

## Les Sortileges performs

# Quebec folkloric group does Israeli, chassidic dance

MONTREAL —

Why is a Quebec-based folkloric troupe so interested in Israeli and chassidic dance?

For Jimmy di Genova, the founder, artistic director and business manager of L'Ensemble national de folklore Les Sortileges, the answer goes back to the 60s, when folk was at its height and the Israelis were held up as leaders in its interpretation and Israeli society, with its kibbutzim, a model.

**"In the 60s, hundreds of French Canadians were doing Israeli folk-dance," said Di Genova. "There were many teachers coming from Israel to Quebec."**

The Jewish community had a chance to see Les Sortileges at the celebration of Israel's 40th anniversary at the Verdun Auditorium in April. For many, it was the highlight of the evening.

The performance was donated by Les Sortileges.

Les Sortileges, the only professional group of its kind in Canada, has been dedicated to the preservation and promotion of folklore since its founding in 1966. Its Chassidic Suite and Israeli Suite are 'but two entries in Les Sor-

tileges' vast repertoire of international and Quebec folklore.

**The Chassidic Suite is a series of dances, performed in authentic costume, recreating the major steps of a chassidic wedding: the men's dance, the preparations of the bride, the meeting of man and wife, and the wedding feast. It expresses how dance for the chassidim is used to express devotion to God.**

The suite, choreographed by Moshiko Alevy of New York, was added to Les Sortileges' repertoire in 1983.

The Israeli Suite consists of the modern dances, Hora Or, Yamin Usemol and Koreem Lanu Lalechet, choreographed by Moshe Eskayo, also of New York, for Les Sortileges in 1985. They reflect the youth exuberance of Israel, the joy of its people in their own country.

A trip to Israel in 1973 for the International Folklore Festival in Haifa, at the invitation of the Israeli consulate, deepened Les Sortileges' knowledge of Israeli dance.

Di Genova also discovered a personal interest in Jewish culture when the



This is a scene from Les Sortileges' Chassidic Suite.

then Israeli consul-general, who had lived in Rome, pointed out that Italian names meaning origin from a certain place usually indicates Jewish ancestry.

It was a shock for Montreal-born di Genova, who was a teacher in a small Catholic school in the east end when he first launched Les Sortileges as a small amateur troupe. The troupe has been professional since 1981 and now has 16 professional and eight amateur dancers, between 18 and 28 years old, who are trained at Les Sortileges' own studio.

**Not all are French**

**Canadians; they come from across Canada and a variety of cultural backgrounds. Sortileges, incidentally, is both a**

**French and English word meaning witchcraft or magic spells.**

The troupe has performed abroad frequently,

as well as regularly across Canada.

"Presenting a national folklore is not a matter of choreography, but a matter

of the spirit," di Genova said. "Folklore is not only technique, it's the reflection of the soul of a people."