scenes from a solitary beach

{5 Pieces for Solo Clarinet}

I-Sand
II-Waves
III-Undertow
IV-Frosted Glass
V-Tide

by

Ryan Jesperson

{2003}

"When the waves are round me breaking,
As I pace the deck alone,
And my eye in vain is seeking
Some green leaf to rest upon;
What would not I give to wander
Where my old companions dwell?
Absence makes the heart grow fonder,
Isle of Beauty, fare thee well!"
- John Milton
Paradise Lost

scenes from a solitary beach

{for solo B♭ clarinet}

duration: app. 7 minutes

I-Sand (2' 50")

II-Waves (30")

III-Undertow (40")

IV-Frosted Glass (1' 30")

V-Tide (1' 30")

Program Notes:

These pieces were written for, and with the assistance of Sarah Wilson to be premiered at the 2004 Washington State University New Music Festival.

The first piece, *Sand*, explores the subtle effects of pressure and time that create the grains of sand on a beach. To show this, the clarinet slowly bends from one half-note to another, displaying an infinite number of steps in between Western music's smallest tonal interval. Slowly the melody expands, eventually leading to the climactic moment when the clarinet ascends a minor ninth, then descends a minor 25th, showing just how miniscule the earlier minor second was in relation to the rest of the world.

The second and third pieces, *Waves* and *Undertow*, are related both melodically and metaphorically. They are symbols of opposites. A wave breaks visibly on a shore demonstrating its power, while the undertow silently pulls the water back out to sea invisible underneath the flow of the waves. Similarly, the second and third pieces are organized to be completely opposite. With few exceptions, the third piece is an absolute retrograde of the second piece. By making the two pieces mirror images, it allows the music to flow into the ear then slowly back out to the clarinet, creating an auditory illusion of a wave and the subsequent undertow.

The fourth piece, entitled *Frosted Glass*, is an impression of the interesting shards of glass that one often finds on the beach. Most of these shards are broken bottles, man-made containers, that carelessly were abandoned and taken in by the ocean. But in their abandonment a magical thing happens—the glass is reabsorbed by nature and when it is

rediscovered it displays a newfound beauty. In the music this is represented by the static nature of the rhythm. It isn't until the last segment, when the melody is released back to the audience in a tempo-free form, that the beauty is truly uncovered.

The final piece, *Tide*, is derived from the last four measures of Undertow. In this piece the clarinet repeats the same tone for different durations, producing a driving effect that implies a connection to a larger force. The repeated notes produce an interesting affect to the ear. Instead of listening for the next note, the ear instead refocuses on the richness of the single tone. Tide twice moves down a minor third, ending the piece on a sustained note a tritone away from the original. By moving as far away from the original sustained note as possible, the long tones create the feeling of sinking into a much larger space. The piece ends the same way the first began, with a slow bend up a minor second.

Performance Notes:

During measured passages accidentals apply throughout the measure, in the octave of occurrence, in the usual tradition. In unmeasured sections, accidentals *only* apply to the specific note the accidental is attached to, and is negated as soon as the note's duration has ended.

Accidentals located above trills apply to the note one letter-name higher, and are negated when the trill has ended. If no accidental is present, then the trill note is to be played as a natural.

Uncommon tuplets are written using a ratio (i.e. A:B). The ratio represents how many notes (A) are to be played in the specified duration (B). Common tuplets are written in the normal manner.

The first and last pieces are to be played into the sounding board of a grand piano. If possible, the sounding board should be amplified.

The first and last pieces are marked with a tempo of "Heartbeat". If the performer is able, s/he should try and determine his/her heartbeat backstage before performance, and use that tempo for the two pieces.

Tide should be played with a moderate amount of vibrato.

Tide should be played using a strict tempo and exact rhythms.

Duration: 2' 50"

1. Sand

{for Sarah Wilson}

Music by
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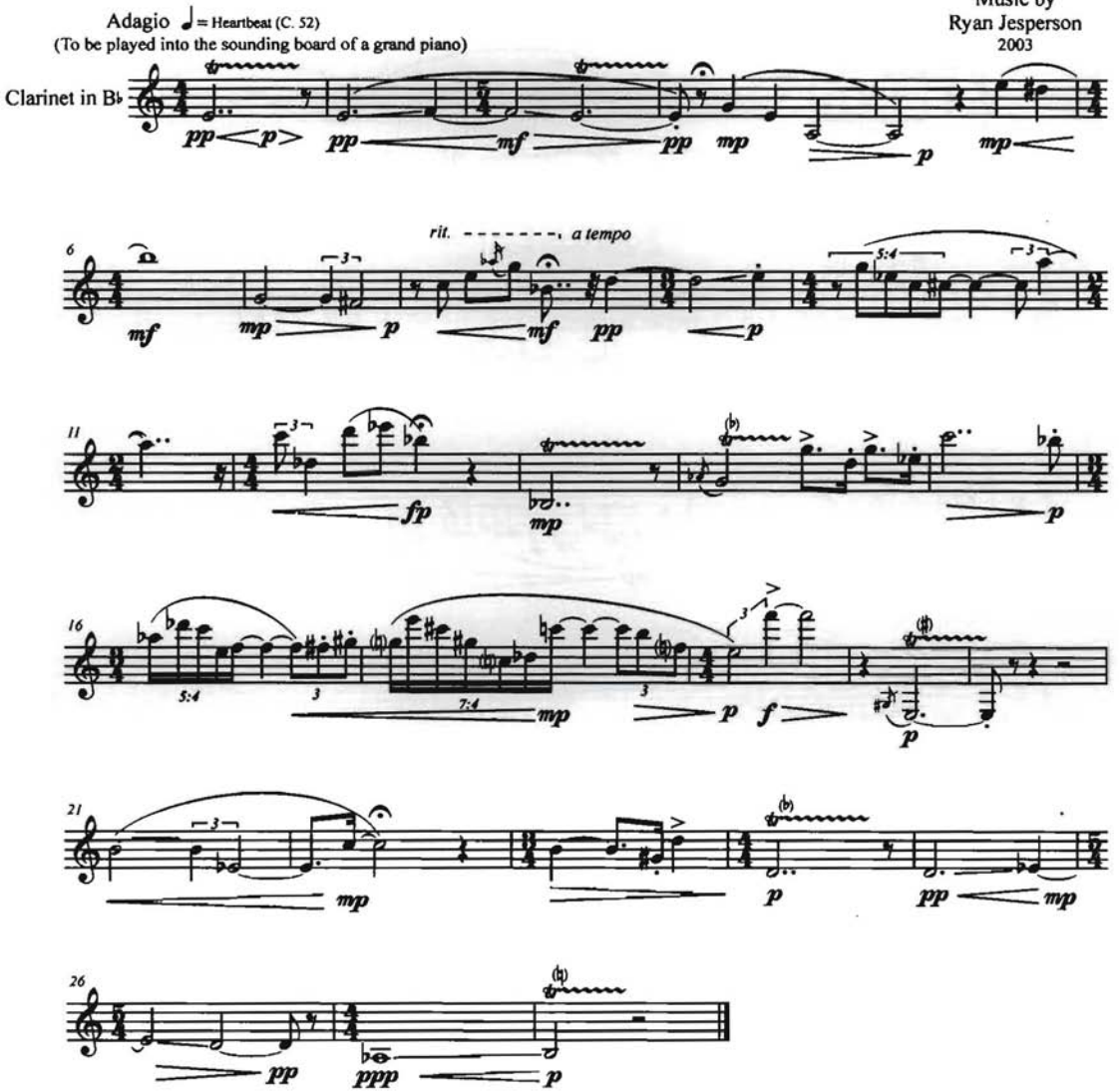

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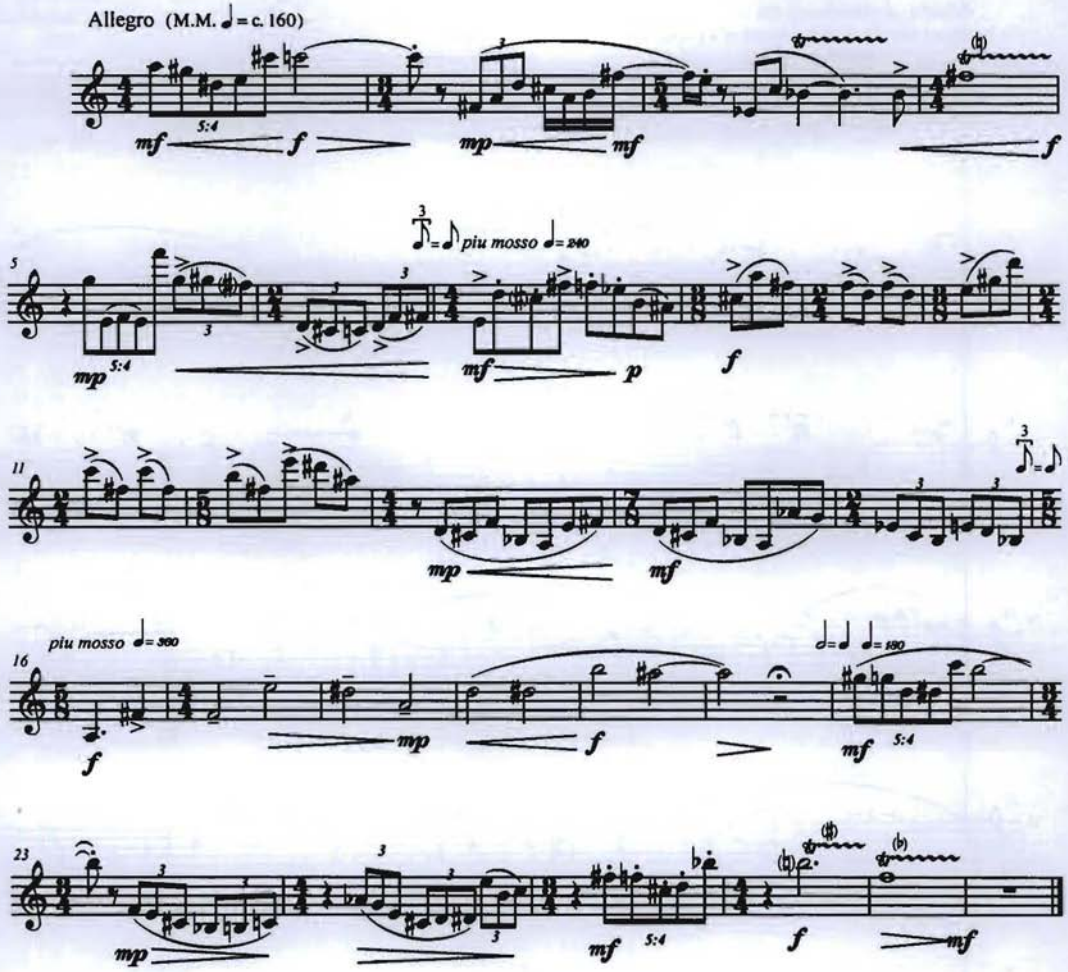
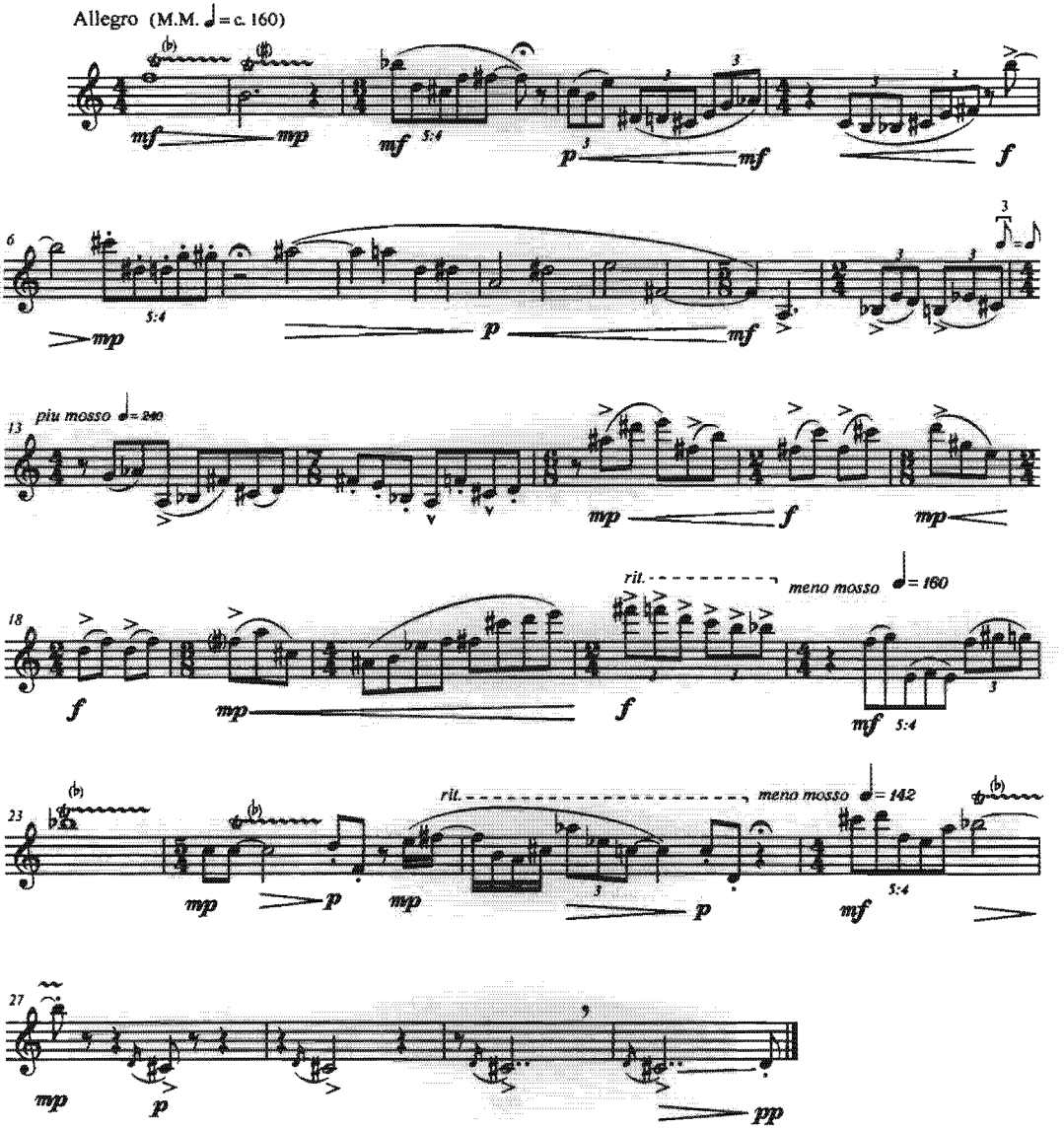
Duration: 30"

2. Waves



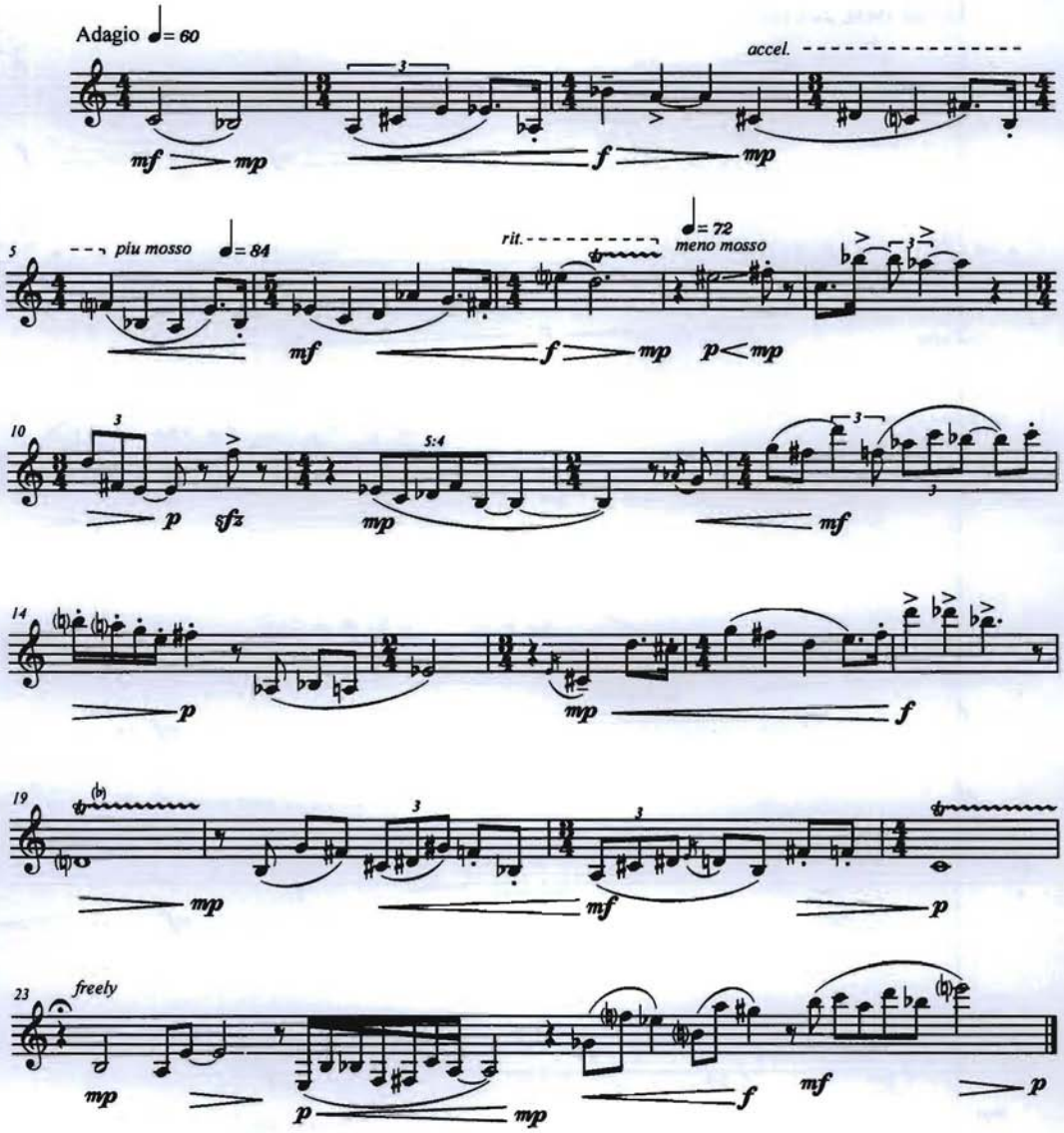
Duration: 40"

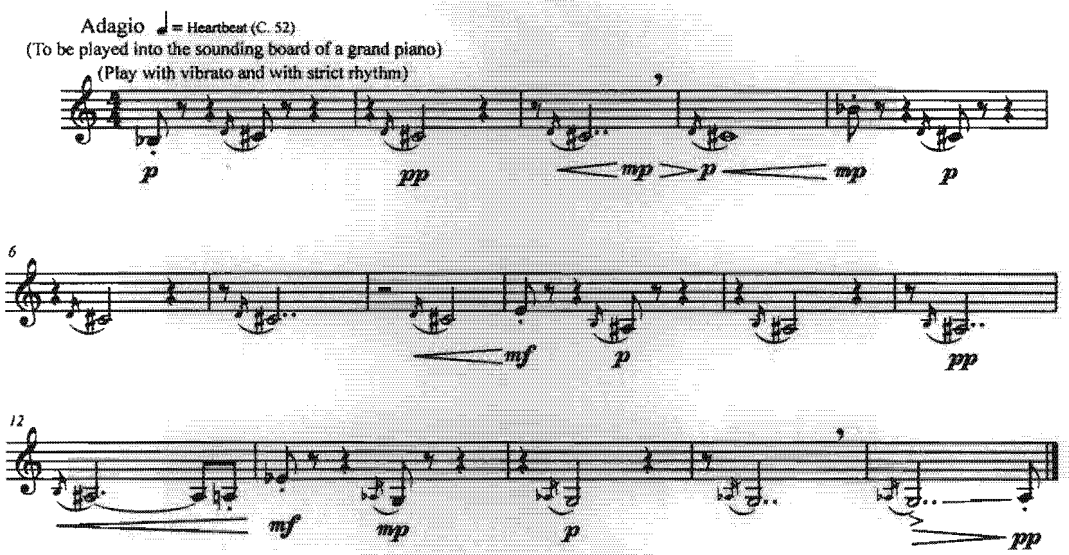
3. Undertow



Duration: 1' 30"

4. Frosted Glass



Duration: 1' 30"

5. Tide