

Tsippi Fleischer: Commentary on

Sixth Symphony: The Eyes, Mirror of the Soul, Opus 73 (2011)

This composition was inspired by Dorit Harel's text – her exhibition's credo:

The Eye, Mirror of the Heart and Window of the Soul

Our Whole Inner World is Reflected in the Look of One Pair of Eyes

1. After Dorit

During the months of January-March 2007 I underwent a rare experience: five times (!) I visited the same exhibition of photographs by Dorit Harel, "The Eyes, Mirror of the Soul". The strong impact made by the exhibition has remained with me ever since. It accompanies me. There were so many pairs of eyes...Had I visited the exhibition fifty times I would not have succeeded in drinking my fill.

This work of mine is an extended interpretation of wishes Dorit expressed in her exhibition (the first and last of her life), an exhibition featuring her very own personal inner life. In Israel and throughout the world she normally designed exhibitions, museums and parks, in touch with her unique creative, cognitive, sensitive talent. She was also incredibly self-effacing.

To continue.

Dorit blazed the trail and I am pursuing it; the potential for pleasure with which she provided us has not been fully exploited as yet. My hope is that here it will continue to provide inspiration. In conversation we would sail off on flights of imagination – hers and mine.

In the composition of this symphony, her creativity was my guiding light. In addition, Stockhausen, Romitelli and Cage influenced me significantly and helped to slake my thirsty, receptive soul.

2. The pictures and the choice of the Clairmont Auditorium

From the innumerable photographs of pairs of eyes I chose sixteen. Each of these told me a story that I translated into an emotional, musical affect. I created 16 miniatures. Dorit's text (The Eye, Mirror of the Heart...) was divided into phonemes for the total sound, each time starting anew. The pairs of eyes I chose were from only two sections of the exhibition – old people (for the symphony's first movement) and children (for the second movement). The exhibition included several other sections – prison inmates, air-force cadets, cosmopolitan London.

The stories that the photographs of the eyes told me became the headings of the miniatures. Here there is a complete blend between the object (that is, the performing ensemble and the emergent sounds) and the background (pictured eyes): the pictures form the background to the music, and if you wish, the other way round – live, very dominant sound, accompanying the pictures.

The lengthwise quadrophone was ever-present in my audio-visual concept. I saw immediately that in every “picture embedded in music” such as this, the performing body, made up of four blocs of 8 string players plus 4 vocalists, forms a line at the front of the stage. Behind them are two prepared grand pianos, and behind all these, fairly high up, the eyes speak to us – another pair, and yet another pair....

bass (mas.)	alto (mas.)	tenor (fem.)	soprano (fem.)
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2 d. basses	2 cellos	2 violas	2 violins
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In other words – a longitudinal display with pairs of eyes alternating on the screen, staring at us while we listen.

When I envisaged all this in my mind's eye, it seemed ideal to have the event take place in the Clairmont Auditorium. I day-dreamed about it. Fortunately it came to be. However, had I not succeeded in having the world premiere of “The Eyes, Mirror of the Soul” in this particular hall, the inspiration it provided had already been internalized as far as I was concerned and, without a doubt, played a valuable part in influencing the creative flow of imagination.

3. The Text

Dorit's text (*The Eye, Mirror of the Heart...*) as I mentioned earlier, was taken apart so that the words suddenly became empowered and independent, while the separate syllables/phonemes/words seemed to come together naturally to form a miniature/picture. New significances arose and semiotics flourished, at times even emphasizing, the theatrical expression.

We enter a whirlpool of meaning: the syllable I used for the picture of eyes titled "It's just beginning" (the eyes of a young child, perhaps even of a baby) receives at least two interpretations: ma ma ma ma ma – suggesting calling to a mother, and the questioning repetition – what what what what? "Ma" is cut off from the word "mabat" (look); "zug" (pair) gives us "zoo" – a human-animal zoo, "levav" provides us with "vav" (hook) to which to connect, "lanshama" (to the soul) gives us "lan" – if repeated a few times, we almost tend to sink into sleep (lalun, to sleep)...The fragmentation of words resulted in more and more new meanings arising.

The last miniature – also the Finale of the symphony – ties up the ends: it was created for the picture of eyes informing (according to the heading of the miniature) that "one needs to grow up". Here, for the first and only time in the whole work, the full text appears. This miniature is sad, summing up, as it were, and abounds in musical events.

4. The Musical Structure

The performers, positioned as previously mentioned, transmit the compactness of a new sound concept, come into being within the ensemble itself. The same lengthwise live quadrophone (human, not technological) of four focuses of color-voice-instrument across the forefront of the stage, is meant to make a clear statement to the audience. There are always two singers (alto + bass" for a masculine nature", "soprano + tenor" for a feminine nature) forming the leading obligato (*obl* in the score); by their side is the accompanying pair of singers whose function is defined as ornamental (*orn* in the score). This then is the "vocal and instrumental apparatus" or "the apparatus of timbre and gender".

An additional diagram:	2VI	soprano	feminine
	2Vc	contralto	masculine
	2Vla	tenor	feminine
	2Db	bass	masculine

All these come together with the fragmented line of the two prepared pianos, a somewhat static and sonorous base, like a carpet on which the scene takes place.

From this basis of prepared pianos, the listener may absorb the rich, magical quasi-percussion-instrument sound (something between permanently pitched and non-pitched): qanun, harp, cymbals, triangle, various types of mallets, WB, TB, snare drum, xylophone, cowbells, church bells, or other types of bells. This is a percussion orchestra in small dimensions, reminiscent now and then of the gamelan orchestra.

However, the world of pitch relies on a rising chromatic progression from one miniature to the next and the Finale presents an authentic, independent world based on this progression.

In classical terms, the form – that is to say, the internal structure of the miniatures – is often A A B. This implies a fixed layout at the beginning of each miniature: the first quarter is devoted to its title (*pict* in the score) with complete musical silence. In the second quarter the musical interpretation begins: pianos and strings open – after which the vocalists enter. It seems that this consistent structural order stands in contrast to the wild versatility invested in each miniature.

5. Tsippi within Tsippi

Of all my compositions up till the present, I have suddenly found myself in an all-encompassing structure nearest to what I did in *Spielmobil* (12 miniatures about vehicles on the road, for harp and organ); but whereas –

- Then there were 12 miniatures, here, 16;
- Then there was more segmentation: four characteristic groups of vehicles, each of which contains three vehicles, whereas here we have one large segment which divides the work into OLD and YOUNG;

- Then the atmosphere was humorous (apparently 1995 saw the end of my humorous days) whereas here, a long-established feeling of depression. Even the children come across with an unmistakably melancholy flavor, although they are noisy and more mobile (reflected in the quicker tempos and rhythms, as well as the tumultuous dynamics – the *forte* areas) as pitted against the old people;
- Then there was no text whereas here there is;
- Then the ensemble was very small, here much larger, even though here too, as regards the instrumental spectrum, I attached special perceptions as regards instrumental expression;
- The headings as triggers to the imagination – a very similar element in both, even though with completely different material;
- And perhaps the most interesting feature is that in neither do I register as a Middle-Eastern composer; here I am more avant-garde. And as ever, I am very fond of *unisoni*;
- However, in both works there is the clearly minimalistic direction already evident in my earlier compositions – here with an additional nuance of drama in comparison with the humor pervading *Spielmobil*;
- In both works, no tonal characteristics whatsoever are evident (such as broad modality, levels of pitch, fragments from oriental scales, and so on).

Tsippi Fleischer

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(a collection of my notes while composing)

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