The Artist’s Way
as a Path
Toward Peace

By Cynthia Cohen, Ph.D.
Director, Coexistence Research and International Collaborations
Slifka Program in Intercultural Coexistence; Cochair, Intercultural Residency Series

Peacebuilding scholars and practitioners increasingly recognize that restoring relationships in the aftermath of violence requires something more than judicial proceedings and pragmatic solutions to practical problems. In the conflicts that plague our world today, violence too often insinuates itself into the psyches and spirits, the bodies and souls of both children and adults. Such conflicts are not amenable to transformation through rational processes alone. They require modes of expression that embrace paradox and give voice to thoughts and feelings that defy words. Transformation of violent conflict calls for forms of engagement that touch bodies and spirits as well as minds, reaching deeply into persons and broadly throughout societies.

This intuition animated the Brandeis International Fellowship Program “Recasting Reconciliation through Culture and the Arts,” a recent program of Brandeis’ Slifka Program in Intercultural Coexistence. In it we learned of the Burundian drummers, Deo Ntakarutimana and Maurice Gasabanya, who have continually chosen to stay alive to protect each other rather than succumb to frightening rage. We watched a film in which we might experience while watching Aziz’s drumming and singing in the West today, and Yeghish. M Susanak, Duduk player, an Armenian Christian. They will be joined by Aziz, an authentic Sufi Dervish, a member of the Mevlevi Sufi Order both in Turkey and in the United States. As described in the summer 2004 edition of Sing Out! The Folk Song Magazine, in the Yuval Ron Ensemble “Israelis, Arabs, Armenian and American Jewish musicians join forces on [a] sincere effort to do in music what seemingly cannot be achieved in the world’s capitals and on its battlefields—to explore the very real affinities among the related cultures of the Middle East and to blend them in a manner that strengthens them all.”

Can the beauty of the Yuval Ron Ensemble’s powerful exploration of the musics of the religions of the Middle East inspire us to restore relationships with those we have come to regard as ‘other’ or even as ‘enemy’? What possibilities for peace can be found in the wonder we might experience while watching Aziz dance and listening to Najwa’s smooth, unspoken, frightened rage. We watched a film in which hauntingly beautiful melodies supported the audience to listen, to stay present and open, to stories of loss told by both American and Vietnamese widows of war.

The intuition that music makes unique contributions to intercultural understanding and to peace is central to the Yuval Ron Ensemble, coming to Brandeis this October to launch the Intercultural Residency Series.

Brandeis Music Marquee Series

Bob Nissel’s Big Wolf Band
Friday, October 7, 8:00 pm
Join one of the finest jazz composers and bassists in New England for the exciting debut of his new ten-piece “little big band” in a swinging concert of new compositions and standards.

Irving Fine Memorial Concert
Sunday, October 23, 3:00 pm
Our annual tribute to the great American composer Irving Fine, founder of the Brandeis Department of Music. This year’s concert features Daniel Shapiro, violin, and Sally Pinkas, piano.

Free and open to the public.

The Boston Secession
What Makes It Great:
Unlocking the Guilty Pleasures of Choral Masterworks
Saturday, November 5, 8:00 pm
Director Jane Ring Frank and the acclaimed 25-voice professional ensemble, The Boston Secession, conduct a curatorial tour of choral music’s museum of greatest hits. Program includes Hubert Parry’s Wes Clad: Gilbert and Sullivan’s Hail Poetry, Durufles’ Ubi Caritas, Swingle Singers’ Bourree for Bach, and Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus.”

Auros Group for New Music:
A Tribute to Eric Chasalow
Tuesday, November 12, 8:00 pm
New England’s premier contemporary chamber music ensemble honors Brandeis’s award-winning composer on his 50th birthday. Program features his electronic and acoustic compositions from 1984 to the present and the world premiere of a new concerto.

Rozart Re-Mix
A 42nd Anniversary Celebration
Wednesday, November 30, 8:00 pm
In 1965, avant-garde composer John Cage premiered his work “The Rozart Mix” at The Rose Art Museum at Brandeis. A recreation of this historic concert will be performed by Alvin Lucier at The Rose celebrating Brandeis’s commitment to innovative music. Free and open to the public.

Joshua Gordon
An Immigrant’s Journey:
The Complete Works for Cello and Piano by Leo Ornstein
(1892–2002)
Sunday, December 11, 3:00 pm
Lydian cellist Joshua Gordon is joined by pianist Randall Hodgkinson for a special concert of works by Leo Ornstein.

How do we transcend the cycles of violence that bewitch our human communities while still living in them? Transcending violence is forged by the capacity to generate, mobilize and build the moral imagination.... We must venture into the mostly uncharted territory of the artist’s way as applied to social change, the canvases and poetics of human relationships, imagination and discovery, and ultimately the mystery of vocation for those who take up such a journey—John Paul Lederach, The Moral Imagination