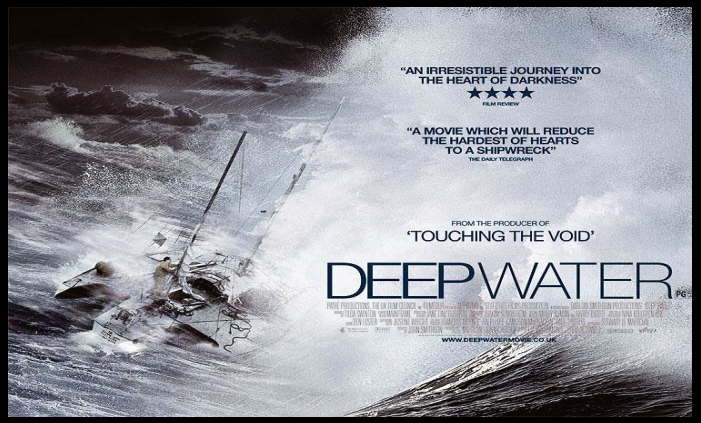
Abstraction, Dreams and Surrealism



Abstract / weird / strange but subtle music can be…

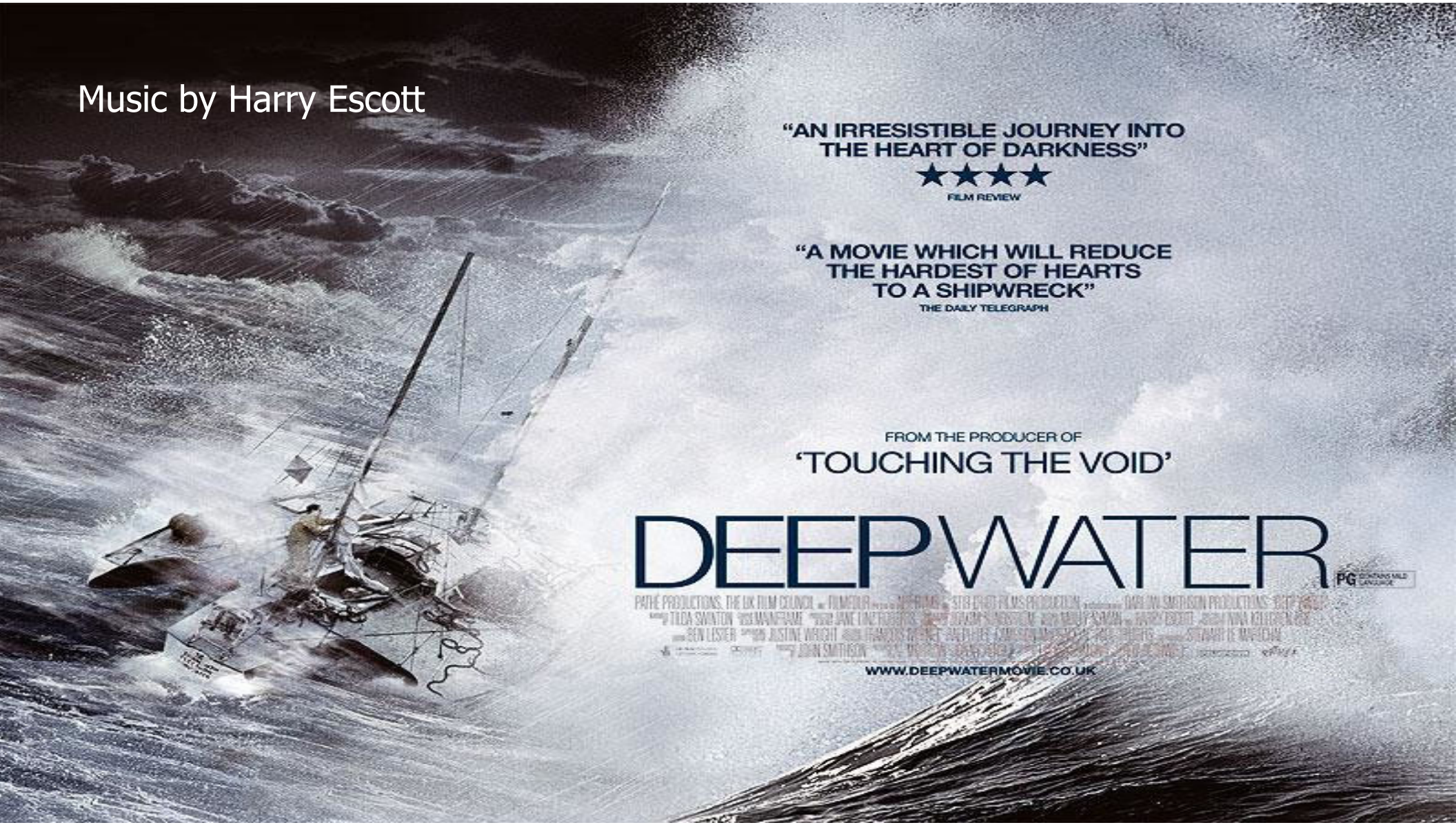
either something strange, out of context, unexpected or something in the foreground – often it's not the style but the usage; the context

Abstract / weird / strange but subtle music can be…

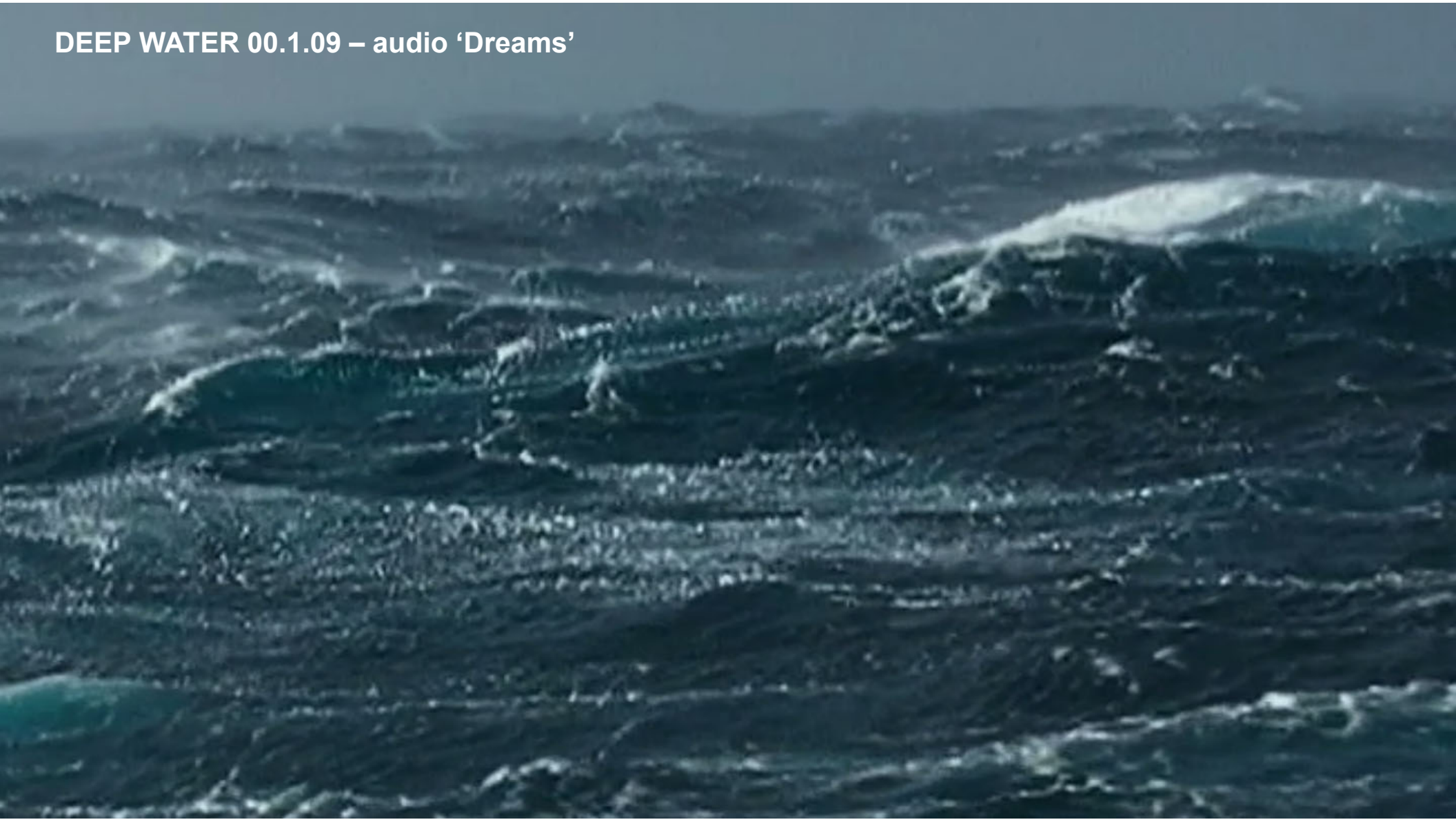
either something strange, out of context, unexpected or something in the foreground – often it's not the style but the usage; the context

For most people music is experienced in the abstract, but..

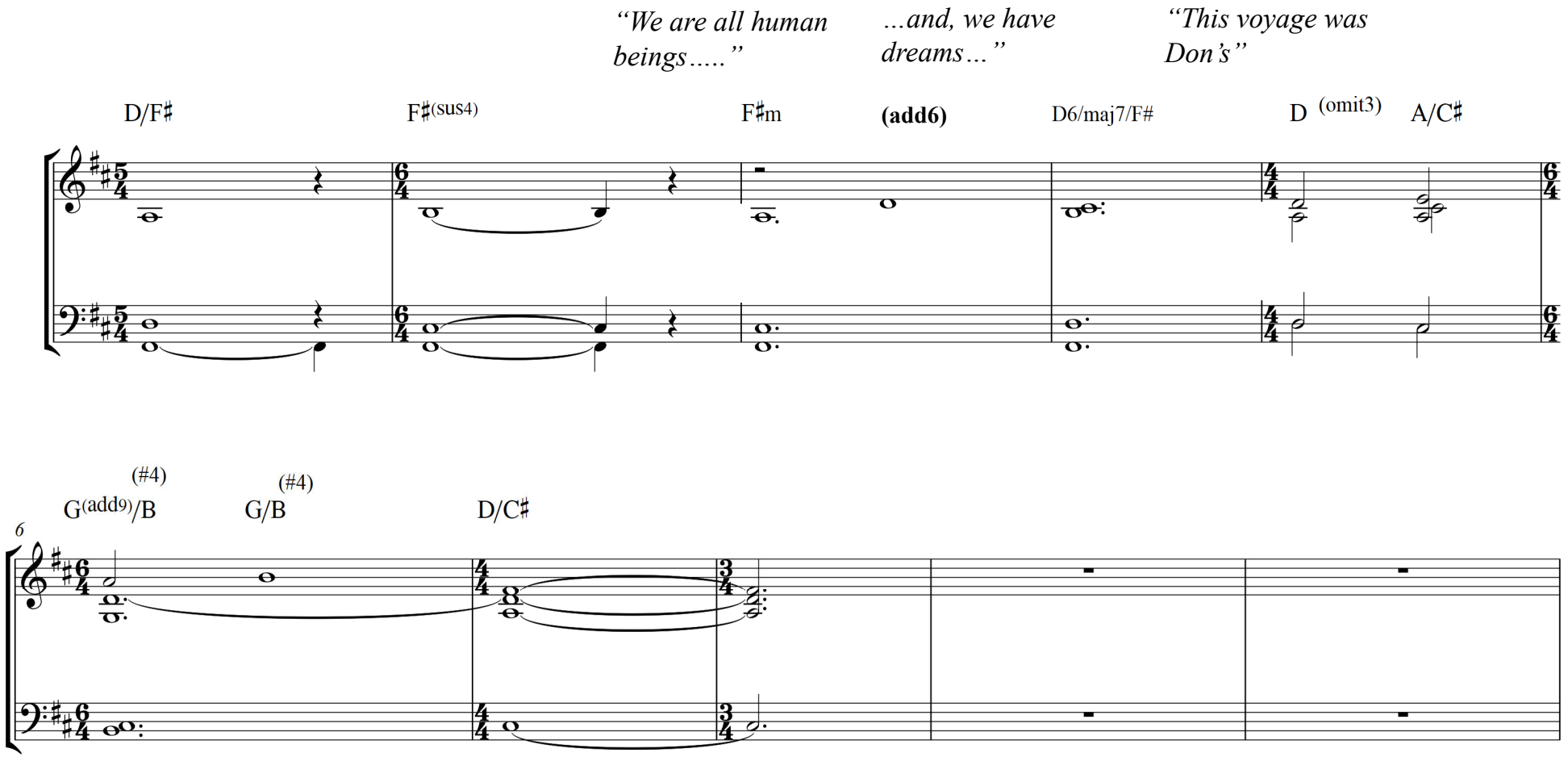
people 'understand' harmony. Unconscious musical analysis They are used to quite an ordinary diet of harmony usually. Abstraction demands more attention.


Music by Harry Escott
"AN IRRESISTIBLE JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF DARKNESS"
★★★★
FILM REVIEW
"A MOVIE WHICH WILL REDUCE THE HARDEST OF HEARTS TO A SHIPWRECK"
THE DAILY TELEGRAPH
FROM THE PRODUCER OF
'TOUCHING THE VOID'
DEEPWATER
PG
WWW.DEEPWATERMOVIE.CO.UK

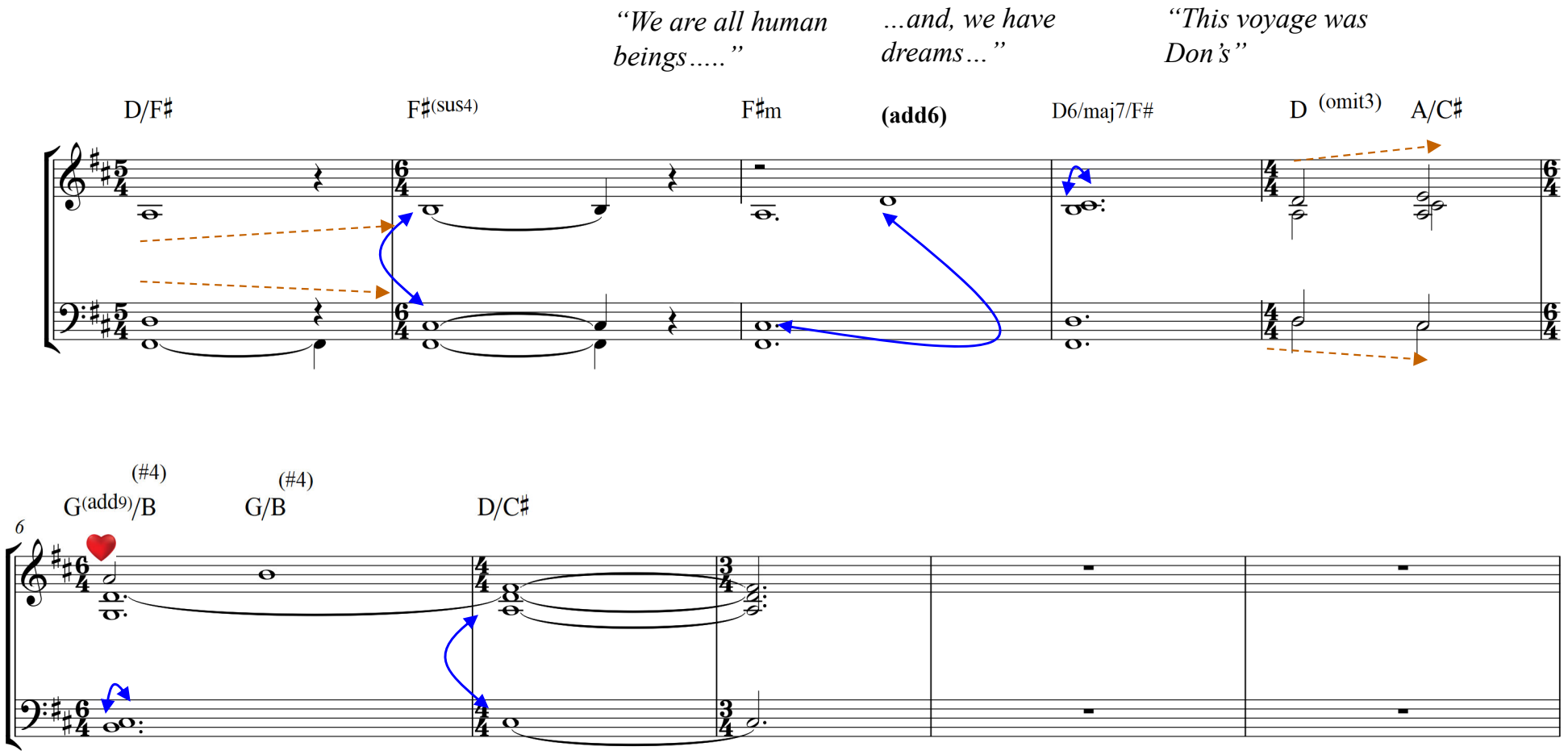
DEEP WATER 00.1.09 – audio ‘Dreams’



DEEP WATER 00.1.09 – audio ‘Dreams’



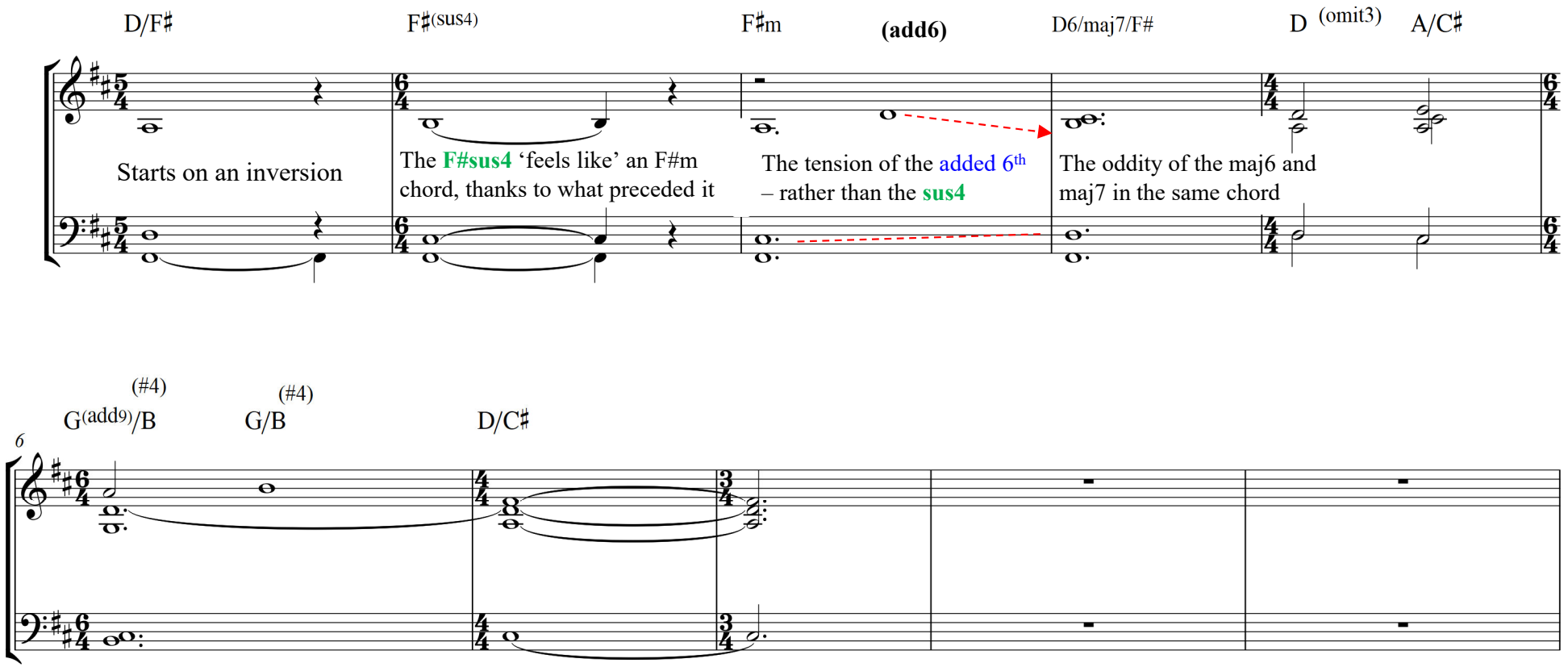
tensions, warmth & contrary motion

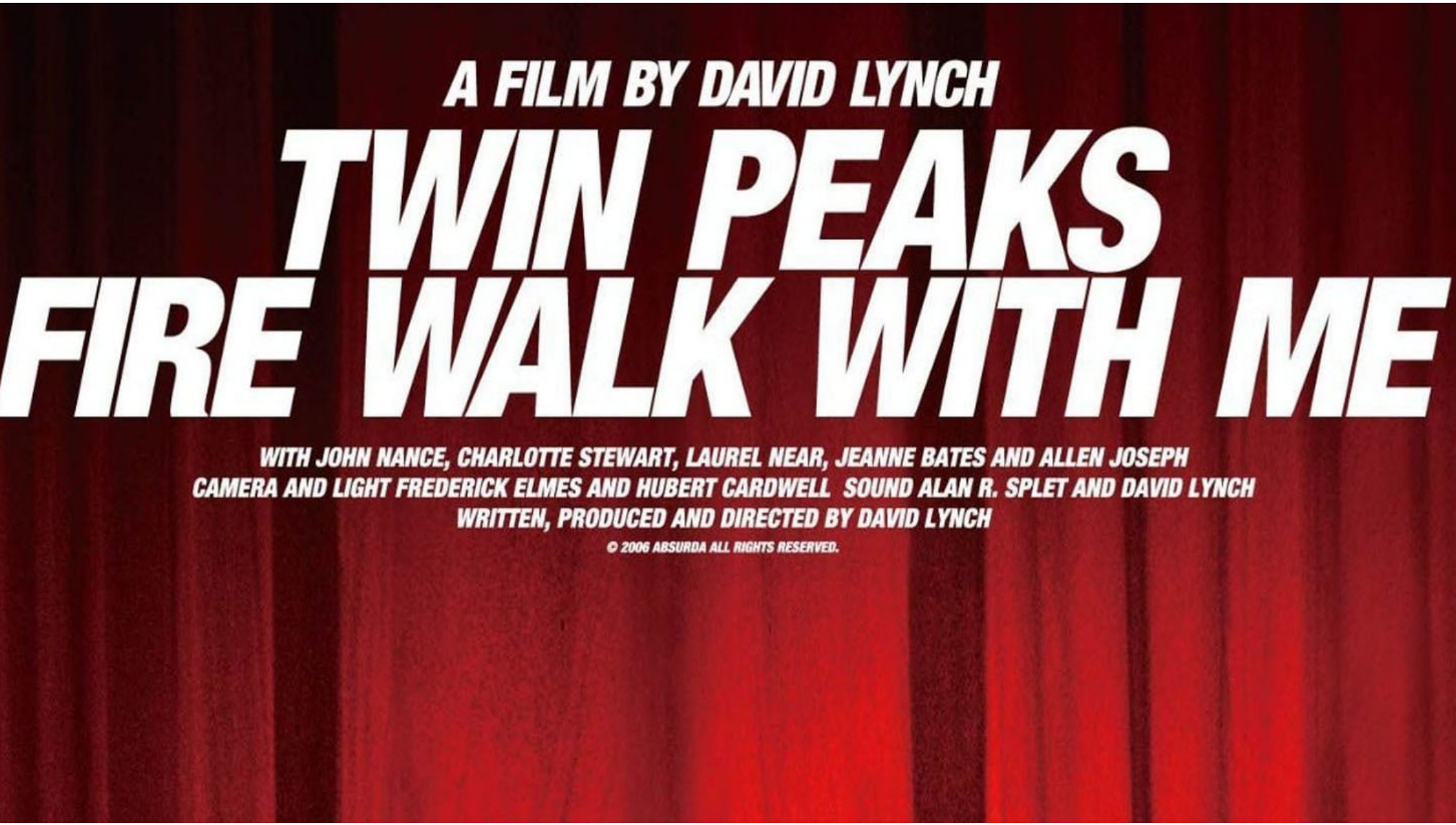


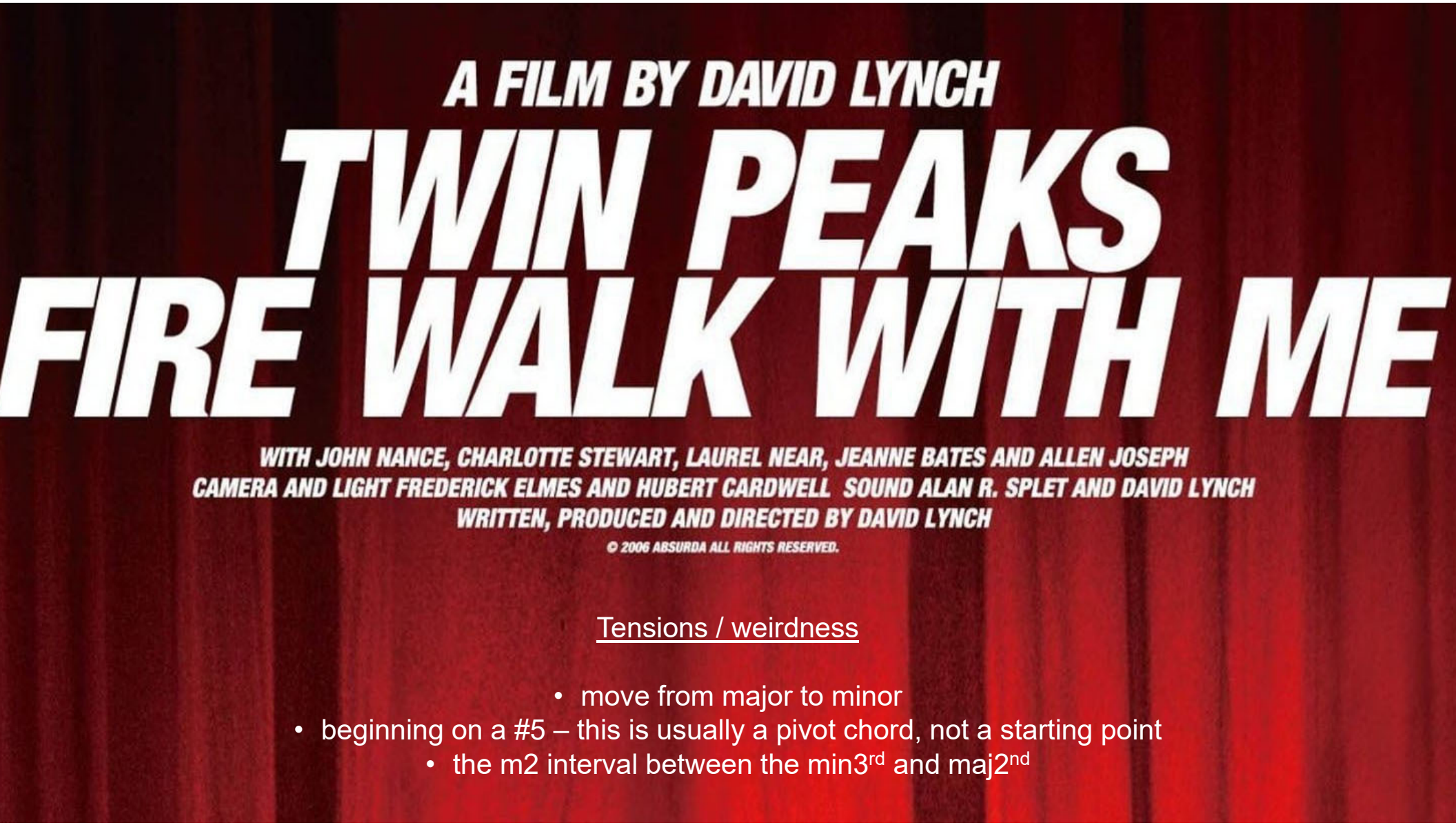
"We are all human beings....."

...and, we have dreams..."

"This voyage was Don's"

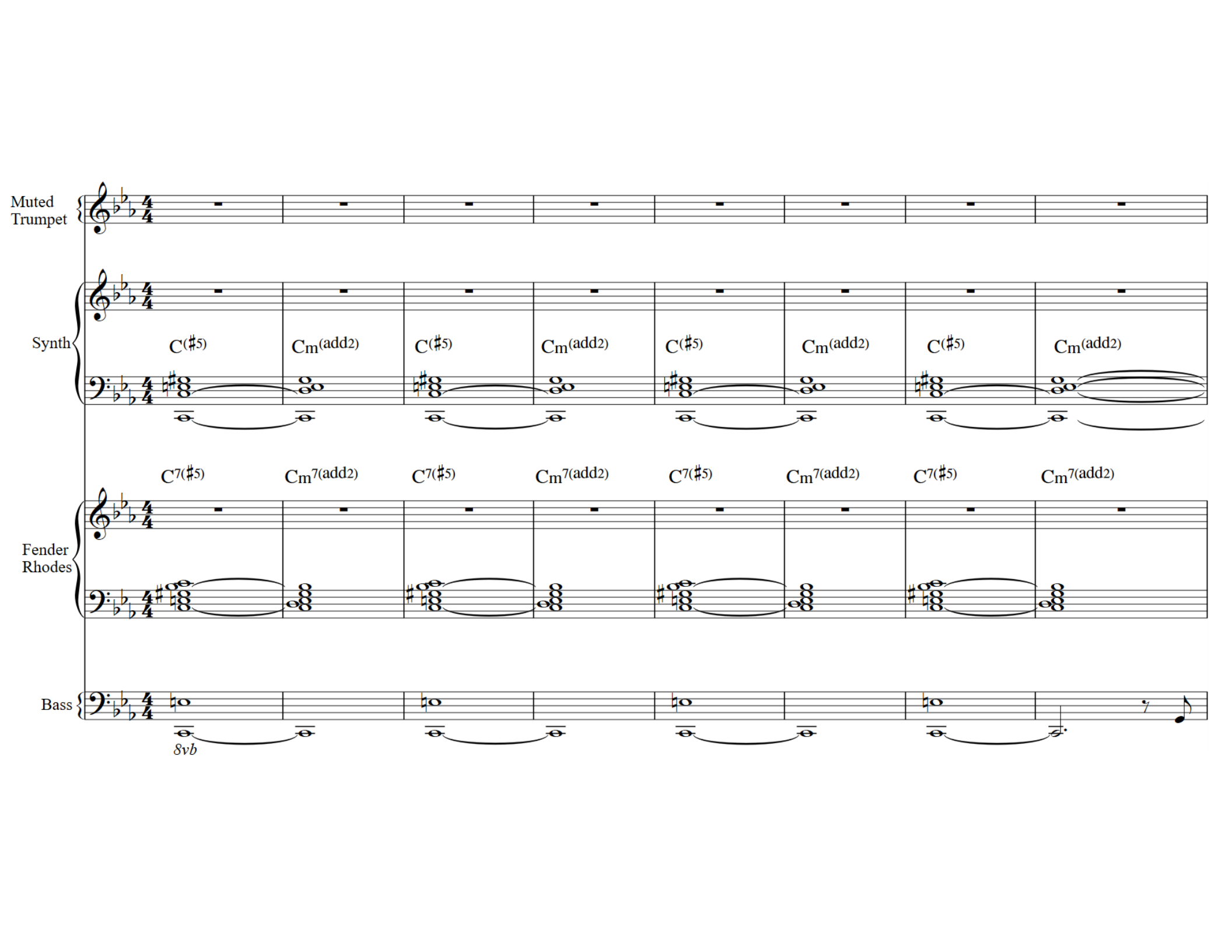



A FILM BY DAVID LYNCH
TWIN PEAKS
FIRE WALK WITH ME
WITH JOHN NANCE, CHARLOTTE STEWART, LAUREL NEAR, JEANNE BATES AND ALLEN JOSEPH
CAMERA AND LIGHT FREDERICK ELMES AND HUBERT CARDWELL SOUND ALAN R. SPLET AND DAVID LYNCH
WRITTEN, PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY DAVID LYNCH
© 2006 ABSURDA ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



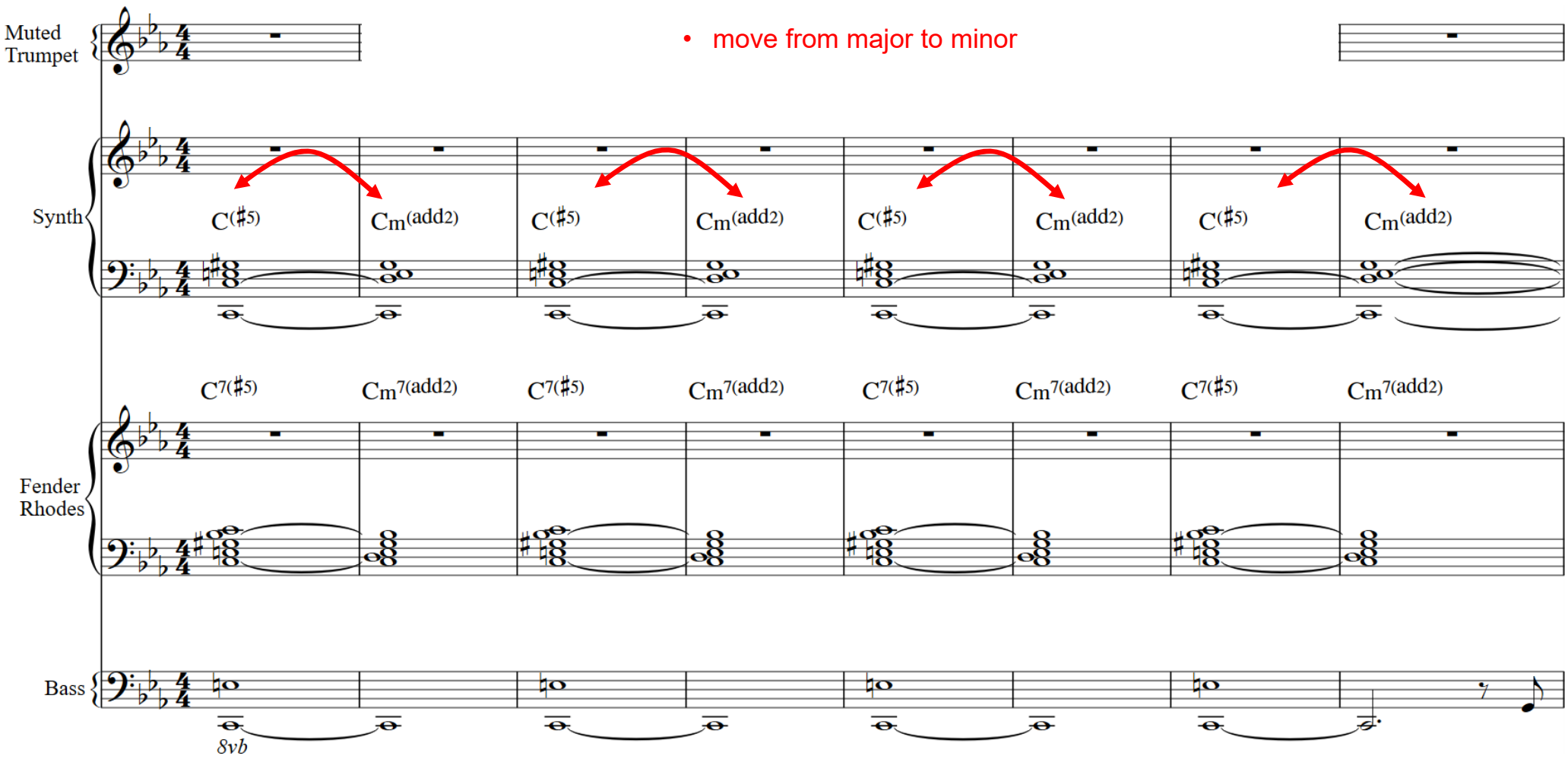
Tensions / weirdness

- move from major to minor
- beginning on a #5 – this is usually a pivot chord, not a starting point
- the m2 interval between the min3rd and maj2nd


Muted Trumpet
Synth
C(♯5)
Cm(add2)
C(♯5)
Cm(add2)
C(♯5)
Cm(add2)
C(♯5)
Cm(add2)
C7(♯5)
Cm7(add2)
C7(♯5)
Cm7(add2)
C7(♯5)
Cm7(add2)
C7(♯5)
Cm7(add2)
Fender Rhodes
Bass
8vb

Tensions / weirdness

- move from major to minor



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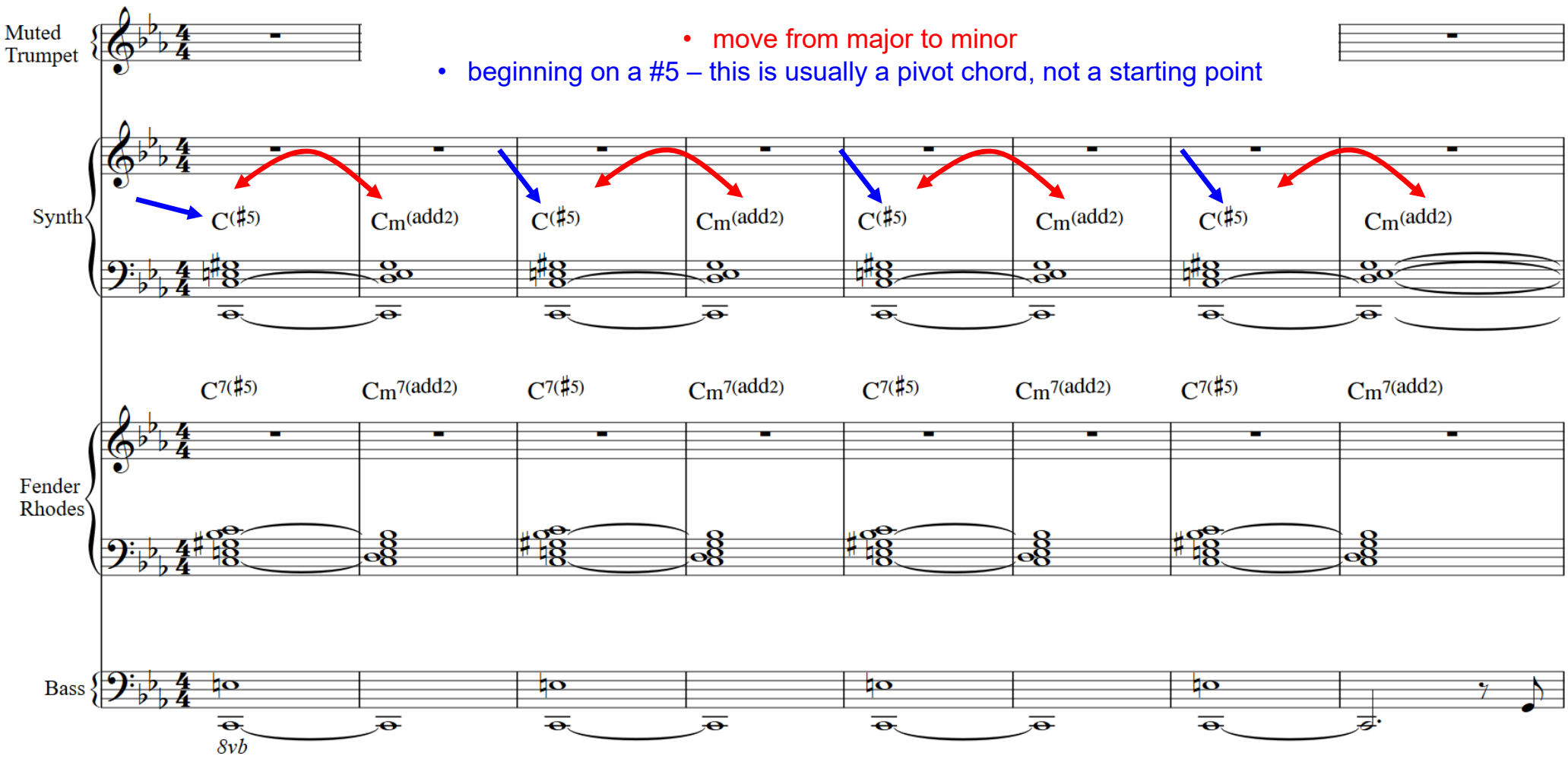

Tensions / weirdness

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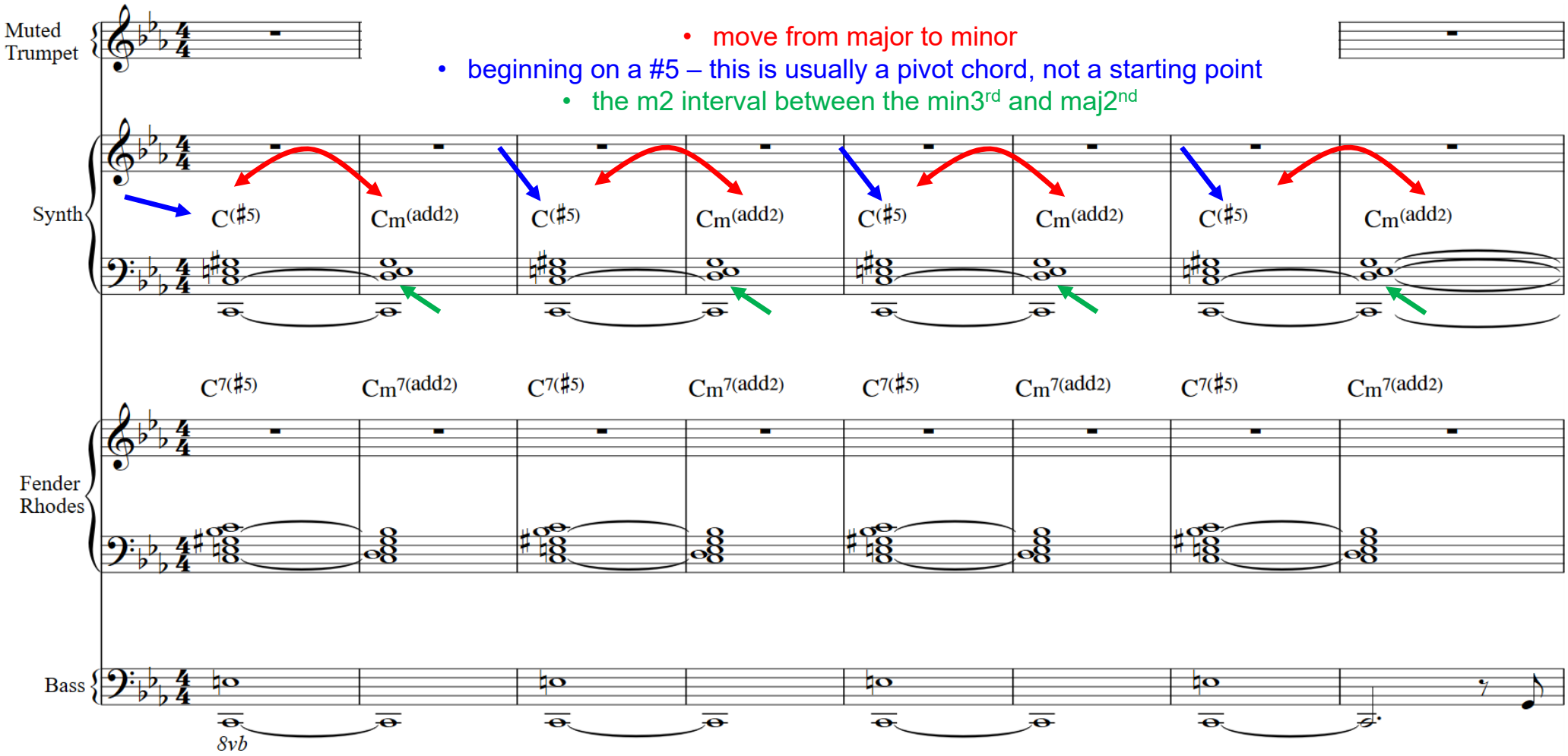


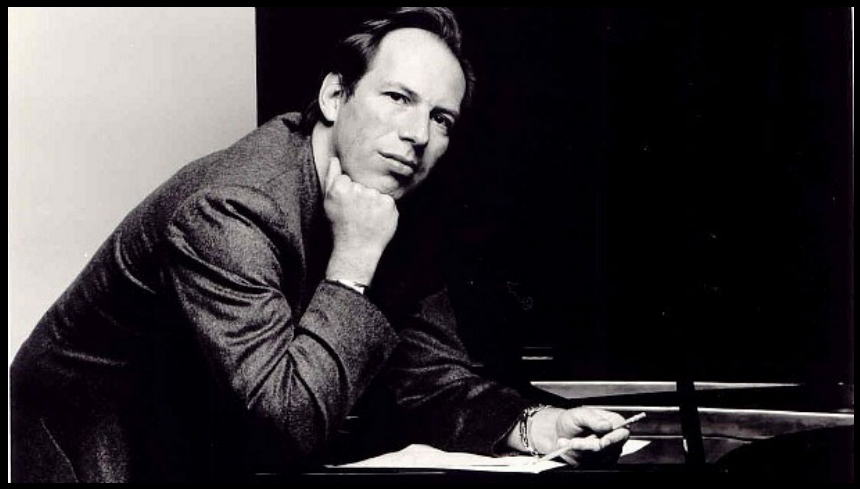
9
Muted Trumpet
Fm7
Cm(add2)
Fm(add2)
Cm
Ab
Fm
Fm/G
G
Synth
Fm7
Cm(add9)
Cm
Fm(add2)
Cm(add9)
Ab
Fm
Fm/G
G
Fender Rhodes
Bass

17
Muted Trumpet
Cm(add2)
Fm7
Cm(add9)
Fm(add2)
Cm
Fm/A♭
Dm7(♭5)/G
Cm
Synth
Cm(add9)
Fm7
Cm(add9)
Fm(add2)
Cm(add9)
Fm/A♭
Fm/G
G
Cm
Fender Rhodes
Bass

MAN OF STEEL

Opening titles

Audiences spoke of being ‘overcome’ and ‘overwhelmed’ by the music for the opening sequence



MAN OF MUSIC PRODUCTION

How ? - listen to the music first

“…what kind of sonic world am I going to pour this melody into…”

“What’s the sonic world we’re going to pour this tune into.”

Hans Zimmer
(composer)

“[music] is like a magical thing; you can’t put your finger on it. If you could, it wouldn’t be magical.”

Jack Snyder
(director)

Opening titles

How does the music work ?

Why is it there ?

What does it do that words and images alone can’t do ?

How does it make you feel ?

How does it bring the film closer to you ?

How does it do it ? -

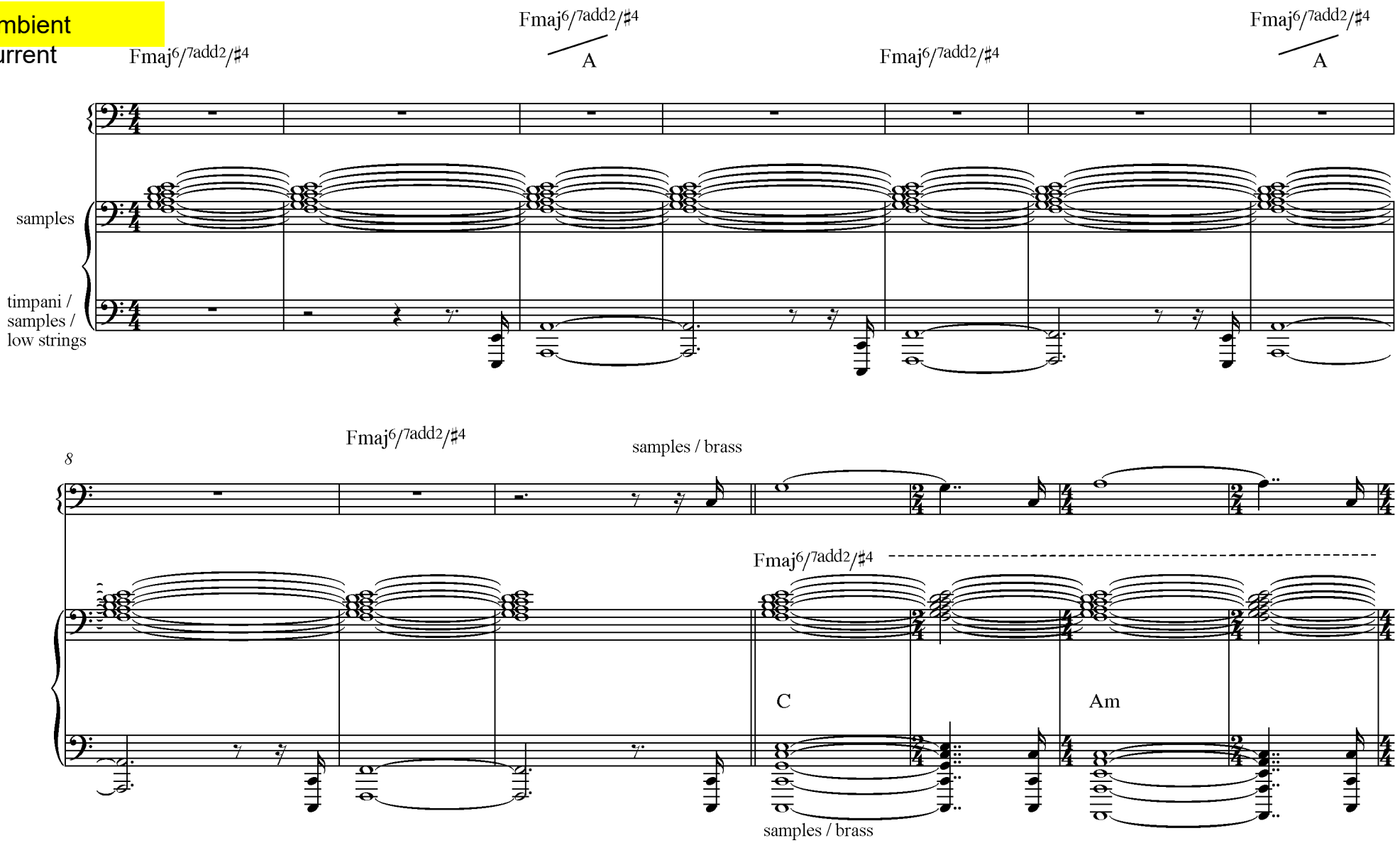
- texture, orchestration, harmony, production

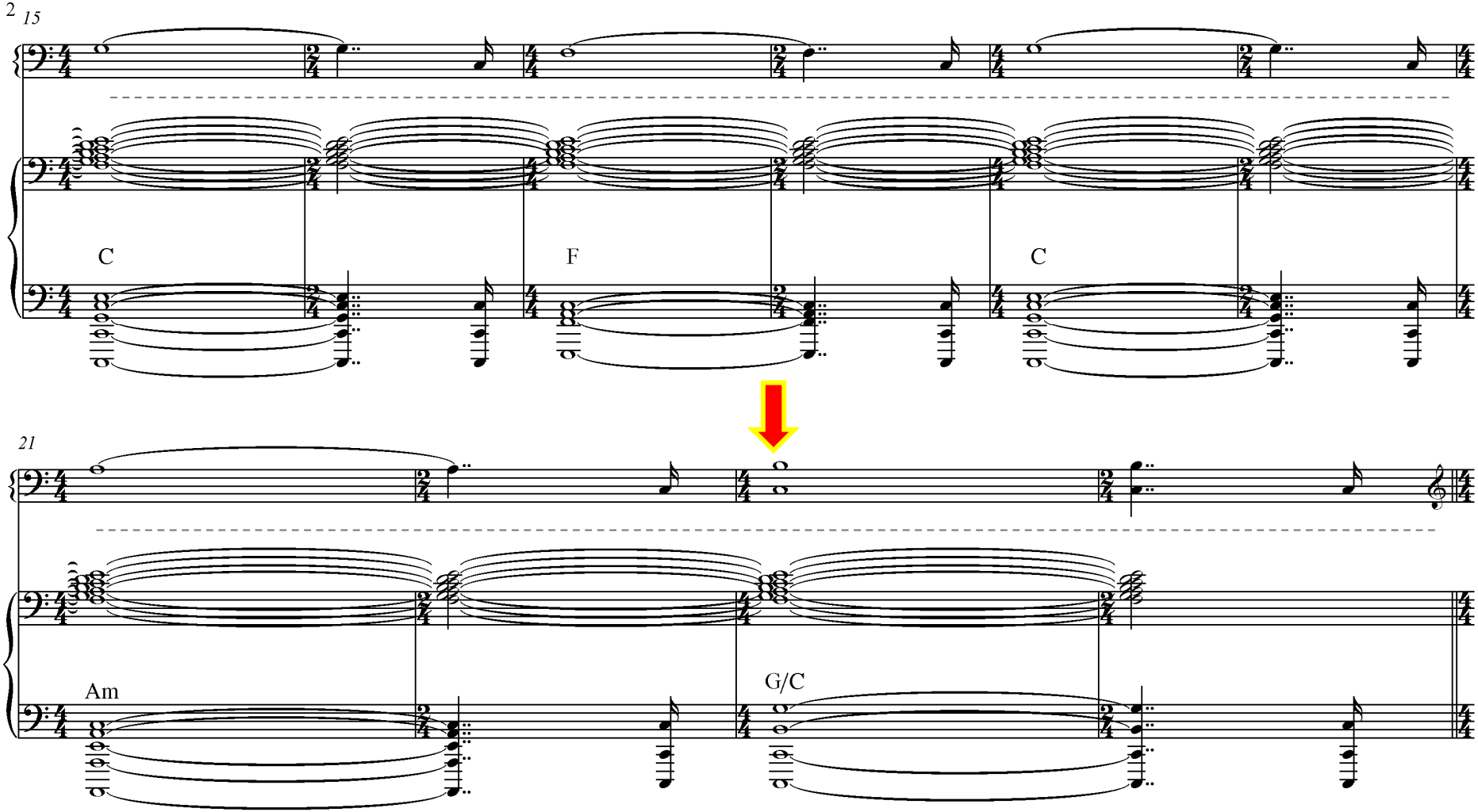
Watch the opening sequence

Are there any ‘hit points’

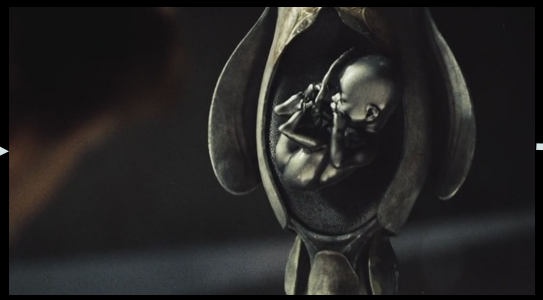
Ambient

current

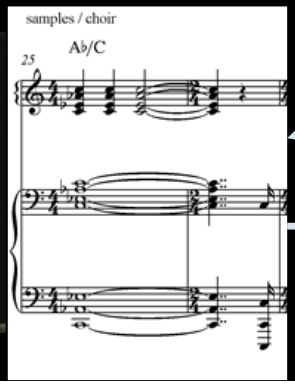


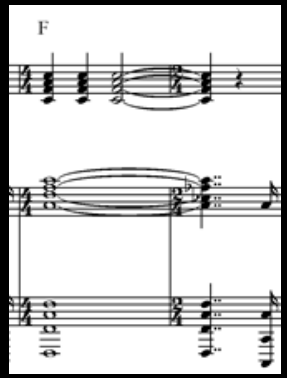

2
15
C
F
C
21
Am
G/C

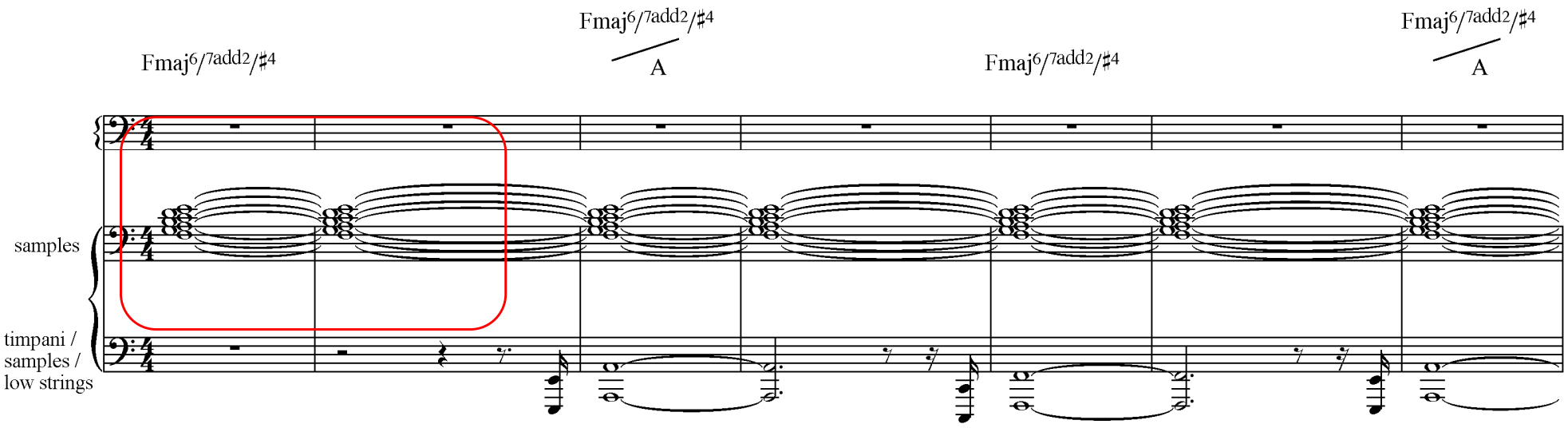
The birth scene is when the theme begins



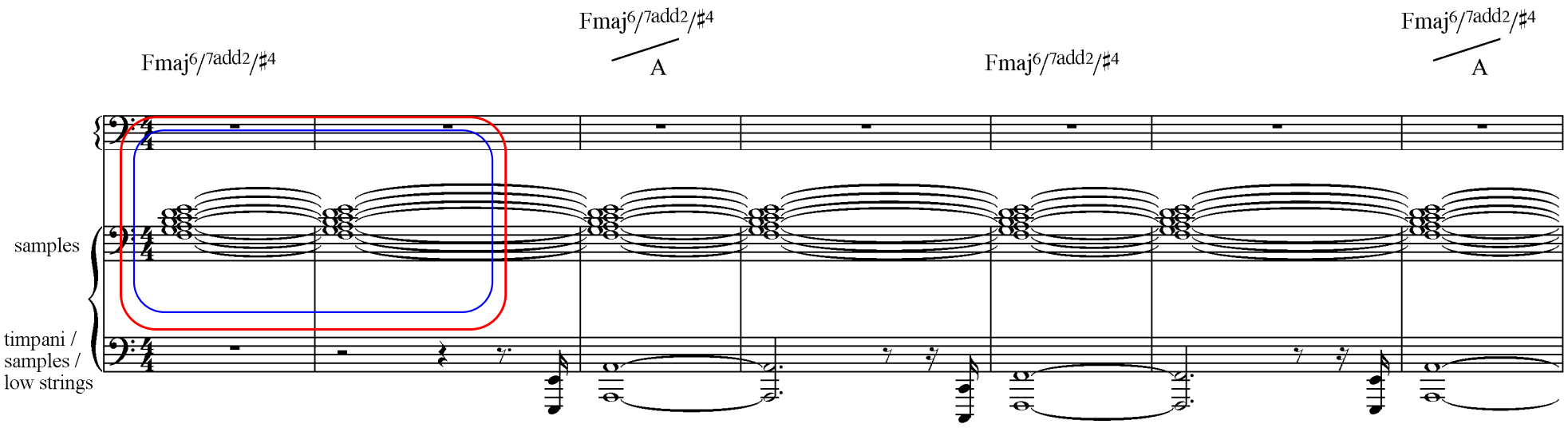
The ‘difficult’ chord



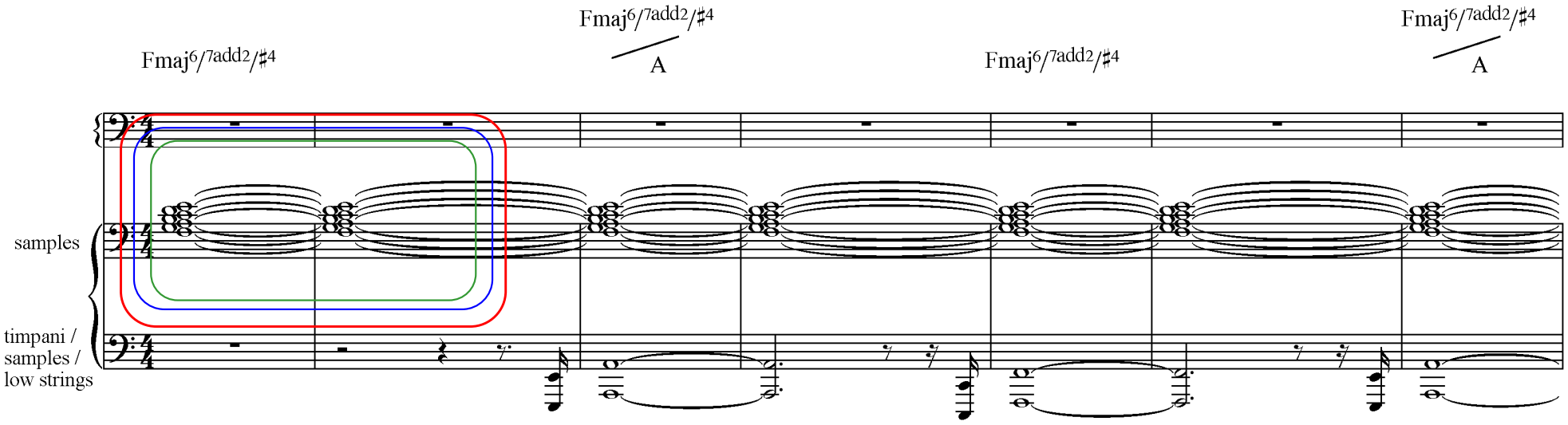




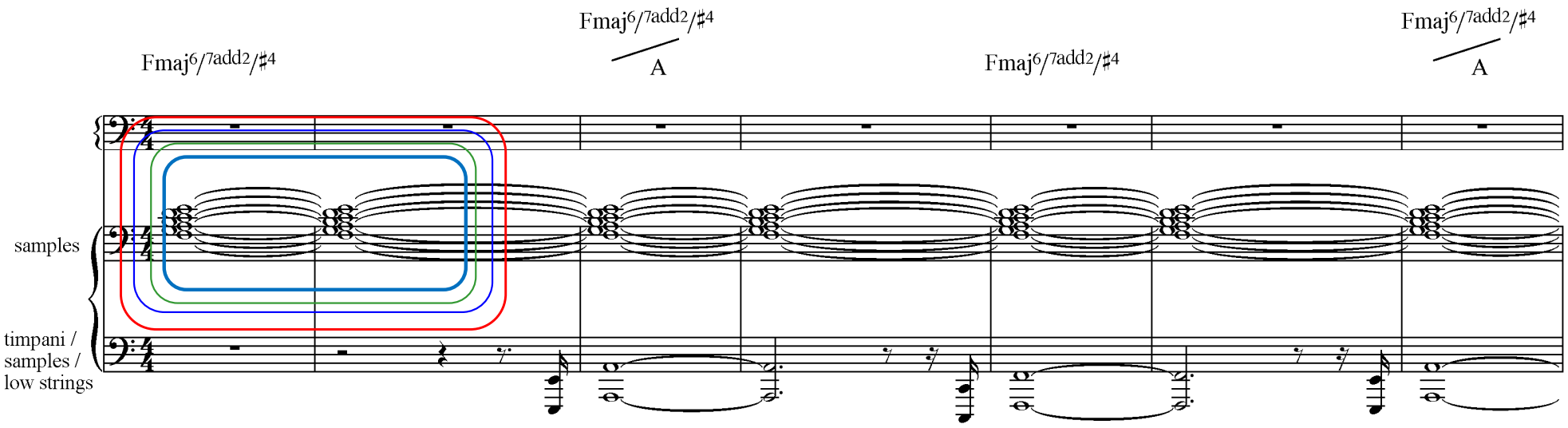
This chord is several chords. Look and you will find an **Fmaj7**.



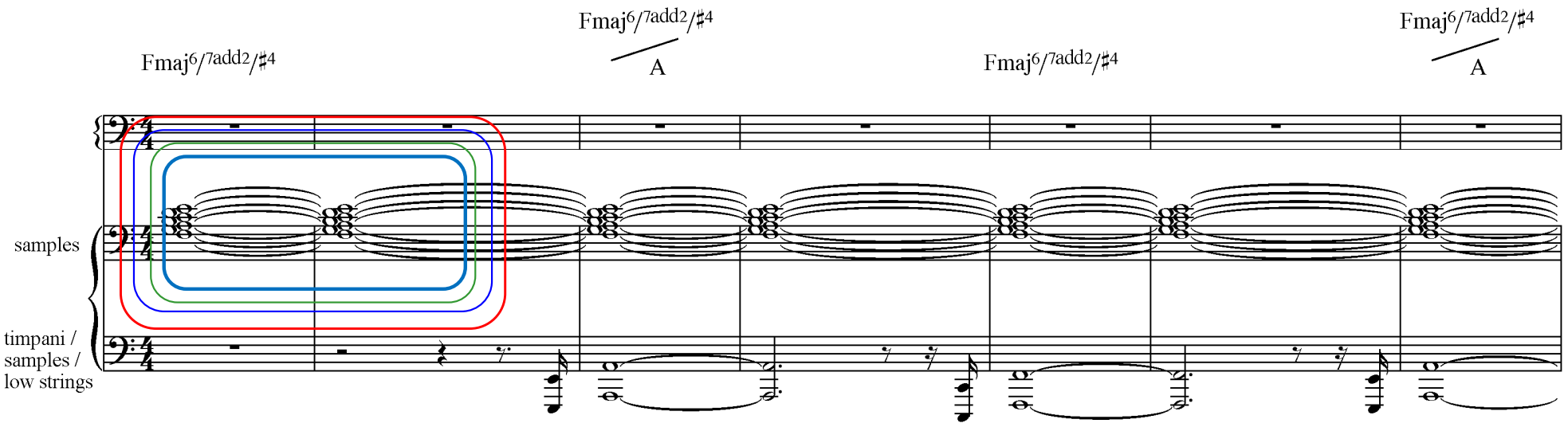
This chord is several chords. Look and you will find an **Fmaj7**. Then you'll find a **G chord**.



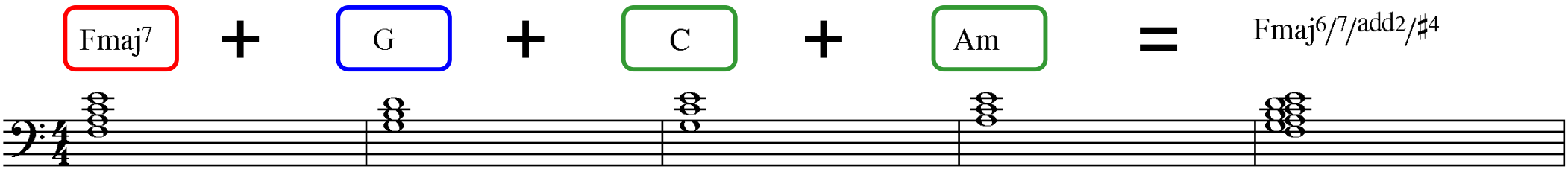
This chord is several chords. Look and you will find an **Fmaj7**. Then you'll find a **G chord**.
Then you'll find a **C chord**.

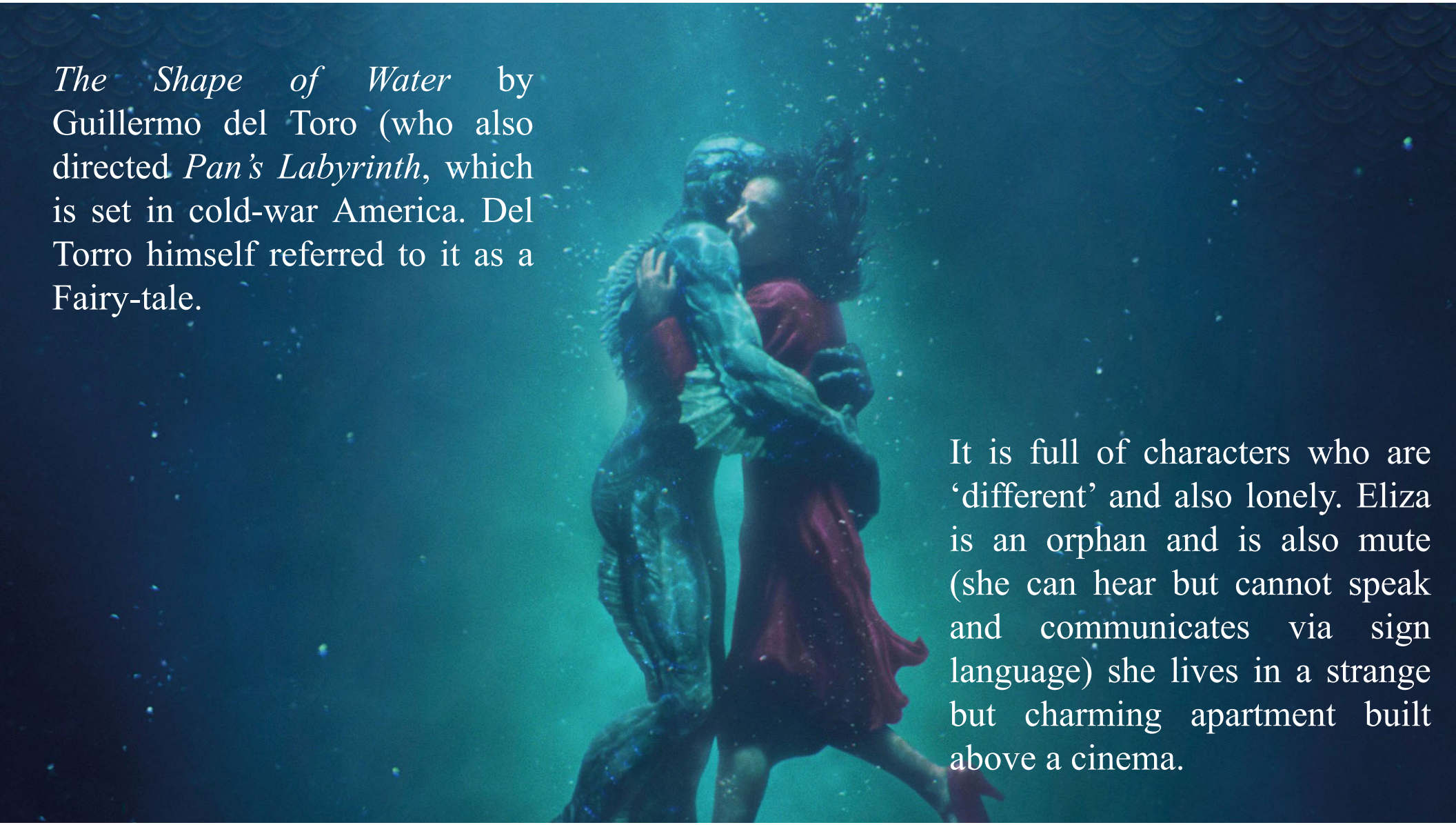


This chord is several chords. Look and you will find an **Fmaj7**. Then you'll find a **G chord**.
Then you'll find a **C chord**. Then you'll find an **Am chord**



Or, put simply





The Shape of Water by Guillermo del Toro (who also directed *Pan's Labyrinth*, which is set in cold-war America. Del Torro himself referred to it as a Fairy-tale.

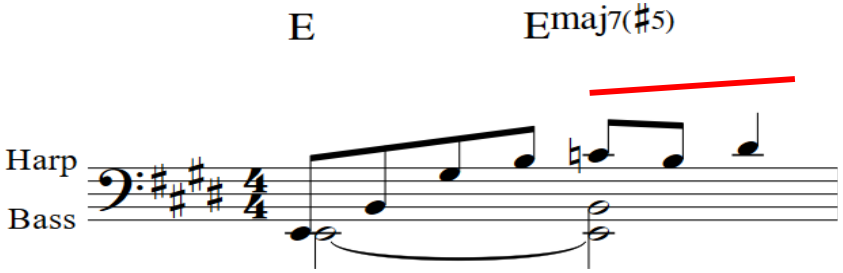
It is full of characters who are 'different' and also lonely. Eliza is an orphan and is also mute (she can hear but cannot speak and communicates via sign language) she lives in a strange but charming apartment built above a cinema.

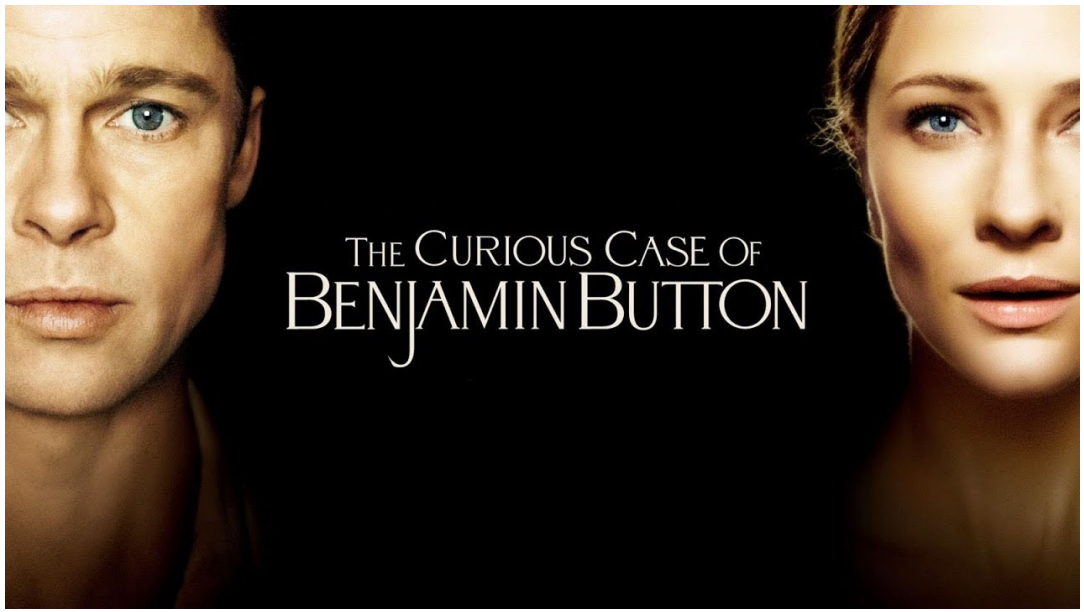
She works at a research facility, cleaning labs. Her boss is security supervisor Strickland, an awful, cruel and prejudiced man. We join the story shortly before Strickland returns to the lab following a trip to the Amazon, with a creature he calls ‘the asset’ - a water dwelling creature but one which can also stand on two legs and has two breathing systems.

The creature is being studied for its military applications. After a number of secret visits to the lab by Eliza, she develops a connection with the creature, and when the lab’s real intentions become clear she acts to save him.

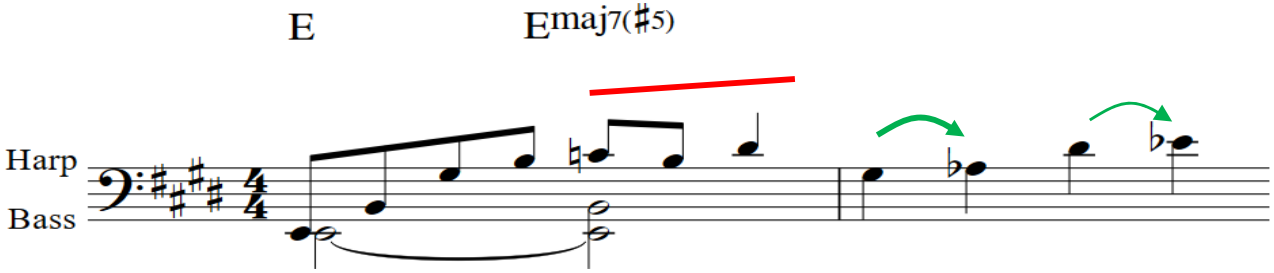
The title track to Alexandre Desplat's score for *The Shape of Water* is similar to his music for The *Curious Case of Benjamin Button*.

Bar 1 of the transcription below (fig.27) is from the first bar of a piece called 'Postcards' from *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. The chords in this bar appear regularly throughout the cue.



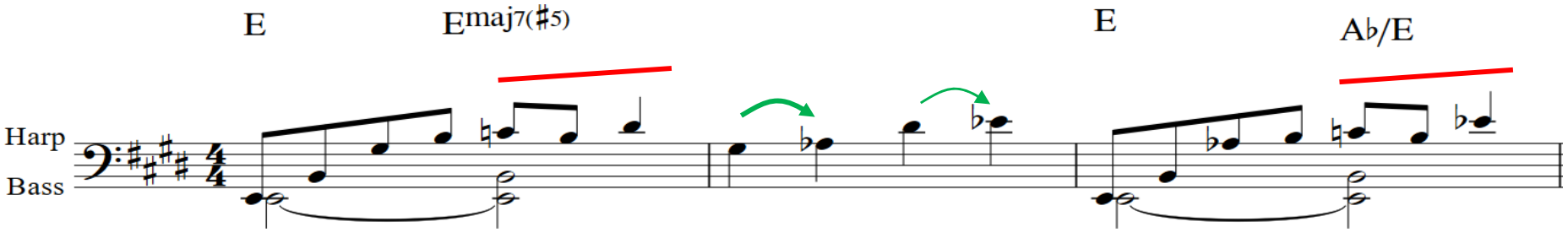


In bar two I have placed enharmonic equivalents alongside two of the notes to show a different way of contextualising them (G# becomes Ab and D# becomes Eb).



In bar two I have placed enharmonic equivalents alongside two of the notes to show a different way of contextualising them (G# becomes Ab and D# becomes Eb).

In bar 3 I have rewritten bar 1, using the new enharmonic different notes, to exaggerate the different ways we can contextualise, or 'feel' the harmony. In reality bar 1 would remain written as it currently is, **but looking at bar 3 simply shows an alternative way it can be felt. If you play this you will definitely hear or feel the 'Ab' chord over the E and B notes.**



The reasons that pieces like this work, and sound **'dreamy'** is not just because of the textures, but because of the existence of two different but parallel ways of feeling them.

The first cue from *The Shape of Water* is similar in that, like 'Postcards', it features chords which have **two interpretations,** hence the dreamy effect

The chord in bar 2 can be felt as a $D^{(\#5)}$ but also $Gm9^{(maj7)}/D$

How we **feel** the harmonies depend on how we hear the **Bb, A and F#.**

This mild confusion is what generates the dreamy feel

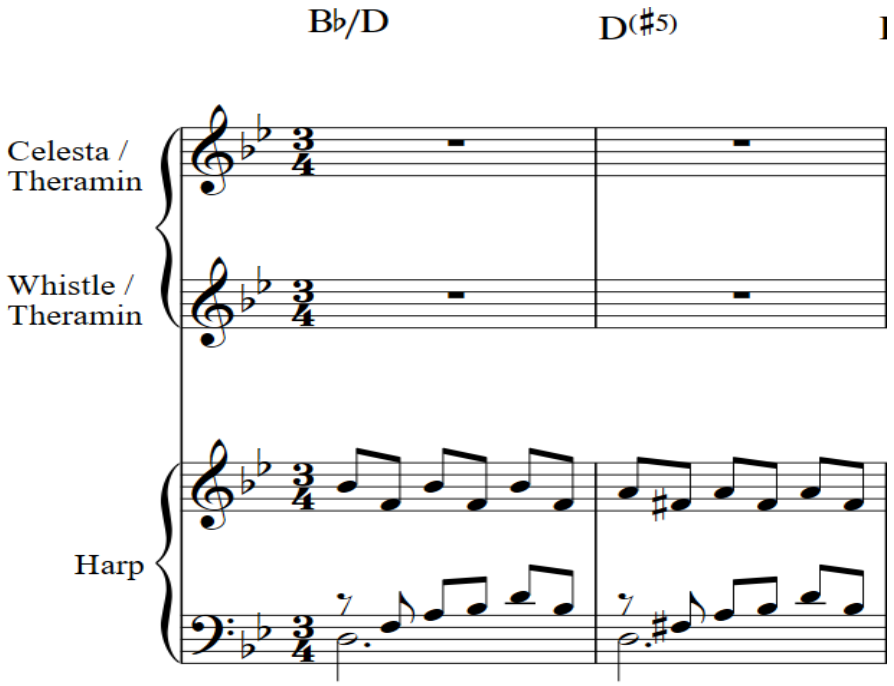
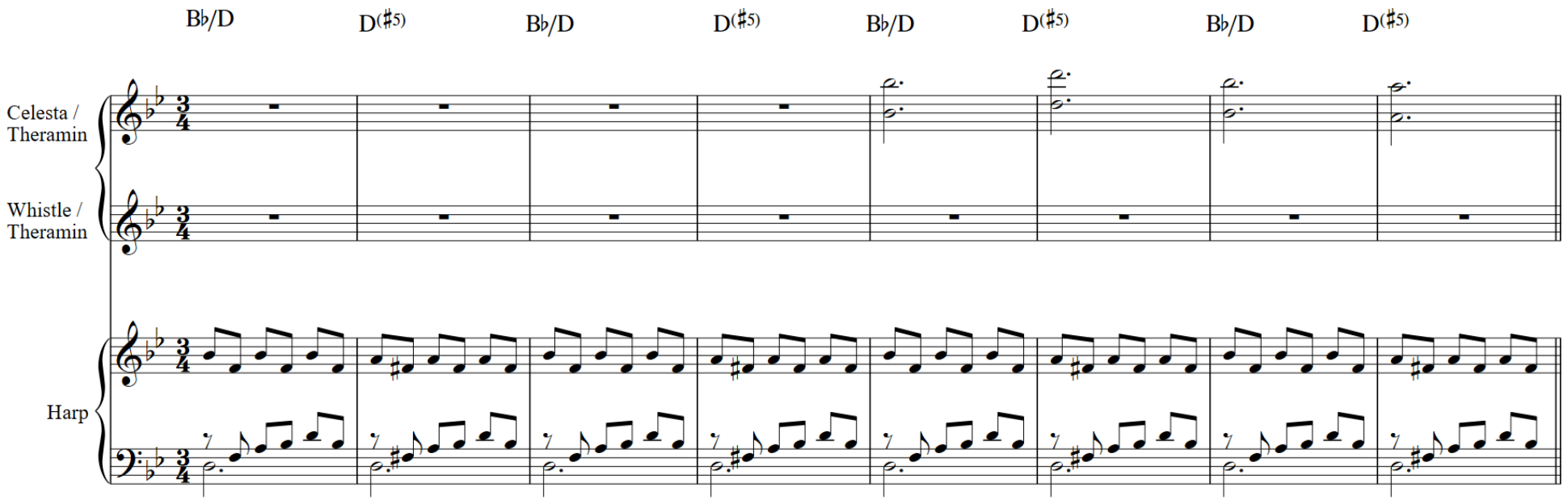
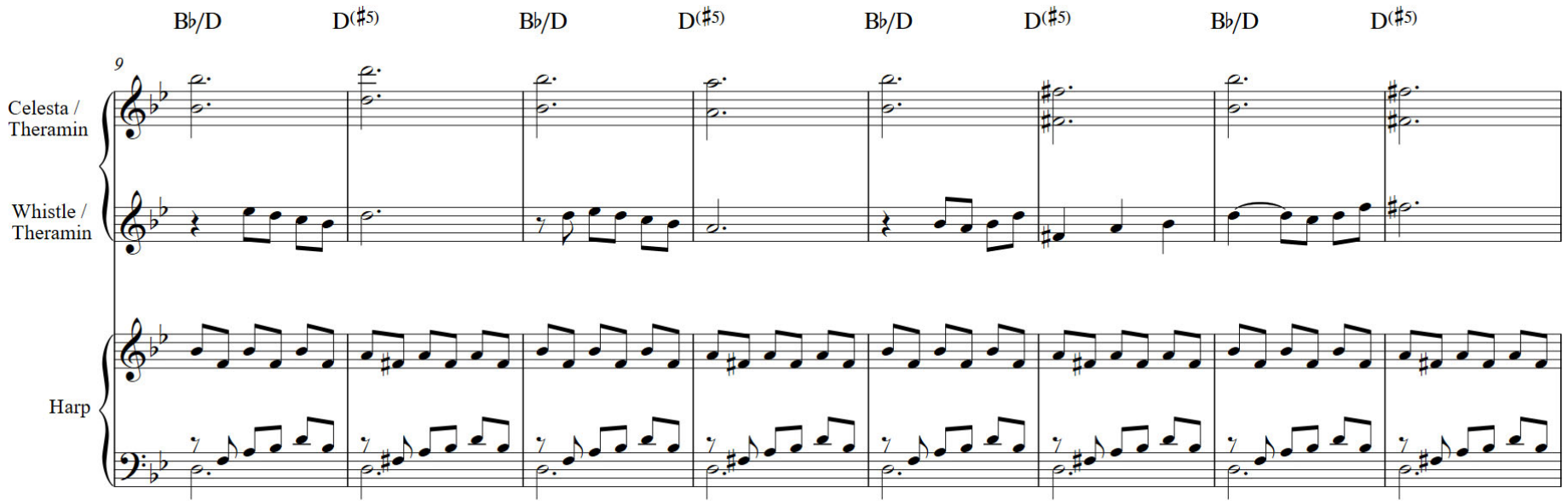


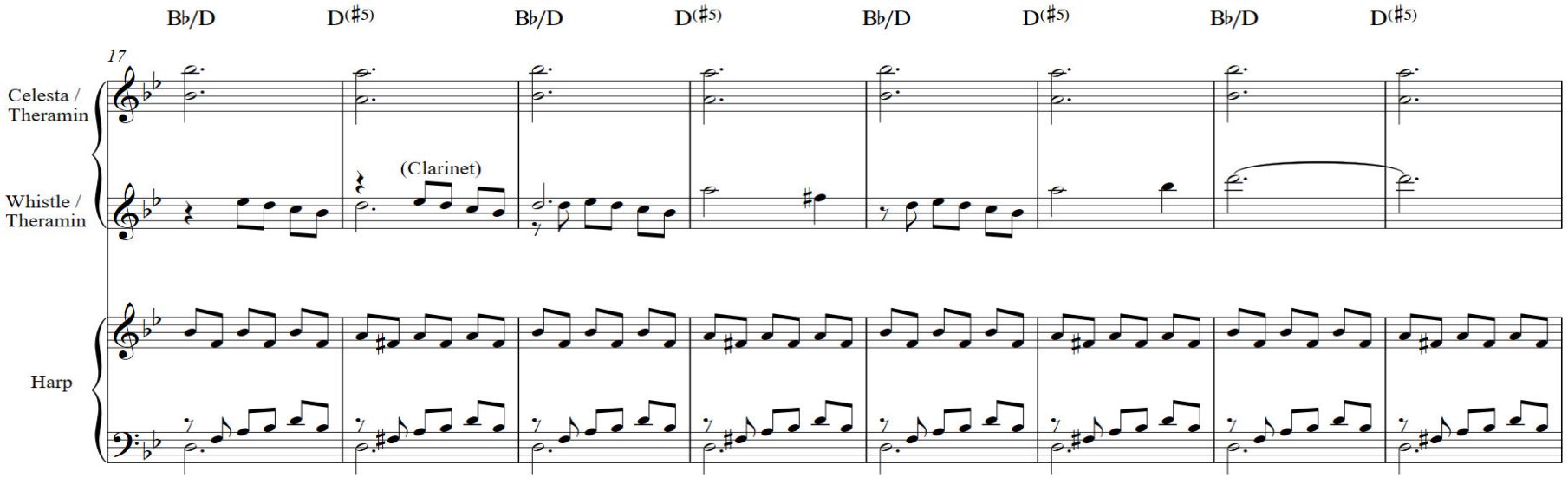
Figure: 27a **Track:** 'The Shape of Water' **Audio timing:** 00.00 **Film Cue Sync:** 00.00.35



Whistle 8va throughout



Ultimately just as pictures are affected by music, so music is affected by pictures. This introductory theme, with its distinctive textures, odd harmonies and innocent emotional associations, is also made odder by the really excellent and evocative underwater sequence. Straight away the human whistle has a mesmerising vagueness to it, which, alongside the other musical characteristics, captures and compliments the blurry, indistinct underwater images beautifully.



Peter Bradshaw, writing in the *Guardian*, said:

> *"It is a* Beauty and the Beast *fable where both get to be beautiful and neither has to be beastly. [It exists in a] dream state, like a two-hour episode of The Twilight Zone written by Puccini."*
>
> Peter Bradshaw, *The Guardian*, 15th Feb, 2018).

This is an interesting quote because musically Desplat's score really does occupy the territory that exists between Fairy-tale and Sci-fi very well. A large part of the reason why a film critic would contextualise the film this way is down to the music. The movie takes its name from Plato's idea that in its purest form, water takes the shape of an *icosahedron,* a 20-sided polyhedron, evoking the idea that beauty and humanity has many faces.