

NEWS

the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance



February - March 2019 | Issue no. 16

A Fabulous February

Pamela Peled

Just in time for Pessach God has finally come clean: she's a woman, and she's pretty damn fed-up. The Deity is a grumbling Coloratura, at least in the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance's Vocal Department, which recently performed David Sebba's modern opera, "Mothers."

photo: Noam Tabib



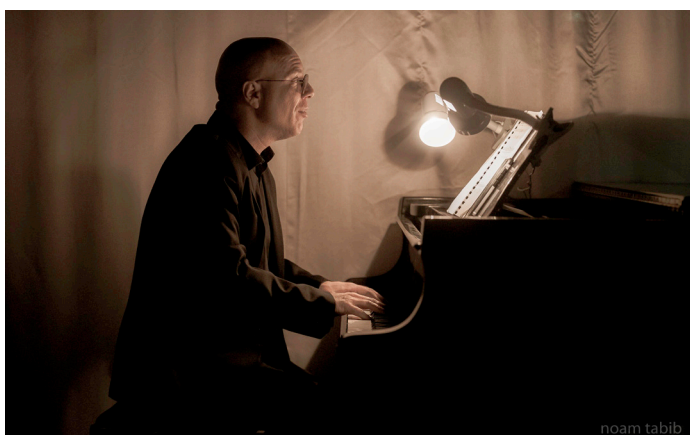
photo: Noam Tabib



"You beg me for things," the Almighty admonishes her people, in a technically challenging, crazy role. "I make wars and make women fertile; but you forsake me and leave me lonely."

Sebba, composer, musician, conductor and Head of the Studio of Israeli Opera, also teaches at JAMD. According to Anat Efraty, Head of the Classical Vocal Department at JAMD, "Mothers," through which the undisclosed feelings of Biblical women throb, proves Sebba has an instinctual feel for human suffering. The ache of being erased, the pain of feeling that a wife is simply a uterus, are powerfully authentic.

photo: Noam Tabib



Music & Libretto: David Sebba

The emotional libretto includes arias by the spurned Lea, waking up full of angst next to new-husband Jacob, who longed for her sister; Sara, who's not consulted when Abraham takes their son, their only son, to be ritually sacrificed; Rivka, singing sadistically to son Esau that "Mommy loves you, but less ..."; and by God Himself, nagging for more attention.

"The audience could hardly clap at the end," says Efraty of the performances last month, staged by Shirit Lee Weiss, Director of the Studio of the Israeli Opera. "It was so confrontational, so gutting, and so very, very beautiful."

Performance is a key component of the degree in Vocals; every Tuesday sixty Opera singer students trill or boom out on stage as they showcase an Opera, Classical Cabaret or Baroque Concert. This year eight students will fly to Trieste to appear in Haydn's "La Canterina," marketing their music beyond parents and friends.

Efraty, an acclaimed international singer herself who performed with the Vienna State Opera for years, pushes her students to dream. "Opera is blooming in Israel," she says, "partly because of the Russian immigration. I'm aware that today singers have to look good as well as sing beautifully, but that's life. My students have to take that into account, as well as striving for quality and excellence."

JAMD-trained singers are looking good all over the world today; performing in operas and studios, and winning prizes internationally. "We are a world-class department in a world-class school," says Efraty. And that's something to sing about.

Press a key, and a pad on the saxophone is either covered or opened, lowering or raising the pitch. And as you blow into the single-reed mouthpiece, if you know what you're doing, the sound stretches into the beat of your heart. Music from a sax does magic; it melts the listener. It makes you ache and it makes you smile; Roberta Flack must have been listening to great jazz when she was killed, softly.

Eli Degibri, the Head of JAMD's Jazz Department, stumbled into a Dixieland rehearsal when he was ten, and knew he wanted to be a "Jazz magician." He switched from the mandolin, which he had been studying in the Jaffa Conservatory since the age of seven, and literally began blowing people away.



Eli Degibri

photo: Paulo Evangelista - Fluxure

Full scholarships at Berkley College and acceptance into the Thelonius Monk Institute led to him playing extensively with Jazz greats like Herbie Hancock and Al Foster. Today he fronts the Eli Degibri Quartet, comprised of four young Israelis living in New York, heads the Department at JAMD, is the Artistic Director of the Red Sea Jazz Festival in Eilat, and is one of the founders of the Michael Brecker International Saxophone Competition – the first such competition in the world. Oh, and in his spare time he composes.

"The Jazz scene is so great in Israel," says Degibri, who credits the country's great teachers as well as the Israeli mentality for the ever-growing success. Sixty lucky students learn improvisation, how to master their instruments, composition, harmony, solfège and more at JAMD, and sway through the Jazz standards in the "Great American Songbook."

Degibri believes in bringing inspiration to his students from the outside world, and he has great friends in the industry to call upon. In February Aron Goldberg, one of the most influential jazz pianists alive today, spent three days jamming with the students of JAMD, working with their ensembles, and giving one-on-one sessions (which were open to all.) On the last night Goldberg, Degibri and Ilan Salem, Flutist and the first head of JAMD's Jazz Department, and Degibri's mentor, joined a few select students on stage for a thrilling performance of world-class jazz that rocked Jerusalem to her roots. They say that King David, looking down from heaven, reached for his lute for the first time in three thousand years, and strummed right along.



Aron Goldberg

photo: Alejandra Barragán