

Boskovich, Alexander Uriah (b Cluj, 16 Aug. 1907, d Tel-Aviv, 5 Nov. 1964). Israeli composer of Austro-Hungarian origin. He studied the piano and composition with Victor Ebenstein and Richard Stöhr in Vienna (1924) and with Dukas, Baudenberger and Carter in Paris (1925). Back in Cluj he was appointed conductor of the State Opera, and he was also active as a concert pianist. In 1938, on his arrival in Israel, his work *The Golden Chain* was introduced by the Israel PO. He taught composition and theory at the Tel-Aviv Academy of Music from 1945 until his death, instructing many Israeli composers who later achieved renown. In addition he was a member of both the senate of Tel-Aviv University and the National Council of Culture and Art, and from 1955 he was music critic of the daily paper *Ha'aretz*. There, and in other publications, he showed an ability to keep pace with new developments in all fields of Israeli music, freely expressing his personal views. His compositions have received several prizes and have been performed by leading conductors in Israel and abroad.

Boskovich's works display a continuous striving to synthesize the spiritual and musical tradition of the Jewish people with wider contemporary traditions. The Oboe Concerto (1943) may be considered as the starting-point of a style which he described as that of the 'eastern Mediterranean school', a style which almost ended with the *Semitic Suite* for orchestra (1946-7). Apart from incidental music for the theatre and revisions of earlier scores, Boskovich then produced little until 1960, when he composed the *Cantico di Ma'alo* and the cantata *Daughter of Israel*. In the latter he attempted to combine advanced and traditional styles, both textual and musical: the music for tenor solo (on a text by the contemporary Hebrew poet Chaim Bialik) and most of that for wind and percussion is written in 12-note technique, while the chorus (singing biblical and traditional texts) and the rest of the orchestra have rather conventional material. This amalgamation marked a turning-point in Boskovich's style, leading in 1962 to the new sonorities of the *Concerto da camera* for violin and instrumental ensemble, including a very large percussion section. Boskovich here tried to synthesize serial technique with rhythmic and formal patterns characteristic of the vocal liturgical tradition of the oriental communities, and in particular of the Jews of Jerbah. The relationship between the Hebrew language and music always stimulated him; his last completed work, *Adayim* ('Ornaments') for flute and orchestra, is, to quote his introduction, 'a contemporary interpretation of the Yemenite prayer mode of the Song of the Sea (*Exodus xv*). It draws its inspiration from the poetic idea of the subject matter but concentrates mainly on exploring the innate potentials of the rhythmic-lyrical metre inherent in the Hebrew text'. Fascinated by the *Kabbala* and by Hassidic Judaism, and a keen admirer of Buber, he composed in his last year an oratorio, *Ha'or haganuz* ('The hidden light'), on Hassidic tales by Buber.

WORKS

(selective list)

Orch: *The Golden Chain*, suite, 1937; *Vn Conc.*, 1942; *Ob Conc.*, 1943, rev. 1960; *Semitic Suite*, 1946-7, rev. 1959; *Suita ze'ira* (Piccola suite), fl., snare drum, str., 1956-7; *Shir hama'alot* [Song of ascent], 1960; *Adayim* [Ornaments], fl., orch., 1964
Vocal: *Adonai ro i* [The Lord is my shepherd] (Ps xxiii), A-Bar, orch str qt, pf, 1946; *Hinach yafa ra'ayati* [You are beautiful my beloved] (Song of Songs), Mez T, 1947; *Dudu* (H. Hefer), Mez T, 1948, other versions for lv, orch, pf and chorus; *Daughter of Israel* (Bialik, Bible, trad.), T, chorus, orch., 1960; *Ha'or haganuz* [The hidden light] (Buber), oratorio, 1964; *Shnei hatulim* [2 sarcasms] (Y. Alharizi), Mez/T, other versions for lv, orch/pf and vn, pf; *Betupim ubim-cholot* [With joy and gladness], 2vv, drum and triangle ad lib
Chamber: *Psalm*, vn, pf, 1942, rev. 1957; *Kina* [Lament], vn/vc, pf, 1962; *Conc. da camera*, vn, 10 insts, 1962
Pf: *The Golden Chain*, suite, 1937; *Semitic Suite*, 1945, arr. 4 hands 1957, arr. 2 pf 1960; 6 *Pieces for Youth*, 1947

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