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 a 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
7:6
8va

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 6:5 p ppp fp fp ppp ppp ppp fp fp ppp fp f f sfz fp 8va fff blocks toms snare pizz. ppp

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

pizz.

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

4/8
7/8

shaker
ppp
fp
5:4
3:2
f
mf
sfz
fff
crotales
snare

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
fff
f
snare fff
shaker 5:4 ppp
shaker ppp 5:4
shaker ppp fp
pizz. ppp 5:4

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

tr
fp
ppp
fff
f
pizz.
7:6
ppp

58

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

Flz.
blocks
toms
pizz.
shaker

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

shaker
bass drum
pizz.

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

crotales

shaker

pizz.

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.

shaker

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

8va

snare

Perc.

overpressure

Vn.

Va.

pizz.

Vc.

Cb.

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

4/8

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

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

shaker
overpressure
snare
toms
5:4
7:6
3:2

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

blocks

snare

overpressure

5/8 4/8

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.

7/8
5/8

mf
5:4
mf
7:6
p
ppp
p
5:4
p
tr
f
pp
f
pp
3:2
mp
f
ppp
crotales
p
tam
shaker
5:4
ppp
fp
fp
fp

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

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

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

snare

overpressure

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

shaker

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.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

exhale
inhale
blocks

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

Invisible Cities (iii): Ersilia (2015-04-16)

5/8

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

7:6

p f mf

Gt.

L.V L.V L.V

mp p pp p mf pp

Pf.

mf fp f

f 7:6 mf

Perc.

windchimes

f pp

15

Vn.

tr tr

mf fp fp ff

Va.

tr tr

mf fp fp ff

Vc.

tr tr tr

p p fp

Cb.

tr tr

mf fp ff

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Pp.

Gt.

Pp.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Pp.

Cb.

58

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.

4/8

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.

windchimes

blocks

overpressure

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

inhale
exhale
marimba
windchimes
overpressure

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

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

3:2

Gt.

L.V

8va

Pf.

9:8

5:4

3:2

windchimes

Perc.

overpressure

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

6:5

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.

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.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

4/8

6:4
5:4
5:4
3:2
L.V
8va
5:4
7:6
windchimes
crotales
overpressure
overpressure
overpressure
overpressure

♩ = 64

C [ii]

♩ = 80

D Chemish

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

shaker

toms

pizz.

L.V

8va

7:6

5:4

3:2

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

shaker

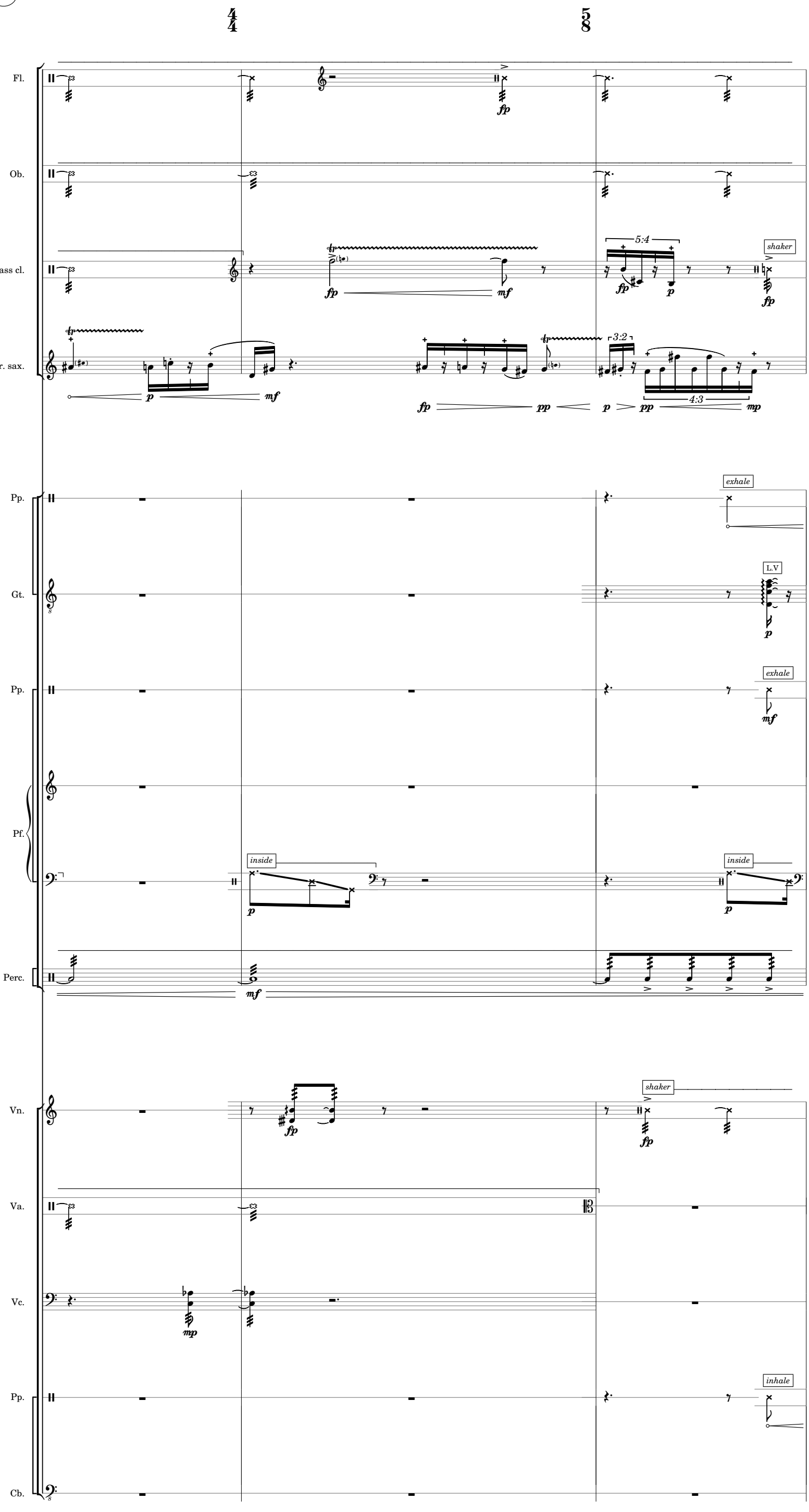
4:3

bass drum

inside

tam

shaker


4/4
5/8
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.
fp
mf
5:4
shaker
3:2
4:3
pp
mp
exhale
L.V
inside
inhale

4/8 7/8

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.

7/8 5/8 4/8

Fl. shaker fp | fp

Ob. shaker fp | shaker fp

Bass cl. shaker fp

Bar. sax. pp | fp 7:6 p | fp mf | fp

Pp. inhale fp

Gt. p sfz | p | sfz

Pp. inhale p

Pf. ppp | inside p

Pp. inhale ppp

Perc. tam p | snare fff

Vn. shaker fp

Va. shaker fp

Vc. shaker fp

Pp. exhale fp | p

Cb.

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Gt.

Pf.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

inside

L.V

L.V

bass drum

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

7:6
shaker
L.V
tam

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
5:4

4/4 5/8 4/8

Fl.

Ob.

Bass cl.

Bar. sax.

Pp.

Gt.

Pp.

Pf.

Pp.

Perc.

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

Pp.

Cb.

Fl.

Ob.

shaker

fp

Bass cl.

3:2

pp

Bar. sax.

fp mf

Pp.

p

Gt.

L.V

ppp

Pp.

mf

Pf.

Pp.

mf

Perc.

snare

fff

Vn.

fp

Va.

Vc.

Pp.

ppp

Cb.

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

shaker
inhale
exhale
bass drum
5:4

4/8 5/8

Fl.

Ob. *shaker* *fp*

Bass cl.

Bar. sax. *pp* *p* *mp* 5:4 *fp*

Pp. *ppp*

Gt. L.V *p*

Pp. *exhale* *p*

Pf.

Pp. *p* *inhale* *fp*

Perc. *p* *snare* *fff* *f*

Vn. *shaker* *fp*

Va.

Vc.

Pp. *inhale* *fp*

Cb. *ppp*

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Scores available from the composer at
www.josiahwolfoberholtzer.com

€80 / $90