



INTERNAL COMPASS MUSIC

Matanel Foundation Activity Report 2025/26

Almog Zahavi – Project Manager – Meev'er, Arts & Creativity Center

almog@internalcompassmusic.com

050-9703844

State of the Program

The 2025/26 academic year marked an important new stage in the development of the Mitzpe Ramon Music School and its surrounding cultural ecosystem. With the support of the Matanel Foundation, the scholarship program provided students and graduates with both financial stability and meaningful opportunities to deepen their professional involvement in Mitzpe Ramon.

Current students were able to continue their studies while taking active roles in sound engineering, event production, marketing, documentation, booking, community events, and the operation of the Mitzpe Ramon Jazz Club. At the same time, graduates and fourth-year students expanded their professional experience through orchestral performance, choir participation, youth ensemble leadership, studio work, equipment management, and cultural coordination.

The program strengthened the natural transition between academic studies and professional practice, while increasing the daily interaction between young musicians and the local community. Through this matching framework—supported by the Matanel Foundation, Mifal HaPais, the Mitzpe Ramon Local Council, the local Youth Center, private contributions, and Meever's organizational contribution, the scholarships have become an important foundation for retaining talented musicians in the region and advancing long-term cultural growth in the Negev.

Main Achievements

During the 2025/26 academic year, despite the continuation of the war and the periods of escalation with Iran, the Matanel Music Scholarship Program contributed significantly to the stability and growth of the school and the wider cultural ecosystem in Mitzpe Ramon.

1. **Maintaining continuity during an unstable year** - The school continued to operate throughout a highly uncertain period, while students and graduates took active roles in sustaining concerts, community events, educational activities, and the daily operation of the school's cultural institutions

2. **Responding to Mitzpe Ramon's role during the escalation with Iran** - During the periods of escalation, Mitzpe Ramon became a place of refuge for many people arriving from other parts of the country. Scholarship recipients helped operate a wide range of cultural and community activities for both local residents and temporary visitors, strengthening the town's role as a stable and welcoming cultural center.
3. **Improved student retention** - The scholarship framework reduced financial pressure and provided students with meaningful employment and professional responsibilities alongside their studies. This contributed to lower dropout rates and improved continuity throughout the academic year.
4. **Professional development of students and graduates** - Scholarship recipients gained practical experience in sound, production, booking, marketing, documentation, youth education, studio work, equipment management, and cultural coordination. This strengthened the transition between academic study and professional work.
5. **A breakthrough year for the Mitzpe Ramon Big Band** - The Big Band experienced its strongest year to date, with a significant rise in its artistic and professional level. This process culminated in a major concert at the Mitzpe Ramon Jazz Festival, marking an important milestone in the ensemble's development.
6. **Stronger integration of graduates into local cultural life** - Graduates continued to perform in orchestras and choirs, lead youth ensembles, manage cultural spaces, and support community-based music projects. Their involvement further established a sustainable professional path for musicians who choose to remain in Mitzpe Ramon.

Evaluation Report

The scholarship program achieved strong results during the 2025/26 academic year. All 16 scholarship recipients completed their annual responsibilities, and the program contributed to greater continuity among participating students. Dropout rates among scholarship recipients declined, and although some graduates still leave Mitzpe Ramon after completing the program, fewer are doing so than in previous years.

More than ten graduates were integrated into professional musical, educational, and cultural activity in Mitzpe Ramon. The Mitzpe Ramon Big Band also made a significant professional leap. Its conductor, David Alfandari, described this as the orchestra's strongest year by far, a development that is already attracting additional musicians and new activity.

Both students and graduates expressed a strong desire to continue next year. At the same time, we plan to refresh part of the recipient group, particularly among current students, in order to extend the opportunity to a broader circle.

The main operational lesson concerns coordination. Managing multiple fellows across different roles requires dedicated on-site supervision. Although the limited-hour framework has functioned well due to the recipients' motivation and commitment, next year we intend to appoint a staff member responsible for coordinating, monitoring, and supporting the scholarship participants throughout the year.



Keren Ettinger Playing the guitar
during concert in the Jazz Club



Assaf Gorren Plays the trumpet during concert in the jazz on the Edge Festival



Audience during concert in the Mitzpe Ramon jazz Club

Video Documentation: The video features the Mitzpe Ramon Music School Alumni Ensemble, directed by internationally acclaimed pianist Yonathan Avishai -

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ide8Od0dlfedJU28xuTOqbzH8FEKHTft/view?usp=sharing>

Moving Forward

After years shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, prolonged war, reserve duty, and repeated periods of instability, the continued growth of the Mitzpe Ramon Music School has proven something essential: culture can take root and flourish even under the most difficult conditions. In Israel's most remote town, we have built a stable and expanding center for music, education, and community life, demonstrating the potential of the Negev as a place of artistic excellence and long term growth.

Looking ahead, we aim to deepen the professional pathways available to both students and graduates. The scholarship program is central to this process. It enables students to continue their studies while gaining practical experience in production, education, sound, media, community work, and management. It also allows graduates to remain in Mitzpe Ramon, perform in professional ensembles, lead projects, and build sustainable careers in the region.

Through these scholarships, we seek to strengthen the natural progression from education to professional practice, create meaningful employment, and continue developing a musical ecosystem rooted in excellence, initiative, and place. In doing so, we hope not only to support individual musicians, but also to contribute to the cultural, social, and demographic growth of Mitzpe Ramon and the wider Negev.

We therefore respectfully request the renewal of the Matanel Foundation's support for the coming academic year. Continued support will allow us to sustain the progress already achieved, expand the professional opportunities available to students and graduates, and deepen the program's long term impact in Mitzpe Ramon and throughout the Negev.



'Matanel' Creative Music Program
8th year graduates. June 2026. Left
to right: Noam Vaknin, Nimrud
Lurie, Idan Plozner, Yarden Arad,
Shira Leibovitz, Gil Gofer

Thank you!

Almog Zahavi – Project Manager. MeeVer Arts & Creativity Center