# Yurahi: The City Of Balance

Thematic Development Assignment

By Hannah Owens

## AIM - To develop a theme / motive according to the narrative structure, mood and / or atmosphere in service of the wider story that it inhabits.

### Instruments **Program Note**

#### **WOODWIND**

Piccolo

Flute

**Bb Clarinet** 

Bassoon

#### **BRASS**:

Bb Trumpet Trombone

Tuba

### **PERCUSSION**

Snare Drum

Floor Tom

Cymbals (Ride & Crash)

**Tambourine** 

Glockenspiel

Vibraphone

Marimba

Timpani

Tubular Bells

#### **STRINGS**

Harp

Violin

Viola

Violincello

Contrabass

This score outlines the theme and thematic development for the fictional city of "Yurahi". Through this process, I experimented with the world building of my urban fantasy narrative, "Black & White" (based around the themes of Balance and Yin & Yang). My approach was to split this piece into 4 distinct sections, using the different seasons to map out the development and structure of my piece.

This was constructed by viewing the city through the lens of our young protagonists and how their perception of it changes over the course of those seasons. The narrative and thematic beats are as follows:

Season 1- Yurahi is a place of exciting new possibilities for the characters but is simultaneously an ancient and historically important war site (Atmosphere is "Grand and Fantastical")

Season 2 - Yurahi has become the characters' home and is now the place where they feel the most comfortable (Atmosphere is "Warm and Nostalgic")

Season 3 - Yurahi becomes dark and mysterious as the characters begin to question everything they knew about the city and their allies (Atmosphere is "Tense and Unsettling")

Season 4 - Yurahi becomes a war zone once again as the characters fight to take it back from tyranny alongside unexpected allies (Atmosphere is "Grand and Heroic")

The main theme develops across these seasons but remains balanced in emphasis and structure to support the core themes of the narrative.

Thematic material is introduced in A Dorian through the harpist at their own pace quickly followed by a slow and grand reveal of the orchestra. It is mezzo piano, adding to the grand and understated introduction that is brought back later in the piece. It is mostly rubato with long phrases to sustain the big chordal movements A minor i - D major IV. The timbre spread across the orchestra, excludes the marimba, vibraphone, trumpet and clarinet, leaving an airy and resonant sound.

# "Yurahi" Theme & Development

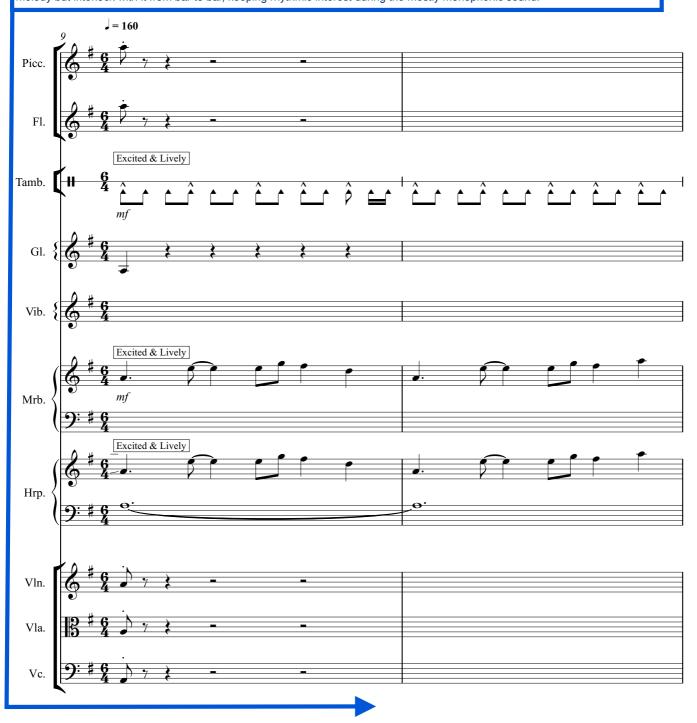
Hannah Owens



A quick transitional section to help naturally liven up the pace. Phrases become quicker and switch to a descending pentatonic melody. Percussive instruments are introduced e.g. tambourine & marimba and the brass section is taken out, readying for the crescendo into the next section...

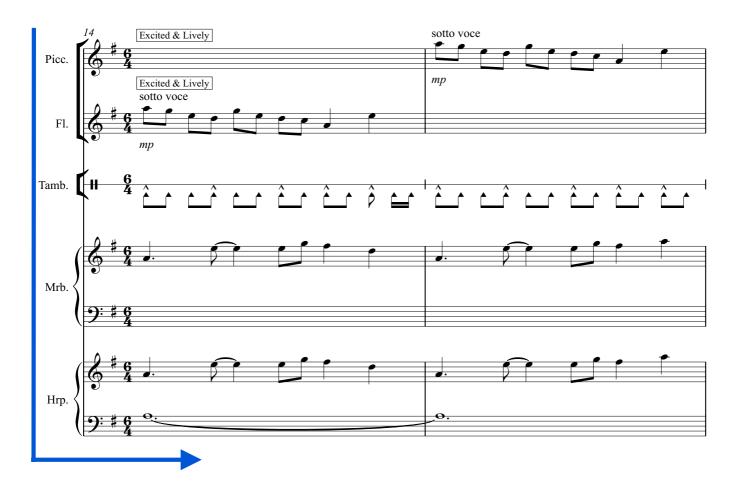


SEASON 1 b: Instrumentation has been significantly stripped back down to mezzo forte harp, marimba and tambourine with syncopated & staccato valley shaped phrases for a light and percussive sound. This melodic contour helps to paint a picture of the geography of the city of Yurahi. The lack of strong / defining harmonic movement alongside the 4/4 turn arounds makes the section feel potentially boundless, like it could continue on with this pattern forever. The tambourine accents reinforce the rhythm of the melody but interlock with it from bar to bar, keeping rhythmic interest during the mostly monophonic sound.



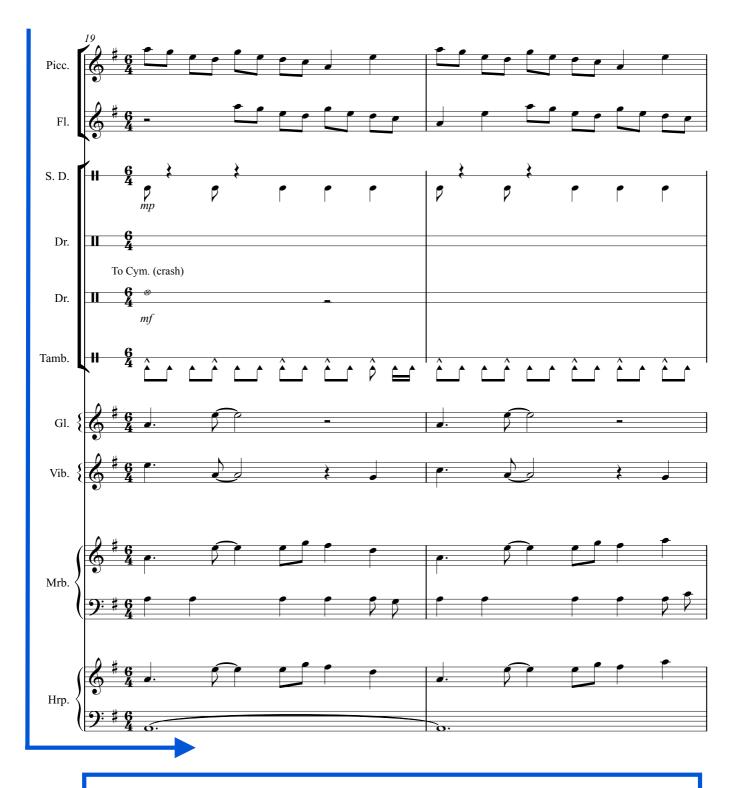
Worthy Side Note! This section is in double time of the theme introduced in Section 1 a. The reasoning behind this is that the slower theme is meant to communicate to the listener that Yurahi is an ancient site, despite how advanced and fantastical it appears to be on the surface. This is also why it's initially played by a solo harpist, since in ancient times, it would've been immensely difficult to have an orchestra of musicians, maintaining the authenticity of its introduction.





The introduction of the flute & piccolo helps to diversify the timbre & texture of the section as it gradually becomes more polyphonic, introducing new musical ideas within the theme to reflect to the diversity of possibilities for the characters presented by their new environment. However, the woodwind instruments are mezzo piano and are "sotto voce", meaning that they are merely providing a counter melody and homophonic background texture so as to not completely overtake the main theme.





A snare drum and crash cymbal are introduced for a thicker and snappier rhythmic texture as the bass clef of the marimba outlines the pulse in crotchet beats to ground the orchestra as the section gets busier rhythmically.

The flute and piccolo are now mezzo forte as they start to fully realise the polyphonic texture that was hinted at before, by canonising the previous descending melody (which again, reflects the geography of the city founded in a valley).

The vibraphone and glockenspiel are also introduced, supporting the main melody by using similar rhythms but in contrary motion to one another.

All of this is to enhance the excitement of the climax of this section and to create the sense of density and height as the characters travel from the outer districts of the city and into it's CBD.



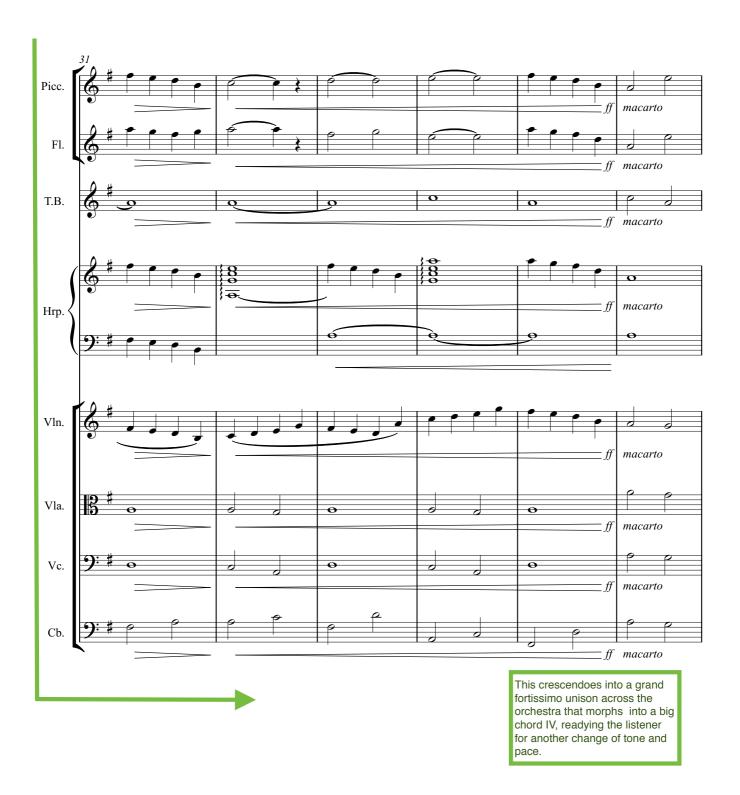
Anticipation for the next round of the theme is enhanced by using longer contrasting (but still syncopated) phrases, including a 2/4 bar on the next page, subverting the listeners expectations and making them wait for the big finish to this section of the piece!

Finally, the big release of tension as the flute and piccolo join in with the main theme in fortissimo, leading into it with a quick flutter tongue to mimic the trill of the newly introduced timpani. The vibraphone and glockenspiel are one upped by sustained tubular bells ringing out to underline the percussive soundscape. Instrumentalists are instructed to play "with gusto", which was my way of trusting the musicians to feel for the accents and to authentically make the sound punchy and excitable as an ensemble.



A transitional section leading into Season 2. Most of the percussion gradually drops out as the phrases become longer and more legato. The lower strings sneak in with pedal notes as the harmonic structure is renewed in its importance (switching between chords i - IV), with the violin eventually supporting the melody. As the characters become more familiar with their environment, the piece switches to a strong and steady 4/4 beat, clearly defined by the crotchet rhythms in the woodwind, harp and violin parts.







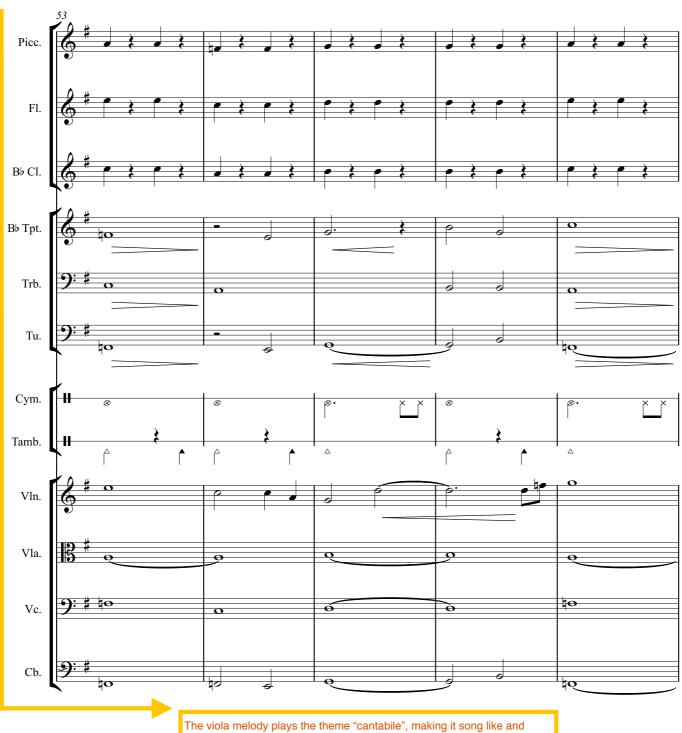
SEASON 2: The bassoon, Bb Clarinet and the brass section join in, subtly altering the timbre of the piece once again to something thicker and warmer (with clarinet & trumpet playing a counter melody of theme). The orchestra moves through lush, legato harmony, (C Major III - Bb Major 7 II - A Major I) eventually leading into a turn around modulation to G major.

The strings continue sustaining the chords in long phrases as the violin outlines the harmony in steady 1 bar crotchet beat phrases

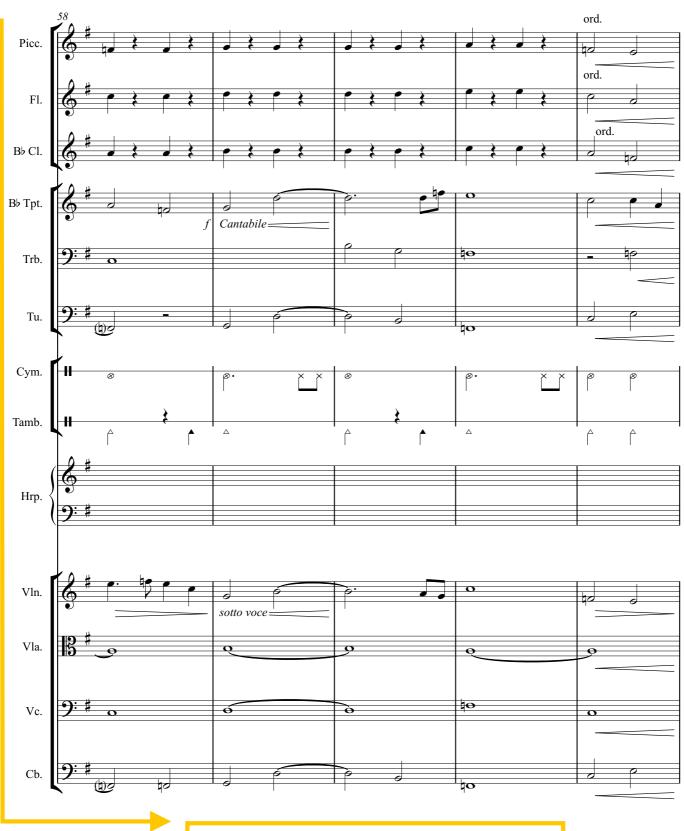




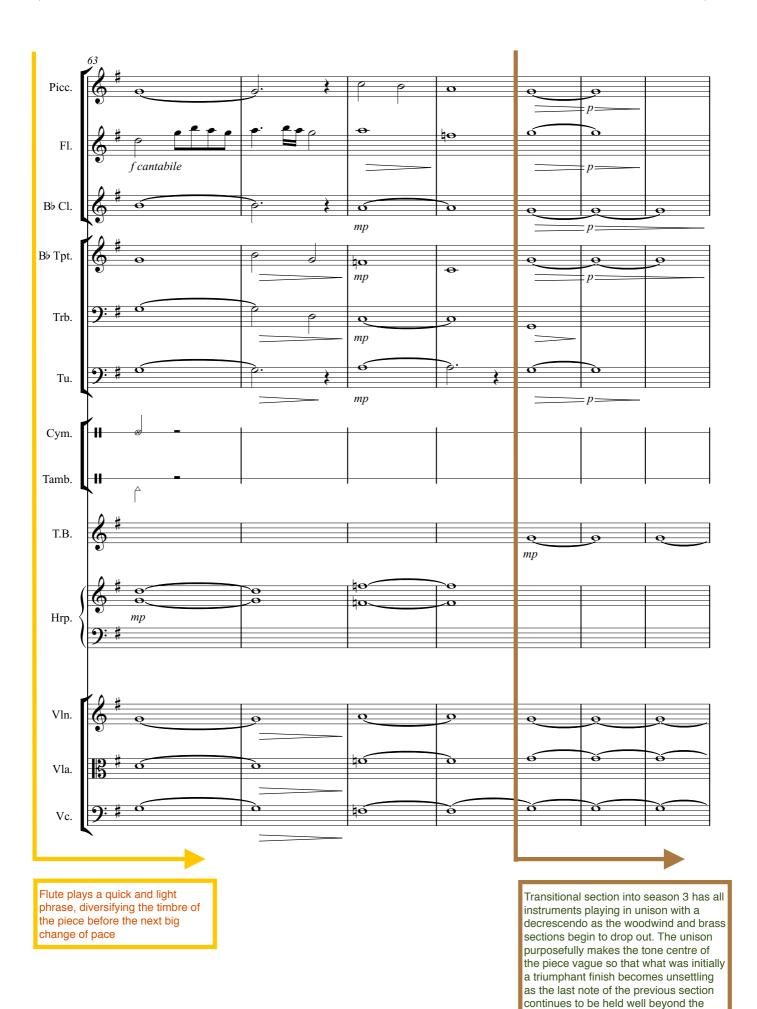
The woodwinds switch roles to become decorative & staccato for the viola part playing the main melody and the broader, un-muted brass section playing warm major harmonies (G Major I - F Major VII). This makes the main melody of the theme feel encompassed by the rest of the orchestra as it sits nicely in the middle of the pitch spectrum, giving this section an overall sense of comfort and security (as we know where the boundaries of the melody are, unlike when it was played in the upper woodwinds in section 1b which made it feel boundless. The boundaries make it feel known and safe).



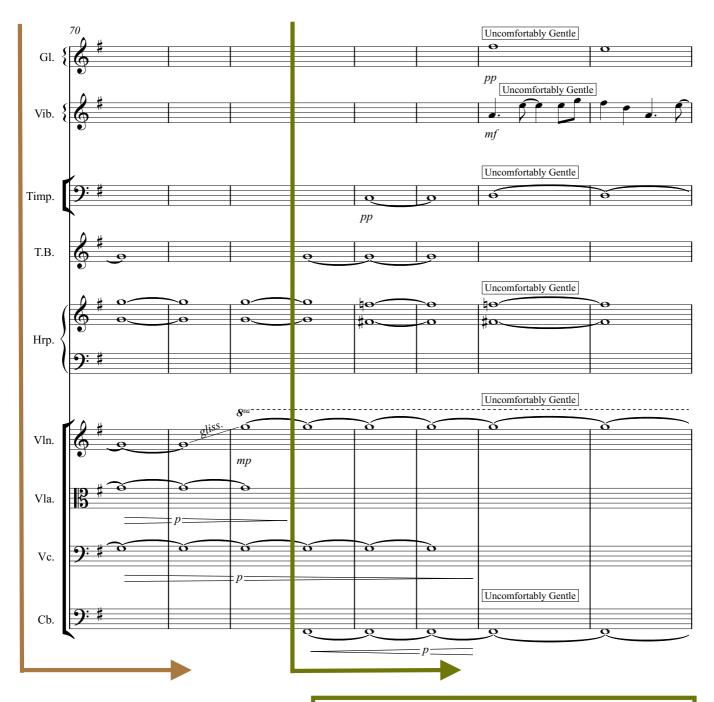
The viola melody plays the theme "cantabile", making it song like and expressive. The longer phrases hold onto the highest pitches of the theme, contrasting the previous sections whilst still being recognisable as the same melody. The brass sections adopt a counterpoint based harmony, moving in similar and contrary motion.



The trumpet now takes over the last section of the theme for a stronger finish as the viola slips down into a counter melody, playing "sotto voce" so as to indicate that it is no longer playing the main melody.



listeners expectations.



SEASON 3: 6/4 phrases used in 4/4 time have an "incomplete" quality, and pulse is purposefully muddied along with any idea of a tone centre. The violin and contrabass continue playing as mezzo piano as possible, now many octaves apart, leaving an uncomfortable amount of space between them. However, the bass holds an F# while the violin continues holding the G natural as a displaced minor 2nd interval. The glockenspiel helps in some regard to keep tempo with its consistent semibreves, however, it's melody is pianissimo and is too aimless to provide any sort of musical backbone to this season of the piece.

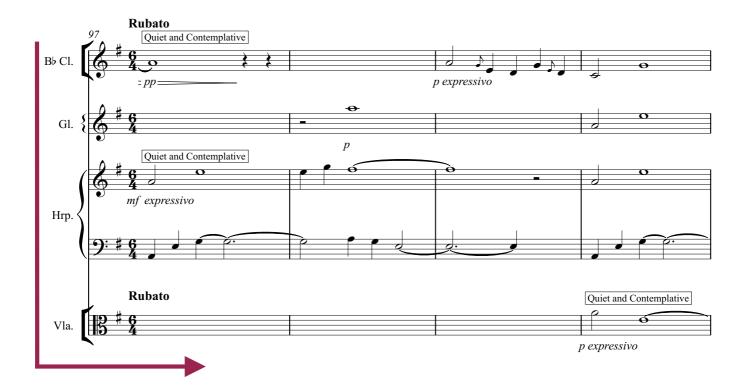


The percussion section is reintroduced with the vibraphone & marimba and harp, as they try to play the main melody. However, each are playing in different keys and can't settle on a bar in which to play together, therefore they overlap in chromatic harmony and awkward cannons. This is designed to unsettle the listener and indicate that there is a dark unknown history to the city of Yurahi that has been kept just out of sight. The percussion sections contrasts against the blanket of noise provided by the strings, adding to the timbral, tonal and rhythmic dissonance of this section.





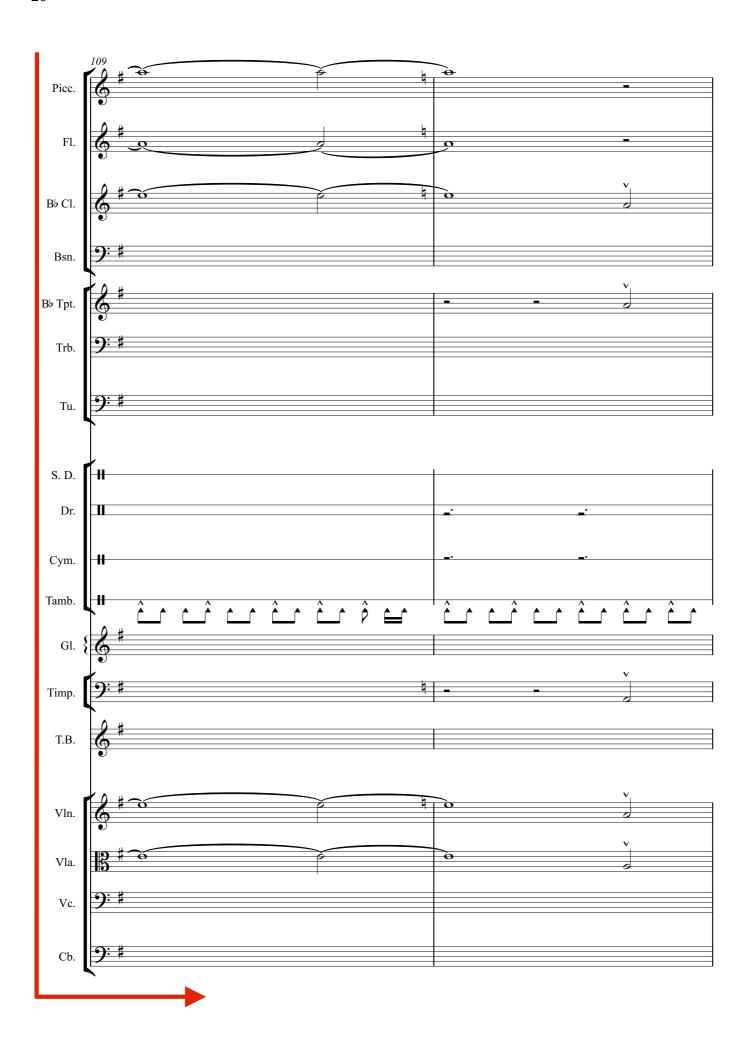




This transitional section into Season 4 is an extended reprise of Section 1 a (A dorian, half time, 6/4 and 4/4), reminding the listener of where the piece started before diving into the final stretch. It is expressive and layered, with the harp once again providing the foundation for the theme. It's decorated with the glockenspiel, clarinet and viola. Since it is rubato here, the players need to bounce off of one another just as the melodies and counter melodies bounce off of each other.







SEASON 4 a: The orchestra explodes in fortissimo as the woodwinds and brass retake the main melody line, using similar lengths of phrases as Season 2. The strings provide interlocked accompaniment, with the lower strings and timpani walking up and down to the next note with a crotchet beat before the next bar, making the 6/4 time more clearly defined and easier to keep track of. The harmony for this sections follows in A dorian with A minor i - C Major III - D Major IV (C Major is replaced by F major VI and G major VII on repeat). Meanwhile, the upper strings are off, racing each other up and down to the next bar in pentatonic quavers. The snare drum accents the syncopated beats, buzz rolling into them for a marching, "battle like" feel to this section.





















The orchestra gets to have one final moment of build up before the end of the Season and the piece as a whole, with a crescendo swell on a lush G pedal chord before subverting the listeners expectations when the resolution to the A minor quietens down to pianissimo. The strings, brass, and percussion fall away, leaving only the flute, harp and glockenspiel restating the shorter phrase of the original melody once more for a humble end to the piece as the characters are simply relieved to have their home back.