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I-Fairy robot dressed in white is master of ceremony at Japanese wedding

Leo Lewis

To her creators she is a high-tech symphony of semiconductors and solenoids, the pinnacle of Japanese robotic engineering. But you can call her the nuptialiser.

Yesterday, under the soft morning sun in Tokyo's Hibiya Park, Japan's obsession with robots took another giant leap into the absurd as a mechanised priestess joined two people in matrimony. It was both a romantic and static affair, possibly the first wedding where the official had self-illuminating eyeballs and required a supply of 100V DC to stay upright.

Conducting the ceremony in a white breastplate, plastic pigtails and floral tiara, I-Fairy charmed her way through proceedings with a voice somewhere between Minnie Mouse and the extermination-threat of a Dalek.

Clasping bride and groom in her steely paws, and controlled remotely from behind a velvet curtain, the diminutive I-Fairy worked her way through the traditional questions and culminated in the proclamation: "You may lift the bride's veil." The event highlighted the oddity of Japanese weddings, where the ceremony carries no legal weight — by the time they get to the altar most couples have been married for months and the "priest" is often an English teacher in a cassock.

The choice of marriage official by Satoko Inoue, 36, and Tomohiro Shibata, 42, was not entirely coincidental. The latter is a professor of robotics at the Nara Institute of Science and Technology, while his bride is an employee of Kokoro, the company that builds and markets the 6.3 million yen (£47,000) I-Fairy.



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