

ISRAELI ART MUSIC - A COLOURFUL SPECTRUM OF MANIFOLDED TRENDS AND SONORITIES.

Two years ago the state of Israel celebrated its 50th anniversary. On the threshold of the 21st century Israel can look back on nearly four generations of composers.

Israeli Art Music has no preamble of artistic evolution and no past with a historic continuity. Most of the founding fathers of Israeli art music came to the country from different parts of Europe during the 1930's, a decade of social-political upheaval there. They were in the midst of budding careers as composers and musicians, and brought with them their cultural musical heritage, education and experience.

For decades the gathering of Jews from the four corners of the world has turned Israel into a perpetual melting pot of enormous dynamism. This cultural encounter of diverse Jewish communities, particularly the meeting of those from Europe and those from Oriental countries, had a crucial influence on Israel's socio-economic-cultural and artistic development in all fields.

The revival of Hebrew as a modern language, the creation of a new society, culture and art, were part of a common goal to rebuild the Old-New Homeland. Composers, artists and writers were enthusiastic partners of this historical renaissance. These were the years before and after 1948.

A small but very special group of composers did not look back, but opened their minds and ears to the new reality. They began to formulate the artistic goal to compose music based on a fusion of oriental musical elements with compositional European techniques, which developed very soon into the "Eastern Mediterranean Style", an important landmark in the history of Israeli art music.

The common denominator that underlies many of these works, which were composed during the 1940's and 1950's, are the living sonorities and rhythm of oriental dialects of the Hebrew language, the texts and cantillations of the Old Testament, the songs, dances and rich folklore of the oriental Jewish communities, as well as the colorful sonorities of Arab music and its instruments. All these contributed to the initial formation of contemporary Israeli music.

The quantity and complexity of these components changed from one composer to the other.

The generation of composers and musicians, that grew up during the years that followed the second world war, were strongly exposed to western influences of diverse musical trends.

In years to come immigration from Ethiopia and especially from countries of the former Soviet Union, enriched the tonescape of Israeli music. Individualism started to flourish. During the last decade of the 20th century, local as well as western composers and musicians, are once again intrigued by the wealth of ethnic and folkloric music.

Israel universities and cultural centers launch diverse programs and workshops, and initiate encounters of Israel musicians with musicians of Mediterranean countries, as well as with those of Central Asia. They play in order to discuss and explore together their respective musical traditions, and thus enrich their musical experience.

It seems, that although conditions, situations and goals differ, history, somehow, repeats itself by creating a link between the present and the past, the ideas of the "Eastern Mediterranean Style" of the 1940's and 1950's.

Miriam Boskovich