

רחמי נאני רזים וסוזנה אל
 פפכר ארז פפרט ; אל
 את אישיתו של נאני - פפכר
 פפכר, פפכר - פפכר,

אני מתפטר לזאת את נאני פפכר ;
 את פפכר - ארז פפכר ;
 פפכר - פפכר !

Movement Cannot Cheat and Lie

Valentina Archipova Grossman



"אביב בגן", 1956, מופע תלמידים בפסטיבל
 הפרח בחיפה צילום: אוסקר טאובר
 "Spring in the Garden", 1956, Student
 performance in Haifa Flower
 Festival photo: Oscar Taube

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In 1936, Valentina Archipova Grossman opened the dance studio on 37, Massada St., Haifa. Until the mid-1960s, she was the only professional ballet teacher in the north of Israel. Already in the 1950s, she started sending advanced students for studies at the Sadler's Wells School in London, and later to the Royal Academy of Dance, thus creating her first contacts with the R.A.D. In 1967, an examiner from the R.A.D. first arrived in Israel. A year later, the opening of an R.A.D. branch in Israel was approved, with Valentina Archipova as its representative. She died in 1977 of an illness.

Following is a (verbatim) lecture by Archipova, which I heard several times as a child, and believe to have been written in the mid-1950s.

Ruth Eshel

Impressions and Problems of a Ballet Teacher in Israel

My Work – Its Aims and Functions

I began my pedagogical activity in Israel thanks to an acquaintance with a dancing-shoes cobbler. Naturally, when I arrived in Israel [1933] I wanted, first of all, to become familiar with what was being done here in the field of dance. I looked for the Opera, for ballet schools. My impressions while visiting those and a few dance studios were of utter and total disappointment.

In the field of music I found many talents here: the musical terminology, the accomplishments and education were notable; I saw and felt a musical culture and tradition. But dance! Ahah! All I saw here twenty years ago was depressing. Pettiness and dilettantism were common, and mainly there was an enormous presumption to present all that as art.

Over time, I also understood my own role, my duty, and my goals in dance education became clear. Time proved and justified to me all that I have found, lived and received before, all I aspired to in a former period of my life, in art and in my actions in it; first as a student of the Imperial Ballet School in St. Petersburg and then as a professional artist and educator. Later, I realized as a certainty that in art there is only one truth, which lies beyond the boundaries of time, situation or place; what matters is not the 'what', but 'how', 'why', 'wherefore' and 'what for'. Discipline – namely, self-criticism, self-education – is the point. From which, once more, stems the holy concept – namely, that the principle is 'how', not 'what'!

I remember how Miss. Martha Graham presented a demonstration dance. She commented: 'In dance, I always take the advice of my father, who was a doctor. He said: "Movement does not cheat!" I bow to her for that comment.

As I mentioned before, I began my educational activities as a dance teacher in Israel thanks to a cobbler. I learned that this expert of ballet shoes works in Tel Aviv, and wished to order a pair of shoes for myself – so that I could at least practice my profession from time to time. When I came to him in Tel Aviv, I saw these horrible dance shoes – strong, awkward, heavy. Not dance shoes but wood logs. After hearing and absorbing all my guidance and comments, he promised me that he would make shoes according to my requirements and bring them to Haifa.

Two weeks later, his wife appeared together with another lady accompanied by a girl aged 9-11 [Natanya Bialistock (Ramon). R.E.], with two pairs of shoes of the same pattern – for me and for the girl. It turned out that the girl had already studied ballet here, in Haifa, and her mother wished to show me her daughter's accomplishments and her ability to stand



מרים ציכטינגר (לימים עופר), 1945
Miriam Zichtinger (Offer), 1945

'on point' [*Shpitzim*]. She stands already! Incidentally, the truth is that in Israel it was common practice to use point shoes from the very first lesson.

After the girl's dance – short and awful – ended with a 'split', I told her in all simplicity and honesty: Don't dare to dance or even to get on your toes, not if you ever want to dance or if you really do like dancing. I explained that until the age of 10-12 it is forbidden to get on your toes at all, since the toes are the ending of the slow evolution of the human body; of the human back's strength. They are the result of that evolution into strong uprightness and overcoming gravity; the next stage after standing on your toes is standing in the air. After many doubts and hesitations, many indeed – would she be able to face up to the demands I put to her – she became my first student in Israel, once I was convinced that her decision was made in full understanding and awareness.

This was actually the first step – the beginning of my ac-

tivities in Israel. After a while, other parents started to show up, asking me to accept their children. They convinced me to accept their children despite my claim that I had no room and couldn't work at home with several students, although at the time this was the norm: whoever taught dance at the time did so in their own private apartment, in a small room, totally unsuitable for the purpose.

I came to know more and more how inexperienced were these parents, and how simply they could be taken advantage of for material gain while harming their children and their future. It was crystal clear to me that I must not give in to the conditions prevalent in the teaching of dance; that they should be shattered and changed, and aggressively combated.

It was clear to me that, first of all, students should be taught to realize that they were not studying dance just like that, for fun and enjoyment, but were being educated in the art of dance. The issue of place became tangible to me, neces-



תלמידים רוקדים טרנטלה, 1953
Students dancing the Tarantella, 1953



"ולס הפרחים", 1963, חופע תלמידים בפסטיבל הפרח בחיפה
צילום: אוסקר טאובר
"Waltz of the Flowers", 1963, Student performance in
Haifa, students
photo: Oscar Tauber

sary and most urgent. After many strenuous searches, with the help of my late husband, may he rest in peace, the place where I still work was found – 37, Massada St., for which I will be eternally grateful to him. Once I had found a place for the eight students registered with me, I approached the matter of teaching with great passion.

At the same time, I started searching for the authority that would give me a permit to teach dance. I looked for the authority that could examine my knowledge and give me permission and a permit for teaching. Wherever I took this matter, people looked at me without understanding – what do I really want?! – and gave me a very simple answer: 'Just get on with it and work!' I couldn't understand it. 'How can this be?' I thought, 'when it is possible that a teacher's knowledge might not be at the level required for teaching'. I thought: 'Whoever wishes – teaches?!' The whole thing was so strange to me.

I believe – and upon that belief I construct my educational work: First of all familiarity with movement; then, understanding movement in its anatomical action; then, perception and knowledge of movement through actions related to its understanding and familiarity; after going through this cycle, comes the expression of movement in the field, in the trainee's own personal way. And only after complete cooperation which is subjugated to rhythm, the quenching of emotional thirst and its experience. Not the other way round! Because there is no true, perfect emotional experience prior to understanding the stages that bring about that experience. On the contrary, the movement would be empty and artificial, and that is just a horror and a disgrace.

For me, classes are always filled with secrets and mysteries about how consciousness evolves in the individual, about forms of expression that reveal the person's personality in its three main aspects: intellectual, moral-spiritual and physical.

Through physical movement I get to know the nature of the student; through movement I see the person inside him and his internal world; movement cannot cheat and lie! Movement may be compared to the best radar, responding and conveying all of man's inner fluctuations – intellectual and emotional – all of his deviations from the truth. Through intellectual criticism of bodily movement I lead to criticism of the trainee's emotions. And the whole process is subjugated to rhythm, since it is clear and proven that the whole universe and its processes submit to it.

From the first lesson, I explain the contents of the things to be learned. The student must prove to me that he accepts full responsibility – through free will and understanding, which will bring him to dance lessons. A sort of bond is created between us, and a friendship born of joint work and mutual actions.

At times I was really astounded, thinking: how could it be that the same mother who exhausts herself taking care of her

הכוריאוגרף ג'רום רובינס מבקר בסטודיו, 1964,
מימין לשמאל: קטיה מיכאלי, יהודית גוטליב (נציגת
קרן אמריקה ישראל), ג'רום רובינס, צילום: אוסקר
טאובר

Jerome Robbins visits the studio in Haifa,
1964, from right to left: Katya Michaeli,
Judith Gottlieb (representative of American-
Israel Cultural Foundation), Jerome Robbins,
photo: Oscar Tauber

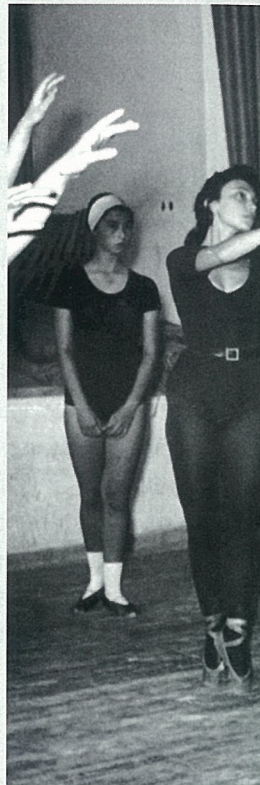


child; who runs after it in the street with a 'banana'; who looks for a job and works hard outside the home as well, so that she can buy her child an 'apple'; who exhausts herself in order to give her child every possible thing, also sending him to study dance, which is an expense – But when she buys the 'banana' or the 'apple' she examines the fruit from all directions, choosing the nicest, best one... and when choosing a dance teacher, it is the 'address' that matters to her rather than who is that teacher she entrusts with the future and well-being of her child! The child's development, physical and spiritual, depends upon who takes care of him, who guides him. She chooses the kindergarten teacher, she criticizes the school, but when it comes to a dance teacher, all she cares about is that he should be at a convenient 'address'!!!

In some cases parents brought me babies, practically in diapers. My advice to parents was one: instead of dance lessons, find yourselves a good nanny. Come to me later. Although, economically speaking, they are the easiest to take advantage of. Mothers – and, more dangerously, fathers – are gladly willing to pay in order to see how their children are being amused. It is sad and distressing that they cannot see how their children are being broken, in the physical sense, and poisoned, in the moral sense.

My role, then, is to provide my student with joy in his work and satisfaction in his self-organization, to develop in him an ability to concentrate and cooperation between his actions and his mind, and to teach him that it is not quantity that matters but quality. How their eyes shine when they reach self-correction – achievement through understanding.

Often they would bring to me the 'prodigies' or the 'stars' who have done wonderful things at home – a 'split' or a 'bridge' [back arches] – thus supposedly proving their dancing talents. This attitude to the art of dance would bring me to the verge of actual murder. This might seem strange to you today, but these used to be the facts and I had experienced it more than once.



שיעור לדוגמה בשיטת האקדמיה המלכותית, קולנוע שביט,
חיפה, 1969
צילום: אוסקר טאובר
R.A.D. demonstration class in Haifa, 1969
photo: Oscar Tauber

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הופעת תלמידים באולם "מכבי",
20 במאי 1945
Students performance in
Maccabi Hall, 20 May 1945



הופעת תלמידים באולם "מכבי",
20 במאי 1945
Students performance in
Maccabi Hall, 20 May 1945

זֶרֶת עֵשֶׂת עֵשֶׂת
וְהָאִנְיָאִן (Rhythm)
כֵּן כֵּן
זֶרֶת עֵשֶׂת עֵשֶׂת
וְהָאִנְיָאִן (Rhythm)
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זֶרֶת עֵשֶׂת עֵשֶׂת
וְהָאִנְיָאִן (Rhythm)
כֵּן כֵּן

Thank you.