

# On the spectrum: The many colors of Jerusalem on view during white night

Wouldn't it be nice to feel good about the municipality? Wouldn't it be great to pay our housing taxes and, maybe, even our parking fines with a smile on our face?

By BARRY DAVIS DECEMBER 12, 2019 16:45



Beit Hillel returns to its roots with a stunning production of 'Fiddler on the Roof' (photo credit: ELI SINGALOVSKI)

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Wouldn't it be nice to feel good about the [municipality](#)? Wouldn't it be great to pay our housing taxes and, maybe, even our parking fines with a smile on our face? OK, so that may stretching things a little too far, but those of us who go along to the Spectrum shebang over at city hall on December 19 may come away with a lingering feel-good luster about the people who run the Jerusalem urban facilities and services.

Spectrum – which the organizers also call White Night, and which was thought up by Arts and Culture Department honcho Yoram Braverman – kicks off at 8 p.m. and runs through until 2 a.m. The promo video adds a titillating subtitle of “the arts takeover of city hall,” which is a pretty succinct description of the happening.

Einat Gomel, head of the [municipality](#)'s Events Department, is happy with the moniker. “Of course, Spectrum can have connotations relating to autism. But Jerusalem is on the spectrum,” she notes. “It is on the spectrum of everything – of religion, on a philosophy of life, on the interface between East and West, of everything. Jerusalem is located at the meeting point of everything.” There may be some other cultural, religious, ethnic and

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sociopolitical strands around the world that our capital does not, in fact, encompass, but you get Gomel's multifaceted point.

The name of the event also infers an eclectic and polychromic corrective approach. "This also talks about a sort of spectrum of color, of the relationship between art and the municipality, which is perceived as being very gray and bureaucratic and generic," Gomel says.

She might have added that, for many of us, city hall is almost solely about shelling out for services. Gomel and her city hall cohorts were keen to offer us the opportunity of adjusting that mindset next week. "It is specifically in these places [such as the Collections Department] that we are introducing artistic, colorful, different content, at night. We hope that the next time you go there to pay a bill, you'll remember this fun event," Gomel laughs.

The "fun event" takes in a range of workshops, performance, dance, concerts, exhibitions and parties at all kinds of spots – some very surprising – across the municipality compound. As the event blurb puts it: "this proves that it is possible, through creativity and support for art, to turn the Collections Division into a cultural domain, and the mayor's office into a place for piyutim (liturgical song), the plenum into a concert hall and the municipal parking lot into a giant party location." The live musical entertainment lineup takes in some top class acts, including Arabic music troupe Firqat Al-Nur, and internationally renowned indie band Lola Marsh.

Mayor Moshe Lion appears to be well and truly on board the Spectrum venture. Not only is he accommodating a piyutim concert in his own workplace, he will be joining in the fun himself. Apparently, Lion was blessed with no small amount of talent in the singing department, and will display that in the company of a bunch of like-minded instrumentalists.

THERE ARE surprises almost everywhere you look in the program, such as the hands on slot scheduled at the Archives Department, which will be overseen by artist Ruth Hoff. "This is a sort of memory database," Gomel explains. "You go from station to station in the department, and you are asked about your memories, with Ruth's help." There will be a bunch of artists on hand, too, to portray your personal recollections in a more creative format.

The seemingly incongruous setting will also fill a role in the evolving creative process. "The artists come from different disciplines, so that will come across," says Gomel. "And the archives are also a place where all the gifts given to the various mayors are stored, and Ruth will relate to all that too."

There is also an intriguing and eminently appropriate exhibition lined up.

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Award-winning photographer Eli Singalovski has a thing about architecture in general, and the four works he will display at Spectrum indicate he places a sensitive and understanding finger on his camera release button.

The four structures in question include two instantly recognizable downtown features, as well as a couple of apartment blocks that appear to be representative of a more generic slew of buildings. I put it to Singalovski that, among other epithets, Jerusalem has always been known as a city with an unforgiving masonic aesthetic. Writers across the centuries have depicted the rough landscape around the city and, in more recent times, the fabled Jerusalem Stone façade ruling introduced by late iconic mayor Teddy Kollek. But Singalovski's works present the harsh exterior in a softer, gentler, light – literally.

That, apparently, was the point. “That, basically, is what the work is about,” he notes. “I have been working with architecture for many years as a subject, in Israel and abroad, but the original idea was to talk about the people via the architecture. I didn't want to address the building, just as a building, rather to relate to the building as a go-between, with signs and testimony of the people who live in it and use it.”

That is an intriguing approach, especially considering that his pictures of the Clal Building, Amir Center and apartment blocks in Kiryat Hayovel and on Koresh Street, in the center of the city, show not a single living soul. Singalovski, instead, takes the subliminal line. He leaves it up to us, the viewers, to complete the human and human-esque picture. “The idea was to photograph the buildings in this way, to get as close as possible to a portrait picture – as portrait picture of a building taken in a studio. Like taking a picture of a person in the studio, against a black backdrop.”

That may sound a little strange, but you get that. Singalovski took the pictures at night, using long exposure, and the end result is an image which is appealing and inviting. It is, indeed, as if the structures in question have a persona, if not personality, of their own. “I wanted to leave out all the stuff that I think is irrelevant. I wanted to take nighttime pictures in order to detach the building from its surroundings, with a black sky. That was designed to help the viewer focus on all the details of the building.”

Therein lies the human reference. We see laundry hanging on a line and can, possibly, imagine who the wearers are. There are air conditioners and old satellite dishes, bicycle and scooters, cars and the odd indoor light. Who are these people? Are there youngsters living there who, the following morning, jumped on their bicycle and rode to school? Who are the beneficiaries of the hot water stored in rooftop containers? “There are balconies that have been closed off and changed – say in the Amir Center building,” Singalovski observes. “Who did that? And why?”

Spectrum may be the harbinger of more, similarly veined, fare further down the line. We want to open the municipality at different times, to add different content and show the public a different face,” Gomel continues. “We hope this event becomes a fixture, that it becomes a tradition.”

The initiative is also targeted and two specific categories of Jerusalemites. “There are two audiences that we want ‘to convince’ to attend our events – municipality personnel of the various departments, and the general public.” The latter is a given, but why should employees, who spend five days a week at city hall, need to be “convinced” to go to the event? Surely they know the score, from firsthand, long-term range.

I'd missed the point. Gomel was talking about the need to get municipality staff on board the spirit of the new project. “We want to persuade them that it is worthwhile and that it is okay for members of the public to go into their

offices, and that all will be well with that, and that the interface between art and the municipality is welcome and profitable.”

Leon says that Spectrum is part of a more expansive drive to give the arts a much-needed boost in Jerusalem. “I am a former businessman and I understand the soul of the individual artist,” he says, “the artist who has to fight for his artistic work. Spectrum is another step by us to support artists and make culture and artist accessible to the general public, through the municipality’s people, infrastructures and creativity.”

Hopefully Spectrum will achieve all that, and become an annual fixture.

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