



## Jewish Federation helping to bring Israeli artists to Cleveland

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**Michael O'Malley, The Plain Dealer**  
By

The Inbal Pinto & Avshalom Pollak Dance Company from Israel, a colorful troupe featuring ballet, contemporary dance, mime and acrobatics, will perform at the Ohio Theatre on Saturday, Jan. 28, and Sunday, Jan. 29.

The show is presented by Dance Cleveland with support from the Jewish Federation of Cleveland.

Through corporate and private donations, the federation last month established a program to help bring Israeli arts to Cleveland, working with the city's academic and art venues.

So far it has helped bring the following artists from Israel: singer Yasmin Levy, who performed at the Cleveland Museum of Art; the Alon Yavnai jazz quintet, which performed at Severance Hall; and novelist Amos Oz, who lectured at Oberlin College and Case Western Reserve University.

In March, the Cleveland International Film Festival will feature films from Israel.

"We want to let our neighbors know that Israel is a very culturally vibrant place," said federation President Stephen Hoffman. "It's not just about the headlines you see about the conflict."

For ticket information on the Israeli dance troupe, call the PlayhouseSquare box office at 216-241-6000 or 1-866-546-1353.

**Polka hits the big screen:** "Polka! The Movie," created by Clevelander Joe Valencic, will be shown at the Cleveland Museum of Art at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 15,

The 90-minute film written and narrated by Valencic was first shown last year on Slovenia's public-television



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Courtesy of DanceCleveland

Members of Inbal Pinto & Avshalom Pollak Dance Company perform "Oyster," a dance-theater work that the Israeli troupe will present in January 2012 at the Ohio Theatre as part of DanceCleveland's 55th season.

network. It was also shown at the Cleveland International Film Festival in April.

The film explores the Cleveland-style polka, which has its roots in Slovenian folk music but is influenced by American rhythms and instruments like the banjo.

"Just like rock 'n' roll, each style of polka music has its followers," said Valencic, 57, who lives in the North Collinwood neighborhood. "We decided to do a documentary on the Cleveland style, including all the culture that surrounds it -- sausages, picnics and camaraderie."

A polka jam session will be held before and after the movie, and Valencic will give a talk about the project. General admission is \$9. For museum members and students, admission is \$7.

**Exploring black Catholicism:** C. Vanessa White, a professor of spirituality at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and a historian of black Catholicism, will lecture Thursday, Jan. 5, at the City Club of Cleveland, 850 Euclid Ave.

White will talk about the Rev. Augustus Tolton, a late 19th century cleric who was the first black Catholic priest in the United States.

The noon luncheon lecture is sponsored by the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland's First Friday Club. For reservations, call 440-390-0172.

**Polish 'Wigilia' planned:** A traditional Christmas "Wigilia" dinner will be held today at the Polish American Cultural Center, 6501 Lansing Ave. in Cleveland's Slavic Village neighborhood.

In Poland's early Christian days, a Wigilia -- Latin for watch or vigil -- was held on Christmas Eve in preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus.

The center's Wigilia begins at 12:30 p.m. with the traditional breaking of "oplatek," or bread, followed by a meatless meal.

For ticket information, call the center at 216-883-2828.

**Celebrating Kwanzaa:** Mali Yetu, a nonprofit summer education program for Cleveland-area African-American children, is holding a Kwanzaa celebration at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 27, at the Slovenian Society Home, 20713 Recher Ave., Euclid.

Kwanzaa, which begins Dec. 26 and ends Jan. 1, is a holiday celebrating African cultures.

The Mali Yetu event features live music, dinner and a talk by Yvonne Pointer, a local anti-violence activist. The musical group Hue People will perform folk and jazz numbers. Drame, a drum and dance ensemble, will also

perform.

"Kwanzaa is a time for people of African origins to reflect on the year that's passing and look to the year ahead," said the event's coordinator, Michele Rudolph. "It's a time to commit to the ideals of community, faith and self-determination."

The celebration is free. For more information call Rudolph at 216-965-5357.

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