

AMI YAM AMI YA'AR

(Song of My People-Forest People-Sea)

A Ballet by John Cranko created for
The Batsheva Dance Company of Israel

Compliments of
Batsheva Dance Company

AMI YAM AMI YA'AR
(Song of My People-Forest People-Sea) World Premiere 1965

<i>Choreography</i>	John Cranko
<i>Narrator</i>	Chana Maron
<i>Music</i>	Ruth Ben-Zvi E. W. Sternberg D. Zeltzer
<i>Flute</i>	Amos Eisenberg
<i>Costumes</i>	Ya'akov Sharir Yair Vardi
<i>Lighting</i>	Haim Tchelet
<i>Literary Advisor</i>	Israel Ouval
<i>Rehearsal Director</i>	Rahamin Ron

INTRODUCTION

Dear Viewer,

The ballet *Ami Yam Ami Ya'ar* ("Song of My People-Forest People-Sea") is being presented in its original form as created by John Cranko for the Batsheva Dance Company.

The thirteen poems which accompany the ballet are narrated in Hebrew by one of Israel's most outstanding actresses, Chana Maron.

This special recording of Ms. Maron's reading, which serves as a unique and distinct musical score for the ballet, was done under Mr. Cranko's personal supervision.

Mr. Cranko believed that his choreography, along with the musical accompaniment for this work, should stand as a universal message even to the non-Hebrew viewer, and that the sound and rhythm of Chana Maron's reading is essential to the total concept and presentation.

The translations of the poems are provided for you in English for further reference.

Yours,

Batsheva Dance Company

**(A Nation and Man move in Parallel Cycles from
Death to Regeneration)**

1. Excerpts from
"To the Mound of Corpses in the Snow"
Uri-Zvi Greenberg
2. "Silent Night"
Tuvia Rubner
3. "The Amputation of the Wing"
Uri-Zvi Greenberg
4. "Song of My People-Forest People-Sea"
Uri-Zvi Greenberg
5. "Not by Chance"
Chaim Nachman Bialik
6. "Percussion"
Ruth Ben-Zvi
7. "Alone"
Chaim Nachman Bialik
8. "Song of Songs"
Ruth Ben-Zvi
9. Excerpts from
"In Two" "Maayan Ganim"
Shlomo Tani
10. Excerpts from
"Massada" "Hands of Israel"
Yizhak Lamdan
11. "Spread Your Wings"
Chaim Nachman Bialik
12. "God Lives"
I. Z. Rimon
13. "I Shall Know"
Sung by Netanya Davrat
Else Lasker-Schuler
14. "I Always Want Eyes"
Nathan Zach

TO THE MOUND OF CORPSES IN THE SNOW

Uri-Zvi Greenberg (1897-)

When they brought my father to the mound of corpses that was in the snow in the foreign field, the German officer screamed: 'Ausziehen!' And my father knew the verdict. My father, like one who strips from himself the substance of this world took off his coat and his trousers, and drew off his shoes, as on the evening of the Fast of Av, and stayed standing in his white underclothes and his socks. What is more naked than such nakedness, under the dome of the sky, on that day of the universe?

In all his days, he had not stood naked in his underclothes beneath the dome of the sky, wearing on his head his black skull-cap, except at night before his bed, and in the bath-house in the moment before he entered the water to be cleansed; for then only did he take off his underclothes and his socks and remove his skull-cap: he would not look at the nakedness of his body till the water covered him all round. He entered as though to prostrate himself in the depths.

But when the officer saw that my father was still standing in his underclothes and his socks, and wearing on his head his black skull-cup, the brute struck him with his cold weapon between the shoulders and my father coughed and fell to the ground: as before God. A prostration to the depths of his being from which he did not rise. He gave a groan that was like the finishing of a last prayer, after which there is no more prayer, only a clouded sky, a heap of corpses, and a live officer, smoking in the snow-covered plain. The snow on both sides of my saintly father's face was melting, reddening, because of the blood that came out of his mouth, from his burst lungs.

SILENT NIGHT

Tuvia Rubner (1924-)

The stars are still sowing their light. People are still returning from distant fields and their hand is still clean of blood. Babies are crying, their mother is still coming and the shadow on the threshold is nothing but the shadow of a tree. The clock is still counting its hours peacefully. The world is still silent. Silent still is the world. Another night just like any other night. A dream is still forgiving the sins of the day. But what is this complaint? What is this lament? Who is asking? And no one is praying. Only the wind whined. And our heart stopped still.

THE AMPUTATION OF THE WING

Uri-Zvi Greenberg (1897-)

All of a sudden, one bright morning
When the fragrance of all vegetation spread in the air
All birds were flying with one single wing . . .
Woe to the man who saw them
and didn't take in his hands
the grapes of his eyes and didn't squeeze . . .

The birds themselves don't know who severed their wing.
All of a sudden they fly in the air turning on their side . . .
And there is not a single drop of blood
and not a single sign to show
that each bird had two wings to transport longing hearts
from here over there . . .
Now there is no more over there . . .
Upon the word of God, as in a dream, a wing was severed
and the spot of the amputation was sealed.

SONG OF MY PEOPLE-Forest People-Sea

Uri-Zvi Greenberg (1897-)

When a man walks in the forest and lifts his voice there,
the great forest answers with an echo-echo,
a sign that the voice has entered and shaken its forest heart;
but when a man wanders the sea and lifts his voice to the sea,
the sea never answers, the water goes on flowing . . .
Like the voice of a man on the open sea, such is the voice of the seer
in my-people-that-are-a-sea . . . my people-sea! in the manifold world.
But my people-sea, who are a sea for all their seers,
are a forest everlasting for the peoples of the world:
giving the best of wood for pillars and sills
and roofs of palaces;
cloud after cloud will be sent on the head of my people-forest
to the alien nations; they will come
to lay the trees low. There the beasts of prey assemble.
When an alien people rise beyond my forest-people and lift their voices
my people-forest will answer them!
Not so when a prophet and seer with powerful voices stands up from within them,
and where he stands, there is the heart of the sea . . . my people-sea!
In truth, a curse of generations, a sin of generations . . .
a sadness not even madness can overcome!
Is it of God, this cruelty?
Happy the innocent or fool, happy the man, ignorant of the heart of this,
like the blind and deaf harper when his hands are on the strings,
like the man who walks, led by imagination's miracle,
behind a plough in the heart of the sea,
and thinks: a field! and ploughs furrows in the waters;
a field! and casts seed upon the waters . . .
But woe unto the seer-sage who knows the secret,
a fear in his luminous mind
until his mind trembles, a torch in the wind . . .
He knows that this is a sea and not a field
but walks on the sea and he ploughs and sows:
Perhaps a miracle will happen; and the cruel god
of generations, leading a desert wind, will bid the sea to be a continent;
the sea and the waves of the sea turn field and its fat furrows,
and that which was sown in it in the knowledge of a longed-for-miracle
rise green and golden
every grass according to its kind, every tree, and all the grains of the sun
All my days and all my nights are a prayer for the miracle.

NOT BY CHANCE

Chaim Nachman Bialik (1873-1934)

The light did not come to me just by chance,
And from my father I did not inherit it:
No, I scratched it out of my rock and my stone
And hewed it out of my heart.

A single spark hides in the rock of my heart,
A tiny spark, but all of it mine,
Borrowed from no-one nor stolen,
From out of me, always mine.

And from the hammer-blows of my sorrows,
When my heart, my rock, almost burst,
The Spark took wing, sprayed into my eyes,
And from my eyes—to my verse.

And from my verse it will flee to your hearts,
And in your flame that I lit will fly higher,
And I, with my body and blood,
Will pay the price of the fire.

ALONE

Chaim Nachman Bialik (1873-1934)

The wind took them, light swept them all away,
The morning of their lives sang with a new sense
I, a soft fledgling, remained below
The wing of God's presence.

I was left utterly alone, and the Presence
Fluttered above my head her smashed right wing.
My heart knew her heart, she trembled on
Her son, her only one.

She was driven away from everywhere.
Only one small grim lonely place was left:
The house of study where she hid in shadow
And I shared her grief.

When my heart yearned for the window, for the light,
When I grew embittered at her wing's hard weight
She laid her head on my shoulder, her tears dripped
on the pages of the Talmud.

She wept to me softly and clung to me
As though I was enclosed by her smashed wing
'The wind took them,
I stayed alone.'

And like the closing of a very old lament
Like a prayer moving in pleading and in fear
My ear listened to that gentle weeping,
And to that scalding tear . . .

SONG OF SONGS

Ruth Ben-Zvi

Night after night on my bed
I have sought my true love.
I have sought him but not found him.
I said, I will rise and go the rounds of the city,
through the streets and the squares,
asking my true love.
I sought him but I did not find him.
I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,
if you find my beloved,
what will you tell him?
That I am faint with love.

The watchmen, going the rounds of the city, met me.
And I asked, Have you seen my true love?
Scarcely had I left them behind me
when I met my true love.

He took me into the wine-garden
and gave me loving glances.
His left arm was under my head, his right arm was around me.
I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,
Do not rouse and do not disturb my love
till he pleases.

IN TWO

Shlomo Tan'i (1919-)

The palm of my hand touched only one spot
But all the blood flowed there running,
and the whole body was in the palm of my hand.

As my eyes, two small portholes, see you
But your beauty is delivered running
to the whole of me, and I'm ablaze.

THE HANDS OF ISRAEL (Excerpts from "Massada")

Yizhak Lamdan (1900-1950)

And who are you, ascending with your hands outspread?
—Not mine! They are the hands of Israel, that embrace everything,
And everything tumbles out of their embrace,
And they hang like empty pails
Over the world's overflowing wells . . .
Ah, these hands, the first to raise the banner of any revelation,
And the last to gain its solace,
Are lately raised toward Massada's walls—
To embrace!
I charge you, hands of Israel, if from here too you return empty—
Then fumble in empty space!
I charge you to grasp Massada's walls,
To grasp them unrelenting!
Or else—may these hands be cut off from whose embrace
Everything tumbles,
Whose grasp grips nothing!

SPREAD YOUR WING

Chaim Nachman Bialik (1873-1934)

Spread your wing to be my shelter.
Be my mother, sister, all.
Let my head nest in your bosom
And my prayers that vainly call.
Bend at dusk, the hour of pity,
My sorrows will confess the truth:
Youth exists here, so they tell me.
Where's my youth?
I'll reveal another secret:
My soul burnt itself alive.
Love exists here, so they tell me.
What is love?
There were stars, and they betrayed me.
There's no dream: there was before.
I have nothing left now, nothing,
Nothing more.
Spread your wing to be my shelter.
Be my mother, sister, all.
Let my head nest in your bosom
And my prayers that vainly call.

GOD LIVES

I Z. Rimon (1889-1958)

God lives! The splendour of the skies says so,
And the black storm that hides them also speaks;
God lives! The ornament of earth says so,
And the tempest uprooting forests also speaks;
God lives! The day in its brilliance says so,
And the night with its terrors also speaks;
God lives! The purity of rivers says so,
And the heavy burden of fog also speaks;
God lives! The rich crop of mountain says so,
And the gushing flow of lava also speaks;
God lives! Life in its spring says so,
And death that is cruel also speaks;
God lives! The sea in frothing waves says so,
And in its whispered yearnings also speaks;
God lives! My heart, alien but bursting, says so,
And flowing into God's lap also speaks.

"I KNOW"

Else Lasker-Schiller (1876-1945)

I know, I know, that soon I must die—
Yet all the trees are bright with fruit,
The summer having long gone by.
Pale grow my dreams—
So sad an ending this, sere and dry
To what I wrote in reams and reams.
You cull a flower for me to enjoy—
I loved it when 'twas a seed
Alack, I know that I must die.
Softly my breath sighs o'er the river of God,
Softly I set my feet
On the path to the home eternal, to God.

I ALWAYS WANT EYES

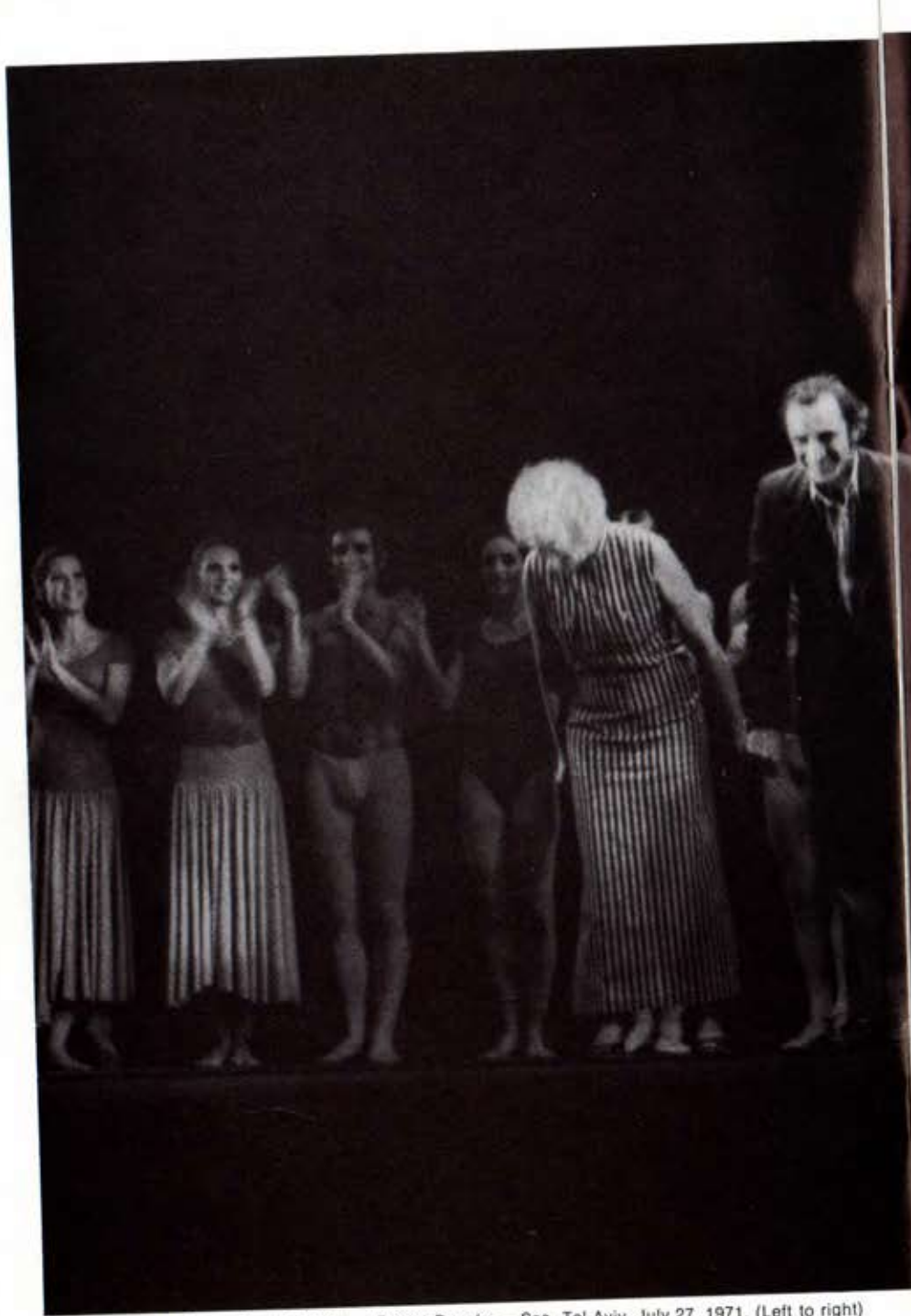
Natan Zach

I always want eyes to see
the beauty of the world and praise
this wonderful faultless beauty
and praise He who made it so praiseworthy
and full, so full of beauty.

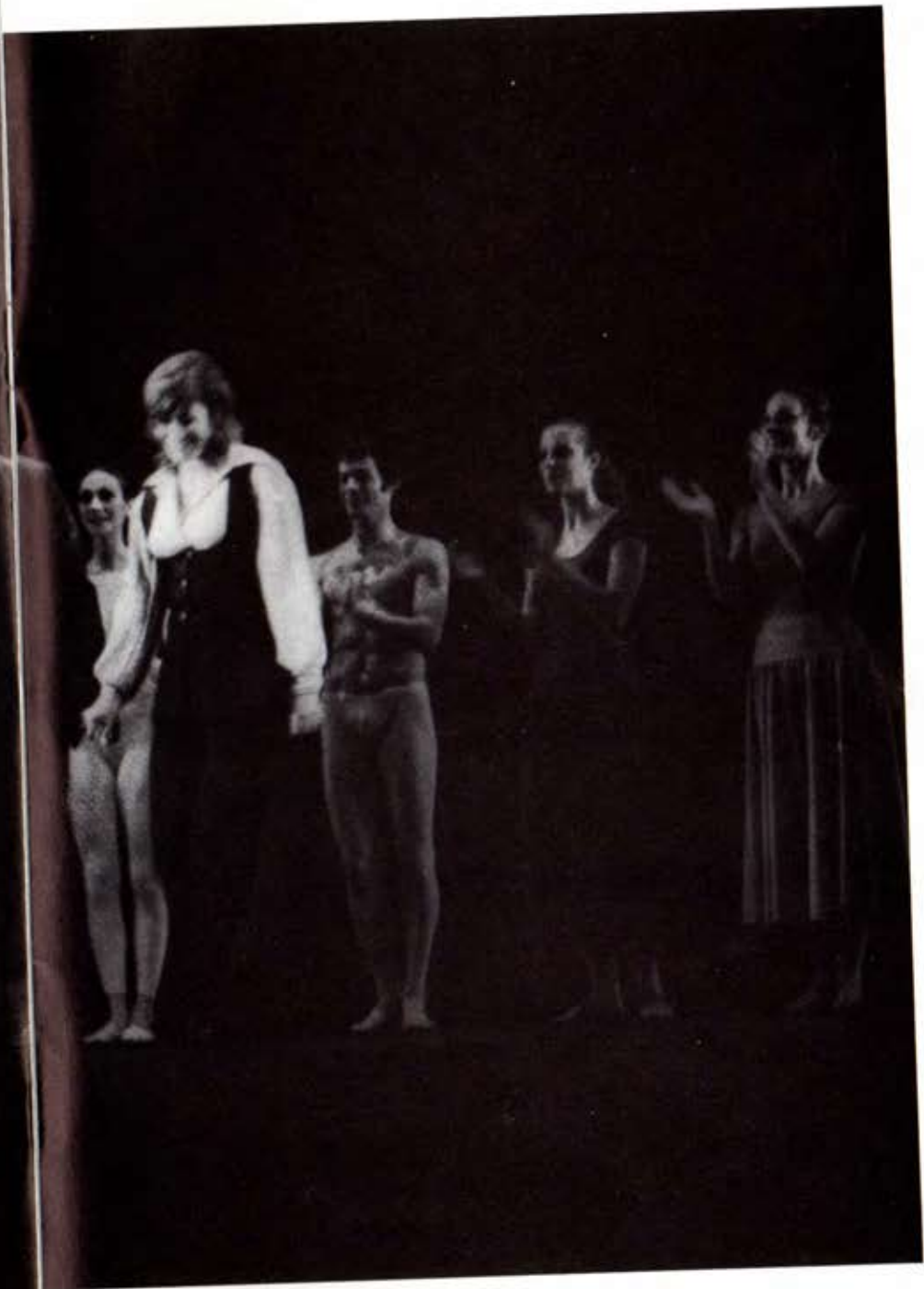
And I don't want ever to be blind
to the beauty of the world as long as I'm alive.
I'll give up many other things
but I'll never have enough
of seeing this beauty in which I live
in which my hands walk like ships
and think and make my life with courage
and no less with patience, yes, endless patience.

And I'll never stop praising.
Yes, never will I stop praising
And if I fall down I'll rise again—if only for a minute—
lest they shouldn't say he fell but he rose for a moment
to praise
with his last eyes
that which to praise he'll never stop.





Opening night of *Song of my People — Forest People — Sea*, Tel Aviv, July 27, 1971. (Left to right) Chana Maron, John Cranko, Ruth Ben-Zvi and the company.



JOHN CRANKO (1927-1973)

The choreographer John Cranko said that when he choreographed a ballet he tried to create visual images that speak for themselves. "A ballet image," he said, "should be like a diamond . . . a diamond has no color but it takes light and when you look at it you see red, blue, green and yellow . . . and the ultimate definition of the images comes from the eyes of the public, not from my eyes."

Such a diamond is the work "Song of My People-Forest People-Sea." The Hebrew poetry, the music and the choreography of the dance all celebrate the sorrow and the joy of the past, present and the future of Israel.

John Cranko was born in South Africa and after an internationally celebrated career as a choreographer, in 1961 was asked to direct the Stuttgart Ballet which shortly after became one of the world's foremost ballet companies.

His brilliant career was cut short at an early age by his sudden death.

CHANA MARON, considered to be the most accomplished and versatile actress Israel has ever produced, has been a leader in Israeli theatre for many years. She is one of the founding members of the Cameri Theatre of Tel Aviv. The wide range of her roles, both in Israel and abroad, shows only a small fraction of her great talent. She is the only actress who was awarded the "Israel Prize" for her artistic contribution to the Israeli Theatre.

RUTH BEN-ZVI, born in Israel, studied music in Israel and at the Juilliard School of Music in New York. She created and performed the major part of the music for Ami Yam Ami Ya'ar. As a solo artist she has frequently appeared with symphony orchestras and jazz ensembles throughout Israel, Europe and the U.S.A. She is, however, best known for her solo performances of her own compositions on the oriental jar-drum, an unassuming folk instrument which she richly developed into concert dimensions.

It was after having heard her performance of her own compositions that John Cranko invited her to create the score for the ballet Ami Yam Ami Ya'ar (Song of My People-Forest People-Sea).

NETANYA DAVRAT, soprano, sings the section in the ballet "I Shall Know." She is an internationally known Israeli singer who is loved for her many recordings of vocal compositions ranging from folk songs to the most advanced schools of contemporary music. She studied music at the Juilliard School in New York with such famous teachers as Jennie Tourel and Mme. Freshl.

ERICH WALTER STERNBERG, the composer of the music for the section "I Shall Know," was born in Berlin in 1891 and emigrated to Israel in 1932. While living in Tel Aviv he taught music in order to continue his work as a composer. Many of his musical compositions were played and recorded by outstanding artists. The song "I Shall Know" is a cycle of five songs set to the poems of Else Lasker-Schiller, a poetess who died in Jerusalem in 1945.

ISRAEL OUVAL was asked by John Cranko to assist him in selecting the poems for Ami Yam Ami Ya'ar and also to help him in the literary concept of the ballet. Born in Tel Aviv in 1945, he is a teacher of languages as well as a translator. He studied at the Tel Aviv University and the Sorbonne in Paris.

