

String Quartet No. 2 - Mirage

Composer: Avner Dorman
Year: 2004
Duration: 20 min
Orchestration: 2vn, va, vc
Publisher: G Schirmer Inc

Program Note

Movements:

- I. Mirage
- II. Prayer for the Innocents
- III. Ruchot

Composer note:

Anyone that has walked in the desert or drove in hot weather conditions is familiar with the phenomenon of a mirage. What seems like a pool of water appears in the distance, and then disappears as you approach it.

When I was asked to write a new piece for the Jerusalem Quartet, I wanted it to be uniquely Israeli. Mirage is characteristic of both our physical land as well as of our history and heritage. Throughout the piece, themes appear and develop, but before reaching a satisfying culmination they evaporate or fade away as we approach them. The first movement, "Mirage," begins with a short mystical introduction. The initial theme recalls a quasi-Indian raga and on rhythmic cycles, while the second is inspired by the rhythms of classical Persian music. Throughout the movement, the opening three chords help to blur the boundaries between what is real and what is fantastic. As the mirage continues to elude the traveler, frustration builds, creating more and more energy and anxiety towards the end of the movement.

The second movement, "Prayer for the Innocents," follows the first without a pause. It begins with a transition based on the opening three chords which leads into a solemn prayer. The prayer theme is first introduced in a baroque like

fashion, and is then followed by a variant in Middle-Eastern style. As a quiet cry can express tragedy more powerfully than many words, this movement is simpler in style. While I was writing this movement, the horrible massacre occurred in Beslan, Russia. In memory of the children who passed away, the movement's title, "Prayer for the Innocents," quotes a Russian archbishop praying for the victims' souls.

The third movement is entitled "Ruchot." This Hebrew word has multiple meanings, referring to winds, spirits, and souls. Desert winds are extremely unpredictable — one minute very weak, the next very strong. They carry sand with them and can cover or reveal anything in a matter of seconds. In a sense they can imitate spirits or souls — and are a kind of mirage

— Avner Dorman

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Accessed on December 6, 2025