

The Blind Tongue

music theater for soprano, baritone, flute, and marimba

dédié à Catherine Issalys

music by Mark Warhol

words by Gary Joyner

Introduction

Scene 1

Scene 2

Scene 3

STAGING INSTRUCTIONS

The Blind Tongue is a work of music theater requiring a set, costumes, and props. Note the video of a performance on the composer's website.

ACCIDENTALS WITHIN A MEASURE

normal convention : an accidental affects all notes of the same pitch in the same octave

LICENSES AND FEES

performing rights organization : ASCAP
publisher : Deaf Smith Publishing
publisher email : mw@markwarhol.net

COMPOSER INFORMATION

web : www.markwarhol.net

The Blind Tongue

by Gary Joyner

INTRODUCTION

The principles dress in white. Flute enters and begins playing. The strange flute sound played is the music of the language of the unreadable message. Flute, She, and He move in a ritual circle.

He: In-n-n the beginning
In the beginning

She: The word The wor-r-r-rd
Sta-ma-ma-ma-ma-merred

He: Caved in on itself

She: The word escaped
The word esca-a-a-aped

He: Ic-c-c-ce

She: Bla-a-a-ade Bla-a-a-ade

He: Blood Blood Blood

She: Amulet-let-let

He: How-w-w-wl

He emerges, born from their circle. They move away, He follows Flute, reaching for her. Flute stops playing, turns to him, leans over and extends flute toward him. They can't quite manage to touch. Lights dim. When they come up again we see:

He stands alone.

He: (Sung)
Some stammering god spit
I was hurled into being
Against my will

(Spoken)
No, that's not right

(Sung)
Existence was injected
An inoculation of enthusiastic quickening
Immunized this daily disease

(Spoken)
Try again

(Sung)
Someone sent a message
That never arrives
In a language I cannot read

In the beginning was the word
And the word was night
And the night was a stammering circle
Of repetition

He stops singing, looks to the left, to the right, and down. He suddenly looks straight ahead and says clearly. . .

(Spoken)
Begin

SCENE I

The man enters. He carries a wolf head.

He: Ah, this one
It's been weeks
An obscure message in blood
On the wall
Here

He sees She off to one side. Her head is draped with a large cloth. She takes a step one way, stops, takes a step another way. Her fingers individually move, struggling for vision. Through the rest of the scene he moves around her in a diminishing spiral until he is near enough to remove the covering from her head.

He: (Spoken)
Something new

She: He had the head of a rooster
Aquarium eyes
Leaky birdcage heart
Beating da-DA, pa-PA, da-DA, pa-PA
He was simplicity
A museum coat rack
An open window
Calm at the chessboard's center

He: Sister
I hope your presence
Completes this dream
Mirror the creeping hunger
Of its walls

(Whispers)
Come to me

She: Do you see him?

He: I hear the decay of ice

She: But do you see him?

He: My nostrils flare
The stench of rotting snow

She: What do you see?

He: Mouth beyond mouth
The horizon lifts its lip
Blood smeared teeth
Laugh like a startled jackal

She: You confuse me

He: (Looking her down and up)
I see hidden wisdom

She: (Moans)

He: I see a heaving breast
Wordless
Animal
Breath

She: Temptation

The man reaches out and whips off the drape. A red sash is bound around her head and eyes. She remains blinded.

He: (Looking out)
Begin again.

Blackout

SCENE II

The woman is seated at a table. She is a seer. She wears the red sash around her head, like a gypsy. The wolf head, a crystal ball, cards, and cups on her table. He enters, lays payment on her table. She puts it in her clothing.

He: I return.

She: Return?

He: Without end

She: It means nothing to me

He: (He holds up a picture of himself)
What do you see?

She: I see a man

He: (Spoken)
Ha! Wrong!

(Sung)
As always, you are wrong
The image of a man
Why do I come back?
You never get it right

(Presents himself, challenging)
What do you see?

She: Now I see a man

He: (Spoken)
Wrong again!
(Sung)
You are hopeless
I too am an image
Dreaming of dreaming a dream

She: What do you want?

He: Throw light on a mystery

She: Light creates shadow

(Looking into the cards or crystal)
A dying red ember in a bowl of darkness

He: (He looks over her shoulder)
What do you see?

She: First you must confess.

He: There is nothing.

She: Confess!

He: (thinks a moment)
In my home
No word can live
I am naked
Before I undress

She: More.

He: A woman
With teeth torn from a wounded fox
I shamelessly watched her
Lean against a tree
And weep like a lion in church
The flesh is weak.
Wash it away!
Now, what do you see?!

She: (laughs at his pretension as she repeats his words)
The flesh is weak

He: (Spoken softly)
Tell me what you see.

She: Rubies drip from a blue cloak
And a tongue numbed by ice
No more

He: What do you see?

She: No more!

He: Say it!

She: A locked door
Lonely thirst
A blade of steel
Hidden in a block of ice
Numbing cold
Painless, a tongue is shredded
The taste of blood exciting flesh-lust
Ribbons of scarlet
Cascade from an unbelieving mouth

He: No solution

She: No solution?
Then perhaps no problem
Only night following day

(Laughs long)

He: (Looking out)
Again

Blackout

SCENE III

The stage is dark. We can only see the man and woman in silhouette. When they sing or speak they turn on a flashlight and hold it under their chins.

She: Icons of memory
Cast brilliant shadows
Across a landscape of holy need

He: (Spoken)
She wore a silver amulet
In the shadows below her neck.

He: (Moans)
The torment
When she bent forward
I ran my tongue over her body
Tracing unknown letters on her breast

She: (Leans toward him and laughs
sensually deep in her throat)
Icons of memory
Cast brilliant shadows
Across a landscape of holy need

He: Dry at first
Catching on her skin
Then pink streaks
In a moist trail.

She: I melted with each pass

She: (He points flashlight at her face)
A noise at the door.

He: (She points flashlight at his face)
It's nothing
A messenger who never arrives

She: (He points flashlight at her face)
We embraced
In a fury of snaps and snarls

He: (She points flashlight at his face)
Have we progressed?

She: (He points flashlight at her face)
There is no progress
There is endless variation

(Both flashlights find the red sash extending from the mouth of the wolf head. Stage lights up.)

He: A yelp
A bellow
A howling

She: A yelp
A bellow
A howling
I am natural

He: I bite a bellow
A howling
I am natural
I bite nature on the thigh

She: Midwives revolt
Infants give
Midwives revolt
Infants give birth in the

He: Revolt
Infants give birth in the sunlight
And are sunlight
And are dragged beneath the revolt

She: Infants give birth in the sunlight
And are dragged beneath the sky

He: By red & white sunlight
And are dragged beneath the sky

She: By red & white suspenders

He: Coyotes crawl from their suspenders

She: Coyotes crawl from their holes

He: And are dragged beneath the sky
By red & white suspenders

She: Coyotes crawl from their holes

He: And erupt in their holes

She: And erupt in support

He: Another yelp at being holes

She: And erupt in support

He: Another yelp at being reborn

Both: With a broom to dust off
The yelp at being reborn
With a broom to dust off the moon
And howl again at the moon
And howl again at something beyond

They sing together wordlessly, in the new language. The music that finally fades up and away like the howls they described. They freeze in an embrace, he realizes this one has run it's course.

He: (Looking out)
Again...

Slow fadeout

The Blind Tongue

♩ = 50 introduction - music of the language of the unreadable message. . . *mp* spoken. . .

She

The word The wor-r-r-rd Sta-ma-ma-ma-ma-merred

He

p spoken. . .

In-n-n the beginning In the beginning

Fl.

(breath tones)

p *mp*

Mba.

4

She

The word escaped The word esca-a-aped Bla-a-a-ade Bla-a-a-ade Amulet-let-let

He

mp *mf*

Caved in on itself Ic-c-c-ce Blood Blood Blood

Fl.

mf

Mba.

7

She

(silent)

He

f (silent) He emerges, born from their circle. . .

How-w-w-wl

Fl.

f

Mba.

9 *She moves away...* *Lights dim...*

She

He *He follows Flute, reaching for her...* *They can't quite manage to touch...*

Fl. *Flute moves away...* **A Tempo** *Flute stops playing, turns to him, leans over, and extends flute toward him...*

mf *mp* *p*

Mba. *Marimba moves away...*

12 *Lights come up...*

She

He *He stands alone...* **A Tempo** *p* (sung)

Some stam-mer-ing god spit I was hurled in-to be-ing

Fl.

Mba. **A Tempo** (tapping the handles of two mallets together) *p*

15

She

He *mp* spoken...

a—gainst my will No, that's not right

Fl. (breath tones continue) *p*

Mba. **A Tempo** (continue tapping the handles of two mallets together) *mp*

17

She

A Tempo
(sung)
mp

He

Ex-ist-ence was in-ject-ed An in-oc-u-la-tion of en-thu-si-as-tic quick-en-ing Im-mu-nized this dai-ly dis-ease

Fl.

Mba.

20

She

mf spoken. . . (sung) *mf*

He

Try again Some-one sent a mes-sage

Fl.

(breath tones continue)

A Tempo
(continue tapping the handles of two mallets together)

Mba.

22

She

He

That nev-er ar-rives In a lan-guage I can-not read

Fl.

(breath tones continue)

Mba.

25

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

28

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

f

In the be— gin— ning was the word And the word was night

31

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

And the night was a stam— mer— ing cir— cle Of rep— e— ti— tion

mf

mf

34

She

He stops singing, looks to the left, to the right, and down.
He suddenly looks straight ahead and says clearly. . .

He

p spoken. . .

Begin

Fl.

mp *p* *p* repeat endlessly. . .

Mba.

mp *p* *p* repeat endlessly. . .

38 ♩ = 66 scene one. . .

She

He

Fl.

(play with mallets)

Mba.

ff *pp* *ff*

41

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

pp *ff* *pp*

44

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

ff *pp* *ff*

47

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

pp *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff*

Ah, this one It's been weeks

50

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

pp *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff*

An ob-scure mes-sage in blood On the wall Here

62

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

65

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

68

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

f spoken...
Something new

71

She *mp* He had the head of a rooster

He

Fl. *mp*

Mba. *mp*

74

She A-quar-i-um eyes Leak-y bird-cage heart Beat-ing da DA, pa PA, da

He

Fl.

Mba.

77

She DA, pa PA He was sim-ple-i-ty A mu-se-um coat-rack

He

Fl.

Mba.

80

She

An o—pen win—dow Calm as the chess—board's cen—ter

He

Fl.

Mba.

83

She

mf Sis—ter I hope your pres—ence Com—pletes this dream

He

Fl.

mf

Mba.

mf

86

She

He

Mir—ror the creep—ing hun—ger Of its walls

Fl.

Mba.

89

She

He *mp* (whisper) Come to me

Fl.

Mba.

92

She *f* Do you see him? But do you see him?

He *f* I hear the de—cay of ice My nos—

Fl. *p*

Mba. *f*

94

She What do you see?

He trills flare The stench of rot—ting snow

Fl.

Mba.

96

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

Mouth be— yond mouth My ho— ri— zon lifts its lip

98

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

Blood smeared teeth Laugh like a star— tled jack— al

You con—

100

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

fuse me

I see hid— den wis— dom

102

She *p* (moans)

He

Fl. *ff* 3 3 *pp* 3

Mba. *pp* 3 3 3

104

She

He *pp* 3 3
I see a heav—ing breast Word—less

Fl. 3 3 3 3 *ff* 3 3 *pp* 3 3 *ff* 3 3

Mba. 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

106

She

He An— i— mal Breath

Fl. *pp* 3 3 *ff* 3 3 *pp* 3 3 *ff* 3 3

Mba. 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

108 *pp*

She *Temp* — ta — tion

He

Fl. *pp* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 *ff* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Mba. *ff* 3 3 3 3 3

110

She

He

Fl. 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Mba. 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

112

She

He *He reaches out and whips off the drape. . .*

Fl. *ff* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Mba. *ff* 3 3 3 3 3

114

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

pp
spoken. . .

Begin again.

ff

repeat endlessly. . .

119 ♩ = 58 scene two. . .

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

ppp

122

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

125

ppp

She Re— turn?

ppp

He I re— turn With—out end

Fl.

Mba.

127

She It means noth— ing to me

He What do you see?

Fl.

Mba.

129

She I see a man

fff spoken...

He Ha! Wrong!

Fl.

Mba.

131

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

pp

133

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

pp

As al—ways, you are wrong The im—age of a man

135

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

Why do I come back? You nev—er get it right

137

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

What do you see?

139 *pp*

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

Now I see a man

141

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

ff spoken... *p*

Wrong again! You are hope—less I too am an im—age

143

She *p* What do you want?

He Dream— ing of dream— ing a dream

Fl.

Mba.

145

She Light cre— ates shad— ow

He

Fl. Throw light on a mys— ter— y

Mba.

147

She A dy— ing red em— ber in a bowl of dark— ness

He

Fl.

Mba.

149

She *f* First you must con— fess.

He What do you see?

Fl. *f*

Mba. *f*

152

She *f* Con— fess!

He *f* There is noth— ing.

Fl. *f* *f* *mp*

Mba. *f* *f* gliss. *mp*

155

She

He *mp* In my home No word can live

Fl.

Mba. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss.

157

She

He

I am na—ked Be—fore I un—dress

Fl.

Mba.

gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss.

159 *mp*

She

More.

He

A wom— an

Fl.

Mba.

gliss. gliss. gliss.

mf *mf*

161

She

He

With teeth torn from a wound— ed fox I shame— less— ly watched her

Fl.

Mba.

gliss. gliss.

163

She

He

Lean a—gainst a tree And weep like a li— on in church

Fl.

Mba.

gliss. gliss.

165

She

He

The flesh is weak Wash it a—way!

Fl.

Mba.

gliss. gliss.

167

She

He

Now, what do you see?!

Fl.

Mba.

mf

The flesh is weak

gliss. gliss. gliss.

169

She

He *p*
spoken...

Tell me what you see.

Fl. *f*

Mba. *f* gliss. gliss. gliss.

171 *f*

She Ru— bies drip from a blue cloak And a tongue numbed by ice

He

Fl.

Mba. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss.

173

She No more

He *pp*
What do you see?

Fl. *pp*

Mba. gliss. gliss. gliss.

175 *pp*

She
No more!

He
Say it!

Fl.

Mba.

ff

177 *ff*

She
A locked door Lone—ly thirst

He

Fl.

Mba.

ff

gliss.

179

She
A blade of steel Hid—den in a block of ice

He

Fl.

Mba.

gliss.

181

She Numb— ing cold Pain— less, a tongue is shred— ded

He

Fl.

Mba.

183

She The taste of blood ex— cit— ing flesh - lust Rib— bons of scar— let

He

Fl.

Mba.

185

She Cas— cade from an un— be— liev— ing mouth

He No so— lu— tion

Fl.

Mba.

187 *ppp*

She *ppp*
 No so— lu— tion? Then per— haps no prob— lem On— ly night fol— low— ing day

He

Fl.

Mba.

189 *fff* laughs long. . .

She *fff*
 Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha . . .

He

Fl.

Mba. *fff*
 gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss.

192

She

He *fff* spoken. . .
 Again

Fl.

Mba. *ppp*
 repeat endlessly. . . gliss. gliss.

195 ♩=80 scene three. . .

She

He

Fl. *ppp*

Mba. *ppp* 3

199

She

He

Fl.

Mba. 3

203

She *ppp* 3 I ——— cons of mem — or — ry

He

Fl.

Mba. 3

207

She
Cast
bril_____ liant
shad_____ ows

He

Fl.

Mba.

210

She
A_____ cross
a land_____ scape
of ho_____ ly
need

He

Fl.

Mba.

213

She

He
ppp spoken. . .
She wore a silver amulet

Fl.

Mba.

216

She

He *pp* spoken. . .
In the shadows below her neck

Fl.

Mba. *pp*

219

She *pp* I cons of

He *pp* The tor

Fl. *pp*

Mba.

222

She mem o ry Cast bril liant

He ment When she bent for ward

Fl.

Mba.

225

She shad— ows A— cross a land— scape of ho— ly

He I ran my tongue o— ver her bod— y

Fl.

Mba.

228

She need

He Trac— ing un— known let— ters on her breast

Fl.

Mba.

231

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

p

234

She *p* I melt—ed

He *p* Dry at first Catch—ing on

Fl. *p*

Mba.

237

She with each pass

He her skin Then pink streaks

Fl.

Mba.

240

She I melt—ed with each pass

He In a moist

Fl.

Mba.

243

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

246 $\text{♩} = 72$

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

mp *3*

A noise at the door We em—braced

mp *3* *3* *3*

Its noth—ing A mes—sen—ger who nev—er ar—rives

mp *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3*

mp

249

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

3 *3* *3* *3*

In a fu—ry of snaps and snarls There is no prog—ress

3

Have we pro— gressed?

3 *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3*

252

She

There is end— less var— i— a— tion

He

Fl.

Mba.

255

She

He

Fl.

Mba.

$\text{♩} = 66$

mf

258

She

A yelp

He

A yelp A bel— low

Fl.

Mba.

mf

260

She
A bel— low A howl— ing I am nat— u— ral

He
A howl— ing I bite a bel— low

Fl.

Mba.

262

She
Mid— wives re— volt In— fants give

He
A howl— ing I am nat— u— ral I bite na— ture

Fl.

Mba.

264

She
Mid— wives re— volt In— fants give birth in the

He
on the thigh Re— volt In— fants

Fl.

Mba.

266

f

She In fants give birth in the sun light

He give birth in the sun light And are

Fl. *f*

Mba.

268

She And are dragged be-neath the sky By red

He sun light And are dragged be-neath the re-volt

Fl.

Mba.

270

She and white sus-pend-ers By red and white sus-pend-ers

He By red and white sun light And are dragged

Fl.

Mba.

272

She By red and white sus— pend— ers

He be— neath the sky Coy— o— tes crawl from their

Fl.

Mba.

274

She Coy— o— tes crawl from their holes Coy— o— tes

He sus— pend— ers And are dragged be— neath the sky

Fl.

Mba.

276

She crawl from their holes And e— rupt in sup— port

He By red and white sus— pend— ers And e— rupt from their holes

Fl.

Mba.

278

She
And e—rupt in sup—port And e—rupt in sup—port

He
An—oth—er yelp at be—ing holes An—other—er yelp

Fl.

Mba.

280 *fff*

She
And e—rupt in sup—port With a broom to dust off

He
at being—ing re—born With a broom to dust off

Fl.

Mba.

282

She
And yelp at be—ing re—born And a broom to dust off the moon

He
And yelp at be—ing re—born And a broom to dust off the moon

Fl.

Mba.

284

She
And howl a—gain at the moon To howl a—gain at some—thing be—yond

He
And howl a—gain at the moon To howl a—gain at some—thing be—yond

Fl.

Mba.

286

She
To howl a—gain at some— thing To howl a—gain

He
To howl a—gain at some— thing To howl a—gain

Fl.

Mba.

288

She
To howl Howl

He
To howl Howl

Fl.

Mba.

290 *f* ♩ = 60 (long howls - with each breath, begin on C - then move away)

She
Howl
Hooooooooooooowwwwwwwwwllllllllll

He
Howl
Hooooooooooooowwwwwwwwwllllllllll

Fl.
(breath tones)
p

Mba.

293 *diminuendo*

She
diminuendo

He
diminuendo

Fl.
(breath tones)
(play normally) (play normally)

Mba.
(tapping the handles of two mallets together)
p

296 (diminuendo)

She
(diminuendo)

He
(diminuendo)

Fl.
(breath tones) (breath tones) (breath tones)
(play normally) (play normally) (play normally)

Mba.

299 (diminuendo) ----- *p*

She

He

Fl. (breath tones) 3 (play normally) (breath tones) 3 (play normally) (breath tones) 3 (play normally)

Mba.

302

She

He *f* spoken... Again...

Fl. (play normally)

Mba.

305

She

He

Fl.

Mba. *p* repeat endlessly... 3 3 3 3 3