Founder of the Jerusalem Ballet, Nina Timofeeva

Nina Timofeeva was born on the 11th of June 1935 in Leningrad. She studied as a ballet dancer in the Vaganova Ballet Academy, where her mother worked as a music teacher and pianist.

At the age of 16, while still in school, Nina danced her first lead role on a professional stage in the ballet “Nutcracker” to the music of Tchaikovsky.

Only a year after graduation, she danced the lead role in the ballet “Swan Lake” on the stage of the of the Kirov Theatre (now the Mariinsky Theatre).

Two years later, in 1956, Timofeeva left the Kirov, joining the Bolshoi Theatre’s historic London tour, receiving much critical acclaim. The Bolshoi became her professional home, where she danced until the end of the 80’s in a variety of different roles, unprecedented by any other.

Timofeeva was under the protection of two of the greatest ballerinas of the Bolshoi, Galina Ulanova and Marina Semyonova. Throughout her long and glamorous career, she danced most of the lead roles in the many ballet productions of the rich classical repertoire of the Bolshoi Theatre. Many roles were built specifically for her by many big choreographers of the soviet era, among them was Leonid Jacobson, Kasyan Goleyzovsky, Mikhail Lavrovsky and Yuri Grigorovich. In their productions, they portrayed her deep and dramatic character and her exceptional technical abilities. With noticeable character portrayals such as Aegina (“Spartacus”), Mechmene Banu (“Legend of Love”), Lady Macbeth and many others.

Her personal life was full of vicissitudes. At a young age she married conductor Gennady Rozhdestvensky. The marriage fell apart and she married a second time to the famous cameraman Georgey Rerberg who worked, amongst others, with the famous Russian producer Andrey Tarkovsky. Rerberg is the father of Timofeeva’s daughter Nadya, who continues in her footsteps.

Timofeeva’s third husband, Kirill Molchanov, composer and director of the Bolshoi, composed for her the ballet “Macbeth” (to the choreography of Vladimir Vasiliev). Sadly, the day of the premiere, Molchanov suddenly passed away.

In 1969 Timofeeva was granted the title of “Artist of the Soviet Nation” for her immense input into the culture and art.

In 1988, Timofeeva retired from the stage, but continued to work in the Bolshoi theatre as a rehearsal director.

With the falling apart of the Soviet Union in 1991, Timofeeva shocked the ballet world: with the singular decision to accept an invitation to teach in the Academy of Music and Dance of Jerusalem, and immigrated along with her daughter Nadya and mother Frida Sliman to Israel. Along with the wave of tremendous talent that came to Israel with the flow of immigrants from the Soviet Union and enriched the State of Israel with a huge cultural capital, Timofeeva sought to contribute from her experience and tremendous talent.

For 13 years, she taught at the Academy of Music and Dance and at the high school next to the academy in Jerusalem, and even conducted a dance workshop sponsored by the academy.

In 2003, upon reaching retirement age, Timofeeva finished her work at the academy and decided to open a ballet incubator in her own studio. Thus, with a defiant step and a sense of mission, a ballet studio bearing her name was born on Balfour Street in the heart of the Rehavia neighborhood of Jerusalem, and over time, a ballet school. Timofeeva's vision was to develop a classical and neoclassical ballet tradition in Jerusalem and to raise a new generation of dancers at the highest level.

Despite the economic difficulties and the lack of recognition and support from those who assist the cultural and artistic bodies in Israel, Timofeeva continued to sustain her life's work.

In 2007, upon her retirement, Timofeeva transferred the management of the school to her daughter Nadia.

On November 3, 2014, Nina Timofeeva, one of the great dancers of the 20th century, passed away. She left behind a tremendous dance heritage and a life enterprise that continues to establish generations of ballet dancers in Jerusalem, the capital of Israel.