

Spirit of *Israel*

The unity and diversity of the Diaspora is reflected in performances by the Sherman Oaks-based Keshet Chaim Dance Ensemble, which springs onto the stage of the John Anson Ford Amphitheatre on Sunday.

Keshet Chaim, Hebrew for "Rainbow of Life," unites different strands of the Jewish experience to celebrate Israel through dance and song. And like Israel, a crossroads for religions and pilgrims from around the world, Keshet Chaim's production, "New Jerusalem Rhythms," is a composite of styles and traditions.

"We're trying to broaden our exposure to other communities," said the ensemble's managing director Genie Benson. Their performance will include dances ranging from the traditional "*hora*" to hip-hop. There will also be songs by two local gospel choirs and the interfaith choir, Angel City Chorale.

"All of us relate to Israel in a different way," Benson said. "But everyone—Christians, Muslims, Jews—everyone has feelings about Israel."

Several of the dances have story lines, including a dance depicting the biblical love affair between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Another dance tells the story of the generation gap between young and old in the community of Yemenite Jews.

Keshet Chaim will also perform a fast-paced dance called "The Negev Cowboy," named after the



Keshet Chaim dancer Silvia Schoffman moves across the stage in a flowing skirt at the Ford theater. The group's "Rhythms of Jerusalem" show will include traditional and contemporary dances.



Maya Rogel holds a towel to her forehead at end of rehearsal. Sunday's event will include performances by gospel groups.

Local Dance Troupe Broadens Its Style

desert in southern Israel, and combining American and traditional Israeli dance styles.

"We did the dance when we went overseas to represent America and maintain our Jewish roots," Benson said. "We wanted to show that we are Jews, Israelis and Americans."

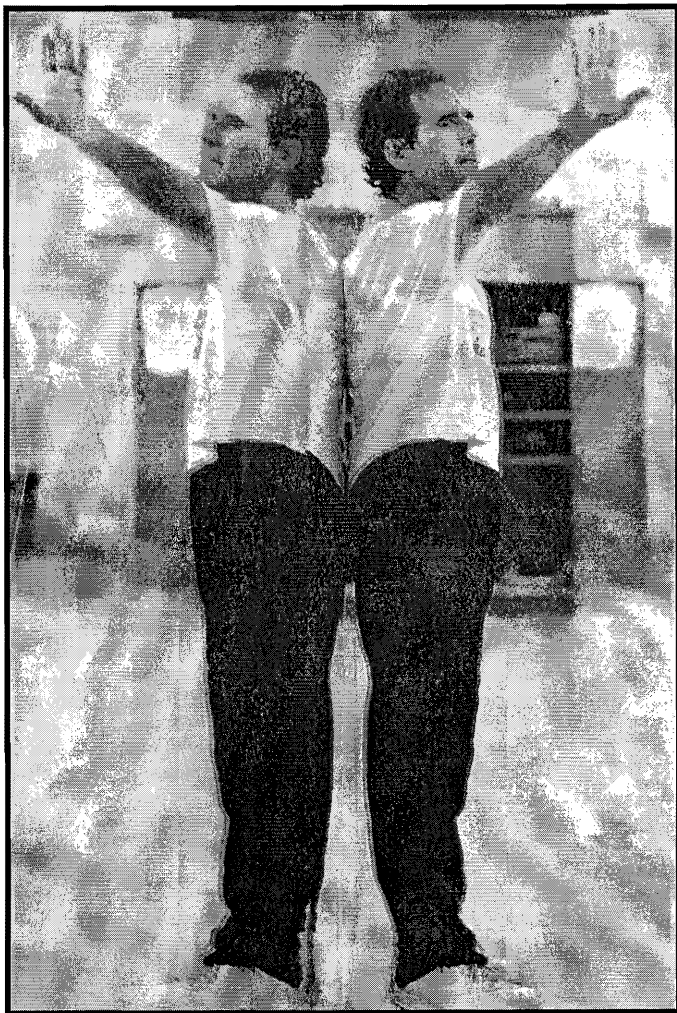
Benson said she has been surprised by the positive reaction of Gentile audiences. Churches of different denominations, including Mormon and Baptist, have invited the dance company to perform.

"We're not trying to make other people Jews," Benson said. "We are just trying to make people more tolerant of Jews."

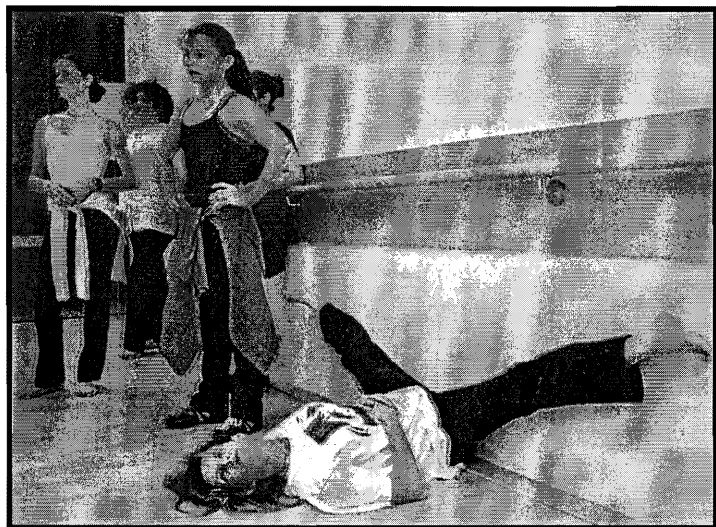
The performance begins at 7:30 p.m. Call (800) 209-5277 or (213) 658-4077 for information.



Robin Palman, center, and Hadas Dvir, right, rehearse in traditional costumes.



Eytan Avisar, Keshet Chaim artistic director and choreographer, is reflected in mirror as he directs members of the troupe.



Ayelet Selinger stretches her legs against the wall while Silvia Schoffman watches dance rehearsals.