

I wrote your name

*I wrote your name
on the notebooks of the rain,
on the sheets of ice,
on the blankets of snow,
and on the pine cones.*

*Then I shared with you
the names of the trees,
and I translated for you
the nightly conversations of the crickets;*

*I gave to you the secret addresses
of the faraway stars.*

Setting verses from the collection
One hundred love letters by Nizar Qabbani,
in Arabic and English, translated by the composer,
for nine-part treble chorus (SSSMMMAAA) *a cappella*

Eric Banks

Commissioned by Anthony Trecek-King, and composed
in August 2012 for the Boston Children's Chorus.

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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 eight lines of *I wrote your name* in their original Arabic, and in IPA (the International Phonetic Alphabet):

'æɲæ kætæɲbtuki
ʕælæ dæfæɲɪræɪ-mɔʔɪr,
wæ ʃæɲæʃɪfɪθ-θæɲɪ
wæ 'ækwæz 'ɒʃ-ʃʊnæwɒɪr.

'æɲæ ʕællæmtuki 'æsmæ'æʃ-ʃɒʒɪr,
wæ ɪwæɲʃ-ʃɒʒɪræɪ-læɲɪjæh,
wæ 'ɔʕɲɔɲtuki
ʕænæwɪnæn-nʊzʊmɪl-bæʕɪdæh.

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

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

And key of of the IPA for Arabic consonants:

bdfkhlmnstz	are pronounced as in English
ɖʂʐ	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 song 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>
ħ	a 'glasses-fogging' version of ɸ, high in the mouth
q	a guttural k, produced in the back of the throat
r	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>

The pitches of this piece (D Eb F# G A Bb C#) 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.



أَنَا كَتَبْتُكَ
عَلَى دَفَاتِرِ الْمَطَرِ،
وَشَرَّاشِفِ الثَّلْجِ،
وَأَكْوَاظِ الصُّنُوبَرِ.
أَنَا عَلَّمْتُكَ أَسْمَاءَ الشَّجَرِ،
وَحَوَارِ الصَّرَاصِيرِ اللَّيْلِيَّةِ،
وَأَعْطَيْتُكَ
عَنَاوِينَ النُّجُومِ الْبَعِيدَةِ.

Delightfully $\text{♩} = 204$ ($\text{♩} = 102$; $\text{♩} = 68$)
(beat 3+2+2+3 throughout)

I wrote your name

Eric Banks

p

S1 I wrote your name _____ on the note-books of the rain, _____ on the sheets of ice, _____

S2 I wrote your name _____ on the note-books of the rain, _____ on the sheets of ice, _____

S3 I wrote your name _____ on the note-books of the rain, _____ on the sheets of ice, _____

M1 I wrote your name _____ on the note-books of the rain, _____ on the sheets of ice, _____

M2 I wrote your name _____ on the note-books of the rain, _____ on the sheets of ice, _____

M3 I wrote your name _____ on the note-books of the rain, _____ on the sheets of ice, _____

A1 I wrote your name _____ on the note-books of the rain, _____ on the sheets of ice, _____

A2 I wrote your name _____ on the note-books of the rain, _____ on the sheets of ice, _____

A3 I wrote your name _____ on the note-books of the rain, _____ on the sheets of ice, _____

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S1 _____ on the blankets of snow, _____ and on the pine cones. _____ I wrote your name...

S2 _____ on the blankets of snow, _____ and on the pine cones. _____ I wrote your name...

S3 _____ on the blankets of snow, _____ and on the pine cones. _____ I wrote your name...

M1 _____ on the blankets of snow, _____ and on the pine cones. _____ I wrote your name... *mf* 'æ-næ kæ-

M2 _____ on the blankets of snow, _____ and on the pine cones. _____ I wrote your name...

M3 _____ on the blankets of snow, _____ and on the pine cones. _____ I wrote your name...

A1 _____ on the blankets of snow, _____ and on the pine cones. _____ I wrote your name...

A2 _____ on the blankets of snow, _____ and on the pine cones. _____ I wrote your name...

A3 _____ on the blankets of snow, _____ and on the pine cones. _____ I wrote your name...

DO NOT PRINT

S1

S2

S3

M1
tæb-tu-ki... 'æ - næ kæ - tæb - tu-ki...

mf *goccioline, schizzato (come la pioggia)*

M2
ʃæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti-ræel-mΛ-ʃΛr... ʃæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti-ræel-mΛ-ʃΛr... ʃæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti-ræel-mΛ-ʃΛr...

M3

A1

A2
mf
wæ ʃæ -

A3

S1

S2

S3

M1
'æ - næ kæ - tæb - tu-ki...

M2
ʃæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti-ræel-mΛ-ʃΛr... ʃæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti-ræel-mΛ-ʃΛr... ʃæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti-ræel-mΛ-ʃΛr... ʃæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti-ræel-mΛ-ʃΛr...

mf *compatto, spinoso (come una pigna)*

M3
wæ 'æek-wæz 'ʌs-su - næw-blr...
mf *compatto, spinoso (come una pigna)*

A1
wæ 'æek-wæz 'ʌs-su - næw-blr...

scorrevole, scivoloso (come una lastra de ghiaccio)

A2
ræ - ʃi-fiθ-θæel-ʒi... wæ ʃæ - ræ - ʃi-fiθ-θæel-ʒi... wæ ʃæ -

mf *scorrevole, scivoloso (come una lastra de ghiaccio)*

A3
wæ ʃæ - ræ - ʃi-fiθ-θæel-ʒi... wæ ʃæ - ræ - ʃi-fiθ-θæel-ʒi...

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SAMPLE
DO NOT PRINT

S1

S2

S3

M1
'æ - næ kæ - tæb - tu - ki... 'æ - næ fæel -

M2
fæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti - ræel - ml - tAr... fæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti - ræel - ml - tAr... fæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti - ræel - ml - tAr... fæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti - ræel - ml - tAr...

M3
wæ 'æek - wæz 'As - su - næw - blAr...

A1
wæ 'æek - wæz 'As - su - næw - blAr...

A2
ræ - fI - fiθ - θæel - ʒI... wæ fæe - ræe - fI - fiθ - θæel - ʒI... wæ fæe -

A3
wæ fæe - ræe - fI - fiθ - θæel - ʒI... wæ fæe - ræe - fI - fiθ - θæel - ʒI...

S1

S2 *mp* fæ - næ - wi - næn - nu -

S3 *mf* *crescente, rampicante (come un albero)* 'æes - mæ - 'æj - fAr... ʒAr...

M1 læm - tu - ki... 'æ - næ fæel - læm - tu - ki...

M2 fæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti - ræel - ml - tAr... fæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti - ræel - ml - tAr... fæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti - ræel - ml - tAr... fæ - læ dæ - fæ - ti - ræel - ml - tAr...

M3 wæ 'æek - wæz 'As - su - næw - blAr... wæ 'æek - wæz 'As - su -

A1 wæ 'æek - wæz 'As - su - næw - blAr... wæ 'æek - wæz 'As - su -

A2 ræ - fI - fiθ - θæel - ʒI... wæ fæe - ræe - fI - fiθ - θæel - ʒI... wæ fæe -

A3 wæ fæe - ræe - fI - fiθ - θæel - ʒI... wæ fæe - ræe - fI - fiθ - θæel - ʒI...

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lontano, splendente (come le stelle)

mp

29

S1 *lontano, splendente (come le stelle)*
 ʃæ-næ-ʷi-næn-nu - zu - - - - - mil-bæ-ʃi - dæh...

S2
 zu - - - - - mil-bæ-ʃi - dæh... ʃæ-næ-ʷi-næn-nu - zu - - - - -

S3
 'æs - mæ - 'æʃ - ʃl - - - - - ʒlɹ... 'æs - mæ - 'æʃ -

M1
 'æ - næ ʃæl-læm-tu-ki...

M2
 ʃæ - læ dæ-fæ-ti-ræel-ma-ʃlɹ... ʃæ - læ dæ-fæ-ti-ræel - ma-ʃlɹ... ʃæ-læ dæ-fæ-ti-ræel - ma-ʃlɹ... ʃæ - læ dæ-fæ-ti-ræel-ma-ʃlɹ...

M3 *mf cinguettato (come le grilli)*
 næʷ-blɹ... ʷæ ɦl - ʷæər ʌʃ-ʃl-ɹl-ʃlɹ æl-læil - li - jæh... ʷæ 'æək - ʷæz 'ʌʃ-ʃu-næʷ-blɹ... ʷæ ɦl -

A1 *mf cinguettato (come le grilli)*
 næʷ-blɹ... ʷæ ɦl - ʷæər ʌʃ-ʃl-ɹl-ʃlɹ æl-læil - li - jæh... ʷæ 'æək - ʷæz 'ʌʃ-ʃu-næʷ-blɹ... ʷæ ɦl -

A2
 ræ - ʃi-fiθ-θæel-ʒl... ʷæ ʃæ - ræ - ʃi-fiθ-θæel-ʒl... ʷæ ʃæ -

A3
 ʷæ ʃæ - ræ - ʃi-fiθ - θæel - ʒl... ʷæ ʃæ - ræ - ʃi-fiθ - θæel-ʒl...

33

S1
 ʃæ-næ-ʷi-næn-nu - zu - - - - - mil-bæ-ʃi - dæh... ʃæ-næ-ʷi-næn-nu -

S2
 - mil-bæ-ʃi - dæh... ʃæ-næ-ʷi-næn-nu - zu - - - - - mil-bæ-ʃi - dæh...

S3
 ʃl - - - - - ʒlɹ... 'æs - mæ - 'æʃ - ʃl - - - - -

M1
 'æ - næ ʃæl-læm-tu-ki... 'æ - næ 'cɹ -

M2
 ʃæ - læ dæ - fæ-ti-ræel - ma-ʃlɹ... ʃæ-læ dæ-fæ-ti-ræel - ma-ʃlɹ... ʃæ - læ dæ-fæ-ti-ræel-ma-ʃlɹ... ʃæ - læ dæ - fæ-ti-ræel - ma-ʃlɹ...

M3
 ʷæər ʌʃ-ʃl-ɹl-ʃlɹ æl-læil - li - jæh... ʷæ 'æək - ʷæz 'ʌʃ-ʃu-næʷ-blɹ... ʷæ ɦl - ʷæər ʌʃ-ʃl-ɹl-ʃlɹ æl-læil -

A1
 ʷæər ʌʃ-ʃl-ɹl-ʃlɹ æl-læil - li - jæh... ʷæ 'æək - ʷæz 'ʌʃ-ʃu-næʷ-blɹ... ʷæ ɦl - ʷæər ʌʃ-ʃl-ɹl-ʃlɹ æl-læil -

A2
 ræ-ʃi-fiθ - θæel - ʒl... ʷæ ʃæ - ræ - ʃi-fiθ - θæel-ʒl... ʷæ ʃæ -

A3
 ʷæ ʃæ - ræ - ʃi-fiθ - θæel - ʒl... ʷæ ʃæ - ræ - ʃi-fiθ - θæel - ʒl...

37

S1 3u - - - - - mil-bæ-fi - dæh... fæ-næ-wi-næn-nu - 3u - - - - -

S2 fæ-næ-wi-næn-nu - 3u - - - - - mil-bæ-fi - dæh... fæ-næ-wi-næn-nu -

S3 - 3ʌr... 'æs - mæ - 'æf - ʃʌ - - - - - 3ʌr...

M1 [ɔɪ]-tu-ki... 'æ - næ 'ɔf - [ɔɪ]-tu-ki...

M2 fæ-læ dæ-fæ-ti-ræel - mʌ-ʃʌr... fæ - læ dæ-fæ-ti-ræel-mʌ-ʃʌr... fæ - læ dæ - fæ-ti-ræel - mʌ-ʃʌr...

M3 li - 'æh... wæ 'æk - wæz 'ʌʃ-ʃu-næw-blʌr... wæ ɰʌ - wær ʌʃ-ʃʌ-rʌ-ʃir æl-læil - li - 'æh... wæ 'æk - wæz 'ʌʃ-ʃu-

A1 li - 'æh... wæ 'æk - wæz 'ʌʃ-ʃu-næw-blʌr... wæ ɰʌ - wær ʌʃ-ʃʌ-rʌ-ʃir æl-læil - li - 'æh... wæ 'æk - wæz 'ʌʃ-ʃu-

A2 ræe-ʃi-fiθ-θæel-ʒi... wæ ʃæ - ræe-ʃi-fiθ - θæel - ʒi... wæ ʃæ -

A3 wæ ʃæ - ræe-ʃi-fiθ - θæel-ʒi... wæ ʃæ - ræe-ʃi-fiθ-θæel-ʒi...

41

S1 - - - - - mil-bæ-fi - dæh... fæ-næ-wi-næn-nu - 3u - - - - - mil-bæ-fi-dæh...

S2 3u - - - - - mil-bæ-fi - dæh... fæ-næ-wi-næn-nu - 3u - - - - -

S3 'æs - mæ 'æf - ʃʌ - - - - - 3ʌr... 'æs - mæ 'æf -

M1 - - - - - 'æ - næ 'ɔf - [ɔɪ]-tu-ki...

M2

M3 næw-blʌr... wæ ɰʌ - wær ʌʃ-ʃʌ-rʌ-ʃir æl-læil - li - 'æh... wæ 'æk - wæz 'ʌʃ-ʃu-næw-blʌr... wæ ɰʌ -

A1 næw-blʌr... wæ ɰʌ - wær ʌʃ-ʃʌ-rʌ-ʃir æl-læil - li - 'æh... wæ 'æk - wæz 'ʌʃ-ʃu-næw-blʌr... wæ ɰʌ -

A2 ræe - ʃi-fiθ - θæel-ʒi...

A3 wæ ʃæ - ræe - ʃi-fiθ - θæel - ʒi...

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