

Dance of Masada (1951)

The Canadian Jewish Congress had much to celebrate with the then-newly established state of Israel. The Congress commissioned two works by Weinzweig that depict this joy: *Dance of Masada* (1951) and *Am Yisrael Chai! = Israel Lives!* (1952). *Dance of Masada*, for solo baritone and piano, uses a Hebrew poem by Zionist poet Isaac Lamden (1899-1954) and depicts the religious fervour during a nightly communal bonfire at the ancient fortress of Masada.

The pervasive tonal centre, triadic melodies, and modal cadences of the refrain are surprising given Weinzweig's typically dissonant sound, often guided by serial technique. He alternates this "dance" refrain with contrasting sections of different tonal centres and a dialogic texture between piano and voice. Aggressive and sharp articulations build intensity to the final dramatic line: "God with us in the circle will sing: 'Israel!'"

Written by Alexa Woloshyn