

Program notes:

Ramal for orchestra (2014)

Kareem Roustom (b. 1971)

*Poetry and music originate from the same root:
the balance between movement and stillness.*

Al-Farabi

Ramal is the name of one of sixteen pre-Islamic Arabic poetic meters used in classical Arabic poetry. Each of these poetic meters is comprised of multiple variations of the verb فعل (*fa'al*), which means 'to do'. These variants of *fa'al* are constructed by combining a series of unaccented [o] and accented [/] syllables. The variation of the *ramal* poetic meter used in this work follows this pattern:

فاعلاتن فاعلن فاعلاتن فاعلاتن

as symbol (read left to right):

/o//o/o - /o//o - /o//o/o - /o//o/oo

as musical meter:

7/8 5/8 7/8 8/8

This poetic meter is used as a structural framework throughout the work. The opening section expands the metric cycle by gradually adding rests to each measure, while the closing section contracts by gradually removing the added rests. The middle, and largest, section of the piece develops the rhythmic and melodic motifs with contrasting moods that range from intimate and reflective to declamatory and strident. Although the work is not programmatic in its design, its emotional drive and changing meters reflect the unsettled state of the world, specifically the devastating current situation in Syria. Despite all this, there is a tone of defiance in *Ramal*. Dedicated to the memory of Edward Said, *Ramal* is inspired by his steadfast determination to speak truth to power.