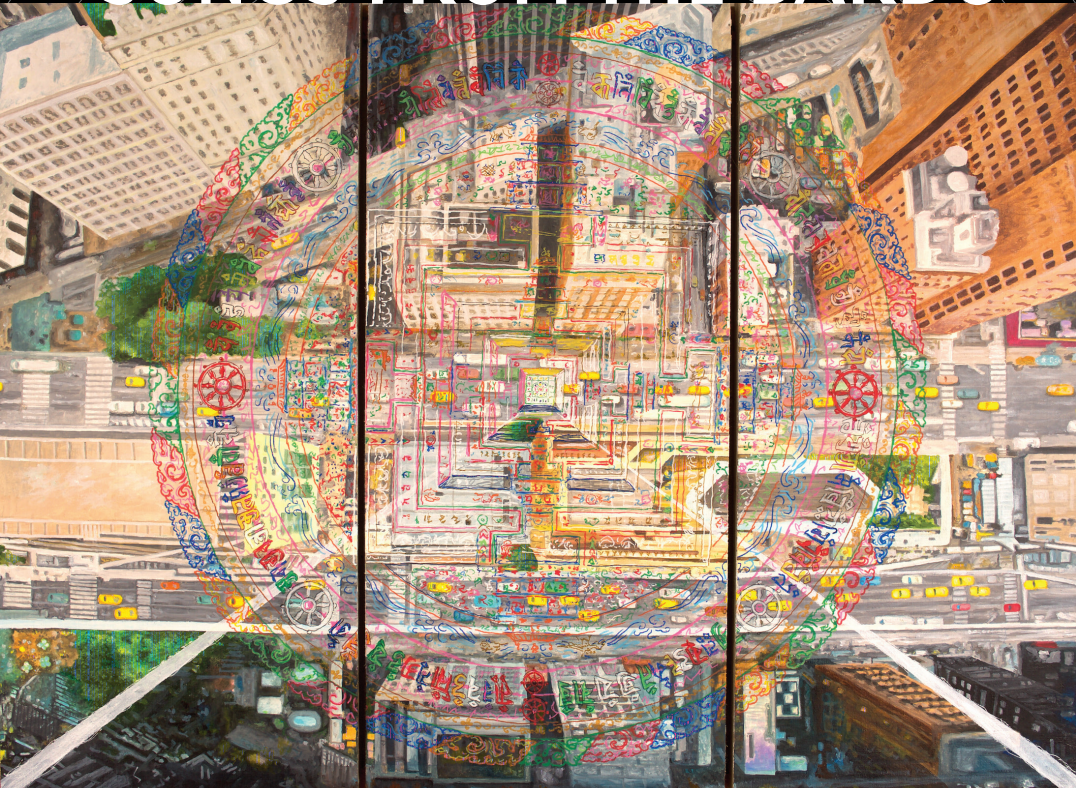


SONGS FROM THE BARDO



Laurie Anderson

Tenzin Choegyal

Jesse Paris Smith

The image is a complex, multi-layered collage. At the center is a detailed, colorful illustration of a Tibetan Buddhist temple interior, showing a long, brightly lit hallway with a central aisle, ornate walls, and a high ceiling. This central scene is surrounded by a dense, multi-layered border of intricate, colorful patterns and motifs, including floral designs, geometric shapes, and what appears to be Tibetan script. The entire composition is set against a background of a city street scene, with buildings, cars, and a street intersection visible. The overall effect is one of rich cultural fusion and visual complexity.

SONGS FROM THE BARDO

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1. Homage to the Gurus 3:31
2. Heart Sutra Song – Gone Beyond 7:31
3. Awakened One 5:28
4. The Three Jewels 4:17
5. Brilliant Lights 11:13
6. Listen Without Distraction 5:27
7. Gong 1:37
8. Dancing With the Crescent Knife 4:26
9. Jigten 6:04
10. Natural Form of Emptiness 6:38
11. Lotus Born, No Need to Fear 7:07
12. Dividing Line 3:50
13. Moon in the Water 5:15
14. Awakened Heart 5:09

FEATURING

Tenzin Choegyal, chanting, Tibetan singing bowls, gong, *lingbu* (Tibetan bamboo flute), and *dranyen* (Tibetan stringed instrument)

Laurie Anderson, spoken word and violin

Jesse Paris Smith, piano, crystal bowls, and gong

Rubin Kodheli, cello

Shahzad Ismaily, percussion

(arr. by Laurie Anderson/Difficult Music,
BMI-Tenzin Choegyal, APRA-Jesse Paris Smith, BMI)

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City Mandala by
Karma Painsok

INTRO- DUCTION

JESSE PARIS SMITH

Creating *Songs from The Bardo* was an organic journey shared by musicians with a mutual appreciation of Tibetan culture, Buddhist tradition, and the breadth and depth of the spiritual world. Based on text from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the album speaks of death, passage, and facing one's own mortality. The words offer a guiding hand, an accompanying voice through life's most feared transformation.

I first met Tibetan musician Tenzin Choegyai in 2008, and we shared the stage at the Annual Tibet House US Benefit Concert in 2014, at Carnegie Hall. Tenzin suggested we collaborate on a new approach in presenting the text, hoping to add to the understanding of *The Bardo* and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. I was honored to take this walk with him. Working together, we shaped a musical script using excerpts of the text as our foundation. When imagining who might carry these words, Laurie Anderson, with her expressive voice and spiritual knowledge, was the perfect choice. Then, after hearing cellist Rubin Kodheli perform and noting his thoughtful touch and dynamic range, we recruited him.

In early winter 2014, we all met at the Rubin Museum of Art in Manhattan. Taking cues from shared pages, we entered a universe resonating with collective consciousness, an energy of healing, of knowing we were on the right path together. Part of me wished we had recorded the performance, but I hold it in my heart as a memory.

Inspired by this mutual connection with the material and our desire to share the text with new listeners, we happily agreed to record our newly developed interpretation. Our hope is that for each person, this album will be whatever it needs to be. An entry point. A meditation. A comfort. An auditory friend. We are grateful to have had this opportunity to bring the medium of sound to such a deeply vital text. We see these words as universal, for all are born into this world and all shall experience death. Let us remember those who have passed on, let us keep in mind those who are on the way, and let us be here for one another in this life.

THE STORY BEHIND SONGS FROM THE BARDO

TENZIN CHOEGYAL

Five Dhyani Buddhas
by Karma Phuntsok

The most vivid memories from my childhood in Tibet are of mountains and melodies. As a nomad my mother would always hum tunes in the morning and sing throughout the day as she went about her chores. China's occupation of our homeland did not dampen my mother's innate spiritual core and her love of song. These values are ingrained in me, and much of my passion for music comes from her. As I continue to journey into the world of music, I try to channel our spiritual tradition in my songs in tune with today's contemporary way of life. But we believe that our time on this earth is only a brief phase in the circle of *samsara* and its endless dance of life and death. As we journey through this sequence of births, deaths, and rebirths, we acknowledge impermanence.

When I was forced into exile, I realized the true sense of the principle of impermanence. I had to leave behind everything that I grew up with and held dear and was dropped into the space of others, in a different universe. It was as if the sky had collapsed. In Tibetan Children's Village schools in India, I became aware of the depth of our spiritual tradition and its approach to facing death, not as an end in itself, but as a continuation of our journey on the path to enlightenment.



**“EACH STANZA UNTIES
A KNOT FROM MY
PSYCHE, AND LIFE
BECOMES MORE
PRECIOUS AND DEATH
LESS TERRIFYING.”**

Perhaps the single most important Buddhist text for dying, *bardo*, and rebirth is *The Bardo Thodol*—widely known as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*—a guide for practitioners to embrace death and transition the consciousness to another life through rebirth. *Bardo* is the transitional state of existence between death and rebirth.

I was first introduced to *The Bardo Thodol* by a *geshe* in our school. The first time I remember actually seeing this precious scripture, it was at a friend's place, wrapped in dark blue cloth. I wanted to get closer to it, but the volume was kept in a cabinet with a glass door that was fastened with a yellow lock. The time had not come for me to see the holy book, I thought.

Believed to be written and then hidden as a *terma* or treasure text by the 8th-century Buddhist master Guru Rinpoche, *The Bardo Thodol* was revealed by Karma Lingpa in the 14th century. Today this scripture is ubiquitous in all Tibetan households, carefully placed on the altar and read on special occasions or when someone dies—generally recited by a spiritual master shortly before death and continued throughout the 49-day period leading to the next life.

I had the experience of witnessing death and the power of *The Bardo Thodol* when my brother-in-law passed away at a Tibetan refugee camp in northern India. I spent seven weeks with my sister, during which the consciousness of my late brother-in-law lingered in the *bardo*. As the monks recited *The Bardo Thodol* and performed rites each week, I too read it and shared relevant parts with my grief-stricken sister.

After the final rites were performed on the 49th day, when my brother-in-law's consciousness was freed from *bardo* and transitioned to a new rebirth, a *thangka* was commissioned for him according to the astrological calculation. The monks left to return to their monastery. The ritual performance and recital of *The Bardo Thodol* by the monks transformed my sister from a devastated person to someone who gained conviction in her life again. The whole process was as therapeutic as anything I have ever observed in my life.

Tenzin Choegyul, photo
by Karanjit Singh



**“A FINE BALANCE
OF MUSIC AND
NARRATION THAT
AWAKENS OUR MINDS
AND CAN LIFT OUR
CONSCIOUSNESS
TO ANOTHER LEVEL”**

*Tenzin Choegyal, photo
by Michael Murchie*



As I grow older and become more aware of the phenomena of impermanence and death, *The Bardo Thodol* is my constant companion. I recite it daily in Tibetan, and I become the subject: It is as if the book reads me and not the other way round. Each stanza unties a knot from my psyche, and life becomes more precious and death less terrifying. Occasionally, I refer to English translations of the text for things I find difficult to understand. The volume, apart from providing deep insights and a practical guide to understanding the stages of death, *bardo*, and rebirth, remains a powerful inspiration for my artistic endeavors. In fact, my musical rendition becomes an extension of the practice.

Over the last 15 years, my adaptation of this profound text into musical form has evolved through several stages and collaborations with some of today's finest artists. I first performed *Bardo Songs* with renowned Tibetan artist Karma Phuntsok, who is also a wonderful flute player. This was an informal recital in Cairns, Northern Queensland, Australia. Later I worked with my dear friend and composer Michael Askill to create a major musical rendition entitled *In the Between – Meditations and Illuminations on The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which became a calm and subtle meditational chant.

More recently, this musical piece has evolved to become *Songs from The Bardo*, with Laurie Anderson, Jesse Paris Smith, and Rubín Kodheli, which was performed at the Rubín Museum, New York City, in 2016. The result of our joint labor of love is this engaging soundscape, a fine balance of music and narration that awakens our minds and can lift our consciousness to another level.

I pray that this album becomes a source of joy and inspiration, guiding listeners to accept death not as a terrifying event, but as an inevitable part of life. Furthermore, I hope it becomes a source of healing and vigor for life, as it has been for me.

With deep gratitude and many thanks to all my gurus from the past, present, and future. *sarva mangha lam*

Note: In creating this work, I referred to the original Tibetan text and various translations in order to deepen my understanding of the subject and ensure that the most appropriate English words and phrases were used to convey its meaning to contemporary listeners. In many cases, my own translation of the original text is very similar to if not the same as the well-known version by Chogyam Trungpa.

A black and white portrait of Laurie Anderson. She is wearing a dark, patterned jacket and has her right hand resting under her chin. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a thoughtful expression. The background is a solid dark grey.

**LAURIE ANDERSON ON
SONGS FROM THE BARDO**

Most religions—and let's use that word in a very loose way—have a goal of not just teaching people how to live, but even more how to understand time. They tell stories of where we come from, how things began, what will happen in between, how it will end. And people hold on to these stories, because we don't really understand time at all. I know I don't. Sequence is not part of it; at least I don't see it that way. It flows backwards and forwards so quickly and fluidly. I'm much more responsive to the idea that there is no such thing as time.

The description in *The Bardo* of our experience of time—not just time, but of sensory experience—is really thrilling to me. I see my mind as a very small, black, analyzing machine that's in my head somehow. It gets signals, light or sound or something, and it tries to make sense of those things. And it's endlessly fascinating what it tries to make of that. So *The Bardo, The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, is really very much about how the mind works.

Whatever I'm trying to do, write music or stories, or paint, that's really what it's all about, how senses work with the rational mind—the so-called rational mind, because I'm not sure I have one. When I hear things about the transitory nature of life and experience, I really respond to it, because I feel that music is also in that realm: of something where time is suspended.

And yet there it is, tempo is incredibly important to music, and its way of marking the passage of time. That is so odd, because I can listen to a piece of music and have no idea of how much time went by from beginning to end, because it takes away, rips away your sense of time, and yet it is all built on timing, and this sound next to that sound.

One of the great meditations of my teacher, Mingyur Rinpoche from Nepal, is about sound. He has one that is particularly wonderful: he uses a very small finger cymbal, with a very, very long reverb. In the first exercise he says: I want you to follow this sound with your mind. Then he plays it and you follow it all the way to the end, paying attention to it as it disappears as a vaporous trail into nothing.

“IT IS NOT ABOUT A PERFECT PERFORMANCE; IT’S ABOUT LEAVING ENOUGH AIR IN IT FOR PEOPLE TO STEP IN AND LOOK AROUND A LITTLE BIT.”

Then he says: I’m going to play this again; this time don’t follow the sound with your mind. How does that work? Because you tend to follow lines: We look and see lines, we hear lines, we want to make these connections.

In this work, *Songs from The Bardo*, we try to do both, because we try to create a flow in which your mind is able to free-associate, and let one image pile on top of others, stir around and color each other. Yet at the same time, it invites you to just be awake to what is going to happen next, because it does not have a strict tempo. Things just happen in these songs, and images collide.

Listeners, I think, or at least I’ll speak for myself, try to make sense of these lines, try to make associations, and comparisons, in all sorts of ways: how do these things work together. And that’s the collaboration we’re trying to set up with our listeners. To really have that happen in your mind as you listen.

I find that very exciting. It is not about a perfect performance; it’s about leaving enough air in it for people to step in and look around a little bit. Using musical phrases and word phrases to give people that room, not just rattling something off, but to let them walk around in it and experience it for themselves.

I’ve lived long enough to have gone through many disciplines. As a young artist, when I was a minimal sculptor, I dealt with the exact same concerns. Minimal sculpture was pretty hard-core. It was about noticing the edge, noticing displacement, and your relationship to objects.

One of my favorite works was by Robert Moore from the early 1960s. He did a sculpture that was just a plywood box, and inside it was a recording. It was called *Box with the sound of its own making*. He recorded some of the sawing and hammering and gluing sounds and put it inside the box. So that narrative is there, but of course, it’s in a sculpture, which is a very temporary form; it’s not a narrative you sit down and listen to. So it pulls against a lot of different ways of thinking about time and space.

But it looked like a regular box, and that was the whole point of minimal sculpture. Some other things looked like sheetrock leaning against the wall, but this was the sculpture. So it was not about making precious objects, but noticing how things displace space and noticing how your mind works. And that was what it meant, that was the meaning. Where is the border, why is it this and not that, how do these things influence each other, or how does time work in this situation?

I'm a narrative artist working in forms that are sometimes really anti-theatrical to narrative. For example, now I'm trying to work on some more visual work, and narrative and visual work like painting and sculpture do not work very well together. They just don't, you know. People in museums give ten seconds to each image. They do not sit around for the story.

A record like this, *Songs from The Bardo*, is something that has a very loose narrative, but also lets you drift through it, in and out. I'm more and more interested in music that isn't performed onstage with an audience. This is something much more invasive than that.

We had no rehearsal for this recording. Tenzin called me and asked me: would you like to do something at the Rubin [Museum], which is a wonderful place. When I arrived, he just said: Here it is. There are some notes here and there, and we can just see what happens as we go. I love that.

The first time I did improv I was incredibly nervous. This was maybe ten years ago. John Zorn invited me to do something, and Lou [Reed] as well. He said: We're just going to see what happens. And I said: But who plays the first note? Let's see. What key? I don't know. I thought: This is sounding like a really bad idea.

I had never been that vulnerable, because if you don't have ideas, you can't hide that. The entire audience knows you have no ideas, no idea where you're going. But then of course, the great thing is that if you find it, they find it too. So you get all of that stuff: the boredom and uncertainty of things, just like treading water, which is also very touching and

“THE MUSIC IS MEANT TO HELP YOU FLOAT OUT OF YOUR BODY, TO GO INTO THESE OTHER REALMS, AND TO LET YOURSELF DO THAT WITHOUT BOUNDARIES.”

beautiful, and then you get the BOOM! We found it, and it goes like this, and then we'll go back to it and pick another idea and have a crack at it.

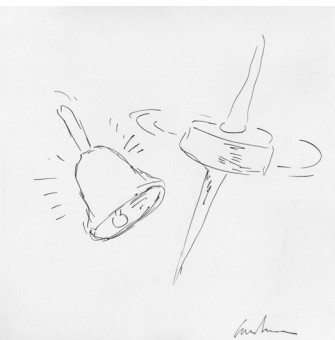
So in fact, it was exhilarating. It was like building a giant ship that we could then revolve around and look at from different angles, and we could sink it and we could sail it and we could do things to it. It was beyond thrilling to create a piece of music like that, because it isn't only in the present. You are making something that is moving through time, a little bit like a ship that does not know where it is going, maybe like a whaler, one that is not delivering goods from A to B. It's looking for things. That I could really appreciate. I really respond to improv now.

The text we use, from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, is not just poetry. This work has got an incredible punch. It is a beautiful, profound text of time and disintegration, how to use the senses and what happens when they go, and how the mind is connected to those. What else could we study? This is a really fantastic bunch of words to learn from. It's confrontational, and also a how-to guide. Here's what you should do, try it. It is not like you have to think about it first. Just do it. That is both challenging and exhilarating.

I remember my first introduction to Buddhism. It had to do with concentration. A friend was saying that he was having trouble with that. Then he did a ten-day silent retreat, *vipassana* style, and he said that after that his mind was like a beam. The chatter had stopped, he could move it from here to there easily, without all the other stuff going on in the background.

I thought: Oh, I'd like to have a mind like a beam, I'm going to do this too. The first thing they said as I appeared: You are here because you're in pain. I said: I'm not. I'm here because I want to have a mind like a beam. They said: No, you're here because of pain. I thought: This is a very bad way to start, with an argument. But I gradually realized they were completely right.

What was astounding to me was that, as you're sitting there—and we sat for 18 hours a day—you get very stiff, and you suffer incredible



Sketch by Laurie Anderson

pain, of your knee or whatever your thing is. As you get to know that pain, and pay attention to it, you realize you can move it, but more than that, you realize it has the most elegant code to it, that somehow, when you experience emotion, you store it somewhere in your body. And you realize: Wow, I'm a library of pain. The idea with *vipassana* is to focus on that and loosen it up if you can.

At that time, I was doing a lot of sculpture, so I was trying to be aware of space. When your eyes are so relaxed for so long, at the end of ten days, your peripheral vision is hugely increased, because you're not looking in a targeted way: I see it, I want it, I get it. You're aware of what's behind you, what's out there, you have the eyes of the prey rather than the predator. I thought: This is amazing, I can see way more on the sides now, the space behind me and above me, so you can situate yourself in the world in a much less egocentric way, at the same time using your powers of perception to locate yourself. That is very mind-expanding.

Everything I've ever done as an artist has to do with disembodiment, not only the work I'm doing currently with virtual reality (VR). Not only VR has special abilities to do that. You can be carried away by a piece of music, or get lost in a pencil sketch, or in a novel. Our mind has the ability to do that.

My hope with a record like this is to enable the listener to reach a looser mental state through their ears which capture these sounds, without tempo leading back to structure. The music is meant to help you float out of your body, to go into these other realms, and to let yourself do that without boundaries.

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གྲངས་དག་གསལ་བའི་ལེན་ལ་མ་ཡེད་བ་འདུག། རང་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་མེད་རྣམ་མཁའི་དམིངས་སུ་ལམ་ལང་། འདུལ་ལྷན་གྲགས་སུ་དང་ལྷན་ལ་ལང་། མི་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་མ་ཡིན་པར་ཤེས་པར་
བྱ། གྲེ་མ་བདག་ལ་ཚེས་ཉིད་བར་དོ་འཚེ་འཇུག་པའི་རྒྱུ་ ལྷན་ལ་དངངས་སྐྱོག་འཇིགས་སྤང་སྤངས་ལྷན་ནས། གང་གང་རང་སྤང་རྒྱུ་བར་དེ་ལོས་བྱ། བར་དོའི་སྤང་སྤང་ལོན་པར་
ཤེས་པར་བྱ། དེའི་ཚེན་ལག་གསལ་ལ་ལྷགས་པའི་དུས་གཅིག་ཡིང་། རང་སྤང་བྱི་ཤིང་ཚོགས་ལ་མ་ཡིན་གསུམ་ཡི་གཞ། གྲེ་མ་བདག་ལ་སྤོང་བ་བར་དོ་འཚེ་འཇུག་པའི་རྒྱུ་ འདུག་པ་ཆེ་
གཉིས་ཤིང་ལེ་མས་ལ་སྤང་ལྷན་ནས། འབར་ལོ་ལ་སྤྱི་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལྷན་དང་། རང་ལ་སྤོང་དགགས་ལས་རྩ་ལོག་ལྷན་པར་བྱ། རྗེད་དུས་དག་སྤང་དགོས་པའི་དུས་གཅིག་ཡིན།
མིག་སེར་སྤངས་ནས་སྤྱི་མ་ཡེད་བ་སྤོང་། འཚི་བ་ལོ་སྐྱུལ་མེད་པའི་སྤོང་བའི་རྒྱུ་ དེའི་ཚོ་འདི་ལྷན་འཕྲུལ་སྐྱུལ་ནས། དེ་ལེ་སྤོང་ལོག་ལྷན་ལ་འདུན་ལ་འཁྲུལ་
དགོས་ཤེས་ཤེས་པ་དམ་པའི་ཚོས་ཡིན་ལས། དེ་སྤོང་ཉིད་དུ་སྤོང་བའི་སྤོང་བའི་རྒྱུ་ དེའི་ཚོ་འདི་ལྷན་འཕྲུལ་སྐྱུལ་ནས། སྤོང་བའི་གང་མཚན་ལེ་མས་ལ་མ་བཞག་ན། རང་
གི་རང་ཉིད་སྤྱུལ་བས་མི་ལྷུར་རྩམ། བར་དོ་རྣམ་པ་རྒྱལ་གྱི་རྩ་ཚིག་ཤིང་གསུམ་ལོ།

ABOUT THE TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD

KHAMO

The Bardo Thodol (Tibetan: བར་དོ་ཐོས་གྲོལ།, Wylie: *bar do thos grol*), or *Liberation Through Hearing During the Intermediate State*, is the seminal Tibetan Buddhist text for guiding the consciousness of the recently deceased through their death journey and rebirthing process. The text is commonly known in the West as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, a name chosen by Walter Evans-Wentz—he first translated into English (according to Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup’s English rendering) and published three chapters of the text in 1927—because of the parallels he found with *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*.

The Bardo Thodol belongs to the genre of Tibetan Buddhist writings called *terma* (*gter ma*) or “treasure.” This body of literature is believed to have originated from the great Indian tantric master Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche, who visited Tibet in the 8th century and started teaching Buddhism there. Judging that his teachings were too advanced for the people to understand at that time and would only be properly understood in the near future, he instructed his consort to write down his teachings; then he buried them in caves, lakes, pillars, or sometimes in the hearts of yet-to-be born Buddhist disciples.

Padmasambhava reportedly composed thousands of such works, including *The Bardo Thodol*. Buried in the 8th century, it was only uncovered in the 14th century by Karma Lingpa (1352–1405).

The Bardo Thodol belongs to a longer *terma* cycle called *Zab chos zhi khro dgongspa rang grol* (*Profound Doctrine of Self-Liberation of Mind [through Encountering] the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities of Karma gling pa*). There are a few versions of this *terma* cycle, but the contents of all of them usually cover meditation instructions, visualizations of deities, prayers and mantras, and descriptions of the signs of death and future rebirth.

The Bardo Thodol focuses on *bardo*, the intermediate state or transitional states that mark an individual’s existence during the period between death and rebirth. After death and before one’s next birth, one’s consciousness is not connected with a physical body, and one’s

The root verses of the Bardo Thodal.
Calligraphy by Tenzin Choegyul

**“THE BARDOL THODOL
AIMS TO HELP THOSE
WHOSE CONSCIOUSNESS
HAS ENTERED THE
INTERMEDIATE STATE.”**

consciousness experiences a variety of phenomena that are confusing and frightening to most deceased. *The Bardo Thodol* aims to help those whose consciousness has entered the intermediate state to move themselves into a new reality, with the ultimate goal of escaping the cycle of life altogether, or, in other words, to become enlightened. If enlightenment is not possible due to one's karmic deeds, the process aims to lead to a better rebirth. This transition is accomplished through reading the text to the dying/dead in order to assist the consciousness in finding its way through the *bardo*.

The Bardo Thodol, which consists of two extended texts, also serves as the foundation for various meditation and ritual practices that are based on one of the central principles of *The Bardo*, which is the true nature or true reality of death. The first text contains the *Bardo* of this life, the *Bardo* of dream, and the *Bardo* of meditation. The second text, part of which is used in this recording, also consists of three *Bardos*, and they refer to the three phases between death and rebirth. According to *The Bardo Thodol*, these three phases last for 49 days.

The first *Bardo*, the *Chikhai Bardo* (*Bardo* of the moment of death), concerns the stage that occurs immediately after death. At the beginning of this *bardo*, right after a death, a lama will read the instructions to the deceased to help them in accepting that death has finally come and is the ultimate existence. This experience is called the Clear Light of Reality. If the consciousness can accept the truth about its death and see its death as the Clear Light of Reality, it will escape the cycle of existence and become enlightened. If not, the consciousness will move into the next *bardo*.

The second phase/text, *Chonyid Bardo* (*Bardo* of the experiencing of reality), is a two-week period wherein the deceased will meet numerous spiritual beings: the Peaceful Deities and Wrathful Deities, which are actually manifestations of Peaceful Deities. The instructions are read to assist the deceased to not be confused and frightened in the presence of these deities. If the consciousness can follow the instructions and be still



and not frightened, it will be liberated. Otherwise, it moves on to the next *bardo*.

The *Sidpa Bardo* (Bardo of rebirth) is the *bardo* of becoming or rebirth. This *bardo* starts when the current consciousness moves into a new, transmigrating form. It is determined by the “karmic seeds” of the current consciousness and begins with the inner-breath at the start of the new transmigration, which eventually results in rebirth. This is typically represented by the imagery of men and women passionately entwined.

The readings on this album, with their vivid descriptions of the being that the deceased meets on its way, are from the *Chonyid Bardo*.

Guru Yab Yum by
Karma Phuntsok

THE ARTISTS

TENZIN CHOEGYAL is a Tibetan artist, composer, activist, musical director, and cultural ambassador. Over the years, Tenzin has forged a successful international career as a musician, playing at such prestigious events as WOMAD as well as several Concerts for Tibet House at Carnegie Hall, New York. In 2008, he founded the annual Festival of Tibet in Brisbane, Australia, which showcases Tibetan culture through music, film, art, and discussion. He was musical director for the Asia Pacific Screen Awards in 2011 and 2013 and is artistic director of the Brisbane Himalayan Film Festival. In 2015, in his role as ambassador for the Australian Himalayan Foundation, Tenzin traveled to the border of Tibet on the Nepalese side, the closest he has come to his ancestral homeland since he was forced to leave.

In addition to his solo performances of soaring vocals and circling rhythms, Tenzin is an avid collaborator with musicians from diverse cultures, traditions, and genres, ranging from classical Western (with chamber orchestra Camerata of St John's) and contemporary (with Philip Glass) to ancient traditional (with didgeridoo master William Barton). Tenzin embraces opportunities to take his music to uncharted territory, both in the studio and onstage. Tenzin has six independent album releases and recently collaborated with Philip Glass on the score for the film *The Last Dalai Lama*. www.tenzinchoegyal.com



*Tenzin Choegyal, photo
by Steven Sebring*



Laurie Anderson, photo
by Steven Sebring

Laurie Anderson is one of America's most renowned and daring creative pioneers. Best known for her multimedia presentations, innovative use of technology, and first-person narration, she is a writer, director, visual artist, and vocalist who has created groundbreaking works that span the worlds of art, theater, and experimental music.

Her recording career, launched by "O Superman" in 1981, includes many records released by Warner Records, among them *Big Science* (1982), the soundtrack to her feature film *Home of the Brave* (1986), *Strange Angels* (1989), *Life on a String* (2001), and *Homeland* (2008). *Landfall* (2018), released on Nonesuch, is a work commissioned by Kronos Quartet and inspired by the devastating effects of Hurricane Sandy. She also has recorded numerous works for radio and podcast.

Anderson's live shows range from simple spoken-word works to multi-faceted, multi-media stage performances such as "United States Parts 1-4" (1982), "Stories from the Nerve Bible" (1992), "Songs and Stories for Moby Dick" (1999), "Delusion" (2010), and "Language of the Future" (2017).

In 2002, Anderson was appointed the first artist-in-residence of NASA, which culminated in her 2004 solo performance "The End of the Moon," the second in a series of three "story" performances along with "Happiness" (2001) and "Dirtday" (2012). All of them toured extensively internationally.

Anderson has published eight books. Her most recent release—*All the Things I Lost in the Flood* (Rizzoli)—is a series of essays about pictures, language, and codes. She is currently writing and compiling *The Art of the Straight Line*, a series of essays and interviews about tai chi in the work of her late husband Lou Reed, whom she lived and collaborated with for 21 years.

Anderson's visual work has been presented in museums around the world. Major audio-visual installations include "The Record of the Time – Sound in the Work of Laurie Anderson" (2003), which toured to five museums; works for World Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan; a major retrospective of her visual and installation work in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro

(2010); and “Habeas Corpus” (2015), a collaboration with Guantanamo detainee Mohammed el Gharani at the Park Avenue Armory in New York City, for which she was awarded, for the second time, Yoko Ono’s Courage Award for the Arts.

Anderson’s films include numerous music videos and installation works as well as *Carmen* (1992), the high-definition *Hidden Inside Mountains* (2005), and Arte-commissioned *Heart of a Dog* (2015), chosen as an official selection of the 2015 Venice and Toronto Film Festivals.

Her series of paintings, *Forty-Nine Days in The Bardo*, and film-sculptures, “Iron Mountain,” have been exhibited widely. She continues to tour her evolving performance “Language of the Future.” The recipient of numerous honorary doctorates and awards, among them a Guggenheim fellowship (1982) and the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize (2007), she continues to experiment with many different forms and contexts for her work.

In 2017 Anderson joined four other artists in Mass MoCA’s Building 6, inaugurating a 15-year rotating exhibition of work. She will show pieces from her archive as well as new work. Included in the first exhibition cycle are her virtual reality collaborations with Hsin-Chien Huang, “Chalkroom” and “Aloft.” “Chalkroom” has been featured in film festivals all over the world including The Venice Film Festival, where it won the award for “Best VR Film” under its Italian title “La Camera Insabbiata.”

As an activist Anderson has participated in many groups including Women’s Action Coalition and Occupy Art. She continues to work with the activist group The Federation, which she co-founded in 2017. She lives and works in New York.





*Tenzin Choegyal and Laurie Anderson,
photo by Karanjit Singh*

JESSE PARIS SMITH is a composer, writer, instrumentalist, producer, and co-founder of Pathway to Paris, a nonprofit organization dedicated to combating global climate change. She has been recording and performing since 2004, collaborating with musicians and artists around the globe. Her music has been commissioned for films, commercial work, installations, audiobooks, and live score performances. Recognizing the deeply transformative and healing power of music, she shifted her efforts in 2008 towards incorporating this element more intentionally. In 2013–14, she studied with the Sound and Music Institute, a professional training focused on integrative healing practices, where her personal emphasis was on resonating instruments and the role of music and sound in grief. Following the program, she also studied Performance Wellness with the late Dr. Louise Montello.

Many of Jesse's projects and collaborations concentrate on the topics of global climate change and the Himalayas. She is on the Associate Board of Tibet House US, where she has co-curated and hosted events, and has performed many times at their annual benefit concert at Carnegie Hall, where she met Tenzin Choegyal. In 2014, Jesse and cellist Rebecca Foon launched Pathway to Paris, of which Tenzin is a board member and regular contributor. The organization has produced several major concert events and offers tangible solutions to climate change, including their 1000 Cities Initiative launched in 2017. For two years, Jesse co-hosted and curated "Talking Stick" at the Rubin Museum of Art, a multi-media storytelling event in production for over ten years. Following the Himalayan earthquake in April 2015—less than four months after Jesse's first visit to Nepal—she also founded Everest Awakening (a name chosen by Tenzin), an initiative which raises awareness, funding, and organizes various humanitarian and rebuilding projects in Nepal and Tibet. Through their many projects together, Jesse and Tenzin work to highlight the Himalayan region in the conversation of climate change, and to keep the wisdom and knowledge of Tibet alive in our minds.

Grief and loss are subjects very dear to Jesse's heart, and she has spent a great deal of energy over the years exploring her own experiences of loss. Wishing to further devote herself to others, she has completed a significant amount of study in this area, including a program in Creative Grief Support completed in 2018. She feels deeply passionate about the socio-cultural expectations, misinformation, and oppression around grief, especially in our Western culture, and wishes to do all she can to help shift the world into a place of understanding, support, and compassion around grief.

*Jesse Paris Smith, photo
by Steven Sebring*



CREDITS

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Recorded and mixed by Eli Crews

Mastered by Pete Reiniger

Annotated by Tenzin Choegyal, Laurie Anderson, Huib Schippers,
Jesse Paris Smith, and Khamo

Cover painting “City Mandala” by Karma Phuntsok

Sketches by Laurie Anderson

Calligraphy by Tenzin Choegyal

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Production manager: Mary Monseur

Production assistant: Kate Harrington

Editorial assistance by Carla Borden and Elisa Hough

Art direction, design, and layout by Visual Dialogue (visualdialogue.com)

SPECIAL THANKS FROM TENZIN to Guru Padmasambhava;
His Highness the Dalai Lama for always being the inspiration; all
my Tibetan gurus of the past, present, and future; and all my
family and friends.

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SONGS FROM THE BARDO begins with a bell ringing: once, twice, three times, before chant emerges from the dense silence. This collaborative composition by avant-garde icon Laurie Anderson, Tibetan multi-instrumentalist Tenzin Choegyel, and composer and activist Jesse Paris Smith is a guided journey through passages from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. It unfolds as an ebb and flow of sound and words, fusing contemporary compositional techniques with ancient Tibetan Buddhist philosophy to reach new generations. The result is an experience that transports the listener, draws the mind into the present moment, and provides a framework for inner exploration. 77 minutes, 32-page booklet with extensive notes and photos.

Produced by Tenzin Choegyel, Laurie Anderson, and Jesse Paris Smith.

1. Homage to the Gurus 3:31
2. Heart Sutra Song – Gone Beyond 7:31
3. Awakened One 5:28
4. The Three Jewels 4:17
5. Brilliant Lights 11:13
6. Listen Without Distraction 5:27
7. Gong 1:37
8. Dancing With the Crescent Knife 4:26
9. Jigten 6:04
10. Natural Form of Emptiness 6:38
11. Lotus Born, No Need to Fear 7:07
12. Dividing Line 3:50
13. Moon in the Water 5:15
14. Awakened Heart 5:09



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