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“Who’s Right? Whose Rite? American, German or Israeli Views of Dance”

By Judith Brin Ingber

The crux of dance writing, history, criticism, research, teaching and performance of course is the dance itself. Unwittingly I became involved in all of these many facets of dance when I came from the US for five months and stayed in Israel for five years (1972-77). None of these facets were clear cut and the diamond I thought I treasured and knew how to look at and teach had far more complexity, influences with boundaries blending differently than I had thought. Besides, what I had been taught as to how modern dance developed or what were differences between types of dance had different bearings in this new country.

My essay will synthesize dance information and personal experiences including comments on Jewish identity while reporting on the ascension of modern dance and folk dance in Israel. It was only later as I began researching and writing about theatre dance and its development in Israel, that I came to realize as important were the living dance traditions in Jewish *eydot* (communities) and the relatively recent history of the creation of new Israeli folk dances. I came to see dance styles and personalities interacting in a much more profound and influential way than I had ever expected.

I was a studio trained ballet dancer, my teachers Ballets Russes alums Anna Adrianova and Lorand Andahazy; added to that, I studied modern dance at Sarah Lawrence College in New York. It was one of the few vibrant modern dance programs in American academia in the middle 1960s, and at its dance program core was dance composition, taught by the esteemed Bessie

Schoenberg.¹ (Today, the Bessies, in her memory, are awarded yearly in New York to recognize the best performers and creators in dance). Though she was born (1906) and raised in Germany, she allied herself with America's most important modern dance creators. Her first modern teacher was American Martha Hill (who established the important summer dance program at Bennington College; company residencies at the American Dance Festival; and early degree programs in dance at New York University and finally, she was first director of the Juilliard School's remarkable dance program). Then Schoenberg joined the Martha Graham Dance Company, one of the original dancers in Graham's *Heretic* and also dancing in other works, the most important *Primitive Mysteries* in 1931. Like all the American modern dancers Schoenberg too prided herself as being in the line of the first revolutionaries Isadora Duncan and Louie Fuller--both of whom went on to dance all over Europe--in turn inspiring Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn's Denishawn troupe. They spawned those known as the second generation (including Martha Graham).

In Israel I learned much more about the development of the German *Ausdruckstanz* modern dance and also German modern body culture. I learned that like in many things, what I had been taught about American dancers leading a new path away from ballet was not the only story. So did the German modern dancers at about the same time. The powerhouse dancer, choreographer and innovator Rudolph Laban wrote in his memoir *Ein Leben für den Tanz*, that "before the advent of the Third Reich no country was more active in the development of modern dance than Germany."² Besides the all powerful Laban and his followers Mary Wigman, Grete Palucca, Harold Kreutzberg, Kurt Jooss there were a host of others who had their own schools and companies (with government support in many of the different German cities). There was also the influence of Emile Jacques-Delcroze's eurythmics and his music, dance and theatre experiments. His school at Hellerau-Dresden in 1910 and then in Laxenburg near Vienna influenced many including Marie Rambert (she was the one who helped communication between the Ballets Russes's star and choreographer Nijinsky and composer Stravinsky).

In Israel I found out about many theatre dancers who had begun their careers in Europe. Margolit Ornstein from Vienna who had opened the first

¹ Cynthia Nazzaro Noble, *Bessie Schoenberg, Pioneer Dance Educator and Choreographic Mentor*, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005.

² Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy, Nudity and Movement in German Body culture, 1910-1935*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, 98.

studio of *Ausdruckstanz* in *Eretz-Yisrael* (Land of Israel or Palestine) in 1922 when she moved there. She trained her twin daughters Yehudit and Shoshana and they became her main teachers and featured dancers. They did return to Europe in the summers to study at Hellerau, with Laban, Ellinor Tordis, and with Gertrud Bodenweiser.³

Gertrud Kraus⁴ left the Vienna Academy of Music and Dance where she was both dance accompanist and occasional dance student to form her own school and dance company. In 1929 she assisted Laban in the creation of festival processions in Vienna and by the 1930 International Munich Dance Congress she gained critical attention for her work, especially her “Songs of the Ghetto” cycle. Kraus’s first tour outside Europe in 1931 went from Egypt through *Eretz-Yisrael* to Lebanon. The sights and sounds of Jerusalem especially influenced her. Sensing pending doom, she left Austria in 1935 for *Erretz-Yisrael* where she created dances for the Palestine Folk Opera, the Habimah National Theatre Company and for her reestablished Gertrud Kraus Company. She inspired many who performed or studied with her over several decades; those in her first troupe included Wera Goldman, Hilde Kesten, Paula Padani and Naomi Aleskovsky, then Yonatan Karmon, Arie Kalev. Students who made their own careers in New York included Ze’eva Cohen, and later Zvi Gotheiner.

We all know the years leading up to and including World War II decimated all aspects of Jewish life in Europe, including those involved in professional dance, religious dance and folk dance. Some European professionals though escaped the Nazis by the late ‘30s for *Eretz-Yisrael*: Ruth Harris; Wigman dancers Katia Michieli, Ilsa Dublon and Shulamit Bat Dori; Tehilla Roessler from Prague; Deborah Bertonoff from Russia studied with Jooss⁵ in England from 1934-36 and returned to *Eretz-Yisrael*. They all

³ Ruth Eshel, ed. Giora Manor, *Lirkod em hahalom*, Israel: Sifreat Poalim, 1991, 14-15; 29-45.

For further info on Bodenwieser see Betina Vernon-Warren and Charles Warren, eds. *Gertrud Bodenwieser and Vienna’s Contribution to Ausdruckstanz*, Australia: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999.

⁴ Giora Manor, *Haim hamahol shel Gertrud Kraus*, Israel: hotzaat hakibutz hameuhad, 1978. In Hebrew and English, 1-102.

⁵ Kurt Jooss, who had worked with Laban, established his own company in Essen and a studio called the Folkwangschule. He worked with music composer Fritz Cohen and together with his dancers (many who were also Jewish) created the anti-war dance “Green Table” in 1932. It became his most popular international work but due to virulent hostility towards Jooss by the Nazi press and propaganda he took his company of 23 performers and “sneaked across the Dutch border in September 1933” just before the Gestapo moved to arrest him. His company was then headquartered in Dartington Hall, England from 1934-42, though he went back to live and work in Germany in 1949. (Today probably his most famous

helped to promote the Expressionist-style in teaching and performance and many created their own dances (Bertonoff also wrote extensively). It was an odd fact that these dancers in Israel bridged the censorship and destruction of the war years to continue and develop European modern dance. In addition, there were also physical education teachers who had been trained in the German body culture as well as the *Nacktkulture* movements who helped to create new approaches to physical education in *Eretz-Yisrael* and also an interest in folk dance.⁶

Fritz Berger (later in the US known as Fred Berk) who had been a member of Kraus's company in Vienna also successfully escaped the Nazis, eventually settling in the US. Under his new name Fred Berk made his second career in New York and before teaching and directing became his focus, he danced with former Kraus performers Claudia Vall and especially Katya Delakova.⁷ Some articles and books have been written about those who made new lives despite the Nazis, but more is needed.⁸ Little considered is even the effect of the Nazis on dance writing skewing who were important performers.⁹

Despite World War II, in the US Martha Graham was becoming more and more important. Her "Appalachian Spring" with a commissioned score by Aaron Copland was a hit in 1944. Graham had been teaching at Neighborhood Playhouse in the poor, heavily Jewish Eastern European immigrant area of New York known as the Lower East Side. Many of her students there joined the Graham Company including Sophie Maslow, Anna Sokolow and Miriam Cole. Their sense of wronged minorities and the need

student is Pina Bausch). See Karl Toepfer, *The Empire of Ecstasy*, 271. In 1975 Jooss came with his daughter to restage "The Green Table" for the Batsheva Dance Company.

⁶ See more about the role of physical education teachers in creating new outlooks of the Jewish body in Eretz-Yisrael in Judith Brin Ingber, "Vilified or Glorified, Views of the Jewish Body" in *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review*, Vol 20, 2000.

⁷ Judith Brin Ingber, *Victory Dances, The Story of Fred Berk, A Modern Day Jewish Dancing Master*, Tel Aviv: The Israel Dance Library, 1985.

⁸ Patricia Stoeckmann, "Tanz im Exil; Emigranten" (to Paris; England; Warsaw; Stockholm; Israel; Paraguay; US; Chile; Algeria; Argentina; Australia), *Tanzdrama Magazin*, #42, series 3, 1998, 13-43. (in German).

Marion Kant and Lilian Karina, *Hitler's Dancers, German Modern Dance and the Third Reich*, New York: Berghahn Books, trans. By Jonathan Steinberg, 2003.

Marion Kant, "Practical Imperative: German Dance, Dancers and Nazi Politics," eds. Naomi Jackson and Toni-Shapiro-Phim, *Dignity in Motion, Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justice*, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2008, 5-20.

⁹ Kant, Marion, "Joseph Lewitan and the Nazification of Dance in Germany." Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett & Jonathan Karp, Editors, *The Art of Being Jewish in Modern Times*. Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, 335-353.

for social justice, a certain activist strain of Judaism, later influenced American modern dance as they created their own works.

The most important venue for modern dance whether by Jewish choreographers, African American, young or established choreographers surprisingly was the New York City's 92nd St Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association.¹⁰ Some who performed there regularly were Sophie Maslow, Jane Dudley (first director of the Batsheva Co), Anna Sokolow, and main stream dancers, too.

I was a book lover even for dance subjects, the most ephemeral of the arts. But I realized talking to people was going to be the way to learn more since there were very few books laying out the information about dance in *Eretz-Yisrael* especially during World War II. Only later would I be able to piece together the facts that the 1940's witnessed the rise of Israeli folk dance and its festivals centered at Kibbutz Dalia which seemed to bring the entire *yishuv* (Jewish community in pre-state Israel) together in solidarity. The first festival in 1944 took place despite cries to abandon dancing because Jews were being killed by the Nazis; the second Dalia festival was in 1947.¹¹

The festivals under visionary Gurit Kadman helped to encourage new pageants and dances for those in kibbutzim, as well as immigrants and city folk. The background of those creating the dances included trained European modern dancers Lea Bergstein in Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan (who had danced in Vienna in Kraus's company); Rivka Sturman in Kibbutz Ein Harod (who had danced in Leipzig with Jutta Klamt); Shulamit Bat-Dori (a Wigman dancer) in Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek and others. Yardena Cohen, an original who had briefly studied in Vienna and Dresden, worked in the kibbutzim though she lived in Haifa where she also ran her own studio and toured with solo performances. She had been awarded the title of most Israeli dancer in the National Dance Competition of 1937. Also involved in the Israeli folk dance movement was Sara Levi-Tanai, an Israeli original who based her folk dances on Yemenite influences. However, I learned by 1950 she chose to create only in the theatre dance context for her newly formed troupe the Inbal Dance Theatre.

¹⁰ Jack Anderson, *Art Without Boundaries: the World of Modern Dance*, University of Iowa Press, 1997, 183.

Naomi M. Jackson, *Converging Movements, Modern Dance and Jewish Culture at the 92nd Street Y*, Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2000.

¹¹ Ruti Ashkenazi, *Sipoor Maholot Ha'am B'daliyaah*, Haifa: Tamar, 1992. Other festivals and then in 1951, 1955, 1958 and in honor of the twentieth anniversary of the state in 1968.

Theatre dance received a shot in the arm from Jerome Robbins when he made his first trip to Israel in 1951 under the auspices of the American Fund for Israel Institutions considering contributing to dance in Israel. “Robbins was to make a survey of dance in Israel, he met individually with Gertrud Kraus, who had just organized the Israel Theatre Ballet and his fellow American Talley Beatty who was acting as guest teacher and choreographer to Kraus’s group... the prominent ballet teacher Mia Arbotova and Sara Levi-Tanai, director of Inbal Dance Theatre...He was excited by Israel and by the spirit of the people he met there... the company that most impressed him was Inbal.”¹²

A result of Robbins’s trip was the connection he made between Anna Sokolow and Inbal. He sent her to work with Inbal in 1953 to teach the dancers stagecraft and technique without changing Levi-Tanai’s unique Yemenite/modern dance vision. Hardly ten years later, Sokolow decided to create her own modern dance company in Israel called Lyric Theatre with 13 actor/dancers including Rina Shaham, originally from America, Ze’eva Cohen, Rina Schenfeld, who had had trained at the New York Juilliard School, Galia Gat, Ehud Ben-David and others.¹³

The *Jerusalem Post* newspaper heralded the new company in an unsigned article published in June of 1962 but gave the mistaken impression it was the first Israeli theatre dance activity. The hurt of being ignored was expressed in a letter to the editor by Gertrud Kraus representing the Dancers Association of Israel, published on July 4, 1962: “We, the dancers, teachers and choreographers welcome any advancement in the field of art or theater in this country. It was in this spirit that large and small dance schools gave their moral, collegial support to Ms. Sokolow’s venture, allowing and encouraging their best and most veteran pupils to join her group, despite obvious interruptions of routine, work and study. Her group is composed of the product of those schools and institutes which your writer stated are non-existent. Her venture will, therefore, benefit from many years of hard work invested by the local artists who also and educated her potential public. She has also obtained financial support, and advantage never enjoyed by local choreographers who nevertheless staged many fine and valuable works despite the difficulties arising from the lack of such support.”¹⁴

¹² Deborah Jowitt, *Jerome Robbins, His Life, His Theater, His Dance*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004, 192-194.

¹³ Larry Warren, *Anna Sokolow: The Rebellious Spirit*, Princeton; Dance Horizons Book, 1991, 192-200.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 194-195.

However Sokolow's company lasted only two seasons because of a really remarkable initiative: the collaboration of Martha Graham with Bathesabee (Batsheva) de Rothschild who had been the principle benefactress of the American Graham's dance company. She decided after years of helping to support the artistic endeavors of others, that Rothschild wanted "to launch her own enterprise,"¹⁵ a new company. No one could compete with Rothschild's offer of a full-time salary, new facilities, commissioned works with professional lighting, sets and costumes, Graham repertory selections and international touring. Sokolow's company closed after that and she only worked sporadically in Israel after that eventually staging a few of her works for Batsheva some ten years later.

Kraus dropped any attempt to continue her own company after Robbins' initial visit to Israel when he told her together they could create the Israel Ballet Company. She directed it alone and then turned to her painting and sculpture when Robbins returned to the US. Kraus was veritably ignored by the Graham/ de Rothschild initiative though she had a valued place at the Rubin Academy of Music and Dance in Jerusalem teaching dance composition under Hasia Agron-Levi (who had been an early student of Graham's in the 1940s.) In 1976 Kraus was awarded the first professorship in dance in Israel. Kraus also continued teaching in Haifa and in her own studio in Tel Aviv almost to the end of her life in 1977.

In 1963 Israeli performers traveled to the Graham studio to be coached and trained for the Graham repertoire and I began my college career at Sarah Lawrence College in New York. Since I knew about the dancers at the Graham school, I too would leave campus at the end of the day to study at the Graham school, hoping I might be "discovered" and could join the new co. I came from an active Zionist family and I had grown up hearing discussions with a father imbued with Israeli history, archaeology and a passion for everything Israeli. My bat mitzvah year coincided with the 10th anniversary of Israel and I had been an ardent Israeli folk dancer at my synagogue with others my age. The winter of '63 my father was one of the few foreign volunteers to work on the archaeological excavations of Masada. In the end, I stayed at Sarah Lawrence and studied with Graham teachers there plus Cunningham dancers Viola Farber and Judy Dunn. Their Judaism, unlike the earlier modern dancers in Graham's Company was irrelevant to their dance. I especially followed Dunn and would see her performances at Judson Church in NY's Greenwich Village neighborhood. Judson became the name adopted by the anti-establishment, anti-modern

¹⁵Ibid, 198-199.

dancers including Schoenberg's star pupil, fellow student Meredith Monk, who premiered her work "16 Millimeter Earrings" at Judson.

Although we were part of a liberal arts college, most in the dance department hoped for a professional dance career. We studied our technique classes in ballet and modern most intently, and also dance composition with Schonberg, as well as other related subjects. Fridays always included a special guest from the professional dance world. As my last academic year grew to a close I was amazed to learn Fred Berk, the Israeli folk dance teacher would be taking the special guest slot. I certainly didn't think Israeli folk dancing befit our professional aspirations. Nonetheless, Berk turned out to be a master teacher in the truest sense of the word and so I was introduced to an influential personality.

My last year at Sarah Lawrence I also met and danced for Anne Wilson not knowing this too would be an interesting contact in Israel where she started the Israel Dance Library. After graduation, I danced in Meredith Monk's "Juice" at the Guggenheim Museum and I landed a job as assistant to *Dance Magazine* editors Lydia Joel and Doris Hering. New York was the center of an enormous dance boom and the editors arranged for me to see most everything. I was also introduced to dance writers including Selma Jeanne Cohen who had founded and still edited the quarterly *Dance Perspectives*, each issue on a single dance theme.

While I was at *Dance Magazine*, I got to know Fred Berk much better, He asked me to edit his articles about Israeli folk dance, some for *Dance Magazine* and others for "Hora," a small biennial publication that he had began in the fall of 1968 published through the American Zionist Youth Foundation (AZYF). The organization also sponsored the Israel Folk Dance Department bringing students and folk dance teachers to Israel in the summer all coordinated by Berk. He also he was the director of the Jewish Dance Division at the 92nd St YMHA. I learned at the Y he had several different dance companies and he was in his 17th year directing the Israel Folk Dance Festival, with youth groups from all over the eastern coast of the US. All of these activities made him a popular and important figure in the Israeli dance world both in Israel and in the United States for his choices of which Israeli dances to teach and stage made him a gate-keeper and trend setter. As we worked more and more together he offered me a scholarship to the Y which gave me free dance sessions. Instead of my initial reaction to Israeli folk dancing at Sarah Lawrence, I became an avid follower of Berk and I especially enjoyed hearing his stories about Gertrud Kraus, his first teacher in Vienna.

A few years later I moved to Tel Aviv. Gertrud Kraus became the heart of my dance experience in Israel, and through her I met an entire network of dance artists though I was teaching at what some considered the enemy camp of the Bat Dor-Batsheva Society. The German-Expressionist dancers who had been the basis of dance performance and teaching in Israel from the 1930's were in their sunset years. So were the originators of the Israeli folk dance movement and as I met one after another I became more and more eager to hear their stories and to learn of their work.

During the 1970s when I lived in Israel, the Batsheva Dance Company had its 10th anniversary year; Inbal Dance Theatre was still touring internationally; the Kibbutz Company¹⁶ had its first season and Bat Dor was thriving. Though I began working for Rothschild's Batsheva/Bat Dor Dance Society, it splintered in the mid-'70's and the baroness decided to support only Bat Dor under Jeannette Ordman who enlarged the company in its impressive mid-town Tel Aviv facility with multiple studios, offices and its own theatre. Some of the Batsheva dancers went out on their own including Moshe Efrati who created Kol VeDemama, the dance company for hearing and deaf performers with Yankele Sharir, Esti Nadler and Gabi Barr. There were also unaffiliated choreographers working for multiple companies including Mirali Sharon who had trained with Alwin Nikolais in the US, Domi Reiter-Somer and Gene Hill Sagan, an ex-patriot African American embraced by several Israeli companies. Fringe artists Rachel Kafri and Ruth Eshel as well as others found smaller venues and unorthodox places at the time like the Tel Aviv Museum. Ze'eva Cohen came back to perform her unique solo show at Tel Aviv's Tsafta theater after making her career in New York first with Sokolow's company then as an independent. I was amazed to learn about all the government and institutional support for dance, so different than in America. It all seemed vibrant and extensive.

I was oblivious to the loosening of the hold European expressionism had on Israeli modern dance in favor of American modern dance while home-grown Israeli choreographers were coming into their own. I barely understood the dynamics of the Ashkenazic power and influence over dance, down grading dance from the Mizrahi and Sephardic communities. My

¹⁶ Later I began to interview Yehudit Arnon and learn more of her remarkable story. "If I Survive: Yehudit Arnon's Story as Told to Judith Brin Ingber," Naomi Jackson and Toni Shapiro-Phim, eds., *Dignity in Motion, Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justice*, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2008.

Also, see Avshalom Kveh, *Ahoozat Mahol, Yehudit Arnon v lahakat hamahol hakibbutzim*, Tel Aviv, 2003.

husband and I arrived in Israel in 1972 and moved to *ulpan* Ben Yehuda at a *mercaz klita* in Netanya thinking we would learn some fluency in Hebrew and have a wonderful time touring the country as newlyweds. We had no idea of the meaning of a *mercaz klita* and how it would change us to live with immigrants determined to make a new life in Israel away from regimes in South Africa, The Soviet Union or Argentina. The first week we went to a dance concert of Batsheva in Tel Aviv and I remember being astounded by the power of the American choreography (Graham's works "Errand unto the Maze" and "Diversion of Angels" and Jose Limon's "The Exiles") danced by dynamo Israeli performers. At the intermission I saw a circle around a small woman and I went up to her. "Excuse me, are you Gertrud Kraus?" I asked. So began my introduction to Kraus.

For five years we ate breakfast every Tuesday at Café Ditzza on Rehov Frishman across from the Camari Theatre, my personal tutorial with a seminal creator of Israeli theatre dance.¹⁷ Sometimes I'd look at her notebooks filled with her unique shorthand sketches of dance ideas for classes she would teach in Haifa; at the Rubin Academy under the watchful eye of the devoted dance director Hasia Levi-Agron; and in Kraus's own studio on Dizengoff Street where she still occasionally taught. Later I realized we shared some of the same students including Zvi Gotheiner and Margolit Rueben, apprentices at Batsheva Dance Co. I learned how Kraus's own artistry and her experiences in Europe's *Ausdrucks Tanz* expressive dance gave her an entirely different influence than the one I had been taught in New York.

Just how Gertrud developed as an artist and why she decided to move from Vienna were also illuminated during our meetings. She told me "When people came to *Eretz-Israel*, let us say until Hitler, they came to discover a dream, to leave their past, their European education and they came to discover the orange groves of the kibbutzim and to find the real colors like an artist. They found that the city is only vertical and up and down lines, but here is the dessert, the horizontal line..."

I am still fascinated by the story she told me about leaving Europe. Gertrud had gone to perform in Prague in 1934. "I received a letter inviting me to come to a certain hall. Out of curiosity I went and found myself in an enormous room filled with hundreds of Communists and some very prominent artists...the group was making plans for the future. They wanted me to become their spokesman. ..incredulous I asked why? They told me

¹⁷ Judith Brin Ingber, "The Gamin Speaks: Conversations with Gertrud Kraus," *Dance Magazine*, March, 1976, 45-50.

they weren't interested in me personally, but in my force since I could make 10,000 people quiet with one gesture and they wanted to use my powers. My answer was that if my personal conscience had brought me to the left rather than the right, it was due to my own humanism and sense of justice...my art is not a placard and I don't want to convince people, but I want my art to be convincing....Because I was Jewish I was on my way to Palestina I told them. 'You may think that I have an influence on people and if I do, it would be more useful in *Palestina* than in Europe. I returned to Vienna and asked for a visa to *Palestina*. I felt I had no flag and I wanted only to leave Europe behind...what we experienced in Israel from the start was the pure Must of existence and this marked our work. Art brings a clarity of where you are and who you are. It brings devotion and enthusiasm to your own colors, to your own landscape and it makes you a part of the rhythm of life...I'm talking about how you build a new art in a new country. ...Here in Israel our arts come from the vantage point of Necessity and Must, not from luxuries and leisure."

Sitting with her in the café also meant watching a parade of artists who would come to speak with her including dancers who had worked with her especially Hilde Kesten and Naomi Aleskovsky. I met her devoted friend Gene Hill-Sagan, the ex-pat American choreographer. Gertrud's curiosity and her openness astounded me. She was ever interested in my dance experiences. I thought I would soon become a member of Batsheva since the director Brian Macdonald put me into rehearsals of Glen Tetley's newest work. Moshe Romano, who had first danced in Sokolow's Lyric Theater and then worked with Ballet Rambert in London was the director's assistant. Unbeknownst to me, like the foreign directors of Batsheva before him (many from the Graham world including Jane Dudley, Robert Cohen, William Louthier), Macdonald's stint was over. The Batsheva dancers decided to make it an all Israeli company and newcomers were not welcome.¹⁸

¹⁸ Giora Manor wrote in his article "Batsheva, the Flagship of Modern Dance in Israel" (sfenat ha-degel shel hama<h>ol ha-yisraeli), *Ma<h>ol Be-yisrael*, (No. 4: October, 1994), 108. "During this period of consolidating its international standing" (following its first tour to the US in 1970 to New York, the undisputed world capital of modern dance), "and so to speak playing in the world league of modern dance, Batsheva knew little tranquility at home. Artistic directors came and went their way...Pinchas Postel, the general manager attempted to steer the ship in stormy waters..."

See also Rena Gluck, *Lahakat Hamahol Bat-Sheva, 1964-1980, Sipoor Ishi*, Jerusalem: Ha'akademia lemuzika v lmahol bYerushalym, 2006. I also taught in Gluck's private

Romano counseled me to teach at the dance school shared by both Bat Dor and Batsheva, and indeed I was accepted to teach a creative class for the apprentices of both companies. Coincidentally the *ulpan* ended and my husband and I found an apartment in Tel Aviv's art gallery district only two blocks from Gertrud's.

Classes were often the subject of our conversations. Mine were modeled on my experience studying with Bessie Schoenberg and dancing in New York, emphasizing dance composition and dance discussion with occasional special guests with the dance elders I had begun to meet in Tel Aviv. When guests came Jeannette Ordman, allowed them to address any interested students in the school. Gertrud came and I also invited Mia Arbatova, the doyenne of ballet in Tel Aviv.¹⁹ I was unaware that both she and Gertrud were considered too old fashioned to be teaching at Bat Dor.

My students were eager to hear about choreographers I had seen or studied with in New York. I included much about Cunningham theory of chance and free choice which I thought was especially needed by the Israeli dancers. I presented Anna Halprin's experiments with tasks and improvisation as well as game theory of Steve Paxton and pedestrian movement from the downtown choreographers and Judson Church luminaries.²⁰ Cunningham's company performed in Israel during this time and I especially remember the sold out performance at the Caesaria amphitheater after the Yom Kippur War. Everyone was still skittish from air raid sirens. Suddenly during the performance we heard the rising tone of a siren. Half the audience rose to exit, but as the electronic sound score veered off into other sounds everyone resumed our seats, the dancers oblivious to our unexpected response.

The dance students in my class were company apprentices in Batsheva, Bat Dor and the Kibbutz Dance Company. Some came straight from their army bases, laying their arms (*nesek*) on top of the piano before going to change. Those in the army included Batsheva apprentices Zvi Gotheiner and Ohad Naharin.

studio when the company would go on tour sharing substituting with Nomi Ben-David, granddaughter of Margolit Ornstein, another important Tel Aviv dance figure.

¹⁹ Later Rena Sharett wrote *Malka Bli Armon, halutzat habalet haklasi b'yisrael*, Tel Aviv: Dance Library of Israel and many supporters, 2005.

²⁰ Only later did important texts appeared such as Sally Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980.

Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body, Judson Dance Theater, 1962-1964*. Ann Arbor: UMI Press, 1983.

I told Gertrud Selma Jeanne Cohen proposed I write a *Dance Perspectives* monograph about Sara Levi-Tanai and Inbal. Gertrud's response was enigmatic. She took me to meet someone but did not explain who or why. We walked towards Gordon Beach, stopping at a Bauhaus style private home on Rehov Shalag. An elderly woman took us through a large living room I surmised had been a dance studio, gongs and drums still hanging in their frames at the side of the room into a sunny dining where another elderly woman awaited. I sat quietly while the three chatted in German. These Tuesday outings repeated a few times until once of the women invited me to join her on her daily swim even though it was a cool February day. That is how began my talks with Gurit Kadman, the visionary who shaped Israeli folk dance. After sizing me up she set up a network of contacts: Tirza Hodes director of the Histadrut Folk Dance Department; folk dance creators Rivka Sturman, Lea Bergstein, Yardena Cohen, Shalom Hermon, Yoav Ashriel, and also Frankel, the librarian at Kibbutz Daliyyah, as well as others. (NOTE this is equivalent to the bottom of p 16 in the Hebrew version translated by Yasmin Sagiv).

Berk had retired to Israel and I continued to help him edit his "Hora" publication; we often discussed the Israeli folk dance personalities I was meeting on Friday afternoons at Gurit's. There we participated with many others from the world of art and politics during Gurit's "*aru<h>at min<h>a*." I wrote to Selma Jeanne Cohen that I had a different angle for her magazine, and I suggested placing the work of Sara Levi-Tanai in the 1940s within the bigger context of the development of Israel and Israeli folk dance.

Rivka Sturman would come to Tel Aviv from Kibbutz Ein Harod to teach the elderly or occasionally to give special workshops for the Histadrut Folk Dance Department. She had a small apartment near me and I also became her regular visitor, listening as she reminisced and read to me from her diaries. The entries about a tour of Israeli folk dancers she and Gurit took to Displaced Persons camps in Europe in 1947 were particularly fascinating.²¹ Mirali Sharon, one of Batsheva's choreographers was Sturman's favorite on that tour.²²

I traveled to Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan to meet Lea Bergstein. She greeted me with open arms, as blue petals fell on us from a Jacaranda tree overhead.

²¹ Not until the late '90s was I able to research this further with the resulting article "Vilified or Glorified, Views of the Jewish Body in 1947" in *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review*, (vol. 20: No. 1-2), 2000.

²² Later Rina Sharett wrote a biography of Rivka Sturman called *Kuma Eyha*, Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Hameuchad Press and Dekel, 1988,

She, too, joyously shared her stories about her first dance teacher, a devotee of Isadora Duncan who stressed the importance of studying paintings, sculptures and vases for inspiration. She told me what it was like to dance with Kraus in Vienna and how she was arrested along with her frequent collaborator and composer Mattityahu Shelem in the '40s in the kibbutz fields. They were practicing with many kibbutz dancers for their Omer Festival²³ however the British Military Police were convinced they were conducting secret military maneuvers for the illegal Haganah. Lea was a wonderful raconteur as was Yardena Cohen.²⁴

I traveled to Haifa to speak with Yardena sometimes at the seaside or in her dance studio which always had been open to all kinds of children, whether Hebrew or Arabic speaking. She told me about studying in Europe in the early 1930s in Vienna and Dresden. The Indian musician Uday Shenkar saved her from severe homesickness and advised her to return to her homeland to begin creating her own dances. Also riveting were her stories about bringing Biblical tales to life through her dances for kibbutzim. She always invited neighboring Arab or Druze or Bedouin villagers in her to participate in her pageants. I learned she won first prize for the most Israeli dance in the 1937 competition at the Mograbi Theater in Tel Aviv, discussed in her two fascinating autobiographical books.²⁵ I heard about her disagreements with Kadman about what constituted folk dance. Yardena considered herself a theatre dancer, therefore her simple dances for the kibbutz folks couldn't be called folk dances. It seemed that Yardena, too had been waiting to tell her stories.

Gertrud suggested I meet another dancer, Yonaton Karmon, who at the time was dance director at the Olympia in Paris.²⁶ When he came to Israel

²³ Abba Cherniack-Tzuriel, "The Omer Festival of Kibbutz Ramat Yochanan" *The Drama Review*, (Vol. 21, part 3, 1977), 11-20.

²⁴ Later a biography of Lea Bergstein was written by Yoram Goren, *Sadot Lavshu mahol*, Haifa: Hotazat Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan and Heret Publishing, 1983.

²⁵ Yardena Cohen, *B'Tof ubmahol*, Tel Aviv: Sefreat Poaleem, with Hotzaat Hakibbutz haartzi hashomer hazair, 1963.

And later, Yardena Cohen, *Hatof ve hayam*, Tel Aviv: Sefreat Poalim with Hotzaat Hakibbutz haartzi hashomer hazair, 1976.

²⁶ Beginning in 1988 for Israel's 40th anniversary, Karmon created and directed a new Israeli folk dance festival in the Galilee that became a yearly summer event known as the Karmiel Festival, inspired by the Daliyya festivals. Held in the city of Karmiel, the festivals feature Israeli folk dance companies from all over the country plus performances in many kinds of dance styles performed in the city stadium, gymnasiums, tennis courts and the fine arts complex, plus teaching, competitions and activities throughout the town, and the climax are elaborately staged

for a visit, we met at a Dizengott café and he told me how he had danced in Gertrud's company and then developed his famous dance medleys for the Daliyya Festivals and later for his own company. I knew they were favorites of the Israeli folk dance movement. Gertrud had urged him to examine how Israelis walked down the street and how their rhythm and gestural details could be expressive elements in his dances. Years later when Zvi Gotheiner was in Israel to research Kraus's life for his dance piece "Gertrud" (which premiered in March of 2007 in New York) he learned that the shoulder rhythmic movements with arms extending to the side so often associated with Karmon's dances, actually were inspired by shoulder movements in Kraus's works that he knew so well. "It's an unusual and interesting process—almost upside down, that a movement from a theatrical artist's works influence folk dance. Usually it is the other way, that folk movements influence theatrical dance movement."²⁷

Then I met Sara Levi-Tanai at the Inbal studio. We had intense talks resulting not only in a growing pile of typewritten pages, but also a job offer first teaching the company and then I became Sara's assistant for two years. While in the office, Gila Toledano, company manager and confidant to Sara²⁸ gave me free reign to read through twenty years worth of international and Israeli coverage of the company. I was astounded to read how often her dances were extolled on tours but discounted in Israel; in the mid-'60s some rabbis considered excommunicating Sara for accepting work in Hollywood in the extravaganza about Moses and the Ten Commandments in the film "The Greatest Story Ever Told."

Watching Sara work with the Inbal dancer/singers chanting Biblical texts and dancing was revelatory. Sara was a fount of unique dance ideas and song enhanced by collaborating artists and her company members. Through her stories I began to understand some of the tensions between Sephardic and *Mizrahi* communities and the ruling Ashkenazic influence in the social fabric of Israel. I felt personally affronted when Sara recalled her desire to join the Habima Theater as a young actor but her Israeli Yemenite inflected accent was deemed inappropriate since it did not blend with the preferred Russian Hebrew accent of the veteran national theater actors.

Gurit Kadman was an exception--she realized the treasures of immigrant dance masters were being ignored not only by dance experts but by their

folk dance performances on a huge stage at the bottom of an amphitheatre seating some 50,000 people.

²⁷ Recorded by author interviewing Zvi Gotheiner in March, 2007, New York City.

²⁸ See Gila Toledano's book *Sipoopura shel Lahaka, Sara Levi-Tanai and the Inbal Dance Theatre* Tel Aviv: Resling, 2005.

own children and grandchildren; so she created a new initiative she called the Israel Ethnic Dance Project. She organized filming and recording of dance masters from many different *eydot* especially Kurdish, Yemenite and Moroccan. She also involved researchers from the Folklore Dept. of Hebrew University, the Histadrut Folk Dance Department and independents including myself.

After a few months of talking with Gertrud I discovered someone else was beginning to interview her—and that is how I met the theater director and journalist Giora Manor. He had heard from countless artists how invaluable she was and his interviews resulted in a biography of her life. He also reissued a book with drawings of Kraus published in Vienna before World War II. Giora and I became fast friends and by 1975 he had convinced me to help him co-edit the first journal on Israeli dance, in both English and Hebrew to be published once a year. We called it the *Israel Dance Annual* and it began in 1976.

We also worked together on Israel Dance Library projects. At first, the library, brain child of Anne Wilson, was housed in the AMLI Tel Aviv music library on Bialik Street. I helped Anne and Yemmy Strum unpack books including donations from Fred Berk. David Eden became director and he started activities like lectures on dance history which were well attended. Later Giora²⁹ became the director and he began publishing new dance books and reissuing rare out of print editions such as *Agadati: The Pioneer of Modern Dance in Israel*. Giora also edited my biography *Victory Dances: The Story of Fred Berk, a Modern Day Jewish Dancing Master*. Later Gila Toledano became director, expanding the library holdings after the move to the municipal library at Beit Ariella.³⁰

In 1976 my husband and I returned to the US with our little son and we faced the criticism of abandoning Israeli life and dance. Now I know that I have never really left any of those I cherished in Israel, never coming to the

²⁹ Giora and I also worked together along with a group of many spearheaded by Barry Swersky, general counsel to Bat Dor, to create the International Theatre Institute of the UN's conference "The Bible in Dance" in July of 1979 at the Israel Museum. The conference drew scholars from Australia, Europe and America including Genevieve Oswald, director of the esteemed New York Public Library Dance Collection at Lincoln Center speaking on "Martha Graham's Biblical Materials and Myth with Film." I headed a panel about how the Bible inspired the Israeli folk dance creators Lea Bergstein, Rivka Sturman and Gurit Kadman. Yardena Cohen refused to participate, still boycotting the idea that her work was relegated to folk dance, something she did not believe could be created by individuals.

end of researching or rethinking my experiences nor searching for fresh words to express their life quests, especially Gertrud and the constellation of artists she influenced³¹— of her dear friend Gurit and the unique artists Yardena Cohen and Sara Levi-Tanai and many others. They were my matriarchs and with that connection came obligations—like *mitzvot*-- to keep alive their work and to pass on their legacies. Fred Berk and Giora Manor set me on the path of editing and writing articles and they are all continuing inspiration for the book manuscript I am currently editing to be published by Wayne State University Press of Detroit tentatively called “Perspectives on Israeli and Jewish Dance.”

My conversations and some time arguments with dancer-writers in Israel continue, including Ruth Eshel, Henia Rottenberg, Dina Roginsky, Deborah Friedes and especially theatre dance artist and writer Gaby Aldor, inheritor of so much through her grandmother Margolit Ornstein and performer mother Shoshana. She has challenged me to examine differences between Jewish choreographers in the Diaspora and Israel, arguing that Israel and its dance should be considered on its own, separate from the category of Jewish dance. For myself, I had discovered that I couldn’t separate studio dance by really gifted movers at Jewish celebrations of all kinds and for me, movement was a valid way to express a whole new identity—no longer a modern dance of America or a modern dance of Europe, dance in Israel had become its own creation.

This all came together at a family wedding in July, 2008 at a special kind of wedding venue in a kibbutz not far from the Mediterranean near Tel Aviv. My mother in law, from the Polish *shtetl* Lubomil, left for North America and said good by to her newly married sister in the late ‘20s who was going to *Eretz-Yisrael*. Who could imagine that more than 80 years later we would be dancing at their great-grandson’s wedding? The groom Yonaton, heir to Ashkenazi traditions through both his father and mother married beautiful LePaz, heir to Sephardic/Mizrahi traditions, one grandmother from Morocco and the other from Kurdistan.

The dancing brought all the families and some 500 excited guests together celebrating. Before the wedding there had been a henna ceremony, the Ashkenazic grandmothers all decked out in Moroccan Jewish finery. After the Huppa there was all manner of delicious delicacies—*kubeh*, and *roladas* all mixed together on the appetizer table, lamb and chicken,

³¹ See my paper “Identity Peddlers and the Influence of Gertrud Kraus” in the proceedings of the Congress on Research in Dance conference from Barnard College, New York, in November 2007.

anything one could want gastronomically—and we all danced. At one moment I would be doing a kind of Moroccan style duet with the bride's grandmother and another moment I was watching as the Kurdish grandfather and uncles were on the shoulders of the other, moving in a big circle, and then the bride and groom were taken on to their shoulders. The flurry of movement all around was so different than a *hora* when the bride and groom are held aloft in chairs as is common at Ashkenazic weddings. Here there were many lines dances with men and women mixed together circling in the dance style of the Kurdish Jews. If someone at that wedding had heard the stinging derogatory "*ana kurdi*" thrown at them, it was of no matter here for we all were following the big stepping stance as best we could, young Kurdish Jewish leading the mixed lines as the bride and groom were seated on the shoulders of male relatives.

No one cared whether the steps had been researched and recorded to determine from which Jewish community they hailed and no one noticed who was a "trained" dancer or not. Who in the crowd knew that we were all carrying out our obligation, our mitzvah, to dance at a wedding because it says so in the Talmud? In that revered book (in *Ketoboth* 17A) it is written we must dance, all of us, whether we are old or lame, young or able-bodied, and our obligation is to make sure the bride is happy at her wedding. Every Jewish community no matter where they have been located for all the centuries of Jewish life has danced at a wedding. There was I, dancing at an Israeli wedding and it was indeed a priceless, joyous experience binding together the group as one. We were celebrating a precious new union, precious to the couple but also to the country and its Jewish people-hood, expressed through dance.

It is as though I have many snapshots of dance from many moments, those from the 1970s quite different than those in 2009. Of course dance in all its manifestations keeps changing but I know my exposure has given dance far greater meaning than my own initial joy in the studio. Now I know it to be for me also an expression of Judaism and Israel and I honor all those who have brought it to its fullness today.

Short Bio:

Judith Brin Ingber co-founded the chamber music and dance troupe Voices of Sepharad and continues to perform, publish and lecture about dance in Judaism and in Israel. She gave the keynote address for the international conference "Reflections and Celebrations: Jews and Judaism in Dance," at

the 92nd St Y, NY, 1986, was a Faber Fellow at Princeton University and some of her articles include contributions to Yale/YIVO's *Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (2009), to the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (2008), to the CD-ROM *Jewish Women, A comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia* (2007) and Oxford University Press's the *International Encyclopedia of Dance* (1998).