

# GIL SHOHAT

COMPOSER, CONDUCTOR, PIANIST

Both at home and abroad, audiences and critics alike regard the youthful Gil Shohat as one of the leading Israeli musicians of his generation. Forbes magazine, together with all three of Israel's major newspapers (*Yedioth Aharonoth*, *Ma'ariv* and *Ha'aretz*) have declared Shohat to be "The most important and influential personality in classical music in Israel." In June 2009, the French government named him a Knight in the prestigious Order of Arts and Letters.

He is the composer of nine large-scale symphonies, ten concertos for various instruments, three operas, various oratorios, cantatas, solo vocal pieces, and dozens of chamber and piano pieces, as well as the performer of more than 80 concerts a year worldwide, both as a conductor and pianist.

Shohat came to local and international attention with his opera *Alpha and Omega* (2001) - the largest original opera production ever staged in Israel - receiving enthusiastic reviews worldwide. This was followed by the operas *Tyre and Jerusalem* (2002) and *Badenheim* (2005); Shohat has also written musical and theater pieces for children, including the musical *Max and Moritz* (2004). All these compositions have enjoyed world premieres, with most receiving repeat performances throughout Israel as well as Europe.

Shohat's music has been performed by conductors Gary Bertini, John Nelson, Mendi Rodan, Steven Sloane, Alvaro Cassuto, Stanley Sperber, Philippe Entremont, Yuval Zaliouk, Shlomo Mintz, Hermann Max, Micha Damev, Doron Salomon, Jonathan Webb, Peter Bergamin, Gabor Hollerung, Massimo Mercelli, Daniel Reuss, Elias Arizcuren, Nir Kabaretti, and Mats Liljefors. In addition, Shohat regularly performs as a pianist and conducts his own compositions. Orchestras that have performed Shohat's works include the Berlin Symphony, the Rome Opera Orchestra, the Pomereggio Musicale Orchestra of Milan, the Cologne Radio Orchestra, the Bochum Symphony, the St. Petersburg Hermitage Orchestra, the Dohnany Orchestra of Budapest, the Bucharest Philharmonic, the Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, the Bangkok Symphony Orchestra, the Irish Chamber Orchestra, and all major Israeli orchestras - including the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, the Israel Symphony Orchestra Rishon LeZion, the Haifa Symphony Orchestra, the Raanana Symphonette, the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, and the Israel Chamber Orchestra. All these Israeli orchestras have also commissioned orchestral pieces from Shohat. Choirs that have sung Shohat's vocal music include the WDR Koln Choir, the Rheinische Kantorei Choir, the Philharmonia Singers, the Milwaukee Symphony Choir, Cappella

Amsterdam, the Philharmonic Choir, the Israeli Opera Choir, the Union Choir, the Kibbutz Choir, the Moran Children's Choir, and the Bat-Kol Children's Choir. His concertos, chamber music and solo pieces have been performed by numerous first-rate soloists, ensembles and singers worldwide.

Gil Shohat has collaborated with EMI/Virgin Classics to record his orchestrations. The Israeli Broadcast Authority made a documentary about his music, with the participation of many leading local artists. Another documentary, focusing on his opera *Alpha and Omega*, was produced by the French television channel "MUZZIK". The Jerusalem Music Center commissioned, produced, and recorded his 16 *Anekdotos* Cycle. Israeli Director Michal Kesten produced the film "Omegas," based on Shohat's *Alpha and Omega*. Additionally, performances of his works have been recorded and broadcast by radio stations around the world, including Israel's "Kol Hamusica", France's "Radio France", Germany's WDR, Italy's RAI, the USA's WFMT and Hong Kong's National Radio.

Shohat's works has also been performed and/or commissioned by the Venice Biennale, the Royal Palace Music Festival in Stockholm, the Cappella Amsterdam, the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, the Music Festival of Macedonia, the Royal Palace Music Festival (Sweden), the Hermitage Festival, the Perugia Music-Fest, the Emilia Romagna Festival, the Vermont Mozart Festival (USA), the Roque d'Antheron Piano Festival (France), the Ruhr Piano Festival (Germany), the Jewish Music Festival of London, the International Music Festival of Yugoslavia, and the Dominican Republic Philharmonic International Festival, the Portland Quartet, the Amarcord ensemble. Performances and commissions in Israel include the Israel Festival, the International Chamber Music Festival in Jerusalem, the Upper Galilee Chamber Music Festival, the Keshet Eilon International Master Course for Violinists, Tel Hai International Master Classes for Pianists, and ICO's Classic-Chamber Festival in Eilat. Numerous worldwide ensembles of contemporary music have commissioned and performed his works, such as Conjunto Iberico (Spain), Mussica d'Oggi (Italy), Matisse Ensemble (Italy), and Musica Nova (Israel). Additionally, Shohat has written large-scale theater pieces for the Beit Lessin and Cameri Theaters in Tel Aviv.

Gil Shohat was born in Israel in 1973. He began his musical studies at the age of 7, and by 12 was composing and performing his own piano pieces. Shohat's first orchestral composition - a cantata, *The Nightingale and the Rose* - was commissioned by the Israel Chamber Orchestra when he was just 18. He is a graduate of the Israel Conservatory of Music, Tel Aviv (1984-1990). He received his first and second degrees (BM, MM) from the Mehta-Buchman School of Music at Tel Aviv University (1991-1995) and holds two post-graduate diplomas (piano and composition) from the Santa Cecilia National Academy in Rome (1995-1997). He pursued advanced studies with Prof. Alexander Goehr of Cambridge University in England (1997-1998). All of his degrees were awarded *summa cum laude*. Most of Shohat's compositions are published by the CASA RICORDI Editions, which he joined

at the age of 23 - the youngest composer in the company's history. His composition teachers included Andre Hadju in Israel and Azio Corghi, Ivan Vandor, and Luciano Berio in Italy. His piano teachers were Rachel Feinstein and Arie Vardi in Israel, Sergio Perticaroli in Italy, and Maria Curcio in England. His conducting teachers were Stanley Sperber and John Nelson.

Gil Shohat has won many prizes and accolades, including the Israel Conservatory Prize (1989), Rubin Israel Music Academy Prize (1993), the Italian Government Grant for Advanced Studies (1995-1996), and the British Council Award (1997). He has been awarded grants by the American-Israel Cultural Foundation (1990-1998), the Bracha Foundation (2001), the Rich Foundation (2001, 2005, 2007), and the Rabinovich Tel Aviv Foundation for the Arts (2001-2007). He received first prize for composition from the Arthur Rubinstein International Society, his work becoming the obligatory piano piece for contestants in the International Arthur Rubinstein Piano Competition (1998). He is a laureate of Israel's Caesarea Edmond Benjamin de Rothschild Foundation (2001). He received the Tel Aviv Prize for the Performing Arts – Rosenblum Prize (2002) and the Israel Theater Prizes for “the most significant event of the year” for his opera *Alpha and Omega* (2002), as well composer of the year (2004). He won the Prime Minister's Prize for composition (2003). He has received a prize and a commission from the Zfunot Tarbut Foundation for the Promotion of Art and Artists in Israel in 2006-2007. His sponsors include the Safra Group in Switzerland, Motorola Israel, Mr. Murray Pepper (Los Angeles), Mrs. Susan Rose (New York City), and the prestigious *Soli Deo Gloria* Foundation in Chicago. Gil Shohat is a chosen artist of Israel Cultural Excellence Foundation (IcExcellence) since 2004.

As a pianist, Shohat performs more than 40 concerts a year and has given recitals and solo performances with orchestras in 25 nations, including most European capitals, the Far East, India, and the Americas. In Israel, he performed his first recital at age 12; by age 16 Shohat had performed as a soloist with every major national orchestra, including the Israel Philharmonic. Along with a selection of his peers, Shohat established a group of young piano virtuosi who have undertaken a series of performance "marathons". These have included the complete piano repertoire of Chopin (2002-2004), the complete piano repertoire of Schumann (2004-2006), the complete Scriabin sonatas (2004), major piano works by Rachmaninoff (2006), and the complete partitas by Bach (2007). Shohat has recorded 10 CDs as a pianist with Israel's Helicon and NMC labels.

Gil Shohat has been a visiting professor/artist at several music academies and universities worldwide, including The Harvard University, Princeton University, Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, The American University (Washington DC), the National Academy Santa Cecilia (Rome), University of Georgia (US), Iceland Academy of Music, Bucknell University (Pennsylvania), Kutztown University (Pennsylvania), and the Belgrade Music Academy.

In addition, Shohat is a sought-after lecturer in his country. He teaches musical composition at Tel Aviv University (the Mehta School of Music and Cathedra Advanced Studies) and at Israel's Open University ("Ascolot"), where he has developed and taught over 30 courses. In Tel Aviv alone, he collaborates with cultural centers such as the Diaspora Museum, the Zionist Organization of America, the Ayala Zaks House, the Lev and Khen Cinema Chains, the Cinematheque, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, and the Eretz Israel Museum. He has served as the editor and moderator of the Piano Series of the Chamber Music Center at the Israeli Conservatory of Music.

He is the artistic director of the Lecture-Recital Series which has been held in cities such as Haifa, Caesarea, Ashdod, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. This series has included full courses on subjects such as: The History of Western Music; Bach's Piano Music; Bach's Oratorios; Requiems from Scarlatti to Penderecki; Haydn Symphonies; Mozart Chamber Music; Mozart Piano Music; Beethoven's Symphonies; Beethoven's Chamber Music; Beethoven's Sonatas; Chamber Music and Lieder by Brahms and Schubert; the Complete Operas by Verdi, Puccini, Wagner and Strauss; Mahler's Complete Symphonies; French Music in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century; French Impressionist Music; Second and Third Viennese Schools; Schoenberg and his Contemporaries; Music Between the World Wars; Contemporary Music; Contemporary Operas; Post-Serial Music; Electronic Music; and Avant-Garde Jazz Compositions.

Shohat's projects that go beyond the concert-music world include: Shohat-Ptashka Piano Duo Show (Jazz); Shohat-Khan Piano-Tabla Duo (Indian Music); the Vilensky Project (Israeli Folk Music); Pink Floyd's *The Wall* – a remake production with the Israel Chamber Orchestra, choir and soloists (Rock); and French Chansons with Tilda Rajoan and the Israel Chamber Orchestra.

In 2008, Shohat founded two ensembles: The Israel Soloists, a string ensemble based in Berlin that comprises Israeli and international string players; and the Israel Festival Orchestra – Elysium Ensemble, led by 12 prominent musicians in Israel. Since 2008, Shohat is the Artistic Director of the "Sounds of Youth" Festival of the city of Holon. This Festival is the leading music festival for children in Israel. Since 2003, he is the Musical Advisor and Head of Music of the world-renowned Israel Festival in Jerusalem. In 2008, the renowned conductor Valery Gergiev appointed Shohat the Artistic Advisor of Red Sea International Classical Music Festival. Shohat is also the Musical Director of the Ein Hod "Maestro" Festival, an annual classical music festival during the Shavuot holiday in an artists' village in northern Israel. In early 2009, he was also named the Chief Music Director of the new Kiryat Motzkin Theater, the largest, most prestigious, and most active theater and concert hall in northern Israel.

Starting in the 2004-2005 season, Gil Shohat received an appointment as Musical Director and Chief Conductor of the Israel Chamber Orchestra (until

2008). With the orchestra Shohat performed more than forty concerts a year as a conductor. Since 2001, he was the Resident Composer of the Israel Symphony Orchestra Rishon LeZion and the Artistic Director and host of their chamber music series (Until 2005). During his military service (1991-1994), Shohat served as the coordinator and commander of the Israel Defense Forces Chamber Orchestra and ensembles, as well as the official concert pianist of the IDF. In the same period he also served as editor and moderator of a concert series for young artists at the Jerusalem Music Center, and the Presenter of the International Arthur Rubinstein Piano Master Competition (1992 and 1995). He received his first official position as the resident composer of the Israel Chamber Orchestra (1998-2000).