$The \ Amphibian \qquad \hbox{(Flute, Horn, Bassoon, Bass + 3 Tuvan Throat Singers)}$

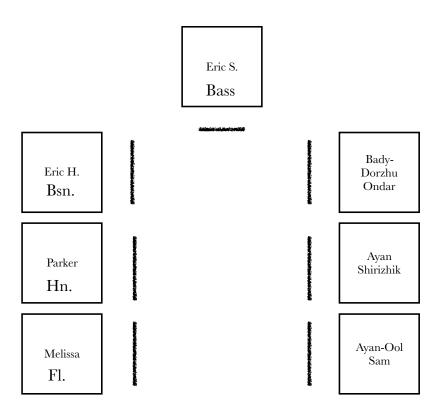
for Fifth House Ensemble + Alash Ensemble



for Fifth House Ensemble + Alash Ensemble

The Amphibian

Staging:



Instrumentation:

Eric S. — Bass, Score-keeping, Narration

Melissa — Flute Parker — Horn Eric H. — Bassoon

Ayan-Ool Sam — Voice (Mostly *Sygyt*), Doshpuluur Ayan Shirizhik — Voice (Mostly *Xöömei*), Xomus Bady-Dorzhu Ondar — Voice (Mostly *Kargyraa*)

Movement I: Finite Game

In this movement, the ensemble plays a game which involves the translation of a code from Overtone #s into various other musical materials.

The code is then recited — passed around one # at a time — by Melissa, Parker, and Eric H as if playing a game of 'hot-potato'.

Whoever holds their breath the longest during this musical-code version of 'hot-potato' is the winner, and gets to progress to the next page.

Eric S. serves as score-keeper and signals the beginning and ending of this section.

Movement II: The Frog in the Well

In this movement, Eric S. tells a story about a frog who lives in a well. Certain words he says trigger evocative music from either side of the ensemble.

Movement III: Infinite Game

In this movement, the ensemble plays a game which involves the interpretation and reproduction of a musical picture, traced in Overtones by Alash.

The picture is first traced in 6 segments, one at a time.

After each segment is traced by Alash, the rest of the ensemble reproduces that segment, and so on, as if in dialogue. This dialogue happens 3 times, and each time members of Fifth House are tracing different parts of the picture.

After this, both Fifth House and Alash trace the entire image together, at once.

General Notes

'The Amphibian' —

The metaphor of the amphibian — a creature who lives both on the land and in the water — has been deployed for thousands of years as an attempt to capture various ways that the human condition is precarious, unsettled, or dichotomous. My use of this metaphor has its roots in the Hegelian idea that we human beings live simultaneously in a 'space of causes' (a realm of *objects* subject to physical law, force, and causation) *and* a 'space of reasons' (a realm of *subjects* capable of belief, meaning, and understanding.)

'Finite and Infinite Games' —

This pair of terms was coined by James P. Carse in his book of the same name. Finite games are games that are played to be won (or lost), and in that sense they are played so that play will end. Infinite games, in contrast, are games which are played so that play might continue. Carse's main point in his book is that the things we care most about — politics, ethics, friendship, pedagogy, romance, parenting, art — should be approached in the manner of an infinite game. This can be seen as a particularly strong version of an argument against 'zero-sum' thinking in politics, for example. Carse argument is that it's the 'sum' which is the truly problematic part of such thinking, not just the 'zero.'

In this piece, I further connect the *finite* with the *space of causes* and the *infinite* with the *space of reasons*. To the extent that we are merely causal objects, we are finite: we can only reach, for example, as far as our arms will let us, we can only hold our breath as long as our bodies will allow. The 1st movement of this work is finite in both senses — it is a game you can win, it involves causal human interactions, it is centered around the physical limitations of our breath.

To the extent that we are communicating, reasoning subjects, we are infinite: our ideas, artworks, and communicative relationships transcend both time and space. The 3rd movement of this work is infinite in both senses — it is an *interpretive* game which cannot be won or lost but will continue indefinitely, it involves the dialogical and creative potential of our breath.

'The Frog in the Well' —

Versions of this children's story — about a frog who thinks he has it all but then realizes his limited perspective — have appeared in many cultures. In my version, the frog's movement out of the well is analogous to the movement from the finite and disconnected to the infinite and communal, or from the space of causes to the space of reasons. I also hope to suggest, however, that such enlightenment is not a one-time thing, but is itself an infinite and open-ended game. The frog, after all, used to be a tadpole ('has this happened before?') and the sparrow, like all of us, is in the bottom of its own metaphorical well ('what a fine, fine world to live in'). This is a story which could loop indefinitely. Along the same lines, the staging is meant to evoke the shaft of a well, but the 'top' of the well is left intentionally ambiguous.

Insofar as we take part in the space of reasons, insofar as we are 'infinite,' we cannot achieve an *exhaustive* or *absolute* understanding of the world, or of each other. The same is true of *artworks*, insofar as we conceive of them as in the space of reasons, as expressive of meanings that can be understood or misunderstood. In this piece, the finite game can be scored — it has a winner — and it can be explained exhaustively in causal terms. But if one were to reveal the 'answer' to the *infinite* game, perhaps by using spectral analysis, one would be back where they began, with another mysterious work of art, a meaningful image demanding the same ongoing and open-ended process of interpretation.

The 2nd movement, wherein the story of the frog is told, sits in-between the clarity of the finite game and the opacity of the infinite game.

Ritual —

Ritual, like many human practices, subtly bares the mark of amphibiousness. On the one hand, ritual often involves strictly prescribed and mechanistic actions. In this way, being a part of a ritual is like being part of a well-oiled machine; you needn't even comprehend rationally the holistic meaning of the ritual, only the strict rules of your particular engagement. On the other hand, rituals are not performed once, they are ongoing and open-ended processes which are not performed for their own sake, but for larger unquantifiable reasons — they are meaningful. In this piece I try to make glimpses of this same amphibiousness noticeable through banal musical rituals (breathing/cueing, page-turning, staging), through connections to children's activities (hot-potato, racing, story-time, tracing), and through more basic elements of human organization (dialogue, eye-contact).

Participation -

As a supplement to this work, I will provide a small audience-booklet which is meant to encourage a sense of participation, particularly from younger audience-members. Parts of this work are superficially more accessible for participation than others. In the first movement, for example, it is possible to keep score of the game being played. And when the game stops abruptly mid-play, this incompleteness is noticeable, and may even be annoying.

In the second movement, it will at first be easy for the audience to follow the children's story, and to associate the music with it. As the story progresses, however, gaps in the narrative may remind audience members that they, like the frog, have an incomplete picture of the world.

The final movement is in many ways the most opaque of the three, and though there are many clues as to its meaning, it is unabashed in the genuine interpretive challenge it presents. My hope is that this kind of open-ended interpretive challenge — the same challenge we face interpersonally, politically, and pedagogically every day — can be seen as just as thrilling and satisfying as the relatively easy achievement of score-keeping, or even as the more familiar tracking of a musically represented narrative.



Logistical Notes for Each Movement

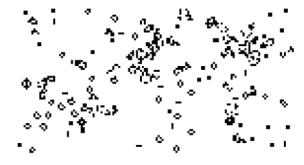
Movement I: Finite Game

The steps of the game:

- 1) **Eric S.** Begins the game by playing a short pizzicato snippet, followed by three pitches which will be used to keep score.
- 2) After this, a member of **Alash** performs a short snippet of music **2x**. It contains a certain ordering of overtones (a **code**).
 - a) The code may change from performance to performance. I have provided two options for each Alash member on each page.
 - b) Only one Alash member performs the code each round the other two can choose to accompany that member with quieter drones.
 - c) Any Alash member can begin the first round it is up to you! After the first round, the order is dictated by the winner of the game.
 - d) The code involves combinations of the following partials: 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13/14 (see chart on the previous page), but on three different fundamentals C, D, E one for each Alash member.
- 3) The **code** is recognized by Fifth House (**5H**) members (except Eric S.), and is then 'translated' by all 3 5H members, all at once.
 - a) 'Translation' = play corresponding bits of music in the order indicated by the code. Each # of code should only last 2" or so.
 - b) When 'translating' all at once, each part of code needn't line up perfectly between 5H members it can be a bit messy.
- 4) Following this, the **5H** member across from whoever sang the code 'translates' the **1st #** of the code, alone.
 - a) So, first everyone 'translates' the whole thing at once, then one person 'translates' just the 1st #.
- 5) The 5H member to their right then 'translates' the **2nd** # of the code, then the next 5H member 'translates' the **3rd** #.
- 6) This one-at-a-time 'translation' of the code happens **on a single breath** for each performer.
 - a) So, once the one-#-at-a-time cycle starts, try to hold your breath.
- 7) When a 5H member runs out of breath, they should breath audibly, so it is easy to tell who is 'out.'
 - a) The remaining 5H members continue the game until there is only one person left holding their breath.
- 8) The last 5H member to breathe 'wins'.
- 9) The 5H winner and all members of Alash then move to the next page (the losing players stay on the same page).
 - a) When 2 5H players have advanced to the next page, the third player should also advance.
 - a) Alash should only move to the next page if there is a 5H member who has also moved on to that page.
 - b) The score will be announced (musically) at the end of each round by Eric S.
- 10) The Alash member across from the winner then starts the next round of the game.
- 11) The end of the game will be suddenly announced by Eric S. in the middle of play he will play a louder version of the score-keeping music.

Additional considerations:

- 1) Please, do not take the rules too seriously, especially when it comes to holding your breath! This is supposed to demonstrate a game, more than actually be a genuine competition.
- 2) The game will get harder the farther you go. Hopefully this will encourage variation in winners of each round.
 - a) Each time the winner moves on to the next page, the code will become one number longer.
 - b) So, if Melissa wins the first round with Code: **6-8-9**, and the next code is **6-8-9-10**, she will begin the on-#-at-a-time cycle with **6**, Eric H. will play **8**, Parker will play **9**, and Melissa will play **10** and **6**. Parker and Eric H will only play with the first 3 #s.
 - c) If Parker wins that round, both he and Eric will move on the 4-#-Code page. If Melissa wins again, she will be on the 5-#-Code page, while Parker and Eric H will still be on 3-#-Code page. So if the code is then **6-8-9-10-12**. She will play **6**, Eric **8**, Parker **9**, and then Melissa has to play **10-12-6**.
- 3) Feel free to rig the game to ensure a more even distribution of winners. (The fact that this is a game which *can* be rigged is actually philosophically interesting you can't 'rig' a relationship, for example, and that tells you something about relationships.)
 - a) Also feel free to just settle on a pre-ordained sequence of codes if the unpredictability is too challenging.
- 4) Also feel free to use strategy *a la* hot-potato. (You may prolong or shorten your 'translations', but you may not simply wait in silence the game has to keep moving at a pretty constant clip.)
- 5) This movement should last around 3 minutes. If it is finishing much too soon, try rigging to have a more even distribution of winners. If it is taking forever, Eric S. will simply end play after 3 minutes or so.
 - a) If it's taking forever to complete even one round, try pushing the speed of either the 5h or Alash parts. Playing the code only once (instead of 2x) may also cut down on some time.
- 6) Try to avoid playing exactly 3, 6, 9, or 12 complete rounds (to ensure a single winner at the end of play).
- 7) Feel free to subtly express joy or disappointment with winning or losing a round, but also try to maintain a sense of this process as mechanistic. The ideal is that the audience feels a bit like they are watching a slot-machine: satisfying to follow the mechanism, maybe even somewhat absorbing, but ultimately not exactly a deep, humanistic experience.



Movement II: The Frog in the Well

There are 8 stanzas of narration (4 on IIa, 4 on IIb) — read by Eric S — and each should last around 20-30". This movement should be approximately 3-4 minutes, but this may vary, so please feel free to adjust the timing if the movement is concluding way too quickly or too slowly.

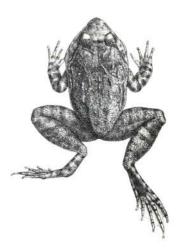
In rehearsal, you should be able to get a feel for which stanzas to stretch and which can be pushed along. It isn't a big deal if you get a little behind or a little ahead — my concerns are only that it isn't way too long or way too boring.

There are plenty of timing things that need to line-up within each group (3 5H members / 3 Alash members), and for those moments you have full visibility of each relevant part on your score. There is also one moment in Movement II which involves the 5H and Alash sides of the ensemble linking up temporally. This occurs after the word 'SWOOPED'. The idea here is that the 5H members turn their pages to create a rhythmic 'triplet' whooshing sound moving toward Eric S. Then, in that same rhythm, Alash members turn their pages to create the same whooshing triplet sound in the opposite direction.

Feel free to emphasize any of the programatic aspects of this section. For example, if you have a way of making your illustration corresponding to 'BUGS' more BUG-y, go for it!

Eric S. will be telling the story aloud, and the cues for this section are largely verbal. I have also put small roman numerals by each of the cue-boxes in Eric S's part — these can be used to cue Alash non-verbally (perhaps by holding up fingers or nodding, etc), if that is more feasible.

Another (really awesome, I think) option would be to say the cueing-words in both English and Tuvan — if that is possible, it would really be true to the spirit of this movement and it would make practical sense, so that'd be fantastic.



Movement III: Infinite Game

This movement involves Alash 'tracing' an image in overtones, and 5H attempting to reproduce/re-trace that image using their own instruments/grid. I have provided my own example of a crude drawing (page: 'III-Alash') of the 'horseman and dirigible' stamp, but any equally meaningful image will suffice.

Members of the 5H ensemble needn't be aware of the image ahead of time — the image can be changed every performance.

The image will be traced in 6 segments.

Alash (all 3 members at once) will begin by tracing (singing) the **1st** segment, and this segment should last around 5 seconds.

While Alash is playing the 1st segment, 5H should be both **inhaling slowly** and **paying attention** to the shape being traced by the Alash member across from them.

After the 1st segment is played, 5H members should (all at once) re-trace what they observed in that 1st segment (also around 5 seconds).

While 5H is doing this, 'retracing' the 1st segment, Alash should be **inhaling slowly**.

(Basically, you should always either be performing or inhaling slowly — the whole ensemble is breathing back-and-forth throughout this section)

When 5H has finished, Alash should begin the **2nd** segment.

This dialogue of tracing and re-tracing continues until all 6 segments have been traced and re-traced (around 1 minute).

Then, the **entire** process repeats, but with each 5H member re-tracing from a *different* Alash member, and then a **final third time** with each 5H member re-tracing from the *remaining* Alash member.

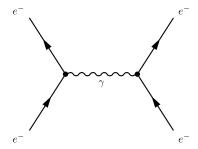
All told, these 3 dialogues should last around 3'30".

The ordering of which 5H member is lined up with which Alash member in each tracing isn't important—this can just be decided via eye-contact before each full dialogue. It **is** important, however, that only one 5H member can be paired with one Alash member during each dialogue. (Each Alash member is 'tracing' a different part of the image—top, middle, bottom—and it is important that the *entire* image is being traced/re-traced at all times. ie: two 5H members should not both be re-tracing the *middle* section.)

Between the rounds of tracing/re-tracing dialogue, Eric S will be playing his own thing. Other members of the ensemble can essentially ignore this, and continue on with the next round of tracing after a small break of 10 seconds or so.

After these 3 back-and-forth dialogues are complete, both sides should then 'trace' the entire picture together, at once, and more quickly than before (around 3 seconds per segment). This 'full all-together trace' can be repeated another time, even more quickly and smoothly, if that seems appropriate.

If it helps, you can touch the score with a free hand during this movement, to help you trace the right path. If this movement becomes too slick/predictable, begin closing your eyes while playing (only opening your eyes during inhalations).



Performance Notes for Each Movement

Movement I: Finite Game

Bass: Your role in this movement is as score-keeper and time-keeper. The game should end at around 3 minutes, but this can be reduced/stretched based on your own sense of the timing/pacing of the whole work. Your page "**I. Bass**" should explain everything you need for this first movement.

Winds: Your pages for this first movement are labelled **I. 1** through **I. 4**, on the same pages as Alash (just upside-down...)

Above each snippet of music there are some #s, which correspond with harmonic series #s **6**, **8**, **9**, **10**, **12**, and **13/14** (see chart earlier in notes).

After hearing the order of harmonic #s, you first translate those, playing them all together in a sequence. There should be space between each #.

Then, the game of musical hot-potato plus breath-holding contest begins. The person opposite the Alash member who performed the code should start.

Between each round, Eric S will announce the score, musically.

The game continues until Eric S ends play, by interrupting it, loudly, with his playing.

****Parker — Mvt I is written in F, the rest of the work in C

Round noteheads: Ordinary playing

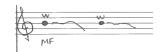


Square noteheads: pitchless air through instrument (staff indicates relative 'pitch' or 'brilliance')



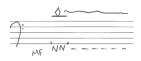
W noteheads: whistling (not through instrument)



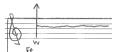


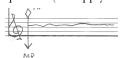
Diamond noteheads: Singing through instrument ('NN' = humming through nose)





Up Arrow/Down Arrow: High/Low as possible (can apply to singing/whistling/etc)





Up Arrow with lines: Squeaky, High-Pitched Kissing Sound



Helicopter tonguing:



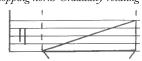
Whistle tones (random changes):



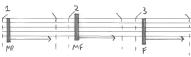
Key-click arpeggios:



Gradually stopping horn/Gradually rotating mouth over tone hole:



Multiphonics (numbered 1-3... should be gradually louder/more raucous):



Rests of relative length:



Alash: Your pages for this first movement are labelled **I. 1** through **1. 4**, on the same pages as Fifth House (just upside-down...)

For the first round of this game, you will have to choose one performer at random, and that performer will have to choose one of the two options on their page.

That choice will be performed by that person (alone or with droning, quiet, improvised accompaniment) **twice (2x)**. Your singing of the code should happen relatively quickly — perhaps 5 seconds for the 3-note versions on I. 1, getting longer from there).

You then wait for the Fifth House ensemble to finish their breathing-game, and for Eric S to announce the score using his Bass. After each round, turn to the next page.

The Alash member **opposite the winner of the previous round** is the one who begins the next round.

This continues until Eric S ends play, by interrupting it, loudly, with his playing.

Movement II: The Frog in the Well

Once upon a time there was a **Frog** who lived at the bottom of a well. He had plenty of **water** to drink, and plenty of **bugs** to eat.

A disk of *sky* shifted above his head. 'What a fine, fine world to live in,' thought the **Frog**

But no-one ever visited the Frog; he was **alone** at the bottom of a **well**.

One day a *Sparrow* sat at the top of the well and called down to the Frog: 'Frog, come up out of the dark well and **play** with me!'

But the frog did not understand, and could only sit in **silence**, staring at the Sparrow. Frustrated, the Sparrow **swooped** down and picked the Frog up.

He flew the Frog over tall *mountains*, thick *forests*, and vast **seas**. 'Do you understand now?' said the Sparrow to the Frog.

But the Frog was stunned by this new *perspective*. "Has this happened before?," he wondered, as the Sparrow placed him on the ground.

'What a fine, fine world to live in,' thought the Sparrow, as he flew into an empty sky.

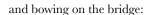
Bold = Cues one side.

Bold and italic = Cues both sides.

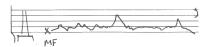
Bass:

Your role in this movement (page IIa/IIb) is the narrator and the cue-er of both sides of the ensemble. I would suggest speaking slowly, with plenty of time taken during commas or other breaks. Generally speaking, each stanza (8 total) should last from 20 to 30 seconds. Text always moves from Left to Right, and from Top to Bottom. Your words also cue your own playing. Only play the sections as indicated with dotted lines and arrows. These chunks of music (which sometimes repeat) are not necessarily written in any particular temporal order — they are just chunks waiting to be cued by the text.

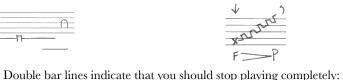
This clef indicates lateral bowing:



and 'perforated,' scratchy, lateral bowing:







Some playing should resemble the rhythm of speech:

Arrows represent repeating the previous chunk:



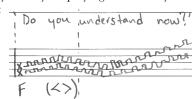




This 'censor-block' indicates that the playing should overshadow or censor the word:



Dynamics may cause your playing to 'censor' your speaking in other places as well:



Your role in this movement (pages **II L a** and **II L b**) is to represent the narrative of the story being told. You are cued by the words presented in boxes.

Horizontal arrows indicate to repeat the previous chunk, while curved arrows indicate to go right onto the next chunk:



Big arrows represent repeating the previous chunk as a group:

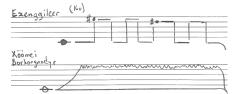


Alash: Your role in this movement (pages **II R a** and **II R b**) is to represent the narrative of the story being told. You are cued by the words presented in boxes. Vocal techniques are always listed, as are instrumental parts.

"Blow" means to exhale audibly, while "Snore" means to inhale regularly in a way that sounds like someone sleeping:

Borbangnadyr and Ezenggileer effects can be improvised

I provide a small picture to indicate the general speed/intensity of change:





Movement III: Infinite Game

Bass: Refer to **III Bass** — hopefully everything you need to know is there.

Winds: Your role in this movement (page III — different versions for each player) is to re-trace the shapes that Alash traces for you. This happens in six segments, corresponding with the six columns of boxes on your page. Each Alash member will be using a single vocal technique (Kargyraa/Low, Xöömei/Mid, Sygyt/High) which corresponds with a pair of the four rows of boxes on your page. The corresponding Fundamental or Overtone for each vocal technique is indicated to the left of the boxes.

The material in each box is not played all at once, but it may smear or overlap depending on what Alash traces.

For example, look at the lowest box to the left, which corresponds with the first segment and the fundamental or 6th partial of the Kargyraa style.

If the **Kargyraa** performer gradually slid their fundamental pitch up and then down, you might begin by playing the texture on the very bottom stave, and then gradually transform/meld it into the second-to-bottom stave in that box, and then return back.

If the **Kargyraa** performer instead began on a fundamental, but then shot up quickly to the **9th partial** and stayed on that for several seconds, you would — perhaps very messily and unpredictably — quickly slide up through the various techniques/textures/sounds written in the bottom two boxes in the left-most column, arriving finally at the 8th-from-bottom stave (the one which corresponds with the 9th partial), and continue playing that texture/stave for several seconds.

In any vocal style, the performer may jump rapidly back and forth between two partials — this should be taken as sort of a 'coloring-in' of a section of the grid, and may be re-traced by you either by jumping rapidly back and forth **or** by blending the techniques/sounds of the 'colored-in' section.

Alash: In this last movement (page **III. Alash**) your role is to trace an image using your voices.

The **Kargyraa** style and the **Xöömei** will involve tracing with both the fundamental and the overtones, while the **Sygyt** will be tracing with only overtones.

The **Kargyraa** style will be used to trace the bottom of the image, the **Xöömei** will be used to trace the middle, and the **Sygyt** will be used to trace the top.

You can trace any image you find meaningful to this piece and its themes, though you will all have to decide and agree before hand amongst yourselves.

For convenience, I have provided (on page **'III. Alash'**) you with an image I think is particularly meaningful — a crude rendering of the old 'horseman and dirigible' Tuvan stamp. So, feel free to stick with what is provided — I just wanted it to be possible for you to choose something else if you wish.

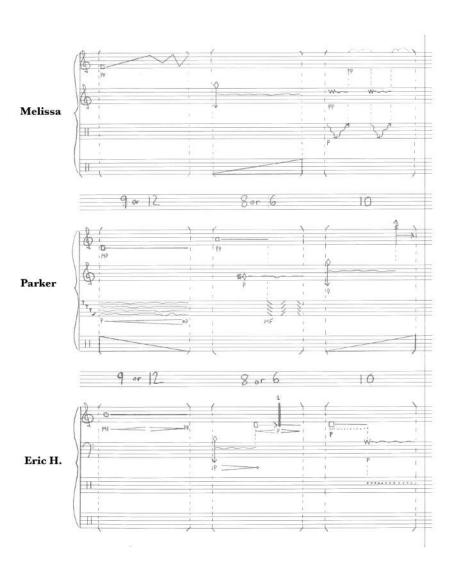
I thought this particular image was an interesting example of many things relevant to the themes of this piece — not just as an analog to the frog and the sparrow, or to the fundamental and the overtone, but also for its symbolic role in captivating Richard Feynman and accelerating the Western appreciation of Tuvan culture. More subtly, the stamp's problematic contrasting of Tuva with modernity — a result of its apparently having been made not in Tuva, but in Moscow, as a way of cynically capitalizing off a manufactured Tuvan exoticism — points to the exact objectifying tendency I hope to elucidate the dangers of in this musical work. There is something deeply *amphibious* about this strange combination: that something so formative to Alash's project of transcendent cross-cultural communication also contains within it the trace of that which so often stands in its way.

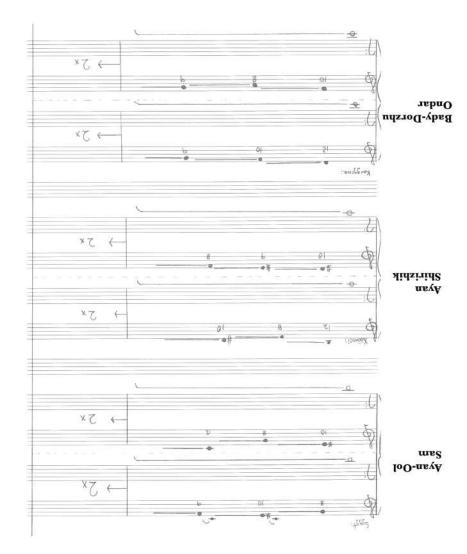






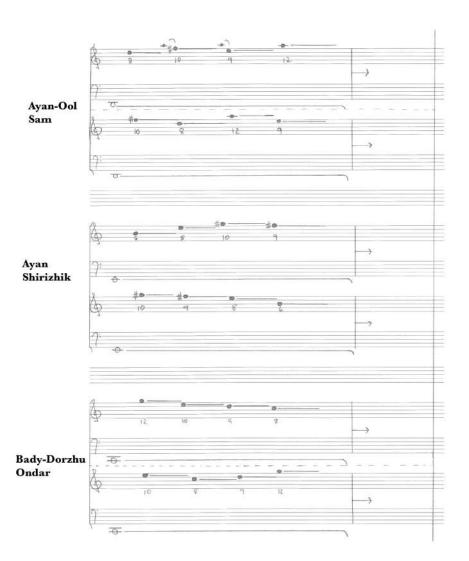




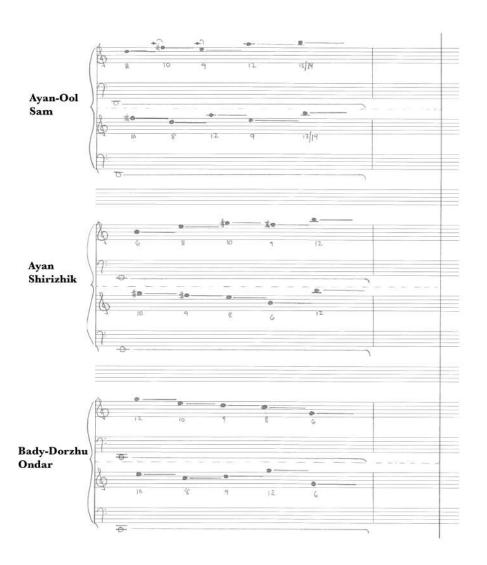


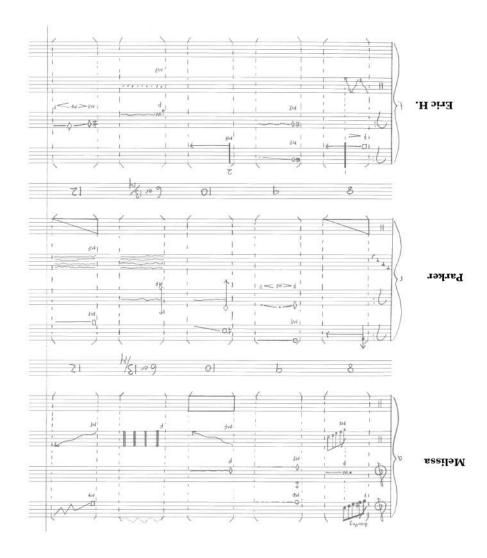
Proto



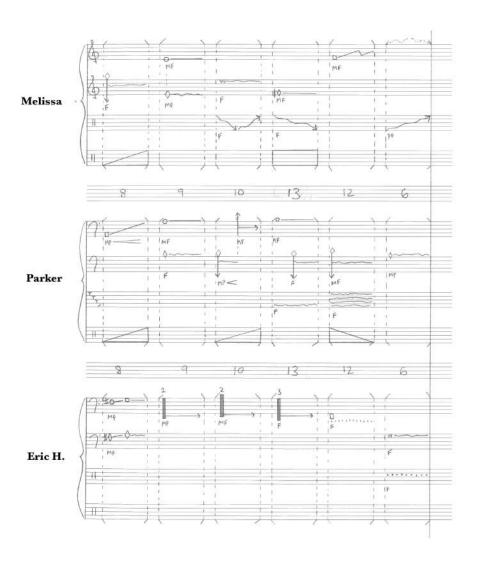


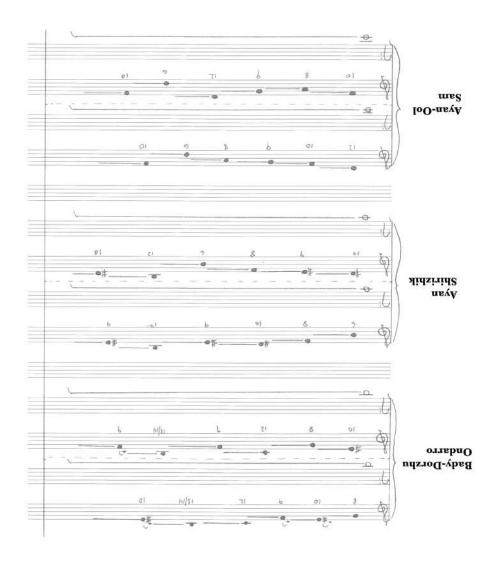




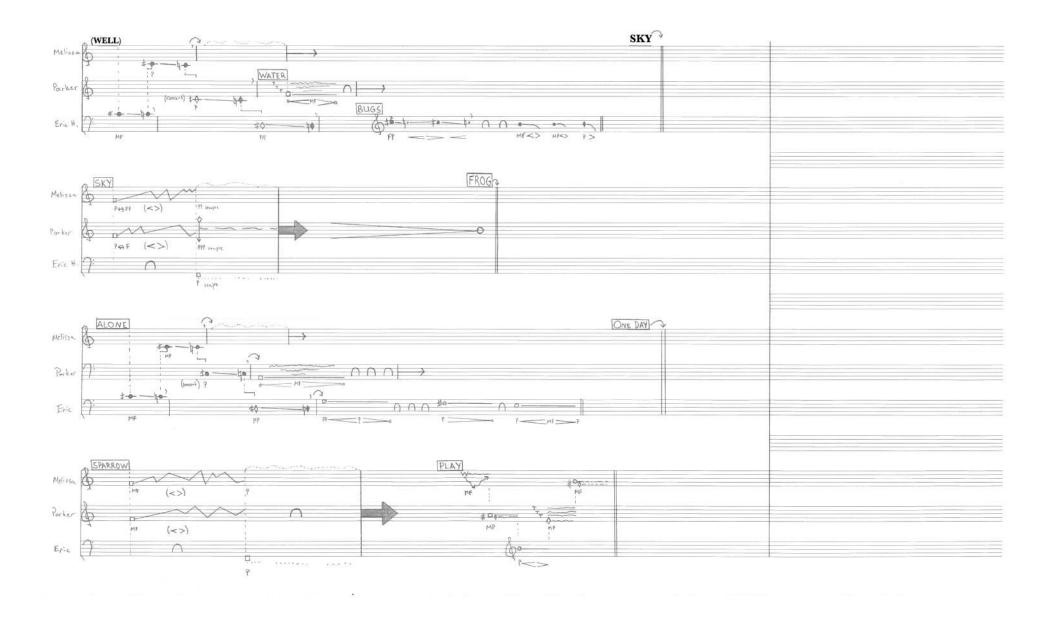




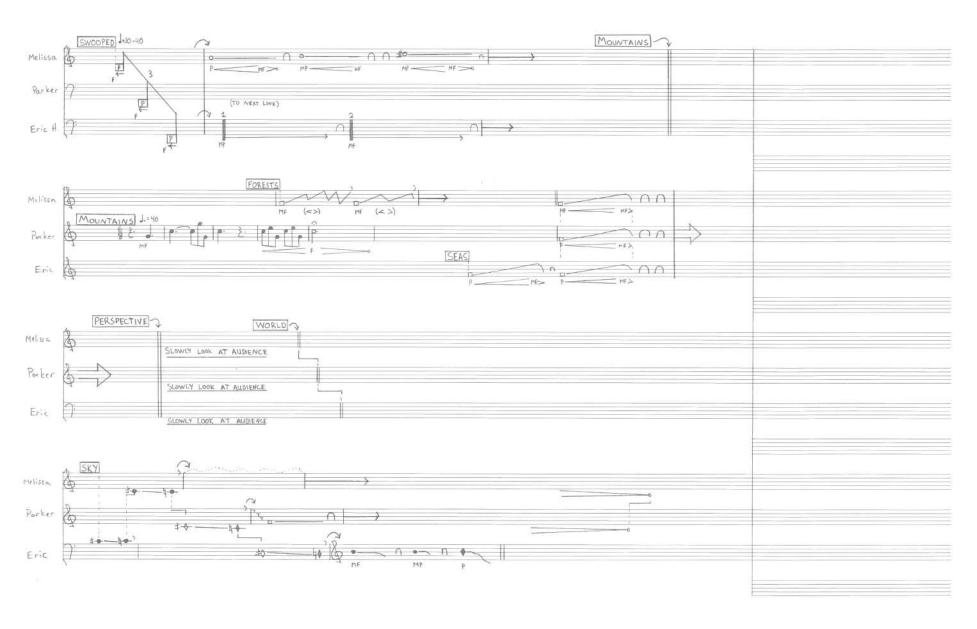




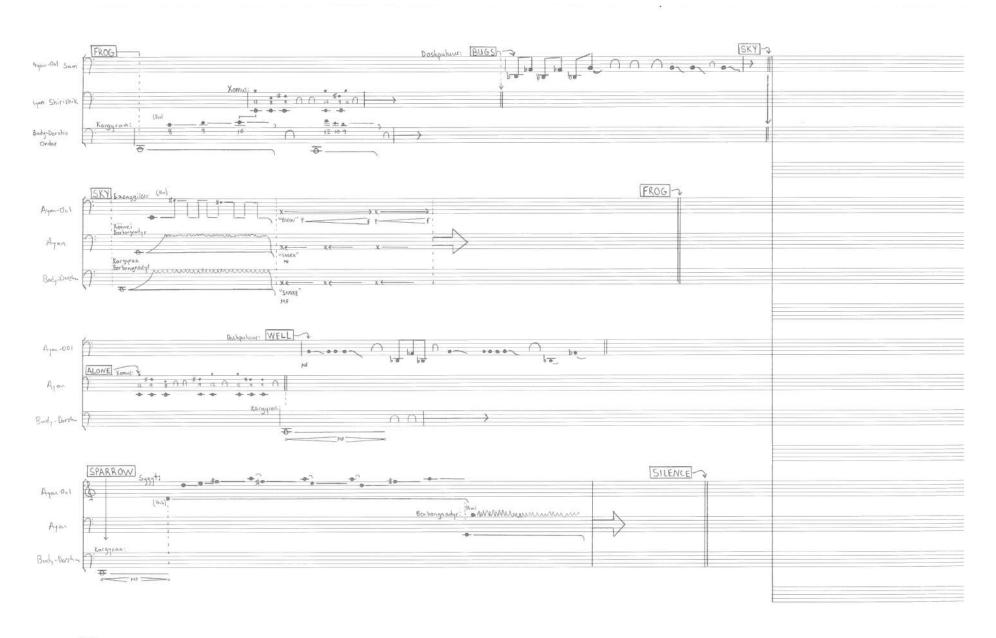




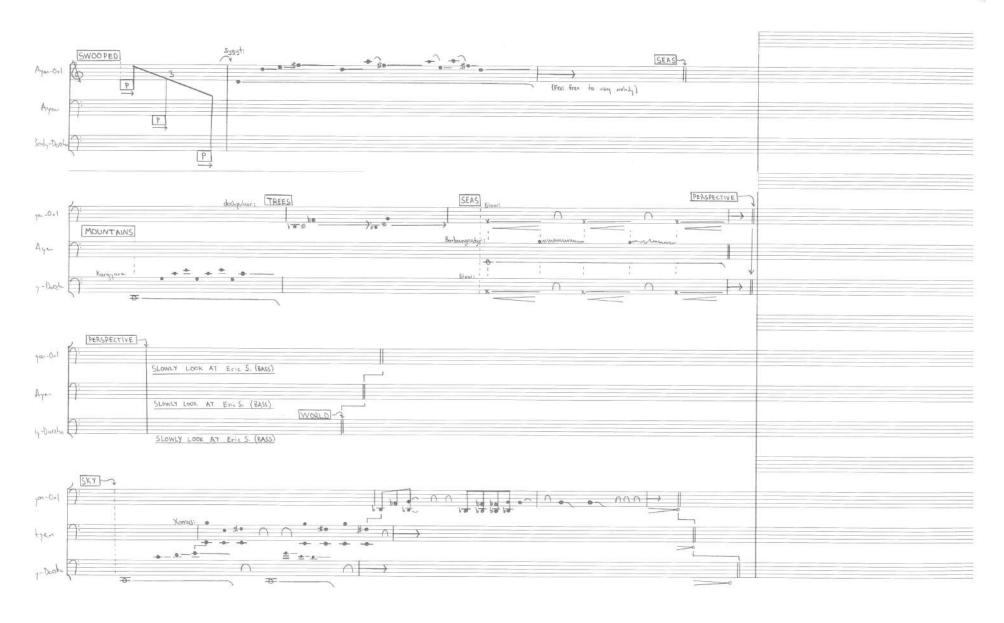
II. (L) a



Carta va a







While 'tracing' is taking Place, improvise within the texture you have. Start tenatively, but by the time the outire image is bring traced, your sound on he as present as argane alsoes. Feel free, at first, to misme (pluny sitently but will physical movements) the shape of what you hear. This can include quiet, impredictable sounds like audible broath, or your finger accidently striking a string. Those lainds of Sounds — sounds which shadow your affort — are especially encouraged.

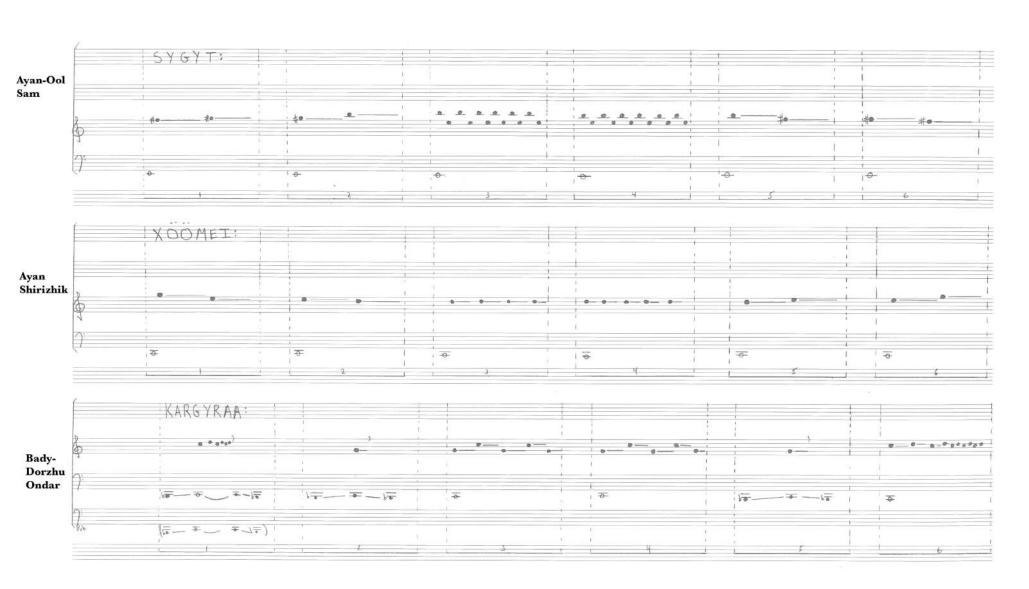
After each round of tracing (3 long back-a-forth rounds and I or 2 shirter "all-bagether at ace" traces) continue (or begin) mining.

So, between each round all the audience will hear is the sound of your mated or matiled effort. What you are

mining is up to you. It can be part of the shape you just heard, or something it reminds you of. These miner-breaks

between rounds should get "louder" each time to more effort, more physicality, more accidental or impredictable rounds.

After the final frace ... either end the work of a final mining QR end it or the final trace. I'm not some which will be more effective.



Carta No. 27

