

Light Years to Lebanon  
TTBB a cappella  
CANTUS-009.1

Saunder Choi

pdf download - \$2.50



# LIGHT YEARS TO LEBANON

TTBB a cappella

Saunder Choi

Graphite™

The music from this  
publisher is exclusively  
distributed by Graphite.  
[GraphitePublishing.com](http://GraphitePublishing.com)

## Text and Translation

Light Years to Lebanon (*From Lama to Razan*)  
By Brian Sonia-Wallace

*My love, you love  
the mountains, they rise forever,  
the sunset, with its promise  
of reunion, of stars  
filling the dark space  
in between.*

*My love, you love  
the smell of sumac, the light  
of bakery windows inviting families  
to break their fasts, as we  
feed each other kisses  
in the shadow  
Of the olive grove.*

*Our love forbidden, secret, aching  
with a distance that defies time.  
Each departure a glimmer of tears  
across the expanse of sky.*

*Light years to Lebanon,  
we keep climbing  
our love a mountain  
Piercing the horizon  
where sun and sea kiss  
All the shadows away.*

*Light years to Lebanon  
under a shared sky  
burning with salt and hunger  
we trek through the dark  
and follow the stars.*

*My love, you love  
the mountains, they rise forever,  
the sunset, with its promise  
of reunion*

Arabic text and translation  
(Lebanese dialect):

ya habibti - my dear (feminine)  
/ja ɥa'bib.ti/

assama - the sky  
/as.sa'ma/

annujum - the stars  
/an.nu'ʒum/

nel ta'a - we meet  
/nɪl ta'ʔa/

samawet dawiyeh - light years  
/'sa.ma.wet dao'ʔi.ye/

---

## From the Composer

The tradition of queer love letters always intersects with the idea of distance. Just as queer people meet themselves twice in the process of coming out, they also encounter longing twice—first for the impossible lover (the unrequited love, the straight crush), and then for the lover who becomes unreachable due to time, distance, or circumstance. It is a love that is both familiar and estranged.

*Light Years to Lebanon* explores this kind of love. It stems from a fragment of a love story shared with writer Brian Sonia-Wallace during West Hollywood Pride, as part of his Pride Poets installation, where LGBTQ+ poets are invited to write for Pride attendees based on their personal stories. A young woman from Lebanon, now living in the United States, asked Brian to write for her partner, who remains in Lebanon. Her longing was palpable—an ache not just for a distant lover, but also for a beloved homeland and a life that had to be kept secret.

Yet, more than anything, her story beamed with hope—a hope that when love burns bright enough, it can bend space and time, and travel light years. With her permission, the resulting poem has been set to music.

This work was commissioned for Cantus' *The Secret Letter* through the generous support of Tom Arneson. It was premiered in the Twin Cities in April 2025. Special thanks to acclaimed tenor Haitham Haidar for help with the Arabic text. There are two versions, the original for TTBB, a cappella, and another version simplified for TB choir (with occasional divisi) and piano.

---

## Biography

Saunders Choi is an award-winning Filipino composer and choral artist based in Los Angeles. He is the 2024 recipient of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) Raymond Brock Prize for Professional Composers. His music has been performed internationally by ensembles including Conspirare, Philippine Madrigal Singers, Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Pacific Chorale, Cantus, and the Choral Arts Society of Washington.

As an arranger and orchestrator, he has written for Tony Award-winner Lea Salonga, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Orquestra Filarmónica Portuguesa, San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, and the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles.

Saunders also performs professionally with Pacific Chorale, L.A. Choral Lab, and HEX Vocal Ensemble. His studio singing work includes major film scores such as *The Lion King* (2019), *Mulan* (2020), *Turning Red* (2022), *Nope* (2022), *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), and *Superman* (2025).

He views music as advocacy, using his work to center issues of immigration, racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, climate justice, and his identity as a Filipino-Chinese artist. He serves as Director of Music at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Santa Monica and is a teaching artist with the Los Angeles Master Chorale.

[www.saunderschoi.com](http://www.saunderschoi.com)

CANTUS-009.1

Commissioned for Cantus' The Secret Letter through the generous support of Tom Arneson.

# Light Years to Lebanon

TTBB a cappella

Brian Sonia-Wallace

Saunder Choi

*poco rubato* ♩ = 60, distant, yearning  
*pp*

Tenor 1  
ooh \_\_\_\_\_ ooh \_\_\_\_\_

Tenor 2  
*pp* يا حبيبي  
ha - bib - ti \_\_\_\_\_ ya ha - bib - ti, \_\_\_\_\_ ha - bib - ti, \_\_\_\_\_

Baritone  
*pp*  
ha - bib - ti, \_\_\_\_\_ ya ha - bib - ti, \_\_\_\_\_ ha - bib - ti, \_\_\_\_\_

Bass  
*pp*  
ooh \_\_\_\_\_ ooh \_\_\_\_\_ ya ha -

Rehearsal Piano  
*pp*

For perusal purposes only.  
Do not use, copy, or distribute.

Light Years to Lebanon

*poco più mosso*, slightly opening up

4

T1. ooh oh oh

T2. ya ha - bib - ti, ha - bib ti oh ya ha -

Bar. ya ha - bib - ti, ha - bib ti, ya ha - bib - ti oh

B. - bib - ti, ooh oh

Reh Pno

*mp* *mf* *mp* *mf*

Do not use, copy, or distribute.

8

*poco rit* ..... **A**

T1. ooh My love, you love the moun - tains, they

T2. - bib - ti, ya ha - bib - ti, My love, you love the moun - tains, they

Bar. ya ha bib - ti, My love, my love,

B. ooh My love, my love,

Reh Pno

*p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

*a tempo* (♩ = 63), unfolding

Do not use, copy, or distribute.

Light Years to Lebanon

13

T1. *p* rise for - e - ver, the sun - set, *mp* with its

T2. *p* rise for - e - ver, the sun set, *mp* with its

Bar. my love, the sun - set

B. my love, the sun - set

Reh Pno *p* *mp*

17

T1. *mf* pro - mise of re - u - nion, of stars.

T2. *mf* pro - mise of re - u - nion, of stars.

Bar. *mp* oh, it's pro - mise of stars. *mf*

B. *mp* oh, it's pro - mise of stars. *mf*

Reh Pno *mf*

Light Years to Lebanon

*poco rit.*..... *p* **a tempo, più mosso** (♩ = 68)

T1. fil - ling the dark space in be - tween. ha - bib - ti,

T2. fil - ling the dark space in be - tween. ha - bib - ti,

Bar. fil - ling the dark space in be - tween. My love, my

B. fil - ling the dark space in be - tween. My love, my

Reh Pno

*poco rall.*..... *mp* **a tempo** *poco f*

T1. ya ha - bib - ti, ha - bib - ti, ha - bib - ti.

T2. ya ha - bib - ti, ha - bib - ti, ha - bib - ti.

Bar. love, my love. My

B. love, my love. My

Reh Pno

Light Years to Lebanon

28 **B** *mf* *poco f* warmly

T1. My love, \_\_\_\_\_ the light from the ba - ke - ry win - dows in -

T2. My love, you love the smell of su - mac, the light from the ba - ke - ry win - dows in -

Bar. love, you love the smell of su - mac, the light \_\_\_\_\_ in -

B. love, \_\_\_\_\_ the light \_\_\_\_\_ in -

Reh Pno

32 *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf*

T1. - vi - ting fam - 'lies to break their fasts, \_\_\_\_\_ as we feed \_\_\_\_\_

T2. - vi - ting fam - 'lies to break their fasts, \_\_\_\_\_ as we feed each o - ther

Bar. - vi - ting fam - 'lies to break their fasts, \_\_\_\_\_ as we feed \_\_\_\_\_

B. - vi - ting fam - 'lies to break their fasts, \_\_\_\_\_ as we feed \_\_\_\_\_

Reh Pno

Light Years to Lebanon

rit. .... a tempo C poco accel.

36

T1. *mp* *p* <

T2. *mp* *p* <

Bar. *mp* *p* <

B. *mp* *p*

Reh Pno *mp* *p*

kis - ses sha - dow. Our  
kis - ses in the sha - dow of the o - live grove. Our  
kis - ses in the sha - dow of the o - live grove. Our love  
kis - ses sha - dow. Our love

41

T1. *mf* *sub. p* *mf*

T2. *mf* *sub. p* *mf*

Bar. *mf* *sub. p* *mf*

B. *mf* *p* *mf*

Reh Pno *p sub.* *mf*

love for - bid - den, se - cret ach - ing with a dis - tance that de - fies  
love for - bid - den, se - cret ach - ing with a dis - tance that de - fies  
ooh ooh oh  
ooh oh

*♩* = 72, with urgency

Light Years to Lebanon

46

T1. *mp* time. a glim - mer a - cross the ex -

T2. *mp cresc.* time. Each de - par - ture a glim - mer a - cross the ex -

Bar. *mp cresc.* Each de - par - ture a glim - mer of tears a - cross the ex -

B. *mp cresc.* Each de - par - ture a glim - mer of tears a - cross the ex -

Reh Pno *mp*

49

T1. *poco f* - panse of sky, as - sa - ma *rall.* السماء

T2. *poco f* - panse of sky, as - sa - ma

Bar. *poco f* - panse of sky, sky. as - sa - ma

B. *poco f* - panse of sky, as - sa - ma

Reh Pno *poco f*

Light Years to Lebanon

**D** **a tempo, passionately**

53 *f*

T1. Light years to Le - ba - non, we keep climb - ing. Our love, a moun - tain

T2. Light years to Le - ba - non, we keep climb - ing. Our love, a moun - tain

Bar. we keep climb - ing. Our love, a moun - tain

B. oh we keep climb - ing. Our love, a moun - tain

Reh Pno

56 *mp* *mf*

T1. pier - cing the ho - ri - zon, where sun and sea kiss all the sha - dows a - way

T2. pier - cing the ho - ri - zon, where sun and sea kiss all the sha - dows a - way, a -

Bar. pier - cing the ho - ri - zon, where sun and sea kiss the sha - dows a - way a -

B. pier - cing the ho - ri - zon, where sun and sea kiss the sha - dows a - way a -

Reh Pno

Light Years to Lebanon

60 *mf* *poco f*

T1. Ya ha - bib - ti Light years un - der a shared sky.

T2. - way. Light years to Le - ba - non, un - der a shared sky.

Bar. - way. Light years to Le - ba - non, un - der a shared sky.

B. - way. Light years un - der a shared sky.

Reh Pno

64 *meno f* *mf*

T1. Burn with hun - ger through the dark and fol - low

T2. Burn with hun - ger, we trek through the dark and fol - low

Bar. *meno f bring out* *mf* Burn - ing with salt and hun - ger, we trek through the dark and fol - low the

B. *meno f* *mf* Burn with hun - ger through the dark, fol - low the

Reh Pno *meno f* *mf*

Light Years to Lebanon

68 النجوم *p* rit..... E Tempo I (♩ = 60)

T1. *p* an - nu - jum *pp* ooh ooh

T2. *p* an - nu - jum *pp* ha - bib - ti, ya ha - bib - ti, -

Bar. *mp* stars. *p* an - nu - jum *pp* ha - bib - ti, ya ha - bib - ti, -

B. *mp* stars. *p* an - nu - jum *pp* ooh ooh

Reh Pno *mp* *pp*

*poco più mosso*

72 *mf*

T1. ooh oh

T2. ha - bib - ti, ya ha - bib - ti, ha - bib ti oh

Bar. ha - bib - ti, ya ha - bib - ti, ha - bib - ti, ya ha - bib - ti

B. ya ha - bib - ti, ooh oh

Reh Pno *mf*

Light Years to Lebanon

76 *poco f*  $\text{♩} = 72$ , opening up

تلقي *poco f*

T1. nel ta - 'a nel ta - 'a sa - ma - wet daw -

T2. nel ta - 'a nel ta - 'a nel ta - 'a

Bar. oh سنوات ضوئية *poco f* ha - bib - ti sa - ma - wet daw - i - - ye,

B. nel ta - 'a sa - ma - wet daw - i - - ye, *poco f*

Reh Pno *poco f*

*poco rall.*..... **F** *a tempo* ( $\text{♩} = 72$ ), expansive, broadly

80 *mp* *f*

T1. - i - ye, ya ha - bib - ti Light years to Le - ba - non,

T2. *mp* *f* ya ha - bib - ti, Light years to Le - ba - non,

Bar. *mp* *f* ya ha - bib ti, ya ha - bib - ti ah

B. *mp* *f* ya ha - bib - ti ah oh

Reh Pno *mp* *f*

Light Years to Lebanon

83

T1. we keep climb - ing. Our love, a moun - tain pier - cing the ho - ri - zon, where

T2. we keep climb - ing. Our love, a moun - tain pier - cing the ho - ri - zon, where

Bar. we keep climb - ing. Our love, a moun - tain pier - cing the ho - ri - zon, where

B. we keep climb - ing. Our love, a moun - tain pier - cing the ho - ri - zon, where

Reh Pno

86

T1. sun and sea kiss all the sha - dows a - way. *mp* *mf* Ya ha - bib - ti

T2. sun and sea kiss all the sha - dows a - way, a - way. *mp* *mf*

Bar. sun and sea kiss the sha - dows a - way a - way. *mp* *mf*

B. sun and sea kiss the sha - dows a - way a - way. *mp* *mf*

Reh Pno

Light Years to Lebanon

90 *poco f* *meno f*

T1. Light years un - der a shared sky. Burn with

T2. Light years to Le - ba - non, un - der a shared sky. Burn with

Bar. Light years to Le - ba - non, un - der a shared sky. Burn - ing with salt and

B. Light years un - der a shared sky. Burn with

Reh Pno *f* *meno f*

94 *mf* *mp* *rit.*

T1. hun - ger through the dark, the dark

T2. hun - ger, we trek through the dark, the dark

Bar. hun - ger, we trek through the dark, the dark

B. hun - ger through the dark, dark

Reh Pno *mf* *mp*

For perusal purposes only. Do not use, copy, or distribute.

Light Years to Lebanon

98 **a tempo** *p* **rit.**.....

T1. and fol - low the stars, stars, stars, stars.

T2. and fol - low the stars, stars,

Bar. and fol - low the stars, stars,

B. and fol - low the stars, stars, stars, stars.

Reh Pno

**G** ♩ = 63, reflective

103 **pp fluttering**

T1. nu'nu'nu... nu'nu'nu...

T2. **pp fluttering** nu'nu'nu... nu'nu'nu...

Bar. **p** My love, you love the moun - tains, they rise for - e - ver,

B. **p** My love, you love the moun - tains, they rise for - e - ver,

Reh Pno **pp**

Light Years to Lebanon

107

T1. nu'nu'nu...

T2. nu'nu'nu...

Bar. *poco cresc.* *mp*  
The sun - set, with its pro - mise

B. *mp*  
The sun - set, the sun - set with its pro - mise

Reh Pno *mp*

rit. ..... a tempo ..... molto rit.....

111

T1. *pp*  
pro - mise of re - u - nion. Ya ha - bib - - ti.

T2. *pp*  
pro - mise of re - u - nion. Ya ha - bib - - ti.

Bar. *pp*  
of re - u - nion. Ya ha - bib - - ti.

B. *pp*  
of re - u - nion. Ya ha - bib - - ti.

Reh Pno *pp*

For perusal purposes only.  
Do not use, copy, or distribute.



THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK.

For perusal purposes only.  
Do not use, copy, or distribute.

For perusal purposes only.  
Do not use, copy, or distribute.



THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK.

For perusal purposes only.  
Do not use, copy, or distribute.

For perusal purposes only.  
Do not use, copy, or distribute.



For perusal purposes only.  
Do not use, copy, or distribute.

Look for more titles from Cantus at **GraphitePublishing.com**

