

## Wonderful Wellington Weekend – Machol Pacifica 2008

With Wellington being my childhood home town, I did not need much persuading to register for an Israeli dance camp there. The opportunity to experience Marcelo Marianoff as tutor was also a drawcard, as I had missed the Auckland 2005 event where he shared the teaching honours with energetic Paula Pernitchi. I arrived early, full of happy anticipation for the annual dancers' reunion that recharges us all with new repertoire from our favourite choreographers.

By now I feel I am a “floating member” of the Wellington Israeli Dance Group because I frequently join their class whenever I am visiting the city. So, I offered my services to help set-up the venue and got to work with the blue tack and posters directed by young Sarah who had been given responsibility for decorating the gym. Further time passed companionably with Cherry stapling streamers together and before we knew it the team work was done.

Greetings and welcoming hugs for guests arriving from afar set the evening dancing off to a warm and relaxing atmosphere. Injuries, age and economics had taken their toll on the number of registrations. This proved to be a positive aspect because it meant the teaching could be done in one circle rather than overcrowding requiring an inner circle of faster learners. This helped to maintain the friendly, no fuss atmosphere throughout the event. Marcello taught the customary one dance that evening. He chose Avi Levy's beautiful dance “Ba Min Hashtika” (It comes from the Silence) and I am sure this one will remain a favourite with many campers.

There followed two days of teaching sessions in which we recapped the first dance and added a further nine, including two partner dances. Rafi Ziv's cheeky little cha-cha rhythm “Roni” was quickly mastered but Gadi Bitton's “Simanim” proved a little more challenging. Erica and Marcelo made it look easy but the direction changes viewed from across the circle and the faster pace of this dance meant it took longer to

get to grips with. It was worth the effort of perseverance and may prove a handy performance piece.

Marcelo's teaching was greatly improved from the video I had seen of his earlier visit to New Zealand. He was patient, clear, mostly taught using the A-Z method and made sure we had mastered each part before moving on to the next. His recent teaching experience in England showed, and his English had obviously improved too. His South American accent tripped a few, at first, but we soon got our ear in. "Chor-rus" will stay in my mind for a while yet and perhaps he meant "interlude" but we got the idea, whatever the terminology used. Counting down introductions, calling cues and prior reminders of dance structure ensured we quickly remembered his thorough instructions the next day.

I had to be very selective on what I joined in with for the two party nights in order to look after my dodgy knee for the teaching sessions. Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to dance their favourites in a large group. This is what the camp is really all about - sharing of that common repertoire built up over previous years. Long live Machol Pacifica! Yvonne went to a lot of trouble to produce a social play list that would hope to satisfy everyone's expectations. Despite this prior preparation and taking into account of popular requests there were apparently still complaints. I felt this was a disappointing response from a few unthinking participants, who obviously have not experienced the difficulties of organising such an event.

We also were treated to some short performances. An emerging talent in the form of a young women's hip hop group gave us a glimpse of what the younger generation aspire to. Their spirited and unique performances were a preview of what they hoped to take to international competition. Marcelo's afternoon workshop on choreography for performance resulted in an example item for our appraisal too. The use of simple props – blue and white helium-filled balloons and appropriate movement was adapted to keep the flow of people and colour interesting. It worked a treat and demonstrated

what simple modifications to known dance vocabulary can achieve in just one intensive session. Well done participants. We hope you use the ideas for your next public performances.

The final morning review session included one new dance which may yet prove to be my camp favourite - "Lyia" a rather unusual Moshe Eskayo offering. Debka rhythms excite me more than the beautiful lyrical dances a former ballet dancer naturally enjoys so this camp had plenty of fodder for me on both fronts. "Im Yesh Gan Eden" has a particularly haunting melody and who can resist the lively tune "Wai Wai Wai"? Israel Shiker produced a most satisfying dance for that which I am sure will long remain a favourite with many New Zealand Israeli Dance Groups.

No need to comment on the usual high standard for refreshments, however. We were certainly well fed and watered. A big thank you to all involved in making it happen so the rest of us could relax and enjoy it all. Thanks too to Marcelo, for a lonely job well done - while he too was nursing an injury. He energetically gave us his all with no one to share the load or even give him some respite by lapsing into his native tongue now and then. This photograph of him exhausted at the end says it all!

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