**Keshet Eilon Center Profile**

**September 2023**

The Keshet Eilon Music Center was established in 1990 in Kibbutz Eilon in Western Galilee, near the Lebanese border, in the periphery, far from the urban commotion. Its primary activity is focused on nurturing young, talented string musicians from Israel and around the world and promoting their development. This is achieved through seminars and an international summer Mastercourse held at the music center, with the participation of distinguished teachers and artists from Israel and around the world.

In order to advance its activities, a nonprofit organization was established in 1991, named "Keshet Eilon Master Classes," under the musical leadership of Prof. Itzhak Rashkovsky (a senior violin faculty member at the Royal College, London). The organization's activities are overseen by the CEO, Nitza Avidan, who previously managed other associations. Nitza moved to the Western Galilee and served as the VPO of Keshet Eilon for eight years, and since April 2022, she has become the organization's CEO.

Keshet Eilon is run by an elected board headed by Jean Judes, who previously managed Beit Issie Shapiro. All board members, including subcommittees, work on a volunteer basis. Gilad Sheba, the founder and visionary, is a kibbutz member, actively participating in the association's activities.

In its early years of operation, up to 25 violinists participated in the Master classes each year, mostly Israelis and new immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The number of participants in the Mastercourse increased annually. Keshet Eilon gradually gained recognition in the global music community, accelerating and achieving professional prestige over its 33 years of operation. It distinguished itself through its informal atmosphere, the inclusive educational approach characteristic of the project, and, most importantly, its high professional standard and the aspiration for excellence shared by both students and professors, encouraging distinguished educators in the world of string instruments to join it and collaborate with the senior teaching faculty. Even during times of war and the COVID-19 pandemic, Keshet Eilon never ceased its activities.

Our goal is to continue to advance Keshet Eilon into an international center for music and excellence, attracting hundreds of outstanding young musicians from Israel and around the world each year. Today, Keshet Eilon is already a well-known and important institution worldwide, contributing to the cultural prestige of the State of Israel and the Western Galilee in particular. Music, as we believe at Keshet Eilon, is a universal, natural, and profound form of expression capable of bridging people, cultures, religions, and countries, hence the name "Keshet" (rainbow) that reflects this idea.

Simultaneously, we aspire to transform the Keshet Eilon Music Center into a place where Israel's finest young string musicians can emerge and perform on the world's prestigious stages, as it did when the project was established over three decades ago. This aspiration is emphasized against the backdrop of the concerning trend of emigration of outstanding young musicians to foreign music centers, particularly in Europe and the United States. Over more than three decades, it appears that more young musicians are filling important roles in Israeli orchestras, more Israelis are passing the auditions for the summer Mastercourse, and there's a sense that Keshet Eilon, along with leading Israeli music institutions, is encouraging this positive change.

**Keshet Eilon – Goals:**

Ever since its establishment, Keshet Eilon has been guided by the following vision:

* The Keshet Eilon Music Center will become an international magnet for violin and string instrument training with the goal of paving the way for its students as future soloists on the world's important concert stages and as leading performers in noted orchestras in Israel and throughout the world.
* Keshet Eilon will make every effort to integrate violin students from all communities and sectors in Israel, reaching out to young Arab students, and collaborating with music institutions in the Arab community in Israel.
* Keshet Eilon will allow every talented student, regardless of financial wherewithal, to participate in its training programs.
* Keshet Eilon will contribute to the Western Galilee by increasing the qualitative concerts and programs it offers for the benefit of the local population, while stimulating tourism in the region.
* Keshet Eilon will constitute an important economic asset to the development of the Western Galilee and the country's northern periphery generally.
* Keshet Eilon will expand the number of Keshet Eilon's goodwill alumni "ambassadors" for Israel throughout the world, a reflection of our efforts to showcase the country's rich cultural accomplishments despite its existential concerns.
* Keshet Eilon will carry on all its programs despite security threats and any other obstacles that stem from its location on Israel's border with Lebanon.
* The construction of a campus will enable the Keshet Eilon Music Center to function every day of the year, and will reinforce the fulfillment of this vision.

**Activities of the Keshet Eilon Music Center today:**

A. International Summer Mastercourse for Violinists, Violists, and Cellists:

Every summer, around 55 talented young musicians aged 16-26 come to Eilon from over 22 countries, including Israel. These musicians are carefully selected, and many applicants are turned down due to limited spots. Keshet Eilon places great importance on Israeli participants receiving guidance from world-class teachers and having the opportunity to collaborate with young colleagues from abroad. Over 1,600 Keshet Eilon alumni from 52 countries are dispersed around the world today. To ensure that every talented Keshet Eilon participant can attend regardless of their economic situation, we raise donations for scholarships that are granted without regard to race, gender, religion, or nationality.

The course lasts about three weeks. During this time, students receive individual lessons and participate in masterclasses conducted by top professors from around the world. They perform in chamber ensembles and concerts in the Bar-Uryan Concert Hall in Eilon and in the festive gala concert in Tel Aviv. They have the rare opportunity to perform in front of a discerning audience. All of this takes place in an atmosphere that allows for intense focus on playing and practice.

B. Seminars for Young Israeli String Musicians:

The seminar program for young Israeli violinists, violists, and cellists and their teachers was established in 2002. Keshet Eilon provides its facilities and the professional expertise it has accumulated over the years to the participants. Two seminars are held each year, one in the spring and one in the winter, with 50-60 participants in each. Students are admitted based on the recommendations of their personal teachers, without auditions. During the three intensive days of study, each student receives three private lessons from a senior Keshet Eilon teacher and participates in ensemble playing, attends concerts, takes masterclasses, and engages in various other activities.

Some seminar participants come from musical institutions in Arab communities, and the shared activities foster personal, social, and musical connections. Parents and teachers report that students leave with increased motivation to advance their playing and enhanced confidence after interacting with peers of their caliber.

Indeed, Keshet Eilon believes that when these young musicians return to their homes and families, they become ambassadors for the center. Their positive experiences stay with them, and they share their stories and spread KeshetEilon’s name. In summary, the number of Israeli string players who register for Keshet Eilon's international summer Mastercourses has significantly increased since the seminar program began.

In its efforts to nurture excellence, Keshet Eilon also supports young string players in additional ways. We lend quality string instruments and bows from our instrument collection to musicians who cannot afford such instruments. We offer scholarships to cover part of the participation fees, and we provide our unique music library to participants and their teachers.

C. Activities in the Arab Society:

Believing that music is an international language for bringing people, cultures, and religions together, and desiring to provide equal opportunities to Arab children as to their Israeli counterparts and integrate them into Keshet Eilon's national and international activities, we initiated our work in various music centers in the Arab community. We assisted "The al-Kandi Music Center" in Jatt and " Al-Isfahani Conservatory, Qalansuwa in the Triangle region, Sheikh Danun Conservatory, and also lent violins to students, donated scores from our library, and directed interested donors to these places.

In the summer of 2015, we began collaborating with the "Polyphony Education Center" located in Nazareth. This organization is also committed to bridging gaps between Jewish and Arab youth through music. The collaboration lasted for several years, and today, both organizations operate independently.

In 2023, a new partnership between Keshet Eilon and Chen Zimbalista's "Music Factory," which brings together Jews and Arabs and operates in communities like I'billin, an underprivileged neighborhood in Haifa, Abu Ghosh, and East Jerusalem, was established. The first joint concert will be seen and heard in the fall of 2023.

D. "Sounds of Keshet" Concert Series:

As residents of the distant western Galilee, far from the cultural hub of central Israel, we feel the absence of high-quality culture in the periphery. Therefore, in addition to the activities mentioned above and in our aspiration to enrich the cultural life of the region, promote tourism in the Galilee, and make high-quality music accessible to residents who may not be able to travel to the city center, Keshet Eilon holds the "Sounds of Keshet" concert series throughout the year. The series includes recitals for string instruments, performances by various chamber ensembles, choir performances, folk music, and more. We take pride in offering high-level music at reasonable prices to the audience in our region. The proceeds from the concert series are dedicated to supporting Keshet Eilon's activities and maintaining the hall.

Funding for Keshet Eilon's Activities and Benefit Concerts:

Most of Keshet Eilon's activities are funded through donations from foundations, businesses, generous private donors, and government offices. Nevertheless, our income does not cover ongoing expenses, let alone long-term development budget needs. Keshet Eilon aims to address resource shortages independently by organizing benefit concerts in Israel and abroad, in halls and private venues. All the proceeds from these events are dedicated to advancing and developing the project. Musicians and staff appearing in these concerts volunteer their time, and many friends and supporters of Keshet Eilon have opened their homes for this purpose. Friend associations in several major cities around the world provide central halls or suitable spaces for these concerts.

For example, such concerts have been held in London, New York, Houston, Berlin, Chicago, Geneva, Paris, Los Angeles, Miami, and various cities in Israel, featuring young artists and Keshet Eilon alumni alongside guest musicians.

Keshet Eilon Music Center and Plans for the Future:

The Keshet Eilon Music Center has a vision to establish a high-level international music school for talented musicians. This school would collaborate with the regional high school "Manor-Cabri" and provide a foundation for the highest quality educational and musical institution. It would operate year-round and serve as a magnet for musicians from Israel and abroad. The decision to establish the campus was made by the association's management in 2013 when we already had a high-quality acoustic concert hall and a unique music library structure at our disposal. However, the need to provide proper accommodation for students and faculty became increasingly urgent, especially due to the process of privatization that the kibbutz underwent, a process that was completed in 2000.

The first stage in building student dormitories as an addition to the existing facilities became possible thanks to the generous contribution of Raya Strauss Ben-Dror and the family foundation of Lina and Patrick Drahi, as well as an additional most generous donation made in the will of a friend of Keshet Eilon in the United States, Isaac Ribatzky (may he rest in peace). In the summer of 2014, the first eight units of student dormitories were inaugurated for the benefit of the participants, and in the summer of 2015, the construction of four more units, an office, a cafeteria, and an acoustic Shell was completed. Today, the campus includes 12 units of student dormitories, totaling 48 double rooms; 3 villas for teachers, a cafeteria with 130 seating places, and an acoustic Shell designed for outdoor performances with a large lawn area that can accommodate up to 400 listeners. The plan for the dormitories and the cafeteria was designed by the architect Tzadik Elkayam.

In 2015, an acquaintance was established with the Israeli architect Ada Karmi-Melamede, who, with the help of her office's team, prepared a master plan for the construction of Phase II of the campus. This phase includes the completion of several essential buildings such as classrooms, training rooms, an ensemble hall, faculty accommodations, and social activity spaces, all of which are crucial for the establishment of the school. The earthworks for Phase II, supported by the generous contribution of KKL Germany, have already been completed, and the site development is being carried out with the assistance of the landscape architectural office Miller-Blum. We plan to continue the construction in the near future. As of writing these lines, the "Golden Trail" walkway along the dormitories has been completed, and we are in the midst of constructing the Ensemble Hall and the framework for four additional classrooms, with the generous support of KKL-JNF together with the Alphadyne Foundation.

During periods when Keshet Eilon's music activities are not taking place, the campus hosts various music organizations, such as choirs, chamber ensembles, orchestras, and music groups from different schools, who come to practice and hold rehearsals in the concert hall and KE additional facilities. The campus dormitories are also rented out as apartment accommodation for families and groups touring the Western Galilee, and all income is dedicated to promoting the center's activities.

Keshet Eilon is already an important and well-known center in the music world. It thus contributes to the cultural reputation of the State of Israel, hopefully even on a larger scale following the completion of its campus.