"The Herd" by famed Israeli artist Menashe Kadishman (1932-2015), in memoriam.
Dear Friends:

This year I moved to Chairman of AICF, creating room for the next generation of leadership. Welcome to our new President, Joe Hollander! Our Board is expanding. Our members are excited to support the upcoming generation of Israeli artists.

This year AICF lost one of its most valued and cherished leaders, Vera Stern. For over 40 years Vera devoted her life to AICF. Because of her leadership and generosity thousands of artists are able to represent Israel to the world.

To our artists – all of the 18,000+ we have supported – we encourage you to help support AICF. Join with our donors and partners to sustain Israeli culture.

Major donors – don’t fail us. We need you now. Would a little more hurt? AICF belongs to all of us. Let’s take care of it.

Thank you,

William A. Schwartz
Chairman of the Board

JOIN US IN FUNDING EXCELLENCE
BY HELPING US REACH $1 MILLION
IN ADDITIONAL GIVING TO SUPPORT
SCHOLARSHIPS AND PROGRAMMING.
www.aicf.org/donate
Boaz Vaadia Sculpture Scholarship
Established in 2014 to ensure that a deserving young Israeli sculptor will receive support to pursue his/her career.

Boaz Vaadia
Sculptor

Wolfgang Laufer Memorial Cello Scholarship
Established in 2012 after Wolfi’s passing by his wife Marianna and friends to continue his legacy and support one of AICF’s top young cellists each year.

Wolfgang Laufer
Cellist

ANAT EVEN-OR
Artist
“By supporting me as an artist, AICF made me feel that someone believes in me, my dreams, and my work. By giving back, I hope to ensure that other young Israeli artists will get the same financial and emotional support I did. They need it and deserve it.”

INBAL SEGEV
Cellist
“My husband and I are fortunate to be able to give back to the America-Israel Cultural Foundation. As a child, growing up in a low-income single parent family, the yearly stipend from AICF was an enormous help, and the yearly auditions a great motivation. Thank you AICF!”

GENERATIONS GIVING BACK
CITIZENS OF ISRAEL TAKING THE GLOBAL STAGE

SHARON AZRIELI PEREZ / SOPRANO

Where did your passion for music and singing come from?
We always had music at home. My dad played everything from classical music to Israeli folk music to the Beatles, and my mum had a pretty voice. So we were always singing. I was always given the solos in the school's choir. I once forgot my lines in a performance and was mortified, but I did not give up and went on to be the school soloist for most concerts.

How did you begin and when did you realize you wanted to focus on music as a career?
When I was around 17 years old I decided it was what I wanted, but my father didn't want me to be a professional singer. As a result, I got a number of degrees, including Graphic Design, and worked many years until I was accepted to The Juilliard School in New York City.

What type of music are you most passionate about today? Who are some of the Israeli composers that inspire you?
I am most passionate about the songs of 1948 and Esther Ofarim, because they are the background of my childhood. There is optimism there and a love of Israel that is very pure.

What do you think makes a musician excellent and distinguishes them from the rest?
I think the saying is true that a great musician practices 10,000 hours before they become a master. However, it has to be done a certain way—those hours have to be spent in useful, focused, and correct practice.

As someone who puts an emphasis on the importance of investing in education, how do you feel about arts and culture and how do you see its place in our education systems?
Of course I lament that it is not given its due and that our children are not taught music. Music should be taught as if it was as basic as math and English. It is that important and necessary.

What do you believe an artist needs to be able to develop and fulfill their potential? Love, emotional support, clean air, and enough money that they can focus on learning the roles they need. Each minute of music—for a role in opera, for example—can take 10 hours to learn! So you need patience with yourself and a calm environment.

As a performer known for maintaining your close relationship to your Jewish roots, and for performing world premieres for such distinguished composers as Ofer Ben-Amots and Tzvi Avni, what do you feel about the power and presence of Israeli and Jewish culture in and outside of Israel?
I think it is important to bring Jewish music and to perform it to the world. This is why I have created the Azrieli Music Prize. I am very proud that we will be creating two new works of Jewish music. The full information can be found on the Azrieli Foundation's website.

“Artists need love, emotional support, clean air, and enough money that they can focus on learning the roles they need.”

As an opera singer, what drew you to shift to Cantorial and spiritual works in the past, and how do you balance those two passions today?
It was necessary. I had undergone a very bad divorce and had two young babies. I could not accept opera jobs that required me to travel for six weeks at a time and leave my babies or even schlep them with me. I had to figure out how to support us—and my background in a Hebrew / religious elementary and high school was a natural segue to singing as a cantorial soloist. My first job was for the rabbi who had been the head of Hebrew Union College! After that, I went to the Academy of Jewish Religion and I loved the job of being a Cantor.
You’ve had numerous collaborations with the finest Israeli musicians and institutions such as Isaac Stern, Daniel Barenboim, and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. How were those experiences for you?
With Isaac Stern I only collaborated once: at the Verbier Festival, when Stern, Natalia Gutman, and I prepared and performed a trio program which consisted of Beethoven's Geister-Trio, Brahms' C-Minor Trio, and Mendelssohn's D-Minor Trio. Being the eldest and the most experienced one among the three of us, Mr. Stern was the leading force in our group. His ideas were always right to the point, totally convincing, and truly inspiring.

With Daniel Barenboim I have collaborated on several occasions, and those were all experiences of a very high musical level. Besides, in addition to being a wonderful musician in general, Mr. Barenboim is also a great pianist himself, which makes him a superb accompanist for pianists when he is leading the orchestra in piano concertos.

As for the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra with whom I have happily collaborated on various occasions... Well, those were certainly special and even unique experiences. I have worked with such conductors as Herbert von Karajan and Evgeny Svetlanov, to whom orchestra musicians wouldn't dare to say a word during rehearsals. By way of comparison, I'll never forget when during one of my rehearsals with the Israel Philharmonic something went wrong—and the concertmaster of one of the string groups said to Maestro Zubin Mehta: “We were with you! You slowed down—we slowed down!” Well... this shows that the State of Israel will definitely never become a dictatorship: that's not the system for our people!

Among your outstanding achievements, including two Grammy awards and two honorary doctorates, what would you say if you could speak to your younger self, when you were just starting out?
Nothing—because I wouldn’t have listened anyway.

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REVITAL NARODITSKI / DANCER

How did you begin to dance and why? How old were you?
I started dancing when my neighbor who was a ballet teacher invited me to his school. I was seven. I did not want to dance initially, but I ended up going. I have been studying ballet since then and modern dance since age 14.

You started studying karate with your father when you were four. How is it to be a karate champion, and do you feel it enriches or influences your dancing or vice versa?
I started at such a young age because there was no one to stay home with me. I did not imagine I would do this seriously. When I was six, my dad enrolled me in a competition and I won 2nd place. Karate gave me good coordination and better flexibility, and it developed my ability to remember series of combinations.

How did you use the scholarship you received?
The scholarship enabled me to invest in my ballet training and prepare myself for a U.S. competition, to buy dance and performance clothes, take lessons, and purchase my flight to the U.S. I won several scholarships at the competition, one of them for the Houston Ballet where I studied for a year.

What do you need as an artist today, to be able to continue working and growing? Now I need to study and stay focused on what I am doing, and to find the way to succeed.

Why do you think it is important to invest in art and culture in the world, and particularly in Israel?
It is very important to nurture the arts in Israel, as there are many talented people who need support. We need to show how developed Israeli culture is, and to motivate children to want to go into the arts. Art is a beautiful thing that I believe is very important for people to experience.

Do you feel that being Israeli influences your creativity?
The dance I choreographed, for example, relates to being a proud Jew, and I never forget the past of the Jewish people.

“It is very important to nurture the arts in Israel, as there are many talented people who need support”
The Israeli Artist Network gives artists the opportunity to expose their work easily and quickly to broad audiences worldwide, and it provides art lovers with easy access to the richness and diversity of Israeli culture today.

- David Homan, Executive Director, AICF
AICF Artists have become internationally respected Architects, Animators, Graphic/Ceramic/Plastic/Metal/Industrial/Fashion/Textile/Stage Designers, Multimedia Artists, Painters, Sculptors, Photographers, Ballet & Modern Dancers, Choreographers, Actors, Film & Theatre Directors, Editors, Writers, Arab Music Specialists, Performers of Early Music, Jazz & World Musicians, Singers, Flutists, Recorder Players, Clarinetists, Oboists, Bassoonists, French Hornists, Saxophonists, Trumpeters, Trombonists, Tubaists, Violinists, Violists, Cellists, Double Bassists, Pianists, Guitarists, Mandolinists, Lutists, Percussionists, Composers, Conductors, Instrument Makers, and Educators in all disciplines.
Dear Friends,

It's been a challenging year for those invested in Israel. Yet in spite of global turmoil, AICF celebrates 76 years of excellence. The America-Israel Cultural Foundation is a paramount resource for Israeli artists, both in Israel and worldwide. The enduring legacy of a people is its overall contribution to the world. No question, this is where Israel excels – in science, technology, and yes, the arts!

In 2015 AICF will make grants for artistic excellence to over 450 recipients, encompassing the fields of Music, Fine Arts, Theatre, and Dance. The number of recipients represents those that were singled out for excellence out of many hundreds of applicants. Our recipients and alumni perform all over the world and express Tikkun Olam in the world's most universally shared modes of communication.

We thank all our supporters and ask you to continue investing in the maturation of Israel's cultural landscape. This is truly something about which all k'lal Yisrael can kvell.

B'shalom,

Joseph E. Hollander
President, AICF