



Background

In March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic hit Jerusalem's arts and culture community hard. By April 2020, the field had lost over NIS 42 million in revenue, and more than 90% of the cultural staff in Jerusalem had been laid off or placed on unpaid leave.¹

Although the pandemic impacted the whole arts ecosystem, it was particularly harsh for many of the city's smaller groups, who make up the soul and energy of Jerusalem. **Jerusalem Culture Unlimited (JCU)** works closely with these organizations, in professional and strategic development. These emerging, small, and mid-size groups and independent artists cannot rely on support from large strategic partners, and are dependent on income from events, or municipal and state funding.

However, the Jerusalem arts community is resilient. Many groups quickly adapted themselves to the new reality, and began to innovate. They used the lockdown to renovate their galleries, studios and performance spaces; digitized their galleries; created virtual tours and Zoom performances; rehearsed dance pieces in capsules of 10 performers; staged plays and concerts outside in shared public place; and created new artistic works that directly responded to the loneliness, anxiety, and social distancing of this time. Throughout the pandemic, artists in Jerusalem have created opportunities to celebrate, mourn, and reflect on this challenging time.

In April 2020, JCU re-launched its Giving Circle for the Arts, to provide a quick and responsive Artists Relief Fund, with an initial goal of raising \$20,000 (NIS 70,000). JCU partnered with **Bar-Kayma**, a Jerusalem arts cooperative, to manage the distribution of the microgrants, and expand our reach. Throughout the pandemic, the fund evolved from providing immediate relief and technological support in the first wave, to supporting organizations that successfully pivoted and innovated during the summer and subsequent waves. It supported artists in re-thinking their activity, developing new strategies to meet the evolving restrictions, and creating new and innovative events for Jerusalem.

At the end of 2020, the Giving Circle has far surpassed its goal, succeeding in raising over \$45,000 (NIS 150,000), including a dedicated fund of \$13,000 (NIS 45,000) for artists and organizations based in East Jerusalem. **Over the past 10 months, the Giving Circle has distributed \$30,000 (NIS 102,000) to 18 organizations and initiatives representing all sectors and communities of Jerusalem.**

Timeline

March 2020	JCU and Bar-Kayma Survey of the Jerusalem Arts Ecosystem
April 2020	The Giving Circle was relaunched and began fundraising
May 2020	First round of microgrants opens to support technical adaptations and strategic planning

¹ See: [JCU and Bar-Kayma Survey](#), March 29, 2020.



July 2020	First round of microgrants distributed, totalling NIS 18,000 Second round of microgrants opens, to support general needs
September 2020	Second round of microgrants distributed, totalling NIS 42,000 Third round of microgrants opens, focusing on innovation and creativity
November 2020	Third round of microgrants distributed, totalling NIS 21,000 Fourth round of microgrants opens, focusing on innovation and creativity
January 2021	Fourth round of microgrants distributed, totalling NIS 21,000

Funders

In 2020, the giving circle was supported by 22 local donors and matching funding from philanthropic partners including the Leichtag Foundation, Russell Berrie Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Klarman Family, Bader Philanthropies, and Mubadarat Foundation.

Results and Impact

As of January 2021, the Artists Relief Fund received 83 unique applications, and distributed NIS 102,000 to 18 recipients from all sectors and communities in Jerusalem.

The Giving Circle is a grassroots, bottom-up initiative, led and managed by local Jerusalemites and community members. It recruits and harnesses the energy of local supporters and consumers of arts and culture to provide much needed solidarity and support to the arts in this critical time. It also serves as an effective and efficient partnership between philanthropy and the local community, quickly distributing needed funds, to organizations vetted and chosen by local community members.

In July 2020, microgrants provided needed funding quickly during the first wave of the pandemic, helping organizations survive the initial shock of the pandemic, and the impact of the first lockdown. As life shifted online and to Zoom, micro-grants helped ease this transition, supporting the purchase of high quality cameras, software, and broadcasting equipment.

- Shady Majlaton of **SFM Fashion** used the microgrant to design and launch a business plan, which was submitted to Mifal Hapayis, and received NIS 120,000 in matching support. SFM Fashion is now moving forward with opening a hybrid online and offline studio for fashion design, and looking forward to participating in international fashion week shows.
- The microgrant supported **Muslala's** conception and launch of a NIS 200,000 crowdfunding campaign, which is ongoing! You can see more and donate here: [Muslala Crowdfunding](#). Muslala is also continuing its redesign of the Binyan Clal rooftop, and looking forward to launching its Jerusalem Rooftop Camping Initiative in April 2021.



- The micro-grants helped **Arts Cube Artists Studios** host over 10 events, including monthly discussions with Israeli and international curators, studio visits, and more. One hybrid event (hosted live in the studio and broadcast on Zoom and Facebook Live, was a conversation between Dalit Matityahu, Chief Curator of Israeli Art at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, and Arts Cube artists, who discussed the relationship between visual art and the written word. This event had over 1000 participants live, and many more watched the recording.
- The microgrant supported **Koom-Koom Theater's** development of new performances that met the Coronavirus restrictions. [You can see some of their work here.](#)
- **Spectrum Live** continued hosting performances of Jerusalemite artists, broadcast live on its Facebook page and elsewhere, and hosted events with many participants.
- **Barbur Gallery** designed and built a new website, including virtual exhibition space online. Barbur hosted a series of Artists Talks on the website, and broadcast two new exhibitions online throughout the summer.
- **Studio of Her Own** received a grant to support the renovation of its new garden, starting in Winter/Spring 2021. The renovation will include a new sound system, allowing the gallery to host events outside in accordance with pandemic guidelines, as well as partner with local schools. It will also include a cafe, community garden, stage, and ecologicological arts studio.
- **Tahrir** hosted its annual “*Selichot*, Tahrir Style” event in September 2020. The microgrant helped cover lost revenue from the event, and supported the payment of participating artists. The event was recorded and broadcast live to several thousand viewers.
- **Dancing Ram Theater** constructed the set and hosted rehearsals for its newest production “Pandora’s Box.” The microgrant was key in providing funding to restart the performance and the project, and providing a sense of purpose and mission for the artists and performers.
- **Excessive Productions** is wrapping up the construction of their new sound studio at the HaParsa complex in Talpiot. The microgrant helped purchase necessary equipment for the studio, including a subwoofer, amplifier, and acoustic soundproofing materials. The studio has already hosted several recording sessions for many artists, and will continue to serve as a key resource for musicians, sound artists, and podcasters. Excessive Productions is also launching a new satirical podcast, recorded at HaParsa.
- **C.a.t.a.m.o.n.** Is continuing its work in creating partnerships in East Jerusalem. The microgrant supported translation and production of new marketing materials in Arabic, contributing to CATAMON’s partnerships with the Al-Ma’amal Gallery and Paley Center. Additionally, these materials will serve CATAMON in reaching out to new partners in the UAE. These materials also supported and promoted a new performance by Elad Shechter and Rand Ziad Taha, produced in partnership with UC Berkeley.
- **C.a.t.a.m.o.n.** Has hosted dancers in residence, who produced 9 online events showcasing original work, to over 120 participants. Several other events have taken place with international partners, including “Jackie in the Shuk” a piece that included discussion of space-based dance work in Shuk Mahane Yehuda, in partnership with the Mahane Yehuda Business Association, Leichtag Foundation, and the San Diego Jewish Community.





C.a.t.a.m.o.n. Performance at the “Yafo to Agrippas Festival”

Recipients - (for full descriptions, [click here](#))

Round 1 Recipients (July 2020) - Totalling NIS 18,000

- [SFM Fashion](#) (NIS 2,000)
- [Muslala](#) (NIS 2,000)
- [Art Cube Artists' Studios](#) (NIS 2,000)
- [Koom-koom Theater](#) (NIS 2,000)
- [Unholy Talks](#) (NIS 5,000)
- [Spectrum Live](#) (NIS 5,000)

Round 2 Recipients (September 2020) - Totalling NIS 42,000

- [Barbur Gallery](#) (NIS 7,000)
- [Mazkeka](#) (NIS 7,000)
- [Art Shelter Gallery](#) (NIS 7,000)
- [Studio of Her Own](#) (NIS 7,000)
- [Jerusalem Street Orchestra](#) (NIS 7,000)
- [Tahrir](#) (NIS 7,000)

Round 3 Recipients (November 2020) - Totalling NIS 21,000

- [Excessive Productions](#) (NIS 7,000)
- [Dancing Ram Theater](#) (NIS 7,000)
- [C.a.t.a.m.o.n Dance Company](#) (NIS 7,000)

Round 4 Recipients (January 2021) - Totalling NIS 21,000

- [Between Heaven and Earth](#) (NIS 7,000)
- [Jerusalem Women's Film Festival](#) (NIS 7,000)
- [Shabab](#) (NIS 7,000)