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קשת אילון כיתות אומן בינלאומיות לכינון - 1790					

Liat Elkayam, Photos by Tomer Appelbaum

Itzhak Rashkovsky, 64, and Ani Schnarch Rashkovsky, 62; live in London and flying there

Hello, can I ask where you know Hebrew from?

Ani: We made *aliyah* in 1974, separately: I'm from Bucharest and Itzhak is from Odessa. Both of us studied violin at the Academy of Music in Tel Aviv. It was a real Romeo and Juliet story. I was 17 and Itzhak was 19, and we each had a different teacher, one who taught according to the Moscow school and the other according to the Franco-Belgian school.

Itzhak: Romeo and Juliet? Well, women are always a bit sentimental.

Ani: But in the end we got together. Afterward I went to study in London and we were married and then stayed there, but already back then we were active in an Israeli organization called Youth Music Israel. And then one day, we visited Kibbutz Eilon and fell in love with the place. Thirty years ago, we and a few other people established Keshet Eilon.

Sorry, but I have no idea what that is.

Ani: It's a music center offering international master classes for violinists. Five years ago, we added violists and cellists.

Tomer, the photographer: What about contrabass?

Itzhak: There are very few people today who play contrabass, certainly in Israel. Even when the Israel Philharmonic was established, there were musicians who were missing. Israel was known then as a "bassoon-less country." If you find a contrabass player living in Israel, please send him to me.

Who takes part in the workshops?

Ani: There are master classes and seminars for children – Jews, Christians, Palestinians, Muslims – during Hanukkah and Pesach. The children meet with teachers, play in an ensemble and become friends. There are also many private lessons, because that's how you learn violin.

The violin is considered a difficult instrument for children, right?

Itzhak: Yes, because no one walks down the street in the posture of holding a violin. The violin is a world unto itself, and if you have a burning passion for it you go all the way. The teacher's job is just to provide the match.

What do you mean by "burning passion"?

Itzhak: A violinist has to be fanatical

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about it. We have a saying that's not so nice: You have to be pretty dumb to sit in a closed room five-six hours a day, like a monk, of your own volition. Musicians are a breed apart, they sacrifice a great deal for moments of inspiration on the stage.

What happens on the stage?

Itzhak: When you perform, after hours of preparation and practice, it all converges – and you have to stand there "naked," with everyone looking at you.

Ani: It's a form of expression by which we transmit ideas; without the instrument we have no communication.

What's needed in order to be a violinist?

Ani: If you look at great violinists, you see that they have something in common physically. You need true physical strength to practice, to stand on the stage, also to tour.

Itzhak: Talent is God-given, the parents provide conditions, but above all you need luck. So many great people have snapped midway in their careers or ended up in an asylum. Being a musician is like being an athlete: Even if you have won gold at the Olympics, that promises nothing for the future; you must keep training. Maybe it's like that with all artists, although I always think, "Those poor ballerinas – we at

least can eat."

Can you make a living from art?

Ani: We teach at the Royal College of Music in London.

Itzhak: And we travel around the world. We play without a regular orchestra, we're "free-range." Our nature is not to be part of the herd but to lead it. It's not a 9-to-5 job.

Ani: More like 24/7.

Did you ever think about returning to Israel to live?

Ani: Because of the kibbutz, we have the feeling that we've never really left. We've been coming for many years, the scenery is amazing and the air is fresh, and we work with children who grow up and become teachers themselves.

Itzhak: We have also launched a project to build a permanent school for violinists, like [Yehudi] Menuhin's school. And to think that the reason we went to the kibbutz was so our children could spend time on the grass and in the fresh air.

Did you want your children to play?

Ani: Our daughter has been playing the violin from the age of 3 and a half, and our son from age 7. They both have a burning passion for music.

Itzhak: They grew up and the grass stayed. This year, for the first time, our granddaughter played on it.