MUSIC FOR A STARRY NIGHT

for strings, percussion and piano

Lo Ting-cheung

First Performance:

Violin: Finna Kurniawati, San Win Htike, Tim Chen, Patricia Erika Poblador

Viola: Karoline Vik Hegge, Victor Williams, Jared Yapp, Kieran Welch

Cello: Dylan Lee, Alfian Adytia

Percussion: Matthew Lau, Austin Lamarche

Piano: Thomas Rosenkranz

Conductor: Chris Kim

June 25th, 2015

Wet Link (The Modern Academy Concert Series)

Loke Yew Hall, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Instrumentation

Piano

2 Percussion

Percussion 1: 5 Temple Blocks, 2 Wood Blocks, 4 Cowbells, Xylophone, Large Suspended Cymbal (soft mallets)

Percussion 2: Tam-tam (soft beater and Double Bass bow), Large Suspended Cymbal (soft mallets), Small Chinese Gongs (soft beater and Double Bass bow)

6 Violins

3 Violas

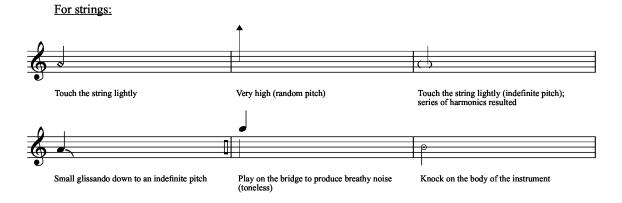
3 Cellos

Performance Notes

For all instruments:

- This is a score in C.
- Accidentals apply to all the notes within the same bar. Natural signs are used when there is a need to avoid confusion.
- All metronomic indications are approximate and may vary slightly, depending on the acoustical properties of the hall.
- A note with an open-ended slur should be allowed to vibrate until it ceases naturally.

For strings:



p.o. = position ordinary

b.a.p. = balzato alla punta

Structure and content of the composition

General structure of the composition

The instrumentation is divided into 3 groups:

- the piano and the percussion (1 & 2)
- string orchestra (Vln. 1-4, Vla. 1-2 & Vc. 1-2)
- string quartet (Vln 5-6, Vla, 3 & Vc. 3)

During the performance, the string orchestra is conducted while the pianist, the percussionists, and the string quartet are free to perform their own materials under a given set of guidelines without the need to synchronize with one another.

All the players begin as indicated in the score. After *rehearsal* D, there are 8 composed "mobiles" for the string orchestra. Given these 8 structural units, the conductor is free to call for them in any sequence, allowing pauses of 8-10 seconds between "mobiles". The sequence can also be determined before the performance. After all the 8 "mobiles" have been performed, the conductor and the string orchestra proceed to *rehearsal* E and perform accordingly. After *rehearsal* E, the conductor cues the pianist and the percussionists. All the performers then proceed to *rehearsal* F, which is notated in the traditional manner, and perform from the notated score since then until the end.

Mode of performance

For the pianist:

There are five mobile sections (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) for the pianist. Each section contains a number of brief musical "events" which differ from each other in their basic sound characteristics.

The pianist is free to perform his materials under a given set of guidelines without the need to synchronize with other instruments.

- The pianist begins by performing any "event" in section 1, allowing a pause of 6-10 seconds before moving on to the next.
- When the conductor gives the cue at *rehearsal* D, the pianist is then free to choose any "event" from both sections 1 and 2, allowing a pause of 6-12 seconds between any two "events".
- After two "mobiles" have been played by the string orchestra, the conductor will cue the pianist again who can then proceed to any "event" in sections 1, 2 3 and 4, allowing pauses of 6-10 seconds between successive "events". The pianist can connect different "events" (no more than 2) to form a longer "event".
- After <u>six</u> "mobiles" have been played by the string orchestra, the conductor will cue the pianist once again who can then choose any "event" from all the sections (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), allowing pauses of 6-8 seconds between "events". Again, the pianist is given the discretion to connect different "events" (at most 3) to form a

longer "event".

An "event" can be used as many times as the pianist wishes throughout the performance, except the two "events" in section 4 which can only be played once. Whenever an "event" is "re-used", the pianist should try to perform it in other registers. An "event" can be repeated in succession, but no more than twice in a row. (If an event is repeated in succession, it is considered as two "events" connected together. But it doesn't count as "re-used", so the "event" doesn't have to change register.) NOT all the "events" have to be performed in a single performance. Some "events" may not be used at all. But the pianist is strongly encouraged to perform as many different "events" as possible in a particular performance.

The "events" are to be performed with the dynamic level from *ppp* to *f*; except the two "events" in section 3 which should be performed in *ppp*. It is possible to perform any "event" with crescendo or decrescendo.

Although there are tempo markings in different sections, the pianist can perform the "events" very freely. He is also free to accelerate and decelerate within each "event".

The "events" in sections 1, 2 and 5 are to be performed WITHOUT <u>pedal I</u> (sustaining pedal) while the "events" in sections 3 and 4 require the application of <u>pedal I</u>. If it is possible, the lowest keys of the piano should be depressed with forearms and <u>pedal II</u> should be secured throughout the performance.

When the conductor gives the cue after *rehearsal* E, the pianist completes the "event" he is playing and, after a pause of a few seconds, proceeds to *rehearsal* F, and performs from the notated score since then until the end.

SILENCE should be substantial throughout the piece. The pianist should insist on accurately articulating relationships between sound and silence.

For the 1st percussionist:

There are two mobile sections (1 and 2) for the 1st percussionist. Section 1 contains a number of rhythmic "patterns" while section 2 contains a number of brief "events" for the Xylophone.

The percussionist is free to perform his materials under a given set of guidelines without the need to synchronize with other instruments.

- Starting from *rehearsal* B, the percussionist is free to perform any "pattern" in section 1 on the Temple Blocks, the Wood Blocks and the Cowbells, allowing a pause of 6-12 seconds between any two "patterns". A single "pattern" can be performed across different instruments. The percussionist can connect different "patterns" (no more than 2) to form a longer "pattern".

- After <u>four</u> "mobiles" have been played by the string orchestra, the conductor will cue the percussionist who can then proceed to any "pattern/event" from both sections 1 and 2, allowing a pause of 6-10 seconds between any two "patterns/events". Again, the percussionist can connect different "patterns" or "events" (at most 3) to form a longer "pattern/event".
- After <u>seven</u> "mobiles" have been played by the string orchestra, the conductor will cue the percussionist once again who can then perform any "pattern/event" from both sections 1 and 2, allowing pauses of 6-8 seconds between successive "patterns/events". The percussionist can connect up to 4 different "events" to form a longer "event".

A "pattern/event" can be used as many times as the percussionist wishes throughout the performance. NOT all the "patterns/events" have to be performed in a single performance. Some "patterns/events" may not be used at all. But the percussionist is strongly encouraged to choose as many different "patterns/events" as possible in a particular performance.

The "patterns/events" are to be performed with the dynamic level from *ppp* to *f*. It is possible to perform a "pattern/event" with crescendo or decrescendo.

Although there are tempo markings in both sections, the percussionist can perform the "patterns/events" very freely. He is also free to accelerate and decelerate within each "pattern/event".

When the conductor gives the cue after *rehearsal* E, the percussionist completes the "pattern/event" he is playing and, after pausing a few seconds, proceeds to *rehearsal* F, and performs from the notated score since then until the end.

SILENCE should be substantial throughout the piece. The percussionist should insist on accurately articulating relationships between sound and silence.

For the 2nd percussionist:

The second percussionist is free to perform his materials without the need to synchronize with other instruments. Starting from *rehearsal* C, the percussionist can perform any "gesture" with either a stroke (using a soft beater/mallet or a Double Bas bow) or a roll on the Tam-tam, the Suspended Cymbal, or the Chinese Gongs, allowing a pause of 6-8 seconds between "gestures". The roll can last as long as 14 seconds.

The second percussionist may exercise his discretion in overlapping different "gestures" to form a longer "gesture" (e.g. a roll on the Tam-tam can be overlapped with a stroke on the Gongs). The maximum number of "gestures" overlapped is 3.

The "gestures" are to be performed with the dynamic level from *ppp* to *p*.

The percussionist continues performing freely until cued by the conductor after *rehearsal* E. The percussionist completes the "pattern/event" he is playing and, after a pause of a few seconds, proceeds to *rehearsal* F, and performs from the notated score since then until the end.

For the String Quartet:

The String Quartet works as a group throughout the performance. All the four players perform from the score.

There are a series of "chords" in the work. Starting from *rehearsal* C, the String Quartet repeats the "chords" ceaselessly until the end, without the need to synchronize with other instruments. Near the end of the performance, the conductor cues the String Quartet who then performs <u>five</u> more "chords" to end the performance.

Score

For the conductor, the pianist and the 1st percussionist, it is suggested that they have the score/parts unbound to facilitate page-turning.

General comments

The conception of the work is that the score only provides basic materials with different musical characteristics. These materials may be subject to different modifications in the form of combining, sequencing, changing dynamics or tempos, or any other modification process spontaneously created in the performance.

The structure is NOT dependent upon improvisation, but there is a high degree of flexibility in the form. Spontaneity is important throughout the performance. The performers should be aware of the flexibility within the composed materials as well as within the predetermined framework.

Given that the structure and content are clearly understood, it is possible for the performers to achieve smooth transitions and well-connected lines. The first impression of the score is that it contains a large collection of sporadic fragments. These fragments can be seen as beads of all shapes and colours which can be stringed together into numerous different forms. The collection offers a wealth of formal possibilities inherent in this piece. It is the realization of such possibilities, not the fragmentation, that should become the dominant characteristic of the performance.

The musical materials are rehearsed; the performances are not. While no two performances will arrive at the same formal outcome, the work will retain its identity from performance to performance through the unchanging basic characters of the musical materials.

The combination of the musical materials should produce an atmospheric texture. Ideally, the materials should slightly overlap, without coming in too much or too less together. The performers (especially the conductor, the pianist and the percussionists) should stay highly alert to the combined effect, and adjust the length of pauses whenever necessary.

The pianist and the percussionists should familiarize themselves with the character of each material so that they can perform with a high degree of flexibility to ensure the ongoing continuity of the performance.

The duration of the performance is flexible. It is suggested to be around 15 minutes.

Programme note

This piece serves as homage to Béla Bartók. Although the instrumentation resembles that of *Music for strings, percussion and celesta* by the Hungarian composer, it pays tribute to Bartók's "night music" in a more general way. Tranquil piano gestures, eerie percussion sounds, and fleeting string sections are tiled together into a surrealistic collage, creating an atmospheric texture, reminiscent of the wonderful sound world around us on a starry night.

I've always been fascinated by the sounds of the night, even more so since I came to study in the UK. Many a night when I was sitting up late, I could hear music, from just outside the window, played by nature's own ensemble. The chirping of birds, the humming of insects, the sighing of the wind joined to make an enchanting tune. The different sounds rose and subsided in a seemingly random way but the combined effect was mesmerizing.

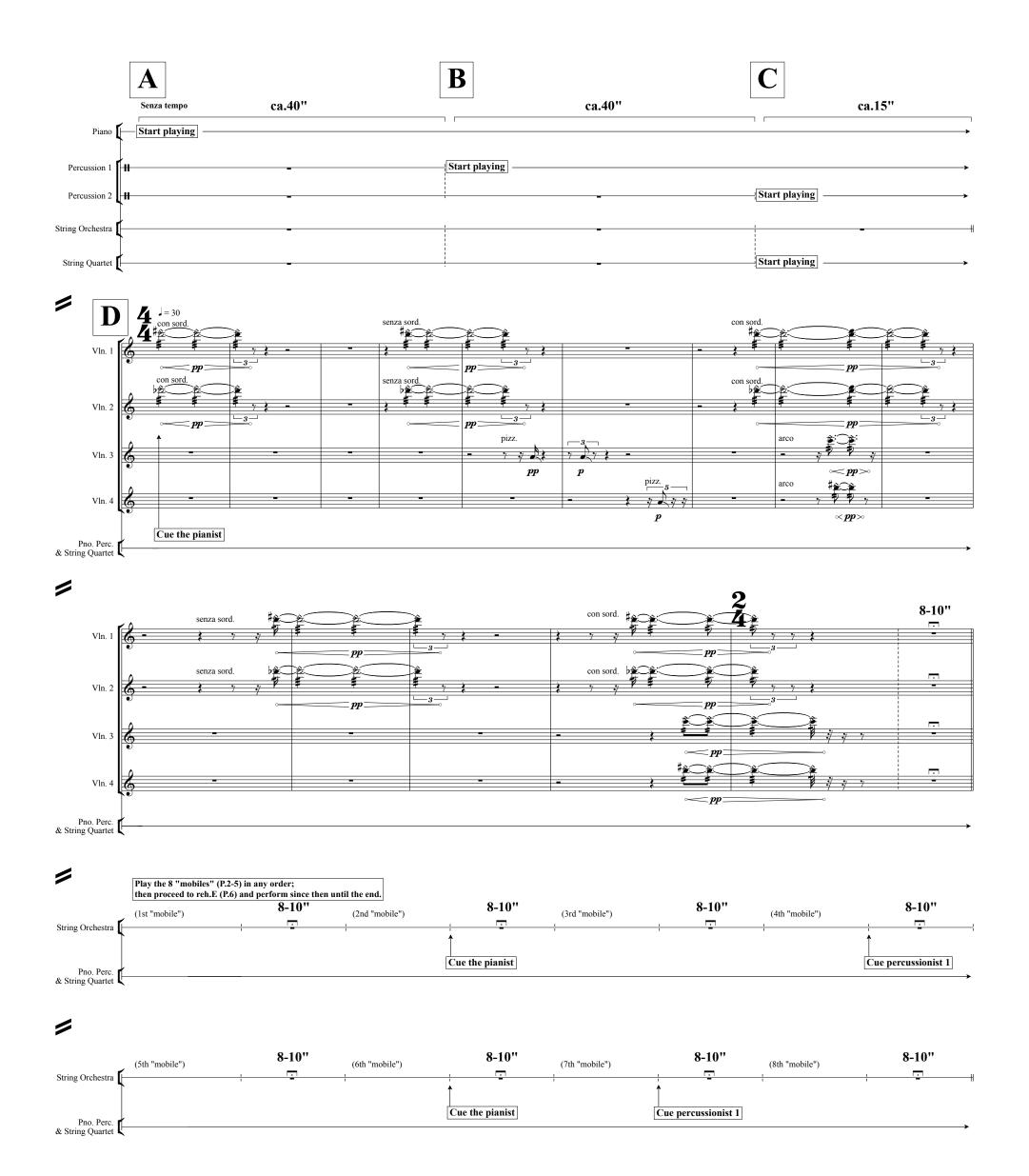
To present such a combination of delicate sounds of nature in musical terms is no easy task. Consequent to my previous works *YOU WANG* (*In the Quietness of a Bamboo Grove*) for prepared violin and *Nocturne* for prepared piano, I've become convinced that "open-form" is a possible option for serving this purpose. The music in this work is allowed to develop in a free manner within a predetermined framework. The score basically contains a collection of sporadic fragments which can be stringed together like beads into different possible forms. The performers are given the discretion to choose their own materials from the score. The music is, in a way, free to find its own course to its final destination.

For some time, my compositional interest has been focused on introducing a component of flexibility to the composed materials, allowing spontaneous decisions to be made in the performance. The final shape of this piece is dependent on the immediate and spontaneous responses of the performers in relation to the composed materials, the surrounding music as produced by other performers, and the unique circumstances of the specific performance. Each performance is therefore a collaborative musical adventure for the composer, the performers as well as the audience.

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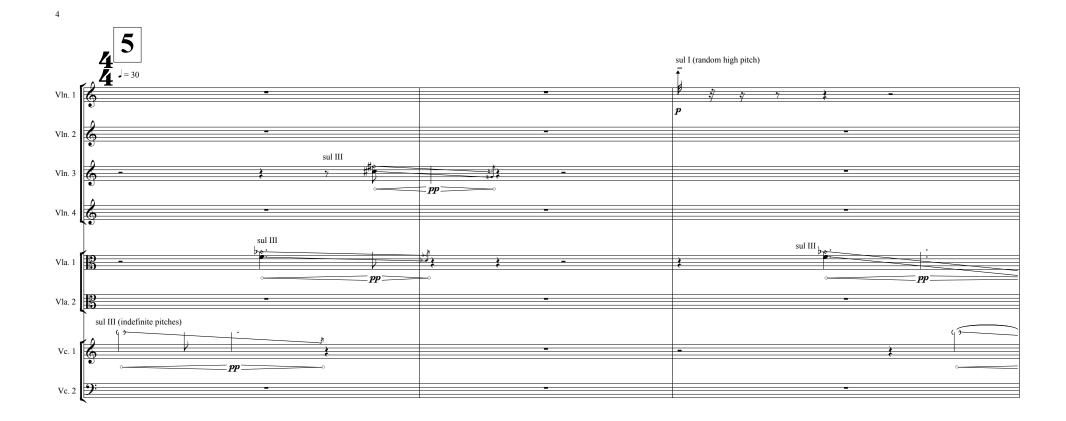
for strings, percussion and piano

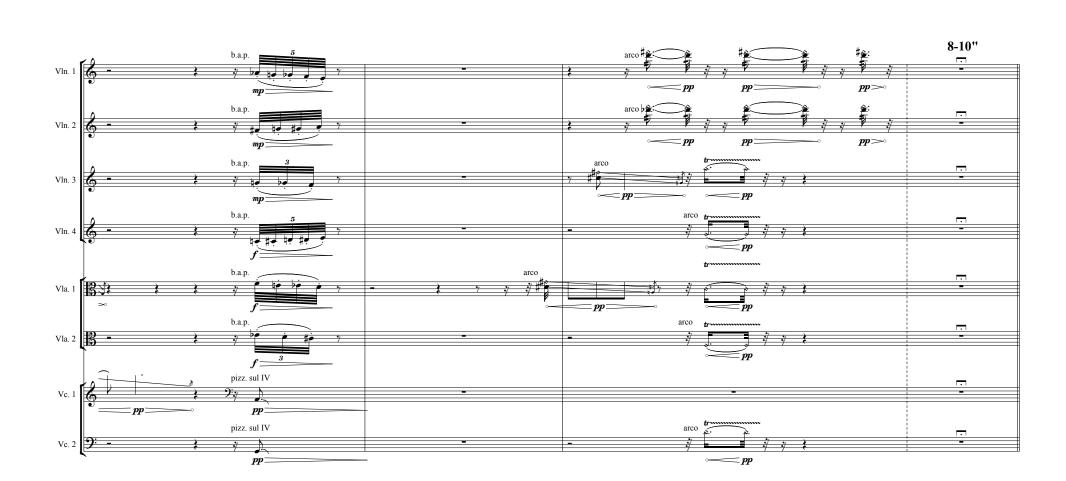
Daniel LO Ting-cheung 2015

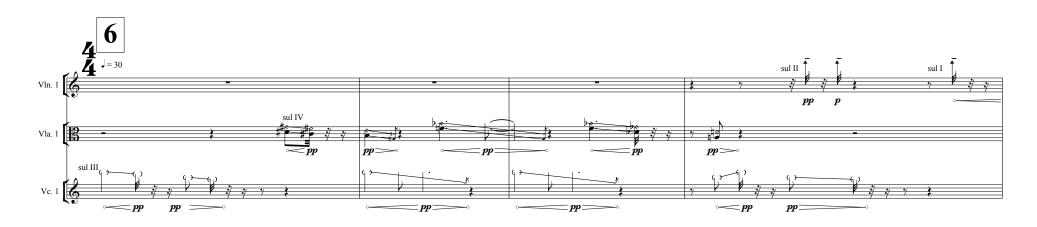


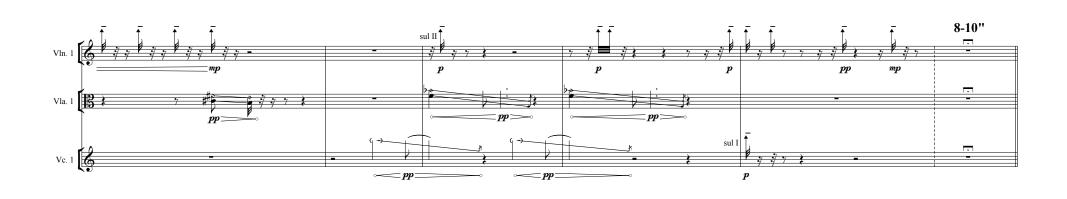


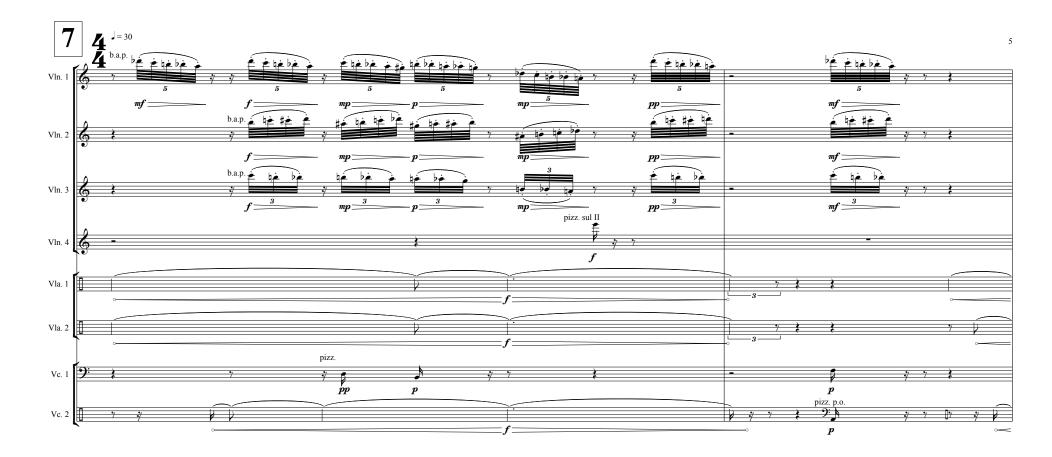








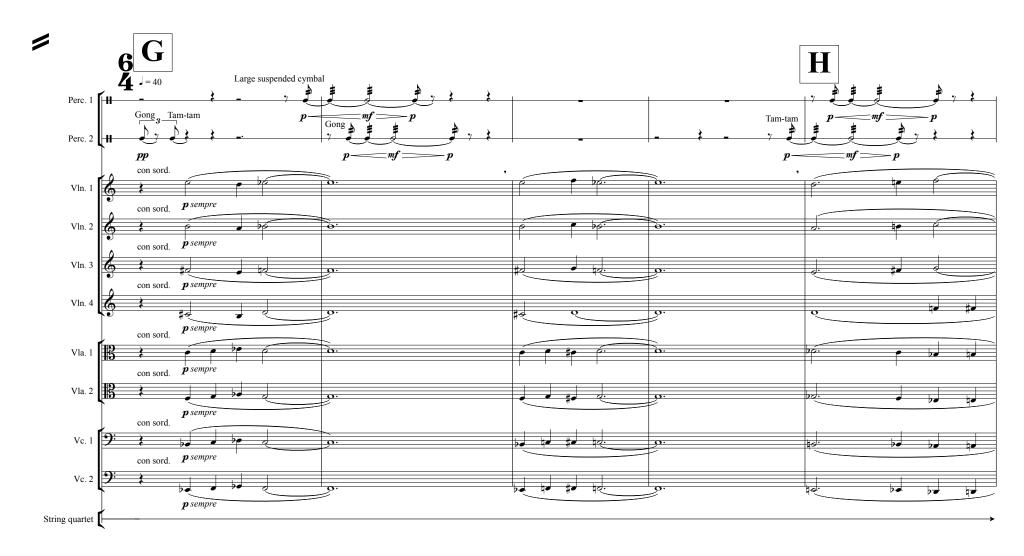


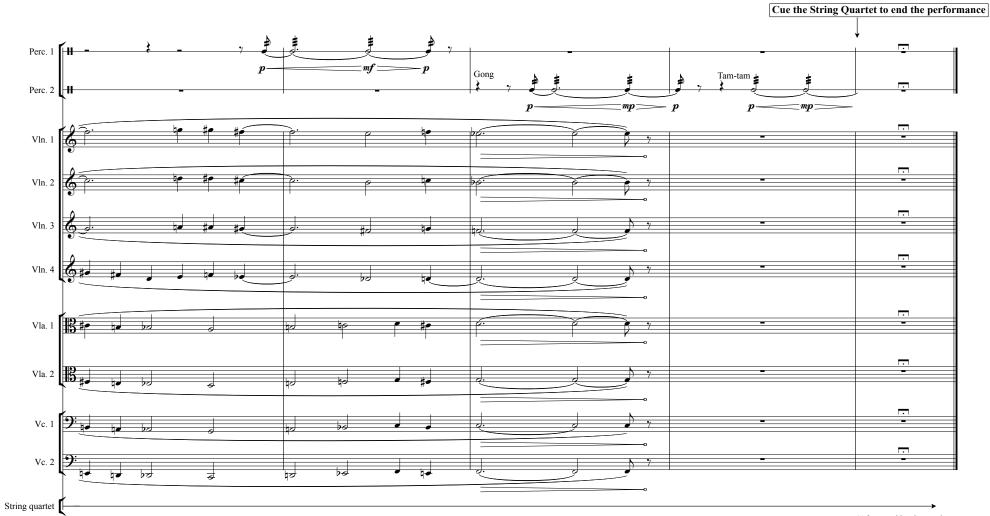






Pno. Perc. & String Quartet

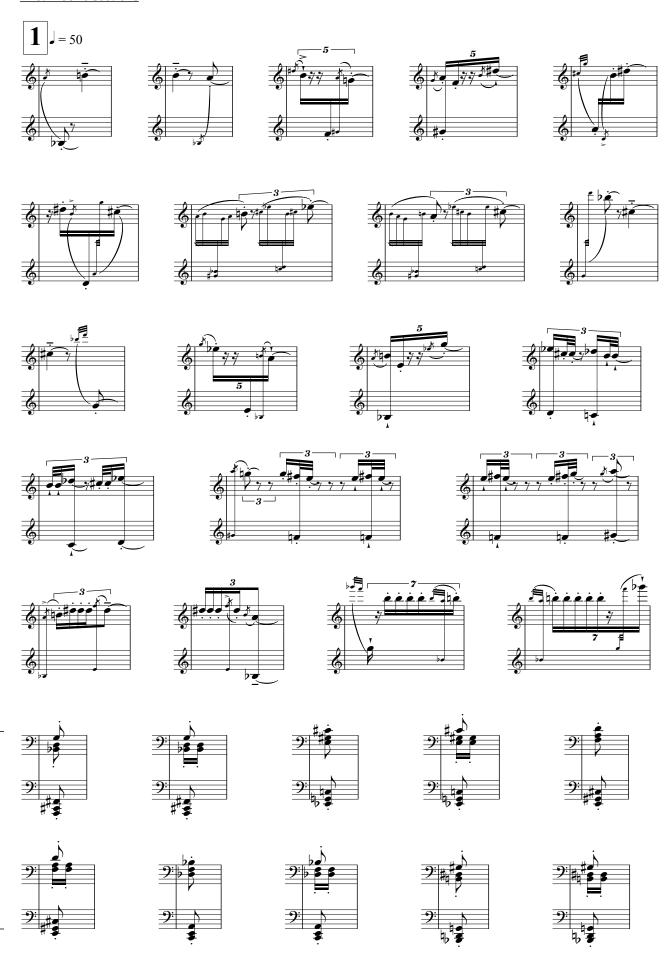




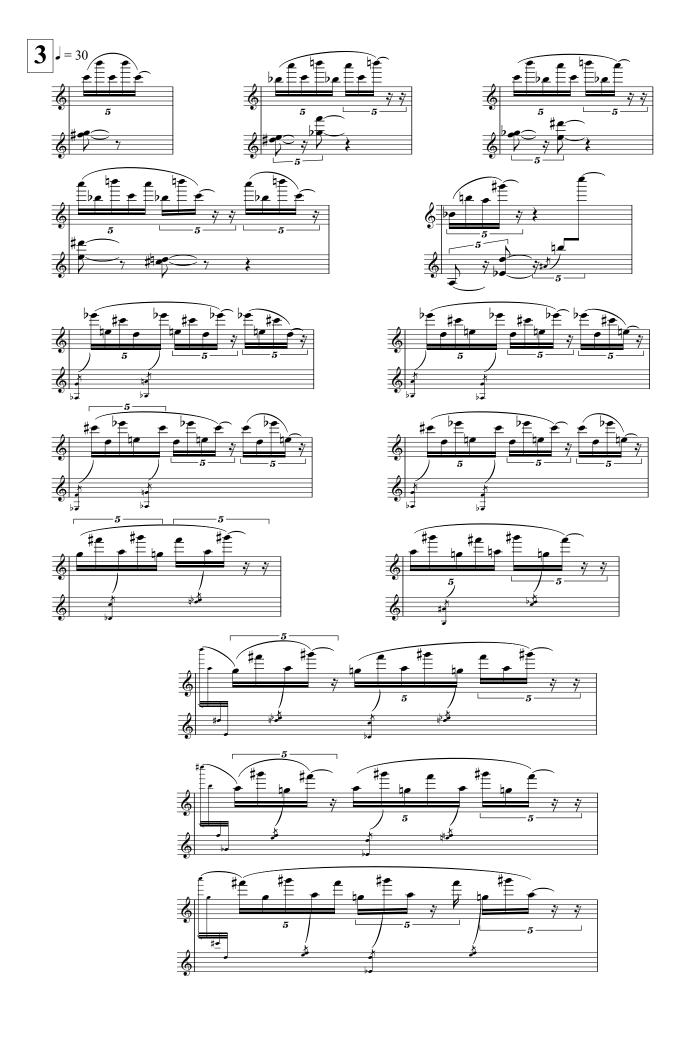
(After cued by the conducotr, finish the concurrent chord and perform 5 more chords to end the performance.)

Pno. mobile sections

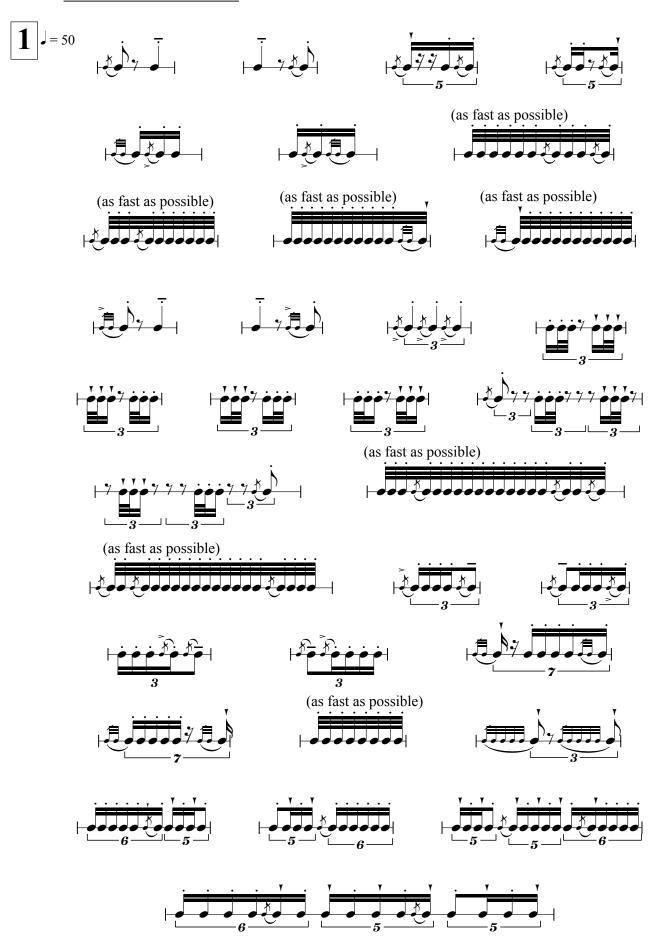
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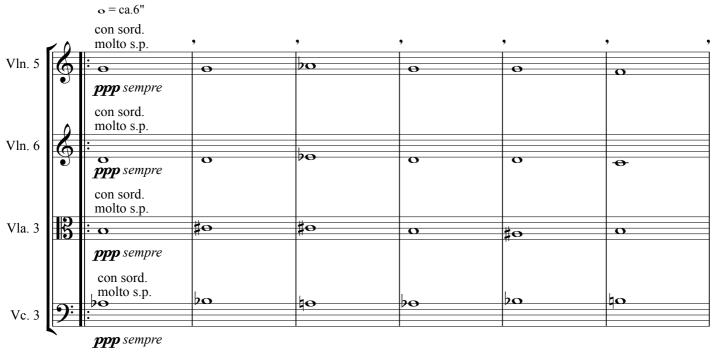


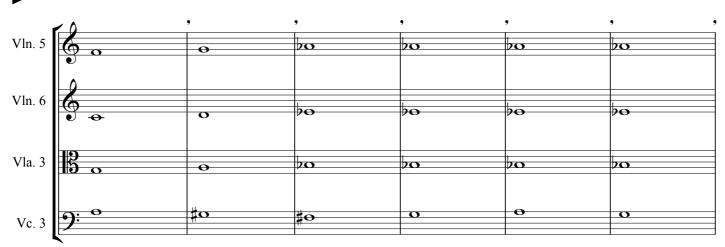






String Quartet "chords"



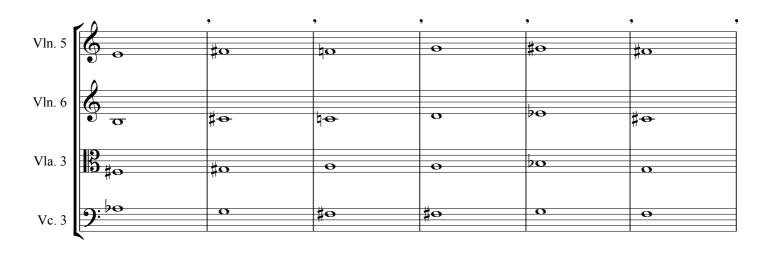




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Vln. 6		o	Þo	#•	# •	0
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Vc. 3	9: ⁵⁰	20	0	O	0	PO







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