



Carol Barnett

Longing for Home

I. Jerusalem

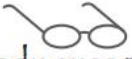
II. Mother

*III. Voyager Dust

IV. A Letter to Marianne Moore

V. Dancing Toward the Promised Land

A song cycle for mezzo, baritone, and piano


beady eyes publishing

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VOYAGER DUST

When they arrive in the new country,
voyagers carry it on their shoulders,
the dusting of the sky they left behind.
The woman on the bus in the downy sweater,
I could smell it in her clothes.
It was voyager's dust from China.
It lay in the foreign stitching of her placket.
It said: *We will meet again in Beijing,
in Guangzhou. We will meet again.*
My mother had voyager's dust in her scarves.
I imagine her a new student like this woman on the bus,
getting home, shaking out the clothes from her suitcase,
hanging up, one by one, the garments from the old country.
On washing day my mother would unroll her scarves.
She'd hold one end, my brother or I the other,
and we'd stretch the wet georgette and shake it out.
We'd dash, my brother or I, under the canopy,
its soft spray on our faces like the ash
of debris after the destruction of a city,
its citizen driven out across the earth.
We never knew
it was voyager dust. It said:
*We will meet again in Damascus,
in Aleppo. We will meet again.*
It was Syria in her scarves.
We never knew it.
Now it is on our shoulders too.

Mohja Kahf (b. 1967)

published in Mizna: LITERATURE IN REVOLUTION Summer 2012, Vol 13.1

duration: c. 3:30

Composer's note

Syrian-American poet, novelist, and professor **Mohja Kahf** emigrated to the United States with her family in 1971. She graduated from Douglass College in 1988, and later received her Ph.D. in comparative literature from Rutgers. Since 1995, she has taught at the University of Arkansas. *Voyager Dust* is the third of five songs comprising *Longing for Home*, a cycle written to celebrate Source Song Festival's fifth season. The texts all reference homecoming in various ways – the enduring wish to return to a place remembered with love and longing, as well as the uncertainty, the impossibility of doing so. In this poem, I was especially intrigued by the chance to evoke the faraway places of Beijing, Guangzhou, Damascus and Aleppo with musical gestures.

LONGING FOR HOME

III. Voyager Dust

Mohja Kahf

Carol Barnett

mezzo-soprano

$\text{♩} = 104$

mf *espress.*

When they ar -

mf *playful*

mp

mezzo

5

rive in the new coun - try, _____ voy - ag - ers car - ry it _____ on their shoul - ders, _____ the

mezzo

9

dust - ing of the sky they left be - hind. _____ The

9

3

mezzo

14

wo-man on the bus _____ in the down-y sweat-er, _____ I could smell it on her clothes.

19

It was voy-ag-er's dust from Chi-na. It lay in the for-eign

24

stitch-ing of her plack-et. _____ It said: _____ We will

p *lontano*

pp *lontano*

mezzo 29

meet a - gain _____ in Bei - jing, _____ in Guang - zhou. _____ We will

29

8^{va}

mezzo 34

meet a - gain. _____ My mo - ther had

34

pp *mf* *espress.* *mf* *mp*

mezzo 39

voy - ag - er's dust in her scarves. _____ I im - a - gine her a

39

3

mezzo

43

new stu - dent — like this wo - man — on the bus get - ting home, — shak - ing out the

3

mezzo

48

clothes from her suit - case, hang - ing up, one by one, the gar - ments from the

mp

48

p

mezzo

52

old coun - try. — On

52

3

mezzo

57 $\text{♩} = 69$
mf playful

wash - ing day — my moth - er — would un - roll — her scarves. —

57 $\text{♩} = 69$
mp

mezzo

61

She'd hold one end, my broth - er or I the oth - er, — and we'd stretch — the wet geor -

61

mezzo

66 4

gette — and shake it out. — We'd dash, — my broth - er or I, — un - der the

66

mezzo

78 *cresc.*

cit - y, _____ its cit - i - zens _____ driv - en out _____ a - cross the earth. _____

78

cresc.

mf

dim.

mezzo

83 (♩ = ♩)

mp 3

We nev - er knew it was voy - ag - er dust. _____ It

83 (♩ = ♩)

p

88

mezzo

said: _____

p lontano

We will meet a - gain _____ in Da -

88

pp lontano

Rea.

92

mezzo

mas 3 - cus, _____ in A - lep - po. _____ We will meet a - gain.

92

III. Voyager Dust

mezzo

97

mp

It was Syr - i - a in her scarves. _____

p

mezzo

101

We nev - er knew it. _____

p

Now it is on our shoul - ders

pp

Red.

mezzo

106

too.

pp