

Yaron Meishar



Ruth Goodman



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Dear Readers,

“Rokdim-Nirkoda” #99 is before you in the customary printed format. We are making great strides in our efforts to transition to digital media while simultaneously working to obtain the funding to continue publishing printed issues.

With all due respect to the internet age – there is still a cultural and historical value to publishing a printed edition and having the presence of a printed publication in libraries and on your shelves.

We are grateful to those individuals who have donated funds to enable the publication of recent printed editions. We encourage the financial support of our readers to help ensure the printing of future issues.

This summer there will be two major dance festivals taking place in Israel: the **Karmiel Festival** and the **Ashdod Festival**. For both, we wish and hope for their great success, cooperation and mutual enrichment.

Thank you **Avi Levy** and the **Ashdod Festival** for your cooperation and your use of “Rokdim-Nirkoda” as a platform to reach you – the readers. Thank you very much!

Israeli folk dances are danced all over the world; it is important for us to know and read about what is happening in this field in every place and country and we are inviting you, the readers and instructors, to submit articles about the background, past and present, of Israeli folk dance as it is reflected in the city and country in which you are active.

On July 1st, a new “Rokdim” website will be launched replacing the one that was launched few months ago which did not fulfill many expectations. The “Rokdim” website is now jointly owned by the amazing **Tamir Scherzer**. Thank you Tamir for your time, patience and the hard work you invested in order for our dreams to become reality.

“Dancing on the 5th of Iyar and Welcoming the Sabbath – **Rokdim Hey Be’Iyar Ve’mekablim Et Ha’Shabat**” was the main

dance event in the celebrations of the anniversary of the State of Israel at 70. As an initiative by both the Ministry of Culture and Sport and **Gadi Bitton**, there were folk dance celebrations in 15 different centers throughout the country, attended by thousands of dancers and dozens of instructors and singers. At this event, we re-experienced the occasion of the declaration of independence of the State of Israel. Pictures from these 15 locations and the event itself can be seen and read about in this issue.

Also in this issue:

- The name **Yoav Ashriel** is known by everyone; **David Ben Asher** interviewed him about his ground breaking role in the evolution of Israeli folk dance and what we experience today.
- **Matti Goldschmidt**, **Judith Brin Ingber**, and **Jill Gellerman** have researched the sources of Israeli folk dance in Germany and Eastern Europe and how it has evolved in Eretz Yisrael.
- **Eti Arieli** writes about “The Light Within Dance”, a group of blind and sighted dancers, led for many years by **Zohar Bartal**. Well done!
- The Dance of the Month: “Tefilot – Prayers” by **Itzik Ben-Dahan**, is a beloved and successful dance which we chose to bring to you at this time.

Happy reading and dancing,

**Yaron Meishar, Ruth Goodman and Danny Uziel** – Editors.

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# CELEBRATING IN A JEWISH MODE:

## Dance in Europe, the Yishuv and Israel

Matti Goldschmidt, Judith Brin Ingber and Jill Gellerman



**Y**iddish Summer Weimar, or YSW, held in Weimar, Germany from July 15–August 12, 2017, was founded in 1999 by **Dr. Alan Bern** who is its artistic director. The curator for YSW was **Andreas Schmitges**. In their programming, Bern and Schmitges were interested in exploring the connections of the cultures of Europe, the Middle East, North and South America.

The special topic for 2017 was “The Other Israel: Seeing Unseen Diasporas.” As stated in the YSW brochure, “Israel today is also home to a kaleidoscope of displaced cultures from around the world. Yiddish culture, with its European heritage, is only one of these... this summer we will enter this amazing and complex intercultural universe.”

A full program of dance and music workshops, lectures and performances was offered. The week of dance workshops hinted at the diversity with Arabic Dabke taught by **Medhat Aldabaaal**, Hasidic dance taught by **Jill Gellerman**, Yiddish dance taught by **Andreas Schmitges**, and early Israeli folk dances taught by **Judith Brin Ingber**.

**Matti Goldschmidt** wrote an article about YSW, reprinted below, followed by additional dance information written by **Jill Gellerman** and **Judith Brin Ingber**. Brin Ingber has also added reflections on her experience teaching dance workshops more recently at the Western Galilee College in Acre, Israel.

## The Multifaceted Nature of Israeli Folk Dance

By Matti Goldschmidt<sup>1</sup>; Translated by Debbie Nicol



Matti Goldschmidt

**T**he organizers of this year’s ‘Yiddish Summer’ in Weimar had asked themselves two very interesting and compelling questions: Which dance cultures besides the Hasidic and Arabic have had a significant influence on Israeli folk dance, and what is the role played here both in the past and present by Yiddish dance?

In addition, they aimed to discover – among other things – how Yiddish dance purportedly influenced “a whole wave of new Israeli dance choreographies in the 1930s and 1940s.”

From Biblical times straight through to the present

day, dance has been a fundamental component of Jewish socio-cultural development. In fact, Jews have always danced: think, for example, of the Israelites dancing around the golden calf (it’s not the dance itself that was deplorable, but the calf which was the object at the center of the dance) or of **Miriam**’s dance after the crossing of the Red Sea, described in Exodus.

Whilst church edicts as far back as the early Middle Ages placed substantial restrictions on Christians dancing, this only meant that Jews – unaffected by such decrees – were able to fill the now-vacant niches. Until

1930 or thereabouts, the non-liturgical Jewish klezmer music (which dated from around the 15th century such as the Freylakh or Bulgar) was considered to be purely dance music.

Jews of the second and third Aliyah were primarily from Russia and Poland (waves of immigration to Palestine in 1904-1914 and in 1919-1923). They shone either in classic stage dance, like **Baruch Agadati** from Odessa, or they were folk dancers who brought folk dances from their former homes, such as the Polka, Rondo, or Krakowiak.

The hora, was originally from Rumania, and mutated into a simplified form, which became the Jewish Palestinian national dance. As early as the 1920s, festivities featuring these types of dances took place mainly, but not only, at Kibbutz Ben-Shemen near the town of Lod.

In the following two decades, immigrants especially from German-speaking countries were to shape the folk dance scene of Palestine, and later, Israel. In an article headlined Rikud Amami ("Folkloristic Dance"), in the 5 August 1938 newspaper edition of the trade-union daily Davar, **Gertrude (Gert) Kaufmann**, a native of Leipzig, called for the replacement of the Diaspora folk dances. Kaufmann, wanted new, indigenous dances to be created by the olim (immigrants) instead of those mainly Eastern European folk dances.

The usual cultural cornerstones of a nation in the European sense, including language, literature and theatre--all of this in the revived Hebrew tongue, plus new music and painting (the latter inspired primarily by Biblical themes), were now to be joined by dance.

### In 1944, in the middle of the war, a national festival and conference on folk dance was held on a kibbutz

Until around 1940, the creative dance environment of the Jewish immigrants in British Mandate Palestine was limited to theatrical dance, primarily of expressionistic and expressive dance, especially by **Lea Bergstein**, **Gertrud Kraus**, and the **Orenstein** family, among others. At the same time, however, performance dances were being choreographed in the secular environment of the kibbutz movement, performed mostly in fanciful Biblical costume and primarily inspired by the religious festivals of the Jewish calendar, such as the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot). The dance U'Shavtem Mayim, presented in June 1937 by **Else Dublon** (who had immigrated previously from Montabaur, Germany) with her performing troupe at Kibbutz Na'an, may be viewed as a prototype. Inspired by the discovery several months earlier – after years of searching – for a water source near the kibbutz, the song's lyrics were taken directly from the Bible: "Therefore you will draw water with rejoicing from the springs of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3).

Although it is no longer possible to determine with complete certainty exactly when Jewish immigrants actually created the first 'native' folk dances in the years after 1940, the consensus is that the birth of a national folk dance occurred no later than at the first (of a total of five) 'National Conference for Folk Dance' held at Kibbutz Dalia on 14-15 July 1944. Of course, in the first half of the 20th century, there could not yet be any 'Israeli' dances; rather, owing to their creation in Palestine, these dances were referred to as 'Palestinian' (by analogy with Greek dances from Greece).



On the other hand, the concept of 'Hebrew' dances indisputably existed – 'Hebrew' being used fairly frequently (at least in Hebrew) as a synonym for 'Jewish' during the later British Mandate period. Thus, for example, on the front page of Yediot Ahronot newspaper's 14 May 1948 issue – the day on which Israel declared its independence – one can read the expression "Hebrew fatherland" and the "Hebrew State" when referring to the proclamation of independence (issue no. 4030).<sup>2</sup>

The first generation of choreographers, consisting of artists such as **Rivka Sturman**, **Gurit Kadman** (a.k.a. G. Kaufmann), **Sara Levi-Tanai**, **Yardena Cohen**, **Tova Zimbel**, **Ze'ev Havatzelet** and **Shalom Hermon**, were bent on demonstrating, via the creation of new folk dances, a cultural independence found among practically all other nations.

Figuring among the works are the still-popular Hora Agadati, Kuma Echa, Hei Harmonika and Machol Ovadya. To quote Kadman, the sources of modern Israeli folk dance should lie "in the soil, in work, and in the revitalization of the Jewish nation," while the song lyrics



referred to the landscape of Palestine, to farming, and to ties to the land or comradeship.

Thus, although dance per se was paramount, it was still unquestionably essential to translate this art form into a unifying national cultural component. In the socialist and secular environment of the kibbutzim, religious texts and Biblical celebrations constituted the sole common cultural denominator of all immigrants, and were thus considered to be no more than the means to an end.

### Hasidic and Yemenite Influences from Odessa and Sana'a

The only two ethnologically Jewish dance styles of the Diaspora certainly made their way into the new choreographies. Thus, to this day, Hasidic elements are still seen – if rather sporadically – in what is now called Israeli folk dance, although the Sherele or Sher – performed at the second Festival for Folk Dance on Kibbutz Dalia on June 20, 1947 as ‘Diaspora dances’ – has largely fallen into oblivion.

For the Yemenite element, which choreographers from central European cultural circles saw as exotic, and believed to be most similar to the original Biblical dance steps, the story is quite different. Although Ozi VeZimrat Ya may not be very popular nowadays owing to its relative difficulty, it is nonetheless impossible to imagine contemporary Israeli folk dance without its ‘Yemenite step’ combination. Like Israel herself, Israeli

folk dance – which was also influenced from the start by modern European Expressionist dance elements – is in constant flux: quite unlike the folk dances of other countries, whose purpose, by contrast, is to preserve old traditions unchanged.

### Israeli folk dance would be non-existent in Germany without (non-Jewish) Germans

In Germany, it was only from around 1980 onwards that tentative attempts were made to introduce Israeli folk dance in international folk dance circles, through contacts via the Netherlands, and the consequent invitation of Israeli folk dance choreographers including **Rivka Sturman** and **Moshiko Halevy**. The founding of the Israelisches Tanzhaus (ITH) in 1992 in Munich marked a turning point. Dedicated exclusively to the furtherance of Israeli folk dance, the ITH has to date invited over fifty different choreographers and dance masters from Israel, supplementing these workshops with organized trips to Israel focusing on hiking and folk dance.

Nowadays, many cities in Germany have, for the most part, small Israeli folk dance groups operating along fairly self-sufficient lines. As a curiosity, it may be noted here that there are virtually no Jewish participants among them: in Germany, Israeli folk dance would not exist, were it not for (non-Jewish) Germans.

But what, then, of the ‘Yiddish dance’ that the organizers of the Weimar Yiddish Summer speak of? Interestingly, this type of term is nowhere to be found in the literature – unlike, for example, Yiddish theatre/film, or Yiddish literature. Even the YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe (Gershon David Hundert ed., Yale University Press, 2008), growing out of the Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut founded in 1925 in Vilna (then Poland), and today based in New York City, is not familiar with this concept.

We would be intrigued to learn how a dance genre requiring the coinage of a new term – ‘Yiddish dance’ – found its way into a folk dance style that, during the period in question, namely 1930-1949, had been in existence less than two years under its mentioned name – here, Israeli dance – and which demonstrably had been referred to by the term ‘Palestinian’ for at most eight to ten years.

#### Further literature:

- Berk, Fred, ed., Ha-Rikud, the Jewish Dance, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1972
- Berk, Fred with Reimer, Susan, ed., Machol Ha'am. Dance of the Jewish People, American Zionist Youth Foundation, 1978
- Goldschmidt, Matti, The Bible in Israeli Folk Dances, Viersen, 2001
- Ingber, Judith Brin, ed., Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance, Wayne State University Press, 2011



Israeli couple dancing. From the cover of the book “Story of Folk Dances in [kibbutz] Dalia, by Ruti Ashkenazi

**Matti Goldschmidt's footnotes:**

- 1 As originally published in German in: Folker 20 (2017), no. 4, 62-64, under the title 'Alles begann in Palästina – Der israelische Tanz in seinen Anfängen und dessen Vorläufer' ('It All Began in Palestine').
- 2 Another example would be the first stamps issued by the State of Israel – already in stock right after the declaration of independence – which bore the words Do'ar Ivri ('Hebrew Post') in both Arabic and Hebrew.

**Websites:**



Horawiki.org



Israeltanz.de



Yiddishsummer.eu/main/workshops/dance-workshop.html

# Additional Relevant Information

by Judith Brin Ingber and Jill Gellerman

At YSW 2017, curator Andreas Schmitges was very interested in tracing elements from Yiddish culture in the development of Israeli folk dance, but this proved to be a difficult task. The early creators were determined to turn away from European influences.

Before the establishment of the state of Israel, for example, soldiers of the Palmach went to **Rivka Sturman**, who was well known for her imaginative community dances at Kibbutz Ein Harod. The soldiers asked her to create a couple dance free of what they considered bourgeois ballroom influences like the Viennese waltz. Sturman's solution was to create Dodi Li which proved to be a beloved couple dance.

What about dances of the Yishuv, the Jewish community of pre-state Israel, and the influences from the European Jewish tradition? What could be seen from the Hasidic tradition, as Schmitges was hoping to establish?

Firstly, one could look to wedding dances because the whole Jewish community would dance after the Huppa ceremony. It didn't matter to which Jewish community throughout the entire Jewish Diaspora you belonged – Yemenite, Moroccan, Russian, German, in a Shtetl (small European town) or mellah (similar to a ghetto but this was a restricted Jewish neighborhood in Morocco) or other places. Wherever Jews have lived they have always danced at their Jewish weddings. All communities interpreted the Talmudic commentary about marriage in Tractate Ketubot (17a), where it says that Jews must dance to ensure the bride's happiness. Consequently, countless different dances have developed as Jews fulfilled that Talmudic requirement or mitzvah of dancing. Hence the community dances of Eastern European Jews in the wedding context are known as mitzva tanzn – not dances of good deeds, but dances that fulfill the mitzvah. One such dance was the Sherele.

It is fortunate that **Gert Kaufmann**, (later known as **Gurit Kadman**), created a series of brochures known

as "The Palestine Folk Dance Series," published in both English and Hebrew, which helped to disseminate these dances both in the Yishuv and abroad. The main influence from the European Jewish tradition, danced by less observant Jews, was the Sherele which Gurit Kadman documented in her Number 2, 1949 brochure simply entitled Sherele. Kadman describes the history, the music, and the form (including sketched figures) in three sections, made up of five or six different figures in each section. This was the dance recreated at YSW 2017 by Schmitges with the help of the other dance leaders.

**Jill Gellerman**, who has documented Hasidic dance styles of both women and men, also taught sher figures (shtern, keytsed merokdim, etc.) done by observant





Jews, in order to situate Kadman's Sherele in the larger dance genre. Jill added that some early twentieth century sources mention the sher and related couple dances as only done in the religious community by women or girls alone. (See: Pauline Wengeroff, *Rememberings: The World of A Russian-Jewish Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, University Press of Maryland, 2000, page 98, and Mark Slobin, ed., *Old Jewish Folk Music: The Collections and Writings of Moshe Beregovski*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982, page 533.)

Discussing the history of the sher, Jill quoted a letter written by the Yiddish folklorist **Shmuel Zanvl Pipe** in 1936: "The name 'sherele' is the diminutive form of the old 'sher' or 'shir' which used to be danced at weddings by two rows facing each other. While singing, the rows would come together and then move apart... similar to one of the old Polish national dances, the Polonaise." (See: Diane K. Roskies and David G. Roskies, *The Shtetl Book*, Ktav, 1975, page 218; Shmuel Zanvel Pipe, *Yiddish Folksongs from Galicia*, edited by Dov and Meyer Noy, Folklore Research Center Studies, Vol. II, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1971 [in Hebrew/Yiddish].)

As evidence that an older form of sher danced in rows has persisted among Hasidim, Gellerman cites **Zvi Friedhaber**: "Where, one may ask, are the 'Sher' and the 'Sherele', both well-known, and commonly labeled as 'Chassidic Dances'? These are clearly not real Chassidic dances. On the contrary, they are frowned upon by the whole orthodox community, as they have become mixed dances, danced by men and women together. But there do exist 'Sher' dances danced by Yeshiva students in the form of row-dances." ("Dramatization in Chassidic Dances", *Israel Dance 1983*, edited by Giora Manor, Israel Dance Society, page 5. See also Jill Gellerman, "Keytsed Merokdim" in *Hasidic Dances in Ritual and Celebration: Unpublished Narrative Report prepared for National Endowment for the Humanities, Dance Notation Bureau, 1978*, pages 102-119.)

According to Gellerman, two related figures found in the sher and done in the Hasidic community as longways sets are directly connected to Israeli folk dances: Der hakhnoe tants, better known as iber un unter (over and under), is attributed to the righteous **Rebe Elimelekh of Lizensk** (d.1786 Poland) and is known in Israel as shmoyne shrotsim ("eight insects"). Der Valozhiner tants, a kadril from the Russian town of Volozhin, was the forerunner of the beloved Israeli partner dance Yesh Lanu Tayish (We Have a Goat) created for children by **Raaya Spivak**. For information on der hakhnoe tants, see Yaakov Mazor, "Hasidism: Dance," *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, edited by Gershon David Hundert, Yale University Press, 2008, page 680; Shlomo Stern, "Rebbe Elimelech's Dance," *Hamodia Magazine*, XII/550, March 12, 2009, pages 20-21; and Menashe Unger, *Der 'Hakhnoe-tants' in*

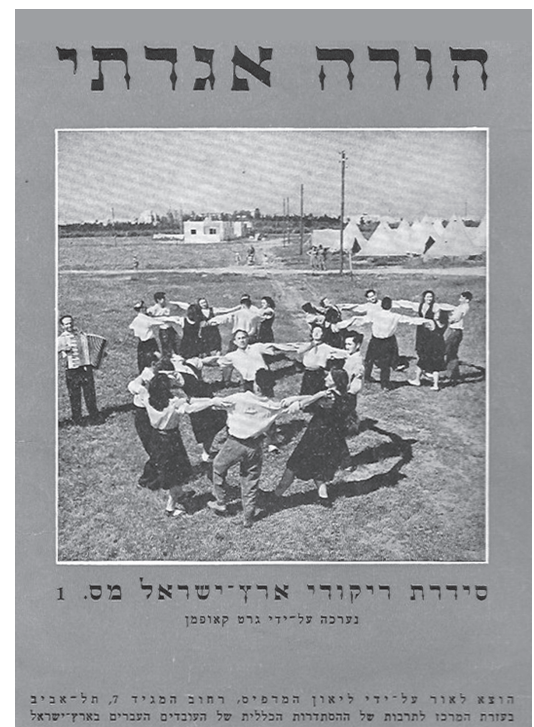
"Di Farshidene Yiddische Tents," *Tog Morgen Journal*, August 12, 1959 [in Yiddish].

Contrary to Goldschmidt's claim that the term "Yiddish dance"... is nowhere to be found in the literature," Gellerman notes the use of the term in the writings of **Menashe Unger**, whose contributions on yiddische tents were published in New York's Jewish press, such as *Morgn zhurnal* (Morning journal) at least in the 1950s, if not earlier. Further references on der valozhiner tants and hakhnoe tants can be found in **Isaac Rivkind**, Chapter 3, "Conductor of Dancing", in *Klezmorim (Jewish Folk Musicians): A Study in Cultural History*, Futuro Press, 1960, [in Hebrew, with English translation under Resources at [www.yiddishdance.com](http://www.yiddishdance.com)]. See also Jill Gellerman, "Yesh Lanu Tayish (Bridge dance)" and "Rebe Elimelekh's Tants ('Over-and-Under')" in *Hasidic Dances in Ritual and Celebration: Unpublished Narrative Report prepared for National Endowment for the Humanities, Dance Notation Bureau, 1978*, pages 43-44, 119-125; and Adrienne Greenbaum, David Goldfarb, Helen Winkler, and Steve Weintraub, "Yesh, yesh?" *Jewish Music List* [jewish-music@lists.jmwc.org](mailto:jewish-music@lists.jmwc.org), *Jewish Music Digest*, Vol. 37:7, May 7, 2010.



Yesh Lanu Tayish:

In addition to the important "Palestine Folk Dance Series" brochures, **Gurit Kadman** established the Dance Festivals held at Kibbutz Dalia beginning in 1944, followed by festivals there in 1947, 1951, 1958



and 1968. (The final Dalia Festival was held on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Israeli independence.) These festivals stimulated the phenomenon of Israeli folk dance creation. It was rare at the festivals to show the folk dances that had come from the Diaspora, but an exception was indeed the Sherele. This dance was performed for the festival audience at the second Dalia Festival by a group of elderly European immigrant couples Kadman had brought from a Jewish home for the aged.

In the Yishuv, Kadman was a charismatic and forceful leader who inspired countless dancers, folk dance creators and choreographers to join the Israeli folk dance movement. An early site where Kadman taught folk dance was the Ben Shemen moshav, one of the first villages established on Jewish National Fund land. There was a farming component but it was most famous for its “Youth Village,” which began in 1906 as an orphanage for child victims from the Kishinev Pogrom in Imperial Russia. The director of the Youth Village and agricultural school, **Siegfried Lehmann**, invited Kadman to teach folk dancing for the Ben Shemen children’s program in the 1920s. This began a long connection between Ben Shemen and Kadman.

Before 1940, there were already key dance creations which became beloved folk dances. These included Hora Agadati. According to Kadman’s “Hora Agadati” [sic] Palestine Folk Dance Series Number 1, **Baruch Agadati** lived in a hut on the Tel Aviv seaside near the New Workers’ Ohel Theatre, [the Tent Theater Company of the Federation of Unions Theater]. The actors turned to Agadati, known as a painter and theatre dancer, to create a new group dance for them. They thought a group dance could be an excellent way to bring both audience and performers together after their performances. At their behest, in 1924, Agadati created just such a dance which became known as Hora Agadati. The Ohel theatre company popularized Agadati’s dance as they performed throughout the Yishuv. Kadman writes in her brochure that Agadati saw his dance being performed at the Dalia Festival in 1944 “hardly recognizing his creation though he says with deep pleasure, ‘Now it has become a real folk dance with a life of its own’.”

**Jill Gellerman** notes that the Ka’et Ensemble, a modern Israeli dance troupe of Orthodox Jewish men (seen in New York in the winter of 2018), took inspiration from the work of **Baruch Agadati** in creating their dance Heroes. In the 1920s, Agadati created dance portraits of Jews, which he performed in the Yishuv and on tour in Europe, the United States, and South America. In his theatre dance Hasidic Ecstasy, Agadati portrayed a Hasidic Jew, complete with prayer shawl, causing much rabbinic scorn and criticism in the Yishuv.

Gellerman suggests that the persistent interest in Hasidic culture in the Yishuv during the 1920s was



*From left to right: Jill Gellerman, Alen Bern - the founder of YSW and Judith Brin Ingber in front of the original bauhaus Building of Arts*

manifest in repeated theatrical productions of **Ansky’s** The Dybbuk by the Habima Theatre, in Hasidic folk tales as source material for other productions, and in literature, such as the stories by **Y. L. Peretz** and **S. Y. Agnon**. (See: Dalia Manor, Art in Zion: The Genesis of Modern National Art in Jewish Palestine, Routledge, 2005, pages 151-155.)

Gellerman cites **Anat Helman**, who argues: “Although the national elite that dominated most cultural activity in Tel Aviv promoted Hebrewness as opposed to Jewishness, Land-of-Israel as opposed to diasporic values, and secularism as opposed to religion, shades of the Jewish, the diasporic, and the religious entered through the back door, for instance in the form of Hasidic... music.”

Helman notes: “Secular Sabbath gatherings organized by [**Chaim Nachman**] **Bialik** (Oneg Shabbat)... included public singing of Hasidic songs.” (See Anat Helman, “Was There Anything Particularly Jewish about ‘The First Hebrew City’?” in Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jonathan Karp, eds., The Art of Being Jewish in Modern Times, University Of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, page 120.)

Quoting **Dalia Manor**, Gellerman contends: “Hasidic dance was proudly credited as the continuation of the ancient dance in the Bible. Presenting Hasidic music and dance not as a product of a religious movement that had emerged in Eastern Europe but as a tradition





*Judith Brin Ingber, in the middle of the circle, teaching students from theatre and dance courses in Western Galilee College – the dance “Water-Water”. In the foreground Danielle On from the kibbutz Geaton*

that is rooted in the ancient, pre-diaspora origin of the nation marks another attempt to harness Jewish religious practices and folklore to Zionist ideals.”

By the 1950s, Gellerman concludes, one of the most prolific pioneers of Israeli folk dance, **Rivka Sturman**, was already drawing on the dances of the Hasidim as source material for her choreography. As part of Sturman’s search for connection with the ancient Hebrew tradition and ‘authentic’ Jewish folklore, for example, she created the Hasidic inspired Israeli folk dance Zemer Atik. Hasidic dancing then – whether in artistic production, literary discourse, or the real thing – was a key influence on Israeli dance, and interest in Hasidic culture was fairly widespread in the Yishuv and after.

While the influence of Hasidic culture cannot be disputed, the influence of Expressionist trained European dancers is easier to trace in the development of Israeli folk dances. Well before the first Dalia Festival in 1944, many physical education teachers who had trained in the European Expressionist movement in their native Germany and Austria were creative in many Yishuv venues. There were original celebrations with dance in schools, kibbutzim and towns documented in the book

by **Yaacov Shavit** and **Shoshana Sitton**, *Staging and Stagers in Modern Jewish Palestine: The Creation of Festive Lore in a New Culture, 1882-1948*, trans. by Chaya Naor, Wayne State University Press, 2004.

A case in point is the dance created before the Dalia Festivals, *Mayim, Mayim*. The development of the dance is contentious, with Kadman claiming in her *Palestine Folk Dance Series Number 3* that it was anonymously choreographed “as a real kibbutz creation of the new Jewish Palestine, born in Degania.” The controversy is documented in Chapter 6 of *Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance*, Judith Brin Ingber, ed., Wayne State University Press, 2011, page 166, note 19. We agree with Goldschmidt: **Elsa Dublon** created *Mayim, Mayim*.

In 1937, the dancers for Dublon’s work were members of Kibbutz Na’an. Finding water was indeed a reason to celebrate and the kibbutz had called on Dublon to create their water festival. The resulting *Mayim, Mayim* became the iconic dance of the Yishuv, also favored far beyond, by Zionists dancing in Europe and the US and wherever Jews wanted a connection to the Land of Israel.

One can see how Dublon inspired the kibbutz dancers to express flowing water from the very beginning of the dance with its four step phrase that from then on became known as the “*Mayim*” step. Afterwards, other folk dance creators often incorporated it into new dances, simply referring to the pattern as the “*Mayim*” step. Dublon explained her thinking in an interview by the dance historian **Zvi Friedhaber**. She said, “**Yehuda (Sharett)** gave me his song and I made it into a whole ceremony. My dance began with (4) steps which I felt expressed waves of water. The next part, in which the dancers entered the circle, (surging forward and lifting their arms in unison) expressed the flowing of the water from the well... as I was choreographing for untrained dancers, I had to devise simple steps...” (see Zvi Friedhaber, *The Development of Folk Dance in Israel, 1987/1988*, p. 34). These effective gestures befit Dublon who was a professional European Expressive modern dancer trained by Mary Wigman in Germany. (See Patricia Stoeckemann, “*Emigranten*”, *tanzdrama magazin*, nr. 42, 3/1998, p. 24.)



*Fans of Israeli folk dances dancing in sports hall (under the guidance of Sagi Azran, Munich, January 2012). Photo: Matti Goldschmidt*



**Yardena Cohen** is another important figure in the development of Israeli dance going back to the 1930s. Regarding the concept of Hebrew culture, mentioned in Goldschmidt's article, Yardena Cohen, a native born Israeli, embodied the term Hebrew dance. She won first prize for her three original solos in the 1937 National Dance Contest held in Tel Aviv at Mugrabi Theatre... searching for the most original Hebraic dance. The public could vote, encouraging the judging with such involved participation. (For more information, see Nina S. Spiegel "Embodying Hebrew Culture: Aesthetics, Athletics, and Dance in the Jewish Community of Mandate Palestine", Wayne State University Press, 2013, pages 108-111.) Cohen's dance studio was open to all children in Haifa regardless of religion; she had Muslim, Druze and Jewish dancers in a remarkably inclusive environment. Her festivals in the Galilee kibbutzim often featured neighboring Druze and Muslim villagers. They could be seen in her celebrations for Kibbutz Ein Hashofet and Sha'ar HaAmakim. She often argued with Kadman that pageantry was not folk dance, but despite their disagreements, her dance Machol Ovadia and sections from her Grape Harvest Pageant were performed at the 1944 Dalia.

**Gertud Kraus**, another Expressionist modern European dancer, was a dance pioneer of the Yishuv whose works were popular and influential. Her company was often accompanied by the Palestine Philharmonic or seen in Habima Theatre productions. Her own training, charisma and imagination in Vienna were the underpinnings for her European career and her later influence.

In the 1944 Dalia Israeli Folk Dance Festival and afterwards, she also influenced folk dance including through her own company dance member **Yonaton Karmon**. (He chose to continue his dance career mainly in folk dance.)

The period of World War II caused much criticism of dance in the Yishuv, especially because many were critical of public dancing and celebration, aimed at the big folk festival planned for Kibbutz Dalia. It seemed horrible to some to dance as the Jews of Europe were being chased and murdered by the Nazis; also there was sorrow and frustration because the British were preventing European refugees from reaching Palestine. At the time, Kraus's dance company performed her powerful "Davka Dance" (davka in Hebrew means 'in spite of'). Kadman, with Kraus's permission, called the entire Dalia Festival the Davka Festival, meaning that despite the tragedies, we will dance to express life.

Part of the excitement of the Davka Festival was seeing dances from all over the Yishuv which drew people from near and far. Several thousand traveled up into the Ephraim Mountains on dirt roads surprising everyone in the organization and in the kibbutz with the arriving numbers. Kadman knew of creators working

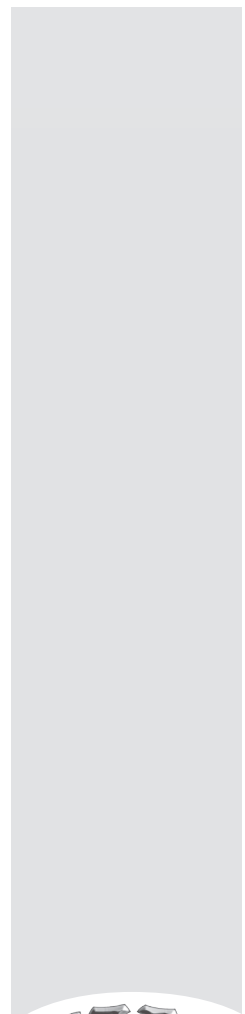


Many elements from Eastern Europe influenced Israeli dance (Revital Dance Company in the Second Horati Dance Camp in Quinns, NY, June 2017). Photo: Matti Goldschmidt

throughout the Yishuv, and she had invited the creators to bring their dances both to teach them and to perform. Those invited included **Rivka Sturman** from Kibbutz Ein Harod and **Lea Bergstein** from Kibbutz Ramat Yohanon. There, Bergstein had already created many kinds of festivals, including her Hag Ha'omer pageant at Passover. One of her Omer dances, Shibolet b' Sadeh, reflected Bergstein's European Expressionist training. The dancers in a circle held their raised hands palm to palm swaying as if they were the waving stalks of grain in the field. Bergstein had arranged for musicians and the kibbutzniks to go out into the fields of ripening wheat to dance on a specially constructed stage. The audience sat and watched outdoors.

**Tscheska [Zashka] Rosenthal** at Kibbutz Gan Shmuel created her Hag Ha'asif pageant (which was shown at Dalia in 1947). For the first festival, **Sara Levi-Tanai** came from Kibbutz Ramat David and her kibbutz dancers performed her El Ginat Egoz, also singing to Levi-Tanai's original song by the same name inspired by Solomon's Song of Songs. These women and others plus **Ze'ev Havazelet** were the respected folk dance creators of the early period.

**Brin Ingber** does not agree with Matti Goldschmidt that **Shalom Hermon** was part of the first generation of Israeli folk dance creators. Hermon was a student of both **Yardena Cohen** and **Gurit Kadman**, beginning his creative work after World War II, when he returned to the Yishuv from London. Hermon's contemporaries amongst Israeli folk dance creators were **Yoav Ashriel**, **Yonaton Karmon** and **Moshiko HaLevy**. It is worth noting that, with the exception of **Ze'ev Havatzelet**,



the first generation was made up of women creators. From then on, the men became prominent with only a few women stand-outs. (See interviews with Israeli folk dance creators in Chapter 6, "Roots of Israeli Folk Dance", Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance, Judith Brin Ingber, ed., Wayne State University Press, 2011, pages 99-171.)

**Brin Ingber** confirms Goldschmidt's assertion that "Israeli folk dance would be non-existent in Germany without (non-Jewish) Germans." She had first-hand experience: of the 29 YSW workshop participants, perhaps only one was Jewish. But many of the students studied Israeli folk dance, and some even were teaching Israeli folk dance in their various hometowns.

One of the YSW Festival teachers was **Medhat Aldabaaal**, a Syrian refugee dancer who is an expert in Dabke, the Arab traditional line dance. It turned out there was much overlapping with Dabke influences seen in the early Israeli folk dances. For example, there were shared six-count rhythmic phrases, jumps and quick stepping patterns. Gellerman confirmed that the dances of Hasidic men, while rooted in Eastern Europe, have also incorporated traditional Arabic, Druze, and Turkish elements in the Israeli context.

These influences emerged in Hasidic horas and debkas even before 1948, in the unique dance traditions on the holiday of Lag B'omer in Meron, near the holy city of Safed. Gellerman added that local customs can be traced back to the Middle Ages involving pilgrimage of both Hasidic Jews and Druze on various festivals to the sites at Mount Meron believed to be the graves of **Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai** and his son. According to Dalia Manor, articles describing the festivities (hillula) and the dances of Ashkenazi Hasidim alongside "oriental" (Mizrahi) Jews and Arabs were published regularly in the press as early as 1908/9. Manor notes, "One of these articles... recounts how the Ashkenazi Hasidim and the Sephardim practiced their... dances in separate groups. Eventually after a long ecstatic dance the groups united and danced together." (See *Art in Zion: The Genesis of Modern National Art in Jewish Palestine*, Routledge, 2005, page 150.)

At the invitation of **Prof. Henia Rottenberg**, director of the Western Galilee College dance program in Acre, Israel, **Judith Brin Ingber** took Dabke variations she learned from **Medhat Aldabaaal** at YSW with her when she taught a combined class of dance and theater students. Her December, 2017 class was

her fourth year teaching the students, but this class was a particularly special experience. It is relevant to explain who makes up the WGC student population, a complete mixture of citizens of the Galilee. Many of the Israeli students are first in their families to study in college; they come from small villages and nearby cities including Haifa and Acre, as well as kibbutzim. Some are Palestinian Muslim and some are Palestinian Catholics. Others are new Jewish immigrants from the Former Soviet Union and some are from Mizrahi families.

In addition to their theatre and dance classroom studies, the students have other cooperative projects and performances which they have taken to community centers throughout the region. An example was a puppet show freed of dependence on any one language, making it enjoyable for Arabic or Hebrew speaking children.

Brin Ingber decided what had been offered in the YSW dance workshops in Germany could be appreciated by all in the class. It was timely to the WGC students to all learn the Dabke Arabic variations from Aldabaaal which were a little different than those forms known in the Galilee by some of the Palestinian students. (One of the dance students, **Tamara Nikola**, directs her own Dabke dance group). It was also relevant for the entire class to learn early Israeli folk

dances of the Yishuv such as Hora Agadati and Mayim, Mayim. Additionally, it was also instructive to learn the Israeli theatre dance history. The students traced how the Dabke steps influenced Israeli folk dance steps and how expressive modern dance elements were present in the early Israeli folk dances.

Of the 30 or so students in the room, no one knew both Arab Dabke and the particular Israeli folk dances. After learning the dances, the students worked in three different groups to come up with their own dances, taking steps and gestures from the repertory to create their own variations. It was a fine opportunity for sharing cultural traditions in addition to being great fun. One of the wonderful things about folk dancing in whatever era is that it brings everyone together, exemplified by the historical dances in addition to the creative work by all the different students joining and sharing together.

