

Tsippi Fleischer
The Animals' Wish
Op. 74 (September 2011)

A Suite of Five Dances

A musical stage-work for children, words and music

Ensemble: flute, clarinet, bassoon, violin, viola and cello

Explanations and directions

The music is based on a text, which is not sung but narrated. The suite consists of five movements:

1. **The Bird**
2. **The Fish**
3. **The Bee**
4. **The Gazelle**
5. **The Camel**

The text is as follows:

1. The bird wants the sky
2. The fish wants the river
3. The bee wants the flower
4. The gazelle wants the rock
5. The camel wants the desert

Colour onstage

azure

grey

red

brown

yellow

Ideal

This is a light-hearted, mischievous suite, "the animals' wish" – the wish is freedom, presented to children by way of a metaphor: the wish to live, to breathe, to be yourself, free and happy side by side with those who are like yourself and share the same privileges. It is easy to sense this clearly through the eyes of children.

In addition to my talents as a composer, I enlisted my knowledge in Hebrew and Arabic and my attraction to musical drama and theatre.

The work is appropriate for an audience of Jewish and Arab children, together or separately. Before each dance, the sub-titles (“the bird wants”, “the fish wants”, etc.) are read. Everything in the music is done in a plastic manner, containing changes of tempo and dynamics, to assist in developing a little drama (we are not dealing with a topic like Medea or the fall of Massada). The dancers/actors/mimes, and/or the string players, will utter sounds/syllables which constitute onomatopoeic sonorities (a whisper with a strong impetus of air) which authentically match the animals’ motion in their environment. These syllables are marked in the score in their precise location.¹ The young audience can easily be taught to take part in this (audience participation and activation!).

All the animals mentioned can be found in my Middle-Eastern habitat, and I was therefore drawn to a sound with an Eastern, somewhat Mediterranean ambience, arising from instrumental doublings upon a basic interval, which specifies each dance. The “permanent scintillating interval”,² consistent within each dance, creates a sense of coherence. The resulting music is strictly stylised, yet also highly varied.

Onstage

Each dance will be preceded by a playful/theatrical narration in Hebrew and Arabic. These titles awake the imagination with their picturesque character. The subtitle is immediately followed by another, somewhat rhyming sentence – see the short texts below (these texts might be developed further):

1. The birds long for the sky – loves to fly, to spread its wings on high.
2. The fish longs for a river or lake – will drink, will swim, without a break.
3. The bee searches for nectar, sweet flower bed, orange or red...
4. The gazelle leaps between rocks, and looks at trees, shrubs and nooks.
5. The camel in the desert – wanders, gazes, it’s late; no water means a cruel fate.

I suggest that the narration will always be read in both languages, even to a single-language audience.

¹ The syllables are indicated with the musical rhythms, and are therefore easy to perform; they are written according to the IPA (International Phonetical Association) rules to the left of subtitles 1-5, which are intended for narration.

² The “permanent scintillating interval” is noted in each dance at the bottom right corner of the page.

It is possible to repeat each dance – or the entire suite – twice, in a different theatrical conception. When introducing the repeat, the narrator can add another statement on the animal's activity, in an atmosphere which will complement the rhymed statement I have already created.

I perceive a powerful sense of colour (clean and clear, evocative of basic colours with no pastel combinations) in the theatrical topic – in the sets, the lightings, the props (a black leotard?) etc. – which I noted in italicised letters between the Hebrew and Arabic titles. This is merely a suggestion.

The Music

- Due to the lightness of the motion, I avoided any tendency to overburden the lower timbres.
- The mixtures both maintain and distance themselves from the pitch frame: there is a balance between a hierarchical musical scale and a consistent intervallic array.
- A scintillating mixture-chordal character is appropriate for the lightness required of music intended for stage movement (as opposed to the polyphonic texture, which involves a certain heaviness and a separation of forces between the instruments). Here, all instruments join together to support the on-stage movement.
- The melodies were written in a spontaneous-suggestive manner; my mind's ear was guided by the psycho-musical affinity with each animal, not by an obsession with any particular method (be it chromatic, tonal, dodecaphonic, etc.). I wished to delight the soul, rather than force unnatural sounds on the ear.
- The musical thought led an optional design idea: it might be advisable to arrange the instrumentalists in an alternation (e.g., flute next to violin), instead of grouping the winds apart from the strings.³ Also, if movement or pantomime were to be staged, the actors-dancers and the players could be scattered on the stage in a way which facilitates connection between them.

³ The standard formation in classical chamber music is to place the strings together, as one group, and the woodwinds together as another group. What I propose here is to mix the two groups – for instance, placing the violin next to the flute.

Providing an Educational Flavour

The recorded soundtrack could be activated in young children's classes; they could internalise the changes of rhythm and tempo from dance to dance (that is, from animal to animal) and move freely. The movements they will invent will match the music's character. I would advise against forcing the children to mimic the rhythms precisely (as in eurhythmic classes). Instead, the teachers should have faith in the children, and give free rein to their imagination.

On the pronunciation of consonants in this work

The addition of a particular consonant in the score for each animal / miniature, performed simultaneously with the notes – whether by the actors / pantomimers / dancers or by the instrumentalists, should add – I hope – a special and authentic atmosphere to the 'actions' of each animal in its natural environment: to the bird as it flies in the sky, to the fish swimming in water, and so on. Below are the personal associations that led me to create the sounds; however, performers of the music and movements should feel free to relate to additional or different associations.

Here are the associations / images that came to mind:

1. The Bird [wa]: swooping through the air
2. The Fish [š]:⁴ the swish of its fins
3. The Bee [s]: hovering over a flower, sipping nectar
4. The Gazelle [ts]: the friction on rocks during a leap
5. The Camel [f]: dust and sand swirling in the desert.

Tsippi Fleischer

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Upon completing the composition of the work

⁴ According to the IPA (International Phonetical Association), this letter sounds as *sh* in English, *sch* in German.

THE ANIMALS' WISH

החיות רוצות

THE BIRD

הציפור

Dance No. 1

מחול מס. 1

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Moderato

1st. time ♩ = 64

2nd. time ♩ = 72-76

Flute *mp* *leggero* *mf*

Clarinet *mp* *leggero* *mf*

Bassoon *mp* *leggero* *mf*

whisper [wa]→

Violin *mp* *leggero* *mf*

whisper [wa]→

Viola *mp* *leggero* *mf*

whisper [wa]→

Violoncello *mp* *leggero* *mf*

Fl. *rit.* *a tempo* *sub.mp*

Cl. *sub.mp*

Bn. *sub.mp*

Vln *sub.mp* [wa]→

Vla *sub.mp* [wa]→

Vcl. *sub.mp* [wa]→

rit. sempre a tempo

8

Fl. *mf* *f* *sub. mf*

Cl. *mf* *f* *sub. mf*

Bn. *mf* *f* *sub. mf*

Vln. *mf* *f* *sub. mf*

Vla. *mf* *f* *sub. mf*

Vcl. *mf* *f* *sub. mf*

==

1st. time *accel.*
2nd. time *rit. molto*

1st. time *accel. molto*
2nd. time *rit. molto*

12

Fl. *f* *ff*

Cl. *f* *ff*

Bn. *f* *ff*

Vln. [wa] *f* *ff*

Vla. [wa] *f* *ff*

Vcl. [wa] *f* *ff*

Permanent interval: big second