Conducted

2026

## Opening Scene

**INT. CONDUCTOR'S HOUSE – DAY**

Classy but simple house. CONDUCTOR sits on a stool at the counter separating the kitchen from the dining room. He reads carefully, making notes on his papers.
His phone vibrates.
In one motion, he finishes his coffee, stands up, grabs his things, and answers the phone. He walks quickly toward his dark gray BMW.

**(on phone)**
Lis

**ELISA**
**(Conductor's Assistant. In her late 20s.**
**Professional singer. Sarcastic. Has a good relationship with CONDUCTOR)**
*CONDUCTOR (Name)

**CONDUCTOR**
Good morning.
How are you?

**ELISA**
I'm ok, how are you?

**CONDUCTOR**
On the run.

**ELISA**
As always...
Hey, a couple of questions.

CONDUCTOR closes the door and starts the car. The call connects to Bluetooth and in the process Elisa's voice cuts out. We see CONDUCTOR driving.

**CONDUCTOR**
I didn't catch that, can you repeat it?

**ELISA**
No way, you're just heading out now?

**CONDUCTOR**
(looks at the dashboard clock)
I'll make it on time.

**ELISA**
Mmmm. Ok.
(distracted)
Hey, I am booking your flight… for August 22.

**CONDUCTOR**
(closes one eye trying to remember)
The 22nd?

**ELISA**
(with a tone of rolling eyes-gesture)
Mahler…

**CONDUCTOR**
Right.

**ELISA**
Rehearsals on the 23rd and 25th. Concerts on the 26th and 27th.
You might need one last rehearsal on the morning of the 26th. They're not the best orchestra…

**CONDUCTOR**
Not the worst either…

**ELISA**
Not the worst either.
There's a flight at 14:30 and another one at 20:00.
If you take the one at 20:00, you don't have to cancel your class.

**CONDUCTOR**
Let's do the one at 20:00.
What time do we need to be at the airport, six?

**ELISA**
You do… I'm not going.

**CONDUCTOR**
You're really sending me alone?

**ELISA**
Man, I have to finish my thesis!

**CONDUCTOR**
Alright, alright.
Yes, the one at 20:00, please.

**ELISA**
If you are there at 18:00 it should be fine.
Return is on Sunday at 17:20.
Sounds good?

**CONDUCTOR**
(Distracted, he tries to see what is causing the traffic)
Yeah

**ELISA**
I'll add it to your agenda.

**CONDUCTOR**
(He sees a big crowd blocking the street ahead)
Ah, shit…

**ELISA**
What happened?

**CONDUCTOR**
There's a protest…

**ELISA**
Now you're definitely not gonna make it.

**CONDUCTOR**
Lis. Please call Sergio.
Tell him I'm stuck, see if he can start with Copland, second movement.

**ELISA**
Got it.
Hey, there's a union meeting today, by the way.

**CONDUCTOR**
True!
(With frustration)
Fuck, rehearsal's gonna be super short.

**ELISA**
I'll call Sergio.

**CONDUCTOR**
Thanks, Lis.
Bye.

CONDUCTOR leans on his head to the back of his seat and "plays" a piece of music on the steering wheel that we don't hear.

**INT. MAIN HALL – DAY**

The hall completely lit. All the players are dressed in normal clothes. The orchestra rehearses the *finale* of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony. Sergio is leading from his violin, cueing the winds and strings.

**SERGIO**
(raises right hand to pause)
Thank you.
Double basses, let's play more *sul ponticello*, bring out those harmonics.
(plays violin as example while he keeps explaining)
As if we were really trying to bring out that high A.

He gestures with his hand and the basses begin.

SERGIO smiles.

**SERGIO**
(gestures to pause)
Thank you.

Again, strings and winds.
One thirty-one.
*Fortississimo*.

SERGIO positions the violin and gives the cue, joining the strings. He closes his eyes, listening closely, recognizing the change in sound.

When he opens them, he sees CONDUCTOR approaching. He has a weird look, as if something was troubling him.

He gives a final cutoff.

**SERGIO**
Thank you. Much better.
(turns, and greets CONDUCTOR with a slight nod)
Maestro.

**CONDUCTOR**
(approaches and shakes his hand)
Hey, Sergio. Thank you so much.
(turns to orchestra)
Everyone, my sincere apologies. I got stuck in traffic, there was a protest.
(turns to Sergio, and makes a regretful gesture)
I thought I'd be ten minutes late…

Anyway, thank you for working with the Maestro.
(points at Sergio, smiling)

Shostakovich?

**SERGIO**

Yes, Maestro. Polishing details in the final *ostinato*.
We also worked on Copland, but I think we need to check it with you.

**CONDUCTOR**

Thank you, Sergio.
(He takes the score out of a leather backpack and places it on the stand)
Indeed, the ostinato is vital here. If we do not hear that sense for Soviet triumph, that is the end of Shostakovich's career.
(makes a throat-slitting gesture)
This is the moment he regains Stalin's favor…

Without opening the score, he prepares the orchestra.

**CONDUCTOR**

One thirty-one. Tutti.

He gives a confident, vigorous prep beat. The orchestra plays, but it doesn't sound good. Nobody seems to notice except for CONDUCTOR. He lets them continue for two bars before stopping.

Confused, he opens the score.

**CONDUCTOR**

I said 131, right?

**CELLO 1**

Correct.
Sorry, Maestro, but we have to go to our meeting.
(points to two people at the door)

Hiding frustration, CONDUCTOR nods.

**CONDUCTOR**

Alright.
Thank you all, and again, my apologies for the delay.
We will continue tomorrow.

The musicians begin packing.
CONDUCTOR takes out his phone and dials a number.

**SERGIO**

(cleaning rosin from his instrument)
Maestro, are you okay?

**CONDUCTOR**

Yeah, I just hate this stuff. All this damn bureaucracy.

**SERGIO**
Tell me about it…

**CONDUCTOR**
(finger to lips in sign of 'keep quite')
But better this way.
Best advice I can give you: never mess with the union.
(with a mix of sarcasm and honesty)

SERGIO smiles with complicity.

**SERGIO**
True. But I meant… are you feeling alright?
You seemed off when we started.

**CONDUCTOR**
(interrupting)
Yeah! What was that?

SERGIO looks confused but before he can say anything, CONDUCTOR's phone connects his call, interrupting their conversation.

**PHONE**
Hello?

**CONDUCTOR**
(Raises his index finger to tell Sergio to hold for a moment)
Ohps, sorry Sergio.
(On the phone)
Hello?
Yes, I can hear you.
Hi.

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Realization

**INT. CONTEMPORARY ENSEMBLE REHEARSAL ROOM – DAY**

PIANIST plays on a vertical piano that sounds very different from any normal piano. The microtonal music that she plays attracts the other musicians, gathering around her. Musicians gather around a newly arrived instrument: a metamorphosed piano by Julián Carrillo.

*NOTE: Julián Carrillo created a series of pianos tuned in unconventional ways, using microtonality in quarter tones, eights of a tone, etc.

**FLUTIST**
(to VIOLINIST 1)
When did this arrive?

**VIOLINIST**
I think this morning…
Man, that Julián was crazy, right?

**FLUTIST**
(smiling)
Yeah, especially back then…

PIANIST stops playing for a second and PERCUSSIONIST takes the opportunity to ask:

**PERCUSSIONIST**
(to PIANIST)
Could you play a full scale so we can hear it?

**PIANIST**
Sure. The whole range is only about two octaves. Listen:

She plays all notes from low to high register. What we hear is a continuous-frequency spectrum of two octaves.

**PERCUSSIONIST**
What if you play a piece?

She plays Bach's Fugue in C minor, but it sounds completely different.

**PIANIST**
(smiling while playing)
This is Bach's Fugue in C minor…
(stops)
Maybe Ligeti would actually sound good with this tuning.

She starts playing *Musica Ricercata* by Gyorgy Ligeti.

The other members of the ensemble begin to take their places.

CONDUCTOR enters, smiling.

**CONDUCTOR**
Good afternoon!

They all greet him.

**CONDUCTOR**
(to PIANIST)
Ligeti?

**PIANIST**
Thought it might work. It's basically one note…

**CONDUCTOR**
(joining the fun)
Try a bit of Étude 13.

PIANIST accepts the challenge and plays. Everyone else stops what they are doing to listen. CONDUCTOR smiles and closes one eye, a gesture that shows that he is not so sure about his suggestion.

When PIANIST reaches the high register section of the piece, she laughs and stops playing.

**PIANIST**
(laughing)
Oh God, I played it terribly!

**CONDUCTOR**
(laughing)
No way to tell.

Thank you, that was great!

Alright, let's begin…
As you've seen, what we have here is a relic of Mexican music. Well, a relic of music in general. Carrillo truly reinvented the concept of tonality and timbre… in his own way.
Surely, many of you already knew about Carrillo and his *Sonido 13*, but probably this is the first time that you hear this instrument live.
This piano is tuned in eighth tones, that means that we divide the octave in 48 microtones instead of 12 semitones.
And it sounds tremendous!

Anyway, let's begin with (INSERT PIECE NAME).
Everyone, letter B.
PIANIST, from the end of your intro.

PIANIST plays the end of a complex solo, marking the final chords with her head, cueing the rest of the ensemble for their entrance.

CONDUCTOR cues the violins, who play extremely high harmonic notes, subtly, creating an interesting sound with the piano's resonance. The PERCUSSIONIST bows a suspended cymbal, producing another layer of high-frequency tones. The piccolo enters, and the CONDUCTOR gestures to stop the music.

**CONDUCTOR**
(giving instructions to FLUTIST and VIOLINISTS 1 and 2)
Careful, don't drift toward that tuning.(Pointing at the piano)
High E-flat, and F a quarter tone low.
Same spot.

The music starts again, and as soon as the piccolo enters, the CONDUCTOR makes a disappointed gesture and stops the orchestra.

**CONDUCTOR**
No.
Let’s try that again. Please play that E-flat.

CONDUCTOR shakes his head.

**CONDUCTOR**
(pointing to the oboe)
E-flat, please. An octave lower is fine.

CONDUCTOR reacts with surprise when he hears a wrong note again. He cannot believe that they are playing so wrong.

**CONDUCTOR**
What’s going on guys?
(pointing to the trumpet)
Trumpet. E-flat?
(now he points to the clarinet)
E-flat!
(Makes a hand gesture showing his annoyance)

CONDUCTOR loses his composure in an instant. He pushes the stand aside and rushes to the grand piano standing in the corner, where he plays E-flat looking at the musicians, but it again sounds wrong. He cannot believe his ears and starts playing E-flat across all octaves in total desperation.

The entire ensemble freezes in shock, completely silent, watching him.

CONDUCTOR plays several notes in different octaves, together and separately, angrily challenging the piano.

Finally, he sits down. Defeated, head lowered, he returns one last time to the E-flat that triggered everything.

**CONDUCTOR**
(without looking away from the keyboard)
Can somebody please take me to the hospital?



Sculpture
A piano stool
lit by a spotlight
Surrounded by a bunch of
objects welded together
The audience cannot go
inside the circle
but can see the stool
from the openings
between the structure

MISSING SCENES IN BETWEEN

## The Clinic

**EXT. PARKING LOT AT BUS STATION**

CONDUCTOR exits the bus station. To reach the taxi stand, he cuts through a small market.

Loud music plays from every stall. Vendors shout over one another as people move around him. Overwhelmed, CONDUCTOR pushes forward, his face tense with discomfort.

Within a few steps, the noise shifts from the market's chaos to a wall of car horns. Dozens of taxi drivers sound quick, short honks to attract passengers.

Disoriented, CONDUCTOR walks without direction. He takes a tissue from his pocket and tears off two small pieces. He then rolls them into little balls, and stuffs one into each ear.

**TAXI DISPATCHER**
Where to?

CONDUCTOR snaps out of it.

**CONDUCTOR**
(Whispering loudly)
Sorry?

**TAXI DISPATCHER**
Where are you heading, do you need a taxi?

**CONDUCTOR**
Ah, yes. To the neurotology clinic.

**TAXI DISPATCHER**
The what?

**CONDUCTOR**
(In a normal voice)
To the hospital.

The TAXI DISPATCHER points at a row of cars.

**TAXI DISPATCHER**
The second one in that cue.

**CONDUCTOR**
Thanks.

Proof of concept of the installation
that will probably come with these scenes.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ehpYJW_1OQ

## Buying earplugs

**INT. KITCHEN, CONDUCTOR'S HOUSE - DAY**

CONDUCTOR fries eggs for breakfast.
The DOORBELL rings.
He glances at the microwave. The digital clock blinks: 11:42
He walks to the front door and opens it.

**CONDUCTOR**
Ah. Good morning.

**DELIVERY GUY**
Hi. Package for Mr. CONDUCTOR

**CONDUCTOR**
That's me.

DELIVERY GUY hands him a padded envelope.

**DELIVERY GUY**
There you go. Have a nice day!

**CONDUCTOR**
Thanks, you too.

CONDUCTOR closes the door and immediately tears open the envelope as he walks back inside.
At the kitchen counter, he takes out a small box, leaving the rest of the packaging behind.
He opens the box.
A pair of silicone earplugs.
He unfolds the instruction leaflet.

*"Fo Qs — Experience the Silence."*

His eyes skim over diagrams, warnings, tiny print.

He inserts the earplugs.
The room changes. The refrigerator fades into the background. The ventilation hum nearly disappears.
He listens.
Almost nothing.

A faint smell reaches him.
He rushes into the kitchen and turns off the burner.

The eggs are overcooked.
He stares at them for a moment.

CONDUCTOR reaches up and presses the earplugs a little deeper into his ears.

## Confrontation

**INT. LIVING ROOM, CONDUCTOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT**
CONDUCTOR is sitting on the couch in his living room. All lights are off except for one floor lamp in the corner. On the coffee table stands a bottle of whiskey and an almost empty glass.
He receives a phone call from his ex-wife. She has been calling and sending messages and voice notes for the past few days with no answer.

Voice notes:
Hey! How are you? I called earlier but had no luck… Give me a call when you get a chance.

Hi. Listen, I've been calling to see how you are doing. I ran into Lis and she mentioned that you were not doing fine. She did not tell me much, please call me.

Hey. Why are you not answering my phone calls? I can see that you heard my voice notes. This is not ok. I'm coming tomorrow morning, you better be there.

CONDUCTOR listens to the last voice note and ends up calling her.

**PHONE (Sophie)**
Finally!

**CONDUCTOR**
Hey.

**PHONE**
What the fuck, man?
Why are you ghosting me?

**CONDUCTOR**

(whispering)
I'm not ghosting you.

**PHONE**
Yes, you are!
Why are you whispering?

**CONDUCTOR**
Ehm, I am just a bit sick.
It’s nothing.

**PHONE**
Is it like the flu or something?

**CONDUCTOR**
Something like that…

**PHONE**
OK.
How are you feeling now?

**CONDUCTOR**
I’m OK.

**PHONE**
Why are you not answering my phone calls?

**CONDUCTOR**
I’ve been busy Soph. How are you?

**PHONE**
I ran into Lis last week.
She mentioned you were not doing so well…

**CONDUCTOR**
Yes, I’ve had a rough patch.

**PHONE**
And then I saw the announcement…
…
You are not conducting the coming season?

**CONDUCTOR**
No.

**PHONE**
Why not?
What’s going on?

**CONDUCTOR**
You clearly already know…
Plus I know that Lis spoke to you.

**PHONE**
(with a softer tone)
So what happened?

**CONDUCTOR**
I don’t know if I quit or they fired me.
It doesn’t matter, I clearly cannot perform anymore.

**PHONE**

What exactly is it?
Lis really did not say much.

**CONDUCTOR**
I don’t know, Soph. I cannot recognise music anymore.

**PHONE**
Did you go to the Hospital?

**CONDUCTOR**
Of course.

**PHONE**
But what the hell is it?

**CONDUCTOR**
They don’t know.
They explained it is some sort of Amusia.
They think it can be a neurological disorder, because my ear is fine.

**PHONE**
What do you mean fine?
It is clearly not fine!

**CONDUCTOR**
(annoyed)
I don’t know what to tell you.
My hearing is perfectly fine. They did all sorts of tests.
Apparently everything looks healthy in my inner ear. I can understand conversations, even at very low volumes, and I can hear every sound and every pitch up to 18 Kilohertz or so.
But it all sounds weird.

**PHONE**
Weird how?

**CONDUCTOR**
Nothing sounds normal.
Even your voice, right now, is hard to recognise.

**PHONE**
But you have perfect pitch…

**CONDUCTOR**
That’s how I know that everything sounds wrong.
It’s like being color blind.
Or worse…
Imagine that you see a sign.
You can read the letters, even from very far away, but you cannot make up what word comes out of it.
That’s how I hear.

**PHONE**
Shit.

…
So what’s next?

**CONDUCTOR**
(annoyed by the question)
What do you mean what’s next?

**PHONE**
Well, there must be something to do.

**CONDUCTOR**
I’ve done everything. I’ve seen ten thousand doctors.
Otorhinolaryngologists, Neurologists, Psychiatrists…
The only one who’s been actually helpful is my psychologist.

**PHONE**
What? Since when are you having this?

**CONDUCTOR**
It’s been like two months.

**PHONE**
Two months!

**CONDUCTOR**
Yeah. Feels like much longer.

**PHONE**
Fuck man, I am sorry.

**CONDUCTOR**
Yeah.
(He finishes the last sip of his whiskey)
Me too.
Thanks.

**PHONE**
Do you want me to come over?

**CONDUCTOR**
Nah, don’t worry. You do your thing.

**PHONE**
(Upset)
What do you mean ‘do your thing’?

**CONDUCTOR**
I mean I appreciate it, but there is no need for you to drive all the way here.
I am ok.

**PHONE**
I can’t believe you did not tell me.

**CONDUCTOR**

Sorry, I was kind of in the middle of it.

**PHONE**

Exactly! I could have been there with you.

**CONDUCTOR**

(Breathes deeply to recover his patience)
I am sorry I did not tell you.
I was… I still am… mourning.

**PHONE**

(hesitant)
I get it.
Sorry.
…
Would you let me know if there is anything that I can do?

**CONDUCTOR**

I will. Thank you.
(His tone shows that he is trying to change the subject)
How are you?
How's Erik?

**PHONE**

We are fine.
Erik's at work and should be back home soon.

**CONDUCTOR**

Good.
Well, I'll leave you to it.

**PHONE**

Alright.
I'll call you these days.

**CONDUCTOR**

Thank you. Don't worry about me.

**PHONE**

(Doubtful)
Ok…

**CONDUCTOR**

All is good.
…
Good night.

**PHONE**

Night.

CONDUCTOR pours another glass of whiskey and walks towards the grand piano. He opens the lid without sitting down. With his right hand, still holding the glass of whiskey, marks a subtle prep-beat for his

left hand to play the note Eb. He keeps the note pressed for less than a second, looks up and closes the lid.




Video installation
Videos of conductors
from the POV of the orchestra
projected over a cloud
of smoke/mist/fog
No sound

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Groceries

**INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT**

CONDUCTOR browses every aisle of the supermarket. He moves slowly, a rolling basket trailing behind him.
He stops at the cereal aisle. One by one, he studies the different brands, again and again. He doesn't notice someone standing beside him, waiting to reach the shelf. After a moment, the shopper politely reaches in and takes a box anyway.

**CONDUCTOR**
Oh, sorry.

The shopper replies, but the words are unintelligible. They move on.

Embarrassed, CONDUCTOR grabs a box of cereal, reads the back, then returns it to the shelf. He leaves the aisle without taking any cereal. Eventually, he heads toward the checkouts. A cashier is free, but he quietly joins the self-checkout line instead.

He scans his groceries and attempts to pay.
A message appears on the screen: “Random Check. Please wait for assistance.”

He closes his eyes for a brief moment.
A STORE WORKER approaches.

**STORE WORKER**
Good evening. I'll just scan a few items.

CONDUCTOR removes his noise-cancelling headphones and one earplug.

**CONDUCTOR**
Hi. Sure.

Without unpacking the bag, the worker rescans a few items.

**STORE WORKER**
...Four. And five.
Everything's fine. Thank you.

**CONDUCTOR**
Thank you.

The moment the worker leaves, CONDUCTOR puts the earplug and headphones back on. He pays, takes his receipt, and walks out.

## Subway Scene

**INT. TRAIN/METRO CAR -**

CONDUCTOR rides the subway. No gesture in his face, looking into nothingness. With the announcement of the next stop, he stands up from his seat and walks towards the doors. As the train approaches his stop, CONDUCTOR recognizes a melody produced by the train's brakes, snapping him out of his trance. He immediately takes off his noise-cancelling headphones and his eyes open completely. His hands begin to tremble and he decides not to get off. He needs to listen to that sound one more time.
At the next stop, the breaks squeak again and CONDUCTOR recognizes certain notes. This time it's not the same melody, but there is something reminiscent of Scelsi's String Quartet No. 3. He stays on to the following station and prepares his phone to record the sounds.

The recording sounds similar to the String Quartet.
Still in the subway, we see the screen of his phone as he sends the audio to his friend LAURA and texts:

**CONDUCTOR**
What do you hear?
(Two blue ticks)

**LAURA**
(...)
What do you mean?

**CONDUCTOR**
Which notes do you hear?

**LAURA**
(takes a moment to reply)
I think I'm hearing a slightly sharp *A-flat*, an *F*, and some scraping sounds around *F* as well, in the low register.
What is this? Are you on the subway?

**CONDUCTOR**
You don't hear a *B*?
A *B-flat*?
Or a *C*?

**LAURA**
Mmm, no. Why?
What's going on?

CONDUCTOR listens again to the audio, still recognizing something similar to Scelsi.

**LAURA**
???

**CONDUCTOR**
It's nothing. I think I am just confused.
I thought I recognized something, but I guess not…

**LAURA**
I see…
How have you been feeling?

**CONDUCTOR**
Same.
But anyways. I'm sick of it.

**LAURA**
I get it.
I'm here if you need anything.
If you want to talk, or not talk, or just throw rocks from a rooftop…

**CONDUCTOR**
(laughing emoji)
Thanks!
You good?

**LAURA**
Yeah, in an Uber. About to pick up DAUGHTER1.

**CONDUCTOR**
Hugs to both of you!

**LAURA**
Thanks, same to you!
Talk soon.
And seriously… anything you need.

**CONDUCTOR**
Thanks.

CONDUCTOR listens to the audio one last time, thoughtful. Seconds later, he again hears something resembling the string quartet and gets off the train.

Subterranean Atmospheres - Sound experience
(Please see attachment 1 at the end of this pdf)

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**INT. CONDUCTOR'S STUDIO – NIGHT**

CONDUCTOR approaches the piano, it has been a while since the last time that piano heard any sound. He opens it and, without thinking much, plays a *B-flat* but he hears something different. His face shows an expression of anger with disappointment.

CONDUCTOR takes out his phone and plays the recording while he sits on the piano bench. He can still hear a slightly-out-of-tune *B-flat* within the breaks of the train. He starts playing notes on the piano, trying to find the matching sound to the recording he just heard. He finds the right note playing precisely what LAURA said she could hear. Trying to understand, CONDUCTOR plays every note, and writes down, one by one, the pitch he hears. For the next few days he reads and re-reads the list, trying to find a relationship, but nothing makes sense to him.

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Explanation

**EXT. CAFÉ TERRACE - DAY**

CONDUCTOR and his friend NICO sit at a wooden table, the day is warm and they both wear sunglasses. A waiter comes to clean the table and they order two more cups of coffee.

**NICO**

So what is this thing that you were talking about on the phone?

**CONDUCTOR**

I don't know, man. I was there the whole night, checking note by note but nothing really made sense. Although I felt I was on to something…

**NICO**
How come?

**CONDUCTOR**
(takes a small notebook out of the blazer hanging on his chair)
I don’t know, look at this. These are the notes that I hear across the entire keyboard. You see how there is no relationship within octaves…
And look at the high register vs the lower one. There is a huge difference in what I perceive.

**NICO**
Wait, wait, wait… Remember, I am not a musician, so you will have to explain a bit better than all this nonsense.

**CONDUCTOR**
Yes, yes. Sorry.
Okay, you know how the piano is divided by octaves, right?

**NICO**
Aha. With twelve semitones.

**CONDUCTOR**
Exactly.
Okay well, whenever I play the same note in different octaves, I should listen to the same note, only higher or lower…
But look at what I hear when I play A in each octave:

**NICO**
Bb, D, G, Eb…
And what do the plus and minus symbols mean?

**CONDUCTOR**
Those are all out of tune. A bit higher or lower than the actual note.
And in the lower register, I hear a bunch of harmonics that make no sense to me.

**NICO**
Again… not a musician.

**CONDUCTOR**
Why are you not a musician?

**NICO**
(Laughing)
I don’t know!

**CONDUCTOR**
But you play the piano.

**NICO**
I mean, you know I can play a bit, but nobody ever explained theory to me.

**CONDUCTOR**

You play quite well. I've seen you.

**NICO**

Never mind that. Just explain the thing you were saying.

**CONDUCTOR**

Ok. So basically every note that we play contains extra notes within it. Extra frequencies on top of the fundamental one, and we call them 'harmonics' or 'partials'.
So, if I play the note C on the piano for instance, the string vibrates along its entire length but also on some extra frequencies. And these beautifully correspond to the fundamental frequency multiplied by whole numbers.

**NICO**

You mean just like 1, 2, 3, 4…?

**CONDUCTOR**

Correct. If I play a note that vibrates at 100 Hz, that note will also contain frequencies at 200 Hz, 300, 400, 500, 600, etc. Each one with less and less volume until we can't really hear them anymore.

**NICO**

Ok…
So C is 100 Hz and what is 200 Hz and 300 Hz in notes?

**CONDUCTOR**

Good question. Well, actually C is not precisely 100 Hz, it is something around 261. I just said that for the sake of making it easier to calculate.
We can do it with A, which is the frequency we use to tune our instruments nowadays. A in the middle of the keyboard is 440Hz.

**NICO**

Right.

**CONDUCTOR**

And something you probably knew is that one octave means double the frequency. So after the A-440, the next octave of A would be at 880 Hz, and the same goes to the lower octaves: 220 Hz, then 110, then 55, etc.

**NICO**

So basically for any frequency, if I double the number of Hertz, I will hear the same note but one octave higher.

**CONDUCTOR**

You got it.
And why was I telling you all of this?

**NICO**

Because I asked about the 'extra' notes.

**CONDUCTOR**

Ah yes. So let’s say we play A at 110 Hz.
The ‘extra’ notes that we hear on top of that would be at 220, 330, 440, 550 Hz, etc.

**NICO**

Aha, while 220 and 440 Hz are also the note A. Just one and two octaves higher, right?

**CONDUCTOR**

Right! 330 is somewhere close to the fifth on top of the fundamental. So very close to the note E. And then 550 is very close to the note C#, so almost a Major third. Then the octave again, then 660 is twice as much as 330, so we hear the E again, but an octave higher. The 770 is a slightly out-of-tune seventh. In our case an out-of-tune G. Then again the octave and we could keep going, but we can barely hear those harmonics, even if we try.

**NICO**

Yeah, you lost me again…
Anyways, I think I sort of get it.

**CONDUCTOR**

Doesn’t matter, this whole thing with the harmonics is not too important here. (while pointing at the notebook)

**NICO**

Ok…

NICO studies the notebook.

**NICO**

Did you try looking at these as frequencies?

**CONDUCTOR**

What do you mean?

**NICO**

Did you try to see their relationships as numbers, not as notes…

**CONDUCTOR**

No.
Not yet.
(thoughtful)
But you’re right. I will do that.
Because despite the nonsense in that list, the one thing that is consistent is that at least the notes are not moving…
I hear the same sounds every time I play.

**NICO**

Ah. At least it is consistent.

Well, maybe you find something there. I don't know, I was just curious how this would look in numbers instead of out-of-tune notes.

**CONDUCTOR**
You are absolutely right. I don't know.
I guess I have to figure out a way to measure the frequency of what I actually perceive.

**NICO**
You'll figure it out. You are 'CONDUCTOR'.
(with grandiose expression)

A flicker of disappointment crosses CONDUCTOR'S face.

**CONDUCTOR**
Not anymore.

Frequency Research

**INT. LIVING ROOM, CONDUCTOR'S HOUSE - DAY**
CONDUCTOR is sitting at the piano. His laptop sits on the music rack, where the sheet music would normally go. On the screen we see a chart that shows every music note and its frequency in Hertz.
CONDUCTOR systematically looks at the chart and writes down a numeric value next to each note from his previous list.
He knows that the numbers he wrote are nothing but an educated guess so he grabs his phone and calls his friend JULIA

**CONDUCTOR**
Julia, dear.
How are you?

**JULIA**
Hey!
Great to hear from you.
I am doing fine, how are you?

**CONDUCTOR**
I'm good too.

**JULIA**
How are you feeling these days?
Any news?

**CONDUCTOR**
Well, pretty much the same, to be honest. But I feel I might be on to something… That's why I am calling you.
I need your help.

**JULIA**

Anything you need. What's up?

**CONDUCTOR**

I need your brilliance and your expertise.

**JULIA**

(smiling, sounding a bit embarrassed)
Pff. There's no brilliance, but you can have my expertise.
Tell me, what can I do for you?

**CONDUCTOR**

I think it is easier to explain in person.
Would you like to come for a coffee one of these days?
Whenever you are available.

**JULIA**

Sure!
I am free next Tuesday, would that work for you?

**CONDUCTOR**

Yes, perfect.

**JULIA**

But tell me, what are you thinking of?

**CONDUCTOR**

I think I am onto something, but I have no clue on how to proceed.
Remember how I explained that I could not recognise pitch?

**JULIA**

Aha…

**CONDUCTOR**

Well, I think I found something consistent. The other day I made a list of the notes I hear when I play every note on the keyboard. Most of them are out of tune, so I need to find a way to translate that into frequencies. But I don't know how to do it.

**JULIA**

Interesting. So when you play a certain note… let's say C, you hear something else and you want to know what exactly it is that you hear.
Right?

**CONDUCTOR**

Precisely.

**JULIA**

Hmm. You have perfect pitch, don't you?

**CONDUCTOR**

Well, I used to anyway.
But yes. If I play, for instance, a C
(CONDUCTOR plays middle C on his piano)
I hear almost an F.

**JULIA**
I see.

**CONDUCTOR**
But why are you asking?

**JULIA**
I'm thinking…
Would it work the other way around?

**CONDUCTOR**
What do you mean?

**JULIA**
If I play a note out of tune, would you hear the correct one?

**CONDUCTOR**
Hmm. I don't think so…

**JULIA**
Have you tried finding a certain note on a fretless instrument?
Or, let's say… If I play a *glissando* of frequencies, would you be able to tell me when you hear an actual note?

CONDUCTOR opens his eyes wide and smiles.

**CONDUCTOR**
Brilliant! I'm so happy I called you.

**JULIA**
(Blushing, we can hear her smiling in her voice)
What, why?

**CONDUCTOR**
You are brilliant.
Yes, I will be able to tell you when I hear the right note. And then we will know exactly at which frequency I hear the correct notes.

**JULIA**
That's what I was thinking of.
Yes.

**CONDUCTOR**
Reverse engineering at its finest!

**JULIA**
(laughing)
Exactly. I will bring my laptop then.

**CONDUCTOR**
Please do. I am looking forward to it!
I'll cook something nice for us.

**JULIA**
Deal!

**CONDUCTOR**

Thank you so, so much. I will see you on Tuesday then.

**JULIA**

See you then!

CONDUCTOR hangs up with a smile on his face.
For the first time in months, a flicker of excitement.
In this rush, he plays a quick chromatic scale along the whole keyboard.
His expression changes. Something clicks. For the first time, the sounds don't seem unbearable.
CONDUCTOR spends another hour improvising, experimenting with different combinations of notes. Like a child discovering a musical instrument for the first time, he fills the notebook with observations.

MAYBE MISSING SCENE OF JULIA AND CONDUCTOR WORKING TOGETHER

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Art Monologue

**INT. DINING ROOM, CONDUCTOR'S HOUSE**

CONDUCTOR and JULIA are having a glass of wine after dinner.

**CONDUCTOR**

It's because most artists today are just trying to survive… And when you're in that position, you start coming up with projects or pieces that aren't essential to you. You make work to appeal to a jury, because that's the job now… getting funding. And so, we end up creating based on what seems relevant to certain groups. Actually, for specific calls, even. A string quartet competition… an ecological residency… an exhibition focused on post-colonial or post-anthropocene or post-whatever bullshit thing. But almost no artist feels any real need for these themes. They're constraints.

You wouldn't believe how many composers decide what to write based on what competitions are out there.
Maybe they don't want to write a piece for piano and saxophone, but there's a prize somewhere, so they go for it…

And here's the worst part: they spend a hundred, two hundred hours just sitting there, composing music that has almost no chance of even being performed. And even when these works are selected, they get played once, maybe twice, and then never again. Ensembles brag about world premieres and then play Beethoven the rest of the year. They open calls for scores where the "prize" is that your piece gets performed in a concert.

What kind of system is this, where you work for hours and hours just for the chance that someone might appreciate your work?

Anyway, going back to the original point… art today is institutional. And for me, that's why it doesn't last. One of the reasons, at least. Think about the most important works in history… They came from emotion. Love, abandonment, devotion, depression. They had a much stronger reason to exist than a piece written for some random competition.

And I'm not saying this exclusively eh, there are works that are great for other reasons. But to me, the most important work an artist makes is the one they *have* to create.

**JULIA**

And that comes from emotion…

**CONDUCTOR**

From emotion, yes. But also from curiosity, from wanting to push the limits of a medium, a subject, or technology. Think of Stockhausen, Ferneyhough, or Feldman… even Steve Reich… Each of them pushing their ideas to the extreme. And in the visual arts, the same thing: Olafur Eliasson, Dimitris Papaioannou, Ryoji Ikeda, etc.

There are two possibilities:
Either the works are created with a real underlying drive… or someone just made up a story to justify them.

**JULIA**

Mmm, yeah I see your point, but I don't think it is the only way to create new works.

**CONDUCTOR**

It's not, but, for me it is the reason why certain works persist over time.
Consider composers now vs composers in the past… Back then, musicians focused on their trade.
And they focused on their audience.
A successful composer was one who managed to find recognition in its town. Perhaps becoming Kapellmeister, or working for a fancy nobleman or family.
Big names conquered bigger cities, and hardly anymore than that.

**JULIA**

No, some composers were actually quite famous in their own time.

**CONDUCTOR**

Sure, gradually composers became recognised by a wider audience.
Already eighteen-hundred composers were known nationally and later internationally.
But why?
Well, because there was an evolution in reproduction, publishing, transportation, communication…
Before this, music was only played locally. Usually by the composers themselves.

**JULIA**

True. I always think about how crazy it is that people a hundred and fifty years ago were very lucky if they could listen to big symphonic pieces even once in their lives.
To think that this music could only exist in the concert hall.

**CONDUCTOR**

And maybe some reductions for piano…
Eventually music started to travel across countries and even continents.
But think about it…
Back then, you only had to compete with your local network. If you managed to be the best in your town, maybe you'd go to a bigger city…
But that's it.
Nowadays, every second there is someone somewhere uploading their creations…
which we all have immediate access to.
We literally have to compete against everyone, everywhere, all at once.
…
Plus, now we have the scores and recordings of all of the great masters at our disposal for listening and studying.

**JULIA**

We are somehow also competing with them.

**CONDUCTOR**

Not somehow…
Composers today are absolutely competing against the great masters as well.
Look at any orchestra's concert season…
Eighty percent of the composers are dead…
Most of them Western European.
And men, by the way.
Living composers have little chance to have their music played.

**JULIA**

Why?

**CONDUCTOR**

It is all a matter of money. I saw it when I was still conducting…
Every orchestra needs an audience to survive.
And it is a fact that Handel's *Messiah* will fill up a concert hall much easier than Unsuk Chin.

**JULIA**

Who's Unsuk Chin?

**CONDUCTOR**

Exactly.
She is an amazing South Korean composer. Already quite famous.
But still, here, at the other side of the world, people want to go and listen to the pieces they know.

**JULIA**

Only the greatest hits.

**CONDUCTOR**

Only the greatest hits.

**JULIA**
Well…
That sucks.

**CONDUCTOR**
Big time. But it sells.
Without an audience, no institution will finance an orchestra.

**JULIA**
Makes sense though.

JULIA points at her laptop, still open on the coffee table.

**JULIA**
So how will you use this?

**CONDUCTOR**
The list, you mean?

**JULIA**
Aha

**CONDUCTOR**
I am not sure.
Do you think it is interesting?

**JULIA**
To hear music in the way you do?
Absolutely!

**CONDUCTOR**
It is clear that this music cannot be performed by tempered instruments. I guess I have to start with strings.

**JULIA**
But will you translate other pieces or make your own?

**CONDUCTOR**
I haven’t composed anything in ages.

**JULIA**
So what?
Start with small studies, see where it goes.

**CONDUCTOR**
True. I can try that.
It is not like I have anything else to do with my life.

**JULIA**
And if you want to work on something electroacoustic, I can help you out.

**CONDUCTOR**
Thanks. That would also be interesting.
I'll try some stuff out and let you know.

**JULIA**
Please do.

First Piece

**INT. LIVING ROOM, CONDUCTOR'S HOUSE - DAY**

CONDUCTOR hands a score to SERGIO

**SERGIO**
What is this?

**CONDUCTOR**
Something I have in mind. What do you think?

SERGIO grabs his Violin and begins playing a strange but familiar melody.

**SERGIO**
Detuning Beethoven?

**CONDUCTOR**
No, no…
(pointing at the score)
That is what I hear when you play the original symphony. And what is worse, I obviously know the real sound by heart.
Every note that I hear is out of tune. 89Hz out of tune, to be specific.

**SERGIO**
What? How did you figure this out?

**CONDUCTOR**
With Julia's help.
And a lot of experimentation before that.

**SERGIO**
So any note that I play, sounds 89Hz higher for you…

**CONDUCTOR**
Yep

**SERGIO**
(Plays a high E)
So, this note?

**CONDUCTOR**
Almost an F

**SERGIO**
(Plays a low G)
And low notes?

**CONDUCTOR**
Way worse. D quarter-tone flat.

**SERGIO**
So it's not really the same amount of out-of-tune for every note.

**CONDUCTOR**
No. It's always 89 Hz, but the higher the note, the less noticeable it becomes.

**SERGIO**
And the lower the note, the further away it gets.

**CONDUCTOR**
Exactly.

SERGIO looks at the score.

**SERGIO**
Well my friend… this is horrible.

**CONDUCTOR**
It is.
And it gets worse…
This version that you played, also sounds odd to me.

**SERGIO**
What do you mean?

**CONDUCTOR**
When you played that first G, I heard an A quarter-tone sharp. So I wrote an A quarter-tone sharp.

He points at the score.

**CONDUCTOR**
But now that I've written it down, and you can play it, I hear something else again. Still 89 Hz above that note.

SERGIO stares at him.

**SERGIO**
So you are cursed?

CONDUCTOR smiles faintly.

**SERGIO**
You'll never actually be able to hear what you write.

**CONDUCTOR**
Probably not.
…
But that’s not the point anymore

Sergio looks at him.

**CONDUCTOR**
Now I am interested in writing music for others, so you can experience sound through my ears. Even if I cannot.

**SERGIO**
Then why Beethoven's Fifth?

**CONDUCTOR**
It is an easy piece to prove my point. Everyone knows the theme. Even when played completely out of tune.

CONDUCTOR hands SERGIO a handwritten score.

**CONDUCTOR**
This is what I would actually like you to listen to.

SERGIO takes the score and puts it on the coffee table.

**SERGIO**
Ooh, I think I will have to study this.

**CONDUCTOR**
Of course. Maybe just take a look at it and see what you think.

Can I get you something to drink?
Mezcal?

**SERGIO**
Mezcal sounds great.

**CONDUCTOR**
Coming.

CONDUCTOR smiles and walks into the kitchen.

While Sergio studies the score, CONDUCTOR prepares drinks. He returns with two glasses of water, orange slices, and a bottle of mezcal.

Sergio starts playing.

CONDUCTOR pours the drinks and silently listens.

**SERGIO**
This sounds quite beautiful.

His face shows a slight sadness.

But you will never know.

**CONDUCTOR**
I know, I can hear it… in my head.

SERGIO continues playing.

**SERGIO**
Do you actually hear these notes accurately?

**CONDUCTOR**
Not precisely. I've used a combination of what I hear with what is possible to play with Western instruments.

I don't need to be super precise. Everyone is always slightly out of tune anyways.

SERGIO continues playing for a while.

CONDUCTOR pours their drinks and silently observes.

SERGIO Stops playing and takes a sip of mezcal

**SERGIO**
Do you have more?

**CONDUCTOR**
I will.
So… What do you think?

**SERGIO**
I love it.
I wish you could hear it on strings.

**CONDUCTOR**
On the back of the page I wrote the theme the way I can hear it.
Would you mind playing it?

SERGIO turns the page and plays a much simpler version of the same music, without the quarter tone accidentals.

CONDUCTOR smiles.

SERGIO stops.

**SERGIO**
Really? Did it come from here?

CONDUCTOR nods.

**SERGIO**
Huh…

**CONDUCTOR**
(with sarcasm)
Now you envy my condition eh?

SERGIO smiles.

**SERGIO**
Kind of.
…
You are truly making something beautiful out of this.

**CONDUCTOR**
Thank you my friend.
It’s been a very shitty year. But now I have something to look forward to.

You’ll have a first draft of a string quartet in a few weeks.
I will need you to be my ears. Tell me if something does not sound good.

SERGIO raises his glass

**SERGIO**
It will be my pleasure.

They clink glasses.

**SEVERAL MISSING SCENES BEFORE THE NEXT ONE**
**Conductor composes a few pieces for small ensembles. Later he dares to write for orchestra, but does not have the strength to try to conduct it.**
**His music begins to attract an audience and his name reappears on the music scene.**

Recovery

**INT. CONDUCTOR’S CAR - DAY**

CONDUCTOR drives He is in a good mood, the sun is out and there is almost no traffic.
He stops at the red light and a vendor approaches him. CONDUCTOR opens the window and buys mint bubble gum.
A black Toyota stops next to him.
CONDUCTOR hears their music and smiles. It brings him good memories.
Green Lights. All of a sudden CONDUCTOR opens his eyes wide open with a face of huge distress. The other car goes.

CONDUCTOR turns on his radio and desperately clicks on the saved stations in search of music.

We hear less than a second of a song by Queen.
He presses for the next saved station and we hear advertisements.

CONDUCTOR
Come on! Come on! Come on!

The third one is playing some music with violins, but he changes to the next one before any piece is recognisable.
More advertisements.
CONDUCTOR recognises in a fraction of a second the jazz standard *Round Midnight*.

CONDUCTOR
(Desperate)
Nooo, no no no no no no!

Conductor hits the wheel with all of his strength and lies his head on it immediately after.

Round Midnight sounds in the background.

## Subterranean Atmospheres – Sound Experience

To experience *Subterranean Atmospheres*, the audience is encouraged to follow these instructions:

1. Obtain a portable audio player.
2. Obtain a pair of mid- or high-range headphones.
3. Prepare the musical piece *Atmosphères** by Hungarian composer György Ligeti (1923–2006).
4. Go to the listening site: a subway car on an underground line.
5. Listen to the piece *Atmosphères* (György Ligeti).
6. End.

* I will compose a music piece that will substitute the suggested listening.

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**1. Obtain a portable audio player.**
Any type of audio player will work perfectly. However, the artist considers it necessary to warn that carrying out the *Subterranean Atmospheres* sound experience requires moving from one place to another on foot. There is a high likelihood of encountering obstacles such as stairs, turnstiles, and path divisions. Likewise, it is almost certain that you will share the space with a large number of people in transit, so it is advisable that your player provides the comfort and discretion you feel you need.

**2. Obtain a pair of mid- or high-range headphones.**
Whether you choose over-ear or on-ear headphones, it is advisable that they are equipped with planar magnetic drivers, although balanced armature drivers also work well. If you have a limited budget, dynamic drivers are the remaining option; despite producing strong bass, their lack of subtlety makes them more affordable and easier to obtain.

The use of electrostatic headphones is not recommended due to the need for specialized amplification and their high cost. In such cases, it is better to sacrifice the high fidelity they offer in order to avoid the risk of theft or mugging.

To appreciate *Subterranean Atmospheres*, it is best to avoid any type of in-ear headphones, as it is necessary to perceive the surrounding ambient sounds and allow them to mix with the audio from your player. For this reason, it is also advisable to avoid any headphones with noise-cancelling features.

Regarding impedance, make sure your headphones are suitable for your portable audio device. Whether you use a smartphone, an MP3 player, or another portable device, headphones with an

impedance of up to 32Ω should function properly. If the selected headphones have higher impedance, consider using an amplification system for better results. This characteristic is important to achieve an amplitude range appropriate to the conditions of the experience.

Although it is not critical, ideally your headphones should have total harmonic distortion below 0.27%.

Do not worry too much about frequency range—almost any model reproduces the frequencies audible to the average human ear. Simply ensure that the stated range includes at least 20 Hz on the low end and 17.4 kHz on the high end.

**3. Prepare the music piece *Atmosphères* by György Ligeti (1923–2006).**
"Prepare the music piece" is simply a general way of referring to the various methods of audio playback available on the device mentioned in point 1. These may include: purchasing a cassette or compact disc, acquiring a digital album, renting or freely streaming audio or video, or any other playback method.

Note: If you choose a free streaming option, it is essential that the sound experience is not interrupted by advertisements of any kind.

**4. Go to the listening site: a subway car on an underground line.**
Worldwide, there are many public transportation systems with underground lines. Some cities where this mode of transport can be found include: New York, Beijing, Paris, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Tokyo, Madrid, Mexico City, Moscow, Taipei, Barcelona, London, Berlin, Hong Kong, Seoul, Munich, Osaka, Chicago, Nagoya, Stockholm, Delhi, Buenos Aires, Porto, Oslo, São Paulo, Santiago, Brussels, Caracas, Rotterdam, Vienna, Saint Petersburg, Busan, Valencia, Singapore, San Francisco, Washington D.C., Lyon, Philadelphia, Amsterdam, Lisbon, Boston, Montreal, Toronto, Bucharest, Recife, Atlanta, Istanbul, Milan, Hamburg, Tianjin, Chongqing, etc.

It is necessary to conduct prior research on specific lines that run underground. Once you have decided, go to any station on the selected line and board a train car. The journey should last at least 10 minutes and 25 seconds—the time required to complete the experience: choosing a spot, playing the tracks from beginning to end, and exiting the train (estimated with a margin of error of about 2 minutes based on the duration of the piece).

Warning: There are numerous risks associated with carrying out this sound experience. You are urged to inform yourself and prepare adequately to avoid unforeseen events, including partial or total theft of your audio equipment, assaults, impacts, falls, slips, transport system failures, lack of oxygen, unpleasant odors, among others.

The artist is not responsible for any incident or contingency that may occur during the *Subterranean Atmospheres* experience.

**5. Listen to the piece *Atmosphères* by György Ligeti (1923–2006).**
Once situated in the space where the sound experience will take place, activate playback on your audio device. Select an appropriate volume level that allows for a polyphonic image combining both the audio from the headphones and the ambient sound of the subway environment.

It is recommended to remain in place throughout the experience. If appropriate, you may close your eyes to avoid unnecessary sensory input (only do this if you are certain it is safe—avoiding risk is essential to fully enjoy the experience).

**6. End.**
Once the music ends, the experience is finished and the artist's involvement concludes.