

# RESEARCH AND DANCE EDUCATION

## *BAT-DOR SCHOOL*

Setting criteria for dance seems somehow incongruous, because only those who love dance are involved with it. How can something so loved be gauged by standards? In fact, in the arts, as in all things, there are different ways of loving and by setting standards, the development of a positive love can be assured - one that allows for appreciation, growth and fulfillment.

In Israel, today, the standard in dance training is set by the Bat-Dor School. With 600 students in its Tel Aviv school and close to 300 in its Be'er Sheva branch and dancers in basically all the performing dance groups in the country, it is an influential pacesetter. The school, started in 1967, was founded by Batsheva de Rothschild with Jeannette Ordman, who set the goals and methods. Mrs. de Rothschild said in a recent interview, "our basic idea is that all study of dance must be serious study. This demands a continuity with requirements which produce regular, earnest and correct study. Our whole school is geared in this serious fashion, no matter whether the individual student's aim is to dance as a hobby or to become a professional or a dance writer or just an informed audience member."

Two techniques are needed for dancers today, she said. "Our syllabus of modern and ballet enables students to learn at a level which will in fact prepare them for the requirements of the stage. The standards we've established are not an invention - they exist internationally and when training dancers, they are necessary." Mrs. de Rothschild's viewpoint, as well as reflecting Jeannette Ordman's approach to dance, comes from knowing the exact necessities for building not only individual dance careers, but also companies for she has years of experience supporting the Martha Graham Company in America and later founding both the Batsheva and Bat-Dor dance companies in Israel.

The director of the Bat-Dor School, Jeannette Ordman, explained lessons are the vital part of the craft of dance - and without craft there can be no art. Some 20 staff teachers, augmented on a regular basis by guest teachers from abroad, teach the craft and art of dance from beginning through professional levels. In the lower school (children can begin at the age of 6), the basis for ballet instruction is the Royal Academy of Dance ballet syllabus. At the age of 10, students begin learning the modern technique based on the Graham method, but must continue to take one ballet lesson a week, in addition to music instruction. In the upper school, students learn modern technique and ballet, which includes study of different methods, notably the Russian. Their music course is augmented to include elements of dance composition and dance history and, as an elective, students may choose jazz dance.

"To control the dancer's instrument - the body - in an intelligible, expressive way takes time and instruction from able and knowledgeable teachers, and to enable talented students to take as many classes as possible in our system of dance instruction we have initiated a scholarship system. Attending a minimum of eight classes per week is an example of our requirements for maintaining a full scholarship," said Miss Ordman.

"There is no substitute for serious work; in this way Bat-Dor can develop the students' talents and love of dance." ■

## *BALLET, MODERN DANCE AND PANTOMIME FOR SCHOOLS*

The immediacy of movement makes dance understandable to children and young adults. By its very nature, being a non-verbal medium, dance in all its forms suits young audiences.

"The Theatre for Children and Youth" (of the Ministry of Education and Culture) has presented for the last two years

dance programs to its audience, devised to further the understanding of the art of dance and to acquaint the pupils with its many forms. Students from a given area are bused to theaters for the programs.

This important educational activity takes several forms. The Batsheva Dance Co. presented a touring program which included an explanation of the nature of choreography (devised by Judith Brin-Ingber) demonstrated by the dancers of the company and a selection of works in its repertory, including dances by Martha Graham, Talley Beatty and others. Next spring Batsheva will resume its performances for schools with a new program including Kurt Jooss' "Green Table."

The "Israel Ballet" will join the scheme, and present a program of works by Balanchine, Felix Blaska and others

introduced to the young spectators by the company's director Hillel Markman.

A special program of pantomime devised and executed by Yoram Boker is performed in the school building itself. "The World of Mime" has been so successful that it has been presented by the Youth Theatre for the last three seasons and is still going strong.

A new show by Rina Sharet now in rehearsal will combine dialogue with dance and song. This, too, will be shown directly in the schools.

Other shows of the Youth Theatre also include dance, for example "King Salomon's Daughter" (text by Bialik) which was presented at the International Congress of Youth Theatres in Hamburg, West Germany last summer. "Inbal" dancers participated in this play. ■

### *THE RUBIN ACADEMY IN JERUSALEM*

The Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem is soon to expand its three year dance program to four. Graduating students earn the only recognized degree in dance education in Israel. Started almost 15 years ago, the Dance Department is directed by Hasia Agron-Levi. The curriculum covers many dance styles and techniques (including ethnic dance taught by Israel Ethnic Dance Project's Cyrelle Soffer), choreography (taught by Gertrud Kraus), dance history and criticism (from "Jerusalem Post's" dance critic Joan Cass who uses video-tapes of dance performances as teaching material), dance pedagogy in theory and practice (taught by Dir. Agron-Levi), dance therapy (Madeline Rodin), music appreciation and theory as well as music for dance, in addition to academic courses. Over 300 students receive dance training in the external dance program offered after school hours. ■

### *AMLI MUSIC AND DANCE LIBRARY*

The dance section of the AMLI Music and Dance Library, at the municipal library at 26 Bialik St. Tel-Aviv, will hopefully be open for circulation within the coming months. The collection of books, periodicals, and dance programs ranging from dance history, biography, dance therapy and notation, as well as films of Jose Limon's "The Moor's Pavanne" and Murray Louis' "Space" only awaits readying of the third floor premises.

In addition to reference and reading rooms there are plans for film showings, lecture-demonstrations and exhibits at the library. The dance library was begun at the initiative of Anne Wilson with the aid of Yemmy Strum in connection with the America Israel Cultural Foundation. Many American dancers contributed books from their own collections. ■

## *KIBBUTZ DANCE CENTER*

For 10 years there has been a proper dance studio in the midst of the northern mountains of Israel complete with grand piano, wall-mirrors, black linoleum floor, communal sleeping room for a small company of dancers plus the more usual livingroom and office filled with dance books, magazines, plants, photos, and posters. Once the building was a tobacco drying plant and later part of a factory for screws. Now it is a kind of production plant for kibbutz dancers.

Some 150 dance students from the age of 12 come from neighboring moshavim (co-operative villages) and kibbutzim to the "ulpan" or studio at Kibbutz Ga'aton. (The studio is connected with the local Regional Council which rents the premises thus providing funds). Classes are offered in ballet, modern, jazz, composition-improvization, Eshkol-notation, as well as refresher classes for dance teachers working in neighboring kibbutzim.

Teachers at the studio include Kaj Lothmann, artistic director of the Batsheva Dance Company, who travels specially from Tel Aviv weekly, as well as other known performers and educators from centers throughout Israel.

Yehudit Arnon is director of the ulpan and the Kibbutz Dance Company, which is based at the Ga'aton Studio.

## *CENTER FOR MOVEMENT NOTATION RESEARCH*

In January, 1973 a Centre for Movement Notation Research was set up at the Faculty for Fine Arts, Tel-Aviv University, headed by Professor Noa Eshkol. Movement notation was recognized as a relevant subject of study in both the field of the arts and communication, and with this came extended development of the work carried out up to that time by the Movement Notation Society. The latter was established in 1968 to provide a framework for the activities of the increasingly large number of people - students and colleagues

She is the guiding spirit and founder of both. Ever since she and her husband came to Israel (and joined Kibbutz Ga'aton) in 1948 from Europe, she has worked to establish dance at her kibbutz and within the kibbutz movement. She has developed dancers (and dance teachers) and at various periods in the last 25 years established different performing groups. Since the Yom Kippur War, the present group of dancers -- from several kibbutzim -- have lived and worked together at Ga'aton, studying intensively, rehearsing with Arnon and guest choreographers such as Gertrud Kraus, Flora Cushman, Gidon Avrahami, Gene Hill-Sagan, and Linda Rabin. They work 3 days intensively per week, each of their respective kibbutzim allowing them time from their kibbutz duties to dance, and also paying for their expenses. During the '74-'75 season the company gave about 20 performances throughout the country.

There is a unique atmosphere in the "dance factory" at Ga'aton, an atmosphere showing professional concern for the dancers' development towards the highest ideals of dance. But even more important than this is the positive communal and group support for the dancer. There is an unusually warm and productive relationship amongst them. This carries over onto the stage and is wonderfully evident during company performances. Perhaps this is one of the advantages of a company of dancers who grew up, and continue to live, in kibbutzim.

of Noa Eshkol - occupied with movement. The Movement Notation Society is a body of overlapping working groups dealing with different facets of movement in all its manifestations. One of these is a group of dancers who takes part in work on movement compositions accomplished through the means of the notation method. Called "The Chamber Dance Group," it gives annual performances in Israel to audiences interested in the nature of movement. It has also appeared in Italy, Great Britain and the United States.

The search for a viable notation of movement resulted in

the Eshkol-Wachman Movement Notation. This is a system devised and developed by Noa Eshkol and Abraham Wachman (now professor of architecture and town planning at Haifa Technical Institute). The first textbook of their method was published in London in 1958.

An objective test of the universal applications of a notation method would entail observation and recording of areas and styles of movement created by others not themselves able to write down their own works. The Eshkol-Wachman method was therefore applied to areas of movement independent of EW Movement Notation, or any other notation method. These included fields as different as physical education, classical ballet, animal behaviour, the language of the deaf, and folk dance. The results showed EW system to be effective; publications were prepared by the Movement Notation Society, and subsequently published under the auspices of Tel-Aviv University. The most recent of this series of books is the score of a dance suite by Noa Eshkol; this publication exemplifies its use as a compositional tool as well as an instrument of thought.

Practical work has been accomplished by theoretical research. In 1968-9 Professor Eshkol participated in a project at the University of Illinois, Urbana, dealing with the nature and implications of simultaneous movement. A computer programme was compiled using information on simultaneous movement of adjacent limbs from a score in Movement Notation as input and a printout showed the positions passed through in the resulting 'space chord'; plots of the space chord were also given by an on-line plotter. Abraham Wachman and M. Klein have since developed, at Haifa Institute of Technology, a new programme for use in the solution of problems in simultaneous movement.

## *DANCE RESEARCH*

A remarkable body for the research and preservation of Israel's ethnic dances is the Israel Ethnic Dance Project. Started 4 years ago by a founder of Israeli folk dance, Gurit Kadman, the Project is sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Culture's Council for Culture and Art in

The current activities of the Centre at Tel-Aviv University extend to many areas. The development and improvement of movement notation is carried out through the analysis and recording of movement in various fields including Folklore, Physical Education, Dance Education, Kinesiology, and Zoology. Other areas include refining a theory of composition in dance, based upon structural principles definable and controllable within the framework of a valid and practicable notation. There is investigation of the various extant systems of movement and dance notation, and also of the numerous past attempts to formulate a notation method. At the present time work is in progress on the notebooks of Vaslav Nijinsky, who recorded at least one of his compositions for the Diaghilev Ballet in a notation method of his own devising.

An interesting application of movement notation in fields other than movement of vertebrates is the work of John G. Harries. He has applied EW Movement Notation to composition in the visual arts and in particular 'kinetic' types including synthetic film - animation.

In the United States, Professor Laura Huelster and Professor Annelis S. Hoyman, both of the University of Illinois work in collaboration with the Centre. Movement Notation is taught at that university by Professor Hoyman, who also devised the basic EW Movement Notation course in the PLATO computer-based tuition system.

In Canada, Dr. Ilan Golani at Dalhousie University, Halifax, is continuing animal behavioural studies which he began at Tel-Aviv University. He is also giving instruction in EW Movement Notation to zoologists who wish to use it in their own work.

working connection with both the Folklore Center of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem and Histadrut's Folk Dance Committee, Tel Aviv. The Project is engaged in intensive fieldwork--such as filming and recording-- as well as reconstructing (with the help of experienced folk dance teachers) traditional dances of Jewish communities from outside Israel and ethnic groups within Israel for performances.

The different dances are those of various communities such as Yemenite Jews, Georgian Jews, Jews from India and Kurdistan (Researching this group resulted in a M.A. on Kurdish Jewish dance for ethnomusicologist Pamela Squires, one of the participants in the Project) as well as Israel's Druze and Circassian. Over 40 dance groups perform in programs encouraged by the Project in conjunction with army, government and educational institutions. These programs serve many purposes, amongst them "bridging the generation gap, the identity gap--introducing youth to their ethnic past--and also bridging of social gaps," said Mrs. Kadman.

### *DANCE CENTER IN NATANYA*

It seems that dance education is not confined to the three big cities, but has expanded to smaller communities as well. The studios, by their close proximity to the children's homes, enable even the very young to attend classes in ballet, modern dance and other disciplines of movement.

Ehud Ben-David, himself born in Natanya, founded the Dance Center in this sea side resort. Apart from the Natanya studio run by the "Assoc. for the Advancement of Dance," the Assoc. recently opened a branch in Even-Yehuda (together with the local Municipal Council).

Ehud Ben-David came to the world of theatre dance from gymnastics and dancing in festivals of Israeli folk dance. His special flair and dance strengths caught critical acclaim during 10 years of performing leading roles in the Batsheva Dance Co. Despite his success in roles by the world famous Martha Graham, Glen Tetly, Anna Sokolow and Talley Beatty, Ben-David likes to stress that he is strictly a home-

Ethno-musicologist Noemi Bahat-Ratzon is also working on aspects of the Yemenite dance in co-operation with musicologist Dr. Avner Bahat, within the framework of the Faculty for the Arts, Tel-Aviv University. The two are researching the relationships between Yemenite-Jewish men's dance, the accompanying songs and the song text, called the Diwan--semi-religious poetry of the Yemenite Jews. Mrs. Bahat has experience in appraising, filming and recording ethnic dance in Israel for she earned her M.A. from the Sorbonne for the first complete study of music and dance in the wedding ceremonies of the Israeli Druze.

grown Israeli dancer. He has long maintained his interest in youth and in the ways of attracting them to dance.

His center has been active for two years and has about 500 students. The advanced pupils also participate in a dance-group which performs folk dance and jazz. Last year the group made the finals of the Israeli Competition for Folk dancers.

The center's administrative manager is Olesh Soffer, himself teacher of dance and a graduate of the Wingate Institute.

All over the world, as well as in Israel, there exists the problem of scarcity of male dance students. Ehud Ben-David, himself a well-known dancer, is aware of this problem and accordingly the center he is in charge of emphasizes the education of boys. In fact many boys are interested especially in jazz dancing.

The Natanya dance center is an example of a dance studio in the so-called provinces. Here future dancers are trained, and what may be even more important, a future well-informed audience is growing.