Irving SCHLEIN

libretto by Linda MASON-DAY

Ramshack
The little boy who never laughed

for Narrator and Chamber Ensemble

1950

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ISSM -70

Instrumentation:

Clarinet / Bass Clarinet
Piano / Celesta
Violin I
Violin II
Cello
Percussion

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Ramshack

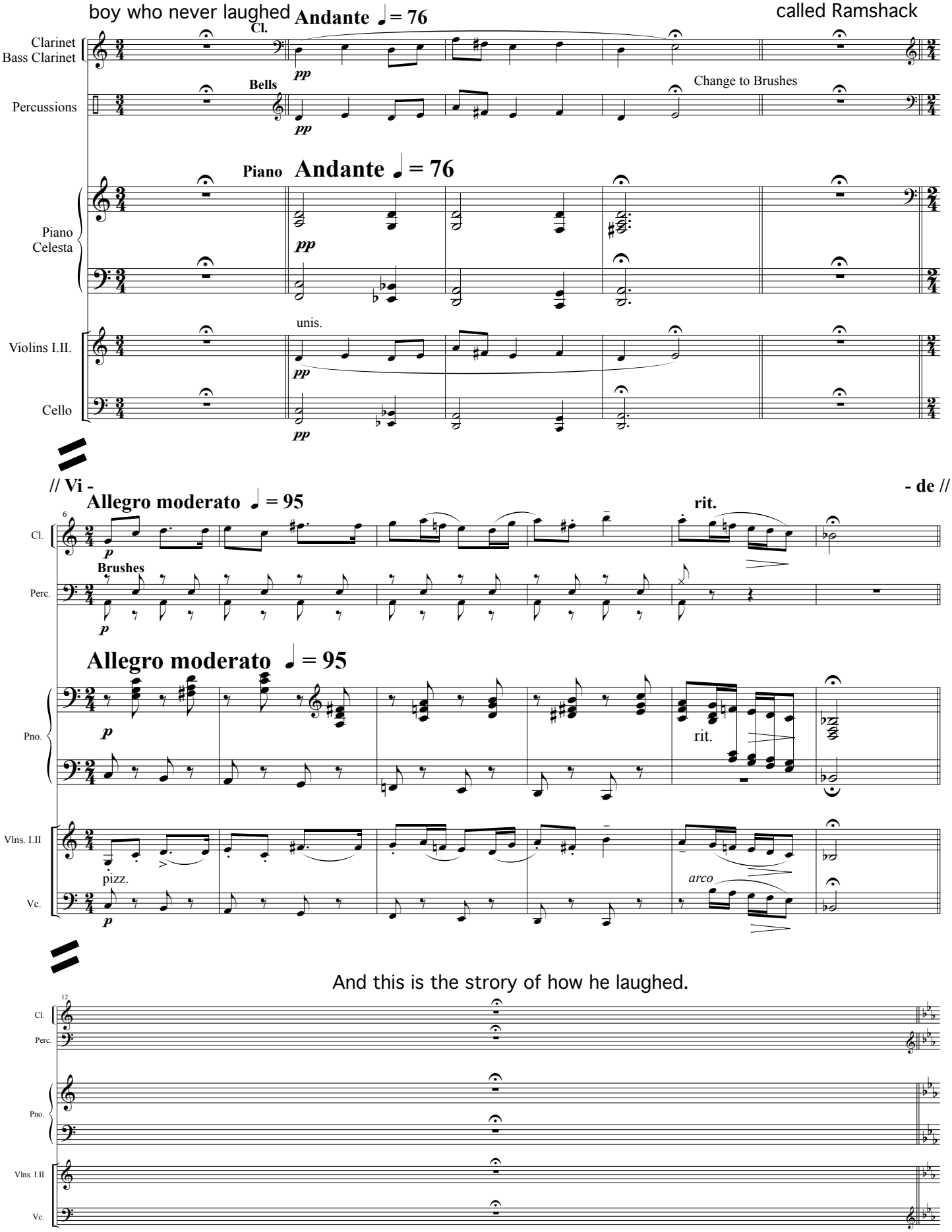
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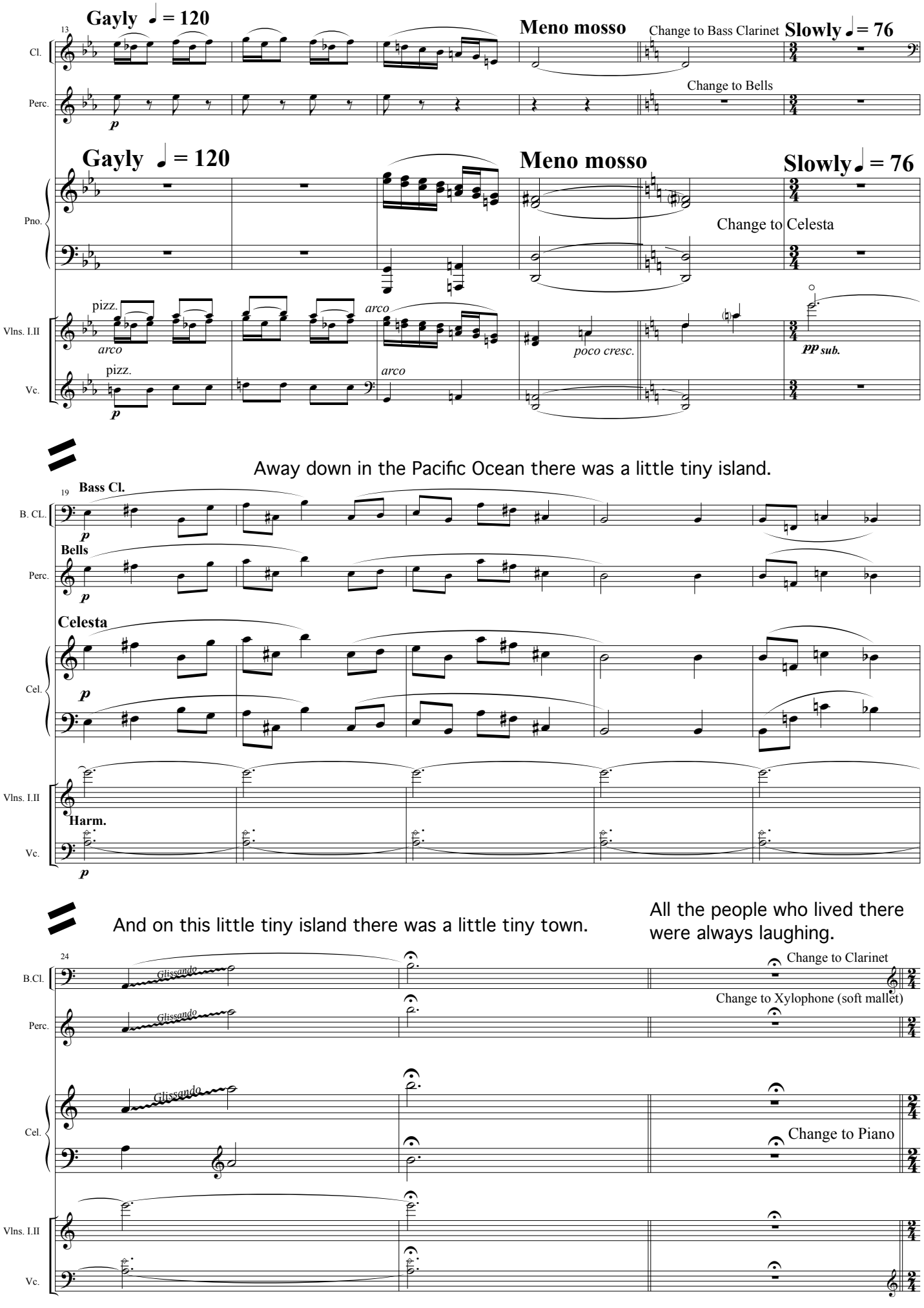
Irving SCHLEIN
(1905 - 1986)

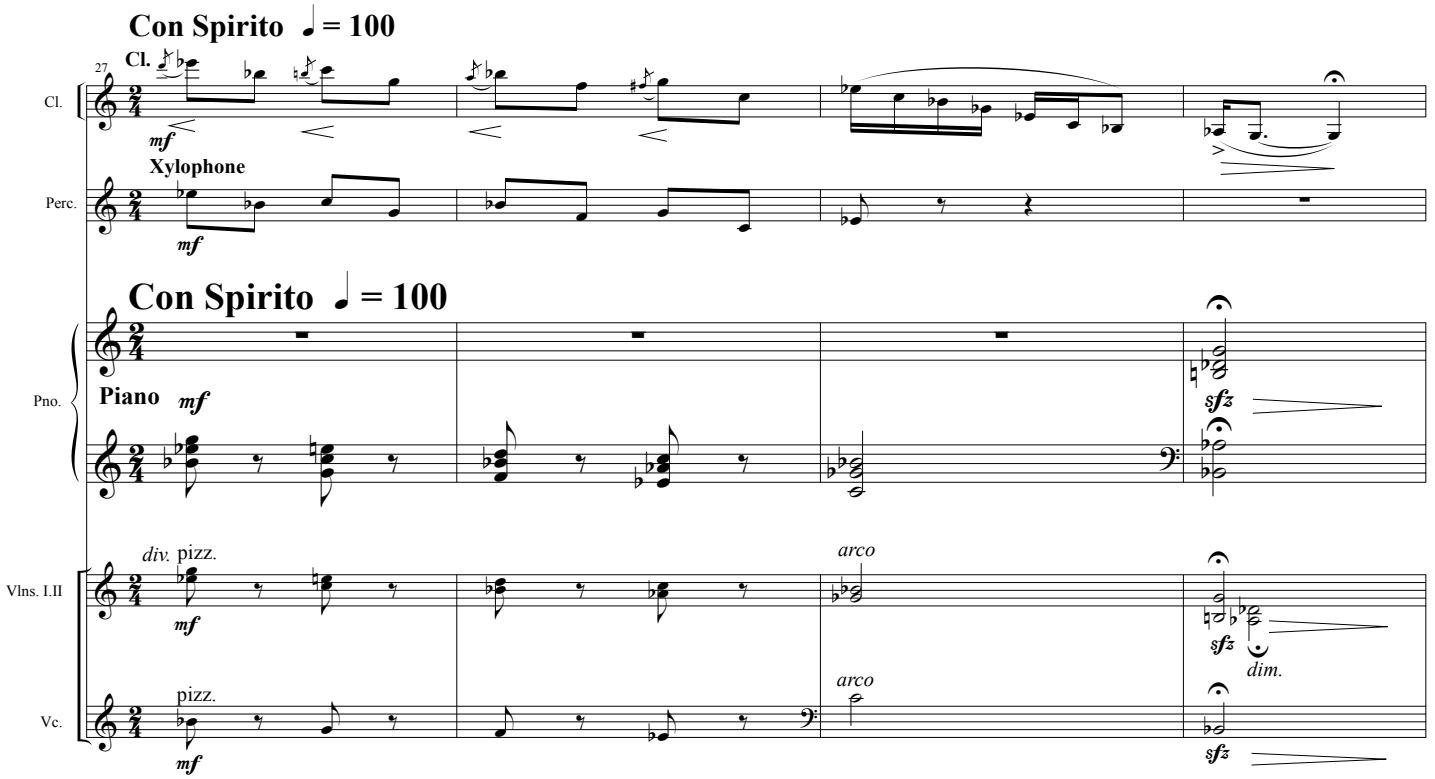
Once a long, long time ago, there was a little boy who never laughed

until he was ten years old.

This little boy was called Ramshack

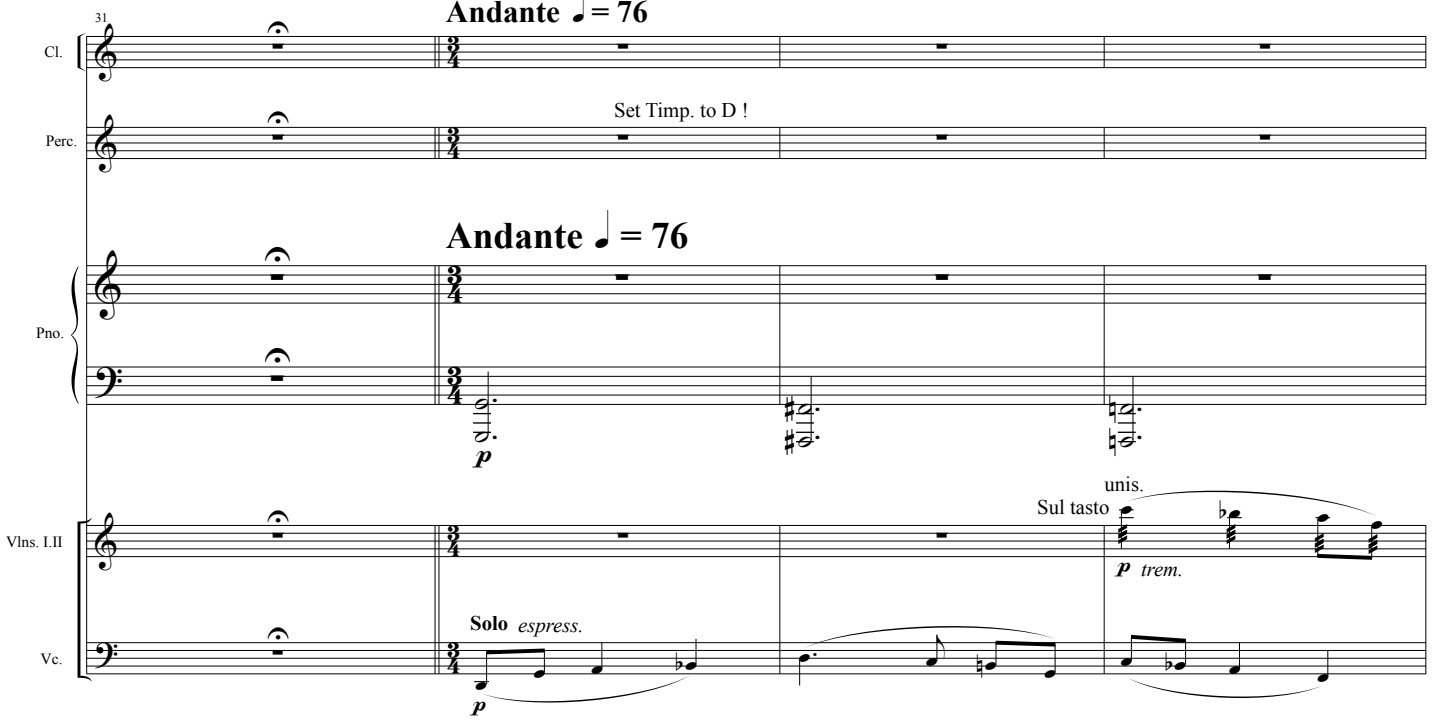



Gayly ♩ = 120
Meno mosso
Change to Bass Clarinet
Slowly ♩ = 76
Cl.
Perc.
Change to Bells
Pno.
Change to Celesta
pizz.
arco
Vlns. I.II
Vc.
poco cresc.
pp sub.
Away down in the Pacific Ocean there was a little tiny island.
Bass Cl.
B. CL.
Bells
Celesta
Cel.
Harm.
And on this little tiny island there was a little tiny town.
All the people who lived there were always laughing.
Glissando
B.Cl.
Change to Clarinet
Change to Xylophone (soft mallet)
Change to Piano

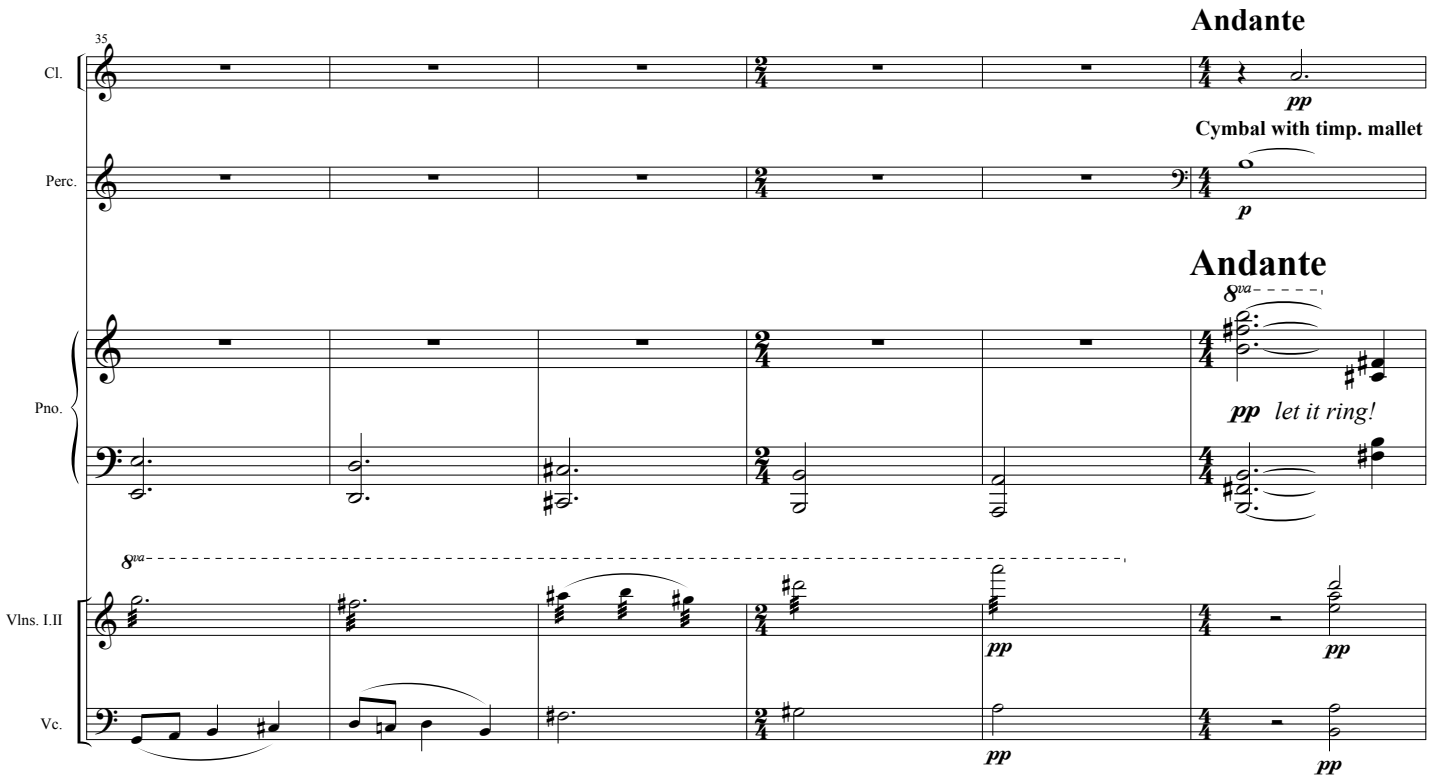


Only one old grandfather
was very unhappy.

All the people whispered

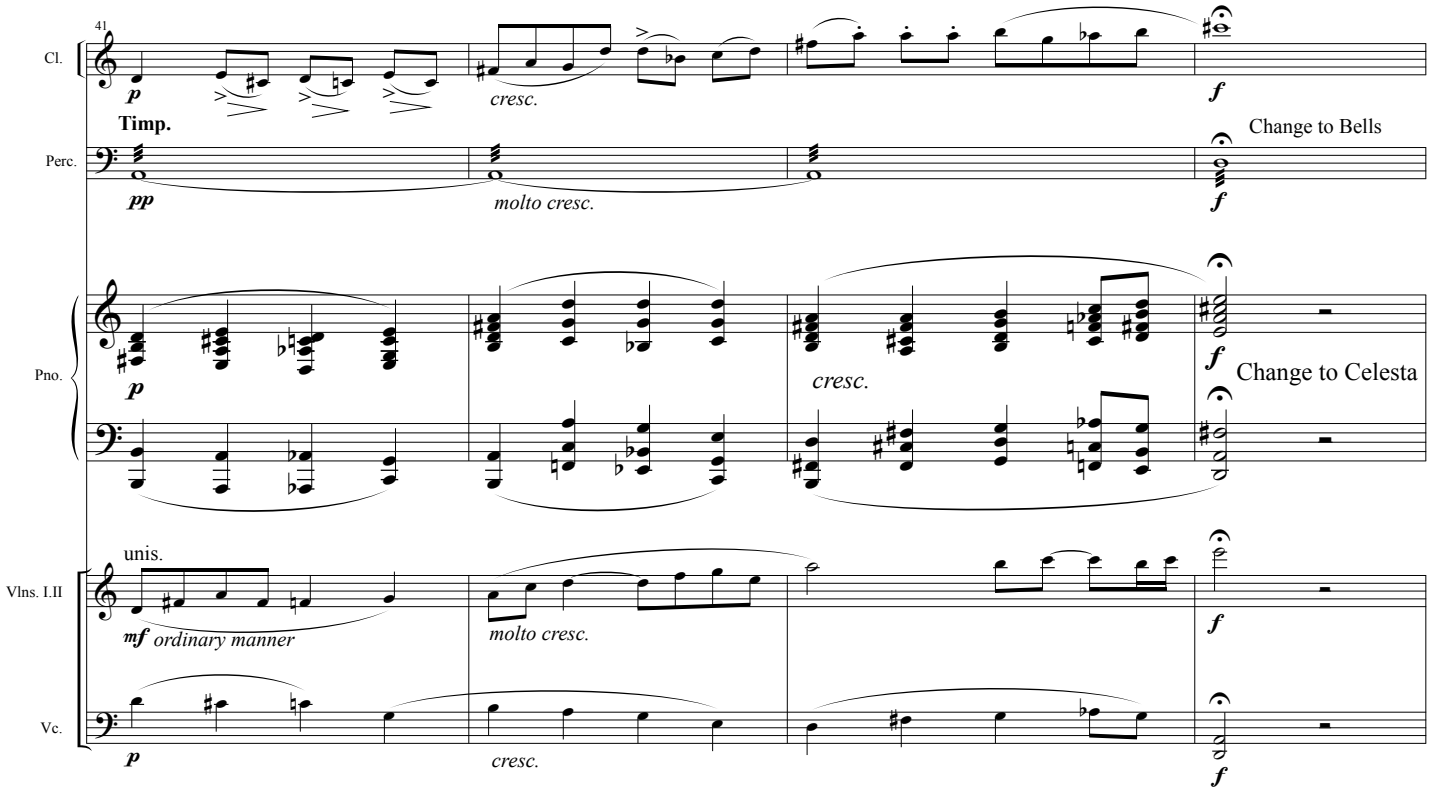


about him, because next feast day he was going to tell them the story of the great gray Mountain

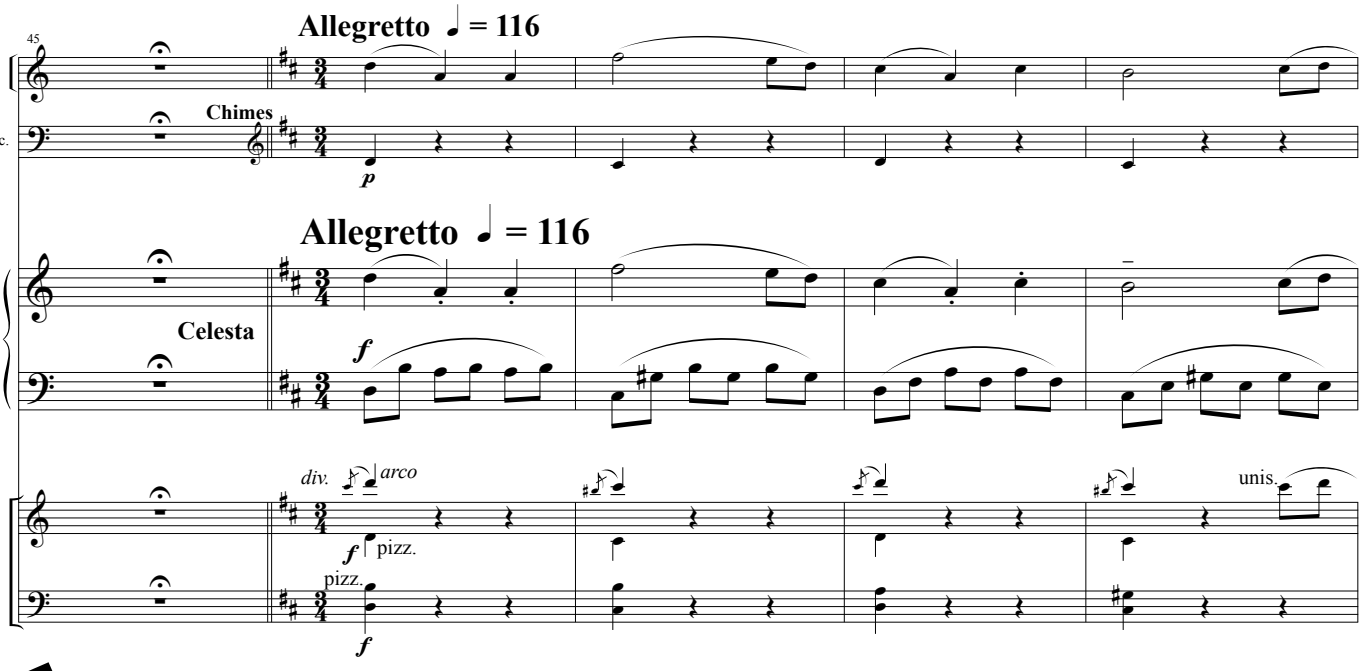


where nobody had ever been.

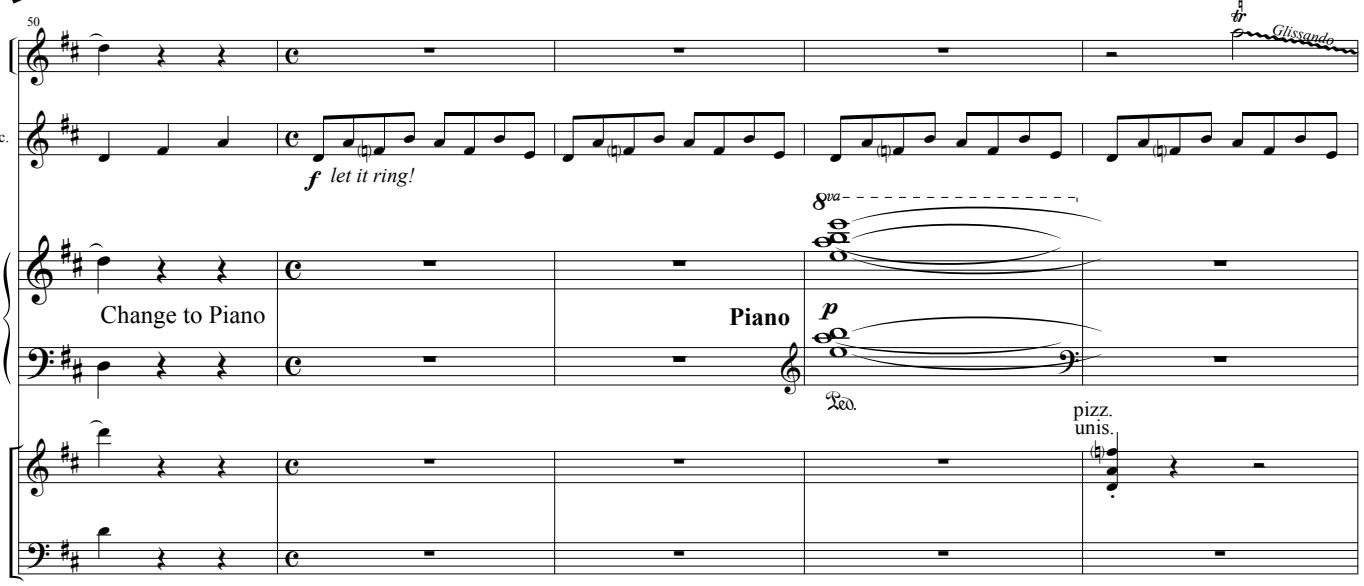
What was the old man going to tell them?



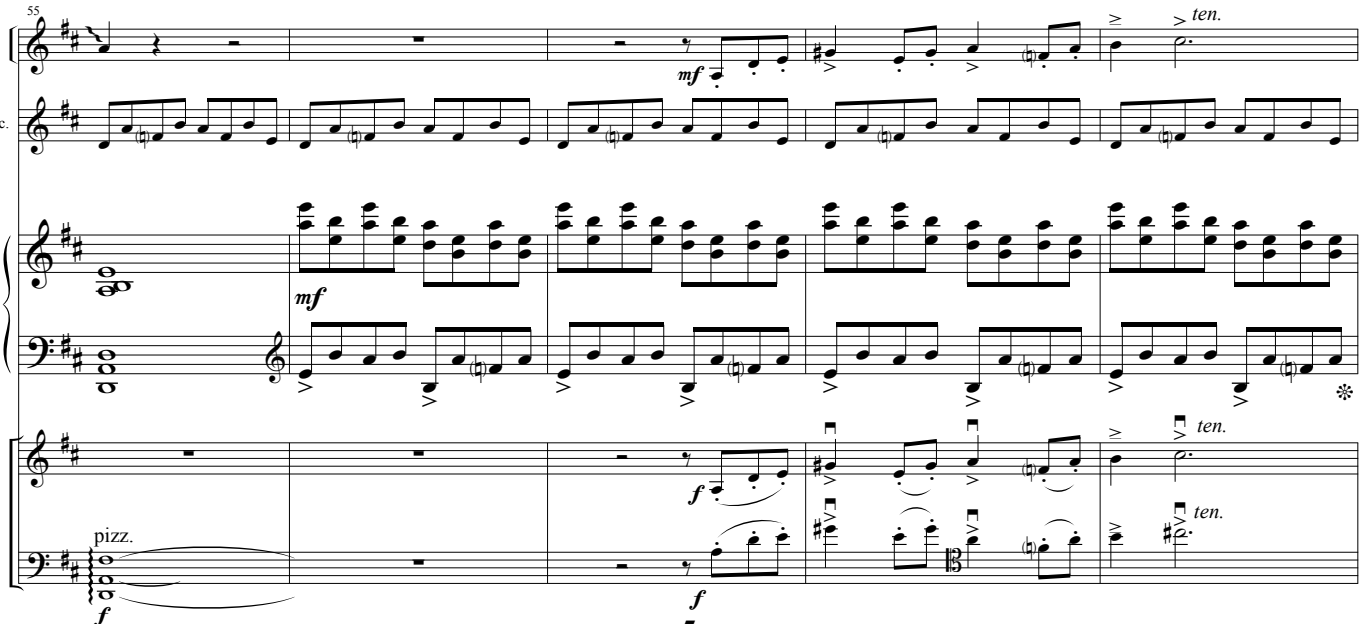
They could hardly wait. Finally the day came.



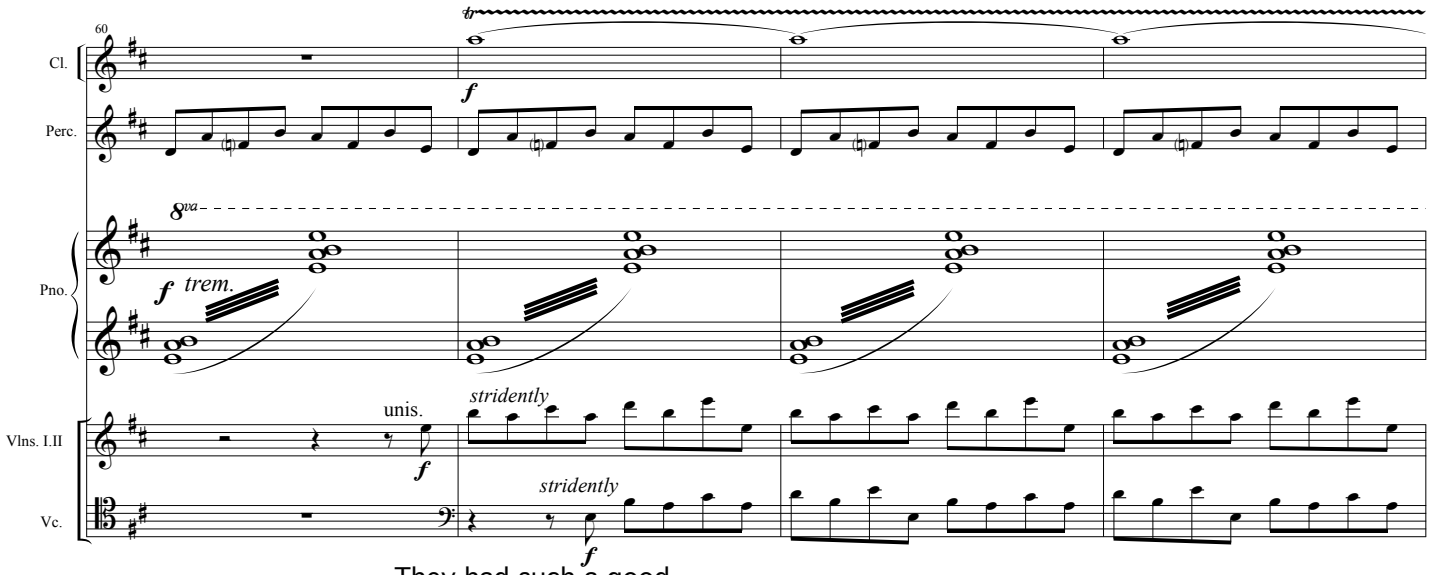
The women worked all day laying the tables. The centers



were covered with flowers and fruits. The places were laid on palm leaves with shells for dishes

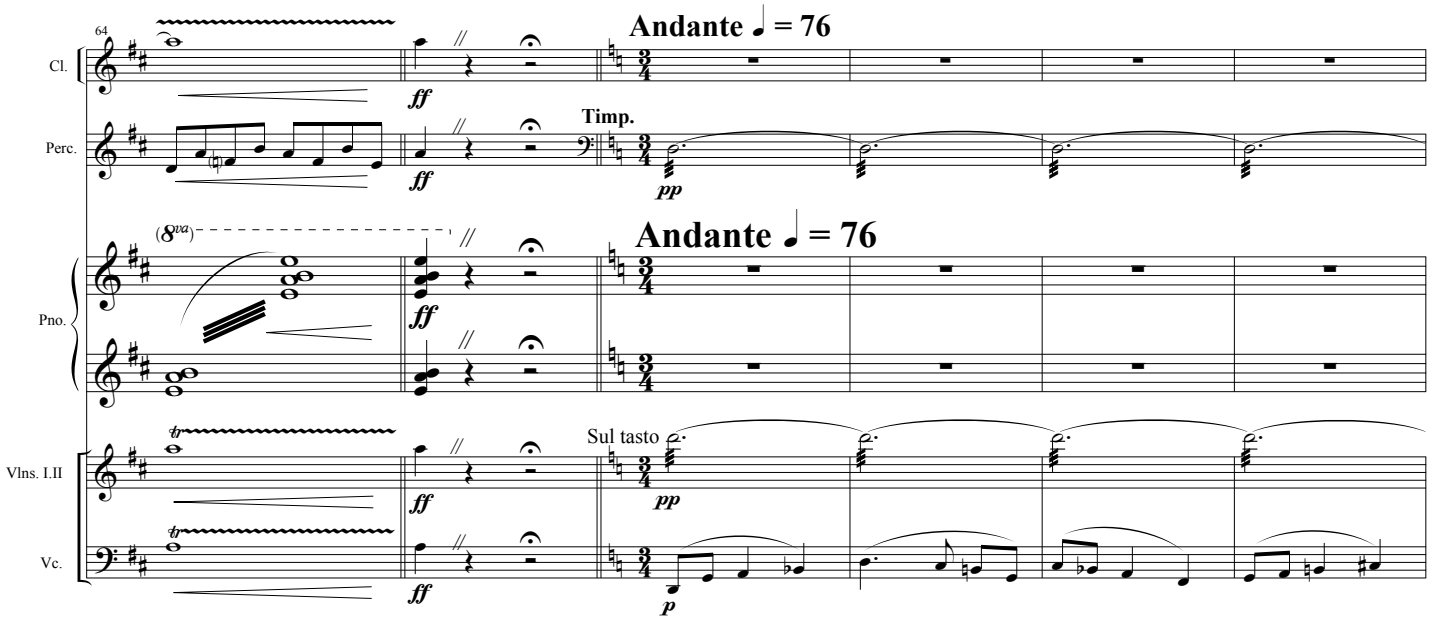


At sunset, the feast began. Everybody had a grand time.
They laughed and danced untill the echoes seemed to rock the earth.

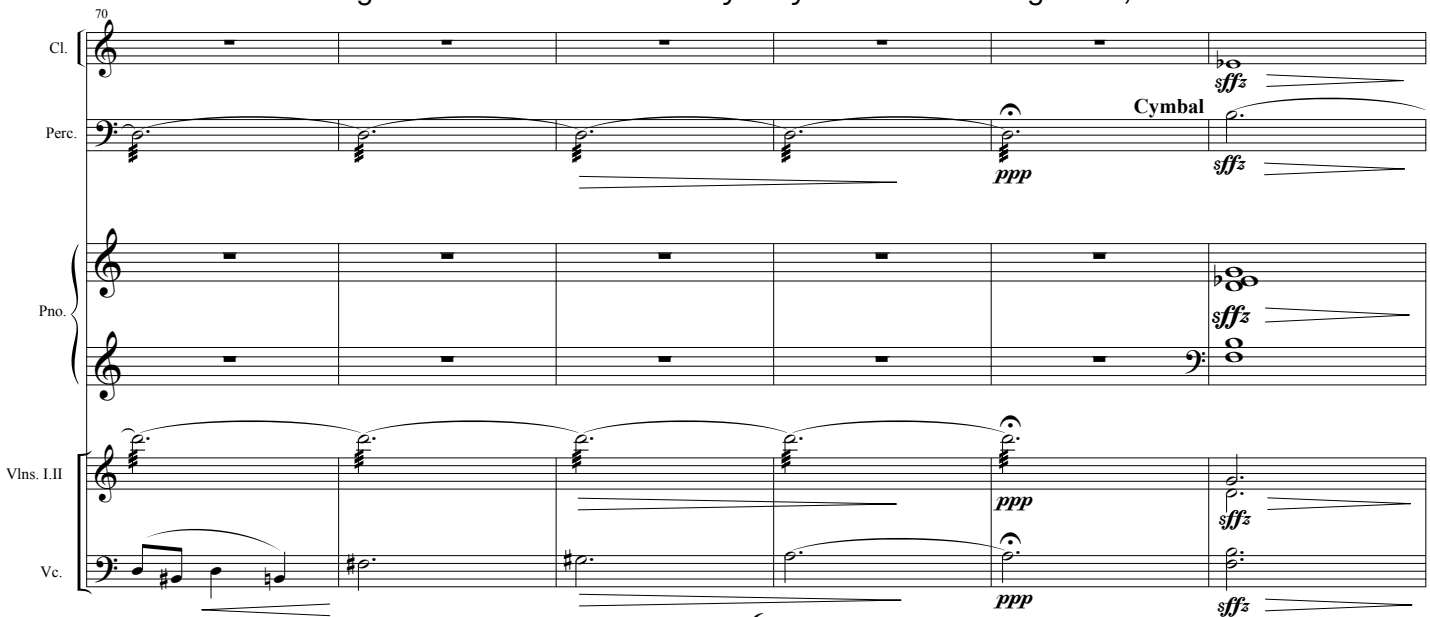


They had such a good time they forgot all about the old grandfather.

Nobody noticed him untill they were all dancing

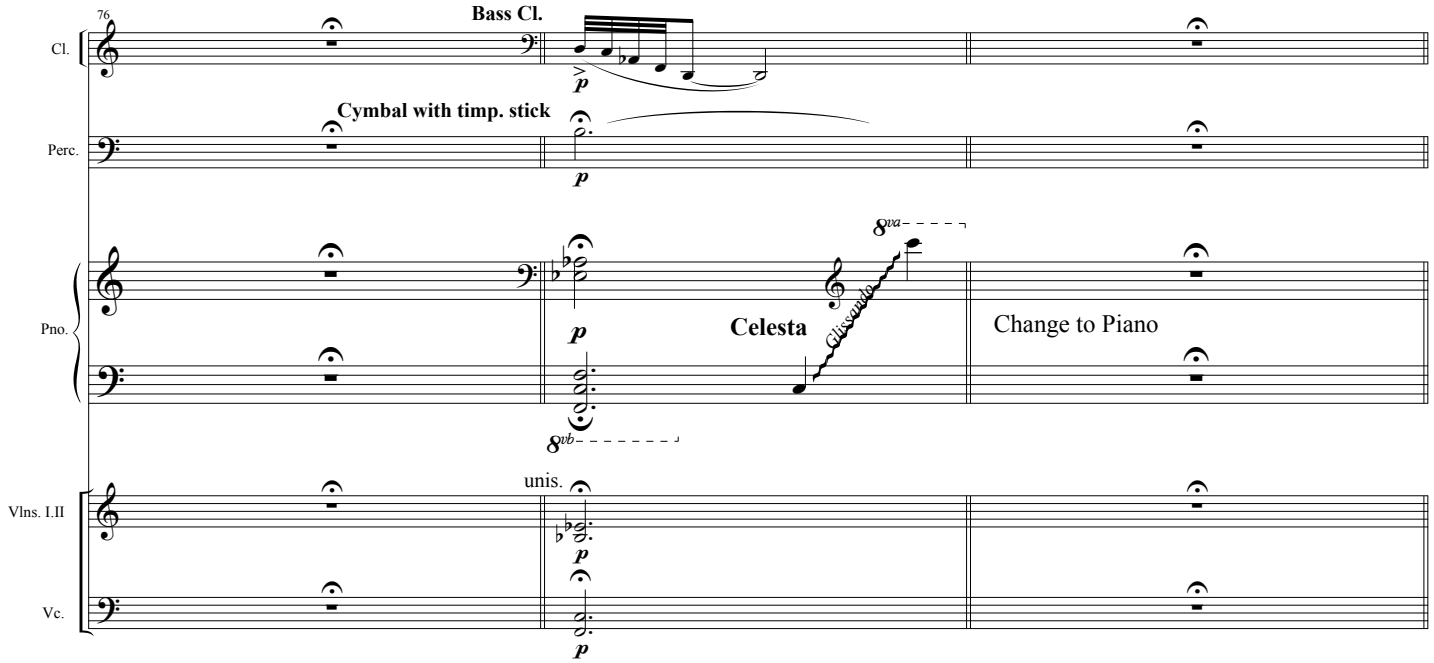


around the bright bonfire. Then suddenly they saw him standing there, behind the fire.

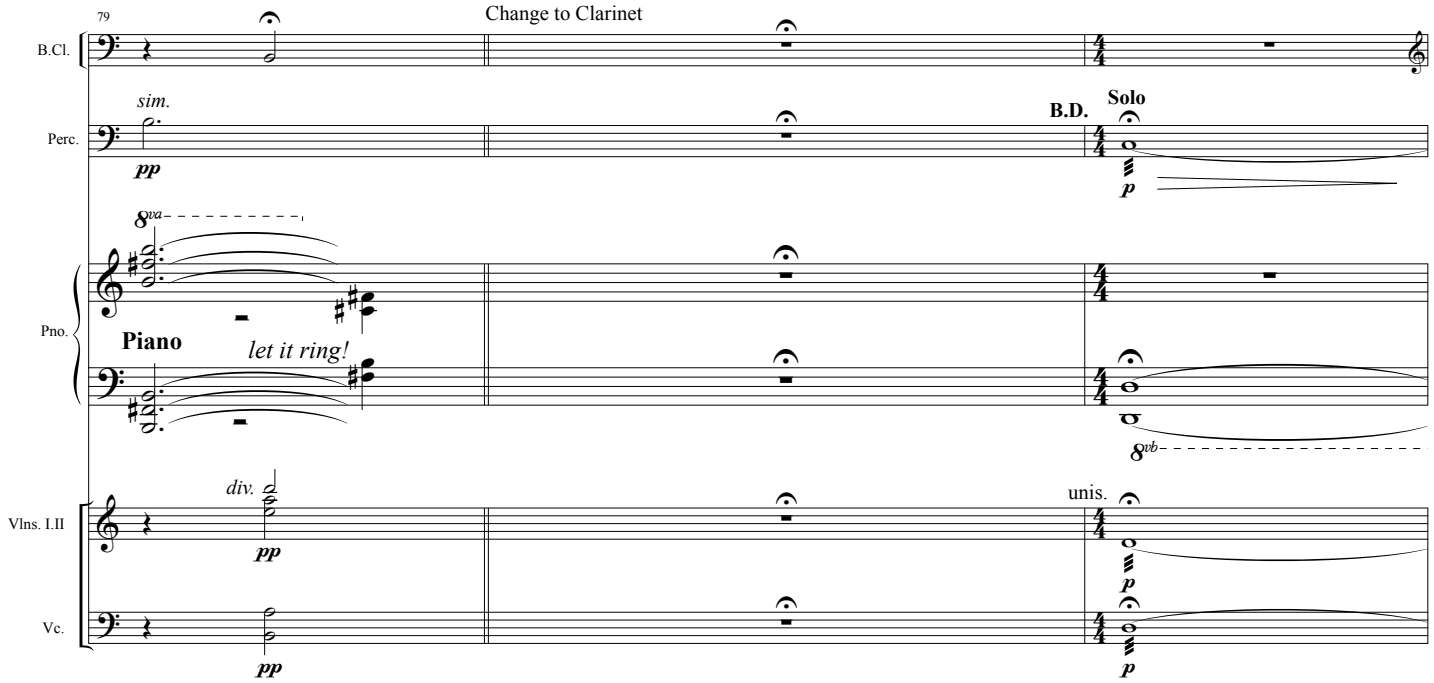


It seemed that the waves in the sea stood still, and the trees caught their breath.

Everybody was afraid. For they knew that now they were going to hear the story of the great gray Mountain.

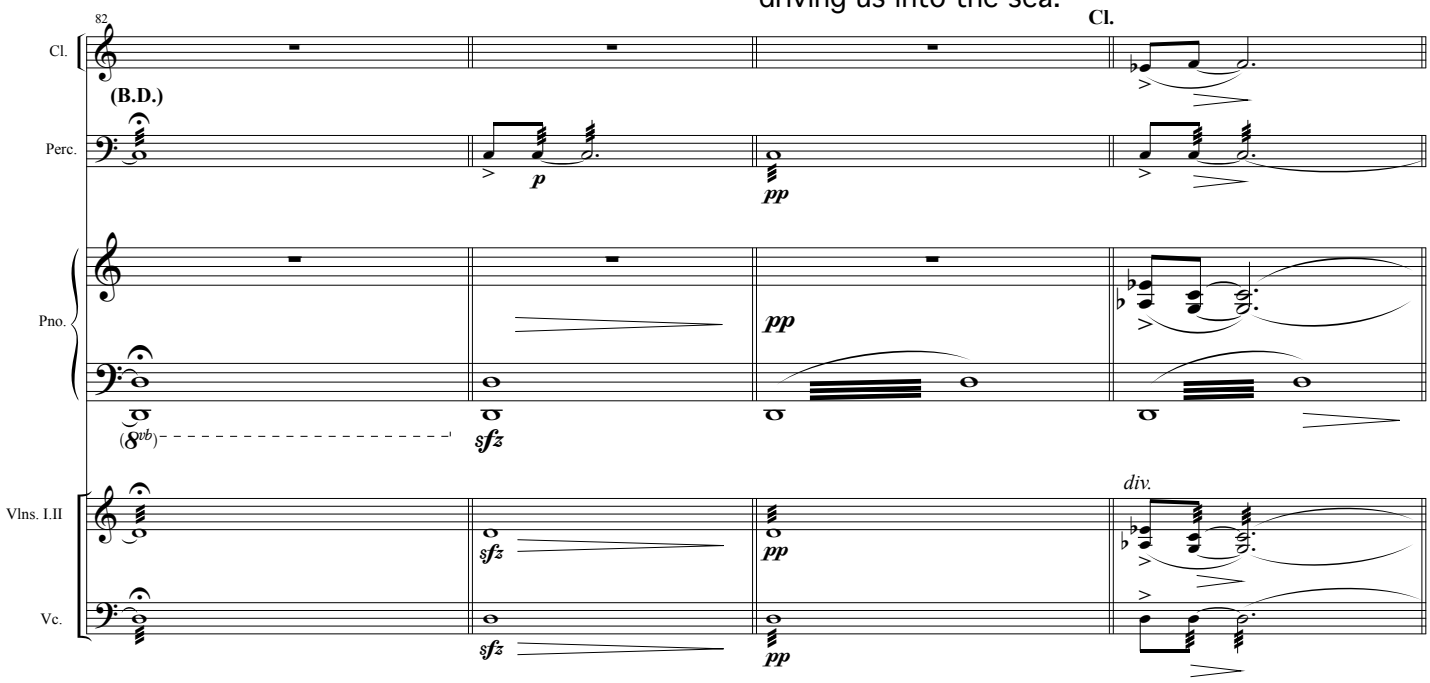


The old grandfather spoke in a voice like thunder.



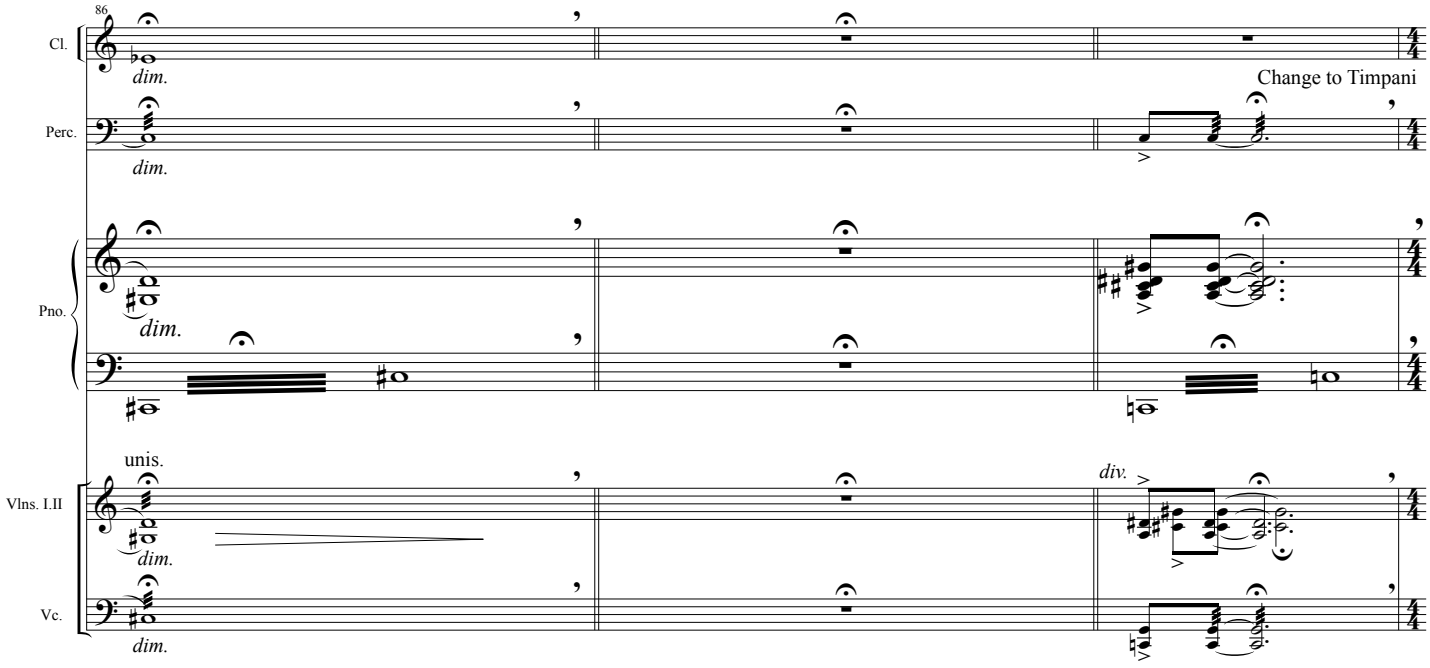
The great gray Mountain
is a living monster!
Today it sleeps.

But many years ago it grumbled
and groaned. It spat showers of
flame that covered our island,
driving us into the sea.

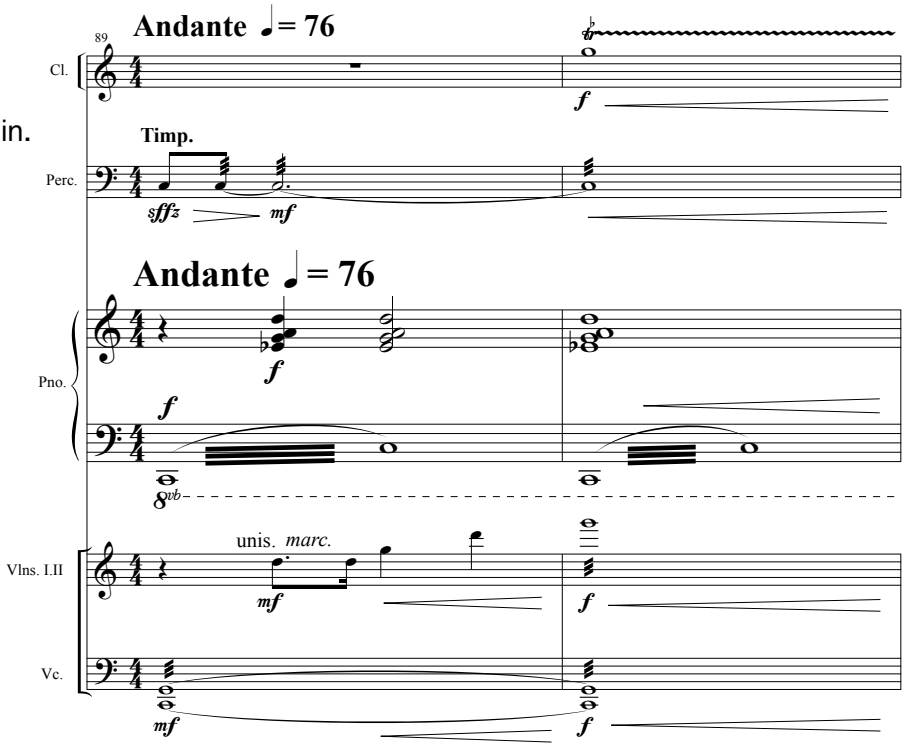


There we lived in boats eating only
fish until our plants grew again.
For the hot breath of the mountain
killed every living thing on land.

At last we called our wisest men.
We must find some way to quiet the
monster. So we chose our strongest
and bravest young man. He and his
wife went, hand in hand, to talk to the
monster. For many moons we watched
and waited, but they never came back.
The mountain rumbled again

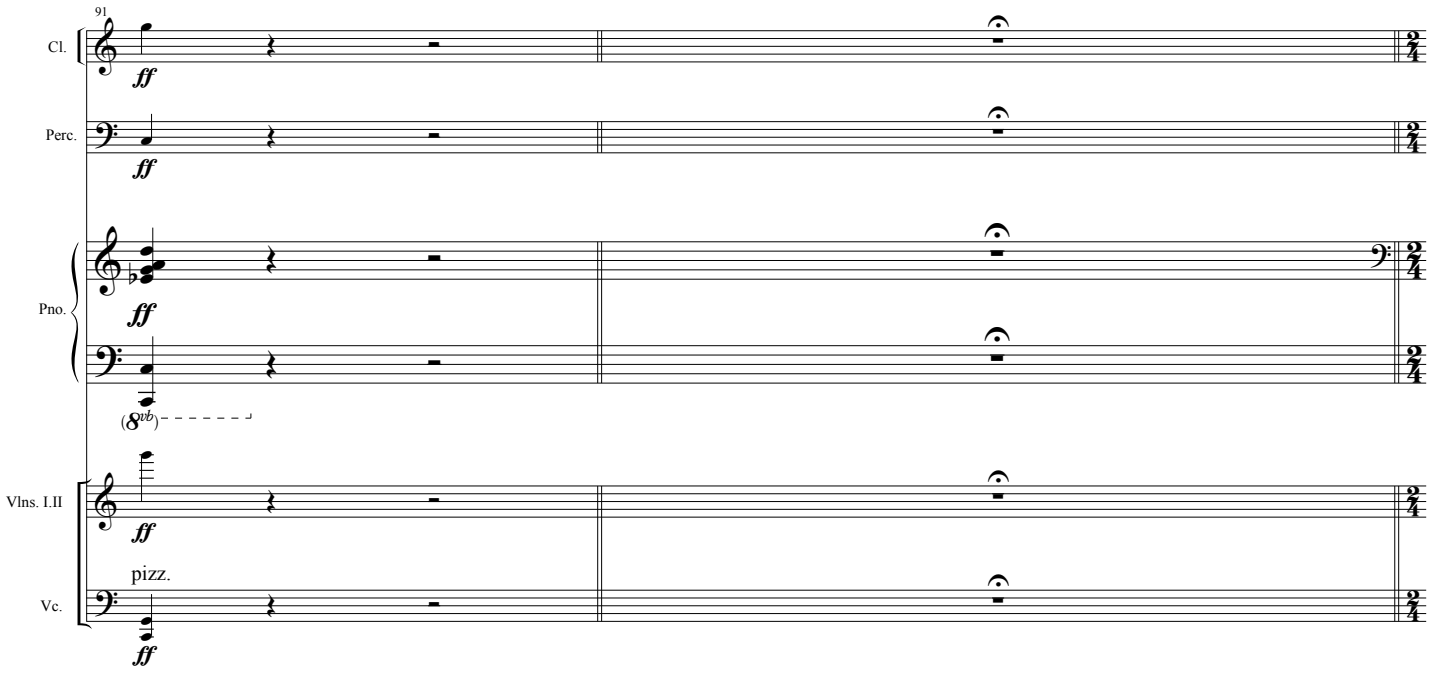


So for many years, every feast day,
we sent two young people to the fiery
mountain. Oun town grew smaller.
We saw that even without fire,
the monster would take us all.
So we sent our last young man to
make this bargain with the mountain.



YOUNG MAN:
We will send no more. For one
hundred years we will laugh.
Then on the feast day of the
hundredth year, the people will be
told of the mountain. And from
that time until the youngest son
in the town is ten years old,
nobody shall laugh. We will
then send him to the mountain.
On him depends our fate.

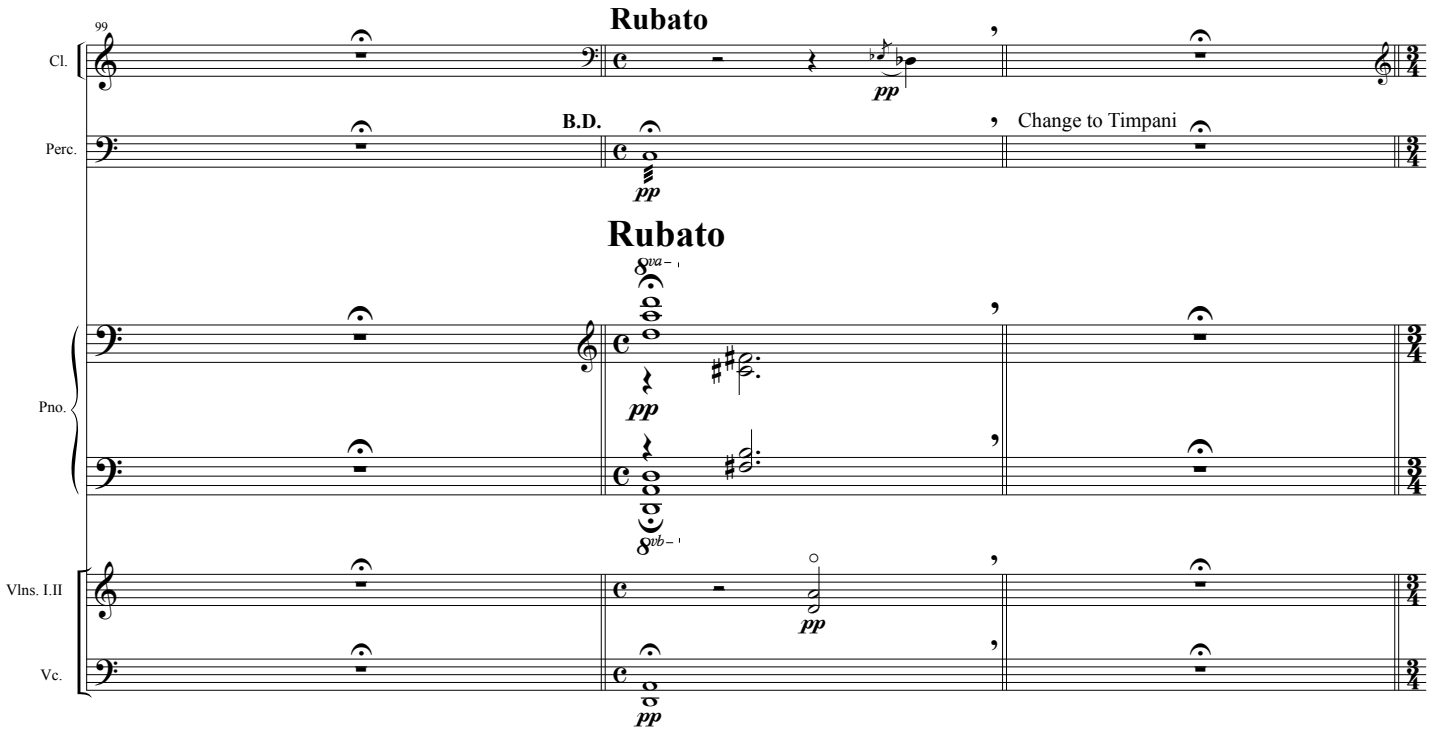
NARRATOR:
And truly, no one felt like laughing. They all knew the
youngest son in the town. His name was Ramshack





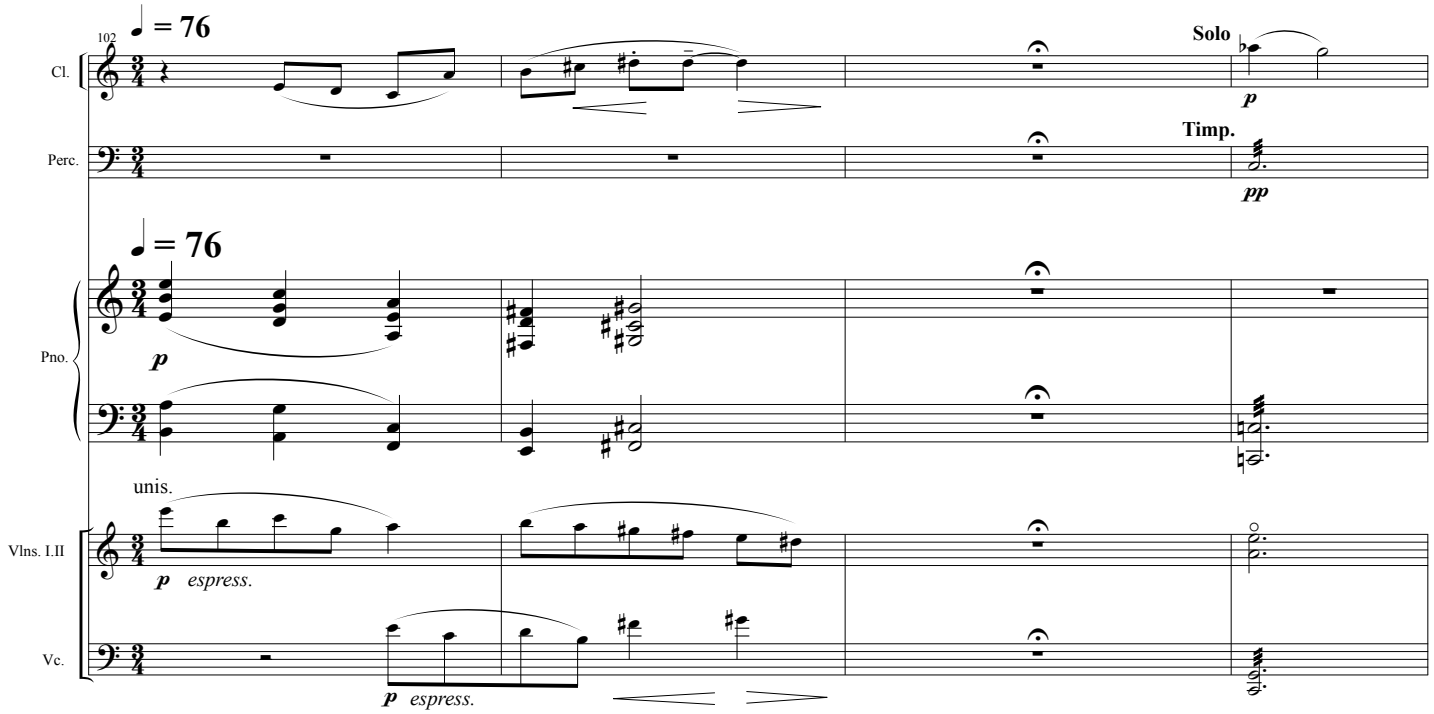
and he had cried ever since he was born. Everybody laughed at the little crybaby. They used every trick they knew to stop him from crying. When Ramshack was seven years old, the children did not believe that Ramshack could save them from the mountain. They called him 'Peacock-feather' because he was good for nothing except to look at. When he was nine years old, the people were shaking their heads and saying, ***PEOPLE***: Ramshack can never save us from the mountain

When Ramshack was ten years old, he said to himself, The people are right. How can I meet the monster when I can't even stop the children from calling me 'Peacock-feather'. I'll go into the woods and never come back.



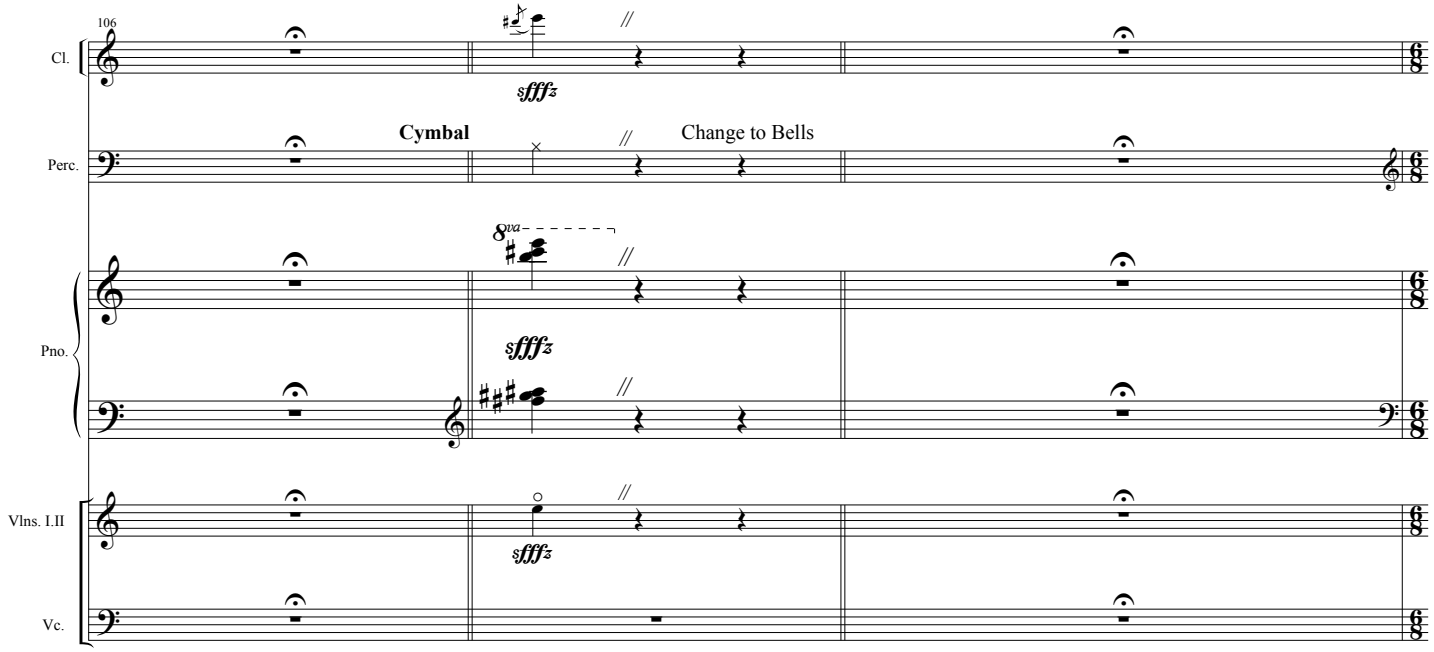
So Ramshack went into the woods and lost his way. It was time to prepare the feast. Everybody was so busy they forgot all about Ramshack.

It was growing dark and he was afraid.

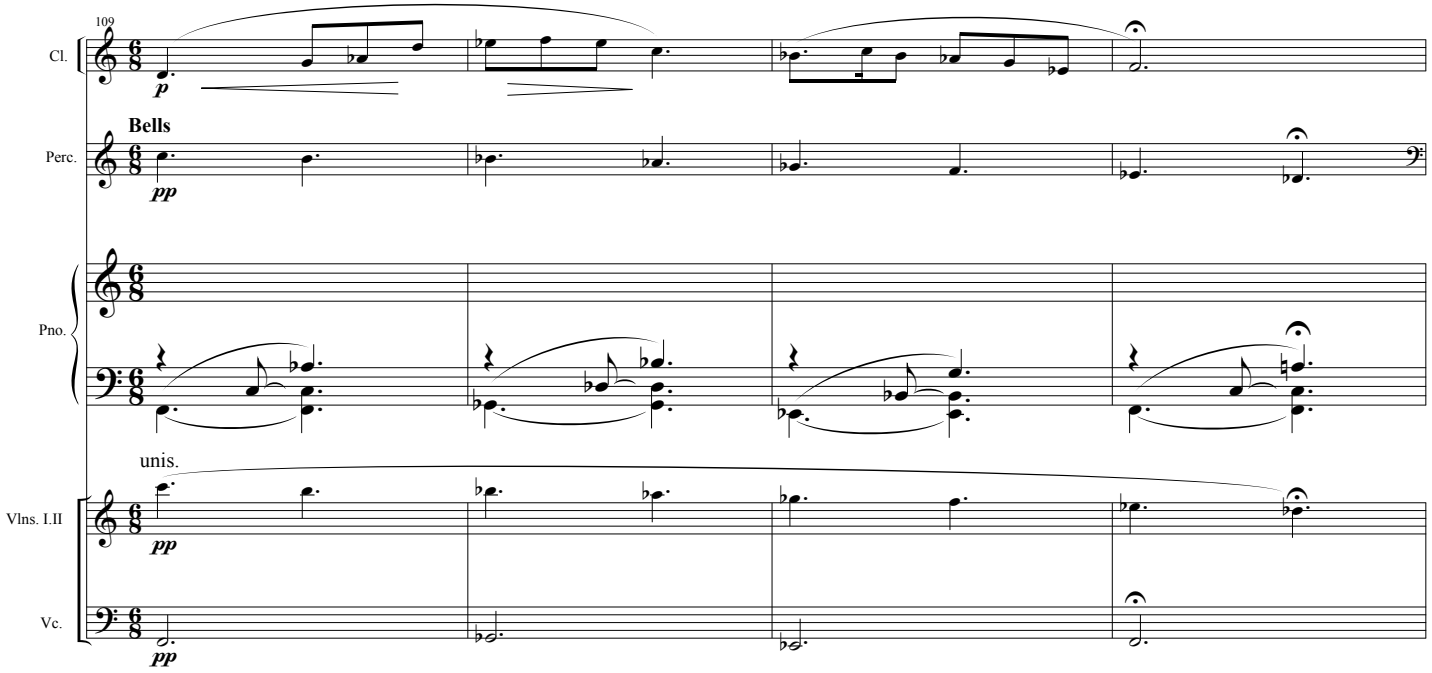


Suddenly he heard a screech.

He looked up and saw a little monkey with its tail caught in a tree... He climbed up and freed the monkey, but he couldn't get down again. So the little monkey cuddled up close to him,

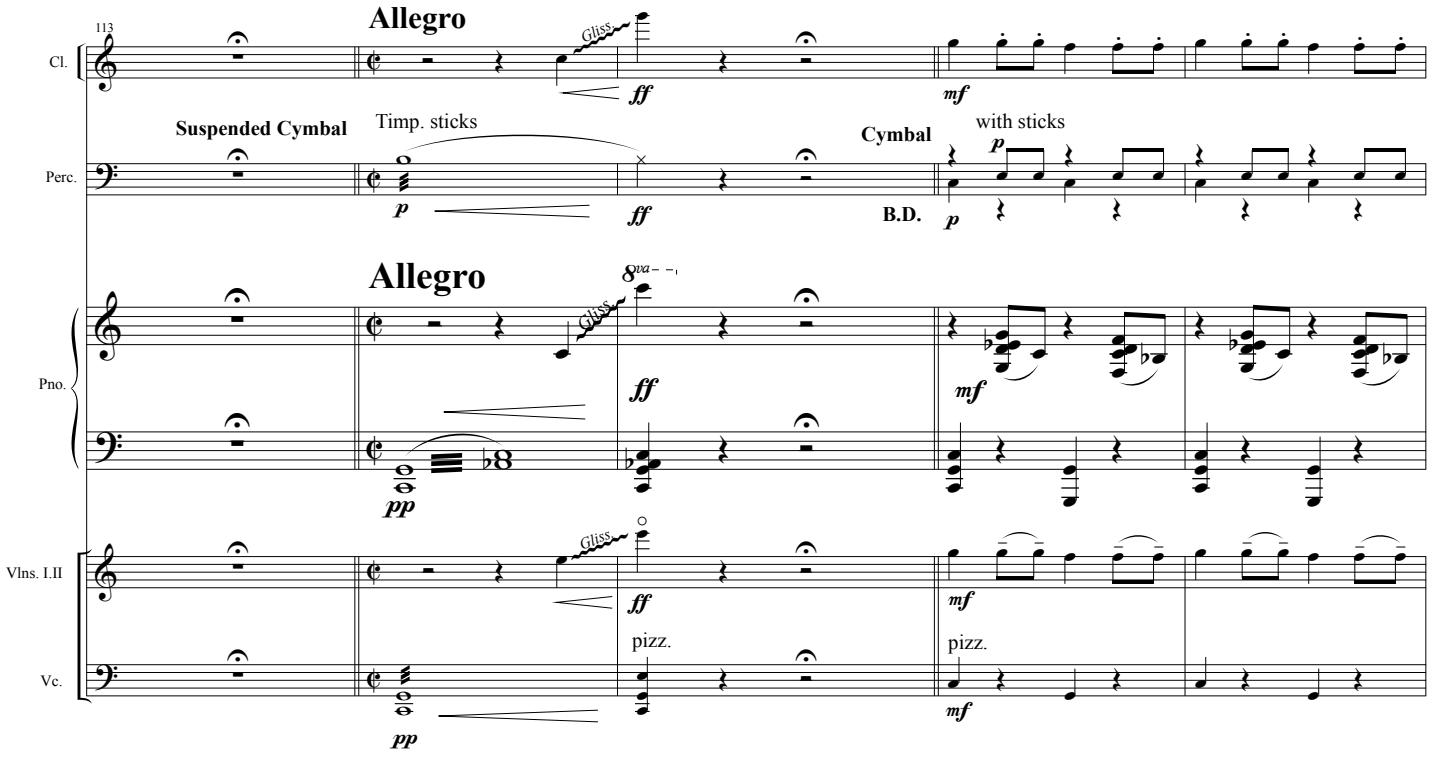


and little Ramshack dreamed he was home with his Mommy and Daddy.



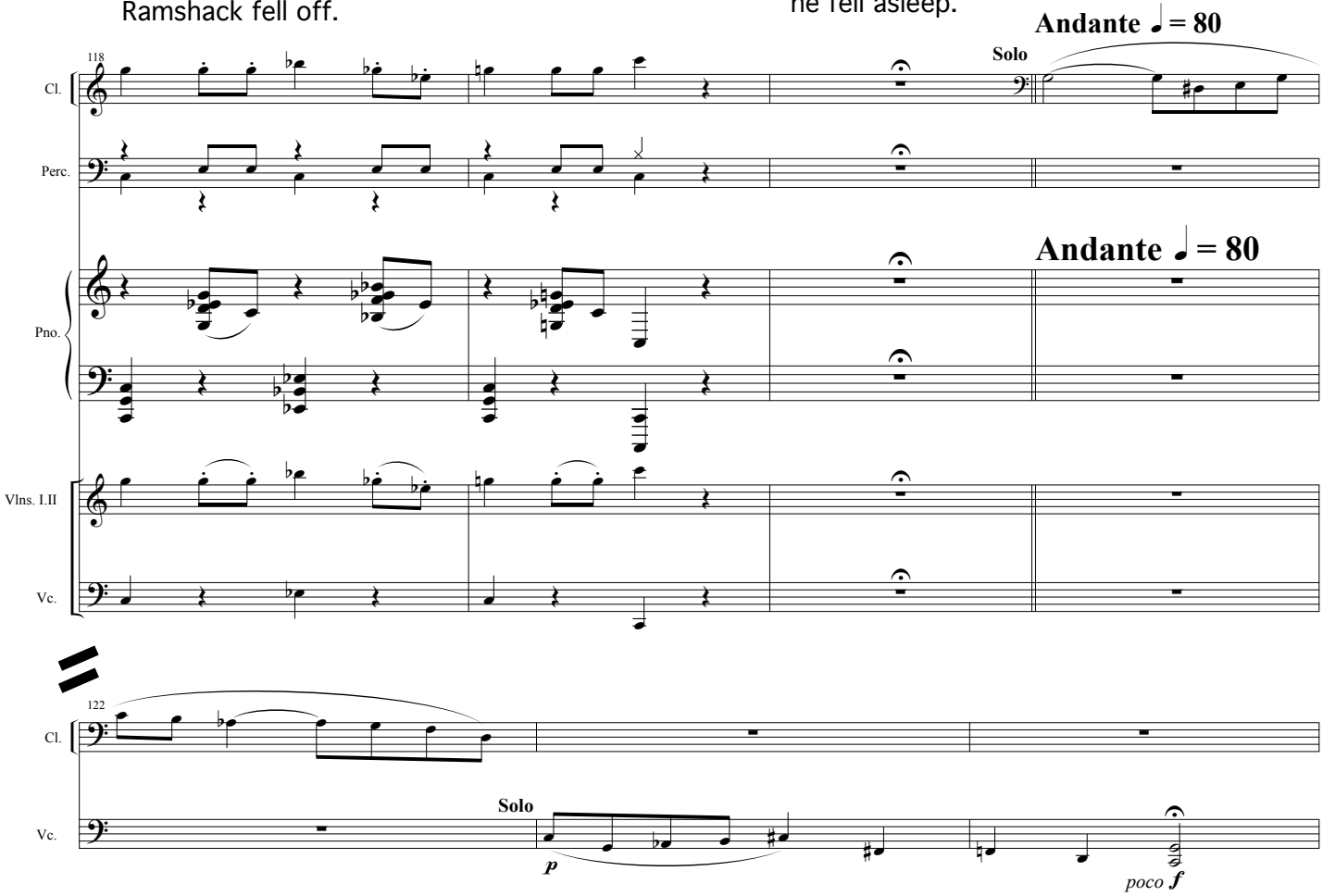
Suddenly he woke up so fast
he almost fell out of the tree.
He heard a rustle,
saw a flash of white!

It hit the tree so hard
Ramshack flew through
the air right onto its
back. Then he knew
he was flying. All he could see was rock and black holes.



He couldn't hold on much longer.
Then the thing stopped so quick,
Ramshack fell off.

He was so tired,
he fell asleep.



When he awakened Ramshack was afraid to open his eyes. He heard voices, but when he looked, he didn't know them. In front of him was an old grandfather almost like the one at home.

GRANDFATHER: How did you get here?

RAMSHACK: Came on flyin' ghost.

GRANDFATHER: Tell us about it.

NARRATOR: So Ramshack told of how he had been choosen to meet the monster, why he had run away, and how the flyin' ghost had brought him here.

RAMSHACK: But now the people will never laugh. I am no good for anything. I can never catch the monster.

NARRATOR: Then the strangest thing happened. Everybody opened their mouths and made a noise Ramshack had never heard before. It sounded like waves lapping on the sand. But little Ramshack started to cry.

GRANDFATHER: We're sorry, boy. We forgot you had never heard that sound before. We are laughing. And your people will laugh too. The great gray Mountain is nothing but an old rock. We were sent to find the monster many years ago. We looked so long, we were too old to climb back again, and the younger people wouldn't leave us. But you have shown us all a way to go back across the mountain. Your flyin' ghost was a mountain goat. Many come here every day for water. They will take us there.

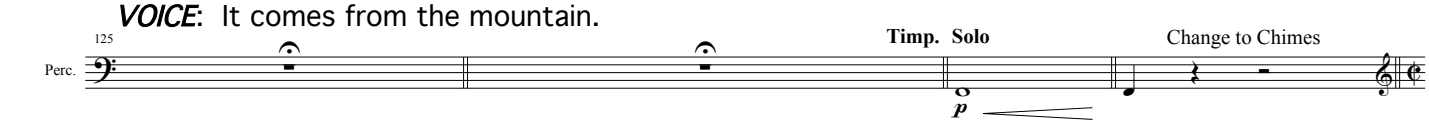
NARRATOR: Meanwile, at home, everybody was so busy preparing the feast, they forgot all about Ramshack and when the time came to send him to the mountain, he was nowhere to be found.

VOICE: We should have been nicer to him.

VOICE: He was afraid to go. He always was a 'peacock-feather'.

NARRATOR: Ramshack's mother cried, and his father looked very sad. The people sat around the fire all night. They were all asleep when suddenly they heard a noise like thunder! Everybody jumped up.

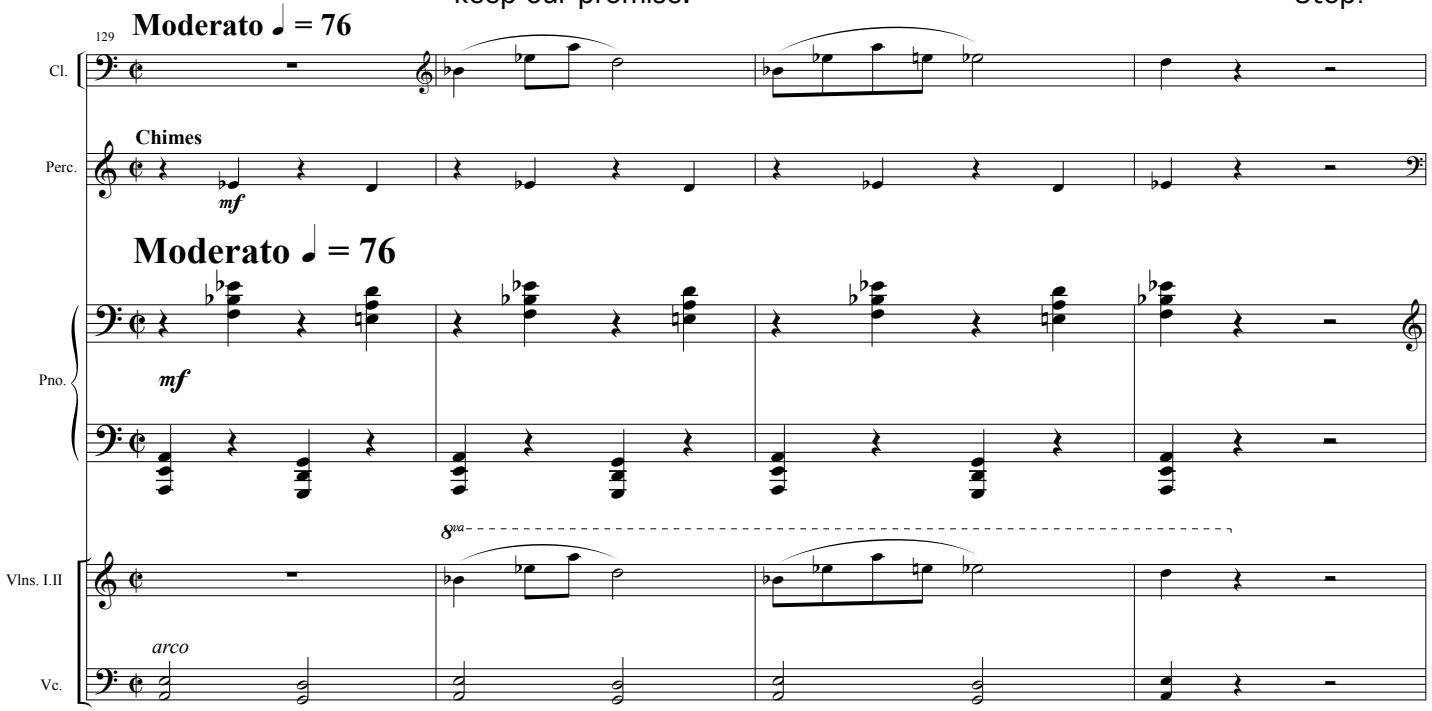
VOICE: It comes from the mountain.



VOICE:
The monster is angry because we didn't keep our promise.

VOICE:
He is coming through the woods! Run to the sea!

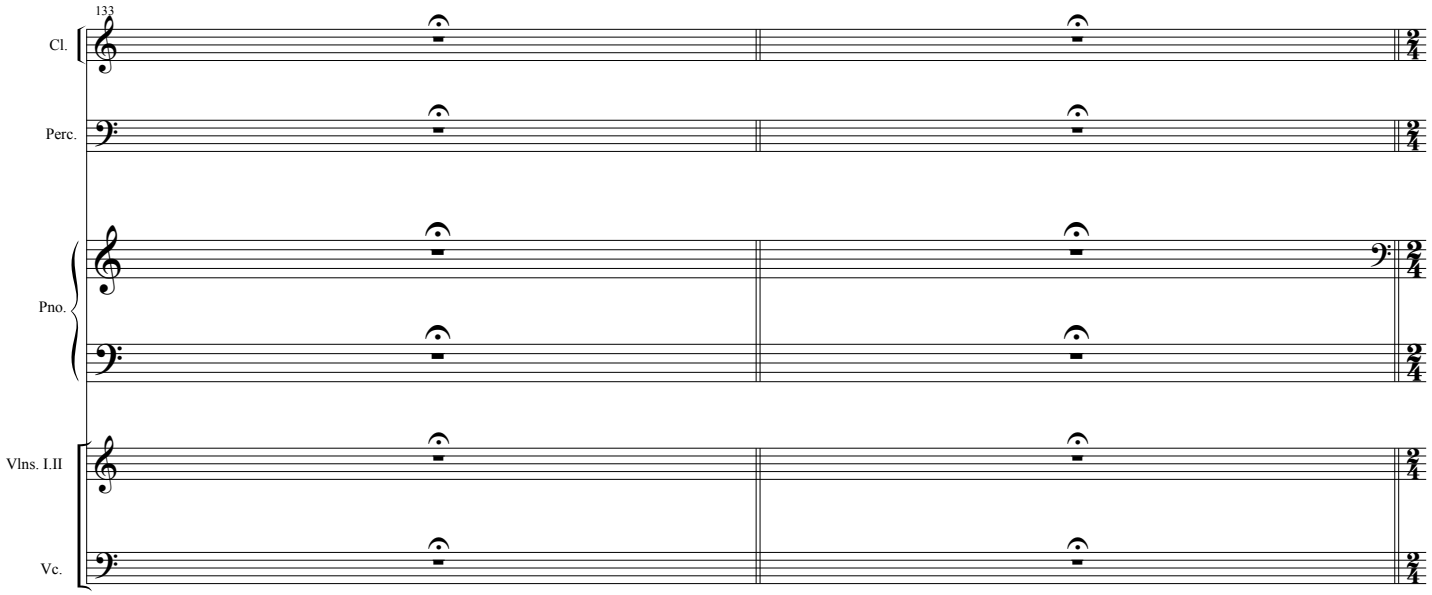
VOICE:
Stop!

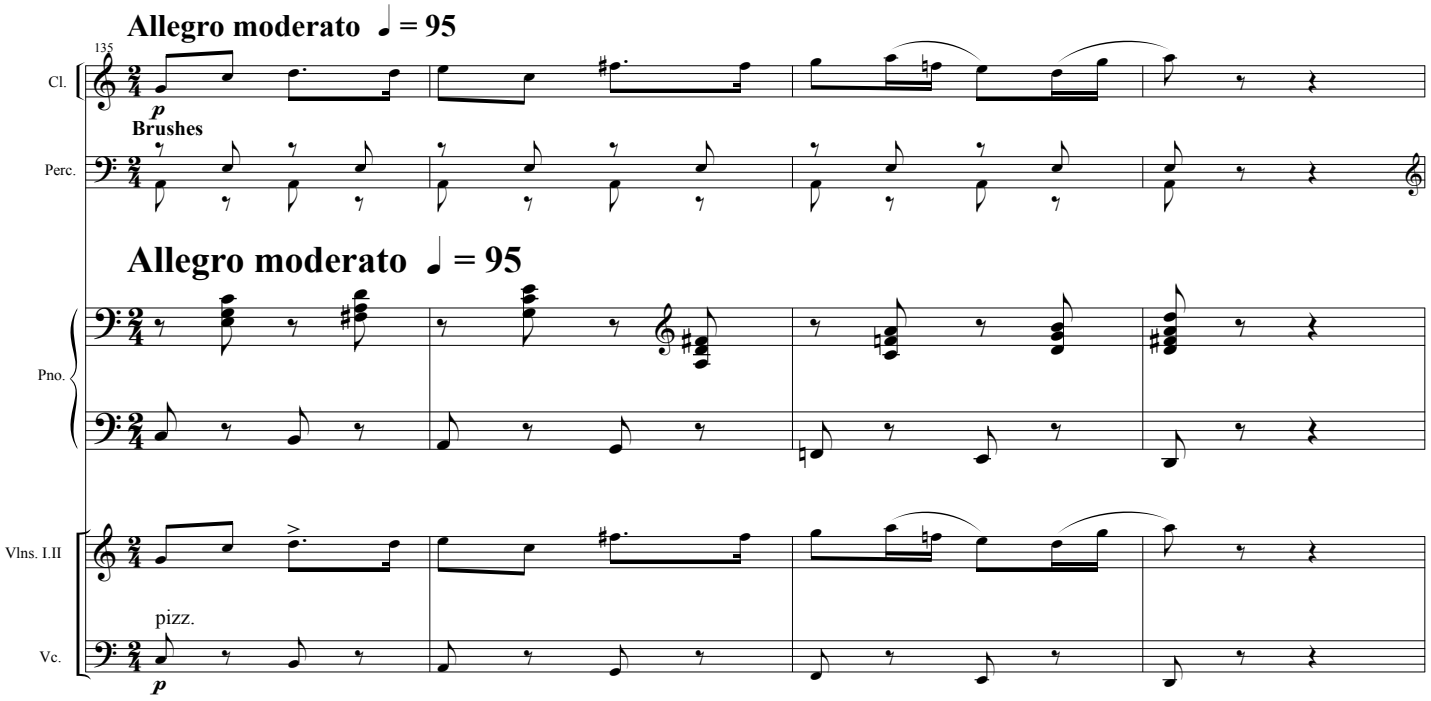


Come back! It is Ramshack! And he has brought all the people back from the mountain.

NARRATOR:
And, as the people fell off the goats, one by one, everybody shouted.

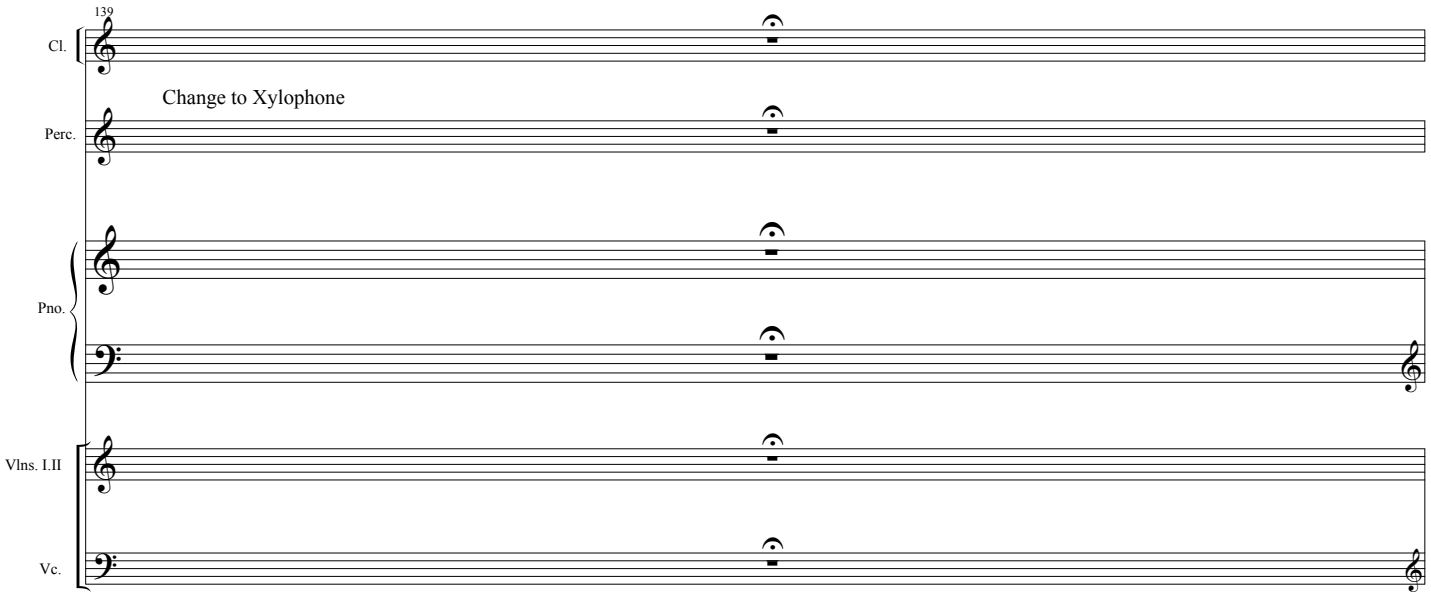
VOICE:
There is no monster. Hooray for Ramshack, our hero!





NARRATOR:
And all the people began to laugh - they laughed as they had never laughed before. Little Ramshack's mommy and daddy laughed louder than anybody. The grandfather laughed, and even little Ramshack laughed and laughed!

And for all we know, Ramshack, and everybody on the little tiny island, is still laughing



Maybe even the great gray Mountain.

