

Profile of IRIT RUB
IPO KeyNote Education and Outreach Program Director

My "romance" with the IPO started many years ago. It was 1980 and I was a soloist with the Orchestra in a youth concert. Maestro Mehta liked my playing and invited me to perform the Shostakovich piano concerto with him at the opening of the 1981 season...an unforgettable experience! The Maestro really knows how to give a soloist a wonderful feeling and the best professional support.



Irit Rub, KeyNote Director



Shesh Besh, Arab/Jewish Ensemble

The IPO has held a warm place in my heart for many years, even before my performance with the Orchestra. The greatest musical moments of my youth I experienced with the IPO. Listening to **Mehta** conducting the *Rite of Spring*, 38 years ago, **Lenny** conducting Mahler, **Maazel** conducting Mahler's 6th Symphony! Such great concerts, such unforgettable performances!!

The Story of KeyNote

My work at **KeyNote**, the Education and Outreach Program of the IPO, started over eight years ago when **Avi Shoshani**, IPO Secretary General, asked me to write a proposal for an education program. I wrote my vision, believing that the beauty of the sound and the value of "centuries old" classical music could have a genuine impact on everyone, especially children, if only I could find the best vehicle to teach them to listen. In December 1999 I was invited to present the program to the AFIPO Board of Directors during their visit in Israel. The next day I was invited to start working. Collaborating with AFIPO Executive Director, **Suzanne Ponsot**, IPO Bass **Peter Marck** and Avi Shoshani, the KeyNote Program was born and now reaches over 20,000 children and young adults each year, teaching them the skills to enjoy the music.

Recently, KeyNote received a donation from the **Fondazione Monte dei Paschi di Siena**, enabling the Orchestra to play in the peripheries, encouraging the audience to come and listen to our concerts in Tel Aviv. Making contact with people in the outlying areas, people who really love music and are enthusiastic to hear the IPO, makes me feel that my work is meaningful and that our music can bring so much joy to so many.

This season, I am responsible for the Family Concert Series, a wonderful program of performances that engages young and older audiences together. I have made a few changes to make the series more interesting and versatile. I hope to encourage active participation from the audience, similar to our KeyNote concerts performed for the school children.

How do the IPO musicians participate in the KeyNote program?

Working with IPO musicians in KeyNote is very rewarding. Distinguished musicians, who were, at first, very reserved and could not see themselves "playing" in the classroom, are now the greatest partners of the program. Many times they come back from the school sessions with glittering eyes and say to me: "It was great! The children know so much, they recognized the pieces, they asked so many questions, they did not want to leave us even in the intermission..." The musicians really feel that they are doing something important, not only investing in future audiences, but also influencing young people by their artistry!

Once, an IPO string quintet and I were working in a most difficult high school, preparing the students for the orchestral concert. The students really resisted classical music and we expected challenging hours there. At the end of the session, one of the students, came over to Robert Mozes (an IPO First Violinist), gave him a friendly pat on the back and said: "Hey man, you are the real thing..." Robi was so happy! That was a true compliment!

How is the IPO different than other orchestras worldwide?

I think that the IPO genuinely feels the importance of being a cultural ambassador for the State of Israel. The Orchestra participated in so many meaningful moments here and abroad and there is an emotional involvement of the musicians that, I think, does not exist in other orchestras around the world.

Also, so many of the musicians are constantly playing chamber music and keep themselves at a very high musical level. That is obviously very important to maintain the standard of excellence required by this orchestra.

Shesh Besh, the Arab/Jewish Ensemble of KeyNote, in the United States

I remember when I first came to New York City, in 1985, after playing concerts in Canada. I landed there and was so shocked by the huge buildings, the noise, the tempo and rhythm of the big city; for three days I just sat at my friend's house and did not want to go out. It took another day or two to fall in love with the City. The rest of the week I ran from one museum to the other, from a Broadway musical to a concert, I could not get enough!

When I returned to the United States with Shesh Besh, it was an important experience. I felt that we proudly introduced the beautiful side of our country, the collaboration between people, the hope for a better future and the great power of music to bring people and nations together. This message traveled very well and people were inspired. The hope, which this group awoke in the audiences' hearts, was that there is a chance for understanding and cooperation between Arabs and Jews in Israel!

On the last evening of one of our Berkshire visits, we all sat on the balcony in the hotel and, for the first time, a real conversation took place: not only the nice, friendly talk that was always between members of the ensemble, but also the painful things, personal, as well as national. That discussion about living together as equal citizens in our country went on until dawn. We all knew then that there is still a long way to go on this path – but together we are traveling it day by day.

A Closing Thought

Living in Israel, with my eldest daughter who is a soldier, my son who will join the army in November and my other two sons who will be soldiers in the future, I know that I am very fortunate to be a musician and to be a part of KeyNote with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. This beauty of music-making and enjoying listening to music is a gift that makes life in Israel bearable. To be able to share this gift with 20,000 children every year, is something that I am really grateful for. I know it is not only for music's sake that our work is done; it is for a better society in Israel, a tolerant and more patient one, and hopefully one day, also a peaceful one.