

The Fear of Men

Composer: Avner Dorman
Year: 2006
Duration: 10 min
Orchestration: piano
Publisher: G Schirmer Inc

Program Note

Texts

Ronen Altman Kaydar, poet

1. The Fear of Men
2. Late

Premiere

15 September 2006

International Festival "Forgotten Music"

Yaron Windmüller, baritone

Peter Baumgardt, director

Görlitz-Zgorzelec, Germany

Composer note

I composed The Fear of Men in 2006 for the Görlitz Festival. The Israeli poet Ronen Altman Kaydar shared several of his poems with me, and I selected these two contrasting yet parallel texts, originally written in Hebrew and translated into English. Both poems immediately immerse the reader in the poet's world, expressing intense emotions of fear and urgency.

The first song aims to convey the speaker's extreme emotions — seemingly at the limits of enduring fear associated with an old memory. Chromatic and repetitive patterns overtake the speaker's mind, and relentless motion plunges us into this intense experience from which there is no escape. The vocal line frequently alternates between very low and high tessituras, mirroring the dichotomous pairs in the text: right and wrong, profit and loss, crime and.... The leaps into falsetto

also contribute to the sense of extreme anxiety. My interpretation is of a haunting experience during military service, where the speaker cannot escape the mocking characters around him, making him feel alone, small, and weak. As in the poem, a military march is expressed musically, conveying a sense of marching toward loss and inescapability. The phrase "shouting in rhythm" takes on particular significance, leading back to the moralistic dichotomy tormenting the speaker.

In the second poem, the speaker is not alone, but he and his partner are running away, hiding, breathing heavily. They vow to return home, to their "palace" — yet, similarly to the first poem, the encompassing darkness seems overwhelming, and it may be too late to go back. The main musical motif consists of rapid arpeggiations punctuated by intense pauses. There is a constant tonal ambiguity, simultaneously implying a home key and its contradiction. The intensity and motion of the piano part correspond to the poem's overall urgency to flee, while more static harmonic sections symbolize the pull to return home. The expressive vocal line juxtaposes small gestures with large leaps. Elements of fugue — from the Latin "flight" and the psychiatric term for impulsively traveling away from home — are incorporated, reflecting the loss of identity driving the journey away from familiarity.

— Avner Dorman

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Accessed on December 6, 2025