

Arnold Schoenberg

String Quartet No. 2 in F sharp minor, Op. 10, Movements 3 and 4

Text from Stefan George's collection *Der siebente Ring* (The Seventh Ring)

Litany

Deep is the sadness that gloomily comes over me,
Again I step, Lord, in your house.

Long was the journey, my limbs are weary,
The shrines are empty, only anguish is full.

My thirsty tongue desires wine.
The battle was hard, my arm is stiff.

Grudge peace to my staggering steps,
for my hungry gums break your bread!

Weak is my breath, calling the dream,
my hands are hollow, my mouth fevers.

Lend your coolness, douse the fires,
rub out hope, send the light!

Fires in my heart still glow, open,
inside my heart a cry wakes.

Kill the longing, close the wound!
Take my love away, give me your joy!

Rapture

I feel air from another planet.
I faintly through the darkness see faces

Friendly even now, turning toward me.
And trees and paths that I loved fade

So I can scarcely know them and you bright
Beloved shadow—summoner of my anguish--

Are only extinguished completely in a deep glowing
In the frenzy of the fight

With a pious show of reason.
I lose myself in tones, circling, weaving,

With unfathomable thanks and unnamed praise,
Bereft of desire, I surrender myself to the great breath.

A violent wind passes over me
In the thrill of consecration where ardent cries

In dust flung by women on the ground:
Then I see a filmy mist rising

In a sun-filled, open expanse
That includes only the farthest mountain hatches.

The land looks white and smooth like whey,
I climb over enormous canyons.

I feel as if above the last cloud
Swimming in a sea of crystal radiance--

I am only a spark of the holy fire
I am only a whisper of the holy voice.