

**Ep #105: (Part 1) Finding Peace in Conflict  
with Zohar Tirosh-Polk**



**Full Episode Transcript**

**With Your Host**

**Leah Badertscher**

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Zohar: I've had to – and all of us who live in Israel and Palestine, and I think that here in America, there is definitely, in the last few years, an awakening to those realities of that you have to deal with the political and social realities around us constantly almost. In Israel and Palestine, they are almost constant and very disrupting and upsetting.

And so, there's this idea of reacting to the outside constantly, but there's also the thought that I could find peace in this moment, even though there is no peace right now in my homeland. And that is incredibly sad to me and upsetting. But I can still find peace today in my day. And also, that maybe there's inner work that I can do so I don't have, all the time, the power to impact change or create change or change that I want.

But I can start with me and I can start with those around me and to continue to believe that there is power in that. And that there's also though the thing outside of us – and I'm thinking of you now because you talk a lot about metaphors. But the thing outside of us is also a metaphor for what is inside of us and vice versa. And that could be worked with artistically, creatively, spiritually.

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That was a clip from my recent conversation with Zohar Tirosh-Polk. Zohar is a playwright, screenwriter, creative coach, and peace activist. She has worked extensively on multiple platforms, from Broadway to Netflix. Her award-winning plays have been presented at many theatres, including the Lincoln Center Theatre, The New Group, Magic Theatre, and others.

She is also a creative coach, and as such, she has coached hundreds of artists, guiding them towards creative fulfilment and success on their own

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terms. Zohar, or we know her as Zoe in the Art School, also happens to be an esteemed and beloved member of the Art School Mastermind. And I am honored and thrilled that she is joining me on the podcast this week and that you get to have this very intimate conversation with us.

It is a wide-ranging conversation. We talk about Zohar's creative career. We talk about her work on Broadway, off Broadway. We talk about the creative process and also the invitation that this year 2020 has been. We talk about our shared passion and commitment to building a paradigm of thriving artists and also our belief that art can be an instrument. It's one of its very multifaceted potentials, to be an instrument of transformation at an individual level, but also at a collective level; in our personal lives and also in the community.

This is such a rich conversation with such a warm, generous, brilliant woman. I'm thrilled to be able to share it with you. I know there will be gems here for your own creative career and process. And also, if this meets you at a time in the world when you are needing encouragement and inspiration, I do hope that that comes across for you in this episode as well.

You are listening to *The Art School Podcast*, a show for artists and creatives who want to become the next greatest version of themselves. Learn how to cultivate an extraordinary way of being and take the mystery out of making money, and the struggle out of making art. Here is your host, master certified life coach, artist, and former lawyer, Leah Badertscher.

Welcome, everyone, to *The Art School Podcast*. To my returning listeners, to new listeners, I am grateful to have you here. This is a special day on a very extraordinary week, in the midst of a very extraordinary week. Today

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is special in a personal way because, 10 years ago today, I gave birth to my middle son, Samuel.

So, we celebrated Sammy's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday today. And he is such a delight. So, I wanted to open this podcast celebrating that sweet and funny – he's had a sense of humor from hour one. I know they say that's too early to tell, but a mamma can tell. He had that mischievous twinkle in his eye from day one. And it's only developed. He's such a light.

So, I'm glad I get to share that little bit of family celebration with all of you. We had a really great family dinner. I always have the kids pick out what they want for dinner. And also, it's evolved into they also choose their birthday eve meal and their breakfast. And we had a family celebration, and talking about the birthday parties we will do once it's safe, post-COVID again. But in the meantime, just really enjoyed our time together today.

And his big ask for his birthday, he has been in love with planes and the thought of being a pilot someday this past year. And so, I got him his first remote controlled airplane. It is this Styrofoam number. It says it's a great flyer to start out with at that age. And he was so tickled, so beyond thrilled. So, that was priceless. And looking forward to taking his plane out tomorrow.

And also, in a larger context, we are in the middle of election week here in the US. And as I am recording this, now the intro outro for my interview with Zoe, Zoe and I got to sit down earlier this week on election day actually. And as I record this, we are yet to have a winner. But Zoe and I were saying earlier this week how grateful we both were that we had that opportunity to spend time together that day in conversation about things

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that we deeply love and you know, just really enjoying the presence of a kindred spirit. And we also had two other Art School meetings that day.

We had the full Art School and we also had the mastermind again later that day. And it really is something that I could not have envisioned when I first envisioned the Art School, that the community is – I don't want to say a sanctuary because it's nothing you flee to, but is a place to be nourished so you feel stronger and resilient and seated squarely in your agency and your resiliency amidst challenging times and interesting times.

And so, it is really such a gift to be in this community of people who are coming together committed to their resilience, committed to their strength, committed to building extraordinary lives no matter what, fully knowing too that it's not just for them, but this is important for their families. This is important for the community. It's this acknowledgement of taking ownership for one's own life and that that is ours to do, and also ours to do here in the US, go out and vote.

It's knowing what is ours to do and, again, taking that full creative responsibility for our lives. And so, I am in awe of the way the members of this community show up and their commitment to their own lives and their commitment to the work and their commitment to positive contributions and creating change out in the world, including extraordinary members like Zoe, who is a talented, gifted, successful artist and also peace activist, right?

I am just so proud and in awe of this community and so proud of individuals like Zoe, like Hope that you've heard from, Anna. And I have others coming on and there's so many more. I would like to introduce you to everyone. I think you would fall in love with everyone.

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So, before I lead you into the conversation with Zoe and introduce you to her via her formal bio, I have a few housekeeping announcements, some exciting free coaching opportunities, free community events that are coming up. And one does pertain directly to Zoe. She is going to be doing an off-Broadway performance with the Art School. So, the Art School is now off-Broadway.

So, here is a lovely autumn event to look forward to. Mark your calendars for Monday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 7pm Eastern. Zohar Tirosh-Polk will be doing a reading of her one-woman show Pieces. You'll hear Zoe talk more about this in our conversation, but her reading will be of Pieces, which is her one-woman show, and I'll share with you this brief description.

During the rise and fall of the Oslo Peace Accords and Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, a young woman leaves her dream life in New York City and returns home to serve in the Israeli army. And as we talk during our conversation, she read a part of this for our mastermind group and we were blown away.

It was so powerful and also, we knew the historical context of it and also her words and the message of it. So on point, poignant, and profound for what we are all experiencing right now. So, I am thrilled to be able to share this with you. We will have a link to that in the show notes. It's free and open to the entire Art School community. You do not have to be enrolled. And we would love to have you.

We are treating it as an off-Broadway performance. So, I don't know about you, but I need an excuse to get dressed up and have a really beautiful theatre night in the middle of November on a Monday night. And so, I would love to have you join us. It will be a really special evening.

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Also, two other events I have coming up, I have a free group coaching call to help you make Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> your lucky day. That will be held at 12pm Eastern time, again, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>. A free group coaching call.

And then, on Friday November 20<sup>th</sup> from 12 to 1:30 Eastern, I am going to be holding a workshop that will help you make this next season, whether you celebrate the holidays or whether you simply and to celebrate the fall and moving into winter season with intention and peace and joy, we're going to help you create the best season yet.

So, I have a particular practice that I want to share with you that has been very popular among my clients and we are adapting it and applying it specifically for this season. So, it's like my seasonal cheer gift to you and I just think now is the time where we could all do with some more warmth and intention and something to uplift our spirits and inspire us and remind us of how much control we do have in our lives to create meaning and joy, meaningful experiences and really causes for celebration and gratitude.

So, I would love to have you join us for that too. It is at no cost, open to anyone. Bring your friends. You will just need to sign up. And again, we will have a link for that in the show notes and on my website.

And finally, for those of you who just cannot get enough of the Art School – which I love hearing from a lot of you, that that is a lot of you. That is awesome – we are also offering early bird first tier enrollment for the Art School 2021. There are many benefits to enrolling early, including the lowest price point ever. But then also, there are additional coaching sessions and group workshops that you have access to that aren't open to the public. You have access to the community through these events. And



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you also just are able to begin to get the ball rolling and start generating momentum that much earlier.

Also, many of you are planning your 2021. I know I am. I'm planning all the way through 2021 in regards to what communities am I investing in, how am I investing in my creative growth, in mentorship and coaching for myself, for my business. And so, it is not too early to look ahead for the Art School, the 12-week session, or the Art School Mastermind.

Our next six-month cohort will launch in February and we are taking applications for that right now. And if you have any questions about either of those programs, please reach out to us at [support@leahcb.com](mailto:support@leahcb.com) and we will take great care of you and help you find the program that best fits your needs, your goals, your intentions.

I hope, I would love for it to be the Art School or the Art School Mastermind. But honestly, it's important to me too that we have an ideal fit because the chemistry, the culture, the dynamic in these communities are very important to me. I am 100% invested in getting results for you and knocking it out of the park for you. Not for some of my clients. Not for most of my clients. Not half of their results. 100% results for 100% of my clients. And also overdelivering and exceeding your expectations and really blowing this out of the water for you and making it, hands down, one of the best decisions you have ever made.

And in order for that kind of result and dynamic to happen, it's essential that it really is a good fit. So, it's important to me that I know what your goals and dreams are and we can assess if the Art School and the Art School Mastermind is the container, is the vehicle, and is the program to make



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sure that that result and a mind-blowing beautiful profound extraordinary experience are inevitable for you.

Okay, and now, I cannot wait to introduce you formally to Zohar Tirosh-Polk. As I said in the intro, Zohar is a playwright, screenwriter, creative coach, and peace activist. Her plays have been presented at many theatres including Lincoln Center Theatre, The New Group, and the Magic Theatre in San Francisco.

Her play, *The Zionist* is published in *Six Plays of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict* by McFarland. Her English translation of Hanoch Levin's play *Those Who Walk In The Dark* is published in *Wanderers and Other Israeli Plays* by Seagull Books.

A 2017-2018 LABA Fellow, Zohar won the Jewish Play Project's new play competition for her play *Six*. Zohar is also the Israeli dramaturg and dialect coach for the Tony Award winning Broadway and national tour production of *The Band's Visit*. She is the translator and dialect coach of the Netflix show *Messiah*. She has a BA in literature and writing from Columbia University and a playwriting MFA from Brooklyn College under Mac Wellman and Erin Courtney.

As a creative coach, Zohar has coached hundreds of artists, guiding them towards creative fulfilment and success on their own terms. So is trained by the Creativity Coaching Association and has studied with renowned creative and business coaches around the world. Zohar lives in New York City with her actor producer husband and two awesome children.

Please enjoy this conversation with Zohar Tirosh-Polk, or as we affectionately know her, Zoe.

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Leah: I have to tell you, like, I was rereading this morning everything you sent me and just thinking about you. And I feel emotional about this interview, in a very good way. I mean, your story, the story that you are telling, the greater story that you are in, the greater story we are all in. And I think it's something about what's reaching through you in your work and yeah, so many things.

Zohar: Also, today is a big emotional day for all of us. I was meditating, I was thinking, "Well, I'm grateful that some of this anxiety-filled day, I get to spend with Leah." A lot of it actually I get to spend to with you.

Leah: I was grateful too this morning, thinking that, "Okay, I have your interview to look forward to and then I have Art School time. It feels like a good day to be in that community. And so, how I love to go about the podcast is – maybe you've heard other interviews – I'll ask you a few questions beforehand, just things that I want to make sure we talk about, things that are burning desires for you or you most want to talk about. And also anything you don't want to talk about.

And then, I just like to start an organic conversation. And what I will do is, when I go back and before I send it to the producers, I will record reading your formal bio and do a more formal introduction. Because so far, I've found for me, it's a hard segue between, "Let me read Zoe Zohar's bio" and then we'll transition into normal person speak.

Zohar: That's totally fine with me, yeah.

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Leah: Okay, so I want to ask you first, what do you want to make sure that we talk about? And I want to make sure to highlight too, your pieces and the breakthrough group. And I have other things too, but now I want to give you a chance, if there are things that you definitely want to talk about.

Zohar: Well, I think one of the things I just know we're going to get to is how Art School has been a transformational, what should we call it, space in my life in the last year. 2020 has been so long that it feels like 10 years. But also because there has been so much depth. It's not just 2020. And I think also the idea that you have put forth, that 2020 has been an invitation and that has definitely been true for me because of the Art School.

It hasn't been a drag most of the time. It's been a deep invitation for exploration, dreaming. What else do I want? I don't know. I think it's going to come.

Leah: Okay, and is there anything that you're like, "No, I'd rather not talk about that?"

Zohar: No. I'm Israeli. It's all out.

Leah: On that note...

Zohar: Yeah, and I think sort of the formal introduction should be Zohar Tirosh-Polk, but then you and I you could say Zoe any time. You don't have to go Zohar Zoe, like, yeah.

Leah: So, do you think – and I loved the interview you sent over with Mona Mansoor, that too, the part where you say, "I'm 100% Israeli and 100% New Yorker." It somehow adds up.

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Zohar: Yeah, it doesn't add up...

Leah: But it adds up. When you know you, it adds up.

Zohar: Yes, yes, for sure.

Leah: So, with that, I think that's a great place too. So, Zoe, do you feel like Zoe is the New Yorker, or is Zoe both the 100% Israeli, 100% New Yorker?

Zohar: You know, it's always a big question. I think that's like a whole therapy session really. But I think that Zohar sort of encompasses all of it. All of it. And Zoe is the part that has had the opportunity to be really vulnerable, to find her own spiritual path, to look for her own individual creative and artistic journey. And Zohar sort of encompasses the whole journey, which is huge.

I grew up on three continents. I lived on three continents before I was 11. So, I was born in Brazil and then I lived in Israel and then I lived in Miami. So, there's been big journeys. And I think Zoe is a more intimate version of it, I think. But I'm sure psychologists will have thoughts about that, but that's okay.

Leah: Well, as we are discussing, I think there is so much in a name. And as you were saying, like, Zohar, one of the reasons is illumination. And the other, can you explain the other?

Zohar: So, Kabbalah, which is hard for me to really describe, but Kabbalah is an aspect of Judaism that really deals with the spiritual mystical part of Judaism. And I think there are few texts. Judaism is heavily invested in text and books. And so, there are few texts. And the highest book, the most

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important book of this mystical spiritual body of knowledge is called the Zohar.

Leah: So, is that something like, as a child, did you know that?

Zohar: No. I knew it later. And actually, my parents, who claim not to be spiritual at all, did not know. They called me Zohar because of this specific description of it, being illumination and light. And my brother's name is Ziv, which if you look under the dictionary, you will see are each other's names. So, if you look under Zohar, it will say Ziv, and it both means intense light or beautiful light.

Leah: That's so fitting. So, having grown up on three continents and I've known you for about a year now so it also just occurred to me now, I have never heard you talk about not knowing where home is. So what feels like home to you? Is it a place or is it a state of being? What does home mean to you?

Zohar: I think that's a really great question. And it's a question I ask a lot in my plays, where is home and what is home? And also, that we have our own idealized versions of home and then home in reality is very different. So, there's a gap there between the reality of what we believe, what we dream of as home.

And it really also relates to Israel. There are so many idealized versions of what the Holy Land is or what Israel is to so many people. And then there's the realized version of that home and what it's like day to day. And there's a big gap there.

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And so, I talk about that a lot in my plays. But for me, home is the thing we talked about, which is I really feel at home in Tel Aviv, by the beach, sitting by the beach with my friends or family, with watermelon, that feels like home. And then I feel at home in New York for sure. Brooklyn and New York City feels like my home. So, like we said, I feel 100% New Yorker and I feel like 100% Israeli and that doesn't add up but it does feel like it is.

Leah: And as you were saying, you know, you write a lot about the question of home in your plays. And I was reading in another interview that you were talking about, in your plays, exploring those war-torn regions outside of us. So, for you, that being both a geographic place and talking about Israel and Palestine. And then you also wrote about those external places can often mirror our internal aspects that are war-torn. And can you say more about that?

Zohar: I've had to – and all of us who live in Israel and Palestine, and I think that here in America, there is definitely, in the last few years, an awakening to those realities of that you have to deal with the political and social realities around us constantly almost. In Israel and Palestine, they are almost constant and very disrupting and upsetting.

And so, there's this idea of reacting to the outside constantly, but there's also the thought that I could find peace in this moment, even though there is no peace right now in my homeland. And that is incredibly sad to me and upsetting. But I can still find peace today in my day. And also, that maybe there's inner work that I can do so I don't have, all the time, the power to impact change or create change or change that I want.

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the thing outside of us – and I'm thinking of you now because you talk a lot about metaphors. But the thing outside of us is also a metaphor for what is inside of us and vice versa. And that could be worked with artistically, creatively, spiritually.

Leah: And I know you and I have had conversations before and we've had these conversations in the Art School about one of the roles and also the gifts, the capacities of artists is to see reality for what it is and to take that all in, the full spectrum of it. And also to tell a meaningful story. And then also there's also the potential to create a vision that may not reflect where we are but could point to where we could go.

Zohar: Yeah, so I spoke about that specifically about this show that I was very lucky to be able to work on called The Band's Visit. And it was on Broadway. It was first off-Broadway and I wasn't part of it when it was off-Broadway. And then it moved to Broadway and I started working on it then from that transition between off-Broadway to Broadway. And actually, my husband was in it as well.

And it was such an incredible ride in our lives. It was an Israeli movie that was adapted into a musical and it dealt with an Egyptian band, army band that shows up in Israel and gets lost. Instead of going to the supposedly big town, which is the joke, it's not really a big town, but supposedly the big town. It gets lost and the band find themselves in a small town in the desert. And the whole show is about these 24 hours of these people interacting, so this Egyptian army band and the people, the residents of this little town in the Negev in Israel. Negev is a desert area in Israel which interestingly enough is an area I grew up in, in Israel.



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So, it is such a beautiful show and I hope that COVID will end soon so that all of these beautiful people who worked on the tour can go back on tour and maybe everyone who's listening will get a chance to see it or download this beautiful album called The Band's Visit album on iTunes. But what's so beautiful about the show is that we get to experience the growing intimacy between these two groups of people and how they all want or wish for the same things. And mainly, that this is true connection.

And that most of this is achieved, not all but most of this intimacy and connection is achieved by music and the power of music to connect these two cultures that when you put them together, they find out that they're really not that far off from one another. And it's such a stunning transformation to witness and the show itself is beautiful.

So, when I spoke about the show, a lot of times plays, theatre, or art are a mirror to life. But what this play did so beautifully was really show us what could be and how easily it could be that. So, that's the story if The Band's Visit.

Leah: That just gave me chill hearing you talk about that in greater detail. And also, what I love within that is the tale within the tale of the story is about the people who come together and realizes intimacy that's facilitated by music, maybe created through music, this common bond. And then too, the meta layer of, like, now it becomes a play that the rest of us can see. And then it has that potential then to bond through understanding, through the narrative of these very personal stories and also through the music.

It then has the ability to offer us the effect that the characters in the play achieved. That just blows my mind that art is able to do that. That's true power and that's true transformation.

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Zohar: It was so beautiful. And we spoke about this in the Art School, but what was so astounding about this is that it was a really small Israeli independent film. It did well, but it was a small independent film. And this young producer saw it in New York and said, “I must do something with this work.”

And it took him 10 years to adapt it, to translate it, to workshop it, to realize that it needed to be a musical, to hire the amazing David Yazbek and other people who worked on the show who wrote the music for it and wrote the lyrics and wrote the book and then our director, our fierce director David Kromer, who got to work on it. And it was an off-Broadway show and to really push it up this hill and to believe in it so much that it could then become the huge success that it was. It ended up winning 10 Tony Awards, including best musical, which was such a joy and a surprise for all of us.

And I wanted to tell you about – this was not the Tony night, which is also a story for another time and it was super-fun, to get dressed up and to go to the Tonys, but this way the opening night on Broadway, which was another fun night and I also got to dress up. But the fun part about that was we ended up moving across the street for the afterparty. It was in a place called Copa Cabana. I was born in Brazil. This was the Copa Cabana club.

We got there and there was – we had the most beautiful musicians, Egyptian musicians, Arab musicians on the show. And there was the most gorgeous Egyptian and Arab music and there was Middle Eastern food on Broadway and Israelis and Arabs and Americans were all dancing together. And there was a moment where the light came up and everyone – not the light came up, but slowly, light started showing up in the room, slowly, and it was everyone’s phones because they were reading the amazing New York Times review that we got that night. It was a really magical, magical

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night. And I remember pinching myself dancing with my beautiful friends from Egypt and Lebanon and Palestine and Morocco and dancing together on Broadway. So, it is, like you asked me, it was a meta, meta idea of what could possibly be. And for a moment, we had it on Broadway and it was wonderful.

Leah: Stunning. And it's so incredible to me too, through your storytelling now, you can summon the magic again. My body, my cells feel – and another part that jumped out at me when you were telling your story was the words and also the way you said that this producer believed in it so much.

Zohar: He didn't take no for an answer. I forgot to mention that. Tony Shalhoub and Kartina star in it. And he got Tony Shalhoub to say yes to it and he got these great, great collaborators. Another lesson from that time for me was I didn't mention that I was the Israeli dramaturg and the dialect coach on the show. The Israeli dialect coach. I had a partner, Muna, who was our Arabic dialect coach.

But what became clear to me then is that I sat there and really I'm a playwright and I want my play to be on Broadway, and I write about these issues, so really, that's what I wanted. But I got to sit there the first day of rehearsal and hear the most amazing voices sing Israeli and Arabic music and tell this stunning story. And I realize that this was the dream if I put my ego aside. And that all of us in that room, and I can't even remember how many we were, 100 or 200 people who worked on the show, has to put that ego part aside to create something so, so, so gorgeous. And when we were able to do that, it really was magic.

Leah: So, I told you I was feeling emotional today.

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Zohar: Well, it's a big day for all of us.

Leah: It is. But that's the dream, right? To aside that which makes us separate and to see where the potential is for coming together despite differences that seem like they can't be overcome. And in that entire creative process too, just overcoming odds, not staying squarely in the vision of what's possible. And you and I are recording this on election day, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. And I think too, something that emerges for me listening to you talk is that this is all in community.

So much of your story here is you're writing about societies, communities, peoples. And in the theatre world, you're talking about this, these creative collectives too, and different artists and the producers coming together. And we were talking at the beginning, we opened up our conversation about how we were both grateful that today is a day when we you and I get to talk first and then we have two Art Schools. I guess it is a moment in history and that we are grateful to be able to anchor ourselves in community today.

Zohar: Absolutely. And because we didn't have a clear start to our conversation, which I loved, and was so genuine and flowing, I didn't get to say how honored I am to be on the podcast with you today. Because the podcast has been such an essential part of my own transformation in the last year or so. It really feels longer. We said to each other. It feels longer than a year, and the Art School, of course. But the podcast has been such a jewel in this past year with pandemic and kids and homeschooling and a lot of laundry and running.

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And I was able to listen to this gorgeous podcast and really work on my own transformation as an artist and a coach and a human being. So, I just feel honored to do this, to be here today.

Leah: Well, it's such an honor to have you. And again, I think that yes, in the greater context of what's going on today. And then too, I was feeling like deeply moved, preparing again, rereading what you have worked on, rereading about your career, thinking about what I wanted to ask you, contemplating about your work as an artist, and also your work as a mentor and a coach for other artists.

And, you know, we share a passion for that work as well, and we share a passion for building creative communities like this that are strong, that really are the foundation for building a paradigm of thriving artists and share a common belief that thriving artists are essential to healthy robust thriving communities and societies and countries and a planet. So, it's such an honor to have a kindred spirit on the podcast and one whose work I greatly admire.

And I'm also appreciating that we should also mention that you have had to move quite a bit throughout this year. Because you're usually in Upstate New York....

Zohar: I'm currently in Upstate New York. We're usually in Brooklyn. We're also in the middle of a renovation, so we're going back and forth between Brooklyn and Upstate and it's been quite a ride, but also a really beautiful one. And I remember when I started listening to your podcast and we had just met and you were on a farm and I thought, "What?"

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We've talked about the fact that I've lived on three continents before I was 11, but I lived in really big cities most of the time. There was a desert aspect, which is different. But also, desert is very different than a farm. And so, I couldn't imagine being able to enjoy that life.

And, this year, I got to spend a lot of time in the country and it's been a real gift of sort of deepening and peace and yeah, abundance. It's been really wonderful. And so, I feel closer to you. Now I can sort of imagine it. Before, I couldn't even imagine it.

Leah: Well, and when you were talking about to your experience, the opening of the bands and the entire message and the power of that piece of art being about the power of art and music to unify, and it reminded me of I've had a few short stints of being able to live in the city. And one was we were able to live in London for six months, in the middle, right off Trafalgar Square.

So, big change to right smack dab in the middle of that major international city. And it was wonderful. And then also very different. And we had all three of our children with us, which was awesome. And then also a challenge when two of them need strollers most of the time and they're six and...

Zohar: Cities and strollers are hard.

Leah: Yes, and city transport...

Zohar: Yes, city transports, they did not think of moms with their strollers. No one did.

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Leah: Trying to get three children from two to six onto a bus or a train before the doors close and get them all together is, like, I felt so accomplished.

Zohar: You were. That is an accomplishment.

Leah: So, but the story I wanted to share with you was, there was one time, this is amazing, I'm so grateful, and I'm also feeling really disoriented. Because the city moves and there's these throngs and it's easy to feel like, gosh, there's how many million people here and it feels so indifferent. I feel so unconnected and not a part of anything while people are just, they're at the same, there's so many people coming and going.

And then, I was just thinking about that and feeling, I don't think it was homesick, but just feeling like, you know, this is my work and yet what does this mean if I can't find my place in this international city, just for a little bit, just to feel connected to all these different people. I don't want to feel so different, so separate, I guess, or that I couldn't connect with people here.

And I was walking back through Trafalgar Square and there was a break dancer that had a huge crowd around him. And all of a sudden, the song changed and he started playing a Michael Jackson song. And I can't even remember which one. But then, it clearly is the one that everyone knows because there was a throng of at least 100 people around him, people of all different nationalities, dress, color, makeup, ages. And they all started dancing and some people were singing along and it's clear that's not their first language. But it just gave me chills beyond – you could feel the unification.

Zohar: That's the thing of the power of music, to connect.



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Leah: Yes, and all of this great energy, focused on this talented young man in the middle who's spinning on his head and bringing the light in the middle of the day to everybody. And people paused in the middle of the day, all of a sudden smiling, you know, dancing. And it is.

It's that power of art and music where, all of a sudden, it is very unifying. And it's easy to dismiss that as, "Oh, that's cute. That's quaint." But I think if we stop and are really like, "What is it about music and art that strums a common thread within us?" And I think if we just pause a little bit longer one, it's beyond quaint. It's powerful. It is transformative. And maybe if we just acknowledge it or honor it a little bit longer, we could be a lot more wise in how we use that.

Zohar: Absolutely.

Leah: So, you told this story about the magical night. And I know too that that's not where the story began for you with your creative life. So, did you always know that you wanted to be a playwright and a screenwriter? Did you always know you wanted to be a writer and an artist?

Zohar: So, I was born in Brazil. And we lived there and the first thing I ever wanted to be was one of those samba dancers with the feather on their heads and the bikini and the color was very shiny and pretty and they got to dance. And so, that's the first thing I wanted to be.

And there's a funny story of a bunch of these dancers showing up at our wedding in Israel, which my husband was very surprised. And I made him dance with a couple. It was really funny. But yeah, that's the first thing I wanted to be.

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And I think after that, I wanted to be a dancer and that didn't quite pan out the way I wanted. But I have a deep, deep love and admiration for dance, specifically modern dance. And I don't know if you know, but Israel is a big center for modern dance in the world and we have Batsheva Dance Company, which is one of the most famous modern dance companies in the world. And I adore them. So, that's dance.

When dance didn't quite pan out the way I wanted, I did a play when I was 10, I guess my daughter's age now. And I played the lead and everyone clapped at the end and I thought, "This is good. This works for me." And so, then slowly, a journey towards acting began. And I studied acting as a young teen and as a teenager.

And I actually, this is a story for a whole other podcast, but I left Israel when I was 17. I graduated early and I went to New York by myself when I was 17 to study acting. So, I will write a book or a TV show about that year one day. But I got to live in the village and study acting that year.

And then, I had to go back to do the Israeli army, which is where the story of Pieces began. So, I lived in New York where I have a dream life and I go to Israel to serve in the Israeli army because that was and still is, unfortunately, is the law. And everyone at 18 has to serve, women and men. So, I had to go leave my dream life in New York and go serve in the army.

And I came back a couple of years later and still acted for a while and then started exploring writing and wrote my one-woman show Pieces and realized that I think I might be more of a writer. And then I went to school and I went to school some more. I studied literature and writing and

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playwriting and so that's where – and then realized that that's what I wanted to do.

Leah: So, let's talk about that, that return to Israel, that that was the basis for your work Pieces. So, you went back to Israel when you were 18. Is that two years?

Zohar: It's two years for women. It's a little different now, I think. But yes, mostly two years. And men go for three.

Leah: And then, when did you write the first draft Pieces?

Zohar: This is interesting. Artistically, I was in the middle of drama school. Because I came back after the army and went to drama school on Broadway at a place called Circle in the Square. I have dear friends in there. And I was in the middle of drama school and it was a Chekov scene. And I was playing Nina from the Seagull. And my acting teacher. Who was more like a guru to all of us then, my acting teacher said, "Why can't you be playful? Be playful. Play with the umbrella or something." I had an umbrella. And I couldn't play.

And he said, "I don't understand, why aren't you playful?" And what came out then was because people are dying. And I didn't quite understand that answer either and I didn't understand why I couldn't be playful. But what was really happening was I was sitting on a lot that needed to be explored and expressed and written and listened to.

And about a year later, I started, pretty quickly I wrote a full draft of Pieces to show. And it was so much bigger than I thought was in me and needed

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to be expressed. And pretty shortly after that, we produced it and I was in it off-Broadway, a small theatre. But it was pretty glorious.

When I wrote it, I thought it was going to be me and – I said – three old Jews in the basement. But at least I wrote it and I did it. And it ended up running for three weeks and it was a joy and a celebration and an expression of something that felt really real and a hope for peace, which was important to express at that point for me. Always is.

Leah: So, this is a great place to introduce, I think – you read the opening of it in the Art School Mastermind the other day. And it was such a profound experience for everyone on that call. I don't have to conjecture or guess about this because everyone said, that was a moment. Something happened. Everyone felt it.

And I think there are those times when we create and we express and its like, sometimes, it's for us. Sometimes, our own creativity has a message for us. And then, I think there are times too when it has a message for the times that we're in, like that context. And then I think – and this was just experiencing just that first piece the other say, you feel that it's more than just for you. And for you.

It's more than just for the times, and it was for those times, and it's 26 years since you wrote that and it felt so, like, made for these times and us right now. And we're very excited that Zoe is going to do a reading off-Broadway through the Art School, AKA off-Broadway. And I could not be more honored and excited about this.

So, it's going to be November 16<sup>th</sup>, right? Monday, 7pm Eastern. And so, we will have all of the information about that. And I was also struck,

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because this was my experience of it personally and then to hear others on that call say, you can definitely see how you were speaking to the time and the world events at that time. And it also felt like a personal message to all of us on that call here too in 2020, which we were talking about like, 2020 has invited us to deepen and enrich.

And there is something about the energy that came through you and through your words in that reading the other night. So, I would just invite anybody who felt that 2020, they want to use this year not as something to just cross off the calendar as soon as we can and move onto the next, but really to enter into the invitation that we've been given. I think your reading of Pieces will be apart of that, a beautiful part of that.

Zohar: You know, Leah, it's interesting about work that its time has come. And I don't know that that's fully true for Pieces or not. But I wrote it, I guess 20 years ago or 21 years ago, something like that. And then based on experiences that happened 26, 25 years ago. And it was done in New York, then I didn't touch it for eight years.

And then, I got a call from a theatre in Boston and they said, "Hey, we want to do this together with a play about Rachel Corrie, My Name Is Rachel Corrie, an American activist who died in the Palestinian Territories, in the occupied territories by the Israeli army, actually.

So, we did both of those plays in Boston and that was an interesting experience. We can talk about it another time. And then, I didn't touch it since 2008. So, that's been 12 years, I haven't even looked at it. I didn't open the document. I didn't even know if it was on my computer. And then it's 2020, November 4<sup>th</sup>, tomorrow is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rabin's assassination, who was our prime minister, and it felt very clear that I had

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to reengage with this in some way. And so, it's not quite when I wanted, how I wanted, and on my time. But there is a specific – I guess there is a real time for a piece of art.

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So, this brings me to the part of the podcast where I want you to do more than just listen. I want you to lean in and really work with me. Coach with me. And actually, this week, because Zoe is also a very brilliant and gifted creative coach herself, I want to have you coach with both Zoe and I.

And taking her lead from the statement about looking for a place in your external life where there might be a conflict, and asking yourself, how can you work with that as a metaphor for any conflict that you are trying to resolve within you. How can a piece that you're trying to seek in the outer world, how is that a reflection of the peace that you are trying to work with in your inner world? And then leave it to your imagination to explore all of the ways that you can explore that.

Is it through your art? Is it through some other physical mechanism? Is it spiritually? Is it emotionally? Is it intellectually? So, again, play with the metaphor here. Is there some situation in your outer life? You could pick a very challenging one, or you could pick a small one. And look to see, you know, where might that be representing and mirroring a challenge which is really an invitation and an opportunity to deepen your relationship with yourself, to explore your relationship with yourself. And how can that be worked with creatively, spiritually, et cetera?

Thank you for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. If you've enjoyed this podcast, if these episodes have been useful for you,

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inspirational, empowering, or uplifting, and you want to pay it forward, the best way to do that is to share, to subscribe, to go to iTunes and leave a review.

As always, I am so grateful for everyone that listens, and especially grateful when you take the time out of your day to do that, to go to iTunes and leave a review or to share this with loved ones and colleagues. Thank you so much for that support.

Okay, to close today, I have some extra credit opportunities for you here. If you go back and listen to when Zoe is talking about her work with the bands and she's telling the story about how that story made it to the US from being a small film in Israel, to being an off-Broadway show and then being on Broadway and then winning 10 Tony Awards, listen to the way she talks about that and describes the process.

There are two gems in particular that I think are such amazing profound teachers and, again, energetic teachers. She said at one point that the producer who saw the film, that his reaction was, "I must do something with this work." And then later, she says that, despite all the odds, he believed in it so much.

Those two takeaways, don't miss those two takeaways in the way she describes that. It's so powerful. Where in your life can you channel that kind of energy and that kind of commitment, where you say about your own work, "I must do something with this work." And then where can you channel believing in it so much, the obstacles just dissolve and melt away? What would be your version of on Broadway and 10 Tonys? I really think those two things that she shared with us there, "I must do something with this work and I believed in it so much," those are really powerful takeaways.



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Yes, there were so many other things and so many other players and moving parts, things that had to happen. But do not discount the power of, “I must do something with this work,” and believing in it so much. Give yourself that kind of energy and that kind of commitment, that kind of belief. And have a beautiful week, everyone. Take very good care of yourself. Take very good care of one another and I look forward to talking with you next week.