

Jewish Symphony showcases music by Canadian composers

By Cantor Samuel Fordis

Borrowing from the music of our neighbors to the north, Noreen Green conducted the Los Angeles Jewish Symphony in a prelude of national anthems consisting of Israel's "Hatikvah" and Canada's "Oh Canada," both sung by Kim Campbell, consul general of Canada. Curiously missing was the "Star-Spangled Banner."

The recent concert, held at the University Synagogue, featured the music of Jewish Canadian composers, most of them Toronto residents.

Their welcome contribution to the contemporary library of Jewish music began with Srul Irving Glick's *Psalm for Orchestra*, an integration of Hebraic tunefulness and classical technique, a loose-knit, rather wandering exposition.

In 1990, much-commissioned composer Ben Steinberg had written a Friday evening service *Kol Shalom* (Voice of Peace). He had included three settings for string orchestra, which were later combined as a *Suite for Orchestra*. In the second section, "Meditation," two orchestra members, violist Cynthia Morrow and cellist Andrea Kessler, sang the *Oshe Shalom* (Prayer for Peace) with panache. The *Suite* presented itself in traditional dress, knowledgeably harmonized.

In 1997, composer Milton Barnes wrote *Variations on a Hebrew Theme* for string orchestra on a grant from the Toronto Arts Council. His musical theme comes from an old melody set to the hymn *An'im Zemirot* (Hymn of Glory). Using this melody, he made eight variations plus a finale in a work well-written but lengthy.

Composer Yefim Adler received his musical education in Odessa. He has written an opera, two symphonies, a violin concerto, and music for motions pictures, TV and radio. In 1990, he settled in Toronto and became a member of the Canadian League of Composers. His *Three Pieces for Orchestra* were inspired by the Marc Chagall paintings "The Blue Violinist," "The Revolution," and "The Juggler."

Concertmaster Mark Kashper was soloist in "The Blue Violinist," displaying a dazzling technique and expressive musical know-how. Adler's sophisticated treatment of the *Pieces* disclosed a composer of considerable ability, much appreciated by an audience which applauded his presence.

In its U.S. premiere, the five-movement *Suite for Klezmer Band and Orchestra* by Sid Robinovitch utilized the Brandeis-Bardin International Klezmer Ensemble, with Leo Chelyapov and Zinoviy Goro doing the clarinet and saxophone solos, and Philip Levy, the violin solos. Chelyapov and Goro provided legitimate klezmer interpretations. Violinist Levy played with zest and good sound, but unfortunately, his gypsy-styled playing fell short of anything resembling klezmer sound.

To her credit, conductor Green allowed the soloists to be heard clearly throughout the concert.