

About The Composer

Alexander Uriyah Boskovich (1907-1964) was one of the leading figures among the Founding Fathers of Israeli art music, and the foremost thinkers and spokespersons of that generation. He was born in Cluj, the capital of Transylvania. After one year in Vienna (1924) he moved to Paris, where he completed his piano studies at the Ecole Normale with Alfred Cortot and composition with Paul Dukas and Nadia Boulanger. At the Schola Cantorum he specialized in the art of choral music (1925/6-1929). Upon returning to his hometown in 1929, he became active as a composer, concert pianist and conductor of the National Opera and of the Goldmark Symphony Orchestra, which he founded in 1935/6.

In 1938 he was invited by the Palestine Symphony Orchestra (now the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra) to attend the premiere of his suite *The Golden Chain*, based on seven Jewish folksongs, under the baton of maestro Issai Dobrowen. He came as a visitor, but decided to stay in the Land of Israel and make it his home. Boskovich identified absolutely with the historic "here" and "now" and was intensely involved in the revival of art and culture of his ancient-new homeland as a composer, writer, educator and music critic.

Boskovich referred to his music as "a most personal re-interpretation of the essence of this unique world of Israel". Throughout his creative life, he retained his unwavering quest to create a musical language that would express this new reality. Profound studies and personal acquaintances familiarized him with the traditions, music and dances of diverse oriental Jewish communities, in particular with the artistic Yemenite folklore as well as with Arabic and Druze music and its indigenous instruments. This colorful cultural and musical mosaic exerted tremendous influence on his music. The poetic beauty of the Bible, its diverse cantillations and the revival of the Hebrew language were to him an unfathomable source of inspiration, and the wellspring of a new idiom in his musical language which he called "The East Mediterranean Style". The *Oboe Concerto* (1942), *Violin Concerto* (1942), *Piano Pieces for the Youth* (1944/5) and *Semitic Suite* (1945), with its myriad versions, are considered among the cornerstones of this style.

In the last years of his life, Boskovich began to crystallize a new style, without abandoning his quest for a synthesis between the archaic and the new, for an amalgam

of oriental musical elements and western compositional achievements. He created a unique fusion between the serial technique and the Hebrew language by transferring its melos, intonations, accentuations and rhythm into musical sound. The Hebrew language both archaic and new is the common denominator underlying his last four major works: *Song of Ascent* for symphony orchestra (1959/60), *Daughter of Israel* – a cantata for tenor, choir and symphony orchestra (1960), *Concerto da Camera* for violin and chamber ensemble (1962), and *Ornaments* for flute and symphony orchestra (1964). Like his major contributions to the East-Mediterranean style, these works are also counted among the pillars of the Israeli art-music

Boskovich's major works were awarded prestigious prizes and performed under the baton of distinguished conductors like Issai Dobrowen, Eduard van Beinum, Charles Munch, Sir John Barbirolli, Sergiu Chellebidache, Genady Rozhdestvensky, Castro, Gary Bertini and Mendi Rodan. Several of his works are available on CD from IMI.

Miriam Boskovich, 2011