The composition was commissioned by UMZE Ensemble as part of the 'Renewable Music. V4 Composers for Sustainability' project co-funded by the European Union under the Creative Europe programme 2021–2027.

Dedicated to the Hashtag Ensemble (Warsaw), BERG Orchestra (Prague), EnsembleSpectrum (Bratislava) and UMZE Ensemble (Budapest)

Máté BALOGH

THOREAU SECOND HAND

In memoriam Alvin Lucier

for narrator, wind ensemble and recycled percussion instruments, in five movements

SCORE

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.







ORGANICO

NARRATOR (amplified)

PERCUSSION

(recycled materials put on a table covered with acoustic sponge)

- 5 beer-bottles (undefined, different pitches, 0.5 liter, made of glass, to be strucked with wood-sticks)
- 5 metal cans (undefined, different pitches, wood-sticks)
- 5 pieces of wood (or wood-blocks)

FLUTE changes to piccolo and beer-bottle*

OBOE changes to beer-bottle*

CLARINET in Bb changes to beer-bottle*

BASSOON changes to beer-bottle*

HORN in F changes to beer-bottle*

TRUMPET in C (with cup sordino) changes to beer-bottle*

TROMBONE (with cup sordino) changes to beer-bottle*

(CONDUCTOR)

Full duration: cca 16 min.

^{*} each wind-instrumentalist should have an empty beer-bottle (0.5 liter, made of glass, with different, undefined pitches) to be blown.

^{*} at outdoor performances, the ensemble should be amplified

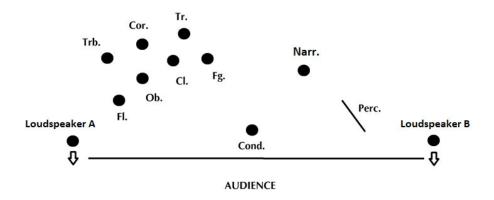
NOTES

My piece *Thoreau Second Hand* was written in the framework of the *Renewable Music* – *V4 Composers for Sustainability* project in 2024, and is dedicated to Hashtag Ensemble (Warsaw), BERG Orchestra (Prague), EnsembleSpectrum (Bratislava) and UMZE Ensemble (Budapest).

For indoor and outdoor performances as well, there is a need of amplification of the narrator, and on occasion – in noisy environment – of the ensemble.

The piece counts with recycled percussion instruments to be strucked: 5 beer-bottles (made of glass), 5 metal cans and 5 pieces of wood (or wood-blocks). These objects should be put on a table covered with acoustic sponge. Besides that, each of the wind instrumentalist should have a beer-bottle to be blown. All the recycled objects (and therefore the exact sounds) may be different for each performance.

The ensemble's location is as follows:



The piece is based on textual phrases taken from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, from the chapter entitled *Sounds*. The instrumental layers of the piece can be regarded as continuous articulating materials attached to the recited text, creating resonant frequencies with variable characteristics. Therefore, the piece can be regarded as a contemporary reflection to Alvin Lucier's classic, *I Am Sitting In A Room*.

The textual phrases are used as gestural skeletons of the musical phrases. The music should follow their declamation in every case. In the 4th movement, the textual background should be described together by all the instruments.

However, the piece has to be interpreted without any commentary of the original text, the attachment of the exact words may help to find the corresponding articulation and declamation during musical interpretation:

Henry David Thoreau: Walden / Sounds

Ι

I'm sitting at my window this summer afternoon, hawks are circling about my clearing; the tantivy of wild pigeons, flying by twos and threes athwart my view, or perching restless on the white-pine boughs behind my house, gives a voice to the air; a fishhawk dimples the glassy surface of the pond and brings up a fish; a mink steals out of the marsh before my door and seizes a frog by the shore; the sedge is bending under the weight of the reedbirds flitting hither and thither; and for the last half hour I have heard the rattle of railroad cars, now dying away and then reviving like the beat of a partridge, conveying travellers from Boston to the country.

Ш

The whistle of the locomotive penetrates my woods summer and winter, sounding like the scream of a hawk sailing over some farmer's yard, informing me that many restless city merchants are arriving within the circle of the town, or adventurous country traders from the other side. As they come under one horizon, they shout their warning to get off the track to the other, heard sometimes through the circles of the two towns. With such huge and lumbering civility the country hands a chair to the city. All the Indian huckleberry hills are stripped, all the cranberry meadows are raked into the city. Up comes the cotton, down goes the woven cloth; up comes the silk, down goes the woollen; up come the books, but down goes the wit that writes them.

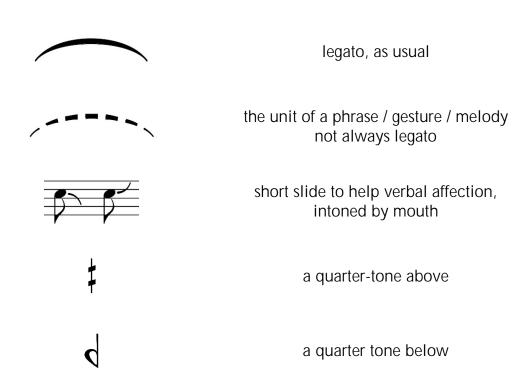
When I meet the engine with its train of cars moving off with planetary motion, or, rather, like a comet, for the beholder knows not if with that velocity and with that direction it will ever revisit this system, since its orbit does not look like a returning curve, with its steam cloud like a banner streaming behind in golden and silver wreaths, like many a downy cloud which I have seen, high in the heavens, unfolding its masses to the light, as if this travelling, demigod, this cloud-compeller, would ere long take the sunset sky for the livery of his train; when I hear the iron horse make the hills echo with his snort like thunder, shaking the earth with his feet, and breathing fire and smoke from his nostrils, (what kind of winged horse or fiery dragon they will put into the new Mythology I don't know,) it seems as if the earth had got a race now worthy to inhabit it. If all were as it seems, and men made the elements their servants for noble ends! If the cloud that hangs over the engine were the perspiration of heroic deeds, or as beneficent as that which floats over the farmer's fields, then the elements and Nature herself would cheerfully accompany men on their errands and be their escort.

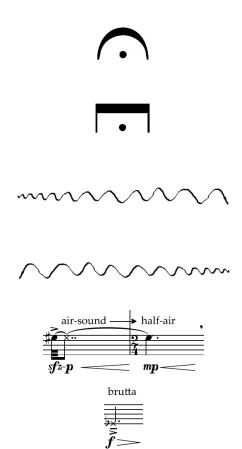
IV

I'm watching the passage of the morning cars with the same feeling that I do the rising of the sun, which is hardly more regular. All day the fire-steed flies over the country, stopping only that his master may rest, and I am awakened by his tramp and defiant snort at midnight, when in some remote glen in the woods he fronts the elements incased in ice and snow; and he will reach his stall only with the morning star, to start once more on his travels without rest or slumber. Or perchance, at evening, I hear him in his stable blowing off the superfluous energy of the day, that he may calm his nerves and cool his liver and brain for a few hours of iron slumber.

Sometimes, on Sundays, I heard the bells, when the wind was favorable, a faint, sweet, and, as it were, natural melody, worth importing into the wilderness. At a sufficient distance over the woods this sound acquires a certain vibratory hum, as if the pine needles in the horizon were the strings of a harp which is swept. All sound heard at the greatest possible distance produces one and the same effect, a vibration of the universal lyre, just as the intervening atmosphere makes a distant ridge of earth interesting to our eyes by the azure tint it imparts to it.

LEGEND





fermata

lunga fermata

developed vibrato (non vibr. → molto vibr.)

regressive vibrato (molto vibr. → non vibr.)

continuous change from air-noise to resonant pitch

'overdriven', noisy sound, with uncertain intonation

Full duration: cca 16 min.

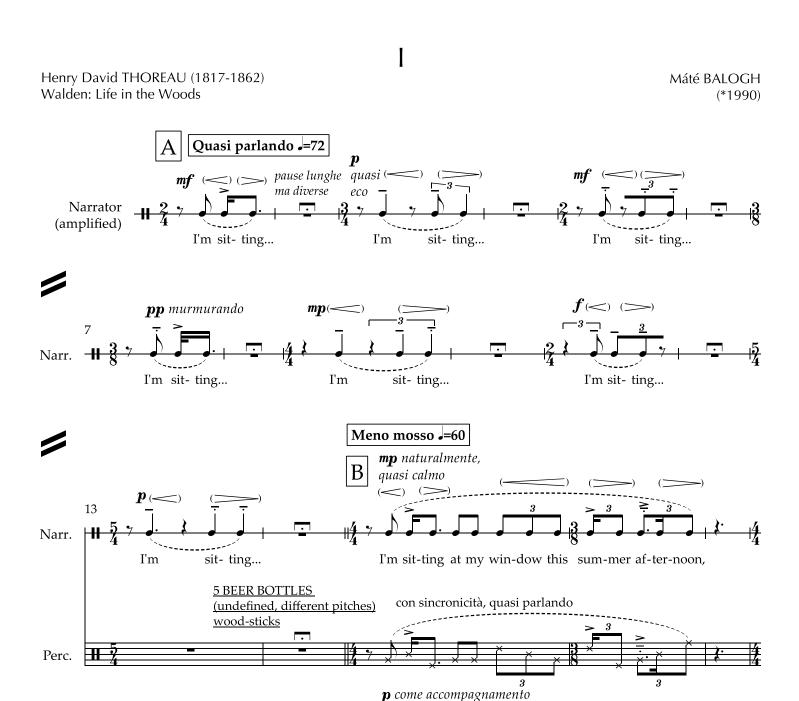
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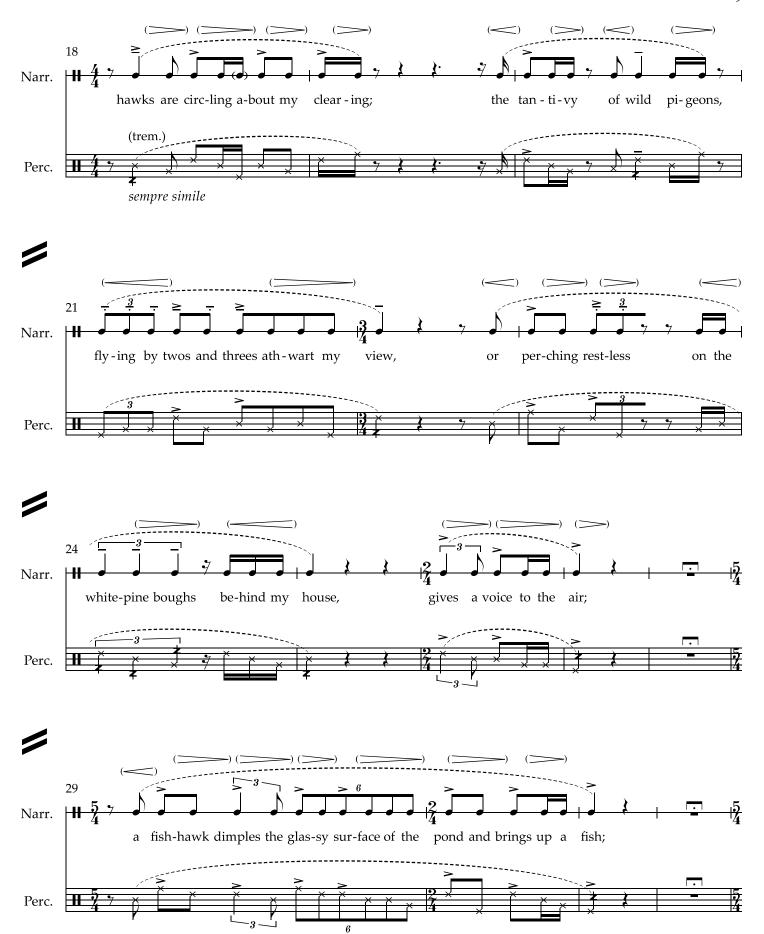
SCORE in C

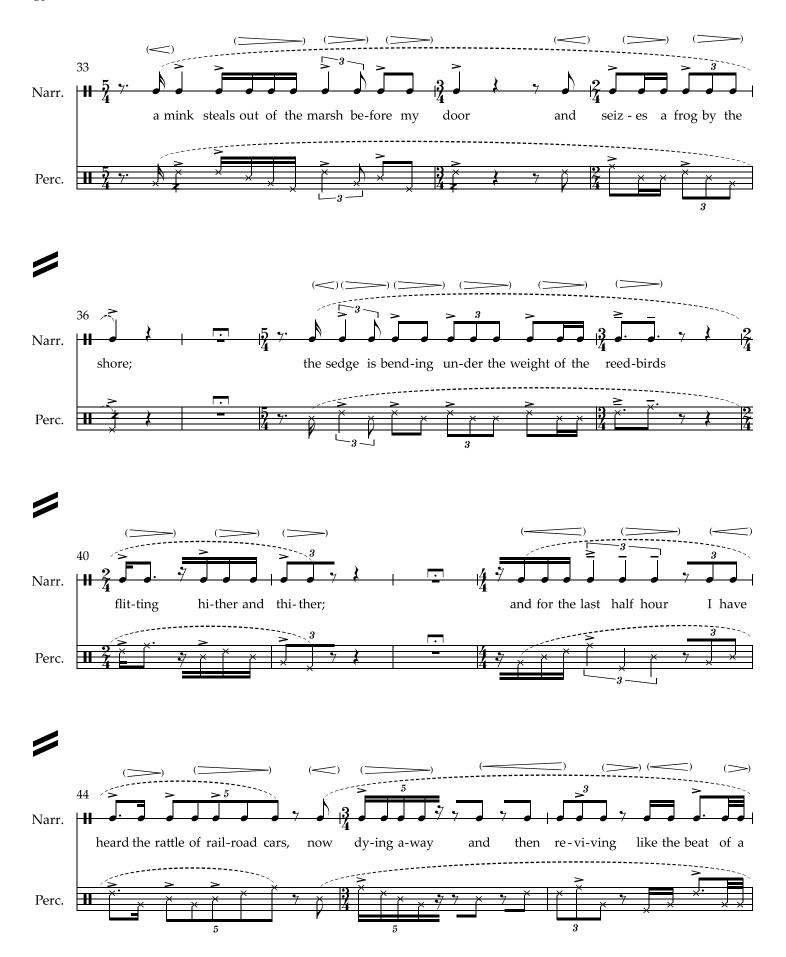
Thoreau Second Hand

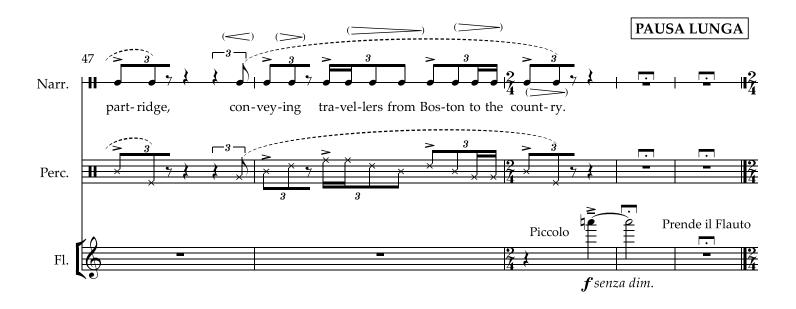
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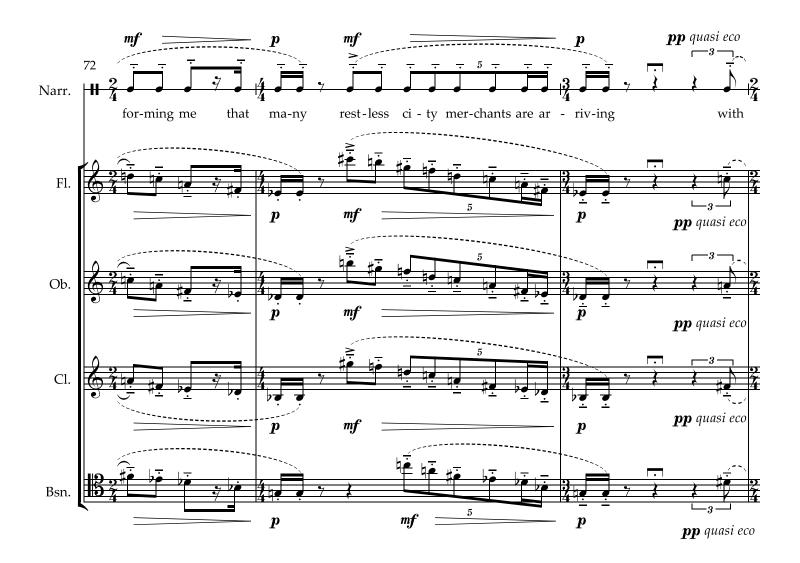


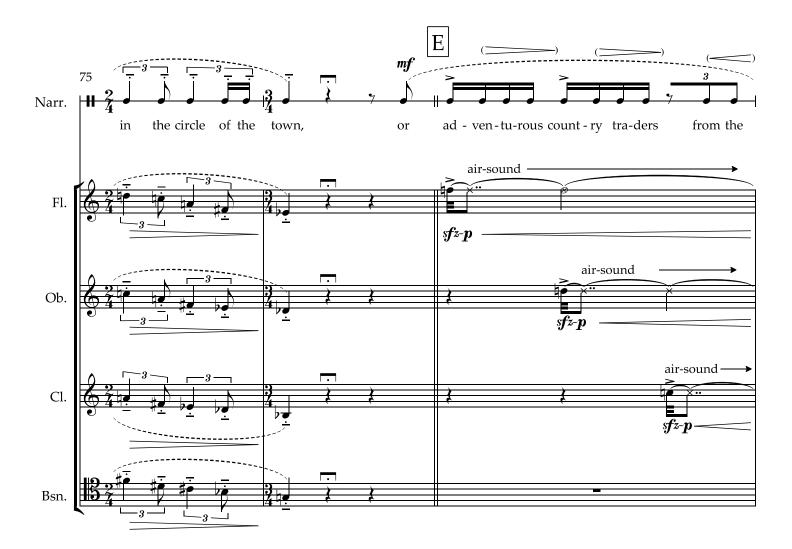


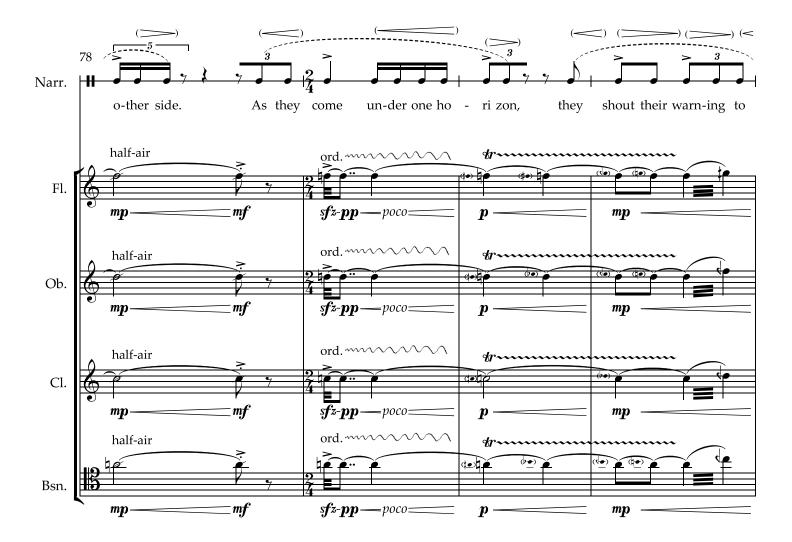
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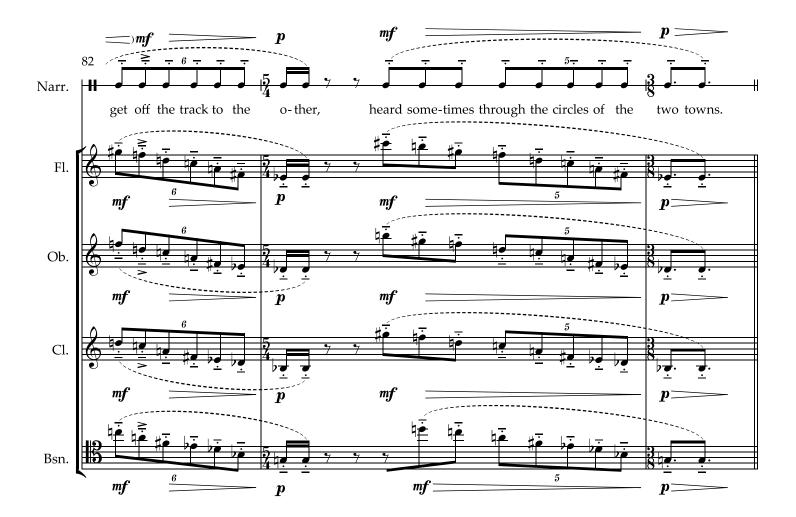


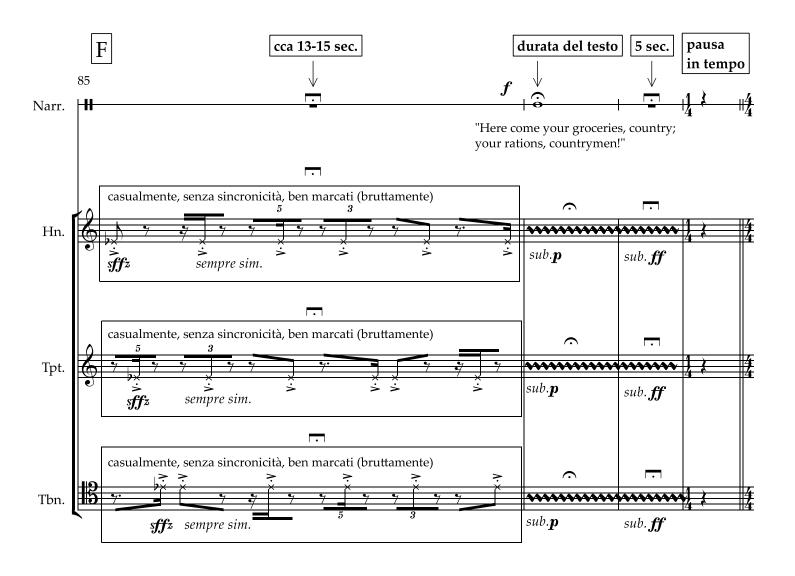


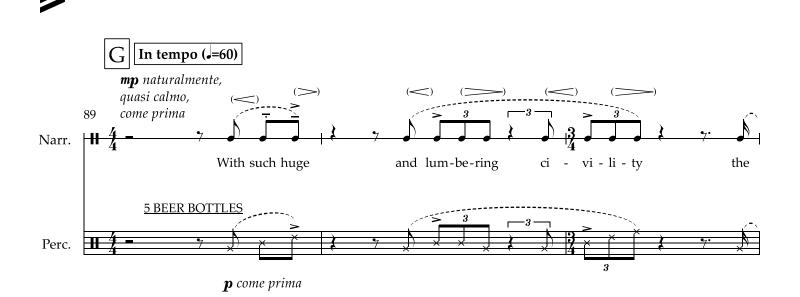


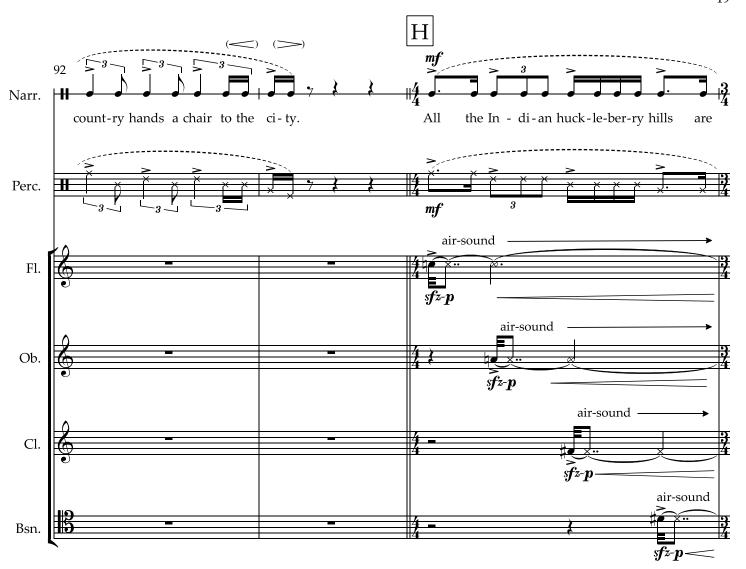


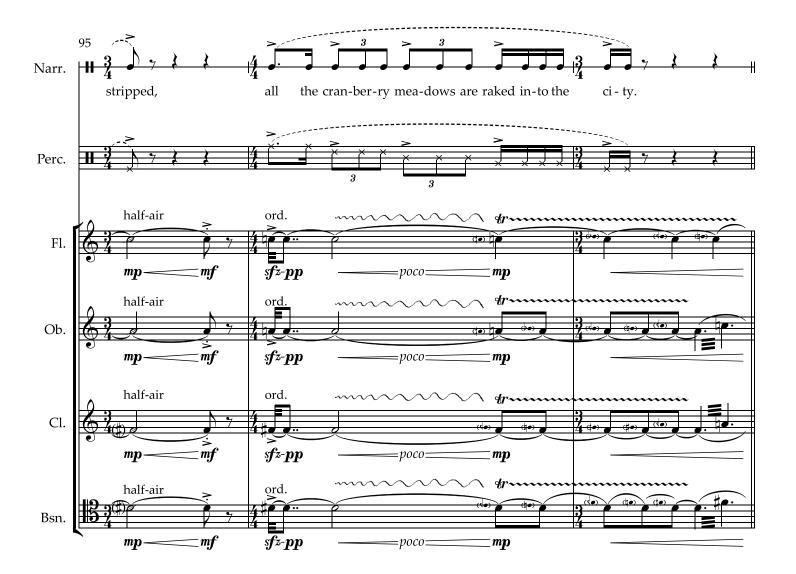








































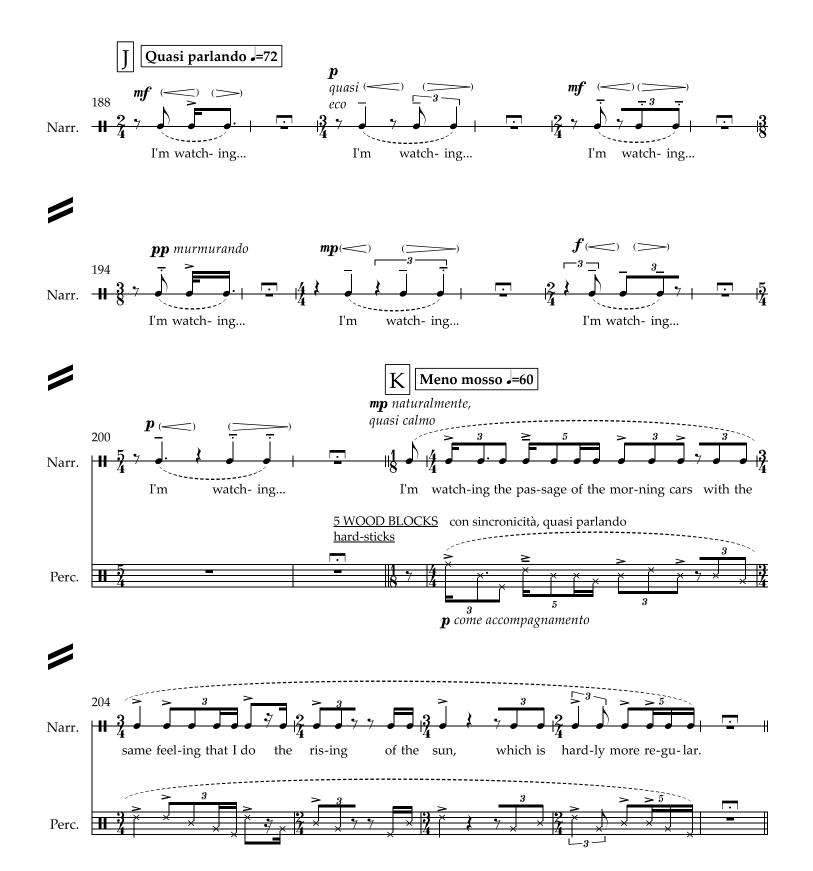


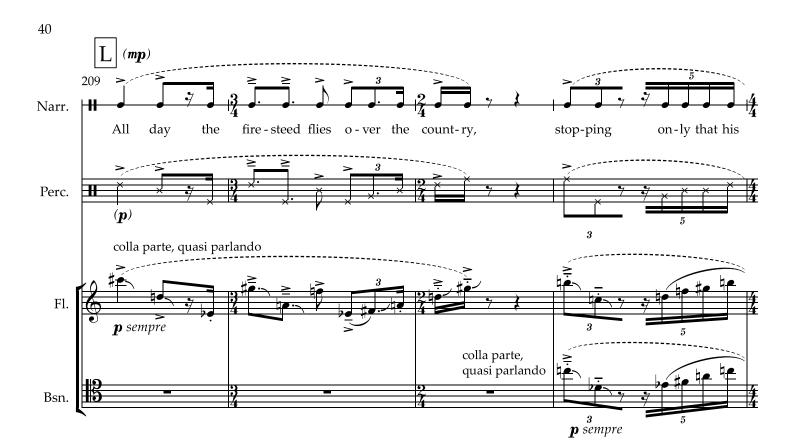


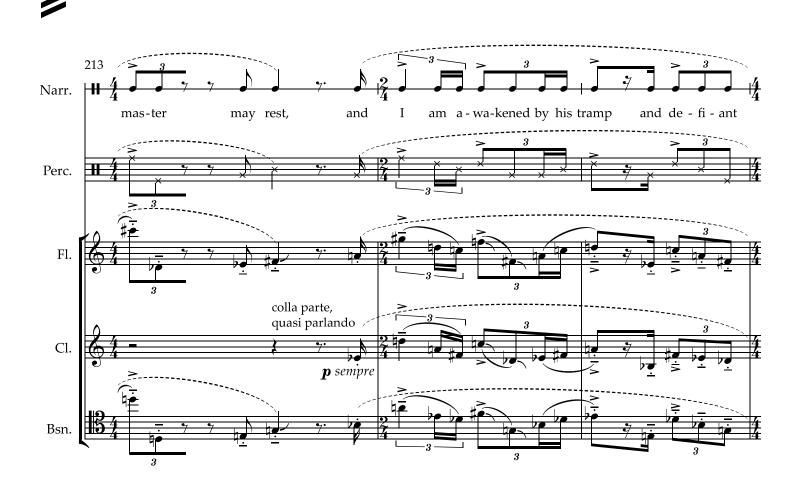


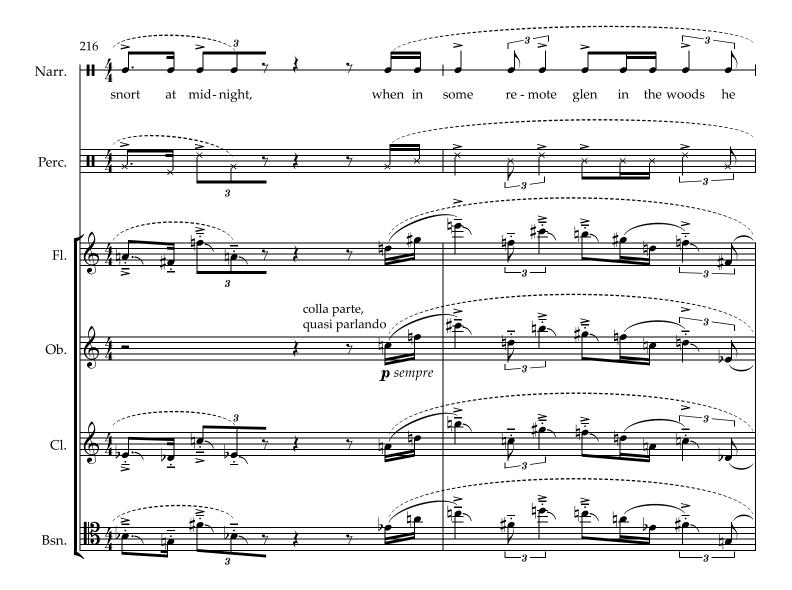


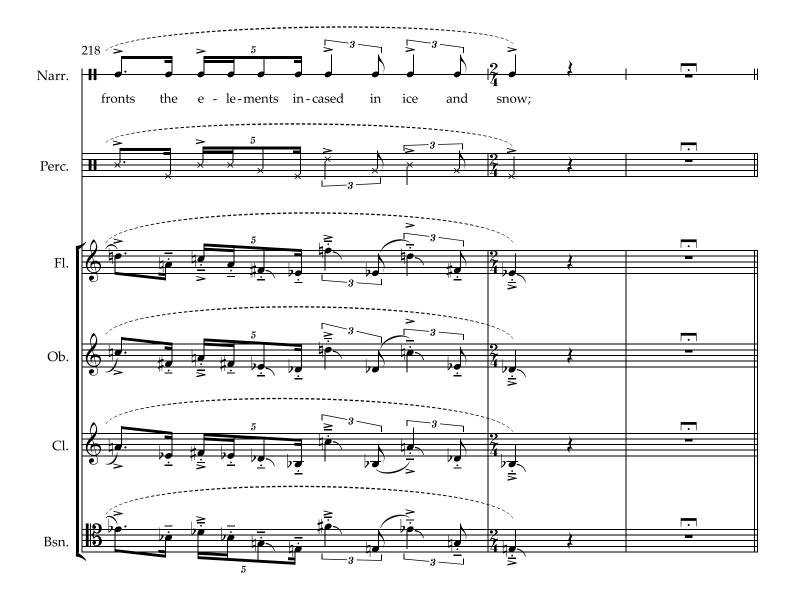
IV

















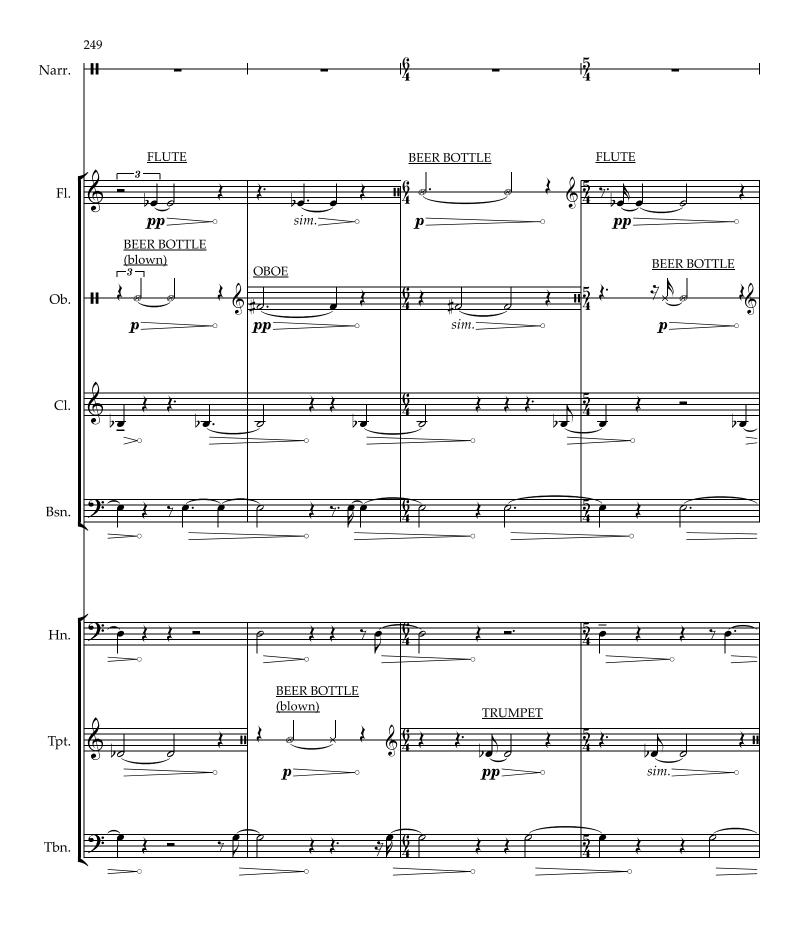


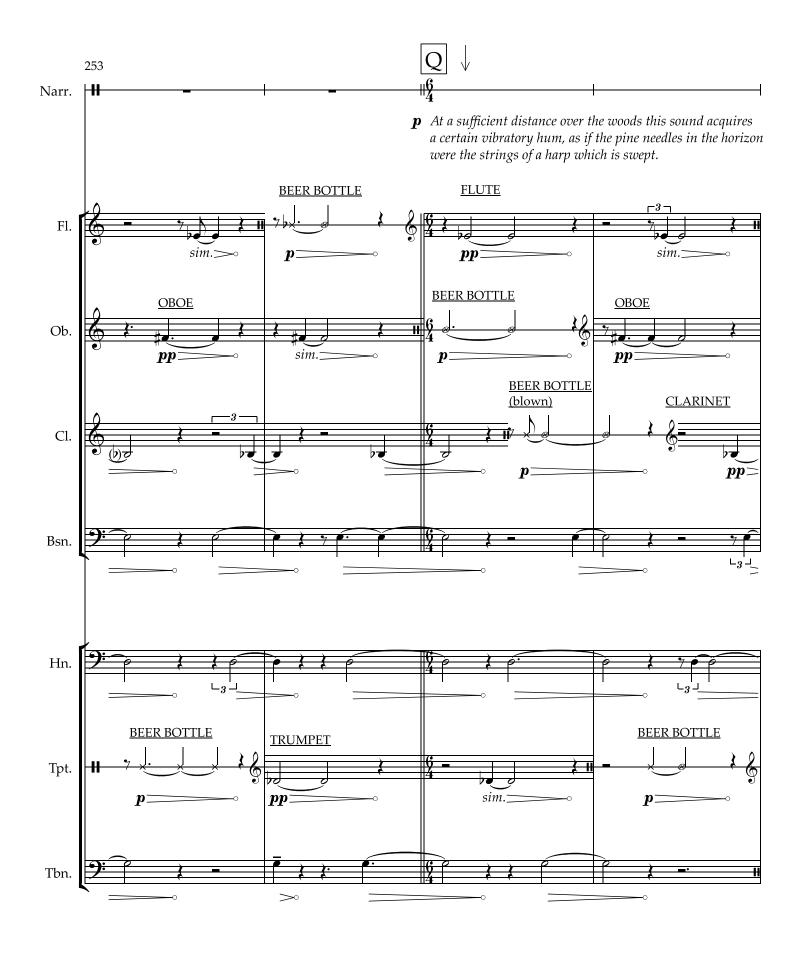
V

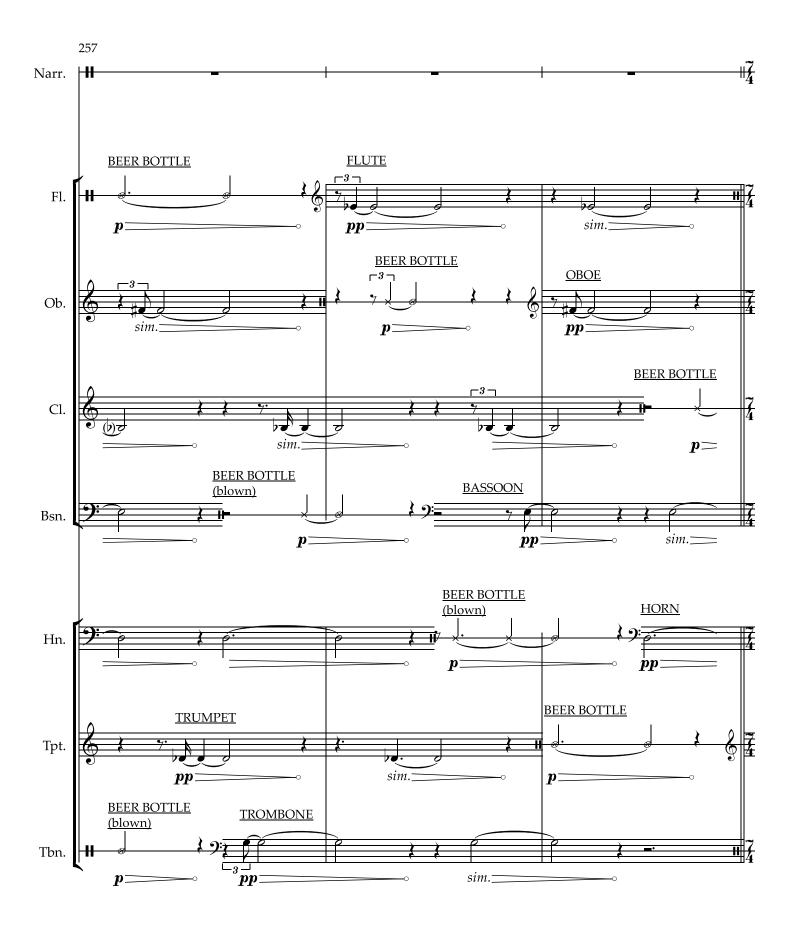


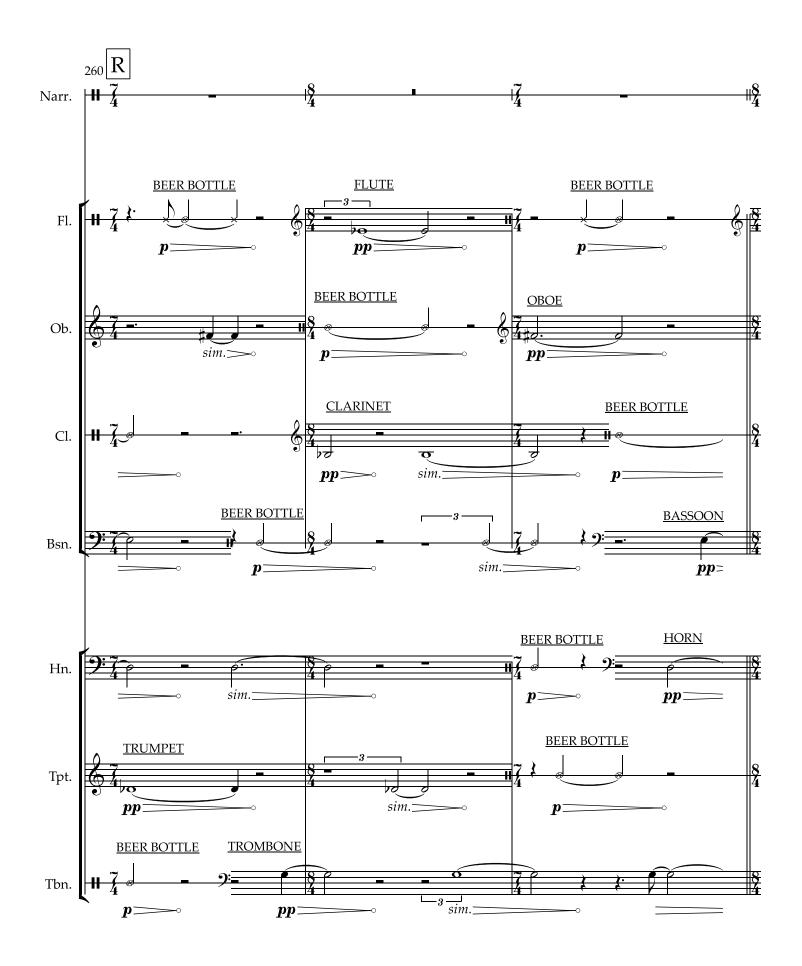


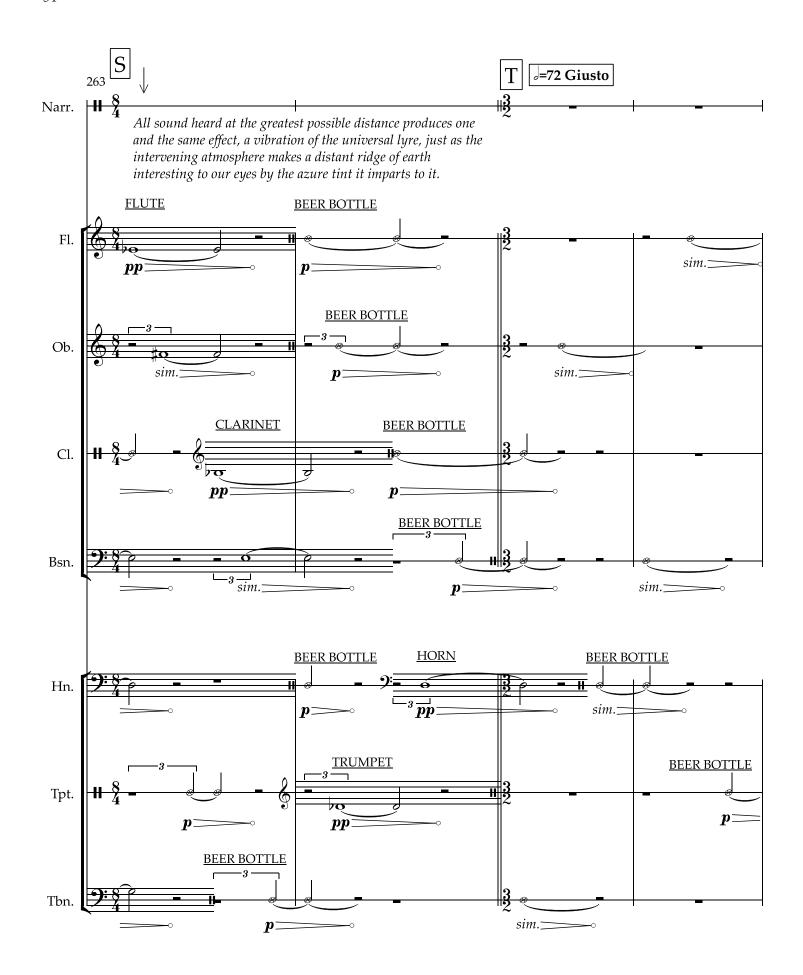


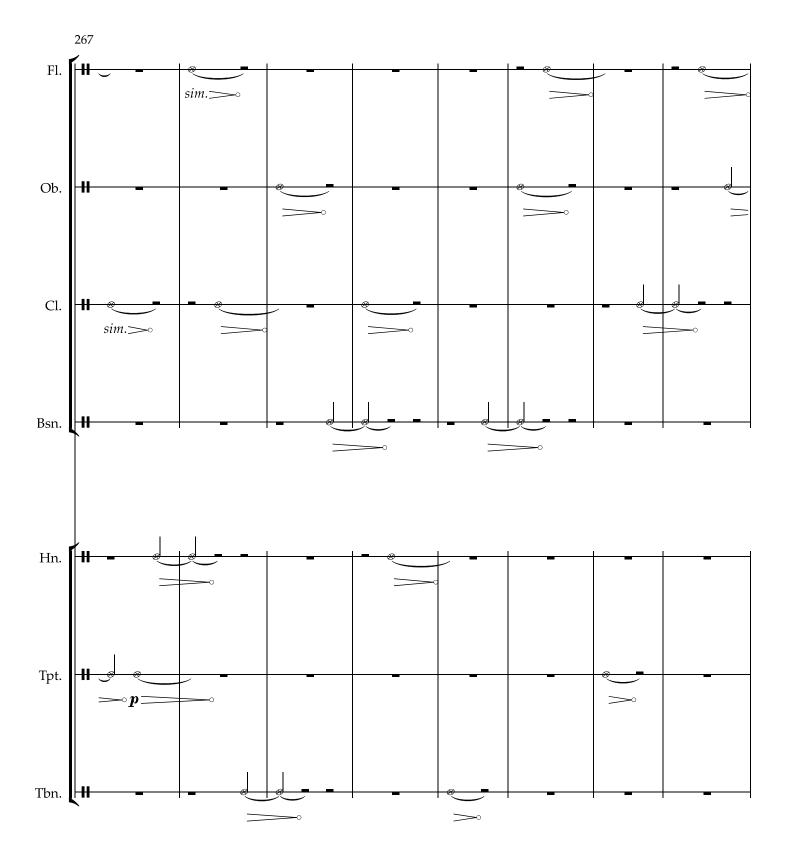


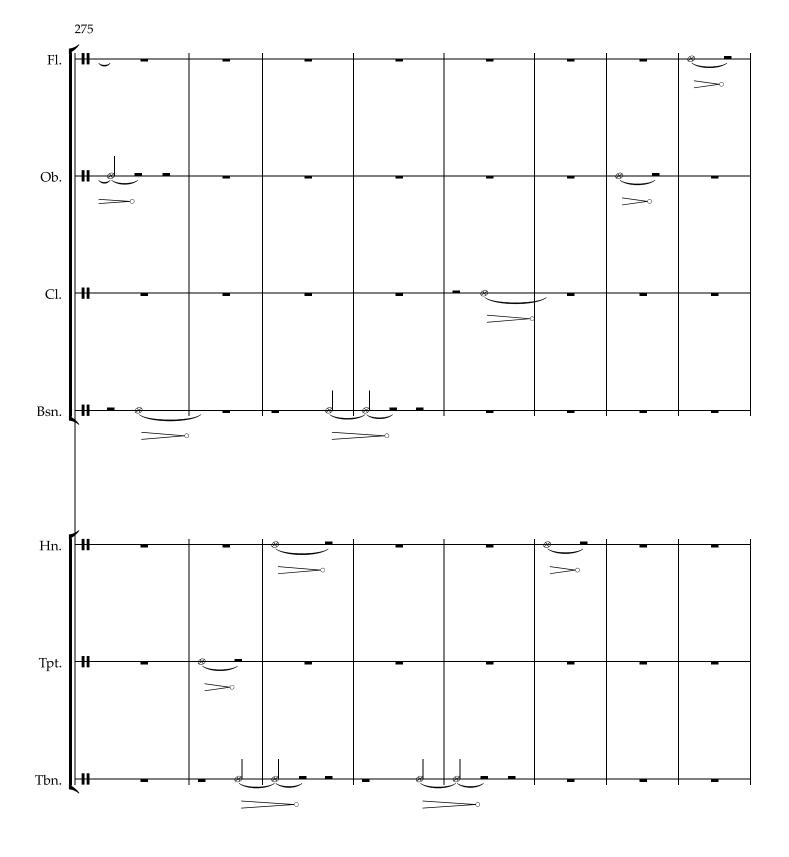


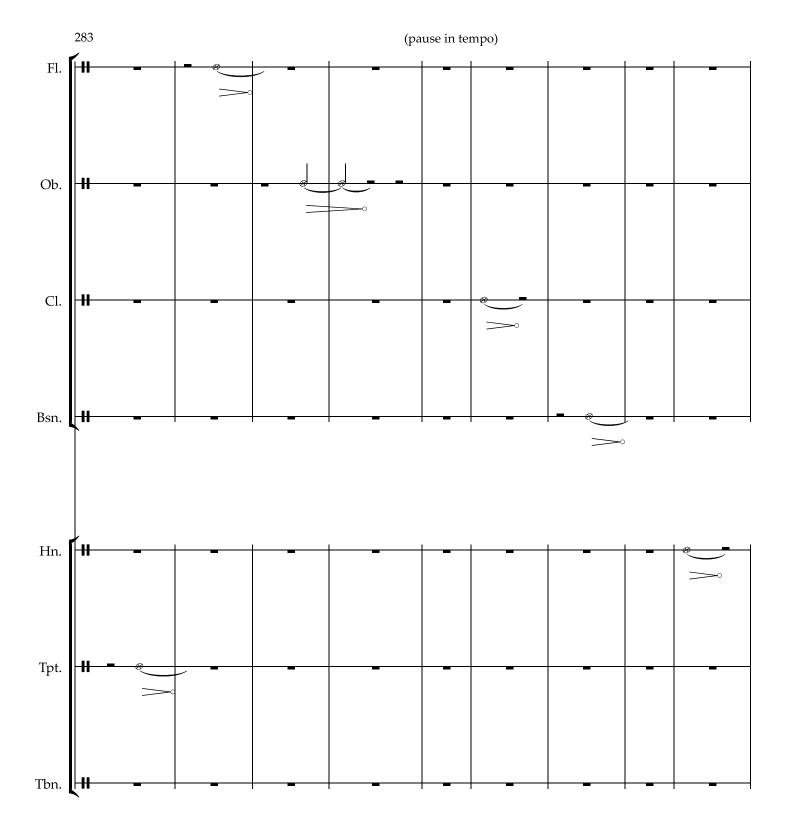


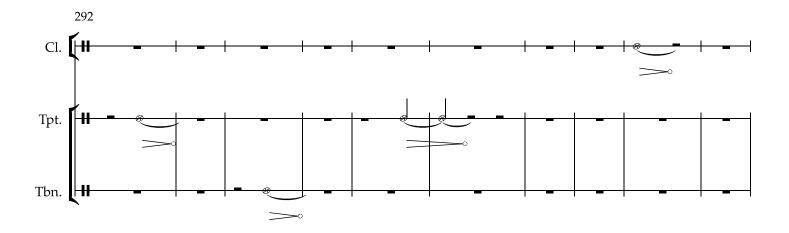




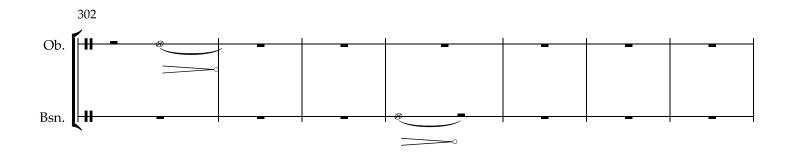




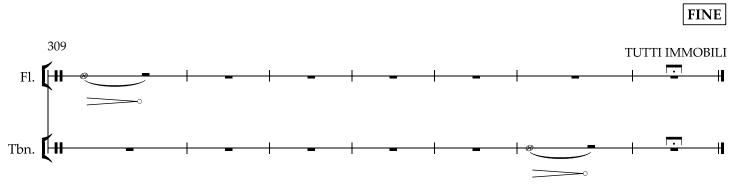












August 2023 - March 2024, Budapest. Full duration: cca 16 minutes