

JERUSALEM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The Jerusalem Post, Jerusalem

Yohanan Boehm

February 1985

Yuri Ahronovitch conducting; with Michael Boguslavsky, piano (Jerusalem Theatre February 6), Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No.2, opus16; Franck: Symphony in D minor.

After surviving last week's concert, when the JSO had to fight for itself under a non-conductor, one could feel the complete and enthusiastic cooperation of all the sections with guest conductor Yuri Ahronovitch. The orchestra sounded most lively, with an unusually wide range of dynamics from nearly inaudible pianissimo to overwhelming fortissimo; but it was the little swellings within phrases and the well-coordinated slowing down and accelerating of transitions that infused the performances with exciting vivacity.

It was, of course, the forceful and totally committed direction from the rostrum that compelled the musicians to react, and Yuri Ahronovitch never relaxed his iron grip on the orchestra. There was never monotonous time-beating or parallel arm-flapping so often mistaken for conducting – movements were reserved for essential directives in tempi, dynamics and phrasing; accents were given, entries were indicated sparingly, so that the orchestra had enough liberty to give of itself and contribute to the performance.

Soloist Michael Boguslavsky was the ideal choice for Prokofiev's Second Piano Concerto, as he possesses not only brachial strength and brilliant technical fluency, but also understanding of the early Prokofiev's style, which he portrayed in all its crudity and barnstorming quality which surly must have shocked audiences in 1913 and later, and maybe even in our time. Cooperation between soloist, conductor and orchestra was perfect, resulting in a rousing and most impressive presentation.

Putting a much-worn repertoire "classic" on the programme bill always involves certain risks; orchestra players can become fed up with repeating even the most beautiful music and conductors tend to go easy in rehearsals.

Franck's Symphony is one of those "on the list," but one can count on Ahronovitch, he will never take things easy or for granted. The symphony could not have been tighter better rehearsed, more lively. Sure, in the first movement we were reminded strongly of Tchaikovsky in his treatment, but it sounded so convincing and logical, that, if affinity is a fault, it should be laid at Cesar Franck's feet. There seems nothing wrong in detecting unrealized similarities in style or orchestration if the original music does not get damaged in the process. And, in this case, everything was worked out in every detail, but without ever losing the natural flow and inner connections. It was one of the very best performances heard lately from the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, thanks to a great extent, to the inspired and committed conductorship and musicianship of Yuri Ahronovitch.