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A Dancing Nation - Cultural Sociology of Dancing in Israel
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A Dancing Nation - Cultural Sociology of Dancing in Israel: An Introduction

Some form of dance has existed in social lives since the early days. For example, ballet as a formalised form of dance that has existed since 15th century Italy, and from Italy it spread to France and then to other countries. At first, ballet was intertwined with opera, but theatrical ballet quickly found its place as an independent form of art. Meanwhile, the wider population developed traditional folk dances, which today form part of national cultures. In history, dance has nevertheless contributed towards creating friendship and understanding. For example, in newly established communities of British settlers in Australia dancing helped newcomers to interact with locals, and establish friendly relations.

At first, the majority of work on dance focused on the history of dance and representational practices of dance, however, that started to change and scholars engaged in other forms of research on dance, such as ethnography, phenomenology, anthropology, etc.

When it comes to sociology, sociology of dance still remains of marginal interest. The exceptions are works by sociologists Francis Rust (1969) on history of social dance, Edith Cope (1976) on small dance companies and interactions among dancers, and Helen Thomas (1995) who established sociology of dance. However, the interest in dance among sociologists – and especially cultural sociologists – is almost non-existent, and especially if we compare number of works on other forms of arts, or with work on the media and popular culture. The fact sociologists are not very interested in studies of dance, is even more peculiar if we take into consideration number of sociological studies on nationalism and ethnicity, and the fact dance is also considered as an ethnic form of art.

When it comes to cultural studies and explorations of dance, cultural studies usually encompass “poststructural approaches to investigate representational practices (literary texts, films, fashion, music, advertisements, theatrical events, among others”, and “cultural studies scholars strive to reveal the complicity of certain representational systems with continuing systems of social oppression and to better understand how social “subjects” (the individuals who make up collectivities) are constituted by and, in turn, manipulate these representations and their meanings”. However, as Desmond (2000) warns, cultural approach to dance studies has resulted

“in a focus on dances as “texts” rather than on the practices that result in such texts, or the acts of engagement with those “texts” (…) Most of the theoretical vigor of dance studies in the last decade has not come from its engagement with ethnography”.

Some authors also claimed that many scholars study dance by taking it out from its social context, even though dance study should encompass both social and artistic
component. An ethnographic inquiry into dance practice means engaging with a dance community, and the researchers are free to join any community to study dance in its everyday life manifestation. As suggested by Desmond (2000), scholarly work on dance should combine ethnography, historical research and cultural studies to encompass all forms of dance and its multiple meanings. This, furthermore, means that by deploying this approach we can gain an in-depth understanding of “how “dancing” happens, when and where, and what meanings and pleasures people attach to it under specific conditions”. This also means that social scientists often fail to contribute to discussions in dance studies by not sufficiently engaging in all aspects of dance when debating this form of art. Furthermore, this means we need to answer the following questions

“What is dancing? What happens when we do it? Why do we do it? How does doing it constitute a “we”? And “I”? A “you”? A social relation? A social history? In what ways is dancing unlike other social/aesthetic practices? Like other commercial practices? In what ways is the same? Why and how does it matter? To whom?”

These observations are confirmed by a sociologist of dance Helen Thomas (1995) who defined dance as a form of art that is “simultaneously a feature of the socio-cultural context of its emergence, creation and performance and a reflexive practice realised through the medium of the body”, and emphasized that “such an approach needs to be interdisciplinary in character”. She continues by explaining that “the activity which commonsensically we understand as dancing does in fact take a number of different forms and occurs in a variety of social contexts which straddle the spectrum of the high art/popular culture divide in contemporary western industrial formations. As an art form, like the other arts, dance is a minority concern (and a minority concern with the arts), which is participated in by a minority and viewed by a minority of the public. As such it can be seen to reside within the confines of the tradition of “high” culture”. Thomas, nevertheless, acknowledges that dance “is not just something that we look at, it is also an activity that takes place in different social contexts, in mainstream popular culture and in subcultures”, as well as “a social activity which has a tradition of popular appeal”.

When it comes to cultural sociology, the discipline is centred on “meaning-making. Cultural sociologists investigate how meaning-making happens, why meanings vary, how meanings influence human action, and the ways meaning-making is important in social cohesion, domination, and resistance”. In this, cultural sociology encompasses “meaning-making in everyday action, the institutional production of meaning, and the shared mental frameworks which are the tools of meaning-making”. There are different ways to define culture, but one that is often accepted is a definition that emphasizes sharing certain worldviews and codes of behaviour with members of the same community. This, however, differs from author to author, and from school to school. For example, the Birmingham school of cultural sociology defined culture as a totality of processes that constitute our everyday lives, while French theoretician Pierre Bourdieu defined culture as “the best that has been thought and said, regarded as the summits of achieved civilization”. Nevertheless, culture also encompasses art such as opera, music, literature, as well as dance. However, different scholars study different aspects of culture, and Spillman argues that these problems can be overcome by considering culture as a

“process of meaning-making - such processes may operate in different sorts of social locations (in more specialized arenas or more generally) and may be evident in all sorts of social
Jacobs and Spillman (2005) also argued that cultural sociology is “not limited to the study of specialized cultural systems such as art, media, or science but rather that it is an analytic perspective on any social arena”, and “a shift to analyzing specific meaning-making processes, from earlier conceptualizations of culture as an integrated whole…” Therefore, we can argue that cultural sociology “makes a distinctive contribution by providing conceptual tools for handling the intersection of macro-level social dynamics and micro-level subjectivity in meso-level processes”, and this sub-discipline within sociology is thought to build “on the examination of cultural processes in concrete contexts”.

In Judaism, dance presents a social tradition since early times because Jews have always expressed joy through dancing. For example, Torah describes Miriam leading the dance ceremony after escaping slavery in Egypt and taking part in Exodus that happened around 1270 BCE. The practice of dancing for joyful occasions continued after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 when Jews danced on the day modern state of Israel was established, and Israeli state has a rich dancing culture: both folk and artist. The importance of dance in Judaism has its tradition going back to the origins of Judaism, and it can be said that the Jewish dance “like Jewish art, music and theater, is an expression of the civilization from which it arises”.

When it comes to the State of Israel, its dance tradition derives from Diaspora and struggles to develop Hebrew culture on a newly re-gained historical land. During 1940s, Jewish community was seeking its right to self-determination, and Jewish communities developed Hebrew culture as a national culture that will foster new national Jewish identity. Dance also had an important position in creating the state and particularly the artistic dance performed mostly by European settlers. Jewish communities also developed folk and modern dance inspired by their countries of origin and the Zionist movement. During 1950s, American dance groups came to Israel and this helped in spreading expressionism in dance techniques. Various dance companies were established during the 1960s, and while folk dances were created from all distinctive traditions in the land of Israel and from Jews who came to Israel after the creation of the modern state of Israel, modern and art dances are flourishing in Israel until the present day. Nevertheless, Israel presents an unavoidable place on world’s dance map, and the importance on dance in Israel can also been seen in efforts of the State of Israel to establish Israeli dance institutes abroad, such as Israeli Dance Institute in London. It can be stated that dance has an immensely important place in Jewish religion and tradition, and nowadays it is possible to follow evolution of Jewish dance as an initial expression of incorporation of art in everyday lives of Jewish women, as well as dance as a means of identification among both secular and Orthodox religious groups in Israel (see articles in this volume by J. Schmidt and L. Naon, S. Katz-Zichrony and T. Perlshtein).

Taking into consideration criticism of cultural studies and largely non-existent work on dance in the field of cultural sociology, this volume engages in exploration of Jewish dances in Israel by considering dance as a meaning-making
process that operates as a contextual cultural practice on all levels of the society. In that, the volume looks at Jewish dances in the State of Israel, a country that had to re-create identities after re-creation of the state in 1948 where dance served, and still serves, as a meaning-making process on all levels, i.e. among state officials who see it as a means to achieve cohesion among citizens and create a strong national identity, among various groups within Israeli society who use dance as an expression of their identities and personal struggles and desires, be them secular or Orthodox in their religious beliefs; and among Jewish Diaspora. Dance, in other words, became a central notion of identification and a part of culture that identifies the everyday lives of Israelis and extends its outreach to Jews in the US and elsewhere. This volume, therefore, analyses dance through the prism of cultural sociology by understanding culture as both separate sphere of the society, and a way of social life. The volume encompasses theoretical, ethnographic and historical considerations of the dance in Israel, in an attempt to offer a comprehensive (albeit not exhaustive) inquiry into dance in Israel, and help in answering at least some of the questions discussed earlier in this introduction, i.e. “What is dancing? What happens when we do it? Why do we do it? How does it constitute a “we”? And “I”? A “you”? A social relation? A social history? In what ways is dancing unlike other social/aesthetic practices? Like other commercial practices? In what ways is the same? Why and how does it matter? To whom?”

The Structure of the Volume

In the first paper, Ruth Eshel offers a history of the development of dance in Israel that helps in understanding other papers in the volume. In that, she elaborates how dance in Israel has evolved from a characteristic of a new, desired Hebrew culture that participated in realising Zionism to the founding part of the Hebrew culture that was eventually established. The Hebrew culture faced opposition as Jewry in Israel divided to two camps before the creation of the present State of Israel where one camp wanted to abandon the Diaspora concept and form a new Israeli culture while the other opposed to this idea. At first, dancers collaborated with Europe and participated in dance manifestations until WWII when they faced cultural isolation. This isolation, however, created a local culture that presents a mixture of influences of all countries from where Jews fled to Israel. At present, dance is blossoming in Israel and while, at first, dance presented an expression of dream and collective expression of belonging, nowadays it is also turning into an expression of individuality and celebration of life. However, dance still maintained its involving character, and dance as a form of art presents personal expression of ideals and desires incorporated into Israeli mentality and culture.

In the second paper Henia Rottenberg writes about Yardena Cohen, dancer and choreographer who significantly contributed to Israeli dances. Yardena Cohen combined influences of the Jewish Diaspora and newly founded Israeli cultural and political scene. In that, the newly founded Israeli state created the Hebrew culture and made an attempt to change the body image, and dance clearly had an influence in that process. By combining narratives of the Zionist ideology, dance influences of the Jewish Diaspora and new dances based on Israeli narratives, life and work of Yardena Cohen and the Israeli dance scene she also influenced demonstrates central place of Jewish dances in Israeli society, culture and politics. The article also shows how Jewish identity – be it the one from Diaspora or the one from Israel itself – is profoundly determined by dance.
The third paper, written by Amit Assis, offers an in-depth analysis of one of the main characteristics of new Hebrew culture, i.e. the Hora dance. Hora is a dance that originates from Hassidic religious background, and it contains religiousness in its dance and lyrics. Nevertheless, the dance presents a religious expression of a secular attempt to create an alternative to traditional Jewish life. This dance also presents a form of community singing that is central to Judaism, and the notion of community that indeed has an important place in Jewish customaries and faith. Hora as a communal dance is one of the main cultural expressions of culture of new immigrants who came to join the Zionist project of building a Jewish homeland. As such, this dance symbolised a new life style, identity, belonging, and a new family. It was envisaged that this Zionist dance would be danced until the Zionist project ends, and dance took a form of faith and hope for a better future. Later on, as the next paper will explain in more details, this dance became part of new Hebrew culture and went into an institutionalised form financed by the State of Israel.

The fourth paper, written by Nina S. Spiegel clearly demonstrates the importance of dance in forming the Hebrew culture, concept of a new Jew, development of Tel Aviv, urban Zionism, and shaping of the Tel-Aviv, the first Hebrew city. In a nutshell, dances had an important place in the life of old Jewish communities during the British Mandate of Palestine where dance was central to everyday lives and Jewish culture, and this prominent role of dance in shaping everyday lives and culture continued with development of large cities after establishment of the State of Israel where dance continued to be a means to express joy (e.g. after building the first harbour, etc.). Tel-Aviv today, therefore, hosts several dance festivals and world’s renewed dance centres, and today’s situation emerges from the history of the city. Dance, and Hora dance in particular, played a very important role in shaping the concept of a new Jew that will be strong, tough and vibrant, and thus different from the Diaspora Jew. While Hora obviously has roots in socialist Zionism hostile to Jewish Diaspora, it also became a symbol of the new urban culture developed in Tel-Aviv, the first Hebrew city that has a new Hebrew culture embedded in its everyday life and culture.

The fifth paper, written by Sari Katz-Zichrony, describes a teaching practice of the Jewish religious college Orot Israel where dance and religion are intertwined to form an everyday life reality of pupils educated to be religious teachers in Israeli public religious schools. In this religious college, dance is seen as divine given the fact it is presented in Torah, however, respect of religious practice also requires adherence to the principle of religious modesty. This, in practice, means that pupils are taught to dance while preserving the modesty principle in their behaviour, dress code, etc. Dance classes follow the same structure as every other dance class with a difference that these classes also encompass Torah learning, as well as learning about the Jewish tradition. These classes show importance of dance in the Jewish culture, and the prominence of dance within the culture brought to bridging a gap between religion and art where children no longer need to choose preferences or give up from one interest for the other one.

The sixth paper, written by Talia Perlshtein, examines religiously observant dance teachers employed in Israeli public religious schools on aspects related to their work, as well as their work satisfaction. In their work, teachers have to live modest lives and give an example to pupils. In other words, teachers have to combine art and education with halachic rules. According to the research results, teacher’s motivation comes largely from personal characteristics such as skills, inclinations and needs, and not from convenient work conditions or similar characteristics. At the same time, teachers are highly motivated and emotionally attached to their jobs to which they attach
divine attributes to dance, as it allows them to enjoy art while fulfilling religious requirements.

The seventh paper, written by Joshua Schmidt and Liora Navon, discusses Israeli trance-dance parties within two groups, secular and Orthodox. In these parties, music and dance are at the centre but there are differences in understanding parties. In other words, with secular parties participants tend to understand this form of dance as a dance therapy helping them to cope with intense Israeli society, and dance thus becomes a means to communicate a different discourse. Individualism is highly cherished for participants dance individually with which dance becomes a form of protest against collective identification. On the other hand, Orthodox participants dance both individually and in groups, and use these gatherings to look for partners to marry. They do not express any protest or individualism with this form of dance; this dance also serves them as a means to integrate in predominantly secular Israeli culture. However, both groups seem to fulfil their desires for changes rather than actually protest since their code of conduct is similar to the one of their parents they are allegedly trying to change, and the dance clearly fulfils this need by making participants feel something has changed and modernised.

Finally, the eighth paper, written by Dina Roginsky, discusses development of Israeli dances and their influence on the identity creation process amongst American Jewry. The dance here reflects identity struggle amongst American and Israeli Jewry. Israeli folk dances are seen as a part of communicating national identity and as an authentic form of expressing cultural identities, and this brought crisis amongst American Jewry that developed its own Jewish identity and Jewish dances. Israeli folk dancing, therefore, became a part of negotiation of a cultural identity that had a symbolic meaning, as Israeli folk present a symbolic attachment to Israel. However, meaning differs amongst Israeli and American Jewry because Israeli dances have religious meaning in the US while those same dances have cultural meaning in Israel. Dance, therefore, becomes a means of cultural display people can consume like, for example, ethnic food, and its influence on the cultural identity and attachment to Israel amongst American Jewry has an immense value.

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Notes

7 Desmond, *Terra Incognita*, p. 43.
8 Desmond, *Terra Incognita*, p. 44.
10 Desmond, *Terra Incognita*.
11 Desmond, *Terra Incognita*, p. 46.
22 Jacobs & Spillman, *Cultural Sociology*, p. 3.
27 Rottenberg, *Anna Sokolow...*
28 ibid.
31 Desmond, *Terra Incognita*.
Abstract

This historic article reviews and analyses the way Concert Dance in Israel has developed since the twenties to the current blossoming of dance in Israel in the second decade of the present millennium. The way dance in Israel has evolved reflects the many changes occurring in Israeli society, among them ideological, social and political changes; as well as influences of dance genres from abroad, globalisation and postmodernism.

The author argues that the engines that have driven dance in Israel along the timeline are change and choices. This article relates to the central points in this process of change and choices leading Concert Dance to its present state.

Key words: Zionism, Concert Dance, dance, Israel, globalisation

The Late Naissance of Concert Dance

The building of a new culture was part of the realisation of Zionism in Eretz Israel (Palestine). Ideological debates discussed questions related to all areas of life, such as what language should be spoken, what should be worn, what music should be listened to, and how people should dance. Now, that 100 years of concert dance in Israel are about to be celebrated, we can pinpoint various junctures that occurred through time, some conscious and some subconscious, which reflect the ideological, political, social and economic changes undergone by the state, as well as being influenced by more global trends.

During the forty years between the First Aliya (1904-1882) (wave of Jewish immigration) and the Third Aliya (1924-1919), the beginnings of various cultural activities were witnessed in the Yishuv (Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel), but there was no development of concert dance. The pioneers who arrived in the country with these waves of immigration came from Eastern Europe, Asia and Yemen, with most coming as individuals, except for the Yemenites who came as families. Most of the others were young single idealists who came to help establish agricultural settlements. There were no dance professionals amongst them. In order for concert dance to make its entrance various things had to happen; firstly, to wait for the resumption of immigration after World War I, in the early 1920s, at which time the people who were to become Israel's first dance pioneers immigrated to the country, led by Baruch Agadati, Rina Nikova, Margalit Ornstein, Deborah Bertonoff and Dania Levin; secondly, the creation of an urban audience appreciative of culture; and thirdly, the renewal of ties with Europe which was characterized in the post-war period by a surge of avant-garde creativity in the arts, including Expressionist Dance (Ausdruckstanz), giving a boost to the desire to create Hebrew dance. Unlike in the fields of music, theatre, literature, visual arts, where a model of Western culture already existed which could be rebelled against, or used as a platform from which to develop innovative Hebrew interpretations, or be adopted as an
intermediary step lending the perspective of the great masterpieces, the situation with dance was different. There was an ideological opposition to classical ballet which was identified with the old world, with both the conditions and the professional abilities lacking for this to be staged in the Yishuv in any case, and a modern dance repertoire did not yet exist.

Not everyone agreed with the effort to try to immediately create Hebrew art and there were heated discussions on the subject, but the voices of those in favour emerged with the upper hand, with the new cultural revival being mobilised as part of the enterprise of a national revival. People's country of origin influenced their decision on which side to take. In general, the first immigrants who came with the first four waves of aliya mostly came from Eastern Europe - countries undergoing an accelerated process of national awakening who sought to create Jewish and Hebrew Art, with this explaining why Agadati, Nikova, Bertonoff and Levin who came from Russia chose this path. However, Margalit Ornstein, a native of Vienna who immigrated to Israel in 1922 claimed that they should not raise their voices to demand a unique Hebrew art, as they were not yet Hebrews! '

Do not demand an expression of nationalism in art until we have a unique expression in our daily life. Do not pre-empt the end.'

She regarded herself, like most Jews of Germany and Austria, as belonging culturally to Central Europe. She opened the first studio teaching dance in Tel Aviv, together with her twin daughters, the dancers Shoshana and Yehudit, teaching "Plastic Gymnastics and Rhythmic Exercises" – a combination of the instruction methods of Bes Mensendieck, Emile Jacques-Dalcroze and Rudolph von Laban. Margalit also put on movement theatre performances for the Eretz-Israel Theatre.

The Search for a Language of Movement

The artists' encounter with Eretz Israel, the sun, the powerful scents and odours, wild expanses of a primitive country where time had stood still, seems to have contributed to their creative outputs. As in many cases, in the Yishuv cultural activity was related to the individual's own personal initiative and vision, and was not planned or arrived at through institutionalised decisions. During the 1920s and early 1930s, a handful of dance artists had searched for inspiration in order to create Hebrew dance. The search for a language of moment was also connected to the new body image pioneers sought to build, which was the toned muscular body of the farmer, the tanned body exposed to the sun of Eretz Israel, instead of the concealed Diaspora Jew perceived as being weak and pale. Since the dance pioneers were individualists, coming from different backgrounds, different solutions were reached in the attempt to create a Hebrew dance.

Baruch Agadati was the first dancer and choreographer to appear in a solo dance performance in the 1920s. He was an avant-garde figure who had studied painting and received a modest training in classical ballet. He turned to the Hasidic Jewish figure as a source of inspiration when he adopted the Jewish gesture and intensified the exaggerated Jewish movement (following cubist inspiration) of the hands and the head, which had become a symbol for ridicule and hatred amongst anti-Semites. This was unusual, because the artists, like the
general population usually sought to shake off the trappings of Diaspora Jew. Like other artists, he turned for another source of inspiration to the Yemenite community, who were perceived at the time to represent the authentic Jew from Biblical Israel, who could serve as a bridge to the present. He internalised the spiritual atmosphere of the dance community with their undulating movement, turning inwards, which he expressed in dances like 'The Yemenite Yahya' or 'Yemenite Ecstasy'. Agadati did not dress up as these characters, but created an ethnically inspired personal dance based on their style, and as someone aware of innovations in painting, created a minimalist dance. Even the costumes he designed were inspired by the cubist and constructivist styles of painting, which indicate that he did not intend to create a first or second source folk dance but a work of art. For example, one costume he designed for 'Yemenite Ecstasy' looked like a coat put together from swathes of fabric, with each piece of cloth designed with stripes of different directions and thicknesses, with the bottom edge of the coat reinforced by a rigid material hence creating a garment following cubist inspiration. For accompanying music he chose pieces by Arnold Schoenberg who created atonal compositions and by the Hungarian composer Béla Bartók.

From 1924 to 1929 Agadati toured Europe with his dance recitals and encountered for the first time Ausdruckstanz artists. He was perceived to be 'a strange fellow.' On the one hand, a modern artist while at the same time, a Palestinian Jew from Russia categorized as being 'ethnic', but totally different from those exotic dancers with appeared with folkloric dance from India, Bali and Spain. When he returned to Eretz Israel he presented a recital without music, seeking to create a minimalistic movement, which speaks for itself and through him himself. This time, the audience did not appreciate his audacity. Disappointed, he abandoned the stage but continued to do ground breaking bold work in other areas.

Rina Nikova who immigrated to Israel in 1924 chose a different direction when she founded the Yemenite Company (1933-1939). Earlier, despite her previous modest training in ballet, she had been the ballerina in the Eretz Israel Opera of Mordechai Golinkin (1924-1927), which had included a handful of girls with no previous background in dance. With the closure of the Opera, Nikova had travelled to the US to start a career as a dancer. It may be assumed that she saw a Denishawn Company performance based on exotic dances from the Far East adapted to the stage creating a visually rich spectacle. When she returned to the Yishuv Rina Nikova assembled a group of girls of Yemeni descent, who danced their traditional dance. In this Yemenite Company Nikova expanded the lexicon of Yemenite movement, which existed in the somatic vocabulary of the dancers by adding every-day movements such as walking, running or skipping. According to Rachel Nadav, the soloist of the biblical ballet: 'We walked with the pitcher, we put it down, we sat down and sang.' These were theatrical performances with rich costumes, accessories, and music, including sections with the girls also singing. The impresario Sol Hurok planned to bring the group to tour the US in 1939, but with the outbreak of war the company's plans were scrapped and the company was disbanded.

The dancer and choreographer Yardena Cohen was exceptional, being the offspring of a family of seventh generation Jews living in Israel, having grown up exposed to Arabic art forms. Cohen also studied expressive dance in Vienna and Dresden. Returning home, she rejected the stylistic influence of her
European teachers. She gathered a musical group of Oriental Jews who played traditional instruments in cafes and at celebrations. Their rhythms connected her, in her words, to her ancient forefathers. She wrote:

‘The rhythms of my ancestors are in my feet, the paths of the Metulla in the Galilee course through my veins, and I drink in the landscape. It is indeed so very close, so natural’.

Her dances were mostly inspired by biblical women faced with dilemmas, such as ‘Lot’s wife’, or ‘Hannah at Shiloh’, ‘Jephthah’s daughter’ and ‘The witch at Ein Dor’; with these characters symbolizing psychological concepts which are not bound to a single time or place, such as fear, the yearning for motherhood, curiosity, and the desire for personal development, with only the details varying, but not the central idea.

Other choreographers who created unique solutions were Dania Levin and Deborah Bertonoff. The former founded the troupe ‘Movement and Speech' (1931) creating theatrical movements scenes based on poems such as ‘Masada' by Isaac Lamdan, which dealt with the theme of the existence of the Jewish people throughout history as well as with contemporary affairs currently on the public agenda. The dramatic scenes inspired by Rudolph von Laban's Movement and Speaking Choirs were performed by combining movement and speech. Deborah Bertonoff, dancer and mime artist and later an anthropologist, recreated ‘The Exodus from Egypt' in her recital (1946) accompanied by readings and contemporary music of Yosef Tal where she played figures from Jewish history using minimalist movement and shaping her characters following Kurt Joos' Eukinetics theories.

**Eretz Israeli Expressionist Dance**

What was started by individuals in the Yishuv in the 1920s with very humble beginnings, took a different turn in the mid 1930s. The rise of Nazism brought professionals of Ausdruckstanz to Israel. Prominent teachers included Tille Rössler, who had been the senior instructor at the School of Gret Palucca in Dresden, and the dancers Else Dublon, Paula Padani, and Katia Michaeli who had all danced in Mary Wigman's company. The most important dancer to arrive in the Yishuv in the thirties was Gertrud Kraus. In 1935, at the peak of her artistic success as a dancer and as a leading first rank choreographer of Expressionist Dance in Central Europe, she decided to move to Eretz Israel. The rapid increase in numbers of dance artists led to a national dance competition being held in Tel Aviv, where the first prize was won by Yardena Cohen.

While the pioneering dancers I have referred to above were looking for sources of inspiration for their language of movement to create Hebrew Dance, the dancers who came from Central Europe brought with them the Ausdruckstanz style which was created through the rejection of existing traditions –matching the ideologies of the pioneers in the Yishuv. It engaged with the personal, the individual seeking to interpret things subjectively, and provided the dancers from the Yishuv with the freedom to express the intensity of the encounter with their ancient/new homeland. Expressionist Dance sought universal and symbolic meaning for its enterprise, which was just how the pioneers felt: their deeds had historical significance. While in Germany, the search for a deeper meaning to life led to an interest in witchcraft, primitivism
and rituals; in the Yishuv the search for meaning led to an investigation of the mythological figures of ancient Israel, to the wonder at the nation's renaissance, to a connection with the land, and to marveling at walking through the lands mentioned in the Bible. Their movement was less introverted, less sombre, more optimistic, wanting to open arms, to embrace and absorb the place.

Inspired by Laban who set up movement choirs and speaking choirs, the function of which were to express socialist holidays and ideas, the dance artists in the Yishuv created pageants. Here was a rare combination: a small, isolated country, the longing for original folk dance, and the rejuvenation of ancient agricultural festivals that would express the process of pioneering in Eretz Israel. The Ausdruckstanz artists saw it as part of their calling to serve the society and this led to the creation of pageants - a combination of Hebrew texts recited and sung together with festive and ceremonial dances, performed by groups of members of the agricultural community in the open air.  

**Artistic Isolation**

With the outbreak of World War II cultural contact was lost with Europe and dance artists in Eretz Israel entered into a period of cultural isolation. This isolation lasted throughout the Second World War and then continued through the War of Independence up until the early 1950s. This cultural disengagement from the world led to the demand for the local artists to create 'Culture' and increased the demand for dance performances. Independent dancers appeared in recitals, and staged performances with their students. The highlight of these artistic endeavours was the modern dance company founded by Gertrud Kraus, which was associated with the Folk Opera (1941-1947). This was something of an innovation, as in those years traditionally only classical ballet companies worked with the Opera House. In addition to the dances included within the operas, Kraus put on dance evenings at the opera where her dance students performed, many of whom later went on to become important dancers in their own right, including Naomi Alesovsky, Rachel Talitman, Vera Goldman and Hilde Kesten. Kraus encouraged her students to create their own choreographies, and they appeared in recitals of their own. Other dancers who appeared in recitals were Hassia Levi-Agron and Rachel Nadav who was remembered as the soloist of Nikova's company.

The independent artists worked under the difficult conditions of the time: the country was coping with the absorption of large numbers of Jewish refugees, a deficient infrastructure and an exhausting climate. They fought in the war of survival. If during the 1930s, the first signs of experimental work had been evident, especially in Kraus's solo work, like, *Stone, Wind and Wood* (1935), some of which was danced in silence; now the increasing demand to supply local 'culture' during the war, as well as the horrors of war shifted the direction towards creating a lighter dance, as part of the escapism which the audience needed. The style of movement also gradually changed and the group works of Kraus in the folk opera included movements taken from classical ballet.

The seeds of classical ballet sown during the 1930s managed to survive. The dancer Valentina Archipova-Grossman originally from Latvia, opened a ballet studio in Haifa (1936) shortly after the dancer Mia Arbatova opened one in Tel Aviv (1934). Grossman focused on teaching while Arbatova not only established generations of dancers but also put on ballet programmes. During the 1950s, Arbatova and her partners Elisheva Mona and Irena Gitri founded the Folk Ballet and encountered harsh
ideological hostility. They wanted to show that ballet is a universal language and can deal with topical issues. Arbatova created *The Way to Freedom* (1949) which deals with the concerns of a mother who sends her children to fight and with the heavy price of independence, while Mona produced *The Negev Calls* (1950) about an Eretz Israeli dancer who is given a contract in Hollywood, but with the outbreak of the War of Independence returns to fight alongside her beloved.

### The Artistic Revolution

In 1948 the State of Israel needed to heal from the wounds of the War of Independence. The first years after the establishment of the state were years of austerity. Food and clothing were rationed through coupons. The trauma of the Holocaust hovered over everything. The land was covered with tents of Jewish refugees from Arab countries and of the survivors from Europe. There was a trickle of immigration from the United States.

The demographic changes spawned the cultural perception of the 'melting pot', that is, people should aspire to spurn the cultural characteristics of each individual ethnic community of the Jews who had arrived from all over the world, and should create from this variety of cultures and styles one single core style that would be 'Israeli'.

The USA, the big winner of the period, had become the superpower worthy of emulation and had taken the place of Europe. For the first time the work inside Israel was exposed to comparison and competition with work from abroad with this prompting the momentum to make progress in all other areas of life. However the meeting between Expressionist Dance and American Modern Dance led the Israelis to feel a loss in confidence in their abilities and in the artistic revolution.

What happened? The meeting took place at a time when *Ausdruckstanz* artists were experiencing severe hardship. After the Folk Opera was closed (1947), Kraus's company, which had been the main company of this style, disbanded. After a visit to the United States (1948) Kraus returned thrilled by the achievements of modern dance in the US but also confused, insecure and with a shaken self-confidence which damaged her own creativity. During those years, established cultural enterprises became institutionalized and received government support, and Kraus founded the Israel Ballet Theatre (1951) without financial support in the hope of partnering with established institutions which received funding. In order to please the establishment, and to act in accordance with the 'spirit of the period', and to gain government funding, Kraus put on a programme that included her own dances, Yemenite dances, excerpts from *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty* with a foreign guest ballerina, and the dance *Fire in the Mountains* (1951) by American choreographer Talley Beatty. For the first time Kraus and her company suffered severely from harsh reviews citing a lack of technical capabilities and excessive expression, while Beatty's work was highly praised. The establishment, which in any case preferred to support folk dances symbolizing the pioneering 'togetherness', did not see themselves obliged to help the 'failing' company, with elitist aspirations.

Just when *Ausdruckstanz* was at its lowest point of crisis, in 1956 Martha Graham arrived with her company for her first visit to the country at the initiative of Baroness Bethsabée de Rothschild. The original movement language, strong technique and the brilliance of the guest dancers, together with the innovative scenery and lighting generated enthusiasm and admiration. There was a sense that thirty years of Expressionist Dance had been 'wasted' and now they needed to catch up and start
mastering the new style of dance. Young dancers turned their backs on their teachers and choreographers, regarding their work as outdated and in unison passionately embraced Graham's style which they studied with Rena Gluck and Rina Shaham, two dancers who immigrated to Israel from the United States in the early 1950s.

**Local Creativity**

While *Ausdruckstanz* had been rejected in favour of modern American dance, two important enterprises were founded during the 1950s, which at the time were perceived as being on the periphery of stage dance. Noa Eshkol and Abraham Wachman invented the Eshkol-Wachman movement notation - a notation system based on the universal language of geometry and mathematics, which enables an objective description of potential movements and their combinations. This notation system is still taught in dance and movement departments in academic education institutions in Israel today.

The other enterprise was the founding of the *Inbal Dance Theatre*. Its establishment was related to the increasing involvement of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation encouraging Israeli culture. The Foundation invited the American choreographer Jerome Robbins (1951) to recommend an Israeli dance company, which could tour the US. He did not find the work of Israeli modern dance artists to be of any interest, but was fascinated by the Inbal Company of choreographer Sara Levi-Tanai who was working with a young group of dancers of Yemenite origins. For him, this was not just another attempt from the period of the Yishuv, to seek inspiration from the Yemenite community, but a revelation to someone coming from the other side of the planet, who was filled with wonder at the unknown. Robbins recommended the Foundation to support the Inbal group, which became the first funded dance company, with this allowing the development of Levi-Tanai as an original choreographer.13

The themes Tanai worked around were inspired by Yemenite folklore, or the Bible, Jewish traditions and the human and geographical landscapes in Israel. Like Nikova, Levi-Tanai also depended on the improvisation of movement materials derived from somatic bodies of the Yemenite dancers, but unlike her, Levi-Tanai deconstructed the movement language of Yemenite dance to individual building blocks, and reconnected them while expanding this vocabulary from within to create a new 'Inbal' language, rich enough for artistic expression.14 She created original works, such as the *Song of Songs* (1979) and the *Book of Ruth* (1961) and Inbal was the first dance company to tour abroad and was a great success.

**Artistic Impasse**

When they arrived in Israel from the United States in the early 1950s the dancers Gluck and Shaham appeared in their own recitals and then in programmes together with their students. As with the *Ausdruckstanz* artists, they dealt with themes including biblical characters to express their connection to Israel but this time their movement language was influenced mainly by the Martha Graham's style. At first their programmes were praised and the dancers who had chosen to settle in Israel were warmly welcomed as being emissaries of the new dance, with excellent technical ability. However, later on the critical reviews changed. The main complaints were directed against the psychoanalytic dances, which were translated into the language of abstract symbols that were non-communicative and distanced the dance
audiences. Olia Zilberman, the music and dance critic for the paper Al-HaMishmar raised a further argument related to the dance language, which they used:

“Modern expressive dance was created to liberate dance from the chains of classical dance technique; from the stereotypes; from the routine of those same movements, positions and variants of the positions. But the technique of Martha Graham and José Limon, who created a dictionary of precise movements – if we become hostage to it, if we adhere to it diligently, we will sink into slavery which is no more desirable to us in our monotonous times than is classical ballet.”

In contrast to Shaham and Gluck, who were young dancers at the start of their careers, the choreographer Anna Sokolow, was a veteran and respected choreographer, who also dreamt of planting the seeds of American dance in Israel's dance repertoire. She was invited to Israel in 1952 at the recommendation of Robbins to train the Inbal company. She also held workshops, created a number of works and established the Lyric Theatre (1962-1964) funded by the America-Israel Cultural Foundation. The company was based solely on the works of Sokolow. But Sokolow had never settled in Israel and spent part of her time overseas. During the months she was overseas she did not allow other artists to work with 'her company,' so while she was absent the company couldn't work. Despite the high regard in which Sokolow was held, her works were also perceived to be non-communicative, like the programmes of Gluck and Shaham and others following the American style.

In the early 1960s it became apparent that dance was going through a serious crisis for various reasons, including the lack of government support, which would have allowed the establishment of a professional company but also because of an artistic impasse. Yehudit Ornstein wrote about the former: 'For years, dancers have studied, practiced and choreographed amongst us - but in vain. A whole army of dancers live and work effectively under the surface, in the studios, instead of being given the opportunity of performing on stage.' The artistic impasse was reflected in 1963 when in the same year, one after another of the independent performers staged repertoires in the American dance style. This was supposed to be a kind of summation of nearly a decade of the revolution marginalizing the Ausdruckstanz style, with the independent dancers having been the hope for new growth. The criticism was harsh. Haim Gamzo wrote in Ha'aretz about 'empty space, perforated, superficial, with no real leap, no ideas,' and about the use of Graham's language, 'the fertile spirit is missing here, of the magical atmosphere of the great choreographer, Martha Graham nothing was left but only Milly Graham'. There was a special disappointment that no choreographer had been discovered having their own innovative statement who could gather the dance community together, providing inspirational leadership. More and more dancers started to leave the country.

Professionalization, Centralization and Looking Outwards

It appears that after the harsh criticism of the performances staged by the independent artists following the American style, Bethsabée de Rothschild came to an understanding that without her intervention, the fate of the new growth, might end up like the previous one, Ausdruckstanz. Furthermore, I think the course of action she had to take became clear to her, and she realised that she needed to found one company, which would gather within it the best dancers in the country; and while there was an absence of outstanding local creative power, the creativity would be based on well-known choreographers from abroad. These insights shaped Israeli
dance for the following two decades. In 1964 the Batsheva company was founded which changed the face of dance, set new standards of professionalism and was a role model for the art of dance on stage, also influencing the periphery. Martha Graham (Rothschild was her producer) served as artistic advisor to the Batsheva company and gave the young company several of her works. In 1967, Rothschild set up another company - Bat-Dor, under the artistic direction of the ballet dancer Jeannette Ordman. This new company was formed following a rift between the Batsheva dance company and Bethsabée Rothschild after the Baroness became embittered by the company who performed brilliantly on stage, but suffered from a severe lack of discipline off the stage. Rothschild asked to appoint Ordman to lead the Batsheva Company, but the dancers rejected her artistic authority. The injured Rothschild turned away from the Batsheva Company, maintaining the distance between them until her death.

As opposed to the Batsheva Company, which was identified with the early era of Martha Graham's work, Bat-Dor was a modern dance company, which combined modern dance techniques with classical ballet, in this way following a similar route to that taken by European modern dance companies of that period. In 1968, the Israel Ballet was founded by Hillel Markman and Bertha Yamplovsky and in 1971 the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company, directed by Yehudit Arnon was founded. The establishment of these companies may also be understood in the context of the economic boom that characterized the country after the victory in the Six Day War (1967).

The Batsheva and Bat-Dor companies competed with each other in bringing choreographers from abroad. They had no faith in the ability of Israeli choreographers. The main companies kept their doors closed to them, apart from in one or two exceptional instances. This prevented local choreographers from working, as all of the professional jobs remained out of bounds for them, being limited to these main companies, and there was total central control.

During the early years of the Batsheva company Graham and Rothschild had encouraged the company's dancers to choreograph dances on Biblical themes, even though in those years turning to the Bible as a source of inspiration was largely associated with 'old-fashioned' Ausdruckstanz. As is well known, Graham sought inspiration from Greek mythology to express herself and saw it as natural for the dancers to look to their own sources - to the Bible. And if the high priestess directed them to the Bible - all reservations and concerns about dealing with biblical themes, like the Expressionist Dance artists had done, faded into thin air. While most of the dancers created dances using the language of Graham, Israeli choreographers Moshe Efrati and Oshra Elkayam stood out for their originality. Later, Efrati founded the company 'Kol Demama' (Sound of Silence) (1975) in which he worked at first with deaf dancers and later with hearing dancers. His language of movement drew on the imagery and movements of the Sephardic community, adopting the lines of classical ballet and combining them with modern dance. Oshra Elkayam based her work more on natural movements, being free of any specific style with an added element of humour. Another dancer who founded his own company after leaving Batsheva was Shimon Braun who founded the Jazz Plus troupe (1969) after studying for a while in New York, in the style of the American choreographer Luiggi. The company was very popular because of their appearances on the weekly television programme 'Ulpan Agol' ('Studio in the Round', one of the first entertainment programmes on Israeli television).

Until the start of the 1980s, the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company, directed by Yehudit Arnon, operated in a semi-professional format. At its
establishment it was intended only for dancers and choreographers who were members of the kibbutz movement, but when it became clear that there were not sufficient high quality choreographers who were kibbutz members, 'an ideological concession' was made, and the choreographers and teachers were not kibbutz members.

The company did not have the funds to hire choreographers from abroad like the private companies financed by Bethsabée de Rothschild, so it had to rely upon the few local Israeli choreographers working in Israel during the 1970s and 1980s the foremost of whom was Heda Oren (the only choreographer who was also a kibbutz member, from Ashdot Ya'acov), who became a kind of in-house choreographer during the company's early years; with Yehudit Arnon, Ruth Ziv-Ayal and Oshra Elyakim also working with the company. Arnon also forged a personal relationship with the teacher and choreographer Flora Kushman, who was enchanted by the idea of a ballet company operating out of an isolated Kibbutz in the north of the country. Kushman had taught at the London Contemporary Dance School – The Place - and had immigrated to Israel following the Six Day War. She improved the technical skills of the Company, bringing it up to a professional standard. Arnon also opened the Company's doors to Israeli dancers who had made a career for themselves abroad, including Yair Vardi, Ya'acov Shrir, Gideon Avrahami, Ze'eva Cohen and Ohad Naharin, inviting them to choreograph pieces for the company. At the same time, she helped develop the choreographic skills of Rami Be'er, one of the dancers in the company, who later became its artistic director.

During this period the company had been looking for its own unique brand as a kibbutz Dance Company. It was not reflected through its repertoire, or through its high technical standards but in the human spirit coursing through the bodies of dancers on the stage, who originated from Kibbutz communities throughout the country, and who had come to live on the Kibbutz together, working and dancing together having been raised in the communal spirit of cooperation. In the early 1980s Yehudit Arnon, managed to create special relationships with choreographers Jiří Kylián, Matz Ek, before they were internationally acclaimed, and Susanne Linke who enriched the repertoire and helped professionalize the company gaining increasing appreciation.

Why 1977? – The Breakthrough of 'Fringe Dance'

The decision to base the repertoire of both leading dance companies on the work of foreign choreographers and the lack of confidence in local artists, had led to a wasteland of local creativity. Excluding exceptional cases, even the few semi-professional companies that were established in the periphery, had no artistic statement, which differed from that of the main companies, and without financial support they did not last long. The change occurred in 1977, the year when a few performances were first staged by independent choreographers/ dancers inspired by American post-modern dance. The appearance of independent creators in dance at that time was something new as all the professional activity was centralized in a few companies, mainly Batsheva and Bat-Dor.

The question is why Fringe activity and Post-modern dance came to Israel after a delay of nearly two decades? The answer is related to the historic' time-line'. Post-modern dance, which shouted out a resounding cry of 'anti'–first and foremost against the canons of American modern dance, led by Graham, did not resonate emotionally with the Israelis. At that time, the dance community in Israel was trying
to become established and institutionalized and needed to get stronger technically and not go off on experimental adventures. Also most of the young people who had gone to study during the early 1960s with the help of Rothschild studied at Juilliard or in Graham's school in order to be accepted into the Batsheva Dance Company.

In the early 1970s, the choreographer Mirali Sharon returned to Israel. She had taken workshops in New York with Merce Cunningham and Alwin Nikolais and had even staged works of her own with her company, which had been highly acclaimed. However she was ahead of her time in Israel, which was not ready or willing to understand experimental work. Thanks to positive reviews from abroad, Batsheva and Bat-Dor were willing to accept her, and she found a way to work within their frameworks. By contrast, in the second half of the 1970s conditions were ripe for a change when a group of young Israeli choreographers returned to Israel bringing with them their experiences of post-modern dance from the US. At the same time, some of the dance communities in Israel had become weary of the repertoire, which was mostly dramatic, staged by Israel's major companies.

The desire to create a 'fringe dance', which was not the providence of the main companies created a connection between young Israeli choreographers who had returned from abroad and a handful of dancers who were willing to 'risk' experimental work. Among these outstanding choreographers were Rachel Kafri who had studied with Merce Cunningham, Heda Oren who had studied with Alwin Nikolais; Ronit Land who had returned from Britain from a course for young choreographers in the 'New Dance' style and Ziv-Eyal who had studied at New York University.

In 1977, Ruth Eshel staged a dance recital including five original solo dances created for her by Ronit Land, Heda Oren, Ruth Ziv-Eyal and Rachel Kafri. In the same year, and that following it, the young daughter company of Batsheva, Batsheva 2—staged works by Kafri, Land, and by the director Miri Magnus who had returned after studying with Peter Brook. The artistic directors of the mother company, to which the daughter company was subordinate; whether from a lack of appreciation for experimental work; or due to a concern that the young company would take a chunk out of the mother company's budget; preferred to regard the company as a group of young trainees who would eventually fill its ranks. The works of the Batsheva 2 Company were staged in the company studio a few times without proper media exposure, and soon the interest of dancers and choreographers in the company was lost. In this way the hope that avant-garde dance could fit into the established companies was lost. In 1978, Rina Schenfeld, the principal dancer of the Batsheva Dance Company, appeared in her first solo recital of Threads, outside of the company, and won international acclaim. In Jerusalem Flora Kushman established the Jerusalem dance workshop.

In the absence of a framework for performances and institutional support to encourage Fringe Dance, choreographers and dancers began to perform at events of other artistic fields, mainly 'Fringe Theatre' which had gained momentum with the establishment of the Acre Fringe Theatre Festival (1980), also at New Music-electronic music concerts, and at performances of visual art events which had been born in Israel in the late 1970s. The acclaimed critic Giora Manor from the 'Al HaMishmar' newspaper founded the Israeli Dance Annual Review (1975) within which he recorded the changes in the dance map in Israel. That same year the Dance Library of Israel was founded.

The independent Israeli choreographers did not adopt the American post-modern dance carte blanche. They cherry-picked certain aspects, such as the rebellion of the new genre against the canons of modern dance, and the search for a language of
movement based on day-to-day movements without a burdensome use of costumes or sets. However, the Israeli artists refused to reject theatrics, plot, message and emotion - components post-modern dance had discarded. The historic co-operation between the sculptor Robert Rauschenberg and Merce Cunningham, the works of Alwin Nikolais with the use of elastic coverings, with dancers inside of them, creating a kind of ‘moving statues’, contributed towards 'Fringe Dance' in Israel, which made good use of objects as a starting point for discovering new movement materials and as a stimulus awakening associations and images.

The Return to Europe and the Rise of the Fringe

In 1982, Pina Bausch came to tour Israel with the Wuppertal Dance Theatre and the dance community was exposed to the Tanztheater style. Since Bausch's roots lay in Ausdruckstanz, her performances awakened the special historical relationship between Israeli dance, and the dormant expressionist dance. It turned out that most of the young independent Israeli choreographers had studied in their youth with teachers belonging to Ausdruckstanz, before they had turned to study Graham's style and post-modern dance. But before the arrival of Bausch, they did not attach the importance deserved to these studies. It became apparent to the Israeli choreographers that Ausdruckstanz unconsciously permeated their works.

The influence of Bausch increased their interest in the issue of gender, which was manifested in the physical and mental violence, which pervaded their works, as well as the increased use of the element of 'repetition' and the use of everyday gestures. The creative process shared between choreographers, actors/dancers – as with Ausdruckstanz - got a new legitimacy following the encounter with Bausch. Suddenly it seemed that post-modern American dance was foreign, too intellectual and conceptual; it was a sort of intermediate step toward returning to the real 'home' in Europe.

During the early 1980s, the community of independent choreographers grew. A 'second generation' of new choreographers was added to the 'first generation' who had started working in the second half of the 1970s, together with veteran choreographers who were previously been associated with the dance establishment, such as Oshra Elkayam and Mirali Sharon who each established ensembles under their own names. Among the new independent artists were Nava Zuckerman, who founded the theatre Tmu-na (1982), Tami Ben Ami with dancer Sally-Ann Friedland, the Magma ensemble, and the Yaron Margolin troupe. Their activities were mainly manifested in projects, so the 'Tamar' Company (Ramle Dance Theatre, 1983-1984) was an unusual exception as an attempt to establish a collective company inspired by post-modern dance based on Israeli artists and dancers who had returned to Israel after living in New York. Meira Eliash-Chain, Zvi Gotheiner and Amir Kolben were behind the organisation of the group. After its breakup 'Tamar- Ramla' was re-established as the 'Tamar - Jerusalem' (1987 -1992), under the artistic direction of Amir Kolben with an increased the influence of the German movement theatre. In contrast to the independent artists, the two Tamar companies dealt with the difficult topics of Israeli society, but their desire to convey clear messages took precedence over and damaged the work's artistic value.

The initiative coming from the field of independent artists brought a change in attitude of the dance department headed by Nilly Cohen in the Ministry of Culture and Sport. In 1984, the enterprise 'Shades of Dance' (Gevanim Be'mahol) was established which gave a platform to the new generation of independent artists and
choreographers, encouraging creativity. The growing importance of the independent artists eventually seeped through to the major companies who began to be more receptive to Israeli choreographers, showing more faith in the ability of Israelis to give artistic direction to the leading companies. In Batsheva, the artistic management was transferred to the hands of Israelis, Kai Lotman, Moshe Romano and David Dvir. Until that point, the artistic direction had still only been entrusted to foreign choreographers. Choreography workshops were now run with the company encouraging the development of choreographers from its own ranks.

Flowering

The key processes in dance which had been developed by the late 1980s and early 1990s eventually combined together, with the whole being greater than a collection of its parts and altogether, dance moved toward a period of growth and blossoming in the 2000s. The successful timing of the institution of several new frameworks in the early 1990s contributed to this, as these absorbed, directed and encouraged the waves of increasing activity. The most important of these was the establishment of the Suzanne Dellal Centre (1989), under the Artistic Direction of Yair Vardi. For the first time dance has a home of its own that gives a platform for creative activity and initiates and encourages new frameworks for projects staged professionally and given international exposure. Then the enterprise ‘Curtain Up’ (Haramat Masach, 1990) was established, another important framework designed to support experienced independent artists' productions. In 1991, the choreographer Ohad Naharin was appointed artistic director of the Batsheva Dance Company. He recreated the company placing it at the forefront of the avant-garde work, and his style was a source of inspiration for many Israeli choreographers. Alongside the Batsheva Dance Company the Batsheva Ensemble was founded which grows generations of dancers and encourages their development as artists and creators. The Kibbutz Dance Company was also at the peak of a process of change and renewal from a repertoire company on the fringe of professionalism to a company identified with the voice of a local contemporary choreographer, Rami Be'er, which now takes its place as one of two leading dance companies. The second mass immigration from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s has expanded the classical ballet-loving audience and enriched the pool of good dancers in this genre. Within the formal education system there are increased numbers of schools offering dance as an elective, which combines technique and creativity with theoretical subjects. These and other components, primarily the improvement in the economic situation and the rapid development of high-tech, contributed to the boom we are now witnessing at the start of the twenty first century.

Alongside the Batsheva and Kibbutz Companies, a new generation of independent artists has arisen who have burst out into the wide world. The couple Nir Ben Gal and Liat Dror opened a new path for the development of independent artists with their work ‘Two Bedroom Apartment’ (1987). During the following decade, the couple proved that a modest production without scenery but with an original contemporary statement, related to their lives as a couple in Israel or in even the Middle East, could break through to the top of the international dance. The dancers/choreographers included Adi Shal and Noa Wertheim who took a similar path; they initially appeared as a couple and later founded the dance company Vertigo (1992); and also Inbal Pinto and Avshalom Pollak as well as Yasmin Godder and Itzik Giuli. Other choreographers emerged and established ensembles, with Ido Tadmor,
Noa Dor, Anat Danieli, Emanuel Gat, Tamar Borer, Yoram Karmi, being a partial list of others who have followed in their footsteps.

For the first time in the southern capital of the desert, Beersheba, there is a professional dance company, Kamea, managed by Danielle Shapiro with the choreographer Tamir Ginz. Formerly it was a branch of the Bat-Dor school, which was closed together with the company in 2005 after the death of Rothchild when the company did not meet the necessary management requirements to receive financial support from the government.

At the start of the twenty first century another generation of independent artists grew up, including Shlomo Bitton, Renana Raz, Sahar Azimi, Niv Sheinfeld and Oren Laor; Maya Levy, Ronit Ziv, Anat Gregorio, Arkady Zaides, Yossi Berg and Oded Graf; Hillel Kogan, Michal Herman, Sharon Eyal, Iris Erez, and the list is still partial, and a new generation of choreographers is dancing at the door. The large number of premieres brought dance to open other venues, primarily at Tmuna Theatre, and in Jerusalem (Mahol Shalem, Hazira-Performance Art Arena).

Established in 1998, the Choreographers Association incorporates most of the independent choreographers, with its own space for concerts, Warehouse 2 at the Jaffa port. The number of dance researchers with a PhD in Israel has increased over the last decade and in 2012 The Israeli Society for Dance Research was established.

To Dance Life

The seething cauldron of Israeli reality sprouts creativity with its dance being part of the global phenomenon of contemporary postmodern, multicultural and multidisciplinary dance. The desire to catch up, to be part of the latest trends, is often obsessive amongst Israelis. In a list published in the mid-1990s, dance critic Giora Manor writes that he knows of no other state with a technological and cultural level like Israel, which experiences constant existential crises. There are extreme situations like social problems and profound disagreements between mystical-religious viewpoints and secular, progressive, liberal approaches. When it comes to dance, 'all of these are designed to also bring the new dance makers to engage in Israel's existential problems and many works have demonstrated a great vitality and personal involvement.'

The Israeli dancers are older than their peers abroad, most of them have completed their military service and everyone is exposed to the political pressure and security issues of the volatile Middle East. For the last two decades there has been a growing involvement of dance with political issues. The explosions of suicide bombers and the endless rounds of wars awaken extreme views to the right and left, with dance, like the other arts usually being associated more with the left wing. The piece 'Reserves Diary' by Rami Be'er (1991) deals with the moral dilemma of an Israeli soldier whose duty it is to protect the security of the citizens of the state, but as a soldier he must fill a role he does not want in a Palestinian village. A decade later the works have become more blatant. On the other hand many artists are turning to engage with themselves, with their biography, with their relationships, the difficulties of the homosexual, the place of the 'Other' in society. The desire for a normal life and the difficulty of dealing with the pressures have created a number of works dealing with escapism with a desire to get to the other place that reflects the exotic or fantastic which reflects the Israeli tendency known as 'to clean the head' in remote locations. On the other hand there are pieces derived from the Eshkol-Wachman movement notation, which deal with net movement, as expressed in the 'Room Dance' Festivals.
(Rikudey Heder) under the artistic management of Amos Hetz and the Rikudneto troupe of Tirza Sapir.

The history of dance in Israel has known various crossroads of connection and separation between stage and ethnic dance. During the Yishuv years the referral to ethnic sources was derived from national needs - to 'prove Israeliness' and point to the connection to the land and ancient Israel - whereas now, the interest in ethnic dance joins a global trend, as with the popularity of world music, stemming from a desire of Israeli artists to refresh and challenge the movement language when postmodernism encourages dialogue with roots and myths. Barak Marshall creates a combination of Chassidic dance, Yemenite Dance and American Pop. Renana Raz created the 'Cassowary' (2006), which is a combination of contemporary dance based on the ethnic Debka dance and on European folk dances. Orly Portal, the daughter of parents who immigrated to Israel from the Atlas Mountains in Morocco with the establishment of the state, has renewed and expanded the oriental belly dance into a rich tapestry of themes and precise movement motifs. Portal has written that over the years as a dancer, 'I came and went, I was moving back and forth, into this culture [Moroccan] and out, until I realised how to merge within me East and West and how to integrate in body and mind what I learned [Western genres of dance for the stage] with what I already knew.'

Ruth Eshel has created a contemporary dance inspired by Ethiopian culture as part of the Eskesta Dance Theatre and Beta Dance Troupe.

During the last decade a number of companies have been founded adapted to the needs of dancers who observe orthodox Jewish traditions, such as the male only company of Ronen Yitzchaky, and a number of companies for orthodox Jewish women including the Noga women's company at the Orot seminary, and the Nehura and Carmieh companies.

In contrast with earlier years when it was possible to talk about the periods influenced by Ausdruckstanz, Graham, Bausch, Killian, Be'er and Naharin; today the question of style remains marginal, as there is now a current personal style. Yair Vardi, director of the Suzanne Dellal Center stated: 'There is an open society. Everything is legitimate. Sometimes things come to extremes that match the dynamics of the nature of Israeli society. The matter of choice is related to responsibility and commitment.

Unlike in the past when dances were danced by people born and gathered from the four corners of the world who sought to prove their connection to the place and that they were Israeli, today dance is created and danced by Israelis, people who were born in the country and live in it. There is no need to prove that they are 'Israeli' because we are 'Israelis' by our very life, shaped by everything around us with our movement finding ways to 'write' on the body the story of the reality, fantasy and aspirations of those who live here.

Dancers and choreographers already have a 'living history'—their own stock of experiences, thoughts and memories. They are direct and sometimes brusque. They are reliable and expressive, while on the one hand they have softness, vulnerability, sensitivity and lyrical charm on the other hand they have an intense energetic temperament. When they dance you think that there are no barriers between the spectator and the dancer, and 'What the viewer sees is what you get'- and he sees first people, and then dancers.

The development of dance in Israel over the decades is similar to the process that everyone must go through in their personal internal life in order to first affirm who they are so that later, they will have the maturity and the courage to let go and return to themselves. The abundance and creative intensity of the productive work and
activity in the dance field in Israel today is a kind of statement 'we are here'. If during the period of the Yishuv they danced a dream then today we dance life.

Notes

5The first film record of dance in the Yishuv is just a few moments from *Massada* by Dania Levin. It is kept in the Israel Dance Library in Beit Ariella in Tel Aviv. Massada was the last bastion of the ancient Jewish independent state which fell to the Romans in 73 / 74 CE and it became a symbol of national revival with the slogan 'Massada shall not fall again'.
9The conductor of the Folk Opera was the composer Mark Lavrye. Kraus included dances as part of the opera repertoire but there were also three dance evenings between 1943-1946
10Rina Nikova established a ballet studio in Tel Aviv for young girls but it was closed in 1927 when she went to the United States.
12Rationing policies were introduced by the government in the fifties in order to create a stable exchange rate, thus saving foreign currency. The policy included limiting investments, and purchase of food and consumer goods.
14H. Rottenberg, "To Dance Inbalit," in *Sara-Levi Tani – A Life of Creation*, eds., H, Rottenberg & D. Roginsky (Due to be published, Tel Aviv: Resling, 2015) [in Hebrew]
15Olia Silberman, "A recital for the dance of Rena Gluck," *Al HaMishmar*, 05.19.1957
17The article by Yehudit Ornstein was taken from a news archive from 1963, found in the Yehudit Ornstein file in the Israel Dance Library.
21J. Dudley in an interview to R. Eshel, Tel Aviv, 5.8.1991;
23Judy Brin-Ingber took part in founding the Israeli Dance Annual Review in the first year and then back to the US. Later Gila Toledano helped Manor. In 1993 the annual review became a quarterly review edited by Giora Manor and Ruth Eshel. In 2000 it was renamed Dance Today edited by Ruth Eshel.
26In the Batsheva Company, the company's dancer, Alice Dor Cohen and the rehearsal manager Siki Kol created a number of dances. In the Bat Dor Company Domi Reiter Sofer, Yigal Perry Yehuda Maor and others also created choreographies.
30 Yair Vardi in an interview to R Eshel, Haifa, September, 2013
Yardena Cohen – Creating Hebrew Dance in the British Mandate of Palestine

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Abstract

Yardena Cohen (1910-2012), a dancer, choreographer, and teacher, is considered one of the founding mothers of Hebrew dance. After studying in Austria and Germany, Yardena began developing her dance career in the early 1930s in the British Mandate of Palestine. She began her career by creating and performing solo dances, and later on, she created festivities for the Kibbutzim, and taught dance. This paper will investigate Yardena's unique action and contribution to the development of Hebrew culture within the context of shaping and formulating a nation-state and a national culture for the new Jewish Yishuv. The aim is to explore Yardena's employment of ancient materials stretching back to Biblical times combined with formal frameworks inspired by German dance expressionism. The paper focuses on her solo dances and festivities created for the agricultural cooperative settlements during the 1940s, when her artistic activity was at its peak. Furthermore, the paper examines how far she conformed to the Yishuv's ideology and whether she found a way to express her unique, and sometimes non-conformist, voice.

Keywords: Yardena Cohen, Hebrew dance, Eretz Yisrael, Zionism, Hebrew culture, British Mandate of Palestine

Introduction

This essay examines Yardena Cohen's unique action and contribution to the development of Hebrew culture for the new Jewish Yishuv in Mandatory Palestine. Yardena Cohen – a dancer, choreographer and dance teacher - was born on July 1, 1910 and died on January 23, 2012. She is considered one of the founding mothers of Hebrew dance. Her dance career commenced developing at the beginning of the 1930s, within the context of shaping and formulating a Hebrew nation-state and a national culture.

Having returned from studying dance in Austria and Germany (1929-1933), Yardena created and performed solo dances, and in 1937 won the first prize in the National Dance Competition held in Tel Aviv. Later on, she created festivities for agricultural cooperative settlements. Since 1933, Yardena taught dance almost until her death, and developed a teaching system she called – “The dance that heals us”. In 2010, when celebrating her hundredth birthday, Yardena won the prestigious Israel Award for her lifetime artistic contribution and achievements, saying that

“Cohen was inspired by the heritage of Eretz Yisrael in general and by Biblical heritage in particular. She was influenced by the cultural diversity of the native people, and was concerned throughout her life with promoting and developing dance.”

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With the emergence of Jewish nationalism in the late years of the 19th century and the formation of Central European Zionist ideology at the turn of the century, the people who phrased it created a clear link between the national revival and the individual's physical rehabilitation. Hebrew culture told its story in terms of the body, and declaration of the need to establish a ‘new Jewish body’. Descriptions in Hebrew literature influenced the discourse, one example being Leon Pinsker’s *Auto-Emancipation* (1882), in which he explains that modern anti-Semitism results in the Jewish people's status as a torn body that is scattered among the nations. Therefore, he calls to resolve the Jewish problem not through education, but rather through National rebirth. It was, however, the rehabilitation of the male body that was placed at the forefront of the nation-building ideology.

In the process of creating new models, the lack of Jewish-Diaspora dance tradition (unlike music or art) led to the need to create first a Hebrew dance structure. Within theatrical dance, modern dance, rather than ballet, symbolized the urge for innovative, independent, secular, and progressive culture. The creative process of dance in general – ethnic, folkloric, social, and theatrical – was shaped largely by European women artists such as Margalit Orenstein (1888-1973) and her daughters Yehudit (1911-2008) and Shoshana (1911-1998), who studied in Vienna and worked in Eretz Yisrael since 1922, or Gurit Kadman (previously Gert Kaufman, 1897-1978), the mother of Israeli folk-dance who immigrated from Germany in 1922.

Yardena’s artistic activity will be examined in this essay as being an author and choreographer, who is, at the same time, an agent of action and a person activated by ideological grounds. This approach is based on Foucault’s work, in which he describes the body as a site on which historical accounts are subscribed, and the body onto which the force is seared to produce the modern subject. Yet, Foucault also opposes the author’s category, which negates the concept of the author as the agent of action. Borrowing from Gluzman’s approach in *The Zionist Body*, I will investigate Yardena’s dance against this position, as both an author who is perceived as an agent of action and as a person acting within the ideological field. Foucault’s emphasis on the notion that where there is power there is also resistance will support investigating how Hebrew dance served Yardena as both a defining space of the Zionist dance and body and as a site for challenging it.

This essay will concentrate mainly on Yardena’s dance that draws heavily on ancient assets and materials stretching back to Biblical times, combined with formal frameworks inspired by German dance expressionism. It will focus on her expressive solos, and on festivities created for agricultural cooperative settlements during the 1930s and 1940s. I will examine how far Yardena conformed to the *Yishuv’s* cultural ideology; to what extent it was fused with the European framework Yardena was influenced by, and, how she expressed her personal and unique voice as a woman dancer and choreographer in the realm that redesigned the ideal ‘new Jewish body’ as male.

My perspective might be limited since I am an Israeli and have been well acquainted with Yardena for many years. However, I hope that this reading will enable me to use other tools to examine and illuminate Yardena’s accomplishments in the context of that period. To this end, I shall draw on Yardena’s two autobiographies – *The Drum and Dance* and *The Drum and Sea*. Furthermore, I shall draw on her written texts, reviews from newspapers of the period, and the conversations I had with her. The visual material I shall draw on is mostly staged photos from her dances, photos from the festivities, and a documentary done embedded with original fragments from the festivity she created for Kibbutz Sha'ar HaAmakim.
The essay will be divided into four sections. The first one will discuss creating a culture as part of the national movement and will focus on Hebrew culture in Mandatory Palestine. The second section will present Yardena - her upbringing and her creative work emphasizing the Israeli and European influences on her development as an artist. The next section will centre on her solo dances within the social and cultural context, and on the unique voice she presented. The last part will focus on festivities she created and her contribution to the design of the secular festival.

Creating Hebrew Culture in Mandatory Palestine

Nation-states and nationalism are modern examples of imagined communities, argues Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*. They are based on imagining symbols, rituals, hymns, and require convincing its members of antique existence of a national identity. The rise of nationalism in the 19th century is considered a social concept if it corresponds to a certain modern territorial state, argues further Eric Hobsbawm in *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Hence, nationalities are directly related to political, technical, administrative and economic conditions and needs. The philosophical discourse, thus, is examined within its social, historical and local contexts.

Nations are mainly constructed from the top, yet they could not be understood unless examined also from the bottom. In other words, nations are measured also by the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people. These common people, in turn, are used as objects for the activities and propaganda of national movements. The philosophical and political discourse of nationalism emphasized common factors that had determined what would be the cultural materials instilled into its people, although not always sufficiently. Great stories of the past that have been fostered by historians have projected the concept of national time further onto educational and cultural systems that, in turn, made it a public domain. Artists completed the construction by constantly drawing from the historical national time. The theoretical breakthrough in the discourse in the early 1980s was concerned especially with the acceptance of the notion that national culture was what the elites provided about their people’s identity.

The emergence of the Jewish national movement at the end of the 19th century, as an analogy to Western nationalism, was accompanied by the appearance of the ‘new Jew’, namely the ‘Israeli Jew’. The origins of this ideological discourse stem from the images of the Jewish body in the European Antiemetic thought of the 19th century. Anita Shapira claims in *New Jews Old Jews* that since these representations of degeneration, disease and old age, and a state of the ‘living dead’ Jew was not considered male characteristic, they became analogous to female existence. The guiding ethos of the ‘new Jew’, she further claims, was secular, revolutionary, based on a new system of values, on the linkage between the Jews and their historic homeland, and on new norms of behaviour among the Jews themselves and between them and the Gentiles.

Orit Kamir argues that the dominant Zionist discourse considered the male’s rule as the natural, normal and healthy order. Hence, freeing the ‘old Jewish male’ negates the political Zionist commitment for equality for women. The Zionist commitment did not have the necessity nor the essential requirement of perception for maintaining similarities between men and women, the appreciation of feminine attributes, nor the recognition of the enslavement of women to men through social institutions and
organisations. Furthermore, that social construction of masculinity was very particular, a national masculinity, tough, competitive and militant.

Body culture was considered a crucial tool in shaping the ‘new Jew’ and essential for a Jewish national resurrection. Kamir debates that Zionism aimed to free the Jewish male from the poor and sick femininity he was trapped in when in exile. Negation of the Diaspora was in general the negation of the ‘old Jewish’ identity within traditional Jewish society, negation of the dependence on the non-Jew, of the inferior status among the surrounding society, and the liberation of man from his feminine characteristics. Cultivating an intentionally and distinctively physical ‘new Jewish body’ was influenced, as mentioned earlier by both European national movements and the German physical Culture Movement. Valuing the corporeal became a basic characteristic of the emerging society.

Christy Adair, who introduces the history of dance from a gender perspective, argues that the power relationships of the society affect women adversely, because the social construction of gender places them in a less powerful position than men. If so, why modern dance in the Yishuv was initiated by women choreographers at a time when there was a strong upsurge in women’s freedom? One reason is based on Kamir argument claiming that although Zionist ideology did not adopt the feminist perspective, it recognized the Jewish woman's right to participate in the project according to her nature and capabilities. Furthermore, at a time of greater mobility in society, and messages heard from the dominant society, Jewish women acknowledged the centrality of dance in shaping their ideas about society as well as the opportunity to make their artistic voices heard.

In dance, the image of the ‘new Jew’, argues Gaby Aldor, was ‘that of the pioneering worker, the physically happy, free-spirited citizen who was very much aware of his or her part in creating a new society and ready to sublimate personal wishes for the needs of the community.’ In that context, Gurit Kadman asserted that ‘our goal […] is to draw our people, who have not had any relation to the body for generations in the Diaspora, closer the body’. However, in another occasion she declared, ‘we should never educate our youth in the spirit of Prussian ideals. If we shall do so we will not be surprised that the new generation will be enslaved as the German people.’ These arguments indicate the tension existing between the desire to preserve the culture of the country of origin and at the same time the wish to abandon it for the sake of creating anew the Hebrew culture in the country of destination.

At the end of World War I Palestine’s status changed from having been over seven hundred years under Muslim rule to being under a Christian regime. The contradictory policy adopted by the ruling British led the Arabs to believe that they would receive a territory in return for their support against the Turks, and at the same time they promised the Zionists a Jewish State in that same region. Furthermore, the end of the War caused an upheaval in the status of Zionists parties in the domestic political ground – they won the hegemony on life events in the Yishuv.

Members of the Zionist movement arriving in Palestine from different cultural backgrounds and approaches to Judaism, and speaking different languages faced a crucial assignment: creating a New Hebrew culture, unifying all into a single national community. Throughout the three (out of five) Aliyot (Aliyah-immigration to Israel) during the British Mandate the number of Jews increased from several thousand to about 600,000 at the end of the Mandate. Jewish immigrants gradually settled Palestine and there has been a tremendous development. Cities, moshavim and kibbutzim were founded, industry was built, institutions of education, including higher education, and the Hebrew press were established. The Yishuv had
organisations and organised institutions, the most important of which were of the Jewish Agency, a government on the way, and the General Union, a powerful political and organisational instrument.

Zohar Shavit (1998), who investigates the history of Hebrew and Jewish culture, argues that what distinguished the shaping of the emerging Jewish Yishuv in Mandatory Palestine from other European national societies was the need to build it from top to bottom. During the first half of the twentieth century, as mentioned earlier, the Yishuv’s leadership and cultural elite invested efforts in formulating and creating a formal institutional culture, hence, creating cultural producers and the consumer audience. It all empowered forming a community in the defined territory for a ‘nation’ to be born. Hebrew culture was considered the uppermost factor in the process of consolidating the new Jewish national identity of the Yishuv. That became possible due to ideology that addressed Hebrew culture as an achievement of national-cultural-existential revolution, creating an ideal model of national culture or even of territorial national culture.

Modern spoken Hebrew, like other semi-artificial structures of national languages, was based and adjusted to ancient Hebrew. Ethnicity served as a unifying factor since the Jews have inhabited extensive territories and did not share a political organisation. Ancient and ‘primitive’ materials were employed to create a new and modern communal identity. At that time, religion was an ideology of the minority, and was perceived as undermining the power of the Nation's monopolistic demand for its people's trust.

Despite the central role of ideology in establishing the cultural centre, the process was accompanied by constant tension as a result of different perceptions regarding the desired nature of the culture to be established. However, what united all denominations and perspectives and created the basis for a cultural consensus, apart from the contrast between the Jewish-Diaspora and Eretz Yisrael cultures, was the idea of relating to the ancient homeland. This basis determined that Hebrew culture should be at the same time ‘original’ and ‘authentic’. In the context of art, these two ends expressed the ideological nature of Hebrew culture as generating national identity relying on ancient Hebrew myths.

Hebrew culture has not been developed in isolation from other cultures. Although imbued with a great mission and many assets of its own, it has borrowed and assimilated ‘foreign’ aspects that have become part of its original creation/construction/body. The new cultural frameworks have been borrowed from cultural centres in Europe, despite their geographical distance. Hence, their cultural frameworks, institutional structure and sometimes even repertoire structure. The central position given to culture shaped, to a great extent, the Hebrew Culture’s directions of development. An example is the establishment of major culture institutions such as the philharmonic orchestra (December 1936) or the core for radio broadcasting (March 1948).

In dance, the rise of the Nazis to power in 1933 brought another wave of immigrants to Eretz Yisrael. Among them were Tille Rössler (1907-1959), a principal teacher at Gret Palucca’s school in Dresden, the dancers Leah Bergstein (1902-1989), Else Dublon (1906-2002), Paula Padani (1913-2001), and Katia Michaeli, who danced in Mary Wigman’s company, or Gertrud Kraus (1901-1977), a notable Viennese dancer and choreographer at the peak of her career in Ausdruckstanz style. They all combined their training in the dominant central European Ausdruckstanz style, which focused on individual expression, with inspiration from the Zionist environment. However, not only German or Austrian natives implemented the new
German dance. There were also those who were born or lived in Eretz Yisrael and went abroad for vocational dance training. Dania Levin from Turkistan went to Berlin (1922); Deborah Bertonoff (1915-2010) from Russia travelled to Berlin (1928) and later studied with Kurt Joss in Dartington, UK, and Yardena Cohen.

**Dancing between East and West**

Yardena was born to a Jewish native family of seven-generations living in Palestine, in Wadi Nisnas in Haifa. She was the eldest daughter of Miriam Nir – Rafalkes and Pinhas Cohen (Yardeni), a family of intellectuals, scientists and educators. Yardena’s family moved to Germany in 1911 to follow her father’s studies, and upon returning, they moved to the German Colony in Haifa. When the British commenced living in the German Colony in 1923, the family moved to the Bat Galim, a new neighbourhood located on the coastline of the Mediterranean. Two most significant and distinct experiences from that period influenced Yardena. Shlomit Rot (Margaret Fox Rot), her dance teacher, who was a student at the Lohland School for girls in Fulda Germany, and the landscapes of the Mediterranean and Carmel mountains, oriental music, and Arabic rhythms and local figures. She writes ‘I was born in the sea, I was born on the mountain, I was born under an ancient olive tree, on brown soil’.

As a native born within the emerging new ‘collective Jewish identity’, she was considered of a higher rank. This generation did not have to undergo psychological and existential upheaval to become ‘new Jews’ since they were born into the reality of Eretz Yisrael. Their identity and behavioural norms and their perspective of the wider world were designed by these circumstances in a particular historical moment. The typical ‘Sabra’, a small minority of youth in Eretz Yisrael, was prepared to go to a kibbutz, to join the Palmach, to use weapons and to get to know the country.

At the age of 14 Yardena was sent to study at Geula Gymnasium, a High School for Commerce in Tel Aviv (founded in 1919). While still a student, she choreographed Zionism (1924). Upon completing her studies, Yardena joined a commune on a hill in Hadera, with young students who were part of the youth movement, Mahanot Ha'olim. Yardena writes that they worked during the day in orchards and building roads, and at night discussed issues such as equality, values, socialism, and the redemption of man. On her experiences in that period, she wrote ‘I am in a society that seeks and creates the image of Man’.

In 1929, like many of her generation, Yardena travelled to Central Europe to study beekeeping, but she soon replaced it with dance studies. That period, between the 1920s and 1930s, was the peak of Ausdruckstanz that embraced different, even contradictory currents, concepts and ideas of dance. As Jeschke and Vettermann argue, the body, movement and dance functioned as metaphors and concrete ideas for the search for origins, as aids in helping people to reconnect with all that is natural and organic. One of the characteristics of that dance style was to turn away from the traditional aesthetics of dance and rather base on movement potential of each individual person.

Yardena studied modern dance for two years at the State Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, under the direction of Gertrude Bodenwieser (1890-1959). At that time, Bodenwieser was considered a leading exponent of Ausdruckstanz with a definitive personal style and a distinguished philosophy of dance. Yardena tells that she was taught the Dalcroze Eurhythmics method by one of the Wiesenthal sisters. Since Yardena realised that her time was short and limited (she did not have means of
existence and could not get a work permit as a foreigner), she decides to leave the Academy for the sake of learning as many methods as she could.

Yardena moves to Dresden to study with Gret Palucca (1902-1993) cherishing her gaiety of movement, and her spirit and body bursting with music and movement. Palucca was known then for her individual style focusing largely on an optimistic view of the world and a brilliant technique. Like Wigman, Palucca sought new ways to express her intent, but unlike Wigman, she was a Hochiänzerin, known for her jumping ability and cheerfulness of movement.

However, at the Palucca School (opened in 1925) Yardena realised that Palucca could not inspire her students with creative force. It was Tille Rössler, the primary teacher at that school, whom Yardena considered as her great inspiration.

Within the thriving of Ausdruckstanz Yardena explored new worlds of dance, music, painting, and sculpture. She writes, 'I let new sounds and colours penetrate into my dormant worlds and evoke them. I felt the act of creation within my body'.

In Dresden, she invested in studying dance technique to enable her to deliver her inner body, however, she wrote, 'in the world of dance I paced being lonely and alien'.

There, during a performance of the well-known Indian dancer Uday Shankar Yardena heard Mary Wigman tell Palucca: ‘This Palestinian; […] among us, this girl is a foreigner. She has come from another world, and there she should return’. Yardena's estrangement increased, and upon the rise to power of the Nazis, she returns to Haifa, equipped with the new dance culture she had absorbed.

Ancient Drum

The embodiment of cultural perceptions, gestures and movements absorbed by the body, is a result of living in a certain way within a certain society. It is expressed not only in everyday movement, but also in forms of dance of that same group, as claims the anthropologist Ted Polhemus. In other words, physical movement is a source for historic information inscribed on the body and can be identified in its cultural context. Yardena writes that experiences and images from her childhood and the temperament of her homeland sank and folded inside her and created her personal rhythm.

Another lasting influence draws from her dance studies in Eretz Yisrael and Europe. As Bettina Vernon-Warren’s states: ‘For many, particularly those in the artistic professions, early experiences could have a lasting influence upon their lives, as can a teacher’.

Upon returning to Eretz Yisrael, Yardena started teaching dance in Haifa and at the same time was searching for her personal voice as dancer and choreographer. Her first attempts to create dance were made to Western music that was soon abandoned. Recognizing the existing bond between Jewish origins in the Middle East and its expressions reflected in dance, music, singing and rhythms made Yardena search for a different music. She soon found Mizrahi musicians - Elijah Yadid on the oud, Obadiah Mizrahi on the drums and Haim Hayat on the canon - who played ancient melodies and chants to lyrics written by Sephardic poets. Later on, she included Western music in her dances composed by Emanuel Zamir (1925-1962), Izhar Yaron (1910-1984) or Alexander Uriah Boskovitch (1907-1964).

Interestingly, they also used Mizrahi rhythms and melodies in their music.

Yardena’s movement vocabulary and dance style were inspired by local landscapes. Walking barefoot on the beach was expressed with skips and jumps, the fluctuation of the waves became powerful swings, and within the lyric sections in her dances, she used broad movements. In her dances, the emphasis was put on shoulders.
and pelvis work, backwards curves of her flexible torso and the stylized spread of her arms. For that Yardena frequently used accessories like feet bells, straw baskets, or fishing nets. In her words: ‘rhythms of shells in the sand, the sound of the wheat in the fields, the fluctuation of sea waves create in man the motion of his home landscapes [...]’.

Yardena’s dances illustrate some of the prominent characteristics of Ausdruckstanz - self-expression, subjectivity of life experience, and the need to express it in a supporting form. Her desire for a new personal statement of movement was expressed in the solo form, enabling her to be at the same time the creator, performer and interpreter of her own dances. In Hagar, for example, she presents the character not as a deprived slave exiled in disgrace, but as a noble woman, an Egyptian princess who proudly heads to the desert, bearing her fate. In Woman Beggar, the character known from her childhood developed into The Sea Bride who was longing for the wide and blue sea.

The role of mysticism in German New Dance was also manifested in Yardena’s dance with its reliance on improvisation, allowing the choreography to appear as if from itself. Likewise, Yardena tells in her archaic language that initially she improvised her dances to the improvised Mizrahi music. Only when starting to work with Boskovich (1944), who accompanied her with the piano, and at his request, she counted and made accurate steps and phrases of her dances. The process of making a dance was for her to await a surprise from the creative world to be manifested through her stormy or calm body. In times, the priestess of dance, as she was referred to, felt as an instrument transferring movements and dances that were as old as the world.

Already at the very beginning of her creative activity Yardena writes that she could see before her eyes ‘Biblical characters in their light stride, ringing step chains at their feet, swayed their hips calling me to revive them’. That was her contribution to the creation of a New Hebrew culture, characters of dancing women who inhabited stories of ancient Hebrew heritage that she heard at her father’s home. Yardena chooses strong, active and outstanding Biblical female figures, while emphasizing the drama and mood vicissitudes of their actions. In Eve in the Garden of Eden she accentuates Eve’s actions towards self-awareness in spite her acknowledgement of the punishment to follow, and in Hannah in Shiloh she highlights the strength in her prayer that will eventually change Hannah’s situation and will lead to the birth of her son, Samuel.

The integration of individual dance style with her radical interpretation of the Biblical stories enables Yardena to demonstrate an opposing approach to the dominant male’s rule. In this context, Yardena’s voice is perceived as undermining the Zionist mainstream, telling counter stories to the accepted political stance that destined to liberate the Jewish nation as a derivation of the liberation of the Jewish man from the Diaspora. That approach is demonstrated in her dance Hagar, who is an independent woman serving as an aid from God against the patriarchal and national voices. And Miriam the Prophetess emphasizes a new feminine model of leadership, different from the male model that Moses represents. A ‘shared leadership’ style contrary to the hierarchical task oriented one.

Local landscapes and culture of the natives serve also as themes and images for her dances. Daughter of the Waves (in Hebrew: Bat Galim) is associated with her childhood memories, dancing as a young girl with a scarf symbolizing foam, wave, or a transparent view into space. Obadiah Dance is a tribute to her old player, Obadiah Mizrahi, and the Sieve Dance was inspired by her grandfather, whom she saw
working when visiting him in Metula. The Sorceress, one of her first dances, was inspired by hanging around with black Healers.

Yardena’s breakthrough into the dance scene occurred in 1937, winning the first prize in the National Dance Competition. Nina Spiegel argues that the Competition fused West and East in relation to high and low art, crystalizing the Yishuv’s aim not only to create theatrical dance modelled on European styles, but also to signify its connections to the Jewish region. After the Competition a debate broke out in which Lea Goldberg, the poet and critic, criticized Yardena for the latter’s wish to dance in the Ertzyisraeli style (Mizrahi dance and music) and abandoning the European, which results in an uninteresting and boring piece. In a later review, she goes further writing that one of Yardena’s dances is an imitation of Arabic dance.

Aware of the criticism, Yardena says that the rhythms of her ancestors were in her feet, the trails of Galilee Metula in her blood, and she breathed the views walking in the footsteps of her father and her grandfather. The sounds and rhythms of the East were in her blood since she was born in the same land as the Arab or Bedouin, and like them it influenced her way of walking and moving. As a result, when watching the Egyptian dancer performing at a coffee house, Yardena felt it was close to her rhythms and technique. Few years later, in the 1940s, Yardena was already considered a dancer and choreographer with a unique movement language and a distinct style.

Valley and Mountain Festivities

During the 1940s, Yardena begun producing festivities to celebrate traditional Jewish holidays and mark important historical events in the labour settlements. This was part of the wider activity during the 1930s and 1940s to create Hebrew culture. These secular festivities served as an alternative to Jewish religious and traditional rituals that did not suit the needs of the modern state to be born. Since agriculture was a central and significant concern to the economy and ideology of the Yishuv during this period, nature and landscape received a representative and symbolic meaning for the life of the Jewish people.

Dance was considered a major role in these secular ceremonies because it enabled the settlers to express their unique experiences. Recited and sung Hebrew texts were combined with dance to create these artistic festivities. They were designated to be staged as community ceremonies performed by amateur participants using simple everyday movements. However, the making of the dances were carried out by well-known artists who sometimes lived in cities and came to the rural communities to create the ceremonies. Another distinct feature was leaving out the proscenium stage, as well as being attentive to local influences – physical and human landscapes, ethnic and local traditions.

As part of the secularization process of the traditional Jewish holidays and the newly created agricultural ceremonies, they were given new meanings and names. For example, Shavuot, marking the festival of giving of the Torah (a Jewish religious festival), became Bikkurim Festival (in Hebrew: the first fruits) or the Tene Festival (in Hebrew: the basket carrying the first fruits) despite the fact that it occurred at a time when there was no new crop. Similarly, Sukkot became the Harvest Festival. Less central Jewish festivals became central while changing their nature. At
Hanukkah, for example, the emphasis was transferred from the miracle of the oil cruse to the heroism of the Maccabees. Passover Seder had structural changes to suit new conditions of life. New unique festivities were added, for example, the day a kibbutz settled on the ground, or the day it was connected to water supply. All these changes brought about the need to create artistic visualizations using music, theatre and dance.

These celebrations had an affinity with Bewegungschören or 'movement choirs', established by Rudolf Von Laban in the 1920s and 1930s, a spectacularly visible element of German national culture. In them Laban desired to restore ritual festivals with artistic and cultural motivations (the need for socialization) in the context of daily life. Colin Counsell claims that German choirs were ‘modern, urban phenomena, operating in cities and large towns against the backdrop of German industrial society’.

Since the amateur status was central to the choirs’ aims, they were to have no audience. Furthermore, because the amateur participants had limited formal training, the movements demanded from them were relatively unchallenging. However, the choreography of the group, which involved up to fifteen hundred participants, was comprised of group action, members moving and gesturing, and creating geometrical patterns. Hence, the ‘choir pieces were abstract, for without characters, stories or allegorical subtexts, each dance consisted solely of the forms that grouped bodies traced in space’.

Yardena is considered an important artist creating and influencing the design of the ceremony culture in Eretz Yisrael. Her celebrations were known for their originality, artistic imagination and daring. Yet, other European women artists, who were exposed to these ideas, created festivities as well. The first one was Leah Bergstein, who studied at Margarete Schmidts School (she was Laban’s student), and danced with Vera Skoronel dance group. She created already in 1931 the Shearing Festival in her Kibbutz Beit Alfa and later staged festivities for Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan. Other pioneer artists were Yehudit Orenstein from Tel Aviv who created a big procession of 4,000 participants for Tene Festival in Haifa 1932, or Elsa Dublon, a dancer in Mary Wigman Dance Company, who created Water Festival in Kibbutz Na’an (1937).

The essential differences between the two artistic community dances lied mainly in their social characteristics and cultural consciousness. In Germany, the phenomenon was part of an urbanization display that resulted from industrialism that disrupted the order of the old world. In Eretz Yisrael, however, it was a part of the need to establish a Jewish state. These differences affected the approaches of expression of each of the forms. In Germany, the movement choirs were abstract and aesthetically rested entirely on coordination of actions and flawlessly unified patterns. In Eretz Yisrael, however, it was associated with characters, stories and allegorical subtexts associated with Jewish ancient history. However, they served as historical, not ritual foundation.

Yardena’s celebrations were mainly created for HaShomer HaTzair (translating as The Youth Guard) kibbutzim in Jezreel Valley and Ephraim Mountains. She regarded the festivities as a means to evoke the culture of a feast, emphasizing the intensity of dancing, celebrating together, and focusing the energy on ideological ardour and new life. These multi-participants festivities that she created integrated past and present life situated within local landscapes that were embedded with historical contexts. Yardena writes:
“It is evident that the roots of the Hebrew movement language are rooted here in our land, in its special landscape and sounds […] our renewed tradition is blessed with festivities […] to each we can find root and hold in the Bible, its most beautiful stories that are involved in working the land will serve us as a bridge between ancient and renewed tradition.”

Yardena’s first production was the modest Bikurim Festival for Kibbutz Ein HaShofet in 1943. She responded to a request from one of the Kibbutz members who wanted a different and distinct festival from the usual. Hence, she began to outline what will be her new form of festival. She writes that she created ‘an innovation [event] for the members and the surroundings, almost a revolution. I looked for the original dance expression in the fields and after that for costumes that would be appropriate for the beauty of the landscape’. One part of The Ode dance, (out of the three parts), was accompanied by a choir, and at the end of the ceremony children released white doves. Her main innovation was to take the participants from the farmyard and the dining hall out to the fields. Furthermore, following that celebration she was asked by Gurit Kadman to present a dance in the first Dalia Dance Festival (1944). Yardena refused saying ‘I do not produce folk dances, folk dances are created over time. By the people’.

A year later (1944), in Tu B’Av (fifteenth of Av), Yardena created the Vineyard Festival for Ein HaShofet. Since the kibbutz is located within the borders of Benjamin tribe, she based the festival on the Biblical story of kidnapping the daughters of Shiloh while they were dancing in the Vineyards by the men of Benjamin tribe (Judges, 21, 16-24). Yardena selects and sculptures the national collective memory by emphasizing the continuity of the Jewish People living in the region. The process of making the pantomime-dance took several months and involved all the kibbutz members, and Yizhar Yaron joined in to compose the music. Her radical contribution was expanding the framework by means of space and time. Not only does she step away from the proscenium stage, but she also cancels the partition between viewers and dancers. Furthermore, she offers the participants a festival that is not only ‘a planned programme’, but is also one that lasts all night with friends enjoying themselves in the vineyards.

The 10th anniversary celebration of Kibbutz Sha'ar HaAmakim in 1945 was based on another Biblical story, that of Barak Ben Avino'am who defeated the army of Sisera at Harosheth Haggoym, a fortified cavalry base, where the Kibbutz is located. The celebration opened with a trumpet blast that gathered all members in the Kibbutz yard, and from there a cart full of music players led the procession of participants to the large festivity space in the fields. The mountains around, the Kibbutz' herds of sheep and goats all served as its scenery.

At the dancing corner, the celebrators set the peg of Jael's tent, under which the choir and orchestra were seated. To the sounds of the songs girls descended from the hills, pitchers on their heads. In the second part of the celebration the Biblical feast that lasted until morning blended into the Kibbutz' Anniversary celebrations – past and present. The titles of the dances - Mourner, The Battle Dance, Dance and the Drum, Dance of Wine and Winepress, and The Pair Dance – all illustrate that merger. What was outstanding then was Yardena’s invitation of the Arab neighbours from the area to join and participate in the celebration. That was extraordinary since close relationships between Palestinian Arabs and the Jewish Yishuv deteriorated upon the beginning of violent incidents, which increased since 1929.

A group of men, women and children came over to join the celebration, wearing their festive attires. Yardena heard them say ‘By God, they are no Jews but Sons of Israel’. She invited a group of young men dressed with abayahs and kaffia [male
Arab cloak and head-dress] to join in, and they danced a restrained and quiet dance to the sounds of flute. The action attests to her independent political standpoint, which exceeded the consensus.

The reviews praised the performance. Her father, P. C. Yardeni, wrote in the newspaper Davar, "From the hills the Arab neighbours of Azubeidat came gliding down, wrapped in their black cloaks". Manor refers to its artistic aspect, post-factum, and wrote: 'I remember a performance, which had perfect harmony between movement, music, landscape and the literary content'. Whereas Amitai chooses to emphasize the contribution to the renewed national culture: 'The Kibbutzim, happily celebrating their feasts this way, know also how to rise early to their work on the day following the feast'.

In 1947 Yardena created the Water Festival at the request of the members of Kibbutz Ginegar, marking the Kibbutz’ Half Jubilee anniversary. She decided to deal with the issue of water for this festival, responding to the kibbutz suffering from water shortage for many years. Once again, she turns to Biblical stories engaged in searching for water. The three parts of the celebration were: Hagar – Abraham gives her bread and water and sends her to the desert with her son; Isaac and Wells - Isaac dug wells and Philistines clogged them; and Around the Well - stories of Jacob and Rachel and the shepherds.

The celebration opened with the blow of a horn announcing the beginning of the event that continued with the blow of a trumpet. The celebration continued with each of its parts being accompanied by a choir singing verses from the Bible, describing the occurrence. The conductor Mordechai Frenkel composed the music according to cantillation marks. At the end of the dances and the water blessing, a strong jet of water burst out of a large drilling machine set in the middle of the field, decorated with greenery. That was the sign for the participants to circle the machine and start dancing. The celebration continued with dances such as Harvest and Grape Pressing in the Wine-Press that lasted until dawn.

Yardena found a solution for the popular and theatrical costumes of this event. The painter Haya Alperovitz designed white dresses for the girls and embroidered shirts for the boys with a leather belt, blending in harmony the spirit of old times with reality. The artist Zachary Hizmi designed the coloured embroideries in the Yemen-style, and the Ginegar girls embroidered them themselves in brown, green, red and gold colours. The boys’ belts were decorated with copper engraving by Hizmi. Later in the 1950s Yardena staged another Water Festival (music: Mordechai Frenkel), this time for Tirat HaCarmel that was then a transfer camp for new immigrants in the Haifa district. In this festival, she managed to unite and bring together people, who came from different cultures, in the celebration she created.

Conclusions

Yardena's unique creation was in itself a work of art, but in view of what is said, she had a significant and important contribution in constructing national culture of the renewed Jewish Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael. Her dance style was crafted by gestures and movements of Middle Eastern culture that were seared onto her body, and integrating cultural processes by being part of the Jewish society. Her stylized dance linked the primitive origins of archaic Hebrew culture with local landscapes. That was invested in the formal frameworks she was exposed to and inspired by when studying in Europe. Hence, her solo recitals and the choir movement she staged for the group celebrations.
But Yardena not only acts within the ideological field but she is also an agent of action. Yardena, the choreographer and dancer, presents her personal and distinct point of view in her solos. Coping with biblical unusual and assertive female characters enables her to present not only subversive position opposing dominant male hegemony, but also a suitable alternative. Her contribution to the construction of celebrations for agricultural settlements was by presenting a secular model linking East and West, new and old. Blurring the boundaries between performers and spectators serves as a unifying element that creates recreation culture on the one hand and strengthens the young community on the other. Furthermore, in a time of an extreme ideological and political polarization that had advocates of using force and violence, Yardena chooses to establish friendly relationships with the neighbours Druze and Palestinian Arabs. She does not confine herself to presenting her view reflecting the integration in the Semitic Region - physical and human, but convinces both sides in her righteousness way.

Note

1 Yishuv is a pre-political entity dubbed and used by the Jewish community to represent the land of Israel.
3 ‘Ha’machol ha’machlim otanu’, in Hebrew, can be considered dance therapy in Israel in its infancy.
4 Author’s translation. All further translations from Hebrew are made by the author.
6 See M. Gluzman, The Zionist Body: Nationalism, Gender, and Sexuality in Modern Hebrew Literature (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuchad, 2007) [Hebrew] on Hebrew Literature; and A. Shapiro. New Jews Old Jews. (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2003) [Hebrew] on issues such as Holocaust, revival, collective memory and its reflection on the discourse of Israeli cultural historiography.
7 For the Orensteins see G. Aldor, And How Does a Camel Dance (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2011) [Hebrew]; and for Kadman see Z. Friedhaber, Gurit Kadman – Mother and Bride (Haifa: Jewish Dance Archive, 1989). [Hebrew]
10 Gluzman, The Zionist Body, 12.
11 Foucault, The History of Sexuality.
12 Most of the cooperative settlements at that time were related to the Labour movement, supported by socialist parties.
14 I would like to thank the Archives of the Dance Library of Israel for allowing me access to their archival materials.
15 B. Anderson, Imagined Communities. (Tel Aviv: Open University, 2000). [Hebrew]
17 Ibid. Arising from that discourse were issues such as how nationalism was perceived by different social classes, how it was translated into political behaviour, or what the main stages of its development were.
18 Shapiro, New Jews Old Jews.
19 The Jews, although scattered all over the world, never stopped identifying themselves as a being part of a particular and distinct people from any other type among whom they have lived with. Until the invention of Jewish nationalism that segregation did not imply any desire for a political or territorial
Jewish state in the context of Jewish affinity to their homeland or for the hope to return with the arrival of the Messiah.


27 Ibid.

28 Some examples are the Queen Esther beauty competitions of Purim; the first Maccabiah games in 1932; the National Dance Competition for theatrical dance in 1937; or the two Dalia Folk Dance Festivals at Kibbutz Dalia, in 1944 and 1947. See N. Spiegel, *Embodying Hebrew Culture*.


30 Kamir, “Zionism, Masculinity and Feminism.” She claims further that Zionist ideology referred to equal rights for women from a differential essentialist concept between individuals, in the context of group affiliation and its implications in Zionist mentality.


32 G. Kadman, Box 123.5.6, Archives of the Dance Library of Israel (hereafter DLI). [Hebrew]

33 G. Kadman, Box 123.5.6A, DLI. [Hebrew]


36 E. Hobsbawm in *Nations and Nationalism* claims that the fate of Modern Hebrew could have been different if it had not been accepted by the British Mandate in 1919 as one of three official languages of Palestine, at a time when the number of native Hebrew speaking did not reach 20,000.

37 Shavit in “Introduction” argues that during the 5th Zionist conference (1901) there were discussions about the importance of art’s contribution in creating a whole person, and that art enables a path to get acquainted with oneself as a people, because in the past it was part of the religious rituals of the Jewish people.

38 Ibid.


41 Miriam’s brother was Nahum Nir – Rafalkes (1884-1968), an Israeli politician, a socialist Zionist leader in Eastern Europe and in Israel, and the second chairman of The Knesset.

42 Her father was an agronomist, educator and science teacher, who founded a number of important institutions of education and culture in Haifa.

43 HaMoshava HaGermanit (the German Colony) was founded in 1868 by German Templers.

44 Cohen, *The Drum and the Sea*, 20. The Lohland School, established in 1912, presented an example of dance-as-life cult. The school integrated gymnastic dance into a craft-centred, cultic lifestyle.

45 Ibid., 11.

46 Shapira, *New Jews Old Jews*.

47 Palmach, [in Hebrew stands for the acronym of Plugot Maḥatz], was the elite fighting force of the Haganah, the underground army of the *Yishuv* during the period of the British Mandate.

48 Shapira in *New Jews Old Jews* argues that there was a connection between the ideal image of the ‘Sabra’ and the ethos of the labor movement, which determined the values, the moral system and the meaning of existential experience in Eretz Yisrael.

49 Considered the first pioneering youth movement in Eretz Yisrael, it evolved out of informal unionizing among high school students, beginning 1926. From 1931 onward, Mahanot Ha'olim was affiliated with the faction of the kibbutz movement known as HaKibbutz HaMeuhad with its political line –that of the MAPAI labor party.


In 1944, fearing the music will be lost with the aging musicians, Yardena asked Boskovich to notate and arrange the melodies for piano. This encounter became the inspiration for the Semitic Suite (1945) with its piano version designed for Yardena. In 1947, the piece was played by the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra and won critical acclaim. In 1958, Boskovich reworked the piano version for two pianos.

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Eventually, Yardena allowed for some of her dances to be danced in the festival, and one of them - *Obadiah Dance* - became a well known Israeli folk dance.

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85 P. C. Yardeni, “10th anniversary in Sha’ar HaAmakim”. *Davar*, Box Yardena Cohen: Critic, 121.10.2.6, DLI. [Hebrew]


87 A. Amitai, “Deborah's Song and Bees Song: The 10th Anniversary to Sha’ar HaAmakim.” Box Yardena Cohen: Critics, 121.10.2.6, DLI. [Hebrew]

The Hora as a Ritual in Lyrics: Interpretations of Ritualistic Texts

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Abstract

Pioneers of Zionist settlements adopted the Hora dance as an expression of their special experience, and saw it as a (quasi-) religious expression of themselves. This essay studies the way Hora was conceived as a symbol and a ritual mainly in lyrics of dance songs. Hora dancing is seen through the lens of lyrics as a rite of passage in the liminal situation characteristic of both the young immigrants and the historical moment as they saw it. The Hassidic background of the dance is highlighted through the charismatic leadership of A.D. Gordon’s dancing and Y.H. Brenner Hassidic-like sermons. The attitude expressed in lyrics is not Hassidic and surprisingly neither is it optimistic Zionist idealism. An interpretation of main motives in lyrics infers a rather existentialist attitude adopted in order to face the difficult situation of a day to day labour life. Being an expression of a past liminal experience, Hora appears in some lyrics as an object of a nostalgic expectation, as a part of an attempt to institutionalize it as a symbol of national identity.

Key words: Hora dance, Zionism, settlements, Hassidism, identity

Introduction

The apparently secular nature of Zionist pioneer Halutzi culture has enticed scholars to examine the ways in which its revolutionary Jewish ideology nevertheless preserves some religious motifs from Jewish tradition. The following study wishes to describe Hora as a (quasi-)religious ritual that has roots in religious Hassidic background but has to be understood as the religious expression of a secular attempt to create an alternative to traditional Jewish life.

The Biblical term Pioneers (Halutzim Num 3, 18) was used during the third Aliyah period to refer to an organised avant-garde elite of immigrants who came to labour for a future national project, as well as to relate to figures previous immigrants who were seen as forerunners of this elitist group and to broaden the circles of Zionist activists and settlers. The dominancy of the Halutz as a cultural prototype is responsible for spreading of pioneer culture beyond the narrow circles of settlers to the majority of the Yishuv that was mainly urban. Even an urban bohemian group of artists and activists like the Hevre Trask saw themselves as pioneers, debated for pioneers’ ascetic values and even tried to take an actual agricultural settlement upon themselves, an experiment that is mainly remembered for its crop of a popular song about the hills of Shekh Abrek. The pioneer’s function as an archetype amplifies its influence but makes it difficult to determine its borders. Hence, Pioneer culture will be understood here as a widespread cultural archetype that is based on the experience of a narrower human circle. Focusing on the Hora, we will trace the problems facing the usage of the symbol far from the experiences that created it.

Communal singing and dancing was recognized as one of the main cultural expressions of pioneer culture. Pioneers adopted the Hora dance that originates in the
Balkans as more than a mere leisure activity. In memoirs it appears to be a routine communal activity as well as an occasional means of celebration. Memoirs often ascribe (quasi) religious attributions to Hora, describing it as a ritual and as a symbol. It was usually enacted after a communal gathering that includes, either a meal, an ideological argument, or a ceremony, which evolves into communal singing followed by dancing. The Hora dance—which was accessible to the pioneers’ cultural repertoire probably due to its presence in Hassidic life—became a central and symbolically self-conscious expression of their new life style.

The main argument in this essay is that the meaning of Hora as a symbol cannot be fully understood as a manifestation of ideology but rather as an expression of an existential attitude. Victor Turner’s notions of rites of passage and communitas facilitates an understanding of the ritualistic nature of this dance, since these pioneers as pilgrims-immigrants (*ולים ד’ירע*) were situated in a liminal phase in both their own life and in national history as they perceived it. In Turner’s view, a main component of the rite of passage is its suspension of social differences and structures; Turner calls this situation a ‘communitas’ where the practitioners of the ritual experience themselves as a part of an egalitarian community whose individual members are bound to each other and freed from previous social restrictions. For Turner it is important to distinguish existential or spontaneous communitas from an ideological utopian equality; the second is but “an attempt to describe the external and visible effects” of the first. Turner rejects a utopian ideological communitas and explicitly debates against Martin Buber’s utopian notion of unions of Kevozoth and Kibbutzim as a sustainable union of groups that preserve a communitas with intimate equal bonds as a sustainable way of life. Turner insists on the transient nature of communitas because he sees the unique human bond as enabled by the anti-structure situation, while a utopian attempt to create a better world requires a social structure. This definition of rites of passage and the Turner-Buber debate is important for this essay because it helps us to distinguish existential and ideological aspects of pioneers’ discourse. It also helps to problematize pioneer culture within the wider Yishuv and Israeli culture, particularly in relation to the attempt to use the ‘pioneering’ ethos as a source of permanent values that conflict, however, with the intrinsically temporal nature of a ‘pioneering’ enterprise.

In this study, Hora is examined through texts. The main textual source will be lyrics where Hora explicitly appears as a symbol, and other text that illuminate the ideological and existential context. Many original lyrics contained explicit references to the dance and its special qualities. When sung while dancing, such lyrics reflect self-consciously on the dance itself. Sometimes the Hora was even personalized and the speaker would address it as in a prayer. Lyrics thus relate to the dance in the same way that a traditional blessing relates to the performance of a religious ritual. Yet, since I examine Hora as a symbol, I discuss some lyrics that accompanied the Hora dance, but also lyrics for other circle dances such as the Krakowiak, as well as the lyrics for sing-alongs that explicitly mention the Hora. This reference to the Hora in the lyrics for other types of dances is telling because it shows that Hora signified far more than a mere reference to a specific item from the Balkan choreographic repertoire. Another kind of text that can be considered as part of Hora as a ritual is a sermon-like short speech that was given as introduction to dancing. Other than these two kinds of texts we will consider memoirs and prose works as background, but as a principal this essay leaves the detailed inquiry of the actual dancing and historiography of song writing for future research and concentrates on the hermeneutics of Hora through lyrics and that accompany the dance.
The dance that these lyrics relate to is what Moti Zeira describes as ‘spontaneous
dancing’ in pioneer culture. Zeira uses this term in order to distinguish between
everyday spontaneous dancing and the celebration of Jewish festivals of which he
writes. I want to use ‘spontaneous dancing’ to distinguish it from other, intensively
produced stage dancing – whether ‘folk’ dances performed by laymen as an organised
consumed leisure activity or artistic folk dances performed on stage and designed by
professionals.

1. Hora as Ritual

For many young Jewish activists who came to the land of Israel in the pre-state
period, arrival to the land was a combination of personal immigration and an attempt
to change national identity on the collective level. Usually interpreted as
autobiographical documentary, Yehuda Yaari’s novel, *When the Candle was Burning* (1937) portrays the first days of an organised group of young immigrants in the land
of Israel. While waiting in Jaffa to go to the Galilee, which is seen by them as “the
real land of Israel,”13 Collective nocturnal singing is taught by a senior member of a
Galilee settlement, singing that evolved into dancing of Hora, also taught by the
senior member. The group’s singing in these ‘three days of feast’14 attracts people
from various strata of Jaffa’s population (the socialist narrator is sensitive to the
diversity) who come to witness and join the young immigrants.15 The communal
singing and dancing serve as a public spontaneous event composed of those who are
subject to change of status and a larger community that support it as audience.

The liminal status of the immigrant extends beyond the first days in the land to
a longer, undefined, period of time. It also goes beyond the status of the individual or
the organised group to portray the national historical situation as liminal from the
avant-garde’s point of view. As we will see below, the liminal nature of the
immigrant’s situation is expressed in Hora lyrics that sanctify the dance in a non-
religious context.16 The song titled ‘I am a Pioneer’ (חלוץ הנהני) by Aharon Zeev Ben
Yishai begins with the speaker's poverty, lack of clothes and identity, and constant
state of insecure employment, and concludes with his rebirth as a pioneer and a
member of the Hora circle, which is a substitute for family: “I have already forgot my
family/Moshe, Hannah, Dvora,” says the speaker, "My brothers and sisters are/all
those who dance the Hora” (אחי/אחיותי הם/כל המירקדים/הורה).17 The Hora circle is portrayed as a circle of
communitas: the participants left their previous places, families and status, they are
poor but this very status binds them together and forms a liminal identity that is
expected to lead them into a being a part of the group of settlers.18

The separation from past can be seen in Alterman’s “Bonfire Hora” (הורה
מדורה), where the revolutionary cutting of tradition is presented as poverty and the
openness to the future as wealth: "We came without a thing/ we are impoverished of
the past/ fate has given us/ the millions of tomorrow” (נין ואל כל בתי/נו/הגורל
אמש/לנו ה裥/מאני/למלני). The Hora appears in this song as a means
of transformation and as the property of the poor: ‘Go out to the circle/ Give a song to
the poor/ The children of poverty and the whip/ have gathered to dance’. (צא
למעגל/תן נא שיר/בני העוני/והשופטים של/הפגנה).19 The song concludes by addressing the Hora itself and asking it to rise and light a fire in the
speaker’s night.
The lyrics here pledge that the dance itself will cause a change, by enflaming a metaphoric fire that will lead the participants beyond the liminal phase into a better future. In “Ode to Hora” (מזמור להורה) written by Asher Zelig Posek, the speaker, also described as poor, begs the Hora to enflame him (להלהבני), and sanctifies it as a pledge of his allegiance to the land of Israel. Yehuda Eilony’s “Hora” asks the dance and the harmonica to play an eternal song that will encourage the speaker until his very blood dances. During the song, the dance receives the characteristics of a magical ritual that causes "the dilapidated world of evil" to "collapse in the blare of the dance" ('ויפל מוחל להורה רצון饰品 עולם זו'). The song concludes by encouraging the dancers to go on dancing until the establishment of the Zionist project is completed ('המפים נקח ה จะ'). The power of the Hora to destroy the evil world alludes to the encirclement of Jericho by Joshua and the Israelites (Josh. 6). Even if the dance is not really expected to act magically, it is expected to express the power of faith and also to generate the will power that endows the speaker with the enthusiasm for the Zionist goal. The religious plea is not directed to a god but rather to an intrinsic, psychic, divinity.

Sometimes Hora is described as an epiphany. A poem by Yitzhak Tavori from Afikim, begins with a memory being recalled from the past, as the speaker asks ‘Do you remember? Do you remember?’ ('התזכורה התזוכו'). The Hora is depicted as a supernatural event: the night, described as a bird of prey, attacks the quiet shack and the fire of the Hora erupts like a conflagration. After this mythical description he moves on to a rather emotional one: it is a slow sad melody ‘shrouded in fatigue and sorrow’ (ועצב ולאות אפופת), crying out of a wound in the throat, bleeding the wrath of repressed feelings. The poem proceeds with a visual description of the room’s furniture moved aside and the sweating, moving bodies, and concludes with another celestial metaphor: the Hora’s epiphany. It appears from a sudden brightening in the skies and the speaker addresses it ‘You tread our stages / and came into our hearts’ (כי באת פנימה אל/בימותינו אל ירדת). The phrase refers to a divine description in the book of Amos (4, 13); the original words refer to god and earth and are used here to refer to a personalized Hora and the human group. The Hora appears as a smiling face within, while fears are threatening outside; the Hora is the fire that will purge our gold from its dross. This poem did not become widely known and no melody was composed for it but it contains many motives that will later become rather customary in self-reflective dancing lyrics, as will be shown below. The poem was given a melody and was publicly danced.

An interesting way of using Hora dance for empowerment can be found in its use for mourning. Yizthak Turner died of pneumonia after defending Menahemia from a rooftop during a winter battle in 1915. When one of his group members learns that his comrade is dead, he sits silently on the floor, and when urged to speak up, he says that Turner wouldn’t want to see his friend crying for him. Instead of crying, he starts singing ‘God will build the Galilee’ ('אל יבנה הגליל'), and the rest of the group join him for a Hora, weaving the dead person’s name into the song, ‘Turner will build the Galilee’. The dance appears as an expression of perseverance and empowerment.

Although Hora is conceived as part of the ethos of Zionist settlement, it is more than a mere gesture of ideological propaganda. On the personal level the Hora helps the individual who left his family to redefine his new social circle. The rupture with the past is not a mere personal situation but a historical attitude, a decision to be ‘impoverished of the past’ in a way that constitutes a new collective biographical fact.
The ritual thus encapsulates the difficulties of the present as a liminal historical moment that will lead to an improved future.

2. Hassidic Roots: Melancholic Joy

Although the Hora is identified with the Second and Third Aliyah, it is not until the mid-1920s and 1930s that original lyrics for this dance began to be written. Melodies and lyrics that were sung during the period of the Second Aliyah go back to Hassidic traditions; many of the leading rabbis of the Hassidic movement ascribed great importance to singing and dancing, and some of the immigrants brought this in their cultural repertoire. Some of the Hassidic melodies were sung with the original words and others were changed: “Blessed is our lord who created us to honour him” turned to “Blessed is our lord who created us pioneers”.

We can see the pioneers’ conceptual reference to their own dancing in Hassidic terms, such as ‘inspiration of the higher spirit’ (השראת רוח השрусארה) and 'devotion' (Dvekut דבוק). Many of the Hassidic theoretic justifications of the value of dancing may not have appealed to the pioneers, for they ascribed theurgical meaning to dance movements and established a mystical equivalence between human organs and divine aspects. Nevertheless, many pioneer memoirs from this period ascribe religious or quasi-religious attributions to the circle dance and we can point to some well-known Hassidic states of mind and customs that were similarly adapted by the Zionist pioneers. The most apparent connection between Hassidic and pioneer dancing can be found in the location of the dance within the pioneer lifestyle, its sitz im leben. Locating the site of the dance in the communal dining room following meals, talking and sing-along follows the tradition of the Hassidic Tish (literally a table, but conventionally a Hassidic gathering in which the Hassidim join the Rabbi’s meal and sing with him); or the Sabbath’s ‘third meal’ that is dedicated to melancholy songs that often turn into a more joyful ending.

Although the dominant ideology among settlers did not allow them to be subjected to religious authority, we do find some charismatic leaders that held a position similar to that of a Hassidic rabbi. One of the first documented Hora dances goes back to 1904, and it concentrates on the figure of A.D Gordon, who devoted himself to agricultural labour despite his advanced age. He immigrated at the age of 48, unlike the rest of the pioneers, who were younger by more than a half his age. On the first day of Sukkot, after coming back from the synagogue, a group of pioneers gathers on the roof of a Jerusalem house; Gordon recites the Kiddush, which is followed by an outburst of Hora. In another memoir, Gordon is described as an old fountain of youth:

“The sixty four year old - his feet are light and his movements are rhythmic; his eyes closed and his head leaning slightly – so he danced. An unlimited excitement grasped us all. The circle grew bigger and wider. “All the bones said”, and a loud singing burst out of the overflowing heart and filled the place. Everyone was dancing tactfully, and the hand clapping of those standing around the circle was rhythmic, as the singing grew louder and louder. And Gordon and the young man in front of him inside the circle. And as they danced on and on, so did the enthusiasm around them grow larger, and so did Gordon’s face turn ever paler. He did not stop and continued dancing even more enthusiastically, all eyes were on him. A sudden fear attacked us all at the sight of his pale face. And suddenly as if by hidden command - the dance stopped in a heartbeat”
The hagiographic tone is dominant in this enigmatic description; it points to the place that Gordon held both in the lives of the youngsters around him and in the memoirist’s recollections. The memoirist alludes to the Hassidic tradition that sees dancing as a realisation of the Psalm ‘All my bones will say: Lord who is like unto thee’ (35, 10). Another important theme in this memoir is the combination of devout joy and deep fear, seriousness, or sadness that characterizes Gordon’s corporal gestures and eventually captures his entire being. Another memoir of him, by Yosef Aharonovich, describes this paradoxical personality in Hassidic terms.

“He was always concentrated within himself, living an intense philosophical life, a horrible sadness on his face and the worldly sorrow in his eyes. At the same time he was, at least during his first decade in the Land of Israel, a very ‘happy’ (שמח) man, or maybe ‘fun’ (משמח). I put the words ‘happy’ and ‘fun’ in quotation marks because I am not sure if those moods of his could be named ‘happiness’. In his dancing there was a kind of god worshiping rather than joy; it was a ‘celestial joy’ according to Hassidic terminology. Anyway, it is not only that the sadness on his face remained there while he was dancing, it even became more and more prominent in every facial line, movement, or gesture. Those days he made habitual use of the word ‘Freilich’ (Yiddish: joy), which he expressed with a snap of his finger, a clap of hands, or in a dance gesture with his whole body, in the sense of ‘all my bones will say’. But this word ‘Freilich’ would come out of his mouth as if it was ritually immersed forty times in a sea of despair’.

While Gordon is well known for his original, religious way of life, it is interesting to encounter quasi-Hassidic patterns in another, prominent, melancholic figure of the second Aliyah, namely, in Yosef Haim Brenner’s sermons. In her biography of Brenner, Anita Shapira describes the dancing that took place after the conference in which the workers' organisation (Histadrut) was established. The melancholic Brenner is not pleased to be carried on the dancers’ shoulders, but he agrees to deliver a sermon in which he explained the Psalms that the dancers were singing ‘How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!’ (133, 1 הנה טב 형ה, המ אתה אחים, Also, psz chet אחים, יחידי הגרד אחים לבית עני, identifying the Biblical verse with the Marxist slogan ‘Workers of the world, unite!' Creatively joining textual passages from different contexts in a sermon is typical of rabbinic – and especially Hassidic – hermeneutics, and memoirists that recall Brenner’s speech indeed identify this hermeneutical manner of explication as a sermon – in this case, a socialist sermon.

Another example of Brenner sermonizing to a dancing crowd using a similar hermeneutic tradition can be found in a memoir by one of the Work Battalion members. Here Brenner uses puns to draw a message out of a Talmudic verse. He quotes the well-known Aggadic story about the warriors of King David who ask for his economic support, and David tells them to go ahead and despoil the foreign legions or, in a rather literal translation, ‘Go and stretch your hands in the battalion (צאו והפשת ידיכם בגדעון)’. Brenner takes advantage of the metaphoric term pishtu Yedechem which means to attack but also means to stretch one’s hand in the homonymical way of also making one’s hands simple (pashut). He thus makes simplicity an imperative and opposes it to a well-known song verse by Zalman Shneur ‘A soft hand she had’, which refers to the stylized, courtier-like, bourgeoisie ethos of gentleness. The battalion to which King David refers turns into the working battalion, which is where one should make one’s hands simple. This sermon furthermore serves as encouragement for dancing:

“He wasn’t speaking (לונא); rather he was ‘sermonizing’ (דרש) […] And so he went on and preached juxtaposing one issue with another, until he got to ‘stretch your had in the battalion’.
and here he excitedly raised his voice and said: ‘Stretch your hands – make your hands simple. The days of ‘A soft hand she had’ are gone; now we need simple hands; make your hands simple; and where? In the battalion’. And following the meal, the evening passed in boisterous singing and dancing. The room did not suffice to contain the dancers and they went outside, and in the large yard the dance was renewed. And Brenner retired and disappeared.

Certainly, Brenner’s charisma leaves its mark on the memoirist. Like Rabbi Nachman of Breslav, who adhered to joy without being happy himself, Brenner’s melancholy is part and parcel of his charisma and his sermons were often delivered in the midst of events that included singing and dancing.

Is Brenner a Hassidic rabbi? Certainly not. There is a humoristic aspect to adopting this way of speech and yet one cannot just say that it is a mere joke that has no meaning. In terms of performance studies, it might be helpful to adopt Judith Butler’s ‘queer’ performativity to understand Brenner’s performing as a secular socialist rabbi. Such a performance does not only gives the performer authority nor does it ridicule the ‘quoted’ origin, although it does both, too. This liminal queer performativity allows him to manifest a certain desire towards Hassidic devotion, and even to use it while distancing himself from it.

Is the happiness of the Hora to be understood in opposition to Brenner’s melancholy? As we have seen before, Gordon was also described as combining sadness with joy. In the following paragraphs we will try to understand this seeming paradox better. But first I have to note that the Hora was not linked only to serious figures and moods. Alongside serious ideological lyrics, some Hora songs allowed youngsters a humoristic approach to embarrassing sexual tensions, as in: ‘Lets go to Ruthie’s/ and dance Hora/ Boys in the front/ and girls in the back’ (ברותי לולא/ ונריקוד הורה/ הבחורים קדימה/ הבחורות אחורה). The melody of ‘Galilean Hora’ (הורה גלילית) was used to sing ‘Aunty say yes’ (דודה הגידי לנו כן), about a young couple that asks their families’ permission to get married but intends to get married in any case. The same melody was used to sing mock parodies of admiration for political leaders.

3. Existential Hora: Pessimistic Avant-Gardes

During the 20’s Hora was danced to the sounds of traditional songs as well as to other Eastern European melodies. Initial compositions of Hora songs (some of them also about Hora itself) coincide with a meta-cultural discussion about Hora. During this epoch there were some voices calling to direct Hora dances into a more artistically designed framework, as a part of a deliberate ideological attention to the creation of a new Hebrew culture. And in 1924 an artistically designed Hora was indeed created by the interdisciplinary artist Baruch Agadati, while the institutionalization of Palestinian/Israeli dance continued in the following years as an organisation eventually funded by the State of Israel, and representing Israeli culture abroad. These are the years when Hora turns from mere practice to a cultural symbol that requires an interpretation.

The combination of serious quasi-religious Hora and nonsensical licentiousness demands an explanation. How does Hora function as an object of odes and nonsense songs? How does it succeed in its mythical mission: to make pioneers happy and confident with their ideological goal in conditions of depression, poverty, and lack of certainty? Some songs’ lyrics (see below) repeat the statement about a happy and healthy life, but become manifestations of political protest and hence not a particularly reliable report of inner feelings of joy.
Mimi Haskin points to the influence of Yitzhak Lamdan’s poiema *Massada* on the concept of Hora.\(^{48}\) The starting point of *Massada* (written in 1923-1924 and published on 1927) belongs to a Jewish remnant form post WWI Europe. He is full of despair and he sees the Land of Israel (that is called Massda in the poiema) as the last way out of the fatal fate of the Jew in modern times. The poiema is built upon the story of Massada told by Josephus and accepted in the Yishuv as a nationalistic story of a collective suicide. Lamdan’s speaker builds his motivation on despair, on the absence of any alternative way.

The third part of *Massada* is dedicated to nocturnal bonfires and the dances. The night dances are presented as a symbol of continuation of a Jewish practice but also as memorial fires for the Jewish places in Europe.\(^{49}\) The fire is also conceived as a transformation of the Jewish past: “Our ancestors hence danced/ One hand on a buddy’s shoulder/ The other one holds the the Torah Scroll […] Hence we also dance/ One hand holds the circle/ The other one embraces a generations weigh/ A book of sorrow […]”.\(^{50}\) The dance is described as hovering above an abyss. Dancing with their eyes closed the dancers know that if they open them, the dance’s spell will disappear and the communal bond with each other and with former generations will vanish.\(^{51}\)

Lamdan’s poiema is one of the strongest mythical formalisations of Hora and Exerpts from it were sung as during Hora.\(^{52}\) The context of these descriptions in poiema poses the dance as a rite of passage in which the subject has to go through danger, but he does not head any better place: Massada as a suicidal locus functions as an eternal liminal place, a place that keeps standing on the abyss. A similar desperate Zionist motivation can be seen in Berenner, who was murdered a few years before *Massada* was published. We do not have many texts from Brenner’s sermons in those nocturnal celebrations, but other writings by Brenner might connect his attitude to Hora as seen through lyrics. Following Yosef Gorny and Avi Sagi, I understand Brenner’s Zionism as an existential philosophy rather than political ideology.\(^{53}\) When Brenner tries to explain the revival of Hebrew literature, he refuses to explain it in organic terms of the demand for Hebrew books or the light within Judaic culture. He insists that Hebrew literature is written "not 'because' but 'in spite of'", ""אף על פי כן".\(^{54}\) His novel *From Here and There* also expresses a thorough pessimism and yet a devout activism toward Zionism but how can this counter-intuitive historical reasoning be understood?

In *From Here and There*, Oved Etzot, the character who autobiographically resembles Brenner, is asked about his pessimistic attitude toward Zionism and he answers: ‘We are all doomed. The whole earth is doomed. And yet we live. We live and strive to have the best life we can. And the same goes for public life.’\(^{55}\) In Brenner’s view absurdity and pessimism express a clearer existential understanding, free from the distortions of ideological hope. In this situation, ideological choices are not a matter of optimistic political beliefs but a simple choice of life over death.\(^{56}\) Typically, when an ideological activist takes a utopian model as his point of departure, his act is justified by the optimistic assumption of a better future. From such a standpoint, ideological activism appears as a logical - or at least reasonable - system. As a rhetorical attempt to persuade someone of a certain way of life, it would make sense if this way of life is assumed to bring more happiness or increase the welfare of an individual or humanity in general. Many immigrants who had absorbed this idealistic motivation actually ended up leaving Palestine, disappointed by the hard and non-heroic demands of its day-to-day life.\(^{57}\)
While an idealistic act typically predent to derive logically from utopian assumptions about the future – Brenner’s acting 'in-spite of' rather faces a pessimistic anticipated future and reacts and functions as a protest against the absurdity and hopelessness of the historic situation. When we think of Brenner’s Zionism from the point of view of Heidegger’s concept of ‘being towards death’, we better understand the uniqueness of Brenner’s attitude toward Zionist activity as not derived from a utopian, mythical future, but rather a choice made through full acceptance of mortality. Unlike the utopian-based activism, the Hora succeeds in expressing the actual experience of pioneer life because it does not symbolize success but failure.

Popular songs that mention Hora, just like Brenner’s novels, express suffering, pain and despair, as well as a choice to act in spite of the unreasonableness of the situation, against the absurd. Hora symbolizes a non-optimistic activism, an activism that takes the present absurdity as a starting point and loads it with strategic rhetorical significance. As a symbol, the Hora does not try to sell a more pleasant future: it is not offered as comfort but as a counter-logical choice, such as the choice to start dancing after a hard day’s work, instead of having a nap. The lyrics do not express an optimistic reliance on a better future but a choice to try to make life better against all odds. The dancer’s leaping over is a leap of faith into the unknown future. The dance does not manifest the ideological result of a serious argumentation, but it is rather an existential protest against the hopelessness of Modern Jewish fate, and therefore involves both a rigorous understanding of the absurd and a devout commitment to life. An example of such attitude can be found in Yehuda Yaari’s novel that quotes a dance lyrics and refrains from their meaning:

“It is good to live [...] in our land”  
We sang with great enthusiasm. But we had not yet lived in the land and we could not truly know if it was good to live in it. But we knew quit clearly that we had “betrothed” this land unto us as a homeland, and were overjoyed to feel it.

Looking back to his first days in the Palestine, the narrator understands that his joy did not express conviction but decision. A few pages later the narrator explicitly connects the dance to Brenner’s known phrase “we danced to the refrain of ‘In Spite of Everything’”.

Another phrase, similar to ‘in spite of’ and very common in those days is ‘never mind’ (אין דבר). The phrase originates in the Bible (Num 20, 19; Sam I 20, 21) but was not widely used until the so-called revival of Hebrew, when it also became the title of a Hora song: ‘Never-Mind Hora’ (הורהאיןדבר). In these lyrics the speaker asks to intensify the bonfire and the dance. The Hora is presented as a way to deal with physical and mental difficulties. The dance is portrayed as comforting but it does not calm nor provide easy comfort; it does not function by distracting attention from the pain of hard physical labor, but rather through concentrating attention on it. One way in which the Hora can help its dancers is through transcending suffering and ascribing it a higher level of significance: "this hand, this callous hand, this clumsy hand, is the hand that redeems the land (‘יד מיובלת/יד מסורבלת/היא יד שガー לא’). The other way of dealing with suffering is intensifying it until it burns away. The title of this song is reflectively mentioned as the means by which the pain will go away: "Even if the heart aches/ even if the pain scorches/ burn them with the Never-Mind Hora" (‘אם גם כואב הלב/אם גם צורב הכאב/שרוף אום”). Difficulties are not only ignored, but rather transcended by the Hora song.
‘Never mind’ appears in some other central places in pioneer culture. The popular song ‘Hey Shoes’ (מיילן ר) by Avigdor Ha’Meiri uses it in a similar way: The speaker complains about his torn clothes (a different item in each stanza) which cause him pain, but the chorus repeats the phrase ‘never mind’ several times and encourages the pioneer to “build Jerusalem” (יווחרים בני, תלונות). But the phrase does not only appear in lightweight contexts. The phrase ‘never mind’ was also known as a part of Yosef Trumpeldor’s last words: ‘Never mind, it is good to die for our country’ (אין דבר טוב למות, דזר). Interestingly, when Zeev Zhabotinski wrote about Trumpeldor’s last words he stressed the ‘never mind’ rather than the remembered heroic sentence.64 Brenner, on the other hand, emphasized the tragic ‘desperate bravery’ (נאוימים ובורה) of the Tel Hai battle and Trumpeldor’s last words. According to Brenner’s existentialist Zionism, he sees the grit of those who undertake an impossible mission, facing death, as evidence of the nation’s life, its vital signs.65 A combination of ‘it is good to die for our country’ and ‘never mind’ denies the understanding of Trumpeldor’s phrase as ideologically preferring death over life. From the existential point of view that takes death as a starting point, the choice is not between life and death: death is already there as the certainty of life’s finitude. From this starting point one can choose an action without letting the fear of death dictate its course.

This existential point of view may be illuminated by the Hebrew lyrics given by pioneers to a Russian drinking song that praises drinking and dancing. The lyrics explicitly relate to Trumpeldor and Brenner and dedicate wine and Hora to them. ‘We will drink to Trumpeldor/ who was killed in the Galilee/ and to the path of free life/ that he commanded to us’ (ולך חזרור ולוחמי בגליל שנסף/ ורכמותו ולבו נשב נשת קַיוֹת). The lyrics also relate to Trumpeldor’s last words with an interesting mixture of valorisation and parody. It replaces dying for the country with dying and drinking, saying that ‘It is better to drink and die than not-drinking and die’ (In Hebrew, the homage for Trumpeldor is more obvious since ‘better’ becomes ‘good’): ' kd translates למות לשתות טוב, טוב: נשתל על המות ישתות טוב'.

At first glance and from a utopian-ideological point of view, it may sound illogical to dedicate an unruly party to Trumpeldor’s strongly ideological behaviour. But having understood the celebration’s existential point of view, these two ways of conduct share the same point of view: an orientation towards death. This point of view leads to the decisive argument: 'Drinking and dying is better/ than not-drinking and dying'. Death is the definite end. It is there whether you like it or not. Having said that, you better drink something before you die, or fighting for a good cause. The death towards which the pioneers are headed is explained in the lyrics through a reference to the title of Yosef Haim Brenner’s novel Breakdown and Bereavement. The novel describes the hard and hopeless life of a pioneer and wishes to drown the hard life in wine: "We will drink and drown in wine/ all the breakdown-bereavement" ( kd translates Kesalon הBarrier נשתל על המות). Celebrating and dancing on Saturday are not presented as a manifestation of Zionist ideal life and its expected success. It is rather a manifestation of failure and death. The lyrics refer to the Sabbath day of rest from the hard work of construction, as mentioned in another stanza, and the celebration of the hardship of hard labour by means of drinking and dancing. In Hora, both drinker’s hedonism and Zionist activism are optional consequences of a pessimistic worldview, life without any promise for a better future. Dancing represents a rebellion against a depressing present and is directed towards the future.
Other lyrics about Hora expresses this leap into the future: "Raise, oh fire of the flaming dance/ light up, oh Hora, the nights of tomorrow/ we'll sing together/ today the heart is happy/ and our fate? We don't care" (התקלאת מחולות שמחות עלך/leck alm de - חורלד/ leeולב הורא/ לילויות המחר/ יחדנו נשרות/ היום הלב שמח/ וגורלנו – זה לנו לאケア) Hora is here again compared to a fire. Like the future, fire is seen but is also unstable. Accepting the unreliability of the future, the collective speaker is happily marching towards the unknown. There is hope, but not optimism. Understanding the subject’s attitude as committing himself to a collective leap into the future, we may understand why Hora might have been used as a pertinent symbol: a group of people leaping into a motion that has no visible beginning or ending.

4. In the Beginning there was Nostalgia

Understanding Hora as a rite of passage emphasizes its being a suspension of social structure that enables its practitioners to transform themselves. Processes of institutionalizing Hora turned an anti-structure performance into a rather structured artistic object that can be used as a symbol of national identity, and help the practitioners to preserve their identity. Some lyrics keep this tension by expressing a nostalgic attitude towards Hora. Nostalgic expressions can be found not only nowadays but also as early as the 30’s.

Alterman's ‘What a Wonder’ (איזה פלא) takes the very possibility of reoccurrence of Hora as a wonder. It reads: "We still recall, we still remember/ your songs mother-Hora" (ורחו אמא שרייך את מוכתרה עוז, מוכתרה עוז). In this song Hora belongs to the good old days in the past and its preservation is considered a wonder: "What a wonder, what a wonder/ if there are such nights/ if we can still try/ such a Hora" (לאו פלא פלא/ אם ישנם לילות כאלה/ אם אפשר עוד/ הורה שכזאת). Like in other poems Hora is described by metaphors of storm and fire, but the center moves from the miraculous emergence of the dance to the wonderfulness of its reappearance in the speaker’s life. Alterman seems to be aware of the pertinence of Hora to a certain past, and maybe even the liminal nature of this past, of those who came ‘impoverished of the past’ as he says in another song. Therefore he cannot take the accessibility of the Hora for granted since it belongs to a certain personal and national liminal situation.

Such a nostalgic attitude is common in the in Hebrew literature of the 30’s. Readers of Alrerman’s poetry can identify it in his celebrated book Stars Outside (1938): "My God, do all these still exist?/ Can we still ask, in a whisper, how they are doing?" (אלי, هنا ישנם הכל? האלי מתוקים באשמת השמים? או, איך הם עושים, איך? (starts outside)). Yizhar’s first story, Ephraim Goes Back to Alfalfa (also from 1938), also concludes with pioneers longing for the nocturnal episodes of the first days of settlement.

Orland's ‘Renewed Hora’ (הורה מחודשת), which is one of the most famous Hora songs, presents an interesting fusion of hope for the unknown tomorrow with nostalgia for the known but inaccessible yesterday: a past that becomes accessible only through the continuation of the Hora as a tradition. Following some of Lamdan’s motives, Orland’s collective speaker addresses the Hora and calls for it to return to collective life ‘Come back Hora, our Hora’ (שובי הורה, הורתנו) and to last ‘forever’ (לעד). This merging of past and future is linked to the merging of the group’s members, which is expressed by the circle of people holding hands. The circle as a shape that has no end implies the idea of eternal continuation and unity of the group during the performance and into the future. The speaker urges the performers to an infinite performance: "The dance shall not stop and the song will not stop" (הריקוד
that is expected to ascend to the sky and the chorus connects it to performance as a reestablishment of an ongoing tradition: ‘Return, return and we will turn/ since our way does not end/ since our heart is one/ since always and forever’. The memory of Hora gains a mythic supra-temporal quality which is expected to bridge the temporal gap.

The motive of continuing an eternal chain in the circle dance is taken from Lamdan’s Massada but while Lamdan’s eternal chain pretends to continue Jewish ancient history Alterman and Orland turns the miraculous memory of Hora to a different diachronic story. In Alterman and Orland the eternal chain is not expected to bridge the gap between modern times and the second temple period but to evocate nostalgic memories of dancing events from the first days of Zionist settlement or the youth of the lyric speaker himself. Hora here turns from a means of Zionist narrative of Jewish ‘great history’ to ‘small history’ the narrative Zionist agents tell about Zionism itself. It is a quest for the authentic enthusiasm of the first liminal days in the Land of Israel. In this narrative the founding days of pioneers’ beginnings are the source of the historical narrative rather than the greater historical narrative that goes two thousand years back.

Conclusion

Historical time was a main concern of pioneer culture, built upon the notion of being the forerunners of a future that is yet to come. This temporal nature gives rise to a certain kind of questions about authenticity. In one of his most famous essays, Yosef Haim Brenner, the most prominent author of the second Aliyah, complains that literary descriptions of Jewish life in Palestine cannot be written, because there is not enough reality to be described realistically, so he turns to expressive writing.

Relying upon the future leaves cultural agents, masters of representation, with a lack of source material to represent. Similarly, when the Third Aliyah dance ethnologist Gurit Kadman thought that there is no traditional Jewish dance, she felt she had to create it. Both Brenner and Kadman are looking for an authentic source and when they don’t find one – they create it. It is a culture leaning against the future and taking steps to prevent from crumbling. The Hora seems to symbolize this leap of faith into the future.

During the formational phases of this culture there was also a nostalgic leaning back on the past, to the first heroic days in the land, as a source of cultural power. The Hora then comes back from being a rite of passage to becoming a ritual of remembrance, a reminder of the beginning. Like the future that was described as uncertain and unreliable, the past is now also a mystery.

Notes

1 I wish to thank Ze’ev Kitsis, Dr. Hizky Shoham, Prof. Aviva Halamish for their readings and helpful remarks. All the lyrics can be found at this website: Zemereshet: An Emergency Project for the Preservation of the Early Hebrew Song (http://www.zemereshet.co.il/).

2 Yet, as a culture of voluntary action it is different than ‘civil religion’ or ‘state rituals’ (A. Maoz, State Rituals: Independence Celebrations and Commemorations of the Fallen 1948-1956, Ben Gurion University Press: Be’er Sheba 1995 [Hebrew]; E. Katz & D. Handelman, ‘State ceremonies of Israel


5 For examples for the sequence of events see: B. Habes (ed.), *Sefer Ha’Aliyah Ha’Shnya (The Book of the Second Aliyah)*, Tel Aviv 1947 [Hebrew], p. 272-273, 544; Y. Erez (ed.), *Sefer Ha’Aliyah Ha’Shlishit (The Book of the Third Aliyah)*, Tel Aviv 1964, p. 337, 534-535; Z. Rimon (ed.), *Sefer Yagur (The Book of Yagur: 40 Years for Establishment)*, Yagur 1965, p. 285, 612. In the book of Yagur I also a quote from a letter from the kibbutz to the Settlement division (of the Zionist Management, *הנהלה הציונית*) to help with funds for a more stable floor that is needed because ‘Every night we dance very enthusiastically’ (ibid, p. 618). See also: G. Dubkin, *Hora Songs: their Sources, History and Place within the Hebrew Song* (Master’s dissertation), Tel Aviv 1985, p. 18. This sequence is not as structured and institutionalized as the less spontaneous model of performance by Richard Schechner (Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, Routledge: New York 1988, pp. 6-15).


8 Turner, p 132. These two are also opposed to a third kind of communitas, a ‘normative’ one that relates to rituals in which the interrelations of anti-structure communitas and the structured society is highly regulated like in pre-modern, traditional, societies.


10 Turner, pp. 134-140. He also argues that even Buber accepts his argument in his later writings (pp. 136-137).

11 The lyrics of ‘Let’s Go to Ruthie’s’ (באו לרותי) that read ‘Let’s go to Ruthie’s/ and dance Hora/ Boys in the front/ and girls on the back’, although it mentioned Hora was used to dance the Krakowiak, which is a dance that involves both circle couples and rows dancing, usually with gender roles (see: Lets Go to Ruthie’s, *Zemereshet Website*, http://www.zemereshet.co.il/song.asp?id=2413); a similar usage is seen in another known as hora (Rise, Oh fire, ibid, http://www.zemereshet.co.il/song.asp?id=2820).


15 Yaari, *When the Candle was Burning*, p. 114.


17 In: Thelma Goldfarb (ed.), *Echoes of Palestine* (Hede Ha’Arets), Brooklyn 1929, p. 34.


For more evidence for religious attributions for pioneers’ dance see: D. Roginsky, Performing Israeliness: Nationalism, Ethnicity and Israeli ‘Folk and Ethnic’ Dance (doctoral dissertation), Tel Aviv 2004 [Hebrew], pp. 74-79.


11 E.g. The Book of Yagur, p. 284.

12 In addition to the two figures that are mentioned here, whose leadership is related to many aspects of life, there were also leaders of singing and dancing whose personae were more professional, or artistic, like Avraham Herzfeld (Ya’akov Mazor, ‘From Hassidic Melody to the Land of Israel Song’ Kathebra 115 (2005), pp. 95-128.


14 The Book of the Second Aliyah, p. 273.

15 For more evidence for religious attributions for pioneers’ dance see: D. Roginsky, Performing Israeliness: Nationalism, Ethnicity and Israeli ‘Folk and Ethnic’ Dance (doctoral dissertation), Tel Aviv 2004 [Hebrew], pp. 74-79.


17 E.g. The Book of Yagur, p. 284.

18 In addition to the two figures that are mentioned here, whose leadership is related to many aspects of life, there were also leaders of singing and dancing whose personae were more professional, or artistic, like Avraham Herzfeld (Ya’akov Mazor, ‘From Hassidic Melody to the Land of Israel Song’ Kathebra 115 (2005), pp. 95-128.


20 The Book of the Second Aliyah, p. 273.

21 For more evidence for religious attributions for pioneers’ dance see: D. Roginsky, Performing Israeliness: Nationalism, Ethnicity and Israeli ‘Folk and Ethnic’ Dance (doctoral dissertation), Tel Aviv 2004 [Hebrew], pp. 74-79.


23 E.g. The Book of Yagur, p. 284.

24 In addition to the two figures that are mentioned here, whose leadership is related to many aspects of life, there were also leaders of singing and dancing whose personae were more professional, or artistic, like Avraham Herzfeld (Ya’akov Mazor, ‘From Hassidic Melody to the Land of Israel Song’ Kathebra 115 (2005), pp. 95-128.


56 Sagi, pp. 72-80. The option of suicide is discussed in many of Brenner’s novels.
59 Yaari, *When the Candle was Burning*, p. 114.
60 Ibid, p. 118.
64 Z. Zhabotinski, ‘Tel Hai’ *Haaretz* 200 (1920) [Hebrew, also Accessible at: http://www.benyehuda.org/zhabotinsky/tel_xai.html].
65 Brenner, ‘Tel Hai’, *Ha’Adama* 1920, p. 748. [Hebrew, also Accessible at: http://benyehuda.org/brenner207.html]
73 In D. Roginsky, ‘Folklore, Folklorism and synchronization’, p. 49.
The City as Subject and Stage: Dance and the Formation of Tel Aviv

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Abstract
This paper investigates the impact of dance on the development of Tel Aviv during the British Mandate of Palestine. It shows how theatrical, salon, and folk dance forms shaped the culture as well as the physical space of the burgeoning city, and how national ideas were encoded into this nexus. The city served as both stage and subject of dancing and choreographic activity.

Keywords: dance; body; culture; urban; Tel Aviv; Mandate Palestine; Israel

Introduction
In contemporary Israel, a well-known saying typcasts its three major cities: “Jerusalem prays, Tel Aviv dances, Haifa works.” Dance indeed plays a significant role in the life of the bustling metropolis: today, Tel Aviv hosts several dance festivals throughout the year, houses the Suzanne Dellal Center, a performing arts space home to the world renowned Batsheva Dance Company and the Inbal Ethnic Dance Center, and contains numerous dance schools and studios.

This centrality and plethora of dance activity in present-day Tel Aviv emerges from the city’s history. During the British Mandate of Palestine, dancing creations and events greatly impacted the development of the metropolis. In these years, folk, theatrical, and salon dance forms shaped the culture, as well as the physical space of the burgeoning city and national ideas were encoded into this nexus.

The creation of Hebrew culture was integrally connected to the formation of the city of Tel Aviv. Established in 1909 as a garden suburb of Jaffa, by the 1920s Tel Aviv had become the dynamic centre of the Jewish community in Palestine. The creation of the city was a central component of the Zionist project. Considered the first Hebrew secular metropolis, Tel Aviv was designed to represent a new Jewish environment and to foster the development of the “new Jew,” one who was to be tough, strong, and vibrant. The city expanded at the same time that a national culture was being constructed: it became an urban symbol of the Zionist rebirth and was viewed as a great achievement.

Dance had a profound impact on the development of Tel Aviv. As a city that defined itself as consistently in motion, dance captured and expressed that essence. The city provided a variety of spaces and sites—both indoors and outdoors—as well as festivities and activities in which dancing took place. Not only did the urban environment itself serve as a stage for movement, but it also served as a subject for
salon, folk and theatrical dance creations of the era. The budding metropolis, and its landscape, became an important source of inspiration, cultivation, and ingenuity.

Moreover, the variety of different forms of dance that flourished simultaneously—including salon, folk, and theatrical---represented different echelons of Tel Aviv life, and different visions of the city’s character and future. Among the contending forms of Zionism, an urban Zionism developed and flourished in these years. Although the leading socialist Zionists called for a return to agricultural life, the majority of Jewish settlers arriving to Palestine in these years moved to towns and cities. During the Mandate, 40% of Jews settled in Tel Aviv with its population growing from around 3000 in 1920 to about 150,000 in 1940.\(^4\) The city wrestled with competing values and sensibilities including both aiming to define a local Hebrew urban environment and character and simultaneously seeking to develop a sense of cosmopolitanism.\(^5\) The variety of dancing forms expressed these divergent directions.

This interrelationship between stage, subject, and urban development holds a significant place in the formation of Tel Aviv. While dance has been featured in the histories of the kibbutzim or rural environments, its central role in the shaping of the character of Tel Aviv has largely been overlooked.\(^6\) Yet, the city emerged as a place filled with dance, and dancers simultaneously aimed to choreograph its character. Dancing in Tel Aviv, thus, was both integrated into—and significant for—cultural production. By investigating the intersection of urban space and culture in the development of the first Hebrew city, this article shows how Tel Aviv served as a stage and a muse for a variety of dance activities.

The City as Stage

Diversity of Dance Activities

During the Mandate era, dance was an integral part of the urban landscape and served to characterize the “new Hebrew city.” Dance both adorned the physical spaces of Tel Aviv and also contributed to its image as a city in motion. Dancing activities took place in a variety of locations: indoors and outdoors, as well as around the urban and natural environment. The city’s architecture and the natural landscape alike served as a stage.

The style of dancing remained varied and variegated, encompassing different Zionist visions, social echelons, and cultural preferences for the “new Hebrew city.” As dance was becoming one of the symbols and markers of Tel Aviv life, the diversity of dance forms represented the varied strains of Tel Aviv society, competing strains of Zionism, and the different directions of the city’s social and cultural interests.

Theatrical dancing aimed to create a high art form of Hebrew movement and was influenced by European concert dance. The intention to create this artistic form of dance was closely linked to urban and cultural Zionism, and, while some of its creations maintained ties to socialist Zionist values, it was often denoted as “bourgeois” by the dominant socialist-Zionists. As I stated in *Embodying Hebrew Culture*, “because the more urban population sought to generate high art which would place the Yishuv within the purview of European nations, these forms were often seen as elitist and exclusivist by the socialist Zionist enterprise, as high art rests on the kinds of distinctions and valuations that socialist concepts eschewed.”\(^7\)

Theatrical dance solidified during the British Mandate era, and Tel Aviv served as its centre, the prime location for developing a high art form for dance in the
image of Europe. Initial dancers included Baruch Agadati, considered the first modern dancer in the Yishuv, and an important Tel Aviv cultural leader who later became a visual artist and filmmaker as well; Margalit Ornstein, a modern dancer versed in German dance expressionism who immigrated from Vienna and opened the first major studio for dance in the country; and, Rina Nikova, a Russian ballerina, who choreographed and performed in dance segments of the Palestine Opera from 1925-1928. The arrival of prominent modern dancer, Gertrud Kraus, from Vienna in 1935, alongside additional dancers and choreographers escaping Germany in the 1930s, was also influential; several dance studios also opened in these years. The National Dance Competition, held in Tel Aviv in 1937, the first and only year of this event, was designed to solidify a space for theatrical dance. The majority of studios, performances, and choreographers in the Yishuv were located in the new Hebrew city.

Salon dancing was also prevalent in Tel Aviv, and was linked both to European culture and a sense of cosmopolitanism. Several studios for salon dance emerged in these years as well. As Anat Helman notes, this form of dance was “an institutionalized and commercial pursuit” and a “Western cosmopolitan import” that “fostered the image of a new Jew who was a man or woman of the world.” Salon dancing came into conflict with socialist Zionist values. However, as already emphasised, “the cultivation of decorated shop windows and cafes with jazz music and European salon dancing, such as the waltz and tango, went against the collective, ascetic, and agrarian ideals of the Hebrew worker on the kibbutz.”

In addition to salon and theatrical dancing, folk dancing was also predominant in the young Hebrew city. This form was viewed as an emblem of socialist and labour Zionism with its emphasis on egalitarianism and connection to agriculture and the land. Many significant developments in folk dance took place in rural environments, such as the Dalia Dance Festivals in the 1940s at Kibbutz Dalia, created to consolidate an Israeli folk dance form, as well as the creation of folk dances for celebrations and pageants in the kibbutzim, and dancing to express the agricultural lifestyle. Yet, significant developments took place in Tel Aviv as well. Gurit Kadman (then known as Gert Kaufmann), considered the “mother” of Israeli folk dance, moved to Tel Aviv in 1927. In addition to teaching in her home, Kadman organised a troupe for Hapoel, the sports association of the ‘Hebrew worker’, entitled Hapoel Tel Aviv, as well as the first leadership course for folk dance teachers in Tel Aviv in 1945. In the early 1940s, she taught folk dance at Hapoel as well as at the Seminar Hakibutsim (Kibbutz Teachers’ Seminary) in Tel Aviv.

The hora, the emerging national folk dance in these years, was viewed as the quintessential emblem of the “new Jew”: tough, strong, energetic vigorous, fun, bold. With arms held shoulder to shoulder and formations in tight circles of men and women dancing together, the hora, by the 1930s, was considered the emerging national dance and became an emblem of Yishuv society. Though traditionally associated with agricultural life in the kibbutzim, the hora was not confined to the rural environment and indeed played a central role in Tel Aviv life, becoming tied to the new city, its landscape, and its character as well. The hora was seen as natural and spontaneous, representing the new and unencumbered Hebrew character. While most commonly viewed as a socialist and labour Zionist emblem, the hora at the same time served to highlight, celebrate, and express urban life in the new secular Hebrew city.

Multitude of Sites of Dance Activities: Beaches, Balconies, Cafes, Buildings, and Streets
These variegated dance activities took place in a range of locations around the metropolis, in both the natural and urban environment. The beach served as an important site for dance activity. A defining feature of Tel Aviv was the Mediterranean Sea, a popular location for leisure activities. A range of physical activities took place alongside the water, especially hora dancing. Reflecting on his visit to Palestine, Dr. J. Sachs commented on hora dancing at the city’s beach:

“In Palestine one still sees dancing that is natural and spontaneous. The men and women returning from the fields give vent to their exuberant spirits in this most natural way. The farmers from the settlements coming for the Sabbath to Tel-Aviv bring their harmonicas and indulge in impromptu festivities. In the main avenue of the city the dancers indulge their love of movement without any conventional qualms troubling their conscience; on the shores of the blue Mediterranean, under the glorious sky they dance in masses, caught up in the collective rhythm of the new life”

The hora dancing at the beach represented an intermingling of rural and urban segments of Yishuv society. It accentuated the natural environment and emphasized the new Hebrew secular city as one with water and sun at the Mediterranean. The well-known photographer, Alfons Himmelreich, took several photos of modern dancers performing on the beach in these years, including Gertrud Kraus and Paula Padani. Gaby Aldor notes that photographs taken of theatrical dancers at the time, featured dancers “jumping on rooftops, caught in midair, or in the open fields, or on the beach.”

Cafes were also a central feature of Tel Aviv life. In its efforts to be like other European cities of the time, café culture played an important role in the city and, as Helman notes, “The number of cafes per capita in Tel Aviv was on a par with that in European capitals.” Cafes were located around town as well as specifically by the water and constituted an “integral part of the city’s bohemian creative life.” Dance galas were an important form of recreation and a significant feature of many cafes, both by the water as well as inland. At times, these dance galas at cafes also served as fundraisers for local causes. In the winter they took place inside and in the summer they were held on rooftops or in the café patios. Many cafes featured European style bands accompanied by salon dancing, representing a sense of cosmopolitanism and bourgeois ideals. Dances such as the tango, foxtrot, and the waltz were typically featured at the cafes, many of which hosted tea and salon dancing, or “Tea Dancing” in the early evening. Dancing was so popular at the Casino Café, a well-known café along the seashore, that they expanded their dance hall in 1931. As they announced on a poster: “The dancing hall has almost doubled and from November 7, 1931, it is possible to savor the wonderful view of the sea and enjoy the soft air in any weather.” Further indicative of the importance of dancing, the Casino Café also featured a gala with a movement competition. At a “great dance” in November 1930, the Café advertised: “3 Valuable Prizes will be given to the couples dancing best: Tango, Valse-Boston, and Fox-trot.”

Salon dancing at the San Remo Café was featured in the 1935 landmark film The Land of Promise, the first sound film to be produced in Palestine that was designed to encourage Jewish immigration to Palestine. The film aimed to celebrate and promote the achievements of the Jewish community in Palestine at the time, and portrayed a variety of accomplishments in the urban and rural environments. The Tel Aviv beach was featured as a source of pride. The narrator boasts, “On days of rest in Tel Aviv the population streams toward the seashore. The Tel Aviv beach is the greatest place of recreation in Palestine. It ranks now as a resort with the Lido of
Venice, America’s Atlantic City, and England’s Brighton Beach as a world attraction. It draws not only Tel Avivians and Palestinians generally, but visitors from every country in the world.” Just before the narrative segment above, the film presents images of Arabs and Jews walking alongside the seashore. At the start of the voice-over, the film displays droves of people laying out in the sun alongside the water and immersing in the water, a ping pong game alongside the water, children building sandcastles, and finally an elite crowd dressed in European style clothing sitting outdoors at the San Remo Café overlooking the water. After the narrated sentence is complete, the film shows smiling faces of an elite crowd engaged in salon dancing outdoors at the San Remo to the tunes of European music. The scene is distinctively happy, peaceful, European, and cosmopolitan. The salon dancing confirms the narrative information, displaying a portrait of both a cosmopolitan place and people in Tel Aviv.

Just as at the beach, there was a variety of dancing activity at the cafes. In addition to salon dancing, cafes at times featured theatrical dance performances as well as hora dancing. Several cafes presented performances on occasion that included theatrical dancers, alongside concert singers and bands on the playbill. The classical ballet dancer, Mia Arbatova, for instance, performed at Café Semadar in 1939, and modern dancer, Paula Padani, appeared at the San Remo Café in 1940. According to Batia Carmiel, theatrical dances were also featured in performances of the Hebrew satirical theater, at Purim galas, fashion shows, and December New Year’s celebrations.

Combining urban and socialist Zionist sensibilities, the hora was also sometimes danced at cafes. In describing the dancing scene at cafes, the theatrical dancer Vera Goldman stated,

"But it is not uncommon to hear in a fashionable café the band suddenly change its tune and all the present, high-heeled and elegantly clothed, are seen bursting into a “Hora.”"

This mixing of dance forms at the European and cosmopolitan style café setting represents the interconnections between urban and socialist Zionism, bourgeois and egalitarian influences, local and cosmopolitan preferences. The variety of dance activity, then, portrays this interplay and intermingling both between different movement styles, and different ideological and social inclinations.

Rooftops and balconies were typical structures in the well-known Tel Aviv International Style architecture. Communications scholar Carolin Aronis has demonstrated the importance of balconies in the architectural and social life of the budding metropolis at this time and the ways in which balconies were both an extension of, and a link to, the street, such that Tel Aviv was depicted as a “city-street.” Several dance classes or dancing sessions—including folk, modern, and ballroom— took place on the rooftops of the teachers’ apartments in these years, emphasizing the outdoors as well as the architectural designs of the city. Gurit Kadman held physical education courses on the rooftop of her Tel Aviv apartment. A segment from a Kadman family home film in 1936 depicted one of these classes, presenting energetic boys and girls in shorts and t-shirts conducting exercises on the roof, appearing harmonious and comfortable with the environment. Similarly, Margalit Ornstein often held modern dance classes on the roof and Alfons Himmelreich photographed the Ornstein Sisters, as well as Gertrud Kraus, performing on a roof. Several cafes, as discussed above, would incorporate salon dancing on rooftops during the warmer months.
The plethora of dancing activity on rooftops, not only official classes, became the subject of municipal discontent. In a municipal announcement from 1925, the city placed a “ban on dances and gatherings on Tel Aviv rooftops,” explaining:

“The municipality is aware that in different places in the city they organize dances and gatherings for different purposes on rooftops that were not specifically made fit for this from the technical side, that is to say that when the homes were built, the rooftops were not built in a particular way with materials that could bear large loads, so the city announces the following: It is forbidden by this specific ban to organize dances or different gatherings whatever they are on Tel Aviv rooftops without special permission for this from the technical department of the municipality. Accordingly, the municipal police have been given special instructions to disband any gathering such as this on Tel Aviv rooftops without the license stated above.”

This sanction shows not only the popularity of dancing on local rooftops, but also the intersection between dance and urban development in the young metropolis.

In addition to rooftops, dance activity also took place at landmark institutions and in other building complexes throughout Tel Aviv. The Herzliya Gymnasium, the first all Hebrew high school and a central landmark in the budding city, became an important institution for the Jewish community in Palestine and also served as a significant site for dance activity. Dance took place there in a variety of settings and on a range of occasions. For instance, Margalit Ornstein’s students performed at a student gala at the Herzliya Gymnasium in 1923. The site was also featured in the film Palestine in Song and Dance, created by the Jewish National Fund (JNF) of America in 1931. The film presented youth engaged in mass calisthenics followed by numerous energetic circles of hora dancing in the courtyard of the Herzlia Gymnasium. Just before the scene featuring the hora dancing, a narrative slide in the silent film states, “The Charleston? No! It’s the famous “Hora”—dance of the Chalutzim.” As a film aimed to introduce and create a positive image to American Jews of life in Palestine in the era, the JNF creators communicated a clear, strong message: the Jews of Palestine were healthy, robust, attuned to their bodies and in harmony with the environment. And these “new Jews” were defined by the dancing style of the hora, in contrast to the European and American salon dancing of the Charleston. Those two dance styles were set against one another, each denoting a particular cultural and social character. Thus, the pioneering and “new Hebrew” spirit was presented as most closely linked to the hora; and rather than illustrating this dance taking place on a kibbutz, the film showcases it in the heart of Tel Aviv. Interestingly, this scene emphasizing the hora over the Charleston stands in contrast to the salon dancing featured in The Land of Promise.

Dancing at the Herzliya Gymnasium also took place at a range of festival celebrations. At the first Maccabiah Games, a Jewish Olympics held in Tel Aviv in 1932, the closing procession ended with singing and hora dancing at the Herzliya Gymnasium. This scene was described in the newspaper Davar: “They walk and they sing Hebrew songs...At 7:00 all of the flags are already found in the yard of the Herzliya Gymnasium from which they emerged. They connect in circles of the hora. They are all happy that the great festivities passed without any mishap.” Hora dancing at this site, then, demarcated both the celebration of—and relief with—the successful completion of the Games.

While there was extensive outdoor dancing around Tel Aviv, dancing also took place indoors, in a range of buildings in the city. The Exhibition Hall served as a site for many galas at which salon dancing took place and other performances. Margalit Ornstein’s studio, for instance, performed there at a gala in January 1927.
The Eden Cinema building, a landmark site established for film in 1914, also presented live performances. In 1920 the site housed the first dance performance of Baruch Agadati. In addition, in 1927, Rina Nikova and her dancing partner, David Brainin, appeared during the intermissions at screenings of films at the Eden Cinema. The Mugrabi Theater, established in 1930, was a well-known theatre and cinema building in the heart of Tel Aviv that presented theatrical dance. The National Dance Competition in 1937, as well as other concert dance performances in the 1930s, took place there.

The cultural centre, Beit Ha'am, established in 1925, also featured performances. According to Maoz Azaryahu, the site was “was intended to become the “spiritual centre of the new Hebrew city.” In the 1920s, Beit Ha'am featured children’s cultural performances, such as a performance of Margalit Ornstein’s Dance School at the first children’s concert there in May 1926. Students at Rina Nikova’s studio, as well as Nikova and Brainin themselves, also performed at Beit Ha'am. According to Batia Carmiel, “In the summer of 1926 and in 1927 there were ballet performances of Brainin, Nikova, and twenty of her students at Beit Ha'am, at Exhibition Hall, and at the Eden.”

In this era, several concert dance studios also emerged in buildings around the city. In 1922, Margalit Ornstein established the first studio for concert dance. Shortly after her arrival in Tel Aviv in 1935, Gertrud Kraus opened a studio in her apartment. In 1938, Mia Arbatova founded a studio for ballet in Tel Aviv. Schools of salon dancing also emerged in apartment buildings in the city. Anat Helman notes that dance studios “became a prominent part of the city’s cultural landscape.” Indeed, the late night dancing activity garnered a range of complaints to the Tel Aviv Municipality from local residents of these buildings who were awakened or who had difficulty sleeping as a result.

With the variety of dance activities indoors and outdoors, ranging from apartment buildings to studios to the beach to rooftops, among the most prevalent was dancing in the streets of Tel Aviv. On a day to day basis, the city became known for late night dancing, as well as singing, in the streets, which was “an important part of the city’s vibrant after-hours scene” that residents sometimes complained about. For festival and special occasions, dancing in the streets, and particularly the hora, were integral and central components of the activities. The outdoor hora dancing at a variety of festival occasions served to adorn the city and promoted an amalgamation of socialist and urban Zionist values. At the same time, it accentuated the urban environment.

Hora dancing took part at Jewish festival celebrations, including at Purim, Hanukkah, and Tu B’shvat. In a photograph from 1934, young children danced the hora in celebration of the holiday of Tu Bishvat. Even in commemoration of a holiday largely associated with nature and the rural setting, their festive dancing was integrally connected to the outdoor urban environment.

The hora also played an important role in demarcating events in the Yishuv, such as for the successful completion of the Maccabiah Games in 1932 (discussed earlier) and for the inauguration of the Tel Aviv port. When the port first opened in 1936, residents celebrated with workers in the water dancing a hora, performing to a new song entitled “Tel Aviv Shore.”

A range of different types of dance played a role in the 20th anniversary celebrations for the city’s establishment in 1929. For instance, the Jewish National Fund offered to arrange a variety of celebratory activities alongside the seashore, including two to three orchestras for folk dancing, artistic groups, and two to three
Mayor Dizengoff acknowledged Margalit Ornstein for her assistance for the 20th anniversary celebrations of Tel Aviv through the participation of her students in the gala, offering a “warm thanks” for the dances they presented “that generated the wishes of visitors and guests.”

While masechtot, theatrical pageant performances mixing theatre, song, and dance, have become associated with holiday festivals at kibbutzim, theatrical dance also played a role in Tel Aviv holiday celebrations. For instance, Margalit Ornstein choreographed for various festivals staged outdoors in Tel Aviv, including for the Purim celebrations in the city. Baruch Agadati, as will be discussed, also choreographed for holiday celebrations in the city, particularly folk dances for the Tel Aviv Purim festivities.

Showcasing the City’s Dancing: The Purim Festivities and the film Vayehi Bimei

Drawing participants from around the world, the Purim carnivals in Tel Aviv were a central event in the life of this emerging city in the 1920s and early 1930s. The carnivals served as a symbol and a source of pride for the burgeoning Hebrew culture. Although Purim is a minor holiday in the traditional Jewish calendar, this holiday was renewed in the Yishuv and given heightened importance.

The city served as a stage for these events. For the Purim festivities, dancing—including salon, modern, and folk—played an important role. During the holiday, the city of Tel Aviv was entirely transformed. According to reports of the time, the entire population of Tel Aviv seemed to be outside---on rooftops, balconies, and in the street. At night, the city came alive with a variety of evening costume balls with lively dancing and costume competitions. The upper echelons of society and culture were represented at the evening costume balls where European salon dances, such as the foxtrot and the tango, were danced, often to jazz music. These balls were elite and bourgeois, and, as with several of the dance galas held at cafes, represented a desire to emulate Western European high society.

In some years, modern dance choreography was created for the event. In 1933, Margalit Ornstein created a dance called “Adloyada” and organised a performance by her studio for the opening of the holiday. In many years, her studio also performed at the carnival.

The boisterous dancing of the hora was a significant element of the celebrations and one of the markers of the event. Danced both in the streets and at some of the elite evening galas, it represented the celebratory, carnival air, and fostered a festive and energetic spirit in the city. Several newspaper accounts of the period refer to the stormy hora danced in the streets into the late hours of the night. The philosopher Mortimer J. Cohen described the dancing:

“The young people do not seek dance halls; the streets afford them more spacious pavilions. Morning, noon, and night they can be seen dancing, prancing, swirling, chains of them, linked arm in arm, taking possession of broad "Shushan-the-Capital," [Allenby Street] singing, swaying, hopping, skipping. Occasionally, a group of them will suddenly stop, form a circle and, with abandon, untiringly dance the Horah.”

Similarly, Lotta Levensohn, the American Jewish writer, describes the festivities:

“… In the midst of Tel Aviv's artery of traffic is a group of Haluzim [pioneers] dressed in kaftans and streimels, with earlocks pasted on to their smoothly shaven cheeks. Their hands are on each other's shoulders and they rotate as devoutly in a Hora as ever did their Hassidic grandfathers on Simchat Torah… The distressed young policeman begs them to dance.
somewhere else. "Mah ichpat lecha?" they shout back in Hebrew. "You should worry! Come and dance with us!" And the next moment the police uniform is rotating gravely among the kaftans, without a hint of opera buffa.\textsuperscript{63}

Both Levensohn’s and Cohen’s accounts emphasized the energetic and exuberant quality of the hora dancing, as well as its central role adorning the city’s streets and defining its character. The hora represents both freedom and abandon---the police officer in Levensohn’s example who is at first attempting to create order, then dances with the halutzim; the masses in the street in Cohen’s description dance “untiringly.” The dance represents a sense of ownership to the city and thereby the land: in the “all Jewish city,” Jews are able to dance with freedom and abandon and with it, claim their urban public space.\textsuperscript{64}

Baruch Agadati, a creator of many aspects of the Purim festivities in Tel Aviv, made a short film about Purim in the 1960s in which he nostalgically looked back on what he saw as the "golden age" of the Purim carnivals of the 1920s and 30s. Emphasizing the centrality of late night dancing, he reflects in the film, “Once, Purim celebrations in Tel Aviv were entirely different. They danced in the streets until dawn, suffused with joy, song, prizes and beauties. It was a celebration nearly as popular as the Nice Carnival.”\textsuperscript{65}

The hora in the streets of Tel Aviv also played an important role in the film Vayehi Bimei, "And it came to Pass in the Days of", a silent comedy produced in Tel Aviv in 1932, whose title is taken from the first two words of the Book of Esther.\textsuperscript{66} Considered to be the first Hebrew narrative film, Vayehi Bimei was set against the Purim carnival [Adloyada] of 1932, and captured some elements of the atmosphere of Purim in Tel Aviv.\textsuperscript{67} According to film historian Hillel Tryster, this film "constitutes the single most significant breakthrough in Palestinian filmmaking in the silent era."\textsuperscript{68} The hora played a critical symbolic role in the feature film and its centrality represents ways in which dancing stood at the forefront of those festivities associated with the young Hebrew city. Tel Aviv is the stage in the film: the streets, the rooftops, the crowd serve as the platform for the narrative as well as dancing activity. Scholar Hizky Shoham reflects, “It is somewhat surprising that the first fiction film created in Jewish Palestine was entirely about the city, while rural space does not appear in the film at all.”\textsuperscript{69}

Vayehi Bimei parodies differences between different segments of Yishuv society: secular and religious Jews, socialist-Zionists and urban Zionists, new Hebrews and cosmopolitans. The film represents the sense of confusion, action, and energy of Purim in Tel Aviv. The focus of the story is a comedy of errors: three couples, including Tzipa and Mendel, caricatures of religious Eastern European Jews; two American tourists (Bobby and Baby); and two halutzim, become confused over the actual identities of their significant other because of costume exchanges and mishaps.\textsuperscript{70} At the end of the film, the chaos is solved at the rabbinate wherein each person’s true identity is revealed. Vayehi Bimei captures the sense of inversion of Purim in Tel Aviv.

The hora is regularly used throughout the film to demarcate the lifestyle of the new Hebrew halutzim. Interestingly, in contrast to The Land of Promise, this film does not present any salon dancing; theatrical dance as well is not included in Vayehi Bimei. Early in the film the Eastern European Jewish characters of Mendel, a tailor, and his wife Tzipa are introduced. Throughout the narrative, this lifestyle is shown to be separated from Yishuv culture: the spirited hora appears early in the film, as well as throughout the narrative, to represent this contrast. As the film presents Tzipa and Mendel in their apartment on Purim, three scenes of hora dancing in the streets are
shown, used both to contrast the new Hebrew existence to that of Tzipa and Mendel, as well as to entice Mendel to join the Yishuv’s festivities. A marital dispute ensues between Mendel and Tzipa. The fun of the halutzim is presented in deep contrast to the Eastern European Jewish way of life and the hora scene embodies these differences. Tzipa does not want Mendel to go out and partake in the festivities. She is against the notion of having fun; rather, she wants Mendel to stay home and work. However, Mendel runs away from his work--and from her--to join in the festivities. The hora is the quintessential symbol of the new life and the foil to the portrayed drudgery of the Eastern European Jewish style existence.

As the story proceeds, the hora continues to play a central role in the narrative. When Tzipa discovers that Mendel has run away, she sets out to look for him to bring him back to work. She finally spots him, dressed up like a halutz and drinking in front of the barber shop. Just as Tzipa goes to catch him, the crowd around her bursts into a stormy hora and engulfs her in it. As the new secular Hebrews entrap this personification of the Eastern European Jew, it is as if they say that their active, pioneering spirit is strong and invincible. Just as Tzipa finally begins to escape the hora, someone in the crowd places a large mask on her head. She cannot remove it at first, and at the moment when she succeeds and can see again, the drunken Mendel escapes from her, riding away on the back of a wagon.

In this comic scene, the differences between the “new” Jew and the Diaspora Jew, the “religious” and the “secular” are highlighted by the hora. The hora, with its fast pace and exhilaration represents the new life in the Yishuv. Tzipa, is literally lost in this new world view, symbolized by the hora dancing in the dynamic city of Tel Aviv. The hora dancing in the city serves as stage and center of the narrative: Tel Aviv is showcased throughout and one of the most central features of its character is presented as the dancing in its streets.

The City as Subject

Dancing and Singing about Tel Aviv

In addition to serving as a stage, the city also served as a subject for folk and theatrical choreography of the era. Several songs about Tel Aviv were written in this era, often created either with accompanying dances or inspiring new dances—including theatrical, folk, and salon—to celebrate the young metropolis. For instance, “Tango Tel Aviv,” composed by Verdana Shlonsky with lyrics by Natan Alterman, served the purpose of providing a Hebrew tango inspired by the first Hebrew secular city. This tango was introduced in 1935 at the Purim galas that took place at Mugrabi Hall.71

In the realm of theatrical dance, the song and dance, “Tel Aviv,” was created as part of a theatrical collaboration between Jerusalem born American dancer Noami Leaf (later Noami Leaf Halpern) and actor and singer Joseph Goland for a production on Tel Aviv at the Ha-matate Theater.72 Goland and Leaf asked Natan Alterman and Avraham Shlonsky to write lyrics that would “describe the way of life on the Tel Aviv street.”73 With music composed by Moshe Vilansky, the refrain of the song states: “A road extends, a car drives/Left, right, around!/What is the commotion here?/Who is here and what is here?/Here is the city of Tel Aviv./Tel Aviv; Tel Aviv.” Noami Leaf’s accompanying choreographic input to this music was a significant part of the production.74
Hora songs and dances were also created to celebrate Tel Aviv. In 1933, “Hora Tel Aviv” was developed as part of a production at the Ha-Matate Theater called Bimhera Beyamenu, a show that presented a vision of Tel Aviv fifty years ahead in the year 1983. With lyrics written by Yitzhak Nozik and Moshe Churgal and musical composition by Moshe Vilansky, the refrain of the hora emphasizes Tel Aviv’s impressiveness: “Tel Aviv! Glory and splendor! The path is so bright/ Tel Aviv! This name creates light/ From the east to the sea, from the south, north/ The centre, the avenues and the Yarkon.” In addition, a hora song entitled “Tel Aviv Shore” (discussed earlier) was created for the establishment of the Tel Aviv port with accompanying dancing. And, the song “Tel Aviv Dance” (Rikud Tel Avivi) was created in the 1930s to music composed by Daniel Samburski and lyrics by Natan Alterman. A group of dancers performed to this song at the Maccabiah Stadium.

**Agadati’s Tel Avivia**

In 1929, Baruch Agadati choreographed a folk dance entitled “Tel Avivia,” specifically for the Purim celebrations that year, with the goal of capturing the city’s essence. He first introduced this dance at a gala that year to select a Queen Esther, alongside the European salon dances such as the tango and the foxtrot. It was subsequently danced at the carnival. The music was composed by Yedidya Admon (Gorochov) and the words to the song of Tel Avivia were publicized in the Hebrew press and printed on posters, which were distributed around the city. A short while later, “Tel Avivia B” was written with the refrain “Right right, left left, forward, behind” and even later a “Tel Avivia C” was written as well.

Agadati dreamed that Tel Avivia would become such a popular dance that thousands of people would perform it in the streets. While it is unclear how many years this dance persisted in the Yishuv, it is interesting to note that this original version has not been included in the repertoire of the history of Israeli folk dance. Yet, a subsequent version to the song “Tel Avivia B” has become a dance in the repertoire, known as “Yemina Yemina” [Right, Right]. In contrast, the dance Hora Agadati, which Agadati choreographed in 1926, is considered to be one of the first Israeli folk dances and is still danced today.

The dance “Tel Avivia,” created to express the character of the Hebrew secular city, interestingly took movement inspiration from traditional Jewish prayer. Agadati was influenced by chanting in the synagogue as well as by the cantor. As he stated in an interview in Do’ar ha-Yom:

“Already at the end of 1926 I was interested in creating a dance whose form and structure would enable the participation of a huge public… I was confronted immediately with great technical difficulties. And then, when I was in Paris two years ago I entered on Yom Kippur—either by chance or not by chance—into a synagogue. It was the time of prayer, in which the cantor says a verse and all of the congregation answers after him in chorus. And this begot in my heart the idea that now matured in me completely.”

The words for the song of the dance, written by A. Z. Ben Yishai presented an allusion to a section from the Passover Haggadah:

[kulanu, kulanu chachamim, vekulanu nevonom, kulanu yodim et ha-torah, Tel Avivia]
These words refer to the part in the Haggadah: "So even if we are all wise, all people of knowledge and understanding, all advanced in years and all versed in the Torah, we are nonetheless, commanded to relate the going out of Egypt, and whosoever does so at great length, he is surely to be praised"[veafilu kulano chachamim, kulano nevonim, kulano zekenim, kulano yodim et hatorah--mitzvah aleinu lesaper bitziat mitzraim, vekol hamarbeh lesaper bitziat mitzrayim harei zeh meshubach]. Agadati explained the lyrics of the song:

The idea of the dance in its structure symbolizes Tel Aviv of today...everyone thinks that we don't have smart or wise ones among us, and everyone together is sure that that everyone is smart, everyone is wise and everyone knows the Torah,

----And because of this the dance is called,

----Tel Avivia. In Agadati’s creation, dancing on Purim symbolically replaced the traditional telling of the Passover story—living in Tel Aviv of the time emerged as the new story of freedom. Thus, Tel Aviv was not only the inspiration for the dance—the dance also made a statement about the importance of the city and its residents. At the bottom of the poster distributed through the streets of Tel Aviv, a long list of instructions was included for the dance. This is the only record of the dance itself. It does not provide an indication of how the dance looked, but rather gives a set of directions.

1. The dance "Tel Avivia" is a mass dance, and the secret to its success is the participation of the wide public.
2. The innovation in this dance is not in the shape of the movements, but in the general structure.
3. The form of the dance is built on the basis of a public prayer. The conductor of the dance does movements, and all of the public that participates follows them.
4. The participants in the dance organise themselves in a crowd of lines, rows in lines facing the conductor.
5. In spite of the freedom in the dance "Tel Avivia" it nevertheless demands discipline and attention to the movements of the conductor.
6. The movements are primitive and are given with ease of understanding.
7. Any interruption during the dance, either by an individual or a group (among the participants), is likely to cause failure of the dance.
8. The public is requested to participate en masse in the dance and to pay attention to these above instructions.

Agadati amalgamated a broad range of Jewish holidays and symbols into Tel Avivia. The dance, created for, and introduced on Purim, was inspired by his visit to the synagogue on Yom Kippur and includes lyrics taken from the Passover Haggadah. It was supposed to represent at one and the same time both Jewish tradition and the renewed Hebrew life in Tel Aviv of the time. As with other aspects of the building of secular Hebrew culture, the symbols of the dance simultaneously broke from, and connected to, Jewish tradition. In Agadati’s creation, dancing on Purim symbolically replaced the traditional telling of the Passover story—living in Tel Aviv of the time emerged as the new story of freedom. Thus, Tel Aviv was not only the inspiration for the dance—the dance also made a statement about the importance of the city and its residents. At the bottom of the poster distributed through the streets of Tel Aviv, a long list of instructions was included for the dance. This is the only record of the dance itself. It does not provide an indication of how the dance looked, but rather gives a set of directions.

These instructions, particularly number three, also indicate that Agadati saw this dance as built on the model of Jewish prayer, which is communal, public, and responsive: the leader of the dance, just like a cantor in a synagogue, would show a
movement and the public was expected to repeat it. The public was also supposed to concentrate closely, just as it would focus on a prayer.

In addition, participants were expected and were asked to be active, rather than passive, a quality that the “new Jew” was supposed to undertake and that many forms of Zionism, with its negation of Diaspora Jewish life, emphasized. As Agadati stated,

“"The main thing is that in the first test … it is not for the public to satisfy itself with watching a play, but to take part in the action and to go out dancing."”

Here, as in other arenas, the Hebrew public was supposed to take a hands-on role in the process of building its own culture. In contrast to the Zionist image of the passive diaspora Jew, the “new Hebrews” were to be dynamic celebrants. Tel Avivia personified in topic, instructions, and content, the central place of dance in the young Hebrew metropolis and in its image of itself.

**Conclusion**

From salon to folk to theatrical dancing, the city of Tel Aviv served as a stage and a muse for cultural production. Dancing was prevalent throughout the young Hebrew metropolis, around both its natural and built environment, indoors and outdoors. Dance both adorned the city and gave voice to its character. Cultural activities were viewed as opportunities to show off the Hebrew metropolis. And, because Hebrew culture and the city were being constructed at the same time, urban growth and development were interconnected to cultural invention, a relationship that is significant for interpreting the history of the young Hebrew city.

The diversity of dancing in Tel Aviv illustrates the different strands of Yishuv society and shows that there was space for a range of trends in this process. Some dances represented the pioneering spirit and demonstrated how the “new Jew” was expected to appear: active, energetic, lively and a dynamic participant in the construction of a new culture. Other forms exemplified European, bourgeois values and a sense of cosmopolitanism. And some creations represented an amalgamation of a number of different trends and interests, including socialist and urban Zionist values.

Dance and the moving body, then, formed an essential feature of Tel Aviv, the vibrant centre of Hebrew culture. Dance activities and creations impacted and formed both the character and design of the city. They shaped the city’s image and sense of itself and incorporated side by side a range of different cultural and social preferences in the Yishuv. And, they also influenced the development of urban Zionism. They hold a key to understanding the development of the “first Hebrew city.”

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**Notes**
In her section on entertainment and leisure in Tel Aviv, Anat Helman briefly addresses some dance activities in the city. Helman, Young Tel Aviv, 108-109.


For a more detailed discussion of the National Dance Competition in 1937, see Spiegel, Embodying Hebrew Culture.

Helman, Young Tel Aviv, 109.

Spiegel, Embodying Hebrew Culture, 18.


For a further discussion of the beach in Tel Aviv life, see Helman, Young Tel Aviv and Spiegel, “Constructing the City of Tel Aviv.” In the latter, note the discussion on the film Tel Aviv in Colors, which featured a segment with children dancing on the beach.


He also took photos of dancer Naomi Aleshkovsky at the beach. See Igal Pressler Collection, Tel Aviv.


Helman, Young Tel Aviv, 122. See also Batia Carmiel, Bate ha-kafe shel Tel Aviv: 1920-1980 (Tel Aviv’s Coffeehouses, 1920-1980) (Tel Aviv: Eretz Israel Museum, 2007).

These evening galas were the most popular on Wednesday and Saturday nights. They were important at cafés in locations such as Allenby and Ben Yehuda streets as well as those by the sea. Dance galas also took place for holiday celebrations on Purim and Hanukkah. The noise garnered from dancing galas was a source of complaints from residents who lived nearby. Carmiel, *Bate ha-kafe*, 119, 121, 171, 179, 182.

Examples of such occasions include the following: the Fire Brigade Ball at the Tarshish Café on the seashore in June 1931 in which the proceeds were for “sending a group of men to Egypt to study a course of Fire Fighting”; a dance gala at the San Remo on October 10, 1931, in which the proceeds were going to help patients in the country; a ball at the Casino Café to benefit the “Relief society for workers suffering from chronic diseases and for convalescents, Tel Aviv” in August, 1932; and one for the same organisation in July 1933 at the Riz Hotel. Carmiel, *Bate ha-kafe*, 178-180.

The dance took place on November 1, 1930. The poster is printed in Carmiel, *Bate ha-kafe*, 175.

Leman, Juda, director, *The Land of Promise*, Film (1935), Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive; Carmiel, *Bate ha-kafe*, 175. According to Hillel Tryster, this film was among the five most important sound films produced in Palestine in the 1930s. Hillel Tryster, “‘The Land of Promise’ (1935): a Case Study in Zionist Film Propaganda,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* : 214-217.

The performance took place on June 20, 1923. See Ruth Eshel, *Lirkod Im Ha-halom*, 15.

Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive, VT DA1014 1,2.

For a further discussion of the Maccabiah Games in 1932, see Spiegel, *Embodying Hebrew Culture*, 106. See Alfons Himmelreich photographs, Igal Presler Collection, (Tel Aviv, Israel). In addition, there is a photograph of dancers at Margalit Ornstein’s studio engaged in exercises on the roof that appeared in *Kol-noa* in 1931, Dance Library of Israel (Tel Aviv, Israel), Margalit Ornstein 121.1.

W. Goldmann, “The Dance in Palestine,” undated, WIZO Instruction and Information Center, p. 5, Lavon Institute, Tel Aviv. While Goldman does not specifically reference Tel Aviv, it is most likely she is referring to the city as that is where she lived and where the most vibrant café culture existed.


“Gurit Kadman’s Parents’ Visit to her Home in Israel in 1936,” Dance Library of Israel, H-317; Author interview with Ayalah Goren Kadman, Jerusalem, Israel, 13 July 1998. See also the advertisement for classes at Gert Kaufmann’s [Gurit Kadman’s] home on Schalag Street #5, Dance Library of Israel. See also Spiegel, “Constructing the City of Tel Aviv.”

Spiegel, *Embodying Hebrew Culture*, 106. See Alfons Himmelreich photographs, Igal Presler Collection, (Tel Aviv, Israel). In addition, there is a photograph of dancers at Margalit Ornstein’s studio engaged in exercises on the roof that appeared in *Kol-noa* in 1931, Dance Library of Israel (Tel Aviv, Israel), Margalit Ornstein 121.1.

Municipal Announcement Number 86, 27 August 1925, Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipal Archives (Tel Aviv, Israel), 3-121B.

The performance took place on June 20, 1923. See Ruth Eshel, *Lirkod Im Ha-halom*, 15.

Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive, VT DA1014 1,2.

*Davar*, 1 April 1932, 5. For a further discussion of the Maccabiah Games in 1932, see Spiegel, *Embodying Hebrew Culture*.


Eshel “Concert Dance in Israel,” 63 and 78; Helman, *Young Tel Aviv*.


For further information on the National Dance Competition, see Spiegel, *Embodying Hebrew Culture*.


Carmiel, *Korbman*, 145. There is a photograph featured of children from Margalit Ornstein’s dancing school dancing at Beit Ha’am on May 11, 1926.

Carmiel, *Korbman*, 142 and 145.

Carmiel, *Korbman*, 145.

Eshel,”Concert Dance in Israel,” 63.

Eshel,”Concert Dance in Israel,” 68.

An advertisement for a school for salon dancing included an image of a couple ballroom dancing and announced dance galas four times a week. The studio was located on Rehov Peretz 37 on the 3rd floor
and was run by Joseph Moore. These galas became the source of complaints to the city from other residents in the building who were awakened by the noise. Brochure, Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality Archives, 4-3642B; Letter of complaint, Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality Archives, 13 June 1937, 4-3642B; Letter of complaint, Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality Archives, 21 July 1937, 4-3642B.

51 Helman, Young Tel Aviv, 109.
52 Letter of complaint about late night dancing, Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality Archives, 28 February 1937, 4-3642B; Letter of complaint about the noise at night from a dance school, Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality Archives, 21 July 1937, 4-3642B; Letter of complaint about Joseph Moore’s school for salon dancing, Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality Archives, 13 June 1937, 4-3642B; Letter of complaint about the noise on Rothschild Boulevard from late night dancing, Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality Archives, 21 April 1939, 4-3642; Letter of complaint regarding late night dancing, Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality Archives, 28 May 1939, 4-3642D.
53 Helman, Young Tel Aviv, 109.
54 Israeli Government Press Office. Photographer: Zoltan Kluger, February 1, 1934. For photo and discussion, see Spiegel, “Constructing the City of Tel Aviv.”
55 Spiegel “Constructing the City of Tel Aviv.”
57 Letter of Mayor Dizengoff to Margalit Ornstein, Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipal Archives, 6 May 1929, 4-3217G.
58 Spiegel, Embodying Hebrew Culture.
59 At first, there were only galas organized by Baruch Agadati often with the support of the Jewish National Fund. Later, there were galas organized by other organisations as well, such as the theater companies. For a more detailed discussion of these various galas, see Batia Carmiel, Tel Aviv bu-tahposet ve-kheter: Hagigot Purim ba-shanim 1912-1935 (Tel Aviv in Costume and Crown: Purim Celebrations in Tel Aviv, 1912-1935) (Tel Aviv: Eretz Israel Museum, 1999): 156-173.
60 The horas took place both in the streets and at the galas, primarily at the popular galas. In 1933, two new horas were introduced at the Ohel-Agadati galas: “Kan” ("Here") which was created by Agadati and "Ha-goren" which was created by Rivka Sturman. Other folk dances included the debka, tcherkessia, krakoviak, the Polish mazurka, the polka and the rondo. Carmiel, Tel Aviv, 95.
61 See, for instance, Ha’aretz, 27 March 1929; and Ha’aretz, 5 March 1931.
63 Lotta Levensohn, "In Carnival Mood," CZA KKL5 2452, 1927-29?.
64 A. 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 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008): 116-127. Helman discusses ways in which residents of Tel Aviv appreciated an urban space that was primarily made up of Jewish residents and felt a sense of control over the space, in contrast to Jewish urban life in other locations.
66 Chaim Halachmi, director, Vayehi bimei. Film (Palestine, 1932) Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive. Hora dancing in the streets during the adloyada can also be seen in the 1935 Hebrew film, Zot Hi Ha’aretz.
69 Shoham, 114.
70 In Shoham’s estimation, these various groups, including the “American bourgeois” and Orthodox couple, demonstrate the “inclusion of all these groups in the national space.” Shoham, 114.
71 The dance galas took place over three days and nights. Eliahu Hacohen, Be-khol yesh bah mashehu: shire ha-zemer shel Tel Aviv (The Songs of Tel Aviv, 1909-1984) (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv:
As Hacohen further states, “the song was recorded in London and the record circulated among fans of Hebrew salon dancing.”

Hacohen states that Natan Axelrod recorded the song, but it is unclear where it can be found and whether the dance was recorded. Hacohen, 122-123. Hacohen’s book features a photograph of dancers performing to this song, but does not include a date or a reference for the source of the photograph. See Do’ar ha-Yom, 25 January 1929, 4.

The words to the song of Gamelet were also printed on this poster. Agadati also created a second dance for 1929 called Gamelet. This dance was introduced to the public on Purim. The words to this song were also written by A.Z. Ben Yishai and the tune was a popular bedouin tune. See Carmiel, Tel Aviv, 94-5.

For further discussion of the development of the different versions of Tel Avivia, as well as of the lyrics of a parody written of the song, see Hacohen, 54-55. There does not appear to be a visual record of the original Tel Avivia dance. I am conducting further research to determine the relationship between the original “Tel Avivia” dance and the later dance “Yemina, Yemina.” Friedhaber places the title “Yemina, Yemina” in parentheses next to “Tel Avivia” to indicate that it is the same dance. He also notes that the dance “Tel Avivia” was included and published in Gurit Kadman’s pamphlet Rikudei Am that she published in 1943, incorporating 22 dances of the time. See Friedhaber, “‘From Ben Shemen, ” 13; Zvi Friedhaber, Hava netze b’meholot: lekorot rikudei am b’yisrael (Let’s Go Dancing: History of Folk Dance in Israel) (Tel Aviv: Mercaz Letarbut u-le’hinuh, Histadrut, 1994): 32.

This is parallel to the use of Yom Kippur terminology in conjunction with the proclamation over the reign of the selected Queen Esther for the Purim celebrations in Tel Aviv. See Spiegel, Embodying Hebrew Culture, 28-29.
Cultural Policy in Dance: The Embodiment of Jewish Tradition in Early Childhood Dance Education in Israel

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Abstract

Teaching dance in early-childhood education in the National Religious community (NRC) is a relatively new phenomenon in the Israeli society. This article describes teaching practices that religious dance teachers create and use to bridge the divide between Jewish tradition and dance. The research is based on an ethnographic observation of dance classes in schools. Through analysis of a typical class, this article illustrates how the teachers have formed a unique dance class structure: the dance midrash.

Keywords: National-Religious community; Early-childhood; Dance education; Jewish Tradition; Midrash, Pedagogical practices

"Living abreast of the times while leaving tradition out – Is like a rootless tree that can be swept away by any wind. Living by the rules of tradition without adapting to contemporary life –Is like a tree with roots but barren of flowers and fruit."
Menachem Ussishkin, a Zionist leader (1863-1941)

Introduction

On the occasion of the opening of the school year at Orot Israel College of Education (Orot), a teachers college affiliated with the National Religious Community (NRC), Rabbi Shlomo Amar, then Chief Rabbi of Israel, presented a lecture on a Jewish subject. In reply to a question from a dance student as to whether the study and pursuit of dance were permissible by religious standards, Rabbi Amar said that if dancing is modest and in adherence to the restrictions laid down by the Halakha - the Jewish law, then it is not only permitted, but pure and serves the God. Rabbi Amar further mentioned biblical figures, such as Miriam, Moses's sister who led the dancing by the people. Each one of the examples cited by Rabbi Amar corroborates the religious idea that as a Mitzvah - a religious duty imposed by God - dancing is permissible. The anecdote reflects the dilemma and the ongoing tension over the years between tradition and secularization, between religious studies and secular studies in general, and between art studies and dance studies in particular.

Orot, where the above interaction took place is a National-Religious College inspired by the philosophy of Rabbi Abraham Yitzhak HaChohen Kook (1865-1935) ("Rav Kook"), the most prominent spiritual leader of the NRC, whose theories had a tremendous impact on the formation of the Jewish national-religious outlook. The college's statement of intent asserts that Orot graduates should become:

“Educators inspired by faith. They shall believe in schooling which is not merely disciplinary and universal but also particular and inspired by faith, one which imparts the sense that the core of their educational work should be a religious mission”.
The students of Orot are oriented towards teaching in the public state-run religious school system called Hemmed. The Hemmed educational system is inspired by Rav Kook’s ideas and embraces the strategy of inclusion, i.e., of stretching the boundaries of Torah studies so as to incorporate all areas and levels of general studies as well. The Hemmed curriculum is designed to impart in-depth knowledge of the written tradition, the Oral Torah, and that of the Halakah, and aims to enhance the individual's commitment towards the community's religious culture, and to form a foundation consisting of a common set of values. Further to these guidelines and according to the Hemmed educational view, imparting general knowledge is conducive to nurturing faith and religious observance. Regarding the study of the arts, Rav Kook remarked that the Jewish tradition regards the Temple as the most noble and consummate artistic work ever created. That is to say that the pinnacle of art and aesthetics is found in sanctity; thus, the pursuit of art ought to be integral to sanctity, and artistic works, which convey emotional experiences, are not the objective per se but rather, are used for embellishing the values of sanctity. These ideas and guidance were also echoed in the words of Rabbi Amar.

The training of dance teachers and early childhood dance education are relatively new to the NRC and Orot. It resulted from a growing awareness of the lack of cultural-artistic involvement among the ranks of the NRC. In line with the college's statement that the religious, Torah-based studies, which are based on holy texts, should be integrated with the world of academic disciplinary knowledge, and following the increasing interest in culture and art education shown at the Hemmed, where the study of dance has begun to be incorporated into the curriculum, the college opened the Department of Movement and Dance (1998). This newly added artistic department posed an unfamiliar challenge for the college dance students who go through a process of professional dance training involving art and the body, but at the same time are expected to adhere to their religious faith and practices, such as not to expose the body "immodestly" in public.

According to the records of Israel's Ministry of Education and Culture (2013), over the past decade there has been a significant rise in the demand for dance classes in early childhood education in the Hemmed. Dance education, as well as dance as an art form, is highly developed in Israel. However, no curriculum has yet been formed for early childhood dance education by the Ministry of Education inspectorate of dance teaching. Each teacher develops a curriculum for the purposes of her own pupils, and explores adequate methods and pedagogy that conform to the cultural views of the community within which she operates. This is especially challenging for the national religious teachers who are in dialogue with the two cultural systems affecting their life: tradition and modernism, and who are required to design dance classes that "juggle" between the non-religious field of the art of dance while, at the same time, continue moving along the path prescribed by their religious society.

This article describes the pedagogical practices chosen by the teachers for bridging the divide between Jewish tradition and the art of dance. The teaching of dance in an early childhood education setting within the NRC is a relatively new phenomenon in Israeli society. The dance learning space within a religious community is innovative in itself and naturally, therefore, sparks various reactions. This has aroused the need to examine the methods of imparting tradition through dance with reference to the inherent conflicts affecting the agenda of the NRC.

In general, dance methods are mostly the consequences of educational philosophies and theories, of interactions with meaningful others and each individual's culture. Where education serves culture it is called "Acculturation" and its aim is to...
forge the nature and mindset of the individual along the lines of the values and notions of the desired culture (Lamm, 2002). The HeMeD schools are oriented towards acculturation of religious lifestyle:

"Educating towards a virtuous life, a life of striving for continuous growth and excellence in all spheres; educating towards faith in God imbued with love and awe of God, embracing the teachings of the Torah and practicing the commandments; educating to adhere with "love thy neighbor as thyself" and the ensuing commandments; educating to love the people of Israel, to assume personal responsibility and engage in society; educating to love our country, respect the spiritual, national and historical value of the State of Israel, and take responsibility for the future of our country by serving it proactively" (Hemed Vision).

Teaching patterns evolve from the prevailing educational ideology embraced by each educational institute. Lamm (2002) calls the teaching pattern deriving from acculturation, the "Formative Pattern." Formative teaching is essentially aimed at forging the features that reflect the fundamental values and notions of the desired culture. Under the formative teaching pattern features are acquired through a process of identifying with historical figures, ideas, stories, and with the teacher. Thus, formative teaching is based on modeling and appeal: the teacher and the content imparted represent the desired values and notions. From this point of view, quality dance teaching would manage to stimulate the students' intellect, imagination and emotions, and would arouse not only interest in the content knowledge but even enthusiasm.

Gurevitch (2007) has recognized how Israeli early childhood centers use dance in acculturating tradition. In his book, On Israeli and Jewish Place, Gurevitch pointed out that dancing and playing activities are a pedagogical method for imparting ideological education in early childhood; it is a method that connects us to our way of life and facilitates our acknowledgement of rules, dignity, and the freedom to acknowledge ourselves. Dance is a basic existential metaphor connecting us with the past, with our environment, with the knowledge of where we come from and amid what and amongst whom we exist. Dancing combines rhythm and simplicity that respond to the principle of ritual – the ritual of the kindergarten's circle, the family circle, and the circle of life (p.163-179). I take the "Formative Dance Pattern" as a method of acculturating not just to Israeli society but Israeli religious society.

The questions guiding the research were, what pedagogical strategies do the religious teachers use to incorporate tradition into their dance classes, and how a gap between tradition and modernism could be bridged?

Methodology

The motivation to explore and understand dance teaching in a religious community originated from my personal history. It started at my grandparents' religious home, where Rav Kook's picture was hung on the wall. It is rooted in my professional experience as a dancer and a dance teacher, and in the various capacities I have fulfilled in the field of dance education. My decision to explore dance teaching in the NRC is associated with the crossroads at which I am situated today: a non-religious dance teacher in a religious college, with strong ties to her religious past.

This research is based on an ethnographic research in schools, as institutions engaged in imparting culture and passing it down to their constituencies. I found qualitative ethnography to be the most suitable methodology for the present study,
which explores teaching practices that emanate from the worldview of dance teachers of the NRC and the Hemmed school system. These practices cannot initially be isolated, and should be examined within the context of the phenomenon and viewed holistically within the natural environment of the classroom and teachers.\textsuperscript{13} The study is based on the qualitative constructivist paradigm, which emphasizes the holistic understanding of phenomena.\textsuperscript{14}

I observed dance classes taught by 14 early childhood teachers who met the following criteria: (a) A dance teacher who is socially and culturally affiliated with the NRC; (b) An early childhood dance teacher with at least three years of professional experience; (c) Teachers working in educational institutions belonging to the Hemmed.

I spent two academic years, 2012/13 and 2013/14, observing the weekly classes taught by two teachers. I observed 12 other teachers randomly selected, by prior coordination. Some of my observations were held preceding Jewish holidays and festivals, as I assumed these classes would be dedicated to these topics. In addition, I intentionally chose to observe some classes on ordinary weekdays, to find out whether dance classes on such days also incorporate elements of Jewish tradition. In this article, I have chosen a typical class and one lesson to illustrate the general strategies of dance teaching methods applied by Hemmed dance teachers in Israel. The presentation of the class is not in itself my objective; I use it rather as a means for conveying insights that I have come by throughout my research as a whole. Since it is typical of the other classes I have observed, this class is instrumental for generalizing a broader phenomenon. I use my findings from this specific sample class to make a connection with general concepts. Thus, the understanding of an individual instance leads to the cultural context of dance teaching in a national-religious setting.

To achieve an in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural context of the processes taking place in the classroom, I embraced the tool developed by Huss, who proposes a hands-on analysis model for interpreting socio-cultural contexts. In my analysis, the goal was to conceive of the dance class not as being an independent artwork by aesthetic measures, but rather as being the teacher's/creator's way of representing meanings and content.\textsuperscript{15} Art-based research is based on the view that the creator's explanation is the key to understanding his/her work.\textsuperscript{16} A dance class is a piece of art, and as such it enables the viewer to interpret the teacher's subjective experience within a complex context of society and culture.

Huss (2010)\textsuperscript{17} proposes a model for art-based research analysis that seeks to address both the subject's experience and the subject's life context. The model combines two views: the humanistic view which conceives of the art work as an inherent expression – the 'inside' on the one hand; and the critical view, which conceives of the art work in terms of discursive structures and power systems (ibid.). The model consists of three stages: (1) the personal – the artist's artwork; (2) the collective – the explanation process in the group's space; (3) the researcher's social analysis. The model enables us to perceive a cultural structuring in the dance class, but also a structuring which opposes this culture, as implied by symbolic and indirect methods.

I will examine the teacher's artwork within its context and along the lines of Rav Kook's philosophy, with reference also to how the NRC structures its discourse. The dance class constitutes the dance teacher's personal "territory." The first stage of the three-dimensional model is the artwork created by the teacher using a "vocabulary" of movements and traditional content arranged in a fixed structure. Teaching the class is the second layer of the model, in which the teacher explains to the pupils her credo and the culture of her community within the space of the class.
The third layer connects with me, the researcher, who seeks to unlock the class's meaning, being a social and cultural microcosm of the NRC.

It is worth noting that my analysis of a dance class, unlike that of verbal material, was performed simultaneously, during the course of collecting data and observing the class. This is accounted for by the fact that the actual class both reflects and interprets reality, just as the interview that followed the class provided an expansion and an interpretation of the class's content.

Findings and Discussion

The movement repertoire of any dance class includes fundamental elements such as basic concepts, structured exercises, series of exercises, structured procedures and sequences, and combinations. The basic concepts are a mainstay of dance classes, and each genre of dance has its own fixed structure of basic concepts. In an early childhood dance class (except ballet) no structure is dictated but it is accepted that the structure "is approached gradually from its rough, schematic form to the expressive dance".¹⁸ It consists of the following parts: Floor Work Warm-ups; Centre Floor Work; Creative Dance, and Reverence. In other words, Floor Work warm-up consists of exercises that aim to strengthen the back and the limbs and improve the functioning of the joints. On the other hand, Centre Floor Work is a continuation of the warm up exercises, and adds a concentration on proper posture, which is the basis for strengthening feet, legs and back. It enhances the capability to cope with the shifting of weight, fronts, bases, routes and heights. New dance phrases (Combinations) are combined within the centre floor work in order 'to dance' and express the acquired technique. Creative Dance are the core of the class. Creative Dance is defined as "the interpretation of the child's ideas, feelings and sensory impression expressed symbolically in movement forms through unique uses of his/her body".¹⁹ Here the teacher suggests particular ideas or feelings she wants her students to express through movement. She may provide a stimulus such as a piece of music, a poem, or a painting, which she wants the students to interpret and express through the medium of movement and dance. Improvisation or choreography is applied in order to develop the students' creativity. Finally, Reverence consists of one dance phrase that ends the class; a thank you curtsey to the teacher and pianist.

The classes observed adapted and followed the basic structure of a modern dance class with the addition of a Midrash story (legend or story from ancient Jewish texts) and the creation of dance accordingly. This addition changes the nature of the class that combines religious, traditional and moral values, turning it into a unique structure that follows the requirements of Rav Kook and the Hemed.

(1) Warm-Up Floor Work

Amos Oz, in his book, The Story Begins: Essays on Literature²⁰, says that every beginning is a contract; every beginning implies an intention and has a method
embedded in it; every beginning ushers in something which is unique while at the same time drawing on that which already exists and is familiar.

Haya's (pseudonym) dance class took place in the first month of the Hebrew year when the High Holy Days occur. The students sat down on the floor; they recited the instructions and performed the movement:

"Stretching and stretching y-a-w-n-i-n-g
Stretching and stretching y-a-w-n-i-n-g
'MODEH ANI' we say, and quickly get up
We wash our hands, and are ready."

Haya whispered in my ear: "This is how we start each class, a repetitive exercise that marks the beginning of the class, stretching the back, curving it and bending." I identified a dance phrase that corresponded to the laws of the regular dance class warm-up, but, unlike and in addition to them, this is an exercise applied as a pedagogical practice based on the integration of the material world (the body) and the holy (knowledge of the commandments). The movement phrase enacted by the body reflected the sequence of actions that take place upon waking up in the morning. In Hebrew: Modeh Ani means 'I am thankful.' These are the first words of a Jewish prayer that observant Jews humbly recite every morning upon waking up, while still in bed, and then they wash their hands as a symbol of purifying before starting another day of work in the service of God. Indeed, the teacher's instruction targeted two goals at one and the same time: referring to knowledge, namely, the sequence of actions that observant Jews must perform when waking up in the morning, and achieving it through the movement of the body.

The class started with a "contract." The teacher started with the "personal" which is the first stage. From the outset she structured a movement phrase that warms up the back and large joints, as common in any dance class. However, the content of the rhymes recited adds a religious touch – the idea that we fulfil ourselves by adhering to the rules of the Lord, and recite a little prayer of thanks for arising in the morning. This kind of opening presented by the teacher guides the pupils towards their own personal experience of dance and tradition. On the one hand, this is a standard opening of any dance class, but in addition to warming up the back, it also warms up the soul that lies within the body. The images are not the standard aesthetics commonly evoked in dance classes; they reflect the teacher's role as the creator of a new set of symbols within the traditional context.

(2) Center Floor Work
Continuation of the warm-up exercise: Haya presented a new exercise. The movement motif was "Height levels" which would then become part of the Creative Dance segment and the dance tradition. The text recited is the following (In Hebrew the text is rhymed):

Hello back,
Stand up straight
Now bow your head
Listen to words of wisdom
Get up and go
To your beloved land
Return to your home
And listen to words of Torah

Rhyming is a common way of teaching at the early childhood stage. Meter and rhyme contribute to a sense of familiarity and control within the represented imaginary world of movement, thus helping the children to connect to it quickly and enjoy it. The rhymed text expresses verbally the body's concurrent movements. The rhymes enable the children to absorb information not only through the teacher's demonstration but also through the musical rhythm of the rhymes and through the conveyed verbal instructions. The movement exercises are performed by following verbal instructions recited with meter, rhythm and rhyme and combined with metaphors or images taken from Jewish tradition. The exercise instructions are articulated with varying degrees of accentuation, speed and volume throughout the sequence; in this manner the verbal text controls the performance of the exercise in terms of its essence and quality. The verbal instructions, which emphasize the movement content (i.e., they tell the pupils what they should do), also contain theoretical concepts related to movement content, such as parts of the body and spatial concepts, as well as content related to Jewish tradition. This is an experiential teaching method that involves the hearing and kinesthetic senses, as well as knowledge of Jewish tradition, all presented in harmony between form and meaningful content.

Metaphor is also a common device in teaching in early childhood programmes; metaphors "enable accessing various levels of meaning, connecting different parts to make a coherent and functioning whole. Metaphors are, by their nature, analogies, which means that they draw on concepts from the subject's domain of meanings [tradition, in this case], and from another domain [dance]".21 Here the teacher is using metaphors as a customary teaching tool but uses it for bringing the values and traditional customs of the NRC into the dance class. In this class, the movement phrase draws on the connection between the worldly, i.e., the body - 'Hello Back stand up straight', and the heavenly - 'Listen to words of wisdom.' It combines movement, rhymes and the instruction to listen to Torah teachings with humility - 'Now bow your head.'
It should be emphasized that the teacher draws on common pedagogic practices such as the use of rhyming and metaphors for teaching movement phrases, but at the same time she builds on top of them another layer, that of imparting tradition. Thus, she creates a dance class consisting of a multi-level text. Derrida (2002) and Barthes (2005) interpret text as consisting of layers; an abstract state which covers previous knowledge and rediscovers it. Text as fabric can be woven by warp and woof threads, and can be unravelled and rewoven differently. This explains why any text is multifaceted and conveys its overt significance on the surface level, and its profound content in its deeper levels, and there can be an infinite number of ways to interpret or restructure it.

The teacher works on both the personal and the collective levels. Using images and metaphors she continues her explanations, interprets elements from her own life and that of her pupils, and continues towards the collective. By personal the teacher refers not only to her own experience but also to that of her pupils. Each girl in the classroom is directed to apply the collective idea of serving God in her personal body and space. Beyond the personal and the collective levels, there is the level of dance as a secular, artistic profession, covered with the patina of tradition. Multi-layer is one of the methods applied by the teacher for coping with her dilemma, which she tries to resolve within the bounds of the class. Baudelaire (1964, 2013) referred to artists, who are inherently creative individuals, as "men of imagination." Indeed those teachers who employ their imagination in order to create symbols and metaphors that express and convey their inner voice are "woman of imagination."

Midrash Dance – The "Pas de Deux" of Tradition and Dance

At this point the class deviated from the typical structure. Haya structured the class so that it built upon a previously introduced Midrash story. She made the pupils sit down in a circle and told them a Midrash story:

“According to one of the halakhic rules concerning Yom Kippur, the atonement achieved during Yom Kippur absolves all offenses perpetrated by man against God, such as profaning the Sabbath. However, offenses committed against a fellow man, such as shaming someone in public, slandering, gossiping or causing someone a bodily damage, cannot be absolved unless by offering apologies and reconciliation, in the absence of which, not even if an abundance of prayers would do. This halakhic rule is the source of the Yom Kippur custom of repenting and telling whoever we have hurt that we are sorry.”

When the teacher introduced the Midrash, it aroused the pupils' interest in learning about the tradition and exploring it through dance. It provided opportunities for the pupils to learn, develop and express awareness of both tradition and body movements. The story is told in order to lend a religious meaning to the next part of the class – that of the pupils' creativity. We can see that in terms of tradition, Midrash, as another
level of explaining text, was related to learning customs and commandments and imparting the values of charity between one another. As for the class structure, the Midrash story was introduced after the warm-up technique, and leading up to the class's climax; based on the Midrash story, creative movement and an expressive dance emerged. In the interview right after the class, Haya explained:

"Every month I choose a major event that occurred during that month and use it as a theme for expressive movement. This way I combine a biblical-historical event or Midrash with a modern theme and the body".

This statement reflects the perception of all the teachers whose classes I have observed. Using the multi-layer text they bridge the gap between the physical body and religious norms. This is their way of abiding by Rav Kook's philosophy and the halakhic rules. Their teaching practices and their explanations during the classes are aimed at exalting God, imparting the commandments and instilling personal and social values, including the bond with the Land of Israel. This is the way in which the teacher grounds her dance class in the national-religious socio-cultural context. She uses the Midrash story to channel the meaning of dance towards the collective body. She operates within the bounds of the discourse structure laid down by Rav Kook and the NRC. By incorporating the Midrash into the class structure, the teacher is not just employing pedagogical techniques, she is changing them. But it is precisely through this proceeding that she is able to carve out a breakthrough within the bounds of her community, using a non-verbal medium.

Creative Dance - Creating Tradition

Once the children have developed internal and external awareness, they can begin to use movement as a way to express ideas or feelings in the next part of the class – their own creative dance. In other words, "the creative process creates vocabulary and it is sequenced to form phrases that impart meaning, mood or abstract design … later the phrases are reworked to make a polished product". Movements taken from the first parts of the class form the basis of the Creative Dance part. The creative movements form the Midrash story and the expressive dance movement merges into a means to encourage and impart faith, tradition, a sense of community, and awareness through movement. This practice guides the pupils into a physical, mental, emotional and spiritual state.

In this section I will elaborate on the details because it is the peak and the most important part of the class, and also because it includes additional means and stimuli for creativity: the analysis of a painting and a musical analysis. At this point, Haya introduced a movement theme involving Height levels learned during the Centre Floor Work, together with the Midrash story. To enhance the emotional experience and the movements performed, and in order to draw the girls into the proper mood for
dancing and faith, Haya used a dialogic discourse with visual arts which stimulates sensual, emotive, aesthetical and intellectual experiences, and allows for broad latitude of interpretation. She explains:

"In order to convey the quality of the movement required for the dance we take a close look at the 'Yom Kippur' painting".

The girls were facing a reproduction of a painting titled "Yom Hakippurim" (the Jewish holiday of the Day of Atonement painted by Maurycy Gottlieb in 1878) which was hung on the wall. Haya reminded them:

“In the previous classes we started rehearsing a dance for a school ceremony. The subject of the ceremony is repentance and prayer; the yearning for God and the wish to be closer to Him. This painting concretizes in what way the dance should spring from a close bond with prayer … Look at the supplicating eyes, the gesture of leaning back – we all need to lean on God Almighty, we all need to pray with all our hearts.”

Haya continued:

“We can see in the painting three elevation levels, which is important to note since we drew on them in structuring the choreography…. On the lowest level of the painting we see the boys who are not yet 13 years old [13 is the coming of age of Jewish boys, their transition from childhood to adulthood]. The mid-level shows the men who are Torah scholars. The women, who are separated from the men, appear nonetheless on the highest level of the painting.”

The girls then prepared for rehearsing the dance. The dance opened with six girl-dancers entering the 'stage', wearing white dresses, each decorated with an ornament that looked like a Tallit (prayer shawl). Haya explained that "the posture of each girl is at a different height level, and they symbolize prayer and yearning," and indeed, the three levels shown in the painting were reflected in the choreography which started with low level postures, went on to mid-level postures and ended with the highest level postures. The rest of the girl dancers entered: they raised their heads and their hands, looked up, bowed and leaned back – abstract movements that convey flowing and softness. The text of the prayer was 'translated' through body language

Haya used the painting in order to strengthen the commandments, faith and the leaning on God. From this point, the content of the painting was translated into movements: Balance and off-balance, leaning, rocking, swaying, drawing routes in space, movements of request and plea, of searching and prayer.

Vaganova (1969) defines dances that are inspired by a painting, 'plastic' dance, or "they were practiced on a particular wide scale in the 1920s, under the influence of Isadora Duncan. The 'plastic' dances represented a basic styling of the pictures". In this example, Haya presented the visual art component to encourage the girls to dance according to the aesthetic and emotional elements found in the work of art and incorporate it into the choreography. This kind of reflection, which does not distinguish between the heavenly kingdom and the world of art conforms to the views of Rav Kook who maintained that engagement in art should be rooted in the foundations of holiness, and the role of artistic creativity is to add beauty to holy values. Using a painting as a "visual narrative" enables us to think of the painting as a mirror of the social and cultural reality. It brings together the viewer's internal, emotional world and his/her external reality, and as such facilitates the process of forming an identity.
Another detail that must be noted is the choice of music played during the lessons. Haya avoids contemporary music and prefers classical music or Jewish traditional or religious tunes. In this class the song "Avinu Malkenu" ("Our Father, Our King") accompanied the dance. Haya explained:

"I chose this version of the song because it addresses children. Other versions are very slow and the girls with their tiny bodies have a hard time filling up the music with movement."

This explanation reflects a teaching rationale that resembles that of secular teachers. In the choice of music she is accounting for her pupils' physical and developmental stage. However, she added: "This prayer includes a lot of pleas that all open with the words "Avinu Malkenu... It is part of the traditional repertoire which is a 'must,' that all our children must be familiar with." Jensen (2000) explained that music can be used to convey content knowledge which we wish to impart and the value of absorbing the tune is that it triggers an emotional response. Songs and tunes can potentially integrate content knowledge of various areas, and facilitate the learning process by making it a hands-on experience. Gardner (1993) referred to music as the most important partner in dance. He pointed out that the structure of a musical composition will strongly affect the dance. He also related how young children can connect music and body movement naturally.

It was indeed evident while the girls were dancing that the rhythm of the melody enabled them to "fill it up" with movement. The girls managed to coordinate the duration of the tune with that of the movement with ease. The praying expressed by the melody was reflected in the girls' eyes, which conveyed pious pleading. 

Avinu Malkenu opens various possibilities for expanded and in-depth inculcating of knowledge related to tradition, as well as knowledge pertaining to physical expression through dance. The verbal aspect emphasizes and shapes the message conveyed by the prayer; it enables the use of movement images and a unique, expressive language through movement. The tune of the prayer and the movements that go with it are a concrete symbol of the inner spiritual world, that of tradition.

The dance class structure with its built-in Midrash story makes for a new piece of art generated by the tension between traditional values and halakhic code on the one hand, and modern universal values on the other hand. The use of the Midrash story serves both levels of this unique teaching method. On the one hand, the teacher facilitated the embodiment of the Midrash story through the body, thereby instilling knowledge of the Midrash and its social consequences (acquiring knowledge of the Jewish tradition); on the other hand, the teacher used tradition in order to "legalize" the teaching of dance at school. This woven text is the teacher's own creation, forged from her inner self, which is then transmitted to the collective.

Reverence
Reverence is the elaborate curtsey performed at the end of the dance class, to show the respectful admiration of the pupils for their teacher. It is usually a short dance phrase that concludes the class with bows. In Haya's class, Reverence strays from its original, usual purpose. The curtsey employed does not target the teacher:

Let the Shekhina dwell in the work of our hands and in our dances [...] Shekhina is the dwelling of the Divine Presence of God in this world [and has been identified with the feminine aspects of God]. We ask God to bless us and inspire us not only in the big moments, but also as we navigate through the seemingly worldly parts of life.

Haya is taking advantage of this part of the class in order to teach Torah, to glorify and thank the Lord. Reverence is the final sealing of the "contract" signed at the beginning of the class.

Cultivating Tradition

A careful review of the lesson reveals that the dance class observed in a religious setting was structured and developed along the same lines as any, non-religious dance class. Both have the following main parts: Floor Work Warm-up; Center Floor Work; Creative Dance; Reverence. The straying from the design of a non-religious dance class is revealed in its structure and the ways the teacher use accepted pedagogical practices.

The "dance midrash," as I have called it is a unique class structure in which a Midrash story is added to the standard class structure, fulfilling a dual role: it is both the basis for the dance piece and the element bridging the divide between modernity and physicality and between Jewish tradition. The Midrash story is a solid methodological tool through which the teacher instils Jewish values and merges tradition with the modern art of dance.

Dance classes taught by NR teachers have a double role: they provide both dance subject matter and a set of guidelines concerning traditional religious aspects. As far as subject matter is concerned, the children learn core principles derived from inherent features of dance, such as: the concept of "knowing our body"; body proficiencies; spatial elements; time elements, and creativity. These elements all undergo a process of abstraction and translation and are projected on the processes of teaching and learning of the Jewish tradition.

The dance class observed had two levels: the surface level featured the text of dance, while the deeper level was imbued with tradition. Tzederboim (2012) explains that any artistic text consists of two levels: the surface level and the deep level, above- and under-ground stories. The surface level is open, structured and organised, with all forms and symbols of the artistic medium. The deep level is concealed, containing all the inner content, carrying deep meaning.

Here we can see how the teacher/artist works with values of the Jewish tradition, adapting and elevating them to the level of a symbol fraught with meaning and an aesthetic component of the class's fabric. The use of the Midrash, which is a part of Jewish tradition, and its adaptation into movement text, is a recurring pattern, which informs the observed teacher's teaching methods. The subject matter chosen by the teacher tells the story of a culture and reveals the process of interweaving tradition with Israel's non-religious, western-oriented mainstream society. The teacher creates a new way of teaching, which is also a new piece of art, in order to merge cultures. She
does not reconstruct or copy that which is known but, rather, holds on to it as a source of inspiration, and ventures away from it, on her educational mission; it serves her as a basis from which she departs to new horizons, assuming the role of a trailblazer with her own original creation/teaching.

Accepted pedagogical tools such as rhyming and metaphors and dialogues with other art forms are used in mainstream dance classes too, but here they are redolent with wisdom of the Torah, halakhic rules and commandments, that instil Jewish traditional and cultural concepts. Music and visual art informed the observed lessons, and were used by the teachers not just to further dance education, but to further tradition. Modern music was shunned. Most of the technique exercises were accompanied by instrumental classical music, while the music pieces used for creating dances or for improvising were traditional tunes, revived traditional pieces and/or contemporary Hebrew songs. Using these music genres connects the children to their Jewish roots and inspires them on the emotional level.

As for the plastic art works used by the teacher – most all of them were created by Jewish artists and depicted Jewish life or subjects related to the commandments. The paintings were used as the foundation of the movement creativity and also inspired the atmosphere. The Midrash stories, rhyming, metaphors, music and visual art were all assimilated in the movement, all were blended in a typical form and structure and became a unified whole.

The teacher knows and controls the Midrash content which conveys the individual's world of meaning. The teacher's personal "dance" is always a "Pas de Deux" danced with the traditional and cultural circles of the society of which she is a member. The analysis of the class enables us to glean information about the relationship between the class and socio-cultural aspects of the NRC, which affects the way the class is structured and the dynamics taking place during its course.

The teacher adapted potential subject matter taken from Jewish tradition and used it to create a piece, which expands that reality and allows for using the medium of dance. In this respect she is fulfilling the philosophy of Rav Kook, who, in his annotated introduction to the Song of Songs, asserted that art is a favourable tool for expressing the soul's impetus for creativity:

> Literature, painting and sculpture are set to put into practice all the spiritual concepts embedded at the depth of the human soul and as long as even a single potential drawing is still ensconced at the bottom of the heart, it is the duty of art to release it (Kook, Prayer Service B).

To reach such a pure level, one must adopt the principles of "unified vision," which reveals God everywhere. This kind of observation of the world that does not separate between God's kingdom and the world of art is the way dance teachers choose to teach. Dance is a valuable resource for the understanding of cultural practices as well as for inculcating cultural values. The national-religious dance teachers observed for this study used aesthetic physical movement to integrate dance into the culture of their particular community, which had long neglected aesthetics in favour of rigorous textual study, while young people who sought art studies often had to abandon their religious practice or give up their art.

Midrash dance as used by the teacher in our sample leads the pupils towards absorption of movement and dance as a source of traditional learning and as an extension of their cultural and communal characteristics. All this is being done by adapting and expanding dance pedagogy so that traditional dance practice as taught in non-religious communities can be used in the national religious community, bringing
back the joyful worship of God described in the Bible, such as the descriptions of how the Israelites sang and danced as they thanked God for the miracles which occurred. The “new pedagogy” of dance integrates the dance tradition with religious tradition to provide expressive and artistic opportunities for members of the community.

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Notes

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Dancing their Identity: Observant Female Dance Teachers Shaping a New Path in Education

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Abstract

This article examined, for the first time, religiously observant female dance teachers who take part in shaping a new path in dance instruction in a Jewish religious spirit within the Israeli General-Religious Education System. The article examined the connections between the teachers' perceptions and positions on aspects related to their professional world, and between their commitment to, and satisfaction from, teaching. 119 teachers participated in the study. The findings show that predictor for satisfaction and commitment is the perception of reciprocations between teacher and the teaching profession, while commitment is also predicted by the intrinsic-towards-myself motivation.

Keywords: satisfaction, commitment to teaching, motivations for choosing the teaching profession, dance instruction, religious education

Introduction

This article examines connections between the perceptions and positions of religiously observant dance teachers on aspects related to their professional world, and between their commitment to, and satisfaction from, teaching in the general-religious education (RGE) system in Israel. The teachers are graduates of the dance department at an academic-religious college of education, which serves as the first and only framework for the religious sector, in which observant women can train towards teaching dance as a discipline in the spirit of the Halacha. The department was launched in 1998 following an application by religious women to the Minister of Education to provide them with academic training that will combine elements of a religious outlook with the creation and teaching of dance. The unique professional choice made by these women is part of a widespread phenomenon of changes generated by women in the Israeli religious-Zionist society over the past few decades, a phenomenon expressed by the paving of new paths for personal and professional realisation while maintaining a religious way of life.

Upon completing their training, a large majority of these teachers chooses to teach within the general-religious education system. This system is part of the national general education system by power of the fact that in Israel religion is not separated from the State. Its existence enables the religious public to choose to educate their children in a framework that combines a religious way of life with modern Western culture, without demanding secularisation or seclusion from modern life. Joining the institutes of the RGE is dependent upon the voluntary choice of parents and children. This results in a situation named by Katz (1999) as 'limited pluralism', in which there is a spectrum of religious conducts and strictness in upholding the Halacha within the population belonging to the RGE. However, the aspiration of the RGE is for the ideal graduate to base their entire activity in the personal and social fields on a worldview that issues from an in-depth study of the holy scriptures, a worldview they shall translate into a way of life based on the Jewish Halacha, while at the same time applying secular knowledge and assimilating into the modern way of life.
Developing the discipline of dance within the RGE was enabled because of the training of observant dance teachers, since this system accepts only observant teachers, who are required to set a personal example to their students and deepen their identification with the religious values as a worthy way of life. Being pioneers in the assimilation of dance instruction in this system, these teachers cope on a daily basis with the ways of shaping the artistic-educational activity in the spirit of the Halacha.

This article will focus on examining the perceptions and positions of the observant dance teachers on several aspects related to teaching – motivations for choosing dance instruction; reciprocations in teaching; the contribution of the dance discipline to students; and commitment to – and satisfaction from – teaching. This study joins previous studies conducted over the past few decades in the area of teaching and learning, which had focused on the examination of positions, beliefs and knowledge of teachers, in the assumption that these factors are central to the work of teachers and influence their decisions and behaviour on the job, and hence merit an in-depth examination. The examination of connections between the perceptions and positions of the teachers on aspects related to teaching, and between their commitment to, and satisfaction from, teaching is intended to shed light on the dimensions that reinforce their integration into the RGE, and could assist those leading the system in identifying existing trends and in enriching their considerations when examining ways of cultivating the welfare of these teachers and developing the integration of the dance discipline into the system.

Theoretical Background

The choice of the teaching profession

Professional identity constitutes a part of the self-identity of a person and is defined as a sense of belonging to the profession and identification with the profession. The profession a person chooses allows them to express the gamut of abilities, characteristics and preferences that make up the self. The findings of various studies attest to the fact that the choice of a profession which meets a person's personal needs and tendencies leads to personal welfare that is expressed in satisfaction from work, persistence and achievements. Studies have found three main categories of motivations for choosing the teaching profession:

A. Intrinsic motivations – the satisfaction derived from the work of teaching itself and from its inherent characteristics, which are perceived by the person as corresponding to their skills and personality. These motivations are the prevailing motivation in the process of choosing the profession. The studies found that most people who turn to the teaching profession perceive themselves as having a good ability to teach, and who define themselves as lovers of children, seeking an occupation dealing with interpersonal communication. Active teachers emphasised instrumental aspects such as satisfaction and joy from teaching and from the option of promoting children; cultivating fertilizing interpersonal connections; interest in the discipline taught; potential for self-realisation; a high level of autonomy; use of life experience and personal knowledge as well as the possibility of realising personal abilities, such as creativity, at work. Nevertheless, Meyer (1986) claims that due to the fact that society underestimates the prestige of the teaching profession, teachers' expectation for realisation and self-fulfilment in their work are especially high, since this validates their choice of a teaching career and attests to their autonomy and control over their fate.
B. **Altruistic motivations** – the perception of the teaching profession as a socially worthy profession, as it imparts a sense of vocation and of giving to the other, allows for an influence on the lives of children, a shaping of the future generation and an action towards a better society.\textsuperscript{17} The altruistic perception is anchored in Jewish tradition as well as in the Christian tradition, both of which view teaching as a social service of high moral value.\textsuperscript{18}

C. **Extrinsic motivations** – the instrumental aspects of the teaching profession, which are not part of its professional characteristics. These considerations relate to aspects such as social status and work conditions – long vacations, the level of pay, required profession and tenure. Another significant aspect is the fact that the teaching profession is suited to family life and parenting, such as the possibility of flexibility in working hours or of a part-time job, as well as a schedule coinciding with that of the children.\textsuperscript{19}

### Commitment

A person's sense of commitment to the profession and their workplace, as well as their level of satisfaction from their occupation, are two important aspects of ensuring their persistence at work.\textsuperscript{20} Teachers' commitment consists of three dimensions:

A. **Commitment to the teaching profession** is derived from a sense of loyalty and deep identification with ideological contents unique to teaching, which is perceived as a vocation.\textsuperscript{21}

B. **Commitment to the pupil** consists of two dimensions: scholarly commitment and social commitment. Scholarly commitment is the teacher's commitment to teach and to promote the pupil cognitively through the impartation of knowledge and tools for realising the personal potential. The social commitment refers to an ideological outlook anchored in the identification of the pupil as a person with dignity and personal identity, estimable and worthy of consideration.\textsuperscript{22}

C. **Commitment to the school**, or loyalty to the institution in which the teacher teaches and identification with its values and objectives. This loyalty is reflected mainly in the willingness and desire to continue working in school over time. This is expressed, among other things, in the degree in which the teacher actively upholds the objectives of the school, and in their involvement in attaining them.\textsuperscript{23}

### Satisfaction

Teacher satisfaction expresses their level of positive feelings regarding their occupation.\textsuperscript{24} Studies have found that satisfaction has an influence on the rotation and absenteeism of teachers from their work.\textsuperscript{25} Moreover, the level of satisfaction is the best predictor to the teacher's desire to continue in their occupation.\textsuperscript{26}

In sum, it seems that a high level of commitment and satisfaction among teachers from the teaching profession determines, to a large degree, the chances that they would aspire to remain in their occupation.\textsuperscript{27} The awareness of all partners in the education system of the aspects reinforcing commitment and satisfaction among teachers could cultivate teachers and ensure their continued work in the system. This awareness is a necessary precondition for the growth of the most significant resource of the education system, which is the human capital – the teachers.

### Arts Education
Arts Education is intended to allow all pupils to study the arts as part of the school curriculum. Researchers claim that artistic education broadens the knowledge, deepens pupil's cognitive development and encourages independent and creative thinking in problem-solving. Artistic activity develops the pupils' imagination, understanding and sensitivity, as well as reinforces values such as self-discipline, precision and devotion.\textsuperscript{28}

The Contribution of Dance Instruction to School Curriculum

Brinson (1993) described the contribution of dance instruction to school curriculum through a six-category model. In the following section, I will outline its major aspects (for elaboration on the model, see Perlshtein, 2014\textsuperscript{29}):

1. **Contribution to artistic and aesthetic education** – education in the art of dance includes two aspects: theoretical knowledge, such as concepts and history; and practical knowledge, such as a movement 'vocabulary', rules for constructing a dance, acquaintance with the body, and developing sensitivity to the significances transmitted by the body. This knowledge provides pupils with tools for discovering, understanding and expressing their inner world and the world surrounding them.\textsuperscript{30}

2. **Contribution to cultural education** – works of art reflect the aesthetic concepts and social, political and economic background of the period in which they were made, and provide an imaginative visual form to historical facts.\textsuperscript{31}

3. **Contribution to personal and social education** – through personal and group work as part of dance lessons, or as preparation for a dance show, pupils develop personal skills such as persistence, discipline and self-consciousness, as well as interpersonal skills in planning and making group decisions.\textsuperscript{32}

4. **Contribution to physical development** – the discipline of dance includes a connection between body and soul, which generates an artistic expression. Perfecting physical skills – such as coordination, flexibility, and strength – is a means for honing the artistic expression.\textsuperscript{33}

5. **Contribution to general subject-matters in school** – an integration of the arts with the core subjects enhances learning and improves pupils' understanding and achievements, due to the use of a variety of learning skills and teaching styles, which characterize the study of the arts. Dance contributes to the study of general subject matters since in this art all senses, and not cognition alone, partake experientially in the processing of contents.\textsuperscript{34}

6. **Contribution to pre-professional education** – 'Dance for All' lessons allow excelling students that possess the necessary physical and mental qualities for a professional career in dance, to stand out. This exposure opens for them the option to choose pre-professional dance studies in designated dance schools.\textsuperscript{35}

Arts Education in the General-Religious Education System in Israel

Declaratively, the Israeli Ministry of Education\textsuperscript{36} attributes great importance to art studies, since it expects the school to impart skills and values on the pupils through teaching art studies\textsuperscript{37}. The will to integrate the arts as subject in the General-Religious education can be understood as part of the integrative approach that characterizes it, an approach that combines “actions aimed at emotion alongside actions aimed at the cognition, actions aimed at ethics alongside actions aimed at aesthetic experiences”.\textsuperscript{38} The importance of integrating the arts in the General-Religious education arises also
in the religious-educational vision of the head of the administration, Rabbi Adler, who declares that

“artistic creation is one of the instruments intended to give voice to our spirit […] through it our country shall be cleansed and sanctified […] hence those who seek to build the country are called upon today, perhaps more than ever before, to dedicate their powers to the perfection of the spiritual, artistic and creative talents”\(^ {39}\)

It is apparent that this perception is based on the teachings of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak haCohen Kook (HaRaAYaH, 1865-1935)\(^ {40}\), one of the founders of religious Zionism. Rabbi Kook viewed art as a means for attaining a higher spiritual cause, and encourage the study of, and engagement in, art, as long as these correspond to the boundaries set by the Halacha. This is in contrast to the modern secular perception, which views art as a personal expression, which is free of all authority.

More than any other art subject, dance deals with a challenge of its integration into General-Religious education, since in this art the human body is the legitimate instrument for expressing spiritual desires. Facing it are religious values based on the ideal of modestly concealing the body, and especially the female body, which is summed up in the virtuous saying 'All glorious is the princess within her chamber' (Psalm 45: 13). The sensitivity to this challenge is an inseparable part of the educational work of the observant dance teachers.

This article, thus, examines the connections between the perceptions and positions of observant female dance teachers on various aspects related to their educational work, and commitment from, and satisfaction with, the profession of dance instruction in the General- Religious education system (RGE), in an attempt to learn of the aspects that reinforce their commitment to and satisfaction from teaching.

**Methodology**

The study is a combined research in which the qualitative paradigm supports and deepens the findings of the quantitative paradigm.\(^ {41}\) The quantitative part is based on a questionnaire developed specifically for this study. The qualitative part is based on interviews with 11 teachers.

The research population consisted of 119 dance teachers, graduates of the dance department at an academic-religious college of education, from the first cohort up to the eleventh cohort, who make up 73% of all graduates in these cohorts. The average age is 29.47, standard deviation 3.44, age range 25 to 41 years. 83.9% of the respondents are married. 33.3% defined themselves as very religious, 56.1% religious, 4.4% lightly religious, and 6.1% not religious. 66.7% teach dance in schools, 68.1% out of these work only in the general-religious educational framework.

A questionnaire was constructed for the purposes of this study, which included the following sections:

**TABLE 1 HERE**

Indices were constructed based on the categories, with a high value on the index attesting to a high-level perception of the measured content. For purposes of testing the separate validity of the various aspects of each section of the questionnaire, Pearson coefficients were computed between the categories making up that section, and in each of the sections coefficients were found on a medium level between .256
and .648. These findings indicate a connection between the dimensions, but not an overlapping one, and increase the separate validity of the different categories.

The study was based on the following research questions:

1. What are the connections between motivations for choosing the profession of dance instruction and commitment and satisfaction among observant female dance teachers?
2. What are the connections between interrelations in teaching and commitment and satisfaction among observant female dance teachers?
3. What are the connections between the perception of the contribution of dance lessons to pupils and commitment and satisfaction among observant female dance teachers?
4. Does the level of religiosity mediate the connections between motivations for choosing dance instruction and various aspects of perceptions of teaching, and between commitment and satisfaction?

The anonymous questionnaire was sent by e-mail and separated upon reception, by e-mail or regular mail, by the research assistant, from any identifying detail of the senders. The interviews that were recorded and transcribed were held with interviewees who had voiced their consent to be interviewed without notice of identifying details, and in the presentation of the data, the names and characteristics were changed in such a manner that the interviewees could not be identified.

Findings

The following table presents all of the study variables along with their averages and standard deviations.

TABLE 2 HERE

The first research question examined the connections between motivations for choosing dance instruction and commitment and satisfaction. In order to test this question, Pearson coefficients were computed between the four categories of motivations and between the level of commitment and the level of satisfaction of the teachers. The findings are shown in table 3.

TABLE 3 HERE

The results shown in the table indicate significant connections at a medium-high level between the intrinsic motivations towards myself and commitment, and satisfaction. The study also found significant connections at a medium level between the altruistic motivation and commitment and satisfaction; and medium-low connections between the intrinsic-educational motivation and commitment and satisfaction. No significant connections were found between the extrinsic motivation and commitment and satisfaction. The interviewees referred to these aspects in the interviews as well. For instance:
Intrinsic-towards-myself motivation: 'I enjoy it very much. It was very clear to me that I wanted to do this. This way dance will be a part of my life [...] actually – why not turn my hobby into a profession?' (S.)

Altruistic motivation: 'Dance is an incredible instrument and it does so much good from so many different directions [...] and when you [...] come to be a teacher then your entire goal is truly to be able to do as much good as possible for the pupils.' (A)

The second research question examined the connections between reciprocations in teaching and commitment and satisfaction. In order to test this question Pearson coefficients were computed between the four categories of reciprocations in teaching and between the level of commitment and the level of satisfaction of the teachers. The findings are shown in table 4.

The results shown in the table indicate significant connections between commitment and satisfaction and: teacher-teaching subject-matter reciprocity – at a high level; teacher-student reciprocity – at a medium-high level; teacher-art within the spirit of the Halacha reciprocity – at a medium-low level; teacher-school reciprocity – at a low level. The interviewees referred to these aspects in the interviews as well. For instance:

Teacher-Student: 'There is a great desire to invest in the children. And when you see the children develop, it is exciting' (B.)

Teacher-Teaching the subject: 'A large part of what motivates me in my teaching is this belief in the power of movement, in what it brings out from within the children' (D.)

Teacher –Art in the spirit of the Halacha: 'As a teacher, it is values that I impart on my pupils; modesty [...] when I am with my body from such a place that externalizes it, when I am with my body from such a place that is erect but not emphatic' (H.)

Teacher-School: 'The mere fact that there is dance in the school is a very big innovation, so it has given me great motivation to rejuvenate, a great desire to professionalize, to bring more things to the girls' (T.)

The third research question examined the connections between the perception of the contribution of dance lessons to pupils and commitment and satisfaction. In order to test this question Pearson coefficients were computed between the five categories of the perception of the contribution of dance lessons to pupils and between the level of commitment and the level of satisfaction of the teachers. The findings are shown in table 5.

The results show that connections between all categories of the perception of the contribution of dance lessons to pupils and between commitment and satisfaction of the teachers are significant but of a low or medium-low strength. The interviewees referred to these aspects in the interviews as well. For instance:

Contribution to artistic-aesthetic education: 'I found out that pupils learn how to listen, dance is an instrument of attention, attention to the body, attention to images, to what comes from within, attention to the music' (Tz.)
**Contribution to physical development:** 'I teach twelve year-old girls. At this age the girls are bent over and have no openness in their bodies. In class I had to correct, very gently, the way they worked with their bodies […] even only broadening the range of shoulder rotation, the way they opened their hands, their shoulder blades, the entire chest area, a lot of work. Gentle, gentle, gentle' (M.)

**Contribution to personal and social education:** 'Dance encourages pupils to think! To exert themselves! To invest in things! Because first and foremost, dance is an investment […] and it's also about self-discipline and seeing that when you invest, something happens… and what happened is yours. I have no doubt that it goes with them. Those who really go with it win, it goes on with them' (L.)

**Contribution to general studies at school:** 'dance deals with learning 'hard core'-the way we learn things, the way we understand things, the way in which we can explain things differently. How to use the body to learn to read, to learn how to subtract and to add fractions, in order to… all sorts of very, very interesting things.' (L.)

**Contribution to artistic-religious education:** 'Dance is an instrument for the work of the Lord. Through movement it deepens pupils' work on their virtues and their consciousness of the connection between body and soul within the boundaries of the Halacha… suddenly the entire body takes on different dimensions […]' (N.)

The fourth research question examined whether the level of religiosity mediated the connections between the choice of dance instruction and various aspects of teaching perceptions, and between commitment and satisfaction. The aspects of teaching perceptions selected were reciprocations in teaching and the perception of the contribution of the dance lessons to the pupils. In order to test this question the participants were divided into two groups, in accordance with their self-definition regarding their level of religiosity: A. Very religious; B. Religious. Participants who defined their level of religiosity as 'lightly-religious' or 'not-religious' were not included in the analysis. These two groups made up only 10.5% of all respondents. In order to validate the self-definition of the level of religiosity, the connection between this self-definition and between an objective index of religious education of the spouse (has / doesn't have). In a xi square test a significant connection was found between the two variables ($X^2 (1) = 5.97, p<.01$). The connection is ascribed to the fact that the percentage of teachers with spouses having religious education is much higher among the teachers who defined themselves as very religious (47%) than among the teachers who defined themselves as being religious (19%). Pearson coefficients between the predictor variables and between commitment and satisfaction were computed for each of the two groups separately. The results show several aspects that affect teaching.

**Motivations for choosing dance instruction:** differences were found between the two groups on three motivations: the first – the coefficient between the intrinsic-educational motivation, the meaning of which is the promotion of the integration of the dance subject-matter in the General-Religious schools, and between the level of commitment, is higher among the very religious ($r=.456; p<.01$) than among the religious teachers ($r=.259; p<.05$). The second – the coefficient altruistic motivation and satisfaction – is lower among the very religious ($r=.353; p<.05$) than among the religious ($r=.524; p<.01$). The third – the coefficient between the intrinsic-towards-myself motivation and satisfaction is lower among the very religious ($r=.307; p<.05$) than among the religious ($r=.565; p<.01$).
Reciprocations in teaching: differences were found between the groups on three categories of reciprocations. The first was the teacher-student reciprocations. The correlation between teacher-student reciprocations and between commitment is higher among the very religious (r=.756; p<.01) than among the religious teachers (r=.385; p<.01). The correlation between teacher-student reciprocations and between satisfaction is higher among the very religious (r=.733; p<.01) than among the religious teachers (r=.543; p<.01). The second was the teacher-art in the spirit of the Halacha reciprocation. The correlation between this variable and commitment is higher among the very religious (r=.623; p<.01) than among the religious teachers (r=.077; NS). The correlation between teacher – art in the spirit of the Halacha reciprocations and between satisfaction is higher among the very religious (r=.569; p<.01) than among the religious teachers (r=.174; NS). The third was the teacher-school reciprocation. The correlation between this variable and commitment is higher among the very religious (r=.437; p<.05) than among the religious teachers (r=.133; NS).

Contribution of dance lessons to pupils: differences were found between the groups on most categories of the contribution of dance lessons. The results are shown in table 6.

TABLE 6 HERE

Table 6 shows that among the very religious significant connections were found between most indices of contribution and between satisfaction and commitment. On the other hand, among the religious no significant connections were found, on almost all types of contribution.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted, in which the predict ands were the level of commitment and satisfaction, and the predictors were the aspects related to the work of the teachers and the level of religiosity. Regression analyses were not conducted on each level of religiosity separately due to the small number of participants in each group.

In the prediction of satisfaction a very high multiple correlation was found (R=.90, p <.001), and from among all predictors only one – teacher-the teaching profession reciprocations – was found as significantly linked to satisfaction, with a very high level of strength of prediction (β=.86). In order to test the prediction of satisfaction without this predictor, a regression analysis was conducted without it, and it was found that the multiple correlation dropped to (R=.77, p <.001), and the significant predictors were: teacher-student reciprocations (β=.53), altruistic motivation (beta=.34), and intrinsic-towards-myself motivations (β=.21).

In predicting commitment a high multiple correlation was found (R=.82, p <.001), and from among all predictors two were found to be significantly linked to commitment: teacher-the teaching profession reciprocations (β=.38), and intrinsic-towards-myself motivations (β=.36). In order to test the prediction of commitment without teacher-the teaching profession reciprocations a regression analysis was conducted without it, and it was found that the multiple correlation dropped to (R=.79, p <.001), and the significant predictors were intrinsic-towards-myself motivations (β=.48) and teacher-student reciprocations (β=.27).
Discussion

The current study examined the connection between commitment to, and satisfaction from, the profession of dance instruction in the General-Religious education system, and between three aspects related to the work of the observant teachers: a motivational aspect – the motivations for choosing dance instruction; an ecological aspect – the reciprocations involved in teaching; and a cognitive aspect – the perception of the contribution of dance lessons to pupils. The study also examined the level of religiosity of teachers as a mediator of the connections between these three aspects and the teachers' commitment to, and satisfaction from, teaching.

As for the motivational aspect, the findings show that commitment and satisfaction are connected to three motivations of an intrinsic nature: intrinsic-towards-myself motivation, altruistic motivation, and intrinsic-educational motivation, while the extrinsic motivation is unconnected. This finding coincides with previous findings regarding the commitment to teaching of teachers in other subjects, which had shown that only motivations of an intrinsic nature predict them. This finding indicates that the motivation for teaching among the dance teachers is influenced by internal personal characteristics such as skills, inclinations and needs, and not by convenient work conditions. This finding, then, enable the inclusion of the dance teachers as part of a wide range of teachers in various disciplines.

As for the contextual ecological aspect, the findings show that commitment and satisfaction are significantly connected to all four categories relating to the reciprocations of the teachers in their teaching: teacher-student, teacher-discipline, teacher-art in the spirit of the Halacha, and teacher-school. This finding coincides with previous findings attesting to the fact that rewarding reciprocations in teaching, that meet the emotional aspect, the needs and the personal inclinations of the teacher, lead to personal welfare expressed in satisfaction from the job and commitment to it. In addition, it was found that the range of correlations traverses the span between a high and low level. This finding could point to a differentiation in the perceptions of reciprocations in dance instruction. The aspects relating to the option of self-realisation through the teaching of the discipline – meaning, the teacher-the teaching profession and teacher-student reciprocations – are more significant and are expressed in higher values of correlation to commitment and to satisfaction. In contrast, the aspect pointing to educational initiatives outside class receives less significance. In order to understand the differentiation between the two types of area further research is required.

As for the cognitive aspect, which reflects the positions and perceptions of the dance teachers regarding teaching, the findings indicate that the connections between all categories of the perception of the contribution of dance lessons to the students, and between the commitment and satisfaction of the teachers, are significant but not high. This can be explained through the claim that commitment and satisfaction of the teachers are connected more to the emotional aspect that to the cognitive one.

Also, in order to examine whether the level of religiosity mediates the connections between the three aspects – the motivational, the ecological and the cognitive – and commitment to, and satisfaction from, teaching, the research population was divided into two groups – very religious and religious, in accordance with the self-definition of the teachers. The findings show different patterns of connections in each of the groups. The finding that especially stands out is that only among the very religious teachers correlations were found between commitment and
satisfaction, and between the cognitive aspect – contribution of dance lessons to the students – and the category teacher-art in the spirit of the Halacha reciprocations of the ecological aspect. It should be noted that many statements in these categories relate to the religious meaning of the dance discipline, for instance 'developing a 'tool' for the worship of the Lord through movement'.

It may be assumed that the commitment of the very religious teachers is more connected to a commitment to education, which is a commitment to an educational ideology or an array of ideas regarding education upheld by the teachers, as opposed to the religious teachers, who emphasize the commitment to the teaching profession as a calling. It seems that the concept of education among the very religious teachers matches the definition of the ideal education formed by Gross, researcher of the Jewish religious education:

'Constructing the Tabernacle for the Divine Presence, for the high and noble ethics, within man, is the objective of education. The aim is for the student to be able to answer the question "Where art thou?" – meaning, where are you in the process of your exposure to the divine within you, in constructing the tabernacle for the divinity and the ethical within you' (2012, p. 136).

These finding coincide with previous studies concerning teachers of the RGE in Israel, which indicate that a person's religious outlook will find expression in various aspects related to the professional-educational world, and in their influence on that person's level of commitment to, and satisfaction from, teaching. However, the findings also show that in prediction, where the categories of the research variables and the level of religiosity were tested, two criteria were found as predictive of commitment to teaching – the category teacher-teaching subject-matter reciprocations, and the category intrinsic-towards-myself motivation. As for satisfaction, it was found that the only predictor was the category teacher-the teaching profession reciprocations. It should be noted that the two categories that were found to be predictive of commitment and satisfaction are connected to the emotional aspect and not the cognitive one, which conform to Chan's concept (2004). Despite the uniqueness of the research population – observant female dance teachers – the results of the prediction coincide with findings of previous studies on various populations of teachers, which had shown that a teacher's commitment to the teaching profession is derived from a deep sense of loyalty and identification with unique ideological contents of the teaching discipline, which is perceived by the teacher as a calling. It is possible that the universal finding that arises from the prediction issues from the idiosyncratic characteristic of people who choose the teaching profession, seeing themselves as having an ability to teach well, seeking an occupation entailing interpersonal communication, and gaining joy and satisfaction from teaching their discipline and from the option of promoting children.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study depicted in this article is a pioneer study examining the connections between the perceptions and positions of observant female dance teachers on aspects related to their professional world, and between their commitment to, and satisfaction from, teaching in the General-Religious Education System in Israel. One of the most prominent findings of the study is that the aspects related to the teaching profession are the predictors of these teachers' levels of commitment and satisfaction, and not the aspects related to their religious identity. It may be assumed that the religious identity, with its various significances, is a predisposition of these dance teachers, in light of the fact that they had chosen to train as teachers of the discipline.
in a religious framework and to teach in the RGE – frameworks that enable them to realise themselves and to pave a new path in dance instruction with a Jewish religious outlook. Further study that will compare the perceptions and positions of the observant female dance teachers with those of non-religious dance teachers could shed more light on the unique and universal aspects of these teachers.

The contribution of this article is in making accessible findings from a pioneer research focusing on observant female dance teachers, who see the instruction of dance as a path for professional self-realisation. Their choice of dance instruction may be seen as an aspiration to cope with the demand made by Rabbi Kook in his book Orrot haTeshuva, to find the sanctity of the body:

“Great is our physical demand: we need a healthy body. Much we have dealt with spirituality, we forgot the sanctity of the body, we had neglected the physical health and bravery, we have forgotten that we possess holy flesh no less than we possess a holy spirit”.

Despite the tensions that arise in the meeting between the art of dance and religious outlook, the study had identified that the instruction of the dance subject matter predicts the satisfaction of these teachers from teaching and their commitment to persist in it.

Notes

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‘In Dance We Trust’: Comparing Trance-Dance Parties among Secular and Orthodox Israeli Youth

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Abstract

Israel is arguably a place where music-centred ‘trance-dance’ parties have attained their highest degree of national/cultural prominence, with these events being extremely popular in secular communities and even among Orthodox youth. Based on findings from ethnographic research, the article compares the core features—settings, participants and conduct—of trance parties for secular and Orthodox Israeli youth and examines the functions they perform for each group of partygoers. The findings point to variances in the cultural and personal needs that participation in trance parties fulfils for these disparate communities, which, accordingly, are reflected in their contrastive features. At the same time, both communities of partygoers paradoxically reproduce the very same attitudes and practices their participation intends to challenge, demonstrating that, unlike in other countries, the consumption of psychedelic electronic dance music culture in Israel is essentially devoid of subversive intentions.

Key words: Psychedelic Electronic Dance Music Culture (PEDMC), secular and Orthodox Israeli youth, trance-dance parties, cultural change, ethnography

Introduction

Trance has taken over the streets. It bubbles out from passing vehicles, is heard in the kiosks and grocery stores and deafens us in the boutiques. It’s in television commercials, fashion shows, malls, half-time shows at football and basketball games, at \textit{bar} and \textit{bat mitzva} celebrations, circumcision rites and weddings…Its sound is now localized and familiar.\textsuperscript{1}

In the past two decades music-centred ‘trance-dance’ parties have become a prominent fixture within the Israeli leisure cultural landscape.\textsuperscript{2} Versions of this postmodern music-centred subculture exist across the globe, yet Israel is arguably where its expression has attained the highest degree of national cultural prominence. Contextualized as Psychedelic Electronic Dance Music Culture (PEDMC), the local popularity of ‘trance’ has led to Israel being recognized as a world ‘trance power’, with an impressive roster of internationally acclaimed DJs (disc jockeys) and a reputation for year-round, no-holds-barred PEDMC parties and festivals.\textsuperscript{3}

In Israel trance-dance events occur among all manner of class and community and even within communities of Orthodox Israeli youth where this sort of event is unexpected.\textsuperscript{4} While researchers have examined aspects of trance parties for secular participants, less is known about these gatherings among Orthodox Jews and the functions that PEDMC consumption serves for this sector. This article compares the cultural and personal functions that such parties perform for secular versus Orthodox youth and the core features of those events – the particular settings in which they are held, the characteristics of their participants as well as styles of dance and other manner of conduct displayed within the respective party environments. The analysis
explains how variances in the core features of the secular and Orthodox parties result from the differences between the cultural and personal needs that these parties fulfil for each community and how, despite those differences, partygoers from both sectors apply elements from their socio-cultural backgrounds to similarly construct a pattern of PEDMC consumption that is apparently unique to Israel.

The findings discussed in this essay are drawn from a larger body of data collected over the past decade and a half during the course of extensive ethnographic fieldwork at both styles of PEDMC events. Fieldwork included participant observation at secular and Orthodox trance-dance parties, in-depth interviews with party producers and attendees and the monitoring of Israeli PEDMC-oriented social media. The comparative analysis of the data relates to cultural theory frameworks and is based on an examination of the findings vis-à-vis literature pertaining to the broader cultural contexts within which these events take place.

*Mesibot: Trance Parties for Secular Youth*

Secular Israeli trance-dance parties are furtive, all-night affairs held in remote outdoor locations at which participants, who refer to themselves as ‘trancistim’ (trancist in singular), ingest narcotic mood enhancers (especially psychedelics) and consume electronic music, primarily through dancing. Our findings indicate that overall, trancistim are a heterogeneous mix of young (17-40) secular Jewish Israelis from a broad spectrum of age, gender, socio-economic, political, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds who live in both urban and rural areas in a range of domestic circumstances. Often trancistim spend years attending these events. While initially, in the 1990s, attending parties was considered by the mainstream public to be subversive in nature, with the passing of time, trance-dance events have evolved into a broad-based—but not an entirely legitimate—local leisure activity. Thus, although many trancistim are recreational drug users, our interviews with them reveal that the vast majority maintain normative productive lives within quotidian Israeli society.

A model Israeli PEDMC party setting requires a hard-to-reach natural venue wherein participants can enjoy themselves with the certainty that their good time will remain undisturbed by the affairs of the outside world. Both male and female trancistim of all ages reported that the distant party location permits them to make use of these events—which they refer to as ‘mesibot teva’ (nature parties) or simply ‘mesibot’ (mesiba in singular)—as a form of therapeutic escapism from the contested place that Israel holds in the chaotic Middle East. The secluded locations generate a unique atmosphere and allow for trancistim candid self-expression. Mesibot participants often dress up in colourful costumes, wear hats and wigs and apply face and body paint. Trancistim may further contribute to the party ambiance through random free-form performance art such as fire or poi juggling, stilt walking, drumming and interpretive dance. Moreover, to enliven the mood, mesibot producers mount large field art installations around the party venue and hire VJs (video jockeys) who mix abstract geometric images and digitized stock footage onto screens adorning the mesibot dance-floors. These devices illuminate the otherwise dark surroundings and form a bizarre contrast with the unspoiled natural landscape.

The privacy afforded by the party venues also enables extensive drug taking among participants. Trancistim employ psycho-actives such as L.S.D. and MDMA to enhance their moods and augment their music listening experience. Additionally, in our interviews with trancistim, they stated that they consume drugs in order to invoke mystical voyages of intellect and spirit. At the same time, the normative drug use
taking place among *trancistim* constitutes the breaking of several laws and lends *mesibot*—which themselves are usually held without proper permits—a risky or deviant aura. This state of mind resembles the experiences *trancistim* undergo during their mandatory military service wherein they serve in remote locations, are active for extended hours at a time and, due to the extremity of the situation, may experience ephemeral comradery. The resemblance to military service is particularly interesting since, when asked about it, *trancistim* noted that their participation in trance parties was an expression of their pacifism and a way for them to forget about their military duties for a while.

‘Psytrance’ is the dominant electronic dance music genre heard at *mesibot* and Israeli DJs are renowned for playing an up-tempo and lyric-less psytrance sub-genre known as ‘Full-on’. Produced with the intent of being played at high volume on outdoor dance floors, the hypnotic cadence (145 beats-per-minute) of the repetitive hard hitting 4/4 beat lends the music a certain primordial, inter-cultural, appeal with the non-stop thumping of the digitally tempered bass-line resembling the pulses of a heart. Successful DJs produce a ‘smooth flow’ of music that can momentarily transport participants into a kind of collective ‘equilibrium’. This dynamic is central to *mesibot* and from our observations—especially when they are under the influence of serotonin inducing ‘empathogens’ like MDMA—when *trancistim* listen/dance to psytrance for extended periods, they may be propelled into elevated states of transcendental awareness during which time they claim the music becomes seductively entified.

When combined at *mesibot*, the remote venues, drugs and mesmerizing trance-dance music foster a sequence of powerful or ‘puissant’ moments during which a symbiotic interaction between private and public spheres converges. Emblematic of late-modern subcultural constructs in general, the collective macro consciousness—located in the uplifting mood of the self-contained party and inspired chiefly by the mystical communion engendered by the music and drugs—is fostered through an ongoing series of subjective micro occurrences. With reference to Victor Turner’s delineation of the ‘transitionary phase’ of public performance, the coinage ‘hallucinatory communitas’ seems to aptly describe the momentary communion experienced among *trancistim* at PEDMC gatherings. Indeed, the isolated and concealed *mesibot* locations combine with the pulsating intensity of the music and drugs to construct an extraordinary ‘moment in and out of time’ in which a kind of sacred bond may form among *trancistim*.

Similar to how the distant party venues enable *trancistim* escapism, *trancistim* reported that this momentary communion is a form of dance therapy, which serves as an exceptional countermeasure for coping with the intensity of Israeli society and politics. Yet, as with other ritual states of communality, hallucinatory communitas is inherently ephemeral and basically disappears outside the *mesibot* setting. Hence, although during the week *trancistim* may connect through social media channels in order to find out when and where future events will occur, they do not necessarily form an explicit socio-political community beyond the *mesibot* context, since this would offset the detached setting they aim to conjure at *mesibot*.

While attending *mesibot*, *trancistim* limit their spoken discourse for hours on end. When questioned, *trancistim* contended that they are using non-verbal avenues of communication to express themselves. This claim accords with the observations of the anthropologist Judith Lynne Hanna that non-verbal communication is ‘more powerful than the verbal for expressing such fundamental feelings and contingencies in social relationships as liking, disliking, superiority, tididity, fear and so on...’.
suggests that dancing is closer to poetry or signage rather than prose in that it ‘conveys messages whose understanding depends on shared, often nonverbal assumptions held by friendship or peer groups’.16

In accordance to Hanna’s depictions, our observations revealed that trancistim ‘converse’ with one another through dance. That is, trancistim dancing combines numerous body movements—darting expressions, oscillating hand and leg movements, rhythmic kicks, stabs, jabs and gyrations—into a seemingly choreographed message. The rhythm of the music replaces the traditional function of the lyrics. Rather than with words, mood, feeling and cognitive message are expressed through beat, tempo and instrumentation and so reinforce the ‘rhetoric of otherness’ essential for successful PEDMC activity.

Since at mesibot physical dancing replaces physical speech, trancistim minimal interpersonal verbalism does not impede their ability to capitalize on the collective energy of a party. Yet, while they endeavour to stay ‘in beat’ with the larger transpersonal group enterprise, trancistim style of dance manifests on an individual basis. Although trancistim ecstatically dance together, on the same dance floor at the same time, they have no physical contact with one another and so appear as autonomous, solitary entities. This mode of dancing is in direct distinction to more traditional forms of communal dance such as square or line dances wherein participants’ bodies actually touch one another or face each other or dance together as a couple or a group in a ritualized manner. In interviews, trancistim repeatedly explained that despite the communal aspect of mesibot, these events provided opportunities for them to be alone, a condition which they claimed was the mark of a good party, since it enabled them to express themselves as individuals while also distancing them from the constrictive Israeli collective.

Trancistim self-centered individuality is also reflected in that mesibot seem to lack an outright sexual atmosphere. This absence appears linked to the feral outdoor locations, the libido-eliminating drugs trancistim ingest and the physical strain caused by a lack of sleep and hours of dancing. Furthermore, as casual sexual encounters are a customary part of the everyday lives of young secular Israelis, trancistim feel less compelled to engage specifically in the fulfilment of sexual gratification at mesibot and tend to concentrate more on the spiritual or self-indulgent aspects of the event. In result, while at parties, trancistim tend to shun the conquest-like behaviour that is often associated with the pursuit of casual sexual activity.

In interviews and in online posts that we monitored for this study, trancistim claim to abide by a live-and-let-live behavioural creed, which recognizes that acceptable conduct at mesibot necessitates a culturally liberal and socially tolerant stance towards others. Yet, trancistim ideals are often inconsistent with their practices. For instance, in promotional emails, invites and social media posts, party crews discuss the need to keep knowledge of the parties to themselves as a precaution against attracting uninvited participants. Since mesibot are held without proper permits, this warning ostensibly relates to their being found out and shut down by law enforcement agents. While rarely discussed publicly, when questioned privately, trancistim often interpret this entity to refer to people who are not connected to PEDMC on a social, cultural or spiritual level, but attend mesibot with more carnal intentions.

Both at parties and in PEDMC-oriented social media channels, trancistim refer to themselves as ‘Anashim Yafim’ (nice/beautiful people) and to the uninvited public as Arsirn (Arse in singular). Anashim Yafim denotes a typical, well-behaved, middle-class trancist of Ashkenazi (Anglo-European, Ashkenazim in plural) descent. In
contrast, *Arse* is an Arabic word that literally means ‘pimp’ and in Israeli slang implies ‘a jerk’. Within the *mesibot* environment, the term *Arsim* designates people (men) whose conduct does not conform to expected behavioural codes; while at parties, for instance, they make spectacles of themselves by fighting, damaging property or talking aggressively to women. Although in an array of social media posts, *trancistim* clearly state that there is no place at *mesibot* for ‘Ashkenazi pretensions’, they stereotypically identify *Arsim* as Oriental Jews of North African or Middle Eastern descent. The disparity between these egalitarian ideals and their lax implementation emerged in interviews with *trancistim* who, despite having described themselves as liberal-minded, frequently claimed that a major part of what contributes to the success of a *mesiba* is the predominance of *Anashim Yafim* and the noted absence of *Arsim*.

One of the devices used by *trancistim* to maintain their exclusivity is noted in the tendency of party producers to charge high entrance fees for *mesibot*. *Trancistim* exclusivity is further reflected in the fact that *mesibot* fliers and the word samples in Israeli Full-on, as well as much of the slang in *trancistim* digital communication, are in English. Several interviewees noted that the use of a foreign language acts to differentiate between the party environment and conventional society. Moreover, *trancistim* claimed to object to Israeli ethnocentrism and stated that the use of English drew them closer to contemporary global culture in general and PEDMC in particular. In an analogous manner, Israeli sociologist Uri Ram describes how in the present era of ‘liberal post-Zionism and the glocal age’, the names of stores in large retail Israeli shopping malls are commonly written in English. The widespread use of English transforms these venues into ‘sterile zones, isolated from the humid and belligerent Middle Eastern environment. They create an illusion of being “here” and feeling “there”—as any proper globalist simulation should’. Since *mesibot* physically separate *trancistim* from their conventional social settings, they provide participants with a feeling that what takes place inside these ‘other-worlds’ is qualitatively different from the goings-on within their customary societal domains.

Nevertheless, even as *trancistim* identify with cosmopolitan philosophies, *mesibot* are regularly held on Jewish or national holidays and feature symbolic décor that blends traditional Jewish/Zionist holiday motifs with various clichéd strands of New Age/neo-pagan or Far-Eastern iconography (e.g., Indian Om-s, Celtic symbols, fire-breathing dragons, Chinese ideograms). These motifs include, for example, Candelabras, Stars of David and sheaths of wheat symbolizing *Shavuot*/Festival of Weeks. Concurring with data presented earlier, this finding points to the fact that *trancistim* attitudes and general demeanour paradoxically reproduce—instead of alter or otherwise improve—the very forms they are attempting to evade.

**Dosibot: Trance Parties for Orthodox Youth**

The consumption of trance-dance parties by Orthodox Israeli youth is a clear indication of the extent to which PEDMC has penetrated beyond secularised Israeli communities into diverse local social arenas. Trance-dance parties for young Orthodox Israelis are colloquially known as ‘*dosibot’*. The word *dosibot* is a combination of *dos*, which is Hebrew slang for ‘*dati*’ (Orthodox Jew, *dati’im* in plural) and the feminine plural suffix *bot*, as in *mesibot*. If the secular ‘*trancist’ prototype is the readily recognized, or unmarked, form within greater Israel, its marked *dati* counterpart, the ‘*dosist’ (our term) is less patently identifiable since so-called ‘religious Jewry’ is splintered into an array of sub-factions. Yet, despite their
nuances, these groups form a single unit with dati ‘im being synonymous with dati‘im leumi’im (National Religious; dati leumi in singular), Israeli Jews who maintain an outlook that is principally, if not exclusively, centred on an ideologically observant lifestyle. Dati‘im leumi’im compose their identities from an ongoing identification with formalized religious Jewry, a firm commitment to the Zionist-oriented Israeli national imperative and a daily lifestyle which closely coincides with the secular Israeli mainstream.

When questioned about their consumption of PEDMC, the dosistim whom we interviewed explained that they are an integral part of Israeli society and claimed that, like secular youth, to avoid being seen as ‘outsiders’ within their communities, they must remain aware of the current changes occurring in contemporary Israel. Their explanation accords with recent research on transformations among young dati‘im leumim. These analyses show that, on one hand, despite the exposure of dati‘im to the influences of late-modernity, they remain keen to preserve their Orthodox identities. On the other hand, both due to their dissatisfaction with the Orthodox establishment’s taut ideological ties to its formulistic religious principles and practices and to their desire to stay abreast with the secular mainstream, many young dati‘im are extending their traditionally directed communal norms by including contemporary secular Israeli cultural elements and mannerisms into their devout lifestyles.

The analyses of this dynamic have focused on young dati‘im embracement of secular cultural components such as post-military overseas backpacking trips and the use of digital and cellular global media. Yet, as opposed to their engagement with these forms, dati‘im incorporation of trance-dance parties into their Orthodox life-worlds seems less obvious. As explained below, dosibot attract both male and female participants. This puts attendees at risk of violating Orthodox law which explicitly forbids physical relations or any other activity that could potentially lead to an ‘(in)voluntary discharge’ prior to marriage.

Relating to how despite this hazard, dosibot became popular among dati‘im, dosistim noted that beyond their desire to remain contemporary, these parties also assisted them in locating potential life partners. This function is related to the ‘relationship crisis’ currently impacting dati communities, a situation that is rooted in the fact that dati‘im are basically raised in single-gender environments—primary schools, youth movements, Torah academies. Once they have completed the army and national service tracts and enter the work world, the Orthodox socio-cultural framework provides few recreational opportunities to fraternize with available members of the opposite sex. This leads to tension since the first mitzvah (divine commandment; mitzvot in plural) in the Torah is to ‘be fruitful and multiply’, a celestial directive that implicitly entails marrying at a young age that, according to current dati conventions, means ‘before thirty’. This widely acknowledged deadline heightens the anxieties of unwed dati‘im, especially females, who feel compelled to conform to this expectation.

Our findings indicate that while at dosibot, dosistim realign the modes of conduct common to secular trance-dance parties so as to create opportunities to find partners while remaining within bounds of Orthodox dictates pertaining to social interactions among the sexes. Offering like-minded participants a safe setting in which to pursue their particular goals, dosibot generally share the same structure: they are held at familiar and accessible commercial venues, charge little or no cover charge and feature the same kinds of music and activities. Moreover, in contrast to trancistim, dosistim are characterized by their homogeneity. Typically, dosibot participants are unwed, twenty-something, middle-class, well-educated, veteran
residents (second generation or older), Ashkenazi (sub)urbanites living with or near their parents. As discussed in the previous section, these circumstances are reversed at mesibot, whose purposeful otherworldliness evokes an allure of danger and unfamiliarity that seems to underscore the bizarre nature of these events and encourage participants’ unconventional behaviour.

Attendance rates at dosibot vary from party to party but, on average, these events draw hundreds of participants per night, as compared to mesibot, that sometimes attract thousands of attendees. Dosistim interest in dosibot can be quite intense at first but tends to wane rather rapidly as they either realise their objectives and move on or, having repeatedly failed to achieve their goal, abandon this line of pursuit. Like mesibot, dosibot usually coincide with the weekend and/or religious holidays. Yet, unlike mesibot, dosibot are routinely held on Thursday or Saturday nights rather than on Friday nights, which is the start of the Sabbath (the Jewish day of rest) and a time when Orthodox Jews refrain from worldly activities such as travelling, working and consumerism. To expedite participation, dosibot are held in metropolitan areas in proximity to where the majority of dosistim live, work and study. Moreover, unlike mesibot, dosibot are staged legitimately, in dati-oriented public or commercial venues such as neighbourhood civic centres, synagogue reception halls and kosher pubs. Also, dosibot occur during regular night time entertainment business hours (20:00 – 02:00), in contrast to mesibot, that ordinarily last all night and into the following afternoon.

Our observations indicate that the DJs at dosibot play dance music that is easily digested by their dati listeners who commonly possess limited knowledge of the various categories and sub-styles of electronic dance music. Composed from a combination of EDM genres remixed with fragments of Israeli pop tunes, this music resembles what is often played at mainstream secular Israeli familial and public celebrations. The music weaves bits and pieces of popular melodies and/or lyrics into the dance tracks and dosistim may sing along as they dance. As such, dosistim fellowship is manifested via their mutual recognition/appreciation of the lyrics/tunes of these well-known Hebrew songs rather than through collective drug use and/or a shared sense of deviance. This use of familiar music contrasts with the tendency of mesibot DJs to cater to trancistim psytrance savviness by playing ‘unreleased’ or unrecognized tracks whose unfamiliar arrangements and rhythmic tonality further contributes to the foreign atmosphere of these events.

During our fieldwork we also observed that dosistim do not have one fixed mode of dancing and may separate into gendered clusters or dance in tandem with multiple partners from either sex. Unaccustomed to dancing to this type of music, dosistim perform steps borrowed from traditional folk and wedding-style line dances. The dosistim we interviewed stated that they had previously encountered these dance styles at events held in synagogues, youth movements and Torah academies where single-gendered community dances regularly take place on Shabbat and religious and national holidays. Within the context of dosibot, however, these group-based dance styles enable dosistim to maintain certain Orthodox conventions pertaining to modesty at co-gendered public gatherings, while also permitting unwieldy or shy participants to go undetected. As with other facets of dosibot, dosistim collective manner of dancing contrasts with trancistim dance style which is solitary and abstract as independent dancers seldom face one another or come into direct or deliberate bodily contact.

Dosistim attire is simple both by dati and/or secular standards. This reflects dati leumi aesthetic sensibilities which are pragmatic and straightforward, an
approach which inundates this sector’s religious performance, commercial practices and leisure habits and typifies dati'im overall fashion sense and cultural temperament. This viewpoint stems from the ethic of t’zniut (humility, simplicity), an Orthodox ideal that stipulates that God fearing Jews should strive to lead chaste and self-effacing modest lives. Dosistim explained that their simple dress mode assists them in conveying a positive impression upon potential spouses by demonstrating their commitment to Orthodox conventions and their ability to negate extravagant, fashion-driven global patterns of consumption. This discretion may also explain why psychoactive stimulants, which are both expensive and illegal, are entirely absent from the dosibot milieu and why dosistim tend to favor (cheaper/abstemious) soft drinks over (expensive/intemperate) hard drinks.

The lighting at dosibot is routinely dimmed so as to allow dosistim to discreetly search for prospective partners. Soft lighting is especially fitting for sexually awkward dosistim as it allows them to engage in their less-than-orthodox activities without becoming overwhelmingly self-conscious. In result, even as dosistim make efforts to comply with the Orthodox restrictions regarding physical contact between the sexes, their involvement with dosibot inevitably leads to a build up of sexual tension. It is therefore not surprising that in contrast to mesibot etiquette, we witnessed how under the cover of near darkness, dosistim convey their desires via flirtatious conversation and suggestive dancing and, paradoxically, both express and repress their urges simultaneously. Ironically, dosistim resolve to remain within bounds of the religious mores of their communities inadvertently produces their sexually suggestive behaviour at dosibot.

Contrary to mesibot, which normally attract less women than men (roughly 40/60), dosibot comprise a higher female-to-male ratio (roughly 60/40). This is likely due to the fact that the dati society places a greater amount of pressure on single females to wed. Within dati leumi communities, unwed dati women—particularly those who have reached their thirties—are culturally limited both on a social/stigmatic and a religious/spiritual level and are unable to perform a number of crucial mitzvot such as menstruation rites and candle lighting rituals. In absence of an institutionalized matchmaking network, dati women are often obliged to locate potential spouses outside the confines of their customary Orthodox environs.

Another difference between dosibot and mesibot was detected in the manner in which they are promoted. In contrast to mesibot, which are selectively publicized in order to ensure their concealment, dosibot are openly advertised via fliers, posters, web-forums and word-of-mouth so as to draw as large a crowd as possible. Moreover, we found that dosibot adverts are usually written with standard Hebrew fonts, provide abundant information and clearly list the proper names and personal phone numbers of the party organisers. Dosibot fliers are simple and precise and commonly contain generic motifs from the Jewish-Israeli holidays connected with the parties. This candid approach contrasts with the enigmatic nature of mesibot fliers whose coded wording and limited details are comprehensible only to privileged insiders.

It turns out that dosibot venues are secondary to the action that takes place at them. The dosibot promoters whom we interviewed claimed that they make little effort to garner product recognition among partygoers because they recognize that dati'im participation in these events is short-lived. For this reason dosibot are normally void of bannered logos and other micro-marketing materials (fliers, CDs, stickers, T-shirts) which are de-rigueur at PEDMC events where they are used to market a producer’s particular mesibot brand. Similarly, dosibot organisers whom we spoke with noted that they regularly cut their production costs by foregoing elaborate
decorations and rarely bedecked party venues with anything more than the most elementary store-bought adornments (e.g. balloons, streamers, confetti, tissue-paper garlands). Akin to the manner in which dosistim attend parties in their regular clothing so as to express their commitment to an Orthodox lifestyle, the relatively tame dosibot settings allow dosistim to remain at ease in what can otherwise be an awkward and off-putting experience.

As a marked entity, ‘dosibot culture’ largely exists within the immediate party habitus, since otherwise dosistim tend to be indistinguishable from other dati’im. To wit, even as the dosibot environment is somewhat unorthodox, the dosistim we interviewed claimed that their experiences at these events do not have a lasting impact on their Orthodox beliefs and practices, nor does their attendance bear upon them negatively within their communities. In fact, recent studies found that, in many instances, the participation of dati’im in secular-based leisure activities actually serves to reinforce their commitment to an Orthodox lifestyle.29

Nevertheless, dati’im use of a secular culture form like PEDMC to contend with a problematic situation encountered within their daily life realms is an ironic scenario within which bass-heavy EDM has become the unlikely soundtrack for this generation’s mating rituals. Pulsating trance-dance music appears well suited for sexually inexperienced dosistim who consider its all-encompassing cadence the perfect cover for the inappropriate interactions that take place on the shadowy dosibot dance floors. As the trance rhythm works to activate a sort of hormonal amphetamine among dancers, the music electrifies the heated crowd, enabling dosistim to momentarily overcome their inhibitions and achieve their goal in much the same manner that Full-on Psytrance and the shared psychedelic experience activates hallucinatory communitas among trancistim and so lends mesibot their restorative puissance. The opportunity to experience this lively atmosphere provides dosistim with the feeling that they are no different from their secular counterparts.

Conclusions

The study shows that in Israel there exist two contrastive styles of trance-dance parties, which are distinguished by their setting, types of participants and their conduct. The first kind of parties are secular mesibot which are modelled after archetypical PEDMC trance-dance parties and feature booming rhythm-driven Psytrance, prevalent drug use, an individualized mode of dancing and spiritual undertones. The second kind of parties are Orthodox dosibot, which feature popularized electronic dance music, an absence of stimulants, a group-oriented mode of dancing and a joyous atmosphere juxtaposed with attempts at modesty and temperance. The contrastive facets of mesibot/dosibot are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1 HERE

The differences in these two party scenes derive from the distinctive cultural contexts particular to each community. The rise of PEDMC in Israel in the past two decades coincided with a number of changes taking place during that period within mainstream Israeli society.30 Until then, Israeli ideology was based on the Jewish-nationalist ethos of Zionism, which developed in the 19th century Europe with a stated goal of creating a homeland for the Jewish Diaspora. As it emerged from Europe, Zionism was preferential towards Anglo-European Jewry, placing a strong emphasis on collectivism, patriotism and dutiful service in the national defence forces. Yet, by
the early 1990s, the influx of globalization and neo-liberal economics and culture supplanted the spirit of socio-nationalism with the self-absorbed pursuit of secular materialism among considerable segments of the Israeli populous.31 As such, these former ideals lost much of their relevance and appropriateness to the contemporary Israeli situation and were replaced with post-Zionist philosophies, which emphasised individualism and critiqued the Ashkenazi elite, the ethnocentric Israeli society and its cultural glorification of military service.32 This transformation in outlook particularly altered the perceptions of identity and selfhood of the younger generations who critiqued the norms and values of the country’s founding generations.33 Researchers generally recognize that the void created by the erosion of the Zionist principles was in part occupied by New Age culture, which stresses such values as universalism and a belief in alternative spiritualities. For example, culture critic Assaf Sagiv suggests that a ‘neo-pagan ecstatic revival has filled the vacuum left by the demise of the old Zionism, and has been fuelled by a mistrust felt by many youth towards anything reminiscent of the grandiose slogans and utopian promises of an earlier day’.34 According to Sagiv, the popularity of PEDMC among secular Israelis was in response to these changes in Israeli culture and society. Our findings support this argument by showing that trancistim attempt to break free from a cultural ethos with which they no longer overtly identify, through the adoption of practices and concepts that provide them with a notion of global affinity and appealing alternative spirituality.

The dati leumi communities have likewise been impacted by the inroads late modernism made into Israeli society and culture. With their exposure to the Internet and secular Israeli mainstream culture, young dati’im began questioning the norms of their parents. Yet, unlike their secular counterparts, this inquiry did not include the vital search for alternative ideologies or substitute belief systems. Thus, while young dati’im began to integrate contemporary secular behaviour into their Orthodox lifestyles and, for instance, embarked on overseas backpacking trips and listened to popular music, by and large they persisted to adhere to the tenets of religious-Zionism. For this reason, dati’im adaptation of trance-dance parties reflects their desire to maintain their connection with mainstream secular Israeli society without the need to incorporate New Age philosophies or universalistic spirituality into their outlooks.

The differences in function that these parties fulfil for each of these two communities, explain their variances in form. Secular trancistim enthusiastic embracement of global PEDMC manifests in mesibot which feature loud and intense music, bizarre decor, drugs and an individualized style of dance. In contrast, Orthodox dosistim have limited use for these PEDMC standards and, therefore, dosibot comprise softer music, modest decorations, are devoid of illegal stimulants and participants’ dance style resembles well-known traditional folk dances.

Our research, however, also reveals that beyond their general, cultural functions, these parties fulfil a more personal function for their participants. In interviews, trancistim indicated that not only are they fascinated with PEDMC as an ideology, but they also attend trance-dance parties for their component of escapism. In contrast, our interviews with dosistim revealed that not only do dosibot provide them with a link to the secular Israeli mainstream, but these events also allow them to fulfil a personal goal by providing unwed dati’im with a nonconventional yet welcoming platform for meeting one another. These additional motivations can explain further characteristic differences between these two kinds of parties. For instance, trancistim secrecy and exclusivity, their ongoing affiliation with PEDMC and independent
asexual demeanour contrasted with the conventional settings and standard promotional methods used for advertising dosibot, dosistim fleeting affiliation with PEDMC and their group-centred manner of socializing. The differences in the cultural and personal functions, which trance-dance parties fulfil for trancistim/dosistim are summarized in Table 2.

**TABLE 2 HERE**

Yet, despite these differences, our study detected parallels in the attitude and deportment of participants at secular and Orthodox trance-dance parties, which seem to effect upon their ability to fulfil their goals. Even as trancistim identify with contemporary universalistic ideals, in essence, they paradoxically mimic traditional, pre-1990s, preferential Israeli socio-cultural attitudes. While claiming to be tolerant and egalitarian-minded, principles that form the basis of the post-Zionist narrative, in actuality, trancistim duplicate longstanding mechanisms of Ashkenazi elitism. Similarly, in an attempt to resist the collectivist nature that epitomized pre-1990 Israeli society, trancistim express present-day globalized norms of individuality by attending mesibot where, paradoxically, their individuality is dependent upon participation in a group dynamic. Moreover, even as they criticize Israeli ethnocentrism and the glorification of military service, trancistim use of soldierly-like conduct and the insertion of Jewish iconography within mesibot décor ironically reproduce these very elements within the outlandish party venues.

In an analogous fashion, our research demonstrates that despite dosistim application of secular Israeli mainstream formulae, in fact, their conduct mostly conforms with the behavioural codes of their parent communities. This is noted in dosistim simple dress style, minimal expenditures and the way in which they attempt to maintain a semblance of modesty within the aberrant dosibot setting. Moreover, this is confirmed by the fact that dati’im participate in dosibot in order to locate suitable marriage partners; that is, they attend these events in order to remain within the fold of their Orthodox community. As these examples suggest, both groups are mimicking the ideals they profess to be resisting. It appears, therefore, that mesibot/dosibot do not actuate significant changes to their participants’ identities and that they provide a platform for the expression of their desires rather than their actual attainment.

It also turns out that although the rampant use of drugs at mesibot and the immodest sexuality at dosibot diverge from accepted cultural norms, trancistim and dosistim unconventional behaviour is not intended to challenge or otherwise modify their daily environment. This conclusion concurs with the argument put forth by Nissan Shor in his historical analysis of club and discotheque culture in Israel, according to which ‘trance [parties] did not create a substitute reality . . . At the end of the party, those in attendance went back to being themselves. Israelis’. Our conclusion also corresponds with other recent ethnographic research on the socio-cultural implications of the New Age culture ‘boom’ currently taking place in Israel and may be explained by the tendency of Israeli culture in general to simultaneously tolerate conformist and non-conformist behaviour from its citizens. For example, even as contemporary Israeli society encourages individuality and freedom of expression, it nonetheless continues to honour collectivist ideals and suppress counter-hegemonic viewpoints.

From the above, it appears that the findings presented in this study differ from other PEDMC research conducted overseas that identifies ‘trance culture’ with
‘insubordination’ and ‘dissent’. Neither do they concur with research on trance-dance parties in other cultures according to which these events function as a vehicle for activism and cultural subversion. Rather than attempt to activate cultural change, what *trancistim/dosistim* are in effect doing is transferring structural inconsistencies from their daily lives into unconventional, yet socio-culturally analogous, PEDMC arenas. This unique manner of PEDMC consumption is geared towards fulfilling particular needs and appears to manifest without altering the identities and cultural norms of respective affiliates, which may explain the popularity of trance-dance parties among diverse Israeli publics. Since this pattern of PEDMC usage emerged in spite of the differences between secular and Orthodox youth, it may likewise surface in trance-dance parties occurring among other subsets of local communities (e.g. the ultra-orthodox, Arabs, LGBT, Russian and Ethiopian immigrants). Thus, this article lays the foundation for additional studies of how PEDMC serves the needs of various local communities as they contend with the profound transitions taking place in present-day Israeli society and culture.

**Notes**

3. PEDMC is an acronym for the specific culture we are writing about. The acronym EDMC refers to this same cultural construct sans its psychedelic element. M. Regev, and E. Seroussi, *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 183.
6. A recent study on marijuana use among the general Israeli public estimated that roughly one million Israelis have used (illegal) cannabis in the past year. A. Amit, “The Neighbor’s Grass: Part One – ‘Everybody’s Smoking’,” *Channel 10 News Magazine*, August 24, 2014 [in Hebrew].
7. LSD-25 stands for ‘lysergic acid diethylamide’ and is synthetic hallucinogenic compound. MDMA, an abbreviation of ‘methylenedioxymethamphetamine’ is an empathogen known for inducing euphoric mind-states and intimacy with others.


14 Ibid., Turner, 97.


19 Ibid., 225-26.


38 G. St John, Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures (London and Oakville: Equinox, 2009), 93-190.

39 Ibid, 93-190
Chains of Authenticity: Cultural Negotiation of Identity between Israeli and American Jewry

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Abstract
Relying on historic and ethnographic fieldwork, this article traces the development of the Israeli folk dance movement in Israel and the United States over the last century. Israeli folk dances are consumed worldwide and especially by American Jewry precisely because they are perceived as an authentic expression of national Israeli culture, even as their authenticity is continuously contested and re-evaluated in different historical and cultural contexts and by various actors who engage in their preservation and re-creation. The result is an intricate articulation of an ideological and rhetorical debate on authenticity, which reveals its relativistic character and sheds light on the cultural negotiation of identity between Israeli and American Jewry.

Keywords: Nationalism, authenticity, dance, folklore, Israel, American Jewry

Introduction

Much has been written about the relationship between Israel and American Jewry: on a political and diplomatic level, an economic level, in the religious sphere and in the area of social organisations. Most researchers and writers focus on the public sphere of diplomacy, economic policy, organised community activity and educational programmes to elucidate the Jewish American attitude toward Israel. However, much less research is dedicated to the comparative differential cultural experiences of both communities, and even less to actual cultural day-to-day interaction between people of each community. This is understandable due to the fact that the two communities are separated geographically and generally do not communicate in the same language. But the English - Hebrew divide is only one barrier in this mutual relationship. This language difference, which may seem only technical, hides, in fact, a complexity of identity struggle regarding their different living conditions (politically, economically, socially) and beliefs (religious, national).

This complexity is expressed in a wide range of emotions and attitudes. On one extreme we find the statement: ‘we are one’ emphasizing a symbolic shared heritage and ancient past that covers all differences between the two Jewish communities. The other extreme attitude predicts that the ‘one people’ may diverge into two differentiated Jewish groups and even sects. Furthermore, recent work indicates an actual rift and vocal opposition among small radical Jewish American groups towards the existence of the state of Israel. Nevertheless, existing research lacks specific case studies of encounters between these two communities. Few case studies that do focus on this mutual relationship, investigating Zionist educational programmes for American youth, reveal the deep cultural differences between Israeli emissaries and the American Jewish youth.
Israeli folk dancing can be seen as another vehicle for communicating national identity, one which is a part of nearly all Zionist American activities. It is also a voluntarily, enjoyable, non-verbal activity that can be seen as a non-threatening yet potent and exciting field for exploring questions about identity, based on the unmediated medium of bodily and emotional experience.

My research suggests that Israeli folk dancing provides a revealing case study in the process of negotiation of cultural identity. Specifically, an exploration of practices and interpretation of symbolic meanings, as they are attached to Israeli folk dancing in Israel and in the United States, would tell us much about the relationship between these two communities. While people from these two communities engage in the same cultural Zionist activity, their interpretation of this practice may vary, as pointed out by Liebman and Cohen: ‘Even the same word can mean very different things in the two societies. The term Zionism, so crucial in the lexicon of modern Jewry, means one thing to American Jews and something else to Israelis.’

Moreover, the present socio-historical case study, which traces the century-long development of the Israeli folk dance movement in both Israel and the United States, enables us to trace the changes in practices and attitudes that have been attached to this cultural activity.

This analysis starts with pre-1948 Zionist efforts to establish folk dance activities simultaneously in Palestine and in the USA; continues with Israeli governmental-based institutionalization and centralization of the field which excluded the Jewish-American creation of dances; further continues with changes that have taken place in Israel as young dance instructors have taken the lead from old institutional figures and broken their monopoly over dance creation, expansion and exportation; and concludes with the present-day new economic opportunities and symbolic benefits that are utilized by the creation of Israeli folk dances in America. Nevertheless, all actors in this field, regardless of their social status, economic interests or place of residence, insist that Israeli folk dancing conveys a deeply Israeli authentic value, and all are engaged in its reproduction.

**National Objects in Motion: Production, Authenticity and Globalization**

The Israeli folk dance movement can be described as a modern tradition. Contrary to the commonly held notion that folk dances have a deep past, Israeli folk dances are relatively new, and they are constantly being created. In the early 1940s, less than ten Israeli folk dances existed; today there are more than 8,000 registered dances. Israeli folk dance is a modern creation, an invented tradition, and an example of the production of heritage. Its creation was part of a deliberate Zionist plan to regenerate a cultural Hebraic identity in the Land of Israel by creating new ceremonies and festivities that were based on Jewish traditions and Semitic images.

Nevertheless, from their inception in the early 1940s, prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, Israeli folk dances have been exported abroad, mainly to American Jewish communities, in order to enhance support and emotional attachment to the realisation of the Zionist project in the Land of Israel. This national, institution-driven exportation, which took place in the early stages of the formation of the Israeli folk dance movement, changed fundamentally in the face of privatization processes in the free-market era of the global economy. This change is most saliently demonstrated by the fact that Israeli instructors living abroad, who used to serve the Israeli institutional agenda by teaching Israeli folk dances to a wide American public,
began promoting ‘Israeli folk dances’ made in the United States and even bringing them back to Israel.

Using Appadurai’s concept of objects in motion, Israeli folk dances can be seen as wandering around the globe, carried on the wings of diverse political and economic interests. Cultural products that are distributed outside of their home of creation, promoted by their impresarios (as is the case of cultural wayfaring fairs or permanent businesses that sell products and services) are consumed precisely because they are considered to be representative of ‘authentic national folklore’ (for example food, crafts, music and dance). Interested spectators and patrons who seek the enjoyment of close-to-home cultural experiences can acquire these goods by purchasing artefacts, buying CDs, eating in ethnic restaurants, or engaging in cultural activities (such as international dance lessons) which allow for the embodiment of different cultural meanings through the physical practice of the cultural live display.

In Destination Culture, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett discusses the issue of representations of live cultural displays, such as festivals and heritage performances, and suggests relocating the question of authenticity from the performers to the audience’s reception of the performance. Elaborating on this idea, the current article deals with the live display of Israeli folk dancing outside of Israel, especially in America, and expands its discussion to include the audiences’ quest for authenticity. By suggesting that the recipients of a cultural activity are not just passive spectators, but rather active practitioners who are physically involved in the performance of Israeli folk dancing, this article will demonstrate how the consumers of Israeli folk dance activities in the United States not only engage in recreational activities of national folklore away from the original site of its creation, but also affect its course of creation.

While it might seem that the era of globalized culture and economy has decreased the importance of national identity in a seemingly border-less world, another school of thought claims that ‘nations matter; in spite of globalization and transnationalism in the post-modern era.’ This second theoretical model asserts that the global cultural economy not only does not undermine the concept of national identity, but sometimes even enhances and expands it across borders. Relying on this approach, I will demonstrate that Israeli national products, which travel away from their homeland and are even remade from a distance via new economic opportunities, are still greatly embedded in a national discourse that serves to legitimize the products’ existence. Israeli folk dances are consumed outside of Israel precisely because they are perceived as an ‘authentic national manifestation’, even though their authenticity is contested and re-evaluated in diverse cultural conditions and by various actors who play a major role in the preservation and re-creation of these dances. In order to analyse this phenomenon, I would like to suggest the concept of relativistic authenticity.

The first part of this article will describe the field of Israeli folk dancing from its inception in the early 1940s up until the late 1970s in Israel. In this period, claims of authenticity focus on the local cultural merit of this newly created Zionist project by the institutional elite. The authenticity of the dances is particularly emphasized when compared to a concurrent, parallel creation of folk dances by Zionist Jews in America. The second part of this article explores the decline of Israeli institutional and cultural forces and the rise of a new leadership in the Israeli folk dance scene, as well as the
dance movement’s shift towards commercialization from the 1980s to the present. This section will examine how the discourse on authenticity changes its focus as Israeli dance instructors living abroad begin to function as dance creators, thereby bringing greater attention to bear on the question of the authenticity of national creations outside national borders. Relying on historic and ethnographic fieldwork, I will interrogate the cultural authenticity of national products as they are consumed and even reproduced across national borders. What happens to the perceived value of these exported cultural products? What do they represent for their consumers and distributors? What happens to national products that travel to foreign countries and are re-made from a distance? Do they still retain some of their original value, or do they gain a new worth? Who may judge their value? And what is their destination culture?

Background on the Israeli Folk Dance Movement: Creation, Expansion and Exportation

The year 1944 marks the beginning of the Israeli folk dance movement. In that year, the first Hebraic dance festival was held in Palestine and served as the foundation for an innovative folk dance movement. This festival took place in Kibbutz Daliah. It included twenty folk dances common in Palestine in those days, among them Jewish Yemenite dances, Jewish Eastern European wedding dances (serele), non-Jewish European folk dances (hora, polka, krakoviak, cherkessia) and eight new Israeli dances created by Jewish immigrants in Palestine, including the classic mayim-mayim (water-water), apparently the most well-known Israeli folk dance ever created. The festival attracted 3,500 spectators and inspired the mass creation of folk dances, which today are considered as authentically Israeli.

The inception of the Israeli folk dance movement in Palestine (which closely corresponded with the development of artistic dance in pre-state Israel) was led primarily by Jewish women who had emigrated from Germany and Austria to the Land of Israel in the 1920s and 1930s. The major figures of this group were Gurit Kadman (1897-1987) and Rivka Sturman (1903-2001), both regarded as the founding mothers of the Israeli folk dance movement, and Gertrud Kraus (1901-1977), the founder of modern dance in Israel. All Jewish dance figures at that time were inspired by modern German Expressionist dance, gymnastics training, and national Romanticism, the latter translating its search for authentic folklore into a Zionist form. These women believed that Jews who had returned to their ancient homeland should have folk dances that could articulate the old biblical tradition. Since no physical evidence remained of biblical dances, they decided that Jewish people should create new Israeli folk dances in Palestine. The turn to biblical tradition served to legitimize the authentic foundation upon which the new Israeli folk dance movement flourished. Kadman recalls: ‘we were striving to build a new society of equality and justice, simplicity of life and also the renovation of the old cultural values of Judaism’.  

Israeli folk dances were created as a modern invented folklore that stemmed from deep Zionist sentiments and took as their influence different kinds of dances that existed in Palestine at that time. Among them one can trace Jewish dances (i.e., Yemenite dances, Hasidic dances and East European wedding dances), as well as non-Jewish European folk dances and Palestinian Arab dances.
By 1945, one year after the first dance festival, Kadman was already the head of the Inter-Kibbutzim Folk Dance Committee, a formal committee established to nurture Israeli folk dance creation. In 1952, four years after the establishment of the State of Israel, a national Folk Dance Section (FDS) was founded which was affiliated with the cultural branch of the Histadrut workers union of the Israeli Labour party. This national institute controlled all activities related to Israeli folk dancing. Its responsibilities included organizing programmes and seminars for training Israeli folk dance instructors; creating choreography for original dances; selecting the dances to be introduced to the public; publishing folk dance materials and notations; establishing the ‘Dancing School’ and ‘Dancing Kindergarten’ projects; and promoting folk dance in the army, youth movements, immigrant neighborhoods and disadvantaged neighborhoods. The institute also established its own official dance company for performances in Israel and abroad.

In the summer of 1947, the Department of Physical Education of the Jewish People’s Council (Hava’ad Haleumi), which was the main national institution of the Jewish community under the British Mandate, sent the first Israeli folk dance performing group abroad. The group’s main objective was to represent the Jewish cultural life in the Land of Israel throughout Europe and also serve as part of an official delegation to the International Democratic Youth Festival held that year in Prague. When the festival was over, the group traveled to Italy, Germany and Czechoslovakia and performed in displaced persons camps, which served as temporary shelters for Holocaust survivors.  

Although the group returned to Palestine, Kadman continued on to America. Encouraged by their success in Europe, she pursued the promotion of Zionist ideology through the dissemination of Israeli folk dances among Jewish American youth. In her words:

‘I felt it was my personal mission to bring our new dances to them, and impress them through the dance medium so that they would want to come and live with us in our new land’.  

As a ‘missionary’ of the Israeli folk dance movement, Kadman stayed in the United States for an entire year. Following this first visit, many folk dance activists from Israel toured Europe and America as dance emissaries, which became the formal title for Israeli dance instructors dispatched abroad by the FDS. The major goal of the emissaries was to strengthen the bond between diaspora Jews and the State of Israel, and to enhance their support and commitment to Zionist ideology, as embodied through the recreational and educational activity of Israeli folk dancing.

The Israeli Folk Dance Movement Today - In Israel and Abroad

Since its beginning, the Israeli folk dance movement has gone through many changes which are visible in the growing number of dances and the diverse music that accompanies them, in new bodily gestures and choreographic motives, and changes to the social context of dance and its leadership. Following the decline of the Israeli Labour party in the late 1970s, the state-run dance section of the Histadrut workers union went through many changes and experienced a loss of authority, until it finally shut down in 2000. Regardless, the fruits of its activities are still apparent to this day. Due to its invented and reinvented nature, the Israeli folk dance movement today is a very dynamic and vital phenomenon, a constantly evolving popular activity that
continually embraces new worldwide influences of music and choreography.

The following data testifies to the movement’s accomplishments. Israeli folk dancing today is a popular, local and global leisure activity. The annual Karmiel dance festival, which is held in the Galilee, continues the tradition that began in 1944 and draws a crowd of approximately 250,000 spectators.\textsuperscript{32} In 1944, less than ten original Israeli folk dances were listed in the programme, today there are over 8,000. More than 300 Israeli folk dance instructors are active in Israel; most of them are also registered as dance composers, and at least 50 of them are prominent creators of dance. In Israel, interested individuals can choose from more than 450 Israeli folk dancing weekly sessions organised throughout the country.\textsuperscript{33} According to the Israeli leading instructor and dance composer Bitton,\textsuperscript{34} the two biggest weekly dance sessions in Israel are held in Tel Aviv and can attract around 1,000 participants in a single evening.

For amateur dancers around the world, Israeli folk dancing is a popular leisure activity whether it occurs as part of a special evening for Israeli folk dance or as part of an international folk dance class. According to the rokdim website, more than 400 exclusive Israeli folk dance sessions take place weekly around the world. Approximately 40\% of international Israeli dance sessions take place in the United States, primarily in California and New York. That makes the United States the most popular country for Israeli folk dancing after Israel (See table 1 at the appendix for the distribution around the world). A dance session in the 92nd St. Y in New York City gathers around 250 participants in one evening,\textsuperscript{35} making it one of the largest sessions outside of Israel. The rokdim website registers more than 400 Israeli folk dance instructors and around 30 Israeli folk dance composers working outside of Israel. Around 50\% of them live and work in the United States.

\textbf{The History of Jewish and Israeli Dance Activities in America}

Fred Berk (1911-1980), a Jewish-American modern dancer and choreographer, originally from Vienna, was the most important promoter of Israeli folk dance activities in the United States. Based in New York City, Berk founded and directed the \textit{Jewish Dance Division} at the 92nd Street YM-YWHA (known as ‘the Y’) and the \textit{Israeli Folk Dance Department} of the Zionist Youth Foundation, from 1951 and 1968 respectively. These departments operated alongside their Israeli counterparts and were the basis for the dissemination of Israeli folk dances all over North America.

As the head of both departments, Berk was involved in promoting Israeli folk dancing in America in many ways. From 1951 on, Berk directed the annual Israeli Folk Dance Festival in New York City and conducted leadership training sessions. He founded the first Israeli dance workshop in the United States—‘the Fred Berk Israeli Folk Dance Workshop’—in 1961 and directed it until 1977. In 1955, following a trip to Israel, Berk established the \textit{Hebraica} dance company as a semi-professional dance group and choreographed for it several suites of dances depicting Israeli holidays and daily life. Berk also founded the newsletter \textit{HORA}, as well as the Israeli dance session at the Y that has operated continuously since it began in 1951. In 1969, with the sponsorship of the American Zionist Youth Foundation and the Jewish Agency, Berk brought to Israel for the first time a group of young Jewish Americans for the FDS Israeli folk dance instructors’ course. The collaboration between Berk and Israeli folk dance institutions remained constant from 1951 until his death in 1980.\textsuperscript{36} Berk’s biographical background provides some explanation for his fruitful relationship with
Israeli dance departments. Like the women who directed the Israeli dance field at that time, he shared a similar modern German Expressionist training and was a student of Gertrud Kraus, when both still resided in Europe. However, while many Jewish European dance figures immigrated to Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s, Berk fled from the Nazis to United States in the early 1940s. Berk immersed himself both in the broad field of modern dance as well as in the more particular field of Jewish and Israeli folk dancing. It is important to note that the 92nd Street Y, served as a productive home for both these activities, and that his personal activities were part of a growing interest in this subject matter following the mass immigration of European Jews to America in the early 20th century. Berk points out that

“The search for Jewish roots and for the meaning of Jewishness has been a characteristic of the American scene in the period which began around 1920”.

The salient expression of Jewish community dancing in the early 20th century in the United States was the Hasidic dance, observed in the streets of Brooklyn during the Simchat Torah holiday. However, non-Hasidic Jews from Eastern Europe also had brought with them communal dances, these were not uniquely Jewish, though they acquired a typically Jewish character over generations. Some of these dances were distributed simultaneously in Palestine and in America by Jewish immigrants who had escaped from Europe. Among them were the Romanian hora, the Russian cherkessia, and the Polish krakoviak, as well as the Eastern European patsh tanz and broigez tanz.

Nevertheless, it seems that for the young Jewish generation in Palestine and America these dances represented the past world of the Jewish shtetl and invoked Yiddish culture, something that was not considered suited to contemporary life experiences. Jackson notes that during the 1930s the desire to create Jewish dance in America was closely connected to dance developments in Palestine. For instance, Jewish dance activities in New York were featured prominently by the Hebrew Art Committee (HAC), which was formed in 1936 as part of the Zionist Organization of America. Committed to transmitting Jewish values through the arts, Corinne Chochem, the head of the HAC’s dance unit, galvanized interest in Hebrew dance and directed a dance group with the Hebrew name ‘Rikkud Ami Dance Troupe’ (‘dance of my people’).

Following these successful initiatives, young Jews involved in American Zionist organisations began to develop their own dances, many choreographed by American dance leaders at educational Zionist youth camps in the United States. In the following passage, Berk describes the situation of Jewish folk dance activities in America when he arrived to the States in 1941.

“The dances of the Zionist youth groups, incorporating as they did the zest and “swing” of American square dancing, are both unique and exciting. Upon investigation, one discovered that these dances had been choreographed by dance leaders of the Zionist movements. The “Double Hora”, the “Dundai”, “Ari-Ara,” “Paam Achat Bachur Yatza” [Once a lad went walking] and many more were among the Jewish dances which had their origins in this country and were referred to as PALESTINIAN DANCES”.

The name ‘Palestinian Dances’ generally designated in this period the Jewish folk dances created in America by Zionist activists, who drew inspiration from the Jewish
community in Palestine. It also characterized dances that were common in the Jewish community in Palestine and brought to America by Zionist activists. However, the establishment of the Israeli folk dance movement in 1944 ushered a major change. Zionist American dance activities abandoned their own folk dance creations and completely adopted the Israeli folk dance repertoire, which was considered to be an authentic expression of cultural revival in the ancient Jewish homeland, rather than a continuation of diasporic life and culture in America. One of the great contributions to this process was Gurit Kadman’s aforementioned tour to the States in 1947-48. Regarding the dances created in Israel as genuine, and in stated opposition to Jewish diasporic culture, Kadman bluntly and intolerantly disregarded the Zionist creation of Palestinian dances in America. In a rare description of this tour, the international folk dance instructor Beliajsust describes his encounter with Kadman in the following manner:

“During an instruction period at the College of Jewish Studies, she [Gurit Kadman] closed her session with a verbal attack on Corrine Chochem, Dvora Lapson, Delakova, American Zionist delegates to Palestine […] She further commanded: ‘Don’t ever dance any more dances you have danced and called Palestinian dances. From now on, dance only the dances I am teaching. That’s my reason for being here. All others are fakes!’”

As the authoritative head of the pre-State Inter-Kibbutzim Folk Dance Committee, Kadman very successfully promoted in the United States Israeli folk dances created in the Land of Israel, and as a result, Zionist Palestinian dances made in America diminished in influence. Berk points to this development:

“The American Jewish Community started to draw their cultural needs from Israel […] Palestinian folk dances made way for the newly created Israeli folk dances […]which were adopted by the Zionist organizations and also spread to the international folk dance circles in America […] Today, only in libraries can one find programs of dances performed on Jewish themes, or books, which note Palestinian dances. Otherwise the period of “Jewish Dance” activities in America has been forgotten.”

With the establishment of the State of Israel and the foundation of the FDS, Israeli folk dance activities in America increasingly gained acceptance and popularity as Jewish community centres, campuses and schools included Israeli folk dances in their programmes. In fact, Israeli folk dancing became a popular activity in international dance sessions as well. In order to understand the deep effect that Israeli folk dance activities had on Jewish Americans, let us consider this excerpt from a letter published by Rabbi Kline:

“I have met young Jews who claim that Israeli folk dance is their sole interest and involvement in Judaism […] spoken prayer is a difficult thing for many people, fraught with misconceptions, frequently confusing and embracing, not to mention the problems of knowing and understanding the words, be they Hebrew or English. No verbal devotions, on the other hand, such as music and dance are both subtle and intense. There is no need for the participant to intellectualize what is being expressed. As in any art form, interpretation is variable and quite secondary to the main point, which is physical and spiritual activity […] a person who expresses his or her Jewishness through dance is responding to a healthy neshama [soul], a lively, feeling, outgoing soul.”

The Rabbi emphasizes the importance of Israeli folk dancing to Jewish Americans as a way of connecting to their Judaism. The letter expresses the diasporic view that Israeli dance can be a tool for enhancing the religious and spiritual life of Jews.
outside of the Holy Land. While performing Israeli folk dances, American participants become physically and spiritually engaged in an activity in which the aura of Judaism pervades, without the need to speak Hebrew, move to Israel, or make intellectual efforts.

Nevertheless, it is important to realise that like many other cultural and symbolic products, different audiences perceived and interpreted Israeli folk dances in many ways and attached to them different purposes. Whereas a Jewish American audience may have applied a Jewish religious meaning to these dances, in Israel the dances were an expression of a national, secular modern revival. Although it derived from ancient Jewish history and heritage, the creators of the modern tradition of Israeli folkloric dance in Israel perceived it as an expression of national secularism in its Zionist Socialist form.

To the extent that different audiences have interpreted the dances in distinct ways, the dances themselves have been freighted with new values throughout the years and have reflected the dynamic changes that have taken place in Israeli society and culture. In the second part of this article, I will explore the changes that the Israeli folk dance movement underwent as it moved towards a stage of privatization and commercialization, which also marked a turning point for Israeli national dance creation abroad and yielded a new discourse regarding its authenticity away from its homeland.

**The Privatisation and Creation of Israeli Folk Dances in the United States**

From the early 1950s, the FDS managed the Israeli folk dance movement in a centralised way, with the support of an institutional budget and authority. However, from the late 1970s onward the FDS gradually declined in power and authority with the defeat of the Labour Party. A more right wing political agenda took hold in Israel, bringing with it a change of economic orientation, from a regime of socialist welfare to neo-liberal economics, accelerated by Americanization and globalization processes that affected the Israeli way of life.⁴⁶

As a micro-cosmos of Israeli society, the Israeli folk dance field reflected these changes. A young generation of Israeli folk dance instructors and choreographers gradually took the lead. Simultaneously, the earlier values of Zionist socialism—collectivism and volunteerism—that once were the trademarks of Israeli folk dance activities, gradually vanished. Once an idealistic, volunteer effort, Israeli folk dancing became a field dominated by economic interests, privatization and commercialization. More and more private workshops, as well as the unfettered creation of new Israeli folk dances to popular radio hits became the new reality in the Israeli folk dance business. Regardless, Israeli dance still relies heavily on its national patriotic discourse as a legitimizing basis for its activities.

The changes that have taken place in Israel have affected Israeli folk dance activities in America as well. While Berk and his institutions represented the organised institutional aspect of Israeli folk dancing activities in America, a group of Israeli folk dance instructors, who immigrated from Israel to the States and worked mainly in New York and California, began to operate on a privatized basis. Whereas in the 1950s and 1960s these individuals (mostly men) focused their activities solely on Israeli folk dance instruction, since the 1970s they also have begun to create Israeli folk dances in America, which they have introduced to the local Jewish American
dance community and exported back to Israel, thereby adding to a constantly growing Israeli folk dance repertoire.

This development provoked a vigorous reaction among institutional dance departments and dance creators in Israel, all of whom were opposed to Israeli dance promoters who were living and creating in the United States. In order to understand this debate, I would like to analyse its discourse in terms of its claims of authenticity, ownership and representation, bringing to bear on these three components a focus on economic interests that have influenced the dance field as a result of privatisation and commercialisation.

Can National Products be created across the Borders?

In general, the Israeli attitude towards Israelis living abroad has been marked by resentment over the years. Portrayals of those who have emigrated from Israel depict them as traitors, stigmatizing them with the degrading Hebrew term yordim (which literally translates as ‘descend’). Yet, in the field of Israeli folk dancing, instructors who emigrated to the States initially served the Israeli government’s mission of exporting Israeli folk dances abroad and engaging Jewish Americans in this Zionist activity. However, once Israeli instructors began to create their own dances in America and introduce them as ‘Israeli folk dances,’ the institutional dance department became angry and confused. The persistent question of ‘what is Israeli about Israeli folk dances?’ became even more pressing in the face of new Israeli creations from abroad. In a manifesto published both in Hebrew and English, in Israel and in the States respectively, an Israeli senior dance instructor and choreographer, Yoav Ashriel, decisively opposes the creation of Israeli folk dance in the States:

“There are people living in the United States who manufacture Israeli folk dances! This is indeed a strange phenomenon for these are not original Israeli folk dances, but rather some artificial process […] Folk dances are being created as part of the ongoing and the newly born culture and folklore in Israel […] this folklore is rooted in the unique Israeli experience […] it is not possible to reside in one country and create the folklore of another country […] The creators abroad exploit the desire of the dancers there to learn new Israeli dances […] If, on the other hand, they still wish to create Israeli folk dances, then it should be in Israel, where their creation will be naturalistic […] if they wish to dance Israeli folk dances in the States, they must learn them in Israel, and not “invent” them artificially. At least we in Israel should not have anything to do with this imported material, which can destroy our beautiful folklore. Let us help to preserve the authenticity of the Israeli folk dances, which is an integral part of our culture.”

A close reading of the rhetoric that the Israeli senior instructor employs reveals that he bases his attitude on two clear-cut oppositions: the creation of Israeli folk dances abroad is considered to be ‘artificial’, while the creation of Israeli folk dances in Israel is ‘naturalistic’; the dances in the States are ‘manufactured’ while the dances in Israel are ‘created’; the Israelis abroad ‘exploit’ and ‘destroy’ the ‘original’ and ‘authentic’ folklore that is being created in Israel.

This binary opposition, which portrays Israeli folk dance activities in Israel as purely ‘authentic’ versus the creation abroad as purely ‘artificial’ requires further analysis. Ashriel himself was one of the first Israeli dance creators who refused to comply with FDS demands in the 1970s and started to create his own private workshops and dances in Israel. Many instructors accused him, and the other creators who followed him of dragging the field of Israeli dancing into commercialisation, thereby emptying of its genuine values, which the governmental dance unit apparently
safeguarded. By accusing Israeli folkdance creation abroad of being fake, Israeli dance composers were able to represent their own creation as authentic and disregard the other one as artificial. In so doing, the Israeli instructors created a cultural hierarchy of authenticity chains, relying on the relative value of authenticity attached to the dances created in Israel in contrast to those created abroad.

Furthermore, Ashriel’s call to ‘not have anything to do with this imported material’ was manifested in certain practical ways, such as by excommunicating dance creations from abroad, not introducing dances from America in workshops and dance sessions held in Israel, and even by creating a new dance to a song that already had an American dance attached to it. This development led to many problems within the Israeli folk dance community. For example, devoted dancers who were used to travel worldwide to attend Israeli dance workshops expected to learn the known Israeli folk dance repertoire. As a result, they were confused by the existence of two dance versions to the same song. By taking these measures, the instructors from Israel strove to assert their cultural superiority and social power over creations made in America. In response, Israeli-American folk dance activists protested the attitude of the Israeli instructors. In the following letter, Ofer Gil, an Israeli dance instructor who lived abroad challenged the basic premise of Israeli folk dance authenticity by recognising the creations in Israel and in America as a newly created folklore in a modern era:

“IIsraeli dances – both those that have been created in Israel and those that have been created abroad – are not folkdances, neither are they folklore. Folklore is the culture of the people and it cannot be created artificially by a systemized planning of steps and a given music. Israeli dances are created in Israel – as they are in the US – with an eye to their economic feasibility and the claim that the only considerations are “voluntary,” “pure,” and “idealistic” ones etc. is not true […] Bad dances are also created in Israel […] On the other hand, there are some very beautiful dances that have been created abroad and it is very worthwhile to get them and dance them in Israel.”

This position raises the question of an inner value of the cultural product regardless of its place of creation, taking into account the fact that the huge repertoire of Israeli folk dancing includes both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ dances. Participants of Israeli folk dance sessions generally understand the distinction between a ‘good’ or ‘beautiful’ dance as the creation of an inner harmony between steps, melody and lyrics, which allows a dancer to embody a kinesthetic aesthetic. Based on this criterion, the dancing public considers many of the Israeli folk dances created abroad to be beautiful; that is why many of these dances eventually became popular despite the initial hostility of Israeli-based instructors.

The Authenticity of National Products as a Borderless Creation

Interestingly, Israeli instructors living abroad have interpreted the ‘inner beauty’ of Israeli dances created outside of Israel on the basis of the sense of authenticity that these dances impart. For Israeli instructors who reside outside of Israel, the creation of new Israeli folk dances stood apart from its economic value, as a way to express their deep emotional involvement in Israeli culture. While living abroad, Israeli Jews were able to express their longing for Israel and their Israeli identity by contributing to a constantly evolving Israeli culture. Their self-perception as ‘Israelis’ first and foremost, and in the eyes of American Jewry, conferred on them the knowledge and legitimacy to contribute to Israeli culture, a privilege that was denied, along with the
hierarchical chain of relativistic authenticity, to non-Israeli American Jews, as well as non-Jews.49

Today, Israeli dance creation abroad is generally accepted and appreciated mainly for its artistic value. In the following passage, a present-day composer, Mali Lipson, who lives in America, describes both her background and her choreography of the popular dance *Isha Al Hachof* [a woman on the beach]:50

“I was born in Tel-Aviv. Throughout my life I was connected to music, thanks to my father Z”L, who had been the first violinist in the Israeli Philharmonic […] After completing my studies at Tel-Aviv University, I moved to Miami, where I still live today with Moshe, my partner in life and in dance […] About ten years ago we started to choreograph dances. Our first dance was ‘Ata Li Eretz’ [you are my land] and since then we have choreographed about fifteen additional dances. The song *Isha Al Hachof* (performed by the Parvarim with Hebrew lyrics by Naomi Shemer to Greek music by composer Manos Hadjudakis) was given to us by one of the Miami dancers, together with a special request to create a dance to this magnificent song […] we are proud that through this dance we were able to accomplish the task of conveying the song’s magical message and we are happy that the dance has been well received by dancers throughout the world.”

This dance, regarded by many critics as one of the most beautiful, gained enormous recognition both in Israel and abroad and was chosen as ‘the dance of the month’ in July 2006 by the Israeli folk dance magazine *rokdim-nirkoda*, a bilingual magazine that serves the Israeli folk dance community worldwide.51 Lipson’s description emphasizes her biographical background and her deep emotional connection to Israel, thereby legitimizing her creation abroad. Both she and her partner feel that Israeli folk dancing is an essential part of their Israeli identity, allowing them to contribute to its evolving culture. Yet, their dance also represents the current hybrid identity of Israeli folk dancing. From her description, we learn that this ‘Israeli folk dance’ was created in Miami at the behest of a Jewish dance audience, and was composed to Greek music with lyrics by ‘the first Lady of Israeli Song’, Naomi Shemer (who wrote the legendary *Yerushalaim shel Zahav* ‘Jerusalem of Gold’). Additionally, the song is performed in Hebrew by the Israeli ‘Parvarim’ duo, who are mostly known in Israel for their Latin American music.52 Lipson’s example beautifully demonstrates the many changes that Israeli folk dance has undergone from its beginnings as a national product initiated by pioneering Jews to a dance that can be created both in and outside of Israel. Created abroad by former Israelis, the dances now incorporate a diverse mix of choreographic influences, various musical genres, and Hebrew lyrics. Furthermore, the instructions for this circular-dance state that this is a ‘hands free’ dance. This feature alone reflects a powerful symbolic and physical change that has characterized individualisation processes in the Israeli folk dance field over time. As dancers gradually stopped holding hands, the collective intimate bond that they shared diminished and the quasi-mythological quality of earlier Israeli folk dances was abandoned.53

One year before his death, Fred Berk made a wish that ‘the dances of Israel, from the West Coast and from New York, will influence a cultural merger of the two countries [Israel and the States]. They will influence each other and hopefully become a new ethnic dance form, which so many people helped build and develop’.54 Today, it looks like his forecast was quite accurate. Presently the huge impact of Israeli folk dance workshops and camps held in the States can be felt on the development of the Israeli folk dance movement. For instance, the organisers of Israeli folk dance camps outside of Israel tend to invite active Israeli composers to their dancing sessions.
While the American audience benefits from the interaction with ‘authentic Israeli’ creator, the composer himself benefits financially and symbolically by enhancing his reputation and prestige among his colleagues the dancing public. Furthermore, the opportunity to present new material abroad became so important that one estimate claims that nearly half of the new Israeli folk dances were first presented in workshops abroad and only afterwards were introduced in Israel.56

Conclusion: ‘Israeli folk Dances made in America are like the Children of Israelis born Abroad’

Presently, the registry of Israeli folk dances includes thousands of dances, and Israeli folk dancing is a popular activity around the globe and especially in the United States. Its creators, who live both in Israel and in the States and their worldwide audiences, are very much engaged in a reciprocal cultural relation. These relations, facilitated as they are by new economic opportunities, are based on varied interests ranging from financial benefits to status and recognition and are joined by deep patriotic sentiments. In the contemporary era, it looks as though geographic borders matter less than their symbolic meaning. The question of where a dance was created gradually has lost its importance. Seemingly, the average folk dancer today does not bother with this question and generally is not aware of the creator’s name or place of residence. A dance that flows nicely to catchy music and Hebrew lyrics is what Israeli folk dancers most appreciate. To corroborate this claim, I turn now to an ethnographic study I conducted in 2005 at the ‘Y’ in New York that asked dancers to discuss how they regard Israeli folk dances created in America. In response to this question, only one out of 17 interviewees considered Israeli folk dances made in Israel to be more authentic than those created abroad. Most of the participants said that they don’t care where a dance is created as long as it is enjoyable. Dancers also insisted that Hebrew lyrics are important and that it matters if the composer is Israeli, regardless of his or her current place of residence. This suggests that national products should not be examined by their place of creation, but rather by the authenticity that can be attached to their composers. As such, Israelis who live abroad retain their Israeli identity and connection to Israel, as do their dances. One Israeli woman even compared Israeli folk dances made in the United States to her children: ‘My children were created in America as well, so does that make them not good enough?’

In conclusion, Israeli folk dances can be described as a secondary expression of folklore, theoretically known as modern folklorism.58 This label can be applied to all Israeli folk dances created in Israel and abroad. However, taking into account the various motivations for the dances’ creation--national romantic sentiments, government initiative, artistic expression, commercialization, or diasporic longing for Israel--the young field of Israeli folk dancing developed an inner hierarchy, a multi-layer structure that relied on diverse claims of authenticity. While folk dance creation in Israel was accused of being an artificial government-sponsored folklore, Israeli creation abroad was perceived as less authentic cultural expression and was easily attacked by critics. Yet, for Zionist Americans, the creation of Israeli folk dances was a symbol of a genuine national revival, for which they had abandoned their own self-made communal dances.

Israeli folk dancing is an authentic expression of a modern nation building project and cultural re-creation, and as such, its value as a carrier of the Israeli national spirit is its most salient feature. All activists who take part in the Israeli folk
dance movement, regardless of their place of residence, emphasize this trademark quality, and through their efforts, constantly expand the discourse on its authenticity.

**TABLE 1 HERE**

Notes


6. The ethnographic work of Shokied is an example of such an effort, see M. Shokied, *Children of Circumstances: Israeli Emigrants in New York* (Ney York: Cornell University, 1988).


14. See [www.israelidances.com](http://www.israelidances.com), the most comprehensive website currently documenting Israeli folk dances (data collected in November 2014).


17. I use the name ‘Israel’ to refer to the country after 1948. To designate the region prior to statehood, I use the names: ‘Palestine,’ or ‘Land of Israel’.


20. Ibid.


23. From the program of the first Hebraic dance festival in 1944. The Israeli Dance Archive, Tel Aviv.


Arab dances were included in the second dance festival held in 1947, and remains so to this day. On the incorporation of Arab dances in the Israeli folk dance movement see D. Roginsky, “Nationalism and Ambivalence: Ethnicity, Gender and Folklore as Categories of Otherness,” Patterns of Prejudice 40, no 3 (2006): 237-258.


The head of the FDS, published a special guide for Israeli folk dance emissaries. See T. Hodes, A booklet for the Emissary: Israeli Folk Dances in Summer Camps in the USA. (Tel Aviv: The Histadrut Press and the Jewish Agency for Israel, 1970) [in Hebrew].

With the exception of changes that affect the exportation of dances, other changes are not the focus of the present article. For a discussion of other changes and their meanings as a reflection of broader political, economic and social changes that took place in Israel see D. Roginsky, “Structural Changes and Cultural Meanings in the Israeli Folk Dance Movement,” in Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance, ed. J.Brin Ingber (Wayne State University Press, 2011), 315-327.


These figures were calculated using material from the website rokdim (‘dancing’ in Hebrew) which publicizes Israeli folk dance activities and keeps a registry of Israeli folk dance instructors and choreographers www.rokdim.co.il (Data collected in January 2011).


F. Berk, Jewish Dance Activities in America.

N. Jackson, Converging Movements, 183.

F. Berk, Jewish Dance Activities in America (original emphasis in bold).

V. Beliajus, “My Encounter with Gert Kaufman,” Viltis: a Magazine of Folklore and Folk Dance 49, no.5 (1991):7. I would like to thank Helen Winkler, an Israeli and international folk dance instructor, for introducing me to this source.

F. Berk, Jewish Dance Activities in America.


Y. Ashriel, “Israeli Dances Made in USA,” HORA 11, no.2, issue # 32 (1979):1-3,
A unique example of a creator who is neither Israeli nor Jewish is Roberto Haddon, an international folk dance instructor from England who became deeply involved with the Israeli folk dance scene. He created the dance *Beini Leveinech* [Between you and me] to Hebrew lyrics. In an interview he remarked: ‘I would say that Beini Leveinech is my first dance to Israeli music – I'll leave the deliberations about whether as such it is an Israeli dance to the scholars […] For me the most important consideration for any of my dances is how well they fit into Israeli dance sessions in terms of style and feeling’. [http://batamanoot.net/robertohaddon.php](http://batamanoot.net/robertohaddon.php)

Another interesting example of the globalization is a circle dance that was choreographed to the theme song of the movie ‘Borat’ in May 2007 by Ira Weisburd, a Jewish dance instructor based in Florida. See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=188lKJOA5gw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=188lKJOA5gw).

It cannot be considered as an Israeli folk dance since the lyrics of the song are not in Hebrew, but it does use a typical Israeli folk dance steps and gestures. I would like to thank Professor Judah Cohen from Indiana University for bringing this example to my attention.

For more on the structural changes in the Israeli folk dancing field and their symbolic meanings see D. Roginsky, *Structural Changes*.

As opposed to the early days of the Israeli folk dance movement, when women were the leading figures, present day composers are mostly men. For a discussion of the relation between gender, culture and nationalism see Roginsky, *Nationalism and Ambivalence*.

Some of the results of this work were presented in a conference paper D. Roginsky, “Diasporic Dance Encounters: Israelis and Jewish Americans’ Exchange of Cultural Identity and Social Relations,” *Association for Israel Studies (AIS), New York University* (2008).


The Israeli folk dance instructor Yaron Meisher founded it in 1987 in Tel Aviv as a Hebrew magazine. Since July 2004, it has been a Hebrew-English magazine and is supported by the Israeli Dance Institute in New York, which is directed by Ruth Goodman and Danny Uziel.

For more on the structural changes in the Israeli folk dancing field and their symbolic meanings see D. Roginsky, *Structural Changes*.

F. Berk, “American-Israeli and Israeli Folk Dance,” *Lincoln center archive*, Fred Berk Papers *MGZMD 41, box1, folder 9 (1979).*


Some of the results of this work were presented in a conference paper D. Roginsky, “Diasporic Dance Encounters: Israelis and Jewish Americans’ Exchange of Cultural Identity and Social Relations,” *Association for Israel Studies (AIS), New York University* (2008).

Film Review: Ida’s Dance Club

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A film by Dalit Kimor (director and producer) produced in collaboration with Tel Aviv University and David Katz Faculty of the arts, Department of Film and TV and The Anna Havas Scholarship fund for students in the film & television department established in memory of Michael Havas (1903-1993). In Hebrew, with English subtitles. Distributed by Ruth Deskin Distribution.

Ida’s Dance Club is a must-see film for all dance scholars, sociologists, individuals interested in the Israeli society, but also anyone interested in a good documentary that vividly shows everyday lives and personal stories of a group of people. The film features dance society for senior Israeli citizens run by Ida Ben Ami in Tel Aviv, Israel. The dance society organises dance competitions for senior citizens (Golden competitions), and the film shows a story of preparing for the second Golden competition. However, the film is much more than that because it also depicts the personal stories of the participants and the role dance has in their lives, personal destinies and problems people are faced with in their everyday lives, as well as complexity and diversity of the Israeli society.

The film opens with Julia Goldinsky showing her winning the first Golden competition, and then going to the market to buy vegetables. People in the market recognise her, commend her dancing style, and even dance with her because they saw her on the TV and liked her. After that, the film shows another women (Clara Shezifi) telling her friends she saw an advert for the competition. While explaining why she wants to join the competition, Clara makes a bold statement by asking: “Why is Dancing with the Stars only for youngsters with nice legs?” With this, she reflected upon the problem all modern societies are faced with nowadays, i.e. the problem of the media and popular culture that impose values, expected lifestyle and personal appearance expectations that have a negative impact on people who do not fit within the stereotype or an expected role. This is particularly true of women, as many feminist researches have shown. This statement will bear new relevance later in the movie with events surrounding Julia Goldinsky who will undergo plastic surgery to remove extra skin from her legs only to end up in pain and miss the second competition even though dancing means everything to her, i.e. in one moment in the movie she states she is nothing without dancing, and if ever not able to dance she prefers to die. As we will learn as the movie progresses, Clara’s and Julia’s life paths are very similar and united in pain caused by their siblings, and even though these two women do not interact in the movie nor is their destiny exactly the same, similarity, pain and deep connection between both women can be strongly felt throughout. In some ways this story reminds the viewer of a movie called Crash, however, unlikely for Crash where director emotively sensed racial problems American society is going
through and has created a story based on one true event, this film offers a narration of
true people who are going through similar life paths, and yet they do not always
interact. The people in this movie are the ‘real people’ that all of us can identify with,
and unlikely for most Hollywood movies the happy ending, as in real life, is not
guaranteed nor achieved in all cases.

Throughout the movie we are looking at preparations for the second Golden
competition while, at the same time, meeting competitors who give snapshots of their
lives through cut scenes. For example, Julia is obsessed with her looks, being the best
in dance, but she has no relationship or contact with her daughter. When she speaks of
her daughter and the lack of communication between them, we see her sadness and
loneliness. On the other hand, Clara has an ill daughter and she takes care of her for
17 years. She cries in the movie saying she loves her daughter and does not want to
lose her, but that she has no life that has “turned into a 24/7 depression for her”. In
that, this dance competition means a distraction and relief for her, and when we listen
to her story we feel sadness. While at first this confession sounds negative for we do
not usually perceive children as a burden to private life even if they require constant
care, as it appears, Clara’s daughter refuses to eat properly and does not take any
advice from her mother who is trying to explain that very small amount of plain
vegetables will not make her feel any better. We do not see Clara’s daughter properly,
but even a look from the back is enough to notice that her daughter is extremely
skinny, almost like a human skeleton, and probably suffers anorexia accompanied
with psychological denial of the medical condition. Therefore, dance classes became a
centre of Clara’s life, and she takes them very seriously. Just like with Julia, dance
classes became a relief and meaning in life. Clara’s dance partner Alberto switches to
dance with another women (Carmella Ashkenazi) based on Carmella’s intrusive
initiative, and Clara finds a new partner in Benny Raphael for whom we will later in
the film learn that he is gay who has been hiding his orientation for major part of his
life, and had to cope with that.

The film also shows other competitors such as Sarah who is still dancing even
though she is 92 and cannot dance all dances she still vividly remembers from the
past. We also meet one Ukrainian man who survived Auschwitz and the notorious Dr
Mengele and his medical experiments. This Ukrainian dancer was a victim having his
blood drained like many Jews did for German army blood transfusion purposes (while
they are alive and lying on the table). This man cries in the movie and says Mengele
hurt him so much, and that perhaps he would be better of dead. Even though he still
works, he refuses to say anything else about him saying the only thing that matters are
his traumas from the Holocaust that determine him. Yet, he attends the dance class
and tries to find a meaning in this form of art. We also meet a women who cannot
stand rings and sparkly things that make “Christmassy noise” because she gets
“shivers” remembering how the Nazi’s would come to take Jewish property, and how
the Jewish people would be throwing everything valuable on the floor, like jewellery
etc, which made a jingling sound. They would do this knowing the punishment would
be brutal if they had something to hide.

These Holocaust stories reflect wider Israeli problem of collective trauma
caused by the Holocaust that still lasts even though it has been more than 60 years
since the WWII ended. However, as research conducted by some Israeli scholars
shows, Israel has never completely recovered, as survivors still have to live with their
traumas that largely define them, and these traumas are also often passed on to next
generations. Dance, however, appears as a form of relief and a meaning making in
otherwise sad lives in which Jewish people cannot overcome trauma they encountered in the past.

To generalise, it could be said, it is very visible in this movie that all participants are looking for a meaning in their lives, and with this dance becomes embedded in the everyday lives of participants that really enjoy and identify with dance. In some aspects when dance becomes your whole life it brings with it its own disappointments. The portrayal of dance in this movie becomes a story of joy, meaning, and happiness, but also sadness, disappointment and defeat. For example, Julia undergoes plastic surgery to remove the extra skin from her legs, which projects the media expectations in terms of personal appearance, i.e. as Clara stated there is an expectation that dance is only for people with nice legs. However, as an outcome, Julia is in pain due to surgery and cannot dance and compete, as well as keep her apartment on the roof that gives a view of the whole Tel Aviv because she cannot walk up the stairs anymore. We see deep sadness during the dance competition when Julia can only watch other participants but not compete. Ida calls Julia’s daughter and explains that Julia is in pain, but in the movie we do not see her daughter coming to see her, and in a way Julia loses everything. On the other hand, Clara takes this dance competition very seriously but fails to win any prize while her competitor Carmella who took her dance partner away (Alberto Kapiluto) and made an attempt to take her second dance partner (Benny Raphael), wins the second place. The movie shows Clara packing her stuff while the victory celebration is still on, apparently leaving quickly in disappointment. Unlike the usual Hollywood movie plots, there is no happy ending for the main characters, Julia and Clara alike. We also see disappointment on the face of Ukrainian men who suffered from Mengele’s abuse. But, then surprisingly the first place is won by Inga and Michael Perry where we see Inga getting “shrivers” albeit this time for winning the competition and not because of Nazi’s coming to take her personal belongings. This victory symbolically represents a victory for all Holocaust survivors who managed to settle down in a Jewish state. The Holocaust story is narrated throughout the movie from a different perspective as well, i.e. we see that people speak Hebrew and other languages, and this shows the diversity of the Israeli society, where Jews from all countries immigrate, to find shelter from prosecutions that in some places did not end up until the present day.\(^1\)

In some aspects it appears that dance becomes a language of emotions, i.e. it seems that participants can communicate their emotions better when communicating in their languages of origin other than in Hebrew (e.g. Russian for Julia or English for Benny and Sarah). Therefore, with this, we get the message that while the language of origin helps in expressing emotions properly, there are no language barriers when it comes to dance, which clearly has an important meaning in life for the Israeli society, where immigrants often face exclusion due to language barriers. Dance, thus, helps to bring a sense of belonging and interaction within society, as well as a meaning in what could be otherwise sad and lonely lives.

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2 Crash. Directed and written by Paul Haggis; produced by Yari Film Group, 2004.