MUSICAL DIARY

Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. Regular Subscription Concert. Heinz Freudenthal, conductor; André Navarra, cello. (Edison Hall, Jerusalem, February 14). Normally the public tries to avoid listening to contemporary music and especially to new compositions—and here the case was aggravated by the fact that this work had actually been written by an Israeli living among us. Out of consideration for the customer, Tal's Symphony had been placed in the middle of the programme and the pill sugared by a collection of standard classics built around it. But here something went wrong; the classics fell rather flat, and contemporary music stole the show.

Beethoven's Eighth Symphony, played by the orchestra with visible boredom and audible lack of interest, left even the most conservative listener cold, while Weber's "Freischuetz" with its folio-proof C Major scale and happy ending, made no impression after the impact of Tal's Symphony. The great success of this evening lies in the point that for once our public was obviously moved and affected by something new and showed its appreciation by lengthy acclams.

As in his other works, Tal uses a minimum of material (here it is a very old Jewish Lamentation from Persia, "By the waters of Babylon"). Harmonic problems are circumvented by many-toned tremolos, which produce an indistinct but very effective mysterious background for the development of melodic elements.

The symphony is energy laden and so concentrated in its contents that one sometimes wishes that the composer would let go for once and allow himself some expression of warm human feeling. Life is not only sadness and depression, and although it is the composer's right and duty to create works congenial to his temperament, a really great artist embraces all wonders of life and sings about them.

This great success should be an encouragement to Josef Tal, who has already won considerable renown abroad.

Heinz Freudenthal directed the performance with as much devotion and driving force as a composer could wish for. He also showed his rare gift for accompanying—reliable, unobtrusive, leading the orchestra with spare but efficient movements, an ideal helpmate to every soloist performing his difficult task.

Though André Navarra's way of playing Boccherini may be slightly different from the conservative interpretation to which one is accustomed, his unaffected, seemingly unsurpassable performance must have satisfied everyone. There seems to be no technical difficulty for him, and his cantilena is sheer delight. If Boccherini was not quite rococo, the "Rococo" Variations by Tchaikovsky were given all the fireworks in the right places. One looks forward to Navarra's solo recital, which promises another feast of enjoyment.

Y. BOEHM