



# INSight

news from *Jewish Institute For The Blind, Jerusalem*

volume 22 number 41 - Fall 1997

## A Vision of Music

"Whenever I am sad or angry at someone, I go to the music room, sit at the drums, and play them as loud as I can," says Ophir, a 16-year-old pupil at the Jewish Institute for the Blind. "Then when I am not mad anymore, I go over to the piano and play something quietly." One of the many students benefitted by music therapy as well as music lessons at the Institute, Ophir articulates clearly the positive note that music adds to his life.

In addition to playing drums and piano, Ophir finds a release as well as joy in music. He writes lyrics to tunes he knows, but says that he most enjoys listening to different types of music. His imagination always active, Ophir can dance around a fire with African tribes or march with soldiers, depending on the music he listens to. Music can fit his every mood, and oftentimes, it can help to improve it.

### Importance of Music

"With the help of music, I try and enter the world of the blind," explains Irit, a music therapy instructor at the Jewish Institute for the Blind. As part of a wide variety of activities, the Institute utilizes music therapy to help both blind and partially sighted students. Not only does music allow children the opportunity to release anger, but it increases their self esteem, and they receive immediate feedback. Oftentimes, with music, a child feels that he can succeed, he is part of the group, and the music is a vision he can experience just as well as a sighted person.



*Sintayu finds a quiet moment of happiness practicing her guitar*



*Afternoon in the music room at the Jewish Institute for the Blind*

Loud noises, screams or sudden sounds, however, can be terrifying to a blind child as he does not have eyesight to compensate him. Developing listening skills are very important, and a blind person very often has a highly developed sense of hearing and rhythm. Music education and awareness can be very therapeutic even without years of training.

The music room at the Institute is a happy place, full of instruments, and even more important, filled with smiles and camaraderie. All students are tested, and they are placed in small groups or worked with on an individual basis. Even though pupils may have severe problems which result in their limited movement, (in addition to their blindness), oftentimes they are helped to find an instrument with which they can develop. Both a band and a choir have been formed at the Institute, and it is common to see groups of pupils sitting quietly and listening to another person sing or play an instrument.