

high voice

# shamhat, unheard

words by  
rachel rose

music & movement by  
jeffrey ryan

Perusal Copy

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## *Performance notes*

**Total performance time:** ca. 5'15" (not including optional opening, described below)

**Vocal range:** C4 to Ab5

**Finger cymbals (“zills”):** The performer is required to play two pairs of fingers cymbals (one pair for each hand). As is traditional, the cymbals are worn on the thumb and middle finger, with the strap positioned on the knuckle just below the nail.

There are four different playing techniques employed in this work, all drawn from traditional finger cymbal technique, and notated as follows:



“Pure”: Damp the middle cymbals with the fingers. Strike the two thumb cymbals together on the edge to create a pure metallic tone.



As above, but allow the tone to ring and fade naturally.



“Ring”: Strike the thumb and middle cymbals of one hand fully together and immediately release (separate) them by quickly opening the hand. The resulting sound begins with a “clack” followed by a ringing tone. Do not damp the middle cymbal with the fingers—keep the other fingers slightly away from the cymbal so that it may ring freely. In this technique, the tone is always allowed to ring. It may be used by one hand, by both simultaneously, or alternating to create rhythms.



“Click”: Bend thumb so the edge of the thumb cymbal is pressed against the hand on the pad below the thumb. Damp the middle cymbal with the fingers. Click the middle cymbal on the edge of the thumb cymbal (the cymbals are roughly perpendicular). Do not release. The result is a short, light percussive click.



“Clack”: Damp the middle cymbal with the fingers. Strike thumb and middle cymbals of one hand fully together as in “Ring” but do not release. The result is a somewhat harsh percussive clacking sound. This technique may be used by one hand, by both simultaneously, or alternating to create rhythms.

Wherever specific hands are indicated, the performer may reverse them as desired, depending on hand dominance.

**Optional opening:** In Sumerian culture, music was revered and considered sacred. Performers would wash their hands before playing, as an act of purification. If the performance circumstances permit, *Shamhat, Unheard* may begin in silence with the performer, in full view of the audience, ritualistically washing her hands and putting on her finger cymbals, before moving to centre stage to perform. More complete suggested details are given at the top of the first page of the score.

**Movement:** Hand position and arm movements are notated in the score in both pictures and words. The piece should have an overall sense of ceremony, ritual and magic. From m. 80, Shamhat looks into her near future, in a kind of trance. From m. 116, she looks into her far future—the audience’s present; in this passage the performer is free to improvise slow-motion and stylised exotic dancer movements.

The notated movement is an important part of the theatre of the piece and may not be omitted. However, in all cases, while observing the notated movement and staying within the character of the piece, the individual performer is invited to make the movement organically her own.

### ***Programme note***

*Unheard* is a suite of four Song Theatre works for unaccompanied female voice with notated movement. They may be performed as a set, individually, or in any combination. Poet Rachel Rose has been writing an on-going series of poems in which she gives voice to female characters from literature and mythology who are largely unheard in traditional tellings, usually in favour of the male characters. We hear from these women after they have left their stories, expressing their experience in hindsight and illuminating for us a different perspective while connecting with women’s experience in contemporary times.

Shamhat, the temple prostitute in the ancient Sumerian/Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, plays an active role in the story only in the first two tablets. It is she who, through sacred sexuality, tames the wild man Enkidu, taking him from his life with the animals and introducing him to the civilised world and King Gilgamesh, with whom he would go on to slay various monsters. In *Shamhat, Unheard*, we hear from Shamhat long after she has left the story, as she takes us back to her past and gives us a vision of her future—our present—realising with regret how her gift to Enkidu did not have the result she had hoped for.

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## **Shamhat to Enkidu**

*by Rachel Rose*

Enkidu, come in from the desert.  
Leave your scavenging  
and crawl to my knees,  
part my civilized rose. Cup  
wet musk. Bring me your face.  
You smell like a ram. I taste like cedar in the rain.

Look: I have fire, I have sex.

Wrestle me by the deep wells  
for seven days and nights. I will tame you,  
wild man, I'll drop fermented honey  
into your mouth. Look: I have vocabulary.  
My hair is hung with bells.  
I have a silver knife and bowl.

I'll lead you to the man  
who will be your best friend,  
who will teach you the love of battle,  
a power greater than my own.  
You will forsake me for him  
and then the word for what I am will be lost:  
Harlot-Priestess, the one who knows the source.

Centuries later my only followers  
will be forced to the profession:  
Stolen girls, who grease their breasts  
and dance around poles to tame men for money.  
Bodies of my priestesses will be dumped  
in alleys, stuffed in the trunks of cars,  
left to bloat in rain. Men will thumb bills, cock  
needles. There will be no worship in the act.

Enkidu, I should have left you with the beasts.  
I was your touchstone, your red dust whore.  
I gave you words so Gilgamesh could give you war.

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**OPTIONAL:** Begin with a purification ritual. On a small table upstage right: a basin of water, a hand towel, the finger cymbals on an ornamental pillow. In no hurry, wash and dry hands reverently, then don finger cymbals. Proceed to centre stage.

**• = 48 Ceremonial, weaving magic**

arc arms quickly outward to sides, palms up. Leave arms outstretched in a welcoming pose, like a celebrant

arms return to centre, completing the circle

similar motion, but do not open arms as wide (describe a smaller circle)

**FINGER CYMB.**

**5**

again, same as previous measure

again, but as arms come in to chest level (on decresc.), lower head to look at hands

again, but do not arc arms — separate hands only slightly

**8**

slowly raise head to look forward, while turning hands so palms are facing body, with fingers pointing up

**• = 144 A tempo**

R.H. stays close to (and facing) body. L.H. rings close to body, then arm arcs slowly forward in an offering gesture, palm facing up

L.H. *mf*

R.H. *mp* *sempre*

*mp* inviting, enticing

said: \_\_\_\_\_

En - ki - du, En - ki - du,

**12**

(L.H. extended)

slowly withdraw L.H. straight back

again, extend L.H.

*mf*

(*mp*)

come in from the de - sert. En - ki - du, En - ki - du,

## Shamhat (high)

16 (L.H. extended) *mf* *withdraw L.H.* *extend...* *withdraw...*

come in. Leave your sca - ven-ging. Crawl

20 *mf* *extend...* *withdraw...* *mf* *extend...* *withdraw...*

to my knees, part my ci - vi - lised rose. Cup

24 *mf* *extend...* *mf* *withdraw...* *mf* *extend...* *mf* *withdraw...*

wet musk. Bring me, En - ki - du, bring me,



L.H. matches R.H.

both hands

28 *mp* *sempre*

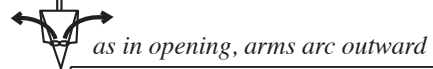
bring me your face, bring me your face, your face,

keep hands close to body,  
L.H. fingers pointing up

32 L.H. *mf* *mp* *mp* *f*

bring me your face, your... You smell like ram, I

♩ = 48 *A tempo, ceremonial again*



*molto rit.* -----

36

*f* *f* with freedom again

taste like ce - dar in the rain. Look: \_\_\_\_\_



complete circle...

again...

again...

*poco rit. to --*

look at hands

39

*f* *f*

I have fire, I have sex. I \_\_\_\_\_

*mf* reflectively

♩ = 40  
again, but separate  
hands only slightly

slowly raise head,  
look forward

♩ = 120 (♩ = 40) *A lullaby*  
play with hands close to body, but  
allow some freedom in arm movement

43

*p* *p* *mp* *mp* *sim.*

R.H. R.H. R.H. L.H. L.H.

said: \_\_\_\_\_ Wre - stle me by the deep wells \_\_\_\_\_ for

48

se - ven days \_\_\_\_\_ and nights. \_\_\_\_\_ I will tame \_\_\_\_\_ you,

54

wild man, wild man.

*rit. to* -----  $\bullet = 108$  *molto rit.* -----

palms still facing back, extend arms straight up, raise hands past head

arc arms forward as if offering a gift

60

*mp* *p*

I'll drop fer - ment - ed ho - ney in - to your mouth.

$\bullet = 48$  *A tempo*  
from "gift" position, open arms outward

67

*f* *f* with freedom

Look. I have vo-

70

(arms still outstretched to side)

L.H. *f* *sim.* *f*

R.H. *f*

ca - bu - la-ry. My hair is hung

73

*f*

with bells. I have a sil - ver knife and bowl.



♩ = 30 sub. (♩ = 60)

contract arms inward,  
palms facing down  
(to m. 1 starting position)

bow head

76

*f* >

reflectively *mp*

I said: \_\_\_\_\_

♩ = 120

lift head slightly, staring into the  
middle distance, in a quasi trance

both

80

*p*

*f* sub. *p* sub.

*p* < *mf* *p* (aside)

I'll lead you, I'll lead you \_\_\_\_\_ to the man (I'll lead you)

84

*mf* *f* sub. *p* sub.

*p* (aside) *mf*

who will be your best \_\_\_\_\_ friend, (I'll lead) who will teach you the

88

*f* sub. *p* sub.

*p* (aside) *mf* > *f* sub.

love of bat-tle, (I'll lead you) a po - wer great - er than my own.

look forward...

♩ = 126 *sub. Intensifying*  
L.H. *sim. alt. hands*

92

R.H.  
*f* *f*

You will for - sake me for him, you will for - sake me for him,

96

*poco accel. to -----*

and then the word for what I am will be lost.

100

♩ = 138 *slowly raise arms -----*

Har - lot - Priest - ess, Har - lot - Priest - ess,

104

*accel. to -----*  
L.H. *sim. alt.*

R.H.  
*p*  
*(f)*

Har - lot - Priest - ess, the one who knows the source.

*(accel.) -----*

109

*step forward...*

I see:

♩ = 168 (♩ = 84) *Having a vision*  
*eyes wide, improvise stylised exotic dancer*  
 L.H. *movements in slow motion through m. 139* *sim., always let ring*

116

*ff* R.H. *mf* *sempre* *chant-like* *ff*

Cen - tu - ries la - ter my on - ly fol - low - ers will be forced — to the pro -

121

*ff* *ff*

fes - sion: Sto - len girls, who grease their breasts and dance a - round poles

125

*ff*

to tame men — for mo - ney. Bo - dies of my priest - es - ses will be dumped in

130


*ff* *ff* *ff*

al - leys, stuffed in the trunks of cars, left to bloat in rain.

134

*ff* *ff*

Men will thumb bills, cock nee - dles. There will be no \_\_\_\_\_

139 *molto rit. to* -----  $\text{♩} = 60$   
*extend arms out to sides, palms down*  *slowly drop arms to sides; trance ends, return to present*

R.H. R.H.  
 L.H.  
*f* *mf* *p*

wor-ship in the act. I say:

143   $\text{♩} = 96$  sub. *Defeated, with regret* *rit. to* -----  
*both hands*

*p* *p* *emptily, dead tone*

En - ki - du, En - ki - du, I \_\_\_\_\_ should have left you with the

147  $\text{♩} = 72$

*p* *p*

beasts. I was your touch-stone, your red dust whore.

152 *rit. to* -----  $\text{♩} = 60$

*p* *p*

*lift hands and look at cymbals, as though there is blood on hands* *flick hands with spread fingers, scattering dust*

I gave you words so Gil-ga - mesh could give you war.