

# Shape On Us



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Israeli choreographer Sharon Fridman and the Vertigo – Power of Balance Integrated Dance Center collaborate in a new show performed by dancers with diverse abilities.

“The work is not just a choreography, but the product of an ongoing engagement of Vertigo Dance Company with the disability community.

In 2000, the choreographer Adam Benjamin led a series of contact improvisation workshops with able and disabled dancers to create a new piece. It was in these workshops that Hai Cohen, who participated in the piece, met Tali Wertheim, sister of Vertigo’s artistic director Noa Wertheim. They began to explore the potential of the practice Benjamin had proposed further, and continued to develop, specialize and promote the field of integrated dance through workshops in Israel and around the world.

The first production, *The Power of Balance*, became its own branch of the company. Housed in the ecological village in Netiv HaLamed-Heh, Power of Balance continues to engage with communities throughout Israel and further afield. For many years, Power of Balance and Vertigo Dance Company worked in parallel. The main troupe of Vertigo’s, whose cast is comprised of able-bodied dancers, created new works and performed them. Now, the company is placing Power of Balance in the forefront.

They called upon Fridman, former company member and renowned choreographer, to create a new work for Power of Balance. Having grown up with a disabled mother, Fridman is acutely aware of the importance of balance. In his childhood home, movement was used as a means to tackle daily physical challenges; moving from chair to chair, rising from the floor and completing simple household tasks.



Perhaps it was due to his respect for movement that Fridman found himself dancing. In his choreographies, the dancers appear to fly. Fridman’s expertise in contact and partnering elevate his works to almost superhuman levels. He employs great speed, striking softness and force to weld together his dances.

In the creative process that led up to “Shape on Us,” Fridman spent a great deal of time learning his cast members, studying their movement and allowing for them to connect with one another. There was no divide between

able and disabled participants. Everyone worked together to define a new movement language, shared by all.

The result is not just a dance piece, it is a breathtaking lesson in listening, sharing and connection.”

Ori J. Lenkinski, Jerusalem Post, August 2020

Shape On Us is a composition for nine people with tremendous and beautiful physical diversity. The project allows me to create an inverted world, one that is adapted and structured in the first place for all of us. A world that opens the curtains and invites the viewer to a curious and not apologetic look at the body, the movement and the space between us. Sharon Fridman



<https://youtu.be/InJ5823Wd9Q>





## Vertigo Dance Company

The Vertigo Dance Association was founded in Jerusalem in 1992 by the couple Noa Wertheim and Adi Sha'al. Vertigo operates in two complementary centers: in Jerusalem and in the Eco-Art Village in the Ella Valley. The Vertigo dance company under the artistic direction of Noa Wertheim is an exceptional contemporary dance company that promotes the creation of art with a social, environmental and community statement, stemming from a commitment to in-depth research of human nature and our relationship with the environment. Over the years these ideas have crystallized together into a unique way of life and a unique dance language, taught in Israel and around the world.



## Vertigo Power of Balance

Vertigo currently indicates 20 years since the establishment of the unique Power of Balance project led by Hai Cohen and Tali Wertheim - dancers, creators and dance teachers. Power of Balance is an integrated dance center - researching and connecting different people with diverse physical abilities. The workshops, the annual program and the teacher training of the Power of Balance are for dancers with and without physical disabilities and are based on contact improvisation. In the essence of the dance there is listening to myself and to the other through common meeting points.



[Vertigo Chairman] Michael Fischer

The quest to test the boundaries of movement together with the challenge of meeting people from varied backgrounds and a wide range of movement capabilities - began before the world faced the outbreak of a global pandemic that continues to challenge everything we know. The world has shifted and is out of balance, we are forced to live our lives under strict restrictions and limitations whilst attempting to create a new sense of wellbeing and parameters for everyday life.

The creative process of *Shape on us* was nipped in the bud when Israel entered its first lockdown and for the first time in Israel's history the Art and Culture world was silenced. In spite of the fact that half of the troupe members are in a high-risk category, the choreographer Sharon Fridman and the dancers decided to continue to work as a group while being in isolation and adhering to the restrictions.

Once possible, we made a courageous decision to resume work on the piece, bringing the dancers together face to face, and to continue to create based on the belief that there is a significant artistic social statement here. I would like to acknowledge and cherish the fortitude and the commitment of all the dancers and all the members



of the crew and to recognize the courage they showed by continuing to work as an ensemble despite all obstacles and fears.

The piece confronts us with parallel worlds that sometimes meet and sometimes collide. We are challenged to reflect, examine and question ourselves. How do we see and experience ourselves and those that are different from us? How do we treat each other? Do we actually see people with differences or are they transparent to us? How do we deal with the differences as an individual in my own private space and as a member of society in the public sphere? How do we co-exist side by side? Is the world as we know it fragmented or whole?

*Shape on us*, was created during this period that we were all forced to stop and examine how we live our lives in a world that is out of balance and we are all handicapped. The piece offers an opportunity to look at all individuals that are part of the society in which we live. We are challenged to rethink the familiar and how to create a reality that is more balanced ensuring that each and every one of us, regardless of our abilities, has a place and role in our world.





[Choreographer] Sharon Fridman

Has been working with his company in Madrid, Spain since 2006. In Israel, he danced with the Ido Tadmor Dance Company, the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company and the Vertigo Dance Company. Throughout his career he and his company have won various awards, including the Max Award for Best Dance Performance for 2015 and the Max Award for Best Choreography for 2019. Many international companies hold Sharon Fridman's creations in their repertoire.



[About the creation] Sharon Fridman

"When I was commissioned by the Vertigo dance company to create work for dancers with diverse physical abilities, the first thing I thought of was anything that could not be done. The many hours of joint presence in the studio and the neutral physical search cleared up excess charges of socio-political pretensions and allowed human diversity to float and rise. The dance field revealed itself to be accurate for this type of work."

In a field that engraves on its banner the search for physical authenticity and a unique movement language, a practice is required that combines different bodies and exposes the nature of things."







[Dancers] Itamar Beck

31-year-old Haifa native, musician and creator of the band "Itamar Beck and The Receptionists", walks with crutches due to disability (CP) from birth. From my time as a high school student, I loved the world of stage, creation and performance. I was involved in music, singing, writing and theater studies. The dance world is new to me. I came to the field of integrated dance about two years ago when I joined the "Vertigo Power of Balance" training program. With my love for music, dancing was never foreign to me. Under the guidance of Tali Wertheim and Hai Cohen of "Vertigo" I found a home to perfect and expand the world of movement through my body.

Today I am excited and happy to be a part of Shape on Us. Working with Sharon and the team of dancers is an opportunity to continue to learn about myself and others, to release limitations, explore and break existing movement or thinking patterns and create an alternative reality on stage.



[Dancers] Shmuel Dvir Cohen

43 years old, married and father to second grade twins. Former economist at the Leumi Group, holds a bachelor's degree in economics and a master's degree in finance with honors from Tel Aviv University.

I have lived with a neurological disorder since childhood. From experience, I know that the best medicine is movement and touch. I share this knowledge with the audience in my participation in this project.



Close to the floor, in one of the rehearsals, I asked Shmuel if he could perform a certain movement at a certain time. After he identified the movement, he said, that it was an involuntary movement, something he could not control. I asked if he could try to make the involuntary – voluntary. Shmuel said he would try.

This moment is the starting point of a search after physical logic, needs and solutions. When the involuntary is accepted, and becomes voluntary, that is where choreography happens, on the way to creating a world whose rules fulfill his needs.

[Sharon Fridman]



[Dancers] Grisha Lev

From a young age, I was led by my enthusiasm for dance, hunger for inspiration and the development of artistic intelligence. I studied at the Ga'aton Dance Workshop, danced in the KCDC 2 (Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company 2) and in the Kolben Dance Company.

In the process of creating Shape on Us, I was exposed for the first time to working with dancers with disabilities. It was a special learning experience. I realized that choreographers and dancers sometimes create a lot of movements and a lot of information to serve one statement or idea. Here I felt that every little detail, whether it was a look, a touch, or a movement, between me and a dancer in a wheelchair, had a broader and greater meaning of its own; a kind of artistic microcosmos that we create together.

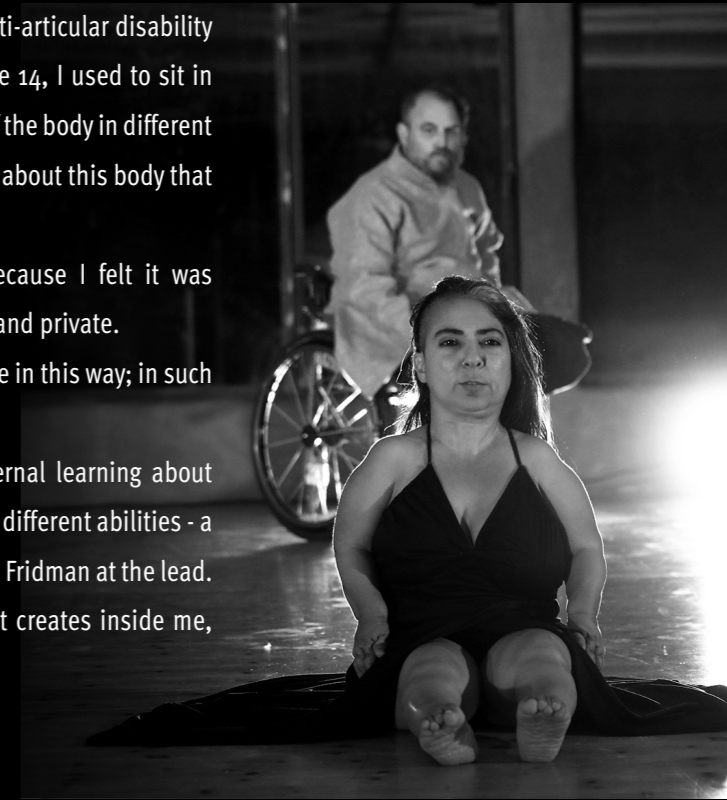
[Dancers] Meitali Aharoni

I am a single mother to seven-year-old Uriah. I have been sitting in a motorized wheelchair since the age of 8 due to my multi-articular disability from a younger age. I remember the period at about age 14, I used to sit in front of the mirror in my little room and move every part of the body in different movements and rhythms just to get to know a little more about this body that is reflected in the mirror.

I felt embarrassed to move around people mainly because I felt it was something too revealing. I wanted it to remain personal and private.

I never thought I would really want to be exposed on stage in this way; in such a clear exposure of motion.

As part of Shape on Us, I experienced a powerful internal learning about myself: As a member of a dance ensemble that combines different abilities - a unique group of special souls with choreographer Sharon Fridman at the lead. I have immense curiosity for the results and the echo it creates inside me, from me and to the outside world.



[Dancers] Inbal Aloni

Creative dancer and facilitator for Release, Improvisation and Creativity. Mother of 3: Noga, Yam and Anna Jasmine. Danced with the Vertigo Dance Company (participated in Adam Benjamin's work "The Power of Balance" in 2002), Inbal Pinto, Noa Dar, Yasmeen Godder, the Improvisation Ensemble Octet and more.

Established both the Shlombal, an improvisation and creative dance workshop, and the Gufadam, a movement laboratory in Jerusalem.

When I was invited to participate in the work Shape on Us I knew I would go on an adventure. I have met dear people who have touched me deeply and I feel privileged to share further the same process that expands the look on moving bodies and expresses people.





[Dancers] Tomer Navot

Dancer, independent creator and teacher of modern dance and Contact Improvisation. Born and raised in Jerusalem. Director of rehearsals and cast "Birth of the Phoenix" of the Vertigo Dance Company, and director of rehearsals of Kaet Dance Ensemble. Student of Cognitive and Linguistics at the Hebrew University.

I danced in the Vertigo Dance Company from 2009-2015. I have worked over the years with various choreographers: Noa Wertheim, Anna Halprin, Sharon Fridman, Elad Shechter and Shlomit Fundaminsky and others. The thing that excites me most about creating in any field is dialogue and collaboration. That's where the real magic happens.

[Dancers] Shira Ben Uriel

I was born and raised in Haifa to a family that breathes movement. At my parents' house, I absorbed values based on accepting the other. They gave me the ability to live alongside people different from me, look at the difference as unique and to even be interested and intrigued about it.

Along the way I have been privileged to take part in fascinating creative processes with diverse creators, dancers and artists.

For me, movement is a way of expression and release.

One of the things I enjoy most about the studio is to draw inspiration from the people around me, collaborate with them, surprise them and share a space with them that allows for co-creation.





[Dancers] Noam Ben Israel

22 years old from Malkishua, on the Gilboa.

I have been dancing since I can remember myself, on thorns, on stones and pretty much everywhere. I studied in the Vertigo International Dance Program that exposed me to the world of professional dance. I am curious and excited about what this piece will bring and very happy for the opportunity to continue this professional and human search.



[Dancers] Amir Ishar

After the army service, an obscure disease erupted and affected the blood flow to my legs. Due to complications, I underwent surgery to amputate both of my legs.

Paradoxically, replacing my legs with a wheelchair opened up a new universe of possibilities for movement and dance. Since my acting studies, 25 years ago, I have wandered in the performing arts fields of street theater, clowning, performance and student films. In recent years I have been fortunate to study in the Power of Balance for Integrated Dance program. This is the first time I have participated in a production of this magnitude; a dreamlike creative environment with people who are truly special and have a love for the world and art. I feel like wings are growing and I want to open them and see the wonderful places I can fly to.





Separate bodies & their personal stories creating one body - a soft & comforting human tissue.



# Shape On Us

World Premiere Israel Festival 2020

Choreographer	Sharon Fridman
Artistic Consultant	Noa Wertheim
Dancers Co-Creative	Meitali Aharoni, Amir Ishar, Inbal Aloni, Shira Ben Uriel, Grisha Lev, Noam Ben Israel, Itamar Beck, Shmuel Dvir Cohen, Tomer Navot
CEO and Co-Artistic Director	Adi Sha'al
Power of Balance Co-Managers	Tali Wertheim and Hai Cohen
Production Manager	Tamar Mayzlish
Original Music	Noam Helfer
Costume Design	Inbal Ben Zaken – Mizo
Light & Stage Design	Sharon Fridman / Dani Fishof – Magenta
Rehearsal Manager	Rina Wertheim-Koren
Stage Manager	Sandra Brown
Technical Director	Dani Fishof – Magenta
	Sound   Orgad Marciano Lighting   Adam Rotblit Stage   Ayam Dromi
Power of Balance Producer	Michal Goldfield-Sadot
Video Photography	Ran Yehezkel
Stills Photography	Yoel Levi
Graphic Design	Dorit Talpaz



Vertigo Dance Association

Chairman | Michael Fisher Chair of Vertigo Friends and Patrons | Varda Samet  
Members | Avishay Greenfield, Dgania Cohen, Lior Caspi, Ruth Sorensen, Irene Steinfeld, Yoel Sigal, Hila Oren,  
Jean-Marc Liling, Hanna Lotan, Shulamit Voosen, Baruch Reznik, Mike Fliderbaum, Orly Ronen, Aaron Weingrod, Yossi Offer

Artistic Director | Noa Wertheim CEO and Co-Artistic Director | Adi Sha'al  
Assistant Artistic Director | Rina Werthiem-Koren  
CEO Executive Assistant | Sigal Roth Director of Development | Yohanna Kremer

Vertigo Dance Company

Company Manager | Sandra Brown  
Stage Manager & Tour Manager | Reut Shaibe  
Rehearsal Manager | Rina Wertheim-Koren  
Company Teachers | Rina Wertheim-Koren, Etai Peri, Sian Olles, Inbal Aloni.  
Technical Manager | Dani Fishof – Magenta  
Production Manager | Arina Baron

Vertigo International  
Dance Program (VIDP)

Artistic Director | Keren Horesh-Begun  
Professional Counsel & Executive Coordinator | Sigal Roth

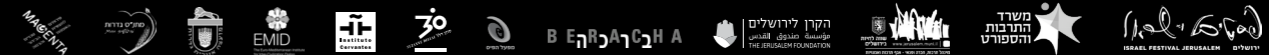
Vertigo Eco-Art Village

Directors | Tati Morag, Danny Goldenberg Staff | Tomer Goldenberg, Chamutal Nitsan

Vertigo Power of Balance

Directors | Tali Wertheim& Hai Cohen  
Producer | Michal Goldfield-Sadot

Art Director | Dorit Talpaz  
Financial Manager | Anat Binyamin Jerusalem Office | Mireille Kammoun  
Accountant | Shimonowitz and Co. Internal Auditor | Hilel Steinberg, Barzily & Co. Insurance Agent | Aderet  
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Many thanks for the generous hospitality of Beit Ha'am Gderot and the community center staff



L to R: Amir Ishar, Inbal Aloni, Noam Ben Israel, Itamar Beck, Meitali Aharoni, Grisha Lev, Tomer Navot, Shmuel Dvir Cohen, Shira Ben Uriel

We thank all our friends in Israel and worldwide for supporting our vision and mission.

POWER OF BALANCE

Vertigo

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