

L A N D A U

# The Broken Rope



by Jake Landau

*for mezzo (Her), baritone (Him), chorus, and chamber orchestra*

FULL SCORE (in C)

on poetry by

**Bertold Brecht**

Translated into English by

**Tom Kuhn and David Constantine**

Compiled and ordered by

**Tom Kuhn**

Written for John Harle leading The Bauhaus Band and Singers, 2022-3 season  
with funding from the Humanities Cultural Programme at the University of Oxford.



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## Orchestration:

Soprano Saxophone  
Alto Saxophone  
Tenor Saxophone  
Baritone Saxophone

2 Trumpets in C  
Trombone  
Bass Trombone

Percussion

- *Wind Chimes*
- *“Low cymbal” – perhaps a large ride cymbal? A small gong? It should be executed with little attack, like a wash of ambience.*
- *Woodblock*
- *Suspended cymbal (plus bow)*
- *Ride cymbal*
- *Bass drum (large, boomy)*
- *Glockenspiel*
- *Vibraphone*

Drum set

- *Standard, plus a mounted tambourine*
- *Drumsticks and brushes*

Electric guitar  
Electric bass

Choir (SATB)

Piano

Violin 1  
Violin 2  
Viola  
Cello

# PART 1

I. that not-to-be-forgotten night  
II. Kin-Jeh said of his sister  
III. still broken

# PART 2

IV. One rose to find  
V. The willow pipe

I. that not-to-be-forgotten night

The sky above me on that not-to-be-forgotten night  
Was bright enough. The chair on which I sat  
Was easy enough. The conversation  
Was light enough. The drink  
Was sharp enough. And soft enough  
Was your arm, girl, on that  
Not-to-be-forgotten night.

II. Kin-Jeh said of his sister

We loved one another between the battles.  
From column to column  
Marching by, we waved. There were letters  
Poste restante in the taken cities. Awaiting my enemies  
In hiding, poorly housed  
I heard her light tread, she  
Brought food and news. Quickly at the railway station  
We agreed how we should continue our operations.  
With the dust of the road still on my lips  
I kissed her. Around us  
Everything changed. Our affections  
Did not change.

III. still broken

The broken rope can be knotted again  
It will hold, but  
It is still broken.

Perhaps we will meet again, but  
Where you left me will  
Not be where you see me again.

Poetry by  
Bertold Brecht

As translated by  
Tom Kuhn and David Constantine

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IV. One rose to find

Seven roses the rose bush has  
Six belong to the wind  
But one remains so that I'll have  
One rose to find.

Seven times I'll call your name  
Six times stay away  
But promise me the seventh time  
You'll come right away.

V. The willow pipe

I am not the standard bearer  
I am not the seer with the heart of an eagle  
On your march into the great dawn.  
I am the willow by the river  
Whipped by the wind  
From which the earth's rebel spirit  
Plucks a little pipe to play  
Its tune: of the storm, of love and pain  
And perhaps a little  
Morning grey.

Performance notes:

- The “roles” of “Her” and “Him” are best suited to mezzo and baritone voices respectively. I ask that these voices come more from the musical theater and popular music tradition than the operatic one, and that they be amplified accordingly.
- The choir is at turns divided into traditionally into SATB and at others, less conventionally into SAA 1, SAA 2, TTB 1, and TTB 2. Each of these SAA sections is to be comprised of the entirety of the Soprano and Alto section divided evenly. In other words, these are not trios of soloists separate from the Tutti: these are the Tutti. Therefore, during these moments, it will be necessary to divide the Soprano section into Sopranos 1 and 2, and to divide the Alto section into Altos 1 Primo, 1 Secundo, 2 Primo, and 2 Secundo.
- In measure 5, the mezzo soloist is given stemless note heads. This notation is designed to communicate the freedom and naturalness with which this part should be sung. The approximate durations of the notes are approximated by the note being filled in (shorter) or empty (longer) as well as by their loose position in the bar.
- A “z” tremolo in the choir indicates that the lyrics (for example, measure 9’s “bright, bright...” are to repeated ad libitum on the given pitch for the given duration, out of sync with the accompaniment and each individual’s neighboring singers. The length of each “bright” should vary: “Bright, briiiiiight, bright-bright-bright-briiiiiight....” The result should be a cloud-like, echoing burst of the given word or words.
- A “z” tremolo in the instruments, such as in the saxophones in measure 9, indicates a moderate, Morse-code-like irregular repetition of the given pitch. As approximated by the notated feather-beams, the repeated notes should hasten and relax in speed ad libitum. These rhythmic fluctuations should never align with one’s fellow “z”-tremolo’ing instruments.
- The “Percussion” part is quite prescribed and is to be altered even slightly with the greatest care and only for acoustic, rather than creative, reasons. (A certain kind of mallet may yield a better result in one hall than in another.) The “Drum set” part, by contrast, is often to be treated more freely—more a blueprint than a prescription. All hits notated in the part must be included, but, at times deemed musically appropriate by the conductor and the player, more may and should be added to the part than is written. Both conductor and player should always be especially aware of which of the piece’s two significant “moods” is being communicated at any given time: fragmented (calling for more disparate hits), or cohesive (calling for more of a beat).

Procedural notes:

Unlike the traditional song cycle – a collection of loosely affiliated songs – this piece develops its themes throughout, in a style more typical of symphonic writing. It’s constructed around an unrealized vision of what “The Broken Rope” looked (sounded) like before it broke. This imaginary unbroken rope takes the form of a series of four interwoven tonalities, not unlike a four-chord pop song: B minor, A Major, G Major, C Major—at first in B minor as i, VII, VI, flat-II. Throughout the cycle, we hear snippets (snippings?) of the rope as it was, depicted by these four chord succeeding each other in fluid, naturally unfolding harmony. Indeed, this chain of tonalities is also represented in the keys of the first four songs in the cycle, with the fifth and final one being a return to B, but major this time.

Each of these strands that comprises the rope (the aforementioned chords (cords?)) also correlates to a given image presented in the opening song, “I. that not-to-be-forgotten night”: “The sky” is tied to A Major, “the chair” to G major, and so on. The rope that used to connect our two protagonists, simply referred to as Her and Him, is made up of common images their love shared. The sky, the chair, the conversation, the drink... But that string of images (and their associated chords) has been broken, and the song cycle begins with a fragmentary attempt to reconstruct the rope.

As the chorus seeks to repair the rope, attempting to string the images and chords back together, our female protagonist “Her” sings the complete text of “that not-to-be-forgotten night”. By the end, she is joined by the male protagonist “Him”, and it is revealed that she has been singing for both of them the whole time. He finishes the movement with his own singing of the phrase “that not-to-be-forgotten night”.

The second song, “**Kin-Jeh said of his sister**”, provides more exposition for these two characters, explaining who they are and how their love has been forced to exist against their wartime circumstances. Musically, the snare drum beat of “the battles” softens into “her light tread” and eventually into the anxious shivers of the line “Quickly at the railway station”. Meanwhile, in this whole new key, the chords of the rope continue to try to build themselves back to their unbroken state.

“**III. still broken**” features the rope, and the two characters it used to connect, at its most frayed. Words once connected to chords, even in fragmentary form, are now slightly displaced from them. The four harmonies making up the rope itself slip away into chromatic variations. By the end of this song, and Part 1 of the cycle, “Her” and “Him” realize that, though they may be able to one day knot the cords back together, it will always have been broken, and it will never be the same.

Following an intermission, Part 2 of the cycle begins with “**IV. One rose to find**”. With this new understanding of their situation comes a more grounded, less tortured expression of their love, delivered by “Her” and the choir.

In the finale, “**V. The willow pipe**”, the music builds to a depiction of the newly fashioned rope. New images interweave with the original ones on their designated chords. At the end of this story, the rope is not unbroken—it never will be—but it is certainly “knotted again”.

Program note:

“The Broken Rope” describes a connection between two people that has been frayed by the same backdrop of wartime out of which it was tightly spun. This metaphorical rope is depicted musically as a string of chords and images from the first song, “I. that not-to-be-forgotten night”. These images, “the sky”, “the chair”, “the conversation”, “the drink,” are the unraveled strands of rope that the choir is desperately trying to piece back together over the course of the entire song cycle. Meanwhile, two soloists are providing more detail on what their connection, that rope, looked like once, and how it’s changed since.

Over the course of their journey these characters realize that, though the rope of their relationship *can* be “knotted again”, it will never be the same — that there is a deeply emotional difference between “repaired” and “never having broken”.



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Poetry by  
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Music by  
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## I. that not-to-be-forgotten-night

Gently ♩ = c. 160 (♩ = c. 80)

*1* *2*

Soprano Saxophone  
Alto Saxophone

Tenor Saxophone  
Baritone Saxophone

Percussion

Electric Guitar

Electric Bass

SSA. 1

SAA. 2

Piano

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

*p* *poco* *p* *poco* *p* *poco*

Low cymbal\*  
like a wash, little attack

Woodblock  
a bit dead, not too intrusive

soft mallets

*p* resonant but articulate

Bass drum

small gliss. up

cut off

(cut off)

*p* (*Tutti*)

The sky

The sky

*p* (*Tutti*)

The chair

\* Each of these SAA sections is to be comprised of the entirety of the Soprano and Alto sections divided evenly. In other words, these are not soloists separate from the Tutti: these are the tutti. Later on in the movement, these "SAA" sections will revert back to their more conventional separate "Soprano and "Alto" staves.

The same goes for the later TBB sections at REHEARSAL D.

*8<sup>va</sup>*

*8<sup>vb</sup>*

pizz.

*p* pizz.

*p* pizz.

*p* pizz.

*p* pizz.

*p*

## PART 1

3

3  
before and the same throughout.

SA. Sax.

TBar. Sax.

Tpt. 1  
2

Tbn.  
B. Tbn.

Perc.

Drums

E-Gtr.

E-Bass

Her

SSA. 1

SSA. 2

Pno.

Vn. I

Vn. II

Vla.

Vc.

*poco cresc. sempre*

*poco cresc. sempre*

with mute

*pp* (non cresc.)

(without mute) (non cresc.)

*pp* *pp* *poco* *pp* = *poco* *sim.*

(without mute)

clack sticks together

Kick

Toms

Enter precisely here.  
Then, treat rhythm freely, approximately  
lining up with the barlines as written.

*legato*

The sky a -

*sim.* (p) *sim.*

The sky The con-ver - sa tion The sky The con-ver - sa tion The sky The con-ver - sa tion

*sim.* (p) *sim.*

The chair\_ The drink The chair\_ The drink The chair\_ The

*loco* *8va* *8va*

(8) (8)

(secco)

(pizz.) (pizz.) (pizz.)