

# I asked the wind

*I taught the children of the world  
How to spell your name;  
But their lips suddenly changed  
Into mulberry trees.*

*I asked the wind  
To comb the locks  
Of your anthracite hair;  
But the wind refused:  
For, time was too short,  
And your hair was too long.*

A setting of the last seven lines of the first letter  
in the collection *One hundred love letters* by Nizar Qabbani,  
in Arabic and English, translated by the composer,  
for twelve-part mixed chorus (SSSAAATTTBBB) *a cappella*

## Eric Banks

Commissioned by Anthony Trecek-King, and composed  
in August 2012 for the Boston Children's Chorus,  
revoiced and revised in May 2014 for The Esoterics.

# About this work

Nizar Qabbani was born in 1923 in Syria to a traditional, well-to-do family. Qabbani's poetry has been described "more powerful than all the Arab regimes put together" (*Lebanese Daily Star*), and "like water, bread, and sun in every Arab heart and house" (*Tishreen*). Qabbani's verses are simple and direct, describing everyday life. He was a constant campaigner for women's rights, and a great many of his poems praise the beauty of the feminine form. He was an Arab nationalist, but often criticized Arab dictators for the lack of freedom that they caused throughout the Arab world. He worked as a diplomat in Syria for more than two decades, but settled in London in the mid-1960's for political reasons. Qabbani died in London in 1998, and is buried in Damascus.

Here are the ten lines of *I asked the wind* in their original Arabic, and in IPA (the International Phonetic Alphabet):

ʕællæmut ʔɔʔfæɫæɫ-ʕæɫɪm  
kæɪfæ tuhæʒʒunæ-smæki;  
fætæɦɫællæt ʃɪfæɦuɦum  
ʕɪlæ ʕæʒæɾɪ tut.

ʔwsoʔtur-riɦæ  
ʕæn tumæʃʃɪʔɔ xusʊɫɔɾɪ  
ʒɔɾækiɪ-fæɦɪm;  
fɔɾtæðæɾæt biʕænnæ:  
wɔqtæɦæ qɔʒɪɾ  
wæ ʒɔɾæki ʔwɪl.

Here is a pronunciation key of the IPA for Arabic vowels:

æ	between bat and bet
ɔ	as in bought
ʌ	as in but
i	as in beet
ɪ	as in bit
ʊ	as in book
u	as in boot

And a key of the IPA for Arabic consonants:

bdfkhlmnstz	are pronounced as in English
ɟʒʔ	are retroflex versions of their English equivalent, and are pronounced with the back of the tongue raised to the palate
ʕ	a velar approximative, pronounced as the [ŋ] as in <i>song</i> without touching the tongue to the palate
ð	a voiced fricative, as in <i>thus</i>
θ	an unvoiced fricative, as in <i>thin</i>
ɦ	a 'glasses-fogging' version of h, high in the mouth
q	a guttural k, produced in the back of the throat
ɾ	a lightly flipped r, as in Italian
ʁ	a guttural r, as in French
ʃ	an unvoiced fricative, as in <i>shin</i>
ʒ	a voiced fricative, as in <i>pleasure</i>
x	as in the German <i>ich</i>
ʔ	the glottal stop, as in 'us
j	as in <i>yet</i>
w	as in <i>wet</i>

عَلَّمَتْ أَطْفَالَ الْعِلْمِ  
كَيْفَ تَهْجُونَ اسْمَكِ؛  
فَتَحَوَّلَتْ شِفَاهَهُمْ  
إِلَى أَشْجَارِ تَوْتِ.  
أَوْصَيْتَ الرِّيحَ  
أَنْ تَمْشِطَ خِصَلَاتِ  
شَعْرِكَ الْفَاحِمِ؛  
فَاعْتَذَرْتَ بِأَنْ:  
وَقَّتْهَا قَصِيرِ  
وَ شَعْرِكَ طَوِيلِ.

The pitches of this piece (G Ab B C D Eb F# G) comprise a transposition of the maqam Suzidil. The translation of Nizar Qabbani's poem is my own, and has been tailored especially for this work.



# I asked the wind

Eric Banks

Blusteringly ♩ = 198 (♩ = 99; ♩ = 66)  
(beat 3+2+2+3 throughout)

The musical score is arranged in a grand staff format with ten staves. Staves S1, S2, and S3 are for Soprano 1, 2, and 3. Staves A1, A2, and A3 are for Alto 1, 2, and 3. Staves T1, T2, and T3 are for Tenor 1, 2, and 3. Staves B1, B2, and B3 are for Bass 1, 2, and 3. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 10/8. The score includes vocal lines with lyrics and piano accompaniment. A large, semi-transparent watermark 'SAMPLE DO NOT PRINT' is overlaid across the center of the page. The lyrics 'I taught...' are repeated in the vocal parts. The bass parts include the lyrics 'fæel - læ - mut...' and 'ot -'.

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SAMPLE

4

5

6

S1

S2

S3

A1

A2

A3

T1

T2

T3

B1

B2

B3

The musical score is for a SATB choir. It features vocal lines for Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Soprano 3 (S3), Alto 1 (A1), Alto 2 (A2), Alto 3 (A3), Tenor 1 (T1), Tenor 2 (T2), Tenor 3 (T3), Bass 1 (B1), Bass 2 (B2), and Bass 3 (B3). The vocal parts have lyrics and phonetic transcriptions. The piano accompaniment is in the bass clef. The score is marked with a large 'SAMPLE' watermark and a 'DO NOT PRINT' watermark.

Lyrics and phonetic transcriptions for vocal parts:

- S1, S2, S3, A1, A2, A3, T1, T2, T3: I taught the child - ren...
- B1: fæ - læl - ʃæ - lɪm... 'ɒt - fæ - læl - ʃæ - lɪm... 'ɒt - fæ - læl - ʃæ - lɪm...
- B2: kæj - fæ... kæj - fæ...
- B3: ʃæl - læ - mut... ʃæl - læ - mut...

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SAMPLE

7

8

9

S1

S2

S3

*mp*

fi -

A1

*mp*

fæ - tæ - ɪl - wæl - læt... fæ - tæ - ɪl - wæl - læt...

A2

I taught the child - ren of the world

A3

I taught the child - ren of the world

T1

I taught the child - ren of the world

T2

I taught the child - ren of the world

T3

hæɜ - ʒu - næ - smæ - ki, tu - hæɜ - ʒu - næ - smæ - ki, tu - hæɜ - ʒu - næ -

B1

'ɒt - fæ - læl - ʃæ - lɪm... 'ɒt - fæ - læl - ʃæ - lɪm...

B2

kæɪ - fæ...

B3

ʃæl - læ - mut... ʃæl - læ - mut... ʃæl - læ - mut...

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SAMPLE

10 11 12 *mp*

S1

S2

*mp*

'I - læ...

'I - læ...

S3

fæ - hu - hum...

ʃI - fæ - hu-hum...

ʃI - fæ - hu-hum...

A1

fæ - tæ - HA - wæl-læt...

fæ - tæ - HA - wæl-læt...

fæ - tæ -

A2

*mp*

how to spell your name;

A3

*mp*

how to spell your name;

T1

*mp*

how to spell your name;

T2

*mp*

how to spell your name;

T3

smæ - ki, tu - hæʒ - ʒu - næ - smæ - ki, tu - hæʒ - ʒu - næ - smæ - ki,

B1

'ot - fæ - læl - ʃæ - lɪm...

'ot - fæ - læl - ʃæ - lɪm...

'ot - fæ - læl -

B2

kæɪ - fæ...

kæɪ - fæ...

kæɪ - fæ...

B3

ʃæl - læ - mut...

ʃæl - læ - mut...

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SAMPLE

13

14

15

*mf*

S1  
 3æ - rɪ tut... 'æf-3æ - rɪ tut... 'æf-3æ - rɪ tut...

S2  
 ɪ - læ... 'ɪ - læ...

S3  
 ʃɪ - fæ - hu - hum... ʃɪ - fæ - hu - hum...

A1  
 ɦɑ - wæɪ - læt... fæ - tæ - ɦɑ - wæɪ - læt... fæ - tæ - ɦɑ - wæɪ - læt...

A2  
 but their lips...

A3  
 but their lips...

T1  
 but their lips...

T2  
 but their lips...

T3  
 tu - hæʒ - ʒu - næ - smæ - ki, tu - hæʒ - ʒu - næ - smæ - ki, tu - hæʒ - ʒu - næ -

B1  
 ʃæ - lɪm... 'ɒt - fæ - læl - ʃæ - lɪm... 'ɒt - fæ - læl - ʃæ - lɪm...

B2  
 kæj - fæ...

B3  
 ʃæl - læ - mut... ʃæl - læ - mut... ʃæl - læ -

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SAMPLE

16

17

18

S1 æf-3æ - ri tut... 'æf - 3æ - ri tut...

S2 *mf* 'I - læ... 'I - læ... 'I - læ...

S3 *mf* ʃI - fæ - hu-hum... ʃI - fæ - hu-hum... ʃI - fæ - hu-hum...

A1 *mf* fæ - tæ - HA - wæl - læt... fæ - tæ - HA - wæl - læt...

A2 *mf* their \_\_\_\_\_ lips \_\_\_\_\_ sud - den - ly changed...

A3 *mf* their \_\_\_\_\_ lips \_\_\_\_\_ sud - den - ly changed...

T1 *mf* their \_\_\_\_\_ lips \_\_\_\_\_ sud - den - ly changed...

T2 *mf* their \_\_\_\_\_ lips \_\_\_\_\_ sud - den - ly changed...

T3 *mf* smæ - ki, tu - hæ3 - zu - næ - smæ - ki, tu - hæ3 - zu - næ - smæ - ki,

B1 'ot - fæ - læl - fæ - lim... 'ot - fæ - læl - fæ - lim... 'ot -

B2 *mf* kæi - fæ... kæi - fæ... kæi - fæ...

B3 *mf* mut... ʃæl - læ - mut... ʃæl - læ - mut...

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DO NOT PRINT

19 20 21

S1 *f* 'æf - ʒæ - ri tut... 'æf - ʒæ - ri tut... 'æf - ʒæ - ri

S2 *f* 'i - læ... 'i - læ...

S3 *f* ʃi - fæ - hu - hum... ʃi - fæ - hu - hum...

A1 *f* fæ - tæ - hɪ - wæl - læt... fæ - tæ - hɪ - wæl - læt... fæ - tæ - hɪ - wæl - læt...

A2 changed in - to mul - ber - ry trees,

A3 changed in - to mul - ber - ry trees,

T1 changed in - to mul - ber - ry trees,

T2 changed in - to mul - ber - ry trees,

T3 *f* tu - hæʒ - ʒu - næ - smæ - ki, tu - hæʒ - ʒu - næ - smæ - ki, tu -

B1 fæ - læl - ʃæ - lɪm... 'ɒt - fæ - læl - ʃæ - lɪm... 'ɒt - fæ - læl - ʃæ - lɪm...

B2 kæi - fæ... kæi - fæ...

B3 ʃæl - læ - mut... ʃæl - læ - mut...

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34 35 36 37 38 39

*pp come un pettine*  
 S1 I asked the wind to comb the locks

*pp come un pettine*  
 S2 I asked the wind to comb the locks

*pp come un pettine*  
 S3 I asked the wind to comb the locks

*pp come un pettine*  
 A1 I asked the wind to comb the locks

*mp come capelli lunghi*  
 A2 \_\_\_\_\_ 'o<sup>w</sup> - so<sup>j</sup> - tur - ri - Hæ...

*mp come capelli lunghi*  
 A3 \_\_\_\_\_ 'o<sup>w</sup> - so<sup>j</sup> - tur - ri - Hæ...

*mp come capelli lunghi*  
 T1 \_\_\_\_\_ 'o<sup>w</sup> - so<sup>j</sup> - tur - ri - Hæ...

*mp come capelli lunghi*  
 T2 \_\_\_\_\_ 'o<sup>w</sup> - so<sup>j</sup> - tur - ri - Hæ...

*mp come capelli lunghi*  
 T3 \_\_\_\_\_ 'o<sup>w</sup> - so<sup>j</sup> - tur - ri - Hæ... 'æ<sup>n</sup> tu-

*pp come un pettine*  
 B1 I asked the wind to comb the locks

*pp come un pettine*  
 B2 I asked the wind to comb the locks

*pp come un pettine*  
 B3 I asked the wind to comb the locks

NB: From m35 to the end of the piece, please combine the alto and tenor voices to sing each of parts: A2-A3-T1-T2-T3. The resultant timbre will be otherworldly, and the extreme range (C3 to Ab4) will be gently singable in each part.

SAMPLE

40

41

42

43

44

S1 of your an-thra-cite hair;

S2 of your an-thra-cite hair;

S3 of your an-thra-cite hair;

A1 of your an-thra-cite hair;

A2 'æŋ tu - mæʃ - ɪ - ʃə xu - ʃu - lə - ti... xu - ʃu -

A3 'æŋ tu - mæʃ - ɪ - ʃə xu - ʃu - lə - ti... xu - ʃu - lə - ti

T1 'æŋ tu - mæʃ - ɪ - ʃə xu - ʃu - lə - ti... xu - ʃu - lə - ti ʃəʃ -

T2 'æŋ tu - mæʃ - ɪ - ʃə xu - ʃu - lə - ti... xu - ʃu - lə - ti ʃəʃ - ræ - ki -

T3 mæʃ - ɪ - ʃə xu - ʃu - lə - ti... xu - ʃu - lə - ti ʃəʃ - ræ - ki - fæ - hi - m;

B1 of your an-thra-cite hair;

B2 of your an-thra-cite hair;

B3 of your an-thra-cite hair;

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SAMPLE

45

46

47

48

49

S1  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 but the wind re-fused:

S2  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 but the wind re-fused:

S3  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 but the wind re-fused:

A1  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 but the wind re-fused:

A2  
 lo - ti fɔf - ræ - kil-fæ-nɪm; \_\_\_\_\_ fɔf - tæ - ðæ-ræt bi-'æŋ-næ: \_\_\_\_\_

A3  
 fɔf - ræ - kil-fæ-nɪm; \_\_\_\_\_ fɔf - tæ - ðæ - ræt bi-'æŋ-næ: \_\_\_\_\_

T1  
 8 ræ - kil-fæ-nɪm; \_\_\_\_\_ fɔf - tæ - ðæ-ræt bi - 'æŋ-næ: \_\_\_\_\_

T2  
 8 fæ-nɪm; \_\_\_\_\_ fɔf - tæ-ðæ-ræt bi-'æŋ-næ: \_\_\_\_\_

T3  
 8 \_\_\_\_\_ fɔf - tæ-ðæ-ræt bi-'æŋ-næ: \_\_\_\_\_

B1  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 but the wind re-fused:

B2  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 but the wind re-fused:

B3  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 but the wind re-fused:

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SAMPLE

50 51 52 53 54 55

S1  
 for, time was too short, \_\_\_\_\_ and your hair \_\_\_\_\_

S2  
 for, time was too short, \_\_\_\_\_ and your hair \_\_\_\_\_

S3  
 for, time was too short, \_\_\_\_\_ and your hair \_\_\_\_\_

A1  
 for, time was too short, \_\_\_\_\_ and your hair \_\_\_\_\_

A2  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 wɒq-tæ-hæ qɔ-sɪr... wæ

A3  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 wɒq-tæ-hæ qɔ-sɪr... wæ ʃɔf-

T1  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 wɒq-tæ-hæ qɔ-sɪr... wæ ʃɔf-ræ-

T2  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 wɒq-tæ-hæ qɔ-sɪr... wæ ʃɔf-ræ-ki...

T3  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 wɒq-tæ-hæ qɔ-sɪr... wæ ʃɔf-ræ-ki...

B1  
 for, time was too short, \_\_\_\_\_ and your hair \_\_\_\_\_

B2  
 for, time was too short, \_\_\_\_\_ and your hair \_\_\_\_\_

B3  
 for, time was too short, \_\_\_\_\_ and your hair \_\_\_\_\_

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SAMPLE

56 57 58 59 60 61

S1  
 was too long... too

S2  
 was too long... too

S3  
 was too long... too

A1  
 was too long... too

A2  
 fɔf - ræ - ki... to - wil,

A3  
 ræ - ki... to - wil

T1  
 ki... to - wil,

T2  
 to - wil,

T3  
 to - wil, to -

B1  
 was too long... too

B2  
 was too long... too

B3  
 was too long... too

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SAMPLE

62 63 64 65 66 67 68

S1  
long. I asked the wind...

S2  
long. I asked the wind...

S3  
long. I asked the wind...

A1  
long. I asked the wind...

A2  
to - wil... 'o<sup>w</sup> - soj - tur - ri - hæ... *p*

A3  
to - wil... 'o<sup>w</sup> - soj - tur - ri - hæ... *p*

T1  
to - wil... 'o<sup>w</sup> - soj - tur - ri - hæ... *p*

T2  
to - wil... 'o<sup>w</sup> - soj - tur - ri - hæ... *p*

T3  
wil... 'o<sup>w</sup> - soj - tur - ri - hæ... *p*

B1  
long. I asked the wind...

B2  
long. I asked the wind...

B3  
long. I asked the wind...

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SAMPLE

69 70 71 72 73 74 75 *lunga*

S1 *ppp* I \_\_\_ asked the wind... *lunga*

S2 *ppp* I \_\_\_ asked the wind... *lunga*

S3 *ppp* I \_\_\_ asked the wind... *lunga*

A1 *ppp* I \_\_\_ asked the wind... *lunga*

A2 *pp* 'o<sup>w</sup> - soj - tur - ri - hæ...

A3 *pp* 'o<sup>w</sup> - soj - tur - ri - hæ...

T1 *pp* 'o<sup>w</sup> - soj - tur - ri - hæ...

T2 *pp* 'o<sup>w</sup> - soj - tur - ri - hæ...

T3 *pp* 'o<sup>w</sup> - soj - tur - ri - hæ...

B1 *ppp* I \_\_\_ asked the wind... *lunga*

B2 *ppp* I \_\_\_ asked the wind... *lunga*

B3 *ppp* I \_\_\_ asked the wind... *lunga*

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Duration: 4  
14 August 2012  
8 May 2014  
Roscoe | Seattle



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