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WHERE COMPOSITION MEETS IMPROVISATION

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AND THE OCEAN TAUGHT ME: WHERE COMPOSITION MEETS IMPROVISATION

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ABSTRACT

This document aims to demonstrate the need for a college-level curriculum that teaches composers to create successful works of improvisational music, to preset a method which helps composition students develop the tools they need to explore improvisation, and to demonstrate the creative possibilities of carefully controlled improvisation. Because there are few resources available to teach students to compose improvisational music, the methodology proposed here specifically focuses on non-idiomatic and experimental improvisation. This curriculum is sound-oriented, performer-focused, and stresses clarity of notation and critical understanding of a composer's own creative decisions.

This document is accompanied by an original composition, *And the Ocean Taught Me...* which utilizes carefully controlled improvisation to create specific programmatic affects. This piece is written for soprano voice, flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, violin, viola, cello, contrabass, and two percussionists. The soprano's text is a setting of an original piece of flash fiction and incorporates sections of both sung and spoken word.

I. INTRODUCTION

Composing works for an improvisational soloist or ensemble is, in many ways, a separate skill from composing music which uses standard notation. One advantage of writing music with standard notation in the 21st century is the existence of notation software which allows the composer to listen to an approximation of their music before they give it to performers. In contrast, the composer of an improvisational piece will not often have the advantage of hearing their work outside of a live rehearsal, depending on the method of notation they choose. Being able to effectively notate and "hear" the possibilities of and improvisational piece before it is performed is a skill which students can learn only through experience. However, the teaching material which exists in this area of composition is extremely sparse, leaving any student interested in creating this type of music to develop these skills largely through a frustrating process of undirected trial and error.

The primary aim of this project is to develop a resource for composers and instructors interested in the process of writing works of improvisational music. This text will demonstrate a teaching method which guides students to develop and critically evaluate their improvisation ideas, to notate these ideas clearly, and to effectively work with performers to realize these ideas.

What is Improvisation? Discussion of Terms

During the first rehearsal of an improvisational ensemble I directed, I asked the students the question, "What is improvisational music?" One student immediately raised their hand and, half jokingly, answered, "It's when everyone does whatever they want." While this may not have

been the most precise definition, it does get to the center of a surprisingly contentious discussion. Do improvisers really get to play "whatever they want?" If not, where do the creative choices originate? If creative musical choices originate with the performers, can anyone claim to have "composed" the work at all? While these questions will be explored in detail in later chapters, some of the answers lie in what exactly is meant by "improvisation."

Even among experts in the field, the definition of the term "improvisation" is far from unified. Some choose to define improvisation through examples from specific musical idioms like jazz.[1] Others define it simply as "composition in real time."[2] Still others argue that to draw hard lines around the term "improvisation" is to limit its scope and therefore its usefulness.[3] But for the purposes of this text, it will be helpful to define exactly what is meant by the term "improvisation" before I begin discussing how such music can be written.

Before defining what improvisation *is,* it may be helpful to define what improvisation is *not.* There are several other terms which are often used in conjunction with or in place of "improvisation." While experts may disagree on the exact usages of the following terms, as I will discuss at length in Chapter II, I have tried to create definitions which are clearest and agreed upon most consistently.

Free improvisation – the act of improvising, either alone or as an ensemble, with no input from a composer and no pre-determined form or parameters. Sometimes also referred to as "free music."

Indeterminacy – A mode of composition in which one or more musical parameter is left outside

1 Pamela Burnard, *Musical Creativities in Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

2 David Cope, *New Directions in Music* (Dubuque: W.C. Brown, 1984) 77-101.

3 Raymond MacDonald, Graeme Wilson, and George Lewis, *The Art of Becoming : How Group Improvisation Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

of the composer's control by design. Often used as an umbrella term for improvisation, aleatory, and chance music.

Aleatory – A mode of composition which seeks to distance or remove the composer's will from the resulting music to some extent. Chance music is a type of aleatory.

Chance music – Music which is created through chance processes. These chance processes may be performed by the composer during the composition of the score or by the performer during a performance to generate musical material.

Because the goal of this text is to provide an in-depth and focused curriculum for the composition of improvisational music, it will not directly cover aleatory or chance music, nor will it cover the performance of free improvisation. However, it is important to note that chance processes can often be used in conjunction with improvisational processes to great affect, and that some composers use improvisation as a form of aleatory.

At its core, improvisation is a mode of creating music in which both the composer and performer collaboratively contribute creative material. In many cases, this supposes the existence of a composed score which conveys directions for generating musical material. The manner and extent to which the score is notated may vary dramatically.

There exist numerous modes or genres of improvisation, each with their own preconceived methods and idioms, for example the improvised classical cadenza, improvised jazz solos, and many types of folk music. While there are portions of this text which may be of use to performers or composers of these musical styles, this text mainly aims to develop a method to guide composers through the process of creating new works which are non-idiomatic, or which do not conform to or presuppose the rules of any given improvisation idiom.

With these points in mind, when the terms “improvisation” or “improvisational composition” are used throughout this text, they assumes the following definition:

Improvisation – A work of music to which both the composer and performer(s) contribute substantial creative material, which is played from a composed score or instructions, and which does not suppose any pre-conceived musical idiom.

While it is true that performers of improvisational pieces take on some of the same responsibilities as a composer, making creative divisions and developing musical material within the bounds of the score, for the purpose of this text, the term “composer” will assume the following definition:

Composer – The individual who develops the original artistic conceit, parameters, and notation of a piece of improvisational music.

Why Improvisational Composition?

Improvisation, and especially the composition of improvisational music, is a field which is often overlooked in modern composition pedagogy. However, improvisation is a lively and rapidly growing field of study with numerous practical applications and endless creative possibilities.

In recent years, there has been a surge in international interest in new and experimental improvised music, particularly improvisational music which is interdisciplinary or trans-stylistic. Numerous music festivals and organizations dedicated to the study and performance of improvisational music have been established in the past twenty years alone. The International Society for Improvised Music (ISIM), an organization which encourages the performance of

improvised music and lobbies for the development of improvisation teaching methodologies, began hosting yearly conferences in 2006.[4] Australia's *Now Now Festival*, which focuses on spontaneous and improvised music, began running annually in 2001, and the *All Ears Festival,* a festival which presents musical improvisation in Norway, began annual presentations in 2002.[5]

Attention has also been brought to the social benefits of improvisation and its possible applications in community programming and music therapy. Certain forms of improvisation can be an accessible form of music-making, especially for individuals without much music training or who may lack fine motor control. In May of 2022, The Center for Deep Listening began the *Year of Deep Listening* project, which will publish 365 improvisational scores by May of 2023. One of the requirements for these scores is that they have to be easily comprehensible by amateur musicians in an effort to foster accessible community music-making.[6]

For the composer or composition instructor, there are many creative and pedagogical benefits to learning to compose improvisational music. Improvisation composition requires composers to learn new modes of notation, increases their ability to communicate clearly with performers both in written instruction and in-person workshopping, and forces them to think critically about musical possibilities and parameters which they may take for granted in fully notated music. Listening to and workshopping improvised music increases aural sensitivity, and working with improvisation performers teaches collaborative creativity and allows an opportunity for composers to develop a vocabulary for describing musical ideas. Improvisation is also a treasure trove of creative possibilities, opens new avenues for interdisciplinary

4 "About ISIM," International Society for Improvised Music, accessed October 20, 2022, https://improvisedmusic.org/about-isim

5 Raymond MacDonald, Graeme Wilson, and George Lewis, *The Art of Becoming : How Group Improvisation Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020) 3.

6 "A Year of Deep Listening," The Center for Deep Listening, accessed October 20, 2022, https://www.deeplistening.rpi.edu/ayodl

collaborations, and can be used as a tool to increase the playability of certain types of musical passages. In short, improvisational composition is a lively and growing field, one which composition students should be given more tools to explore.

Project Goals

The primary aim of this document is to demonstrate the need for a college-level teaching method for creating successful works of experimental improvisational music, to outline the content and progression of the method, and to demonstrate the type of music which students might have the opportunity to explore through this method. There has been very little written on teaching students to compose music which utilizes improvisation. The few composition textbooks which do deal with improvisation are typically new music composition texts[7] which spend a single introductory chapter discussing improvisation under the broad umbrella of indeterminacy, along with aleatory and chance music. While these texts provide an introduction to some of the broadest methods of writing this type of music, the wide scope and short length of these chapters does not allow for more than the most basic instruction to students who might be interested in trying their hand at composing improvisational works. The methodology proposed here will not deal with indeterminacy as a broad category of study, but will instead narrow its focus to non-idiomatic and experimental improvisation.

In this first chapter, I have discussed the scope of this document and its goals. Chapter II will review existing research and pedagogical methods on the subject of improvisation. It will also discuss the need for my proposed teaching method and how this method builds upon existing literature. Chapter III will outline my pedagogical method and some of the primary

7 These texts will be discussed at length in Chapter II.

points which students will learn through it. This curriculum is designed to be completed in a single semester and takes the student step-by-step through the process of brainstorming, developing, writing, and workshopping a piece of improvisational music.

One point which I hope to demonstrate through this document is that the space between composition and improvisation is a sliding scale rather than a binary division. This space holds endless creative possibilities. At the end of this document is an original composition, "*And the Ocean Taught Me...*" which includes sections of controlled improvisation and which demonstrates many of the compositional methods discussed in Chapter III. Chapter IV will discuss my compositional process in this piece and how it demonstrates many of the ideas outlined in the teaching method.

II. FILLING A VACANCY IN EXISTING CURRICULA

Review of Existing Improvisation Composition Curricula

Below is a review of the texts which are currently available to students and educators who are interested in improvisational composition. As I will discuss later in this chapter, there are very few resources available which are intended to instruct students through the process of creating new works of improvisational composition. As a result, I have also included texts intended to teach students how to improvise as part of an ensemble, as well as recent research in the field of experimental music improvisation. This review does not include improvisation anthologies and repertoire; a list of resources for further score study will be discussed in Chapter III.

Pedagogical Texts On Improvisation Composition

Materials and Techniques of Post-Tonal Music, Stefan Kostka and Matthew Santa[8]

Chapter 14 of this text discusses "the roles of chance and choice in post-tonal music."[9] In this chapter, the authors attempts to cover all types of music in which the composer's control over musical material is limited in some way. The authors breaks these musical processes into two categories: chance in composition (chance music) and choice in performance (indeterminacy and aleatory). Within performer choice, the text separates indeterminate music from aleatory, but notes that this is only a psychological differentiation. Indeterminacy, as defined by this text, is

8 Stefan Kostka and Matthew Santa, *Materials and Techniques of Post-tonal Music* (Boston: Pearson, 2018).

9 Ibid, 283.

the desire to distance the composer from the process of making music. Aleatory is giving performers certain level of control in choosing musical material on some level. The text dedicates two pages to explaining some possible processes behind these two types of music; a page on aleatory explains how a composer can choose to leave one or more of the elements of composition up to the performer. These broad musical elements are medium, expression, duration, pitch, and form. The text then gives brief examples of how a composer might hand each of these elements over the the performer. A much longer section is dedicated to useful examples from late 20th century repertoire, including pieces which use indeterminacy by Stockhausen and Feldman. A final (very short) section briefly mentions the existence of graphic notation and text scores, giving two examples of each.

The end of the chapter offers students a few interesting questions about the definition of music and whether that definition should be changed to include some of the stranger score examples given in the chapter. This review section also includes three short, single paragraph composition assignments instructing students to write an improvisational piece, a piece with graphic notation, and a piece of chance music. These assignments are clearly meant only to expose students to the concepts of the chapter rather than to give them any substantial direction on how to write these types of pieces.[10]

Conclusion: This chapter is a wonderful introduction to the concepts of chance and aleatoric music. While the composition assignments at the end of the chapter are useful in encouraging students to form a deeper understanding of this type of music, it gives very little in the way of guidance or direction on *how* to write this type of music. Because it attempts to cover all types of music in which the composer gives up some level of compositional control, it cannot

10 Kostka and Santa, *Materials and Techniques*, 283-298.

cover any aspect of this topic in depth. The text spends very little time on instruction and suggestions, instead teaching through explanation of broad topics and examples from existing literature. While this chapter is a good introduction, it is also an example of the inadequacy in existing teaching material for any student or instructor looking for more than a cursory introduction.

New Music Composition, David Cope[11]

Chapter 11 of this text deals with indeterminacy in composition. The chapter contains an interesting discussion on the value of indeterminate music and the questions surrounding whether the real composer of an indeterminate piece is the composer or the performer. The chapter also discusses the value of indeterminacy to the composer, asserting that it can help move them out of compositional ruts, is a testing ground for composer/performer communication, and can result in important developments in notation or in one's own style of composing.

This text defines indeterminate music simply as music with unpredictable outcomes at some point in the process of creating sounds. It uses "indeterminacy" as an overarching term which is broken into five categories:

- Graphic or indeterminate notation
- Composer indeterminacy written with traditional notation
- Performer indeterminacy (improvisation with little notated "ground work")
- Composer determinacy of events with random selection of the order of events
- "Stochastic methods" - basic parameters are determined but material is chosen by

11 David Cope, *New Music Composition* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1977).

random selection.

The end of the chapter contains ten composition assignments. Interestingly, the first several of these assignments are very detailed and give students the exact method of composition, such as using a deck of cards to determine random pitches or creating a score by blotting ink on a paper and smearing it, while the last few ask the composer to integrate these techniques into their traditionally composed/notated music. Each of these assignments asks students to have the works performed and critically observe the results.[12]

Chapter 22 discusses notation. The author differentiates between improvisational notation (based on traditional notation concepts but only as raw material from which performers may interpret), proportional notation (meterless notation in which the distance between notes indicates approximate duration), and indeterminate notation (any of a wide range of other types of graphic notation).[13]

Conclusion: Of the texts listed here, this text does the best job of encouraging composers to think about indeterminate and improvisational music critically and consider its many possible uses. It also gives composers the widest range of exercises and compositional projects which still allow some level of creative freedom. Because of the brevity of the chapters, however, the text does not give students instructions in how to improve in this area of composition beyond trial and error.

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12 David Cope, *New Music Composition* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1977), 116-126.

13 Cope, *New Music Composition,* 255-270.

New Directions in Music, David Cope[14]

Chapter 5 of this text deals with indeterminacy. It begins with a discussion of how indeterminacy in contemporary music has its roots in notation of passages which are impossible or impractical to notate precisely, increasing playability through imprecise notation.

It also includes a discussion of how some composers differentiate between aleatoric/indeterminate music and improvisation, giving some of the clearest definitions found in any of the texts listed here.

- Aleatoric music – Music which does not recognize the existence of artistic goals.
- Improvisation – The realization in real-time of defined artistic goals.
- Indeterminacy – An umbrella term for both of the above, further broken into composer indeterminacy and performer indeterminacy.

The chapter goes on to take a brief overview of different indeterminate composition strategies through a study of score excerpts. It covers chance music and graphic notation, pointing out the varying levels of control the composer has over their end product, or how predictable the end result will be based on their notation.[15]

Conclusion: Once again, this chapter is a good introduction to the compositional techniques of improvisation. It contains some of the clearest definitions of terms found in any text listed here, and the discussion of musical predictability based on notation is a brief look into performer psychology which often goes unmentioned in similar texts.

14 David Cope, *New Directions in Music* (Dubuque: W.C. Brown, 1984).
15 Ibid, 77-101.

Pedagogical Texts on Improvisation Performance

Creative Improvisation, Roger Dean[16]

This text aims to give the performer a broad overview of the techniques and applications of improvisation. The author asserts that the musical ideas which come about through improvisation might be some of the most complex and nuanced material that can be produced in all music, and that the possibilities of improvisation co-exist with and compliment those of composition. Rather than focusing on one tradition of improvisation (such as jazz, the teaching of which the author argues has been too harmony-focused), the text attempts to give ways of developing an improviser's individual voice through the treatment of different fundamental musical elements (e.g. pitch, timbre, rhythm, melody, etc.).

This text is very deliberate with its definition of improvisation, noting that the assertions that improvisation is "free of scoring," "spontaneous," or exists without "preconceived context" is either unhelpful or impossible. Importantly, the author asserts that scoring does not prevent improvisation, and discusses the infinite possibilities for degrees of control in both composition and improvisational performance, noting that in recent years the trend in composition has clearly been toward having the most control possible. The text attempts to give broad pedagogical directions which can be applied in any genre of improvisation, focusing on the treatment of different musical parameters one at a time before discussing ways to interpret different types of scores.

Conclusion: While this text does not specifically address the composer, the text's method of thinking about music as individual parameters of sound is very close to my proposed method

16 R.T. Dean, *Creative Improvisation* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1989).

of thinking about improvisational composition. The text's discussion on infinite degrees of control is also a concept which I plan to incorporate into my pedagogical approach.

Music Discovery, Daniel J. Healy and Kimberly Lansinger Ankney[17]

This text deals with teaching improvisation in large ensembles and music classrooms. Similar to the approach of Dean's *Creative Improvisation,* this text encourages instructors to work with their group on one musical parameter at a time, breaking the largest portion of the text into exercises and explanations on how to teach improvisation in the areas of melody, harmony, rhythm, texture and timbre, articulation, and dynamics. While this text does not deal with improvisational composition, it does try to debunk a number of improvisation "myths," including the thinking that improvisation is unteachable, the stance that group improvisation can only result in disorganized noise, and the thinking that the success of improvisation cannot be assessed or evaluated.

Conclusion: While there are no specific points in this text which will be helpful in building my pedagogical approach, it does support the method of thinking about music in individual parameters and being creative with each of these parameters.

Other Resources and Research on Improvisation

The Art of Becoming, Raymond MacDonald and Graeme Wilson[18]

The Art of Becoming is one of the newest resources available in the field of creative

17 Daniel Healy and Kimberly Ankney, *Music Discovery.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

18 Raymond MacDonald, Graeme Wilson, and George Lewis, *The Art of Becoming : How Group Improvisation Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

improvisation, published in 2020. The text is largely concerned with the theory and philosophy behind improvisational performance, discussing improvisation as a broad creative topic before diving into performer psychology and models for creative improvised work. It defines improvisation broadly as "spontaneous creativity," encompassing any creative activity which has little to no pre-determined parameters.[19] The authors assert that "Indeterminacy places agency, status, and power in the hands of the composer, while Improvisation puts agency, power, and status in the hands of the performer."[20]

This text describes improvisation as a rapidly growing field of study, citing a growing focus on improvisation at music festivals and other art gatherings, as well as a wider acceptance of artistic improvisation in academic institutions around the world. The authors continually stress the fact that improvisation is an eclectic art form through which artists from any genre (or any artistic discipline) can work together toward a creative end. This text explores the idea of musical improvisation as "real-time composition" and notes that the lines between improvisation and composition are very blurred. However, the text focuses mainly on the role of the performer in improvisation, and while it states that the lines between composition and improvisation are blurred, it rarely touches on composition or the role of the composer in improvisation. The authors consciously try not to define improvisation in concrete terms, nor do they attempt to differentiate it clearly from other forms of music or art. They view improvisation as a *type* of activity that is somewhat quantifiable but which also bleeds into other types of activities. Their aim is to create the broadest and most inclusive definition of improvisation possible.

This text gives an incredibly detailed overview of current trends in the field of

19 Raymond MacDonald, Graeme Wilson, and George Lewis, *The Art of Becoming : How Group Improvisation Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020) xxi.

20 Ibid. xviii

improvisation, from its terminology to past and present theories about how improvisation works and ways to conceptualize what improvising is. The text also stresses the inclusive aspect of improvisation; everyone is capable of improvisation, no matter their level of training. In addition, it presents a new framework for understanding improvisation and how musicians interact, and also tackles the idea of virtuosity in improvisation. Lastly, the text outlines key areas for future research.

Interestingly, the text deals very little with improvisation that utilizes a score of any type. In the final chapter, the performance of graphic notation is described as being "cross-disciplinary," with the two disciplines being improvisation and composition. Within this cross-disciplinary form of art, performers are required to improvise within the premeditated boundaries set by the composer. No other type of non-ideomatic music which utilizes both improvisation and a score is mentioned. However, the authors imply that this type of cross-disciplinary activity is an area in need of more focused study and development.

One key point of interest is explored in chapter three, in which the authors discuss how improvisation is primarily understood in hindsight through verbalization (talking about it). They stress that being able to verbalize how and why a musical decision was made is a crucial skill for an improvisation performer to possess. This could easily be applied to the composition of improvisational music as well; a composer must be able to verbalize why each decision in a score was made, including decisions on what to include and leave out.[21]

Conclusion: This text focuses on performers and not composers, separating improvisation from indeterminacy (one is performer-driven and one is composer-driven).

21 MacDonald, Wilson, and Lewis, *The Art of Becoming* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

However, much of the language used in this text (such as the term "non-ideomatic improvisation") were very helpful in clearly articulating the creative aims of my curriculum. In addition, the sections of the text which deal with performer psychology and process are invaluable, as I believe one of the keys to developing clear improvisational instructions is to understand how a performer will perceive any instruction.

Musical Creatives in Practice, Pamela Burnard[22]

This text covers a wide range of topics concerning how music is taught in schools and universities. It argues that many of the aspects of musical education (such as the canonization of composers as individual geniuses and the separation of high-status musical genres from low-brow art) effect musical creativity and creates a wide gap between music in academia and how the author believes music is created in the "real world." The author attempts to offer a wider concept of musical creativity which might change the way music is taught and understood.

Chapter seven deals with musical creatives in the field of improvisation. The author believes improvisation is fundamentally different from the traditional conventions of "composition," but focuses mainly on the performance of improvisation. The point the author makes through a study of musical improvisation in different cultures and musical traditions is that the existence of musical improvisation challenges what she believes is a sterilized view of music creativity taught in universities. She speaks of free improvisation as being free of "the inevitability of genre" and points to John Cage's "non-intentional" music as a model for how improvisation can create new ways of viewing music creativity.[23]

22 Pamela Burnard, *Musical Creativities in Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
23 Ibid. 152.

One of the most interesting discussions in this chapter was an interview with improviser David Toop, who brought up the topic of constraints in free (non-idiomatic) improvisation. Through this interview, the author discussed the existence of unspoken rules and limits in free improvisation and comes to the conclusion that improvised music is not created out of pure freedom, but through a series of value judgments made by the performers in real time. These value judgments often differ from those of the individual performer, as improvisation is at its core a social activity (between composer and performer, between several performers playing together, and between the performer and the listener). This model of music making, the author argues, differs greatly from the traditional picture of the Western composer, who is often pictured as making nearly all musical decisions in solitude before presenting it to the listener through the performer.[24]

Conclusion: Burnard's views on improvisation are very similar to those of MacDonald and Wilson, who also focus on the social aspects of improvisation. She also brings up the blurred line between the improviser and composer and draws attention to the oversimplification of our current definition of creativity. Her arguments strengthen the idea that performer psychology has an elevated role in improvised music, and her use of terms, while sometimes imprecise, generally agree with the terms and definitions I have chosen for my text.

Improvisation: Music from the Inside Out, Mildred Portney Chase[25]

A single chapter of this text is written "To the composer." While the majority of this text is concerned with the performance of improvised music, this one section focuses on

24 Ibid. 150-180
25 Mildred Chase, *Improvisation : Music from the inside out* (Berkeley: Creative Arts Book, 1988) 87-91.

improvisation as a tool for the composer. However, rather than discussing the possibilities of improvisation in written scores or how the composer might compose the parameters for improvisation, this text discusses the value of improvisation, or the "free association of sound," as a channel for unlocking a composer's unique musical voice. Chase briefly discusses the importance of developing an intuitive ear for music and argues that free, solo improvisation is a good way for composers to develop this type of intuitive musical thinking.

Conclusion: While this text does not contribute much in the way of pedagogical methods or ideas, it does support the value of improvisation as a tool for composers, as well as its value for improving overall musical sensitivity.

Overall Conclusions on Existing Curricula

While each of these texts discuses improvisation from very different angles, there were some things upon which almost all of them agreed.

1. **Creative possibilities.** Several of these texts agree that improvisation is a valuable and under-studied area of music for several reasons. While some authors, like MacDonald and Wilson, believe that improvisation is often (mistakenly) viewed as a less important mode of music-making in academic settings, Burnard, Healy, and Lansinger Ankney attempt to tackle the belief that improvisation is completely unteachable. Chase and Cope both argue that the creative process of improvisation is of great value to composers searching for new sounds and creative possibilities. Each of these authors assert that improvisation is a field with endless possible applications and creative possibilities.
2. **Performer psychology.** Understanding the psychology of the performer in live

improvisation settings is important and affects the success of the resulting music. MacDonald and Wilson devote an entire chapter on performer psychology in improvisational performance. Cope notes that indeterminacy is a testing ground for composer/performer communication, allowing composers the chance to think deeply about the way performers think about notation. Each of these authors agree that understanding the way performers think about improvising is instrumental in understanding improvisation as an art form.

3. **Composition vs. improvisation.** The lines between improvisation and composition are blurred. While some texts attempted to draw loose borders between improvisation and composition, nearly every one of these texts concluded that there is no clear point at which composition ends and improvisation begins. Some of the texts asserted that trying to find the borders of these two modes of creating music is unhelpful or even limiting. Cope asserts that the composition-improvisation relationship can be a sliding scale. In most cases, the authors define improvisation as something akin to "composition in real time."
4. **Focusing on music as separate parameters.** Many of these texts teach improvisation through breaking music down into its fundamental parameters (pitch, rhythm, harmony, timbre, etc.) Authors Healy and Lansinger Ankney, as well as Dean, present a framework for teaching improvisational performance through focusing intentionally on each of these musical parameters, developing students' listening and creative problem-solving skills. Cope also briefly breaks music down into individual parameters in *New Music Composition* in an effort to explain the creative possibilities of aleatoric music from the

viewpoint of the composer.

Limitations of Existing Curricula

After reviewing the above texts, it is apparent that the current teaching material available to educators and composition students who are interested in composing new pieces of improvisational music is lacking. Of the texts listed above, only three deal with composing works of improvisational music (or aleatory/chance music, depending on the text). These are *Materials and Techniques of Post-Tonal Music* by Stefan Kostka and Matthew Santa, *New Music Composition* by David Cope, and *New Directions in Music* by David Cope. Only two of these texts discuss indeterminacy in a modern context; *New Music Composition,* while useful as a generic introduction to indeterminacy, was written in 1977 and contains somewhat outdated assertions about the trajectory of indeterminate music, some of which the author later amends in the more contemporary *New Directions in Music*.

Each of these texts focus on giving students a wide explanation of 20th and 21st century music techniques, and each (appropriately for the scope of the texts) spend only one chapter on improvisation, aleatory, and chance music collectively. Within these chapters, the vast majority of space is used explaining what aleatory is, how it is different from chance music, how chance music is generated, and who were the important composers in developing some of these compositional techniques. Very little time, if any, is spent discussing *how* to write this type of music and *how* to tell if a newly composed improvisational score will be successful in performance. *Materials and Techniques of Post-Tonal Music* and *New Music Composition* both give short composition assignments at the end of their respective chapters which are meant to

briefly expose students to this particular mode of composition, but give no direction to students or educators on how to evaluate the resulting works. At present, further study material in this area is nearly nonexistent.

The usefulness of these texts is further limited by the glaring inconsistencies between them, particularly in the area of terminology. Idiomatic improvisation, non-idiomatic improvisation, composer indeterminacy, performer indeterminacy, chance music, stochastic methods, and aleatory are just a few terms which are used in the above texts to describe music that is created through spontaneous processes or through a composer giving up a certain level of creative control. One thing that becomes apparent while comparing these texts is that the terminology for improvisation and related music is far from standardized. In many cases, the terminology in these texts directly contradict one another. For example, *The Art of Becoming* by MacDonald and Wilson defines improvisation in terms of complete spontaneity with no premeditated input from a composer; they describe improvisation as a process through which the performer is freed completely from the control of the composer. In contrast, David Cope in *New Directions in Music* defines improvisation as "the realization in real-time of defined artistic goals," indicating that this usually consists of performers creating music by re-imagining and re-ordering pre-determined musical material; he describes improvisation as the form of indeterminate music through which the composer retains *the most* creative control, especially in pitch and rhythm.[26] As another example, *Materials and Techniques of Post-Tonal Music* by Kostka and Santa defines "aleatory" as music which gives performers a certain level of control in choosing musical material on some level. In contrast, *New Directions in Music* by David Cope defines aleatory as music which does not recognize the existence of artistic goals.

26 Cope, *New Directions in Music,* 78.

Because each of these texts have such vastly different ideas of exactly what improvisation is and how it is created, and because none of the available texts gives more than a cursory introduction to improvisational composition, students may find attempting this mode of composition to be dauntingly directionless and frustrating. A curriculum which collates the various existing understandings of improvisational composition and builds upon them would be a valuable resource and would fill a vacancy in existing literature.

Building on Existing Materials

Currently, the existing method for teaching improvisational composition is through (1) explaining generally what improvisation and indeterminacy is and (2) teaching the composition of these methods through a few examples of existing repertoire. If a student wishes to take their knowledge of creating this type of music further, their best avenue is through trial and error, a frustrating process for a type of music which requires a live ensemble with which to experiment.

The method of teaching I propose in Chapter III would not replace these methods, but would substantially build upon them. It asks students to think deeply about their compositional choices at every step of the creation process, just as they would when writing fully notated music. It encourages them to think about both how performers will likely interpret their notation and the desired end product of their work (how their piece should sound) during every step of the development process. Finally, it gives students a suggested work flow and workshopping tips to effectively assess improvisation ideas.

Based on the above research, I have come to the following conclusions regarding the implementation of my proposed pedagogical method and its place in the existing literature.

1. The pedagogical method I am proposing, which focuses on introducing students to composing works for improvisation ensemble and guiding them through the development and workshopping process, would fill a vacancy in the existing literature on improvised music. In order to be as focused as possible, it will only discuss improvisational music and will not cover other types of music which exist under the umbrella of indeterminacy.
2. Clearly defining the terms I choose to use in my proposed text and using these terms precisely and consistently will be of great importance due to the inconsistent use of these terms in existing literature.
3. My method will take into account performer psychology. It will focus on guiding students to think from a performer's perspective at every step of the compositional process and stress the importance of composers being able to clearly articulate their artistic visions and goals, both in their score and aloud in rehearsal. It will also stress the importance of collaboratively workshopping a piece at every stage of its development.
4. My method will involve breaking music into its individual parameters and will direct students to make conscious decisions about each of these parameters – whether to retain control, give up partial control, or give up full control of each parameter.
5. My method will be designed so that it is applicable to the broadest possible range of improvised music composition, and will take into account that each composer develops their own unique interests and workflow. It will focus on building a flexible teaching structure which utilizes directed experimentation that can be applied to any compositional idea a student develops.

III. PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

Overview of Teaching Method

The model of teaching improvisation composition which is outlined in the following chapter is inherently performer-focused and sound-oriented. At every step of the composition process, the composer will be asked to consciously consider the performer's psychology, understanding, and interpretation of their music, as well as the end product of their work and the music that will be produced as a result of their notation. By the end of the curriculum, students should ideally be able to clearly articulate their process for creating their piece, which musical parameters they chose to control, which parameters they left up to the performers and why, and what type of music they wanted to result from an interpretation of their score. They should also be able to articulate, upon hearing a performance of their piece, whether they thought the performance met their expectations, whether the performers interpreted their score in a way that was reasonable and within the boundaries they had instructed, and whether they thought more or less instruction was needed or could make the piece more successful in future performances.

The curriculum outlined in this chapter is organized into the following modules:

Module 1: Idea Drafting

Module 2: Accounting for All Musical Parameters

Module 3: Clarity of Instruction/Notation

Module 4: Example Workshopping Model

This teaching method acknowledges that every composer develops their own unique workflow and allows for flexibility as a result. However, it also strives to create a solid

framework within which students who are completely new to the improvisational mode of composition can explore new ideas with direction. Each module will include directions for students at each point in the creation of an improvisational composition, as well as examples, tips, and optional supplementary analysis projects to demonstrate and exercise certain skills learned within that module.

Suggested Curriculum Timeline

This curriculum is designed to be completed within a single semester ideally. Rather than giving students several short composition assignments at the end of each chapter, as is the model in most other composition texts which deal with improvisation, this curriculum will encourage composers to focus on one composition project for a full semester. Often, the bulk of the work in developing a piece of improvisational music is not in writing the musical material, but in developing ideas, deciding on notation systems, and rehearsing/workshopping with an ensemble. This curriculum will encourage students or the educator directing them to give ample time to each of these steps in the composition process.

Below is an example of a semester schedule using this method. While this schedule will give students plenty of time to study each topic discussed in this curriculum, the curriculum is organized into modules which can be easily stretched, condensed, overlapped, and, to a certain extent, reordered to fit within the scope of a composition lesson or classroom setting according to the needs of the particular student or class schedule. Particular attention should be given to allowing ample time for Module 4, where students will be asked to workshop and edit their piece with performers.

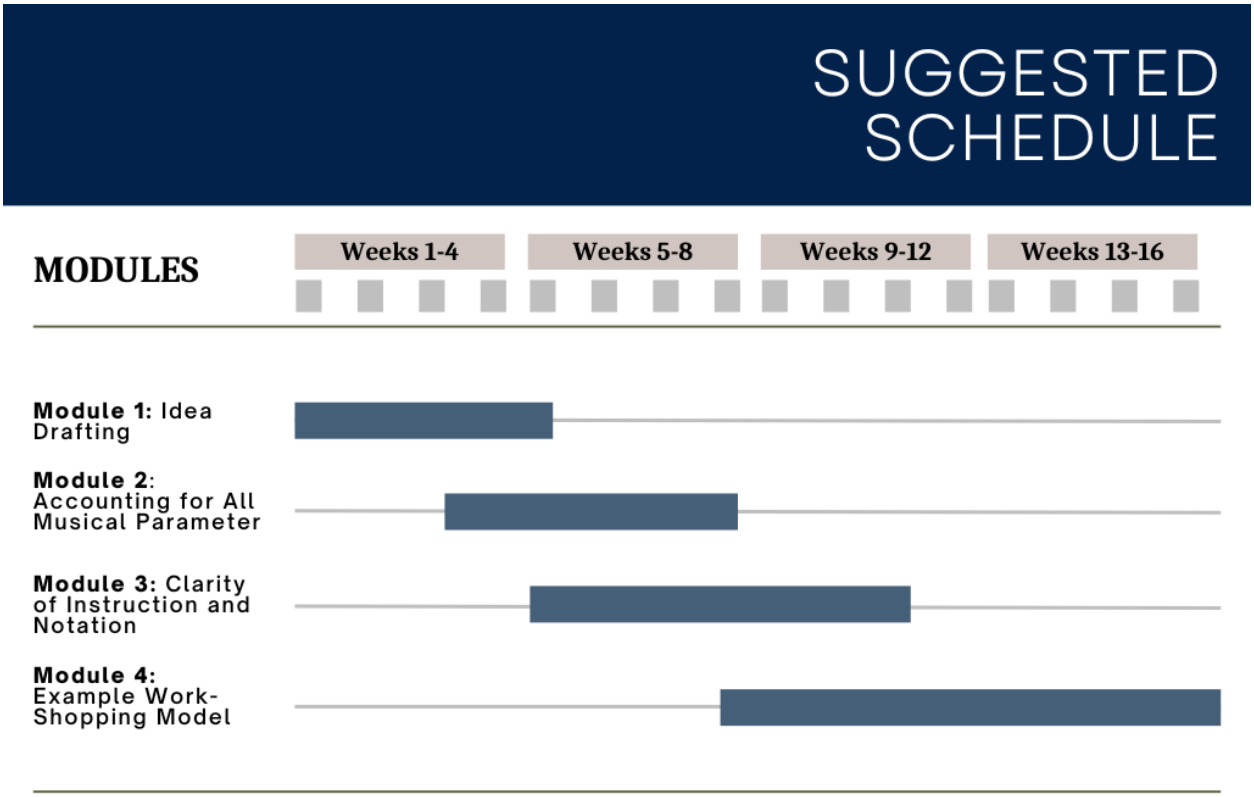

Figure 1: Suggested Schedule for a 16-Week Semester

Other Considerations

Group work: One of the core aspects of this teaching method is the process of workshopping. This method is built on the idea that a solid improvisational composition concept needs to be workshopped at every stage of the creative process. Throughout the curriculum, students will be asked to share drafts of their creative work with a group of performers, taking special note of questions and comments. In a classroom setting, an instructor may want to take note of the performance capabilities of the students at the beginning of the semester and might choose to break the class into workshopping/performance groups at certain times throughout the

curriculum. In a private lesson setting, the instructor will want to encourage the student to put together an ensemble early in the semester or direct them to work with an existing ensemble for the purpose of workshopping compositional concepts and hearing their notation played aloud.

Score study: During Module 2: Account for All Musical Parameters, instructors are given the option to assign students a few short score analysis projects. Examples of these projects are included in this document, along with the original compositions that have been analyzed. However, these assignments can easily be applied to most improvisational works, and instructors may choose to assign any piece(s) they wish to include in the curriculum. Additional resources for score study, both for these assignments and for use during Module 1: Idea Drafting, can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of this document. These projects could also be lengthened into short paper analyses or shortened into class discussions depending on the time and scope of the course.

Module 1: Idea Drafting

Module goals:

- Become familiar with improvisation, its limitations and creative possibilities.
- Study improvisational scores with different notation methods.
- Generate improvisational ideas, keeping in mind the sound you would like to produce.
- Workshop composition concepts.

Exploration

The primary goals of this first module is for students to become familiar with some of the ways improvisational music is produced and to begin generating and evaluating possible compositional ideas. While it is impossible to teach a student how or where to find inspiration for new works, it is possible to give them the tools they need to find their own inspiration. Becoming familiar with improvisational sounds and notation is the first step toward generating original and creative improvisation ideas. Many new composition students may have never seen an improvisational score, and studying the many styles and notation methods of improvisational music will not only help them build a framework for generating ideas, but will also build their confidence in those ideas.

During this initial exploration phase, the instructor should encourage the students to explore as many different pieces as time permits. Students should listen to performances of the works as they are available, preferably several different performances of each work, taking note of differences in interpretation. If possible, allowing students the opportunity to try musically interpreting the score themselves will also give another level of insight, especially in a classroom

setting. A list of resources for further score study can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of this document, but the following selection of pieces may be a useful cross-section of improvisational notation, and recordings of these pieces are readily available online.

- *In C* – Terry Riley (example of highly controlled improvisation utilizing staff notation)[27]
- *Noise-Silence* – Pauline Oliveros (example of text score with a loose form)[28]
- *Branches* – Paul Chihara (example of mostly notated music which utilizes improvisation for affects)[29]
- *Music of Mountains* – Walter Mays (example of highly abstract graphic notation)[30]
- *From the Seven Days* – Karlheinz Stockhausen (several examples of very abstract text scores and graphic notation)[31]
- *Paper Piece* – Benjamin Patterson (example of precise text notation utilizing only found sound objects)[32]
- *December 1952* - Earle Brown (example of score with vague graphic notation and text instructions)[33]
- *Edges* – Christian Wolff (example of musical symbols used experimentally)[34]

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27 Riley, Terry. *In C : (1964) / Terry Riley.* Berlin : Tucson, Ariz.: E.R.P. Musikverlag Eckart Rahn; Celestial Harmonies, 1964.

28 Oliveros, Pauline, and Brian Pertl. *Anthology of Text Scores*. Deep Listening Publications, 2013.

29 Chihara, Paul. *Branches; two bassoons and percussion.* Hollywood: Protone Music, 1968.

30 Cage, John. *Notations*. West Grove, Vt.: Something Else Press, 1969.

31 Stockhausen, Karlheinz. *From the Seven Days = Aus Den Sieben Tagen : Nr. 26 Composed in May 1968 / Karlheinz Stockhausen ; Translation by Rolf Gehlhaar, John McGuire, Hugh Davies.* Wien: Universal, 1970.

32 Cage, John. *Notations*. West Grove, Vt.: Something Else Press, 1969.

33 DeLio, Thomas and Stuart Saunders Smith. *Twentieth Century Music Scores.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1989.

34 Ibid.

After studying these improvisational scores, students should be asked to describe the overall musical feel of each improvisation and generally discuss the method of notation each composer used and the level of musical control each notation method seemed to give the composer in each case (with the understanding that this concept will be discussed in more detail in Modules 2 and 3). Not only will this exercise begin to develop the students' ear for improvisational music, but it will also help them to develop a language for describing this type of music, a language which they can use to develop and critically analyze their own musical ideas.

Drafting Ideas

Once the students have begun gathering enough context through score study, they will begin the process of creating one or more "idea drafts." An idea draft is very different from a draft of a score – it may be just a few vague ideas about overall musical concept or feel, a programmatic idea, or a specific musical form. Students should be encouraged to generate a few musical ideas or concepts with which they would like to work in their improvisational piece. While these ideas can be as vague or as specific as each student wants, it is import to note that successful idea drafts will focus on sound or concept rather than notation, and that the student need not necessarily have ideas about how they would like to notate their score at this point.[35]

The instructor may pose any number of creative questions to get students started generating ideas, but some helpful questions for students to consider while brainstorming might be:

- Does your work have programmatic elements or themes?
- Is there an overall feel or affect you would like to create?
- What is your desired instrumentation, or will instrumentation remain flexible or open?

35 See "Avoiding 'Process Over Product' Composition" at the end of this module.

- Are there any specific sounds you find interesting which you would like to incorporate?
- Will you ask performers to musically interpret an extra-musical element, e.g. a text, image, video, or other type of non-musical media?
- Is the work one movement or multiple?
- Will your work rely on composed pitch or rhythmic content?
- Should your work have a set trajectory, arch, or form?

As students begin to answer these questions, their ideas should naturally lead them to think generally about how much musical control they would like to have over their performances and which components of the music (e.g. pitch, rhythm, form, theme, timbre, etc.) will be the most important or most central to their work. Successful idea drafts may only be a few phrases and include ideas about desired musical sound, theme, or concept. A few examples might be:

- A piece based on a single cluster of pitches which starts very quiet and calm but gradually gets more complex and chaotic.
- A piece for a group of wind instruments with a steady rhythm, generally broken into three sections.
- A piece based on the sound of a tornado siren and a storm.
- A piece which only includes very low and very high instruments.
- A piece which incorporates performers musically interpreting different colors.

Workshopping Idea Drafts

If at all possible, it can be extremely useful for students to workshop their musical concept *before* writing their score. Have students jot down a few notes on their concept, describe an overall sound, or have a programmatic idea or extra-musical inspiration ready to discuss.

Each student should be ready to describe their overall concept, ideas on instrumentation, staging, musical form, etc. and workshop these concepts, no matter how vague, with a group of performers. Workshopping at this stage will involve students verbally describing their concepts and taking questions and comments from performers, and does not include having any of these concepts performed yet.

Make it clear that students need not have answers to any or all clarifying questions at this stage! The purpose of this workshopping stage is to ready the students to begin the process of score development with performer questions and concerns in mind; again, this method of building an improvisational score is performer-focused. Students should take special note of any clarifying questions or comments the performers might have and think about how they can address these questions in their score. Not only will this help students further develop their concepts and force them to identify the most important underlying parameters of their work, but it may head off any potential interpretation problems that performers may have before the students writes their first draft.

Avoiding "Process Over Product" Composition

If it is the student's first time composing improvisational music, it may be advantageous for them to avoid a "process over product" mode of composing. In essence, this means that composers should have a sound or compositional concept in mind first and design their notation around these ideas, rather than developing an experimental notation or musical process without having an idea of what it will sound like.

This is not to say that process over product composition is inherently harmful. Quite the opposite – composers may find that experimenting with notation can unlock endless creative

potential. However, the method outlined here is sound-oriented and is built around the concept of asking students to make conscious notational choices with a specific affect in mind in order to build their performer communication skills and improvisational understanding. Starting with only a notation concept at the idea drafting stage can be potentially counter-productive and may set students up for frustrating roadblocks during later stages in the drafting process. Students should not be discouraged from exploring any musical concept, but should instead be guided toward thinking about their music beginning with sound or overall concept rather than notation or process. Improvisation is full of experimentation, but this type of *directed* experimentation will develop stronger overall skills.

Example of a "process over product" idea draft (not preferred for beginning students): A piece where the score is all straight lines of different thicknesses with some dots placed at certain points.

Example of a sound-oriented idea draft (recommended for beginning students): A piece that is made up of mostly long tones with small bursts of activity.

Module 2: Accounting for All Musical Parameters

Module goals:

- Become familiar with the sliding scale of compositional control.
- Begin thinking about improvised music in separate musical parameters.
- Analyze scores for control of particular musical parameters.
- Identify and outline important parameters for your project.

The primary goal of this module is to help students to develop a method of critically analyzing improvisational scores and musical ideas. In this module, students will be asked to break music into individual parameters, track where the creative control of each of these parameters lies within different musical examples, and begin to outline which parameters they will need to control in their own scores in order to achieve their desired musical ideas or overall affects.

Levels of Compositional Control: A Sliding Scale

When interpreting fully notated music,[36] there are usually very few (many composers would hope only one) "correct" decisions for performers to make about how to play any given aspect of the score. The performer might have interpretive choices to make within the constraints of the notation and performance practice (articulation, dynamic interpretations, and expression for example), but in the end, a notated C4 should always be played as C4. However, improvised music allows performers to have a measure of creative control over certain aspects of the music, as was demonstrated through the examples studied in Module 1. At this point, it will be natural for students to interpret the possibilities of compositional control in improvisational

36 By "fully notated music" I mean any music which is written for live performers and uses traditional notation on a staff as standardized by 19th century music.

music as a binary division, with each creative aspect of a piece being controlled by either the composer or the performer. However, rather than viewing creative control as having only two dichotomic possibilities, it is much more useful and nuanced for students to begin conceptualizing the composer/performer relationship as a sliding scale containing various levels of creative collaboration.

It may be helpful for students new to improvisational composition to think of a piece of improvisational music as a piece in which the number of possible "correct" performance decisions is purposefully increased by the composer, giving the performer a heightened level of creative control over one or many musical parameters. When analyzing a piece of improvisational music for composer control, there are two questions which need to be answered: what musical parameters does the composer control, and how many "correct" interpretations are there within each of those musical parameters, or to what extent does the composer control each parameter? To answer these questions, students must first dissect a piece into its individual musical parameters and then develop a method for discerning and describing the composer's level of control over each parameter.

Select a few improvisational pieces[37] and have students begin to describe not only the individual musical parameters over which the composer exerts some level of control, but exactly what notation or instructional method the composer uses to assert creative control over that parameter. These parameters can be broken into the smallest parts possible, but some of the main parameters which should be addressed are listed below:

- **Time –** How long should the piece be? How do performers keep track of time? How fast or slow should the material be performed? Is there a steady tempo or variable speed?

37 The score study list found in Module 1 might be a good place to start when selecting pieces for analysis.

- **Structure** – Does the piece have sections or an overall trajectory? How do performers coordinate beginning and ending the piece and/or its sections?
- **Pitch content** – To what extent does the composer control pitch content? Are there precise melodies or harmonies, or are gestures and/or pitch range notated more generally (e.g. with graphic notation)? Are the pitches ordered in any specific way?
- **Rhythm** – Are there specific rhythmic patterns or a steady beat or pulse indicated in the score?
- **Texture** - Is the piece sparse and pointillistic or active and dense?
- **Instrumentation** – How many performers should play the work (exact number or range of performers)? Could this piece be played by a soloist? What instrumental timbres are included? Does the composer notate exact instrumentation (e.g. clarinet, piano, vibraphone), general instrumentation (wind instruments only, or separate instructions for low and high register instruments), or open/flexible instrumentation (any instrument can be used). Are there vocal parts which are spoken or sung?
- **Timbre** – Should the performers play this score using standard techniques or are certain extended techniques allowed or preferred? Does the composer include found sound elements (sounds from objects not typically used to produce music)?
- **Dynamic –** Does the composer indicate specific instructions for dynamics? If not, is there anything else in the piece which might consistently result in specific dynamic levels or changes (e.g. instrumentation, overall feel, instructions on form, register, or texture)?
- **Extra-musical elements** – Are there specific stage directions (lighting, performer seating arrangements, additional equipment, performer choreography)? Are there other visual

elements? Projected image or video? On-stage performers such as dancers, actors, or visual artists?

After analyzing exactly which musical parameters are controlled or directed by the composer, students should work to analyze the extent to which the composer controls each of these parameters. Figure 2 below gives a general idea of how students might conceptualize levels of compositional control. Compositional control exists on a spectrum and may fall at any point between full composer control (extremely detailed notation) at one extreme and full performer discretion (completely un-notated) at the other. Between these two extremes exist many possible levels of composer/performer creative collaboration. For each musical parameter identified above, students should analyze the level of control by placing it somewhere along the continuum.

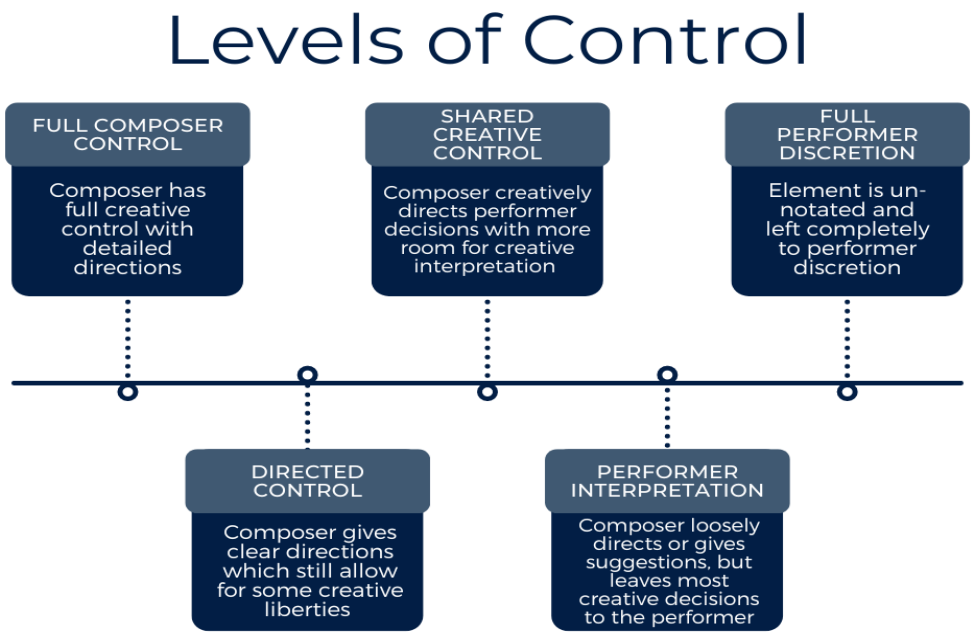


Figure 2: The Sliding Scale of Compositional Control

Assignment Directions: In a few words, based on this score (without having heard it) how would you describe how you would expect the music to sound? Place the musical parameters listed above on the provided scale and explain why the notation indicates that level of control. Then describe how the composer notates this musical parameter and how this specific notation or direction generate that particular level of control. What are the primary musical elements which the composer controls and which the improvisation is built upon?

Note: If in a classroom setting, it may be helpful to compare and discuss answers with other students. Are the conclusions similar, or different? What does this say about the level of control the composer has over the music?

Example Score Analysis

The score analyses exercise outlined in the previous section can be applied to any improvisational score and is most useful if students have the opportunity to apply it to several scores which use different types of notation. Below, I have provided an improvisational score analysis of my original improvisational composition, *Translucid.* The full improvisational score of the piece is included first, followed by the analysis of each musical parameter.

Translucid

Nikki Krumwiede

Instrumentation: any ensemble of 3 or more performers with any combination of instruments and found sounds. Found sounds should consist of an assortment of glass items such as cups, jars, plates, glass sheets, tiles, glass wind chimes, mirrors, etc.

Piece length: ~ 5-15 minutes

Performance instructions:
One performer is to read the text (found below) aloud.

- Text can be read straight through or fragmented. Any ordering of words/fragments is acceptable.
- The performer may repeat words, phrases, or sentences they find interesting as many times as they wish.
- The reader need not speak throughout the entire piece; they may pause for long intervals if they wish.
- Ellipses (…) denote placement of suggested pauses, with spaces after ellipses denoting suggested relative length of pauses.
- Depending on the performance space, the reader may want to use a microphone in order to allow for more subtlety in dynamic and inflection.

The remaining performers are to play any combination of instruments and glass objects.

- Listen to the reader and respond by musically interpreting their words. Interpretation can be based on individual words and phrases or on the overarching atmosphere and feeling of the text.
- When playing instruments, performers may wish to attempt to imitate the timbres of found sounds. Consider including extended techniques or unconventional performance methods.

Reader Text:

Glittering, pristine. Clear, cool. I tap my face, leaving fingerprints. My eyes glint back at me.
Crystalline... Gleaming, glistening. I am here... I am... and there... maybe both...

or maybe... neither...

Frosted with dust and age. Dark and cracked. Am I here? In part, but... unclear. Obscured, hazy.
I am blurred, myself... or maybe not... A shadow. A specter... A haze of light. Dust settles...
Where? I thought... What did I think? Nothing, maybe...

Shattered, cracked, glittering fragments. Jagged, scraping knives. Brittle, chipped. Is this...
Scattered stardust. Scattered... shards of light. Fading... Am I... Was I ever...
Perhaps... Maybe... nothing... or everything...

Figure 3: *Translucid,* original score by Nikki Krumwiede, written 2022

Translucid analysis:

Time – Shared creative control: The composer notates a large range of possible lengths for the

piece in minutes, allowing the performers to decide the appropriate length of any given performance within that range.

Structure – Performer interpretation: The form of the piece is not explicitly notated. However, the layout of the text may suggest a possible form to the reader. Other performers will then follow the form which the reader creates based on the text.

Pitch content – Full performer discretion: Pitch is un-notated.

Rhythm – Performer interpretation: Rhythm is un-notated. However, layout and directed pauses in the text may produce particular rhythmic patterns.

Texture - Between shared creative control and performer interpretation: Texture will always include at least three performers, but the number of performers playing at any given time is not specified. The density of the material played by the performers is also not specified.

Instrumentation - Shared creative control: The glass found sound objects and voice are fixed instrumentation, while the choice of additional instrumentation is open.

Timbre - Between directed control and shared creative control: The timbres of the speaker and glass objects are directed by the composer, and while other instrumentation is open, leaving open many timbre possibilities, it is suggested that other instruments attempt to imitate glass sounds, which may further limit or direct performers' creative choices.

Dynamic - Full performer discretion: Dynamic is un-notated.

Extra-musical elements - Between directed control and shared creative control: The reader's text is pre-written and therefore controlled by the composer. However, the performer has creative liberty to rearrange the text and to speak the text in any manner they see fit.

Conclusions: The primary elements of the piece which are the most clearly notated, and

therefore which the composer controls the most, are the timbre, instrumentation, and extra-musical content. The piece is built primarily upon the extra-musical material (the text) as performers are directed to follow the reader, and secondarily upon the timbre of the glass objects, as performers are given the option to mimic the timbres of these objects.

Idea Draft Analysis

Using their idea draft from Module 1, students should now begin analyzing their own musical ideas. Having practiced breaking music into its individual parameters and categorizing those parameters by level of composer control, they should be able to begin formulating thoughts about which musical parameters will be the most central to their own improvisational ideas and to what extent they would like to control these ideas. As students begin to make decisions about their piece, these decisions should naturally lead to ideas about notation. Depending on how detailed a student's idea draft is, this process will include answering a set of questions and concerns unique to that student's project. However, with a student's desired sound or affect in mind, the following questions should help lead the student to form a more detailed outline of their improvisational idea:

- What musical parameters are central to the success of your creative idea?
- Are there any musical parameters which you specifically mention in your idea draft?
- Would your piece benefit from any particular specific performance directions?
- Would your piece benefit from general directions on the intended overall feel?
- Are there any moments or events in your piece which will need more specific directions than others?

- Are there points in the piece where all performers will need to coordinate on specific musical evens?
- Do you want the performers to follow some extra-textual element during the performance in addition to or in place of a score (e.g. following and interpreting a video or fixed media recording, following a single performer's free improvisation, following some element of the space in which they are performing, etc)?
- For each important musical parameter you identified, how wide do you want the range of possible "correct" performance decisions to be?

After answering these or similar questions, students should go through the list of disparate musical parameters and identify any which they have not specifically addressed in their answers. If, after considering a parameter, they come to the conclusion, "it should be up to the performer" or "any possible treatment of this parameter fits within my artistic vision," then the composer should *consciously* give creative control over this musical parameter to the performer by deciding to provide loose instruction on that parameter or purposefully leaving that particular parameter un-notated. It is important to note that any decisions or plans made here are only building a framework for the score and can easily be changed once students begin notating their score in the following module.

Module 3: Clarity of Instruction/Notation (How Do We Talk About Music?)

Module goals:

- Further develop language to describe and effectively convey your musical idea.
- Consider your score from a performer's perspective.
- Develop notation and write the first draft of your improvisational score.
- Evaluate your draft for clarity and soundness.

Drafting the Score

By this point, many students will have a good idea of how they would like to begin to notate directions for their improvisational piece, whether that be through graphic notation, written instruction, experimental staff notation, a multi-media approach, or any combination of these and other methods. During this module, students will complete a first draft of their score.

Students have already begun the process of learning the skill of verbalizing musical ideas and workshopping those ideas through the previous two modules, setting them up to be able to both articulate their musical ideas verbally and in writing and to view their music from the vantage of the performer. Both of these skills should be consciously applied while drafting the score. The ability to verbally describe musical goals will be particularly important in improvisational scores which are primarily text-based, but will apply to any score which uses text directions in any form. Taking performer comprehension into account will be particularly critical at this stage of score development; much of the suggestions outlined in this module are meant to lead the student to account for performer's own creative process and in-performance psychology.

From a performance perspective, one of the major differences between playing fully notated music and performing from an improvisational score is the elevated role of listening. In performances of fully notated music, while listening plays an important role in maintaining the balance, expressiveness, and precision of a performance, reading and interpreting the score's notation takes a large portion of the performer's cognitive energy and will in turn make many of the moment-by-moment decisions for the performer. However, in any type of music which is largely improvised, even when there is a score, performers often decide what to play, when to play, when not to play, and how to play based on interactions with and/or deference to the musical material created by one another. Depending on how loosely the composer chooses to control their musical material, much of the creative responsibility for keeping improvised musical material coherent and interesting often rests on the performers' ability to listen, interpret, and creatively respond to one another. As a result, the largest amount of the performer's cognitive energy while improvising is often used to evaluate what they hear and decide whether to maintain those ideas, build upon them, or initiate new ideas.[38] Therefore, listening is often the primary activity of the performer during improvisation, while reading and interpreting the score becomes secondary.

It might seem that, in a setting where the score might become secondary to the performer's own creativity, clarity of notation would become less important. However, the opposite is usually true. If an improvisational score is overly complex, leaves out key instructions, or introduces a new form of notation without accounting for all musical parameters (see Module 2), performers may be forced to split their attention between trying to understand

38 MacDonald and Wilson suggest an understanding of improvisational psychology where the performer is in a constant state of evaluation and can make one of four choices at any given time: maintain, change, initiate, and respond. Raymond MacDonald, Graeme Wilson, and George Lewis, *The Art of Becoming : How Group Improvisation Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020) 78-80.

and decipher the score and trying to creatively interpret the composer's notation. This leaves them no cognitive capacity for listening to their fellow performers (and thus creating music which is coherent) and can often lead to an end product which sounds even more random than if the composer had notated no musical instructions at all. I have noticed that this phenomenon is particularly common in highly abstract or complex graphic notation, but it is a possible outcome for any type of notation which is overly complex or confusing. Because the notation for improvisation is (necessarily) unstandardized, much more of the responsibility for clarity of notation rests with the composer.

Composers may come across another unique set of possible issues when creating a score with a set performance group in mind. While having a group of performers to workshop a score at every step of its development process is extremely valuable, composers may also be more prone to overlook certain instructions that were discussed verbally with performers, or create the score knowing that if the piece doesn't turn out as they intended or performers have difficulty understanding how to interpret a particular instruction, the composer can simply set them straight with extra advice in rehearsal. Such assumptions can lead to the creation of a score which is incomplete or unclear. A helpful way to avoid this potential problem is for students to ask themselves, “If I was not here, could the performers pick up my music and understand it on their own?” Just as many composers are not taught to compose improvisational music in a general course of university study, many performers are not taught to improvise or interpret vague or experimental improvisation ideas. Students should be aware that the harder it is for a performer to understand how they are meant to approach and interpret a score, the less inclined they will be to play it at all.

Special Considerations for Utilizing Text Instructions in a Score

It is important to note that, while most musicians are accustomed to reading notes and interpreting them into musical ideas simultaneously, many will not be as accustomed to reading large amounts of text instructions while simultaneously interpreting them and making creative musical decisions from them. If a student's score uses a large amount of text instructions, it is important to make certain that these instructions are not only clear, but easy to utilize in a live performance.

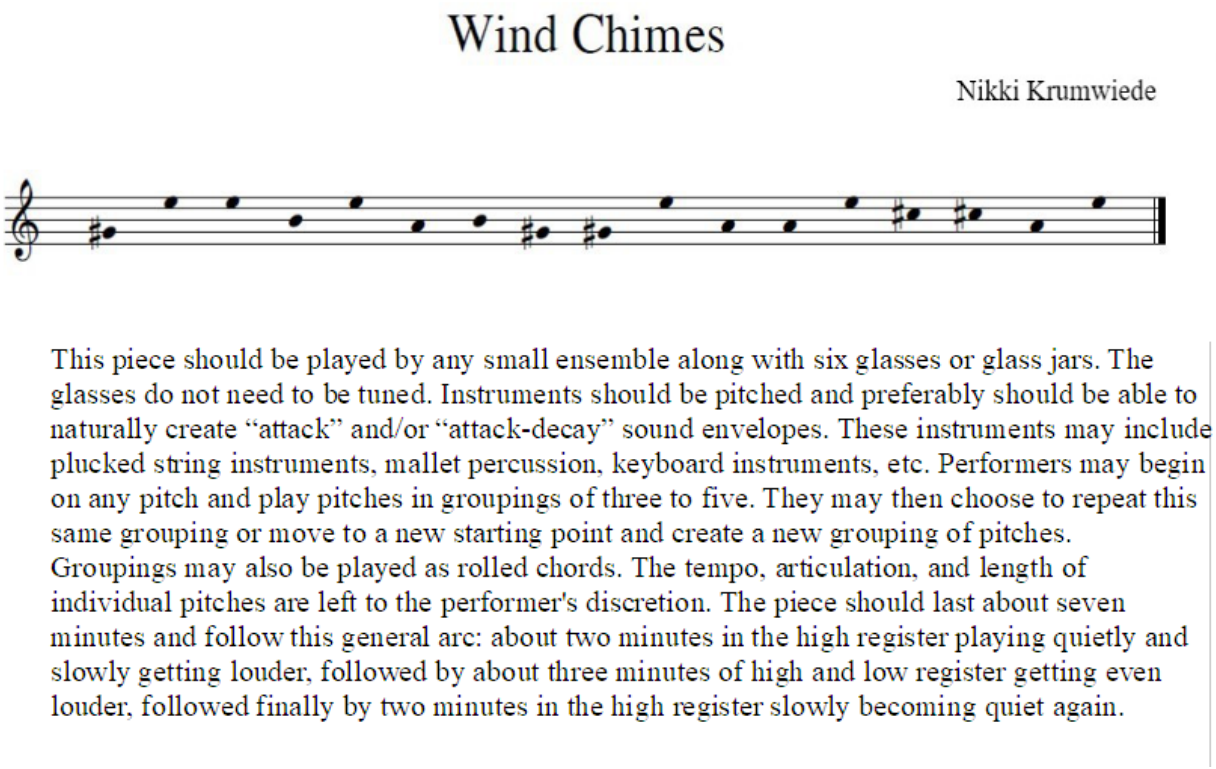
For example, in the thick of a longer improvisation performance, if a performer wants to check what is supposed to happen in an upcoming section, instructions organized in a long paragraph will tear their attention away from their performance or even cause them to stop playing altogether while they hunt for information. It may also cause performers to miss key instructions or to fill in the missing information with their own creative solution, leaving open the possibility of performance choices which the composer did not intend. In order to prevent unnecessary distraction or confusion, consider employing one of the following methods of arranging text instructions:

- The text instructions are simple, clear, and concise enough that the entire score and all its musical parameters can be easily memorized by the performers.
- The text is laid out in such a way that a performer can easily navigate and read it *while continuing to perform.* This could include the use of bullet points, time stamps on certain instructions, or concise phrasing which can be read and interpreted at a glance. Instructions that can be conveyed in 1-5 words are ideal.

  Pay close attention to how text instructions are arranged on the page. In most instances, a

large paragraph of text instructions is far less effective at conveying a composer's musical vision than a bulleted list of parameters or a timeline outlining musical changes with short phrases.

Both of the following score examples have the same performance instructions, but which of them is clearer at a glance?



Wind Chimes

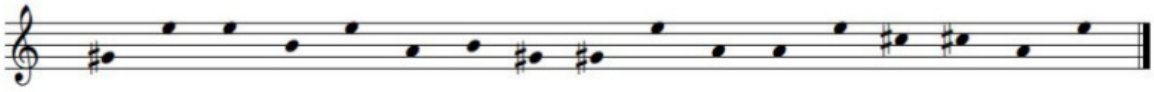
Nikki Krumwiede

This piece should be played by any small ensemble along with six glasses or glass jars. The glasses do not need to be tuned. Instruments should be pitched and preferably should be able to naturally create "attack" and/or "attack-decay" sound envelopes. These instruments may include plucked string instruments, mallet percussion, keyboard instruments, etc. Performers may begin on any pitch and play pitches in groupings of three to five. They may then choose to repeat this same grouping or move to a new starting point and create a new grouping of pitches. Groupings may also be played as rolled chords. The tempo, articulation, and length of individual pitches are left to the performer's discretion. The piece should last about seven minutes and follow this general arc: about two minutes in the high register playing quietly and slowly getting louder, followed by about three minutes of high and low register getting even louder, followed finally by two minutes in the high register slowly becoming quiet again.

Figure 4: *Wind Chimes:* notation example 1

Wind Chimes

Nikki Krumwiede



Instrumentation: any small ensemble + six glasses or glass jars (glasses need not be tuned).
Note: Chosen instruments should be pitched, and preferably should be able to naturally create "attack" and/or "attack-decay" sound envelopes (i.e. plucked string instruments, mallet percussion, keyboard instruments, etc.)

- Performers may begin on any pitch and play pitches in groupings of three to five. They may then choose to repeat this same grouping or move to a new starting point and create a new grouping of pitches.
- Groupings may also be played as rolled chords.
- Tempo, articulation, and length of individual pitches are left to the performer's discretion.
- The piece should last about 7 minutes and follow this general arc:

  ~ 2 min in high register, ***pp-mp***
  ~ 3 min mixture of high-low register, ***mp-f***
  ~ 2 min gradually return to high register, ***mp-pp***

Figure 5: *Wind Chimes:* notation example 2[39]

Draft Evaluation

After students have completed a draft of their scores, they should take time to evaluate their own scores for its soundness and clarity. Use the analysis method outlined in Module 2 to evaluate the score for completeness. Some additional questions students should answer about their score to test it before workshopping with performers might include:

39 *Wind Chimes,* original score by Nikki Krumwiede, written 2018.

- Are there any possible ways a performer could interpret any of my instructions which would result in a sound or outcome which I did not intend or don't like?
- Is my score laid out in a way that will allow performers to find specific instructions while also listening and creatively interpreting both the score and one another?
- Could a performer with little to no improvisation experience be capable of understanding my instructions?
- Is it necessary for my performers to stay together and track the score simultaneously, and if so, is my notation laid out such a way that makes this possible?
- Are all musical parameters either notated/directed in some way or consciously left un-notated for a specific purpose?

Module 4: Example Workshopping Model

Module goals:

- Hear drafted improvisational piece interpreted several times by live performers.
- Critically analyze performances of your score.
- Learn to pinpoint needed score adjustments for desired sound or performer clarity.

While this module is meant to set aside a large portion of the curriculum for workshopping and editing the complete score, the workshopping process as a whole should ideally have been occurring throughout the entire semester. Students should have workshopped their musical concepts and notation ideas with performers at least a few times by this point, but this will be their first opportunity to hear their piece in full. Students should be encouraged not to think of their improvisational score as complete after finished the first full draft of their notation. Improvisational score creation is an ongoing process of experimentation and evaluation, and students should be encouraged to revisit their notation and re-evaluate it as often as possible.

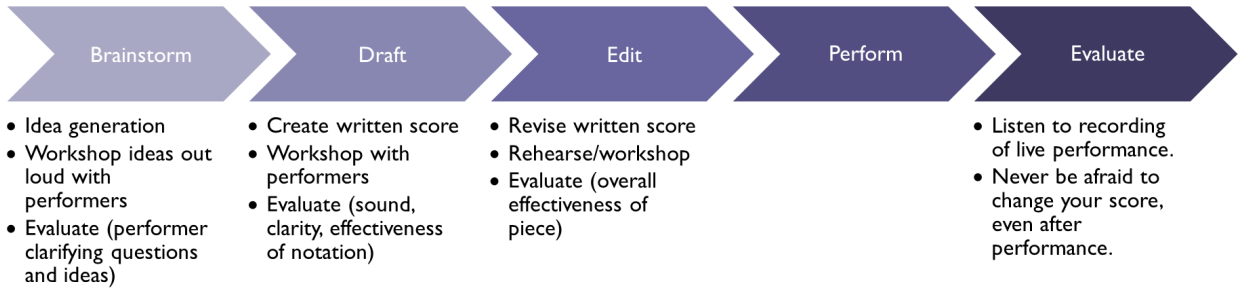


Figure 6: Example workshopping model

The particular method of running workshopping sessions with performers should be

tailored to each specific project, but this module will outline a few overarching methods for effective and efficient workshopping, including how to pin-point edits that are needed in the score.

Workshopping Suggestions

It is important to differentiate between workshopping and rehearsing; this difference is mainly psychological. A rehearsal implies getting the performers to work with the score in order to correctly interpret it and ready it for public performance/recording/etc. Workshopping, instead, is a conscious effort by the composer to learn from listening to performers interpret, play, and discuss with the intention of further editing their ideas.

When students begin the process of workshopping the score with performers, they should take special note of performers' initial reactions and questions about notation before they begin interpreting the score musically. Students should think about how these questions could be addressed by the score if they were not present. Next, students should have performers perform the piece once or twice without interruption, taking note of how the performance sounds, how confident and comfortable the performers seem with the score, and whether it seems like any particular instruction in the score was overlooked by the performers. After the first run-through, students should immediately ask performers for more feedback and clarifying questions. Often, performers will find holes in the score's instructions in an initial run-through that they would not have noticed by simply looking at the score; for example, how should we coordinate this transition? Should all of us try to end at the same time? etc.

It is alright to be unhappy with how the piece sounds in the first workshop! Students should not feel the need to simply accept whatever sounds happen to result from their score's

first draft. If a student dislikes the way the piece sounds on the first run-through, they should point out any parts of the score which might clarify the sound they want and ask the performers to play through it again. Students should also try adjusting their instructions in rehearsal or ask performers to play in a slightly different way to see if they can get a result that is closer to their desired sound, making an effort to pinpoint the precise musical parameters which were not played as they intended. For example, the piece was too long (time), the piece seemed stagnant or didn't "go anywhere" (structure), the piece was too dissonant (pitch), etc. Students should then run the piece again and see if the result more closely matches the sound they were expecting, keeping careful notes of what changed and what they like and dislike. If after repeating this process a few times they still have not achieved their desired result, it may be time to return to the score drafting phase and try a different approach to notation or instruction. If they get a result that is closer to what they wanted, they can move on to make any needed revisions to their existing score.

This process should take place with at least three separate drafts of the score during three separate rehearsals. This will not only allow students to thoroughly examine every instruction in their score and performers' reactions to them, but will give performers time to get used to the notation and come up with more ideas about how to creatively interpret it. The more times students can hear their piece interpreted, the deeper their understanding of the piece and its creative possibilities will become. Even after a piece is publicly performed, the composer should not be afraid to re-evaluate their notation or their compositional idea. This part of the process, more than any other, should be an *ongoing* creative collaboration between composer and performer.

Questions to think about when workshopping drafts of a score:

- Do performers have any initial questions about how to interpret your score? Is there a way to make the answers to these questions clearer in your score?
- Does the music sound the way you had expected it to when writing it? If not, do you still like the way it sounds? If the answer is still no, how can you make your musical intentions more clear?
- Do performers seem comfortable and confident while playing your score?
- Are there any instructions which were overlooked by the performers? If so, how can you make those instructions clearer or draw the performers' attention to them?

IV. AND THE OCEAN TAUGHT ME

Overview and Explanation of Process

In this chapter, I will briefly discuss my original composition *And the Ocean Taught Me...*[40], my compositional process, and my use of improvisation as a compositional tool to create a specific musical affect for a specific programmatic purpose. This piece uses the tools and musical vocabulary which students will develop as they become comfortable thinking critically about improvisational scores. The following explanation and analysis of my work will further illustrate many of the concepts which I discussed in Chapter III, such as the development of a desired sound informing the development of notation, the sliding scale of compositional control over individual musical parameters, and considering performer psychology while composing.

And the Ocean Taught Me... is an original composition written for soprano voice, flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, violin, viola, cello, contrabass, and two percussionists (vibraphone, glockenspiel, tam-tam, concert bass drum, and glass wind chimes). The piece is a setting of an original work of flash fiction.[41] The macro-structure of the piece, as well as many of the micro-level compositional choices I made throughout, are inherently text-centered and developed organically from the macro-structure of the text.

One reason I gravitate toward working with text in music is that these two mediums in conjunction can bring out aspects of both which neither can accomplish alone. The text of *And the Ocean Taught Me* is written as a frame narrative, a term used to describe a story within a story. The main character of the outer "frame" of this story is a writer; the text follows this

40 Full score is found in Appendix 3 of this document. The original text of the piece can be found in Appendix 2.

41 Flash fiction – a work of fiction of extreme brevity (usually no more than a few hundred words) which still contains narrative development and is often experimental in form or narrative style.

writer's internal dialogue as she searches for inspiration, brainstorms ideas, and rephrases wordings. This "frame" surrounds the "inner" story, in which a poet describes their time sitting in a cave by the ocean. While it is possible to create this type of story successfully without the help of music, it would have taken many more words to create the same sense of space and timing as I was able to create *with* the help of music. For example, I was able to create a sense of time passing through instrumental interludes, such as the one which occurs in mm. 100-123. It would have also been difficult to differentiate between the writer in the frame narrative and the poet in the inner narrative, both of which are written in first person, without the help of music. Through my music, I was able to differentiate between the two, with the text of the frame presented in spoken word while the inner narrative is sung.

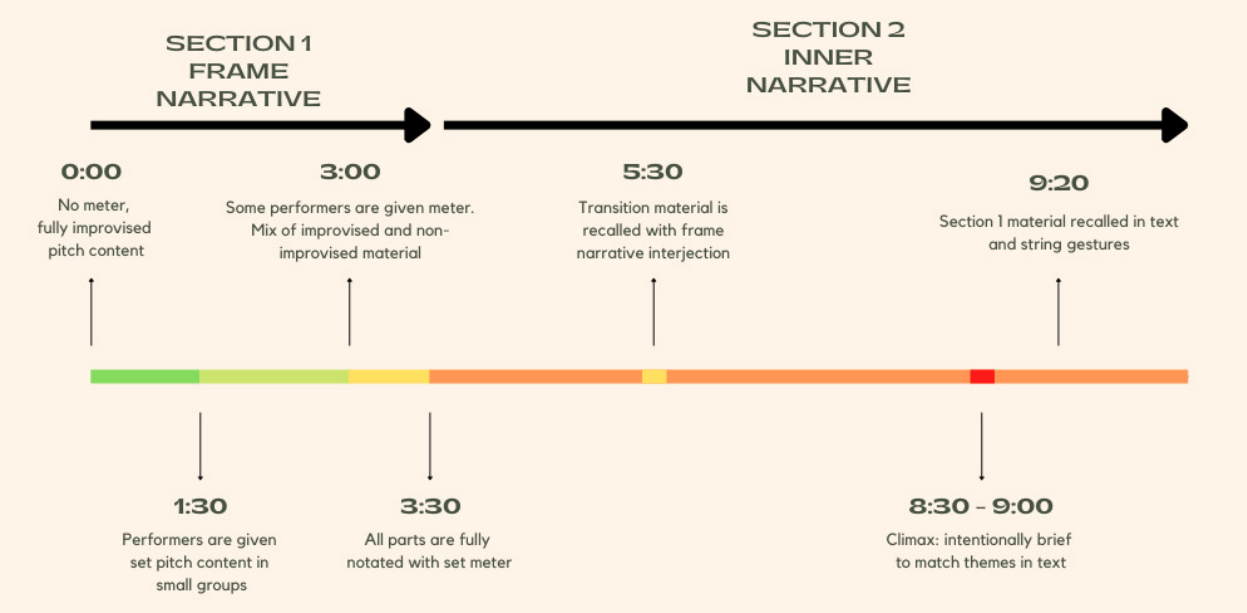


Figure 7: *And the Ocean Taught Me...* Structural Diagram

One of the most important programmatic ideas I wanted to create through this piece was a musical representation of the artistic process. The first section of the piece, which lasts for about

3-4 minutes, represents the brainstorming process; as the writer sifts through unrelated fragments of ideas, the improvised nature of the accompaniment creates a background of controlled disorganization. Just as the writer in the text explores and discards materials before coming to one she decides to develop, the musical material of the first 3-4 minutes presents fragments of unrelated timbral and gestural material, some of which are then "discarded" and never return later in the piece, such as the air sounds in the winds and the timbre of the glass wind chimes.

The slow transition between controlled improvisation and full notation is meant to represent the process of an artistic idea slowly forming and solidifying, so that by the time the writer in the text begins creating the inner narrative within the frame, the musical material feels fully formed in tonality and rhythmic structure. However, I remind the listener of the "brainstorming" which occurs in the first section at several points throughout the longer second section of the piece. For example, the music unravels somewhat and momentarily recalls the textures at the end of section 1 in mm. 63-66, where the frame narrative interrupts the inner narrative. I also wanted to represent how seemingly unrelated materials created during the brainstorming process are often incorporated into the finished creative product; I represent this idea both musically and within the text. For example, material from section 1 is recalled near the end of the piece as the phrase "silver ink on black paper" reappears, accompanied by the ricochet bowing gesture in the strings which was prevalent throughout the section 1. More subtly, the words "starlight," "silver," "lace," and "smooth" are incorporated at several moments throughout both the frame and the inner portions of the text and, although they are contextually unrelated, serve as thematic connections between two stylistically disparate sections.

Use of Improvisation in *And the Ocean Taught Me...*

One of my early inspirations for this type of improvisational writing was the piece *Branches* for two bassoons and percussion by Paul Chihara.[42] In this piece, Chihara moves from fully notated writing into fully un-notated improvisation and back in order to create a specific sense of energy and chaos during the climax of the piece. He moves seamlessly between the two modes of composition by gradually giving his performers control over the musical material one parameter at a time until no musical parameter is notated besides the general feel and dynamic of the improvised section. He then slowly takes control back by adding in notated parameters and narrowing the scope of possible musical decisions his performers make. The result is a highly controlled type of improvisation in which performers are given creative liberties but the composer's artistic concept will remain relatively stable across different performances.

While I did not give performers as much creative liberty as Chihara at any point in *And the Ocean Taught Me*, I did employ his method of moving between creatively directed and fully notated music in the first section of my piece. I use improvisation in section 1 of this piece to create a specific artistic and programmatic affect which is intentionally dissimilar to the artistic and programmatic affect of section 2. The piece begins with notated musical cells to be performed repeatedly for a roughly-indicated span of time. Within each of these cells, timbre, gesture, dynamic, instrumentation, and macro-structure are controlled precisely, while rhythm, pitch, and time are controlled very loosely or not at all.

42. Chihara, Paul. *Branches; two bassoons and percussion* (Hollywood: Protone Music, 1968)

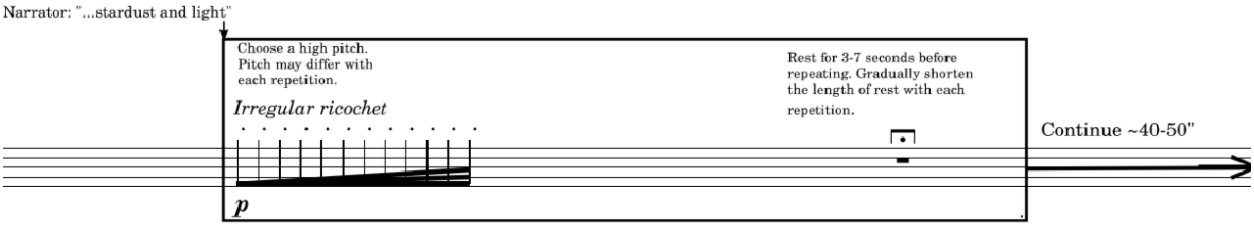


Figure 8: Example of notation cell from *And the Ocean Taught Me* (1)[43]

I then slowly increase in my level of compositional control, similar to Chihara's method, by gradually tightening control over individual musical parameters. Groups of performers are gradually given more precise directions, first on pitch content and then rhythm and meter before improvisational choices are phased out altogether for section 2. Using improvisation in section 1 allowed me to create a sound which is timbrally and gesturally consistent yet harmonically and rhythmically "random" and complex. It also drastically increasing the playability of the material.

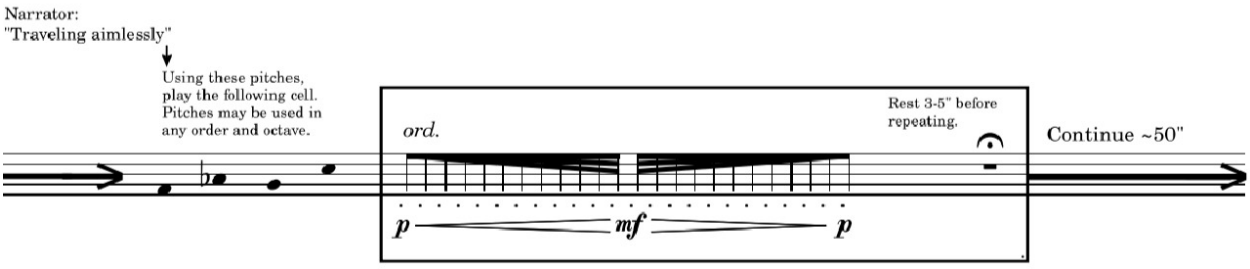


Figure 9: Example of notation cell from *And the Ocean Taught Me* (2)[44]

I also intended for my notation choices to effect the way the performers choose to creatively interact. As discussed in Chapter III, some of the most important aspects of any group

43 This cell appears early in the piece where pitch content, rhythm, and timing are only loosely notated.

44 This cell appears about 1.5-2 minutes into the piece. Pitch is more closely controlled, and dynamic is more precisely notated.

improvisation are the creative decisions the performers make as a collective and the interplay between individuals. Studies have shown that, among experienced improvisers, each performer will spend much more time following another performer's lead or building on a given idea than they will spend generating new musical ideas.[45] It should come as no surprise that the key to a coherent improvisation is performers who listen and respond to one another. However, my score, particularly in the first two minutes, intentionally limits the performers' capacity to respond to one another in order to create a sense of tension. I wanted to create an initial feeling of unease and disorganization in these first two minutes of the piece and limit the interplay between the performers in a few ways.

First, I create an environment in which each performer or small subset of performers have static gestural and timbral material, limiting the decisions each performer can make and therefore the amount of textural interplay between performers. Second, I direct performers to wait for a set amount of time between repetitions of gestures, somewhat limiting their ability to choose to play as a response to another performer's gesture. Finally, this improvisational section is driven largely by the narrator; I direct instrumentalists to listen for certain phrases in the soprano's text to indicate entrances and changes in performance direction. This will most likely encourage performers to put some level of focus on the speaker for cues, making them less likely to *fully* listen and respond to one another. It is my hope that the resulting music will sound tentative, and that performers will naturally play their parts with less regard for the musical decisions of the other performers for the first two minutes of the piece, creating a sound of organized fragmentation and chaos.

45 Raymond MacDonald, Graeme Wilson, and George Lewis, *The Art of Becoming : How Group Improvisation Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020) 78-80.

However, as I begin limiting the pitch content near the two-minute mark, I expect the performers' focus to gradually shift as well. While the limited pitch material will create its own sense of coherence, I also anticipate performers to find it more natural to begin responding to one another and consciously interacting once they begin hearing the ensemble's pitch material become more uniform. Performers may begin overlapping similar pitches, echoing one another, or falling into comfortable patterns. It has also been my experience that some improvisers tend to become more confident in their own musical choices once they pick up on a collective harmonic pattern in the ensemble. This may result in a less tentative, more confident overall sound from the ensemble and help the music naturally swell toward the arrival point when all parts become harmonically and metrically unified at the beginning of section 2.

CONCLUSION

Through this document, my aim was threefold. First, I wanted to underline the need for a composition curriculum which thoroughly explores improvisation. While there are many texts which endeavor to teach students to improvise in performance, especially in specific idioms like jazz, there are no texts which focus exclusively on improvisational composition. The few composition texts which do discuss improvisation only go deep enough to serve as introductions to the subject, and many of these texts contain information which is outdated. This lack of adequate instructional material poses a frustrating challenge to any student interested in improvisation and may dissuade them from pursuing it further.

In response to this vacancy in current composition teaching material, I outlined a teaching method to assist composers through their exploration of this mode collaborative creativity. My improvisational composition curriculum guides students through the development of new creative works with a method that is flexible and will allow students to develop their own creative voices. This method is sound-oriented, performer-focused, and encourages critical analysis and group creativity at every step of the creative process.

Finally, I wanted to demonstrate some the creative possibilities of improvisational composition through my own creative work, *And the Ocean Taught Me*, which utilizes highly controlled improvisation in order to create a specific affect for a specific programmatic purpose. I hope that this document can be a useful resource for both educators and composers, whether they are exploring improvisation for the first time or seeking to study it from a new, critical angle. The lively and growing field of improvisational music holds a wealth of new and exciting

creative possibilities, and I hope to provide composition students with some of the tools they need to explore it.

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APPENDIX 1

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APPENDIX 2

Original Text of *And the Ocean Taught Me....*

Text by Nikki Krumwiede

Shattered stained glass.

Jars of smooth pebbles.

Ice-covered wind chimes.

I see my reflection, blurred...

A forest covered in ferns and moss.

Lace curtains.

All things are stardust and light.

An abandoned greenhouse.

An old bookstore in the rain.

Silver ink on black paper.

Traveling aimlessly...

Embroidered roses.

Ivy over a hidden window.

I create for myself, for no one...

A hidden cave behind a waterfall. Or maybe it's by the ocean? With cursive poetry on the waves.

That could work.

It's about... the artistic process. Or art's value? No... no, don't start with themes, you know better. Start with images. Stitch fragments together.

Gulls circle overhead as I crest the windswept sea wall. This place is our secret, mine and theirs. Where the black sand meets the rocks and grass clings in obstinate huddles, here she and time have carved my haunt. I am but a visitor here, resting where the wind won't steal my words. A little vague... I'll come back to that.

She ignores me at first as I settle in to watch her, too powerful to take notice of the likes one so small. As I set my pen to paper, she races and dances with a force at once peaceful and dangerous. Her train of silver lace sweeps the black sands smooth. I follow her rhythm, let time flow with her motion. And in a few hours, her waltz brings her closer, until silver lace brushes over my feet. I set my verses before her, laid out on the sand. She considers them as she sweeps by and takes what she deems worthy.

She is kind, but stern; a critic, but a fair one. I dare not call her my muse, for she is my teacher. I may have written my masterpiece and set it on the tide. I leave them to her and forget them. They are beautiful simply to have been.

And when starlight flecks the waves, like silver ink on black paper, I stand and thank her and take nothing with me. My words are for her, for myself, for no one. For who am I to say what is beautiful?

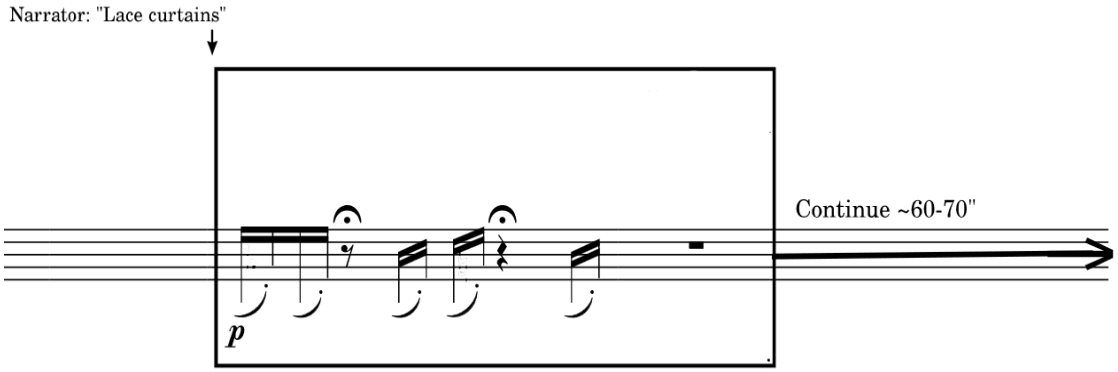
Well, it's a start.

APPENDIX 3

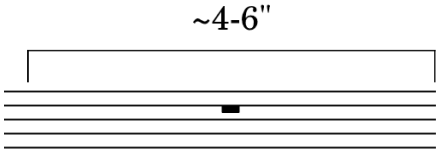
AND THE OCEAN TAUGHT ME...
by Nikki Kruwiede

Performance Notes

For All Instruments



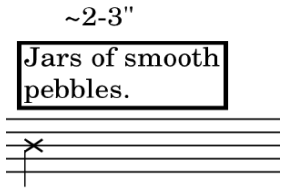
Begin performing material within the cell at the designated point in the narrator's text. Continue repeating the cell until a change is indicated in the score. Timings are approximate and may vary.



Material under the bracket should occur within the approximate duration indicated.

Play improvised pitch within the indicated range.

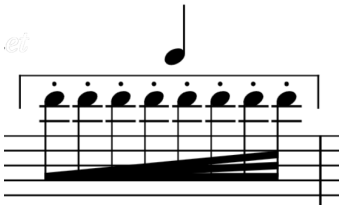
For Speaker/Singer



Speak the text in the box at a normal speaking speed for the approximate duration indicated, but longer if necessary. Begin speaking where the X note head is indicated.

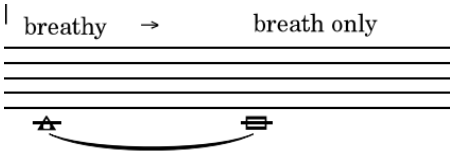
For Strings

Irregular ricochet bowing with improvised pitch.

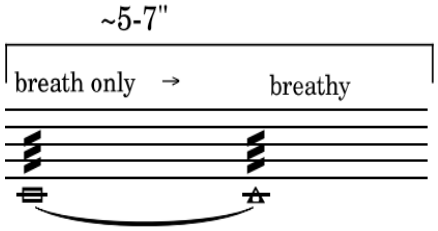


Irregular ricochet bowing spanning the duration of the note above the bracket.

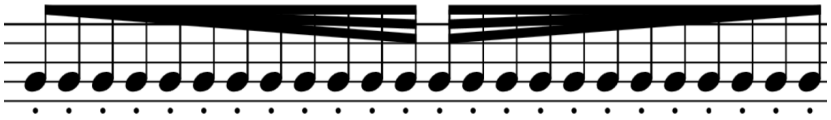
For Winds



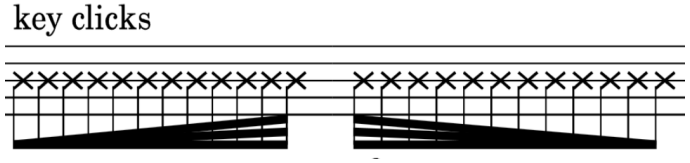
Gradually change from aeolian sound (only the breath is audible, but with precise pitch) to air sound (unpitched).



Flutter tonguing. Gradually change from air sound (unpitched) to aeolian sound (only the breath is audible, but with precise pitch).



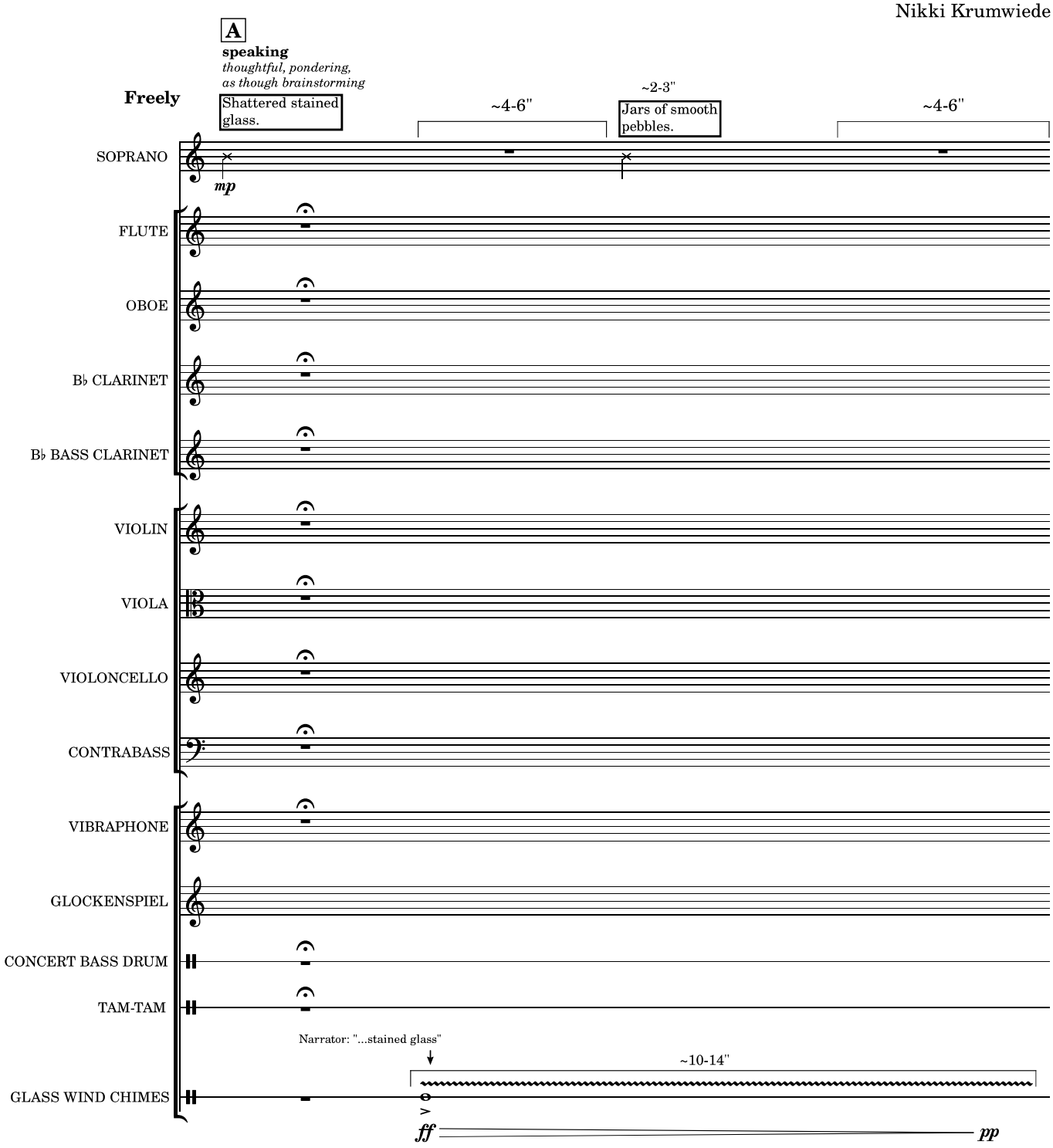
Feathered beams: Gradually slow down or speed up between 32nd note to 8th note length.

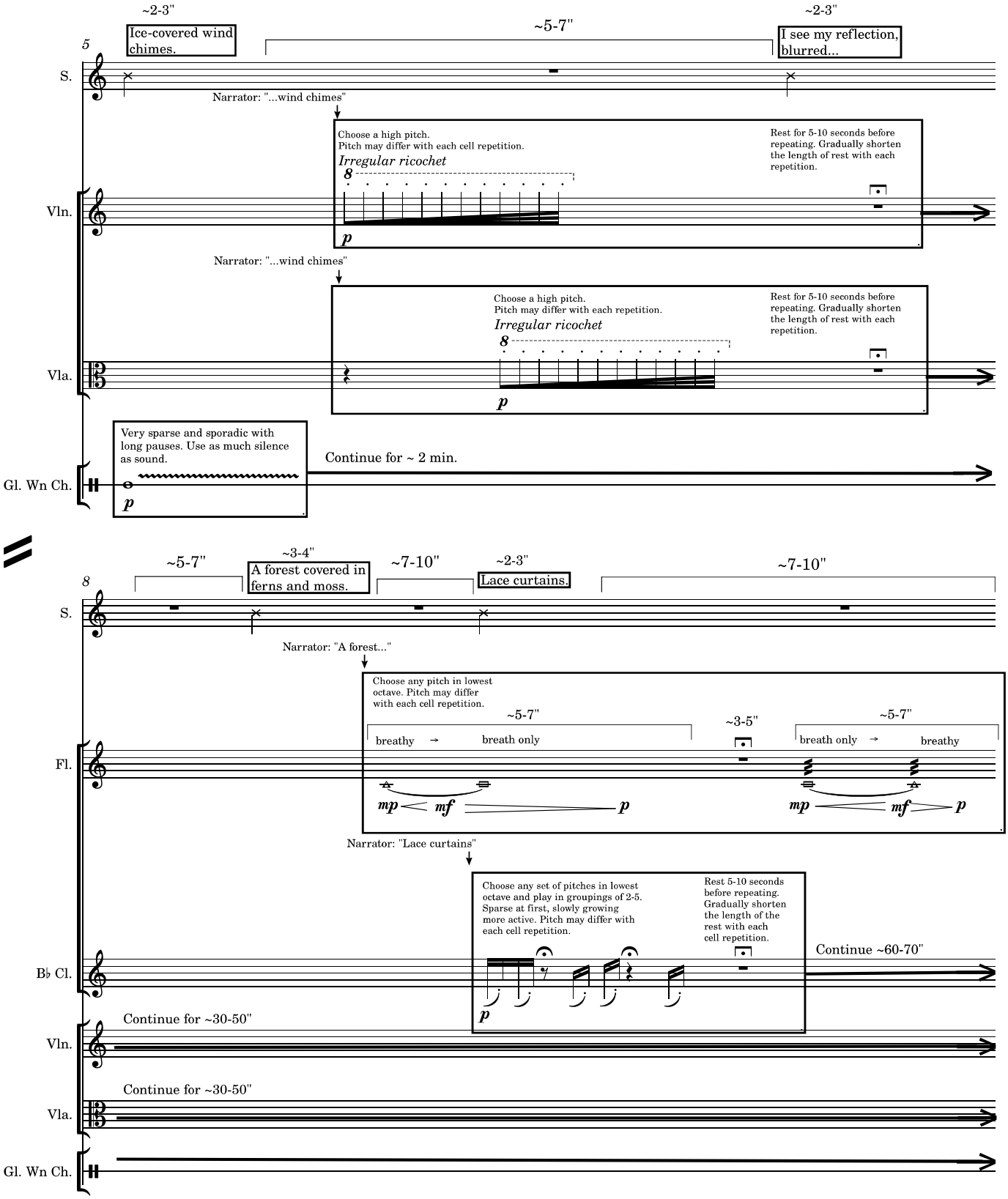


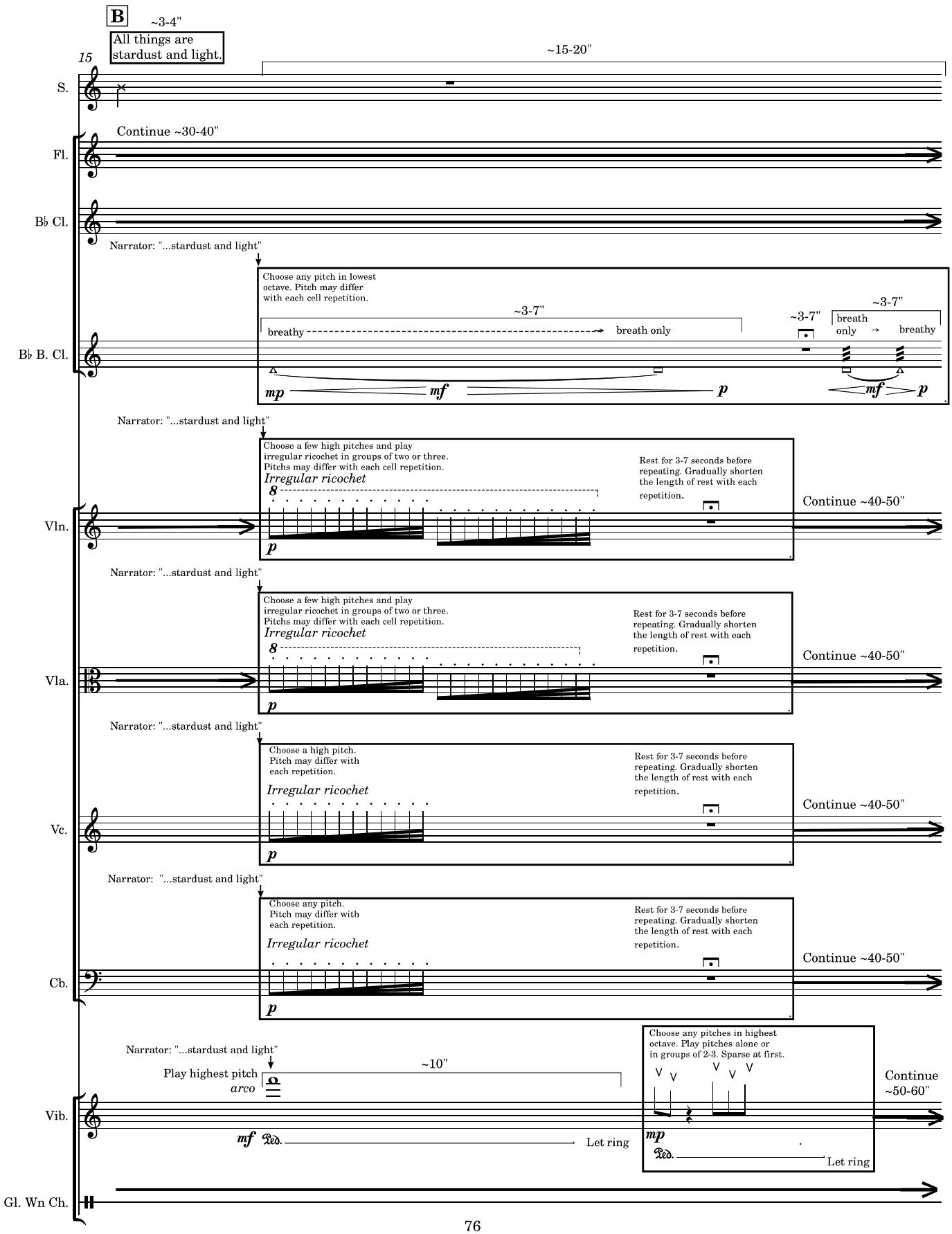
“X” note heads indicate key clicks.

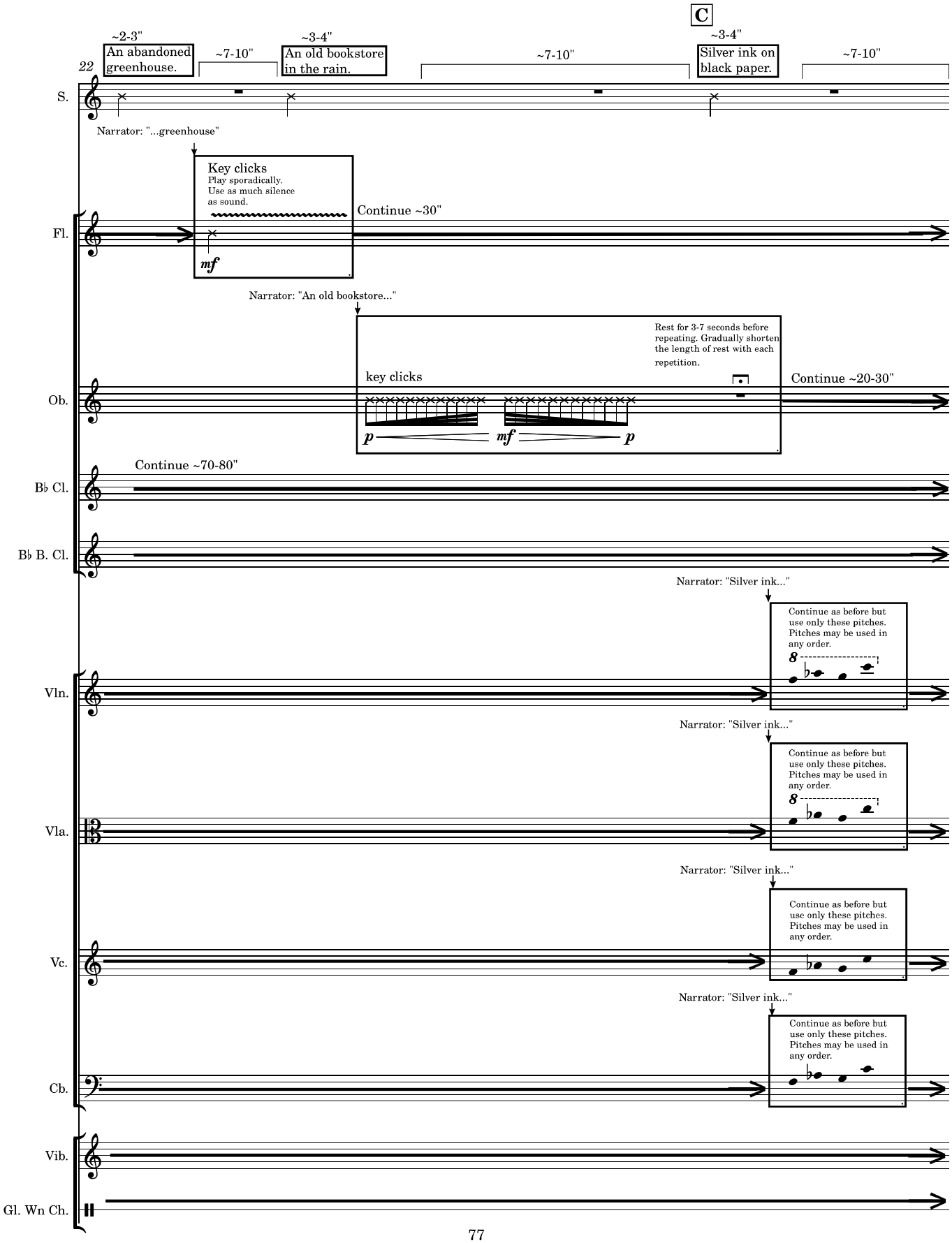
And the Ocean Taught Me...

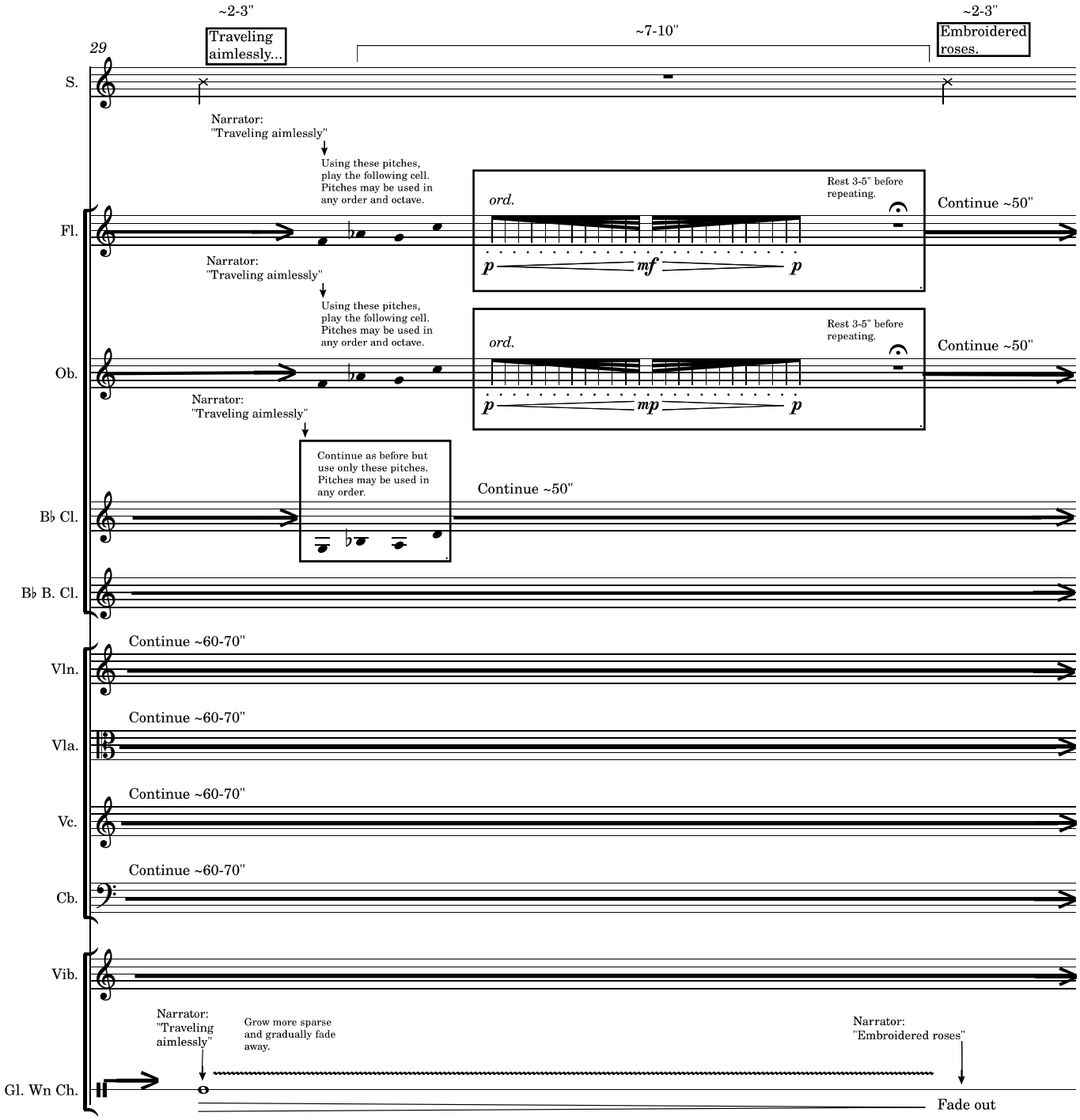
Nikki Krumwiede

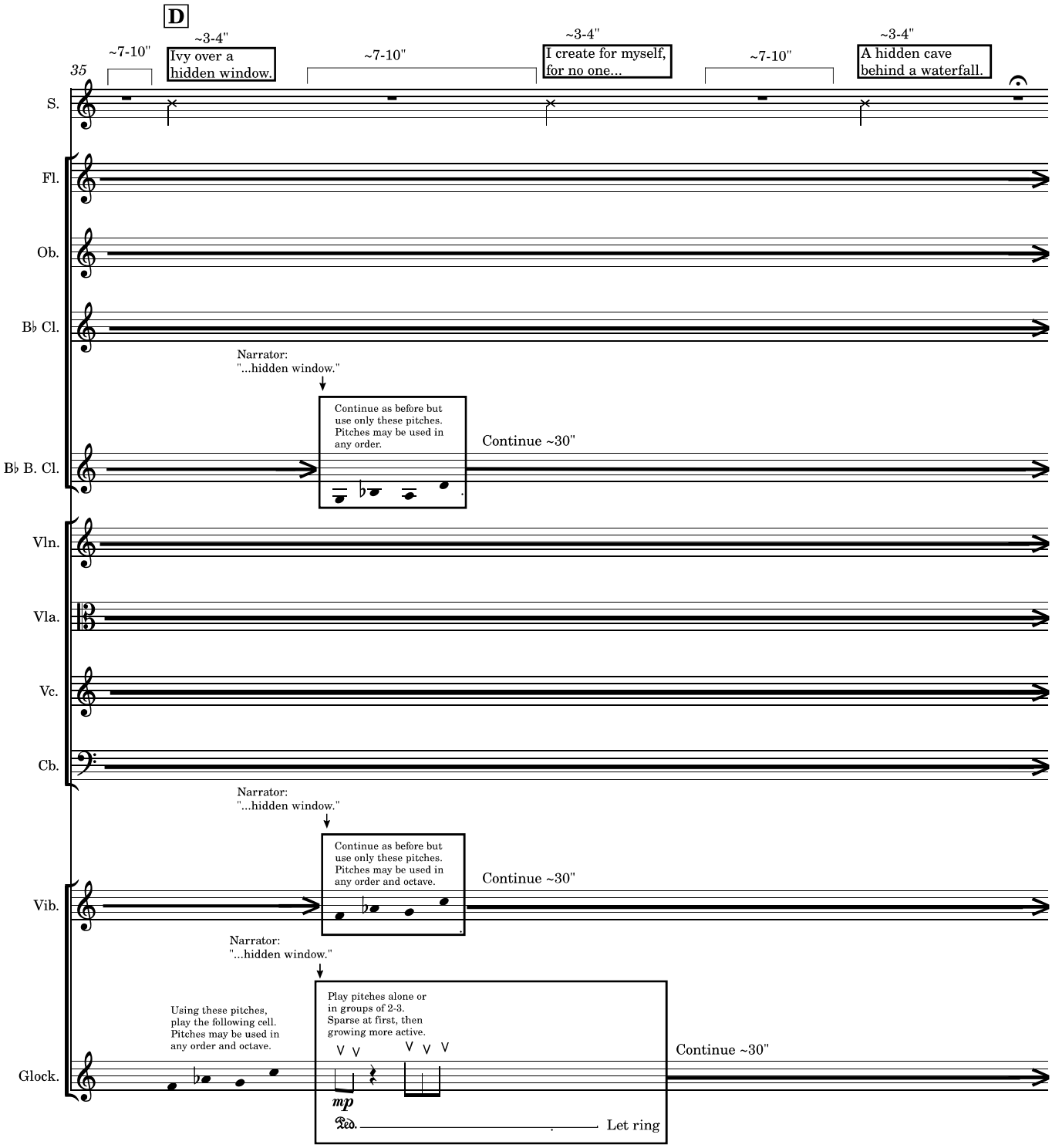


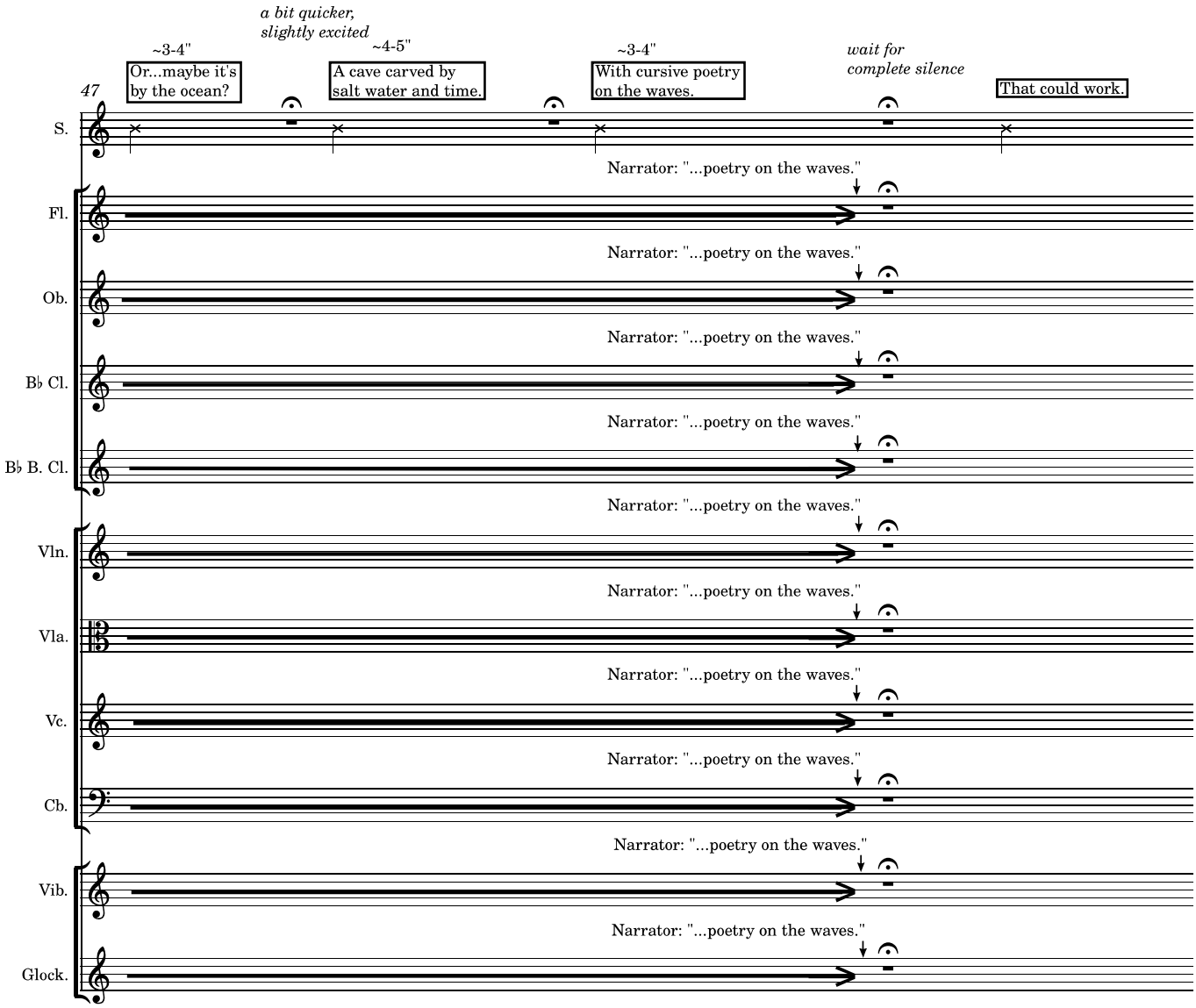

~2-3"
Ice-covered wind chimes.
~5-7"
~2-3"
I see my reflection, blurred...
5
S.
Narrator: "...wind chimes"
Choose a high pitch.
Pitch may differ with each cell repetition.
Irregular ricochet
Rest for 5-10 seconds before repeating. Gradually shorten the length of rest with each repetition.
Vln.
p
Narrator: "...wind chimes"
Choose a high pitch.
Pitch may differ with each repetition.
Irregular ricochet
Rest for 5-10 seconds before repeating. Gradually shorten the length of rest with each repetition.
Vla.
p
Very sparse and sporadic with long pauses. Use as much silence as sound.
Continue for ~ 2 min.
Gl. Wn Ch.
p
~5-7"
~3-4"
A forest covered in ferns and moss.
~7-10"
~2-3"
Lace curtains.
~7-10"
8
S.
Narrator: "A forest..."
Choose any pitch in lowest octave. Pitch may differ with each cell repetition.
~5-7"
~3-5"
~5-7"
breathy
breath only
breath only
breathy
Fl.
mp
mf
p
mp
mf
p
Narrator: "Lace curtains"
Choose any set of pitches in lowest octave and play in groupings of 2-5. Sparse at first, slowly growing more active. Pitch may differ with each cell repetition.
Rest 5-10 seconds before repeating. Gradually shorten the length of the rest with each cell repetition.
Continue ~60-70"
B♭ Cl.
p
Continue for ~30-50"
Vln.
Continue for ~30-50"
Vla.
Gl. Wn Ch.

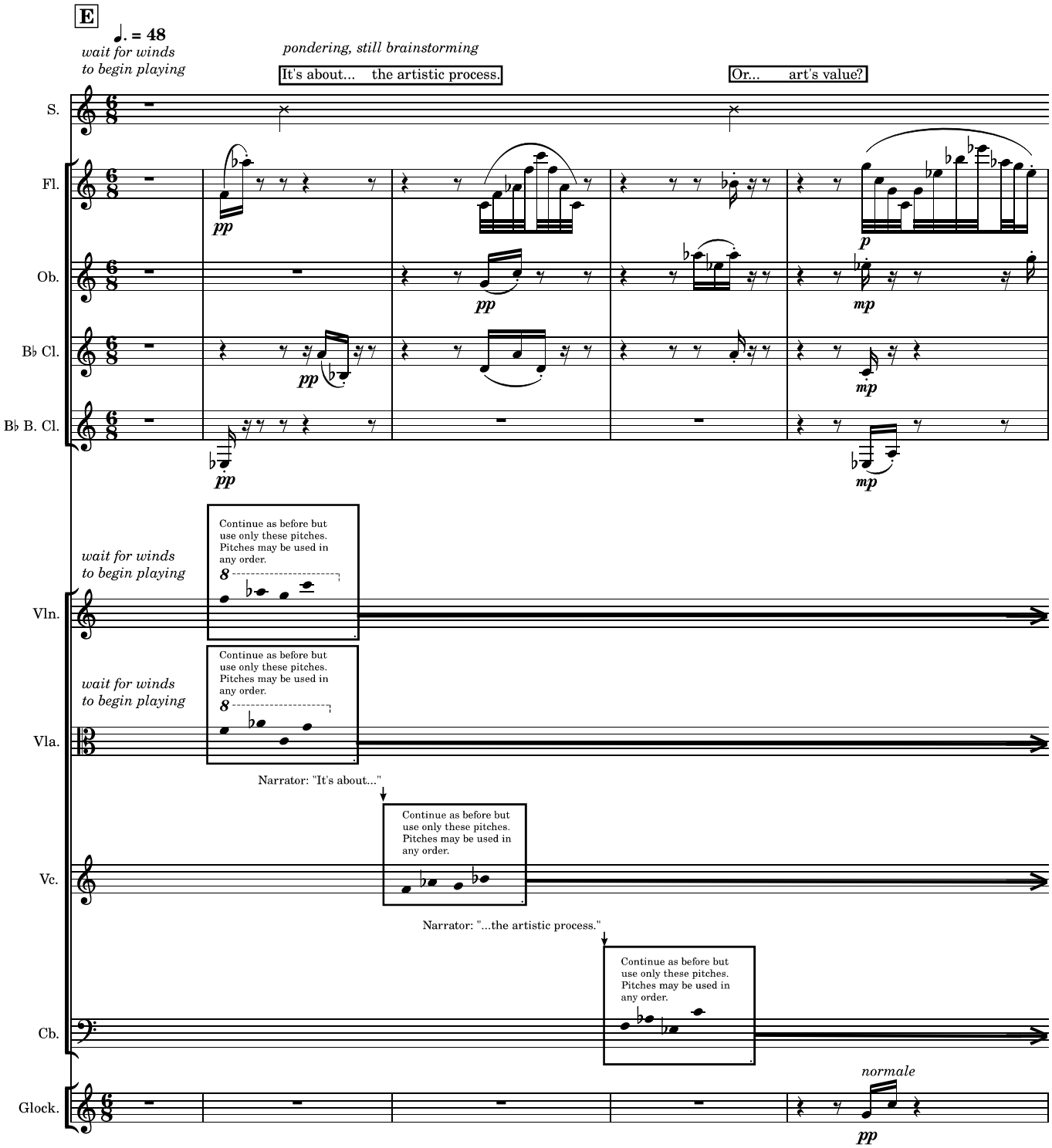

B
~3-4"
All things are stardust and light.
15
~15-20"
S.
Continue ~30-40"
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Narrator: "...stardust and light"
Choose any pitch in lowest octave. Pitch may differ with each cell repetition.
~3-7"
breathy
breath only
~3-7"
~3-7"
breath only
breathy
B♭ B. Cl.
mp
mf
p
mf
p
Narrator: "...stardust and light"
Choose a few high pitches and play irregular ricochet in groups of two or three. Pitchs may differ with each cell repetition.
Irregular ricochet
Rest for 3-7 seconds before repeating. Gradually shorten the length of rest with each repetition.
Continue ~40-50"
Vln.
p
Narrator: "...stardust and light"
Choose a few high pitches and play irregular ricochet in groups of two or three. Pitchs may differ with each cell repetition.
Irregular ricochet
Rest for 3-7 seconds before repeating. Gradually shorten the length of rest with each repetition.
Continue ~40-50"
Vla.
p
Narrator: "...stardust and light"
Choose a high pitch. Pitch may differ with each repetition.
Irregular ricochet
Rest for 3-7 seconds before repeating. Gradually shorten the length of rest with each repetition.
Continue ~40-50"
Vc.
p
Narrator: "...stardust and light"
Choose any pitch. Pitch may differ with each repetition.
Irregular ricochet
Rest for 3-7 seconds before repeating. Gradually shorten the length of rest with each repetition.
Continue ~40-50"
Cb.
p
Narrator: "...stardust and light"
Play highest pitch
arco
~10"
Choose any pitches in highest octave. Play pitches alone or in groups of 2-3. Sparse at first.
Continue ~50-60"
Vib.
mf
Let ring
mp
Let ring
Gl. Wn Ch.

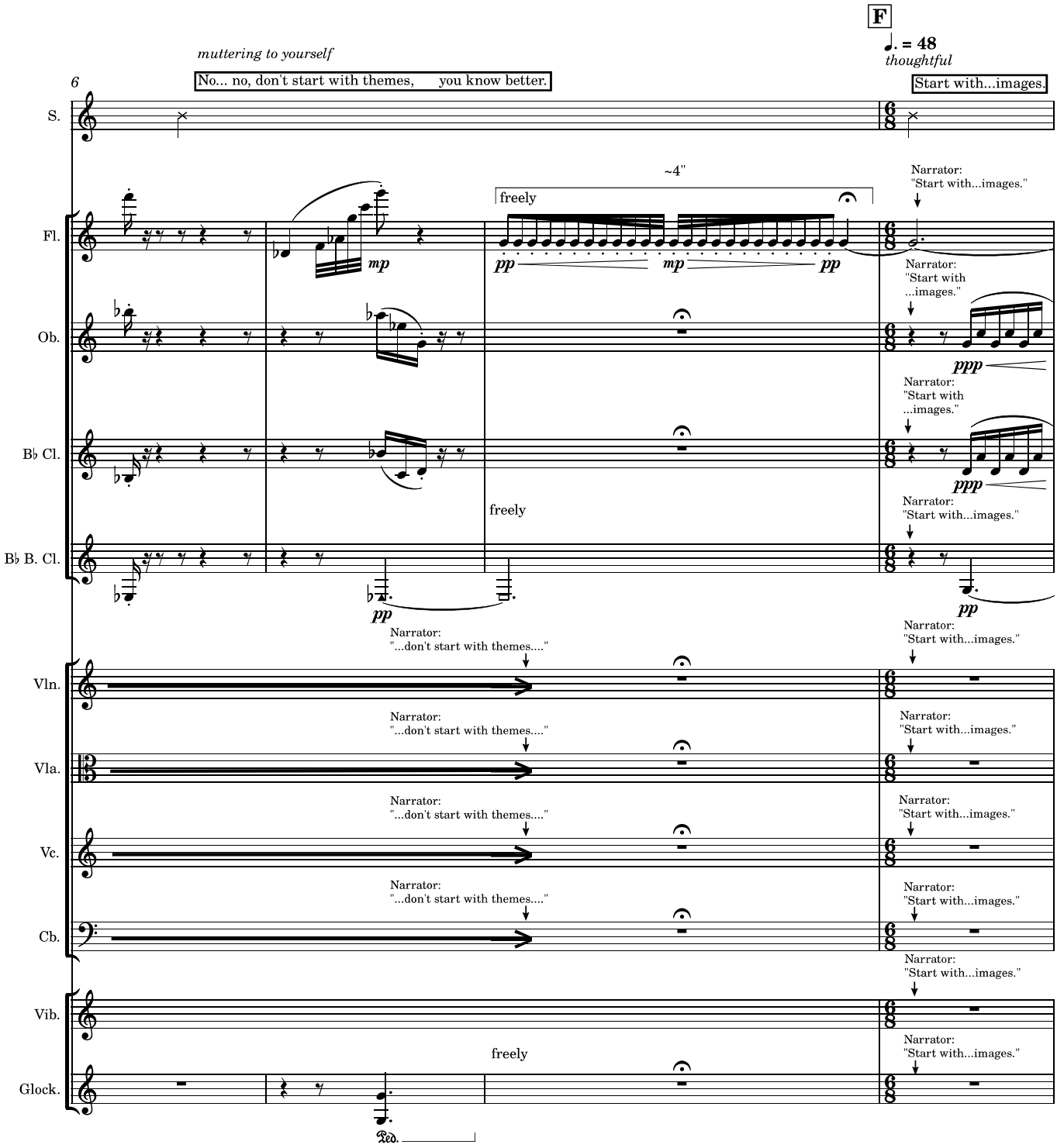

C
22
~2-3"
An abandoned greenhouse.
~7-10"
~3-4"
An old bookstore in the rain.
~7-10"
~3-4"
Silver ink on black paper.
~7-10"
S.
Narrator: "...greenhouse"
Key clicks
Play sporadically.
Use as much silence as sound.
Continue ~30"
Fl.
mf
Narrator: "An old bookstore..."
Rest for 3-7 seconds before repeating. Gradually shorten the length of rest with each repetition.
key clicks
Continue ~20-30"
Ob.
p
mf
p
Continue ~70-80"
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Narrator: "Silver ink..."
Continue as before but use only these pitches. Pitches may be used in any order.
Vln.
Narrator: "Silver ink..."
Continue as before but use only these pitches. Pitches may be used in any order.
Vla.
Narrator: "Silver ink..."
Continue as before but use only these pitches. Pitches may be used in any order.
Vc.
Narrator: "Silver ink..."
Continue as before but use only these pitches. Pitches may be used in any order.
Cb.
Vib.
Gl. Wn Ch.

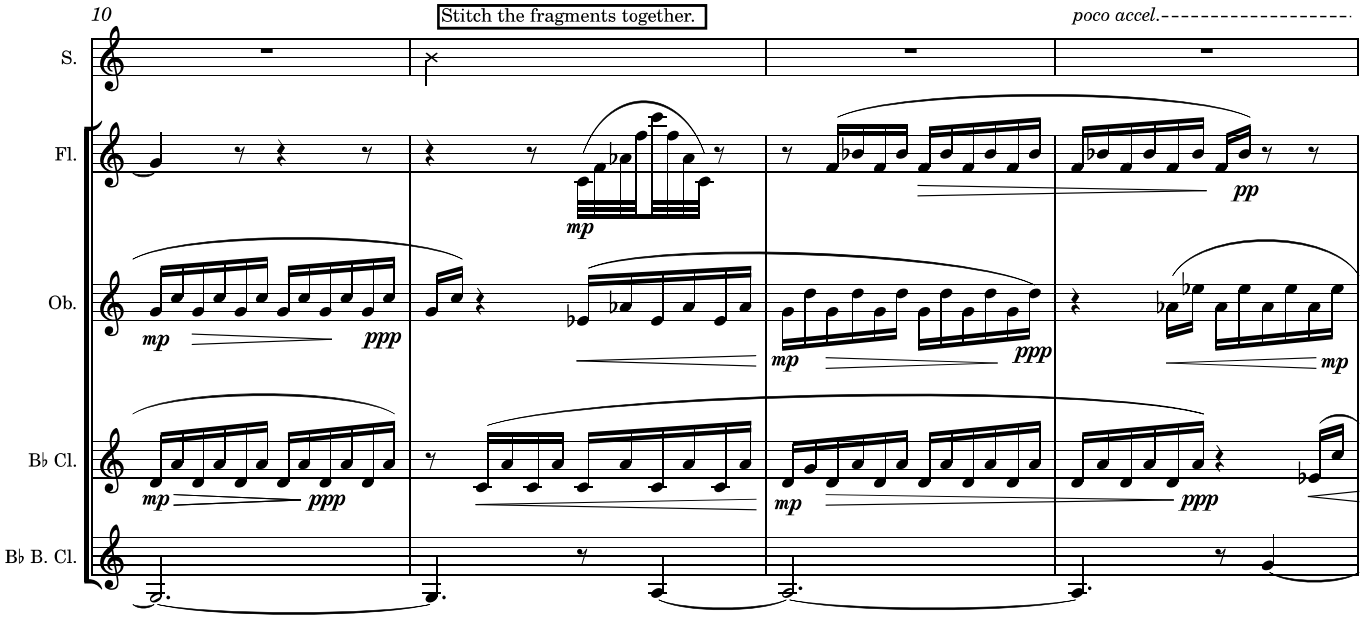

29
~2-3"
Traveling aimlessly...
~7-10"
~2-3"
Embroidered roses.
S.
Narrator: "Traveling aimlessly"
Using these pitches, play the following cell. Pitches may be used in any order and octave.
ord.
Rest 3-5" before repeating.
Continue ~50"
Fl.
Narrator: "Traveling aimlessly"
Using these pitches, play the following cell. Pitches may be used in any order and octave.
ord.
Rest 3-5" before repeating.
Continue ~50"
Ob.
Narrator: "Traveling aimlessly"
Continue as before but use only these pitches. Pitches may be used in any order.
Continue ~50"
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Continue ~60-70"
Vln.
Continue ~60-70"
Vla.
Continue ~60-70"
Vc.
Continue ~60-70"
Cb.
Vib.
Narrator: "Traveling aimlessly"
Grow more sparse and gradually fade away.
Narrator: "Embroidered roses"
Gl. Wn Ch.
Fade out

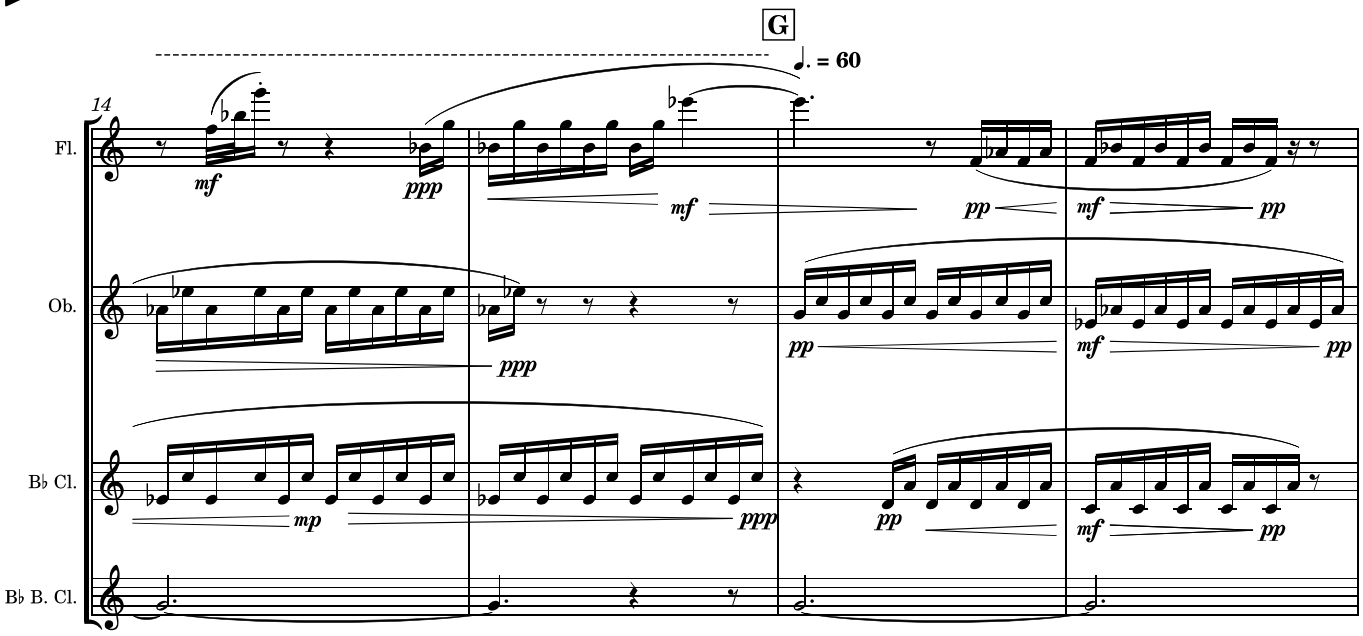

D
35
~7-10"
~3-4"
Ivy over a hidden window.
~7-10"
~3-4"
I create for myself, for no one...
~7-10"
~3-4"
A hidden cave behind a waterfall.
S.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Narrator: "...hidden window."
Continue as before but use only these pitches. Pitches may be used in any order.
Continue ~30"
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Narrator: "...hidden window."
Continue as before but use only these pitches. Pitches may be used in any order and octave.
Continue ~30"
Vib.
Narrator: "...hidden window."
Using these pitches, play the following cell. Pitches may be used in any order and octave.
Play pitches alone or in groups of 2-3. Sparse at first, then growing more active.
mp
Let ring
Continue ~30"
Glock.

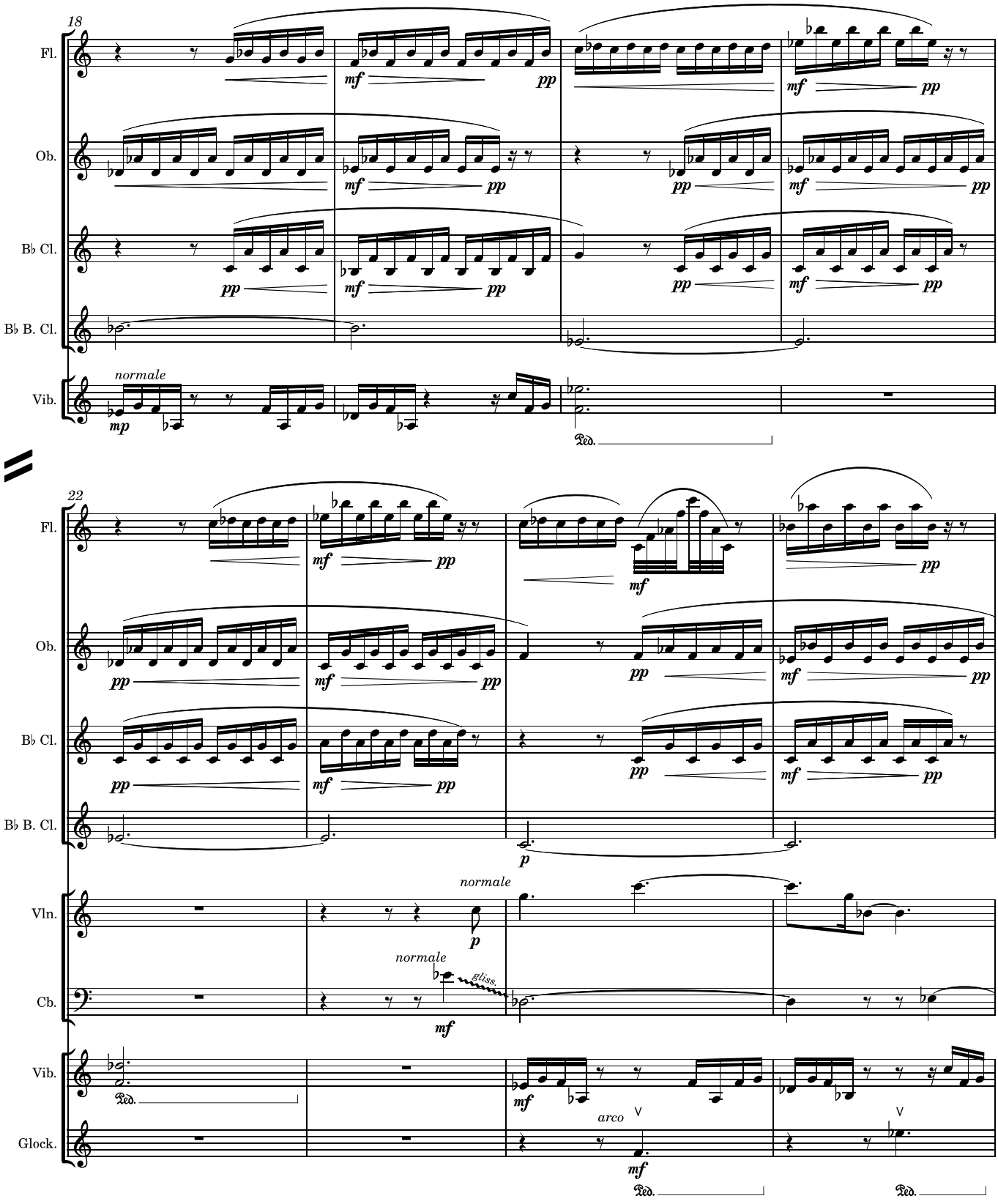

47
~3-4"
Or...maybe it's by the ocean?
a bit quicker, slightly excited
~4-5"
A cave carved by salt water and time.
~3-4"
With cursive poetry on the waves.
wait for complete silence
That could work.
S.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
Glock.
Narrator: "...poetry on the waves."

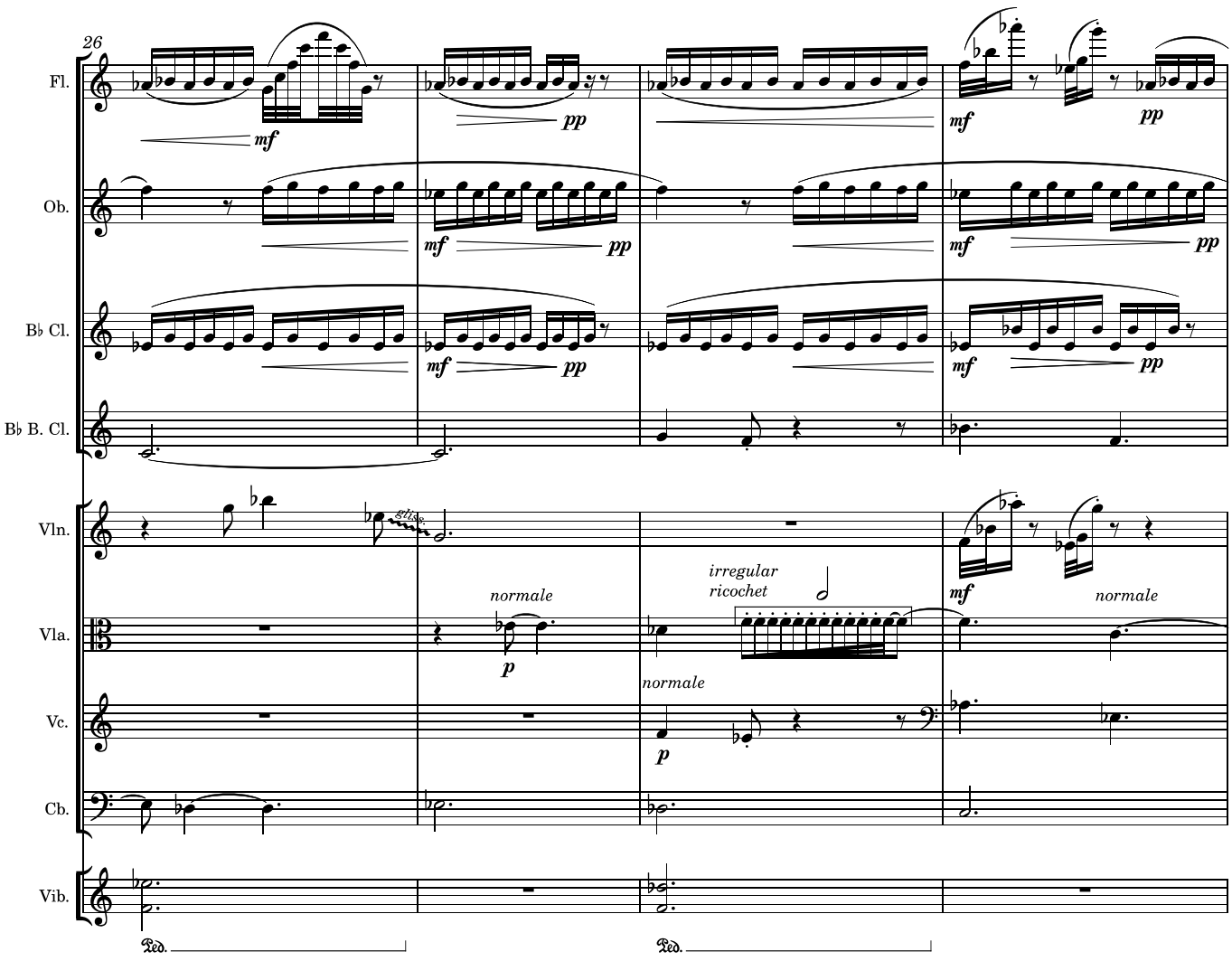

E
♩. = 48
wait for winds to begin playing
pondering, still brainstorming
It's about... the artistic process.
Or... art's value?
S.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
pp
mp
p
Continue as before but use only these pitches. Pitches may be used in any order.
wait for winds to begin playing
Vln.
Vla.
Narrator: "It's about..."
Vc.
Narrator: "...the artistic process."
Cb.
normale
Glock.

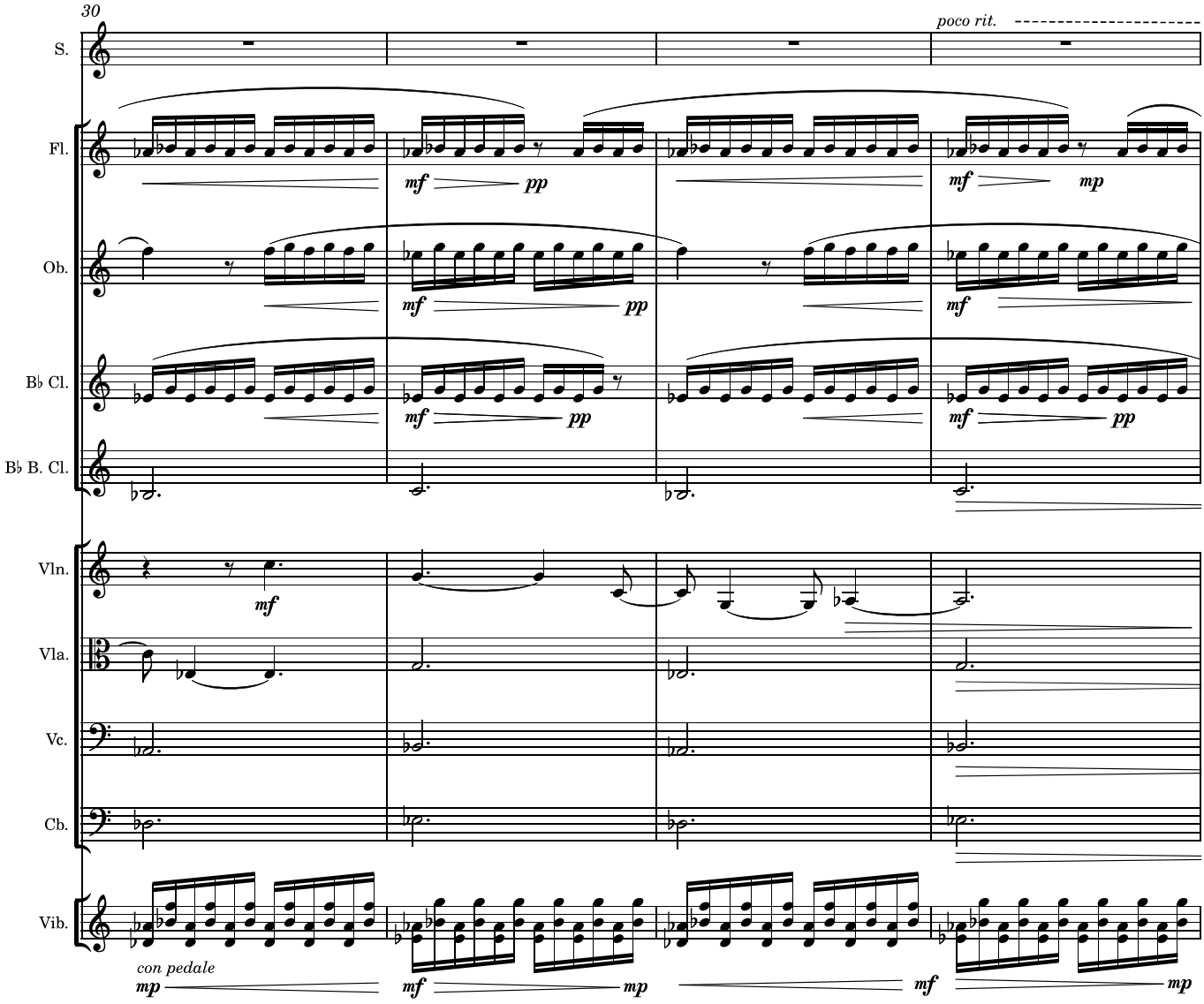

F
♩. = 48
thoughtful
muttering to yourself
6
No... no, don't start with themes, you know better.
Start with...images.
S.
~4"
freely
Narrator: "Start with...images."
Fl.
mp
pp
mp
pp
Narrator: "Start with ...images."
Ob.
ppp
Narrator: "Start with ...images."
B♭ Cl.
ppp
freely
Narrator: "Start with...images."
B♭ B. Cl.
pp
pp
Narrator: "...don't start with themes...."
Narrator: "Start with...images."
Vln.
Narrator: "...don't start with themes...."
Narrator: "Start with...images."
Vla.
Narrator: "...don't start with themes...."
Narrator: "Start with...images."
Vc.
Narrator: "...don't start with themes...."
Narrator: "Start with...images."
Cb.
Narrator: "Start with...images."
Vib.
freely
Narrator: "Start with...images."
Glock.
Ped.

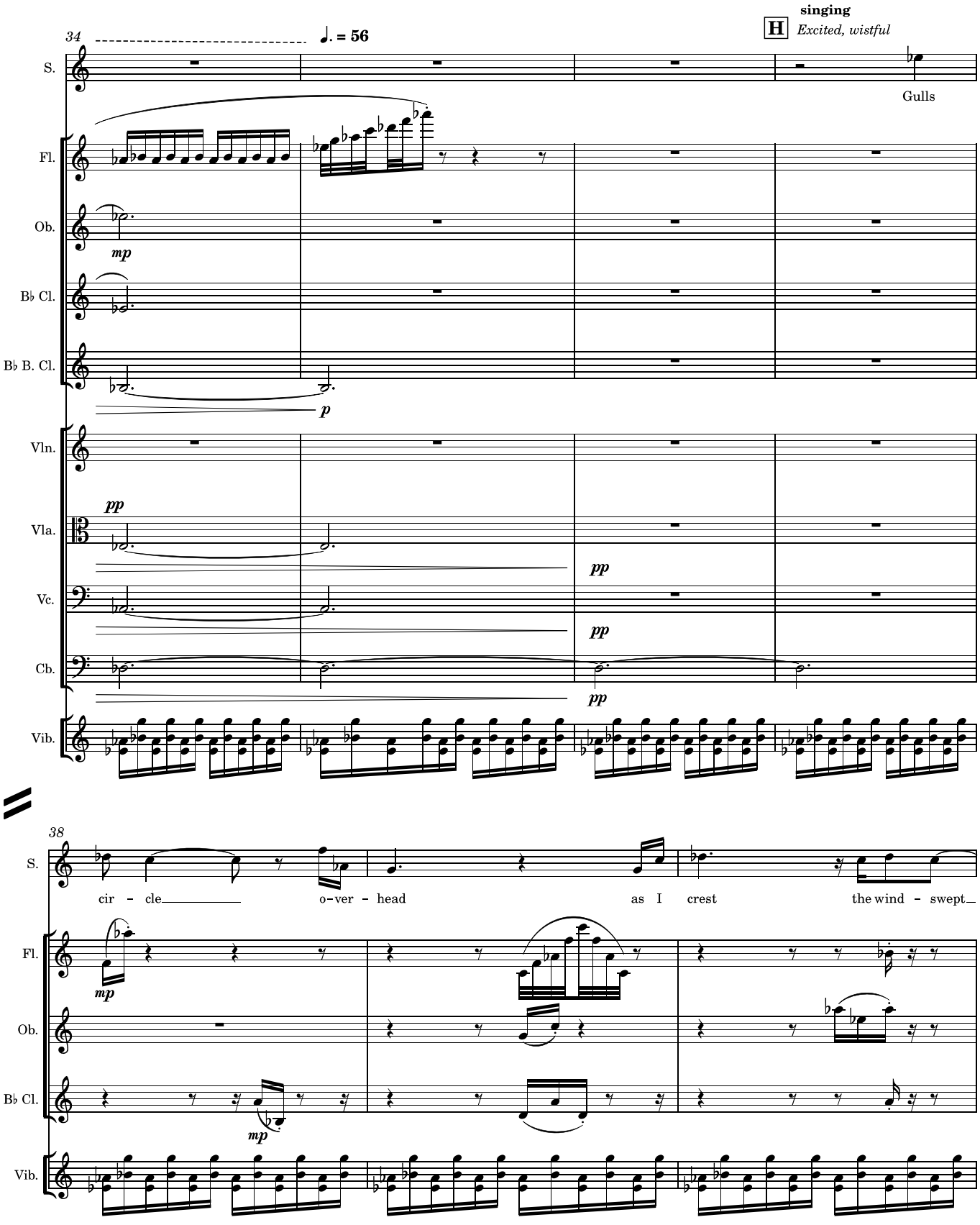

10
Stitch the fragments together.
poco accel.
S.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
mp
ppp
pp

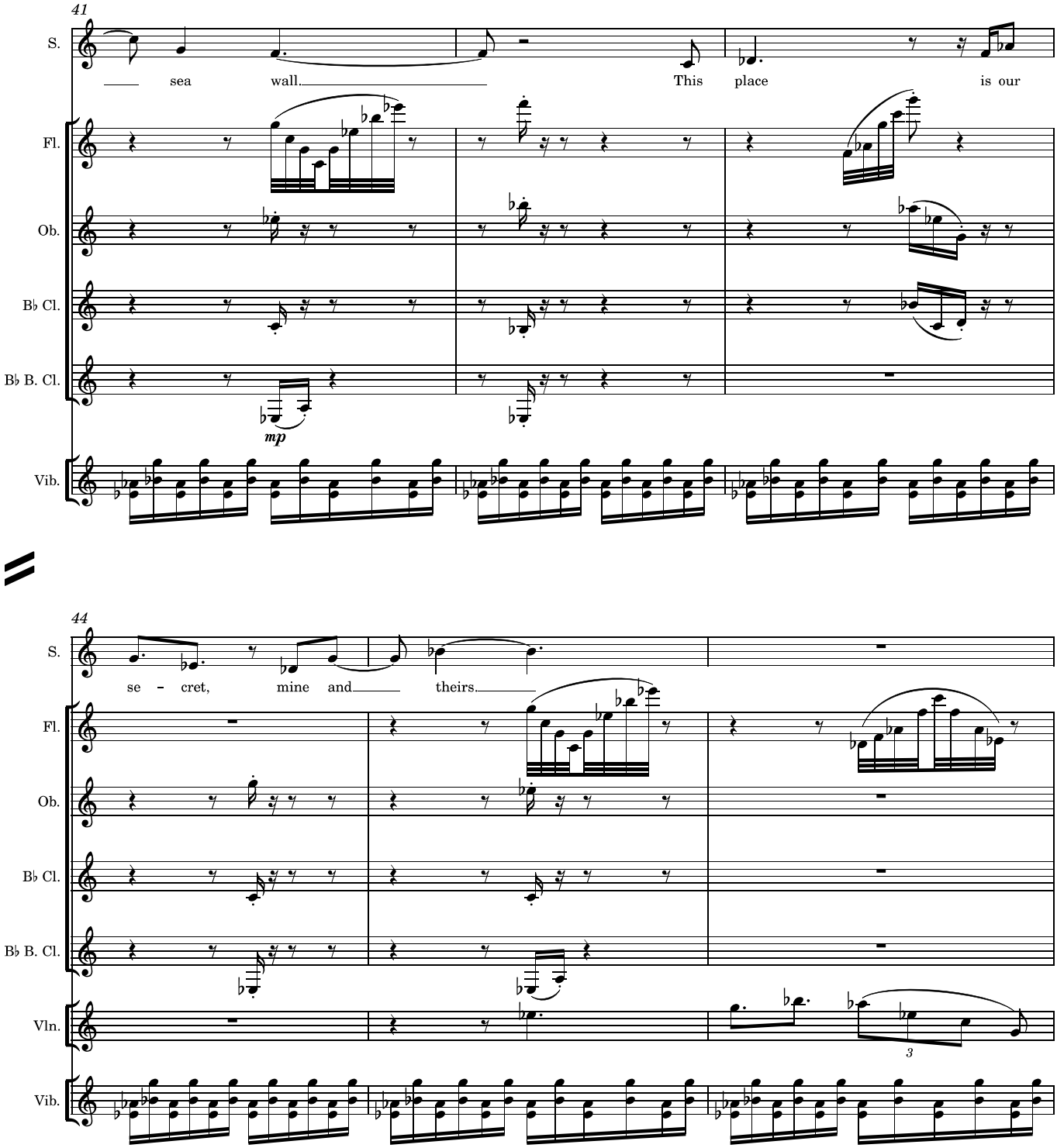

G
♩. = 60
14
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
mf
ppp
pp
mp

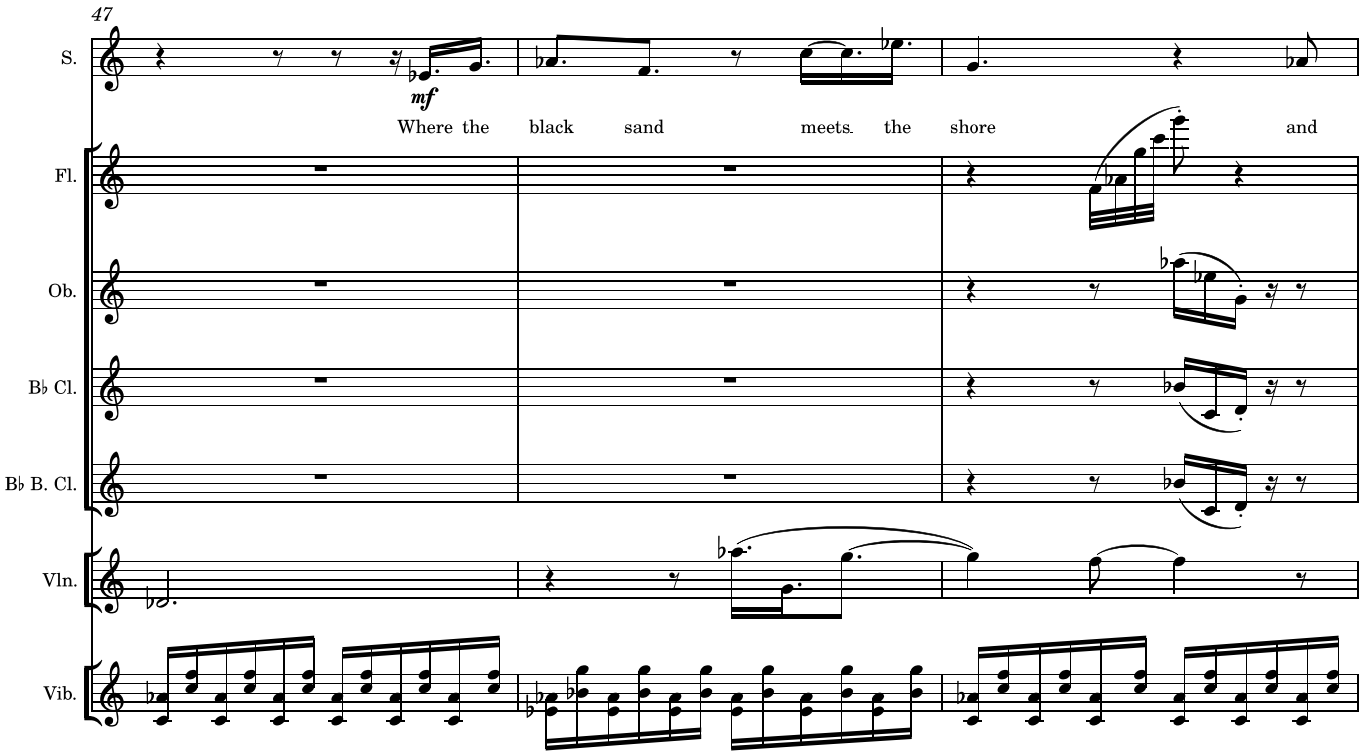

18
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vib.
normale
22
Vln.
Cb.
Glock.
normale
gliss.
arco

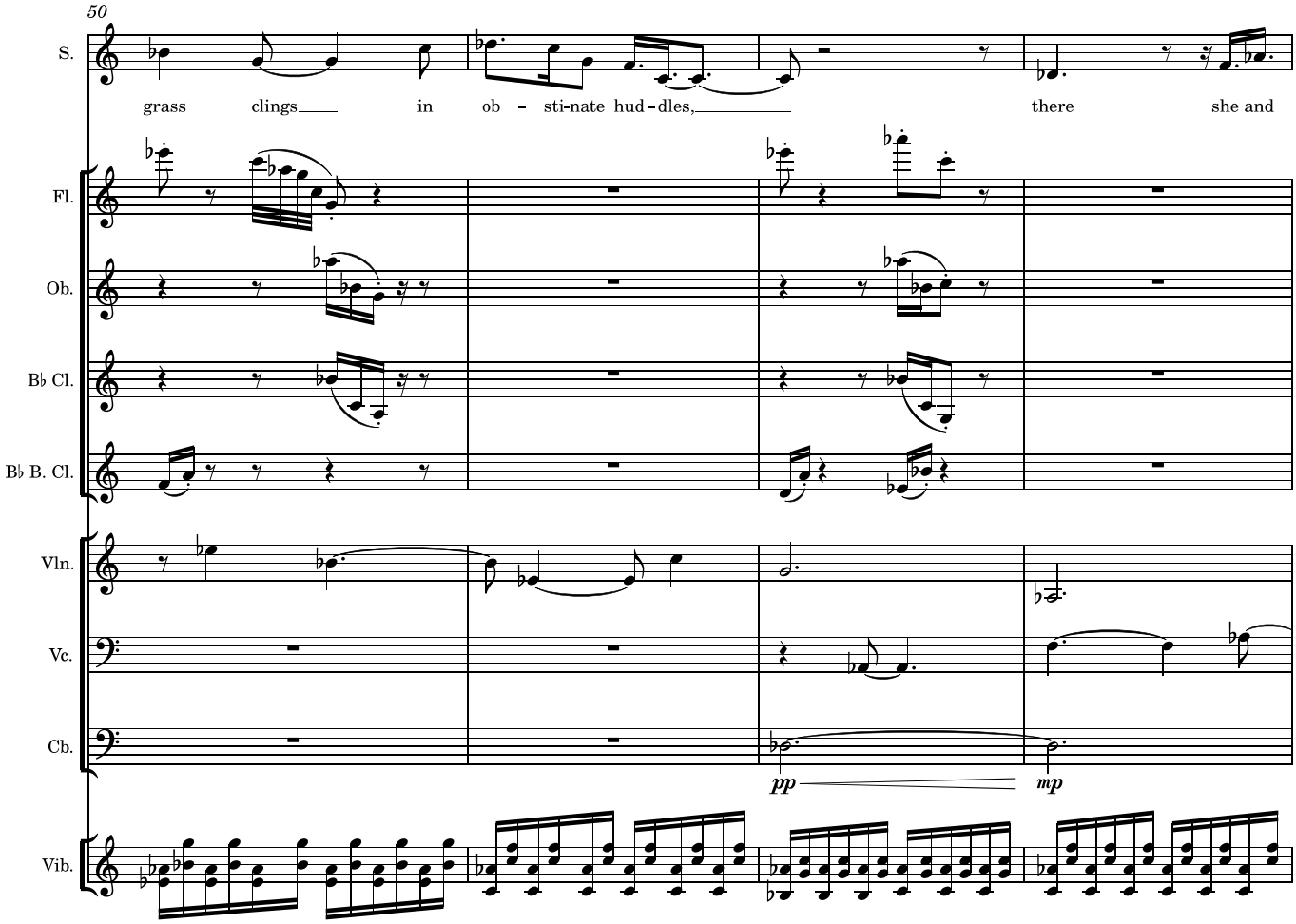

26
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
mf
pp
normale
irregular
ricochet
p
Ped.

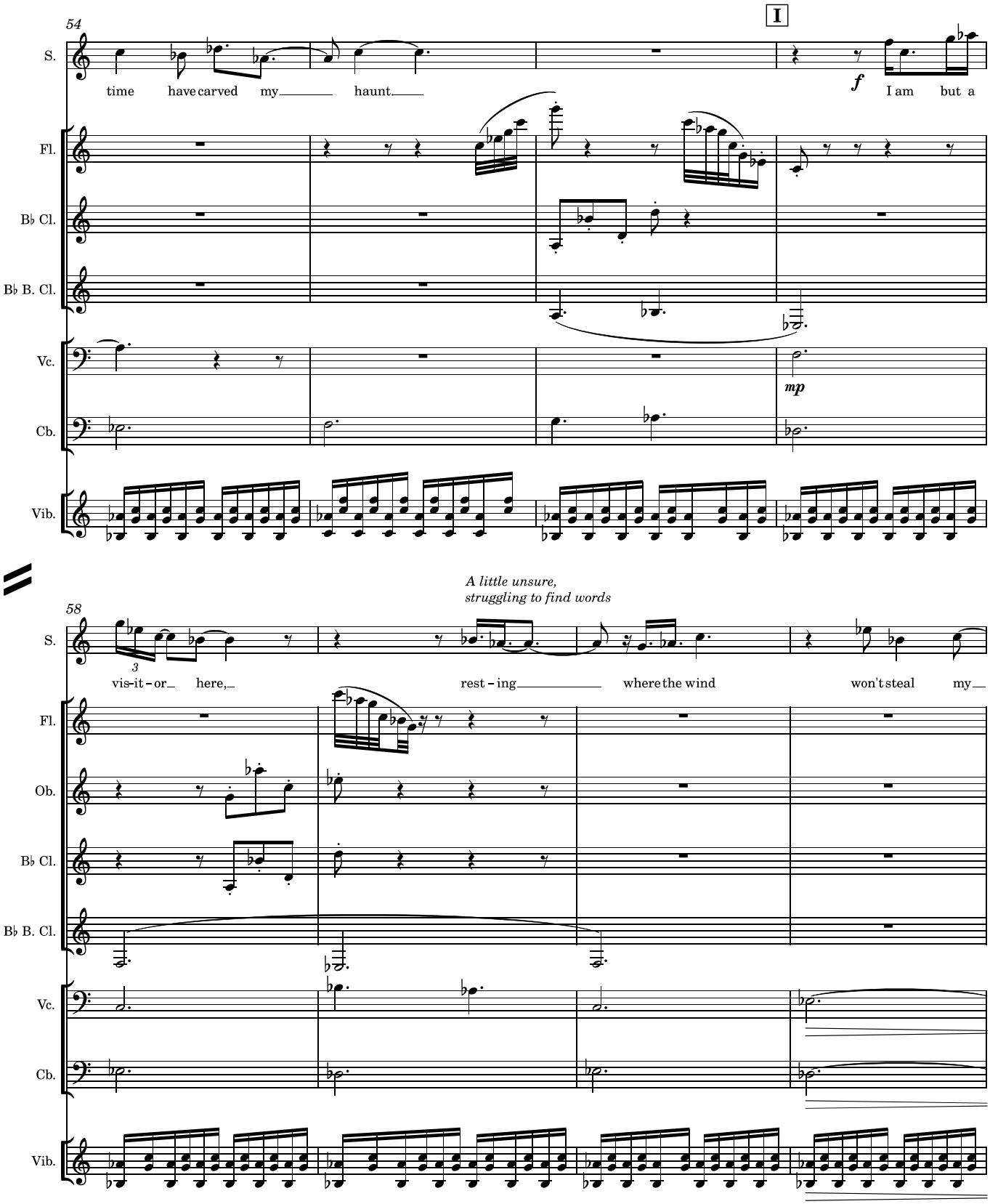

30
poco rit.
S.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
con pedale

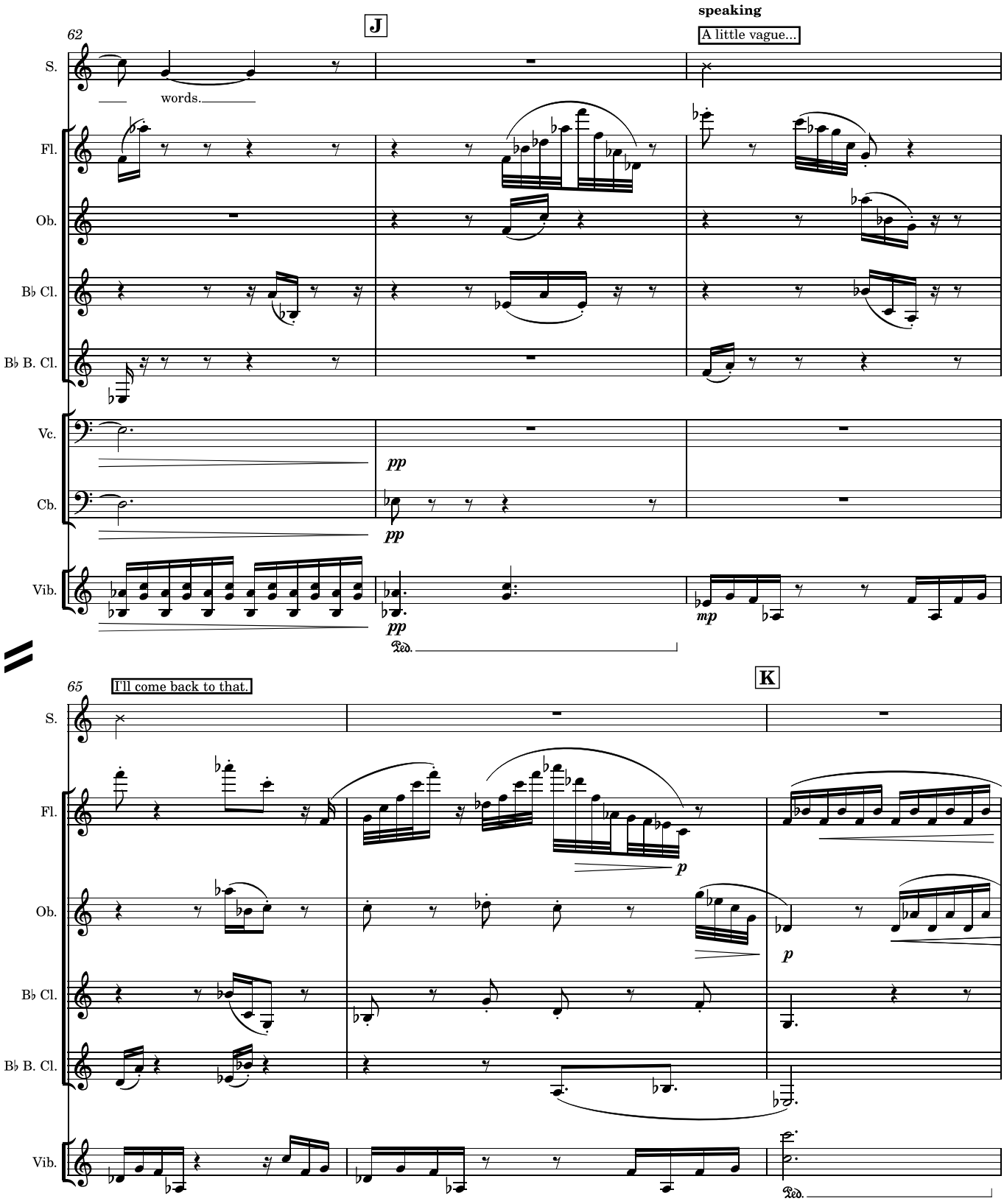

34
♩. = 56
H
singing
Excited, wistful
S.
Gulls
Fl.
Ob.
mp
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
p
Vln.
pp
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
38
cir - cle
o-ver - head
as I crest
the wind - swept

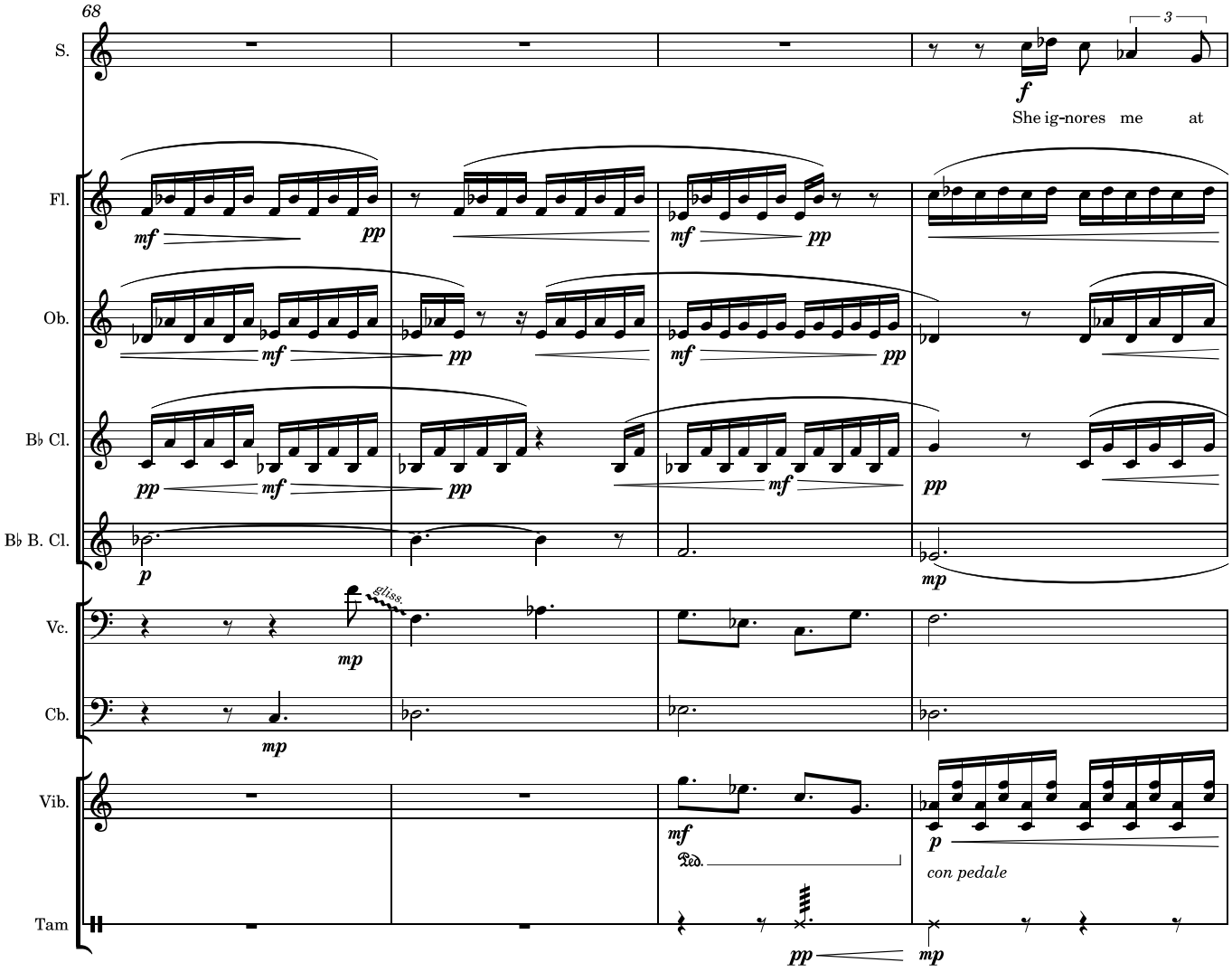

41
S.
sea wall.
This place is our
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
mp
Vib.
44
S.
se - cret, mine and theirs.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
3
Vib.

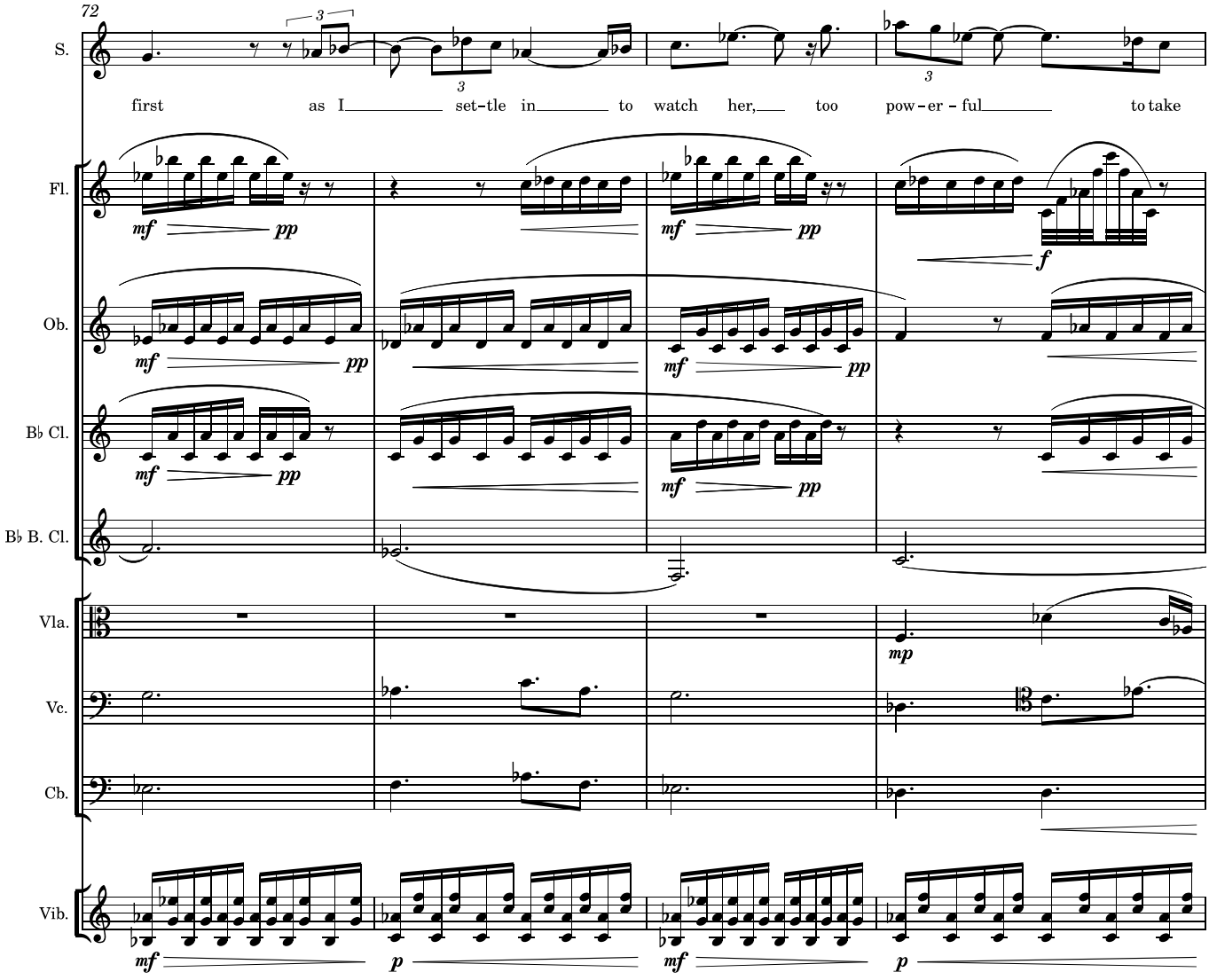

47
S.
mf
Where the black sand meets the shore and
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vib.

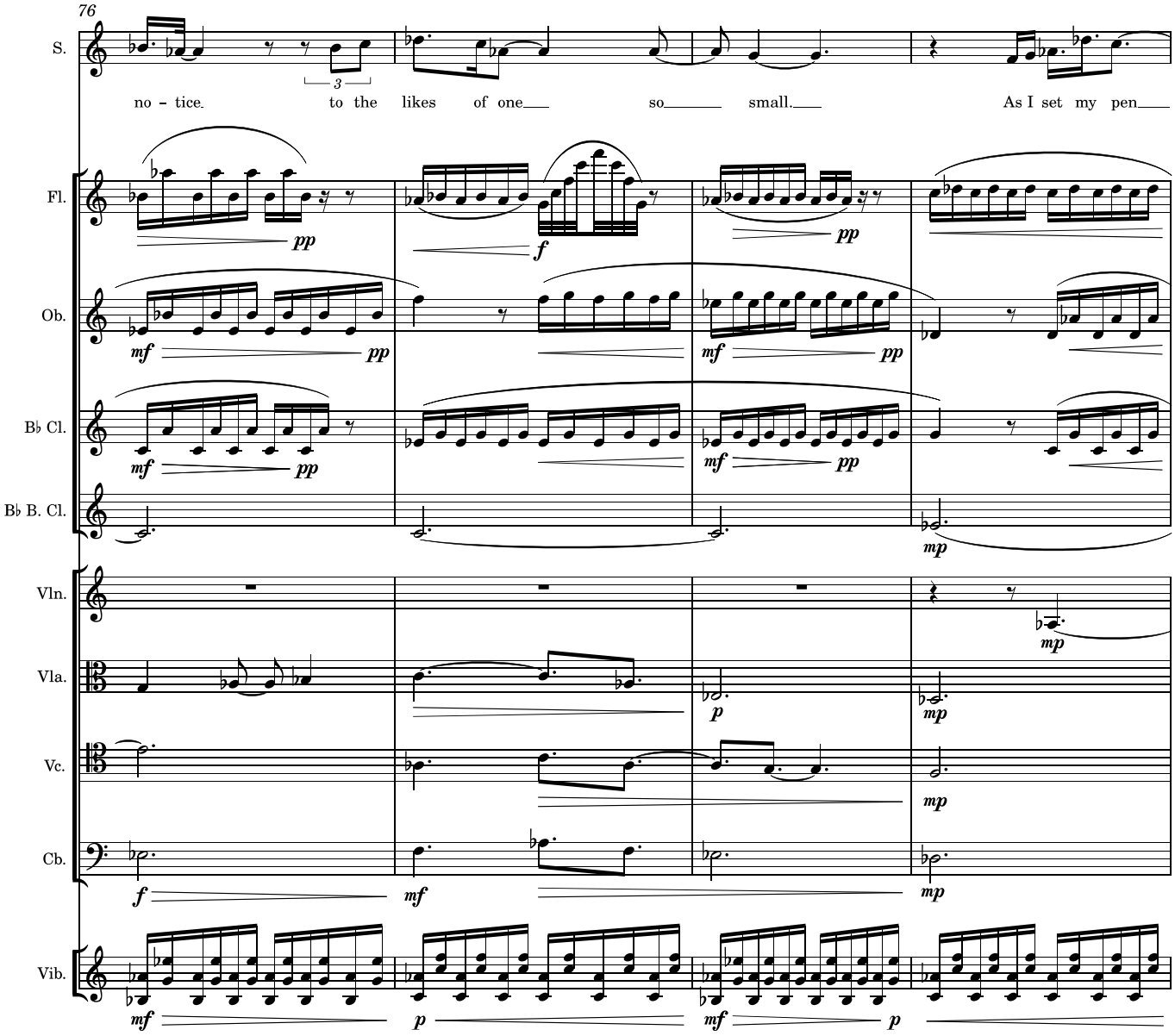

50
S.
grass clings in ob - sti-nate hud-dles, there she and
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
Cb.
pp
mp
Vib.

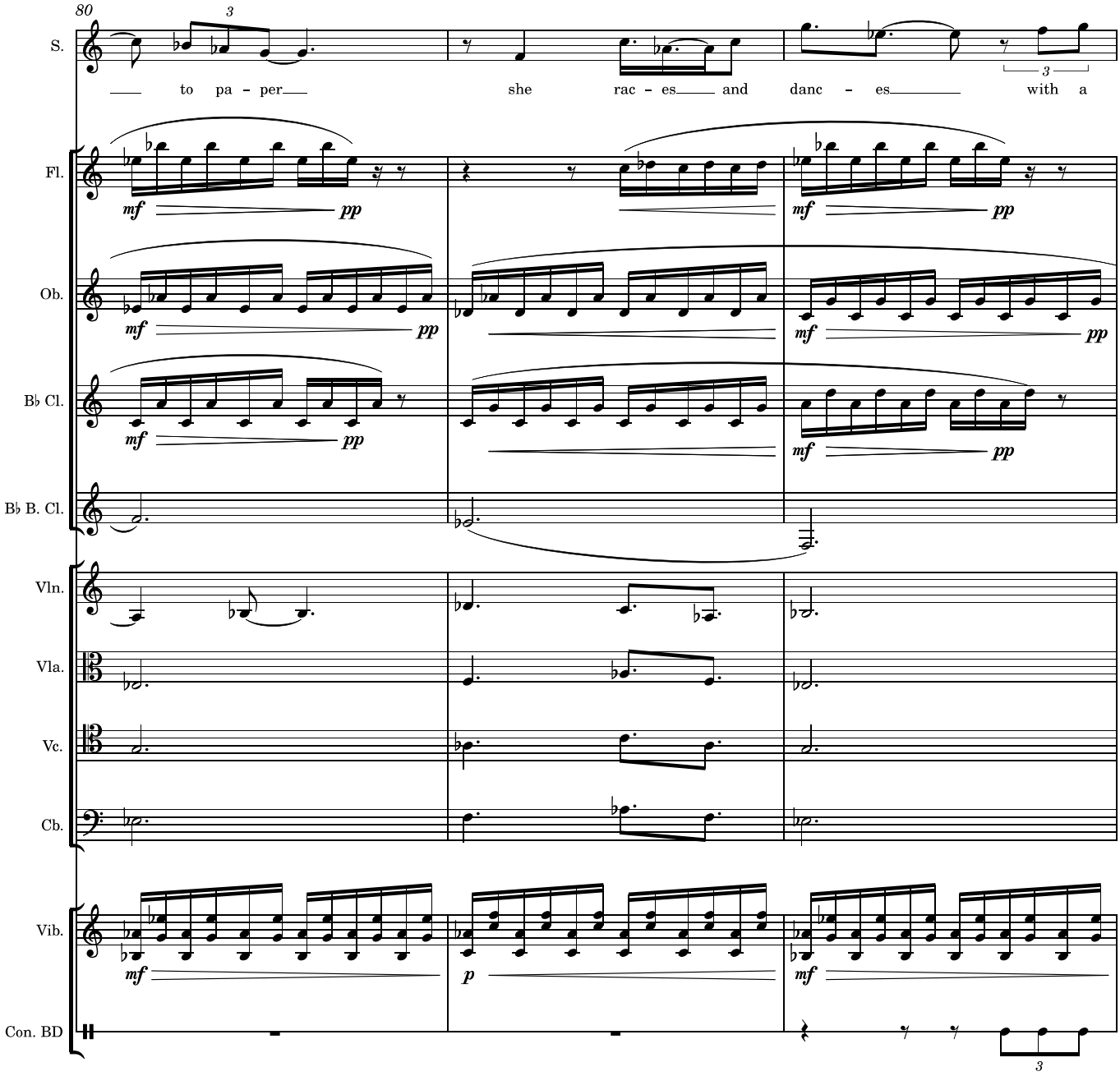

54
I
S.
time have carved my haunt.
f
I am but a
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vc.
mp
Cb.
Vib.
A little unsure,
struggling to find words
58
S.
3
vis-it-or here,
rest-ing where the wind won't steal my
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.

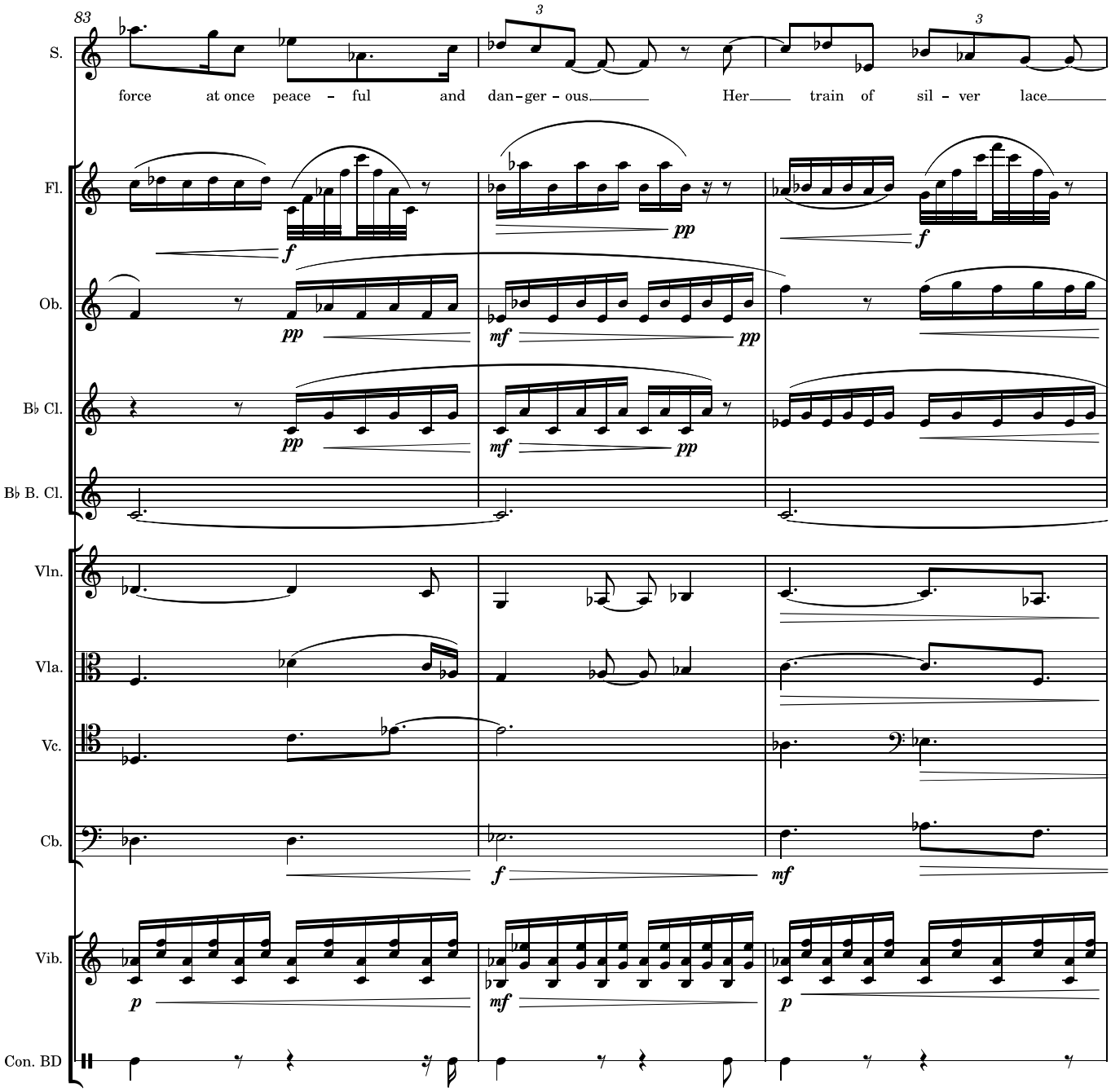

62
J
speaking
A little vague...
S.
words.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
pp
mp
Ped.
65
I'll come back to that.
K
p

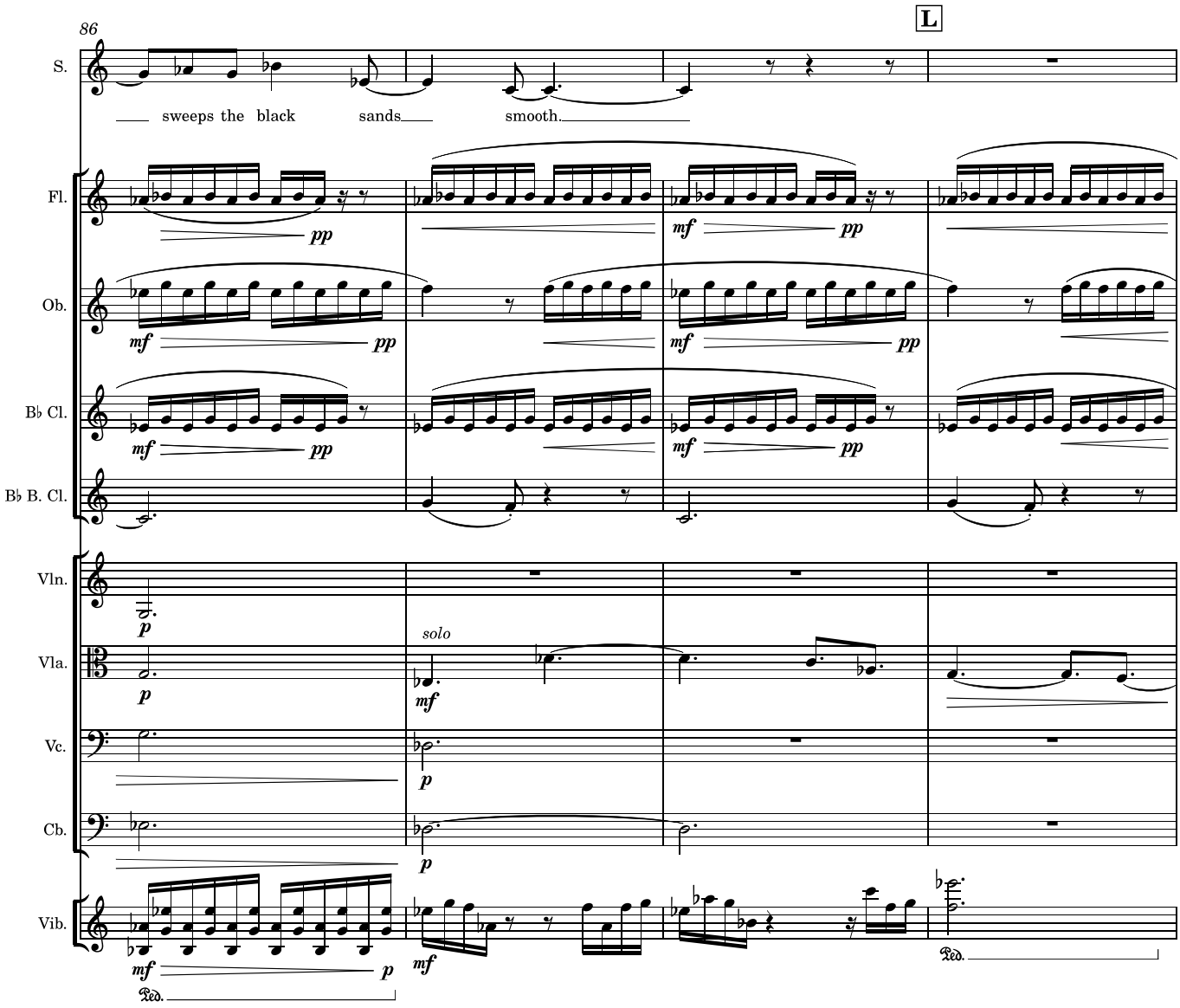

68
S.
3
f
She ig-nores me at
Fl.
mf
pp
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
p
mp
Vc.
gliss.
Cb.
Vib.
Ped.
con pedale
Tam

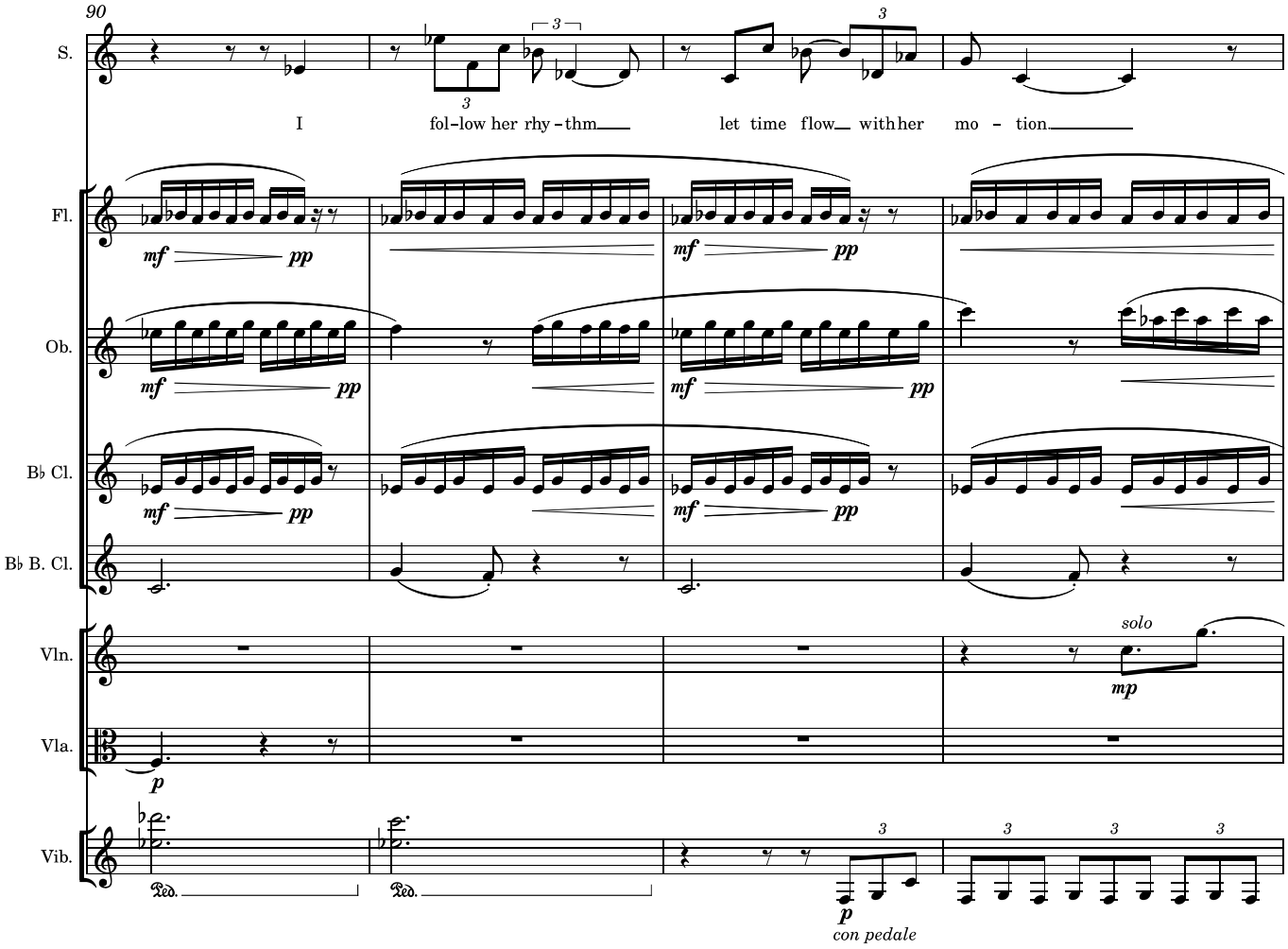

72
S.
first as I set-tle in to watch her, too pow-er-ful to take
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
mf pp
f
mp
p

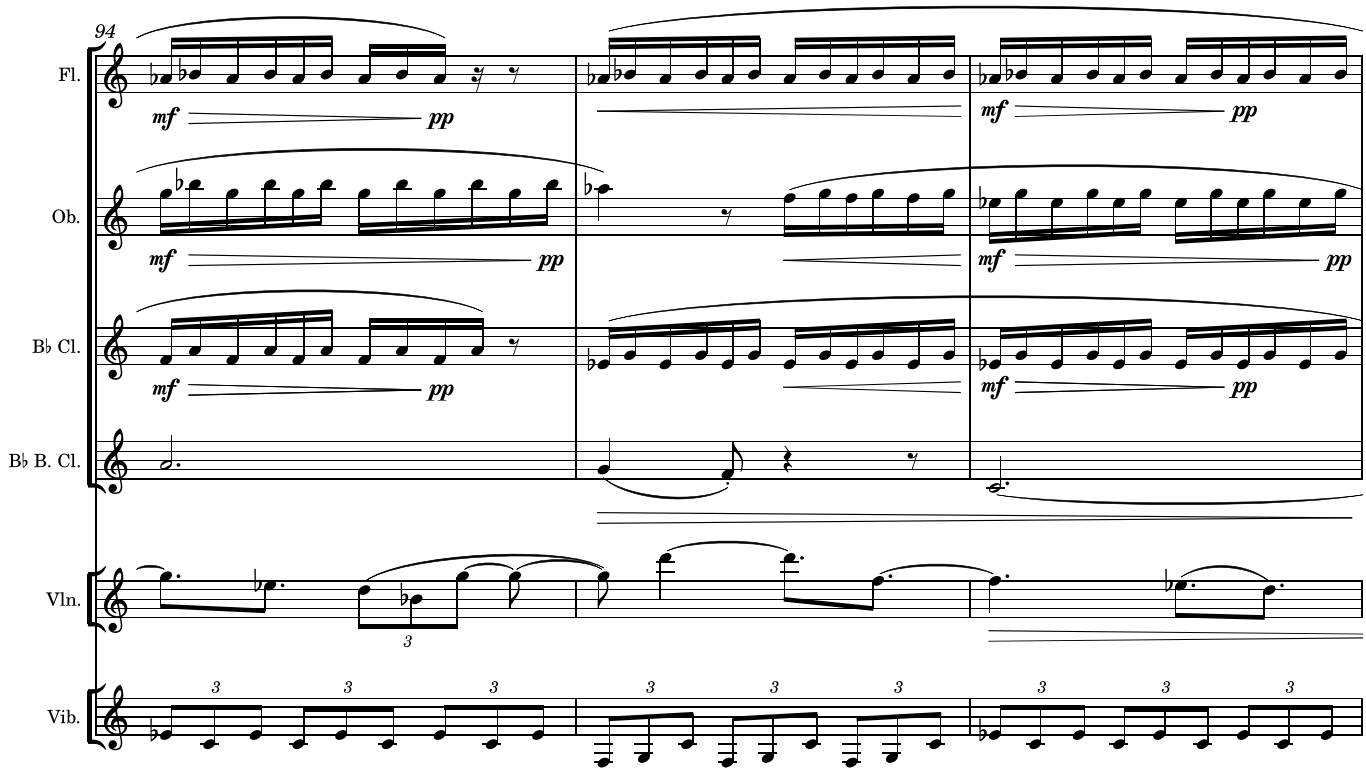

76
S.
no - tice. to the likes of one so small. As I set my pen
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.

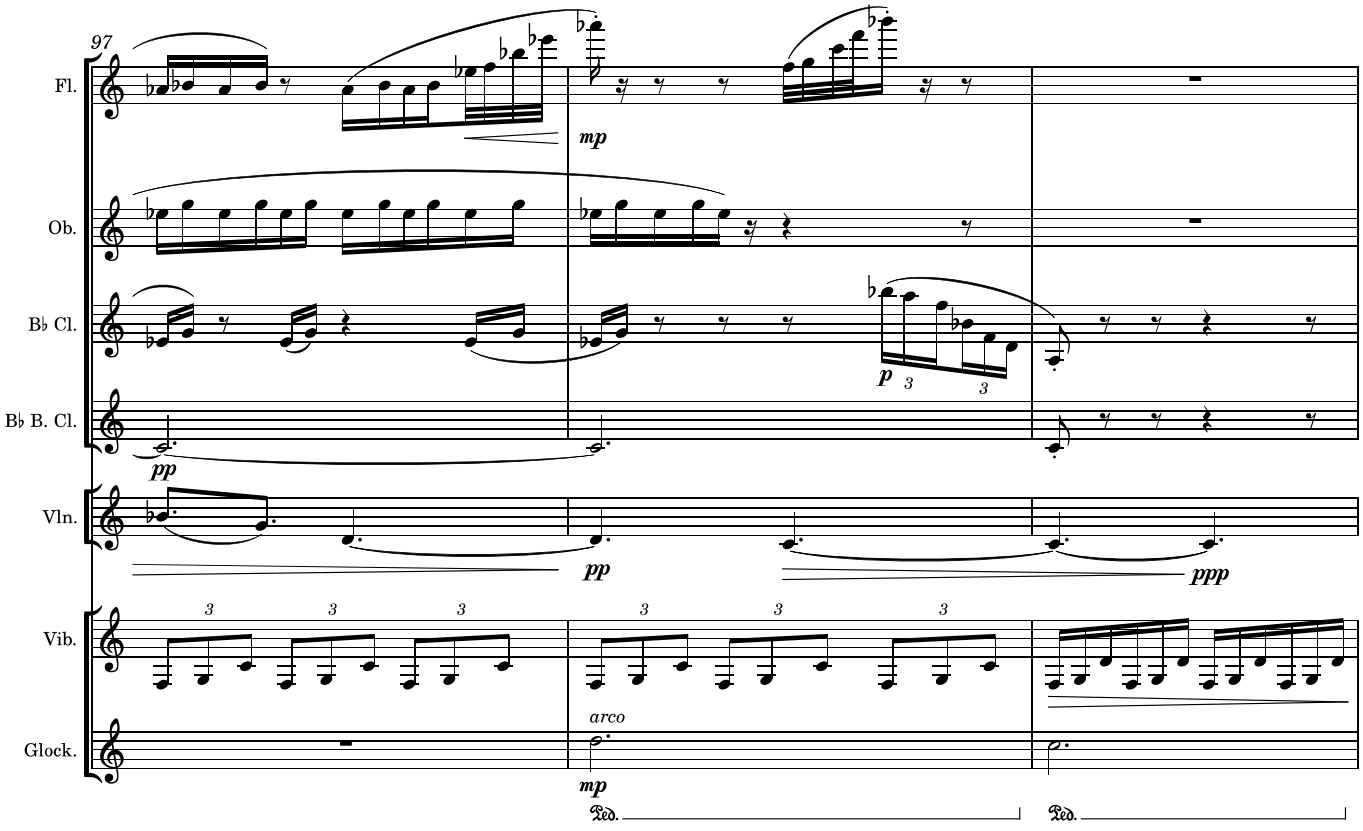

80
S.
to pa - per
she rac - es and danc - es with a
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
Con. BD
mf
pp
p

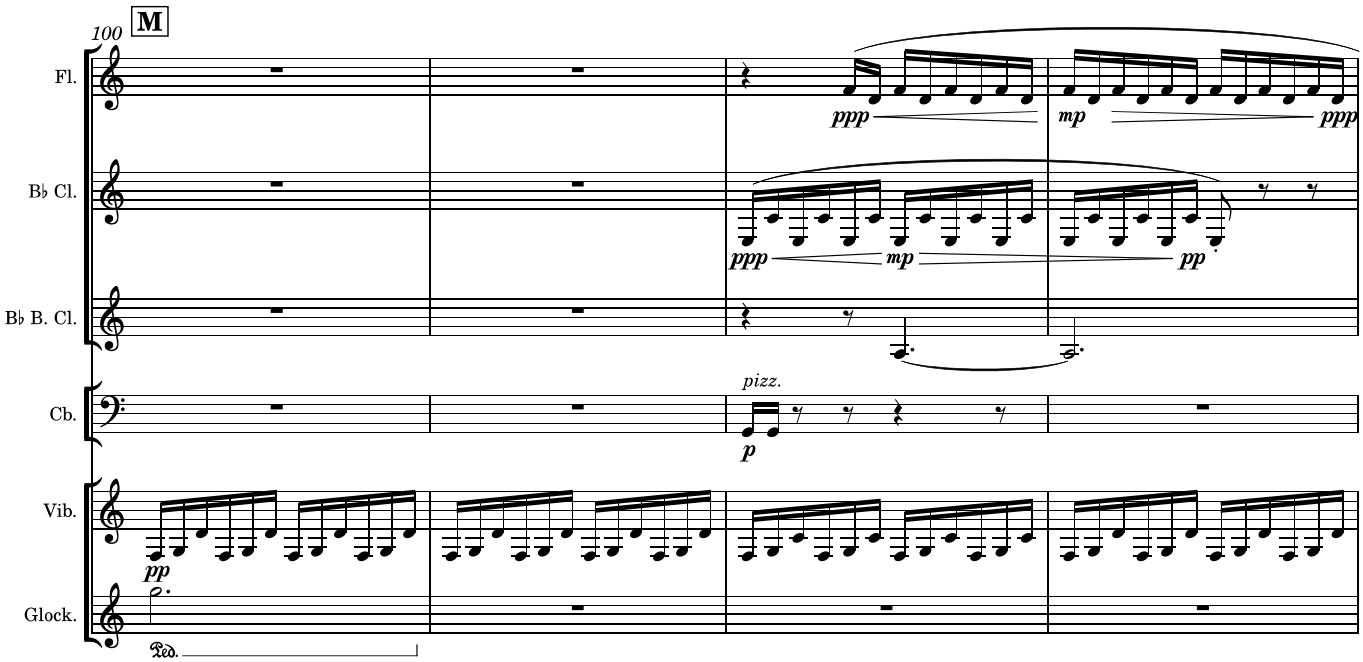

83
S.
force at once peace - ful and dan - ger - ous Her train of sil - ver lace
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
Con. BD

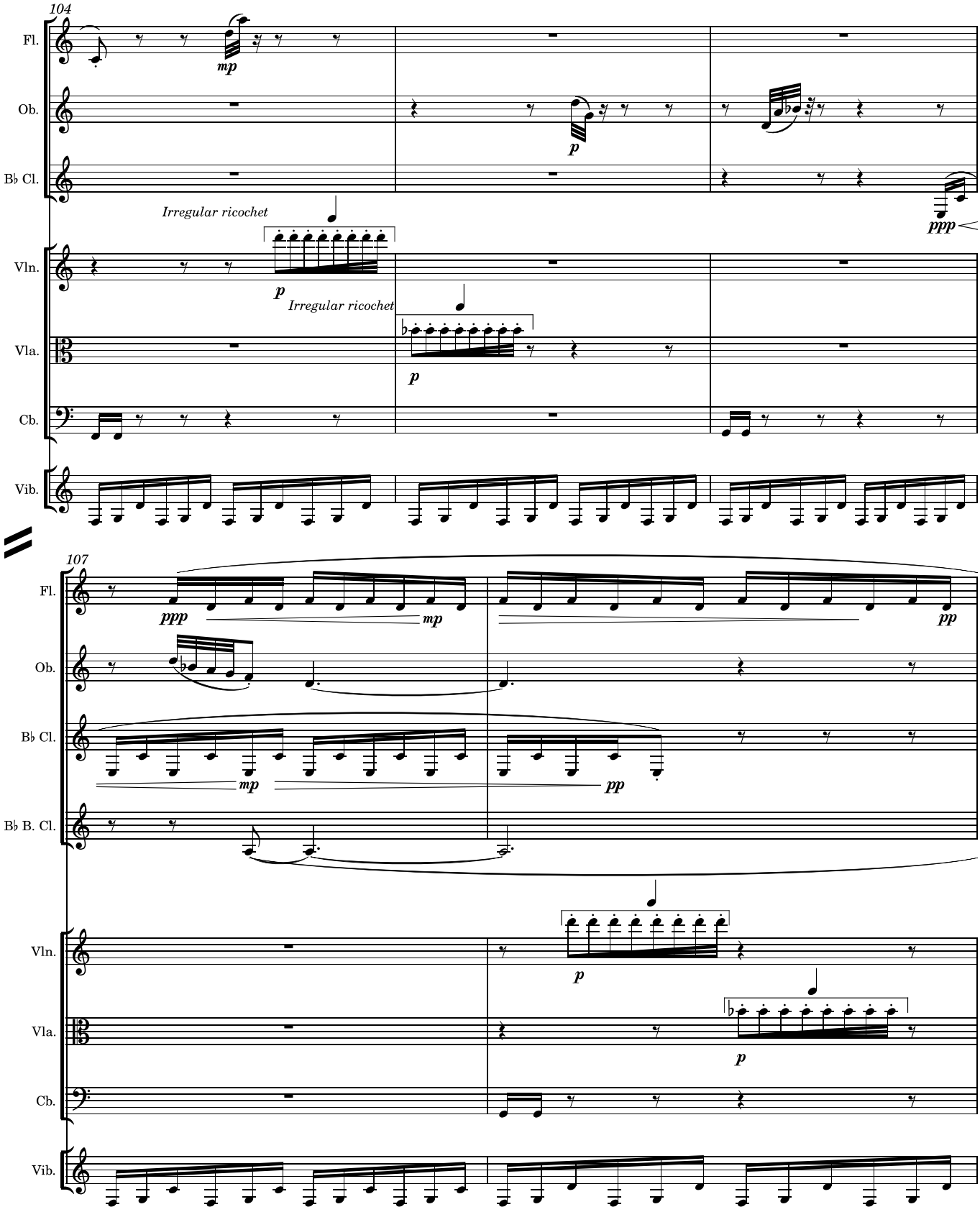

86
L
S.
sweeps the black sands smooth.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
solo
pp
mf
p
Ped.

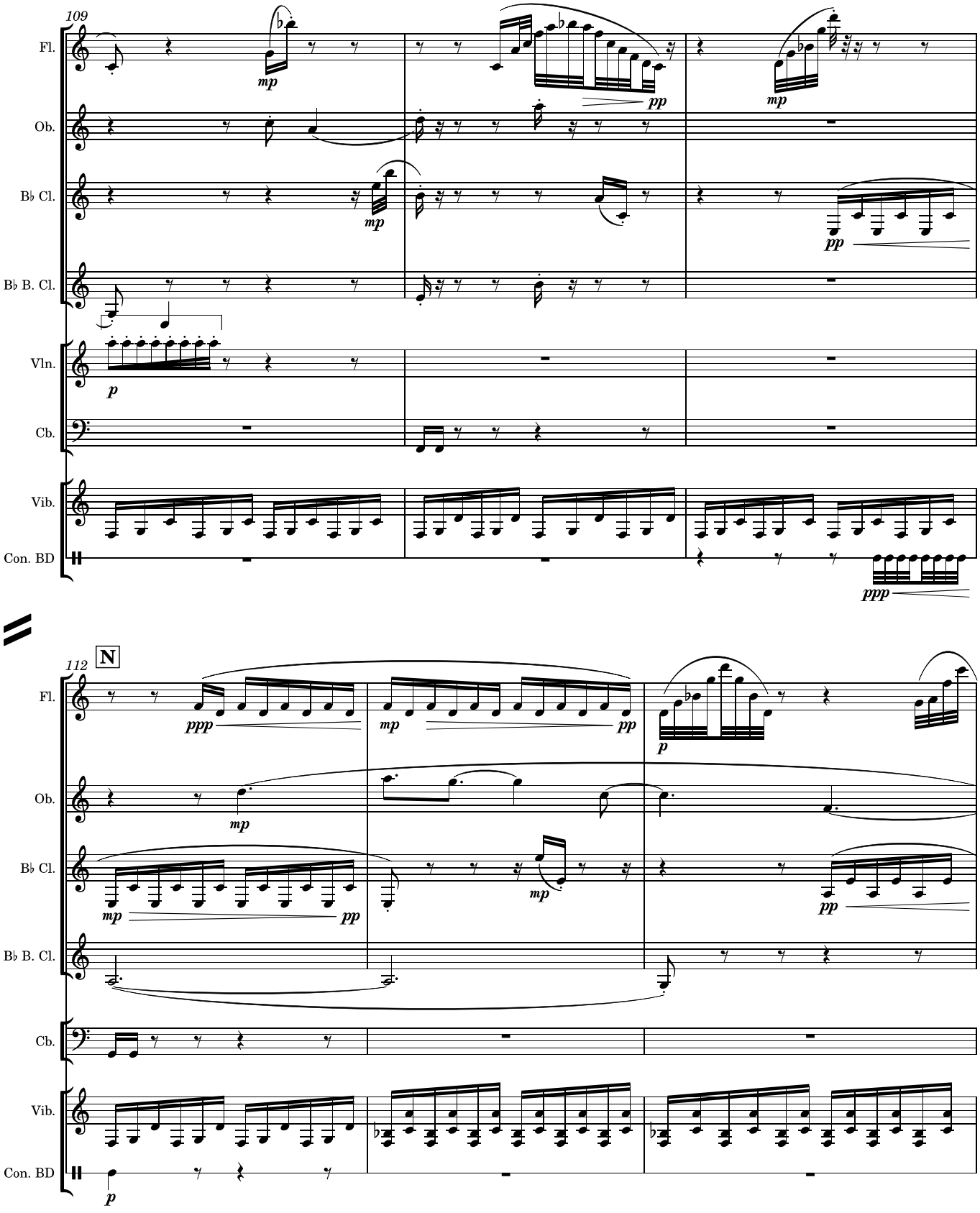

90
S.
I fol-low her rhy-thm let time flow with her mo-tion
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
solo
Vla.
Vib.
Ped.
con pedale


94
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vib.
mf
pp

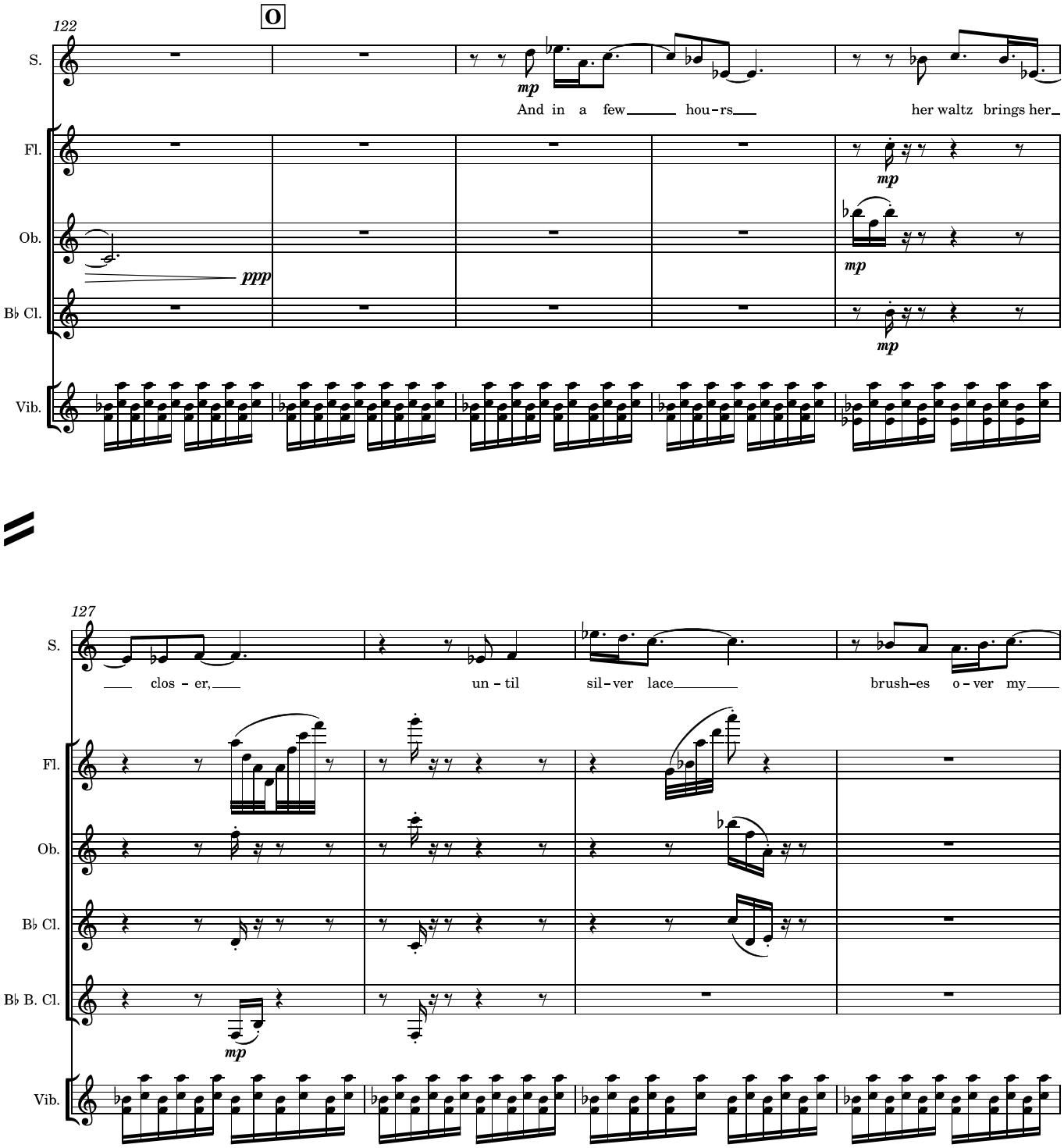

97
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vib.
Glock.
mp
pp
p
3
arco
ppp
Ped.

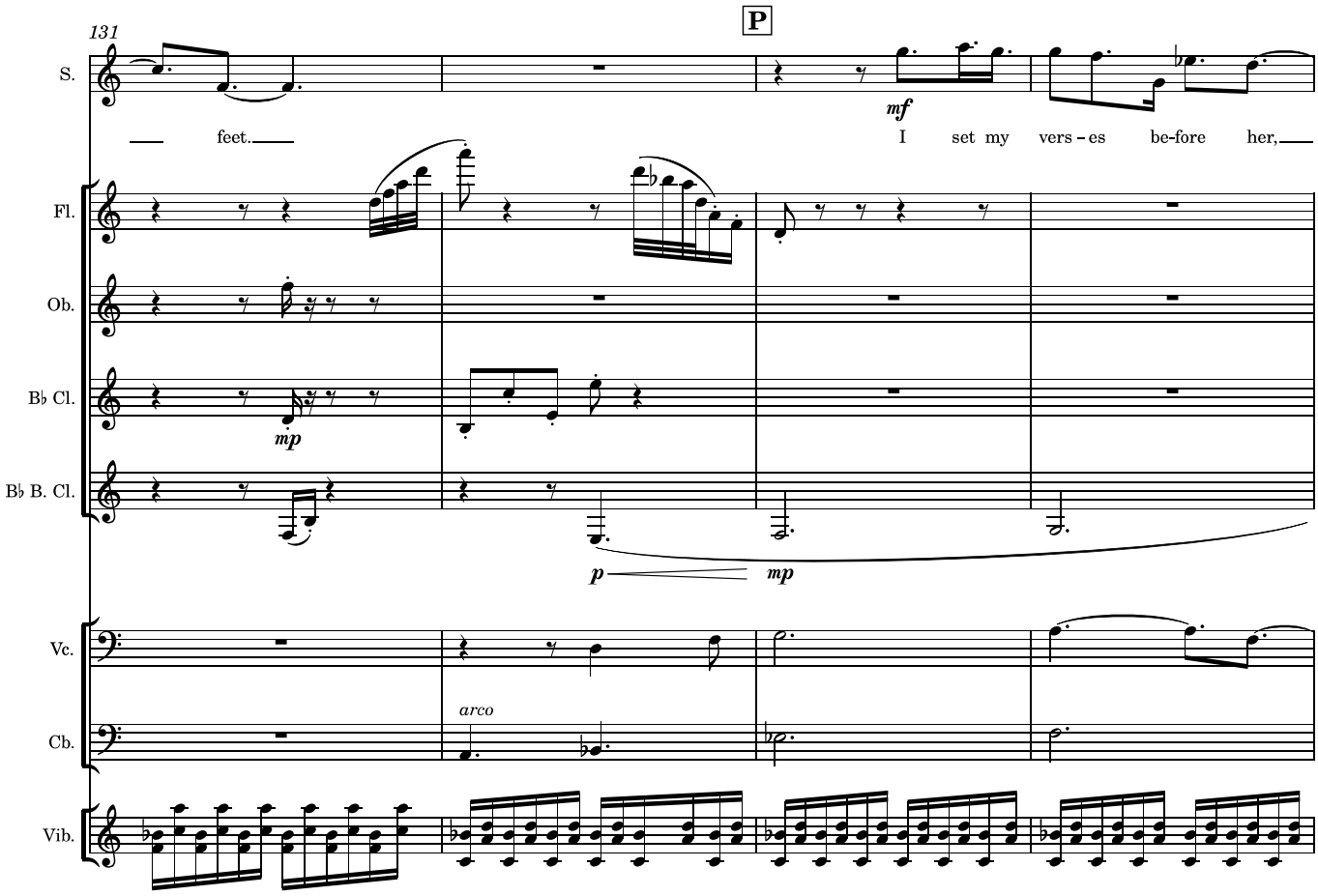

100
M
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Cb.
Vib.
Glock.
ppp
mp
pp
pizz.
p
Ped.

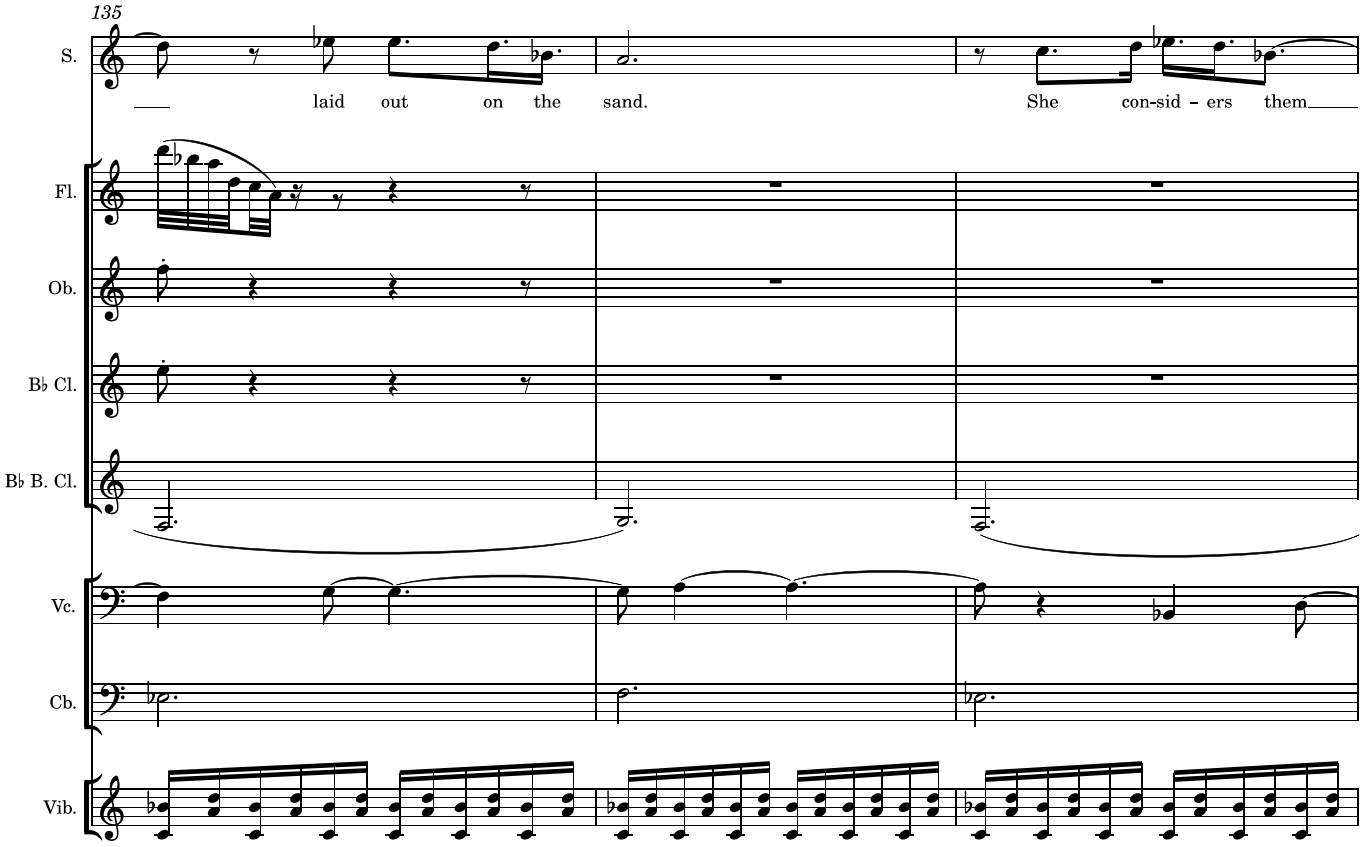

104
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vla.
Cb.
Vib.
mp
p
ppp
Irregular ricochet
Irregular ricochet
107
ppp
mp
pp
B♭ B. Cl.

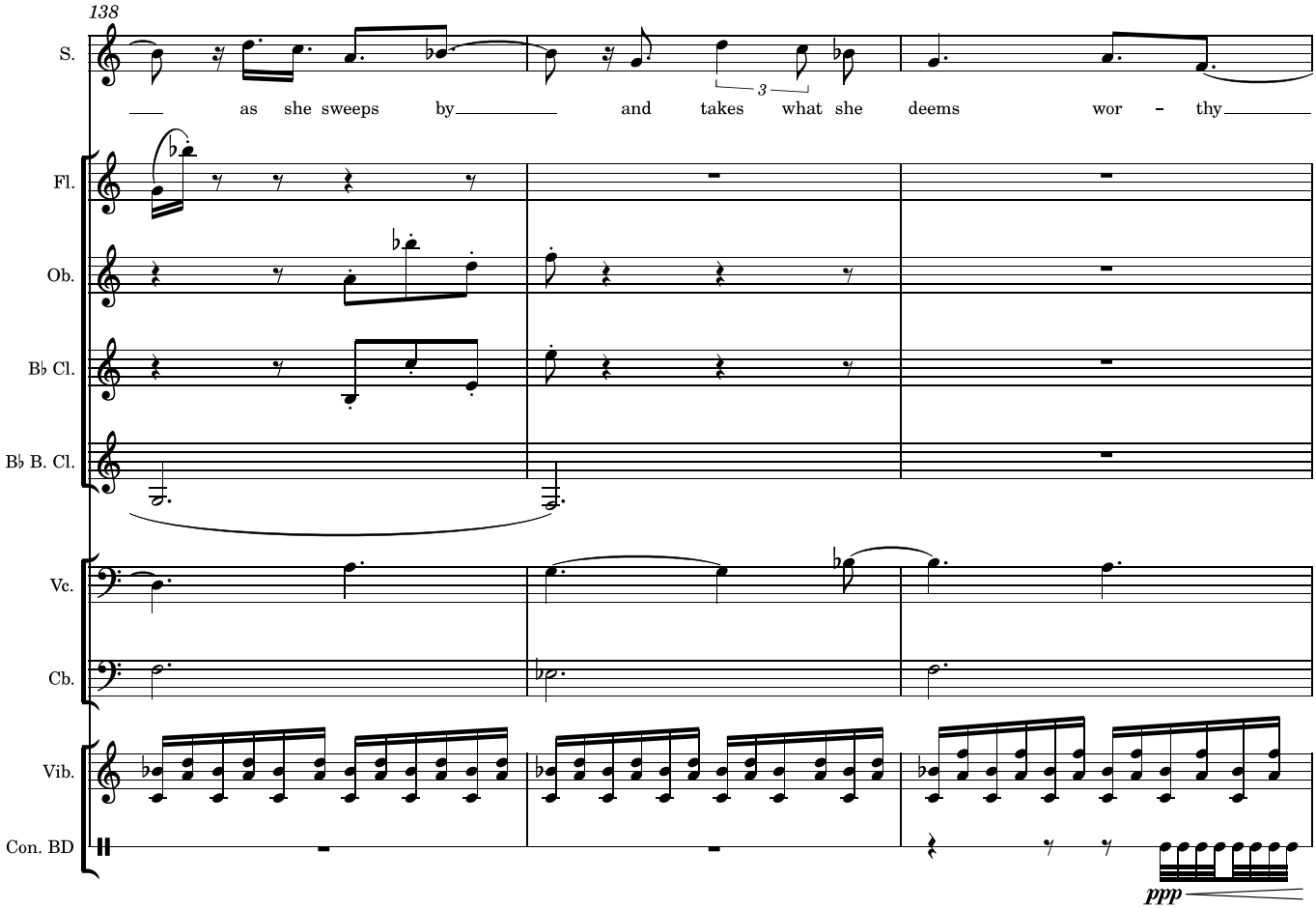

109
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Cb.
Vib.
Con. BD
mp
pp
p
ppp
112
N

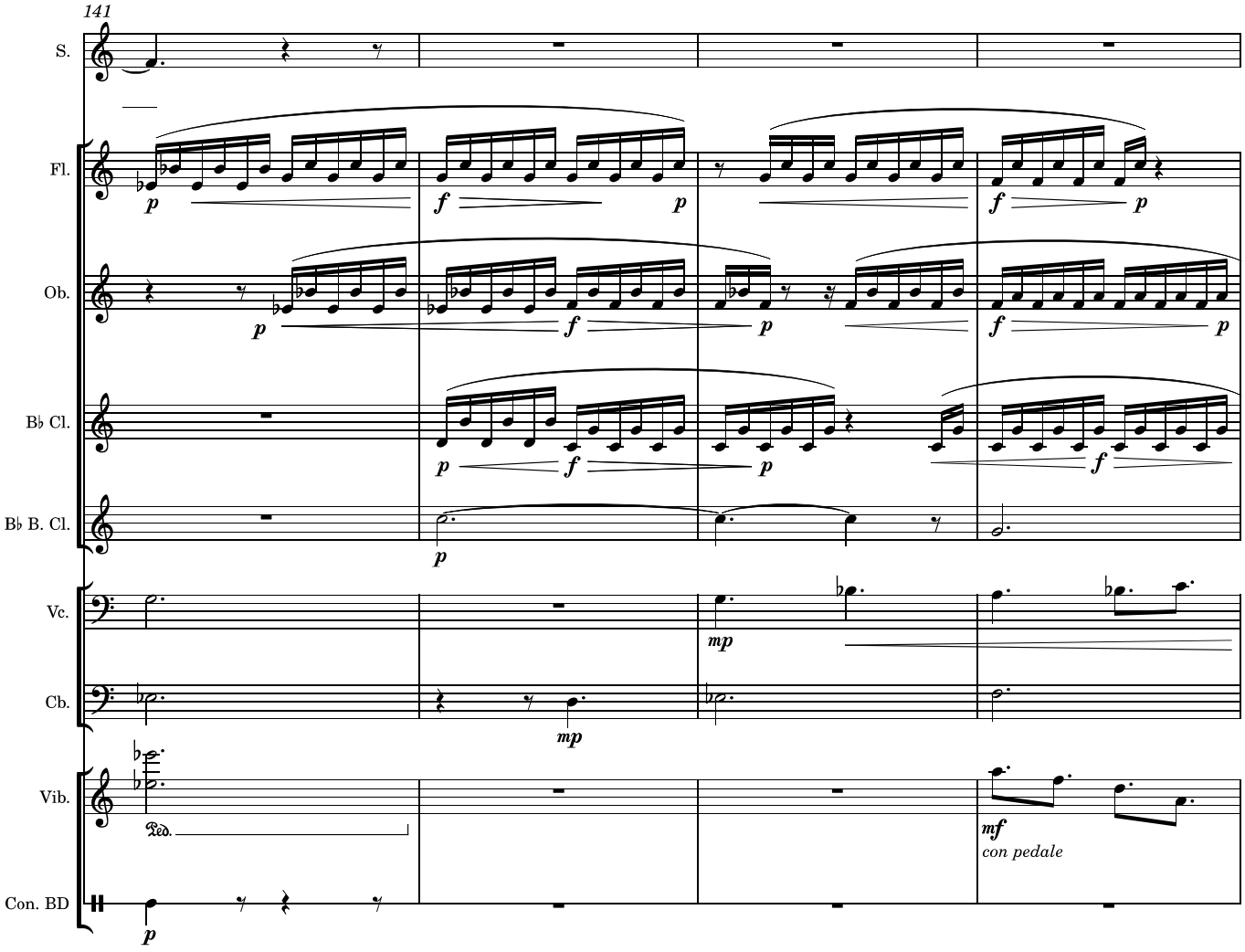

115
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vib.
Con. BD
mp
pp
ppp
118
Cb.
p

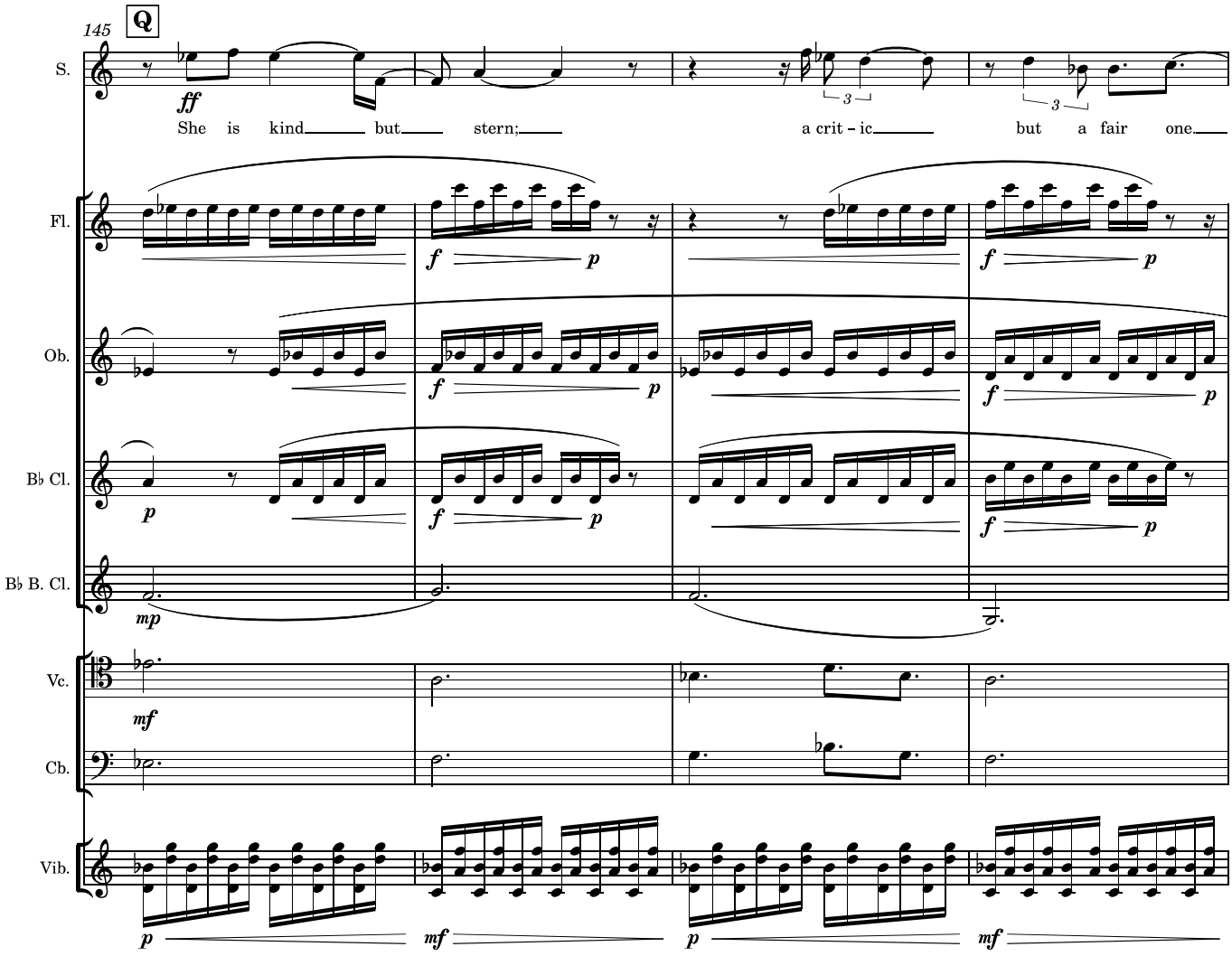

122
O
S.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
mp
And in a few hou-rs her waltz brings her
ppp
mp
mp
mp
127
S.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vib.
clos - er, un - til sil-ver lace brush-es o - ver my
mp

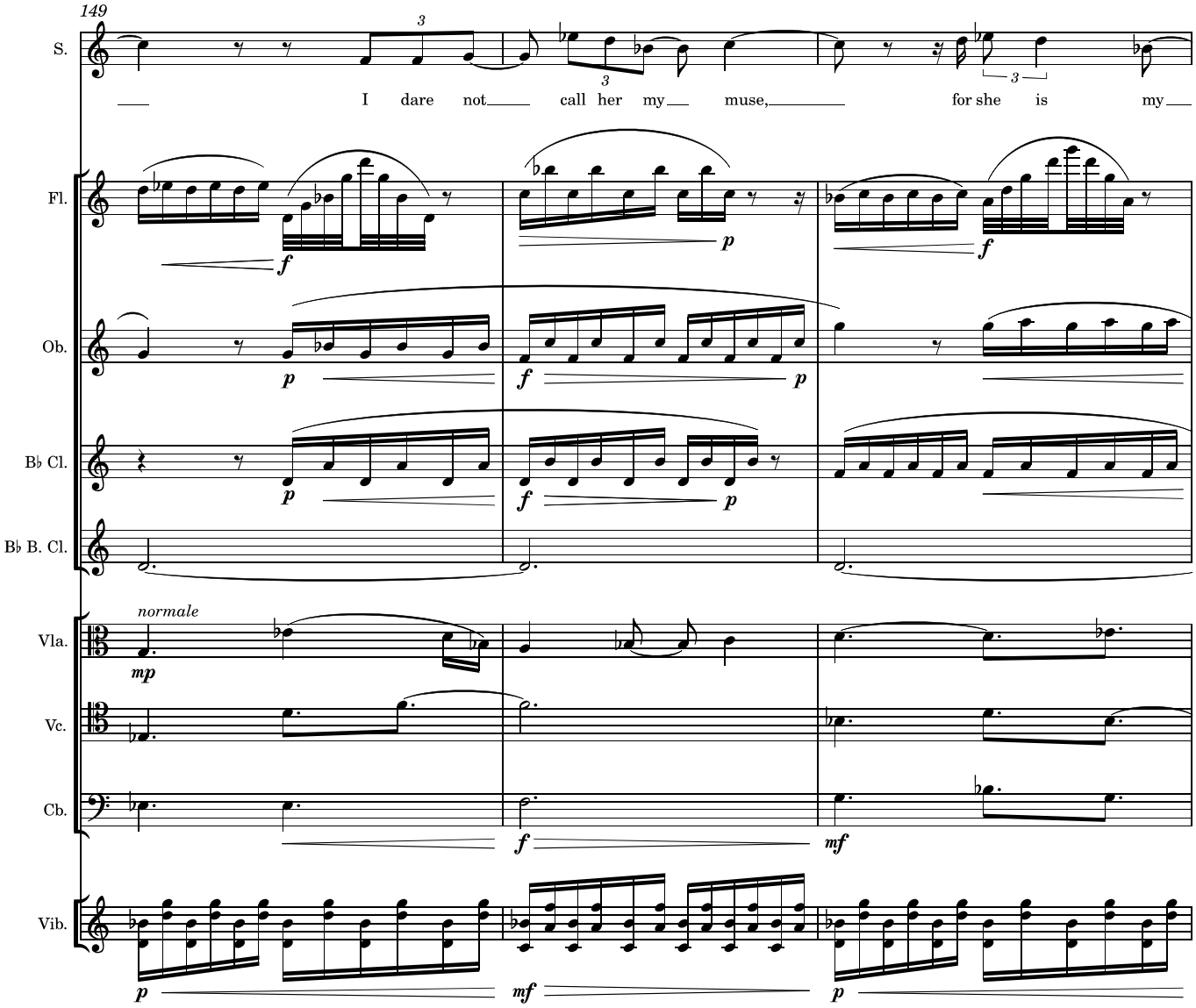

131
P
S.
feet.
mf
I set my vers - es be-fore her,
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
mp
B♭ B. Cl.
p
mp
Vc.
arco
Cb.
Vib.

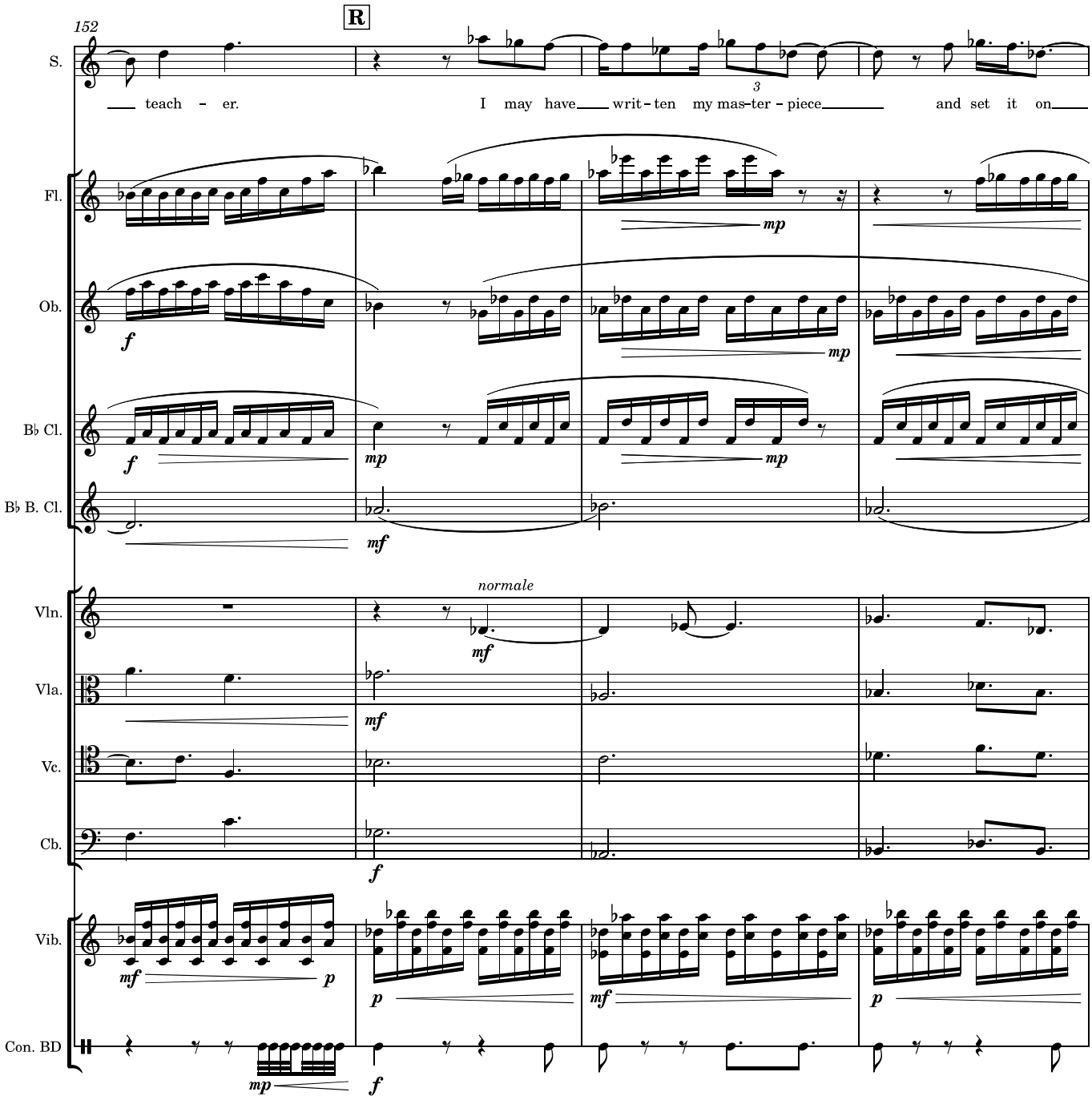

135
S.
laid out on the sand.
She con-sid - ers them
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.

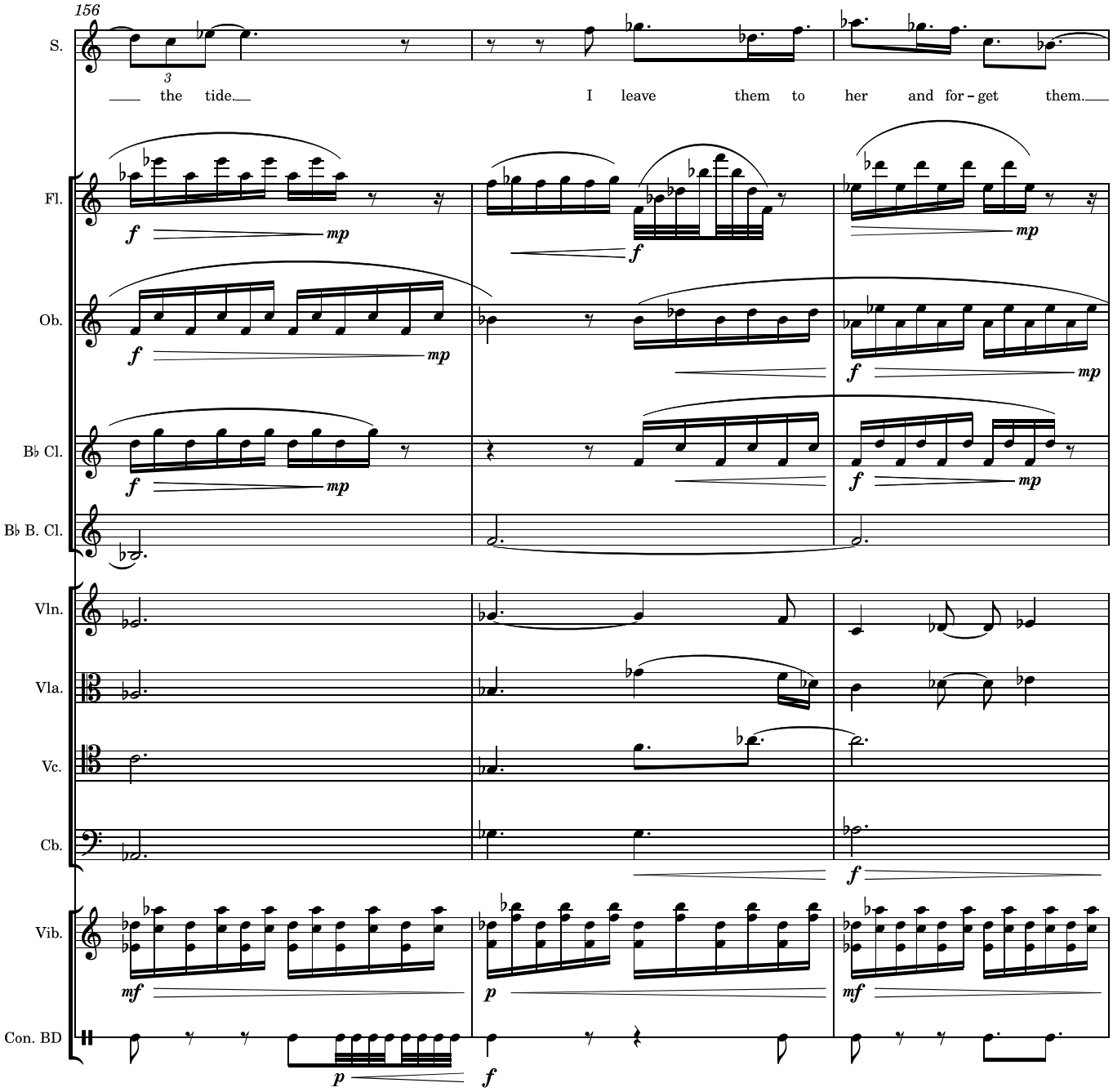

138
S.
as she sweeps by and takes what she deems wor - thy
3
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
Con. BD
ppp

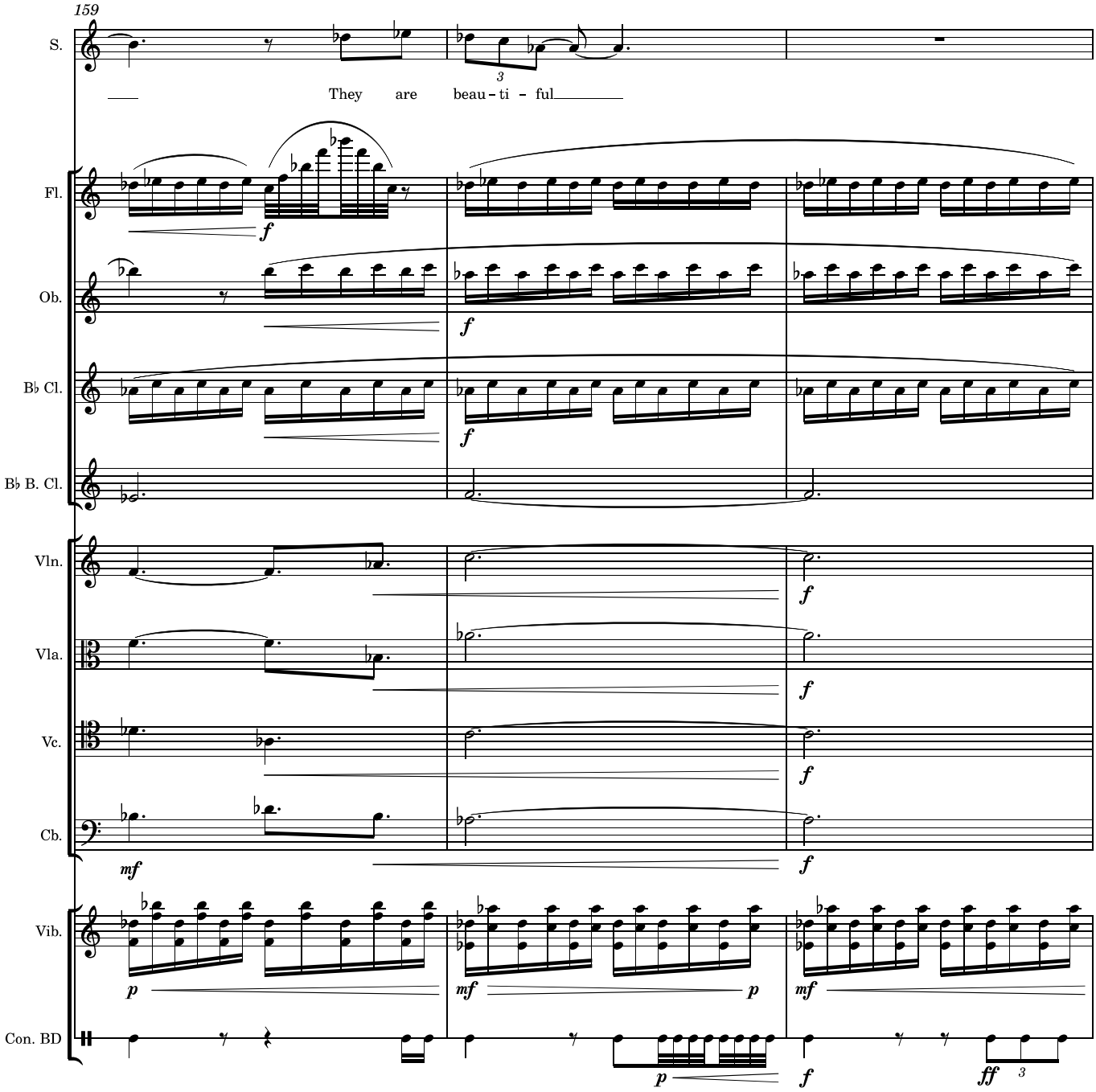

141
S.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
Con. BD
p
f
p
f
p
f
p
p
f
p
f
p
mp
mp
Ped.
mf
con pedale
p

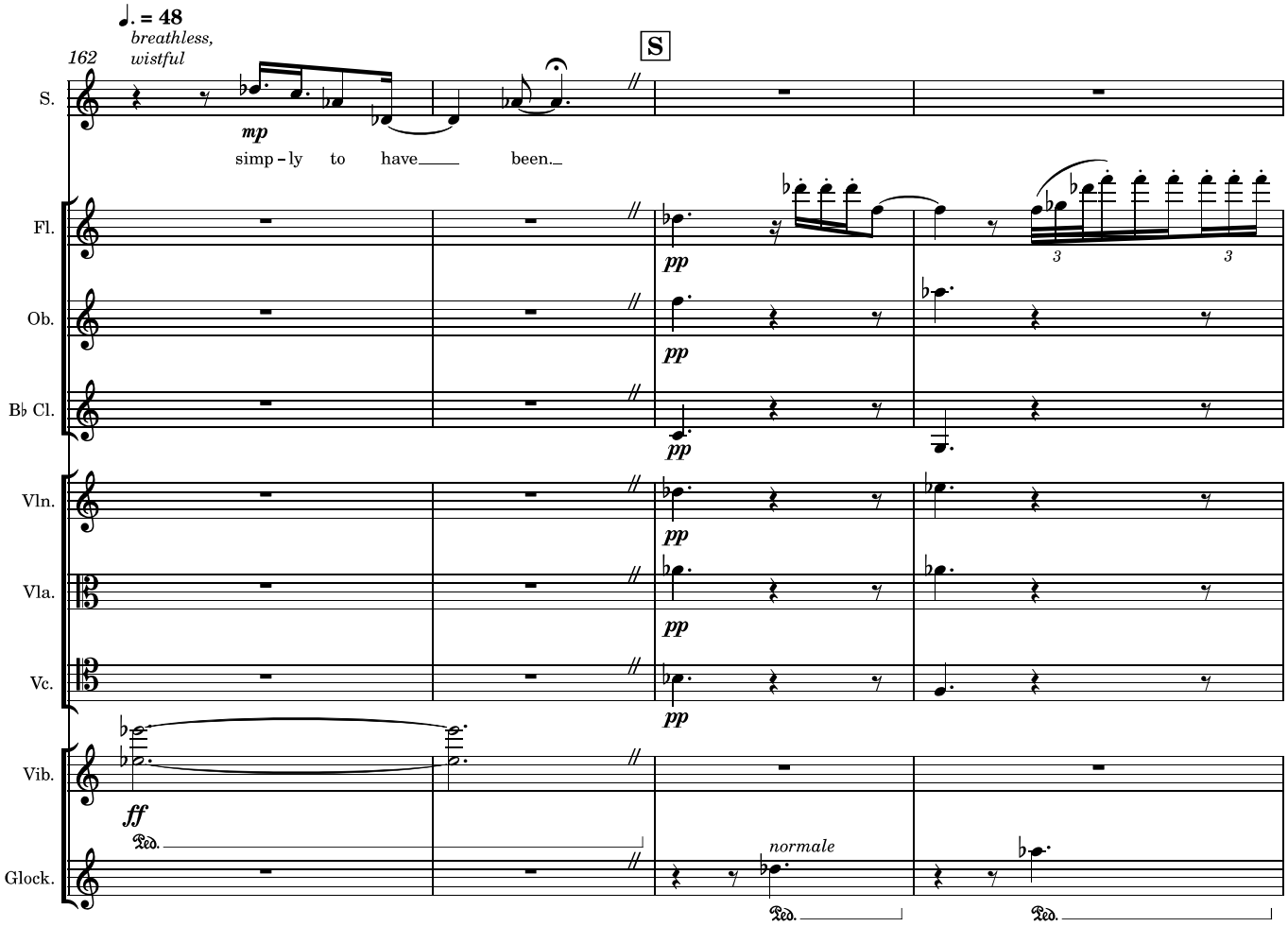

145
Q
S.
ff
She is kind but stern;
a crit - ic
but a fair one.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
mp
mf

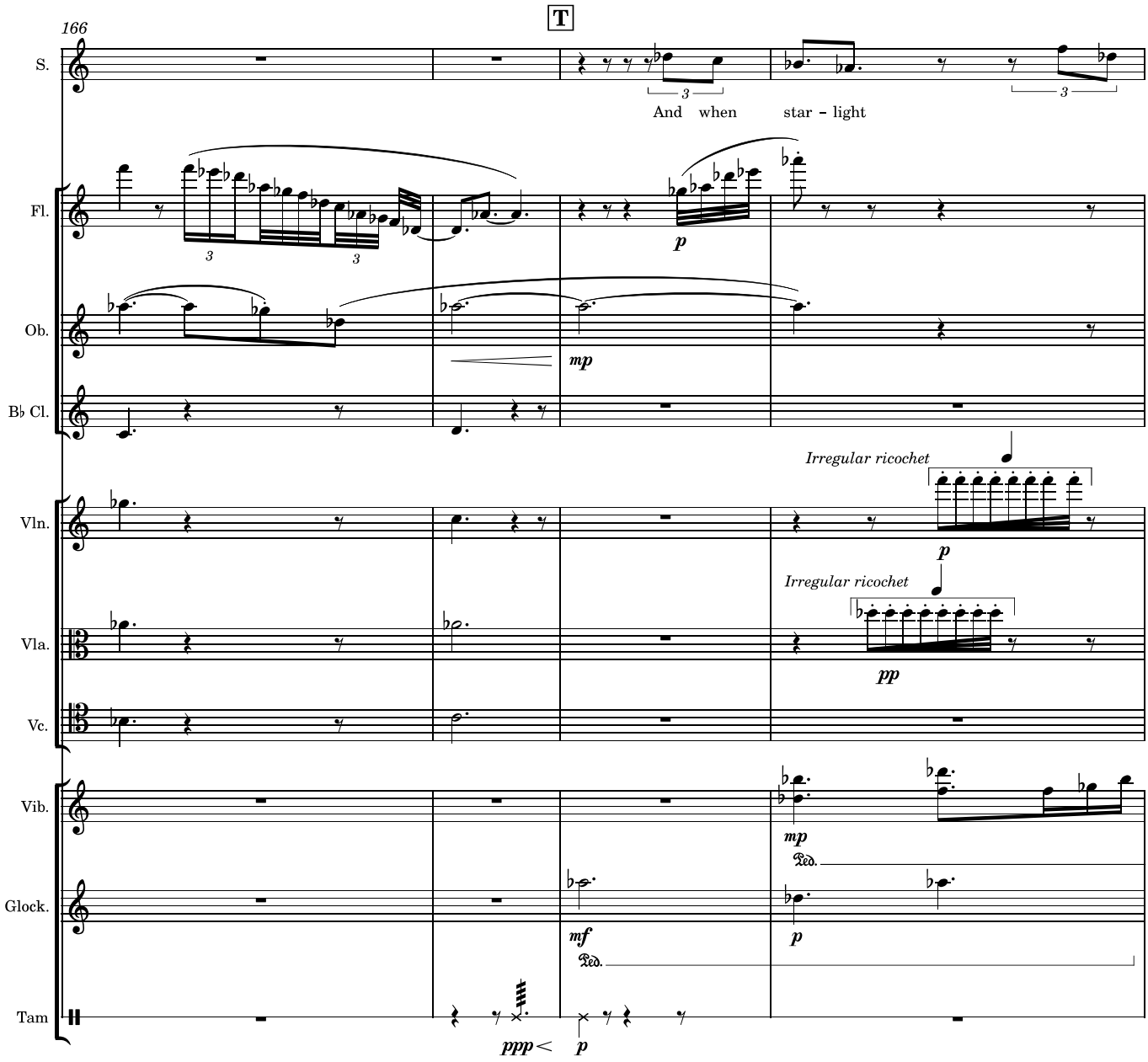

149
S.
I dare not call her my muse, for she is my
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
normale
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.

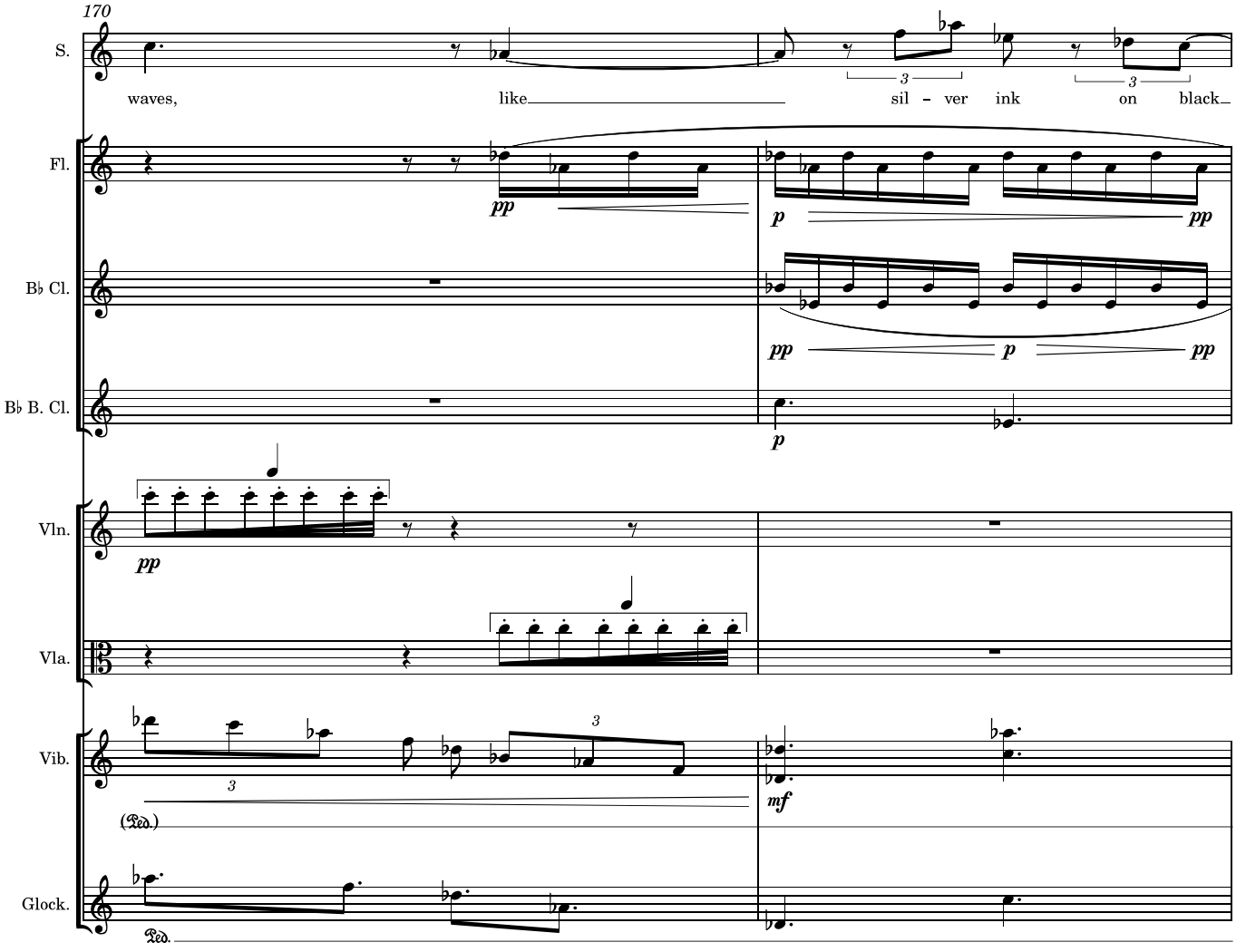

152
R
S.
teach - er.
I may have writ - ten my mas - ter - piece and set it on
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
normale
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
Con. BD

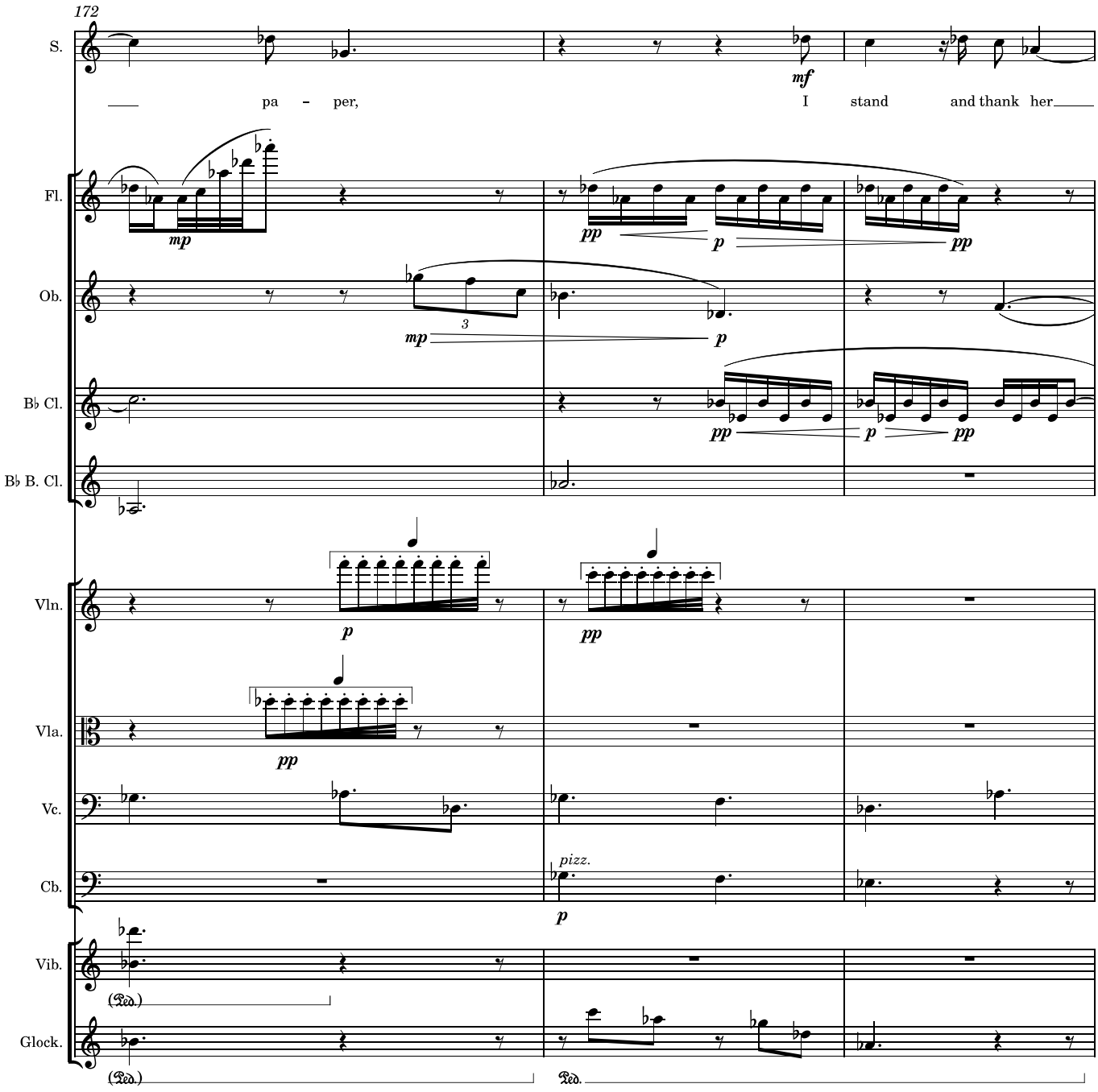

156
S.
the tide.
I leave them to her and for - get them.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
Con. BD

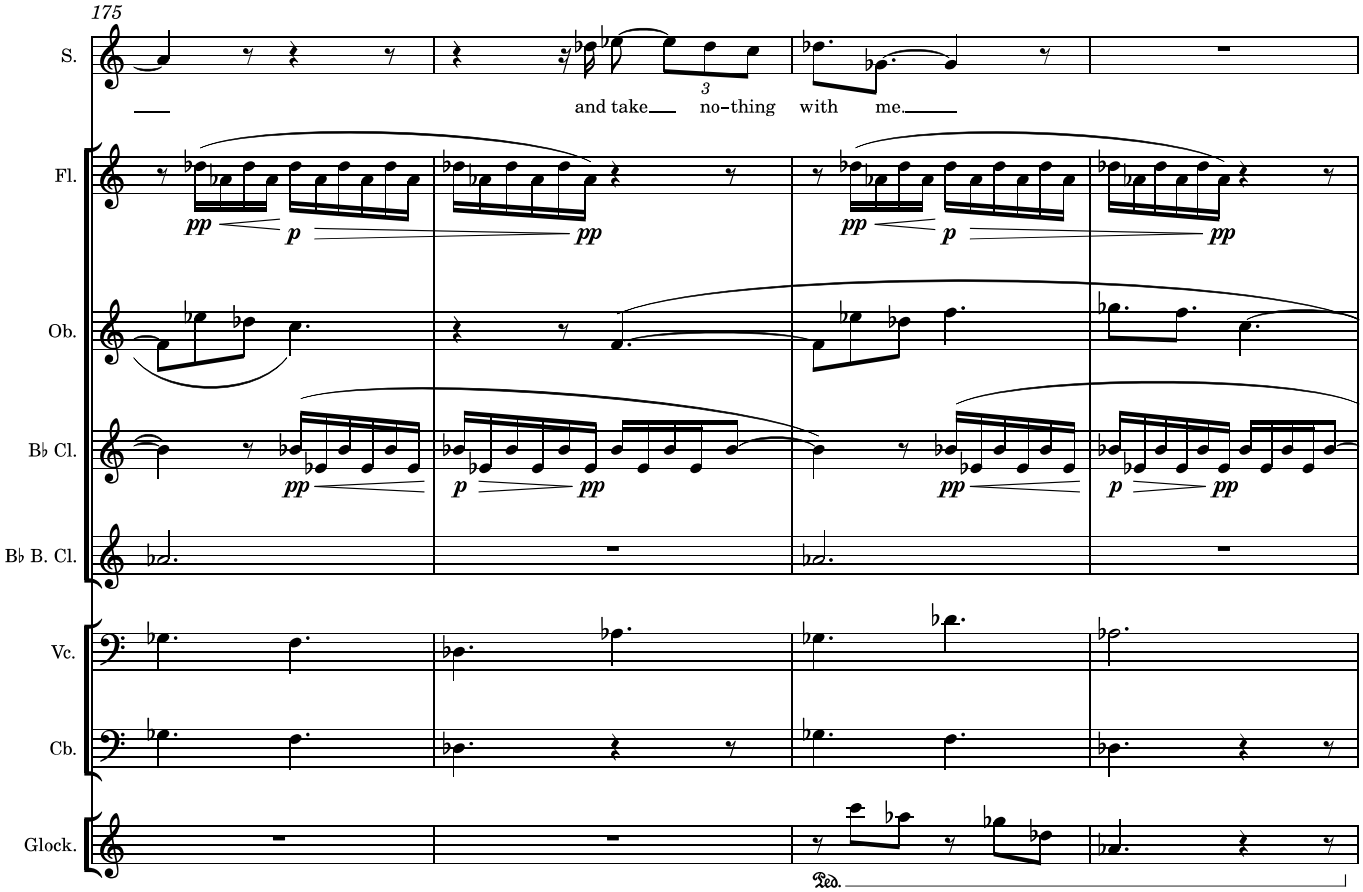

159
S.
They are beau - ti - ful
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
Con. BD

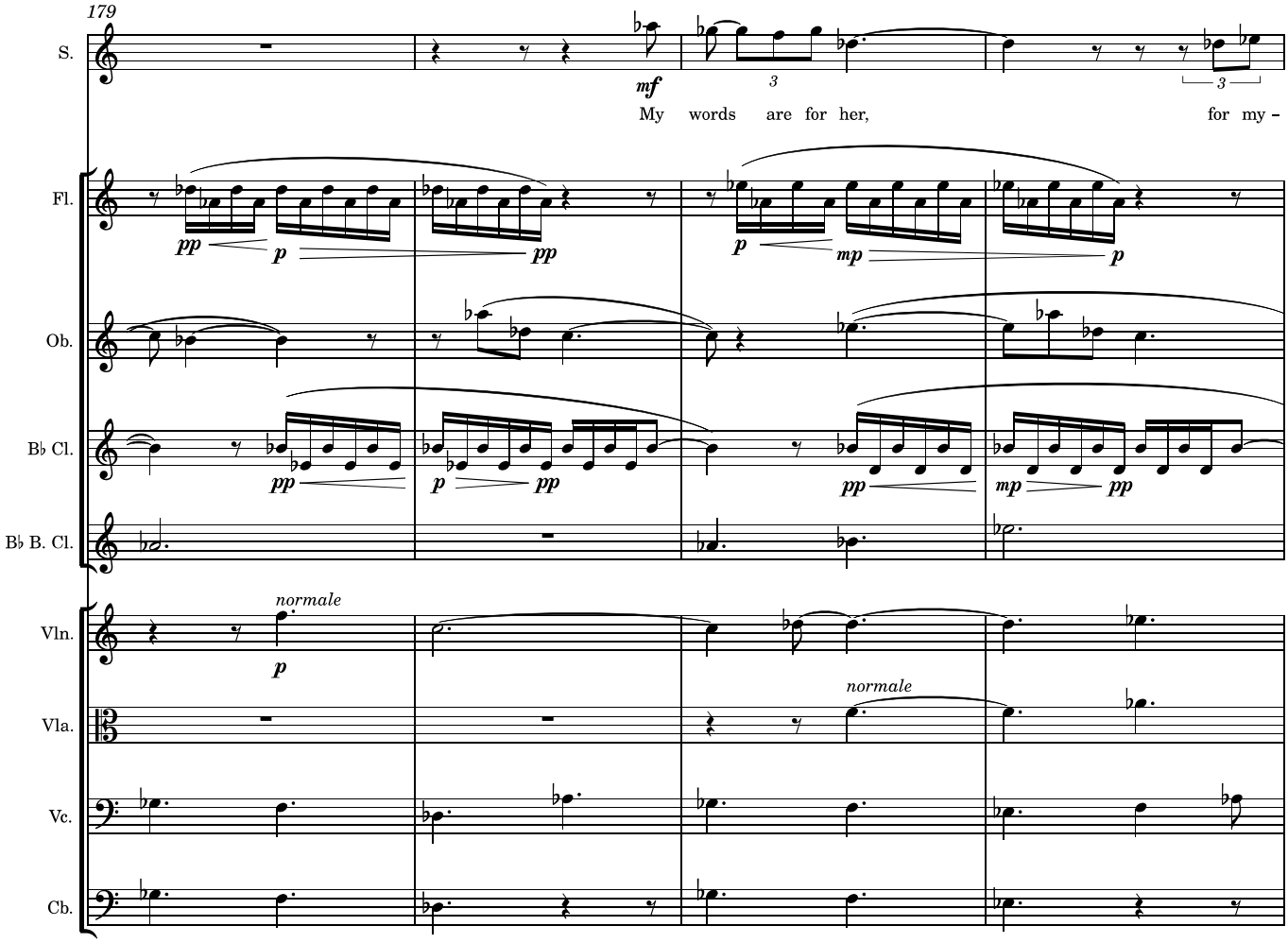

♩. = 48
breathless,
wistful
162
S
S.
mp
simp - ly to have been.
Fl.
pp
Ob.
pp
B♭ Cl.
pp
Vln.
pp
Vla.
pp
Vc.
pp
Vib.
ff
Ped.
Glock.
normale
Ped.
Ped.

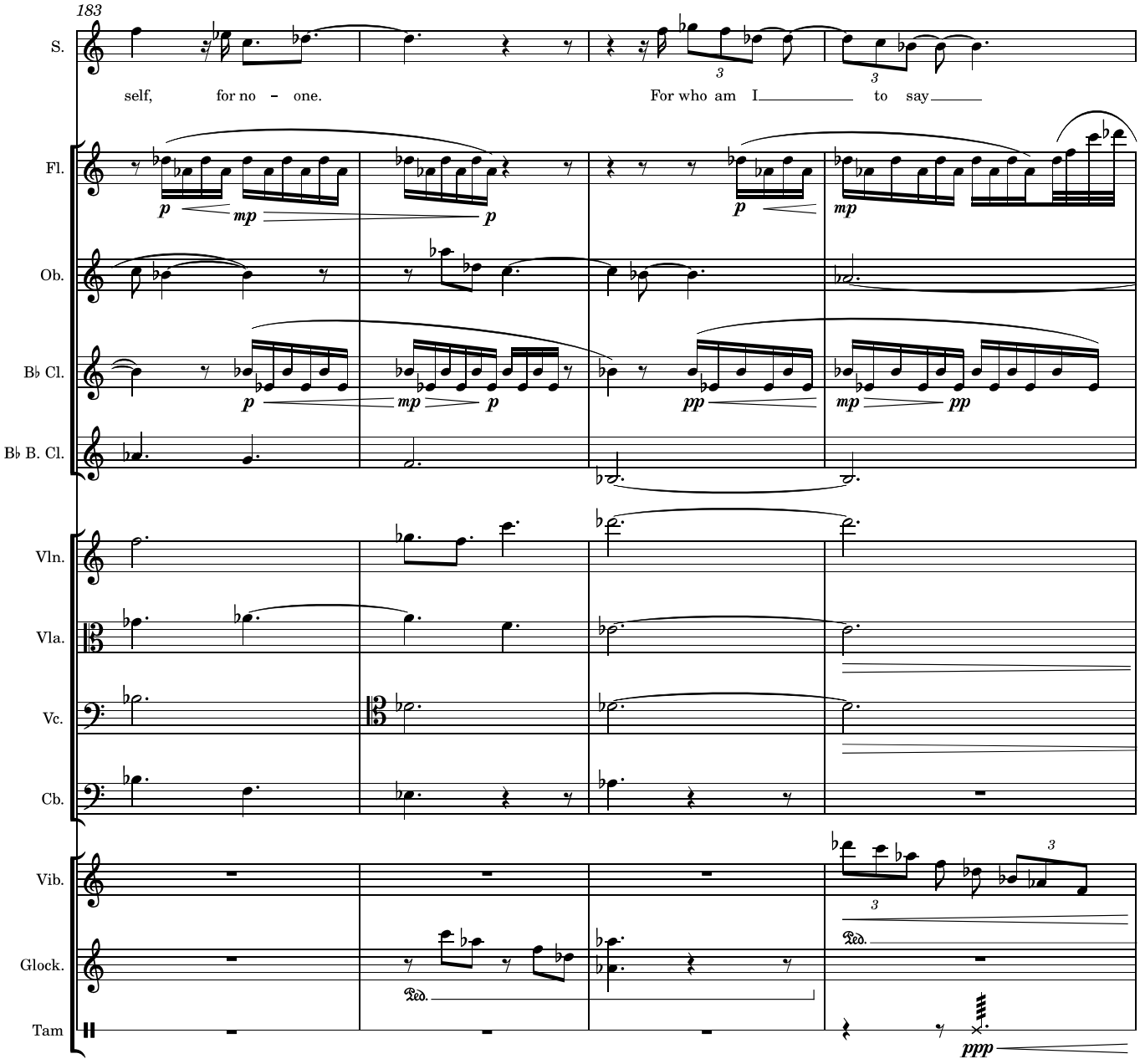

166
T
S.
And when star – light
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Irregular ricochet
Vla.
Irregular ricochet
Vc.
Vib.
Glock.
Tam
p
mp
pp
mf
ppp
Ped.

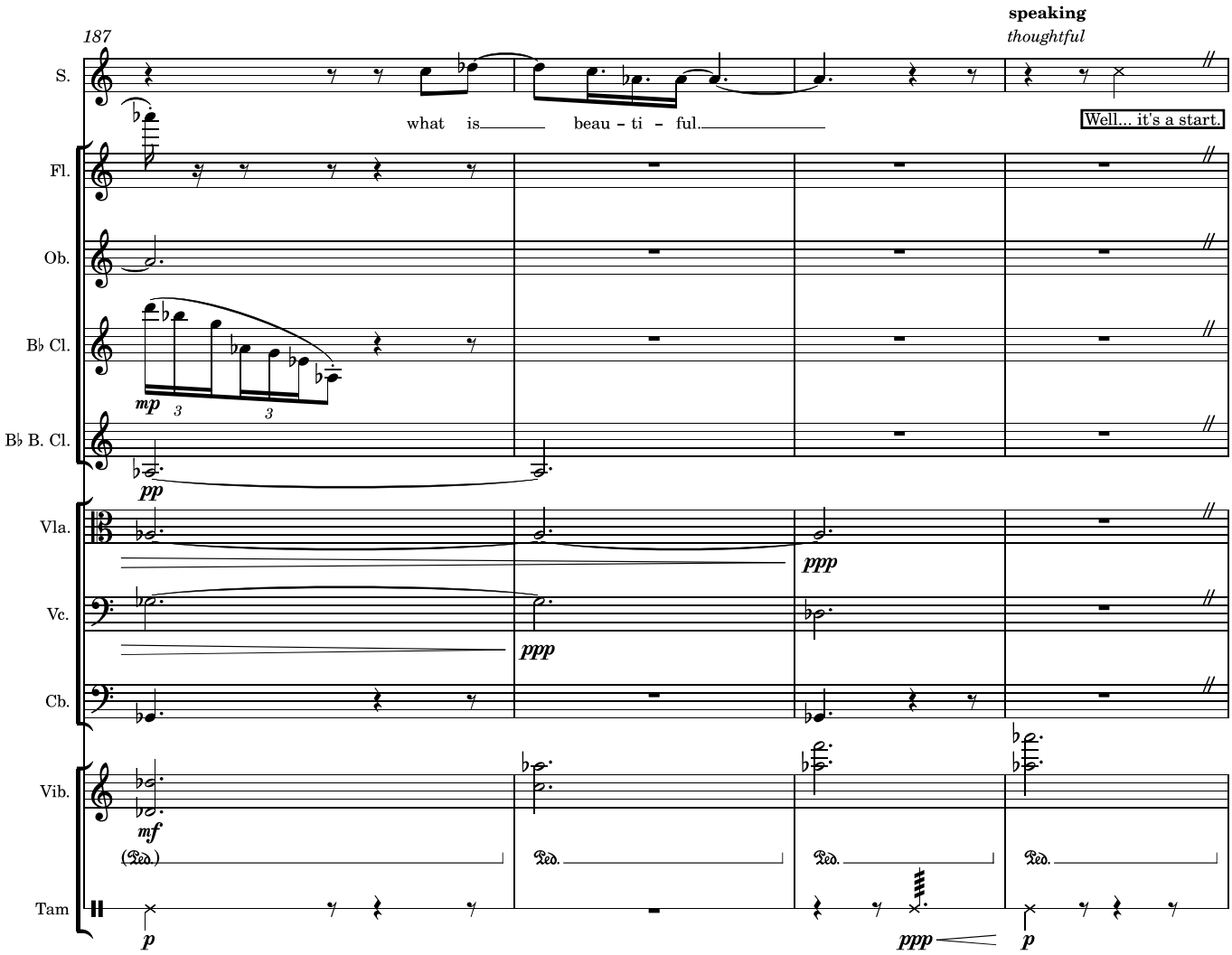

170
S.
waves, like sil - ver ink on black
Fl.
pp
p
pp
B♭ Cl.
pp
p
pp
B♭ B. Cl.
p
Vln.
pp
Vla.
Vib.
3
(Ped.)
mf
Glock.
Ped.

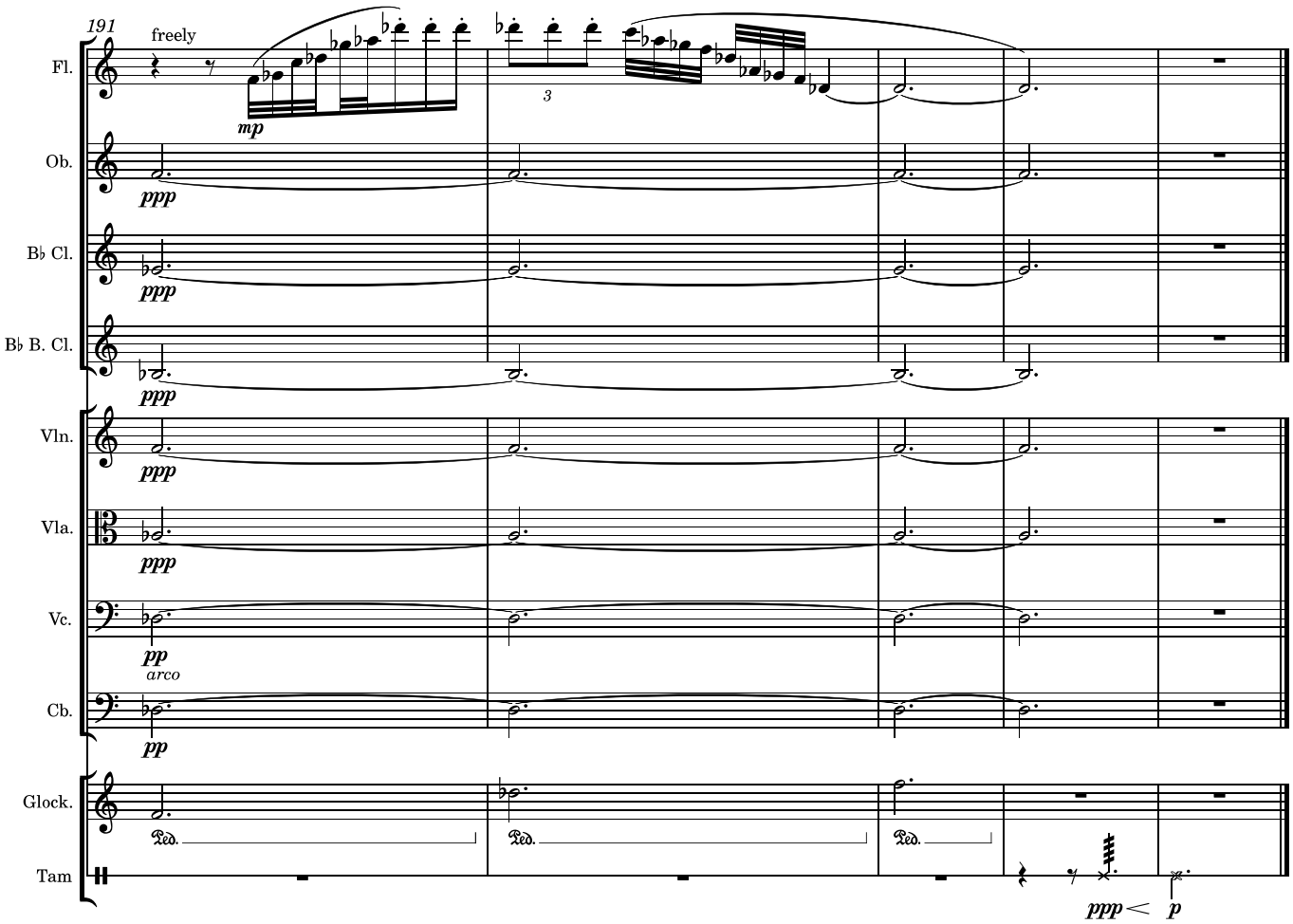

172
S.
pa - per,
I stand and thank her
mf
Fl.
mp
pp
p
pp
Ob.
3
mp
p
B♭ Cl.
pp
p
pp
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
p
pp
Vla.
pp
Vc.
Cb.
pizz.
p
Vib.
(Ped.)
Glock.
(Ped.)
Ped.


175
S.
and take no-thing with me.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vc.
Cb.
Glock.
pp
p
pp
Ped.


179
S.
mf
My words are for her, for my –
Fl.
pp p pp p mp p
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
pp p pp pp mp pp
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
normale
p
Vla.
normale
Vc.
Cb.


183
S.
self, for no - one.
For who am I to say
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
Glock.
Tam
Ped.
Ped.
p
mp
p
p
mp
p
mp
pp
mp
pp
ppp


187
speaking
thoughtful
S.
what is beau - ti - ful.
Well... it's a start.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Vib.
Tam
mp
pp
ppp
mf
p
ppp
p


191
freely
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ B. Cl.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Glock.
Tam
mp
ppp
pp
arco
3
Ped.
ppp
p