



World Chants:  
Eitan Ben Moshe

A folksong is something of an entity, a body of knowledge made of words and melody that passes from person to person, from mouth to ear, and contains the constituting core of a people. A “people” as in humans, who gathered around a shared nucleus over hundreds of years and created a tradition, sense of belonging and meaning. Folksongs excite our hearts, reaching in and activating our emotions, awakening something latent within us. The term “folksong” is relatively late, coined in the 19th century along with the rise of national movements. Songs, which till then were an integral part of local traditions, entered the service of national ethos, along with new songs written specifically for that purpose. Many folksongs express universal experiences, and their influence often transcends national boundaries, carried like seeds in the wind and merging with the traditions of other peoples; there is reason to regard them as world songs. Within the Israeli melting pot, the sources of folksongs and their recreation are far-flung. The roots of melodies and lyrics spread beyond the state’s borders and over the sea, reaching almost every continent and country that housed Jews. Many of our folksongs originate in Russia, Arab countries, Europe and Africa. Each nation has its musical genetic code and often includes surprising influences of enemy nations or those with no geographic connection to Israel. In addition, Israel also has a local Muslim and Christian tradition, interwoven with ancient folksongs.

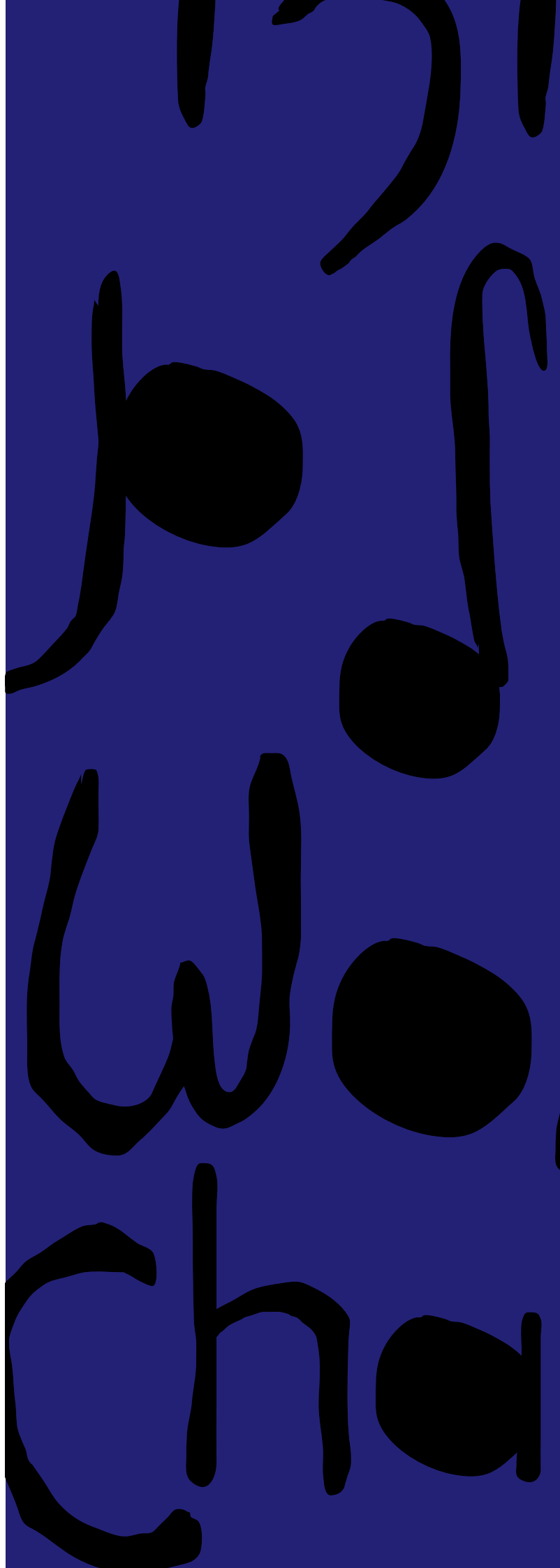
When Eitan Ben Moshe began exploring folksongs, he searched for the core of civilization to remind us what it means to be human. The songs he collected were the basis for digital-virtual sculptures created with advanced image processing technologies and 3D and animation software, making them seem to shine from within the darkness. In the exhibition, each folksong underwent an acoustic and digital process combining existing songs with new acoustic and electronic music. Each video is based on archetypal images such as a butterfly, a broken rock, a bubble carried by the wind, a spark of fire, and a lump of fur, all constantly being transformed.



Ben Moshe does not intend to create folksongs but undoes and reassembles existing ones into new, incomplete entities. Hearing the songs in their faulty versions exposes the core of their human memories, of people's fears, beliefs and hopes. This is at once a utopic and dystopic process, in which Ben Moshe entwines the primal and deep-seated with the transient and technologically innovative. Ben Moshe seems to be testing our ability to gather again around the tribal bonfire as he questions the meaning of folksongs in a world undergoing accelerated technological developments in which, while nothing can be forgotten, it is unclear if anything can be recalled.

Bat Yam Museum now stands in darkness. The works gleam from within like pearls or strange planets. Among the projections, giant seeds lie in the dusk, their hairs illumed by a gentle light as visitors pass by them, moving through the songs. The sounds emanating from the virtual sculptures merge into each other and mix, creating a cacophonous space, a sphere of imagination where dreams and nightmares constantly interchange. Human awareness is reflected in the works as a throbbing, extending tissue, strange and dynamic, a space into which human subconsciousness discharges emotive and cursed recollections, old and new, providing them with relief, context and perhaps some even meaning and mercy.

Hila Cohen-Schneiderman  
Exhibition Curator



## Mother

The work presents a new digital choreography of a Butoh dance created in 1998 by Kazuo Ohno, who was 92 when he performed it. The dance is a physical and spiritual journey into the figure of Ohno's mother. Traditional Japanese dance has men performing female roles; however, in this case, Ohno's decision to embody his mother is the essence of this expressive choreography. The video is based on the original soundtrack performed by an anonymous musician. Ben Moshe divided the music into six sets in which the narrative meanders through different states of awareness. The work is influenced by Japanese art, particularly Butoh, in which the relation between body and image is sculptural and direct. This work, which opens the exhibition, centers on a supple, buoyant water bubble that floats in space and meets a spark of light, a moment of creation. The distinction between waters is the origin of the biblical story of creation. Our current ecological reality reminds us of the horrors of water and its threat to rise again and flood everything. Water is the motherly essence, as in the amniotic fluid surrounding the fetus. Ben Moshe created *Mother* when his mother had dementia, a time in which they had many conversations that gave rise to beautiful images and fragments that affected the creation of the video.

Video (CGI), 11:29 min.



While You Live, Shine!

While you live, shine

Don't let sorry you benight

We don't have life for long, my friend

To everything Time demands an end.

The Song of Seikilos is the earliest composed tune to survive from antiquity that includes musical notes (most likely from the first or second century BC). The Epitaph was inscribed on a cylindrical marble column near the ancient Hellenistic town of Aydin, now in Turkey. The column has the song's words and melody in ancient Greek notation. The first sentence of the lyrics is "While you live, shine bright." This work was created to meet the decree.

At the center of the work is an element that looks like a cross between a pelvic bone and a flower and remnants of existing life that encircle its axis. The light rises and falls; an ember dies out and glows again. The Sanskrit word Samsāra refers to the ongoing motion of time and denotes the cycle of life and reincarnation in Buddhism and other religions. Unlike the video Mother, which has a beginning, middle and end, all the other videos in the exhibition are looped in cyclical time.

Video loop (CGI)





## Little Sailboat

The little sailboat flows with its two sails  
Its sailors are fast asleep.  
Wind hovers over the water,  
A child walks on an empty beach.

The work is based on the song *The Sailboat Flows* (*Dugit Nosa'at*), written in 1943 by the poet Natan Yonatan to music composed by Lev Alexandrovich Shvarts for the Russian film *The Childhood of Maxim Gorky*.

Like the poem, the work maintains the tension between sleep and waking; reality seeps into dreams. Small objects, perhaps seeds or doll eyes blinking heavily, express the joy of falling into slumber and the danger of succumbing to sleep. The colorful background movement evokes visions seen through closed eyes, while the childish, squeaky sound is both numbing and disturbing. Falling asleep while the flood is threatening is reflected in this work as well.

Video loop (CGI)



Rejoice, Rejoice

Rejoice, rejoice now in the dreams  
I the dreamer am he who speaks  
Rejoice, for I'll have faith in mankind  
For in mankind I believe.

For my soul still yearns for freedom  
I've not sold it to a calf of gold  
For I shall yet have faith in mankind  
In its spirit great and bold.

The work was influenced by the famous poem I Believe by Shaul Tchernichovsky, also known by its first words: Rejoice, rejoice. Tchernichovsky wrote the poem in Odessa in 1892, and it appeared in his first collection of poems, Sights and Melodies, published in 1898. The melody is based on Russian folksongs.

The former Knesset members Mohammad Barakeh and Avraham Burg, when they were Knesset members, suggested using the song and its universal, humane message as the Israeli anthem instead of Hatikva, which has a pronounced Jewish spirit. The poem talks about the importance of dreams for individuals, societies, and nations.

The images in the video allude to the works of the Jewish painter and Holocaust survivor Samuel Bak, whose works link surrealist Dali-like elements to Jewish narratives of destruction and resurrection.

Video loop (CGI)



From Aomori

When autumn comes,  
The hills and dales turn red  
The mudlark and the singing frog  
Craning their necks above,  
Must think of the hills are on fire.

This Japanese folksong by an anonymous poet speaks about the year's seasons, the changing colors of the hills, and the field frogs. The song shares many characteristics of folksongs from various cultures, including the personification of nature, beloved by adults and children. As in many folksongs, the joy is tarred by an undercurrent of decay and stagnation. The video builds on the song's imagery, while the soundtrack is based on traditional Japanese music. The work's visual elements constantly change, moving between animals and pebbles, flowers and blood seeping into water.

Video loop (CGI)





The Nightingale (Morq-e Sahar)

Morning bird, mourn,  
further renew my pain  
With a sigh that rains fire,  
break this cage and overturn it  
Lightless nightingale, from the pine cage,  
sing humanity's song of freedom  
From the breath of the masses,  
fill the open earth with fire  
Oppression, the oppressor,  
the hunter's oppression,  
it has left my nest dwindling in the wind  
O God, O Universe, O Nature,  
make our dark evening into dawn  
It's a new spring, the flowers have bloomed,  
the clouds in my eyes, are filled with dew  
This cage, like my heart,  
is suffocated and dark  
Oh, fiery sigh! start a flame in this cage,  
Nature's hand,  
don't cut short the flower of my life  
Give the lover a look, my young flower,  
make it more!  
You heartless bird, make it brief!  
Make it brief, the story of separation.

This Persian folksong was written by Taqi Bahar and composed by Morteza Neidavoud in the early 20th century during the constitutional revolution in Iran. The song describes a nightingale's lamentation. Throughout the song, the speaker pleads with the bird to use its song to liberate itself from its cage. In the song, night symbolizes repression, while dawn announces the advancing liberation. The song became an unofficial anthem for Iranians fighting for liberty, whereas its first verse was also used in public events and gained national status. The second verse was sometimes banned due to its radical messages. The music in the video was composed in collaboration with Menashe Sasson, a Persian-Israeli musician from Bat Yam.

Video loop (CGI)



World Songs  
Eitan Ben Moshe

Bat Yam Museum of Art, 2023



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