

Introducing Joan Hantman

An accomplished dancer and vocalist, Joan Hantman will be the Israeli dance master teacher at "Harbor View" Statewide Festival this coming May.

Joan began to study ballet as a three-year old in Boston—where she lived with her family—and she was performing "on pointe" by the age of eight. She also started singing in childhood. She enjoyed being in the chorus throughout her schooling. Since, she performed in supporting roles, in the chorus, and of course as a dancer, with a regional musical theater—the Reagle Players—for over 35 years (she played Grandma Tzeitel and Shprintze in "Fiddler on the Roof," Anybodys in "West Side Story," she sang in "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," sang and danced in "Oklahoma," "Carousel," "Music Man," danced in "A Little Bit of Ireland" choreographed by Deidre Goulding of "Riverdance," just to quote a few favorites).

In 2008 Joan Hantman moved to Los Angeles, where she works as a Registered Nurse at UCLA's Santa Monica Hospital. During her time off she acts in independent films, internet series and television shows. Most of her performing activity, though, is focused on song and dance.

Joan was introduced to Israeli dance at Brandeis University. It was love at first sight. She then studied with all the major choreographers, and she soon began teaching and performing. She has danced in Boston with the Israeli groups Keren Shemesh, Screaming Sa'adya and the Electric Camels, and Zikukim, with Parparim at the Mets stadium in New York, with Bustan Boston in the first Karmiel festival in Israel, as well as demonstrating dances with Israel Yakovee, Avner Naim and Moshiko at various dance workshops.

In May 2014 Joan won the North American Israeli Dance Competition for circle dances. Winners were to be entered in the Worldwide Competition to be held in Israel. This was the first time anything of such magnitude was initiated. The criteria included knowing the correct choreographies step by step, having correct styling and being able to dance several types of Israeli dances by different choreographers. (Unfortunately, weeks later, due to some controversy in the couples dance competition, the organizer decided to forfeit the results of the entire North American contests, and the winners were unable to compete for the World Championship in Israel... Such is life!)

Before moving to L.A., Joan coordinated and taught Israeli dancing at the M.I.T. Folk Dance Club for more than 25 years. She also served on the Board of Directors for the Boston Israeli Folk Dance Festival, as well as performing in it for over three decades. She was also on the staff of Sababa Camp, Hora Shalom, and Hora Keff in New York, and still co-organizes the IFC camp, in New York as well.

While she was at M.I.T., Joan caught sight of Balkan dancing and a new passion ensued. She attended workshops in the United States, but she also traveled several times to Macedonia and Bulgaria in order to learn dance and song, intrigued by the intricate rhythms and vocal harmonies. She studied with some of Bulgaria's and Macedonia's top folk dancers, singers, and musicians.

Her love of dance and song kept further expanding, leading her to Greece, Romania, and Turkey.

In the US, she complemented Ercüment Kılıç's teaching and she joined International groups such as Collage (led by Ahmet Lüleçi) and the Mandala Folk Dance Ensemble (this last, with which she performed throughout the US northeast, England, and Hungary, both as a dancer and artistic director).

Joan currently sings with the Balkan Band Veselba, and she previously sang with the Bulgarian chorus Superdevoijče, conducted by Tzvetanka Varimezova. She has performed with Superdevoijče in Los Angeles and also in Sofia, Bulgaria, along with leading choral groups from around the world and some of Bulgaria's top singing artists, in the context of prestigious festivals such as Pirin Pee and Koprivštica. Those moments, she says, were unforgettable highlights of her entire life.

"I grew up in a house full of teaching," says Joan. Her parents never missed an opportunity. Learning something new whenever the opportunity arose was the norm throughout her childhood. When teaching, she likes to incorporate a variety of techniques, as everyone learns differently, and it is important to use diverse modalities for diverse audiences. Not only does she love introducing new dances, in hopes they will be passed on to even more people, she also tries to convey the history, background, and all of the styling nuances, so that each dance is transmitted "intact." This way, the whole experience becomes tremendously rewarding for both teacher and students.

Some of the many dances that Joan recently taught are: Avak Hadrachim, Dobra Nevesto, Jaimale. Kako Kostadino, Karaj Maijco, Kouventa Stin Kouventa, Kumi, Sa, Shar, Tinka, and Valle Nuseve.