SONGS OF THE NIGHT SKY:
THREE POEMS OF QUENTIN SMITH

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

Marilyn Shrude, Advisor

Songs of the Night Sky: Three Poems of Quentin Smith is a setting for soprano and small chamber ensemble consisting of clarinet, cello, and piano. The poet's philosophy concerns cosmology, time, and the meaning of the universe's existence. His basic view toward these subjects is best described as scientific, naturalistic, and Humanistic. His poetry reflects this viewpoint by capturing the wonder and awe experienced when encountering the magnitude and vastness of the universe via the night sky.

Songs of the Night Sky: Three Poems of Quentin Smith complements Smith's poetry by musically portraying its emotional and intellectual states as well as painting the text to further illuminate its meaning. The three poems form a distinct narrative and dramatic progression. The overall form of the piece is analogous to this dramatic shape.

The piece draws on well-known twentieth century vocal/small ensemble literature. The instrumentation loosely models that of Arnold Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire, Op. 21*. Pierre Boulez's *Le marteau sans maítre* impacts this work through its abstraction of the text and relation of instrumental accompaniment to the text. George Crumb's *Ancient Voices of Children* and *Lux Aeterna* are manifest through the use of extended techniques and complex, evocative timbres. The influence of Luciano Berio is evident in the treatment of text as seen in *Thema: Omaggio a Joyce*, *Visage*, and *Circles*. The final poem presents the emotions the author experienced when listening to Bruckner's *Symphony no. 4*. The third movement's finale quotes extensively from this piece.

Songs of the Night Sky: Three Poems of Quentin Smith is intended as a musical component of and counterpart to the Humanistic philosophy and world view embodied in Smith's philosophy and poetry. It is also intended as a contribution to and extension of the twentieth century vocal/small chamber ensemble tradition.

To Sarah, my love and inspiration

I. OUTSIDE

Blood-flecks in the sky
Red lights on towers
Flash death-warning

Swords of stars
Crash silver blades
On black rocks.

Hard birds arc
Like bombs
Through the night

The wind drives
Against a tree
Like a truck

Without an anchor
A pole
Splashes in the dirt

The sky turns to a wave-crest
Flowing from distant orange suns
And the night breaks

Without a scream
Through the sinews
Of the Earth.

Written 1973, 1974, 2002

II. NIGHT

The night like an infinite wing
Keeps spreading towards the earth

In flowing mirrors that melt and dissolve
The air vanishes below the stars

Beyond the moon's scarred ice-stone
A frozen-orange hall is fading

Onto a field space is pouring
An ocean of eternal silence

Into a ghost mountain's distant glow
A purple shadow gently crashes

On a hill a tombstone breaks
In the light of silver suns

Moonlight splashes on a statuehead
And trickles numbly on its eye-dead face

Near a vine that grows blue around an elm
Starlight rains softly on a marble pond

On an island of a darkened meadow
A rose echoes the deep universe

Written 1974

III. WALKING HOME FROM A MOVIE

The longing glow of the moon
Slid in and out of the scattering clouds,
Illuminating them with a silver-blue radiance…
O everything is infinite! Glorious night!
Stars speckled and so near in your distance
…I have risen beyond myself, beyond the world…
There is no more time, there is only beauty;
Everything is the deepest
And the most fullest eternity of love…
There is no world, I am the infinite…

Written 1971

All text used with permission of the author

Guide to notation

The following applies throughout the ensemble:

All performers read from score

Accidentals apply throughout a measure; accidentals apply only to the notes they immediately precede where measures are absent; accidentals apply throughout boxed repeated figures

No Meter

Duration is indicated through brackets:

Arrows are used to indicate cues between parts

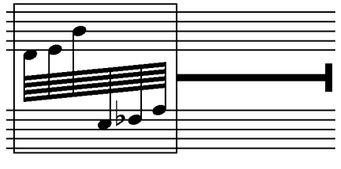
Dashed barlines indicate points of simultaneity

Small notes are used to indicate release, used to cue another player

A group of beamed notes with a slash indicates that the figure should be played as fast as possible

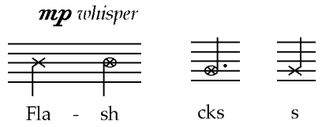
A line between notes indicates sustain (same as a tie)

The termination of a line indicates a release

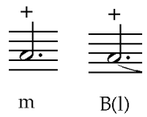
Any boxed figure should be repeated until the end of the bold line 

Symbols used in the voice part:

“X” noteheads indicate an unvoiced whisper or a sustained fricative (may be voiced or unvoiced depending on the text)



Notes marked with a “+” indicate a sustained consonant (nasal or semi-vowel)



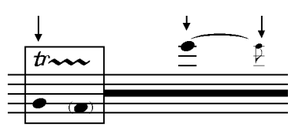
Indicates the following pitch should be sung a quarter tone lower than the already flatted pitch

The vocalist is also asked to play bamboo wind chimes, finger cymbals, and a large Chinese wind gong (Feng Luo) (strike with large, soft tam-tam mallet)

Symbols used in the clarinet part:

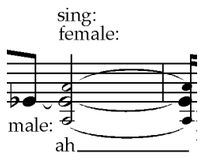
Notes marked as such: should consist entirely of breath noise, while the marking indicates a mixture of tone and breath noise

Multiphonics are designated as follows: and will always include a suggested fingering (see *The Clarinet of the Twenty-First Century* by E. Michael Richards for information on multiphonics)



A register key trill with upper multiphonic is shown: (see *The Clarinet of the Twenty-First Century* by E. Michael Richards)

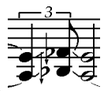
An “X” above a note indicates a slap-tongue

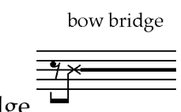
Multiphonics produced through singing and playing are shown as follows: 

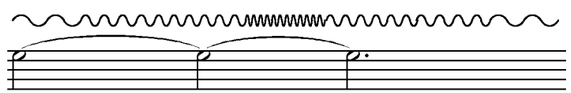
the small noteheads are transposed and are to be sung in the octave most comfortable for the performer

Glissandi are indicated as follows: Glissandi covering wide ranges should use both changes in embouchure and fingering, at the performer’s discretion

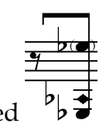
Symbols used in the cello part:

Small pitch bends on open strings  are obtained by applying pressure to the strings behind the bridge, thereby raising their pitch slightly

An “X” notehead indicates to bow the bridge 

Variation in vibrato speed is shown graphically, as such: 

Glissandi are indicated as follows: Every attempt should be made to perform each glissandi entirely on a single string; exceptions to this are left to the performer’s discretion

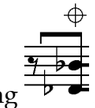
Artificial or stopped harmonics are indicated 

A triangular notehead indicates the highest possible stopped pitch on a given string

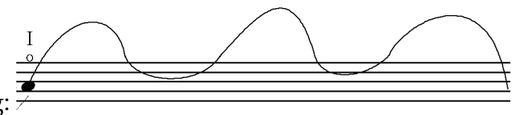
A diamond notehead above a triangular notehead indicates the highest possible stopped harmonic on a given string

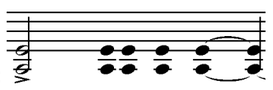
A triangular notehead marked with a circle indicates the highest possible natural (or touch) harmonic possible on a given string

A “+” above a note indicates a left hand pizzicati

The marking  indicates the strings should be muted using any free left hand fingers in order to produce bow noise, with no actual tone

The marking above a note indicates it should be muted as above, but lightly, as to create a combination of bow noise and tone

The following:  indicates free glissandi through the natural harmonics available on the given string

Ricochet bowing is indicated as such:  When followed by sustain, the final bounce should begin the sustain

The cellist is also asked to use a plectrum. A standard guitar plectrum is appropriate.

Symbols used in the piano part:

Muted strings are indicated with a "+"

Harmonics are shown as follows:

A diamond notehead indicates the key(s) should be depressed silently

Tone clusters are indicated as follows and should include all chromatic pitches between the two given pitches

Indications to play on the keyboard or on the inside of the piano are made as such: Keyboard Inside

The pianist is also asked to scrape a wire brush (the type typically used by jazz drummers) both lengthwise and across (as if strumming) the strings (see page 22-24 of the score)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Marilyn Shrude for her invaluable insight and guidance that has proved crucial to the completion of this work. I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Elainie Lillios and Dr. Burton Beerman for their bountiful assistance throughout the creative process. Further acknowledgement must be given to my friends and family members, too numerous to name individually, but all deserving of recognition for their support and encouragement. Finally, I thank my wife Sarah. Her patience and encouragement makes possible all that I do.

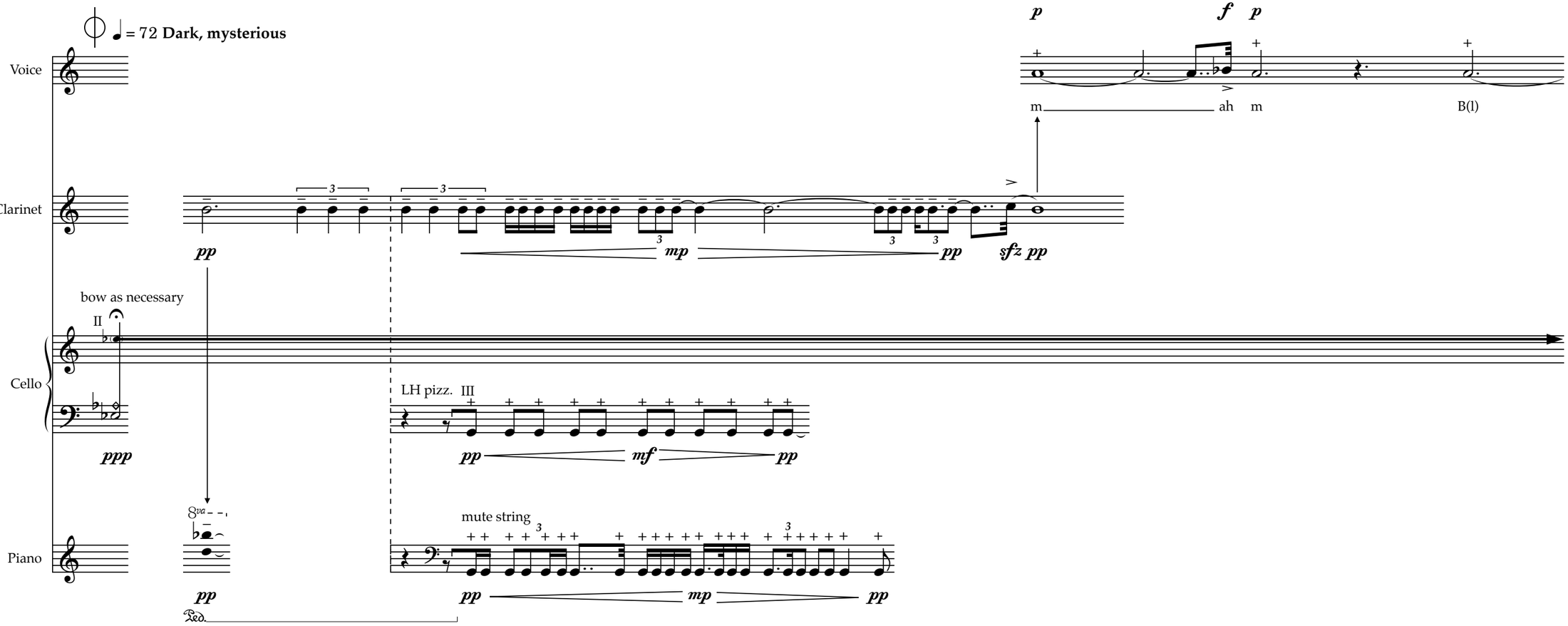
Transposed Score

Songs of the Night Sky:
Three Poems of Quentin Smith

Quentin Smith

I. Outside

Lee Scott Price (2005)



Vox

ood fleck s in the sky

mf

mp

Re d lights on tow - er s

3

mp *whisper*

Fla - sh

Cl.

randomly trill keys

blow air through horn

tr

p

growl

mp *f*

norm.

3

p *mf*

Vc.

Pno.

8va

mf

mp

15ma

pp

p *mf*

pp

Ped.

Vox

Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

f *p* *p* *mp* *f*

norm.

dea th w ar n ing

Inside

pizz.

Keyboard

pp

f

p

ff

pp

p

ff

ppp

3"

8va
(RH only)

mp

ff

Ped.

Ped.

Vox

S - wor d s

of stars

Cra sh sil - ver blade - s

On bla ck rock - s.

Cl.

slap tongue

sing:

ah

key clicks

airy sound
(add breath noise to tone)

Vc.

pizz.

arco
norm.

tasto

pont.

pizz.

arco
norm.

Pno.

8va

15ma

15ma

Inside

sweep finger across strings

15ma

Keyboard

(Ped.)

Vox

Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

6"

= 96 **Harsh, obsessively**

f

H ard birds arc Like bomb - - - - s

freely alternate
between trill notes
norm.

pp

ff *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf*

pizz. rasp.

pp

arco

ff *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

8va

pp

ff

play given note in
erratic rhythm

f

mp

Vox

Th rough the night

Cl.

mp *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf*

Vc.

mf *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf*

Pno.

fast to slow

tr

mp *mf* *f*

Ritard…

♩ = 72 **Cool, distant, objective**

Vox

p

The wi - n - d drive - - -

Cl.

mp *pp*

Vc.

mp *pp*

bow bridge

highest possible stopped pitch

III

pp *f*

Pno.

mp *pp*

Depress keys silently; secure with sostenuto pedal

sos

Vox

- s A - gai - n - st a tree Like a tru - ck

Cl.

Vc.

bow bridge

bow bridge

tasto pont.

Pno.

(sos)

Slur throughout; do not rearticulate each repetition

Cl.

Vc.

norm.

Pno.

(sos)

3

Vox

Vc.

Pno.

f

With - out an an - chor

mp whisper

f norm.

A pole Spla - - - shes in the dirt

Lighter, confident

The

mf

(Ped.)

Vox

sky turns to a wave– cre - - st Flow - - - - -

Cl.

mf *sfz mf* *mp*

Vc.

Pno.

(Ped.)

Vox

- - - ing from di - s - tan - t or - ange su - n - s

Cl.

sing:

ah

f *ff* *mf* *ff* *mf*

Vc.

mf

Pno.

mf

(Ped.)

Vox

And the n - ight

breaks

♩ = 58 **Calm, Warm, Sincere**

pp

Wi - th - out a s - cream

Cl.

ff

breathe as necessary

ff *mp* *ppp*

Vc.

ff

Ricochet (begin sustain on last bounce; bow as necessary)

bend string behind bridge

ff *mp* *ppp*

Pno.

ff

(Ped.)

ff *mp* *ppp*

Ped.

Ped.

Vox

Th- rough the si - n - ew - s Of the Ear - - - th.

Bamboo Wind Chimes

ppp

Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

(Ped.)

II. Night

♩ = 66 **Deliberate, confident**

Vox

mf *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf* *pp*

n n n

mf Finger Cymbals

p *mp*

The night like an in - - -

Cl.

timbral trill timbral trill timbral trill timbral trill

ppp *ppp* *ppp* *p*

Vc.

pizz.
with plectrum

vib. rate:
arco

mf *ppp* *ppp* *p*

sweep across strings
with fingernail

Inside

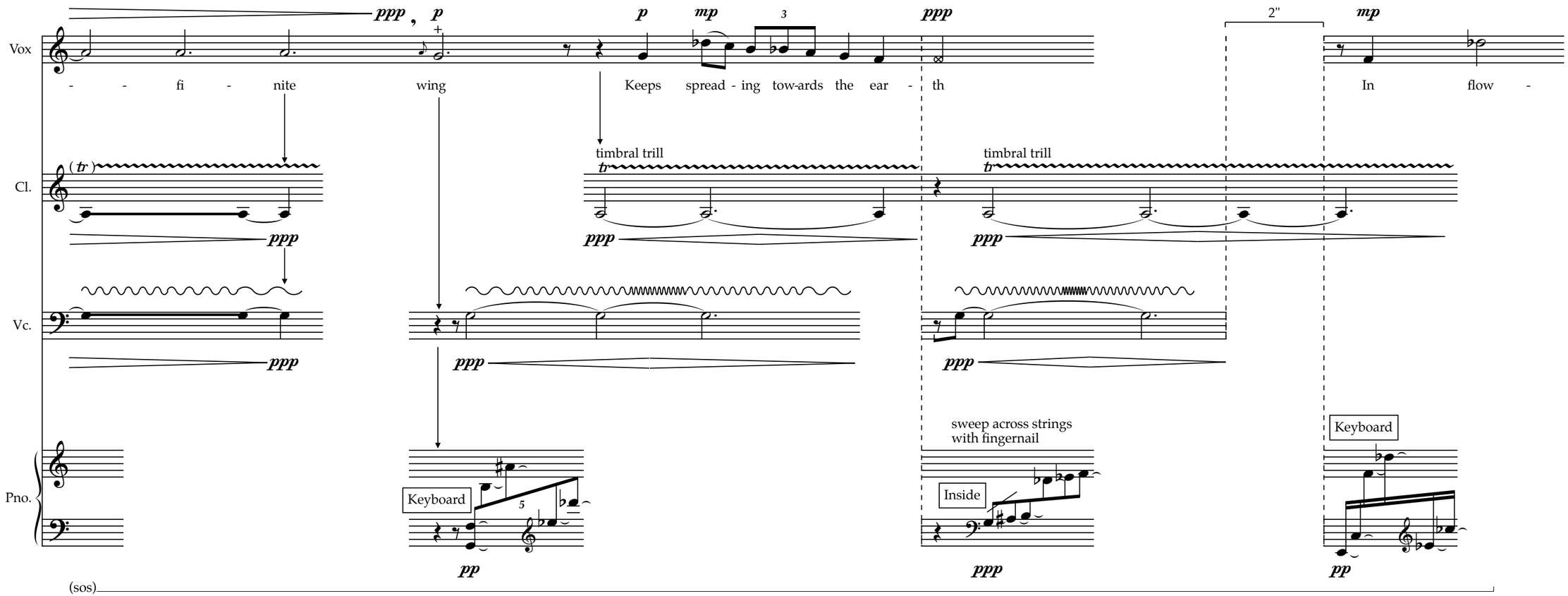
Pno.

mf

Depress keys silently;
secure with sostenuto pedal

p *pp*

Ped. sos


Vox
Cl.
Vc.
Pno.
- - fi - nite wing Keeps spread - ing tow-ards the ear - th In flow -
timbral trill
timbral trill
2"
sweep across strings
with fingernail
Keyboard
Inside
Keyboard
(sos)

Increasingly agitated

Vox

- ing mir - rors that melt 3 and dis - solve The air van - i - shes be - low the

mf *mp whisper* *mf norm.*

Cl.

ppp slowly and gradually crescendo…

Vc.

ppp slowly and gradually crescendo…

Pno.

ppp slowly and gradually crescendo…

Ped.

* Syncronicity between parts is approximated in this section.

Vox

f

stars

Cl.

… *f* *diminuendo…*

Vc.

… *f* *diminuendo…*

Pno.

(Ped.)

Vox

Cl.

… *ppp*

Vc.

… *ppp*

4"

♩ = 66 **Warm, fragile, ethereal**

mp

Be - yond the moon's s-carred

mp

Ricochet (begin sustain on last bounce; bow as necessary)

sfz *pp*

Pno.

Ritard…

… *ff*

diminuendo…

(Ped.)

mp

Ped.

Vox

i - ce– s - tone A fro - zen– or - ange hall is fad - ing

Cl.

Vc.

4"

Pno.

(Ped.)

Lighter, driving, liberated

♩ = 72

Vox

p *mf* *ppp* *p*

On - to a field space is pour - ing An o-cean of e - ter - nal si - lence In - to a

Cl.

Vc.

sfz *p* *sfz* *p* *ppp*

Pno.

mp *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp*

2" 5" 8

(Ped.)

Depress keys silently;
secure with sostenuto pedal

sos

Vox

mp *mf* *mp*

ghost moun - tain's dis - tant glow A pur - ple shad - ow gent-ly cra - - - she -

3

Cl.

Slur throughout; do not rearticulate each repetition

breathe as necessary

p

Vc.

bow as necessary
mute strings while bowing to create noise

p

slightly mute strings while bowing to create noisy tone

Pno.

Inside
Scrape bass strings secured with sos. ped. lengthwise with wire brush

away from endpin

5

3

near endpin

p
(sos)

Keyboard

8vb *p*

Vox

- s On a hill a tomb - stone breaks In the light of sil - ver suns

3" 3 5:4 3

Cl.

norm.

Vc.

norm.

Pno.

8va 8vb 8vb

strum across strings
with wire brush

(sos)

Ecstatic, warm

Vox

ff *f* *mf* *mp*

Moon - - - - light spla - - shes on a stat - ue - head And trick-les numb -

6:5 3

Cl.

growl

ff *mp* *ff* *mp*

Vc.

freely gliss through natural harmonics

I I

3 3 3 3

ff *p* *ff* *p*

Pno.

Keyboard

ff *ff*

(sos) Ped.

Vox

- ly on its eye– dead face Near a vine that grows blue a-round an elm Star - light rains soft -

Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

(Ped.)

Rallentando ad. lib.
(independent of ensemble)

Vox

- - ly on a mar - ble pond On an is - land of a dark-ened mead-ow A rose ech - oes the deep

Finger Cymbals

Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

(Ped.)

Vox

u - - - - ni - - - - verse

Cl.

← ♩. = ♩ → (♩ = 44)

pp

← 𝅗𝅥 = ♩ → (♩ = 22)

ppp

Slur throughout; do not rearticulate each repetition

pppp ***(soft as possible)***

Vc.

I

pppp ***(soft as possible)***

Pno.

8va

p

8va

pp

← 𝅝 = ♩ → (♩ = 7.34)

8va

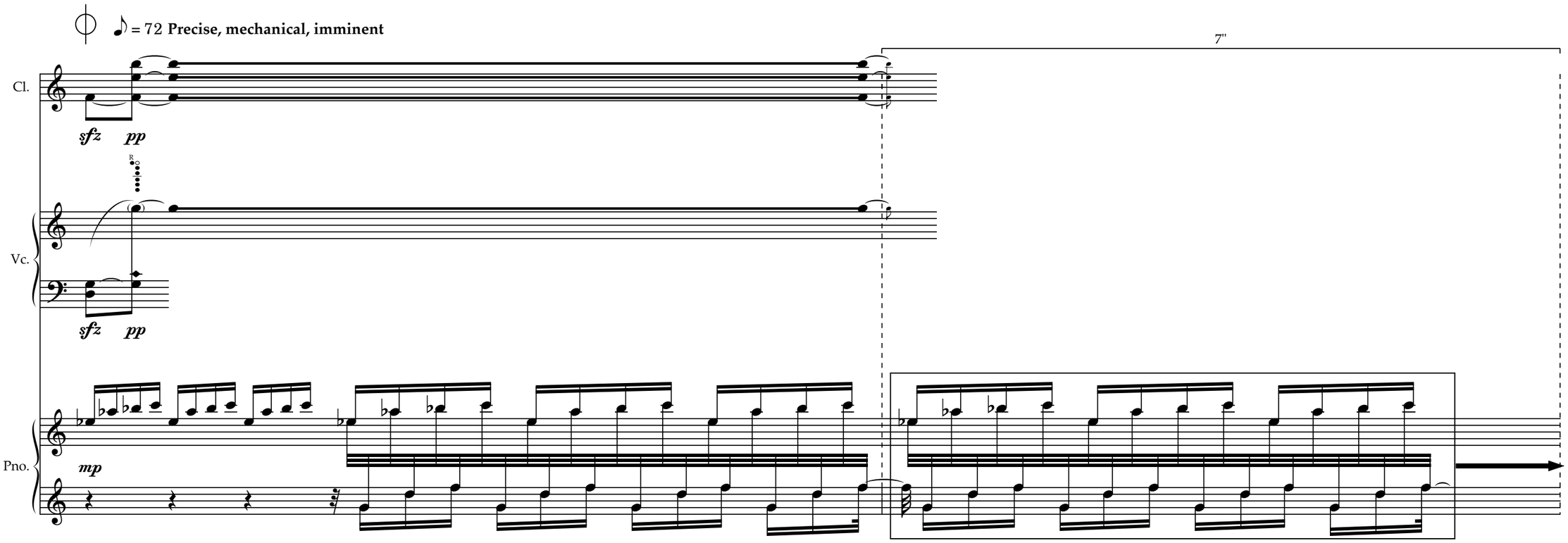
ppp

pppp ***(soft as possible)***

8vb

(Ped.)

III. Walking Home from a Movie



5"

9"

Cl.

mp

f

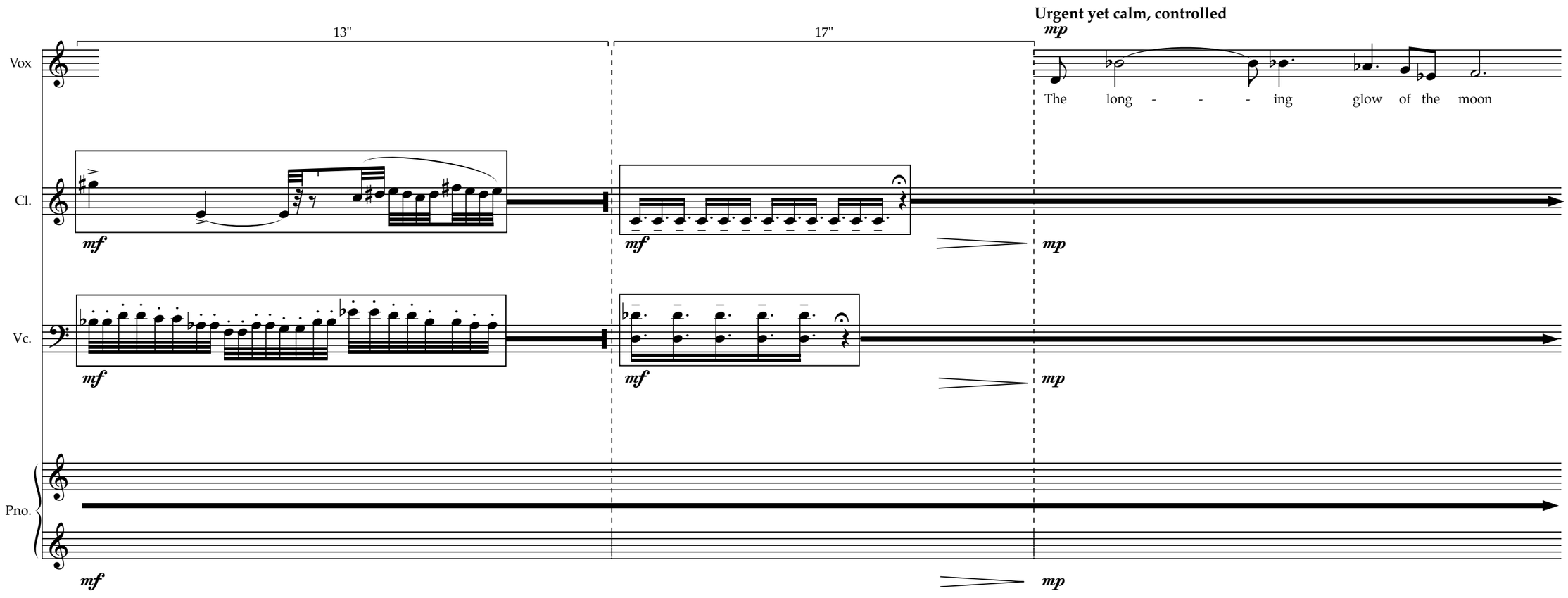
Vc.

mp

f

Pno.

f


Urgent yet calm, controlled
13"
17"
Vox
Cl.
Vc.
Pno.
mp
The long - - - ing glow of the moon
mf
mf
mp
mf
mf
mp
mf
mp

Vox

2"

mp *mf* *mp*

S- l-id in and out of the scat - ter - ing clouds,

3"

mp *f* *mf* *ff*

Il - lu - mi-na-ting them with a s - il - ver– blue ra - di-ance…

Cl.

tr

Trill with register key

Vc.

Pno.

Ecstatic, powerful, absolute

Vox

Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

ff mf f ff f

O e - very - thing is in - fi - nite! Glo - ri - ous

4"

Vox

Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

ff

night!

5"

Reflective, awestruck

mf mp

Stars speck - led

mf p

3

and so near in your dis - tance

7"

Introspective, affirmative

pp mp p f

quasi recitative

3

…I have ri-sen be - yond my-self, be-yond the

3 3 3

ff

Slur throughout; do not rearticulate each repetition

f pp

IV

f pp

ff

Ped.

f pp

Ped.

Vox

pp

world…

Cl.

pp

Accelerando…

crescendo…

Vc.

pizz.

pp

arco

crescendo…

Pno.

pp

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

crescendo…

= 82 **Ecstatic, boundless**

ff

Vox

There is no more time, there is

Cl.

ff

Vc.

ff

Pno.

ff

(Ped.)

Vox

on - ly beau - ty; E - - - - very - thing is the deep-est And the most full-est e - ter-ni-ty of

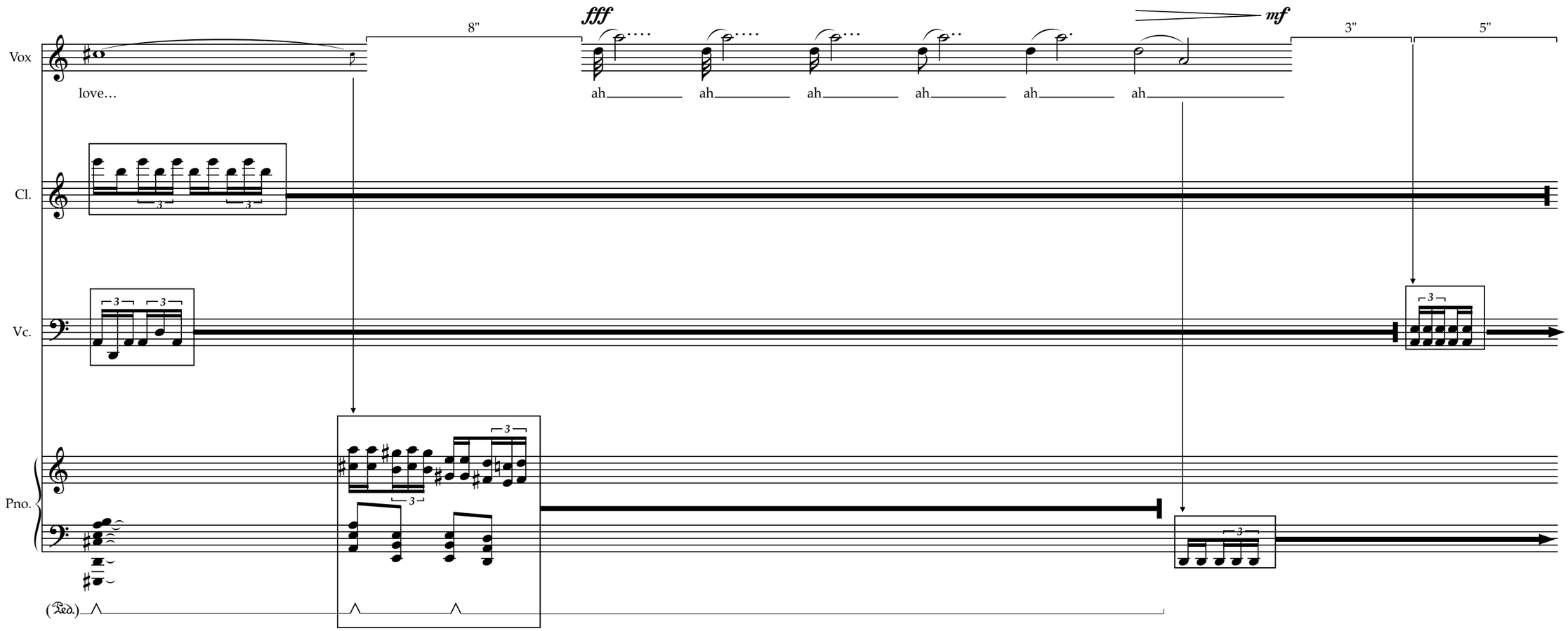
Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

do not play
first time

Ped.


Vox
Cl.
Vc.
Pno.
8"
3"
5"
fff
mf
love…
ah
ah
ah
ah
ah
ah
(Ped.)

Comforting, inward

Freely

13"

13"

Indefinite, ad lib.

Vox

pp

There is no world, I am the in - - fi - nite…

Large Chinese Wind Gong

f

Cl.

Ritard to end…
(independent of ensemble)

diminuendo…

…*pp* *diminuendo…*

ppp *n*

Vc.

Ritard to end…
(independent of ensemble)

freely gliss through natural harmonics

II

highest possible natural harmonic

diminuendo…

…*pp* *diminuendo…*

ppp *n*

Pno.

Ritard to end…
(independent of ensemble)

diminuendo…

…*pp* *diminuendo…*

Ped.

… *ppp* *n*