

**DINOS CONSTANTINIDES**

**INTIMATIONS**

One Act Opera on a text by  
David Madden

CHAMBER VERSION-PIANO REDUCTION

**LRC 39a**



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**DINOS CONSTANTINIDES**

**INTIMATIONS**

*Winner of the 1981 Brooklyn Chamber Opera Composition Contest and recipient of a  
matching grant from MEET THE COMPOSER*

*Also winner of the 1985 Outstanding Achievement Award in the  
First Midwest Chamber Opera Festival at Ohio State University.  
Adjudicators: Boris Goldovsky, Henry Butler and Richard Owens.*

One Act Opera

On a text by  
**DAVID MADDEN**

**MAGNI PUBLICATIONS**  
BATON ROUGE  
1980

**INTIMATIONS**  
**One act Opera by Dinos Constantinides**

Libretto by David Madden

Miss Ellen  
Celeste

Synopsis

Ellen, a forty-five year old blind woman, and Celeste, a fourteen year old guest, are waiting for Linda to come home. Ellen persuades Celeste to leave the window seat where she is watching for Linda and hold her hand and sit beside her. Ellen and Celeste are profoundly disturbed. When Linda's lover came in from riding in wind and snow, Ellen put poison in his coffee; she says she thought it was sugar. He lies dead in an adjoining bedroom to which Ellen and Celeste dragged him from the kitchen. Celeste feels guilty because had she not been looking in the cellar for old photographs of her brother, she would have gotten the sugar for the young man's coffee. Dreading Linda's return from town, Ellen asks Celeste to look out the window again. Celeste obeys, but stays on the window seat when Ellen asks her to sit beside her again. A growing, unconscious fear prompts her to question what Ellen tells her. Celeste sees Linda's red coat and her cigarette glowing in the distance. Celeste promises that she will be the one to tell Linda what has happened. Ellen asks Celeste to push her chair back into the shadows. Celeste does not move. She now suspects that Ellen did not put poison in the man's coffee by accident. They hear Linda at the door.

Ellen tells her to open the door to let Linda in. Celeste moves toward the door.

## Program Notes

The one-act opera “Intimations” by Dinos Constantinides is based on David Madden’s poem “Fugue for Two Voices.” It is a dialogue between an older woman and a young girl with the subject being a possible murder. The work can be presented on stage but the static character of the plot makes it interesting without theatrical staging as well.

“Intimations” was presented for the first time on stage at the Brooklyn College of New York on February 5, 1982, when it was awarded the first prize of the Brooklyn College Chamber Opera Composition Contest.

The composition was written originally in 1975, with a slightly different format requiring a dancer and entitled “Fugue for Two Voices.” It was presented twice in Baton Rouge in July 1975 as a part of the city’s Festival of the Arts. Since then, the piece was reworked in 1980 with the present title and subsequently won two first prizes including the Brooklyn College prize. It has had numerous performances including a New York Times reviewed presentation at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

“Intimations” employs one soprano, a female speaker, and an instrumental quartet: violin, clarinet, harp, and percussion. The four instruments represent the four characters of the story: 1) Clarinet represents Miss Ellen, because her complex character demands portrayal by an instrument of diverse tone possibilities such as the clarinet. 2) Violin represents Celeste, who appears as an innocent young girl who becomes a mature person during the course of the opera. 3) Harp represents Linda, who enjoys a happy life with her lover without knowing what is coming soon. The harp conveys happiness well. 4) Percussion is very appropriate to present the unexpected death of the young man. The music uses four instruments for the four persons involved in the story: two who are present on stage and two who are only talked about.

There is also a chamber orchestra version of “Intimations” which calls for two soprano soloists and staging.

## Text for Intimations

### FUGUE FOR TWO VOICES

by David Madden

Do you hear her coming?

No, ma'am.

Is there enough light on the road?

The moon's bright.

Has the snow stopped?

Yes, ma'am.

Watch carefully. I want you to tell me when you see her coming.

Yes, ma'am.

Where are you Celeste? I hear you breathing but I don't feel the warmth of you near.

I'm near you. On the window seat, watching the road.

Give me your hand, Celeste.

But I can't reach you, and be near the window, too.

I feel so alone. Please give me your hand, Celeste. Celeste?

Yes, ma'am.

Call me, Miss Ellen.

Yes, Miss Ellen.

My dear, your hands are so cold. And it's so warm in this room.

Do you feel ... sick?

I feel all right.

It was too much for you, poor girl. How old are you?

Fourteen.

So young. I'm very sorry it happened, Celeste, while you were visiting.

Why, Celeste, your hands aren't getting warm. You aren't afraid, are you?

No, Miss Ellen.

Try not to think of him in there. Why, my child, it was an act of fate.

I thought it was sugar.

If I hadn't been down in the cellar, looking for old  
photographs of my brother, it wouldn't have happened.

Don't think of it, Celeste. Just sit here beside me.

Only an hour ago I saw him riding through the snow.

He looked so small on that huge horse.

He was too fair a man. Too small and slender.

Why, Miss Ellen, how could you know what he looked like?

Haven't I had to sit with her in the evening, listening to her go on about him, how fair and lovely he was? And he out riding that white stallion through the hills and meadows.

Let's not talk about him. It's too awful to think of him  
lying in there. And she will be coming home soon from town.

Go to the window and see if she's coming. Do you see anything  
on the road?

Shadows of the sycamores on the snow.

Come back and hold my hand, little Celeste.

Hadn't I better watch the road?

I'm used to be alone.

I think I see a light in the trees.

What kind of light?

A tiny one. Now it's gone.

She stopped to light a cigarette.

I'm frightened, Miss Ellen.

It couldn't be helped. You know that. He came cold from riding in the wind and snow, and you were in the cellar. So I poured him some coffee and I thought it was sugar I took from the sideboard. He should have gotten his own coffee, instead of asking a blind woman. Celeste, are you crying?

No ma'am, Miss Ellen.

That's a dear, brave girl.

Miss Ellen, how are you going to tell her?

Oh, aren't you going to, little Celeste?

Oh, I couldn't, Miss Ellen.

Please. I'm old and sick. Will you?

Yes, ma'am.

Just explain that I didn't know it wasn't the sugar box.

All right.

Is she almost there?

Yes. I see her red coat in the moonlight. And the cigarette glowing. I think I hear her singing.

How odd. She lights a cigarette and she sings, walking home in snow and moonlight. Isn't it odd, Celeste?

I don't know if I can tell her.

But when she goes into the bedroom she'll see him anyway.

I'll tell her. I don't want to hear her scream.

Celeste?

Yes.

Am I in the lamplight?

No.

Am I in the moon?

Yes.

Would you please push my chair back into the shadows.

Why?

I can't bear to think of her looking at me.

You can't see her face. Anyway, why would she look at you?

Because of him.

It was an accident wasn't it? You thought it was sugar, didn't you?

Listen, Celeste. The lock striking in the gate.

Yes. I hear her shoes in the snow now.

Did you comb his hair, Celeste?

Yes, I did what you told me to do.

How old are you now, Celeste?

Fourteen.

Did it frighten you?

No.  
But the other did. Dragging him in there after it was over?  
Yes.  
Was he heavy?  
You know he was.  
Was he cold when you combed his hair?  
Don't ask me those things, Miss Ellen.  
I'm sorry, dear. Tell me now, do you see her?  
She's coming up to the door.  
Stomping the snow from her shoes. Are you afraid to tell her?  
No. I'm going to tell her.  
Then open the door and let Linda in.

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## **GENERAL NOTES**

### **Persons represented:**

Ellen – soprano, a blind woman about 45  
Celeste – female speaker about 14

### **The Scene:**

In a sitting room with a window overlooking a road

### **Instrumentation:**

Clarinet in Bb, Violin, Harp, Percussion (Snare drum, five Temple Blocks, Suspended Cymbals, Woodblock, Cowbell.)

## Explanation of Symbols:

	Accelerando
	The highest note possible
	Indefinite pitches following the pitch contour
	Repeat the same pitches
	Whisper
	Speaking voice at the approximate pitch
	Violin: left hand pizzicato Clarinet: key sounds (clicks)
	A rapid, irregular tremolo
	Arpeggios, upward and downward
	Change bows at will
	Scream, shout
	Tremolo (for clarinet as fast as possible)
	Repeat the entire unit inside the box
	Length of line indicates duration of sound
	Play as fast as possible
	(with text) Duration of the syllables
	Clusters, mass of sound
<i>c.v.</i>	Colla voce (follow the voice in free rhythm)