

### Building the Future

Pamela Peled

Those of us of a certain age, who remember studying from books in a library with index cards in little drawers, also remember the irresistible urge to talk, just under the "Silence!" sign. Whispers carried so clearly; every enunciated consonant bounced off the book-stacks in their little bays, and were absorbed quickly. Musicians call this type of acoustic "Dry." In contrast "Wet" acoustics in large, reverberant spaces reflect the slightest sound, enhancing it in the vast volume of air and scattering it into a thousand parts.



Imaging of the Front of the New Building

some gravel from where the foundations will soon be set. Mrs. Kushner, who herself loves singing, was overjoyed to see the JAMD campus for the first time, and joked that maybe she would enroll in one of the voice classes.

In his address Mayor Moshe Lion, under whose patronage JAMD has received generous support from the Jerusalem Municipality, noted that each street in the city peals with music, and the Academy will continue to add to the great panoply of sounds of this unique place. Both Kushner brothers, acknowledging the literal and metaphorical warmth of the day, spoke of their excitement and joy to be part of this wonderful new project.

The expansion has come at a most appropriate time: the last three decades have seen exciting growth in the Academy's student population and activities. "In 1985, when we moved into our Givat Ram premises from our old home in Smolenskin Street, we had approximately three hundred and fifty students," recalls Professor Yinam Leef, President of JAMD. "Today eight hundred music and dance students learn and practice daily on site, not counting some one thousand pupils in the JAMD two daughter institutions."



Mayor Moshe Lion, Speaking at the Ceremony

"About five years ago we started planning to expand again," explains Leef. Again the student body had outgrown the facilities; the faculty also felt the time was right to create world class studios and performance halls. Then, according to Marc Kushner, partner in the American architectural firm HWKN, a magical coincidence occurred. Meir Nitzan, a former Development Officer of JAMD, sat down next to him at an event hosted by then Mayor Nir Barkat in New York. An invitation to Jerusalem followed, and, says Kushner, "the rest is history."



Arch. Erez Ella, Arch. Marc Kushner and the HQ Architects team

It was clear to the architects both here and in The US that the goal would be to maintain this atmosphere in a new building that would combine world-class facilities, while providing an infrastructure and conditions for the cross-fertilization between the various fields of music and dance for which the Academy is renowned. Ella designed a large atrium which wraps around the thirteen small teaching spaces on one side and the main spaces - a Solo and Chamber Music Recital Hall, an Opera-Studio Hall, a Jazz and Improvised Music Hall, and a large Dance and Choreography Studio - on the other. The atrium facilitates the main circulation of the building; its common spaces allow the students to meet, play, stretch, and collaborate as before.

The unique stone façade system, designed by the American HWKN firm, will shade the building, reducing energy consumption in dry, hot weather. Architect Matthias Hollwich notes that when the team visited JAMD, "we experienced a building filled with music, as if the architecture itself was an instrument. Our façade references that; we envisage the stone as being light and poetic, as if the music was echoing on the material."

The new performance halls will not only conform to international standards, they will also provide welcome exposure for the students. Entrance to performances is often free of charge; audience capacity ranges from sixty to one hundred and twenty seats.

The total cost of the new building is 30 million shekel; nearly 80% of that has already been raised. The first stage of construction, including completing the structure, is slated to finish by March 2021; the second six-month stage will see the fitting out and completion of the individual venues. Enthusiastic partners in this project include the Council for Higher Education, the Jerusalem Municipality headed by Mayor Moshe Lion, the Jerusalem Development Authority, the National Lottery and private donors. Mr. Murray Kushner of the United States, who could not be at the Groundbreaking Ceremony for personal reasons, together with his wife, Lee, provided a generous initial donation which kick-started the entire project.



The Opera Studio Hall Imaging

Marc Kushner, working for the first time in the Holy City, claims that JAMD is a dream job for any architect - "Building a music school on a cliff in Jerusalem ...? Wow!" - but JAMD is also one of the most unifying cultural places that he's ever experienced. "Music bridges any difference in culture, gender, race, religion, and sexuality," he claims. "I wish for our new building's boundaries to dissolve with the music that is being created within. I could not be prouder to have worked on the design of such a perfect place of creativity."

Professor Leef beams to hear the accolades. He is eagerly awaiting the move to the new building, and already thinking one step beyond. The master plan caters for still more expansion to the west, allowing JAMD to grow one addition at a time. An exterior public space would further unite the JAMD community, with a Symphony Hall envisaged for the north-east side. But Jerusalem wasn't built in a millennia; decade by decade JAMD's stone façade will grow, embracing the acoustically exhilarating spaces in its shade.

And, oh! In case you were wondering: Jazz thrives in rather "dry" performance spaces; Chamber Music prefers "wet" conditions. So now you know.



Imaging of the Recitals Hall

So now: a question. Does Jazz do best in wet or dry acoustical conditions? How about Chamber Music? (Do not Google! Guess - answers at the end.)

Students at JAMD breeze through questions like this, but until now the answers were academic only; most of the various musical disciplines had to share the same multi-functional performance spaces on the campus, making do with less than perfect conditions. All that is set to change as the Academy broke ground recently for its latest electrifying project: the brand new Lee and Murray Kushner Family Building. This beehive shaped structure will house several professional venues and performance spaces, tailor made to serve the various disciplines.

Donors Lee Kushner and two of her sons, Marc and Jonathan, were in attendance on a sunny Jerusalem October morning to shovel



Left to Right: Adv. Amina Harris, Prof. Yinam Leef, Mr. Jonathan Kushner, Adv. Yair Green, Mr. Moshe Lion, Mrs. Lee Kushner, Arch. Marc Kushner

Over the last three decades, as the Academy grew, a generous donation by the Nazarian family of Los Angeles enabled the new High School and Conservatory Building to be added, together with the Navon Hall. Later a new wing was added to the Academy; this Geller Foundation Building housed additional classrooms, teaching spaces, and a recording studio, facilitating enrolment growth, the expansion of the curriculum, and the growing number of international collaborations.



Arch. Marc Kushner, Mr. Jonathan Kushner, Mr. Meir Nitzan, Mrs. Lee Kushner

Part of that history includes bringing Erez Ella and his Tel Aviv architectural office on board. According to Ella the brief was intriguing: how to expand and fulfil the Academy's needs without compromising the unique character of the institution with its multi-disciplinary, influential, multi-national vibrant energy. Ella discovered something else which had also impressed Kushner: the existing premises, which had not been designed with music in mind, (they originally housed the Hebrew University School of Social Work), were acoustically impaired. Ironically that had a lot to do with the vibrant energy of JAMD, and the cross-disciplinary influences. "The sounds that leaked into the corridors, the dancers stretching anywhere they could before classes, all this created a culture in which motion, opinion, and sounds constantly move and flow in the Academy in the most open, freest way," Ella explains.



Imaging of the Atrium

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With the breaking of ground comes naming opportunities: the Opera-Studio Hall will be named after JAMD Governor Ruth Bach to honor her very generous donation. Other donors' names will be affixed to various halls; the building itself will be named after the principal donor. And what a building it promises to be. "My old High School is next door to the JAMD campus," says Ella. "This makes it even more exciting for me to come back and influence young students' experience of Jerusalem."



Ruth Bach



The Dance Studio Imaging