

M. E. Valverde

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S k i n

for SSAA chorus and piano

About the Poet

A recent Young People's Poet Laureate for the Poetry Foundation, Naomi Shihab Nye has worked as a poet, author, teacher, and anthologist. Her accolades include numerous fellowships and awards from the International Poetry Forum and the Texas Institute of Letters, the Carity Randall Prize, the Jane Addams Children's Book Award, the Academy of American Poets' Lavan Award, the National Book Critics Circle Lifetime Achievement Award, the NSK Neustadt Prize for Children's Literature, and four Pushcart Prizes.

Nye was born to a Palestinian father and a German American mother and was raised in Ferguson, Missouri. She attended high school in Ramallah in the central West Bank and college in San Antonio, Texas where she completed a Bachelor of Arts in English and world religions, exposing herself to Methodism, Hinduism, and Zen Buddhism. Informed by her Arab-American heritage and by her various travels as an adult to Central America, the Middle East, and Asia, her works are woven together in a humanitarian tone and relay a distinct message for peace.

*Skin remembers how long the years grow
when skin is not touched, a gray tunnel
of singleness, feather lost from the tail
of a bird, swirling onto a step,
swept away by someone who never saw
it was a feather. Skin ate, walked,
slept by itself, knew how to raise a
see-you-later hand. But skin felt
it was never seen, never known as
a land on the map, nose like a city,
hip like a city, gleaming dome of the mosque
and the hundred corridors of cinnamon and rope.*

*Skin had hope, that's what skin does.
Heals over the scarred place, makes a road.
Love means you breathe in two countries.
And skin remembers — silk, spiny grass,
deep in the pocket that is skin's secret own.
Even now, when skin is not alone,
it remembers being alone and thanks something larger
that there are travelers, that people go places
larger than themselves.*

"Two Countries" from *Words Under the Words: Selected Poems* by Naomi Shihab Nye, Copyright © 1995.
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Composer's Notes

"Skin" addresses themes of healing, resilience, passage, and travel. Without mention of any particular name, age, gender, or race, the protagonist "Skin" acknowledges past traumas and ultimately expresses a profound feeling of gratitude "that there are travelers, that people go places larger than themselves." Such a notion recalls Maya Angelou's, that when we know better, we do better. The incessant pulses of the piano create the impression of how an enormous amount of time seems to slip away as we continuously strive to adapt and grow beyond life's adversities. A single line of text is sung twice, "Love means you breathe in two countries," in honor of the two worlds indicated in the title of the poem. Through these words Nye suggests that, because we have the capacity to heal, we need not abandon a part of ourselves when we move to nourish another part of humanity thirsting for life.

Completed in 2020, just before lockdowns initiated on a global scale in response to the imminent spread of COVID-19, "Skin" was finally premiered in 2022 and 2023 by members of a consortium of fourteen treble choruses from across the United States.

dur. = ca. 4'

Jointly Commissioned by
Atlanta Women's Chorus, Melissa Arasi, conductor,
the Collegiate Chorale of Agnes Scott College, Rebecca Duren, conductor,
Cornell University Chorus, Sarah R. Bowe, conductor,
Hollins University Choirs, Shelbie Wahl-Fouts, conductor,
the Manitou Singers of St. Olaf College, Therees Tkach Hibbard, conductor,
Queens College Treble Choir, Sarah R. Bowe, conductor,
See Change Treble Choir, Amy Johnson, conductor,
Sistrum, Lansing Women's Chorus, Meghan Eldred-Woolsey, conductor,
the University of Illinois Women's Glee Club, Andrea Solya, conductor,
the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Treble Choir, Shannon Gravelle, conductor,
the Women's Chorus of Dallas, Melinda Imthurn, conductor,
the Young Professionals Choral Collective, Danielle Cozart Steele, conductor,
21 V, Martin Benvenuto, conductor, and
the 2022 Alaska All-State Treble Choir, Coty Raven Morris, conductor

Skin

for SSAA chorus and piano

Naomi Shihab Nye

b.1952

Mari Esabel Valverde

b.1987

Recalling a painful memory ♩ = ca. 100
fp *poco cresc.*

Soprano 1
Skin re - mem - bers

Soprano 2
Skin re - mem - bers

Alto 1
Skin re - mem - bers

Alto 2
Skin re - mem - bers

Piano
mp

*
Ad.

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4 *fp* *poco cresc.*

S 1 Skin re - mem - bers

S 2 Skin re - mem - bers

A 1 Skin re - mem - bers

A 2 Skin re - mem bers

Pno. *sub. pp* *mp* 3

Leg. *

7 *fp* *poco accel.* *poco cresc.* **Con moto** ♩ = ca. 120 *mf* tenderly

S 1 Skin re - mem - bers how

S 2 Skin re mem - bers how

A 1 Skin re - mem - bers how

A 2 Skin re - mem - bers how

Pno. *sub. pp* *mf*

mp sempre leggiero

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10

S 1
long _____ the years grow when skin is not

S 2
long _____ the years grow when skin is not

A 1
long, how long _____ the years grow when skin is not

A 2
long, _____ how long the years grow when skin is not

Pno.

14

S 1
touched, _____

S 2
touched, _____

A 1
touched, _____

A 2
touched, _____

Pno.

mf cresc.

f

molto rub.

* *ped.* * *ped.* *

18 *mf* , *p poco cresc.*

S 1 a gray, gray tun-nel of sin-gle-ness,

S 2 a gray, gray tun-nel of sin-gle-ness,

A 1 a gray tun-nel of sin-gle-ness, feath-er

A 2 a gray tun-nel of sin-gle-ness, feath-er

mf

Pno. *mp*

22 *mf* *p*

S 1 lost swirl - ing, swirl - ing, swept

S 2 lost swirl - ing, swirl - ing, swept

A 1 lost from the tail of a bird, swirl - ing on - to a *poco dim.*

A 2 lost from the tail of a bird, swirl - ing, swirl - ing on - to a *poco dim.*

Pno.

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20

S 1
a - way...

S 2
a - way...

A 1
p
step, swept a - way by some-one who nev - er saw it was a feath - er.

A 2
p
step, swept a - way by some - one who nev - er saw it was a feath - er.

Pno.

30

S 1
cresc. mf
Skin ate, walked, slept by it - self, knew how to raise a

S 2
cresc. mf
Skin ate, walked, slept by it - self, knew how to raise a

A 1
cresc. mf
Skin ate, walked, slept by it - self, knew how to raise a

A 2
cresc. mf
Skin ate, walked, slept by it - self, knew how to raise a

Pno.
mp

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34

S 1
see-you-lat-er hand. But skin felt it was nev - er seen, nev - er

S 2
see-you-lat-er hand. But skin felt it was nev - er seen, nev - er

A 1
see-you-lat-er hand. But skin felt it was nev - er seen, nev - er

A 2
see-you-lat-er hand. But skin felt it was nev - er seen, nev - er

Pno.

Leg. *

38

S 1
known as a land on the map, nose like a cit - y,

S 2
known as a land on the map, hip like a cit - y,

A 1
known as a land on the map, gleam - ing

A 2
known as a land on the map,

Pno.

p

Leg. * *Leg.* * *Leg.* *

p poco a poco cresc.

42

S 1 and the hun - dred

S 2 *p poco a poco cresc.* and the hun - dred cor - ri - dors of cin - na - mon and

A 1 *p poco a poco cresc.* dome of the mosque and the hun - dred cor - ri - dors of

A 2 *p poco a poco cresc.* and the hun - dred cor - ri - dors of cin - na - mon and rope,

Pno. *mf* *sub. p poco a poco cresc.*

43

S 1 *mf* cor - ri - dors of cin - na - mon and rope. Skin had

S 2 *mf* rope. cin - na - mon and rope. Skin had

A 1 *mf* cin - na - mon and rope, and rope. Skin had

A 2 *dim.* *mf* cin - na - mon and rope. Skin had

Pno. *mf*

Red. *

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48

S 1
hope, that's what skin does. Heals o - ver the scarred place, makes a

S 2
hope, that's what skin does. Heals o - ver the scarred place, makes a

A 1
hope, that's what skin does. Heals o - ver the scarred place, makes a

A 2
hope, that's what skin does. Heals o - ver the scarred place, makes a

Pno.

52

S 1
road. Love means you breathe in two coun-tries.

S 2
road. Love means you breathe in two coun-tries.

A 1
road. Love means you breathe in two coun-tries.

A 2
road. Love means you breathe in two coun-tries.

Pno.
cresc. *f*

Reo. * Reo. * Reo. *

rall. A tempo

poco cresc.

50

S 1 Love means you breathe in two coun-tries.

S 2 Love means you breathe in two coun-tries.

A 1 Love means you breathe in two coun-tries.

A 2 Love means you breathe in two coun-tries.

Pno. cantabile

Lea. * Lea. * Lea. * Lea. * Lea. *

60

S 1 *sub. p* *sweetly, gratefully* *poco a poco cresc.*
And skin re-mem - bers— silk, deep

S 2 *sub. p* *sweetly, gratefully* *poco a poco cresc.*
And skin re-mem - bers— silk, deep

A 1 *sub. p* *sweetly, gratefully* *poco a poco cresc.*
And skin re-mem - bers— spin - y grass, in the pock - et

A 2 *sub. p* *sweetly, gratefully* *poco a poco cresc.*
And skin re-mem - bers— spin - y grass, in the pock - et

Pno. *p* *poco a poco cresc.*

65 *mp* *mf assuredly*

S 1 [that's] skin's se - cret own. E - ven

S 2 [that's] skin's se - cret own. E - ven

A 1 [that's] skin's se - cret own. E - ven

A 2 [that's] skin's se - ret own. E - ven

Pno. *mp* *mf assuredly*

69 *mp*

S 1 now, when skin is not a - lone, it re - mem - bers be - ing a - lone and

S 2 now, when skin is not a - lone, it re - mem - bers be - ing a - lone and

A 1 now, when skin is not a - lone, it re - mem - bers be - ing a - lone and

A 2 now, when skin is not a - lone, it re - mem - bers be - ing a - lone and

Pno. *mp* *poco dim.*

73

S 1 *mf*
thanks some - thing larg - er that

S 2 *mf*
thanks some - thing larg - er some - thing larg - er

A 1 *mf*
thanks some - thing larg - er some - thing larg - er

A 2 *mf*
thanks some - thing larg - er that

Pno. *p poco a poco cresc.*

76

S 1
there are trav - el - ers, that peo - ple go plac - es larg -

S 2
larg - er larg -

A 1
larg - er larg -

A 2
there are trav - el - ers, that peo - ple go plac - es larg -

Pno. *mf*

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80 *f* (9)

S 1 er than them - selves.

S 2 er than them - selves.

A 1 er, larg - er than them - selves.

A 2 er, larg - er than them - selves.

Pno. *mf*

poco rit. al fine

84

Pno.

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Reo.

*

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