

# A Time to Mourn and a Time to Dance

Concerto for Two Violins and Strings

**Composer:** Avner Dorman

**Year:** 2025

**Duration:** ca. 18 minutes

**Orchestration:** Strings

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## Program Note

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Dedicated to Adele Anthony & Gil Shaham I had been meaning to write a concerto for Gil and Adele for quite a while. The opportunity to do so came at a particularly challenging time in the world - especially for my country of origin, Israel, and the Jewish people. The attack of October 7th and the ensuing war have touched me personally and have cast a cloud over everything during the past year. In trying to cope with these events and challenges, I found myself looking for rituals that deal with loss and that would connect me to the collective experience. I have found that the Jewish tradition often combines practices of mourning with those of celebration - a combination that holds a deep meaning for me. The piece is written in four movements. The first is a meditative lament that begins with a soft, distant drone. The solo violins introduce the main theme - an elegiac melody that incorporates Jewish prayer gestures and the 'sigh' motif - a descending half step. Through the movement these elements and the theme travel between the soloists and larger ensemble, ending with a simple solemn prayer. An upbeat dance in changing meters, the second movement employs the same scales and thematic materials of the first, but now they serve as the building blocks of an exciting drama. The movement is structured as a series of dance tunes and various textural explorations, reaching its culmination in a reprise of the harmonic sighs of the

opening movement, now as a cathartic release. Deeply sorrowful, the third movement opens with the return of persistent drones, and the sigh motif permeates almost every bar of the melody. The movement is structured like a large triple fugue, beginning with the individual solo players and slowly spreading throughout the ensemble. After an intense yet still lamentful climax, the movement continues to slow down as if time stands still - ritualistic, slowly, and softly. An exuberant and exciting dance, the fourth movement is mostly in an asymmetrical 7/16 meter. Joy, almost forgotten in the lament, returns in full force, though the material includes both elements of happiness and grief. This joy acknowledges the pain and sorrow yet embraces the opportunity to dance again.

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Avner Dorman

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