

# Tel Aviv Clarinet Days 2012 and The Ruth Lewis International Clarinet Competition

December 9-13 2012

By Cassandra Hibbard

**The Tel Aviv Clarinet Days** were met with a special amount of excitement in December 2012. For thirteen years, Sarah Elbaz (Director of **The Tel Aviv Clarinet Days**) has hosted guest artists from around the globe to perform and teach at the Lin and Ted Arison Israel Conservatory of Music, Tel Aviv. Clarinetists of all ages have found an avenue for learning in a beautiful environment at **The Tel Aviv Clarinet Days**. Professor Elbaz offers students the chance to participate in masterclasses, lessons, and hear world-class performances. Past guest artists of the **The Tel Aviv Clarinet Days** have included Sabine Meyer, Antony Pay, Guy Deplus, and Michele Zukovsky. This year a monumental event was inaugurated: **The Ruth Lewis International Clarinet Competition**. Two age groups (14-18 and 18-26) competed for the grand prizes over the course of five days. The required pieces included standard clarinet repertoire and works by Israeli composers. The jury was comprised of an illustrious group of musicians: Eli Eban (Indiana University), Danny Erdman (Principal Clarinet, Israel Chamber Orchestra), Joy Farrall (Haffner Wind Ensemble and Guildhall School of Music and Drama), Eyal Ein Haber (Principal Flute, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra), Caroline Hartig (The Ohio State University), Reiner Wehle (Musikhochschule Lübeck), and Mira Zakai (Prof. (Emeritus) Tel Aviv University) who acted as chairman of the jury.

The first rounds for both age groups, December 9-10, were a delight to both the audiences and the jury as highly-talented students demonstrated their skills. The first age group was required to perform *Concertino*, op. 26 by C. M. von Weber and *Hyperbole for Solo Clarinet* by Yehezkel Braun. The second age group performed *Three Pieces* by Igor Stravinsky, *Introduction, Theme and Variations* by G. Rossini and *Premiere Rhapsodie* by C. Debussy. A second round (December 11) for the second age group required those who moved on to “perform two works for solo clarinet, one by an Israeli composer.” At the end of the first and second rounds for both age groups, six students advanced to the finals. For the 14-18 age group: Oded Shnei Dor, Ohad Shy, and Dekel Homossany. For the 18-26 age group: Ido Azrad, Jonathan Hadas, and Hila Zamir.

Before the final rounds of competition, a day was devoted to masterclasses, lessons, and a special performance. Caroline Hartig, accompanied by Anna Vinnitsky, performed at the Ran Baron Hall in the Israel Conservatory of Music, Tel Aviv at exactly 12:12 pm on December 12, 2012. The audience was dazzled by Caroline Hartig’s performances of *Cantilène* by L. Cahuzac, *Denneriana* by A. Bloch, Sonata for clarinet and piano by F. Poulenc, *Cavalleria Rusticana* by C. D. Giacomini, *Achat Sha’alti* by Paul Schoenfield and *Shalom Alechem Rov Fiedman* by B. Kovács.

On December 13, the Israel Conservatory of Music’s auditorium was filled with an enthusiastic audience ready to witness the first winners of **The**

**Ruth Lewis International Clarinet Competition.** Accompanied by The Tel Aviv Soloists Ensemble, conducted by Barak Tal, the finalists from the younger group each performed Concertino, op. 26 by C. M. von Weber and the finalists from the older group performed Concerto in A Major, K.622 by W. A. Mozart. All of the performances were outstanding, with extreme sensitivity from six finalists. In the 14-18 age group, First Prize was awarded to Ohad Shy and Second Prize was awarded jointly to Dekel Homossany and Oded Shnei Dor, with a special award to Emil Bagirov from Azerbaijan for the best performance of a piece by an Israeli composer. In the 18-26 age group, the First Prize of \$10,000 was awarded to Jonathan Hadas and Second Prize to Hila Zamir, with an award to Jonathan Hadas for best performance of a piece by an Israeli composer.

Before the competition came to a close, friends and family paid homage to the life of the woman who had made this competition possible, the late Ruth Lewis (1937-2010). The study and performance of the clarinet had been a lifelong passion for Ruth Lewis. She performed regularly with a wind quintet, an amateur orchestra, and various chamber groups during her time in Liverpool, England and in Israel. Even after she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1984 she continued to perform until physically incapable. The friends and family of Ruth Lewis were delighted by the performances of the **The Ruth Lewis International Clarinet Competition** and were surely convinced that the beauty and integrity of the competition had greatly honored Ruth Lewis' memory. **The Ruth Lewis International Clarinet Competition** will return again to the **The Tel Aviv Clarinet Days** continuing the legacy of Ruth Lewis and inspiring young clarinetists. The contribution of the Ruth Lewis Family made this wonderful international competition a reality and a definite benefit to the clarinet and the music world.

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