

Repeated Petitions (chamber version)

from Visions of Humanity

Composer: Avner Dorman

Year: 2026

Duration: 6 minutes

Orchestration: pf/2vn.va.vc

Commissions: Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra - Summermusik (2026); Classics Northwest (2026); El Paso Pro Musica (2026); Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra (2026); Long Beach Symphony (2026); Mesa Arts Center (2026); Sitka Festival (2026); South Carolina Philharmonic (2026); Spokane Symphony (2026)

Program Note

This commission began with a prompt connected to the 250th anniversary of the United States: I was asked to revisit the Declaration of Independence and respond to it from my own cultural perspective. Upon re-reading, I found myself struck less by the famous opening preamble and more by what follows: the exhaustive list of grievances and the concept of "repeated petitions." I was moved by the image of the colonists arguing, reasoning, and trying again—exhausting every verbal and intellectual resource before finally taking responsibility for their own freedom.

That persistence reminded me immediately of Talmudic discussion. While not a literal parallel, both share a fundamental trust that the act of returning to the same question from different angles is a vital part of the search for justice. This spirit of active, persistent engagement became the core of Repeated Petitions, my movement of the collaborative cello concerto Visions of Humanity/Unity.

The resulting music is energetic and rhythmic. I was drawn to the early American fife-and-drum music and the marches of the Revolutionary and Civil War eras. Having lived in Gettysburg for the past sixteen years, this soundscape has become very familiar to me; I hear it in the town's ceremonies and reenactments, and in the way this landscape constantly returns to its own history.

As the music moves from Revolutionary sounds toward Civil War-era material—including quotes from the fife tune Blatchley’s Banter and the spiritual Go Down, Moses—it reflects my thinking on freedom as an active process rather than a static achievement. I wanted to celebrate freedom not as a finished gift, but as something precious, unfinished, and inextricably linked to responsibility. Ultimately, freedom is something we must keep petitioning for: constantly asking who is free, what we are protecting, and what still needs to change.

Avner Dorman

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