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La'ib an-nard (The Dice Player)

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# لاعب النرد

## La'ib an-nard

The Dice Player

For Viola, Cello, and Bass

(2019)

Sami SEIF

سامي سيف

Duration: 12 minutes

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## Program notes:

This piece is loosely based on Mahmoud Darwish's poem which is titled "La'ib an-nard" (The Dice Player). Mahmoud Darwish was born in 1941 in the small village of Al Birwa. At the age of seven, he fled his native Palestine to Lebanon. His village was destroyed soon afterwards. The destruction of his village is mentioned several times in this poem. This poem was written in 2008, the same year of his death. It was his final artistic statement.

The dice player is a metaphor that Darwish uses in order to depict the random elements of life, those outside the locus of one's control: family, hereditary diseases, natural talents, place of birth, biological sex at birth and other circumstances. The text is essentially a reflection on the role of chance and luck in life.

The poem is long – a 23 minute recitation – and difficult to summarize. However, it is a deeply personal, contemplative and expressive narrative, peppered with wise proverbs. Perhaps that is why it continues to be so convincing. Darwish discusses several near-death experiences, his thoughts on femininity and on religion, referencing both Christianity and Islam.

My piece is not intended to be a setting of the words. Rather, it is a commentary. The form of the music is entirely independent from that of the poem. Musically, the first three sections of the piece each cover one distinct element. Though unrelated, all the elements ultimately coalesce and fully integrate into one another.

*La'ib an-nard* was selected as a finalist for the 2019 Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra Call for scores from a pool of more than 2200 entries from more than 90 countries as well as the second prize in Webster University's Young Composers Competition.

## Performance notes:

Whenever the music is unmetered, the performers are given rhythmic flexibility in their realization of the piece. Performers should not count whilst realizing this piece. Rather, they should approximate the rhythm, even stretch it out or condense it for expressive purposes. The most important thing is that the piece moves its audience. Rubato may thus be used freely.

In the first section, the players' barlines do not always align. Therefore, performers are meant to cue and interact with each other. Small tempo indications accompany some of the gestures on the score. These indicate the approximate tempo at which the figure is supposed to be played. That tempo is independent of the general tempo, which is the one always used to determine how long to wait in between figures. Therefore, we have a "main" tempo, and a secondary one in effect at once.

Indications of time in seconds are approximate.

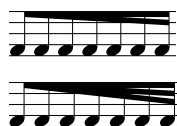
*ahap* as high as possible

♭ quarter-flat: indicates that the note is to be lowered by slightly more than a quarter-tone. For example, when this symbol precedes the note E, the desired pitch should be ever so slightly flatter than an exact quarter tone. The heard pitch would thus be closer to E $\flat$  than E $\natural$

(6) indicates that a musical event or rest is supposed to last the approximate duration

⌈5⌋ indicates that what is within the bracket should last 5 seconds

X senza misura, cancels time signature



gradual increase in speed. The absolute note values do not necessarily need to be strictly observed.



gradual decrease in speed. The absolute note values do not necessarily need to be strictly observed.

○  crescendo from niente

 decrescendo to niente

Horizontal arrows indicate a gradual shift from one playing technique to another.

Hairpins with no indication of dynamics are meant to be very light, “expressive” crescendos or decrescendos.

The singing that is required to be carried out is meant to color the sound, and only be on the verge of audibility to the audience. It may be done in any comfortable octave.

Whenever a drone is held, the player must gradually change the color of the sound by moving the bow (ever so slightly) up and down the string(s).

Music which is contained within a box is meant to be played throughout the indicated duration.

Measure 101 includes an effect which emulates an impulse complexe. An impulse complexe is a granular, electronic music effect pioneered by Karlheinz Stockhausen. It can be heard in the opening of his piece: *Gesang Der Jünglinge*.

# لاعب النرد The Dice Player

Inspired by Mahmoud Darwish's poem

Sami Seif  
سامي سيف

With humility (♩=63)

arco  
con sord.  
molto vib.

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

pizz. *f* *p*

con sord. *ppp* *pp*

*fp*

(♩=69)

pizz. *f*

arco  
con sord. *p* delicately, *legatissimo*

*fp*

7

arco (♩)

Vla. *p*

(♩=56)

pizz. *f*

arco *pp*

(♩=66)

Vc. *f* *pp*

(♩=48)

quasi *f*

quasi *f*

Db. *sub. pp*

II, bow note, then gliss. up from the nut

quasi *f* *sfz*

12

pizz. *f*

arco

Vla. *f*

*mf*

Rit.

5" (V)

*ff*

arco *p*

on the beat *pp*

Vc. *p* *pp*

5" (V)

*ff*

II

5" (V)

*ff*

17

Vla. **X**

Vc. **X** *pp* *legatissimo, quasi cadenza* *tr*

Db. *pizz.* *f*

18

Vla. *mp* *pp*

Vc. *pizz.*

Db. *pizz.* *4"* *sfz* *arco* *4"* *sfz* *arco*

22

Vla. *f sub.* *molto*

Vc. *pp* *molto*

Db. *pizz.* *f*

$\text{♩} = 63$

Accel

24 tutti cresc, legatissimo, slur ad lib.

Vla. *pizz.* *p* arco *mf* *f* *mf* **Rall.**

Vc. *pizz.* *p* arco *mp* *mp*

Db. *p* *p*

A tempo

25

Vla. *sim. pizz.* *f* arco *mf* *f* *mf*

Vc. *pizz.* *f* arco *mp* *mp*

Db. *p* *p*

Slow and Soulful (♩. = 48/♩ = 72)

Rit.

26

Vla. *senza sord.* *pp* molto espressivo *poco*

Vc. *pizz.* *sfz* arco *senza sord.* *pp* molto espressivo *poco*

Db. *pizz.* *sfz*

31

Vla. **A tempo** **Rit.** **A tempo** *sub.* *p* *mf* *p* *sub.* *pp* *pp* *p*

Vc. *sub.* *p* *mf* *p* *sub.* *pp* *p*

Db. arco *senza sord.* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *p*

sul tasto quick port.

Hopeless,  
tempo primo (♩=65)  
senza vib.

37

Vla. *slow and wide*  
*ppp* *mp* *ppp*  
senza vib.

Vc. *pp sub.* *ppp* sul pont. → ord. *ppp*  
senza vib.

Db. *ppp* *ppp* *pp* *ppp*

42

Vla. (ord.) *fppp* sul pont. → ord. *pp* 6

Vc. (ord.)

Db. (ord.)

Fading out... Suddenly very aggressive (♩=130)

49

Vla. *sub. ff* *f* *ff* *fp*  
pizz. arco martelé

Vc. *sub. ff* *ff* *mp*  
pizz. arco arco

Db. *sfz* *mp* *fp*  
gliss on the nut martelé

54

Vla. *ff* *poco* *fpp* *fff*

Vc. *sfz* *ff* *poco* *fpp* *fff*  
pizz. arco

Db. *sfz* *ff* *poco* *fpp* *fff*  
pizz. arco



**Bellicose and defiant**

57 **Perpetuum Mobile** (♩=90)

Musical score for measures 57-58. The score is for Violin (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (Db.).

- Vla.:** Starts with a forte (*ff*) dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Includes fingerings (5) and articulation marks (>). Later measures include *pizz.* and *arco* markings.
- Vc.:** Starts with a forte (*ff*) dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Includes fingerings (5) and articulation marks (>). Later measures include *pizz.* and *arco* markings.
- Db.:** Starts with a sforzando (*sfz*) dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Includes fingerings (5) and articulation marks (>). Later measures include *pizz.* and *arco* markings. A note marked with an 'x' is labeled "x = finger notes".

59 **Slightly faster** (♩=96)

Musical score for measures 59-61. The score is for Violin (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (Db.).

- Vla.:** Starts with a *pizz.* dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Includes fingerings (5) and articulation marks (>). Later measures include *arco* markings.
- Vc.:** Starts with an *arco* dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Includes fingerings (5) and articulation marks (>). Later measures include *pizz.* and *arco* markings. A *sfz* dynamic is present in measure 60.
- Db.:** Starts with a *pizz.* dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Includes fingerings (5) and articulation marks (>). Later measures include *arco* markings. A *f* dynamic is present in measure 60. A *molto* marking is present in measures 60-61.

62 **accel.** (♩=104)

Musical score for measures 62-63. The score is for Violin (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (Db.).

- Vla.:** Starts with a *p* dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Includes a *quasi cadenza* marking. Later measures include a *mf* dynamic.
- Vc.:** Starts with a *mf* dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Later measures include a *pizz.* dynamic.
- Db.:** Starts with a *mf* dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Later measures include a *pizz.* dynamic.

64 **With focus** (♩=92)

Musical score for measures 64-66. The score is for Violin (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (Db.).

- Vla.:** Starts with a *mf sub.* dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Includes fingerings (5) and articulation marks (>). Later measures include *f* and *mf* dynamics.
- Vc.:** Starts with an *arco* dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Includes fingerings (5) and articulation marks (>). Later measures include *f* and *mf* dynamics.
- Db.:** Starts with a *sfz* dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Includes fingerings (5) and articulation marks (>). Later measures include *mf* and *sfz* dynamics.

67

Vla. *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

Vc. *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *pp* "noisy" and ethereal

Db. arco pizz. *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *mf*

70

Vla. *fpp* *f* *mp sub.*

Vc. *fpp* *ppp* *pp*

Db. *fpp* *mp*

Relaxed (♩=69)

tr. *ord.* *molto sul pont.*

**Sea of Seagulls: quick, staggered seagulls**  
Do not synchronize.

75

Vla. *p* *ppp* *pp* *like a sunrise*

Vc. *p* *ppp* *pp* *ppp*

Db. pizz. *p* *f* *ppp* *pp* *pp*

10" I seagull gliss. molto pont.

80 *molto rall.* (♩=56)

Vla. *mp* *pp*

Vc. *mp* *sub. pp* *pp* *p* *pp*

Db. *f* *sub. pp* *pp*

*pizz.* *arco*

88

Vla. *ppp* *pp* *cantabile* *ppp* *sub.* *mf*

Vc. *ppp* *pp* *pizz.* *arco* *ppp* *mf*

Db. *ppp* *pp* *arco* *ppp* *mf*

*pizz.* *arco*

10" Like a storm  
do not synchronize

95

Vla. *sub. ff*

Vc. *sub. ff*

Db. *sub. ff*

**Rit.**

99

Vla. *sub. mp* *mf*

Vc. *sub. mp* *mf*

Db. *pp ethereal*

12"

I, II, molto sul pont, very high continuous, random tapping/ whispering, imitating an impulse complexe

*ppp ahap*

I, II molto sul pont.

*ppp ahap*

arco  
I molto sul pont

pizz. *ppp ahap*

**Heartwarming (♩=63): gradual morendo until the end**

102 *ppp*

Voice Mmm

Vla. *glittery*

Vc. *f* *pp* *mf* *pp*

Db. *ord.* *pp ethereal*

109

Voice — Oh

Vla. I, II, (wide) molto pont *fpp* *fpp* *pp*

Vc. *f* *f* *fppp*

Db. *f* *pp*

115

Voice

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

arco, molto pont.

pizz.

on the beat

arco

pizz.

*pp*

*f*

*f*

*pp*

119 (unpitched)

Morendo: 10"

Voice

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

shhh

pizz. arco ord.

molto pont.

pizz. arco

pizz. arco

*f*

*pp*

*pp*

*f*

*pp*

*ppp*

*ahap*

*ppp*

*ahap*

I, II molto sul pont.