

Jerusalem's Electronic Composer

By CHARLES BOONE

Josef Tal, director of the modern Center for Electronic Music in ancient Jerusalem, is in San Francisco this week for a concert of his own music, and with him he has brought a forecast about the future of music in general.

Tal recently played his Second Concerto for piano

and electronic sounds at New York's Lincoln Center. We will have a chance to hear it this evening at 8:30 when he presents a lecture - demonstration at the Tape Music Center, 321 Divisadero.

In a recent interview Tal said, "Some day people will forget about the current division of music into sepa-

rate categories such as the new electronic and concrete music, and the older instrumental music. For the man of the future there will only be Music."

NEW PROBLEMS

He continued, "Since electronic sounds have absolutely changed the syntax of music, listeners are faced with new problems. If they compare the new music with what they already know, they will miss what is really there.

"As yet there is no grammar of electronic music,

no convention for the composer to follow. Therefore, an audience must be prepared for the impact of the music itself no matter what the means of achieving it may be. They must listen closely to what is going on. They must be free.

"Most important, both composers and listeners must learn to be tolerant. Intolerance is a sign of insecurity. One must honestly realize that sooner or later we throw out our old ideas."

Tal spent three years

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MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

143 U.S. CRITICS ON ISRAELIS

A GREAT deal of interested comment was elicited from the New York press recently when Composers Showcase, a non-profit organization which presents non-American music to Americans, organized a concert of Israeli compositions at Philharmonic Hall under the patronage of the Israeli Government and with the support of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation.

An imposing array of talent was assembled for the occasion: Charles Munch and Julius Rudel conducting members of the American Symphony Orchestra, the Masterwork Chorus under David Randolph, soprano Janice Harsanyi, mezzo-soprano Jennie Tourel, tenor Jan Peerce, percussionist Paul Price, viola player Emmanuel Vardi (pitching in at the last moment for Oedoen Partos, who was ill), pianists Allen Rogers and Eugene Isonin, and composer Yosef Tal as soloist in a piano concerto by himself with electronic tape.

Wide range

The programme featured a wide range of compositions, from folksongs like "Adarim" and "Ve'Ulai" through choral settings by Partos, Seter and Lavry to Paul Ben-Haim's cantata "Lift Up Your Heads," Ami Maayani's "Mizmorim," Partos' "Agada" and Tal's Concerto (his Fifth). This mixed bag drew, of course, mixed comments.

Not a success

As could be expected, most critics enlarged on Yosef Tal's work.

Alan Rich (Herald Tribune) thinks "it is not very good piano music, mostly in a brist-board style that is already rather cliché-ridden in today's serial world. The tape background consisted mostly of a fuzzy add-a-part recording of some almost orchestral sounds. The work failed to establish either a genuine pianistic style or a convincing justification for the electronic devices."

Harold C. Schonberg (N. Y. Times) comments: "His Fifth Concerto is not a success, but that does not mean it entirely lacks punch. Some sections are exciting, and point toward something that is coming along very fast. Where the concerto fell down was in the problem of relating piano to tape. Once in a while there was a mesh, where solo instrument integrated with tape in an intriguing manner. For the most part, though, the taped sound had little to do with the piano sound; and as yet Mr. Tal does not seem able to realize the enormous tonal potential implicit in the manipulation of magnetic tape. Too many of the effects he created were timid, and are old hat by now. If nothing else, Mr. Tal proved himself to be a skillful and authoritative pianist."

"Terrific pianist"

Miles Kastendieck (Journal-American) felt that "The electronic element juxtaposed barnyard and jungle noises with super-jet sounds in a way to leave the listener convinced that there is no substitute for a good old-fashioned orchestral accompaniment. Even virtuoso pianism could not compete".

And Louis Biancolli (World-Telegram) mused: "Up to date in all ways, Israel even has its electronic genius, a little man named Yosef Tal... Here were, or seemed, the usual police siren, colliding steel girders, nightmarish crescendos, and wrenched metal and ivory, plus passages of hypnotic fusion between piano and tape. A terrific pianist, Tal may also be the Beethoven of tape. Who can tell?"

All participants came in for high praise for their performance, especially Jennie Tourel for her "beautiful style," "gorgeous singing" and "simplicity and beauty of timbre" in Ben-Haim's Cantata. Soprano Janice Harsanyi sang "stunningly" with "great clarity and force," and mastered the great demands in Ma'ayani's score to the satisfaction of all critics.

YOHANAN BOEHM

learning what the sounds of new music are before he began to assemble them into compositions. By studying wave patterns on an oscilloscope he learned to hear almost imperceptible differences in sounds. "Today's hearing is very primitive indeed," he said. "What I am able to hear and compose now would have been impossible ten years ago.

LIMIT HIMSELF

"The possibilities for the composer in electronic music are infinite, so he must strictly limit himself in his means. In this new music, just as in the case of music based on conventional instruments, the composer hits upon a choice of sounds which is by no means fortuitous, but is exactly the one he needs in order to give his ideas 'a local habitation and a name'."

He continued, "Even though the techniques and equipment of electronic music are complex, the artist must not be conditioned by the machines. He must always be sure to take care of the music as well as the technical details.

"There are not enough serious musicians composing electronic music yet. But like developing the ear, it is only a matter of time."

Music: Israeli Composers

Sense of Nationalism Underlies Works

By HAROLD C. SCHONBERG

PRESUMABLY, last night's Composers Showcase program in Philharmonic Hall was carefully put together to give a cross-section of what is going on in Israeli music. Everything was present, from folk song to electronic music, from post-romanticism to serialism.

Israel is a young nation, and many of her composers were born and trained elsewhere before settling in the country of their people. But all of the composers heard last night seem to have one thing in common, no matter how different their techniques and musical language. Underlying all of the music—well, nearly all—is a strong sense of Israeli nationalism. One is ever conscious of Near Eastern melisma, of Hebraic chant, of a tradition that reaches back thousands of years.

The one piece that broke away from nationalism was Josef Tal's Piano Concerto No. 5. At least, at a first hearing there was little or no evidence of anything that could be specifically designated Hebraic or Near Eastern.

It is an avant-garde work, scored for solo piano and electronic tape. Mr. Tal has created a center for electronic music in Jerusalem, and he is one of the pioneers of the new medium. His Fifth Concerto is not a success, but that does not mean it entirely lacks punch. Some sections are exciting, and point toward something that is coming along very fast.

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The Program

COMPOSERS' SHOWCASE, composers of Israel. Members of the American Symphony Orchestra, Charles Munch and Julius Rudel, conductors; Masterwork Chorus, David Randolph, conductor; Janice Harsanyi and Jennie Tourel, sopranos; Jan Pearce, tenor; Eugene Istomin and Allen Rogers, pianists; Emanuel Vardi, violist and Paul Price, percussionist. At Philharmonic Hall.

Ein Adir	Oedoen Partos
By the Rivers of Babylon	Mordecai Seter
Ken Yovdu	Marc Lavry
Piano Concerto No. 5 with electronic accompaniment (first American performance)	Josef Tal
Lift Up Your Heads	Paul Ben-Haim
Adarim	arr. Julius Chajes
V'ulai	arr. Henry Lefkowitz
Agada for viola, piano and percussion (first New York performance)	Oedoen Partos
Mismorim (first performance)	Ami Ma'Ayani
Hamavdil	Oedoen Partos
Eschet Chayil; Adir Kevodo	Mordecai Seter

The entire program, indeed, was marked by superior performances. Jennie Tourel sang Paul Ben-Haim's motet, "Lift Up Your Heads," with simplicity and with beauty of timbre, to a background of American Symphony Orchestra members conducted by Charles Munch.

Mr. Ben-Haim, born in 1897, is considered the dean of Israeli composers. His motet is on the whole a conservative piece, but a strong one with plenty of character. Less personality could be found in the "Agada" by Oedoen Partos, for viola, piano and percussion. This was a routine, serial-derived work, very busy, very conventional. The composer, who was to have played the viola part, was indisposed, and Emanuel Vardi filled in. Eugene Istomin and Paul Price were pianist and percussionist, respectively.

Julius Rudel conducted the small orchestra, and Janice Harsanyi was the soprano, in Ami Ma'Ayani's "Mismorim," a dissonant but exotic-sounding work with plenty of advanced effects. Jan Pearce, with Allen Rogers at the piano, sang two traditional Israeli melodies, and David Randolph conducted the Masterwork Chorus in two groups of a cappella works by Mr. Partos, Mordecai Seter and Marc Lavry. These choral works were uniformly pleasant, nationalistic and melodious.

The concert was given under the patronage of the Government of Israel. Also acting as sponsors were the America-Israel Cultural Foundation and the Women's League for Israel.

Josef Tal's Electronic Concerti

S. F. EXAMINER

29/3/65

By CHARLES BOONE

Josef Tal, the noted composer of electronic music from Jerusalem, came to town last week and made a prediction. He said that after the novelty of certain types of new composition wears off, what remains will have to sink or swim on the basis of its intrinsic musical merits.

When Tal played his two piano concerti Saturday night at the Tape Music Center, we felt sure that time would be favorable in judging his music.

The most unusual thing about these two works was the way in which the pianist was accompanied. Instead of using an orchestra to support and comment on the doings of the soloist, for instance the way Brahms or Beethoven did, Tal produced an accompaniment made up of various electronic sounds. These were recorded on electronic tape and played back through loudspeakers during the performance.

MUSICAL CONNECTIONS

Asked what the connection between these unusual partners, a piano and electronically produced sounds, could possibly be, Tal replied, "The same connection as between a piano and violin. That is to say, there is no connection."

Therefore, in writing these two works, the composer dwelt primarily on the contrasts between the two media.

The first concerto was a transparent work, full of immediately discernable musical logic. The virtuoso piano part was backed up by a variety of recorded sounds mostly derived from a short melody sung in Hebrew. Using this as his raw material, the composer made all kinds of transformations and variations. The result was a colorful, fresh sounding piece was one of warm lyricism. In which the over all quality was one of warm lyricism.

The second concerto, completed just last year, shows considerable growth in the composer's style. In this work the unusual electronic sounds are handled in a much more sophisticated way.

Like the first concerto, it is a major work (15 minutes) which deals with large musical ideas. Although it is "further out" than its predecessor, it is not at all difficult to comprehend on first hearing. The constantly changing dialogues between piano and electronic accompaniment were interesting throughout. Dramatic connections between the solo instrument and the sounds coming from speakers on either side of the stage, made the piece an exciting one.

Tal proved to be an able soloist in his difficult music. His sense of passing time is so highly developed and accurate, that in playing the long solo cadenzas he was able to finish precisely at the moment the tape sounds rebegan.

The small audience received the composer and his music enthusiastically. His comments on new music in general, and his own in particular, were helpful in understanding the new and exciting medium of electronic music.