

**Living Dance**

or

**People Dancing**

**Dance – Society – Culture  
in Israel and the World**

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**Survey**

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## **Introduction**

The central question that this book addresses is how dance as an expression of the creative man represents society and reflects culture. I propose to investigate dance from its various social perspectives, its meaning to a group of people who dance and its part in the creative cultural fabric.

My first basic assumption is that the representations of culture differ from society to society, from place to place and in different time periods. In this context, it is crucial that we emphasize the perspective that no society is more cultured than any other society. This is basic to our study.

My second basic assumption claims that art is a fundamental need of human and social activity and is not a question of privilege. Man expresses himself through a variety of artistic tools in a many different ways according to the framework of the society in which he lives and the culture he has inherited. These include way of speech, style of dress, self-adornment and many other elements which are necessary to social integration and the creation of a personal identity. Art is not only the prerogative of people that choose art as a way of life or profession. Through viewing and analyzing dance, we will be able to learn about people as human beings, and about the social group in which they live and the culture that they create.

Many researchers see dance as the most primordial art form and as the father of the arts. There have been many attempts in dance research to understand the significance of dance from historical and ethnological perspectives in order to understand and focus on the

universality and variation of dance insofar as it represents the difference between various societies and reflects diverse cultures.

We have learned from the historical perspective that in tribal cultures, ethnic dance included all the functions of dance – it constituted an inseparable part of the yearly cycle and the cycle of life; as ritual dance it was a means of healing and treatment and formed part of ritual ceremony and prayers; dance as communication, dance as a unifying framework, dance as entertainment and organization, a means of wooing, an expression of joy and sorrow, an artistic tool and aesthetic expression, which contains the history of the dancing group, its myths, its customs, its traditions, its issues and aesthetic conventions

In this book we will attempt to deepen the understanding of the functions which developed in the art of dance and which today live side by side: ethnic dance, ritual dance, folk dance, social dance and stage dance.

One of the aims of this study is to focus on basic concepts which are related to the understanding of dance and to clearly articulate, based on the information we have available today, a general definition of dance and of basic concepts related to the various social functions of dance which have crystallized over the course of history

In addition, we will attempt to focus on the meaning of dance for the individual who belongs to a group and who reflects the culture of an ethnic group.

In order to facilitate the creation of tools for understanding dance from a general perspective and from an Israeli perspective as representative of social, cultural and artistic behavior, this book raises questions, but does not promise to answer them. In Israel, as in other places, dance reflects the uniqueness of socio-cultural groups and forms the basis of what makes up their identities

Ethnic dances in Israel and the attempts to forge local folk dance, social dance and stage dance are surveyed primarily from the ethnographic rather than the historical perspective. In Israel, as in all places in the world where people dance, the various conceptions of gender find expression in dance – shaping and strengthening new and already existing perceptions and at the same time functioning as a challenge to traditional conceptions of gender. Jewish Yemenite dancing is given as an example of a dance tradition which has been researched from different perspectives: ethnic dance in the context of family and community and the way it functions today in Israel; as a central influence on folk dance and social dance created in Israel, and as the source of influence on stage dance. This dance tradition is also surveyed from the perspective of gender and identity: how are these views expressed in the changing face of dance. An examination of the various perspectives, as they are expressed in the dance

of Yemenite Jews shown in this book, enables us to raise questions and examine Israel as a cluster of societies, cultures and dance traditions in which differences exceed similarities. In this book, we will attempt to examine the different relations between various interpretations of dance, society and culture, comparing tribal traditions – Jewish, Muslim, Christian and others – with dance traditions which have traversed barriers and become popular as well as with the creative work of the individual that forms a part of our cultural diversity.

This study was created out of an ongoing conversation with students and colleagues. It is part of a continuum whose importance is in its persistence in relating to what unfolds and is created in the field of dance as an ongoing conversation which explores identities in an artistic prism whose starting point is cultural pluralism.

### **Chapter One – I Move, I Exist**

Dance is one of the most personal forms of expression known to humanity. But, it serves, to the same degree, as a framework and instrument of expression for social, cultural and artistic values. The starting point for this chapter is the **significance of movement and dance to the mover** and the dancer – to man as a living human being. And further, the way in which the dancing community is given expression by the dancers as well as the spectators – **dance and its significance a group of people.**

Dance is an experience that crosses geographical and cultural boundaries and which contains local and personal features and markers. The diversity of dance is based on the dynamic between the language of personal and social movement and the continuity of culture-dependent movement which breaks through personal space to general space and binds groups of people in time and space. Movement is a primary expression of life. I move, I live, I exist.

Man first becomes aware of himself through movement, and in this way, the first connection is made with the physical and social environment. Very quickly, man discovers movement as an instrument of communication. Through movement we give expression to sensations, feelings, ideas and thoughts.

The way that a social group moves, shows, more than anything else, that group's inner dynamic. Through the integration of rhythm and music, a common emotion is created. The physical response of each individual is gradually consolidated into a shared movement response. The bodily excitement of the individual strengthens the group feeling while the movement and dance serve as its means of expression. The play of reciprocity and correspondence between the personal form of the individual dancer and that of the dancing group facilitates a continual perfecting of the expressive capacity.

It is worth remarking that the individual is not always aware of the way he dances, of his movement language. Within the context of expressing the need to move, there are people, who even while responding spontaneously to personal and social requirements, dance without awareness of their movement language.

There are dancers who see dance as an area of expertise that demands study and experience, which can be gained by imitation, by participation in an event that involves dance or by extended preparation prior to the dance that takes place in the appropriate circumstances.

Before examining those circumstances, contexts and meanings, we should not forget for a moment that our concern is with a human form of expression. In this context, we should remember that there are exceptions to every rule and that the role of every assertion is the facilitation of greater understanding, and most of all, the acquisition of tools, which enable us to raise further questions.

### **Movement and Dance as an Existential Impulse**

Various sources from different periods mention movement as a primary impulse. What constitutes this impulse? What drives it and what forms does it take?

The concepts of “body language,” “movement language” and “non-verbal communication” became prevalent mainly in the second half of the twentieth century. They are connected to various areas of research which involve understanding the individual and social groups by observing the relations between verbal and non-verbal communication. They are also connected to attempts to decipher difficulties in self-control, and to attempts at deciphering individual messages influenced by the social and cultural environment. Lest we forget that we are dealing with a very complex phenomenon and the attempts to focus on particular aspects of it, it is important that we do not disconnect the phenomenon of dance from the complexity of its development and its forms of expression.

Many sources reflect the debate between attempts to decipher movement messages and the relation to the artistic outcome, which includes the attempt to interpret formal and aesthetic codes. It is impossible to separate between the components of movement and dance, when attempting to seriously understand such a complex human phenomenon. The point of view of the observer himself must be examined thoroughly and accordingly, the attempt to interpret the personal, social, cultural and artistic significance of dance and the attempt to differentiate between means and ends, as well as the choice between different ways of

interpreting movement language are all part of a process which should raise many questions, questions which may not have unequivocal answers.

### **Man Performs Miracles**

The beginnings of dance were in the movement that the individual made in his personal space. Later, groups of individuals danced together, each one moving in their own specific way. What was common to them was the physical basis of the human body. This corresponded to the way in which they dealt with the physical environment in which they danced. There is a great difference between hard ground, rolling hills, flat plains, forest clearings or desert spaces. Feet that sink into desert sands will move differently than feet that stamp on hard ground. The movement of the feet is the foundation for the movement of the whole body, and for the style of that movement. When people dance in a group, shared feelings are strengthened. Movements create imitative responses and corresponding to individual movement, social combinations and artistic ability, a repertoire of shared movements and a style of dance will be created. The ability to move, the social combinations and the artistic choices made in relation to the movement have become part of a movement statement, which is both individual and social and enables the expression of feelings and different ways of being creative.

The child who dances goes through different movement experiences; he activates his body, he experiences the sense of discovery and develops the capacity to control his body and his environment. Movement enables him to experience participation in a group and the release and strengthening of his self-image. The next stage consists in creating a connection with the other. Here dance enters the picture. Communication demands conventional movements, the understanding of shared codes on the basis of uniformity and agreement. In apparent contradiction to what has just been said, communication through movement requires continual creativity. Creativity relies on individual initiatives that are measured against the group's ability to respond, receive, understand and adopt – and in this way they become part of a tradition, an issue of consensus. The creation of a tradition of dance depends upon the consent of a social institution or of a social group. The ability of a society to impart this tradition, by means of its chosen agents, to its members, young and old, makes it possible for that tradition to become a component in the culture of that society.

The dynamic between tradition and innovation has produced the best in dance creativity. It is in the nature of man to struggle between “the right ways”, the desirable conventional way and dancing that is “unconventional” and which is not recommended from the perspective of

health, education or social convention. Man has the capacity to creatively express himself and at the same time has the need to be part of a group and a culture in which others participate in different ways. The swift development of innovations has led to many different kinds of “dissidents” in the dance world, and has sometimes produced misunderstandings and conflicts. The opposition between tradition and innovation, so-called educational goals, different perspectives of gender and society and the fear of breaking down conventional frameworks caused vigorous reactions within the sphere of artistic creativity in general, and creativity in the field of dance in particular, that were sometimes destructive. This reached such intensity that it was difficult to believe that the conflict was about artistic expression. When the instrument of expression is the human body, a situation may sometimes arise where what is accepted in a specific cultural context will not be accepted in another cultural context. As interpreted by the observer, a system of prohibitions and defenses in reaction to unrestrained exposure produces opposing reactions and gives rise to new systems of defenses and prohibitions on the part of the dancers themselves or on the part of social, cultural and religious institutions. This situation finds expression in the confusion of fundamental concepts connected to dance. Every attempt to fix a common language of concepts, even if only basic, demands engagement with existing cultural difference and gives rise to the enormous variety and forms of dance behavior found in the world. Or, as Jones writes, a dance will awaken the trembling of religious ecstasy in one person and will represent movements of sexual abandon in another. Dance is so personal, so tied up with cultural identity, that if there is no consensus about the significance and values of certain dances, the subsequent embarrassment can lead to contempt, anger and even violence. Challenging or belittling the value of a nation’s traditional dances is equivalent to harming their right to self-determination.

Primarily, dance is the concern of the person or people who are dancing; it belongs to them and must therefore be understood according to their concepts and categories. Understanding is founded on historical knowledge; defining the field of research; understanding the significance of the dance for the dancers; documenting, categorizing and explicating the collected material according to rules which will transform the information into a science.

## **Dance Research**

The history of the study of dance can be divided into three stages:

**1. The Descriptive Stage** developed with the initial recognition of the importance of dance as a meaningful component in different cultures. Many followed after the footsteps of Curt Sachs. In their work, the researchers focus their descriptions of dance on the historical and geographical angles. In their descriptions of dance in different periods and different countries, they tend to find universal characteristics which derive from the description of the local features. Consciously or not, the researcher compared what was called “Western culture” to what was referred as “non-European”. The information that was available to researchers consisted largely of written material by western scholars, researchers and thinkers. Various ways of thinking, points of view and areas of interest were limited at this stage to descriptions of one central culture. This stage of development constituted simply the description and recognition of the “non-European” and was of interest and importance primarily to members of the same culture. (For examples, see Sachs, 1938).

**2. Comparative Research** – In this next stage, researchers from different disciplines – mainly ethnomusicology, history and cultural anthropology – discovered the socio-cultural perspective of dance. In conjunction, means of documentation by recording and filming as well as developments in the methods of analysis during this period were more promising. It is also possible to discern a change of perspective in the academic world, which was influenced by developments in the sound and light technology available (at least in industrialized societies). These enabled researchers to be freed from the exclusively verbal descriptions of academic study and revitalized ways of thinking and expression and facilitated the emergence of new directions in dance research. This stage also saw a renewed discovery of interdisciplinary study. There were those who wanted to believe that by deciphering the language of movement and local dances, it would be possible to find rules and formulas in order to corroborate the concept of dance (like music) as an “international language”. This stage of research inaugurates the beginning of the attempt to grapple with ways of deciphering languages of movement and dance. However, in most cases, the studies were not accompanied with in-depth analysis of the context in which these dances were created, nor did they relate to the significance of the dances for the dancers. Documentation by information of specialists and informants and

learning by real experience of dance and movement in cultural-dependent traditional frameworks was the lot of pioneers only (For examples, see Lomax, 1968).

**3. The third and current stage constitutes the examination and analysis of dance in wide cultural contexts with contemporary theoretical tools, by multi-disciplinary researchers.** This stage is based on the internalization of the view which claims that no culture is more important than another and that no art is superior to another. Today, the aim of finding universal rules that will enable the understanding of dance as an “international language” has been abandoned. Great interest is directed at the collation of material and the deciphering of artistic and cultural codes as expressions of the individual and of society. The guiding principle of the study of dance today is the attempt to understand the significance of dance from the perspective of those who dance. Today’s researcher must define the subject of his study and choose the appropriate research tools. Additionally, he must be aware of the information available in the natural sciences, human sciences and social sciences. The researcher is required to interpret and decipher culture-dependant aesthetic codes as well as individual expression within the social group by means of artistic expression in movement. Contemporary researchers are required to understand the complexity of events which include dance. Frequently, they will need to examine musical structures, forms and styles which are an inseparable part of the dance in question. Alternatively he will need to examine verbal texts, forms of dress and adornment and different expressions of material culture etc., without which it is impossible to understand the interconnecting relations that make up the dance. As a result, the research will often be interdisciplinary and will require thorough study of each field separately, as well as the study of the relations between the different elements and their influence on the whole creative work. (For examples: see Bahat, 1995).

In the second half of the twentieth century dance was included in different research contexts and was given a variety of titles. Sometimes similar subjects were given synonymous names and sometimes, if the approach was similar, they were given different emphases. These included the Comparative Study of Dance, Dance Ethnology and/or Anthropology of Dance. The principal stream for this kind of approach started in the United States in the 1960’s. Susan Youngerman lists the researchers who founded the anthropological research of dance approach: Kaeppeler Williams, Peterson-Royce and Backin in England, Kealiinohomoku and Lynne-Hannah (Youngerman, 1998).

The three stages of dance research mentioned were all breakthroughs in their own time. Today when an innovative dance challenges the cultural norm it has one of two fates: either it disappears quickly or it becomes part of the mainstream culture. Researchers of dance must therefore be attentive to the swift development which takes place within culture-dependant tradition.

**Dance research in Israel** is relatively younger than dance research in England and the US. At base a society of immigrants, attempts by agents of culture to form a national melting pot, it is beginning to realize that pluralism is inevitable. If we also take into consideration initial comparative descriptions of the different sub-societies in Israel, descriptions which do not yet constitute research, it is possible to speak of a history of approximately 60 years. From the 1950's onwards, attempts were made to gather, document and preserve information in a way that did not constitute research and most importantly did not correspond to the required rules and therefore cannot be relied on for current research. Dance research in Israel worthy of its name, began in the 1970's.

#### **Who are dance researchers and why is dance researched?**

Since dance research as an independent discipline is relatively new, the first dance researchers came from other disciplines. As a result, the starting point of most researchers did not include dance but would come up in the process of their work when they discovered that it was neither possible nor appropriate to neglect the subject. We find examples of this in fields such as history, ethnography anthropology, musicology, ethnomusicology, sociology and others. An ethnographic or historian researching forms of behavior or cultural expression in a particular society will find in dance one of the most interesting sources of material and will add additional light on that society.

Dance research today is done by people whose basic qualifications relate to the dance professions and who, in addition, have specialized in academic study such as history, musicology, ethnomusicology, sociology, anthropology and other subjects. With the increasing tendency for interdisciplinary work in different fields which research institutions are offering it will be possible to present research questions and illuminate different themes in the field of dance studies from non-conventional perspectives.

What can we expect from researchers whose focus of interest is dance?

They must have expertise and experience in the fundamentals of movement and dance and have basic knowledge in studies of the human body (anatomy, kinesiology, bio-mechanics, etc). They need to be familiar with the fundamentals of music, especially in music that relates to the dance that they are documenting, learning or researching.

In accordance with the subject of their research and the questions they present, the researchers should define the tools of their research

In the study of society, culture and art, dance presents a movement text in which men and women make statements about themselves to themselves and to others, as is common in the anthropology of culture.

The central concern of this book is dance as representative of different social perspectives and reflective of a variety of cultures. Our goal is not to survey the history of dance. The historical aspect will be mentioned to the degree that it will contribute to the understanding and significance of the developmental aspect of the dance component in human culture. In this regard we will need to clarify fundamental concepts in the hope that this clarification will provide useful tools for the understanding of the essence of the dance-society connection as well as the language of movement, culture and artistic expression.

It is possible to say that in ethnochoreological research or in the process of investigating dance as a part of interdisciplinary anthropological research, various aspects of the researcher's responsibility are put to the test:

- A. The degree of the researcher's responsibility towards the people he is researching.
- B. The way in which ethnochoreology reflects the society being researched and whether the researcher is a member of that society or another society.
- C. The degree of the researcher's professional knowledge of dance and his ability to document and understand the significance of the dance and its place in the life of the society and the culture of a specific ethnic group.
- D. The ability of the researcher to understand and present the totality of contexts and their significance, as dance is an area of research which is interdisciplinary in its essence.

The researcher is obliged to document and describe everything surrounding the event which includes the dance. He should interview the informants and experience the dance in question himself, with the aid of the relevant informant. This is necessary, even though the researcher may not be a member of the culture being researched. If that is the case, the researcher should not make the mistake of claiming to be one of the dancers of that culture despite the fact that he must act in accordance with the conventions of the environment under research. In addition to the modes of research available to researchers in general, reliable, portable means of recording and filming are now available to researchers of dance. It is also strongly recommended for all movement and dance research to integrate documentation and analysis using the Eshkol-Wachman (E.W.) notation system. Eshkol-Wachman movement notation is usually precise and reliable and is able to organize data and attain results of a

scientific standard. Dance researchers should use these tools in a balanced sensible way which addresses the research questions they have set for themselves. These tools are a means rather than an end – a means to understanding dance as a human social cultural artistic system of behavior which provides the researcher with the instruments to decipher the aesthetic codes and artistic structure of the dance.

### **Dance – Concepts and Definitions**

An examination of common definitions of the concept of dance reflects historical perspectives and reveals culturally specific views and beliefs. In definitions of dance, we find the connection: “dance – a form of artistic expression” or “dancer – artist in dance.” These definitions indicate that it is not sufficient to speak of dance as the language of movement, but of dance as a form of artistic expression in movement. In the preface to the collection “What is Dance”, the editors debate the boundaries of the concept of dance: are we dealing with dance as a phenomena particular to human society? In that case how do we relate to ‘dance-like phenomena’ in the natural world? The great progress that has taken place in research of the social behavior of animals advances the understanding of dance in animal and human society.

Relating to dance as “basic rhythmic patterns of movement in space” is not satisfactory when it is easily possible to discern rhythmic patterns of movement which are not dance (Copeland-Cohen 1983). Various theories on dance as an art form are surveyed and quoted in the collection as well as references to its meaning in cultural history.

Despite the difficulties involved in such an endeavor, offering a satisfactory definition of what we call dance, cannot be attempted without relating to three basic concepts: **art, body movement, language and communication** (non verbal).

By combining these three concepts in a statement whereby all the forms of dance are included, it is possible to offer the following definition:

#### **Dance – The art of body movement as a language of expression and communication.**

It is the nature of a definition to speak volumes in a few words. A definition focuses and clarifies a certain aspect of the concept of dance and raises many questions in regard to its other aspects.

Dance is one of the arts of the body, and body movement is its basic material. We communicate, express ourselves and create by using a language of movement that is subordinated to societal conventions and reflects cultural and aesthetic rules which are dependent on time and place.

In this regard, it is important to point out that the common use of the term “artistic music” and “artistic dance” to distinguish dance pieces that have been created for concert and dance performance from pieces that are created and performed in the framework of the family or community and are therefore not considered artistic, is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the concept of “art”.

## **Chapter Two – I Dance, I Belong**

### **Ethnic Dance – Representing Society and Reflecting Culture**

After various transformation in the significance of ethnic dance, researchers of dance today agree that **ethnic dance** can be defined as the dance of a particular ethnic group: it symbolizes the group’s internal identity, is a means of strengthening the society’s feelings of belonging and uniqueness and represents the society vis-à-vis other societies with whom it has reciprocal relations.

Very simply, it is possible to say that ethnic dance is dance performed by an ethnic group, but this definition is not very enlightening. In the past, this form of dance was labeled in numerous ways as "primitive dance", "tribal dance", "peasant dance" and "traditional dance". Today it is more acceptable to define ethnic dance in terms of function, context and process. (Peterson-Royce, 1998)

For the majority of people, ethnic dance is the dance of an ethnic group who inhabits a common territory and shares a common history. The dances are usually accompanied by traditional music or by music which is characteristic of the particular group. In traditional societies generally, many ethnic dances are an integral part of events or ceremonies related to yearly cycles or the cycle of life.

Today, a growing percentage of the world’s population live in suburban societies and industrialized economic centers which are characterized by social and geographical mobility and often include many sub-cultures and ethnic groups of multiple generations. In these societies, dance as a form of non-verbal expression and communication sometimes becomes more important than other art forms.

In this regard it is important to point out that ethnic dance will sometimes be discussed under varying terms. For example, there are those that claim that “dance sociology’s most important task is to explain the significance of dance as a mode of communication in its socio-cultural context.” (Filmer, 1998: 362)

The movement content and the context in which the dance is performed are integral to the cultural heritage of every social group. The movement structure relates to ordered or

spontaneous formulas of movement which are based on the rules of what is permitted or forbidden.

The textual and contextual dimensions of dance – who dances what, why, how, when, where, and with and for whom, as well as the audience's role – are part of a group's cultural heritage. (Hanna, 1998: 363)

### **Ethnic Dance in Socio-Anthropological Research**

The following example will provide an opportunity to explore the significance of dance and its characteristics for the Wodaabe tribe. We will examine the place of the Wodaabe dance in consolidating a socio-cultural identity, and how different age groups are represented in the dance. How is the dance unique; how is it incorporated into nomadic life; how does it give expression to important aesthetic codes for the Wodaabe; in what ways does it facilitate the representation of conceptions of gender and how does it mark events within the yearly and life cycle of the Wodaabe people?

The examination of this form of dance will be open to meanings or characterizations that arise from the evidence.

The summary is based on two source materials: a book and a video recording.

1. Backwith, C. and Offelen van M. 1993, **Nomads of Niger**, Abardale Press, Harry N. Abrams, New-York.
2. **The Wodaabe**, Disappearing World, Granada, 1988, produced and directed by Leslie Woodhead, the anthropologist on the film – Mett Bovin (video film).

This study enables us to learn about the different functions of dance for the Wodaabe people and to examine the different meanings and features of ethnic dance.

1. Dance constitutes a **significant basis and central concern of celebrations** intended to break the routine of nomadic life of the Wodaabe.
2. Dance offers a **framework for leisure and entertainment** for members of the ethnic group and facilitates the creation of relations between sub-groups of the ethnic group.
3. Dance is meant to mark **central events in the yearly cycle**, such as the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the dry season, as well as marking **events in the life cycle** – commemorating junctures in life from birth to marriage.
4. Dance enables different age groups, including young and old, to **encounter, contemplate and get to know one another** in an approved framework for flirting and choosing a mate.

5. Dance is a traditional-ritualistic means of creating **connections with the primordial fathers** and with special powers, in accordance with the dance and its place in the festivities. The dance enables the magic forces to function and operate and is meant to cause the men's powers of attraction to take effect and influence the women to select them.

6. Dance both realizes and strengthens the **aesthetic foundation** that is of crucial significance in the life of the Wodaabe. The importance of aesthetics for the Wodaabe is expressed in a variety of ways including the decoration of their utensils and their daily and especially festive style of dress and self-adornment. The Wodaabe principle of "beauty" is considered a sign which identifies them as a group and which represents them and distinguishes them from other groups (city people). The application of make-up in preparation for a dance takes hours. The colors are daring and the make-up is applied by the men themselves. Through the characteristic style of movement unique to the Wodaabe, the dance demonstrates their conception of "beauty" and cannot be separated from their style of dress and self-adornment. The dance consists of a wide array of facial movements including movement of the eyes and lips and movements of the head, arms, legs, (with the intention of emphasizing an erect bearing, a long and narrow body, a long face and whiteness of the teeth and eyes, etc.)

7. The aim of dance is to **contrast the group to the individual**. On one hand, the dance emphasizes and consolidates the unity of the male age group: they assemble with linked hands, dance shoulder to shoulder, and move their legs in a uniform manner. On the other hand, the beauty and uniqueness of the individual is emphasized through make-up and adornment as well as in the movements of the face and head.

8. Dance establishes the Wodaabe **conception of gender**: The man should be especially beautiful and enhances his beauty through make-up, adornment and the dance. In order to be attractive in the eyes of the women, the men must make an obvious effort to enhance their beauty. The women must be dressed and adorned in a more subtle way than the men; they must lower their eyes in front of the men and move in a more restrained manner. It is the responsibility of the men to be attractive to the women and it is the woman who selects a male partner. The selection is public and occurs during the course of the dance. During the dance the women are modest, restrained and respectful while the men manifest beauty, persistence, perseverance and determination in order to enchant the women.

The Wodaabe dance is a representative example of ethnic dance: different genders and a variety of age groups are represented in the dance. The dance of the Wodaabe imparts aesthetic codes that reveal the behavioral patterns acceptable in their society and constitute the

conditions of belonging to it. Various elements such as the immense amount of time dedicated to the daily culture of utensil-making, the preparation of clothing and the great effort dedicated to festival days including the special and elaborate style of make-up and the hours of singing and dancing – all contribute to strengthening the role of aesthetics and artistic expression in consolidating the particular way of life and socio-cultural identity of the Wodaabe people.

### **Forms of Dance**

In the beginning, ethnic dance served as a framework which included all the various functions and aspects of dance. The following diagram illustrates the features which distinguish ethnic dance from other forms of dance and also shows what is common between them.

### **Types of Dance**

**Ethnic Dance      Ritual Dance      Folk Dance      Social Dance      Stage Dance**

This diagram illustrates that ethnic dance and ritual dance have the most in common. Today there are those who include ritual dance or elements of it within the rubric of ethnic dance. The division between ethnic dance and folk dance demonstrates the renunciation of the ritual aspect of dance and its attachment to events connected to both the yearly cycle and the life cycle. Folk dance emphasizes the national aspect of dance and to a large degree, preserves many traditional features. It is interesting to realize that these features are preserved and especially emphasized in cases where the ethnic group lives in the Diaspora and where the dance constitutes a means of preserving unity.

Social dance has fewer and fewer traditional and geographical bases. The role of entertainment is emphasized in social dance whose primary purpose is to act as a framework for social encounters. In many places, social dances often served educational purposes and imparted norms of socially accepted behavior as well as a sense of social standing. Stage dance is often mistakenly referred to as “artistic dance”, is a forum for the individual artist’s personal mode of expression and emphasizes the status of the individual dancer as an artist. Our society is currently acquainted with the artistic, professional and often social message, which the individual artist or group of artists brings to the audience. The audience is generally

passive except for the fact that it decides to come to the performance and pay money, with the expectation that it will receive a fitting compensation for its outlay.

### **Dance – Context and Function**

As has been previously written and demonstrated, the category of **ethnic dance** is capable of containing a myriad of possibilities and forms in accordance with the society it represents and the culture it expresses.

**Ritual dance** constitutes a part of ritual worship in addition to other forms of ritual expression. Ritual dance forms a part of ceremonies where the divine or other supreme powers are worshipped and is used to express religious awe. Ritual dance is part of a series of activities which constitute, in their entirety or in part, the ritual act. These include prayers, offerings and sacrifices, processions, bowing, song, instrument playing and dance. Ritual dance has numerous functions such as preventing or withstanding disasters and spurring on the forces of nature, including rainfall and fertility. It also includes dances which praise and glorify the divine or which heal the sick. Ritual dance constitutes a central component of traditional ethnic groups. Much time is dedicated to the preparation of the dance as well as its actual performance. In certain traditions, such as India and Indonesia, the ritual dance performers have attained a very high level of skill and expertise. The purpose of training people to attain such high levels of expertise stems from the desire to separate between the material and the spiritual and between the daily and the lofty. Ecstatic dances are another type of ritual dance. They yearn to make a complete separation from the physical and the rational in order to obliterate their day to day personality and reach heights of spirituality which will bring man closer to their god, allow him to hear man's prayers and grant human beings powers which are given to disciples of the god.

**Folk dancing** is a powerful manifestation of the essential need to dance. It is primarily a group's form of expression. Folk dancing enables the individual to bond with the group and enjoy the group bonding by being a participant in the group experience. Sometimes a few individuals stand out from the group as teachers or soloists. They are able to emerge from and return to the group, and thereby emphasize the experience of bonding. Folk dancing represents a particular cultural tradition. In its essence, it strengthens the national aspect of the group and its sense of belonging.

In an age of global economy and communication, there is an increased tendency to see national values emerging in folk dancing. In addition, there are those who see folk dancing as a “declaration” of national identity for the group itself and in contrast to other nationalities. This approach formed the basis for incorporating folk dances in the educational system of various countries, with varying degrees of success.

**Social dance**, as opposed to folk dance, is unrelated to a national context and crosses geographical boundaries. While giving expression to the basic impulse to move, social dance is subordinate to the social contexts which shape this impulse. European court dances, for example, were stylized according to socially and culturally dependent demands. In discotheques today the traditional context and styles have been broken down. Social dance is characterized by a large public who dances in groups. There is a mingling of the sexes and sometimes couple dancing. Originally, social dance was meant to secure class distinctions and acted as a shaping influence on the appropriate status of the dancer. Today social dance reflects the existence or non-existence of status stratification. Social dance is a measure and expression of how gender is perceived and constructed in certain societies. In social dance, the individual often presents himself as performer to the onlookers or to those dancing with him.

**Stage dance** is primarily a creative initiative that reflects the creating individual. Even when the dance is created by several artists, they constitute a cluster of individuals who joined together in order to create a common piece, rather than an obligatory traditional social framework. Stage dance can demonstrate a particular stylized, artistic movement tradition, but is also able to be a medium for protest against an existing traditional framework. Every movement or dance style is culturally dependent and the process of deciphering aesthetic codes cannot be disconnected from the context in which they were created.

### **Chapter Three – Dance – Identity, Tradition and Culture in Israel**

This chapter concentrates on the features of ethnic dance in Israel within a cultural context. From this angle, dance can be seen as integral part of the forms of artistic expression represented in the different cultural traditions which make up Israel’s multi-faceted cultural experience.

At the basis of dance research in Jewish society, the functions which dance fulfills will be examined through the behaviors, issues, forms and customs that dance demonstrates. As in

ethno-musicological studies, in contemporary ethnic dance studies, it is common to integrate two perspectives: the **synchronic** – up-to-date data available to the researcher during the time of the research, and the **diachronic** – the historical perspective, which compares data with past information. The integration of these two perspectives facilitates a better understanding of the significance, issues, forms and methods of ethnic dance, as the dancers themselves perceive them. It is possible to find many traditions of dance in Israel today. From a historical perspective, we can find a description of a common source for dance in the Bible.

### **Dance in the Bible**

In order to understand the significance of dance in the history of the Jewish people, it is important to start with the Bible, the text that is most identified with the Jewish people and which constitutes the symbol of their history and their faith. The bible is sacred to three monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – and has been translated more than any other literary work. Apart from being a sacred book, the Bible forms a basis for every cultural development in Israel, including dance. It is possible to find references to events which incorporate dance in the Bible, but these descriptions do not include a discussion of the dances themselves. These descriptions are insufficient and we do not have the necessary material or information to complete the picture. There is no lack of verbal descriptions of dance, but apart from the fact that we have a written testimony, it is not possible to learn how the dance was performed or what made up its content. Therefore, this field remains the domain of linguistic researchers, who are milked for maximum information regarding the significance of dance and the forms of dancing prevalent among the Jewish people during the period of the Bible.

What has been written about styles of dance and dance performance during the period of the Bible must remain supposition. Scholarly and linguistic interpretations lack an iconographic basis as a result of the prohibition against visual and sculptural representation. Therefore we are forced to rely on different and sometimes contradictory, interpretations. There is no general consensus on the form or content of dance or the ways in which it was performed during the period of the Bible and there cannot be. We will be able perhaps to find certain validations for descriptions of dance found in the Bible in the dance customs of different communities in the Jewish Diaspora.

### **Dance in the Jewish Diaspora**

The dispersion of the Jewish people in the Diaspora after the destruction of the temple constitutes a significant turning point in their history. The division into old and new

congregations, communities and sub-communities which were continually wandering and moving caused different types of mergers and splits in various communities and can be seen in the dance and Jewish cultural life of many Diaspora communities. The book surveys dances from the Jewish life cycle and calendar year and brings typical examples from various communities.

### **Traditions of Ethnic Dance in Israel**

It is possible to classify ethnic dances in Israel according to three major categories. It is important to emphasize that the dances of certain communities only fall under one of the three categories while dances of other communities can fall under more than one category.

The **first category** includes characteristic dances of communities, which were danced in the Diaspora outside the borders of Israel and which preserved an independent dance tradition. Even though ethnic dance is not immune to outside influences and can be affected by its surroundings, these communities maintained a unique dance tradition. With the return to Israel, these communities continued to dance their own particular dances. Despite the understandable difficulties and disturbances which changes in time and place caused, the unique communal dance tradition of the Jews of central Yemen and of some Hassidic communities has been preserved. It is possible that there are other dances which are unique to a certain community and which can be included in this category even though dance studies in Israel have not yet found them.

The **second category** includes dances which were adopted by Jewish communities during their sojourn in the Diaspora. These dances are identical to those found in the countries in which they were living. They became identified with the Jewish community, and represented the Jewish community both to itself and to others, even when they came to Israel. In Israel the dances continued and continue to be a part of community traditions and are a symbol of social and communal identity. In this category it is possible to find the dances of Jews from Kurdistan, north and south Yemen, parts of North Africa, Ethiopia and Jewish communities from the Asian Russian states, etc.

The **third category** includes residents of Israel who are not Jewish such as Arabs, Bedouins, Druses, Circassians and Armenians. The category includes ethnic dances which are particular

to each group and which have a lot in common with dances of people from the same nations in their country of origin or in other Diaspora countries.

### **Dance – Tradition and Identity for Yemenite Jews**

Dance as representative of Yemenite Jews in Yemen and in Israel is surveyed in the book and brought as an example of ethnic dance in Israel. This study has been conducted over the last twenty-five years.

### **Yemenite Jewish Dancing in Yemen**

For obvious reasons, which can not be elaborated here, the study of Yemenite Jewish dancing in Yemen was conducted fairly recently in Israel and not in Yemen, over the period of the last twenty-five years. Attempts were made to document dance in the 1950's, however these attempts were unsystematic and marred by lack of continuity. Most importantly, those who were involved in the documentation process lacked knowledge and experience in dance research as an expressions of tradition, society and culture.

Today, the limited information we have is drawn from three main sources:

**\*Bibliographical Sources** – These sources are few and far between. Presented in an ordered way, they are based on personal information and experience and they describe dance as an inseparable part of the life of Jews in Yemen. The book of Rabbi Yosef Kapach is one of the few detailed examples which describe the life of the Jews in Sana'a in Central Yemen and refers to dance as an integral aspect of the cycle of family and communal life.

**\*Testimonies of Jewish Yemenite Informants** or descendants of Jews from Yemen who remember the traditions of their forefathers and continue to preserve these traditions or parts of them, even after leaving Yemen.

**\*Visual Documentation** of the life of the Jews in Yemen by means of photography, film and video: the collection is small and partial and was collated by travelers, academic researchers and temporary researchers who gathered information on the life of Jews in Yemen. This information is available today in a scattered and fragmented form without detailed or systematic documentation.

There is an enormous difference between the dances of the Jews of central Yemen to those from rural areas. The Jews from central Yemen preserved their own unique tradition of music and dance, which was partly influenced by the dance traditions of the local tribes. In contrast, Jews who lived in rural areas far from any Jewish centers merged more with the local population and were therefore more influenced by their surroundings.

The overview in the book is based on the following sources:

Bahat, Naomi & Avner, 1995 – **Saperi Tama**, the Diwan Songs of the Jews of Central Yemen, Poetry-Music-Dance, Beth Hatefutsoth and “E'ele Batamar” (English and Hebrew).

Bahat, Naomi (ed.), 1999 – **Barefooted**, Jewish-Yemenite Tradition in Israeli Dance, E'ele Batamar and Inbal, Tel Aviv (in Hebrew).

Bahat, Naomi, 2002 – “Dance – Expression of Identity, Culture and Tradition,” in **Yemen**, edited by Saadoun, Haim, Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem (in Hebrew).

### **Dances of the Kurdish Jews**

The second category includes dances which were adopted by Jewish communities while they lived in the Diaspora and which are identical to the dances of the countries in which they lived. As examples of this category, the book offers an overview of collated material on dances of **the Jews of Kurdistan** from the following sources:

Kadman, Gurit & Squires, Pamela, 1977 – **Five Kurdish Dances**, Culture and Education Enterprises, Tel Aviv.

Friedhaber, Zvi, 1984 – **Dance in the Jewish People**, Wingate Institute, Israel (in Hebrew).

### **Dance in Hassidism – Ritual Dance, Mitzvah Dance and Performance Dance**

**Dance** has a special purpose and significance in **Hassidism**. Like music, dance is also susceptible to the influences of the surroundings and can be affected by the various aspects and features of music and dance found in the country where one is living. The development of the forms of Hassidic dance, dance as prayer and commandment dances characterize Hassidic dance and differentiate it from other traditions. In the division between different forms of ethnic dance in Israel, presented in the beginning of this chapter, it is possible to find Hassidic dances of two categories: There are Hassidic dances which belong to the first category and are particular only to Hassidism, and dances which belong to the second category and were adopted from the surroundings in which they lived according to the dictates of Hassidism. An overview of the study provided here is based on the following publications:

Friedhaber, Zvi, 1984 – **Dance in the Jewish People**, Wingate Institute, Israel (in Hebrew).

Mazor, Yaakov; Taub Moshe (1994) – “A Hassidic Ritual Dance: the Mitsve Tants in Jerusalemite Weddings,” in **Yuval**, vol.VI, edited by Israel Adler et al, Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem: 164-224.

Of the three categories of ethnic dance in Israel, it is possible to argue that according to the overview presented, Hassidic circle dances incorporated ethnic elements from their non-Jewish surroundings (such as basic step patterns from Balkan circle dances) in ways particular and unique to Hassidic communities. Hence, it is possible to discern a blurring of the first and second categories.

Mitzvah dances display a unique conjunction of ceremony and dance characteristic of Hassidism, even if they can be found to contain aspects which are similar to other traditions. In other words, Mitzvah dances can be included in the first category. Performance dance, on the other hand, belongs, without a doubt, to the second category, as they can be found and performed in different and diverse traditions. The small overview testifies to the various functions of dance in Hassidism:

1. Dance as prayer, a means to bring man's prayer closer to the object of his prayers.
2. Dance as a mitzvah which gladdens the bride and groom and as a way of attaining spiritual and physical union.
3. Dance as entertainment, an expression of capability, wit and humor and mostly an expression of the yearning to rejoice and make others rejoice.

In conclusion, dance in different Hassidic movements has not yet been adequately researched. There are also written sources which document the relation of Hassidic thinkers to dance. Not much is known regarding the actual structure of Hassidic dance or regarding the similarities and differences between its various forms. Though in many communities, women do not dance at all, there are those in which women dance separately, solely in the company of other women or in the women's section in the synagogue.

Additionally, even though Hassidic dance forms are based on common outlook, principles and a similar pattern of basic steps and movements, its various structures and forms are diverse. Hassidic dance is a unique addition to Jewish dance and still needs to be studied and documented in order that its significance will be better understood.

### **Dances of Minority Groups in Israel**

As mentioned above, the dances of minority groups in Israel constitute an independent category and are characterized by features which distinguish them from the other two categories, as can be seen from the examples already presented – dances of Jews from Yemen and Kurdistan and dances of Hassidim. This category includes Arabs, Bedouins, Druze, Circassians and Armenians. Apart from the known fact that there is a similarity between the

dances of these groups in Israel and their brethren in other countries, the dances have functions and meanings which are particular to minority groups.

To illustrate the special place of dance for a traditional minority group in a contemporary society in Israel, the book presents a selection of features particular to each group as well as what is common to minority groups as it is expressed through dance. By the term **minority** we mean a population group with a common origin, language, culture and often religious belief that differentiates them from other population groups. These linguistic and cultural connections create a sense of uniqueness and separate them from the larger population in Israel. Generally speaking, dance serves as an expression of particularity and functions as a framework for cultural and traditional continuity. It also serves the members of the minority group as an educational tool for learning the behavioral mores and forms of entertainment which are expected of them. Like the majority society in Israel, the minority group is also susceptible to processes of economic, social and cultural change. The process of modernization causes continual conflict between the rise in standards of living, technological developments, expanding possibilities for study and education and changes in sources of income and the yearning to preserve the traditional frameworks in order to protect the continuing existence of the minority group. In the last few years, we witness changes in religious traditions and in relation to traditional leaders. Some claim that religious foundations are waning, while others consider the existence of religious and traditional leaders and the intensification of religious faith as a source of strength that defends against innovations which they believe are endangering their society.

Minority groups are making demands for equal rights in employment and education and want their language to be recognized as a main language of instruction. In the context of the struggle to achieve these aims, political demands have also increased and manifest themselves in different forms of political struggle, some of which are joint with the Jewish majority and some which involve the minority group alone.

### **Dance in Arab and Druze Society in Israel**

The third category includes ethnic dances of national minority groups in Israel (Arabs, Druses, Circassians and Armenians). The book introduces two examples of types of dance common in the Druze and Arab communities – **Debka** and **Saff**. The overview is based on the following sources:

Bahat-Ratzon, Naomi, 1978 – “The Debka – A Traditional Dance of Unity and Relaxation,” in **Israel Dance**, 78/79, (ed: Giora Manor), pp.9-14.

Bahat-Ratzon, Naomi, 1976 – “Le Saff – Procession dansée dans le Cérémonie du Mariage Druze,” in **Orbis Musicae** (5), Studies in Musicology (ed: Avenary), Tel Aviv University 1975-76.

Haddad, Munam, 1979 – “Arabic Dances in the Galilee,” in **Ethnic Dance in Israel**, no.3, January 1979 (ed: Tami Winter), (in Hebrew).

These dances are surveyed in their ethnic context. Different types of dances are mentioned as well as their names in relation to their geographical location. Accordingly, the dances are surveyed in connection to their appropriateness for performance by dance troupes so that they may be preserved and passed on to the younger generation. We will also examine the influence of these dances on Israeli folk dance and stage dance.

### **Circassian Wedding Dances in Israel**

Circassians are one of the minority groups found in Israel. Originally from the Caucasus, they were given the name Cherkes by neighboring nations, although they call themselves Adyghe. Today, the Circassians in Israel are concentrated in two villages. The first is Rihanya, situated in the eastern part of the Upper Galilee, 680m above sea level, which is considered to have been founded before other Circassian settlements in 1869. The second village is Kfar Kama, situated in the eastern part of the Lower Galilee at the start of the Kama River which flows into the Tabor River. It was established in 1876. The Circassians follow numerous laws and customs which form part of the Circassian tradition called “Adyghe Habaze”. Circassian tradition plays an educational role for every member of the community, indicating how one should behave in a society given to religious, geographic and social changes.

The Circassians in Israel invest great effort in preserving the framework and continuity of the Circassian tradition and way of life according to their guiding principles despite the changes that are happening in their society.

Dance as a declaration of social, traditional and cultural belonging is evident in Circassian wedding dances. It affirms the community’s sense of identity and confirms their sense of belonging to a larger Circassian community scattered in the Circassian Diaspora such as Caucasus, Jordan and Turkey.

In its ethnic dimension, the dance serves as an educational instrument and as a framework that shapes norms of behavior according to conceptions of gender in Circassian tradition. Dance enables legitimate flirting, allowing one to see and be seen in public while engaging in

movement with agreed restrictions, without touching, and for part of the dance, without eye contact.

Stage dance is important for the Circassians in different communities in order to shape, preserve and impart a national ethnic identity to the younger generations. The stage dance is based on ethnic movements, music and dress. The need to engage in this sort of dance is strongly felt as the Circassians are a minority group who live far from their origins and who must struggle for cultural survival.

### **Dance in the Armenian Community in Israel**

Little is known about dance in the Armenian community in Israel. Nevertheless it is important that we do not neglect this small and special community in our examination of the significance of dance in minority communities in Israel. According to what we know today, only one study, that of Hadass Rak, has dealt with the subject of Armenian dance in Israel: **Dance – Socio-Cultural Expression in the Armenian Community in Israel**, 2001 (only in Hebrew).

Dance has several functions for the Armenian community in Israel:

- \* Dance serves as a framework for entertainment and for rejoicing in the company of others according to community traditions.
- \* Dance facilitates an approved social encounter where one can see and be seen and where one can establish and deepen social connections.
- \* Dance passes on historical symbols and national feelings by means of movement gestures, words and melodies.
- \* Dance imparts aesthetic and traditional codes.
- \* Dance strengthens a sense of unity and increases the sense of ethnic belonging.
- \* Dance reminds one of the links between other dispersed Armenian communities.
- \* Dance is an education tool that instills mores of gender behavior for men and women.
- \* Dance trains and forms the body, according to the conceptions of gender in the Armenian community.

## **Chapter Four – The Way of the Dancing World**

### **Folk Dance – Folk Culture**

Folk Dance is also referred to as Peasant Dance or National Dance. Folk dance was an appropriate framework for realizing social and cultural functions in a rural society when ritual elements, which formed a significant part of traditional ethnic dance, were neglected.

In a more open, industrial consumer society, it is not possible to continue with the tradition of ethnic dance as part of events in the life cycle or the yearly cycle, to the same extent as closed traditional societies can.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, **dance as “national culture”** was acknowledged as an educational and cultivating tool which did not require full identification with the symbols it represented such as conceptions of gender, or the context which gave rise to it. Folk dance satisfies the **primary need to dance**, to respond to rhythm and engage in **inter-personal communication** through movement as well as enabling people to feel bonded and to find **release from routine life** within the bonding experience. The folk-national framework symbolizes **continuity, security and belonging**.

For many people, folk dance symbolizes so-called “traditional national spirit,” a difficult concept to define, but clearer when it is expressed through a body-language that is based on an ethnic tradition going back generations. This is inseparable from traditional folk music, which is an integral part of folk dance or from traditional dress, which is integral to the movement of the dance, even if these elements are not always preserved in their entirety because of the force of circumstances. In contrast to ethnic ritual dance, folk dance has no ceremonious aims. There are sometimes national aims which require ceremonious manifestation, but the same dance can also be performed in different circumstances.

Even if a particular dance is created by an individual artist, it becomes adopted by the wider public and serves the function of folk dance when it is shared by the wider public. Obviously, this is the result only after the dance has been through many changes and transformations and has been performed in a variety of different situations.

It appears that in its folk form, dance can become part of “new education.” By virtue of its aesthetic features and the power of movement symbols in non-verbal communication, dance becomes shared by the wider public incredibly quickly. Sometimes, in no less time, it ceases to be part of folk culture.

In conclusion, folk dance is entertaining and grants a sense of release and group pride. Folk dance facilitates all these things while preserving a unifying, national identity without being connected to events that relate to the cycle of life or the cycle of the year. Folk dancing

happens when a group of people is interested in this type of dance or when social and cultural situations permit. There are those who see folk dancing as the natural, primary “embodiment of the national spirit” which is still untouched by artificial influences.

This romantic and nostalgic relation to national tradition is common to certain thinkers in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Today, in the twenty-first century, this approach seems like a naïve desideratum or a passing dream.

Folk dance has the power to express the customs and character of a nation. Sometimes this description corresponds to historical traits and will continue to be a symbol in the present. Sometimes dance is an expression of the particular features and customs of a certain society, but it is primarily an expression of the need for movement with national and unifying overtones.

### **Folk Dance in Ireland**

**Irish folk dancing** is an example of the flowering of folk dance today and transcends their geographical location and their function. In the last ten years Irish folk dance has become renowned outside of Ireland and Irish communities living in the world. This is a result of the popular performances based on Irish folk dances. This phenomenon, particular to our age, draws attention to the parallel existence of folk dance and stage dance, which is based on the former, and in particular to their reciprocal influence by means of communications available to every child, even those in more distant rural areas. The overview is based on the following sources:

1. Video Film – **Ceili Time in Ireland, Temple House Ceili Band and others - Set dancers and Step dancers in Comhaltas**, Ceoltoiri, Eirnan in Dublin, Produced by Midas Productions in association with Lunar Video and TV, 1991.
2. Television Film – **Emerald Shoes, The Story of Irish Dance**, director – Alan Gilseman, Ulster Television, 1999
3. Bibliographical Sources:  
Foley, Catherine (1998) – “Irish Traditional Dance” in **International Encyclopedia of Dance**, ed: S.J. Cohen, vol.3, pp.515-519, Oxford University Press, NY, Oxford.  
McCourt, Frank – **Angela’s Ashes**, Touchstone Book, Simon and Schuster, 1996, New-York.

## **Dance as a Component in Creating a New Society –The Hora**

### **Folk Dance in Israel**

Trying to understand the socio-cultural development of Israel which brings together Jews from many different countries who want to join the earlier settlers of the land – Jews, Arabs and Druses will find it difficult to comprehend the magnitude of the conflicts and intolerance that accompany the process of establishing roots in this country. Along side efforts by the small settlement to absorb immigrants and share the little there was, today as then, the struggle between the “old” and “new”, religion and tradition and secular nationalism, religious nationalism and humanistic, pluralistic society represent oppositions which are only becoming more extreme.

The Zionist vision and the need to become rooted in the land in a new social reality matched the nationalist collective drive to shape a new form of Israeliness. However, the dedicated efforts of these new ‘agents of cultural’ raised the question of whether there was a role for folk culture within the new Hebrew culture? In the value system of the emerging culture it is important to note three central principles: Hebrew language, education and the figure of the ‘Sabar’.

The overview of the Hora dance in Israel will be based on the following sources:  
Bahat-Ratzon, Naomi, 1977 – “Is the Hora an Israeli Dance?” in **Israel Dance** 77, (ed: Giora Manor), pp. 9-15.

Friedhaber, Zvi, 1984 – **Dance in the Jewish People**, Wingate Institute, Israel (in Hebrew).

Shmueli, Herzl, 1971 – **The Israeli Song**, Mifaley Tarbut Vechinuch, Tel Aviv.

### **Hora – Dance in Israel – Values, Symbol and Significance**

Since the establishment of the State of Israel and even before the state was declared, the ‘Hora’ was already accepted as a symbol of ‘Israeliness’. No Israeli song was more Israeli than the songs of the ‘Hora’ and no dance symbolize Israel and ‘Israeliness’ more than the dance of the ‘Hora.’ In actual fact, it is a borrowed symbol whose origins are not Israeli, but it became one of the strongest symbols of Israeli society not merely by chance or error. One of the necessary conditions for the creation of a dance (or melody) that is shared by a nation is its function for the people who dance it. What caused the Hora to become the quintessential Israeli dance and what role did it play in shaping Israeli society and in the renewal of the Jewish settlement in Palestine?

The beginnings of the Hora in Israel occurred in two essentially different frameworks. Firstly, the Hora was commonly danced in pioneer youth movements (in Israel and the rest of

the world) and later spread to a wider public in the days of the first Aliyot. Secondly, the Hora was a common form of dance in Hassidic circles who according to their custom borrowed melodies and dances from the non-Jewish surroundings in which they lived.

The Hora was more than just a form of entertainment, danced when one feels ‘happy.’ The Hora was a way of liberating, consolidating and forming social connections. It provided an opportunity and a framework for resolving problems and constituted, as it were, the ‘group dynamic.’ For the individuals who were separated from their familiar home environment and had come to a new place as pioneers, forced to face many difficulties and obstacles, the Hora provided a context in which they could release tensions and draw strength and comfort from the collective.

The circle of the Hora as an expression of the individual in the pioneer settlement is mentioned many times in the memoirs of the early settlers. Descriptions of events where a new person joins the group or a temporary guest enters the Hora circle talk of them finding themselves alone – the circle spreading and converging immediately before and behind them and of being left alone in the center. On the other hand the invitation to join the circle constituted an affirmation of belonging.

### **The Hora – The Development of Dance in Israel**

The development of dance within the repertoire of folk dance in Israel from the first Aliyot until today began with an array of melodies and movements whose origins were not in Israel and continued with the process of sorting and selecting, a process which is basic to all folk art. In addition to the Hora, the Kozachok came from Russia, the Krakowiak from Poland and the Polka from Czechoslovakia

On one hand, there were ethnic traditions of song and dance which were and continued to be part and parcel of traditional, family and community contexts: dance, songs and piyyutim of the Jews from Yemen, Kurdistan, North Africa and many others. In conjunction, the songs and dances of the national local minorities – Arabs, Druses and Circassians – were an object of longing and were often copied. In the center, as a reference point within this diversity, the Hora went through many changes. The attempt to describe the basic formula of the steps of the Hora steps will provide an example of the many different versions of steps, which have all become common variants of the Hora. The researcher who notes down the different variations of the Hora will need to commence his research with the following step pattern, one of the most common:

Form of the dance: circle, clockwise (or counter-clockwise). Hands placed on the shoulders of those standing to the right and left, creating a position of inter-linked arms.

The steps are structured on a pattern of 6 units (4/6):

1 – Left starts to the left (or alternatively right starts to the right)

2 – Right crosses before left (or alternatively left crosses before right)

3-4 – double skip on the left (or alternatively double skip on the right)

5-6 – double skip on the right (or alternatively double skip on the left)

The most common variations to the steps occur in stage 5-6 or 3-4-5-6. The inter-linking of arms can also be different even though the typical position of the arms in the Hora is maintained: Hands on shoulders, arms inter-linked.

The Hora leaves a lot of room for the improvisation of the dancer, a characteristic which most probably made the Hora popular with the wider public. According to one's mood and the desire and ability to 'belong,' it is possible to join the dance at any stage and to leave the circle without disturbing the rhythm of the dance. The equality between the sexes in the dance accorded with the outlook of the members of the pioneer youth movements.

The 'Hora' continues to embody values, some of which have become mythologized. In certain contexts, dancing the classic 'Hora' is symbolic and traditional and represents more than 'dance.'

Folk dances included under the rubric 'Hora' are still symbolic and representative of the Israeli experience and generally signify Israel. At the same time, these symbols and meanings relate only to certain groups in Israel and are not shared by the whole of Israeli society in which there are many communities for whom the values that the Hora expresses are absolutely alien.

## **Dance as a Unifying National Framework – The Dream and its Shattering**

### **Folk Dance in Israel – Historical Background**

Several elements played a significant role in the creation of folk dance in Israel:

1. Socially conscious views contributed to a fitting setting for the creation of "new folk dance" directed and realized in Europe by Rudolf von Laban. Laban believed that dance should serve society. He was disillusioned by the stage dance of his era and decided to create a new form of folk dance. At the end of the 1920's and the beginning of the 1930's, he put on large displays of movement based on simple dance patterns which incorporated the masses in street performances.

2. The Zionist-socialist view was shared by artists and members of the movement who were personally involved or aware of Laban's activities: Gurit Kadman (Gert Kaufman), Rivka Sturman, Leah Bergstein and artists such as Gertrude Krauss, Baruch Agadati and others.
3. The desire of the "agents of culture" to fill the vacuum in the cultural life of the society after having separated from the tradition of dance in the Diaspora.
4. Palestine of the 1930's and 40's was the ideal arena for creating folk dance which would express equality for all. The relative isolation, the yearning for simple communal dances which would strengthen the feeling of the collective, release tensions and become a symbol for a new life.
5. The initiative of individual choreographers to demonstrate their ability to create, dance and create dances for others. The process of creating folk dance in Israel is accompanied by constant questions: Can one create folk dance? Or, is folk dancing, as people used to believe, "the creation of a nation," created by itself? Accordingly, it is not coincidental that the original impetus for creating folk dances was the creation of festivities in the agricultural settlement. Some of these dances later became folk dances in which many people could participate.

In the 1920's and 30's, the attempt to forge a Hebrew secular culture led to widespread activities in the area of dance in the framework of creating Hebrew holidays for the agricultural settlement.

Following the efforts of various innovators, headed by Gurit Kadman, different contexts for creating Hebrew folk dances were established. There are those who see the gatherings that were organized in Kibbutz Dalia and which were named after the kibbutz, as important turning points. The first gathering was held in 1944 and those following in 1947, 1951, 1958, 1968. These gatherings reflected, each for its own time, the ideological goals of their organizers – the desire to meet in order to dance together, to see and be seen and most importantly, to affirm their identity through dance. A lack of clarity with regard to the choice of dances became evident at the gatherings: The folk dances which were performed originated in different countries; there were dances created for festival pageants in the agricultural settlement; others were created to be part of a repertoire of Israeli folk dances. There were ethnic dances from different Jewish traditions and also from national minority groups – Arabs, Druses and Circassian.

In 1952, the Department for Folk Dancing was founded by the Center for Culture and Education of the General Workers' Union. Within this framework, Gurit Kadman and Tirza

Hodes initiated methods of instruction, education and organization for teachers of folk dance. This was done in conjunction with deepening knowledge of ethnic traditions. Bracha Dudai and Rina Meir continued on this path with extensive activities to establish a tradition of folk dance in Israel. Later, many others joined the enterprise and initiated meetings in addition to the gatherings at Dalia (in Zemach and in Carmiel). They also organized sessions to train teachers of folk dance, as well as advanced study groups and seminar discussions.

In the 1960's attention was directed to ethnic dance traditions existing in different settlements, far from the focus of the cultural establishment, and which Gurit Kadman called the 'community dances.' There were a number of reasons for this. The most important was the encouragement Gurit Kadman gave to 'new Israelis' not to neglect their ethnic dance heritage in their attempt to establish roots and reject elements of their cultural identity which were perceived by many as connected to the world of the Diaspora and not belonging to the Israeli environment. This supportive activity was very important at its time and there is a great deal of evidence regarding the contribution it made to the self-image of the dancers and their ability to proudly perform their ethnic dances inside and outside the family community framework. Another motive for the emergence of interest in ethnic dance traditions was the desire to block the stream of "foreign influences" on Israeli folk dance and to give folk dance a local flavor from the point of view of movement language, melodies and texts. In the 1960's, Gurit Kadman in conjunctions with government institutions, promoted gatherings of folk and ethnic dancing on a shared stage. The Project for the Cultivation of Community Dance was established in 1971 by the Ministry for Education and Culture and the Department for Folk Dancing in the General Worker's Union. The Department of Folklore at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was also involved but unfortunately its role did not go beyond the provision of storage for a small part of the material documenting ethnic dance.

The main contribution of this project was that it led to a renewed awareness of the existence of ethnic traditions of dance in Israel. Moreover, it promoted and facilitated the continuing existence of many ethnic and folk traditions living side by side, and most importantly it strengthened and encouraged different ethnic groups which were maintaining traditions of ethnic dance to continue to uphold these dances without feeling that they belonged to a tradition that was no longer relevant and which belonged to the Diaspora rather than Israel. This was the first step by the 'agents of culture' that showed that the culture of dance in Israel is not a single block but a mosaic of different traditions. The movement for folk dance in Israel received encouragement from those standing at the head of the Project for the Cultivation of Community Dance to be open to Israeli ethnic traditions. It is worth

emphasizing that from the very beginning, ethnic dance exercised an unceasing influence on folk dance in Israel. The question was one of quantity and proportion, knowledge of movement good taste and an ability to discriminate between the essential and the marginal in the traditions of ethnic dance. At the time, the disputes and different points of view related mainly to the understanding of the essence of Israeli folk dance – questions which continue to preoccupy those who lead the movement for folk dancing in Israel. The following is a detailed example of the **integration of Jewish Yemenite Tradition into Israeli folk dance**.

With the purpose of creating a common heritage, the Bible was a natural source of images and texts. These included biblical descriptions, the experience of connection to land and place, the cycle of the agricultural year and the strong link to the landscape and the local heritage. Parallel to the “official heritage” there was an unofficial ethnic and folk tradition of song and dance in many ethnic communities in Israel. Some of the creators of stage dance aspired to a local language that was open to local ethnic influences and to receiving images, texts, melodies and movement materials from the local ethnic traditions. There was reciprocity between folk dances that were created from an urge to fill a deficiency, ethnic dances, which continued to be part of the way of life of many communities and stage dance. Since there were no absolute obstacles but rather continuous reciprocal influences, it was only natural that dance would move from one function to another. The movement for folk dance in Israel was blessed with a very large and interested audience, many of whom were teachers aware of the great demand for what they could give and aware of their marketing ability. As the burst of creativity of young and veteran artists grew, so the number of dances regarded as unchangeable and permanent assets of the treasury of folk dance in Israel lessened. Dances that had been shared by the many constitute today the repertoire of specialty dances in limited frameworks which are concerned with preserving historical legacies and see the legacies as a suitable style for those interested in dancing folk dance today. The search for ethnic influences has not ceased but rather, continues to exert its powers of attraction on creators of folk dance.

### **Social Dance – Entertainment and Status**

This section reviews the contexts and particular features which characterize social dance. In different societies, especially outside of Europe, but also within Europe, ethnic dance has always included features of social dance, before social dance acquired a specific and separate role. This section deals with social dance in Europe and in western culture

The effort to distinguish between different classes – the ordinary people, the bourgeoisie, and the aristocracy – makes the mobility between them manifest. As mentioned previously, when we wrote about different forms of dance, one of the characteristics of social dance is that it crosses geographical boundaries. Social dances came into existence when the upper classes needed to impart modes of behavior, manners and customs that would be a measure of those who see themselves as worthy of being included in the upper class.

Court dances, which went through many changes, became the bases for social dances in terms of socio-cultural context and ideas relating to ways of spending the constantly increasing leisure hours. Styles of dance reflect tradition and change, conceptions of gender, communication, and ways of courting and betrothal. All these are reflected in social dance. The book summarizes the history of dance in Europe from the social and cultural point of view.

### **Social Dance – Communication and Protest**

In the second half of the twentieth century, as means of communication break through geographical and national borders, particular styles are adopted by the wider public for longer or shorter periods of time. The cultures of different societies manifest themselves through dress, adornment, ways of behavior, and dance, whether the conception of gender is traditional or modern. Dance, which has always been one of the most striking expressions of the concept of gender, today also reflects a rebellion against racial divisions and offers a tangible opportunity to protest against values which the older generation represents, as well as offering an opportunity to protest against social, religious and political institutions.

Social dance began to flourish when needs, which only this kind of dance could satisfy, arose. Social dance provides an opportunity for venting one's feelings, entertainment and social encounter. It instills ideas of "masculine" and "feminine", shapes behavior, and provides an opportunity for younger generation to rebel against the conventional ideas and modes of behavior of the older generation by creating or adopting a new dance which is not yet accepted by the older generation. Social dance pertinently reflects the pace of change undergone by a society. Changes occur at a slow pace in a society which preserves traditional socio-cultural structures. Frequent changes of fashion which flood the arena of dance with new and innovative dances indicate that a culture is made up of various sub-cultures whose distribution of power is dynamic and susceptible to change. Therefore, despite the variety of contexts which have created different forms of dance, the connection between ethnic dance,

folk dance and social dance is constant, while their traditional characteristics are sometimes clear and explicit and sometimes hidden

A preliminary overview of the history of social dance shows how certain characteristics are continually re-examined at different stages:

- The need for control and the adherence to established rules in contrast to the desire to break rules and find personal liberty.
- Physical culture as an expression of gender.
- Dance as representative of freedom of expression and sexual freedom.
- Movement dance as an expression of socio-cultural consensus.
- Tradition and change in dance as an expression of inter-generational conflict or harmony.

### **Dance as an expression of the rights of the individual and the struggle for them**

The power of social dance emerges from the creation of an entertaining social encounter where convention and protest, tradition and change are in continual conflict. Alongside social dance, which does not exhibit strong forms of protest, in nightclubs and discotheques today, we can find dances which are characterized by the features of “teenage rebellion.” The intensity of the music and its frequent changes in style, the style of dress, which is more revealing than what is accepted in the older generation, and the different styles of make-up and adornment represent the rebellion of the young generation against that of their parents. Their protest sometimes adopts ethnic elements from the realm of music, adornment and style of movement. However, social dance in the twentieth century is mainly characterized by change and the desire not to be the same as the previous generation.

## **Chapter Five – Dance – Symbol and Significance**

### **Dance – Ceremony, Prayer, Healing and Tradition as Representation**

**Stage dance** is a performance where its performers are aware of its public nature and of the message conveyed in the encounter between active choreographers and performers and an audience, which is less active and much more passive. People of different ages can participate in stage dance on the condition that their abilities are compatible with the requirements of the choreographer, who mediates between the movement material, the performers and the message he wants to convey. These will be filtered and examined in accordance with his professional and artistic ability. Primarily, stage dance is meant to display a high level of performance skill in movement.

In order to achieve this aim, expert teachers were required to develop the expertise of movement performance in an atmosphere of continual competition that facilitates the attainment of new heights. The varying differences in the skills and capabilities of professional dancers created a class of dancers who possessed outstanding talents and were able to attract an audience, and thus played a part in a spectrum of artistic, and later also commercial, considerations. In its essence, stage dance is learned dance and is planned and performed at a professional level of expertise. It is possible that spontaneous and improvised movement be incorporated into the dance performance, but like the creation as a whole, these elements will be under the direction of the choreographer who has a pre-existing plan for a performance intended for stage.

As in many **traditional-tribal** religions and beliefs, the physical is meant to serve the spiritual in the dances of African tribesmen. The differentiation between ‘physical’ and ‘spiritual’ does not exist for the dancers. Thus, the body is not the source of sin as commonly accepted in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The ceremony and the dances which are integral to it, “revive” the primordial fathers in order to deal with problems in the world of the living. The style of dance of the “primordial father” assists in forming a tangible figure. Even though his movements are vigorous, they are controlled and reserved and create a sensation of respectability and control. Through these forms of ritual dance, channels between the past and the present are sustained and kept open. Training for the role of priest includes, in some tribes, knowledge and control of the drumming rhythms and their symbolic ceremonial significance. The dance of the priests and priestesses before the gods is performed with careful attention to movements which are polished and refined in style. When the god or goddess willingly accepts the dance, they locate themselves in the body of the dancer or priest-dancer.

**Folk celebrations** often take place in the form of dance processions and exist all over the world from the beginnings of human cultural history. These celebrations incorporate ecstatic-folk enthusiasm in a large performance. In the Christian world, carnivals were held in different locations and each had its own unique historical and cultural emphasis in connection with the agricultural year and in accordance with the Christian calendar. It is possible to find similarities between different carnivals in the Christian world. However, in the same degree, folk celebration can be seen as a reflection of a society and culture which steps outside of the routine for a limited period of time in order to later return to the conventional way of life with partial or full acceptance of the religious and secular institutions. It is possible to identify various traditions of tribal rituals and movement language originating in agricultural festivals

in carnivals as well as different forms of traditional expression which have merged in new combinations.

In the island of **Bali** in Indonesia, a tradition of dance-drama-music and song performances emerged from deep religious belief. Even before the Hindus came to Bali, a tradition of local dance performed by girls specially trained for this purpose was in existence. These were ecstatic dance performances which integrated music, dance and drama. Later, the local culture was influenced by traditions from India, China and Java. Early trance dances influenced and continue to influence the forms of dance in Bali even today. Myths, legends and healing dances as well as the need to entertain and impart the history of the community led to the creation of multi-disciplinary performances and required highly specialized levels of expertise. A tradition of preparing young girls and boys to meet the required levels of expertise developed and included ways of teaching and training that enabled the gifted students to fulfill the difficult requirements of the performance and was integrated into the dance and music tradition of Bali. Many researchers use the example of Bali to illustrate the movement from ecstatic healing dances to performances incorporating music, dance and drama. The performances are for the benefit of members of the community who watch the dances regularly and by doing so absorb the morals of Balinese tradition and learn and internalize episodes from the history of the community. No less important, these performances provide an opportunity to internalize aesthetic values, symbols and codes which represent the community to itself and to others and which integrate faith, learning, education, artistic expression and entertainment.

In **India**, the gods themselves also dance. The universe began with the dance of the god Shiva “the god of dance” and it continues to exist by virtue of constant dance movement. In the Indian sub-continent, different forms of ritual dance developed: dance processions, trance performances and different ceremonial dances which include the participation of masses of believers or performances where specially trained performers put on a show for a large audience of spectators.

The **French court dances** of Louis XIV were used as a tool to shape elite society in its attempt to distinguish itself from rural society. Dance performances in the court were meant to consolidate a class of society with aristocratic modes of behavior and to establish the status of the king at the top of the aristocratic hierarchy. The dance performances, which developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, were an early form of stage dance and required special training, creating the demand for teachers, musicians, designers and artists who were integrated in the ballets of the royal court.

**Classical ballet** became a school of stage dance when the Royal Academy of Dance was established in France in 1661. The five founding positions, which were established at that time as basic positions and dictate of style, still constitute a part of the basic accepted lexicon of steps and movements today. In ballet schools all over the world today, a similar repertoire of movement is still taught, styles a redeveloped according to similar principles and one strives for the same technical expertise. The subjects and plots of ballet take the spectators to imagined and legendary lands far in time and place. The ballet characters are based on polarized stereotypes and are not realistic. Female figures that are beloved, beautiful, delicate, good and brave are contrasted with evil, jealous, despised and threatening women. In European culture, classical ballet is considered the crowning achievement of stage dance and involves dancers, choreographers, teachers, directors, stage and costume designers, composers and musicians in its creation. For lovers of aristocracy, classical ballet offers a musty fragrance of castles from distant lands. The techniques of classical ballet are considered a preferred prerequisite for training and enhancing the expertise of professional dancers who are studying stage dance. Despite the changes that have occurred in classical ballet, its techniques have remained the basis for shaping the body in European culture and have spread through teachers and choreographers to the rest of the world.

When ballet was taken out of the exclusive realm of royal palaces and moved to halls intended for a much wider audiences, it was made accessible to the working and middle classes, who, in exchange for a ticket, if they could afford it, passively participated in the legacy of elite society. Gradually, ballet schools and companies were founded which were more open to different classes of society, but the teaching methods and procedures used in the schools and companies preserved the hierarchies and manners of the aristocratic world of Europe for a long time. Many creators in different artistic spheres found a fertile field for artistic expression in ballet. The existence of ballet companies outside of the royal court or aristocracy was possible when impresarios, patrons, donors, authorities and states saw ballet as a cause that justified the allocation of resources. The enterprise of Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929) is an excellent example of the individual's capacity to attract and direct some of the most famous creators, choreographers, dancers, teachers, composers, designers and painters. Through their unique cooperation they brought some of the masterpieces of the twentieth century to audiences. Many are performed regularly in old and new versions. At the time, some of the works inspired strong reactions in the audience. In particular, the opening performance of 'Le Sacre du Printemps' by the dancer-choreographer Nijinsky and the composer Stravinsky in 1913 caused a scandal. The desire for dance to remain in the realm of

the pleasurable, the enjoyable and the conventional can contrast with the impulse of the creator to express other aspects of human existence, sometimes not so pleasant. This dichotomy constituted a site of contention between the independence of the artist and his dependence on various individuals, authorities and, of course, the audience, who gave life to the dance.

The primary role of classical ballet in western cultures and in traditional court dances in eastern Asia was to realize a tradition of continuity, order and permanence. In the east it is a dynamic tradition which symbolizes movement as the secret of the continuity of the universe.

In the **twentieth century** works of stage dance concentrate on the figure of the creator, the author, and the choreographer. The starting point of the piece does not require adherence to the plot; it focuses on the personal sensations, longings, outlook and messages which the choreographer wishes to convey. In modern dance, the choreographer continually redefines his movement language in accordance with the message he wishes to convey, his aesthetic vision and his professional ability. This book does not attempt to survey the history of dance, rather, it seeks to examine the various contexts and dynamics which together form stage dance and in which the choreographer, the individual creator, stands at its center.

The choreographer, like the audience and the performers, expects a professional performance, a display of virtuosity, but also the expression of a meaningful statement. Most of all, we expect a shared experience which will create a significant encounter between choreographers of professional standing, a challenging team of performers and an aware audience willing to participate in an artistic experience.

### **Dance – Personal Statement and Social Artistic Identity**

Today, the human body is the starting point for the choreographer and we acknowledge that its language is first and foremost movement language. A choreographer is expected to use a sophisticated, rich and open movement language that will reveal his sensitivity to the diversity and variety that constitutes dance heritage. Today it is harder than ever to know what to expect and this is due to the fact that in creating stage dance, contemporary choreographers do not have to prove or declare that their work belongs to a particular school or style of dance. The stage dance spectator will sometimes find it difficult to articulate the professional elements he expects to see in stage dance.

It is difficult not to be amazed by the ever-perfected virtuosity of the dancers who must express an endless variety of messages, aesthetic codes, experiences, ideas and views in the

language of movement. The technical mastery of dance integrates movements and gestures from daily life with sophisticated stage accessories which can create almost any illusion, offering a mixture of imagination and reality. These elements contribute to dances which can be performed in streets, train stations, on ladders and buildings using garbage containers, cleaning equipment and anything which the creator or choreographer is willing to use.

It is important to emphasize the personal background of each creator in modern dance. In contemporary dance, the personal statement, unique style and individual shaping of any particular stage dance are at the heart of choreography. The choreographer brings his own personal world, the traditions of his home and his schooling to bear on the work he is creating. In the second half of the twentieth century, a generation of choreographers who first and foremost represented themselves stepped to the foreground of stage dance. This trend is increasing today.

In this context, it is important to point out the common characteristics of choreographers at the end of the second millennium and the beginning of the third:

- They have extensive knowledge and awareness of the value of diverse experience in methods of movement and dance for the creators and dance performers of stage dance.
- They have extensive education, experience and knowledge in the basics of music and its different forms and styles.
- They are aware of the elements of stage – design, lighting, costume, accessories, etc. – and create a dynamic relation between these and the movement medium.
- They do not hesitate to say that they are continually contemplating, questioning, learning and seeking.
- They are aware of their personal heritage and refer to it or quote it on stage.
- They are socially involved, and are sensitive to human rights and abuses and find creative ways of expressing their commitments in their artistic work.
- They are teacher-artists who are aware of the importance of the tool – the human body – in the realization of their work.
- They are excellent directors who know how to involve the performers in the creative, emotional, sensual and contemplative experience.
- They see the difference and uniqueness of every individual and their particular capacity for movement and expression as an important tool which is important to foster and to integrate in a work of stage dance

In addition to what has been said, it should be noted that there is a different school of thought shared by many teachers and a small group of choreographers, who see movement notation as the starting point for works of stage dance.

During the 1950's, **Noa Eshkol** and **Abraham Wachman** articulated the basic models for movement notation (E.W. Movement Notation), using the term 'movement' rather than 'dance' on purpose and enabling new forms of thinking and creative work. The notation is based on a mathematical geometric model which translates the meanings of the body's movements into abstract values symbolized by numbers, letter and other graphic symbols. The proponents and creators of movement notation saw it as a tool for thought and composition that would assist the understanding of movement without needing to refer to other methods of dance or movement in a given style. (Eshkol-Wachman, 1958; Eshkol-Harris, 1998, 2001, Yanai, 1974)

To date, E.W. notation has proven itself a very important tool in movement education by including accepted and effective concepts in the language of instruction and by internalizing ways of thinking and awareness about movement without pre-determined stylized constraints. It also serves as a tool for documenting and analyzing animal movements as well as documenting and analyzing different systems of movement, ethnic dance and different forms of folk dance, social dance and stage dance (classical ballet). Recently, ways of integrating notation as a useful tool for different learning disabilities have been developed. There are major figures in addition to Noa Eshkol – the proponent and teacher of leading educators and innovators in this field – who are now themselves educating teachers. These include Amos Katz, Tirza Sapir, Yael Shemi and Rachel Nol. Notations which use E.W. notation as a starting point share the following characteristics:

- The desire for purity of movement and maximum precision according to the notation, usually without improvisation.
- Except for a few examples, no use of music – continual use of the metronome has become an identifying feature of this movement method.
- The notations are usually intended for chamber groups and are performed in pure unison or canon form, etc.
- On the rare occasions that this school of movement holds performances in front of an audience, the experimental atmosphere of the studio is maintained through the use of lighting. Entrance to and exit from the stage after the dance are not always insisted upon. The dress is often in the style of a practice session in the studio and does not adhere to the usual requirements of a performance in front of an audience.

- This school of movement has its own small and select audience of devotees who follow closely the appearances and performances of these notations.
- E.W. Movement Notations (EWMN) are sometimes found, produced or reconstructed. Notators commonly compare a page of notation with musical notes; even so, the movement from the page to the dimension of movement raises many questions and is a constant challenge. For those who are interested in this form of movement notation, there are rare events where notations are performed – dance according to the E.W. movement notation is an experience where there is no attempt to pander to the audience.

### **Artists as Shapers of Culture – Festival Pageants in the New Israel**

In addition to the artistic and professional choices that need to be made in the course of creating an artistic piece, social consciousness can raise many difficult questions for artists. As already mentioned, the work of Laban, who was active in shaping cultural, artistic trends and was a researcher in human movement was very influential through cooperative projects, and as a result of the study and knowledge of his work in Europe. Many female choreographers who began working in the field of dance in Palestine worked according to his principles. It is possible to note several characteristics which were common to dance artists who began their work locally in the 1930's in the agricultural settlement:

- They were socially conscious and committed, and this was expressed in some of the dance pieces they created.
- They assumed that it was possible to create a work of dance with dancers who lacked professional training.
- They desired social equality and were politically involved.
- They shared the opinion that it is possible to create dance in the outdoors, in different types of halls and in unconventional conditions and settings.
- They were open to different styles of movement which were based on primary movements which any dancer could perform.
- They wanted to participate in the budding culture developing in the New Israel.
- They were open to local influences: the geographical and human landscape, local ethnic traditions in Israel.

In the pioneer culture of the New Eretz-Israel, artists were deeply involved in the struggle for security as well as the struggle for economic and social survival. Intensely involved in creating a 'new society' they felt mobilized to participate in shaping the culture of a society in the making. For the sake of the collective, artists contributed to the immediate need to mark

events connected to the life cycle or calendar year and sometimes felt it was at the expense of their own individual voice.

The following elements were shared by the first creators of the pageants:

- The artists-designers are meant to be an inseparable part of the celebrating society.
- The pageant is a folk celebration shared by the entire community. Its features are drawn from working the land, primary sources such as the bible and on the local landscape.
- The performance, planning and preparations are shared by all the members of the community regardless of age.
- The requirements for performing the words, song and dance should match the capacities of the majority.
- The pageants included a ceremonious portion centered on the best singers, musicians and dancers and a folk portion for the participation of the majority whose aim was to express the general feeling of rejoicing in the celebration.
- The design of the setting, clothing and style of dance, movement, song and music would be reflective of the new society while simultaneously referring to ancient local traditions.
- The creation of appropriate celebrations is a vital element in shaping the culture of a society in the making.
- The artists should be mobilized to dedicate their artistic capacities to society and should repress the desire for personal expression.
- They believed it was possible to create a folk culture and that a new culture can shape a new society.
- Festival pageants seemed an appropriate format for a society striving for equality and social justice.
- The format, form and features of the pageant were constructed so that they could become permanent and could be re-instituted the same time the next year for events in the calendar year (festivals, special dates) or life cycles (mainly weddings). They believed having the power to shape a new local tradition.
- Like the agricultural settlement of the 1930's, 40's and 50's, its artists saw themselves as the innovators of a New Hebrew culture in a new society.
- It was a type of mass performance – a speaking, singing moving choir that truthfully symbolized the striving for unity, with a shared destiny and vision and expressed fundamental ideas that applied to all and which were easy to identify with.

For the artist/creators, the festival pageant constituted an opportunity to address needs and create meanings:

\***The need** to create new ways to mark events in the cycle of life and the calendar year.

\***The need** for a unifying ethnic national culture in a place where it had not previously existed.

\***The need** for educational tools which would aid in shaping the 'new man' according to their ideals.

\***The need** for text, song and dance that would inwardly and outwardly represent the society to other societies.

**The significance** of realizing these needs is complex and multi-faceted:

\*The style and content of work of the individual conflicts with the need to address the needs of the social group.

\*By accepting social agendas, the artist is required to integrate them, identify with them and refrain from criticizing them as part of the process of the ideological acceptance of the artistic piece.

\*The desire to find local connections to the ancient Hebrew traditions as found in the Bible: content, marking relevant geographical sites, textual contexts, melody, dance, dress and applying them to modern society in the twentieth century while trying to liberate oneself from the so-called irrelevant traditions of the Diaspora.

\*Mobilizing to form a new society entails creating a culture of song and dance which represents the ideals of Hebrew culture, labor, Zionist agricultural settlement and the impulse to fill the vacuum with the song and dance traditions of a society in the making.

\*Formal as opposed to folk-performance stage dance alongside collective dance which seeks folk significance.

The festival pageants reflect the processes of change of a budding society. Their relevance is continually changing and re-examined for its suitability. Young artists are less committed to the collective and more attentive to their own personal agendas and to the professional artistic tools at their disposal which may or may not exist in the current social framework which they are meant to articulate and celebrate.

These elements do not detract from their unique contribution at a stage when festival pageants fulfilled a vital and necessary socio-cultural function. Moreover, the pageant contained a contemporary artistic element that integrated a socio-cultural agenda while addressing artistic issues. In conclusion, it is worthwhile mentioning that festival pageants are

part of what formed Hebrew identity and represent an attempt to shape a local culture whose place and significance in Israeli culture will only become clearer with time.

### **Dance – Identity, Image and Gender in Israel**

In contemporary society, where attitudes to the human body and ‘body culture’ change rapidly, there exist unavoidable discrepancies between personal bodily behavior and what is accepted as appropriate bodily behavior in the community or in a specific social group. Posture and basic, daily movements and gestures have been absorbed and internalized by the individual from his surroundings and constitute an important part of his social and personal identity. Through our daily routine movements, we transmit different messages which make us recognizable to ourselves and to others as belonging to a certain society.

Dance is a central tool in consolidating our social and personal self-image in society. Dance consolidates movement structures and demonstrates a stylized abstraction of a specific body culture. Dance reflects perceptions of gender (socially constructed distinctions between the sexes as opposed to biological differences) which can be passed on from generation to generation and creates and strengthens the traditions of a dancing socio-cultural group. In conjunction, dance serves as a way of challenging social, cultural and religious consensus and also functions as a channel for expressing new points of view. Gender constitutes the earliest determiner of the existential distinction which defines our cultural experience and our socio-cultural perception of reality. In all human societies the general perception of culture is split into male culture and female culture (Polhemus, 1993).

In traditional Jewish culture, where men and women dance separately, a simple and fundamental conflict in their style of dance allows us to determine the difference between them and illustrates cultural gender differences that make up their movement language. Even when men and women dance together, this does not indicate that a cultural conflict does not exist.

Examining the way the dance tradition of Jews from Yemen was integrated into Hebrew culture and forms of dance in Israel from the perspective of gender reveals certain trends. These include the move from ethnic dance to folk dance, that is from dance which upholds and fixes a traditional Jewish perspective to mixed dancing which symbolize the new Israel without repudiating ethnic symbols. Ethnic dance maintains separation between the sexes and insists on modest body covering. In contrast, stage dance expresses the individuality of choreographers who are not opposed to revealing the body and who seek a personal

movement language without giving up the option of quoting modes of movement, music, dress, poetry and symbols from ethnic dance in the context of contemporary stage dance.

The analysis and judgment of dance according to terms such as ‘respect and shame, modesty and licentiousness’ have always accompanied women’s dancing. This is true of ethnic dance in the context of the family and community, folk and social dance as well as women’s dancing in front of an audience in stage dance, where the public dimension exacerbated the criticism and paternalistic judgment.

### **Men’s Dancing as an Expression of Jewish Culture and Tradition**

In the Jewish Yemenite tradition – as in the mainstream Jewish tradition – special attention and value is accorded to the written word and to male study of reading and writing.

The desire to fence off song and dance from the need to have fun and relax characterizes the male Jewish world of various different ethnicities and communities. The dancing of Jewish men in central Yemen represents a unique Jewish tradition. Even though it was susceptible to influence and change, as is generally true of ethnic dance, men’s dancing in Yemen preserved the Jewish features particular to the Jewish community of central Yemen.

Whatever was tolerated and forgiven in internal female society was considered unacceptable in male society. What was done in female society, including the singing and the dancing, was considered inferior in the eyes of male society, and as a result, the damage to women’s self esteem was minimized as long as it was kept within their world.

**The Figure of the Dancer in the Jewish Yemenite Tradition**, like their relation to dance, is subject to contradictions. The fear of the audience’s scorn can be understood according to biblical sources and the Jewish tradition in which the Jews of Yemen were well versed. Typical of the human response found in many societies, the more there are restriction on song and dance of a secular and recreational nature, the more one will attempt to find ways around them.

### **Women’s Dancing – The Art of Folk Tradition and Personal Expression**

In distinction from men’s dancing in Yemen, women’s dancing is part of the fabric of folk art not based on a written tradition. Women’s song is intended to be heard by women and reflects their own sense of themselves and the way they project their image of themselves to the male eye. Dance as an expression of the world of the Jewish woman in Yemen is limited and circumscribed:

\* Women danced primarily at wedding celebrations. They usually danced in pairs and most of the movement was concentrated in the feet. As their dress covered them from head to foot, the soles of the feet played a central role in the dance.

\* Role playing in the course of the dance was one of the ways in which women could express, in folk artistic form, their feelings of frustration and their criticism of the dominant male world which restricted their lives and ruled over them. The role playing allowed the women to speak in a male voice and as such, was their only opportunity to criticize and find fault with reality, a privilege not allotted to them as women. (For further detail, see Chapter Three).

In conclusion, in the ethnic sphere, songs that were passed on from mother to daughter and new songs which were composed according to traditional models were a liberating form of expression that eased women's sense of oppression or frustration. The different types of dance reflected an acceptance of convention: as expected from women, the body was covered and joy was expressed in a restrained manner. On the other hand, songs and play-dances enabled the voicing of criticism which did not threaten the accepted customs and which were permitted as long as the women kept them to themselves.

### **Struggle for Changes in the Status of Women in the New Yishuv**

At first glance, it is difficult to imagine a more intense conflict than the one between family tradition and the perception of gender of women from Yemen and that of the members of the first Aliyot, who apparently shed all traditional commitments. When one looks closer, however, the differences are not so great. Was the slogan for equality of rights for women in earnest or was it merely words?

Jewish society in Yemen was based on the same societal structure as Muslim society – there where extended families and men, as head of the family, had the last word. At the beginning of the Aliyot to Palestine in the 1880's, and before the new reality had succeeded in destroying the old foundations, the traditional family structure was still maintained.

### **The Figure of Man and Woman as Represented in the Longing for the East and the Forging of a New Hebrew Culture**

In the 1920's attempts were made to forge a Hebrew culture in Tel Aviv. Among the main leaders of this initiative was the artist and dancer Baruch Agadati. He was resolved in his desires to create folk celebrations in the style of carnivals which he had seen in different countries in Europe. His aim was to create a context whereby the masses could themselves create collective celebrations and could forget their daily troubles and dance till dawn. Purim

was a good opportunity for creating costume parties, music, song and dance, and did not contradict the stance of the religious institutions. The desire to create new local Hebrew figures, the preoccupation with the East and the phenomenon of Orientalism which was popular in Europe, influenced the choice of costumes and decorations as well as the representations of men and women in art forms including dance.

### **Representation, Exoticism and Nostalgia in Creating Stage Dance**

The stage dance of Russian-born Rina Nikova, who founded the 'Yemenite ballet' in the 1930's, was continuous with the exotic Orientalist approach of Europeans to the East. The idea of Yemenite men and women as representative of figures from the Bible was a trend already shared by artists in different artistic fields.

In order to preserve exotic feminine representations of historical figures and romantic folk exoticism from a distant world, only women participated in the ballets of Nikova.

### **Representation and Gender in the Search for Ethnic Sources to Create a New Folk Culture**

Freeing oneself from romantic ideas and exotic representations did not take place in one day. The changing relation to the dance of Yemenite Jews was part of the process of adopting multi-culturalism in Israeli society and should be seen that way today. From the point of view of their stated intentions to try and build a new society, to foster the figure of the 'Sabar' figure in an equal society and to create a fitting culture, it is not surprising that we find the first buds of new conceptions of gender in the folk-dance movement. In the attempt to find a fitting movement language artists drew from ethnic Jewish and local non-Jewish traditions of dance. Artists in the agricultural settlement were the first to find a connection between the local landscape, traditional values and the needs of the new society.

Folk dance in Israel, and primarily the Hora as a national Israeli symbol which strove for equality between the dancers, was a symbol of the youthful spirit of a poor pioneer society without belongings and full of dreams and enthusiasm for a new life. The simple step structure that formed the basis of the Hora – interlaced arms, shoulder to shoulder – permitted the whole community to dance, for the first time in a collective dance, detached from family-community tradition and symbolizing the new society; a society which was trying to shed all traditional traces of the Diaspora. The attempt to find a connection to sources and traditions was also common to the creators of the festival pageants in the agricultural settlement and the creators of folk-dance in Israel.

Seemingly, the creation of folk dance in Israel was open to all kinds of influence and yet, exotic representations, the feeling of strangeness and the preoccupation with the ‘other’ still constituted the basic concern in the first years of the state. Only after almost a generation, when the third generation of Jewish immigrants from Yemen was among the dancers and choreographers of folk dance in Israel, did the traditional ethnic foundations fuse with the Israeli perception of folk dance. The reality that was reflected through the cracks of traditional conceptions of gender and the disappointment that resulted from not realizing new ones was fertile ground for the phenomenon of integrating movements and steps from the ethnic dances of Yemenite Jews in Israeli folk dances. Thus, in a completely different context than that related to the conceptions of gender and the preservation of ethnic dance traditions, folk dances are danced by mixed members of different communities, preserving to a large extent the preoccupations of the pioneer movement – their social ideals and their gender conceptions.

The new needs of Israeli society led to a unique tradition of social dance in celebrations by immigrants from Yemen and their descendants. In the last three decades at least, two models of dance danced by Jewish women from Yemen form the basis for dances at celebrations. The wider public, which in these circumstances wanted to integrate the participants who came to dance, adopted these models from a wide array of steps. It is hard to know how this type of dance developed, but it is clear that it answers a vital need, offering a conception of gender different from that demonstrated in the ethnic dance of Yemenite Jews and giving expression to a different representation of Jewishness and Israeliness. The traditional ethnic foundation provides a sense of identity and belonging; the simple structure enables a large number of people to rejoice and feel united and equal while still being able to express themselves by improvising without hindering the bond of the group dance.

### **Gender, Representation and Tradition in Contemporary Stage Dance**

Yemenite women are among the leading musical creators and choreographers. From the perspective of gender, representation and tradition, it is worthwhile examining the motives, aims and hesitations which Levi-Tanai powerfully articulates verbally and orally. Her first hesitation, with herself and her family, was the very act of choosing the path of a ‘creative artist’ – is she making the right choice, is she neglecting her family by choosing the art of choreography? The second hesitation was how to link her ethnic background to a personal work of art, and dealing with the question of her personal language in the context of the larger culture. The crystallization of the dance theatre ‘Inbal’ and its foundation at the end of the

1940's constituted the crystallization of Levi-Tanai's identity and her decision to choose the path of artist. She is a woman whose ethnic roots are an obvious part of her life as an independent choreographer and contemporary artist. When she was asked to work permanently and continuously, her wide general and Jewish education brought the following questions and issues into sharper focus:

- How should she give expression to Judaism, tradition, spirituality, prayer and poetry in her work?
- Should she teach technical expertise; which skills are fitting for a group of dancers who integrate ethnic dance material in contemporary stage dance?
- How much should be based on the home traditions of the dancers; will conventional professional training damage their personal communal traditions?
- How should she integrate text, melody and dance, all disciplines in which Levi-Tanai was an accomplished artist? Will the demands of the performing artists match their abilities?

In stage dance, artists and dancers from Yemen broke through the ethnic framework when they found themselves in a different social context. But as artists such as Rachel Nadav, Sarah Levi-Tanai and many others have shown, the artist always remains true to his own childhood landscape, roots, culture and home. Even if he distances himself to learn new skills, internally he continually returns to himself and to his primary modes of expression. The struggle of artist-choreographers with conventional social representations initially entails the very decision to create. As such they position themselves as observer-participants and as cultural innovators by virtue of their art. Conceptions of gender are always being tested in the creation of stage dance and in Israel's multi-cultural environment, there is never absolute consensus. In contrast to the ethnic context, which provides symbolic representation of belonging to a community, stage dance, by virtue of being performed, is not just a matter of an artist struggling with himself and choosing his own artistic language of expression; it also entails conflict with the performing artists and more often – the audience. In Israeli culture, the arts in general and dance in particular are primarily about offering a personal message which raises questions regarding the reality we live in, its various societal traditions and different and opposing conceptions of gender. Israeli society is complex and contains multiple groups and sub-groups with a myriad of cultures and it is difficult to discern the messages and codes which characterize every social group and its sub-culture.

In Israeli cultures, in the widest and most general sense, gender and sexuality as expressions of female power and submission coexist with puritanical traditions of controlling the body, bodily repression and submission. In dance too, there are examples of both free and

stylized expression of movements, as well as freedom of movement and movement as a form of open communication between men and women, male and female choreographers and the audience. Opposing conceptions of gender, stated intentions and daily reality mingle and mix, finding expression in the movement behavior of each and every one of us in daily life and in diverse socio-artistic contexts in dance. The question remains however – does deciphering social contexts and aesthetic codes and the attempt to understand artistic and movement messages suffice in reaching the core significance of the dance experience?

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