To the people of conscience...

For vocal trio

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To The People of Conscience (2008)

Text: Jumah al Dossari

For vocal trio: soprano 1; soprano 2; alto

Premiered by Juice in the Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, 2008.

Duration c. 9 minutes
Notes on the Text

Having been captured by Pakistani forces, who were commonly awarded large bounties for handing 'terror suspects' over to US forces, Bahraini national Jumah Al-Dossari was held at Kandahar air base for several weeks, where he was beaten and abused, burned with cigarettes and pushed onto a floor covered with broken glass. He was was eventually bound, blindfolded and taken to Guantánamo Bay Detention Camp in Cuba. During his time there he was routinely interrogated and enticed to admit to baseless and often ridiculous accusations about his involvement in terrorist activities. During one such interrogation the interrogator slammed his head against a metal table. He was tortured with sensory over-stimulation such as flashing lights, loud music and extreme temperatures. He was told that he would be there forever and US personnel even threatened to kill his daughter. On one occasion Al-Dossari was beaten so badly that he ended up in intensive care. An eye-witness describes that a guard “ran in and did a knee drop onto Jumah’s back just between his shoulder blades with his full weight. (...) [Then] grabbed his head with one hand and with the other hand punched him repeatedly in the face. His nose was broken. He pushed his face and he smashed it into the concrete floor.”

In these conditions, his mental health deteriorated. He reported that he had been suffering from seizures and nightmares and needed mental healthcare but did not trust camp medics and had been refused treatment. He made numerous suicide attempts. As a result he was put into solitary confinement for long periods of time, where he was subjected to extremely cold temperatures and given a single unit to wash in, drink from and use as a toilet. During all of the years he spent in Guantánamo Bay Al-Dossari was never formally charged with any crime. The following excerpts (printed in the LA Times) from letters to his attorney from Guantánamo Bay illustrate his feelings of disillusionment and despair while in US custody:

“The purpose of Guantánamo is to destroy people, and I have been destroyed. I am hopeless because our voices are not heard from the depths of the detention center. If I die, please remember that there was a human being named Jumah at Guantánamo whose beliefs, dignity and humanity were abused. Please remember that there are hundreds of detainees at Guantánamo suffering the same misfortune. They have not been charged with any crimes. They have not been accused of taking any action against the United States. Show the world the letters I gave you. Let the world read them. Let the world know the agony of the detainees in Cuba.”

During his detention at Guantánamo Bay, Jumah Al-Dossari wrote 'Death Poem,' the text set in this composition. It was published by the University of Iowa Press in 2007 in a collection entitled 'Poems from Guantánamo - The Detainees Speak' which was compiled by voluntary lawyers representing the detainees. It is a reminder of the importance of the principles outlined in the Geneva Convention and the dark consequences that occur when they are flouted by “the protectors of peace”.

Thankfully Jumah Al-Dossari did not die at Guantánamo Bay. He was released July 2007 with no explanation or apology and has made a full recovery.

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1 Jessica Azulay: "Guantanamo Abuses Caught on Tape, Report Details,". The Newstandard (February 2, 2005).
2 Most of the information in this paragraph is paraphrased from Al-Dossari's own account, which appeared in the Washington Post (Sunday, August 17, 2008; Page B04)
Death Poem
by Jumah al Dossari

(Reprinted with permission from the University of Iowa Press)

Take my blood.
Take my death shroud and
The remnants of my body.
Take photographs of my corpse at the grave, lonely.

Send them to the world,
To the judges and
To the people of conscience,
Send them to the principled men and the fair-minded.

And let them bear the guilty burden before the world,
Of this innocent soul.
Let them bear the burden before their children and before history,
Of this wasted, sinless soul,
Of this soul which has suffered at the hands of the “protectors of peace.”
Key to Non-Standard Notation

Semi-whisper - voiced but extremely breathy. Pitch may be shown on a five-line staff or left indeterminate (shown on a single-line staff in this example).

Spoken

Exaggerated vibrato

Gradual increase to exaggerated vibrato, returning gradually to normal tone.

Pronunciation of Phonetic Symbols:

Explanations are in Received Pronunciation English unless otherwise stated.

[a]: ‘â’ as in the French ‘pâtes’
[o]: ‘a’ as in ‘father’
[e]: ‘é’ as in French ‘santé’
[œ]: ‘ir’ as in ‘bird’
[o]: ‘o’ as in American English ‘bode’
[u]: ‘oo’ as in ‘soon’
[m]: ‘m’ as in ‘man’
[n]: ‘n’ as in ‘no’
To the People of Conscience...

(For Juice)

Text: Jumah Al'Dossari
Stef Conner

Walk towards the audience until you are too close for comfort - almost stepping on their toes. Choose individual members of the audience and stare directly at them, with fixed, intense expressions. Do not look away until rehearsal mark A.

Slightly guttural, like exclamations of disgust. Take obvious and decisive staggered breaths, so that subsequent notes are a little like sighs.

\[ \text{Soprano} \]
\[ \text{Mezzo-soprano} \]
\[ \text{Alto.} \]

\( q = 72 \) Freely; filled with contempt...

\( \text{A} \) Break intense gaze...

**Accel.**

\( j = 90 \) subtley emphatic

**Rit.**
A tempo (\( \ell = 90 \))

\[ \begin{align*}
S. & \quad \text{p} & \quad \text{ff} & \quad \text{[e]} & \quad \text{death} & \quad \text{shroud} & \quad \text{with a little more urgency} & \quad \text{[m]} \\
M-S. & \quad \text{mf} & \quad \text{f} & \quad \text{and} & \quad \text{the rem-nants of my} & \quad \text{bo-dy} & \quad \text{ppp} \\
A. & \quad \text{f} & \quad \text{ff} & \quad \text{mf} & \quad \text{take my death, shroud and take} & \quad \text{[m]} \\
\end{align*} \]

B \( \ell = 90 \)

\[ \begin{align*}
S. & \quad \text{mp} & \quad \text{pp} & \quad \text{take} & \quad \text{photo-} & \quad \text{graphs} & \quad \text{of my corpse at the grave,} \\
M-S. & \quad \text{lone-ly} & \quad \text{[n]} & \quad \text{decisive} & \quad \text{world} & \quad \text{[n]} \\
A. & \quad \text{lone-ly} & \quad \text{send them to the} \\
\end{align*} \]

\[ \begin{align*}
S. & \quad \text{f} & \quad \text{send them to the world} \\
M-S. & \quad \text{f} & \quad \text{send them to the judges and to the people of conscience send them to the world send} \\
A. & \quad \text{mf} & \quad \text{send them to the world send them to the world send them} & \quad \text{[u]} \\
\end{align*} \]
Increasingly agitated... (poco acel.)

D  \( \frac{\text{mf}}{\frac{\text{D}}{\text{mf}} = 72} \)

Lean closer to the audience.
Each look directly at an individual audience member until bar 65.
Break intense gaze

4

my death

the remnants of my body

take my death

my

blood

in my death

shroud

take

my

blood

send them the people of conscience the world and let them bear the guilty burden of this

send them conscience to world and let them bear the guilty burden of this

send them to send them and let them bear the guilty burden of this

innocent soul let them bear the burden before their children and before history of this

in - no-cent soul let them bear the burden before their children and before history of this

in - no-cent soul let them bear the burden before their children and before history

wasted soul

G.P.

shroud

[Note: The musical notation includes specific expressions and dynamics (mf, ff, p, etc.) and text annotations beneath the musical notes. The text appears to be a setting of a song or a poem, with each line correspondingly placed under the musical notation.]
S. fair-minded and let them bear the guilty burden before the world let them
M-S. and let them bear the burden before the world let them
A. bear the burden before the world let them

molto accel.

S. bear the burden before their children and before history of this wasted sinless
M-S. bear the burden for their children and before history of this wasted sinless
A. bear the burden for their children and before history of this wasted sinless

j = c. 184

S. soul of this wasted sinless soul of this soul which has
M-S. soul of this wasted sinless soul of this soul which has
A. soul this wasted sinless soul of this soul of this soul which has

molto rall.

Move even closer to the audience, each speaking emphatically to one person;
retain intense eye-contact until the end.

S. suffered at the hands of the protectors of peace
M-S. suffered of the protectors of peace
A. suffered at the hands of the protectors of peace