

Los Angeles Times

# CALENDAR

Tuesday, July 11, 2006

## MUSIC REVIEW

### Israeli drummer shines with L.A. Jewish Symphony

By RICHARD S. GINELL  
*Special to The Times*

The Los Angeles Jewish Symphony turned up Sunday night at the John Anson Ford Amphitheatre with "Ahavah: From Israel With Love," a program guaranteed to be unfamiliar to even sophisticated music lovers unless they happened to be residents of Israel.

All of the works were U.S. premieres. None of the composers was anywhere close to being a household name in this country. But there was one performer who ought to be: a provocative percussionist from Tel Aviv, Chen Zimbalista.

Zimbalista is a young, muscular, intense dynamo with charisma to burn and a precise technique that knows no stylistic bounds. He's also a showman who knows how to make an entrance.

With the house lights down, two other percussionists placed to the left and right above the stage duelled on timbales and congas, giving way to Zimbalista perched in front of a set of trap drums.

He then reeled off an extraordinary solo, one with kinetic impact, a sense of direction and melodic logic — and it also swung like mad. Why can't all drum solos be like this, instead of the usual aimless, boring flailing about that we get from even skilled drummers?

Zimbalista made easy work of Hadas Goldschmidt-Halfon's

fascinating new percussion concerto, "Knock on Wood" (ha ha), with its difficult two-handed polyrhythms on marimba, bongos, temple blocks and tom-toms and its gently syncopated slow movement on triangles and glockenspiel.

And with conductor Noreen Green and orchestra scrambling to keep pace, Zimbalista impishly led everyone, including us, in a frantic Shlomo Gronich scherzo called "Go," in which the audience was often asked to restart the piece's engines by shouting, "Go!"

Nothing in the first half of the program, alas, was as arresting as the Zimbalista vehicles. Hanoeh Jacoby's "King David's Lyre" (with narration by actor Herzl Tobey) dates literally from the day Israel was founded (May 14, 1948), and it sounds like a building-block piece with its basic mournful Hasidic-flavored tunes and dance rhythms.

Three excerpts from Lev Kogan's "Suite Hassidic 'Chabad'" and Yehezkel Braun's Concerto for Horn and String Orchestra were pleasant, while Laszlo Rooth's naively banal Variations on a Sephardic-Jewish Romance was thankfully over after three minutes or so. A second guest from Tel Aviv, French horn player Alon Reuven, was the steady, mellow soloist in the latter three pieces.

The evening concluded with a sharp swerve into another sphere, Israeli popular songs as sung by Tehilla Lauder.



LOS ANGELES  
 JEWISH SYMPHONY  
 Dr. Noreen Green  
 Artistic Director/Conductor  
 presents

# AHAVAH

From Israel with Love  
 Featuring Chen Zimbalista



**Sun. July 9 at 7:30 p.m.**

Experience Israel's dynamic musical culture: classical and pop selections influenced by folk sounds of Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The "totally charismatic" (*Jerusalem Post*) Chen Zimbalista guest stars on marimba. Alon Reuven solos on french horn.



Tickets: \$36, \$25  
 Full-time students  
 and children 12 &  
 under \$12



## Ford Amphitheatre

Just off the 101 (Hollywood) freeway across from the Hollywood Bowl and south of Universal Studios. Grounds open 2 hours before showtime for picnicking.

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