

GALLERY גלריה

Strumming on the strings of her love

Amir Mandel

Cellist virtuoso Kristina Reiko Cooper is the scion of a musical family from the United States. Her father is an American pianist and her mother is a violinist of Japanese extraction. She completed her doctorate in music at the prestigious Juilliard School of Music at an early age, and took the fast track to an international career of concerts and recordings. The New York Times acclaimed her as "sensational in concert" and she has amassed a host of rave reviews, concert invitations and trips from stage to stage.

An unexpected turn in the story occurred a decade ago, when she met Leonard Rosen, a Jewish investment banker from New York who was managing his bank's operations in Israel. Cooper converted to Judaism, the two married and decided to live in Israel. It was convenient but not necessary for his work, and the two decided to live in an atmosphere in which Jewish culture is dominant and present, not a deserted island. Since then, Cooper splits her time between New York and Tel Aviv, with Israel being the family's primary base.

She has a teaching position here as a professor in academia, and continues to appear — much around the world, little in Israel.

Besides the personal change, her musical performance also changed. She says she started on the most accepted track and the toughest education. In her family, a career in music is almost unavoidable. "My sister is the rebel in the family by not becoming a musician," she says. She started out studying the piano, then violin, but says she fell in love early on with the cello. She says its sound is so similar to the human voice.

"It took time until I could play the cello, technically, because my hands are small, but at age 10 I started to study and the love between me and the cello has continued ever since."

She studied in the most prestigious schools, meet-

ing at Juilliard Joel Sachs, a teacher and codirector of Continuum, the new music ensemble. "The encounter with modern music taught me a lot," she says, explaining she learned how to draw sounds out of her cello that characterize new music. She says she mainly learned not to be afraid to try. Now, she says, when she teaches, she tells her students to dare to go a little crazy.

Cooper dared. She started becoming interested in combining styles, in crossing borders between genres, matching classical music with the world of the singer and the tune, jazz and every musical component that can go together. She released the album "Stone and Steel" in 2009, which she says was inspired by Israel. She says it is based on ancient foundations, but processed in a modern spirit. Songs of early Renaissance and Baroque composers like Dowland and Purcell, and other early works performed in a style that is close to jazz, as if they had immigrated to our time.

Despite crossing genres in her recent work, Cooper's love for classical music remains strong.

Her latest project is "Around the World with Love," a collection of love songs from around the world, which she play on the cello together with Or Matias on piano and Satoshi Takeishi on percussion. The album has classical tracks like the beautiful song "Après Un Rêve" by Gabriel Fauré, as well as popular songs like the Mexican Besame Mucho by Consuelo Velazquez and "My Beloved" ("Ahuvati Sheli Livnat Tzavar") by Sasha Argov.

Cooper says she believes that classical music is a little closed inside inflexible and outdated forms. "I fear it's driving away the young, contemporary crowd," she says. There is a fear that interest in classical music will decline, that this whole at-

mosphere will shrink into a closed world that gradually dies away, she says. She cites Israel as an example of a country that is fairly active musically, having many orchestras and musicians. Still, it seems to her, interest in classical music, its place in the public stage and the feeling that it lives as part of the world of young people are all declining, being pushed a little to the edges, relative to what people say Israel used to be like.

Precise and meticulous

The solution Cooper offers is classical concerts being renewed both in content and in form to become more up-to-date. "Musicians need not sell their souls, compromise on the quality of their performance or play works that in their eyes are unworthy," she says. However, she notes, there is a need to build a program that flows well, adapts to the pace of the concert to our world, to speak a little with the audience, not to ignore it, not to preserve the traditional detachedness of the classical concert.

For example, she says that we are used to this ceremony in which the musicians, the orchestra, tune their instruments on the stage before the concert begins. "I keep my tuning to the absolute minimum, and if it isn't necessary, don't tune on the stage," she says. Now, when she performs on stage the program on the disc, which has love songs on it, she makes sure that the lyrics are projected onto a screen in the auditorium, even though they are only playing the tunes. That way the audience can relate more emotionally to the pieces.

The very choice of a mixed genre — classical and popular love songs — is a significant departure from the classical tradition. "I love the mix in general," says Cooper. She says she loves Sting's modern interpretation of Renaissance love songs by the composer John Dowland, which he released in 2006. She notes this recording also has a personal side.

"My husband loves mu-



Cellist Kristina Reiko Cooper.

Alon Shafransky

sic, but he doesn't relate to everything I've done," she says. "I wanted to do something that could be entertaining and enjoyable for him. I chose love songs."

She says there are love songs in every culture, and gave space to many cultures, periods and styles. She says the atmosphere of love songs is accessible to her husband, her children and, she supposes, other people.

Cooper says she had fun both working with musicians she admires and loves

working with them. "We started with the recorded album, and now there are also the performances."

She notes that recording is different from performing in that everything is precise and meticulous. "Every mistake and every gesture is magnified in a recording, so the recording teaches to play more precise and more polished."

She hopes to perform the love songs in Israel, too. "We have to find a suitable auditorium that will allow

projecting the words during the show," she says.

Despite her current work crossing genres, Cooper's connection to classical music remains strong, and there is a list of composers she points to as particularly beloved, or as sources of inspiration. She says Brahms embodies the tension between two sides of music — the intellect opposite emotional expression. "I very much relate to this struggle. I enjoy Rachmaninov, understand there are people who see him as a bit of a simplis-

tic or kitschy composer, but I love it. I also love the works of the 20th-century Japanese composer Toshiro Ma-yuzumi."

She particularly likes the works of contemporary American composer Steve Reich, noting that they know each other a little. It turns out that the rabbi who was involved in her conversion is also Reich's rabbi, and they met through him. She says that independent of their meeting, his works excite her because they are con-

temporary, accessible and rousing, and she hopes they will be performed more in Israel.

"It's impossible to talk about great composers without mentioning Bach, who inspired them all," she adds. "And the French composer Maurice Ravel is a special childhood memory for me. Father played piano, and Ravel's pieces that he played enchanted me."

In her choices, like in her works, Cooper crosses cultures and merges worlds.

The 10 best bars with food in Tel Aviv

Libby Spering

Tel Aviv is full of bars. They line the city's main thoroughfares as though it were London or Madrid. They dot the alleyways on the outskirts of town, taking pride in the unconventional — like exceptional food served alongside vast ranges of beer. And they surprise at every corner, including in their musical selections. Here's a short list of what we consider Tel Aviv's best bars.

Amiram

This institution has been around since the 1970s, but changed hands a few years ago into those of barmaid Haggit Colton. She runs it like those small bars in European cities — paying personal attention to each and every customer, and serving quality Guinness on tap alongside lighter options as well as wine and spirits. The kitchen serves fantastic taramasalata and dishes like shellfish, pork ribs and fried red mullet.

8 Hata'arucha Street

Barbunia Bar

Next to the small restaurant Barbunia lies this excellent bar, which plays soft American rock and stays cool even on the hottest of summer days.

On tap are Guinness, Erdinger, Becks and the Golan Heights-produced Bazelet. On the menu are light dishes like sea fish ceviche, fish carpaccio and sashimi, but also a range of grilled and fried calamari, shrimps and other seafood. Soft, white rolls are served alongside the beer, with tomato salsa and high-quality tahini.

192 Ben Yehuda Street

Extra Brut

When people who like to drink open a bar that they like to frequent themselves, this is what it looks like. Extra Brut is the little brother of Brut, the wine bar next door.

The only beers on tap here are Guinness and Stella Artois, but what beers to have on tap! An innovative system allows the glasses to be washed cold before the beer is served, resulting in a whole new level of beer arriving to your taste buds. You'll also find special spir-

its here that you won't find elsewhere.

The kitchen serves bruschetta with cured and smoked fish, as well as cheeses and cured meats from all over the world. There's always something Asian-inspired on the menu, too.

The kitchen is true to whatever comes out of the market and the mood of the person who's gone shopping that day — so you could find oysters and fresh fish on the menu, too.

36 Nahalat Binyamin Street

Pimpinella

Pimpinella is the plant from which anise is extracted, across the Mediterranean Sea. Here, anise alcoholic beverages are king and, accordingly, this place is happy and laid-back, spreading out into the street in true Mediterranean style.

Stop by for an Arak and fried fish, salty fish on challah bread with sour cream, a hard-boiled egg, baked potato and vegetables, or a Turkish cheese pastry drizzled with local honey.

There are also colorful, anise-based cocktails to sip, along with small and precise dishes. A wonderful soundtrack that ranges from French to Italian to Spanish music will make you feel happy at any hour.

115 Nahalat Binyamin Street

Norma Jean

Sitting along the border of Tel Aviv and Jaffa is this bar, taking its design inspiration from English pubs. On tap are 16 beers, which change all the time, from all over the world.

If that weren't enough, the place offers 120 whiskey labels, some of which are rarely found in Israel. Norma Jean also offers beer and whiskey tastings, which gives you the chance to try a wide range of bottled beers.

The food here is of the decadent bar-food variety, like hamburgers (recommended), homemade sausages, baby-back ribs with barbecue sauce, shrimps, mussels and more.

23 Eli'elet Street

Cerveceria

Inspired by the bars that line the streets of Madrid, this bar's starring moment is in the summer. The open bar, which spills out into the street, demands a visit



Haminzar. Fun lunch specials for \$12.

Aviad Herman

Haminzar

On your way back from the beach. Particularly light beers and lagers are served here — like Israel's Maccabi and Goldstar, Spanish Mahou and German Benediktiner Weissbier — alongside an impressive collection of gin and, of late, herbal cocktails that are totally worth trying.

Ice-cold sangria is also served, and the staff hand out free chasers of sangria and gin all night long. Chef Robert Kluger took over the kitchen a few months ago and assembled a great menu of classic Spanish dishes. Don't miss the decadent, drunken brunch, every Saturday from 11 A.M.

48 Ben Yehuda Street

Ouzeria

Styled as an upgraded version of the small ouzerias of the Greek islands, this place opens early to offer great lunch specials at some of the most attractive prices in the city (55 shekels, or \$15).

Dishes include half-Greek meals like excellent moussaka, souvlaki, grilled chicken with roasted vegetables and tahini or tzatziki, lamb siniya, smoked sirloin and even calamari with black beans in butter with smoked chipotle.

At night, the place turns into a wild bar with lively music — at which point it's best to focus on the smaller dishes like taramasalata, tzatziki, cauliflower, bruschetta and shellfish. The bar serves anise and Greek brandy, as well as carefully selected, quality wines.

44 Matalon Street

Haminzar

This bar, next to the Carmel Market, feels like it has been here forever. The barmen spoil their custom-

ers during a never-ending happy hour and keep the doors open until late into the night.

On tap are Guinness, Weihenstephaner, Becks, Pilsner Urquell, Goldstar and others that come and go. But what we love most is gulping down a glass of orange Magners Irish Cider on cold ice. The changing menu always serves up delicious food. Among the stars are fattoush salad, Caesar salad, Korean barbecue baby spareribs, pork belly sliders, mussels linguini and others. Fun lunch specials are served for 45 shekels (\$12) along with nice cheap wines by the glass.

58 Yehuda Halevi Street

Molly Bloom's

The first Irish pub to open in Tel Aviv has retained its original, unique style — warm and covered in wood. On tap are the Irish beers Guinness and Kilkenny, alongside Magners Irish Cider, Carlsberg, Tuborg and Weihenstephaner.

Of course, it also offers an impressive range of whiskeys, too. From the kitchen, it's best to stick to the shepherd's pie, Guinness sausages, roast beef sandwich or cheeseburger.

They offer membership cards to frequent visitors and a happy hour that's well worth it.

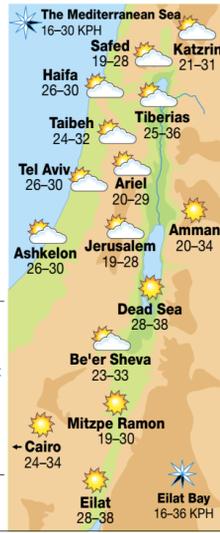
2 Mendele Mokher Sfarim Street (corner of Hayarkon Street)

Weather

No change

Today will be partly cloudy to clear with no change in the late-August heat and the humidity along the coast. Tomorrow will be the same. Wednesday and Thursday will be slightly cooler.

Tuesday Wednesday Thursday
Sunrise 06:13 Sunset 19:07
Air pollution index: 27.8.16
low medium high very high
Jerusalem Tel Aviv Haifa Krayot
Be'er Sheva Karmiel Atula Mod'in
pollution forecast for this morning: low-medium



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