

# Sukkat Shalom

October 2012

Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community

Scottish Charity No SC035678

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## Events and Services

### Date **Saturday 6 October 2012**

Event Shabbat Sukkot Service  
Venue Morningside United Church,  
15 Chamberlain Road, EH10 4DJ  
Time 9:30am decorating the Sukkah  
11am service

### Date **Sunday 7 October 2012**

Event Erev Simchat Torah Service  
Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace  
Time 6:30pm

### Date **Friday 12 October 2012**

Event Erev Shabbat Service  
Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace  
Time 7pm

### Date **Friday 19 October 2012**

Event Student lead Kabbalat Shabbat Service  
Followed by a shared meal. Please bring some  
food or drink to share (No meat or seafood)  
Venue Marchmont St Giles, 1a Kilgraston Road  
Time 6:15pm

### Date **Saturday 27 October 2012**

Event Shabbat Service led by Rabbi Mark Solomon  
Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace  
Time 11am

### **Event** Tea & Talmud

Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace  
Time 3pm

### Date **Sunday 28 October 2012**

Event Choosing Judaism  
Venue Usual location  
Time 10:30am

### **Event** Spinoza

Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace  
Time 4pm

## Simchat Torah

7.10.2012, 6:30pm, Columcille Centre

**Stew Green will be Chatan Torah  
and Joanna Bleau will be Kallat Bereshit.**

Please join the service armed with some sweets  
(but not too many to make the kids sick) and help  
celebrate the conclusion of one and the beginning  
of a new cycle of Torah readings.

**Deadline for copy for  
November 2012 newsletter:  
Sunday 21 October**

## ELJC support line

**0131 208 1447**



Use this number if you have an emergency and really need to speak to someone. It goes to one of our members. Otherwise please leave a message on the community phone and we will respond as soon as possible.

## Contents

Page 2 Liberal Judaism, Scotland Limmud day  
Page 3 Chairman's word. Kol Nidre appeal  
Page 4 Kol Nidre appeal charities  
Page 5 Community matters - BBQ and EGM  
Page 6 Community matters - Shabbat service  
acclaimed, new members, mazal tov for  
births, SCoJeC items and Edinburgh Star  
Page 7 Events and Announcements  
Page 8 and 9  
Letters to the editor in connection with the  
Batsheva protest at EIF  
Page 10 Review of Hora (Batsheva Dance  
Company) at the EIF.

## Future Dates

Our regular schedule is as follows:

Our **Erev Shabbat service** will be on the **SECOND** Friday of each calendar month and our **Shabbat morning service** on the Saturday after the **FOURTH** Friday.

These services take place in the **Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace.**

## Jewish Calendar

Festivals begin on the evening before the day listed.

Chanukah	9.-17.12.2011
Tu B'Shevat	26.1.2013
Purim	24.2.2013
Pesach	26.3.-2.4.2013
Shavuot	16.-16.5.2013
9 Av	16.7.2013



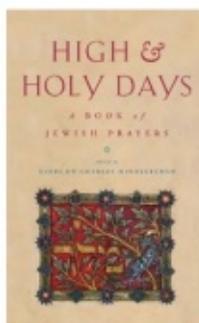
## A Rosh Hashanah Message from Rabbi Danny Rich



As Rosh Ha-Shanah approaches we ought reflect on the whole of the past year but inevitably our thoughts turn to the past summer in which London – and other parts of the United Kingdom – hosted the Olympic Games. Read more [here](#).

## New Book: 'We Have Sinned'

Liberal Rabbis Andrew Goldstein, Charles Middleburgh and Marc Saperstein have contributed to a just published book looking at various aspects of the two confession prayers in the Yom Kippur services : Ashamnu and Al Chet entitled *We Have Sinned: Sin and Confession in Judaism*. The book can be ordered from Amazon.



For another look at the High Holy Days, Rabbis Goldstein and Middleburgh's *High and Holy*

*Days - A Book of Jewish Wisdom* can be purchased from Liberal Judaism [here](#). This book is an anthology of prayers, poems and prose covering 40 different themes connected with the High Holydays.

## New Liberal Judaism

### Lectionary

The new Liberal Judaism Lectionary is now available. Covering 5773 and 5774, you can download a copy by clicking [here](#).

You can also download a useful list of notable Jewish dates by clicking [here](#).

## Every Voice at the Western Wall



The Kotel (Western Wall) is the holiest site in Judaism but Progressive Jews have no representation on the Western Wall Heritage Council, which administers the site. IRAC have created a petition to present to the Israeli government stating that the policy of giving one group complete control of the Kotel must be changed. You can sign it by clicking [here](#).

## International Bible Competition - Registration Now Open

The International Bible Contest, run by the Israeli Ministry of Education, is once again open to adults after a 32-year hiatus.

The contest, which has been won by Jews both secular and religious, will test participants' knowledge of the TaNaKh, under the motto: "The tribes of Israel gathered as one" (Deuteronomy 33:5). For more information please click [here](#).



## Scotland Day Limmud 2012

**Sunday 25 November 2012**

The web site is now active and people can book bus travel from Edinburgh there and back but places are limited so you should book soon.

<http://www.limmud.org/day/scotland/>



## Chairman's word

The afternoon of Rosh Hashanah started with a panic. At around 2pm we received a phone call from our Rabbi, Mark Solomon, to say that his train, due to arrive at 4pm, was indefinitely delayed in Carlisle due to signal failures. Nick and Norman started preparing emergency plans for leading the service and I tried in vain to contact anyone in the railway to rescue our Rabbi. In the end it all worked out and Mark arrived at the venue by taxi from Carlisle with 10 minutes to spare before the start of the service. I am writing this just before Yom Kippur but happy to say that Mark is already with us on Monday, so we will have no worries for the Kol Nidre service on Tuesday evening.

It was wonderful to have such a large congregation both on Erev Rosh Hashanah and for the morning service. One of our congregants who had not been with us for High Holyday services for a few years remarked to me that she noticed a huge change in numbers from four years ago. Another visitor complimented us on being such a good "singing congregation". Both of these are undoubtedly due to our having Mark as our Rabbi. His singing has inspired us to be at least a bit more tuneful. I'm glad the visitor did not hear us four years ago. Mark's sermons are always interesting and challenging and address important issues of the day. He is not afraid to let his views be known on any topic, even where it may be controversial, and listens when we argue back. We are so lucky to have him.

Another pleasure of then Rosh Hashanah service was to have so many young children present and to see how well they could blow the Shofars. The long one, about as tall as some of the children, proved to be the easiest to blow and some of the youngest kids were able to get amazing sounds from it.

Finally, we had our usual trip to the Water of Leith for Tashlich. The rain didn't stay off this year, but we were able to shelter under a tree while Maurice (seen standing on a rock) took this picture of us. As well as the usual reading from



Micah 7, including the lines *You will again have compassion on us; You will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.* Rabbi Mark provided us with some further poems on Tashlich which can be found on the web site [www.ritualwell.org](http://www.ritualwell.org). This is very well worth a visit; it has Jewish rituals for all sorts of things. Today its front page describes Kos Miriam for Yom Kippur, a ritual and blessing for a first drink of water after fasting on Yom Kippur. Perhaps, by the time you are reading this, we will have carried it out after the Neilah service on Wednesday evening.

Wishing all members and friends an easy fast and a good and sweet year to come.

Gillian Raab



## Kol Nidre Appeal

As usual we have nominated four charities to benefit from your donations, a local Jewish charity, a local non-Jewish charity, an Israeli charity and an international charity. The choices of charities are made by our council, following a request for suggestions from our members. Our choices for this year are given below. In previous years we have been proud of the generosity of our members which has allowed us to send around £1,000 to each of our four charities. We hope you will approve of our choices (see next page) this year and give as generously as ever.

**Please send your donations to our treasurer Claudette Hudes, 14 Old Perth Road, Milnathort, Perth and Kinross, KY13 9YA, with cheques payable to Sukkat Shalom, Edinburgh, and a note explaining that it is for the Yom Kippur appeal.** If you would prefer to credit your donation directly to our account please email [treasurer@eljc.org](mailto:treasurer@eljc.org) for bank details.

### **Jewish Care Scotland is our local Jewish Charity for this year** (<http://www.jcarescot.org.uk>)

Although its headquarters are in Glasgow, Jewish Care services are available to Jewish people throughout Scotland where they work in partnership with other agencies. In the past, several Sukkat Shalom members have benefited from their services. They provide social work and volunteer services to support people in crisis, or with more enduring problems.



Given the ageing profile of the Jewish Community in Scotland as a whole, although our congregation may be the exception, much of their work concerns services for the elderly. But in recent years they have been working with many more young people struggling with the economic situation, sometimes with difficult relationships and fragmented families.

An army of volunteers to Jewish Care provide services and specialist advice on topics ranging from friendship and support, baking, bridge-consultancy and pharmaceutical advice. In June 2012 Jewish Care Scotland was awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (an MBE for volunteer groups) in recognition of its outstanding voluntary work.

### **Sistema Scotland and the Big Noise project – our local non-Jewish Charity** (<http://makeabignoise.org.uk/welcome-to-big-noise-raploch/>)

Big Noise is an orchestra programme that aims to use music-making to foster confidence, teamwork, pride and aspiration in the children taking part — and across their wider community. It is based on the methods of Venezuela's "El Sistema" movement. In the 1970s in Venezuela Maestro José Antonio Abreu began running music lessons for a handful of children from poor backgrounds. Today "El Sistema" involves 300,000 children in centres across South America.



Learning any artistic skill can have knock-on benefits in terms of self-esteem, discipline and pride. The transformation is not just of individuals but whole communities. In the summer of 2008 the charity Sistema Scotland established its Big Noise orchestra in Raploch, Stirling. Big Noise is officially partnered with the Venezuelan programme and has the same aim — to transform lives with music. This June the Big Noise concert in Stirling attracted an audience of over 7000, despite the pouring rain, as well as many more who saw the television coverage.

Sistema Scotland hopes to expand its work to many other parts of the country. In recent years there have been many initiatives by the Scottish Government to try to reduce the inequalities between different areas in Scotland. These have mainly had no effect or even made things worse by stigmatising poor areas. The Sistema Scotland approach may be something that will at last work, by giving people pride and pleasure in making music together.

### **Our Israeli charity is Neve Shalom** (<http://nswas.org>).

(ne-vé shal-om/waah-at i-sal-aam (NS/WAS): Hebrew and Arabic for Oasis of Peace [Isaiah 32:18]): A village, jointly established by Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel, that is engaged in educational work for peace, equality and understanding between the two peoples.



NS/WAS gives practical expression to its vision of an egalitarian society through pioneering educational work at *The School for Peace*, *Children's Educational System* and the *Pluralistic Spiritual Centre*. A *Youth Club* provides extracurricular activities for the community's children. Our contribution will be made via Oasis of Peace UK, which supports the educational programmes of the village and community of NS/WAS, the first place where Jewish and Arab Israeli citizens have made a determined choice to live, work and educate their children together in the spirit of equality, respect and understanding.

Founded in the 1980s, the pioneering educational system provides bilingual and multicultural schooling to children from NS/WAS and the surrounding area. The School for Peace (SFP) was

created in 1979 as an ideological educational institution to run workshops and training programs for Arab and Jewish youth and adults in Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The professional staff of SFP comprises a roughly equal number of Jewish and Arab facilitators, with academic backgrounds in the humanities and social sciences, and special training in facilitating groups in conflict. Every encounter program is run by Jewish and Arab facilitators on an egalitarian basis and strives to address the needs of each group, acknowledging natural limitations in the ability of each to understand the other. Since the School for Peace first opened its doors, some 35,000 Jews and Arabs have attended its programs. Some are conducted at the school's campus at NS/WAS; others take place elsewhere in Israel, Palestine, the region, and beyond.

### Finally, Money for Madagascar is our international charity

(<http://moneyformadagascar.blogspot.co.uk/>)



Madagascar is not only one of the poorest countries in the world, it has a unique eco-system. Thousands of species, plant and animal, are found nowhere else in the wild. Prolonged poverty amongst the people has led to devastating destruction of the island's habitats as people struggle to support themselves in the absence of education, skills, proper healthcare provision, housing and even tools.

Money for Madagascar is a small charity, based in Wales, which is dedicated to working with local people to assist them in improving their own lives and in supporting and protecting irreplaceable biodiversity. Amongst other things, MfM helps people develop small enterprises, enables women to build their own houses, works with children, and provides training and skill development. The exemplary work of MfM in the Betampona rainforest was recently featured in a report by the School of International Development at the University of East Anglia.

Council felt that as a small community ourselves, it was particularly suitable for Sukkat Shalom to support small charities which make such a disproportionate difference to people's lives.

## Community Matters

### Annual barbecue and EGM

Thanks to Nick and Kate Silk for hosting our annual barbecue, which was enjoyed by many Sukkat Shalom members and friends on a fine September Sunday afternoon. During the afternoon we convened the members present for an Extraordinary General Meeting which allowed us to adopt our new constitution and become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO).



## August Shabbat Service gets critical acclaim

*Belle of the Bimahs* has reviewed our August Shabbat service in her blog at <http://cartoonkippah.com/belle-of-the-bimahs-edinburgh-liberal-jewish-community/> She doesn't give stars or scores, but I think we did OK. Here are some quotes:

*The smiling faces at the door directed me to a large, bright hall in which around seventy people were singing in good voice with the rabbi standing before them There was a nice mix of ages and genders in that room, including young families, the elderly – even some people in their 20s!*

*The Rabbi tunefully led the service from the front, though at times I found myself happily distracted by the two wonderfully well-behaved little girls in front of me and their fashion sticker books.*

*I enjoyed my time with this community and, if I find myself in Edinburgh and the Liberal congregation are meeting, I would happily gatecrash again (and they'll happily welcome you, dear reader, too).*

## New members

We are delighted to welcome **Daniel Fisher** and **Jake Pearson** as new members. Daniel, originally from New Jersey, is the vice-president of a wine and spirits store in NYC, but is able to work from his home in Scotland where he lives with his fiancée Yvonne Logan. Daniel and Yvonne are expecting their first child.

Jake has joined as a student member now that he has started his course at Edinburgh University. Jake has travelled to our services before from his home in Grangemouth, so we will be pleased to see more of him now that he is closer at hand.

## Mazal Tov

to **Karol Schlosser** on the birth of her first grandchild Katie Hannah, and to **Adi and Lance Stockdale** on the birth of their daughter Zoe, a wee sister for Gillian and Maya. Here she is with her family.



## Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)

The Rosh HaShanah Issue of Four Corners will be available at our services and can also be read on the SCoJeC web site. <http://www.scojec.org/4cs/4cs.html>.

Leah Granat is sending greetings from her new home in Israel where she will be continuing some of her work for SCoJeC. Her email continues to be [leah@scojec.org](mailto:leah@scojec.org).

SCoJeC has just been awarded £10,000 from the Voluntary Action Fund to implement some of the findings of the Being Jewish in Scotland project. The aim of the project is to connect the generations by having young people help older members of the community with ICT skills. If you are a young person who would like to volunteer or if you are, or if you know of, someone who would benefit from such help please contact the project coordinator [fiona@scojec.org](mailto:fiona@scojec.org) / 07779 206 522. More details about the project can be found [here](#).

## Edinburgh Star

The Edinburgh Star is a beautifully produced magazine for the Edinburgh Jewish Community that comes out twice a year. The Rosh Hashanah edition has just come out and, thanks to Claudette Hudes, who now represents us on the Star board, it has several articles by our members. If you don't currently receive it and you would like to, you can send a donation (there is no fixed subscription) to Sidney Caplan (treasurer), 4 Salisbury Road, Edinburgh, EH16 5AB, with cheques payable to Edinburgh Star.

## Events and Announcements

The following events have been notified to ELJC for members and friends who may wish to attend them.

### Films

#### **Der Golem** (Germany 1920)

*Filmhouse, Lothian Road, 18.15, Wednesday 17th October.*

Silent with Live Piano Accompaniment by Forrester Pyke  
Sixteenth-century Prague. Rabbi Loew, spiritual leader of the Jewish community, divines from his astrological tables that a disaster is imminent, and decides to summon the dead spirit Astaroth and build the Golem, a huge clay figure



which will serve the man who gives it life. A visually impressive, sophisticated and highly atmospheric example of early German cinema, and a valuable lesson for those interested in the history of horror.

#### **Five Broken Cameras**

*Filmhouse Lothian Road, 15.15 Friday 28th Sept and 20.15 Saturday 29th Sept*

Winner, Best Documentary, Sundance 2012

When Emad Burnat buys a video camera to record the birth of his son, little does he know that he will suddenly be drawn into an extraordinary new role in his village of Bil'in in the West Bank. Overnight Bil'in has become the centre of an international campaign to halt the seizure of land and olive groves for Israeli settlers: one that the world must not be allowed to see. Navigating a dangerous path between truth and propaganda, family and friends, life and justice, Emad, and his camera, stay firmly in the firing line throughout this extraordinary film that shows the price of freedom steadily going up



and up. The star and director of 5 Broken Cameras, Emad Burnat, will be at a Q&A following the screening on Saturday alongside Barrie Levine (Scottish Jews for a Just Peace).

### Dance

#### **Batsheva Ensemble: Deca Dance**

*Tue 30 & Wed 31 October 2012, Festival Theatre 7.30pm*

Batsheva Ensemble, the younger wing of Israel's world class Batsheva Dance Company, makes its first visit to the UK performing Deca Dance, a 'greatest hits' piece by artistic director Ohad Naharin. Deca Dance is regularly updated and so offers a fresh look at the work created by Batsheva every time it's performed. Set to sensational music ranging from Goldfrapp to The Beach Boys and Vivaldi to Dean Martin!

## Survey on Antisemitism

### **Your Chance to Have Your Say**

As you may have read in the press, the European Union is currently conducting a survey about antisemitism in the Europe and it is important that the UK is well represented. They are eager to hear directly from Jews about their thoughts and experiences, and they specifically invite you to complete the survey by clicking <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/FRASurvey>.

## Portobello book festival event

Sunday, 7th October, 2.00 to 3.30 pm, upstairs in the Portobello Library (from which free tickets are available) THE HOLY BOOK. Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders talk about the holy scriptures of their respective faiths. What do they have in common? How do they differ? How can faith communities come to understand one another better? Chaired by Rev. Andrew Patterson in collaboration with Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association

## Letters to the Editor

**From Gary Sakol** (Director, Israel Connect; Deputy Director, Zionist Federation)

I note with interest the article on page 8 (*of the September newsletter ed.*) from Catherine Lyons, a Jewish person who personally supports a boycott of Israel and as such was protesting against the Israeli Dance Troupe Batsheva in Edinburgh.

The Zionist Federation would like to make it abundantly clear that in no shape, way or form do we support the Jewish English Defence League (JEDL), who we believe to be an abhorrent organisation promoting community discord and the ugliest forms of Islamophobia and racism. We do not work with the JEDL in any way and we have repeatedly asked their members not to turn up at our demonstrations.

It is also important to note that whilst the Zionist Federation was the only organisation that took a role in organising the counter-leafleting effort, not all those who kindly volunteered were members of the Zionist Federation, and thus we cannot be held responsible for their statements.

Whilst we are passionate supporters of Israel, who believe those involved in protests against Batsheva work against the interests of freedom of expression, peace and prosperity, we do not support personal insults on those attending the boycott and we are very sorry to hear about the isolated incident where Catherine Lyons was insulted. The Zionist Federation believes the case for Israel and against the boycott movement is extremely strong and through debate and argument we will highlight the truth.

**From Anna Duncan-Nitzan** (Sukkat Shalom member)

The demonstration surrounding the Batsheva appearance whipped up some very strong and opposing sentiments in our community. For that reason, I wanted to reply to Catherine Lyons's article in the last newsletter. I believe that both sides of any issue should be heard. I am pleased and feel it is right that this issue contains an apology from Zionist Federation about the language used towards Catherine at the demonstration.

I went to the 'counter' demonstration and dragged my (Israeli) husband with me. Perhaps I should have listened to him, for he warned me beforehand how pointless it would be and what little chance we would be listened to by the 'other side'. However, I felt, as I believe others do, that demonstrating against an arts group seemed particularly petty and cruel. It seemed to me that Israel (out of all the states in world with human rights abuses) was being specially targeted.

Regarding Brand Israel, I have no problem with a nation and especially a country like Israel which is continually misrepresented, promoting the cultural aspects it has to offer. Indeed there are many wonderful artistic groups in Israel which the world deserves to see. I did read the contract which Catherine found so objectionable and again, I just thought it seemed quite standard. In general, if a group receives funding, there are always strings attached. Complete artistic freedom is for those that can afford to fund themselves. Moreover, it is for Batsheva to speak up if it has a problem with its contract.

If the demonstration sought to target a meaningful instrument of the Israeli government, this totally failed: Batsheva is comprised not solely of Israelis and moreover, engages in outreach programs in underprivileged communities across Israel. They are hardly a group of right wing politicians. Would you prefer they ceased all their valuable outreach activities which no doubt encourage dialogue among and between communities.

Before I went to the counter-demonstration I'd had no contact with the Zionist Federation. I'm also friends with many Muslims. While I am aware that abuses are committed on the Israeli side, I believe that violence on the Palestinian side is also to be condemned and it is disingenuous to paint them as the 'underdog'. I do read history books and the picture that is presented of a nation called Palestine being invaded by Jews, is plainly distorted and simplified. When I talked with protesters, the first thing I asked them was whether they had ever visited Israel. None of them had. Moreover, they had a very poor grasp of the history and seemed to be there on the basis that 'they had heard' there was an apartheid state in Israel. I stood with my husband, and explained to people what reality in Israel was really like. We also tried to explain the political and ethnic complexities. This was dismissed as right wing propaganda! It was really puzzling for my husband to meet people who had never visited his country but insisted they knew more about what was good for it than he did.

Perhaps this is the essence of what really bothers me: it is very easy for people here to assume that they can impose their standards on others when they understand so little of what it is like to live in Israel (or indeed any other country). Most of my husband's family is made up of refugees from Iran and Europe who were variously persecuted. All of his family has had to serve in the IDF, including in the last Lebanon war. Unless you are a Haredi Jew, you must serve in the IDF (a point that is particularly annoying to the many secular Jews). Israel most definitely does sometimes get it wrong and usually investigates any wrong doings because that is what a democracy does. But Israel does also protect minority rights and Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs, Druze and Jews often work together. Israel has Arabs represented in the parliament, Supreme Court and on every layer of the governmental services. How can that be described as apartheid?

The West Bank is still a disputed territory and history shows that there have been many missed opportunities to come to a peaceful agreement that cannot be blamed solely on Israel. For every headline, there is often a more complex reality. From Gaza, rockets are routinely fired on Israel and this should also be condemned. Until this violence ends, how can Israel cease control of goods entering Gaza? In an interesting anecdote, a few months ago, while Israel was being targeted by rockets on a daily basis, an ambulance from the Gaza strip was permitted entrance to Israel. Inside that ambulance sat the sister of Ismail Hanyia, the Hamas leader in the Gaza strip, along with her husband who needed medical treatment. You can read about it here: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4265787,00.html>

While I'm sure a majority of Palestinians just want to live in peace and get on with life (and who could blame them), it is clear that others will never recognize the right of Israel to exist. I very much hope that the leftist community is not playing into the hands of extremists. Unfortunately, the language I heard on the night such as "all Zionists are rats and it is the duty of every civilized human being to resist them" suggest they may be. I'd also point to this article about Majid Nawaz (radical Islamist turned democrat) who states: "the liberal left were particularly credulous: How we Islamists laughed at their naivety". <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/charlesmoore/9437550/An-insiders-expose-of-Islamist-extremism.html#>

What essentially happened at the demonstration is that an audience was terrorized by the pro-Palestinian supporters. I personally know people (not from any religious or political group) who bought tickets and were too scared to approach the Playhouse. Several others have told me how scared they felt. The fact that the performance was disrupted three times really is a disgrace. Children left because they felt threatened. Is this what was intended?

I find it strange that the British still feel that they know best how to run the Middle East after having carved it up so disastrously. Ultimately, the protestors don't have the confidence that the Palestinians and Israelis (who are the only ones that understand the reality and complexities) can sort this out for themselves. Or maybe this is nothing more than a bandwagon for them as some people seemed to be professional protestors. I expect these protectors of human rights to be extremely busy if they are to apply the same standards to all other countries.

This demonstration has forced me to ask whether it's really possible to separate Zionism from Judaism and for me, the answer after feeling so threatened at the protest, is no. For the first time I feel I witnessed an antisemitic demonstration because I have seen no similar demonstration against performers from another country. Whatever my view though, I think we must remember as a community that there is a SPECTRUM of views and no-one can assume agreement for their own position.

## Editorial Comment

It has been the de facto policy of this newsletter, although never formally discussed in Council up to now, that we do not publish articles that consist of the views of members on the current situation in Israel/Palestine. There are plenty of other forums for such comments. The justification for publishing the article by Catherine Lyons in our September newsletter and Anna Duncan-Nitzan's response to it in this issue is that they concern the direct experiences of Community members. Catherine and Anna are both valued members of our community. Catherine and her family are founder members and have supported Sukkat Shalom in innumerable ways since its inception. Anna is one of the younger members who we have been so happy to welcome to the community in recent years. Their articles illustrate only too well our divergent views on the Middle East situation. We can only reiterate our commitment to "build our community through mutual respect, regardless of our differences".

*The correspondence in relation to protests at the Batsheva performance is now closed.*

## Review: Hora (Batsheva Dance Company), Edinburgh International Festival

by Tracey S. Rosenberg ([pisica@gmail.com](mailto:pisica@gmail.com))



How strange can the human body become? In Hora, the Batsheva Dance Company transforms itself into an alien species going about its business on a strange world. The backdrop of glowing green walls mimics a forest, but the unsettlingly bright shade constantly reminds the viewer that this is no familiar landscape.

The eleven dancers are onstage at all times, and the odd number (with its built-in gender imbalance – six women, five men) automatically disrupts any sense of balance. These creatures look vaguely human, but they bend at all the

wrong angles. They flock, thumping in unison; they crawl away to die. There are mating rituals and preening struts.

At one point it seems likely that they will eat each other; elsewhere, they merge into a sinister unified force, facing down unseen enemies.

The music includes a deliberate science fiction strand – the themes from 2001: A Space Odyssey and Star Wars are mixed in with classical pieces by Grieg, Sibelius, and Debussy, among others. While the resonance of otherworldliness, along with utterly alien clicks and whistles, puts the audience into a particular mindset, the more recognisable melodies remind the brain that we do understand some of what's going on here, whereas the strength of this piece is the way it forces the viewer to draw out meaning from unfamiliar signs. It's also slightly ironic that a dance company, so strongly and controversially identified with Israel, uses the music of Richard Wagner, but one must assume this was a deliberate choice by choreographer and artistic director Ohad Naharin.

Throughout their hour-long performance, the dancers displayed consummate professionalism in response to multiple disruptions in the auditorium. They either stood stock still as the house lights came up (to the sound of sustained audience applause), or calmly reset their positions in order to restart from a slightly earlier position.

Although more than one of the dancers was visibly rattled by the interruptions, they overcame this quickly. In spite of numbering fewer than a dozen, this is an international troupe, hailing not only from Israel but from Taiwan, Japan, and the United States of America. Such integration demonstrates Naharin's ability to form a cohesive unity, no doubt fostered by the movement language Gaga, which he developed and which is now Batsheva's method of training dancers.

The genders are often impossible to distinguish except by costume, though at one point a female is writhing alone, stared at by predatory males...until she, in turn, halts and languidly requires them to dance for her entertainment. An insect pas de deux becomes a pas de trois. Because the stage is bare apart from the dancers and an unobtrusive bench along the back wall, the only decorations are the shadows of these freaky creatures.

The audience isn't simply watching a dance performance – they become explorers observing and judging a new lifeform, and thus actively participate. As intruders who are never really sure that they're correctly decoding the movements and interactions, they can ultimately only guess at the narratives.

A full life-cycle is played out on stage, but this is not life as we know it.