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Bernard Herrmann as Musical Colorist: A Musico-Dramatic Analysis of His Score for *The Day the Earth Stood Still*

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Each film can create its own variety of musical color.
—Bernard Herrmann, *Sound and the Cinema*

Of the many horror, fantasy, and science-fiction films for which Bernard Herrmann composed the music, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, which was produced by Twentieth Century-Fox in 1951, stands out as a landmark in its genre. The film came at a pivotal point in the composer's career. It was the first film Herrmann scored after moving to Hollywood in 1951 following his successful tenure as a radio composer with CBS in New York from 1933 until 1951, during which time he had also been the conductor of the CBS Symphony, a position which he held with great pride. The eight film scores he composed between 1941 and June of 1951 had been done during vacations or leaves from his post at CBS. But early in 1951, with the burgeoning medium of television taking CBS away from radio, Herrmann's beloved orchestra was disbanded and he turned to Hollywood for his livelihood.

A sci-fi film classic, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was directed by Robert Wise, who in 1941 – when he was a film editor at RKO – had worked with Herrmann on the composer's first two films, *Citizen Kane* and *All That Money Can Buy*.[1] By virtue of its subject matter, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was a composer's dream because it allowed Herrmann, for the first time in his career, to deal directly with fantasy elements with the freedom to deal musically with the unknown. The story concerned a peaceful alien sent to Earth by other inhabited planets to deliver a strong message against the use of nuclear arms and humans' propensity toward aggression. As Randall Larson aptly points out in his survey of music in horror, fantasy, and science-fiction films:

> Music for science fiction, fantasy and horror films . . . has always been a particularly unique area of film scoring due to the imaginative nature of the subject matter. Just as fantasy has allowed the minds of writers and filmmakers to flow into new and unexplored regions, so has it allowed the imaginations of film composers to create much of the finest music composed for motion pictures . . . . Music has always seemed to be at its best in fantastic films. And at its most experimental. According to veteran genre composer, Les Baxter, horror films present fewer restrictions to a composer than a drama, because of the orchestral colors available. "With a horror score," Baxter said, "the melodies can go much farther out, the notes can be extremely strange. That gives you a lot of leeway. You can be as far-out or as weird as you want to, musically. *The orchestration and the colors have to be more unusual and that of course is a pleasure for any composer*" (emphasis mine).[2]

Such films were well suited to Herrmann's flair for musical color as they offered him opportunities to creatively explore new or unusual sonorities. As Herrmann himself recalled, "*The Day the Earth Stood Still* was the first of the big science-fiction films and I decided in doing that I would do something quite different."[3] Perhaps the

[1] *All that Money Can Buy* was also released under the title *The Devil and Daniel Webster*.
[2] Randall Larson, *Musique Fantastique: A Survey of Film Music in the Fantastic Cinema* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1985), 1.
[3] Bernard Herrmann, "Bernard Herrmann: A John Player Lecture," *Pro Musica Sana* 3, no. 2 (summer 1974): 22.

most striking feature of the music is the instrumentation, which includes a number of electronic instruments. In composing music for radio, films, and television, Herrmann wrote for whatever instruments or instrumental combination he thought would best serve the drama. Sometimes he would dispense with the conventional studio orchestra altogether and instead score a scene for a small ensemble. Often he would use unusual "color" instruments or omit others from the standard orchestra complement if he thought the result would be more dramatically effective.[4] His keen sense of the orchestra and his ear for orchestral effects undoubtedly developed partly as a result of his eighteen years of experience scoring radio dramas for CBS. Unlike films, radio shows offered the audience no visual component, and so the orchestration was a means of evoking images in the listener's mind. Claiming to have supplied music for as many as three thousand radio dramas,[5] Herrmann realized that with the visual dimension of drama absent, "you had to tell everything by music," and that "the music itself must have a simplicity so that the first time through, the ear and the mind grasp it."[6] Commenting on Herrmann's radio music, one writer noted in 1939 that "[Herrmann] has been called upon to express almost everything in music from an iceberg to a man turning into a tree; he once wrote love music for a couple of comets. For Kreymborg's play on housing he composed a score for hammer, nails, and a saw."[7]

The instrumental ensemble Herrmann employed in his music for *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was certainly unorthodox in a period when the symphonic orchestra was the Hollywood norm.[8] In scoring *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, Herrmann departed radically from the symphonic tradition. He later recalled: "I attempted to balance a conventional orchestra consisting of piano, harps, brass and a large timpani section with a sizable electronic group including two theremins, electronic violin, electronic bass and electronic guitar. There were no woodwinds. My goal here was to characterize a man from another world, and the music had to reflect an unearthly feeling of outer space without relying on gimmicks. The result . . . seems to have been successful and most certainly predicted the shape of things to come for electronic scoring."[9]

In addition to electronic instruments, Herrmann also employed special recording techniques. One of them was the use of overlays, consisting of two or more separately recorded music tracks mixed together, yielding a single (monaural) composite mix.[10] Another technique involved playing music tracks backwards in the music mix in order to achieve a certain effect. In a few instances both of these techniques were used at the same time. While these unusual instruments and recording techniques had previously been utilized in Hollywood film music, Herrmann's score for *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was undoubtedly the first to use them in such complex ways and with such ingenuity, not just for isolated colorful effects or as representations of single characters or plot elements but as major thematic elements of the score as a whole.

Although the amount of music in the film that either features or is colored by electronic instruments marks the score as a prototype in the sci-fi film genre, acoustic instruments also play an important if unconventional role in the orchestration. Significantly, the instrumentation is unusual for what it leaves out, and the score is the first film score Herrmann composed is which the music is written entirely for substantially less than the full orchestral complement The score calls for no acoustic strings, woodwinds, or horns (except for one sequence that features a French horn solo).

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[4]Herrmann's departure from the conventional orchestra is perhaps most radical in his choice to score *Psycho* for string orchestra. Another example is an episode of the television series *The Twilight Zone*, titled "The Living Doll," which Herrmann scored solely for harp, bass clarinet, and percussion. For a fuller discussion of Herrmann's orchestrations, see my DMA paper *Selected Examples of the Unique Orchestration Techniques in the Film Scores of Bernard Herrmann*, available in the Music Library of the University of Colorado, Boulder.

[5]Bernard Herrmann, "The Colour of the Music: An Interview with Bernard Herrmann," by Ted Gilling. *Sight and Sound*, (winter, 1971-72): 36-9.

[6]*Ibid*.

[7]Richard O'Brien, "A Cradle of Drama," *New York Times*, July 30, 1939. Quoted in Graham Bruce, *Bernard Herrmann: Film Music and Narrative* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985), 22.

[8]MGM cartoon composer Scott Bradley was similarly iconoclastic in his use of the orchestra: "Why should the whole orchestra be playing (er – pardon me, Mr. Petrillo!) when only these naive and simple [cartoon] characters are having their brief moment in the spotlight? We hear too much 'full swell, coupled to great' scoring in pictures, and the human ear gratefully accepts a little contrast." Scott Bradley, "Personality on the Sound Track," *Music Educator's Journal* 33 (1947): 28. "Mr. Petrillo" was James Petrillo, the once powerful president of the American Federation of Musicians and whose sworn promise to its members was to keep as many musicians employed as possible. See Robert D. Leiter, *The Musicians and Petrillo* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1953).

[9]Bernard Herrmann, album liner notes to *The Fantasy World of Bernard Herrmann*, London Phase 4 SP 44207, London Records, 1974.

[10]The term "overlay" is film industry recording parlance for this procedure. See Earle Hagen, *Scoring for Films*: *A Complete Text* (New York: E.P.J. Music, 1971), 249.

Although Herrmann had come to be known in radio for using only those instrumental colors that he thought would most quickly evoke an image, he had not previously dispensed with entire sections of the orchestra for the entire duration of a score. Apart from his use of electronic instruments, Herrmann's orchestration for *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was the spawning ground for the unique sound of his later scores for *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* (1958), *Psycho* (1960), *Torn Curtain* (1966), *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), and episodes of television's *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964).

In terms of its structure and its role in the film's narrative, Herrmann's score for *The Day the Earth Stood Still* reveals the composer to be first and foremost a musical colorist. The melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic construction of the music is deceptively simple; instead of being the primary focus of music interest, these elements are components of the music's overall color. Traditionally, motifs in film music are melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic in nature, and Herrmann himself had used them in that traditional way, especially in *Citizen Kane* (1940) and in *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* (1947). In *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, however, it is the orchestration that serves the leitmotivic function. This applies to Herrmann's use of special instruments such as the theremin and the unusual complement of tubas, but it is evident in the large orchestral groupings as well.

Analysis

Analysis of film music must take place on two levels: in terms of musical conception and in terms of the music as a dramatic component of the film.[11] The compositional elements in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* will be identified and examined at both levels, with primary emphasis being given to orchestration and the manner in which the other musical constituents function within it, and also to the way in which these aspects work within the composite soundtrack – that is, the music combined with dialogue and sound effects – relative to the film's narrative structure. Through orchestration, and even through the actual selection of the pitches assigned to specific instruments, Herrmann showed a unique ability to portray or interpret a visual image in musical terms. His remarkable effectiveness as a musical colorist is very likely the aspect of his work most responsible for the attention his oeuvre still enjoys almost a quarter century after his death.

Before proceeding with a detailed examination of the score for *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, it will perhaps be useful to consider some general observations and remarks about the use of musical color in film music made just a few years prior to *The Day the Earth Stood Still* by musicologist Robert U. Nelson:

> In the broad sense, musical color may be taken to represent the sensuous or exotic side of music, in distinction to musical structure and line, which may be looked upon as representing the intellectual side. Such a division of music into color and line is an obvious oversimplification; nevertheless, it has considerable validity. The color-versus-line division has a significant bearing, furthermore, upon film music, for it leads us inescapably to one conclusion: film music is overwhelmingly coloristic in its intention and effect.
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> There are many reasons why current film music is dominated by color. For one thing, color is associative – the bagpipes call up pictures of marching Highlanders, the oboe readily suggests a pastoral scene, muted brass connotes something sinister, and so on; hence, color plays an important role in heightening mood. Then, too, color is not intrusive; it does not compete with the dramatic action. Again, color is immediate in its effect, unlike thematic development, which makes definite time demands; infinitely flexible, color can be turned on and off as easily as water from a tap. Moreover, color is easier to achieve than musical design – an important consideration when a composer writes against time. Finally, color is readily understood by even the least musically trained film audience.[12]

By its very subject matter, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was a film that potentially gave Herrmann a relatively unlimited degree of compositional freedom with which to work. This freedom might easily have been squelched by the producer or the director, but Robert

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[11] Claudia Gorbman has conceptualized this distinction in terms of "codes," distinguishing between what she calls "pure musical codes" and "cinematic musical codes." See Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 2-3.

[12] Robert U. Nelson, "Film Music: Color or Line?," *Hollywood Quarterly*, II, no. 1 (Oct. 1946): 57.

Wise, having complete faith in his composer, told Herrmann simply to "do something special."[13] This Herrmann did.

Between 25 June and 28 July of 1951, Herrmann produced a score that not only portrayed the film's characters, events, and story but also brought directly to the viewer's senses the abstract, other-worldly atmosphere that pervades the film.[14] Instead of being overrun with exotic sounds, however, the score balances unusual instrumental timbres with readily identifiable, traditional musical elements, so that the human or earthly aspects of the story are portrayed as well. Thus, viewer sympathy for both the alien and the human characters is reinforced and encouraged.

Herrmann's score comprises thirty-two individual musical sequences, or "cues." Herrmann gave to each a title and a number:

1. Prelude; 2. Outer Space; 3. Radar; 4. Danger; 5. Klaatu; 6. Gort; 7. The Visor; 8. The Telescope; 9. Escape; 10. Arlington; 11. Lincoln Memorial; 12. Nocturne; 13. The Flashlight; 14. The Robot; 15. Space Control; 16. The Elevator; 17. Magnetic Pull; 18. The Study; 19. The Conference; 20. The Jewelry Store; 21. Panic; 22. The Glowing; 23. Alone; 24. Gort's Rage; 25. Nikto; 26. The Captive; 27. Terror; 28. The Prison; 29. Rebirth; 30. Departure; 31. Farewell; 32. Finale.

Forty-nine musical instruments are required, although no more than twenty-seven are used in any one cue (however, the composer frequently asks for multiple tracking of individual parts, an aspect that will be fully explored later). The electronic and electric instruments include theremin I and II; electric violin, electric cello, electric bass, and electric guitar; Hammond organ I and II; and vibraphone I, II, and III. The acoustic instruments are studio (pipe) organ; pianos I and II; harps I and II; C trumpets I, II, and III; B-flat trumpets I, II, and III; solo horn; trombones I, II, and III; bass tubas I and II; contrabass tubas I and II; timpani I, II, and III; bass drum I and II; celeste and marimba; glockenspiel I and II; chimes I, II, and III; crash cymbals; small suspended cymbal I and II; large suspended cymbal I and II; and tam-tam I and II.

Apart from the lack of the traditional acoustic strings and – more surprising – woodwinds, the first thing one notices is the very large brass and percussion sections. While it was probably not unusual to call for three trombones in a symphonic film score, four tubas are rare, and every time Herrmann uses the tuba (in fifteen cues) he uses all four.[15] On the other hand, the third set of timpani is needed in only three cues. The cymbals are used in six cues, and each cue involves multiple overlaps or reverse tracking; therefore, in all cases but one, the parts can be performed by a smaller number of players. The vibraphones are called for seventeen times and are electronically altered only once; that occasion and one other are the only times in which there are three individual vibraphone parts, and most of the time the vibraphones function in pairs.

The C and B-flat trumpet parts are almost completely exclusive of one another; in all cues save one, the parts could easily have been played by the same three musicians. The exception is the penultimate cue ("Farewell"), in which a solo C trumpet is accompanied by three B-flat instruments. Herrmann was aware of the subtle tonal differences between these otherwise similar instruments; the C trumpet, with a length of tubing one whole-step shorter than that of the B-flat trumpet, produces a brighter sound. In 1951 the B-flat trumpet was the instrument of choice in almost all performance venues; in recent decades the C trumpet has become the standard for orchestral trumpeters, including those who perform in symphonic film scores, while the B-flat trumpet dominates jazz and commercial work and concert bands. Even today, however, most composers write for one or the other – and the player still decides which instrument to use. Actually to require the use both instruments is remarkable for 1951, and it is a subtle distinction that illustrates Herrmann's attention to coloristic detail.

Another general observation one might make about the orchestration is that the sound of every instrument chosen for this

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[13] Steven C. Smith, *A Heart at Fire's Center: The Life and Music of Bernard Herrmann* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 83.

[14] Bernard Herrmann, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1951), holograph score. PA Mss 3, Series III, Box 54. Bernard Herrmann Papers, Department of Special Collections, Donald C. Davidson Library at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The score is signed, dated, and includes a notation "June 25-July 28, 1951 L.A. Cal." in the composer's hand. All references herein to the music refer to the composer's manuscript.

[15] The bass and contrabass indications at that time would have referred to E-flat or F, and BB-flat or CC instruments. The primary difference between the bass and contrabass tuba is timbre, with the larger instruments producing a slightly heavier, more robust sound.

orchestra has either power or brightness, and in some cases the instruments possess both characteristics. The score contains nothing that we associate with "sweet" sounds; there is no large, sweeping string section, no delicate or frolicsome woodwinds; even horns, which traditionally serve to blend disparate instrumental timbres, are absent. There is an important correlation to be drawn between these instrumental choices and the narrative of the film. The idea of power is contained in the following plot elements: 1) the ability of the alien – whose name is Klaatu – to travel between planets; 2) the fact that the robot Gort is of a "race of robots" created by the inhabitants of other planets in order to patrol space and assure peace; and, 3) the ability, reflected in the film's title, of the space visitors to selectively stop all electric and mechanical power on an entire planet without harming anyone. Similarly, the idea of brightness is directly associated with certain objects: 1) the stars graphically depicted in the main title sequence;[16] 2) the searing beam of energy that emanates from the robot when it attacks; 3) the flashlight which Klaatu uses to communicate surreptitiously with the robot; and 4) the jewels that Klaatu used for currency. One might also extend the connotation of the word "brightness" to include intelligence. Klaatu's attempts to deliver his message are thwarted by earthlings who are more concerned with their own political problems than with the reasons for which the spaceman traveled to Earth. Eventually Klaatu speaks with "the smartest man in the world," Professor Barnhardt, who then invites the visitor to deliver his message to an international group of scientists. The only other humans who display intelligence enough to understand the spaceman's intentions are Bobby Benson, the boy who befriends him, and Bobby's mother, Mrs. Benson. Ultimately, it is Mrs. Benson who must accept Klaatu's word with complete faith and utter the now famous words "Klaatu barrada nikto" to Gort, commanding him not to destroy the earth after Klaatu is killed by the military. Her acceptance and action carry a dual importance: Not only are they the film's foremost illustration of human intelligence, but through her command Mrs. Benson wields more power than any other human being.

Perhaps the musical element most responsible for creating the other-worldly atmosphere of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is the theremin, an electronic instrument created in the 1920s that bears the name of its Russian inventor. It generates a single tone, altered in pitch and intensity, respectively, by the proximity of the performer's hands to one straight and one looped antenna.[17] Used in film music at least as early as 1943 in Robert Emmet Dolan's score for Paramount's *Lady in the Dark* (released in 1944),[18] the theremin's first important use in a major score was in Miklós Rózsa's music for *Spellbound* (1945).[19] The nature of the theremin is such that its continuous pitch range can easily transcend the boundaries defined by western music's twelve chromatic pitches. In this respect Rózsa used it very effectively to portray the neuroses of amnesiac played by Gregory Peck by transporting the listener from the "known" (distinct pitches working in a scalar relationship) to the "unknown" of the protagonist's subconscious mind.[20] Later in 1945 Rózsa used the theremin in a similar way to portray the alcoholism of Ray Milland's character in *The Lost Weekend*.[21] Just as the

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[16]There is an element of "the unknown" in the narratives of many of the radio shows, film, and television episodes for which Herrmann composed music. Most notable among these are the score for the radio treatment of *The War of the Worlds* (1939), the "Rosebud" music in *Citizen Kane* (1941), the scores for the fantasy films *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* (1958) and *Mysterious Island* (1961), the scores for such Hitchcock films as *Vertigo* (1958) and *Psycho* (1960), music for episodes of *The Twilight Zone*, and the scores for Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) and Brian DePalma's *Sisters* (1972). A voracious reader, Herrmann may have been fascinated by this theme his entire life. Louis Kaufman, the concertmaster of the RKO orchestra who performed the solos in the score for *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), relates a story about how Herrmann arrived at his door after midnight the evening of a recording session to congratulate him on his fine performance; they then proceeded to have "a long, rambling talk that lasted until about two in the morning, which ended with his talking, of all things, about the universe and the vast distances of the stars" (quoted in Smith, 93).

[17]"Theremin" in *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, ed. by Don Randel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 854.

[18]Nelson, 62.

[19]Even contemporary books on film music state that Rózsa was the first to utilize the theremin in his score for Hitchcock's *Spellbound*. However, Nelson's claim was corroborated by Robert Bornstein, music librarian at Paramount Studios, who examined the score for *Lady in the Dark* at the request of the author.

[20]While a theremin in the hands of a good player is capable of producing recognizable melodies – and does so in each of these referenced scores – it is its inherent connectivity of sound and its quavering vibrato that lend an eerie character to its sound.

[21]With the success of these two scores and their simultaneous nominations for Academy Awards (*Spellbound* won), Rózsa became somewhat typecast and received many assignments for psychological dramas over the remainder of the decade, but he used the theremin again only in *The Red House* (1947). It was not until his final score, for Carl Reiner's 1976 *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*, a parody of 1940s psychological dramas, that Rózsa returned to the theremin.

sound of the instrument helped depict the unknown aspects of the subconscious mind in these psychological dramas, it proved effective for the unfamiliarity of outer space, spaceflight, and alien life, and it was first heard in the science-fiction genre in Ferde Grofé's score for *Rocketship X-M* (1950) and Dimitri Tiomkin's score for *The Thing from Another World* (1951).[22]

Herrmann was not the first film composer to use the theremin. But unlike these two science-fiction precursors, the score for *The Day the Earth Stood Still* incorporates the instrument's timbre as a fundamental sonority, not as an "effect" or as a representative of a specific character or locale. Just as alien life forms with other-worldly powers capture a closed-minded human society in the film's narrative, so does the sound of the theremin pervade the score. Indications of the prominent role it assumed in the music include the fact that there are two separate theremin parts, sometimes for both high- and low-pitched instruments, in all twenty-four cues in which the theremin is heard, and the fact that four separate parts, requiring multitracking, were mandated in the brief "Prelude." In a 1972 lecture, Herrmann commented on his use of the instrument in the score:

> We had a variety of electronic instruments that for some reason or other are not fashionable any more. And we used several theremins . . . two of these upper theremins, and we used a lower theremin, bass theremins. [*sic*][23] We had a group of theremins, we had an electric violin, an electric bass. A theremin and an electric bass [sound] different than [electronic instruments] today. As a matter of fact, the only thing we didn't have was an electric hot water bottle – which Alfred Newman supplied. He said, "in case." It's not important when you see the film that you know what is playing, but what is important is, "What does it do for the film?"[24]

Just as the combination of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons can result in a blended woodwind color, the essence of much of Herrmann's score results from the mixing of the timbres of the electronic (and electric) instruments. But the distinctive sound of the theremin is not the only unusual sonority in the score. Its combination with electric violin,[25] electric cello, electric bass,[26] and electric guitar, as well as with the two Hammond organs, yields an ambiance that serves an important function in itself, for the overall color of the sound – rather than the notes the instruments play – becomes representational of the many aspects of "the unknown" in the film.

Herrmann subtly alters the quality of the theremin sound by sometimes making a specific designation for two bass-clef instruments. We first see this implementation in the cue "Gort," when the robot makes its entrance in response to Klaatu being shot. The distinct tonal color of the two bass theremins also characterizes "The Visor," "The Glowing," "Alone," "Gort's Rage," and "Captive." These cues, coincidently, are the only cues that support scenes in which the robot functions on its own volition entirely apart from Klaatu. The audience is informed that the robots were created by the inhabitants of other planets and are programmed to respond automatically to any sign of violence, and the use of the low-pitched theremin sonority in these scenes suggests the enormous power of which the robot is capable. The other four cues in which the robot might at first be perceived as acting of its own will – "Nikto," "Terror," "The Prison," and "Rebirth" – each contains some important connection with Klaatu, and, consequently, they include higher-pitched theremin music: Mrs. Benson delivers Klaatu's crucial message to the robot in "Nikto"; "Terror" accompanies Gort's carrying of the woman into the spaceship; "The Prison" is the scene in which Gort melts a hole in the wall of the cell in order to retrieve Klaatu's lifeless body; and "Rebirth" accompanies Gort's reanimation of Klaatu.

The lower pitches of the theremin illustrate a specific facet

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[22]For more on the use of the theremin in science-fiction films, see James Wierzbicki, "Weird Vibrations: How the Theremin Gave Musical Voice to Hollywood's Extraterrestrial 'Others'," *Journal of Popular Film & Television*, vol. 30, no. 3 (fall 2002): 125-35.

[23]Aside from the specially constructed "Prelude" that precedes the title sequence, no more than two theremin parts were used at any one time in the film.

[24]Bernard Herrmann. Lecture given at the National Film Theatre of London, 11 June 1972.

[25]The electric violin had been used eleven years earlier by Franz Waxman in his score for *Rebecca* (1940) (see Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 119). and again in his score for *Mr. Skeffington* (1944), (Nelson, 62).

[26]Both the electric cello and electric bass parts call for written notes as low as C below the bass clef staff, a major third lower than the usual ranges of their acoustic counterparts.

of Gort's behavior, but one acoustic instrumental family – the tubas – is also utilized throughout as a general symbol for the robot. Aside from a series of cues pivotal to the audience's comprehension of Gort's actions, all four tubas appear in every cue pertaining to the robot, sometimes flexible and moving with great agility, at other times firmly rooted in deceptive solitude, or spewing volcano-like anger. The tubas are a frequent reminder that the audience does not fully comprehend Gort's superhuman capabilities.

The timpani appear only in select cues. They are used purely for coloristic effect in "The Telescope," but in other cures they seem to represent one particular aspect of the robot's behavior: They all portray Gort acting without the apparent instruction of Klaatu. The sound of drums, of course, has been symbolic of "action" since ancient times and the use of timpani to represent a heartbeat (a symbol of life) is common; timpani are used in such a manner, for example, in Richard Strauss's tone poem *Death and Transfiguration* and in Franz Waxman's score for the film *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935). That connotation would seem evident by the use of bass drums in the cue "Gort." While the robot is not a living creature, acting on its own certainly implies sentience, which is one aspect of life. These associations, then, make the timpani's appearance in "The Robot," "The Glowing," "Alone," "Terror," "The Prison," and "Rebirth" highly effective. The symbolism is particularly reinforced in "Terror" because the timpani are not heard in "Space Control," the earlier cue on which "Terror" is based. Klaatu is seen alone in the control room in "Space Control," whereas in "Terror" Gort forcibly picks up Mrs. Benson and holds her inside the ship as a prisoner after Klaatu's death.

While chimes usually contribute to a bright, percussive sound, one cue in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* incorporates an important symbolism that might be lost to the casual audience member. Titled "Alone", it accompanies Mrs. Benson's critical delivery of Klaatu's words, an action that sets Gort's direction for the rest of the film. If the command were not issued, Gort would embark on a destructive rampage that would perhaps ultimately destroy the planet. Over the unbalanced rhythm of a displaced *ostinato* in the pianos and the shifting colors of cup-muted brass and theremins, the terrified heroine meets the robot face to face. Despite her fear and understanding of the incredible importance of her charge, she intones the words. Barely audible underneath this is a series of whole notes struck on chimes at the beginning of each measure. They are marked *lontano* (at a distance) and *pianississimo*. This unique sonic event supports the conclusion that Mrs. Benson is being identified as a savior, a religious association created by singly struck chime notes suggestive of church bells. While director Robert Wise claimed he did not intend religious symbolism in the film, Herrmann may well have included such symbolism in his score.[27]

Herrmann's use of two harps, two pianos, and studio organ is also noteworthy. The harp's distinctive sound has often been associated with the mysteries of the sea; it is used in Debussy's *La Mer*, for example, and in Herrmann's scores for the films *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* (1947) and *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef* (1953), the latter featuring nine separate harp parts. A similarly mysterious quality is associated with outer space, and it seems reasonable that harps might elicit the same emotive responses in the context of a score for a science-fiction film. But Herrmann also uses the harp in a percussive way in this score; harps are plucked, causing a percussive attack, and in this respect they work in tandem with the pianos, organs, and glockenspiels. Much of the pervading color of the music is effected through these instruments' rapid rhythms and the resultant pitched percussiveness of their attacks. This idea will be explored fully when the cues "Outer Space" and "Danger," which also include the use of studio organ, are examined.

Finally, electronic recording techniques – specifically, the overlapping of separate tracks – are required in many cues and thus play an important role in the music. The technique was not new to Herrmann, who even claimed to have invented it for his second film, *All That Money Can Buy*. In explaining the technique, Herrmann, on one occasion also illuminated his relentless attention to the detailed musical color:

> Mephisto – Mr. Scratch – plays at a barn dance. Now we had to have . . . a fiddle reel nobody else could play. So I had what I thought was a pretty brilliant idea, because since then it's become very popular: I simply imposed a series of tracks on

[27] *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, Limited Edition Laserdisc, Beverly Hills, CA: Fox Video, Inc., 1995. Robert Wise is interviewed on a supplemental audio track.

top of each other. We had a violinist who played . . . "Pop Goes the Weasel," then he [put on] headphones [and] he played another version, then he played another one, another one, and another one, and then these were all combined to make one violin, playing the most impossible things that no one violinist could ever play: harmonic pizzicatos, and harmonic pizzicato and *arco* at the same time. As a matter of fact . . . I played it to Heifetz, and we told him we'd engaged a brilliant young Hungarian, and he said, "Quick! Quick! Quick! Let me meet him!" When we explained to him what it was, he was so impressed with the technique that he recorded the Bach double violin concerto playing both parts himself. But I believe it was the first time it was ever done.

Of course, people have said to me, you didn't have to do it that way; you could have gotten four violinists . . . Well, it wouldn't sound like one man playing; it would sound like a quartet of violins . . . . It's only a small point in the film, and yet I feel a composer who doesn't pay as much attention to a small point like that is really being overpaid and ought to be dismissed. Finding quick solutions that give you the same result is not the same thing. I remember the great care [director] William Dieterle had and the days that were spent with Walter Huston [who played Mr. Scratch] to synchronize to the track of the violin. I mean, William Dieterle never heard of "You've got a schedule," you know.[28]

Even more elaborate is the superimposition of several individual tracks in such cues as "Prelude," "The Glowing," and "The Prison." In "Prelude," three instances of overlaying coincide with cuts made for dramatic emphasis. In "The Glowing" and "The Prison" the overlaying results in musical "sound effects": The overlay of tracks in "The Glowing" depicts Gort's disintegration of the "KL-5" used to imprison him,[29] and in "The Prison" the overlay accompanies Gort's disintegration of a portion of the prison wall.

Another unusual recording technique that Herrmann employed is the playing of tracks backwards, which can be heard in "Prelude," "Magnetic Pull," and "The Glowing." Percussive sonorities produced by piano, chimes, cymbals, tam-tam, and, vibraphone – all of which feature a slow decay immediately after the attack – were recorded and then in the mix played backwards. The result of this technique is a crescendo that begins slowly and increases dramatically to a point at which the sound stops abruptly.

Still another recording technique Herrmann used in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is the recording of only the reverberations of instruments.[30] This can be heard in "Magnetic Pull" and "12:30," the two scenes in which humans are forced to realize that Klaatu has the power to interrupt the lives of every man, woman, and child, and that Gort can act of his own volition with unstoppable destructive abilities.

Orchestral Effects

I will now turn to a detailed examination of selected cues from Herrmann's score. In this discussion I will focus on its success as a score driven by its orchestral sounds, but I will also point out some specific compositional devices of the more traditional sort (melody, harmony, and so on).

The first cue, "Prelude," lasts only six and two-thirds seconds. It introduces the main title and exemplifies all of the unusual recording techniques utilized in the score (see Example 1). Four separate recordings are superimposed. Two of the musical phrases on the manuscript (marked Y and Z) are played normally, while the remaining two (W and X) are to be faded in backwards.[31] The most prominent sound is that of the theremin parts in phrase W, which requires an overlay of four tracks. The first two tracks (the first "measure" of W) consist of parallel glissandi a major third apart, on the scales of (G-flat and B-flat), and descends through six octaves; the other two tracks (W's second "measure") are

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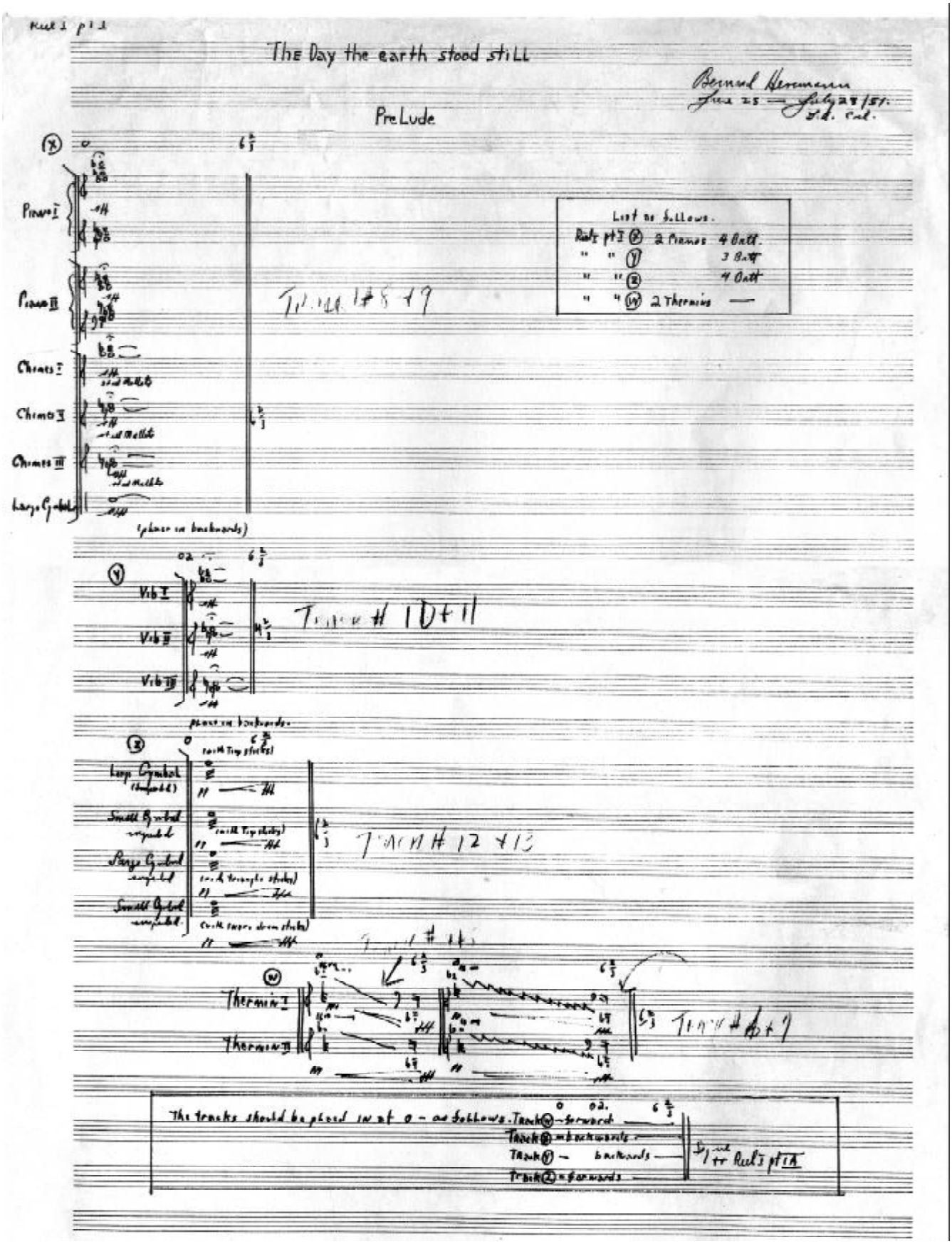
[28]Herrmann, lecture.

[29] This was also used in the film – but does *not* appear in the manuscript score – when Gort vaporizes the Army tank in "The Visor"; similarly, the first chord of that cue accompanies his attack on the soldiers in "The Robot."

[30]Also not an innovation with Herrmann, David Raksin had already used this technique in *Laura* (1944). See Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score*: *Music and Classical Hollywood Film*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 178.

[31]The notations on Herrmann's manuscript indicating track assignments appear to be in another hand – presumably that of the recording engineer – and, while each phrase seems to have been recorded on two tracks, this was for mixing purposes, not for stereophonic sound.

Example 1 ("Prelude")



performed with wide vibrato throughout. The other forward-rendered phrase (Z) is composed of four simultaneous suspended-cymbal rolls. Timpani sticks are used on one large and one small cymbal, and triangle beaters are used on the other cymbals; the timpani sticks produce a resonant and continuous reverberation whereas the rapid articulations of the triangle beaters contribute a bright, metallic tone. Phrases W and Z are both marked *crescendo*, so that the sound intensity increases into the downbeat of the following cue, "Outer Space."

One retrograde phrase, X, contains a singly struck chord scored for two pianos, three pairs of chimes, and large cymbal. The percussion instruments are played with steel mallets, producing a bright sound. The harmony created by the chimes and piano is a polychord of E-flatminor and F major, the importance of which will be discussed shortly. This phrase consists of an initial attack and its subsequent reverberation; the reversed effect is that of a steady crescendo. Phrase Y contains pairs of notes struck simultaneously on three vibraphones; it is phased in at the 2-second mark, not at the beginning of the cue. The reason for the delay is the fact that vibraphones have a longer decay than chimes or the piano. Since phrase X would essentially decay to silence after six and a half seconds, its retrograde presentation would not interfere with the sound of the theremins and cymbals.

The polychord in the reversed tracks is a tone cluster, but Herrmann's choice of the two constituent chords (E-flat minor and F major) relates to a broader scheme of pitch organization. Due to the reversed tracking, the cluster's E-flat root is most prominent at the end of the cue and flows immediately into the fundamental D of "Outer Space," thus establishing a half-step relationship that permeates the entire score. D is the score's primary key center, and the pitches E-flat and D makeup the most prevalent semitone therein. The resolution to D is sometimes in the minor mode, sometimes in the major. At the very end of the film, a brightly voiced D major triad accompanies Klaatu's departure and Earth's awareness that there is still hope. In a large sense, then, the E-flat-based sonority of the "Prelude" not only establishes a key relationship with the next cue, but this intervallic motion also frames the entire film.

The cue into which "Prelude" segues, "Outer Space," accompanies the title sequence's depiction of bright stars, and it performs dramatic and musical functions (see Example 2). The instrumentation includes (in score order): Theremins I and II;[32] Hammond Organs (H.O.) I and II; Studio Organ; Pianos I and II; Harps I and II; C Trumpets (Trpts.) I, II, and III (appearing on one staff and designated by Arabic numerals); Trombones (Pos.) I, II, and III (similarly presented); Tubas I and II and Contrabass (C.B.) Tubas I and II (divided onto two staves and also listed with Arabic numerals); Vibraphones I and II and Glockenspiel I and II, one staff per pair; Tam Tam; Electric Violin (El. Vl.); Electric (El.) Cello; and Electric (El.) Bass. Herrmann likely included an option for an electric bass substitute, but in the manuscript the notation has been obscured, presumably by Herrmann himself. This marking/option appears nowhere else in the score – not even on the first page of the "Finale" cue which, save for one added note in the trombones, is a literal reproduction of this page.

Orchestration (instrumental color) and rhythm provide two important analytical foci. The list below itemizes three *affective* qualities expressed by the music – power, suspense, and urgency – along with their corresponding musical events.

Power:

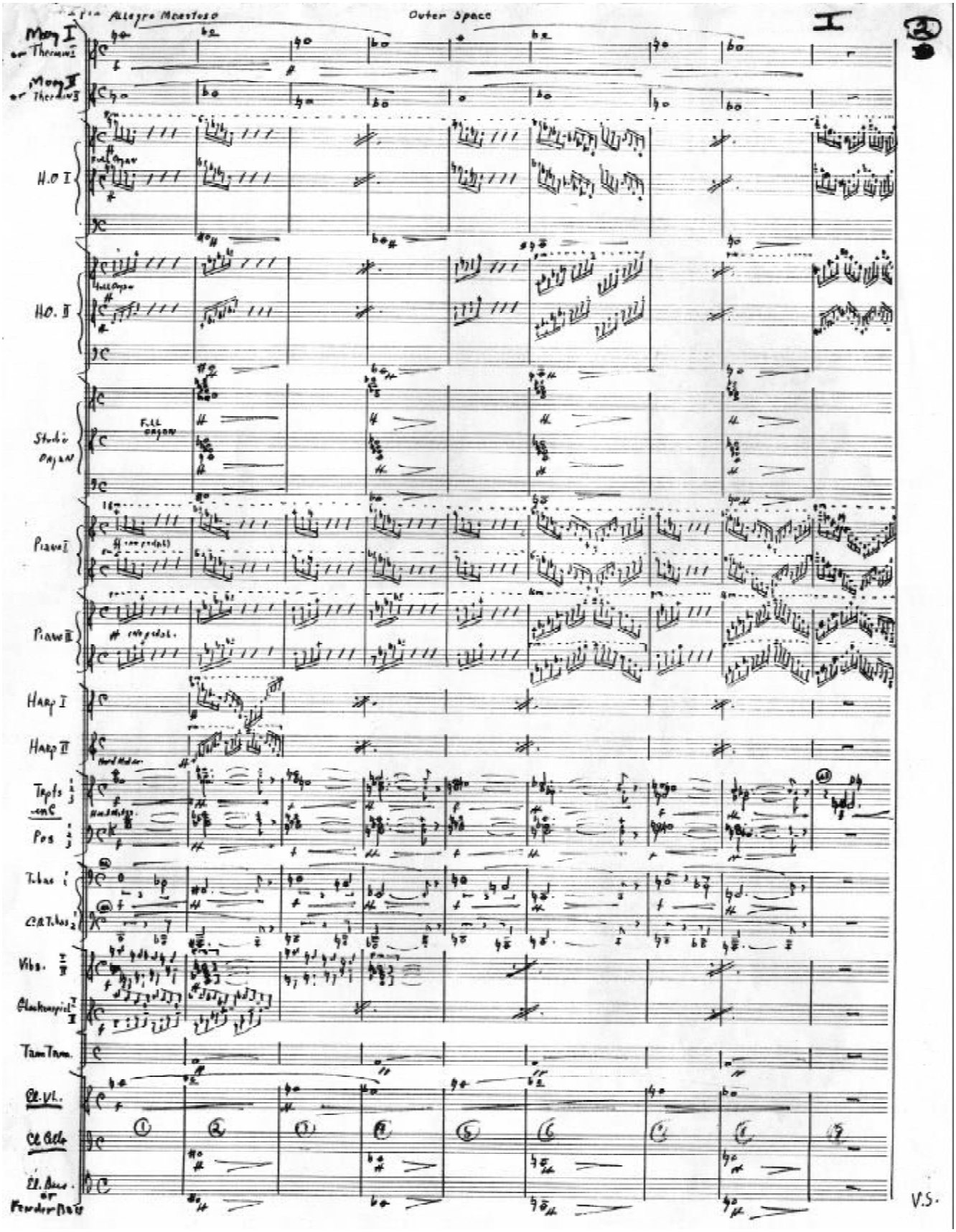
- loud, sustained chords in the trumpets and trombones, one per measure.
- the scoring of the whole-note melody in octaves, partially outlined by those chords in the theremins and electric violin.
- strong, thick chords in the studio pipe organ that appear every second measure,
- tam-tam strikes and very strong whole notes in the electric cello and bass that coincide with the studio organ chords.
- a strong melodic line in octaves in the tubas, moving independently from other melodic elements and landing every second measure on whole notes that become part of these chords.

Suspense:

- chords in the studio organ (also supported by the whole notes of other voices identified above), each of which provides a dramatic emphasis not unlike that heard as standard usage in

[32]The notation of "Moog," written on the score over each theremin part, was probably added by the composer when he recorded a suite from the score for London Records in the early 1970s. Herrmann was familiar with Moog synthesizers as he had used them in 1972 in his score for *Sisters*.

Example 2 ("Outer Space", mm. 1-9)



radio dramas, when a powerful chord is struck and sustained in response to a particular plot device.
- tam-tam strikes.
- quarter-note motion, in the vibraphones, that leads to the organ chords.

Urgency:

- a multitude of sixteenth-notes in the Hammond organs and pianos that form repeating patterns, or *ostinati*.
- occurrences of contrary-motion harp arpeggios every second bar.
- the inclusion of the disquietingly unfamiliar sound of theremins and electric violin.
- glockenspiels, with their bright percussive quality, moving in eighth notes.
- vibraphones and their regularly placed sustained ring.
- harps, as discussed earlier.

William H. Rosar has remarked on the silent-film-like qualities of Herrmann's music,[33] and some elements of the "Outer Space" cue do support this premise. Herrmann grew up during the silent-film era, and many of the musical devices used at that time later became standard fare in radio dramas. The *ostinati* of "Outer Space" are reminiscent of the *agitato* pattern that in silent-film accompaniments often occurred over a moving bass, similar to the tuba line in the film cue.[34] The big block chords for the brass are not unlike "suspense" chords, typically rolled repeatedly in a tremolo fashion, that were used by pianists and organists of the silent-film era, and likewise the huge half-diminished chords that occur every second measure in the studio organ part. A typical cliché of the silent-film pianist was a glissando preceding climactic chords; the harps adopt this cliché at the end of "Outer Space," and the effect is even more pronounced at the film's conclusion when the same musical material leads into the final D major chord.

The "Outer Space" cue is forty-seven measures long, and its form is ABA'. The only distinctions between A and A' are the endings. The main difference between the A and B sections lies in the melodic material for the tubas; harmonically, the sections are identical. Each large section consists of two eight-bar phrases, and all but the last of these phrases can be divided into two four-bar sections; it is the last four-bar phrase that is replaced, by a final cadence, in A'. Essentially, then, two four-bar ideas are repeated to result in the form aabb/aabb/aab. In addition to new tuba material in section B, there are other slight differences between the components of each corresponding pair, for example, a subtle contrast in orchestration or harmonic voicing. More important, within the several "a" statements the tubas' line actually functions as an eight-bar, rather than a four-bar, unit. This provides further aural contrast, and it also suggests a dramatic implication of the orchestration. The tubas function powerfully within the music's framework, but they sometimes seem to transcend the form established by the other instruments, just as Gort sometimes seems to be merely a soldier for Klaatu but at other times demonstrates the ability to function, with unbelievable powers, independently.

Other Compositional Devices

Orchestral color, of course, is not the only ingredient of Herrmann's work that contributes to its overall effectiveness; as the visual element of film comprises numerous aspects, so does the aural. Remarkable, though, is just how subdued a role other compositional elements do play in the music for *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. As is the case with many of his later scores, Herrmann's combination and slight alteration of a few basic building blocks – amidst the music's prevalent sonority – result not in monotony but in unusual dramatic effectiveness. An examination of the elemental musical aspects of "Outer Space" will reveal most of the musical material on which the entire score is based. The *ostinato* device will be considered first, then melodic and harmonic elements, particularly those which – often through coloristic implementation – effectively delineate and propel the narrative.

The *ostinato* is one of the simplest, most direct ways to make a musical passage cohere, and it serves film composers well, given that the need to immediately establish a mood or emotion often precludes extensive melodic or harmonic development. The *ostinato* can produce a sense of monotonous decoration, as Robert U. Nelson observed about Herrmann's treatment of it in the score for *Anna and the King of Siam* (1946),[35] but the eleven cues in which the technique is present in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* use

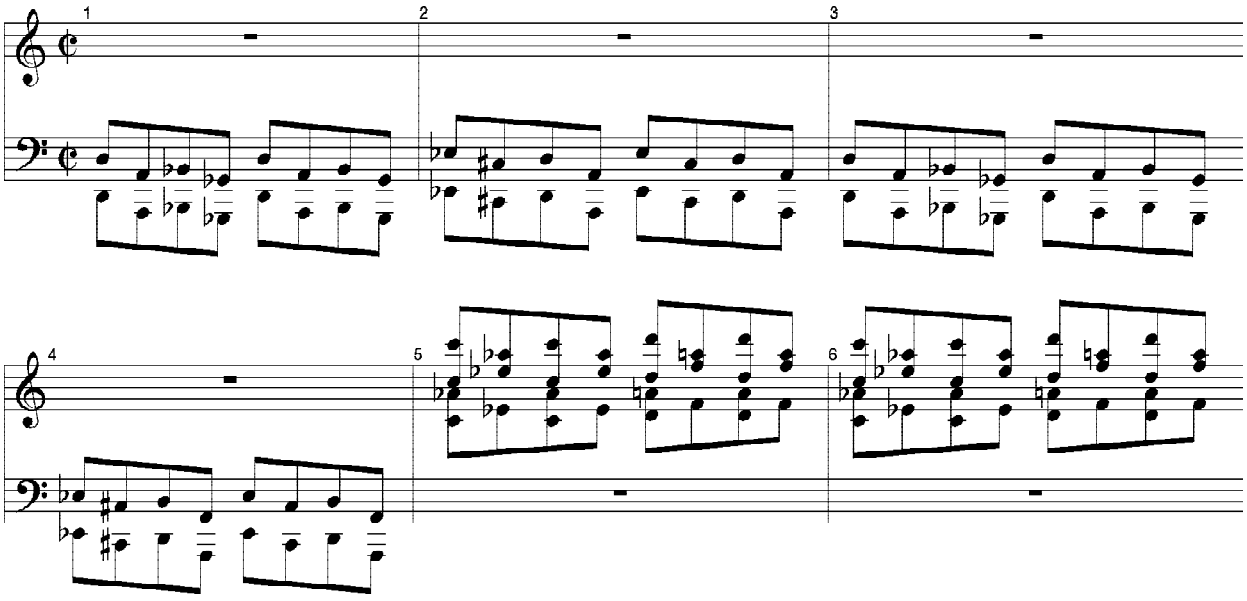
[33]William H. Rosar, personal communication, n.d.
[34]Rosar has also drawn a parallel to a similar aspect of Herrmann's music for *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (1952) and *Beneath the Twelve-Mile Reef* (1953).
[35]Robert U. Nelson, "The Craft of the Film Score," *The Pacific Spectator* I, no. 4, (autumn 1947): 445.

subtle variation or other treatments to produce a sense of variety and development.

Unique to the orchestral tapestry of "Outer Space" is a striking multiple implementation of *ostinato*. No fewer than four different *ostinati*, each appearing in pairs of instruments, are present in the following voices: pianos and the Hammond organs, the harps, the vibraphones, and the glockenspiels. Let us first look at the particular colors produced by the instruments. All of these instruments are percussive; the attack of each note is audible. Their sound here is essential, for it is the enunciation of these rhythms that provides forward energy and creates the anxious excitement that prompts the whole notes in the theremins and violin. Onto this underlying rhythmic background is daubed the referential colors of the harp arpeggios and the metallic percussion. So, not only is a frantic energy generated by the repeated rhythms, but the carefully chosen instrumental colors elicit a subconscious response that complements the other-worldly sound of the melody. Each *ostinato* is constructed basically of the same melodic pattern, but within each pair of instruments the order of the pattern is reversed. In addition, three different rhythmic values define the various *ostinati*. The cue "Radar" is a perfect example of such construction (see Example 3). Its ninety-eight measures of *ostinato* portray the agitation of Earth's peoples as radar tracks the descent of the spaceship. Its incessant eighth-note construction never becomes boring because of the ingenious manipulation of the basic compositional material, all of which is presented in the first six measures. The cue is composed of a dialogue between two voices, a piano and bass and a piano and vibraphones. The most noticeable variation in the cue's harmonic structure derives from substitute chords. The following devices provide less obvious variation:

- differing chord tones within pairs of eighth-notes, first at the span of a measure and later at the span of a half note.
- alteration in the length of each voice's statement, including measure-by-measure interchange.
- register change in the bass notes.
- substitution of chord tones in the bass line.
- displacement of the vibraphone chords by a half measure.
- variation in the number of vibraphone attacks in the statements by voice II.
- variation in the rotational order of harmonies at the span of a measure or half-measure.
- addition of a third bass note on the second quarter-note of a measure.

Example 3. ("Radar," mm. 1-6)

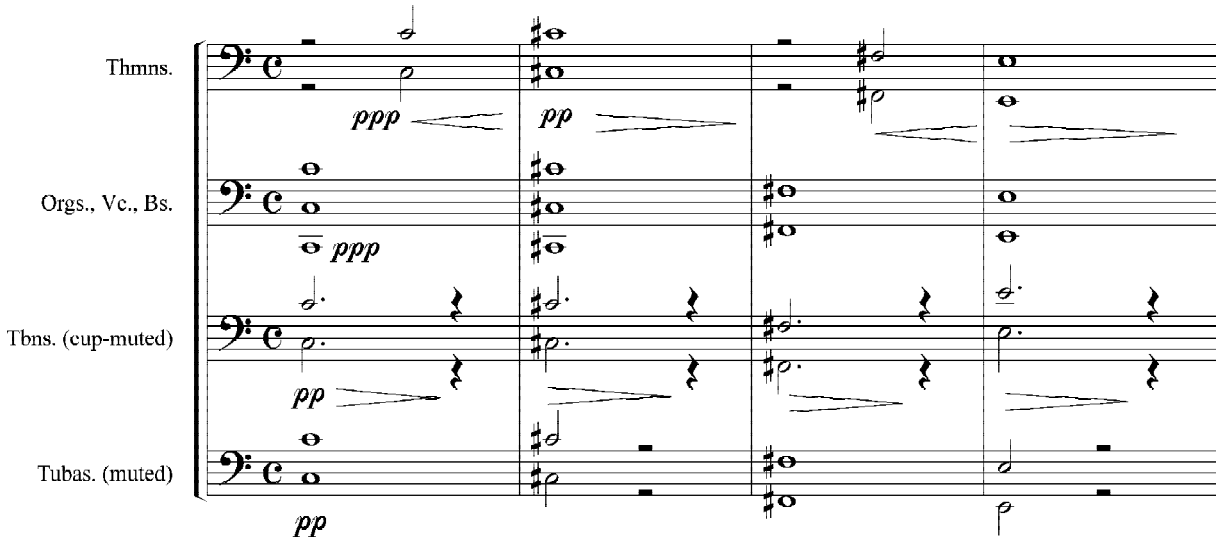


Another technique for varying an *ostinato* is used in "The Visor" (the material of which is also used in "Nikto"). Here, one pitch-class per measure (C, C-sharp, F-sharp, E) is woven among diverse instruments, varied only by duration and register. The result is a dazzling display of shifting colors (see Example 4). Thus, the color of instruments alone, creates a disquieting affect, but the cue contains other elements as well. The most striking is a sixteenth-note *ostinato* in the pianos. Constructed of increasingly large leaps away from G, this figure further elevates the feeling of anxiety (already strongly established through shifting electronic colors and by the mere presence of an *ostinato*) by lengthening every second statement by one note. This technique is dramatically effective for two reasons: The incorporation of ever larger intervals directly reflects the audience's deepening comprehension of the potential vastness of the robot's attack, and progressively lengthening the group of attacks results in increased tension. Just as Gort is eventually ordered by the spaceman to stand down, the *ostinato* returns to its original length by, beginning in measure 13, reversing the process (see Example 5).

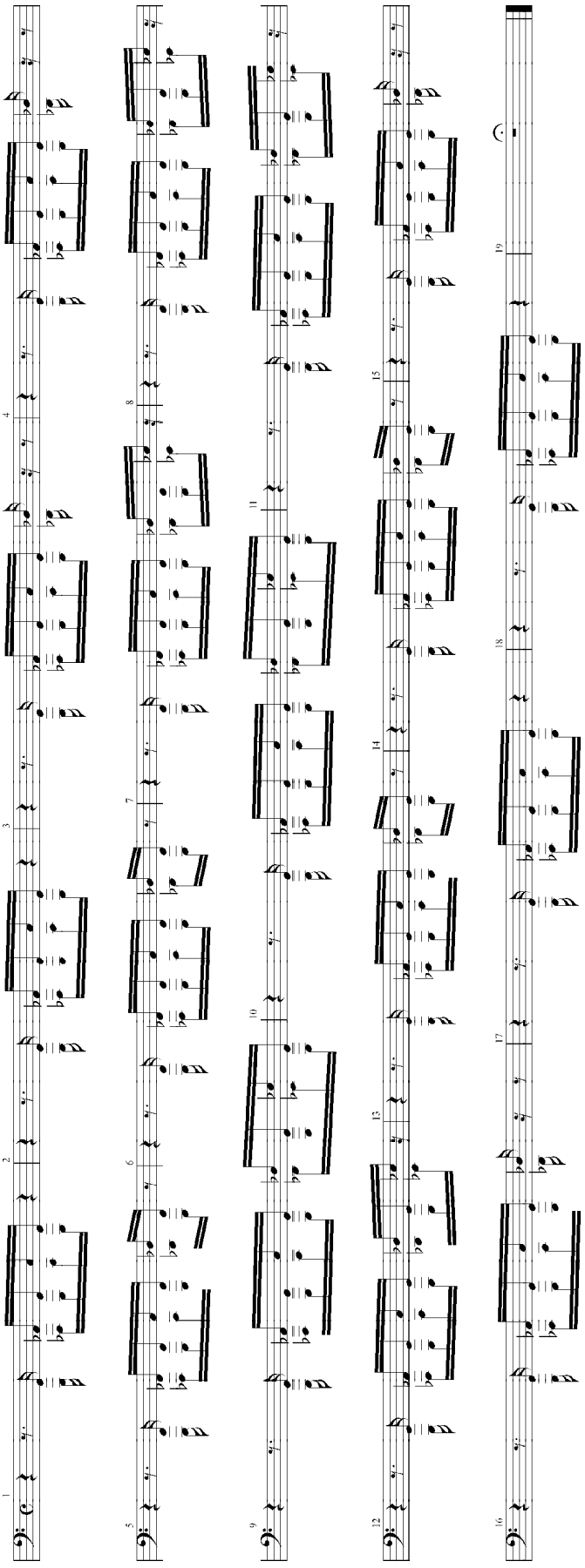
The cue "Space Control" is similar to "Radar" in that it uses only one *ostinato* pattern throughout. In this case, however, the basic pattern never changes; the orchestration alone highlights the *ostinato*'s two melodic components in a dialogue. To capture the atmosphere of the spaceship's interior, Herrmann established a four-measure phrase for the celeste (with non-pedaled piano), glockenspiels (struck with wooden sticks), and harps. The bright sound is reminiscent of twinkling stars, and the percussiveness of each instrumental attack produces a persistent eighth-note energy despite the *moderato* tempo. Aside from occasional octave displacement and exchange of lines between pairs of like instruments, this pattern is effectively stated nine times without significant variation (see Example 6). In the second phrase, the electric guitar (also a percussive-sounding instrument) assumes the melodic element from the second glockenspiel, condenses it to half steps, and reiterates it (see Example 7). In measure 9, one theremin, and then the other an octave lower, assumes this small melodic gesture, which is stated five times in all, with upper-lower-upper-lower-lower octave placement (see Example 8). Later in the cue, subtle shifts of instrumentation similar to those in "Nikto" achieve variety in the *ostinato*. It is essentially the interchange of the two melodic fragments between the theremins and the electric guitar over the constant shimmering panorama of color that establishes the extra-terrestrial location and gives form to an otherwise deliberately shapeless composition.

The compositional process suggested in the interplay of instrumental colors and ostinati applies equally well to orchestration and the essential motivic-thematic elements of the score as a whole. Three intervallic relationships that appear in "Outer Space" are fundamental to the harmonic and melodic construc-

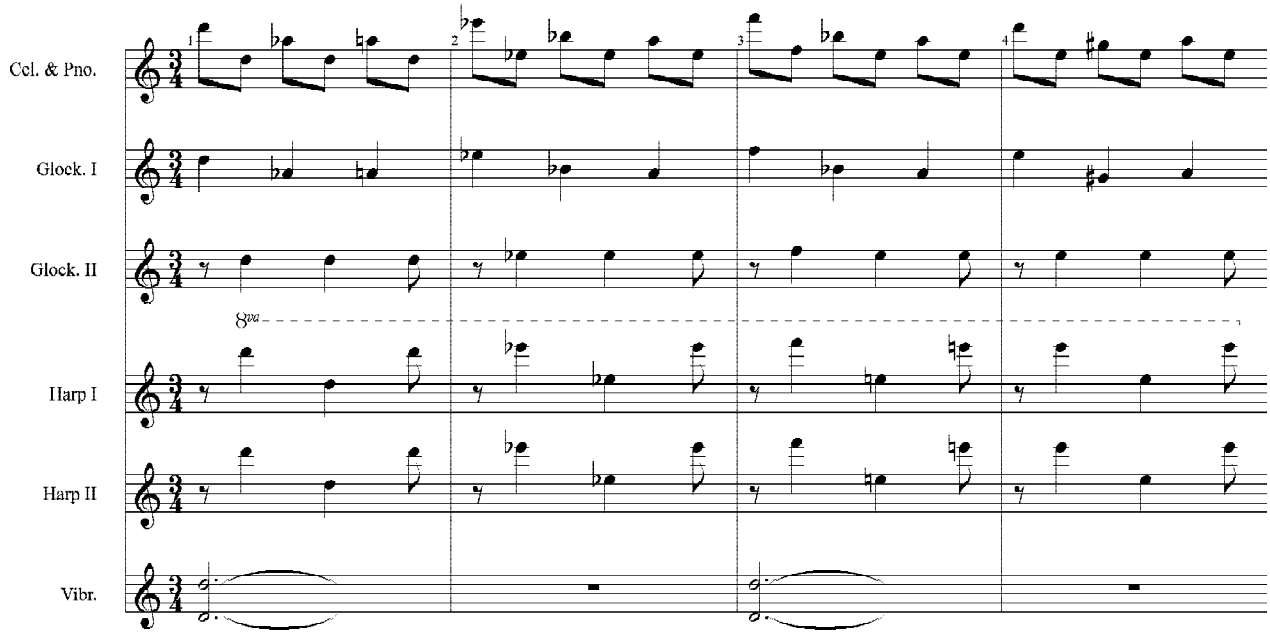
Example 4 ("The Visor," coloristic orchestrative framework, mm. 1-4)



Example 5 (“The Visor,” piano ostinato, mm. 1-19)



Example 6 ("Space Control," ostinato parts, mm. 1-4)



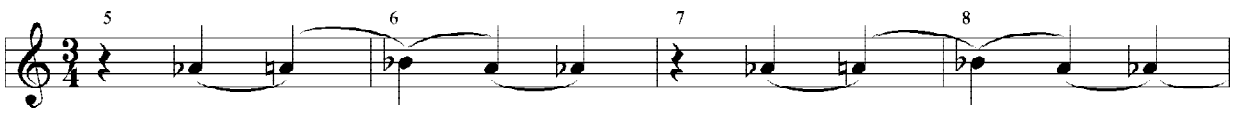
tion of the music for *The Day the Earth Stood Still*: semitone, perfect fifth, and tritone. The relationship of E-flat minor to D minor established in the "Prelude" is strongly reinforced in "Outer Space" as each measure of the "a" sections alternates between these two harmonies (with a C added to each, without affecting the tonality). This harmonic alternation also forms the foundation of fourteen other cues.

Many cues in which the robot Gort plays a prominent role are based on another half-step relationship, between D-flat and C. The earliest instance, the cue entitled "The Robot," is typical (see Example 9).

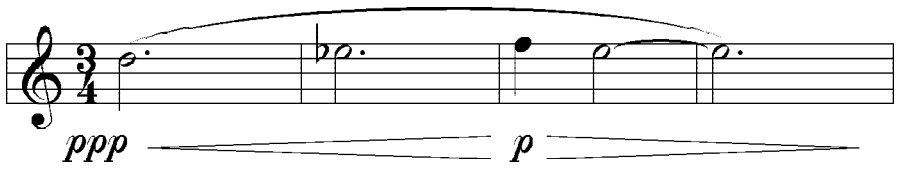
The ambiguity in the audience's understanding of Gort is finally eliminated in "Rebirth" when the robot demonstrates its fantastic ability to bring Klaatu back to life. This cue includes an enharmonic D-flat minor triad in the timpani, a motivic figure that is closely associated with the robot (see Example 10). The trombones, however, repeatedly interrupt with a D-flat major chord that resolves to C major (once again, the semitone relationship), and this resolution is reinforced by the sound of the Hammond organ. A unique trio – an electric violin and two theremins – completes the cue. As if to emphasize the importance of the major-tonality resolution of this cue, all but two intervals of the parallel theremin lines are major thirds. The violin part (measures 11-16) repeatedly states the basic semitone motive, with each successive pair of notes sounded a whole step lower. The resulting harmonies are augmented triads in the first half of each bar and minor triads on beat three. In measure 16, all this dissolves into a C major triad. The cue's concluding B-flat in the violin turns this into a seventh chord, a common device used by film composers to mitigate the overly sharp articulation of a clearly defined final cadence.

One other orchestrational aspect of this cue supports the intended evolution in the audience's perception of Gort: Trombones replace the four tubas,

Example 7 ("Space Control," electric guitar, mm. 5-8)



Example 8 ("Space Control," theremin I, mm. 9-12)



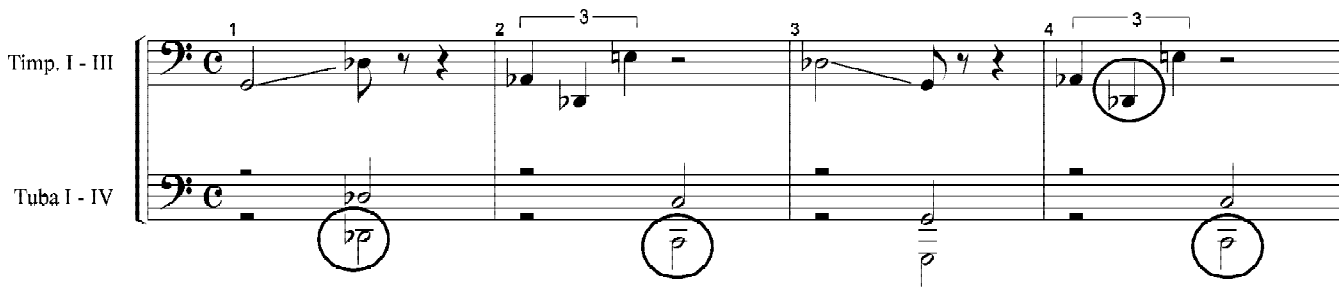
on which every musical illustration of the robot – save "Alone," "Nikto," and "Rebirth" – has relied heavily. The three robot-related cues that do not feature the tubas are crucial to the audience's ultimate understanding of Gort's character. During the scenes accompanied by "Alone" and "Nikto," Mrs. Benson is in danger as she conveys to the robot Klaatu's imperative command. Gort does not harm her. Not coincidentally, the tubas – symbolic of the tremendous power wielded by the robot (thus far, portrayed as destructive) – are absent. While "Rebirth" does retain the arpeggiated timpani chord that has also been a part of Gort's music, the weighty, dark, and powerful timbre of the tubas is again absent. The trombones' tone color, of course, possesses certain similarities to that of the tubas, but voiced here in the less weighty first inversion and in a higher tessitura they are noticeably less imposing. The essential brass character is retained, reminiscent of Gort's other music, but the subtle transformation of orchestral color readies the audience for acceptance of the robot's positive qualities.

Another illustration of harmonic reliance on the interval of the half step appears in the cue "Danger" (the cue "Escape" is very similar). The motive is lengthened to a progression of four parallel minor chords (see Example 11). Again, slight alteration of material — in this case, changes in the sequence of the chords, variation in dynamics, and momentary harmonic clashes during the lengthened notes in the trumpets — adds variety within each pair of measures.

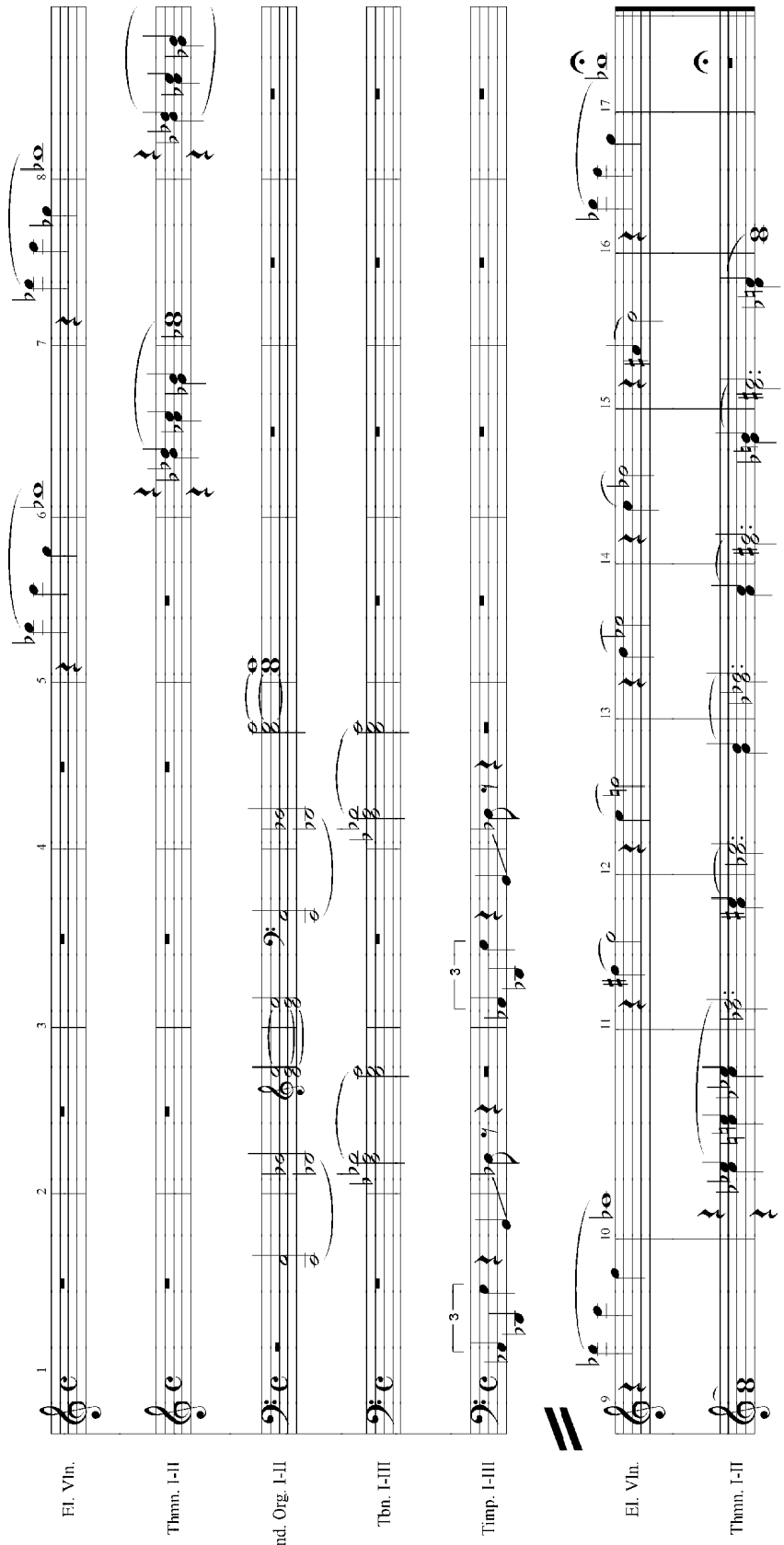
These superimposed parallel harmonies are also for the basis of "The Study" (see Example 12). The four minor chords of "Danger" (F-sharp, F, E, E-flat) have been transposed down a whole step to (E, E-flat, D, D-flat), and the last of them has been altered to a D-flat augmented triad. The chords have been reorganized to achieve whole-step root pairs: E-flat and D-flat; E and D. That Herrmann added a bass line that generates more complex harmonies, altered the D-flat chord (which allows the basic half-step motive to be highlighted), and switched chord pairs in the second phrase (which also underscores the half-step motion) suggest that he composed "The Study" by extracting as many motivic possibilities as he could from the simple chord sequence in "Danger."

With few exceptions, most of the melodic elements in the score for *The Day the Earth Stood Still* are dominated by half-step or whole-step motivic figures – especially in the theremins, on which the performance of smaller intervals is

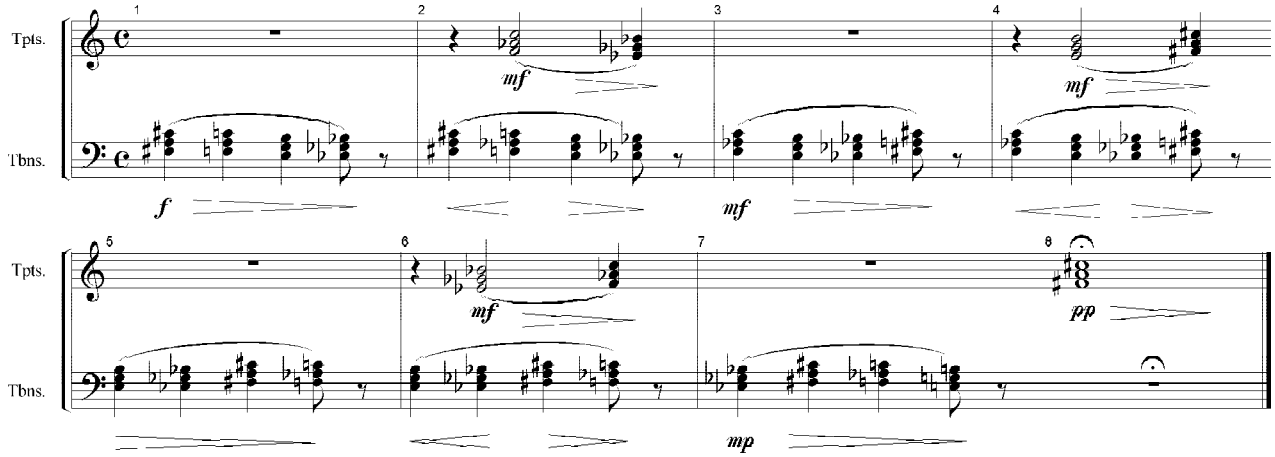
Example 9 ("The Robot," mm. 1-4)



Example 10 (“Rebirth,” mm. 1-17)



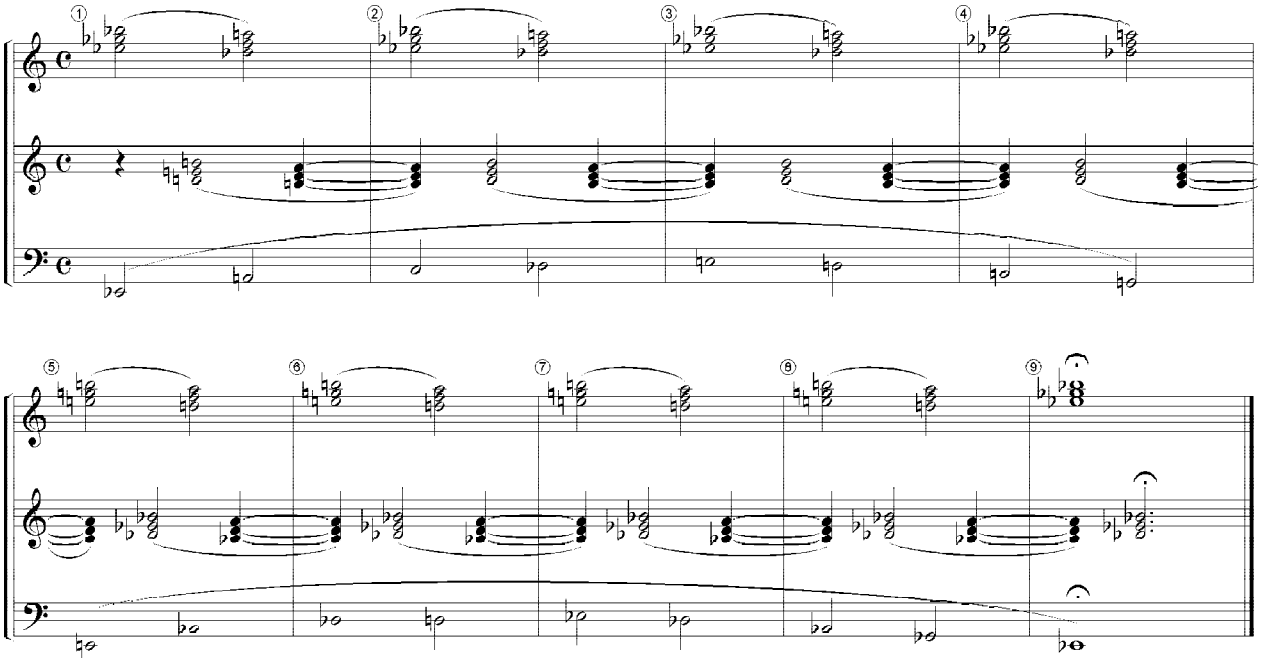
Example 11 ("Danger," brass parts, mm. 1-8)



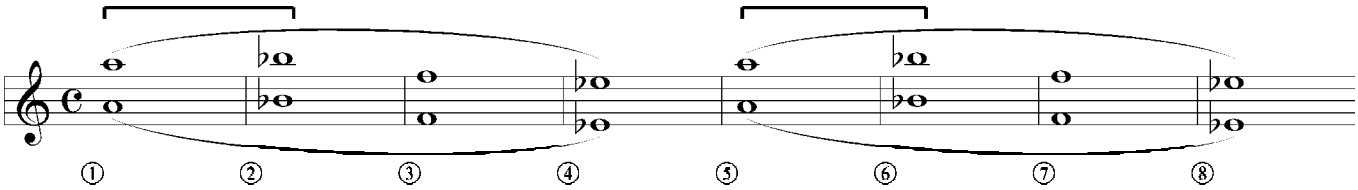
more accurately and consistently achieved. Both the half step and the whole step as melodic intervals are heard in the opening pitches of the theremin and electric violin parts in "Outer Space" (see Example 13). The trumpets and trombones, although they normally provide dominant colors in orchestration, are subservient to the electronic colors and voiced to support the melodic line. The theremins and the electric strings also make one "cadential" declaration of the E-flat to D motive at the end of the cue. The same figure precedes the final two bars of "Finale," and it is an essential ingredient in two of the film's pivotal cues, "Klaatu" and "Departure."

The interval of a perfect fifth has long been used to represent strength and power, and this association is evident in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. The interval's foundational presence in that

Example 12 ("The Study," mm. 1-9)



Example 13 ("Outer Space," theremin parts, mm. 1-8)



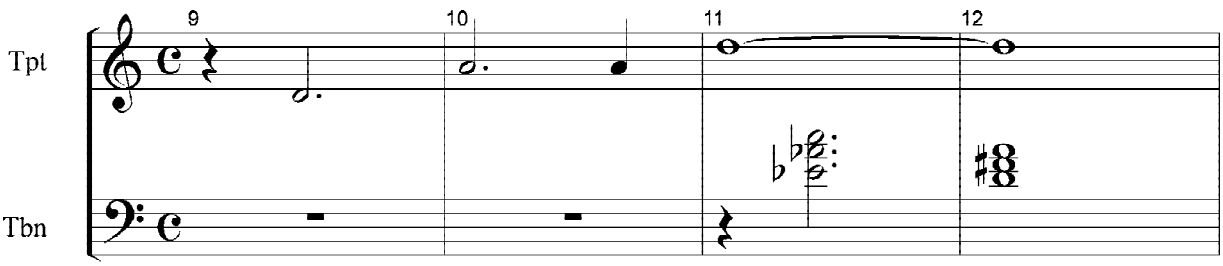
natural harmonic series made it elemental to royal fanfares and military bugle calls, both of which have been historically executed on natural (i.e., valveless) trumpets. Many film composers have used the ascending perfect fifth, played on brass instruments, to make reference to a noble power or a military call to arms. In "Outer Space," Herrmann bases the second part of each phrase on a figure resembling a bugle call, pronounced first by the trumpets and then by the trombones (see Example 14).

Narratively, there are at least three story elements to which this brief motive could refer. First, there is Klaatu's mission, his assignment to serve as an emissary from the other planets, to travel to Earth and deliver a crucial warning to its people. Second, the figure might be a call to action for Earth's inhabitants: Act and you will live in peace with the other planets; do nothing and you will perish. Third, after surmounting continuous obstacles – including his own death – Klaatu fulfills his orders, and thus the motive could be interpreted as a summons for him to return home, injured, but with his mission accomplished.

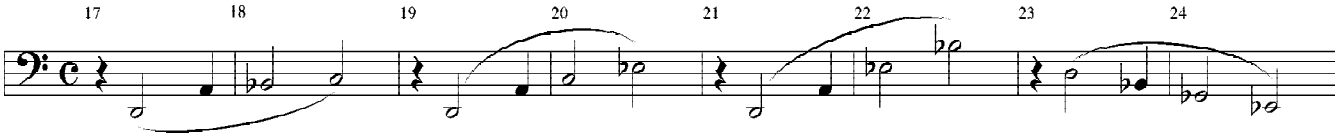
In the B section of "Outer Space," the four tubas present new melodic material whose initial fifth is obviously derived from the trumpet line heard earlier (see Example 15). Here, though, the fifth does not resolve to its higher tonic. Instead, it leads to upward excursions through E-flat minor that culminate in a high E-flat to B-flat motive (measure 22) that is left unresolved. The regular presence of tubas in cues that accompany Gort support the idea that this phrase foreshadows the robot's awesome power and independence. The active leading quality of this fifth, high in the tubas' range and without resolution, serves to reinforce the mystery surrounding the audience's perception of the robot's intentions.

Two connected cues derived from the ascending-fifth motive are "Arlington" and "Lincoln Memorial." Their orchestral setting, however, distinguishes them from other cues dominated by the perfect fifth and consequently assists in establishing some essential plot material. The scenes in which Klaatu and Bobby first visit the Arlington National Cemetery and then the Lincoln Memorial are the first in the film that portray elements of American society prior to the extraterrestrial's visit. Both of these symbols of war represent the nation's internal struggles that eventually led to atomic technology, which is perceived by the extraterrestrials as threatening. Looking out over the vast expanse of headstones at the cemetery, Bobby explains his father's death during the war. At this point, Klaatu's comprehension of the devastation of earthly wars is

Example 14 ("Outer Space," mm. 9-12)



Example 15 ("Outer Space," tuba parts, mm. 17-24)



heightened, and a concomitant compassion for human beings grows within him. Then, when Klaatu reads the words of Abraham Lincoln, he begins to believe that somewhere there must be intelligent human beings who recognize the importance of his message; thus far, it seems, political posturing has thwarted the message's delivery.

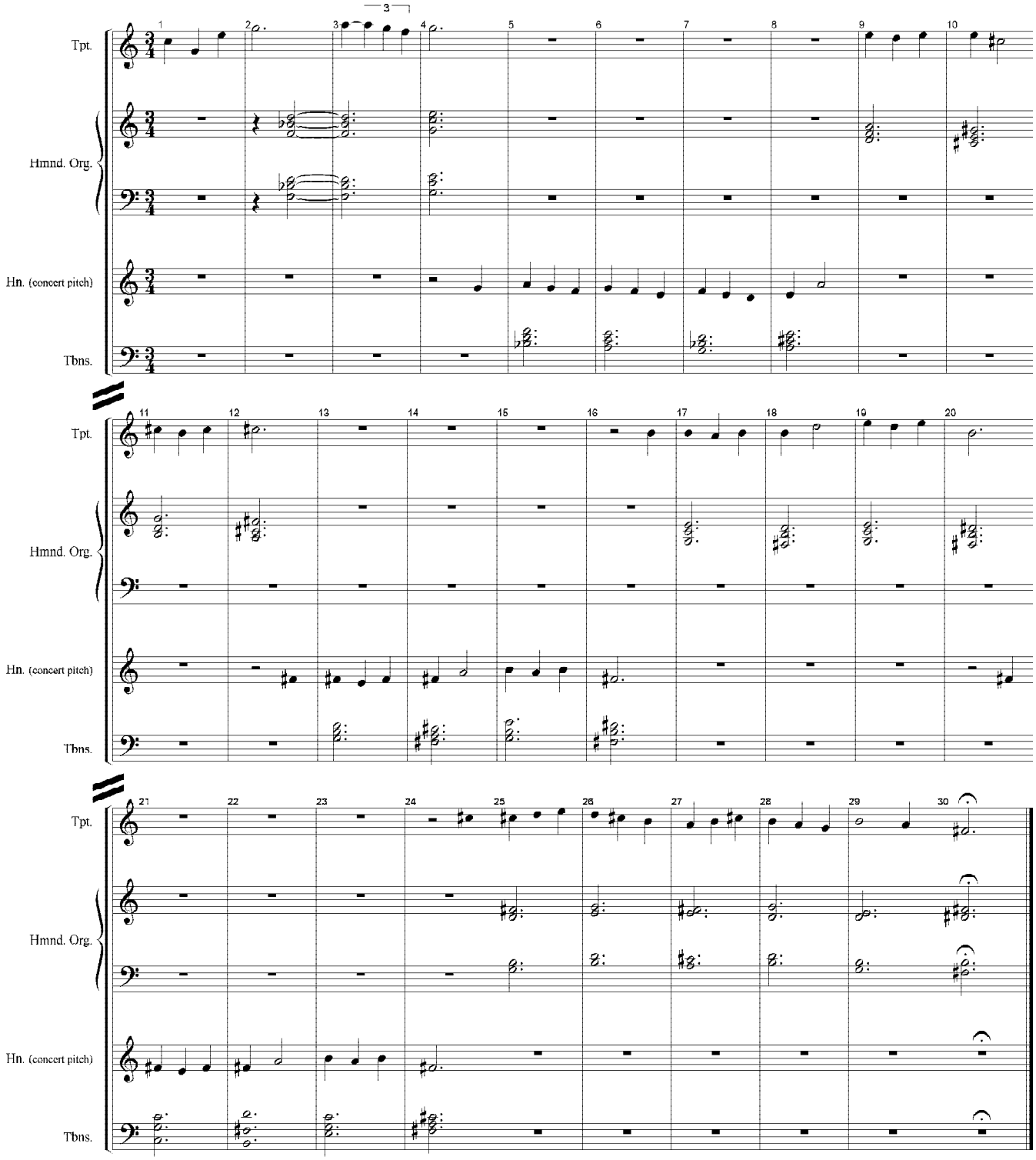
The orchestration of "Arlington" is identical to that of "Lincoln Memorial," and both cues maintain a four-bar antiphonal interchange between instrumental groups. "Lincoln Memorial" differs through the chromaticism of its melody and its more elaborate harmonic structure (see Example 16). Because of the more basic construction of "Arlington," its militaristic theme is intensified. Excursions into a more progressive harmonic color in the second cue, accompanying the transportation of the famous words of an historical American president into a contemporary setting, occur as the film establishes the need to seek an intelligent man who functions outside of governmental bureaucracy. When compared with the rest of this score, these cues have a remarkably "acoustic" effect. On the one hand, the virtual omission of electronic color firmly roots them in Earth-bound matters, and the omission of the use of trombones allows the resulting color to retain its identity as a representation of strength and power. On the other hand, these cues (along with the later "Farewell") are the only instances other than "Outer Space" in which the composer specifically calls for a C trumpet. This trumpet is not only brighter in comparison with the more standard B-flat instrument, but it is arguably lighter and closer in timbre to a bugle. Using a muted trumpet for "Arlington" calls to mind a bugler playing *Taps*. Removal of the mute for the second cue assists the psychological shift from past to present concerns.

The muted C trumpet is used again in the penultimate cue, "Farewell." This music immediately precedes the spaceman's final entrance into the ship and his departure from Earth. Two identical four-measure phrases transform material from "Arlington" (see Example 17).

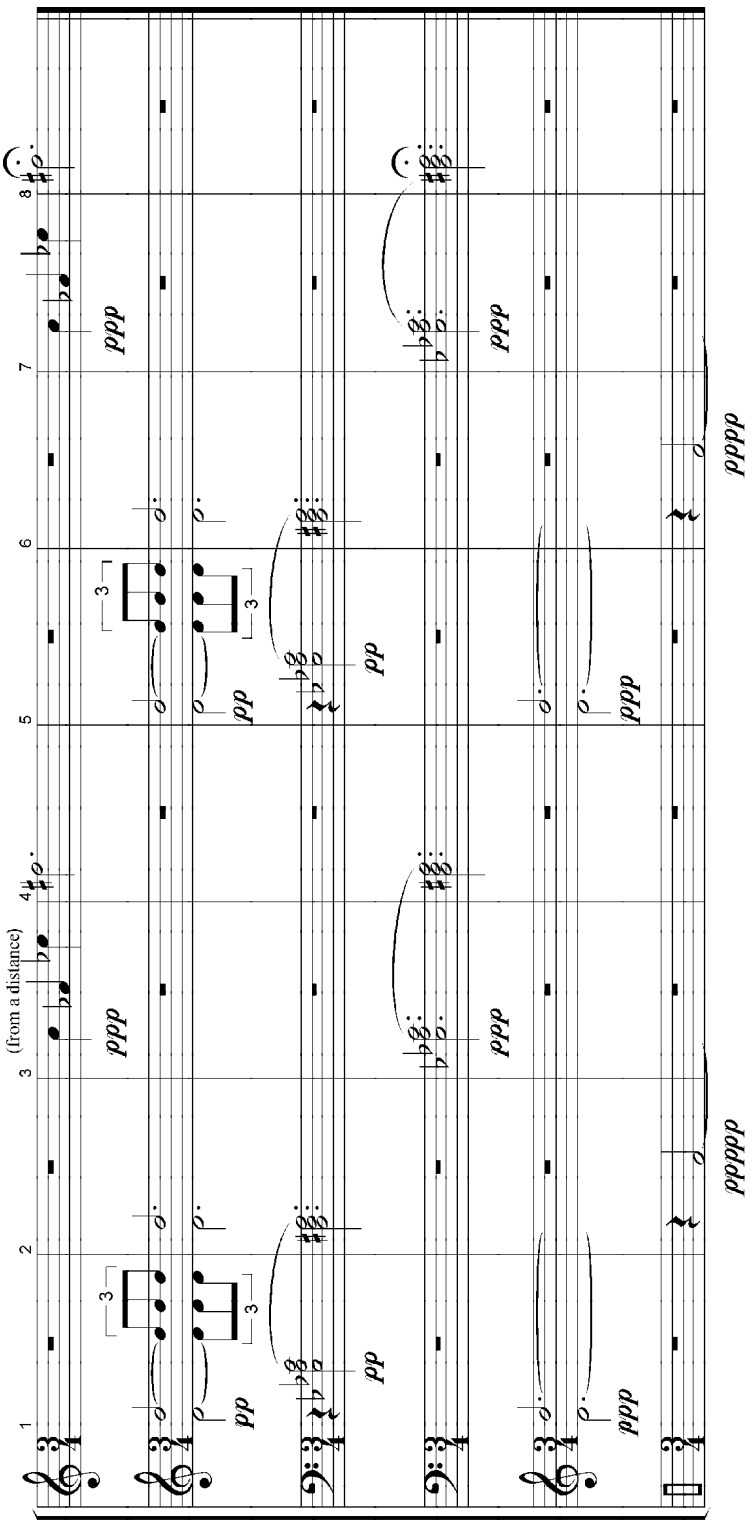
While the perfect fifth as a melodic interval appears in many cues in this score, its implementation as a direct harmonic element, as a simultaneity of pitches, is reserved for two cues that involve tubas and are representative of power. The specific connotations, however, differ as much as do the orchestral settings. After the introductory alternation between D-flat minor and C of "The Robot," during which Klaatu communicates with the seemingly sleeping Gort by means of a flashlight and thus compelling him to attack the two soldiers standing guard, Herrmann introduces a pair of parallel fifths (see Example 18). Up to this point, the tuba parts have been written in octaves (as in measures 3-4 of Example 18); as the audience begins to grasp the intent of Gort's actions, however, Herrmann harmonizes the D-flat (here written as C-sharp) with a lower fifth and then shifts the interval a tritone down. In a low tessitura, the perfect fifth imbues the sound with a much greater foundational strength – as though doubling the number of bricks at the base of a structure. The addition of the perfect fifth below – rather than above – the D-flat/C-sharp cause the G-flat/F-sharp to replace the other note as the harmonic root of that particular moment, thereby altering the expected timbre and setting up a subconscious change in the audience's perception of Gort's involvement. Tritone root motion has been used at least since the early nineteenth century to convey a sense of the unnatural; here it obviously supports Gort's increasing relevance within the narrative.

Compositional material in "The Telescope" relies even more on parallel fifths, but the effect and implication of their use is different. The implementation of fifths accompanies Klaatu's description of ". . . a gift for your president . . . with [which] he could have studied life on the other planets." (Klaatu had withdrawn this gift from his pocket, but it was immediately destroyed by an overzealous soldier who shot and wounded the spaceman.) As we have seen elsewhere,

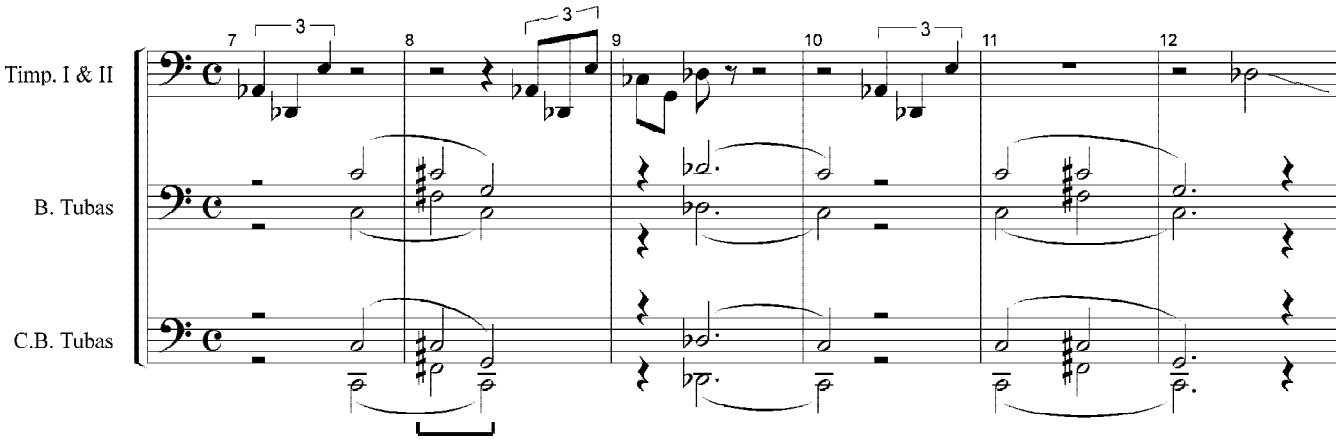
Example 16 (“Lincoln Memorial,” mm. 1-10)



Example 17 ("Farewell," mm. 1-8)



Example 18 ("The Robot," mm. 7-12)



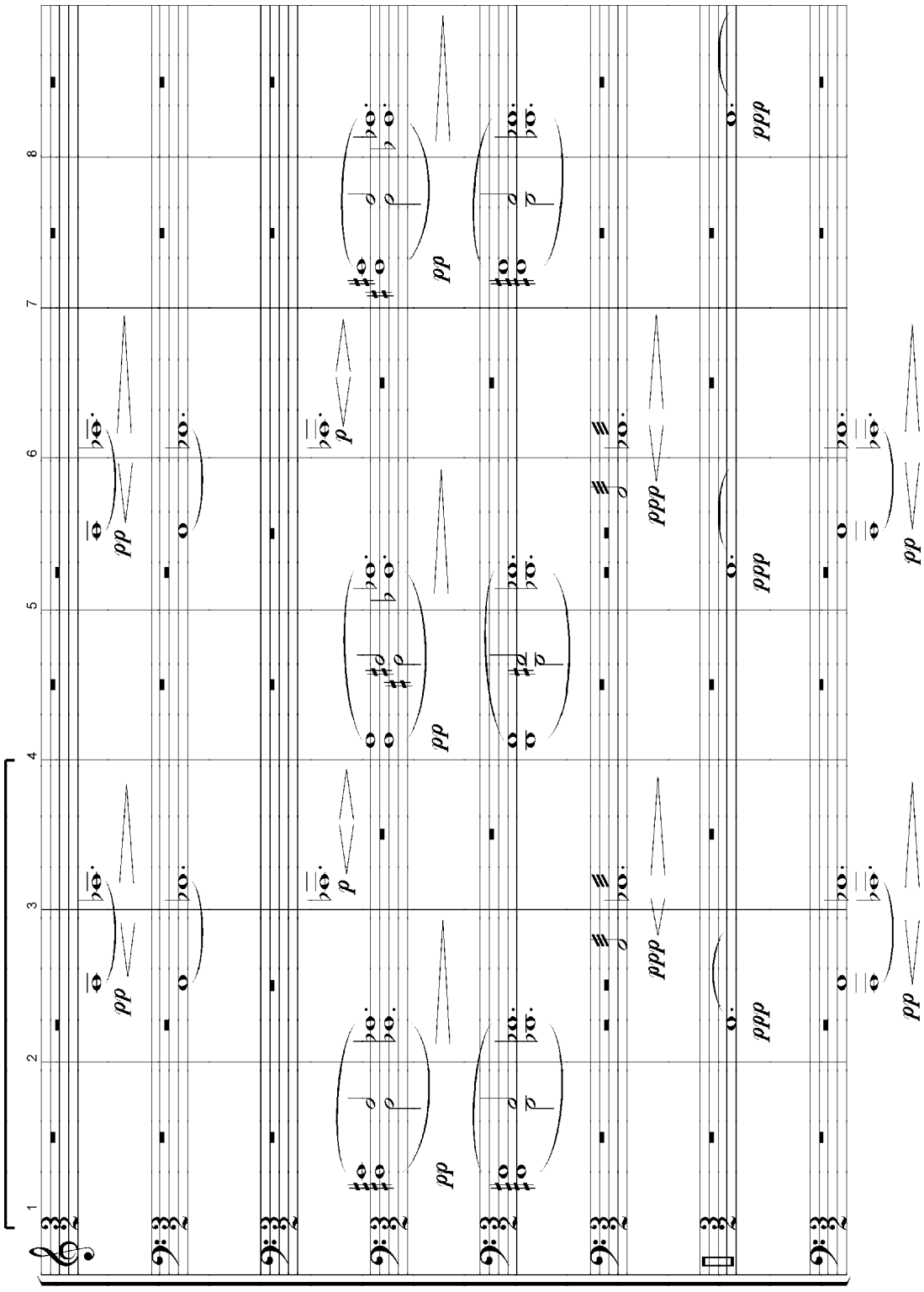
Herrmann relies on slightly varied repetitions of a small phrase (see Example 19). Hammond organs played *pianissimo* (and with a dark color, as per a "manual only" notation inserted by the composer) are combined with two octaves of parallel fifths played by the tubas. The theremins, electric low strings, and timpani answer with a descending half step, A to A-flat. Muted trombones in the pedal-tone range add a subtle coloration to each of the long, sustained A-flats by means of a crescendo and decrescendo. Here, the tubas' presence in the score has a unique quality: This is the tubas' *only* appearance in which they cannot be directly linked to Gort. "The Telescope" is also one of only two cues that require the tubas to use mutes. (The other is "The Visor," in which the tubas are intended to blend with the rest of the instruments). A request for muted tubas, while not rare today, is still uncommon when compared to requests for mutes for other brass instruments; in 1951 it was quite unusual. In addition to softening volume levels, mutes alter the balance of the constituent overtones of a brass instrument's tone. One adjective that might be used to describe the sound of muted tuba, in comparison with the instrument's natural sound, is "hollow," and the muted timbre when applied to open fifths indeed evokes the subconscious image of a large void. The effect of Herrmann's music, then, simply through his choice of orchestrational and harmonic color, evokes a perception of something incredibly powerful, even though the on-screen image is only that of a pocket-sized cylinder. In a direct way, this supports Herrmann's claim that "film music must supply what actors cannot say. The music can give to an audience their feelings. It must really convey what the word cannot do."[36]

The third fundamental intervallic component of the music for *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is the tritone. Melodically, the tritone is present in many of Gort's cues. Consider the opening of "The Robot" (Example 9), the material of which is taken directly from the theremin's low-register glissandi that predominate in "Gort," the cue that accompanies the robot's dramatic first appearance (see Example 20). Angry at the soldier's attack against its master, the robot emerges from the spaceship and vaporizes all of the military's weaponry; identical music is heard later in "Gort's Rage," when Mrs. Benson confronts the robot to deliver her crucial message. In "Outer Space," however, the tritone plays an important harmonic role. The interval is first apparent in the second phrase as a root progression from A-flat to D (see Example 14, lower staff). The harmony implied by the root motion from A-flat to D takes on a strong symbolic quality in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. In examples we have already discussed, the tritone is present in "Radar" (see Example 3, measure 5) and "Farewell" (see Example 17). Two further examples occur in the middle of the film's narrative, and in each of the scenes they accompany a decision is made from which specific actions follow.

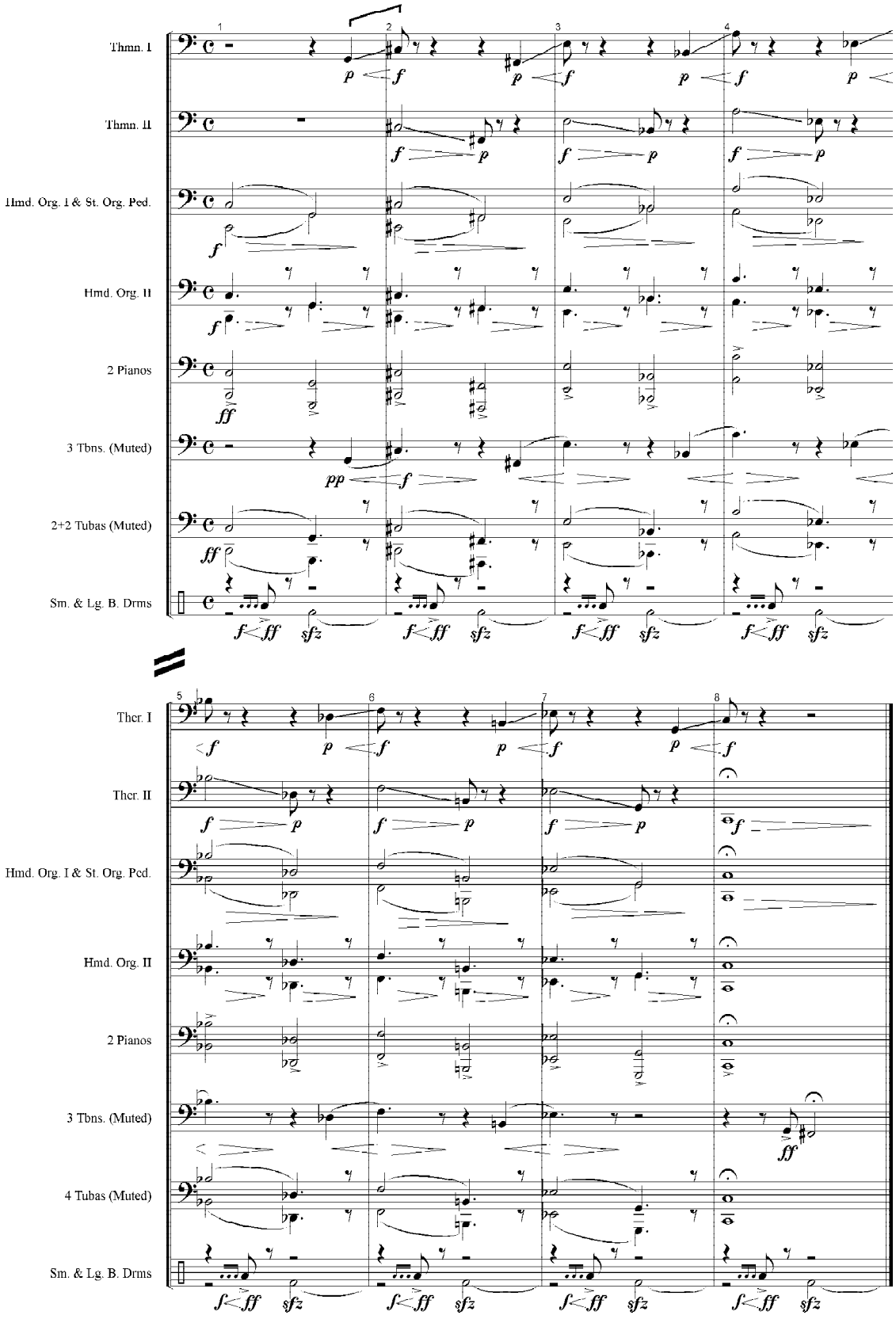
The first of these examples involves a pair of nearly identical cues that frame the thirty minutes during which Klaatu has arranged for all of the Earth's power to be

[36]Bernard Herrmann, radio interview with John Amos, date unknown.

Example 19 (“The Telescope,” mm. 1-8)



Example 20 ("Gort," mm. 1-8



interrupted. Between "The Elevator" and "12:30" the audience sees the panic that results from Klaatu's dramatic efforts to encourage people to comply with his important yet still unspoken message. Klaatu speaks with Mrs. Benson about his message while the two are suspended alone in an elevator caught between floors; he convinces her of the message's importance and elicits her assistance in ensuring the possibility of its delivery. Overlapping chords based on D and A-flat create a cloudy, nondistinct atmosphere that supports the disorientation and incapacitation of earth's people during this scene (see Example 21). Both chords appear here as minor triads; with their roots a tritone apart; there is no pull from either chord toward a harmonic resolution. The sound hangs suspended, just like the elevator, and it mirrors the earthlings' mystification.

The other progression from D to A-flat that is expressed with minor triads appears within the same segment of the film. The cue titled "The Conference" accompanies the meeting of military leaders in which they decide on a course of action to defeat the perceived menace of the spaceman (see Example 22). The cue consists of three slightly varied statements of the material shown in Example 21, plus a final version of the opening three measures which comes to rest on a polychord consisting of A-flat minor and D minor. The overall effect is one of aimless activity that ends inconsequentially – exactly the outcome of the leaders' decision.

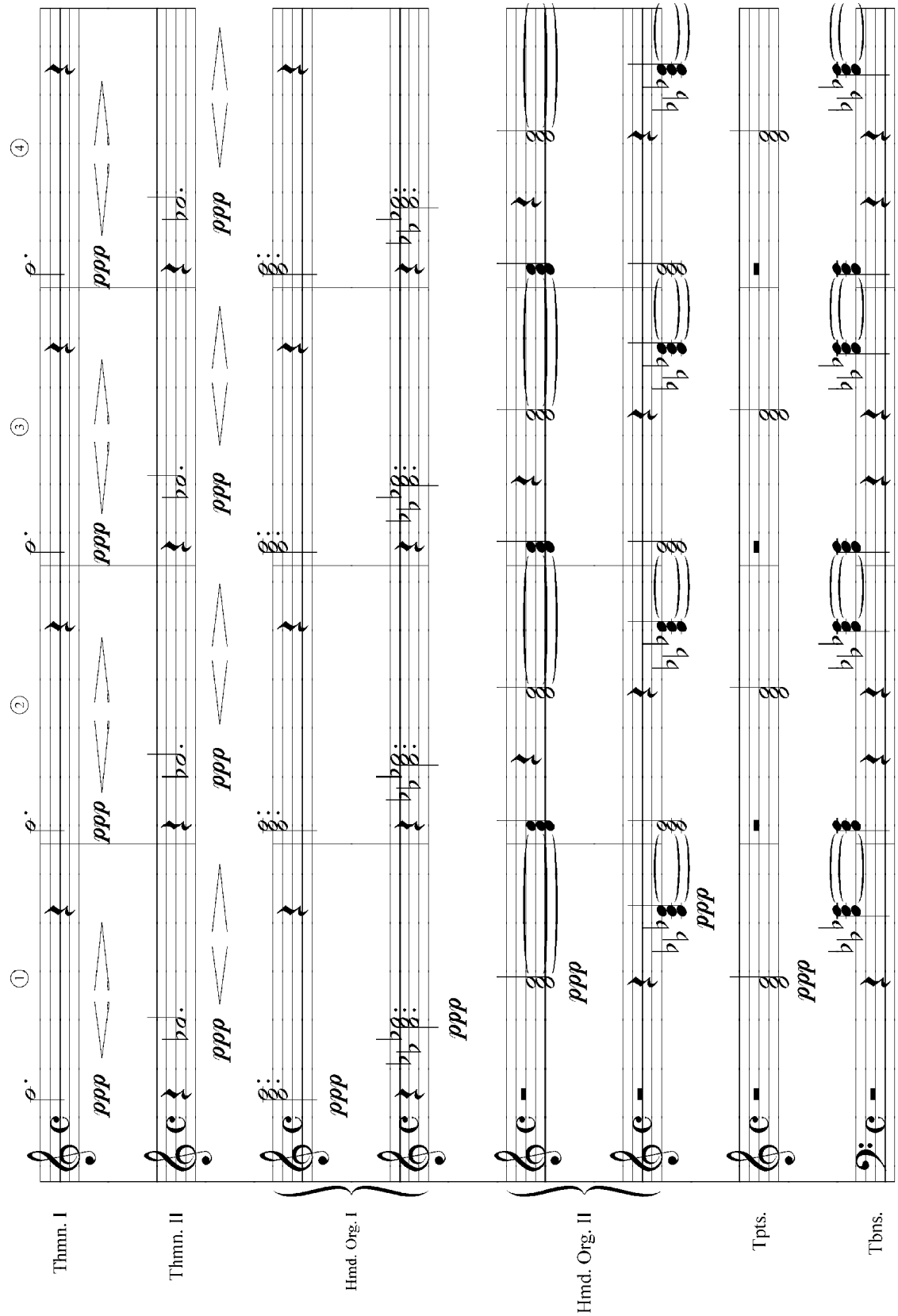
As the first trumpet and first trombone parts demonstrate, the melodic movement from E-flat to D that first appeared in the theremin part of the "Outer Space" cue here combines naturally with the tritone root movement of A-flat to D. Two cues based entirely on these materials are "Klaatu" and "Departure." They accompany news that frames the central action of the film: first the spaceman's emergence from his recently-landed ship and then his departure from Earth. "Klaatu" marks the first time the theremins are heard within the film's narrative, ("Outer Space" occurs within the title sequence.) Great mystery has surrounded the ship's arrival, and earth's peoples are frantically anxious. As the door opens and the helmeted spaceman walks down the ramp, he is shot (but only wounded). The audience and the earthlings in the film do not know whence or why the spaceman has come, or whether his intentions are good or evil. "Departure" is presented at the end of the film when the spaceman, shot again and this time killed, amazingly emerges from the ship again. Uncertainty is still present, but compounding it now is incredulity at the spaceman's reanimation and an increased terror concerning his potential retribution. Earth's peoples (those convened at the ship by Professor Barnhardt) are held in suspense until the spaceman finally delivers his stark warning: Restrict your ever-increasing aggression toward your own planet and live in peace with the others, or let your newfound atomic power propel that aggression into space and suffer having "this earth of yours reduced to a burned-out cinder."

The music for both of these scenes is suspenseful and expectant. "Departure" consists of a D pedal point that alternates between different instruments and different octaves (see Example 23). Onto this is superimposed two thematic ideas: the E-flat to D melodic motive and an A-flat major triad. Subtle renderings of A-flat major chords in second-inversion (alternating between cup-muted trumpets and trombones, and supported by the Hammond organs) create the same expectant quality as when they were heard in "Outer Space." Here, however, the feeling is sustained throughout because the chords are never allowed to fulfill their expected resolution to D major. Several statements of the D to E-flat to D semitone motive are dotted throughout the texture, in high and low theremins, in electronic strings, and in organ pedals.

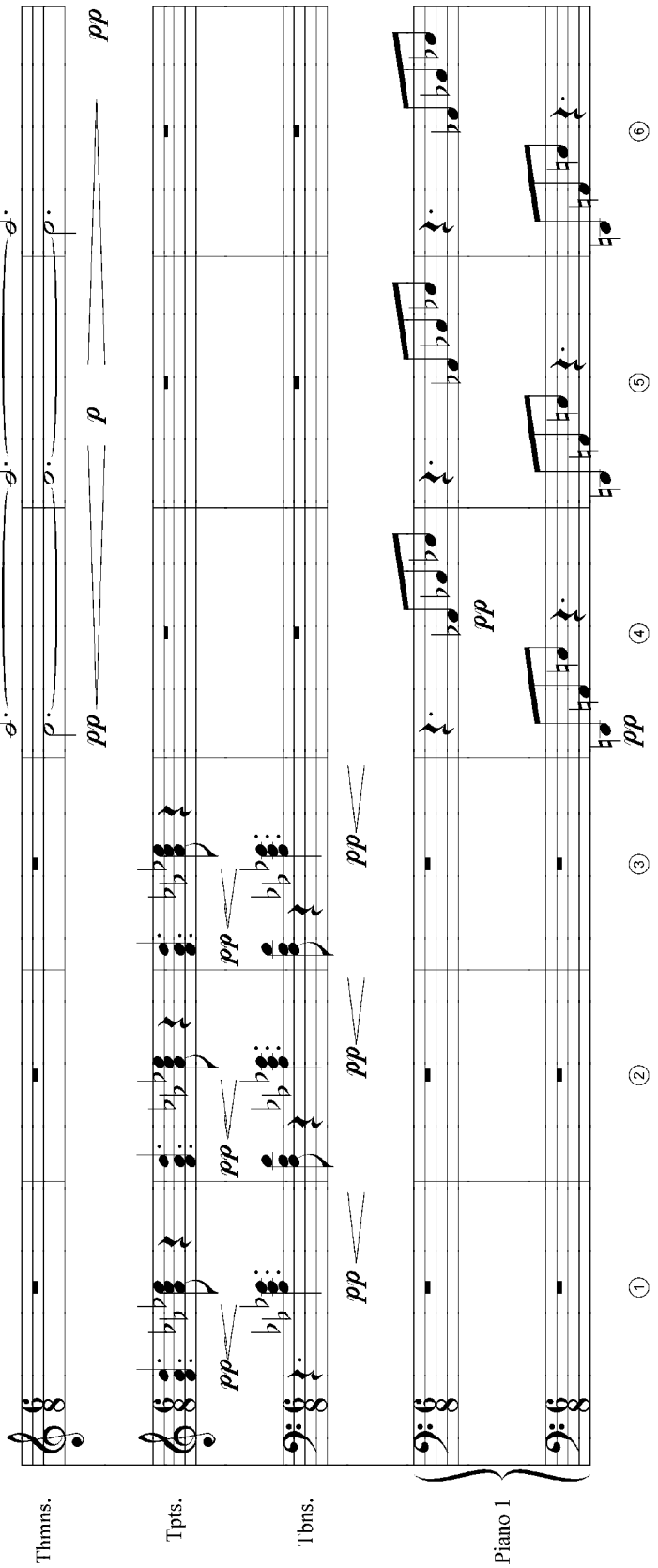
The primary difference between "Klaatu" and "Departure" is the addition of tubas to the latter. The four bass instruments are given significant E-flat to D statements of their own. The first two of these are answers to a sustained A-flat chord in second inversion. In the final statement, however, the D coincides with the questioning chord, and thus both musical and narrative functions are served. There is no opportunity for a resolution to occur, and the ultimate answer to the fate of the Earth is left to each individual; one might even argue that Herrmann's placing of this material in the tubas alone is a subtle reminder that the responsibility might fall upon the robots, with their incredible destructive powers to keep interplanetary peace, should that became necessary.

A musical resolution finally occurs in "Farewell," the last cue prior to the departure and the end credits. As noted earlier, the use of cup-muted trumpets symbolizes the calling home of the soldier. Example 17 showed that the initial harmony accompanying this sound is the same second-

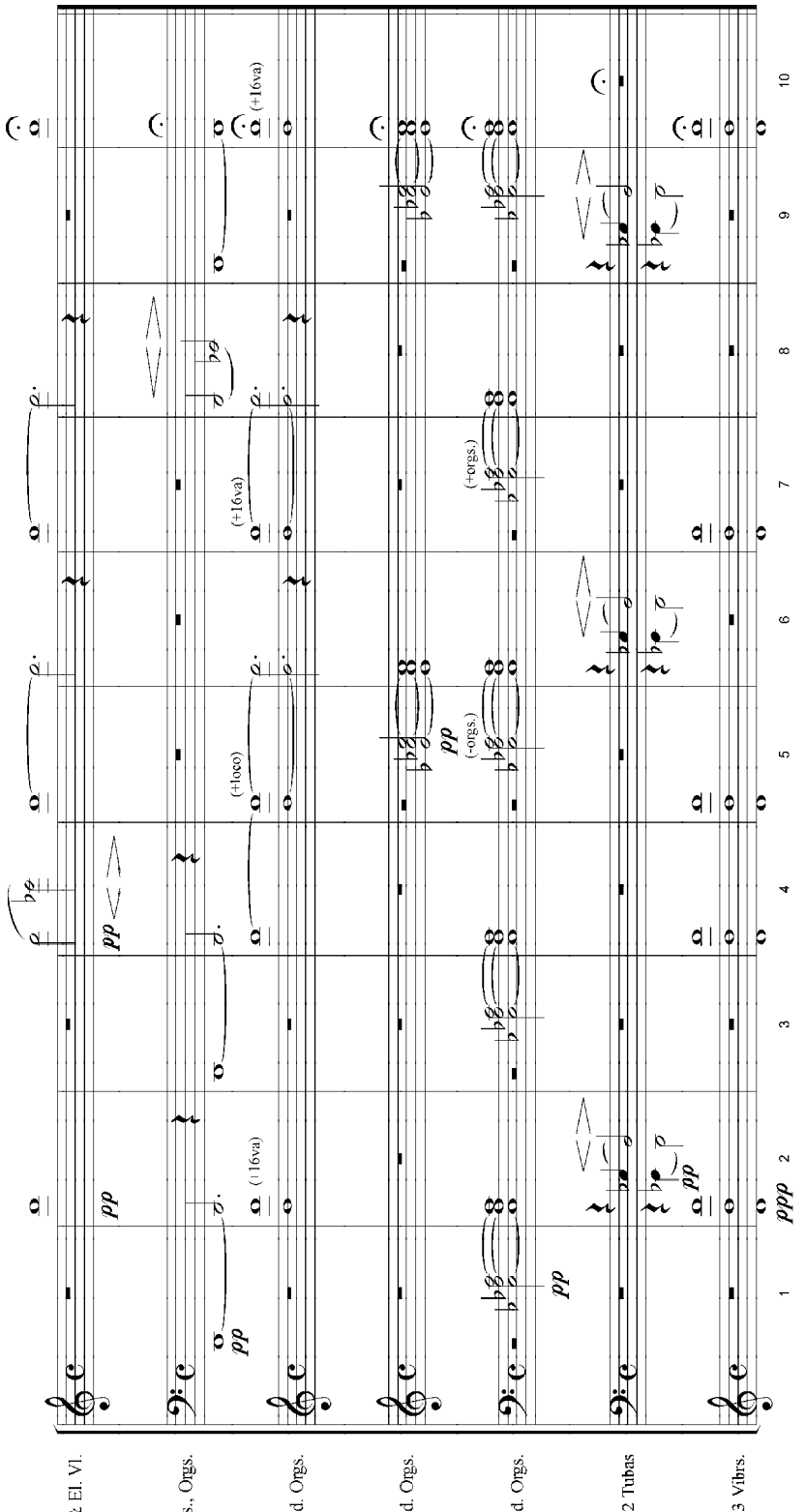
Example 21 ("The Elevator," mm. 1-4)



Example 22 ("The Conference," mm. 1-6)



Example 23 ("The Departure," mm. 1-10)



inversion A-flat chord that is present in "Departure." But now, for the first time since it's initial presentation in "Outer Space," the suspension is resolved to D major. The question of peace or destruction that had been lift to hang in the earthlings' minds is, for once, given a push toward a "peaceful" answer.

The same meaning is implied at the conclusion of the cue titled "Finale"; resolution occurs again, but more emphatically. The trumpets – and trombones – proclaim the bugle-like call. This is again answered by a superimposed A-flat major triad, but the orchestration of the chord is completely different: It is now the four tubas that boldly pronounce both the suspension and the resolution to D major (this is the only time in the score that the tuba parts constitute a major triad). The tubas are joined by luminescent rolled chords in pairs of vibraphones and glockenspiels, and the color is further reinforced by the addition of all three organs. This texture fades, however, to be interrupted by a final proclamation of the E-flat to D motif by the theremins and electric strings and scored to include five different octave levels. Once again the sound dissolves, this time into the final statement of the A-flat to D cadence. Harps glissando into the resolution on D major, which is voiced as in "Farewell" but with numerous parts now stating the "hopeful" third. Despite the orchestration, the predominant color is a major third (D and F-sharp) in the theremins. The earlier nudge toward resolution has been replaced by what we might call a searing ray of musical optimism – just as the spaceship disappears into the distance and the words "The End" appear on the screen. The theremins finally function in tertial harmony rather than in counterpoint or octaves, and their presence indicates a positive outcome. The chord is reinforced when the colors of the studio organ, strings, and tubas rejoin the already voluminous sound; the tubas, as were the theremins in the preceding measure, are voiced to emphasize the third.

Conclusions

The Day the Earth Stood Still remains a highly regarded film in the science-fiction genre, and it is generally accepted that Bernard Herrmann's musical score contributes significantly to the film's stature. The groundbreaking techniques employed by the composer produce sonorities rich in their ability to evoke image and atmosphere, and, concurrently, to effectively propel the film's unfolding dramatic narrative. It was with the music for *The Day the Earth Stood Still* that Herrmann, for the first time in his film-scoring career, let flourish his remarkable sense of instrumental color. In 1952, standard practice for a film composer would have been to write in reduced-score format, often making specific notes about desired instrumentation, then deliver the score to an orchestrator to complete. But Herrmann always insisted on orchestrating his own work. When Royal S. Brown stated to him in an interview, "You always seem to have an instrumental conception of every picture you do," the composer replied:

> Always. Color is very important. And this whole rubbish of orchestration is so wrong . . . I always tell them, "Listen, boys . . . I'll give a thousand dollars. I'll give you the first page of the *Lohengrin* prelude, with all the instruments marked. You write it out. I bet you won't come within 50 percent of Wagner." To orchestrate is like a thumbprint. People have a style. I don't understand it, having someone orchestrate. It would be like someone putting color to your paintings.[37]

Herrmann's enviable ability to conceive music as much through its color as through its constituent notes was matched by a talent for conceptualizing the entire film score without making preliminary sketches. Fred Karlin, a successful film composer in his own right, observes in his book *Listening to Movies* that "most composers put a film score together bit by bit, filling in the missing pieces like a jigsaw puzzle. But Bernard Herrmann appears to have had the ultimate work methods." Quoting another legendary composer, Karlin continues: '"It seems almost incomprehensible,' says Elmer Bernstein with admiration, 'but he [Herrmann] would start with the first piece of music in the film and write a prologue or overture – then he'd just write straight through the film, from beginning to end, in ink, on score paper.'"[38] As Lyn Murray once observed: "He [Herrmann] seems to see a movie score whole with all its ramifications and developments and, of course, his orchestration is superb."[39]

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[37]Brown, 292.
[38]Fred Karlin, *Listening to Movies.* (New York: Schirmer, 1994), 29.
[39]Lyn Murray. *Musician: A Hollywood Journal,* (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart Inc. 1987).

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