

Lament and Variations

for Solo Piano

Composer: Avner Dorman
Year: 2024
Duration: 15:00
Orchestration: Pno
Publisher: Lyric Row Press
Commission: Commissioned by and dedicated to Mackenzie Melemed

Program Note

The first time I heard Mackenzie Melemed perform my music was in 2012 at the New York International Piano Competition. He played my Three Etudes with such depth, understanding, and natural virtuosity that I immediately felt he truly understood my music and interpreted it wonderfully. Since then, we have collaborated on numerous projects, including my Third Piano Concerto, written specifically for Mackenzie and premiered by him in 2021. He has been a dedicated champion of the work ever since.

Lament and Variations follows the principles of a traditional set of variations. The piece is a lament for the victims of the October 7, 2023, massacre of twelve hundred Israeli children, women, and men by Hamas. At its core is the descending lamento bass, a musical gesture rooted in Renaissance and Baroque traditions, here set within an alternating metric framework of 7/16 and 10/16. These time signatures symbolize the date of the attack, embedding its memory into the music.

The piece unfolds through eleven variations, making up a total of thirteen sections, a symbolic number in Jewish tradition, each exploring a spectrum of emotional states— some reflecting what I imagine the victims experienced, and others expressing my own reactions to the tragedy. Some variations take a cue from traditional sets of variations by incorporating canonic procedures over the lamento bass, and one even directly quotes Brahms' Variations on a Theme by Robert

Schumann. The music builds to a cataclysmic apex, after which the final variation, titled Finding Freedom in Stillness, seeks a sense of solace. The piece concludes with a fragile return of the original lament, its tragic character fading delicately into silence.

Avner Dorman

Lyric Row Press

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