

# Contrafacts

For the San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra

Composed by Alex Ness

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## Instrumentation

Flute  
Oboe  
Clarinet  
Bassoon

Marimba

Trumpet  
Horn

Piano

Violin 1  
Violin 2  
Viola  
Cello  
Double bass

## Movement titles and durations

1. "Pretty Little Eyes": 4'
  2. "You, You, You": 5'
  3. "Me, Me, Me": 4'15"
- Approximate total: 13'15"

# Performance notes

## Recordings and synchronization

In each movement, the orchestra plays along with a synchronized pop music recording:

1. “Pretty Little Eyes”: [Me Enamoré](#) (Shakira)
2. “You, You, You”: [Hotline Bling](#) (Drake)
3. “Me, Me, Me”: [Hurtin’ Me \(Remix\)](#) (Stefflon Don ft. Sean Paul, Popcaan, Sizzla)

Please refer to [these mockup tracks](#) for an approximation of the intended effect. Note that the orchestra’s tempo (exactly 60 BPM throughout) is different than that of each song. Therefore, the conductor should use a watch, click track or video timer to keep time and to maintain a precise polyrhythm through the piece.

For practice, I’ve posted [recordings with synchronized click tracks and video timers here](#). For the conductor, I’ve made [recordings with synchronized video timers](#) (without clicks).

Normalized mp3s of the pop songs are available [here](#).

## Balance

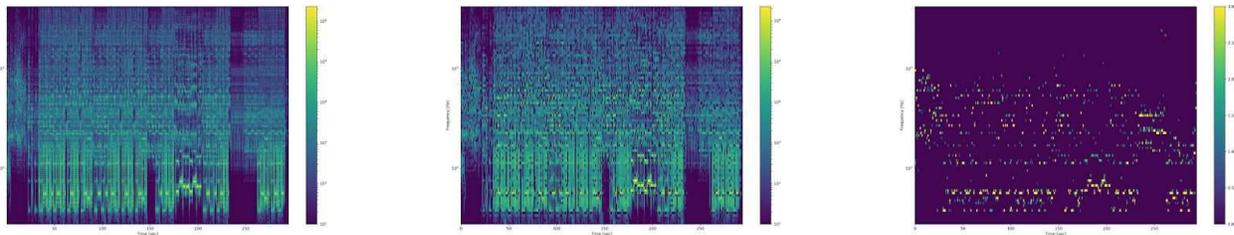
**Between the orchestra and the recordings:** In general, the orchestra should be a bit louder than the pop song, without overwhelming it. The audience shouldn’t have to strain to listen to the song, but should have a hard time focusing on it without the sound of the orchestra intruding upon the consciousness.

**Within the orchestra:** The orchestra is divided into three ensembles: the five strings, the four winds, and the four other instruments (piano, horn, trumpet, and marimba). In essence, each of these ensembles plays a single voice spanning the entire frequency range. The counterpoint between these three voices should be as clear as possible: no ensemble should overwhelm the others, or take on a foreground role to the others’ background. Within each line, there’s room for individual variation and expression, and the musicians are welcome to bring out details.

## Program notes

For “Contrafacts”, I wrote a piece of software that converts sound files—in this case, pop music recordings—into pieces of music for orchestra. I was inspired by the work of other artists whose work involves this sort of translation: in the visual arts, Chuck Close, who translates photos into pixelated paintings; in music, the Austrian composer Peter Ablinger, who translates recordings of voices, field recordings and noise into different sorts of quantized musical accompaniments.

When I starting working, I had a technical idea in mind, but no idea how the results would sound. After I got the software up and running, I was able to listen to some mockups of the piece, and to focus on musical problems of counterpoint and balance. Those musical problems in turn revealed deeper expressive concerns: I wanted the live orchestral music to both complement and negate the sleek, artificial surfaces of the three pop songs I chose as sources. The result is a mashup of conventional and experimental aesthetics that reflects my disparate musical interests and experiences.



Three spectrograms:

Left: a frequency analysis of [Hotline Bling](#)

Middle: the analysis data quantized to 60 BPM and equal temperament

Right: a three-part counterpoint extracted from the quantized data. This is the musical material for “You, You, You” (Movement 2)

# 1. Pretty Little Eyes

Alex Ness

$\text{♩} = 60$  exactly: anxious

0:00 0:04 0:08 0:12 0:16

Flute

Oboe

B♭ Clarinet

Bassoon

Marimba  
Hard mallets, tremolo ad lib.

C Trumpet

Horn in F

Piano

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

6 0:20 0:24 0:28 0:32 0:36

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

0:40 0:44 0:48 0:52 0:56

11

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

15

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

1:00 1:04 1:08 1:12 1:16

16

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

15

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for the piece 'Pretty Little Eyes'. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout with multiple staves. The instruments included are Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Mellophone (Mrm.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Horn (Hn.), Piano (Pno.), Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The score is divided into five measures, with time markers at 1:00, 1:04, 1:08, 1:12, and 1:16. Measure numbers 15 and 16 are indicated at the beginning of the Mellophone and Flute staves, respectively. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks. The piano part is mostly silent, with only a few notes in the bass clef.

21 1:20 1:24 1:28 1:32 1:36

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

15

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for the piece 'Pretty Little Eyes'. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. At the top, there are five time markers in boxes: 1:20, 1:24, 1:28, 1:32, and 1:36. The instruments listed on the left are Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Mellophone (Mrm.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Horn (Hn.), Piano (Pno.), Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The Flute part starts at measure 21. The Mellophone part starts at measure 15. The Piano part starts at measure 15. The Violin 1 part starts at measure 15. The Violin 2 part starts at measure 15. The Viola part starts at measure 15. The Violoncello part starts at measure 15. The Contrabass part starts at measure 15. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

26 1:40 1:44 1:48 1:52 1:56

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

31 2:00 2:04 2:08 2:12 2:16

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hrn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

36 2:20 2:24 2:28 2:32 2:36

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

41 2:40 2:44 2:48 2:52 2:56

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

46

3:00 3:04 3:08 3:12 3:16

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

51 3:20 3:24 3:28 3:32 3:36

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

15

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for the piece 'Pretty Little Eyes'. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. The instruments listed on the left are Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Mromatic (Mrm.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Horn (Hn.), Piano (Pno.), Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The score is divided into five measures, each with a time signature in a box: 3:20, 3:24, 3:28, 3:32, and 3:36. The first measure starts at measure 51. The piano part (Pno.) is marked with a '15' at the beginning of its section. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor).

56 **3:40** **3:44** **3:48**

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

# 2. You, You, You

♩ = 60 exactly: melancholy, cool

Alex Ness

0:00 0:04 0:08 0:12 0:16 0:20 0:24 0:28 0:32 0:36

Flute

Oboe

B♭ Clarinet

Bassoon

Marimba  
Tremolo with soft mallets throughout

C Trumpet  
Mute

Horn in F  
Mute

Piano  
15

Violin 1  
Mute on

Violin 2  
Mute on

Viola  
Mute on

Violoncello  
Mute on

Contrabass  
Mute on

11 0:40 0:44 0:48 0:52 0:56 1:00 1:04 1:08 1:12 1:16

Fl.  
Ob.  
Cl.  
Bsn.  
Mrm.  
Tpt.  
Hn.  
Pno.  
Vln. 1  
Vln. 2  
Vla.  
Vc.  
Cb.

15

21 1:20 1:24 1:28 1:32 1:36 1:40 1:44 1:48 1:52 1:56

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

31

2:00 2:04 2:08 2:12 2:16 2:20 2:24 2:28 2:32 2:36

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

41 2:40 2:44 2:48 2:52 2:56 3:00 3:04 3:08 3:12 3:16

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

51 3:20 3:24 3:28 3:32 3:36 3:40 3:44 3:48 3:52 3:56

Fl.  
Ob.  
Cl.  
Bsn.  
Mrm.  
Tpt.  
Hn.  
Pno.  
Vln. 1  
Vln. 2  
Vla.  
Vc.  
Cb.

61

4:00 4:04 4:08 4:12 4:16 4:20 4:24 4:28 4:32 4:36

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

71 4:40 4:44 4:48 4:52

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Remove mute

Remove mute

Mute off

Mute off

Mute off

Mute off

Mute off

# 3. Me, Me, Me

♩ = 60 exactly: hot!

0:00

0:04

0:08

0:12

Alex Ness

Flute

Oboe

B♭ Clarinet

Bassoon

Marimba  
Hard mallets; tremolo ad lib.

C Trumpet

Horn in F

Piano

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass  
Pizz. ad lib. throughout

0:16 0:20 0:24 0:28

5

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

15

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

0:32 0:36 0:40 0:44

9  
Fl.  
Ob.  
Cl.  
Bsn.  
Mtrm.  
Tpt.  
Hn.  
Pno.  
15  
Vln. 1  
Vln. 2  
Vla.  
Vc.  
Cb.

0:48      0:52      0:56      1:00

13  
Fl.  
Ob.  
Cl.  
Bsn.  
15  
Mrm.  
Tpt.  
Hn.  
Pno.  
15  
Vln. 1  
Vln. 2  
Vla.  
Vc.  
Cb.

Detailed description: This page of a musical score contains measures 13 through 15. It features a full orchestral ensemble including Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Maracas, Trumpet, Horn, Piano, Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The score is divided into four measures, each with a time signature box above it: 0:48, 0:52, 0:56, and 1:00. The woodwinds and strings play active parts, while the piano part is mostly silent. The maracas provide a rhythmic accompaniment.

1:04

1:08

1:12

1:16

Musical score for Contrafacts 3. Me, Me, Me, measures 15-20. The score is arranged in a system with 12 staves. The instruments are: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Maracas (Mrm.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Horn (Hn.), Piano (Pno.), Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Cb.). The score is divided into four measures, each marked with a time signature: 1:04, 1:08, 1:12, and 1:16. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals. The Flute part starts at measure 17. The Maracas part starts at measure 15. The Cello part starts at measure 15.

1:20 1:24 1:28 1:32

21

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

1:36 1:40 1:44 1:48

25

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

15

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

1:52 1:56 2:00 2:04

29

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

15

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

2:08

2:12

2:16

2:20

33

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

15

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for the piece '3. Me, Me, Me'. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. At the top, four time markers are enclosed in boxes: 2:08, 2:12, 2:16, and 2:20. The instruments listed on the left are Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Maracas (Mrm.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Horn (Hn.), Piano (Pno.), Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), Cello (Vc.), and Double Bass (Cb.). The Flute and Oboe parts begin at measure 33. The Maracas part begins at measure 15. The Piano part begins at measure 15. The Violin 1 and Violin 2 parts begin at measure 15. The Viola, Cello, and Double Bass parts begin at measure 15. The score contains various musical notations including notes, rests, and accidentals.

2:24                      2:28                      2:32                      2:36

37

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mtrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

2:40                      2:44                      2:48                      2:52

41

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

15

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Detailed description: This page of a musical score contains measures 41 through 44. The score is for a full orchestra and piano. The woodwind section (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon) and brass section (Trumpet, Horn) are active throughout. The string section (Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, Contrabass) and piano provide harmonic support. Time signatures are indicated above the measures: 2:40, 2:44, 2:48, and 2:52. Measure numbers 41 and 15 are marked at the beginning of the first and second systems, respectively.

2:56 3:00 3:04 3:08

45

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

3:12      3:16      3:20      3:24

49 Fl.  
Ob.  
Cl.  
Bsn.  
15 Mrm.  
Tpt.  
Hn.  
Pno.  
15 Vln. 1  
Vln. 2  
Vla.  
Vc.  
Cb.

3:28      3:32      3:36      3:40

53

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

15

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

This musical score page contains ten staves of music. The top four staves are for woodwinds: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), and Bassoon (Bsn.). The next two staves are for brass: Trumpet (Tpt.) and Horn (Hn.). The piano (Pno.) is represented by two staves. The bottom four staves are for strings: Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Cb.). Above the first staff, there are four time markers in boxes: 3:28, 3:32, 3:36, and 3:40. The number 53 is written above the first staff, and 15 is written above the Mrm. and Pno. staves. The music is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings.

3:44 3:48 3:52 3:56

57

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

4:00

61

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Mrm.

Tpt.

Hn.

Pno.

15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a symphony orchestra. The page is numbered 16/16 at the bottom left. At the top left, there is a box containing the time '4:00'. The score is divided into several systems. The first system includes Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), and Bassoon (Bsn.). The second system includes Mellophone (Mrm.), Trumpet (Tpt.), and Horn (Hn.). The third system includes Piano (Pno.). The fourth system includes Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The Contrabass part is the focus of the page. The score contains various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A rehearsal mark '61' is placed above the Flute staff, and another rehearsal mark '15' is placed above the Piano staff. The page ends with a double bar line.