

Musical Discoveries Series Concert No. 6

Thursday, 10.7.08 at 20:00
Henry Crown Hall, Jerusalem Theatre

Ilan Volkov, conductor

Alexander Uriya Boskovich (1907-1964)

Song of Ascent, for symphony orchestra

Andante moderato

Allegro con brio

Più mosso

Josef Tal (b. 1910)

Symphony No. 2

Intermission

Abel Ehrlich (1915-2003)

Music

Oedoen Partos (1907-1977)

Concertino for String Orchestra

This concert has been made possible in part through the support of the
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This year marks the 70th anniversary of The Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, IBA, and in celebration, the JSO will hold a series of events: first, the concert program shall designate a spot for figures and stories from the orchestra's rich history; second, the orchestra celebrates this occasion with a series of concerts, which culminated with the historic Israeli premiere of Mahler's early cantata **Das Klagende Lied** (Song of Lamentation), which was presented as part of the Israel Festival and featured guest soloists and the Warsaw National Philharmonic Choir. Tonight's special tribute concert focuses on the generation of composers largely responsible for laying the foundations to musical life in Israel



Alexander Uriya Boskovich (1907-1964)
Song of Ascent, for symphony orchestra
approximate duration 15 min.

Born on August 16, 1907 in Cluj, Transylvania, Hungary (today Romania), Boskovich began his musical education in his hometown and continued it in Vienna, which was followed by Paris, where he studied piano with Alfred Cortot and composition with Nadia Boulanger and Paul Dukas. In 1938 Boskovich came to Israel on the occasion of the first performance of his piece **The Golden Chain** by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. Boskovich stayed on in Israel and became an important figure in Israeli music life - as composer, educator of an entire generation of composers as well as music critic for the prestigious daily paper Ha'aretz. His compositions won him many prizes and were conducted by renowned conductors such as Sir John Barbirolli, Eduard van Beinum, Charles Munch, Gary Bertini and Mendi Rodan. His creative path was strewn with stylistic changes which influenced his ideology and that, in turn, shaped his music. The connection between music and the Hebrew language, its timbres and rhythms, were of the greatest interest to him and a rich source of inspiration.

All the works Boskovich composed during the last five years of his life contain a poetic idea and reflect mystic-symbolic elements transformed into music. "The source of inspiration of this composition is the book of Psalms, the chapters of Song of Ascent, in particular chapter 122, 'I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the House of the Lord'. It is my feeling, that these psalms express the yearning to ascend to Zion, to the House of the Lord, and on a more abstract level, the ascent of the spirit and the soul to the divine - the ascent which has no end and is timeless. The longing, as well as the ascent, are eternal." The composition is set in one movement, delineated into three distinct parts. The rhythmic melodic structure of **Song of Ascent** has its source in the idea of the talea used in motets of the 14th century. Characteristic statements of the talea may employ a reiterated scheme of time values, leading to repetitions of the melody (cantus firmus) in different rhythmical patterns.

In the Hebrew alphabet each letter has a numerical value. The name of the composer's son David, when written in Hebrew, is equivalent to the numbers 4-6-4. By breaking down the time value of this pattern into half 2+3+2 quarters, Boskovich incorporates his son's name into the *talea* rhythmic structure of the **Song of Ascent**. The opening theme of the *Andante moderato*, performed by bassoons and cellos, starts with a descending fourth D – A. Inverted, the ascending fourth turns into the 'theme of yearning', played by violas and flutes, and elaborated by variations of the *talea* by the piano and the violins. The rising fourth is like a driving force of chain reactions, and symbolizes "the mounting tide of emotions". The second part – *Allegro con brio* – develops, through continuous variants of the *talea*, the augmentation of the fourth into a sixth, into a joyous outburst of "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the House of the Lord" (Psalms, Chapter 122), scored for string and wind instruments. The third part – *Più mosso* – is ecstatic in mood. The accumulating tension erupts in a forceful climax of *fff*, an oriental style toccata, performed by percussion instruments. With a sudden *pianissimo* the music dissolves into an echolike sonority of peaceful quietude. The work was awarded First Prize in competition sponsored by The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. It was premiered in 1961, under the baton of maestro Gary Bertini.

Miriam Boskovich

Courtesy of the Israeli Music Institute



Josef Tal (b. 1910)
Symphony No. 2
 approximate duration 12 min.

Josef Tal was born Joseph Gruenthal on September 18, 1910 in Pinne (now Poland). Tal's teachers at the Staatliche Akademische Hochschule fuer Musik in Berlin included Tiessen, Trapp, Hindemith, Sachs, Kreutzer and Saal. He emigrated to Palestine in 1934 and taught composition and piano at the Jerusalem Academy of Music. He was Director of the Academy from 1948 until 1952. In 1965 he joined the faculty of the Hebrew University and eventually became head of the musicology department.

Numerous among Tal's works were written on biblical subject or were influenced by the Bible or were based on epic events in Jewish history. However, in style, Tal remained faithful to his European background and was not affected by the trends which dominated most Israeli compositions in the 1940s and 1950s which, in the main, were based either on the folklore of the various Jewish communities in Israel or on the Eastern musical traditions of the region (the *maqam*). By that time, Tal was already deep into writing 12-tone music and with the passing years, his use of the dodecaphonic elements became less and less constrained.

The many honours bestowed upon him include a UNESCO grant for the study of electronic music, the State of Israel Prize (1971), Art Prize of the City of Berlin (1975), the Wolff Prize, Israel (1983), Verdienstkreuz I Klasse, Germany (1984), Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France (1985), Johann Wenzel Stamitz Prize, Germany (1995).

Courtesy of the Israeli Music Institute