

# AICF



# 75

YEARS

## 75 YEARS OF CULTURAL IMPACT

Exclusive interview  
with Grammy Award-  
winning violinist and  
humanitarian Miri  
Ben-Ari



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Ziv Guelfand, dancer/Photo: Daniel Babchek

Tziporela, theater company/Photo: Ben Palchov

## WE ARE

## INSPIRING: ENGAGING YOUTH TO TELL THEIR STORIES THROUGH CREATIVITY



Signal Teadmar

## AMIT HASON, 15

Even Yehuda, The Sharon Region

Classical & Modern Dancer

**When did you start dancing and why?** I began when I was in 2nd grade, just for fun. My teacher, Moran Barak, was the director of the after-school program. She noticed my talent immediately and encouraged my parents and myself to seriously invest in my development as a dancer. When she opened a private dance school, I was excited, because I had been looking for a program where I could further develop my dancing.

**How does your family encourage the direction you took with your dancing?** They constantly encourage me to continue and focus on it. They help me when it gets tough, comfort me in times of crisis, and are there for me every moment.

**Do you remember your first show? How was it?** It was the end of 2nd grade. I remember feeling overjoyed. I immediately fell in love with the stage and felt that I was born to be there.

**Why did you audition for AICF and how did you hear of the opportunity?** Moran suggested that I go to the 2013/14 auditions. I did and received a scholarship in Classical Dance. Thanks to the scholarship, I took private lessons and performed at an event hosted by Shosh Carmel, one of the most notable supporters of the Foundation in Israel. I'm extremely grateful to AICF for making this dream come true.

**What happened at your audition?** I was asked to perform a variation from the piece *Sylvia*. When I was done, one of the judges applauded. That was one of the most touching moments I've had in my life!

## GAYA FELDHEIM SCHORR, 21

Tel Aviv  
Jazz, Voice

**Is there any arts background in your family?** My father is the director and founder of the Sam Spiegel Film School, and he received an AICF scholarship in his 20s, and my mother is the director of a film foundation and also works in theater. Our home was always full of music.

**Why did you want to audition for the AICF scholarships?**  
I went for the first time in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Getting the scholarship saved me.

**How was the recent audition?** I'm always extremely nervous when I audition. Even after receiving the scholarship four times, I still worry that I won't receive the honor.

**Do you have any specific plans for the future?** That's why I came to New York, as all the best performers are here. That's why I'm so excited to be part of AICF's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concert.



CJS

DANCE

## ZIV GUELFAND, 13

Sunnyvale/Kfar Saba  
Classical & Modern Dancer

**Where do you live?** Sunnyvale, California. I just moved a month ago to study at Ballet San Jose.

**It's amazing that your whole family moved for you to be able to live in the US.**

**Why did you want to audition for AICF?**  
My dance teacher, Georgina Yaakobi, who was my teacher right before I moved to the States, told me about AICF and asked me to apply. I was only 10 when I auditioned. My teacher had to make special arrangements to get me an audition, as 12 is usually the earliest age for dancers, but through her persistence and the fact that I was three levels above my age level, I was granted an audition.

**When did you realize it was getting serious and that you wanted to dedicate so much time to dance?** I just love dancing and learning new things.

### **Michal Guelfand on identifying her son's talent:**

Ziv started walking when he was 10 months old, and he started dancing at the age of 1. It just came out of him. He was born with it and it flows from him naturally. It is his passion. His teacher calls him "My Baryshnikov".



Life Touch

**How was the audition experience?** I got up early, ate breakfast and arrived two hours beforehand to warm up physically and mentally. I treated it as any other performance, so I focused on myself and how much I enjoyed dancing.

**How will you use the scholarship?** I dance 20 hours a week, and I look to add more one-on-one hours with my teacher whenever possible. I also go to competitions that might provide scholarships to study abroad, so I hope that when I'm 16, I'll receive a scholarship from one of the largest schools and find the strength in me to leave the family to pursue further studies.

**Which projects are you working on now?** I'm currently working on a few projects, and I'm also still in high school, so it is important to me to maintain high grades. The most important project right now is the AICF 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration in New York City. I am so excited to be performing at Jazz at Lincoln Center! It's every dancer's dream, performing in New York City.

## ELEVATING: BUILDING BRIDGES BY RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS



Ben Palchov

## GAL FRIDMAN

THEATER

Tziporela Theater Company

*"Movement, Music, Physical Theater, and Outrageous Comedy..."*

**Tell us about founding Tziporela, why and how it came about?** At Nisan Nativ there is one evening where students showcase their original pieces. Over our years of studies, we decided to collect material from all of those nights and produce one show to showcase all of them. That show was so successful that we were asked to perform it again. At that moment we realized that our need to see another kind of theater was not only ours but also our audience's, and so Tziporela was founded. This first show eventually ran for over 500 nights.

**Why do you think it's important to offer support, particularly to young artists in Israel?** Israel is the kind of place where the majority of the attention goes to survival. Cultural life does not get enough attention and resources. In this complex reality, an organization like AICF is one of the very few encouraging activities that really put culture and art at the top of our priorities. Israeli artists, as I see it, are our future and are vital to our society's ability to maintain our cultural life and to make a brighter future a possibility.

**How is the experience of working abroad as Israelis?** It is important to emphasize that I do not believe in Israeli art. There is no such thing; there is only art. The tendency to define and separate can alter and damage the audience's pure experience.

**When I go to see an artist I ask myself not where they're from, but what their art is saying. The world has become one global village.**

## ALEX LEVIN, 19

Tel Aviv

Jazz, Saxophone

**What do you think makes one musician better than the rest?** It's the choices they make, when they make them, how they make them, and who they do it with. It's parallel to talking. Someone can talk forever and never get through to you, while someone else simply says two sentences and immediately wins your attention.

**Tell us about the experience of auditioning for AICF.** I feel that the judges are people who truly love and understand jazz.

**What are you working on now?** I am in a jazz ensemble in the army — I'm an IDF Musician of Excellence — with other AICF recipients, with drums, bass, piano, and vocals.

MUSIC



## TOMER BAR, 20

## NITZAN BAR, 16

Jerusalem

Tomer: Classical & Jazz Piano, Nitzan: Jazz, Guitar

### What was the process that led you to playing and how did you begin?

*Tomer:* Our father Atcha Bar is a musician and the founder and director of the jazz club Yellow Submarine in Jerusalem. So I was exposed to a lot of music through him. Our mother Sharona Cohen Bar is an actress, so the performing arts have always filled our home. As for myself, I composed music with the pots in the kitchen when I was very young, but my formal training started with the piano around 9.

*Nitzan:* Our father worked with some of the greatest Israeli performers such as Gali Atari, Miki Gavrielov and more.

### Talk about your professional relationship with your father.

*Tomer:* Since I was young and wanted to write music and produce it, my father has helped me considerably, which makes our relationship very special, because we created a different kind of friendship. As an experienced person who believed in me as a musician, he invested himself in my work, and that is totally separate from our being father and son.

### How did you come across AICF and why did you audition?

*Tomer:* I first auditioned in 2008. Once there is an AICF audition planned, with its requirements, you are driven to practice and excel at certain pieces, and the process takes you on a journey.

*Nitzan:* The jazz auditions are like a big hangout of all the serious jazz players from around Israel, so you always see familiar faces. There's a good vibe, knowing that everyone is doing it. People don't do it only for the scholarship. It's also an amazing exposure to important people in the field, a great opportunity to present yourself to people you want to know and introduce your music.

### Tomer, tell me about your composition:

I recorded an album of songs that I wrote when I was 12 with the Ozen Ha'Shminit record label. Through my dad, I got to connect to a very talented bassist and drummer. The project got positive feedback, and I recorded three more albums.

### How do you feel about being an Israeli artist?

*Tomer:* I think the scene is just amazing here because our history created this unusual fusion. I'm very influenced by it. The texture of my Israeli identity is inseparable from my musicianship.

*Nitzan:* I am happy that it appears in my resume. I don't expect it to influence what people feel or think about me. When I say I'm a guitarist from Israel, people usually say, "Wow, all the good musicians come from Israel!"



MUSIC

Photo credit for Tomer Bar:  
Atcha Bar  
Photo credit for Atcha &  
Nitzan Bar: Tomer Bar



## TOM CHODOROV, 25

THEATER

Tel Aviv

Theater, Acting



Ilan Besor

### Do you feel that being Israeli affects you and your work?

It has to. I do not think I could create what I do here abroad, as theater is part of a cultural context. It's not only the aesthetic value of the piece; by producing it, you have the power to make a real change in your society, to change minds and hearts.

### You've recently participated in an event with AICF in Israel, hosting the Jewish Federations of North America. How was the experience?

I was honored to be part of it. They came when the recent war was at its peak. I was very happy to meet them and for them to be able to meet and get to know young Israeli artists.

**We have an exceptionally powerful resource of artistic talent here, which is an aspect of Israel that is not always known to people, and being able to communicate and show that aspect benefits everyone.**

# GIVING BACK: VIOLINIST AND HUMANITARIAN MIRI BEN-ARI

**When did you start playing and why?** My parents gave me a violin at the age of five and I liked it. They wanted to give me a music education, the ability to play and enjoy classical music.

**Are there any artists or musicians in your family?** My brother, Ohad Ben-Ari, is a concert pianist, producer, and a composer. He lives in Berlin and is one of the best musicians I've ever worked with.

**When did you realize it was getting serious, that you wanted to focus on the violin professionally? What triggered it?** As a child, I was very serious about classical music, I used to practice many hours a day and perform at many concerts. At the age of 17, I fell in love with the music of Charlie Parker and moved to New York to play and study jazz music. I also suffered from chronic fatigue syndrome, a condition of profound fatigue and severe muscle pain. Because of my illness, I was able to take a break from the life that I used to have as a classical musician and start off with a clean slate. I had to start over from scratch and learn how to improvise, produce, and compose my own music.

**What do you remember from your first encounters with AICF and the period leading up to your auditions at the time?** I remember the pressure I had to go through as a child every year, knowing that my music studies were dependent on how well I played at the audition. It was a tough situation but also a great way to learn discipline and appreciate my studies by understanding that I can achieve things in my life if I work hard.

**Why do you think it's important to offer support, particularly to young artists?** When you support young artists you invest in future generations and in the future of art. You are also giving someone a chance that otherwise wouldn't be possible. You can impact and change people's lives!

**Tell us about some of your recent projects.** I produced a new show dedicated to balance and sustainability, as I

am getting ready to headline the 14th World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates in honor of Nelson Mandela. I am collaborating with Kweku Mandela on a new video campaign with my nonprofit organization GedenkMovement.org for my new song "Freedom" featuring Nelson Mandela. I am finishing up my new album to be released in 2015.

**What do you think makes a musician inspiring to others, and particularly to other musicians?** I personally get inspired by art that delivers a powerful message. Stay true to who you are as a person and as an artist and don't be afraid to be yourself.

**What is the achievement you are most proud of in your career and other activities?** Probably somewhere between winning a Grammy with Kanye West, being a UN Goodwill Ambassador of Music and performing at the White House. There is a part of me that still does not believe some of my career achievements and moments.

**You are recognized as a music pioneer, creating a revolutionary fusion of classical, soul, and dance music. How did you develop your personal taste and style?** I have used the technique and knowledge that I've acquired by studying classical and jazz music and taken it to a different place.

**Tell us about your experience of working as an Israeli artist abroad and how you feel it affects you.** I am proud to be an Israeli. Being Jewish and Israeli is who I am and I always try to represent that the best way I know how.

**What drew you to dedicate time and effort to humanitarian work and to give back to the community in the many ways you do?** As an artist I carry the responsibility to use my artistic platform to promote positive and powerful messages. There is nothing like giving back. It is inspiring and drives me to become a better person.

*Since 1939 we have given over \$145 million towards 17,000 individual scholarships and to more than 600 Israeli institutions. The support and generosity of thousands around the world will help us reach new milestones and give AICF artists the opportunities they need to succeed.*



## EMPOWERING: ALLOWING US TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR DIFFERENCES AND CELEBRATE OUR SIMILARITIES



Yamaguchi Atzushi

### BAR AVNI, 25

Austria / Kfar Saba

Classical Music, Conducting

**Women conductors are still quite rare. How do you feel about that?** Once you are in this world, you learn it's not as rare as it seems, especially at the Academy. That said, since things are not equal yet, musicians are often still surprised to have a female conductor.

I dreamed about conducting before even fully knowing what it meant. At that time, although I was young, the education system I was enrolled in was extremely encouraging. Now that I'm beginning my Master's Degree at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz, I have the confidence in myself to succeed.

#### How did you hear about the AICF auditions?

It is an important part of one's development as an artist in Israel. There are tons of opportunities for competitions and examinations, but AICF's is the most distinguished. It is unlike any other in its prestige and the enrichment opportunities it creates for artists.

**What advice would you give your younger self if you could go back and whisper in her ear?** Don't try to prove yourself. Just show up and everything will be all right.

### NOA GABAY, 17

Ra'anana

Classical Music, Harp

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Haim Kinchi

**Where are you from?** I was born in Israel. At age two, we moved to Wales, U.K. because of my father's career. We moved back to Israel only a year and a half ago. I love living in Israel!

**How was the transition back to Israel?** The U.K. is different in every sense, and in the first months, music was my anchor. I fell in love with the openness and warmth of the people in Israel and found my social circle very quickly. I have no doubt that I belong and that this is my home.

Every week, I take my harp and play as a volunteer in hospitals, rehabilitation centers for IDF veterans, and at organizations for Holocaust survivors.

**Do you have an idea of what you'll be doing in the army?** In a few months I'll audition for the IDF Musicians of Excellence program.

**How do you feel about being an Israeli musician?** I always have a sense of pride when I compete in international competitions. I am proud to represent Israel and to show that Israel also has a large cultural scene.

**Where did the passion for music come from?** When I was five, like most little girls, I had a dream of becoming a ballerina. My mother took me to see the *Swan Lake* ballet. But instead of watching the dancers, I spent the whole show looking at the orchestra. It was the first time that I saw the harp. It was gold and beautiful and I was struck by its stunning sound. I immediately began studying the harp. Slowly it became an inseparable part of my life.

## NOUR DARWISH, 21

Iksal, Northern Israel  
Classical Music, Opera, Soprano

**What kind of music do you like to sing?** Mainly classical, but I also enjoy singing and performing Arab and Mizrahi music.

**How do you see yourself in the future, your dreams?** As I've learned, unexpected things happen. I have only been singing for five years.

**Which musicians inspire you today?** Sharon Rostorf-Zamir, my teacher. I'm very inspired by her singing. When I started studying with her, I was amazed to see that she was able to address any technical difficulty I had by using her technique, and it immediately helped me. All of a sudden, my voice reached a whole other level, and I felt that I was beginning to be able to express myself through the music with freedom and ease.



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**Why do you feel music is important in society and specifically in Israel?** With everything happening around us in Israel, music can provide a moment of pure beauty. When you listen to music, you leave everything else behind and give it your undivided attention. Everybody understands the language of music and feels what it expresses. In Israel, because of our difficulties, we need it now more than ever.



Natascha Gallitzine

## TALIA HORVITZ, 21

New York/Nir Am, Southern Israel  
Classical Music, Upright Bass

**You just came back from the Middlebury Music Program. How was it?** It was wonderful. I participated in their new program, in partnership with AICF, this past summer.

**Were the students curious about your life?** I am from Kibbutz Nir Am, located very close to Gaza. There were always a lot of questions about that.

**How was growing up around there?** Tough! I remember us dealing with Qassam rockets since when I was about 6 years old. Sadly, in time, it became a routine. That's just how we lived life. It made me mature quickly. Music is also an extension of it.

**How do you feel about being an Israeli artist living abroad?** There is a pride amongst Israeli musicians in New York. We are always very excited to meet each other. There are so many amazing Israeli musicians who contribute to the music community here, which is incredible, when you think about our comparative size.

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*Our goal: to cultivate top Israeli artists by funding them from as early as six years old. Our recipients serve as Israel's cultural ambassadors around the world, representing the finest talent Israel has to offer.*

## CREATING A GLOBAL VILLAGE: WHAT ISRAELI ARTISTS DO FOR THE WORLD THROUGH COLLABORATION ACROSS BOUNDARIES



Halil Balabin

### HALIL BALABIN, 27

Jerusalem/Kibbutz Tzova  
Visual Art, Sculptor

FINE ART

**Where do you work?** I have a studio in the house, where my girlfriend and I sew puppets, showcase and sell them. In December we have an exhibition opening at Beit Ha'Omanim, Tel Aviv.

**Why did you go study at Bezalel?** In one of my visits to Jerusalem, I noticed a sign about an open day at the Bezalel School of Art and Design, and I decided to check it out. Ido Bar-El, who was the head of the Art Department at the time, talked about art in a truly romantic and magical way, and at that moment it became clear to me to apply.

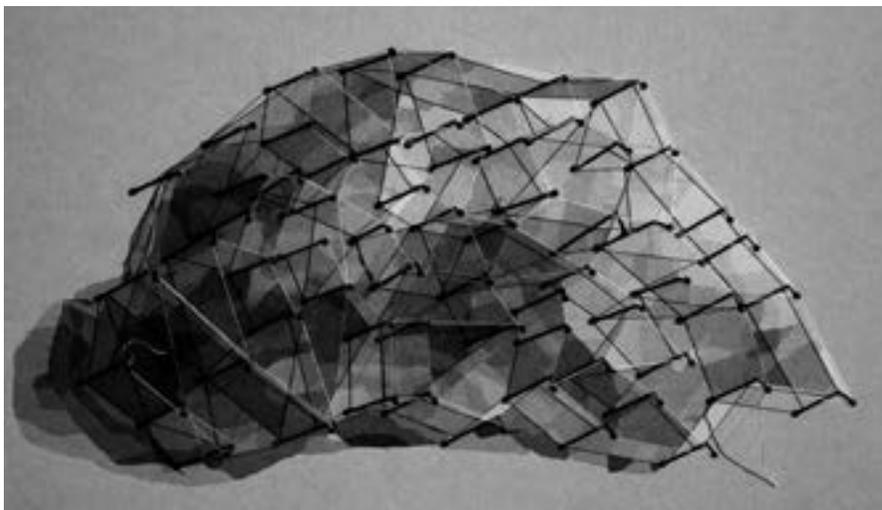
I believe that the generous scholarship that I received from AICF will help me to keep investing in my art and will strengthen my motivation.

**My need to create is primal, just as a starving man craves food. I'm always hungry for the next thing, the next piece through which I'll attempt to express myself.**

## HADAR SAIFAN, 29

Kibbutz Dafna, Northern Israel

Visual Art, Multidisciplinary Artist



Hadar Saifan

**When did you start making art and why?** Growing up near the Lebanon border, that area shaped my personality. As a result of security issues in that location, I have experienced some intense emotions. I still live with it today, the sense of the temporary nature of things, the importance of the strength of a community, and the ability to understand what really matters.

**How was the experience of presenting your art before AICF judges?** The interview took place after the judges had evaluated and examined my works, so we could have an in-depth talk about it. It was a good experience, very pleasant and encouraging, and I could feel that they truly cared about it.

**How will you use the AICF scholarship?** I have a solo

exhibition coming up, and I'll use the funds to produce and build it.

**Thinking about the future, what do you imagine yourself doing ideally? And where and with whom?** I'm currently a member of an Arab-Jewish group of female artists, and we're preparing to create an exhibition in Haifa. We look to discuss the freedom of speech.

**How do you feel being an Israeli artist affects your work, if at all?** The Israeli intensity is part of me and drives my need to comment on my surroundings with my art. It comes from my need to say something about the place I'm from.

## MIKA HAZAN BLOOM, 26

Tel Aviv

Visual Art, Multidisciplinary Artist



Mika Hazan Bloom

**How did you start creating art?** I don't recall when I started creating, because it had never had a definition. It was just something that I did, until I started studying Art in high school, and suddenly the things I had been absorbed with all of my life got a name — Art.

**When did you realize it was getting serious, that you wanted to focus on art professionally?** When I turned 23, I left the fashion department after having studied there for 3 years, and I transitioned to art. That was a moment in my life where it became crystal clear that this was the direction for me.

**How was the experience of the AICF examinations and interview for you?** While I was waiting outside, I could hear that the judges played my video twice. That made me very appreciative; even though I hadn't met them yet, I knew that the people inside that room honestly cared and dedicated their full attention to the works they reviewed. They expressed great interest in my works as well as in my future plans and where I'm heading as an artist.

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



Avner Moriah

We all derive comfort and solidarity from art and culture. Despite their many differences, artists from all over the world continue to collaborate with Israelis to create works of beauty in which we can all rejoice. AICF has spent the last 75 years nurturing Israel's soul and helping children work towards careers in the arts. Today, as we reflect back on thousands of dreams fulfilled, we are enormously proud of all of our alumni and excited about continuing to shape Israel's arts landscape for many years to come.

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