

# **Mebasi**

**for Flute, Oboe and  
Prepared Piano**

**Kevin H Gray**

## FOREWORD

*Mebasi* is partly a tribute to the eminent French ethnomusicologist Pierre Sallée, who made several protracted expeditions to Gabon, among other destinations, to document various tribal customs during the sixties and early seventies. The aspect of his work that pertains to this piece, however, is his time spent among the Bibayak tribe, whose complex, richly textured, and utterly compelling musical traditions were documented by Sallée in several field recordings. So although I certainly feel indebted to his important work in preserving evidence of these vanishing traditions, the true inspiration for this piece is the irrepressible ingenuity and undeniable artistry of the Bibayak people themselves; and in a broader sense, this music is about what society has lost as it has become progressively more technology-dependent.

The title is a Bibayak word given to a musical game, in which participants improvise vocally. The main goal of the game is for all but one of the participants, through a series of discrete communications, to slyly and abruptly stop singing, thereby hopefully catching one unobservant vocalist in an unintended solo. The newly exposed voice must then save face by improvising a cadenza which commands the respect of the other participants, who then gradually acknowledge their approval by rejoining in the singing as the game continues.

This piece is entirely devoid of dynamics markings. This at once introduces an improvisatory element into the *gestalt* of the piece. One of the characteristics of authentic *mebasi* is the tension between moments when all participants strive to blend, and moments when one or another of the players seeks to dominate the texture either through greater volume or through the use of vocal embellishments of particular grandiloquence. Although being true to the spirit of boisterousness that is pervasive in the relevant field recordings indicates to me that the overall presentation needs to remain near *mezzo-forte* or *forte* most of the time, there are certainly opportunities for brief excursions into *mezzo-piano*. But, in any event, this piece is not one that hangs its hat on the rubric of dynamic contrast.

Articulations for all three instruments are notated uniformly, with the three symbols in question carrying the same meaning for all three players.

First, and most simply, accents should not be subtle; and must be easily perceived to stand out from their surroundings by even a casual listener.

Next, the unmitigated staccato dot is intended to represent the shortest possible duration, irrespective of all and sundry considerations which, in the minds of many players of all instruments, often justify the lengthening of notes that bear a staccato dot. I find that when I coach players in performances of my music, the first comment I am likely to make is to request shorter staccatos. Within the locus of my composition, the use of staccato is usually meant to evoke an abruptness bordering on violence, regardless of the volume level.

This brings us to the third and final articulation mark, which is the dash

sometimes referred to as the *tenuto* mark. This symbol's interpretation depends on context. If used in tandem with the staccato dot, it should function to mitigate the severity of the staccato effect, thereby subtly lengthening the duration of the affected note, producing what might be referred to as a slightly "fat" staccato. Whenever the dot and dash are present beneath the same note, the dash's only purpose is the mitigation of the staccato dot, and no additional meaning should be inferred.

In those instances where the dash appears without the dot, its use denotes, for the note in question, an additional heft, weight, or darkening of the tone, perhaps similar to the manner in which most players might respond to the Italian term "*pesante*."

Please exaggerate contrasting articulations.

Preparing the piano for *Mebasi* is a relatively simple task, since all notes that are used are to be prepared in the same fashion. Mute the strings by firmly depressing commercially available silicone putty earplugs (or similar) to each applicable string nut. The amount of putty required to achieve a uniform, muted tone over the specified area of the piano may vary with register, acoustics of the room, and type of piano. Please note that the goal of the preparations is uniformity of *tone*, rather than uniformity of size of the balls of putty. Some experimentation will be necessary. Prudence seems to dictate that neighboring notes at the periphery of the applicable range also be muted in the same manner, so that the effect of a possible wrong note in the heat of performance is not exacerbated by the sudden, unwelcome intrusion of a non-muted note.

It should be noted that, in the composer's opinion, this prescribed method of preparing the piano is completely harmless to the instrument, particularly if latex gloves are worn during the preparation. In the unlikely event that the silicone putty imparts a detectable residue, it may be safely cleaned with cotton swabs lightly dampened with denatured alcohol. Should a reader of these instructions nevertheless in any way damage a piano, please be advised that the composer assumes no responsibility.

Kevin H Gray

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin H Gray', written in a cursive style.



# Mebasi

Kevin H Gray

$\text{♩} = 84$

**With boisterous, high spirits throughout**

Pno.

pedal generously but change often

7

Pno.

12

Pno.

18

Ob.

Pno.

23

Ob.

Pno.

27

Ob.

Pno.

31

Ob.

Pno.

35

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

39

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

43

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

47

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

52

Fl.

Pno.

57

Fl.

Pno.

61

Fl.

Pno.

65

Fl.

Pno.

69

Fl.

74

Fl.

*ad libitum*

79

Fl.

*a tempo*

Pno.

84

Fl.

Pno.



90

Fl. Ob. Pno.

This system contains measures 90 through 94. The Flute part (Fl.) features a melodic line with slurs and accents, including a trill in measure 94. The Oboe part (Ob.) provides a harmonic accompaniment with slurs. The Piano part (Pno.) consists of a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents.

95

Fl. Ob. Pno.

This system contains measures 95 through 98. The Flute part (Fl.) continues with a melodic line, featuring a trill in measure 98. The Oboe part (Ob.) has a melodic line with slurs. The Piano part (Pno.) continues with a rhythmic accompaniment.

99

Fl. Ob. Pno.

This system contains measures 99 through 102. The Flute part (Fl.) has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Oboe part (Ob.) has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Piano part (Pno.) has a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents.

103

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

108

Fl.

Pno.

113

Fl.

Pno.

117

Fl.

Pno.

121

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

This system contains measures 121 through 124. The Flute part (Fl.) has rests in measures 121 and 122, followed by eighth-note patterns in 123 and 124. The Oboe part (Ob.) has rests in measures 121 and 122, followed by eighth-note patterns in 123 and 124. The Piano part (Pno.) features a continuous eighth-note accompaniment with slurs and accents throughout all four measures.

125

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

This system contains measures 125 through 128. The Flute part (Fl.) plays eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents in measures 125-127, followed by a rest in 128. The Oboe part (Ob.) plays eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents in measures 125-127, followed by a rest in 128. The Piano part (Pno.) continues with its eighth-note accompaniment, including slurs and accents.

129

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

This system contains measures 129 through 131. The Flute part (Fl.) plays eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents in measures 129-131. The Oboe part (Ob.) plays eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents in measures 129-131. The Piano part (Pno.) continues with its eighth-note accompaniment, including slurs and accents.

132

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

This system contains measures 132 through 135. The Flute part (Fl.) plays eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents in measures 132-135. The Oboe part (Ob.) plays eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents in measures 132-135. The Piano part (Pno.) continues with its eighth-note accompaniment, including slurs and accents.

136

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

140

Ob.

Pno.

145

Ob.

Pno.

149

Ob.

Pno.

153

Ob.

*ad libitum*

158 *a tempo* *ad lib.*

Ob.

Pno.

163 *a tempo*

Ob.

169

Ob.

174

Fl.

Ob.

179

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

183

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

188

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

192

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

195

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

VI

IV

This system of music covers measures 195 to 197. It features three staves: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), and Piano (Pno.). The Flute staff has a whole rest in measure 195 and then plays a melodic line with slurs and accents in measures 196 and 197. The Oboe staff plays a similar melodic line with slurs and accents. The Piano accompaniment consists of a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and quarter notes in the left hand, with slurs and accents. Roman numerals VI and IV are indicated at the end of the system.

198

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

VI

V

V

V

V

V

This system of music covers measures 198 to 201. It features three staves: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), and Piano (Pno.). The Flute staff has a whole rest in measure 198 and then plays a melodic line with slurs and accents in measures 199, 200, and 201. The Oboe staff plays a similar melodic line with slurs and accents. The Piano accompaniment consists of a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and quarter notes in the left hand, with slurs and accents. Roman numerals VI, V, V, V, V, and V are indicated at the end of the system.

4'54"

Oboe

# Mebasi

Kevin H Gray

$\text{♩} = 84$

**With boisterous, high spirits throughout**

5 16

27

35

42 42

91

98

103 17

125

129

133 6



Oboe  
2

143

150

*ad libitum*

157

*a tempo*

*ad lib.*

162

168

*a tempo*

174

180

186

192

197

Flute

# Mebasi

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♩ = 84

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5 29 39 44 58 65 72 78 *ad libitum* *a tempo* 84 91 97 102 4

Flute  
2

111



117



124



130



135



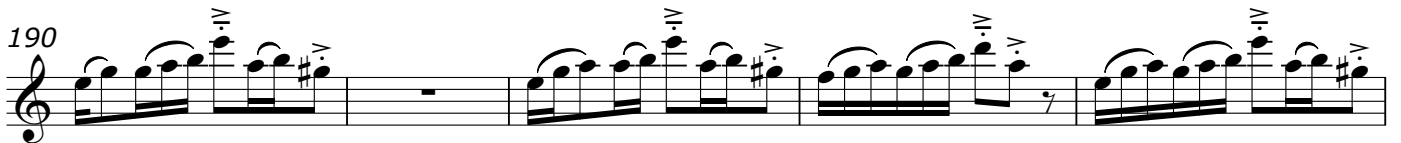
178



183



190



195

