Jazz Chamber Music:

An Analysis of Chris Potter's Imaginary Cities and a Musical Composition

by

Stephen P. Harvey

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Music

in

Jazz Studies

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

August, 2016

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Stephen P. Harvey

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Signature:		
	Stephen Harvey, Student	Date
Approvals	:	
	Dr. David Morgan, Thesis Advisor	Date
	Dr. Kent Engelhardt, Committee Member	Date
	Dr. Steven Reale, Committee Member	Date
	Dr. Salvatore Sanders, Associate Dean Graduate Studies and Research	Date

Abstract

This essay is a critical analysis of the mixed ensemble writing of jazz musician and composer Chris Potter, from his 2015 album *Imaginary Cities*. This analysis focuses on the compositional aspects of Potter's music when incorporating a string quartet into his ensemble setting. The essay discusses topics such as pentatonic harmonization, rhythmic layering, harmonic development, 20th-century influences, and modern jazz composition, which are prevalent in his work.

Along with this analysis, the essay also discusses an original composition by the author. This composition is a mixed ensemble piece with three movements. The essay reviews compositional methods, influences, and programmatic elements of the piece, as well as its relationship with the analysis preceding it.

Contents

Acknowledgements		
Chapter 1: Introduction		
Part One: The Analysis, Chris Potter's Imaginary Cities		
Chapter 2: "Dualities"	3	
Chapter 3: "Shadow Self"	18	
Chapter 4: "Sky"	32	
Part Two: The Original Composition		
Chapter 5: "Suite Childhood"	42	
Bibliography	49	
Discography	50	
Appendix A: Selected Discography		
Appendix B: Interviews	53	
Appendix C: Transcribed Scores		
Appendix D: Composed Scores	111	

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude toward Dr. David Morgan, Dr. Kent Engelhardt, Dr. Steve Reale, and the faculty of Youngstown State University's Dana School of Music. Thank you for helping to cultivate my voice as a musician, composer, and scholar.

To my family and friends, my music is inspired and dedicated to you.

Finally, thank you to my wonderful fiancée Kellie. You are my confidant, best friend, and inspiration. Without you, there is no reason to write.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is the integration of the classic string quartet into the modern jazz ensemble. The study is in two parts, the first analytical and the second creative. Part One is an analysis of three pieces transcribed from Chris Potter's *Imaginary Cities*, in which he fuses a string quartet with a seven-piece jazz ensemble. The compositions utilize complex harmonic ideas and compelling melodic content over a scheme of odd meters. Part Two is an original three-movement suite for a 14-piece jazz ensemble, including string quartet, entitled "Suite Childhood."

The tenor saxophonist and composer Chris Potter, a prominent musician in today's jazz scene, has performed and recorded with many important musicians, including Dave Holland, Pat Metheny, Paul Motian, Herbie Hancock, and John Scofield. He has an extensive discography as a sideman and as a leader of his own ensembles.² His incorporation of non-traditional instruments into the small jazz ensemble on *Imaginary Cities* is representative of a new type of chamber music, one that explores the boundaries of jazz, classical music and World music.³

I will focus on three compositions from *Imaginary Cities*: "Imaginary Cities (Pt. 2, Dualities)", "Shadow Self", and "Sky". Since I did not have access to Potter's original scores, I needed to transcribe the music from the recording and create my own scores.

The analysis will explore Potter's compositional process by addressing a number of

¹ Chris Potter. *Imaginary Cities*. Chris Potter's Underground Orchestra. ECM. CD. January 13, 2015.

² Milkowski, Bill. "BIO." Chris Potter. http://www.chrispotter.net/home/biography.

³ Other musicians working in this area include Billy Childs, Vijay Iyer, Michael League (with Snarky Puppy)...

questions: How is the string quartet integrated into the texture of the jazz ensemble? How does the use of non-traditional jazz instruments influence these techniques? What is Potter's harmonic language when harmonizing melodies? What is his approach to form? How does he deal with non-conventional metrical schemes?

"Suite Childhood" is the focus of Part Two. In addition to providing the full musical score, I will attempt to describe my compositional process, including the initial impetus and influences for each movement, and the compositional devices at play. I will also discuss the process of bringing the piece to life by organizing its performance and recording.

CHAPTER 2: "DUALITIES"

"Dualities" is the second movement of Chris Potter's suite, "Imaginary Cities". This movement is an exploration of 11/4 meter. In contrast with the complexity of the meter, the pitch materials of the melodic themes are primarily drawn from the E minor pentatonic scale. The simplicity of the melodic material allows Potter the option of either simple or complex harmonization of the melody. The form of the movement is created by the juxtaposition of two primary ideas, labeled A and B, which are developed in a variety of ways to create the overall form of the piece. The form of the movement is summarized in Example 2.1. Strings are integrated into the ensemble texture, playing *pizzicato* rhythmic figures, *arco* melodies, countermelodies, ostinato backgrounds, and *cantabile* solos.

Example 2.1 – Form of "Dualities"

Measure	Activity
#'s	
1-12	Introduction (0:00-0:43) – 11/8, 180 bpm
1-2	Pizzicato ostinato vamp, Violins
3-4	Pizzicato continues, Viola joins
5-8	Cello and Violin 1 enter with the introductory melody
9-12	Guitar joins melody, marimba joins ostinato
13-41	Melody (0:43-2:19, AA'B)
13-16	Drums play time, shared bass vamp enters
17-24	Tenor Sax, Guitar, and Viola play melody
25-26	Guitar and marimba play ostinato background figure
27-35	Melody is harmonized amongst T. Sax and String Quartet (A')
36-39	T. Sax plays B section of the melody, rhythm section plays rhythmic ostinato,
	strings play countermelody
40-41	Ostinato vamp
42-71	Solo Section (2:19-6:59)
42-45	Send Off
46-47	Vamp, T. Sax solos
48-51	Four bar solo vamp, repeated seven times with T. Sax solo
52-55	Vamp and solo continue, string backgrounds, repeated twice
56-59	B section of melody returns, T. Sax solo continues
60-62	Ostinato returns, T. Sax finishes soloing
62-65	Four bar solo vamp returns, repeated 6 times with Marimba solo
66-69	Vamp and solo continue, string backgrounds, repeated twice.
70-73	B section of melody returns
74-91	Development of B section melody (6:59-7:59)
74-75	Two bar vamp, dramatic texture and dynamic shift
76-79	Violin B section melody
80-83	B section melody repeated up a P4, slight texture change
84-87	B section melody repeated down a P5, more texture change
88-91	T. Sax solos over strings and drums
92-99	Harmonized A' section of melody with countermelody (7:59-8:26)
100-103	Introduction melody and ostinato return to close (8:26-8:44)

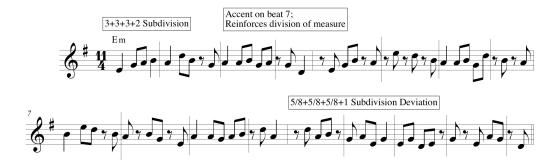
The movement begins with the violins playing a *pizzicato* ostinato figure. At m. 3, the viola joins in, doubling the first violin an octave lower, with a slightly varied rhythm. This ostinato, shown in Example 2.2, establishes the 11/4 meter.

Example 2.2 – mm. 1-2, Opening Ostinato



In m. 5, the first violin leaves the ostinato in order to play the introductory melody with the cello. The introductory melodic theme, shown in Example 2.3, reinforces the metric division of each measure into groups of 3+3+3+2.

Example 2.3 – mm. 5-8, Introductory Melody



The composite figure of mm. 5-8 is shown in Example 2.4.

Example 2.4 – mm. 5-8, Introduction Material



At m. 9, the marimba joins the texture with an independent ostinato, shown in Example 2.5, while the guitar doubles the violin/cello melody.

Example 2.5 – mm. 9-10, Marimba Ostinato



At m. 13 the introductory material stops, and the drums and basses establish a groove, which reiterates and solidifies the 3+3+3+2 grouping of the measure. The ostinato bass line, shown in Example 2.6, introduces the pedal E.

Example 2.6 – mm. 13-14, Bass Groove



After a four-bar vamp, the primary theme of the A section emerges in the tenor saxophone, guitar and viola. This melody, shown in Example 2.7, is primarily pentatonic.

Example 2.7 - mm. 17-24, A Theme



Following the initial statement of the A theme, the ostinato from the introduction reemerges in the marimba and guitar, at m. 25.

The primary theme returns at m. 27, transformed by changing the pitches of the melody while retaining the same rhythm. This A' melody, shown in Example 2.8, is harmonized in four voices. Each phrase begins with a chromatic bass line. The voices then split into open fifth sonorities, with the final pitch of each phrase harmonized by a four-voice chord. Each of these sustained chords uses pitch material from the E Dorian mode, resolving the tension created by the chords generated from the chromatic bass line and parallel fifth movement. This section is a good example of Potter's propensity to set simple diatonic/pentatonic melodic material with complex harmonization.

Example 2.8 – mm.27-34, Harmonization of A'

T. Sax + Violin I



At m. 36, the B theme, shown in Example 2.9, is presented for the first time. This marks the first point in the piece that the E pedal is absent. With the entrance of the piano, the B theme also marks the first moment that all members of the ensemble are playing. The largely pentatonic melody is harmonized with IV^{7sus} – III^{7sus} –#iii– V^{7}/V – V^{7}/V –V in the key of E minor. A countermelody in the strings creates motion during the sustained tones of this theme.

Example 2.9 - mm. 36-39, B Theme Composite



The B section leads back into the E Dorian vamp. A listener, upon first hearing, might anticipate a return of the primary melody. However, this vamp leads into the send-off for the first solo chorus. The send-off, shown in Example 2.10, features a complex melody in the tenor saxophone and strings, accompanied by ensemble hits of an $E^{7(\#9)}$ chord on beats one and seven. This melody emphasizes chromatic half-step motion that resolve to chord tones. At m. 44, the melody implies an A^9 harmony, with no half step

motion. After returning to E⁷ material in m. 45, the final phrase outlines a B+⁷ arpeggio, resolving to Em⁷, the first chord of the solo section.

Example 2.10 - mm. 42-45, Send Off



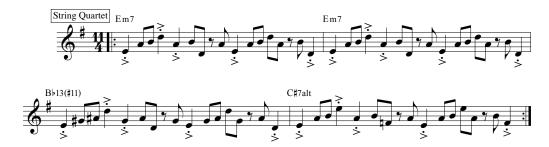
The solo section retains the AB form of the theme. The A section vamp, shown in Example 2.11, includes two harmonies outside of the E minor tonality, Bb^{13(#11)} and C#^{7alt}. The roots of these chords are related by chromatic median or tritone and the implied scales, shown in Example 2.12, contain the root, 3rd and 7th of the Em⁷ chord. Therefore, the vamp ornaments the E minor tonality, rather than undermining it.

 $Em^{7} \hspace{1cm} Em^{7} \hspace{1cm} Bb^{13(\#11)} \hspace{1cm} C\#^{7al}$ Example 2.12 – Implied Scales

Em ⁷ E Dorian	E	F#	G	A	В	C#	D
Bb ^{13(♯11)} F Melodic Minor Mode 4	Е	F	G	Ab	Bb	С	D
C# ^{7alt} D Melodic Minor Mode 7	Е	F	G	A	В	C #	D

Potter incorporates material from the introduction as a background figure for the soloist, as shown in Example 2.13. Previously played *pizzicato*, the backgrounds are now played *arco*. The background variation moves away from solely pentatonic pitches, altering notes to fit the underlying harmony and signals the last two repetitions of the solo vamp for the each soloist.

Example 2.13 – Solo Vamp Backgrounds



At the conclusion of each solo, the B theme is restated. While the original appearance of the B section pairs the melody with a countermelody, the end of Potter's solo leaves out the composed countermelody, as Potter instead improvises a countermelody over the B section's harmonic progression.

Following the marimba solo, at m. 74, there is a drastic change in dynamics, instrumentation, and harmony. The ensemble immediately reduces from full ensemble to piano, *pizzicato* strings, drums set, and basses. The tonal center shifts up to F Dorian. The dynamic level drops to mezzo forte, which contrasts with the forceful ending of the marimba solo.

Starting at m. 76, Violin 1 states the B section melody in a *cantabile* style, accompanied by viola, cello, piano, and bass. While the rhythm section accents the

beginnings of the beat groupings, the viola and cello *pizzicato* lines perform a waltz-like accompaniment. During this section, Potter intermittently varies the subdivision of the measure, shifting from 3+3+3+2 to 3+3+2+3. This is shown in Example 2.14.

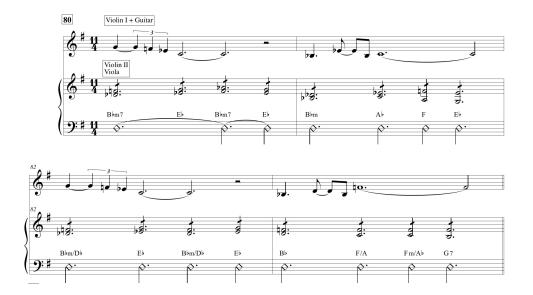
Example 2.14 - mm. 76-79



The four measures of the B theme melody are played a total of three times, serving to expand the B section. With each repetition, a new element is added, building intensity. Each recitation of the B melody also shifts the tonal center up a perfect fourth, as if it were resolving in a dominant-tonic relationship. While the A theme has complex harmonic development, the B theme is subjected to development through variation.

With the second repetition at m. 80, the guitar joins the violin on the melody. This repetition shifts to Bb Dorian. Violin 2 and the viola play quarter notes on chord tones, while the cello continues the pizzicato line. This is shown in Example 2.15.

Example 2.15 - mm. 80-83, B Section Expanded Bb Dorian



The tenor saxophone takes the melody during the third repetition, starting at m.

84. During this repetition, the violins and violas plane diatonic triads within the underlying tonality. Shifting each measure, they sound the triads in second inversion, root position, first inversion, and second inversion. This figure, shown in Example 2.16, adds rhythmic intensity while prolonging the chord structures of Ebmin¹³–Ab¹³.

T. Saxophone

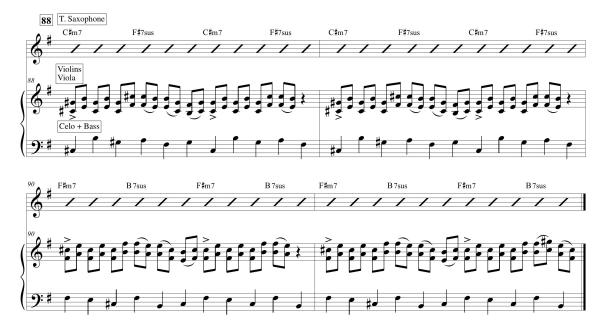
Violin

Note that the second of the second o

Example 2.16 - mm. 84-87, B Section Expanded Ebm13-Ab13

At m. 88, there is a fourth repetition, which brings additional change in texture. Here, Potter improvises a melody rather than repeating the B theme. This fourth phrase, shown in Example 2.17, completes the B-development's ongoing chain of chords moving by dominant-tonic relationship. The harmonic progression of C#min⁷–F#^{7sus} to F#min⁷–B^{7sus}, arrives at the dominant, which resolves to a return of the A section melody.

Example~2.17-mm.~88-91, B~Section~Expanded, Final~Phrase



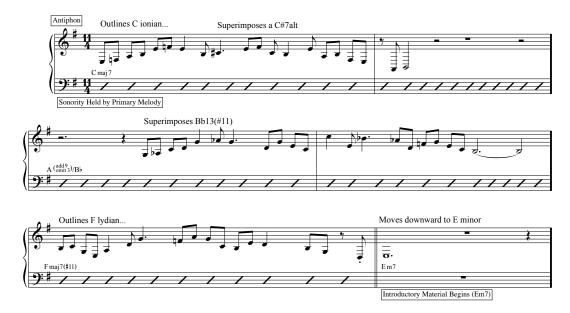
The A theme returns in m. 92. This statement, shown in Example 2.18, is harmonized much like mm. 27-34, but now with five voices and without the rhythm section accompaniment. Chromaticism is still prevalent, but is not restricted to the bass voice. Potter abandons the open fifth harmonies before the cadences.

Example 2.18 – mm. 92-99, Final Harmonization



While the saxophones and strings play the melody, the guitar and piano perform a new countermelody, shown in Example 2.19. The first two chords superimposed, C#7alt. and Bb13#11, are taken from the solo vamp, while the final line outlines the tritone substitution of the dominant.

Example 2.19 - mm. 93-100, Final Antiphonal Line



This countermelody is the last new material heard in the piece, as it elides with the introductory material, now acting closing as material of the piece. These last four measures add a bookend of familiarity, giving the piece a sense of resolution and uniformity at the end.

CHAPTER 2: "SHADOW SELF"

"Shadow Self" is a major departure from Chris Potter's compositional approach in "Dualities." While the previous chapter's piece was rooted in the modern jazz tradition, this piece is profoundly influenced by contemporary classical music. Its construction is not dictated by jazz nomenclature and harmonies. Moreover, this piece is a clear example of how Potter creates music using melodic and harmonic intervallic relationships based on equal divisions of the octave. Using these compositional approaches, Potter creates through-composed sections that form the entire piece.

When looking at "Shadow Self" at a macro level, the piece can be split into two large sections. The first section is performed by the string quartet and the double bass, and features improvisation by Violin 1. The second section features the full ensemble with Potter on bass clarinet.

The string feature could be thought of as a prolonged introduction. However, because of its length, and the material that differs from the full ensemble section, it will be analyzed as its own complete section. Example 3.1 provides a formal analysis of "Shadow Self."

Example 3. 1 – Form Chart

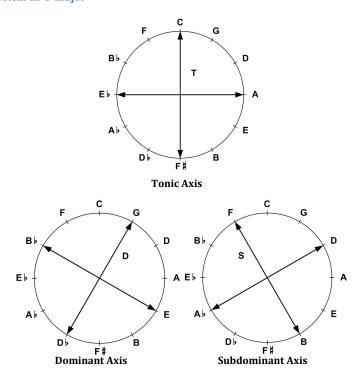
Measure	Activity		
#'s			
1-88	String Quintet Feature – c. 80 bpm <i>Rubato</i>		
1	Cello and Double Bass set tempo		
2	Violin I begins improvising		
10-17	Violin II and Viola begin playing backgrounds, Violin I begins to improvise		
18-38	Cello joins with background figures intermittently		
38-49	Violin II, Viola and Cello strike chords as backgrounds, as Violin I solo climaxes		
50-52	Violins perform call and response against Viola and Cello		
53-56	Four voices converge and end striking chord		
57-62	Fugatto section		
63-65	Unison line expands into chords, sequenced twice		
66-68	Material from mm. 50-52, voices switched		
69-70	Lines converge, similar to mm. 53-56		
72-88	Longer unison lines expand into chords, ends on octave F#		
89-End	Full Ensemble (a tempo)		
89-91	Piano enters		
92-99	Bass clarinet, Violin and viola play melody while guitar, piano, and double bass play sustains and pedals		
100-107	Melody continues, the rest of the quartet enters with sustains, electric bass plays harmonic line that interacts with the melody		
108-115	Bass clarinet and cello perform melody accompanied by marimba		
116-117	Previous material continues, the rest of the quartet enters		
117-125	Ensemble either plays pedal Ab or harmonic structure while Bass Clarinet		
	improvises		
126-133	Similar to mm. 92-99, Violin II and Cello have sustains, with motion towards		
	end of phrases		
134-141	Similar to mm. 100-107, Violin II and Viola have background figures similar		
	to first section rather than sustains		
142-146	Baseline is played against a steady sustain, chord strike ends the piece		

Potter cites Béla Bartók as influencing a portion of the material within this composition. When asked about specific aspects of Bartók's music that influenced him, Potter cited Bartók's tonal axis system, rhythmic layering, and phrase manipulation. He noted that these influences are especially strong in the opening string section.⁵

⁴ Nicola Kremer. "Project." http://player.ecmrecords.com/potter-2387/cms/project#. ⁵ Chris Potter. Interview by author. Email. March 26, 2016.

The first chapter of Erno Lendvai's seminal analytical work on the music of Bartók describes his axis system in detail. Lendvai suggests that Bartok uses the axis system in order to achieve dodecaphony without atonality. The axis system uses three axes of tones related by a minor third as substitutes for each other. Because their major and minor keys create a pattern of relativity toward each other, they can be substituted for each other and their assigned function. Once one axis has been assigned the function of tonic, the other two axes are assigned the respective functions of dominant and subdominant. Example 3.2 shows the axes and their designated function in the key of C major.

Example 3.2 – Axis System in C major⁷



⁶ Erno Lendvai. Béla Bartók: An Analysis of His Music. London: Kahn & Averill, 1971.

http://www.harmonicwheel.com/bartok_axes.pdf

20

⁷ Béla Bartók's Axis System. Harmonic Wheel, 2009.

The axis that the tone C would fall on would be C-Eb-F#-A. Since C major is relative to A minor and C minor is relative to Eb major, the roots of these chords form a connection, can share function, and substitute for each other. There are only three possible axes, which correlate with the minor third division of the octave: C-Eb-F#-A, F-Ab-B-D, and G-Bb-Db-E. The second portion of the piece could be thought of centering on the A axis, due to its starting bass notes and ending cadence. Because of this, the C-Eb-F#-A axis can be designated as the tonic, the F-Ab-B-D axis as the subdominant, and G-Bb-Db-E axis as the dominant.

To start, the cello and bass perform quarter note E's, thus establishing the pulse of the piece. This pedal E is present until m. 49. Keeping in mind the axis assignments of the second portion of "Shadow Self," one can think of the first half of the piece as a prolongation of the dominant.

Violin I improvises in mm. 2-49. At m. 10, Violin II and the viola enter with background figures. Rather than create figures centering on a specific harmony, the content is created from the manipulation of intervallic motives. Example 3.3 shows the first three phrases, in which both voices move by minor third followed by minor second, sometimes in contrary motion, and sometimes in similar motion.

Example 3.3 – mm. 10-12, Interval Manipulation



The minor third and minor second are the most prevalent melodic intervals in this section, with the major second, major third, and perfect fourth introduced beginning in m. 22. The appearance of these new intervals coincides with the expansion of phrases within the inner voices. While the violin and viola's phrases began as three eighth notes at a time, they eventually expand to cross bar lines.

As the violin solo comes to a climax, the violin II, viola and cello begin striking tone clusters at m. 38, using double stops, shown in Example 3.4.

Example 3.4 – String Chords



The E pedal in the double bass ceases in m. 50. This is the first instance of rhythmic layering. The melodic material, shown in Example 3.5, is a melodic manipulation of the major third and minor second. The violins begin each phrase, and pass to the viola and cello. Potter, again, uses contrary motion to dictate the pitch content of the lines with each paired voicing. Each phrase is also sequenced down a major third.

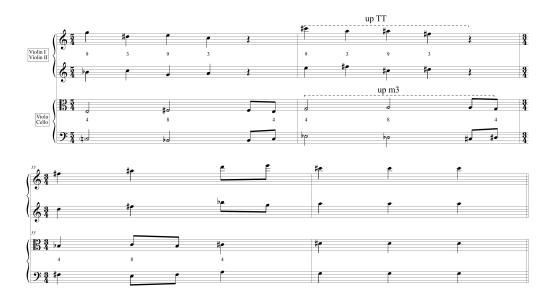
Example 3.5 – mm. 50-53



In m. 53 the cello and viola continue with identical intervallic relationships in their melodic lines, replacing the major third with minor third. The violins manipulate different intervallic relationships sequenced in the same interval. At m. 55 the violins revert to playing the same intervals within their lines, moving in parallel motion. The viola and cello line is also sequential, but continues into the cadence.

This change in interval manipulation, shown in Example 3.6, acts as a tonal foil between the rhythmic pairs. While the horizontal movement in the violins utilizes the major third, the vertical structure accentuates the equal division of the octave in minor thirds. To counter this, the horizontal line in the viola and cello is derived from the octatonic scale, but creates harmonic intervals that accentuate the equal division of the octave in major thirds. This phrase ends with the [0, 2, 6, 8] tetrachord, which encapsulates the division of the octave in both minor and major thirds. This could be thought of as either two tritones with roots a whole step apart, or two major thirds with roots a major third apart.

Example 3.6 - mm. 53-56



The material is presented in a *fugato* fashion starting at m. 57. All four voices, as shown in Example 3.7, present the same intervallic sequence. Each phrase begins and ends on a note from the tonic axis. The phrase is altered from entrance to entrance in order to create variety and facilitate strong counterpoint. The cello, the first voice to enter, presents the original sequence. The viola then presents the voice inverted, and a

major sixth up. Violin II follows with a sequence up another major sixth, but in the same prime form as the cello. Violin I, the last voice to enter, present a hybrid of the prime form and its inversion.

Example 3.7 - mm. 57-62



Following the *fugato* section, in mm. 63-65, the strings present a homophonic line that mixes of unison/octaves with harmony, as shown in Example 3.8. The unison/octave line in m. 63 is a manipulation of the two intervals found in the preceding *fugato* section. The inner voices in the harmonized passages chromatically approach a sonority that superimposes a minor sixth in the violins over a major sixth in the viola and cello, once again referencing the two equal divisions of the octave. This phrase is further manipulated by sequencing it down a major third in the following two measures.

Example 3.8 – mm. 63-65



The material in mm. 66-72 is derived from that of mm. 50-56. This section, shown in Example 3.9, uses the exact melodic intervals heard in mm. 50-56. Now, however, the viola and cello enter a call-and-response texture with the violins. Rather than sequencing the entire texture down by the interval of a major third, the bottom voices ascend by major thirds while the violins descend by minor sixths.

Example 3.9 – mm. 66-72

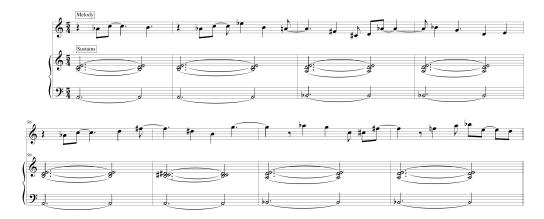


Following this, at m. 73-88, there is another homophonic section, shown in Example 3.10. Instead of each of these phrases being one measure of 5/4, however, the

unison/octave phrases are extended before the three beats of harmonized melody. Each unison/octave phrase is extended a different length of time. These lines are still manipulations of the major third and minor third melodic cells. Perfect fourths and fifths are also used, but only to offset sequences of intervallic sequences of thirds. For each three-beat harmonization the double bass joins in to create a five-voice sonority. The final phrase makes use of the half step in its sequence. The phrase ends on a unison F#, derived from the tonic axis.

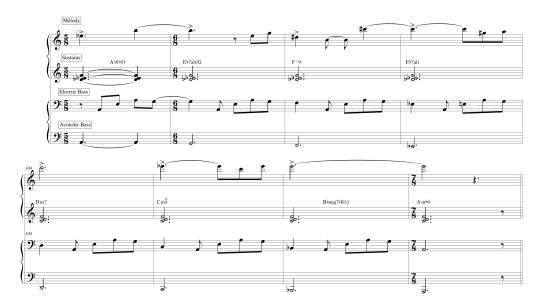
As this sustained pitch fades at m. 89, the piano repeatedly strikes the pitch A, creating an elision into the full ensemble section. This repeated A over the F# implies an F# minor chord. At m. 92, the marimba continues the repeated A's with the left hand of the piano, the bass plays an A root, and the right hand of the piano and guitar enter with sustained sonorities. These sonorities can be organized into compacted fourths or fifths around the root, creating quartal or quintal harmonies. In this same measure, the bass clarinet, violin, and viola enter with a new through-composed melody. This chromatic melody, shown in Example 3.10, creates tension through chromaticism, which is resolved at the end of phrases.

Example 3.10 - mm. 92-99, Melody



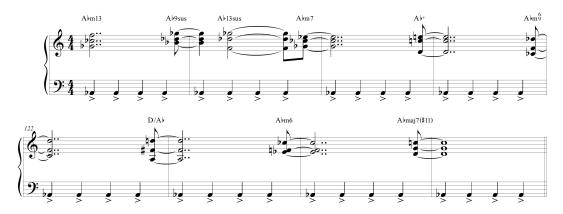
The conclusion of this section, mm. 100-107, shown in Example 3.11, is quite striking. There is an intensification of harmonic motion, creating powerful counterpoint in contrary motion between the melody and the bass line. The pulse quickens, transitioning from repeated measures in 5/4 towards shorter measure lengths. At m. 100, violin II, viola, and cello join the piano in playing sustained notes. The descending figure in the basses creates contrary motion with the ascending melody in the bass clarinet and violin I. With each downbeat, the electric bass line reinforces the line of the acoustic bass, which sounds an octave lower. The marimba and left hand of the piano continue to sound pedal A. The combination of this pedal A with the new sustained pitches reprises the [0, 2, 6, 8] sonority.

Example 3.11 – mm. 100-107, Melody (contd.)



This melody is followed by an interlude for bass clarinet, cello, and marimba in mm. 108-117, leading to a short improvisational section featuring the bass clarinet. The accompaniment for the improvisation consists of an Ab pedal played by cello, both basses, and the left hand of the piano, continuing the repeated quarter note figure that has been prominent throughout the piece; and sustained harmonies--played by the violins, viola, marimba, guitar, and right hand of the piano--that outline the harmonic framework for the improvisation. This texture is summarized in Example 3.12.

Example 3.12 – mm. 118-125 Implied Harmonies for Improvisation



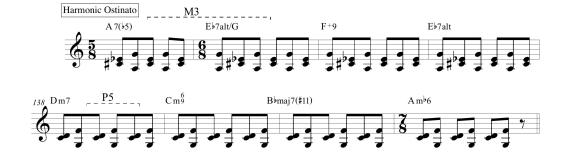
Following this improvisational section, there is a recapitulation of the throughcomposed melody at m. 126. This recapitulation, shown in example 3.13, introduces a countermelody, played by the violin II and viola. The countermelody is largely static, with more rhythmic motion occurring towards the end of each measure. As the countermelody interacts with the melody it follows the harmonic content implied by the sustained notes.

Example 3.13 - mm. 126-133, Melody Recapitulation



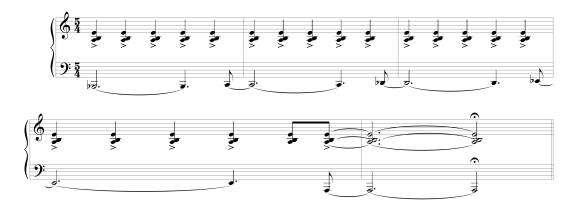
As the melody continues in mm.134-141, its content is identical to mm. 100-107. However, the violin II and viola introduce a new texture, shown in Example 3.15. These two instruments carry a rhythmic ostinato that provides chord tones and extensions of the harmonic sequence. The construction of this part recalls the opening section, where paired voices are constructed using contrary motion of the same melodic interval. If treated as a singular sonority, the [0, 2, 6, 8] tetrachord is once again heard.

Example 3.14 - mm. 134-141, Harmonic Ostinato



The 5/4 meter returns to end the piece, again featuring compact quartal and quintal harmonies over an ascending bass line. This combination, shown in Example 3.16, creates an abnormal harmonic sequence that moves between the tonic and dominant axis. Potter accents the concluding bass line by anticipating it against the continuing quarter note figure on the downbeats.

Example 3.15 - mm. 142-146



CHAPTER 4: "SKY"

"Sky" marks a return to a modern jazz compositional style. In this rhythm-driven piece, Potter utilizes mixed-meter schemes which add complexity to the melodic and harmonic content. The melodic content is derived mostly from G Mixolydian and G major pentatonic scales, with the blues inflection of the lowered third. He creates interest throughout the piece by varying the harmonization of the core melody, increasing the harmonic complexity as the piece moves forward. Additionally, through the introduction of various melodic lines that either stand alone or pair together, Potter creates the form of "Sky." The form of the composition is summarized in Example 4.1.

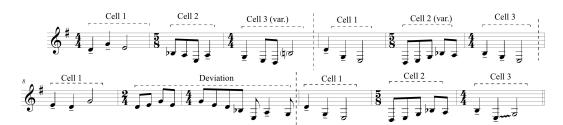
Example 4.1 – Form Chart

Measure #'s	Activity			
1	Prolonged Improvised Introduction			
2–29	Melodic Exposition			
2–3	Presentation of melody, tenor sax and acoustic bass			
14–15	Interlude Vamp, Tenor Saxophone improvises			
16–27	Melody reemerges, harmonized with strings, marimba and piano			
28–29	Interlude Vamp, Tenor Saxophone improvises			
30–109	Improvisation with melodic interludes			
30–33	Piano Solo; repeated			
34–45	Piano continues to solo over melody			
46–47	Piano continues to solo over interlude vamp			
48–55	Piano continues to solo			
56–70	Unison string interlude			
71–74	Tenor Saxophone solo			
75–86	Melody reemerges; tenor saxophone temporarily stops improvising			
87–88	Tenor saxophone improvises over the interlude vamp			
89–96	Tenor saxophone continues to improvise			
97–109	Harmonized melody, unaccompanied with one bar rest			
110–146	Melodic layering ending			
110–116	New melodic pattern introduced, repeated			
117–130	Bass melodic pattern introduced, layered			
130–146	Original melody reemerges, layered; repeated			

"Sky" opens with ambient sonorities, played by the ensemble, out of time. These sonorities are constructed with pitches from G Mixolydian, with G in the bass. Because of the asynchronous nature of the underlying parts, no direct chord symbol can be assigned. However, possibilities for the implied chords are $G^{6/9}$, G^7 , G^{7sus} , G^{13} , and G^{13sus} . The tenor saxophone improvises over the implied harmony.

After a prolonged improvisation, the tenor saxophone and the double bass present the theme. This theme is largely pentatonic, with the added blues inflection of the lowered third. Interestingly, the minor third is only presented in the odd meter and implied odd meter portions of the phrase. Each phrase of the theme, shown in Example 4.2, is only three measures long. Each of these phrases is comprised of three melodic cells, excluding one deviation. With each appearance, each melodic cell uses a similar rhythm with reordered pitch content. For example, each Cell 1 contains the notes D, G, and E, but not always in that order. This melody accents the interval of the perfect fourth and its inversion, the perfect fifth. The ambient sonorities are still occurring underneath this original presentation of this melody, so no chord symbol has been explicitly given.

Example 4.2 – mm. 2-13, Theme



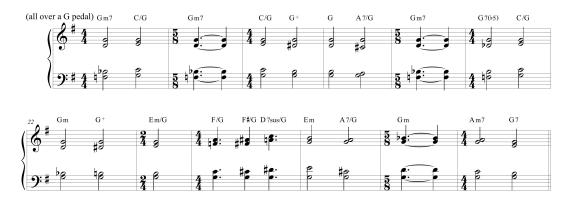
Following this theme, a two-bar vamp is established over which the tenor saxophone improvises. This vamp, shown in Example 4.3, is the first instance of uniform pulse within "Sky," and departure from the G pedal. The triadic diatonic figures superimposed over the vamp imply harmonies.

Example 4.3 – mm. 14-15, Bass Vamp



Following this vamp, there is a repetition of the theme, now harmonized over the G pedal, starting at m. 16. The piano, marimba and string harmonies, shown in Example 4.4, create a chordal texture underneath the saxophone melody.

Example 4.4 – mm. 16-27, Chordal Accompaniment



The restatement of the theme elides with the beginning of the piano solo. Rather than continue the complex mixed meter of the melody for the improvisation, 4/4 meter is used. Instead of using background figures derived from the melody or vamp, as in

"Dualities," Potter utilizes the entire melody and vamp as background figures. Therefore, the backgrounds for the solos, marked at mm. 34-47, represent a reorchestration of the thematic material in mm. 16-29. Two devices differentiate these two events. When the melody is presented in the background, the strings play it as well, while the piano improvises over the harmonies that were previously stated. During the vamp, rather than rapid figures, the strings strike an A quartal chord in quarter notes over the vamp material, creating the harmonies shown in Example 4.5.

Example 4.5 – mm. 46-47, Solo Vamp



Following the piano solo, the strings are featured in a short interlude that is heard in octaves over a G pedal in the rhythm section. The interlude, shown in Example 4.6, reinforces the piece's ubiquitous uses of mixed meter, the Mixolydian mode, and the blues inflection of the minor third. Some interest is created by stressing the major seventh, F#, which is outside of the Mixolydian mode, and has yet to be used melodically. This pitch, often juxtaposed with F natural, seems to imply the applied dominant, D^{7(#9)}.

Example 4.6 – mm. 55-72, Interlude



The conclusion of the interlude elides with the beginning of the saxophone solo at m. 71. The saxophone solo form is constructed in the same fashion as that of the piano solo. When the backgrounds are played in mm. 75-88, they are comparable to the backgrounds in mm. 34-47. Potter, however, paraphrases the theme over the backgrounds, then returns to non-thematic improvisation over the vamp.

An unaccompanied four-part harmonization of the melody played by saxophone and strings follows. This harmonization, shown in Example 4.7, continues the tendency towards increasing chromaticism when the theme recurs. While the first statement of the theme was set with tones solely from G Mixolydian, this final statement is the most chromatic harmonization of the theme.

Example 4.7 – mm. 97-108, Final Harmonization of the Theme



This thematic recurrence represents the harmonic climax of the piece, and thus could serve to end of the piece. Instead, Potter ends with a lengthy section featuring several melodies in counterpoint. This section synthesizes the elements of mixed meter, pentatonic layering, and melodic use of the perfect fourth/fifth.

The melodic layering commences with a completely pentatonic layer, shown in Example 4.8, constructed largely from perfect fourths. This is the shortest melodic layer of this section, containing only 21 beats. Treble instruments play this melody twice, before the second layer is added.

Example 4.8 – mm. 110-116, Melodic Layer 1



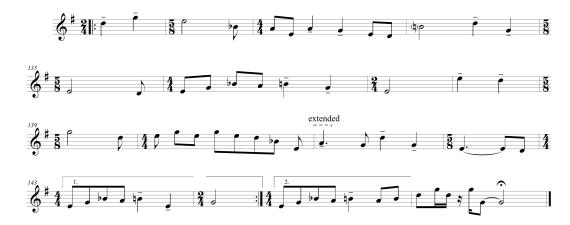
The second melodic layer is presented in the bass instruments. This layer, shown in Example 4.9, incorporates non-pentatonic chromatic tones. These chromatic tones act as secondary leading tones within the melodic line, but interact vertically with the first layer. Since the first layer is pentatonic, its tones can act as upper extensions and chord tones of the sustained notes of the second layer. The second melodic layer is 42 beats long. Therefore, it takes two cycles of the first melodic layer in order to complete one cycle of the second layer. This adds tension between the two patterns, where one resolves as the other continues to progress.

Example 4.9 – mm. 117-130, Melodic Layer 2



The third and final melodic layer, shown in Example 4.10, is a restatement of the piece's original theme. This melody is altered in order to fit the metric scheme of the first two layers. While the original melody is 41.5 beats long, one note is lengthened by an eighth note to fit the new underlying metric scheme. Because the line is primarily pentatonic, it fits with the counterpoint created by the other two layers. After one iteration of the melody, the second ending proceeds to mimic the ending of the first melodic layer, as piece ends on a sustained G⁵.

Example 4.10 – mm. 131-146, Melodic Layer 3 | Extended Melody



On first hearing, the melodic layering section seems to be new material completely devoid of relation to the rest of the piece. But, when all three layers have been presented, culminating with the extended theme, the relationship of all of the layers becomes evident. The first and second layers often act as a rhythmic foil to the melody, filling in rests or subdivisions where motion is absent in the melody. When layers 1 and 2 are not filling in space, they are heard accenting different portions with the melody. The composite rhythm results in no points of silence when all layers are present.

The simultaneous entrances/accents can be analyzed harmonically. The resulting harmonic structures exemplify the harmonization of pentatonic lines when counterpoint creates harmony. This is especially true when considering the melodic content of the first melodic line, which contains very few sustained pitches and therefore "fills in" while the other two lines sustain

The harmonic structure used most often is that of compacted fifths, starting with C, which reiterates the use of perfect fifths throughout the piece. It also the exploits the fact that the five-note pentatonic scale contain four perfect fifths. However, the chromatic and non-pentatonic portions of the second layer are also accented, creating chromatic harmonizations as well as reiterating the harmonic versatility of a pentatonic melodic line. This concluding section, shown in Example 4.11, contains the essential compositional elements used throughout this piece, and acting as a final synthesis of Potter's compositional process for "Sky."

Example 4.11 – Melodic Layer Composite



CHAPTER 5: SUITE CHILDHOOD

Concept

Suite Childhood is an original three-movement composition for mixed ensemble and is the culmination of two years of creative and theoretical work undertaken at Youngstown State University. The goal of the piece was to compose in the mixed ensemble medium, while showcasing my original voice as a composer.

The composition of the piece took place following the transcription and analysis of the work of Chris Potter. Therefore, instances of influence can be attributed to Potter's three pieces. The majority of the suite, however, draws influences from a wide variety of composers and techniques.⁸ The chart in Example 5.1 details the difference in instrumentation between my original composition and that of Chris Potter. The instrumentation of Suite Childhood is designed to reflect the synthesis of a large ensemble/big band with a string quartet, forming a jazz chamber orchestra.

Example 5.1 – Comparison of Instrumentation

Suite Childhood – Harvey (14 piece)	Imaginary Cities – Potter (11 piece)			
3 Reed Parts	Reed Part			
2 Trumpets	2 Violins			
Trombone	Viola			
2 Violins	Cello			
Viola	Marimba			
Cello	Piano			
Piano	Guitar			
Guitar	Drums			
Drums	Acoustic Bass			
Acoustic Bass	Electric Bass			

The three movements were conceived with three different aspects of childhood in mind, and compositional techniques were used to capture these aspects of childhood.

⁸ See selected discography for musical influences

I. Hiding and Seeking

The first movement was composed with the childhood game of hide-and-seek in mind. In this game of two or more participants, one player is designated "the seeker" and attempts to find and tag other participants who are hiding. The movement is constructed to reflect the dark, uncertain, and exciting feelings that may exist during the game. This is accomplished through programmatic elements and the implications of different compositional methods.

For example, this movement begins with a 20-measure *pizzicato* introduction in 5/4 meter. The uneven pulse of the mixed meter is used to imply the uncertainty of looking for others, capturing the feeling of not knowing who is around the next corner. The staggered entrances of the *pizzicato* strings denote the tradition of counting to one hundred before seeking, with the introduction containing one hundred beats. The use of this *pizzicato* material was inspired by similar material in "Dualities."

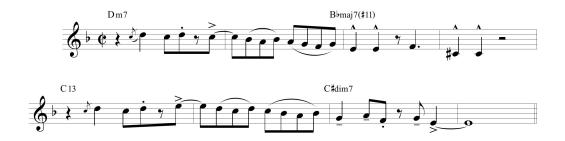
The two melodic themes and their assigned harmonies serve to further reinforce feelings of anxiousness, relief and relaxation felt during the game. The first melodic theme, shown in Example 5.2, is heard following the "counting to one hundred," and represents seeking in the dark.

Example 5.2 - Hiding and Seeking, Uneasy Melody



The second melodic theme, depicted in Example 5.3, is heard after a sudden metric modulation following the tenor solo. This laid-back theme captures the relief of finally tagging an opponent, and then finding your own hiding spot. To add to the feeling of relief, a slower hip-hop groove replaces the mixed meter groove preceding it.

Example 5.3 – Hiding and Seeking, Relaxed Melody



II. Passing Notes With Fortunetellers

The second movement, a ballad, is derivative of the concept of childhood romance. Two activities that depict this concept are passing notes with a "crush" in class and predicting marriages via paper fortunetellers. Taking inspiration from these activities, the melody is constructed utilizing serial methods with material evoking these activities.

When passing notes, one would see phrases such as "do you like me?", and would have to answer either "yes" or "no." With fortunetellers, a participant would give the name of someone they loved which was spelled out for their answer. Using the cryptographic method of composition, the words "like," "love," "yes," and "no" were turned into motifs, which were then turned into pitch sets. When using the cryptogram in Example 5.4, the chosen words yielded four pitch sets.

Example 5.4 – Source Cryptograph and Results

A	В	C	D	E	F	G	Н
I	J	K	L	M	N	0	P
Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
Y	Z						

LIKE – D, A, C, E – [0, 3, 5, 7]	YES - A, E, C - [0, 3, 7]
LOVE – D, G, F, E – [0, 2, 3, 7]	NO - F, G - [0, 2]

These pitch sets are used as melodic materials for the waltz theme. The theme, pictured in Example 5.6, uses transpositions of the "like" and "yes" pitch sets towards the beginning of the melody, while using the "love" and "no" pitch sets and towards the end of the melody. Subsets of the pitch sets and non-related sequences are also used in this melody. The 26-measure melody is then played a half step down to create the 52-measure form. This practice of creating longer forms by repeating large sections at another pitch level is a signature characteristic of the music of the great trumpeter and composer Kenny Wheeler.⁹

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⁹ For example, five of the six pieces on Wheeler's *The Widow in the Window* (ECM 1417, 1990. CD) use this generative device.

Example 5.5 – Passing Notes With Fortunetellers, Annotated Melody

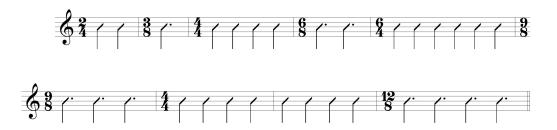


The string introduction is a nod to the string introduction in Potter's "Shadow Self." My introduction, however, is derived from the 26-measure theme of the second movement, which follows. While the quartet's cadences summarize the harmonic movement of the melody, the melodic content within each part is a rotation of the four pitch sets.

III. Hand Games

The third and final movement is an expansion upon Slide, a childhood hand game. Depictions of the game can easily be found online. Slide features a seven-movement set that expands internally. The first round would feature a 4+3 movement, while the second movement would double into an 8+6 movement, and so on. If each hand movement is equated to an eighth note beat and each pulse of the movement sets is notated, four rounds of slide comprise the metric scheme shown in Example 5.6. This figure was clapped to start the piece and to accompany the melody at different times.

Example 5.6 – Hand Games, Meter and Hand Claps



The melody, shown in Example 5.7, was composed to fit this metric scheme and represent four rounds of the game. To accentuate the youthful and jovial nature of the game, the melody is mostly pentatonic. This pentatonic melody is then coupled with quintal and major harmonies. Most of the movement is generated by manipulations of the entire melody, the seven-beat patterns, or combinations of the two. To feature the quintal harmonies and pentatonic melodic content, this movement also features a string quartet fiddle section, evocative of American folk music.

1

¹⁰ "Hand Clapping Game 'Slide'," June 10, 2009, video clip, accessed February 20, 2016, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXJsX7T8fYM

Example 5.7 – Hand Games, Melody



Development

This composition project developed into a self-produced recording project, which culminated in an album release of the same name.¹¹ This album features four other original compositions for big band instrumentation coupled with the titular suite and features the Youngstown State University Jazz Ensemble One and other students from the Dana School of Music.

In order to fund the album process, a crowd funding campaign was launched via the website Kickstarter.com. After the funds were raised rehearsals commenced for the pieces, leading up to the recording session on April 3, 2016. Further funds were garnered through a collaborative grant, the NEXUS Grant, from the College of Creative Arts and Communication at Youngstown State University (YSU). This collaboration resulted in three individual graphic designs by YSU student Michael Hardy, based on the content of the album. These designs were then used as the album artwork for the album.

48

¹¹ Stephen Harvey. *Suite Childhood*. SPHarvey Music, 2016. CD.

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Appendix B: Interview

Stephen Harvey: How did you approach the composition for this suite? Did you think of melodic ideas, harmonic ideas, or rhythmic ideas first? And where did you work these ideas out? In your masterclass, you said you play a lot of piano. Did these sprout from there, playing the sax, singing, thinking, etc.?

Chris Potter: I wrote a tune early on in the process called Imaginary Cities, which was much different than the final suite, but contained some of the seeds for the whole thing. At some point I realized the ideas wouldn't fit into a single tune, but could be expanded. I did a huge amount of editing and reworking of the material, and each step led to the next one, so that the material I started out with was completely transformed by the end. Thematically there are connections: there's a section in the first movement which provided the material for the melody of the third movement. The opening melody in the first movement gets repeated in different form in the second movement, the fourth movement is a kind loose development of this same melody, etc. The whole thing was like a painting that starts out being one thing, and with many additional layers becomes a painting of something entirely different. The overarching aesthetic guide was my idea of imaginary cities, a kind of utopian ideal, and when the music seemed to fit this idea, that's how I knew it was finished. As far as how I work things out, yes, I use the piano a lot, and also the saxophone, and other instruments sometimes like bass and drums to see how the music flows from the bottom up. Also, there is a lot of planning that goes on in my head, away from an instrument.

SH: What led to your fluency over "odd" meters and your rhythmic diversity in these charts?

CP: I've been working on playing over odd meters for many years, both in my own music and that of my colleagues, so now it has become a part of my musical language. Internalizing a new rhythmic structure is always difficult at first, but with time and practice becomes easier, to the point that I no longer think about what the meter is when improvising. I like working in different meters because it's another way of adding variety to my compositions and finding new grooves, and because it forces me to confront the musical challenges involved.

SH: When soloing in Dualities, it seems as if 11 is a time that your have been playing over as much as 4/4. Do you approach these differently?

CP: The same principles of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic organization apply no matter what the meter is, so I try to get to a level where I can be as free with the 11 as I am with 4/4, there's not really a difference in approach, except as dictated by the character of the tune.

SH: What informed your approach to writing for strings on Imaginary Cities and Song for Anyone? Did you pick up any orchestration books, or was it all from experimenting?

CP: I did look at some orchestration books, Rimsky-Korsakov's was quite old but helpful, also I looked at string quartets from Bartok, Debussy, Beethoven, and others.

SH: What previous works/composition informed your compositions? For example, the opening of Dualities reminds me of the Ravel Quartet in F, Movement 2.

CP: I'm familiar with that quartet, but I didn't have it in my mind then. For the opening of Dualities I was actually thinking of imitating the sound of an African kora. I was also influenced by Steve Reich in that section. In general I draw on influences more or less unconsciously, As I confront a musical problem I realize what ideas I can borrow to get me through it, and hopefully the combination of influences and the way I put them together yields something new and unique.

SH: I read that Béla Bartók was an extreme influence on Shadow Self. What elements his music did you incorporate into this piece?

CP: If you heard the opening string section played in strict time, which is how I originally intended it, you would hear the influence more directly I think. Certain ways Bartok would create melodic and harmonic structures by using an axis as a tonal center, and certain ways he would layer rhythms by having different instruments play the

same rhythmic phrase at different times, sometimes elongating or truncating the phrase, are techniques I incorporated into that section.

SH: With the internet age, we can definitely agree that we do not compose, perform, or live in a vacuum. What other projects incorporating non-traditional instrumentations have piqued your interest? (Past and Present)

CP: I think my interest in unusual instrumentations and textures goes back to listening to Sergeant Pepper's as a kid actually. Certainly the world of hip hop with its aesthetic of sampling from pretty much any musical tradition has opened up my ears as well. The idea for two basses originally came from Coltrane's Africa Brass recording. The textures of traditional African and Indian music were also reference points for me in this piece, though not always directly.

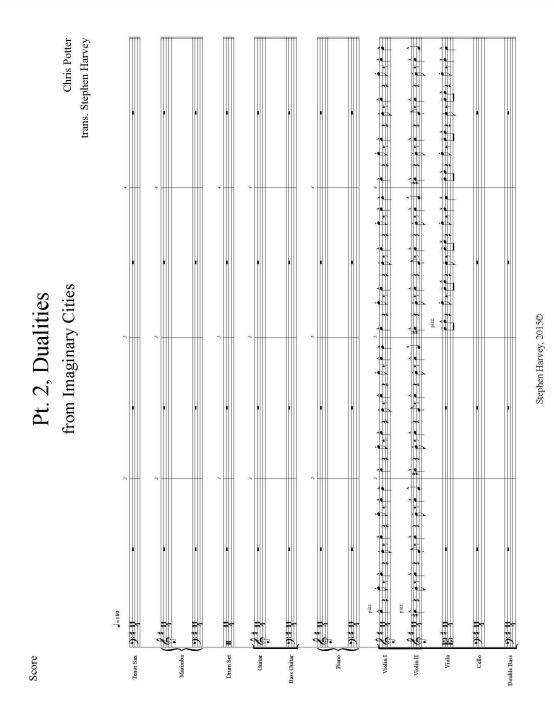
SH: Did any of your early experiences in music contain classical training?

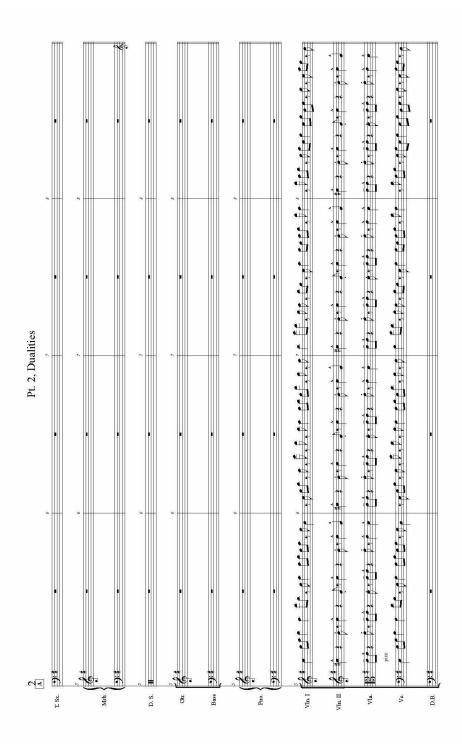
CP: I played a little of the classical saxophone repertoire as a kid, the Creston Sonata and whatnot, but honestly not very well! At the same time I was discovering Charlie Parker around age 12, I was also discovering the Rite of Spring, so while I did not have much direct classical training, I always listened quite a bit to classical music and did some reading on my own to learn how it was constructed. As a student at Manhattan School of Music I received basic instruction in classical music history and took some composition classes.

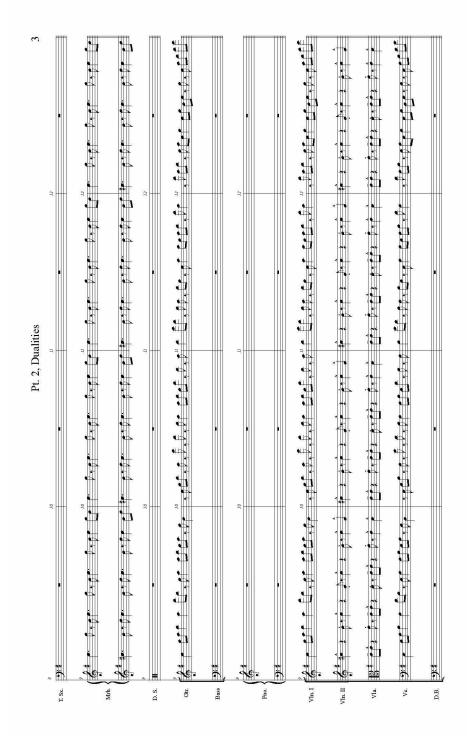
SH: Looking back, what was your biggest take away from these mixed instrumentation projects (Imaginary Cities and Song for Anyone)? Do you plan on writing for this instrumentation (or similar ones) in the future?

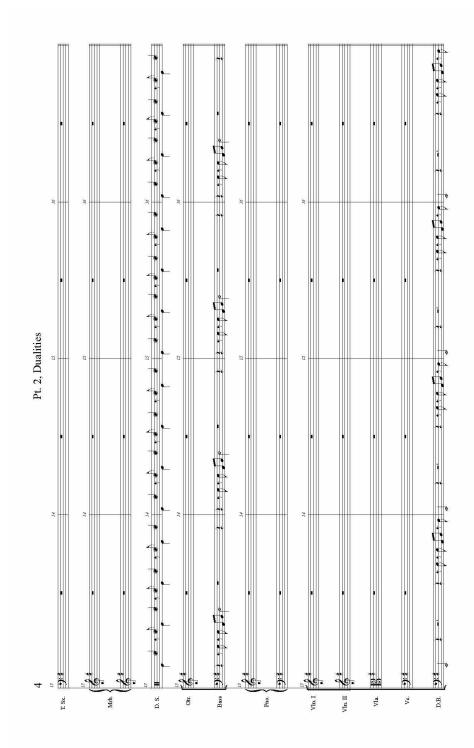
CP: I love the possibilities that are afforded with a larger palette and the challenges of writing for such a group, it pushes me to be creative in a different way than improvising as a soloist on the saxophone does, or rather it allows me to flesh out ideas that I can usually only imply. I'm not sure what the next large group project will be, but I definitely intend to return to this in the future, Writing for large ensembles always helps me become a better musician in every context.

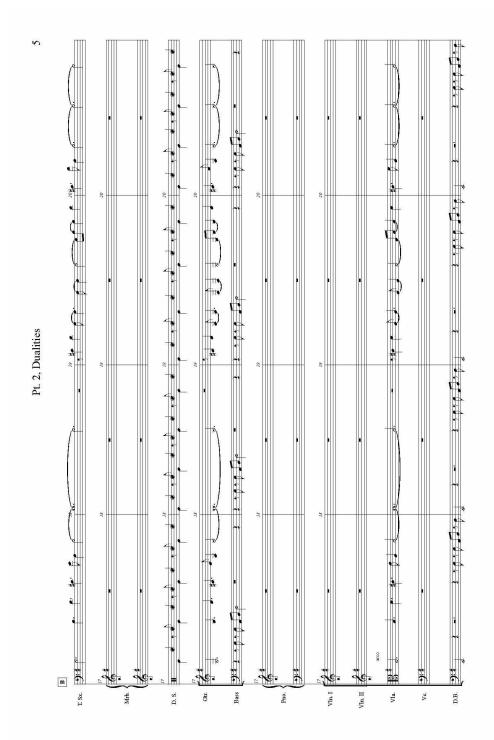
Appendix C: Transcribed Scores

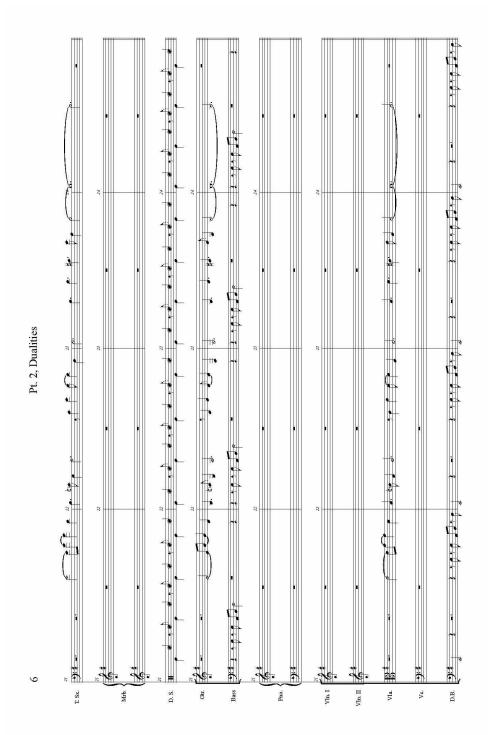


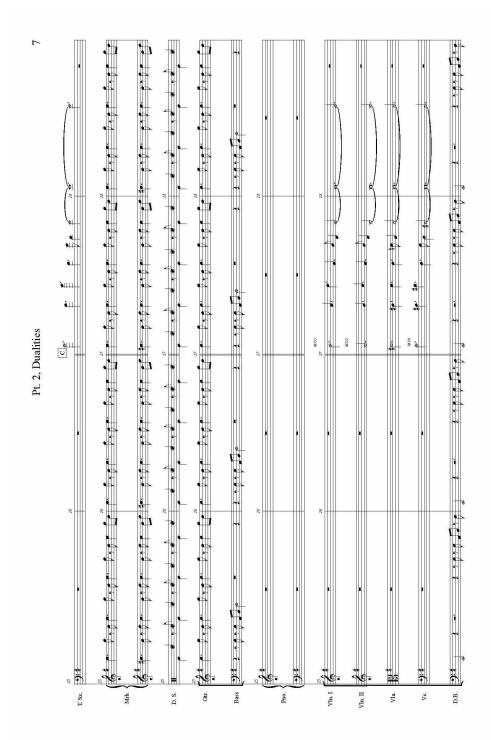


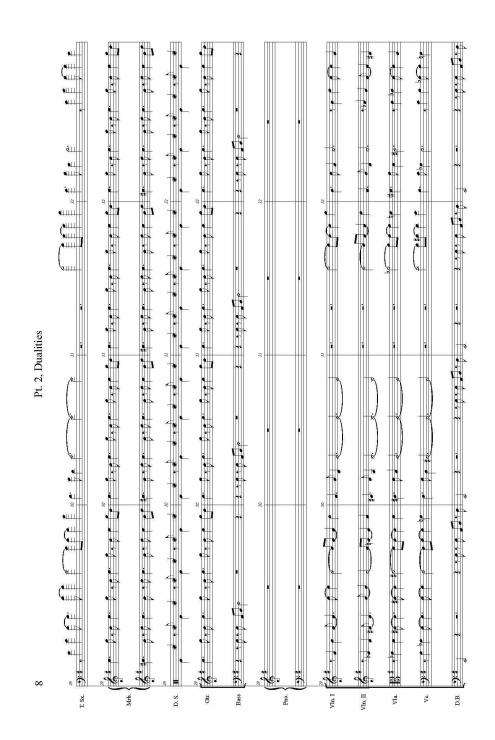


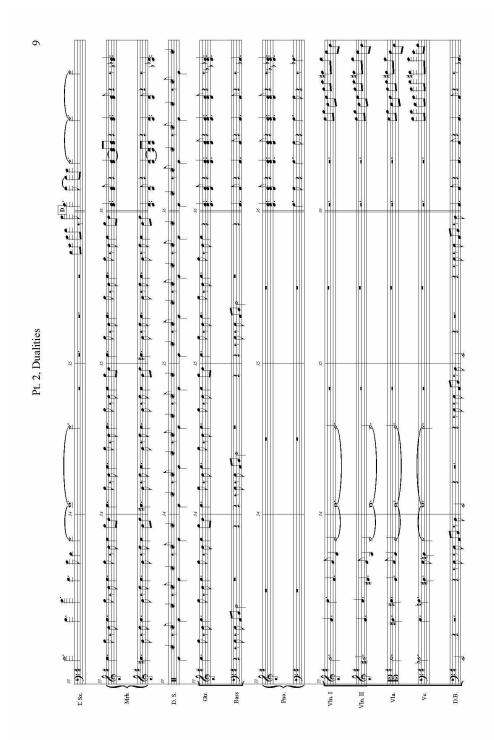


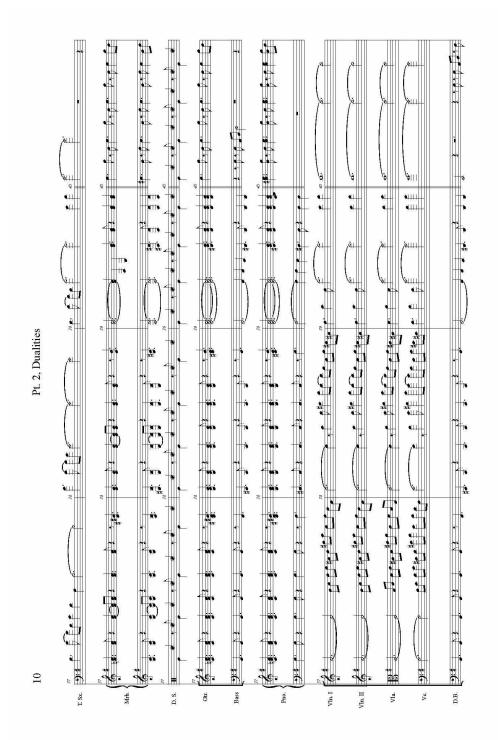


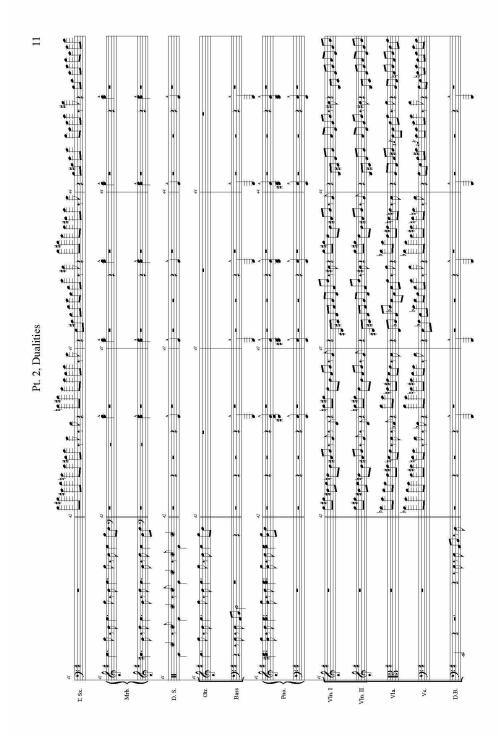


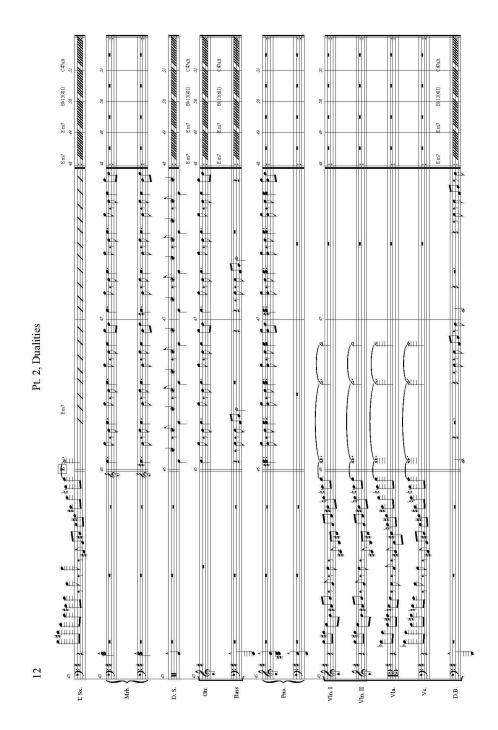


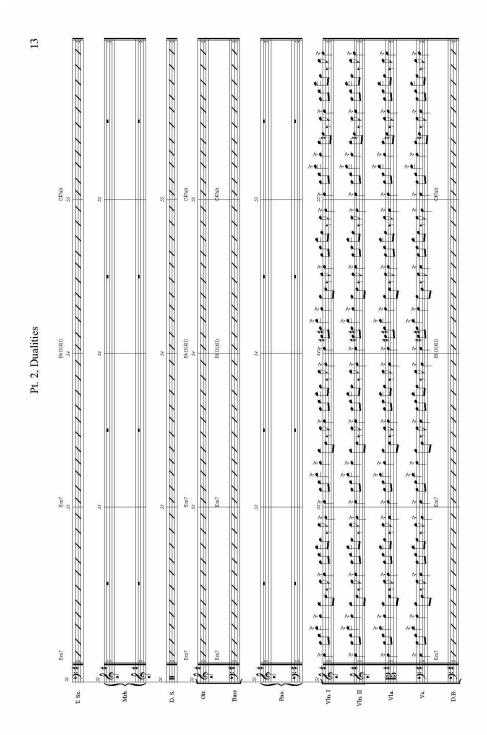


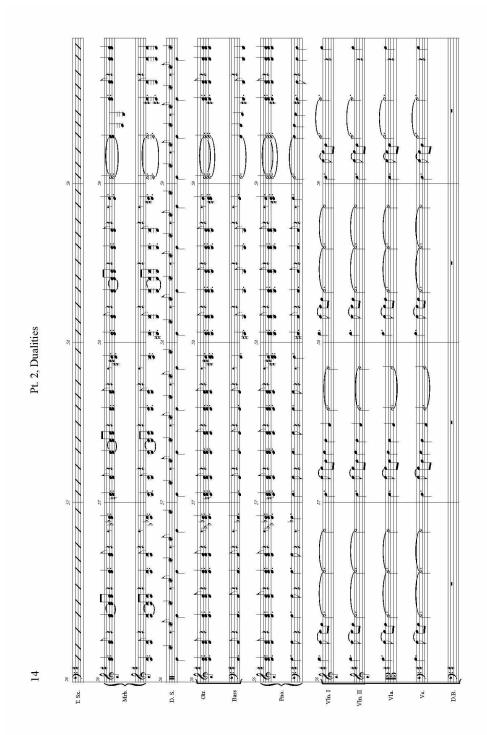


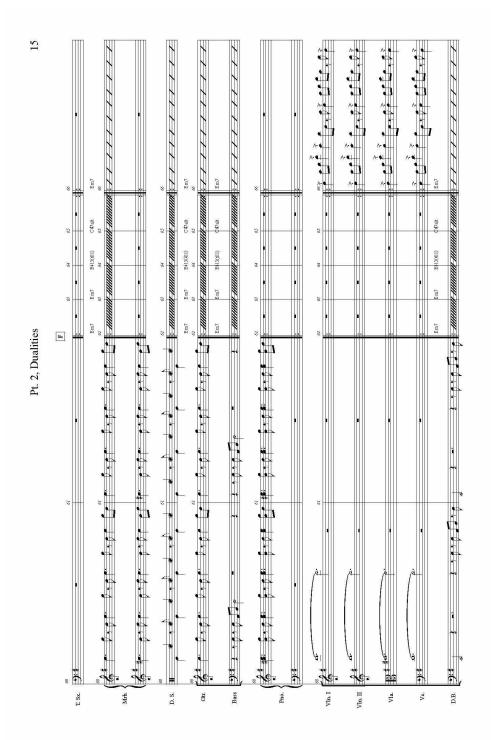


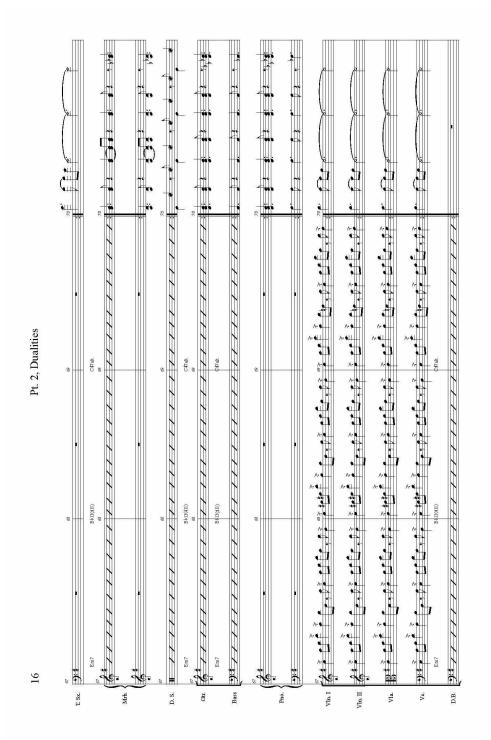


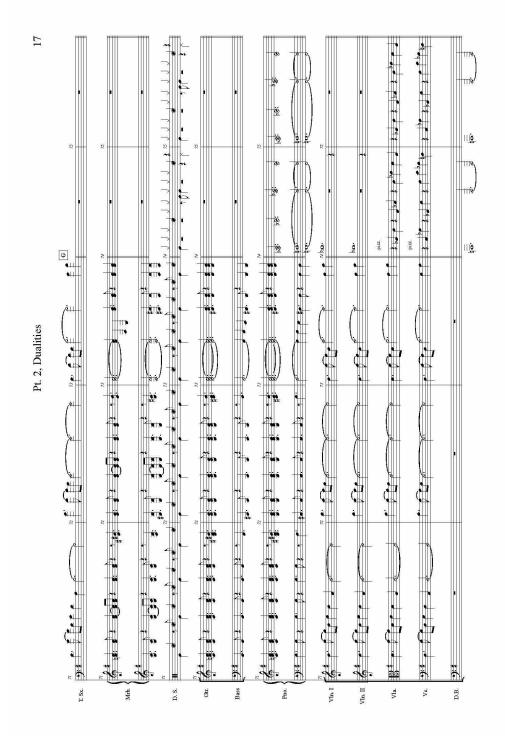


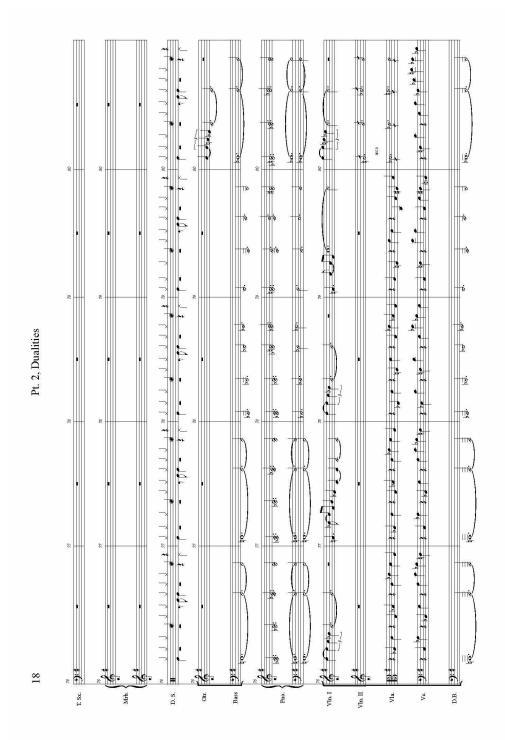


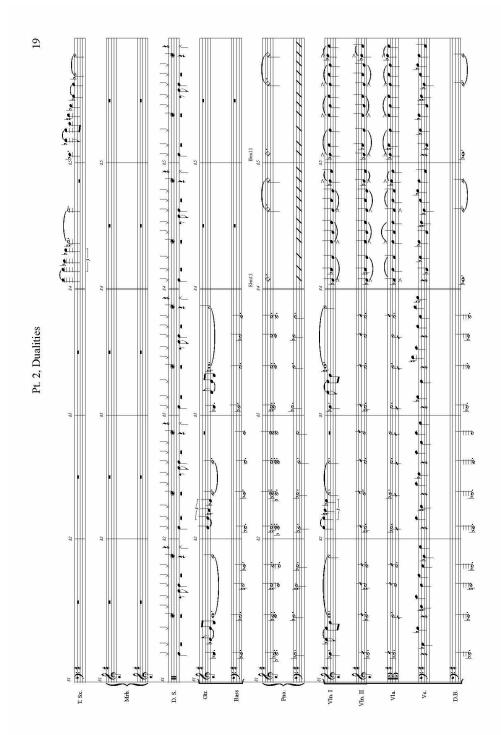


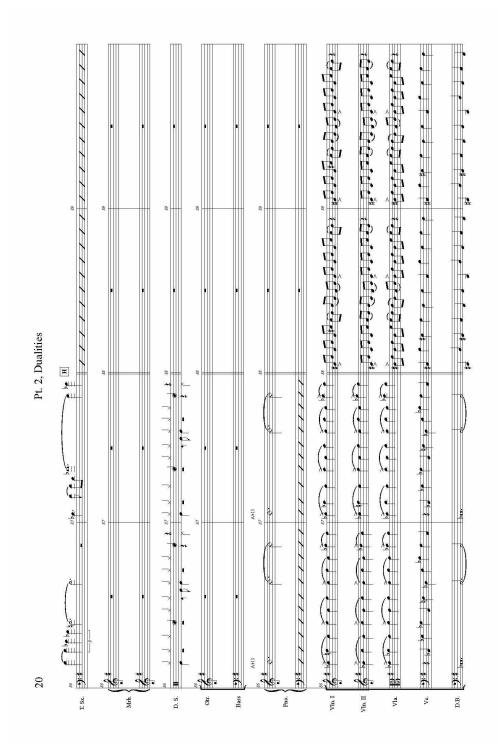


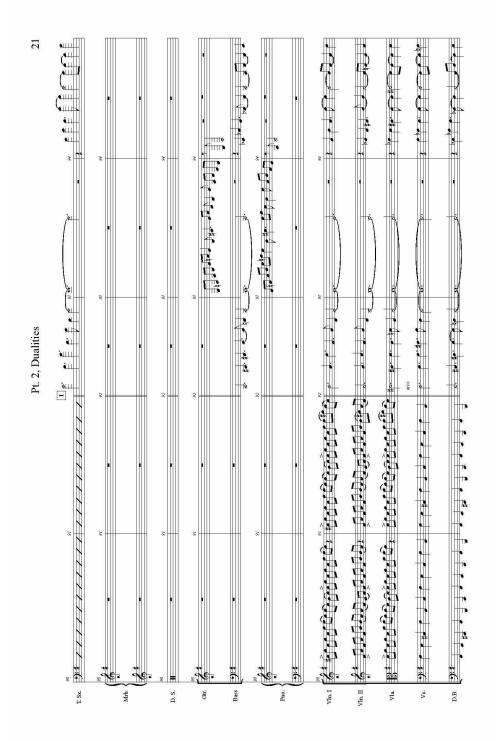


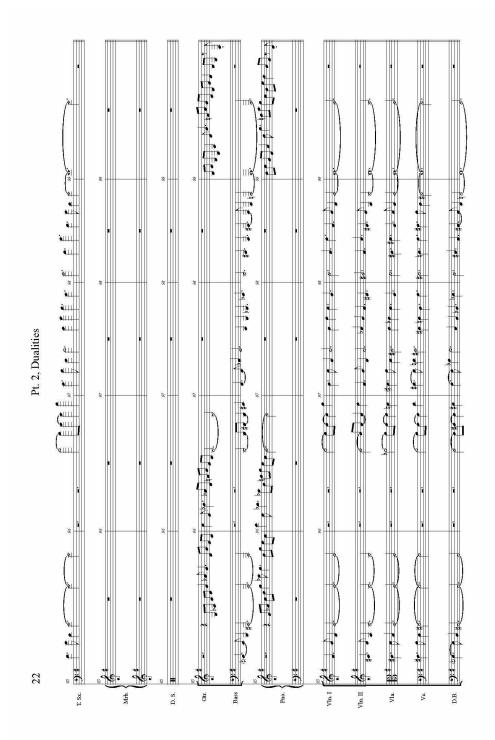


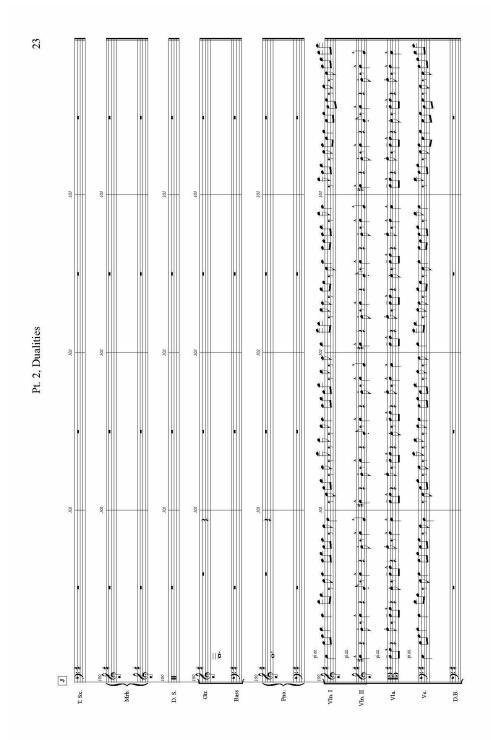


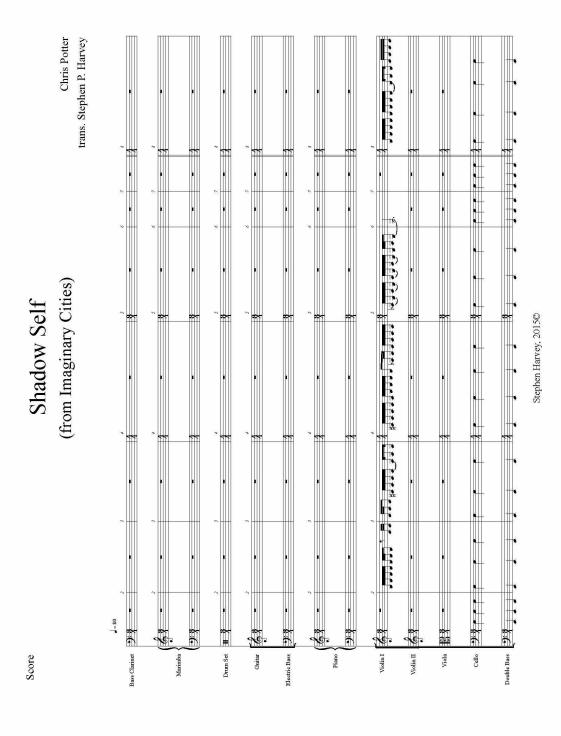


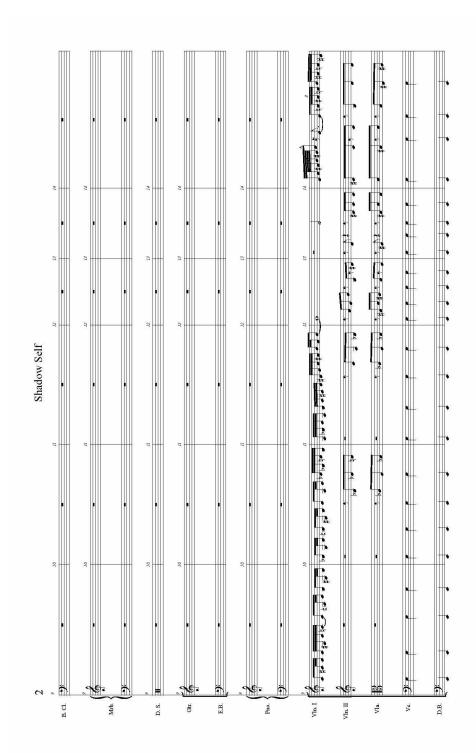


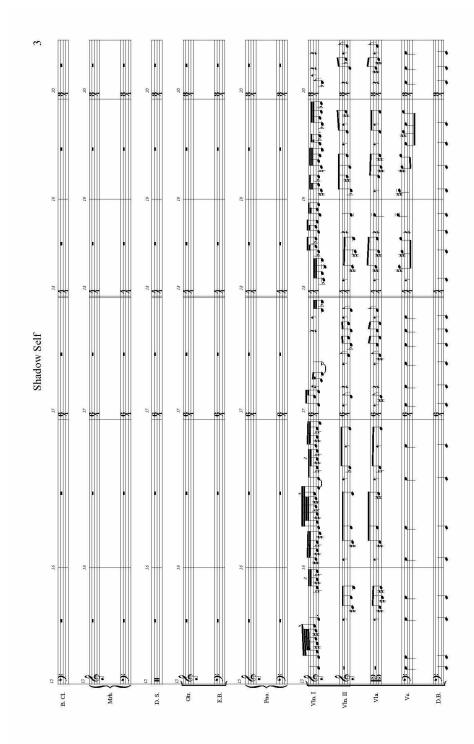


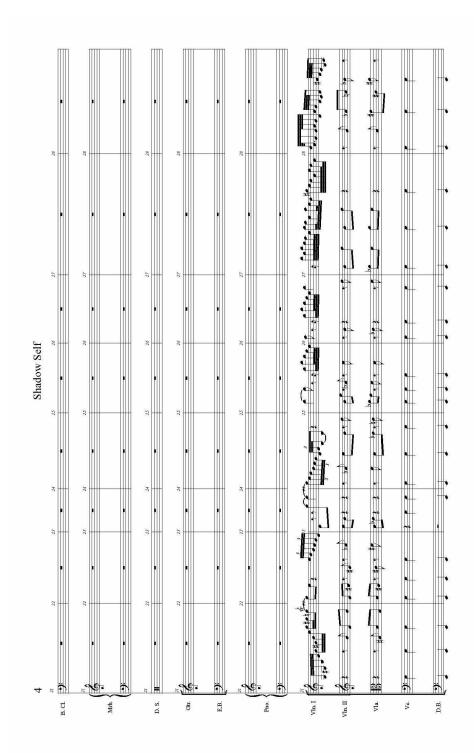


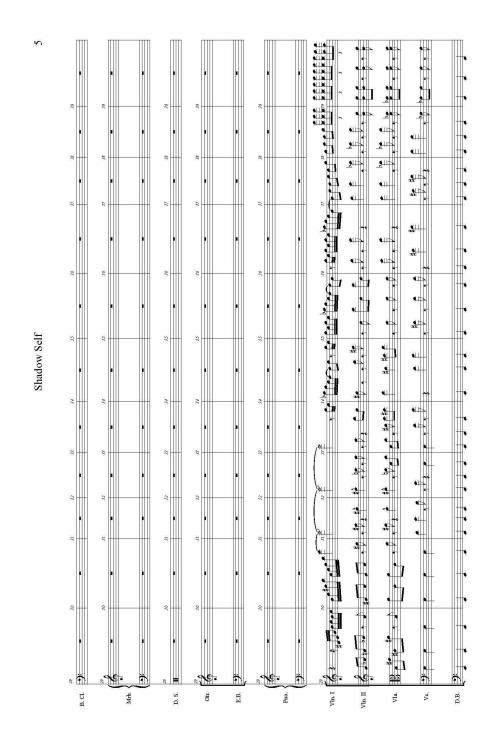


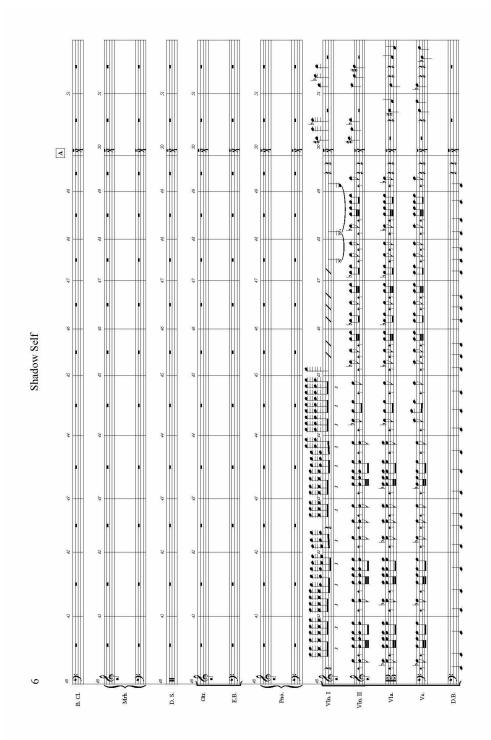


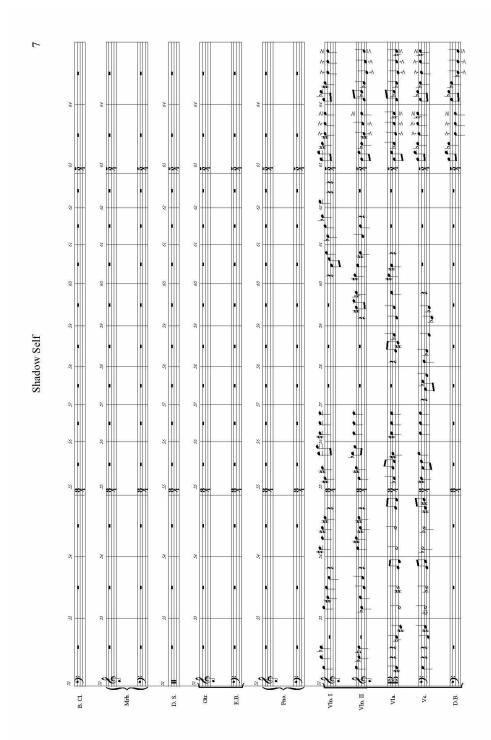


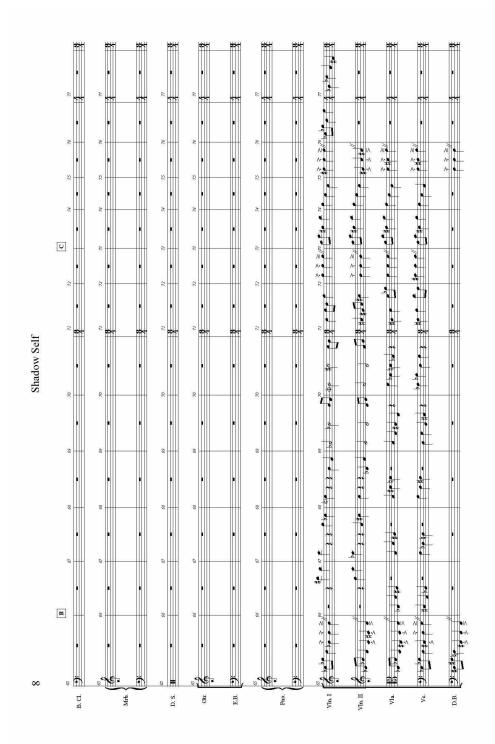


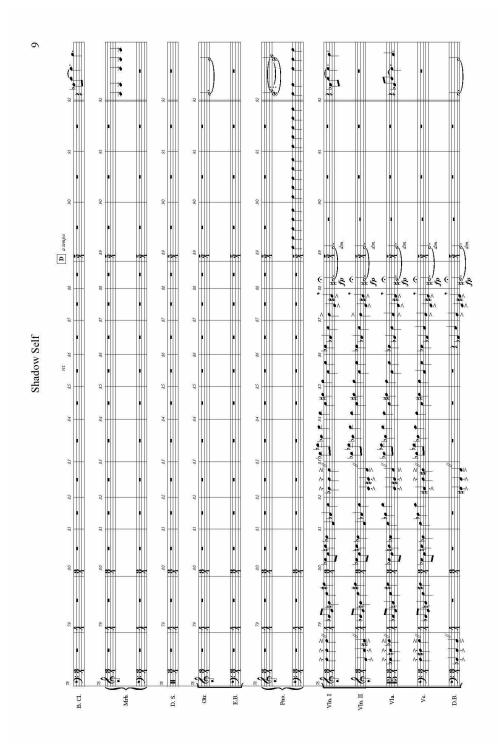


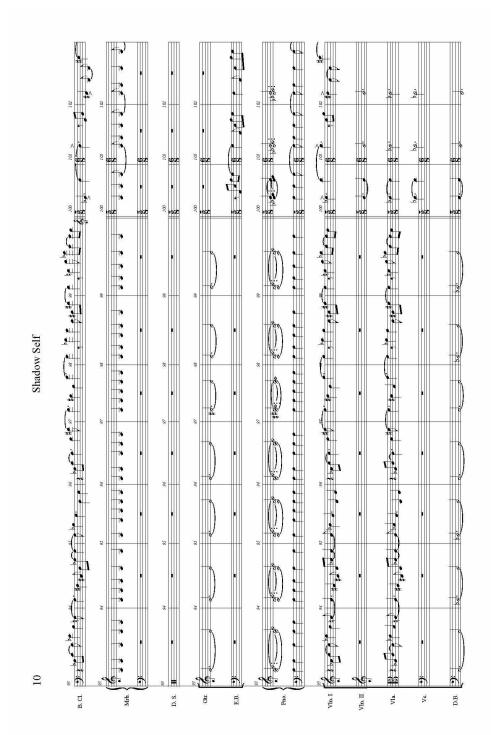


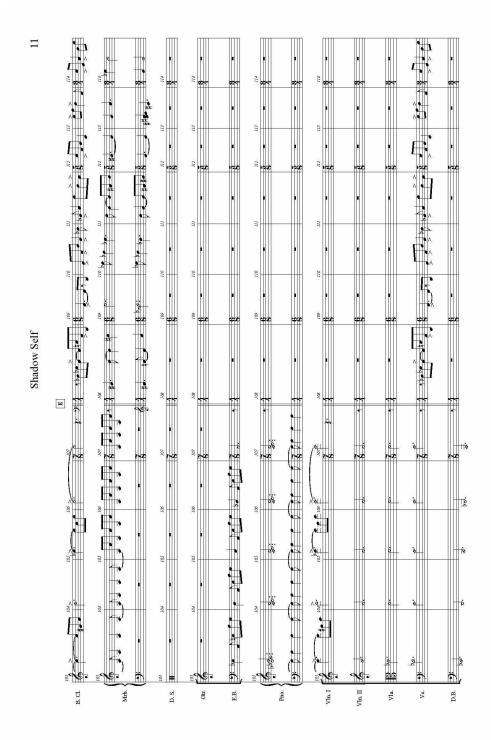


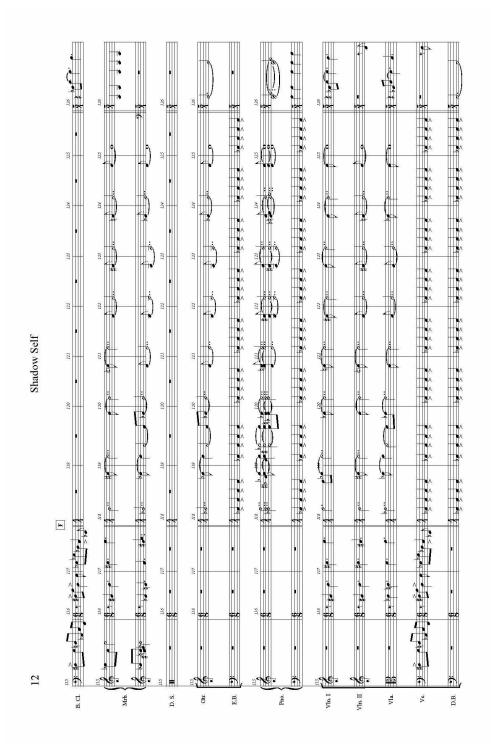


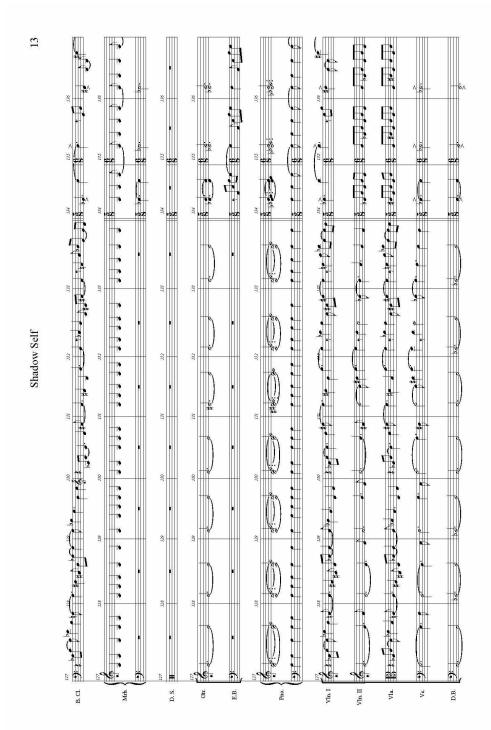


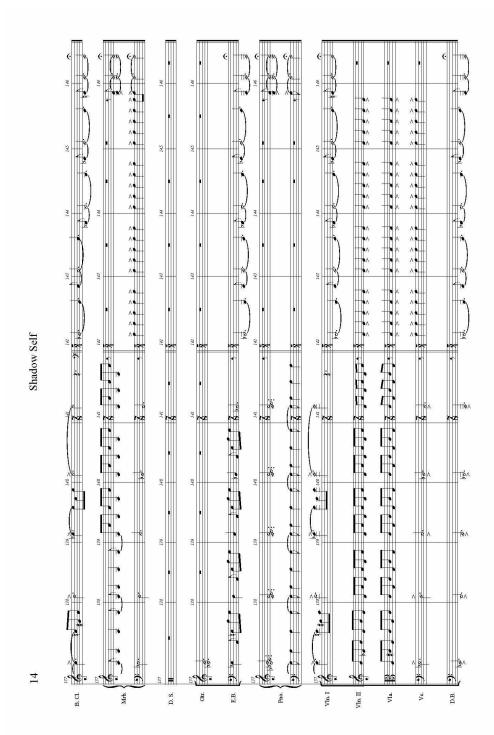


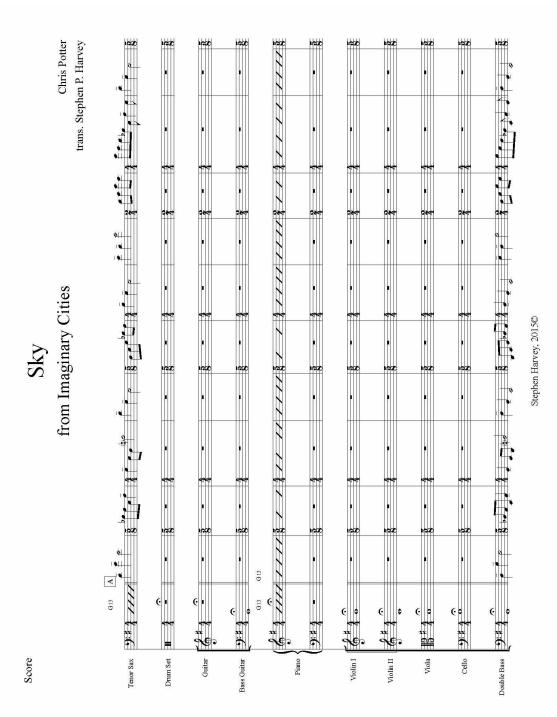


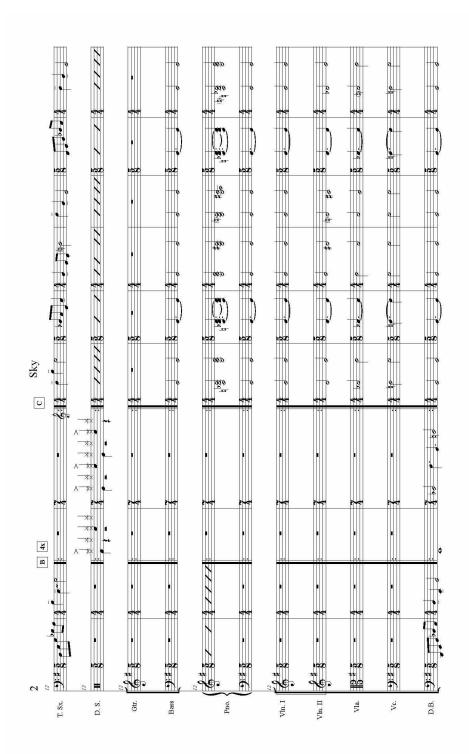


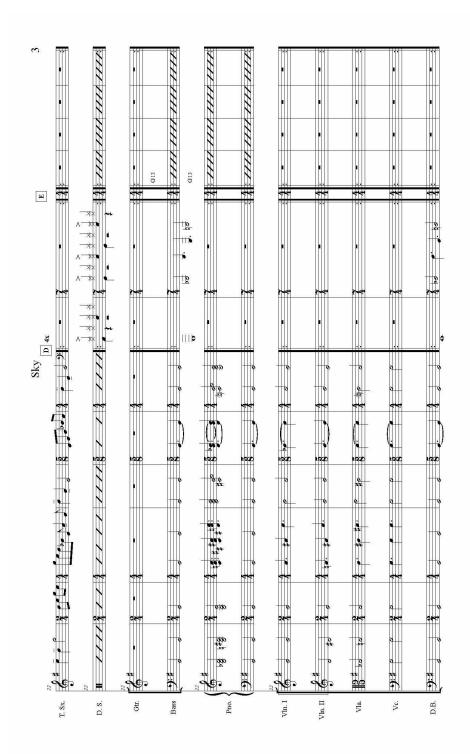


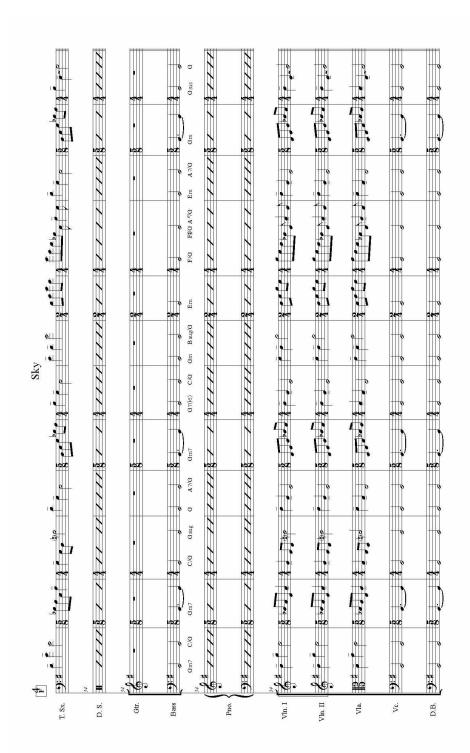


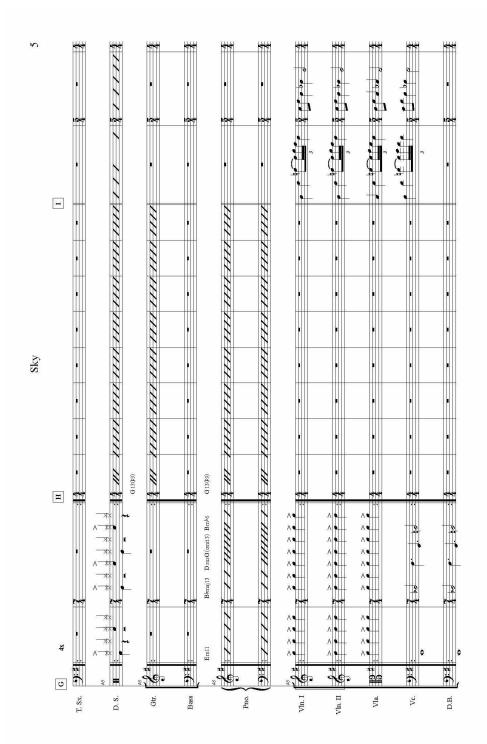


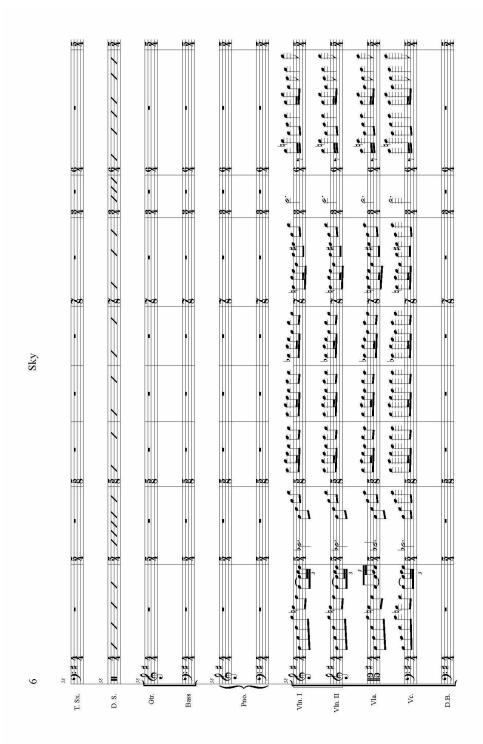


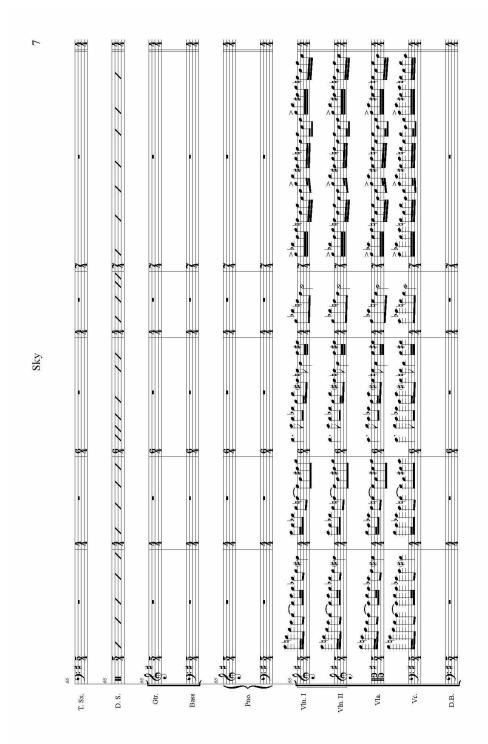


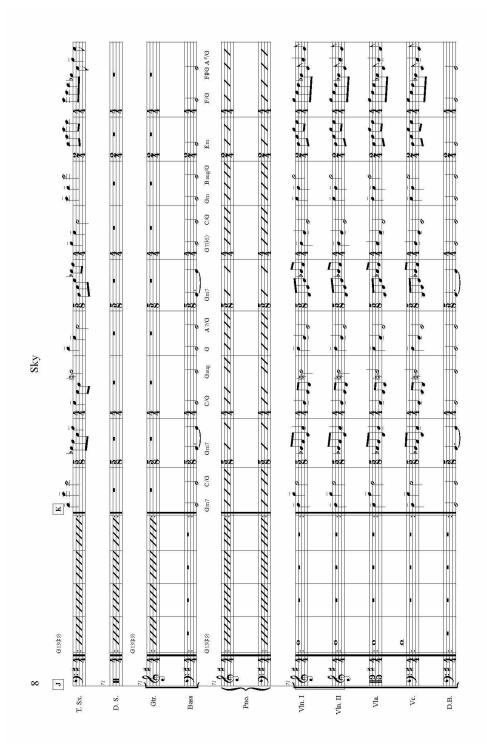


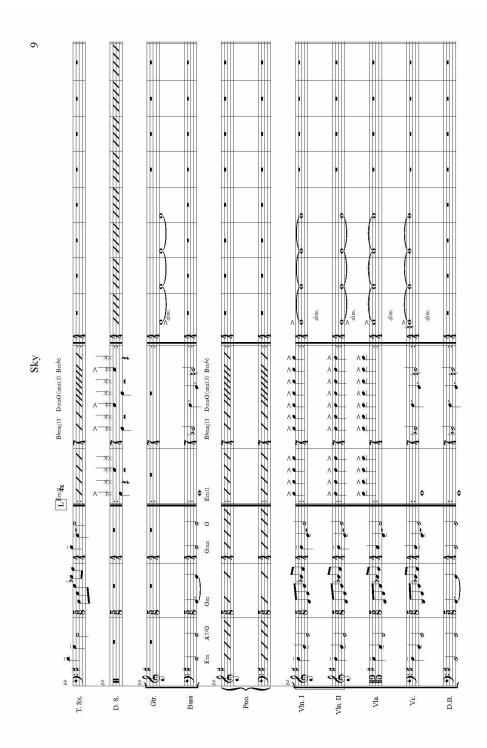


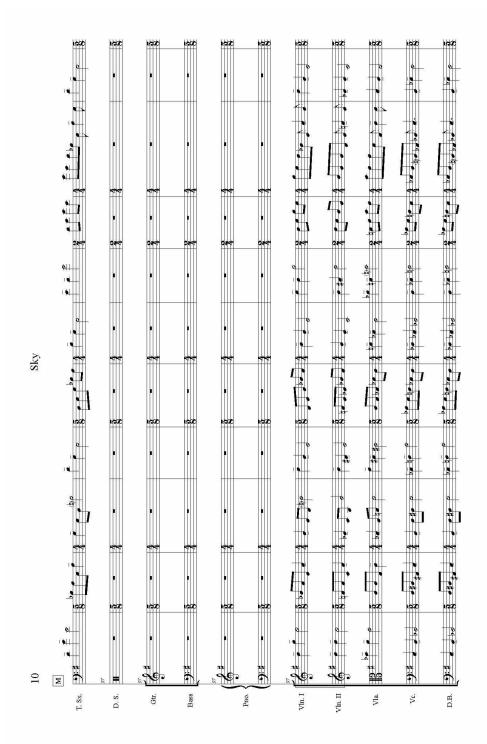


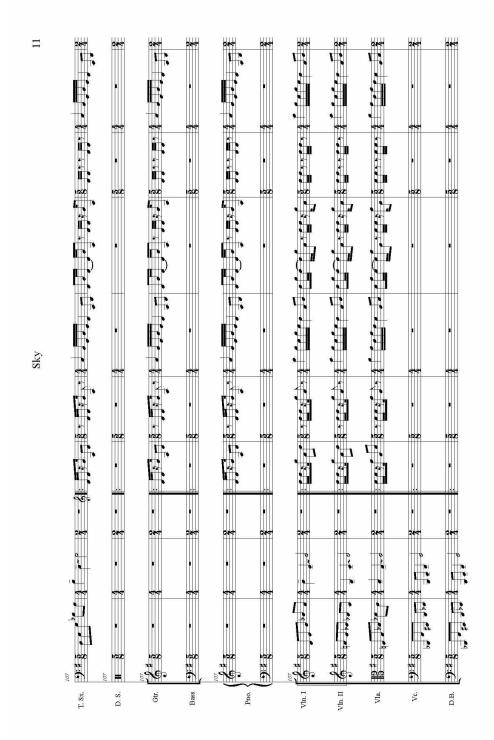


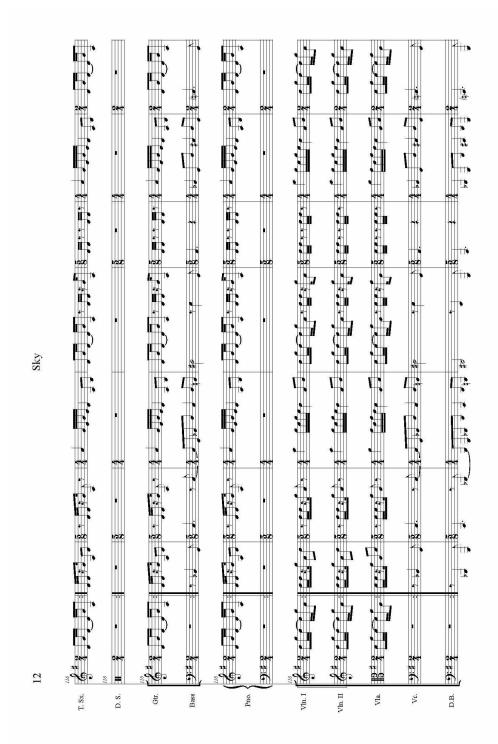


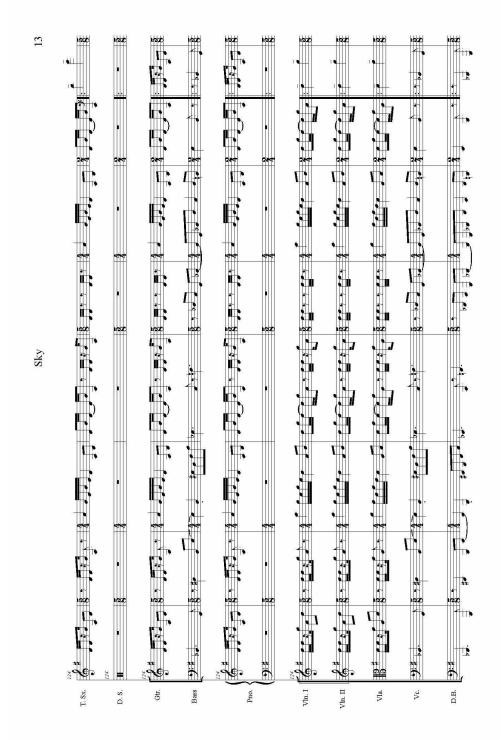


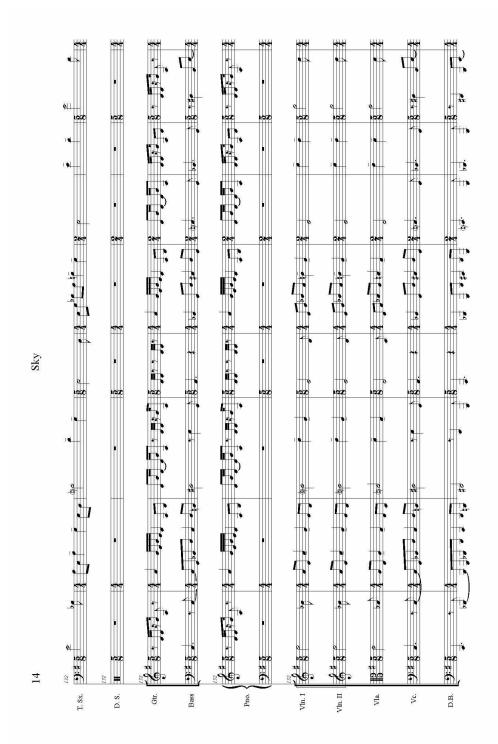


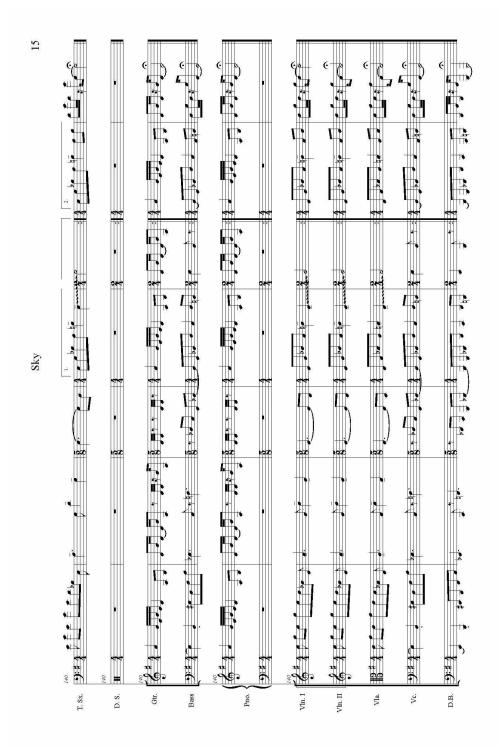












Appendix D: Composed Scores

