Seeing Songs

BARBARA BLOOM // MUSICAL SCORES

Selected by Stephanie Cristello

If images have voices, Barbara Bloom gives them resonance. The following selection of works, produced by the artist for Issue 05 of THE SEEN, consists of five compositions from the series entitled *Songs*. In contextualizing these works, the vocabulary of music is helpful in at least a few ways. For Bloom, the inflection (read: tone) of the image is one defined not only by 'composition'—a term that refers to organizational representation in visual art, as well as its notational function in music—but also in the linguistic comparisons that come along with appropriation of the score as a form. For example, the presumed 'literacy' of the image is mirrored by the assumption that one can 'read' music. In a more practical sense, the works function as expressions of music terminology in and of themselves—after all, the series consists of various found photographs suspended on a staff (*a fermata*). Though, one could also say that this conceptual method of culling, collecting, and display acts as a type of pause or extension of the viewer's attentiveness to Bloom's source material. In their relationship to time, the pace of the images—their tempo, pitch, and syncopation—unfolds like a melody in a similar durational fashion. ——————————————————————————————— Barbara Bloom: the conductor of images. ——————————————————————————————— In any combination of these elements, each of Bloom's *Songs* performs in a cadence that is at once referential, acutely observational, and critical. We see their sounds: pictures of black and white advertisements slide in elaborate scales, images of disparate crowds are grouped tightly together as if they were somehow united, or the poignant humor in depicting 'musical chairs.' Every page is a silent symphony. In each of these works, Bloom articulates the capacity to translate the senses, allowing sight and sound to exist as one. The rest is for the reader to compose.

A series of subjective, yet related, images.

Safe, 1999. Framed digital print (still from Alfred Hitchcock's *Marnie* (1964) depicting the gloved hand of actress Tippi Hedren), hinged onto wall, wall safe, mounted into wall. 19 x 23 inches (Image) and 12 x 15.75 x 4 inches (safe). Image courtesy of Galerie Gisela Capitain and the Pérez Art Museum Miami.

Barbara Bloom, *Steinway Piano Carpet*, 2010. Wool rug, 90 x 72 inches.

Mrs. and Mr. V.N. Carl Mydans photograph of Véra Nabokov with reflection of her husband Vladimir Nabokov at their home in Ithaca, New York, 1958. Mr. and Mrs. genius. The photograph of Véra typing is in the typewriter. Véra is the perfect artist's wife and is brilliant. Vladimir is in the picture but disappears from its sculptural re-creation. The magician is in the mirror. Caption courtesy of *A Picture, A Thousand Words* press release, David Lewis Gallery May 5–June 18, 2017.

Barbara Bloom, *Songs of the Waves*, 2008. Archival digital print, 24 x 30 inches. Image courtesy of David Lewis Gallery.

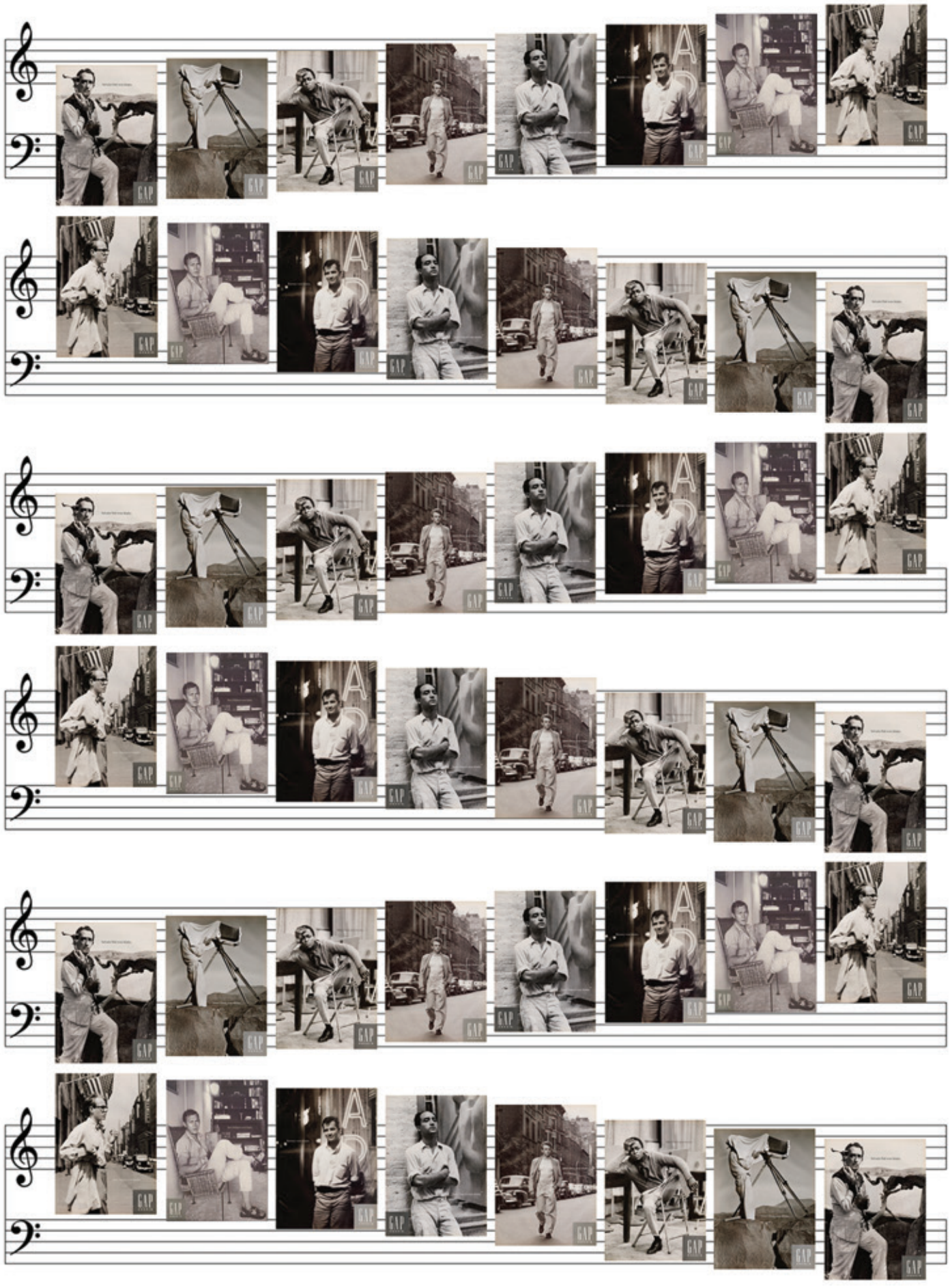
The Ideal Home.
This one is all about being Bloom. And: a depiction of an ideal world. Three images from left to right:

—In James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom describes an ideal home (slipping into bizarre particularity.) In Perec's *Life: A User's Guide*, the interior decorator Henri Fleury includes a doll-house version of Leopold Bloom's description of this ideal home in a house he decorates. This second text is set inside the original text from *Ulysses*. —Anonymous photograph of James Joyce examining a text with a magnifying glass. The photograph includes a .46€ commemorative stamp depicting Georges Perec. Issued in France, 2002. —Layering of images of ideal homes, including a drawing by Barbara Bloom's father of an ideal home.

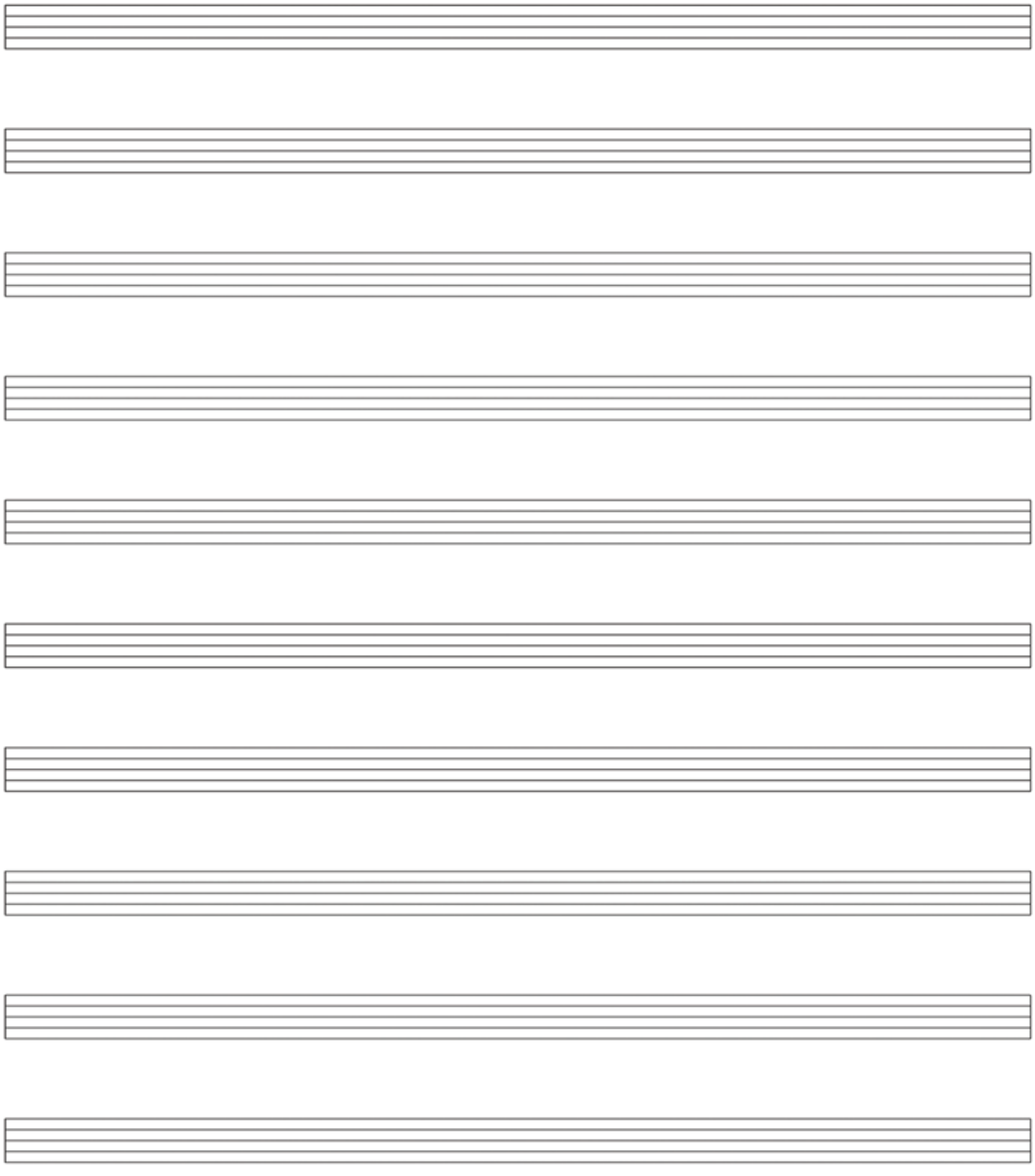
Caption courtesy of A Picture, *A Thousand Words* press release, David Lewis Gallery May 5–June 18, 2017.

Belief Systems

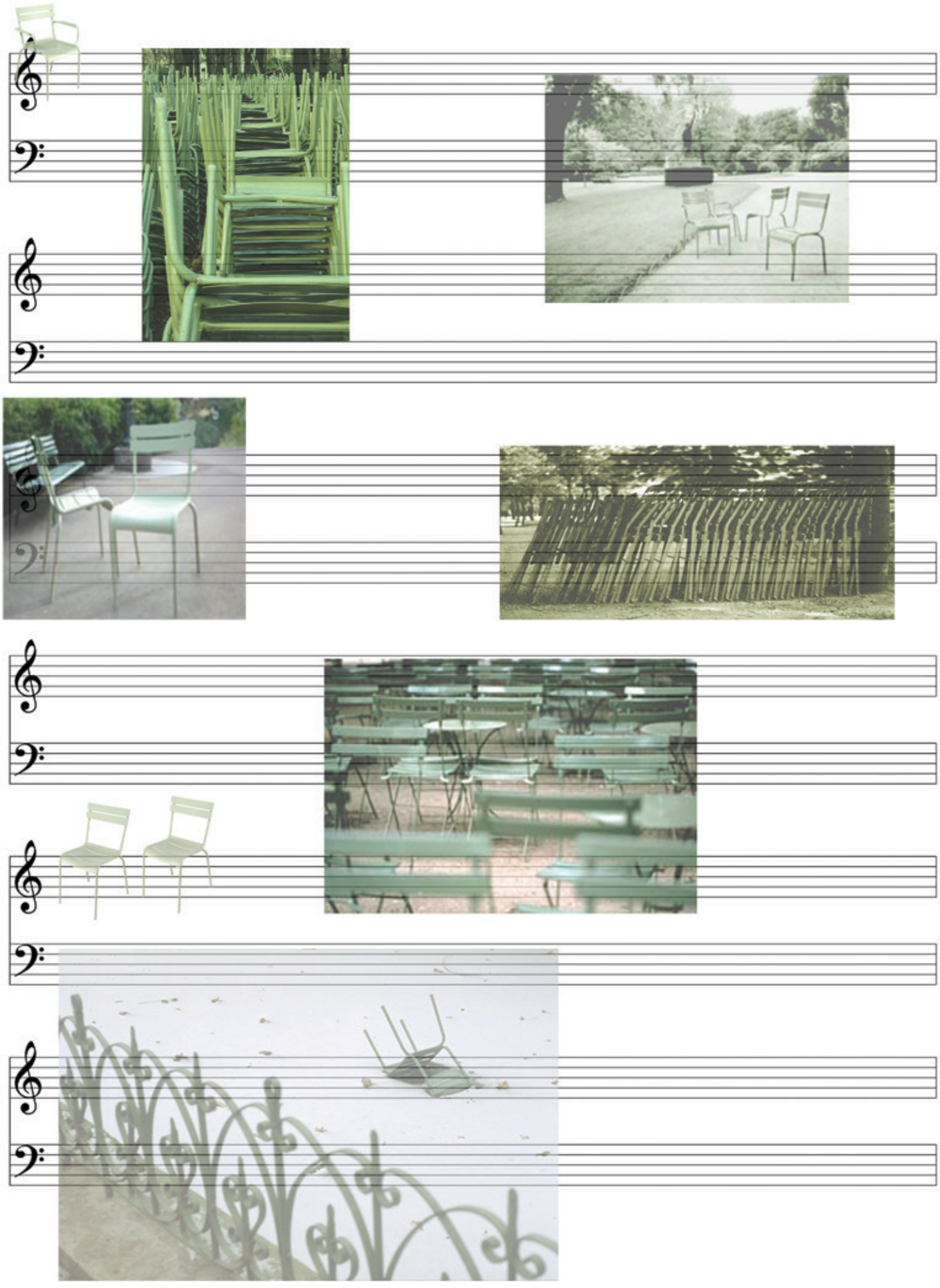
Gap Scales
(me too)

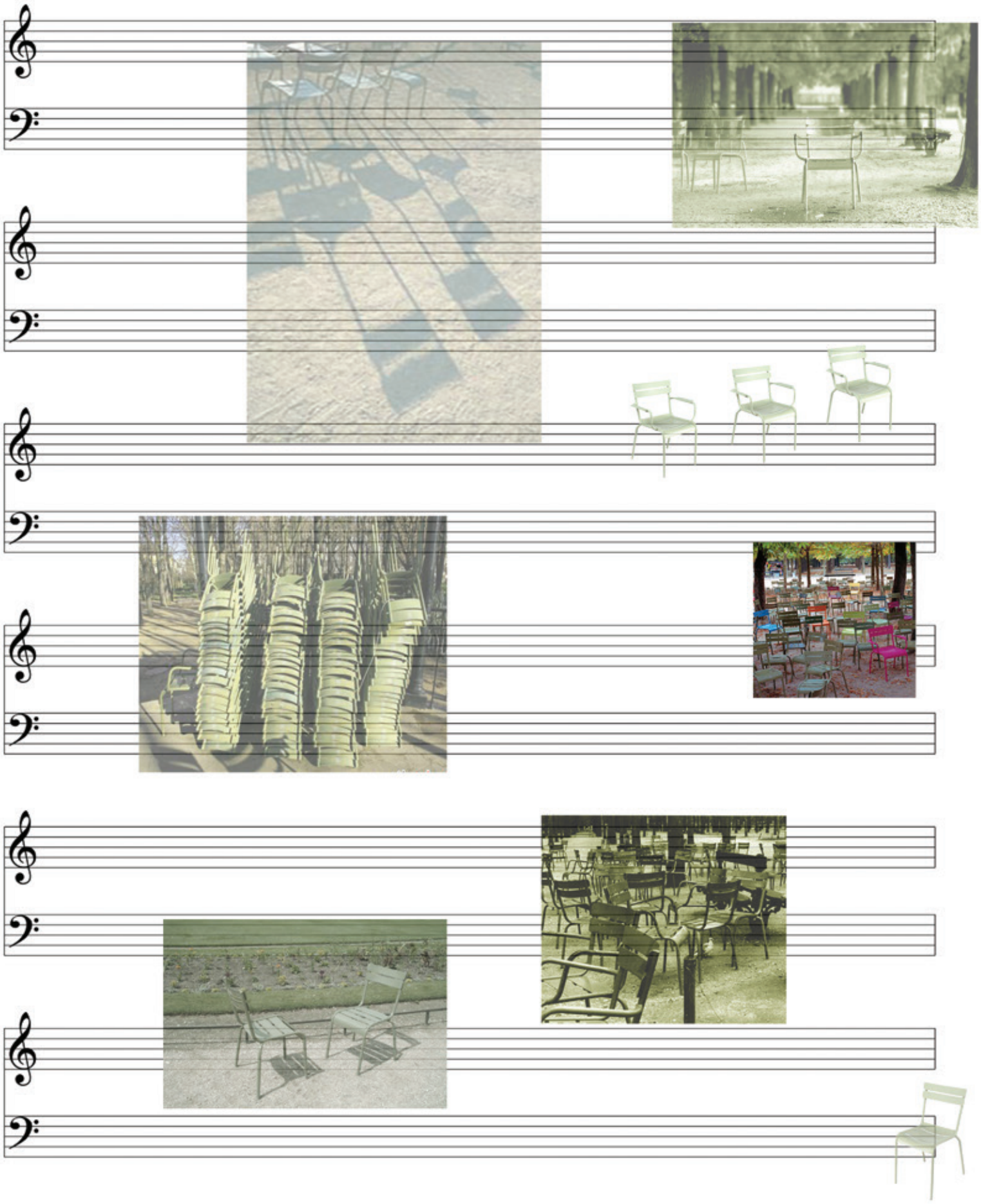
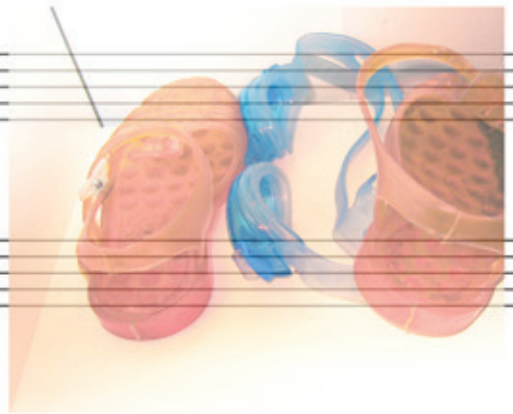
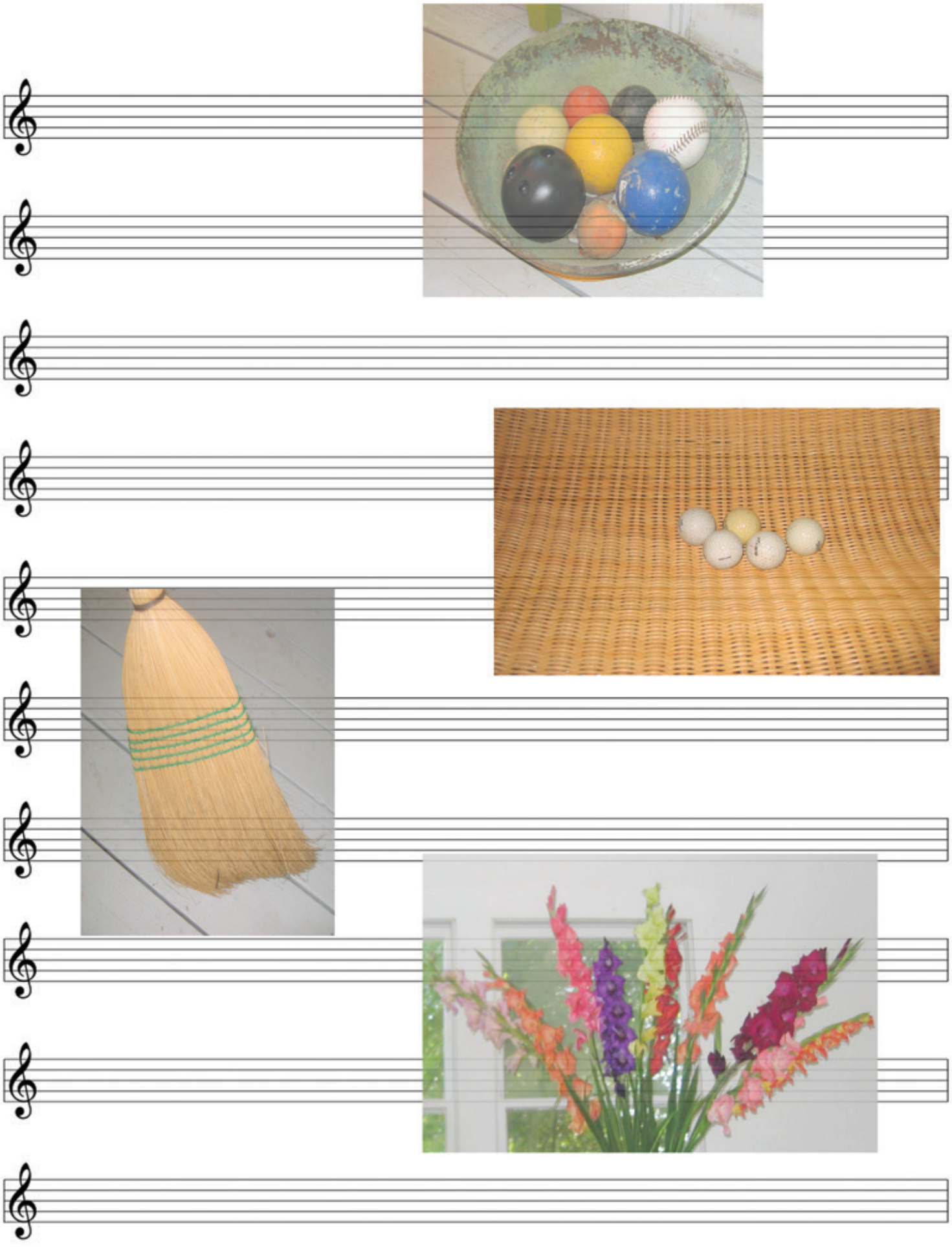


Crowd Song



Luxembourg Garden Chairs
(Civilized Song)





MaHong's Song