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A Symphonic Fusion of Israeli Sounds

World Music Review

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SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

The traditional elements of world music and the instrumentation of a symphony orchestra don't make a particularly compatible combination. The instruments found around the globe are as varied as their countries of origin, while the orchestra, with its well established phalanxes of strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion, evolved as the expression of a much more specific cultural area.

All of which raised the question of what to expect from the Los Angeles Jewish Symphony's performance at the Sinai Temple on Sunday in a program described as the "Jewish fusion" of Israel's music. The answers were as varied as the works, all of which were written by composers born in Israel.

"Kadim (East Wind)" by Moshe Rasiuk, "Symphony #1" by Benjamin Yusupov and "Exodus" by Ariel Davydov, although dramatically different in content, made similar efforts to extract Middle Eastern timbres from the orchestra. Rasiuk emphasized swirling string sounds and busy woodwinds to create his impressionistic landscape. Yusupov, in his much larger work, attempted to simulate the sounds of ethnic instruments.

The program's most fascinating moments, however, took place when dancer Or Nili Azulay was on stage, in "Israel Suite" by Noam Sheriff and "Sephardic Songs of Exile" by Yuval Ron. Her richly textured Spanish style superbly amplified the Sephardic elements of the music. And when she was joined by singer Maya Haddi, drummer Jamie Papish and composer Ron on oud in the latter work, the program fulfilled its promise to seek out and illustrate the cultural fusion of Israel's music.