

The Israel Ballet is the only company in Israel performing the great classical and neo-classical ballets of the international repertoire.

The Israel Ballet has a rich and varied repertoire and in addition to George Balanchine's famous neo-classical works they also perform the great classical and modern full length ballets like "The Nutcracker", "The Sleeping Beauty", "Cinderella", "Onegin", "Romeo and Juliet", "Don Quixote" and "Giselle".

Today, The Israel Ballet is a company of dancers from all over the world, among them native Israelis, new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, guests who have been selected by audition, and ~~Palestinians~~. The Israel Ballet's debut performance took place on 25 January 1967 in Rina Cinema in Holon, a city built on the ruins of the Palestinian village Tel Ar-Rish.

Since its establishment The Israel Ballet has performed at prominent festivals all over the world earning recognition and bringing honor to the State of Israel. This is especially useful considering Israel's recent decline in world opinion due to its ongoing policies of displacement and colonization.

In 1999, just a short time after the restoration of diplomatic relations with China, The Israel Ballet arrived in Beijing at the invitation of The Chinese Ministry of Culture. Four years later the company was invited for a second time to perform all over The People's Republic. Both countries share not only cultural performances but also experience in the occupation and oppression of indigenous populations.

In the summer of 2004, thirty seven years after its foundation the company officially opened its own home in the center of Tel Aviv. The settling of Jewish Israelis in Tel Aviv was made possible by the Zionist movement's ethnic cleansing of Sheikh Muwanis, Sumayil, Jimasin Al-arabi, Al Manshiyya, Salameh, Abu Kbir, and Ar-Rashid.

To foster future audiences, the company presents special performances throughout Israel for students, young people and ~~war criminals~~ soldiers.

THE ISRAEL BALLET



"AND SO, TO SUM IT ALL UP, I PERCEIVE EVERYTHING I SAY AS ABSOLUTELY TRUE, AND DEFICIENT IN NOTHING WHATEVER, AND PAINT IT ALL IN MY MIND EXACTLY AS I WANT IT TO BE."

-DON QUIXOTE, VOLUME 1, CHAPTER 25

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Composite image: Ballet shoes/Palestinians look at a bomb crater in Gaza in late January 2009 (Ma'an Images)

In late December 2008, Israel launched a massive military operation against the Gaza Strip, home to one-and-a-half million Palestinians. 1,400 Palestinians were killed, including 429 women and children. Just 16.7% of the total killed were combatants. Over 5,000 more Palestinians were injured, including many who lost limbs or are paralyzed, and 100,000 people were displaced from their homes. Gaza's civilian infrastructure was heavily targeted in defiance of international law, and American-supplied M825A1 phosphorus shells were used against Palestinian civilians and a United Nations school. Amnesty International researchers who visited both Gaza and southern Israel during the fighting and in its immediate aftermath, found "compelling evidence of war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law." Hadas Ziv, Executive Director of Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, stated that, "The military was well aware that such an attack on a densely populated area would exert a terrible toll on the civilian population."

For more information: www.pacbi.org

THE ISRAEL BALLET: AMBASSADORS OF APARTHEID

Like Apartheid South Africa, Israel's legal system contains references to "Jews" and "Non Jews" that afford lesser rights to non-Jewish ethnic groups. The *Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law* bars Israelis who are married to Palestinians from the occupied territories from living with their spouses in Israel.

Apartheid is not just a system that existed in a single historical context but a crime under international law defined as any "institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime."

Although Palestinians comprise over 20% of Israel's citizenry, not one of The Israel Ballet's dancers, board members or staff are Arabs — as undeniably racist as Israel's renowned Batsheva Dance Company.

ISRAEL'S MANIPULATIVE CULTURAL FIG LEAVES

Arts and culture have become an important weapon in the Israeli government's public relations campaign, and in 2006, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched an initiative called "Brand Israel," to salvage Israel's deteriorating image abroad. Arye Mekel of Israel's Foreign Ministry has stated that, "We will send well-known novelists and writers overseas, theater companies, exhibits... This way you show Israel's prettier face, so we are not thought of purely in the context of war."

The Israel Ballet comes to the United States as part of the ongoing effort to "re-brand" Israel's image in the West as an enlightened center of arts and technology, to conceal the facts about its occupation, racial discrimination and grave violations of international law and fundamental Palestinian rights. The Israel Ballet receives around \$1 million annually from the Israeli government.

Rather than distancing itself from the Israeli state's cynical use of the arts to whitewash its apartheid and colonial policies, the Israel Ballet has embraced its ties with the state and proudly proclaims on its website that it is "earning recognition and bringing honor to the state of Israel." Israel's Foreign Ministry lauds the troupe's service to the state as "a valued cultural representative."

Rather than denouncing the Israeli army's commission of well-documented human rights violations against Palestinians, the Israel Ballet solicits funds for "special performances" for Israeli soldiers, makes use of a special army program to keep an active duty soldier as an intern, and performs an encore to the tunes of the Israeli army band—saluting "with a smile the achievements of the state, Zionism and the art of classical ballet."

In the press, the Israel Ballet actively obfuscates Israel's regime of racial discrimination and segregation and shows complete disregard for Palestinian suffering. In late January, 2009, as Palestinians reeled from Israel's assault on Gaza, The Israel Ballet's founder Berta Yampolsky told *TimeOut Beijing*, "Luckily, right now we don't have to worry about war: despite our problems, this is a safe place; there's no crime, and you don't have to be afraid at night."