

for Septura, on their 10th anniversary

Seven Heavens

1. Paradise of Adan

Roxanna Panufnik

Repentant harmonies after being punished for sins...

$\text{♩} = 60$

con sord. - felt hats

Musical score for the first system of 'Paradise of Adan'. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of seven staves: Trumpet in Eb, Trumpet 1 in Bb, Trumpet 2 in Bb, Tenor Trombone 1, Tenor Trombone 2, Bass Trombone, and Tuba. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The first staff (Trumpet in Eb) starts with a *mf* dynamic and a melodic line. The other staves (Trumpet 1 & 2, Tenor Trombone 1 & 2, Bass Trombone) play sustained notes with *mp* dynamics. The Tuba staff starts with a *mf* dynamic and a sixteenth-note pattern, marked with a '6' for a sextuplet. The system ends with a *mp* dynamic.

... leading to mercy from God/Allah and a beautiful garden where every wish is granted and a river flows below.

Musical score for the second system of 'Paradise of Adan'. The score is in 5/4 time and consists of seven staves: Eb Tpt, Tpt 1, Tpt 2, Tbn. 1, Tbn. 2, B. Tbn., and Tba. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The first staff (Eb Tpt) starts with a *pp* dynamic and a melodic line. The other staves (Tpt 1, Tpt 2, Tbn. 1, Tbn. 2, B. Tbn.) play sixteenth-note patterns, marked with a '6' for a sextuplet and *pp* dynamics. The Tba staff starts with a *pp* dynamic and a melodic line. The system ends with a *mp* dynamic and the instruction 'senza sord. (solo)'.

When brass septet, Septura, approached me about a tenth anniversary commission and mentioned the word ‘spiritual’, the Muslim concept of seven levels, or ‘Jannah’, of paradisiacal afterlife came to mind. Each heaven has its own unique mood and atmosphere, with metaphorical imagery, and is portrayed in a short movement, where one of the players will be featured as a soloist, with the other six accompanying them. Throughout the piece I have used Arab maqāms (or scales) to place the work’s sound world at the source of Islam.

1. **Paradise of Adan** (‘residence’ and ‘eternal place’)

Repentant and discordant harmonies after punishment for sins introduce this movement. The tuba takes the solo role, accompanied by a river of rushing and swirling maqam, flowing below beautiful gardens where every wish is granted. The music mellows as acceptance from God is granted.

2. **Paradise of Firdaus** (‘Garden’)

This is the most prestigious and superior level with every kind of plant: fruit, trees and especially grapevines – so the noble bass trombone solo is accompanied by entwining gentle maqāms and little fanfares.

3. **Paradise of Naeem** (‘blissful paradise’ or ‘delight’)

Warm, comforting and tranquil harmonies accompany the second trombone as this heaven rewards its inhabitants with a prosperous and peaceful life, abundant in happiness and numerous blessings. The river of the first movement reappears, more serenely, towards the end.

4. **Paradise of Mawa** (‘a place to take refuge; dwelling, home, to descend home’)

The first trombone starts its solo on its own, depicting the Lote tree which abides here. The music for the tree is rising up, growing and healing. The other players accompany by rattling pencils in their instruments’ bells and blowing gently through their instruments to make a sound like the tree’s leaves rustling in the wind. Angels accompany the soul ‘descending home’.

5. **House of Qurūb** (‘near/close in proximity to God’)

The music becomes intimate and reverential. The second trumpet’s ardent solo is accompanied by hymn-like harmonies, the instruments closer in pitch to each other.

6. **Paradise of Al-Aliyah** (‘high, elevated, superior, in location and rank’).

The highest place in Paradise naturally features the piccolo trumpet as soloist, accompanied by ascending maqām scales and rising harmonies as we are under the throne of God and his incomprehensible greatness.

7. **House of Al-Salam** (‘home of peace and safety’)

We come ‘home’ to where the piece started, safe from visible and invisible harms, no grief or sorrow, death or illness threatens the abode of well-being. Initially, the first trumpet plays their solo against a backdrop of the first movement’s tuba theme, harmonized in all the other parts. Then the river returns and every instrument reminds us of a few bars of their theme. We end in jubilant splendour as God, with the light of guidance, illuminates our hearts.

I am hugely grateful to Septura for commissioning me and particularly to eminent Islamic scholar Imam Dr Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi and his students for their fantastic and informative research notes.

Roxanna Panufnik, 16 May 2024

Sources:

www.zamzam.com/blog/seven-levels-of-heaven/ by Dr Omar Ayoub, Bayt Al Fann

www.baytalfann.com/post/the-seven-skies/ by students of Sayyed Ali Abbas Razawi

Duration: c. 12 minutes

*Commissioned by Septura to celebrate their tenth anniversary,
with support from the Vaughan Williams Foundation*

First performed on 16 November 2024 at the Wigmore Hall, London, by Septura