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L'Chaim!



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Israeli Keshet Chaim dancers celebrate Israel's Independence Day at a festival in Westwood Plaza Monday afternoon. See story, page 5.

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Israel Day festivities

promote nation, culture

By Joshua Romonek

Bystanders clapped to the lively beat of Israeli folk tunes as a Jewish dance troupe and a children's choir performed Monday at UCLA in honor of Israel's 43rd birthday.

Promoted as Israel Day, the event attracted more than 60 UCLA students. "(The turnout) was even bigger than we hoped for," said Adina Jaffe, co-chair of the Israel Action Coalition, which sponsored the event along with the UCLA Jewish Student Union.

Hopefully, the festivities will

increase people's excitement about Israel and its culture, said Jaffe, who spent a year in Israel and eventually plans to live there.

The celebration fell within a week of the Israeli Independence Day, said JSU President Kira Burt. The event was scheduled for January but postponed until Monday because of the Persian Gulf war. Although April 18 was Israeli Independence Day according to the U.S. calendar, Israelis will be celebrating Israel's independence May 14 according to the Hebrew calendar.

A children's choir performed

traditional Israeli folk songs which quickly drew an audience. The Valley Beth Shalom Children's Choir, a group of nine-year-olds from an Encino synagogue, also sang a round of "It's A Small World."

A local dance company also displayed its talents. Keshet Chaim, whose name means "life connection," has traveled worldwide, performing at the 1984 Olympic Celebration, the L.A. Dance Festival and the Israeli Dance Festival.

Although some of the dancers are native Californians, most are

transplanted Israelis now living in Los Angeles.

In addition to the entertainment, students were welcome to taste "fine Israeli cuisine," said Burt, referring to some Israeli snack foods that were available nearby.

Other Jewish organizations were also present at Westwood Plaza, providing information to interested students.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee is reaching out to UCLA through a new organization. The Committee on American-Israeli Relations is an extremely pro-Israeli group which

supports a peace settlement with its Arab neighbors, said co-president Ted Moore.

The committee is among the most powerful pro-Israeli lobbying groups in the nation, said UCLA student Meredith Gordon, who worked for the group as a lobbyist in San Francisco. She has also visited Israel, and she described her visit as "absolutely the best experience of my life."

The festivities were cut short when guest speaker Uri Dromi from the World Zionist Organization could not make his scheduled appearance.



"I think that programs like these help the students express their pride in Israel," said Adina Jaffe, co-chair of the Israel Action coalition and the event.



Over three hundred people celebrated Israel's forty-third year of independence in UCLA's Westwood Plaza on Monday, April 2. The festivities, co-sponsored by UCLA's Israeli Action Coalition (IAC) and the Jewish Student Union, gave students a taste of Israel through music, dance, food, and Israel program information.

As students walked down Bruin Walk, they were greeted by a mass of blue and white balloons, and several large Israeli flags. A colorful wall exhibit featured posters of Israel's people, holy sites, and scenic landscapes, as well as other materials from *Haganat Hatevah*, (Protection of Nature), an Israeli environmental society.

"I think that programs like these help the students express their pride in Israel," said Adina Jaffe, co-chair of the Israel Action coalition and the event. She and Elaine Kealer, also co-chair of IAC and the event, believe that the event increased excitement for Israel on campus.

"Walking through the plaza made me wish I was in Israel," said student Avital Elad.

The *Keshet Chaim* (Rainbow of Life) dance ensemble helped to create the Israeli atmosphere through Israeli folk dances. The troop, which performed at the 1984 Olympics, is currently the only professional Israeli dance group in Los Angeles.

The group opened with a traditional Israeli dance, with the members dressed in white and blue costumes. Their second act, a hassidic number, was designed to take the audience back to Europe to observe the interactions between the hassidic men and women in a small Russian village. In the first part of the act, the women covered their hair with handkerchiefs, but as they came out for the second part, the women were dressed as peasants, with their hair hidden under classic styled Russian hats. The men, unable to distinguish



their gender, began dancing competitions with the women, until one woman lost her hat and their secret was revealed. The men and women began to dance together and a huge *tallit* (Jewish prayer shawl) was held up by the troop.

The troop ended with a number that represented the Yemenite segment of the Israeli population. Students clapped along with the rhythmic music as the six couples performed the Mideastern dance.

Between dances, the audience was entertained by Valley Beth Shalom's children's choir. The choir sang songs of peace along with a variety of Hebrew folk songs. One of the songs used the melody of "It's a Small World" with lyrics dedicated to Israel.

Although the program began with large quantities of tasty Israeli treats, the food complementary for everyone who stopped by, quickly began to disappear. The assortment of dishes included several varieties of Israeli and Turkish salads that were stuffed into pita bread. Borekhas, a traditional Mideastern pastry filled with cheese, spinach, and potatoes, were enjoyed along with an assortment of Israeli nuts, chocolates and cookies.

A cake, decorated with an edible Israeli flag, was distributed to the many people enjoying the event.

Several groups set up booths offering general information about Israel. One table was an Israeli Programs Fair, offering information about different programs in Israel. The Committee for American Israel Relations (AIPAC on campus) manned a booth. The United Jewish Fund, UCLA's JSU and IAC all ran booths filled with flyers and leaflets.

Students eagerly gathered the information, expressing hopes to go to Israel this summer or next year.

"This is great!" said student Elisa Pretsky. "But nothing can come close to actually being there."