

## CHAMBER MUSIC WINTER FESTIVAL

Jerusalem Music Center YMCA

February 7-9

• By URY EPPSTEIN

A selection of Franz Schubert's celebrated masterpieces was performed in the winter version of the Jerusalem Chamber Music Festival, presented by the Jerusalem Music Center.

The opening concert established an uncommonly high level that the artists of the following ones might have found challenging to compete with.

In *Winterreise* ("Winter Journey"), Robert Holl's soft, warm bass-baritone persuasively expressed profoundest emotions by minute nuances of tone colors, rendering them not melodramatically or theatrically, increasing the voice's volume gradually, emphasizing meaningful words of the lyrics forcefully without ever shouting, and so creating a rare musical and emotional experience.

Sunwook Kim provided the piano part with utmost sensitivity.

Even in chamber music, Schubert could not conceal that he was first and foremost a com-

poser of songs. In his Piano Trio No. 1 significant melodic passages were sung on the piano, violin and cello by Elena Bashkirova, Michael Barenboim and Gabriel Schwabe, highlighting their poetic content.

In the "Trout" Piano Quintet, melodic passages were rendered energetically – sometimes too much so, at the expense of lyrical subtlety, and with occasionally swallowed intermediate notes.

For the sake of variety, Hugo Wolf and Robert Schumann – contemporaries of Schubert, though different in style – joined the festival at its conclusion.

The here not yet well-known bass René Pape emerged as a singer of stature. Forceful expression of his sonorous, dark bass alternated with almost inaudible, delicate expression. Schumann's well-known *Dichterliebe* ("A Poet's Love") sounded as though heard for the first time. Heinrich Heine's biting irony was expressed poignantly by voice and piano alike in "*Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen*" ("A youth loved a maiden"). The unrestrained anger of "*Ich grolle nicht*" ("I am not angry") was expressed passionately with unmistakable anger.

Elena Bashkirova's piano part was a full-fledged partner of the performance. The festival's winter version's attraction lies, inter alia, in its unflagging shortness.