

HAARETZ

Tuesday, June 17th, 2008

Last Night's Concert

By: Noam Ben Ze'ev

ROMANTIC DARING

People of all ages, shapes and sizes were seen sitting on the stairs yesterday in the overflowing Enav Center. This was a clear declaration by the Tel Aviv Conservatory of the impact it is making on the local music scene: despite a renovation project that took away its home auditorium, despite a change in leadership that shook its foundation this year or perhaps because of them, it and its chamber music series are here to stay and grow.

On this evening the conservatory took advantage of the craze that has taken hold of Europe on Israel's 60th Independence anniversary together with a new ensemble, the Israeli Chamber Project, supported by the French Institute and its *Harmony at 60* program which promotes French culture. The marathon concert, which began at 8 PM and continued deep into the night helped disseminate this culture via works by Debussy and Ravel, Saint-Saëns and Faure, Poulenc and Milhaud, and there were others.

Nothing but French music, mostly from the first part of the 20th century and for nearly four hours. This repertoire can fall into monochromaticism and in some ways this was the case but several highlights did break away from it, chiefly Faure's romantic piano quartet. This, the oldest-dating piece on the program

demonstrated the great daring of the French, having been dissatisfied with classical and romantic tonality, and attempt to reach beyond it. Those composers who had already committed the 20th century's original sin and abandoned tonality, like Andre Caplet and Charles Koechlin who were also played here sounded so flat in comparison.

Faure and Francis Poulenc in his sonata for clarinet and piano defined the opposite ends of the French spectrum – both were original and possessed a unique style. They were also played marvelously: by Itamar Zorman and his gorgeous sound, Tibi Cziger with great taste and musicality and Yael Kareth with virtuosity and confidence, and those are just three of the excellent team that was unveiled here.

The Israel Conservatory, Tel Aviv in its season finale: French music marathon performed by the Israeli Chamber Project. Sivan Magen – harp; Itamar Zorman, Daniel Bard, Michal Korman – strings; Assaff Weisman, Yael Kareth – piano; Tibi Cziger – clarinet; and guest artists. *Stricker at Enav*: Series. Enav Center, Tel Aviv.