Like a Spear from the Earth

for three performers with computers

Seth Shafer

Program Note

In 1977, NASA launched a space probe whose mission was to study the outer solar system and beyond. Over 30 years later, Voyager 1 is the farthest man-made object from earth, and one of a handful of other such objects close to leaving our solar system and entering the vast desert of interstellar space. Equipped with an unusual time capsule with artifacts of intelligent life from earth, Voyager 1 is hurdling at over 38,000 miles per hour into the big, empty unknown. It is a beacon of light in great darkness, thrown by mankind.

Performance Directions

This piece requires three performers. Each performer needs a computer running a copy of the accompanying performer software and a microphone sending signal from their instrument into the computer. All computers need to be connected to the same network. One performer needs to run the controller software in addition to the performer software. The piece begins with the performers setting their software into "Live" mode and starting 1 together. The intended method of playing each box of pitches is described in detail below. Generally, each performer should act independently, sustaining each series of pitches as long as breath will allow. Dynamic level is unmarked as it should be clear by register and accompanying computer generated material. After 17, in which the performers sustain the final pitch, five red circles in the software will sequentially light, after which the performers should cease to play.

Numbered boxes correspond to numbers displayed on the computer. When given a number, play the set of pitches indicated below the appropriate box. Each set of pitches is to be repeated until the next numbered box is displayed on the computer.

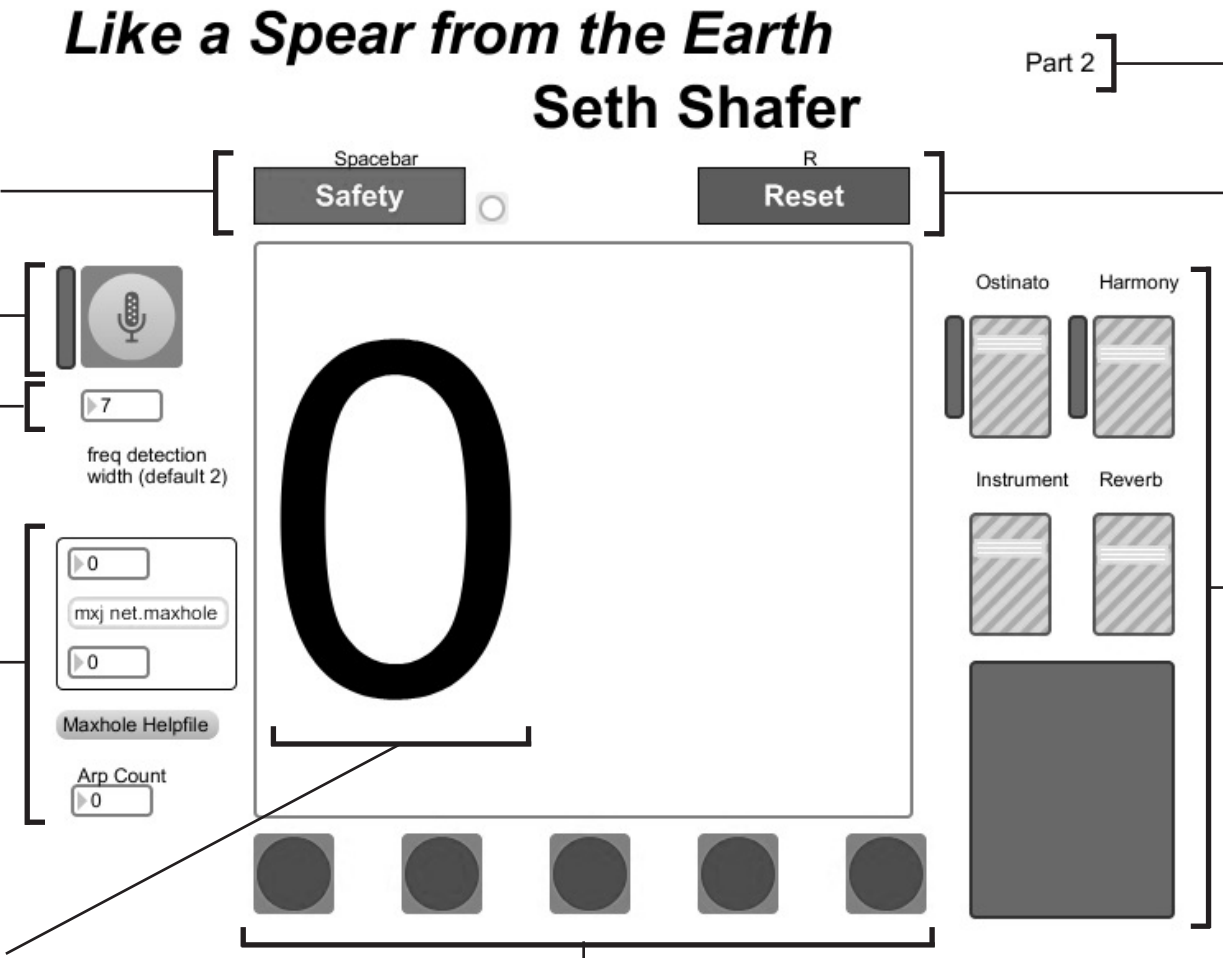
Play pitches in order, left-to-right. Breathe after one complete cycle.

Play pitches in order, left-to-right, and then right-to-left. Breathe after one complete cycle.

Play pitches in any order. Breathe when necessary.

Play pitches left-to-right, varying the number of pitches played. For example, if given four pitches, one can play pitches 1 and 2, followed by 1, 2 and 3, followed by 1, 2, 3 and 4. Breathe before returning to pitch 1 each time.

Performer Interface



Safety/Live Toggle:
Prevent the piece from beginning while in safety mode. When ready to begin, set to live mode.

Audio On/Off:
Must be on in order for patch to function.

Frequency Detection:
Use this to increase the computer's likihood of detecting the correct pitch.

Troubleshooting Tools:
Use these to verify that the computer is sending and receiving information over the network.

Number Box:
The number indicates which cell to play in the score.

Part Number:
Patches correspond to part number in score.

Reset:
For use in rehearsal. Resets patch to openning state.

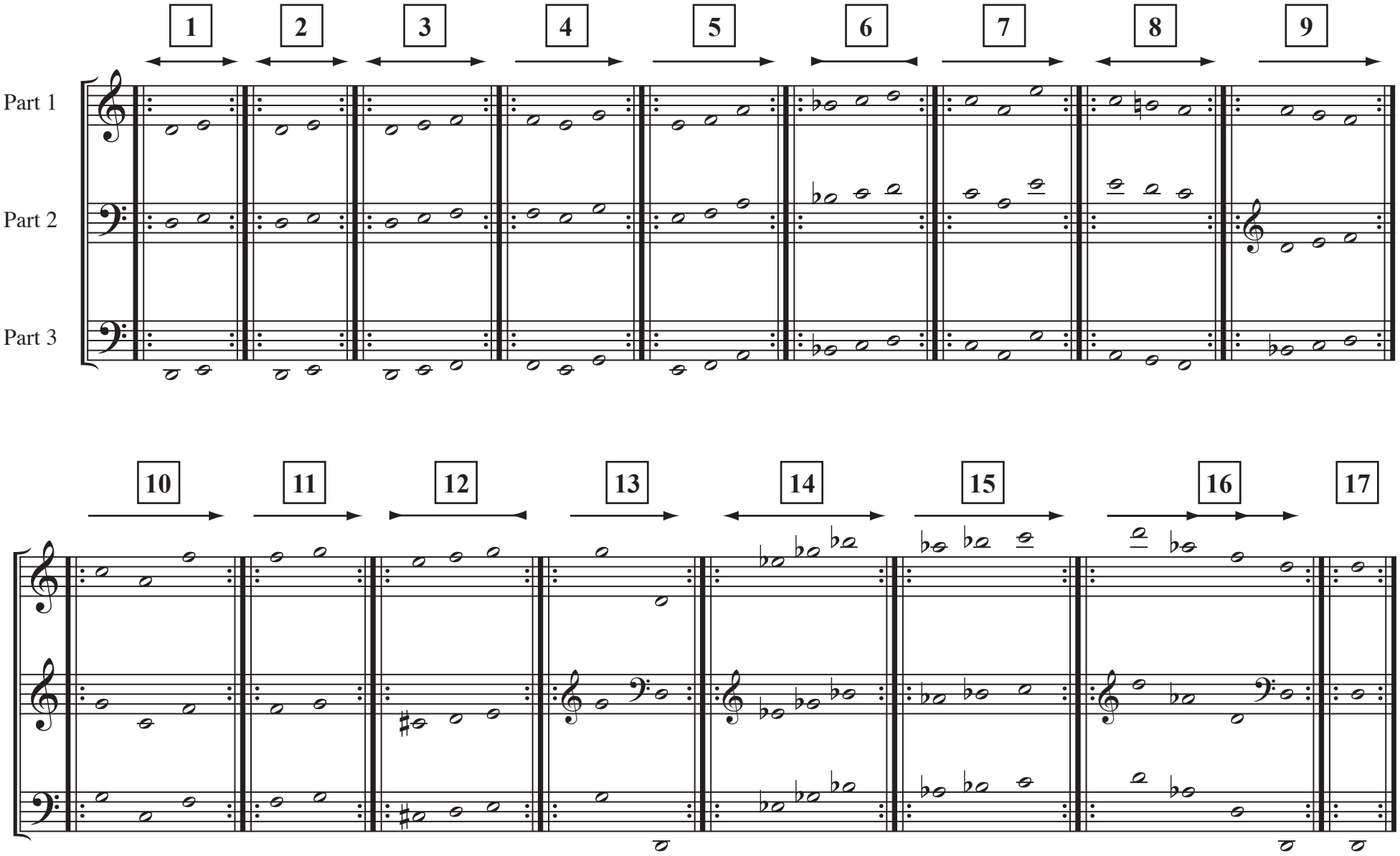
Volume Levels:
Use to adjust the balance between all elements in the piece.

Ending Sync:
These red circles will light sequentially, indicating when to cease playing.

Performance Score

Like a Spear from the Earth

Seth Shafer

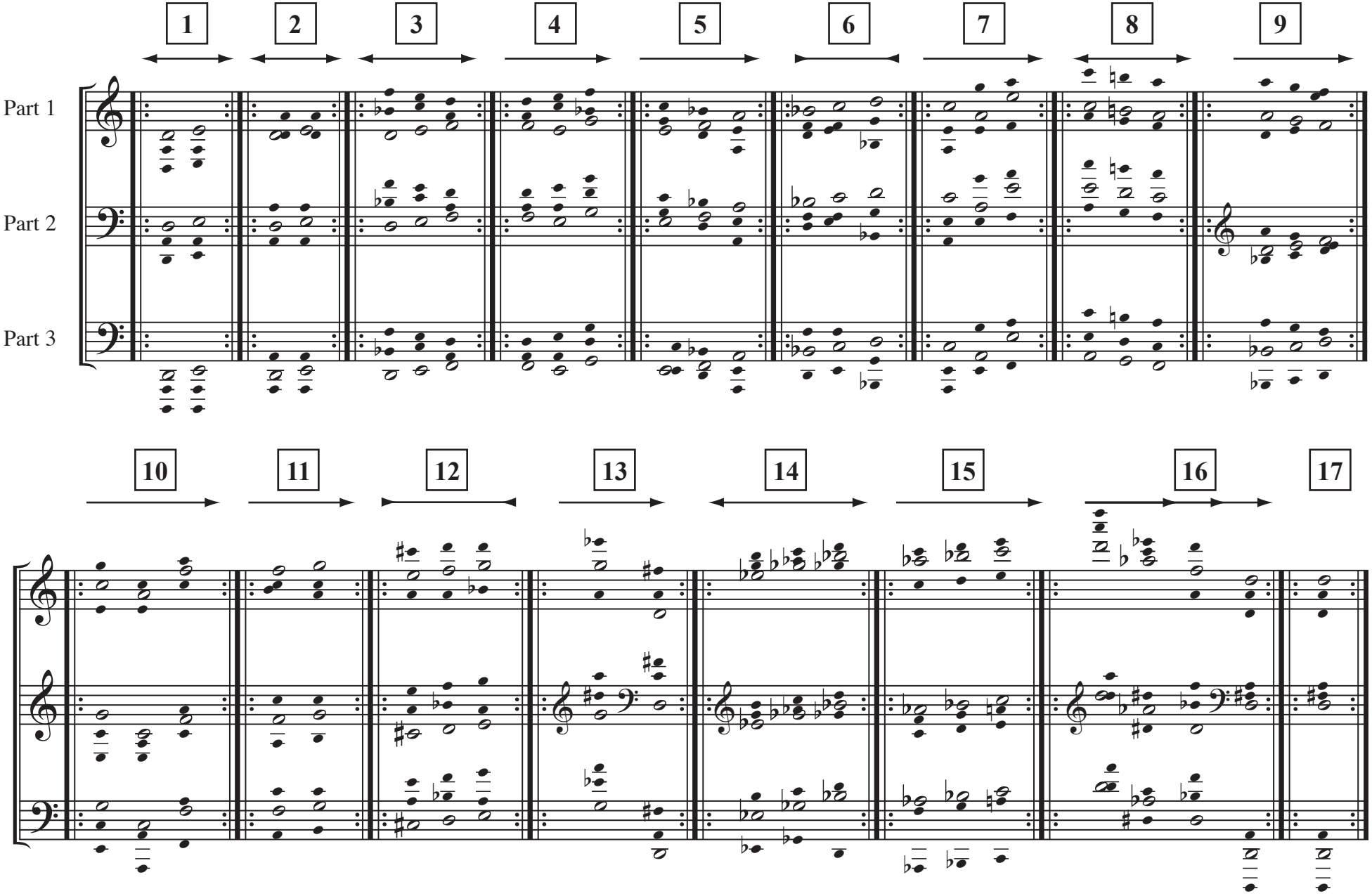


Seth Shafer © 2011

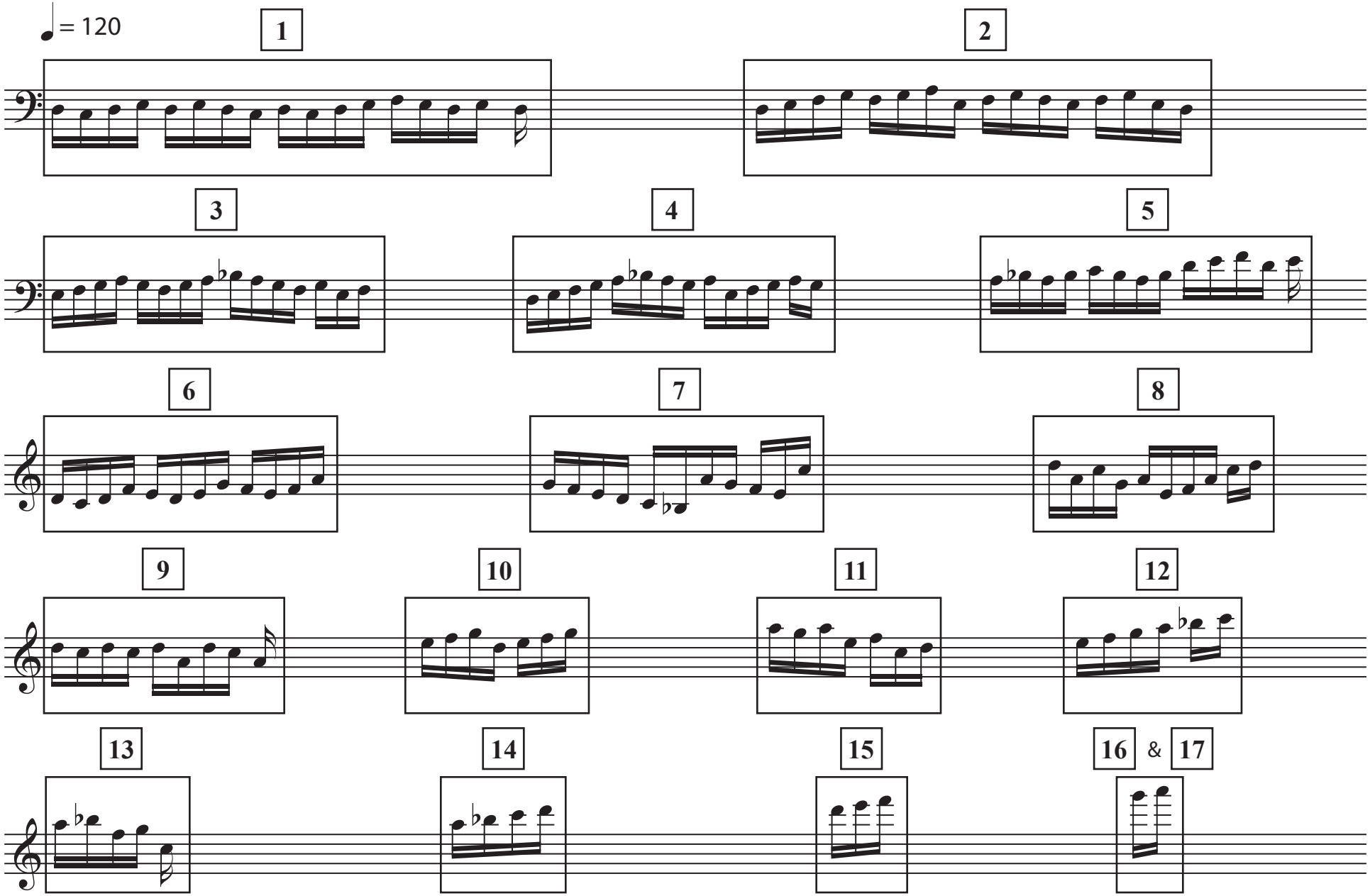
Computer Generated Material 1

Like a Spear from the Earth

Seth Shafer



Computer Generated Material 2

Like a Spear from the Earth

Seth Shafer