

Creating Light and Hope



Composer and social activist Yuval Ron '89

A major goal of the capital campaign Soundbreaking: The Campaign for Berklee is to “promote the power of music to change people’s lives for the better.” The unique journey of **Yuval Ron '89** exemplifies this theme.

Before coming to Berklee from Israel in 1985, Ron was an aspiring jazz guitarist who discovered his passion for composition during his compulsory military service. At Berklee, Ron majored in film scoring and, soon after graduation, a friend from Berklee encouraged him to move to Los Angeles where he began working on a TV series. This was the beginning of a steady flow of work scoring animated and live-action shows.

Over the next decade, Ron composed for television, dance, film and theater. He also started to play the oud after falling in love with the sound of the instrument at age 17 upon hearing it played by Bedouin tribesmen in the Sinai desert. During his early years in Los Angeles, he also experienced a growing interest in three religious traditions of the Middle East: Judaism, early Christianity, and Sufism (a mystical path of Islam).

During the late 1990s, Ron’s growing awareness of the violence between Israelis and Palestinians prompted him to become involved in social activism. In 2000, he formed the Yuval Ron Ensemble to promote harmony across borders and national divides. Members of the ensemble include a Palestinian, an Armenian Christian, Sufis from Pakistan and Turkey, a Jewish Moroccan dancer, and Israeli singer **Maya Haddi '99**. Having grown up in the part of the world where Judaism, Christianity and Islam all began, his ensemble represents his belief that the power of music can create peace and unity.

Led by Ron on the oud, the ensemble has enjoyed success internationally

and in the United States. The group was invited by the king of Morocco to appear at the Fes Festival of World Sacred Music in 2009 and had the honor of headlining a benefit concert for the Dalai Lama’s initiative “Seeds of Compassion” promoting compassion in education, business, and community. They were also featured four times at the Festival of World Sacred Music in Los Angeles and performed at the 2005 International Peace Festival in South Korea.

A notable highlight in his film scoring career came with *West Bank Story*, which premiered at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival. In 2007, at the 79th Academy Awards, it won the Oscar in the Best Live Action Short Film category. In an interesting parallel to the music of his ensemble, this film is a remake of *West Side Story* set against the backdrop of Palestinian-Israeli relations.

Additionally, Ron has offered a mentorship program in Los Angeles for emerging composers, songwriters, and music producers since 1989. During this six-month experience, he teaches practical aspects of music business and music production for film, television, dance, and theater. Many Berklee graduates have benefited from this program.

For Ron, music is the vehicle to bring people together, emphasize the beauty in each culture, and build bridges between people of various faiths and ethnic backgrounds. “We are trying to create light,” Ron says of his ensemble. “We are trying to create hope.”

Visit www.yuvalronmusic.com to learn more about this composer, artist, educator, peace activist, and oud specialist.

—Peter Gordon '78

Director of the Berklee Center in L.A.

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