

רוקדים

מגזין לריקודי עם ומחול

Vol 118 | July 2025 | **VIP** Members



Ashdod International Dance Festival 2025

ASHDODANCE

Artistic Director: Avi Levy | Chief Producer: Art Production



August 25-28.2025

Watch the magic Scan here

שני צדדים לאותו מטבע

OPENING SHOW

TWO SIDES OF THE COIN

26.08.25 ASHDOD AMPHITHEATRE

Watch the magic Scan here

אקליפס וקצ'וא

SUBLIMINAL VE'HAZEL

AND THE TACT FAMILIA

27.08.25 ASHDOD AMPHITHEATRE

Watch the magic Scan here

Get Ready

IT'S TIME TO DANCE THE 80's

28.08.25 ASHDOD AMPHITHEATRE

27-30.07.2026 ★ SAVE THE DATE ★ 05-08.08.2027



Digital program
Scan here

TICKETS 08-9522242
WWW.ASHDODANCE.CO.IL



Watch the magic
Scan here

*The World of
Jim Gold International*



Folk Tours 2025-2026 Jim Gold International

Travel, adventure, folk dance, culture www.jimgold.com

GREECE & the GREEK ISLANDS • Oct. 4-17, 2025

Athens, Nauplia, Sparta, Olympia, Delphi, Meteora, Mycenae. Greek Island Cruise: Mykonos, Crete, Rhodes, Patmos, Kusadasi. *Led by Lee Otterholt.*



TURKEY • October 17-31, 2025

Istanbul, Ankara, Cappadocia, Pamukkale, Izmir, Kusadasi, Pergamon, Troy, Canakkale, and Bursa. *Led by Lee Otterholt.*



PERU: Nazca and Peruvian Amazon ext • November 5-14, 2025

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



ALBANIA, GREECE, MACEDONIA and KOSOVO ext • May 21 / June 2-4, 2026

Tirana, Durres, Vlora Folk Festival, Kruja, Gjirokaster, Saranda, Berat, Lake Prespa, Ochrid. *Led by Lee Otterholt*



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 Email: jimgold@jimgold.co www.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

מעולם לא הרפ בביטוח ופיננסים (מאז 1978)



REGISTERED CHARITY
NUMBER 1206015

**4-8 AUGUST
2025**

Mechol Europa

BOOK NOW!

info@idi.org.uk
www.idi.org.uk

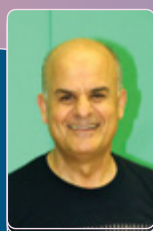
**UNIVERSITY
OF SURREY**
1 HOUR FROM LONDON



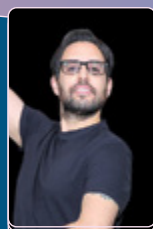
MICHAEL
BARZILAI



SHARON
ELKASSASSY



SHMULIK
GOV'ARI



YUVAL
TABASHI



DADO
KRAUS



VAEL
YAAKOBI

Dear Readers,

Here is Rokdim-Nirkoda magazine, issue 118.

While this magazine was being edited, the "Ke'Lavi" war (the war with Iran) broke out. We all stand in awe of the extraordinary courage of our soldiers and pilots and hope for their safe return to their families' embrace. Our hearts go out to all those who suffered heavy losses in this war.

This is the 6th magazine since the massacre on October 7, 2023 and there are still 50 hostages, alive and dead. We do not forget them and their families.

Aviva Uri, z"l (1932-2025), a respected instructor who educated and trained generations of folk dance instructors, passed away in April. Her students and acquaintances bow their heads in her memory.

Yair Vardi z"l (1948-2025), founded the very successful dance center in Neve Tzedek, the "Suzanne Dellal" Center. Yair managed the Center for 30 years and was the life's breath and initiator of dozens of important dance projects and events there. We said goodbye to him a short time ago. See: ["Illuminating the World of Dance"](#) by **Miri Krymolowski**.

The Karmiel Festival, scheduled to take place on July 1-3, 2025, has been moved to the Sukkot holiday: October 8-10, 2025. The AshdoDance Festival, scheduled to take place on July 7-10, 2025, has been moved to August 25-28, 2025.

Also in this issue:

• ["Will We Have Our Own Original Folk Dances?"](#)

An article by **Gurit Kadman z"l**, published in 1951, about the beginnings of Israeli dance creation in the Land of Israel, with interesting analysis and questions that are still relevant today.

• ["Accordionist, Singer, Dance Leader, Composer, Arranger"](#)

About the music and dance journey of **Ami Gilad**, whose hands and feet are "deeply immersed in our songs and dances." **Iris Levitan** spoke with him and wrote this article.

• ["Israeli Folk Dancing in Austria"](#)

Around the world with **Matti Goldschmidt**, this time about the development of Israeli folk dancing in Austria, the instructors, the dancers, and our dance culture that has permeated every possible place across the European continent.

• ["Sipur Milchamot – A Story of Wars"](#)

In the "Dance of the Month" section, we traveled all the way to Los Angeles for **Orly Star's** dance – a song (Sipurey Milchamot) and dance in memory of **Re'em Meir Betito**, who fell on October 7, 2023 protecting Israel.

• ["My Father! You Are An Israel Prize Laureate!"](#)

In the "Eye of the Camera" section, **Lital Maman** (daughter of **Shlomo Maman**) wrote and collected photos from the Independence Day event at Binyanei Ha'Uma. An important memory from an important event.

• ["Synopsis"](#)

In the "Dance Company in Focus" section by **Shuki Hoffman**, this time the spotlight is on the The Center For Dance "Synopsis" Tiberias under the artistic and professional direction of **Doron Gueta**.

Enjoy your reading,

Yaron Meishar and Ruth Goodman – Editors



Yaron Meishar



Ruth Goodman



רוקדים
מגזין לריקודי עם ומחול



NIRKODA
עמותת
ארגון
המדריכים

Volume 118 | July 2025

To Receive This Issue
Please Press **VIP**

■ **Publisher:**

"Rokdim-Nirkoda" – Published and produced by: The Association for the Documentation and Preservation of Israeli Dance in collaboration with the Israeli Dance Institute (IDI), USA

■ **Editors:**

Yaron Meishar, Ruth Goodman

■ **Editorial Staff:**

Shani Karni Aduculesi, Honey Goldfein, Matti Goldschmidt, Allen King, Benny Levy, Ruth Schoenberg, Tzipi Shragai

■ **Graphic Design:** Anna Kadary

■ **Editorial Office:**

Rokdim, 96/35 Moshe Dayan Rd.,
Tel Aviv 67320

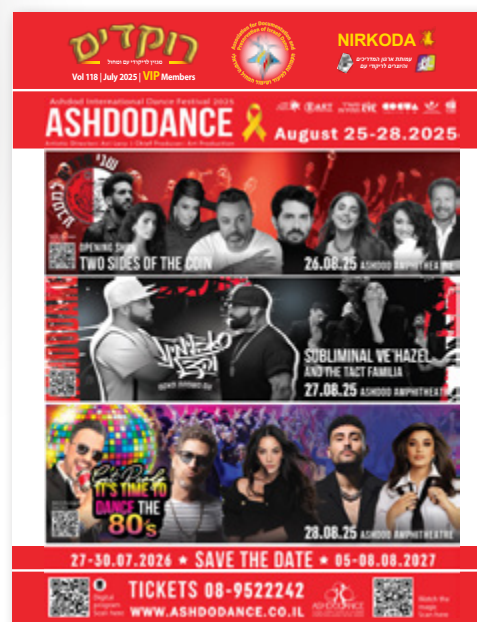
Tel: 972-52-5620447,

Fax: 972-3-5614651

Email: rokdim@rokdim.co.il

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

SUBSCRIBE





Gurit Kadman, z"l
(the "Mother" of
Israeli Folk Dance)

Translation:
Ruth Goodman
and Allen King

Will We Have Our Own Original Folk Dances?

**On the beginning
of the creation
of Israeli dance
in the Land of Israel**



The article is from 1950 and was published in 1951 in the Gadna Command's magazine "Bamachane Alumim – In Alumim Camp"

For various reasons, this year's Folk Dance Gathering was cancelled, but the previous two gatherings were outstanding successes. We occasionally hold events like this, the purpose of which is to spread folk dances in the country.

However, isn't it a contradiction to speak of an "initiative" in connection with folk art? Should it be "activated"? Doesn't it thereby lose its very nature and value? Doesn't this art grow by itself? Yes, indeed, this art develops by itself and by its own virtue, but what are we talking about here – in the nations as they are at that time, but not the people of Israel, which does not constitute a "proper nation" – and not in the current period, which is not a "proper" period?

The experiences of the Jewish people, their dispersion and suffering, deprived them of most of the possibilities of developing an independent and living folk art. With the revival of the people on their land, the vital need arose for the vigorous development and cultivation of folk art, and folk dance as a part thereof.

Development out of awareness and desire, spurred by the magic wand of "no choice" – this is the foundation of our dance enterprise.

A dance enterprise exists among the other peoples of civilization, but it is different among us. Its primary meaning is: the salvation of the values of a tradition that has been forgotten and lost due to the current, fatal period, which erased folk customs and folk art. Given the dominance of technology, cinema and radio and their increasing influence, the diverse village customs of handicrafts, the decoration of the house with holiday costumes, folk shows, music and dances are disappearing.

In recent decades, enlightened youth, students, folklore researchers, and artists in Europe and America have stepped up to save, archive



"We began to accelerate the salvation; we tried to create. We sought out elements of our own original movement, the fundamental and elemental character of Israeli dance."

and record the remnants of these folklore treasures. Folk dance societies have been established to accomplish the revival of these dances in an organized manner and spread them among urban youth as well.

Thus, the content of their work is twofold: collection in the villages and distribution in the cities, a collection and educational activity - but not creative - apparently, it cannot be creative, because the spirit of our time does not allow for the emergence of folk dances. After all, through "seductive technology" everything is received ready-made. The technology paralyzes the inclination towards individual creativity - even in the village, which served as the primary location for the creation of folk songs and folk dances in the past.

And yet, contrary to the spirit, or lack of spirit, of the times, and to developments in other countries, there is an extraordinary and surprising fact: in Israel, new folk dances are being created and emerging. They do not grow slowly like trees. They spring into life like mushrooms after the rain. They are not the fruit of a centuries-old tradition, but rather the youngest of the young, five years old, three years old, a year old and we still have so much more to accomplish!

According to conventional concepts, they should not yet be called folk dances, because who knows which of all these nascent creations will be absorbed into the life of the people in the future and which will fall and be forgotten. They are still sprouts, blossoms, and aspirational folk dances.

Nevertheless, the people dance them to an ever-increasing extent. The enterprise is expanding with astonishing speed, and the folklorist experts who have seen our dances at international forums in Europe and America find therein a unique character and color, independent and unique lines. They relate to the "experiment" with interest, astonishment,

and admiration. Our dancers encountered such a positive and heartfelt attitude at the international conferences in Prague in 1947, in Budapest, and in Venice. I found the same attitude during my activities (teaching our dances) in the United States among wide circles interested in the dances of all peoples. The conclusion is that the five-year-old "plant" has already borne fruit and is on the right trajectory.

It is interesting to look back at its beginnings. Before me is an article about folk dance in the summer of 1938, which reflects the state of our dances at that time; (since then, my position has fundamentally changed!) and here are excerpts from that article:



*Gurit Kadman (the second from right) and her children, January 1945.
Source: Wikipedia*

"In Israel, new folk dances are being created and emerging. They do not grow slowly like trees. They spring into life like mushrooms after the rain. They are not the fruit of a centuries-old tradition, but rather the youngest of the young, five years old, three years old, a year old and we still have so much more to accomplish!"

What is important to us are these questions: What, from this whole ingathering of exiles of folk dances, has been revived here?

And a second question – what is suitable for us, what do we want to instill here? To what extent is it possible to influence folk dance by willpower?

"We are the people of Israel who live in Zion - do we have a folk dance? We are a kibbutz galuyot (an ingathering of the Exiles) - and our dances are also a kibbutz galuyot. From the ancient, biblical period, no dances or songs remain, because they were not recorded. They must have danced a lot then. In the Bible, much is told about dances. One can assume that the dances then were similar to those of the Arabs today, but all of this is mere speculation.

The Israelites also danced in exile, in Yemen and Eastern Europe. The dance of the Chassidim, for example, is a true and original expression of the Chassidic existence, their suffering and joy, their abundance of physicality and spirituality, whereas the dances of the Jews from Persia and the Caucasus and even Yemen are apparently influenced by many of their neighbors in those countries and are less original.

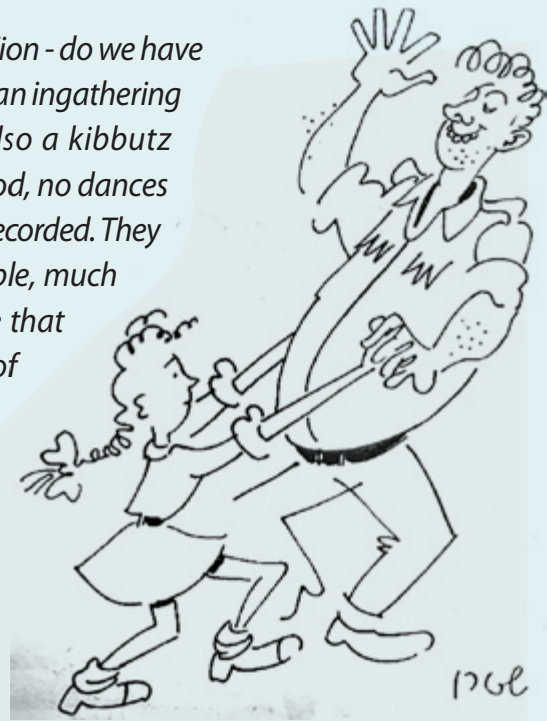
But the question of originality is not so important. What is important to us are these questions: What, from this whole ingathering of exiles of folk dances, has been revived here? And a second question – what is suitable for us, what do we want to instill here? To what extent is it possible to influence folk dance by willpower? What will we focus on and what will we try to revive?

It is strange that the most self-defining dance in our country is neither Chassidic nor a dance from the Eastern ethnicities (Edot Hamizrach), but rather a Romanian rural dance: The Hora. Strange, but understandable: a people returning to their land and to nature, needs an unproblematic simple, strong, healthy, social dance. There was none of this ilk among the original Jewish diaspora dances; they took it from a village of another people - the foreign dance became an expression - not original, but true – of our existence.

And the popular and beloved dances other than the Hora? Not a single one of them is of Diaspora Jewish origin either. Most, if not all of them, are borrowed from the various peoples who used to host us: Circassians, Russians, Poles and others (Tcherkessia, Krakoviak, Polka, etc.).

Should we regret this? No more than in all other areas of our art. We still do not have - nor can we have - an original individual style in any artistic genre. We do not have a large treasury of folk songs that live on in the mouths of the people, so how can we expect to have an original folk dance?

But the folklorist goes on and asks: How will a Jewish-Israeli folk dance be created in the Land of Israel? And the answer, like most of our questions: Hope for the future. Generations will arise that will not be burdened with foreign influences as we are.



The instructor and his pupil dance together.
Yossi Stern, 1951

If the people of Israel live a healthy and normal life and if global civilization even allows for the possibility of folk dancing – our original dance will emerge as well.

They will create their own way of life – and from it, virtually effortlessly, the suitable folk dance will blossom; it will bear the mark of the Land of Israel, the strength of its soil and the existence of its people.

But what will we do in the meantime? Two action items: First: a systematic collection of our folklore treasures, without which they are doomed to extinction. Second: taking advantage of the fact that we have been guests among all the peoples of the world. We will dance those dances of theirs that are most suitable for us. Perhaps here there is a pantheon of sorts of the dances of the nations. Ben-Shemen sets a fine example in this direction. Why should we accept in Israel only the dances of the Romanians, the Russians and the Poles? We will also learn from the Hungarians among us, from the English, the Scandinavians, etc.

And let us not fear that engaging in the dances of other nations will interfere with our own folk dance, which will be created in the future. If the people of Israel live a healthy and normal life and if global civilization even allows for the possibility of folk dancing – our original dance will emerge as well.

These were my thoughts in 1938! Twelve years have passed since then, and in the last five years, our dances have undergone a powerful development. What was said then about the historical origins of our dances remains valid, but the approach to the question of originality has changed completely. We soon realized that we had to choose either a "pantheon of the dances of the nations" or our own original



dance that needed to be developed. We chose – and abstained from – the "pantheon". We turned our backs on the dances of other nations, fought against their dissemination, demanded that the instructors and the organized youth spread only our own dances. We were a small handful of people who did not have the patience to wait until generations would come, in which the appropriate folk dance would flourish, without special effort – our own original dance. We began to accelerate the salvation; we tried to create. We sought out elements of our own original movement, the fundamental and elemental character of Israeli dance.

And already a picture of the character and style of our new dances is emerging before our eyes. Here we enter into the thick of the problems. Without a doubt one fact exists: These dances have their own special character and hue. A second fact: It is not yet possible to accept their style and define it as something clear and specific. Various and numerous influences are at work and leave their marks. Elements from the West and the East intersect and merge but have not yet reached complete unity from a single mold.

Elements from the "[Hora](#)" are evident in a number of new circle dances ([Hora Agadati](#),



Performances of dance troupes at the Karmiel Festival, in the New Dance Choreography Competition

[Mechol Sarid](#), [Harmonica](#), [Im Hupalnu](#), etc.). The Arab debkas have enriched the creation of many new dances of our own ([Mechol Ovadia](#), [Hanoded](#), [Ken Yovdu](#), [Debka Gilboa](#), [Debka Rafiach](#), etc.)

The partner dances that the youth are most interested in were influenced and enriched in part by Europe ([HaKotzrim](#), [Har Vekar](#)) in part by Yemenite movements and their style ([El Ginat Egoz](#), Mecholot Hashnayim ([Dodi Li](#) and [Iti Milvanon](#)) and in some, no particular influence is evident, [Bo Dodi](#)).

Among the Jews of Eastern Europe, the one [dance] that has been spared and cherished in the Land as a unique and precious asset thus far – the “[Sherele](#)”, a square dance, is currently danced as a wedding dance in many communities. On the other hand, the influence of Yemenite dance on our dances is increasing. Many of their own dance steps, body movements, and handholds have made their way into our dances and determine their style.

The picture is very diverse and rich, and perhaps too much so, if we compare ourselves with other peoples with a typical development of tradition. We create and offer a large number and variety of dances out of hope and recognition that the people and history will filter everything: the unsuitable will be forgotten on its own, and the suitable will be preserved as a national treasure. This is how a tradition will be formed. Within a generation or two no one will know our doubts and concerns about our style, as it will be a living and existing fact. We are the generation of the beginning and the transition, with all the joy of searching and creating and all the suffering due to the doubts and impatience that this entails. So, it is in all genres of art and life, and so it is in dance as well.

In two related genres we are still undecided more than in dance: in the areas of music and costume.

Every nation possesses its national musical instruments, every village in the world its orchestra – we have neither one nor the other. We take from what is



*Couple dance
"Har Vekar",
by Zeev Chavatzelet*



Opening dance sessions on the sports field at the Karmiel Festival

available to us: here an accordion, there a Neapolitan orchestra, here a piano (which is not a folk instrument at all), there a symphony orchestra in miniature – to accompany folk dances.

Our dance melodies, most of which are songs with lyrics, are also, like the dances, highly diverse: some are European, some are Mizrahi, and in some of them – which are few in number and very dear to us – we feel the new Israeli tone. (Shall we call it a Semitic tone?). How exactly the dances should be accompanied, how these melodies should be performed – no one knows. The laws of European harmony in many cases are clearly not appropriate, but it is not clear what should replace them.

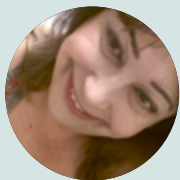
What kind of instrumental ensemble do we need? How can we acclimate the hearing of the musicians to playing together in joint improvisation, as rural orchestras throughout the world do, among the Blacks and among the Russians, the Indians and the Scots? Should they learn notes and receive printed material instead of accompanying themselves by improvising based on musical feeling and rhythmic harmony? Perhaps we should think about creating our own special new instruments and instrumental ensembles, which will suit our melodies, our kibbutzim, our dances? Regarding all these problems we are still at the beginning.

Even concerning the question of holiday clothes and dance clothes for the village, we are at the beginning. And here, in our efforts to create our own special style, we clash with a huge and powerful global force: fashion. Can we compete with the attraction of the "ideals" from Hollywood, of the concepts of beauty in magazines? We should not force people to wear clothes according to our calculated sketches, according to the stylistic suggestions of a group of artists or researchers. The suggestions must please everyone in order to become a tradition. The very question: what the style of our dance clothes should be remains unresolved.

It is desirable that it contain both contours from the Bible and modern contours. And to find this harmony with regard to men's clothing is even more difficult than with regard to women's clothing.



There is no lack of problems, but the question of all questions, the existence of our folk dance, has already been decided in the affirmative. And if we think about the short period of development so far, a period of five years – we must admit that we are now facing one of the wonders in the chain of wonders that marks the revival of the People of Israel in their land.



Iris Levitan

Translation:
Ruth Goodman
and Allen King

The rumor about the excellent quality of young Ami's (11-12 years old) accordion playing spread like wildfire through Tel Aviv, where at that time (the 1950s) almost everyone knew everyone else.

Accordionist, Singer, Dance Leader, Composer, Arranger

Ami Gilad
with Lehakat HaNahal and
Lehakat Karmon
and more...



Ami Gilad was born in 1939 and was educated in Tel Aviv. As someone who came from a musical family (his mother was a singing prodigy), he was drawn from a young age to the world of music in general, to the songs of that period that he heard played on the radio, and to the world of folk dance in particular.

While a student at the city's Yesod Hama'ala elementary school, Ami began his first steps as an Israeli folk dancer as a member of the Gadna youth movement. This is how he discovered the accordion with its magical sounds and power.

To satisfy his curiosity about the wonders of the accordion, Ami learned to play with **Zvi Caspi**, an accordion teacher. At the same time, Ami danced wherever possible.

• *His professional fate is determined*

The rumor about the excellent quality of young Ami's (11-12 years old) accordion playing spread like wildfire through Tel Aviv, where at that time (the 1950s) almost everyone knew everyone else, especially in the folk dance community, and where it also reached **Yoav Ashriel**, who was the "Oracle" in the field.

"To dance, I came to **Yoav Ashriel's** group at Beit Hapoel (which no longer exists on Ussishkin Street - I.L.)," Gilad says. "Someone whispered to him that I also played the accordion. Yoav told me: 'Take it, play it.' I played it and he liked it," Gilad continues.

At the end of the short audition, Ashriel decided: "I have enough dancers; I need an accordionist." And with that, in effect, he determined young Ami's professional future as an accordion player.

• *Between dance and music*

Ami Gilad's protests didn't help: "I like to dance; I'm also willing to play, but I want to dance," he pleaded with Ashriel. "There's a shortage of accordionists," Yoav replied firmly. "And that was it. He got down to business with me immediately and taught me the speeds and rhythms that are suitable for dancing."

Hapoel Tel Aviv also had a dance troupe, whose choreographer was Yoav Ashriel. He and no one else. "You'll also play for the troupe, accompany it in rehearsals and performances," Yoav suggested to me.



With the Democratic Youth delegation at the International Dance Festival in Vienna, Austria



Lehakat HaNahal, Ami Gilad with his white accordion



With the accordion and Lehakat HaNahal

It's not hard to guess how Ami felt; he was torn between dancing, which he loved so much, and music.

- ***Both a musician and a dancer***

As their journey together continued, Ashriel, at some point, relented and finally gave in to Ami Gilad's pleas, and he was also allowed to dance. It was in the troupe "Pa'amei Machol", Ashriel's next troupe, which was formed to replace Lehakat Hapoel Tel Aviv, which had disbanded. There, for the first time, Ami Gilad took his steps as a dancer on stage. There, for the first time, he both danced and played.

- ***His name precedes him***

Word of the accordion playing of the boy prodigy, Ami Gilad, crossed the borders of Tel Aviv, the city where he was born and educated, and reached Petah Tikva.

"**Shmuel Tzemach**, the city's cultural figure, was the first person to hire me as a paid musical accompanist for dance groups," Gilad recalls. "It was a special experience, but I actually wanted to dance..."

- ***We won't stop dancing***

"I really loved dancing in the lively dance session in the courtyard of "Cafe Bustan" near Dizengoff Square," Ami recalls with a smile.

At the same time, he danced in **Mira** and **Yoav Ashriel**'s classes, which gained immense popularity, at Beit Hapoel, and at the "Ahad Ha'Am" and "Dubnov" schools.

Prior to his enlistment in the IDF, he also accompanied classes led by Mira Ashriel with his accordion at the Ayanot Agricultural School (where, incidentally, **Yonatan Karmon** was educated), and by **Tirza Hodes** at Beit Lessin in Tel Aviv.

- ***The Blossoming of the Accordion***

"In those days, there were no folk dance records yet, certainly no cassettes, nor CDs," Gilad explains. "The only musical instrument used to conduct a folk dance class, rehearsal, performance, as well as community singing, was the accordion". One can certainly identify with Ami Gilad's love for this wonderful instrument. I, too, was captivated by the magic of its sounds. For me, it was 'love at first sound'.

"In the best case," Gilad continues to describe, "there was also a darbuka. In an even better case, there was someone who played the flute or a recorder; the guitar came later. Now I remember that Yoav also held a tambourine in his hand, for the rhythm."



With Tirza Hodes

When Ami realized that his hobby, playing the accordion, had become his profession, he decided to stay in America, develop professionally, and expand his formal musical education, settling in New York.

• **The choice of the Nahal band**

When the time came for Ami to be drafted into the army, he accepted the advice of Yoav Ashriel, "my teacher and rabbi," in Gilad's words, to audition for a military band. "I'll call, I'll find out," Ashriel offered, trying with all his heart for his protégé.

The lot fell on the Nahal Band, which was the best of the many military bands operating at the time, Ami emphasizes. "The Nahal Band was the band back then. There was nothing like it," Ami recalls with shining eyes.

The band's songs played over the airwaves non-stop, as did the songs of the other military bands during Gilad's youth, but the songs of the Nahal Band were more pleasing to the young Gilad's musical ear than those of all the others.

"I really liked their vocal arrangements, and I just connected with them," said Gilad, explaining his interest and preference to serve in the Nahal military band. "Their professional level was high," continues Gilad. "They paid attention to every word, to the correct pronunciation of the words. They worked on correct diction there, so that the listener could understand every word," he explains.

• **The audition**

"I came to audition as a singer-actor. I didn't say I was an accordionist. I was given an etude (a musical exercise – I.L.). I played. But Yosef (Yosele) Oreg, who was the band's accordionist, and knew me as [an accordion] player, told Uri Zohar, who was the band's



With the Karmon Troupe in Bogota, Columbia



Ami leads dancers in Debka Rafiach



With Dov (Dubi) Seltzer and Yehoram Gaon



With Chaim Topol

Uri Zohar loved to frolic, to do pranks, but to his credit, he knew the limits. He didn't let others run wild either; he set boundaries and enforced strict discipline in the group.

leader, that I played the accordion. Uri told me: 'Take an accordion, and play.' I played 'Mul Har Sinai – Opposite Mount Sinai' like it is on the record," Ami recounts with satisfaction. Then Zohar told him, "You won't be a singer-actor in the band," because he admired his playing: "You'll be our accordionist."

Later, it turns out, his luck and talent played to Ami's advantage, and in addition to his role as accordionist in the band, he also received opportunities to lend his voice to singing, his other love, after dancing.

"I was sent with a friend to the "Garin" (social and cultural training program) for the singing and dancing course that began at Nahal 906 Base (near Karmiel). We were taught by **Gurit Kadman, Shalom Hermon, Tamar Alyagor, Yoav Ashriel, "Viki" (Shmuel) Cohen, Margalit Oved, Meir Ovadia**, and others. This was in the framework of social and professional courses to which Nahal soldiers are sent so that they will be useful in their continued service at the kibbutzim. In this course, I was both a student and also directed the musical section."

• **Rigorous rehearsals**

After completing his basic training at Machane 80, Ami joined the Nahal Band. The band's rehearsals were held in Jaffa, in the long-standing, legendary building of the Nahal Command. They were held until the wee hours of the night, with lots of love and with lots of motivation for success. "Our work process was like this," Ami details:

"The song arrangements arrived ready to go from the composers. Each member of the band learned his part. Next, we worked on staging the song. At the end of the process, the composer would come to the rehearsal in person, just as **Naomi Shemer**, the writer and composer of "Vals LeHaganat HaTzome'ach – Waltz for the Protection of All that is Growing" in the well-known music clip, came and made her comments to the tremendously talented solo performer **Yardena Arazi**, to give a final and precise polish, and then, on to the performances."

"During my time, the accordionist was responsible for the musical side. After us, they brought in a professional musical director from outside the band, such as: **Yair Rosenblum, Beni Nagari, Aryeh Levanon**. In any case, here I was also given the title of "musical director." Uri also had the authority to make his comments. And he did."

• **Uri Zohar**

"Uri was a man of the stage; he intuitively understood the essence of what a stage was. He truly schooled us", Ami compliments his revered commander, with awe which did not fade over the years. Uri's talent was then in its infancy."

"Uri loved to frolic, to do pranks, but to his credit, he knew the limits. He didn't let others run wild either; he set boundaries and enforced strict discipline in the group. Anyone who let loose received a reprimand," Gilad continues.



With Yoav Ashriel



With Yonatan Karmon

• **Memories of Naomi**

"I remember **Naomi Polani**, who worked with the troupe," Ami recalled, "as a professional but not harsh stage woman, who achieved what she wanted in her pleasant way, with a constant smile at the corners of her mouth."

• **Dance abroad**

Upon his release from the army, Ami continued to accompany dance groups on his accordion. This time, he travelled outside the State of Israel to the "Democratic Youth Festival" in Vienna with a representative national troupe of dancers from all over the country. "The festival took place every four years, each time in a different country," Ami notes. Later, he joined the legendary Karmon troupe in its performances around the world.

• **A hobby that became a profession**

After a successful performance tour with Lehakat Karmon in the United States, Gilad remained there and the troupe returned to Israel without him. When Ami realized that his hobby, playing the accordion, had become his profession, he decided to stay in America, develop professionally, and expand his formal musical education. He settled in New York, choosing the option of studying theory, conducting, and composition at the renowned Mannes College of Music.

• **The American connection**

Regarding Ami Gilad's first stay in America, it was good, and was characterized by professional flourishing and personal enrichment. This first of two stays lasted for about 11 years, during which he specialized in his field. He produced musical arrangements for folk dance records under the direction of the "Father of Israeli Folk Dance in America", **Fred Berk** (originally Fritz Berger).

Fred Berk is described on Wikipedia as a dancer, choreographer, dance teacher, and a flag bearer in the Diaspora (especially in Canada and the United States) in the study and dissemination of Israeli folk dance, also in articles such as in the magazine 'Hora' – a journal he founded and edited.

In 1962, while in New York, Fred Berk asked **Danny Uziel** to create an accessible dance for beginners. Ami composed the song, **Nehemiah Sharabi** wrote the lyrics, **Geula Zohar** sang, and Danny composed the dance steps for "At Va'Ani." The dance is still danced today and is considered a classic among folk dance circles around the world.

According to dance scholar **Judith Brin Ingber**, Fred directed an annual Festival of Israeli Folk Dance in New York from 1953 to 1978.



Radio Broadcaster on Kol HaShalom in Miami

During the intervening time between his two stays in America, Ami was privileged to participate as a musical accompanist in the productions in Israel of **Avraham Desha Pashnal (Pasha)**, who was then a household name in Israeli entertainment.



With Gadi Bitton in Miami

At the same time, Fred Berk choreographed a folk dance in a circle called "[Freilach](#)", to a melody written by Ami Gilad.

"Fred asked me to write a melody with a Hasidic tone," says Gilad. **Moshe Eskayo** also liked the bouncy, inspiring melody that Gilad composed, and choreographed "[Chanita](#)", a circle dance, to the same tune. Another aspect of Fred Berk's extensive activity in the field of dance was reflected in the dance camps he organized in America.

"I first met **Shlomo Maman** at 'Camp Blue Star,' which Fred founded in North Carolina.

Shlomo was invited as a guest artist," Gilad recalls.

• **America 2**

During his second stay in America, in the 1980s, Ami Gilad settled in Miami, Florida. There, too, he brought his musical spirit, mainly in educating the younger generation. But not only that – he also devoted his energy to musical programs as a broadcaster on local Israeli radio stations.

During the intervening time between his two stays in America, Ami was privileged to participate as a musical accompanist in the productions in Israel of **Avraham Desha Pashnal (Pasha)**, who was then a household name in Israeli entertainment:

- "Tzatz ve'Tzatzah", 1969, a musical performance based on poems by **Nathan Alterman**.
- "Shirei HaChumash – Songs of the Pentateuch", from the poems of **Itzik Manger**, written in 1935 in Warsaw.
- "Chayei Kelev – A Dog's Life", (I was present in the hall and remember the wonderful **Gadi Yagil**, who is insanely funny. – I.L.).
- "Gumbo", 1971.

Ami Gilad continued composing and continues to do so today.

His compositions include: "Sapri Li Kinneret – Speak to Me Kinneret", "Malach Katan Sheli – My Little Angel" to the words of **Nissan Friedman**, "Yevarechecha HaShem V'Yishmerecha – May G-d Bless You and Keep You" to the words of the morning prayer. Before that, he composed for military bands, such as the Northern Command, the Southern Command and the Combat Engineering Corps: "Tugah Shel Stav – Autumn Sorrow", "Shmor Li Al Mishmar HaGvul – Protect Me at the Border Guard", "Layla Bli Miklat – Night Without Shelter", "B'Sinai Mutar – In Sinai It Is Permitted", "Ma she Ratzui U'Ma she Matzui – What is Desired and What is Found".

Indeed, later, in addition to playing the accordion, Ami Gilad would also compose beautiful melodies that would be embodied in folk dances. He would also engage in the field of musical arrangement, thanks to these studies, which opened a window for him into the depths of the magical world of music.

• **Funding for recordings**

Like Ami Gilad, to put it mildly, there are certainly other people who are not satisfied with the advancement and technological dynamism in the context of folk dances. Ami's

He is hopeful that the new Association for the Preservation of Folk Dances, which was recently established, "will also include composers of melodies, not just dance creators."

opinion on the subject overflows, and he asserts that, although it is generally advisable to move forward and keep up with the times, in this case, he is troubled by the current changes created in the work process.

"Once," Ami recounts somewhat gloomily, "the creators of the dances would approach me to write melodies with 'operating instructions', with special intentions regarding the style, atmosphere, and rhythm. They were also responsible for the continuation of the work process, for arranging and recording. Today, however, they prefer to use the finished product, the songs that are played everywhere, from the radio to social networks and especially YouTube, songs that are used 'as is'. These songs are ready for the choreographic creation process, while I am "stuck" with 36 melodies, which in order to hand over to the choreographers, I need to arrange and record – so that everything will be ready for them. It's very expensive. Where will I get the money?", he painfully throws rhetorically into the air.

He is hopeful that the new Association for the Preservation of Folk Dances, which was recently established, "will also include composers of melodies, not just dance creators."

• **9 things you didn't know about Ami Gilad:**

- 1 Performed with "almost every living artist," in the humorous language of Ami Gilad...
- 2 Ami and **Arik Einstein** sing together in the chorus, in the song "12 Tons" by the Nahal band.
- 3 He played on the recording of Yoav Ashriel's dance session (harkada), which was broadcast on the monthly radio program "LaRokdim Heidad – For Dancers, Cheers" on Kol Yisrael. It could be that this recording was a precursor of **Avner Naim's** future instructive programs, "BeTzad Teimani – In a Yemenite Step," which became "Rokdim VeSharim – Dancing and Singing". This program was broadcast for many years with great success on Reshet Gimel; it entered the hearts of the people and crossed borders.
- 4 He composed an additional melody for the song "Lifnot Erev – At Sunset". **Eli Ronen's** dance to the song is danced to the melody of **Sasha Argov**.
- 5 Ami also composed another melody of his own for "Ein Shirim Acherim – There Are No Other Songs," the lyrics of which were written by **Yossi Gamzu** and composed by **Moshe Wilensky**.
- 6 The dance "Shiri" created by **Shlomo Maman** is based on a melody composed by Ami Gilad with the name of his daughter **Shiri**.
- 7 He released a series of folk dance CDs together with **Avner Naim** as artistic editor, which were published by the Reuveni Brothers Company in the series "Lo Nafsik Lirkod – We Will Never Stop Dancing."
- 8 Wrote new melodies ('Dekba' and 'HaPerach V'Ani – The Flower and Me') for **Avner Naim**.
- 9 Ami led a community singing session at the opening of **Yankele Agmon's** successful radio show "Birah VeMatzav Ruach – Beer and Mood."



Ami and his accordion



Matti Goldschmidt

Israel's precarious political situation since October 7, 2023, and public opinion surrounding it, certainly also have an impact on cultural issues, insofar as they affect not only Israeli but also local Jewish interests.

Israeli Folk Dancing in Austria



Taking into account the loss of the German-speaking regions of South Tyrol (Italy) and Sudetenland (Czechoslovakia) as well as the gain of Burgenland by referendum (Hungary), Austria only existed within its current borders since 1921. It was granted independence by the victorious powers of the First World War practically against the will of the population. The name "Ostarrichi" for today's German "Österreich" was first recorded in 996; while the word "Austria" is the older Latin name for this Alpine region. At 83,883 km² (or 32,387.5 m²), Austria's area is about a fifth that of California. Although German is the official language, Hungarian, Slovenian, and Croatian are also permitted in a few isolated border communities. The republic is divided into nine federal states, with Vienna as one of them having the largest share of the population with over two million inhabitants and just under 23% of Austria's total population (or almost a quarter of 9.2 million). After Vienna, Austria's largest cities are Graz, Linz, Salzburg, and Innsbruck.

The evidence of a Jewish presence in Vienna dates back to the 12th century. King **Albert V** ordered the extermination of Vienna's Jews through expulsion and murder between 1420 and 1421; hundreds committed collective suicide. The last were eventually burned alive. A second expulsion took place in 1669/1670, until in 1683, during the Turkish siege of Vienna by the Ottomans, the royal family became heavily dependent on funds from Jewish bankers like **Samuel Oppenheimer** and **Samson Wertheimer**. With the "Edict of Tolerance" of 1782, the Jews of Vienna and Lower Austria were granted access to all universities and extensive freedom of trade. Finally, the "December Constitution" of 1867 granted Jews unrestricted residence and religious practice throughout Austria for the first time in its history.

In 1869, approximately 40,000 Jews constituted 6.6% of Vienna's population. In 1885, the "Austrian-Israelite Union" was founded, which also published the weekly magazine "Die Wahrheit" ("The Truth"). Politically, the "National Jewish Party" (1882-1938, known as the "Jewish List" from 1930 onward) had little success. Around 1900, Austria's capital was one of the most important centers of Jewish culture in Europe. Today, only around 8,200 citizens are registered as Jews in Austria (although including unregistered Jews, the number could be twice as high), about 85% of whom live in Vienna.

It is no longer possible to determine exactly since when Israeli folk dances first existed in Austria. Beyond Austria's borders, it became first known through a listing of foreign

The closest thing to Israeli folk dance events organized by the IKG are performances at annual street festivals. The name of Lisa Erber was mentioned as a direct contact. It is worthwhile to mention that the motto of the IKG's cultural department is otherwise described as "lively, diverse and unifying".

dance events in Rokdim 10 (September 1991, p. 27), which mentioned a certain "Erwen Renart" as contact at "Praterstraße 25A." This name last appeared in Rokdim 30 (March 1995, p. 31), followed by **Miriam Eibner** with the same address. **Erwen Renart** could not be identified by anyone, though, and thus he remained largely unknown. However, with some research, a

certain **Erwin Rennert** (1926-2009) was finally located, who published his biography in two read-worthy books, namely "Der Welt in die Quere" (Sideways into this World) and "Fast schon Amerikaner" (Almost American), both unfortunately only published in German. After having contacted the Viennese JCC, they informed me that there must be another person, albeit with the same name. As the now-real Erwin Rennert explained to me in a phone call, he was unaware that his name had appeared in an Israeli periodical – he himself had never initiated anything in this regard. However, Rennert added, that he is indeed related to the other, the first Erwin Rennert.

Now talking about the real Erwin Rennert, he first encountered Israeli folk dance in the mid-1980s during a year-long stay in a kibbutz, although there must have already existed internal courses offered in Vienna through the local "Hashomer Hatzair" in the years before. Back in Vienna, he founded his own dance circle around 1988 with approximately 8-12 more or less regular participants. The location, Praterstraße 25 A, was a kind of cultural center of the SPÖ, the "Socialist Party of Austria" (from 1991 "Social Democratic"), one of the country's three leading parties. Rennert mentioned the visit of several Israeli choreographers around 1990. However, how this was organized could no longer be determined. Rennert was not able to provide any more specific information, stating that the whole thing had happened far too long ago. The only thing he remembered was the name of **Avi Amsalem**.

A certain movement occurred in Austria's Israeli folk dance scene around 1991-1993 after Matti Goldschmidt held his first weekend workshops in this country, first in Hallein (1991 and 1992) and the following year in Salzburg (1993) under the direction of **Dr. Marianne Ferstl**. He was soon invited for further workshops in Vienna organized by **Brigitte (Gitti) Lanik** and **Martin Pokorny**, who were originally more dedicated to international folk dance. The general interest among folk dancers in Israeli folk dance became so intense that, due to strong demand, two workshops were held in Vienna in 1993. A large number of annual workshops led by Matti Goldschmidt followed in other parts of Austria, such as in Graz (1994-2007, primarily organized by **Franziska Perhab**), Salzburg (1993-2005), Linz (1994-1995), and Klagenfurt (1996-1999, **Bernhard Hofer**).

According to **Ben Dagan**, head of communications for the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG – "Israelite Community") in Vienna, at the beginning of 2025, the JCC itself had never offered Israeli folk dance, in contrast to similar institutions in Germany such as in Munich, Frankfurt or Berlin. The closest thing to Israeli folk dance events organized by the IKG are performances at annual street festivals. The name of **Lisa Erber** was mentioned as a direct contact. It is worthwhile to mention that the motto of the IKG's cultural department is otherwise described as "lively, diverse and unifying". The following lists people in alphabetical order who have been particularly involved in the field of Israeli folk dance in Austria. For the sake of completeness, **Piroska "Piri" Selemen**, who led her own regular





Ada Sedlak.
Photo: Archive
Israelisches Tanzhaus

dance group for several years, should be briefly mentioned. In the same way to be mentioned is **Ada Sedlak**, with a PhD in Computer Science, with her dance group "Hora Belibenu" ("Hora in our Hearts") in the years 2014-2020, who already danced in her earlier years (1966-1969) at the Vienna section of "Hashomer Hatzair" in the Storchengasse under the youth leader **Yoram Roth**. Also worthy of mention are **Elisabeth Marothy** and **Andrea Lukacs**, who maintained a dance group in Innsbruck for many years.



Street Performance with "Hora Belibenu", 2019.
Photo: Archive Israelisches Tanzhaus

As is the case not only in Israel and other countries, the field of "Israeli folk dance" in Vienna is complex and characterized by personalities of varying temperaments, so that minor disagreements, splits, and occasionally even reunions within dance circles repeatedly occur. The exuberance of the period 1993-2010 subsided over the years, and practically all of the remaining groups lacked new, younger participants – surely a worldwide phenomenon in the field of folk dance. Israel's precarious political situation since October 7, 2023, and public opinion surrounding it, certainly also have an impact on cultural issues, insofar as they affect not only Israeli but also local Jewish interests. Vienna's Jewish population today amounts to only 0.35%, while the Muslim population (citizens with Austrian citizenship) accounts for 11% (mainly of Turkish or Bosnian descent). Of all the names mentioned below in this article, essentially only Lisa Erber stayed active in the field of "Israeli folk dance" in Vienna.

In contrast to South American countries, the USA, or even Australia, Austria's folk dance clientele is predominantly non-Jewish, similar to that in Germany.

Natali Assa (Vienna/Wien) assa.natali@gmail.com

Actually, everything about Natali was already told in [issue no. 107 of Rokdim-Nirkoda](#) (p. 5). Born in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, she began teaching regularly in Vienna in 2013, then at the age of 18, at the Jewish sports club "Hakoah" which was founded in 1909. It is worthwhile to note that its football (soccer) section won the Austrian championship in 1925. Her first class consisted of up to fifteen participants. This was followed in 2014 by a second class at the Jewish Institute for Adult Education (JIFE), founded in 1989.



Natali Assa.
Photo: Archive
Israelisches Tanzhaus



Jump Like Meshugeh – Vienna Dance Team.
Photo: Archive Israelisches Tanzhaus



*Dancing in Vienna with Natali Assa and Matti Goldschmidt.
Photo: Archive Israelisches Tanzhaus*

With the onset of the pandemic (COVID-19) and after everything else came to a virtual standstill, she opened a Sunday course on the "Donauinsel" (Danube Island) in 2019 under her own direction and the motto "Dance with Nat!", which typically attracted between twenty-five to thirty-five participants. Her preferred catchphrase was essentially "Jump like Meshugeh", trying to attract younger participants into her dance circles. Natali's stay in Vienna, and thus her dance activities there, ended in October 2020 with her move to Barcelona.

Miriam Eibner-Löwy (Vienna/Wien)

Miriam Eibner came to Vienna from Abtenau (Salzburg-Land) around 1990 to study musicology. After a year of ballroom dancing and with a constant lack of a dance partner, she switched to international folk dance, ultimately settling on Israeli folk dance in 1993 after her first workshop with Matti Goldschmidt. In 1995, she participated in the Israelisches Tanzhaus' (ITH) third dance trip to Israel and attended several dance weekends in Munich as organized



Miriam Eibner-Löwy (right) with Levi Bar Gil, Shlomo Maman, Eli Kohen and Shmulik Gov-Ari, in Bedford, England, 1996. Photo: Archive Israelisches Tanzhaus

by the ITH, including guest instructors such as **Mishaël Barzilay**, **Moshe Eskayo**, **Sefi Aviv**, **Meir Shem Tov**, and **Avner Naim**. Like many other dance enthusiasts from Europe, she also visited England for **Maurice Stone's** "Machol Europa". She was soon commissioned by the JIFE to teach Israeli folk dance courses (1995-1997). Until recently, like Rennert, she was unaware that her name was published in Rokdim's list of foreign dance instructors (from issue 32, July 1995, p. 47). Due to professional developments, marriage, and pregnancy, she ended her dancing activities around 1999.

Lisa "Batya" Erber (Vienna/Wien) tirkedu@gmail.com

Lisa Erber, originally from Tulln (Lower Austria), is possibly the longest-standing Israeli folk dancer in Austria, as her dance career dates back to the dance circle led by Erwin Rennet as mentioned above. Attending various workshops in Munich and participating at Machol Europa in 1999 solidified her dance repertoire. Starting in 2020, she replaced **Monika Macht** as dance director in the dance group "Hava Nagila". In 2022, she founded yet an additional dance group under the name of "Tirkedu" (Dance!) which replaced "Hava Nagila". They currently dance for three hours every Tuesday from 6:30 p.m. in a seminar center in the Second District (Vienna's "Jewish district"), beginning with easier dances and later moving on to more advanced ones, albeit from the more modern and



Lisa Erber. Photo: Archive Israelisches Tanzhaus

contemporary repertoire. The cost is €12 per participant. On Wednesdays, she leads courses with around fifteen participants at the JIFE, which also welcomes participants with no previous experience. The cost for one trimester (that is for fourteen sessions) is €104 (US \$118 / ILS 430). Due to a lack of men, there are virtually no partner dances in either course. Currently, "Tirkedu" has the only performance group in Vienna that contributes Israeli dances to public street festivals.



*A typical Viennese street performance, June 2024.
Photo: Archive Israelisches Tanzhaus*

Naama Isabelle Fassbinder (Vienna/Wien) naama.fassbinder@gmx.net

Naama Isabelle Fassbinder is originally from Heidelberg (Germany) and began Israeli folk dancing in 1984, at the age of 16, under the direction of **Zeev Heinrich**. In 1991, she moved to Vienna. After failing to find a public dance group there, she decided to found one herself. In 1992, she was appointed course instructor at the Jewish Institute for Adult Education (JIFE), a position she held until 1995. She attended various workshops, including those with Matti Goldschmidt in Vienna and one in Munich with **Moshe Eskayo** in 1995. During this period, the performance group under her direction performed at various public events organized by the City of Vienna and the local JCC. In 1998, after another three years with her private dance circle, she and her dancers decided, for "reasons of age", to switch from Israeli folk dancing to "Biodanza", which had been originally developed in Chile.



Naama Fassbinder's Street Performance Group. Photo: Archive Israelisches Tanzhaus

Bernhard Hofer (Klagenfurt, Carinthia/Kärnten) bernhardhofer@gmail.com

Bernhard Hofer began dancing at a young age, initially as the leader of a children's group within the "Katholische Jungschar" (KJS), the children's organization of the Catholic Church in Austria. In 1994, he joined a dance group founded by **Jutta Trampitsch**, featuring international folk dances. Together with her, in 1995 he participated in the Israelisches Tanzhaus' third dance trip to Israel. The dances he learned there ultimately laid the foundation for shifting the focus of his and Trampitsch's dance repertoire to Israeli. In 1998, Bernhard took over the group, which from then on would essentially focus exclusively on Israeli folk dance. In Munich, he regularly attended workshops organized by the Tanzhaus, including those with **Naftaly Kadosh**, **Tuvia Tishler**, and **Roni Siman Tov**. In the aftermath of COVID-19 and the accompanying well-known restrictions, Bernhard finally disbanded the group in 2022 due to a lack of new participants.



*Naama Isabelle Fassbinder.
Photo: Archiv Israelisches
Tanzhaus*



*Bernhard Hofer.
Photo: Archive Israelisches
Tanzhaus*

Klaus Kerber (Reutte, Tyrol/Tirol) klaus.kerber@web.de

Klaus Kerber is not only a ballet dancer, but also a trained ballet teacher. He received his diploma in 1989 in Vienna from the "Austrian Society for Music Theater" under **Prof. Karol Toth**. Part of his training was also character dance, whereby, according to Kerber's words, character dances are understood to be folk dances created for ballet theater at a professional level. In Munich, Germany, Klaus founded a ballet school called "Viva la Danza". Quite by chance, one of his young students at the time, namely **Katharina Popp**, once asked at the end of a lesson if she could perform an Israeli folk dance that she had learned in one of Matti Goldschmidt's classes. For Klaus, it turned out not to be just this one dance. The use of Rokdim dance videos enabled the Tyrolean native to gradually expand his repertoire and for about five years he has been offering an Israeli Folk Dance Course every Monday at the adult education center in Reutte (Tyrol).



Klaus Kerber.
Photo: Archive Israelisches Tanzhaus

Monika Macht z"l (Vienna/Wien)

Monika Macht (1952-2023) first encountered Israeli folk dance well over thirty years ago: a workshop with Matti Goldschmidt in Graz in 1994, a weekend with Moshe Eskayo, a dance trip to Israel with the Israelisches Tanzhaus in 1995, and Machol Europa with **Shlomo Maman** and **Moshiko Halevy** in 1996 – these were the first and most important stops during her initial years. From 1998 until 2015, she led a dance group called "Hava Nagila" at the JIFE, and in the years that followed, she instructed at a studio called "Tanzstelle", a Viennese "meeting place for dance and movement culture". Most recently, her program consisted of two weekly dance evenings of three hours each (Saturdays and Mondays).



Monika Macht.

Photo: Matti Goldschmidt



Workshop with Rafi Ziv, Vienna 2008. Photo: Archiv Israelisches Tanzhaus



Monika Macht with Rafi Ziv and Matti Goldschmidt in Vienna, 2006.
Photo: Archive Israelisches Tanzhaus



Performance during the European Maccabi Games in Vienna, 2011.
Photo: Archive Israelisches Tanzhaus

The price per evening and per participant was €11 (US \$12.50 / ILS 45). According to an excerpt from the official federal "Register of Associations", the association she chaired, namely "Hava Nagila israelische Tänze Wien e.V.", was founded as a registered charity in September 2018 (ZVR number 1550687066).

Starting in 1996, Monika Macht invited various choreographers from Israel to Vienna, who thus had the opportunity to visit Austria for the first time. The names included **Sefi Aviv**, **Eran Bitton**, **Gadi Bitton**, **Yoram Sasson**, and **Rafi Ziv**. In 2009, she organized a weekend camp in the south of the country called "Machol Austria" in Velden at Wörthersee (Carinthia).

She performed annually at various street festivals with the dancers of her dance group. The highlight was the dance group's performance in 2011 at the opening ceremony of the European Maccabi Games (choreography: Matti Goldschmidt) under the musical direction of **Timna Brauer**, daughter of the painter and singer **Arik Brauer**. Since 2006 she has been regularly accompanied by her granddaughter **Melanie Fröhlich** (cf. Rokdim-Nirkoda 107, p. 12), then only ten years old, and captured on video as a dance partner with Rafi Ziv in Munich in "[Menagev Lach et Hadma'ot](#)" (Wiping Your Tears). You may see ten year old Melanie dancing together with Rafi Ziv from [2:08](#). Around 2020, Melanie moved to Salzburg for professional reasons and thus gave up her dance activities.



Melanie Fröhlich, Vienna 2007.
Photo: Matti Goldschmidt

In April 2022, due to Monika's already advanced illness, she ended her dance activities in Vienna in cooperation with **Judith Weinmann-Stern** with a weekend workshop with **Dudu Barzilay**.



Helmut Stolterfoht.
Photo: Matti Goldschmidt

Helmut Stolterfoht (Graz, Styria/Steiermark) hstolterfoht@yahoo.com

Over twenty years ago, **Helmut Stolterfoht**, originally from Stuttgart, Germany, founded a Sunday dance group specializing in Israeli folklore in Graz, Austria's second-largest city with 303,000 inhabitants (and home to **Arnold Schwarzenegger**, former Governor of California from 2003 to 2011). After a brief hiatus and a break until 2014, Helmut dances – and this is remarkable for Austria – five times a week, Monday to Friday at lunchtime, at the "Tanzsportklub Eden" in the city center. Only on Thursday evenings do they meet in the (Catholic) parish of Graz-Ragnitz. Around seven dancers usually attend each of these meetings. They dance both older and newer dances, especially those with music that contains texts from the Bible or other religious sources. Partner dances are also done, as long as men occasionally join in. A fee of €5 (US \$5.70 or ILS 20) is payable per participant and per meeting.

Helmut dances – and this is remarkable for Austria – five times a week, Monday to Friday at lunchtime, at the "Tanzsportklub Eden" in the city center.



Veronika Wassermann.
Photo: Archive Israelisches
Tanzhaus

Veronika Wassermann (St. Pölten, Lower Austria/Niederösterreich) ott.veronika@gmail.com

Since 2011, Veronika has been leading classes in her private winter garden in Saint Pölten, the capital of Lower Austria, about 60 kilometers (around 39 miles) west of Vienna. The group consists of an average of ten people who meet every Monday for two hours. They intensively practice about five dances each evening. There is no participation fee for the classes.

At just 19 years old, Veronika was so inspired by "[Od Lo Ahavti Dai](#)" (I Haven't Loved Enough) that she subsequently created her own choreographies, based on basic Israeli steps, to music composed by her husband, **Bertram**. Naturally, those were based on well-known Israeli melodies. Her nine dances have since been published with dance descriptions on a CD and DVD under the title "The Dance Book of Baroness von Frech".

Veronika was so inspired by "Od Lo Ahavti Dai" that she subsequently created her own choreographies, based on basic Israeli steps, to music composed by her husband, Bertram

Veronika is particularly enthusiastic about the joy and liveliness of Israeli folk dances; both of these characteristics are, according to her words, "usually quickly transferred to those present". Their repertoire, which has now grown to twenty-four dances, includes titles such as "[Dror Yikra](#)" (He Shall Proclaim Freedom), "[Al Kanfei Hakesef](#)" (On Silver Wings), "[Todah](#)" (Thank You) and "[Mechol Halahat](#)" (the Flame Dance).

Around 1900, Austria's capital was one of the most important centers of Jewish culture in Europe. Today, only around 8,200 citizens are registered as Jews in Austria (although including unregistered Jews, the number could be twice as high), about 85% of whom live in Vienna.



Orly Star Setareh

Orly Star is the "heartbeat" and energy of the community! She promotes a passion for Israel and inspires a love of learning. Her charismatic, welcoming nature immediately captivates new dancers and sparks a much-needed connection to our Jewish community.

Sipur Milchamot – A Story of Wars

Dance of the Month



Orly Star Setareh was born in Jerusalem, Israel and moved with her family to Beverly Hills, California in the United States when she was seven years old. She studied ballet as a child but developed a sense of love and devotion for Israeli folk dance at the age of 19. She assisted and was mentored by **David Dassa** in Los Angeles for 16 years. Today, Orly conducts the largest Israeli dance session in Los Angeles with young and veteran dancers every Wednesday evening at "Adat Shalom".

With over 26 years of teaching experience, instructing Israeli dance to children and adults of all ages throughout the Los Angeles and the Valley areas, Orly Star is the "heartbeat" and energy of the community! She promotes a passion for Israel and inspires a love of learning. Her charismatic, welcoming nature immediately captivates new dancers and sparks a much-needed connection to our Jewish community.

Orly infuses a fresh and young vibe into every teaching lesson while maintaining the importance of tradition. She creates Israeli dance programs for many Jewish private schools and summer camps and is invited all over the world to educate teachers on how to bring the younger generation to dance. She works hard to ensure that folk dancing continues and is passed down from generation to generation.

Orly has choreographed [Israeli dances](#) that are danced all over the world. She loves to create dances that bridge the gap between the older and younger generations so that both can dance together. Her most beloved dance is "Sipur Milchamot" (Sipurey Milchamot) – A Story of Wars (War Stories)".

Orly tells us about the dance:

This is a song and dance that is a war story and tribute to a heroic 19-year-old Golani (IDF) soldier, **Re'em Meir Betito**, who was killed on October 7th while protecting Israel. The lyrics of the song recreate the words and last conversation Re'em had with his mom on the phone before he was killed. He was crying and afraid. She told him: "wipe your tears. You have prepared your whole life for this situation. You know exactly what to do."



Re'em Meir Betito z"l

“This situation is much bigger than me. Everyone around me has died. I see things no one should see. I just want to tell you that I love you and if something happens to me and I don’t get out of this alive please know that I lived a little but I loved a lot.”



Everything is okay. You have to stay strong!” But he replies: “this situation is much bigger than me. Everyone around me has died. I see things no one should see. I just want to tell you that I love you and if something happens to me and I don’t get out of this alive please know that I lived a little but I loved a lot.” The song concludes with the heart-wrenching, poignant lyrics: “When dreams die, heroes are born, memories live on”.

The dance is a waltz that is like a painting. Each step is like a brush stroke of intense emotions. The beginning of the dance evokes waking up in the morning to go to his post. In the transitional balance step sequence, there is

a gesture of wiping your tears as your hands swipe across your eyes. The next part uses back and forth movement with double tcherkessia steps and turning in and out of the circle, mirroring the conversation between Re’em and his mother. Following this there is a backward movement to show that the nation of Israel is behind our soldiers, supporting them from near and far.

This dance is a journey that makes you feel a sense of appreciation and gratitude for the sacrifices of our soldiers – our heroes and champions. It is a story about our Jewish history in the past and present – the story of our people and our country – then and now. The dance is relevant and created with respect and intention. It’s a dance for everyone.

Sipur Milchamot – Dance Notation

Formation: Circle

Structure: One verse, two parts, transition, additional phrase

Meter: 3/4 (In the notation, each count represents one measure.)

Part A: Face Center

- 1 Waltz step fwd (RLR) rising on toes and raising arms upward.
- 2 Waltz step bwd (LRL) lowering arms.
- 3-4 Balance step R to rt. w/R arm opening upward and out to rt.; balance step L to left. w/L arm opening upward and out to left.
- 5 1¼ turn rt. moving CCW to end facing CCW.
- 6 Rock fwd onto L, step back on R in place, rock back onto L.
- 7 Step R fwd, brush L fwd, step L fwd.
- 8 Repeat count 7.

- 9-10 Two waltz steps fwd (RLR, LRL).
- 11-12 Full turn fwd with waltz step (RLR); cross L across R, step R back in place, step L to left to face center.
- 13-14 Repeat counts 1-2 (waltz steps fwd & bwd raising and lowering arms).
- 15-16 Full turn left with two waltz steps R-L beginning with R crossing over L.
- 17-32 Repeat counts 1-16.

Transition: Face Center

- 1-3 Three balance steps beginning with RLR. On the first two balance steps, the back of each hand wipes across eyes reflecting the song lyrics, “wipe the tears”.
- 4 Full turn left with waltz step (LRL).

Part B: Face Center

- 1 Stamp R across L to left turning body ¼ turn to left; step L back in place; step R to rt. opening to face center.

- 2 Step L across R to rt. turning body ¼ turn to rt; step R to rt., step L behind R to face center.
- 3-4 Repeat counts 1-2 (Part B).
- 5-6 Double tcherkessia step: Cross R over L, step L back in place, step R to R; cross L over R, step R back in place, step L to left.
- 7 Move fwd toward center turning ½ turn rt. with RLR.
- 8 Move out of center turning ½ turn left with LRL.
- 9-10 Moving CCW: Waltz step R fwd; waltz step L fwd turning ½ turn left to face CW.
- 11-12 Moving bwd CCW: Waltz step R bwd; waltz step L bwd turning ¼ turn rt. to face center.
- 13-14 Balance step R.; full turn left with LRL.

- 15-16 Repeat counts 1-2 Part A.
- 17-24 Repeat counts 9-16 Part B.

Repeat Part A counts 1-16

Repeat Transition

Repeat Part B

Additional phrase (after the second time through the dance):

- 1-2 Balance steps from side to side (RLR, LRL).

- 3-4 Full turn rt. with two waltz steps R-L moving CCW on the line of the circle.

- 5-8 Repeat counts 1-4.

Ending: Repeat Part A counts 1-12, step fwd on R with arms raised, hold.

Instructions notated by **Ruth Goodman and Allen King**

This is a song and dance that is a war story and tribute to a heroic 19-year-old Golani (IDF) soldier, Re'em Meir Betito, who was killed on October 7th while protecting Israel. The lyrics of the song recreate the words and last conversation Re'em had with his mom on the phone before he was killed.

Sipurey Milchamot

Lyrics and Music: **Eli Huli, Or Frey, Ido Ohayon**; Vocalist: **Eli Huli**

Transliteration

Kamti baboker lifnei hazricha, ve...
Ze od yom Shabbat she'ani mifasfes arucha
be...
Chultza levana, lovesh ta'madim, olim
le'shmira

Avak ve'ashan memalim ta'einayim
Shrikot pagazim machrishot et ha'oznayim
Ze lo kmo ba'sratim
O sipurey milchamot
ra'iti dvarim she'asur li lirot
Menagev et hadma'ot
Atem mistaklim alai
"Ata kvar muchan le'ze"
Omrin ze katan alai
Aval ani katan le'ze
Kulam me'a'chorai
Ve'im lo netze mi'ze
Tady'u she'chayiti me'at aval ahavti harbeh

Chozrim lamutzav lo hifsaknu lalechet
Eich oto hamakom nir'a kol kach acheret
Kulam nilchamim u'ven kavanot
Cholmim al kol ma she'yacholnu lihyot
Menagev et hadma'ot

Atem mistaklim alai
"Ata kvar muchan le'ze"
Omrin ze katan alai
Aval ani katan le'ze
Kulam me'a'chorai
Ve'im lo netze mi'ze
Tayd'u she'chayiti me'at aval ahavti harbeh

Ending

Od me'at erev achshav kvar yode'a
Slichim pagati be'mi she'shome'a
K'she'chalomot metim giborim noladim
Zichronot nisharim

Translation

I woke up in the morning before the sunrise, and...
It's another Shabbat that I'm missing a meal, in a...
White shirt, wearing my uniform, going onto guard duty

Dust and smoke fill my eyes
The whistling of shells deafens my ears
It's not like in the movies
Or war stories
I saw things I shouldn't have seen
I wipe away the tears

You look at me
"You're already prepared for this"
They say it's not a big deal for me
But I'm too small for this
Everyone's behind me
And if we don't get out of this
Know that I lived a little but loved a lot

Returning to the outpost, we didn't stop walking
How the same place looks so different
Everyone is fighting and between the (rifle) scopes
We dream of everything that we could have been
I wipe away the tears



You look at me
"You're already prepared for this"
They say it's not a big deal for me
But I'm too small for this
Everyone's behind me
And if we don't get out of this
Know that I lived a little but loved a lot

Ending

It's almost evening, I already know
Sorry if I hurt anyone who's listening
When dreams die, heroes are born, memories live on

Lyrics transliteration and translation by Benny Levy



Lital Maman
Translation:
Ruth Goodman

My Father! You Are An Israel Prize Laureate!



This is one of those defining moments in life that makes me pause and reflect on our shared moments on this journey. I remember from my childhood that you worked – you worked a lot! You tirelessly traversed [the country], from the south to the north. You circled the globe in folk dance camps to spread your dances around the world. I remember the dolls you brought me from places in the world you visited as part of your work in Israeli dance. Remember when you brought me a life-size kangaroo and koala from Australia? From Austria – a huge purple box of "Milka" chocolates. That was before the era of WhatsApp and video. That's how I learned where you take your steps in the world.

The first time I remember the recognition you received in your field was as artistic director at the Karmiel Festival. I remember the excitement, the warm greetings you received when we walked around together through the harkadot (dance sessions).

The Karmiel Festival has accompanied me since I was in the womb of my mother (Lucy) – who says that until she was in her ninth month of being pregnant with me, she would move from stage to stage and work with the dance companies. Later on, I remember myself as a child on the lawn of Karmiel until late at night. Each time, a different company member or choreographer took it upon himself to look after me, as I watched my father speak into the microphone and conduct the general dress rehearsal with great skill and talent.



With Lital Maman



With Yoav Kisch, Minister of Education



From there we would continue on to production meetings until the wee hours of the night. At first, I just tried to sleep. Then, little by little, I expressed my opinion and you all took me completely seriously and appreciated my opinions. Already then I felt how tickled I was to join the lehakot (dance troupes), dance the "mayim" steps and raise our arms to the sounds of "Or" and "Karmiel Rokedet."



With Ronen Tinn

I was moved by the unity that was created there on stage and the power that it generated. I appreciated it no less than a well stretched leg. Although I have always danced in professional settings (settings that also did not always appreciate Israeli dance enough), much to your credit, I felt strongly that Israeli dance is our cornerstone, and therefore, it burns and continues to burn in my bones to this day.

I remember our trips together during which you had to check out the music for the Karmiel Festival and we would listen to them in "loops". There were old Israeli songs that I learned and came to know thanks to you. Maybe that's why I always feel like I was born in the wrong era. Kids my age never understood how I knew **Shoshana Damari**, **Yardena Arazi** and **Natan Alterman** and how much I love this music.



With the Lehakat HaStudentim and Galgaley Rishon



With Itzik Sa'ada



With David Felber, Head of the National Service Division in the Education Ministry and Advisor to the Minister of Education for the Israel Prize



With Galit Wahba Shasho, Director of the State Ceremonies and Events Division, former Head of the Cultural Administration at the Ministry of Culture and Sport

To this day, in every setting I am in, I feel how important it is for me to incorporate Israeli dance and music. Therefore, every year, as part of my undergraduate studies in dance at Seminar HaKibbutzim (Kibbutzim College), I invited you and Mom to join me and conduct an event – an Israeli dance workshop – and expose the Seminar HaKibbutzim students to Israeli folk dance.

You also passed on to me the passion and desire to make the love of movement and dance accessible to everyone, as in "Dance Baby", the project I created – dances for parents with baby carriers, so that they can move together with their baby from birth. That's how Gillan (my husband), Alaia, and Luan – our sweet children, joined the circle of dancers.

The work that you and mom did with Jewish communities abroad inspired my work with the youth of Jewish communities, with whom I worked as part of Taglit (Birthright), or at camps in the United States. I understood very well the responsibility on my shoulders to convey the love for the land of Israel through the feet, through the body, and first and foremost – through the soul.



A defining moment in our relationship was when I started working with you in Lehakat HaStudentim. Our bond became even closer. We spent a great many hours together on intensely focused Saturdays or late-night rehearsals.

You are a man of work and action, a true "workaholic". And all of this would not have been possible without the support of your family. They gave you the peace and quiet that a true artist needs – to create and be active.

My father! I still can't believe I'm saying that you are an "Israel Prize "laureate" and there's no one prouder of you than I am. Your determination, perseverance and endless work have always been and will always be a guiding light for me. Your love for what you do sweeps everyone who comes within your orbit off their feet.

The embrace and love you received from all those who love you and all the dignitaries at the ceremony, including the President (of Israel), moved me to tears. I felt like this entire journey of life was concentrated on one stage, full of recognition, for the amazing path you have taken and continue to take.



With Nir Lahav



With Lucy and Lital Maman



With Moshe Telem and Yael Yaakobi

With pride and much love.



With Yoel Avitan



With Lehakat Hadarey Rehovot



With Itzik Sa'ada



With President Herzog



With Miriam Adelson



Shlomo with members of his family



With Ronit Tamir, Moshe Telem, and Yael Yaakobi



With Liat and Eti Katz, and with Dudi



With Haim Milstein



With the family



With Aharon and Naomi Salomon



With Zehava Ben



Shlomo with his brother Itzik



With Avi Baranes



With Avi Toledano



With Aharon Salomon



The connection between folk dance troupes and the general public is a mutually enriching asset.

This section aims to renew and deepen this connection. Each issue will focus on a different dance company.



Compiled and edited by Shuki Hoffman
Photographs: Nurit Mozes and Rotem Almoz
Translation: Ruth Goodman and Benny Levy

The Center For Dance "Synopsis" Tiberias

The "Synopsis" dance troupes are the representative dance troupes of the city of Tiberias. The troupes operate within the framework of an elite dance school and are artistically and professionally managed by **Doron Gueta**.

Sponsors: Tiberias Community Center Network, Tiberias Municipality and with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Sport.

Doron Gueta

Director and choreographer in the field of folk dance for stage, modern and contemporary dance and dance-theater. As a child, he danced in the lehakot (dance troupes) of **Dado Kraus** and **Shlomo Maman**, and was later trained at a workshop for the training of professional dancers at the dance village (Kfar HaMachol) in Kibbutz Ga'aton, founded by the late **Yehudit Arnon** z"l Israel Prize laureate for Dance. Later he danced in Lehakat HaMachol HaKibbutzit HaTze'ira (the Young Kibbutz Dance Company) under the artistic direction of **Rami Be'er**.

About ten years ago, he founded and established the matriculation exam dance program in Tiberias which operates within the framework of the troupes and he serves as a national examiner in practical matriculation exams in dance. He is a member of the professional committee of the field of dance in the Ministry of Education and co-wrote the first curriculum written in the field of folk dance for the stage for middle schools.

Academic studies: Bachelor's degree in education and dance instruction at the Kibbutzim College and Master's degree in the Interdisciplinary Arts Program at Tel Aviv University.

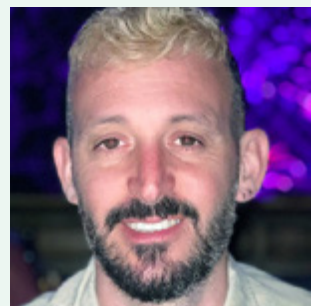
In recent years, he has directed major performances at the Karmiel Dance Festival and the Ashdodance Dance Festival.

Director of the "Synopsis" School and Dance Troupes, Tiberias: Avia Mordechai Gozlan

She holds a certificate as a producer of stage events from the external studies program of "Rimon College", and is engaged in the production of shows, municipal events and cultural initiatives. As a teenager, she grew up and danced in the "Synopsis" dance troupes and stood out as an entrepreneur and social leader. She has served as a director for the past eight years, lives and breathes the work with the dancers and works to promote the fields of dance, stage and artistic education in the city. She is married to Nir Gozlan and is the mother of two-year-old Maor.

Choreographer and Coordinator of the Junior Division: Bar Noa Ben Shabat

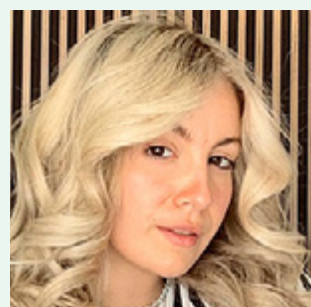
Bar is a creator in the field of Israeli dance, with extensive experience in teaching, choreography and production of shows and events. As a teenager, she danced and grew up in the "Synopsis" dance troupes. Today, she coordinates all the activities of the Junior Division (grades 1-6) and serves as a teacher and choreographer. She holds a bachelor's degree in education and community from the Kinneret Academic College and a certificate in dance instruction from the Levinsky-Wingate Academic Center. In addition to her professional role in dance companies, she serves as a producer and coordinator of events and social activities for the dance troupes.



Doron Gueta



Avia Mordechai Gozlan



Bar Noa Ben Shabat



Lehakot Staff: Classical Ballet Instructor – **Lee Alfasi**, Composition Instructor – **Kida Tidhar**, Modern and Repertoire Instructor – **Yahav Ohayon**, Early Childhood/Instructor: **Hila Cohen**, Rehearsal Manager – **Yahav Braunstein**.

About the Leahakot (Dance Troupes)

The "Synopsis" Tiberias dance troupes currently have about 350 male and female dancers, divided into groups according to age. "The "Synopsis" troupes represent the city of Tiberias and take part in events in municipal, national and international spheres – in festivals, competitions and various events.

The repertoire of the troupes is varied and includes unique works suitable for every occasion and every theme. The works combine unique musical arrangements, colorful and spectacular costumes and stage props, creating an unforgettable cultural experience for the viewer.

The lehakot have a cohesive movement language, combining past and present, old and new, tradition and modern progress. The themes of the dances parallels the breadth of the movement language while engaging with Israeli, Jewish and universal narratives.



The "Synopsis" Tiberias dance troupes are considered relatively young troupes. They were founded in 2010 by **Doron Gueta** and **Yifat Ruach** together with the Director of the Culture Department, **Shlomi Zer**. Every year the companies participate in the Karmiel Dance Festival, the Ashdodance Dance Festival and the Bitnua Camp Festival in Eilat. As part of these events, they have collaborated with first-rate artists; **Danny Sanderson**, **Sarit Hadad**, **Idan Raichel**, **Marina Maximilian**, **Roni Daloomi**, **Orna Datz**, **Elai Botner** Ve'Yaldei HaChautz, **Narkis**, **Ariel Zilber** and more. You can view the troupe's dances on YouTube and on the Instagram page: synopsis_tiberias.



Achievements:

In Israel

2017: Karmiel Dance Festival – 3rd place in the choreography category for the work, "HaMalachim Ba'im – The Sailors Are Coming".

2017: Karmiel Dance Festival – 2nd place in the choreography category for the work "Betza'ad Teimani – In a Yemenite Step".

2018: Karmiel Dance Festival – 2nd place in the choreography category for the work "Tumbalalaika".

2019: Karmiel Dance Festival – 3rd place in the choreography category for the work "At Telchi Basadeh – You Will Walk in the Field".

2019: Karmiel Dance Festival – 2nd place in the choreography category, 1st place in the performance category, 1st place in the costume design category and the Audience Choice Award for the piece "HaNigun – The Melody".

2020: Karmiel Dance Festival – Best Dance Award for the work "Po Ze Lo Europa – Here is Not Europe".

2022: Karmiel Dance Festival – Audience Choice Award for the work "She'eriyot Shel HaChayim – Remnants of Life".

2022: Leah Porat Gur National Competition – 3rd place in the choreography category for the piece "HaNigun – The Melody".





Throughout the world:

2023: International competition at the South Korean Andong Mask Dance Festival – 3rd place in the Best Dance category for the piece "Hakol Talu'i Becha – It's All Up to You".

2023: International competition at the South Korean Dance and Masks Festival – 1st place in the Best Dance category for the piece "Arba HaOnot – The Four Seasons".

2023: International competition at the South Korean Dance and Masks Festival – 1st place in the Best Dance category for the piece "Zman L'Ahava – A Time for Love".



Original Productions – Lehakot Performances

2011 – "Synopsis 2011".

2012 – "Milchama Ve'Shalom – War and Peace".

2013 – "Chayim Be'Seret – Living in a Dream World".

2014 – "Mischakim – Games".

2015 – "Moledet Yechefa – Barefoot Homeland".

2016 – "Onot – Seasons".

2017 – "Beresheet Shemot" and "Playlist".

2018 – "Ir Eretz – City Country" and "Rak Rotzim Lirkod – Just Want to Dance".

2019 – "Le'abed Et Zeh – Processing It" and "Doz Poa".

2020 – "Slichu Al Ha'She'eila – Excuse the Question?! Synopsis".

2022 – "Rock-Dim" and "Chagigat Machol – Dance Celebration".

2023 – "Neches Tzon Barzel – Heritage Asset" and "Asorim – Decades".

2024 – "Ha'Erev Machazemer – Tonight is a Musical" and "Yesh Bi Ahava – There is Love Within Me".

2025 – "Zman Misparim – Numbers Time" and "Ein Kmo Ima – There's Nothing Like Mom".

In addition, every year starting in 2015, there is an evening of individual works in which the dancers are given a stage to create dances.



Original Productions – Dance Theater

Within the framework of the lehakot, two full-length dance theater works (50 minutes) have been created to date and presented on an arena stage (in the round). The audience surrounds the stage, the dancers sit among the spectators who dance near them. Within this artistic model, dance segments derived from the theme of the work are constructed and deconstructed. In the absence of a boundary and a barrier between the audience and the dancers, the result is fascinating and empowering, and even creates a different and mesmerizing viewing experience.

2017: "Nekudat Gisha – Access Point" – deals with the dominance of technology and smartphones in our lives and Western society's ways of coping.

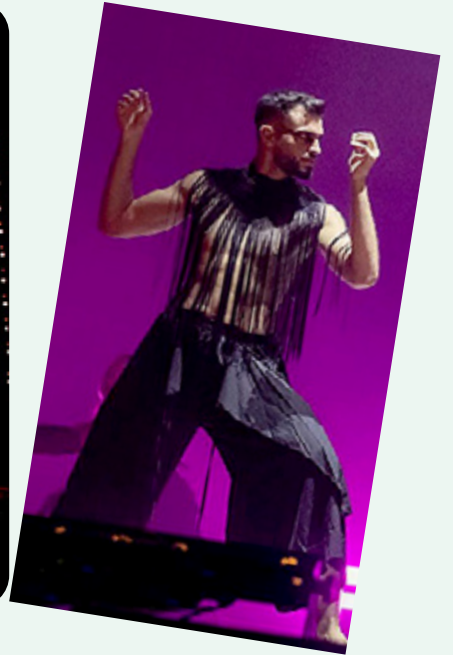
2023: "Mano'a – Engine" – introduces the audience to a new, fascinating interpretive perspective on some of the extensive work of the contemporary poet Noam Horev.

Almost every year, the company represents the city of Tiberias and the State of Israel at various festivals and events around the world: United States, Germany, China, Brazil, France, South Korea, and more.











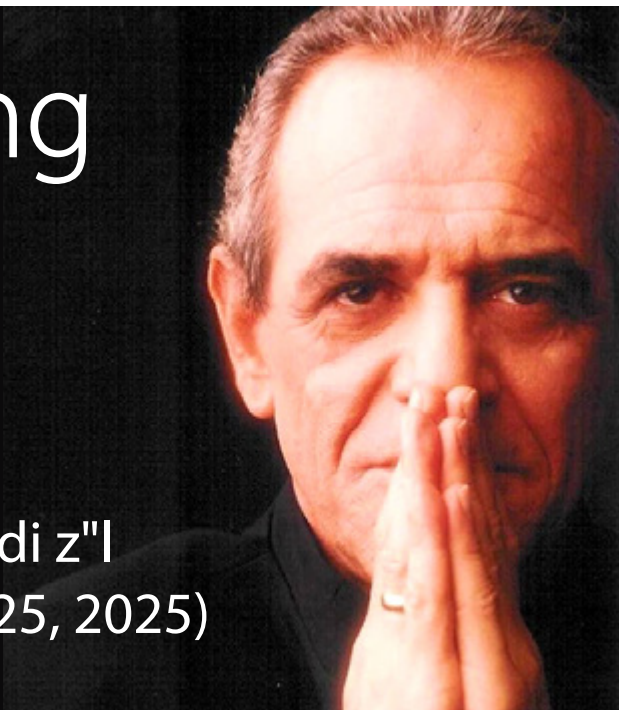
Miri Krymolowski,
Cultural Researcher
and Dance Critic at
Kol Israel

Translation:
Ruth Goodman

"When the award was presented to Yair Vardi, who was the life's breath in the establishment of the Center and the director of the Center for thirty years, it was clear and obvious, because when you said the Suzanne Dellal Center, you said Yair Vardi."

Illuminating the World of Dance

In Memory of Yair Vardi z"l
(May 29, 1948 – May 25, 2025)



In 2010, the Suzanne Dellal Center was awarded the Israel Prize. Among the reasons for the award: "In its twenty years of activity in Neve Tzedek, the Center has succeeded in bringing about the rise of the art of dance in the State of Israel. The Center's many and diverse artistic initiatives have nurtured a new generation of artists, creators and performers in the field of artistic dance." When the award was presented to **Yair Vardi**, who was the life's breath in the establishment of the Center and the director of the Center for thirty years, it was clear and obvious, because when you said the Suzanne Dellal Center, you said Yair Vardi.

The Suzanne Dellal Center was built with funding from the British **Dellal family** in memory of their daughter **Suzanne**, who died at the age of 23 under tragic circumstances. It opened to the public in 1989, which is also when I met Vardi while working as a reporter for "Rokdim" magazine. Later, my acquaintance with Vardi deepened after I also became the dance correspondent for Kol Israel. In those early days of this impressive project, most of the public was not familiar with the Neve Tzedek neighborhood at all.

In a short time, the place became a magnet for anyone who was involved in or simply loved dance, with all its genres, themes, and dancers. The entire neighborhood developed around it.

Vardi was the man who was always there, not only for ideas such as the international exposure events to cultural centers around the world, "Haramat Masach – Raising the Curtain," "Macholohet – Hot Dance", and others, but also was physically available to everyone. He lived and breathed the place, infusing everyone around him with his enthusiasm and vision.

Yair Vardi was born on Kibbutz Kfar Blum, precisely at the same time as the birth of the



This is undoubtedly one of the things that is important to mention in the context of Vardi's work, the fact that he did not rank the types of dance. Any dance, if it was done well, was worthy in his eyes.

State of Israel in May 1948. Let us recall that at that time, a kibbutz member who wanted to go out to dance was unusual, one might say, even daring. When he arrived in the big city, he quickly became a dancer in the Batsheva Company and later even choreographed for the company.

He made the biggest leap in his career in England, initially in London and later in the dance company he managed in the city of Newcastle. The idea of a unique dance center in Israel brought him back to Israel with his wife, the dancer **Stella Ford**. The Center also became the center of his life.

Over the years, he pushed and was excited by every development at the Center: the construction of the adjacent building for the Batsheva Company, the **Yaron Yerushalmi** Children's Performance Festival, large-scale outdoor events, and so on; each time there was a new idea, each time new partnerships at home and abroad. When he retired from the Center, he was appointed director of dance at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance and continued to be active in the world of dance.

But not much has been said about his original thinking and the fact that he did not discriminate. This is undoubtedly one of the things that is important to mention in the context of Vardi's work, the fact that he did not rank the types of dance. Any dance, if it was done well, was worthy in his eyes. Thus, he later became an active and full partner in the artistic management of the dance festivals in Karmiel. Being a man without dichotomies, he legitimized and elevated folk dance and, for that matter, Middle Eastern dance (what is sometimes called belly dancing in our regions). The Center also provided a stage for flamenco dance with the "Flamenco Days" festivals, the initiative of the late **Eva Agmon z"l**, in memory of her flamenco dancer daughter **Adi Agmon z"l**.

Vardi loved dance with all his heart and soul, in all its forms, and this was his life's mission. In one of the interviews I did with him for Reshet Bet of Kol Israel, I asked him what he thought about the shows that suddenly appeared on our television screens, such as "Nolad Lirkod –

Born to Dance," "Rokdim Im Kochavim – Dancing with the Stars," and the like. I expected an answer that would mock these reality shows, but Vardi answered simply:

"These programs only do good for the dance world. Look how many people who were not at all connected to dance discovered this world, and now we, too, have new audiences. Every dialogue with this world is blessed, and may there be more like it in the future. May we be blessed with a generation that did not know dance but discovered it with joy."

