Jerusalem Mix

Composer: Avner Dorman
Year: 2007
Duration: 17 min
Orchestration: ob, cl, bn, hn, pf
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Program Note

Composer note
Jerusalem Mix takes its title from a popular Israeli dish made of an eclectic assortment of fried meats. The dish, much like the city of its origin, is a melting pot of flavors and characters - each preserving some of its unique characteristics while contributing to the whole.

When I was first approached to write a woodwind and piano quintet for the 10th anniversary of the Jerusalem International Chamber Music Festival I knew I wanted to write a piece that would reflect the spirit of the festival and of the city of Jerusalem.

As I started writing the piece, I discovered that the piano and woodwind quintet is a tricky ensemble as it embodies members of four different instrument families: the bassoon and oboe are both double-reed instruments; the clarinet is a single-reed instrument; the French horn is a brass instrument; and the piano is of the percussion family. I decided to use the diversity of this ensemble to mirror the diversity of Jerusalem.

With this in mind I set out to write this piece as a collage of short scenes, each portraying one or more aspects of the city:

I. Jerusalem Mix – portraying the busyness of the modern city. Musically, this movement is based on Armenian and Turkish folk dance-styles in which the length of the beats constantly varies. In the middle part of this movement a prayer-like

melody is introduced in the Oboe emulating its Middle-Eastern origins such as the Zurna or the Duduk.

II. The Wailing Wall – emulates the sound of a praying crowd. This movement is based on the characteristic sigh of the Jewish prayer and pays homage to the opening movement of Mordecai Seter's oratorio "Tikun Hatzot."

III. Wedding March – a humorous movement that is first inspired by Hassidic Music but gradually incorporates wedding music from Middle-Eastern Jewish traditions. As the wedding party reaches higher levels of ecstasy (and the guests are increasingly drunk) these different styles collide and collapse into one another.

IV. Blast.

V. Adhan (the Islamic call to prayer) – by hitting the strings of the piano with drumsticks the pianist emulates the sound of a Kanun and the prayers of the opening movement and of the "wailing wall" movement become the call to prayer of the Muezzin.

VI. Jerusalem Mix.

All the movements are based on two simple melodic cells – one chromatic and the other made of a whole step. For me, the fact that these simple motives can lend themselves to the music traditions of Christianity (Armenian dance), Islam, and Judaism, express that on a deep cultural, musical, and humane level, our cultures are closer than we realize.

— Avner Dorman

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