

25.46x30.6	31	עמוד 20	THE JERUSALEM POST - IN JERUSALEM	26/10/2012	34227181-8
פנטסיה כורלית הפנינג ווקאלי - 84490					

# Jerusalem weekend fantasy

The inaugural Choral Fantasy Festival is the culmination of one man's dream of providing quality musical fare on Shabbat



The Jerusalem Baroque Orchestra is set to perform on Sunday morning. (Courtesy)

By BARRY DAVIS

Shimon Bigelman admits to harboring an ulterior motive for the upcoming Choral Fantasy Festival. "I am an amateur singer; I sing in the Oratorio Choir and I object to the fact that there is nothing happening in Jerusalem in the performing arts on Fridays and Shabbat," he says. "A few years ago I organized a petition to open the Jerusalem Theater on Shabbat and we got around 5,000 signatures, but the municipality did absolutely nothing."

But he wasn't ready to give up. "I couldn't just forget about it, so with my background in singing, I thought I'd get a vocal music festival going over Shabbat." The Choral Fantasy, which will take place at the YMCA over two weekends - November 1-3 and December 22-24, eventually took shape and, in all truth, Bigelman, musical adviser conductor Stanley Sperber and the festival's supremo Haggi Goren, have put together a highly creditable roster of artists.

The festival kicks off on November 1, at 8:30 p.m. with a concert of the [Tel Aviv Soloists Ensemble](#) and the Tel Aviv Collegium Singers, with Barak Tal on the conductor's podium and featuring soloists soprano vocalist Keren Hadar and horn player Alon Reuven. The program includes Mendelssohn's Symphony for Strings, Mozart's "Wer nur den Lieben Gott lässt walten" and "The People Walking in Darkness" by Yehezkel Braun.

Bigelman and the other festival organizers were evidently keen to cast their musical net far and wide and to appeal to as broad a cross-section of music fans as possible. The second slot, at 1 p.m. on November 2, features the fine Jerusalem Academy Chamber Choir, with Sperber conducting a "celebration of a-cappella arrangements of Afro-American spirituals and songs of the King's Singers and the Beatles."

Fans of baroque music should enjoy the concert with the Barocade Ensemble, at 8:30 p.m. on November 2, with works by Vivaldi and Purcell. There are more offerings from the era, with the November 3 morning slot (11 a.m.) occupied by the Jerusalem

Baroque Orchestra under conductor David Shemer, who will perform works by Pergolesi and Vivaldi. The late concert on the Friday (November 2, 11 p.m.) will also cross the classical divide with a program of cabaret songs, jazz and numbers from musicals presided over by jazz saxophonist Yuval Cohen.

Bigelman is naturally delighted the Choral Fantasy is taking on corporeal form and has gained financial assistance from the Jerusalem Foundation and from the municipality.

"The festival serves two purposes," he notes. "First, there is going to be a wonderful cultural event with vocal music of the highest quality this country has to offer. Second, as we have benefited from financial support, I decided we will invite high-school students, soldiers and university students to the concerts free of charge. That's my ticket. I want to give something back from the word go. It fits in with my social-political agenda, and I know that youngsters find it difficult to pay for concert tickets. It's an expensive business."

He also sees the move as a long-term investment. "I

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The [Tel Aviv Soloists Ensemble](#) kicks off the festival. (Nitzan Shorer)

hope these youngsters will come to the festival and will continue coming to concerts later on in life, too," he says.

Other standout items in the festival include The Voice of Colors concert by the Jerusalem-based Thalamus Vocal Quartet, which will perform a varied program incorporating material by Rossi, Arcadelt, Kurt Weill and Cole Porter.

The last morning of the first weekend also features a "Tour & Concert" slot, with guided tours of some of the city's most interesting neighborhoods in addition to short concerts in various churches and other notable venues.

The second Choral Fantasy installment includes a concert of Italian and Spanish music with the Shahar Choir, directed by Gila Brill, and musicians from the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance, with works by Monteverdi, de Falla, Granados, Rodrigo and Piazzolla. This will take place at 5 p.m. on December 22, followed by "Homage to Three Traditions" with the Gary Bertini Israeli Chamber Choir, an instrumental ensemble and the Ankor Choir. The concert will include the Israeli premiere of "Ashkina" by Sharon Farber, Leonard Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms" and various a cappella works based on texts taken from Psalms.

The Choral Fantasy festivities will close on December 24 with some seasonal musical. The Jerusalem A Cappella Singers Choir, under conductor Judy Axelrod, will perform a program of Christmas-related material.

"There will also be some surprises along the way," promises Bigelman. "I hope the festival takes off and, hopefully, next year we'll bring an ensemble or two here from abroad. The YMCA is a lovely place to perform and listen to music, and the acoustics in the auditorium are good."

Bigelman hopes that people will come from other parts of the country to hear music in Jerusalem. "You know, the distance from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv is exactly the same as from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. We have a very good program here, so there is no reason why people shouldn't make the trip to Jerusalem for it. There is a very wide range of material on offer, from baroque to the Beatles and plenty in between."

He says he is particularly looking forward to the closing show of the first weekend, which features a second appearance by the Jerusalem Academy Chamber Choir and Stanley Sperber, whose efforts will be augmented by the Megiddo Choir under Pnina Inbar. The November 3 slot (7 p.m.) includes the Israeli premiere of Motet for 40 Voices by 16th-century English composer Thomas Tallis.

"There will be five choirs, each with eight singers," Bigelman explains. "It is an a cappella work with 40 voices. That should be something."

Bigelman will also be on singing duty at free concerts by the Oratorio Choir.

"I think there's something for everyone in the program," he says. "I am really looking forward to it." •

For tickets and more information: (02) 569-2693, (09) 894-5957, [www.run-art.co.il](http://www.run-art.co.il) or [www.ymca-fantasy.com](http://www.ymca-fantasy.com)