st11.1.17



sumtone

:

michael edwards

pas de poule, pas de pot

for clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and electronics

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About a year before composing this piece, I was at a concert where a friend of mine was playing the drums in a jazz trio comprising himself, a guitarist, and a pianist. The drums, being naturally clangourous (especially in the enthusiastic, polymetric hands of my friend) along with the guitar (played by an apparently half-deaf aficionado of the noise bomb, who definitely had an amplifier that went all the way up to eleven and stayed there), left the piano struggling, or rather failing, to make itself heard. No amount of amplification was going to help the situation before feedback had its wicked way and sent us all running for cover. So, being in a position to see the pianist's fingers at work, I was left to imagine what he might have contributed had he been even the slightest bit audible. This was a very engrossing project, and I soon arrived at the point where I was hardly even listening to the two sonic terrorists sitting beside him; instead, I was completely focussed on mentally reconstructing the havoc I saw his fingers wreaking at the piano keyboard (it has to be admitted, he too was not at all shy of committing aural atrocities). Suddenly, seeming to grasp the lamentable situation he was in, he did a wonderful thing. After a particularly tumultuous (looking) run over the whole length of the piano, his fingers went off over the high end of the keyboard and into thin air. He stood up, faced the audience, and played, quite unashamedly, the greatest "air piano" solo you could ever wish to see. Notwithstanding the onslaught pouring forth from his comrades-inarms, his intent was clearly audible above their mere sonic utterances, and seemed to augment and compliment the now climactic part of their performance.

This unheard music then, this music of the eye, became the starting point for my piece. It was tempting to pilfer the idea of the "air piano" solo, but I shunned this out of moral compunction. Besides, it takes a unique personality to bring off this act with the panache I was lucky enough to witness (and, more importantly, will probably never witness again). Instead, I concentrated on the idea of musical mime, of expending tremendous amounts of energy at producing next to nothing at all. Coming after a considerable period of time spent working almost exclusively in the field of computer music, this was not at all alien to me. And, after so many tape music concerts involving no visual stimulation whatsoever, it was actually rather inviting to consider a piece in which the visual element plays the most important role of all, for some time at least. Accordingly, at the beginning of pas de poule, pas de pot we find the pianist busily playing nothing. the clarinettist hard at work at making almost no audible effect. If the performance works, however, it will appear that they are playing music of the highest complexity and speed, with all the subtle interactions and exchanges of a monstrously detailed score. What little aural result there is though (besides the one created inside the listener's head), comes not from the playing, but rather from the amplification of the act of playing.

(About the title: pas de poule, pas de pot has several meanings, two of which at least are "No chicken, no pot" and "No chick [girl], no luck." But the meaning of the words does not have any particular relevance to the music. Their sound, however, created by the alliteration, and their ambiguity (or better still, their lack of comprehensibility to non French speakers) has everything to do with music, which, as we know, is the least concrete of all the arts. The connection is, then, that I write what I like to hear, and I like to hear "pas de poule, pas de pot.")

PERFORMANCE DIRECTIONS AND KEY TO SYMBOLS

GENERAL:

d

Quarter tone sharp.

Quarter tone flat.

Accidentals carry throughout the bar but are repeated in parentheses as deemed necessary.

Transition from one performance state to another (e.g. sul ponticello \longrightarrow ordinario in the strings). When this occurs between random, fast, silent fingering (see each instrumental category below for a description of this) to random fast "sounding" notes, it is assumed that the transition will be a little "lumpy" (especially in clarinet and piano). By this, it is meant that notes will begin to emerge (sound) then die again, only to re-emerge more audibly, etc. etc., before proceeding to become a fully-fledged sequence of fast, audible notes.



This indicates that a certain action (e.g. random grace notes) takes place over the duration of a quarter note and is used only to clarify the rhythmic notation.

The score is NOT in C. The clarinet sounds a major second lower than written pitch and the bass clarinet sounds a major ninth below written pitch.

Duration: approx. 8 mins.

ELECTRONICS:

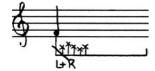
Amplification: Microphones should be placed as close as is practicable to the violin, cello and clarinet. The piano should have two or three microphones: one near the keyboard to amplify the silent playing (see below) and one or two inside the piano, close to the strings. If two microphones are available for inside the piano, one should be placed close to the lower strings and the other close to the higher strings. The numbers indicate which instruments are to be amplified, from top to bottom: clarinet, violin, cello and piano (just as in the score layout). The amplification indicated is either 1 or 0 (on/off), cresc. or dim. (fade in/fade out). The amount of amplification necessary in the on and off states depends upon the acoustic of the concert hall. For example, in a larger hall it may be necessary to amplify all the instruments throughout the whole duration of the piece, so that the contrast between amplified and unamplified sections is not so strong. Likewise, when two instruments are to be amplified, but not the other two, it may in fact be desirable to add a little amplification to the two "unamplified" instruments so that a better mix can be achieved throughout the whole ensemble. Further, during sections where an instrument is directed to be amplified, it will be necessary to continuously adjust the gain to avoid saturating the microphones during the loud parts, and yet to make sure that there is enough signal during the quiet parts. Overall then, the directions in the score are merely basic indications of the desired effect. The subtleties of the sound diffusion will need to be worked out during the rehearsals and are, therefore, left to the discretion of the engineer. The only stipulations are that no reverberation or other signal processing effects should be added, and that the gain should be sufficient to make all of the quieter effects clearly audible, even if (especially if!) this means including some "extraneous" noises caused during the performance (the players' breathing etc.)

On page 7 of the score, there is a direction to play a CD of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. The CD should be cued so that the opening chord is heard as soon as the play button is pressed. The recording should only continue one-eighth note (in the tempo of the symphony) into the oboe's second note (E). The conductor should then immediately interrupt the symphony with the next section of the piece, and so, as soon as the first notes from the piano and clarinet are heard, the CD should be abruptly stopped.

On page 30, a pre-recorded tape is to be started. It should be loud enough so that a good fortissimo is reached by bar 260, but not so loud that the piano is not heard at this point. It should be left to fade out by itself.

CLARINET:

The clarinettist doubles Bb clarinet and Bb bass clarinet (with written low C).



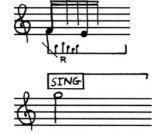
Random key clicks: move the fingers of the indicated hand (L=left, R=right, L+R=left and right simultaneously) as fast as possible, using those keys which make the most noise (usually the lower keys when R is indicated), but always without any audible pattern. When this is not included with breath tones, the reed should be pressed against the mouthpiece by the tongue so as to create a more resonant sound. The note indicated at the beginning of such a passage is the note upon which to start (usually with a tongue stab or some such event) and is only repeated (in ties etc.) for notational convenience and rhythmic clarity. The note given at the end of such a passage is the pitch with which to end. The key clicks last as long as the beams that the grace notes are connected to indicate.



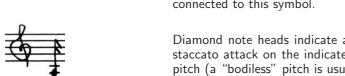
Similar to random key clicks, but here the rapid, randomly played pitches are audible. When both hands are indicated (L+R) the fingers are to move simultaneously, not alternately (as is conventional). The random pops and squeaks arising from such a performance practice is both expected and desirable (by the composer at least). This is always legato (slurred) and, as with the key clicks, the indicated start and end notes should be observed.



Again, random notes as fast as possible, but the stems without note heads indicate that the performer should tongue in the indicated rhythm and manner (staccato, tenuto etc.). The notes, which arise at the attack points, are unimportant and will probably involve squeaks and other such noises. This is intentional, and further, the player should strive to dissociate the movement of the fingers from the attack of the tongue in order to avoid the conventional alignment of the two.



Similar to above, only the indicated pitches should be played as well as the random attacks (stems without note heads).



The player should sing or hum into the instrument whilst playing, causing a rough, rather wild tone. The sung pitch is not important, though it should not be the same pitch as that being played. This manner of playing lasts as long as the bracket that is connected to this symbol.



Diamond note heads indicate a tongue stab (also known as a slap tongue): a sharp staccato attack on the indicated note, but without resulting in a full-toned "normal" pitch (a "bodiless" pitch is usually audible however).











Square note heads indicate breath tone: blow air through the instrument without producing a normal tone (some pitch will be audible, however, depending upon the given fingering). The directions "OUT" and "IN" apply to breathing: "OUT" means breathe through the instrument (in the normal manner, the default, which is to be used when no indication is given) and "IN" means breathe in through the instrument.

A diamond note head connected to a square note head indicates that a tongue stab is to be followed by a breath tone (without any break between the two). A similar notation is used when a normal note is to be attacked staccato and followed by breath (in that case the notation is a normal round note head connected to a square note head).

An accent with the letter "D" underneath or above indicates a diaphragm accent (this usually occurs at the end of a phrase). Create an accent by pushing sharply with the diaphragm (this may change the pitch slightly) but do not use the tongue.

A note with the letter "A" above it indicates "alternative fingering." find another fingering for the note, one that has a different colour to the conventional fingering. Try to avoid any change in pitch (though slight changes of less than 1/8th of a tone are permissible).

Create a trill between the conventional fingering and an alternative fingering of the same note. If the indicated note permits, this may be accomplished simply by rattling the lower keys of the instrument, thus creating a form of tremolo or fake flutter tonguing.

Flutter tongue.

VIOLIN AND CELLO:

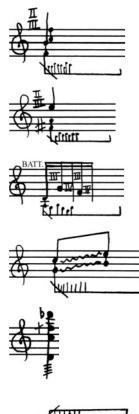
All tremolos are unmeasured: as fast as possible.

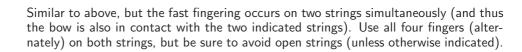


Play, as fast as possible, random notes within the given range (use all four fingers), including all microtones (not just quarter tones). Unless otherwise indicated, this is always legato. When this notation occurs under rests, the fingering continues even though the bow is not in contact with the string (where possible, this "silent fingering" should be audible, thus exaggeratedpull and pluck at the strings with the fingers of the left hand). When one of the notes indicating pitch range is written with a larger note head, this is the note with which to begin the passage (otherwise it is not important). When finger numbers are given (e.g. 2,3,4 next to the grace-note beam), these are the only fingers to be used (e.g. because a string change momentarily takes place and finger 1 is used on the neighbouring string). The note given at the end of such a passage is the note upon which to end. The passage lasts as long as the beams that the grace notes are connected to indicate.



As above, only the notes are now fast "harmonics." Touch all parts of the string lightly in the given range as if they were all harmonic nodes (causing some notes to sound while others remain muffled).





Again, similar to above, but the fast fingering only occurs on the lower string, whilst the upper note is held normally (or vice-versa). The fast fingering is therefore executed with three, instead of four fingers.

Battuto attacks: The bow strikes the indicated strings while the fingers continue the grace notes always on the fourth string, though seamlessly inserting the indicated note on the third string. The headless stems indicate a note to be struck on the fourth string during the grace notes (the resultant note is therefore indeterminate).

Fast fingering "glissando:" not a true glissando, but rather the range in which the fast fingering occurs shifts up (or down) to the new pitch range, as indicated. When stemless note heads indicate the limit of the "glissando," it is because the fast fingering is immediately transferred to another string.

Quadruple stop tremolos do not imply that the bow should be in contact with all four strings simultaneously, but rather that the bow should be in contact with two or three strings (depending upon the prevailing dynamic) yet moving across all four strings as rapidly as possible. The movement across all four strings should not be in any regular pattern, but rather constantly varied. This is always a very rough, strong effect.



In the context of a quadruple-stop tremolo, this "fast fingering" notation means hold the basic quadruple stop (if not executing a glissando as well), but unstop and restop all four strings randomly and as fast as possible (one string at a time) so as to introduce the open strings. This unstopping and restopping is not to be coordinated with the bow movement.



The four lines below the normal staff indicate which strings are to be played upon (top line=I, bottom line=IV). (This is usually only necessary to clarify the notation when there is a quadruple-stop glissando, or quadruple-stop tremolo with accents on specific strings).



Slowly bring the two lower strings into the quadruple stop tremolo (i.e. a transition from playing a double stop to a quadruple stop tremolo).



Scratch tone on indicated string: lightly damp the string at a non-nodal point and draw the bow flatly across the string with a continuous downward pressure.

Ricochet: an indeterminate number of bounces (as many as the indicated dynamic will permit) which then proceeds smoothly into the following playing style. E.g. if a tremolo is indicated after the ricochet, as soon as the bow stops bouncing the player should begin the tremolo. A diminuendo is implicit in this manner of playing, so the tremolo can begin quietly, to effect the transition as smoothly as possible. If no playing style is indicated, then the ricochet should proceed into a normally bowed note.

WB Draw the whole length of the bow very quickly across the string.

CL Col Legno.

CLB Col Legno Battuto.

CLT Col Legno Tratto.

 $\frac{1}{2}$ CLB or $\frac{1}{2}$ CLT Use both the wood and hair of the bow, in equal portions.

CLB-T Col Legno Battuto followed by Col Legno Tratto, i.e., strike the string "battuto" but

then continue the note by drawing the wood of the bow across the string. If possible, try to avoid bouncing the bow (unless otherwise indicated), i.e. try to avoid a re-attack

before the "tratto" begins.

SP Sul Ponticello.

SPE Sul Ponticello Estremo (very close to the bridge, almost to the point of grazing it).

Batt. Battuto.

PIANO:

All of the important pedaling is indicated, though more or less may be necessary depending upon the size and nature of the performance space. When no pedaling indications are given, the pedal may be used at the discretion of the performer. However, the direction "senza ped." is to be strictly observed (please).

An accent or sforzando marking under either a pedal up or down indication means the pedal should be pressed or released with great force so as to create a resonance in the piano (when the pedal is released with force it will create a "thud," which is the intent).

CR over a pedaling indication means "catch resonance" (of the previous attack).

 $\frac{1}{2}$ over a pedaling indication indicates the pedal should be held halfway between down and up.



Similar to the strings, the pianist should play randomly, and as fast as possible, all (chromatic) notes within the given range, for as long as the beam that the grace notes are connected to indicates. The cross-type grace-note heads indicate a "silent playing" (no notes sound). The intent is similar to that of miming: the performer appears to be playing a very energetic, complex music, with all the gestures, effort and ensemble coordination of normal, "sounding" music. The only difference is, there is not much to hear, except the fingers and finger nails striking the keys (which should be amplified, see above), and perhaps the performer's breathing as he or she struggles to play this "complex, dense, loud" music. It is essential that the performer convey a lot with the small amount of information given in the score. Hence, he or she must almost invent their own music, within the limits of the pitch range and indicated rhythms, with all the gestures of rapidly changing dynamics and constant interaction with the other player(s).



Same as above, only the notes are now audible, as in normal playing, at the given dynamic. Except where specifically indicated, the notes should be played with varying forms of attack (staccato, tenuto, accented etc.), at the performer's discretion. Unless larger note heads are used (see below), the given notes should never be executed as a two-note chord: they merely give the pitch range in which the performer is to play randomly. The opening note is, therefore, to be determined by the player. With regards to performance style, it is essential that the player follows the directions as given for the "silent playing," with the addition that no regular pitch patterns should be allowed to emerge at any point. It is permissible to insert clusters and random chords along with the fast single notes (also to vary the speed of the grace notes), but overall the music should stay within the confines of the indicated rhythms, pitch ranges and performance dynamic. However, once again the performer's improvisatory input here is absolutely essential to a convincing performance of passages such as these.

If finger numbers are indicated next to the grace-note beam, then only these fingers should be used (the other finger(s) will be used to hold another note or chord).

When one of the notes indicating pitch range is written with a larger note head, this note must actually sound, at the indicated dynamic and for the length indicated by the given duration.

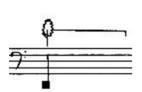


When the grace notes are written over a chord (with large note heads) that includes another smaller note head above or below, then the chord is to be struck and the grace notes are to follow in the range between the small note and the highest or lowest note of the chord (depending on whether the small note is higher or lower than the large notes—in this example the range is $F\sharp$ to E).

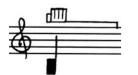
When the grace notes are written over the notes of a chord (all large note heads) or cluster, then the range of the grace notes that follow the chord is between the highest and lowest notes of the chord/cluster.



Similar to the strings: this is not a glissando but, rather, a gradual shift (over the given duration) of the range in which the fast notes are to be played.



Cluster: strike all the chromatic notes in the given range (including the two outer notes) with the palm of the hand or with the fingers, as deemed necessary by the width of the cluster and/or the performance context. Accidentals are always given to clarify the width of the cluster.



Use a bass drum beater, on either the wooden, exterior side of the piano, or upon the strings (as indicated). This continues for as long as the bracket connected to the symbol.



An open handed palm-slap on the strings of the piano. Unless indicated otherwise, this is always somewhere in the middle region of the piano, with the left hand (naturally) lower in pitch than the right. The slapping continues for the duration of the bracket connected to the symbol.

Triangular note heads indicate that the player should strike the lid (nearest the keyboard) of the piano with the knuckle of one or more fingers of the indicated hand (R=right, L=left). This only occurs in the first section of the piece and, if preferable, could be executed by the violinist with drumsticks or something similar (wooden) on the side or (upper) lid of the piano.





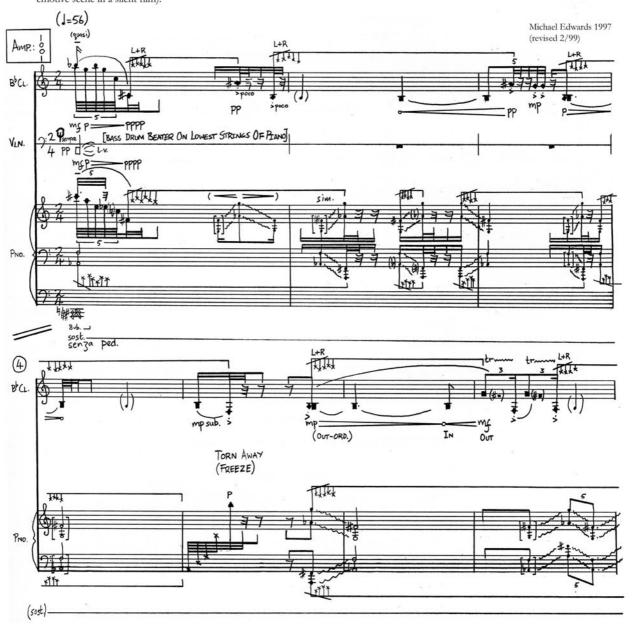
Harmonics: with the finger(s) of one hand, the string should be touched lightly near its beginning (closest to the player) and struck normally on the keyboard with the other hand, thus causing the harmonic one octave above the normal pitch to be heard. The exact location for eliciting this harmonic must be discovered by the player, but it is usually very easy to find. For clarity, the parenthesised pitch indicates the note which is played (and touched), and the other, one octave above the parenthesised, is the audible pitch.

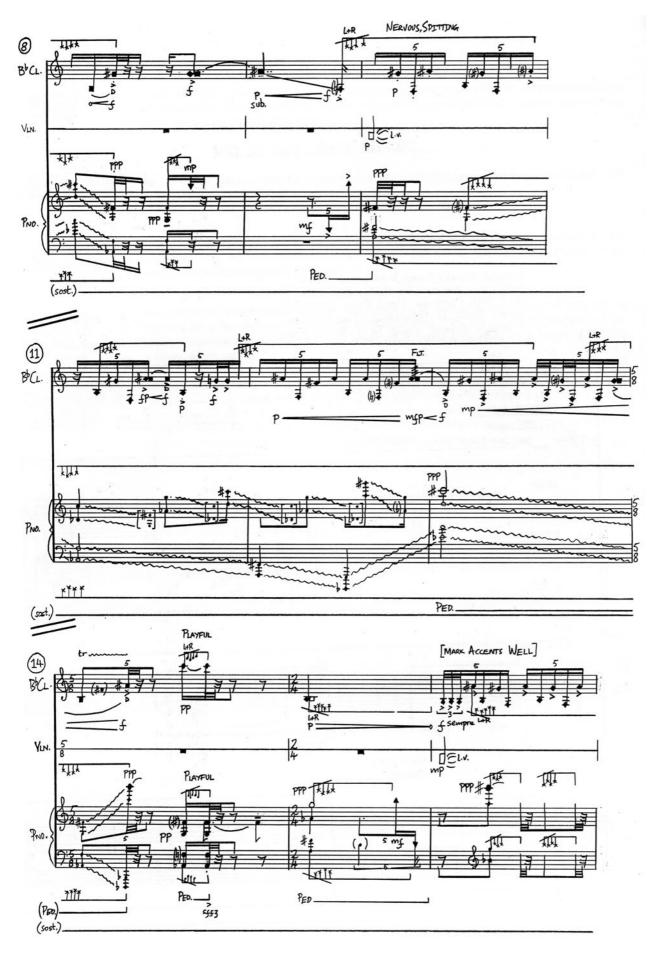
Diamond note heads (open or solid) indicate a silent depression of the indicated keys.

Pre-depress the key halfway before sounding the note so as to create a very quiet, subdued tone once the key is struck. (On Steinway pianos this means press the key until you feel the "click" halfway down.)

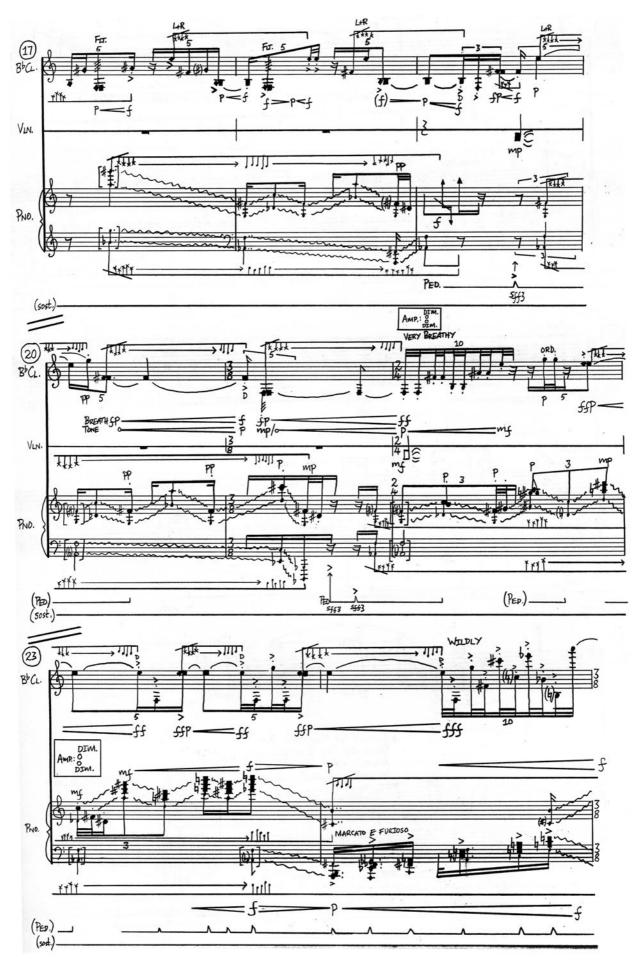
pas de poule, pas de pot

Intently; focussed; sharply rhythmicized; furtive. Giving the effect (and making the gestures) of a fast, scurrying music, even though the audible result is negligible (like watching a highly emotive scene in a silent film).

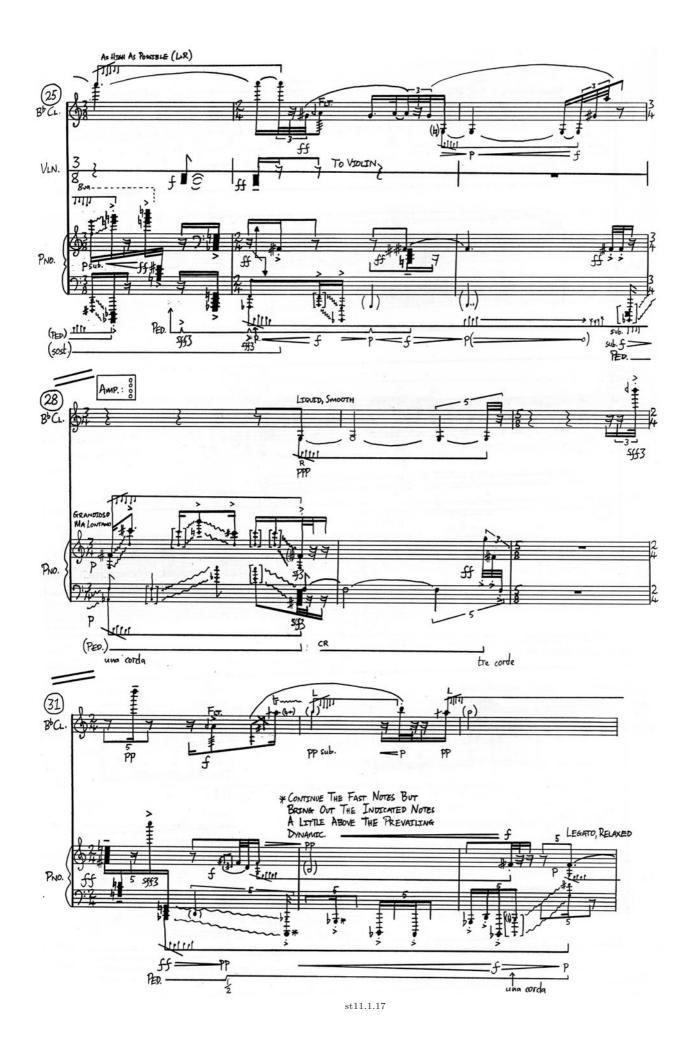


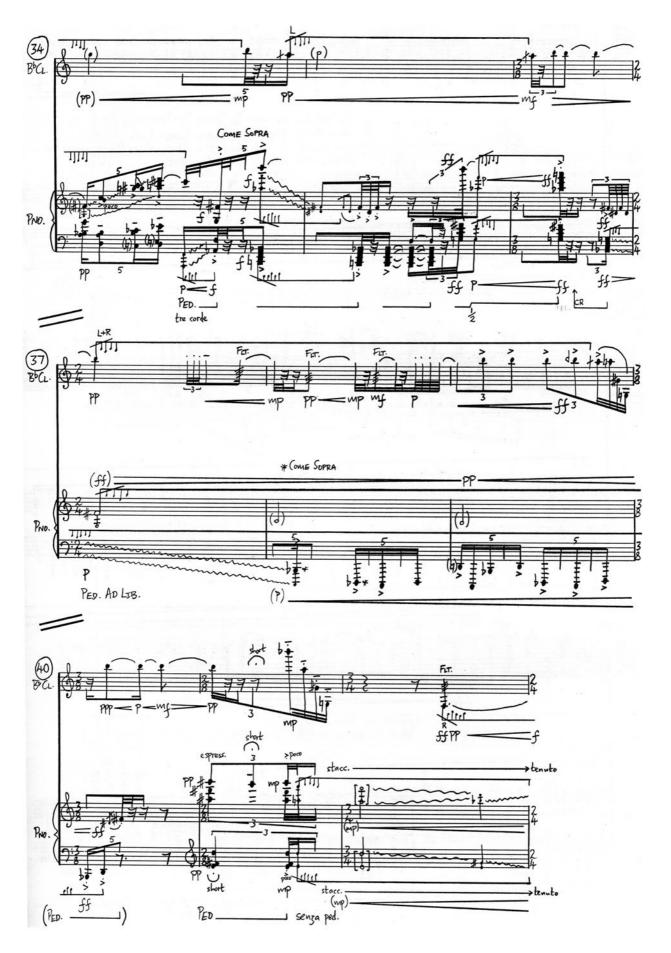


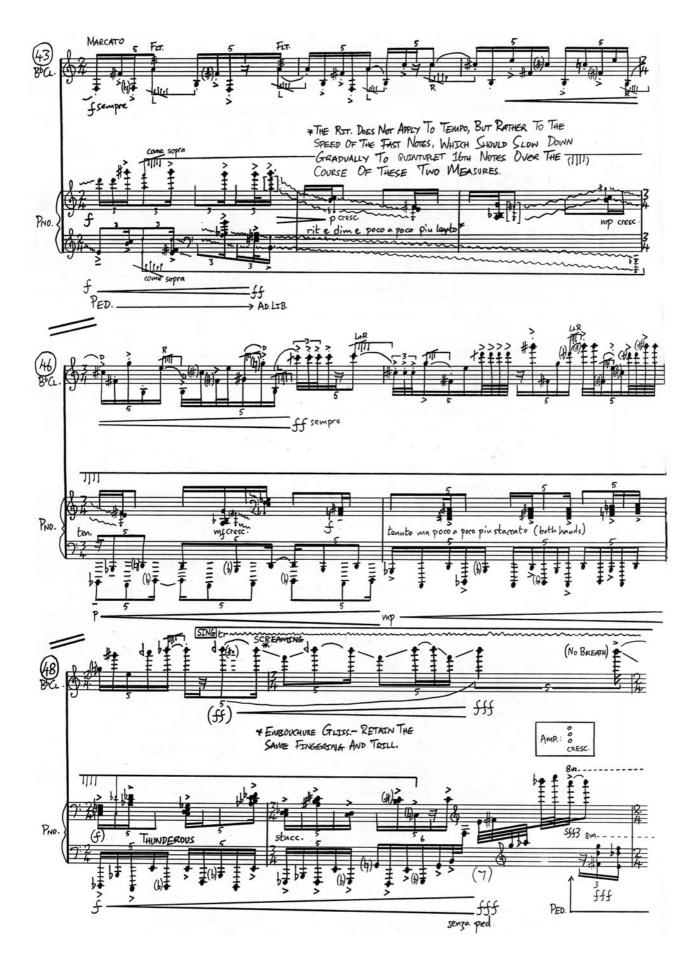
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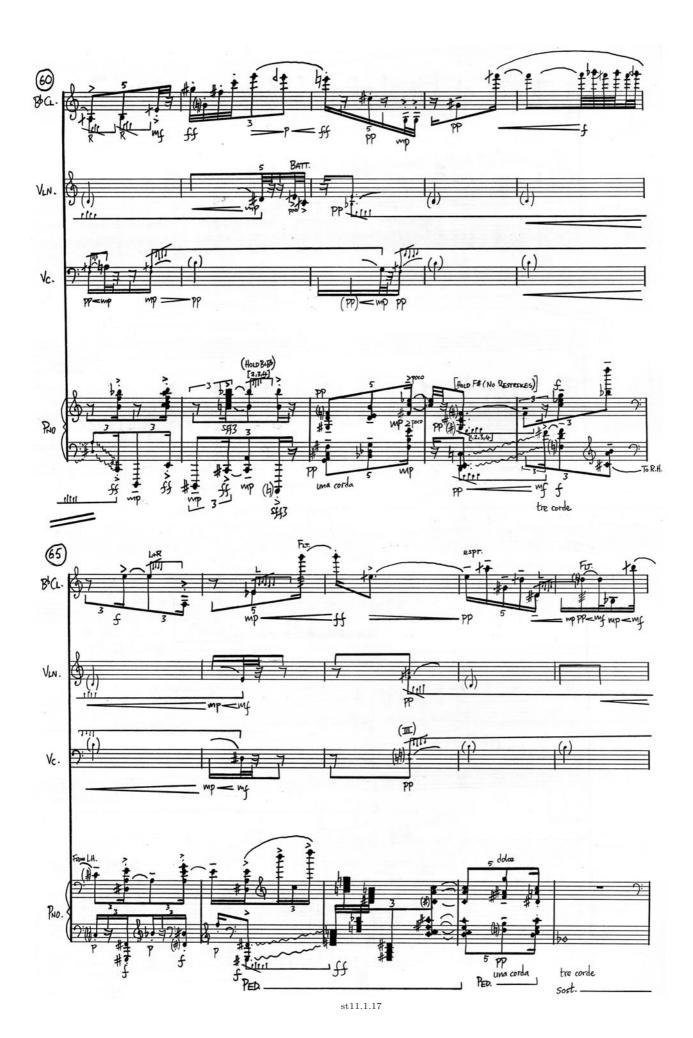
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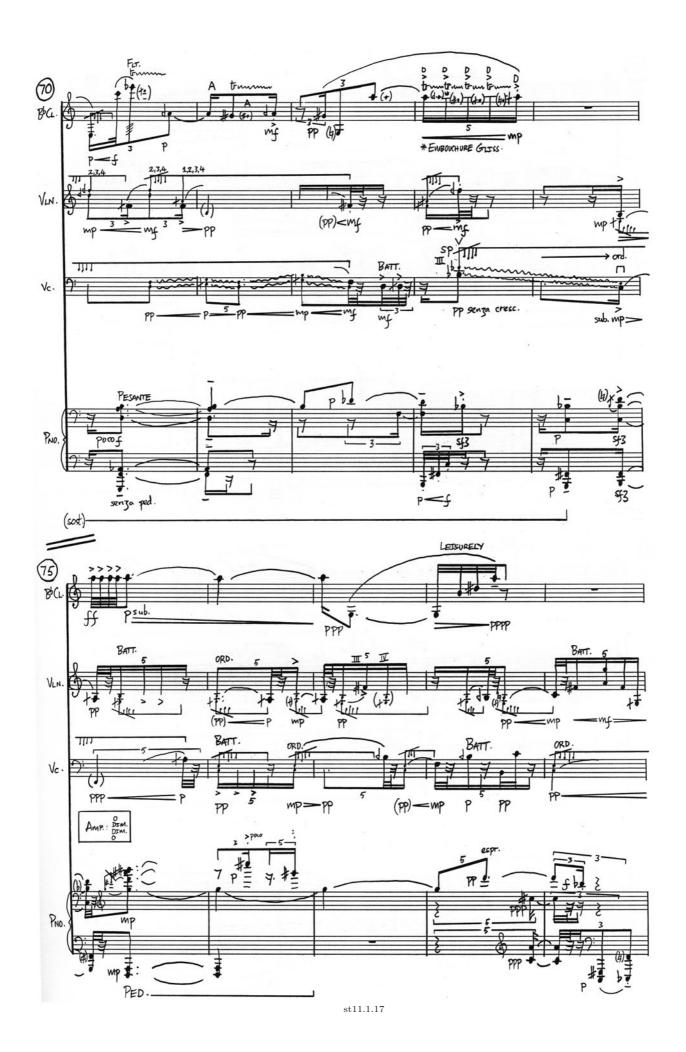


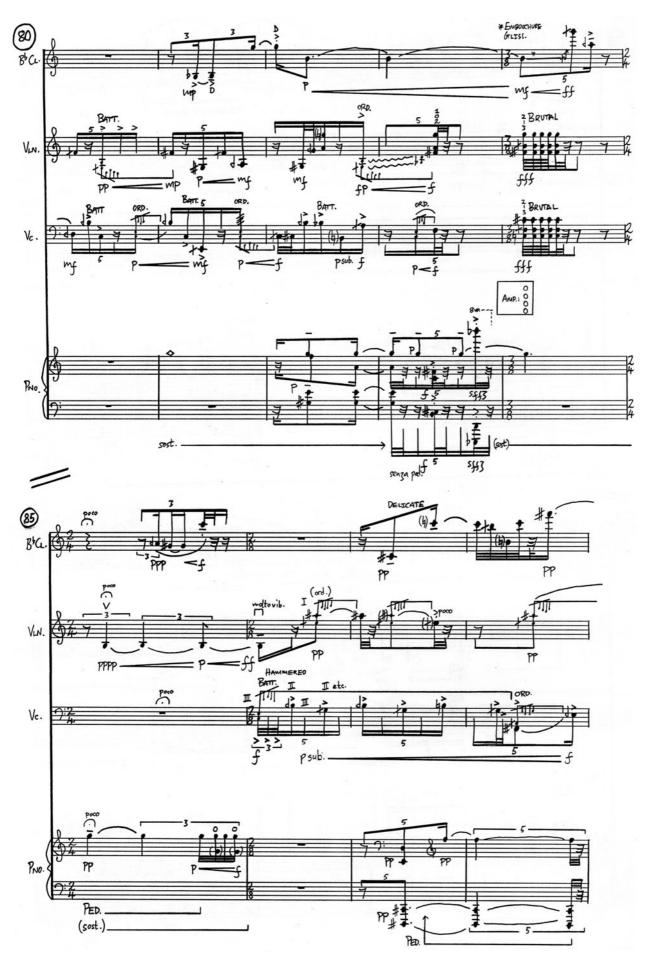




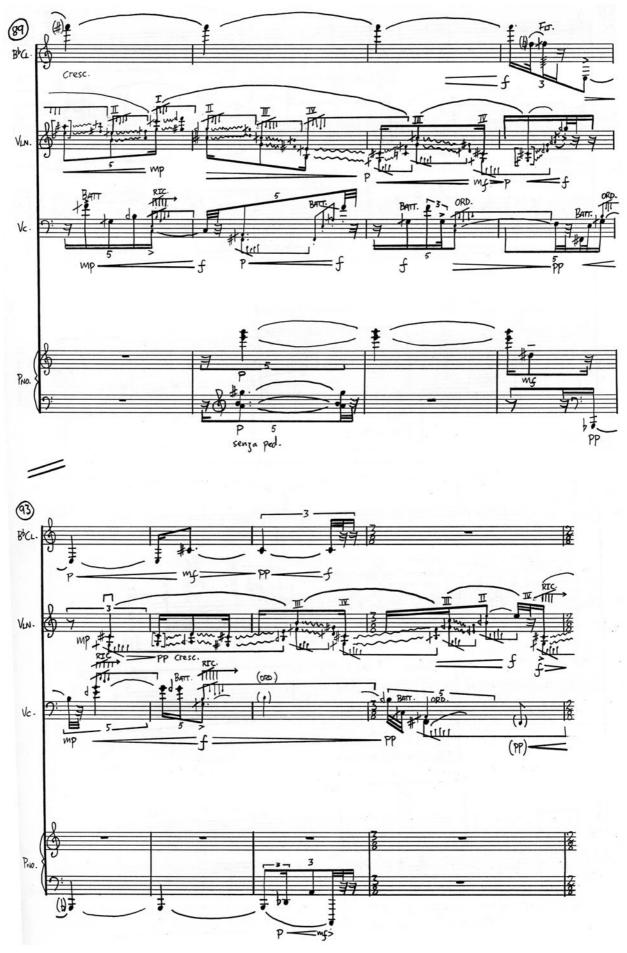




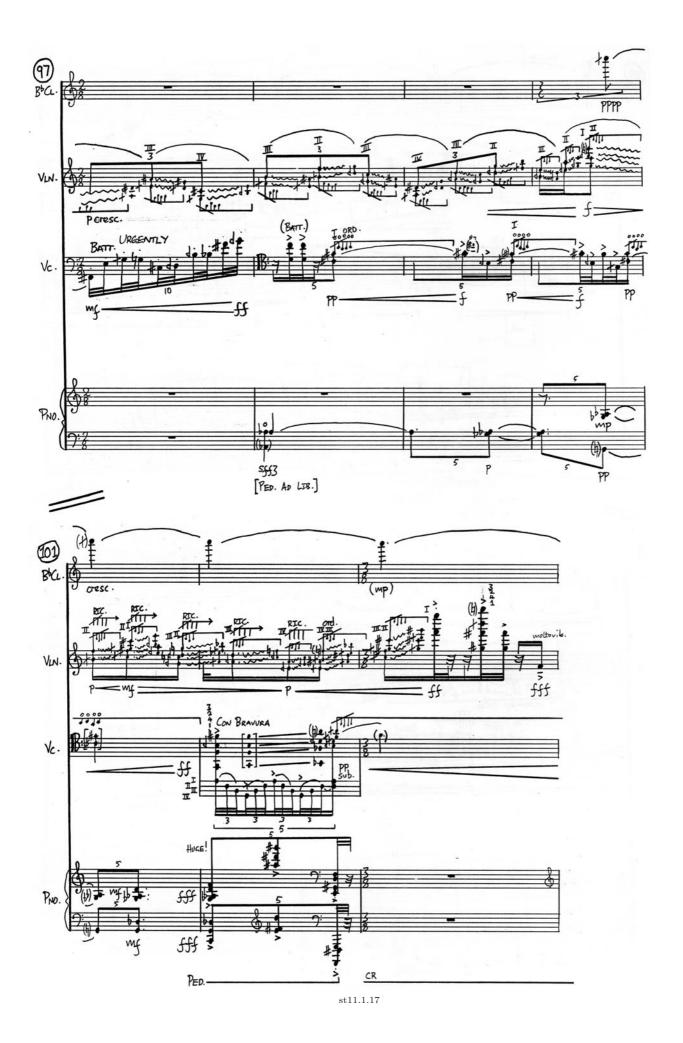


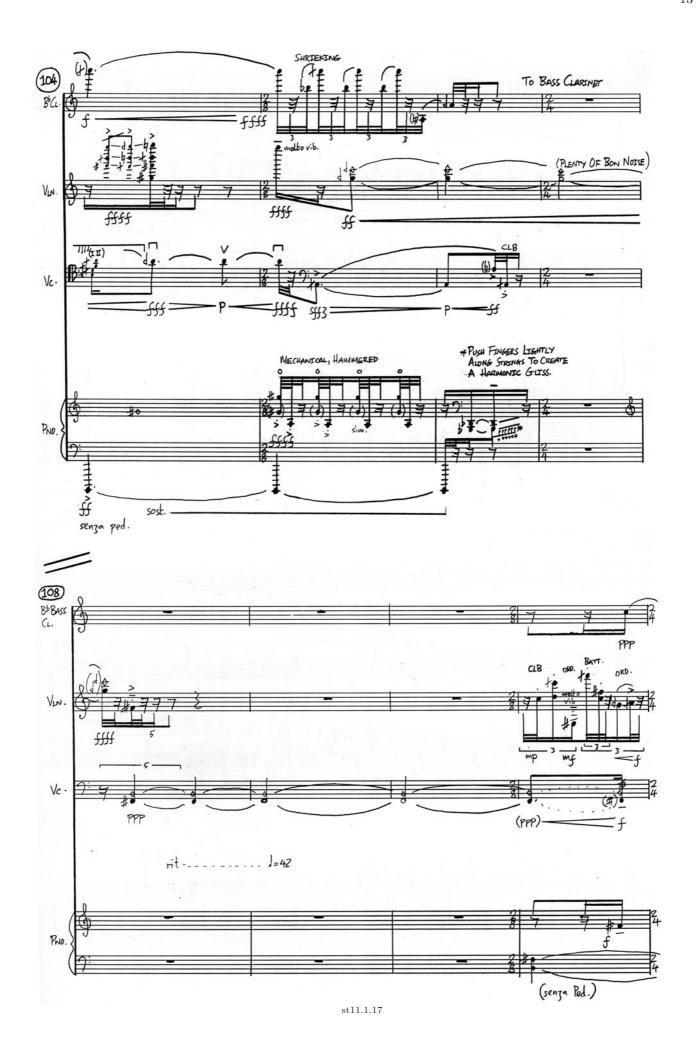


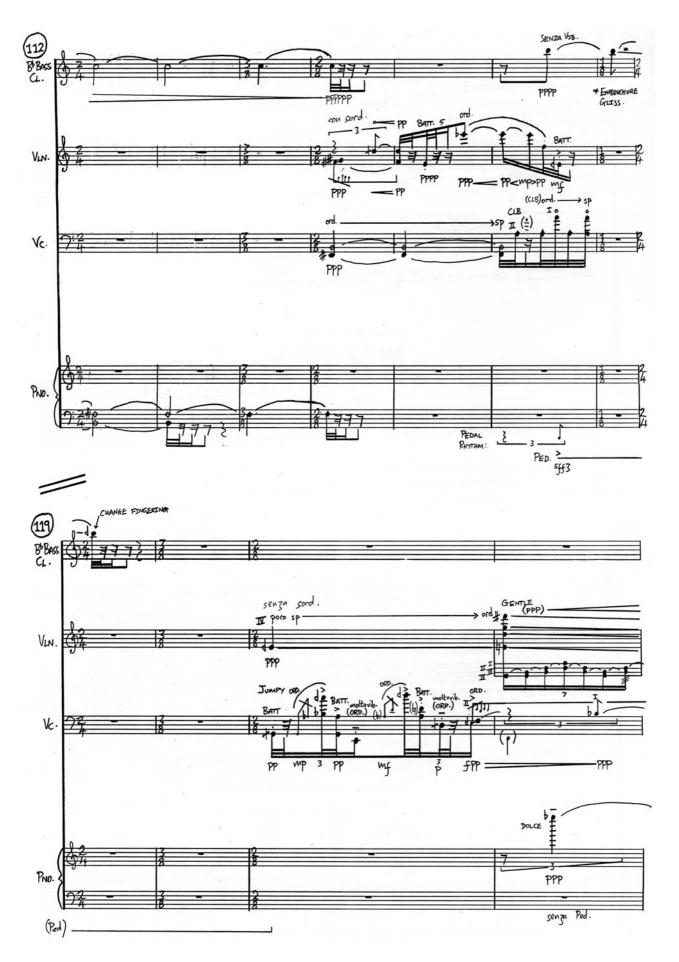
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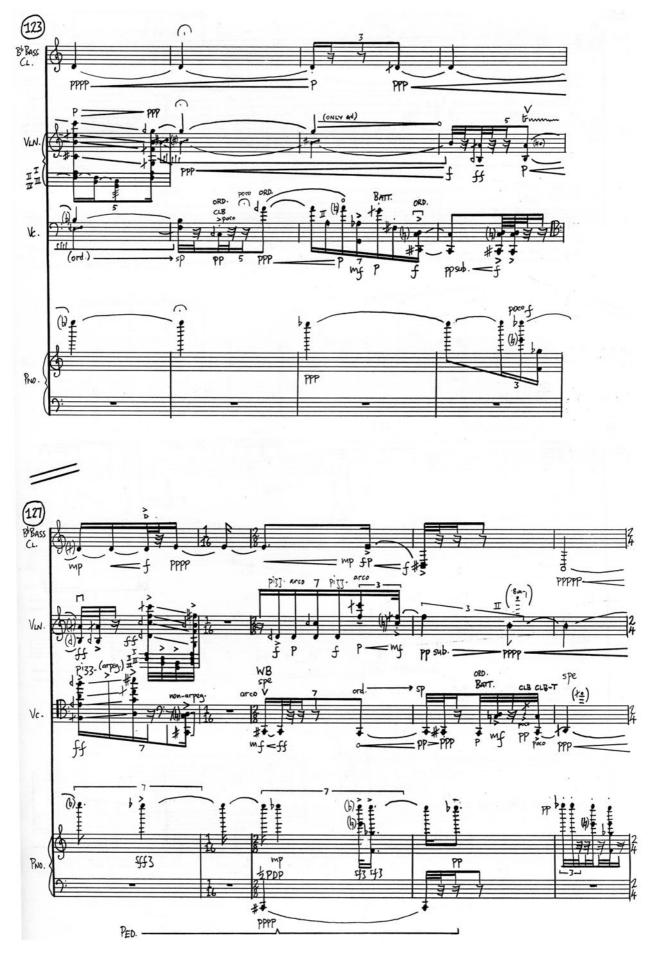


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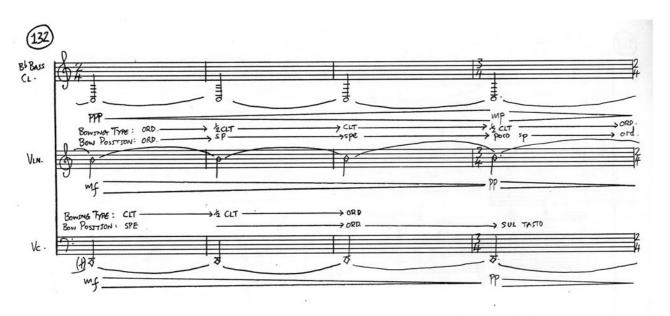




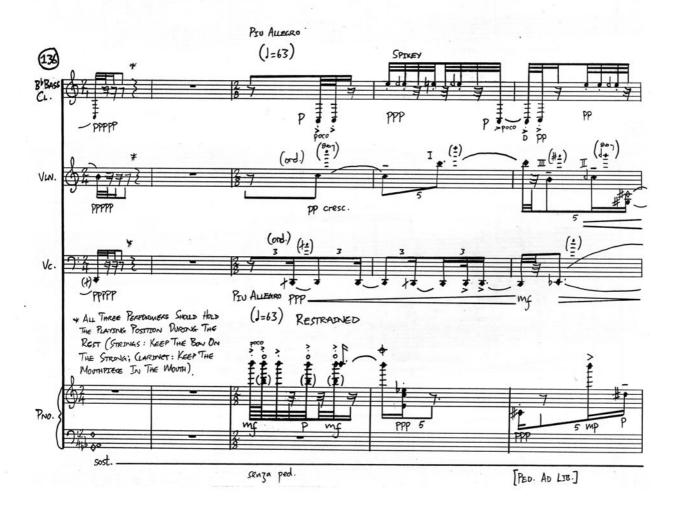


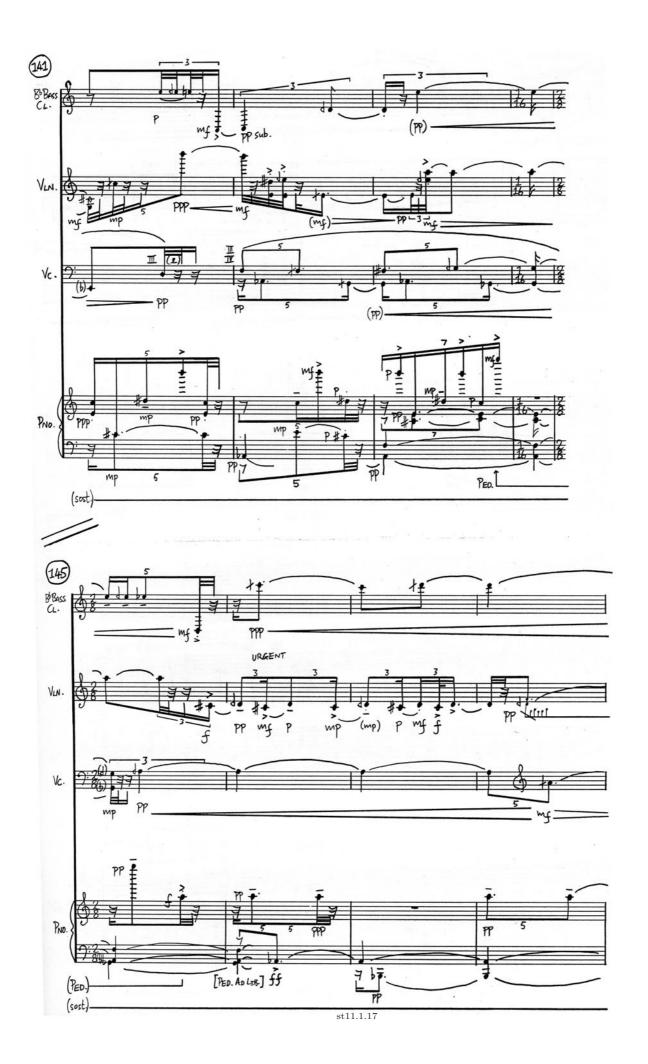


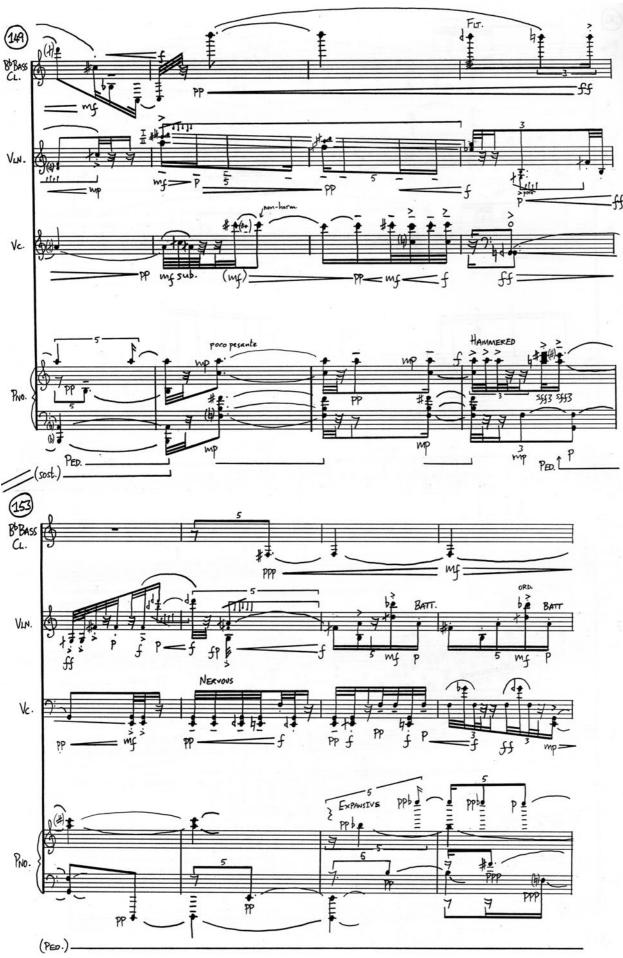
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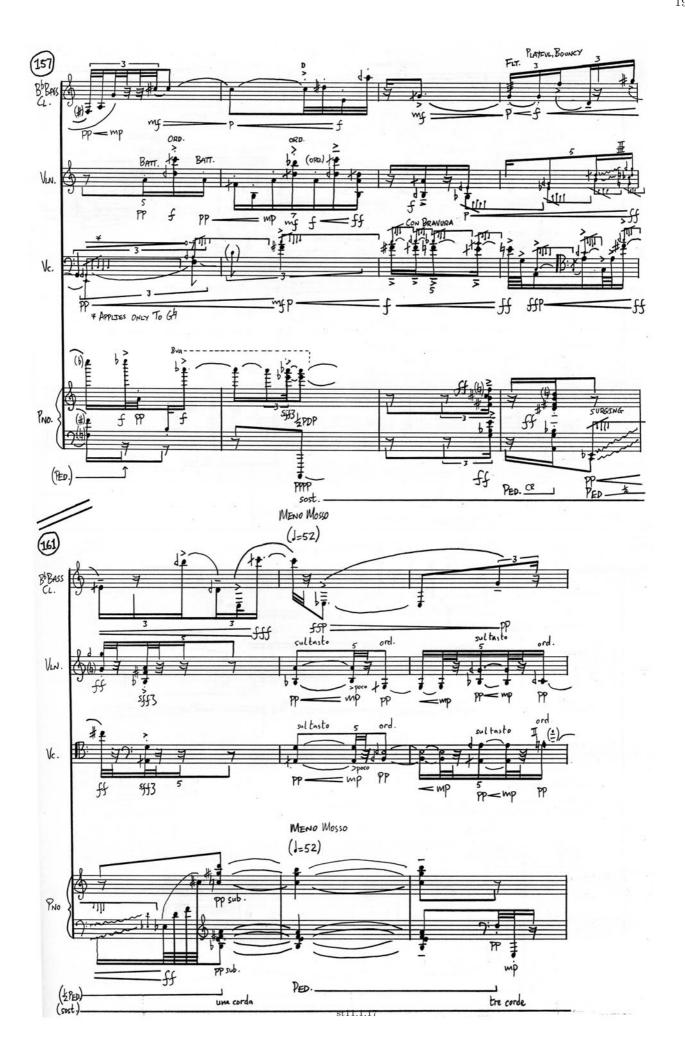


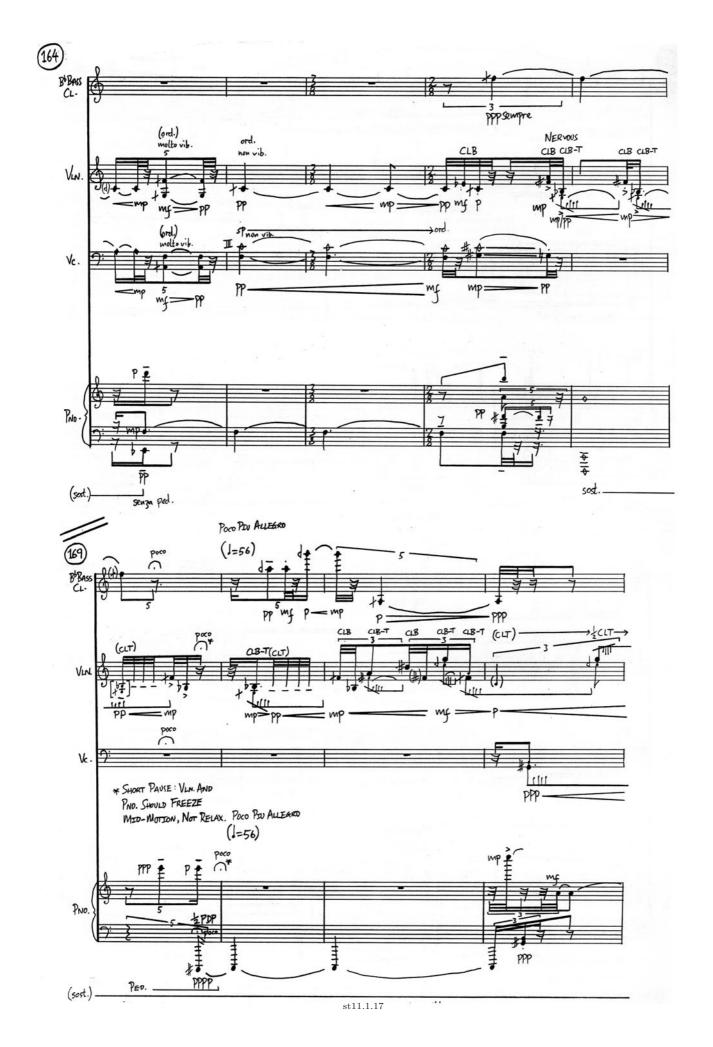






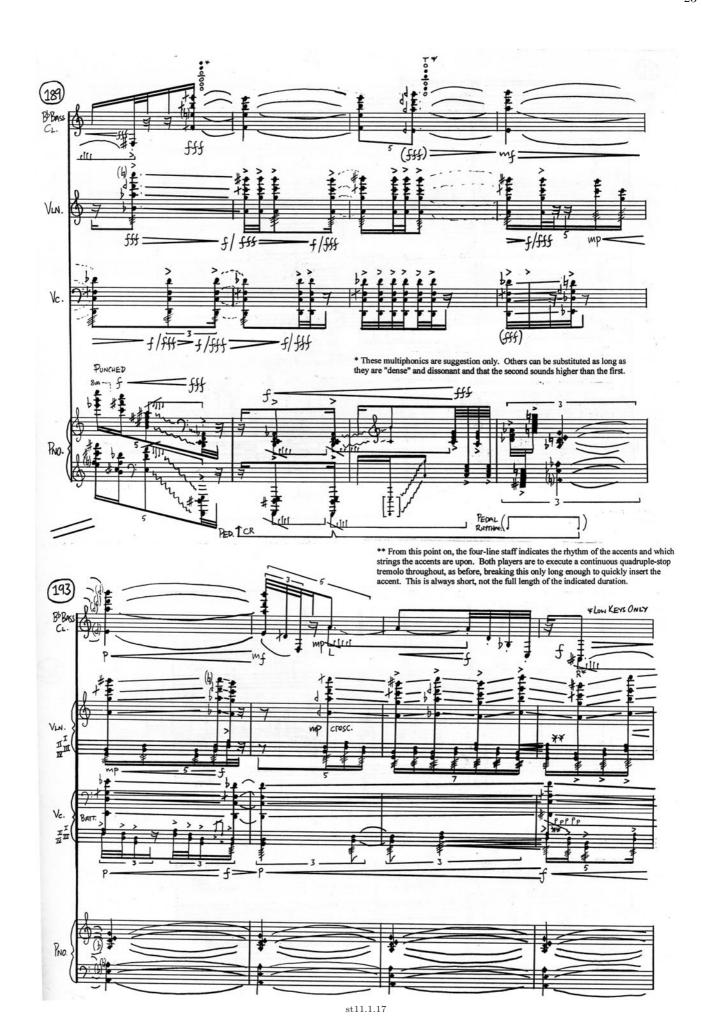
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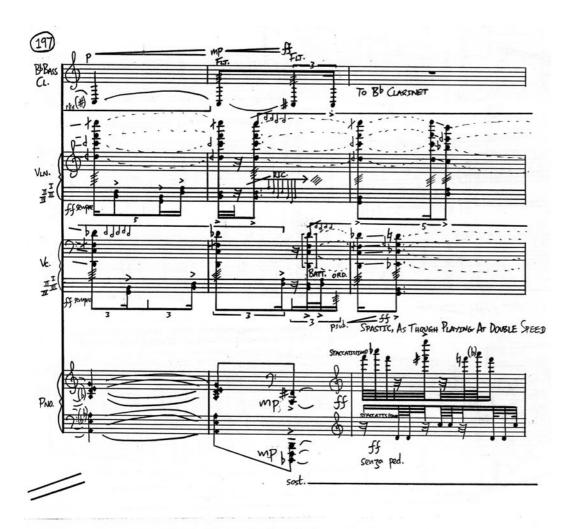


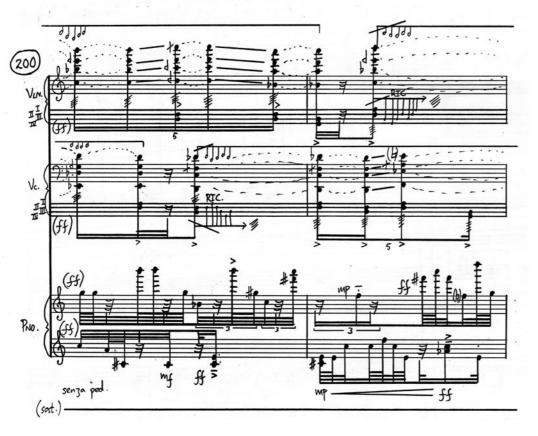






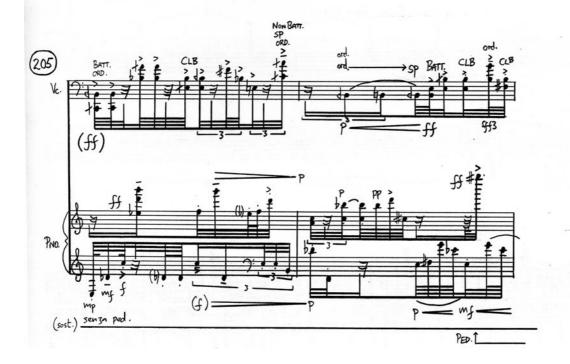


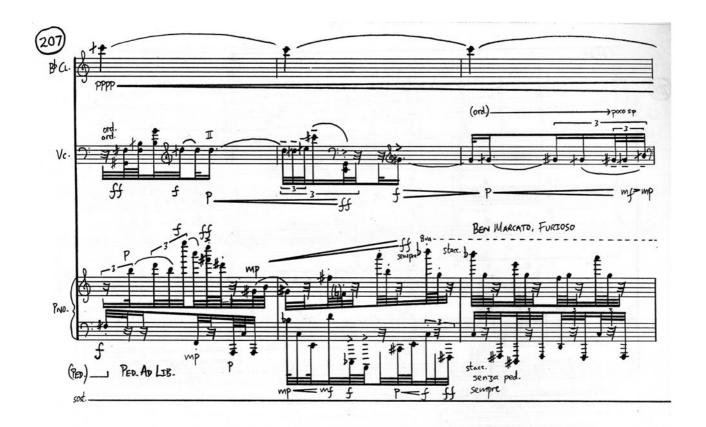


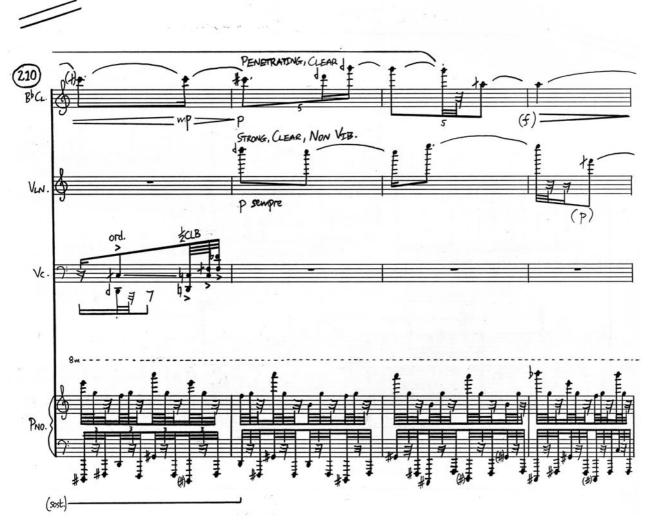












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