***Variations for Piano and Orchestra, Syrian Symphony: Phoenix in Exile*, Malek Jandali**
***Witness #2*, Suhair Sibai (Contemporary, mixed media on canvas)**

Both the artist of this painting and the composer of this piece of music are contemporary (living). They are both Syrians who have left their home country and pursued their artistic careers in the United States--they left the desert for the promised land. So many people make this journey to “the promised land”. What does this mean? It seems that the human experience is a journey from some sort of desert to a promised land--Muslim, Jew, Christian, athiest, we all share this experience...

Listen to the piece of music and mindfully observe the painting. What is this look in her eyes? What can the piece of music tell us about the journey of the artist? Reflect upon the journey of the artists… Leaving the homeland (the desert) for a new place--full of wonder and surprises--yet we can see and hear the traces of their homeland in their work...

Ask yourself:

1) What is the meaning of “the promised land” in my own life and spiritual experience?
2) What does it mean to be in the “desert”?
3) In what ways have I had this experience?
4) What does it mean to “thirst”? To yearn?
5) What am I *thirsting* for?

Psalm 42:1-8

As a deer yearns for running streams, so I yearn for you, my God.

I thirst for God, the living God; when shall I go to see the face of God?

I have no food but tears day and night, as all day long I am taunted, 'Where is your God?'

This I remember as I pour out my heart, how I used to pass under the roof of the Most High used to go to the house of God, among cries of joy and praise, the sound of the feast.

Why be so downcast, why all these sighs? Hope in God! I will praise him still, my Saviour,my God.

When I am downcast I think of you: from the land of Jordan and Hermon, I think of you, humble mountain.

Deep is calling to deep by the roar of your cataracts, all your waves and breakers have rolled over me.

In the daytime God sends his faithful love, and even at night; the song it inspires in me is a prayer to my living God.