Invisible Cities:
ERSILIA

for
Chamber Orchestra

Composed by
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2015

PREFACE

1

In Ersilia, to establish the relationships that sustain the city's life, the inhabitants stretch strings from the corners of the houses, white or black or gray or black-and-white according to whether they mark a relationship of blood, of trade, authority, agency. When the strings become so numerous that you can no longer pass among them, the inhabitants leave: the houses are dismantled; only the strings and their supports remain.

From a mountainside, camping with their household goods, Ersilia's refugees look at the labyrinth of taut strings and poles that rise in the plain. That is the city of Ersilia still, and they are nothing.

They rebuild Ersilia elsewhere. They weave a similar pattern of strings which they would like to be more complex and at the same time more regular than the other. Then they abandon it and take themselves and their houses still farther away.

Thus, when traveling in the territory of Ersilia, you come upon the ruins of abandoned cities, without the walls which do not last, without the bones of the dead which the wind rolls away: spiderwebs of intricate relationships seeking a form.

- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

2

"Are we still in the South Reach?"

"Reach? No. The islands –" The chief moved his slender black hand in an arc, no more than a quarter of the compass, north to east. "The islands are there," he said. "All the islands." Then showing all the evening sea before them, from north through west to south, he said, "The sea."

"What land are you from, lord?"

"No land. We are the Children of the Open Sea."

Arren looked at his keen face. He looked about him at the great raft with its temple and its tall idols, each carved from a single tree, great god-figures mixed of dolphin, fish, man, and seabird; at the people busy at their work, weaving, carving, fishing, cooking on raised platforms, tending babies; at the other rafts, seventy at least, scattered out over the water in a great circle perhaps a mile across. It was a town: smoke rising in thin wisps from distant houses, the voices of children high on the wind. It was a town, and under its floors was the abyss.

- Ursula LeGuin, *The Farthest Shore*

3 Instrumentation

- Flute
- Bass clarinet
- Oboe
- Baritone saxophone
- Acoustic guitar
- Piano
- Percussion
    - bamboo wind chimes
    - four toms
    - five wood blocks
    - snare drum
    - marimba
    - crotales, two octaves
    - tam-tam
    - bass drum
- Violin
- Viola
- Cello
- Contrabass

4 Performance notes

Six players – flute, bass clarinet, oboe, violin, viola and cello – receive a shaker – caxixi, maraca or similar. Four players – guitar, piano, percussion and contrabass – receive a chromatic pitch pipe – a circular harmonic-like instrument generally used for tuning vocal groups.

The shakers should be placed on or suspended from their respective performer's music stands, or wherever convenient.

The pitch-pipes should be played by inhaling or exhaling – as indicated – through fully half of the circumference of the instrument, creating a rich cluster.

For all winds, a +-symbol indicates slap tonguing.

For guitar, the coda symbol indicates a percussive damping of the strings.

Piano plays with pedal to their discretion throughout the first four sections of the piece. The sound should be generally dry, although some pedal should be used when appropriate for phrasing and blending, especially on tremolo passages. The sustain pedal should remain fully depressed for the entirety of section D. Inside-piano glissandi are notated proportional to the lower interior portion of the instrument – from the lowest string up to the first cross-bar – and should be played with the fingertip.

Percussion should use hard sticks on toms, woodblocks, snares and crotales, and softer mallets on marimba, bass drum and tam-tam (when ergonomic to do so).

All mordents and trills are a major 2nd, unless otherwise specified. All tremolos are unmeasured and should evoke an even, cloud-like texture.

Invisible Cities (iii):

ERSILIA

(a botanical survey of the uninhabited northeastern isles)

for Ensemble Dal Niente

Josiah Wolf Oberholtzer (1984)

♩ = 96

Komokome

Flute
Oboe
Bass Clarinet
Baritone Saxophone
Pitch Pipes
Guitar
Pitch Pipes
Piano
Pitch Pipes
Percussion
Violin
Viola
Cello
Pitch Pipes
Contrabass

shaker
snare
8va
7:6

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

5/8 4/8

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

6:5

p ppp fp f sfz fff

8va

blocks toms snare

pizz.

4/4 4/8 7/8

Fl. mf

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax. fp 5:4 f mf 5:4 f mf

Gt. mf f sfz fp

Pf. f ppp f 3:2 f fff ppp fff fff

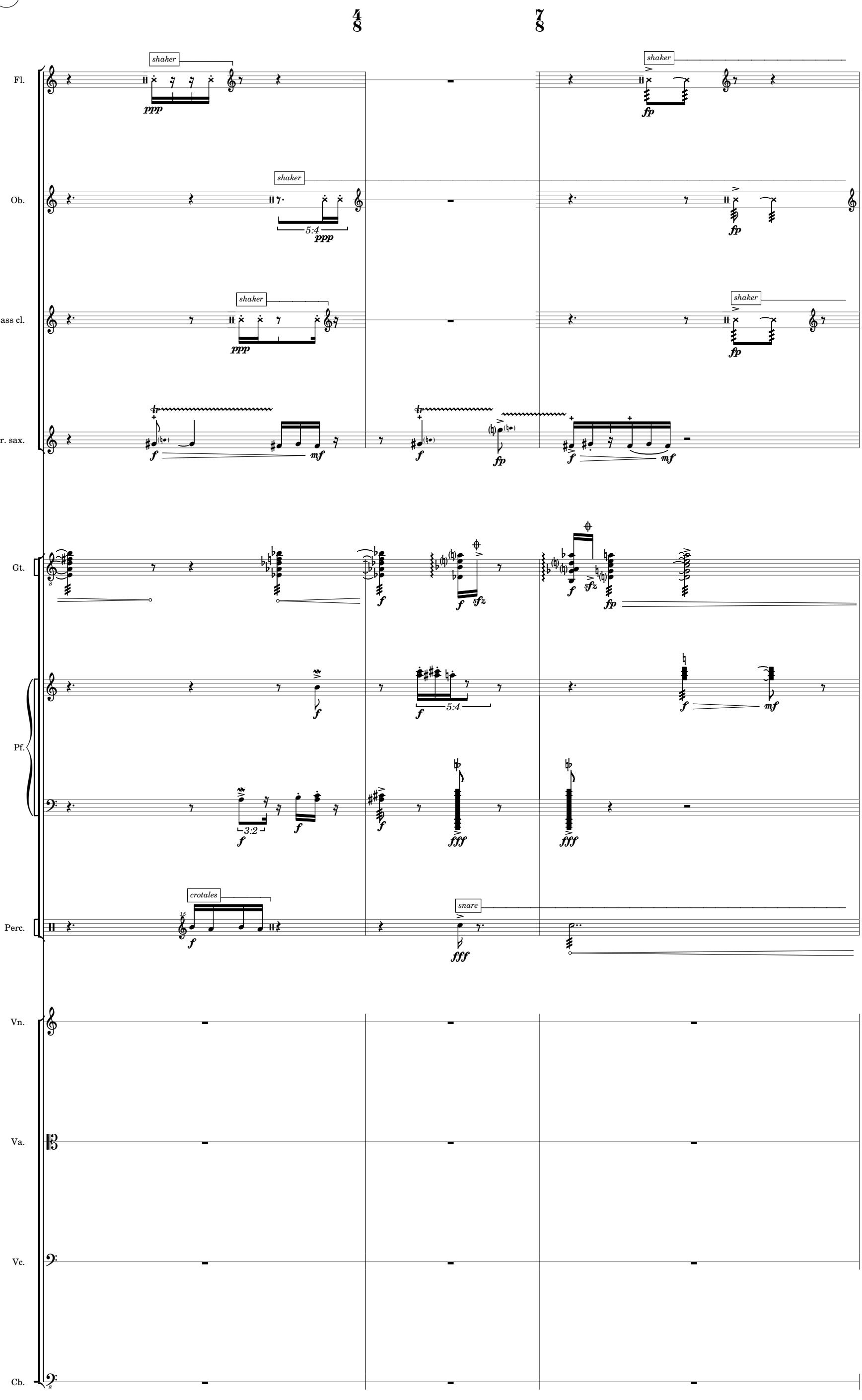
Perc. fp fff f

Vn.

Va. pizz. 5:4 ppp

Vc.

Cb.


4/8
7/8
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
shaker
crotales
snare
5:4
3:2
ppp
fp
f
mf
sfz
fff

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

4/4 4/8 5/8

5:4 ppp
f p
ppp
mp p
ppp
mf p
fp
8va ppp
8va fp
8va p mf
8va f p
8va 3:2 pp
8va mp
fff
f
fff
snare fff
shaker 5:4 ppp
shaker 5:4 ppp
shaker ppp
fp
pizz. ppp 5:4

6/8 7/8 4/4

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

tr
fp
ppp
fff
f
pizz.
7:6

85

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

shaker
bass drum
pizz.
3:2
5:4
7:6
8va
fp
mf
ppp
pp
mp
p
f

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

shaker
shaker
snare
7:6
5:4
3:2
8va

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

shaker
snare
overpressure
pizz.
8va
3:2
4:3
7:6
5:4

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

4/8

fp ppp 5:4 fp ppp
ppp 5:4 ppp 5:4 ppp 7:6
ppp 5:4
fp
f sfz p f
p mf 3:2 f pp 3:2 mp 8va fp
fff fff
fff f toms p 5:4
fff
overpressure fff
overpressure fff

4/4 5/8

Fl. shaker 5:4 7:6 ppp

Ob. shaker ppp

Bass cl. shaker ppp fp

Bar. sax. f mf fp 7:6 f mf 3:2 f

Gt. f sfz fp

Pf. mf mp f 5:4 f fff fff fff f

Perc. snare f fff toms f fp

Vn. overpressure shaker fff ppp fp

Va. overpressure shaker fff ppp fp

Vc. shaker overpressure ppp fff shaker fp

Cb.

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

5/8 4/8

Fl. Ob. Bass cl. Bar. sax. Gt. Pf. Perc. Vn. Va. Vc. Cb.

tr ppp fp mf fp 5:4 3:2 4:3 f mf p fff shaker pizz.

7/8

5/8

Fl.

mf

5:4

mf

Ob.

7:6

p

p

Bass cl.

ppp

p

5:4

p

Bar. sax.

f

Gt.

pp

f

Pf.

pp

3:2

mp

f

ppp

Perc.

crotales

p

tam

shaker

Vn.

5:4

ppp

fp

Va.

fp

Vc.

fp

Cb.

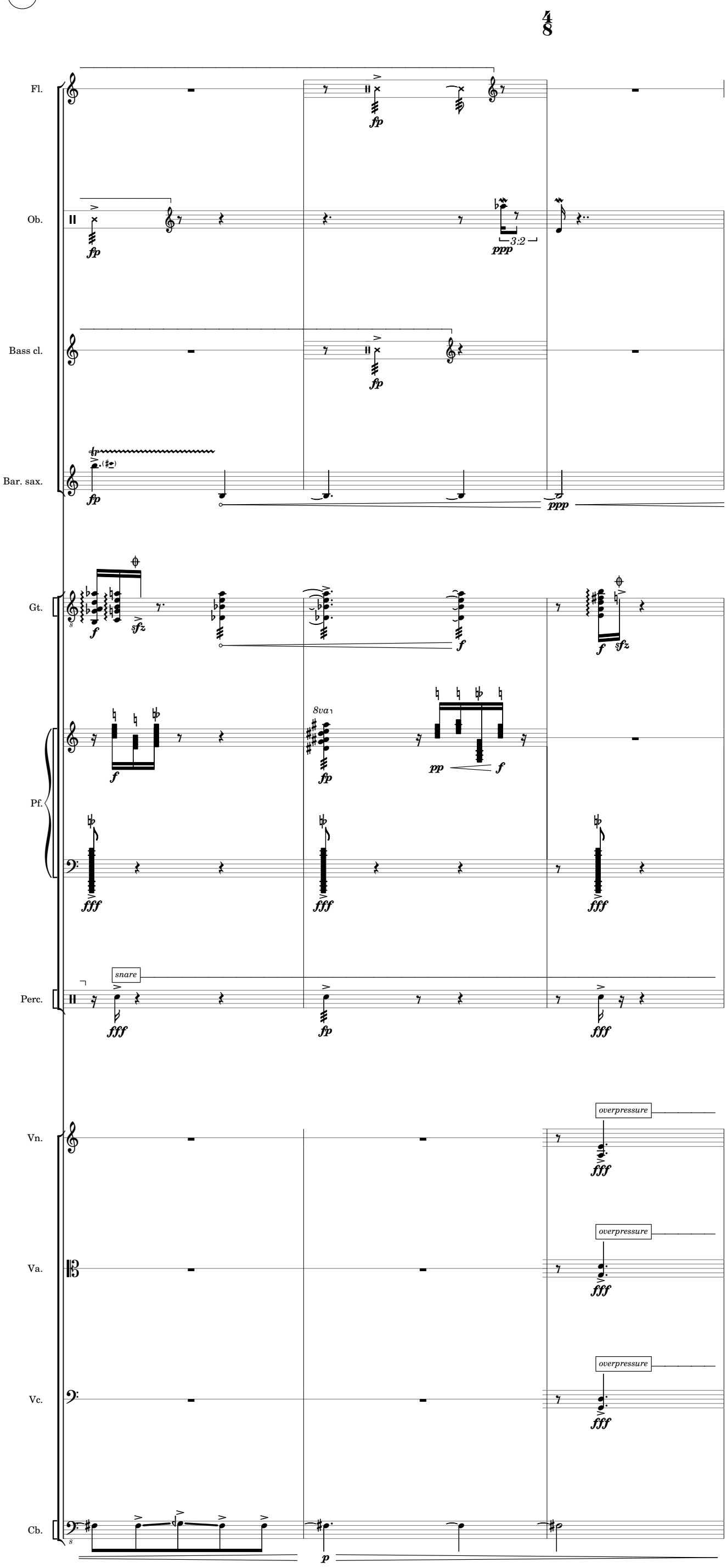
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

shaker
shaker
shaker
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.

p
ppp
ppp
fp
fp
ppp
mf
mp
p
mf
mf
ppp
ppp
ppp
ppp
ppp

3:2
7:6
3:2
5:4
5:4
5:4
5:4

8va


4/8
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
fp
ppp
3:2
sfz
f
8va
pp
fff
snare
overpressure
p

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

Flz.
overpressure
crotales
snare
8va
9:8
3:2
5:4
7:6
4:3

♩ = 96

4/8 A [i] 4/4 7/8

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

♩ = 64

B Sort

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Pp.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.

exhale
inhale
blocks
8va
5:4
3:2
4:3

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

5/8

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

mp 3:2

Bar. sax.

7:6

p f mf

Gt.

L.V

mp p pp

L.V

p

L.V

mf pp

Pf.

mf

fp f

f 7:6 mf

Perc.

windchimes

f pp

15

Vn.

tr

mf fp fp ff

Va.

tr

mf fp fp ff

Vc.

tr tr

p p fp

Cb.

tr

mf fp ff

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Pp.

Gt.

Pp.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Pp.

Cb.

85

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

windchimes
marimba
crotales

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Pp.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

4:3
7:6
3:2
5:4
8:6
6:5
8va
windchimes
blocks
overpressure

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Pp.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Pp.

Gt.

Pp.

Pf.

Pp.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Pp.

Cb.

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Pp.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.

4/8 7/8 5/8

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

3:2
5:4
L.V
8va
windchimes
overpressure

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

4/8

5:4
6:4
mp
p
mf
5:4
mp
mf
mp
f
mf
fp
f
L.V
pp
mf
ppp
sfz
p
8va
f
fp
5:4
f
mf
7:6
f
mf
windchimes
pp
crotales
15
f
overpressure
fp
fff
mf
fff
overpressure
fp
fff
overpressure
fp
fff
overpressure
p
fp

♩ = 64

C [ii]

♩ = 80

D Chemish

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

4/8 7/8 5/8 4/8

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

tr

fp mf

shaker

fp

fp

tr

fp mf

fp mp

fp

inside

p

bass drum

p

tam

mp

mp

shaker

fp

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Pp.

Gt.

Pp.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Pp.

Cb.

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Pp.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.

5:4
L.V
inhale
shaker

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

bass drum

L.V

7/8 5/8 4/8

Fl. Ob. Bass cl. Bar. sax. Pp. Gt. Pp. Pf. Pp. Perc. Vn. Va. Vc. Pp. Cb.

shaker inhale inside tam snare exhale

fp p mf mp sfz ppp fff

3:2

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

4/4 5/8 4/8

fp mf fp

fp

fp

tr tr

fp > pp mf

5:4

fp

L.V L.V

mf ppp

inside

p

bass drum

fp

fp

fp

fp

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

shaker
tam
L.V
7:6
5:4

4/8 7/8 5/8

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Pp.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.

inhale
exhale
L.V
7:6

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

shaker
bass drum
L.V
9:8

4/4 5/8 4/8

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Pp.

Gt.

Pp.

Pf.

Pp.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Pp.

Cb.

6/8

4/4

Fl.

Ob.

shaker

fp

Bass cl.

tr

(b♭)

p

Bar. sax.

7:6

fp

Pp.

p

Gt.

L.V

ppp

Pp.

mf

Pf.

Pp.

mf

Perc.

snare

fff

Vn.

fp

Va.

Vc.

Pp.

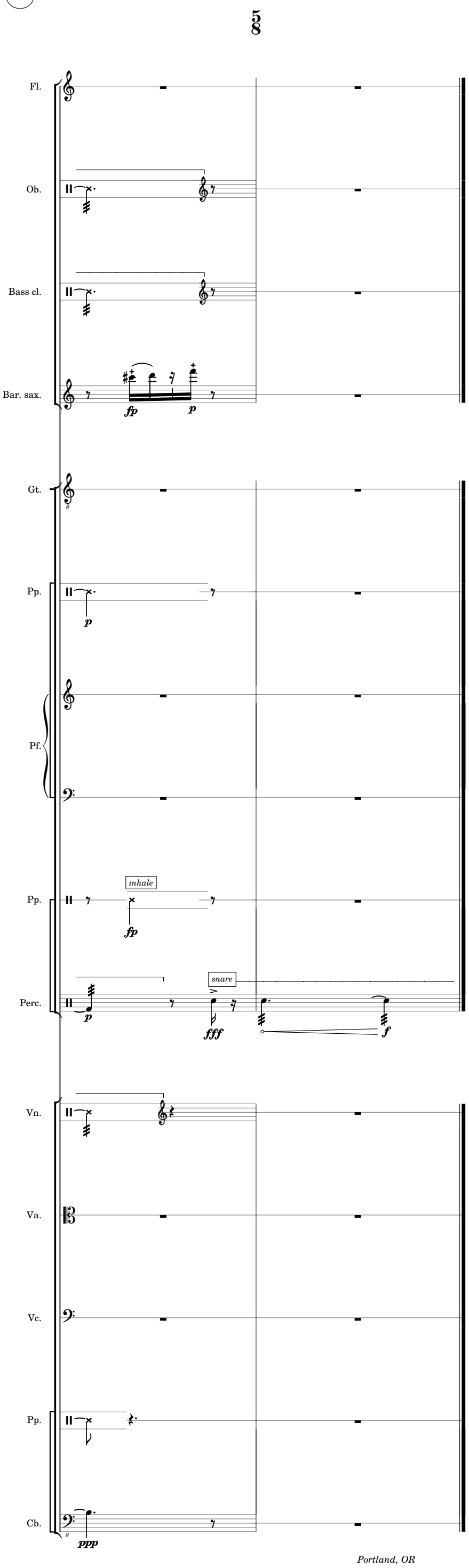
ppp

Cb.

5/8 4/8 4/4 4/8

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Pp.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.

shaker
inhale
exhale
bass drum
L.V
3:2



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Scores available from the composer at
www.josiahwolfoberholtzer.com

€80 / $90