A SYMPHONY OF WHEAT

ADAPTED FROM THE FILM SCORE TO CITY GIRL

JOHN FREDERICK PAUL

ARRANGED FOR CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
SCORE - IN C



Duration: approximately 23'

Program Notes:

The title "A Symphony of Wheat" is an allusion to FW Murnau's penultimate film, which he described as "a tale about wheat, about the sacredness of bread, about the estrangement of the modern city dwellers and their ignorance about Nature's sources of sustenance". His working title was "Our Daily Bread". The director had given several of his films musical sub-titles, including "Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horrors" and "Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans". In the same vein, this film was conceived as an epic "silent" film with a fully synchronized symphonic score. Unfortunately before its release in 1930, the studio turned the film into a talkie and renamed it "City Girl". The film was long considered lost, but a silent version was discovered in the 1970's. I was given the opportunity in 2009 to create a new score for this silent version that was to be performed live. Logistical considerations led me to write for a quartet of clarinet, violin, viola and cello. But it is my hope that transforming excerpts of this chamber music into a version for symphony orchestra better captures the grandeur of the Murnau's epic film, inspired by the magnificent wheat-fields of Kansas and eastern Oregon and Washington, places in which I have lived and traveled.

I. Allegro: Titles and Introduction

Title screens showing the harvesting of wheat are followed by a marvelously compact scene in which we are introduced to the main characters of the film: Lem (the son) traveling by train to the big city to sell the family's wheat crop, Tustine (the domineering father, through a letter), the loving mother (through another letter and care package), and a city girl (although it is not the same woman he falls in love with several scenes later).

II. Intermezzo: Fields of Wheat

This tender scene shows the newlyweds Lem and Kate (whom he met in the city) journey from the city back to the farm. They walk hand-in-hand, enjoying the sweeping vistas of the country-side, breaking into a joyous chase through the wheat in celebration of their new life together.

III. Scherzo mecanique: City Music

In contrast to the pure beauty of the country, the film depicts the modern city as impersonal and mechanistic, especially in its impact upon the two main characters. Kate frantically works as waitress in a fast-paced diner full of leering patrons. She dreams of a better life in the country. Lem is devastated by his inability to sell the wheat-crop at a price his father demanded. He wanders alone among swarms of people and cars in the streets.

IV. Passacaglia: Harvest

The harvest sequence was filmed in the rolling hills of eastern Oregon in the style of a documentary. The farm work is depicted with utmost dignity, interspersed with more personal vignettes: the fears, doubts, challenges and hopes of the newly-married couple. Tying the music together is a passacaglia theme based upon a fragment from Malotte's setting of the Lord's Prayer: "Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread".

V. Finale: Hoe-down

Music introducing the hired reapers arrival at the farm brings the symphony to a joyous conclusion: the hoe-down's fiddle-music layered below final statements of "Our Daily Bread".

Instrumentation:

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet in A

Bassoon

Horn in F

Trumpet in C

Trombone

1 Percussion (Glockenspiel, Xylophone, Triangle, Suspended Cymbal, Guiro, Ratchet, Castanets, 4 Toms)

Violins I & II

Violas

Cellos

Double-basses

I. ALLEGRO

Introductions











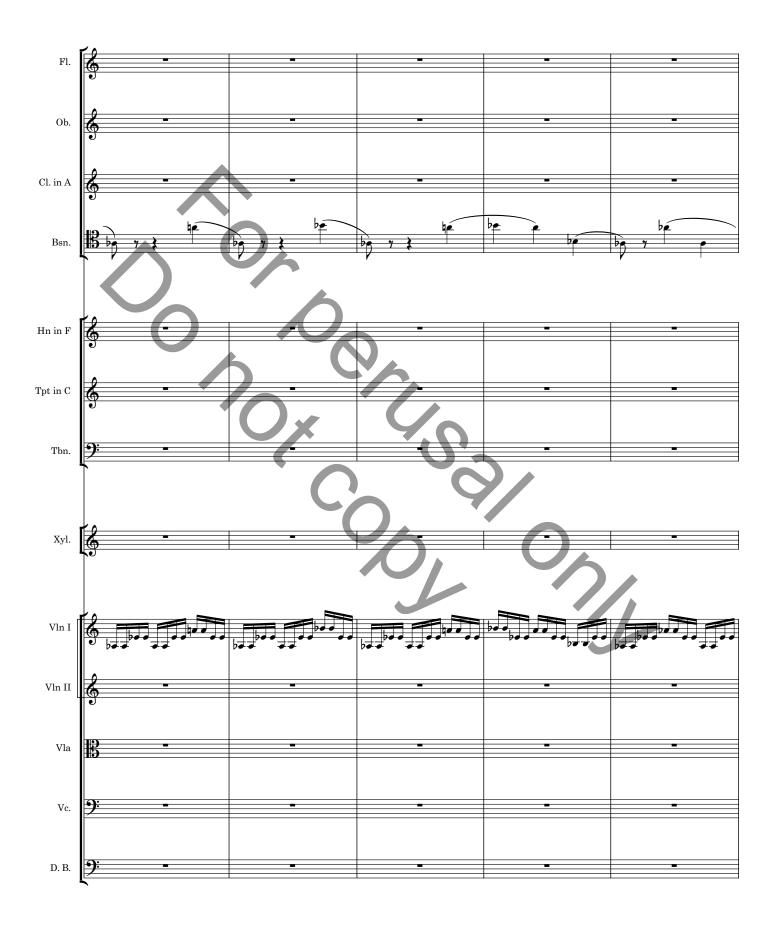




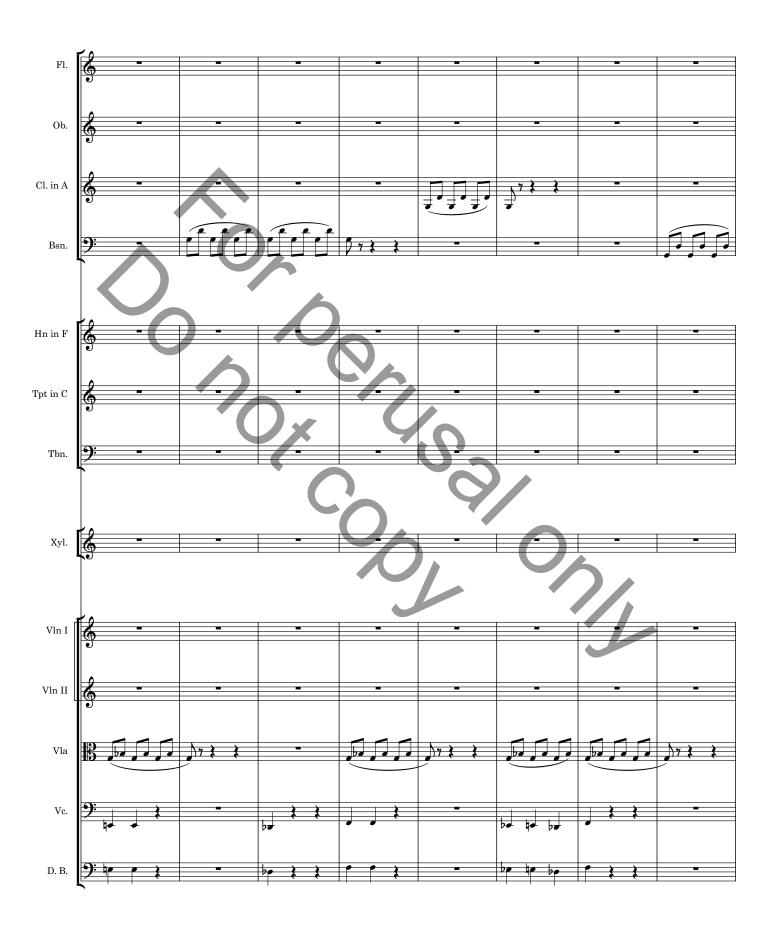












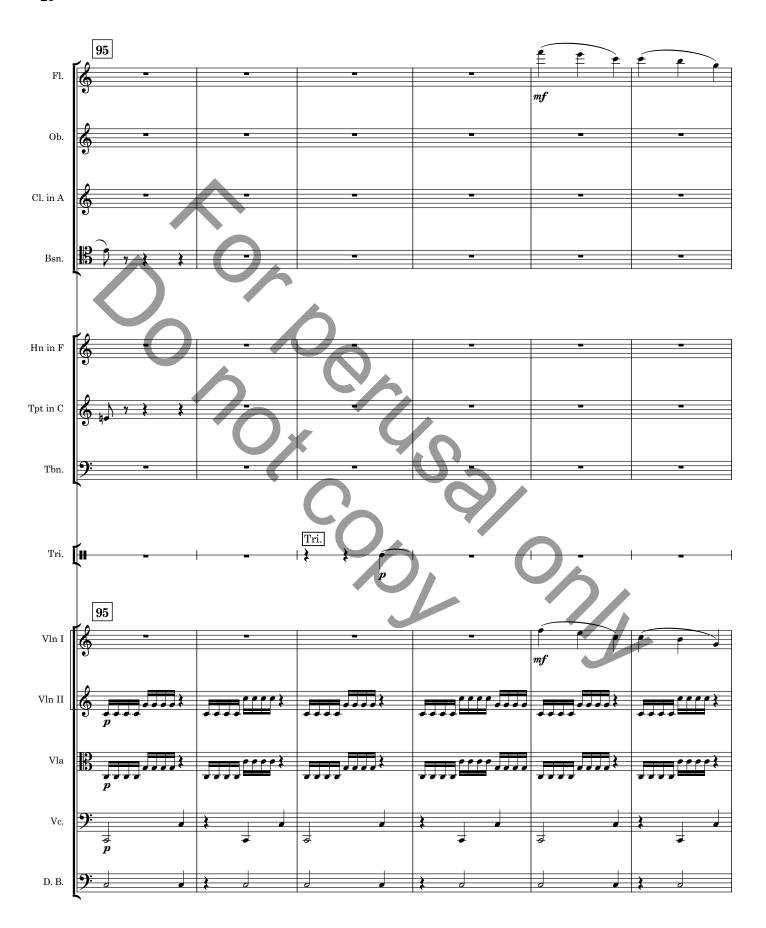


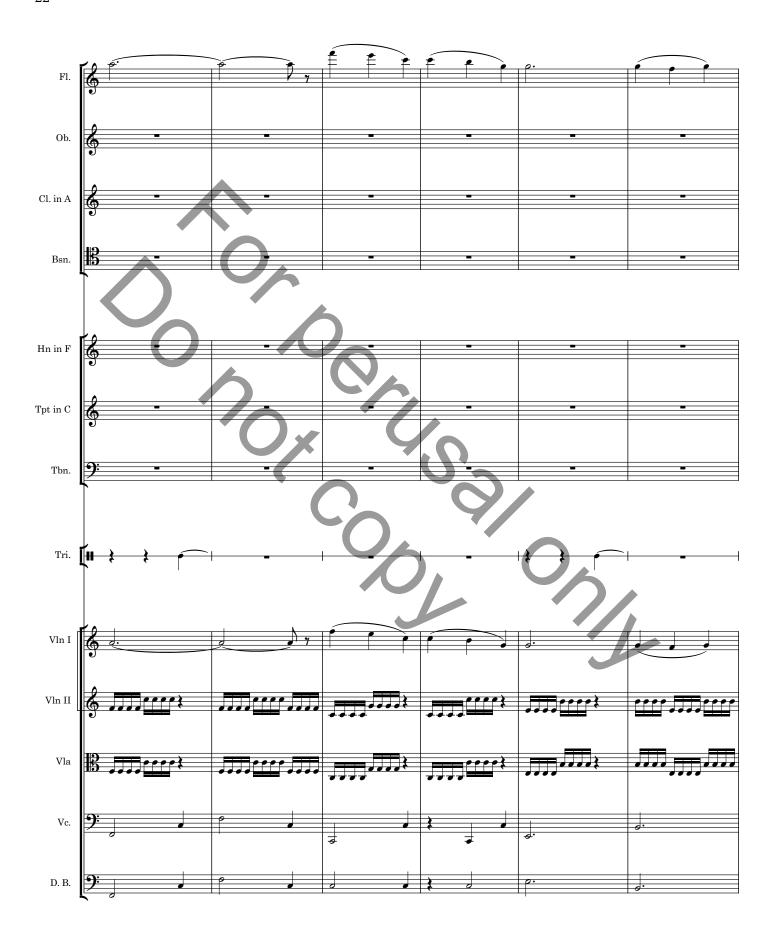
























II. INTERMEZZO

FIELDS OF WHEAT





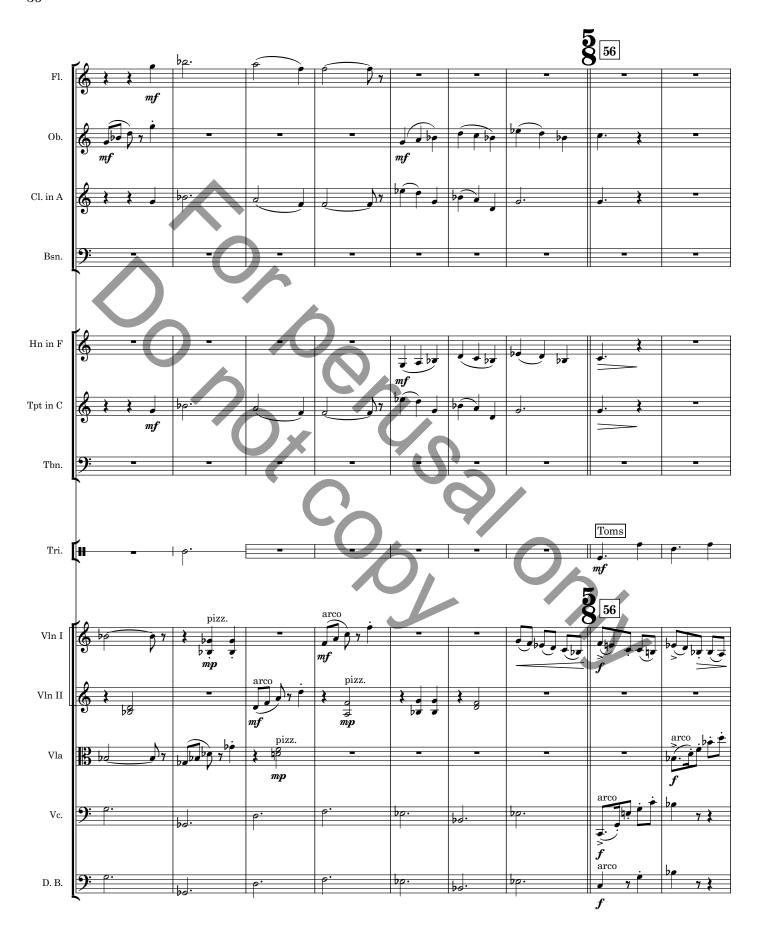












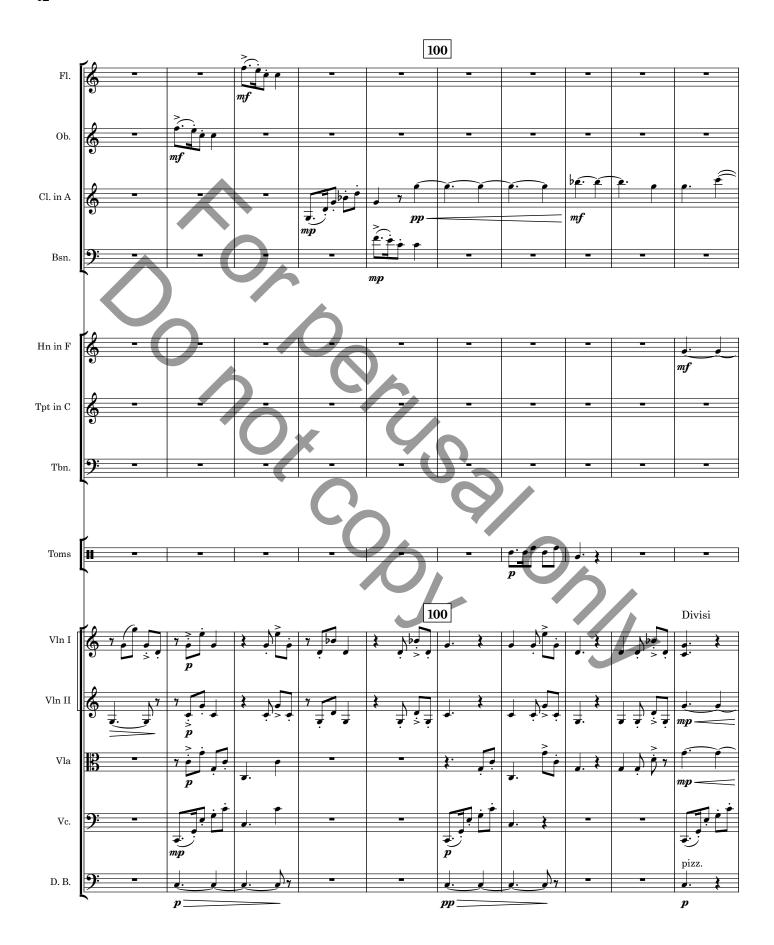




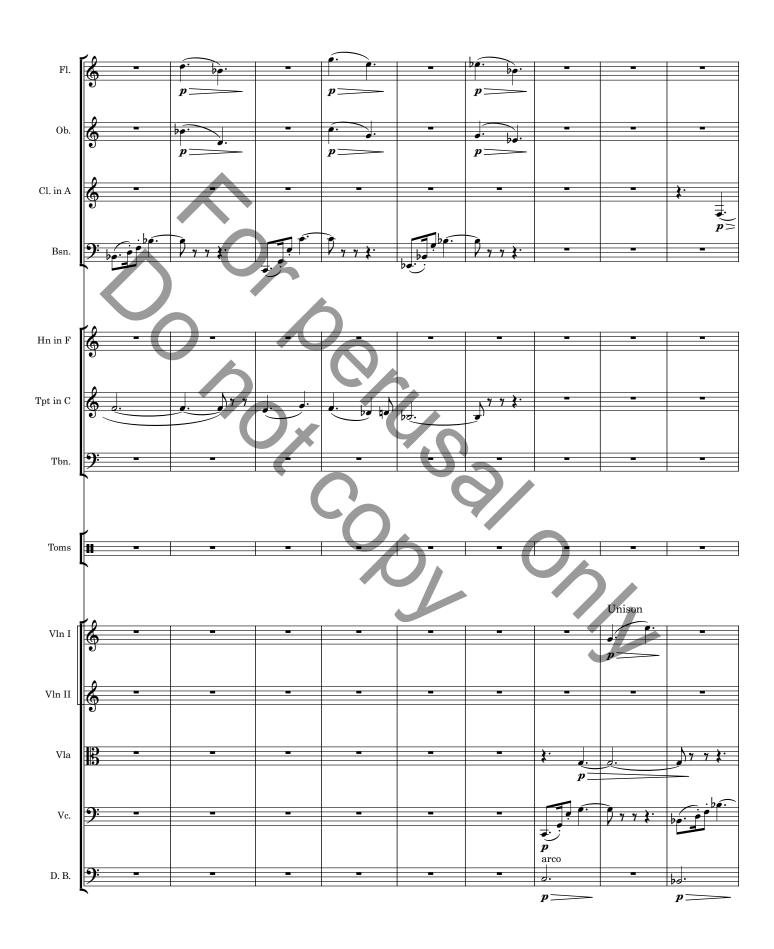












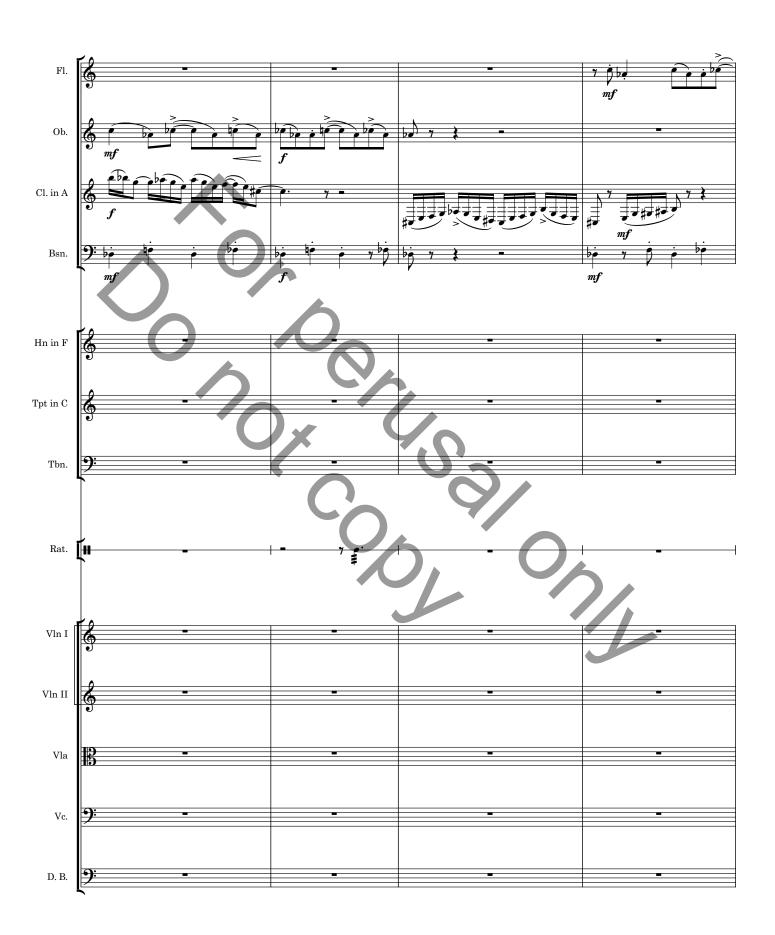




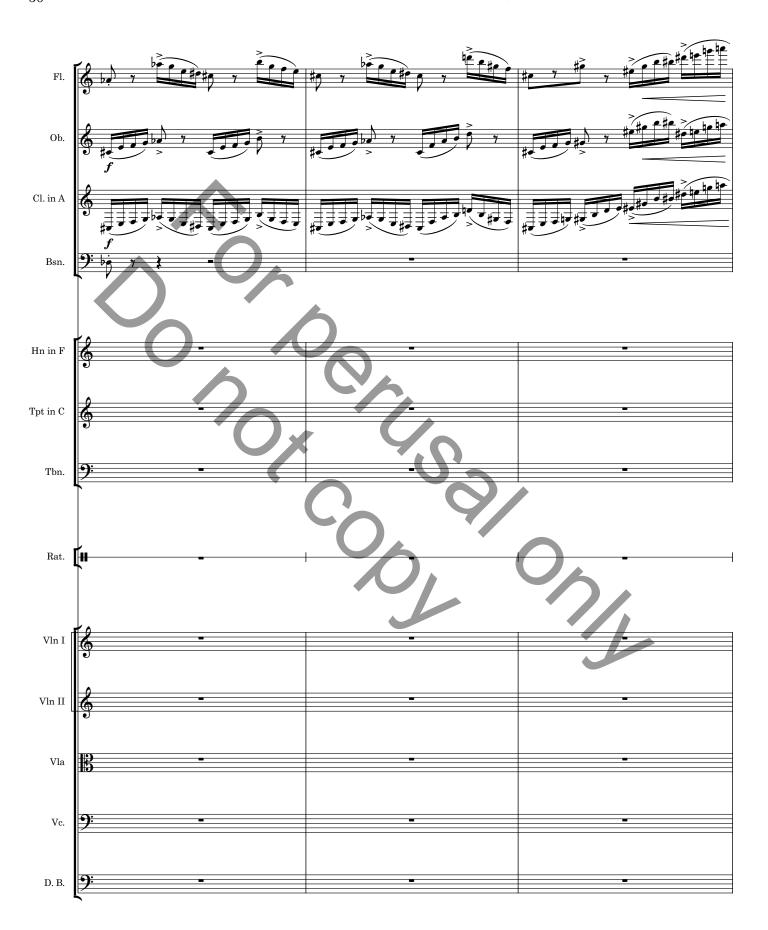
III. SCHERZO MECANIQUE

CITY MUSIC





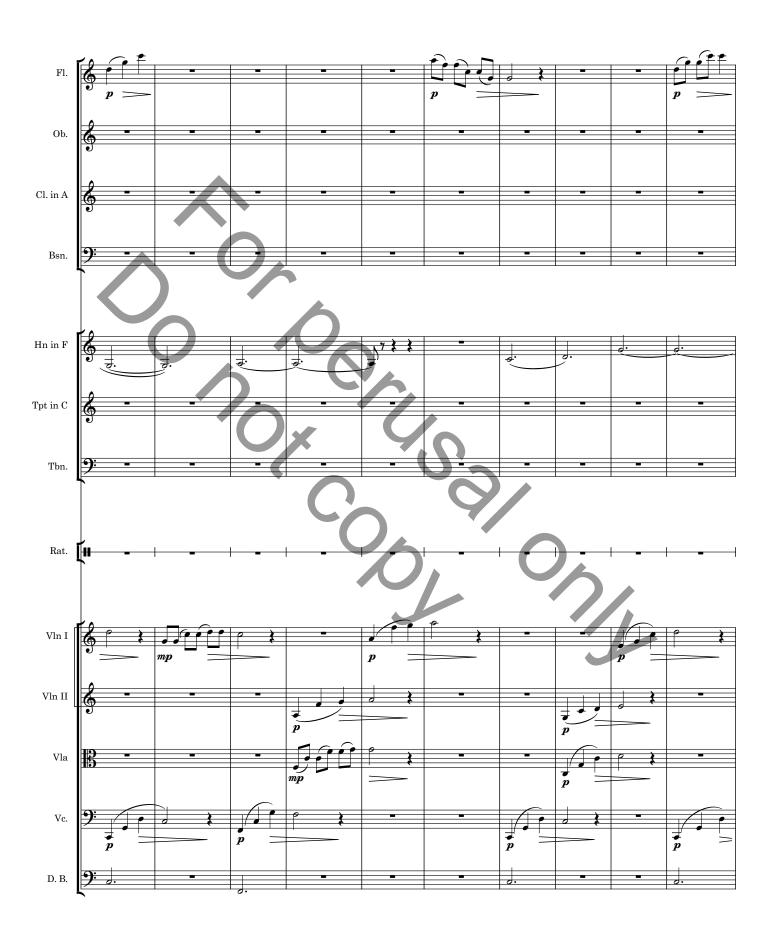




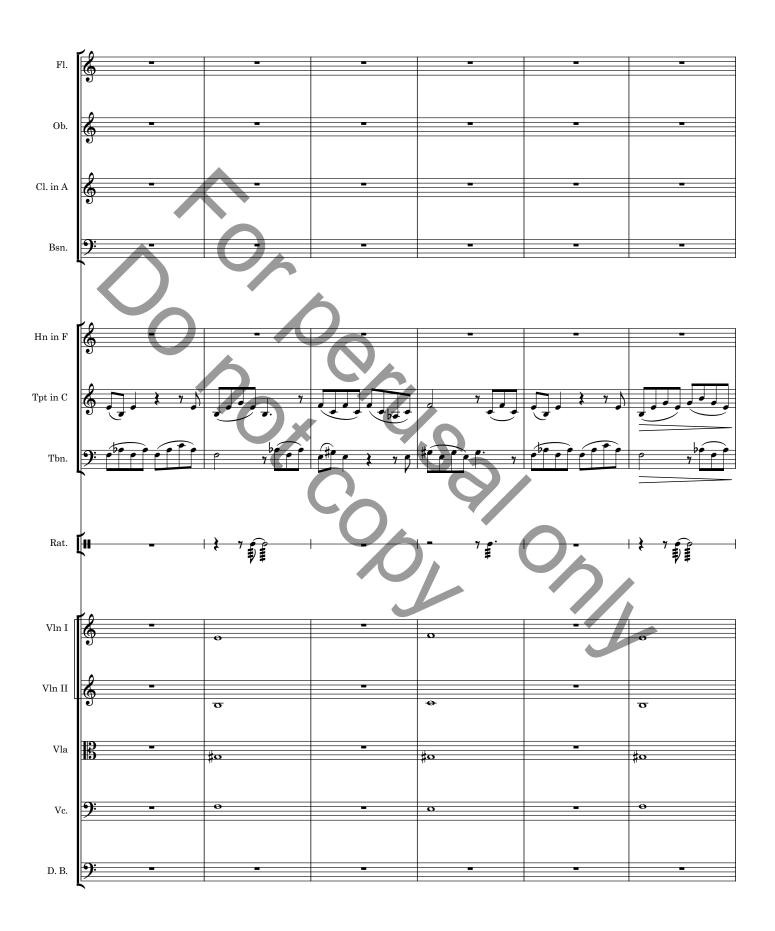




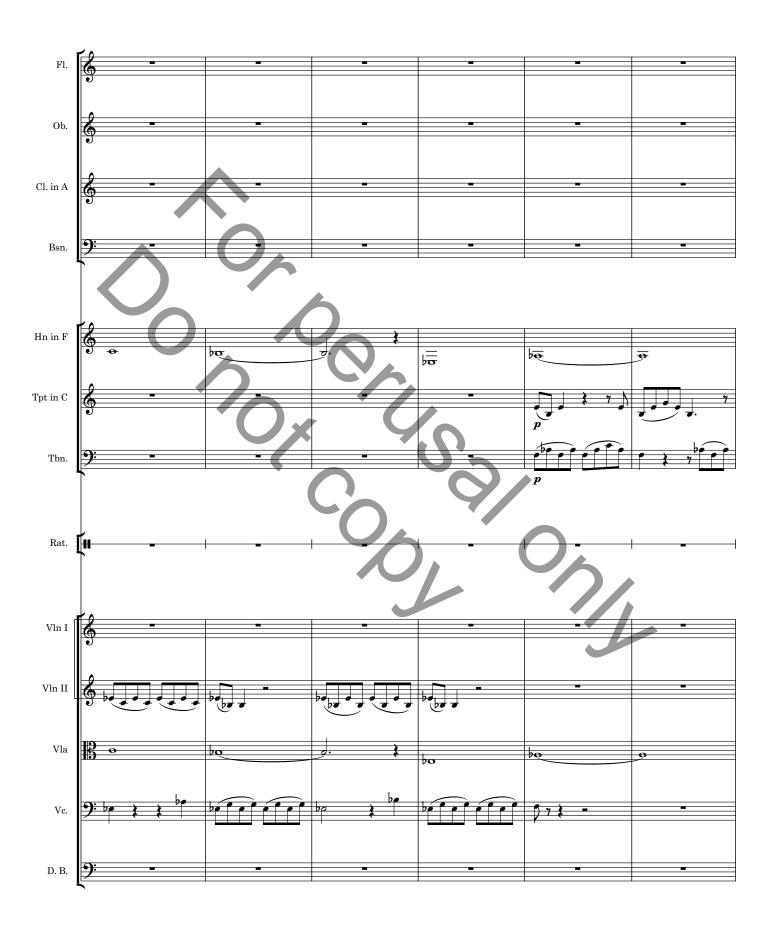


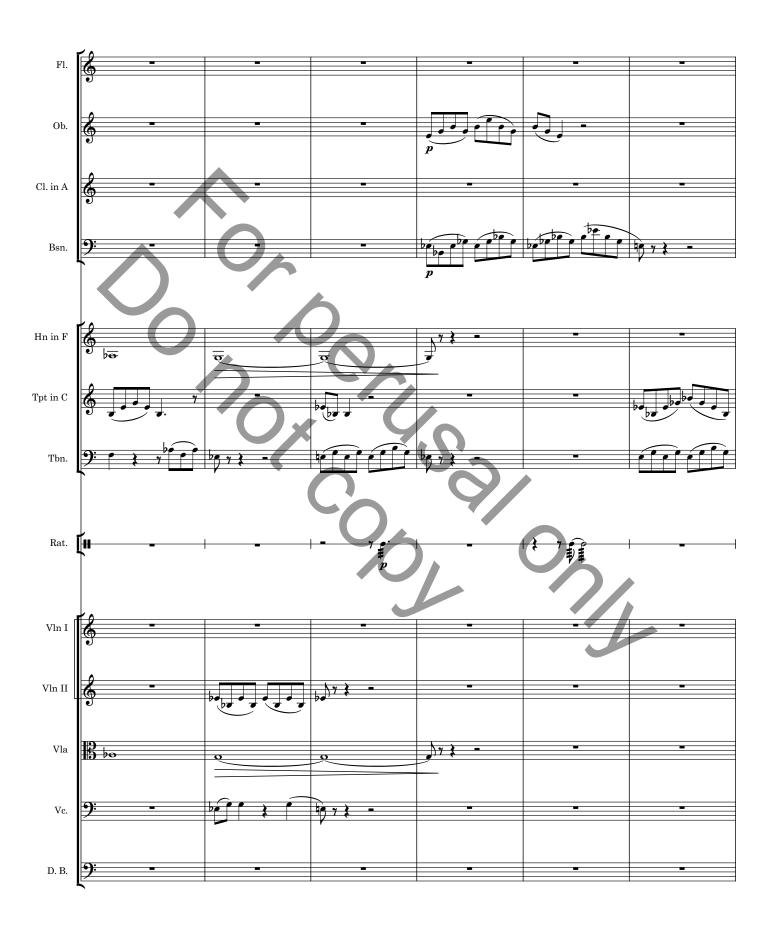
















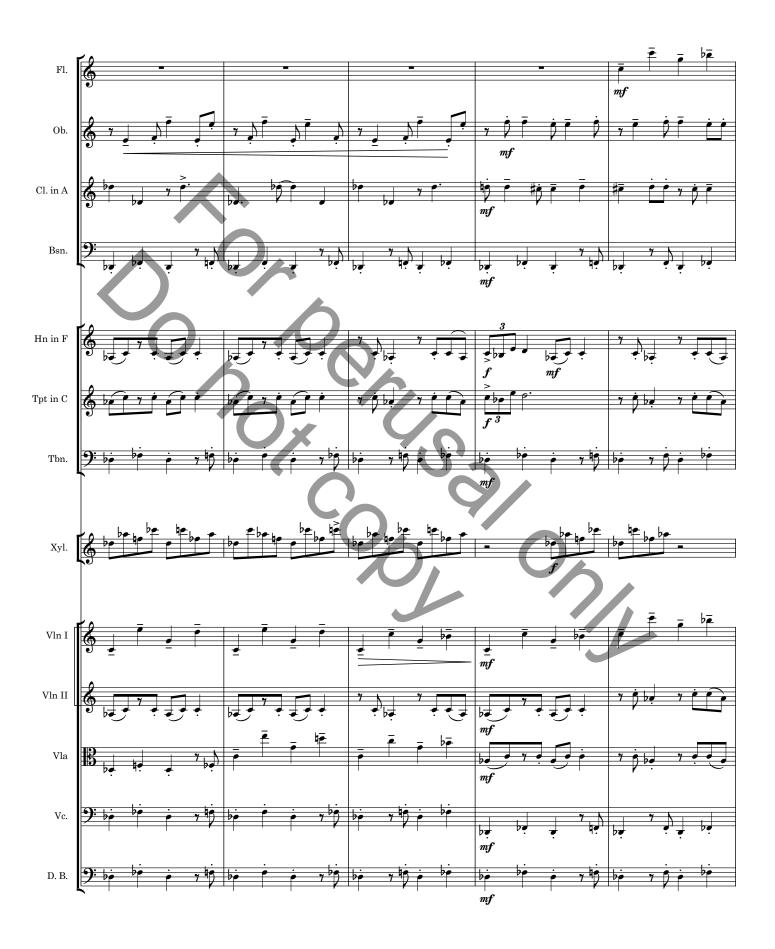




















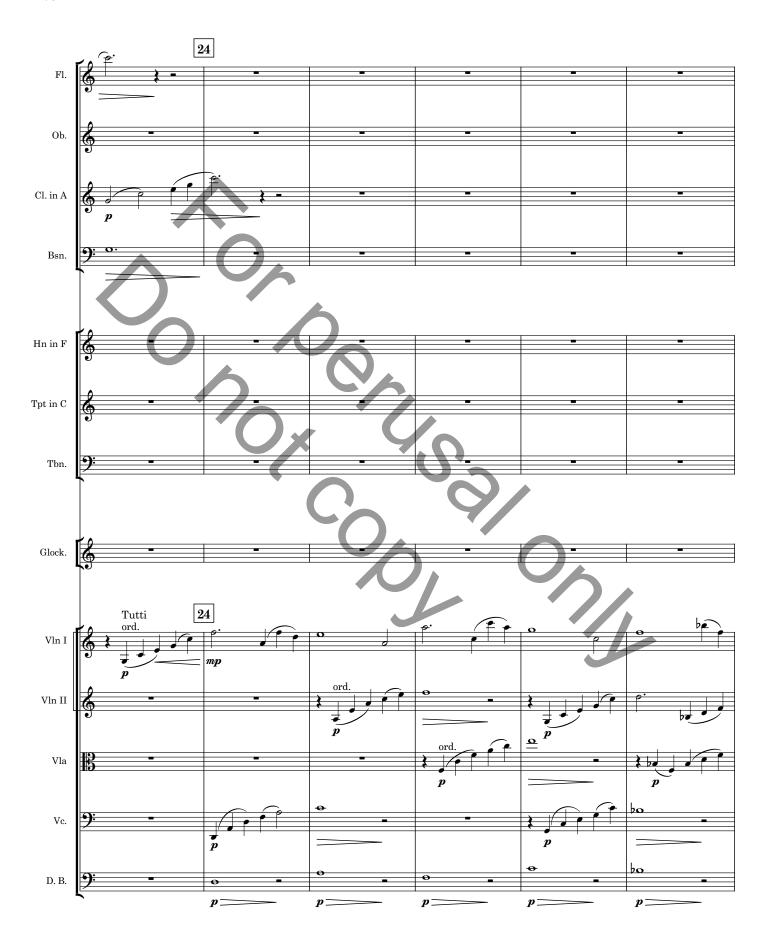
IV. PASSACAGLIA

THE HARVEST

















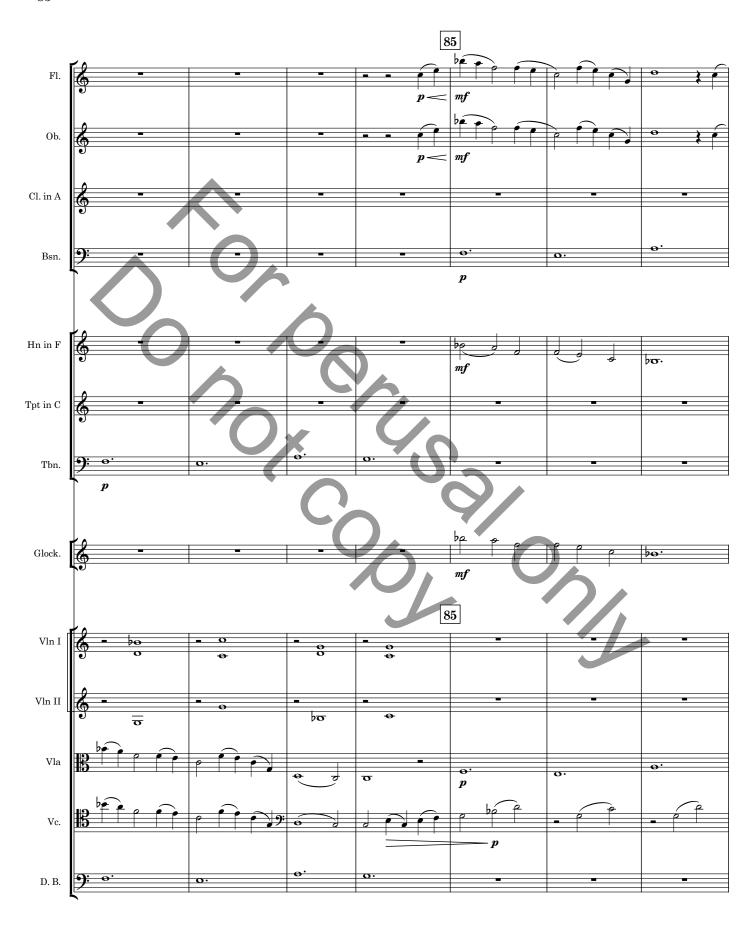


















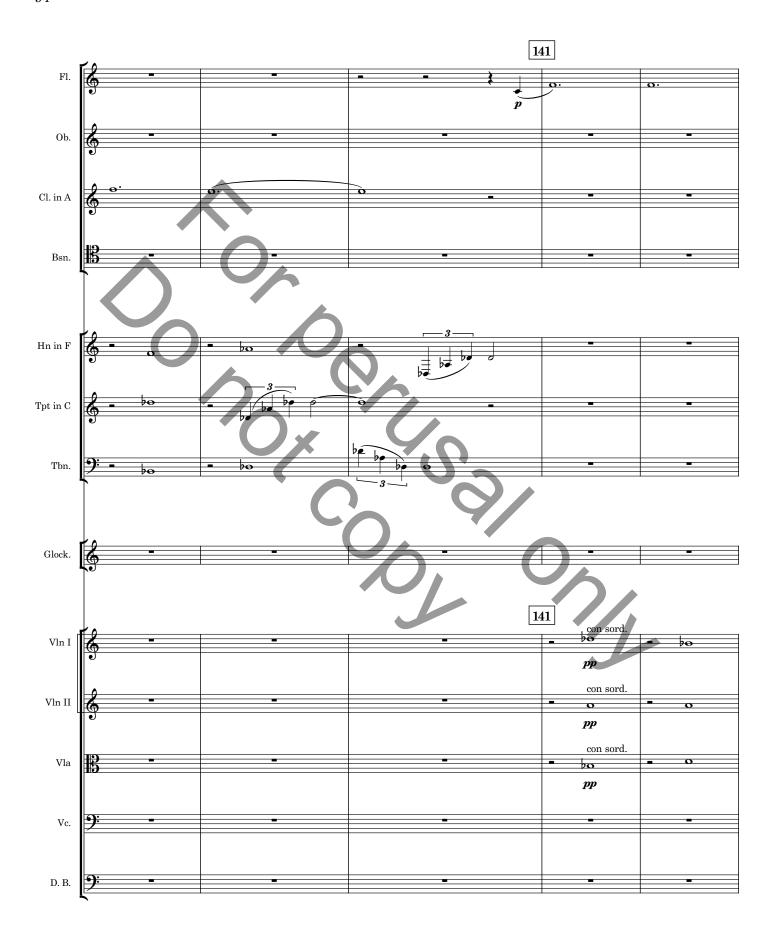




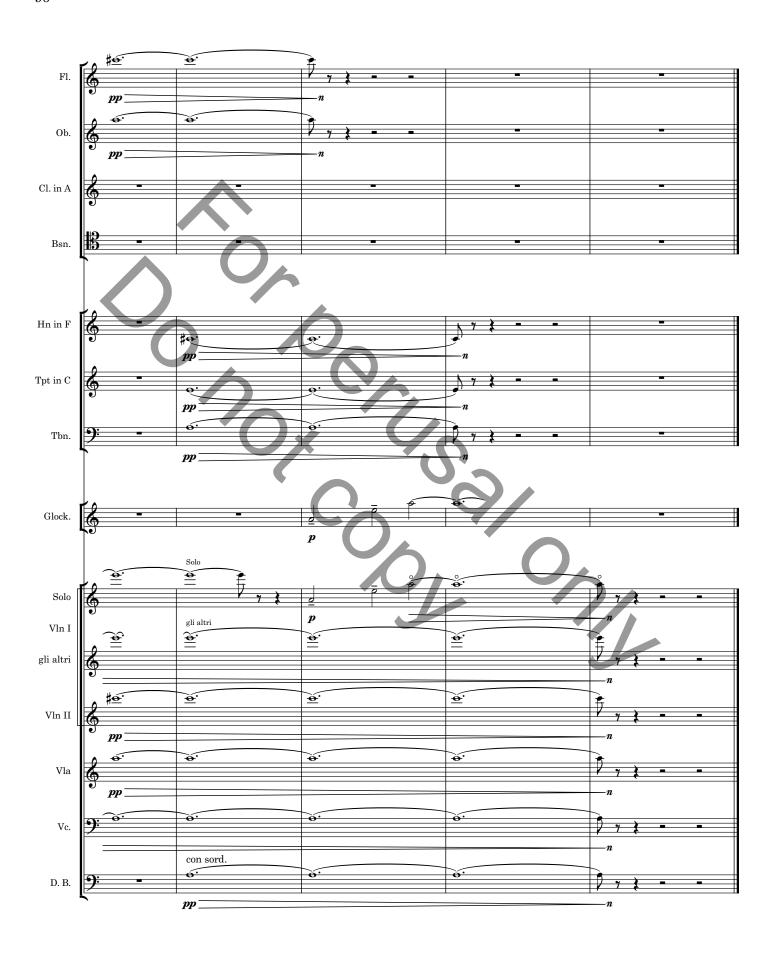












V. FINALE

HOE-DOWN

























































