Tanyaderas

Composer: Avner Dorman

Year: 2023

Duration: 8 minutes

Orchestration: 2.2.2.2/4.2.2+btbn.1/timp.3perc/strings

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Commission: Tanyaderas was written for the Jewish Federation of Greater Rochester and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra's joint celebration concert in honor of Israel's 75th anniversary, made possible with a generous gift from Joyce and Victor Poleshuck.

Program Note

When the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra contacted me to write a celebratory piece for the 75th anniversary of the State of Israel, I wanted to add a unique perspective on musical celebration in Jewish tradition.

I first learned about tanyaderas from an article by Cia Sautter in the Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women. To paraphrase Sautter, tanyaderas were Sephardic Jewish women who led singing and dancing during life celebrations, particularly at weddings. They typically played a frame drum (somewhat like a tambourine, but without metallic jingles) while singing, and they performed ballads and upbeat songs in Ladino. Most of our knowledge of tanyaderas comes from ethnographic studies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Sephardic communities. Tanyaderas were central to Jewish life in Sephardic communities in Medieval Spain and later in the Balkans, Turkey, and Morocco.

My piece entitled Tanyaderas uses a few musical elements that we know, with some level of certainty, would typically have been present in many tanyadera performances. The first of these is the use of the frame drum and hand-clapping, and having the percussion and the rhythm act as the driving force of the piece, which it does almost throughout the whole composition. The other has to do with specific rhythms and meters. For much of the piece, there are alternations of duple and fast triple meters (e.g., 2/4 and 3/8, which together create a double-measure totaling seven eighth notes). This free alternating of duple and triple is common in

the music of the Balkans, Turkey, and elsewhere in the Mediterranean region. One can find it in much Jewish dance music from Sephardic and Mizrahi sources (all the way from Morocco to the Caucasus).

My piece also blends the above elements with allusions to Jewish musical traditions from around the world, including brief bits from a few well-known traditional Israeli songs and dances.

The piece is structured in one movement with a broad ABA form. The entire composition is energetic, with a more expressive and lyrical middle section. The piece features several short themes, similar to what I imagine would be the case in a traditional tanyadera performance, yet they are all connected through motivic relationships.

All in all, the work celebrates the past, the present, and the future of the wider Jewish community in Israel and beyond.

היצירה "טניאדרס" נכתבה עבור קונצרט חגיגי לציון 75 שנות עצמאות לישראל, בביצוע הבכורה של התזמורת הפילהרמונית של רוצ'סטר בניצוח אנדראס דלפס ב-20 באפריל 2023. ההשראה ליצירה מגיעה ממונח הלאדינו "טניאדרס", שתיאר נשים יהודיות שהובילו חגיגות בשירה, ריקוד ותיפוף במסורות קהילות ספרד, צפון אפריקה, הבלקן והמזרח התיכון, ומקושר לשירת מרים. היצירה מתמקדת באלמנט הריתמי, תוך שימוש בתוף מרים ובמחיאות כפיים ובמעברים בין משקלים זוגיים למשולשים, המאפיינים מסורות מוזיקליות מהאזור. היא משלבת רמיזות לריקודי עם מראשית המדינה ולמנגינות ידועות, ונכתבה בשלושה חלקים: שניים אנרגטיים ואחד לירי, כייצוג של עצמאות, מסורת וחשיבותן של נשים במסורתנו.

Avner Dorman

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