JOHN WEBBER 81-6

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

EA POE

melodrama in 13 scenes for two flutes, oboe, string quartet piano and narrator

WEBBER MUSIC - PORTSMOUTH ENGLAND

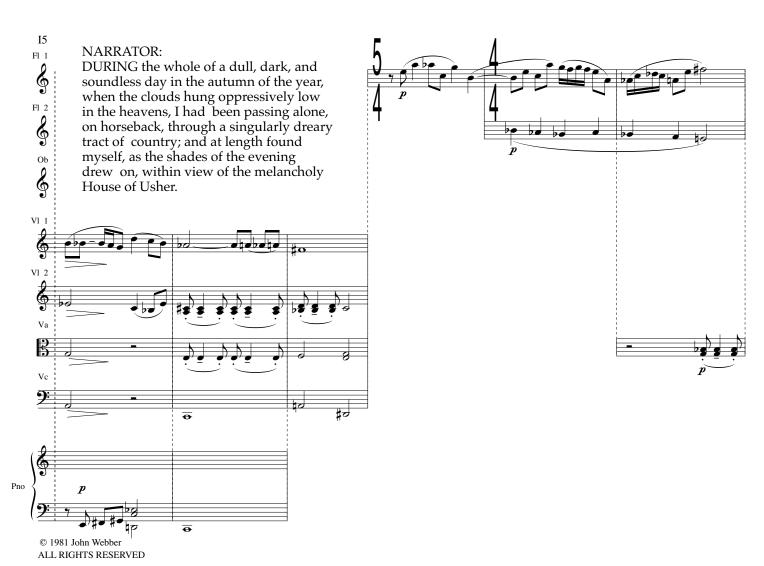
THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

Edgar Allen Poe

Melodrama in Thirteen Scenes for: two flutes, oboe, string quartet & piano

Text abbreviated by the composer











NARRATOR $\widehat{G.P.}$

Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon companions in boyhood; but many years had elapsed since our last meeting. A letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country -- a letter from him --which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a personal reply. The MS. gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness -- of a mental disorder which oppressed him -- and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best, and indeed his only personal friend, with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady.





I43

FI 1

Fl 2

Vl 1

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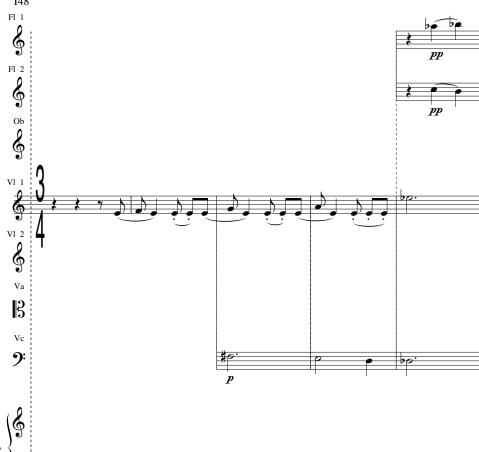
VI 2

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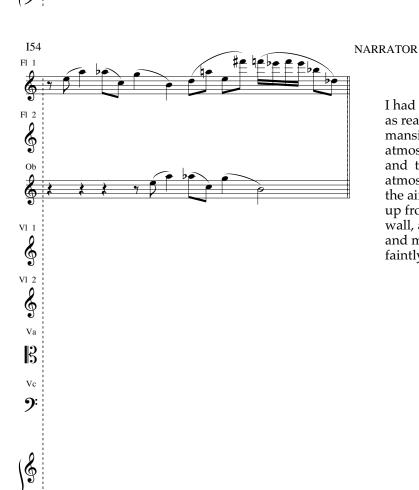
Va |**3**

9:





I had learned the very remarkable fact, that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honoured as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain.



I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity-an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn -- a pestilent and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued.

G.P.

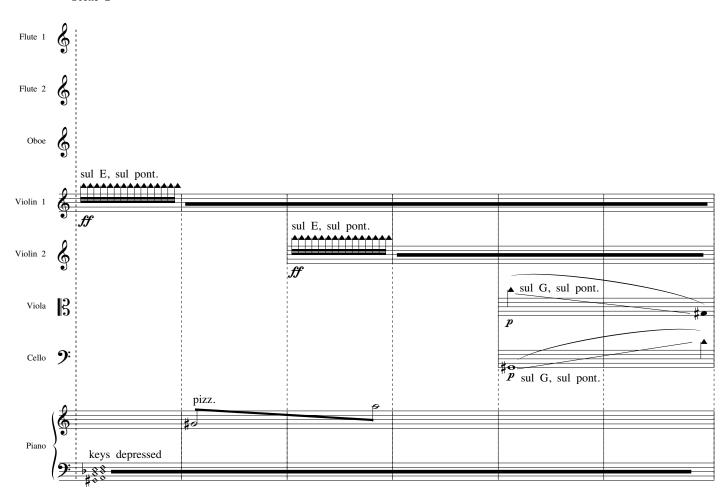


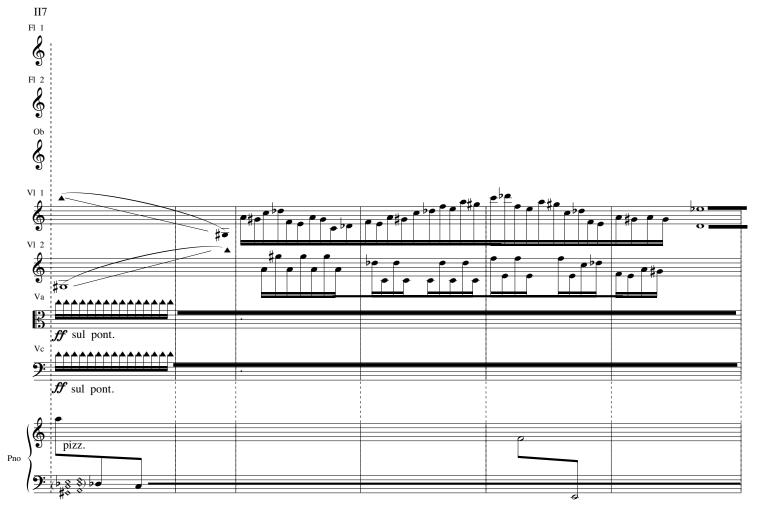
Shaking off from my spirit what must have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones.

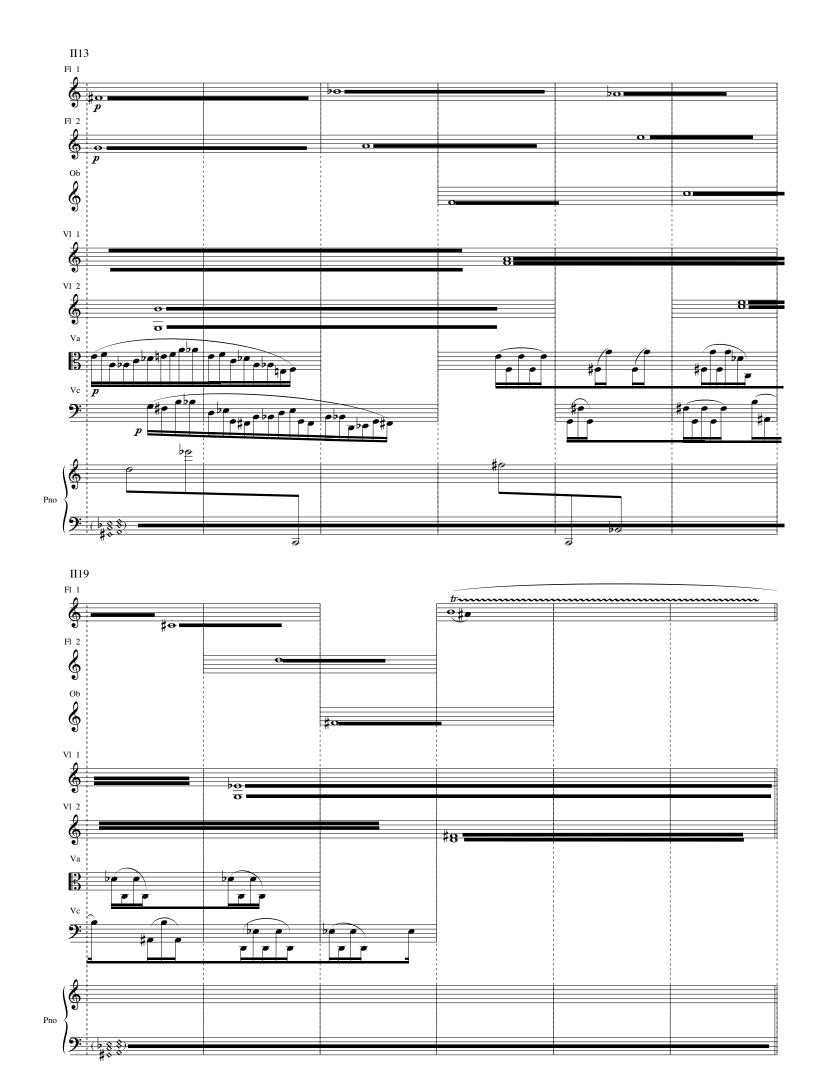


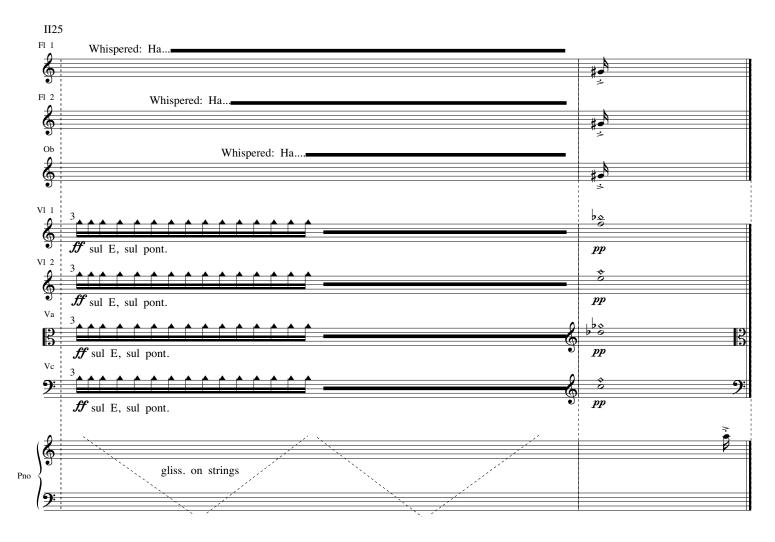
 $\begin{array}{c} \widehat{\bigcirc} \\ \text{NARRATOR} \end{array}$

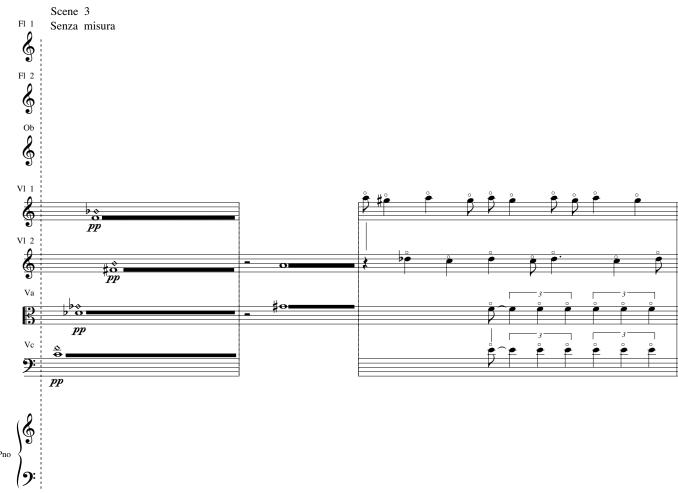
Noticing these things, I rode over a short causeway to the house. A servant in waiting took my horse, and I entered the Gothic archway of the hall. A valet, of stealthy step, thence conducted me, in silence, through many dark and intricate passages in my progress to the studio of his master. On one of the staircases, I met the physician of the family. His countenance, I thought, wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity. He accosted me with trepidation and passed on. The valet now threw open a door and ushered me into the presence of his master.



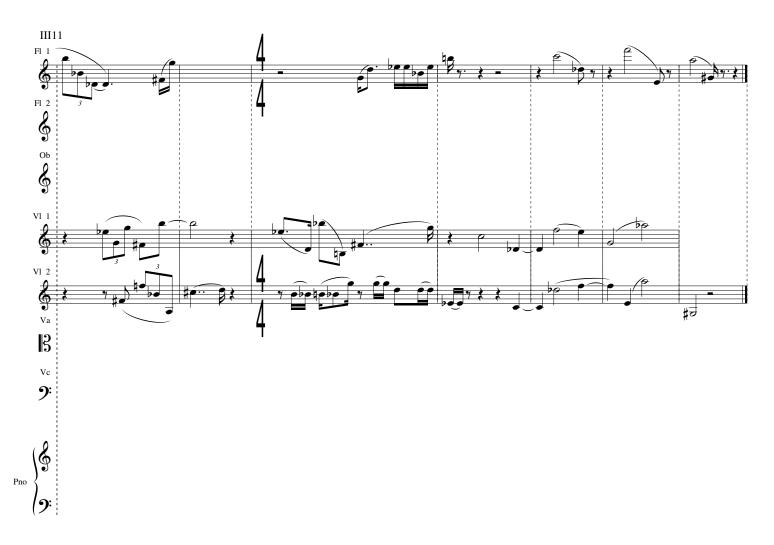


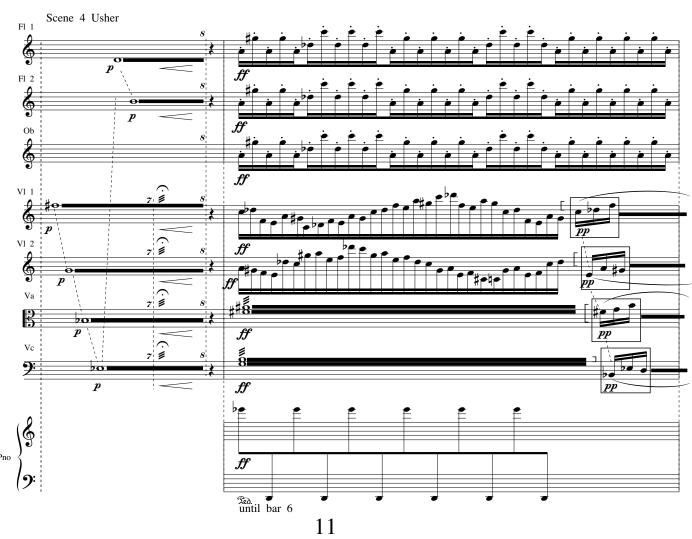


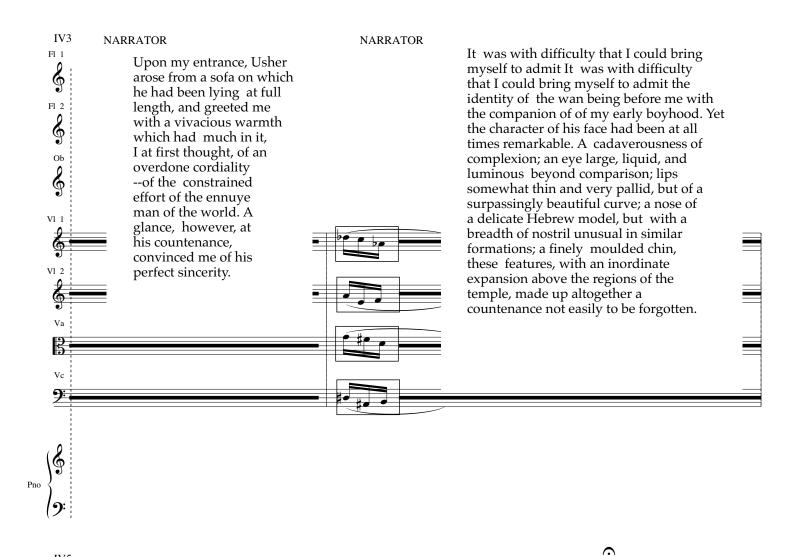


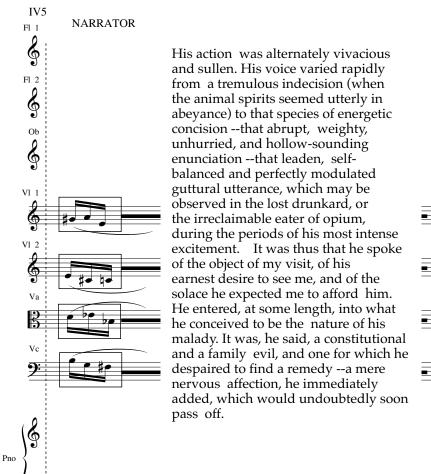








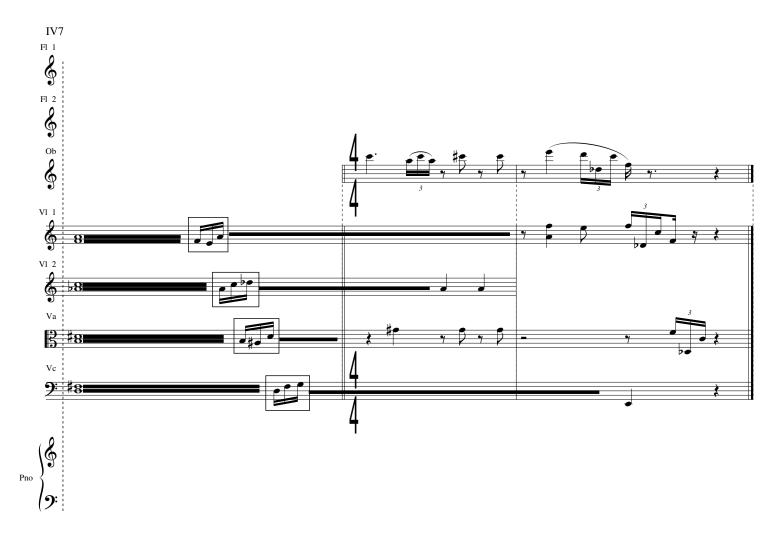


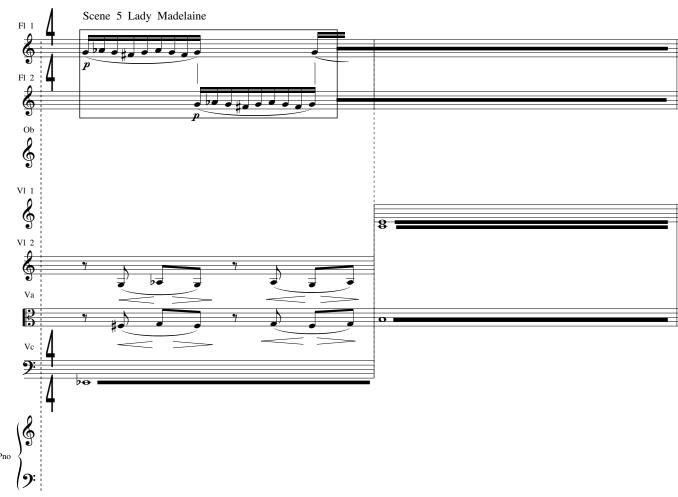


To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave. "I shall perish," said he, "I must perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall I be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results. I shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial, incident, which may operate upon this intolerable a gitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect --in terror. In this unnerved-in this pitiable condition --I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, FEAR."

GP

NARRATOR





NARRATOR GP

V3

Fl 1

8

Fl 2

VI I

V1 2

Va

13

Vc

9:

He admitted, however, although with hesitation, that much of the peculiar gloom which thus afflicted him could be traced to a more natural and far more palpable origin --to the severe and long-continued illness --indeed to the evidently approaching dissolution-of a tenderly beloved sister --his sole companion for long years --his last and only relative on earth. "Her decease," he said, with a bitterness which I can never forget, "would leave him (him the hopeless and the frail) the last of the ancient race of the Ushers." While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so was she called) passed slowly through a remote portion of the apartment, and, without having noticed my presence, disappeared. And I learned that the

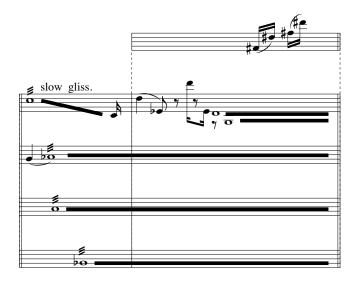
glimpse I had obtained of her person would thus probably be the last I

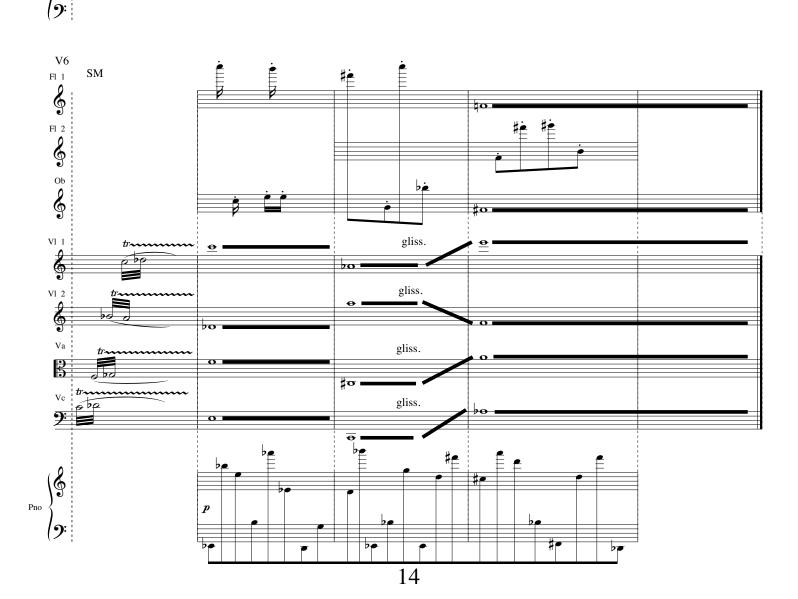
should obtain -- that the lady, at

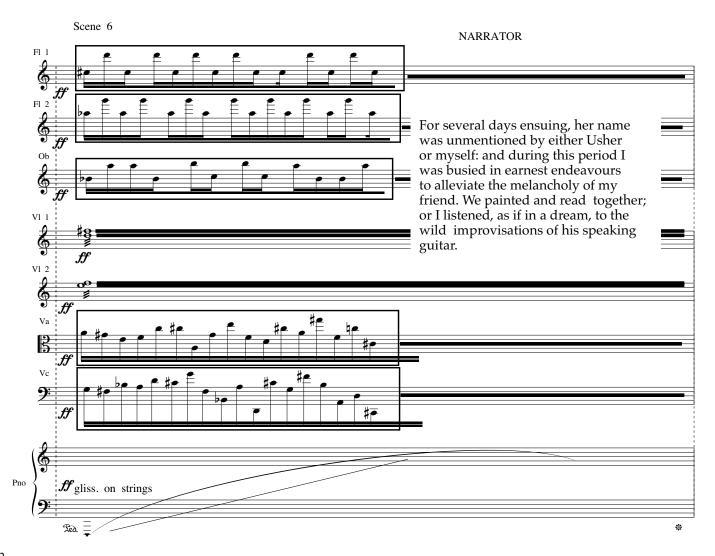
by me no more.

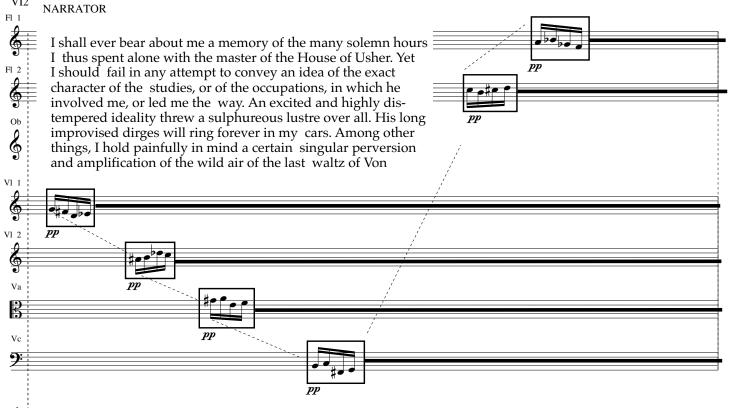
least while living, would be seen

SM CM





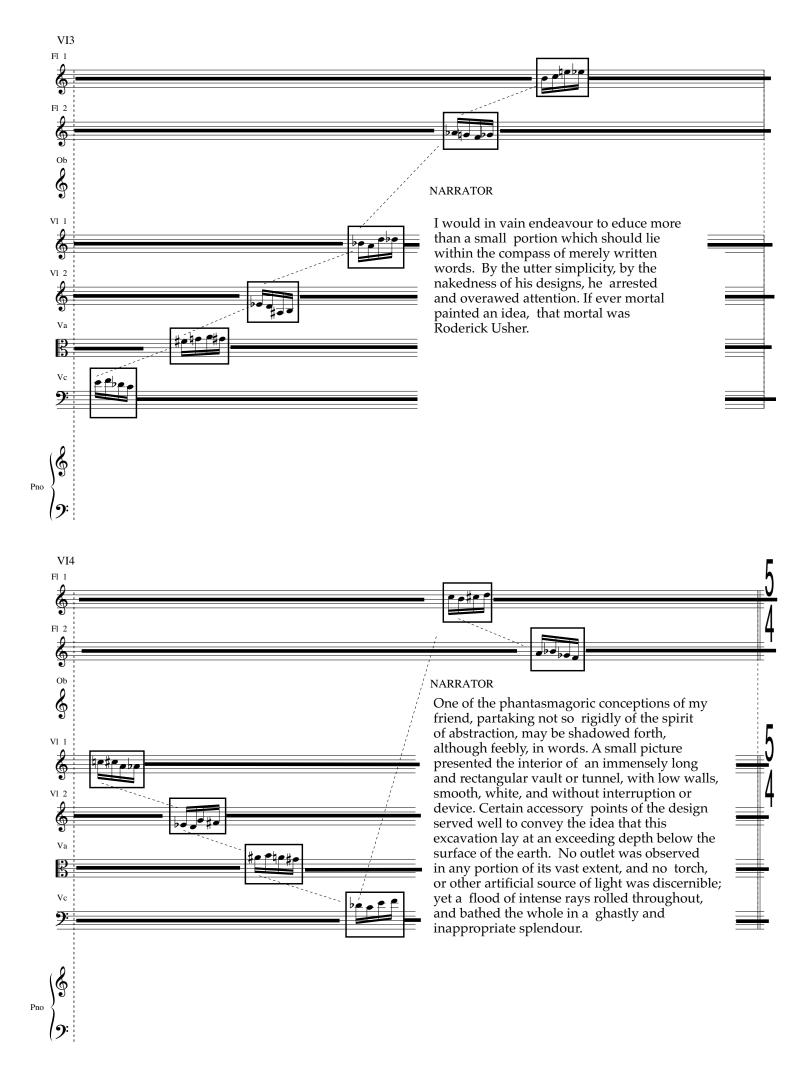


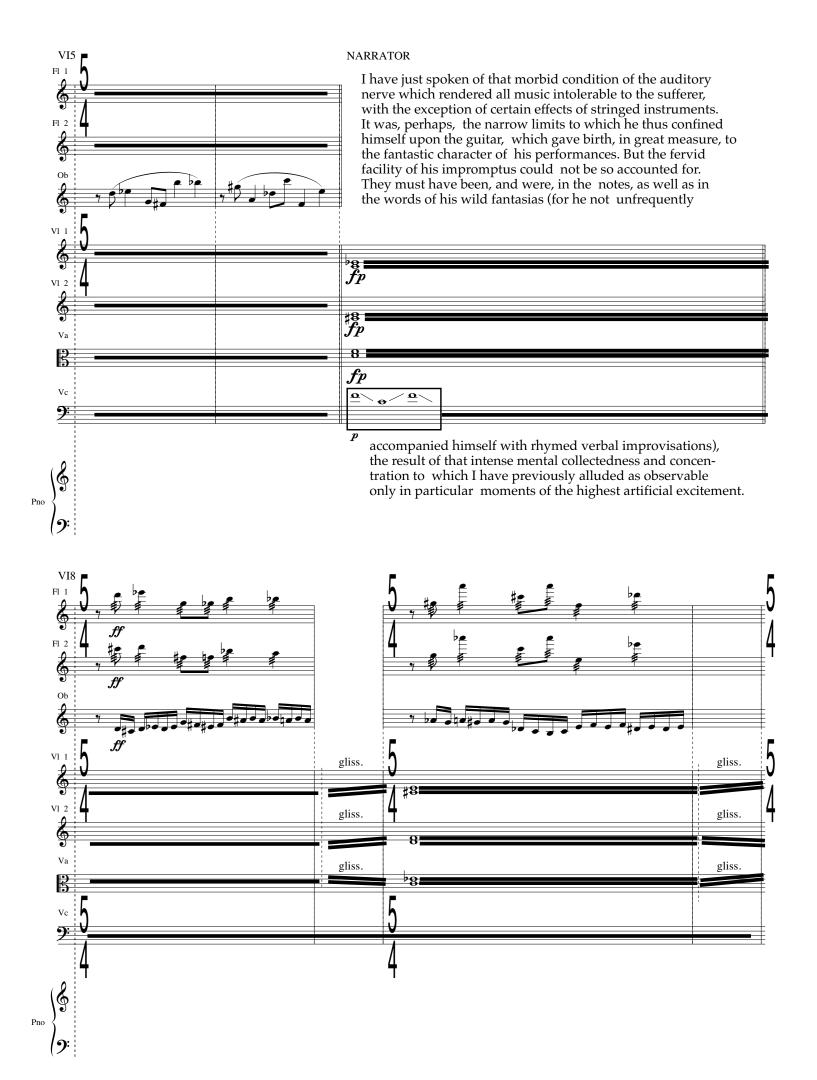


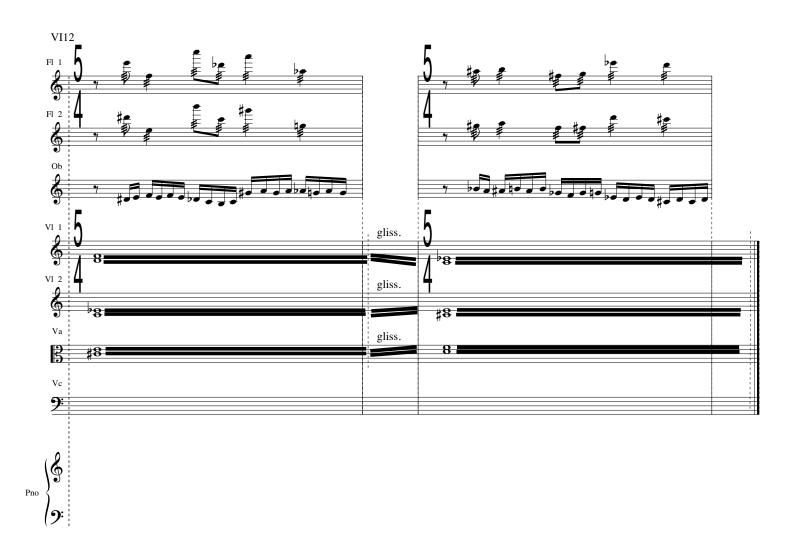
touch by touch, into vaguenesses at which I shuddered the more thrillingly, because I shuddered knowing not why; --from these paintings (vivid as their images now are

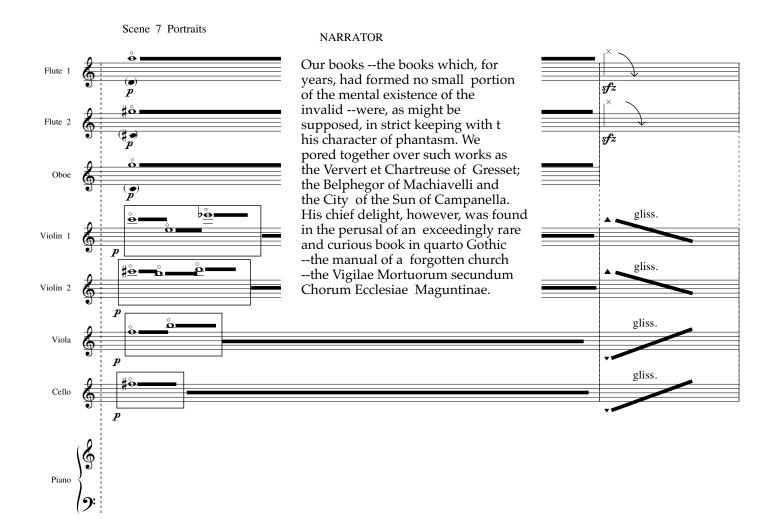
Weber. From the paintings over which his elaborate fancy brooded, and which grew,

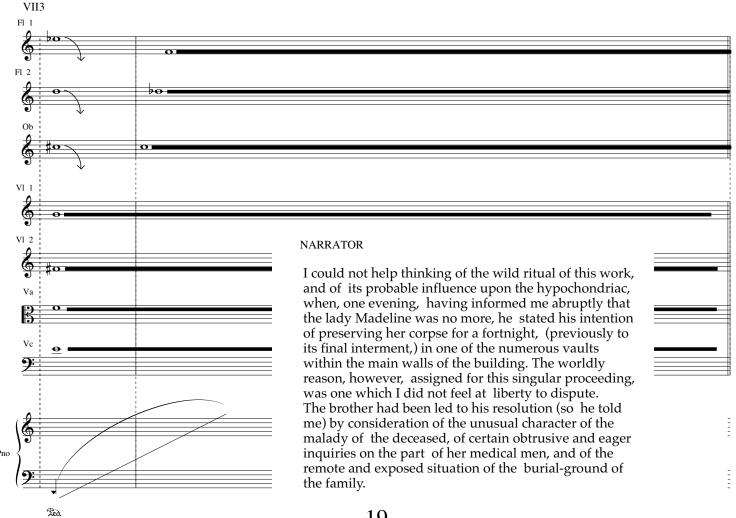
before me)



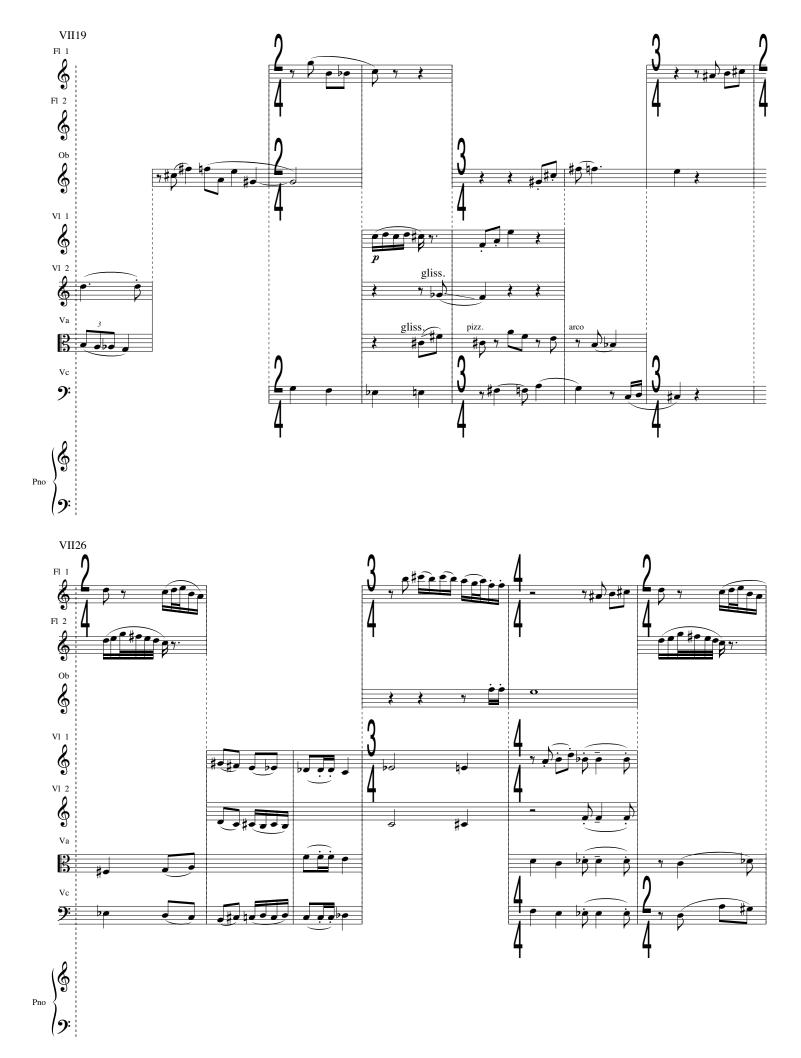












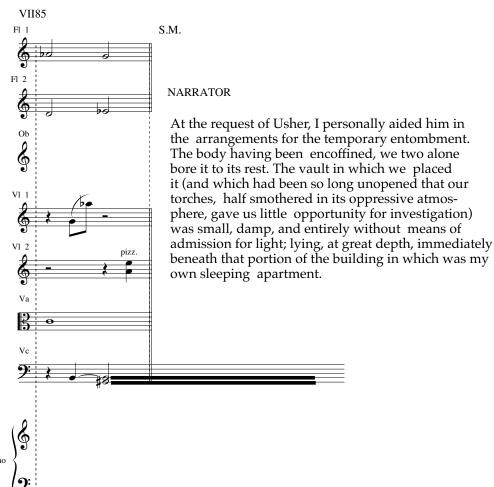


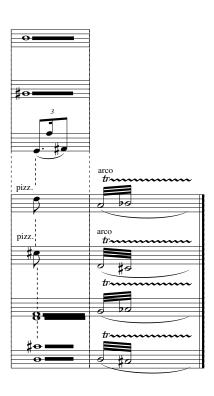


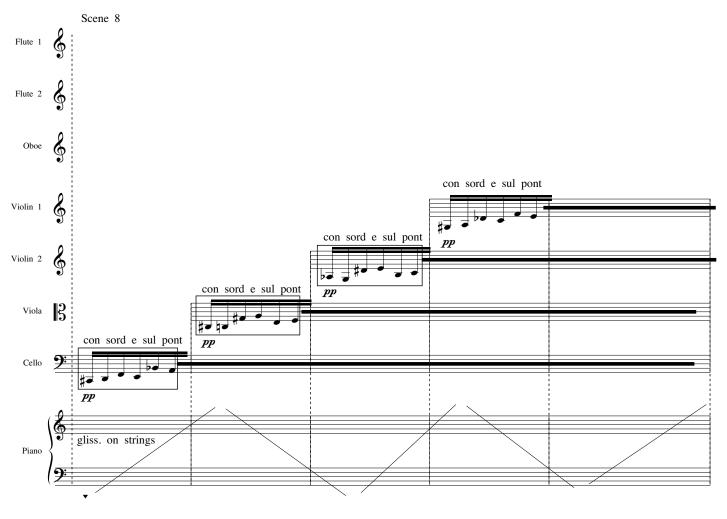


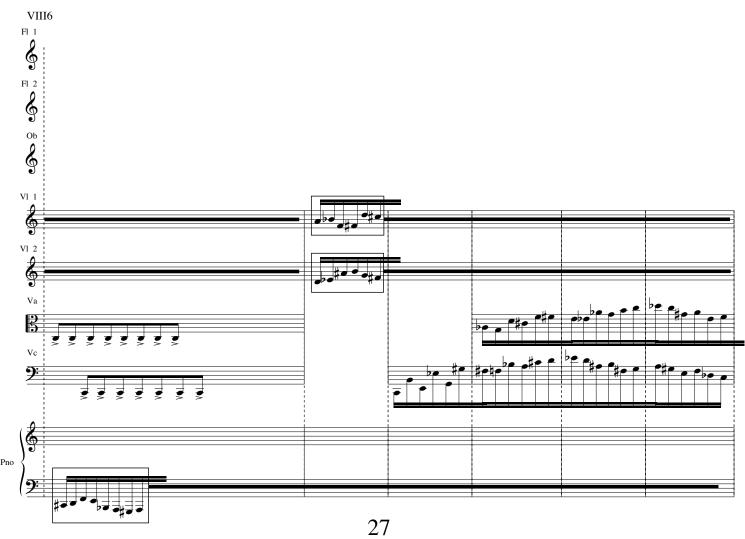


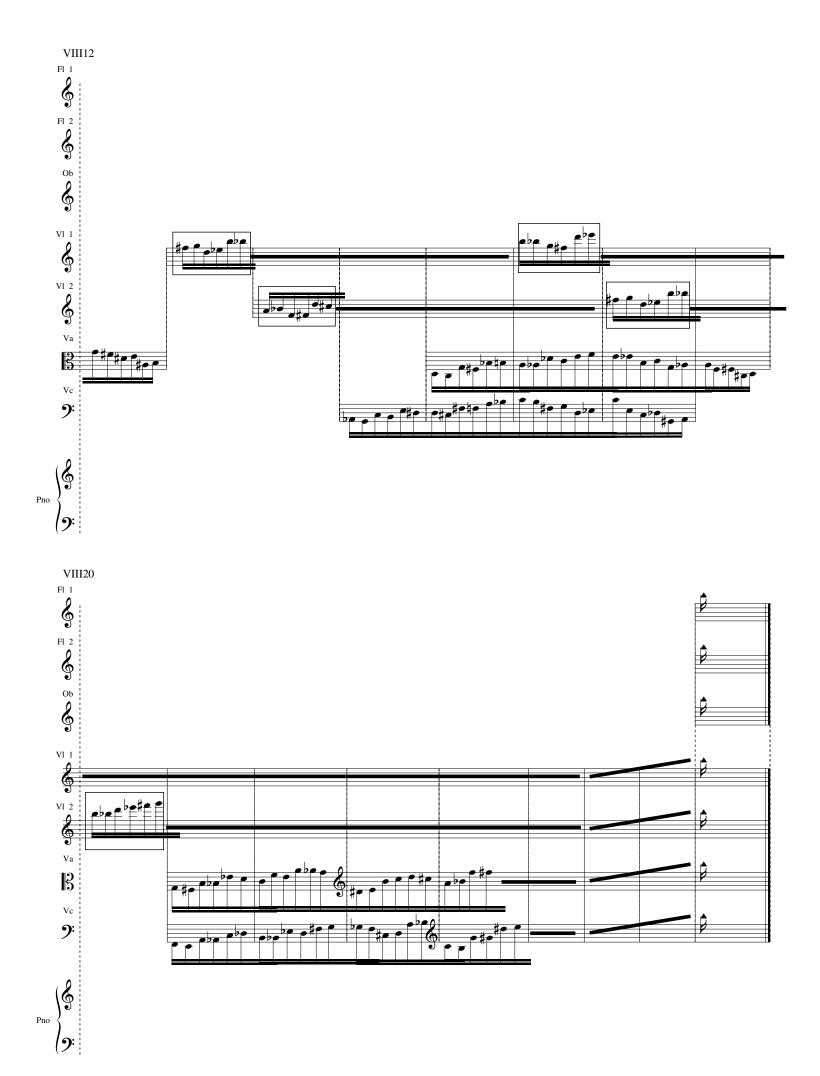






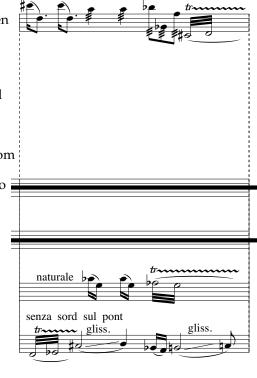




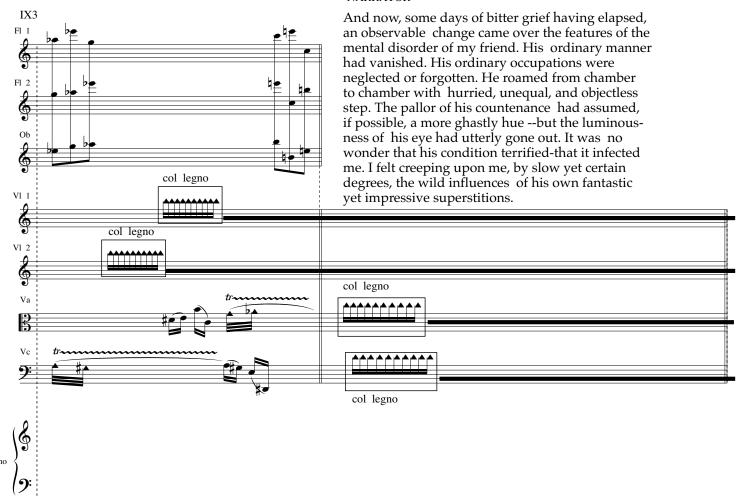


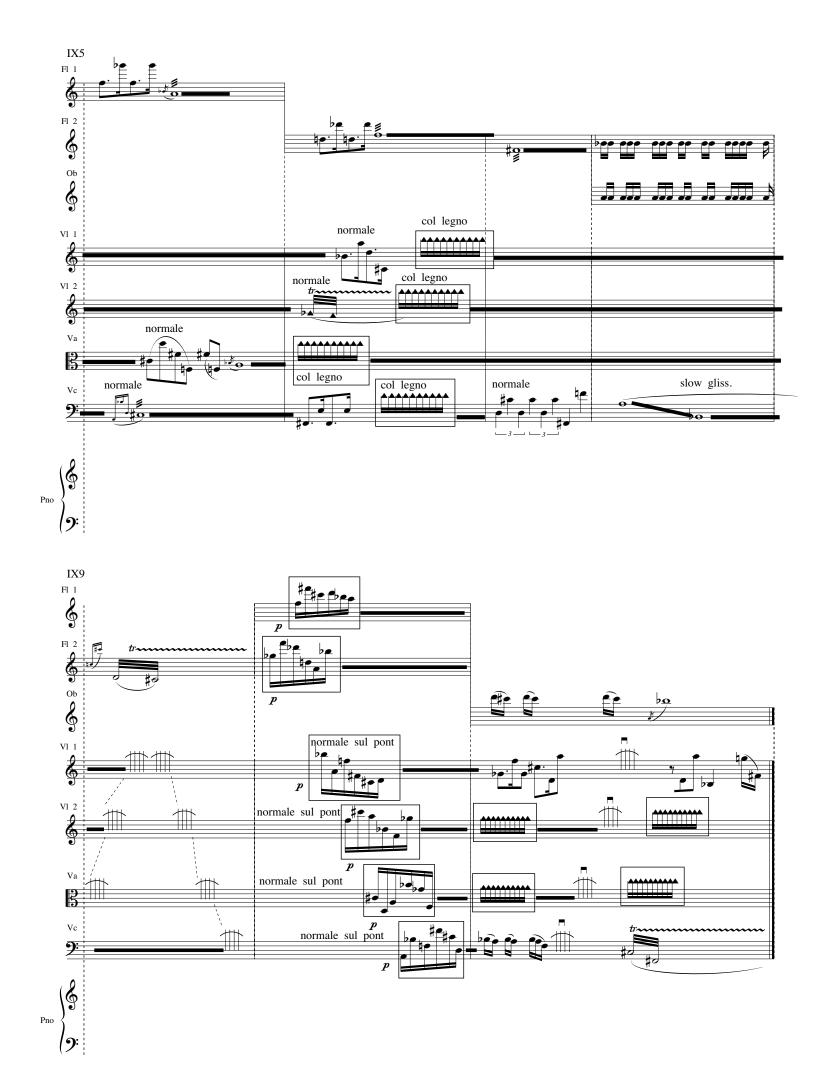


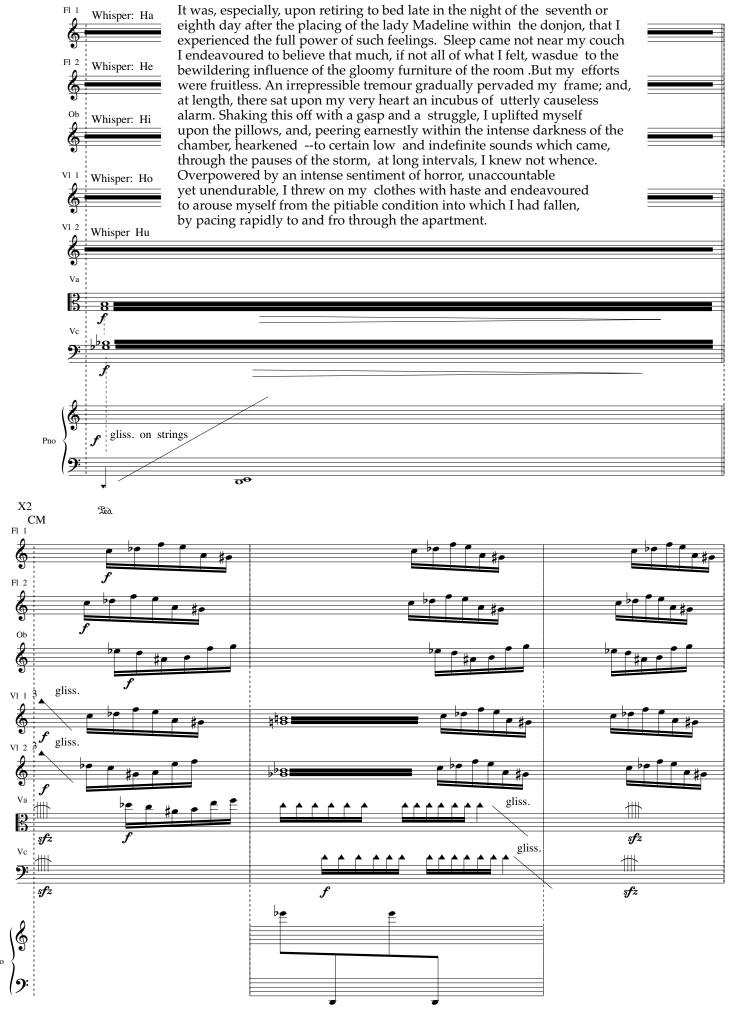
Having deposited our mournful burden upon tressels within this region of horror, we partially turned aside the yet unscrewed lid of the coffin, and looked upon the face of the tenant. The disease which had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly catalepticalcharacter, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death. We replaced and screwed down the lid, and, having secured the door of iron, made our way, with toll, into the scarcely less gloomy apartments of the upper portion of the house.

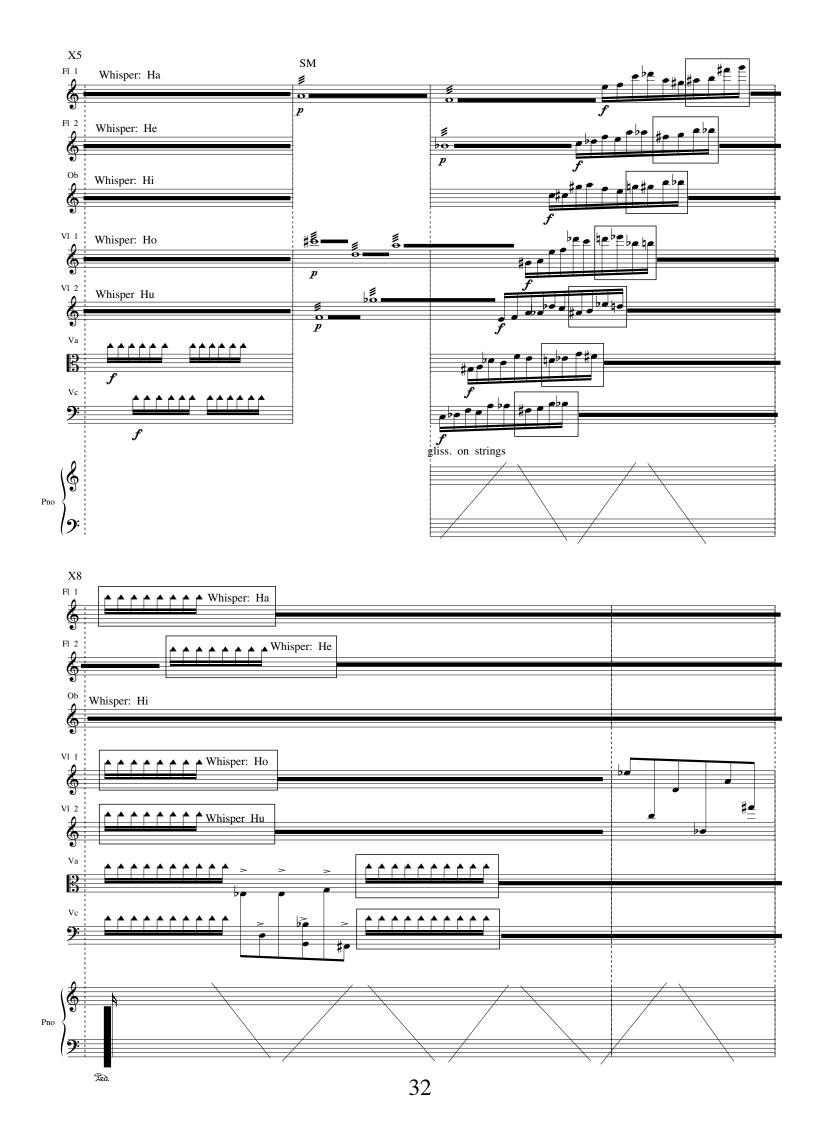


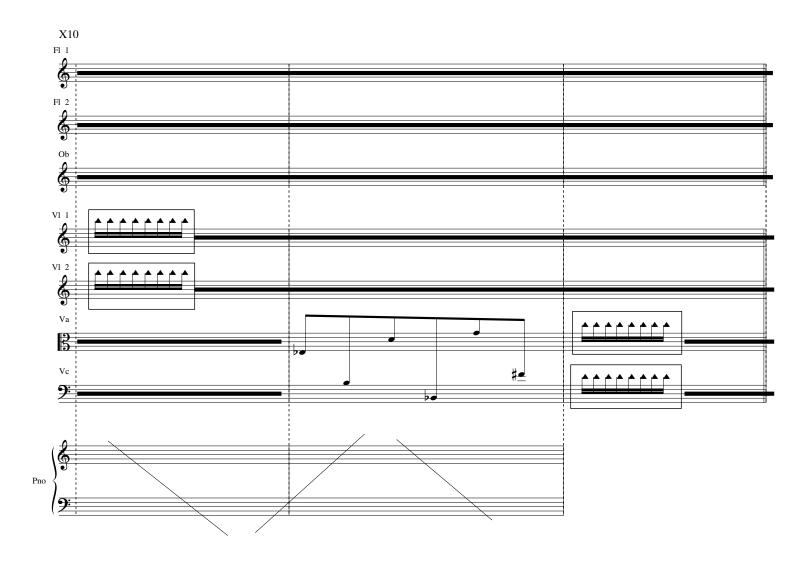
NARRATOR

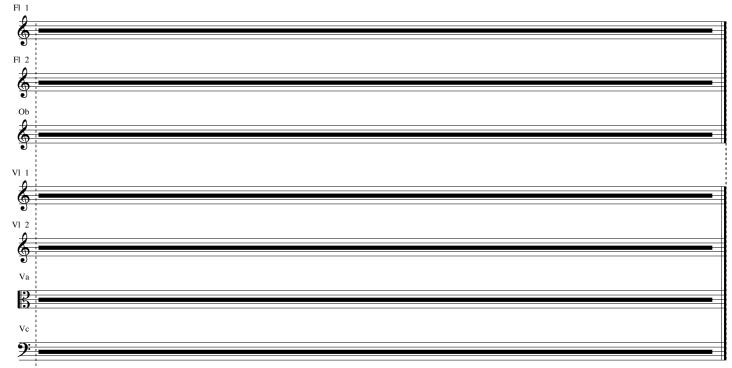










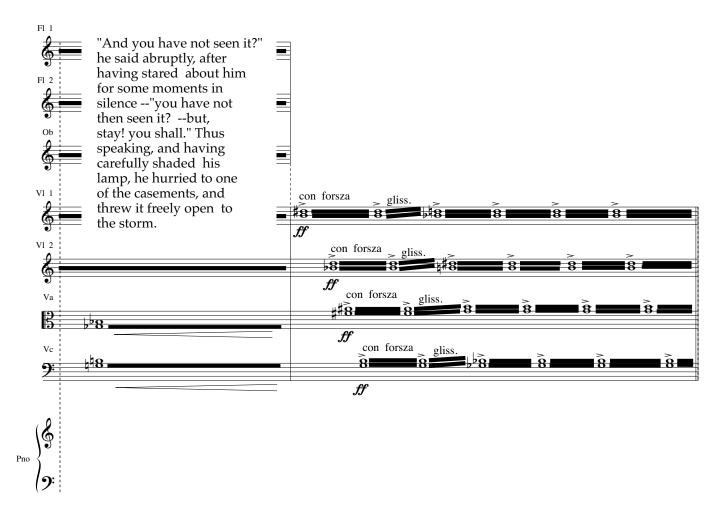


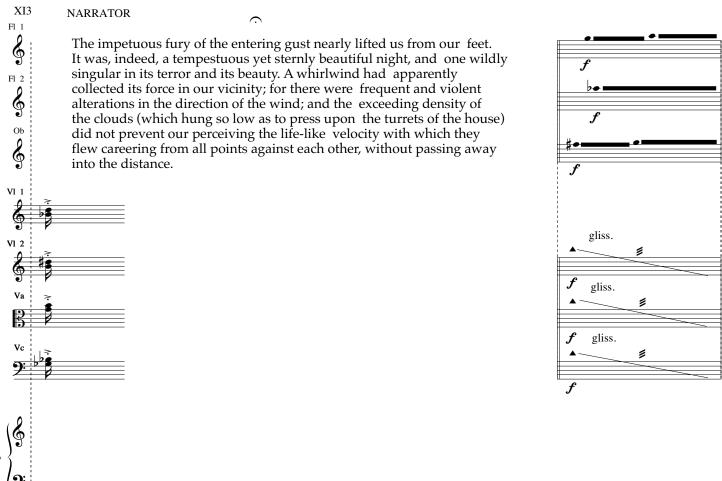
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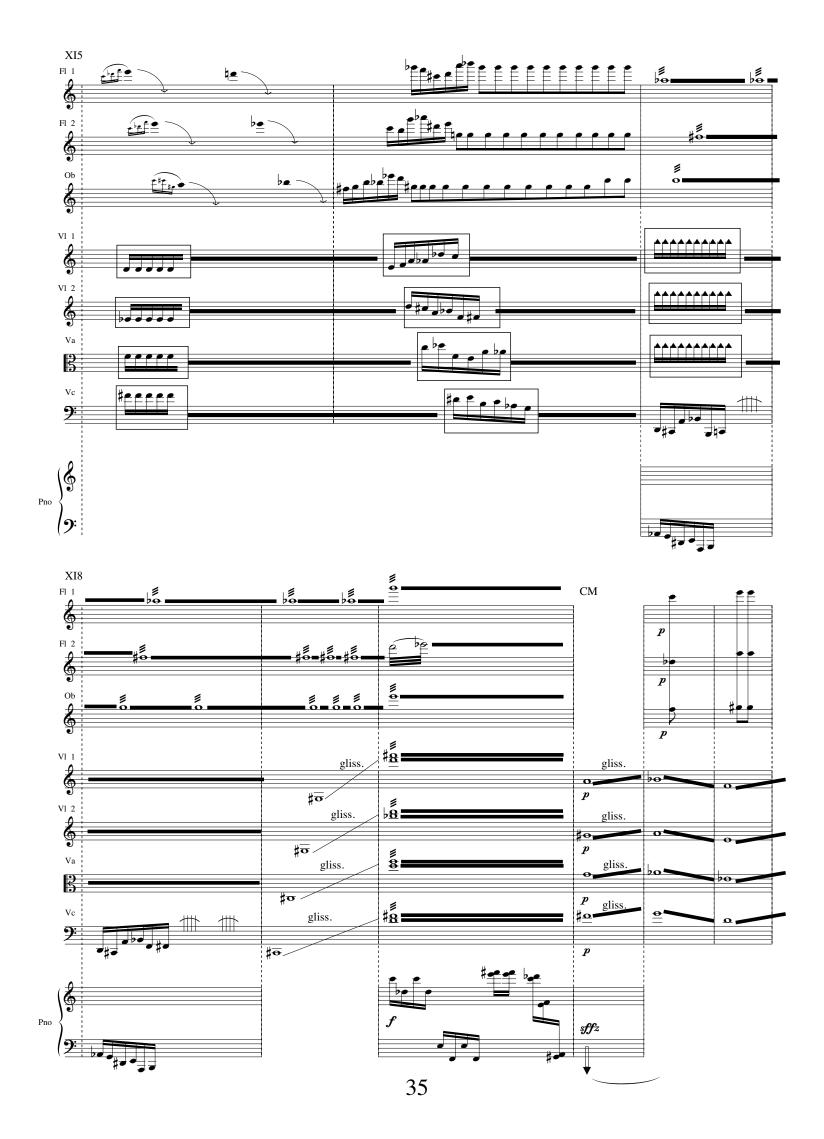
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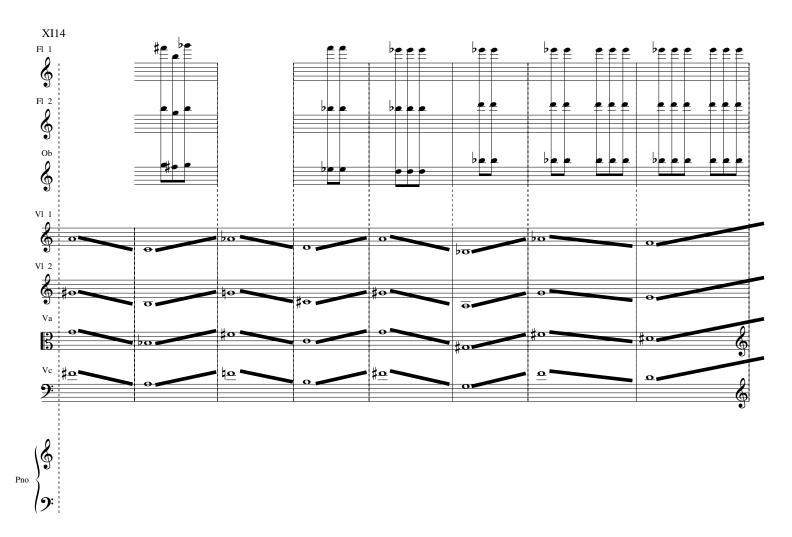
I had taken but few turns in this manner, when a light step on an adjoining staircase arrested my attention. I presently recognised it as that of Usher. In an instant afterward he rapped, with a gentle touch, at my door, and entered, bearing a lamp. His countenance was, as usual, cadaverously wan --but, moreover, there was a species of mad hilarity in his eyes --an evidently restrained hysteria in his whole demeanour. His air appalled me --but anything was preferable to the solitude which I had so long endured, and I even welcomed his presence as a relief.

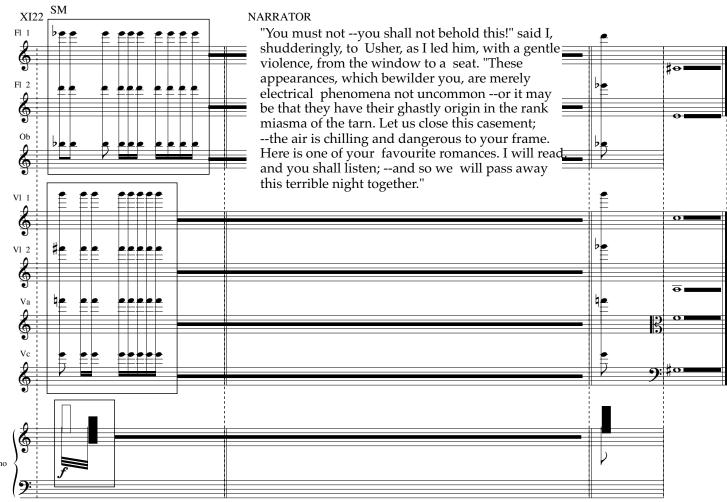
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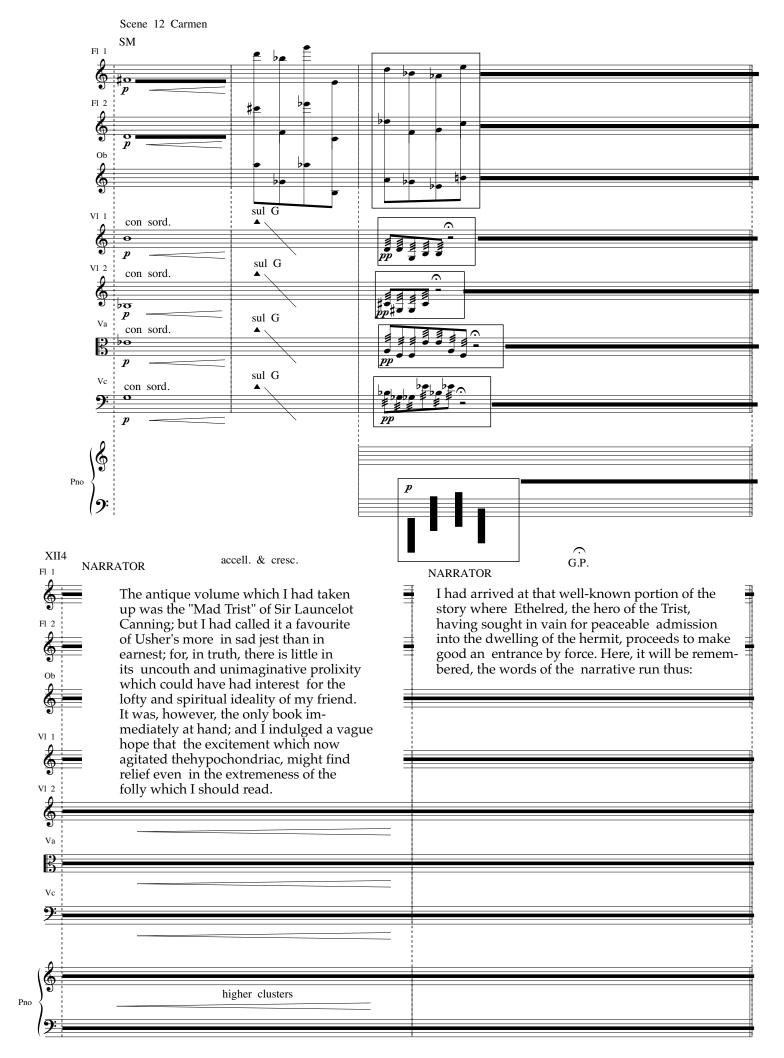




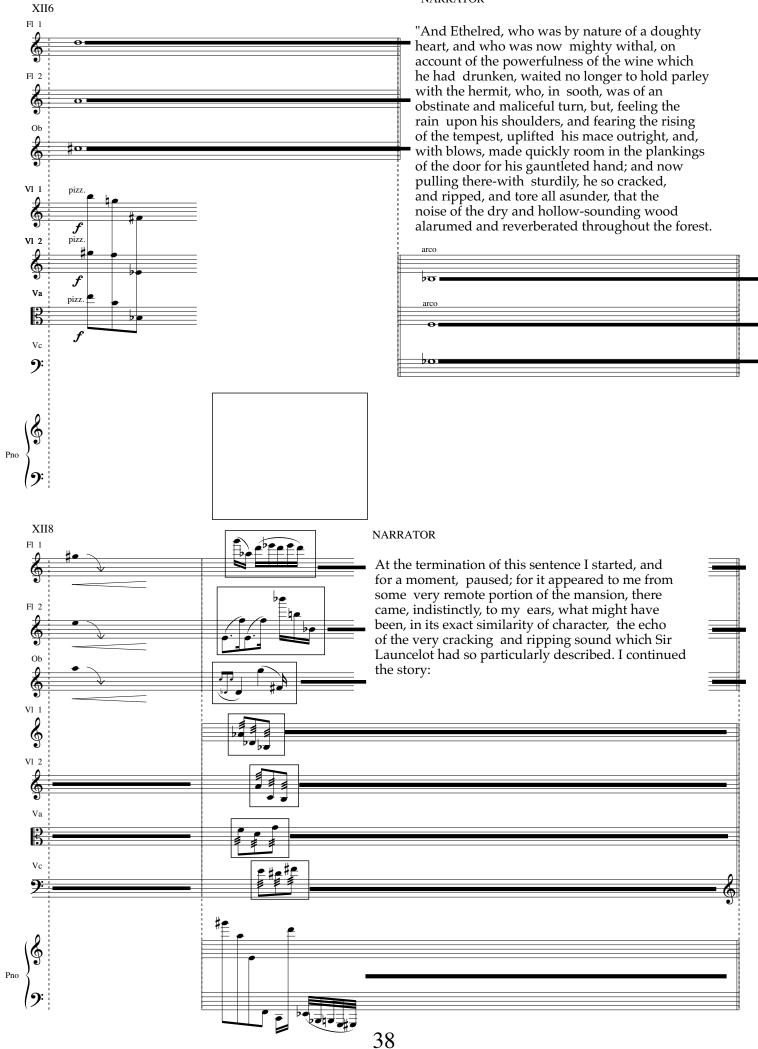


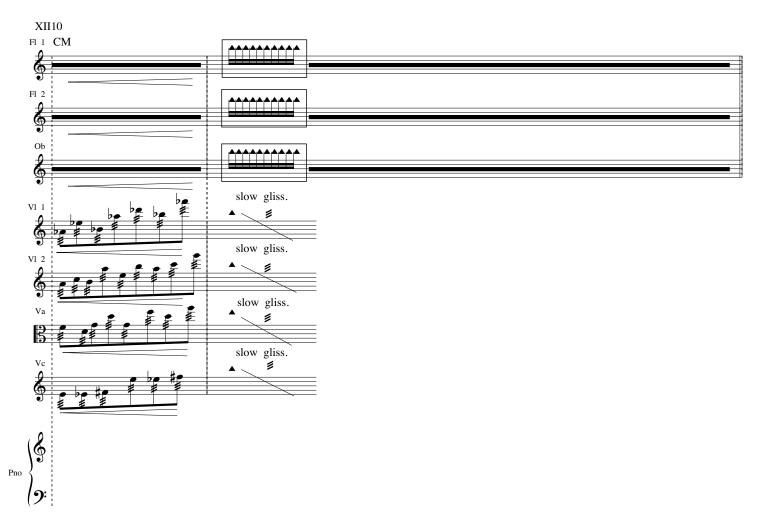


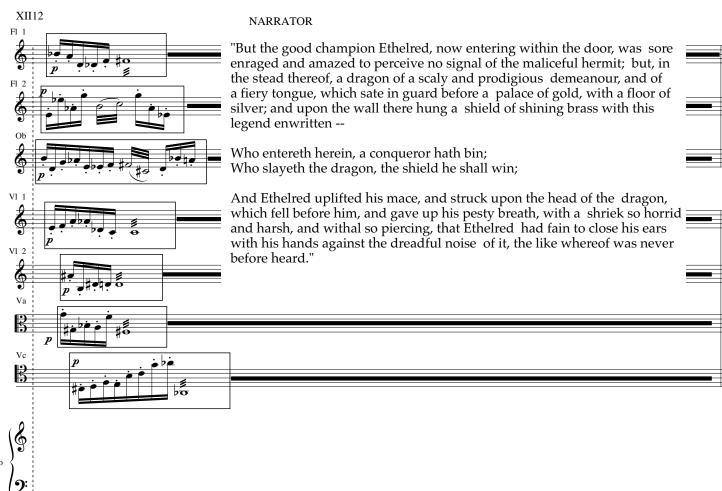












XII13 NARRATOR G.P.

8

Fl 2

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Ob

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VI 1

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VI 2

Va

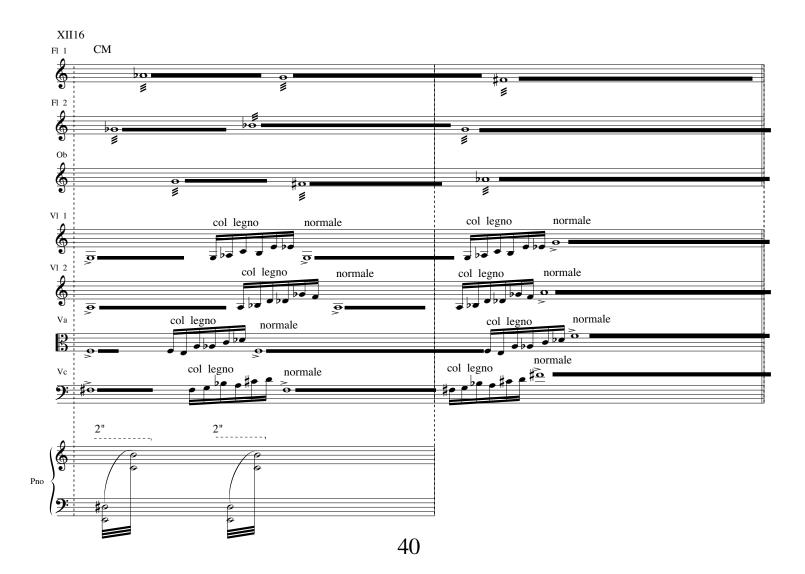
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vc **9**: Here again I paused abruptly, and now with a feeling of wild amazement --for there could be no doubt whatever that, in this instance, I did actually hear a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound --the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon's unnatural shriek as described by the romancer.

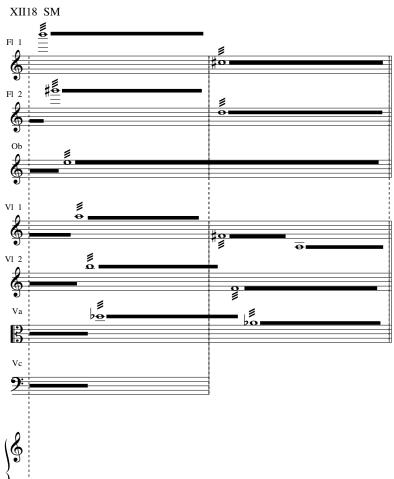


NARRATOR

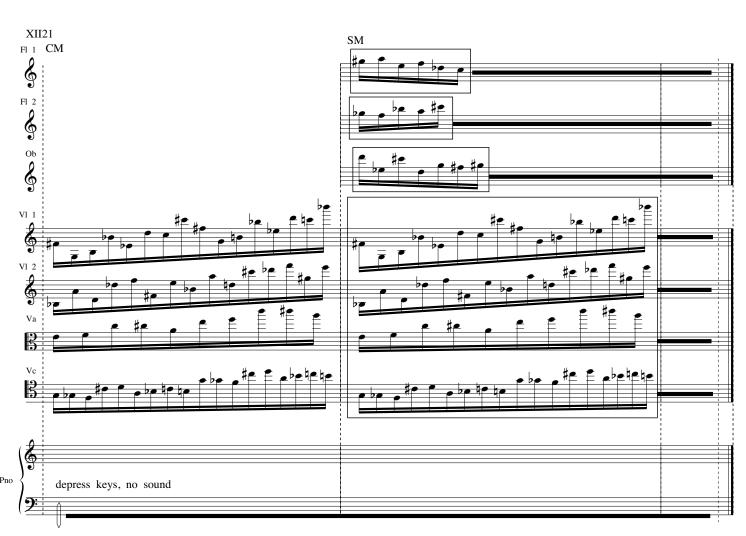
I still retained sufficient presence of mind to avoid exciting, by any observation, the sensitivenervousness of my companion. I was by no means certain that he had noticed the sounds in question; although, assuredly, a strange alteration had, during the last few minutes, taken place in his demeanour. His head had dropped upon his breast --yet I knew that he was not asleep, from the wide and rigid opening of the eye as I caught a glance of it in profile. The motion of his body, too, was at variance with this idea --for he rocked from side to side with a gentle yet constant and uniform sway. Having rapidly taken notice of all this, I resumed the narrative of Sir Launcelot, which thus proceeded:

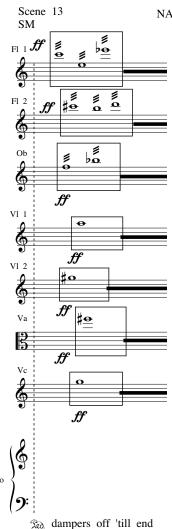




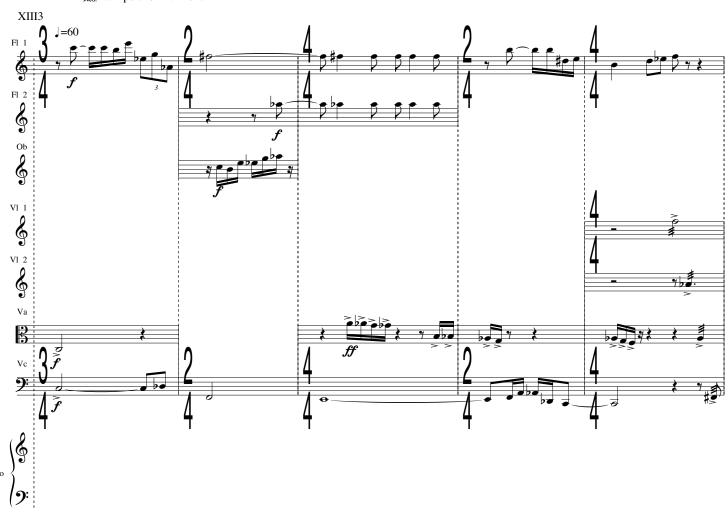


"And now, the champion, having escaped from the terrible fury of the dragon, bethinking himself of the brazen shield, and of the breaking up of the enchantment which was upon it, removed the carcass from out of the way before him, and approached valorously over the silver pavement of the castle to where the shield was upon the wall; which in sooth tarried not for his full coming, but fell down at his feet upon the silver floor, with a mighty great and terrible ringing sound."





No sooner had these syllables passed my lips, than --as if a shield of brass had indeed, at the moment, fallen heavily upon a floor of silver became aware of a distinct, hollow, metallic, and clangorous, yet apparently muffled reverberation. Completely unnerved, I leaped to my feet; but the measured rocking movement of Usher was undisturbed. I rushed to the chair in which he sat. and I saw that he spoke in a low, hurried, and gibbering murmur, as if unconscious of my presence. Bending closely over him, I at length drank in the hideous import of his words. "Not hear it? --yes, I hear it, and have heard it. Long --long --long --many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it --yet I dared not --oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am! -- I dared not -- I dared not speak! We have put her living in the tomb! Said I not that my senses were acute? I now tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them --many, many days ago --yet I dared not --I dared not speak! And now --to-night --Ethelred --ha! ha! --the breaking of the hermit's door, and the death-cry of the dragon, and the clangour of the shield! --say, rather, the rending of her coffin, and the grating of the iron hinges of her prison, and her struggles within the coppered archway of the vault! Oh whither shall I fly? Will she not be here anon? Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste? Have I not heard her footstep on the stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? MADMAN!" -- "MADMAN! I TELL YOU THAT SHE NOW STANDS WITHOUT THE DOOR!"











NARRATOR

As if in the superhuman energy of his utterance there had been found the potency of a spell but then without those doors there DID stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold, then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated.

NARRATOR

From that chamber, and from that mansion, I fled aghast. The storm was still abroad in all its wrath as I found myself crossing the old causeway. Suddenly there shot along the path a wild light, and I turned to see whence a gleam so unusual could have issued; for the vast house and its shadows were alone behind me. The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon which now shone vividly through that oncebarely-discernible fissure of which I have before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened -- there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind --the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight --my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder --there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters --and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the "HOUSE OF USHER."



