

DER JAHRESBERICHT DES "JÜDISCHEN ARTECKS" SOMMER 2025

JÜDISCHES Arteck

Internationale Jugendbegegnung



ROOTS & VISION
20 YEARS OF JEWISH ARTECK

LIFE & LEARNING
BRUNDIBÁR – MELODY OF HOPE
AND RESISTANCE

JOY & LEGACY
ART • MEMORY • RESILIENCE



J-Arteck Jugendbildungsstätte e.V.



Yizrael Gilboa Music Center



**Kdo má rád tatínka a maminku svou a vlast
svou, s námi si může hrát.**

He who loves so much his mother and father and
his native land is our friend and may play with us.

Adolf Hoffmeister, 1938 (original libretto of Brundibár)

Whoever loves justice and stays true to it,
unafraid, is our friend.

Theresienstadt children's version, 1943

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20 Years of Jewish ArtEck From a Dream to a Movement

*A look back at two decades of creativity,
education, and connection*

In 2025, we celebrate the 20th anniversary of Jewish ArtEck (J-ArtEck) – an international cultural and educational project that has grown from a small dream into a vibrant movement.

Over two decades, J-ArtEck has become much more than a youth camp – it is a living community where art, Jewish tradition, and history come together to shape identity and inspire creativity.

WHEN THE PROJECT BEGAN in 2006, our goal was simple yet ambitious: to give teenagers from Russian-speaking Jewish families the chance to rediscover their roots through art.

Today, the camp offers a unique space where creativity, learning, and tradition meet – helping young people find their voices, shape their future, and connect across borders.

Inspired by the humanistic philosophy of Janusz Korczak, we base our work on respect for every child's dignity, individu-



**Two decades of
J-ArtEck represent
thousands of stories,
friendships, and
moments of
transformation**

ality, and right to self-expression. Mixed-age and multilingual groups foster empathy, collaboration, and a true sense of community.

A STRONG CONNECTION WITH ISRAEL has always been one of the pillars of J-ArtEck. Thanks to the participation of Israeli teens, educators, and madrichim, the camp embodies the spirit of the kibbutz- shared responsibility, teamwork, and purpose.

Commemoration and remembrance remain at the heart of our mission. Through encounters with Holocaust survivors, visits to historical sites, and creative reflection, participants learn that memory is not only about the past – it is also a responsibility for the future.

This anniversary year brought a special milestone: the Berlin performance of *Brundibár*, the children's opera once performed in Theresienstadt. It became both an artistic and emotional culmination of our journey, uniting young people from

Germany, Israel, and Ukraine in a shared story of courage, solidarity, and hope.

IN A WORLD MARKED BY WAR and uncertainty – from Ukraine since 2022 to Israel after October 7 – the message of *Brundibár* resonates with renewed urgency.

On stage, our young performers reminded us – in four languages – that the story of resilience continues, and that art remains one of the most powerful ways to keep memory alive.

The long and heartfelt applause from more than 200 audience members became a true reward for the young performers.

This camp was special not only in theme but also in its concept. For the first time, every participant had the opportunity to explore multiple art forms – music, theater, vocals, digital, and applied arts – discovering new talents and ways of self-expression. This open, cross-disciplinary approach received enthusiastic feedback from the participants themselves.

THE SUCCESS OF J-ARTECK rests on the dedication of a passionate and creative team who bring knowledge, imagination and care to every project.



They are mentors, artists, and educators who guide young people to create, reflect, and grow. Together they form the heart of our community – a team united.

And at the very center of it all are the young people themselves – curious, talented, and full of the desire to create. They are the driving force behind every project, reminding us year after year why this work matters.

We are deeply grateful to our partners, supporters, and funders whose trust makes it possible to bring even the boldest ideas to life.

I am deeply proud of what our team and participants have created and become over these twenty years.

As we celebrate this milestone, we look forward with gratitude and hope – ready to create, to connect, and to inspire the next generation!

*With love and gratitude,
Ella Nilova
Founder and Director, J-ArtEck*



From Hannelore Brenner's *Brundibár* to the J-ArtEck Stage

How a Book Inspired a New Generation

The idea to stage the opera *Brundibár* at J-ArtEck Camp was born from the pages of Hannelore Brenner's beautifully illustrated children's book *Brundibár. Wie Aninka und Pepíček den Leierkastenmann besiegten* (*Brundibár. How Aninka and Pepíček Defeated the Organ Grinder*).

Published in Hebrew, Ukrainian, and German, the book reimagines the classic opera for young readers, offering emotional depth and a powerful message of courage and solidarity. Its trilingual editions became the spark for our own creative journey – inspiring the J-ArtEck team to transform this story of resilience into a multilingual stage production that connects art, remembrance, and youth from different countries.

THE GIRLS OF ROOM 28

Hannelore Brenner, a former radio journalist, first met the women of Room 28 in Prague in 1996 while researching her radio feature *Brundibár und die Kinder von Theresienstadt* (*Brundibár and the Children of Theresienstadt*).

These Holocaust survivors, who had lived together in Room 28 of the Girls' Home L 410 in the Theresienstadt ghetto, vividly remembered the opera's performances in which some of them had sung or acted. Their stories grew into a long-lasting Jewish-German project of remembrance – a book, an exhibition, and a theatre play *"The Girls of Room 28"*. Drawing on the diary of Helga Pollak, the scrapbook of Anna Flachová, letters, poems, photographs, and personal memories, the

project tells of life, friendship, fear, and hope in the ghetto. When *Brundibár* was performed in Theresienstadt, some of the girls were on stage while others were happy when they could watch the show. Most were later deported and murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau; those who survived were determined to remember – and with Hannelore Brenner's help, they gave their voices to the world.

A LEGACY FROM THERESIENSTADT

What began as remembrance grew into an enduring educational mission. In 2004, Hannelore Brenner published *The Girls of Room 28* (Droemer, Munich), followed by an exhibition that helped survivors share their memories



with younger generations. For years, the women travelled with it across Germany and the Czech Republic, giving history a human face.

Translated into several languages, the exhibition has been shown at major institutions across Europe and beyond. In 2023, Hannelore Brenner received the Federal Cross of Merit of Germany for her contribution to Holocaust remembrance.

A PERFORMANCE TO REMEMBER

On August 18, 2025, J-ArtEck participants staged a multilingual performance of *Brundibár* – the culmination of months of creative collaboration. The production was accompanied by panels from

Hannelore Brenner's exhibition *The Girls of Room 28*, forging a living connection between historical memory and the experiences of young people today.

As a special gift, each participant received a copy of the book – a lasting reminder of the story's message and of their shared journey of bringing it to life.

Through this project, the book that once inspired us continues to inspire others – turning the story of *Brundibár* into a living bridge between generations. ■



Voices from the Project

STAS GAVRILOV:

"Hannelore Brenner's book in Hebrew allowed me to delve deeper into the libretto, expanding the characters' emotional depth.

It helped bridge language gaps and brought Israeli participants closer to the story, making *Brundibár* more accessible and meaningful for everyone."

ELLA NILOVA:

"Hannelore Brenner's commitment to preserving the memory of the girls from Theresienstadt deeply moved me. The story of *Brundibár* resonates with the spirit of J-ArtEck.

Inspired by this connection, I proposed a multilingual musical-theatre production of *Brundibár* as the centerpiece of J-ArtEck Camp 2025, both an artistic tribute and an act of remembrance."



Panels of "The Girls of Room 28"

Brundibár

THE CHILDREN'S OPERA THAT DEFEATED EVIL

FROM PRAGUE TO THERESIENSTADT -

the story of how a children's opera became a symbol of courage, solidarity, and the victory of goodness over tyranny. The opera *Brundibár* has become a symbol of children's courage, solidarity, and faith in goodness, even in times when evil seemed to prevail. Today, this opera is performed by school and youth ensembles around the world, helping young people explore profound themes such as justice, empathy, and resistance to violence.

Rehearsing and discussing *Brundibár* gives participants more than artistic experience. It becomes a way to understand that art can be both remembrance and resistance - that even on stage, one can stand against evil through music, friendship, and cooperation.



Ghetto-produced poster for the 1943 Terezín staging of *Brundibár*
© Memorial Terezín

“The opera’s unique stage history has turned it into a symbol of global resistance to genocide and authoritarianism.”



Archival photograph of a *Brundibár* performance in the Terezín ghetto, ca. 1943

A LEGEND BORN IN THE SHADOW OF A CONCENTRATION CAMP

Brundibár was created by Czech composer Hans Krása and librettist Adolf Hoffmeister as a fairy tale about a brother and sister who defeat an evil organ grinder to help their sick mother. Yet its fate became deeply intertwined with one of the darkest chapters of the 20th century.

The opera was written in 1938 for a Prague National Opera competition for children's works – a contest later canceled. Rehearsals began in 1941 at the Jewish orphanage Hagibor in Prague, where children separated from their families gathered. By 1943, both the children and the staff were deported to the Theresienstadt (Terezín) ghetto.

Terezín was unlike other Nazi camps: it served both as a transit camp and as a so-called “model Jewish settlement” for propaganda purposes. Despite the harsh reality, it developed a remarkable cultural life with lectures, concerts, exhibitions, and plays – all cynically used by the Nazis to showcase the “human face” of their regime.

In Terezín, Hans Krása reconstructed the

score from memory, adapting it to the few instruments available. The premiere took place on September 23, 1943 followed by 55 performances within the next twelve months.

For the imprisoned children, the performance became a ritual of hope. Each week they sang:

“Whoever loves justice and stays true to it, unafraid, is our friend.”

In these words, they heard a call for courage. To them, the defeat of *Brundibár* symbolized resistance to Hitler, and the stage became one of the few spaces of freedom.

“When we were on stage, we didn’t have to wear the yellow star. It was a few minutes of freedom,” recalled Ella Weissberger, who played the Cat.

A special performance was organized for the Red Cross visit in 1944, and the opera was filmed for a Nazi propaganda movie. Soon after filming, most of the performers were deported to Auschwitz. ▶



Hans Krása (1899–1944), composer of *Brundibár*



Adolf Hoffmeister (1902–1973), librettist of *Brundibár*



Brundibár, Mariinsky Theatre, 2017. Production by Mstislav Pentkovski. Photos: N. Razina © Mariinsky Theatre

FROM SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE TO THE WORLD STAGE

After the war, *Brundibár* became a universal symbol of defiance against violence and tyranny. It has since been performed worldwide – from Germany to the United States, Israel, Russia and Australia. In several productions, survivors of the Terezin performances took part.

In Germany, the opera was rediscovered in the late 1970s, when Sister Veronika Gruters found the surviving score and helped recreate the first modern performance. In 1992, *Brundibár* was professionally staged at the Bielefeld Opera.

In 1995, Jeunesses Musicales Germany initiated a pilot *Brundibár* project with performances in Berlin, Prague, and Warsaw. This marked the beginning of countless further productions throughout Germany and abroad. By 1999, German schoolchildren had performed it more than 130 times. In 2010, the Gewandhaus Choir of Leipzig performed it in Israel.

In the United States, *Brundibár* gained new life through the collaboration of playwright **Tony Kushner** and illustrator **Maurice Sendak**. Their 2003 book was named one of The New York Times “10 Best Illustrated Books of the Year.” Later, Kushner’s stage adaptation was produced in Chicago and on Broadway, bringing the story to a new generation.

A LIVING MEMORIAL

Today, *Brundibár* is performed not only as a piece of art but as a living memorial. For many years survivors have come on stage to sing the finale with children – a moving ritual that has turned the opera into a ceremony of remembrance. Professor for Costume Design **Sofia Pantouvaki** calls this “a recurring gesture of mourning, transforming performance into commemoration.”

Musicologist **Teril Dobbs** describes the opera as a “musical memorial,” a space where today’s singers perform in solidarity with the silenced voices of the past:

“THROUGH SINGING, WE REMEMBER THOSE WHO CAN NOT BE HEARD – CONTINUING THEIR TESTIMONY.”

Yet educators warn against turning tragedy into emotional spectacle. It is vital that children not only empathize but understand the historical context.

As Czech educator **Zdena Fleglová** explains:

“IN TEREZÍN, CHILDREN SAW BRUNDIBÁR AS HITLER, AND THE ANIMALS AS SYMBOLS OF HOPE AND COURAGE. TO-

DAY’S CHILDREN CAN’T FULLY FEEL WHAT THEY DID, BUT THROUGH DISCUSSION, WE CAN HELP THEM UNDERSTAND WHAT HATRED AND XENOPHOBIA MEAN – EVEN IN OUR WORLD TODAY.”

TEACHING NOT FEAR, BUT HOPE

In many countries, *Brundibár* has become a tool of humanistic education. Including the opera in school programs helps children not only learn about the Holocaust but also develop empathy, recognize bullying, and understand how evil can appear in everyday forms.

Director **Mstislav Pentkovski** notes:

“THE OPERA’S UNIQUE STAGE HISTORY HAS TURNED IT INTO A SYMBOL OF GLOBAL RESISTANCE TO GENOCIDE AND AUTHORITARIANISM.”

Educators emphasize that *Brundibár* teaches not fear, but hope. Through a simple children’s story, it conveys timeless values – solidarity, faith in oneself, and the enduring power of goodness. ■



Brundibár - EJKA e.V., Munich, 2015. Photos: L. Bergida & C. Wildmann



Brundibár performed by participants of J-ArtEck Camp, Berlin, 2025



Brundibár, Mariinsky Theatre (2017), Director M. Pentkovski; children’s ensembles with Terezin survivor Ella Weissberger, one of the “Girls of Room 28”. Photos: N. Razina © Mariinsky Theatre



Stas Gavrilov,
Musical Director
of the J-ArtEck
production of *Brundibár*

BRUNDIBÁR REIMAGINED

From Theresienstadt to J-ArtEck

In 2025, J-ArtEck staged a new multilingual adaptation of *Brundibár* under the direction of Israeli musician Stas Gavrilov. The project brought together young people from Germany and Israel, as well as refugees from Ukraine, to explore the opera's timeless themes through collective creativity.

“A children’s
opera is
always
a celebration”

This interview of Anna Smoliarova with Stas Gavrilov reflects on the vision and process behind this unique production

SINCE THE 1995, NUMEROUS PRODUCTIONS OF *BRUNDIBÁR* HAVE BEEN STAGED AROUND THE WORLD. WHAT IS YOUR SPECIFIC VISION AS A DIRECTOR?

Indeed, over the years *Brundibár* has become somewhat standardized, and certain canons have emerged around how it is usually performed. Mstislav Pentkovsky, one of the opera's directors, once called *Brundibár* a “date opera” — an opera staged for a specific occasion. Because of its association with Theresienstadt, most stagings include symbols that directly emphasize the opera's tragic historical context. I believe this approach, while important,

has limited the opera's universal message. We must remember that the kind of danger faced by Jews in the 1930s could arise in any society, under any regime — not only against Jews. My intention was to step away from these established conventions and return to the work's original spirit — to how it was conceived before its performances in Theresienstadt.

In preparing the production, I read many memoirs of those who took part in the performances of *Brundibár* in Theresienstadt in 1943. What struck me most was their sense of hope: for them, *Brundibár* represented faith in another world — one in which goodness ultimately triumphs. I wanted to bring that same spirit of uni-

versality and belief in humanity to today's audience.

WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT A CHILDREN'S OPERA?

A children's opera is always a celebration — a celebration of color, creativity, and live performance. My educational goal was to show today's teenagers what traditional theater truly is. We used no digital effects; everything was built through the simplest means, through children's imagination and the art of making things by hand — using only boxes, paints, glue, and creativity. The sets came alive because the children made them themselves.

“*Brundibár* represented faith in another world — one in which goodness ultimately triumphs.”

“*Theatre is teamwork — and in *Brundibár*, everyone finds a place.*”



It was essential that there was live music and that our participants performed to the best of their abilities. I even orchestrated the entire opera myself, adding some of my own music while keeping everything stylistically coherent.

It is important to me to cultivate good artistic taste — in theater, in music, and in art — and to show that with sincerity and creativity, one can create something truly powerful. It was equally important that the audience included not only the participants' friends and families but also people genuinely interested in children's art and creativity.

THIS IS THE FIRST YEAR THAT J-ARTECK HAS BEEN ENTIRELY DEDICATED TO SUCH A LARGE-SCALE PROJECT AS STAGING AN OPERA. HOW DID OPERA FIT INTO THE J-ARTECK CONCEPT?

It was important to create an interpretation that truly reflects J-ArtEck's principles. First of all, opera is a deeply collaborative art form — and collaboration is at the heart of everything we do here.

Secondly, I believe that art allows our participants to engage with complex themes — both historical and contemporary — in a way that feels natural and personal. Art provides an opportunity to reach a young person. Through artistic creation, they can explore difficult subjects while expressing their own emotions and ideas.

Finally, the process of working on an opera is both self-discovery and self-expression. It unites music, theater, and visual art — a genuine synthesis of the arts, which I've always valued. That's precisely what led me to opera and made it such a meaningful fit for J-ArtEck.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU PERSONALLY TO STAGE THIS OPERA IN BERLIN?

Staging this opera in Berlin has been a deeply personal and meaningful experience for me. There have been very few Israeli productions of this work, and I wanted to bring a distinctly Israeli perspective to it rather than a European one. This approach is especially evident in the opening and closing scenes, where I introduced directorial changes that reflect my own vision.

I feel both proud and grateful to be an Israeli, and the opportunity to realize my creative and educational project here in Berlin — as an Israeli artist — has been profoundly significant to me. ■





Melody of Hope and Resistance

Brundibár in Rehearsals & Performance



When Art Becomes Memory

J-ArtEck Meets the Jewish Museum Berlin

For the participants of J-ArtEck, a visit to the Jewish Museum Berlin became far more than a cultural excursion. It was a powerful journey – a dialogue across generations, where art became both remembrance and resistance.

Through this encounter, the young participants formed a living connection between the themes of *Brundibár*, Jewish creativity, and resilience – stepping into an ongoing cultural dialogue not merely as observers, but as active voices shaping memory, identity, and the future through art.

Through their experience of the exhibition *Defiance: Jewish Women and Design in the Modern Era*, the campers discovered how art can be more than self-expression – it can be an act of will, strength, and freedom, especially in times of oppression. These themes lie at the heart of our multilingual performance *Brundibár: Melodies of Hope and Resistance*.

The exhibition presented the lives and works of more than 60 Jewish women designers – artists, artisans, and entrepreneurs – who in the early 20th century fought for their place in culture, society, and history. Despite discrimination and rising antisemitism, they continued to create against all odds.

A particularly emotional discovery was the story of several women who, like the original performers of *Brundibár*, were imprisoned in Theresienstadt: Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, Paula Schwartz, Elli Hirsch,

and Agnes Meyerhoff. Some, like Friedl, worked with children. Some survived. Others did not. But all left behind a legacy of courage and light.

“They, too, wanted to be heard. They created when everything was against them.”

What made this museum experience especially meaningful was that the tours were led by members of the J-ArtEck team themselves – **Anna, Ruslan, and Stas** – who prepared in advance and guided participants in Hebrew, German, and Russian. Their voices brought history closer to their peers, making the stories alive, personal, and emotionally resonant. They shared insights and stories that created a space for empathy, reflection, and connection.

LIVING PORTRAITS: BRIDGING PAST AND PRESENT

A particularly moving element of the exhibition was the “living portraits” created by **Mariya Mizhys, Eugene Goubine Bricker, and Sasha Vaisman**. Through storytelling, performance, and visual expression, they built a powerful bridge between the exhibition and the camp’s central theme.

They brought historical figures to life by sharing personal stories, experiences, and carefully chosen artifacts, allowing participants to engage with history on a deeply emotional level. Their work made the past feel immediate and personal –

transforming the museum space into one where memory became vivid, intimate, and profoundly human.

“It feels like we’re continuing their work,” said one participant after the visit. “They wanted to be heard, just like we do. They created – even when everything was against them.”

ELLA NILOVA REFLECTED: *“This exhibition strongly resonates with the theme of our project. In Theresienstadt, opera became an act of hope – a way not to give up. The design work of these Jewish women was also a form of resistance. They didn’t follow society’s rules about what a woman, a Jewish person, or an artist should be. They created their own path. And that’s the central message of our camp: don’t conform, don’t give in – be yourself and create, together.”*

For many participants, this visit offered a powerful realization: that what they are doing today – staging operas, creating visual art, telling stories – is a continuation of the same line of hope and resistance carried forward by these women through their work. ■



J-ArtEck at the Jewish Museum Berlin, 2025



Exploring the exhibition “Defiance: Jewish Women and Design in the Modern Era” through a living portrait performed by Sasha Vaisman

Reflections from the Team

Inside the Creative Studios of J-ArtEck

THE ROADS WE CHOOSE...

Alexander Vaisman, Head of Art Studio

EVERY ROAD TELLS A STORY.

Ours began long before the curtain rose on *Brundibár* - in the shared spaces where art, memory, and Jewish tradition have long met and inspired one another.



The 20-year history of J-ArtEck continues this legacy, drawing strength from the Jewish educational and creative movements of the past. These were places where young people learned to express themselves through art, knowledge, and community. They remind us that creation and learning have always gone hand in hand.

The Art Studio builds on this foundation, connecting past and present through color, texture, and imagination. This year, our young artists designed the visual world of *Brundibár* - a story of courage, kindness, and friendship. In their hands, design became more than decoration; it became a language of remembrance and a way to dream.

If, in the voices of our participants and the light of our stage, we hear echoes of the past and hope for the future - then we know we are on the right road.



VOICE STUDIO.

THE SOUND OF UNITY

Alina Ostapenko, Head of Vocal Studio

Brundibár: A Melody of Hope and Resistance was one of the most meaningful projects I have ever joined.

In just a few days, people from different countries and languages came together with one purpose - to create and to give voice to something that truly matters.

Working with teens on this opera was deeply moving. The participants became co-creators, expressing the story through their own emotions and voices. I was touched by their sincerity, their joy on stage, and the freedom with which they sang. Watching them perform reminded me why art, especially music, is such a powerful force for connection and healing.

This experience planted something lasting within them - a sense of unity, a moral compass, and faith in goodness. I was equally inspired by the educators' creativity - sometimes bordering on magic - and by their courage and openness. From my first day at J-ArtEck, I felt trust and belonging. That spirit of unity made this experience unforgettable. For me, *Brundibár* at J-ArtEck became a living harmony of people, voices, and hearts.



DIGITAL STUDIO. ART IN MOTION

Ruslan Itskovich Frimerman, Head of Digital Studio

In the J-ArtEck Digital Studio, creativity met technology. Inspired by *Brundibár*, our participants turned ideas into moving images - blending music, drawing, and animation to tell the story in a new visual language. Within just a few days, they created a short video intro and a mini animated film: small works of art capturing the essence of *Brundibár*: courage, friendship, and the triumph of good over evil. For many, it was their first experience in digital storytelling. They learned to combine sound and image, rhythm and color, teamwork and imagination - discovering that art can live not only on stage but also on screen. As one participant said: "It felt like we were giving the old story a heartbeat in pixels."

"It felt like we were giving the old story a heartbeat in pixels."

THEATRE STUDIO.

THE COURAGE TO DREAM

Zhenya Gubin, Head of Theatre Studio

This year at J-ArtEck felt truly extraordinary - bold in its vision and heart. To stage *Brundibár*, a full opera, within the brief span of a summer camp was almost unthinkable.

Yet our young participants embraced the challenge with remarkable dedication, developing day by day, learning through mistakes, and growing stronger together. Many of them carried experiences of war, fear, and antisemitism. On stage, they brought not only talent, but emotion, honesty, and hope. *Brundibár* became an act of resilience, faith, and connection. I am deeply proud to be part of this platform that gives young people something rare today - the courage to aim for the impossible and the patience to build it step by step. When the curtain fell, the hall of the Berlin theatre filled with a ten-minute standing ovation - more than applause, it was a lasting memory, proof that perseverance and unity can transform dreams into reality. In a world of instant gratification, J-ArtEck offers something far more enduring - a lesson for life: that meaning is created through effort, empathy, and art.



MUSIC STUDIO. CREATIVITY AND SHARED ACTION

Stas Gavrilov, Musician and Stage Director

J-ArtEck is a space where creativity becomes action and art becomes shared experience. When Israeli participants step outside their familiar surroundings and see Israel from a distance, they discover a deeper sense of pride and identity. For German participants, it's a chance to meet peers from Israel not as "kids from Jewish schools," but as equals, modern teenagers with similar dreams and questions.

Guided by Janusz Korczak's humanistic ideas, we create an atmosphere where every young person is heard and feels free to express themselves. Through music and collaboration, they learn empathy, respect, and responsibility. What makes J-ArtEck unique is not only what we create, but how we create it - together.

In that shared process, creativity becomes a language of understanding, and harmony becomes a way of life. ■

Kabbalat Shabbat

A Celebration of Unity and Creativity

As the sun sets on Friday evening, a gentle hush settles over the camp. Then the magic begins – music, voices, laughter – and the familiar rhythm of Kabbalat Shabbat fills J-ArtEck.

Together, participants and their mentors turn this moment into a vibrant celebration of connection, reflection, and belonging. Through song, dance, and tradition, everyone feels part of one big family – united by shared values, creativity, and spirit. Even far from home, we create a sense of community through art, music, and hope – reminding us that joy and togetherness lie at the heart of Jewish life.

This year's celebration combined beloved traditions with new elements. The evening began with the J-ArtEck orchestra filling the hall with festive melodies before Shabbat dinner. Together, we learned a nigun – a traditional Jewish tune that set a mood of peace and anticipation – and sang familiar hymns that lifted everyone's spirits. Each creative studio contributed to the

PARTICIPANTS' VOICES

ALISA: *"I really enjoyed Kabbalat Shabbat because it felt like a real family celebration. We all sang, danced, and celebrated together – it was truly special."*

YASMIN: *"What I loved most was the Kabbalat Shabbat. It felt so special to experience it here, to learn how it's done, and to feel this magic. The songs, the dances, the warmth – it felt like being with family I hadn't seen in a long time."*

LENA: *"It's always a joy to celebrate Shabbat at our camp because we can experience Jewish culture freely. I love seeing so many Jewish people together and feeling connected to this tradition. We can dance, laugh, and play music without fear – something we can't always do elsewhere."*

celebration. The digital art studio prepared a Table of the Hostages – a table set for those still being held captive by Hamas. Even in this joyful moment, we remembered them, keeping them symbolically among us. The table, adorned with a yellow ribbon, stood empty – yet it expressed our shared hope that one day they will return and celebrate Shabbat with us again. This quiet act of remembrance taught empathy and solidarity, reminding us that our joy is intertwined with care for others.

After dinner began Oneg Shabbat – the joyful continuation of the evening filled with laughter, performances, and song. The theater studio presented scenes reflecting the impact of the wars in Israel and Ukraine, prompting deep emotion and reflection. The vocal studio performed "Hineh Mat Tov" – "How good and pleasant it is for brothers to sit together in unity" – a song that became a shared prayer for peace and togetherness.

The camp's visual artists added warmth and color with a bright stand of Shabbat greetings and wishes. Soon, the clarinets began to play, and everyone joined in lively circle dances. Laughter, rhythm, and movement filled the space until the night culminated with "Hava Nagila," bringing everyone together in one final, joyous dance. ■



Madatzim:

From Participants to Mentors

How J-ArtEck's young leaders grow from participants to mentors – discovering responsibility, teamwork, and the joy of guiding others

Every summer at J-ArtEck, something remarkable happens: yesterday's participants become today's mentors. The *madatzim* (young assistants to the madrichim) - embody the camp's spirit of growth and continuity. They learn to lead, to care, and to carry forward the creative values that make J-ArtEck a true community.

At J-ArtEck, leadership grows naturally from experience. The madatzim are not just helpers; they are young leaders in training who take initiative, guide others, and support the daily rhythm of camp life.

From morning Morgentanz to evening programs, they keep the energy of the camp alive - with laughter, creativity, and teamwork.

The tradition began during J-ArtEck's tenth anniversary, when older participants wanted to return and contribute more. Those aged sixteen or seventeen were invited to become madatzim, turning experience into mentorship. Since then, the program has become a living school of responsibility and cooperation. A memorable milestone came in 2017, during the Janusz Korczak year, when madatzim helped create a children's parliament.

Each group proposed ideas to improve camp life – and many of them were actually implemented. It was a true lesson in democracy and shared leadership.

"We help gather participants before events, keep them engaged, and organize morning exercises – our Morgentanz. This year, we ran the GotTalent festival from start to finish, planning, decorating, and hosting it ourselves. It was the first time I truly felt like a leader." Anna

Today, the madatzim program is one of J-ArtEck's proudest traditions.

It builds bridges between generations, strengthens the sense of belonging, and gives young people the chance to discover who they are. For many, it's more than a step toward becoming madrichim - it's a journey toward confidence, teamwork, and adulthood. ■



Madatzim supporting group activities throughout the camp, J-ArtEck 2025

J-ArtEck Got Talent

Where Creativity and Hearts Shine!

What makes J-ArtEck so special? Why do campers wait for this evening all year long? Because this is where the magic happens, when creativity meets courage, and every heart shines on stage!

J-ArtEck Camp isn't just a place to spend the summer. It's a creative home where every teenager can open up, believe in themselves, and become part of one big artistic family.

J-ArtEck Got Talent is one of the camp's most cherished traditions – a celebration of music, inspiration, friendship, and self-expression. This evening, the entire camp became one big team. Everyone gets the chance to shine, to surprise, to move the audience and to receive a wave of applause in return!

"Everyone in our camp is talented, but the Got Talent night is a chance to show what makes you unique. The campers look forward to this evening all year – for many, it becomes the most unforgettable moment of the whole camp,"
— Polina, Educator.

The stage came alive with solo and group performances: songs in different languages, energetic dances, musical pieces, original skits, and even improvisations. This year, the audience enjoyed 22 performances, including 3 dance numbers, 11 songs, and 5 instrumental pieces!

"It's amazing that everyone can share their talents, inspire each other, try something new, and simply celebrate what they can do,"
— Anna, Madatz.

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

A special highlight of this year's event was that it was organized entirely by the madatzim, or the senior campers. It was their first experience managing such a large-scale event, and they did an incredible job! One group took care of decorations, another wrote the hosts' scripts, and a third coordinated the stage and performances.

"For me, it was an important step toward leadership. I learned how to work as part of a team and realized how meaningful it is to create something for everyone,"
— Liza, Madatz.

A NIGHT OF MEMORY AND UNITY

The stage design was done in orange tones, in memory of Ariel and Kfir Bibas, the red-haired brothers kidnapped and killed by Hamas in October 2023. This tribute gave the evening a deeper meaning, turning it into not only a celebration of creativity but also an act of solidarity and remembrance.

The night ended with a truly moving moment: participants and the audience stood together and sang Israel's national anthem, "Hatikvah."

In that instant, everyone felt united, hearts beating together in rhythm. Moments like these teach us what music, unity, hope, and shared strength truly mean. ■

Photos on the right side:

1. Singing "HaTikvah"
2. Ketty and Yelyzaveta hosting the J-ArtEck Got Talent evening
3. Young Israeli musicians
4. Guitar solo by Yesieniia
5. Award ceremony



J-ArtEck Limmud

Curiosity Is Our Superpower!

Learning turns into adventure when campers become teachers.



Workshop on Shabbat traditions with Milana



Dance masterclass with Anna



Thinking differently: Ruslan's talk on postmodernism



A creative journey into 20th-century fashion with Masha

Who said learning has to be boring? And who decided that only adults can be teachers?

At J-ArtEck Limmud, we prove every year that everyone learns from everyone! Here, teens become teachers, experts turn into curious students, and learning transforms into a true festival of ideas and inspiration. Limmud isn't just about lessons. It's an adventure!

It's a format of informal education where everyone can discover something new and also share what they already know. As it says in Jewish texts of Pirkei Avot: "Who is wise? The one who learns from everyone."

And it really works! When teens teach others, they don't just repeat facts, they grow as persons, gain confidence, independence, and learn to listen and be heard. One special evening, our camp turned into a mini university under the open sky. Campers hosted their own lectures, workshops, creative studios, and sports games.

Everyone could choose an activity that matched their interests and join a small group of like-minded peers. Learning suddenly became a festival of energy, ideas, and creativity!



Music and storytelling with Yaron: the tale of David and Goliath.

At the **dance workshops**, the energy was unstoppable — campers kept dancing even during the breaks!

Next door, **philosophical debates about postmodernism** and science fiction unexpectedly became one of the hits of the night.

In the **art studio**, participants explored how to combine personal stories with artistic expression, while another group discussed **Shabbat as a tradition** that helps us slow down and connect generations.

Some campers practiced **public speaking**, others explored the world of teen **marketing** or got inspired by **fashion and design** after a visit to the Jewish Museum.

And of course, there was the creative workshop **Painting Like Mark Rothko**, where participants discovered how many emotions can live inside simple blocks of color.

Limmud is more than just an evening of learning — it's a chance to step into the educator's role. When teenagers lead their own sessions, they learn how to explain, how to listen, respect, and understand. It's a powerful experience that helps them grow intellectually and personally.

These kinds of sessions develop skills every modern person needs: critical thinking, teamwork and communication, respect for different opinions, responsibility and empathy. And most importantly: the feeling that your voice truly matters. That night reminded everyone that we can learn from anyone, at any age.

All it takes is our curiosity: to ask questions, explore, and share what inspires us.

**Curiosity, not textbooks,
is the true superpower of J-ArtEck!**



The 'Diva' of the Shuk

**“Where
friendship
meets
entrepreneurship
and inspires us
to act
and to give”**



Crafts & Treasures at the Shuk Kah-Ten Market



Artekels – the camp's own currency



**“It felt like a real city
fair – only better,
because everything
was made by us!”**

Shuk Kah-Ten

Where Creativity Becomes Currency

Who doesn't love a good market day?

At J-ArtEck, our traditional Shuk Kah-Ten transforms the camp into a buzzing, joyful marketplace filled with color, laughter, and creativity.

Campers bring handmade crafts, books, jewelry, sweets, and small treasures to trade – all using our own camp currency, the arteckels. Instead of money, imagination drives the exchange: friendship bracelets, Israeli snacks, souvenirs, mini-artworks, and rare collectibles change hands in a whirlwind of fun and excitement.

TRADING TALENTS

One of the highlights was the “Colonial Goods Stand,” where Art Master Sasha Vaisman sold vintage-style postcards that instantly became a hit. Nearby, a jewelry stand offered handmade bracelets, and a miniature Israeli shuk came to life with Bamba, Bissli, and Stas

Gavrilov cheerfully bargaining with everyone. The book stand became a multilingual micro-library with Hebrew, German, Russian, and Ukrainian books – including copies of *Brundibár* and *The Girls of Room 28*, gifted by Hannelore Brenner.

A MARKET PLACE OF CREATIVITY

As the fair unfolded, the camp's creative guilds – architects, fashion designers, journalists, and photographers – added their own flair and earned extra arteckels through small challenges and tasks.

The star of the day was a camper dressed in a spectacular red-and-white gown made entirely from fabric scraps – a show-stopping creation by the fashion design guild.

The Shuk ended with an exciting auction run by the madrichim, where mystery lots sparked lively bidding and a great deal of laughter. ■



Days of Creativity and Joy

Meet the people behind the project - who make J-ArtEck possible



Brundibár

a Melody of Hope and Resistance

18.08.2025



J-ArtEck Production, Berlin 2025



Yizrael Gilboa Music Center

Performed by participants of the German-Israeli Youth Encounter Jewish ArtEck

Orchestra

Ksenia Krivosheeva Flute
Mili Tsvitman Flute
Yaron Yoffe Clarinet
Nov Cohen Schwartz Clarinet
Adi Reznik Clarinet
Yftach Aharon Clarinet
Roni Tsvitman Clarinet
Dina Kripak Saxophone
David Emmanuel Bringuier Violin
Avital Birchenough Violin
Shalev Sinaisky Violin / Melodica
David Ovadya Violin
Mykola Chechetko Guitar
Denys Ruban Drums
Sophie Milman Piano
Olga Monakh Accompanist (Piano)
Conductor Stas Gavrilov

Cast & Choir

Aninka Yuli Dagan
Pepíček Mili Heker
Brundibár Yaron Yoffe
Little Birds Daria Mirtsin, Helio Iglina
Cats Maya Shamir, Jana Mirocinic
Dogs Sofia Kanevska, Naama Sharir
Ice-Cream Seller Yesieniia Gorb
Bakers Yelyzaveta Ester Maliukova, Ketty Nikitina
Milkmaid Yasmin Dilmuratov
Flower Girl Mariya Mizhys
Policewoman Orlov
Doctor Mariia Slobodnychenko
Newsboy Blanka Acsay

Policeman Ruslan Itskovich Frimerman
Hat Seller Lena Kalinowska
Fabric Seller Alla Barkovska
Jewelry Seller Alexandra Liderman
Balloon Seller Alice Shmuglin
Book Seller Anastasiia Bazarova
Harlequin Nataly Shprengel
Postman Timofii Pererva
Old Woman Milana Kolisnychenko
Beggar Elizabete Zagorska
Mother with "Sonny" Marharyta Ivanovska
Child with Mother Gavriel Kripak
Young Ladies Bordacheva, Rey Gill
Sisters Romy Itzhakov, Rotem Gavriellov
Children from the Fair Ariel Gavriellov, Leo-Ariel Sherman, Vladyslav Tsurenko
Dancer Anna Shvarts
Vocal Director Alina Ostapenko
Assistant Mariya Mizhys
Performance Director Stas Gavrilov
Acting Director / Stage Lights Eugene Goubine Bricker
Stage Assistants Polina Rahman-Gettsel, Anna Smoliarova

Scenery & Costume Design

Alla Barkovska
Anastasiia Bazarova
Iana Bordacheva
Ariel Gavriellov
Rotem Gavriellov
Rey Gill

Marharyta Ivanovska
Lena Kalinowska
Gavriel Kripak
Jana Mirocinic
Alice Shmuglin
Elizabete Zagorska

Head of Art Studio (Scenery and Costumes) Sasha Vaisman
Assistant Artem Bondar

Digital Design Studio

Timofii Pererva
Leo-Ariel Sherman
Anna Shvarts
Vladyslav Tsurenko

Head of Digital Studio Ruslan Itskovich Frimerman

Press & Technical

Press Center Anna Smoliarova
Technical Assistant Artem Bondar
Production Producers Mariya Mizhys, Polina Rahman-Gettsel
Stage Director Stas Gavrilov
Project Director Ella Nilova



Music & Libretto

Music Hans Krása
Libretto Adolf Hoffmeister

Opera originally composed in 1938 and performed in Theresienstadt.

J-ArtEck production includes new musical arrangements by Stas Gavrilov, compositions by Yuri Povolotsky and Mark Varshavskij, and traditional Yiddish folk songs.

Texts inspired by Hannelore Brenner's book "Brundibár. How Aninka and Pepíček Defeated the Organ Grinder".

Opera was performed in Czech, German, Ukrainian and Hebrew.

The performing rights of the opera are hold by the music publisher Boosey & Hawkes.

Voices of Participants, Parents and Guests

What remains after the stage lights fade – gratitude, emotion, and the living echo of J-ArtEck in the hearts of its people.

PARTICIPANTS

NASTYA |

I want to say a huge, truly gigantic thank you for this labor-intensive and challenging project. Thank you for your strength, patience, endurance, and obvious love for what you do. Thanks to the camp, I made many new friends, changed some of my views on life, and became a better person...

I've become truly happy. I realized that J-Arteck is what makes me who I am. At the camp, I discover new talents and qualities that help not only me but others as well. Thank you so much again!

FINN |

Being part of J-ArtEck means being part of a family. I feel completely at home here – not only with the adults but also with the other teens. It's such a warm, welcoming atmosphere, almost like one big family.

DINA |

For me, J-ArtEck means being part of a huge, loving family that renews itself every year to create something amazing together. It's real freedom – to be who we are, to do what we love, and to share it with our friends.

LEO ARIEL |

I miss everyone already. I want to return to J-ArtEck as soon as possible. I'm waiting for Summer 2026 so we can be together again. The talent show was so nice and I can't even forget this moment.

MILANA |

J-ArtEck feels like family to me - the place where I always feel most at home.



ELIZAVETA |

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the entire J-ArtEck team who worked on this incredible project. Now, returning home from the camp, I catch myself thinking about what a joy it was to dedicate my energy to this opera. At first, staging an opera in just six days seemed almost impossible. But thanks to the persistence, inspiration, and unity of the entire camp, we managed to make this dream a reality. Yes, there is a bit of fatigue, but the joy of realizing what we accomplished together instantly outweighs it. A special, huge thank you to Ella and Stas for creating a true miracle and giving us all this unique experience!

LENA |

At J-ArtEck, I feel part of a large Jewish community filled with wonderful and inspiring people. It's been like that for me for three years now – and it keeps getting better every time.

YASMIN |

I joined J-ArtEck because I truly love to sing. It's inspiring to be part of something meaningful – to rehearse every day, to see how it all comes together. I never get tired of it; it's pure joy.

PARENTS

TANYA VOLKOVA

I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you gave Yasmin. For the special impressions, emotions, new friends, and for everything she experienced for the first time – at such a camp, abroad, far from home, performing in front of a foreign audience. You were like parents to the children – with all your love, attention, and warmth. And we appreciate it very much. I really hope this is just the beginning, and that we have many more meetings, trips, and wonderful memories together ahead.

AUDIENCE

MARIA BASINA, JOURNALIST

Yesterday was wonderful! So much soul, good feelings, and creativity! You are simply superb! In my career as a journalist, I've seen hundreds of children's groups and admired many of them. But I've always been interested not so much in the professionalism with which these well-trained Russian children won prizes at international competitions, but in the children's mood, their personal feelings during the preparation and performance: do they feel like actors from the Karabas-Barabas Theater? Yesterday's actors performed with all their hearts! They were clearly happy to be together, to have a wonderful performance, and to be received so well by the audience. That's truly invaluable! Thank you for the invitation. I am continually amazed, Ella, at how you manage to bring such projects to life. And how wonderful it is to have such talented and passionate colleagues by your side! Bravo – from the bottom of my heart!

EDUCATORS FROM ZION CLUB AT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF BERLIN

Thank you for inviting me to this wonderful musical performance. It's clear how much work went into it, and how professionally and passionately the staff worked with the children. It was a wonderful evening and a wonderful performance! I'd like to extend special words of admiration to Stas – an amazing director, conductor, and teacher. His talent and dedication were evident in every detail. Of course, the work and dedication of the entire team made this event truly unforgettable.

PARENTS

OLGA MONAKH

Honestly, I'm still reeling from yesterday's emotions. The fact that the children created this miracle in just a week is incredible! Ella, thank you so much for your energy, your faith in the project, and your willpower. This is, of course, a team effort, but I'd like to express my special admiration for Stas Gavrilov. He has such a wealth of experience and understanding of our teenagers; you made them devote themselves to the project for hours! And with pleasure! It's so important for them. And how did you do it?! You were busy with the children all those days and led the entire performance! Simply incredible. Thank you!



RINAT DAGAN

I would like to express my deep appreciation for the wonderful camp you organized as part of the arts program. My daughter returned full of experiences, with a genuine sense of empowerment, and with new and meaningful friendships that were formed during the shared days together. It is moving to see the children keeping in touch even after the camp, and how much they are already looking forward to returning and participating in the coming years. The highlight of the camp was the final performance – highly professional, artistic, and profoundly moving.

he impressive production filled us with pride, and the presence of representatives from Germany and other embassies gave the event an additional dimension of significance and international recognition. It was especially powerful and emotional to stage the opera "Brundibár" on German soil, and to hear the national anthem of Israel performed at that moment. This experience had a whole new meaning, particularly in these difficult times, when Israel is facing a painful war, and war still continues in Ukraine. Against this context the event carried even deeper meaning: a triumph of life, culture, and hope over darkness and destruction.

Beyond the artistic and social aspects, there was also special significance in the meeting with Jewish children from different communities around the world. This encounter strengthened my daughter's sense of identity and belonging, and gave her a unique experience of a global Jewish community that embraces and connects.



IRINA NIKITINA

I want to say a huge thank you to Ella, Stas, and your entire wonderful team for this camp. Katie always returns from camp filled with new impressions, skills, and joy. The atmosphere you create for our children is incredible: so much care, energy, love, and positivity!

I'm sure this camp will be the talk of the house for the next six months. Every day is filled with events, laughter, new challenges, and discoveries – and this makes a huge difference in our children's development and happiness. Thank you for everything you do! For your involvement, patience, and the heart you put into it. It's priceless!



ANNA IVANOVSKA

Today we were fortunate to attend the performance "Brundibár – Sound of Hope and Resistance" featuring our J-ArtEck 2025 students. I think I can speak for everyone who was also fortunate enough to attend this performance.

It wasn't just a performance, it was a true miracle! We were absolutely delighted – the incredible energy, the depth of the concept, and the stunning execution left a lasting impression.

A huge thank you to the organizers for their high level of professionalism, for creating such inspiring and deeply touching projects. And, of course, a deep bow to the children – for their talent, strength, endurance, and the sincerity with which they filled the stage. It was unforgettable!



J-ArtEck Camp Team



Special thanks to the mentors and artists for the dedication and belief in the power of art.

Organizers:



Funders:



Partners:



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**JOIN US AGAIN AT J-ARTECK 2026!
PLANNED DATES: 2-13 AUGUST 2026**

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