

Joanna Marsh

Arabesques

mixed voices unaccompanied
(S, A, A, T, Bar, B)

Sample
copy

JOANNA
M/ARSH



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Arabesques (2015 – revised 18th August 2020)

mixed voices unaccompanied
(S, A, A, T, Bar, B)

Total duration c.13'

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Arabesques

A commission for the Kings Singers, Arabesques are settings of four short but highly evocative poems by contemporary male Arab poets. Each tells the story of a woman they have known: 'A Woman', remembers a passionate encounter, 'You want', muses on her acquisitiveness, 'Fading', observes her aging, 'Seeds in Flight', finds rebirth after her death. 'Fading' was premiered at the London A Cappella Festival, on 29th January 2015. 'A Woman', and 'Seeds in Flight', were premiered at The American School in Doha, on May 7th 2015. The pieces were revised in November 2015. A fourth piece 'You want' was included in the set and this arrangement was created to enable the works to be sung by choirs.

1. A Woman

How will I drag my feet to her now?
In which land will I see her,
And on which street of what city
Should I ask about her?
And if I find her house,
Let's say I do,
Will I ring the bell?
How should I answer?
And how will I stare at her face
As I touch the light wine
Seeping between her fingers.
How should I say hello...
And how will I take the pain
Of all these years?
Once twenty years ago,
In an air-conditioned train,
I kissed her all night through...

Sa'adi Youssef b.1934 Iraq

2. You want

You want, like all women,
Solomon's treasure.
You want pools of perfume,
Combs of ivory.
You want a horde of slaves.
Sharazad, like all women want.
You want me to give you
The stars, the heav'ns.
You want me to give you
The stars in the heav'ns

Nazir Kabbani 1923-1998 Syria

3. Fading

Imagine where this dove will go;
Imagine when her wings turn grey,
When her call grows old.

Will she turn to the mirrors of young sparrows
Who slide into delusion?
Or will a deaf sparrow offer her
A perch to sing?
How will she apologise to a traveller
Wanting to stroke her feathers
When the flock scatters?
How will she strut through the courtyard
Or impress the grass?
Will she look for a kind boy to grind her
A grain of wheat,
Or an old flame to relight aging passions?
Perhaps she will divide her sadness
Between a window and a metal cage.
Perhaps she'll become a professional mourner
At the funerals of birds.
Imagine where this dove will go
When the trees donate their lowest branch.
Imagine when neighbours
Are indifferent to her past, fading.

Abboud al Jabiri b.1963 Iraq

4. Seeds in Flight

An ancient woman, who has lived all seasons,
Wanders the earth gathering camomile.
Each flower in her apron is a star,
Her apron is the sky.
When she reaches the house,
She strews them to dry
Like shells on a beach –
To bring good luck,
To whisper the future.
In the sun her tattoo glistens,
A star glints in her golden earring,
The camomile dries.
Her hand, hennaed with God's names,
Spun the wool of the flock,
Embroidered the wedding clothes,
Gathered the dried flowers.
But next season, when the future arrived,
It silenced the whispers.
She was buried with her ancestors.
And yet as if by chance,
As if by magic,
As if by a miracle
The camomile grows each season.
Many seeds have flown.
These seeds remain.

Khaled Abdallah b.1970 Gaza

Arabesques

1. A WOMAN

Sa'adi Youssef
b.1934 Iraq

Joanna Marsh

$\text{♩} = 98$

SOPRANO

ALTO 1 *mf sost.*
How will I drag my feet to her

ALTO 2 *mp*
How will I _____ drag my feet to her

TENOR *mp*
Drag my feet to her

BARITONE *mp*
How will I _____

BASS

5 *più f*
How will I drag my feet to her

mf
now? How will I drag my feet to her

mf dolce
now, _____ to _____ her now? How will I drag my feet to her

mf
now? How will I dra - (a)g my feet to her _____

now, to her now? How will feet to her _____

mf
now, to her now? How will feet to her

10

mf sost.

now? In which land will I see her, which street of

mf sost.

now? In which land will I see her, which street of

mp *mf sost.*

now, to her now? In which land will I see her, which street of

mp *mf sost.*

now, to her now? In which land and on which street of

mp *mf sost.*

now, to her now? In which land will I see her, and on which street

mp *mf sost.*

now, to her now? In which land which street

14

sost. mp

what ci - ty _____ should I ask a - bout her? _____

what ci - ty _____

p

what ci - ty _____ a - bout her _____ if I find _

sost. mp *mf sost.*

what ci - ty _____ should I ask a - bout her? _____ And if I

p

a - bout her _____ if I find _

mp

what an (n)

19

19

mf sost. find her house ___ *mf* ring the bell? ___

___ her house and ___ *mp* will I ring the bell, *p* ring ___

mf find let's say ___ I do, will I ring *mp* ring the bell? ___

___ her house and ___ *p* Will I ring the bell, ring ___

mf let's say ___ I do *mp* ring the bell? ___

24

24

mf How would I an - swer? *f sost.* How should I an - swer

mf How would I an - swer? *mf* How should I an - swer ___ *f sost.* and how will I

mp How would I *f* and how

___ would I an - swer? *mp* How should I an - swer ___ and how will I

p How would I *mf* an - swer *f* how will I

___ would I an - swer?

poco rit. a tempo

mf

rit.

tenderly

her face

stare at her face as I touch the light wine

her face I touch the light wine

stare at her face as I touch the light wine

stare at her fa(ce) at her face as I touch the light wine

stare at her touch

mf

rit.

Poco meno mosso ♩ = 92

mp

seep - - - ing

seep - ing, seep - ing 'tween her fin - gers, -

seep - ing, seep - ing be - tween her fin - gers, -

seep - ing, seep - ing be - tween her fin - gers, -

seep - ing, seep - ing 'tween her fin - gers, -

seep - ing, seep - ing

37

Tempo I ♩ = 98

mf *rit.*

fin - gers? ___

mf

'tween her fin - gers? ___

mp *p*

fin - gers? should I ___

mp *p*

be - tween her ___ fin - gers? ___ How should I, ___

mp *mf sost.*

be - tween her ___ fin - gers? ___ How

mp

'tween her fin - gers? ___

42

mf legato

and

mf sost.

How should ___ I say, ___ hel - lo and

mf

how should I ___ should say, hel - lo and how will

how should how should I say and how ___

should I say, should say hel - lo

mf

hel - lo

how will I take the pain of

how will, how will I take, I take the pain, I take the pain of

how will I take the pain of

how will I take I take the pain, I take the pain of

how will, how will, how will I take the pain of

of

f *mf* *f* *mp* *f* *mf* *p* *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

all these years? Once

all, of all these, these years? Once

all these years, these years? Once

all, of all these, these years, these years? Once

all these years, these years? Once

all these years? Once

mp *f* *mp* *f* *mp* *mp*

51 *f* *mf*

twen - ty years a - go, I kissed her

f

twen - ty years a - go in an air - con - di - tioned train

mf

a - go, air - con - di - tioned train I kissed her

f

a - go in an air - con - di - tioned train

f *mf*

twen - ty years a - go, I kissed her

f *mf*

in an air - con - di - tioned train I kissed her

56 *mp* *rit.* *dim.* *p*

all the night through, the night, the night through.

mp *dim.* *p*

the night, the night through.

mf dim. *mp* *dim.* *p*

all the night through, all the night through.

mf *mp dim.*

all the night through, the night, the night.

all the night through.

all the night through.

2. YOU WANT

Nazir Kabbani
1923–1998 Syria

Joanna Marsh

$\text{♩} = 120$
ad lib. first two beats

SOPRANO
You want

ALTO 1
You, you want

ALTO 2
You want, you want, you want, you

TENOR
You want, you want, you want, you

BARITONE

BASS
You want, you want, you want, you

4

you want like all wo - men

you want like all wo - men

want, you want, you want, you want, wo - men

want, you want, you want, you want, wo - men

want, you want, you want, you want, wo - men

8

mf
want, trea - sure trea - sure

f *mf*
want, So - lo - mon's trea - sure trea - sure

f *mf*
want, So - lo - mon's trea - sure you

8 *mf*
want, You want, you want, trea - sure you

mf
You want, you want, trea - sure

want, You want, you want, you

11 *mp* *f*
So - - - lo-mon's trea -

f
So - - - lo-mon's trea -

mf *f*
want So - lo-mon's you want, you

mf *f*
want So - lo-mon's So - lo-mon's you want, you

So - - - lo-mon's

mf *f*
want, So - lo-mon's you want, you

15 *sub. mp*

- sure, trea - sure like all wo - men

- sure, trea - sure.

sub. mp

want, trea - sure all wo - men

sub. mp

want, trea - sure like all wo - men.

f *sub. mp*

want, you want like all men.

sub. mp

want, trea - sure all

a tempo

19 *p* *mp*

want

mp *p*

you want you want you want you want you want you want you

p *mp*

want

mf

Pools of per - fume

22

mp you —

want combs of i - vo - ry — you —

p *mp* *mf* combs of you want you want you want — you want a horde

mp *mf* you want you want you want — you want a horde

mp *mf* *sub. mp* combs — of i - vo - ry — you want

mp *mf* combs — of a horde —

25

want, you — want, a horde of slaves

want, you — want, a horde of slaves

mf a horde — of — slaves

mp *p* you want you want, slaves — you want you want —

you want you want, a horde of — slaves — want —

— a horde — of — slaves

30

mf *mp*

per - fume _____ a

mp *mf* *mp*

pools of per - fume _____ i - vo - ry, _____ a

mp

combs of i - vo - ry, _____ a

p *mp*

_____ you want you want _____ you want _____ combs of i - vo - ry, _____ a

p *mp*

pools _____ of per - fume _____ combs of i - vo - ry, _____ a

mp

combs of i - vo - ry, _____ a

34

mf *mp*

horde of slaves. _____ Sha - ha - ra - zad, _____

mf *mp*

horde of slaves _____ Sha - ha - ra - zad, _____

mf

horde of slaves _____

mf *mp*

horde of slaves _____ like

mf *mp*

horde of slaves _____ like

mf

horde of slaves _____

39

p Sha - ha - ra - zad, *p* Sha -

p Sha - ha - ra-zad, like all wo-men! *mf* Sha -

p like all wo-men! *mf* Sha -

p all wo-men! *p* Sha - ha - ra-zad, like all wo-men! *mf* Sha -

p all wo-men! *p* Sha - ha - ra-zad, like all wo-men! *mf* Sha -

p Sha - ha - ra-zad, like all wo-men! *mf* *mp* Sha -

43

mf - ha - ra - zad, *p* wo - men, want like

mf - ha - ra - zad, like all wo - men! *p* Sha - ha - ra - zad, like

mf - ha - ra - zad, like all wo - men! *p* Sha - ha - ra - zad, like

mf - ha - ra - zad, like all wo - men! *p* Sha - ha - ra - zad, like

mf - ha - ra - zad, like all wo - men, want like

mf - ha - ra - zad, like all wo - men! *p* Sha - ha - ra - zad, like

46 *mf* *sub. p* *f* *With a swagger*

all wo - men want, _____ You want me to give _____

all wo - men want, _____ You want me to

all wo - men want, _____ You want to

all wo - men want, _____ You want me to

all wo - men want, _____ me

all wo - men _____ me

50

_____ you the stars _____ in the heav'ns, _____ you want me

give you the stars in the heav'ns, _____ you want me to

give the stars the heav'ns, _____

give you the stars the heav'ns, _____ you want me to

you the the heav'ns to

you the the heav'ns to

54

mf *f*

the stars _____ in the heav'ns. You want me to give _

give you _____ the stars _____ in the heav'ns. You want me to give _

the stars _____ in the heav'ns. You want me to give _

give you the stars _____ heav'ns. You want me to give _

give you the stars _____ in the heav'ns. You want me to give _

give you _____ to give _

58

molto rit. *p*

— you the stars _____ in the hea - - - - - vens.

— you the stars _____ in the hea - - - - - vens.

— you the stars _____ in the hea - - - - - vens.

— you the stars _____ in the hea - - - - - vens.

— you the stars _____ in the _____ vens.

— you the stars _____ in the _____

3. FADING

Abboud al Jabiri
b.1963 Iraq

Joanna Marsh

♩ = c.92

SOPRANO *mp* Where this

ALTO 1 *mp* mm dove

ALTO 2 *seamless mp sim.*
I - ma - gine, i - ma - gine, i - ma - gine, i -

TENOR *seamless mp sim.*
I - ma - gine, i - ma - gine, i - ma - gine, i -

BARITONE

BASS

5

dove will go; when her

mp go, o, o; *p cresc.* when

- ma - gine, i -

- ma - gine, i -

airy sigh p (ahhh) *gliss.* *mp* fad - ing (ng)

p *mp* fad - ing (ng)