

Glass Constellations

Brandon Shen

## Glass Constellations

Duration: 14:03

## <u>Instrumentation</u>

Piccolo

2 Flutes

2 Oboes

2 Bassoons

Contrabassoon

E \ Clarinet

4B b Clarinets

2B b Bass Clarinets

Contra-alto Clarinet (or Contrabass)

2 Alto Saxophones

Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone

3B > Trumpets

4 French Horns

3 Trombones (2 Tenor, 1 Bass)

Euphonium

Tuba (2 or more preferred)

Double Bass

Piano

Harp

Timpani (with Dand Fcrotale for pitch bend, shared)

Percussion (7 players in addition to timpani)

Player 1: Vibraphone

Player 2: Glockenspiel, C Whirly (shared)
Player 3: Marimba, F and C Whirly (shared)

Player 4: Singing Bowls (pitched C3 and G3), Suspended Cymbal (shared),

Hi-Hat

Player 5: Crotales (shared)

Player 6: Wood Block, Triangle, Snare Drum, Suspended Cymbal (shared), Mark

Tree, F and C Whirly (shared)

Player 7: Tam-Tam, Bass Drum, F Whirly (shared)

Sharing whirlies and suspended cymbals is not mandatory if there are extra instruments.

Crotales may be substituted with aluphones in the slow section to enhace meditative mood.

If singing bowls are not available, use crystal glasses tuned to some octave of C and G.

## <u>Program Note</u>

The phrase Glass Constellations refers to the appearance of lightbulbs when viewed without my glasses (I have really bad eyesight). During a walk I took during a late night, I noticed a collection of these lights and just happened to have my glasses off. A beautiful Glass Constellation, connected by golden beams of light had formed in front of me. Simple light bulbs, originally fragile and delicate, transformed into radiant spheres of luminosity.

Glass Constellations, written throughout my final years of high school, is a celebration of my growth artistically and personally throughout the last years of my time spent as a child. It is also a reflection of how my passion for music has enriched my life. In the last 4 years, multiple events have caused me to be distressed and fragile- just like a lone lightbulb. Music is how I touch the world - it is what illuminates my life, and it connects me with other little lights (friends and/or fellow musicians), forming a beautiful constellation of different passions and talents.

The work starts with a meditation. David Maslanka, one of my composer idols, stresses the use of meditation and "active imagination" to compose. As such, the slow portion of the piece reflects the ways in which his philosophy and work has influenced my own compositional methods- the piece's themes have been largely created using active imagination and meditation. First, Tibetan singing bowls and whirly tubes are used to create a musical chamber of reflection. A chorale setting composed by Maslanka (Ihr Gestirn, ihr hoften Lüfte (Your Star, Your High Heavens) is used directly in the slow section piece and is the source material for the chorale used in the fast section. The fast section, a virtuosic celebration, is a blooming of my love, wonder, and gratitude for my current life. While mostly lively and energetic, the meditative energy from the slow section returns to invoke a sense of hope for what the future holds for each of our little lights.

-Brandon Shen. November 2023

## About the Composer

Hailing from Chantilly, VA, Brandon Shen is a Chinese-American composer, saxophonist, and pianist currently studying composition and arts administration at the University of Texas at Austin under Omar Thomas. His previous instructors include Chris Evan Hass (composition), Ed Fraedrich, and Billy Wolfe (saxophone). Through music, he intends to explore human connection, perception, natural phenomena, and the digital age by creating musical experiences from a diverse set of mediums.















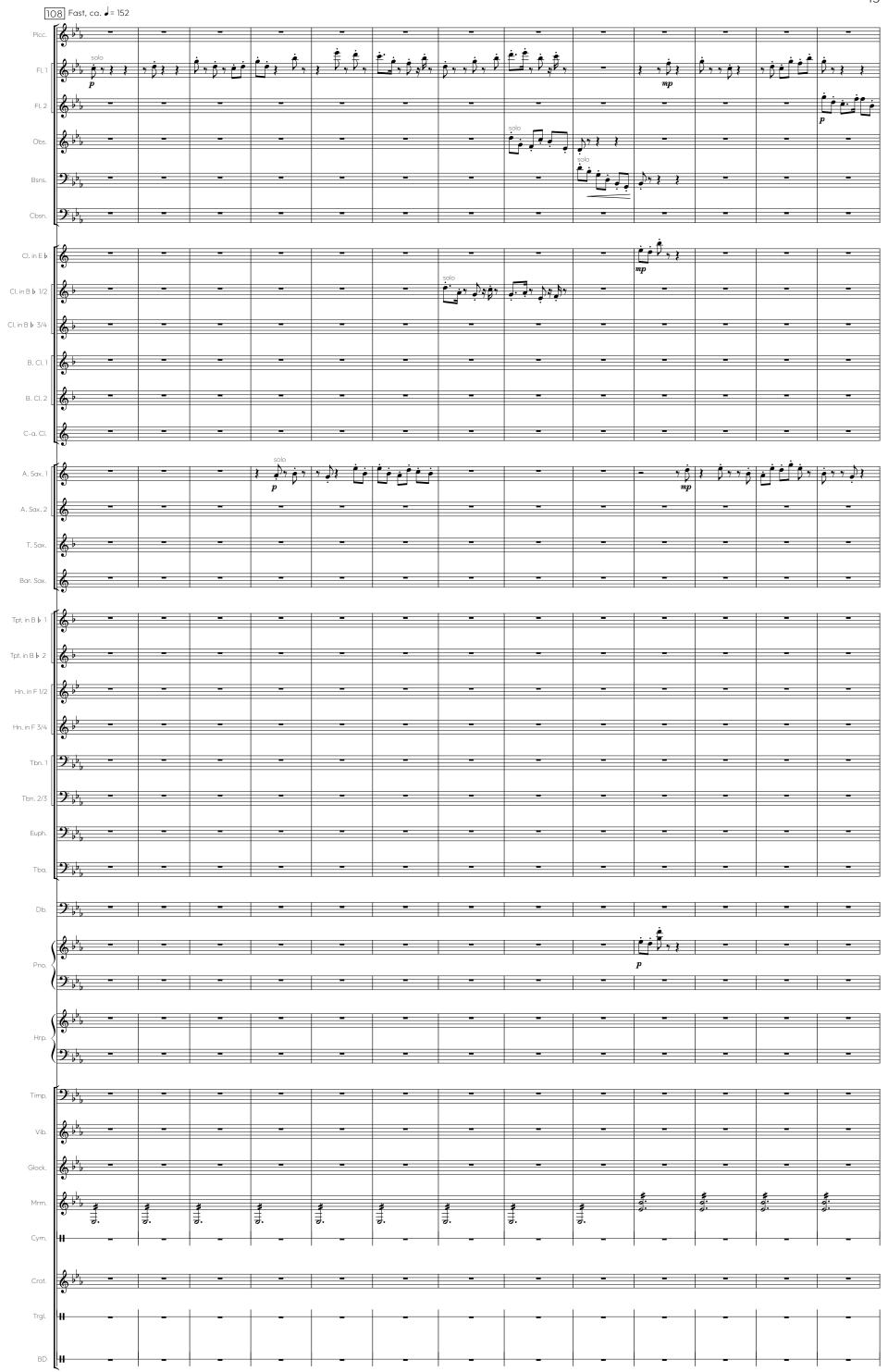


























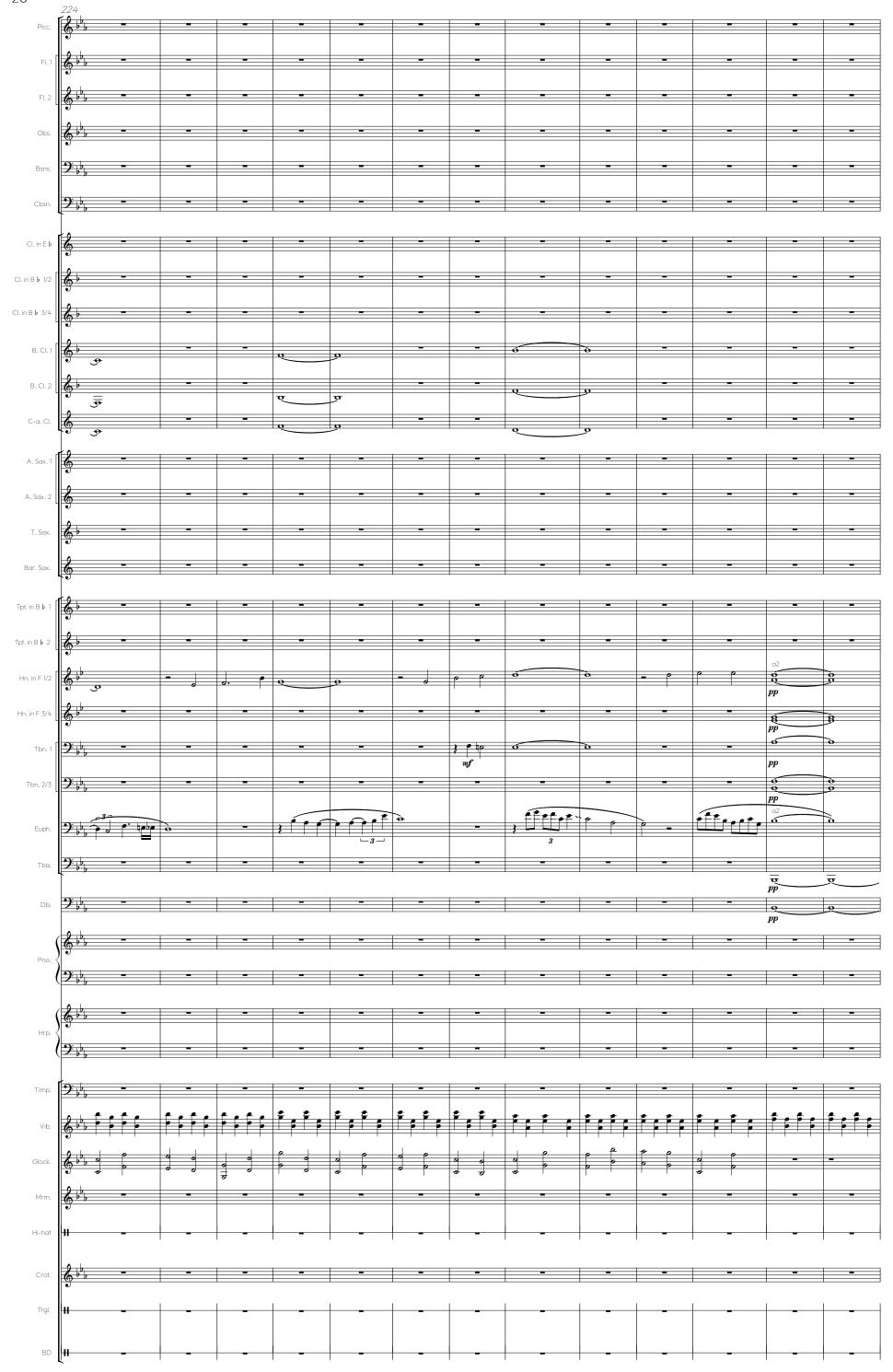
























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