calling the steps needs to be done so that the dancers will be led to the next step, to prepare them for what comes next.

"Grapevine" should be said in the "pause" just before the step is to be executed and not while it's physically being danced.



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



Yaron Meishar leads families "Harkada" at the Sharona Center in Tel Aviv



Dance sessions in the kindergarten

In this way the skilled dancers can dance without looking at the instructor, while their brains absorb what the instructor is saying and "broadcast" to their legs what needs to be done next. You can see this in the video here <https://bit.ly/4ceihTD>.

Questions that shouldn't be asked

There are dance instructors who ask questions of their dancers. These are unnecessary questions and were intended to help the instructors by giving them some breathing time to think about what they really want to say/to teach. Questions like: "Did you understand?" "Is it clear?" "Should I explain again?" "Who didn't understand? etc. These are totally unnecessary questions that shouldn't be asked. A professional dance instructor will observe all of his dancers and will see if most of them absorbed what he taught, or if he needs to repeat himself and teach the section again. Or maybe just practice it again. Or maybe just proceed further.

A good instructor sees all of his dancers and is able to decide how to continue. These questions produce (if any at all) many answers that the instructor is neither capable nor properly set to listen to.

The Terminology and the Language

And the language – oh the language... it isn't possible for a school teacher to say, for example, "I want four (using feminine grammar) boys to go to the blackboard". This is difficult to hear, or "do a search (using the English word "search" instead of the Hebrew word) on the internet to find the information. This isn't Hebrew! This is not how a teacher should speak to the students! We need to treat the profession of dance instruction with respect! It's not enough that the dancers understand the intention.

"Cha Cha" and "Mayim" are not correct technical terms. There are specific Hebrew terms that have evolved to

A professional dance instructor will observe all of his dancers and will see if most of them absorbed what he taught, or if he needs to repeat and teach the section again. Or maybe just practice it again. Or maybe just proceed further.

The field is moving into an instruction method of "follow me". This method needs to be taught and practiced. Unfortunately, many instructors don't know how to do this.

comprise the language of Israeli folk dance and are adapted to match terminologies in different languages. The names of the steps are important; the language of the instructor should be correct and clear.


We need to get a lot done

The need of the instructors (a totally imaginary need) to dance many dances at a weekly session leads to hurried instruction and to the use of the "do as I do" method. The pressure to do more dances has led to the shortening of the songs. In the past we danced each dance at least three times around, and if it was a short dance, we danced it more than three times. Today, after two times through the dance, most of the dancers stop... why? What's burning? Who's chasing us? Let us take the time to enjoy the song and the dance until they both end!

The method of a "dance medley", one dance attached to another, already exists. Each is danced only once with no introduction and no end. The instructor has to announce what the next attached dance will be.

With sarcastic humor I will suggest a much better method – a method that makes is possible to "dance" hundreds of dances in one session. Simply: listen to the musical introduction of each dance and immediately go on to the musical introduction of the next dance and then the next dance, and so on. This way you can dance many dances in one evening.

What do you think of the idea?

And now seriously, let's enjoy the song and dance to the end! Enjoy the togetherness because this is the secret of the magic of our Israeli folk dance culture. 



Yaron Meishar leads "Harkada" at the "Giborei Israel" primary school in Tel Aviv

With sarcastic humor I will suggest a much better method – a method that makes is possible to "dance" hundreds of dances in one session



Susy and Maurice Stone

My Israeli Dance Journey

Maurice Stone's story: Advancing Israeli Dance (IFD) in the United Kingdom



Susy and Maurice Stone wearing their British Empire Medals

*I have known **Maurice Stone** for many years. We are in regular contact. Maurice is very supportive of "Rokdim" and what I do, and I, for my part, help him as much as I can.*

Like all the dance camp organizers outside of Israel, Maurice also tries to bring well-known choreographers and bring new dances to the camps, because that is what attracts participant dancers. However, at the same time Maurice and the organization he founded promote two very important strategies that I have not encountered in other countries:

- A. A regular dance activity in Jewish schools in London, culminating in an annual meeting of all the schools on a concentrated dance day.*
- B. Dancers-instructors who come to "Machol Europa" at a subsidized price, or completely free of charge, in order to learn the dances and become dance messengers in their countries of origin.*

These two things have taught me to appreciate, respect and cherish Maurice Stone throughout the years.

Of course, I would love to read and know about other places that do such important things for Israeli dance.

Yaron Meishar, editor

Beginnings

My dance journey started when my father, who was then chairman of the Glasgow Zionist Organisation, persuaded me to attend the "Habonim" youth club at the age of 9. I did not want to go, but he insisted on depositing me at their door. Two hours later, when he returned to take me home, I did not want to leave. At the end of our Sunday meetings, the group used to come together to dance as we sang our repertoire of Israeli songs.

One Sunday, at age 11, as I returned from the swimming class for a bagel at the "Habonim Centre", the secretary – Mazkir – announced that "Habonim" was putting together an Israeli



Shlomo and Yuval at Moscow seminar with Adrian and Maurice from London

I read about dance camps with Israelis in the USA. In 1977 I decided to visit one to see if it could be replicated in the UK.

dance group to perform at an event, and he wanted the swimmers (3 boys) to join in because they needed more people. I joined the group that was then under the direction of **Dvorah Dittman**, a Hebrew teacher at the Jewish primary (elementary) school, Calderwood Lodge. The group attracted girls from the more religious Bnei Akiva youth movement, so my dance partner was the daughter of the Chazan – Cantor – from Giffnock Synagogue. I realised then how Israeli dance could bring people together from across the Jewish religious spectrum. Our 15 minutes of fame came when we were asked to appear on a Scottish Television programme. The Carmel Dancers, as we were called, went on to perform at Yom Ha'atzma'ut – Israeli Independence Day – events.

Although I didn't dance while I was a student at Glasgow University in 1972, things changed

when I transferred to McGill University in Montreal, Canada to do a master's degree. A flatmate told me about Sunday night dancing on the mountain in the middle of Montreal. This class, with **Sue Baxt** at **Hillel House**, reignited my interest in Israeli dance.

London

When I returned to the UK, I moved to London. With some Irish "Habonim" friends, led by **Jack Bloomfield**, we started a dance class at West Hampstead Synagogue. My girlfriend **Susy**, who later became my wife, was at that time the Student Director at Hillel House in Euston.

In 1973, with the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, the teachers of the student Israeli dance class returned to Israel and Susy invited us to move our class to Hillel House. We increased our repertoire by asking visiting Israelis or Americans to teach us a dance in return for a free night's accommodation!

We also established the "Hillel Dance troupe", which performed at prestigious venues like the Royal Festival Hall and Trafalgar Square. One of the highlight performances was at a Royal Air Force base near Reading for Israeli Air Force pilots at the end of their training.

1st Summer Camp

I had read about Israeli dance camps in the USA, and in 1977, I decided to visit one to see if it could be replicated in the UK. Unfortunately, **Fred Berk's** camp was cancelled that year because of illness. [He subsequently died in 1980.] Therefore, I went to **Moshe Eskayo's** International Folk Dance Camp in Upstate New York. Inspired by what I experienced, I decided to try an international dance camp in the UK.

An Armenian dance teacher, **Tom Bozgian**, had done a workshop with us, so in 1978 we invited him to our first "Israeli and International Dance Camp" together with **Moshiko Halevy**.

In 1980 we set up the Israeli Dance Institute as a UK charity to promote Israeli dance. This turned out to be a turning point which enabled us to fulfil a far wider vision for our activities.

They were joined by Israeli dance teachers from London, **Yossi Badihi** and **Lily Cohen**, as well as **Fiona Howarth**, who taught both Israeli and international folk dance. We had 42 participants.

Due to changes in the organisation, our early support from Hillel ended in 1980, so we set up the Israeli Dance Institute as a UK charity to promote Israeli dance. While we were disappointed at the time, this turned out to be a turning point which enabled us to fulfil a far wider vision for our activities.

Machol Europa

In the autumn of 1978, a dance teacher from Israel, **Moshe Telem**, who was on a visit to family in London, came to our class. He agreed to teach a dance and even extended his stay in London to enable him to teach again the following week. His popularity gave us the confidence to change our second dance camp into an "Israeli dance only" event, which it has remained ever since. Until Covid struck, Moshe attended and delighted us with his presence every year.

Over almost 50 years, Machol Europa has developed into a worldwide phenomenon with many well-known Israeli dance instructors and choreographers attending. In 1981, there were 103 participants. By 1986, we were attracting people from various countries including Australia, New Zealand, France, Holland, Sweden, Italy & Switzerland.

While Moshe Telem and Moshiko were our regular core teachers for many years, we constantly sought to broaden the repertoire of dances with various teachers. Invitees have included **Yankele Levy**, **Eliyahu Gamliel**, **Shlomo Maman**, **Israel Shiker**, **Shalom Hermon**, **Shoshana Kopelovitch**, **Menachem Menachem**, and **Dani Dassa**.

More recently, our regular teachers have been **Shmulik Gov-Ari** and Moshe Telem, although Moshe's active participation has now sadly ended after more than 40 years' contribution to



Machol Europa 2010 Performance workshop

our work. We are proud to have also nurtured new talents: notably **Marcello Marianoff**, **Yuval Tabashi** and **Ilai Szpiezak**. This we did through Machol Europa and through an arrangement where we have employed these young talents as Dance Development Directors with IDI-UK.

We are immensely proud of the part Machol Europa has played in spreading Israeli dance around the world.

At the beginning of the revival of Jewish life in the Former Soviet Union in 1989, President Gorbachev gave permission for "Faerlich", a



Maurice and Adrian (IDI Vice chairman) with Moshe, Moshiko, Dudu, Gadi, Shmulik and dancer at Machol Europa

We are immensely proud of the part Machol Europa has played in spreading Israeli dance around the world.



Rafi Ziv leading dancers at Machol Europa

Jewish ensemble from Lithuania, to attend the Maccabiah Games in Israel. Susy suggested that we could bring dancers from the ensemble to Machol. We managed to contact Maccabi Lithuania and arrange visas for **Anna Kravets** and **Oleg Ziskinder** to attend. We were then invited to send a team to a Chanukah seminar organised by "Faerlich" in Vilnius and so began our work with Jewish communities emerging or in distress.

We raised money from Jewish philanthropists to subsidise these participants, most of whom could not pay for their UK visas or flights. We introduced a three day 'pre-camp', with participants from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Belarus, Moldova, and Georgia staying with Jewish families in London. After the synagogue bombings in Turkey in 1986, we established strong links with the Jewish community there, with about 8 young leaders coming each summer. In 2013, we managed to invite our first participant from Cuba, sending her home with a suitcase full of Israeli dance materials, since Cuba had no access to our internet resources.

In 2023, in response to different needs, we changed the pre-seminar to provide intensive training with Dado Kraus and Shmulik Gov-Ari for those working with children and teenagers, and with stage choreography. We welcomed trainees from the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine, Georgia, Cuba, Brazil, Argentina, Spain, Romania, and the north of Israel.

This structure will be repeated for Machol Europa 2024 when our guest teachers will be **Shmulik Gov-Ari**, **Shlomo Maman**, **Tamir Scherzer**, **Gabo Mirkin**, **Yael Ya'akobi** and **Dado Kraus**.

University Campus Tour

Following the 1973 War, when Jewish students on university campuses in the UK were facing increased antisemitic and anti-Zionist activity, we decided to bring a dance teacher from Israel who would visit universities around the UK to conduct dance sessions, with an opportunity to speak to students about life in Israel. We needed someone who would share student accommodation and engage with them on a personal level. We chose Moshe Telem for the first campus tour in 1979. Moshiko Halevy came in 1981, and over the following years we invited **Menachem Menachem**, **Yoav Sidi**, **Noam Chaver**, **Yigal Triki**, **Ilan Givon**, **Gadi Bitton**, **Levi Bargil** and **Ra'anán Mor**. Although we have not done the tour for many years, the current situation on our campuses calls out for this kind of activity when the time is right.

*Nitzanim*

Spreading Israeli dance

By 1984, we had made contacts around the UK and in Europe and encouraged a network of classes in Liverpool, Leicester, Manchester, Redbridge, Cardiff, Nottingham, Oxford, Bristol, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Zurich, Stockholm and Paris. Of course, this depended on having local people who were happy to teach, some of whom are still involved today.

In 1985, we produced our first video of "Dances for Beginners" with an accompanying cassette and distributed it widely. We followed it up in 1986 with a second programme. We have gone on to develop many resources which, with the expansion of the internet, we have brought online.

Bringing new generations

When Susy became a teacher, and ultimately head teacher at a successful Jewish Elementary School in London, she inspired me to expand our work in dance to children in Jewish schools.

In the early 1980's, I read about **Hilda Smolash**, who had successfully introduced Israeli dance for children in Quebec and other parts of Canada. In October 1984, we invited her to visit elementary schools in London, Manchester and Liverpool. In 1985 in Israel, I met **Raya Spivak** who had inspired Hilda. Raya would have a profound impact on our approach to working with children. In March 1986, we arranged for her to come to the UK to teach in Jewish elementary schools in Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and London.

In 1987, we received the Chief Rabbi's Award for Excellence for our work in Jewish schools.

Working initially with Raya Spivak, and her late husband, **Yossi**, and for the last 15 years with **Yael Ya'akobi**, we have developed our work with children into teachers' seminars and an annual Children's Dance Festival, where children from several elementary schools, joined by their parents, dance together a repertoire learnt at school.

Before the Covid pandemic, we were working with 24 Jewish elementary schools across the UK with an average attendance of 400 children, including schools where many of the pupils are no longer Jewish. We also have a Festival for Early Years (children aged 5 to 7) which we hold in the schools. In 2023 we visited 10 schools in 5 days with more than 1,000 children participating.

We have also developed a unique online programme of children's dances for the Chagim – the Jewish Holidays, which we adapted during the pandemic to support the wellbeing of families celebrating the Jewish festivals in lockdown.

*Oranim at Karmiel Festival*

Before the Covid pandemic, we were working with 24 Jewish elementary schools across the UK with an average attendance of 400 children, including schools where many of the pupils are no longer Jewish.

Oranim has represented the UK Jewish Community at many inter-faith events and has participated in many Jewish communal events, recruiting and developing its members over many years.



Oranim performing Barry Avidan's tambourine dance

Harkadot

Our original group met at Hillel House in Euston, London from 1973 to 1986. Then we moved to the Habonim-Dror Youth Centre on Finchley Road. Since "Habonim" closed, we have met in different schools in northwest London.

Over the years our Dance Development Managers, **Marcelo Marianoff**, **Yuval Tabashi** and **Ilai Szpiezak** have contributed to developing our Harkada and other activities. Yuval still comes once a year to work with Oranim.

The number of adults involved in the main Harkadot in London is now low, with all classes in London attracting no more than about 80 individuals per week. While lifestyle changes and the relationship of young people with Israel are just some of the factors that explain this, we continue to provide beginners classes and innovations such as online access to provide gateways for people to join our circle.

Performance dance

In 1982, our original performing group, the "Hillel Dancers" became "Oranim". "Oranim" has received choreographic input from **Shomo Maman**, **Moshiko**, **Shuki Hoffman**, **Dado Kraus**, **Yuval Tabashi**, and **Ilai Szpiezak**. It has represented the UK Jewish Community at many inter-faith events and has participated in many Jewish communal events, recruiting and developing its members over many years. During that time, we have also developed groups for children, teenagers and seniors.

There have been many milestones. In May 1984, Oranim won an award from the Greater London Arts Association and performed at the Shaw Theatre. In December 1985, Oranim performed for the Labour Friends of Israel at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton, and the following year at their event in the House of Commons (UK Parliament). In July 1986, we taught the actor **Richard Gere** to dance Yemenite steps for the film, "Life of King David". **Myer Rosen** and **Jonni Brill**, members of the live band who accompanied us then, were involved with the music production for the film. We also advised on **Yehoshua Sobol's** production of "Ghetto" at the National Theatre and for a Royal Shakespeare Company play.



Moshe Telem Instructing in London

programme included dances from a variety of nationalities including Caribbean, Israeli, Turkish, Kurdish, Greek, and Asian. The event was funded for 3 years only with subsequent years also including Polish and Scottish dancers.

Nurturing the Flame – bringing Israeli dance to emerging and distressed Jewish communities

The invite to “Faerlich” was the beginning of an outreach journey that we are still on. In December 1989, we held the first Israeli dance seminar in the former Soviet Union. People with Israeli passports were not given visas, so I travelled with **Anne Greenwood** and **Caroline Hoffbrand**. On the way back to London, through Moscow, we met **Chaim Topol** z”l, who agreed to become a patron of the Israeli Dance Institute.

From 1990, our work on this project was supported by the UK charity, World Jewish Relief, and the US Joint Distribution Committee. In July 1990, we invited “Faerlich” to the UK to perform, after which we went together to Israel where we appeared at the Karmiel Dance Festival, with “Oranim” and “Faerlich” performing a special dance together called “Balalaika” choreographed by Barry Avidan. It was a deeply moving moment for us all, as Jewish people in the FSU began to rediscover their identity.

In December 1990, at the end of a seminar with Raya & Yossi Spivak and Shlomo Maman, we were suddenly asked to leave the after party and go to the station to take the last train to Moscow. Russian tanks had arrived to invade Lithuania!

In January 1992, we went to Odessa with **Yigal Triki**, **Oren Halali**, **Anne Greenwood**, **Lisa Silverstein**, and **Pamela Glick (Amdurer)** z”l. At the seminar, we met **Julia Karcheschaya** z”l, who went on to support our work as education director for the JDC in Moscow. She was one of many wonderful people who have helped us to bring Israeli dance to communities worldwide.

In 1992, the Israeli Dance Institute received an award from the UK Parliament Soviet Jewry Committee for services to Soviet Jewry.

The seminars in 1993-95 were held in the Moscow area and then moved to Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities. One highlight was a children’s dance festival led by Raya Spivak in a military

In 1992, the Israeli Dance Institute received an award from the UK Parliament Soviet Jewry Committee for services to Soviet Jewry.

In 2019, I was awarded a British Empire Medal partly because of our work in reaching out to emerging or distressed Jewish communities, and for our work in promoting community cohesion in the UK through Israeli dance.

barracks. I need to make a special mention of the IDI Vice-chairman, **Adrian Andrusier**, who helped us with this project.

In 1999, we held the first Machol Hungaria with Raya & Yossi Spivak, Moshe Telem and Yaron Carmel. Although our involvement ended, the seminar continues until today mainly with Gadi Bitton. Other Machols across the world, not necessarily run by us, are a tribute to the brand that we are proud to have created!

The last seminar run in the former Soviet Union was in 2006. With no budget to enable us to continue, we have instead focused on raising funds in the UK to bring suitable candidates to Machol Europa.

Recognition

I have never sought any award or recognition for myself for my involvement in Israeli dance activities. My inspiration is Susy, who has encouraged me for over 40 years to indulge my passion with her educator's approach.

However, in 2019, I was awarded a British Empire Medal partly because of our work in reaching out to Jewish communities which are emerging or are in distress, and for our work in promoting community cohesion in the UK through Israeli dance.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to all the dance teachers from Israel who have contributed to the work of the IDI, inspiring both Jewish and other communities across the world.

Finally, we continue to raise funds to enable people to come from the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Turkey, Cuba, and South America to Machol Europa to enhance their teaching skills. If you go to <https://www.idi.org.uk> and click on "Our Work", you will see the testimonies from people who have benefited from our work. 🇺🇸





Matti Goldschmidt

Photographs:
Matti Goldschmidt

Translation:
Alex Huber

"Machol Europa" – Zionism in dance

Cheers to Maurice and Susie Stone

The Dance Camp "Machol Europa" is undoubtedly the oldest IFD dance camp in Europe. It seems that in the beginning no one believed or thought that such a camp would have such a great Zionist influence.

From 1989, dancing Jews from the countries of the former Soviet Union – Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia – and later also from other countries such as Turkey, Cuba and south America, were included in the "Machol Europa".

This mosaic made "Machol Europa" that has been taking place for almost 50 years, the largest international IFD camp in the world.

The organizers – **Maurice & Susan Stone**, had a tremendous impact on the development of

Israeli folk dances in Europe. There is no camp in this world (if I dare say) that combined so many dancers from dozens of countries all over the world, many of who continue to teach IFD dances in their countries of origin.

The Stone family's enterprise is a valuable Zionist enterprise. They operated an extensive financial system of donors that enabled dancers from low-income countries in Eastern Europe and South America to come learn new folk dances and specialize in the old ones in order to spread our folk dances to every corner of the globe. The Israeli folk dance community in the world salutes this important Zionist enterprise.

Warwick University



2017



2017



Dancers from Bulgaria and Turkey, 2012



Ofer Alfasi, 2012



The performance group 'Oranim', 2012

[Back to contents](#)



Drum session, 2018



Dancers from Lithuania and Latvia performing, 2017



An Yemenite performance, 2015



2018



2017



Moshe Telem, 2018



2018



Shmulik Gov-Ari giving a lecture, 2018

Participants performance with Dado Kraus and Ilai Szpiezak, 2013



2013

Bedford

Shlomo Maman and Uri Cohen z-l, 1996



10 out of 44 participants from Germany, 1996

Bath



Yuval Tabishi, 2010



Moshe Telem and Gadi Biton, 2010



Warming up before the class begins, 2010

Gloucestershire



Rafi Ziv, 2019



2004

Coventry



An improvised performance, 2008

Loughborough



2009

Loughborough



Naftali Chayat
Translation:
Dena Matmon

A Man of Israeli Culture



**Roni Siman Tov – Dancer,
Choreographer, Director,
Organizer, Producer, Manager**

Introduction:

I met with **Roni Siman Tov** at his home. I was surprised to learn that he and I were the same age, since, in Israeli folk dance, there was the sense that “he was always there”, because of the abundance of dances that he contributed to the folk dance community. It turns out that he choreographed his first dances at the age of 17 (Teivat Ha'Zimra: <https://bit.ly/3sUFc4a>), in 1983. While he was engaged in his artistic creations for the stage and the dance community, Roni also served as the chairperson of Irgun Ha'Markidim – the Dance Instructors Organization (of the Histadrut) for five years between 1999-2005.

For the past 35 years, Roni and his wife **Nira**, have been involved together in producing and directing performances as well as in artistic management and choreography – all while working with dance troupes (lehakot). After years of work with children, youth and adult lehakot, Roni started to work with lehakot that integrate dancers in wheelchairs with “standing” dancers. Among the lehakot that he instructed were Lehakat Beit Halochem in Tel Aviv and Lehakat ILAN in Rishon LeZion. But he is most proud of Lehakat “Galgal Ba'Ma'agal”, which has been operating under the auspices of the Herzliya Municipality for 25 years. This troupe also combines individuals in wheelchairs with dancers who stand next to them.



From the show "Laga'at Ba'Mayim, Laga'at Ba'Ru'ach - To Touch the Water, To Touch the Wind"

The Path to the World of Dance

Born in Givat Shmuel, Roni already started to dance at the age of 14 with the municipal dance troupe led by **Shalom Amar** z"l. At the age of 15, he was accepted into **Yonatan Karmon's** (z"l) troupe in Petah Tikva and he danced there for three years. During his military service, he moved to the Karmon-Jerusalem troupe. Roni describes his experience of meeting the well-known choreographer Yonatan Karmon and the many things he learned from him in his article in Karmon's memory: <https://bit.ly/3HERHoK>.

At age 17, Roni met his future wife, Nira, and in 1980 they together attended a marathon arranged by **Mira** and **Yoav Ashriel** z"l. The meeting between the two dancing couples developed into a long-standing friendship. Roni wrote about this in his article in Yoav Ashriel's memory: <https://bit.ly/3w38LSv>.

Choreographing Folk Dances

Yoav and Mira Ashriel, a special dance couple who arranged hishtalmuyot (workshops) for dance instructors, became Roni's mentors at the beginning of his journey as a choreographer. A few days after that marathon, Roni and Nira met with the Ashriels and showed them their dance, "Teivat HaZimra – Music Box" - Roni's first dance.

Yoav thought that the dance was too complex – "there are three dances here in one", he said. As a mentor, he helped to break down the dance, to give it structure and to "cook" (edit) the music, to fit the verse-chorus repetition structure to make it easier for the dancer. Yoav was a great believer in simplicity and he inculcated his ideas into many choreographers who knocked on his door so that their dances would be included into his hishtalmuyot that he conducted.

Yoav used to say that it's important to create "something simple and beautiful because a complicated dance won't be danced". To the couple's credit, it must be said that the Ashriels always nurtured as well as developed the young choreographers. At hishtalmuyot, Yoav took care to present

Roni as just another choreographer and made sure that he was judged by his dances and not by his age, which was difficult for some of the veteran choreographers to accept at first.

The lesson on "simplicity" was expressed in Roni's second dance – "Ahava P'Shuta – Simple Love". Roni himself asserts that when there's an idea and a connection to the music, the dance choreography is sometimes ready in minutes. That's what happened in this case.

But then came the dilemmas. Isn't it too simple? Maybe it should be made a little more complex? In the end, at Nira's suggestion, he left it in its original version. I think many will agree with me that "Ahava P'Shuta" became one of the most beloved and danced dances to this day. In contrast, the choreography for "Serenada L'Ada – Serenade for Ada" took longer. The song has a theatrical character and at the beginning it was difficult to express. But as time went on it came to him and the dance was quickly created.

Since then, Roni has created dozens of dances, both circle and partner dances. Many of them have become part of a permanent repertoire of dances in harkadot (dance sessions), among them: "Avre Tu", "Shir HaShayara (Song of the Convoy)", "Hakinor Hane'eman (The Faithful Violin)" "Shir Megaresh et Ha'Choshech (A Song Drives Away the Darkness)", Al Ha'ir



Nira, Yoav and Roni - Yoav's 80th birthday

"Yoav helped to break down the dance, to give it structure and to 'cook' (edit) the music, to fit the verse-chorus repetition structure to make it easier for the dancer".

"Yoav used to say that it's important to create 'something simple and beautiful because a complicated dance won't be danced'".

Afot Yonim (Doves Fly Over the City"), "Libeinu Lalaila (Our Hearts at Night); "Imri Li Ahuva (Tell me, Love)", "Ha'Ahava Ha'Yeshana (The Old Love)", and many others.

Here is a list of all of Roni's dances which appear on the Rokdim website: <https://bit.ly/3HBeHEY>

Roni notes that he always prefers classic Israeli songs and music, but having said that, he had no qualms and inserted new styles into Israeli folk dances. Thus, "Kayitz al Ha'ir (Summer on the City)" was the first tango in Israeli folk dances and "Masa Ben Kochavim (A Journey Between the Stars)' was the first representation of rock n' roll rhythm.

During his most fruitful creative period and, as one who choreographed many dances in special styles, Roni was invited many times to participate in dance camps abroad, primarily in the United States and in Europe. These camps, despite its connotation as a nickname, were a meeting place for dancers and instructors from all over the world, mainly, but not exclusively comprised of Jews.

These camps fostered collaborations and connections, some of which continue to this day.

This subject led me to ask a question that comes up often among the dancers: What is the place of nostalgia in relation to new dances? In Roni's opinion, the field of folk dance is constantly renewing itself and it is not appropriate to restrict the repertoire to some specific year. On the other hand, the instructor needs to be attentive to his audience, its age group, its background, its preferences and its level of fitness. The characteristics of the group should guide the instructor as to whether to place an emphasis on old dances based on classic Eretz Israel songs or on newer dances. Should "running step dances" be included in the repertoire or should one place an emphasis on more relaxed dances? The instructor should use discretion and choose a dance repertoire based on an artistic viewpoint and not just because "people are dancing it elsewhere".

In Roni's opinion, the fact that today "everyone is a choreographer" has caused a situation where many dances aren't properly constructed. Some even "interfere with the song", don't fit the spirit of the song or "break the holding of hands". The simplicity is thus lost and there is excessive pursuit of originality and new steps.

In retrospect, Roni is comfortable with the entirety of his choreographies. To my question – "From the perspective of time, are there dances that you would give up on?" – he answered: "No! Because each dance was right for its time. However, there are dances whose continued success surprises me, such as "Hapilpel – The Hot Pepper", which is still being danced fairly often even today".



Performance at Beit HaNassi



Roni is given a bouquet at the end of the performance "Zionism and Art"

"The fact that today 'everyone is a choreographer' has caused a situation where many dances aren't properly constructed. Some even 'interfere with the song', don't fit the spirit of the song or 'break the holding of hands'".

From the beginning of his career in the 1980s and until the beginning of the 2000s, Roni continued to choreograph dances such as "Imri Li Ahuva", "Libeinu LaLaila", "Ha'ahava Ha'Yeshana", "Tzchokam Shel Yeladim", and more. In the complete list of his choreographies there are some 20 circle dances and about 25 partner dances.

I was curious about why he stopped choreographing folk dances, and Roni explained: "Mostly I had had it with the "marketing" work that accompanies each dance. Promoting a new dance and getting

it into the repertoire required visiting different harkadot (dance sessions) and was involved with too much politics among the instructors. There were many cases in which the instructor was pleased to invite me but didn't back it up with his commitment or investment [of time] to learn the dance and continue to play and promote it."

Looking back, Roni can point to two main problems that occurred in the field of folk dance starting in the year 2000. The first is the fact that every instructor or even a dancer started to put together three steps and call it a dance. This caused a flooding of Israeli folk dancing with a significant number of dances. This doesn't even include the fact that beautiful and good songs were pushed out of the repertoire solely due to the fact that the dance wasn't properly constructed.

The flood of dances that hit the market without being vetted through hishtalmuyot or the critique of someone with experience, placed another obstacle before the instructors: a dance is taught one week and the following week must include a review of the dance. This means that two new dances are taught every month. But in a "flood" situation, the instructor is unable to discern the quality of the dance, to teach it properly, to go over it; he therefore collapses under the pressure of the dancers and teaches more and more... The result: many dances are removed from the repertoire too quickly, including really good dances.

Another problem that arose is the fact that the Instructors Organization (Irgun HaMarkidim), at a certain point, allowed every choreographer of a dance to register songs "on his/her account" to which he/she intended to choreograph a dance before even choreographing a dance to that song. So began an unfair competition of expedited registration of reserved songs in the bank, and the result was a drop in the quality of the dances or an excessive focus on a specific choreographer; this led many veteran choreographers to decline to participate in this "crazy race" and to retire from the joy of creation.

Even **Yaron Meishar**, in his films for the "Rokdim" website, sees himself as a documentarian and not as an examiner of new dances. So, under the current circumstances, perhaps it would be appropriate to consider establishing a committee that would filter the content a bit without infringing on artistic freedom.

For the above reasons, Roni chose to focus on his work as a director and choreographer for the stage and lehakot (performing groups). The only exception is the dance "Shir L'Ashriel", choreographed in 2016 as a tribute to Yoav Ashriel on the occasion of his 80th birthday.

"In a 'flood' situation, the instructor is unable to discern the quality of the dance, to teach it properly, to go over it; he therefore collapses under the pressure of the dancers and teaches more and more..."

Instructor and Chairperson of Irgun HaMadrichim – the Instructors Organization

As soon as Roni completed his military service, he began instructing dance sessions. He led groups in Savyon, in Kiryat Ono and in Yahud, activities that continued until the outbreak of the COVID pandemic. His most outstanding period of activity was between 1999 and 2005, the period in which he was head of the Choreographers and Instructors Organization (Igun Ha'Choreoraphim Ve'Ha'Markidim).

As head of the organization, Roni worked on several fronts. He worked to clear up relations between the organization, AKUM and federations, with the understanding that folk dances are an inseparable part of Israeli cultural heritage. During his tenure, Roni worked to organize 5-6 annual hishtalmuyot for instructors under the auspices of the Irgun, including subsidizing the price of participation and cooperation with Yaron Meishar to produce instruction booklets and CDs for the hishtalmuyot.



From the dance "He Rak Rotza Lirkod - She Just Wants to Dance"

He also advanced the project of "Batei Sefer Rokdim" together with Yael Mero (who was then a senior supervisor in the Ministry of Education and later active in CIOFF, the International Folklore Association). In addition, he worked to raise the prestige of the instructors at the Karmiel Festival, raised funds for them for festival productions, for travel expenses and for proper management. In Roni's opinion, the Organization must "have the back of the instructor".

Among other things, he arranged for workshops and instruction days, not just vis-à-vis dances, but also addressing pedagogical subjects such as interaction with an audience and methodology of instruction.

The field of professional ethics is also very important. One must respect professional colleagues, avoid causing loss of income by not running dance sessions for free, and engage in fair competition. There should be a differentiation between an instructor and a dance leader, between a club and a dance session. The instructor, as opposed to the dance leader, must be equipped with pedagogical skills as he is teaching other people and serves as a role model.

Beyond this, Roni is well aware of the difficulty and uncertainty concerning income that is dependent on teaching folk dance. He therefore recommends that instructors have an additional job and income. Thus, during the period of COVID, when all sessions, clubs and troupes were closed, Roni received the proper certifications and started to work as an insurance assessor.

Dances, Food and Relationships

Roni considers folk dancing to be a multi-faceted activity, which includes social mingling, sport, community ties, and even establishing a family. As chairperson of the Organization he initiated a campaign with the slogan, "All the People in Folk Dance – Folk Dancing is the National Sport". He even distributed stickers to be placed on cars. He laments the stigma of negative social interaction



From the dance "The Troops"



From the dance "The Troops"

in folk dancing and prefers to focus on the positive side of the field – social connections that sometimes also lead to pairings and the emergence of stable relationships, and even weddings. That's how, by the way, he himself met his wife Nira.

This conversation led to the subject of couples for life who also dance together. Roni mentioned that often you can see wonderful harmony between them. But in some cases, dance partners who are also couples for life bring their tensions from home to the dance floor

and permit themselves to criticize one another in a way that wouldn't be done with a stranger. In such cases, a lot of tolerance is needed and a realization that some couples just don't have the same dance ability. If they are honest with each other and have enough understanding and mutual respect, it can be more easily accepted that they will both dance, just not with each other.

Another phenomenon that Roni noted in dance sessions is the whole concept of refreshments, or in his words "catering". Everyone likes to eat, but this is not the right place for it. The focus should remain on the dance session.

Youth, Youth

We talked about the future of folk dancing in light of the advancing age of the dancing population and the lack of younger dancers. From his perspective of many years of work with troupes and with youth, Roni noted that very few graduates of dance troupes go on to attend folk dance sessions. In his opinion, there should be an investment in marketing folk dancing to youth. For example, to combat the image of dancers as "nerds" and to draw them in by using more contemporary songs and music, even using old and familiar dances with up-to-date music (as is often done at Purim dance sessions). When the first obstacle is overcome, one can connect them to the history and the origins. Emphasis can be put on the social advantages, for example, the chance to break down social barriers between boys and girls and to dance together holding hands.

Production and Stage Direction

Roni's main activity today is in the field of staging and producing events within the framework of the "Niron Productions" Company, which he founded together with his wife, Nira, more than 30 years ago. The company engages in a wide range of productions for institutions and for individuals, starting with community building days, marking holidays and festive events, as well as artistic management and actual direction of onstage performances featuring a combination of artists, dance troupes, and other professionals.

For two decades Roni managed and directed dance troupes in various locations (Ben Shemen Youth Village, Modi'in, Beit Aryeh, Lev HaSharon, Drom HaSharon, Ramat Efal, Ra'anana), with a wide range of age groups: children, youth and adults, and several dance styles – folk, hip-hop, funk.

His greatest pride lies specifically in his work with physically handicapped people and those in wheelchairs. For 17 years he worked with the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) Disabled Veterans Organization, including a musical production for them with many participants.

Roni is well aware of the difficulty and uncertainty concerning income that is dependent on teaching folk dance. He therefore recommends that instructors have an additional job and income.

This was presented on the best and largest stages around the country. At the same time, Roni invested in the advancement of the "Galgal Ba'Ma'agal – Wheel in a Circle" troupe, sponsored by the Herzliya Municipality for the last 25 years and today is considered the leading troupe in its field.

There are 12 couples in the Galgal Ba'Ma'agal troupe – one dancer sits in a wheelchair and his/her partner stands next to him/her. The troupe works on a varied repertoire and performs at different types of events including at assemblies in schools around the country. The message they bring is "different but equal". In recent years the troupe has been a permanent part of the central performances of the Karmiel and Ashdod festivals. The troupe also participated in international festivals and performed in many places around the world, among them Brazil, the United States and throughout Europe.

In 2017, the troupe even took part in the Celebrate Israel Parade on Fifth Avenue in New York City, along with the Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations and many other dignitaries.

Roni emphasizes that, in his work with this troupe, he relates to all the participants as dancers, and not as handicapped or people with limitations. The emphasis is on the professional and artistic work, but it's integrated with social activity. From his viewpoint as a choreographer, Roni focuses most of his energies on achieving an artistic outcome. The choreography obviously takes into consideration the physical limitations of some of the dancers, but with time and practice the bar is set higher each time. The wheelchair is not treated as a limitation; rather it is integrated into the choreography as a prop. Roni's choreographies focus more on the upper body, on hand and head work, on mimicry and strengthening the connection between the person sitting and the person standing. He constructs his dances for this troupe to suit the style of the music and makes sure that the message of his creation is supported by a matching costume.

Together we watched part of the last performance of the troupe, "Zionism and Art", and it was indeed impressive how Roni's approach is applied in practice: putting a regular chair next to a wheelchair as part of the choreography; taking advantage of the natural grading between those seated and those standing to create a visual effect; an appropriate use of the colors of costumes and the addition of accessories. This was an impressive performance on every level, and I am sure that the work of this troupe is a source of empowerment for everyone involved.

In conclusion I want to say that I was very happy to meet such a multi-faceted person as Roni Siman Tov – a dancer, choreographer, stage director, organization manager, producer and director, a man of Israeli culture. I hope I succeeded in sharing my impression of Roni, so many of whose dances we love and dance. 🙌



The finale of "The Troops" dance



Michael Barzelai

Dance of the Month

Mechakot (Waiting) – HaBalada LaMechakot (The Ballad for the Women Who Are Waiting)



Michael Barzelai, 35, lives in Or Akiva and is the father of 6-year-old **Danielle**. He started to dance at the age of 8 with **Itzik Ben Ami** in Kiryat Haim, following in the footsteps of his mother, who danced there.

As a child he also danced with **Dede Lusky**, **Yossi Peretz** and **Chanan Dadon**. Already at age 13 he started to learn how to edit music and especially music for dance. He was encouraged and guided by Dede Lusky.

He continued to dance as he grew older, during his high school years and his military service as well as during the time of his academic studies. During his military service he substituted for various instructors at different dance sessions, and after that, in 2010, he experimented with professional dance for a year – while he worked with **Elad Perel** at the Technion dance session in Haifa.

Later on, he had the opportunity to collaborate with well-known choreographers such as **Yaron Carmel**, **Ohad Atia** and others. As a dancer, he always enjoyed the challenge of folk dancing, always wanted to learn more dances and more styles. Even now Michael travels at every opportunity to marathons and dance festivals, in order to dance a broad variety of dances.

He choreographed his first dance in 2015 to the song “Ima - Mother”, originally by **Nisim Sarusi** and then updated by **Harel Moyal**. The dance is called “Ima Sheli – My Mother”: <https://bit.ly/3SCzL41>.

In the summer of 2015, at the initiative and with the support of two friends, **Chen Shporen** and **Ohad Atia**, Michael traveled for the first time to teach his dances and those of other choreographers at Gvanim Camp in the United States. While there he taught the dance “La Trompeta”, to trumpet music played by the Israeli trumpeter **Arik Davidov**.

Since then Michael has choreographed many





dances which are danced in Israel and around the world. His dances can be found on the Rokdim website: <https://bit.ly/3UaairES>.

The last dance taught in Israel and abroad is "Mechakot – Waiting", words and music by **Tsilil Kalifi, Mor Sasson and Narkis Reuven**.

The song, whose original name is "HaBalada LaMechakot – The Ballad for the Women Who Are Waiting", is sung by the songstress **Narkis (Narkis Reuven)**.

About the Dance:

The background to the choreography of this dance is very special: On the 7th of

October, 2023 a catastrophe happened here. The mass terror attack by Hamas from Gaza hit the Gaza Envelope settlements and the Nova Festival; many children, youth and adults were murdered. Among those murdered was **Yaniv Sarudi z"l**, brother of **Nofar Sarudi**, a close friend of mine, who dances at our dance sessions. Nofar requested that her brother Yaniv's death should be commemorated with a dance, so that she could have a personal memory of him – the world of dance that she so loves.

I was happy to fulfill her request and searched for a suitable song. I sent Nofar several possible songs that seemed right to use for a dance, and she finally chose "HaBalada LaMechakot – The Ballad for the Women Who Are Waiting". It completely filled the way she felt, and this is what she chose.

The song was registered to my good friend **Sharon Elkaslassy** (who introduced this song to me) and he agreed to release the song so that we could choreograph a dance in memory of Yaniv.

The dance was debuted 30 days after the horrific attack and was immediately taught at dance sessions in Israel and all over the world. Many dancers and instructors wrote to me to say how much the dance, as well as the song, touched them, and helped them return to dancing because it became a bridge between the world of dance and the memory of the terrible massacre. These reactions touched me emotionally and made me feel at peace with creating a dance in a period that wasn't in the least trivial.

As always, I tried to create a connection between the steps of the dance and the words of the song. For example: In the first part: "Good night to all those waiting for the light of the moon" / "Put your head down but there's no one to lean on" – in the dance we do a "balance" step when we lower our heads, as an expression of waiting, or perhaps leaning. This is immediately followed by looking up and waving an arm toward "the light of the moon".

In part 2: moving from side to side and swinging hands, to express searching and yearning for the return of the loved one for whom we wait.

In part 3: "I fell to the sky, I couldn't go up" – you go down and then you slowly climb upward.

And at the end of part 3, you place your left hand on your heart, then you turn left and throw out your arm and finally both hands return to the heart. This ending expresses the search of the speaker's heart and all of us as well for comfort and warmth following our loss.

Video of the dance: <https://bit.ly/4b7mJmr>

Mechakot – Dance Notation

Meter: 4/4

Formation: Circle

Part A: Face CCW

- 1-2 Step R fwd, touch L toes next to R.
- 3-4 Step L fwd, touch R toes next to L and pivot on L to left to end facing center.
- 5-8 Moving CCW: Step R to rt. side, L behind R, R to rt. side, L across R.
- 9-12 Step R to rt. side, hold, step L behind R facing slightly to the left (CW) and bending fwd, step R fwd (CW).
- 13-16 Step L fwd while straightening the body, hold, step R fwd while raising rt. arm upward, step back in place on L pivoting rt. to end facing CCW.
- 17-32 Repeat counts 1-16 (Part A) but end facing center.

Transition: Face Center

- 1-4 Yem. R and pivot rt. to face CCW.
- 5-8 Three steps fwd on the line of the circle: L,R,L.
- 9-16 Repeat counts 1-8 (Transition).

Part B: Face Center

- 1-4 Starting with R, open mayim on line of the circle: side, behind, side in front.
- 5-8 Step R to rt. while raising arms to rt., hold, turn to the left with L,R moving left on the line of the circle.
- 9-16 Repeat counts 1-8 with opposite footwork and direction.
- 17-20 Moving toward center of the circle: Step R fwd and face CCW, brush L to left toward center, step L to left, R behind left.
- 21-24 Step L to left and pivot left to face CW, brush R to rt. toward center, step R to rt., L behind R and face center.
- 25-28 Step R fwd, L fwd while bending fwd, step R bwd while straightening body and raising arms, hold.
- 29-32 Three steps bwd toward the line of the circle: (lowering arms to sides), hold.

On the 7th of October, 2023 a catastrophe happened here. The mass terror attack by Hamas from Gaza hit the Gaza Envelope settlements and the Nova Festival; many children, youth and adults were murdered. Among those murdered was Yaniv Sarudi z"l, brother of Nofar Sarudi, a close friend of mine, who dances at our dance sessions

- 33-64 Repeat counts 1-32 (Part B).

Part C: Face Center

- 1-4 Three steps moving in an arc on the line of the circle to end facing out: R,L,R. Hold.
- 5-8 Tcherkessia step rocking fwd and bwd on R while bending fwd: R fwd, L bwd in place, R bwd, L fwd in place.
- 9-12 Straighten body and move in an arc out of center and to the left to end facing center with three steps: L,R,L. Hold.
- 13-16 Moving toward center with three steps fwd: R,L,R while moving arms in a circular motion upward, hold.
- 17-20 Yem. L while placing left hand on chest.
- 21-24 Moving out of center with three steps bwd: R,L,R. Hold.
- 25-28 Turn left with three steps: L,R,L while extending left hand to left and end facing center.
- 29-32 Step R to rt. opening rt. arm to rt. side, step L in place, close R to L while bringing hands together (rt. palm over left) on chest at heart.
- 33-64 Repeat counts 1-32 (Part C).

Instructions notated by **Honey Goldfein**



HaBalada LaMechakot – The Ballad for the Women Who Are Waiting

Music: Tslil Kalifi, Mor Sasson

Lyrics: Narkis Reuven, Tslil Kalifi, Mor Sasson

Singer: Narkis Reuven

Transliteration:

Laila tov lekol hamechkot le'or yare'ach
Chalomot tovim ve'lo li'dog, ze yavo

Hayayin meshaker li
Ose li lekavot

Veshuv lo hayita badelet
Veshuv hitarganti sha'ot
Hayita sho'el oti, ma balev sheli, ma balev
sheli hayom

Ve'eich lo rartzita lishmo'a
Ve'ecih lo ratzita lir'ot
Ma balev sheli, ma balev sheli, ma bo'er
etzli betoch

Laila tov lekol mi she'kamoni lo nirdemet
Sama et ha'rosh ve'ein al mi le'hisha'en

Tagid li ma yihiye iti
Ma yihiye basof

Veshuv lo hayita badelet
Veshuv hitarganti sha'ot
Hayita sho'el oti, ma balev sheli, ma balev
sheli hayom
Ve'eich lo rartzita lishmo'a
Ve'ecih lo ratzita lir'ot
Ma balev sheli, ma balev sheli, ma bo'er
etzli betoch

Nafalti lashamayim lo hitzlachti la'alot
Im ata me'ir ta'dma'ot sheli
Lama be'sha'a kazot?
Atzamti ta'einayim vebikashti ba'tfilot
Hayita sho'el oti, ma balev sheli, ma balev
sheli hayom
Hayita sho'el oti, ma balev sheli, ma balev
sheli hayom



The dance was debuted 30 days after the horrific attack and was immediately taught at dance sessions in Israel and all over the world. Many dancers and instructors wrote to me to say how much the dance, as well as the song, touched them, and helped them return to dancing because it became a bridge between the world of dance and the memory of the terrible massacre.



HaBalada LaMechakot – The Ballad for the Women Who Are Waiting

Translation

Good night to all those waiting in the
moonlight
Good dreams and do not worry, it will
come

The wine lies to me
Makes me hope...

And again, you weren't at the door
And again, I prepared myself for hours
You would ask me, "What's in my heart?
What's in my heart today?"
And how you didn't want to hear
And how you didn't want to see
What's in my heart, what's in my heart,
what's burning inside me

Good night to everyone who, like me,
doesn't fall asleep
Put my head down and there's no one to
lean on

Tell me what will happen to me
What will happen in the end?

And again, you weren't at the door
And again, I prepared myself for hours
You would ask me, "What's in my heart?
What's in my heart today?"
And how you didn't want to hear
And how you didn't want to see
What's in my heart, what's in my heart,
what's burning inside me?

I fell to the sky, I couldn't rise up
If you wake my tears, why at this hour?
I closed my eyes and asked in prayers
You would ask me, "What's in my heart?
What's in my heart today?"
You would ask me, "What's in my heart?
What's in my heart today?"

Lyrics transliterated and translated by **Ruth
Goodman and Benny Levy**

Experiences Through the Eye of the Camera



Yaron Carmel

Translation: Dena Matmon

“Kmo Az – Like It Was Then”

Nostalgia Marathons

As 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.



Experiences Through the Eye of the Camera



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.



Experiences Through the Eye of the Camera



Experiences Through the Eye of the Camera

