

# Alexander Uriyah Boskovich

## "D a u g h t e r o f I s r a e l" (1960)

Cantata for tenor, choir and orchestra

Text by **Chaim Nachman Bialik**

*" This poem is dedicated to the ideal of the Jewish woman, an ideal which is deeply rooted in the perception of the Jewish- Hebrew tradition. This concept is reflected in the "Song of Songs" as well as in the traditional- spiritual heritage of Israel until this very day."*

*"Who but Bialik knew how to open the gates to the spiritual world of the archaic images which are deeply engraved in the soul of the Jewish people and express the timeless validity of these images in a short poem." (composer).*

In 1960, the commission of Henrietta Szold's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday decided to commemorate her personality by inviting several Israeli composers to participate in a competition of a musical work set to the poem "Daughter of Israel" by Chaim Nachman Bialik. A.U. Boskovich was awarded the first Prize by a jury consisting of Darius Milhaud (France), Aaron Copland (U.S.A.) and Frank Peleg (Israel). In 1961, the premier of his work was performed at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary concert of the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra with the British tenor Ronald Dowd, the "Rinat Choir" conducted by Gary Bertini.

"Bat Israel" is a turning point in Boskovich's music. After the "East - Mediterranean Style" of the 1940's he changed his musical direction towards the serial style that was common in the 1960's and beyond by transferring the intonation, rhythm, melos .and accents of the Hebrew language into his musical language. Explaining his elasticity in serial technic he points out that "*...The source of serialism in this work is the human intonation. This is contrary to the formal approach, which sees the basic acoustic rule of the series as a predetermined organized tone pattern.*"

The melodic pattern heard throughout the cantata consists of a row of five tones A-B-E-C-D. The music of "Bat Israel" moves simultaneously on three levels. The tenor and the orchestra perform in a contemporary musical language, the tenor sings the words of Bialik in a declamatory-

singing style, while, at the same time, the choir is singing verses from the "Song of Songs " and the Shabbat Prayers in tonal-modal music.

As in his previous work "Song of Ascent" the symbolic element can also be found in the music of "Daughter of Israel". While Bialik's words are reminiscent of his mother blessing the Shabbat and lightening seven candles, the orchestra is heard by seven different instruments: vibraphone, harp, bells, celesta, triangle and campanelli. Two violins play a very high continuous tone – a kind of orgelpunkt – which symbolizes the Shabbat quietude.

The music of the cantata is born out of the word , it is a perfect amalgamation between the sound and the rhythm of the word. The fusion between the tonal- modal language, and the atonal- serial one, excels in its artistic wholeness. As an idealist, Boskovich saw this fusion as a kind of symbol of the connection between the past and the present and the creation of a merger between the ancient Jewish traditions and the contemporary Israeli experience.

Miriam Boskovich

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