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Avner Dorman Interview

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Avner Dorman is one Israel's most successful and renowned composers. He is published by Schirmer and has a CD of piano music out on Naxos.



Avner Dorman

Tell us something about your background.

I was born into a musical family (my father is a Bassoon player and a conductor), but as a child, I didn't take music studies too seriously – I preferred playing football! (or as they call it in the US – soccer) I started playing the cello at age eight. A year later, my family moved to London for a year, and I used that as an excuse to quit the cello. At age twelve, I really wanted to play the drums, but was convinced to take on piano for a year or two first, just to learn the basics of music.

I guess you could say I was more prodigious as a child in math and chess, but as I grew older I knew my love for music was much stronger. I also studied Physics in addition to composition at the Undergraduate level, as part of a special program at the Tel-Aviv University.

How did you start composing?

I think I was a composer even before I learned music. A few years ago I found these old tapes that I made with my brother when I was eight or nine years old.



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There's this one piece I 'wrote' and recorded which is in 5/4, and alternates between Dorian and Pentatonic modes (and is sometimes polymodal). In the background I recorded noises of walkie-talkies, screams, and radio short-wavesso I guess that was always in me J

Which composers have influenced you most?

That's a tough one! First of all, I would say my two teachers – John Corigliano and Josef Bardanashvili. Other than that, it's very hard to decide – can I say whether Bach influenced me more than Mozart, Ligeti more than Josquin De Prez, or Bartók more than Ravel? I do think that like many composers of my generation my music is influenced by Pop and Rock of the 70s and 80s. Also, since I studied music from central Asia, some Arabic music and some Carnatic music, the principles of these musical cultures, as well as some of their characteristic elements, have found their way into my music as well.

Which non-musical influences have affected your music most?

I like poetry, philosophy (especially of language), and I still study quite a bit of math. I think these other intellectual activities stimulate my brain and influence my work, but not in a direct way, at least not one that I see. Perhaps the one direct connection has to do with the structure of the Hebrew language. Almost every word in Hebrew is constructed from a root and every Hebrew speaker can invent words by combining roots with lingual structures. I love analyzing the Hebrew language, and I think my attitude towards developing motives is probably influenced by it.

On a more emotional level, I have responded to World events in my music. For example, I wrote the second movement of my second string quartet Prayer for the Innocents in memory of the victims of the massacre in Beslan in 2004.