

Who is that Stranger?

six songs of personal exile for high voice and piano

*based on traditional anonymous oral poetry
of women from Yemen and the West Bank*

translated from the Judeo-Arabic
by Mishael Maswari Caspi

Program note:

Who Is That Stranger?'s six songs are based on the traditional anonymous oral poetry of Jewish women from Yemen and the West Bank, translated from the Judeo-Arabic by Mishael Maswari Caspi. In each song, the singer yearns for home, for Paradise, for deliverance, for the end of her personal exile - an exile even within a community itself in exile. The imagery is that of the ancient, ageless desert diaspora. Thirst is the overarching metaphor for longing, and each song is an invocation of the outcast's craving for an almost imaginary home.

Although several of the songs call on Middle Eastern rhythmic modes, scales and gestures, one, "I am Thirsty," also appears to be a modern spiritual, invoking another exiled people's *cri du coeur*.

Performance notes:

1. Is to be sung as a lovesong
2. The narrator tells a story interspeded with personal laments and piano triplets have two roles as the stageset: the LH triplets are like a heart ominously pounding or hooves in the distance, fate. The RH high triplets are like the ululation of women in the middle east.
3. Like many women's lives, the official plea is interrupted by personal desperation: the melismatic lines about the mother and sister suggest wailing
4. Stark and empty as truth. The piano is like those little dots of object in the distant desert, faraway and meaningless visual punctuation of the vast emptiness. Deep disappointment,
5. Sung like a spiritual
6. Consider the piano to represent the bejeweled facets of Yemenite wedding headdress
7. See the singer as a glorious, transcendent bride
8. Let the audience decide whether the jewels are fake.

Who Is That Stranger?

I O Dweller of Paradise

With An Almost Magestic Yet Lyrical Longing $\text{♩} = 72-76$

The musical score is written for voice and piano in the key of A major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. It consists of four systems of music. The first system begins with a vocal line and piano accompaniment, both marked *mp*. The vocal line starts with a whole rest followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4, all beamed together. The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "dweller of pa - ra - dise, o - pen — for me to come in." The piano accompaniment includes a *poco* marking and a *mf* dynamic. The third system has the lyrics "O I. shall bring — my food, I. shall bring my food, my mat - tress —" and features a *mp* dynamic. The fourth system concludes with the lyrics "and ev - ry - thing I need. O dweller in pa - - ra - dise, dweller in pa" and includes a *mp* dynamic. The score is filled with musical notation including notes, rests, beams, slurs, and dynamic markings.

mp *mp*

O dwell-er of pa - - ra - dise,

poco *mf* *poco*

dweller of pa - ra - dise, o - pen — for me to come in.

mp *mf*

O I. shall bring — my food, I. shall bring my food, my mat - tress —

mp

and ev - ry - thing I need. O dweller in pa - - ra - dise, dweller in pa

mf ra-dise, o - pen for me to come in. *mp* O dweller in

pa - - ra - dise, dwell er - in pa - ra - dise,

p dweller in pa - ra - dise, *mp* dweller in

pa - ra - dise, dwell - er in pa - - - ra - dise

p *lontano* *pp*

II

I Shall Begin to Sing

Subtly ominous and menacing

mp $\text{♩} = 84$ *mp* 3

I shall be-gin to sing of You,

p sotto voce

Oh Lord, a - bove all fir-ma-ments. Oh Lord, my true sup-port.

mp 3 *mf* 3

My heart is full of long-ing and full of sighs. Oh, Mo - ther, Mo-ther, Oh,

mp 3

Mo - ther, Mo - ther, I will not tell the sor - rows, a ca - mel ly-ing on

The musical score is written for voice and piano. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 84. The score is divided into four systems. The first system shows the vocal line starting with 'I shall be-gin to sing of You,' and the piano accompaniment with a *p sotto voce* marking and triplet patterns. The second system continues with 'Oh Lord, a - bove all fir-ma-ments. Oh Lord, my true sup-port.' The piano accompaniment features a dense texture of triplets. The third system contains 'My heart is full of long-ing and full of sighs. Oh, Mo - ther, Mo-ther, Oh,' with a *mf* dynamic marking. The fourth system concludes with 'Mo - ther, Mo - ther, I will not tell the sor - rows, a ca - mel ly-ing on'. The piano accompaniment continues with triplet patterns throughout.

mf **poco allargando**

my heart, stab-bing like dag gars. — Oh, — my mo-ther - my fa mi-ly. Oh, mo-ther, mo-ther,

mp **A tempo** *mf*

Oh, mo - ther, mo - ther. Oh how — they ab-horred me, sent me to a land I

più p *mp* *p*

did-n't know. Mo - ther, mo - ther, — nor was I known there. When. I walked up on the roof o - thers

mf

said, o - thers said, "How — vo - lup-tu-ous and de - light - ful, — de -

p con passione *mp*

light - ful," — but, Mo - ther, mo - ther, when I

sfz *parlando*

came down in-to the yard, they said, "Who is that stran-ger."

sfz *mf* *mfp*

Who is that stran-ger? Oh, Mo - ther, Mo-ther, Oh, —

sotto voce

con molto rubato

(p) *sfzp*

Mo - ther, Mo - ther, Who is that stran - ger?

8va *fp* *sfp*

III

Write Down, Write Down, O Judge

Pleading ♩=63-69

The musical score is written for voice and piano in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Pleading' with a range of 63-69 beats per minute. The score is divided into four systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a consistent rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand, with occasional triplets and slurs. The vocal line includes lyrics and dynamic markings such as *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *p* (piano). The lyrics are: 'Write down, write down, O Judge, I have married a stran - ger. At home, at home, the mo - ther cries, my sis - ter says, "Oh, my be - lo - ved." Write down, write down, O Judge, they have taken me from my vil - lage. At home the mo - ther cries;'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, triplets, and dynamic markings.

mp
Write down, write down, O Judge, I have mar - ried a

p
stran - ger. At home, at home, the mo - ther cries, my sis - ter says, "Oh,

mp
my be - lo - ved." Write down, write down, O Judge,

p
they have ta - ken me from my vil - lage. At home the mo - ther cries;

my sis - ter says, "She ___ is gone ___ for - ev - er." Write down, write

down, O Judge, I ___ am ta - ken from my fa - mi - ly. At

home, at home, the mo-ther cries; my sis - ter says, "Oh, ___"

pi - ty, pi - ty, ___ pi - ty." At home, at home, the mo-ther cries; my sis-ter says, "Fare ___"

well for - e - - - ver." my sis - ter says, "Fare ___

well for - ev - er." My sis - ter says, "Fare - -

well for - e - - ver." At home, at home the mo-ther cries; my sis - ter says,

"Fare - - well for - e - - ver."

IV

I U s e d t o H a v e a F r i e n d

Semplice ♩=66 *mp* *mf*

I u s e d t o h a v e a f r i e n d a n d h e b e - c a m e m y

Entire piano part may be plucked inside the piano, the pedal down throughout in any case

mp *p*

m a s - t e r, — m y m a s - t e r, — a n d I h i s s l a v e ; a n d e v - ' r y d a y , a n d e v - ' r y

mp *mf* *mp* *pp*

d a y . a n d e v - ' r y d a y I s e r v e h i m , I s e r v e h i m , I s u f - f e r h i s h e a t , h i s c h i l l . —

V

I am Thirsty

Like a Spiritual ♩=76 *mp*

I am thirs-ty, I ___ am thirs-ty but I

p

drank still wa - ter. Oh, lit - tle bird, ___ how you were caught ___ in the net they spread. Theirs

was the fault, but thus is writ-ten your fate.

mp

poco più espr. e poco più f

As though I were blind, they fed me trou - bled wa - ter, say - ing swam - py wa - ter re - me - dies wounds.

mp *mf*

I am thirs - ty, I ___ am thirs - ty but I drank still wa - ter. O

mp

lit - tle bird, how you were caught in the net they spread. Theirs was the fault, but thus is writ - ten - your fate.

mp *mf*

From a spring I drank mild poi - son; ___ but now, O my heart, ___ I ___ won't drink.

it a - ny - more. *p* I am thirs - ty, I _____ am thirs - ty but I

drank still wa - ter. *mp* O lit - tle bird, how you were caught in the net. they spread. Theirs

was the fault, but thus is writ - ten your fate. — *p* Theirs was the

fault, but thus is written your fate. *mp* *sfpp*

VI

Oh Groom, Who Guided You

With Luminous, Jewel-like Joy ♩=58

mf ma ben dolce

Oh groom, who guided you, - who showed you our door?

mp *bright but legato*

poco f dolce

Oh groom, who guided you, _____ who showed you our door? The

mp

mf

mf

bright one guided me, - shining through the flow'rs, wa-ter-ing the fra-grant herbs. the

mf

bright one guid-ed me, look - ing down from ___ the pa - ra - pet.

mf ma ben dolce
Oh Groom, ___ who gui-ded you, ___

who showed you our door?