

Ruth Eshel

DANCE SPREADS ITS WINGS

Israeli Concert Dance 1920–2010

Why did dance and dancing become important to the construction of a new, modern, Jewish/Israeli cultural identity in the newly formed nation of Israel? There were questions that covered almost all spheres of daily life, including “What do we dance?” because Hebrew or Eretz-Israeli dance had to be created out of none. How and why did dance develop in such a way? *Dance Spreads Its Wings* is the first and only book that looks at the whole picture of concert dance in Israel studying the growth of Israeli concert dance for 90 years—starting from 1920, when there was no concert dance to speak of during the *Yishuv* (pre-Israel Jewish settlements) period, until 2010, when concert dance in Israel had grown to become one of the country’s most prominent, original, artistic fields and globally recognized. What drives the book is the impulse to create and the need to dance in the midst of constant political change. It is the story of artists trying to be true to their art while also responding to the political, social, religious, and ethnic complexities of a Jewish state in the Middle East.

Ruth Eshel has a rich background in dance performance and research. Having danced and choreographed many multidisciplinary solo recitals, she went on to establish the contemporary Ethiopian dance troupes *Eskesta* and *Beta*. She is also the editor of the periodical *Mahol Akhshav* (Dance Today)—The Dance Magazine of Israel. In 2021 she was named Honorary Fellow of the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance.

“*Dance Spreads Its Wings* is a preliminary essay—comprehensive, clear, interesting and in-depth on the formation and especially on the development of the dance field, as an important component of culture in Israel. Ruth Eshel’s research encompasses historical and social backgrounds, dialogue with other arts, especially a fascinating story, from pioneering to blossoming.”

Dan Oryan, Head of the Department of Theater Studies at the Western Galilee Academic College, Akko, Israel.



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Of interest to:

Scholars and students of Jewish studies, Israeli studies, Dance Studies, Art studies, and Middle East Studies

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