

# To the people of conscience...

For vocal trio

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Stef Conner

**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 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."<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> 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."<sup>3</sup>

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)

3 Retrieved from <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-dossari11jan11.0.4240384.story?coll=la-opinion-center> (07/05/09)

Death Poem  
by Jumah al Dossari

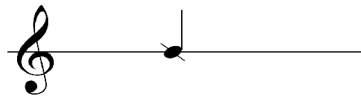
(Reprinted with permission from the University of Iowa Press)

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

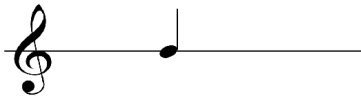
Send them to the world,  
To the judges and  
To the people of conscience,  
Send them to the principled men and the fair-minded.

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."

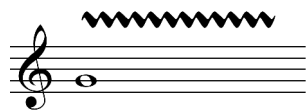
## Key to Non-Standard Notation



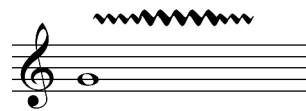
Semi-whisper - voiced but extremely breathy. Pitch may be shown on a five-line staff or left indeterminate (shown on a single-line staff in in this example).



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'
- [ɑ]: 'a' as in 'father'
- [e]: 'é' as in French 'santé'
- [ɜ]: '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.

*p* c. 25" c. 5" ♩ = 72 Freely; filled with contempt...

Soprano

Mezzo-soprano

Alto.

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

take my blood

**A** Break intense gaze...

S.

M-S.

A.

take my blood take my blood

12 *accel.* ♩ = 90 rit.

S.

M-S.

A.

take my death shroud and

death shroud the rem-nants of my bo-dy

**A tempo** (♩ = 90) rit. ♩ = 72

*p* *ff* *mf* *f* *ppp*

drone - breathe ad lib.

18 S. [e] death shroud [n]

M-S. and the rem-nants of my bo-dy

A. take my death shroud and take [m]

with a little more urgency

**B** ♩ = 90

24 S.

M-S. *mp* *pp* *pp*

take pho-to - graphs of my corpse at the grave

A. drone - breathe ad lib

[n]

30 S.

M-S. *p* *pp* *mf* *f*

lone - ly [n] world

A. *p* *mf* *f*

lone - ly decisive send them to the

36 S. *f* *f* *f* *f*

send them to the jud-ges and to the peo-ple of con-science send them to the world send

M-S. *f* *f* *f* *f*

send them to the jud-ges and to the peo-ple of con-science send them to the wor...

A. *mf* *mp* *mf*

send them to the world send them to the world send them [u]



C

Increasingly agitated... (poco accel.)

41

S. — them to the peo-ple of con-science bo-dy take my my bo-dy

M-S. — [a] - [m] - [e] bo-dy bo-dy my

A. — take my blood take take my

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

rit.

A tempo (♩ = 90)

47

S. my bo-dy my bo-dy the rem-nants of my bo-dy my blood

M-S. my bo-dy my bo-dy bo-dy take my blood

A. death shroud take my take my blood take pho-to-graphs

*f* *ff* *f* *ff* *fp* *ff* *fp* *f* *mp*

53

S. Determined; insistent send them to the peo-ple to the jud-ges to the peo-ple of con-science prin-ci-pled men

M-S. send them to the world send send them send them to the prin-ci-pled men prin-ci-pled men

A. send them to the peo-ple to the jud-ges send them to the

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

(sustain the 'n')

(sustain the 'm')

rit.

D ♩ = 72

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

59

S. — the fair - min - ded

M-S. — fair - min - ded and let them bear the guil - ty bur den be - fore the world

A. — and the fair - min - ded and let them bear the guil - ty bur den be - fore the world

*mf* *mf* *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

Break intense gaze

65 *mf* *ff* *mf* *f* *mp* *fff*

S. my death take the rem - nants of my bo dy

M-S. take my death shroud take my blood

A. take my death shroud take my blood

73 *mf* *f* *p(sub.)* *mf*

S. send them the peo ple of con science the world and let them bear the guil - ty bur - den of this

M-S. send them to con science to world and let them bear the guil - ty bur - den of this

A. send them to send them and let them bear the guil - ty bur - den of this

**E**

78 *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf*

S. in - no - cent soul let them bear the bur - den be - fore their chil - dren and be - fore his - tory of this

M-S. in - no - cent soul let them bear the bur - den be - fore their chil - dren and be - fore his - tory of this

A. in - no - cent soul let them bear the bur - den be - fore their chil - dren and be - fore his - tory

85 *pp* *pp* *pp* *p* *p* *p*

S. wa - sted soul [o] shroud

M-S. wa - sted soul [o]

A. take my blood take my death shroud

**molto accel.**

**♩ = c.160**

93

S. *mp* *mf* *f* *f*  
 my take my bo-dy my death shroud my bo - dy take my

M-S. *mp* *mf* *f* *ff*  
 take my death shroud my blood take my bo-dy the rem-nants take my bo-dy

A. *mf* *f* *ff* *f*  
 my blood take my bo-dy take my blood

**molto rall.**

**F** **♩ = 72**

99

S. *fff* *f* *pp*  
 death shroud the rem-nants of my bo - dy

M-S. *fff* *f* *mp*  
 my death shroud take pho to graphs of my

A. *ff* *fff* *f* *pp*  
 shroud my

**accel.**

**♩ = 90**

105

S. *f* *p* *pp*  
 corpse at the grave lone - ly the world

M-S. *f* *p* *mf*  
 corpse at the grave lone - ly to the world

A. *f* *p* *mf*  
 corpse lone - ly send them to the world

112

S. *f* *mf* *f* *mp*  
 send them to the jud-ges and to the peo-ple of con-science send them to the prin-ci-pled men

M-S. *f* *mf* *f* *mp*  
 send them to the jud-ges send them to the prin-ci-pled men

A. *f* *mf* *f* *mp*  
 send them to the jud-ges and to the peo-ple of con-science send them to the prin-ci-pled men

**G**

117

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

S. fair - min - ded and let them bear the guilt - y bur - den be - fore the world let them

M-S. *p* *mp* *f* *mf*  
d'the  
( 'd' from 'and' ) and let them bear the bur - den be - fore the world let them

A. *p* *mf* *f* *mf*  
and bear the bur - den be - fore the world let them

**molto accel.**

123

*f* *mp*

S. bear the bur - den be - fore their chil - dren and be - fore his - tory of this wa - sted sin - less

M-S. *f* *mp*  
bear the bur - den for their chil - dren and be - fore his - tory of this wa - sted sin - less

A. *f* *mp*  
bear the bur - den for their chil - dren and be - fore his - tory of this wa - sted sin - less

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 184$

$\text{♩} = 72$

129

*f* *ff* *mf*

S. soul of this wa - sted sin - less soul of this soul which has

M-S. *ff* *mf*  
soul of this wa - sted sin - less soul of this soul which has

A. *ff*  
soul this wa - sted sin - less 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.

135 *pp* (sustain the 'n')

S. suf - fered at the han... 5 - 10"

M-S. *pp* *ppp* 5 - 10"  
suf - fer of the pro - tec - tors of peace

A. *pp(sub.)* *ppp* 5 - 10"  
suf - fered at the hands of the pro - tec - tors of peace