



September 2009, Issue 2

10 Years Beit Almusica!

If the piece of paper I am writing on could choose, I am sure it would be ready to receive notes and become a musical score.

Music has been central to human existence since time began. With each passing year its importance becomes greater, and it forms part of many contemporary therapies.

Countless philosophers, thinkers, and great writers have been aware of the enormous impact that music has on our lives and daily moods, and they have written movingly about mankind's need for music and its perfection.

Amongst the most memorable tributes to music are these words of Plato: 'Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and to everything.'

In my opinion, every individual, school or organization that teaches music - or simply promotes music, whether through concerts, social activities, or any other program that gives people the opportunity to interact with music and its beauty - should be blessed and fully supported.

And this is where Beit Almusica comes in.

As the last newsletter explained, Beit Almusica started in an office of three rooms, next to a parking lot; the space was barely big enough for ten students. It started with no support from any other organization, yet it managed to educate many students and to become a professional and well-known conservatory in its own right - well-known for its seriousness, its goals and ambition, and most importantly, for its inspiring

student programs, with frequent opportunities to perform in our own, and outside conservatory concerts.

I began my love affair with music when I was a little boy, about 5 years old. My great good fortune was to be able to study music in Beit Almusica. It became a private playground in which I could play music and get to know many instruments, teachers and great performers. Beit Almusica helped me prepare for my matriculation examination, which I passed with ease thanks to the advice and direction that the conservatory gave me.

Today I study music and psychology in the University of Haifa, and intend to become a professional musician. I don't think that I would have reached this point without the help and support of Beit Almusica.

Now, as a member of the Beit Almusica board, I participate in all the organization's important decisions and activities, which is a real honor for me. I am proud to be a part of the conservatory, and am sure that we can overcome in the best possible way any obstacle that crosses our path.

I take this opportunity to thank Beit Almusica and all its members for the great job they have done over the years.



Saied Silbak

*Beit Almusica Graduate
and new member of the
Board of Directors.*

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About Us

Beit Almusica is a non-profit organization (NGO) established in 1999 by a group of young artists. Our mission is to promote cultural rights of the Palestinian minority in Israel, to enrich society through the development of musical environments, to open prospects for artists, and to interact musically with other cultures.

We believe that the Palestinian community in Israel is entitled to equal opportunities for cultural and musical expression, to have their own cultural identity, and to benefit from a music education at high professional standards. Providing this rich cultural experience will ensure Palestinians in Israel feel proud and confident of their heritage, thus reinforcing their sense of belonging to society.

Conservatory

This is the first and only Arab institution that enables Palestinian children and youth living in Israel to receive musical education at a high academic level and to pursue an academic degree in music. After completing all the stages of the program of studies, students are entitled to take the **matriculation examination, or 'Bagrut', in music**, in addition to receiving a certificate of graduation that enables them to study music at a university or music academy. The Conservatory specializes in Oriental and Western music. In addition to its methodical approach, the conservatory provides several creative and supportive group activities that aim to nurture the talent of the student, including: (1) Oriental Music Ensemble; (2) Choir; (3) Youth Orchestra; (4) Guitar Quintet; (5) Violin Group; (6) Arabic Percussion Ensemble; (7) Music Workshops and Master Classes; (8) Participation in Competitions and Public Events.

Bagrut: A Word Feared by Senior Music Students

By Rasha Hilwi and Heidi Paredes, pictures by Khulood Tannous

When Nadine Abboud approached the room in which she presented her Bagrut Examination in Music, she felt excited. She remembered her first piano lessons at the age of nine at Beit Almusica Conservatory. "I didn't really choose the Piano then. When I was nine years old, my sister was playing the piano, so my parents asked me if I also wanted to take lessons. At that time I didn't know much about musical instruments, so I agreed," Nadine says.



Nadine Abboud

It was the tumultuous year of 2000 when she began her music education with Luba Kalnatski, who has taught her ever since. Luba is not only an outstanding piano teacher, but has been a great support for Nadine, as she has been for all her students. Today, at the age of 18, Nadine has successfully graduated from the music program at Beit Almusica, passed her Bagrut Examination with outstanding marks – 100% – and won the second prize in the piano category at the Marcel Khalife Music Competition. She is certainly ready to start her music career; she has a strong foundation and consequently a bright future.

Nadine's success was shared by three other students this summer. Rawan Azzam (guitar), Rula Jarayse (qanoun) and Nadim Makhoul (violin) approached their Bagrut Examination with trepidation – but unnecessarily as each of them gave an excellent performance.



Nadim Makhoul

For Nadim the Bagrut Examination is a "step that can change your life." From the Galilee, Nadim studied Western violin with Galilna Breakman for seven years, and then switched to Eastern violin with Sameer Makhoul. He decided to move on from Western to Eastern violin because he felt that he had gained enough knowledge and experience of the

techniques needed to play the Western style. He wanted to explore new techniques. He scored 95%.

Rula Jarayse, from Nazareth, is one of the few female musicians to study and play qanoun. Rula not only showed that women can do well playing a traditionally male instrument, but thrilled her audience during her examination, receiving an excellent mark of



Rula Jarayse

98%. She likes qanoun because she feels that it is the most important instrument in the world. "Before knowing how to play on the qanoun, just from how it looks you can feel how special it is. And it always makes me feel good while I'm playing it. The qanoun makes the musician feel so pleased," says Rula.



Rawan Azzam

Rawan Azzam, from Shefa-Amer, started to play the guitar when she was 14 years old. Her relationship with the guitar and her decision to learn how to play this instrument came from her love of Spanish music, especially Flamenco. Rawan was also one of the senior students that passed the Bagrut examination this year with the excellent score of 98%. "It was a special step in my life. I practice daily

on my guitar but this year, before the Bagrut, I practiced more as I felt that I had a goal to reach. Preparing for the Bagrut helped me to improve significantly; I discovered and reached a new stage", Rawan says.

At Beit Almusica we are proud of being the only Arab Conservatory in Israel (there are more than thirty Jewish institutions) that offers the opportunity to talented young Palestinians to take the Bagrut examination, which enables them to study music at a university or music academy. Since its official recognition from the Ministry of Education as a Music Conservatory in 2004, 11 students have successfully taken the Bagrut Examination.

Festival 2009, Spring Season

Beit Almusica Eastern Music Group

Tickets for the first concert of the Eastern Music Group 'Wa-Hanin' (Nostalgia) were sold out two days before the event – a great achievement given the late-buying habits of audiences for cultural events in Israel.

Our first production, the Beit Almusica Eastern Music Group, premiered on 28 March 2009. This first concert took place in Haifa, at the Krieger Hall which has a 500 people seating capacity, in the French Carmel. The music was very moving, and the diversity of the audience was remarkable. People came from all over the Galilee - Palestinians (Druze, Moslem and Christian), Jews and representatives from the international community. Feedback and media coverage were very positive.

This project started as an answer to the absence of professional frameworks for local Palestinian artists and musicians, who have no opportunity to perform and no possibility to record and promote their art at a professional level. Many talented individuals are driven to perform at weddings and other social events in order to make a living - or have to give up their dream and content themselves with music as a hobby.

Beit Almusica Eastern Music Group was launched in 2006 to contribute to the preservation and revival of Palestinian and Arab culture and in particular its musical heritage. The group started as a choir, evolving into an ensemble of 13 singers accompanied by five instrumentalists. In 2008 the Beit Almusica Eastern Music Group was expanded, its musical repertoire was chosen and adapted, and more than 30 rehearsals took place in preparation for CD recording and public performances.

The Beit Almusica Eastern Music Group performs classical songs in Arabic, 'Muwashshat', Arab folkloric songs as well as more modern styles of singing, and new compositions. 'Muwashshat' has a 1,000-year history in and around the Mediterranean basin and is an Arabic poetic form as well as a secular musical genre that uses texts as lyrics. It originated in Andalus, where it was cultivated by poets and musicians. Nowadays the 'Muwashshat' continues as a widely enjoyed musical form throughout the Arab world.

Samir Makhoul, under the artistic supervision of Amer Nakhleh, conducts the group. Both musicians are well-known in the Palestinian society in Israel and enjoy its broad support.



Ana Vidovic

At the age of 5, in the small town of Karlovac near Zagreb, Croatia, Ana Vidovic followed her vocation and began an amazing career as a guitar player.

She became the youngest student to attend the prestigious National Musical Academy in Zagreb where she studied with Professor Istvan Romer. Her reputation in Europe led to an invitation to study with Manuel Barrueco at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, USA, from where she graduated in May 2003.

By the age of 23 Ana had won an impressive number of prizes and international competitions all over the world. These include first prizes in the Albert Augustine International Competition in Bath, England, the Fernando Sor competition in Rome, Italy, and the Francisco Tarrega competition in Benicassim, Spain. Other top prizes include the Eurovision Competition for Young Artists, the Mauro Giuliani competition in Italy, the Printemps de la Guitare in Belgium and the Young Concert Artists International Auditions in New York.

She has given over 1,000 public performances since first taking the stage in 1988 and Ana's extraordinary talent and formidable gifts have enabled her to take her place amongst the world's elite musicians.

On April 2, 2009 we had the honor of welcoming Ana at Beit Almusica, where she charmed an audience of 300 people with a solo recital of classical guitar music.



Nizar Rouhana

Nizar Rouhana launched his first album "Sard" with a performance in Haifa on April 30, 2009

"Sard" means *narration* in Arabic. In the album the authentic language of the oud is heard, but new expressions and rhythms are achieved through dialogue with other instruments such as the double bass, the qanoun and percussion. The album includes five pieces composed by Nizar Rouhana, in addition to two familiar tunes specially arranged for this recording.

Nizar is a prominent oud player on the Palestinian musical scene. He was born in the village of *Esefya* on Mount Carmel in 1975 and began his musical education at an early age, starting to play the Oud before he was 15. In 1996 he moved to Jerusalem to start his academic studies. Focusing his research on the music of the great Egyptian composer Mohammad el-Qasabji, Nizar completed his Masters degree in Musicology in 2006.

Nizar Rohana is accompanied by: Hani Assad - percussion, Oystein Bru Frantzen - double bass, Waffa Zagal - qanoun and Micheal Rouhana - oud.

The production was partly financed by the Cultural Resource (Egypt) in collaboration with Al-Urmawi Centre (Palestine).



Festival 2008, Winter Season: 'Oud Days'

By Heidi Paredes

While trying to find out about the history of the oud, I searched Wikipedia. More bored than interested by the article, my attention began to wander. I was about to look for another source of inspiration when I spotted a list of the most famous oud players from around the world. Under the section for Palestine, I found many of the musicians who have performed at Beit Almusica's Festival and my interest returned.



Issa Boulos was born in Ramallah. As musician, critic, writer and lyricist, his works have covered various genres and acquired worldwide recognition. Boulos is a lecturer at the University of Chicago where he directs the Middle East Music Ensemble. He is also founder and president of the Arab Classical Music Society, co-founder of the Palestine International Festival, co-founder of the National Conservatory in Ramallah, among other initiatives. Issa Boulos writes music reviews for Four Magazine and is a recipient of many awards and fellowships, including most recently an Artists Fellowship Award from the Illinois Arts Council.

One of the musicians on the list was **Issa Boulos**. An audience of 400 experienced his great talent at first hand in a concert in which he performed new compositions from his album *Shams u Hawa* (Sun and Air). The impressive performance marked the beginning of the winter season of Beit Almusica's Festival featuring *Oud Days*. Two more concerts in Haifa and Shefa-Amer followed. Issa, who now

lives in Chicago, is famous for his blend of tradition and innovation, which forges important musical links between the Arab world and the West.



Wisam Murad was born in Jerusalem. He learnt oud at Sabreen's training center in 1987 and studied jazz piano for three years at the Rubin Academy for Music in Jerusalem. In 1995 he joined Sabreen as a singer and percussionist, participated as oud player on their CD *Ala Fein*, and as vocalist and arranger on their latest production *Mazooj*. Murad has written and composed music for the plays "The Mission," "Cannibals" and "Um Dia," and performed as a singer on a new production called "Kalila Wa Dimna." Among his most important works are the re-arrangement of some of Sayyed Darwish's songs for the "Darwish Ya Sayyed" play, which won first prize at Acre's Masrahid Festival in summer 2003.

Wissam Murad, who grew up surrounded by music and musicians, fascinated an audience of more than 300 people with his performance in Haifa. Wissam, besides his impressive career as a musician, is renowned for the warmth and soulfulness of his voice and music. He presented several songs from his first solo album *Min Ba'd*, a compilation of songs and musical pieces composed by Murad to lyrics of the late Egyptian poet Biram Altunisi. The music is modern with a classical perspective. It crosses many boundaries, defies categorization, and brings a feeling of the past into a contemporary musical setting.

The last concert, featuring **Wasim Ode**, took place in Shefa-Amer and



Wasim Ode studied Musicology in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and specialized in Oud performance at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance for his master degree. Wasim Ode won a prize for talented music students three times from the Sharet Foundation. He is the oud soloist in the Arabic Orchestra of Nazareth. In 2006-07, he supervised a quartet band from the Arabic Orchestra of Nazareth in an international competition in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, and won third prize among 40 bands. Wasim Ode teaches music at several conservatories including the Edward Said National Conservatory.

was attended by an audience of 200. Wasim was born in Nazareth and enjoys strong links with the local community. During the second part of the concert, he performed with the *Wattar* band, which plays popular songs for the local public, thus creating an interactive atmosphere between musicians and audience. The repertoire of the first part of the concert included segments from his own compositions.

With the closing of Oud Days, in cold winter days, I remembered the oldest known picture of an oud (or lute), which depicts a woman crouching with her instruments upon a boat, playing right-handed, and I wondered where our women oud players are.



Community Outreach

Student Ensembles on Tour

The Community Outreach Program addresses the acute need for artistic events and cultural expression through different activities performed to a high standard.

Our aim is to expose the Palestinian community to a wide range of musical genres, to provide opportunities, especially for the most marginalized, to have access to professional musical frameworks, and to provide Palestinian society with outlets for independent cultural expression and artistic creativity.

The program nurtures a sense of self-identity through an education in music as a positive agent of change for both themselves and their community.

Beit Almusica's Student Ensembles are eager to perform in front of different audiences, thus improving their skills and acquiring further experience in public performance.



To this end, Beit Almusica has undertaken tours, participating in the following events:

- On Mother's Day 2008, the Eastern Ensemble performed in Shefa-Amer in a special celebration with 1,200 participants. Feedback was very positive and the event was a memorable experience for our young musicians.
- At the end of November 2008, Amir (the Organization for Challenge) organized an event in Haifa for people with special needs. In front of an audience of 500, the Eastern Music Ensemble performed together with two local groups.
- In March 2009, the Guitar Ensemble played at an event for high schools in Shefa-Amer. Around 250 students enjoyed the performance.

Why Music?

"When people put on a play or a dance piece together, they learn to cooperate – and find they must go beyond tradition and authority if they are going to express themselves well. The sort of community created by the arts is non-hierarchical – a model of the responsiveness and interactivity that a good democracy will also foster in its political processes. And not the least, the arts can be a great source of joy. Participation in plays, songs and dances fills children with happiness that can carry over into the rest of their education."

Martha Nussbaum, University of Chicago; Newsweek International, August 2006; "Teaching Humanity."

Supporting Palestinian Children Living in Poverty: New Online Campaign

In April 2009 we joined an online campaign to raise at least £1,000 from 50 different donors to support disadvantaged Palestinian children. Thanks to your generous donations we met the challenge and have now been invited to stay on the Global Giving site, initiators of the challenge. This is one of the steps undertaken by Beit Almusica to enable those Palestinian children in Israel who face social and economic disadvantage to find a way forward through music.

Some 60% of Palestinian children in Israel live in poverty, most attend substandard schools, lack meaningful after-school activities, live in localities with inadequate infrastructure, face discrimination, lack perspectives for the future and face an unstable social and political future.

The project will provide a musical education for 50 to 60 children from low-income families living in the Galilee region, indirectly benefiting their families and local communities. They will receive a musical instrument and partial scholarship for a year, which will enable them to take part in a specially tailored program in Western and Eastern music. In addition, they will participate in group and individual classes, creative and supportive activities, and small-scale public events.

Through this project we aim to help children improve their personal, social, and learning skills while continuing to appreciate their identity and cultural heritage. The project encourages positive integration into society and opens perspectives for a brighter future to disadvantaged children.

We still need your help to ensure that these children will be able to continue the program, and so that more children can benefit from the project. For more information and/or to make a donation please visit:

<http://www.globalgiving.co.uk/pr/2700/proj2620a.html>

Upcoming Events 2009

For the celebration of our 10th Anniversary, Beit Almusica will host a series of special events:

17 October at Beit Almusica: A piano recital by Fadi Diab, one of the most prominent young Palestinian talents.

21 November in Haifa: The highlight of our celebrations will consist of an exclusive performance by Kamilya Jubran, born in Acre and now living in France. For 20 years, Kamilya was Sabreen's lead singer, and a player of oud, qanoun, and other Oriental instruments. Since 2002, when Kamilya toured with her first project, Mahattaat, then Wameedd, and gave solo performances in several Arab and European cities. Kamilya has created and performed her own songs and music, with a number of European musicians, in out-of-the-way and non-commercial venues.

Beit Almusica Festival: The Winter Season (December-January), will host 'Oud Days' featuring local Palestinian and international musicians.

For more information on any of these events, please contact us at Beit Almusica: heidi@beit-almusica.org.



بيت الموسيقى
ביית אלמוסיקה
Beit Almusica

How to support Beit Almusica?

If you would like to help us promote the cultural rights of the Palestinian minority in Israel and enrich society through the development of musical frameworks, there are many ways in which you can support our work:

A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION – by allocating grants and other funds, or by making an individual donation.

A PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION – by providing musical instruments, equipment or services or by providing technical or administrative assistance.

VOLUNTEERING – by supporting our work through a number of volunteer options.

BECOME A FRIEND – through a small annual membership fee.

JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP – Facebook reaches across countries, communities and age groups and the more people who sign up to our group, the more impact it will have.

PASS THE WORD – tell your friends about us and our work.

CONTACT US AT: heidi@beit-almusica.org, Phone: +972-4-9500230.

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Promoting Cultural Rights of
the Palestinian Society in Israel



On behalf of
Beit Almusica,
we would like
to take the
opportunity to
thank you for
your support!