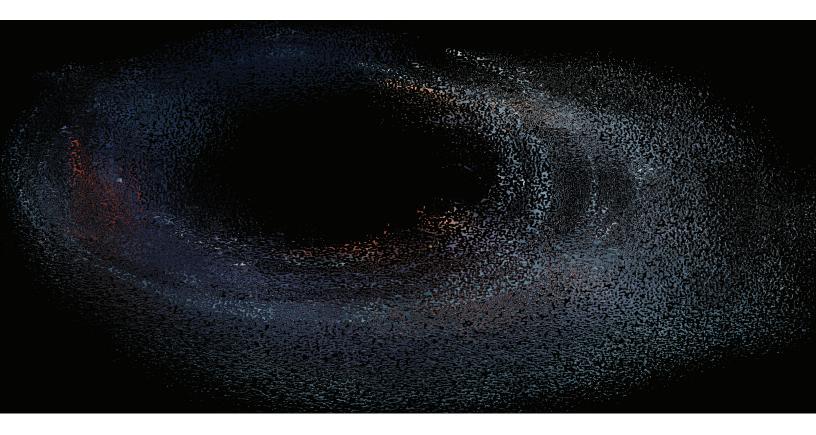
Yvette Janine Jackson



T-MINUS a radio opera for ensemble and tape

Commissioned by and written for the International Contemporary Ensemble

© MMXXIII Yvette Janine Jackson (ASCAP)

Duration ca. 50 minutes

The Score is Transposed

T-MINUS

Instrumentation Flute Bass Clarinet 1 Bass Clarinet 2

Trumpet in Bb 1 (harmon mute) Trumpet in Bb 2 (cup mute) Bass Trombone (harmon mute) Tuba (cup mute)

Percussion 1 (Vibraphone: mallets, bow) Percussion (Marching tenor sextet, Cellophane)

Sampler (2 stereo tracks: Front LR, Rear LR)

Cello 1 (DPA mic on bridge) Cello 2 Double Bass

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T-Minus Description (Duration ca. 50 minutes)

Yvette Janine Jackson's *T-Minus* is part of a series of radio operas themed around the environmental and socioeconomic impact of space tourism on local communities near launch sites. The idea was prompted by the livestream of the SpaceX Crew Dragon Demo-2 in May 2020 which took place at a time when people around the world were taking to the streets in protests against police brutality and systemic racism. The juxtaposition of events evoked a 1970's Gil Scott-Heron poem come to fruition. *T-Minus* builds on *Left Behind*, which was premiered by Jackson's Radio Opera Workshop ensemble at the Venice Music Biennale, and *The Coding*, a video concréte influenced by Samuel Delany's *Babel-17* novel that examines the power of language.

Radio opera is a term Jackson first used to describe her narrative electroacoustic compositions, like the *Invisible People* series, that frequently forefront historical events and social issues. The term continues to take on new meaning for the composer as she expands these ideas to include live performance, visuals, lighting, and interactivity. Influenced by productions from the Golden Age of Radio Drama, Jackson's radio operas leave room for the listener's experiences to give meaning to the music.

Performance Notes

T-Minus is part of a series of radio operas themed around the environmental and socioeconomic impact of space tourism on local communities near launch sites. The idea was prompted by the livestream of the SpaceX Crew Dragon Demo-2 in May 2020 which took place at a time when people around the world were taking to the streets in protests against police brutality and systemic racism. The juxtaposition of events evoked a 1970's Gil Scott-Heron poem come to fruition.

Radio Opera Background

Radio opera has multiple meanings when applied to *T-Minus*. Radio opera is a term I have used to describe my narrative compositions since 2012, but the characteristics can be found in my first electroacoustic compositions from the mid-1990s. "Radio" is meant to evoke the Golden Age of Radio Drama when dialogue, music, and sound effects combined to help the listener imagine the spectacle and "opera" simply refers to the large-scale format of the compositions. In this score, I use the term to refer to the composition as a whole, the electroacoustic interludes, and both the process of composing *T-Minus* as well as the processes in the score. Radio operas function as a type of "knee play."

My relationship with radio opera continues to evolve with each project. Radio opera is a process -a living composition that is guided through music notation, text-instructions, and an aural score. The practice was initially focused on non-linear narratives performed as multichannel, fixed-media acousmatic experiences in darkened listening spaces. These electroacoustic compositions became the aural storyboards and scores for live performances with musicians and actors. I have shifted from using recordings of my chamber ensemble as source materials that I would manipulate through musique concréte techniques to providing notated, graphic, text-based phrases and fragments for musicians to control in live performance.

T-Minus is an open score composed of a series of nested and independent structures. It is an invitation for each participant to express themselves and to take the composition in unimagined directions. The score provides a structure that may be interpreted literally or regarded as a guide for a more improvised performance. The fixed-media *radio opera* cues should be regarded as both an aural score with which the musicians may interact and voice in the ensemble.

Electronics in *T-Minus*

The "Tape" part is provided as two stereo audio files: **Front L R** and **Rear L R**. For preparation and rehearsal purposes, a stereo mixdown is provided. There is one cue per movement and the start time is indicated in the score. Tape parts can be faded out manually after the suggested durations or allowed to continue (all cues have built in fades), allowing for more overlap with the ensemble. This can be decided before or during rehearsal. The cues location and suggested durations are:

Intro - Cue 1 (6 minutes) Act I - Cue 2 (4 minutes) Act II - Cue 3 (8 minutes) Act III - Cue 4 (2 minutes) Outro -Cue 5 (4 minutes)

These audio cues, or radio operas, can be regarded as aural scores, sonic environments in which the ensemble can respond.

Cello 1 has a DPA mic attached to the bridge. When it is bowed, it produce a nice deep sound.

The Score

In my initial radio operas, the musicians recorded their parts and I manipulated them in the studio. *T-Minus* gives more creative agency to the Conductor and Musicians who can manipulate the materials in real time. **The tempi** and section **durations** are suggestions and should not be taken too literally. The composition should have room to breathe and to be awkward at times. The tempo is often slow enough to bathe in; the composition moves in and out of periods of meditative stasis and motion. The motions reflect different types of human patterns: wandering, gathering, processions, marching, colliding, floating, dreaming etc.

There are three main components: loops, improvisation rounds, and calling out. Loops

T-Minus features different types of looping patterns. Any loop may be repeated indefinitely, bathing in the different moods and textures; in most sections, 3-5 repetitions or 10-12 seconds for short patterns is a good starting point. There are patterns of stasis and motion (wandering, gathering, marching, etc.). The patterns should feel elastic at times, shifting tempi and textures. Not every part in a loop needs to be played simultaneously -sections can build slowly and musicians can drop out of looping patterns in order to change the textures.

Entrances can be thought of as processions in sections where the material is looped for long periods. Here are examples of possible procession order:

Celli—>Percussion—>Low Brass and Bass—>High Brass—>Woodwinds Flute—>Strings—>Percussion—>Bass Clarinets—>Trumpets—>Low Brass

Loops may be **in phase**, where all the musicians are playing at the same tempo, or **out of phase** (or out of time) loops, where each musician plays the pattern at their leisure,

independently of what others are playing. The results sometimes produce ugly coincidences which should be embraced.

Generative loops may be played in or out of phase. The musician has agency to move freely between looping patterns.

 $\rightarrow \quad \longleftrightarrow \quad \text{any on cue}$ ||: a :||: b :||: c :||: d :||

- a) Musician may proceed to the next measure
- b) Musician may move to the previous or next measure
- c) Musician may go to any measure
- d) Musician may arrive here from C or the conductor's cue and may return to measure *a*

Improvisational Rounds

This is a recurring technique in my music. Players are given the pitch material and may start the cycle at their own leisure. This technique produces a heterophonic improvisation based on the prescribed pitches.

Calling Out

Musicians are encouraged to "call out" at any time. Calling out is simply improvised responses (approval, contradiction, etc.) to what other musicians, including the fixed media radio operas, are doing. This technique works best when musicians actively hear themselves in conversation with the other instrumentalists and call out on their instruments, including voice. A musician is not required to participate in this manner.

Additional Notes

Pitch **cells** indicated before a looping section (see Percussion parts in Intro) identify the notes or drums that can be played in the following section. Notes can be played in any order or rhythm, unless otherwise stated (as in the Tenor drum part).

Pitch **rows** are indicated by stemless note heads. Notes must be played in sequential order, but the musician can control the timing and rhythms.

Arrows indicate the duration of a looping section. The musician may drop out and return until the end of the section.

The Structure

T-Minus is divided into five movements. At the Conductor's discretion, the composition may be performed with or without pause between the movements.

Intro - Hello, World! (6 minutes)

Misterioso. Darkness to light (dawn).

[Cue 1] The radio opera begins in darkness About halfway through, the ensemble creeps, staggers in. Builds from niente to forte and back down to niente. This tutti entrance and exit lasts approximately 2 to 2.5 minutes. The Conductor controls the arc of the swell. The musicians can move between looping sections as notated below. **Cue 1** can be faded out at 6 minutes or fade out slowly as Act I begins.

 $\rightarrow \quad \longleftrightarrow \quad \text{any on cue}$ ||: a :||: b :||: c :||: d :||

- e) Musician may proceed to the next measure
- f) Musician may move to the previous or next measure
- g) Musician may go to any measure
- h) Musician may arrive here from C or the conductor's cue and may return to measure *a*

Act I - The Invitation (16 minutes)

Lonely. Daybreak to sunrise.

Out of time. Sections maybe repeated indefinitely before moving to the next. With [**Cue 2**], the flute and tuba interact/comment with the aural score. Radio opera leads to coda; a groove moves us forward. A procession falling into place.

Act II - The Journey (18 minutes)

Meditative and anxious. Light to dark.

At Section A, pitches are indeterminate as they call and respond. The duration of each call and response should be on the breath. The tutti call and response turns into a tug-of-war, followed by improvisation rounds of the 12-tone row. During the improv rounds at Section C, musicians can play their parts independent of the other, slightly overlapping. Brass (m.17) should play together at least twice; if they continue to repeat, they can become less synchronized. **[Cue 3]** The radio opera is supported by shifting drones. Concludes with responses and calls; shorter, not connected to the rhythm of the breath.

Act III - Arrival (8 minutes)

Floating; menacing to comforting. Blues and purples.

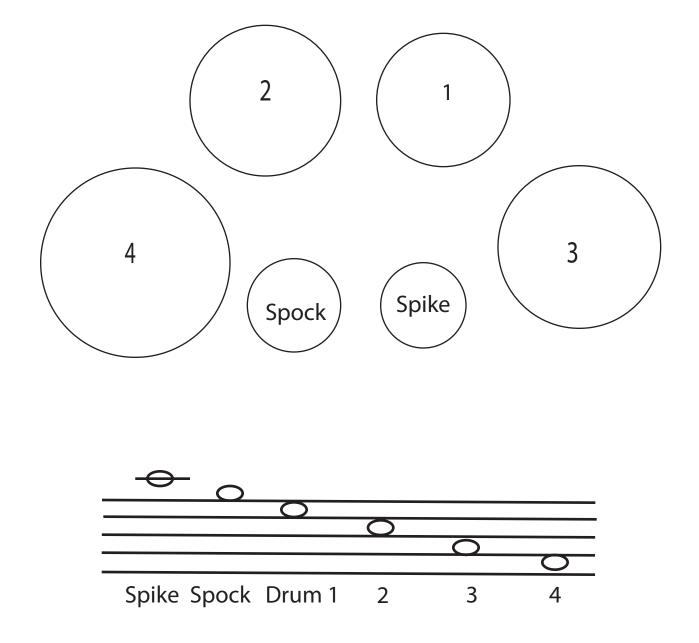
This movement evolves into the sensation of floating which leads to the next radio opera, [**Cue 4**]. There is a chaotic build within the ensemble which is resolved with a reprise of the floating sensation. Act III has text-based instructions which begin at measure 14 while the radio opera is still playing. The section lasts approximately 2 minutes.

- 1) Tenor drums moves from sparse fragments to complete phrases
- 2) Instruments process in gently reflective
 - a) Procession: flute, trombone, strings, clarinets, tuba, trumpet, vibraphone
- 3) Builds to tutti chaos (think of this as a convergence of furious overlapping cadenzas)

Outro - Hello? (4 minutes)

Light to Dark to Light.

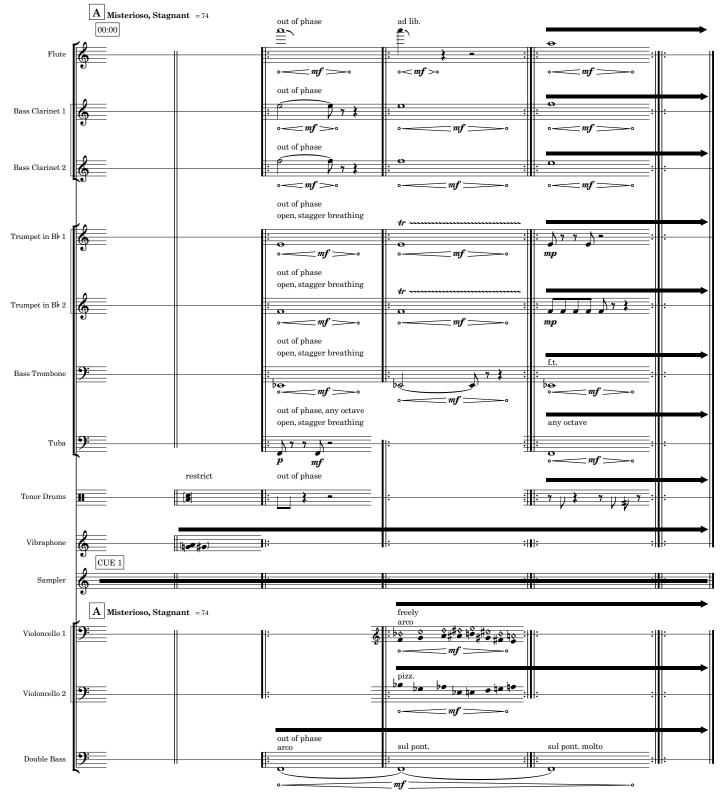
[Cue 5] and the tutti ensemble begin this movement. Halfway through, the ensemble fades to niente, staggered exits.



Transposed Score

Yvette Janine Jackson

Intro - Hello, World!



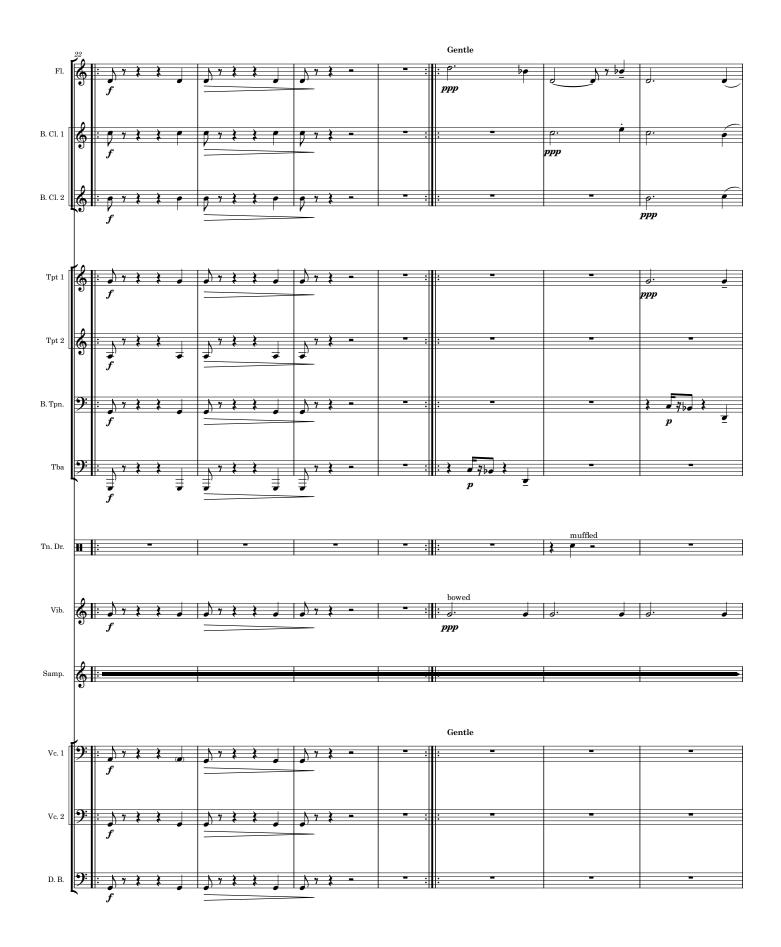
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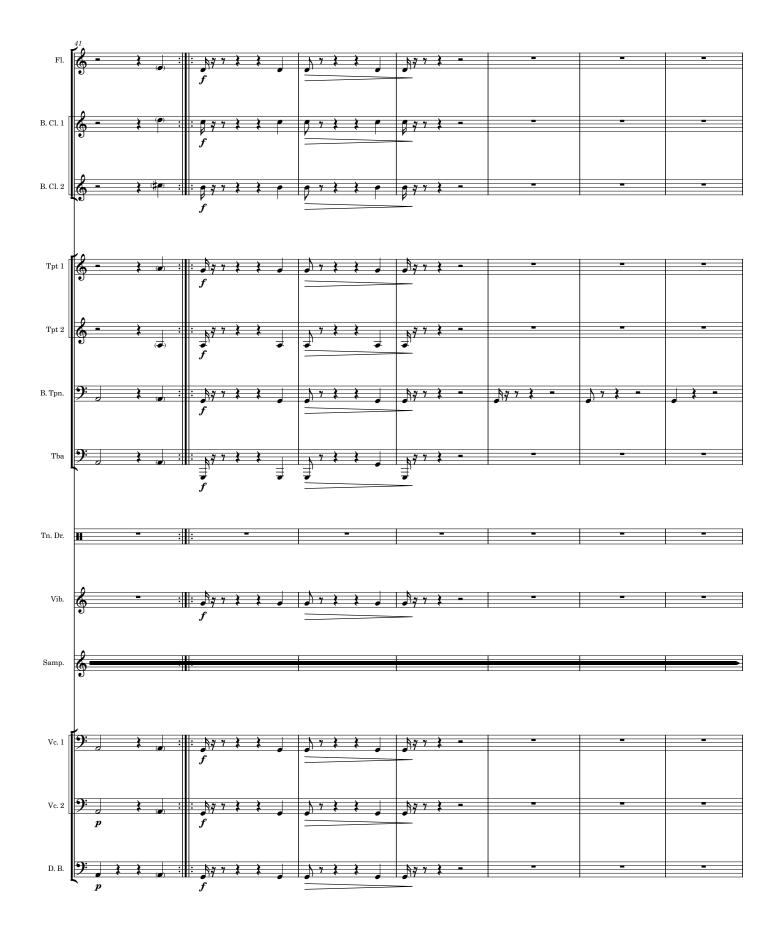




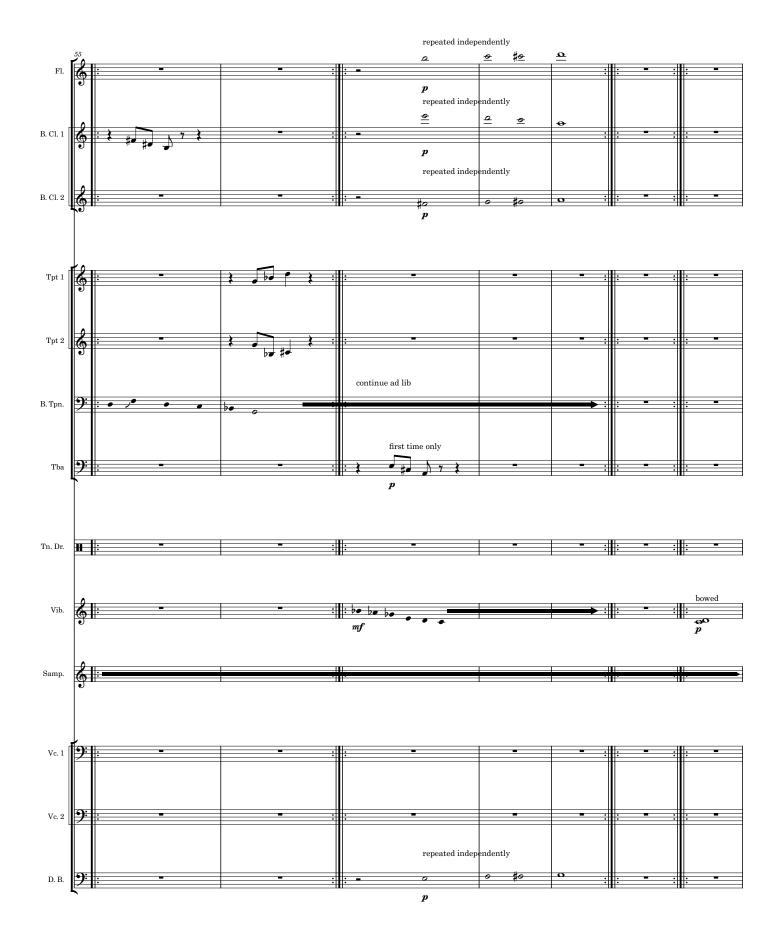


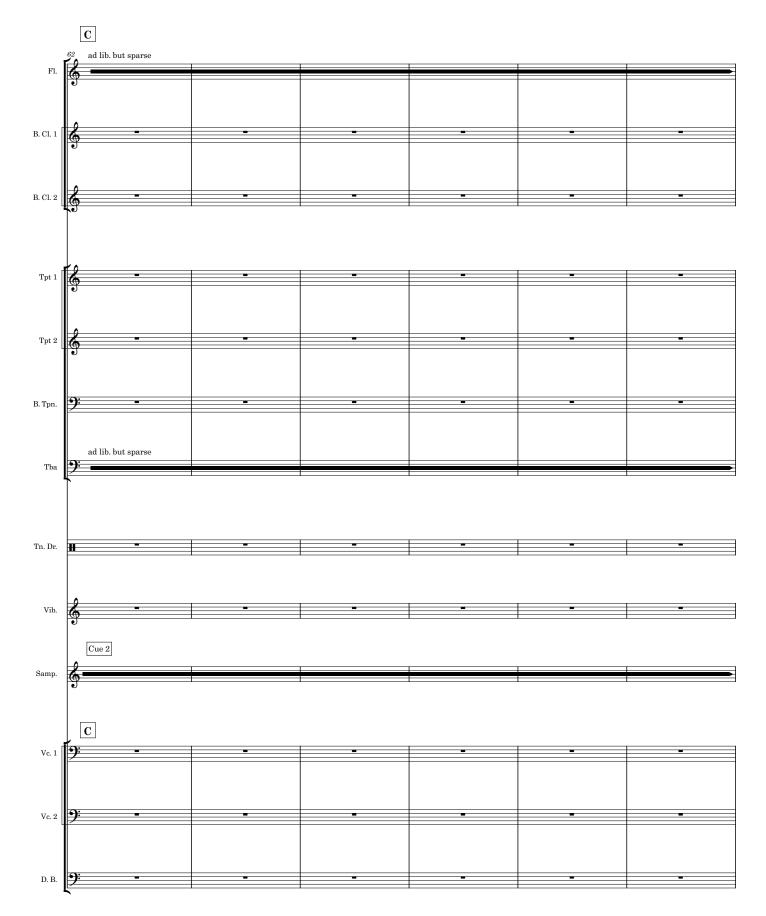


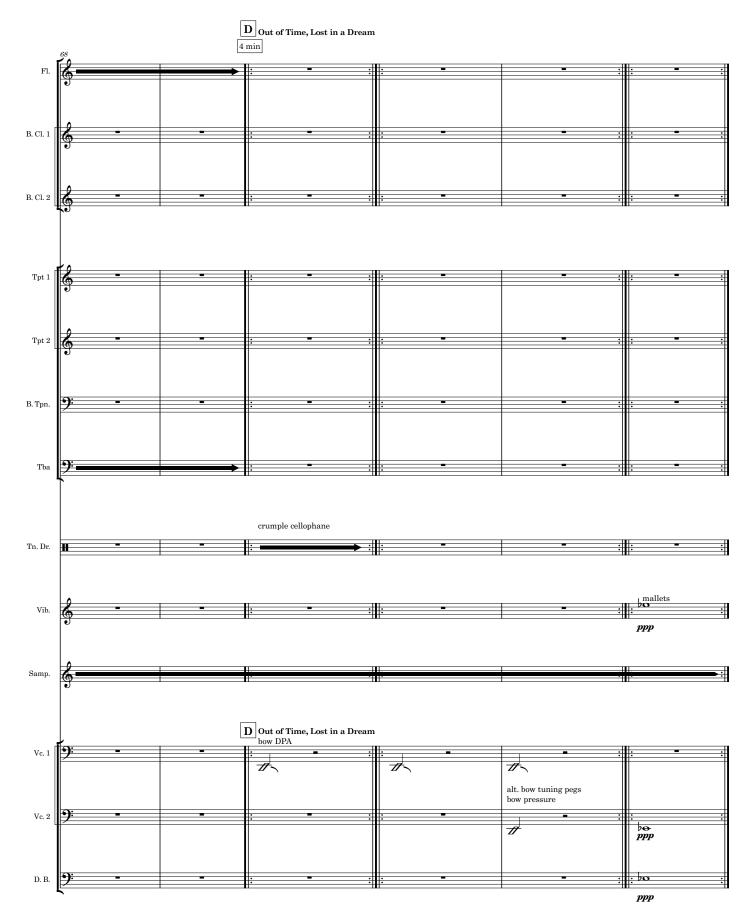




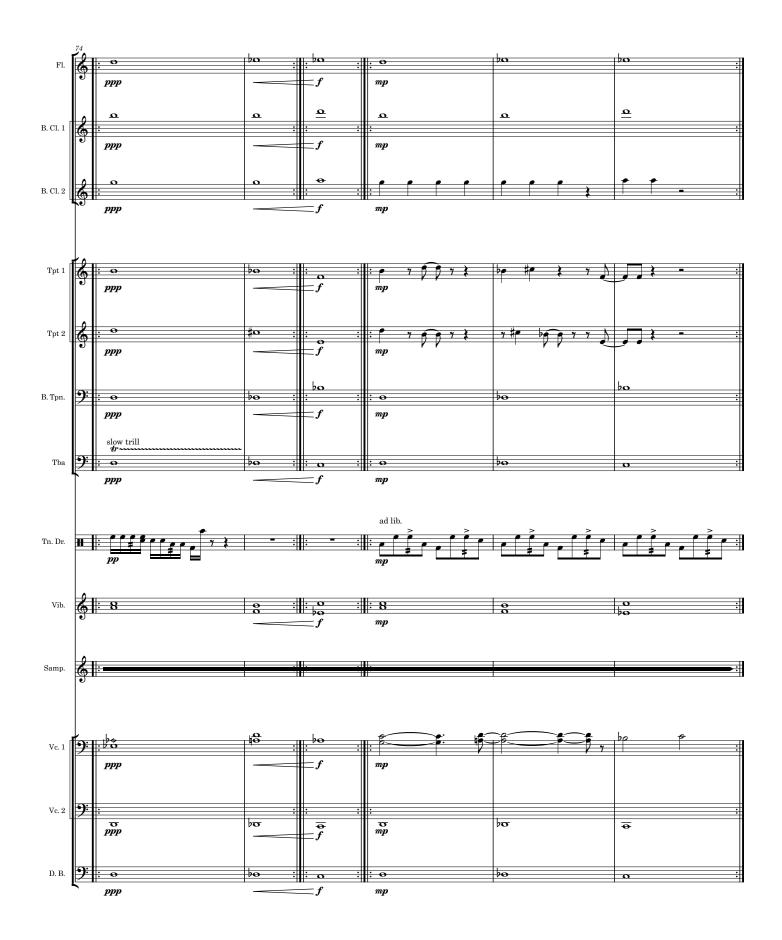


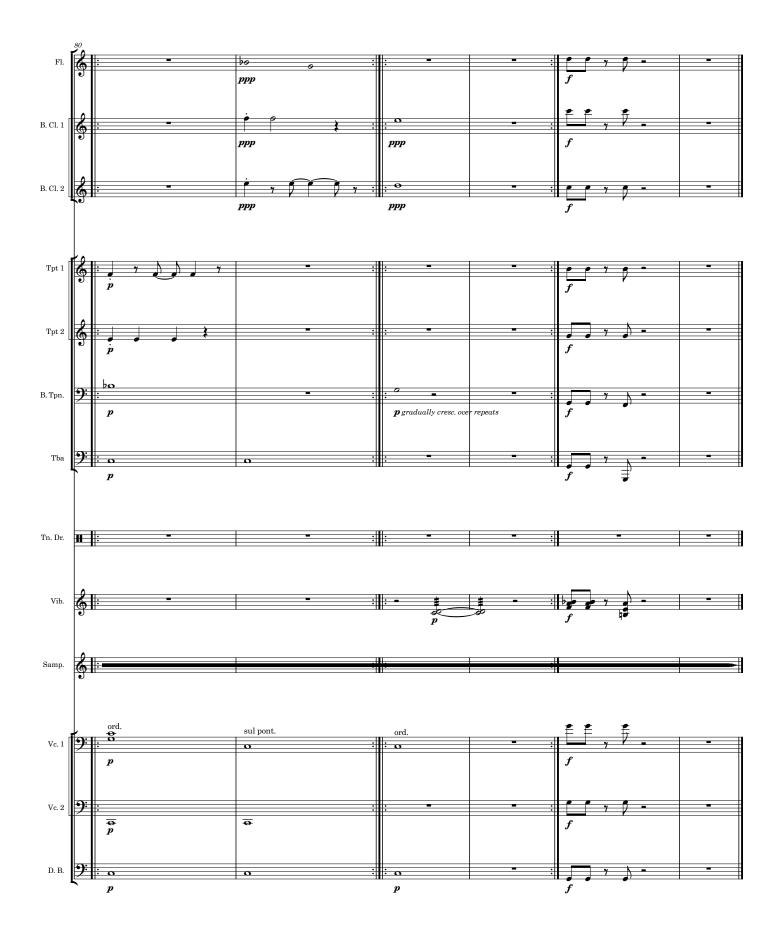






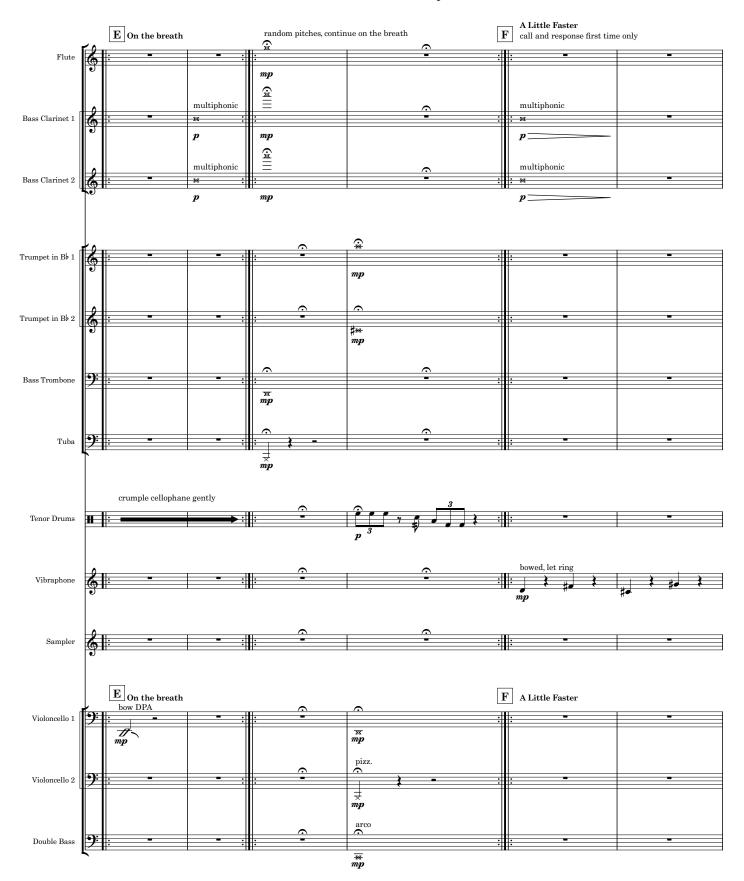
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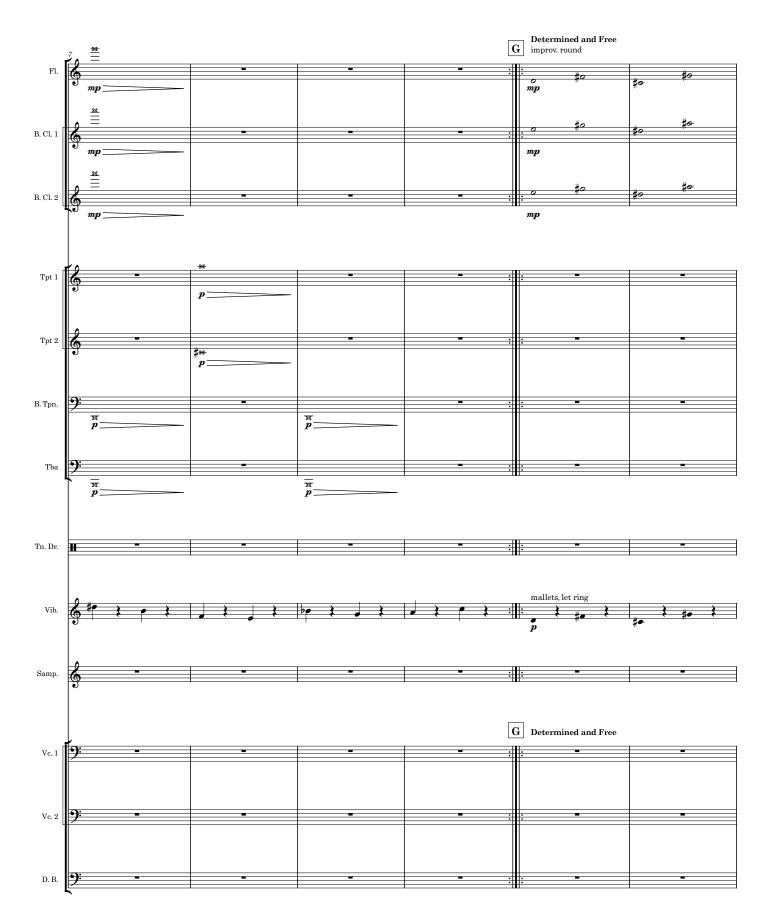


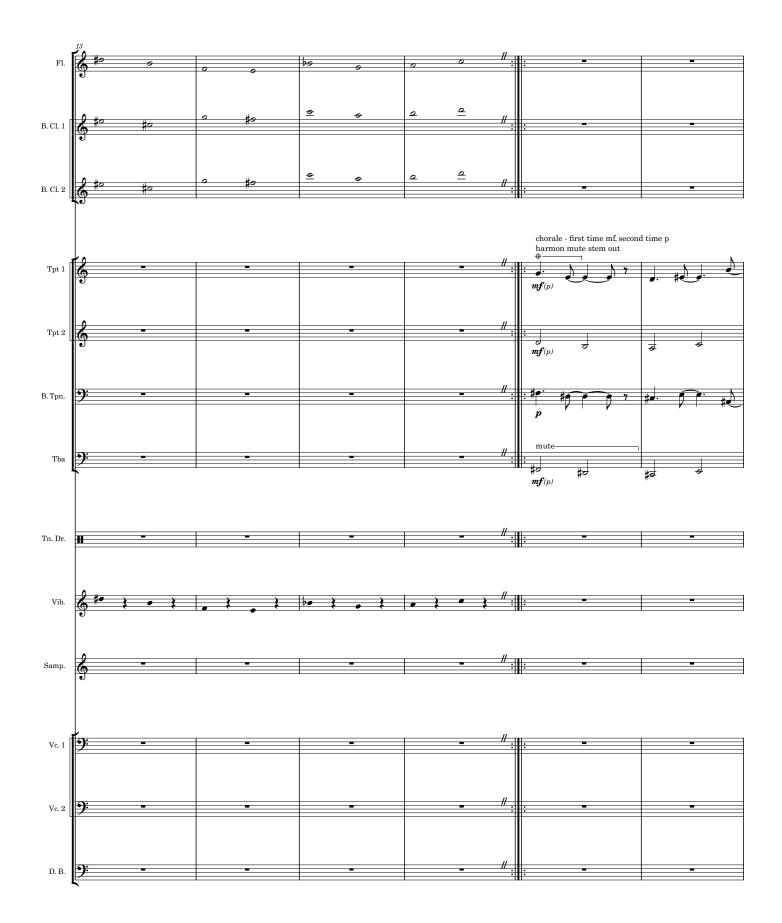


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Act II - Journey



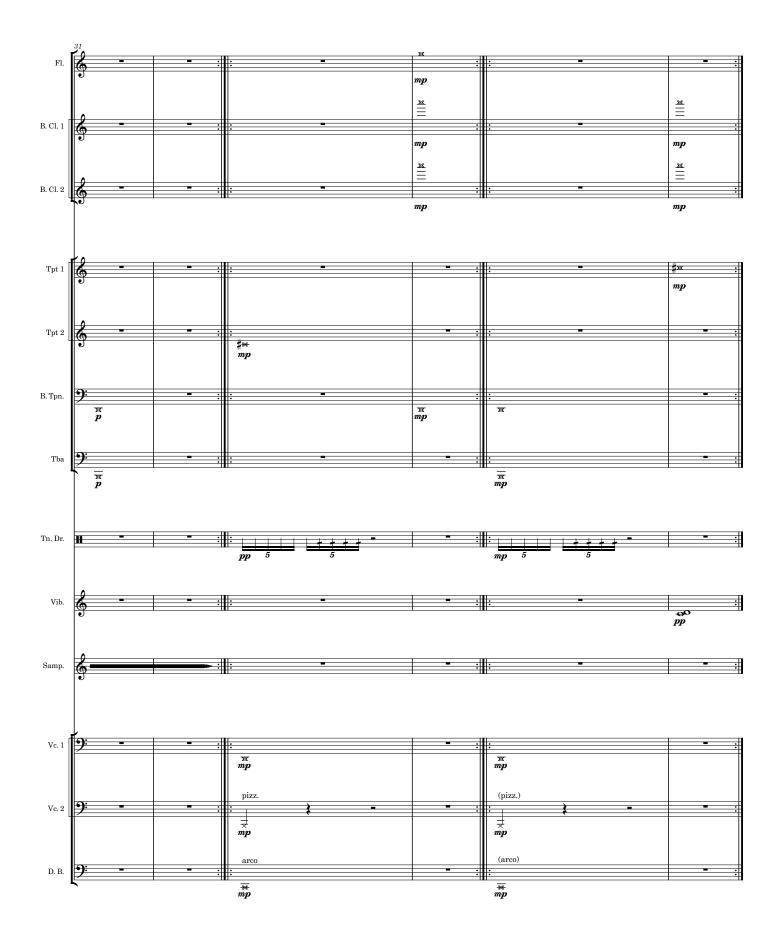


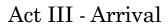


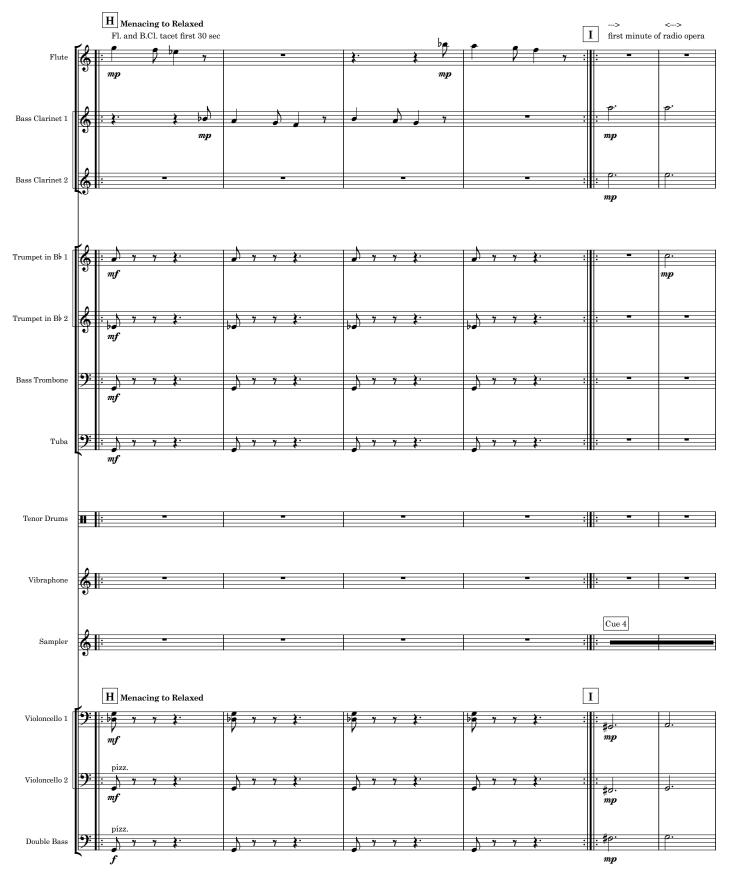


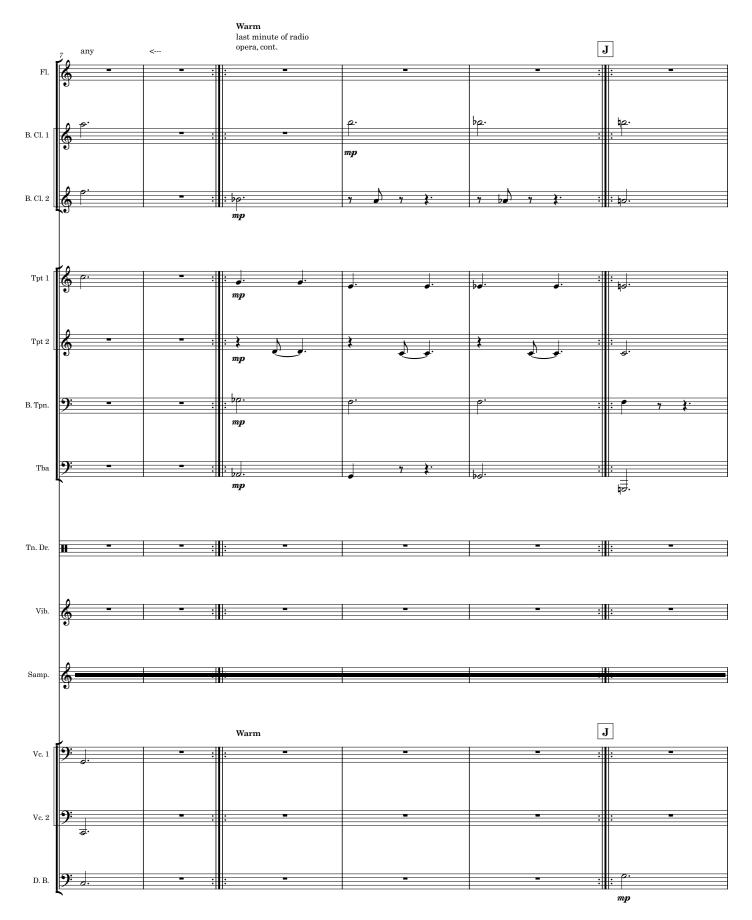
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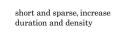




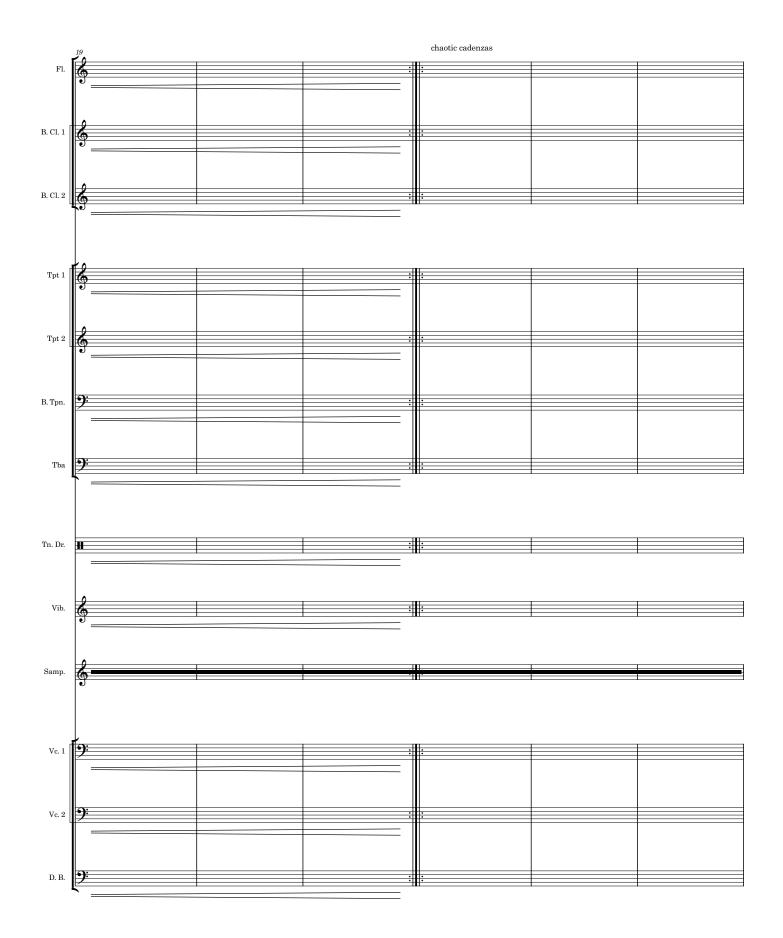














Outro - Hello?

