**Sounding Schubert Anew: “McNulty Fortepiano Graf” Featured in Jerusalem Performance**

On May 24th, 2025, the Eden-Tamir Music Center in Ein Kerem, Jerusalem, celebrated a landmark moment in its artistic journey — a full-house concert of Franz Schubert’s piano trios performed on period instruments, centered around the center’s newly acquired Graf fortepiano, a handcrafted replica by McNulty fortepianos.

The event featured pianist Dror Semmel, artistic director of the Eden-Tamir Center, joined by violinist Nitai Zori and cellist Hillel Zori. This high-profile performance presented on the McNulty fortepiano Graf, which had been introduced in January 2025 upon its delivery and set up by the maker himself, Paul McNulty. The concert marked the fortepiano’s official inclusion in the center’s ongoing concert life — a significant step for historical performance practice in Israel.

Crafted in walnut and modeled after instruments built by Conrad Graf (Vienna, early 19th century), this McNulty fortepiano represents a meticulous reconstruction of the soundworld known to Beethoven, Schubert, and Chopin. As the only Graf fortepiano currently in Israel, it positions the Eden-Tamir Center as a unique platform for historically informed performance in the region.

Before the concert began, Dr. Semmel expressed heartfelt thanks to the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation, whose support made the acquisition possible. He also spoke about the instrument’s acoustic and expressive properties. The string players offered brief remarks about their instruments as well — a Baroque cello by Amit Tiefenbrunn (played by Hillel Zori) and a Classical violin with gut strings (played by Nitai Zori), both using historical bows.

The program consisted of two of Franz Schubert’s major chamber works: the *Piano Trio in B-flat major*, Op. 99 (D 898) and the *Piano Trio No. 2 in E-flat major*, Op. 100 (D 929). Composed likely in late 1827, these two trios were written in close succession, possibly even in parallel with the somber song cycle *Die Winterreise*. Their brightness and lyricism stand in contrast to the personal melancholy Schubert experienced at the time.

As reviewed by Pamela Hickman, the trio’s performance of Op. 99 was praised for its lyricism, clarity, and attention to detail. The ensemble’s phrasing and balance highlighted the music’s lyrical sweetness and Schubert’s refined use of modulation. From the personal, tender mood of the second movement to the animated Viennese charm of the Rondo, the fortepiano’s delicate colors brought out the music’s period character.

Op. 100 followed, beginning with a bold unison gesture and proceeding through a sequence of contrasting moods. In the haunting Andante con moto, one of Schubert’s most iconic slow movements, the performers revealed the deep expressive power of their period instruments — especially in the fortepiano’s darker textures and subtle use of pedal. The finale reintroduced the funeral march motif, as Schubert intended, and the group performed the full, original version of the final movement.

Through their committed and communicative ensemble work, the musicians brought the unique sound palette of early 19th-century instruments vividly to life. The McNulty fortepiano Graf, with its crystalline sonority and historical authenticity, played a central role in illuminating the structure and character of the works.

This concert reflects a growing global interest in reviving the authentic sonorities of classical repertoire. McNulty fortepianos, built after original models by Walter, Graf, Pleyel, Buchholtz, and others, are trusted by leading younger generation artists as well as internationally acclaimed performers like Sir András Schiff and the Labèque sisters, who have embraced the sound and interpretive possibilities offered by period instruments in select repertoire.

The Eden-Tamir Music Center’s dedication to bringing historically informed music-making to Israeli audiences, through the use of instruments such as the McNulty fortepiano Graf, marks a significant contribution to both national and international musical culture.

This event stands as a testament to how fine craftsmanship, period instruments, and sensitive musicianship together allow us to hear the music of Schubert — and his contemporaries — in the way they once imagined.