

# The Performer's Response as Symbolic Space: Exploring the piano music of Charles Griffes

Performers(') Present Symposium

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# Biographical overview

- Born September 17, 1884 in Elmira, New York
- 1903-1907 Studied at the Stern Conservatory, Berlin. Enrolled as a pianist. Composition lessons with Philipp Rüfer and later briefly with Humperdinck
- 1907 Took up a position at a boys school in Tarrytown, NY but frequently commuted into Manhattan
- On the recommendation of Busoni, taken on by Schirmer.
- Started to gain significant recognition from 1918. Important premieres by the Boston Symphony (Monteux) and Philadelphia Orchestra (Stokowski)
- Died April 8, 1920



“The Night Winds flies up and down the keyboard in a shimmering spray of notes, the sighing left hand melody surrounded by a torrent of whole-tone based arpeggios. A sort of "baby" Feux d'Artifice (Debussy), the ending is reminiscent of that of Ravel's Scarbo.”

Lewin, CD liner notes 1999

The languid, sensuous music of "The White Peacock" and its subject were strongly reminiscent of "The Afternoon of a Faun“

NY Tribune, 11 March 1921

“Debussyesque harmony predominates, with however a rather firm chiselled melodic line close to Ravel” (On Griffes’ 1912 Oscar Wilde songs)

Hitchcock, Music in the United States: a historical introduction (2000)

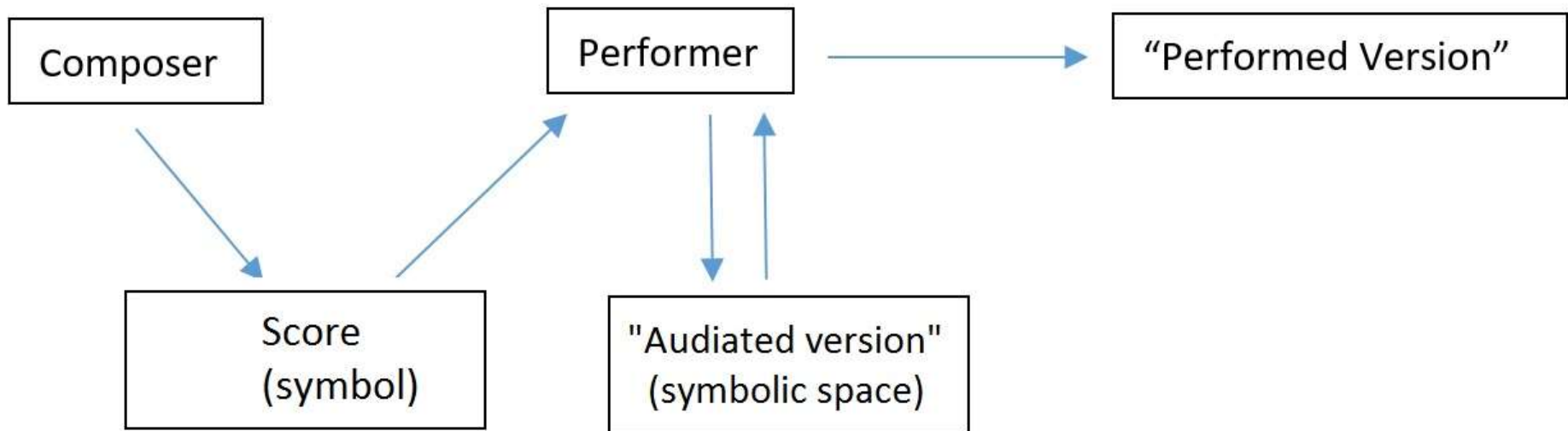
“His use of harp, piano, and celeste evokes colors later used by Bartok; the wind writing is sometimes like Ravel's in Daphnis and Chloe--as well as Stravinsky's in Petrouchka--and solo clarinet lines remind one of Olivier Messiaen”

American Record Guide, 1998

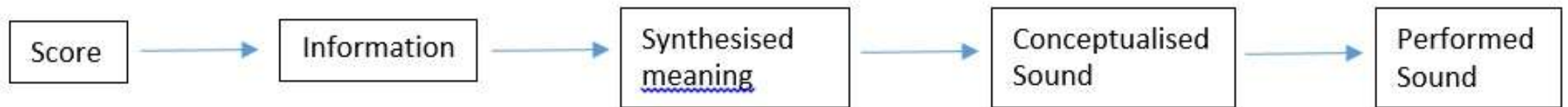
“In about 1911 Griffes began to abandon the German style. The works written from then until about 1917 are highly coloured, free in form, and generally reflect many other elements of musical Impressionism. The piano pieces, for example, are pictorial and employ descriptive titles and/or poetic texts (e.g. *Three Tone-Pictures and Roman Sketches*). But as often as not Griffes added the texts and titles after he had completed the works. Impressionistic moods are established by gliding parallel chords, whole-tone scales, augmented triads, ostinato figures across the bar-line, and other devices.”

Anderson, D. K. (n.d.). *Griffes, Charles T.* (Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press)

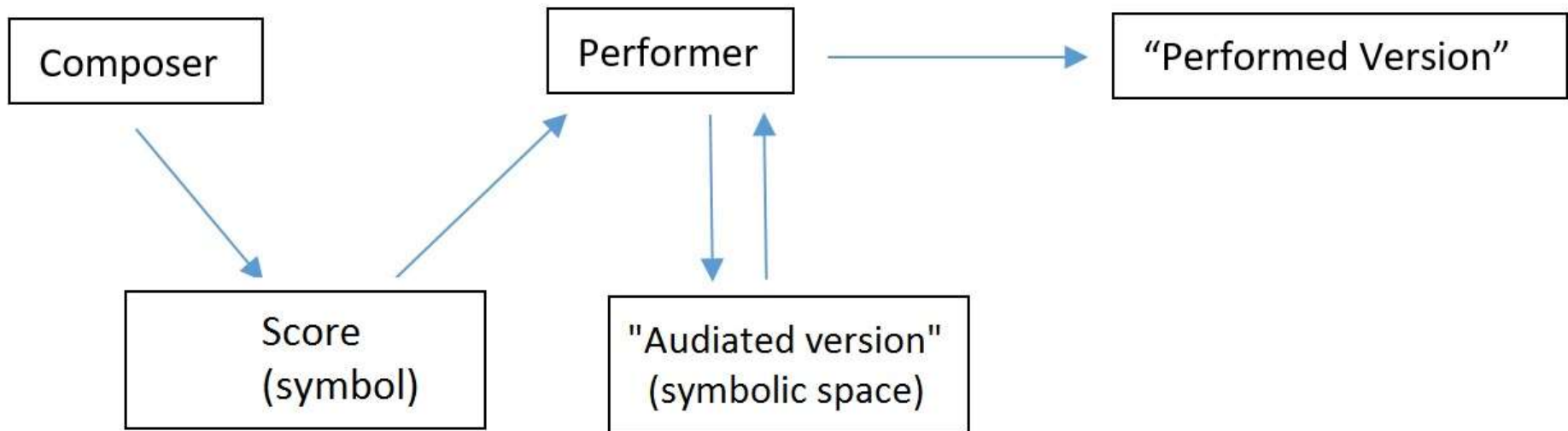
# The Performer's Response: The "Audiated Version"



# Processes of a performer's response



# The Performer's Response: The "Audiated Version"



# Goethe's definition of a symbol

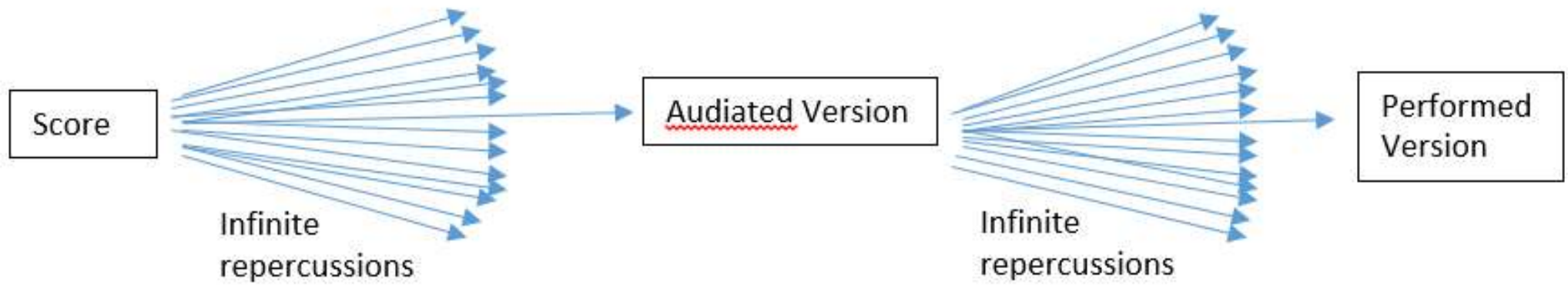
A symbol is that which

“transforms the phenomenon into an idea, and the idea into an image, and does this in such a way that the idea in the image has infinite repercussions, and remains intangible.”

Jarocinski, Stefan, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, trans. from the French by Rollo Myers (London: Eulenberg Books, 1976), 23.



# “Infinite repercussions”



# The White Peacock, from Roman Sketches Op. 7

Here where the sunlight  
Floodeth the garden,  
Where the pomegranate  
Reareth its glory  
Of gorgeous blossom;  
Where the oleanders  
Dream through the noontides;

.....  
.....Where the heat lies  
Pale blue in the hollows,

.....  
Here where the dream-flowers,  
The cream-white poppies,  
Silently waver,

.....  
Here as the breath, as the soul of this beauty  
Moveth in silence, and dreamlike, and slowly,  
White as a snowdrift in mountain valleys  
When softly upon it the gold light lingers:

.....  
Moves the white peacock, as tho' through the noontide  
A dream of the moonlight were real for a moment.  
Dim on the beautiful fan that he spreadeth,

.....  
Dim on the cream-white are blue adumbrations,

.....  
Pale, pale as the breath of blue smoke in far woodlands,  
Here, as the breath, as the soul of this beauty,  
Moves the White Peacock.

WILLIAM SHARP



# Griffes's piano works and orchestration

- The piano version always precedes the orchestra version

White Peacock: Piano version (1915), orchestra version (1919)

- Both scores are complete and self-sufficient
- Piano score is first point of contact with the work and has primacy over orchestra score in my practice
- to **explore the tension and implications** of the differences between the two scores, to **challenge, confirm and enrich the response** that I have already had to the piano score, to **form a synthesised conceptualisation** of Griffes's soundworlds to be **translated** into actual sound

## Defining Sound

- Delineating layers of texture
- Assigning timbral identity (to melodic material, harmonies, expression markings etc)
- Axis of brightness
- Establishing sound worlds

## Enhancing Sound

- Audiating harmonies
- The illusion of altering sound through a held note
- Engineering shine
- Imagining and manipulating layers of resonance
- Expressive resistance
- Orchestral crescendo

Languidamente e molto rubato

Piano

una corda

7

7

pp

ppp

pp

p

pp



# Enhancing Sound: Audiating harmonies

Larguidamente e molto rubato

Piano

una corda dib

The piano part consists of two staves. The right hand has a melodic line with a 7-measure rest, followed by a 3-measure rest. The left hand has a bass line with a 3-measure rest. The tempo is 'Larguidamente e molto rubato'. The marking 'una corda' is written below the first measure, and 'dib' is written below the second measure.

Largamente e molto rubato *I solo*

Flutes I, II

Oboes I, II *I solo*  
*pp esp.*

Clarinets (A) I, II

Bassoons I, II

Horns (F) I, II

Trumpets (F) I, II

Trombones I, II

Percussion

Harp I, II *pp*

Celesta

3  
2

Largamente e molto rubato

Violins I *sord.*  
*ppp*

Violins II *sord.*  
*ppp*

Viola *sord.*  
*ppp*

Violoncello *sord.*  
*ppp*

Double-Bass *sord. (div)*  
*ppp*

*PPP* Copyright, 1917, by G. Schirmer, Inc.  
Copyright renewal assigned, 1945, to G. Schirmer, Inc.

The orchestral score is arranged in a standard format. The woodwinds (Flutes, Oboes, Clarinets, Bassoons) and brass (Horns, Trumpets, Trombones) are at the top. The strings (Violins I, Violins II, Viola, Violoncello, Double-Bass) are at the bottom. The Harp and Celesta are in the middle. The tempo is 'Largamente e molto rubato'. The first section is marked 'I solo'. The Oboe part has a 'pp esp.' marking. The string parts have 'sord.' and 'ppp' markings. The Double-Bass part has a '(div)' marking. The score is copyrighted by G. Schirmer, Inc. in 1917, with a renewal assigned in 1945.

# Defining Sound: timbral identity of melodic material

Motif 1

Larguidamente e molto rubato



una corda

Detailed description: This musical score is for the piano part of Motif 1. It is written in 3/2 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo/mood is 'Larguidamente e molto rubato'. The score features a melodic line in the right hand with a slur and a fermata over the first two measures, and a bass line in the left hand with a slur and a fermata over the first two measures. The first measure of the bass line is marked 'una corda'. There are two '7' markings under the first two measures of the right hand, indicating a seventh chord.

Oboes I, II



I solo

*pp* *espr.*

Detailed description: This musical score is for the Oboes I and II part of Motif 1. It is written in 3/2 time with a key signature of three sharps. The tempo/mood is 'Larguidamente e molto rubato'. The score features a melodic line in the right hand with a slur and a fermata over the first two measures. The first measure is marked 'I solo' and 'pp espr.'. There is a '7' marking under the first two measures, indicating a seventh chord.

Motif 2

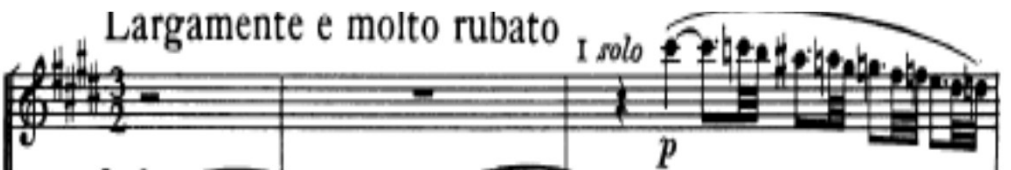


*pp*

Flutes I, II

Detailed description: This musical score is for the piano part of Motif 2. It is written in 3/2 time with a key signature of three sharps. The tempo/mood is 'Largamente e molto rubato'. The score features a melodic line in the right hand with a slur and a fermata over the first two measures, and a bass line in the left hand with a slur and a fermata over the first two measures. The first measure of the right hand is marked 'pp'.

Largamente e molto rubato



I solo

*p*

Detailed description: This musical score is for the Flutes I and II part of Motif 2. It is written in 3/2 time with a key signature of three sharps. The tempo/mood is 'Largamente e molto rubato'. The score features a melodic line in the right hand with a slur and a fermata over the first two measures. The first measure is marked 'I solo' and 'p'.

Motif 4



*pp*

*p*

Detailed description: This musical score is for the piano part of Motif 4. It is written in 3/2 time with a key signature of three sharps. The tempo/mood is 'Largamente e molto rubato'. The score features a melodic line in the right hand with a slur and a fermata over the first two measures, and a bass line in the left hand with a slur and a fermata over the first two measures. The first measure of the right hand is marked 'pp' and the second measure is marked 'p'.

Cl. I II



*solo*

*p*

*espr.*

Detailed description: This musical score is for the Clarinets I and II part of Motif 4. It is written in 3/2 time with a key signature of three sharps. The tempo/mood is 'Largamente e molto rubato'. The score features a melodic line in the right hand with a slur and a fermata over the first two measures. The first measure is marked 'solo' and 'p', and the second measure is marked 'espr.'.



# Defining Sound: timbral identity of melodic material

Motif 3

Orchestral score for Motif 3. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes Flute I & II, Oboe I & II, Clarinet I & II, Bassoon I & II, Horn I & II, Trumpet I & II, Trombone I & II, Tuba, Harp (with first and second positions marked), and Cello. The second system includes Violin I & II, Viola, Violoncello, and Bass. The key signature is three sharps. The Flute I part begins with a first fingering (I) and a dynamic marking of *p*. The Violin I and II parts also begin with a dynamic marking of *p*. The Harp part has a dynamic marking of *mf*.

# Enhancing sound: The illusion of altering sound through a held note

Bar 4

Musical score for Bar 4, featuring a piano accompaniment with treble and bass clefs. The music consists of chords and moving lines in both hands, with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

Bar 37

Musical score for Bar 37, showing the Violin I and II (Vln. I, Vln. II) and Viola (Vla.) parts. The strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano). The Violin parts include a *div.* (divisi) marking.

Piano accompaniment for Bar 37, showing the treble and bass clefs. The music features chords and moving lines, consistent with the piano part in Bar 4.

Musical score for Bar 49, showing the Violin I and II (Vln. I, Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Bass parts. The strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano).

Bar 49

Musical score for Bar 49, showing the Violin Solo (Vln. Solo) and Viola (Vla.) parts. The Violin Solo part features a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking and a *div.* marking. The Viola part also features a *pp* dynamic marking.

Piano accompaniment for Bar 49, showing the treble and bass clefs. The music features chords and moving lines, with a dynamic marking of *ppp* (pianississimo) in the treble clef.

# Defining Sound - Axis of Brightness (bar 5-6)

This block contains the musical notation for the first two staves. The top staff is for Flute I, showing a melodic line with a long slur over two measures. The bottom staff is for Harp, showing a complex arpeggiated accompaniment. The key signature has one flat, and the time signature is 4/4.

Flute I.

This block shows the musical notation for the Flute I part in bars 5 and 6. It features a melodic line with a long slur over two measures, starting on a high note and moving downwards. The staff is empty for the rest of the measures.

This block shows two empty musical staves, likely representing the Flute II and Flute III parts, which are not active in these bars.

This block shows an empty musical staff, likely representing the Clarinet part, which is not active in these bars.

Harp

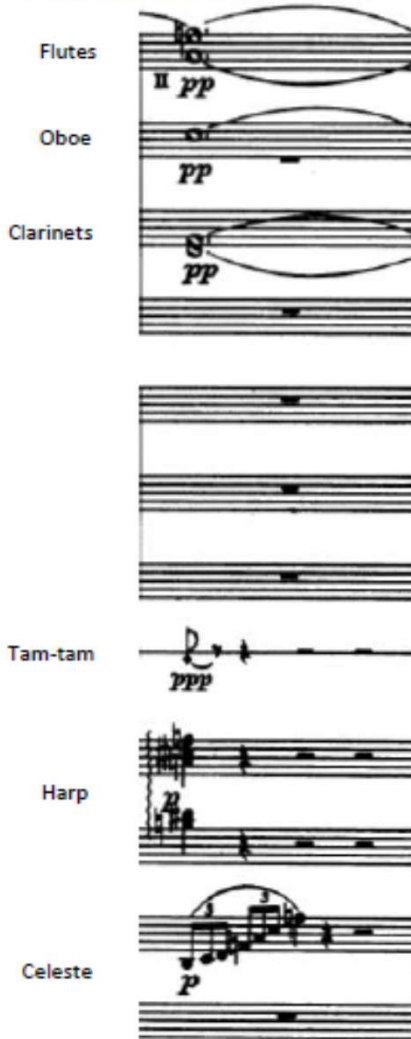
This block shows the musical notation for the Harp part in bars 5 and 6. It features a complex arpeggiated accompaniment with a long slur over two measures. The notation includes various chords and intervals, creating a rich harmonic texture.

# Enhancing sound: Engineering shine (bar 7)

Bar 7, orchestra score



Musical score for Bar 7, orchestra score. The score is in 5/4 time and features a melodic line with a long slur. The dynamics are marked *ppp* (pianissimo) and the key signature is one sharp (F#).



Orchestra score for Bar 7, showing the parts for Flutes, Oboe, Clarinets, Tam-tam, Harp, and Celeste. The Flutes, Oboe, and Clarinets parts are marked *pp* (pianissimo). The Tam-tam part is marked *ppp* (pianissimo). The Harp part is marked *p* (piano). The Celeste part is marked *p* (piano).

Enhancing sound –  
engineering shine (not directly applicable)  
bar 16-17

Musical score for piano, bars 16-17. The score is in 7/4 time and features a complex, multi-measure rest in the right hand. The left hand plays a melodic line with triplets and quintuplets. The dynamic marking is *pp*.

Musical score for orchestra, bars 16-17. The score is in 7/4 time and features a complex, multi-measure rest in the right hand. The left hand plays a melodic line with triplets and quintuplets. The dynamic marking is *pp*.

Fl. II  
Ob. II  
Cl. II  
Ban. II  
Ho. II  
Tpt. III  
Trb. II  
T-T.  
Harp  
Cel.  
Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.  
Bass

*ppp poco cresc.*  
*pp*  
*f*  
*f*  
*f*  
*f*  
*f*  
*f*

# Defining Sound: timbral identity of harmony and expression markings

Bar 19, piano score

Con languore

*p*

This piano score for Bar 19 features two staves. The upper staff contains a series of chords with a fermata over the final chord, marked with the tempo instruction "Con languore". The lower staff contains a melodic line with a fermata over the final note, marked with the dynamic *p*.

Bar 22, piano score

*p esitando*

This piano score for Bar 22 features two staves. The upper staff contains a series of chords with a fermata over the final chord, marked with the dynamic and expression marking *p esitando*. The lower staff contains a melodic line with a fermata over the final note, also marked with *p esitando*.

Fl. I II *con passione* *affrett.*

Ob. I II *p esitando*

Cl. I II *p* *p esitando*

Bsn. I II *pp* *p*

Hrn. I II *p* *p*

Tpt. I II III

Tcb. I II

T-T.  $\frac{3}{2}$   $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{3}{2}$

Harp I *p*

Harp II *p*

This is a full orchestral score for Bars 19-22. The woodwinds (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn, Trumpet, Trombone) and strings (T-T) are shown. The woodwinds have various dynamics and expression markings. The strings play a rhythmic pattern. The harp has a melodic line with a fermata over the final chord, marked with *p*.

Enhancing sound: imagining and manipulating resonance (bar 24-26)

Two systems of piano music. The first system features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a common time signature. The music is marked with a forte *f* dynamic and includes the instruction *affrett.* (accelerando). The second system continues the piece, marked with *f dim.* (forte, decrescendo).

A large section of musical score for strings, labeled 'B' at the top and bottom. It consists of multiple staves for different string parts. The score includes various dynamics such as *pp* (pianissimo), *f* (forte), and *dim.* (decrescendo). It also features performance markings like *molto espr.* (molto espressivo) and *stacc.* (staccato). The notation includes complex rhythmic patterns, slurs, and accents across the different string parts.

Enhancing sound:  
expressive resistance (bars 34-35)

A musical score for piano, showing two staves (treble and bass clef) for bars 34 and 35. The music is in a key with three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 3/4 time signature. The right hand features a complex, rhythmic melody with many beamed notes and slurs. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. A 'dim.' (diminuendo) marking is placed above the right hand in bar 34, with a hairpin indicating a gradual decrease in volume.

Bars 34-35, orchestra score

An orchestra score for bars 34 and 35, consisting of multiple staves for various instruments. The score includes woodwinds (flutes, oboes, bassoons), strings (violins, violas, cellos, double basses), and percussion. The music is in the same key and time signature as the piano score. A 'tempo' marking is present in the lower left, and an 'intenso' (intensity) marking is in the lower right. A blue arrow points from the right side of the image towards the orchestra score.



# Defining sound: Establishing soundworlds

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef, starting with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a dynamic marking of *p*. It features a series of chords and a melodic line. The lower staff is in bass clef, starting with a dynamic marking of *mf pp*. It contains a descending seven-note scale (G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3) with fingering numbers 2, 3, 5, 1, 2, 3, 5. The second system also has two staves. The upper staff continues with complex chords and a melodic line, marked with a dynamic of *p*. The lower staff continues with a descending scale, marked with a dynamic of *pp*. The piece concludes with a final chord in the upper staff.

D

Musical score for woodwinds and strings. The woodwind section includes Flute I and II, Oboe I and II, Clarinet I and II, Bassoon I and II, and Horn I and II. The string section includes Violin I and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Bass. The score features dynamic markings such as *p*, *ppp*, and *pp*. A large slur covers the first two measures of the woodwind parts.

D

Musical score for strings, including Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Bass. The score features dynamic markings such as *p* and *pp*.

Musical score for woodwinds, harp, and strings. The woodwind section includes Flute I and II, Oboe I and II, Clarinet I and II, Bassoon I and II, and Horn I and II. The harp section includes two Harp staves. The string section includes Violin I and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Bass. The score features dynamic markings such as *p*, *pp*, *ppp*, *p cresc.*, and *dim.*. A large slur covers the first two measures of the woodwind parts. A note in the Bassoon part indicates a change to Piccolo.

Handwritten musical score for piano, consisting of two systems of two staves each. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Key annotations include:

- M2**: A large bracket spanning the first system.
- pp**: Piano piano dynamic marking at the beginning and end of the first system.
- all whole tie**: A handwritten note in the first system.
- BbM 2**: A handwritten note in the first system.
- mf**: Mezzo-forte dynamic marking in the second system.
- dim.**: Diminuendo dynamic marking in the second system.
- 5 2**: A handwritten note above the second system.
- EBWT**: A handwritten note above the second system.
- 1 2 3**, **4 5**, **2 3**: Fingerings and other markings throughout the score.

Every note of the chromatic scale represented, except A natural, which is the tonal centre at the start of the middle section

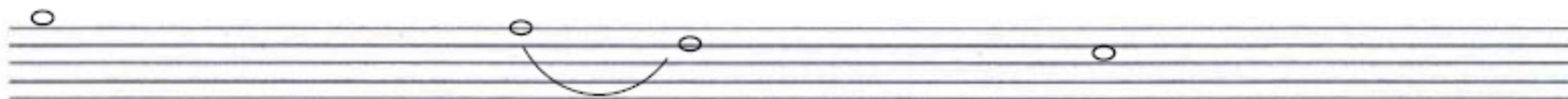
Handwritten musical score showing a chromatic scale in two staves. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Key annotations include:

- pp**: Piano piano dynamic marking.
- 5 3**: A handwritten note above the first staff.

1-2	3-5	6-7	8-13	14-19	20-21	22-24	25-27	28-31	32-34	35-36	37-40	41-42	43
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m2	m2/M2 worlds separate	m2	Minor 2 and Major 2 worlds collide	M2 harmonies	E flat min Gravitational pull	Separate m2 and M2 worlds over e flat minor pedal
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wave	motif	wave	motif extended	Motif fragmented/ developed	M 2   W A V E	Motif	Wave	Resolutions	wave	wave	motif + ext	res.	w
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Presto fuggevole

*pp*

6 6 2

1 2 4 5

Red.

Minor 2<sup>nd</sup> + Perfect 5th

*ff stridente*

9 7

Red.

Major 2<sup>nd</sup> + Augmented 5th

The image shows a handwritten musical score for "Night Winds". It features two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains several chords and melodic lines, with some notes circled and connected by lines. The bass staff contains a few notes, including a half note and a whole note. Below the staves are five handwritten labels:  $V^{b9}$ , WT on tritone, tritone from tonic,  $V^{b9}$  transformed, and WT with tonic. A vertical line is drawn through the middle of the score, and a large bracket spans across the top of the treble staff.

Harmonic reduction of Night Winds.