ephemeral blossom

For flute, viola, soprano, piano, and fixed electronics

Score

Max Chung

(2025)

PIECE TITLE: ephemeral blossom

DURATION: ca. 7’

INSTRUMENTATION: flute, viola, soprano, piano, and fixed electronics

PROGRAM NOTES:

Inspired by the cycles of dormancy and bloom, the piece evokes the rare and fleeting phenomenon of super-blooms in the Mojave Desert when hidden seed reservoirs awaken across the desert valley floor and alluvial fans in a sudden, vibrant emergence of color and texture.

Ephemeral blossom is part of a larger two-part composition inspired by Max's two-week experience in the Mojave desert amongst the volcanic craters and canyons. The piece highlights the transformation from dormant seeds in the lowest and driest geologic landscape in the Mojave that awakens to life briefly with bursts of vibrant color approximately once a decade when phenomenological conditions are aligned. This electroacoustic soundscape incorporates onsite recordings of the raw, unfiltered wind sounds from this stark and unsettling desert landscape, as well as EDM-inspired noisy growls in the climax of the work.

The composition begins with a blend of voice, instrumentation and electronics, featuring a sparse and limited pitch range in each motif, while building layers of percussive textures that add depth to the overall soundscape. In the final third of the piece, a startling and momentary flourish occurs, dramatically expanding the range and timbre of each instrument. The composition concludes with the interplay of electronics and the echo of the voice reverberating in the piano soundboard, evoking the haunting transience of the ephemeral blossom; a reminder of the fragility and resilience of life.

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

The piece begins with hollow and airy sounds dominating the soundscape, mirroring the stark aura of this vast landscape. Over time, pitch slowly creeps into each phrase, integrating itself while lively percussive sounds creep into the texture. The piece's phrasing is clearly articulated as individual motifs at first, with fermatas demarcating the ending, but over time they begin to weave into each other. These changes suddenly compound on top of each other like the superbloom in the last third of the work, growing into a flourish which drastically changes the range and timbre that the instruments span. This culmination is quick to disappear, and dies away until the listener is left with textures from the beginning of the piece eventually slowly disappearing.

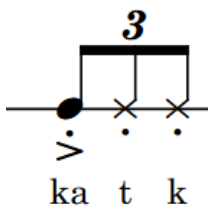
KEY:

General Notes:

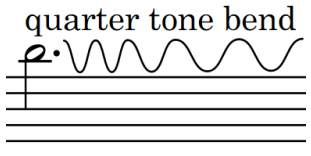
Accidentals only apply to the note they modify. Any naturals are courtesy accidentals.

At the very end, walking up the piano is indicated for almost every instrumentalist. In this case, each performer should speak or play into the piano to take advantage of its reverberation.

Each instrument has a speaking line and a typical performance line. On the speaking line, the x noteheads represent a whisper. Regular noteheads represent spoken syllables.

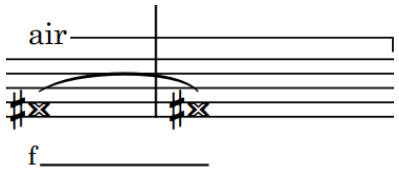


Pitch bends: pitch bends are indicated by curved lines after the note. A pitch range may or may not be specified. If it is not specified, go up or down as far as possible smoothly and quickly.

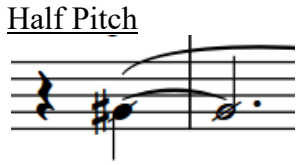


Flute:

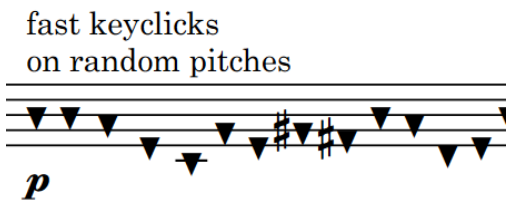
Full air: blow pure air into the flute using the consonant provided at the bottom.



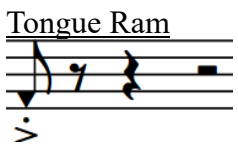
Half pitch, half air: use half pitch and half air. Changing between different amounts gradually during the held duration is preferred.



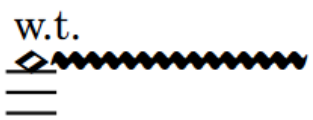
Keyclicks: Random keyclicks as quickly as possible. This is done after walking to the piano, and try to get the flute close to the inside of the piano as possible.



Tongue Ram: Prepare a tongue ram.

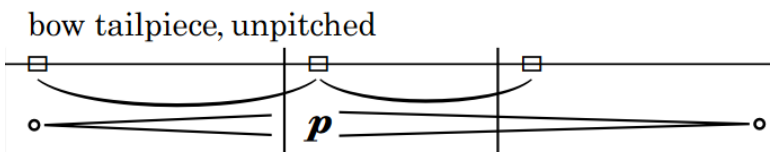


Whistle Tone: Do a whistle tone on the specified note. The whistle tone should be unstable in pitch.



Viola:

Bow tailpiece: Bow the tailpiece of the viola. Aim for an unpitched and noisy sound.



Soprano:

When possible, cues for starting pitches are indicated in the part.

Piano:

Piano lid should be raised if possible. Unless pedaling is specified, all pedal is up to the pianist's discretion. Aim for a reverberant texture, without being muddy.

ephemeral blossom

(2025)

Max Chung
(b. 1998)

Like the Wind ♩ = 92

Flute (Speech)

Flute

air

sh

p

w.t.

p

ah

pp

Viola (Speech)

Viola

bow tailpiece, unpitched

p

v

p

shu ee eu

p

Soprano (Speech)

Soprano

pp p pp pp p p pp

shu ee eu shu ee eu ah shu ee eu h

Like the Wind ♩ = 92

Piano (Speech)

Piano

h

p

1

Electronics

complete silence

©2025 Max Chung

A
13

Fl. (Speech)
Fl.
air
f
p
air
sh
p
fv
pp

Vla. (Speech)
Vla
shu ee eu ah
p
bow tailpiece, unpitched
p

S. (Speech)
p
shu ee eu
p
shu ee eu fv
S.
electronics play F#
ppp *fragile*
shu i eu

A
Pno. (Speech)
Pno.
v
pp
ah
p

2
Ele.
entrance note for soprano, filtered wind sample

B
25

Fl. (Speech)
Fl.
air
f mp p
p
half pitch
sh
p fp
chu ee
sho mm
sfp sfp p

Vla. (Speech)
Vla
shu ee eu
p sfp sfp
ah
p mp
p fragile p
gliss.
mp

S. (Speech)
S.
p sfp sfp p
shu ee eu mm mah
electronics play F#
floating
ppp p
m
pp p
zh h

B

Pno. (Speech)
Pno.
tap keys with fingernails
15ma
ppp
gliss. gliss.
8ba 8ba
chu ee eu mm
p sfp sfp p

3

Ele.
filtered wind sample with reverb, entrance note for soprano follows

C

36

Fl. (Speech)

Fl.

chu shee ka k

ku tree cha

Vla. (Speech)

Vla

ricochet

ps

ricochet

pha

S. (Speech)

S.

electronics do not cue

lonely

gliss.

m

C

Pno. (Speech)

Pno.

shu ee eu ah t v

con pedale

floating

4

Ele.

filtered wind sample with reverb, stretched music box sounds

45

D

Fl. (Speech)

Fl.

fp

p like silk

Vla. (Speech)

tru cha

fp fp

bow tailpiece, unpitched

p

cru tee peu f t t t t

p sfp p ppp

Vla

ricochet

mp

S. (Speech)

S.

electronics play E

mp like silk mp pp

mm

D

Pno. (Speech)

pha ch tru cha

p fp

shu ee eu tah

pp sfp

Pno.

p

pp

5

Ele.

filtered wind sample with reverb,
stretched music box sounds

letter "t" with delay

54

Fl. (Speech)

Fl.

mp p pp

Vla. (Speech)

Vla

p mp

jeté

mp

pa

p

S. (Speech)

S.

mp

gliss.

gliss.

p mp

ta k li cha p

Pno. (Speech)

Pno.

f mp

pp

p

Ele.

granular synthesis
of percussive hits

synthesizer playing B repeatedly

E

62

Fl. (Speech)

Fl.

pp *cantabile* ***pp*** ***p*** ***p*** 3

Vla. (Speech)

Vla

shu ee eu ch ah oh

p ***fp***

gliss. jeté ***mp*** ***p*** ***f*** pizz. ***p***

S. (Speech)

p ***sfpp*** ***pp*** ***mp*** ***sfpp*** ***mp***

shu ee ch ta tah fah hh ch

S.

mp *cantabile* ***mp***

shu ee eu ah mm

gliss.

E

Pno. (Speech)

shu kah tah shu cho teu tch

mp ***sfp*** ***sfp*** ***p*** ***sfp*** ***sfp***

Pno.

p ***mp*** ***p*** ***pp***

cantabile

6

Ele.

filtered wind sample with reverb,
stretched music box sounds

bass hits with reverb

71

F

Fl. (Speech)

Fl.

half pitch

3 3

sh k t k t k t

p pp p

Vla. (Speech)

Vla

sh oo tou ah

pp mp

ppp

S. (Speech)

S.

pp p pp 3 3 fp

ch ch ch eu ah k t k t k t ti i

F

Pno. (Speech)

Pno.

shu ee ah shu ee ah

p mp p sfz pp

7

Ele.

knocking, clocks, and running water

78

Fl. (Speech)

Fl.

sfz *mp* *p* *mp*

Vla. (Speech)

Vla

arco pizz. arco jeté

mp *mp* *pp* *sfz* *sfz* *mp* *pp*

sfz *mp* *p* *sfp*

S. (Speech)

da o shu pi eu

S.

Pno. (Speech)

shu

p

Pno.

p *sfz* 3 3 *p*

Ele.

pitched wind knocking with reverb

84

Fl. (Speech)

Fl.

kh kh kh kh

p *ppp*

half pitch

sh *p*

v *mp*

Vla. (Speech)

p

ee *f*

pt *sfz*

sh *f* *p*

Vla

jeté

3

sfz *mp*

sfp *mp*

sfp *mp*

pp

S. (Speech)

kh kh kh ch ch kh ch ch ch ch kh ch ch ch ch ch

S.

mp *f* *p*

mm

Pno. (Speech)

tah cheu pf *sfp*

Pno.

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

Ele.

dying down to wind

G

90

Fl. (Speech)

Fl.

pp f sfp p mp 3 p 3 f

tongue ram

SPEECH TACET UNTIL END

Vla. (Speech)

Vla

mp f p sfz mp f p jeté

shi li ou

fp sfp f

SPEECH TACET UNTIL END

S. (Speech)

S.

sfz sfz mp sfz p p sfp sfp

ah oh mm oh mm

shu ee

G

Pno. (Speech)

Pno.

pp sfz p mp p 3 sfz sfz mp sfz p mp

SPEECH TACET UNTIL END

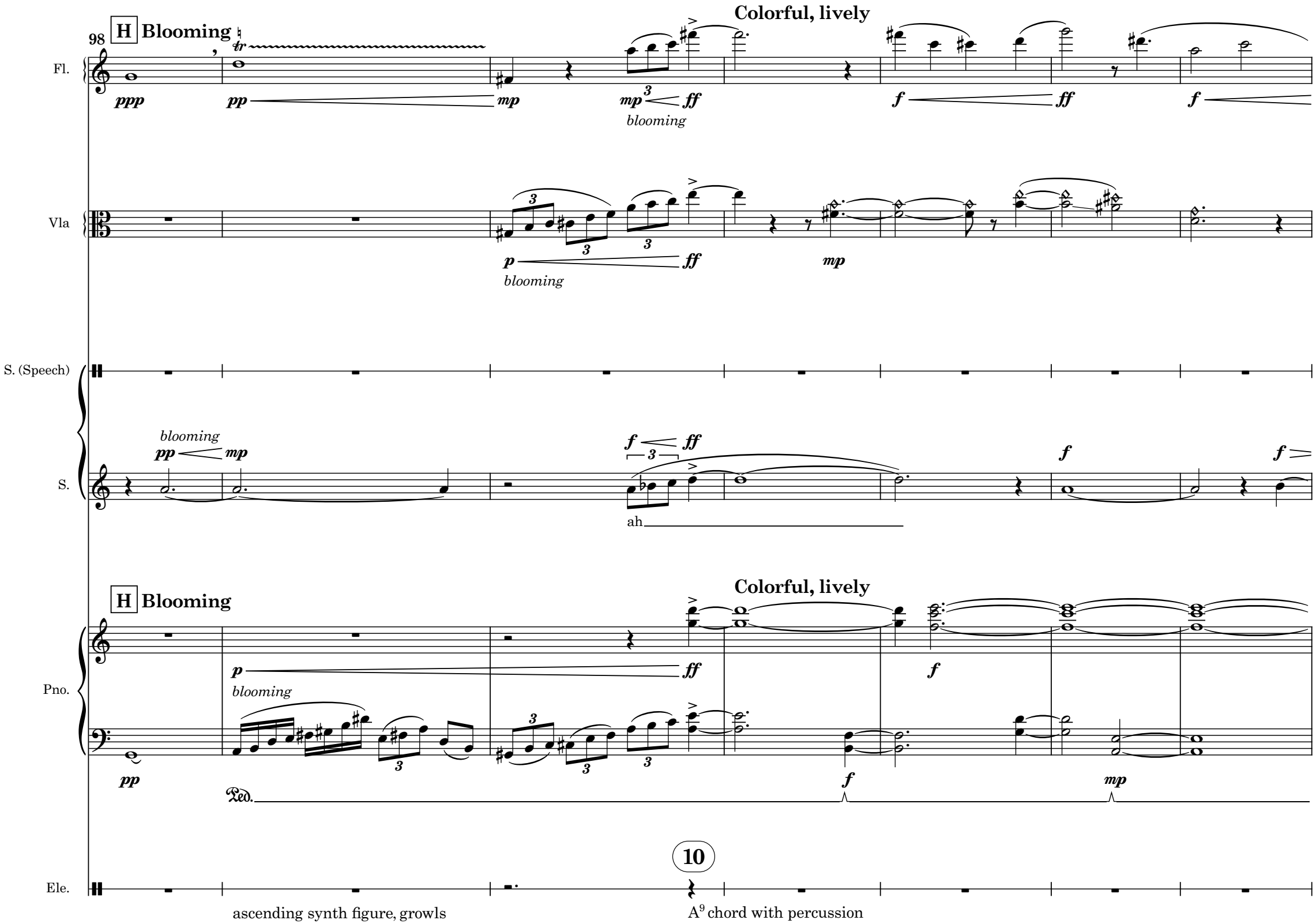
8

9

Ele.

E major chord and percussion

E major chord and percussion


98
H Blooming
Colorful, lively
Fl.
ppp
pp
mp
mp
ff
blooming
f
ff
f
Vla
p
ff
blooming
mp
S. (Speech)
blooming
pp
mp
f
ff
f
f
S.
ah
H Blooming
Colorful, lively
Pno.
p
ff
blooming
f
pp
f
mp
Ped.
10
Ele.
ascending synth figure, growls
A9 chord with percussion

105

Fl.

ff

mp ebbing

tongue ram

p

pp

Vla

p ebbing

p < *fp*

S. (Speech)

p

3

ka t k

3

ka t k

S.

p

mp ebbing

Pno.

(Ped.)

11

Ele.

A/E chord

I

112

Fl.

f *ff*
blooming

tongue ram

f

mp *f* *mp*

f

p

Vla

mp *blooming*

gliss

ff

mp

S. (Speech)

S.

blooming
mf *f* *sfz*

sfz *mp*

p *f*

I

Pno.

mp *ff*
blooming

sfz

f

ff

p

Ped.

sfz

Ped.

12

Ele.

G/A chord with growls
and found sounds

120

Fl.

ebbing

p

f *vibrant*

sfz

3

fp

pp

f

fp

Vla

gliss.

f ***p***

3

sfz ***f***

vibrant

ricochet

f

S. (Speech)

p *ebbing*

t t tuh t t

f

hwe hwe

S.

vibrant

sfz ***f***

p t p

f ***p***

gliss.

ah

Pno.

ff *vibrant*

f

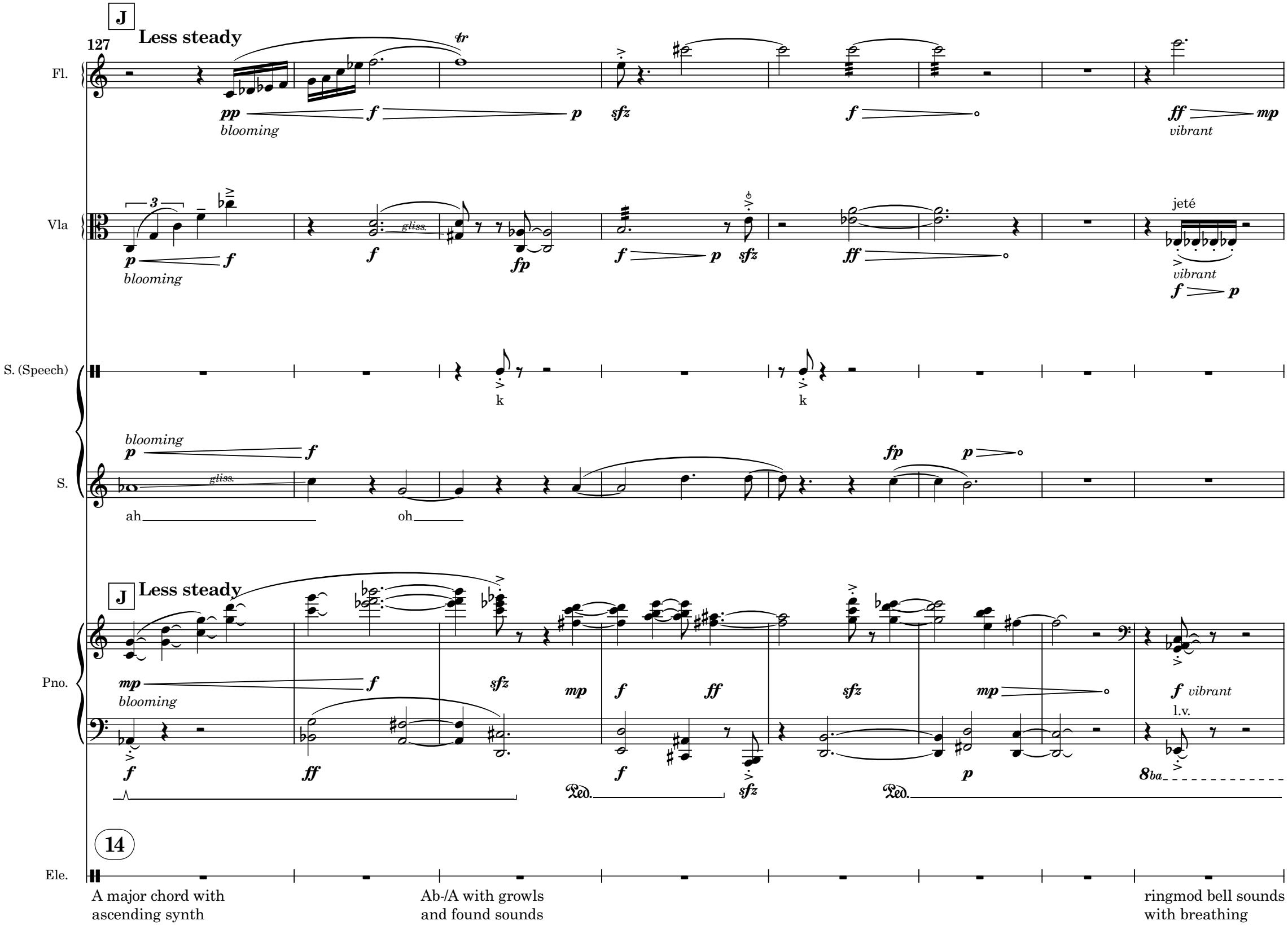
(Ped.)

Ped.

13

Ele.

bell sounds


J
Less steady
127
Fl.
pp
blooming
f
p
sfz
f
ff
vibrant
mp
Vla
3
p
f
blooming
f
gliss.
fp
f
p
sfz
ff
jeté
vibrant
f
p
S. (Speech)
k
k
blooming
p
f
S.
gliss.
ah
oh
fp
p
J
Less steady
Pno.
mp
f
blooming
sfz
mp
f
ff
sfz
mp
f vibrant
l.v.
f
ff
f
sfz
p
8ba
Ped.
Ped.
14
Ele.
A major chord with
ascending synth
Ab-/A with growls
and found sounds
ringmod bell sounds
with breathing

K

Beginning to dissolve

135

Fl.

quarter tone bend

quarter tone bend

ff p f p mp f f p<

Vla

6

f mp p f p

3

f ff mp f

gliss.

S. (Speech)

vibrant

f p f p p f

gliss. gliss. gliss.

ah oh ah uh

Beginning to dissolve

K

8va

Pno.

3 3

f ff f sfz

(8)

(Ped.) Ped.

15

Ele.

A half-diminished

142

Fl.

f *ff* *mp* tongue ram *f* *ff* *mp* quarter tone bend *ff* *p*

Vla

fp *ff* *f* *p* 3 3 *p*

S. (Speech)

f t t k t *pp* sh

S.

f *p* shi

Pno.

(8) *sfz* *sfz* *mp* *f* l.v. 3 *8va* *p* (8) *sfz* Ped. Ped.

16

Ele.

Bells cut in and glitch

L Withering Away

148

Fl.

tongue ram

sfz

w.t.

p

walk to piano

Vla

gliss.

f *mp*

p

gliss.

S. (Speech)

f

pp *p*

walk to piano

shu ee eu

S.

p *f* *p*

L Withering Away

Pno.

(8)

f

sfz *mp*

sfz *sfz* *f* *p*

pp

(8)

(Ped.) Ped. Ped.

17

Ele.

complete silence

155

Fl.

arrive at piano

play into piano,
fast keyclicks on random pitches

Extremely Freely, but Slower

Vla

walk to piano

play into piano,
bow on bridge, soft noise

S. (Speech)

shu ee eu

shu ee

arrive at piano

S.

Extremely Freely, but Slower

Bb

C

Pno.

lift and prepare L.H. after playing note

L.H., tap bottom of soundboard

Ped.

Ele.

159

wait until reverberation fades fully

Fl.

Vla

pp

S. (Speech)

sing into piano

p *clear*

S.

shu i eu

Pno.

p

(Ped.)

Ele.