

Shamayim

Shamayim began as a music work commissioned as 3 separate parts by numerous European festivals and Project Isherwood, an initiative to create new works for bass singer Nicholas Isherwood. Funds were also provided by the Grame Center in France, the Argosy Fund for Contemporary Music, the New York State Music Fund, as well as the Birge-Cary Chair in Music, the UB2020 Scholar's Fund, and the Morris Creative Arts Fund (image realization) all at the University at Buffalo.

Shamayim is a work for solo bass voice, 8 channels of electronic sound made or modeled upon bass singer's Nicholas Isherwood's vocal instrument, with video created by Elliot Caplan. The work is an extended meditation inspired in part by the Book of Formation (Sefer Yetzirah), the writings of thirteenth century mystic Abraham Abulafia, and descriptions of states of consciousness that accompany prophetic experiences, as in Ezekiel. The work is in three sections titled respectively:

1. Chashmal (speaking silence) 2006-7
2. Sa'arah (stormy wind) 2007-8
3. Black Fire / White Fire 2008-9

The unique talents and abilities of bass singer Isherwood were the primary sources for all of the sounds in the piece, with accompanying natural sounds and selected ringing metals.

This work is designed to exist in two complementary versions; the first, is a conventional live performance, with image, in concert halls with live amplification, processing, and 8 channels of sound; the second, a version for installation, concert hall/large cinema with 8 channels, or home theater presentation in surround 5.1 and with a specially prepared image presentation. The latter was commercially released in October, 2009 by Albany Records.

Spatial distribution of musical elements is a critical component in the composition. The DVD/DTS may be played through a dvd multi-channel audio player by connecting the output to a surround receiver and a system that has a 5.1 setup as a prepared reduction of the original 8 channels.