

Kimberley Ex-Pats Newsletter #55 April-June 2023

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Dancing in Kimberley

There were many lovely dancers in the Jewish Community of Kimberley. Some families were particularly prominent – such as **Hannah Frank** and her daughter **Brenda**, also **Hazel Diamond** and **Jennifer Datnow**. I have found some pictures of my dancing life in my photo albums. I am sure many of you will have pictures you may like to add to fill out the story of how we danced in Kimberley.

I absolutely loved dancing and adored ballet. I collected scrapbooks of ballet dancers. Choice birthday presents for me were the coffee table books 'Baron at the Ballet' and 'Baron Encore' which had gorgeous black and white pictures of all the famous dance companies around the world and their dancers, choreographers and ballet productions. I devoured Arnold Haskell's 'Balletomania' where he narrates the saga of the ballerinas, productions and tours of Diaghilev's Ballet Russe.



In the picture above probably taken in 1950 or 51, I am second from the left in one of Joyce Hoopers dance display numbers. On either end are Pam Richmond and Verlice Watkins. They were both granddaughters of Markie Richmond – one of the early diamond pioneers who died in 1961 and is buried in the Green Street Jewish cemetery. [Mark Richmond stone](#). Next to me is Wendy Doran. Her mother used to play the piano with the beautiful music for our dance classes.

Does anyone recall Joyce Hooper's dance classes? In the 1950s and 60s, they took place in a glorious dance studio which had actually been the ballroom at the back of **Sir David Harris's** house, called Lancaster Lodge, at 136 Dutoitspan Road. We used to enter from the back of the building near the technical college. Miss Hooper was a very professional teacher and she and her mother lived in a flat on the premises. How lovely for her. My friends and I enjoyed many happy hours dancing there.



In 1966, much to the despair of the ballet school, this ballroom was moved, lock stock and barrel, to the Big Hole Museum. In the picture above, of this very ballroom/ballet studio, taken at the Big Hole Museum, my late daughter Loren Auerbach is demonstrating some barre work on a visit we made from London to Kimberley in 1998. (You can even see the holes where the ballet barre had been fixed!)



In the picture on the right, we see the little stage area (on the right) where the band would be placed (and where the piano was situated for the dance classes)

Sir David Harris's Ballroom in action recalled: by someone who was there!

Sir David Harris was a pioneer of the diamond days and became a director of many diamond companies including De Beers Consolidated Mines. His Great-Grandson, Peter Harris, came to visit me in London in 2022 and brought me, amongst other treasures to look at, a report from Isabella Wepener who had worked for the family at the turn of the 20th Century, as a special maid to Lady Rosa.

She wrote about the Annual Balls held there. She recalled that the **Colonel** was a wonderful husband and father and a perfect host. She spoke of how the family used to entertain the many famous actors, music hall stars, musicians and singers when they toured South Africa and played in Kimberley. Their own children too were very musical and played instruments and sang.

Isabella remembers the excitement of the **Annual Balls** at Lancaster Lodge, when the ballroom built at the back of the house in 1901, was transformed into a glittering fairy palace with carpets everywhere and lovely sitting out nooks.

She says: 'The buffet suppers at the Harris Annual Balls were out of this world, with Mrs de Vries, the old cook's, lovely aspic and confections! It was my special privilege to help my brother who also worked for the family, prepare the fruit cups.

'The dancing to the strains of the ensemble lead by the famous Viennese bandleader **Herr Carl Rybnikar** lasted till the early hours. Isabella said that if you were lucky enough to be invited to a ball at Sir David and Lady Rosa Harris's – you knew you had 'arrived' socially in Kimberley.

[Carl Rybnikar was the most sought-after Kimberley bandleader, and he was booked to play at all fashionable functions and at the nearby resort 'Alexandersfontein' for dances every week. He also was booked for weddings and other special occasions in the city. Herr Rybnikar also conducted a classical orchestra of at least 30 players for the Diamond Fields Music Society].

In this picture below, Joyce Hooper is standing second from the left with a selection of her pupils, in this very ballroom – which was the perfect dance studio.

In the picture we can see the lovely parquet dancefloor and behind us, the little stage for the band – from where our pianist would accompany our steps and enchainments.

On this occasion we were honoured to be entertaining the famous South African international ballet stars of Sadlers Wells Ballet Company, **Nadia Nerina and Alexis Racine** who were on a visit to South Africa.



From our community, I see kneeling in the middle row from the right **Jennifer Datnow** and **Hazel Diamond**. Also in that row fourth from left is Alma Frank. In the front row from the left I think are **Lucille Friedman**, **Brenda Garsh** and **Gwynne Schrire**. I am standing second from the right and **Fay Goldberg** is next to me on the end of the row. There may be others you may recognise? These pictures are probably from 1952/3)

Gwynne Robins née Schrire sent a similar picture below taken after a dance exam, also in the dance studio/ballroom.

She says:

Miss Hooper's ballet school.

Gwynne Schrire is third from left in second row from bottom.

Perhaps others may recognise themselves.

Gwynne



In this more close-up we see on the left one of Joyce's lovely dancers Norma Andrews, (who later became a popular dance teacher in Port Elizabeth) with Joyce, Alexis and Nadia – and on the right, **Denise**

Datnow, Fay Goldberg and me, Geraldine Kretzmar – pencil in hand probably read for the autograph!

This is an even earlier picture after one of the Royal Academy of Dance exams in about 1950. That must be the examiner with Joyce Hooper at the back.



Some of the names I remember. Between the examiner and Joyce is **Stephanie Eden**. Left of her **Janet Galloway** who I learned became a dance teacher and taught with Joyce in the 1960s. On her right is **Norma Andrews**, and at the back on the right was the specially lovely dancer **Vicky Rhodie**, remember her? She could do the splits! In the front row standing are **Wendy Doran** (whose mother played the piano in my time) **Verlice Watkins**, **Norma Levinsohn**, **Geraldine Kretzmar** (me) and **Pam Richmond**. In the front are **Helen Lang** (who was good at Scottish dancing) and **Avril Matthews**.

Gwynne Robins née Schrire, wrote: 'I also attended **dancing classes with Miss Joyce Hooper**. She taught in the sumptuous ballroom of diamond magnate, Sir David Harris's house in Pan Road. Miss Hooper would hold an annual dancing display. One year we needed five changes of costumes – that certainly kept our mothers busy sewing. Miss Hooper used to show off with solos until one year my little brother walked onto the stage when she was dancing to look at her – that was the last time she included herself in the programme.'

I believe Joyce Hooper also taught **ballroom dancing** in the 1960s to boys and girls on a Saturday morning to prepare them for their school dances. In my time in the mid-nineteen fifties, we learned ballroom with somebody else – a man I think – upstairs above a shop in Pan Road near Chapel Street. Does anyone remember?



What about Before Joyce Hooper came to Kimberley?

There was dance teaching in Kimberley even before Joyce Hooper. When I was very little, there was **Miss Connie Timlin**. I think she was the sister of William Timlin, the architect and watercolourist who worked in the famous architectural practice with DW Greatbatch.

Here on the left was my first foray into a dance display with Miss Timlin.

I remember that when I got on stage, I forgot all about the dance I was supposed to be doing and instead ran around looking at the floor and picking up the beautiful sequins that had fallen off our pink satin fairy costumes.

The Hannah Bergman Dance Studio

Even earlier, in the late 1930s my Aunty **Hannah Bergman** (later Frank) studied ballet at the University of Cape Town and opened a studio in Kimberley for a while.

Her daughter Alma found some wonderful clippings from the Diamond Fields Advertiser describing one of the Bergman dance displays – the ‘Woodland Fantasy’ – an integrated ballet like Swan Lake where all the different children and their dances made up a coherent whole . (Hannah was always frustrated that Joyce Hooper would

always just do bits and pieces, a waltz of flowers a Hungarian dance – a Scottish dance etc with no connection, whereas Hannah created a framework for it all.)

Here is the DFA cutting from October 1937 . I am sure you will remember the names of the dancers and singers in this show:

CHILD DANCERS SCORE SUCCESS IN ‘A WOODLAND FANTASY’

MISS HANNAH BERGMAN’S BALLET AT CITY HALL

Miss Hannah Bergman scored a success in the City Hall last night with ‘A Woodland Fantasy’, the first ballet she has presented in Kimberley. None of the many details which go to the making of a successful dance display were overlooked, and besides varied and talented dancing the excellent costuming, scenery and music were all skilfully blended to make the ballet an entrancing performance.



Each of the four scenes, distinct in character, formed an intrinsic part of the story woven round the ballet. The story centred on a little girl, Joy, who, wandering unobserved out of a flower shop while her companion was admiring the flowers, was carried off to a gypsy camp. A Russian nobleman and his lady, journeying through the woods, were enthralled with Joy’s talent and charm and took her away as their adopted child. Many years went by, Joy became a talented dancer with her appearance at a famous nightclub as the crowning success of her career.

The production was smooth and effortless. The scenes closely followed the plot of the story. The dainty charm of the flower shop was

followed by the pleasing fantasy of a woodland scene. The action of the ballet rose to a swifter tempo in the gay gypsy camp scene which followed, and reached a climax in the night-club scene, which ended the display.

*With the lightest grace **Miss Bergman** (pictured above) gave two dances – an operatic dance, ‘The Wedding Bouquet’, in the first scene, and as the talented dancer, Joy, at the end of the display. She received a warmly-merited ovation at each appearance.*

As the little girl, Joy, **Miss Joy Goldman** was charming and revealed true dancing ability. Wherever they made an appearance, the baby dancers in the display, effectively costumed, won the hearts of the audience. All the group dancers in every scene were perfect in their routine, and the soloists and duo dancers were splendid throughout.

Among the soloists, Miss **Yvonne Coqui's** 'posy' dance in a blue ballet frock decorated with soft pink flowers was outstanding, while the flower seller in the first scene also danced with excellent feeling and artistry. **Miss T. Bayer**, in a dream-like frock of white organdie, was charming in the first scene.

Miss Marion Gershowitz was among the most talented of the performers in the ballet and in the 'Valse Russe' in the gypsy camp scene she and Miss Coqui gave a spirited and excellent performance. In her 'cigarette seller' dance **Miss Gershowitz** was again outstanding. **Mr F. Craig's** tap-dance as a waiter in 'The Silver Moon Club,' was a most pleasing performance.

The Ballroom tango given by **Miss Hilda Blumenthal** and **Mr H. Buch** in the last scene showed how graceful and pleasing modern dancing can be when skilfully done.

The fine singing of **Mr Issie Goldberg** to the accompaniment of Miss Daintree White's violin playing added an exuberant and effective touch to the gypsy scene.

The artistic scenery was the work of Mrs C. Coqui. Mr Vivian Taylor led the orchestra and **Miss Gertie Goldberg** was an accomplished accompanist. The ballet will be repeated tonight.

Even earlier than 1937, the same **Gertie Goldberg** that is listed above as an 'accomplished accompanist' was a lovely dancer too. This picture shows her at four and a half years' old in 1922, when the family lived at 18 York Street in Kimberley.





Her brother **Issie Goldberg** was mentioned as a delightful singer. He was also a soloist in the shul choir in 1930. He is seated on the left in this picture aged about 13.

Back Row: Lionel Apter, S Klein, Abe Goldberg, I Levin, G Fine, M Lazarus, H Mehl
 Front Row: Issie Goldberg (soloist), Harry Klein, M Want, Cantor the Rev A Rudy, N Brayton (Choirmaster) M Rudy, Mendel Apter Centre Front: Shim Maresky



In these pictures **Gertie Goldberg** is 14 in 1932. On the left she is in a pose in her Acrobatic dance and on the right the Eastern delight.

On the next page on the left we see Gertie her 'Classic' dance.





This picture above of **Hannah Bergman** as a teenager, may also be of the 1932 vintage. I wonder who was teaching dance in Kimberley at that time?

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Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London, 4 April 2023 and updated 7 June 2023 from pictures and stories sent in by Kimberley Ex-Pats.
