Audite Africam!

Suite

for

String Orchestra

Hans Huyssen

München 1997 Lynedoch 2000

Audite Africam!

(Commissioned by the Audi Culture Foundation for the Georgian Chamber Orchestra, 1997)

Audite Africam! might be described as European music with an African message: Cast in the form of a Suite, it presents (and plays with) two completely different styles of musical expression.

By adhering to the respective structural principles of two quite incongruous musical styles, the composition aims to differentiate clearly between the two, not amalgamate them. There is no attempt at any *fusion*, rather the endeavour to communicate the differences by stressing them and explicitly exploring their potential dramatic contrast. Though obviously this is a *cross-cultural* work it chooses to develop a new approach to this genre: instead of settling for the compromise of any common denominators, which is usually are found at the loss of specific nuances, it advocates the preservation of unique and meaningful expressions.

Comprehension of another culture does not mean to colonize or overrun it, but to allow for, understand and - if possible - appreciate its *divergences*.

The first movement is based on an African *time-line-pattern*: $|\cdot|: --\cdot ---\cdot :|\cdot|$. Such patterns (traditionally played on a double bell) function as orientation structures, ultimately binding together all rhythms and metrical explorations into which the players might set off. It also forms the backbone for all *complementary rhythms* - independent rhythmic figures in different parts, which interlock in such a way as to create the illusion of a unified complex textures. This is a characteristic (and highly effective!) means to increase the rhythmic energy in African music. It works just as well from a Western point of view, continuously generating a progression of rhythmical complexity - in this case to such a chaotic extend, that there can be no return and the movement stops abruptly.

In the second movement the orchestra is divided into an *African* and a *European* ensemble. The first group (Solo Violin I and Cello accompanied by pizzicato Violins and Violas) quote a song from Guinea with typical dropping phrases over a characteristically unchanging accompaniment - very strong, straightforward, repetitive. The second group (Solo Violin II with three muted Celli) in contrast interrupts this texture in a highly expressive manner, and performs changes of tempo and dynamics, cuts, agitated gestures and reflective moments. Both worlds have nothing to do with each other, until towards the end a minute dialogue evolves.

The third movement uses the ever-recurring material of a traditional Xhosa song (credit to Feti Totoyi from the Elliot district, Eastern Cape), however always with new accompanying textures, so as to form a set of variations. Besides that, the ambivalent rhythmical structure of the theme is highlighted by continuously changing its emphasises (i.e. shifting the motive with respect to the bar lines). Eventually the development leads to a quotation of the Dollar Brand's famous *Homecoming Song*. (This is opens a semantic bracket, which is to be closed at the end of the last movement.)

It would be inappropriate to seek *authenticity* in African music only in unchanging traditional forms. On the contrary, the ease with which African musicians have been able to incorporate various musical influences yet always let them sound uniquely African, is remarkable. In many of the contemporary musical forms, obvious Western derivatives are used in such a way, as to express a wholly African atmosphere, an example being the simple, very basic chord progression used in *Kwela* music. The simple harmonies are subsumed (or should one say transfigured?) by a spicy yet completely relaxed groove. The fourth movement treats material of this kind in the style of a Passacaglia. Two attempted individual interjections (by soloists in a Western sense) are simply swallowed up again immediately by the encompassing and irresistible swing.

The fifth movement is forcefully driven along by a Senegalese drumming-rhythm until all harmonic energy ceases and only *rhythm* remains (to be physically *finger-drummed* on the tables of the instruments). The disintegration of sound continues even further, to a point where European avantgarde abstraction and African sound colouring may have common ground. From within this noise backdrop *Ladysmith Black Mambazo's* touching song *Homeless* gently emerges and is quoted to correspond with the previously heard *Homecoming Song*.

Is not this what is at stake? Africa's fate (if not that of the whole world...) is pending between ultimately becoming barren land at the will of an exploitive and destructive utilitarian materialism (often disguised commendably by the notion of so called *development*) or remaining 'home' to human beings rooted within age-old cultures. African music has far too often been treated as a political issue and much too seldom been appreciated for its intrinsically complex structures and sensitive means of expression. Yet perceived in this regard it would have a lot to say – even to Western audiences – communicating a thoroughly *human* attitude towards life, being humble and content, yet at once spirited and soulful. If only we would listen – hence the title...

(In a *linear* – European – version the performance of the work might end with the last movement – thoughtfully, introvert and quiet. The *cyclical* – African – alternative would be to repeat the first movement – closing the Suite on a high energetic level.)

Audite Africam!

Suite für Streicher

Auftrag des Audi Kulturfonds









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713 7

\$ 7 B 7 B

D

mf

pizz.

dolce Ē#Ē

mp

I/1

I/2

II/3

II /4

Va

Vc

Db

I / 1

I/2

II/3

II /4

Va

Vc

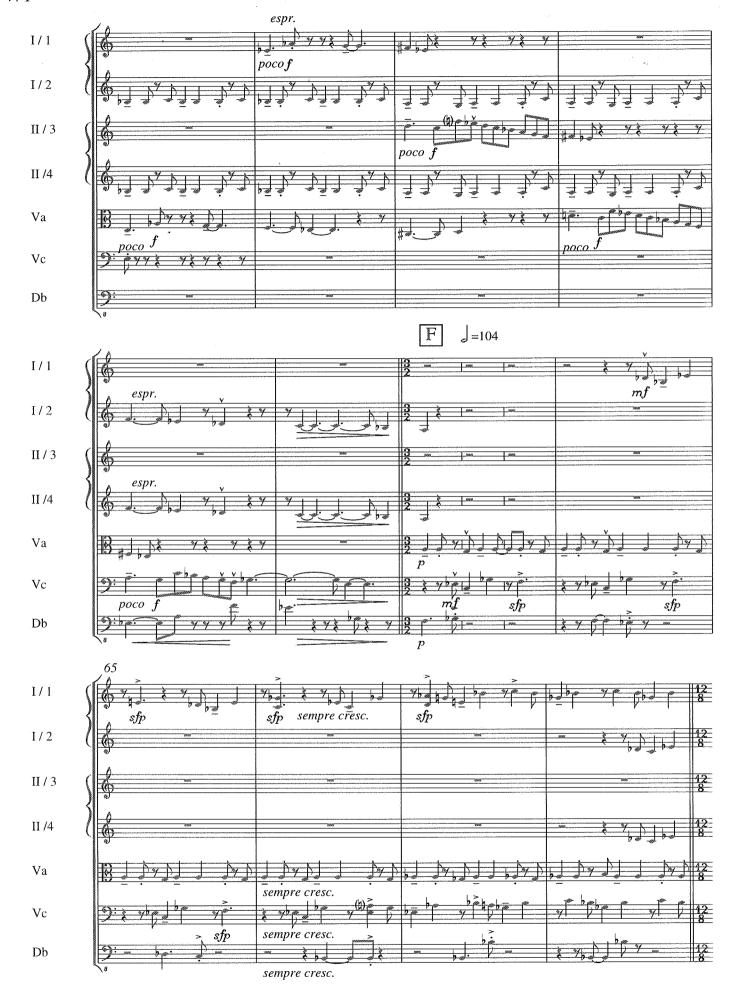
Db

1/1

V,a

Vc

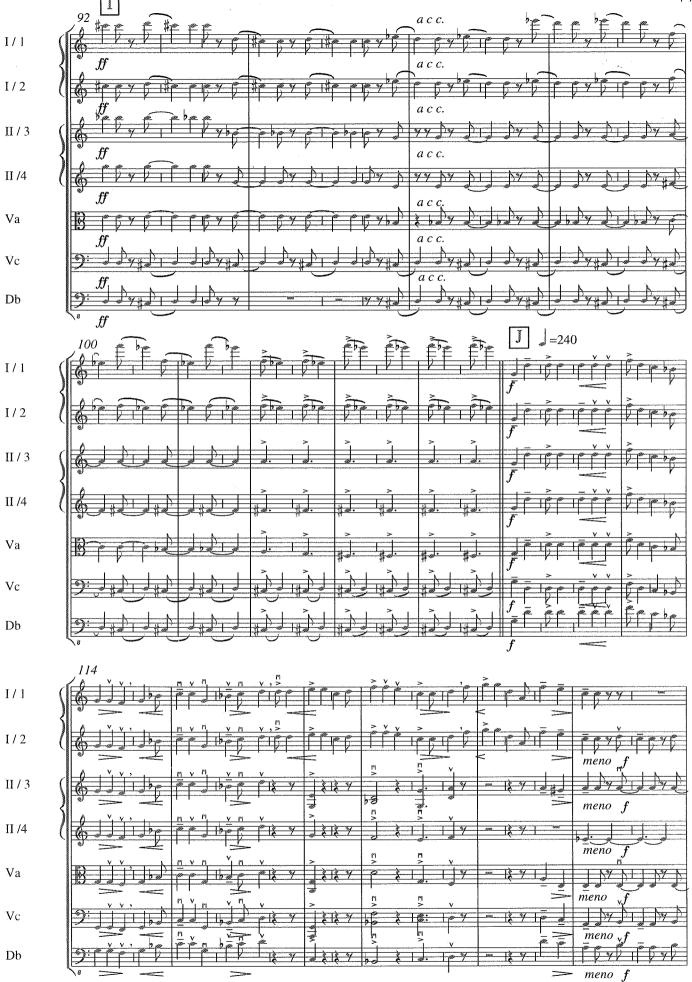
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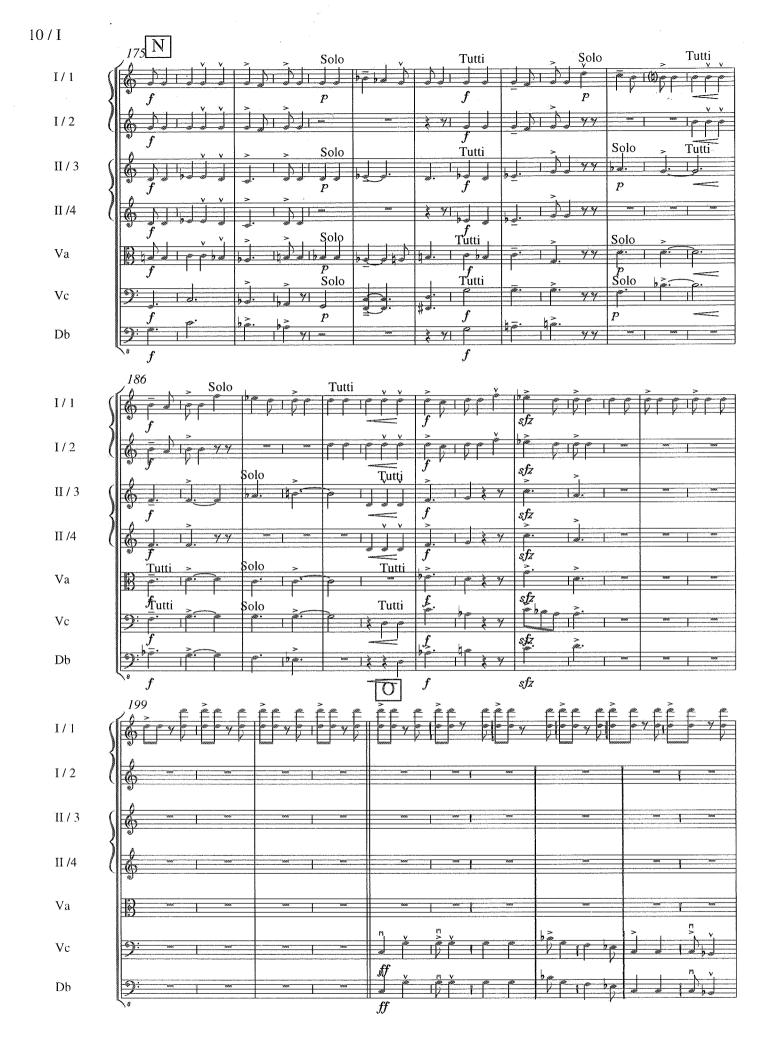
















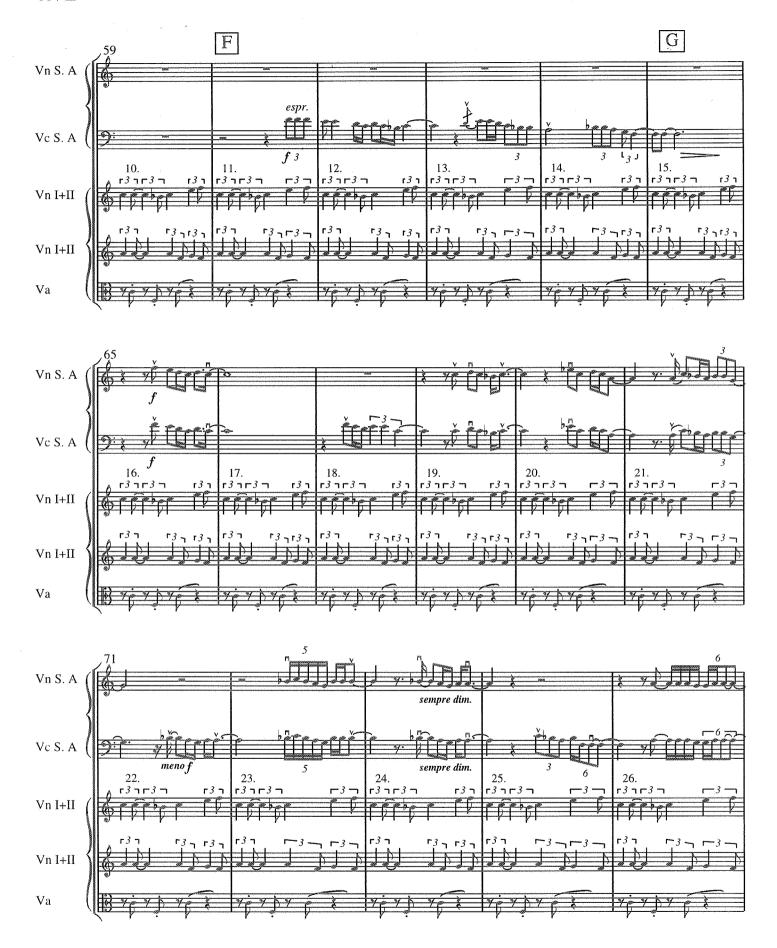












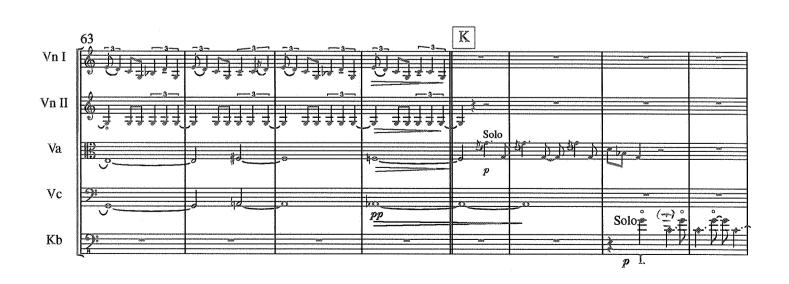






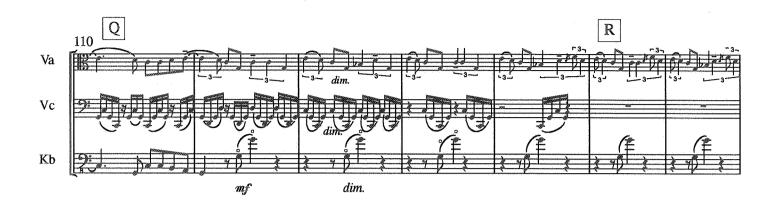


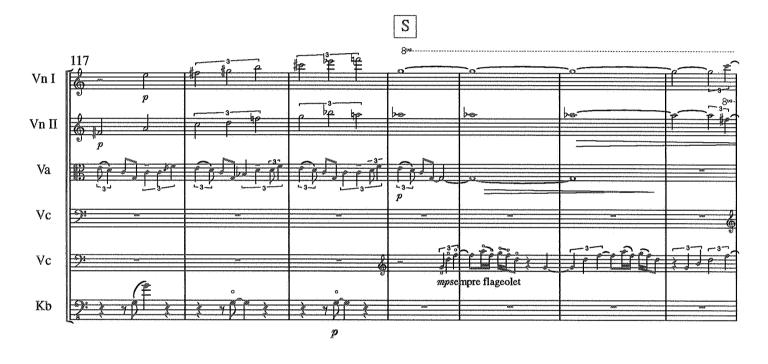


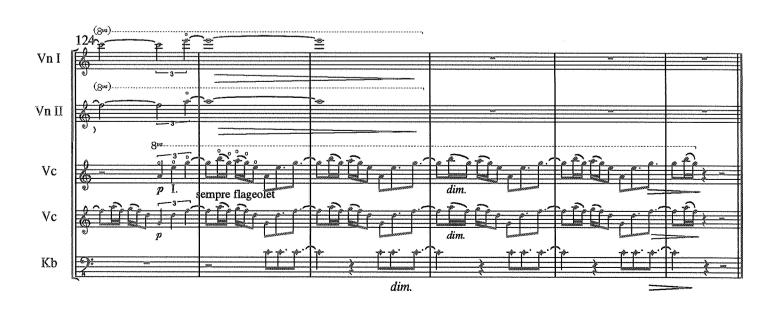




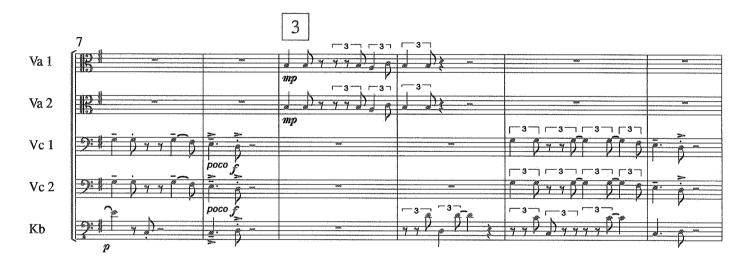


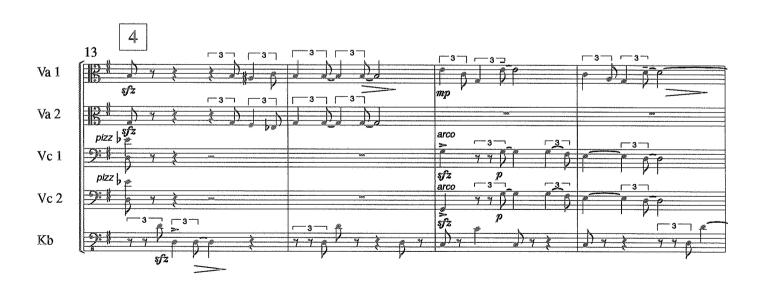


















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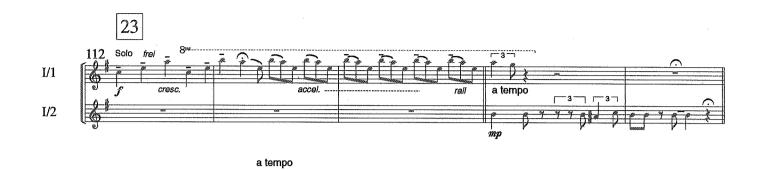


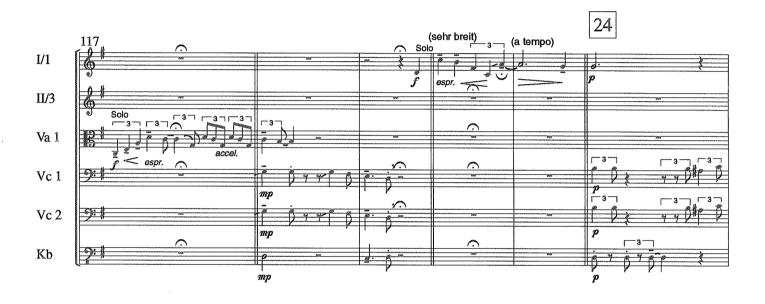


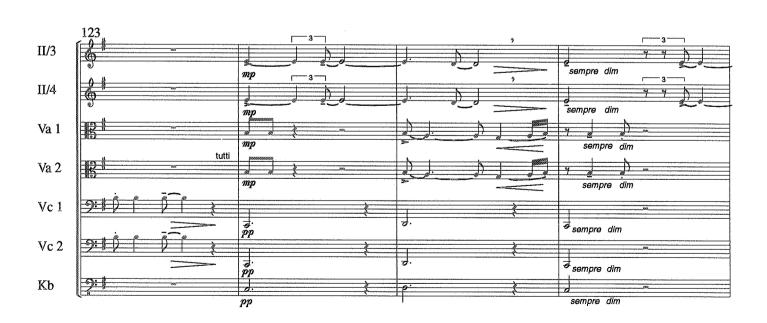
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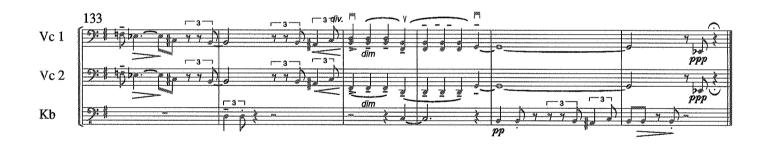














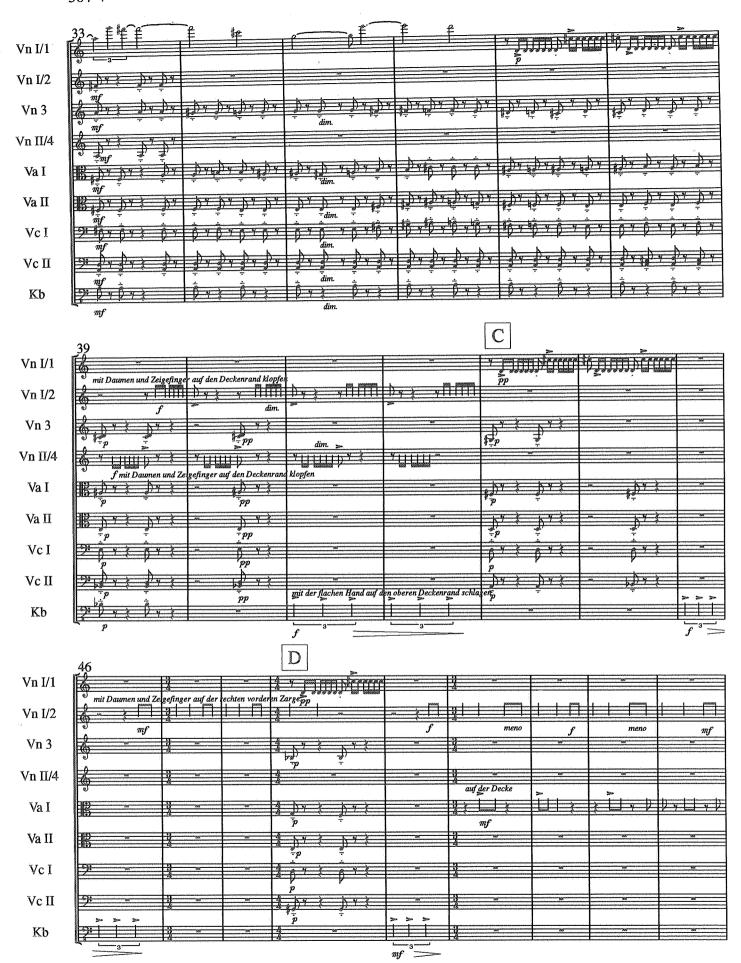




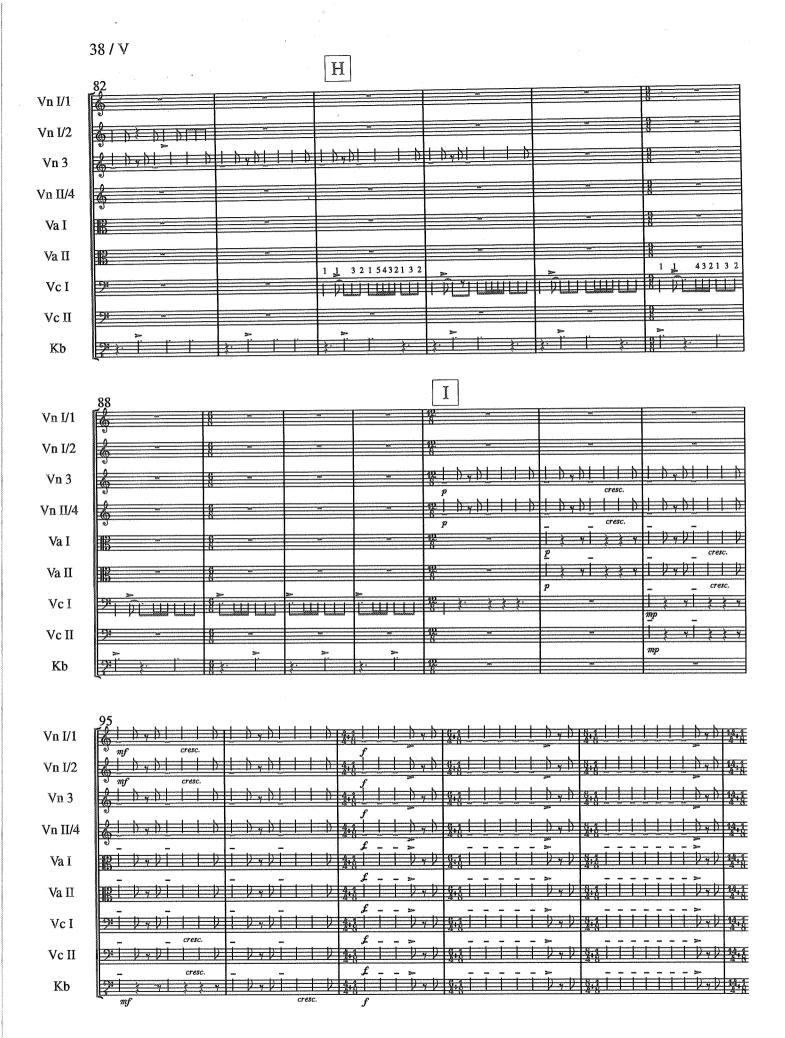


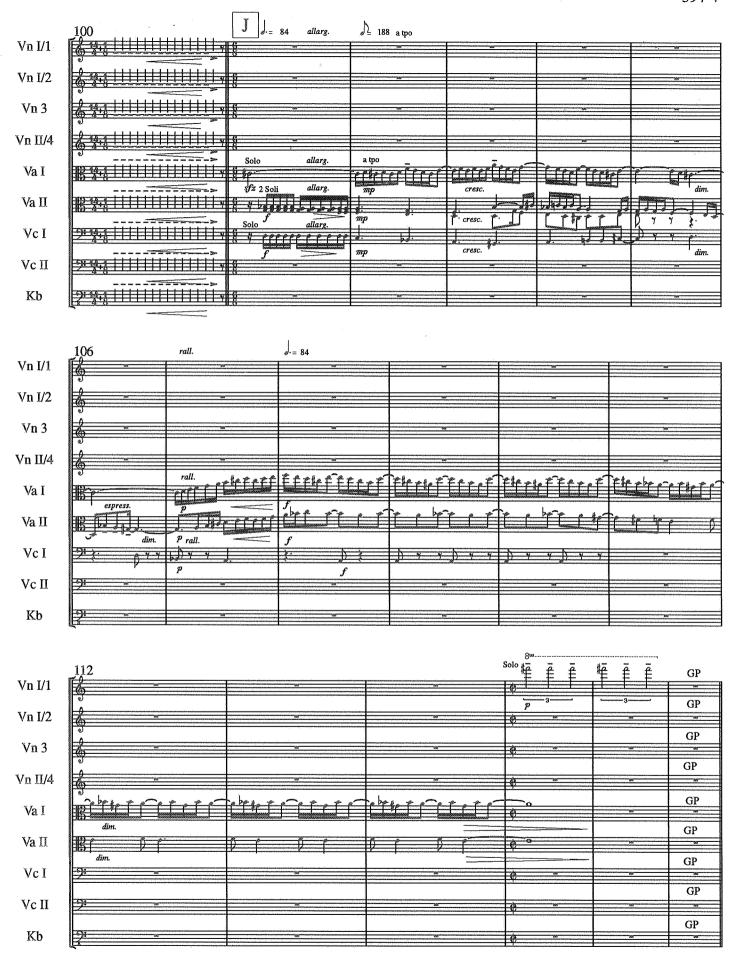


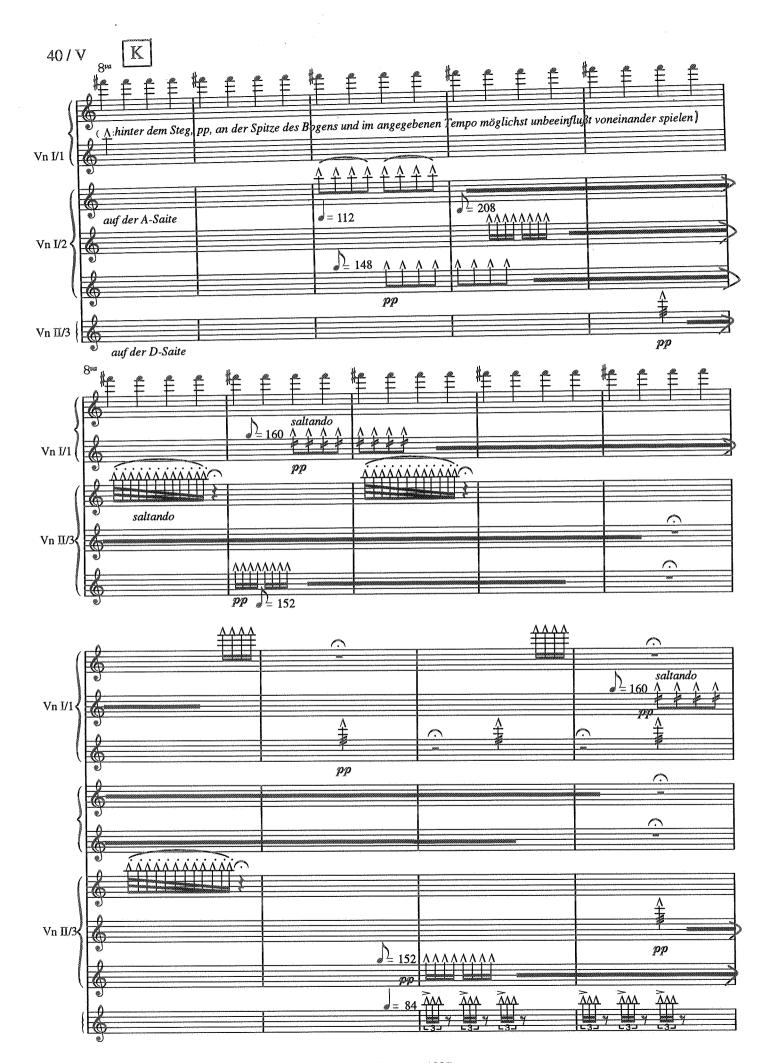


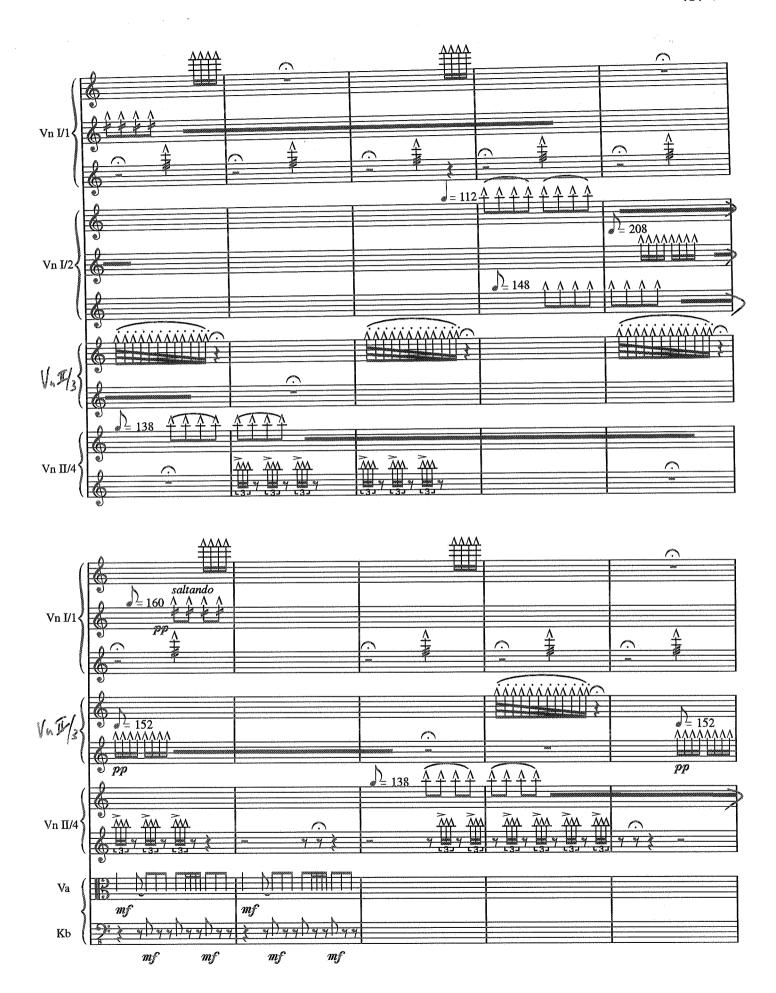












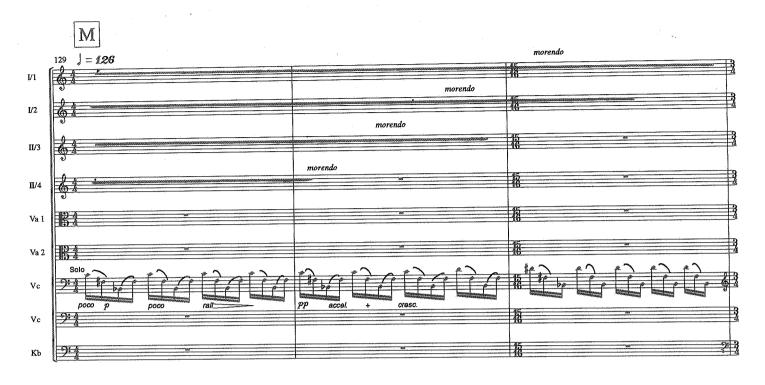
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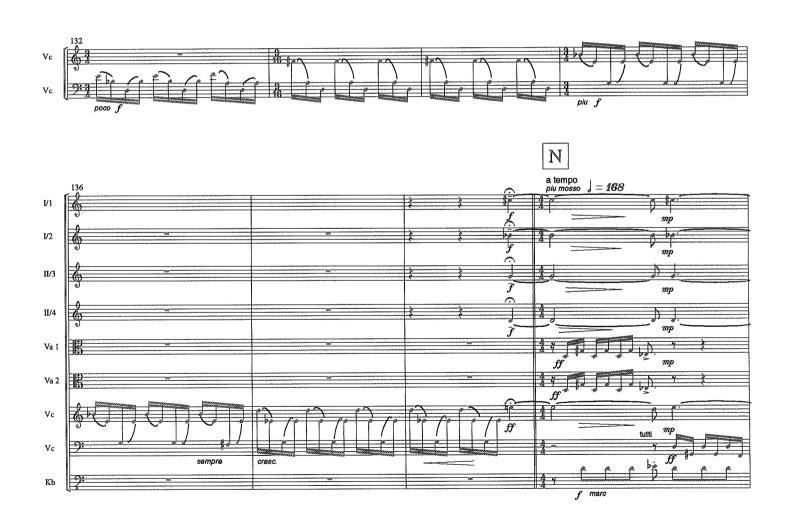
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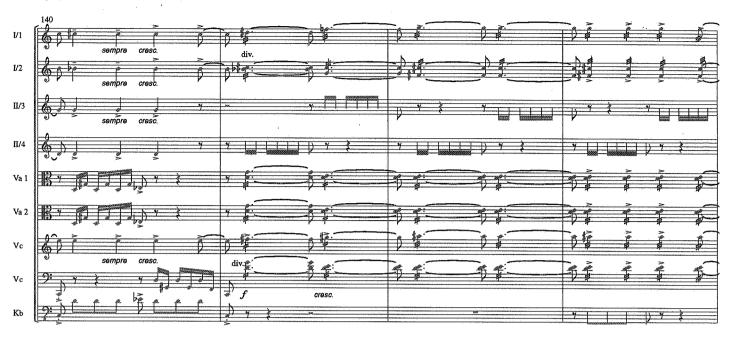
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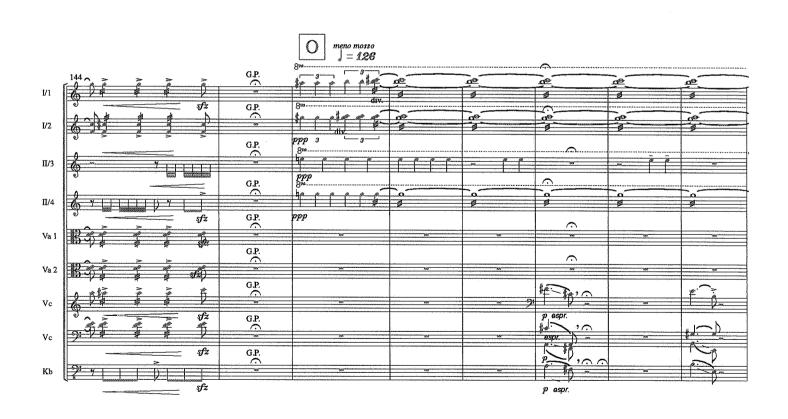
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