

**ANDREA CLEARFIELD**

**RABSONG SHAR**

*(THE EASTERN ROOM OF THE PALACE)*

*soprano, electronics and chamber orchestra*

2016

## **INSTRUMENTATION**

**Soprano Solo**

**Flute**

**Oboe**

**Bb Clarinet**

**Bass Clarinet**

**Percussion (3)**

**Harp**

**Piano**

**Violin**

**Viola**

**Cello**

**Bass**

## **PERCUSSION LIST**

### **Percussion 1**

Marimba

Vibes

Glock

Bass bow (for bowed vibes)

Drilbu Bell (or any bell - M)

Suspended Cymbal (H)

Rolmo Cymbal (or small crash cymbal)

Slapstick (or 2 pieces of wood)

### **Percussion 2**

Snare

2 Timbales (H, M)

Sus. Cym (H)

Triangle (M)

Drilbu Bell (or any bell - L)

Metal (Singing Bowl, Bundt Pan or any metal)

Woodblock (L)

### **Percussion 3**

Snare

2 Toms (M, L)

B.D.

Tam-Tam (Gong - M)

Triangle (L)

Ting-Sha Bells (2 bells on a cord)

Woodblock (H)

**Composer can provide Tingsha Bell, 2 Drilbu Bells, Rolmo Cymbal**

## Notes

This piece is inspired by my fieldwork in the restricted, remote Himalayan region of Lo Monthang in Upper Mustang, Nepal, near the Tibetan border. There I recorded indigenous folk music with Katey Blumenthal, ethnomusicologist and anthropologist. The people of Upper Mustang are ethnically Tibetan; the region is one of the last remaining enclaves of traditional Tibetan culture. Much is in flux and this ancient horse culture is threatened. Efforts are being made to preserve their music, dance, medicine, religion, language and art. Under the auspices of the Rubin Foundation, Katey and I recorded over 130 songs that had not been previously documented. These included the complete repertoire of *gar-glu* (court offering songs) of the last royal court singer Tashi Tsering. The songs, passed down from father to son for centuries, tell of the history of the people in this region; their festivals, weddings, origins, way of life.

*Gar-glu* repertoire was performed by members of the Emeda caste, low in the caste system. There was originally an ensemble of eight musicians performing *gar-glu* repertoire. Now only Tashi Tsering remains. Traditional ways are being replaced with more modernity, including the feudal and caste system. Tashi Tsering no longer sings in his traditional role; the era of *gar-glu* singing has ended.

Our recordings are now in the Cultural Library in Lo Monthang and are part of the University of Cambridge World Oral Literature Project: "an urgent global initiative to document and make accessible endangered oral literatures before they disappear without record." In NYC these songs are now taught to Mustangi children as part of a new Himalayan language and culture preservation initiative.

I chose to write a piece for The University of Arkansas' New Music Ensemble that was inspired by the song *Rabsong Shar* (The Eastern Room of the Palace), a favorite of the former King of Lo Monthang, Jigme Dorje Palbar Bista (the last king in a lineage dating from 1380, who stepped down in 2010). *Rabsong Shar* is about a room in the palace in Lo Monthang where the King and Queen live that has a door on the East side. Inside the room, the King wears a golden hat and the Queen wears turquoise and coral beads. Tashi Tsering played this song to welcome the King and Queen.

I recorded Tashi Tsering singing this song in 2008. He accompanied himself with a pair of skin drums called *nha* (like small conga drums). Fragments of the traditional Loba words, melody and rhythms from the first stanza of the song are incorporated into this work, framed in my contemporary music language. There are elements informed by vocal ornaments particular to Tashi Tsering's singing style. There are also percussive elements based on Tashi Tsering's drum rhythms. Electronics at the beginning and end of the work were constructed from my original recording of *Rabsong Shar* in Lo Monthang with Tashi Tsering playing the drum. The work deals with memory, loss and change. It is also about song as a way to tell the story of a people and to celebrate, honor and preserve a culture and its language.

With gratitude to Alex Shapiro and Carol Moore, whose studios provided time and space within which to create this work.

*Andrea Clearfield*

Translation by Katey Blumenthal. Transliteration by Katey Blumenthal and Andrea Clearfield.

## *Rabsong Shar (The Eastern room of the palace)*

The King stays on the right side of Rabsong Shar.  
In this room my kind king stays  
The brightness of the gods is the king's generation  
The king's crown of gold, peacock feathers and ornaments.

The queen stays on the left side of the Rabsong Shar  
In this room my kind queen stays  
In the brightness of the gods is the queen's generation  
The queen who wears turquoise and coral jewels.

Inside the Lo Valley the king's strong horses are kept  
After three days, adorn the horses with saddles  
A golden saddle for the king and a turquoise saddle for the queen  
All the world is brilliant, and when the king and queen appear they are radiant  
Gods and goddesses protect them  
And the sun and moon revolve around them.

1st stanza transliterated:

Rab song shar gyi gwas phyog nas  
Bdag gi phyon po bjang po bzhugs  
'da gsar lha 'I dung rgyung bshugs  
Geig cha kha la gnyis cha Inoms  
Mi dbang rba bya gser gi brom togs lthoms

### **Pronunciation Guide**

- Vowels are generally pronounced in their pure form (Ah, Eh, Ee, Oh, Oo) and without a diphthong unless indicated by a series of connected vowel.
- The consonant 'H' is sung with an aspiration, like in the word "Khar"
- ZH combinations are pronounced soft, almost like the American 'SH'
- CH combinations are hard, like the American word "Chair"

### **Performance Notes**

Two electronic tracks are played as part of this score. The first one begins the piece, with the downbeat for performers at 15 seconds. The second track begins at m. 190. Each track includes fade in and out. Composer will supply electronic tracks.

Accidentals apply only to the octave in which they appear. Some courtesy accidentals are included for ease.

# PERCUSSION KEY

Musical score for Percussion 1, 2, and 3. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of five measures. Percussion 1 (top staff) plays: Sus. Cym -M (Measure 1), Rolmo Cymbal (Measure 2), Slapstick (Measure 3), and Drilbu Bell (Measure 4). Percussion 2 (middle staff) plays: Snare (rim) (Measure 1), Snare (Measure 2), Timbale - H (Measure 3), Timbale - M (Measure 4), and Sus. Cym. - H (Measure 5). Percussion 3 (bottom staff) plays: Tom-M (Measure 1), Tom-L (Measure 2), B.D. (Measure 3), Gong (Tam-Tam) (Measure 4), and Ting-Sha Bells (Measure 5).

Musical score for Perc. 2 and Perc. 3. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of five measures. Perc. 2 (top staff) plays: Drilbu Bell (Measure 1), Metal (Measure 2), Woodblock (Measure 3), and Triangle (Measure 4). Perc. 3 (bottom staff) plays: Triangle (Measure 1), Woodblock (Measure 2), Snare (Measure 3), and rests (Measures 4 and 5).

C Score

# RABSONG SHAR

(The Eastern room of the palace)

Commissioned by the McIlroy Professor Endowment for Jamal Duncan  
and the Arkansas New Music Ensemble

Based on a traditional Loba *gar-glu* song  
Translation by Katey Blumenthal and Karma Wangyal Gurung  
Recorded by Andrea Clearfield and Katey Blumenthal

Andrea Clearfield  
February, 2016

Begin Electronic Track 1  
Conductor downbeat at 0:15

Moderato ♩ = 86

Perc. 2 **Snare** *Snare off, play on rim with wood*  
*ppp*  
*sul tasto to.....sul pont to.....sul tasto*

Vla. *pppp*  
*sul tasto to.....sul pont to.....sul tasto*

Vlc. *pppp*  
*sul tasto to.....sul pont to.....sul tasto*

Fl. *pp*  
*very slow gl.*  
*pp*

B♭ Cl. *ppp*  
*pp*

Perc. 1 **Marimba** *sticks on rim of bar*  
*pp*

Perc. 2 *on drum (Snare off)*  
*pp*

Perc. 3 **Gong** *rub around edge with rubber mallet or super ball*  
*ppp* **Tom-M** *on rim*  
*pp*

Vln. *pppp*  
*p*  
*sul tasto to.....sul pont to.....sul tasto*

Vla. *pppp*  
*sul tasto to.....sul pont to.....sul tasto*

Vlc. *pppp*  
*sul tasto to.....sul pont to.....sul tasto*

9

Fl. *emerging from cl. pitch* *very slow gl.* **ppp** 4 3 3

B♭ Cl. **pp** 4

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3 *strike quietly in sweet spot* *rub around edge with rubber mallet or super ball* Tom-M rim **pp**

Pno. *inside piano: scrape low strings with finger nail* **pp**

Vln. *sul tasto* *sul tasto.....to sul pont.....to sul tasto* **ppp** *col legno, ricochet repeat figure freely* **p**

Vla. *sul tasto to.....sul pont to.....sul tasto* **p** *sul tasto to.....sul pont to* **pp**

Vlc. **pp**





16

Fl. *p*

B♭ Cl. *pp*

B. Cl.

Perc. 1

Perc. 3 *mp* with wood B.D. Tom-L.

Hp.

Pno. *sim.*

Vln. *n.*

Vla. *pp*

Vlc. *col legno, ricochet repeat figure freely* *n.*





25

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Perc. 1

Perc. 3

Hp.

Pno.

S

Vln.

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

*p*

To Glock

*p*

Rab

*pp*

*p*

*arco*

The image shows a page of a musical score for 'Rabsong Shar', page 13. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. The instruments and parts included are:

- B♭ Cl.** (B-flat Clarinet): Measures 29-30, dynamic *p*.
- B. Cl.** (Bass Clarinet): Measures 29-30, dynamic *p*.
- Perc. 1**: Measure 31, *Rolmo Cymbal*, dynamic *mp*, instruction: "hold cymbal horizontally, play with hard mallet".
- Perc. 2**: Measure 31, *Sus. Cym.* (Suspended Cymbal), dynamic *mp*, instruction: "hard mallet".
- Perc. 3**: Measures 29-32, rhythmic accompaniment.
- Hp.** (Harp): Measures 29-32, dynamic *mf*, instruction: "resonant".
- Pno.** (Piano): Measures 29-32, dynamic *p*, instruction: "ord. on keys".
- S.** (Soprano): Measures 29-32, lyrics "song" and "shar", dynamic *mf*.
- Vln.** (Violin): Measures 29-32, dynamic *mp*, instruction: "ord.".
- Vla.** (Viola): Measures 29-32, dynamic *mp*.
- Vlc.** (Violoncello): Measures 29-32, rhythmic accompaniment.
- Cb.** (Contrabass): Measures 29-32, dynamic *mf*, instruction: "(sul G)".

The score is divided into three measures. Measure 1 (measures 29-30) shows the initial entry of the woodwinds. Measure 2 (measure 31) introduces the percussion and harp. Measure 3 (measure 32) continues the orchestral texture with the vocal line. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (*p*, *mp*, *mf*), articulation (accents), and performance instructions (e.g., "ord. on keys", "ord.", "sul G").

Fl. *mp* *mf*

Ob. *mp*

B♭ Cl. *mp*

B. Cl.

Perc. 1 *p* Glock with wood

Perc. 2 *p* Timbale-H wood

Perc. 3

Harp

Pno. *mp*

S *(8<sup>th</sup>) percussive, with energy*  
sha sha sha sha sha sha sha sha sha sha sha Rab

Vln. *ord.*

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb. *pizz.*