act like you know for Orchestra

by

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A composition submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts (Music: Composition) in the University of Michigan 2022

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DEDICATION

To all who contend with mental illness as an obstacle on the path to fulfillment and selfactualization.

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INSTRUMENTATION

Piccolo

2 Flutes

2 Oboes

2 Clarinets in Bb

Bb Bass Clarinet

2 Bassoons

4 Horns in F

3 Trumpet in C

2 Trombones

Bass Trombone

Harp

Piano

Timpani

3 Percussionists:

Crotales (2-octave set; bass bow)

Xylophone

Marimba

Chimes

Triangle

Egg Shaker

Whip

Vibraslap Ratchet Brake Drum Sizzle Cymbal 2 Suspended Cymbals (medium, large) 5 Temple Blocks 5 Tom-toms Snare Drum Kick Drum

Strings

PERFORMANCE NOTES

All instruments



'dashed slur' – phrase mark grouping the indicated pitches together, independent of articulation

Woodwinds

– flutter tongue

<u>Brass</u>

'open' – without mute

growl: vocalize through instrument while simultaneously playing the given pitch
- hand-stopped (horns); closed position for wah-wah mutes (trumpets and trombones)
- open position for wah-wah mutes (trumpets and trombones)

Percussion

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– rimshot (snare drum)

- circular stroke (wire brushes)

- 'arco': played with bass bow
- + - 'dead stroke': mallet stroke with no rebound

<u>Harp</u>

° p.d.l.t.' – prés de la table: played near the soundboard ° − play indicated note as a harmonic

<u>Piano</u>

- mute string with finger

<u>Strings</u>

's.p.'/'m.s.p.' - sul ponticello/molto sul ponticello: played near or very near the bridge

's.t.'/'m.s.t.' - sul tasto/molto sul tasto: played near or very near the fingerboard

'con sord.' – con sordino: with mute

'via sord.' - via sordino: remove mute

'ord.' - ordinario: played without sul ponticello or sul tasto

'1/2 c.l.b.' – 1/2 col legno battuto: strike strings with wood and hair of bow simultaneously

----- gradually transition between indicated playing positions

- left hand pizzicato

• – Bartok pizzicato

ABSTRACT

act like you know (2021) is a 12-minute work for orchestra, scored for picc., 2 fl., 2 ob., 2 cl., 1 bcl., 2 bsn., 4 hn., 3 tpt. in C, 2 tbn., 1 btbn., hp., pno., timp., 3 perc., and strings. The core musical content of *act like you know* is derived from self-reflection and metacognition that I undertook upon entry into the DMA degree program, to answer the following question: what elements do I find to be lacking in my music, and how can I address these perceived shortcomings? Consequentially, this piece demonstrates a cohesive synthesis of two contrasting compositional approaches that I have often unintentionally employed at the expense of one another: the first relying on intuition and emotion, and the second stemming from strict precompositional constraints. The amalgamation of these opposing styles forms a narrative basis for the work, representing my struggles with mental health and the goal of overcoming self-doubt in the face of a seemingly impossible task.

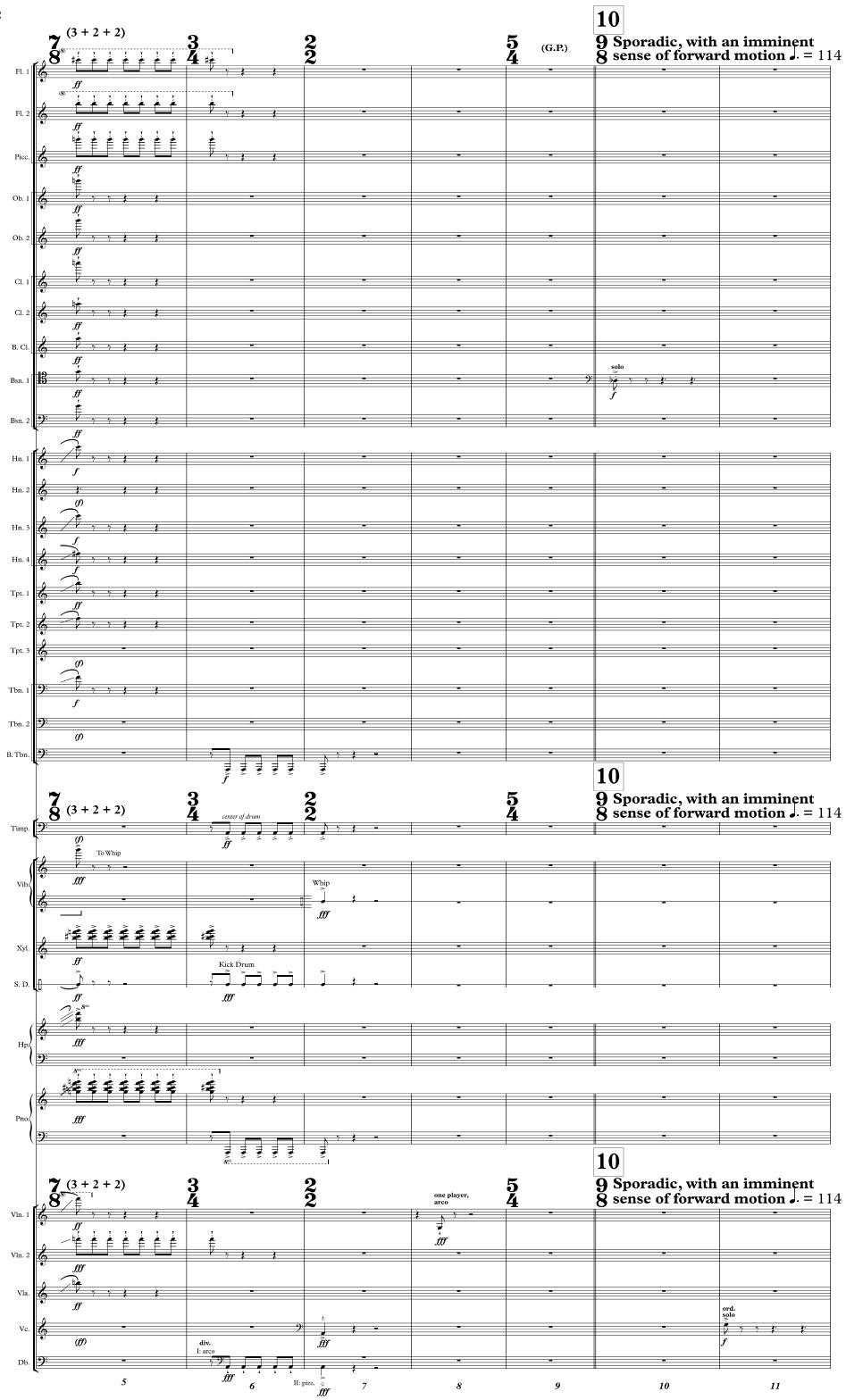
The opening gesture of the work sets up a repeating tritone oscillation between G and C# which continues throughout the first 58 measures of the piece, and the increasing pitches within the concurrently unfolding arpeggios are chosen through a strict additive algorithmic process. These rigid theoretical constraints, however, exist alongside percussive embellishments that instead emphasize a more regular metric structure, lending a sense of groove to the passage that would otherwise be lacking. The pre-calculated gestural nature of this music subsequently transforms into an emotive 'melody with accompaniment' configuration at m.71, where arpeggio fragments extracted from the initial algorithmic process have been rearranged into a harmonically functional vamp that underlies an intuitively composed melody.

The inner sections of the piece alternate with one another starkly in a Stravinskian, rondo-like fashion. In 'Whispering,' which first occurs at m.106, all instruments contribute equally to creating a collective watercolor-like texture out of a singular harmony, evoking a state of mental fogginess. The 'Aggressive' and 'Tumultuous' sections, occurring at m.116 and

m.205, are harsher in nature; they emote a sense of stuttering frustration through irregularly repeating, angular block harmonies that overlap between stratified instrumental groups. The 'Leggiero' sections, first occurring at m.132, are characterized by an ever-changing *moto perpetuo* ostinato that is passed incessantly between individual soloists, representing determined searching. The calculated juxtaposition of these distinct sonic paradigms pulls the music in several conflicting directions before ultimately overcoming an entrenched sense of indecisiveness.

I've constructed the following sections at m.220 and m.242 by assigning a particular compositional constraint to each and subsequently improvising the remaining music within that framework. 'Playfully hesitant' follows an extension of a harmonic progression that briefly appears in the earlier 'Grooving' section, with pointillistic capricious interjections from timbrally-varied soloists, and 'Hushed' is largely comprised of scales taken from the opening bars of the piece, here continuously chained in a melodically intuitive fashion. The subsequent recapitulation leads the work to a swung rendition of the earlier 'Grooving' section at m.324, and finally morphs into an extended pastoral vamp on verticalized harmonies also derived from that section. The self-reflective nature of this piece is the basis for its title. In doubting my own ability to convincingly compose a technically and expressively balanced work, I encouraged myself to approach the process with one phrase in mind: *act like you know*.



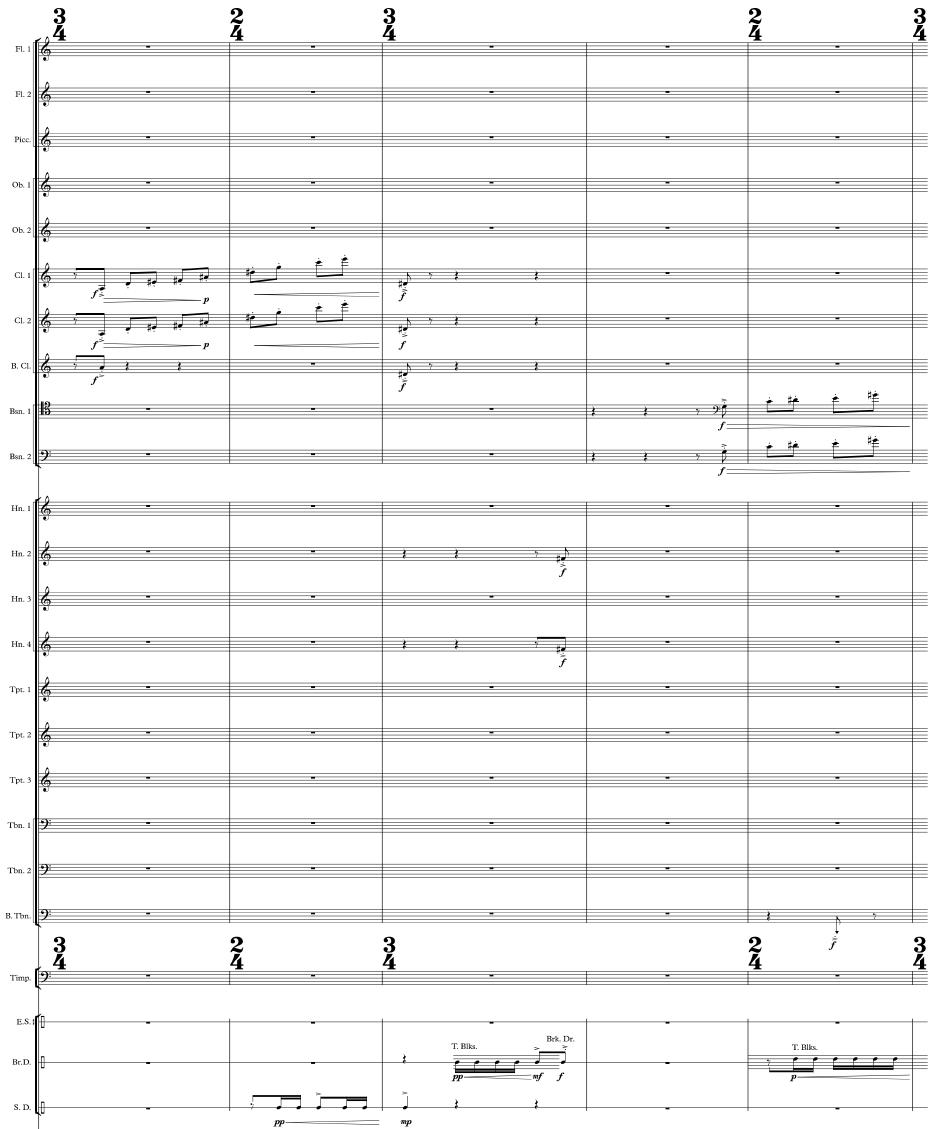


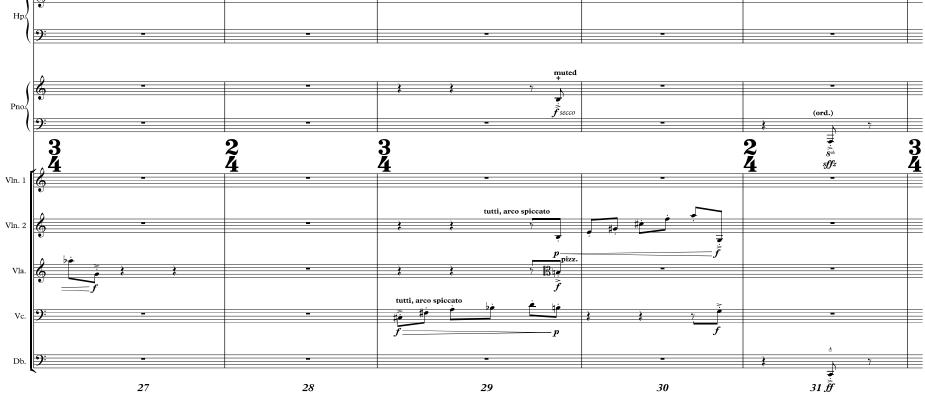














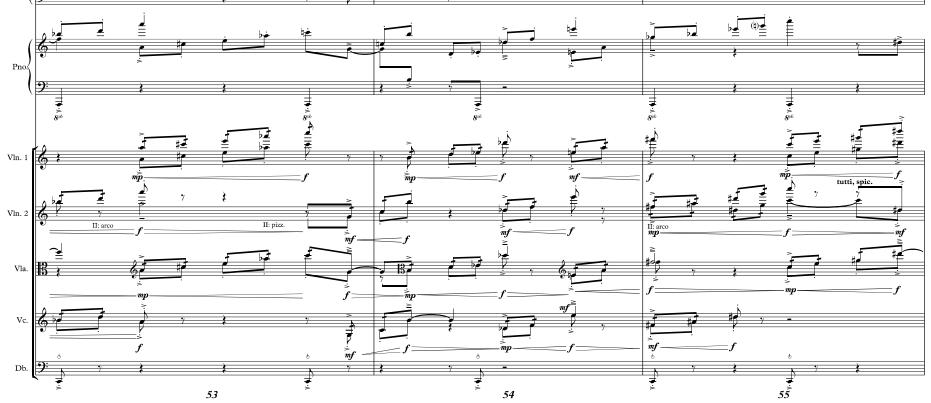






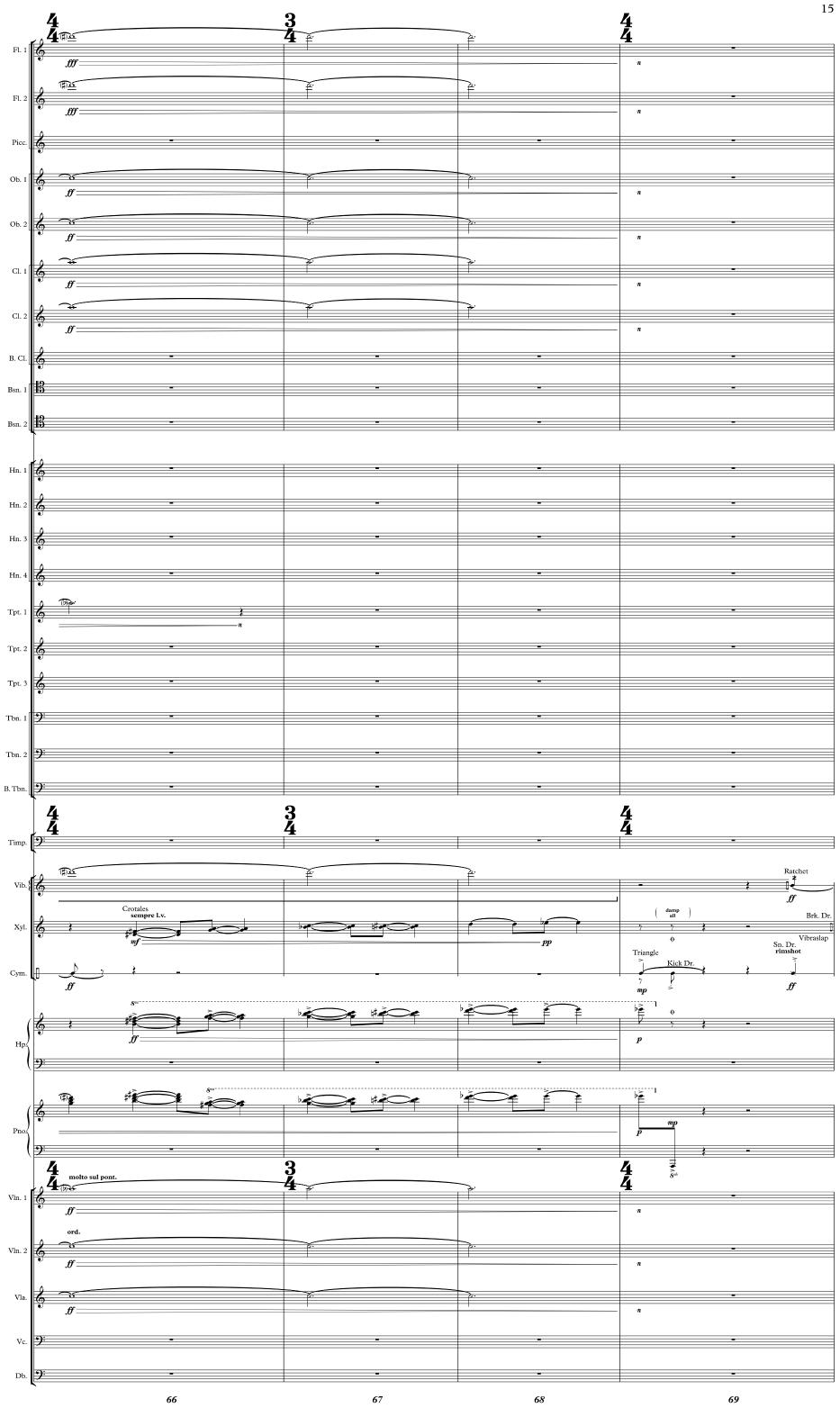




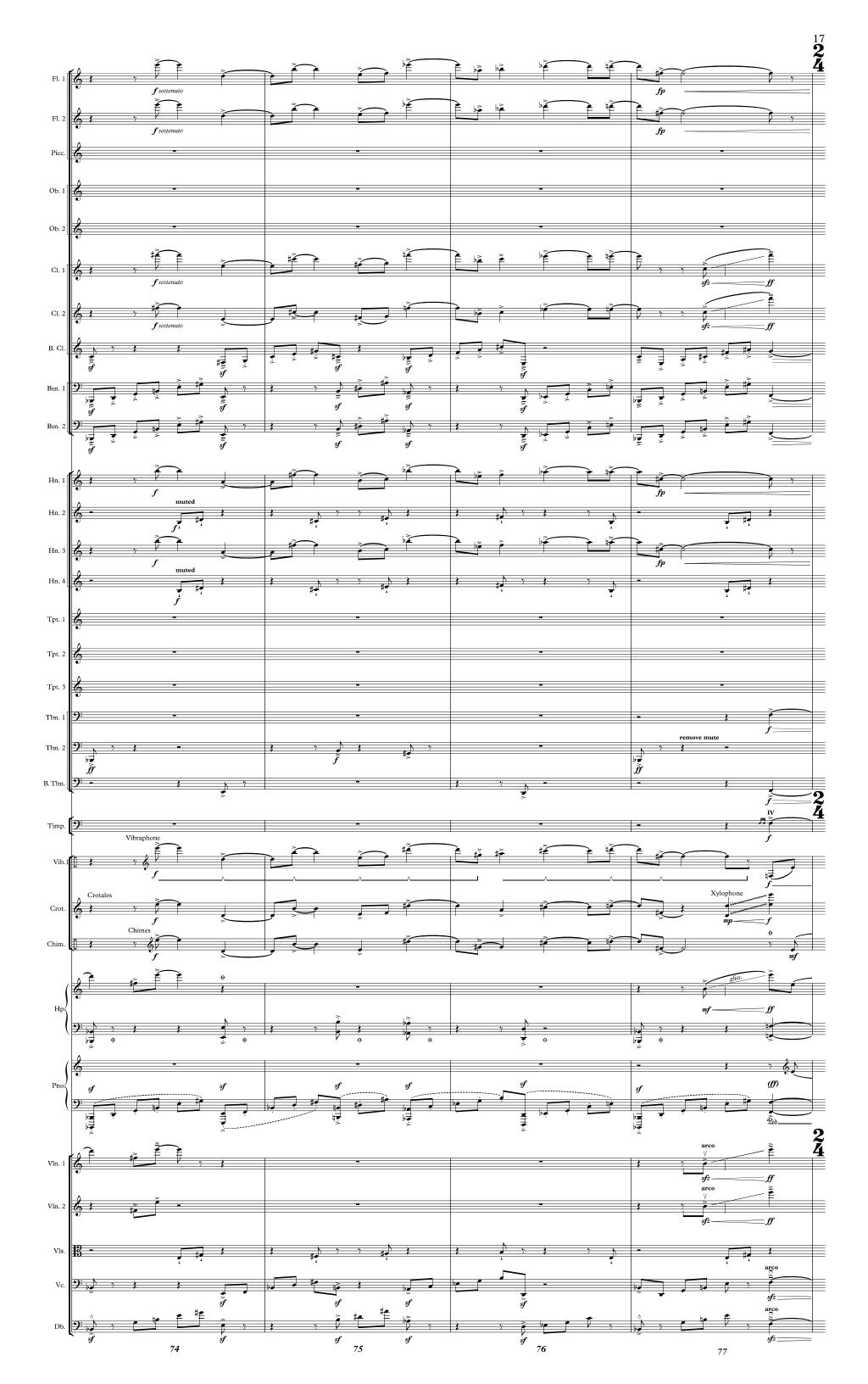












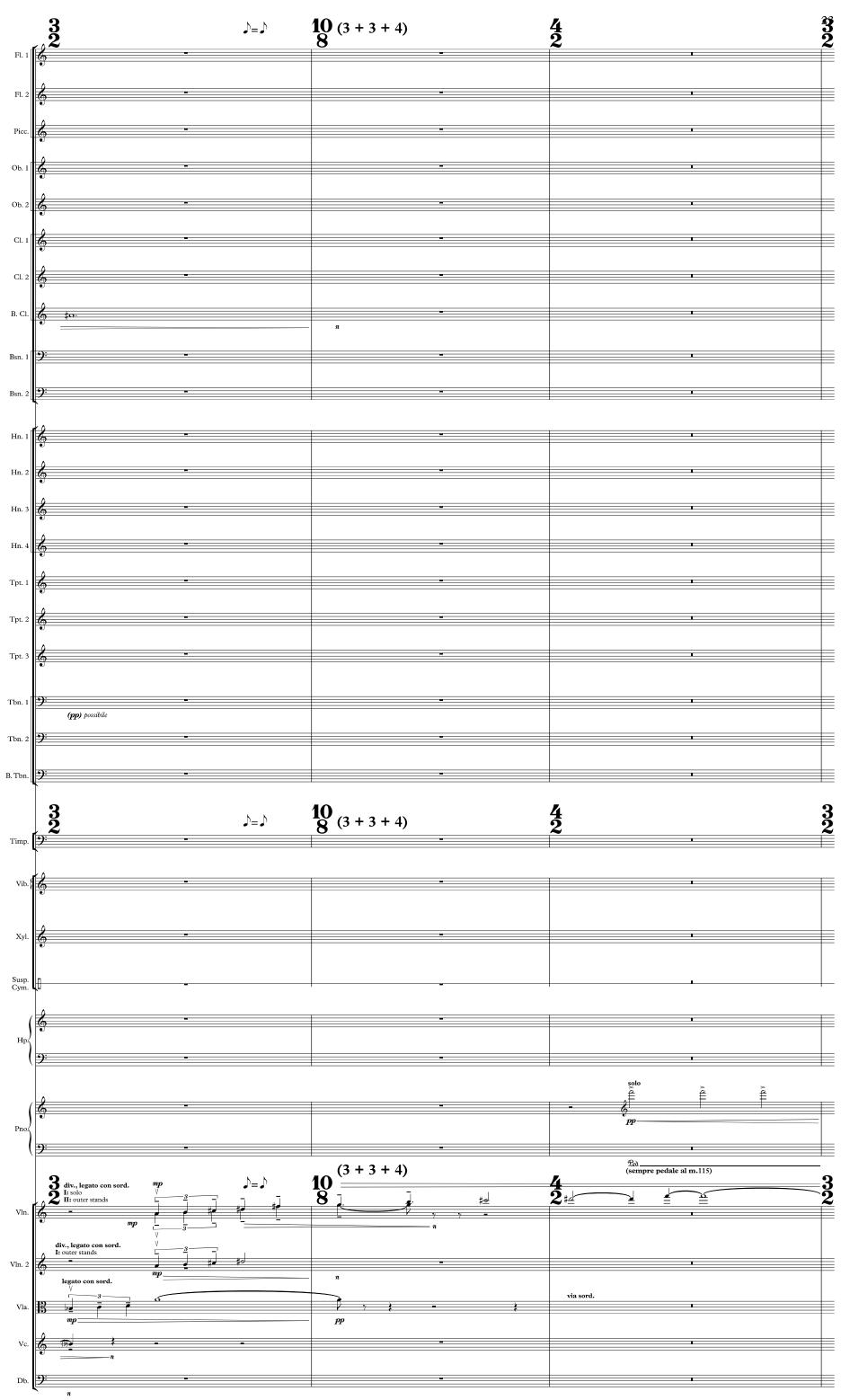


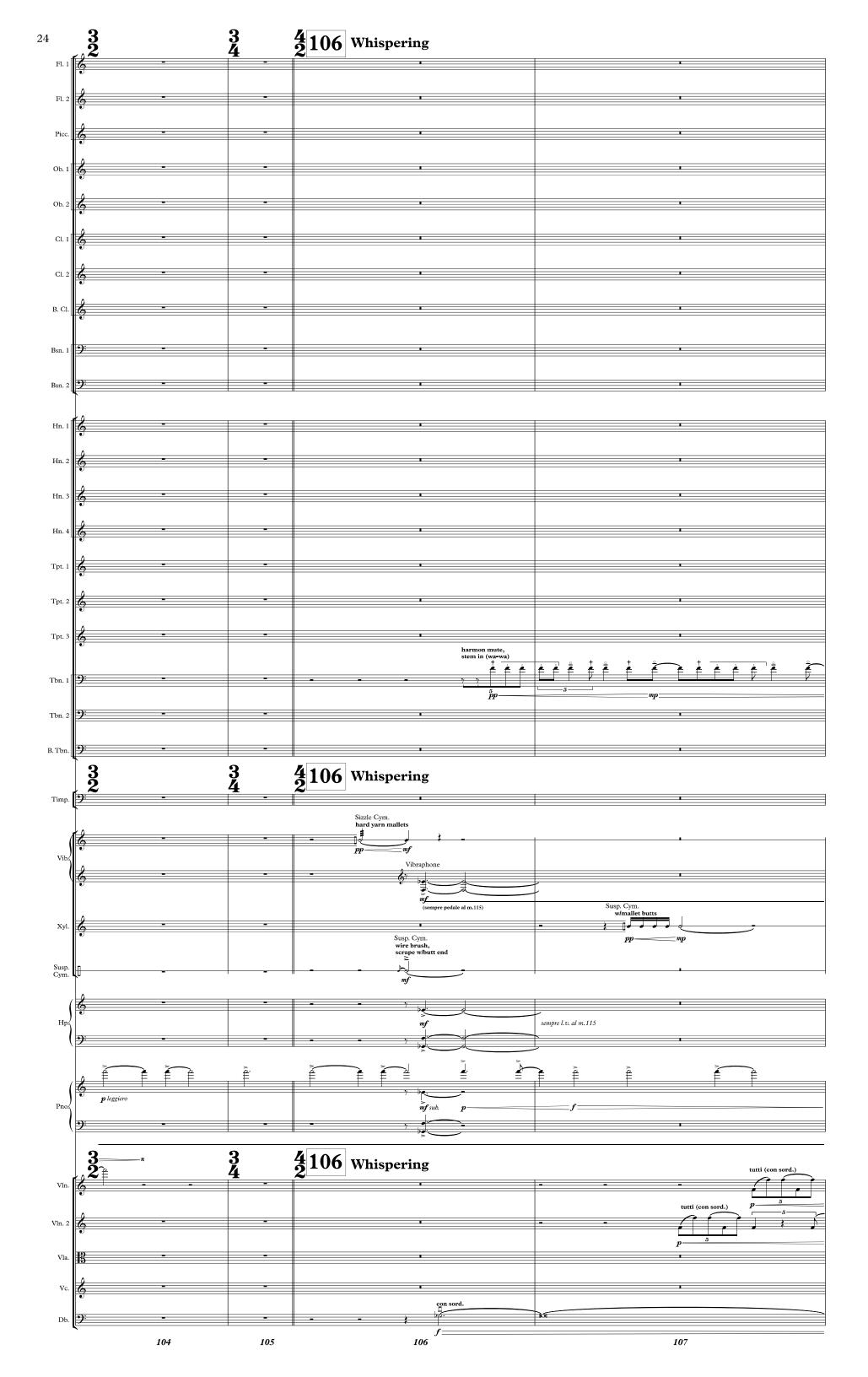














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