Patrick Andrew Thompson

NIGHT, SLEEP, AND THE STARS

for soprano and chamber ensemble

First Performance on December 2, 2018
Griswold Hall, Baltimore MD
Madeline Huss Soprano

COMPOSER'S NOTE

Night, Sleep, and the Stars began in February 2018 as part of a collaboration, led by Kevin Puts and Ah Young Hong, between composers and singers at the Peabody Institute. Working with soprano Madeline Huss, I wrote a piano version of this cycles' eventual third song, "Strain," and immediately felt that it belonged with a larger ensemble as part of a cycle. While exploring texts to pair with Lowell's "Strain," I was constantly drawn towards poems about night, and ultimately selected four poems which share strikingly similar reflections while painting vivid pictures of different scenes at night.

The first poem, attributed - albeit with questionable authenticity - to the ancient Greek poet Sappho, captures in remarkably few words an image of a woman lying alone at night, contemplating the stars and the passage of time. The second, by Sara Teasdale, paints a vivid picture of a woman's night with her lover along the Hudson River in New York City. Amy Lowell's "Strain" then describes a woman lying alone at night, as the first poem, yet with serene contemplation replaced by fear and isolation. Finally, the fourth poem, taken from Walt Whitman's "The Sleepers" in *Leaves of Grass*, describes in a more abstract sense the author's peace in, and even love for, the night.

Musically, each song is largely distinct from the others, attempting foremost to capture its particular moods. Yet there are several recurring musical threads which run through the cycle, echoing the recurring themes shared by the poems themselves. A motif, harmony, rhythm, or texture from one song is recontextualized in ways which sometimes leap off the page and other times hide just under the surface.

The title is adapted from the final line of Whitman's "A Clear Midnight".

- Patrick Andrew Thompson

1. Midnight

attributed to Sappho
translate by Edward Storer

The moon has set and the Pleiades
Have gone.
It is midnight; the hours pass; and I
Sleep alone.

2. Summer Night, Riverside

by Sara Teasdale

In the wild soft summer darkness
How many and many a night we two together
Sat in the park and watched the Hudson
Wearing her lights like golden spangles
Glinting on black satin.
The rail along the curving pathway
Was low in a happy place to let us cross,
And down the hill a tree that dripped with bloom
Sheltered us,
While your kisses and the flowers,
Falling, falling,
Tangled in my hair….

The frail white stars moved slowly over the sky.

And now, far off
In the fragrant darkness
The tree is tremulous again with bloom
For June comes back.

To-night what girl
Dreamily before her mirror shakes from her hair
This year's blossoms, clinging to its coils?

3. Strain

by Amy Lowell

IT is late
And the clock is striking thin hours,
But sleep has become a terror to me,
Lest I wake in the night
Bewildered,
And stretching out my arms to comfort myself with
you,
Clasp instead the cold body of the darkness.
All night it will hunger over me,
And push and undulate against me,
Breathing into my mouth
And passing long fingers through my drifting hair.
Only the dawn can loose me from it,
And the grey streaks of morning melt it from my
side.

Bring many candles,
Though they stab my tired brain,
And hurt it.
For I am afraid of the twining of the darkness
And dare not sleep.

4. The Sleepers

From “The Sleepers” by Walt Whitman

I stay a while away O night, but I return to you
again and love you.

Why should I be afraid to trust myself to you?
I am not afraid, I have been well brought forward
by you,
I love the rich running day, but I do not desert her
in whom I lay so long,
I know not how I came of you and I know not
where I go with you, but
I know I came well and shall go well.

I will stop only a time with the night, and rise
betimes,
I will duly pass the day O my mother, and duly
return to you

INSTRUMENTATION

Flute

Clarinet in B♭ (doubling Bass Clarinet in B♭)

Violin

Cello

Soprano

Percussion (1 Player)
Vibraphone, Glockenspiel, Bass Drum,
Suspended Cymbal, Marimba, Crotales

Piano

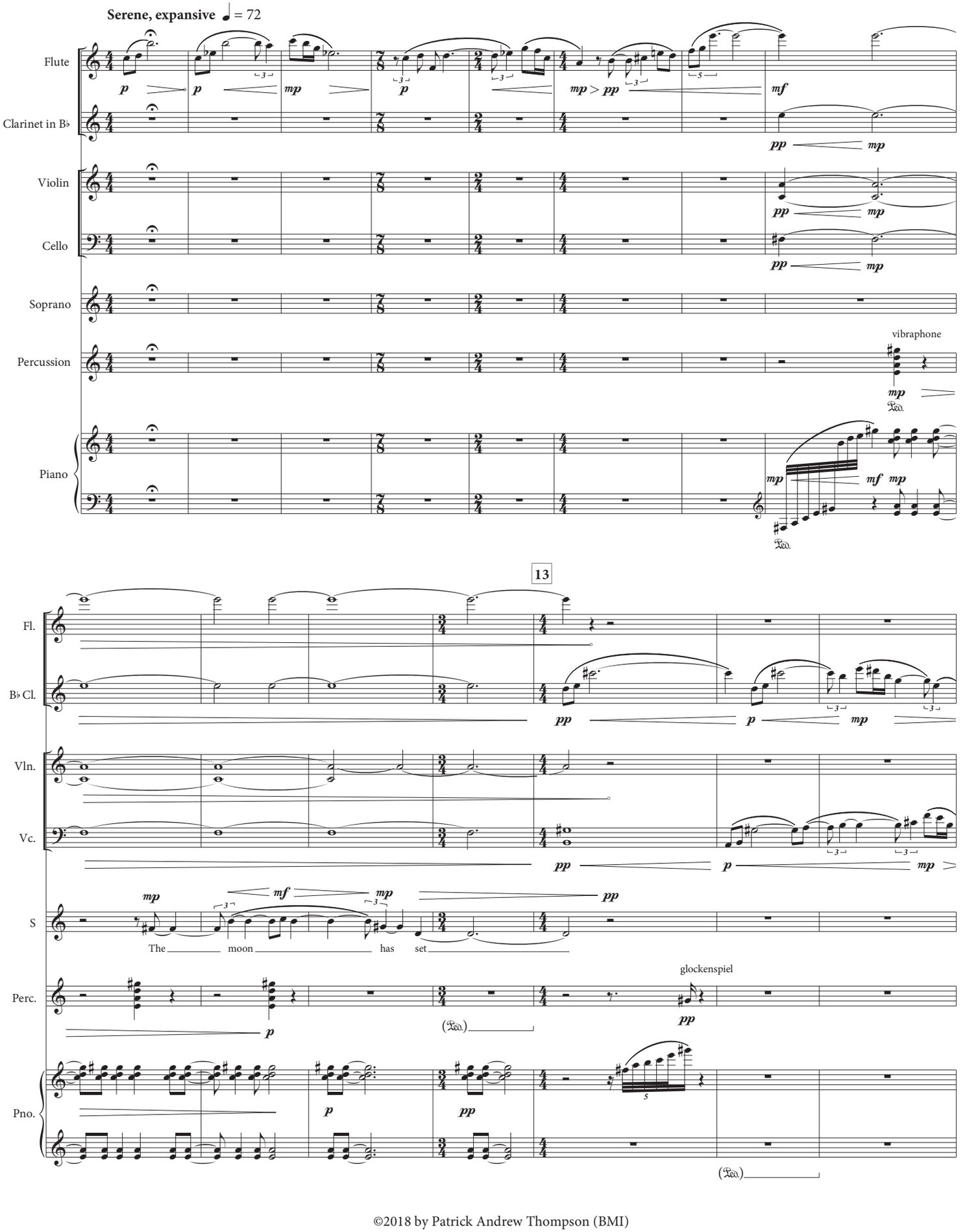
Duration: ca. 19 minutes

NIGHT, SLEEP, AND THE STARS

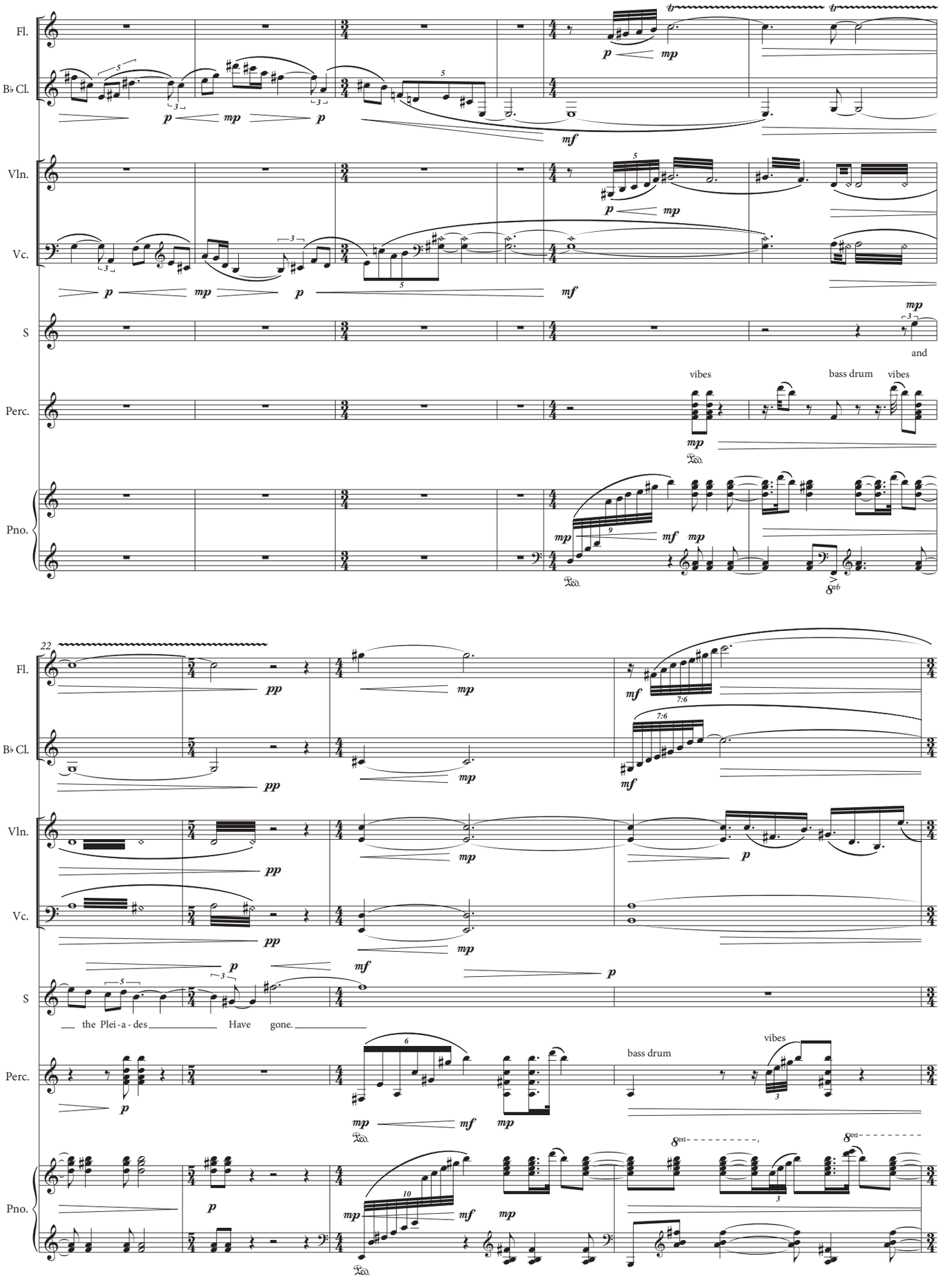
Poem attributed to Sappho
translated by Edward Storer

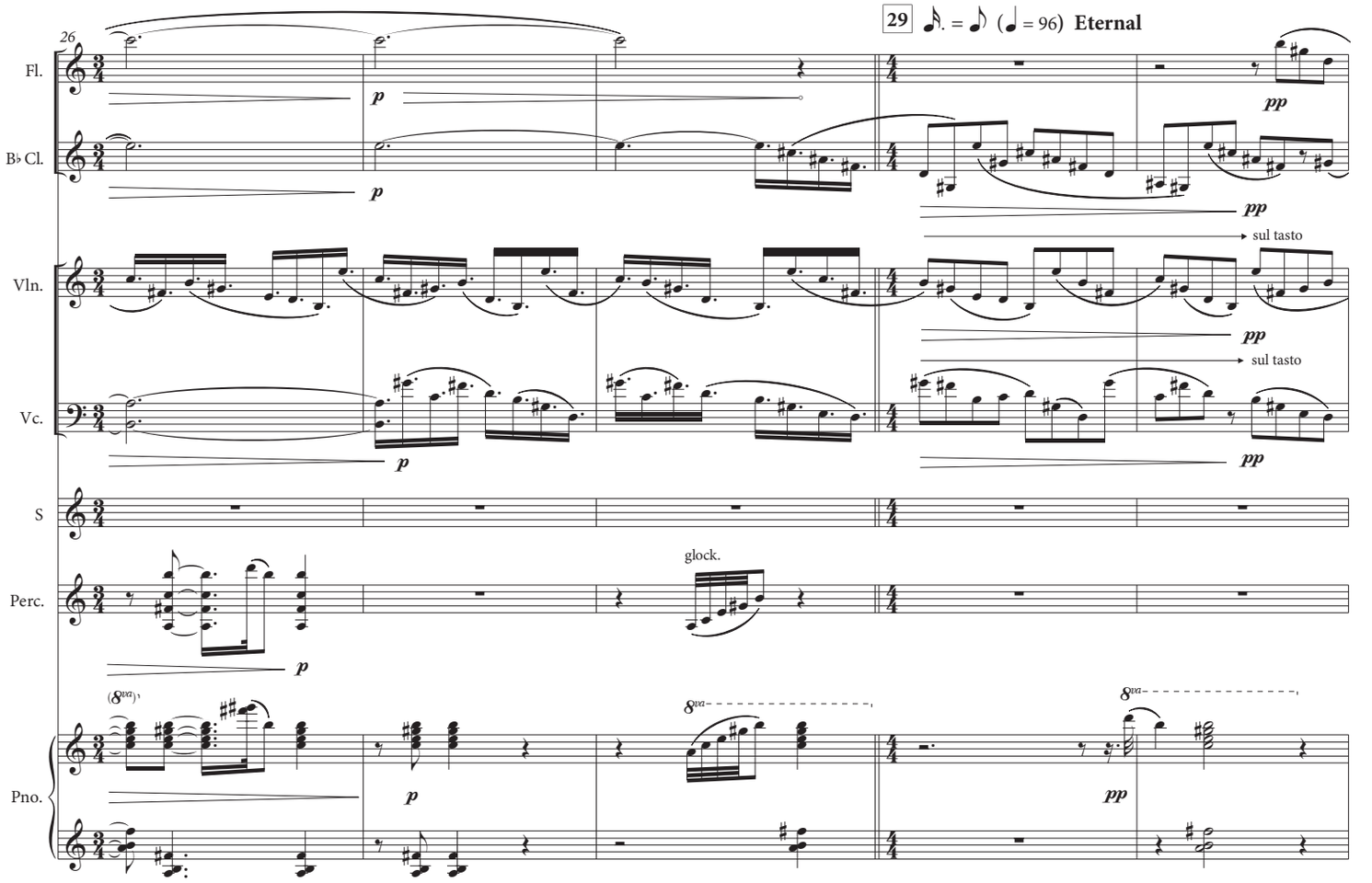
1. Midnight

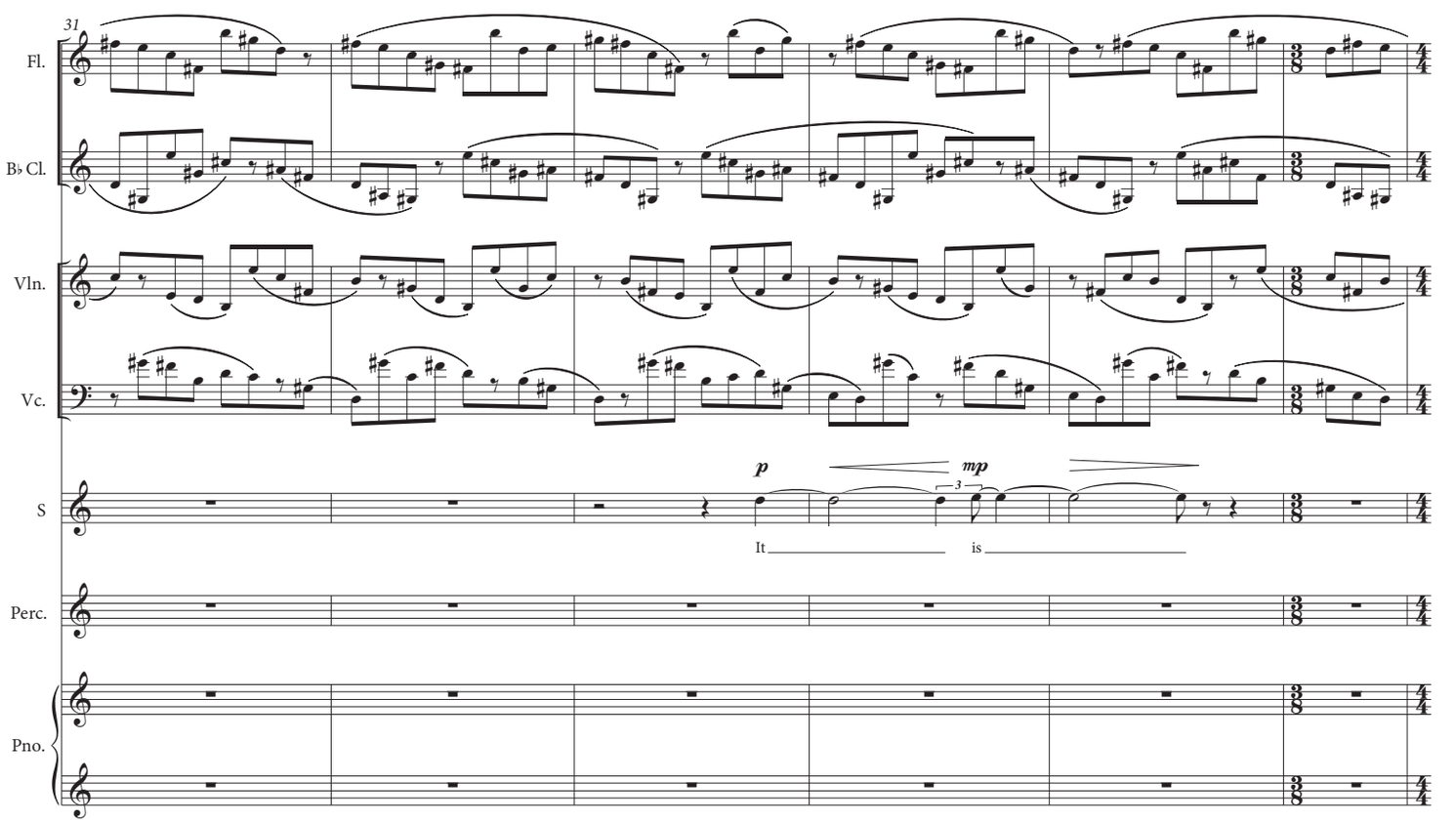
Patrick Andrew Thompson
2018

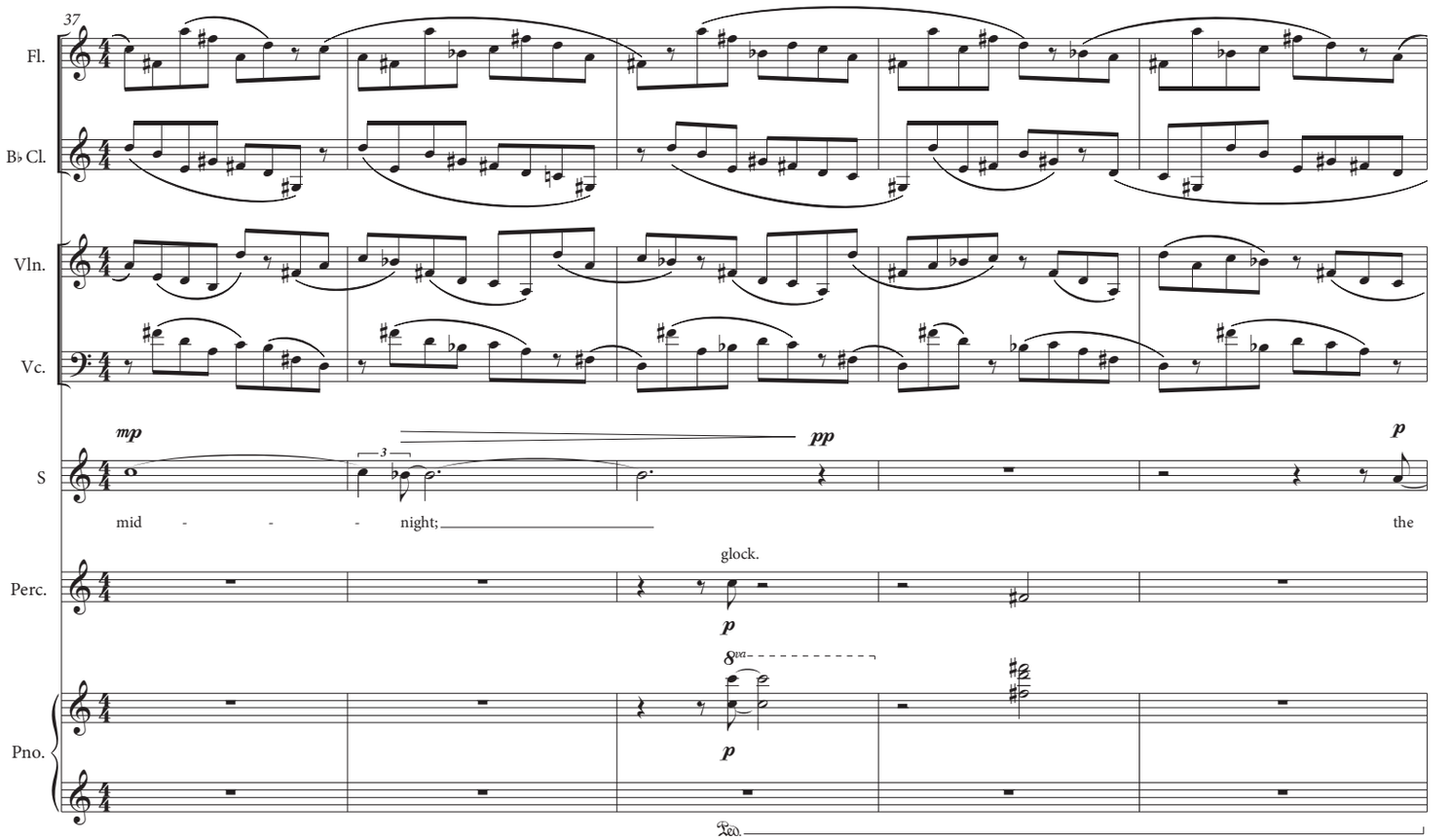


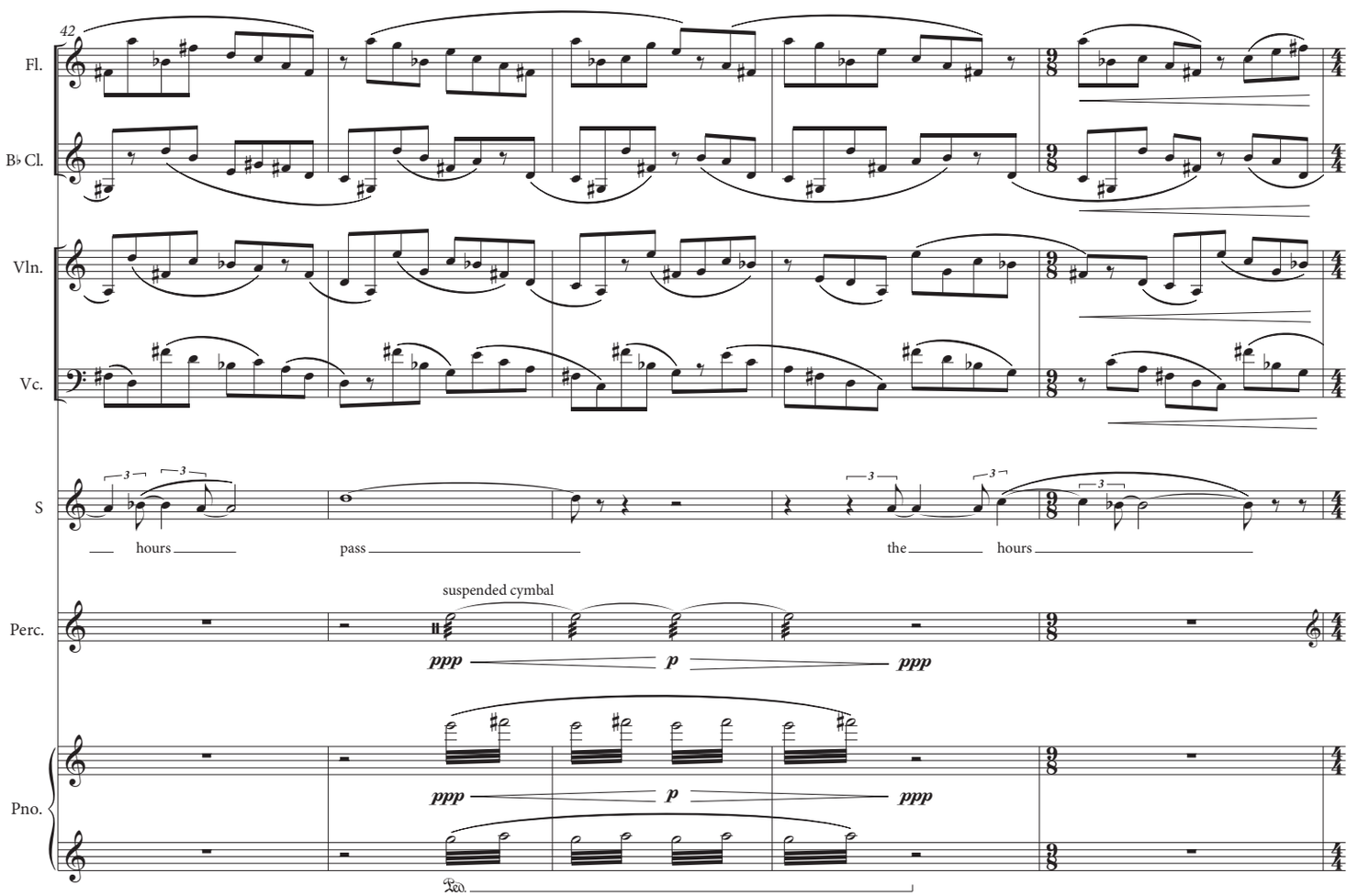
©2018 by Patrick Andrew Thompson (BMI)

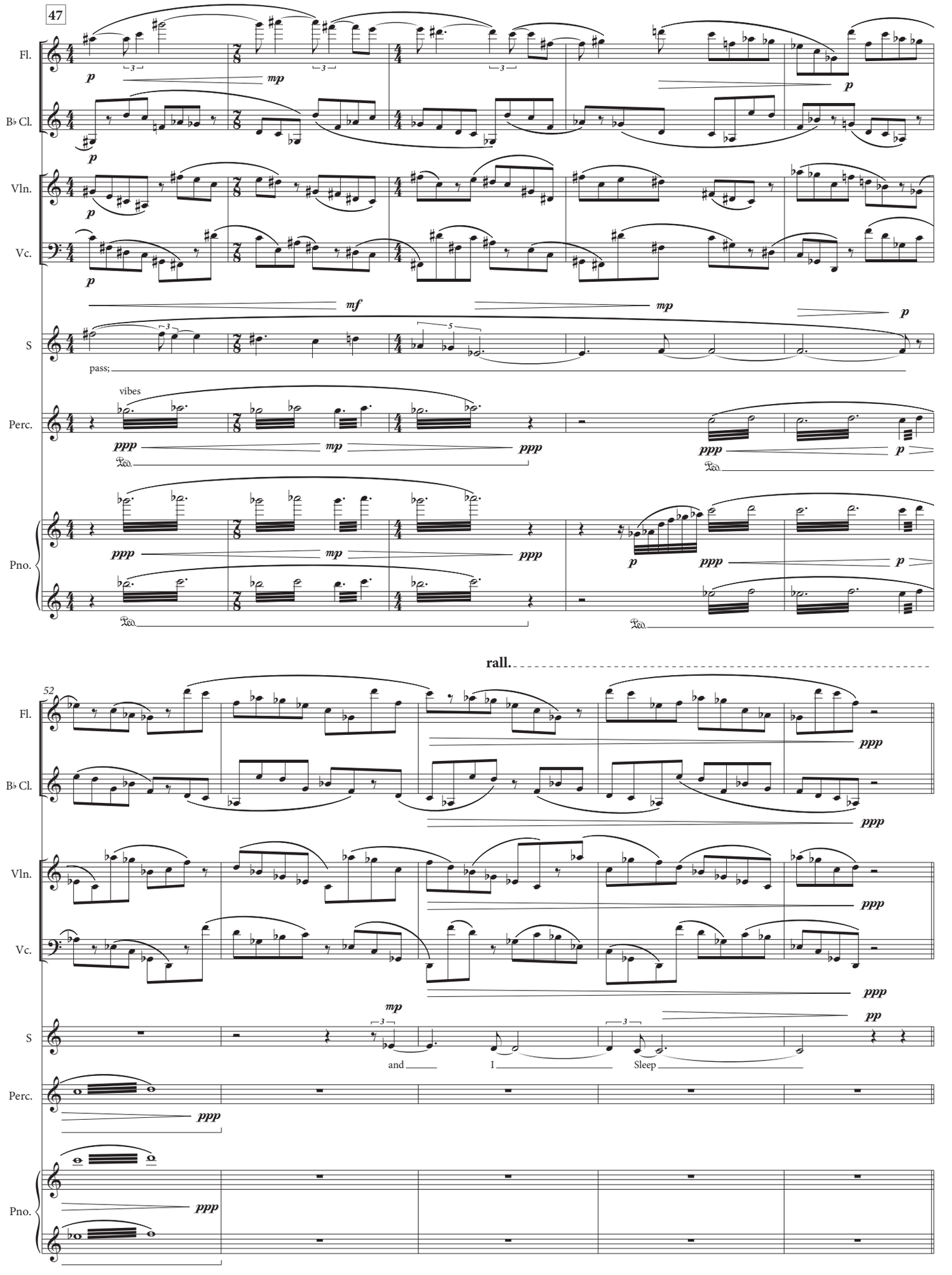

Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
vibes
bass drum
vibes
and
22
the Plei - a - des
Have
gone.
bass drum
vibes

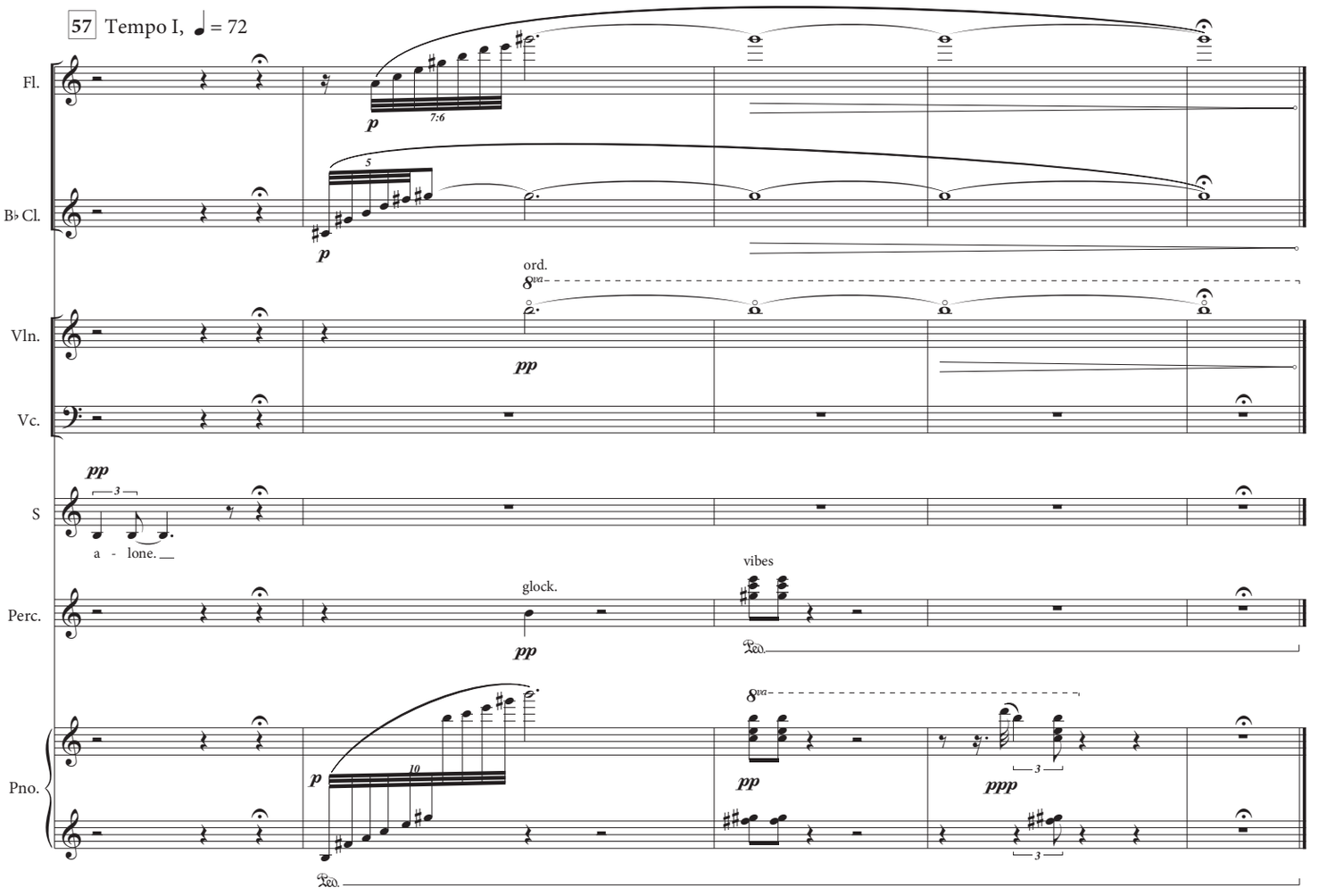

29 ♪. = ♪ (♩ = 96) Eternal
26
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
p
pp
sul tasto
glock.
(8va)
8va


31
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
p
mp
3
It
is


37
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
mp
pp
p
mid - - - night;
the
glock.
Perc.
p
8va
Pno.
p
Ped.


42
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
hours
pass
the
hours
suspended cymbal
Perc.
ppp
p
ppp
Pno.
ppp
p
ppp
Ped.

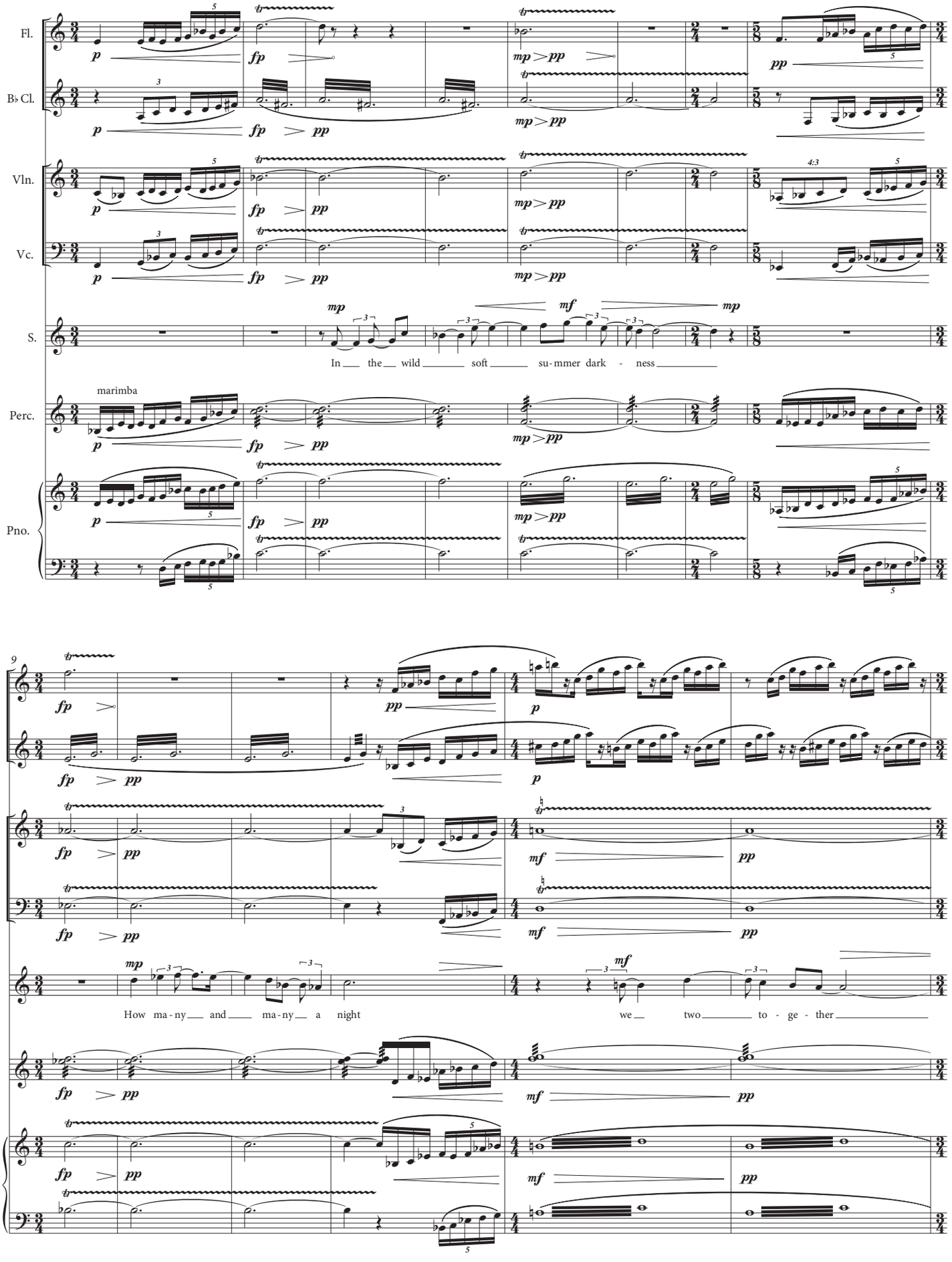

47
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
pass;
Perc.
vibes
Pno.
rall.
52
and
I
Sleep

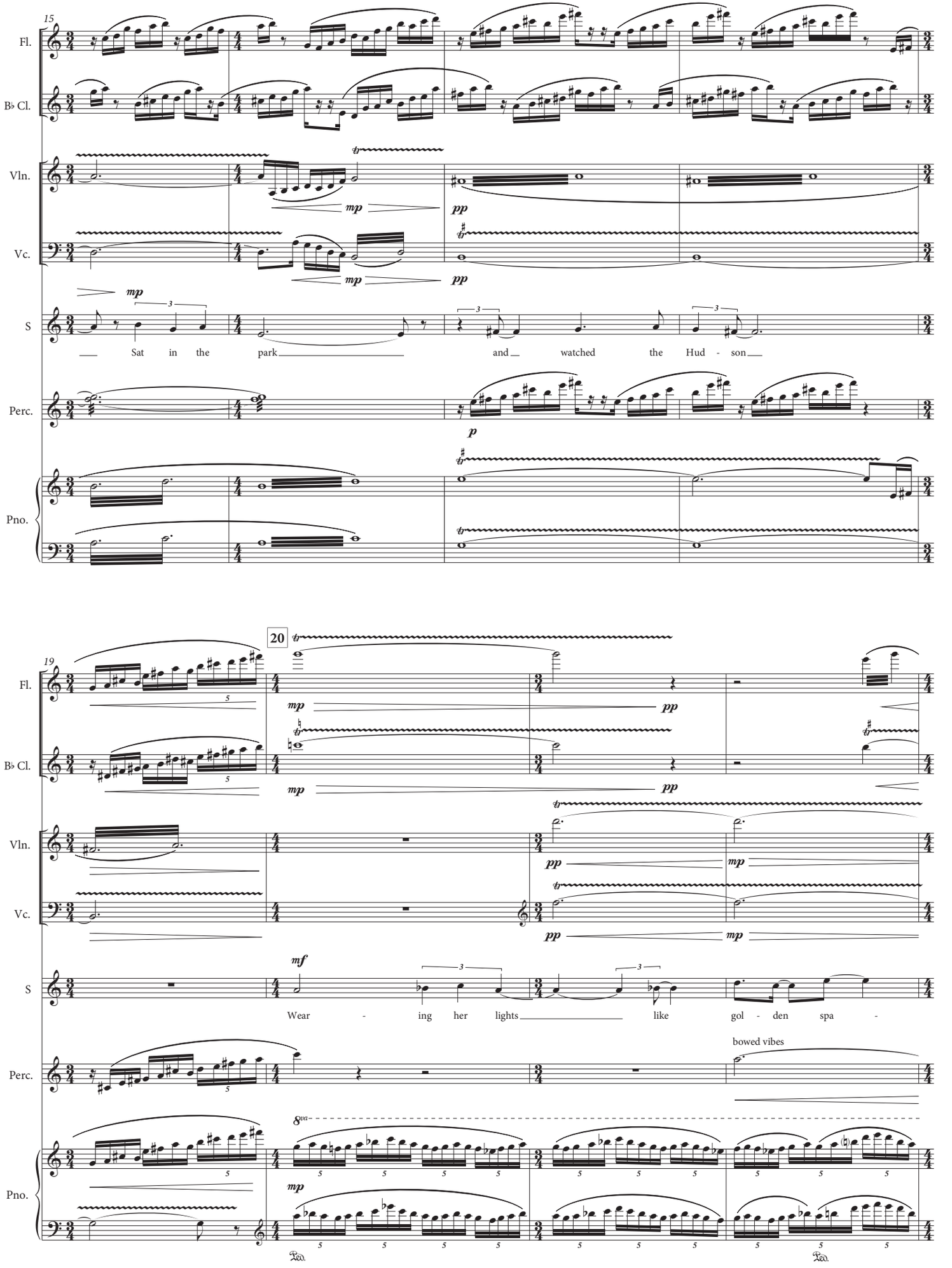

57 Tempo I, ♩ = 72
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
a - lone.
Perc.
glock.
vibes
Pno.
ord.

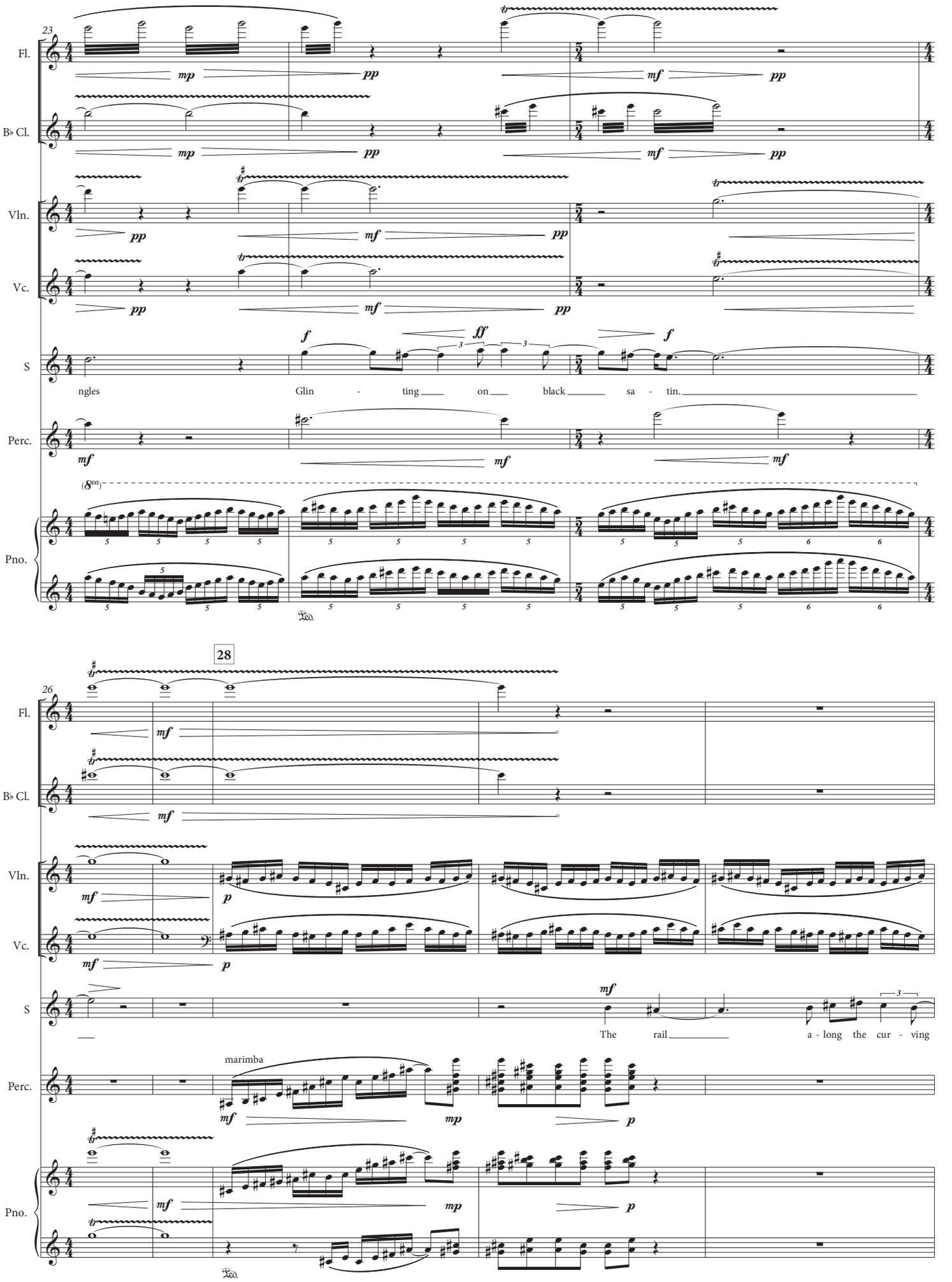
2. Summer Night, Riverside

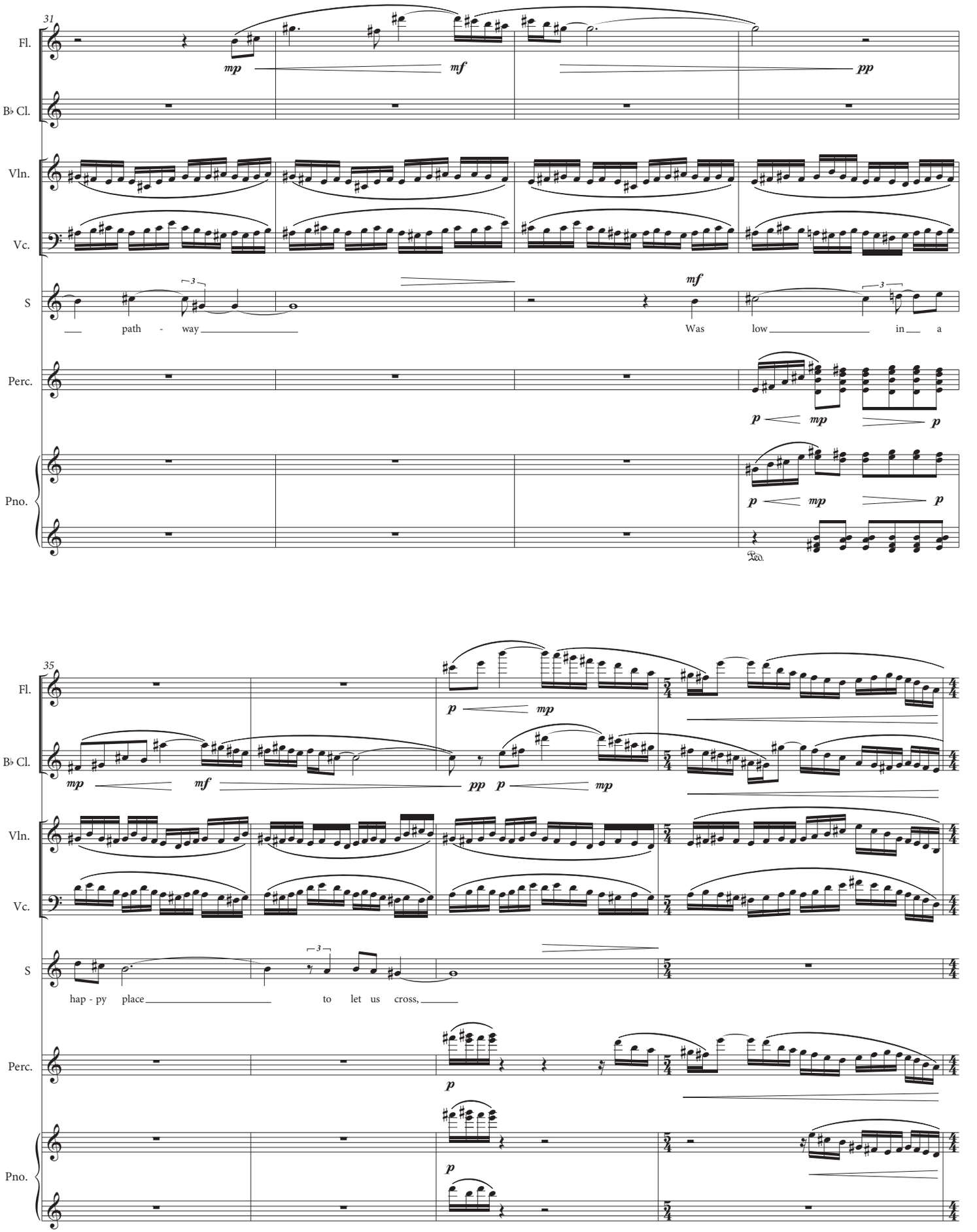
Poem by Sara Teasdale

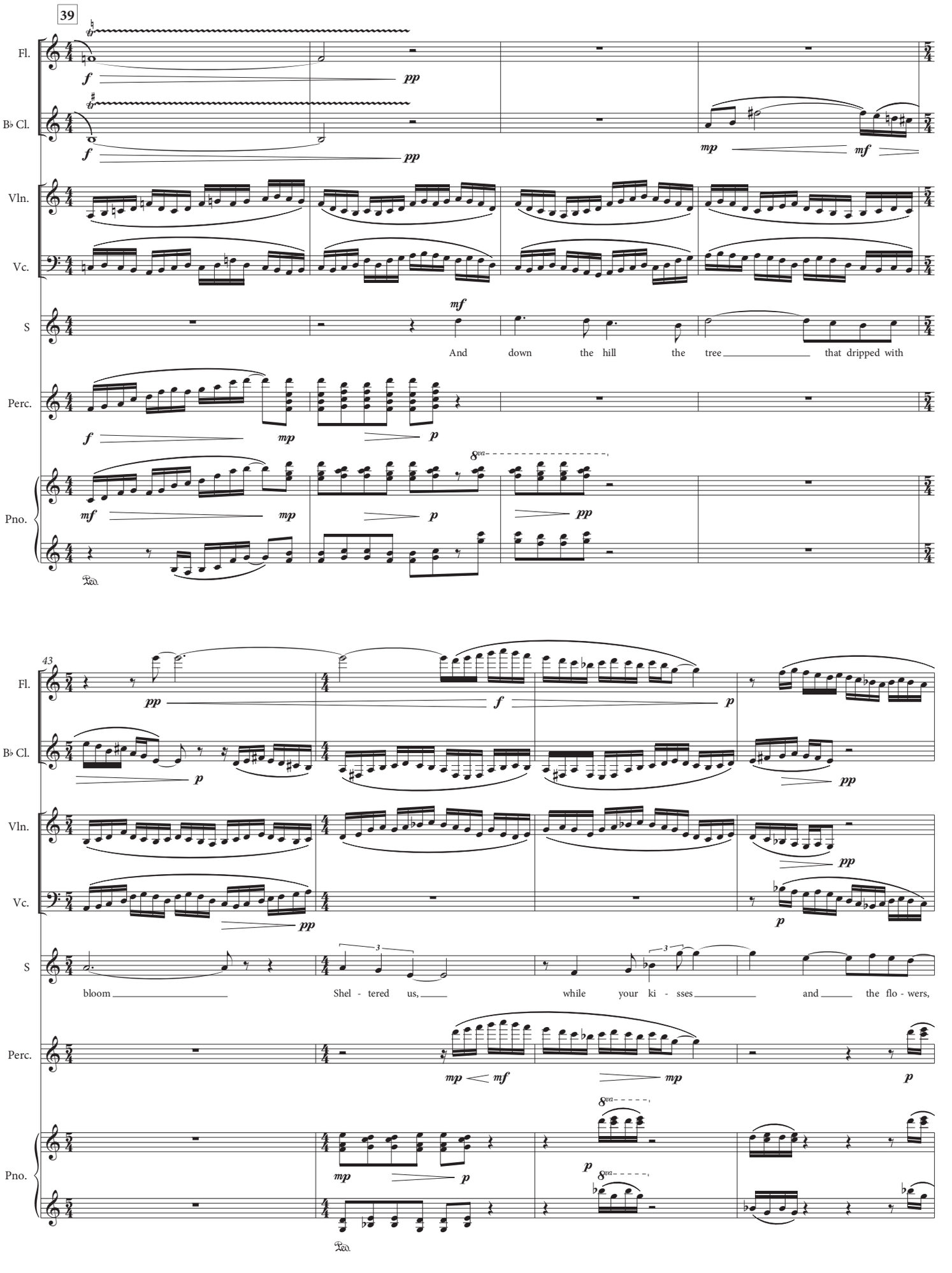
Joyful, tremulous ♩ = 100

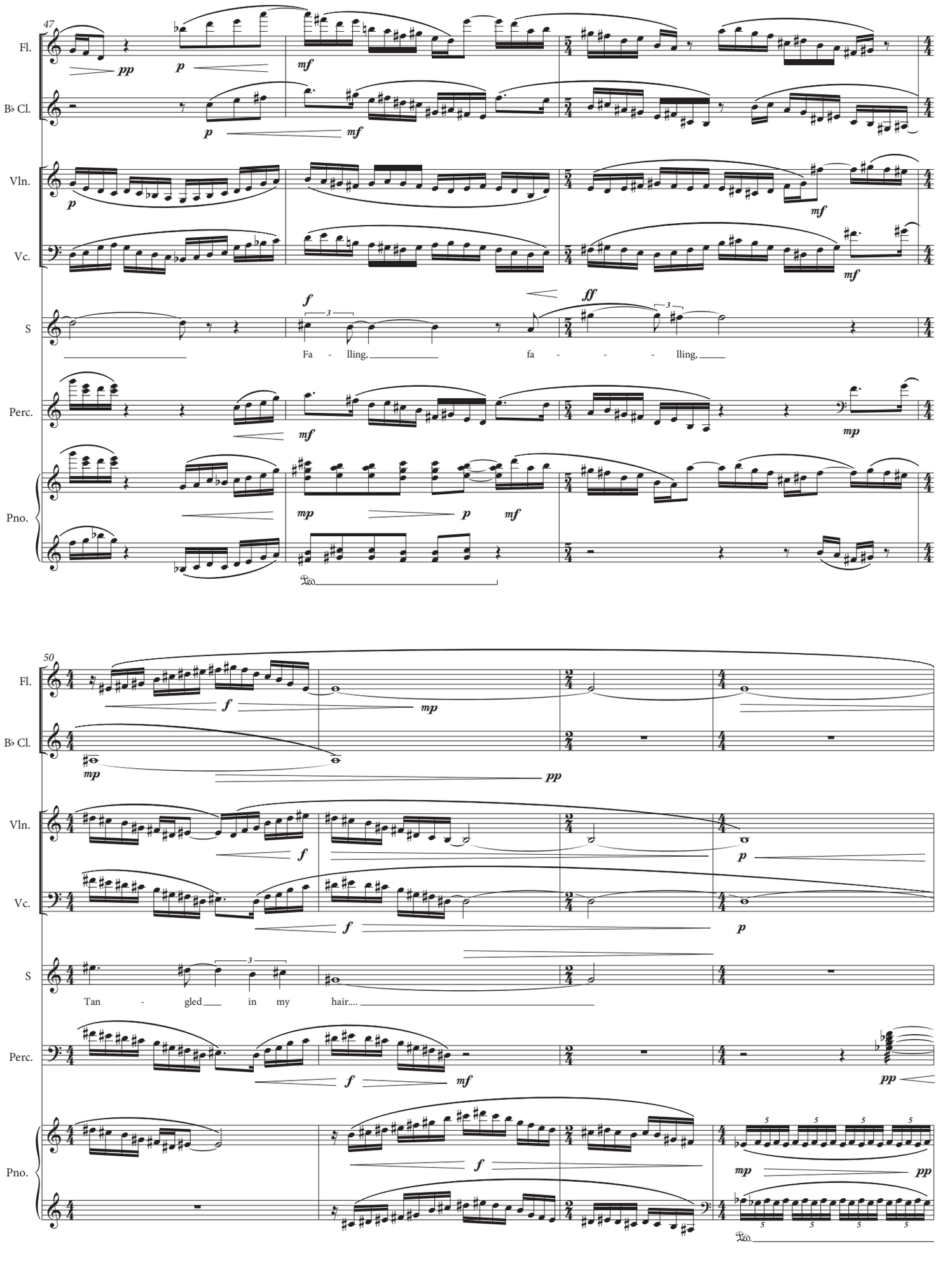


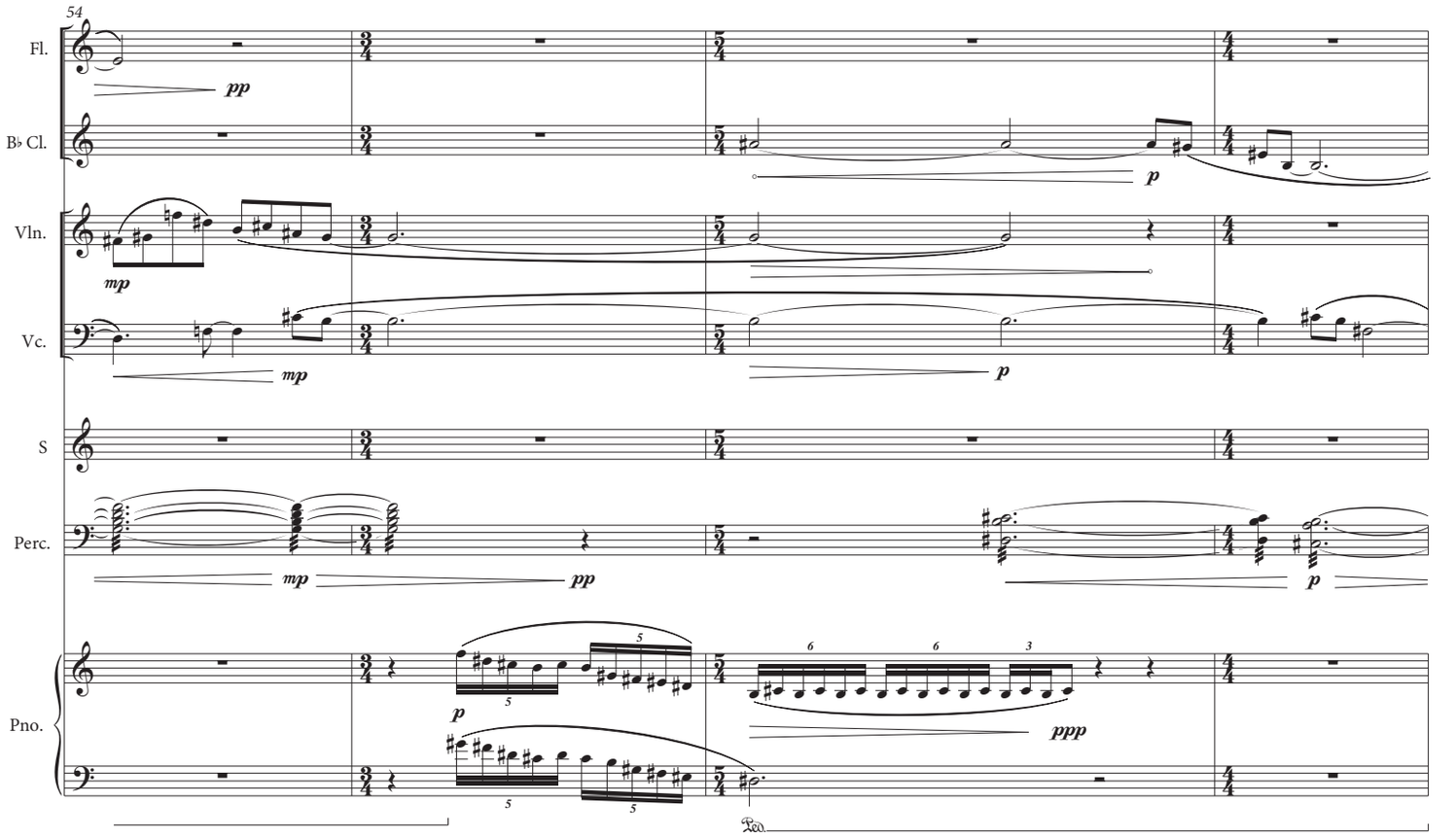

15
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
mp
pp
Sat in the park and watched the Hud - son
p
19
20
mf
Wear - ing her lights like gol - den spa -
bowed vibes
8va
Ped.

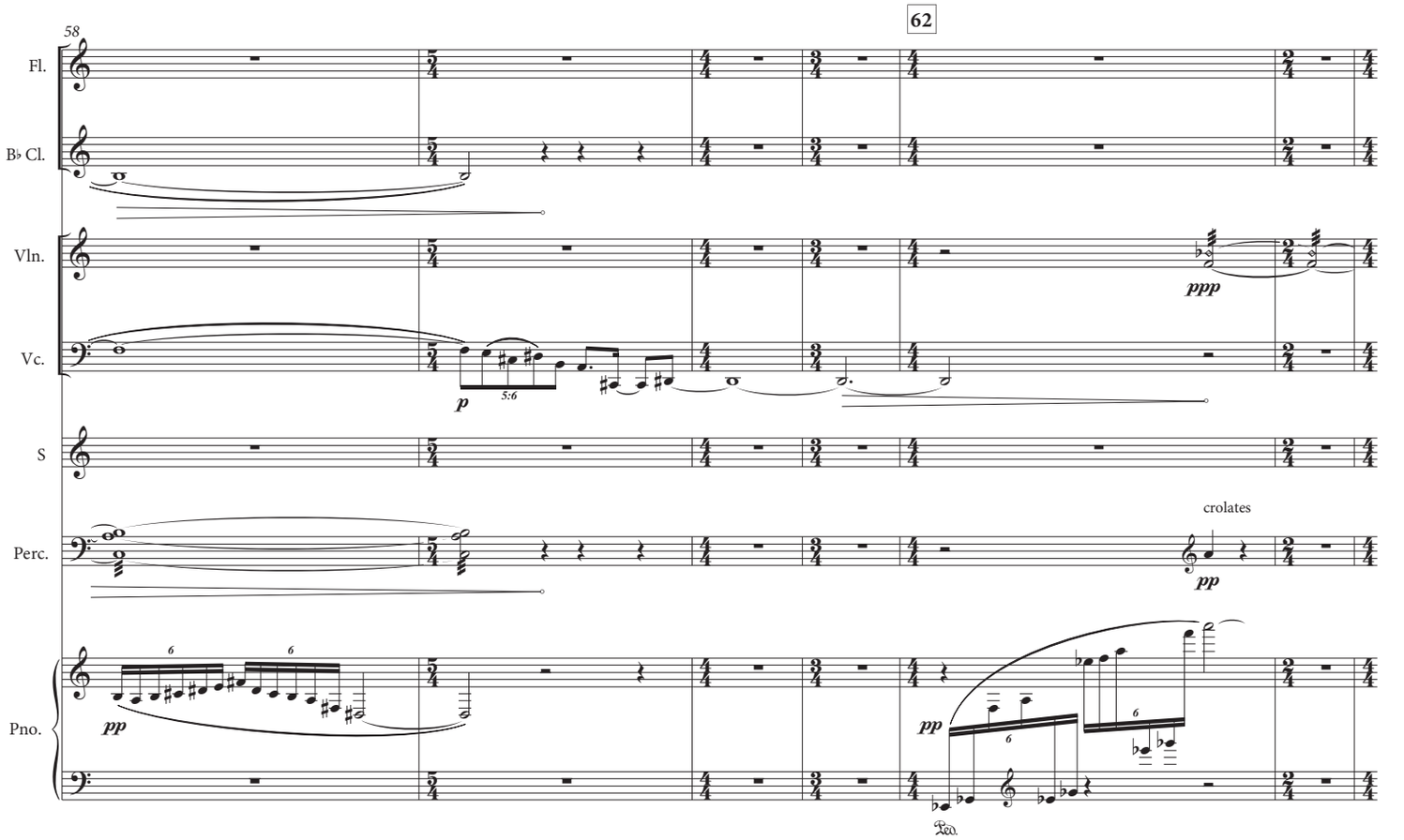

23
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
ngles
Glin - ting on black sa - tin.
Perc.
Pno.
(8va)
28
26
The rail a - long the cur - ving
marimba

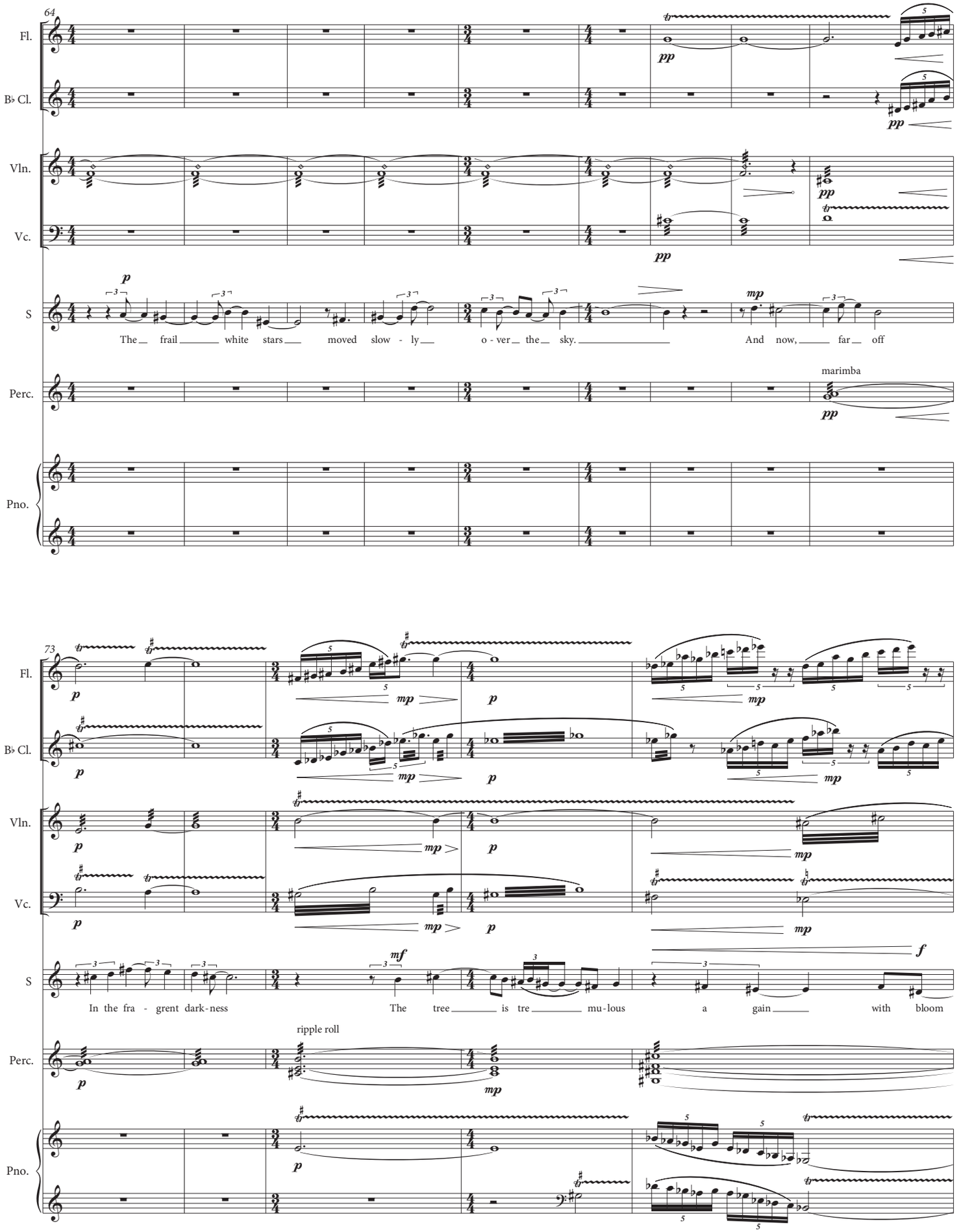

31
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
mp
mf
pp
path - way
Was low in a
35
hap - py place
to let us cross,

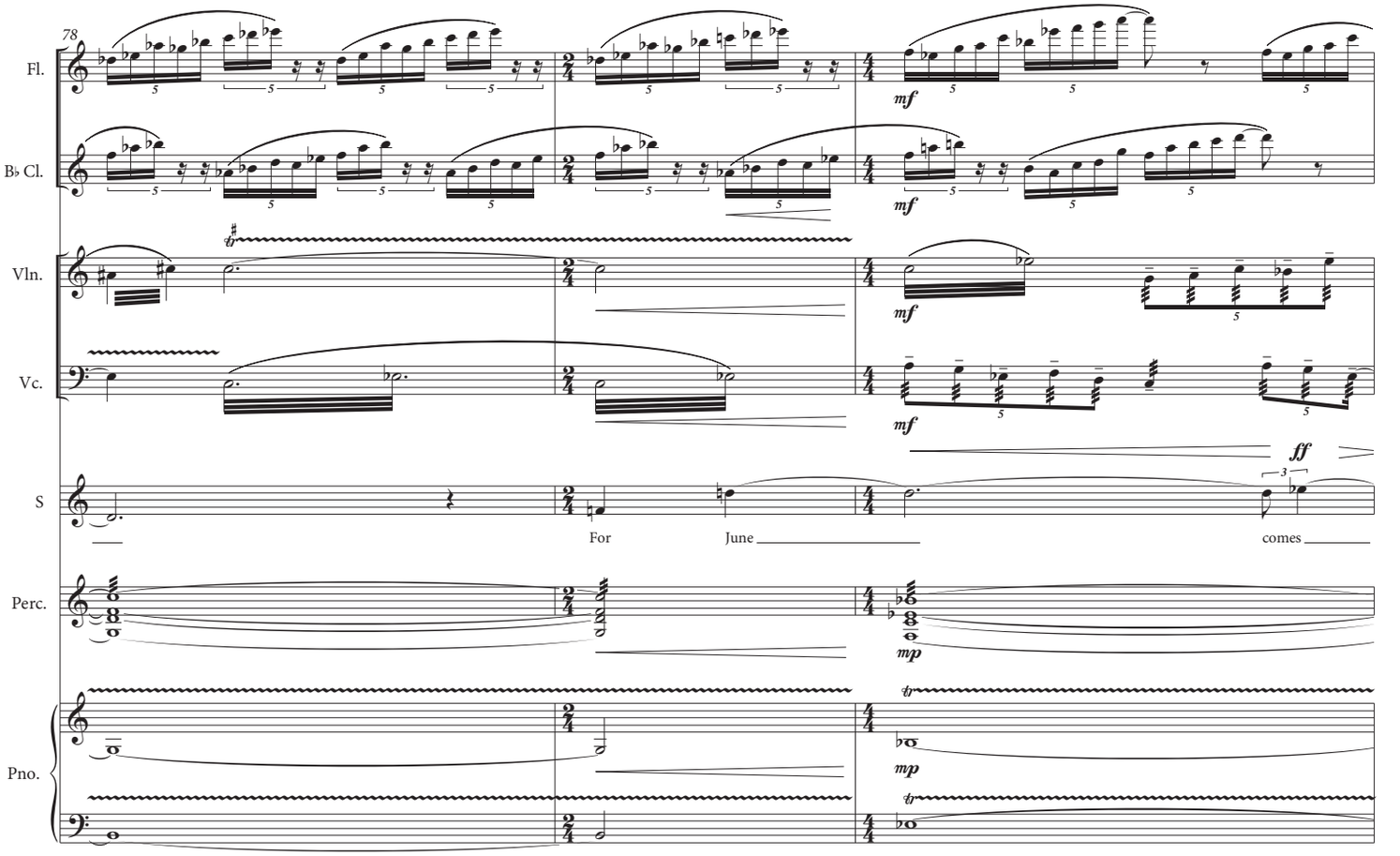

39
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
And down the hill the tree that dripped with
43
bloom Shel - tered us, while your ki - sses and the flo - wers,

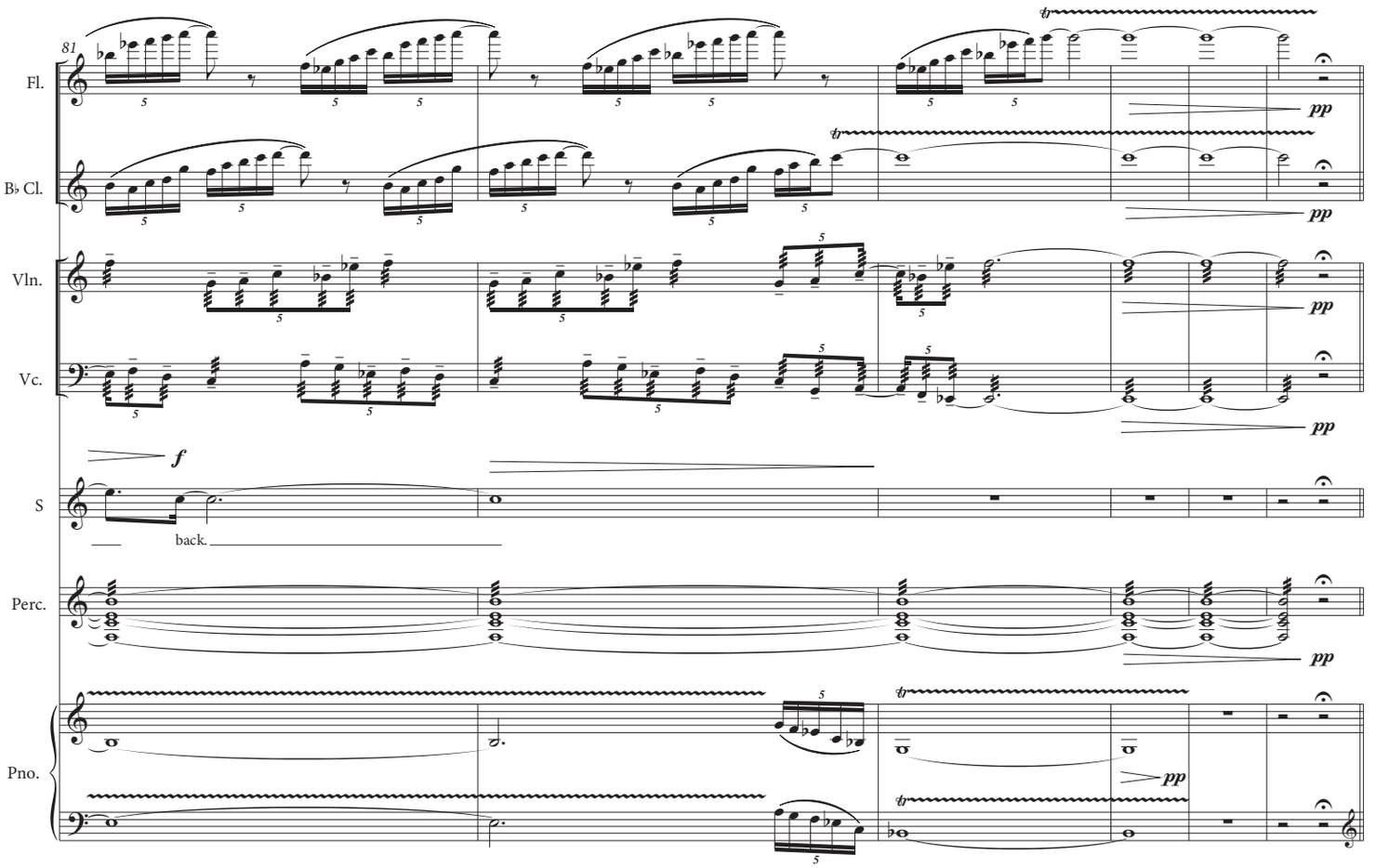

47
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
Fa - lling, fa - - - lling,
50
Tan - gled in my hair....

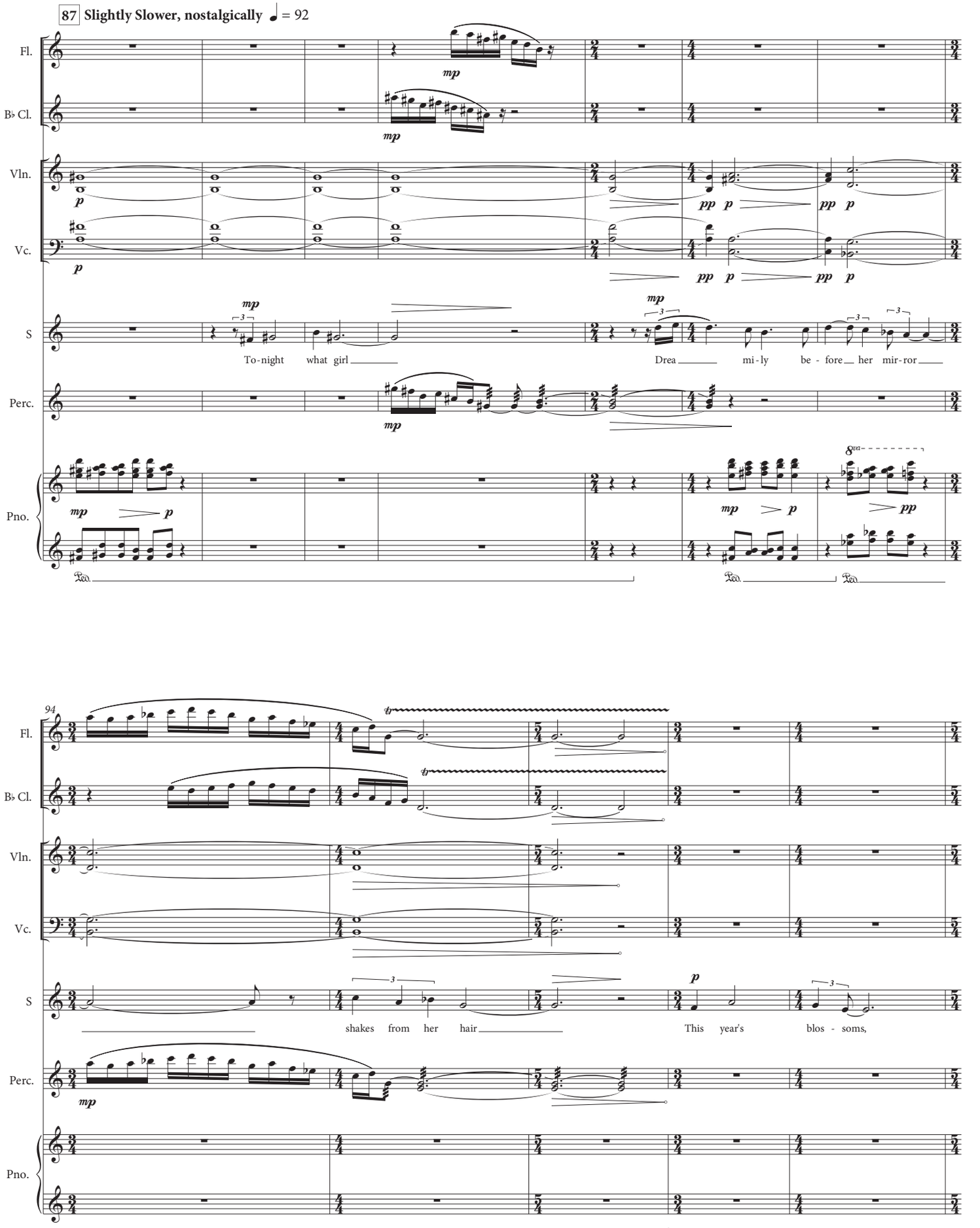

54
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
pp
mp
p
ppp

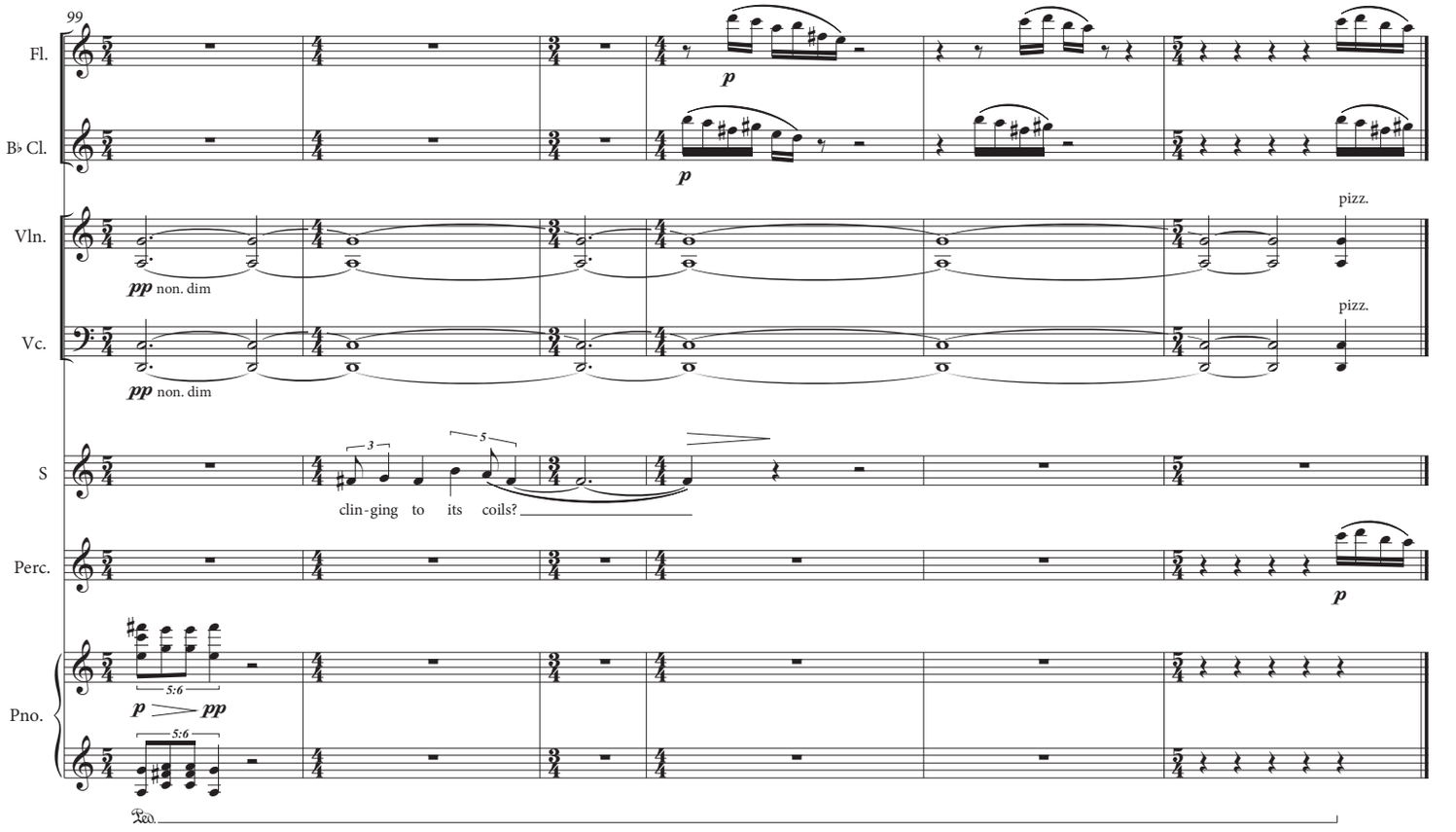

58
62
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
pp
ppp
crolates


64
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
The frail white stars moved slow - ly o - ver the sky. And now, far off
Perc.
marimba
Pno.
73
In the fra - grent dark-ness
The tree is tre mu-lous
a gain with bloom
ripple roll


78
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
mf
mf
mf
mf
ff
For
June
comes
mp
mp

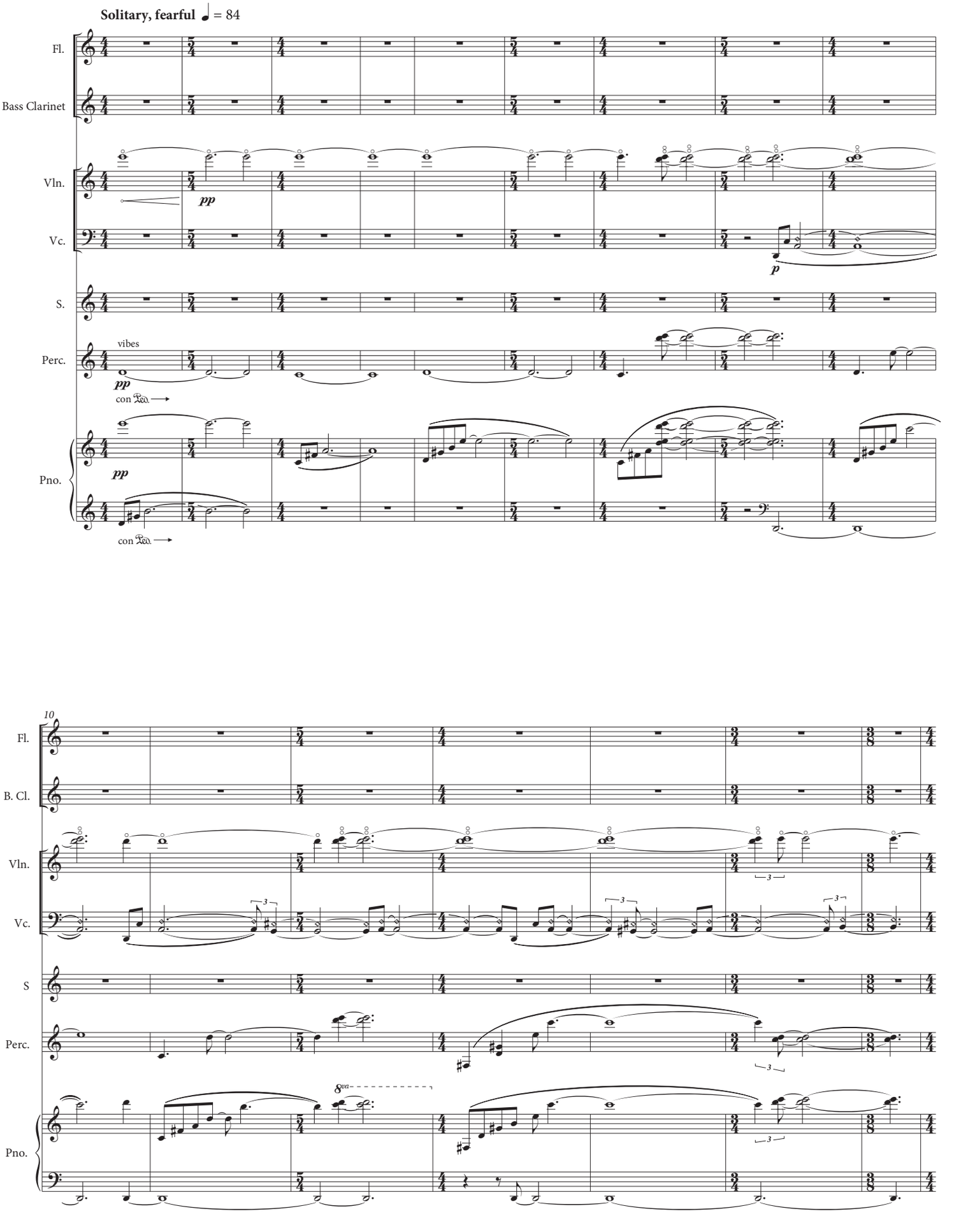

81
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
pp
pp
pp
pp
pp
f
back.

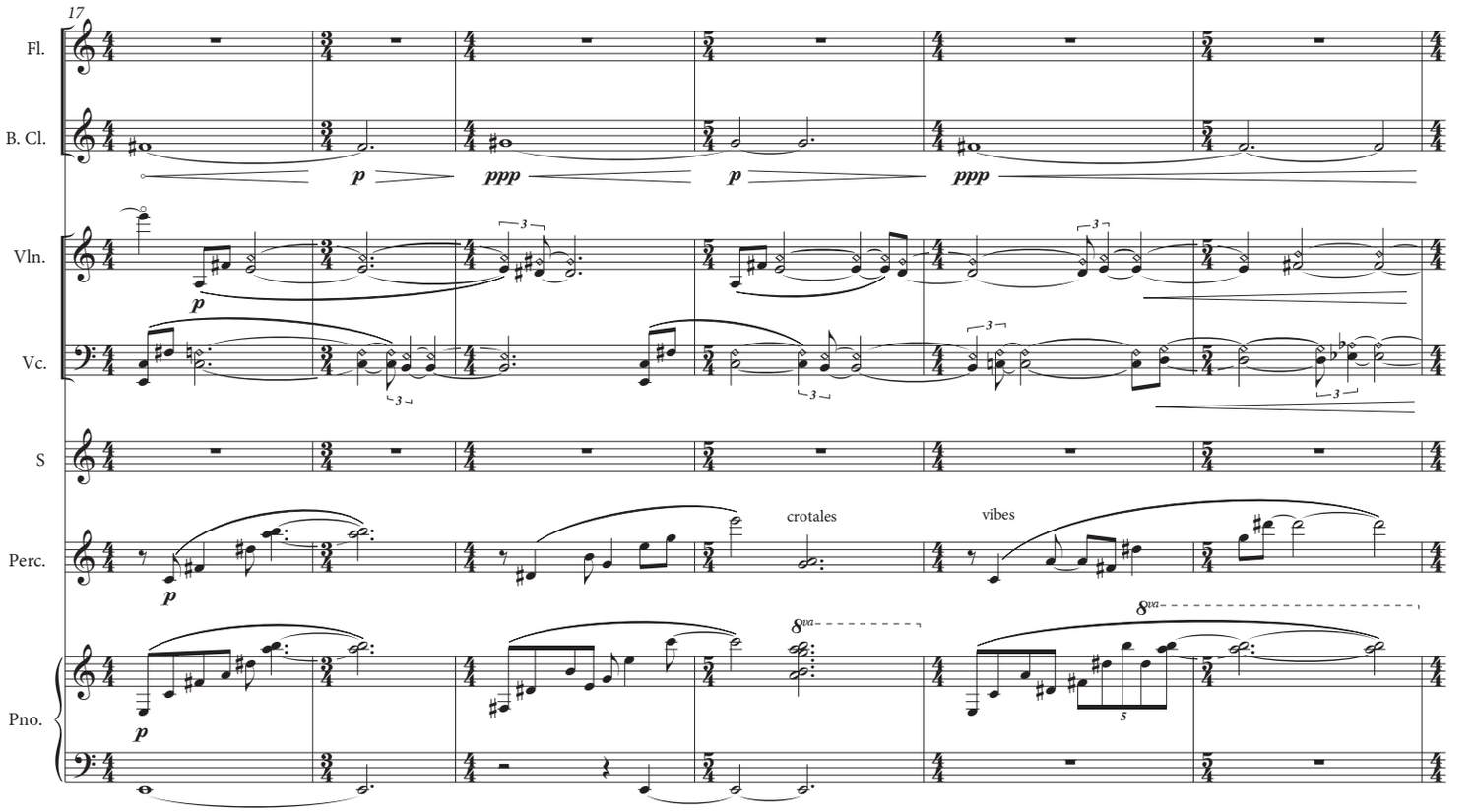

87 Slightly Slower, nostalgically ♩ = 92
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
To-night what girl
Drea mi-ly be - fore her mir-ror
Perc.
Pno.
94
shakes from her hair
This year's blos - soms,

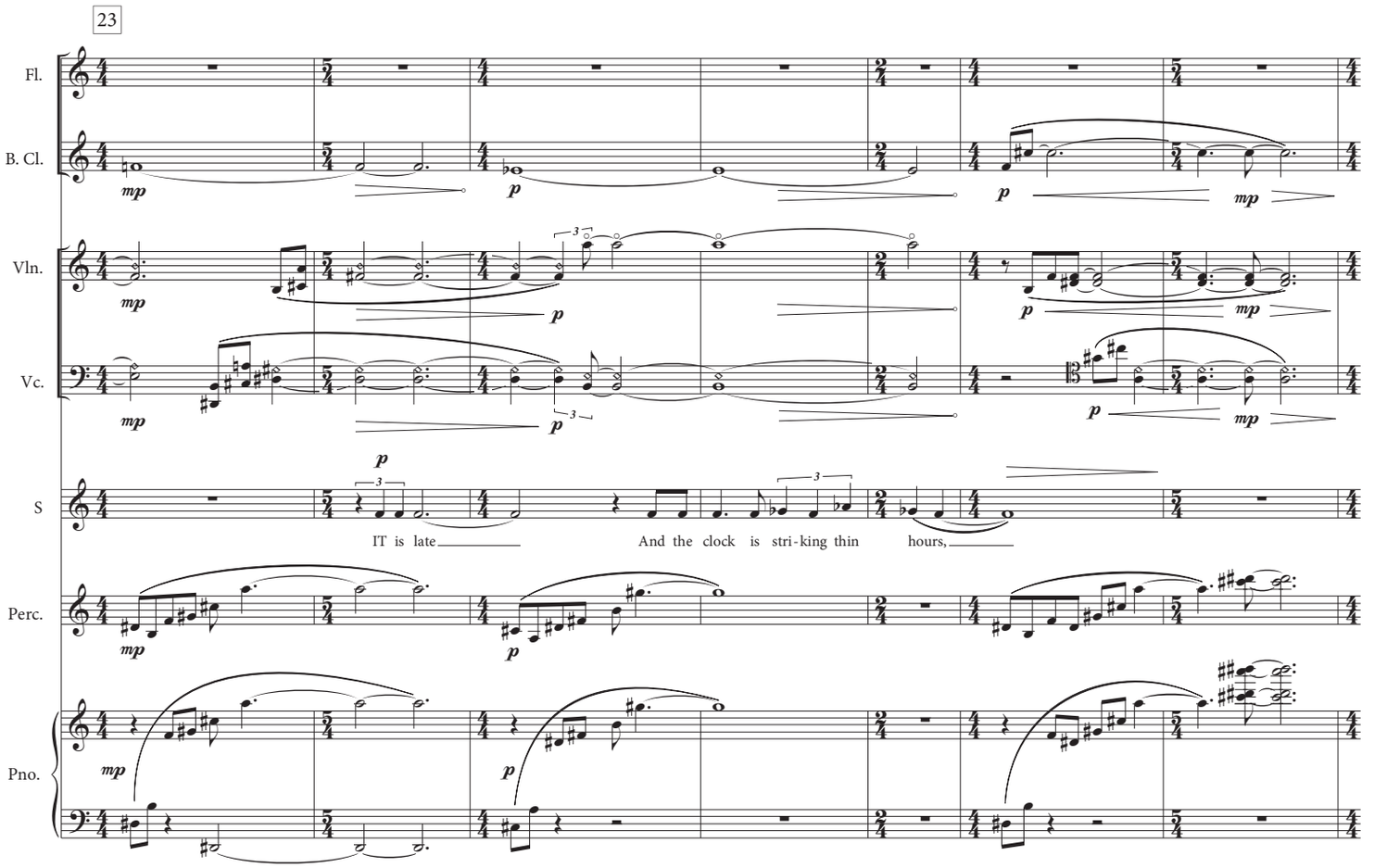

99
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
p
pp non. dim
pizz.
clin-ging to its coils?
5:6

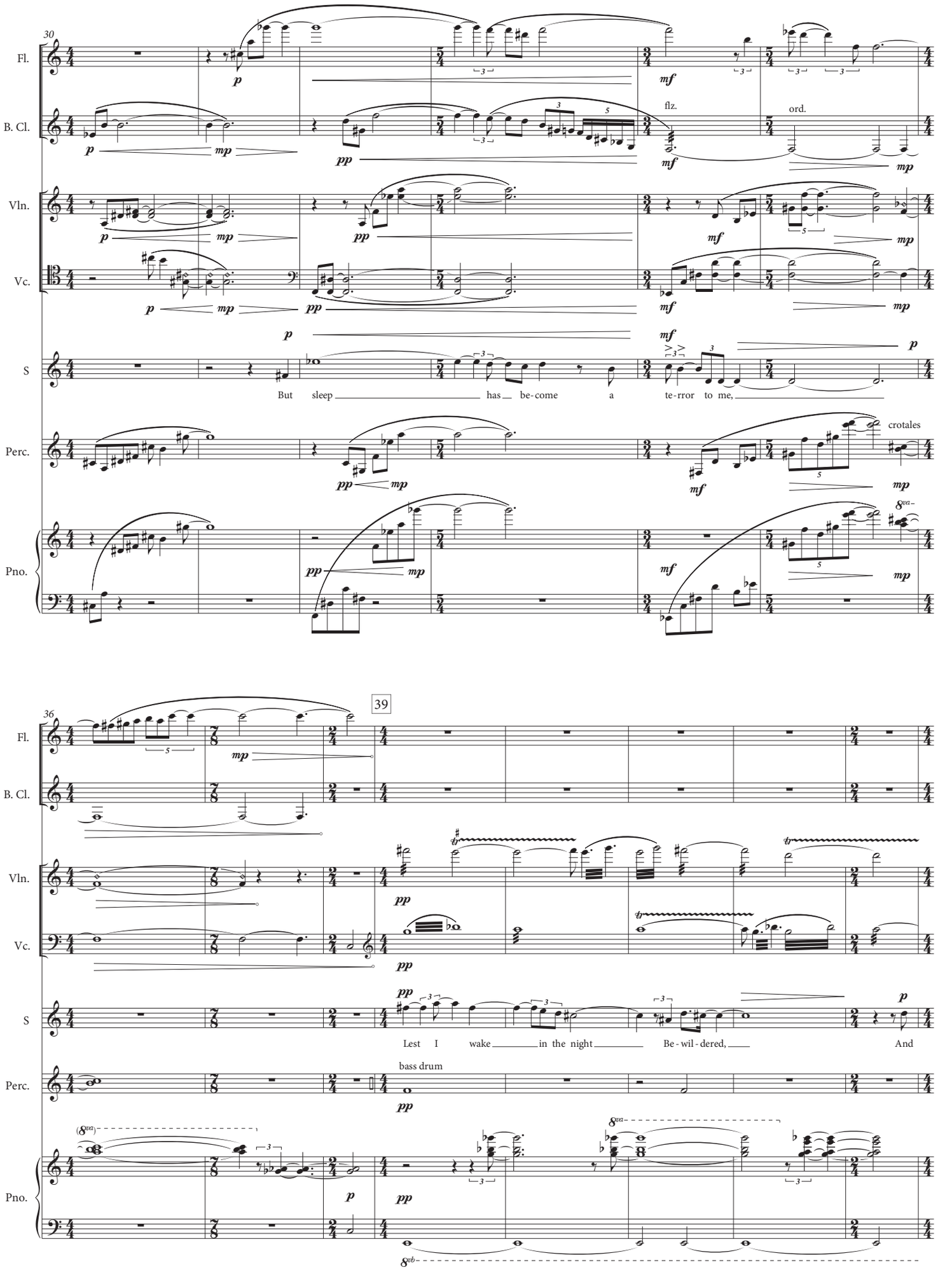
Poem by Amy Lowell

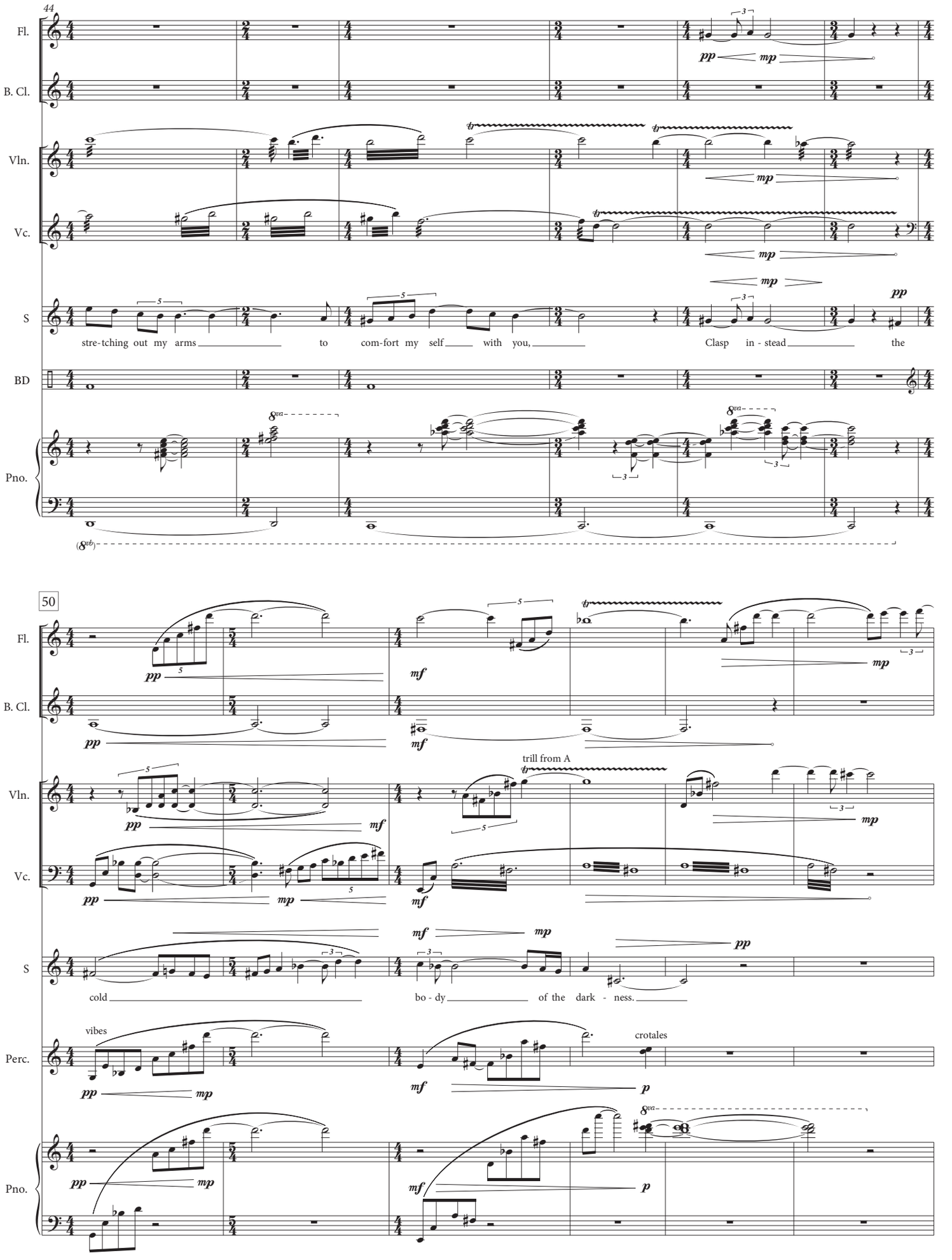
3. Strain

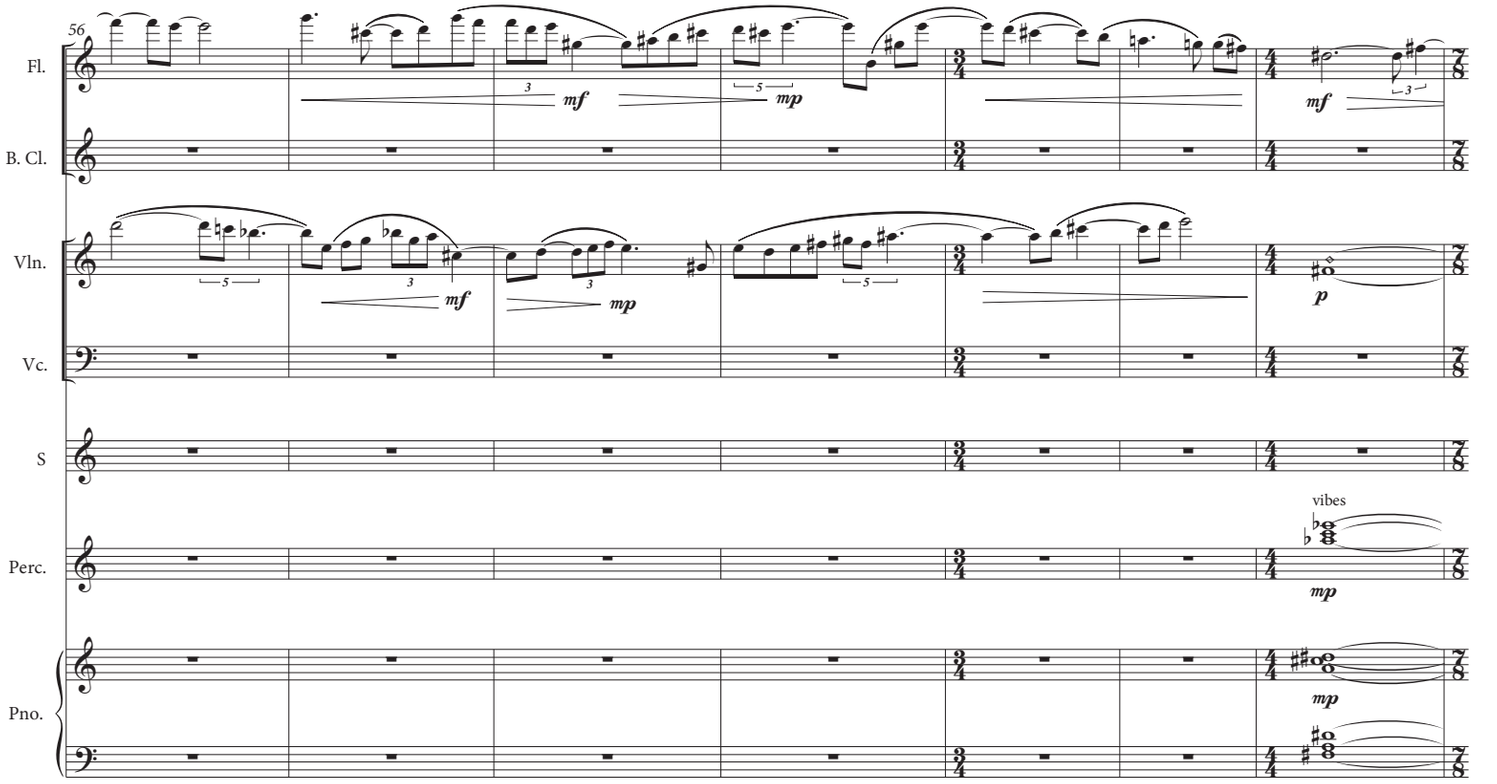


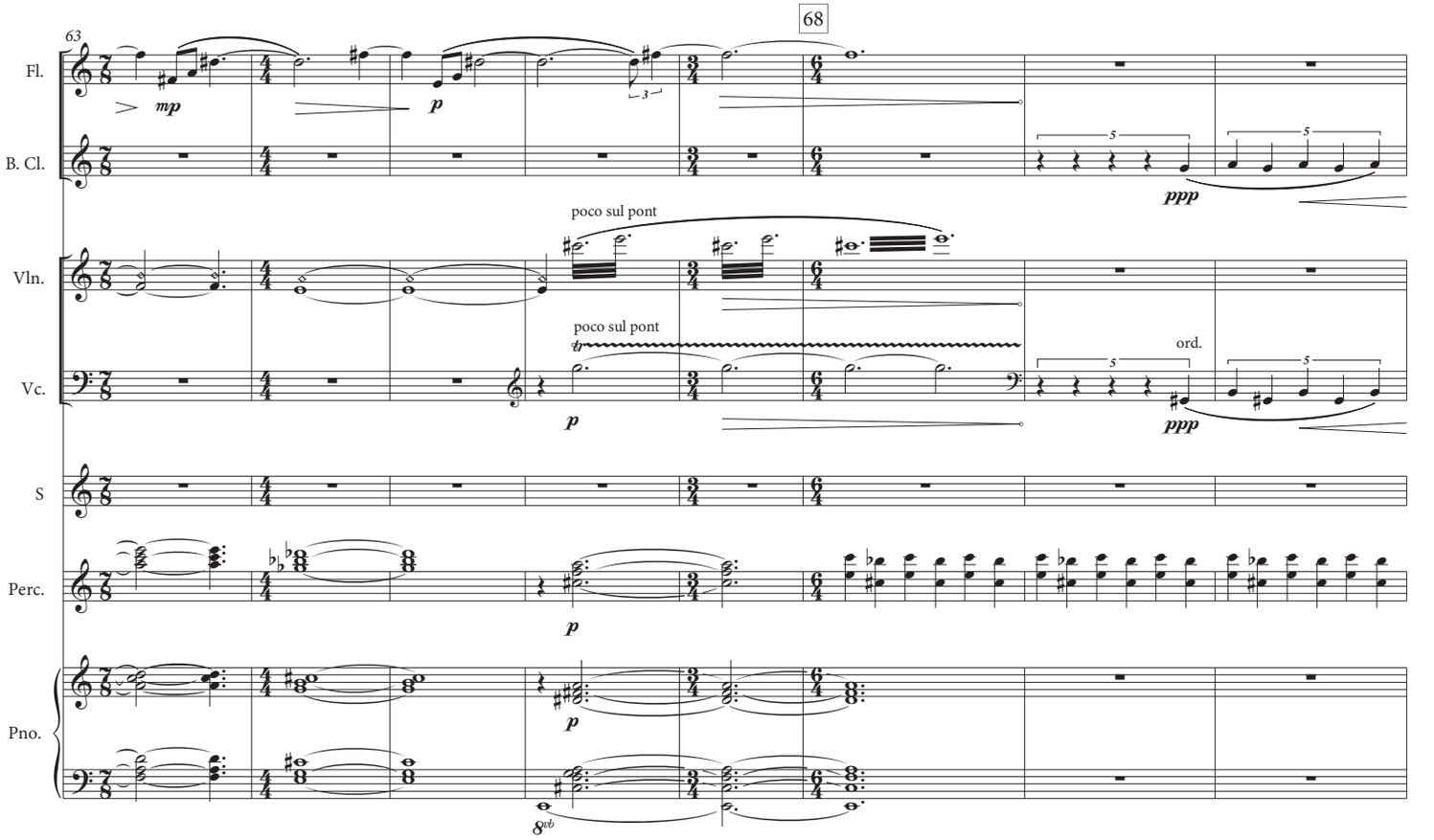

17
Fl.
B. Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
crotales
vibes

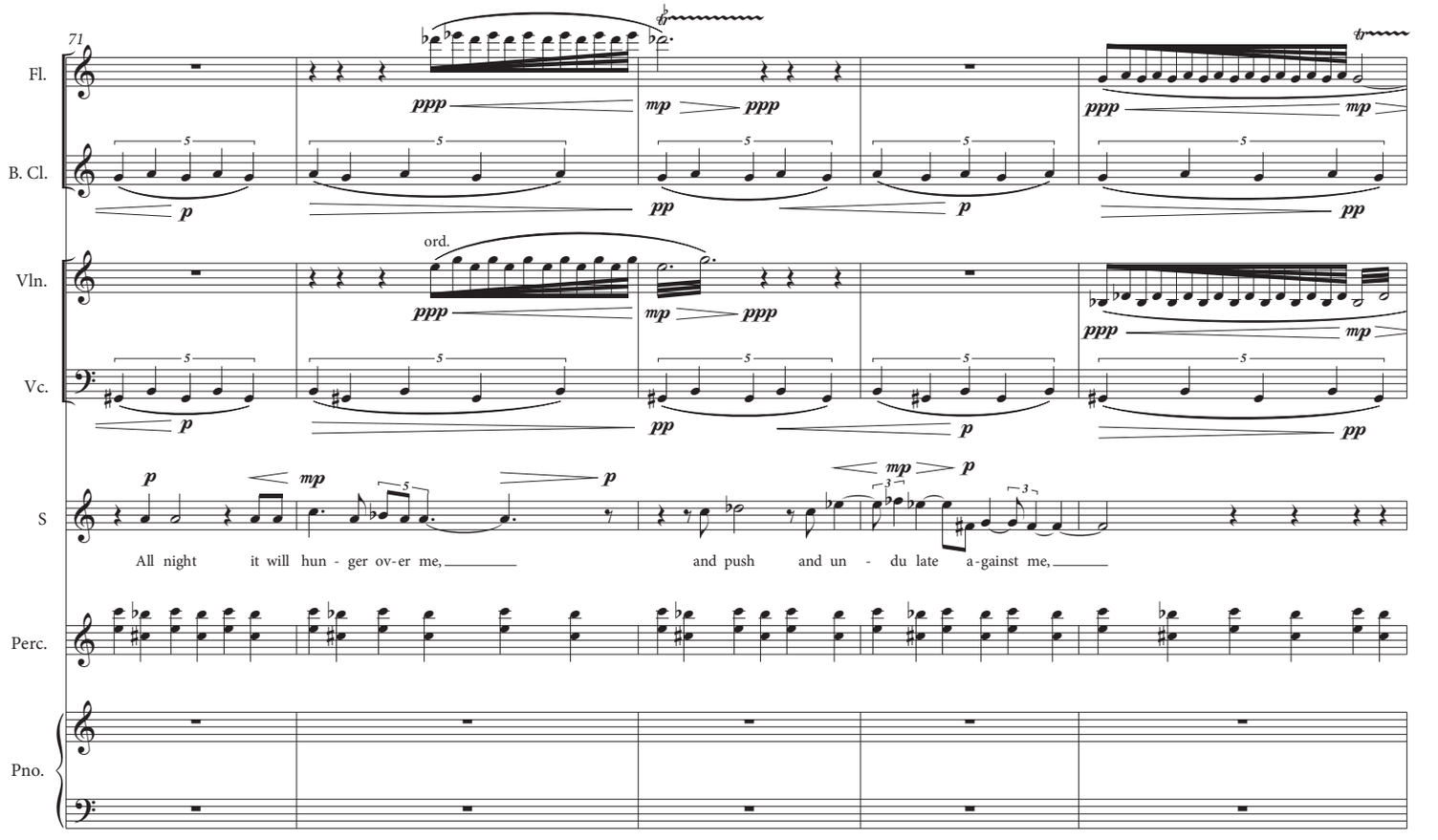

23
Fl.
B. Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
IT is late
And the clock is stri-king thin
hours,
Perc.
Pno.

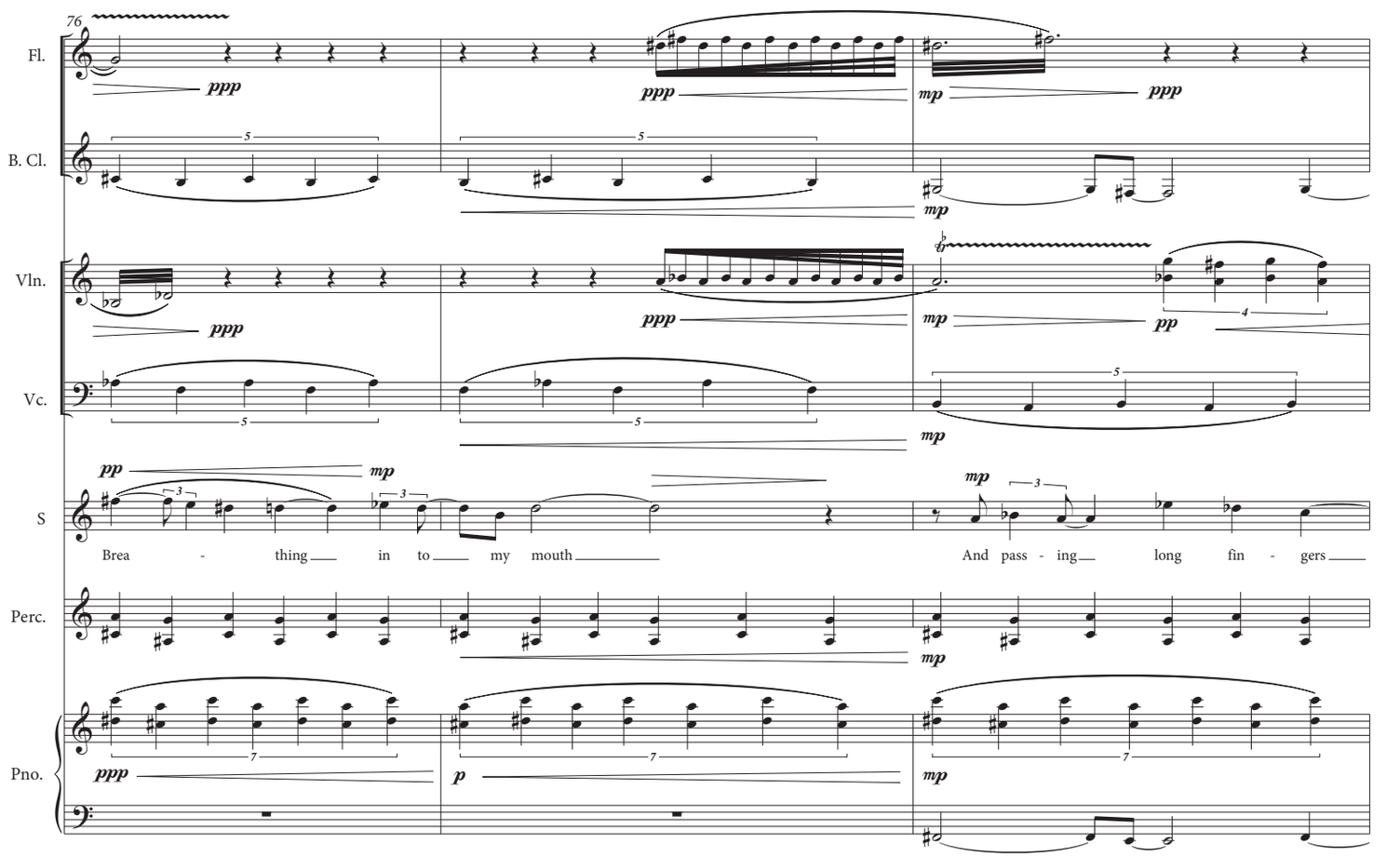

30
Fl.
B. Cl.
flz.
ord.
Vln.
Vc.
S
But sleep has be-come a te-rror to me,
Perc.
crotales
Pno.
36
39
Lest I wake in the night Be-wil-dered, And
bass drum

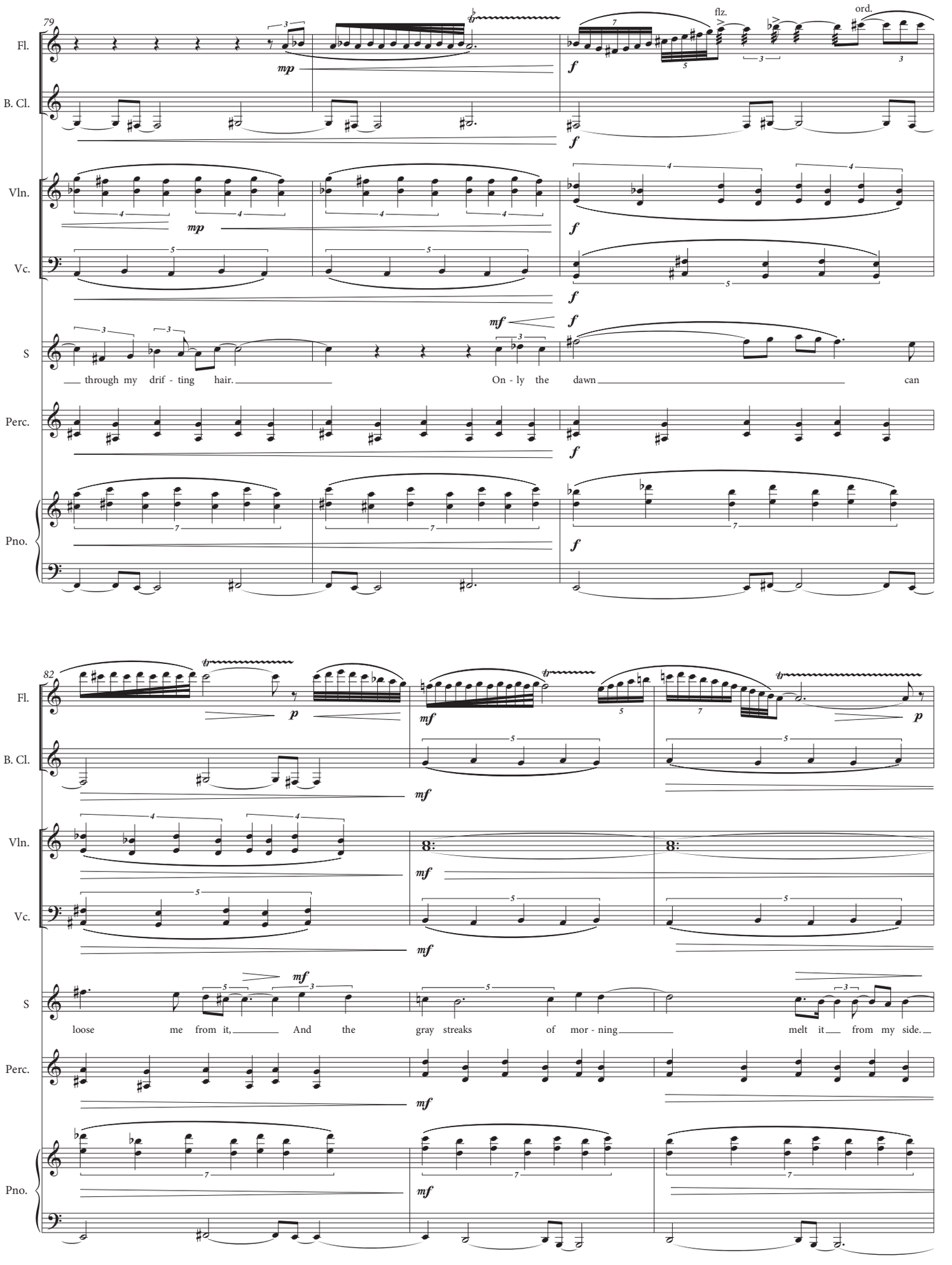

44
Fl.
B. Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
stre-tching out my arms to com-fort my self with you, Clasp in - stead the
BD
Pno.
50
trill from A
cold bo - dy of the dark - ness.
vibes
crotales

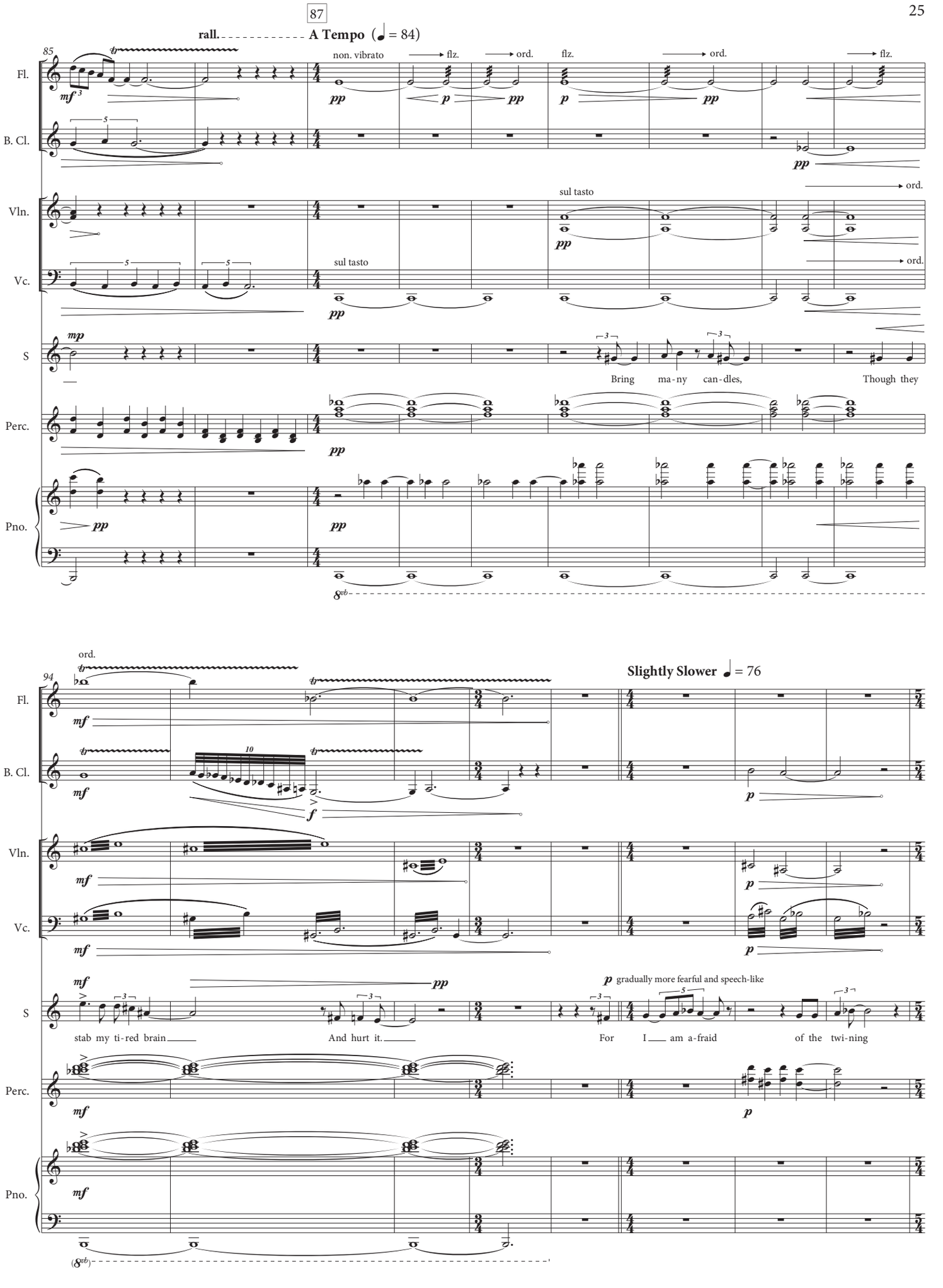

56
Fl.
B. Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
vibes
mf
mp
p

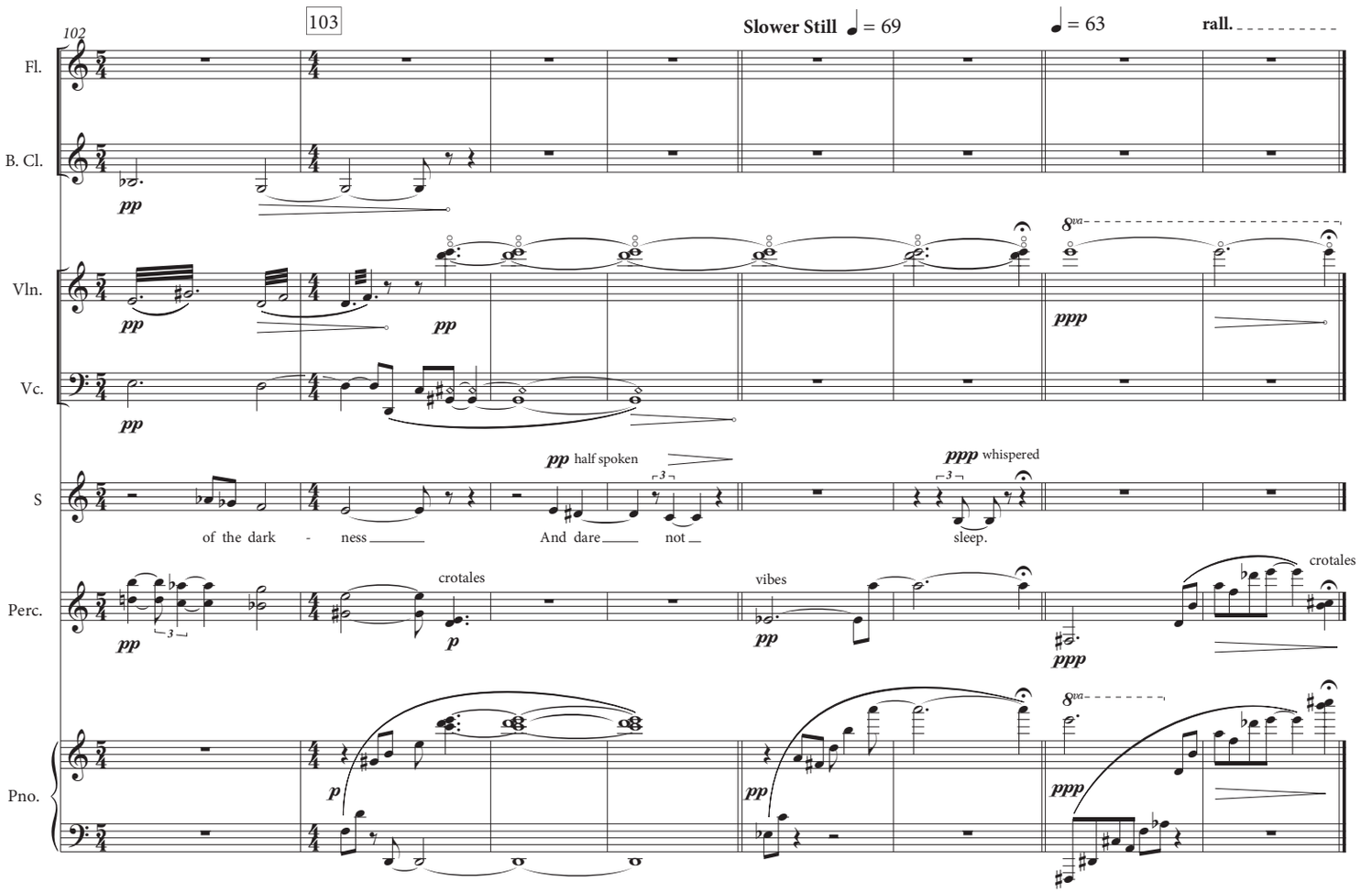

63
68
Fl.
B. Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
poco sul pont
poco sul pont
ord.
mp
p
ppp
8vb


71
Fl.
B. Cl.
Vln.
ord.
Vc.
S
All night it will hun - ger ov-er me,
and push and un - du late a-gainst me,
Perc.
Pno.


76
Fl.
B. Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Brea - thing in to my mouth
And pass - ing long fin - gers
Perc.
Pno.


79
Fl.
B. Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
mp
f
flz.
ord.
mf
through my drif - ting hair.
On - ly the dawn
can
82
p
loose me from it,
And the gray streaks of mor - ning
melt it from my side.

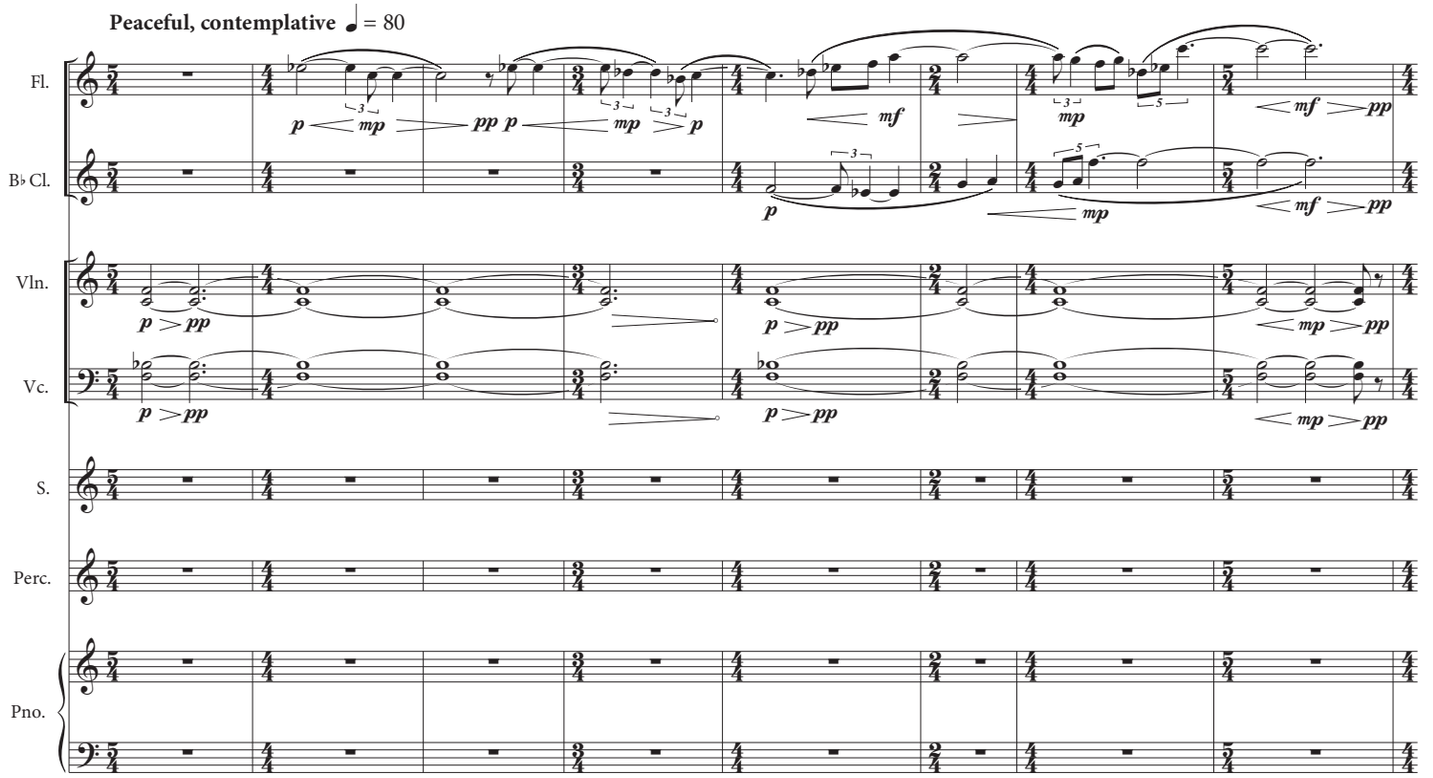

87
rall.
A Tempo (♩ = 84)
85
Fl.
B. Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
non. vibrato
flz.
ord.
sul tasto
Bring ma-ny can-dles,
Though they
94
Slightly Slower ♩ = 76
stab my ti-red brain
And hurt it.
For I am a-fraid
of the twi-ning
gradually more fearful and speech-like

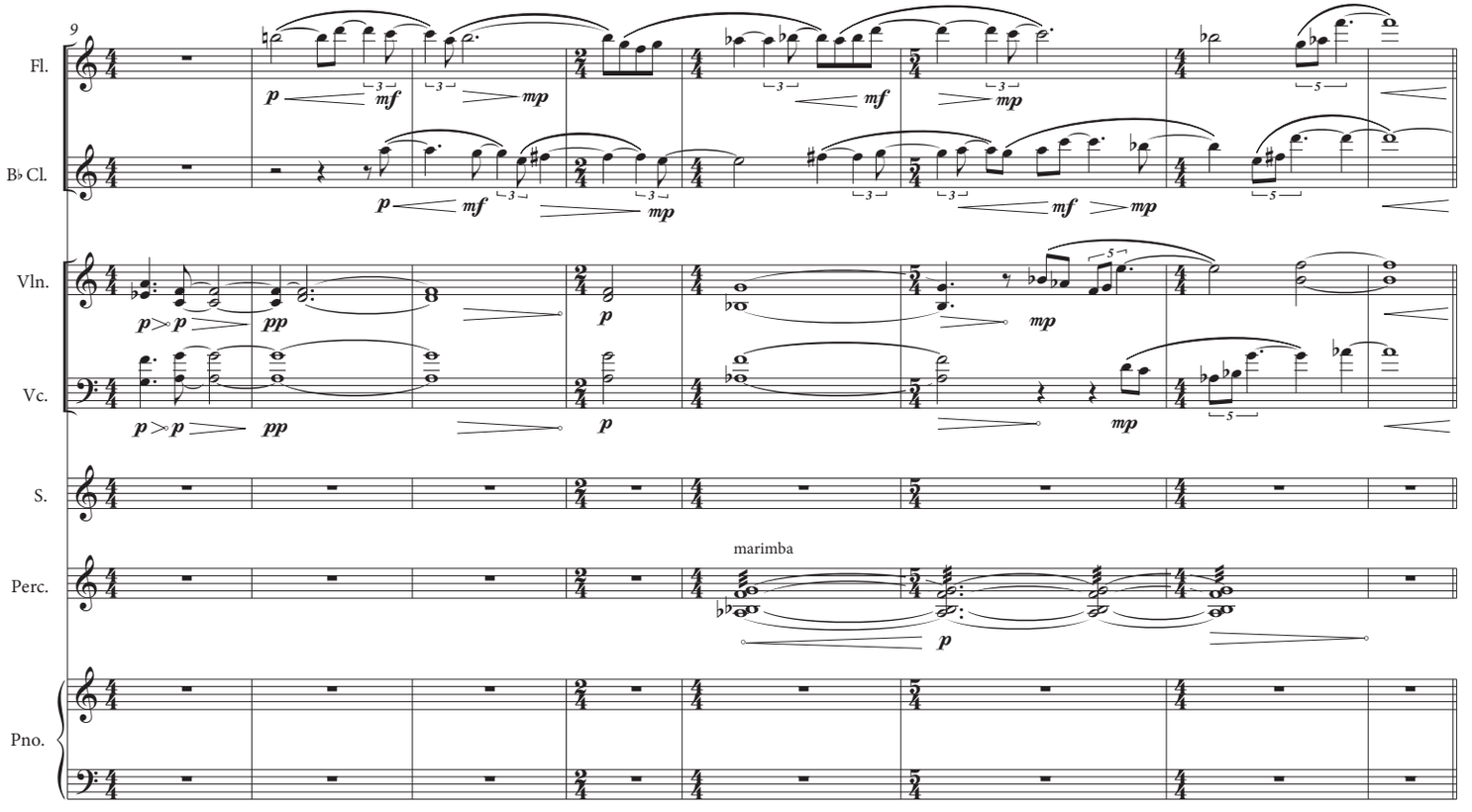

102
103
Slower Still ♩ = 69
♩ = 63
rall.
Fl.
B. Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S
Perc.
Pno.
pp
ppp
8va
pp half spoken
ppp whispered
of the dark - ness
And dare not
sleep.
crotales
vibes
p

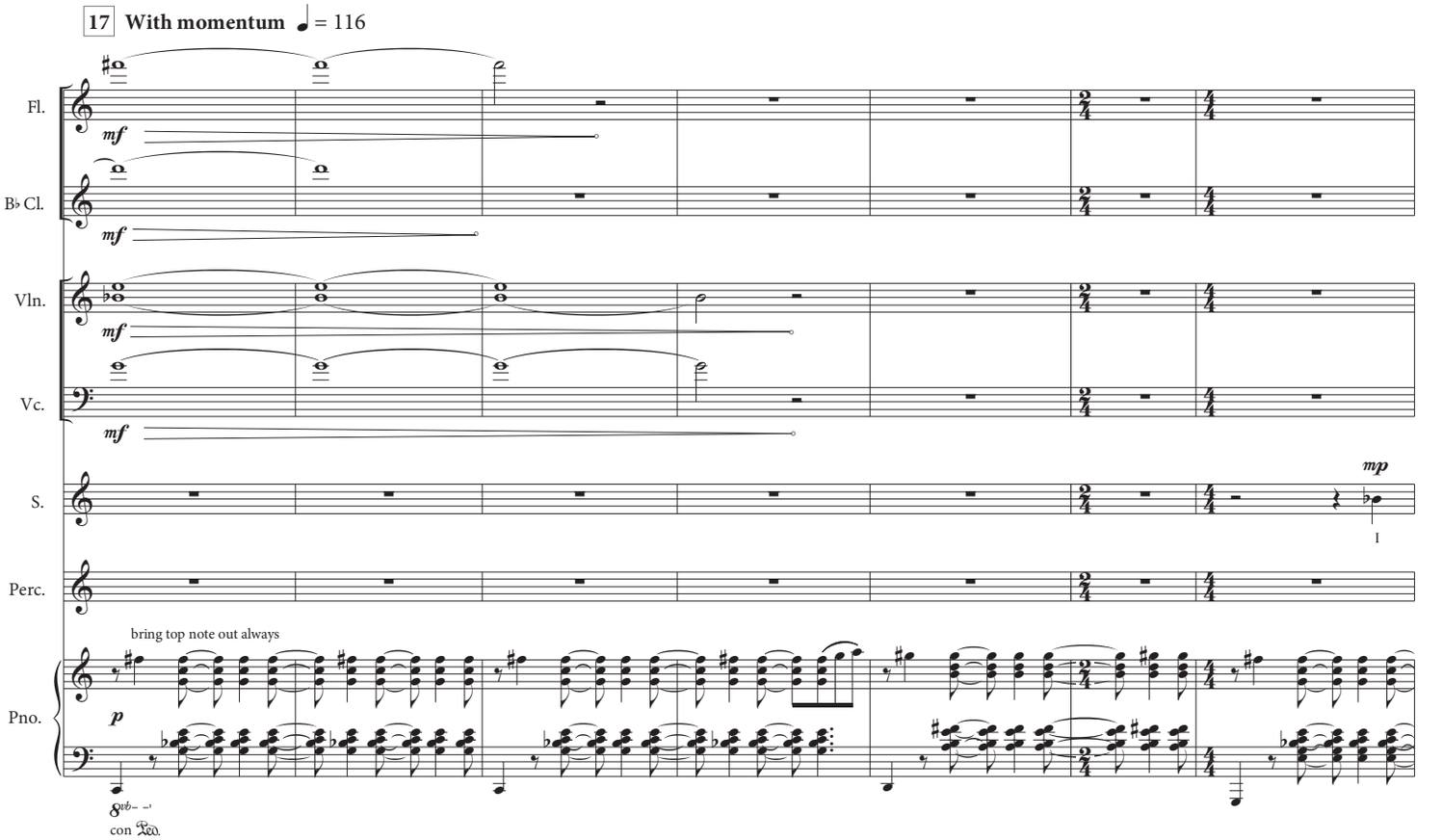
4. The Sleepers

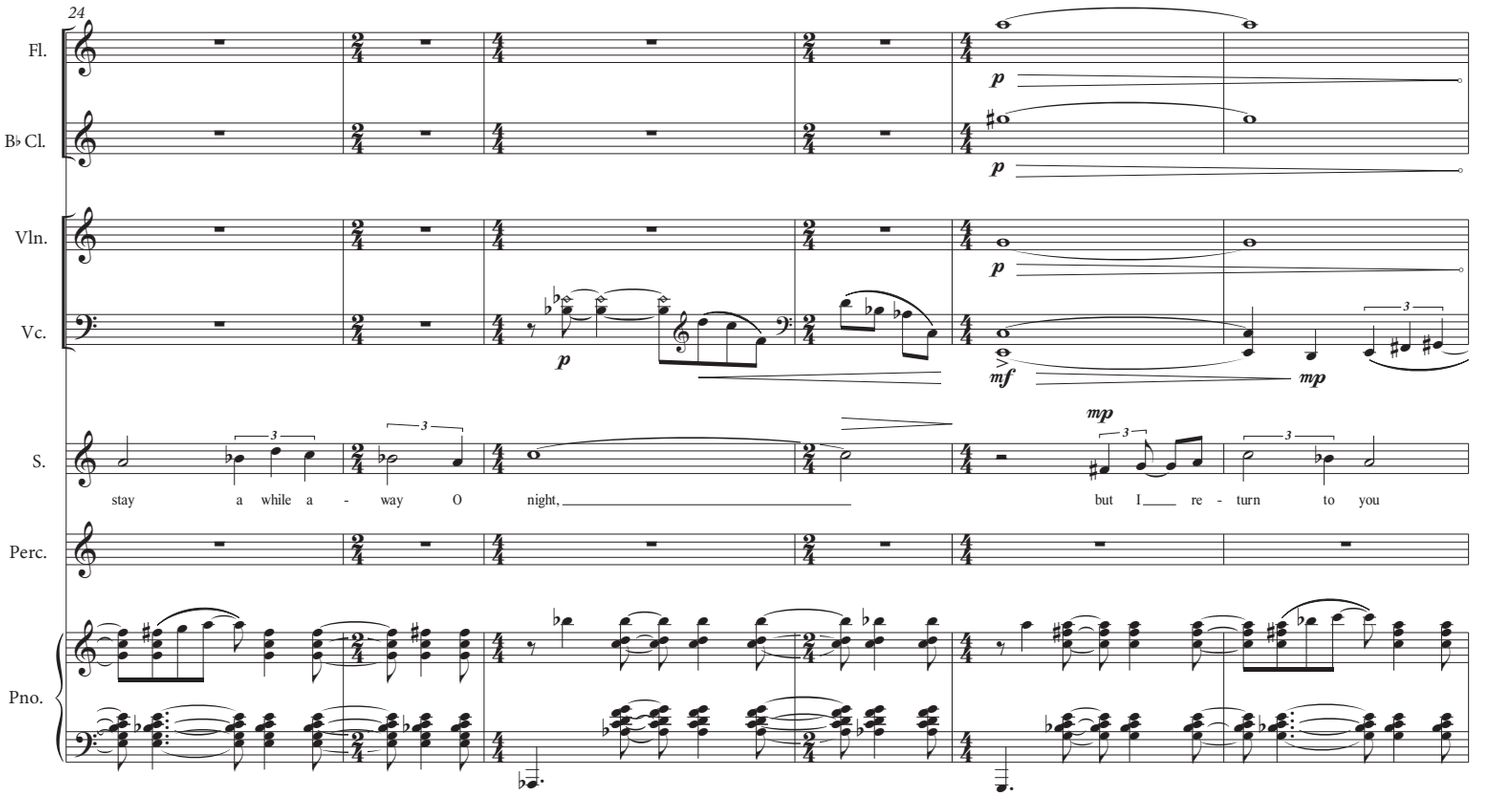
Poem by Walt Whitman

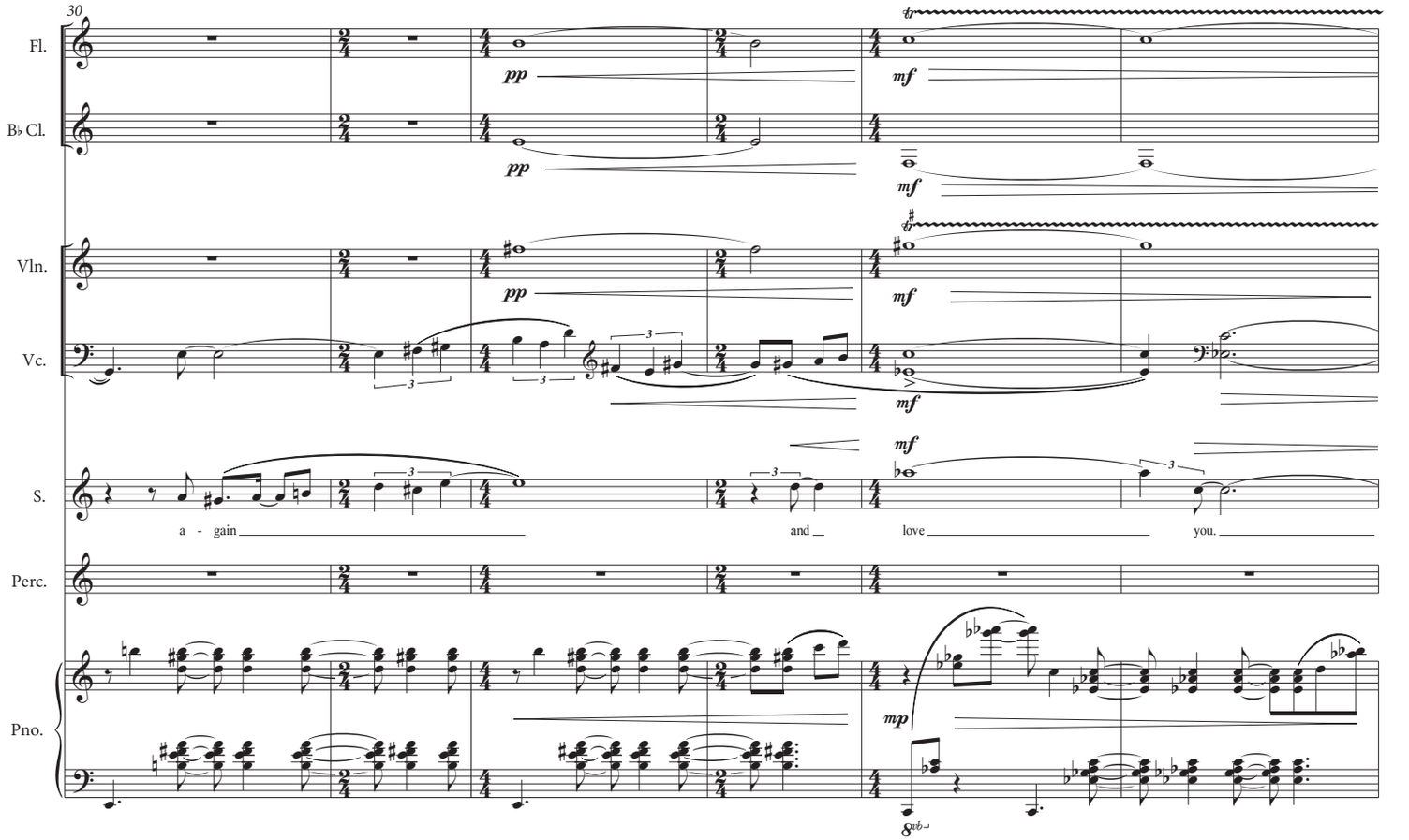
Peaceful, contemplative ♩ = 80

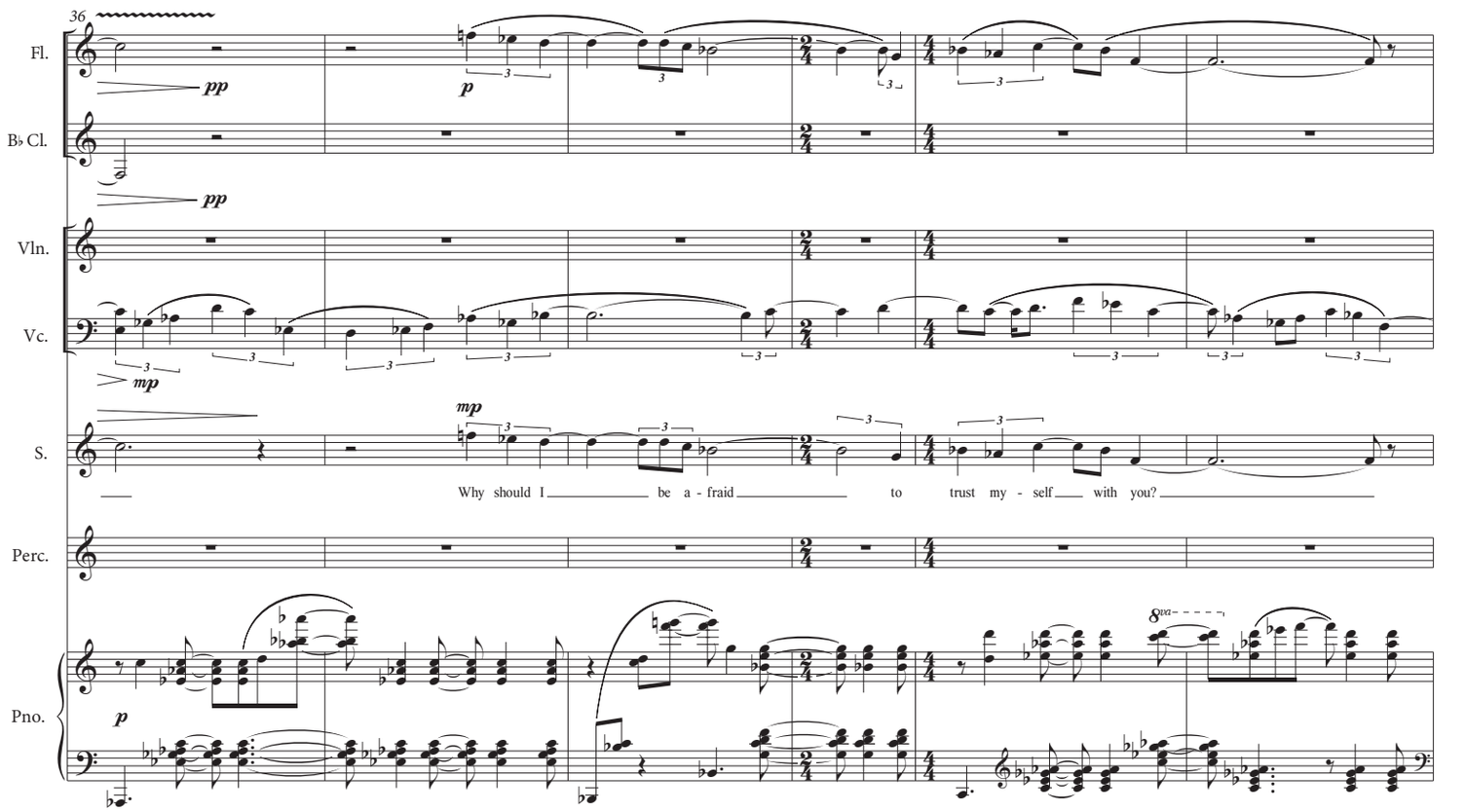


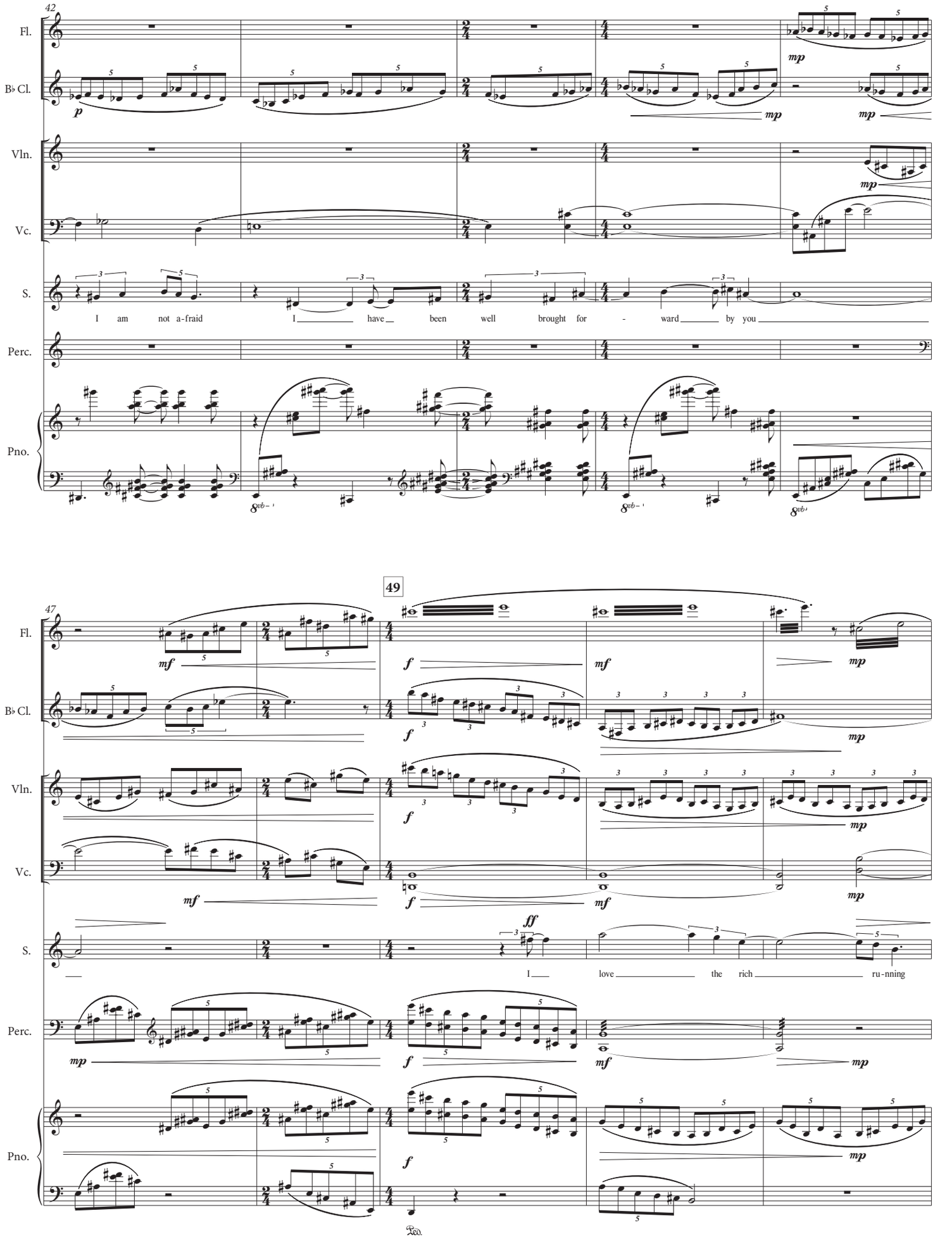


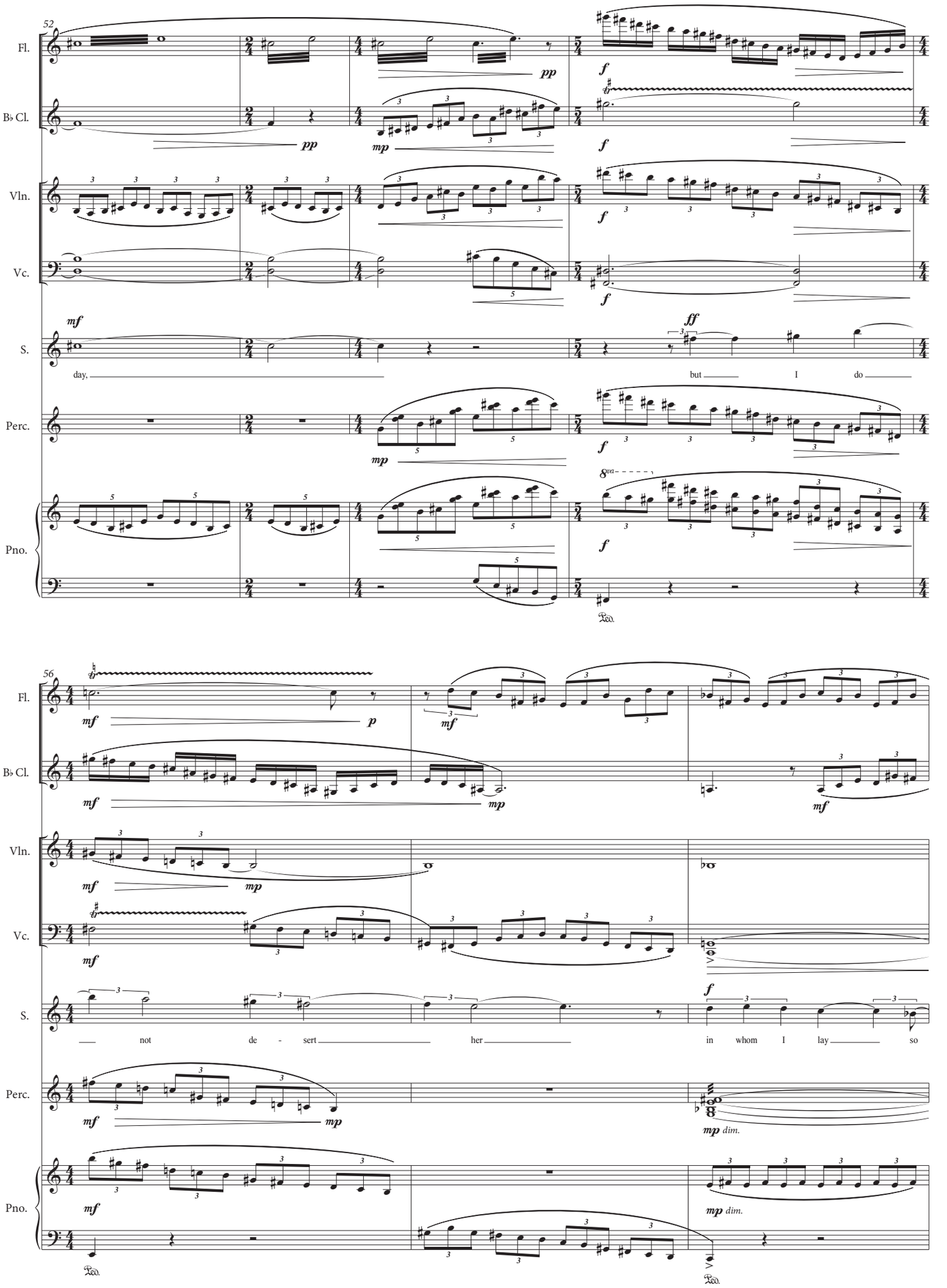

17 With momentum ♩ = 116
Fl.
mf
B♭ Cl.
mf
Vln.
mf
Vc.
mf
S.
mp
I
Perc.
bring top note out always
Pno.
p
con Ped.

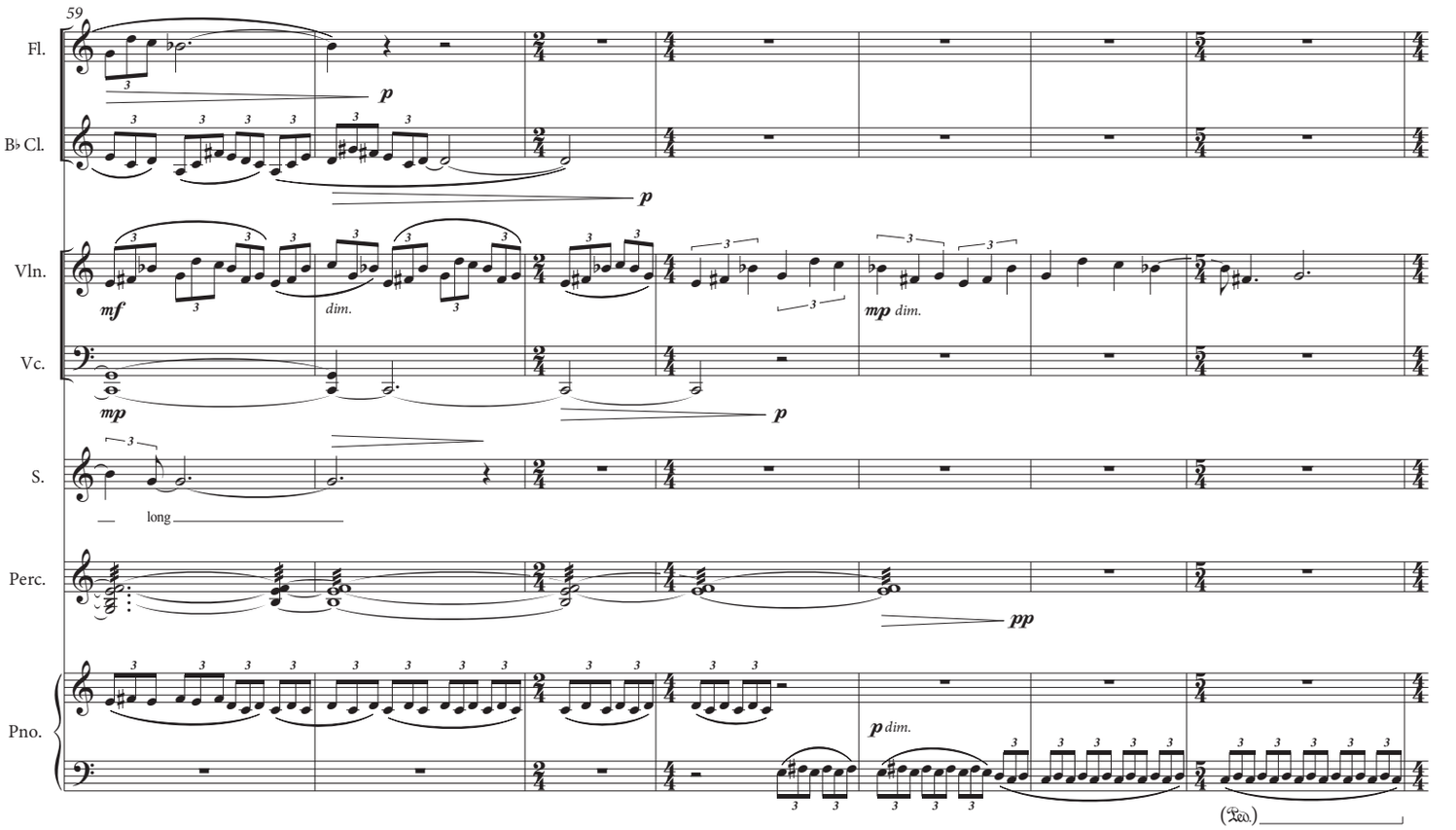

24
Fl.
p
B♭ Cl.
p
Vln.
p
Vc.
p
mf
mp
S.
mp
stay a while a - way O night,
but I re - turn to you
Perc.
Pno.

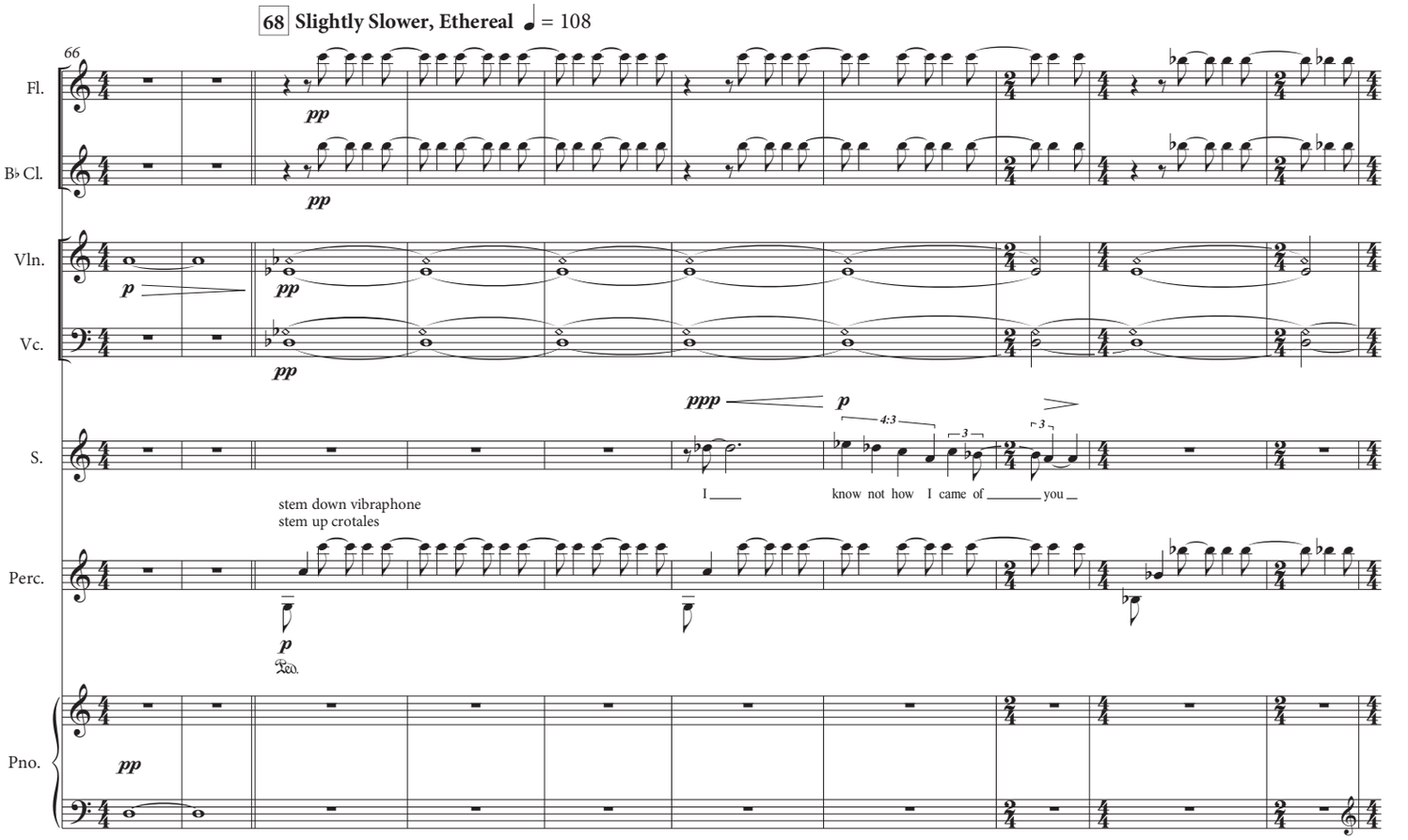

30
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S.
Perc.
Pno.
tr
pp
mf
a - gain
and
love
you.
mp
8vb

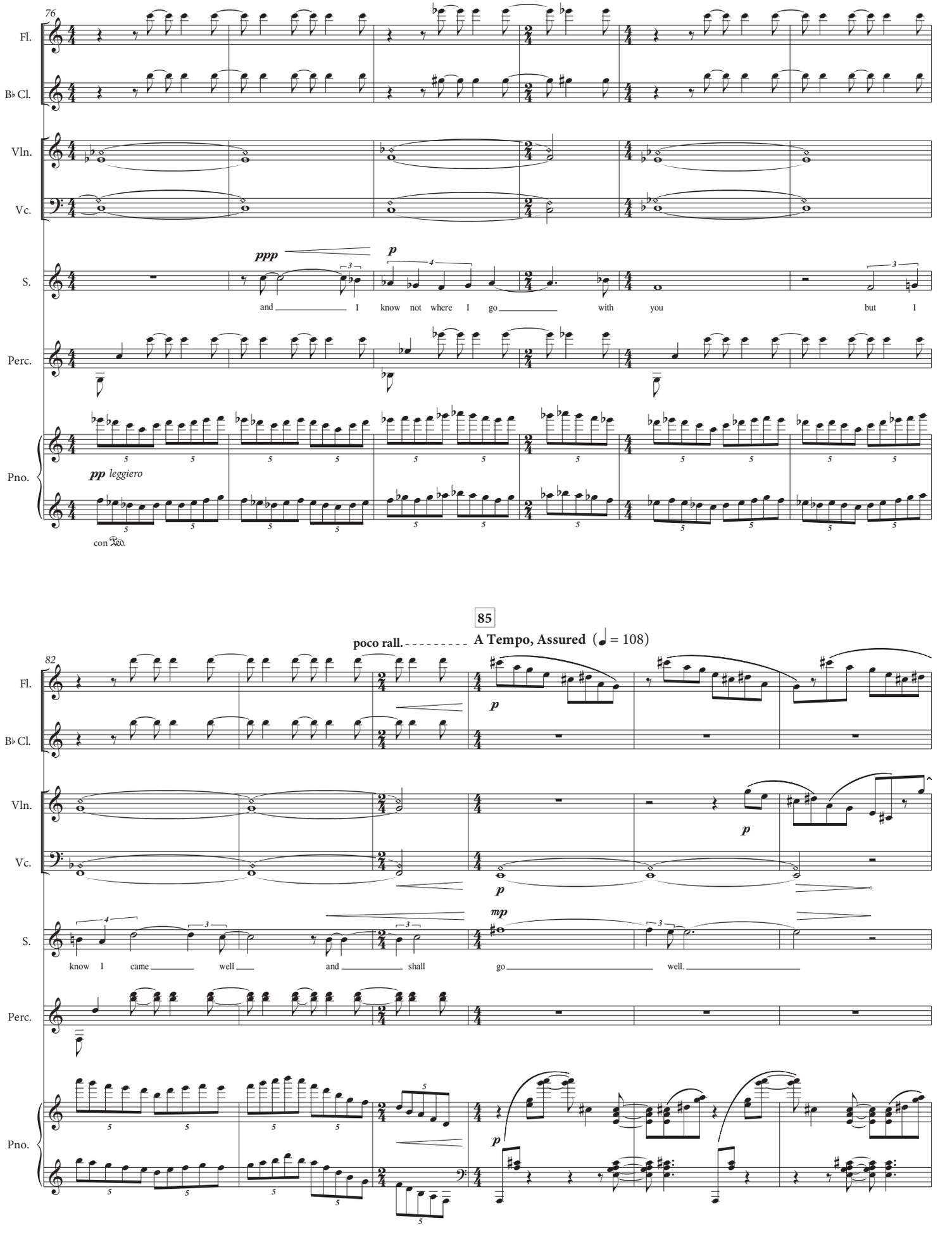

36
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S.
Perc.
Pno.
pp
p
mp
Why should I be a - fraid to trust my - self with you?
8va

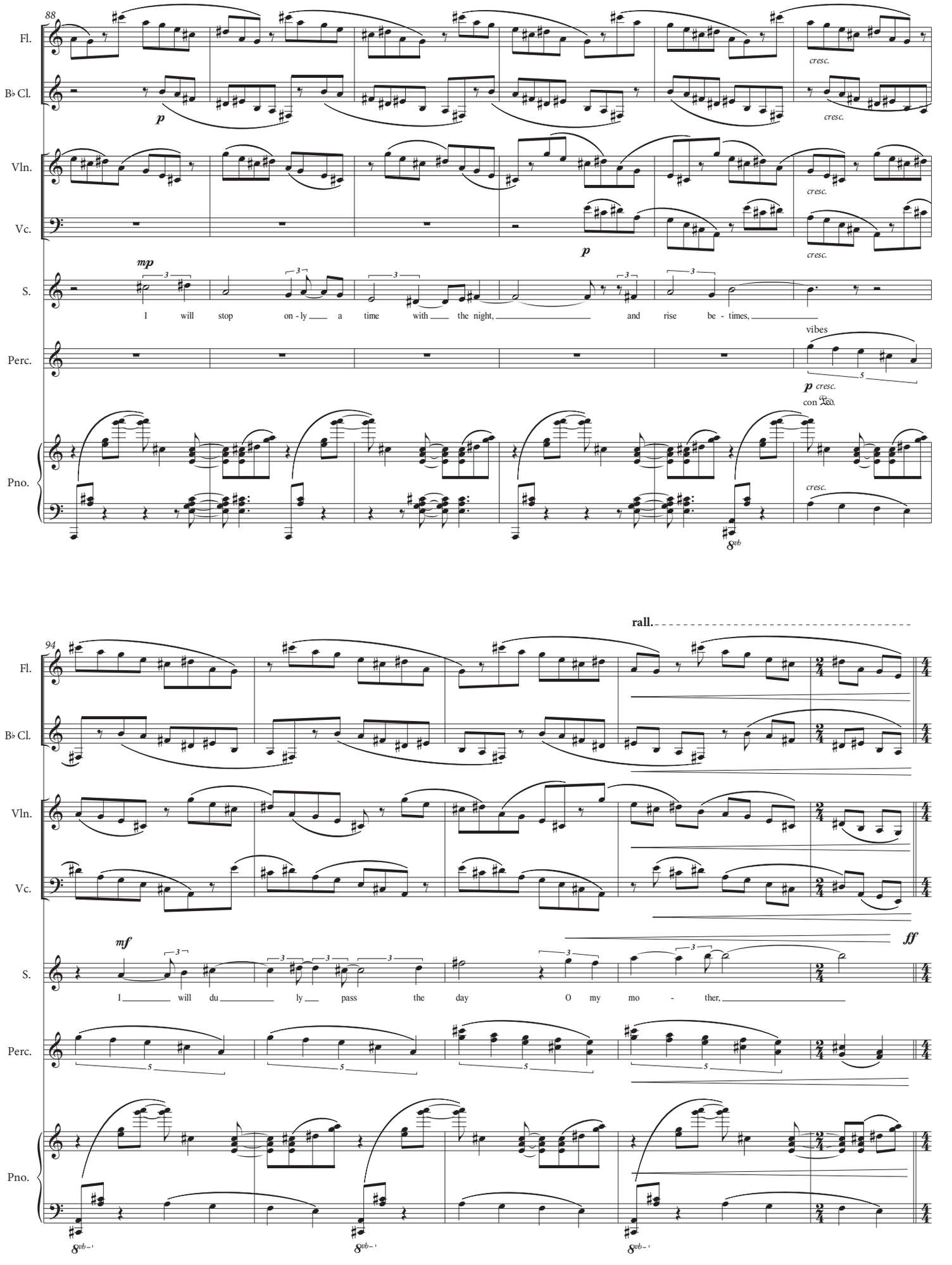

42
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S.
I am not a-fraid I have been well brought for - ward by you
Perc.
Pno.
49
47
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S.
I love the rich ru-nning
Perc.
Pno.

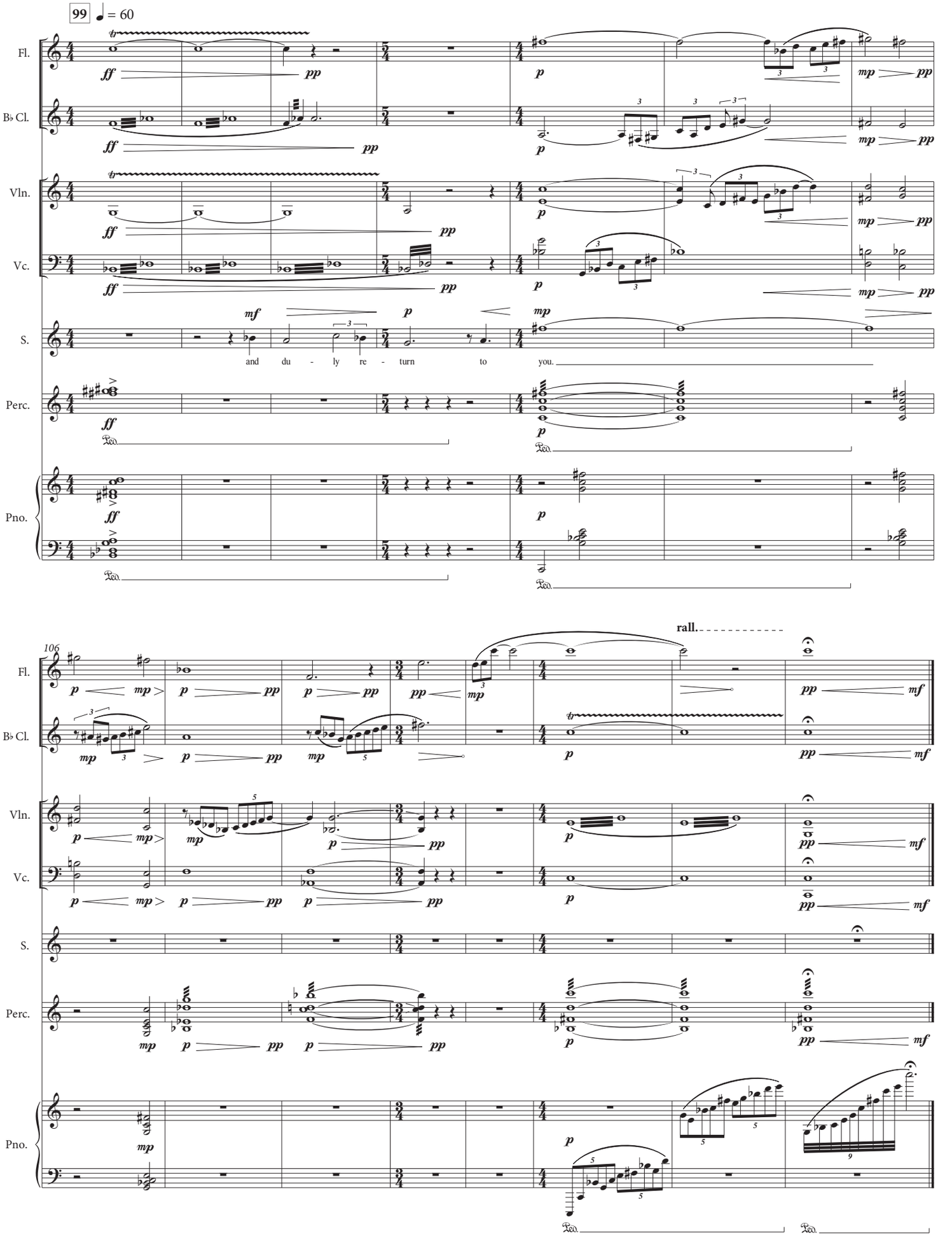

52
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S.
Perc.
Pno.
day,
but I do
56
not de - sert her
in whom I lay so


59
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S.
Perc.
Pno.
p
mf
dim.
mp
mp dim.
long
pp
(Ped.)


68 Slightly Slower, Ethereal ♩ = 108
66
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S.
Perc.
Pno.
pp
p
ppp
4:3
I know not how I came of you
stem down vibraphone
stem up crotales
(Ped.)


76
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S.
Perc.
Pno.
ppp
p
and I know not where I go with you but I
pp leggiero
con Ped.
85
poco rall.
A Tempo, Assured (♩ = 108)
82
mp
know I came well and shall go well.


88
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
S.
Perc.
Pno.
p
cresc.
mp
I will stop on - ly a time with the night, and rise be - times,
vibes
p cresc.
con ped.
8vb
94
rall.
mf
ff
I will du ly pass the day O my mo - ther,
8vb
8vb
8vb



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New York, NY