

# Disregarded contemporary music

**Contemporary Israeli and International Music: works by Orgad, Ran, Rechter, Zorman, Tal, Elliot Carter, Alfred Schnitke, Minoru Miki and Toshimitsu Tanaka, performed by Musica Nova Ensemble, conducted by Itai Talgam; The Van Leer Players, conducted by Ricardo Hegman; Chen Cymbalista, Rami Shuler - percussion. Jerusalem Theater, June 7.**

THE cramming of contemporary music, mostly Israeli, into one long, never-ending evening of marathonic dimensions may be useful for the Israel Festival as an excuse for doing a great favor to the cause of that music. It renders, however, a dubious service to contemporary music itself. It deterred more than it attracted and the audience predictably consisted of the same good old faces that always turn up at such occasions, with hardly any newcomers.

Two other events of local interest value - the *Girls of Toledo* music drama on the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and the Bustan group of ethnic music - taking place at almost the same time, further increased the festival's disregard for Israeli music, splitting an already small audience into three.

The program, containing five premieres of Israeli works, was rich in diversity of styles and combinations of instruments and/or voices. Ben-Tsion Orgad's *Filigree* No. 2 (1991) for oboe (Udi Pintus) and strings elaborates freely on Middle Eastern tonalities, alternating between static and agile strings with which the oboe intertwines to weave a filigree-like sound texture. Its many subtleties are easily lost on someone who listens to it without strained concentration.

*Concerto da Camera* (1987) for clarinet, piano (Avigail Arnheim, Esterith Baltsan) and string quartet

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## MUSIC REVIEW

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by Shulamit Ran has a more direct, dramatic appeal with its display of virtuoso interaction between the solo instruments and interspersed passages of lyric relief - consistently atonal, though, as a safeguard against becoming too lyrical.

Yoni Rechter, in *Parting from a Chanson* (1992) for 13 (Musica Nova) players, seemed to have difficulties in making up his mind whether he intends to be serious or entertaining and ends up by being both - or neither, depending on whether one was in or out of his frame of musical or social references.

Comic relief was provided by Moshe Zorman's *State Comptroller's Report* (1992) for soprano (Amalia Yitzhak) and the Musica Nova Ensemble.

After the first five minutes of amusement with the not particularly sophisticated satire, Yitzhak's operatic stage experience made up for what the piece was lacking in musical substance.

The work of strongest impact was Joseph Tal's *Bitter Line* (1991) for baritone (Avi Jacobsohn) and the Van Leer Ensemble, to words by Israel Eliraz. The "bitter line," represented by twisting, tortured melodic lines of the instruments interlacing with the voice, produced an uncannily dense emotional atmosphere.

Among the performers, Chen Cymbalista stole the show with a stunning display of virtuoso talent and inventiveness in a percussion improvisation, assisted most impressively by Rami Shuler in Miki's *Marimba Spiritual*.

**Ury Eppstein**