



Tom Soloveitzik

*Tel Aviv Flora & Fauna*



Looking out of the speeding car, just before the bridge that leads to the city's northern entrance, I notice two ducks standing on a too-narrow, grass-covered median strip. The ducks had most likely ventured out of Yarkon Park, after leaving the river, climbing up the riverbank, crossing the footpath and the dedicated bike trail, and forging on to reach the lawn that borders the western part of the park and the road along which we are driving. At that point, all that remained was to cross the road, using brisk duck steps, and climb the median strip between the lanes of traffic.

Eucalyptus trees crowd a plot of forest that stretches across a wide expanse at the edge of the park.  
The voices of birds

—mostly mynas and rose-ringed parakeets, two invasive species that have found their way to freedom and have gradually become the most prominent residents of an increasingly homogeneous landscape; as well as hooded crows, which are the most common birds in Israel, and whose predilection for building nests in tall trees, mostly Eucalyptuses, is well documented—





blend together with the background noise rising from the nearby road, which encloses the plot on all sides.

Ferdinand von Mueller (the Prophet of the Eucalyptus, as he was referred to), a German who emigrated to Australia for health reasons, was an enthusiastic eucalyptologist and the first government botanist of the Colony of Victoria. Mueller is credited with the rise of the eucalyptus tree's reputation in the mid-nineteenth century, leading to its spread across the Northern Hemisphere.

The myna, a bird of the starling family, originated in South Asia's tropical regions. During the 1990s, mynas had been brought to the Zapari (a bird park that used to stand in Yarkon Park but which closed a few years ago)



—just over a hundred years previously, the bird had been brought to the bird markets of Victoria to fight against agricultural pests; today, mynas dominate the entire eastern seaboard of the Australian continent—

and had apparently either escaped or were released from captivity. In 2020, they are the fourth most commonly found bird in Israel.







Rose-ringed parakeets, a species of tropical parrots who live in large flocks in Africa and Asia, were brought to Israel from Iran as exotic caged birds in the 1960s. Their predominance in the urban landscape, as they are today the sixth most common bird species in Israel, gives rise to a kind of bird-centered orientalism, which seems to thrive in the conditions of a Mediterranean jungle.

Should I turn the air conditioning on, I asked the piano tuner; I prefer you don't, he replied, otherwise, I'll have to tune to it. It's better not to wait three years, he said, I'll do what I can, see how flat (the pitch has gone), 433 Hz.

# JAGUAR



Reading J.A. Baker's *The Hill of Summer* invites the reader to enter another dimension, where we are called to observe and listen to the many-hued, infinite wholeness of nature. Our physical surroundings while reading the book

*The morning brightens slowly as the wind freshens. There is less haze. The air is warm with the songs of distant blackbirds. A willow warbler drops down into the gorse, leaving a birch-twig trembling. Its dark-shining eye scans the bushes above. It leaps from spray to spray, peering intently, snapping up small insects with its narrow bill. This is its life, this tireless fluttering and falling, the effortless, jaunty song forgotten as soon as uttered, the leaf-shadows moving endlessly over the indifferent face.*





alter the way we listen to its words. Reading in a quiet, snug room is entirely different from the experience of reading in a busy street café. The quiet room allows the reader's full participation in the experience of nature (as it rises from the pages). Reading in an outdoor café is like superimposing two spaces on top of each other, and is analogous to a schizophrenic listening experience, where Baker's idea of nature collapses into the surrounding urban noise and is subsumed by it.





A strong fan blows air onto my nape and on my back, producing a constant buzzing frequency; beside it, and onto the café's outdoor tables, a loudspeaker projects jazz music that sounds quiet in the presence of the loud urban soundscape whirling by. At times, there are birds: a pair of sparrows, the male with a black apron on its chest, perched on the back of the seat and watching me with its black eyes. A crow stands on the tip of a closed parasol, observing the street. A never-ending, heavy stream of traffic flows by. An eclectic mélange of trees is spread out along the sidewalk. Some are still young, planted, perhaps, as part of a generic municipal blueprint for spreading greenery across the landscape.

—Tom Solovetzik

*Translated from the Hebrew by Dahlia Ginosar*

*Photographs by Valery Bolotin*



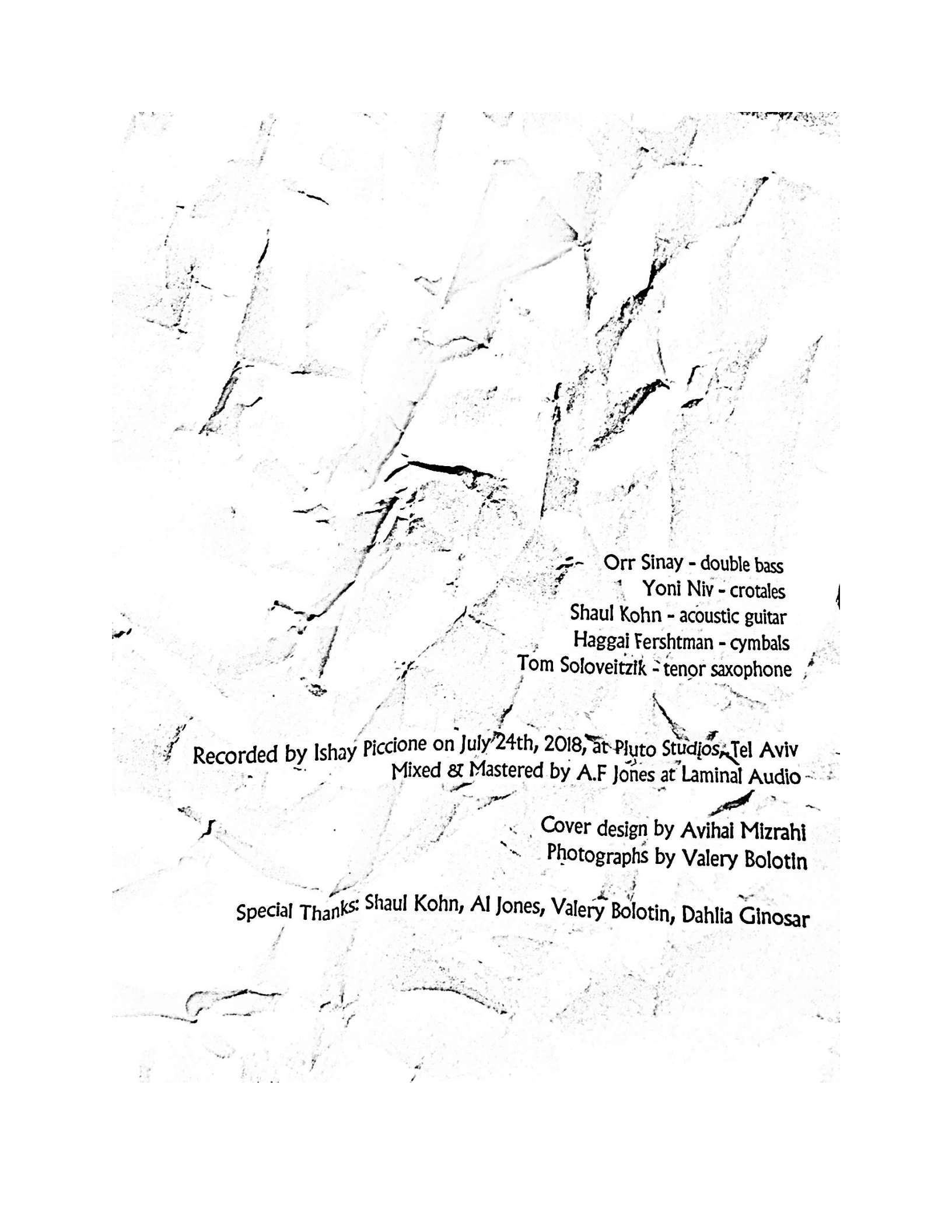
The idea for *Tel-Aviv Flora & Fauna* developed from remnants, debris, and other everyday mutations that I found around me, in my daily surroundings here in Tel Aviv, in the intersection between urban life and nature. I first framed them in the visual realm and then moved on, exploring ways to communicate them via sound. With the exception of the saxophone, all of the instruments in this piece — guitar, crotales, contrabass, and cymbals — were played using a bow. During our session in the studio, the outside surroundings of southern Tel Aviv were recorded from the rooftop above us and were later used as additional sound material.

Tom Soloveitzik is a musician and artist based in Tel Aviv, Israel. He works with the materiality of sound, the practice of listening, and the potentiality of recording [a 'field'] through performance and writing. He co-directs Ensemble Musica Nova for experimental music and the Holon Scratch Orchestra.

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Orr Sinay - double bass  
Yoni Niv - crotales  
Shaul Kohn - acoustic guitar  
Haggai Fershtman - cymbals  
Tom Soloveitzik - tenor saxophone

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