

AICF 80th Anniversary Newsletter

Creative Excellence, Global Impact



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On the cover: artwork by Ghiora Aharoni
The Immanent Transcendental, 2017
Artwork information on page 29
Interviews conducted by Galia Barkol

As we ring in AICF's remarkable 80th anniversary and reflect on its leadership role in transforming the cultural landscape of Israel, we are pleased to thank our dedicated friends and supporters for all they have helped make possible. Your generosity over the years has enabled us to provide over 18,000 Israeli artists in the performing, visual, design, television and cinematic arts with vital support to become ambassadors who promote Israel's cultural richness and diversity around the world.

Our vision, to build a stronger Israel by supporting its greatest cultural voices has never been more timely or important as we look to transcend political borders and foster multicultural dialogue and collaboration. It is an honor to build on our illustrious history and the remarkable legacy of Vera and Isaac Stern by innovating to find new ways of nurturing Israel's creative visionaries of the future.

As we strive to respond to Israel's needs and the changing times, we have taken steps to empower more artists in the periphery than ever before--providing critical support to 125 of our 500 recipients this year.

We are excited to introduce our new Interim Global Executive Director, Iris Reff-Ronen, who will lead the organization in its next exciting chapter and continue to build our global reach. She is an advocate for building positive change in the Israeli cultural sector and brings extensive experience as a corporate and nonprofit leader.

Thank you for being a part of AICF and for joining us in supporting our vital mission to nurture Israel's greatest artists and to share their inspiration with you and around the globe.



Joshua-Marc Tanenbaum
PRESIDENT
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*Chapter President

**AICF Israel

Pinchas Zukerman

Received AICF grants: 1957–1967

At what stage of your career did you receive support from AICF, and how did it help you? From 13–16 years old when I needed the most support and recognition, AICF was there for me. I remember being discovered by Isaac and Vera Stern who eventually brought me to New York City to study at the Juilliard School. The support AICF provided was not merely financial help for my family, but more importantly it was an opportunity for my education.

How do you identify talent and potential in young musicians and in your students? First of all, you have to love the music itself. You have to be connected to it naturally, you have to have eye–hand coordination, and a good ear. Then, to accommodate that, you need to find the best training you can possibly afford. Music must be part of your total existence, from the minute you wake up to the minute you go to sleep. Then, hopefully, with a little bit of luck, you can achieve high standards for yourself and continue the tradition of creating music.

Being an Israeli–American musician traveling the world, do you feel that you introduce people to an aspect of Israeli culture and life that they might not be familiar with? Or are there any other interesting responses to your performances in that context?

I think our culture is the best ambassador of Israel. Israeli culture to me is more about education, intelligence, creativity, and the arts. It is a force and it is a power. There is no question that music has the power to bring people together.



“When I needed the most support and recognition, AICF was there for me.”



Ohad Naharin

Received AICF grants: 1975–1977

What are some of the conditions that allow artists to grow? One of the most meaningful things I offer people is a safety net that allows them to fall and take risks, knowing that they will not hurt themselves or others. Then, they can find a true range of expression and break through their own barriers.

How do you think dance should be taught, and what are your thoughts about how it's done today?

A lot of dance teaching approaches are more about form than about listening to the body and to its range of sensations. There is also a very competitive, achievement-oriented approach that can lead people to frustration and lack of flow in their body. I started my formal training late, and my body had not acquired methodical classical training up till that point. I was very open, and I think that part of it was because of this late introduction to formal dance training. I think that if one can get good, supportive training, and have a good teacher early on, that is wonderful and important.

Ambition is definitely a major force. When ambition is the driving force – to win, to be 'better than', to prove something – it can take over one's creativity, and I think it's not the right type of impetus to focus on. I also feel the power of ambition, but I do not let it take over.

When a dancer learns to be motivated by their curiosity, discovery, the joy of dancing, and the pleasure in physical sensations, then their range of expression changes extensively.

How can this kind of change be initiated?

This tension can be released, sometimes easily, if the person is talented, loves dancing and is just looking for the opportunity for someone to help them unlock it and find their way out.

Rather than releasing or letting go of something that we do not need, I invite people to focus on other things that we do want, in the moment. These can be indulging in a stretch, paying attention to the complexity and subtlety of a particular sound, or the delicate touch they can feel at the tip of their fingers, and how it can be an extension of what they feel in their heart.

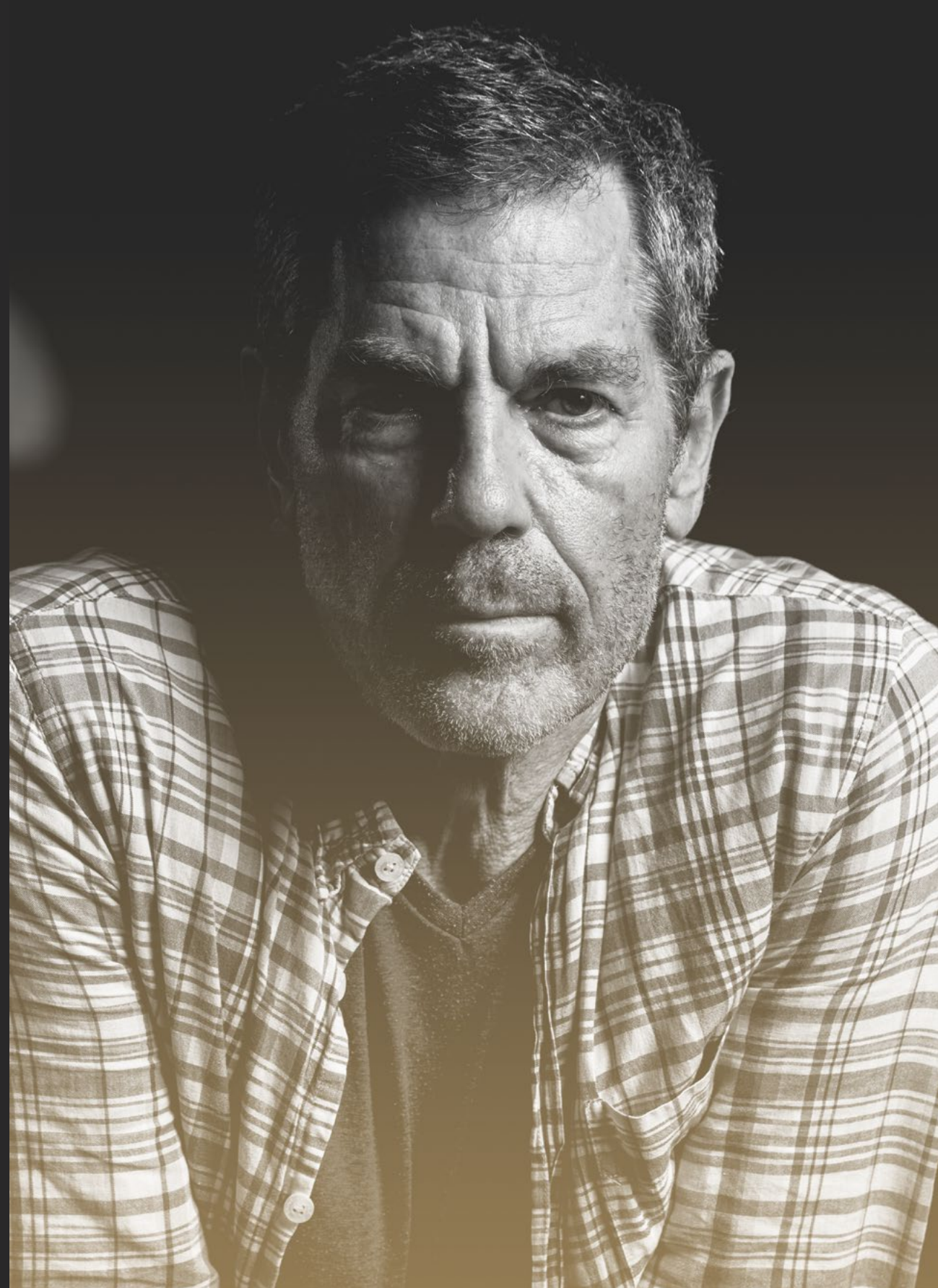
What impact did AICF's support have when you

received your grant for studying at the Juilliard School? I received a grant at a very pivotal moment in my career and life. It enabled me to do something that I wouldn't have had the ability to do otherwise, to focus on my dance training and choose the path that I really wanted. It made it possible for me to take time out to study and



"I received a grant at a very pivotal moment in my career and life. It enabled me to do something that I wouldn't have had the ability to do otherwise – to focus on my dance training and choose the path that I really wanted."

Photo by: Ilya Melnikov





reset, and that time was very important and influential on my career.

I initially moved to New York to dance for Martha Graham. When I decided to leave her company, I had to figure out what to do next. I received the AICF grant around that time, when I was very confused about my relationship with dance. The fact that I was able to go to Juilliard and to feel that I had the financial support to do so, was incredibly meaningful.

How do you explain the major impact that your movement language Gaga has throughout the world, both within populations of dancers and non-dancers? What collective need do you think it answers? Dancing is not about the relationship between the artist and the audience. The audience is part of how things work in the performing arts, but you don't need an audience to do it. To dance, all you need is yourself, time and space. That is something we all have around the world, whether we are young, old, disabled, performing, etc.

We all have a body, we all have areas of atrophy in our body, and we all experience the immense force of gravity. There is so much we all have in common. We can find a way to strengthen, improve, enjoy, and heal our bodies, our well-being, our moods, our connection with people, the world, and ourselves.

After so many projects and such a rich body of work, what keeps you interested in creating? The discovery of things that I could not have imagined are revealed to me through the process of exploration with other people. As a choreographer, I have the privilege of not having to verbalize things. I do not have to articulate

the meaning of the piece to the dancers or to the audience, and I do not need to explain why I do what I do. I just do it through music, movement, volume, texture, organization, chaos, and so forth.

What are you working on now? A new piece. Right now, I am working on the music, which also prepares me for the work itself. It's a site-specific piece, to be performed at Studio Varda in Suzanne Dellal.

AICF has supported Batsheva Dance Company, most recently by awarding grants to outstanding young dancers at Batsheva's and Suzanne Dellal Center's new school of dance.

Yael Taragan

Received grants: 2003–2005

What sparked your interest in fashion? Are there artists and designers in your family? There are no designers and artists in my nuclear family. However, the love and appreciation of art was present in every corner. For example, classical music is my dad's great passion, and my mom dedicated her life to art history research. Since my dad lived and studied in Milano, Italy for a few years before he came to Israel, he brought with him an exceptional sensibility and respect for aesthetics. I have always paid special attention to the material culture around me, and especially to clothes. There was a notion at home that a piece of clothing should be made of quality materials that are durable, and that it has to be 'a classic' in the sense that it would be used for many years. We tend to think about it as a new trend, but it's actually a very traditional approach.

You have done a lot of different things in the field of fashion, including working for the Design Museum Holon, being the chair of the fashion committee for the Academy of the Hebrew Language, working with the Ministry of Education as a fashion design matriculation examiner, you designed for and were the artistic director of the fashion brand Comme Il Faut, and you've written about fashion extensively.

Of all those experiences in the fashion world, what kind of work inspires you the most? I get inspired in the process of working. When I feel that there is true, deep, and authentic meaning to what I do. It might sound grandiose or even banal, but in practice it can be about very specific, even random, moments. When I write a text that articulates something that has been difficult to put into words accurately, it is incredibly

exciting. Or, when I am able to help a student find a new path of exploration in a moment of struggle with their project, it's satisfying and reminds me of why I do what I do.

Unfortunately, there is quite a lot of deception, marketing-focused talk, and aggressive financial motives operating behind the scenes in the fashion industry. It is also faced with major challenges

including the exploitation of workers in third world countries and the need to create sustainable manufacturing practices that reduce pollution. I am most fulfilled and inspired when I feel that my work truly makes some difference and that it doesn't just align with these existing standards.

☰

"I am most fulfilled and inspired when I feel that my work truly makes some difference and that it doesn't just align with existing standards."



AICF Impact

America-Israel Cultural Foundation (AICF) has nurtured and promoted Israeli culture and artistic life over the past eight decades. AICF is the leading non-profit organization in Israel, which supports outstanding young Israeli artists through grants, competitions, enrichment programs and more in the fields of music, dance, visual arts, theater and design. By encouraging and enabling creative excellence in Israeli youth from all backgrounds, AICF connects Israel to the rest of the world through the arts. Due to its early support of nearly all of Israel's major institutions and its reputation for nourishing the finest artists, the name AICF has become synonymous with culture in Israel and abroad.

As AICF enters into its 80th year, the impact of its efforts is remarkable:

- 18,000 musicians, actors, dancers, choreographers, and visual artists have benefited from AICF's financial support through grants and awards.
- AICF alumni serve as ambassadors for Israel as they live and work around the world in nearly every top symphonic, operatic, and theatrical stage, ballet and modern dance company, museum and gallery.

Creative Excellence Grant Program

The organization's principal vehicle for support is awarding grants to young artists, musicians, dancers, actors and designers through annual auditions. Distinguished panels of judges in each field conduct a vigorous audition process that enables AICF to identify and support the next generation of excellence in Israeli arts and culture. The success of this grant program is evident: over the course of eight decades, the list of distinguished alumni who benefited from AICF support when they were most in need includes Itzhak Perlman, Daniel Barenboim and Miriam Fried in music; Michal Rovner and Menashe Kadishman in fine arts; Ohad Naharin and Sharon Eyal in dance; and so many more.

Opportunity: Support an excelling artist (\$2,500 gift)

Abroad Scholarships

AICF awards significant grants to top-tier Israeli artists, helping them to build international careers and gain exposure. The artists function as cultural ambassadors who both maintain a strong relationship with the Israeli arts scene and promote Israel around the world.

Opportunities: Support a top-tier artist to study abroad (\$2,500 – \$10,000 gift)

The Aviv Competitions

AICF's Aviv Competitions are the most prestigious competitions for young Israeli classical musicians. The competitions give musicians a platform to perform for audiences and professional critics, giving them important exposure to the community and media. Cash prizes are awarded to the winners in various musical instruments. The competitions serve as a springboard for musicians to build their

reputation and gain recognition in the field of classical music in Israel and around the world. Held since 1999, the competitions take place every two years in cooperation with the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and the Ministry of Culture and Sport's Department of Music.

Opportunities: Donate a Prize (\$6,000 gift), Underwrite the Aviv Competitions Final concert (\$25,000 gift)

Enrichment Programs

Aimed at giving AICF recipients a broader skill set to improve expertise that is essential for their professional development. Program offerings include seminars and workshops that focus on stage presence, managing stage fright, financial education, marketing & networking, art entrepreneurship and more.

Opportunity: Support one enrichment workshop (\$1,500 gift)

Restoration of String Instrument Collection & Lending Program

Throughout its eight decades, AICF has acquired an impressive collection of 80 string instruments. AICF lends the instruments to outstanding musicians in need, giving them the opportunity to practice, perform, and audition on high-quality instruments – a critical component to artistic development and the start of a career in music.

AICF strives to restore many magnificent instruments to be able to lend to excelling musicians.

Opportunities: "Adopt an Instrument" – restoration of a String Instrument (\$3,000 – \$10,000 gift)

AICF Community

An alumni forum of AICF recipients, a network of influencers of artistic and cultural life in Israel. This group works closely together to cultivate the next generation and to promote vital cultural initiatives.

Opportunity: Support the community (\$5,000 gift)

Israeli Artists Network

AICF's web-based Israeli Artist Network (IAN) has become the go-to resource and cultural database for Israeli artists and consumers of Israeli art. The Network includes an interactive calendar that highlights Israeli artists' events around the world. This provides a way for audiences to find Israeli cultural events by location, and it enables Israeli artists to build their online presence and connect with various communities. Over 1,700 artists are active on the platform, which receives more than 300,000 views annually.

Opportunity: Support the network (\$5,000 gift)



1957, Prime Minister Golda Meir received a financial prize from the Jewish Congress as the woman who contributed the most for the Jewish people. In the picture: Meir is declaring that she will donate the funds for AICF scholarships

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON

Dear Mr. Stern:

I am delighted to send you my greetings on the occasion of the Annual Dinner-Concert of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation, and to congratulate you on your designation of Jacques Lipchitz, Hanna Rovina and Igor Stravinsky as your guests of honor. These three have enriched all of us with their extraordinary talent, and all that they have given of themselves is testimony to their love of humanity.

I wish also to congratulate the Foundation on its 25th anniversary, and to commend it for serving as trustees of the culture of a people who have given the world its law, religion and humanism.

As guardian of Israel's cultural life for a quarter of a century, the Foundation has encouraged new generations of artists, promoted cultural exchange programs with the United States, and aided Israel's cultural institutions. By so doing, the Foundation is making a significant contribution towards the strengthening of democracy and to the betterment of people's lives everywhere.



REHEARSING Paula Kelly, James H. Mitchell



Jason Robards, Anna Sokolow, Coleridge Perkinson



CHECKING COSTUMES

Patricia Zipprodt, Boris Aronson, Jerome Robbins, Anna Sokolow

A letter from the President of the United States Lyndon B. Johnson addressed to Isaac Stern.



1988, Isaac Stern and Prime Minister Golda Meir



1977, Prime minister Golda Meir and Zubin Mehta in IPO concert



Injured soldiers from the Kippur war applauding to a performance by AICF artists.



1986, Young Artists week



1977



1956, Itzhak Perlman receives AICF scholarship



1981

Orna Fitousi

Received grants: 1992-1994

When did you first get interested in acting?

I have been drawn to acting for as long as I can remember. We did not have enough access to television at the time that I could have gotten the idea from, I was just born wanting to act. My dad had interacted with actors as part of his work, and as a result of seeing how difficult it was to support oneself and maintain the lifestyle, he really did not want me to go into this business. When I got into the prestigious Nissan Nativ Acting Studio, he refused to speak with me for three months. The grants I received from AICF saved me, and made it possible for me to pay my tuition to study my craft.

How did the audition for AICF go? At the time, the only grant competitions available for Nissan Nativ students were through AICF. This was my only hope and I knew I had to get it, I felt I would get it, and in turn I received grants two years in a row. When I was nine, I used to interview myself and ask what it felt like to be famous. In the interview, I responded that when I was nine, I imagined being asked that question. Years later once I became well known, I would share this story and reflect on ways our thoughts help shape our realities.

What do you like about acting? I have always felt very comfortable slipping into different characters, which I think has to do with being naturally empathetic. I was a quiet kid, so I took on the role of the observer early on in life. Whether in the streets or at the bus station, I was looking at people, wondering who they were, where they were going, what kind of families they had, etc. This understanding of different people and different worlds made it possible

for me to later become “other people” through acting.

What kind of acting jobs do you enjoy the most?

In the beginning I thought I would be a theater actor, because that is what was happening in Israel at the time. But after my studies, it was difficult for non-Ashkenazi-looking people to get roles. There were not a lot of parts for women with my features. Today we have seen a great deal of improvement in diversity since I started acting. Things are very different, although the problem of stereotypes in casting still exists. I have had the opportunity to play a wide range of roles in my career, but we are still not quite there yet in the industry as a whole.

How do you recognize talent? It is a natural and indescribable instinct. When someone displays authentic acting you have no doubts about their talent.

What would you advise to someone who is now starting out? We live in such a different time and under different conditions than I was when I started out. The possibilities are huge now. You will need a lot of patience and love for this profession. I had incredible success very early, but that does not guarantee anything. You never know if you will stay at your successes or loses. You are always in a new place, figuring things out. There used to only be young people on TV. I am so glad to see the change that is happening – that more “adult” actors (relatively speaking) are getting serious roles on screen. There are more roles for older people, which is new and exciting.

Photo by: Guy Hecht



Lital Goldenberg

28, Qiryat Shemona, from Kibbutz Netiv HaLamed-Heh

Received grants: 2018

How was it growing up in a Kibbutz?

We moved to the Kibbutz with three other families in our extended family. The idea was to create a place called Vertigo Eco Art Village, which combined ecology, dance and education. Our intention was to live a modern creative lifestyle while promoting sustainability and environmental protection.

What prompted you to want to take a course in art? I wanted to find something that was my own. Most of our lives, we perceive ourselves in relation to our family so it is important to find out who we really are beyond them. I asked myself: “What am I most drawn to, and what do I already have some familiarity with?” Jewelry specifically drew my attention.

What makes you impressed by a piece? I like modern pieces; clean lines, angles; and that is what I also naturally find myself doing when I create. I can appreciate the quality of the work now that I have some professional experience and education. I pay attention to interesting designs, to the details that someone put thought into which make it extra special.

How was your interview while auditioning for the AICF grant? I was initially very stressed. I did not know what to expect or who will be there. In addition, talking in front of people does not come easily to me, as I suspect it often is for people who like working with their hands. They were all wonderful and creative people of different areas of the art world. They really went into detail, expressed true interest, and asked me about my technical and non-technical knowledge. It felt more like a conversation than a presentation.

Does living in Israel affect your art and if so, how?

I believe it does since that is what I experience while I create. But we all experience similar things as human beings, so I believe that on a certain level, it's all the same for people around the world.

What gives you motivation to keep going?

I want to love what I do. When I took that course, years ago, I felt happy. I know that life cannot be happy all of the time, but overall, you want to do something that brings you joy.



Renana Bardea

25, Bnei Brak, from Jerusalem

Received grants: 2019

Why theater? I've always wanted to be an actor. I grew up in a religious household, so it was a provocative thing to say that I wanted to be on stage and on screen as an actor, but ultimately I did tell my family.

How does your family respond to you actively pursuing theater today? My mom passed when I was twelve years old and as previously mentioned, I come from a religious family, so they had reservations. I was raised in a feminist religious community that pushed women to pursue their passions. That being said, humility is of course something that is an issue when being an actor. I think they are a little threatened by the profession itself, but they just live in a different world; today they fully support me and want me to succeed. They are happy that I am doing what I want and what I love.

Do you remember how you felt performing in front of an audience for the first time? Very nervous. A combination of adrenaline and euphoria. There is nothing like it.

Are there specific actors that inspire you? Do you know what makes an actor shine in their performance? Actor Liora Rivlin is great, as well as a personal inspiration. She allows herself to be raw in her work. She has this charisma on stage, even when she doesn't speak. She prepares

everything with detail when she works on a role, and that is something I really feel while watching her work.

Does being Israeli affect your work? I think that politics is closely linked with the arts. Religion plays an important role as well. Due to the complexity of life in Israel, we instinctively identify with the challenges in the lives of our characters. As an actor, it provides color and strength that helps us stand apart from actors in other countries.

How do you think art affects society? I got into acting because I wanted to impact people. Today I think that aiming to do that takes away from art, but art has a way of having a say that affects people and their values. Sometimes there is this moment on

stage where you can feel the audience holding their breath. It's an amazing feeling to be able to speak to and touch the audience in this way.

What do you feel you need as an artist today to continue and develop your work? The grant provided by AICF will help to cover my tuition next year and most importantly, allow me to build my career and continue to keep that flame burning.

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"I feel very honored to be part of the Foundation. Winning the grant strengthened my confidence significantly. It's really fun to receive an acknowledgment like this."



Adi Schwarz

16.5, Rakefet, Misgav Regional Council

Received grants: 2018–2019

What is your daily routine? I get up at 5:30 am every morning because it takes about two hours to get to school which is in Haifa. I live in the periphery so I need to take buses and trains to get there.

Your lifestyle sounds very demanding. How do you find the motivation to keep going? When you know your goal and you really love it with all your heart, then even if your body is aching, you'll get up in the morning with a smile, ready to start again. The physical aspect doesn't matter when your soul loves it. When you really love it, your body can't stop you.

What do you think makes a dancer and/or choreographer especially good at their craft? Physical ability is impressive, of course. However, it is the ability to listen and explore that is even more important, including being willing and able to repeat the same movement a thousand times until it is understood deeply. The more I dance, the more I understand the world. It makes me a better person because dance gives me the ability to work with other people, feel their work within the space, and experience a variety of people.

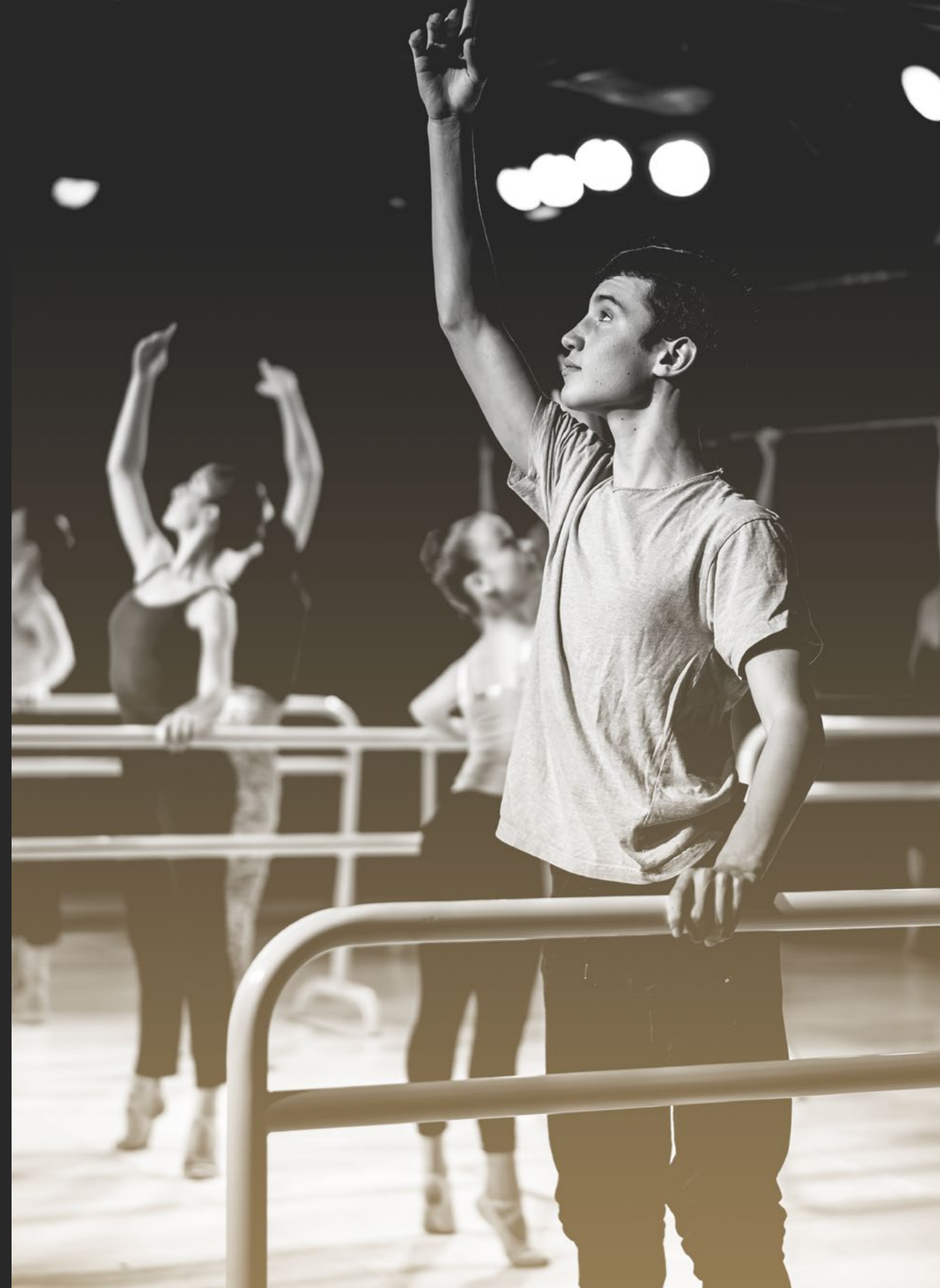
When you get to choreograph as part of your dance school curriculum, how do you work with dancers? I come to rehearsals very open, and I am attentive to dancers' suggestions and limitations. I let their bodies influence my choreography.

How did you hear of AICF and the auditions?

My teachers told some of the people in our class that there was an audition and that we could try. They warned us that chances were slim but said winning a grant would really help us professionally. I remember I screamed so loudly when I found out that I won both ballet and modern dance grants!

Who impresses you in the Israeli dance scene?

Ohad Naharin and Rami Be'er. I went to a performance of Aide Memoire by Be'er by the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company (KCDC). It's not an easy piece to view, especially for a kid, but I remember myself sitting there astounded. I was amazed to see how everyone on stage knew what they were doing even though it looked so improvised. After the performance, I told my mom "This is what I want to be." At that moment, I instantly knew that this was what I wanted to do. It changed everything for me, and in turn how I planned my life.



Noam Benglas

11.5, Ramat Gan

Received grants: 2018–2019

When did you start playing the piano? I started when I was five years old.

Are there any musicians in your family? Only my sister.

Why play music at all? It is fun. Music speaks for itself. We do not do it to get things out of it, but just because it's enjoyable.

How long did you have to work to prepare for your very first concert? A few months. The pieces were very complicated for me when I was younger,

but as you grow older, it gets easier to play certain pieces.

What's your dream? I want to conduct the best symphony orchestras in the world.

How did you think about this direction? I see many conductors. Why not be one? I think it's a lot of fun. I want to try it as well.

What do you need as an artist to keep developing your work? I need willpower, motivation, the joy of doing it, and to believe in myself.



Ghiora Aharoni The Immanent Transcendental, 2017

©2017 Ghiora Aharoni

Assemblage sculpture with laboratory tubes, flasks and beakers (some etched with Hebrew text from Exodus and the medieval scholar Rashi's writings, in-filled with 23-karat gold); antique glass dome; antique Torah scroll finials; bronze, brass and metal objects and icons; and tubular lights on an illuminated steel base.
45" x 70" x 38"

Employing assemblage sculpture and referencing the biblical story of the Golden Calf, *The Immanent Transcendental* combines golden objects, icons and symbols from numerous belief systems and eras with text related to humanity's desire to manifest the divine. While the Golden Calf is traditionally considered the birth of aniconism, *The Immanent Transcendental* considers a parallel perspective inspired by the medieval scholar Rashi's writings: that rather than an act of idolatry the Golden Calf was an expression of the Israelites' desire to connect to the divine. The sculpture's composition becomes a metaphorical expression of humanity's collective desire to exist within a metaphysical/spiritual realm, creating a manifestation that expresses both the immanent and the transcendent divine.

Ghiora Aharoni founded his multi-disciplinary studio in New York in 2004. His artworks are characterized by exploring dualities, such as the intersection of religion and science, or the relationship between nature and architectural

form. Many of his works transform traditional objects or symbols—such as sacred texts or cultural artifacts—in a way that questions their conventional context. A graduate of Yale University, Aharoni's work is in the permanent collection of The Pompidou Center in Paris and The Morgan Library & Museum in New York—as well as private collections in North America, Europe and India—and is exhibited internationally in galleries, institutions and museums. In 2019, his sculptures were exhibited in "Kabbalah: The Art of Jewish Mysticism" at both The Jewish Museum in Vienna and The Jewish Museum in Amsterdam.

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