



Berlin, Dec 4, 2014

## Open Letter

Dear Ms Haug,  
dear Mr Kaegi,  
dear Mr Wetzels,

You are announced with "**Remote Santiago**" at the Theatre Festival [Santiago a Mil 2015](#) in Santiago de Chile, where also other international artists and groups will participate, including Israel's Batsheva Dance Company with the play "Decadence".

For Ohad Naharin (Choreographer & Artistic Director) dance is ['a form of illusion, a unique moment that allows a departure from reality'](#). On the other hand, ['For me a way to visualize the world in which I live'](#) Perhaps this inconsistency is no accident. An actual realization of the world in which Ohad Naharin lives, it suggests well to take refuge in illusions.

The Batsheva Dance Company, among others, is funded by the Israeli Ministry of Culture and what may seem surprising, by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Beyond that it participates in the ['Brand Israel' initiative](#) of the Israeli government. The aim of this initiative, which was launched in [2006](#), is to enhance the image of Israel internationally. This will be achieved by specifically international performances by artists and groups like Batsheva. The campaign is a response of the Israeli government to the growing protests worldwide against the immense massive human rights violations and disregard of international law by Israel - culminated dramatically last summer on the besieged civilian population of Gaza. By supposedly non-political "culture" the image of a normal democratic country should be perceived instead of that what millions of people around the globe are aware of.

The Israeli writer [Yitzhak Laor](#) described in 2008 in an article in the Israeli daily newspaper Haaretz how this works. Israeli artists whose performances abroad are funded by the state, to sign a contract in which they are referred to significantly as service provider. They assure the Ministry to promote "the political interests of the State of Israel through culture and art," which includes "a positive image of Israel".

[Arye Mekel](#), Deputy Head of the Department for Culture Israeli Foreign Ministry, announced in 2009, "We will send well-known novelists and writers overseas, theater companies, exhibits," said Arye Mekel, the ministry's deputy director general for cultural affairs. "This way you show Israel's prettier face, so we are not thought of purely in the context of war." 'At this time, Israel had bombed Gaza with phosphorus bombs and other internationally banned weapons and adamantly resisted the investigation of war crimes by a UN Commission.

The Batsheva Dance Company, however, lends itself for being an ambassador of this Israeli state, it met with massive protests during its tour through the UK and elsewhere.

