

Journey to the Top of the World

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Composing music can transport one to far reaches of the imagination. Commissions often inspire me to explore places, subjects, sounds, and spaces that I might never have imagined, musical and otherwise. However, I had no way of knowing that my life would change as a result of a collaborative commission with a visual artist that would lead me to the top of the world.

In 2008, Linda Reichert, artistic director of Network for New Music, one of Philadelphia's premiere new music ensembles, had a vision to create a season devoted to pairing music and the visual arts entitled "MIX." I was one of the composers commissioned and was paired with Philadelphia painter Maureen Drdak, whose fascinating and dynamic work I had admired for years. Maureen derives her inspiration from Tibetan Buddhist iconography. When we were informed that we were to collaborate, Maureen invited me to join her on a trek to a restricted, remote northern Himalayan region of Nepal, Lo Monthang in Upper Mustang, to gather material for our collaboration. Maureen had previously trekked to Upper Mustang, also known as the Kingdom of Lo (of which Lo Monthang is the ancient capital). She had been moved by the rich yet fragile culture of the region.

With partial support from The American Composers Forum and The University of the Arts, Maureen and I embarked on our research trek in the fall of 2008. We flew via Frankfurt to Delhi, spent the night there, and continued the next day to Kathmandu, a spiritually rich, colorful, and chaotic city. There, we met up with Dr. Sienna Craig, anthropology faculty at Dartmouth College, with whom we would be traveling north. Maureen and Sienna met the way so many people connect these days: random Internet connections turned into a personal relationship. Sienna brought along her nearly four-year-old daughter Aida to introduce her child to the people and places that had so shaped her life. Sienna first went to Mustang in 1993 as a college student and had been returning to the region ever since, most notably from 1995 to 1996 on a Fulbright Fellowship, and since then as part of her ongoing research on Tibetan medicine and her work with local doctors.

We flew out of Kathmandu to Pokhara, a smaller city known as a trekkers' resort with spectacular views of the Annapurna massif. The highlight of the next day was a dramatic flight through the Himalayas in an eighteen-seater plane flying so close to the mountains that I felt both riveted and terrified. The realization of where we were going and the first view of those imposing, majestic peaks brought tears to my eyes. Upon landing, we were greeted at the airport by an enthusiastic group of villagers, Sienna's Nepali "family," who were overjoyed to see Sienna and little Aida. The village of Jomsom resembled an outpost from the American West. We stayed at the Dancing Yak Lodge with renowned Tibetan medicine doctor and Sienna's long-time friend, Amchi (Tibetan for "doctor") Tshampa Ngawang. The next day we were

given our horses and began the trek—starting out in the river bed of the Kali Gandaki, the deepest river gorge in the world, which runs between Mt. Dhaulagiri (8167m) and the Annapurna (8091m) ranges. In the river we found *saligram*, 150 million year-old black ammonite fossils, sacred to the Hindus as a manifestation of the god Vishnu.

We spent long days on horseback traveling high into the stark mountains. Although a passionate trekker, having spent over two dozen summers at high altitudes in the Rocky Mountains, I had not been on a horse since my early teens in summer camp. It was not an easy trip. My belligerent horse, whom I nicknamed "Wildfire," had a mind of his own and preferred precarious rocky cliffs to the small path winding through the mountains. Aida, a remarkable child who stayed calm in the midst of traversing challenging territory, rode on Sienna's back. Sienna was an invaluable help with her connections to the people of Upper Mustang and her knowledge of the Tibetan and Nepali languages. A lasting friendship developed between us.



Ex. 1. Andrea Clearfield en route to Snow Leopard Cave

We traveled north to the village of Kagbeni. From this town, which literally means "check post," most trekkers go east to hike the Annapurna Circuit and the pilgrimage site of Muktinath. We had special government-issued permits, enabling us to pass through into the restricted area of Upper Mustang. This area is marked by its sandy high desert ecology and ranges from 2,900 to 6,800 meters. The landscape was breathtaking: a vast expanse of ancient bone and coral shaded mountains that form the shadow of the Himalaya. We came to playfully refer to this multi-hued area as "the American Southwest on steroids!"

We passed through many small villages that had created impressive irrigation systems for growing buckwheat, barley, potatoes, and sometimes mustard, used for oil. We stayed at teahouses and ate mainly *dal bhat* (rice and lentils), a tasty Nepalese traditional dish that took quite some time to prepare. On rare occasions mutton (sheep or goat meat) would be added to the standard cauliflower, potatoes, and homemade spices. I drank tea. Maureen preferred Everest (Top of the World) beer. At night we looked forward to a shot of whiskey to keep us warm.

We were en route to Lo Monthang, the cultural, religious, and economic capital of Upper Mustang, known to some because of its mysterious allure as the “forbidden kingdom” and to others as the “walled city” but to locals simply as Monthang, which means “plain of aspiration” in Tibetan. Founded in 1380 by a western Tibetan noble, Monthang is the capital of the Kingdom of Lo, which was closed to outsiders because of its sensitive border location until 1991 (and recently closed for a short duration in 2010). Essentially a part of Tibet until the unification of the Nepali nation state in the mid-eighteenth century, Lo is home to people who are ethnically Tibetan; their culture, art, and Tibetan Buddhist (and pre-Buddhist Bon) religious traditions exist as they have for centuries, making this area valuable to the world.

The art of Monthang’s incredible monasteries—masterpieces that represent a Tibetan renaissance of sorts, and that were produced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—were literally falling off the walls until recently, and their restoration has been another type of serendipitous and meaningful artistic collaboration. With financial and logistical support from the American Himalayan Foundation, the King of Lo Monthang, Jigme Palbar Bista, the twenty-fifth lineal descendant of Lo-Monthang’s founder, Amepal, brought in Italian restoration art specialists to work on this massive renovation and restoration project. The initial work—including major structural repairs—was overseen by John Sanday and Associates. Sanday is one of the world’s leading architectural restorationists, having worked on such projects as the renovation of Angkor Wat and the Forbidden City. Later work to restore the masterful wall paintings of the monasteries and the frescoes found in ancient caves has been undertaken by a team of local and Italian art restorers, led by Luigi Fieni. These monasteries and the major restoration effort have been the subject of several films including the 2003 NOVA documentary, *Lost Treasures of Tibet*, and the 2009 film by Will Parinello, *Mustang: Journey of Transformation*.

Maureen and I visited the two largest monasteries (*gompas*) in Lo Monthang, and Luigi showed us some of the techniques used to restore the artwork. I was overcome by the extraordinary beauty of the art inside. Jampa, the oldest, was my favorite, exploding with hundreds of complex and colorful mandalas. Thubchen, a large, red temple is filled with life-size images of Buddhas; I recorded several ceremonies inside its vast interior. While in Monthang, we enjoyed getting to know the Italian team and their work. One day we were allowed to join them on an excursion to a remote cave near the village of Chhosher, where they had discovered a room of exquisite Tibetan Buddhist murals a millennium old. Maureen and I will never forget how it took five to seven people of the group to hold down the ladder while one by one we bravely made our way up into the cave, hoisted up by another team at the top. There we met respected Tibetan scholars Drs. Erberto Lo Bue and Amy Heller. We were also **very** grateful for invitations from the Italians to join them at their social gatherings, where we enjoyed a respite from *dal bhat* and butter tea in favor of pasta, espresso, and fine red wine.

It soon became apparent that the culture of the area (including the ethnic music) was threatened. Lo Monthang is rapidly changing. Many young people are leaving Mustang and even Nepal in search of educational and employment opportunities. In preparation for my research, I had contacted



Ex. 2. Tashi Tsering teaching Andrea a traditional dance

John Sanday. We met with him in Kathmandu, where he suggested that I find Tashi Tsering, the royal court singer of Lo Monthang, to record some of his songs. John mentioned that he and the community were feeling the need to document Tashi Tsering’s repertoire, a wealth of *gar glu* (pronounced “kar lu” and meaning court offering songs) that had been passed down orally for hundreds of years. The *gar glu* were often used to initiate ceremonies,

lead processions, and make offerings to the King and Queen. They are traditionally sung by *emeda* musicians who comprise members of the lowest social caste (along with blacksmiths and butchers) in Mustang. Thus, we learned that Tashi Tsering’s son was unwilling to inherit his father’s occupation, and has also recently denied Tashi Tsering this traditional performance role. Tashi Tsering has no other heirs to learn his music, therefore if not recorded, these songs would be lost when he passes. Originally there were eight performers at the royal court in Lo Monthang, four who played the *daman* (copper kettle drums) and four who accompanied on *gyaling* (double-reed instruments like oboes). Today only Tashi Tsering remains.

Sanday described how to find Tashi Tsering. Since he belonged to the *emeda* caste, Tashi Tsering was required to live outside the city walls. To find him, I needed first to find his daughter who had a small restaurant in the village. With the



Ex. 3. Andrea recording Tashi Tsering singing *gar glu*

help of Amchi Gyaltso Bista, a long-time friend of Sienna's, we were able to arrange for a three-hour recording session with Tashi Tsering. During this time, the old musician not only sang for us but also taught me a traditional dance (see Ex. 2). He sang with the accompaniment of his *damon* drums (see Ex. 3). The music was often pentatonic and was performed with vocal ornamentation and accents that added a rhythmic complexity to the strophic verses.



Ex. 4. The lamas in *puja* at Lo Kunphen

Sometimes the scales would sound Bartókian—mixtures of modes with surprising added tones. The words describe the Loba culture, its origins, land, religion, horses, agriculture, clothing, and festivals.

During our stay, we were invited to a number of Tibetan Buddhist *pujas* (ceremonies) to bless family members, protect houses, and honor holy days, some involving the creation of elaborate sand paintings (see Ex. 4). These rituals allowed me to hear and learn about *yang* (chant) and the Tibetan Buddhist “ritual orchestra.” Instruments included the *rolmo* (cymbals), which were the leaders of the orchestra, the *ngà* (large double sided drum), *kangling* (Tibetan trumpets originally made from human thigh-bone and now constructed from alloyed metals), *dungchen* (long horns), *dungkar* (conch shells), *gyaling* (oboes), and *drilbu* (hand held bells). I slowly learned to appreciate the complexity of the organization of this orchestra, where the only tunes were played by the *gyaling* (see Ex. 5). The horns, trumpets and *gyaling* players used circular breathing so that very long passages were possible. They were played in twos so that when a breath was needed, the other would cover. Even though the pair played the same music, they did not try to play exactly in unison. Contrarily, slight irregularities in pitch and rhythm were considered beautiful and added a flowering to the music. (When I incorporated some of these instruments and philosophies into my music, the performing musicians from Network for New Music, many of whom play in the Philadelphia Orchestra, jokingly declared that they wanted to move to Tibet!)

In addition to the *gar glu* folk music and Tibetan Buddhist ceremonial music, I had the privilege of witnessing a Bon (pre-Buddhist) protection ritual in the village of Lubra where acclaimed anthropologist Charles Ramble was conducting research. The ceremony involved the construction of an elaborate altar that included various deities sculpted out of butter and the intestines of goats. A senior lama with his assistant chanted and played the *ngà*, *rolmo*, and *drilbu* inside the house as well as on the roof. In all of these circum-

stances, I was warmly welcomed and was permitted to make recordings. By the end of our three-week stay, I had recorded a wealth of indigenous folk music as well as 3,000+ year-old religious Buddhist and Bon ceremonies. To give a sense of place, I recorded the music of the land, sounds of wind, horse bells, streams, and village people. I transcribed the songs into Western notation to later use as part of the compositional material for the new piece.

We were honored to have been invited to stay at the home of Gyatso and Tenzin Bista, founders of the Lo Kunphen Tibetan medicine school—an important school for training youth in the ancient Tibetan herbal medical practices. We were pleased to note that women were welcomed into the tradition of this ancient practice, and there were a number of female students. Maureen and I slept in the Bista's ceremonial room—the *tha-kang* (god-room)—under rows of richly-colored *thangka* paintings and surrounded by Tibetan instruments and ritual items. The family took good care of us, and when it came time to leave, they insisted that we not pay them for their hospitality. Instead, they simply asked if we could help save their school, which was in danger of closing due to financial challenges. On September 11, 2008, at Maureen's request, one of our hosts and principal of the school, senior monk and Amchi, Tenzin Bista, wrote a *Prayer for Peace* for us, and Maureen and I both incorporated it into our work.

Maureen suggested the theme of *Lung-Ta, The Windhorse*. We felt that this theme with its symbolic complexity would lend itself well to an interdisciplinary collaboration. She drew



Ex. 5. Lamas playing the *gyaling*

images from two seminal concepts from Himalayan culture, that of *Lung-Ta*, (the Windhorse, similar to the Greek Pegasus)—this horse carries the prayers of the faithful upward to the heavens, and that of the *Rigsum Gompo*—the Three Protectors. These concepts are alive and permeate the Kingdom of Lo; one can see the three-part structures of the *Rigsum Gompo* on the hills leading to and from each village. When I saw the sketches for Maureen's paintings, I felt that their energy was calling for movement, and I invited Manfred Fischbeck, artistic director of Group Motion Dance Company,

Ex. 6. Excerpt from *Lung-Ta* (example of vocal ornaments)

to join the collaboration. His company is the longest-running modern dance company in Philadelphia. Although Manfred was not able to join us on the trek, we videotaped and recorded movements of the monks' *mudras* (ritual hand gestures) and *cham* (dances) that he could use as a starting point for the choreographic movement language.

I purchased a number of Tibetan instruments in Lo Monthang that would be played in my work, including small *damaru* (double-sided hand-held drums) for the dancers. Some of these instruments were delicate and valuable, made of old metals, shell, and bone, inlaid with semi-precious stones. Getting them down to Jomsom on horseback was no small feat. They were placed in a large bag and our horse-master was charged with their safety. Little did we know that the "instrument" packhorse would one morning suddenly decide to take off down the mountain at lightning speed, to our great dismay. Our horse-master, however, was determined to keep his word and raced after the horse, throwing himself on the animal's back, on top of the bag, to save the instruments. When we met at the bottom, we were relieved to see that the instruments were still intact.

Shortly thereafter, Maureen, Manfred, and I started work on our collaboration, which resulted in the piece, *Lung-Ta* (The Windhorse), for chamber ensemble, digital sound, visual art, and dance. The work premiered at The University of the Arts Solmssen Court in Philadelphia in March 2009 to a standing-room-only audience, receiving critical acclaim. The music, scored for nine instrumentalists, also incorporates my field recordings of indigenous folk and monastic music of the area, including music of Tashi Tsering. The musicians, in addition to playing their Western instruments, also play the Tibetan Buddhist ritual instruments brought back from the trek. Maureen's artwork, paintings of the "Windhorse," were hung like prayer flags from the ceiling of the performance venue. Each painting evoked the Windhorse and also one of the three deities in the *Rigsum Gompo*, respectively:

Manjushri, whose attributes are Wisdom and the color red-yellow; *Avalokiteshvara* (Tibetan-*Chenrezig*), whose attributes are Compassion and white; and *Vajrapani*, whose attributes are Action or Power and the color blue-black. The paintings incorporated the respective color clays that Maureen had obtained from the region—the same clays that the inhabitants of Lo Monthang (Lobas) used to anoint their religious shrines. Iron paint was used to trans-

scribe the *Prayer for Peace* as iron is considered an auspicious metal.

Lung-Ta is also the iconic symbol in many Tibetan prayer flags, which most often have as their central image a horse carrying the Jewels of Buddhism to the heavens. Integral to Himalayan/Buddhist cultures, these flags can be found along high mountain passes, in temples, and in private homes as a blessing and protection. The kinetic quality of wind and the symbol of the horse, central to the culture of Lo Monthang, inform the music, visual art, and dance. Golden threads in the paintings, symbolic of universal connection, were represented in the music by a constant D-flat pitch that can be heard from the beginning to the end of the work, dancing through the instruments; they reference the life force of the universal wind that permeates the body and the universe. The music incorporates excerpts of Tashi Tsering's melodies and employs use of some of the vocal ornaments applied to Western instruments (see Ex. 6). The climax happens two-thirds of the way through the piece, where musicians loudly sound the *kangling* and *dungkar* from a higher level and dancers dash wildly across the space with *damaru* drums; the timing is a reference to the Golden Mean proportions of the *saligram* spiral fossils. Fragments of melodies of the *gyaling* were also woven into the texture (see Ex. 7) as well as digitally recorded sounds of Lo.

The *Rigsum Gompo* had musical implications as well. *Lung-Ta* developed into three movements, each dedicated to the essence of the corresponding deity. The first movement, Wisdom, was characterized by heterophony (as in variations on a theme; there are many paths to wisdom). The second movement, Compassion, in monophony, the oneness of all things, and the third movement, Action, was constructed in polyphony, representing global action from diverse cultures. Manfred found that these forms could also be translated to the dance phrases. Each of the three deities was also represented by the sound of cymbals, bells, and

skin drums, respectively (see Ex. 8). Images associated with the deities were integrated into the choreography: clouds, wind, swords, and flowers. At the conclusion of each movement, the dancers form into the shape of a dream-like horse to the sounds of low yang chanting. In the epilogue, dancers walk slowly and purposefully toward the audience while raising a huge red/white/black prayer flag created from scarves. The “flag” is empty, inviting a personal blessing as the music transitions to Lama Tenzin Bista’s prayer, and the long D-flat drone is intoned by musicians and dancers alike.

With the help of Sienna and Maureen, I held a concert and benefit auction event in my loft, just days before the premiere of the new work, to raise money for the Lo Kunphen (Tibetan medicine) School. We were thrilled to raise enough to help them continue running their network of clinics, connected with the school, for another two years. The money

Ex. 7. Excerpt from *Lung-Ta* (example of *gyaling* melodies)

was delivered via Drokpa, a non-profit organization that Sienna and her husband, Kenneth Bauer, founded to support Himalayan communities. Tenzin Bista traveled all the way from Lo Monthang, Nepal to Philadelphia for the concert fundraiser that I held in my home, and there I also recorded him reading the prayer that he had written for us in Lo Monthang, “A Prayer for the Planet.” Maureen incorporated

the words of the prayer in Tibetan script on the bottom portion of her paintings, and the recording of his voice is heard at the conclusion of *Lung-Ta*.

Tenzin spent the night in my home and Sienna and I prepared for him, to the best of our ability, a Tibetan-style diet. It was quite a sight as Tenzin saw and heard a piano for the first time. I performed Debussy for him on my Steinway piano at home. Smiling, he stuck his head under the raised lid to watch the hammers and strings and to feel the resonance. Maureen and I traveled with Sienna and Tenzin to New York City, where they

Ex. 8. Excerpt from *Lung-Ta* (example of cymbals in *Manjushri*)

gave a joint lecture on Lo Monthang at the Latse Contemporary Tibetan Cultural Library. Later that night we were all invited to attend a Mustangi wedding in Queens with traditional food, singing, and dancing. I was surprised to learn that a large community from Mustang, more than 1,000 people, have resettled in New York, mostly in Brooklyn and Queens.

After the premiere, *Lung-Ta* received several more performances in Philadelphia. In 2009, *Lung-Ta* was presented as a gift to His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, as an initiative for World Peace. The premiere of the concert version was given by Network for New Music in November 2010. A Midwest premiere of *Lung-Ta* is scheduled for May 2012 at the University of Chicago's Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, to be performed by the University of Chicago New Music Ensemble under the direction of Barbara Schubert; I have been invited as a guest artist. (Maureen has just received a 2011 Fulbright Award to Nepal to pursue repoussé metalwork and painting.)

A year went by and the project widened. With Tashi Tsering's failing health and the need to document his music, there was increasing interest from the community in a project to make a complete recording of Tashi Tsering's repertoire, transcribing the Tibetan lyrics with English translations. Dr. Craig suggested that her former student from Dartmouth, ethnomusicologist Katey Blumenthal, become involved in the project. Blumenthal's past ethnographical research with musicians in Ladakh, ancestors of Tashi Tsering and bearers of a similar musical tradition, as well as her work with the Royal Government of Bhutan's Ministry of Education and the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, contributed to a trans-regional understanding of Loba music. Katey used the initial field recordings to help generate interest for this project and received funding from the World Oral Literature Project at the University of Cambridge, dedicated to the preservation and documentation of world oral heritage, the Sager Family Foundation, dedicated to Himalayan culture, and other private donors. She embarked on a trek to Lo Monthang in 2009 to record Tashi Tsering's court offering songs.

In May/June of 2010, I traveled back to Lo Monthang with Katey, with support from the Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation in NYC and The University of the Arts, to complete the Tashi Tsering project and also to investigate the recording of other folk music from the area. We did not have funding for horses this time and so we trekked by foot. This was by far a more challenging ascent. A twenty-six-year-old powerhouse, Katey all but skipped over those ten mountain passes with her heavy pack. Almost twice her age, even as a veteran hiker, I was secretly praying for a horse (even Wild-fire would do). Fortunately, with Katey's cheerful ongoing encouragement I made it safely up to Lo Monthang, where the Loba community warmly greeted us.

The following day we met with Tashi Tsering, who was pleased to see us but saddened about the recent confiscation of his *daman* drums due to local controversies over his performance practice. It seemed as though the era of *Emeda* musicians offering *gar glu* music had come to an end. Tashi Tsering spent a number of days recording songs for us, voice

only. Other members of the Lo Monthang community were enthusiastic about performing for us. Among these were students, Tibetan refugees, and three women singers in the community—Kheng Lhamo, Yandol, and Pema Dolkar—who had a vast knowledge of *tro glu*, common folk songs, that they learned from their elders. Dance traditionally accompanies these songs, and the women performed dance steps to the music, adding a dynamic percussive element.

We stayed at the Mystique Hotel, and I remember a special night where Tashi Tsering joined the three ladies in song and dance in the small dining area. A motley crew at the Inn joined in, including a *sadhu* (wandering holy man, who had been living in a cave for eight years and had just emerged), a Swiss film-maker doing a story on him, a handsome French trekker, a Bob Marley-esque Tibetan refugee with dreadlocks, Katey (who played a mean guitar), and Karsang and Karchung, two young Loba women who ran the hotel.

One day we traveled into the high plateau less than a mile from the Tibetan border, where we recorded a young *dramyen* (Tibetan guitar) player in his home. Another excursion took us into a Tibetan Buddhist cave complex high in the cliffs dating back to at least 2000 BC, where stunning ancient wall paintings were hidden. It is known as the Snow Leopard cave because the rare creature was sighted there. Accessing this cave required climbing down a fixed rope into a small opening; the yak-hide rope was attached to the cliff above. (See Ex. 1, a photo of Andrea en route to the Snow Leopard Cave.) Katey, who speaks Tibetan, worked with translator Karma Wangyal Gurung to start the translation process of the songs. After a month, we had accomplished our goals. In total, we recorded over 130 songs not previously documented, including the completed recording of Tashi Tsering's *gar glu* repertoire.

Prompted by Katey, I shared my earlier work, *Lung-Ta*, with Tashi Tsering and the three women singers, none of whom were familiar with Western music. They listened on my iPod (see Ex. 9). Deeply moved by Tashi Tsering's heartfelt response, translated as "this music is a place where your world and my world meet," my belief is strengthened that the world connects through the global language of art.



Ex. 9. Translator Karma Wangyal with the three Loba singers: Kheng Lhamo, Yandol, and Pema Dolkar, and Andrea

Katey and I became interested in ways that the music could be given back to the community, not only to preserve but also to educate the younger generations about these centuries-old songs. Our initiatives now include a library enhancement project that will build a section dedicated to local culture in the Lo Monthang Community library that would include not only music but also dance, art, language, literature, and local medicine. We hope that this is only the beginning of a large and growing educational initiative in Lo Monthang to preserve and teach Loba history. We bought dozens of Mustangi and Loba books, DVDs, and VHS tapes and sent them along with boom boxes, headphones, and batteries back to Lo Monthang. We were happy to hear from the librarian Deekyi that our package had arrived safely.

It is also our hope to publish Tashi Tsering's repertoire into a songbook with accompanying CD so that the young people from Mustang could have access to these songs, and make certain that they are not lost. We will be working with a local non-profit, the Lo Gyalpo Palbar Jigme Foundation, where the songbook would be distributed through Lo Monthang and beyond. Through our various interactions with the community during our fieldwork, other interests in Loba cultural preservation have emerged, including the translation of a history book of Lo Monthang, written by the former Kenpo of Chode Gonpa. Since it currently only exists in Tibetan, Katey plans to contact the Mustangi community in Queens, NY, for assistance with the translations and to generate interest in the project within their community. If more funding is available, I will begin to transcribe the songs into musical notation.

I was commissioned by Network for New Music to write another chamber piece inspired by this recent visit. In preparation, I studied how trope-like ornaments were notated and employed in Tibetan chant. I had also wanted to incorporate the low resonant tones of the *dungchen* (long horn), so while in Kathmandu I inquired about how to purchase one. A Tibetan nun friend whom I call Ani Jane (known in Nepal as Ani Chog Sum Drolma) suggested that she bring several monks from her monastery to help me. They tested many *dungchen* in the store searching for just the right mouthpiece, loud blasts carrying out into the streets of already noisy Thamel. When we found

one I prepared to purchase it but the monks advised me that it was not auspicious to buy only one—the horns traveled (and were played) in pairs. I was already questioning the practicality of getting a single *dungchen* back to Philadelphia by way of Bavaria (where I was composer in residence before returning home). Two *dungchen* on the journey seemed implausible. However, the gods must have looked favorably on the mission since my long horn passed through the various securities. Coincidentally, Ani Jane was headed to the United States. She generously offered to take one of the *dungchen* with her. The two instruments were reunited in Philadelphia this fall and were played in the premiere of my new work by Ani Jane and Paul Kryzywicki, formerly Principal Tuba player in the Philadelphia Orchestra. (As an

KAWA MA GYUR

Commissioned by Network for New Music
with support by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage,
through the Philadelphia Music Project

Andrea Clearfield, 2010

Score in C

Begin digital sound recording on the downbeat of measure 1.
Con forza ♩ = 86 misterioso, lo stesso tempo

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Ex 10. Excerpt from *Kawa Ma Gyur*

aside, I was photographed for the Bavarian newspaper holding my *dungchen* in front of a castle. The caption read something like “From Dungchen to Alhorn.”)

Three other composers were also commissioned to write new works based on my Lo Monthang field recordings: Eric Moe, Michael Djupstrom, and Tony Solitro. With permission from Tashi Tsering and the women singers in Lo, I sent selected songs to the composers who integrated the material in startlingly different ways. The works were premiered on November 21, 2010 in Philadelphia by Network for New Music at a sold-out concert entitled “Trade Winds of Tibet,” preceded by a panel discussion with Linda Reichert, Eric Moe, and myself on the creative process, and Katey Blumenthal, on views from an anthropologist’s perspective.

My new work was entitled *Kawa Ma Gyur* (The Unchanging Pillar). The music draws from the *gar glu* and *tro glu* melodies that we recorded as well as sounds of Tibetan Buddhist monastic ritual, rhythms of dance steps, *dramyen*, and the natural sounds of Lo. We discovered that Tashi Tsering and the women singers knew a song entitled *Kawa Ma Gyur* (The Unchanging Pillar), however the melodies that they remembered were radically different. This in turn led to a further exploration of heterophony as a way to express variations encountered in oral traditions. Scored for oboe, bassoon, percussion, violin, viola, and cello with optional *dungchen*, the work is performed with accompanying electronic sound created from my source field recordings and manipulated using digital software; the live music and electronic component are intertwined throughout. Whereas in *Lung-Ta* I juxtapose source-recording fragments from the first trek in an untreated form, in *Kawa Ma Gyur* I wanted to create more of a merging. I experimented with new ways to blend the live and electronic elements; rather than a bridge between two different worlds and cultures, I wanted to create a new space where the two meet. *Kawa Ma Gyur* was a departure for me stylistically, and it is a language that I wish to further explore (see Ex. 10).

Kawa Ma Gyur is about what remains constant yet what also changes. “Gyur,” meaning “change,” is also a symbol used in notated liturgical Tibetan chant to indicate different types of undulating lines; these phrases occur with microtonal pitch variations in the winds and strings. The title of the work is an ironic reference to much that we witnessed that is changing in Lo Monthang, including the end of an era of *gar glu* performance, political instability, environmental flux, and new roads, which will eventually bring cars and more tourists into this ancient horse culture, propelling Lo Monthang into the twenty-first century.

I marvel at how life can bring things around in a spiral. I had an early interest in ethnomusicology and even considered pursuing a graduate degree at Wesleyan in this field. The creative urge, however, was ultimately a stronger calling. Now, with a joint commission from The Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Girlchoir to write a choral cantata that will incorporate some of the Monthang

tro glu melodies in collaboration with the Tibetan community in Philadelphia, I am finding a way to merge both paths into creative work.

I am deeply grateful to Maureen Drdak, Dr. Sienna Craig, Katey Blumenthal, Network for New Music, The Rubin Foundation, The American Composers Forum, The University of the Arts, and to all of my new friends in Lo Monthang, Nepal, who made these journeys two of the richest and most profound of my lifetime.

Articles about *Lung-Ta* collaborative:

<http://asianart.com/articles/lungta/index.html> (asianarts.com)
<http://www.southasianarts.org/2011/01/lungta-collaborative-living-blessings.html> (South Asian Arts Journal)
<http://www.andreaclearfield.com/works/chamber/lung-ta/>
<http://www.metro.us/philadelphia/entertainment/article/696344—a-not-quite-lost-art>
<http://www.metanexus.net/magazine/tabid/68/id/10779/Default.aspx>

Videos about *Lung-Ta* collaborative:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbCrVJHX10Y>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vX74Pmp5WnM>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oBI9GMwmS0>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSX8wAh2Ktc&feature=related>

Other links of interest:

www.maurendrdak.com
www.groupmotion.org
<http://www.networkfornewmusic.org>
<http://www.siennacraig.com>
<http://www.drokpa.org>
folkmusicarchive.blogspot.com/
<http://www.luigifieni.com/>
http://tshampafoundation.org/jomsom_center.htm

Andrea Clearfield is an award-winning American composer of music for orchestra, chorus, chamber ensembles, dance, and multimedia collaborations. Her works are performed widely in the U.S. and abroad. Commissions include works for The Philadelphia Orchestra, Carol Wincenc, The Debussy Trio, the Los Angeles Master Chorale, Turtle Creek Chorale, Mendelssohn Club, Orchestra 2001, and Network for New Music. She has composed nine cantatas for voices and orchestra; her new cantata, Les Fenêtres, for Singing City and the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, was premiered at the Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts on April 30, 2011. Dr. Clearfield was the recipient of a Fellowship at the American Academy in Rome from the American Composers Forum, 2010 and has also been awarded fellowships at Yaddo, the MacDowell Colony, and Virginia Center for the Creative Arts among others. She serves on the composition faculty at The University of the Arts. Clearfield is also the founder and host of the Philadelphia Salon concert series, now approaching its 25th year; the series features contemporary, classical, jazz, electronic, dance, and world music and was winner of Philadelphia Magazine’s 2008 “Best of Philadelphia” award. More at www.andreaclearfield.com.