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Theseus and the Minotaur

by Ben Lutterbach

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Music in Composition
in the School of Music, Jordan College of Fine Arts of Butler University

Thesis Defense: April 25th, 2016

Date of Final Thesis Approval:

Committee:

Dr. Frank Felice, Chair and Advisor

Dr. Michael Schelle, Reader

Professor Richard Auldon Clark, Reader

Dr. Jeffrey Gillespie, Reader

1 Introduction

Composition on this piece began in the fall of 2010 with an initial goal of writing a work that contrasted my previous piece, which was written for wind ensemble. The original sketches hinted at a very different work with highly melancholic tone and extensive use of traditional tonality. There were no programmatic considerations or a clear goal of what I was attempting to express at this point in the process. After sketching several pages of ideas and draft sections, Dr. Schelle instructed me to return the following week with something stylistically opposite of what I had been composing. During that week, I found the new material I was sketching excited me far more than the existing content. This stylistic shift marked the point when the piece began to take its current shape.

Once the stylistic shift had been made, I chose to focus on what I wanted the end result to convey. I selected to base the piece on a fear I had at that time in my life, which was now more relevant as an adult living independently (away from parents) with plans to start a family with my wife. At the time I was afraid of a violent intruder entering our home, and my responsibility in the situation to ensure my family's safety. This fear provided the programmatic framework for the four untitled movements of the piece, which address a specific aspect or scenario.

As I continued work on the piece, my compositional abilities and use of techniques improved, and upon completion Dr. Schelle and I decided the work would be appropriate for my thesis project, despite this not being the initial goal. In preparation for this review and defense committee, the piece has been slightly revised and the title changed. The title change was due to the highly personal nature of the program. Conveying the nuances of the overall program and the four movements in a way that would also connect with the audience was not something I felt possible with a simple title. After much thought, deliberation, and input from Dr. Felice, *Theseus and the Minotaur* was suggested. This ancient

Greek myth, in addition to providing a clever play-on-words with similarities to 'thesis,' does contain the appropriate elements to match the composed music. Though this paper will focus on the original programmatic material considering that's what the piece was written for, the correlation between the individual movements and the new title is as follows:

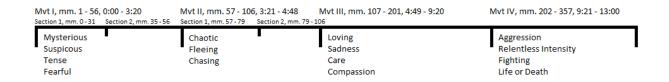
- 1. Movement I Roaming the labyrinth, hiding from and avoiding the dreaded minotaur.
- 2. Movement II Attempting escape from the minotaur only to find it is impossible.
- 3. Movement III The tragedy of those selected for the sacrifice to the monster.
- 4. Movement IV The hero Theseus's battle and ultimate victory in the labyrinth.

This piece is written for flute, Bb clarinet, violin, viola, cello, and double bass (conductor highly recommended), and consists of four connected movements, which are through-composed, each representing a different aspect of my fear of an intruder with violent intentions. The expected performance time is 13-14 minutes (see *Figure 1.1* for a formal diagram). The first movement represents calmness and peacefulness from the onset but quickly shifts to uncertainty and suspicion. As the movement closes, the focus is dominated by extreme tension and fear. The second movement represents a hectic, chaotic encounter with the aggressor. The third movement is meant as a moment of real-time expanded musically, representing those you love and cherish, the duty to protect them, and the price of failure. The final movement is in essence, a focused, relentless musical "fight" that persists until the dramatic end of the piece.

With one exception, which is discussed below in Section 2, individual instruments do not represent a character in the story. Rather, the focus is on conveying the programmatic elements, particularly the underlying emotions aspects, using the ensemble as a unit. In order to convey these aspects, very specific musical considerations were made, particularly regarding meter, orchestration, melodic development, and varied use of pitch and harmonic content. The following Sections will provide an

overview of these aspects as well as important programmatic elements and will discuss each in further detail.

Figure 1.1 – Diagram of the Piece's Structure (All Movement Times are Approximate)



2 Programmatic Elements

The programmatic nature of this piece is one of its most important aspects and was the primary driving force behind each movement's overall intent as well as most musical choices that were made. Each movement explores a different event within a larger scenario in my original fear of a violent intruder. Movement I is separated into two sections and depicts the 'before' of the encounter from my point of view as the unsuspecting, non-aggressor (section 1) and the intruder as he creeps through the house (section 2). The second movement explores, in a very chaotic and terrified way, what happens during our initial encounter. The third movement explores the feelings towards those you love (e.g. spouse, children) who are depending on you in this type of situation, rather than simply the motivation for self-protection. This focus on others is essential; a strong component of my fear was that I would fail those who were depending on me. The final movement is an exhausting, all-out fight-to-the finish (some may reasonably say to-the-death). While most decisions about this piece were influenced by the overall program, only the most significant features of each movement will be discussed.

In the first movement, which is slow, mysterious at times, and filled with several moments of swelling tension, the double bass plays a very important role at two key moments. The first moment comes as the first section comes to a close. Prior to measure 26, a sense of suspicion is building, which

suddenly begins to grow and morph into tension and fear, accentuated by the bass's use of pizzicato and low notes, representing strange sounds, but not ones that can yet be definitively attributed to an intruder (*Figure 2.1*). Similarly, the bass again utilizes pizzicato as well as repetitive legato notes dynamically above the ensemble, as well as a dissonant tremolo at the close of the second section of the first movement, as the intruder creeps closer to an imminent confrontation (*Figure 2.2*).

28 Clarinet in B 20 mpmf Violin mf >mf Viola mf mp#g 8 Violoncello mf mppizz Double Bass mp> mf

Figure 2.1 – Bass Pizzicato Representing a Mysterious Sound (Mvt I, Section 1, mm. 26 – 30)

Figure 2.2 – Encounter is Imminent (Mvt I, Section 2, mm. 52 – 56)



Prior to the encounter taking place, the intruder is sneaking through the house with tension building as he gets closer and closer. This central melodic influence of the second section of the first movement begins with 'footsteps' in the clarinet and cello, with one quiet lead footfall (clarinet) being echoed slightly quieter (pizzicato cello) (*Figure 2.3*).

Figure 2.3 – Intruder Quietly Creeping Through the House (Mvt I, Section 2, mm. 35 – 38)



The second movement explores a chaotic first encounter, which, like the first movement, contains two sections. The first section focuses on the encounter from my perspective, while the second switches to the assailant's point of view. Though this movement is less varied programmatically, two specific moments occur that have a specific intention. Measures 69 – 72 (Mvt II, Section 1) begins with a prominent glissando in the violin and cello, followed by a sequenced (by half step) repetition (without the glissando) which represents the intruder nearly getting a hold of me though I barely slip away (*Figure 2.4*). Finally, in the second section, as the second movement is coming to a close, the intruder finally is able to corner me and my family and seemingly get the upper hand as represented by a very loud, dissonant chord. This extreme dissonance is due to the use of almost exclusively minor seconds as well as tritones. Here are the notes from lowest to highest (see *Figure 2.5* for a visual): A and E_P (bass), G and E-natural (cello), C and B-Natural (7th apart) (viola), C# and A (violin), B_P (flute).

Figure 2.4 – Barely Slipping Away (Mvt II, Section 1, mm. 69 – 72)

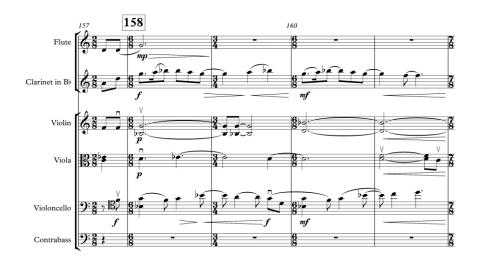


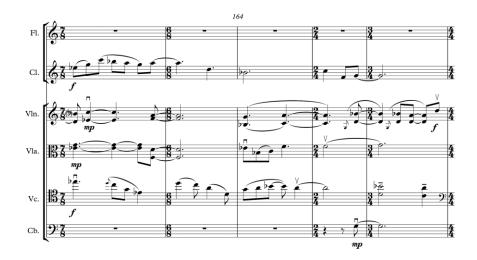
Figure 2.5 – Cornered with Nowhere to Escape (Mvt II, Section 2, m. 106)



The third movement, which is focused on those who are relying on me for their safety, often utilizes short duets, accompanied by the ensemble, between different combinations of instruments. Programmatically, these duets represent the connection between me and another person. Each duet utilizes a fragment or slight variation of the primary theme (see Section 5, *Figure 5.2* below for the full theme), which represents me. Simultaneously, the other member of the duet is playing material that, while based on the primary theme, is developed to less recognizable level (*Figure 2.6*).

Figure 2.6 - Movement III Duet, Clarinet and Cello (mm. 157 -





The fourth movement's program, which is entirely focused on fighting, strongly influences rhythm and meter. As someone trained in hand-to-hand combat techniques for nearly 22 years I believe that a fight, regardless of the context (e.g. self-defense, as the aggressor, during intense combat sports, training, etc.), is an extremely unpredictable experience regardless of your experience, training, and natural physical attributes. It is simply not possible to 'control' another human being during a confrontation, any sense of control is merely artificial; one can only hope to 'manage' the other's

sporadic, unpredictable inputs. This ideology is the basis for the use of mixed meter and rhythm in this section, which is essential to accomplishing the programmatic setting.

The primary time-signature is 7/8 (3 + 2 + 2), but 5/8 (3 + 2), 6/8, 4/4, 2/4, 3/4, and 5/4 are used often. The purpose behind using 7/8 as the primary time signature is to elicit a sense of tension and uneasiness in the listener due to its asymmetrical nature. This is due to the previous movement written primarily in 6/8 and most listeners being aurally accustomed to music in 4/4 (7/8 lies in between the two). Furthermore, 7/8, when divided 3+2+2, gives a natural sense of irregularity, asymmetry, and forward motion. The use of other time signatures adds another layer of metric complexity, further representing the dynamic motions of a fight. Though moments of extended consistency exist, they only serve to mimic a false sense of control before a new time signature shatters the illusion.

Within these frequent 7/8 and 5/8 bars, a regular pulse is established utilizing a repetitive rhythmic motive that persists across much of the movement. The pulse is aided by accents on the first beat of the metric division (see accents in each measure of *Figure 2.7* and *Figure 2.8*). The primary rhythmic motive is shown prominently in *Figure 2.7*. The rhythmic motive and resulting pulse are intended to have a programmatic effect, with accented notes representing strikes while the remaining notes represent body movement and positioning, and footwork (e.g. a boxer striking a punching bag). Even moments when the time signature is in 4/4, the pulse often remains due to a modified version of the primary rhythmic motive (*Figure 2.8* from mm. 227-229, in addition, see: mm. 247, 261-262, 280, 296, 352).

Figure 2.7 – Movement IV Primary Rhythmic Motive (mm. 202 – 208, Motive is 1 measure in length)



Figure 2.8 – Movement IV Primary Rhythmic Motive Modified for 4/4 (mm. 227 – 229)



Since the program focuses on a major fear I once had, I feel that the ending, though violent, turns out in my favor, which was initially represented by a clear root position, fortissimo G-minor triad, with each string instrument playing a triple (bass) or quadruple stop. However, I choose to re-notate slightly to add C (violin, viola, cello) and Eb (cello). This was done to allow for ambiguity so the listener could project a different ending and to represent the mixed outcomes of Theseus's victory in the labyrinth. The re-voicing of this final chord was the only aspect of the piece modified with the story of *Theseus and the Minotaur* in mind.

3 Use of Mixed Meter

The use of mixed meter is prevalent throughout each movement of the piece as well as many of the works I compose. This piece utilizes mixed meter for a specific programmatic effect in the fourth movement as was discussed in the previous section, but this is not the sole reason for its usage. The most common usage is as a 'notated ritardando' (*Figure 3.1*), in which a subsequent time signature is of a longer duration than the previous before switching back to the previous time signature, (ex. 5/8 to

4/4 to 5/8) allowing for the listener to experience more precise and controlled extensions of time than a traditional ritardando, rubato, or fermata can provide (e.g. m.4, 13, 35, 78). Conversely, I also use mixed meter to disrupt the sense of consistent time in a sudden manner, opposite of a 'notated ritardando' (e.g. 4/4 to 3/4 to 4/4 OR 4/4 to 7/8 to 4/4) (Figure 3.2). Finally, mixed meter is also utilized to accommodate melodic phrases, especially when fragmented, whose presentations do not fit well with consistent metering (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.1 – Notated Ritardando in Measure 162 (Mvt III, m. 160 – 163)

 Technique used to allow the Clarinet and Cello to extend their melodies an 8th note longer in measure 162 before resuming the previous 6/8 time.

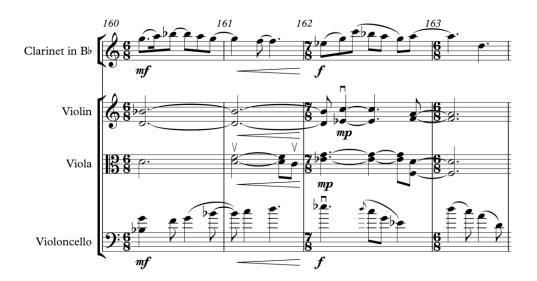


Figure 3.2 – Sudden Disruption of Time in Measure 84 (Mvt II, Section 2, m. 83 – 85)

• Technique allows the sudden forte quarter note ending m. 84 to occur more suddenly.

Compare m. 84 (clarinet) to m. 85 (flute) and note the rhythms, particularly beat 5 (eight note Eb) in the clarinet and beat 3 (quarter note D) in the flute. The clarinet's Eb is shortened to an eighth note allowing it to fit in a shortened (metrically) measure when compared to the adjacent measures.



Figure 3.3 – Mixed Meter in Melodic Lines of Varying Lengths (enclosed in boxes) (Mvt II, Section 2, mm. 98 – 102)



4 ORCHESTRATION

The overall goal of the orchestration of this piece was to provide aural support for the programmatic setting used. In writing the piece I focused on certain emotional states which I felt were essential to the program:

- Tension
- Fear
- Suspicion
- Sadness
- Love
- Aggression
- Violence

These states are often paired together in the music (Tension/Fear/Suspicion, Sadness/Love, Aggression/Violence). The orchestration is a large part of how I attempt to convey these states, in particular tension, fear, aggression, and violence. Admittedly, the orchestration is traditional, especially regarding voice crossings, register, and how the individual instruments are used (e.g. melody in the upper registered instruments and accompaniment/support to the lower registered instruments). This has the intended benefit of simplifying the listening experience, particularly in the 2nd and 4th movements which feature a great deal of rhythmic motion and dissonant harmonies. However, despite the overall simplicity, certain considerations were made regarding orchestration to convey the emotional states listed above. Tension and fear provided an opportunity for one example.

In my mind, tension and fear are accomplished with careful use of thick (given the size of this ensemble) textures, dissonant harmonies, and gradual crescendos and decrescendos. An example can be seen at the close of the first section of the first movement, mm. 26 -30 (*Figure 4.1*), which has also

been discussed previously for its programmatic elements (see *Figure 2.1 above*). While the bass is essential for a specific programmatic element, the notes assigned to the violin were chosen with the intention of utilizing the intense, piercing timbre given the intervals and ranges. Further complimenting this timbral element of the violin, the clarinet and flute maintain very close intervals with the gap spreading as measure 31 approaches. In each measure, the intervals in these voices emphasize tritones as well as major and minor seconds, which provides the dissonance. The viola, cello, and bass complete the lower ends of the texture, with the cello and bass ascending very little. The result is that the beginning of the section, which was from a pitch perspective, separated into a low group (viola, cello, bass) and a high group (flute, clarinet, violin), ends with a richer texture with low, middle, and high voices represented. The final element that aids the building of tension (as I begin to suspect an intruder is present), is use of dynamics. As each measure progresses, the ensemble crescendos gradually, with the exception of the bass, which is given a higher (louder) marking with each new entrance.

Figure 4.1 – Dissonant Harmonies Representing Tension and Fear (Mvt I, Section 1, mm. 26-30)

Movement 2, which is split into two sections, contains a textural division between the cello and bass, and the flute, clarinet, violin, and viola. The cello and bass primarily function as accompaniment

and tend to play in the mid to lower registers of their instrument with few exceptions. The flute, clarinet, violin, and viola handle the primary thematic elements, which primarily consist of eighth and sixteenth notes. The purpose for the textural divisions are:

- Practicality The natural agility in the flute, clarinet, violin, and viola lend themselves well
 to the rapid and repetitive figures.
- 2. Aural Effect The frequent use of the mid to lower register of the cello and bass provide a more ominous undercurrent to the overall texture.

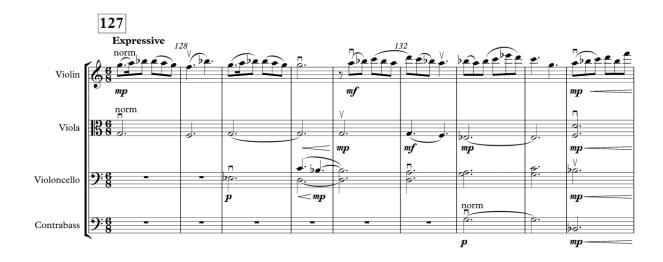
The third movement is unique when compared to the rest of the piece for many reasons. It is tonal, relies on staggered entrances to assist in building to a climax, and melodic trading and duets are used frequently. While the usage of these techniques were driven by the programmatic theme, I would like to discuss their usage from an orchestration perspective utilizing an important moment from early in the movement.

First, staggered entrances, when combined with dynamics, are very important in building up the first of two climactic moments. The buildup begins by gradually adding one instrument at a time, with quiet dynamics (piano or mezzo-piano), over the course of several measures. Once all instruments are present, the final buildup to the climax begins by gradually increasing dynamics, an ascending progression of chords, and duets between the flute and violin (see *Figure 4.2*). The result of these combined elements (staggered entrances, growing dynamics, and duets) is a dramatic, climactic moment that accomplishes one of the orchestration goals – to convey a strong sense of love, specifically, the feelings of love towards those closest to you.

The violin is the primary instrument in this part of the movement; however, the entrance of the flute marks the beginning of a short duet between the two. Duets are very important in this movement, and discussed above in Section 2 (Programmatic Elements). When the flute first enters, it briefly

assumes the melody (m.138) before the violin returns to prominence with the flute playing an accompanying melody. The second climactic moment is orchestrated very similar to the first though it does not begin with staggered entrances, and the roles of the violin and flute are reversed.

Figure 4.2 – Staggered Entrances, Dynamic Buildup, and Ascending Chords (Mvt III, mm. 127 – 144)





5 Melodic Development

This piece approaches melodic development differently than traditional works which often emphasize a clear, consistent melody that is stated, developed using a plethora of different techniques, and restated (often in different keys). Rather than creating and developing melodies traditionally, the melodies in this piece are short, typically lasting two measures, and are presented in fragments more often than in their original, full form. Fragmentation is a standard compositional technique and in this piece, it is the primary one utilized. However, other standard techniques are used as well (e.g. diminution and inversion, see *Figure 5.1a, b*).

Figure 5.1a – Diminution (Mvt I, Section 1)

Original (See Boxed) (mm. 35,36)



Diminution (See Boxed) (mm. 41,42)



Figure 5.1b – Inversion (Mvt II, Section 1)

Original (mm. 58)



Inversion (mm. 87)



In addition to the way melodic material is developed, *when* and *how* it is presented is important as well. In many traditional pieces (e.g. Baroque, Classical, Romantic eras) the melody is stated prominently very early or immediately. While this work utilizes this method at times, (e.g. the openings of both sections in the second movement) in other instances, a gradual approach is used. This can be seen in the 3rd movement, which I will detail, and throughout the 4th movement. The third movement consists of a primary (*Figure 5.2*) and secondary (*Figure 5.3*) theme which are used for the melodic development throughout the movement. The movement begins in m. 107 and quickly begins to introduce short fragments of the primary theme, particularly in the cello, which last until m. 127 when the only full presentation of the primary theme is made. The remainder of the movement, with the exception of the restatement of the secondary theme at the closing, is melodicized only by fragments of the primary and secondary theme.

Figure 5.2 – Primary Theme (Mvt III, mm. 127 – 134)



Figure 5.3 – Secondary Theme (Mvt III, mm. 135 – 144)

• The flute briefly assumes the melody in m. 138, but for this example, it notes are placed in the violin's part for demonstration purposes.



The final note about melodic material involves a hidden 'easter egg' that is used briefly in the 2nd (m. 84 clarinet, m.85 flute), once in the 3rd (m. 111), and in slightly modified form in the 4th movement.

As stated in the introduction, the initial drafts suggested a tonal, melancholic, and traditionally melodic work, however despite the change in temperament, I decided to utilize a fragment of the original primary melody in these places (*Figure 5.4*)

Figure 5.4 – Original Melody Hidden Throughout the Piece (Piano Reduction)



6 PITCH AND HARMONIC USAGE

This work attempts to distance itself from traditional (e.g. Baroque, Classical era) tonality and harmony. The exception is the third movement, which utilizes common triadic chords and tonal themes, primarily within the key of G minor (other non-G minor harmonies exists, simply to provide instability). While this work isn't completely atonal or devoid of pitch centricity, chord progressions, in the traditional sense, are not used. In the first, but more so the second and fourth movements, a substantial amount of harmonic fluidity and freedom exist. In part, this fluidity is achieved by fluctuations between chromaticism and more traditional tonality. Further aiding the sense of harmonic fluidity is the way accompaniment and thematic material are handled. An effort is made to maintain regular pitch centricity during thematic statements (including fragments), and themes tend to be either heavily chromatic (movement by minor seconds) or based on a minor or diminished triad. The accompaniment is given greater freedom to explore different pitches.

In the first section of the first movement, there is an opportunity to explorer the usage of pitch centricity in a very clear way (*Figure 6.1*). This example begins in measure 16 and lasts until measure 23. This part of the music features an emphasis on $F\#/G\flat$ as a starting note of a figure, beginning first with

the flute (m. 16) before passing the use of the central note to other instruments (mm. 18-23). To keep this section harmonically interesting and non-repetitive, presentations of the repetitive rhythmic figure will alter primarily up or down by half step though certain presentations will start on C (tritone above F#). The usage of F natural and G# resolving to F# aurally strengthen this sense of centricity while the occasional use of C# adds dissonance without creating a Major 4th or Perfect 5th relationship which might suggest a traditional key.

Figure 6.1 – Pitch Centricity on F# (Mvt I, Section 1, mm. 16-25)

• Note, the Flute has a Gb enharmonic equivalent in measure 16.



In the first section of the second movement, the primary theme and subsequent fragments are based on minor seconds with limited usage of major seconds (see Figure 6.2). The accompaniment utilizes both chromaticism and minor or diminished arpeggios and scales. The use of quick, sporadic figures rather than sustained notes, particularly in the accompaniment prevent a clear sense of a key or tonal center from being clearly discernible; however, pitch centricity is used by the melodic figures, emphasizing E as a starting note. The second section of the second movement has a stronger emphasis on chromaticism, major seconds, and scalar figures. The melodic emphasis of E as a starting pitch is almost completely reduced in favor of random pitches which are not interconnected. The scalar figures are highly inconsistent and random, not focusing on standard scales. Their usage is more akin to a musical gesture rather than a recognizable scale. From a performance perspective, the scalar figures could be played with different notes or glissandi (strings) and still maintain the aural intention as long as the starting and ending pitches, as well as their placement in time, remains unchanged. While pitch appears to be inconsistent and random, beginnings of a stable tonal center are forming in the bass emphasizing Bb, and Eb before shifting primarily to D and G assisted by the cello in the final measures of the movement. This is a subtle emphasis, and one easy to overlook given the chromaticism and sweeping gestures occurring simultaneously, however it is done deliberately to setup the tonal 3rd movement (in G minor).

Figure 6.2 – Mvt 2, Section 1 Primary Theme (mm. 57-59)



7 CONCLUSION

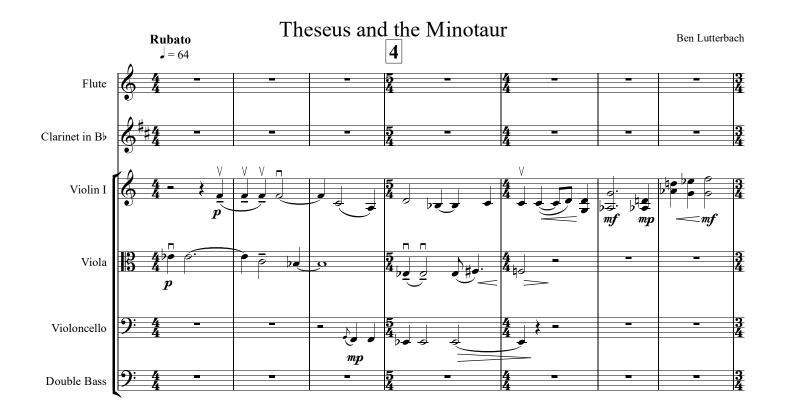
This piece addressed a fear that was very prevalent and often on my mind only a few years prior. It was admittedly illogical and an unnecessary use of my emotional energy given the statistical unlikeliness of the event actually occurring. Still, it was easy to obsess over every subtle noise and triple check the doors and windows prior to going to sleep at night (I still at least *double* check the doors). Ironically, my martial arts experience, which would be my biggest equalizer and asset in the event this situation was to occur, may have fueled my fear due to the increased situational awareness I have gained. It was also partially driven by my obsessive tendencies (different from traditional Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder). This piece allowed me to explore this fear in a different and healthier way. While I can't definitively say whether or not its composition aided in the removal of this fear, I can say that I learned a great deal and that this piece is an important step in my development as a composer.

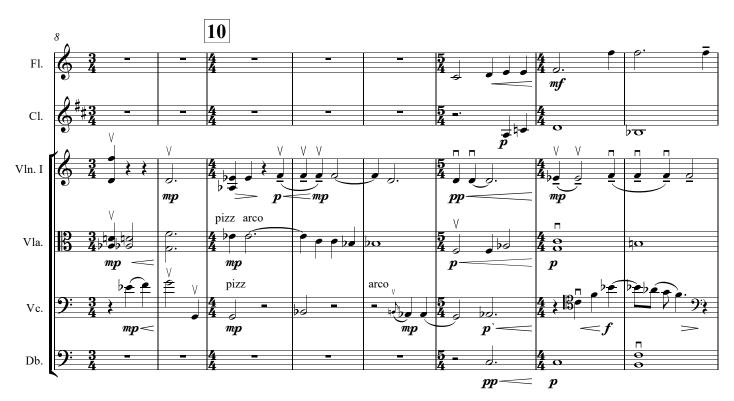
8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

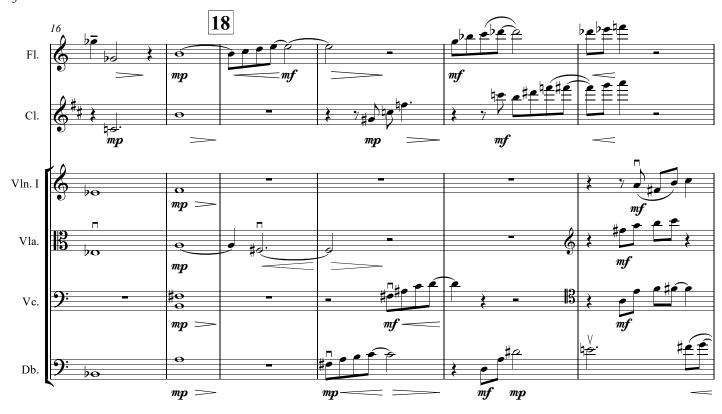
In preparing this thesis project, I would like to thank: My instructors at Butler, especially Dr. Frank Felice and Dr. Michael Schelle, as well as past instructors Dr. Roberta Lindsey and Dr. Michael Drews, past band directors Keith Burton and Mike Doney, and my family and friends for their support and exceptional patience.

Ben Lutterbach

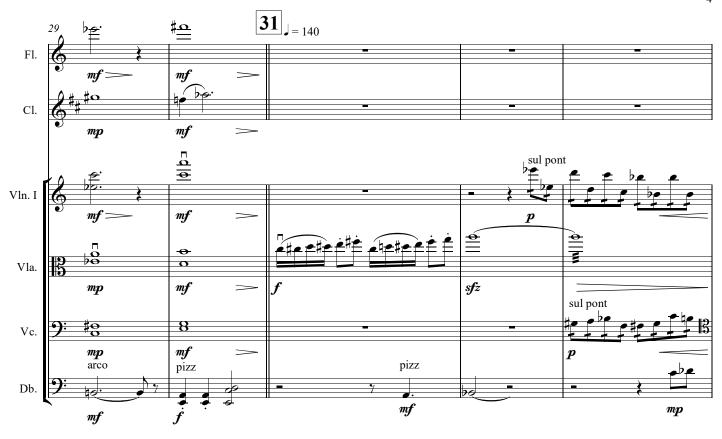
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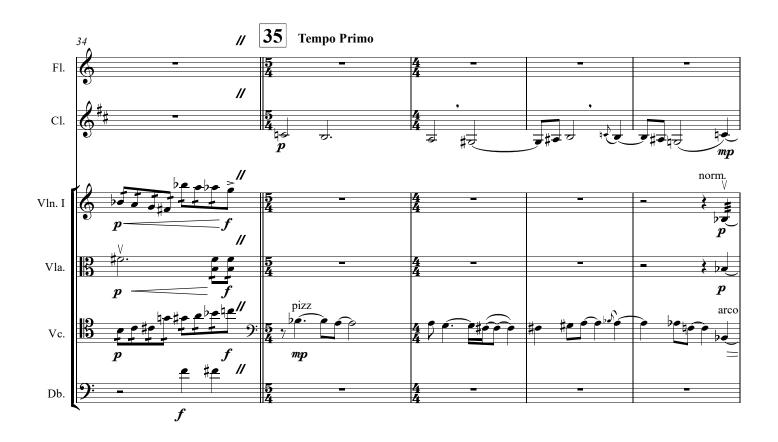


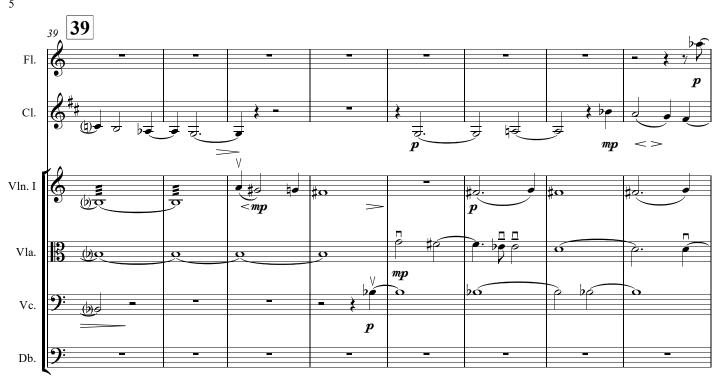


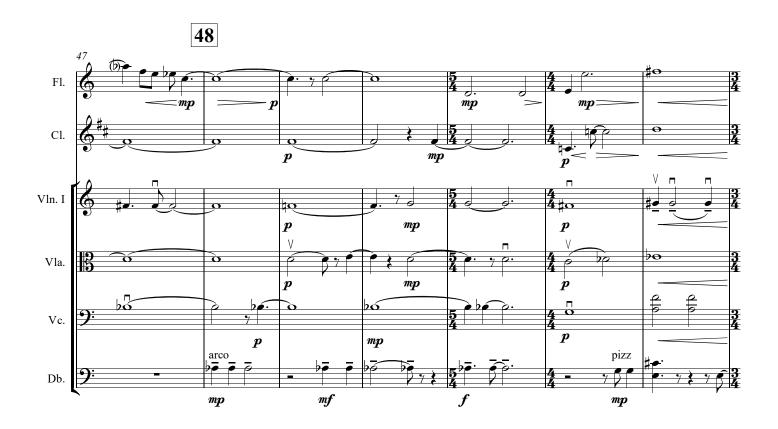










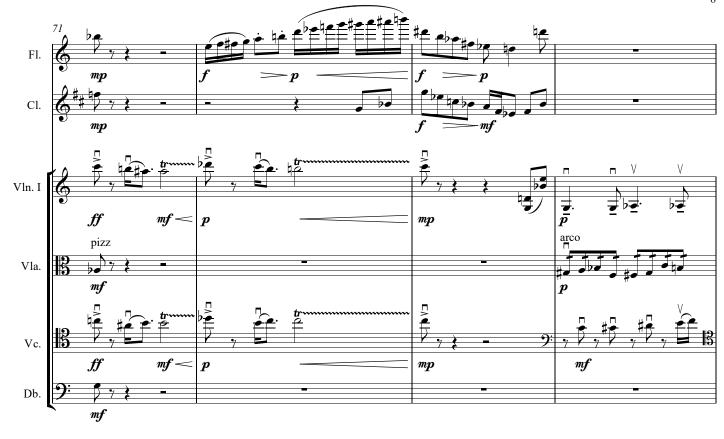












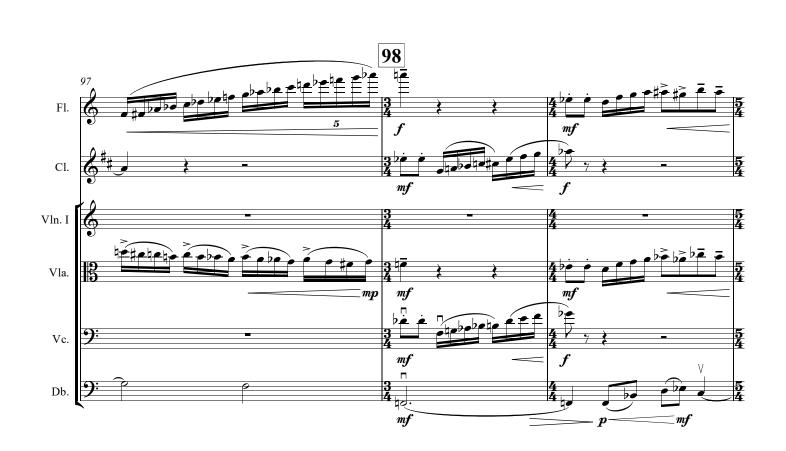






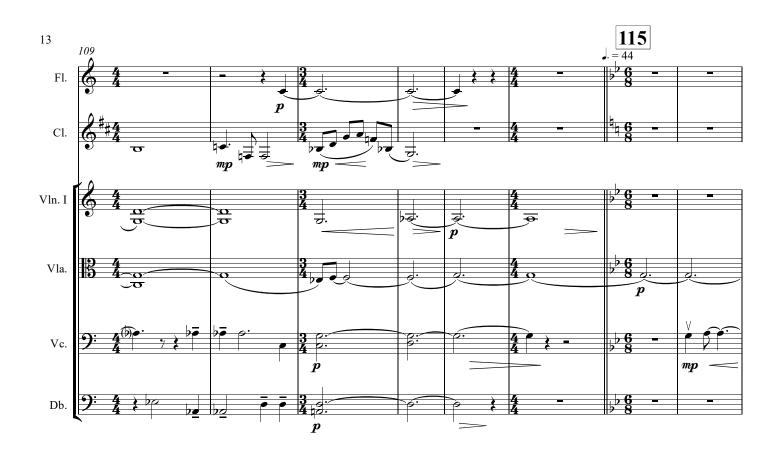


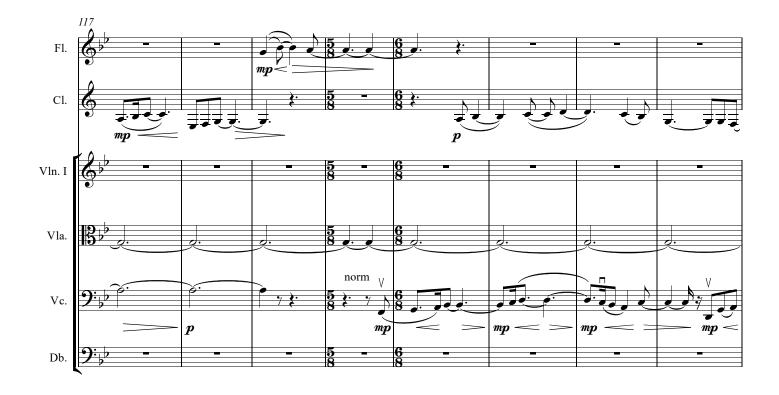




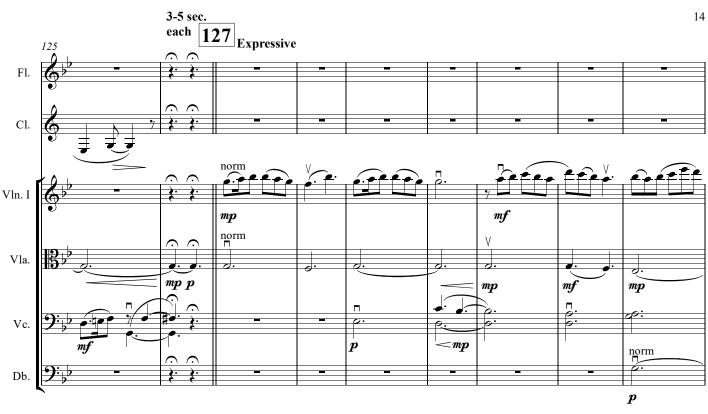
















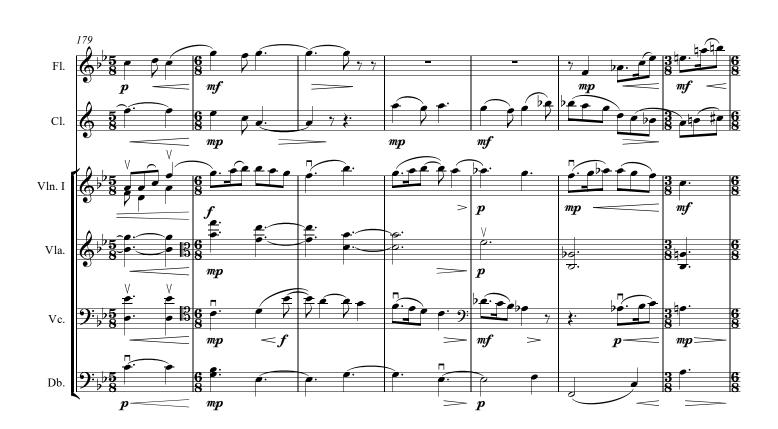


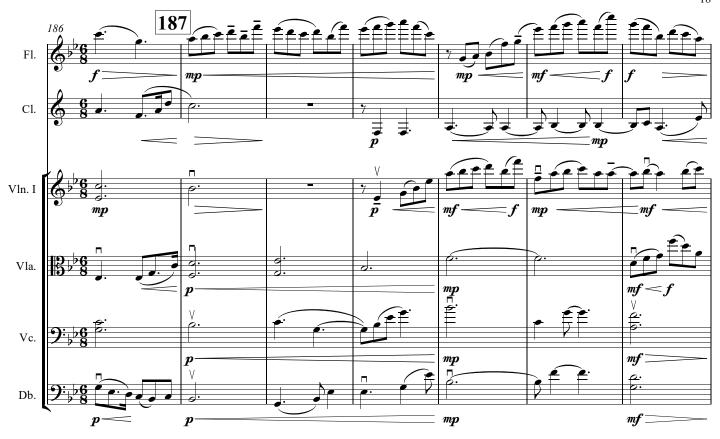














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