

Proposal

American-Israeli Ballet Association

A Non-Profit Corporation (as of 2025)

American-Israeli Ballet Association

President: *Isaac Akiba*

Corporate Secretary: *Ellie Gurary, PhD*

Treasurer: *Deborah Liney, MBA*

Board Member: *Aaron Ganz, MBA*

Artistic Partner

The Israel Ballet

Artistic Director: *Claire Bayliss Nagar*

CEO: *Leah Lavie*

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Executive Summary

Ballet is central to the cultural identity of many countries. Institutions such as New York City Ballet, The Royal Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, and The Bolshoi Ballet exemplify this cultural identity. The public, whether long-time supporters or newcomers, are familiar with the names of the foremost performers who impact the cultural conversation. Classical Ballet is an art form that transcends differences while simultaneously informing the identity of the individual country. An exceptional interpretation of a classical ballet delivered by outstanding dancers creates ripples that spread throughout the cultural ecosystem. On an individual level, the highest quality training provides invaluable life-lessons for all participants. A top-level center for classical ballet is a space for expression, exploration, and healing.

Israel can become the preeminent center for classical ballet in the middle east. However, a lack of philanthropic support and gaps in artistic knowledge impede its development. The **American-Israeli Ballet Association** (AIBA) will connect American patrons of the arts to Israel's prospective center for internationally competitive classical ballet: *The Israel Ballet*. An artistic exchange powered by funding will launch a new era of ballet in Israel. Supporters of the **AIBA** will help young Israeli ballet artists fulfill their potential and see *The Israel Ballet* on the world's most magnificent stages. We will work to fill the financial, educational, and artistic gaps to nurture a bright future for ballet in the middle east.

Proposal

The **AIBA** is a non-profit organization that will raise visibility for *The Israel Ballet* in America. It will bring together lovers of ballet — individuals, philanthropists, foundations, organizations, and artists — to provide *The Israel Ballet* with artistic and financial support. We will assist in elevating the quality and reputation by directing funding to educational programs at *The Israel Ballet*. The vision sees Americans and Israelis rejoicing in witnessing Israeli ballet dancers as elite artists. We believe in the power of dance to move people, cultivate connections, and inspire belief in a brighter future.

Mission

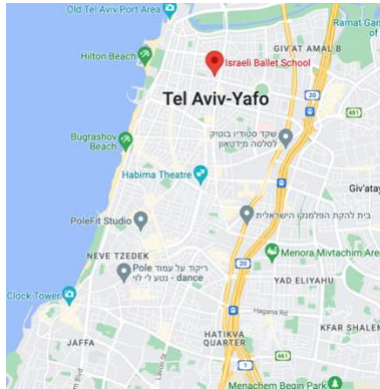
To assist in developing *The Israel Ballet* into a renowned, internationally acclaimed center for classical ballet.

Strengthening The American-Israeli Relationship

The bond between America and Israel is sacred. It needs to be continuously explored, expanded, and strengthened. The **AIBA** is the first of its kind. No other organization seeks to form an association with Israel through the art form of ballet. The impact will benefit everyone involved: students, professionals, audience members and patrons. At the **AIBA**, we dream of *The Israel Ballet* touring in the U.S. and abroad, representing Israel's innovative and unshakeable spirit. Investing in the future of ballet in Israel will provide shared experiences of long-lasting connection, growth, and success.

Our Ballet Company in Israel: The Israel Ballet

Founded in 1967 in Tel Aviv, The Israel Ballet is the only classical ballet company in Israel. For more than 50 years, the company has performed classical and neoclassical repertoire, as well as new works from renowned international choreographers. *The Israel Ballet* has more than 30 dancers from Israel and abroad. Located in the same building in northern Tel Aviv, *The Israel Ballet School* trains about 150 students, has 10 faculty members, and has 7 levels of training. The Artistic Director of both the professional company and school is Claire Bayliss Nagar (see biography on pg. 11). The CEO is Leah Lavie and the Deputy CEO is Amit Somekh.



Needs

The success of American ballet companies is due to the outstanding caliber of the entire artistic process supported by a culture of philanthropy. The well-being of each of these components is interconnected. To build support and philanthropy, we must elevate the caliber of both the training and performance quality of *The Israel Ballet*. *The Israel Ballet* suffers from insufficient philanthropic funding, dwindling government subsidies, and a lack of generational knowledge in the art form.

Under the leadership of Claire Bayliss Nagar—formerly a dancer with Ballets de Monte Carlo—*The Israel Ballet* has made improvements to the quality of dancers and repertoire. Still, Mrs. Bayliss Nagar struggles with making significant improvements.

In the past few years, The Israel Ballet has gone from cancelling poorly selling shows to adding Nutcracker performances to meet public demand. I'm happy and proud of our growth. But, because of the lack of philanthropic funding, The Israel Ballet's development is too slow. If we continue this trajectory, we will never reach our full potential. ~ Claire Bayliss Nagar, Artistic Director of The Israel Ballet

The **AIBA** and *The Israel Ballet* have agreed that the highest quality education is essential for long-term success of a professional ballet company. The Israel Ballet needs access to world-renowned ballet experts to train students and coach their professional dancers.

Education = Improvement

Over a 10-year period, the **AIBA** will sponsor master teachers to work intensively with the students and professional dancers at *The Israel Ballet*. Other duties will include teacher training for *The Israel Ballet* faculty and master classes open to Israel's greater ballet student population.

Timeline and Phases

Phase	Phase 1: Years 1-3	Phase 2: Years 4-6	Phase 3: Years 7-10
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Import 2-4 teachers per year • 2–3-week dance intensives per teacher • Coach professionals in repertoire & company class • Teacher training for IB faculty • Consult on school curriculum • Consult on company repertoire • Expand & upgrade IB building=-0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Import 6-8 teachers per year • 2-3-week dance intensives per teach • 6-week summer intensive consisting of 4-5 teachers • Fund, coach, and stage repertoire for students and professionals • Continue teacher training and consultations for IB school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Import 6-10 teachers per year • 2-3-week dance intensives per teachers • 6-week summer intensive consisting of 4-5 teachers • Fund, coach, and stage repertoire for students and professionals • Develop termination plan
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve technical ability of students and professionals • Deepen artistic knowledge of professionals • Improvement of IB faculty training • Improve overall IB school training program • Ideate for future repertoire • Attract more talent to IB school and company • Expand IB global network • Create content for fundraising • Attract national and international media attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerate technical ability of students and professionals • Expand artistic capabilities of IB professionals • IB students begin entering company • Strengthen IB school curriculum • Establish IB nationally and internationally as acclaimed center for ballet • Create global dance relationships • Attract hundreds of students and top tier artists to IB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach highest levels of training • Attract world-renowned choreographers • Cadre of seasoned professional dancers • Benefit from pipeline of students into company • Compete for International touring opportunities

Why Ballet?

Classical ballet productions pay tribute to the past and contemporary ballet moves the cultural conversation forward. Dance collaborations inspire innovation, create cross-cultural connections, and increases worldly knowledge amongst participants. Training at the highest levels teach invaluable skills like a commitment to excellence, discipline, and self-awareness that help students live meaningful lives. Ballet brings people together in an experience of beauty produced by precision of movement; only through personal and professional discipline can this be achieved.

As the curtain opens, amidst hushed anticipation, dancers execute seemingly impossible movements. The music swells and an empty stage becomes alive. The performers' pristine classical movements have the power to deeply move the audience.

Why We Need The American-Israeli Ballet Association

*In my career, I have performed some of the greatest ballet works, including pieces by George Balanchine, Marius Petipa, William Forsythe and Jiri Kylian. I believe that my own mastery of classical ballet, my personal relationship with Israel, and my connections in the U.S. put me in a unique position to help Israel reach the highest levels of the art form. In partnership with The Israel Ballet, the **AIBA** will provide Israel with artistic, financial, and educational support to elevate the quality and reputation of classical ballet.*

In 2018, 2019, and 2023 I taught at four dance schools and two professional companies in Tel Aviv. I was impressed by the passion, dedication, and raw talent of the dancers. However, through conversation with students, art leaders, and professional dancers, it became clear to me that becoming an internationally competitive professional ballet dancer in Israel is almost impossible. The lack of artistic and financial support does not allow for a space where ballet dancers can reach their full potential.

*Working at the Boston Ballet has shown me the vast support for the arts in New England. And, as a Jewish American, I am aware of and have benefited from the supportive American-Israel relationship. It became clear to me that an organization that acts to bridge the gap between an Israeli dance institutions and America will give it exactly what the country needs to thrive in the art form of classical ballet. In the United States, there are many people who support ballet and Israel. But there are virtually none who support ballet IN Israel. The **AIBA's** mission is to change this. As Israel's national ballet company, The Israel Ballet is the perfect place to make this dream a reality. ~ Isaac Akiba, President of the AIBA and Soloist with Boston Ballet*

Financial Process

To maintain its non-profit status, the **AIBA** uses The Field to process tax-deductible donations. To make online donations, [click here](#).

The American-Israeli Ballet Association is a sponsored artist with The Performance Zone Inc (dba The Field), a not-for-profit, tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) organization serving the arts community. Contributions to The Field earmarked for the American-Israeli Ballet Association are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. For more information about The Field contact: The Field, 75 Maiden Lane, Suite 906 New York, NY 10038, phone: 212-691-6969. A copy of our latest financial report may be obtained from The Field or from the Office of Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.

The AIBA will apply for 501(c)(3) status in 2025. At that time, we will no longer need services The Field provides.

In Conclusion

Israel is a young nation eager to develop in various artistic endeavors especially in the art form of classical ballet. Israel can achieve excellence in this artistic expression. Its success will require infusion from many external sources. The seeds that the **AIBA** plants now will bloom into a domestic ballet culture essential to Israel achieving its potential.

Founders



President

Isaac Akiba

Isaac Akiba is the President of the **American-Israeli Ballet Association** and has danced with the Boston Ballet since 2007. At age nine, he was invited to attend the Boston Ballet School in recognition of his potential in the Citydance Program and joined Boston Ballet's second company at age eighteen.

A Soloist with the Boston Ballet since 2014, Isaac has performed numerous classical principal roles with the company and has worked with some of the foremost choreographers of the 21st century. Isaac has been a Principal guest artist with The Toronto International Ballet Theatre, The American Academy of Ballet in Buffalo, New York, and The World Ballet Competition's annual *All Stars of Dance Gala* in Orlando.

Isaac holds a Bachelor of Science in Leadership with a Business Minor from Northeastern University. In the fall of 2023, he will be pursuing a Master of Business Administration at Boston University's Questrom School of Business.

As an educator, Isaac teaches as his schedule allows in the Boston Ballet School. He has taught in Boston Ballet's Summer Dance Program and internationally in Israel and South Africa. Isaac has taught Boston Ballet's second company class, company class at Jerusalem Dance Theater and the company at the Israel Ballet. He has also taught at the youth dance programs at Unison Dance Studio, The Ballet School, Ironi Aleph, and Vir2OZ in Tel Aviv, Israel.



Corporate Secretary

[Ellie Gurary, PhD](#)

Combining a passion for ballet and a love for Israel, though neither a dancer nor Israeli herself, Ellie grew up in New Jersey with a strong love of both countries and the art form. She is a first generation American from Russia with close family in both the USA and Israel. Ellie is a strong proponent of cultural ties between the two countries. She graduated from Carnegie Mellon University with a Master's Degree in Statistical Practice. In 2019 she received her PhD in Biostatistics from Boston University. Currently, Ellie works as a statistician in biotechnology. In addition to being a board member of the **American-Israeli Ballet Association**, she regularly participates in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) career outreach to students from various backgrounds.



Treasurer

[Deborah Liney, MBA](#)

For more than 30 years, Deborah has worked as a business, financial and tax consultant for artists and organizations. Her love of theater and dance functioned as a gateway to cultivating personal and professional relationships with the most prestigious dancers across the globe. Her clients include dancers at the Boston Ballet, American Ballet Theater, The Royal Ballet, San Francisco Ballet and Semperopera Ballet in Dresden, Germany, and many others.

Hailing from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Deborah received her BA in Musical Theatre at West Chester State University and went on to earn her Master's in Business Administration from Boston College. Shortly after, she became the Business Manager at the prestigious Boston Ballet. Currently, Deborah is the Quality Initiative Manager for the stem cell transplant program at Dana-

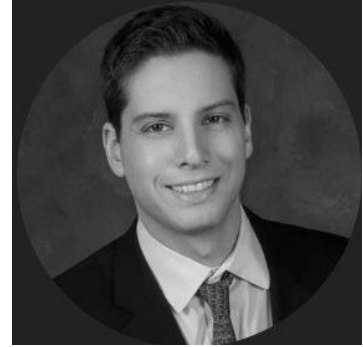
Farber Cancer Institute and Associate Director of the cord blood donation program at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.



Artistic Director of The Israel Ballet

[Claire Bayliss Nagar](#)

Originally from Birmingham, UK Claire studied and graduated from The Royal Ballet School, London. She danced in London's Ballet Imperial, National Ballet of Portugal in Lisbon, Michael Claire's first company in London, Balletto di Roma, Teatro Koros, Balletto del Sole and the Arena Di Verona. Most notably, during her seven-year tenure at the renowned Ballets De Monte Carlo, she worked as a Demi-Soloist alongside some of the foremost choreographers of that time including Jean -Yves Esquerre, Jean Christophe Maillot, Forsythe, Neumier, Roland Petit, Karole Armitage, John Allayne, Jiri Kjljan, Renato Zanella, Nacho Duato. Her repertoire includes many Balanchine ballets and historical Ballet Russe ballets. After moving to Israel, she joined the Israel Ballet as a Principal dancer for two seasons. After retiring from the stage, Claire worked at The Batsheva Ensemble for thirteen years as Rehearsal Director, ballet teacher, and later Company Manager alongside renowned choreographer Ohad Naharin. Returning to The Israel Ballet as Company Manager, teacher, and Ballet Mistress in 2013, she was appointed Artistic Director of The Israel Ballet and its school in 2018.



Board Member

Aaron Ganz

Aaron is a Fractional CFO at Burkland Associates where he serves as a strategic advisor for start-ups from Pre-Seed through Series C and beyond with business strategy, M&A, financial planning, system implementations, analytics, etc.

Before Burkland Associates, he was the Interim CFO of Capital Rx, the former Head of Financial Planning for Vantage Deluxe World Travel and started his career in media with FOX's International Channels group.

Aaron will be commencing MIT Sloan's Executive MBA program (class of 2025), received his Masters in Management from London Business School, graduated with honors from University of Chicago in Political Science with an emphasis in Statistical Analytics and is now completing Certification in Full Stack Development from MIT.

From a very young age, Aaron has had a strong connection to Israel and a passion for its I&O efforts and spends much of his time volunteering within the Jewish community. For JNF, Aaron is currently serving on the Strategic Planning Committee of the World Zionist Village and is VP and incoming President for JNF Futures New England. For FIDF (Friend's of the IDF Forces), Aaron is Vice Chairman of the New England Board and a Director on the National Board. With Combined Jewish Philanthropies / Jewish Federations of North America, Aaron serves as the Mission Chair with JFNA Young Leadership Cabinet, Ben Gurion Chair, Young Leadership Grant Chair, and Annual Campaign Cabinet Member. Aaron is also actively involved in AIPAC (Young Leadership council and Co-Chair of the Temple Emanuel Steering Committee) and is on the Board of Directors of his synagogue, Temple Emanuel of Newton.