



הקרן לירושלים
THE JERUSALEM FOUNDATION
مؤسسة صندوق القدس

קונסרבטוריון הסדנה ירושלים
Jerusalem Conservatory Hassadna



From Risk To Opportunity

Bringing the Beauty of Music Education into the Lives of Children of Ethiopian Descent, the At-Risk and Those with Special Needs.

Introduction

History and Vision

The Jerusalem Conservatory Hassadna, established in 1973 by the musician and pianist Amalia Reuel, is guided by the belief that any child, regardless of physical or mental ability, socio-economic level, ethnicity or religious affiliation, should be exposed to, and provided with the opportunity to experience high quality music instruction.

Indeed, equality and integration are fundamental values at the Conservatory. Motivated and dedicated children are provided with equally high standards of individualized arts education, irrespective of background. Significantly, they study and perform together with peers who reflect the full human mosaic of Jerusalem. We offer challenging and well-rounded educational programs while implementing innovative and creative instructional methodologies.

Mission

The Conservatory's mission is to provide each student with an individualized program best maximizing the child's artistic and personal development. We see each child as a world unto themselves; as such, we are fully committed to ensuring that they benefit from the program of study best suited to their unique needs and aspirations. We pride ourselves on our professionalism, personalized approach and genuine concern for the well-being - artistic, social and otherwise - of each and every student. Students are welcomed warmly into our world and encouraged to make it their own.



Our Staff and Student Body

Currently, the Conservatory serves as a second home to some 550 children, aged 3 to 18. Our students represent Jerusalem's full religious, national and economic diversity while our Jewish students reflect the widest possible cross-section of religious observance.

The Conservatory draws on the talents of an accomplished faculty. We nurture individual excellence in a challenging and supportive community dedicated to the highest standards of performance, teaching and scholarship. Our staff includes 85 professionals, Israeli born as well as immigrants from 10 different countries. We are proud to attract some of Israel's finest music instructors; various faculty members are invited to lead masters classes worldwide and are members of Israel's best orchestras. Under their careful guidance, our gifted student body is given the tools necessary to achieve excellence and international acclaim.

From Risk to Opportunity

Our *From Risk to Opportunity* program, unique in Israel, facilitates access to first-rate music instruction for children from troubled financial, social and physical backgrounds. The Conservatory is proud of its diverse student body including children of Ethiopian descent, special needs and autistic youth and those who have suffered from a life of abuse, violence and poverty. All students are welcomed to the Conservatory with open arms. Our staff and program bring support, structure, normality and beauty into their lives. We promote creativity and encourage these special young people to explore and express their feelings and identities through artistic expression.



Bringing Music Education to Youth-at-Risk

Our program for youth-at-risk was established in 2006, consistent with the belief that all children deserve the same opportunity to partake in high quality music instruction. This program addresses the needs of children coming from difficult economic situations where parents may also exhibit poor physical and mental health.

Currently, some 65 severely disadvantaged youngsters study at the Conservatory. We strive to give them creative and constructive outlets for their feelings while directing them onto better paths. Many of our students' lives are characterized by profound insecurity; they lack emotional and practical support and faith in their abilities.

We have witnessed the significant difference this program has made in the lives of these children. It has given them new ways of expressing their feelings while enriching their lives with beauty, satisfaction and pride. We give these children the sense that we believe in them, that we appreciate their talent and that we are fully committed to providing them with all the tools necessary in order to realize their dreams.

Orit, a 17 year old voice student shared her gratitude with us: "You have changed my life! For me, the music has become the only corner in which I can hold onto in order to survive. When I came to the Conservatory I didn't believe in myself. It was amazing for me that you believed in me. You gave me confidence and the feeling that I will be taken care of, that I have talent, that I can do it! At the Conservatory I experienced warmth, attentiveness, support and encouragement that I have never before had in my life!"



Bringing Music Education to Children of Ethiopian Descent

The Ethiopian community in Israel faces tremendous, on-going and often insurmountable challenges to successful integration in Israel. Ethiopians come from a pre-industrial, traditional and agrarian background and struggle to adjust to the expectations of a modern, western culture.

The complexity of this transition has resulted in numerous social crises, particularly among second generation Ethiopians. While some manage to beat the odds and excel, too many drop out of school and become involved in drugs and petty crime. Furthermore, as a group, Ethiopians have one of Israel's highest poverty rates; the vast majority of families cannot afford music lessons for their children, no matter how gifted or desirous.

The music education program for children of Ethiopian descent was founded in 2005. It identifies children from the Ethiopian community who wish to explore music and, like children at-risk, provides them with intensive support throughout the entire course of their artistic development.

Since its founding, this program has achieved tremendous success. From 10 children in 2005 to 35 children in 2008, its growth rate has been phenomenal.

The launch of this program brought to the fore the incredible need for this type of intervention within the Ethiopian community. Participating children gain substantial benefits that go well beyond their artistic achievements such as feelings of self-confidence and belonging. Undoubtedly, this has contributed tremendously to the students, their families and the community as a whole.



Hadas' Story

Hadas, eight years old, has been studying at the Conservatory since September 2007. Hadas and her family immigrated to Israel from a small city in Ethiopia. Not only was the transition to Israel traumatic, she was faced with an additional hardship: a violent and abusive father. Hadas, her five other siblings and her mother were forced to leave their home and take refuge at the Jerusalem Shelter for Battered Women.

The shelter's Educational Coordinator noticed that Hadas displayed a special gift for the arts. Despite her young age, she referred Hadas to the Conservatory's program for children of Ethiopian descent. After two interviews, Hadas, her eyes shining with excitement, arrived for her first music lesson in the Pre-Music Program. Naomi, the music teacher, fell in love with this talented and sweet child. After only a few months, she suggested Hadas begin studying violin.

Since Hadas began learning at the Conservatory, music has become central to her life. Without a doubt, it has given Hadas the essential escape and release she needs from the difficulties of daily life.



How does our music education program for youth-at-risk and children of Ethiopian descent work?

Each new student undergoes an intensive intake process and financial evaluation. This aids in creating the best possible program of study, and establishing the most appropriate level of financial assistance for each child and their family. Based on our evaluation, an individualized study plan is developed while they are directed to the most suitable instrument and instructor.

Students benefit from individual weekly lessons of 45-90 minutes each on the musical instrument to which they are assigned and attend music theory lessons. As they progress, students are also matched with a chamber music group and orchestra, each of which meets once a week for 45-120 minutes. All young people participate in workshops, concerts and exams and are encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities such as faculty and guest artist concerts and master classes. Furthermore, integrating young people from this program into activities with the rest of the student body reduces a sense of isolation and stigmatization and improves the children's self-concept.

However, in order to achieve success, intensive and on-going support is essential. Parents and children require constant guidance with the most basic issues such as punctuality, the need to dedicate time to practicing, persistence in the face of difficulties and more. In the case of children of Ethiopian descent, the parents' lack of fluent Hebrew and fear of change are further obstacles to progress. While parents struggle to provide for their families' basic needs, they are also seriously challenged by the day to day trials of life in Israel. This leaves them physically and emotionally absent from the home and often unable to support their children's music studies.

Our Program Coordinator maintains on-going and close contact with children, their families, their instructors and others in the student's lives. She aims to utilize and enhance pre-existing support networks while providing any and all additional forms of assistance. For example, each child is assigned a mentor (usually a Conservatory graduate), who regularly visits them at home to facilitate their learning and offer them encouragement. We have found this intensive investment of time and resources to be the most critical component in the program's success.

Music Instruction and Therapy for Special Needs Children

Music therapy is a well-established discipline that uses music as a therapeutic stimulus to achieve non-musical treatment goals. Research supports parallels between speech and singing, rhythm and motor behavior, memory for song and memory for academic material. Furthermore, music can enhance mood, attention and behavior to optimize the student's ability to learn and interact. Therefore, the purpose of music therapy in special education is to provide students with melodic and rhythmic strategies which can then be generalized and transferred to other learning environments.

The Conservatory began working with special needs children in 2002, in cooperation with ALUT (The Association for Autism in Israel). Our program offers young people with disabilities a course of study that is adapted to their special needs, while simultaneously enabling their integration into the larger student body.



Dina Toter, the mother of Yotam, a student with Cerebral Palsy

"When you have a special child at home, daily life is never the same as for others. There is a tendency for everything to be special. But here at the Conservatory, my child experiences a life of healthy normalcy; an experience of being an equal amongst equals.

If he is allowed to improvise, he suddenly bursts out with life...he expresses everything from within his heart without restraint. He is always restrained by structure, he is restrained by a wheelchair. But then, for a moment, he has the chance to breathe, to improvise! He has a music teacher, he has his music lessons from the Conservatory, he is like all of the other students his age.

When I see Yotam playing the piano it's like a dream. A dream I never dared to dream."



Jacob's Story

Eight year old Jacob is a blind boy with severe physical disabilities and distorted hands. While Jacob finds concentrating in everyday activities very difficult, he can sit at the piano for hours working on his next composition. Jacob has a phenomenal musical ear. He eagerly participates in many of the Conservatory's recitals and activities, and regularly performs in piano department concerts to tremendous applause. His piano teacher Schramm Deborah told us: "One day, in the depths of winter, suddenly in the middle of playing, Jacob said: "this is sunlight!" Jacob was playing on the top register of the piano and his music shimmered and sparkled. The beauty of the moment was miraculous."

How does our music education program for special needs children work?

Students are enrolled in one of two tracks: individual music therapy sessions with a music therapist or individualized instrument instruction as both a therapeutic intervention and as musical instruction to develop their musical talents. Hassadna is the only conservatory in Israel which offers the second track - individualized music lessons for special needs children who have the ability to gain pleasure and benefit from playing an instrument.

Children who are found capable of playing instruments are provided with individualized music lessons. Regular faculty members instruct students in this program while receiving additional training to prepare them for this very challenging but enormously rewarding role. Furthermore, special needs students participate in chamber music groups, concerts and other enrichment activities with the rest of our student body. The direct interaction and cooperation required of students in the creation of beautiful music together is extremely beneficial for both sides. Our students learn to listen to each other, to accept each individual's uniqueness and to value the contributions offered by each member of the group.

At Hassadna, uniquely, children who are usually limited to the education system for disabled children are integrated into the general community. As they make music together and play for each other, they develop bonds based on their mutual love of music.

Those who are physically unable to manage their own instrument are enrolled in individual music therapy lessons with a music therapist. She works with them on a variety of topics including development of attentiveness, acquaintance with basic musical elements and emotional expression through music. The therapy is carried out through activities, songs, body motion, voice games and

exposure to different instruments. These lessons open students up to the magical world of sound and give them new tools to cope with complex issues.

Currently 35 children are enrolled in the program, including 10 children with autism in individualized music therapy lessons and 25 with autism and other disabilities such as Down's Syndrome, mental retardation, cerebral palsy and blindness in individual therapeutic instrument instruction. For these special children, who are challenged daily by their physical and mental limitations, music becomes the ultimate door to communication, expression and true happiness!



Rasha's Story

Rasha is a blind orphan with severe autism and mental retardation. Abandoned by her parents as a baby, Rasha was raised in an orphanage. The orphanage's founder observed Rasha's exceptional love of music and brought her to us. From that moment on, a unique relationship was established between her and her teacher Schramm Deborah.

Deborah tells us: "My heart leaps with joy to have the privilege of helping this fascinating student develop. When one considers that without music, Rasha falls apart emotionally, one can only stand in awe of the power of music." For Rasha, coming to her beloved piano lessons, playing chamber music and participating in concerts are the high points of her life and moments of true happiness.

From Risk to Opportunity – Enabling All Children to Reach Their Potential

Partners

We work very closely with both the Jerusalem Battered Women's Shelter and social workers with the Municipal Welfare Department of Jerusalem. In addition to sending us referrals, our partners are crucial in providing on-going support and feedback regarding the impact of the music lessons in the lives of their youth. They have repeatedly told us how grateful they are that we offer 'their' children the very rare opportunity to participate in a program of such high caliber. For the first time in their lives, these young people feel equal to children coming from far less challenged backgrounds and greatly benefit from the stability and sense of normality that our program gives them.

Evaluation

Our Program Coordinator maintains on-going communication with various professionals who work on an intensive and daily basis with the children including social workers, the shelter coordinator, day care workers, school principals, teachers and other relevant individuals. Furthermore, she frequently communicates with students, their instructors and their families. On a more formal level, each student undergoes a structured review every month with a more comprehensive evaluation taking place at the conclusion of each academic year.



Feedback From Members of the Conservatory Community

**Nava Fuchs, Educational Coordinator at the
Jerusalem Shelter for Battered Women**

"For children at the shelter [who attend the Conservatory], this is the first time in their life they have the opportunity to participate in an after school activity. However, this project is not a 'regular' activity, rather the most prestigious studies offered, studies of which they could only dream previously. The children are in a program that is not designed for poor or needy children, rather an opportunity to engage in high level and quality studies at the most prestigious conservatory in Jerusalem. If it weren't for this unique program, this would have never, ever been possible for them."

While striving to help our students reach their highest potential, we also consider ourselves a learning institution. We continually examine ourselves and our services to ensure we are providing our students with the highest quality music education available. We aim to create the foundation and environment needed for successfully leading our young people through the challenging yet compelling and life-changing experience of music education.

Financial Aid

The vast majority of students in this program are from Israel's lowest socio-economic strata. As parents struggle to survive, high quality enrichment for their children remains a distant and unrealized dream. Consistent with our vision of full integration, students in *From Risk to Opportunity* not only receive scholarships for tuition, we provide supplementary assistance including provision of high quality instruments and transportation costs. Our goal is to completely blur the lines between the 'haves' and 'have nots;' this level of aid is essential in ensuring their complete integration into our student body.

Financial aid is established by a financial committee based on an in-depth evaluation of each family's economic situation. Some 25% of *From Risk to Opportunity* students receive partial scholarships while full expenses are paid for the remainder. We also conduct a similar financial analysis for families of our special needs students as we recognize the enormous financial toll a special needs child can have on a family.



Feedback From Members of the Conservatory Community

Asher Rachamim, Chairman of the Ethiopian Community in Talpiot-Baka'a (an area where most of Jerusalem's Ethiopian families reside)

"This program proves in a remarkable way - not only in theory but in real life - how Ethiopian children can be integrated into after-school activities which are not 'for the poor.' I am familiar with most of the projects in Jerusalem and have not come across a program which gives the Ethiopian Community the full attention it requires and deserves. Success is due both to the high level of professional training offered by the Conservatory and its teachers, combined with the seriousness and amazing support for the project's children and families. Astoundingly, the project blurs the lines between families with financial ability and those without. Parents, despite complications and hardships in their lives, recognize that the Conservatory offers an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for their children."



Beyond funding tuition, the provision of instruments and musical equipment has great significance for *From Risk to Opportunity* children. Just as they cannot afford lessons, renting and/or purchasing instruments is completely out of reach. We go to great lengths to provide each student with high quality instruments. This even includes piano rental for students in our piano department. Not only does the provision of instruments enable practice at home, it helps to further equalize the playing field for program participants.

Students respond to the honor of owning their own instrument in kind; their expressions of happiness when holding their instruments for the first time are hard to describe. Ownership of an instrument engenders tremendous feelings of happiness, pride and responsibility and increases their commitment to their studies. We make every effort to ensure that *From Risk to Opportunity* young people are equal among their peers and having their own instrument is an essential component in this.

Financial Narrative

We offer a diverse range of programs designed to nurture each student's innate musicality, leading to the satisfaction and personal rewards that come from accomplishment and sharing. It is often in making music with others that our deepest sense of fulfillment is found. We are committed to helping each child realize the feelings of joy, satisfaction and self-realization that come from making music, while providing our students with the tools they need to fully develop their talents and abilities.

From Risk to Opportunity is intended for children so lacking in opportunity that they are afraid to dream big. Through this program, they access new worlds of

opportunity enabling them to realize their most cherished dreams. This opportunity can, and often does, stimulate profound changes in their lives and their futures.

Children in this program require intensive and on-going attention, support, sensitivity and guidance to guarantee their personal and professional development. Indeed, these elements, combined with comprehensive financial support, are essential in order to achieve our desired outcomes. We are genuinely committed to the well-being of each and every one of our students; as such we invest in meaningful relationships with them over time. Because we open a door for these children, we believe that we have a moral obligation to ensure it does not close on them. Music education, a long-term process, requires continuous financing to secure its viability and stability.

Our comprehensive program, and the individualized approach we offer, is costly. While demand for participation in *From Risk to Opportunity* continues to grow, our ability to provide this experience to all children is limited by the amount of outside funding support we receive.

We hope to reach out to new young people and enable them to benefit from our program. We believe that education through arts makes a significant impact on the lives of all children and is particularly meaningful for the underprivileged. Through music, they express their feelings and identities, harness their inner creativity and bring beauty and happiness into their worlds. We are grateful to those who have made this dream a reality for so many of Jerusalem's most special young people and invite you to participate in realizing this vision.

Feedback From Members of the Conservatory Community

Deborah Schramm, Piano Teacher for Many of Our Special Needs Children.

What is it like to teach special needs children?

“When I work with students who are in what is considered to be the normal spectrum of development, I have a general sense of their overall growth. Students who actively participate in lessons and practice regularly at home will reach a certain level over time. I can, more or less, predict that they will accomplish basic tasks such as proper hand motion for producing a good tone, finger articulation, learning scales, chords, and more. I also know how to help them to accomplish these tasks.

In the case of the special-needs child, the whole picture changes. Perhaps he is blind and I can only reach him by developing his ear and hand coordination. Perhaps she can read notes competently but is so emotionally blocked that she completely resists learning. Perhaps he is the sweetest person in the world and happily participates with me but just finding a note - for him it's like climbing Mt. Everest.”

How do I approach the challenges they pose?

“The process of learning to do so is both fascinating and thrilling. My ‘weaponry’ in this battle involves the entirety of my musicality, my teaching experience, my life experience, and the joy I feel in searching for new ideas and developing creative solutions. With my help, these wonderful children attain musical lives that would otherwise be inaccessible or weak for them. Music lights up their lives because it touches so many places found in the deepest human experience and becomes an integral part of them.

I feel like an explorer out to discover a wide world of pedagogical possibilities that my special students open up to me. I regard each student as a human being with the potential to develop. I work with them as they are, not trying to put them into form or making them as society wants them to be. I make them believe that they are all right just as they are. I try to give them some happiness and share with them my love for music.”



You can join us in making a difference in the lives of these special children and help them experience true beauty and joy.

We welcome general contributions, donations earmarked for a particular population or sponsorship of a child.

non-profit organization in Israel. Tax deductible contributions from the USA may be made through the following registered 501(c)3 conduit: The Jerusalem Foundation, 420 Lexington Ave., Suite 1645, New York, NY 10170 USA. Please include a note designating your gift to the Jerusalem Conservatory Hassadna.

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From Risk to Opportunity
enables the Conservatory
to achieve its true goal of advancing
and enriching the lives
of all children with the gift of music.
Having all these special children,
from such diverse and sometimes
extremely difficult backgrounds,
making beautiful music together
under the same roof, is, by our belief,
the realization of a great vision.

Feedback From Members of the Conservatory Community

Ronit Berman, the Conservatory's Artistic Director and *From Risk to Opportunity* Program Coordinator, who has been working with this program from its outset.

"Working with these special children has been a moving experience in the deepest sense of the word. For me, this unique program represents Jerusalem as I see her in my dreams; Jerusalem of Gold, of happiness, of human richness and of unity. I believe that, more than anything else, music has the power to strengthen and unite these elements.

There is something so wondrous about these children and the special connection that has developed between them and the music. Each of them grows up in a very different environment - often exposed to severe physical, financial and social difficulties, and the alienation that lack of integration can engender. However, all find the Conservatory a second home where music empowers them and gives them joy, hope and new aspirations.

Accompanying these families and children and witnessing the project's impact on their lives has imprinted within me countless unforgettable moments!"



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