

38. Karmit Fadael

*"I'm at home on both sides of the divide"*

**Karmit Fadael (1996) is a young composer. As chair of the youth division of Nieuw GeNeCo, the Dutch professional association for composers, she is dedicated to fighting racism and white privilege in classical music. Her work is inspired by her father's Jewish-Yemenite background.**

After her parents' divorce, she grew up in Friesland with her mother. On the weekends, she would visit her father in Amsterdam. Most of all, she remembers his culinary prowess. "Right after breakfast, he would go straight into the kitchen to start on lunch: Yemenite-Israeli soup, shakshuka, kofte, falafel, tajine – everything made fresh from scratch." In her teenage years, her contacts with him would diminish; her father died last January.

At the conservatory in The Hague, she discovered an international environment and also met Israeli students. "I had a sense of recognition, they were emotional and direct, just like me. You could say that I fall between the cracks, with parents from two different cultures. But you can also see it another way: that I'm at home on either side of that divide."

"I was raised bilingual and I use Hebrew in the titles of my work because I think it sounds beautiful. At home I also cook Israeli dishes that I learned from my father. My childhood definitely coloured my palate."

After the Second World War, Karmit's family was flown from Yemen to Israel in Operation Magic Carpet. One of Karmit's uncles, who worked for the El-Al airline, had a hand in that. By that time, her grandparents were already living in Israel, having gone ahead by boat. "The European Jews in Israel felt that they were superior to the Yemenite Jews (Temanim). The Temanim have very much their own culture, with a lot of Arabic influences."

Karmit has also educated herself about Yemen. "Truly horrible, what is happening there, and there's basically no attention for it in the Western media. It's so important that people know how bad it is there. There was already famine, cholera and a civil war. And now that the coronavirus has taken hold, we're at risk of losing the entire country."

Quotes:

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UN context:

After the Second World War and the Holocaust, more and more Jews from all over the world came to British-controlled Palestine. That led to tensions with the Arab population.

The newly established United Nations proposed splitting the area into Arab and Jewish sections. In 1947, the UN approved the division plan for the region, and on 14 May 1948, the day the last British troops left, Jewish leaders established the State of Israel. Tensions were already high, quickly leading to the Arab-Israeli War, which in part revolves around disputed land ownership around Gaza.

Many Arab inhabitants fled from the violence of war. In some cases, this led to hostility towards Jews in other countries in the Middle East. In 1948, a secret mission known as Operation Magic Carpet was launched. In just two years, Operation Magic Carpet airlifted over 50,000 Yemenite Jews to the new Jewish state.