

Music

Eitan Freilich

Our man in Marrakesh- don't adjust the volume!

Surrounded by exotic palaces, markets and gardens, writing under the sweltering heat of a fierce Marrakesh sun, isn't one of my brightest ideas. But after neglecting my column for several months now, I feel we have a lot of catching up to do. I'm pretty sure many of you have been wondering where I've disappeared to all this time - and even if you didn't notice, don't worry - I'll still fill you in.

Since January, no two days have been the same. On a personal note, my new-born son finally left hospital at the end of January, after a 110-day stint. Then began the legendary long, sleepless nights - us, not him - the milk bills, all the everyday routines turned topsy-turvy. What is he trying to say when he's crying? Is he hungry? Tired? Calling for attention? Who knows? Just two days after he came home, I had to rush off to Israel for an event, finally returning a day later than scheduled after two of my flights were cancelled - lucky me! Trust me when I say that I've kept this anecdote very short - it was a nightmare. Still, *c'est la vie!*

And then, Baruch Hashem, we made a bris just last month. Oh, the nerves, the anxiety - us, not him - but everything went according to plan and the only drama played out in my nervous imagination. I was working in Los Angeles at a wedding when I received the call that our little boy was finally ready, so I'm just lucky they waited for me to come home. Wasn't that thoughtful? No hurry, of course, but we needed to finish by 2pm that Sunday afternoon because I had a wedding in Hertfordshire at 3 o'clock. I'm sure my family and the entire medical team really love me! Or would do if I could slow down enough for them to register that I'm actually there.

But humour aside, it's been a very special few months, filled with real simcha. My wife and I set up a new department within the already well-established Camp Simcha to help parents like us deal with life after the birth of their premature or sick babies. What makes the project even more special to us is its name, 'Avidan's Mission', in memory of our dear younger son Avidan, who passed away so soon after his birth. To date, the project has raised an

incredible £20,000 and continues to support families, siblings and parents in so many valuable ways.

I am constantly reminded, always with the same sense of wonder and gratitude, that we live in such a giving, caring and supportive community. Sitting here in Morocco, it occurs to me that racing Land Cruisers through the desert is one of the last activities in which I ever expected to participate and, in one of the last places on earth I ever thought I'd visit. I'm no Lewis Hamilton. Come to that, I'm no Lawrence of Arabia either. No, really. But thanks to the brainchild and excellent foresight of Moishe Morris, here we are on the Chana Rally, raising much-needed funds (and I do mean much-needed) for this much-needed fertility charity. Definitely smart to bring together fast cars and superb food catered by Ezri - a recipe for success worthy of three Michelin stars.

I've only recently returned from Rimini in Italy, although it feels like years ago on a different planet. I was honoured to perform live in concert during Pesach to the wonderful crowd at the Grand Hotel, hosted by the welcoming Netzer family. Such an inspiring feeling, witnessing families sing together, dance together, and enjoy Yom Tov together. I flew back for the last days of Yom Tov, and since then (even though it's been the Omer) I've been inundated with work. Whether that's studio time, client meetings or rehearsals, it's been one of the busiest Omer periods yet. Wouldn't it be wonderful if some latter-day Einstein could invent a way to stretch time so that twenty-four hours could become a thirty-hour day? Oh, and while he was on the case, perhaps he could come up with a way in which we could get by on two hours sleep a night? Hang on, though. Since our little boy came home, we've been doing that already!

During a performance at Kinloss's community hall recently I was asked a very interesting question. Later, at a Barmitzvah on Lag B'Omer this same very interesting question came up. This query is obviously trending and my dear friends Linda and Aaron Ebert suggested I raise this in my column! So I thought it would be a great topic to share with you. You are desperately eager to



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find out what the buzz is all about, no? Well, they asked, who decides the volume of music at an event? They've been to some events where we performed at what you might call 'talking' level, meaning that you could hear yourself speak and carry on a conversation even as we were singing in the background. At other events we've been super loud (their words, not mine). At these events, 'you couldn't hear yourself think'. I thought this was a great question. There are so many factors to take into account. How big is the hall? How serious is the event? Young people enjoy the lively atmosphere of a loud performance, slightly older audiences not so much. We perform to audiences of all different types and ages. How can you pitch the



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volume at the precise level that will make everyone happy? Look, it's no more possible to keep all of the people happy all of the time than it is to fool all of the people all of the time. So what's the answer? You knew it already. The customer is always right. Simply put, we do as the client asks. Sometimes they want the music to be the focus of the night; they think of the event as a blend of concert and party. They want a loud, vibrant atmosphere rather than groups of guests clustered together, deeply absorbed in their private conversations. So for these events we take the volume high and aim for a level consonant with that at any public music event in the open air. Other clients prefer something more restrained, where the music

creates a celebratory mood but without drowning out the buzz of conversation. Interestingly enough, I don't manage to go to many simchas in a personal capacity during the year, but when I do, I'm always reminded how important it is to get the volume just right, especially when we're eating. My own rule is to always instruct our team to keep the music lower during the meal time, so people can enjoy their conversation without straining their voices. So if you have a problem with the volume, my advice is: tell your hosts. They're in charge. We're just their humble servants!

To contact Eitan Freilich for bookings or enquiries, please contact his team at management@efmusic.co.uk