TSIPPI FLEISCHER - THE CANTATA LIKE TWO BRANCHES

Performed by The Cameran Singers Conducted by Avner Itai

Vocal music composed in Israel to Arabic texts - how vocal art music draws inspiration from its environment in the Middle East

This article is primarily based on information provided by the composer Tsippi Feischer. It contains much factual detail, personal memories and experiences, and provides insight into important stages in the compositional processes of the cantata. Analytical aspects, from a paper dealing with this work by the Israeli musicologist Shulamith Feingold (S.F.), have been included.

Like Two Branches is available on CD, Schwann-Koch (Aulos) Cat. no. 3-1420-2; for the score apply to the composer (P.O.B. 8094, Haifa 31080, Israel) or to the Israel Music Institute (P.O.B. 3004, Tel Aviv 61030, Israel).

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Genesis of the Composition (Ts.F.)

My association with Avner Itai was formed during the second half of the 80s and now, in the second half of the 90s, it is growing even closer. We met at an opportune time for both of us: he, after years of performing Israeli music often inspired by early sources, wished to delve more deeply into the aesthetic truths inherent in local elements; and I - after years of Oriental studies and the composition of art music inspired by Arabic literature (the song-cycle **Girl-Butterfly-Girl** to surrealistic texts from Lebanon and Syria of the 60s, **Ballad of Expected Death in Cairo** to words by Sallah Abd El-Sabur of Cairo of the 80s, **The Gown of Night** of 1988, based on the voices of Beduin children from the Israeli Negev) - was keen to work with an Arabic text again, but this time with old, pre-Islamic Arabic, and to create a well-designed musical setting for it.
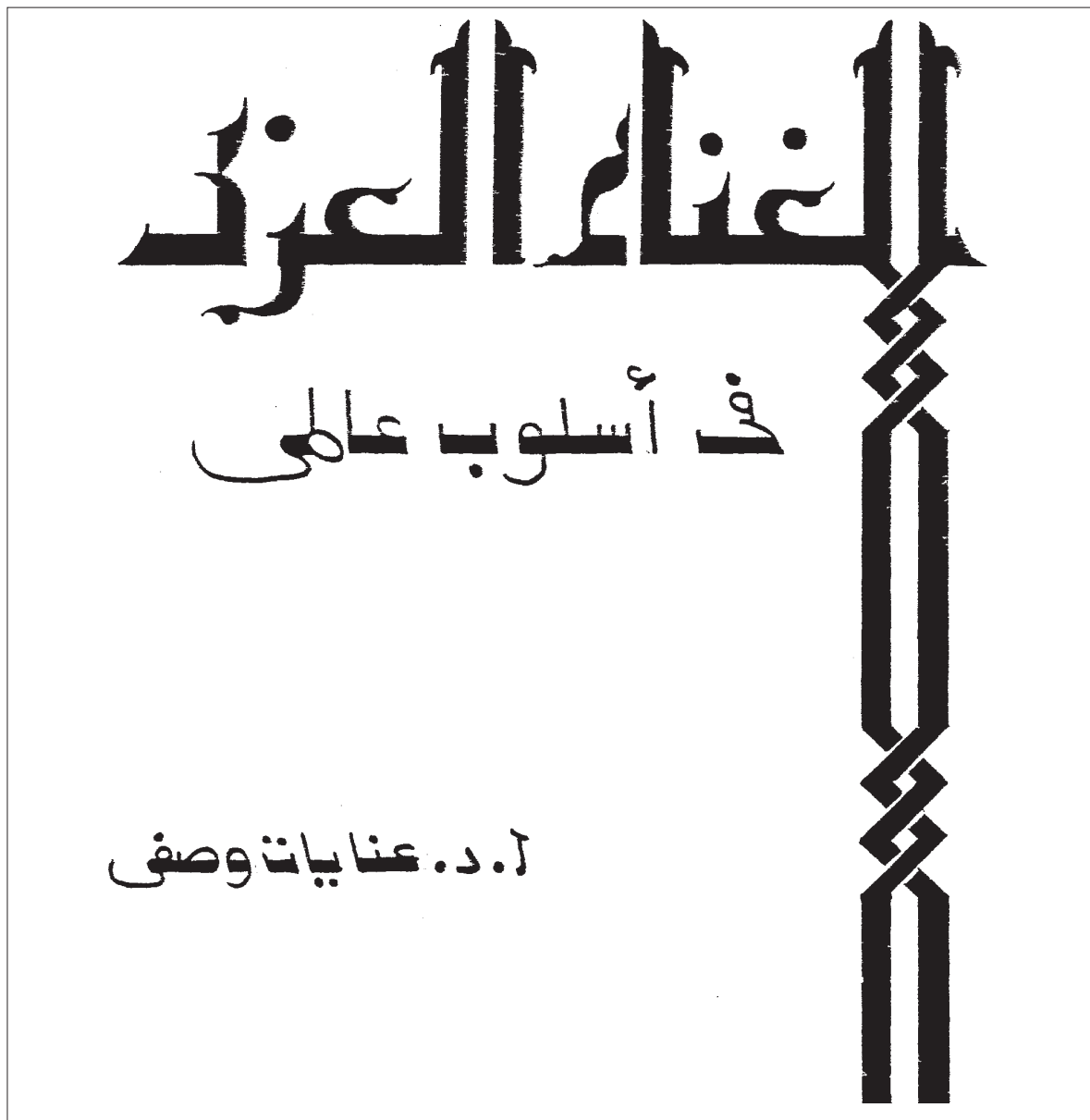
This is how the idea was born for a cantata to be performed by the foremost Israeli chamber choir of the time, the Cameran Singers. I suggested to Avner Itai, its conductor and musical director, that my text should consist of a selection of verses by the extraordinary 6th century Beduin woman poet, Al-Khansa. A chamber ensemble would support the singers - two oboes, cello, kanun and a set of Oriental tar-drums with some supplements. My immediate response to the rich language and daring philosophical ideas of this Beduin poet was a tonal image focusing on a particular Arabic maqam, the Hijaz - well-known throughout the Middle East - with voices and instruments together evoking the strong entity inspired by the lines of the text.

Preparations for the actual composition involved my intimate familiarization with the idea during the years 1986-88. I read the poet's divan and decided upon the selection according to which I would plan the musical structure. It is important to stress: this poetry has been handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, and the collections published lend themselves to many different interpretations in which I needed to orientate myself.

At the time I was becoming familiar with the Cameran Singers and their vocal potential; in addition, in order to clarify the possibilities of setting Al-Khansa's text, I had no option but to refer to the section of the thesis by Anayat Wasfi Shaalan of Cairo. Here she instructs contemporary composers on the usage of vowels and consonants for setting Arabic texts. Shaalan is an expert on vocal music and holds a doctorate in this field from the Academy of Music of Bari, Italy. Below is the front page and one of the inner pages of her thesis, written in Arabic.

(1)   The front page of Anayat Wasfi Shaalan's thesis:

الغناء العربي

في أسلوب عالمي

ا.د. عنايات وصفي

(2a)   Examples from Anayat Shaalan's thesis, providing exercises for
singers of the Kurd maqam:

While doing research into the maqamat (Arabic scales), I was delighted to find a complete set of books in the American University of Cairo, each of which refers to a particular maqam and its usage throughout the Semitic East.

The next stage was to deal with the instrumental aspect; the ensemble had already been decided upon, also the selection of verses from Al-Khansa's poetry and the structure of the work. I took great pains to familiarize myself with the oboe (with the aid of Master Artist Heinz Holliger), the cello (master Artist Siegfrid Palm), the concert kanun (the virtuosic kanun-player, the Armenian Wartuhi Lepejian, previously the coach of the girls' choir of the Armenian Church in East Jerusalem). It was obvious to me from the outset that I would use the instruments in a sophisticated manner in order to serve the aesthetics which I uphold unequivocally; and that it would be necessary to choose the players very carefully, as they would need to perform both as chamber musicians and as virtuoso soloists.

The compositional work was done in a number of stages: after the whole draft had been completed, Itai went over it with me, and together we found solutions to questions still unanswered. Then came the stage of preparing the vocal score and passing it on to the choir, editing the montage with the instrumental parts - in other words, the completion of the full score - and providing the instrumentalists with their parts. Itai himself was the first to try out the Arabic singing during our long weeks of working sessions, and later I stood at his side during the extremely intensive rehearsals. I worked a great deal with the vocalists on their pronunciation of the text and with the instrumentalists, preparing them prior to the combined rehearsals of the entire ensemble. Below is a standard diagram (pronunciation tables for Arabic and Hebrew) which I designed for my vocal works - a type of compromise between the table of the International Phonetical Association (IPA), and the requirements of vocalists for the correct pronunciation of a text set to music in these languages.

(3a)

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PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION OF ARABIC
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Arabic consonant letters	Transcription
أ (إ), �, ء, !	' (glottal stop)
ب (ﺒ)	b
ت (ﺘ)	t
ث (ﺜ)	th (as *th* in English *thick*)
ج (ﺠ)	j (as *j* in *Jack*)
ح (ﺤ)	ḥ (voiceless pharyngeal fricative consonant)[2]
خ (ﺨ)	ch (as *ch* in German *Buch* and *j* in Spanish *José*)
د	d
ذ	dh (as *th* in *this*)
ر	r (alveolar *r* as in Italian)
ز	z (as *s* in *rose*)
س (ﺴ)	s
ش (ﺸ)	š (as *sh* in *ship*)

(3a) Con'd

ص (ص)	ş (emphatic[1] s)
ض (ض)	ḍ (emphatic[1] d)
ط	ṭ (emphatic[1] t)
ظ	ḍh (emphatic[1] dh)
ع (ع, ع, ع)	' (voiced pharyngeal consonant)[3]
غ (خ, ف, غ)	gh (as r in French mère without vibration of the uvula)
ف (ف)	f
ق (ق)	ḳ (uvular k)
ك (ك)	k
ل (ل)	l
م (م)	m
ن (ن)	n
و	w
ه (ه, ﺔ)	h
ي (ي, ي)	y
ة	t or nothing

Arabic vowel letters and optional diacritical marks (placed over and under the letters)	Transcription
´ (over the letter)	a
ا´, ل´	ā (long a)
ا⁼, ل⁼, ⁼	an
ˌ (under the letter)	i
ى, ٮ	ī (long i)
ˌ (under the letter)	in
' (over the letter)	u
و	ū (long u)
˷ (over the letter)	un
‾ (over the letter)	symbolizes the length of the consonant (e.g., د = dd)

N o t e s : [1] Emphatic consonants are pronounced with retraction of the back part of the tongue.

[2] ḥ is pronounced with the pharynx almost closed by the epiglottis.

[3] ' is pronounced with the pharynx half-closed by the epiglottis.

(3b)

PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION OF HEBREW

Hebrew letters	Transcription
א	—
א (after a consonant)	' (glottal stop)
ב	b
ב	v
ג	g
ד	d
ה	h
ה (in word-final position)	—
ו (as a consonant)[1]	v
ו	o
ו	u
ז	z
ח	ḥ [2]
ט	t
י (as a consonant)[1]	y
י	i
כ	k
כ,ך	ch (as in German *Buch*)
ל	l
מ,ם	m
נ,ן	n
ס	s
ע	ʿ [3]
פ	p
פ,ף	f
צ,ץ	ts (as *z* in German *zehn*)
ק	k
ר	r
שׁ	š
שׂ	s
ת	t

[1] ו and י are pronounced as consonants if they precede or follow a vowel, e.g. וַ and נ are pronounced as *va*, יַ is *ya*, יוֹ is *yo*, and יַ_ is *ay*.
[2] ḥ is a voiceless pharyngeal consonant (as in the Arabic name *Muḥámmad*). Ashkenazic Jews usually pronounce it as *ch* in German *Buch*.
[3] ʿ is a voiced pharyngeal consonant (pronounced with the pharynx half-closed by the epiglottis). Ashkenazic Jews usually pronounce it just as א (glottal stop or nothing).

The first lines of Al-Khansa'a text appear below, as given in the score, with both the phonetic pronunciation and the literal translations in Hebrew and English. The singers found this method of presentation extremely helpful; later they met up with the very same phonethic models in the score itself.

(4a)   The first three lines of the Beduin poet Al-Khansa's Arabic text:

(4b)   The same three lines of text in phonetic transcription and in literal translation
as they appear at the beginning of the score:

(4c) A section from the full score in which appear the last words of the text quoted
in examples (4a) and (4b):

The work was premiered six times throughout Israel during the second half of June, 1990, in the last concert of the series presented by The Cameran Singers for the season of 1989-1990. Immediately after the end of the concert series it was recorded in Tel Aviv for the CD Mentioned above.

(5)

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Below is what Itai wrote about his work with the Cameran Singers (as published in the brochure of the CD in which a fine peformance of the cantata **Like Two Branches** was recorded); in this he salutes the fine achievements of his choir (which is no more in existence) during 15 years of musical activity in Israel:

> *"A conductor always strives to interpret music at the highest level, both professionally and artistically. There can be no discussion as to what constitutes "quality" - vocal technique, musicianship, a through understanding of ensemble-work versus solo interpretation. Then, of course, there are matters of personal taste.*
>
> *All my life I have been looking for people who play or sing a phrase the way I feel it. This would mean that there is an affinity between our sensibilities, despite all the possible differences. When a musician opposite me launches an initiative, I am thrilled. Of all my experiences, up to the present, the Cameran Singers - the chamber choir which I founded - came closest to fulfilling my dreams."*

While we were preparing this CD, I invited Avner Itai to add an additional work to the same framework - an a-cappella choral version of the fourth song from the song-cycle Girl-butterfly-Girl performed by the Israel Kibbutz Choir under his baton. This version was commissioned in 1987 by the Philharmonic Choir under its conductor Michael Shani for a concert tour of Germany in the Summer of that year.

The Stylistic Analysis of "Like Two Branches"

Like Two Branches (1989)
Cantata (in Arabic)
Text: Al-Khansa (by Arabian Peninsula, 6th Century)
For chamber choir, two oboes, kanun, cello, set of tar-drums with supplements.

1. Like Two Branches (a)
2. Your Swiftly-Saddled Horse
3. Like Two Branches (b)
4. You Appease Thirsty Spears
5. Ballet (instrumental)
6. Like Two branches (c)
7. In the Shade of a Tree
8. Every Morning at Sunrise
9. Like Two Branches
10. I shall Weep for You (codetta)

In order to introduce the reader to the spirit of the work and its background, Sasson Somekh's [1] idiomatic translation of the poet's text is given below (transmitted by Gila Abrahamson into English):

1. Like two branches
    Of the same tree-trunk we grew.
    The branches spread out, the tree
    Flourished, fruit ripened -
    When suddenly
    One branch was cut off.
    Nothing survives the cruel hand of Time.

2. Your swiftly-saddled horse gallops steadily
    While the other horses hesitate,
    Their hooves sliding on rocky lava.

3. You appease the thirsty spear
    You smite the armed horsemen;
    Like a boiling cauldron you seethe
    While their horses wade
    Through a dark stream of blood.

4. In the shade of a tree he found rest,
    All night long he lay in the sand
    Then suddenly sprang up -
    Was it a rain-storm that alarmed him?

5. Every morning at sunrise I remember Sakhr
    And I remember him when the sun goes to rest.
    Wherever I turn, I see a bereaved woman
    Bitterly crying,
    Crazed by grief at the loss of a brother.
    No, they do not mourn a brother as you were to me.
    With soothing words I console myself,
    O, how my heart aches, remembering you.

6. I shall weep for you,
    So long as the ring-dove on a branch laments,
    So long as stars shine for travellers
    In the dark of night.

Text-Music Relationship

The tendency is to be as faithful as possible to the rhythm of the Arabic language with its many repetitions and rich texture, but not to be constrained by the meter of Arabic poetry. To my mind, to preserve the reccuring accentuations would be too mechanical, would ignore the descriptive and dramatic potential of the words, and would even weaken their impact unnecessarily.

Here, for example, is the poetic meter of the text with which the work begins (one notes immediately that the frequently-used 'albasit metric patterns divide the words; in the poem, the expression is extraordinarily concentrated in contrast to the stable poetic meter): [2]

and the setting of this sentence in other places in the work:

Beginning of the third section:

⑦b   Page 2 in the score, the transitional section between the
instrumental introduction and the body of the first big section:

⑦c   The entire performing body at the beginning of the ninth section
in unisono, performing the text to the melody of the instrumental introduction:
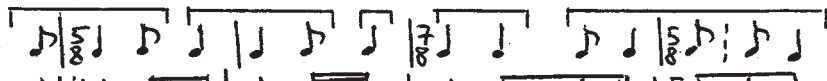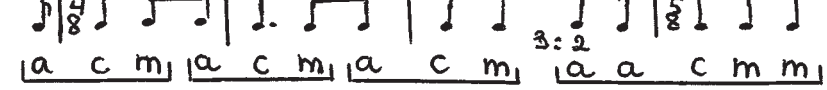
An interesting, well-conceived comparative study has been undertaken by the musicologist Shulamith Feingold. Concerning the codetta in this connection: below is a quotation from the manuscript of her paper, pp. 12-13:

"One of the prominent places in which one can illustrate how closely the text is followed, is in the work's codetta: 'I shall weep for you, / So long as the ring-dove on a branch laments, / So long as stars shine for travellers / In the dark of night' (from m.735 to the end)."

"The perception of the eternal in this sentence is given a static expression musically: above the tonal effects scattered about in the instrumental ensemble, made up of varied ostinato lines, a spoken cluster with fixed dynamics (mp) appears, each of the 12 vocalists declaiming the text on his/her natural fixed pitch and in a fixed rhythm dictated by the natural rhythm of the spoken chorus with the poetic meter:" [3, 4]
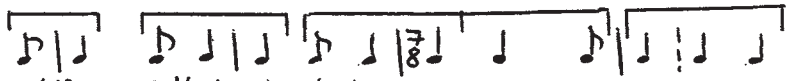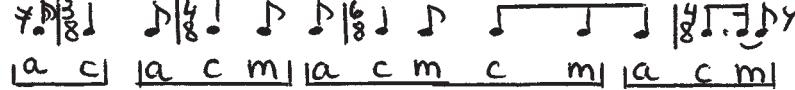

"One notices that most of the original literal stresses are preserved, whether by the length of the tone or by its place in the musical meter. However, in contrast to the poetic meter which follows patterns, the musical meter adapts itself in accordance with the words themselves: the stressed syllables are situated at the beginning of the measure (crusis) whereas the unstressed syllables are arranged aruound them - before them (anacrusis) - and after them (metahcrusis). This arrangement makes for directional flow in the declamation of the text supported by more rhythmical variety than when the poem is read according to the meter."

Feingold was interestsd in my compositional processes; how do I coordinate between textual units making for one entity and my musical language, which is another entity, she asked. My reply was as follows:

"The first stage is intuitive. A general associative correlation is created with a particular motive being selected in order to serve a line or a verse of the text. At this stage a tonal, textural, dynamic and harmonic plan is designed."

"In the second stage, I relate to the text and the melody almost as if I had written both. That is to say, my identification with them is so complete that some elements seem to latch on automatically, even resulting in small changes being made to both text and melody. There are places where the solution is set aside for the moment."

"Only in the third stage are the materials finally coordinated, whether by means of melodic or rhythmic alterations, development, interpolations, elisions or treatment of the text - melismatic extensions, repetitions of certain syllables, parts of words or whole words."

Here are three illustrations:

(9)   The word *sajaru* (tree): the growing of the branches is described in ascending and accelerating sequences (mm. 79-85):
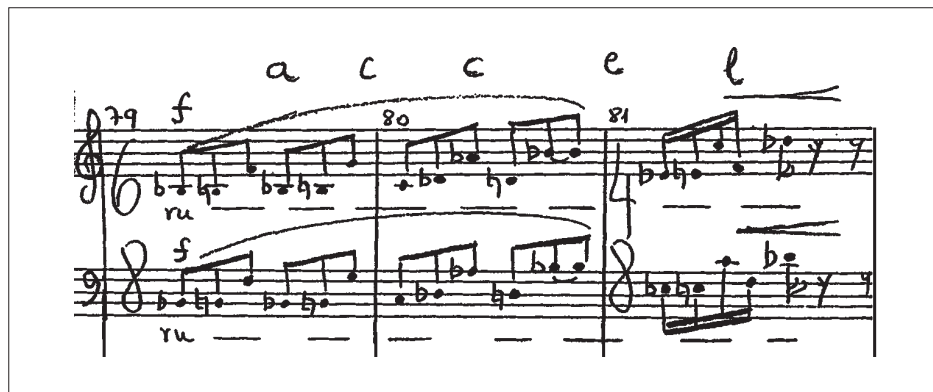
(10)   The combination of the words *wastawsaka ththamaru* (the fruit ripened) - the falling of the ripe fruit is described in "fallings" in a whole-tone scale (mm. 122-37):

The word *tabakat* which indicates the horses sliding and being swamped down in mud, is described in a glissando of the women's chorus, and a chromatic descent in the cello (mm. 179-82):

⑪

The Melodic Aspect

Throughout the whole work, motives of my own are interwoven with borrowed motives - quoted in various ways and at various levels of elaboration.

An example of the borrowed motivic group: the following is taken from the book of Hijaz melodies El Hitami: Classical Instrumental Music of Egypt - Part IV (The Hijaz Group), American University Cairo Press, 1983.[5]

⑫   Yusef Pasha's Melody -

Take note: the sections in square brackets are those the composer used as separate units:

Below is a detailed description of the development of the above melody in the instrumental introduction of the work, as analyzed by S.F. in her paper (ms., pp. 21-22):

"The work starts with two oboes in unison, with the kanun doubling at an octave, quoting a phrase of six measures from the work of Yusef Pasha:"

⑬

There are significant alterations in the quotation:

- The tempo is altered from $\eighthnote = 144$ to $\quarternote = 120$
- The meter is altered from $\frac{3+4+3}{8}$ to $\frac{2}{4}$
- In the third measure there is a change which sharpens the rhythm
- There is no indication of accidentals next to the clef sign
- The original embellishments are omitted; others are used instead, not necessarily in the same places
- In the third measure there is a melodic alteration (G# instead of Bb)
- Glissandi are added in order to achieve an oriental microtonal effect."

After the 'quotation', the motives undergo a development process:

"The form of the motival contour is preserved while the small intervals in the original melody are extended and distorted to include chromaticism, dissonant framing intervals (sevenths, tritones), and irregularity of scale passages. At times, completely new elements are introduced, most prominent of which is the major sixth in m.7 (see previous example). The use of an augmented second adjunct to a minor second, characteristic of the Hijaz, is emphasized. This results in the formation of a new artificial modus, enriched by slight chromatic embellishments:"

"Rhythmic patterns are preserved but there is a general tendency towards penultimate syncopations and stresses formed by a series of fast notes followed by a long note:"
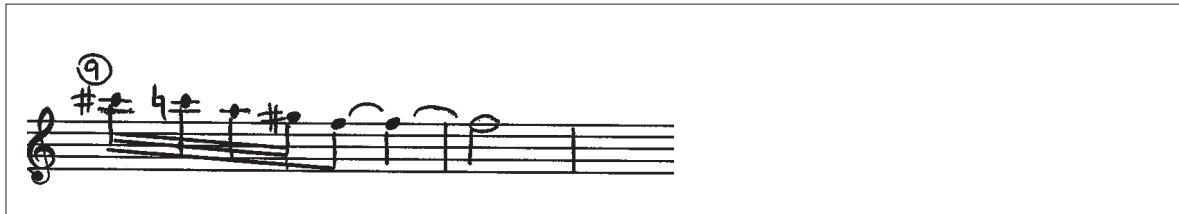
"The intensification achieved by means of the melorhythmic treatment is supported by frequent sharp dynamic alterations, and leads to a kind of fermata on the leading tone of the central tone of the section (m.23)."

"In m.24 the composer continues to quote the second phrase of the melody which opened the cantata:"

"This time the metric similarity is greater, but only the beginning of the phrase is quoted, and as from the fifth measure, is abandoned completely. An exact melodic repetition of the introduction appears in the ninth section of the work. But there the text of the first poem appears in the unison voices of the chorus doubled by the instruments and followed by the singing of parallel fourths and fifths (m.617) in increasingly dense harmonic-textural layering."

In order to provide a complete picture, the whole of the introductory section of the cantata is given below, followed by an illustration of reworkings of this theme in the ninth section.

⑱   The cantata's opening instrumental section:

⑲ The development of this theme at the beginning of the ninth section:

The continuation of this theme's development - in parallel fourths and fifths - starting from m.617:

Whithin the composed themathic fabric, the presence of the Hijaz maqam once more becomes prominent, this time through the development of patterns intrinsic to it.

S.F. states - on the basis of having studied the thematic fabric of the whole work - that "the rhythmic flexibility of alternating beats and meters in the composed melodies, is greater than that in the ethnic melodic sections quoted", and in this way, via the composer's thematic ideas, we approach the extra-European rhythmic world, negating symmetry.

Following is S.F.'s analysis of the composed thematicism in the work: she has chosen, amongst others, Fleischer's original melody for the word *sajaru* (tree), in the fifth part of the first section of the work:

"This is a separate, extended segment, devoted to a single word, appearing at the end of a sentence of the previous section. The voices of chorus, kanun and cello are in unison, so that the melody attracts maximun interest."

"The melodic line is arched and wide in range. In the beginning it is ambivalently tonal, moving between C minor and F which becomes more and more central. At its middle, the melody displays large, dissonant intervals; at its end comes a series of whole tones. There is no sign of the influence of the Hijaz maqam, but the 'oriental spirit' is preserved - possibly because of the orchestration with its blending of colours, or the mixed, alternating meters."

"In contrast to this melody, the dancelike melody in the following section is clearly in the Hijaz maqam (on c) and of a simple, folk nature. However, this Hijaz 'banality' which seems to dominate the melody, is dissipated because of the texture: a collection of linear lines moving in parallel like an open augmented chord, above an additional vocal cluster. Thus the melody assumes a harmonic-atonal colour as well."

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"Tunes written in this vein are scattered throughout the work and are imbued with the Hijaz impetus so central to the cantata."

"One of the 'strangest' melodies in the work is heard in the fourth section, to the words *kamirjali tabbatchatin hina fara* (like a cook's cauldron when it boils over) - referring to the hero's outburst of anger (mm.327-43):"

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"The interval characteristic of the melody sung by a bass solo, is a tritone. This interval and its intervallic context, with wide ranges on either side, is well-suited to the nature of the text. However, between the well-defined 'tritone areas', 'Hijaz areas' are inserted, the most obvious of which - sung in falsetto (m.338) - is none other than a direct quotation from the work by Yusef Pasha which opened the composition!"

"The soloist's a cappella melody in the seventh section - the women's lamentation - is particulary interesting, m.524 onwards. This agitated melodic line with its broad range and "capricious" nature (in the composer's words), is atonal. Primarily it expresses heart-rending lamentation in vocal nuances and in melodic contours of falling, sighing, crying out. But here too, between the ninths and sevenths which give the line a somewhat pointiallistic nature, melismatic patterns in a chromatic line surrounding the central tone are scattered, or an augmented second is juxtaposed to a minor second, reminiscent of the Hijaz maqam."

Below is the beginning of the section of women's voices in a quotation from the full score. Take note in particular of the sopranos' line:

As regards **the Harmonic Aspect**, S.F. feels that she has no more than peeped into the orchard, has merely tasted of its fruit - and that a detailed harmonic analysis has yet to be undertaken:

"The use of modal-maqamatic elements, the borrowing of ethnic melodies which are basically monophonic or connected to a rhythmic ostinato, the composition of atonal melodies - all these usually do not sit well with functional harmonization. And at any rate, what is the logic behind the confluence between various layers? Is it possibly nothing more than a chance encounter, characterizing heterophonic or atonal textures? What types of chords appear in the work? To what degree are they based on the tones of the maqam? Clusters? Triad formations? Fourth formations? What directs the progression of chords - functionality? Parallel formation harmony? Do the different layers of texture proceed in a similar fashion from a tonal-harmonic point of view, or can one come upon various types of behaviour patterns at one and the same time?"

Looking back on the process of composition involving the cantata, I can testify that the harmony is a result of linear massing in most cases - either by layering or by polyphonic juxtaposition. I have no doubt, for example, that the fourth formations were inspired by the tradition of organum singing which has survived until today.

Indeed, as a result of S.F.'s thoughtful analytical study, I feel that we have not as yet plumbed the depths of this aspect of the cantata.

Sound and Textural Aspects (Main Components)

Since 1986 I have become intensely aware of sound in the broad sense of this term (and according to Jan LaRue's definition). I have developed sensitivity to colour, ensemble, methods of vocal and instrumental production, the exotic value of language, registers, articulation, texture and dynamics. Thus in the Cantata **Like Two Branches**, in addition to its important function of fully exploiting the Hijaz maqam, a central position is given to sound: it helps to achieve atmosphere, interprets and supplements the text, at time defining cadential cutting-off points, and is pivotal to the formal design generally.

The Chorus

The vocal body employed is a mixed chamber choir. Choral timbre as regards <u>the division of voices</u> is extremely varied: basically it is a chorus of six voices, (S ,MS, A, T, Br, B). As such it appears in the cantata in fugal and polyphonic segments which create a dense vocal fabric (see mm. 53-63). But in addition, there is a maximal division into 12 voices (in the big Fuge, mm. 632-734), division into pairs of voices - in unison or at a fixed interval (mm. 191-199) - or into partial groups - high or low voices only. The most conspicuous example of the great polarity in effect that the differences in texture create, is situated in the seventh section, where the men's chorus with soloist appears, followed by the women's chorus in the eight section.

In many places the chorus is clearly treated as an ensemble of soloists with many virtuosic functions - melismata, the use of very high registers, large intervals, complicated polyrhythm etc.

Another aspect of sound as applied to the chorus is the approach to the voice: the pronunciation of the Arabic language - its resonance and intonation - dictated the registers, the design of the melodic line and the choice of the performing ensemble. Below are a number of examples of vocal effects:

- <u>Speaking</u>: To symbolize eternity, the text in the codetta was given to a speaking chorus in a static, uniform rhythm (each member of the chorus declaiming in a natural monotone (m.735 onwards).

- <u>Speaking with glissando</u>: At the beginning of the build-up towards the work's climax - in the final ritornello - the chorus performs the song *wastawsaka ththamaru* (fruit ripened) in 12-voiced parallel clusters beginning with an ascending and descending *glissando* within a ninth (more or less) in a *subito p* (mm. 685-86):

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- <u>Speaking into an oboe</u>: In the instrumental ballet, consisting mainly of instrumental effects and melodic fragments, vocal effects are introduced as a colour element. One of these: reminiscences from the work's first melody on *sajaru* (tree) and bits of the sentence *la yubki azzaman ala sayin wala yadharu* (nothing survives the cruel hand of time) are performed by the oboist speaking rhythmically into his instrument:

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- <u>Sprechgesang</u>: this is used for the description of moods or textual illustrations:

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Women's voices rising up individually to express the pain of reconciliation with fate.

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Philosophical Time in which nothing ('*azzaman*) survives, in a delicate vocal timbre of chords combined with descriptions of wind raging in the desert.

- <u>Whispers</u>: For the portrayal of wind in the desert and the heroes resting under a tree near the campfire, a whispered chorus employs the syllable *dif* (the first syllable in the word *dif'i* from the combination *fi dif'i* (in the shade of the tree).

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-Falsetto: The men's chorus in the seventh section, starts on the word *tamakkana* (sits) which symbolizes tranquility, rises to falsettos (mm. 436-54) as a vocal effect indicating ease and relaxation in the expanses of the desert to which the warrior - resting in Nirvana - turns at the end of a hard day.

(30)
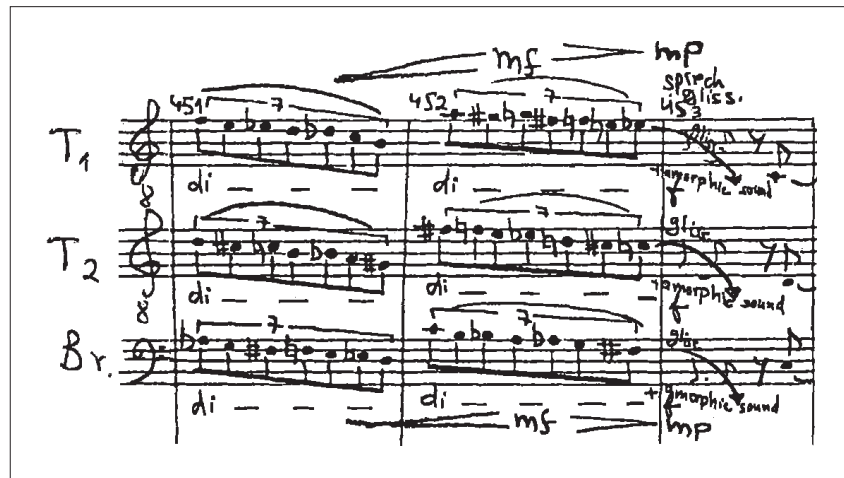
The Instrumental Ensemble

This consists of two oboes, cello, kanun and percussion instruments - mainly a set of tar drums with supplements: darbuka, bongo, cymbals, bells, triangle, glockenspiel, tympani, congas, kashishi, sticks...

The ensemble has a number of main functions:
- It serves as the main medium for the tonal portrayal of images in Khansa'a poetry, either by colourful illustration to accompany the sung text, or by means of instrumental prologues and interludes.
- It adds colour to the voices by exact doublings in sections of an overall unison or in polyphonic segments; also by enriching the vocal colour, or else by providing contrast.
- Instrumental sections serve as areas or points of articulation from the formal point of view. Avant-garde techniques in the cello and oboes were thoroughly investigated and then integrated and organized so as to exploit the instrumental potential fully, and in particular, to enable the instruments to produce oriental effects. The kanun - most popularly acknowledged as an oriental folk instrument with an improvisatory function or as accompaniment to folk singing - is given a solo function here, similar to that in a concerto in Western art music. So, for example in the instrumental introduction, an oriental effect is achieved by the combination of a unison in octaves in the two oboes and kanun, while the slow glissandi in the oboes give rise to microtonality (see the entire instrumental introduction given as a musical illustration on pages 18-19 example (18) here above).

Additional places in which the combination of instruments produce particularly colourful effects are:
- The codetta, in which, above layers of ostinato, and above the background of a speaking chorus, there are flashes of tone-colour from the combination of kanun and glockenspiel.

- In the ballet, an impressionistic effect of "clouds floating in the sky" is created by means of the oboes doubling in octaves, with the kanun doubling at a further octave:[6]

The "rain" in the seventh section (mm. 498-500) is also made up of a unique combination of harmonics and flageolets in the cello and oboe, with glockenspiel:

In order to complete the picture, I would like to refer to the instrumental colour as such.

The cello is fully exploited. Graphic notation allows for a certain amount of freedom in interpretation. In addition to accepted effects such as flageolets, vibrato and so on, use is also made of glissando, pizzicato, col legno, percussive effects and a type of scratching with a low tone value which also has an important formal significance: it is used to mark a cadential cut-off, as it were, and its length also indicates the degree of the formal division.

Here is an example of the percussive cello (mm. 104-109):

The scratching effect in a number of places where its function is to provide a formal division:

③④a

③④b

page 35 in the score

③④c

The <u>kanun</u> has a very special timbre - a certain affinity with the harp and the mandolin, yet it displays a type of percussiveness of its own. As a 'concertante' instrument, its part abounds in scale passages, arpeggios, and forceful sound.
Below are two examples:

- A virtuosic segment with many repeated tones evoking mandolin sound (mm. 320-24, 349):

③⑤

- A glissando and scale passages as in the harp (sections 32a and 32b from the "Ballet"):

�36

The <u>oboe</u> here is not provided with the lyrical attribute which characterizes it in Western music; however, effects such as the following are found: chordality, speaking into the mouthpiece, vibrato as in the Krumhorn (the folk instrument, the zorna), harmonics, glissando on the mouthpiece, alteration of the embouchure, movements, percussiveness. Examples follow:

- Chordality (mm. 196 onwards):

�37

- Glissando on the mouthpiece (section 38a in the Ballet):

�38

- Alteration of the embouchure (section 37e in the Ballet):

�39

At this stage in her research into **Like Two Branches**, Feingold recently summed up as follows:

"An encounter with any work of art activates a system of attributes which amalgamate into expectations - formed on the basis of given data (the creative artist, the title, the sources, the period and the place) - and stimulates the data bank and previous experience of the listener or the spectator."

"In the specific case of this cantata by Tsippi Fleischer, the data system represents an encounter between extremes:
-A jewish woman composer; and a Beduin Arab woman poet.
- 20th century music; and poetry from the 6th century.
- Traditional European musical genre with liturgical religious connotation (cantata);[7] and pre-Islamic Jahiliyya.
- A western "trio" ensemble (two oboes and cello) with mixed chorus; and kanun, tar drums and darbuka.
- In the melodic and textural field, western harmonic development; and motives springing from the Hijaz maqam."

"The multitude of possibilities of stylistic attributes arising out of these data may lead to two fold expectations:
1. Stylistic eclecticism which allows for contrasting sections to lie side by side or even to be given simultaneously, like in a kaleidoscopic collage;
2. An attempt at synthesis which gives birth to a "mixed style" - not necessarily in the negative sense of the term - a style which bridges cultures, nations, religions, periods and compositional techniques."

"Professor Sasson Somekh, who has translated many of the Arabic texts set in Tsippi Fleischer's works, notes, under the title "Translations have their own melody": "The translation of poetry is a creative activity and not merely a technical transference of meaning from one language to another. Not only must a translator tackle problems of rhyme and metre, tone-colour and rhythm, but he or she must ensure that the elements which went into the formation of the textual continuum in the original poem are not allowed to slip through the fingers during the course of the translation...A new melody would have to be found so that our contemporary language could reflect the early texts...'"

"Just as 'translations have their own melody', one may say that the melody to which the text is set 'has something in common with translation.' And even more - something of 'a reading' and 'interpretation' and 'addition' and 'reconciliation': the composer too must 'tackle problems of rhyme and metre, tone-colour and rhythm' and is even obliged to 'ensure that the elements which went into the formation of the textual continuum in the original poem are not allowed to slip through the fingers'. 'A creative activity' entails not merely copying, but providing the text with new meanings, enriching it and instilling new life into it. There is no doubt that when Tsippi Fleischer finds 'a new melody', combining our contemporary (musical) language with an early (poetic) language, she takes upon herself a very difficult, unique task. Her exploitation of the poetic potential is not done by means of translation. The primary impression of the language of origin - of the contents, sound, musical flow - is internalized, and finds its expression in an wealth of suitable values in all that applies to images, ensemble, melody,

rhythm; from here the music makes its way independently, enlisting a variety of musical aesthetics as regards culture, period, conception and sound, and which become mutually reconciled during the work."

"There is no doubt that a great deal of effort has been invested; the sources were referred to for melodic and rhythmic material; all possible methods of sound production for voice and instrument were thoroughly investigated and fully incorporated, structures and textures were taken on and shed form in correlation with all the rest of the elements and with the text. The result: what can be described as a breakthrough to Israeli reality and to the ancient Semitic East, by the blending together of similar elements and the collaboration between different ones."

"And in this period of approaching peace, nothing remains but to repeat, in the words of Theodor Herzl, when prophesying the establishment of the Jewish State: 'If you wish - it is no dream.'"

Footnotes

1. A world-renowned expert on Arabic literature, Sasson Somekh is full professor at Tel-Aviv University; he is currently Head of the Israeli Academic Center in Cairo.

2. Long vowels and closed syllables are given a long/heavy beat/accent; short vowels - a short/light beat/accent. The lines at the beginning of Sasson Somekh's idiomatic translation on p. 11 here above are given a literal translation on p. 8 (beginning of example ④b).

3. This is the *'albasit* meter with a variant (the variant is reflected in the continuation of the verse):

4. a = anacrusis
   m = metahcrusis
   c = crusis

5. This is a Hijaz melody by the Turkish composer Yusef Pasha, inspired by the *sama'i* tradition with its $\frac{10}{8}$ meter.

6. The square drawn around the number indicates the equivalent of a longer measure than usual.

7. The composer notes: my cantata, however, has no divisions between sections; in this it is reminiscent of the 'anti-structural' additive basis in music, and this additive concept possibly influenced me subconsciously.