

The Galilee Circus

In a world - and a region - where fear and distrust between peoples lead to insecurity and violence daily, how can the individual make a difference? One way is through the circus. After all, what is circus all about? It's about overcoming fear, it's about trust, it's based on non-verbal communication, it represents a multicultural tradition, creates a place of shared culture - and its purpose is to make people smile.

The late Australian circus artist and educator Reg Bolton has written about "circus to save the world" When you see the Jewish child from Karmiel balancing on the shoulders of his Arab peer from Dir El Assad - you can see the power of circus as an art form, a sport, a community, and a model of shared culture and responsibility.

When the kids stop the music at the curtain call of their first show to say - in Hebrew and in Arabic - "The Galilee Circus *family* thanks you..." you understand that this not just another after-school activity. These kids come on their own time (from different communities, different religions, speaking different languages), they commit themselves, not because they are idealists, but because there is fun, and growth, and satisfaction in doing circus together.

The Galilee Circus includes Arab and Jewish youth of ages 6-19, from the town of Karmiel in the heart of the Galilee and the villages around it. Rehearsals are held four times a week after school in a school gym, and we perform all over the country for schools, festivals, businesses, etc. Through work on various circus disciplines (acrobatics, aerial acrobatics, juggling, unicycle, etc.), participants improve their fitness, balance, posture, and self-esteem - and get to know each other. Besides the ongoing training and performances, we have operated circus activities for the handicapped, and often perform in special education facilities.