

HOMAGE TO TAL

CONCERT DEDICATED TO THE WORKS OF JOSEF TAL - The Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. Gary Bertini conducting with Walter Boeykens, clarinet, and Adi Etzion-Zak, mezzo-soprano (Tel Aviv Museum, June 21). Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Orchestra; "Else" (Homage) Chamber Scene for mezzo soprano, narrator and 4 instruments; "Imago" for Chamber Orchestra.

IN HONOUR of the veteran composer Josef Tal, recipient of the Wolf Foundation Prize, a special concert of his works was held within the framework of the Exploration series of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. Regrettably, the programme was changed several times, and the decision not to perform the 3rd Symphony, one of Tal's masterpieces, was particularly regrettable. Another unforgivable mishap was the breakdown of the electronic equipment, which resulted in the non-performance of Piano Concerto No. 6 with electronic accompaniment.

The 1980 Clarinet Concerto and the 1982 "Imago" provided an interesting picture of Tal's style and compositional methods. It is apparent that Tal is not a member of the avant garde, and that his music maintains norms. However, it is undeniably contemporary music and strikingly original.

Tal's music consists of a sequence of seemingly independent motifs connected in an associative manner, and creates an unbreakable chain of reaction and counter-reaction. Slowly a special kind of continuity makes itself felt. The work finally appears extraordinarily coherent and complete. The music constantly surprises. This inevitably results in a certain feeling of improvisational freedom but the listener senses also strict organization, and a guiding intellect at work.

Another highly original quality of Tal's music is his treatment of the orchestra or chamber ensemble. There is no climactic tutti reminiscent of the Romantic era. Each instrument speaks for itself, and contributes to a slowly thickening polyphonic dialogue.

IN THE Clarinet Concerto, the solo part, exquisitely played by the Belgian Walter Boeykens, is first among equals. Integrated masterfully into the orchestral texture, it is in constant dialogue with all the other instruments. The relationship between the clarinet and the horn (brilliantly played by Eyal Vilner) is particularly fascinating.

"Imago" develops on similar lines both in the interaction of its motifs and in its texture. This is pure and absolute music with no other message than what the sounds relay. Full enjoyment of the piece demands a considerable intellectual effort. Bertini's performance was highly imaginative and intriguing.

"ELSE", inspired by the strange personality of the German Jewish woman poet, Else Lasker-Schueler, is more in the nature of theatre music. As it is an older piece, and has been heard here several times, I will not attempt a critique of it. Gary Bertini proved a discriminating conductor. Adi Etzion-Zak was in excellent vocal form, and tackled the difficult solo part with great insight.

The excellent instrumentalists were Sarah Fuxon-Hayman, piano; Yuval Kaminkovsky, viola; Alexander Kaganovsky, cello; and Eyal Vilner, horn. Shimon Lev-Ari provided a fine narration.

BENJAMIN BAR-AM