THE PRODUCTION OF A CONTEMPORARY CHAMBER OPERA

(*THE BOY WHO WASN'T THERE*)

MAY HOWLETT (B.Mus., Dip.Ed.)

A creative work and dissertation in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS (RESEARCH)

DEPARTMENT OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC STUDIES
DIVISION OF HUMANITIES
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY
NSW 2109 AUSTRALIA

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DECLARATION

I, *May Howlett,* certify that the work contained in this dissertation, and in the libretto and score of the opera accompanying it, is entirely original and my own work and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

May Howlett
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Abstract

From its origins as chamber opera just over four hundred years ago, Opera developed through the 18th and 19th centuries, in length and complexity, to attain the status of 'grand', a term that most people associate with opera to this day, as these historic pieces are still the mainstay of current operatic repertoire. A synthesis of art forms requiring the most highly skilled creative and performing artists, opera remained an elitist preoccupation until relatively recent times.

At the beginning of the 20th century, radical innovations in the arts influenced by movements such as the *Bauhaus*[1] phenomenon, added to the aftermath of a world war that shattered existing socio-political structures and artistic sentiments turned from extroverted displays of grandeur to the creation of more cerebral, introverted styles. The conceptual base of visual artists such as Kandinsky, with his use of simple shapes and related primary colours matched, intellectually, the new theoretical systems of composers such as Schoenberg in his *Harmonienlehre*. These brought about some famous collaborations involving both theatre and music, such as the Stravinsky ballets and operas, while Kafka's stark writings peeled away 'niceties' to reveal layers of hypocrisy and injustice.

The effect on operatic theatre was that the fascination with the singing voice remained, but stripped of superfluous elements of display for its own sake. Concerned only with an astringent exploration of the inner dynamics of the subject, chamber opera was re-invented as the outer, more economical form for new material, with new colours emerging in the repertoire of the voice. On the threshold of a new millennium, small,

[1] The *Bauhaus* movement – an influential group of leading artists following a reductionist philosophy, centred in Berlin between the two World Wars.

often experimental companies, passionately convinced of the relevance of, and excited by the artistic potential inherent in this revitalized form of opera, formed a loose consortium of creative artists internationally, similar in spirit to the original *Camerata* of the 16th century, making use of current technologies.

Whether these newer works may be styled 'chamber opera' or 'music theatre', they represent a form in evolution, capable of further development into a new genre, a vital nexus of traditional skills applied to current issues, peculiarly suited to integration with electronic modes such as television.

Introduction

Western classical music today, especially opera and the larger instrumental forms, struggles to compete for survival amidst a multiplicity of 'popular' commercialised forms, in spite of a considerable following of devoted admirers, from blockbuster stage musicals to the ubiquitous rock and pop genres, in a 'switched-on', sound-engineered world. As even the large non-commercial theatrical and musical genres find ever greater difficulty in obtaining sponsorship to maintain funding levels, smaller groupings, such as baroque ensembles, quartets and the like, are resuscitating old repertoire to find a new and increasing audience amongst those who prefer acoustically generated sound, recorded or live. But much of this is still 'historical' music, no matter how enjoyable.

Chamber opera, with its genesis in the Baroque period around the year 1600, is a form now attracting the attention and even the passion of contemporary creative artists who are re-discovering its latent possibilities. Although traditional opera eventually eclipsed its chamber opera origins, the original medium has emerged afresh over the last 20 years or so as a genre ideally suited to contemporary composition, design and theatrical performance practice. The characteristics that distinguish chamber opera from grand opera become increasingly apparent in the contemporary genre which takes a diversity of forms, although many modern writers in the 'classical' stream seek to acknowledge in their works the roots from which the new growth springs.

Although contemporary chamber opera is concerned with the human voice as its major vehicle, it conforms neither to what is considered to be the traditional operatic style, nor

to the ethos of the Broadway or West End musical. Leading French director Michel Rostain[2] seeks a solution which eschews the word 'opera' altogether, claiming that this form of 'small' theatre is a new genre, with 'voice' and 'music' the only denominators common to what is traditionally regarded as opera. His suggestion of *Le Small-Scale* as the defining term has not been generally accepted, as it is not specific to chamber opera and could apply equally to other forms of theatre, whether musically based or not. However, the genre defined by most as 'chamber opera', lacking as yet a more specific title, is a form of theatre whose manifestations share three common attributes – it is sung, it is small-scale and it is collaborative. The fundamental criterion throughout is the link with the sung voice.

Nearly a hundred years ago in Europe initially, chamber opera made a brief but dramatic reappearance, re-invented by leading composers and theatre practitioners in conformity with its original ethos and based on dynamic collaborations between specialist writers, composers, designers, technicians and performers caught up in the ideology of the neo-classical movement. Their shared vision referred back to what they considered to be the source of civilized thought and, in aspiring to the perceived purity of classical line and imagery, paid homage to the classical age of Greek art, philosophy and poetry. Serge Diaghilev, the famous entrepreneur, in forming the *Ballets Russes* in 1909, was responsible for forging some of the most exciting of these collaborations. Artists such as Stravinsky, Picasso, and the most radical designers of the day combined in explosive partnerships resulting in revolutionary works that galvanised theatre and the arts in general. Later in the UK, Benjamin Britten and others followed on, recognizing the newer

[2] Michel Rostain: French theatre director long associated with *NewOp*, an informal collective of professional theatre artists dedicated to the development of new music-theatre.

genre's ability to adapt more readily to change than the larger forms because of its comparative brevity and economy. In the 1940s, the experimental period at the Columbia University Opera Workshop which involved such seminal figures as Gian-Carlo Menotti, encouraged the formation of a range of music-theatre companies in the USA, spreading from the east to the west coast. More recently these methods were adopted by small, dedicated companies in Australia.

With advances in technology, the multiplicity of forms is under constant re-appraisal as the bounds of artistic horizons continue to be pushed beyond established limits. This growing potential fires an ongoing international debate on the nature of contemporary chamber opera, a debate complicated even further by the issue of whether the current genre should be viewed as a form of opera at all, or simply as music theatre; but that term, too, has connotations unacceptable to some who seek to avoid impressions of superficiality. In **Chapter 4**, three productions of contemporary works I observed in the decade prior and up to the year 2001 are discussed, chosen to demonstrate the breadth of this diversity and to illustrate a range of paradigms set by leading writers. Some current practitioners and others participating in the international debate add their views. Still, consensus on a solid, universally-accepted definition of the emerging form has been reached only insofar as an agreement that contemporary chamber opera is a form in evolution.

Intent on stripping away superfluous baggage, the use of abstraction in today's writing sometimes verges on the mythological, resonating with the old use of myth and allegory. Reinforced by a tendency to minimalism in treatment, as opposed to the fake realism of operatic *mises-en-scène*, the new model is of shorter duration and more economical in

scoring and instrumentation than the larger form. The lack of formality acquired through the collaborative production processes it prefers to adopt, when linked with the imaginative use of newer technologies, makes it a powerful vehicle for a more internalised treatment of current issues and philosophies, of greater appeal to some modern audiences than grand opera's extravagant obsessions with themes of heroism and *grand amour*.

Innovative works keep appearing from time to time which are relevant to contemporary audiences in terms of themes, styles of treatment and economical production methods, despite the sponsorship difficulties common to most non-commercial productions. Part of the reason for the indifference of commercial sponsors and, at the same time, for the attraction it exerts over creative artists, is the potential for effective and sophisticated treatment of challenging themes, often questioning current ideologies, or dealing with social issues. By embracing modern technologies as integral elements rather than as complementary adjuncts superimposed at the production stage, contemporary chamber opera productions make ultimate use of opportunities to engage audiences in a time-frame roughly comparable to that of an episode of a TV drama series. Theoretically speaking, it requires only one more step – the overcoming of 'populist' commercial attitudes and their antipathy to accepting new ideas in a sung format – to achieve full integration with the small screen. But as we, the listener and viewer, are all too frequently made aware, without the benefit of being experienced - repeatedly - it is all but impossible to become 'popular', whatever that signifies in a world of mass media manipulation.

The Hypothesis

Although almost exactly four hundred years since the genesis of the genre, I have formed the hypothesis that the chamber opera of today is an evolving form whose ethos is, in the spirit of its progenitor, capable of creating a nexus between contemporary and traditional, ethnic and popular forms of theatre and composition, though now in integration with the electronic media and in an exciting fusion of new artistic and technological developments. 'Tele-opera', as it may be called, a concept equally unacceptable to media magnates and opera *aficionados* at present, may yet be recognized as possessing enormous potential to educate as much as to entertain. The flexibility devolving from the wide choices available in source materials today and, even more importantly, its willingness to employ them in original ways marks it as a genre not yet fully defined, but one of great possibilities for the future.

Defining the scope of the study

It was in 1966, as understudy to Eleanor Houston in the role of the Mother in Canberra Opera Group's initial production, a stage version of Gian-Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, that I first became aware of the significant place this work held in operatic history and how many parallels with the original genre it followed. Chamber opera as a popular medium entered another field of possibilities in 1951 when Menotti, a founding member of the seminal Columbia Opera Workshop, wrote *Amahl and the Night Visitors* specifically for television in New York. Although not intrinsically experimental in nature, this modern work was a musical revelation to a public wary of atonalism, as much for its tonal accessibility as for its exposure through the medium of television.

It was an initiative that pointed the way to the evolution of an entirely new genre, but the challenge has been largely ignored by the television medium perhaps because it held no likelihood of commercial gain, although the 'pop' video clip, a mini version of this genre, has certainly proved its worth. Admittedly, video clips are merely advertising mechanisms for the sale of recorded music, and I am not suggesting similar uses for chamber opera; I am simply pointing out the existence of video clips on television. The notion of chamber opera's increasing relevance and exciting potential, as yet virtually unexploited, is the foundation of my approach to this study, which includes literary research, along with findings from the firsthand observation of newer works in the genre in Australia and the UK[3]. These were selected according to a set of criteria forming the basis of subsequent direct and indirect discussions with those involved in the creation and production of those works.

After a backward glance at its fascinating history, this study of chamber opera viewed from a contemporary perspective, concentrates on its proliferation over the last 50 years in general and on the last two decades in particular, with special emphasis on recent developments in Australia. A brief literature review in **Chapter 1** examines the origins of, and developments in, European music theatre since its inception, making reference to seminal older works and influential composers of their day as background to progress of the genre of opera as a whole.

The use of the human voice, its distinguishing feature in all except some iconoclastic modern works, is discussed, together with the comparatively recent application of electronic amplification even in traditional genres and venues. The debate over a clear

[3] The Almeida Theatre in London presents new chamber works annually in a well-attended festival, and *c-opera* email provides a forum for discussion on new works in Europe and the USA.

definition of small works as either 'opera' or 'music theatre' is examined, a task less ambivalent in traditional examples than in contemporary works, as are problems and difficulties associated with their production.

It should be noted here that in the present context works written within the last 20 years are classified as 'contemporary'.

Aims of the Thesis

This thesis aims to demonstrate that contemporary chamber opera is a dynamic, sung form of small theatre, a composite of traditional arts and contemporary technologies easily adaptable to a variety of challenging themes and treatments by means of its relative brevity and economy. By dealing with contemporary issues within a period roughly equivalent to that of an episode of television drama, by absorbing and abstracting from some of the radical social, political and cultural influences presently affecting us, and using the diversity of musics and modern techniques now available, chamber opera as a genre has the potential to create and sustain a new medium by full incorporation with other genres such as film and video. This could create a powerful nexus, not only between the vital elements in traditional and popular music and theatre today, but with a wider field of untapped possibilities, aided by the growing appeal of the Internet and the World Wide Web.

Methods of study

My conclusions are reached through three methods of study:

- historical research,

- observation, based on a number of criteria concerned with production, with particular reference to three works observed and discussed in 2001, as well as notes on the writing of, and problems encountered in,
- the practical application of some of these criteria to an original work, *The Boy Who Wasn't There*, culminating in a CD of the completed score as a workshop performance conducted by the composer.

The study, as its title suggests, is formulated mainly on theatrical rather than on creative or interpretative considerations, by discussion with practitioners, but also includes some reference to critical concerns in related administrative functions, such as work situations, audience levels and reactions, and budgeting.

From a creative viewpoint, works are discussed only in the most general of terms, looking at thematic content and its treatment both in terms of libretto and music, visual imagery evoked through the ability of the performer to assimilate this material, and whether or not it achieves and maintains audience contact. Comprehensive musical analysis, such as the Schenkerian method applied to composition techniques, is not made in relation to works quoted in the text, as detailed study in any technical aspect of their creation, performance or administration is beyond the scope of this topic.

As the subject matter is reflexive, in that it informs by and through its own works, the methodology applied is discursive, attempting to identify and include as many of the known arguments for and against the hypothesis as possible, before reaching the conclusion. Like a lot of the evidence, this is often subjective because of the nature of creation and performance in the arts.

Thesis Structure

Following a review of the historical aspects of the development of operatic form in **Chapter 1**, **Chapter 2** examines characteristics of chamber opera, its nature, and the relationships to 'opera', the voice, and to venues and audiences over the ages.

Chapter 3 takes a closer look at the criteria applied to the debate around establishing a firm definition of the renewed genre, whether it remain as chamber opera, be given a new name, or simply use the generic term 'music theatre' to dissociate it from older forms and preserve the adaptability which currently is its main characteristic.

In **Chapter 4**, three recent premier productions, chosen to illustrate the unique character applied to a variety of forms, are studied more closely. Even while questioning the form's ability to survive at all in Australia, relying as it does on the continuity of a few staunch companies, it appears that, in groups such as *NewOp,* a core of practicing artists exists overseas, working in an expanding repertoire on an international level. Having seen several innovative Australian works in the genre in the 1990s, I was fired with enthusiasm to attempt a small-scale multi-media theatre work myself, convinced that the real hope for the future of composed music lies in the smaller forms.

In terms of my work, production also applies to the re-shaping of both libretto and music of a previous work of mine, a mini-opera version of *The Boy Who Wasn't There*, into the chamber opera format. This included its subsequent production as a workshop recording using the reduced (piano rehearsal) vocal score in the absence of available instrumentalists. Full scores of Versions I and II with revised libretto, a piano score of the

newer multi-media work, a cassette tape of the 2MBS/FM[4] radio broadcast of Version 1 as aired on its Education program, and a CD of the *Sitzprobe* of Version II, performed by an *ad hoc* group of singers recorded with the assistance of staff members of the Department of Contemporary Music Studies of Macquarie University, are appended to the text. The history and some broad analysis of both versions of the work, with a comparison and evaluation of production methods used, are to be found in **Chapter 5**.

Chapter 6 recognizes some of the underlying factors causing difficulties in mounting experimental productions here: aspects of pre-production such as funding, venue development and a lack of exposure are entered into, revealing some of the reasons why opportunities for artistic innovation are so few in an 'advanced' country like Australia, where creative talent abounds. These observations on arts management are supported by information, either as statistics or from reports, derived from research into official Australian government publications and those of relevant organisations, both here and overseas. On the more positive side, collaborative enterprises, as well as touring and education could provide possibilities for future development, with festivals a useful adjunct to promotion and public education. The **Appendix** lists a selection of policies initiated by various companies and institutions, scattered around the globe, determined to overcome obstacles experienced in mounting productions of a non-commercial nature.

[4] 2MBS/FM is a Fine Music Sydney radio station, of mainly classical repertoire(ABS 1997).

Chapter1: Historical Background and Literature Review

The combination of music and drama, harnessed to themes both sacred and secular has produced, over the ages and in many cultures, a multitude of forms in a spectrum ranging from the grandest and most formal of theatrical experiences to smaller, more intimate events, from the realm of 'high'[5] art works to commercially-oriented or populist vehicles no longer associated with 'opera'. Over the last four centuries, the most elaborate 'elitist' manifestation of music theatre emanating from European countries, a legacy of the Italian *maniere*[6] of the *cinquecento*[7] to be more specific, is known to us simply as *opera*, which has 'lighter' offshoots ranging from operetta to the current form of the musical. Chamber opera, smaller both in terms of length as well as in requiring fewer resources, also mutated into a diversity of popular musical entertainments like cabaret, a relatively recent variation.

To gain an insight into the contemporary model, it is necessary to delve into the past to follow the genealogy of chamber opera from its origins as, in its contemporary resurgence, it appears to resonate with many innovations occurring in an Italy still under the influence of the *Renaissance*, around the year 1600. In its progress over the intervening four hundred years, the original genre has undergone a series of startling transformations, evolving into the various forms of European music theatre we know today.

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[5] The term 'high' art is used here to describe multi-layered art forms, like opera.
[6] A stylised fashion in art and manners, centred on 'grace' and restraint, first used in regard to sixteenth-century Italian literature; also applied to music and, later, to other art forms.
[7] The sixteenth century, and the style of art which arose in Italy in the 1500's.

(i) Origins and More

The Florentine *Camerata*, a group of accomplished musicians and writers centred on the humanist court of the Medici at the end of the sixteenth century, met informally to exchange ideas in a dialectic focused on the question of genre in music and the appropriate musical conventions to be used in tragedy, comedy and their favoured medium, the *pastoral*[8]. In doing so, they created and performed experimental works springing from long traditions of theatrical performance of all kinds, from courtly *intermedii*[9] to the ancient *commedia dell' arte*[10]. At the same time, a revolution in the construction of instruments, such as the viol family, and innovations in wind instruments was taking place. These improvements enabled the *Camerata* to apply what was, traditionally, the vocabulary of vocal writing to an instrumental repertoire as in the *concertato* madrigal (such as found in Monteverdi's third, and only surviving, book of *Madrigals for Viol Consort*). This practice became common, facilitating the development of harmony, its chordal structures challenging the established polyphonic style, a choral tradition of church music based on counterpoint, a system composed of the interweaving of a number of melodic lines.

Essentially a new medium, *opera* was the result of a collaboration between members of the *Camerata*, who aimed 'to restore the dramatic use of music as practised in ancient Greek drama' (Rosenthal & Warrack 1966, p. 63) by combining established forms of drama with a new dimension of music brought about by the revolutionary changes in

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[8] *Pastoral:* a stage piece, originally balletic in nature, based on legends or pastoral poetry of restrained lyric passion.

[9] *Intermedii*- choral interludes within a play, often denoting a passage of time.

[10] C*ommedia del'arte* – ancient, popular theatre with stock characters, influential in the evolution of drama and opera bouffe.

composition and performance techniques, enhanced by the radical developments in instrument-making.

The new breed of composers, members of the *Camerata* such as Peri, 'discarded the elaborate choral polyphony of the madrigal style as barbaric' (Scholes 1967 p.710), adopting a less rigid homophonic model, or *monody* which favoured a melodic line 'imitating more or less the inflexions of speech, and accompanying the voice by playing mere supporting chords' (Scholes 1967, p. 710). 'Barbaric' is quite a strong word to use in this context, but it may be argued that here it denotes 'primitive', a comparative term when taking into account the refinements that sprang up so suddenly as a result of the interplay of musical and dramatic intelligences within the *Camerata* (librettists like Cesti and Bardi and composers such as Peri and Monteverdi); innovative minds working together to bring entirely new elements into a new through-written *schema* welding drama to music. A wider spectrum of instrumental colours was available: in wind instruments through the growing use of the reed and the transverse flute, viols were supplemented, and eventually superseded, by refinements in the violin family as well as in the development of the straightened bow for the strings which allowed more tonal inflexions and dynamic possibilities. As words gained in importance, the reaction from group or choral to solo singing saw the introduction of the strophic variation form which, later in the 17th century, with or without the use of instrumental *ritornelli*[11], evolved into the *aria da capo*. Experimental composition techniques forged to accommodate the dramatic scenarios brought forth a totally new, more expressive secular form of music-making combining monody and harmony - melodic line with appropriate aggregations of

[11] Instrumental interludes already used in earlier genres such as the *intermedii*.

pitches beneath underlining dramatic situations and portraying a variety of emotions - built on an architectural concept capable of supporting developments implicit in the sophisticated literary structure of the libretto. Whereas, in the polyphonic age, music had ruled the words, now, almost immediately, and until the latter part of the seventeenth century, words became the stimulus for the imaginative shaping of melody, of harmony foreshadowing chromaticism in some places and, in Monteverdi's case in particular, of sophisticated counter rhythms (as in his word-based variations on a basic rhythmic unit, sometimes a strict dance form such as the *fauxbourdon*), nuances and references adding depth, to delight the *aficionado*.

It took only one further step to incorporate 'high' drama, based mainly on characters from ancient Greek myth or legend, into the equation, building on earlier masques and *Rappresentazione,* which were lavish entertainments at grand occasions, such as weddings and coronations, amongst the aristocracy. The most lavish and seminal of these events, believed by many to be the true antecedents of chamber opera, took place at the wedding of Ferdinando I de'Medici to Christine of Lorraine in 1589, where *intermedii*, written by composers such as Peri, Caccini and others, were interspersed between plays devised by Count Bardi around the *Camerata*'s main ideological theme, the *meraviglia*, or magical power of music in the ancient world[12].

Jacopo Peri's original *Dafne* (1597), now lost, was considered by some to be the first real opera, although many reserve that distinction for Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo (*Mantua, 1607) described on the title page as a *favola in musica,* or 'legend in music', set to a libretto by Alessandro Striggio (1573-1630). *Orfeo* marked the first appearance of the

[12] An event described in Ghisi, F. & others, '*Les Fetes du Mariage de Ferdinand de Medicis et de Christine de Lorraine, Florence, 1589", i*: *Musique des Intermèdes de la Pellegrina*, Paris, 1963.

stile rappresentativo, invented by Monteverdi, to express emotions in naturalistic fluctuations of dramatized speech. By achieving a harmonious balance between *recitative* (vocalised speech), *aria* (song) and chorus, the style in which it was written developed so successfully that it became, if not the form itself, at least the template for works written in operatic form.

Between *Orfeo* and *The Coronation of Poppea,* Monteverdi's last full-length opera (1642) (completed by his pupil, Pier Francesco Cavalli (1602-1676)), a great leap forward was made in dramatic intensity, by the use of stringent solo and ensemble vocal work that all but did away with the artificiality of a chorus presence, and a harmonic diversity informed by Monteverdi's instrumental writings, creating a landmark in operatic form. Ignoring the structural rigidity of the fashionable Roman five-act form, or the lure of mere decorative spectacle, Monteverdi captured the passions generated by the mad Emperor Nero graphically portrayed in the libretto by Franceso Busenello (1598-1659). Others of Monteverdi's surviving works retain their vitality to this day, demonstrating a high dramatic sensibility which achieved its full effect through an expressive musical language. The techniques he employed continue to exert a seminal influence on opera, particularly on the choral and chamber works of contemporary writers such as Alexander Goehr, as will be discussed later in the text.

Contemporary chamber opera is as 'synthetic' as its progenitors, in terms of being a complex of new and older elements, but often highly abstracted in its treatment. The 'borrowing' nature of opera, taking elements of old or prevailing philosophies and art forms and welding them into something new, also derives much from the calibre of the multi-skilled artists it attracts to the work in a spirit of cooperation. In Brooklyn USA,

American Opera Projects Inc., founded in 1988, is devoted entirely to creating, developing and presenting new works mostly devoted to their American heritage and to their American audience. This dedication to local relevance, and its avowed mission of following a new creative project through from inception to production, provides a model for a contemporary chamber opera company with a policy of home allegiance – a useful idea for use in specific purposes, such as education. The integrity of their operation attracts promising young American creative and performance artists, such as librettist-composer Mark Adamo, to workshop new ventures with them through to production (for further information see www.operaprojects.org).

(ii) Further developments

During the centuries after Monteverdi, opera underwent a series of transformations into a number of larger and smaller forms. There were the collaborations of Cavalli and his librettist, Giovanni Faustini (1615-1651), whose three-act format revolved around princely lovers contrasted with stock lower-class characters from *commedia dell'arte.* Handel's baroque masterpieces perpetuated the heroic mould of *opera seria*, where comedy was forbidden and characters were drawn from the gods of the Greek pantheon, or from a panoply of legendary historic heroes, such as *Julius Caesar* (1724) or *Xerxes* (1728). The lighter chamber works such as Mozart's youthful *Bastien et Bastienne* (1768), a one-act *Singspiel*, were considered to be relatively unimportant. *Singspiel* was 'a German form of vernacular opera, corresponding to *opéra comique* and ballad opera…which included spoken dialogue', a form which had lapsed into virtual obscurity since its first appearance in the late seventeenth century (Rosenthal & Warrack 1972, p. 373).

Written for less aristocratic audiences, Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782) is an outstanding example of the *Singspiel* form, which reached its apotheosis in Mozart's last opera, *Die Zauberflöte* (1791), a fantasy full of esoteric imagery. The welding into a cohesive unit of the rather chaotic libretto by fellow Mason and theatre director, Emanuel Schikaneder, called forth his most masterly skills. The music becomes the magic, transcending the form in expressing the divinity of the spiritual powers. Mozart's 'comic' operas, on the other hand, were a contentious mixture of social satire and disarming music, as in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1786), where the common barber succeeds in denying his aristocratic master *droit de seigneur* over his bride.

Ballad opera was 'an English form of independent origin' (Scholes 1967, p. 75), closely resembling the German *Singspiel* upon which, according to Scholes, 'it had an influence' (Ibid, p. 75), as well as having much in common with the French *vaudeville* of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, which had its beginnings as a parody of opera proper. *The Beggar's Opera* of John Gay (1728), the first true ballad opera, and the only one of its kind to survive into the present time, was so outrageously successful that it formed the model for a succession of similar works until 1736, after which new works were few. In it, a series of ballads or narrative poems, set to the music of popular songs, was strung together with spoken dialogue in the vulgar tongue, forming a genre readily accessible to the public, who knew the tunes and could understand the words. This put a great strain on Handel and his rival Buononcini, the reigning monarchs of Italian opera in London at the time. Scholes reports Handel's complaint that audiences 'pelted Italian opera off the stage with *Lumps of Pudding* (the name of the last tune in *The Beggar's Opera*)' (Scholes 1967, p. 75). There was a similar movement towards folk opera in

Scotland, and the ballad form of lyric opera was later revived as English Opera by composers such as Vaughan Williams.

A more sophisticated development became known as *Dramma per musica*:

> *A musical dramatic work in which the actors sing some or all of their parts; a union of music, drama and spectacle with music normally playing a dominant role* (Sadie 1988, p. 538).

The *dramma per musica* (or 'drama through music') of 17th and 18th century Italian opera, although still of a 'serious' nature, introduced reforms in structure suited to the philosophic ideals of the period, characterized by a social order where aristocrats were portrayed as noble masters mingling with the gods and ruling benignly over contented, lowly subjects. Petro Metastasio (1698-1782), master of the rigidly structured libretto of this period, achieved great popularity through his elegant verse and the many opportunities his text provided for action-halting arias to please the reigning divas and their admirers. 'His commitment was to a musical as well as literary conception of *opera seria*' (Parker 1994, p. 54). But Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1788), while written within the constraints of the *opera seria* formula, transcended its confines by the composer's dramatic delineation, through a powerful score, of the anti-hero created by librettist, Lorenzo da Ponte (1749-1838), who reverses the ideological cliché by consigning his philandering 'nobleman' to an eternity in the fires of Hell.

On the subject of Mozart's electrifying influence on the dramatic scope of opera, E.J. Dent in *Mozart's Operas: A Critical Study* (rev. 1991) is both authoritative and comprehensive, while Jane Glover, by selective quotes from his correspondence in *Mozart's Women* (2005), provides informative insights into his ethics, his composition methods including his 'tailor-made' arias, and his hands-on approach to creative and

production processes, collaborating on libretti and teaching his singers to act in a natural manner. However, on the whole, the formalism of *opera seria* was about to expunge naturalistic acting in opera for over a century. It is interesting to note that Mozart's use of the elements - of thunder, and lightning to reinforce the emotional impact of the Don's descent into the nether regions, for instance - pre-empted their ritual use in the filmic genres, and to speculate that even certain outdated conventions in music, cadence and gesture, as in melodrama, for instance, may be corruptions of the noble art of rhetoric as practiced in the time of Mozart.

A variety of styles most commonly thought of as representative of 'opera', such as *bel canto* or the 'art of beautiful singing' of the 18th century, flourished into the 19th century, often surviving absurd librettos and acting excesses as a result of diva worship. Some of its exponents, hailed by many for their elaborate *arias* and exaggerated gestures, supplied rich material for generations of music-hall comedians as the century progressed. A reaction against the superficiality of historical operas with their 'heroic or amorous intrigue' was activated in 1754 by librettist Francesco Algarotti's precept of '*saggio sopra l'opera in musica*', or the search for 'meaning' within his elegant texts, restoring a simpler style in keeping with French operatic principles practised by the National Opera company established by Louis XIV (Dent & Smith 1980, p. 612).

This school of thought provided inspiration for the operas of Christoph Willibald von Gluck (1714-1787), who set in motion musical reforms, as stated in the preface to his *Alcestis* (1767), since credited with laying the foundations of modern music-drama. His principal aim was 'to restrict music to its true office by means of expression and by following the situations of the story'(Rosenthal & Warrack 1972). Noted for their

simplicity, elegance and clarity, his works also featured the re-introduction of the chorus and the ballet, already well developed as an art form in France.

Not until the Music Dramas of Richard Wagner (1813-1883) were there again such sweeping reforms. In 19th century Germany, 'the concept of opera as a unique and indissoluble union of words and music (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) took hold' (Dent & Smith 1980). In France, Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) introduced the *idée fixe* ('fixed idea') composition technique, where a theme associated with a character is metamorphosed to illuminate the dramatic context of the moment as the plot develops. In this technique, developed later as the *Leitmotif* of Wagnerian opera, the creative use of 'a musical phrase that is associated with a character or a quality or an idea', opened the way to complexities of musical character delineation, of harmonic texture, and an enrichment of orchestral tones hitherto unexplored (Wagner, Wagner & Wagner 1944, p. v).

Liberating reforms in Italian opera at about the same time brought *opera ballo*, or grand opera, to its peak, mainly through the many-faceted genius of Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), evident from the violence and passion of his first great work, *Rigoletto* (1851), the tender musical characterisations of *La Traviata* (1853) and on into the grandeur of *Aida* (1871). The momentum caused by this tide swept on through the *verismo* of the operas of Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924), such as *La Bohème* (1896), and into the intense musical psychoanalyses of his female protagonists in Richard Strauss (1864-1949) one-act operas *Salome* (1905), *Electra* (1909), and *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1916). An overview of the whole process is given in (Grout 1988), or there is the *Oxford Illustrated History of Opera* (Parker 1994).

Music Drama is the term that has come to be associated mainly with the massive legend-based operas of Richard Wagner 'in which the musical, verbal and scenic elements…serve one dramatic end' (Wagner, Wagner & Wagner 1944, p. v). Wagner, who acted upon his dictum that opera is 'a combination of the Muse's Arts' (Wagner, Wagner & Wagner 1944, p. v), can best be described as the precursor of the film-maker's concept of *auteur*. Not only did he compose the music for his vast works, he also wrote his own librettos, in verse, adapting Nordic myths and re-fashioning legendary heroes to give voice to his self-styled philosophy of 'redemption through love' (Wagner, Wagner & Wagner 1944, p. preface):

> *Many twentieth-century composers, particularly some with a concern for the musico-dramatic integrity of opera, have followed Wagner's example in providing their own librettos* (Sadie 1980, p. 615) .

His search for total perfection in conveying the totality of his concepts included the design and building, with the aid of his patron, King Ludwig II of Bavaria, of his own *Festspielhaus,* a unique opera house opened in 1876 at Bayreuth (Bavaria), to provide the ideal conditions for the production of his demanding works. The annual Wagner repertoire season is comparable to a pilgrimage, accompanied as it is by the rituals he instigated. It is almost impossible to gain admission to performances as they are booked out years in advance. A severe reaction by creative artists against such grandiose spectacles of heroes in lengthy sagas based on myth and legend (such as the Ring cycle) was bound to come, although Bayreuth's festival maintains a loyal following despite the aversion by some, in days gone by, of the patronage of the erstwhile dictator, Adolf Hitler. Hastened by a World War the like of which had never been seen before, the work of a new wave of artists like Pablo Picasso and composer and theorist Arnold

Schoenberg, exemplified a new kind of classicism impatient with the indulgent sentimentalism and overblown imagery often associated with late Romantics such as Richard Strauss.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, radical innovations in the arts influenced by movements such as the *Bauhaus*[13] phenomenon, added to the aftermath of a world war that shattered existing socio-political structures and artistic sentiments turned from extroverted displays of grandeur to the creation of more cerebral, introverted styles. The conceptual base of visual artists such as Kandinsky, with his use of simple shapes and related primary colours matched, intellectually, the new theoretical systems of composers such as Schoenberg in his *Harmonielehre*, bringing about some famous collaborations involving theatre and music, such as the Stravinsky ballets and operas. Bertolt Brecht (1898-1856), greatly influenced by the dramatic writing and performance persona of Frank Wedekind (1864-1918), developed a style of epic theatre where ideas supplanted the cult of personality through a 'scientific' approach known as alienation (A Effekt) which discourages the audience from identifying with the characters. Later, when he teamed up with composer Kurt Weill (1900-1950), a perfect collaboration produced satirical songs and theatre works, including *Die Dreigroschenoper (1922)* after John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728).

Another innovator, influential British theatre director Peter Brook (1925 -), also turned to epic forms, basing the philosophy expounded in his book, *The Empty Space* on the concept of a 'holy theatre' where performers regard the stage as a 'sacred space', while Kafka's stark theatrical writings peeled away 'niceties' to reveal layers of hypocrisy and

[13] The *Bauhaus* movement – an influential group of leading artists following a reductionist philosophy, centred in Berlin between the two World Wars.

injustice in society. The effect on operatic theatre was that the singing voice as a powerful medium remained paramount, but stripped of superfluous elements of display for its own sake. Concerned only with an astringent exploration of the inner dynamics of the subject, chamber opera was re-invented as the outer, more economical genre for new material, with new colours emerging in the repertoire of the voice.

(iii) Opera: the evolving form

According to the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, the term 'opera' derives from the Italian *opera* (itself the plural of the Latin *opus* meaning 'work') (Sadie 1980, vol.13, p. 545). This authority goes on to point out that we are dealing here with a form emerging from the central traditions of western culture, although ancient and well-developed forms of traditional music theatre akin to opera still exist in Asian countries.

The *Peking* (now more frequently *Beijing)* or classical, and the *Kunju*, based on folk music, are the main operatic forms of China, whilst the *Noh* of Japan, the W*ayang* shadow puppet theatre of Indonesia, and certain versions of the *Ramayana*, are still an inherent part of their respective cultures. All are forms of theatre where heightened vocal lines (often resembling pitched speech or *recitative*) have traditional music accompanying the text in a symbiotic relationship.

Hybridisation of Western techniques with elements abstracted from these ancient Asian and South-East Asian art forms is increasingly practiced in some contemporary works, such as *Yué ling jié (Moon Spirit Feasting)*, a ritual opera based on Taoist beliefs of mischievous spirits wandering the earth in the seventh month, who must be appeased by feasting and street opera. The young Australian composer, Liza Lim (1966-) won the APRA Australian Music Centre Classical Award of 2002, for *Best Composition by an*

Australian Composer with this work, at once a recognition of the composer, of the artistic value of cultural transposition, and of contemporary chamber opera as an authentic and viable medium.

Over the past thirty years, the scholarly perception of chamber opera as a genre seems to have become less ambivalent than it has been in previous centuries. In the 1972 edition of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Opera*, the entry on chamber opera contains the following:

> *(It) has now come to mean a work cast on a small scale, generally with a few singers and instrumentalists, consequently telling a simple story and lasting but a short time* (Rosenthal & Warrack 1972, p. 73).

The 1980 edition of the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* defines chamber opera as a 'term used to designate twentieth century operas of small and intimate proportions using a chamber orchestra' (Sadie 1980, p. 118).

The *Norton/Grove Concise Encyclopaedia of Music* describes opera in general as 'a musical dramatic work in which the actors sing some or all of their parts' and 'a union of music drama and spectacle with music normally playing a dominant role' (Sadie 1988, p. 538). The term 'chamber opera' applies, according to the same authority, not only to 18th century works such as Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona* (1733), but also to 'twentieth century operas of small proportions using a chamber orchestra' (Sadie 1988, p. 144). Benjamin Britten's *Turn of the Screw* (1954) cited as a 20th century example although economical of resources, cannot be described as 'a simple story' by any criteria that may be applied, both in terms of its literary merit and its uncompromising score based on the tone-row. In other words, the rather patronising attitude taken towards the shorter form in

1972 has vanished and later it is seen even more positively as 'small' only in terms of the resources used (Warrack & West 1992, p. 132).

By 1992, the fundamental change of attitude towards chamber opera as a working genre is reflected in the *Oxford Dictionary of Opera*'s closing words in its entry on chamber opera:

> *In recent years a number of groups have found in the smaller scale of chamber opera not only economy and convenience for touring, but a form of opera yielding rich creative results in its own right* (Warrack & West 1992, p. 132),

whilst under the heading of 'Chamber opera and music theatre' in the Opera section of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Andrew Lamb states the matter most succinctly:

> *For many 20th-century composers, rejection of the large scale and elaborate resources of traditional opera was perceived as the best route to a more intense and focussed kind of dramatic expression* (Sadie 2001, Vol. 18, p. 448).

The conclusion that may be drawn from these authoritative assessments is that contemporary chamber opera possesses a number of attributes consistent with a form in the process of growth. In revisiting the ethos of the original genre, and by attempting to harness existing global and technological possibilities, creative theatre artists are currently forging new artistic dimensions through the medium of chamber opera.

(iv) Chamber opera - more recent innovations

In the 20th century, in countries lacking a strong operatic tradition of their own, such as England despite the importance of *Dido and Aeneas* (1689), an early 'miniature' opera by Henry Purcell, and especially in newer countries like USA and Australia, composers were drawn to the smaller form, having been deeply affected by two new movements in music.

One was Naturalism, to be found in 'folksy' works by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), such as in his ballad opera, *Hugh the Drover* (1924*)*) with its music based on English folk tunes, or in ballets based on folk heroes and 'composed' folk music, such as *Billy the Kid,* by Aaron Copland (1900-1990). Although less obvious, this influence still resonates in some English music, as in works of Peter Maxwell Davies (1934-), and in America, in such pieces as *Shaker Loops* by John Adams (1947-). But it was the Expressionism emanating from Germany that was destined to trigger the next great revolution, creating havoc with accepted structural principles in music and theatre, influencing both visual and performance arts into the 21st century.

From a musical point of view, awareness of chamber opera as a viable medium of expressionism developed exponentially in theatrical terms with composers such as Holst, Stravinsky and Schoenberg writing their experimental masterpieces in a philosophical context that forged a new fraternity amongst artists of varying disciplines. In the *Sprechgesang* of Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912), a technique that may be described as an extenuated form of speech requiring a range of vocal skills to span intervals in a style possibly influenced by the heightened speech cadences of ancient Asian forms of theatre such as Peking Opera or less by aggressive moments from the Japanese *Noh*. In *Pierrot Lunaire*, the single vocalist is accompanied mainly by a string quartet, an early example of the search for a new, minimalist brand of chamber opera.

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) stretched the symbolic approach even further into 'alienation', in *Renard (1916-17)*, a chamber opera which he described on the title page of the score as *burlesque*, by placing the all-male singers in the pit and giving the action to dancers, a technique he continued to use in his opera, *Oedipus Rex*, a ritualistic study

of the myth, and in *Perséphone* (1934). Composers like Stravinsky were 'going back to basics', as in the use of narrative themes based on Greek tragedies for his stage works, and in creating new applications for the modalities of folk song. The dramatic and musical style of the vocal works and ballets of Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), though based on Russian folklore, as in *Petrouchka* (1912), or on characters from Greek tragedy, such as *Oedipus Rex* (1927), became gradually more astringent as a reaction to what the composer saw as the excesses of Wagner. This decline into the despondent reached its climax with *The Rake's Progress* (1951). Its 'hero', portrayed as a puppet, "revels in artificiality" (Sadie 1980, p. 608) characterized by a return to the *recitativo secco* of *opera seria*, another apparent twist of direction that set the critics buzzing.

Shattered by the excoriating effects of World War I and its aftermath, his central characters passed from 'hero' to 'anti-hero' as his world view became more arid. That Stravinsky's bleak metaphor for survival after World War I, *A Soldier's Tale (L'Histoire du Soldat*, 1918), poses challenges to performers to this day was apparent in a revival designed for a season of touring in 2002 in a collaboration between the Bell Shakespeare Company and the Australian Chamber Orchestra. The composer's comment that this work was meant to be read, played and danced, received a new twist in this production when Richard Tognetti, a non-singer, acted as the fiddle-playing 'hero', while maintaining his customary role as conductor of the orchestra. A virtuoso violinist, Tognetti 'finds fusion of words and music tricky', so much so that he is convinced that, in his own words, 'Stravinsky invented rap' (Reynecke 2002, p. 8). On the other hand, difficulties in rehearsal experienced by the Bell troupe, according to their director, sprang

from the fact that 'most actors are not used to working with live musicians' (Reynecke 2002, p. 8). Yet these interchanges are the very stuff of modern theatre practice.

Meanwhile, in 1909, Arnold Schoenberg took another step towards deconstruction in theatrical terms by abandoning action in favour of the study of a lone character, a woman, who finds her lover dead in a dark wood. In *Erwartung* (Expectation), first performed in 1924,

> *Schoenberg is able to follow with extraordinary depth of penetration the nightmare journey of her mind; there is no characterization (no thematic development), but a world full of the woman's crazing mind is explored* (Rosenthal & Warrack 1972, p. 361).

Not only that, Neo-classicism, a movement in the early twentieth century based on the denial of emotion in art which absorbed artists such as Picasso, saw Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) as the main exponent of the new 'expressionism' in music, bringing about 'the emancipation of the dissonance' (Schoenberg in Copland, 1968:43). At the same time, Kandinsky and Kafka were the leading expressionists in the realms of art and literature. Schoenberg invented a new 12-tone composition technique eschewing Romanticism by giving equal value to each tone of the chromatic scale, resulting in the breakdown of the centralised tonal system. This was the outcome of a search for an artistic truth which he felt had become lost in the lush chromaticism used in works of the late German Romantics, such as those of Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler. Yet, according to composer Aaron Copland, 'Even the revolution he engendered was made in the name of tradition' (Copland 1968, p. 41). As proof of this contention, Copland continues, Schoenberg himself once wrote, 'I claim the distinction of having written a

truly new music which, based on tradition as it is, is itself destined to become tradition' (ibid p. 41).

Although new forms of inspiration and articulation sprang from this movement, early 20th century innovators once more sought inspiration in the archetypal, in the mythical themes of gods and heroes, as the *Camerata* had done. Gustav Holst (1874-1934) turned to an episode in the Indian classic, the *Mahabharata*, for the subject of his chamber opera, *Sävitri* (1916), a story of marital fidelity in the face of death. In *Die Glückliche Hand* (1913), however, Arnold Schoenberg extended his abandonment of tonality to visual abstractions. Using mime and chorus, the sole character mirrored the composer's personal vision as a seeker on a quest for his artistic truth.

In the latter part of the 20th century, trends in the re-invention of chamber opera covered a plethora of radically experimental works in Europe, from the reinvention of anti-opera in the iconoclastic ethos of Kagel's *Staatstheater* and Ligeti's *Metaoper*, to the more easily recognisable structure of one-act and community opera. Contemporary chamber opera continues to explore themes of substance and gravity, although the treatment varies widely. In the UK universities, regional boards, arts institutions and specialist entrepreneurs such as the Almeida Theatre still support experimental works in these modes. Since 2000, an initiative entitled Almeida Participatory Projects has involved hundreds of children from Greater London schools working, and in some cases performing, with professional practitioners. The Almeida is, in turn, supported by The

British Council's *MusEd*[14] 'Education, Collaboration and Outreach program' (The British Council online).

There is also a movement towards incorporating opera into a number of inter-active[15] educational projects, such as *The Green Children*, a 'window' opera by Nicola leFanu, commissioned by the King's Lynn Festival in the UK, featuring five instrumentalists, three singers, and 'lots of children' who, according to the composer when I interviewed her in 2001, eagerly joined in the three-to-four-minute 'window' occasions scattered throughout the work. This participatory concept was pioneered in 1949 by British composer Benjamin Britten (1913-1976), in his quasi-educational work*, Let's make an Opera*.

Previously in 1946, in a battered post-World War II England, Britten had made what was arguably the most significant single contribution to the renewal of the collaborative ethos of the *Camerata* model of chamber opera in the UK when he, with Peter Pears, founded the English Opera Group, for which he subsequently wrote a series of chamber operas including *The Rape of Lucretia*, first produced in the same year. Whilst recognising the form's economy in a country ravaged by war, the Group's main aim was in itself an innovation, in that their intention was to explore 'the possibilities of the genre *for its own virtue* [16] (Rosenthal & Warrack 1966, p. 73).

In the last 20 years or so chamber opera, or music theatre, has continued to develop in Europe and the USA, aided by the growing influence of the *NewOp* consortium in the UK and Canada. Innovative approaches there and in Australia are discussed more fully in

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[14] Italics as used in the title of the Council's e-journal
[15] Interactive: used here to describe an exercise where audience members are actively encouraged to participate in the performance.
[16] My italics, as implying a new importance to a form largely abandoned, or regarded as frivolous.

later chapters, as are difficulties of getting experimental works financed, and related problems associated with obtaining repeat productions.

Chapter 2: Structural and philosophic changes

(i) Chamber opera as perceived in the past

There is some uncertainty regarding the origin of the term 'chamber opera'. According to the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, it applies not only to 18th century works of various descriptions such as Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona* (1733) otherwise described as an *intermezzo*, but also to 'twentieth century operas of small proportions using a chamber orchestra' (Sadie 1988, p. 144) showing that chamber opera maintained its status as an operatic, that is to say, a 'sung' medium in all its many developments. The *Oxford Dictionary of Opera* (Warrack & West 1992, p. 132) goes so far as to question the use of the term 'chamber' opera by, apparently, linking it to the concept of 'chamber music', which was not known by that generic term prior to the 19th century. This comparison almost denies the existence of chamber opera until that time by the strange correlation of unrelated forms merely through the commonality of the adjectival term 'chamber' when it appears that chamber opera as a genre has survived a number of dead ends along the way. Other small, rather ephemeral, private theatrical and musical entertainments, such as the *serenata*[17], *azione teatrale*[18], which were usually arranged through local or aristocratic patronage, had existed over the years in Europe. But these were comparatively few and were not widely attended, while the 'operatic' repertoire steadily proliferated.

The *masque*, a lavish visual and musical feast and perhaps its nearest cousin the time, was so favoured by the aristocracy of 16th and 17th century England that chamber opera, and reforms leading to dramatic opera, were set back almost two hundred years there,

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[17] *Serenata*: A Cantata, often Pastoral, popular in the 18th Century, much like an opera without stage accoutrements e.g. *Acis and Galatea* by Handel.
[18] *Azione teatrale*: Italian 17th Century term for an opera or a musical festival play.

despite the efforts of the short-lived Henry Purcell. He was the only English composer capable of grasping the significance of what we now call chamber opera, which went beyond the bounds of elegant pageantry, and incorporated many elements of the new genre into stage works such as *Dido and Aeneas* (1689). At the royal courts of Elizabeth I and James I, writers such as Ben Jonson composed the lyrics to the music of the *masque* which consisted of a series of movements similar to the *divertissements* of French ballad opera. Elaborate sets and machinery were designed by such luminaries as Inigo Jones and some contained songs or anthems which became favourites with the general populace. One of the later masques, *Alfred*, by Sir Thomas Arne, which was performed at the court of the Prince of Wales in 1750, featured 'Rule, Britannia' for the first time. The English, after developing the *masque* to its peak, largely ignored developments set in motion by the Florentine *Camerata.*

As time went by and public performance became available to a wider range of wealthier classes in society during the 18th century, opera composers worked less for private patrons and more often for an opera house, and thus were tied to the requirements of entrepreneurial administrators. Subjugated to the demands of 'star' performers, their duties often entailed fashioning works around pampered singers under contract to the management, who had more regard for filling the house than assisting artists to maintain integrity to the creative idea. Some of the world's greatest operatic masterpieces were written under such constraints, at least up to the time of Verdi. Whereas in the earlier works, such as those of Monteverdi for instance, ornamentation was used sparingly and only where the text demanded an added emotional *frisson*, now trills, runs and other forms of vocal gymnastics were let loose in feats of unrestrained display. As the cult of

the diva escalated, the star singer demanded of the indentured composer ever more fanciful ways to demonstrate the *agilità* of the voice.

This voice, detached as it were from its human vehicle not only by lavish staging but by incredulities of plot and action became, to the uninitiated, associated with a style of entertainment exaggerated to the point of ridicule. Even composers of these vocal extravaganzas began to tire of the vacuousness and lack of artistic substance in the librettos that they were expected to set and of the vanity of the singers whose lengthy flourishes usurped the boundaries of musical integrity. Some composers even rebelled, giving rise to a genre of *anti-opera*[19] which, early in its history, reached a high peak with *Il Viaggio à Reims* (1830) by Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868). A fervent admirer of Mozart, Rossini wrote a work consisting of a series of diva-based cameos satirising the world of opera in particular, and current political characters and situations in general. This 'sendup' which contained some remarkable arias by one of the century's greatest composers for the voice, was a forerunner for those works which led the revival of chamber opera as a contemporary genre a century later.

The existence in the 19th century of a populist genre known as *melodrama*, possibly a distant cousin to chamber opera in its use of music and drama, although not usually through-composed, seems to affirm some sort of continuity with the *melodrammi* of 17th century librettist and theorbist, Benedetto Ferrari (1597-1681), author of *Andromeda*, the first opera to be performed in a public theatre - in Venice in 1637 (Glover 1978, p. 41). According to a paper delivered at a conference in Venice nearly four hundred years later (Accorsi 1996), the two forms display some resemblance in terms of content, bearing

[19]Anti-opera: an opera satirising opera.

witness, perhaps, to the survival of a genre with its roots in the early form of opera because of its use of poetry and sung text. Far removed though it may be in time and ideology from the original genre, 19th century melodrama, such as *Murder in the Red Barn*, laden with moral precepts common in the Victorian era of sexual denial, featured wilting maidens, seduced by exaggeratedly evil villains, overcome with remorse and either dying of shame or else being 'saved' by their contrition. In a formulaic reversal from its 17th century counterpart, musical content was composed mainly of settings of sentimental poems like *I was only a poor little Mill girl*, a morbid song about a heroine's downfall that became extremely popular or, in what might be seen as the anticipation of the role of music in film, musical underlays to spoken text which provoked sobs of sympathy, or signaled audiences when the villain was about to pounce. The over-simplification of the texts and the debased role of music in 19th *melodrama* could be construed as a populist rejection of the depth of the operatic format if not of its stage conventions. Interestingly enough, *Pierrot Lunaire,* 21 poems by Giraud set to Schoenberg's music, is described as a melodrama in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music* (Scholes, 1972, p. 448). Early silent movies, with 'scores' consisting of an improvised instrumental underlay to the action of the silent movies being projected on the screen, may be seen as an extension of the melodrama in style and content, although the music in this case is superimposed on the completed artefact. Yet the very notion of improvising on a given theme, albeit based on visual stimuli related to a storyline is, in itself, a newer application of an established baroque musical conceit.

These departures are interesting to contemplate, in the absence of a continuum – a direct line of succession in chamber opera - as there is in mainstream opera through its various

periods. But one thing is certain. The operatic genre, large or small, is a product of the singing voice. At the heart of my view of chamber opera as a likely nexus between the 'alien' worlds of the highly trained and related popular styles, and even the extreme deconstructionist iconoclasts like Mauricio Kagel who sought to dismantle operatic devices altogether, creating a nihilistic form of *anti-opera* by denying the usual roles given to everything - from characters to stage properties such as chairs, which are used for things other than their normal purpose - is the philosophy behind the use of the voice.

(ii) The fascination of the singing voice

It is evident from performances, not only in broadcasts but at 'live' concerts, that unlike opera singers, most popular singers are virtually unable to function without amplification, a fact seldom acknowledged as the microphone is a given, often appearing to be an extension of the singer's hand. Until recent times the well-rounded tones of the diva projected to the back of the theatre, free of artificial amplification, to the delight of all the patrons in the 'house'. Having been trained in a thoroughly acoustic medium, an opera singer would have been, until recently, highly insulted by the offer of a microphone, except for recording purposes. Now, whilst remaining within the vocal tradition of the conventional repertoire, singers must often embrace a non-conventional technology that enables them to contend with electronic instruments in newer works, or to reach vast audiences in a variety of venues, from the conventional to the increasingly popular outdoor or televised presentations of traditional opera, such as those held in the Roman ruins at Verona, or in those performances of *Aida* where the pyramids of Egypt form the authentic *mise-en-scène*.

If 'popular' concerts derived their format from the 'classical' model, the 'stars' of the opera world were not slow in taking up the challenge of mass marketing, with artificial amplification being the key. Australia's own Nellie Melba was the first diva to understand the business potential implicit in the recording process and its capacity for promotion on an international stage, without the necessity for constant travel.

In the exploration of the world of vocalized sound there is still much to be discovered and applied. In the recording studio, voice sampling, multi-tracking[20] and other electronic manipulations are accepted techniques in some *avant-garde* as well as popular musics, bringing production engineers into the equation as creative collaborators with the singer. Live performance mixed with pre-recorded material is becoming increasingly more common in contemporary music concerts as in smaller music theatre productions. These practices symbolise a change of emphasis in performance conventions in music and theatre today however, as in the case of the genre itself, the borders are fluid, the lines not fully drawn as yet, but the fascination lures innovators onwards.

Amanda Lohrey, a writer researching the social and psychological background of going beyond speech to the urge to sing, in contemplating the use of the voice and forms of vocal expression, found an absorbing explanation in the work of Dr. Alfred Tomatis (1920-2001), famous for his revolutionary methods in treating hearing disorders at his Mozart Centre. Lohrey states that, from his research, he formulated a theory that sound is a function of listening, as separate from hearing:

> *His most radical theory is the concept of cortical change, that it is the primary function of the ear to provide the cells of the body with electrical*

[20] Multi-tracking: a technique of recording and overlaying a number of parts, often by the same performer, to create harmonic effects.

> *stimulation and that the cells of Corti deep in the inner ear transform sound waves into electrical input* (Lohrey 1997, p. 257).

The popular phrase, 'switched on' acquires new meaning in the light of this precept. Whilst Dr. Tomatis was a respected member of the scientific community, his controversial studies eventually moved beyond purely technical considerations into the sphere of the metaphysical, the shamanistic. 'When you are singing, it is God singing with your body like an instrument,' he writes, as quoted by Lohrey in *Secrets*, (ibid, p. 257); 'it is the universe that speaks, and we are the machines to translate the universe'. This is a theory which appears to support the notion of the transcendental properties attributed to opera by its performers and its devotees alike:

> *(T)he history of opera has to do with the ritual conditions in which very diverse people from a society come together in one place and have an experience that is transcendant* (Sellars 2000, p. 8).

(iii)Text: changing attitudes towards concepts of text in chamber opera

(a) Sung text – the traditional concept and beyond

Very early in history, the intoning of pitched sound became a natural outlet for shamanistic ritual and for expressing emotions, as it was a more affective means of vocalisation than speech. Later, composers learned to make use of the acoustic properties of church architecture which gave resonance to the pure tones of the choirboy and the *castrato*[21] in the intoning and increasingly decorative settings of the familiar Latin liturgy. In the secular realm, the emotional value of the sung word in more sophisticated musical contexts was realised when trained voices sang in sacred oratorios or secular dramas accompanied by an orchestra or chorus or both, as in opera. Early operas, a

[21] Male singer, emasculated at puberty to preserve his unbroken voice, a practice now discontinued, initiated in the Roman church where female singers were forbidden; popular in heroic roles in 17th and 18th Century opera.

province of the elite as were *masques*, were based mostly on classical themes and often participatory in nature, allowing gifted aristocratic patrons to take part.

From earliest days the highly specialised operatic voice was trained to project with incredible agility, yet without loss of timbre, over long distances. Also, until recent times it was considered that opera should be sung in its original language to capture the musical nuances of the phrasing implicit in that language, as expressed by the composer. There was a similar attitude to *Lieder*, the German song form which combines Romantic poetry with a highly concentrated form of musical expression. These traditions posed difficulties for audiences of other language groups, and bewildered those not favoured with a classical education. Those unable to understand what was being sung tended to equate these forms with 'class', creating a schism between 'elite' and 'popular' music entertainments.

When public theatres came into being for those who could afford to attend, all manner of noisy transactions took place in the boxes and the pit, and only ceased when a favourite singer managed to recapture the patrons' attention with familiar material. Over time the increasingly large and informed opera audience developed a new etiquette, participating silently and attentively and thus responding to vocal tone changes and subtle or indirect stimuli such as familiar literary and musical references.

The contemporary relevance of sung text was championed by theatre director Peter Sellars, when interviewed in his capacity as director of the Adelaide Festival in 2002. He believes that 'music is the permission...you have to sing certain things, you just can't say them' (Sellars 2000, p. 9). Delving deeper into emotional states than spoken language, the sung word is 'about giving voice to something secret' (Sellars 2000, p. 9). This

acknowledgment of the heightened power of communication that the unbroken stream of musical thought brings to opera recognizes the fundamental difference between opera and what was, over the last two centuries, understood by 'music theatre'.

Up to the present, opera could best be described as sung drama, through-composed to intensify heightened emotional values, rather than as a 'show' consisting of a series of 'numbers' encased in a melodramatic framework; a case of passion versus romance, if you will. Until recently, music theatre was a term more generally employed to encompass forms such as music hall and the modern musical, where the word is used both in spoken dialogue and in set songs in a series of disparate musical items, while music underlying the text helps to reinforce mood or character at various times. However in operatic forms music and text are inseparable, the warp and weft of a single fabric, fashioned to embody the changing dynamics of situation and emotion throughout the work. Hence the clear view held by *NewOp*'s founders, of a distinction between chamber opera and music theatre, and a need to redefine them separately in terms of current ethics; a view sharpened, perhaps, by the heritage of European theatre and music traditions in which the members of *NewOp* live and work.

Most contemporary chamber opera, even if styled as music theatre, is through-composed and sung, thus conforming to the basic tenets of traditional operatic form. Certainly most practitioners today display a high level of passion in continuing their work in chamber opera; the monetary rewards are so poor that their persistence affords no other explanation.

(b) Newer concepts regarding text, and questions of relevance

Art works that grew in the soil of one culture were transplanted to newer landscapes such as Australia, and were fostered there, in general, by those trained in traditional skills emanating from Europe. Over the years, a perceived duality between the 'intellectual' and the 'popular' concert or theatre-goer hardened into attitudes assuming in some respects the polarities of a social divide. This perception of a hierarchy associated with classical studies is slowly being eroded by increased general exposure to 'high' art forms, greater educational opportunities, a more relaxed approach to categorization in music studies, and the use of strategies such as the screening of sub-titles for foreign-language operas on a ticker-tape-like screen above the opera stage, to facilitate a wider understanding and acceptance.

On the other hand contemporary chamber opera, through its choice of themes and iconography relevant to the present day, while equally concentrated, works on an entirely different often subliminal, level, that is successfully bypassing barriers created in this way by musical art forms, such as grand opera, which require some kind of preparedness from the audience. Contemporary theatre attempts, in a variety of ways and without compromising artistic intent even though the material may be highly abstracted, to break down the 'fourth wall'[22] between performer and audience. Modern techniques such as theatre-in-the-round and a revival of the 'thrust' stage (at least as old as English Elizabethan theatre) have gone a long way to bringing theatrical 'heroes' down to earth, quite literally, through a recognition of their essential human-ness.

[22] 'Fourth wall': Especially in proscenium theatres, the physical gap created by the distance between stage and audience can inhibit direct communication, alienating the audience if the production is in the hands of unskilled performers or directors.

Besides attempting to reach a wider public through increased formal educational opportunities for audiences, including special projects for young people, some seek other ways of breaking down the social divide reflected in the almost inherent resistance of sections of the community to the operatic medium, which they regard as elitist. Along with the more formal policies aimed at demystifying operatic music, and especially in overcoming the inaccessibility of some contemporary music, there is also a more intimate approach which can be taken to prevent the perpetuation of the divide. In an address at the well-known Curtis School of Music on May 7, 1988, Betty Allen, President of the Harlem School of the Arts, spoke of the positive role of parental involvement in breaking down the negative connotation of elitism stemming 'from external perceptions of artists and the fields they work in'(Allen 1993). This could be achieved, she believed, by acknowledging the need to overcome prejudice in all areas of life, starting from the grass roots. Both strategies are vitally important; one approach champions the open mind, the other, the provision of opportunities to familiarise oneself with something new, so that it is no longer strange.

Popular artists are fully aware of the power of repetition; a participatory element in their live concerts, such as antiphonal singing or clapping is often encouraged, aided by minimal or repetitious lyrics, a semi-hypnotic stimulus recognising the crowd's urge to belong, to 'keep them in the loop', identifying with the bands, moulding them together as a pack. Admittedly, opera's appeal may be less obvious; its denser fabric makes familiarity with its composition a little more difficult to acquire, so, at the moment, it depends on a more personal relationship with the work itself. Were there to be a similar proportion of repetitions on the media, the appeal of opera could expand exponentially.

Today, questions are raised in relation to texts as to whether these should be 'sung or spoken', or whether there should be a text at all, as in the spirit of Ligeti's *Metaoper*. It is interesting to note how, over the last 70 years or so and especially since the decade after World War II, lyrics to popular songs have undergone a vast transformation. Ranging from strongly idiomatic, wordy street and protest songs, and those of a limited vocabulary made virtually unintelligible by screaming voices and deafening instrumentals, to overtly sexual pot-boilers of a lighter nature, few bear any resemblance to the crafted songs made popular by trained vocalists, many of whom were also film stars, or vice versa, in the glamour days of Hollywood.

There is the new crossover point where the acoustic voice becomes, like any other instrument, subject to amplification, manipulation and distortion. Many question whether contemporary chamber opera, in a technological age, should adhere to established operatic principles of acoustic voices singing some sort of text, in order to retain its formal classification. Others ponder contemporary ideologies, and whether, and at what point of experimentation, it would cease to become opera at all. Whilst embracing most technologies, there is now a debate concerning the validity of electronic devices and techniques used as part of the composition process in live performances of contemporary chamber opera, and the provisioning of appropriate performance spaces for their use where these methods are acceptable. Televised work is unacceptable to many idealogues.

The power of the image was foremost in the creative constructs and filmic techniques employed by director/facilitator Saskia Boddeke in *Writing to Vermeer* (Adelaide Festival, 2000). Prior to the Australian premier performance of her new multi-media, full-length opera at the Adelaide Festival in March, 2000, she faced a selected audience to

describe the creative process she pursued. 'You don't need narrative to make drama', she said in the colloquium televised by the ABC and relayed as part of the *Sunday Afternoon* arts program on 3 September 2000. Librettist Peter Greenaway, famous for his *avant-garde* films of the 1960s and 70s, reinforced Boddeke's philosophy on the same program by declaring that 'there *is*[23] no cinema yet - only a following of text', in sympathy with structuralist theories such as Barthes', that 'there is no such thing as content - only language'.

Whereas the literary libretto has, in the past, been so vital to all but the most radical of recent versions of the genre, Jacqui Rutten's *Tresno* (1992), styled as an Opera in Movement, pioneered a trend in Australia towards the emancipation of the operatic form from text-driven works and, in her case, from the sung word. Even so, there is a narrative of sorts forming a thread through this particular work, where characters repeat words or sounds inimical to their condition. Such a radical departure poses a question as to whether this work can rightly be regarded as 'opera', although it resonates in some ways with the *stile concitato*[24], representing the inner dynamics of the stylized sparring between the unsuspecting Tancredi and his lover Clorinda, disguised as a man, in a stylized dance form neither exclusively opera nor mime, created by Monteverdi in his *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (1624). So, in the case of *Tresno*, for instance, the abandonment of some of opera's basic principles in the name of experimentation is, of itself, in keeping with the adventurous spirit of the pioneers of the form.

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[23] The speaker's italics.
[24] *stile concitato*: a frenzied repetition of notes, as distinct from the *molle* or sweet style of singing common in other forms of contemporary opera.

(c) Text Versus Music

Poetry or Music: 'Which is the padrona*, which is the* serva*?'*

Following varying fashions of style and structure, the choice of subject matter in opera fluctuated through time, in keeping with prevailing philosophies and conventions; physical, if not temporal, distance often separated composers and librettists, as may happen even now. From the 17th century to more recent times, any argument over perceived priorities of libretto over music, or vice versa, was then conducted by correspondence, a slow method, giving rise to many difficulties and frustrations. Some of these letters have survived, along with correspondence to patrons and friends and families, and have been published mainly in composer biographies. The Mozart, Beethoven and Wagner letters, in particular, make for interesting comparisons in terms of conditions and attitudes, over the near century of their activities.

The continuing debate as to the relative importance of text or music, not to mention the importance of composer over librettist, has raged since the singer and teacher Guilio Caccini (1545-1618) joined Peri in his second operatic venture, *Euridice* (1600), which survives to this day, though seldom performed. Four hundred years later, as recently as 1997, a dialectic entitled *Creative Compromise* emanating from the proceedings of a seminar on the relationships between libretto and music and published in *Sounds Australian*, the Journal of the Australian Music Centre, showed that the philosophies of practicing composers and librettists are as diverse as ever, but 'it is hugely important to have lots of discussion and thought about the issues you will write about' (Shapcott 1997, p. 7).

Peri's avowed goal, stated (in translation in Donington, 1981 p.105) in the dedication to his second opera *Eurydice* (1601), was

> *to make a simple test of what the Song of our age could do. Wherefore having seen, that it was a matter of Dramatic poetry, and that nevertheless one had to imitate the speaker with song*

thus creating music theatre, where the action was enhanced by the imitation of speech in song (*recitare cantando*). Caccini, on the other hand, preferred a florid style which he called *cantar recitando*, (the precursor of the coloratura aria) developed from a technique he perfected, named *sprezzatura*. From this followed the *bel canto* style of late 18th and early 19th century singing in works made familiar in our era by the voice of Joan Sutherland. But we have to thank the enduring influence of Monteverdi and the survival of his *stile moderno*, where the drama is paramount, and a balance between text and music is of the essence, for establishing a style so suited to opera today. For example, in a salute to the early opera the 'exit aria' of *Quint*, the evil phantom invisibly squeezing the life out of the boy in Britten's *Turn of the Screw*, we also find resonances of the kind of *melisma*[25] used so eloquently by Monteverdi in *Orfeo*.

In terms of structure, the roots of the original genre, whatever you choose to call it at present, are never very far away, even if seemingly well covered by more recent accretions of style and technique, some of which disturb the flow of both music and text by holding up the action. The 'exit aria', for instance, recommended by Andrea Perrucci in his handbook on true acting *Dell'art rappresentativa* (1699) as a technique for bringing the departing singer down to the footlights also, incidentally, avoids collisions

[25] *Melisma*: melodic arabesques.

with characters entering from upstage. As codified by Apostolo Zeno (1668-1750), librettos were structured in a rigid format without comedy, each scene ending with an 'exit aria', one for each of the six principal characters; the chorus participated only in the final *coro.* It was a device beloved of singers and survived through the works of *opera seria*, the prevailing form of opera in the 17th and 18th centuries.

'In opera verbal sense, gesture, and musical figures formed a semantic unity' (Scholz, 1991), Gottfried Scholz stated at the *Musikwissenschaftlicher Kongress zum Mozartjahr*, held in Baden-Wien. Scholz amplifies this view in 1993 at the *Bericht über den Internationalen Kongress der Gesellschaft für Musikforschung* held in Breisgau, while begging the long-debated hierarchical question regarding the relative roles of poetry and music in opera: 'Which is the *padrona*, which is the *serva*?'(Scholz, 1993). By making reference to a third dimension in the semiotics of opera, allied to the visual, he acknowledges the indebtedness of performance practice in early operatic forms to the ancient art of rhetoric, a symbiosis of language and gesture enduring into the early *opera seria* works of Mozart, who learned from his father the principles taught when Mozart senior was at school in Augsburg.

That Mozart took more than the usual interest in the production process of his operas was unquestionable; in fact, he was always deeply involved. For the premiere of *Idomeneo*, for instance, regarded by some as the masterpiece of *opera seria,* Mozart was part of a collaborative team under the supervision of the ducal *Intendant,* as the libretto was chosen by the Munich court at the express wish of the Elector Carl Theodor. As both composer and répétiteur, Mozart was passionate about the speed and vivacity of the recitative*,* insisting on the performer's integrity to the meaning of the text through the

correct realisation of the music he had written, to reveal its inner gesture (its *innere Klang*) which he expected the singers to convey visually.

Despite its complexity, the contemporary product of this multi-disciplinary genre is developing a visual and aural vocabulary which, whether the text is in the vernacular or not, has the power to communicate directly with audiences. Through the original material it presents, energised by the passion of its creators and their belief in the medium's power, new insights into current attitudes or issues are revealed in a more challenging way than ever before. If the boundaries are pushed even further technically into a direct nexus with the electronic visual media, *opera da camera* could acquire another dimension with the qualifying camera taking on an entirely new meaning.

(iv) Debates around the definition – 'chamber opera', or 'music theatre'

> *At the end of the millennium there is a renewed focus on opera and music theatre as forms that resurrect the aspiration to syncretism that lies in the origins of the stage arts* (Pairon & Klaic 1992).

In their mission statement when founding *NewOp* at the international meeting of Small-Scale Contemporary Music-Theatre and Opera in Brussels (1992), it appears that Lukas Pairon, artistic director of the contemporary music ensemble *Ictus* and co-founder, Dragan Klaic, one-time director of the Netherlands Dance Theatre, clearly hold the view that the terms 'opera' and 'music theatre' are not interchangeable. In establishing an ongoing dialectic between leading European, American, English and Canadian practitioners, the search for a concensus on the generic title to be given new operatic creations was a paramount consideration. The gathering was also based on the understanding that, according to the mission statement published on the *NewOp* website, '(t)he functions of composer, dramaturg, director and producer are all open for

reexamination' (http://www.newop.org). At the annual meetings, hosted in various countries by a different national theatre institution each year, attempts are made to define and reshape these evolving roles and the formats in which they express their individual creativity. In an age of globalisation, inventive solutions, such as resource-sharing, are sought to provide practical assistance with problems experienced by other members. Vigorous debate over issues involved with small-scale opera/music theatre, as well as notices and reviews of works in progress or to be performed, continues by email on the *c-opera* subscription list, moderated by New York composer and critic, Barry Drogin. At this international forum, the dichotomy between proponents of various models of music theatre threw into relief the necessity of attempting to establish an acceptable definition of chamber opera in the wider context of contemporary works in the genre. Clearly, a study of the current repertoire on both national and international levels and information gleaned from the practitioners involved was the logical starting-point. Because of the immediacy of the time-frame inherent in the descriptor, 'contemporary', the search for likely overseas venues where my research could be conducted on current productions, mainly through direct observation and personal interviews, was urgent. I had already seen five of these works in Australia and was able to contact practitioners here. The task would have been much more difficult and protracted without the aid of the general manager and the staff of the Australian Music Centre[26], who directed my attention to sources and supplied me with a number of personal contacts.

As a result of correspondence with various institutions, I was made aware of new works to be premiered at two of the most respected arts establishments in London, arguably the

[26] A government-supported body devoted to the interests of Australian composers and performers.

world centre of festivals featuring contemporary works of all kinds. [27]I attended performances of these new works and, as in Australia, met with practitioners to explore their views of the nature of contemporary chamber opera, focusing on the criteria that form the basis of my study.

Having selected three of the five works I had attended in the required time-frame for more detailed attention, the question as to whether 'music theatre' was indeed synonymous with 'chamber opera' became a central focus of my research. Unlike Pairon and Klaic, many seemed to infer that it was; admittedly, both shared a common heritage with opera. It was the more complex use of highly refined skills in the musical and literary fabric of the best of opera, expressed through the use of literary librettos and the exercise of virtuosic vocal writing and instrumentation skills, which separated it from the other forms.

Currently, there seems to be a far less rigid delineation between forms within the genres of chamber opera and music theatre. Both are sophisticated in terms of writing and both demand a high degree of performance skills related to music and movement. That the element of ritual is more pronounced in chamber opera may be debatable, but the ethos of those I have seen rises above the norm of theatrical convention. The term 'music theatre' may invoke expectations of a kind of light entertainment as it has in the past, whereas contemporary chamber opera is mostly serious in intent; where there is humour, it tends to the satirical rather than the superficial.

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[27] I was assisted by a post-graduate research grant from Macquarie University and generous invitations from Almeida Theatre's producer, Patrick Dickie, Dr. Andrew Schultz, Head of Composition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and Gregory Massingham, Head of Opera at Griffith University's Conservatorium, Brisbane, to attend premiers of new works.

Chapter 3: Chamber Opera - a genre in evolution

(i) The question of form

In seeking a preliminary definition of 'art', educator Herbert Read came to the following conclusion:

> [28]*that two main principles are involved – a* <u>*principle of form*</u>*…the objective aspect of all works of art; and a* <u>*principle of origination*</u> *peculiar to the mind of man, and impelling him to create…*
> *Form is a function of* <u>*perception*</u>*; origination is a function of* <u>*imagination*</u>
> (Read 1942, p. 34).

Peter Sellars' allusion to ritual associated with opera (see p.44 above) calls into question the integrity of balance between form – expressed as text, aural context and the integral use of technology - and 'origination', its relationship to the profound inner urges associated with composition, performance, and their effective communication within a primarily vocal medium. Whether this communication is 'abstract' (can any art form be entirely theoretical?) or consciously directed towards some end, like Schoenberg's *Erwartung,* a study of mental breakdown, or aimed at social or political criticism as was Picasso's *Guernica,* the function of art is to convey ideas on a number of levels of cognition, whether the response be physical, psychological, emotional or cerebral, or a mixture of these. On a more transcendental note, all artists, according to the translator in his introduction to the manual of aesthetics by the painter Kandinsky, 'are working to the same end – the expression of the *soul* of nature and humanity, the *innerer Klang'* [29] (Kandinsky & Sadler 1977, p. xiii).

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[28] Words underlined in this quote are in italics in the original.
[29] Sadler's italics.

In the same manner that this visual artist can describe *soul* only in a non-textual way as 'interior sound', so the sung word, through the power of music, takes meaning beyond those associations connected with language into other realms and 'form is the expression of this inner meaning'[30] (*ibid* p. 29). This declaration of form, not as an empirical formula to be filled to satisfy certain 'outer' rules or conventions, but as being dictated by the 'inner' demands of the material being shaped by the creative artist(s) did not always apply to later forms of opera, especially in the days of Metastasian *opera seria* and the *coloratura* aria (with notable exceptions, such as refinements in Gluck's applied ethos of textual integrity and, in particular, in Mozart's major works). The *aria aggiunta* of the 18th century, for instance, lacked any dramatic or musical connection to the work in hand, was often purpose-written to display the vocal gymnastics of a favoured singer, and could be interposed into one opera from an entirely different musical source, even from another opera. The concept of integrity to a central idea as a total concept between text and music in 'music drama', originated by the *Camerata*, revived to some extent in the 19th century, but was not fully applied to opera prior to the first twenty years or so of the twentieth century with the ground-breaking work of Schoenberg and Stravinsky and the artists collected around the entrepreneur, Diaghilef.

Art across many genres was revolutionized by the transformation to an individual, idiosyncratic formal approach to creative work – an approach which has come to be a distinguishing mark of chamber opera over the last hundred years or so. Each new work now conforms only to its own artistic dimensions and demands, although it may borrow from past ideologies and techniques. It is understandable that the freedom of choice

[30] Ditto.

inherent in this philosophy should give rise to a certain ambivalence in qualifying the nature of each work as either 'music theatre' or 'chamber opera'. Opinions remain divided - some wish to shed any relationship to 'grand' opera, for historical or philosophical reasons; others retain the term 'chamber opera' to signal their acceptance of the traditions, even if they fully intend to break or distort them. Whatever the uncertainties pertaining to that choice, it is certain that the sung voice will be the central element in its creation.

Far from the old fixation with love affairs and historical figures, there is nothing ingratiating about the subject matter or its treatment, in most contemporary chamber opera. Typically, it is either politically or sociologically confronting, or it explores that side of the human psyche which goes into 'free-fall', as Peter Sellars describes it (Sellars 2000, p. 8). Titles of recent Australian works, such as Colin Bright's *The Sinking of the Rainbow(1997)*, and Arena Theatre's *Eat Your Young* (2000), emphasise the contemporary nature of the challenging themes tackled successfully in this condensed medium, where form adapts itself in kaleidoscopic fashion to the subject matter, the resources are handled with great ingenuity and production values are paramount.

Raffaele Marcellino, composer of *The Flight of Les Darcy*, goes to the heart of the matter when he says that the alternative terms are used more in an attempt 'to distinguish new opera from old forms, rather than in separating them from each other' (Marcellino 2002). The interaction of image, text and space is the main preoccupation, as is to be expected of a genre 're-inventing itself by going back to first principles', to use Marcellino's apt phrase (ibid 2002).

The European concensus emerging from *NewOp* is 'an informal collective of nontraditional creators and producers' which 'doesn't offer any definitions'; rather, according to Eric Salzman, spokesman for *NewOp* in North America in an article entitled 'Music-Theater Defined' on the *NewOp* website (reproduced from the original in the New York Times of November 28, 1999), 'Music-theater is sometimes exclusionary (not-opera, not-Broadway) and sometimes a catchall for everything, operas and musicals included' that has 'grown out of performance art and live multi-media.' Ultimately, at present, 'contemporary chamber opera defined is, by its very nature, undefined' (Salzman 1999).

But there are a number of defining elements in works that tend towards the contemporary chamber genre of opera. The artistic director of the Almeida Opera Summer Festival in London, Patrick Dickie, firmly believes that, besides a collaborative work practice, the ethos of contemporary chamber opera also refers back to the *Camerata* in the realm of composition and gives the example of Alexander Goehr's style. 'In some works,' he said at a personal interview at London's Almeida Theatre, 'the composer's choice of style, whether consciously or unconsciously, reveals their ancestry' (Dickie 2001). He specifically cites the role of the vocal quartet in Goehr's semi-ritualistic works, *Kantan* and *Damask Drum* which, like that of the chorus in classic Greek plays, or the *intermedii* of the *cinquecento,* is used as commentary between scenes and sometimes within a scene, to voice the inner conflict of the protagonist, or to indicate the passage of time.

Also, whilst the images used by this English composer are intensely 'modern' and provocative, Dickie contends that the vocal language of his chamber operas reflects the composer's 'indebtedness to Monteverdi' (Dickie 2001), whose mastery of the vocal line

and idiosyncratic use of sudden juxtapositions of unrelated harmonies induced compelling emotional shifts, which serve the text whilst maintaining the underlying structure of the music. Incidentally, as its commissioned contemporary chamber opera for that year, the 2002 Almeida season will feature a new work, *Ariadne*, by Elena Langer, Almeida's current Jerwood Composer in Association, written in homage to Monteverdi.

Over the last hundred or so years, the term 'music theatre', when used to describe a production, has implied a form of theatre where music sometimes provides a background to the spoken word, characterized by long stretches of spoken dialogue between frequent bursts of song and dance. In contemporary chamber opera the sung voice, still paramount in a through-composed, more or less operatic format, now shares equal importance with other dramatic and visual values, resulting in a more inter-dependent development between musical, visual, textual and even spatial elements. The same could be said of many works characterised as music theatre.

While taking different positions on the genre's definition, many composers agree on the nature of the material and its treatment. For instance, John Casken, the composer of *God's Liar* (a work discussed in Chapter 4), in a letter dated 3 August 2001 from his home in Derbyshire, gave his view of current aspects of chamber opera that could be most relevant to its future development:

> *It may be evolving in the sense that everything is now possible and chamber opera can take advantage of technology in a way that its predecessors couldn't. It is undoubtedly influenced by cinema and television and is not afraid to pick on subjects that are truly contemporary (as opposed to mythical or taken from the classics)* (p.c. Casken, 3/08/01)[31].

[31] A passage taken from private correspondence, 2001.

(ii) Philosophies at work in contemporary chamber opera

Regarding the creative aspect of what he understands as music theatre at this time, Raffaele Marcellino, composer of *The Flight of les Darcy* (also discussed in Chapter 4), places great stress on the fact that, despite subject matter that may derive from identifiable people or actual situations, 'the contemporary genre understands that opera is mythic theatre and NOT[32] realistic theatre' (Marcellino 2002)[33].

There is no entrenched 'star' system in chamber opera. Perhaps because it attracts smaller audiences and is commonly housed in smaller theatres (it is hard to say which comes first), chamber opera, in common with music theatre, appears to hold a humbler status in the musical hierarchy than other complex genres. The close-knit creative processes that engender it do not encourage a practice of 'specialness'. Highly-paid operatic stars are seldom seen performing in productions of contemporary chamber operas; some occasionally record works or arias on CD or on video, as with Cecilia Bartoli's revival of *Nina*, a one-act short opera by *Giovanni Paisiello* (1740-1816) from a series of mainly European productions which included a number of lesser-known works recorded for television and presented on SBS from time to time. Yet while many writers today regard the terms 'music theatre' and 'chamber opera' as being interchangeable, some - producers in particular - prefer the original term 'music theatre' to 'opera', either on historical grounds, or maybe to avoid any suspicion of elitism in their promotion material.

In some respects, contemporary chamber opera parallels the 'off-Broadway' theatre phenomenon of 20th century New York, where small *ad hoc* companies form to produce

[32] The composer's use of capitals.
[33] From private correspondence, 2001

avant-garde works, often based on controversial themes unlikely to attract the larger audiences required even for the support of conventional forms. Many newborn productions tested in small theatres before small, informed audiences also die there.

This one-off production syndrome is characteristic of many of the works in the smaller music-drama genres today, whether what may be considered as *avant-garde* experimentation in voice or composition techniques is used, or the music is more easily accessible. It is interesting to note that Carl Vine, one of Australia's most prolific contemporary composers, draws a distinction between perceived notions of 'contemporary' and '*avant-garde*' in music. In an article entitled *Composer Overboard,* he says that contemporary composers are 'probably paying the debt of the *avant-garde*, which audiences found just too difficult to listen to' (Reyneke 2000, p. 13).

We may consider that Australian works may not be quite so *avant-garde* as some overseas productions, but Australian practitioners and their products are highly regarded by many overseas experts. Patrick Dickie, director of the Almeida Theatre in London praised *Slow Love* by Richard Murphett and Stevie Wishart in Mob Productions' collaboration with Belgium's theaterMalpertuis which toured Australia after its Belgian premiere. Barry Drogin, American composer and musicologist, founder member of *NewOp* and moderator of the *c-opera* website and members' email-list, described much-travelled Chamber Made productions as 'exciting', and the company as being 'amongst the leaders in their field' (Drogin 2003). Current styles of writing tend to be more inclusive or interactive. At least in some measure, they frequently veer towards greater accessibility, sometimes by means of cross-cultural references, or by rhythmic devices borrowed from jazz and other popular musics. Wedded to a range of current, more direct

styles of drama practice and design, each role, be it performance-related or technical, is creative; form and style are reduced in the crucible of the subject matter and coloured by the mix of partners in the collaboration. Each production is therefore idiosyncratic, a kaleidoscopic phenomenon.

So far it is clear that, although it is concerned with the singing voice (which in some cases equates with vocalized sound), it seldom conforms either to what is considered to be the traditional operatic style, or to the ethos of the big Broadway or West End musical, the Off[34] or even the Off-Off[35] Broadway musical, or the Euromusical, the proposed outcome of a movement in Europe towards the re-invention of the old operetta form.

On the other hand, some innovators find even the most nebulous links with traditional opera constricting and seek to dismantle all the accepted constructs. Meta-Opera, which does away with 'seemingly indispensable elements such as plot, stage decoration, dramatic roles, score (in a conventional sense) and text (apart from nonsense syllables)', was pioneered by Mauricio Kagel in *Staatstheater* (Hamburg, 1971), a form of anti-opera in which text is composed sound and music becomes kinetic activity (Heile 1999-). The more traditional opera-lover finds that '(S)uch ramifications of music theatre have quite exploded or totally ignored any notion of what constitutes opera' (Dent & Smith, 1980, p. 609).

In an extract from a forthcoming book, Bjorn Heile, lecturer in music at the University of Sussex UK (quoted from his website with his permission) finds a new perspective from which to view *Staatstheater*:

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[34] Off-Broadway: Small non-mainstream theatre productions of all kinds, showcases for sponsorship, often radical in theme or presentation. The term applies as a descriptor, whether in the USA or not.
[35] Off-Off Broadway: More offbeat theatre productions, often funded by creators and held in rooms.

> *The significance of the work may be more in its re-appraisal of how the fusion of music and theater, or more broadly, of visual and sonic elements can be conceptualized* (Heile 2004).

But the complexity does not end here, as there are those who, while not dispensing with the word 'opera' entirely, argue that it could well be considered a term entirely interchangeable with 'music theatre'[36] (as distinct from the musical[37]), or the European *Music-Theater*[38]. Once again, as co-founder of *NewOp,* Eric Salzman's summation seems to encapsulate the situation: 'Music-theater is sometimes exclusionary (not-opera, not-Broadway) and sometimes a catchall for everything, operas and musicals included' (Salzman 1999).

Salzman here illustrates the view that current definitions of chamber opera may need to convey the idea of an opposition to established music theatre forms of all kinds, in an attempt to clarify its chameleon nature and find a name for the new genre that is beyond equivocation. It would be a mistake to interpret the deceptive informality of the terminology and relationships within these groups as some kind of incompetence. All are specialists in the field, many live by working in the medium. The seriousness of the dialogue indicates that a lack of conformity to a single format does not necessarily presume chaos, or a lack of professionalism; rather, it conveys, as at the origins of chamber opera, the impression of a brotherhood of professionals seeking to explore and accommodate new avenues of expression.

This ongoing dialectic is pursued both by discussion groups at the annual *NewOp* conferences, by networking after performances, and by open debates or vigorous

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[36] Music theatre is used here as a generic term describing theatre where music is integrated with text.
[37] Musical (theatre): a type of theatre where text is both spoken and sung, or interspersed with music.
[38] Music-Theater: In Europe especially; refers to contemporary opera/chamber works.

electronic interchanges between members in the *c-opera* list (owing to the large distances separating the parties) moderated by Barry Drogin for *NewOp*. Needless to say, this group's title is also prone to change when a solution to the vexed question of defining the genre(s) to the satisfaction of all the members can be found.

Concensus may be obtained within a group or company, but the criteria can vary from production to production, from group to group, or from practitioner to practitioner, as will be seen when discussing individual works later in the text; but most agree that the genre is recognizable, being as distinct from a concert or musical as it is from grand opera, despite its apparent nebulousness. If anything, the lack of rigidity appears to be its main attraction for innovators, stimulated by the challenge of a blank canvas.

As has often been the case historically with exploratory forms in the arts, many new music theatre works reflect the advanced ideas of their creators who have been influenced by, and are influential in, new castes of philosophical thought. Today, these may be interpreted through the study of musical semiotics, influenced in turn by a semantic approach to structures in the scores. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, for instance, postulates:

> *a tripartition of musical activity into three domains: the poietic, concerned with modes of creation; the 'neutral', or that which is immanent in the score, and the 'aesthesic', or domain of a listener's response. Nattiez's form of semiotic analysis belongs properly to the second of these* (Nattiez in Sadie 2002).

Many of the current philosophies emanating from Roland Barthes's theory that literary content is essentially meaningless, depending as it does on the reader's freedom to interpret the text according to a variety of changing paradigms, have an impact on the writing of some forms of literature, including librettos, and subsequently on the music

itself[39]. In extreme cases, deconstructionist forms like anti-opera or meta-opera lack any attempt at narrative, with the result that sound and visuals bear no accepted relationship to each other. Similar philosophies are shaping chamber operas by innovators in Europe and the UK and, to a much lesser extent, in the USA[40]. In *(Un)Fair Exchange*, a kind of fable using the imagery of 'animal' within a human situation, Alexander Goehr goes some way towards adopting this philosophy; the visual juxtaposition of human and 'animal' bespeaks metaphor rather than narrative. Considering the range of ideologies being applied to theatre today, music theatre of some kind seems to allow the greatest scope for invention and the multi-dimensional exploration of contemporary thought.

So one of the key aims of my research, namely to ascertain a generally accepted definition of the contemporary model of chamber opera, met with only limited success. Testing the rather mixed messages gained by attendance at several selected works, two from Australia and one from England, and in interviews with their composers, it appeared to me that the definition of a genre sometimes referred to as 'contemporary chamber opera' is, to a certain extent, a matter of individual choice. In one case in point the producer, when questioned, admitted that the work I saw was indeed a chamber opera, but was described in public announcements and the program as music theatre. Definition, in the case of this evolving genre, becomes not so much a pre-ordained formula as a reference point for change.

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[39] Peter Greenaway holds to a similar tenet in his exposition on "Writing to Vermeer" at the Adelaide Festival, 2002. Alexander Goehr's operas, "Kantan" and "Damask Drum", seen at the Almeida Festival, 2001 acquire a seemingly free modality through intricate polyrhythmic structures. Monteverdi's use of the static chord against the vocal line with an expressive shift of chord is one of the devices used.

[40] As in meta-opera or anti-opera.

The juxtaposition of evolution and change brought to mind the question that occurred to me in one of these composer interviews, as to whether chamber opera today is a separate entity or an embryonic form of opera waiting to grow up, so to speak. If so, it would be a kind of historical process in reverse. So I was interested to discover the relationship, if any, between chamber opera and its fuller form from the point of view of the contemporary Australian composer who has written successfully in both forms.

On being asked if his chamber opera, *Black River*, had acted as a kind of exploratory work for his new three-act, multi-media opera, *Going Into Shadows,* Australian composer Andrew Schultz, was emphatic in his reply. In an interview with him at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London he stated that, on the contrary, each was a separate entity. The larger work was, he said, the result of 'a completely different approach' [41] to that employed in the earlier chamber opera. Both were based on serious issues, with score and text tightly integrated to the service of the subject matter; apart from that, he could find no degree of comparison.

'Initially', said Schultz in an earlier commentary, 'the text of *Black River* was short and in the process of setting it, it got shorter still' (Schultz 1996, p. 12) as, by constant revision to avoid over-statement, librettist (his sister Julianne Schultz) and composer achieved their 'shared vision' of producing a score where both words and music were 'as concise as possible'. Shorter works lose nothing through brevity, in his view, when words and music work together to serve the vision. 'In the end it is the way in which they add up to something of another order of magnitude that matters' (Schultz 1996, 1997, p. 12).

[41] Personal communication, London, July 5, 2001.

On the reverse side, the sheer size of *Going Into Shadows* demanded a ten-year gestation period for weaving complexities of plot and sub-plot, with its vital filmic element, into a score, and the marshalling of the considerable resources required for its staging. So, whilst the composer made no distinction between the potential of both opera and chamber opera to deal with themes of equal seriousness, the fundamental differences of approach in technique and structure between the two were demonstrated for Schultz by his experience of both forms. A commission for its completion by the Guildhall School of Music in London, with the involvement of student performers there, and from the Opera School attached to Griffith University in Brisbane, provided the happy solution for the larger work to receive performances in both UK and Australia.

Described by Guildhall's Principal, Ian Horsburgh, as a demonstration of 'the practice of creative partnerships' (Schultz 2001, p. 4), the total exercise surrounding the premier of *Going into Shadows* incorporated a program called *Echoing Shadows*, the documentation of a sophisticated form of work experience combined with performance assessment, based largely on the participation of senior music students training as singers or instrumentalists. Beyond that, Gregory Massingham, in a letter inviting the author to attend the dress rehearsal, described the project as a visionary co-production with the Queensland Conservatorium of Music in Australia, bringing with it global innovation in the form of a cross-hemisphere 'exchange of creative personnel as well as that of students between the two institutions' (Massingham 2001) [42].

Although (even full) opera is not always generated on such an ambitious scale, there was no doubt in the minds of both librettist and composer about the breadth and purpose of

[42] Personal correspondence to support application for study grant.

this work. 'Both writers', said Schultz, 'were determined to bring operatic form into line with other modern genres, such as film'[43]. The episodic nature of contemporary novels such as *The English Patient,* for instance, were literary models for the filmic approach the Schultz creative team envisaged. The degree of complexity when working on the broader canvas, in handling large themes, their development and orchestration while managing sustainable dramatic momentum, is diametrically opposed to the paring-down processes required in the distillation of essences for the more compact form.

Although *Going Into Shadows* is a full-length work, there are lessons to be learned in this whole enterprise for the future of chamber opera as well. By sharing the load, exchange programs for shorter works, which may or may not have the backing of elite organizations such as those behind this particular project, could well be the means of opening up new audiences and generating more creative work opportunities. The next chapter contains an example of what I think of as 'extended collaboration' in chamber opera, providing a model for the future, while resulting in a most successful co-production.

[43] From a personal interview at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, 5/7/01

Chapter 4: Chamber Opera - its potential for the future

(i)The present situation

In Australia, the prospects for trained performance artists seeking to build a career – or even to survive in a creative capacity - are nowhere near commensurate with the number of graduates from the various institutions running performance-based courses. It is a predicament so apparent that it was publicly acknowledged by a press release inviting participation in a forum convened in Perth, WA on April 2 1998, by Dr. Margaret Seares, chair of the Australia Council (Seares 1998) entitled *Arts in Focus,* which posed the question, *Are We Producing too Many Arts Graduates?* The panel for the forum was to be made up of leading arts administrators in an attempt to analyse the problem. Intended as the first in a series and touted as the Council's first on-line forum, it is uncertain if this exercise produced any measurable outcome, or even an action plan.

When one considers the length of time the Australia Council and other bureaucratic bodies have been in operation, together with the total amount of funding that has been made available, and place that against the number of companies that have survived, their policies of distribution must be brought into question. One must query whether choices are politically or artistically motivated and, if not politically, whether those involved in the selection of candidates for funding are capable of making an artistically informed, sustainable choice.

Over the 20 years of the Australia Council's existence, the bureaucracy of its management has proliferated to about 150 permanent staff divided over the operation of nine Boards administering their allotted funding with the aid of a further 50 or so Board members overall, and a 10-member governing body at the peak of the pyramid. Together

they administer a sum of approximately $150 million per year, in this country of overflowing wealth (according to the Federal Treasurer on Budget day), with the heaviest investment in visual arts and crafts, literature and theatre - much of which goes to supporting what are classified as the Major Performing Arts such as the Sydney Theatre Company, which receive an overall total of about $20 million. Music gets $4 million, about half of the Literature Board's budget. The New Work Board provides support with 'funding for one-off projects' of up to $10,000 according to their handbook, (Australia Council, 2004 p. 92). Chamber Made and Sydney Music Theatre are possibly the best established and longest surviving chamber opera companies in Australia; both are internationally recognised for the quality of their work. But even these consistent beneficiaries of the grants system are receiving only about $30,000 each in the 2004-5 budget. Smaller, or newer, companies would find $10,000 a tantalizing amount to refuse, yet it could not pay the annual rent and maintenance of a suitable space, let alone support a company to mount a production and build a presence in a niche field. One can apply for further funding through 'hybrid arts', for which the guidelines are vague in what may be perceived as an attempt to distribute funds in a democratic manner, but that amounts to a clumsy segmentation of the project through a series of applications via other Boards over an extended period. It is doubtful that even the most financially austere new collaborative effort could survive this tortuous process for long. Projects lacking a permanent work venue and other forms of sponsorship to supplement the grant would find it difficult, if not impossible to sustain operations under these circumstances; time and efforts are wasted if the company comes to nought. For the more successful individual applicants, fellowships (some worth up to $80,000 in some divisions) come in larger amounts and

seem to provide reasonably stable incomes for a few of the favoured. Arts administration is certainly a recognized career path today; but what, in the case of small theatre, exists to be administered? Has arts administration become a part of the problem, when the non-performance graduates have jobs, and the artists who they purport to serve scrabble for a living? This populace, as reflected in its government policies is not prepared to invest in artistic talent, and expects its dedicated practitioners in small theatre to live beneath the salt.

Added to that, the estimated number of students in 1993 was 19,000; at the time of the Australia Council report there were 40,000 practising professionals (Lynch 1997, p. 17), 72% of whom held post-school qualifications (ibid, p. 38), yet 49% of all such artists received less than $20,000 per annum from both artist and non-artist sources (ibid, p. 42). This is a meagre reward for the contribution of the arts to the Federal Government of $240 million in gross income tax for the financial year 1991-1992 (ibid, p.47). Long periods of unemployment, an average of 17 months in five years overall, make it difficult to maintain skills and a working presence in a competitive industry (ibid, p.53). If conditions are so poor for those highly-qualified artists already seeking placements, where are the new graduates to find work? And why do more and more institutions offer 'creative arts' courses when there is nowhere for the preponderance of their graduates to go, unless they vie with contestants in so-called reality TV?

In Australia and the USA, both countries considered to be strong economically, non-commercial or experimental performing arts have held a permanently low profile on the list of funding commitments. Innovators in music-theatre and smaller musical forms are treated with suspicion, almost ignored by government arts bureaucracies and ignored

entirely by corporate sponsors. This, despite the fact that iconic classical composers like Mozart and Beethoven, who were considered by many to be radical in their day, died impoverished but, two centuries later, provide handsome profits for record companies and concert promoters. It is for that very reason – that they are 'safe' now – that 'boring' Mozart is to be played at railway stations, preventing crime by discouraging criminals more attuned to Rock and Roll from lingering and getting into mischief. It would indeed be an ironic twist if, in seeking corporate backing, chamber opera were to lose its integrity by being used as a promotional tool, falling into the illusory ease of the advertorial and drowning its singular dissenting voice. Symbiotic relationships between artistic and institutional, government or corporate funding bodies are a comparatively recent phenomenon which needs to be taken into account. A balance needs to be struck between the dictates of the monoliths of commercial theatre and the struggles of the non-mainstream artist to expand our vision.

Support for new models of creative theatre like chamber opera calls for a new breed of entrepreneurs willing to promote those who write and perform the kind of works that break the boundaries of institutionalised thought. If artists even with proven track records struggle to achieve a response, what makes it so difficult to attract Government aid and assistance? As the cap on the separate submissions required by the Australia Council for each stage of new work is $7,500, according to the current guidelines published on their website, their policy of segmenting the process makes the creation, or mounting, of a new production a long and precarious journey. Governments seem to be falling increasingly into the habit of thinking like corporations. Both federal and state governments' short-sighted and pragmatic inability, or refusal, to view money spent on the arts as investment

in a supposedly free-thinking society, results in a policy of niggardly one-off handouts for a limited number of arts initiatives. Perhaps this is intended as the pursuit of a democratic approach to the distribution of funds but, although some welcome grants are made, the peculiar policies and conditions attached to them tend to reduce the recipient's power to actually fulfil the agreed project.

Policies are convoluted to the point that funding is difficult to administer once granted, because the requirements are so unrealistic. As we are not talking of those wilfully roaming the streets or surfing the waves at Government expense, but of skilled and dedicated people needing a leg-up in the arts (as distinct from 'entertainment'), which always entail financial risk but are productive in a social context, it is inappropriate to view this need as welfare. Rather it should be considered as an investment in work that will make a valid contribution to Australian society and its unique identity.

For how can new work achieve a track record, let alone a proven one, without government aid similar to that given to all kinds of innovative theatre throughout Europe, and in the Scandinavian countries in particular, where the exploration of new ways of thinking and expression is understood and valued as a function of the arts? In these countries with a long history of theatre and respect for artists, independent experimental groups are encouraged and receive generous government assistance and public support. Practitioners like Sam Hayden, who was working with students as AHRB Fellow in Composition at Leeds University at the time, told me in a telephone conversation in July 2001 prior to his departure on a European exchange summer Festival tour of *[rout]*[44], that in the UK there are regional and institutional funds available for specialised projects,

[44] *[rout]* as written here, is the name of the travelling production by students of Sam Hayden at Leeds University (2001). Use of the lower case in titles is common in contemporary theatre.

such as this production. Hayden is nonplussed as to why, in a new country like Australia, which is famously out-going in many respects, it is so difficult to sustain forms of experimental theatre.

English groups also receive travelling and project assistance from regional bodies, especially for a variety of festival productions. The Northern Ballet, for instance, tours the north of England on a seasonal basis, and Opera North commissioned one of the works to be discussed later in the chapter. According to its festival program, productions of contemporary works at the Almeida Theatre receive some assistance from government bodies although the main source of sponsorship derives from a lengthy list of subscribers, some famous as in the case of Andrew Lloyd Webber, but also including a number of 'worshipful guilds' and large companies. Not only do they present the New Music Festival annually, as host to the best travelling productions, but they also feature a newly commissioned chamber opera every year, as well as awarding a composition Fellowship. All round, these initiatives make a sobering comparison to the position here, where no such permanent theatre exists, let alone far-seeing, hands-on development projects.

The 'majority' audience, judged on a ratings system in television and by door sales in theatre enterprises, are presumed to prefer 'reality' TV or blockbuster movies loaded with the tried and true formula of sex and violence, or to be dazzled by ever more overwhelming stage effects in revivals of old musicals or shows built around old movies or celebrities. Can we even speak of a majority, given that most audiences have not been exposed to a choice in the first place, but have been flooded with commercially based product sold by saturation advertising? If applied to the performing arts, this may translate into a period of support for the one or two mainstream companies where

maximum exposure is available for branding on programs and other forms of advertising. Sometimes this support allows for rare commissions or trials of new works, limited mainly to attempts at full-scale opera, or a new ballet to allow the old tried and true repertoire a breathing space. But corporations sometimes change their minds and support can be withdrawn quite unexpectedly, as happened with the Australian Opera some years ago; and recently even the internationally famous Sydney Dance Company has had to beg publicly for emergency measures to permit its survival. When one considers the years of disciplined training and experience required to reach the standards of the major companies in dance, opera and classical theatre, the disproportionate rewards to those practitioners involved are, on the whole, shameful. When such a successful company as the Sydney Dance Company is facing near-nemesis, it bodes ill for the smaller experimental bodies such as chamber opera in their attempts to establish continuity of production. Yet audiences should not be deprived of the opportunity to test the tried and true for themselves; but 'true' cannot be properly assessed in the 'tried and true' relationship until it has been 'tried'.

Box office receipts are never able to make up the shortfall in the production of non-mainstream, non-commercial theatre – a fact regarded as a truism in arts circles. Already stretched to the limit with its meagre funding (when one considers the amount of tax contributed by the most underpaid section of the community, as seen in earlier pages), the Australia Council does its best, supporting the major companies to some extent but in an attempt to cover community, visual arts and other non-performance ventures, must spread itself thinly. Meanwhile, across great and small theatre genres, costs soar in an ever more competitive arena. Factors such as rising rentals, restricted venue occupancy, union

demands and huge insurance premiums, fire and council regulations, all conspire to paralyse small companies even before production and promotion costs come into play. Small theatre, often satirical or in some way idiosyncratic, cannot acquire a wide audience base unless people have time to adjust to its semiotics. When matching music is added to a social theme that may not sit comfortably with patrons accustomed to television pulp containing degrees of violence and almost pornographic sex seldom seen on a stage, the shock can produce reactions of either rejection or curiosity – even, perhaps, a desire for more of the same. Given time and opportunity, the new avenues of stimulation to be discovered in chamber opera can be enhanced on two main levels: by expanding the audience base through wider educational promotion, and by touring.

(ii) Education

Education programs by major USA opera companies, some of which are listed in the Appendix, comprise a serious form of community outreach which is becoming increasingly acknowledged as a means not only of developing audience awareness of contemporary opera and of expanding its audience base, but of accepting a certain kind of social responsibility (French 1998). Overseas, regular workshops and familiarisation programs for young people, aimed at overcoming the perceived elitism of opera, centre on specially designed hands-on projects, such as *The Egyptian Cinderella*: a video project for children entitled Opera is Elementary which provide ways of opening young minds to new concepts by direct experience of and participation in both new and established works (Lozada 2002).

Resource-sharing of facilities between companies is becoming a standard part of good arts management even in larger, established companies in the USA. For an illuminating

insight into some of the philosophies and policies practiced in opera companies in the USA, the session transcript of the debate between directors of opera houses at the OPERA America Annual Conference is available on their website (www.operaamerica.org/outlooka). Even so, the larger companies have the advantage over smaller *ad hoc* companies with no facilities and a burning desire to create and produce contemporary work.

A very comprehensive tool for education and research is being constructed in Canberra (www.musicaustralia.org), which will link the resources of the Australian National Library to State libraries and organizations such as the AMC (www.amcoz.com.au) as well as to other similar institutions world-wide. On this website, the Library is developing a project which will eventually make available bibliographical and biographical information, as well as selected scores of Australian music for downloading. This is a wonderful research resource. There are also a number of mechanisms such as camps run by state or individual schools for the education of young instrumentalists or choristers. These occasions have been, and could well continue to be used to combine skills and develop the co-operative, 'fun' aspect of making music or performing together on festive days or at major venues, as in the annual NSW Schools Spectaculars at the Sydney Entertainment Centre. But there is no co-ordinated strategy providing hands-on types of initiatives to familiarise untutored children with some of the more complex art forms, such as opera. Now that music, including composition, is available as an HSC subject in secondary schools, it would also be a valuable exercise to familiarize the public with their works and with established composers, most of whom get little or no acknowledgment in Australia.

The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in Brooklyn, (New York, USA), provides opportunities for hands-on involvement of young people in a three-week festival of adventurous contemporary music known as the *Bang on a Can* Summer Institute of Music. It is refreshing to see the wider canvas, in this instance of a cross-medium sponsorship which is so successful that it is able to attract mentors of the calibre of Steve Reich, a leading contemporary composer, for the annual program. Australia has nothing to compare with this. University classes, even if adventurous, are based more on individual prowess than on experimental group composition or improvisation, although there are smaller workshop events taking place from time to time.

Although little acknowledged until recently, Australia is rich in women composers, many of whom are internationally recognised. One of the earliest of these was Peggy Glanville-Hicks, noted for her music-theatre works such as *The Transposed Heads* (1954), adapted from a novel by English author, Iris Murdoch. A significant proportion of new works is now being written by women composers, who seem to have a particular affinity with chamber opera form. Their works, like Andreé Greenwell's *Laquiem*, (1999), which are often centred on female characters or feminine issues (although no more overtly gender-based than operas such as *Lucia di Lammermoor* or *Madama Butterfly*), bring an entirely fresh cultural perspective and emotional depth to the medium. *Laquiem* also makes a contribution to the breaking down of the 'fourth wall', that invisible barrier between the onstage performer and the audience, by featuring a central character with an untrained voice (the composer's own at early performances), thus closing the gap between communicator and communicant. Through well-developed technical skills, the newer generation blends cultural and technical sophistication in works such as Liza Lim's

ritualistic interpretation of a South-east Asian legend, AMC/APRA[45] award-winning *Yue Ling Jé* (2000). In *The Tsar Saltan* (2001) composer Elena Kats-Chernin, who is Russian by birth, and Australian choreographer, Meryl Tankard, both recognized internationally for their work, formed a creative collaboration to give new artistic dimensions to a Russian poem by Pushkin.

Composer Derek Strahan brings yet another viewpoint to bear on the levels of diversity enriching the opera scene in Australia today. In an article published on his website, he welcomes as a late twentieth-century phenomenon, the new 'pluralism', namely the 'freedom to compose in a wide range of styles'. including frankly commercial works, which he defines as an attempt to break away from 'the tribalism of academia' and the hegemony imposed by its teaching of 'arty' post-modernist philosophies on composition techniques (Strahan 2002).

(iii) Promoting contemporary chamber opera/music theatre

(a) Spreading awareness of chamber opera by exposure:

In the 1970s, the Arts Council of New South Wales picked up a show devised by a company called Young Opera and toured three singers and an accompanist to almost every primary school in the State for about four years. As one of these singers, I can attest to the joyful reactions of the children to the live performers in the little opera, a term the young audience accepted as such without a tinge of fear or derision. An original work commissioned by the entrepreneurs, it was purpose-written for the age group, based on an anthropomorphic treatment of the primary colours. In the finale audiences participated with great gusto in a simple round, easily taught by the cast as part of the

[45] APRA: The Australian Performing Rights Association.

show. The idea was to foster an appetite and appreciation for opera, or music theatre, from the grass roots. Young Opera was known for its admirable contribution to the arts. It maintained excellent standards and was popular with its audiences but, like many small companies with high ideals, is no longer functioning, nor has the gap it left been filled. School touring in New South Wales has survived to some extent in the form of self-devised, self-packaged shows booked through and approved by the appropriate Department of Education authority.

The chance of seeing good live theatre aimed at a young audience is minimal if not non-existent, although various companies (the Bell Shakespeare Company for instance) present plays consistent with secondary school study requirements as part of their box office strategies. As for music theatre, the choice is severely limited, aside from television programs made up of video clips such as *Rage*, some of which take a step in the direction of vocalised abstraction. Live, youth-oriented events are restricted to rock concerts or occasional shows like *The Lion King*. Distance and expense make theatre visits out of reach for a great percentage of country children, but even in the cities there is little opportunity of promoting a theatre-going habit, as there is seldom anything to see, not even a modern-day version of the funny old pantomimes that spiced up every holiday time in days gone by.

Over the years, there have been some weak attempts by Opera Australia (formerly The Australian Opera) and its touring arm, OzOpera, to stage productions of new material that is specifically aimed at children, such as *Grandma's Shoes* by Kim Carpenter's Theatre of Image, but it is sporadic and half-hearted at best.

Hopes flew high when, on ABC TV's 7.30 Report in January, 2001, Simone Young, the internationally acclaimed Australian conductor famed for having been the only woman to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra no less than for her performances of Wagner, waxed enthusiastic about her plans for creative expansion as the new artistic director of Opera Australia. The presentation of new works, and especially much-needed initiatives for young people, were high on her list of priorities. In September 2003 on the same program, she expressed her frustration at being forced to terminate her contract prior to its expiry date. She also revealed to Australian conductor, Sir Charles Mackerras, who was on the same program, her disillusionment at the demise of these plans and cited other apparently insoluble, but undisclosed, artistic reasons for her departure.

Opera Australia appears to be a closed book in terms of real and ongoing innovation, tied as they are to the tyranny of the box office and a policy of lavish productions of traditional works, out-pricing the average family wage-earner. There must be some way of running weekend workshop performances of new and also older works, where senior secondary and tertiary music students could participate for experience and the public could afford to attend.

Along with the Opera's lack of preliminary public orientation strategies in the context of promoting knowledge and awareness in the young comes the question of secondary, follow-up programs of familiarization through repeated experience of given works – a program needed less frequently in the case of the more traditional repertoire, but vital in the case of new works. Although a limited number of works, such as Richard Meale's *Voss* (commissioned for the 1986 Adelaide Festival), have received repeat performances and a few composers have received repeat commissions (with varying success), most

commissioned works such as Brian Howard's *Whitsunday* (1988), have received just one season's exposure. Others, like Ross Edwards' 1989 work, *Christina's World*, have been cancelled or failed to proceed past the workshop stage. Composers need an opportunity to learn by experience what it takes to write an opera. There seems to be no consistent policy either for developing or incorporating new or unfamiliar works into conservative programming, or for educational outreach projects for training hopefuls, as in the English National Opera's *Operatunity* model, which also exposed a large public television viewing audience to the wonders and rigours of performance, or to stimulate or excite the younger generations into exploring the world of live opera and music theatre of all kinds. Chamber opera is competing against almost unassailable odds unless it can somehow infiltrate into or make use of the formidable power of the media.

There is an abundance not only of quality international and Australian material, but also of artists of high calibre thirsting to create or participate in its production. The Australian Music Centre (AMC) at The Rocks in Sydney is a valuable resource centre for updated information regarding Australian music and its practitioners. The AMC does what it can to promote Australian music and performance on a mini-budget which reflects the indifference of governmental funding bodies to the promotion of non-mainstream Australian music, despite its high status with world artistic bodies.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), struggling against aggressive assaults on its federal funding, bridges the gap with radio programs and compact discs featuring Australian works, often recorded by Australian artists, in an attempt to keep faith with the home-grown product to the best of its ability. Over the last few years, the now defunct *Listening Room* program on ABC Classic FM has included innovative fusions of word

and sound elements although only a few, such as *The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior*, could fulfil the classic definition of opera as the consistent use of the sung word.

At one time operas televised by ABC-TV in simulcast or recorded from performances at the Sydney Opera House or earlier, from their own in-house television productions, frequently featured in their programming. Several contemporary Australian operas written for television, such as *The Fall of the House of Usher* by Larry Sitsky and Malcolm Williamson's *Violins of St. Jacques* were produced there in the 1960s and 1970s, but studio opera production all but ceased thereafter. It was encouraging when the ABC televised the prize-winning film version of *Black River*, the chamber opera by Andrew Schultz and co-librettist, Julianne Schultz in 1993. But video recordings, even of staged chamber operas like *Black River* or *White Baptist Abba Fan* could be counted on one hand. Live or recorded televised opera, or classical music concerts, once a regular part of seasonal planning, are now rare events.

A collaboration between OzOpera, MusicArtsDanceFilm, the Australia Council and the Arts and Entertainment division of ABC-TV offered some hope when MdTV was launched. 'MdTV is a unique project, creating music drama for television and aiming to generate new audiences for the form'(Gallasch 2000). *One Night the Moon*, by John Romeril and Paul Kelly, with Kelly in the dual role of composer and performer, opened the proposed series on December 18, 2002. If the choice of work for the initial MdTV[46] screening proved successful, it was hoped that the planned three-year production schedule would be fulfilled and that other programmers might be encouraged to commission similar works specifically for that medium, or at least to produce some of the

[46] When asked, in 2004, about its continuity, the ABC denied any knowledge of the program.

many existing Australian works. It was a brave step and exactly what was needed, but the project appears to have been abandoned; *The Widower*, another enterprise of the consortium, with music by composer Elena Kats-Chernin and lyrics by Les Murray, is to be released in 2005.

Some 20 years ago a brave individual, Belinda Webster, founded the recording company *Tall Poppies,* which is concerned entirely with recording contemporary Australian performers and contemporary Australian music. Distribution is a big problem for small companies such as Belinda's, financially speaking, in much the same way that marketing is for small theatre. Similarly, Pinchgut Opera, a new and enthusiastic small company launched in 2002 is dedicated to excellence in the production of baroque and lesser known chamber opera, and has produced two major artistic successes – one per year with another, the first Australian production of Rameau's *Dardanus* planned for late in 2005. Its strategy is to hasten slowly and to give excellent performances of rare operas or innovative productions of older works; contemporary works may come at a later stage of their development. Its romantic association with the eponymous island guarding the harbour is indicative of an imaginative approach, which is building acclaim – and audiences. Stopera, a small-scale opera company based in Canberra, has presented a range of both early and contemporary works since its inception in 1995. Exceptions like these that continue to thrive under such adverse conditions serve both to demonstrate that they fulfil a need and that this need would, but for the devotion of these companies, be ignored. It begs the question of how many other areas of the arts considered by bean-counters as a poor investment, and 'not commercially viable' have been less fortunate.

Weekend afternoon programming on SBS television, which includes traditional opera productions from a wide variety of genres, proves that such works can be transferred to film with some success. Calling mostly on an extended traditional repertoire from Europe, many of these films use updated theatrical techniques. Paisiello's *Nina*, for instance, long unperformed as it was considered to be an archival work of interest only to researchers, was revived as a vehicle for Cecilia Bartoli, as she explained in an introductory segment of the video. This work not a new idea, as Monteverdi, with *Orfeo* librettist Alessandro Striggio (1573-1630), had tackled the subject of feigned madness in *La Finta Pazza Licori* (1627) over a century before *Paisiello*'s work. Other works produced in the service of archival preservation were regional operas, like *The Peony Pavilion*, an ancient, rarely-produced *kunju* (Chinese folk opera), or nationalist operas, such as the z*arzuela*, a Spanish lyric opera form. These provide unique opportunities to glimpse the depth and variety of influences exerted by operatic genres in many cultures over hundreds of years. Whether of new or of established works co-produced by stage and film directors, the program's viability is proven by its survival over the years, in a time slot that places it in competition with the peak period of weekly sports coverage on all other channels. This, with what survives of ABC-TV's *Sunday Afternoon* arts program, gives some indication that a viewing public for 'esoteric' productions on television does exist.

(b) Awareness through Producing and Touring

Companies engaged in contemporary theatrical performance arts are seldom involved in the mass market, largely because few know about them. Their choice of themes can limit access to most avenues of funding because of perceived social sensitivities. *White Baptist*

Abba Fan (1997), the one-woman show written and performed from her own experiences by self-proclaimed gay Aboriginal[47] opera singer, Deborah Cheetham, is an exposé of children removed from their natural mothers to be raised in white society. On the other hand, politically motivated agencies may be induced to back productions tackling such issues in the name of social awareness as in *Bran Nue Dae* (see Appendix). Sometimes these themes when compounded with social guilt, fare better in the funding stakes than most. While the standard is as good, if not better, the number and variety of music theatre works emerging here cannot compete with those being presented overseas. Touring productions overseas is common practice in the northern hemisphere and is even more desirable for our companies as it would stimulate cross-fertilisation, as Chamber Made's excursions into Europe have demonstrated.

Alongside the bright lights of Broadway, a culture of small houses and individuals immersed in various aspects of the genre thrives in New York. For example, apart from a variety of larger compositions, renowned contemporary American composer Philip Glass (1937-) has also written a number of chamber works including a dance opera, *Les Enfants Terribles*, which premiered in Switzerland in 1996. Experimenting with new technologies, he followed this with a digital 'chamber' opera, *Monsters of Grace,* in 1998 (Mesa 1997-2001).

In the lead article on the first page of the Weekend section of the *New York Times* of 24 January 2003, (reproduced electronically for *c-opera* subscribers), Anne Midgette described the number of operas being staged in New York at that time as 'astounding':

> *The offerings run the gamut from the creatively homemade - like "The*

[47] These are terms the writer/performer uses to describe herself in the show.

> *Dwarf"- to the crisply professional, like "Patience and Sarah" by Paula Kimper, a production by American Opera Projects that had a big success at the Lincoln Center Festival in 1998. Going to indie opera in New York can mean hearing the New York Grand Opera do Verdi in Central Park, embodying both opera's traditions and its stereotypes: bright, two-dimensional sets; elderly tenors in glossy wigs; big powerful music. It can mean sitting in a small space in the East Village for a sung one-woman version of Anne Frank's diary - attic hideout, iron bedstead and all - as conceived by Nancy Rhodes and the Encompass New Opera Theater. It can even mean taking in Beijing opera at the New Victory Theater, where the Qi Shu Fang Beijing Opera Company is presenting "The Women Generals" this weekend* (Midgette 2003).

Her use of the term 'indie' in this context is interesting: a warm, intimate abbreviation, it endows independent, small opera with an aura of permanence as an accepted part of the arts landscape of what is arguably the world's most vital city.

As is increasingly the custom, many of the Australian works cited are also 'out-sourced', in that they are packaged shows performed in venues other than those in which they were brought to production. Yet it is important for growth companies to have a fixed venue for identification and administration purposes, as well as for readily available access during rehearsal and creative periods. Only the favoured, established companies have the luxury of a full-time venue where they can both perform and rehearse. But there are partial solutions. Chamber Made Opera has a home in a previously unused council building made available by an insightful city council in Melbourne as office and rehearsal space for small theatre groups. A proper use of idle civic resources, and similar initiatives elsewhere could make a tremendous contribution to the survival and development of small companies, for a minimal outlay.

Sustainability, once a work exists, poses the next challenge to the small company or *ad hoc* group which has achieved artistic success in staging their first production, perhaps with the aid of a small government grant. Small companies of all kinds find it advantageous to create exchange plans with other small groups and form links with venue holders with community backing and outreach; in the case of works suited to youth audiences tour operators, such as those set up to service school and other specialised audiences, can be of assistance. But those who tour must have the funds to purchase or hire equipment, to obtain suitable vehicles and the commitment to take on a multiplicity of tasks.

Once operational, touring a packaged show to different countries or venues or on the festival circuit creates other opportunities for increased public exposure and is, therefore, a necessary option for 'adding value' to almost any type of theatrical production today, as the *Oxford Dictionary of Opera* attests (Warrack & West 1992). Because of their easier portability for touring, small theatre genres such as contemporary chamber opera are ideally placed to gain accessibility to a wider, more diverse audience than large-scale productions - an important factor in stimulating future audiences, and especially in the planning and sustaining of productions in times of economic uncertainty. Accessibility, both in terms of a recognized venue and a suitable degree of artistic communication in the wider community, are essential factors in the sustainability of any company, be it commercially or artistically motivated. The main difference in success levels of attracting audiences stems from the fact that the commercial companies not only recognize the need for promotion, but have the resources to sustain it through a variety of media.

At Chamber Made Opera, although a recipient of Australia Council funding and regarded by theatre practitioners overseas as one of the best in the world, the artistic director, Douglas Horton, often doubles as administrator, writer, producer, or director in the interests of economy, yet with no loss of quality. Accomplishing such a feat requires an overwhelming personal commitment. In larger companies there is a definite demarcation between the roles associated with creative and administrative functions, but this kind of operation requires the depth of funding to provide and pay, at a minimum of Union wages, specialist people to fill these roles. Other small companies, equally dedicated but not so fortunate as those already established as frequent recipients of government funding, fall victim to the pitfalls inherent in establishing or sustaining a position in the entertainment arena through disempowerment because of the overwhelming cost of publicity and the difficulty of combining artistic demands with the mechanics of fund-raising under the Australian federal government's policy of self-advocacy in the performing arts.

In a return to the production ethos of opera's beginnings, collaboration, cooperation and ingenuity must be called upon to support the creative urge to compensate for shortfalls in the funding dollar - the price and, in some respects, the prize of independence. It is interesting to note how smaller works, created with enthusiasm in a cooperative environment, often have a greater power of communication with audiences who are, subconsciously, quite sensitive to onstage dynamics.

The impact of productions on audiences is an important factor in assessing, not only the genre's current success, sustainability, and so forth, but its value to the society. This is communication. And communication is the key to all artistic work, dependent on its

accessibility to the audience - whether in ease of reach physically, or in terms of production values such as visual, literary or musical content. Although the main commitment of artistic directors is to pursue ever higher artistic values in their productions, a situation of conflicting interests arises when they are also called upon to become business managers and wrestle with venue difficulties, budget and other problems, such as the demand for 'added value', in the current financial jargon, associated with satisfying submission or sponsorship requirements.

The Sydney Puppet Theatre is an example of a small theatre which, when its long-term funding was withdrawn and, at the same time, its performance space in The Rocks was closed for development, showed its ingenuity by instituting its own Puppet Festival. Historically the concept was based on the idea of The Van, a moveable theatrical feast recalling the *modus operandii* of one of the harbingers of the operatic format, the *Commedia del'Arte*, whose strolling players inspired *I Pagliacci*, by Ruggiero Leoncavallo (1858-1919). The Festival, cleverly hooked into a community on the outskirts of the city, is held biennially at the Blackheath Community Centre. Complete with workshop opportunities for children and a cabaret night featuring adult puppet theatre, it has something for everybody and is now a highly prized feature of summer entertainment in the district. The fact that this group were already established as leading artists, both here and overseas, made this venture possible and benefited not only themselves, but provided at least a short season of work for a number of other practitioners. The group wisely spent their income from funding and door sales on a van for transport and a well-equipped workshop where they made a huge variety of puppets and wrote their own plays and music; their income, though small, was steady. But as

capital works are not included in the granting system, it will be difficult for them to keep up with the workshop rents, find performance venues, and maintain an operational level without either a permanent venue or some other assistance.

Yet there is now no live, original children's theatre of an international standard in the Sydney area to replace it. The thousands of children who, over the years, crammed into the small space, squealing with delight at the music and the humorous characters, so the parents who could take their children with confidence to wholesome, creative theatre, are now deprived of this regular entertainment.

From my observations over the last 10 years at a number of performances overseas and in Australia by Chamber Made and other small companies like Sydney Music Theatre, audiences seem stimulated by the thought-provoking material, an unconventional approach, and contemporary visual and aural language displayed by the evolving medium. Film score composers have long underscored the emotional impact of scenes so subtly that few audience members are aware of its presence. In horror movies, for instance, music that would normally be considered almost unbearably dissonant is acceptable because it conveys, even to untrained audiences, the tension and anxiety building in the scene, underlining their emotional identification with the 'victim', as required by the director and the creators of the script.

Audience reaction around me at productions of the chamber operas I have seen has confirmed for me, that the genre has an ongoing potential for development as a dynamic nexus between art and popular cultures, between music theatre and the electronic media now and into the future. As exciting new works come to the fore, audiences are building, becoming accustomed to and accepting of the directness of the new medium, and

confident in their reactions to it. 'Bracing,' was one comment I overheard during interval at one evening's performance, 'like sailing into the wind!' 'I would see more if there was more,' one young patron told me on another occasion. The trouble is, there is very little more and it is infrequent - the continuity is lacking, so the momentum dies away.

'We have a core audience, which makes things a little more assured. But we still live from production to production' (Jenkins & Linz 1997, p. 11), says Douglas Horton, director of Chamber Made Opera which is, nevertheless, without the advantage of a permanent performance venue. Their original productions vary from new works based on classics like *Medea* to iconoclastic pieces derived from improvisation, or pieces in the local idiom staged in unconventional spaces, such as *The Cars That Ate Paris* performed in a large car workshop.

Yet funding is a problem not restricted to the comparative newcomers in the field. The crisis felt in major opera and dance companies both here and abroad could conceivably become the opportunity for chamber opera to 'legitimise' its revival. An editorial entitled 'Let's Get Small' in the American journal, *Opera News*, describes how US opera companies were 'making a virtue' of downsizing (Unattributed 1997, p. 10). This attitude is reinforced in a later issue of the same journal by director Richard Pearlman in an article extolling 'the joys of working in a smaller operatic form' (Pearlman 1998). In *The House*, a six-part documentary shown on ABC-TV in 1996, the fate of such illustrious and historical institutions as the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden was being discussed. 'Downsizing' became the dreaded buzz word at the approach of the new millenium, causing panic in all, from audience members to the Board, no less than in the auditors of the House's books. Taking it a step further, the suggestion that Covent Garden should

'encompass' the Royal Opera and the English National Opera, mooted in an article in *Opera News* entitled 'Viewpoint', was sure to cause outrage in the ranks of English lovers of all things traditional (Smith 1998, p. 4).

By abandoning the creative and administrative indulgences associated with traditional opera, works such as those commissioned by the courage and conviction of smaller companies, or created by collaborations between enthusiastic individuals, exhibit a commitment to the economical presentation of uncompromising material. Many new works, such as *The Flight of Les Darcy* and *To Traverse Water* are conceived and staged in an economical way that informs the text while engaging the audience directly, adding a new dimension by staging performances in a manner designed to break down the 'fourth wall', which separates the audience from proceedings onstage by the physical and psychological distance created by the formalism of the proscenium arch.

The dismantling of the formalistic mode of conventional opera and music theatre has much to do with the perception, in contemporary theatrical terms, of space and its usage. In an article entitled 'Opera Houses Under Fire', published on April 12 2001 in *NewMusicBox*, the electronic organ of the American Music Theater, Lukas Pairon calls for new infrastructures and building practices where smaller, purpose-built venues suited to more intimate genres, such as chamber opera, are accessible. Although unlikely to draw vast crowds, there is a growing and devoted public for small theatre, and the freedom of artistic choices available to workers in smaller forms is becoming increasingly attractive to creative talents like Philip Glass (1937-), who collaborated with Allen Ginsberg on *Hydrogen Jukebox* for the American Music-Theater Festival.

All this stripping away of the peripheral in writing and presentation points to a serious, or a more internalised approach to subject matter which is demanding for both performers and audiences, yet at the same time more intrinsically satisfying in that it builds up a closer relationship between the two. Attending the Arhus Festival in 1998, Robyn Archer predicted that non-mainstream music theatre has 'a fantastic future' in Australia, due to our 'mongrel culture', mostly unfettered by traditional restraints, and open to 'hybrid' cross-fertilisation (Andersen & Faaborg 1999, p. 29).

Site-specific works such as *To Traverse Water*, described later in the chapter, now create an element of surprise, adding new layers of excitement and relevance to material that would hold no veracity in another venue. Opera is becoming an adventure, not a cultural duty. Recent Australian works have been well received both in London and New York and are admired, particularly amongst members of *NewOp,* for the innovative presentation and universal reach of their uncompromising thematic material. For instance Stevie Wishart's adaptation of Richard Murphet's acclaimed play, *Slow Love* (1998), is based on the disintegration rather than the perpetuation of romantic love. Two major new works, Andrew Ford's *Night and Dreams – The Death of Sigmund Freud* (2000) and Raffaele Marcellino's 'physical opera' *The Flight of Les Darcy* (2001), both productions of Music Theatre Sydney, are centred respectively around two famous men, the founder of the science of psychology, Sigmund Freud, and boxing hero, Les Darcy – two icons from widely diverse fields of human endeavour - reflecting on the circumstances of their strange destinies.

Music Theatre Sydney is a production and entrepreneurial company whose title alludes not only to the home city of the company but to the original concept of opera, whilst

acknowledging, in terms of its modern acceptance, the company's freedom to engage in a range of productions. In a telephone interview the manager and co-founder, Justin Macdonnell said, regarding his promotion company's intrinsic role in the creation of *The Flight of Les Darcy* with the composer and librettist, that this production is the result of close working relationships and a policy 'eager to develop and promote the national profile of music theatre' as stated on the single-sheet program (Marcellino 2002). Although he agreed with me that this work was in every sense operatic Macdonnell, as executive producer, preferred to categorise *Les Darcy* under what he saw as the more generally accessible generic term 'music theatre'.

Chamber Made Opera is perhaps the most well-established and prolific of the smaller Australian opera companies devoted to contemporary works. Director Douglas Horton, whose productions have been highly successful both here and touring to great acclaim in London and New York, underlines the chimerical nature of contemporary chamber opera when he says, 'At this point I can't say contemporary opera is this or that' (Jenkins & Linz 1997, p. 18). Over the last decade or so, his company has produced a variety of works of an experimental nature: some music-driven such as *Recital*, a collaborative work devised by Horton, the soprano Helen Noonan and composer David Chesworth; some in which the visual component takes precedence over the music, such as *Tresno,* the Opera in Movement by Jacqui Rutten previously mentioned. The main focus for Horton is that, 'no matter how innovative in its process, the piece must communicate and involve the audience' and hopefully, 'inspire everyone involved with the project' (Jenkins & Linz 1997, p. 18). This accent on involvement is a key factor amongst all the practitioners I

interviewed, and appears to be typical of the process in the creation of current works in the smaller genre.

Apart from my selected works, mention should be made of other Australian works, where a new breed of talented younger composers remains close to a variety of cultural roots, which they are keen to reinterpret. This cross-cultural[48] element is in my view a very important, if not unique, contribution from our multi-layered society, enriching the medium in a purely idiosyncratic way. The Greek company, IHOS Opera, creates multimedia productions in a highly individual style, often drawing audiences into the fabric of the work by making use of large spatial areas and incorporating natural elements. *To Traverse Water*, for instance, floods the floor-space to depict 'a Greek woman's journey to her new homeland, Australia, exploring the immigrant's cultural displacement' (Gallasch 2000, p. 20). Then there are 'crossover'[49] works using a mixture of compositional techniques, such as Graeme Koehne's score to Louis Nowra's text, *Love Burns* (1992), for OzOpera, 'effectively employing deadpan texts and dance hall rhythms' in a work whose theme follows the journey of a killer couple to the electric chair (Gallasch 2000, p. 19).

Audience reactions to the new works I observed as part of my research were universally positive, with the unfortunate exception of Martin Butler's *A Better Place,* commissioned as the 2001 chamber work for the famous English National Opera Studios and, for that reason, perhaps the most potentially prestigious of that year's productions. The Coliseum venue was too large, the work inconsequential and dwarfed by the venue, the stage design

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[48] Cross-cultural throughout the text refers to the hybridisation of 'other' ethnic or philosophical beliefs and art forms into new works.

[49] 'Crossover' is a term increasingly used here, and elsewhere, to refer to cross-fertilisation of musical modes or styles.

overpowered the performance, the orchestra seemed under-rehearsed or else the music lacked structure; all-in-all, the matinee audience, comprising mainly older ladies, was less than impressed.

(iii) Three works given closer study

The various production methods employed in three representative chamber operas will be subjected now to more specific examination, according to the common criteria of duration, choice of subject matter, economy of treatment, and the impact on the audience of the work as a whole. A more personal assessment of the process is undertaken in Chapter 5, where my own contribution to the medium is discussed.

Two works, *Black River* (1988) by Andrew Schultz and Raffaele Marcellino's *The Flight of Les Darcy* (2001), are Australian in both theme and composition, and *God's Liar* (2001) is by English composer, John Casken. These works meet the typical criteria of contemporary chamber opera in that they examine with great intensity, though in a relatively short period of time and with elements of abstraction in the staging, some of the most confronting issues of our day.

(a) Black River

Black River (1988) by Andrew Schultz and librettist sister Julianne, exposes the clash between black and white 'dreaming' haunted by black deaths in custody. This is a deeply divisive social and political issue between indigenous and non-indigenous people in Australia, stemming from the cultural disenfranchisement of Aboriginal Australians. The librettist says of the experience of writing this one-act piece, 'we were entranced by the

ability of opera to illuminate contemporary themes and the moral ambiguity attached to them' (Schultz 1997, p. 12).

The action takes place in a remote police station where the prisoner is detained in a section of the room. The music captures the desperation and darkness of the theme, maintaining a level of intensity throughout its hour-long duration, evoking deep emotional responses in the listener. The presentation highlights the duality of the moral ambiguity associated with the process of law encountering cultural differences, accentuated by hardened racial attitudes. The dilemma of the haunted white policeman called upon to enforce the law, no less tragic than the plight of the young black man terrified to death of incarceration, is given a 'nightmare' treatment. Thunder, lightning, faces appearing at the window through a veil of tropical rain – all the elements are there to place the action as isolated and, ultimately, inevitable. The stoic young black woman pleads, unheeded by both, like the voice of the river until it comes into flood. It is a remarkable work which has received wide acclaim.

It was commissioned in 1988, the year of the Bicentenary, a contentious time in terms of the reconciliation process, by the Australian Music Centre. It won a National Critics' Award when it premiered in 1989, featuring Australian Aboriginal singers. A film version made by Lucas Produkzions was awarded the grand prix at Opera Screen in Paris in 1993. It is one of the few Australian chamber operas to be seen on foreign TV channels following a screening by ABC-TV in Australia. The composer said of this work that it is 'one of the pieces' where he 'came closest to (him)self' Buzacott in (Schultz 2001, p. 33).

Incidentally, the Schultz team hit the mark once more with their new full-length opera *Going into Shadows* (2001), an essay on terrorism and the distortions practiced by the

media, but in a way more terrifyingly topical than they could ever have imagined. The première at London's Guildhall Theatre at the Barbican took place in mid-June 2001. At the Queensland Conservatorium's Opera Theatre, the Brisbane portion of the co-production began on September 9 and performances were in full swing when terrorists razed the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and attacked the Pentagon in Washington.

'All week, lines from the opera have been going through our heads that are just so unbelievably pertinent now', the lead soprano Sarah Sullivan told reporter Patricia Kelly of Brisbane's *Courier Mail*, after the decision was made to continue with the season of a work whose scenario is so eerily portentous of the tragedy (Kelly 2001, p. Arts 1). At the third Australian performance, dedicated to those who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks, the audience joined the cast in observing a minute's silence. What more vivid example could there be of the relevance and immediacy of the contemporary model of opera?

(b) God's Liar

This work by John Casken was originally a commission by England's Northern Opera, but the ensuing production met difficulties and was abandoned. The rescue by the Almeida Theatre and its featuring of the work as the 2002 chamber opera attraction, was an outstanding example of collaboration taken to its ultimate extent.

In *God's Liar* (2001), the references to contemporary events are not so frighteningly immediate as in *Going Into Shadows*, but in its first season at the Almeida Theatre's temporary lodgings in a deserted King's Cross bus station in July 2001, a novella by Leo Tolstoy was given a contemporary application. A modern film-maker, Stephen, creates a

script from the fragments of the life of *Father Sergius*, once a cavalry officer called Stepan, who leaves the corrupt Russian Imperial Court to go on a moral and spiritual pilgrimage. Co-librettists, Emma Warner and John Casken create a parallel journey for the writer and the repentant Stepan, through trials of conscience, morality and the pragmatic demands of daily life. The drama, maintaining its intensity through the rather longer than usual hour and a half time-frame, is played out on an open stage divided by a 'time-line' in control of the Seductress, who embodies carnal desires. She moves physically across the ages, luring first one, then the other, scattering her seeds of corruption. The open set and stark lighting designs made maximum use of the huge amount of floor space available at the theatre's temporary home in the cavernous bus depot. The orchestra occupied one section of the stage, while clever costume changes, suggestive rather than literal, were often carried out in full view of the audience.

The theme, which confronts many dilemmas encountered in both public and private life today, progresses through a series of relentless disclosures ('Nothing hidden, no lies,' says the script), culminating in a sacrifice. Musically, John Casken's strongly-worked thematic fabric and vivid orchestration create a slow, but unfaltering crescendo rising through the piece; the arias are especially illuminating, providing penetrating character studies in the tradition of the original genre. His unerring sense of timing brings the total impact of the work to a shattering conclusion. At the end, the audience gave it a standing ovation after a moment of stunned silence.

Whereas in European countries, no community is complete without some kind of 'proper' theatre or concert hall, in a country such as Australia, where the old 'house' tradition is weak even in terms of commercial venues, other options for development must be sought.

Long-term occupancy of affordable property able to serve equally as rehearsal and performance space, yet easily accessible to potential patrons, is very difficult to come by here, even on a time-share basis, and often prohibitively expensive. Contemporary collaborators tend to view space as an intrinsic factor in the creation of a new work, eschewing the traditional proscenium arch concept; even so, a lack of suitable public venues is an added difficulty for non-commercial producers in the arts today. Although the use of unconventional spaces such as un-reconstructed warehouses often adds to, rather than detracts from the production of modern works, lack of 'homes' is a constant problem inhibiting to the collaborative process which is the keystone of chamber opera and other small forms of theatre today. But ingenuity sometimes makes a virtue out of a calamity:

> *Even in exile behind King's Cross station, the Almeida remains so cutting-edge a theatre company that you could do yourself a nasty injury just entering the foyer* (Morley 2001, p. 48).

Critic Sheridan Morley passed this comment in an article in the *Spectator* while extolling another production in the Almeida's 2001 summer season as 'one of the few really intriguing breakthroughs in the contemporary British stage musical' (Morley 2001, p. 48; Various 1998).

It was at the Almeida Theatre, itself the triumph of a collective will to produce excellence in theatre and music housed in temporary quarters in an abandoned bus depot, that I was delighted to witness the collaborative process in operation as *God's Liar,* the new chamber opera abandoned by its 'outside' commissioners and provided with a rescue venue by the Almeida. Financed by the *Théâtre Royale de La Monnaie* in Brussels, a theatre of long-standing reputation and in 1992 the original host to the *NewOp*

consortium described earlier, the work was produced under the guidance of the composer. Moreover, co-librettist, Emma Warner, had previously translated several standard opera librettos for the *Monnaie*. A successful European season followed the triumphant premiere at the Almeida, providing recordings for subsequent broadcasts on European and BBC radio networks and assisted in recouping the financial outlay.

Unlike the situation for most innovators here, the Almeida's King's Cross venue was only a temporary measure, as the company returned to its permanent home in Islington once the refurbishment process was complete.

(c) The Flight of Les Darcy

The Flight of Les Darcy (2000) composed by Raffaele Marcellino, celebrates the life and mysterious death at the age of 21 of an extraordinary Australian sports icon so beloved that his funeral was the occasion for a day of national mourning. Set in a brightly-lit, theatre-in-the-round boxing ring, flanked by several versatile musicians, this piece of elegant physical theatre described in the *Program Notes* (Jarman & Marcellino 2001) as a 'powerful "documentary" music-drama' may just as well be called a dance drama, underlining the biographical fact that the boxer took dancing lessons to improve his footwork. In about one-and-a-half hours, librettist and director Robert Jarman, aided by a luminous, lightly-instrumented score, managed to convey 'a sense of the numinous' around the violin-playing, undefeated boxing champion and the circumstances of a life lived in the limelight, that ended so inexplicably in despair and ignominy when he took flight to America to avoid signing up for military service, and the resulting complications arising from religious and political attitudes in the climate of World War I. He would not fight to kill.

Using only three musicians - on viola, cello and percussion - four singers, aided by some judicious crossing over of roles, and a dancer playing the role of the enigmatic boxing hero, *The Flight of Les Darcy* provided a fascinating insight into the mystery surrounding the death of this legendary figure in Australian sports iconography. The scoring, in particular the careful use of the xylophone, added to the feeling of isolation, if not alienation, that seemed to characterise his life.

In each of the works examined, the presentation was fresh in terms of design, though relatively economical in terms of staging, especially in the Australian examples. Concentration was on the performance values, which were of a high standard, both vocally and dramatically. The music was innovative and in each case reflected the widely diverse subjects of the three operas, both in terms of a flexible use of composition techniques and of telling instrumentation.

(iv) Possible new directions

Taking all these factors, and the history of its origins into consideration, it becomes clear that the genre of contemporary chamber opera has within it the potential not only to survive, but to develop by adaptation, absorbing elements of current art forms and philosophies and incorporating them into creative productions using modern techniques and technologies. Supported by developments such as computerised lighting systems which expand the range of spatial controls available on the performance areas and eschewing complicated, often clumsy, scenery (involving lengthy scene changes which break the flow of the text), the performer and the subject become the entire focus of audience attention. Similarly, present-day costuming reflects the growing penchant for the symbolic rather than the literal, for design based on an uncluttered spatial language

enhanced by dramatic lighting rather than artificial representational effects. Above all, as Casken points out, "the need for intelligent and inspiring stage direction is more acute than ever" (p.c., 3/8/01).

Although the innovative nature of contemporary chamber opera is attractive to a small but loyal audience, it is not always conducive to attracting sponsorship and financial support in a society which does not comprehend the value of its lower-profile art and artists. Yet from a practical viewpoint, the contemporary model of chamber opera is ideally suited to the current *Zeitgeist*. Drawing from a large, multi-layered skills base of arts workers for whom there is insufficient work in mainstream theatre and in an increasingly monolithic economic environment where a policy of self-advocacy in the arts demands creative responses to fund-raising, *ad hoc* companies form to collaborate on smaller vehicles where cross-fertilisation of ideas and techniques produces works of individual stamp and character.

As we have seen, in the last two decades the genre of chamber opera has acquired a new impetus by exploring themes arising from political, financial and sociological upheavals that are eroding a number of entrenched attitudes across the world. Disclosures of the serious misdemeanours of leading figures in the political arena and in global financial institutions rock the fabric of society no less than the insidious threat of terrorism. Urban myths such as the time-honoured respect for individual privacy, or the traditional composition of a nuclear family, are giving way to a new world order.

Nothing could illustrate the relevance of chamber opera today more dramatically than the eerie timing of the Australian performances of *Going Into Shadows* described earlier. Interpreters - a role traditionally reserved for creative artists from the days of Greek

theatre, which has resonances in the new model of chamber opera - are needed to shape our understanding of the underlying meaning of the changes to established mores which we have, in our naiveté, taken for granted or, in our busy lives, tried to ignore. Small theatre has the capacity to react quickly and produce economically. In my experience, chamber opera has proved its power to objectivise by the use of music and visual allegory, concepts which leave the audience free to make their own judgments.

In the artist, this freedom translates into an unfettered imagination, embracing cultural differences in the arts with a fusion of theatrical and musical styles in settings designed to create a *rapprochement* with the audience. Some can be described as multi-media productions. It takes only one more step to reverse this process; rather than merely incorporating these effects into new chamber works, all the attributes of chamber opera are ideal for incorporation into the visual media - film, television, or video. A trial production of a similar concept by the ABC did not produce a follow-up because of funding cuts. This gives some indication of the difficulties that lie ahead. Despite the proliferation of vocal ensembles modelled on the success of The Three Tenors, in the minds of the moguls of the TV world music video stops at clips of rock and pop items; any opera, let alone contemporary opera viewed as a nexus connecting a variety of cultural modes and attitudes within the media, would be a laughable idea. In the absence of a corporate epiphany, as the self-styled arbiters of public taste they would view the form as elitist, 'whereas, in truth, audiences who come [to a production] don't feel that' (Casken 2001).

Chapter 5: The personal experiment

The writing of my original chamber opera represents an attempt to explore and synthesize my own experiences with words and music in a narrative theatrical context, and to meet the musical and technological challenges inherent in setting the resulting text. In every sense of the word, it was experimental for me. It required preliminary research into the nature and development of the genre itself, to determine the paradigms which have been maintained from past to present mainly by observing productions both in Australia and overseas. This endeavour ultimately became the foundation of this thesis.

The subject that I felt impelled to explore, not an unfamiliar one these days, is about a boy deemed brain-dead after an accident and a family confronting issues around the voluntary cessation of his life support to provide organs for urgent human transplant. This, I discovered in my research, is a theme consistent with the challenging topics on which today's chamber operas are based.

My background in music and drama informed the choice of this particular medium. At various times in my professional life, I have worked in operatic and theatre genres as performer, accompanist, repetiteur, director and even as librettist and arranger, having adapted an English translation of an archival *opéra bouffe* by Delibes for performance under the guidance of Andrew Greene. *Fortune's Folly* (original title *Les Deux Vieilles Gardes*) premiered at the Sydney Opera House Recording Hall, and subsequently toured metropolitan high schools in Sydney for the Arts Council of New South Wales; another production was toured by the State Opera of South Australia touring company.

But it was not until the early 1990s that I returned to original composition, after a 20-year break supporting my family, to indulge a long-cherished desire to experiment with a multi-media opera work; eventually the initial version of *The Boy Who Wasn't There - a mini-opera for young people* was sent off to a Polish Children's Festival in 1992. The multi-media component was absent, but a video production by school children and amateur adult performers involving an Australian secondary school and its community, was attempted soon after. But lacking financial sponsorship and therefore the ability to engage specialist assistance, our lack of expertise in the medium made the video recording useless, as insufficient footage was taken to allow for editing. However the sound recording, made at Sydney radio station 2MBS/FM, which served as the underlay to the video, has been more fortunate. Since then this independent fine music broadcaster, financed by subscribers and run mainly by volunteers, has aired *The Boy* at regular intervals.

Ten years on, I began rewriting the original mini-opera as a chamber opera, making a conscious effort to engage with ideas and innovations in newer works I had seen or heard over the intervening years. The startling diversity of subject matter and treatment I encountered here and later in my travels abroad, endorsed my own pre-existing concept as being directly in line with other contemporary works. I was intrigued to find, in some works I heard overseas in mid-2001, resonances of some ideas already used in my first full draft of the new score which was completed in March 2001 prior to my departure for London. There was, for instance, a recurring motif based on the word 'remember' in Andrew Schultz's *Going Into Shadows*, similar to a smaller section in *The Boy* where the tragic parents recall the past in an interlude of intimacy between husband and wife. I had

introduced this section when first seeking ways to develop the original, simpler concept by enriching the text with other layers. The idea was to create a momentary release in the midst of the conflict, allowing more space for the working-out of sub-plots, and room for a deeper delineation of character. Texturally, too, my preference for a linear or polyphonic approach to the music seemed to resonate with works I heard in London, especially in Goehr's pieces.

These more complex elements were no more than sketches in the children's score, which had a maximum time allotment of 13 minutes. Version II needed a duration of at least 30 to 40 minutes to qualify as a chamber, rather than as a 'mini' opera, so more development was needed. I was beginning to realise that 'development' and 'padding' were no more synonymous than 'pace' and 'speed'.

Ironically, my first decision towards expansion was to simplify. I started by reducing the number of characters and instrumentalists from the mini-opera, to achieve greater clarity. I wanted the fabric of the newer work to be direct and uncluttered. Besides, the logistics required for the production of the original, with its cast of eight singers and a minimum of 12 instrumentalists, taught me the merit of using minimal resources. Its purpose had changed, but nothing of the intention behind the work would be lost from severe pruning, I felt; quite the reverse, if anything, provided it was to be done with considered economy and re-developed with care. I was soon to discover that this exercise was not as easy as it sounded.

The re-write was a difficult but fascinating process. It demanded a complete re-think in terms of composition methods, in theme and development as well as in scoring, concentrating more on aligning these with the building of character portraits rather than

merely colouring a story-line. So the first step was to make a draft using the original libretto as a kind of skeleton, to be fleshed out with insights into the imagined histories of the characters and the reasons behind their reactions.

I began by re-examining the positions of the more peripheral characters – the Nurse, for instance, who starts out as 'a young Nightingale', her dreams of healing the world soon shattered, but whose profession calls upon her to sublimate emotional responses and assume a calm demeanour. Similarly the Doctor and the Father, who embody the 'forces of reason', take a conciliatory but accepting approach to the fate of Peter wrapped in his case of bandages, suspended between two enigmatic worlds. Interpolations such as the *ariettes* for each character and a lament for the Mother were the result. Maddened by the hospital's clinical approach to her son, she cries:

> *How could I know, when I held that baby in my arms,*
> *That one day I would be his murderer?*

Thus I found myself drifting towards the familiar, in terms of literary structure, rather than away from it, conceding to the wisdom of the older forms in that respect, although determined to keep relevance as the main criterion in the development process as a whole.

Thus, what appeared to be an organic growth gave a lot more balance technically as well as depth to the development of the story, and the ensuing musical segments linking these small soliloquies with the progression of the story injected short pauses for thought and reflection, for audience and performers alike. But not only was breathing space in the score a requirement artistically. From an actor's viewpoint, time needed to be built into the musical structure to allow for anticipated movements of performers about the stage at

appropriate places. I was amazed at how compacted my first attempt at the revision was, and how little real time my setting of the new libretto represented in actual performance. The first draft was characterized by a basic fault in pace, exacerbated by a hastening of the lines through the use of shorter time values than was comfortable for both singers and audience.

The multi-media element now had to be incorporated into my new vision, with film as an intrinsic part of the total vehicle. I decided to establish this very early in the piece, incorporating footage with a sound track; music and lighting to create the interface between the filmed depths of the sea and the clinical whiteness of the hospital ward on-stage, thus creating two worlds between which The Boy hangs, suspended in time. It was clear to me from that moment that abstraction was the key to the newer genre of chamber opera and its treatment, regardless of the theme explored; a view I discovered to be commonly held by other practitioners and revealed in their works. Thinking about the association between the sea and the ward, between our perceptions of sleep and wakefulness, The Boy's suspended state became the focus of my concept of time in the piece. How to suggest this without becoming turgid was my problem - one not solved completely to my satisfaction, I fear; were I to be embarking on a similar project now, I would tackle it quite differently, unconstrained by associating rhythm with time.

Originally, my search for more naturalistic word rhythms was prompted by a conscious desire to resile from traditional phrasing while avoiding, on the other hand, more extreme, attenuated and self-conscious modern techniques in a work based on a fairly realistic story which dealt with tense and stressful situations. The choice of basic speech patterns as rhythms proved fundamental to the profile of the whole score in that the

resulting pace proved far too hasty to allow for proper consideration of the singers, of the technical difficulties and of the expression of sub-textual references. This telescoping effect confused rather than amplified the text. I had to admit that any audience would have found great difficulty in tolerating the music or following the story, let alone in having opportunities to empathize with the characters. I ditched it and started over, almost from scratch. The pain this caused me would not be difficult to imagine, but I had to confront the fact that patchwork was not going to produce a work that came close to dignifying such a serious subject. So I put that behind me, and sat down to analyse the problem.

The old chicken-and-egg question of priorities - the words or the music, and which of the two should receive first consideration - now raised its head, in terms of modifying the quasi-naturalistic pace of speech, to achieve the desired clarity and flow. My solution was to think 'inside the words', as it were. Themes I had chosen to represent various characters (including the sea) were adapted around lengthened vowels or, in some cases, grew to suggest links with other characters, or defined a situation by the occasional repetition of a short passage. In the end, it was unclear to me whether I was thinking 'word' or 'music' - the one began to flow into the other. That salutary lesson in manipulation as applied to this particular medium reinforced the value of the all-important moments of *stasis*, of contemplation and reaction which were, at that point, almost completely absent in the score, despite my fascination with the 'time-space' question. In principle, one can have too much movement; a balance between action and stillness must be struck.

Part of the problem, I found, was my attempt to avoid the aria syndrome; far from making the text more relevant, this manoeuvre had proved more conducive to confusion by creating a 'stream of consciousness' situation. I concluded that the remedy was to be found in a literary structure capable of underpinning a well-paced progression of ideas and hence of the musical elements that clothed them, rather than the reverse. This way, the drama would evolve more evenly and allow the singers the time to express, and audiences the space to understand and perhaps participate emotionally in what was going on. So, in an artistic compromise, the traditional 'well-made-play' mechanism abides, but its treatment abstracts the content to a degree, while still engaging the audience by the direct appeal of devices such as the solo moment, the aria, the soliloquy, call it what you will. As I worked on the more subliminal levels of the characters, I began to see the reasons for the evolution of these devices; but while embracing the form, I was still determined to limit its expression to essentials, in musical as well as in literary terms.

It was becoming clear that the complete restructuring resulting from this major re-think in text should result in a greater depth to the musical score; by adding counter-themes and by working that material more thoroughly through processes of augmentation, diminution and interweaving, more intimate communication seemed possible. With six singers and a minimum of six instrumentalists the new draft was in essence a tightly-knit ensemble piece, a mode of presentation which appeals to me far more than the hierarchical concept of traditional opera and one common to most other contemporary works in the genre. The overall structure that suggested itself was an 'arch' form of five movements or scenes, balancing the opening and the ending instrumentally, and creating an emotional breathing

space, with a touch of humour, in the brief penultimate scene prior to the intense final scene, which occupies a good third of the total length of the work.

So the earlier orchestration was abandoned, along with its harmonic foundations, and a learning curve began, based on the revised philosophy. Pragmatic considerations, linked to the difficulty of achieving production because of financial constraints also influence the adoption of minimalist tendencies in current chamber opera. Both of these considerations impacted on the orchestration in *The Boy* in that, although light acoustic instrumentation is suggested, basically it is designed to rely on synthesizers and multi-skilling to reduce the number of players even further. But if funding were available, players capable of doubling on acoustic instruments, such as flute, clarinet, sax and horn would be the first preference.

The choice of instruments was not in itself programmatic but rather, alliterative; the alto sax, for instance, epitomizes the hidden disillusionment of the Nurse voiced on long, lonely night vigils, while the Doctor's French horn *alter ego* places him in a 'cone of science'. A build-up of these layers forms the overall orchestration. Simply stated, each acoustic instrument, linked to a character and its musical motif, becomes a 'shadow voice', especially in solo sections, combining at times with others in ensemble passages. The intention is not empirical so much as that these threads together form a fabric where voice, instrument and music are inseparable from the drama of the text. (For a more detailed account of the character and instrument breakdown of each scene, see the **Addendum** at the end of chapter 6).

Initially the effect of culling the original extended score, with its instrumental constraints, was rather drastic; in many places it sounded quite emaciated. In the fairly strict

observance of the newly defined rules outlined above, I felt that I had come nearer at last to the creative vision which had goaded me on through the difficulties. But even now, looking at the score, I am not totally satisfied with it. I realize that there is so much that I could have done differently and, I believe, much more effectively - a frustration common to many involved in creative pursuits. Yet editing must stop at some point and the painful lessons learned on this project may help to achieve a more informed approach to future endeavours.

Still, having tried to fulfil all the self-imposed criteria by completing the first full draft (after many false pronouncements as it always ended up back at the drawing board), I had to seek brave and generous souls who would be willing to try it out. Graduating vocal and instrumental students from a conservatorium seemed the obvious choice, as although trained musicians were required, funds were unavailable. When I approached my assistant supervisor, Coralie Joyce, for advice and found that the Macquarie University curriculum did not include classical performance students, she recommended a private teacher who might be able to interest his opera students in creating roles in a new work. Instead of instrumentalists, we would also require a repetiteur who was capable of reading from a score printed out on the Sibelius computer notation program. Fully aware that a score-reading specialist is a rare breed, I approached several friends with some credentials in this line, but was not surprised to find that they were too busy to oblige, despite the enticement of a country weekend away.

As it turned out, there were neither instrumentalists nor a repetiteur at the original read-through, as the budget consisted solely of author-financed comestibles and expenses and sponsorship-in-kind in terms of a country weekend, with accommodation for the singers

provided by Marlene Bell at her B&B establishment, *The Harp*, at Sutton Forest in the southern highlands of New South Wales. Finally on 1 February 2004, the second day of the informal *Sitzprobe* at *The Harp*, a group of unpaid singers led by Michael Dale at an electric keyboard, pronounced the work to be vocally satisfactory, intense and moving, if sometimes rather difficult. The singers all enthusiastically agreed to persist with the work to the workshop recording stage – on one condition. Apart from some minor adjustments to the score, involving the addition of pause breaks and fine-tuned dynamics, the one main condition imposed by the singers was the absolute necessity for a piano reduction score.

I was being forced to face an unpalatable truth; another chore new to me and one that I had, admittedly, been trying to avoid. Another whole score was a major consideration which would take several more months to complete and distribute, taking valuable time out of work on the thesis and adding to the danger of the singers dispersing, or losing interest. Having been on the other side of the equation as singer and repetiteur at various times in the past, I wanted to produce a score that was fairly economical. After all the reluctance and anxieties, I found the job quite enjoyable once I began; the full score is not dense, so the main problem was finding helpful but interesting ways to fill simple, basic chord structures with instrumental cues, while allowing the repetiteur to support the singers and build the emotional content.

Five weeks' intensive work later, the scores were sent out. Though limited as much by financial constraints as by the wide distribution of the singers across the Sydney area, a total of five three-hour rehearsals began over June and July. Thanks to some unexpected financial aid, these were conducted at the home of Maryleigh Hand, a professional

repetiteur. The Music Department at Macquarie, as a result of a request to the University from my supervisor, had come to the rescue by subsidising the repetiteur for these rehearsals and the required workshop recording, which took place there in just one day, on 31 July 2004. Dr Crowdy produced this recording while I conducted; he also edited the resulting CD. The singers, all professionals or aspiring professionals, worked completely unpaid in difficult circumstances. I am deeply indebted to them all for their generous gift of time and energy, talent and spirit, so freely expended in my cause over that period of time. Their sole material reward will be the gift of personal copies of the CD.

I don't know if my modest work will ever be given a full performance either on stage, or in its intended form as a televised opera; but at the end of this, my first and probably last opera, I am even more in awe of the work involved in the operas of composers like Mozart, Handel, Verdi and Wagner.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

My study reveals that the contemporary model of chamber opera, characterised by its creativity 'at the cutting edge' of theatrical and composition techniques and its receptivity to a multiplicity of cultural influences, has the potential not only to sustain growth, but to evolve as a form capable of synthesizing a number of separate elements into a new model, a fusion of ethnic and classical styles, forging a dynamic nexus between contemporary forms of music and theatre and the visual media, in a new domain.

With the advent of Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (1951), commissioned for television in New York, came a glimpse of the potential for an irreversible change of direction for writers and performers alike, by successfully transferring a comparatively low-profile medium with serious intentions from the theatre stage into an arena from which an exciting new hybrid could conceivably emerge. This exposure proved that electronic forms of mass communication were capable of opening up opera and other art forms often considered 'esoteric', not only to previously untapped audiences, but to innovation, through incorporating the new technology and techniques into the creative processes of the works themselves.

Although some live-performance purists may disagree, the combination of all the attributes of contemporary chamber opera, already embracing many modern technologies in a fusion with the electronic media, is all that remains to be achieved for the creation of what would indeed be an entirely new genre, commencing another cycle worthy of the spirit of the *Camerata.* Having progressed through many transformations over the last four centuries, the smaller opera form is currently evolving through an ongoing process

of re-invention capable of becoming a nexus for innovative models of music-theatre, yet remaining consistent with the ethos of the *Camerata's* original concept of collaborative creativity and with Wagner's more recent concept of Gesamtkunstwerk.

The rich palette of formal approaches now available to creative minds has resulted in the difficulty, common to most I questioned on the subject, of striking a consensus on a rigid definition of contemporary chamber opera today. An energetic debate on its nature amongst practitioners - as to whether it is interchangeable with music theatre (as distinct from musicals), Music-Theatre, the Euromusical, a movement towards the re-invention of the old operetta form, or the Off Broadway musical – takes on different aspects according to where, and by whom, the new work is being created.

In its purest form, chamber opera's contemporary vocabulary continues to be enriched by its heritage, but progresses in the same spirit to explore modern issues through recent advances in theatre and composition techniques, sophisticated production methods (including the use of electronic techniques) and, most notably in Australia, the impact of cultural traditions other than those emanating from Europe. The fusion of musical and theatrical styles employed in free-wheeling[50] contemporary productions creates a kaleidoscopic field of ever-changing formats, challenging the hierarchy fostered largely by the elitist culture surrounding opera's early developments.

Today, while many traditional opera houses in Europe and elsewhere carry on 'business as usual' with a repertoire based on standard works cosmetically remodelled in terms of design and direction, smaller experimental works where there are no stars have a small

[50] Free-wheeling: Many contemporary works such as Jennifer Fowler's *Eat and Be Eaten* do not adhere to recognised theatrical conventions.

but steady following in the northern countries of western Europe, Canada and the USA. With the entry into the market of a new breed of practitioners from younger countries chamber opera, at least, seems to reverse the accepted model. A new work is approached on a site-and-concept oriented basis, establishing the closest possible working relationships between notionally equal members of a creative team,. In an ideal situation, this team follows a project through from start to finish, with the result that new works, being non-formulaic, tend to possess singular identities and production requirements. Its hallmarks today are teamwork, innovation and passion.

These qualities are also frequently required in the face of the reluctance of both private and public sector sponsors to fund innovative theatre. Most of the reasons given for this attitude devolve around the presumption of weak box office receipts due to perceived public indifference. The mighty dollar, which is certainly a major consideration, is reserved for making even more mighty dollars through a partly media-created market saturated majority; the minority does not count in this corporate kind of arithmetic. Yes, people are free to choose, but when the names of some candidates are written in invisible ink, the choice is somewhat tarnished.

In the best of all possible worlds, a fraction of the total dollars spent on promoting pop stars to achieve their 'popularity' and the 'stardom' required for the obligatory marketing of the short-lived products, would scarcely be missed, but would enable the launch of a small chamber opera group and probably set up a foundation to sustain it. Then, as inbuilt obsolescence is the name of the entrepreneurial game, those launching next year's star of some so-called 'reality' show could repeat the process. A more realistic and quite inexpensive contribution they could make, however, would be to mentor a small

company and advertise their productions along with the promotional material sent out for their own 'popular' purposes. That could hardly threaten their box office takings.

But as we are living in the real world, as we are often reminded, we are talking of commercial product and although profits on 'unknowns' cannot match those made on popular programs, or stars, such charity is still unlikely to be forthcoming from that direction.. Some kind of government mechanism could be set up for the big boys to contribute to the little guys of opera, by way of retrieving moneys lost through corporate tax avoidance. Admittedly, there are a number of obstacles in the way to a change of heart.

Although not occurring in overwhelming numbers, audience willingness to give opera a go, both here and overseas, was evident in the consistency of numbers maintained at repeat performances of the selected works I attended. Of the two Australian works, *Black River* also provided a rare example of an Australian work that has been viewed internationally on video and the composer has gone on to achieve a UK/Australia co-production of a larger work, *Going Into Shadows*, which could become a prototype for global trends in future productions. But this is an exceptional case: chamber opera, new and old has, until recently, been almost completely ignored. A source of fascination since its rediscovery last century, composers from newer countries have approached it in a variety of ways, many of them highly experimental and unfamiliar to the average audience. Europeans write opera because it is part of the European musical tradition and operas have always been performed to meet the expectations of a pre-ordained audience. Writing for opera is a highly involved craft that needs long-term nurturing; in Europe it is

supported as much a matter of national pride as sport, showing that sporting prowess and theatrical excellence and innovation both have a place in the national consciousness.

As awareness and receptivity to more sophisticated material grows, many people are becoming increasingly critical of standards and the treatment of issues, as they become more frustrated with decreasing choices in the commercial media, or the trendy vacuity of much of the institutionalised theatre. In the performing arts, the tendency to accommodate to funding bodies by proffering works on subjects likely to gratify the prevailing policies of 'political correctness' is derided by critics and dissatisfied subscribers alike (Strahan 2002).

If opera is supposed to be about passion, as many devotees and singers claim, must this always be construed in terms of sexual passion? Are we to keep on asking 'Who's afraid of Sigmund Freud?' (to paraphrase the title of a famous play), where sexual passion or perversion seems the only valid motivation for moral conflict? Freedom of style achieved by a renewed passion for pushing theatrical and artistic boundaries fires the intention behind most new music theatre. What the newer form lacks in the grand passion's fire of shared lusts is made up for in the desire to illuminate by an uncompromising focus on shared fears and concerns. Often the choice of themes, such as that used in *Fahrenheit 451* (1991/2) by Brenton Broadstock (1952-), is a conscientious attempt to present contemporary issues on a political, satirical, or perhaps even demagogic level. Based on a book by Ray Bradbury, this deals with a futuristic concept about a society where culture is irrelevant, so all the books are burned; the title refers to the temperature at which paper combusts, and also to a movie of some years ago.

It is still passion, but of a kind not given to self-indulgence, that is the unifying force in all the many facets of contemporary chamber opera. Many of its workers are poorly paid, if indeed they are paid at all for some of their work. In the intimacy of the smaller venues where performances are usually held, writers and practitioners enlighten their audiences about the original intention behind the work. In this, too, contemporary works draw closer to a spirit of creation reminiscent of the ethos of the *Camerata*, in 17th century Florence.

The combination of music with previously untried fields of aural and visual language and technology seems to beckon opera, chamber opera in particular, towards an exciting future. The cabaret performer and director of two successful Adelaide Festivals, Robyn Archer, while paying due respect to the quality of performance and presentation lavished on traditional opera, referred to it as 'the last bastion of the upper class', warning that other values must be highlighted. 'I would suggest the first one is meaning', she says, 'because I want the form to match the matter' (Archer 2000, p. 6). She goes on to suggest that grand opera should step aside occasionally to allow support for developing 'smaller' forms more relevant to the present day.

In her speech at the *Opera Now* one-day conference held in conjunction with the Festival, Archer summed up the position of smaller music theatre in this country:

> *We also have this very, very large mass of Australian music theatre works and the audience is able to see how much of our Australian creative energy is being put into this form and see how much they would like to go further. It would be really good if everybody that needs to, recognises that burgeoning area of talent in Australian creativity and resources it well,*

> *hopefully not at the expense of also producing good grand opera from time to time* (ibid p. 35).

Despite these 'brave new words', little has since been done by funding bodies to raise the profile of the smaller stage media, their writers and practitioners. On the other hand, commercial musical theatre is currently experiencing an astonishing boom period; large-scale extravaganzas dominate the theatre world.

Today's dichotomy between the commercial, 'feel good', product-oriented show and the small, thought-provoking vehicle is not new; it is simply becoming more exaggerated. Since World War II, tremendous social and economic changes around the globe have brought heightened life-style expectations and choices to a wider public. Amongst other things, these stimulated a proliferation of performance styles in music and theatre, bringing with them changes in entrepreneurial emphasis.

Gone are the controversial but influential pre-World War I days when an adventurous impresario such as Diaghilev could bring together in creative partnerships legendary figures like Picasso, Cocteau and Nijinsky, or even guarantee the long-lasting, but theatre-oriented commercial establishments such as 'the Firm'[51] of J.C. Williamson here in Australia. Nor do modern entrepreneurs and commercially oriented production companies, working on contract systems and aiming at mass markets with proven blockbuster material making huge profits, support experimentation beyond ever more overwhelming stage effects on which they rely to dazzle the public. The virtuosity of their performers, however, derives from hard-won skills handed down from practitioners

[51] The Firm, known in theatre circles as JCW's, a major entrepreneurial and touring establishment in constant production for about 100 years from 1871.

of the older theatre forms, whose standards were strictly governed by theatre practice and long years of training.

It is because of the disparity between cost in a long-term work-intensive industry and its short-term income, that financial loss is a recognised corollary of running even our world-class major drama, ballet, or opera companies. The Australian Ballet and Opera Australia, although seemingly in permanent crisis mode, survive on government subsidies; the acclaimed Sydney Dance Company may not be so fortunate.

Certainly, the importance of money and its responsible management cannot be denied. But neither should it be paramount in all decisions. There is an important principle at stake here: the equal responsibility of providing high-quality choice for the consumer's dollar, which should not be entirely overlooked. It is widely known that advertising agencies vie for the highly-paid privilege of making products desirable in order to sell what the entrepreneurs have already decided to market, removing choice from the unwary consumer by psychologically devised marketing ploys, such as branding.

Looked at pragmatically, one could draw the unfortunate conclusion that forms such as drama, ballet and music theatre, do not merit proper pay or recognition, as they are not sufficiently 'popular' to guarantee sufficient returns to a backer, or merit being subsidised by the taxpayer. The only accepted standard of excellence seems increasingly to be based on the amount of money-making capability a person or production brings to the equation; sadly, this does not always equate with standards of artistic excellence that build future greatness, though not necessarily stardom. That title is reserved for the proudly untrained vocalists whose microphone should rightly be attached to a karaoke machine, rather than a national broadcaster.

Even for those talented and lucky few who are commissioned, there is yet another obstacle for Australian writers and composers of new works, voiced in 2000 in an article in the October issue of *2MBS-Fine Music Radio Guide*. Australian composer, Carl Vine, told his interviewer Annarosa Reyneke, that his withdrawal from serious composition after 20 working years was due to his despair at not receiving international or even repeat Australian performances of his works. 'With only conventional classical repertoire being released by the big labels, gradually the audience for innovative music is disappearing', he told his interviewer (Reynecke 2000, p. 13).

He also deplored the possible outcome of our lack of a philosophy of development or follow-through in smaller creative ventures, as against the market-driven philosophy in monolithic commercial enterprises such as the television and recording industries. Vine's threatened withdrawal brought a shower of protests but even more curiously, further offers of work as a result of the publicity, as well as a public response from composer and academic, Barry Conyngham.

Having discussed the way our composers are downgraded both in terms of financial and public recognition because of inadequate fee structures and an almost complete lack of promotion, Conyngham goes to the heart of the dilemma facing all new musical works:

> *One of the problems with new music is that it is, in fact, too new. Or, more precisely, it's only new - we rarely hear a new work more than once*
> (Conyngham in *24 Hours*, 2000, p. 25) [52].

In this regard, the role of festivals in introducing new works and providing touring opportunities for repeat performances cannot be underestimated. *Night and Dreams*

[52] From the *Peggy Glanville Hicks* address given by Barry Conyngham at the Sydney Spring Festival, 2000, as reported in ABC's *24 Hours* magazine (p. 25).

(2000) composed by Andrew Ford to a libretto by Margaret Morgan, premiered at the Telstra Adelaide Festival 2000 and went on to feature in the Melbourne Festival. On the other hand, *The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior*, composed by Colin Bright to a libretto by Amanda Stewart and performed on the *Listening Room* by its commissioners, The Song Company and austraLYSIS in 1999, was originally written for the 1997 Sydney Festival. 'A select guide to Australian music theatre' as author Keith Gallasch describes his monograph, *In Repertoire* (2000), is an invaluable source of information about premier performances of works written mainly on commission in the decade between 1990 and the year 2000.

In commercial fields, it is understood that any new enterprise demands a period of time for consumers to explore and familiarise themselves with the project. This is particularly true in music which, because of its more abstract nature, needs time to be understood through a number of repetitions. Works remain 'new' despite their age, because they have not completed the valid cycle for performance arts - creation, rehearsal, performance, performance, performance - by a series of interpreters, to explore the many facets involved in the writing. Repeat performances of major works in Australia are rare enough, but international exposure is limited to a very few, thanks to the restrictive mass marketing concepts of the large recording companies, which do not allow for a niche market. This niche market would be entirely ignored but for a few small recording companies, such as Tall Poppies, who dedicate themselves to providing some kind of remunerative outlet for the neglected talent of internationally accepted Australian writers and performers, struggling for distribution against these overpowering forces. Arts administrators seem bound to a rather expensive policy of new work commissions

without follow-up strategies that would enable the works to earn royalties, let alone to satisfy a neglected portion of the community and create more work and thus be self-supporting.

In charting the course of *Batavia*, commissioned by Opera Australia and, at the time of writing, the newest full-length opera by Richard Mills and Peter Goldsworthy, music critic and arts writer John Grant deplored the 'one-off' syndrome, seemingly a recurring disease in the perceived democracy of the arts funding world. 'It will be interesting to see how this major work is received and how opera companies around the world react to it' (Grant, 2001, p. 20). Or, it may languish - like Moya Henderson's commissioned opera, *Lindy* - for over 10 years. Written on a Keating Fellowship grant, it received its premiere at the Sydney Opera House in 2002 as part of the cultural festival associated with Gay Games IV.

Though newer theatre and music may be categorized by some who just want 'a nice night out' as too 'difficult', the audiences, ranging from two-thirds full to packed houses at each of the live performances of the selected works that I attended, seemed fully engaged and applauded with spontaneous enthusiasm at the end. Attendances over a short season, averaged out at about 75% capacity, even allowing for the size of the Coliseum theatre, home of the English National Opera in London.

Having recently attended a number of chamber opera works by contemporary composers, in productions emerging from avant-garde performance practice and performed either in their original venues or on tour it appears that a younger group of people is increasingly attracted to chamber opera. According to my observation, audiences were made up of a high percentage of middle executives, students and those of varied ages with apparently

eclectic tastes, attracted not only by the innovative music and modes of presentation, but by the challenging concepts conveyed in these adventurous works. Discussions with entrepreneurs, box office staff, practitioners and audience members confirmed these impressions.

John Casken expresses the accessibility of the contemporary chamber opera form, for creators and audiences alike, thus:

> *Its relevance in the context of contemporary music is that it allows composers the possibility of being truly post-modernist, in that we can virtually embrace any musical types we wish, provided that the coherence and integrity of the work are not in question. Its greatest significance is that audiences come without fear of the music, unlike concerts where they feel they have to "understand" the music before it can reach them* (p.c. Casken 3/08/01).

At performances I witnessed both here and overseas, at least 50% of attendees were students and young professionals; the rest ranged through to older middle age, with a fairly even distribution of the sexes overall. At the Almeida, the percentage of patrons ostensibly of the social elite to that of younger, middle-executive subscribers was, however, in an inverse ratio at comparable events at the Coliseum. In a national survey of opera demographics, compiled on Canada's *Opera Mississauga* website, the National Endowment for the Arts in America found that between 1982 and 1992, the number of 18 to 24-year-olds attending mainstream opera performances had increased by 18%, and that 31.6% of audience attendees are under the age of 35 years old (Mississauga Opera, 1999: 1). In Canada, where experimental performing arts thrive (witness the amazing phenomenon of *Cirque du Soleil)*, Opera America statistics show a total of 19 of the 204

full (and many of the 69 affiliate) opera companies in North America producing works for the 1999-2000 season.

Although these figures pertain to full opera, none are obtainable for small-scale events or companies unless included in the 'affiliate' category. The fact that relatively small contemporary music theatre or chamber opera companies world-wide can sustain a constant presence in the market place, even though that niche is small and performance seasons are often widely spaced, supports the claim that there is a relatively small but loyal audience base on which to build future productions.

Thanks to ongoing developments including those in electronic technologies, a rich array of material to suit a variety of musical preferences can be experienced on radio, film, video, compact disc, the internet and a proliferating number of popular festivals, which break down musical boundaries and explore new cultural territory. A growing fascination with world music and our exposure to exotic rhythms and modes from lesser-known cultures through the media and festivals such as *Womadelaide*[53], has impacted not only on audiences around the world, but on contemporary composers engaged in experimental crossovers between folk or ethnic musics, jazz and improvisation and our own 'classical' traditions. Drawing on such rich sources of varied materials frees up the language of contemporary music of all kinds including chamber opera with its added dramatic component, and facilitates the creation of a repertoire of highly idiosyncratic works with growing appeal.

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[53]*Womadelaide:* a biennial festival of world musics, held in Adelaide in March of uneven years; similar festivals are held around the world.

These influences, both cultural and technological, have greatly impacted on production values over the last 20 years. Serious contemporary theatre borrows techniques from a variety of performance methods which often requires previously specialist performers to become multi-skilled. Productions usually designed with minimal stage settings pay great attention to skilled lighting, to throw into relief rather than distract from, the expertise of small groups of skilled performers in achieving the ultimate integrity to the essence of the work. Today, the emphasis has shifted away from the external to the internal, from the trappings of stagecraft to the truthful exposition of ideas.

Most newer works focus on serious content, eschewing clutter such as clumsy staging devices or lengthy scene changes which break the flow of the text. They are often site-specific and supported by recent developments such as computerised lighting systems which enhance the architectural use of space on the performance areas. Costuming is mostly austere, in keeping with a penchant for the symbolic rather than the literal, for design based on a visual language enhanced by dramatic lighting rather than on artificial representational effects. The performer's persona is subsumed in the values invested in the performance; the treatment of the subject becomes the entire focus of audience attention. This relentless pursuit of 'artistic truth' makes heavy demands on creator and performer alike.

No longer merely decorative or gratuitous, contemporary chamber opera is a medium at the forefront of a new kind of creative responsibility, seeking innovative ways to expose the dilemmas imposed by our society. The genre, with its potent mixture of music and drama, its accessibility, flexibility, directness of expression, its multimedia capability and an increasing tendency towards economy of production methods, characterises the

defining principles of today's social and economic climate. It is poised potentially for a re-invention that marks the oldest form of music theatre as the flag-bearer for an exciting new cycle of development, by providing a dynamic nexus between widely diverse cultural and artistic styles, and between older and newer techniques and technologies.

So, the chamber opera or music theatre of today, seemingly defined as either one or the other according to its purpose, is a synthetic medium capable of almost infinite development. Awareness of contemporary musical and visual language in the community is increasing, along with the use of technologies capable of their proliferation, and there are a number of skilled practitioners who do not wish to create in the mainstream of popular or traditional performance moulds. These two factors alone could generate exciting work both in the local context and in more sophisticated modes, such as the development of a genre integrated with film or television.

These considerations vindicate my concept of *The Boy Who Wasn't There* in its revised version as a multimedia chamber opera. The structure is aimed deliberately at production for television, or in the case of staged productions, the use of film. The main draft was completed in May 2001, just prior to my June departure for the UK to continue my research. It is more conventional in approach and accessible musically than some of the more existential works I attended or heard about overseas. But it is representative of some of the current innovations in choice of theme, flexibility of production and economy of resources. My experiences and observations abroad were helpful in suggesting a number of revisions beneficial to the final form of *The Boy*.

The local product in this context approximates to the ideals of the original and to the vision promoted by *NewOp,* where stress is laid on live performance of new and original

content to live audiences, to maintain the form's integrity. So far the meetings of this group, consisting of performances and lively debate, have been restricted to western Europe and Canada; greater distances tend to preclude regular attendance at meetings which, along with a performance or creative contribution, is a criterion of membership.

According to Eric Salzman, the effect of the consumer society on communication in general results in the 'splintering of the combinational mode into separate areas'; in the case of a medium such as opera, into areas of separate consideration such as 'music', 'literature', and so on (Drogin 2003) [54]. Moderator of the *c-opera* list, Barry Drogin, in supporting their determination to counter these divisive tendencies by the immediacy of their productions, summed up the ethos of *NewOp* thus: 'music-theatre is so vital, so immediate, so important, that it is exceedingly local when it is at its best'(ibid 2003).

On the other hand, the use of video recording allows a wider audience to view works, even if that limits participation in a direct sense, conforming to the Camerata's principle of synthesising use of innovations of their day. Despite its potential as an exciting new genre, the reality is that contemporary opera stands only a remote chance of being seen on ABC-TV or SBS, and then in a relatively conservative mode. This raises the question, argued energetically by the *NewOp* forum, of 'live' versus 'canned' performance; the passivity of the isolated viewer staring at a screen, versus the magic of a live audience galvanised by the energy of live performance. It seems more than likely that, given the sort of exposure of commercial products, both are potential avenues of development for this emerging genre at the nexus of so many creative possibilities. Whatever the final definition, it should at least survive, along with other small theatre forms, to continue the

[54] From personal email.

proud creative tradition of those who seek to expand the boundaries of the performance arts.

Performing arts graduates from numerous institutions each year swell the ranks of practitioners wanting to create works relevant to the present and perform them to a discriminating public. But the number of these trained practitioners outweighs the number of opportunities available for their development or survival. In Australia, established companies are neither structured for, nor interested in, non-partisan development in outreach programs, and suitable venues are at a premium. Methods of gaining that all-important sponsorship include options such co-production and sponsorship-in-kind. This would overcome some of the problems inherent in the ever more difficult task of maintaining an active presence in the field in an increasingly rationalist economic climate. While the Emperor Joseph of Austria revered the ingenuity of a Mozart, according to a contemporary, his 'friendship never extended to the purse' (Holmes undated, p. 163).

The response by creative artists to the worsening 'crisis of resources', as Raffaele Marcellino puts it, is 'to become ever more resourceful and inventive in themselves, utilising hitherto unexplored spaces, and exploiting interactive possibilities in ways not previously attempted' (Marcellino 2002). A new collaboration between Marcellino and Robert Jarman, the librettist for *The Flight of Les Darcy*, called *Interlude with the Moon*, put some of these theories to the test when it premiered at the IHOS Music Theatre Laboratory in Tasmania in December 2002.

An important consideration in 'selling' stage productions of contemporary chamber opera is that the preferred minimalist staging facilitates touring, an essential element in theatre

funding today. Sponsorship packages are often segmented, or require separate applications for various stages of development or production, but the overall project budget estimate should make some allowance for touring, which is perceived as added value by the sponsors. This can be a protracted process, but besides helping to cover production costs, touring extends the potential audience base of a company's audience whilst playing an important educational role in spreading awareness of the genre itself.

The renewal of interest in operatic forms has led to a burst of creativity and interest worldwide. The immense media exposure and popularity of *The Three Tenors* concert series, for instance, broke down some of the psychological barriers against the word 'opera' itself and the style of operatic singing, making it less confronting to millions who previously felt shut out by the musical language. There is no shortage of excellent material by the best national and international composers; chamber opera, characteristically written for casts of up to six singers with light instrumentation, and minimal resources, is highly suited to exchange or touring programs because of its portability, and by the immediacy of its appeal when given sufficient exposure to audiences. But it has the capacity to stretch even further once its flexibility is fully recognized.

The conclusion supports the hypothesis that, having achieved a rapprochement with live audiences by its relevance and an unparalleled freedom to integrate a variety of cultural and artistic models of theatre and music, chamber opera is evolving into a genre representative of the global age. Beyond mere survival, the incorporation of chamber opera into the electronic visual media possesses the potential to create a vital nexus between varying cultural and artistic models with wide powers of communication to

entertain and to educate to an unprecedented degree. Although some live-performance purists may disagree, the combination of all the attributes of contemporary chamber opera, already embracing many modern technologies, with the electronic media, is all that remains to be achieved for the creation of what could indeed be an entirely new genre, but in the spirit worthy of the *Camerata.*

Addendum

The Boy Who Wasn't There

Scene and Instrument Breakdown

Scene 1:	Overture	French Horn, Bass Clarinet, Keyboard, Synthesizer, Percussion
Scene 2:	Nurse	Alto Sax
	Doctor	French Horn in F
	Mother	Keyboard (including Harpsichord effects)
		Percussion (pitched and unpitched), SFX
Scene 3:	Mother	Flute and Harp
	Boy	Strings/Organ or Synthesizer
		Percussion (pitched and unpitched)
Scene 4:	Kate	Percussion (pitched and unpitched)
		Keyboards
Scene 5:	Nurse	B flat Clarinet
	Doctor	French Horn in F
	Peter	Strings or synthesized
	Mother	Harp or synthesized
	Father	Keyboards
	Kate	Glockenspiel
		Percussion: Tympani

Appendix

An overview of diverse strategies currently employed worldwide in the development of opera, including chamber opera.

In Europe:

From the more traditional Viennese *Kammeroper* to the *Volksoper* and a number of other smaller experimental companies across Europe, and particularly in the Low Countries whose governments give generous support to new works, opera is alive and very well. *NewOp*, centred in Denmark, is an active channel for the development of contemporary chamber opera and Music-Theatre on a global basis, although its emphasis is strongly northern European in character. Its annual, performance-oriented meetings of leading directors, producers, composers, writers, designers and a scattering of performers are held in a different cultural centre each year, attracting wide interest, although attendance is limited to 110 participants.

In UK:

Examples of institutional and regional alternative companies:

- *Almeida*: The theatre's relentless policy of excellence has gathered an impressive subscription list for its opera and new music activities. Described as the 'Circle of Supporters', it boasts a collection of illustrious and well-known names, including that of Lord Lloyd-Webber, occupying eight columns of fine print in a double page spread in the large, glossy festival program. Attracted by the theatre's reputation its other activities, such as fund-raisers like the GASP (Great Almeida

Supper Party) peripheral to the main events, are well attended. Australia may not enjoy the prestige of potential aristocratic patrons; our society leaders come more from the ranks of the business and corporate worlds. It is regrettable that they are not more forthcoming in supporting the less promotionally productive performance genres.

- *Opera North***:** One of the regional opera companies in the UK; also provides workshop-style master classes for students with directors such as Jonathon Miller.
- University-based productions, such as *[rout]* (Hayden 2001), Leeds University.
- *The British Council*: as well as advanced collaboration, outreach and education programs, and backing for the major central and regional opera companies including the Almeida*,* the British Council provides support for independent companies such as *Self-Made Music Theatre*, devoted mainly to contemporary music theatre and with a number of original productions permanently available for touring. Vocal workshops for a range of voices and ages are also run by this company and by V*ocem* electric voice theatre.

In USA:

Major opera houses provide programs for the future, either self-funded, or with assistance from the National Endowment for the Arts grants program (Opera 2002).

- *New York City Opera/Stanford University* together run educative and production programs:

  Glimmerglass Opera with *Thirteen/WNET* - *Star Power* for Great Performances;

Opera Elementary - pro-active programs for children including the Resource Center's production of specially-written work, such as a video, *The Egyptian Cinderella*, (2001/2).

- *Opera America*: an examination and analysis of grant mechanisms resulted in the development of a number of strategies, encapsulated in *Guiding Principles for Audience Developmen*t, a staff-inaugurated information and facilitation program for the 115 American and 5 professional Canadian companies it serves.

- New York: four New York companies are devoted mainly to new chamber opera:

  American Opera Projects

  Encompass

  Music-Theater Group

  Center for Contemporary Opera

Individual NewOp *composers and performers are very active and supportive of new works, with new productions held frequently and in a variety of venues.*

Opera in State centres, both traditional and educational:

- *Baltimore Opera*: an energetic company dedicated to sustaining traditional opera with various strategies e.g. Bulletins, fund-raisers (Opera 2002, 2002).

- OperaDelaware: a State agency, produces an annual program across the spectrum of music theatre, including the Family Opera Theatre Kid-Approved where original, new works are accompanied by free workshops in various aspects of theatre: mask-making, juggling and other practical skills (OPERADELAWARE 2001).

- Schools Productions: Web Databases such as ERIC (Educational Resources Information Centre) reveal a number of productions of self-conceived works being undertaken by enterprising teachers and their pupils. This is a most encouraging indication in terms of familiarising young minds with the form, and creating audiences and participants for the future. (AskERIC has since expanded and is now known as the Educator's Reference Desk.)

- The Longwood Opera Model: an answer to venue problems:

High-quality productions, made up of professional directors working on a co-operative basis with cast, interspersed with fund-raising concerts have been staged in a church hall for the last 16 years, to the mutual benefit of church and company,. The avowed mission, which has proved highly successful, is to provide a range of good quality music theatre and to act as 'a springboard for young talent' (Brumit 2002).

In Canada:

- *Chants Libres*: director, singer and lecturer, Pauline Villaincourt, a member of *NewOp*, creates works for the ensemble which uses extended voice and exploratory techniques. They perform in their home base, Montreal, and tour in other countries, mostly in Europe.

- *The Saskatoon Project*: *Batoche*, a Canadian 'cumulative' workshop production-in-progress, adding to, and re-inventing the work from year to year.

In Australia:

- The *Australia Council*, a Federally funded 'arms-length' body, supports major companies such as *Opera Australia* and the *Australian Ballet* with a system of performance and new-work grants, with some administrative costs, and with policies of limited assistance for some small creative enterprises, such as *Chamber Made Opera,* or selected single productions, but no provision is made for venue upkeep or capital works.
- *Arts Ministries* in various states provide some assistance under state government policies, especially for festivals and accompanying fringe activities in their capitals, often featuring expensive imports,.

Small, committed groups on the fringe of chamber opera, or engaged in local, ethnic or indigenous initiatives supported this way include:

- *The Song Company*: a commissioning and performance ensemble, which champions new works by Australian composers in particular, as well as commissioning from others. Jennifer Fowler's unique *a capella* work, *Eat and Be Eaten*, a kind of choral song cycle with narration and semi-dramatic delivery, was premiered in Sydney in July 2001. The work was presented in a simple manner reminiscent of early oratorio performance, with solo harp accompaniment. A subsequent tour of Europe with repertoire which included this work followed, largely due to the energetic entrepreneurial efforts of its Belgian-born conductor and artistic director, Roland Peelman, and then general manager, Eugene Ragghianti.

Although not an opera company as such, but rather a chorale of solo voices, *The Song Company* tackles original vocal works such as their 2001 commissioning of *Eat and be Eaten,* which defy categorisation. That is why I think that it deserves a mention here; its devotion to the commissioning of contemporary works encourages composers who would like to tackle a larger work to keep writing. The integrity of its performance values attracts funding from the Australia Council, the NSW Ministry for the Arts, the electronic *newmusicnetwork,* the *acp* (Australian Centre for Photography), and a band of 'angels' - private subscribers who form part of a devoted audience following, a hierarchy ranging from 'angels' to 'saints', according to their 'heavenly' input!

- *IHOS Opera*, an experimental music theatre troupe operating in Tasmania, run by Constantine Koukias and Christine Linou, which produces a unique brand of multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-artform music theatre on a large scale, with support from the Australia Council.
- *Bran Nue Day* was an original, Aboriginal musical based on the impact of the missionaries on the Aboriginal population of Australia, and the search for identity – including difficulties in the reconciliation process with white people. Written and performed by a group of indigenous people led by Jimmy Chi, it was a tremendous success, touring long and extensively around Australia. Unfortunately nothing further has emerged from this group, although it was hoped that this would usher in a new kind of art form.

Australian Festivals:

Annual and biennial festivals are held in the state capitals Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. While these feature the best of overseas theatrical and musical events, they can also provide rare and vital opportunities for the creation and promotion of new works. Overseas festivals form an integral part of arts networks, often enjoying generous support from government and commercial interests as well as from a wider public and Australian participation should be encouraged.

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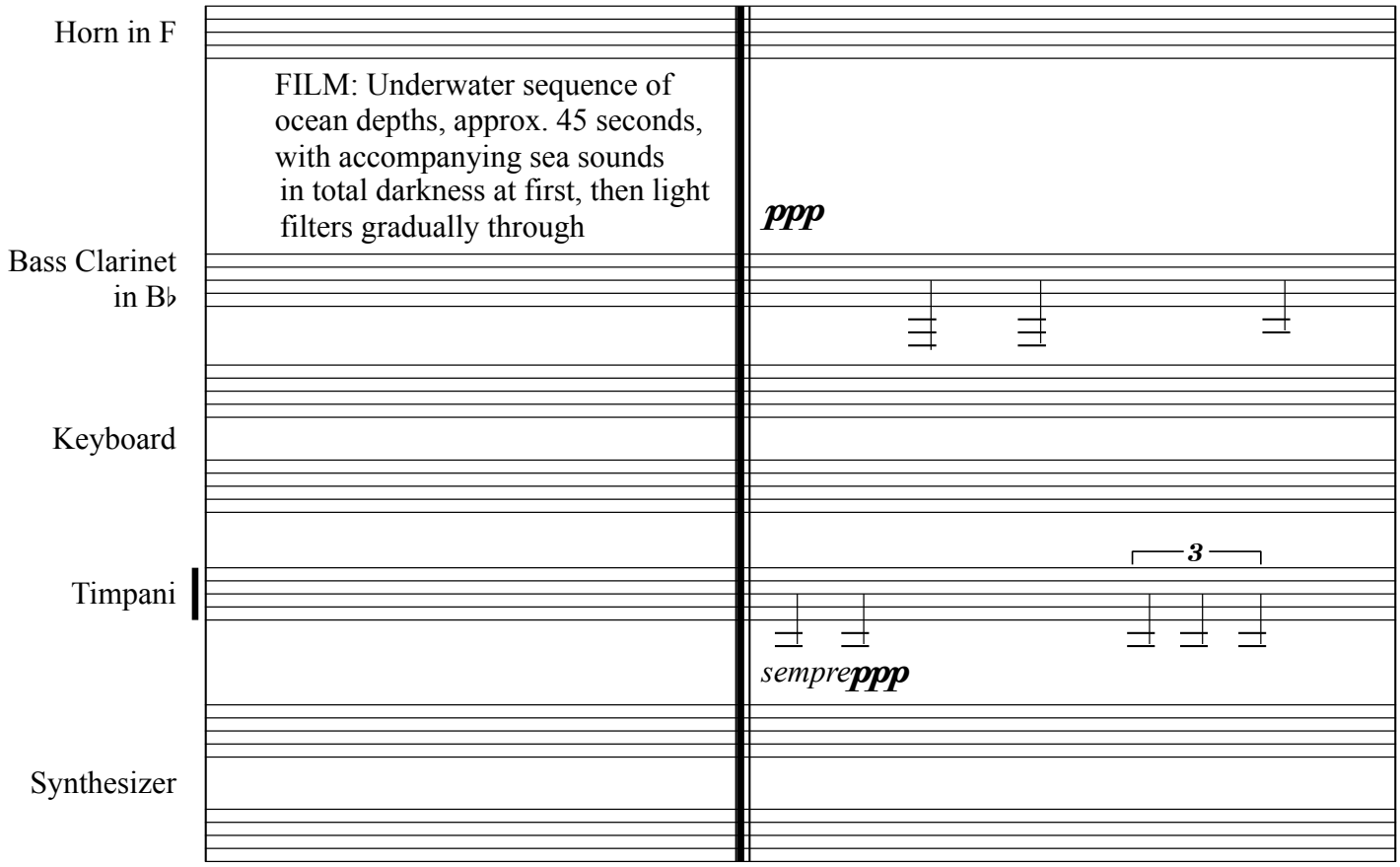
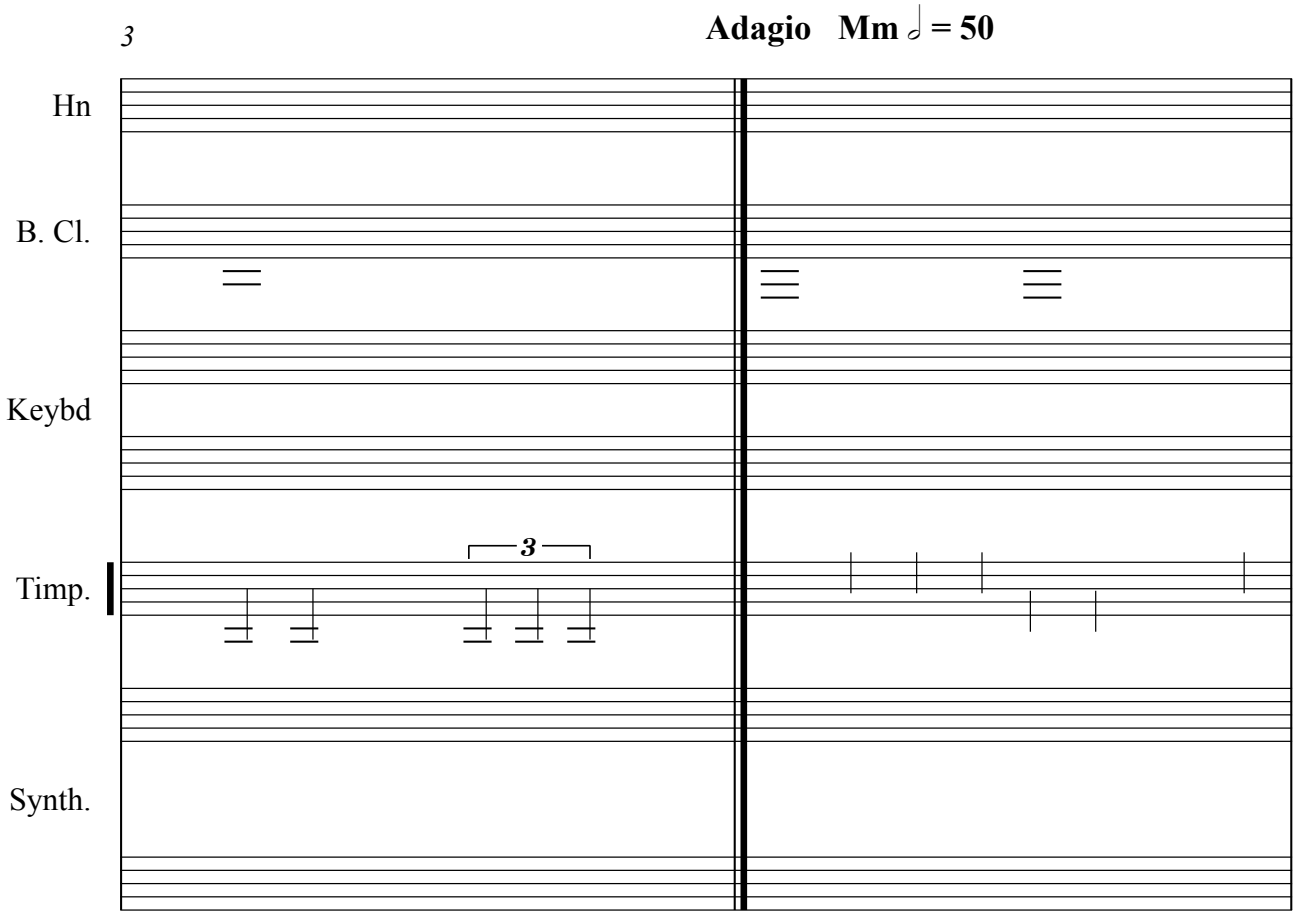
THE BOY WHO WASN'T THERE

Libretto & Score

Scene I INTRODUCTION

by May Howlett





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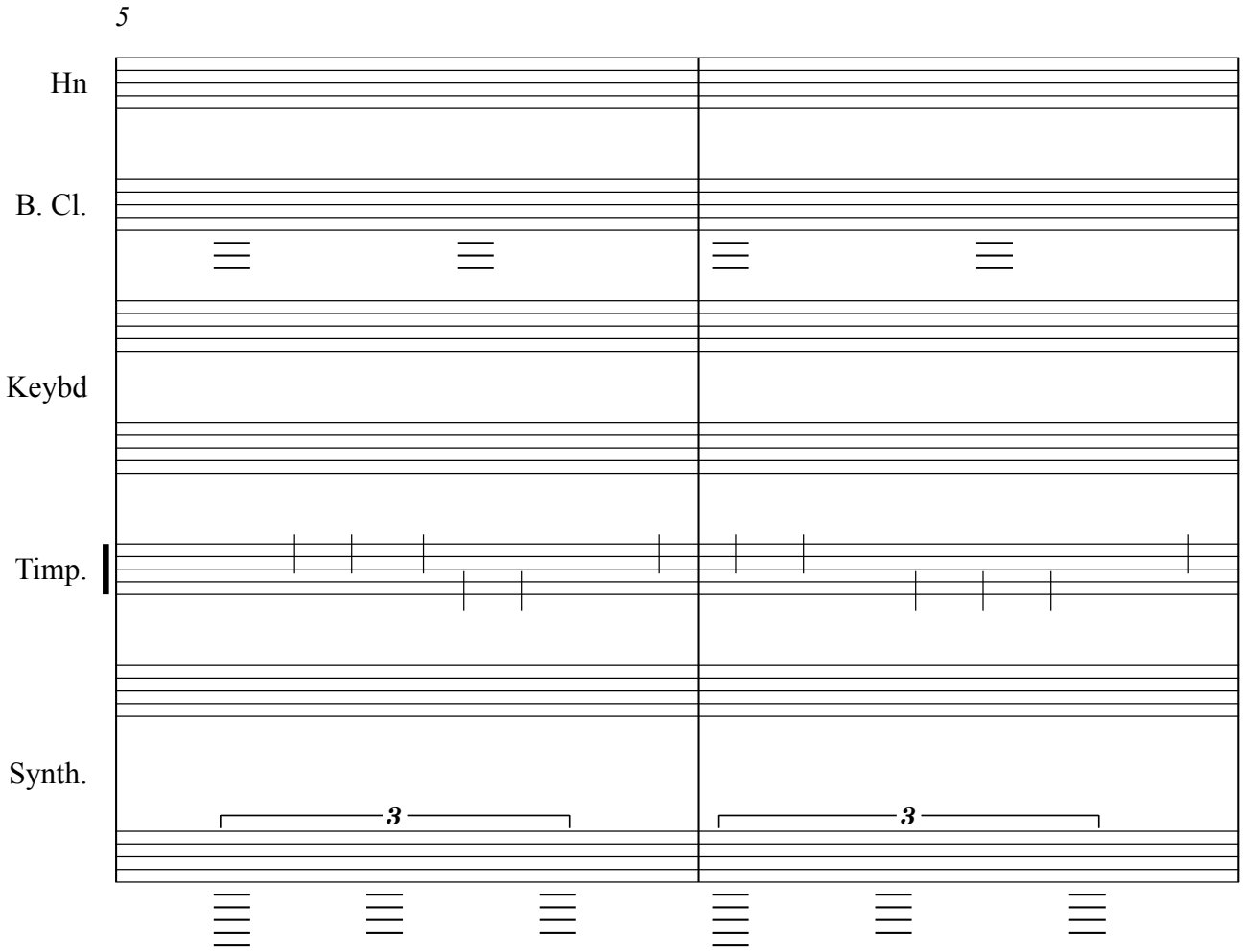
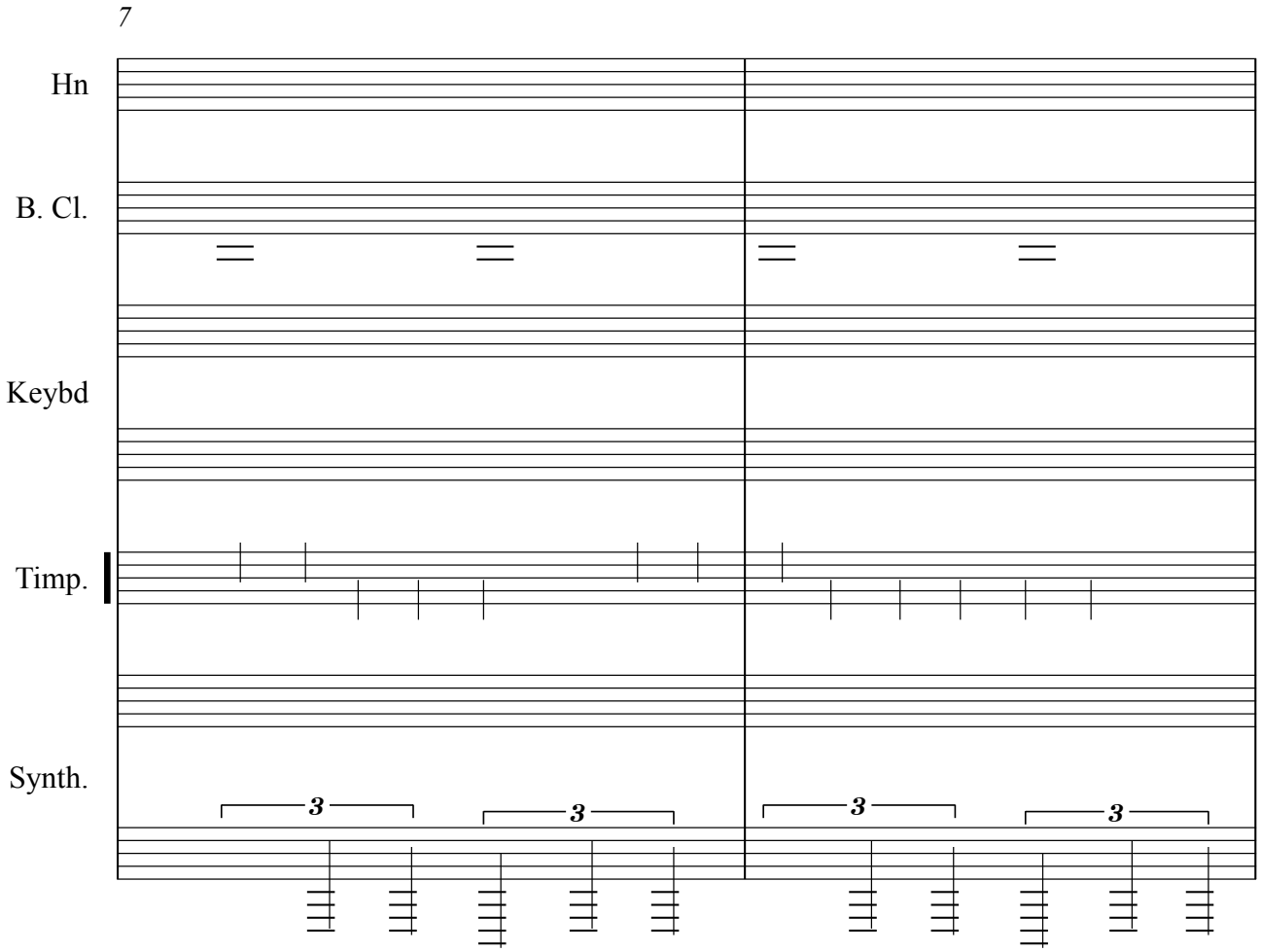
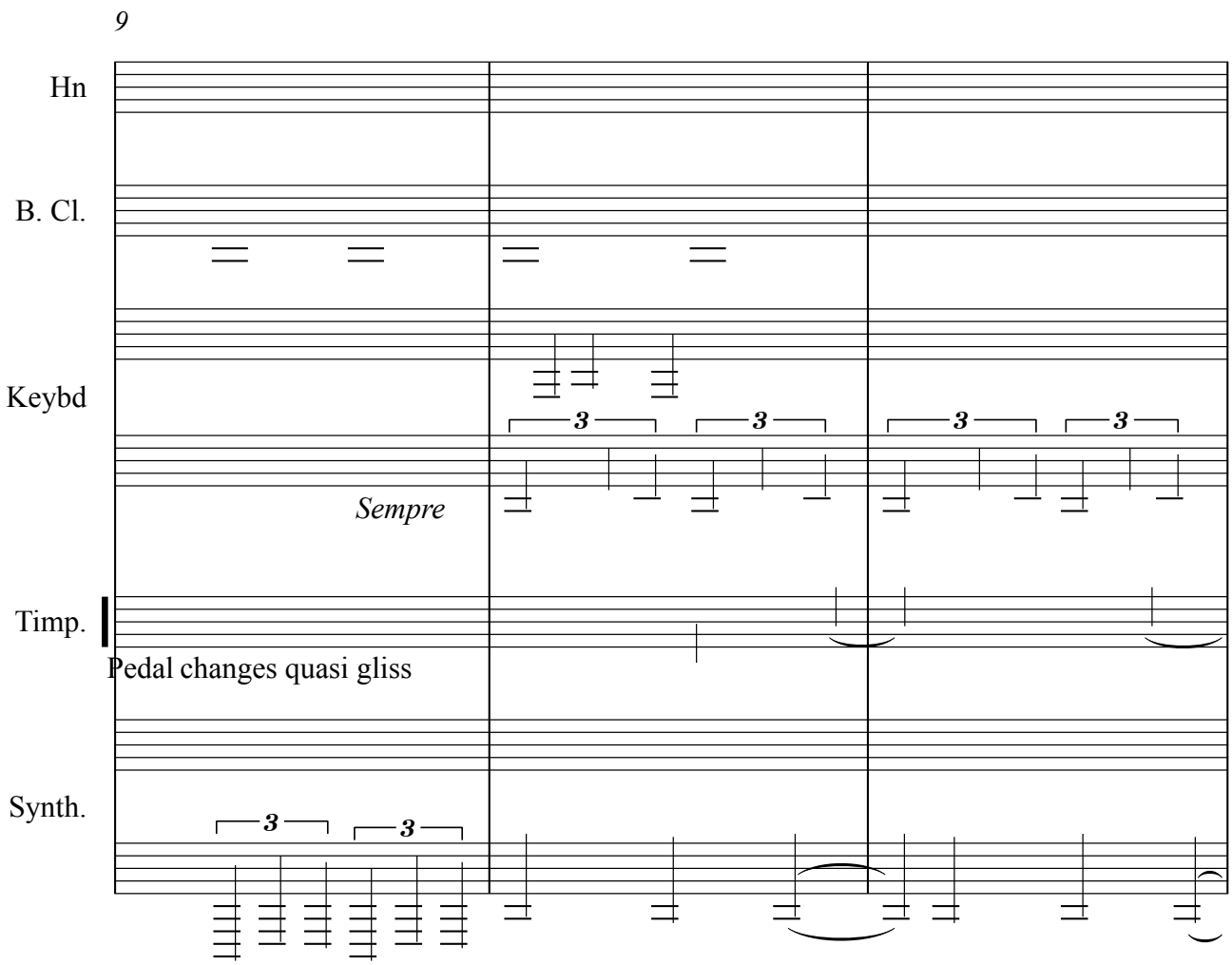
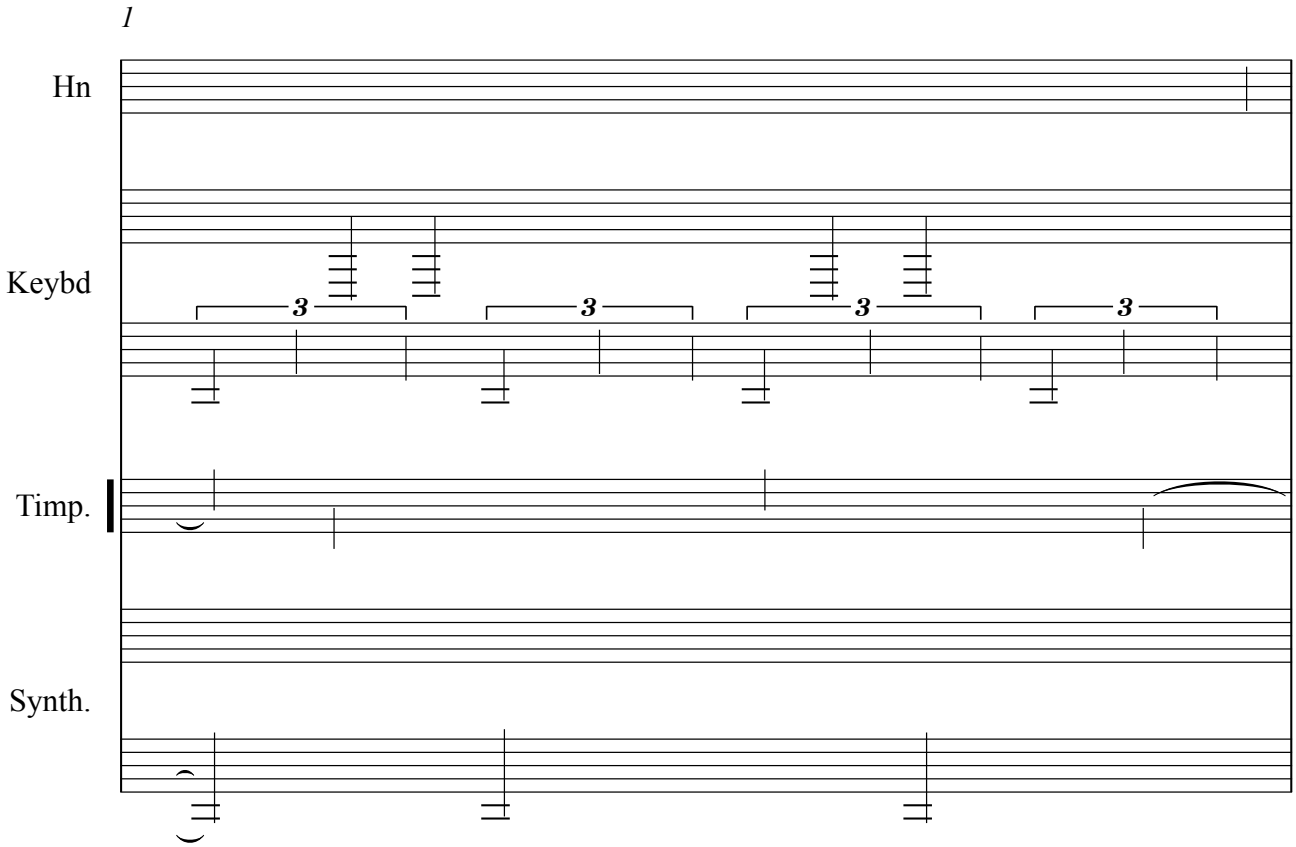
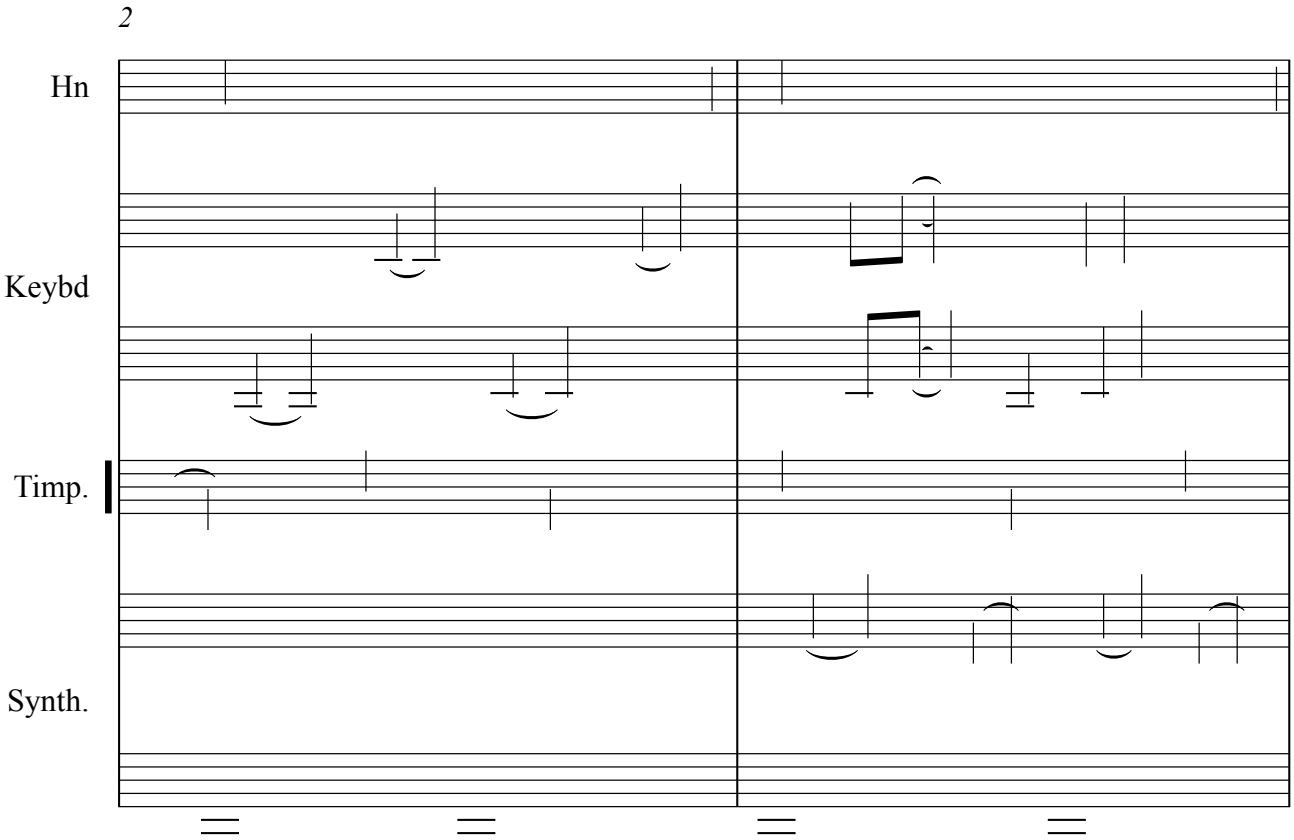

5
Hn
B. Cl.
Keybd
Timp.
Synth.
3
3


7
Hn
B. Cl.
Keybd
Timp.
Synth.
3
3
3
3


9
Hn
B. Cl.
Keybd
Sempre
Timp.
Pedal changes quasi gliss
Synth.


1
Hn
Keybd
Timp.
Synth.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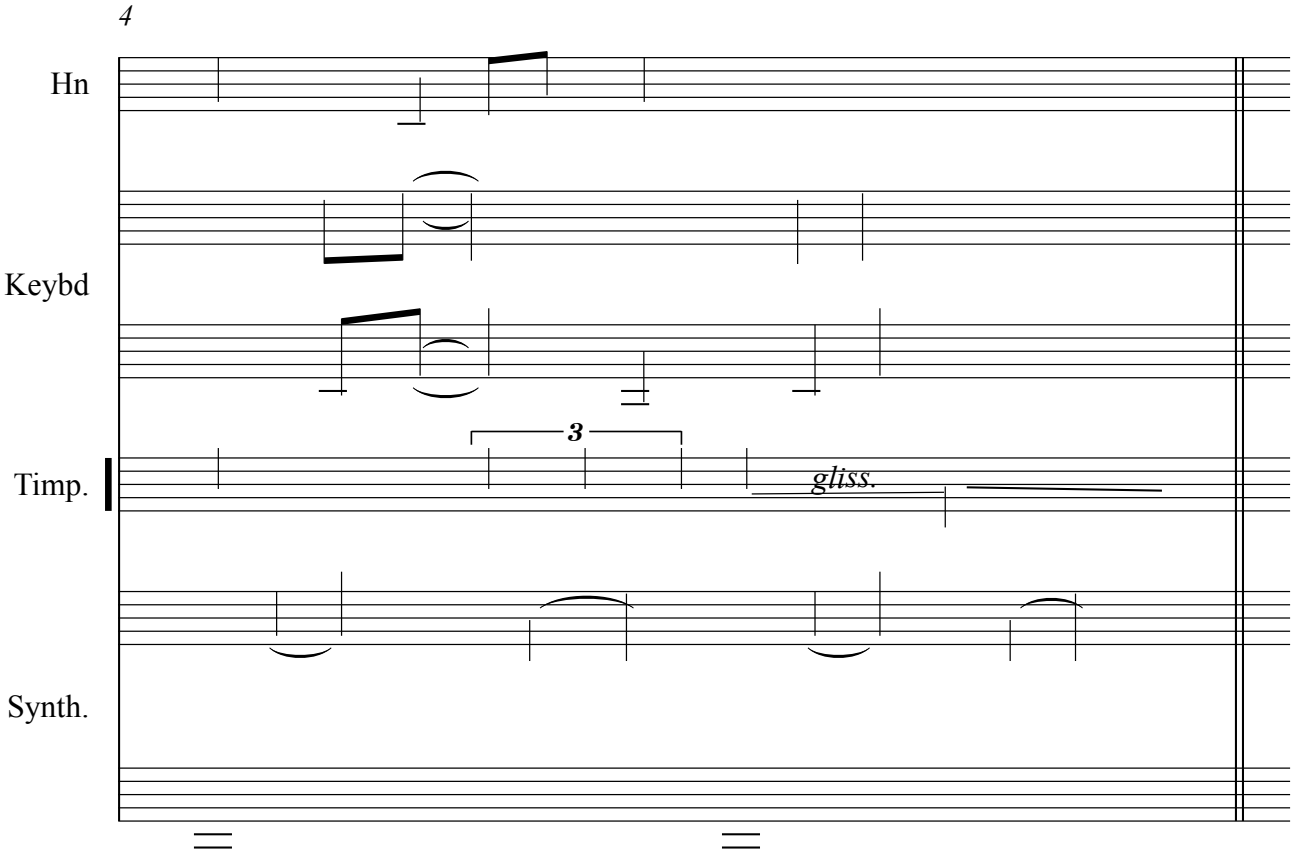
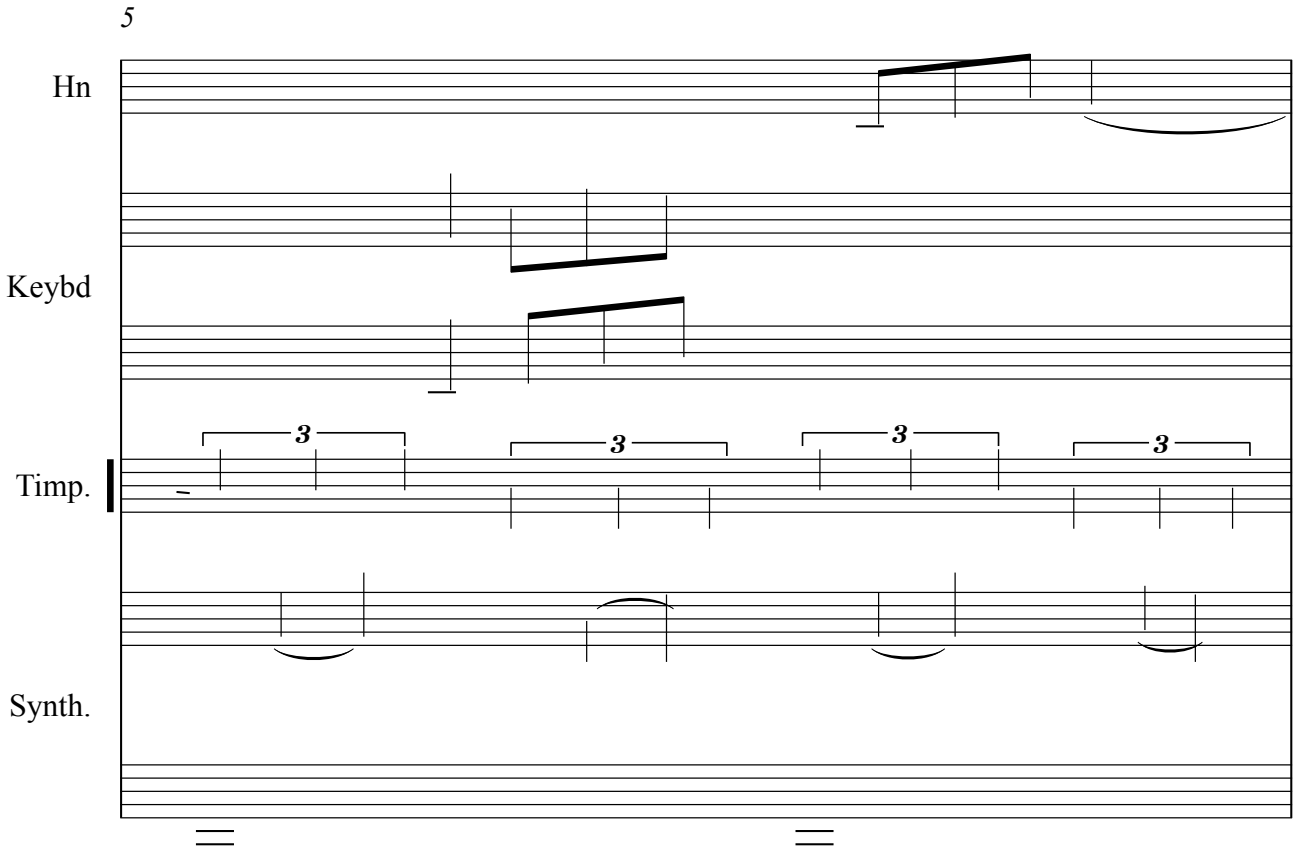
Hn
Keybd
Timp.
Synth.


4
Hn
Keybd
Timp.
3
gliss.
Synth.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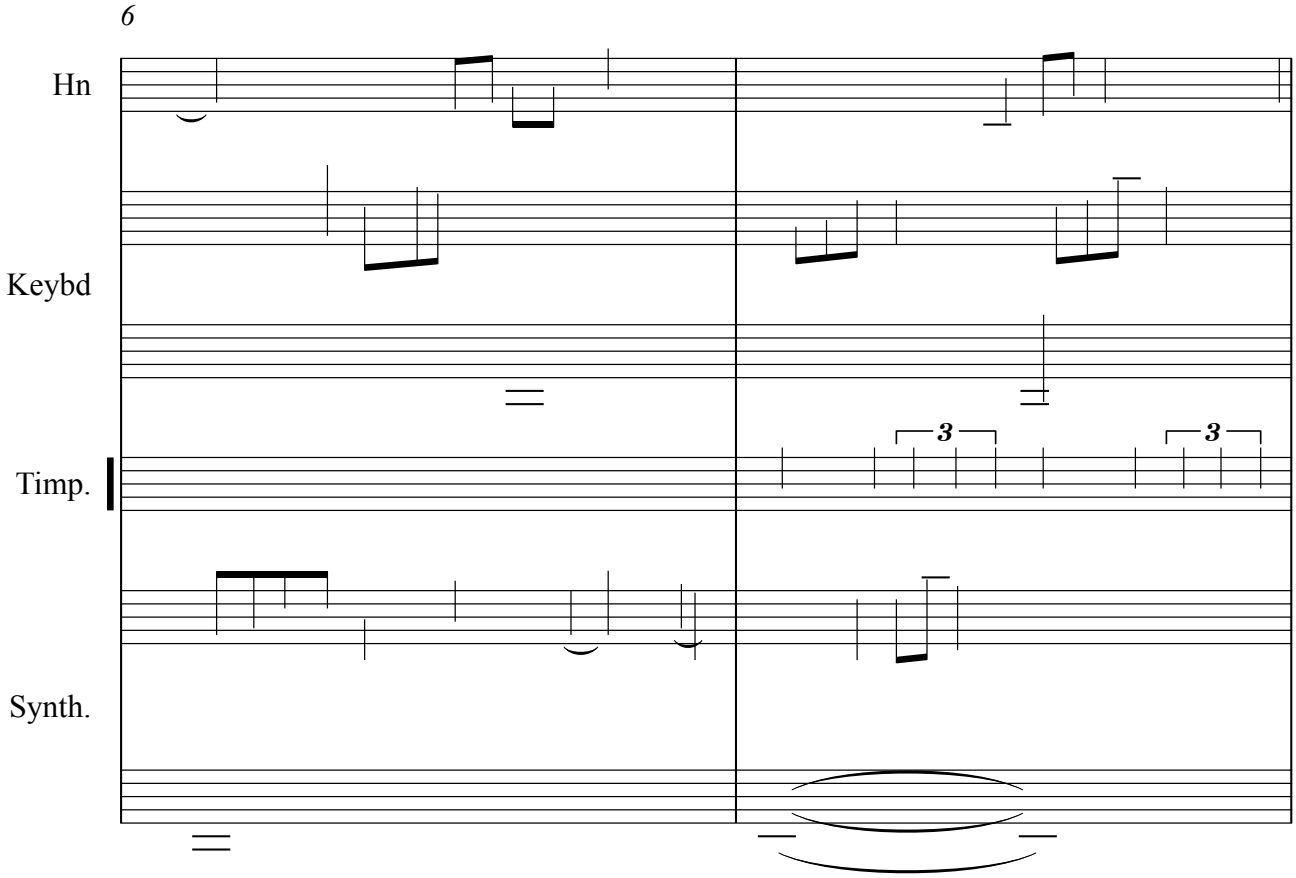
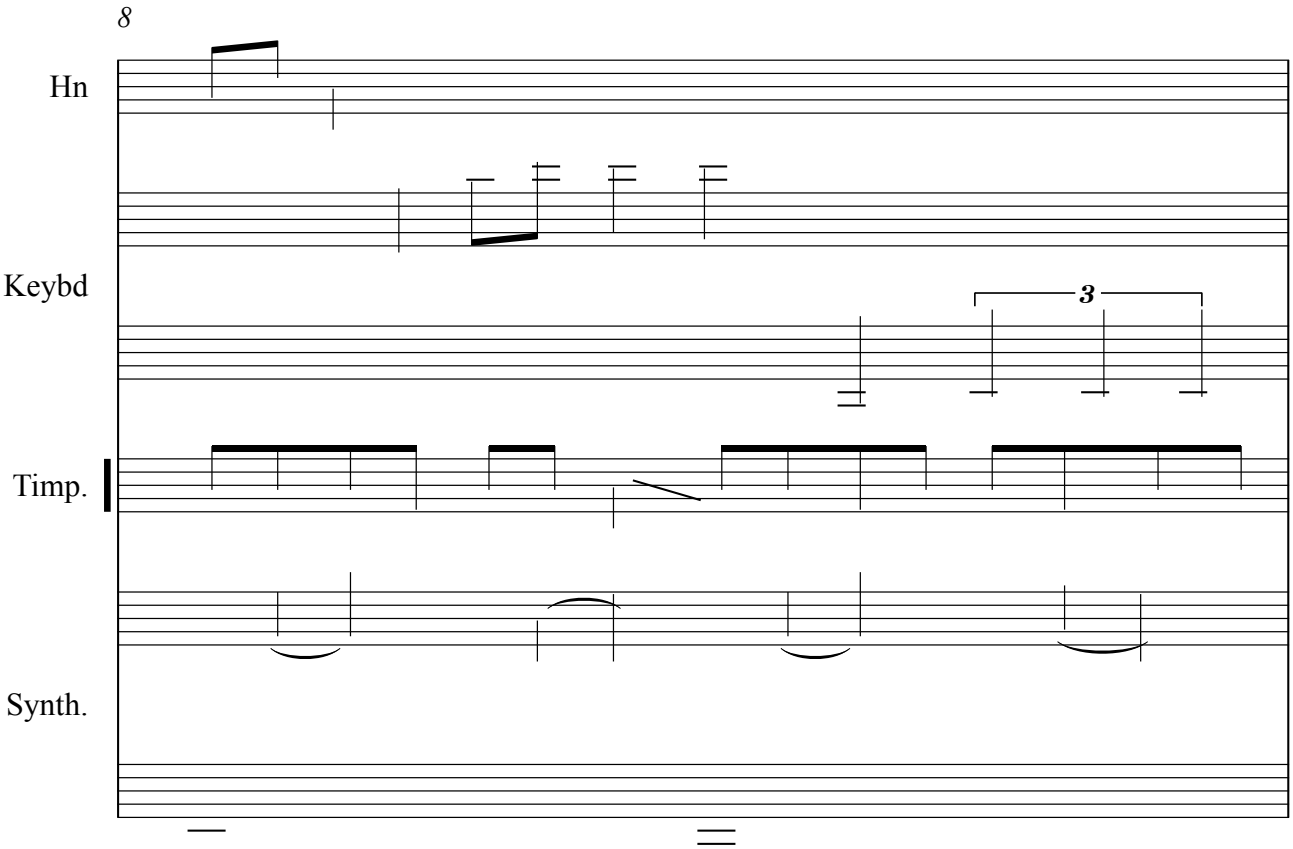
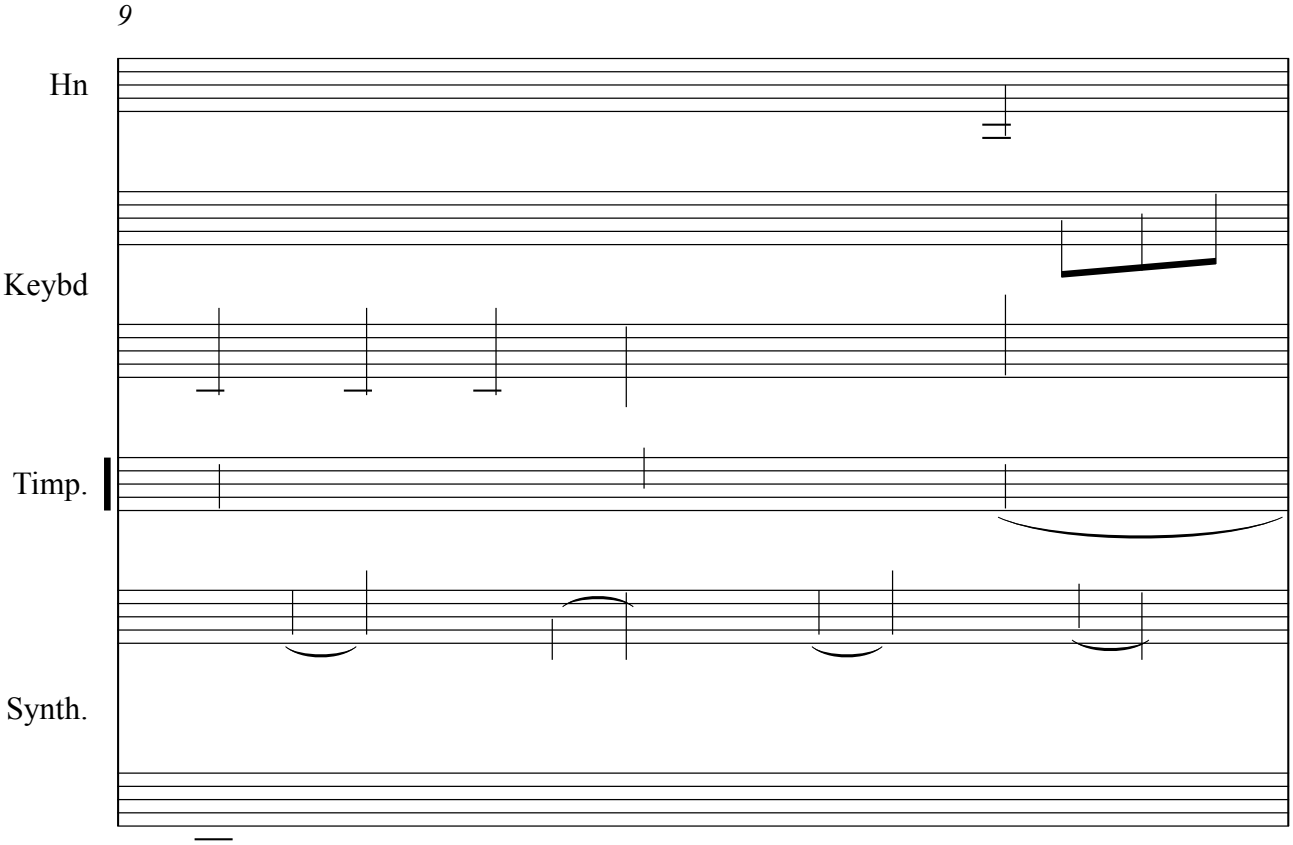
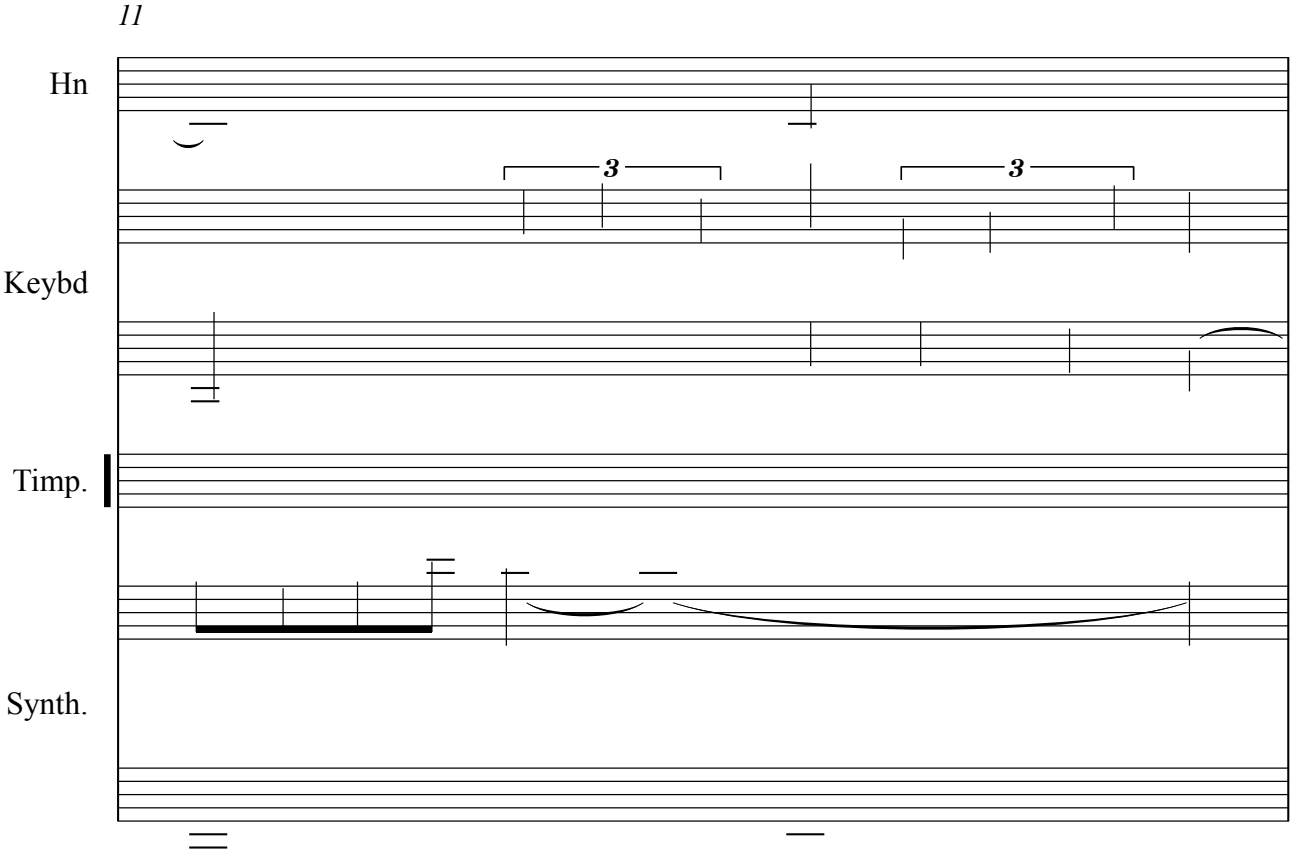
Keybd
Timp.
Synth.

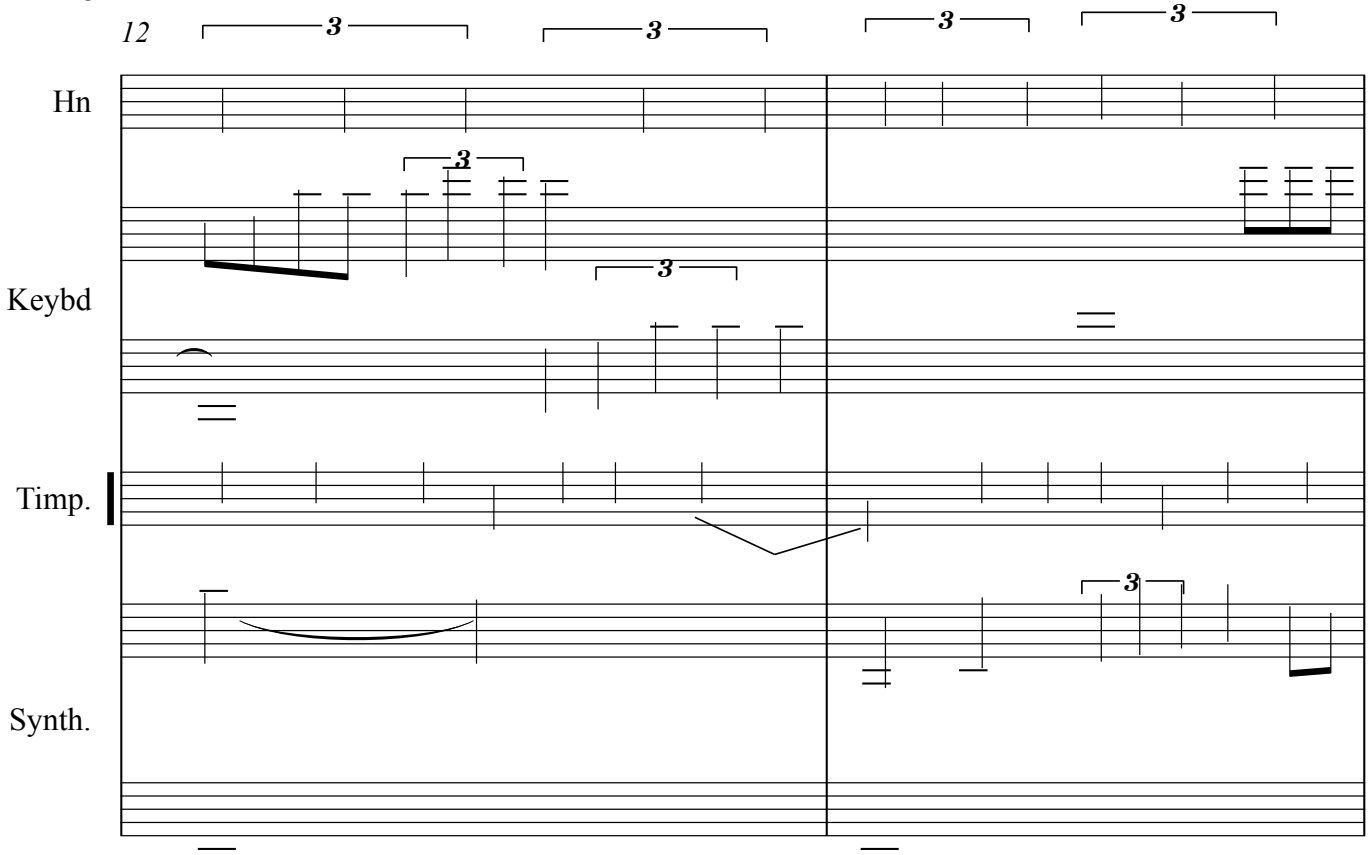

6
Hn
Keybd
Timp.
Synth.

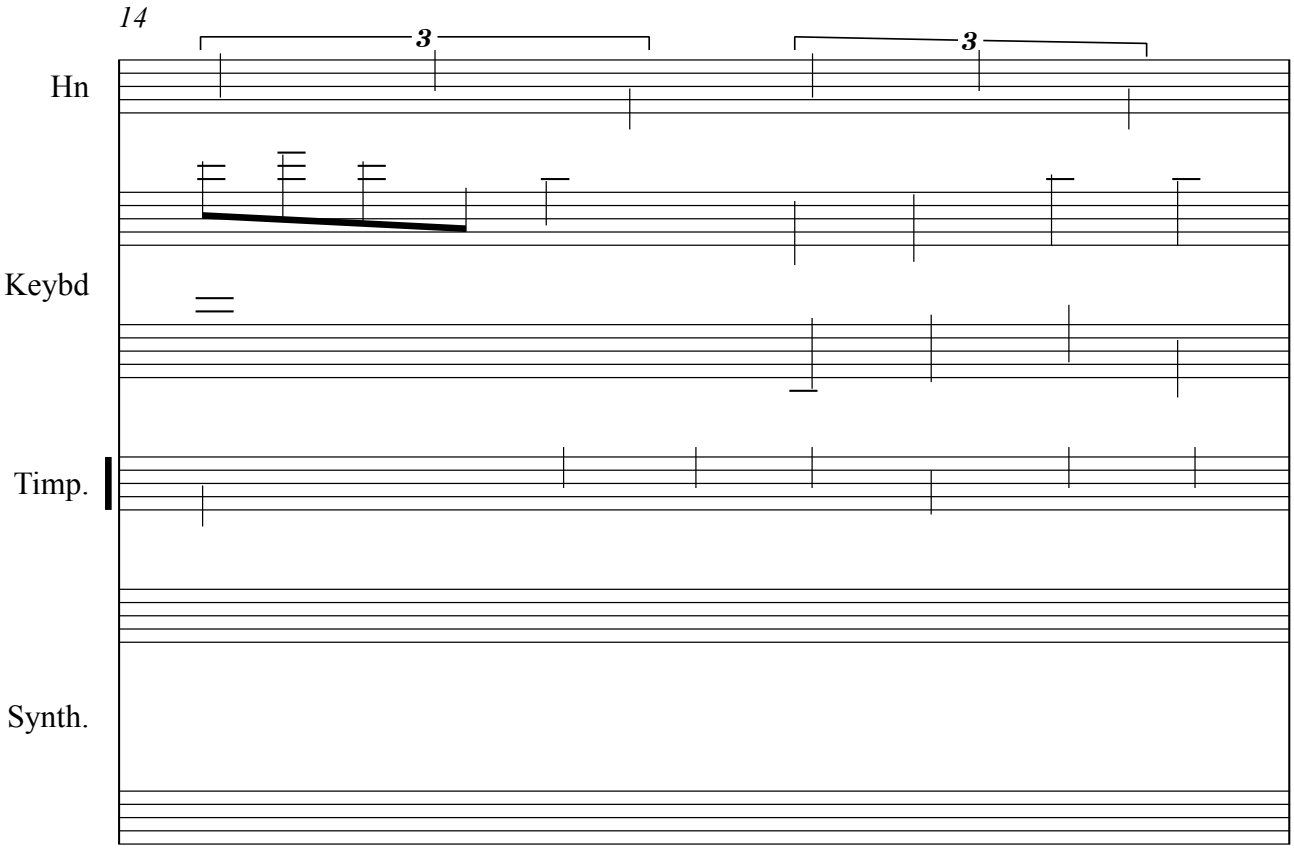

8
Hn
Keybd
3
Timp.
Synth.

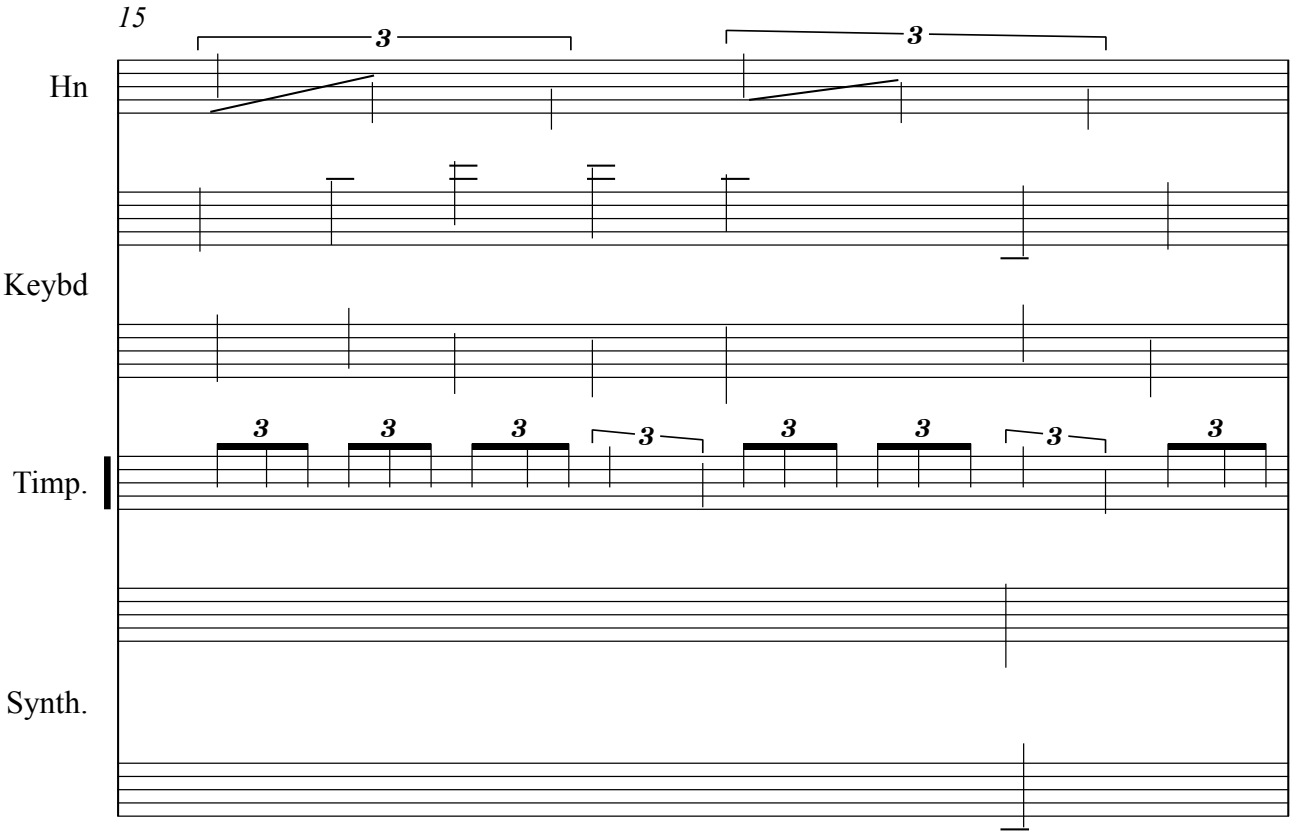

9
Hn
Keybd
Timp.
Synth.

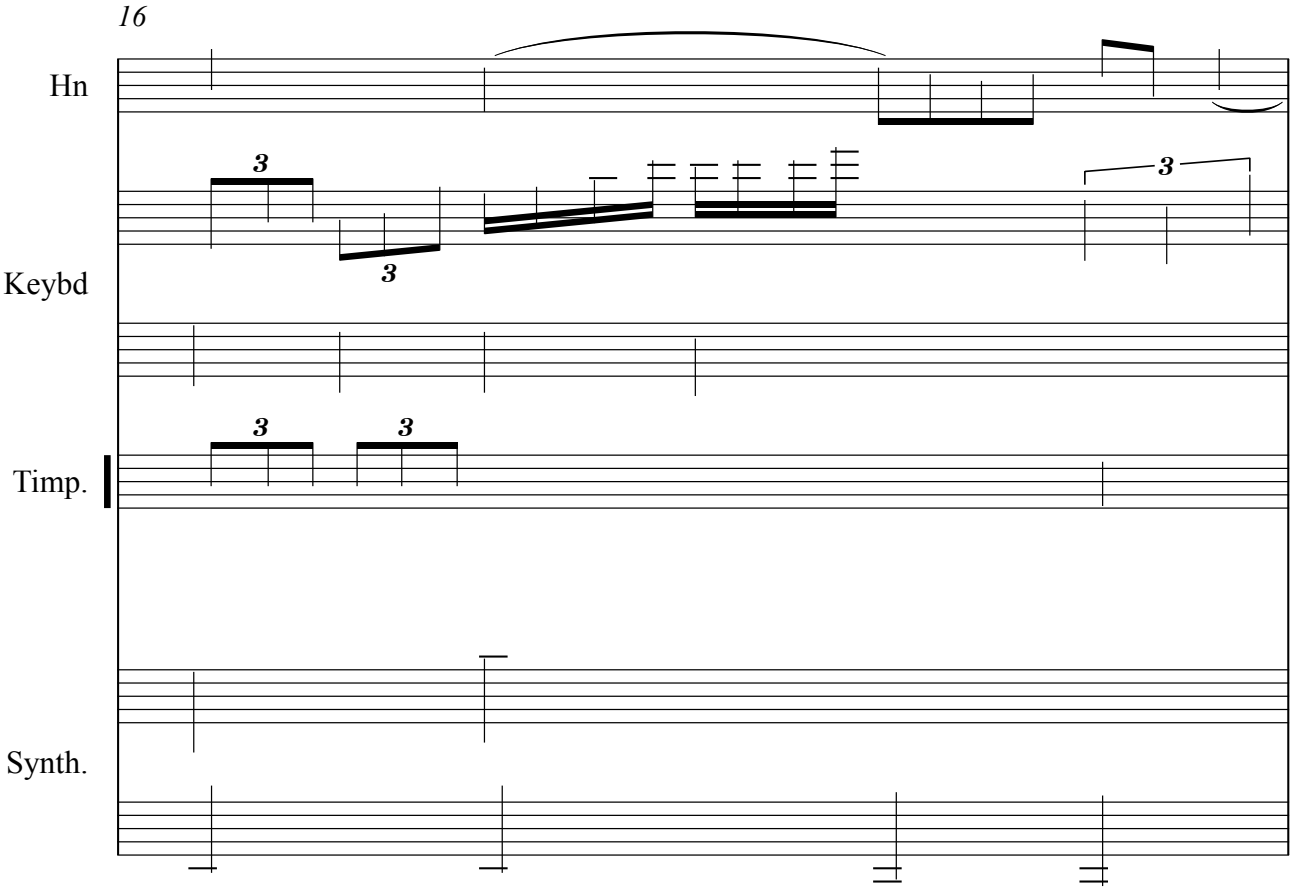

10
Hn
Keybd
Timp.
Synth.

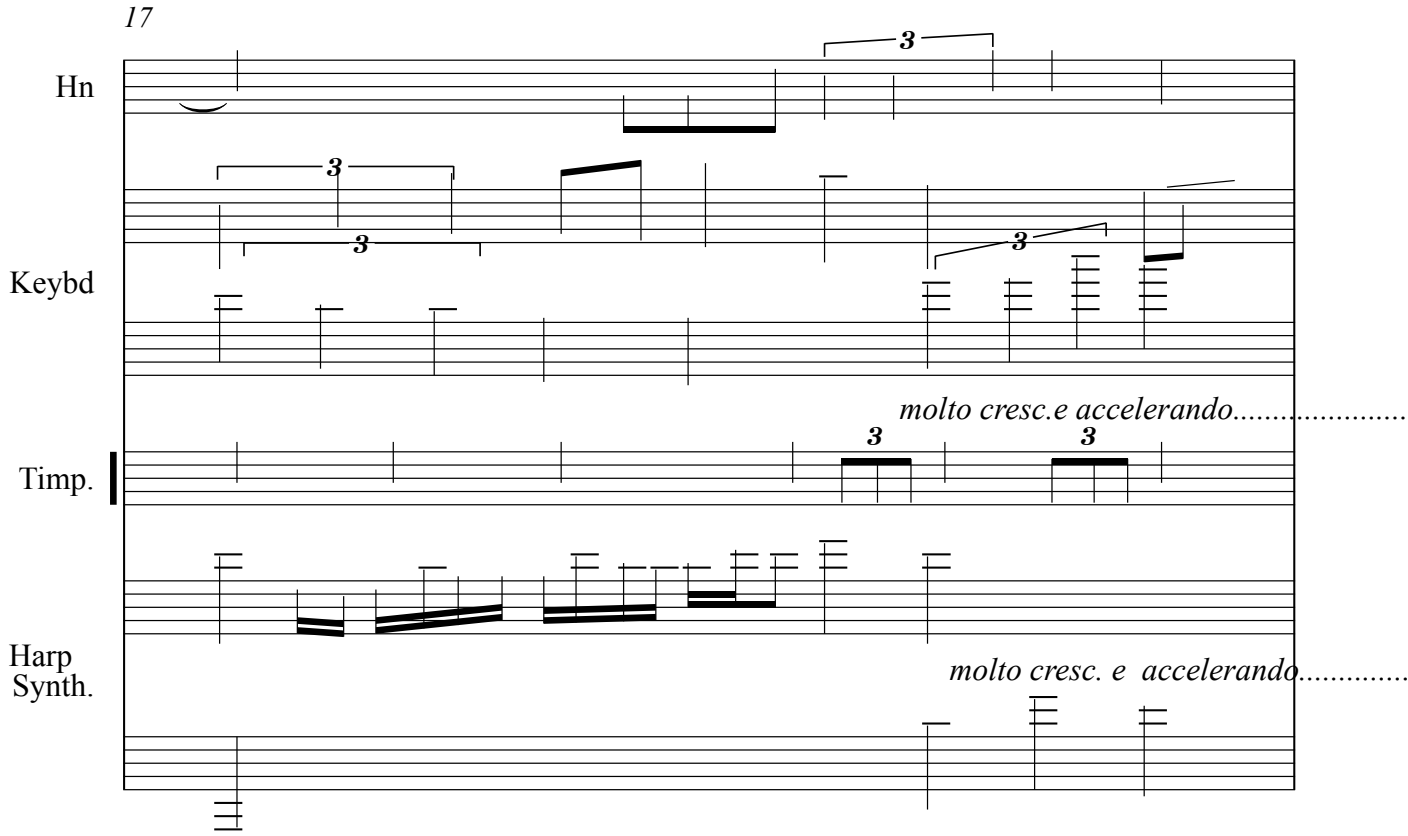

11
Hn
Keybd
Timp.
Synth.

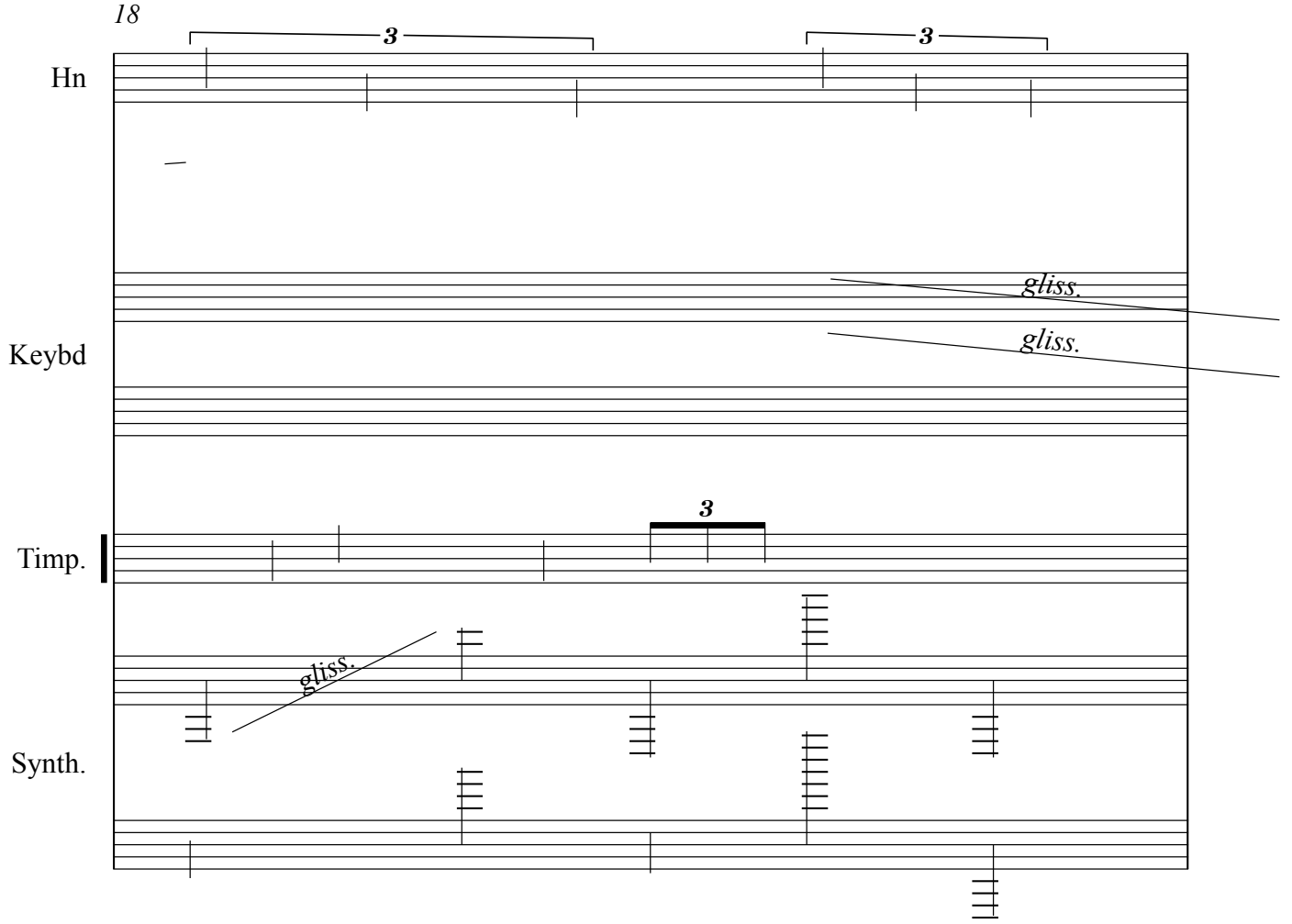

12
Hn
Keybd
Timp.
Synth.


14
Hn
Keybd
Timp.
Synth.


15
Hn
Keybd
Timp.
Synth.


16
Hn
Keybd
Timp.
Synth.


17
Hn
Keybd
Timp.
Harp
Synth.
molto cresc.e accelerando.....
molto cresc. e accelerando.....


18
Hn
Keybd
Timp.
Synth.
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.

19

Hn

Keybd

Timp.

Synth.

LH

20

Hn

fff

The beeps from the support systems emerge from the fading keyboard and distorted synthesiser sounds

Keybd

cluster

fff

Hold

Timp.

cluster

Synth.

fff

Apply 'wave' dynamic; fade.

the boy who wasn't there: Scene II

A A piacere section - approximately 15 seconds

♩=92

Horn in F

Percussion
Side Drum

Day Nurse enters; bustles around busies herself checking equipment, adjusting bedcovers etc. Peter, sole occupant of the ward, lies unconscious, attached to life-support systems.

MOTHER

NURSE

DOCTOR

Piano

~~SOUND WASH - As dolphin clicks should have faded~~ into blips, so blips should merge into a crescendo of the xylophone motif. Start when beat firmly established.

Blips cont'd.

Xylophone
hard sticks

~~Andantino~~
~~sempre staccato~~

4

Horn

Perc.

Mother

in a playful manner-quasi parlando

Nurse

f gliss.

Well! *now, young man!* And how are we this mor ning?

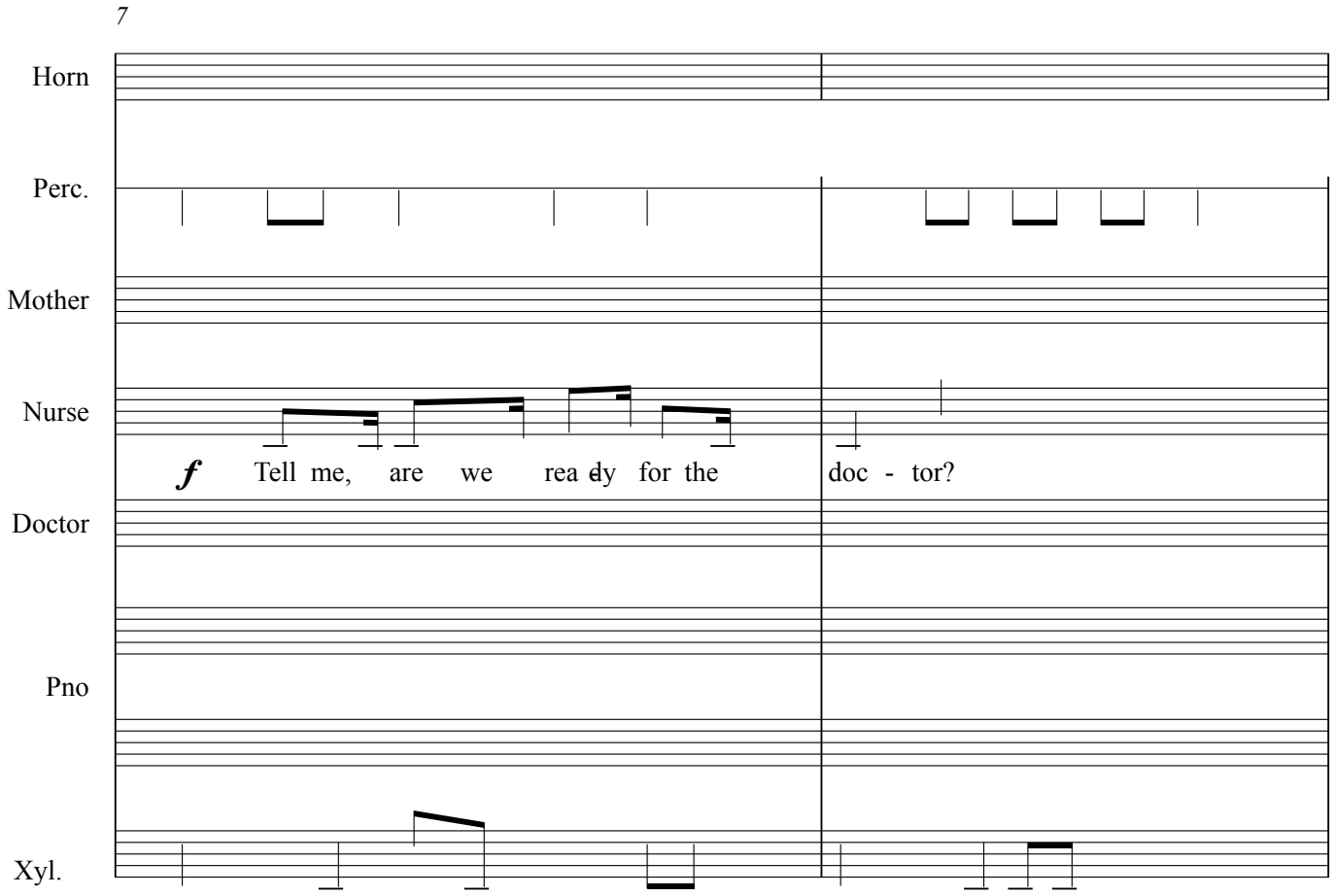
Doctor

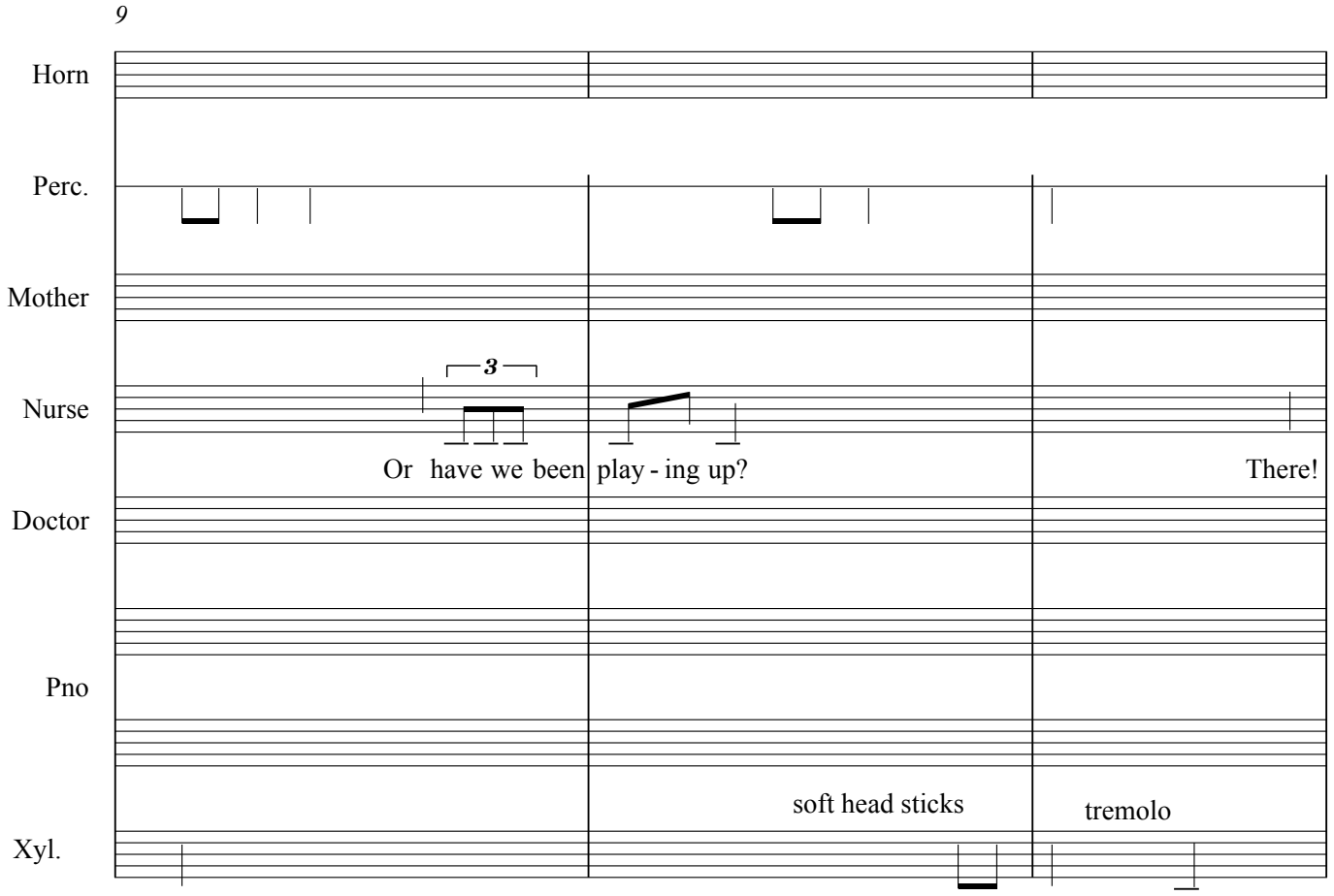
Pno

Xyl.

C 2000

Blips fade in & out creating an underlying presence throughout. Their absence at the end, unnoticed, defines the moment


7
Horn
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
f
Tell me, are we rea dy for the
doc - tor?
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.


9
Horn
Perc.
Mother
3
Nurse
Or have we been play - ing up?
There!
Doctor
Pno
soft head sticks
tremolo
Xyl.

12

Horn

Perc.

Mother

sprechstimme

Nurse

There! Ha! ha! Just my lit - tle joke!)

Doctor

Pno

soft head sticks

gliss.

Xyl.

14

Horn

Perc.

Mother

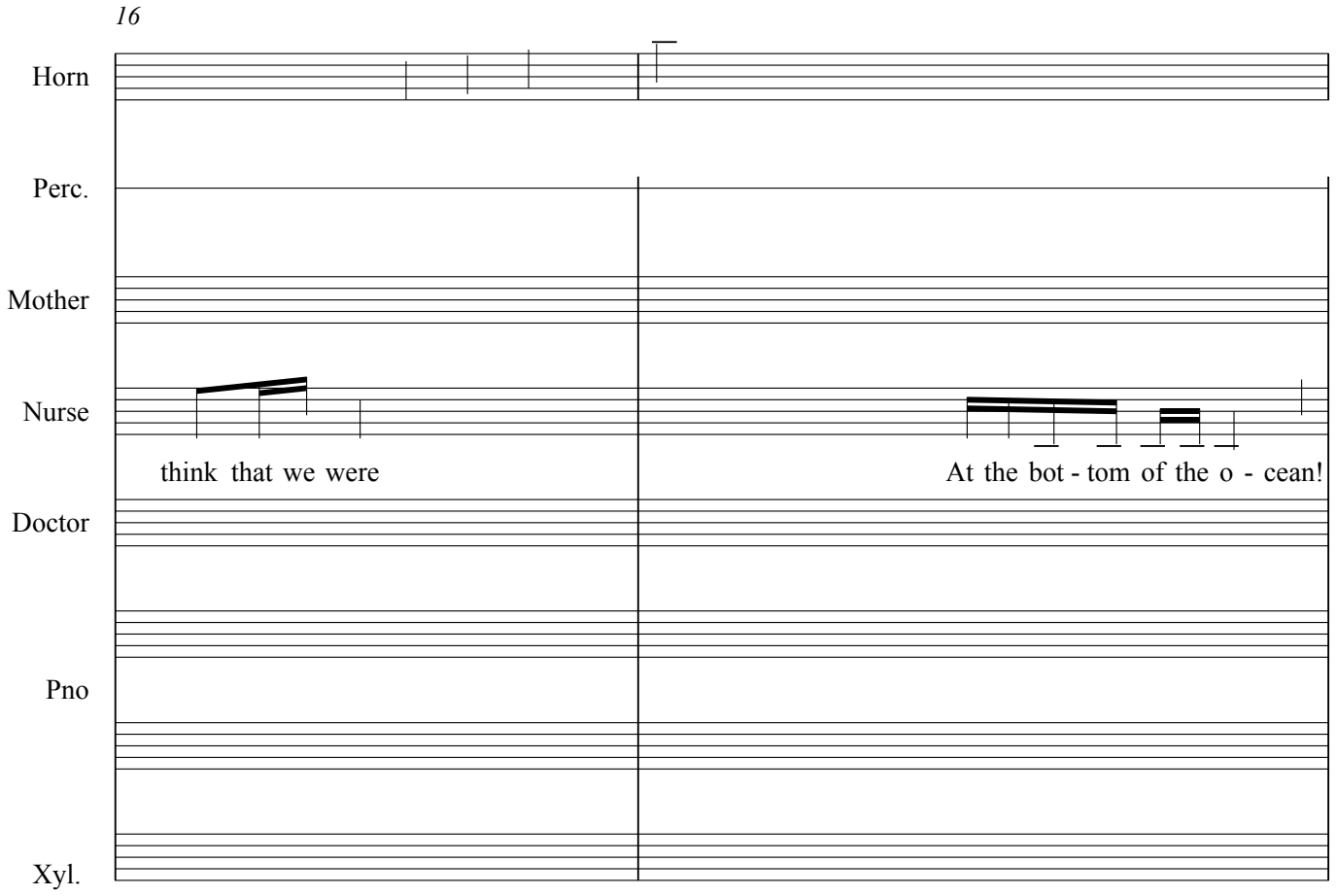
Nurse

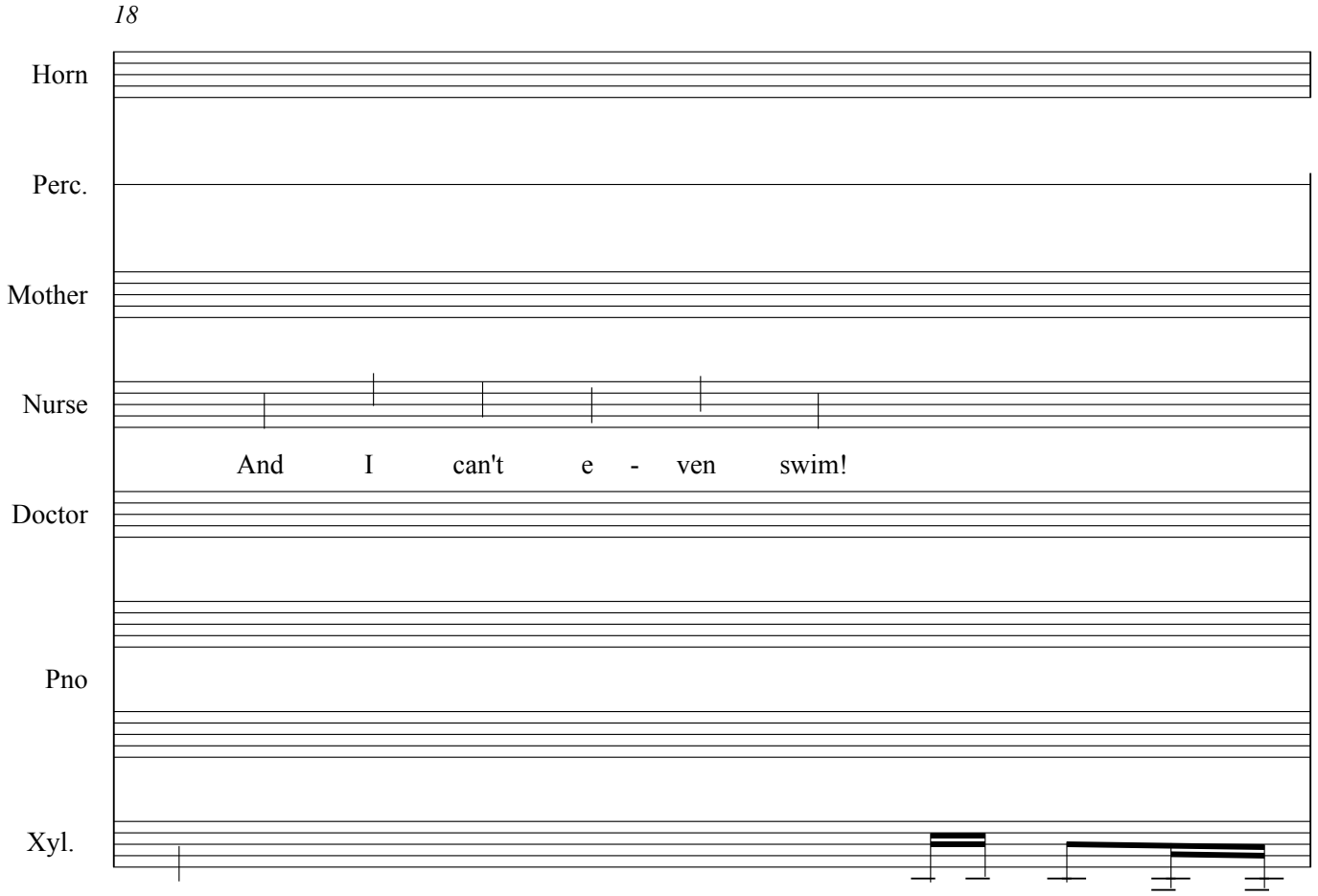
You know, it's rain - ing so hard out - side That you'd

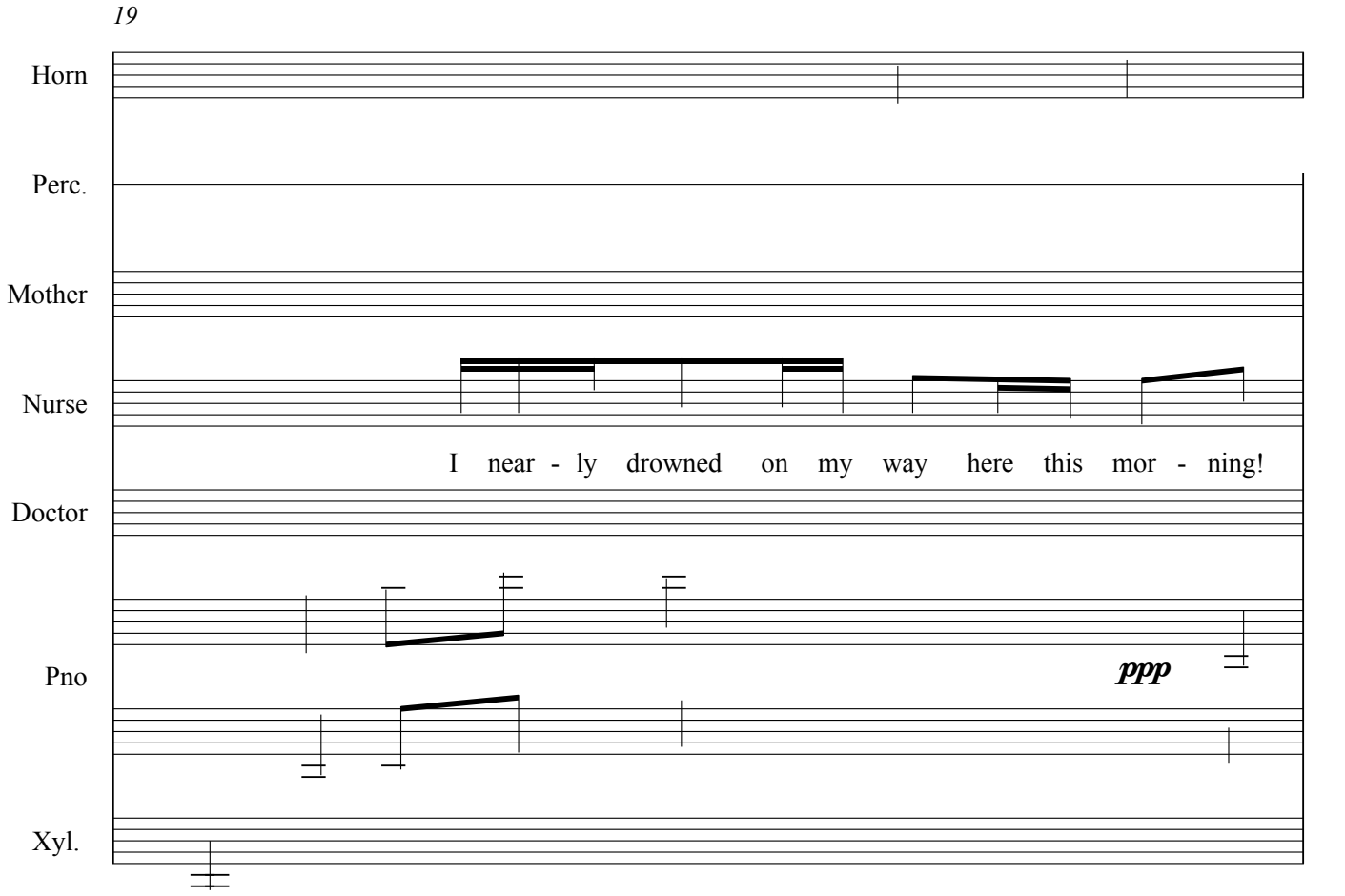
Doctor

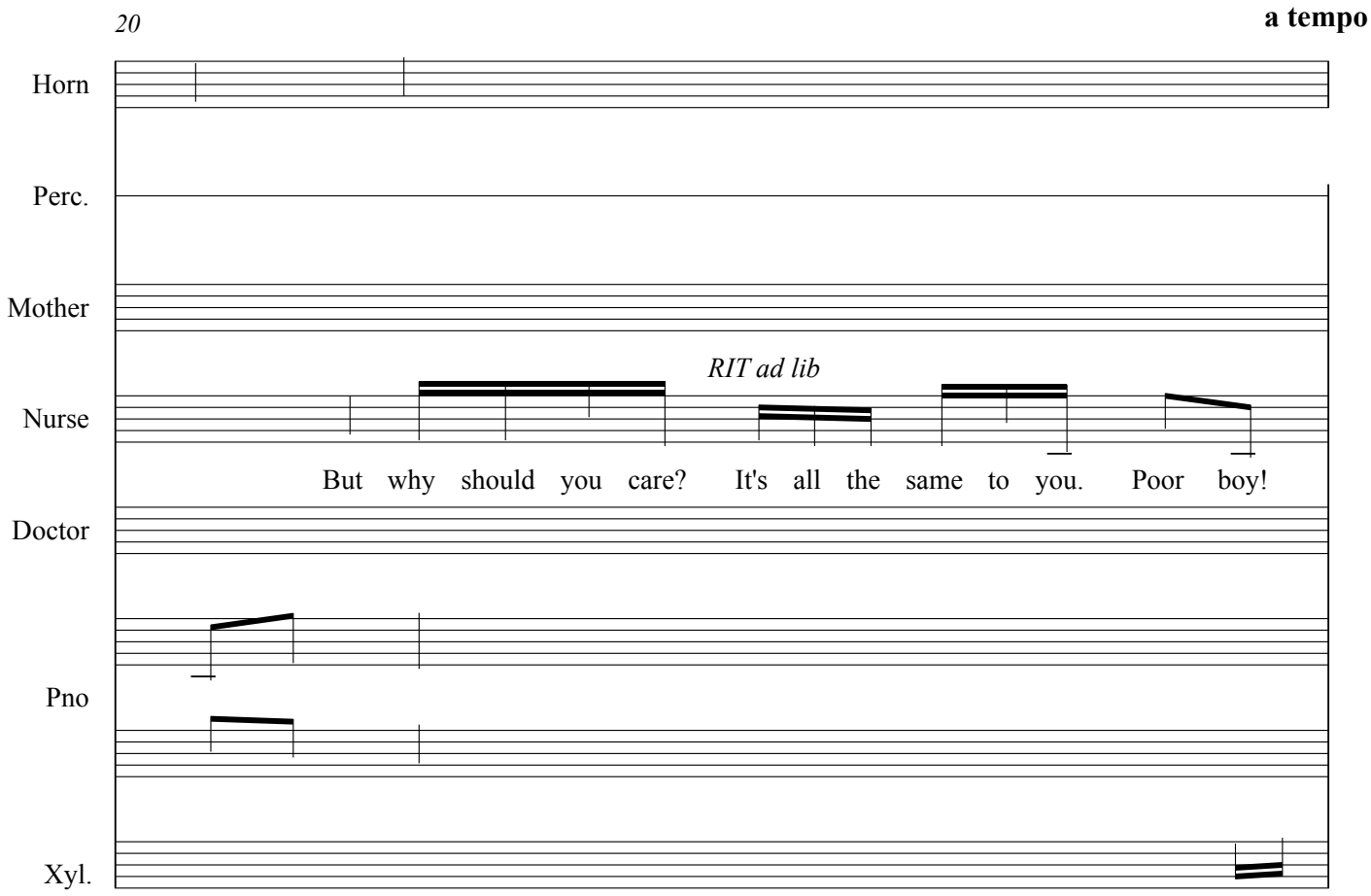
Pno

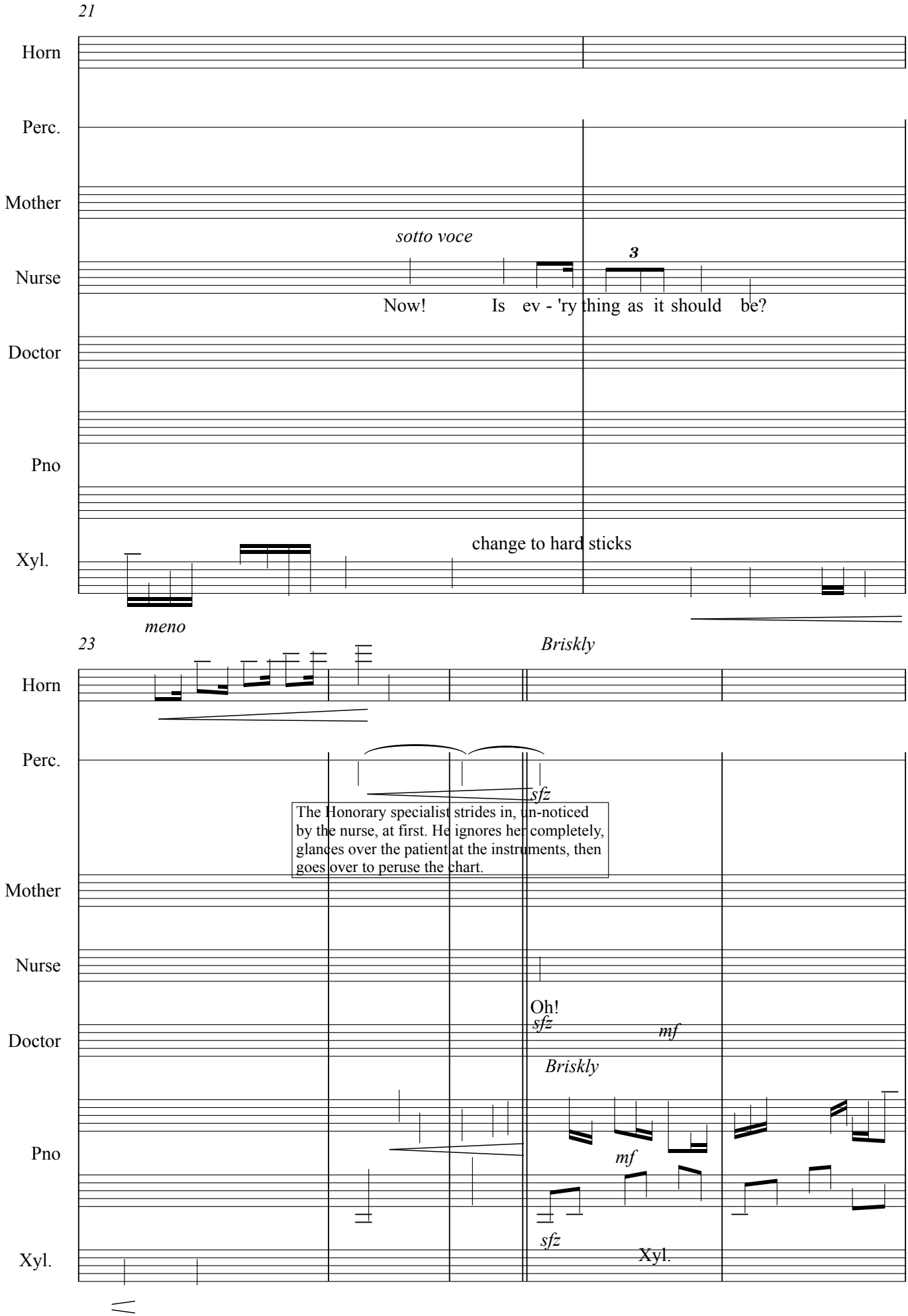
Xyl.


16
Horn
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
think that we were
At the bot - tom of the o - cean!
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.


18
Horn
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
And I can't e - ven swim!
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.


19
Horn
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
I near - ly drowned on my way here this mor - ning!
Doctor
Pno
ppp
Xyl.


20
a tempo
Horn
Perc.
Mother
RIT ad lib
Nurse
But why should you care? It's all the same to you. Poor boy!
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.


21
Horn
Perc.
Mother
sotto voce
3
Nurse
Now! Is ev - 'ry thing as it should be?
Doctor
Pno
change to hard sticks
Xyl.
meno
23
Briskly
Horn
Perc.
sfz
The Honorary specialist strides in, un-noticed by the nurse, at first. He ignores her completely, glances over the patient at the instruments, then goes over to peruse the chart.
Mother
Nurse
Oh!
sfz
mf
Doctor
Briskly
Pno
mf
sfz
Xyl.
Xyl.

28

Horn

Perc.

Mother

Nurse

Good morn - ing, Doc - - tor!

Doctor

f

Good -

Pno

Xyl.

32

Horn

Perc.

Mother

Nurse

Doctor

mor - ning? Have you looked out- side this morn - ing?

Pno

Xyl.

35

Horn

Perc.

Mother

Nurse

Doctor

And it's my golf day, too!

Is e - v'ry - thing as it

Pno

Xyl.

38

Horn

Perc.

Mother

Nurse

Yes, Doc tor!

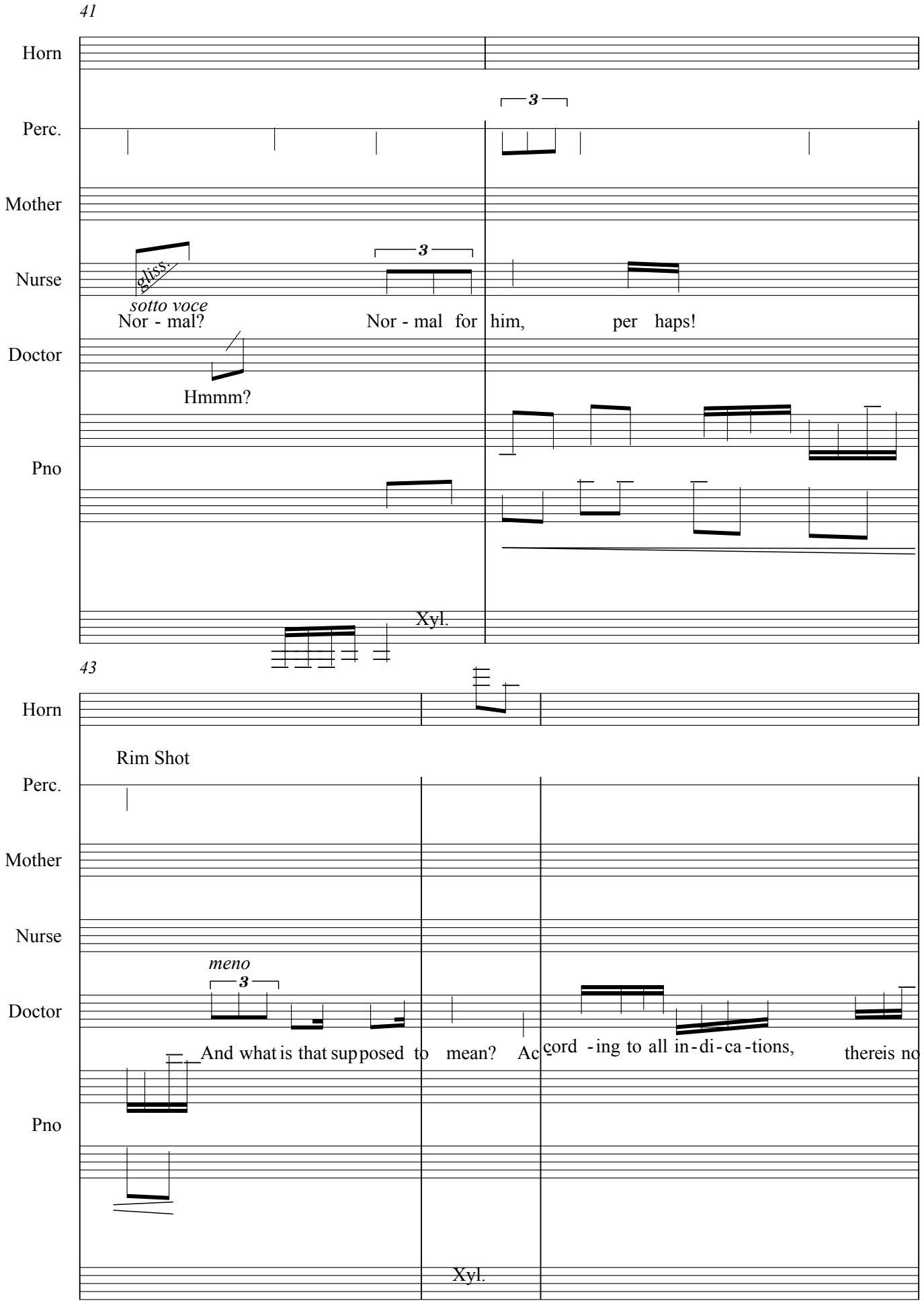
Doctor

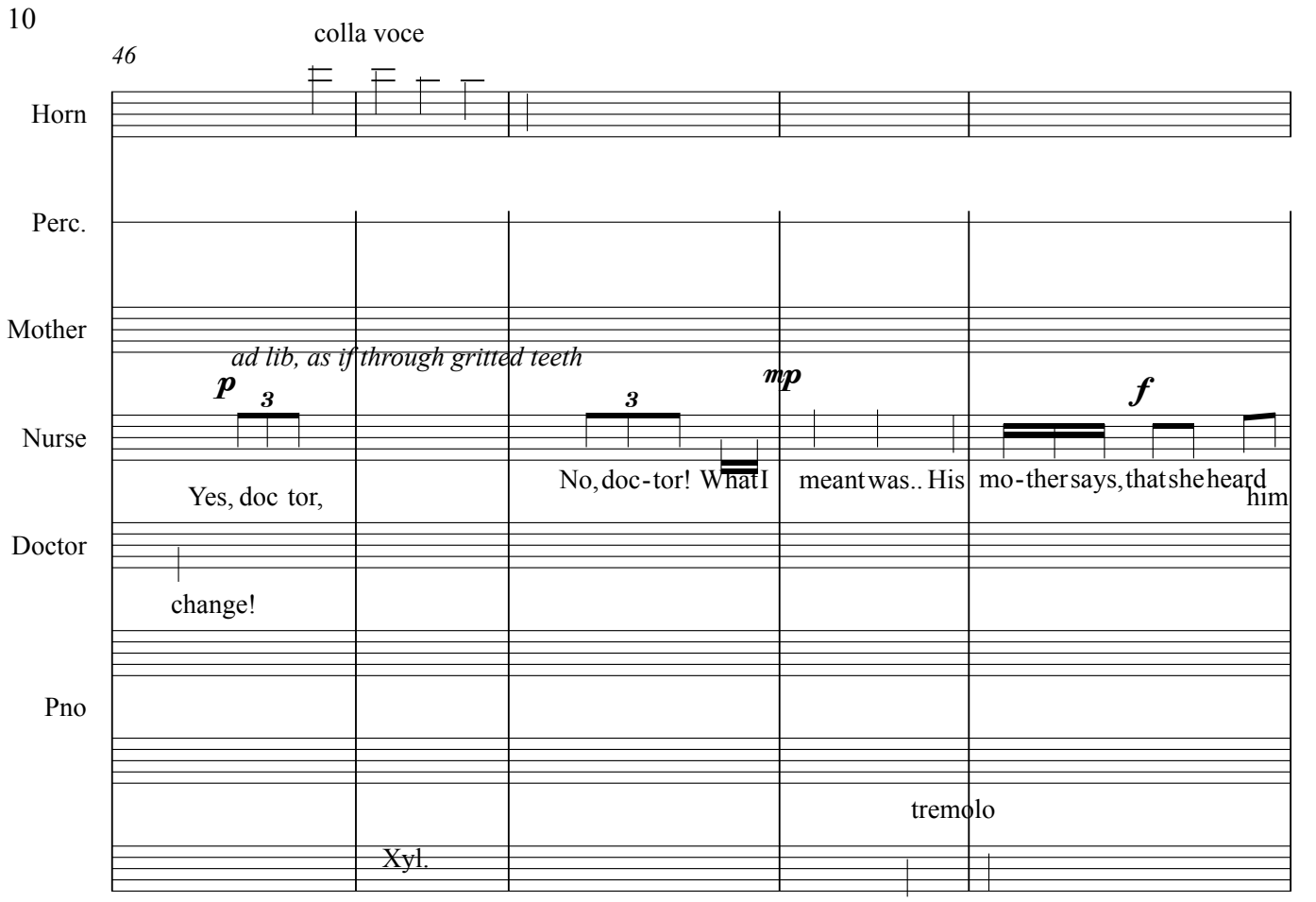
should be?

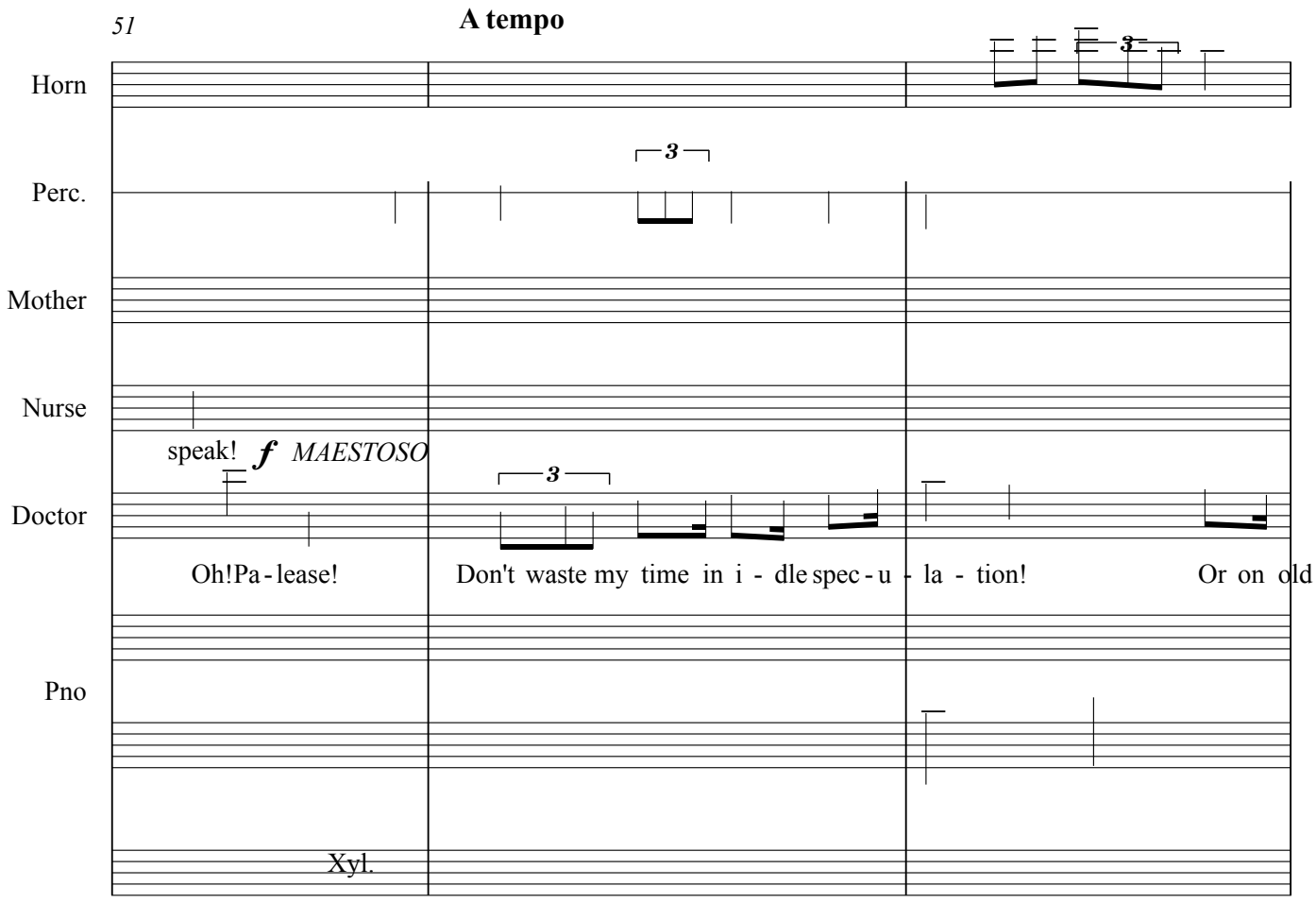
As nor mal?

Pno

Xyl.


41
Horn
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
Doctor
Pno
3
3
gliss.
sotto voce
Nor - mal?
Nor - mal for him, per haps!
Hmmm?
Xyl.
43
Horn
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
Doctor
Pno
Rim Shot
meno
3
And what is that supposed to mean? Ac cord -ing to all in-di-ca-tions, thereis no
Xyl.


46
colla voce
Horn
Perc.
Mother
ad lib, as if through gritted teeth
p
3
3
mp
f
Nurse
Yes, doc tor,
No, doc-tor! What I meant was.. His mo-ther says, that she heard him
Doctor
change!
Pno
tremolo
Xyl.


51
A tempo
Horn
3
Perc.
3
Mother
Nurse
speak!
f MAESTOSO
3
Doctor
Oh! Pa-lease!
Don't waste my time in i - dle spec-u - la - tion!
Or on old
Pno
Xyl.

54

Horn

Perc.

Mother

Nurse

Doctor

wives' tales, or trite re-li-gious tracts! Ig-nore your pa-tients'-hys - te - ri - a, to rea-son

Pno

Xyl.

57

Horn

Perc.

Mother

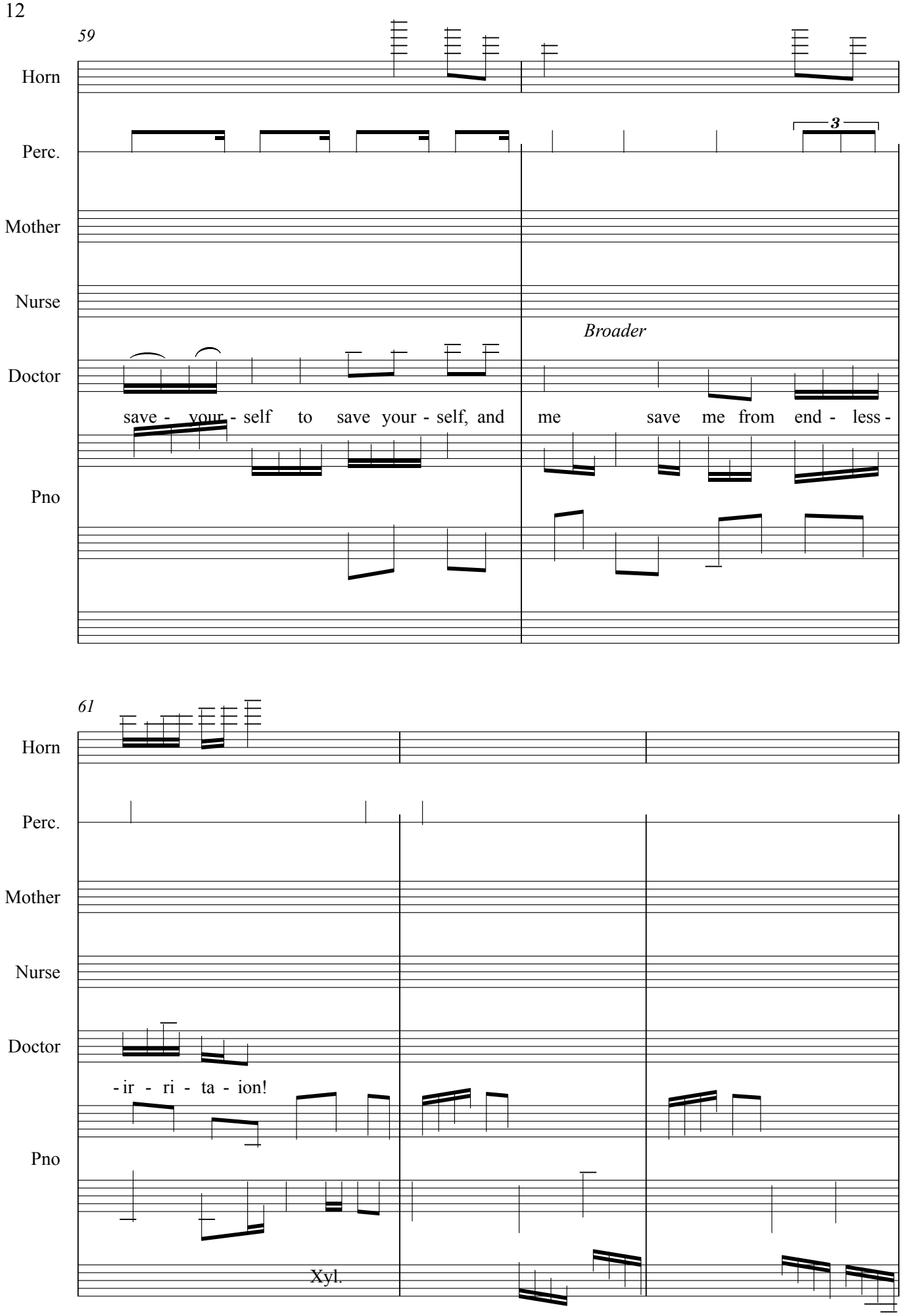
Nurse

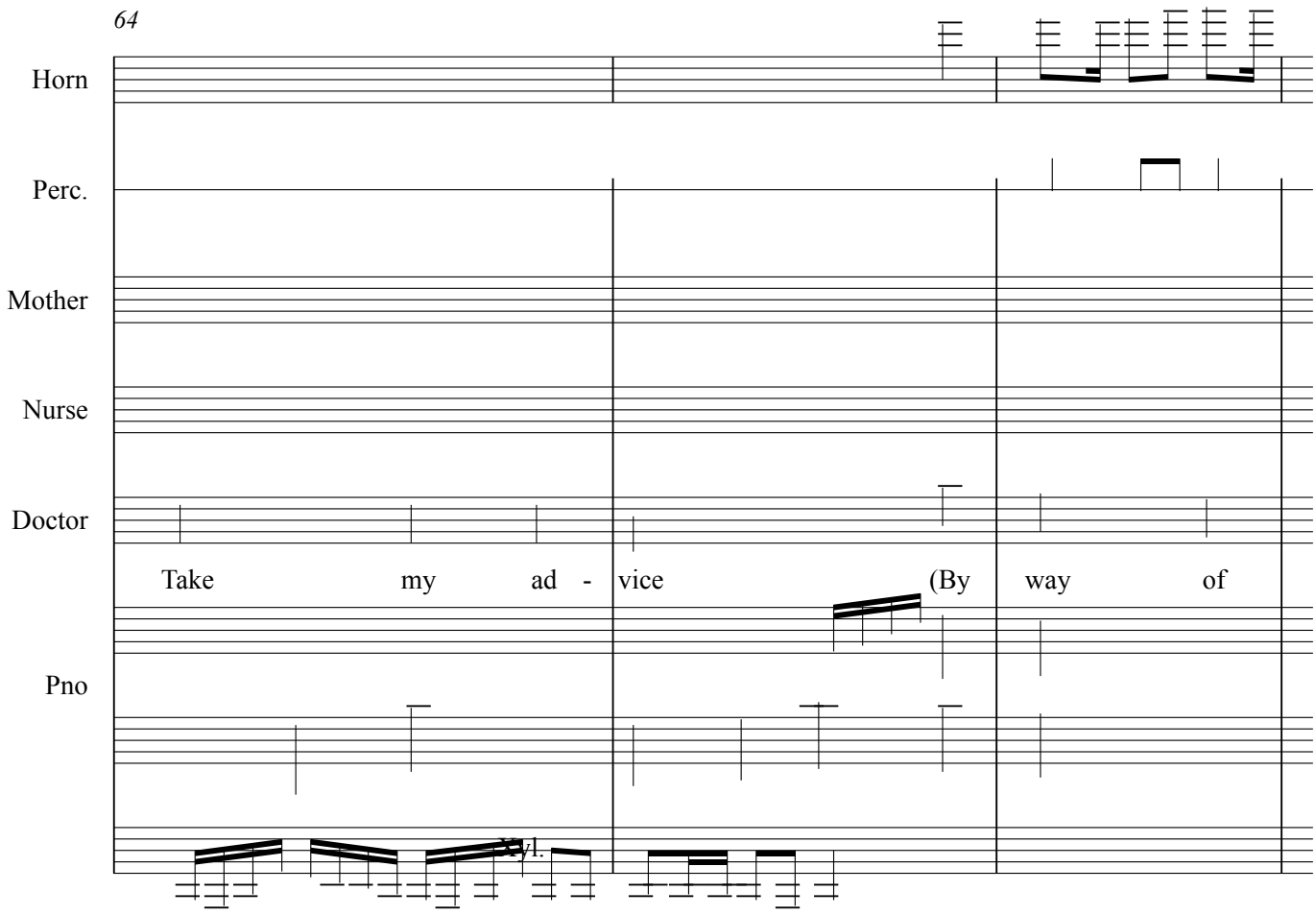
Doctor

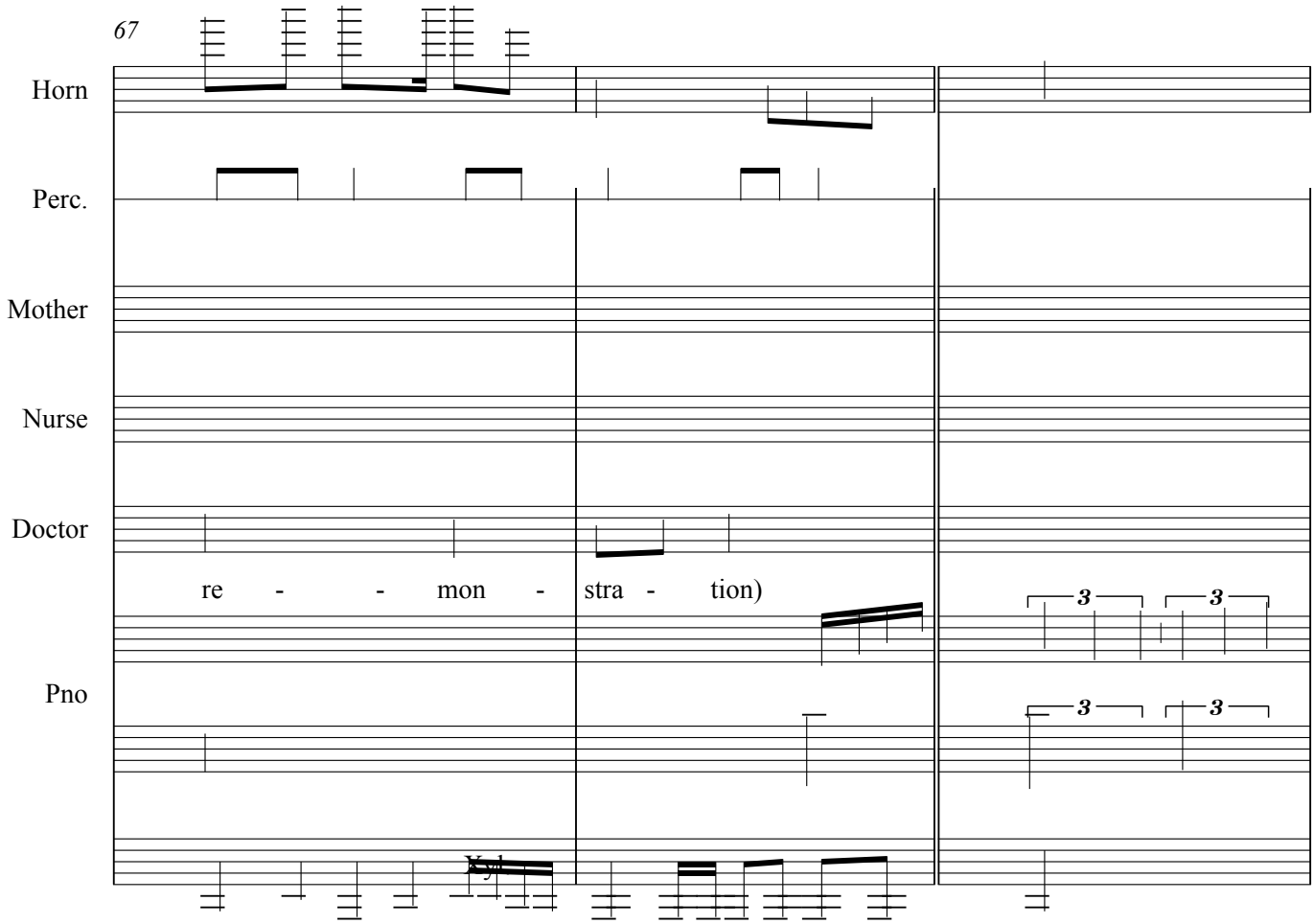
they are stran- gers! To -

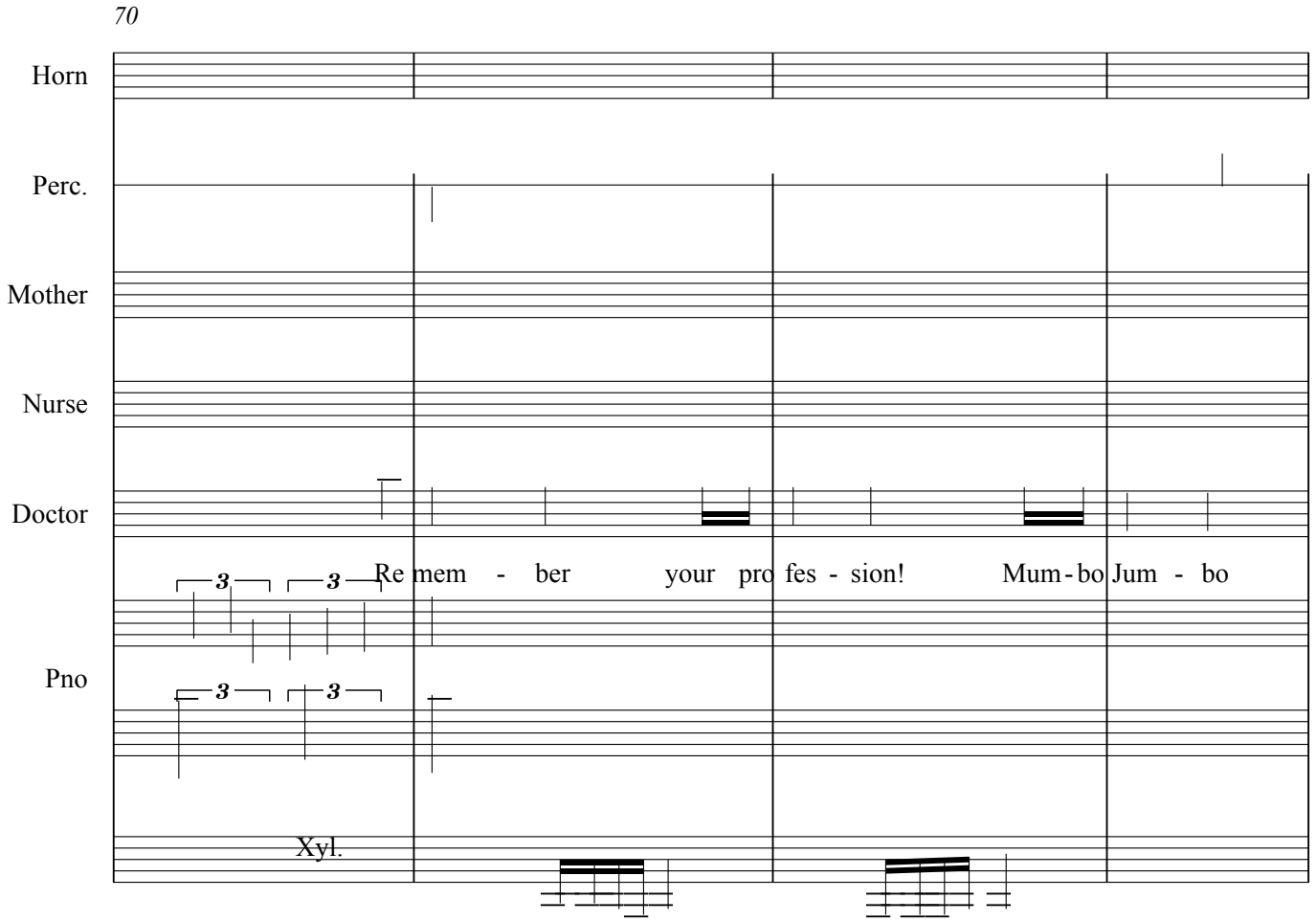
mf

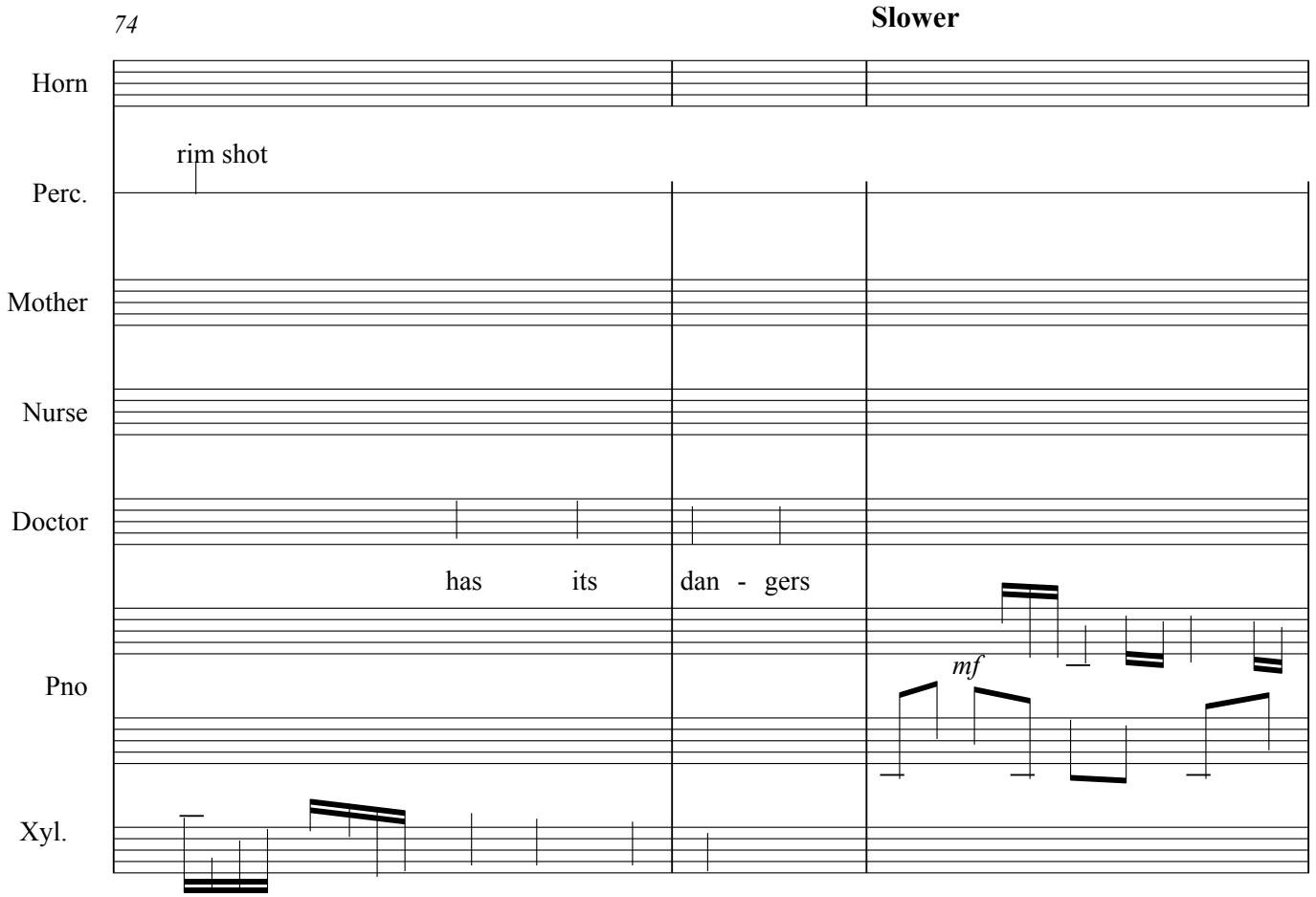
Pno


59
Horn
Perc.
3
Mother
Nurse
Broader
Doctor
save - your - self to save your - self, and me save me from end - less -
Pno
61
Horn
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
Doctor
- ir - ri - ta - ion!
Pno
Xyl.


64
Horn
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
Doctor
Take my ad - vice (By way of
Pno
Xyl.


67
Horn
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
Doctor
re - - mon - stra - tion)
Pno
Xyl.


70
Horn
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
Doctor
Re mem - ber your pro fes - sion! Mum - bo Jum - bo
Pno
Xyl.


74
Slower
Horn
rim shot
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
Doctor
has its dan - gers
Pno
mf
Xyl.

77

Horn

Perc.

Mother

Nurse

Doctor

Al - though - we - must - be - ve - ry - care -

Pno

Xyl.

79

Horn

Perc.

Mother

Nurse

Doctor

Yes,

ful, Don't waste my time now ! Just give me all the facts, Nurse!

Pno

Xyl.

82

Horn

Perc.

Mother

A piacere al Ariette

Nurse

Doc - tor!

Yes, Doc tor!

Doctor

And let me know at once if there are an - y changes!

Exiting

Some times

Pno

Xyl.

85

Horn

Perc.

Mother

Nurse

Yes, Doctor!

Doctor

some -times, Some times I won der who the pa tients are in here!

The Doctor Exits

Pno

88

ARIETTE

espress.

Horn

A. Sax.

Perc.

Mother

Nurse

f

No, Doctor! Tell me, Why should I bo - ther?

Doctor

Pno

Mar.

92

Lento (Slow Waltz)

Horn

A. Sax.

Perc.

Mother

Nurse

Whena nurse - I first - be-

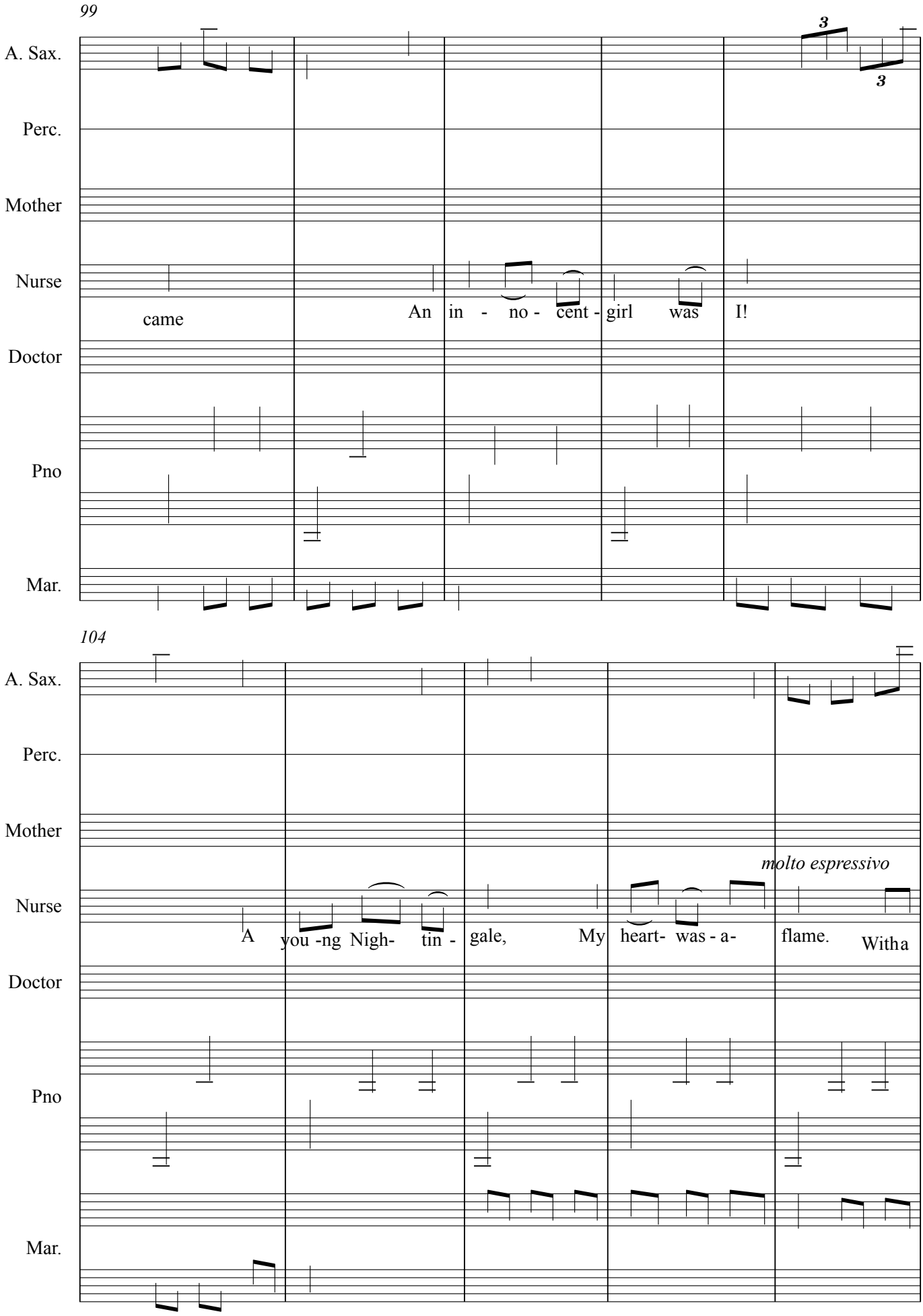
Doctor

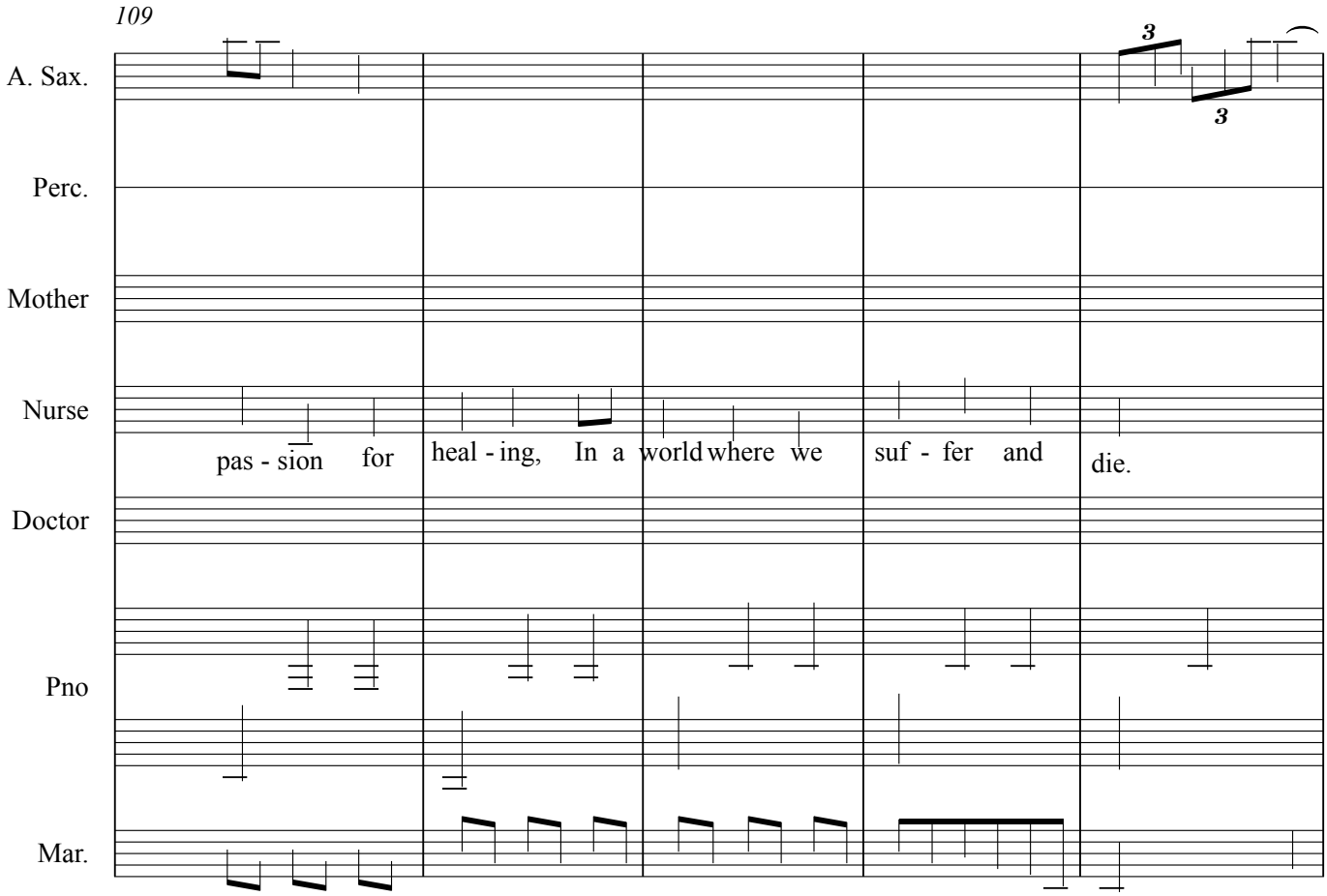
Pno

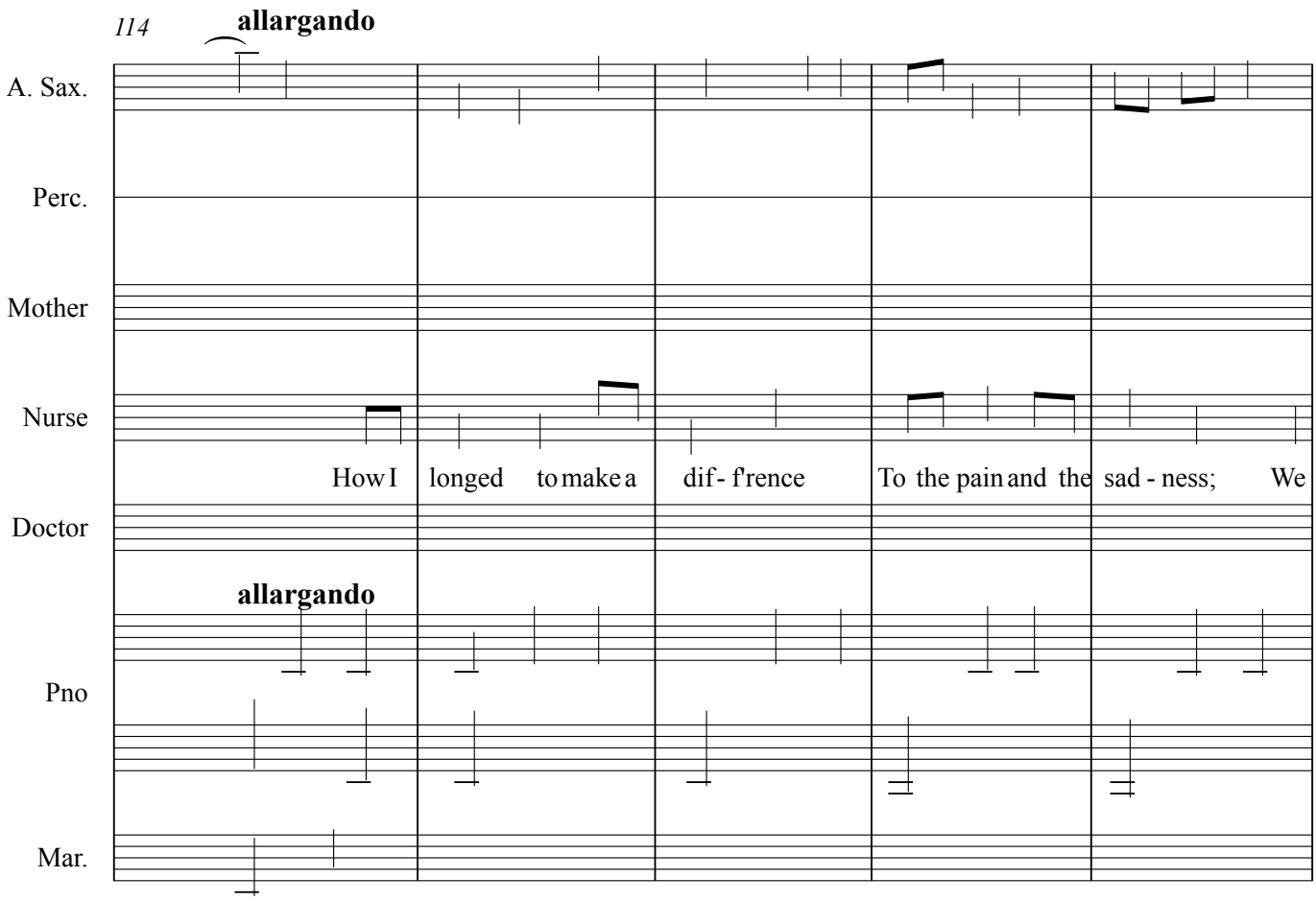
Lento (Slow Waltz)

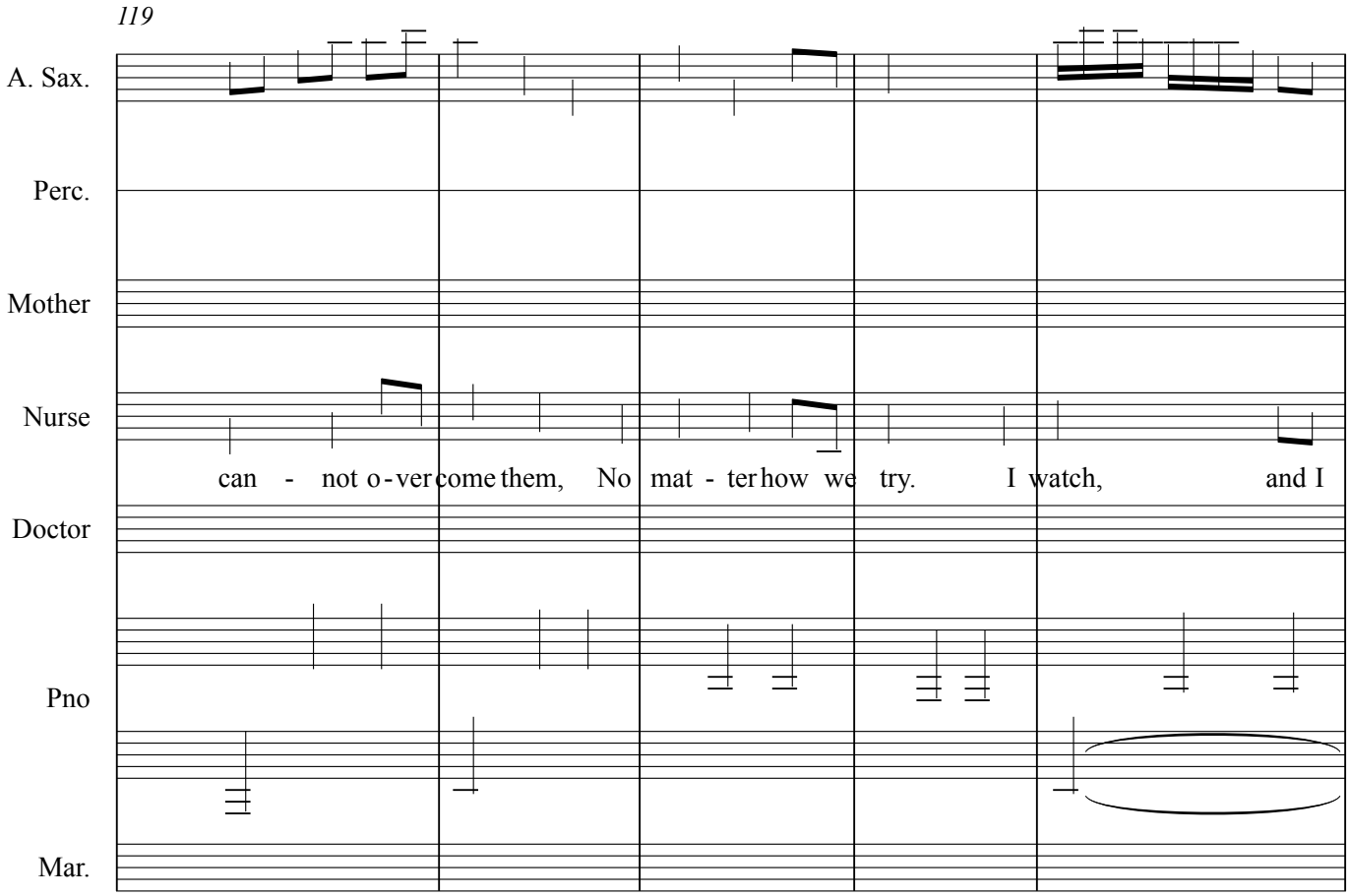
Mar.

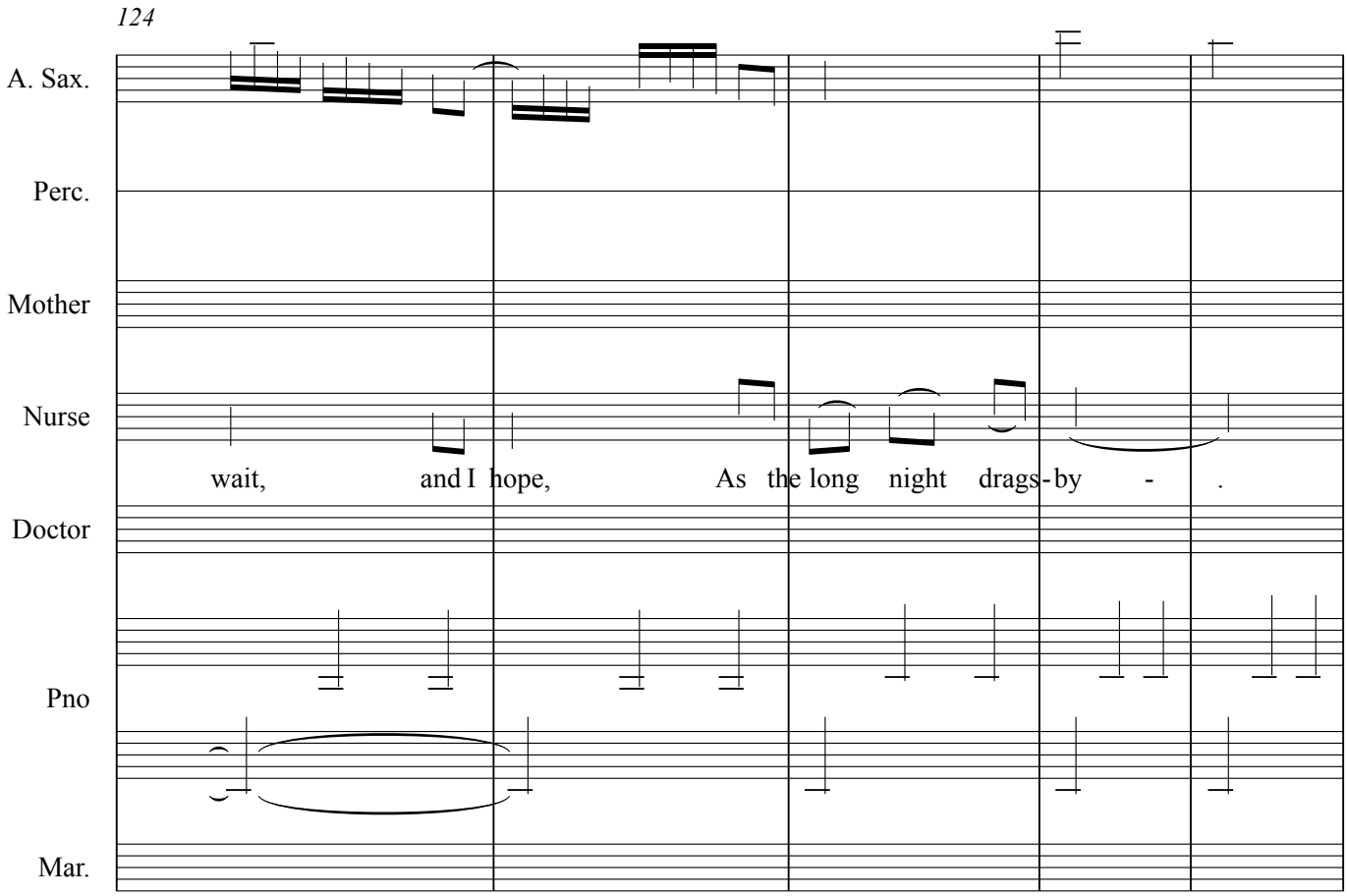
tremolo

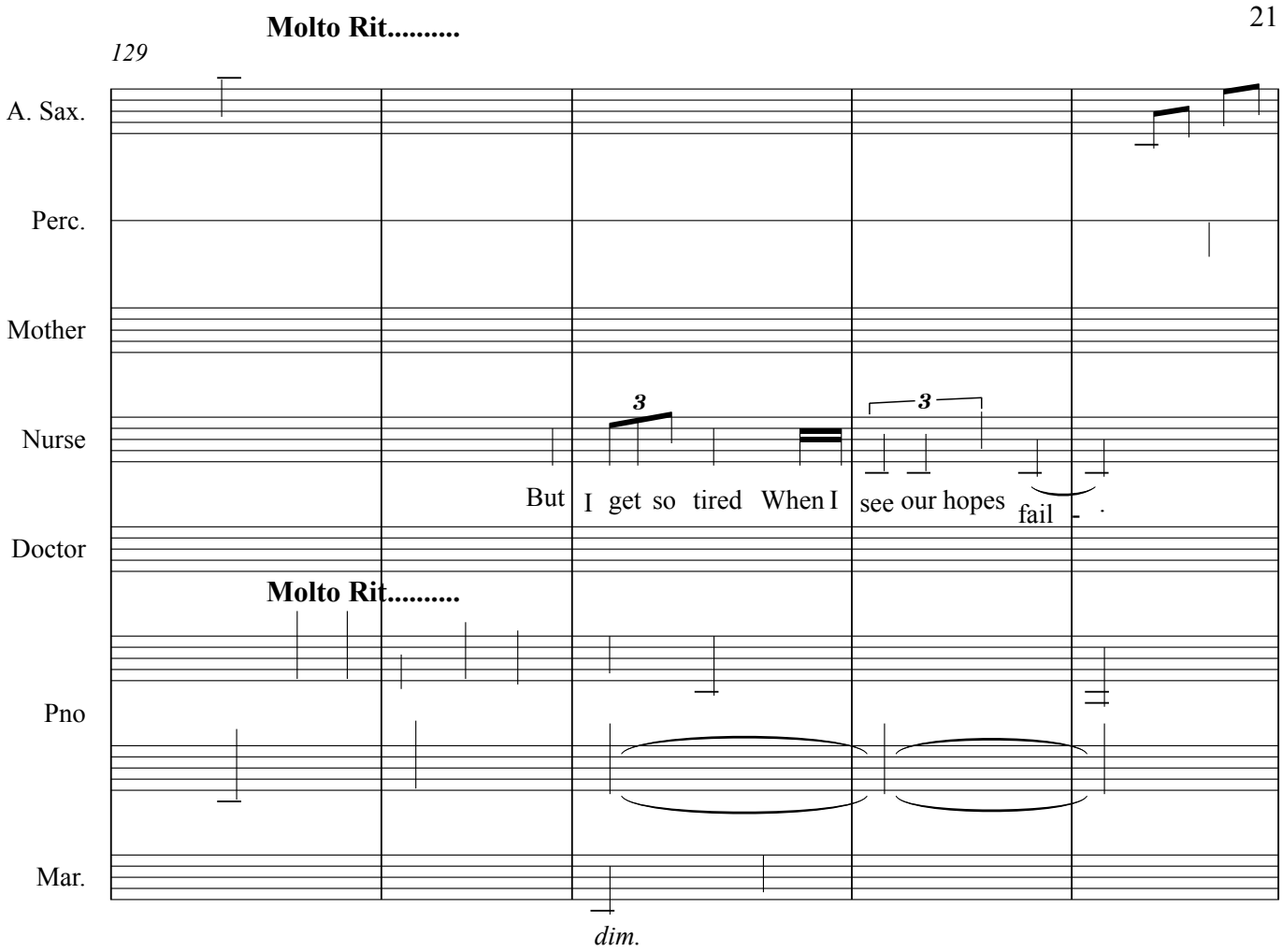

99
A. Sax.
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
came
An in - no - cent - girl was I!
Doctor
Pno
Mar.
104
A. Sax.
Perc.
Mother
molto espressivo
Nurse
A you -ng Nigh- tin - gale, My heart- was - a- flame. With a
Doctor
Pno
Mar.

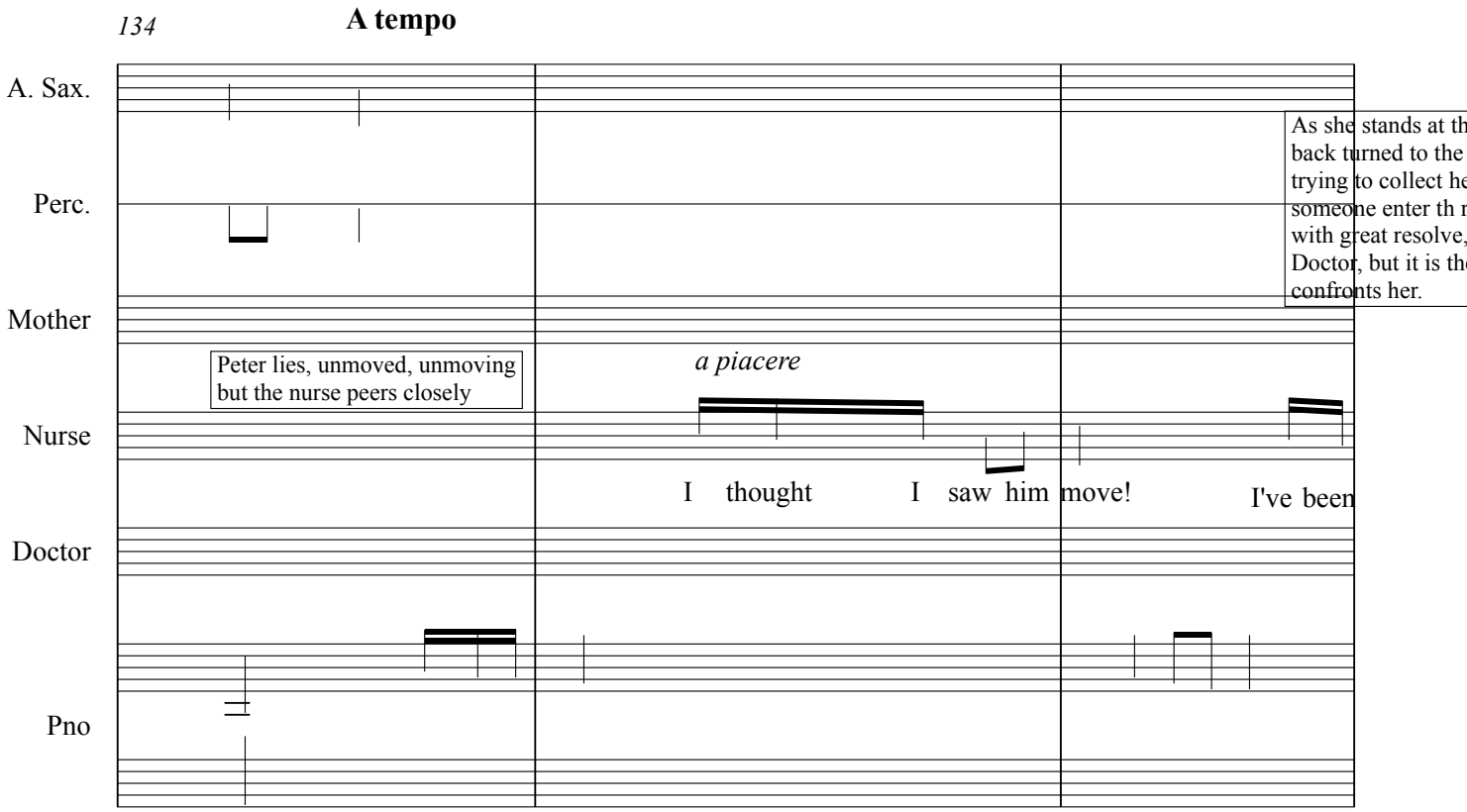

109
A. Sax.
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
Doctor
Pno
Mar.
3
3
pas - sion for heal - ing, In a world where we suf - fer and die.


114
allargando
A. Sax.
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
Doctor
Pno
Mar.
How I longed to make a dif - f'rence To the pain and the sad - ness; We
allargando


119
A. Sax.
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
can - not o-ver come them, No mat - ter how we try. I watch, and I
Doctor
Pno
Mar.


124
A. Sax.
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
wait, and I hope, As the long night drags-by - .
Doctor
Pno
Mar.


Molto Rit.....
129
A. Sax.
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
Doctor
Pno
Mar.
3
3
But I get so tired When I see our hopes fail
Molto Rit.....
dim.


134
A tempo
A. Sax.
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
Doctor
Pno
Peter lies, unmoved, unmoving but the nurse peers closely
a piacere
I thought I saw him move!
I've been
As she stands at th
back turned to the
trying to collect he
someone enter th
with great resolve,
Doctor, but it is th
confronts her.

137

Grave

A. Sax.

Perc.

Mother

Nurse

wor king too- hard!

Doctor

Pno

HARPSICHORD

140

A. Sax.

Perc.

p

Mother

Good mor ning, nurse, And how is he this mor ning? - -

Nurse

Oh! It's you!

NURSE, misunderstanding, refers to the Doctor

Doctor

secco

Pno

142

A. Sax.

Perc.

Mother

Nurse

Doctor

Pno

3

Like a cen - ti - pede - with corns, or an e - chid - na with its coat on in - side out

So! He's

144

A. Sax.

Perc.

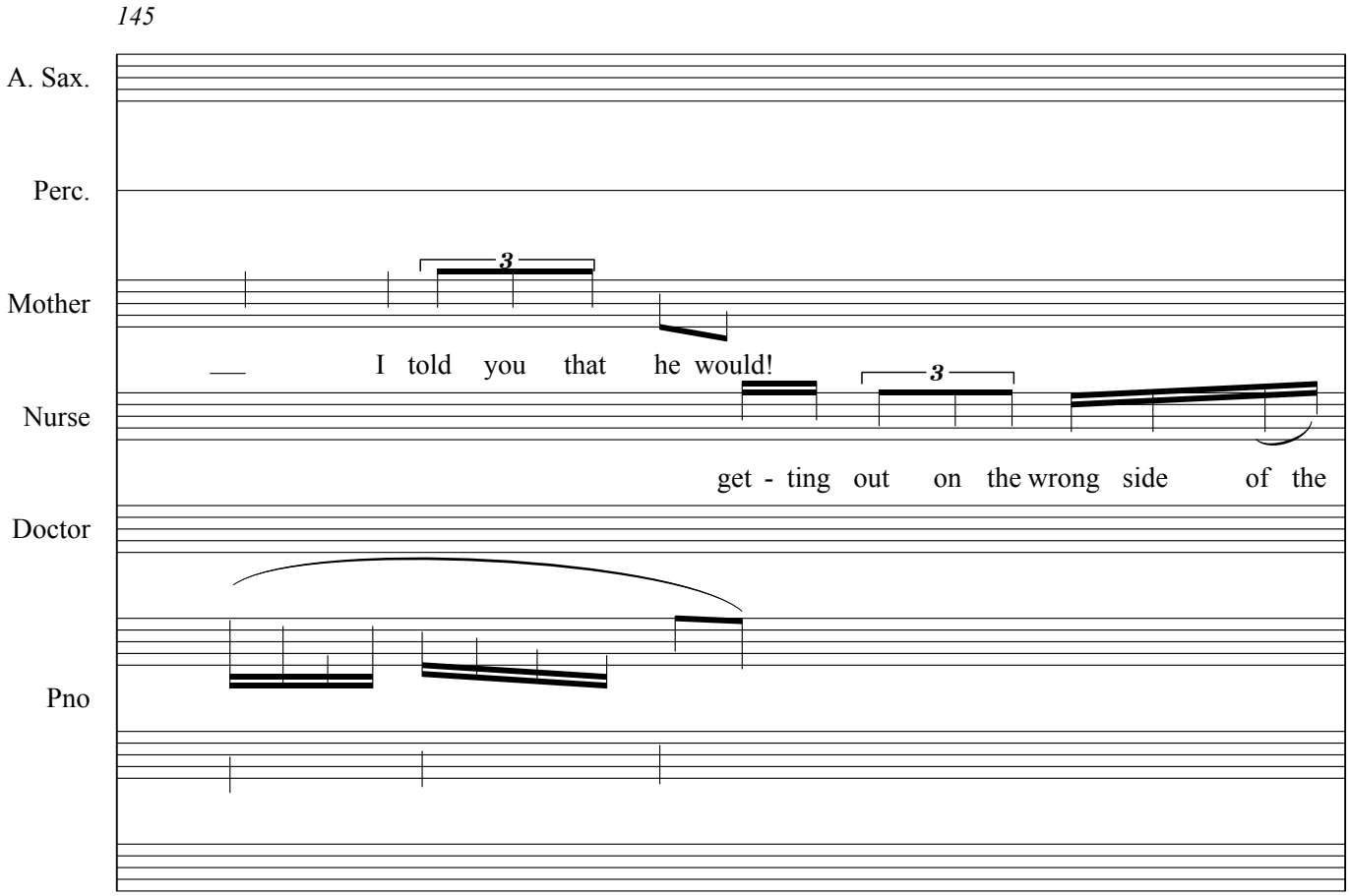
Mother

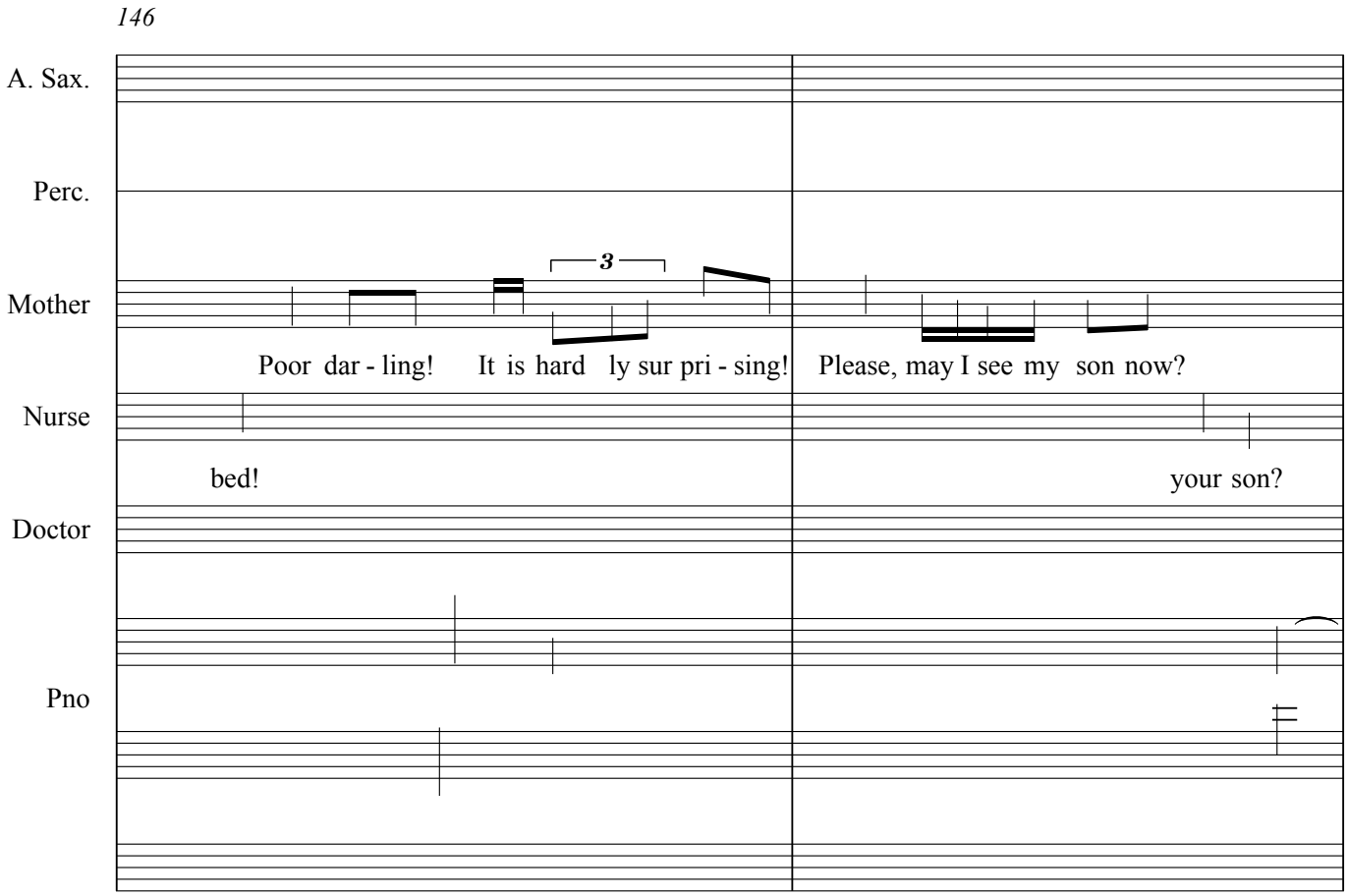
Nurse

Doctor

Pno

wo - ken up at last! Ah!


145
A. Sax.
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
Doctor
Pno
3
I told you that he would!
3
get - ting out on the wrong side of the


146
A. Sax.
Perc.
Mother
Nurse
Doctor
Pno
3
Poor dar - ling! It is hard ly sur pri - sing!
Please, may I see my son now?
bed!
your son?

148

A. Sax.

Perc.

Mother

subito f Surprised, then realising her mistake

What did she mean, I won-der?

Nurse

Of course, your son! The great man says he is as nor - mal! Hmmph!

Doctor

The nurse, pre-occupied with her own thoughts, has been barring the doorway. She steps aside to allow the Mother in, and exits hastily.

Pno

150

A. Sax.

Perc.

Morendo

Mother

If on - ly you would speak then they'd be - lieve me!

Nurse

The Mother sits on the bed, willing her son to speak; The silence in the room, except for the blips of the ECG unnerves her; she rallies herself into action, to stop herself from crying, or screaming her despair.

Doctor

Pno

152

A. Sax.

Perc.

f con brio

Mother

So, now, my dar - ling, I know that you'll

Nurse

Doctor

Pno

153

A. Sax.

Perc.

Mother

love this sur - prise that I've brought in for you! Per - haps it will

Nurse

Doctor

Pno

A. Sax.

The blips on the ECG increase in volume. They unnerve the Mother as she tiptoes around the bed, silently at first, then shestarts to unpack.

Perc.

Mother

help you to re mem ber!

Nurse

Doctor

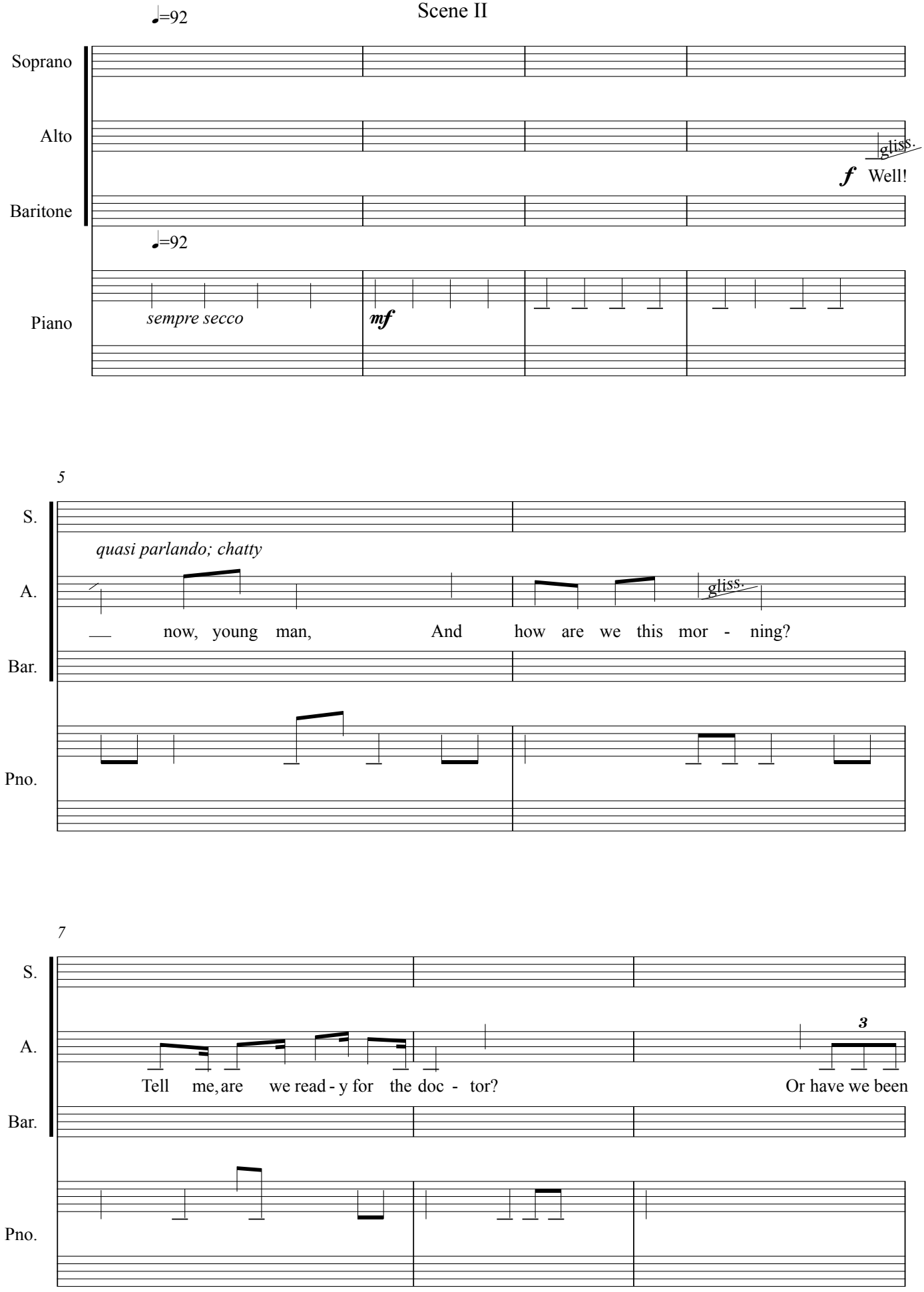
Pno

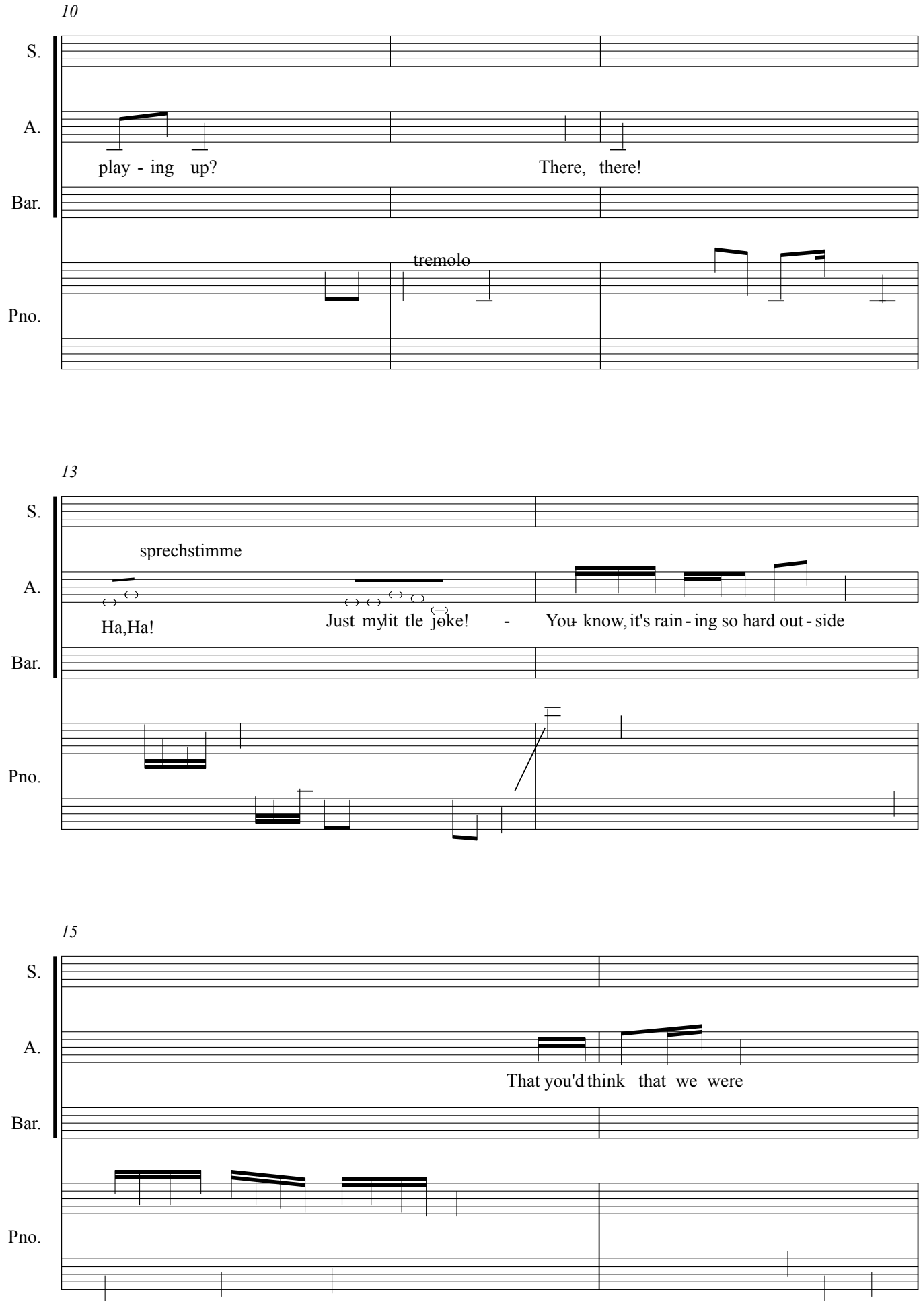
To SCENE iii:

During Sc.III, the Mother unpacks the case which she has brought into the room, and laid on the foot of the bed, closing it when she has emptied it. First she takes out a cassette player and puts in a tape which corresponds to her song; it fades as she becomes more and more engrossed in her memories during the course of the song. For a while she dances, putting a flower from the bedside vase in her hair, and using a colourful shawl as a prop. By the time the nurse enters she is standing, staring at the photograph she holds.

The Boy who wasn't There

Scene II




10
S.
A.
play - ing up?
There, there!
Bar.
tremolo
Pno.
13
S.
sprechstimme
A.
Ha,Ha!
Just mylit tle joke! -
You know, it's rain - ing so hard out - side
Bar.
Pno.
15
S.
A.
That you'd think that we were
Bar.
Pno.

17

S.

A.

At the bot - tom of the o cean! And I can't e ven swim! - -

Bar.

Pno.

19

S.

A.

I near - ly drowned on my way here this mor - ning!

Bar.

Pno.

ppp

20

rall.....ad lib **Tempo**

S.

sotto voce

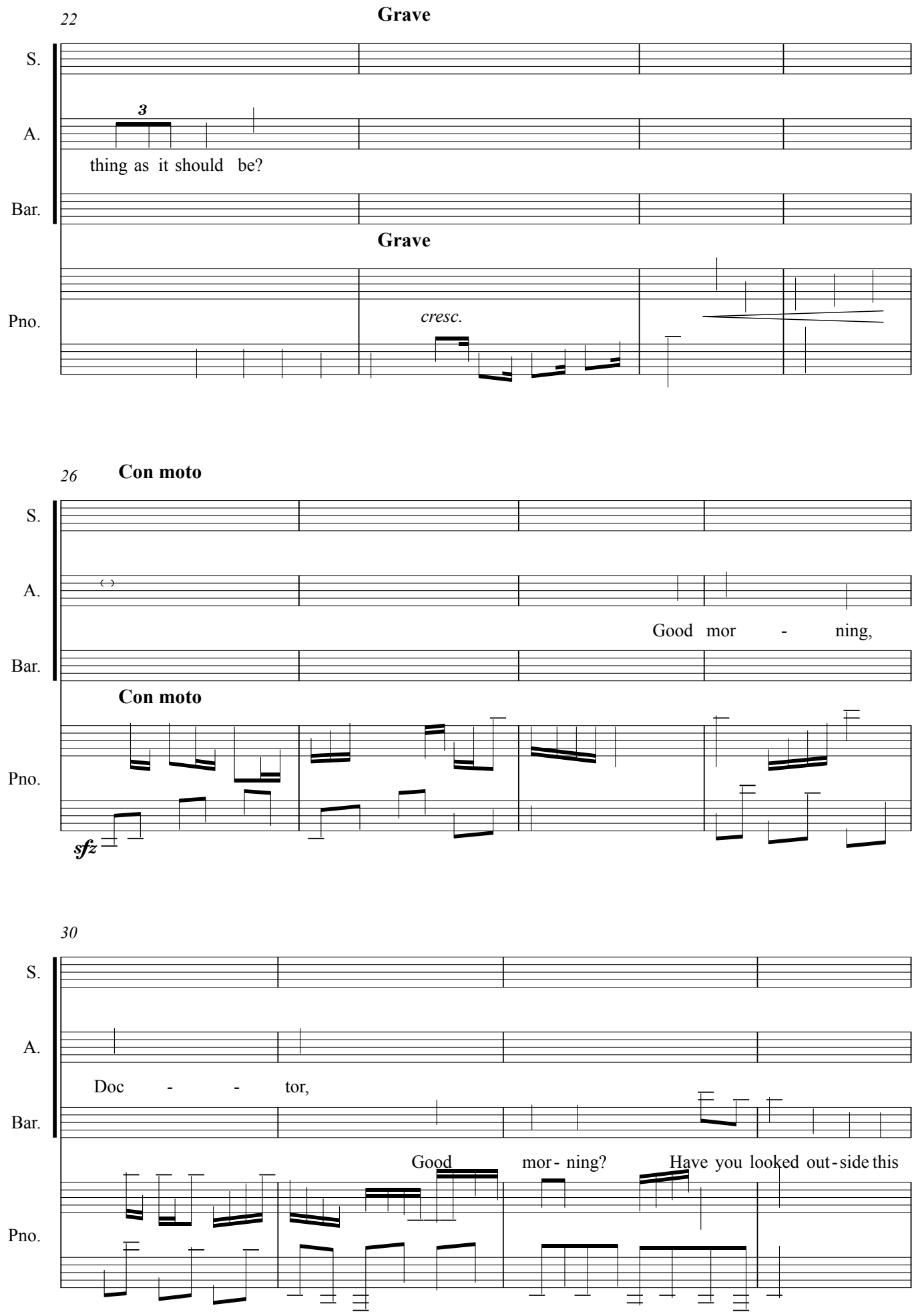
A.

But why should you care?It's all the same to you. Poor boy! Now! Is ev -'ry

Bar.

rall.....ad lib **Tempo**

Pno.


22
Grave
S.
A.
3
thing as it should be?
Bar.
Grave
Pno.
cresc.
26
Con moto
S.
A.
Good mor - ning,
Bar.
Con moto
Pno.
sfz
30
S.
A.
Doc - - tor,
Bar.
Good mor- ning? Have you looked out-side this
Pno.

34

S.

A.

Bar.

mor - ning?

And it's my golfday,too!

Pno.

37

S.

A.

Yes, Doc - tor!

Bar.

Is ev - 'ry - thing as it should be?

As nor - mal?

Pno.

40

S.

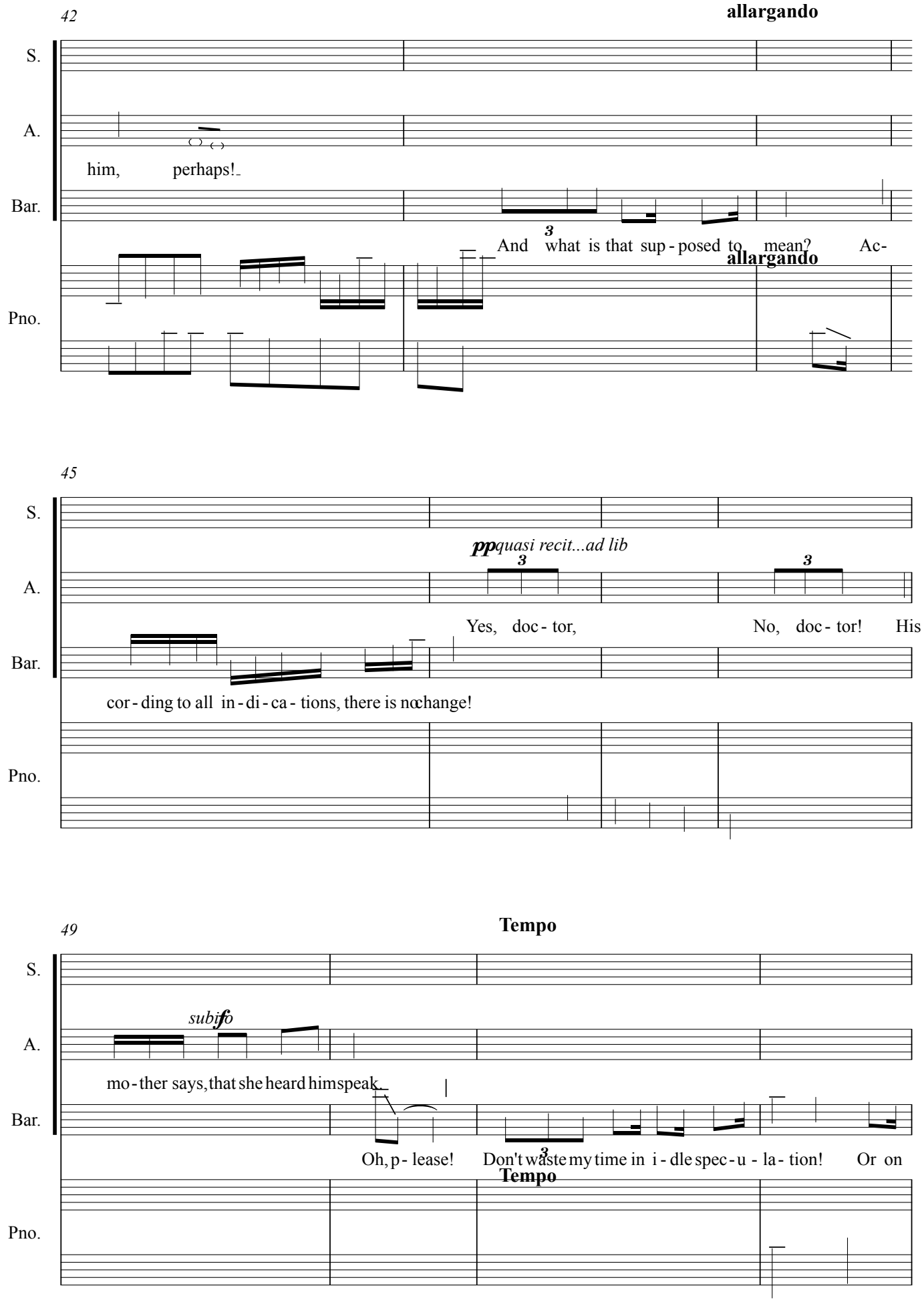
A.

Nor mal?- - - - Nor - mal for

Bar.

Hmm?

Pno.


42
allargando
S.
A.
him, perhaps!
Bar.
And what is that sup - posed to mean? Ac-
allargando
Pno.
45
S.
pp quasi recit...ad lib
A.
Yes, doc - tor, No, doc - tor! His
Bar.
cor - ding to all in - di - ca - tions, there is no change!
Pno.
49
Tempo
S.
subito f
A.
mo - ther says, that she heard him speak.
Bar.
Oh, p - lease! Don't waste my time in i - dle spec - u - la - tion! Or on
Tempo
Pno.

53

S.

A.

Bar.

old wives' tales, or trite re - li - gious tracts. Ig - nore your pa - tients' hys - te - ri - a, to rea - son

Pno.

56

S.

A.

Bar.

they are stran - gers! To -

Pno.

58

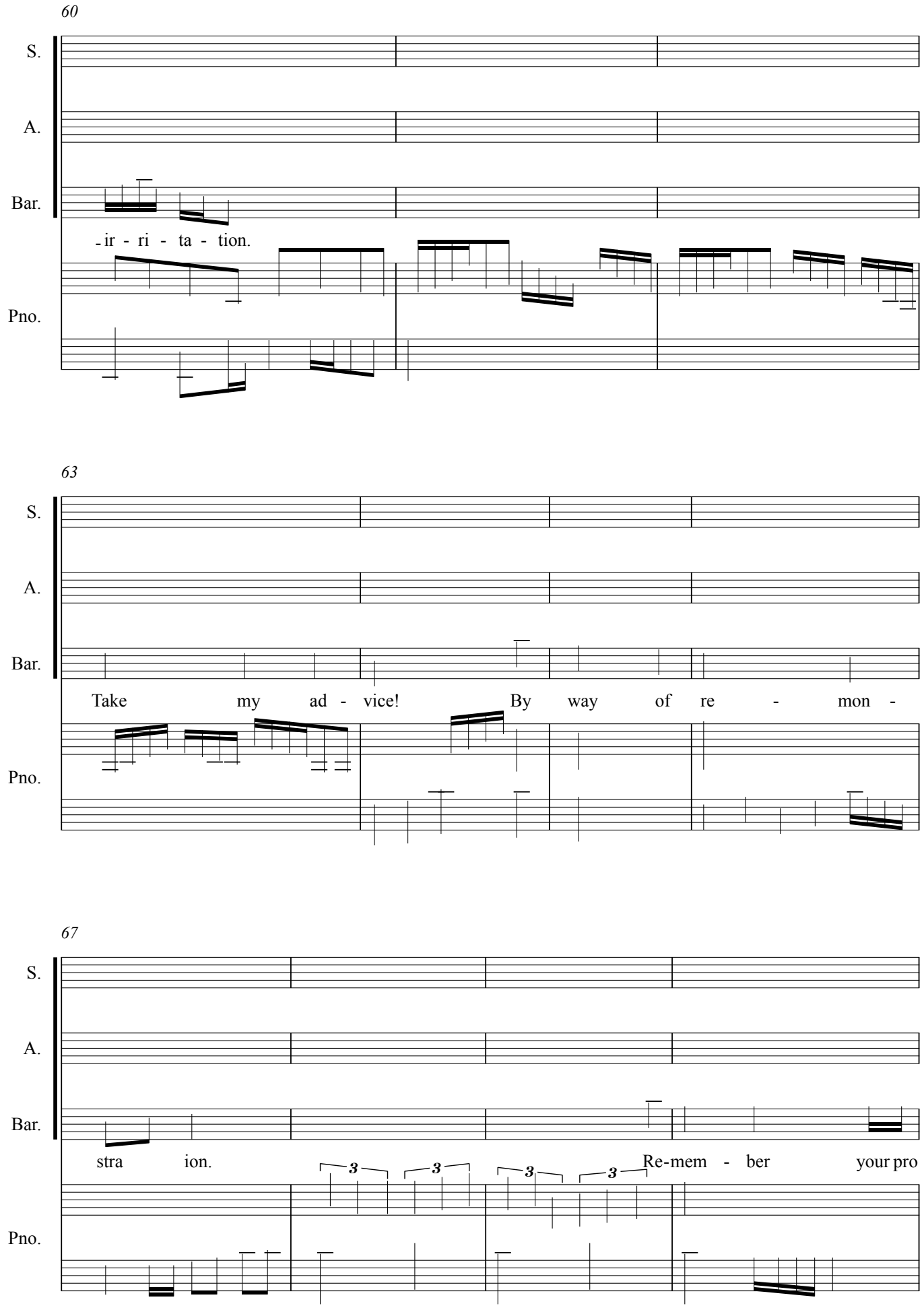
S.

A.

Bar.

save - your - self, to save your - self, and me, save me from end - less -

Pno.


60
S.
A.
Bar.
-ir - ri - ta - tion.
Pno.
63
S.
A.
Bar.
Take my ad - vice! By way of re - mon -
Pno.
67
S.
A.
Bar.
stra ion. Re-mem - ber your pro
Pno.

71

S.

A.

Bar.

fes - sion. Mum-bo Jum - bo has its dan - gers.

Pno.

75

S.

A.

Bar.

Al - tho'- we_must_ be_ve- ry_ care -

Pno.

mf

78

S.

A.

Yes,

Bar.

ful, Don't waste my time. Now, just give me all the facts Nurse!

Pno.

81

S.

A.

Doc - tor! Yes, Doc - tor!

Bar.

And let me know at once if there are an - y chan - ges. Some - times,

Pno.

84

S.

a piacere (mimicking herself)

A.

Yes, Doc - tor,

Bar.

some - times, Some times I won - der who the pa - tients are in here!

Pno.

ARIETTE

87

Lento (Slow Waltz)

S.

A.

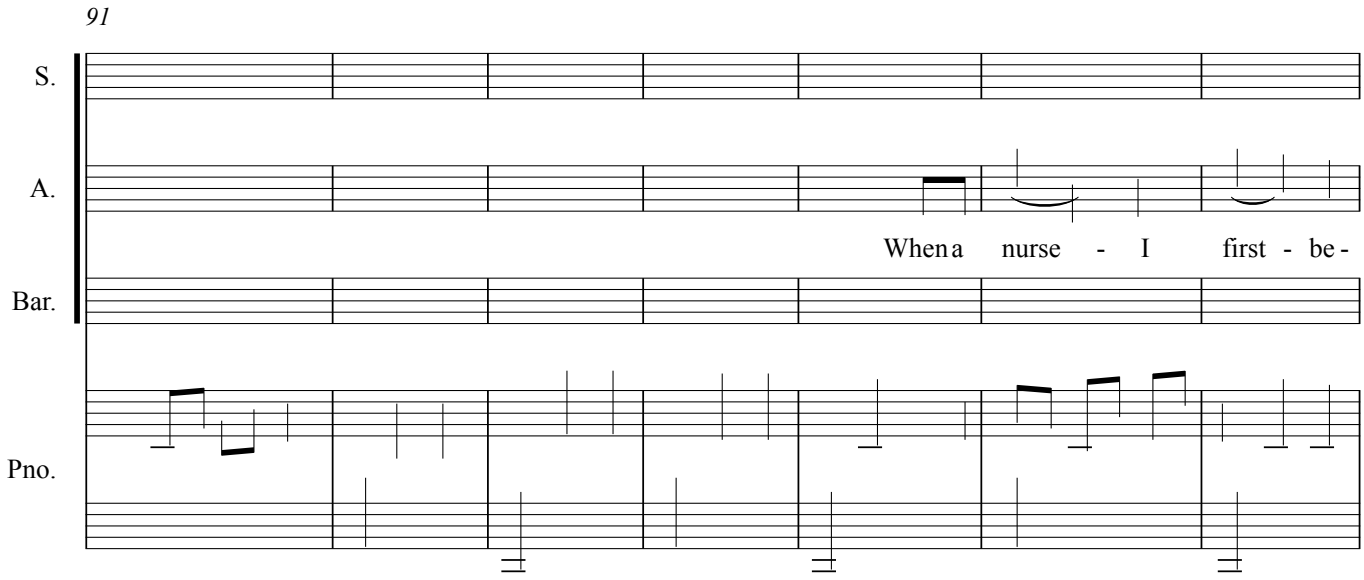
subito ***f***

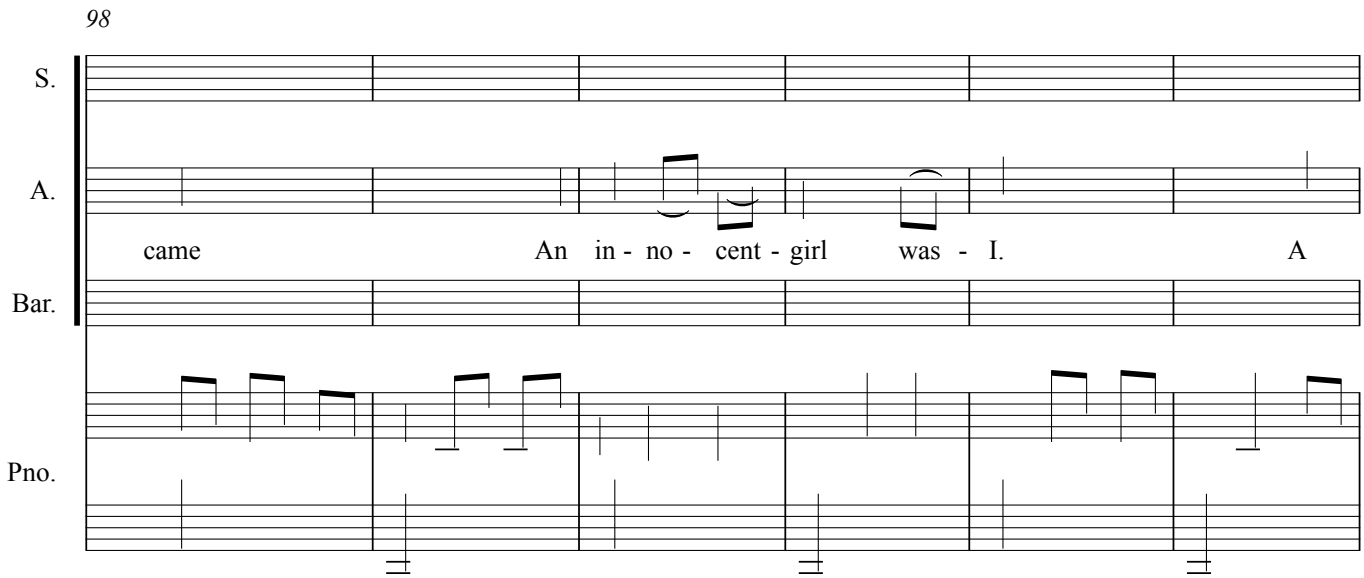
No, Doc - tor! Tell me, Why should I bo - ther?

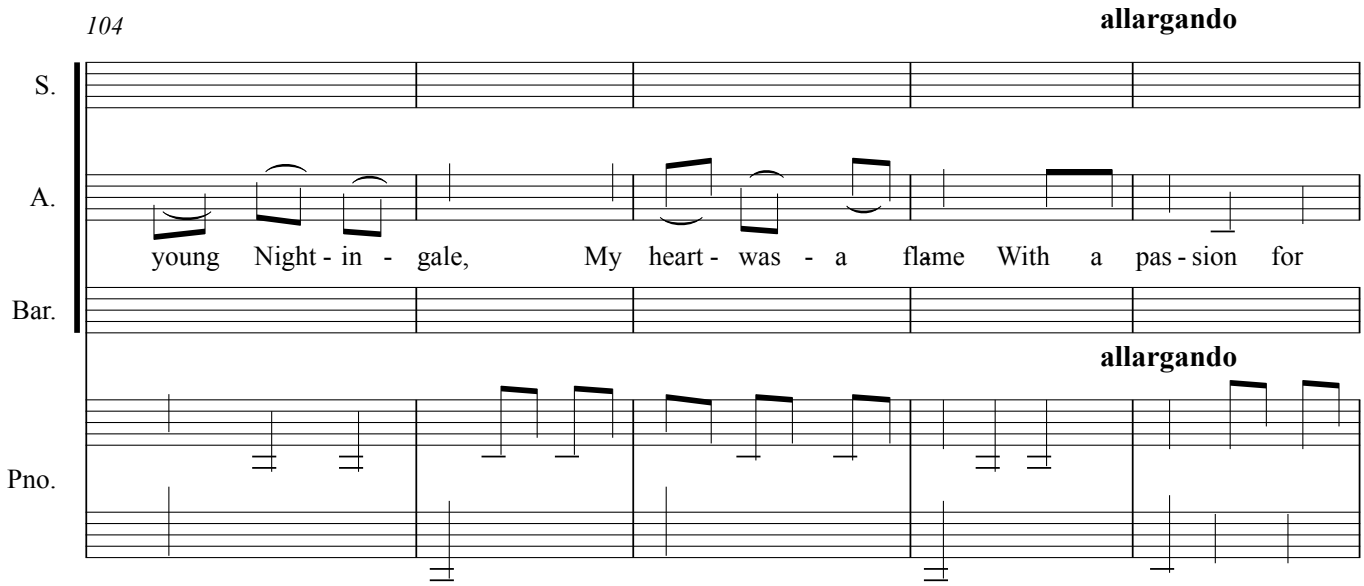
Bar.

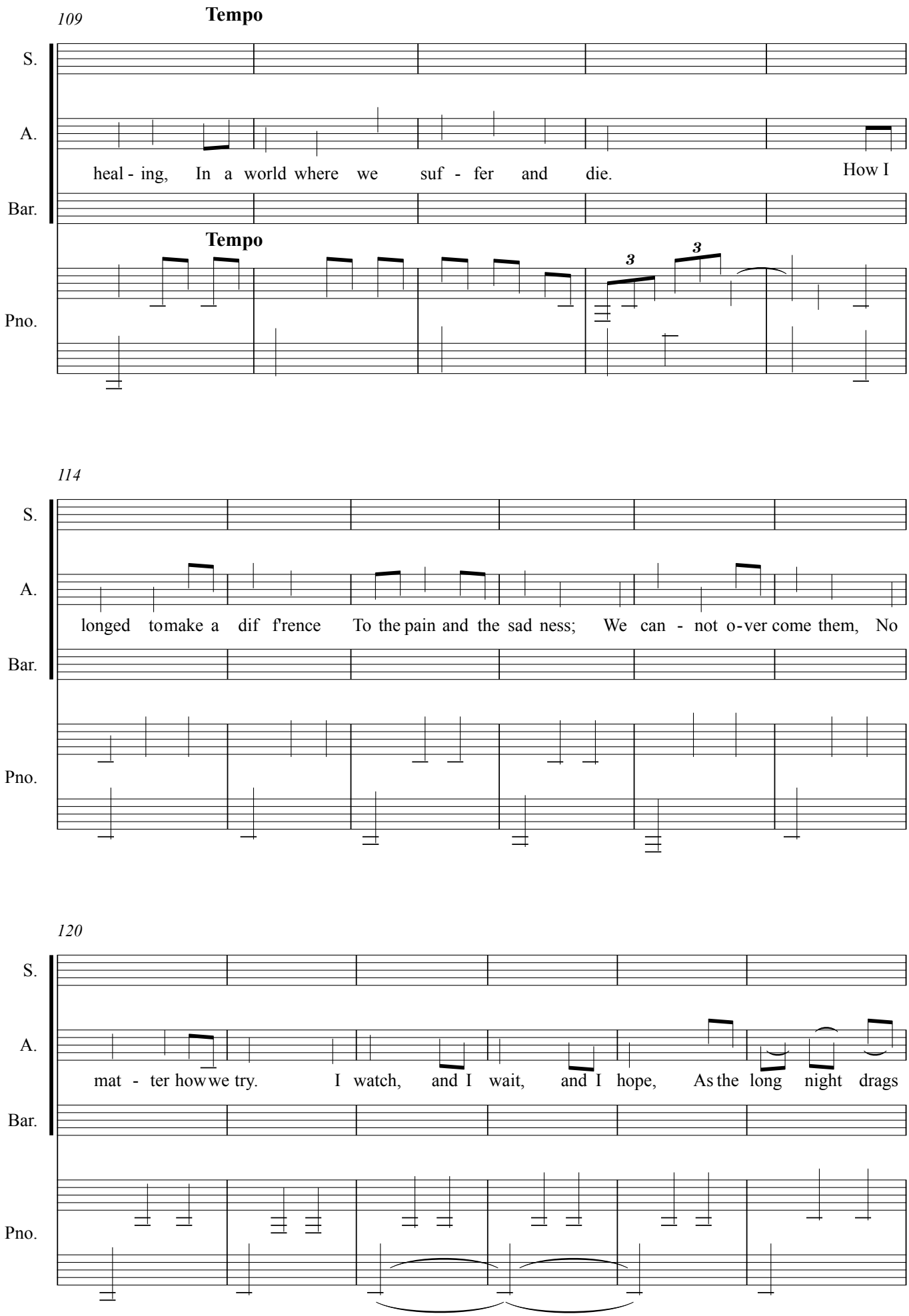
Lento (Slow Waltz)

Pno.


91
S.
A.
Bar.
Pno.
When a nurse - I first - be -


98
S.
A.
Bar.
Pno.
came An in - no - cent - girl was - I. A


104
allargando
S.
A.
Bar.
Pno.
young Night - in - gale, My heart - was - a flame With a pas - sion for
allargando


109
Tempo
S.
A.
heal - ing, In a world where we suf - fer and die. How I
Bar.
Tempo
Pno.
114
S.
A.
longed tomake a dif f'rence To the pain and the sad ness; We can - not o-ver come them, No
Bar.
Pno.
120
S.
A.
mat - ter how we try. I watch, and I wait, and I hope, As the long night drags
Bar.
Pno.

126

rit.

S.

espress.

A.

by - . But I get so tired When I see our hopes fail -

Bar.

rit.

Pno.

132

Vivo Tempo

S.

pp a piacere

A.

I thought I saw him move! I've been working too hard!

Bar.

Vivo Tempo

Pno.

137

Grave

S.

sf (surprised) *p* Good mor - ning, Nurse, And

A.

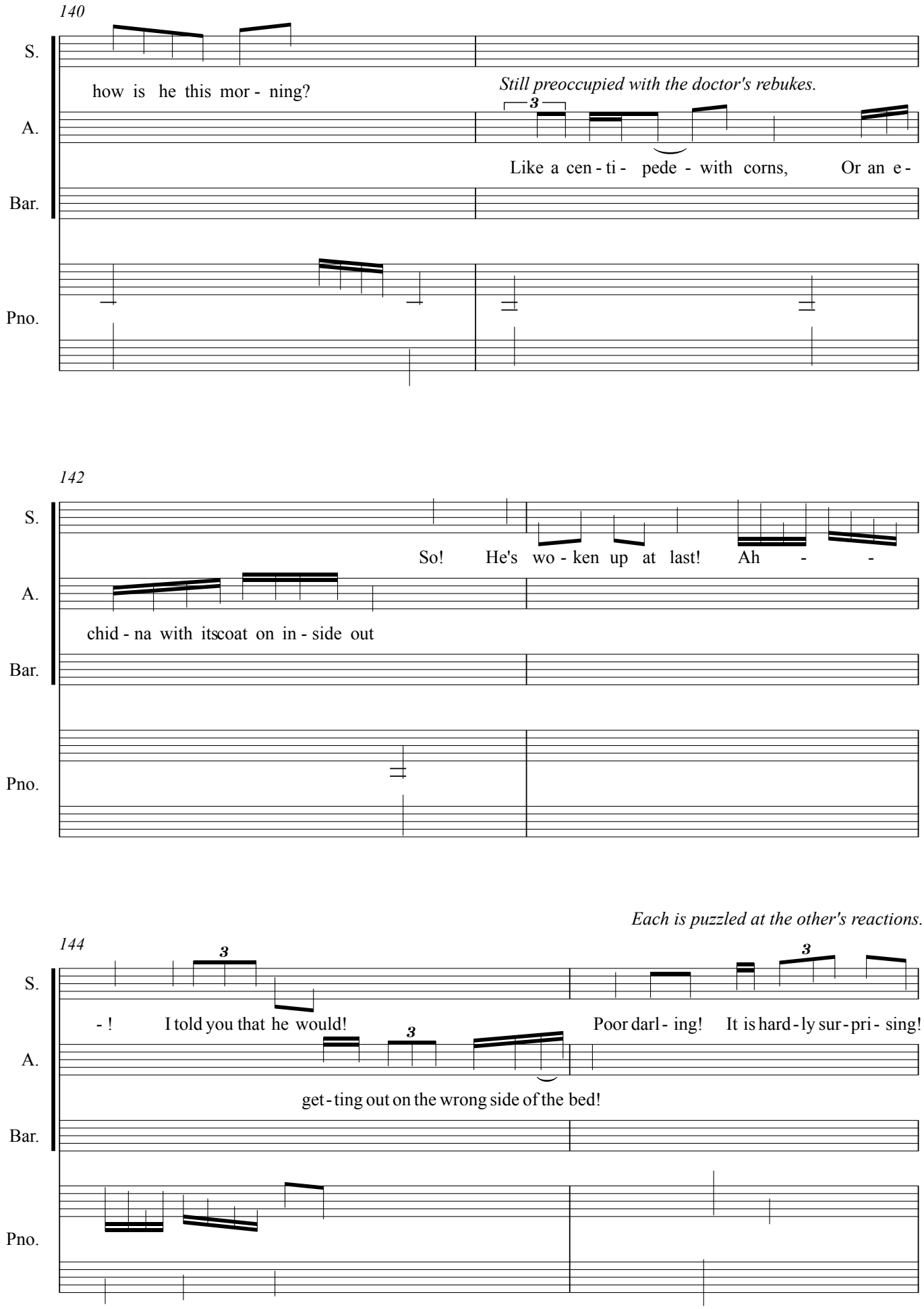
Oh! It's you!

Bar.

Grave

colla voce

Pno.


140
S.
how is he this mor - ning?
Still preoccupied with the doctor's rebukes.
A.
Like a cen - ti - pede - with corns, Or an e -
Bar.
Pno.
142
S.
So! He's wo - ken up at last! Ah - -
A.
chid - na with its coat on in - side out
Bar.
Pno.
Each is puzzled at the other's reactions.
144
S.
- ! I told you that he would!
Poor darl - ing! It is hard - ly sur - pri - sing!
A.
get - ting out on the wrong side of the bed!
Bar.
Pno.

146

S.

Please, may I see my son now?

A.

Your son? *subito* ***f*** Of course! Your son! The great man says, he is as nor - mal...hmmph!

Bar.

Pno.

sotto voce, left puzzled at Nurse's sudden exit.

148

Disappointed, but rallying herself to continue the struggle.

S.

(What did she mean, I won - der? if on - ly you would speak, then they'd be -

A.

Bar.

Pno.

150

Con Brio

S.

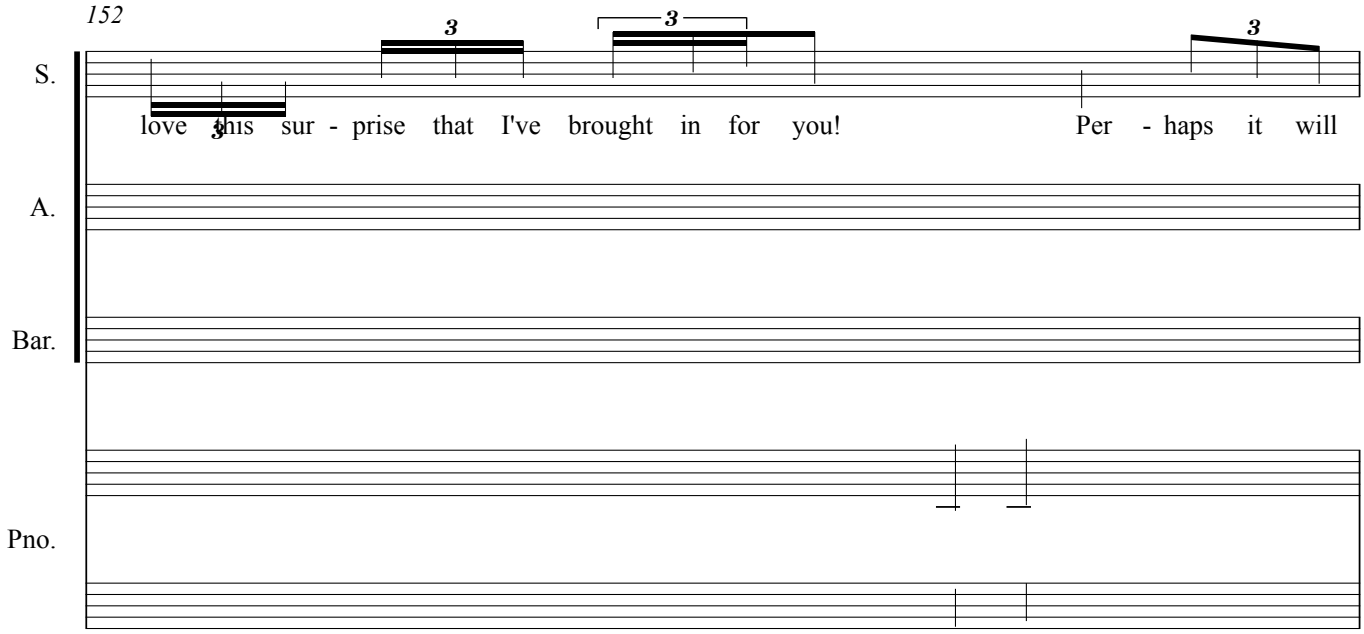
lieve me. (sighing) So now, my dar - ling, I know that you'll

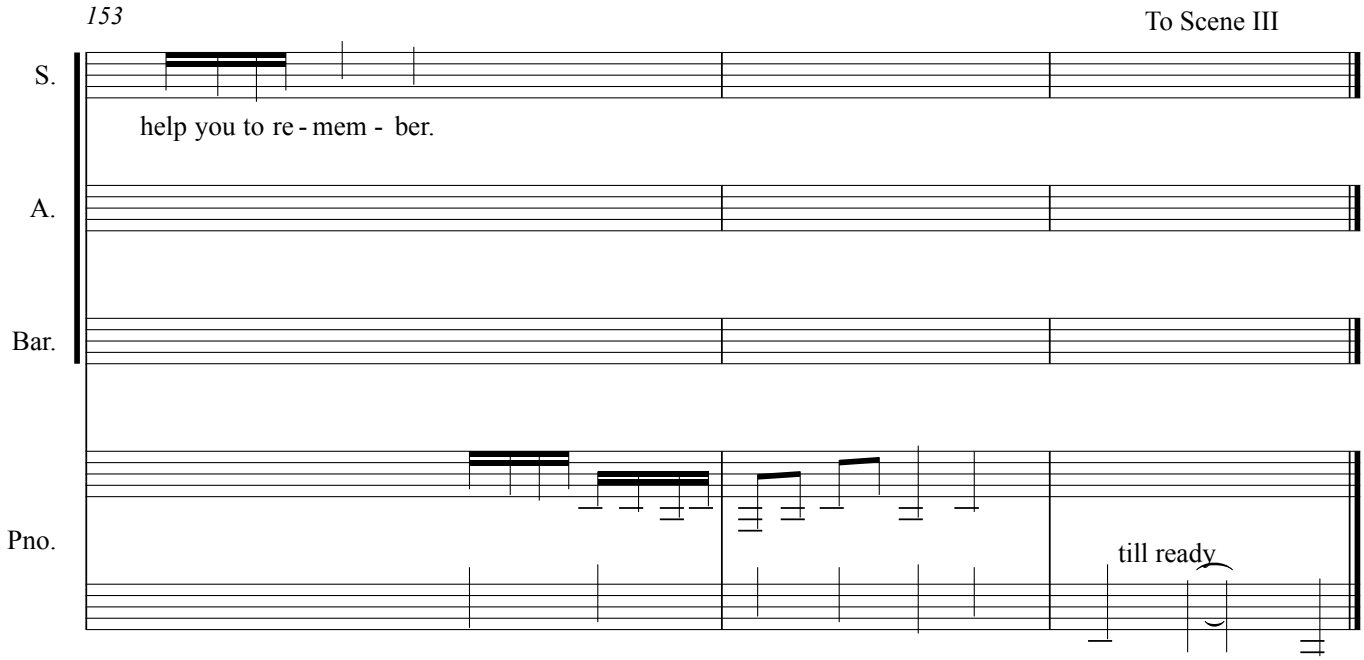
A.

Bar.

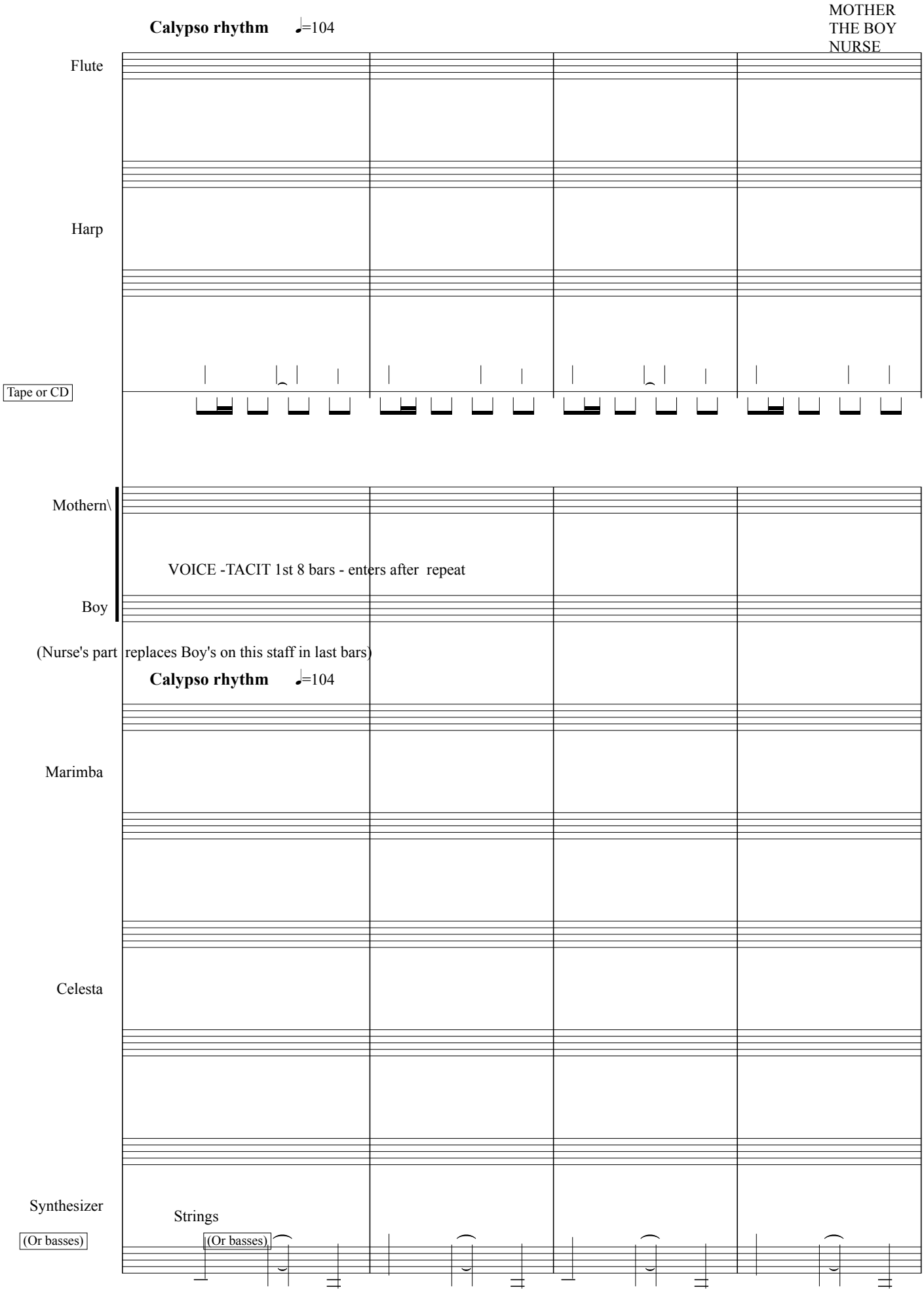
Con Brio

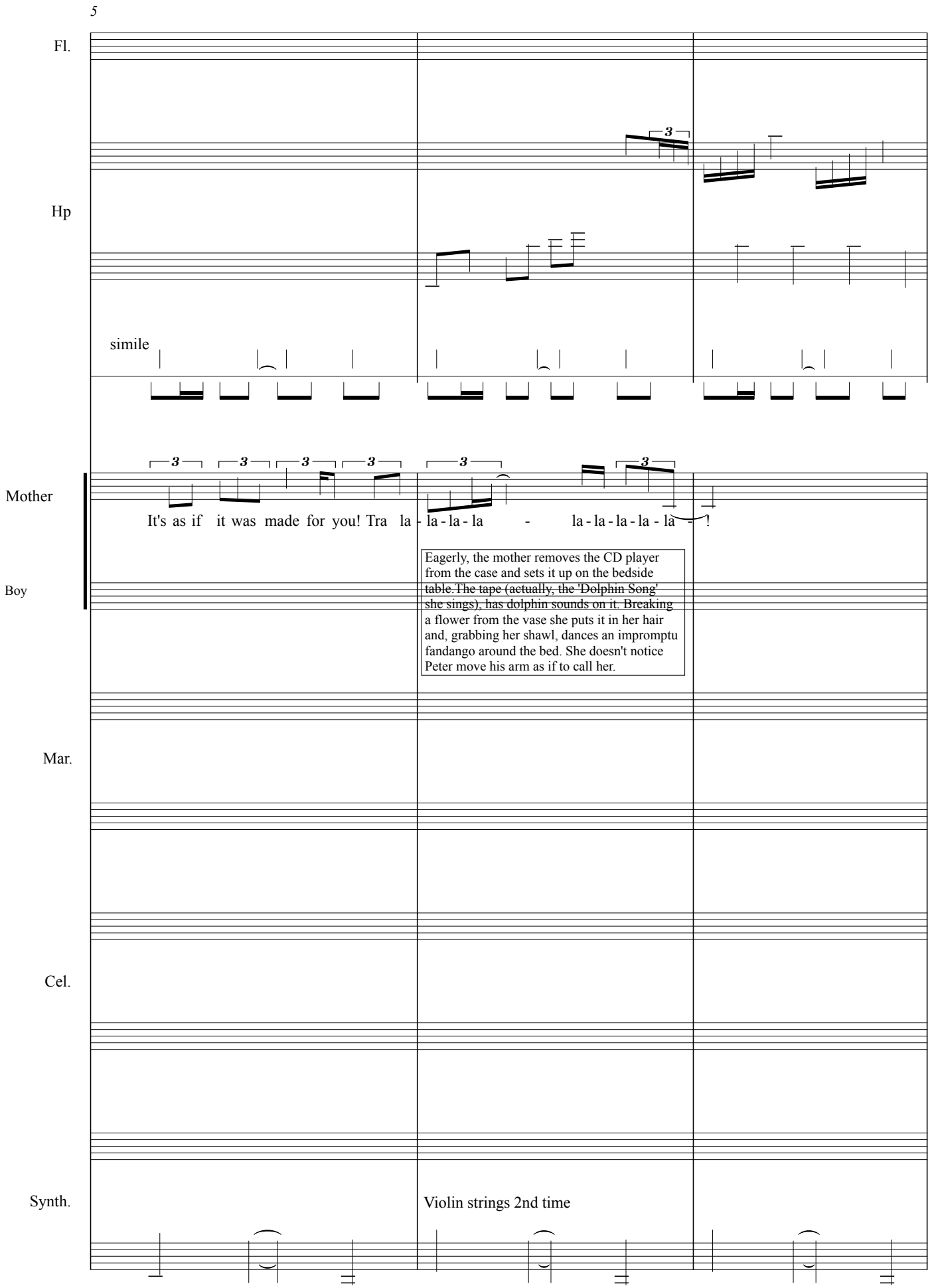
Pno.

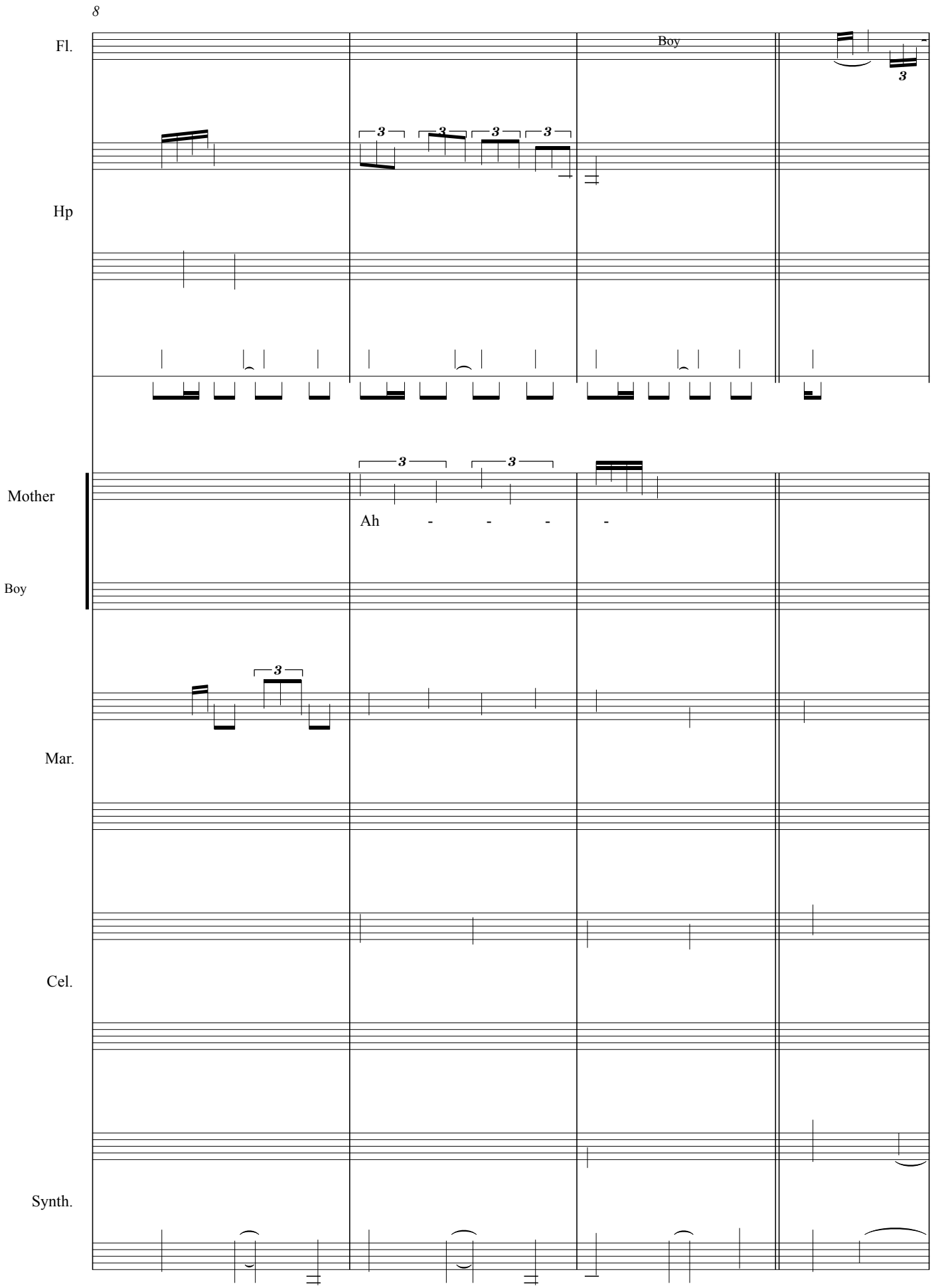

152
S.
A.
Bar.
Pno.
love this sur - prise that I've brought in for you!
Per - haps it will

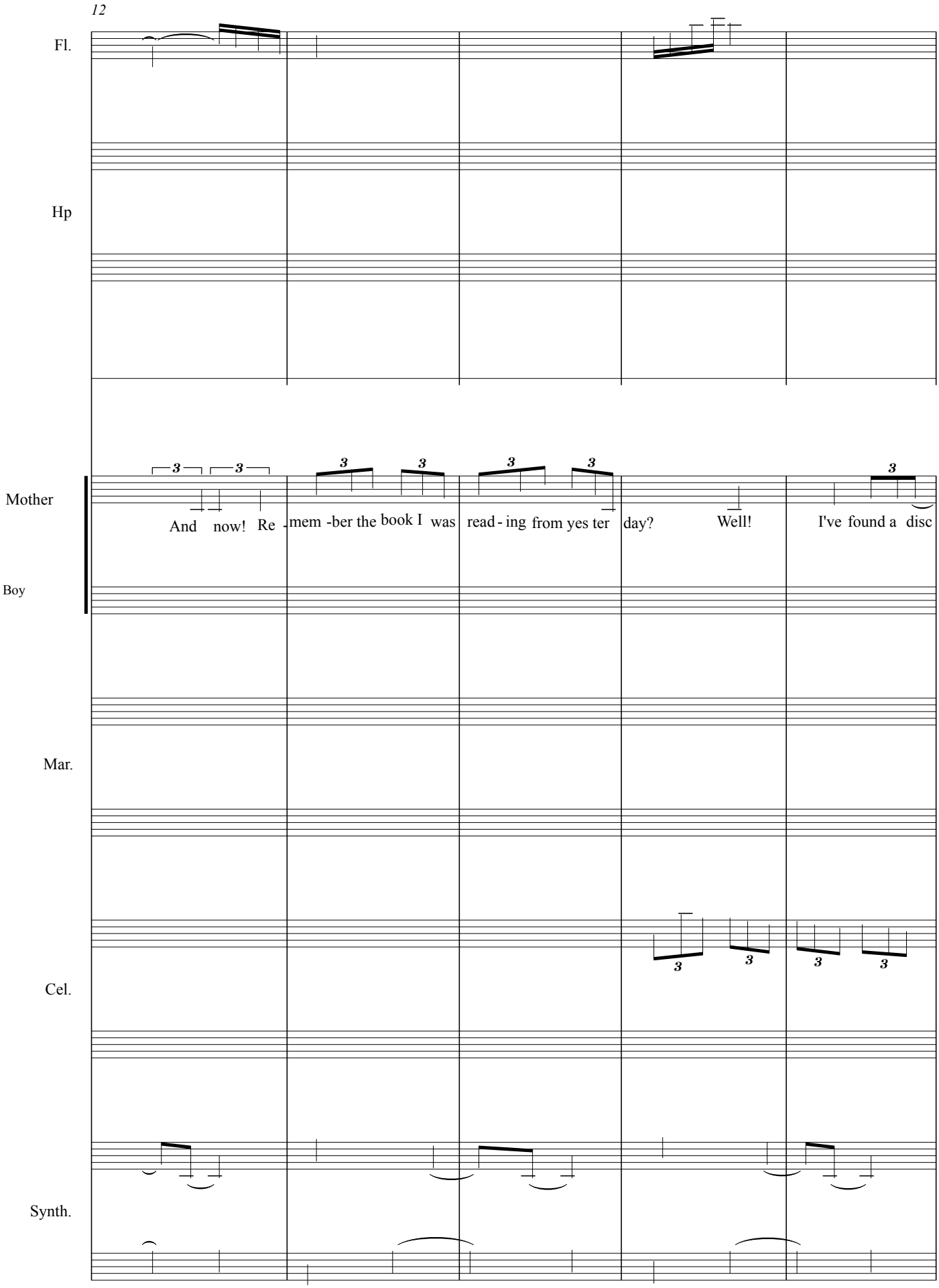

153
To Scene III
S.
A.
Bar.
Pno.
help you to re - mem - ber.
till ready

The Boy: Scene III




5
Fl.
Hp
simile
Mother
It's as if it was made for you! Tra la - la - la - la - la - la - la - la - la -!
Boy
Eagerly, the mother removes the CD player from the case and sets it up on the bedside table.The tape (actually, the 'Dolphin Song' she sings), has dolphin sounds on it. Breaking a flower from the vase she puts it in her hair and, grabbing her shawl, dances an impromptu fandango around the bed. She doesn't notice Peter move his arm as if to call her.
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.
Violin strings 2nd time


8
Fl.
Boy
Hp
Mother
Ah - - - -
Boy
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.


12
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Boy
And now! Re - mem -ber the book I was read - ing from yes ter day? Well! I've found a disc
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

17

Fl.

Hp

Dolphin clicks start with 'CD', returning
at appropriate moments throughout

Mother

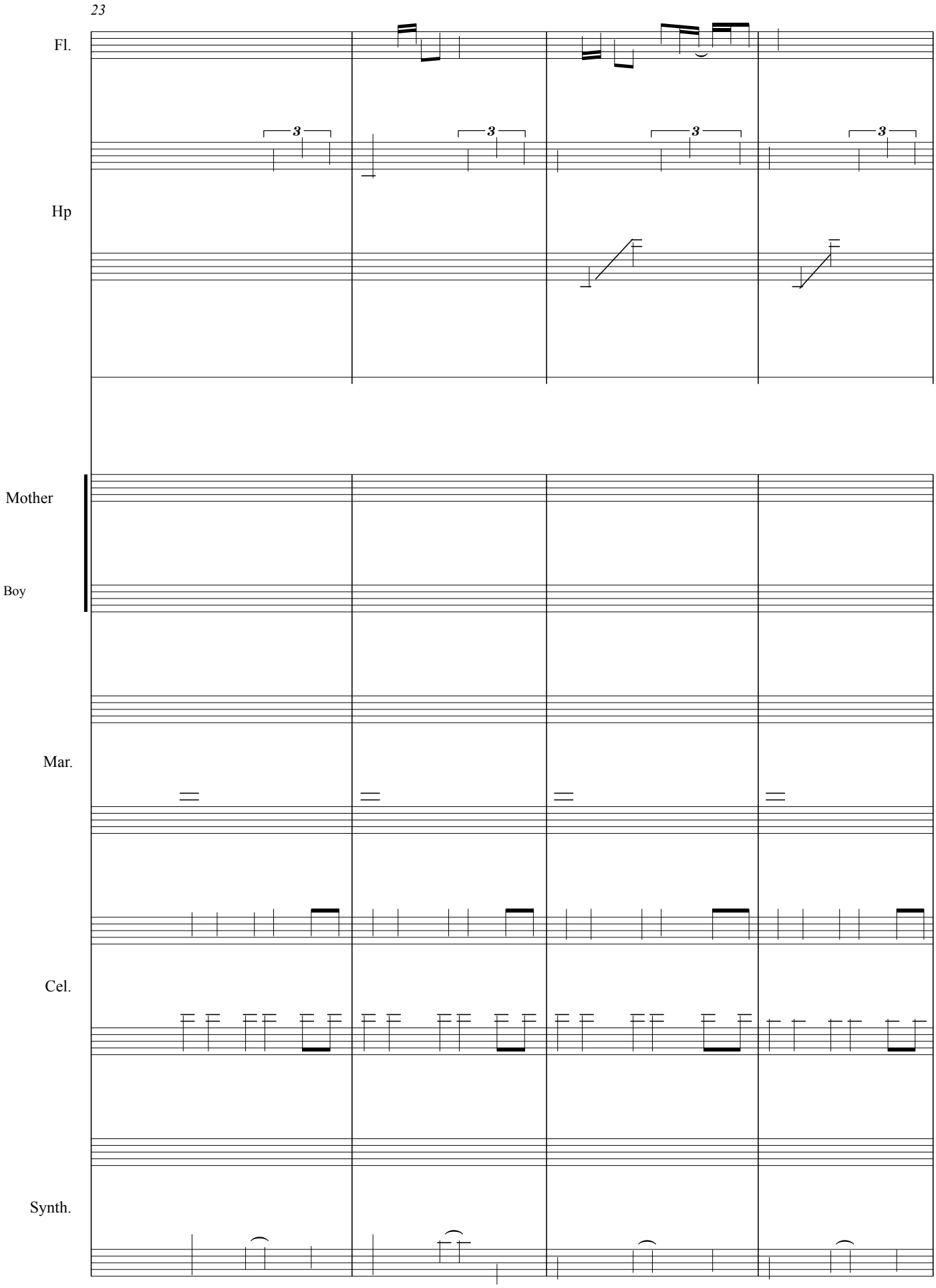
Boy

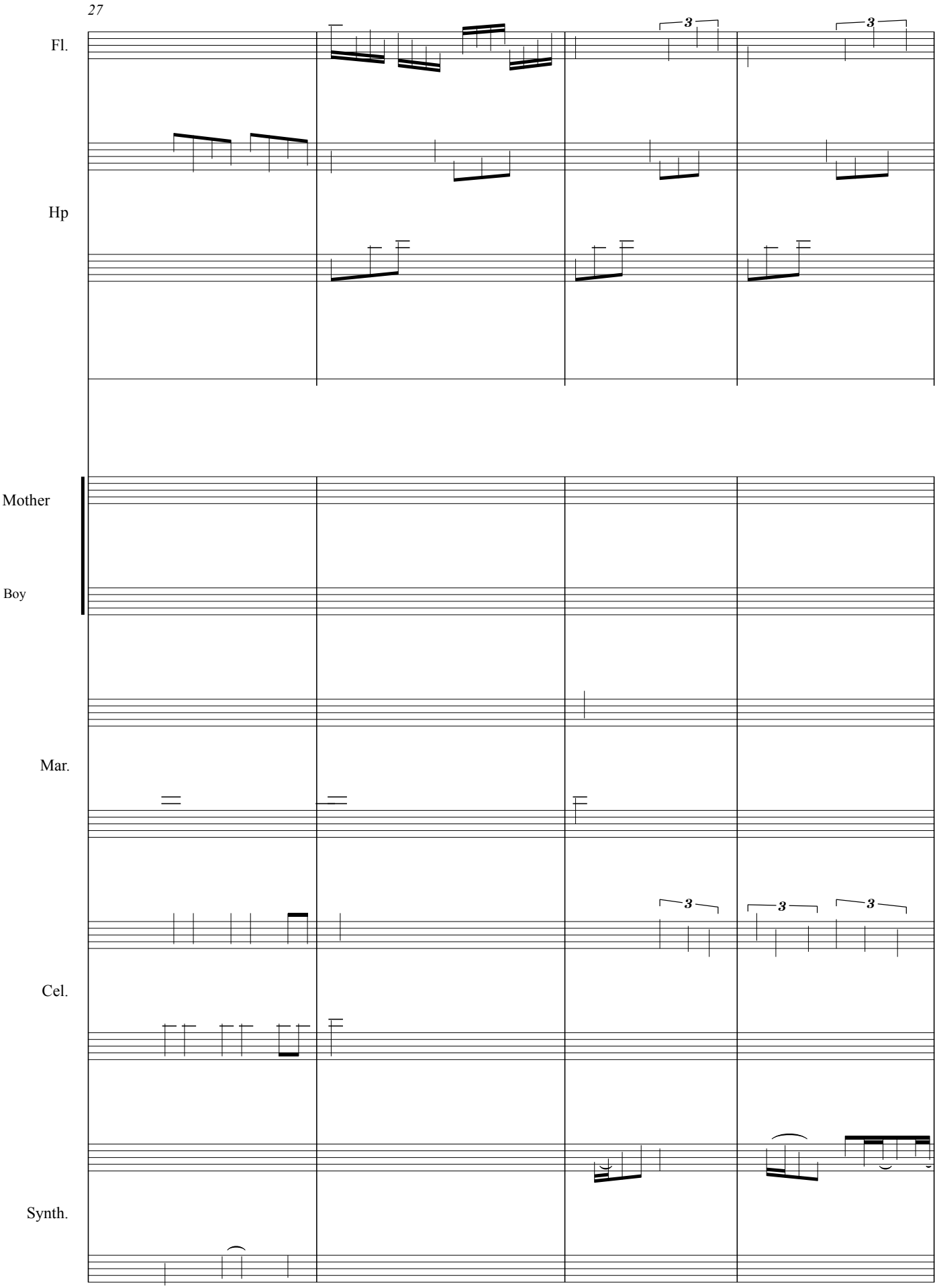
— that goes with - it Where dol— phins laugh as they play! - - o lé!

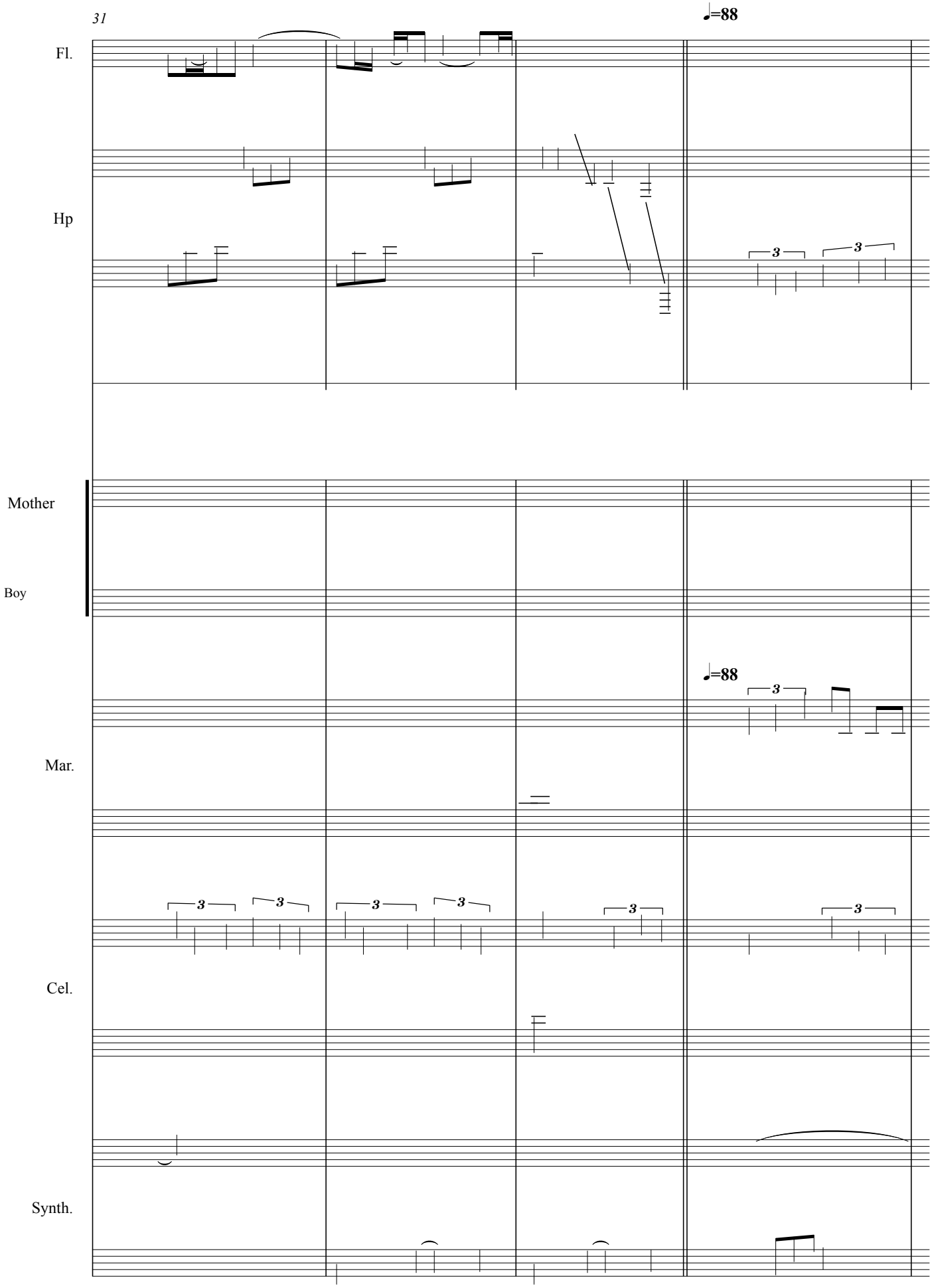
Mar.

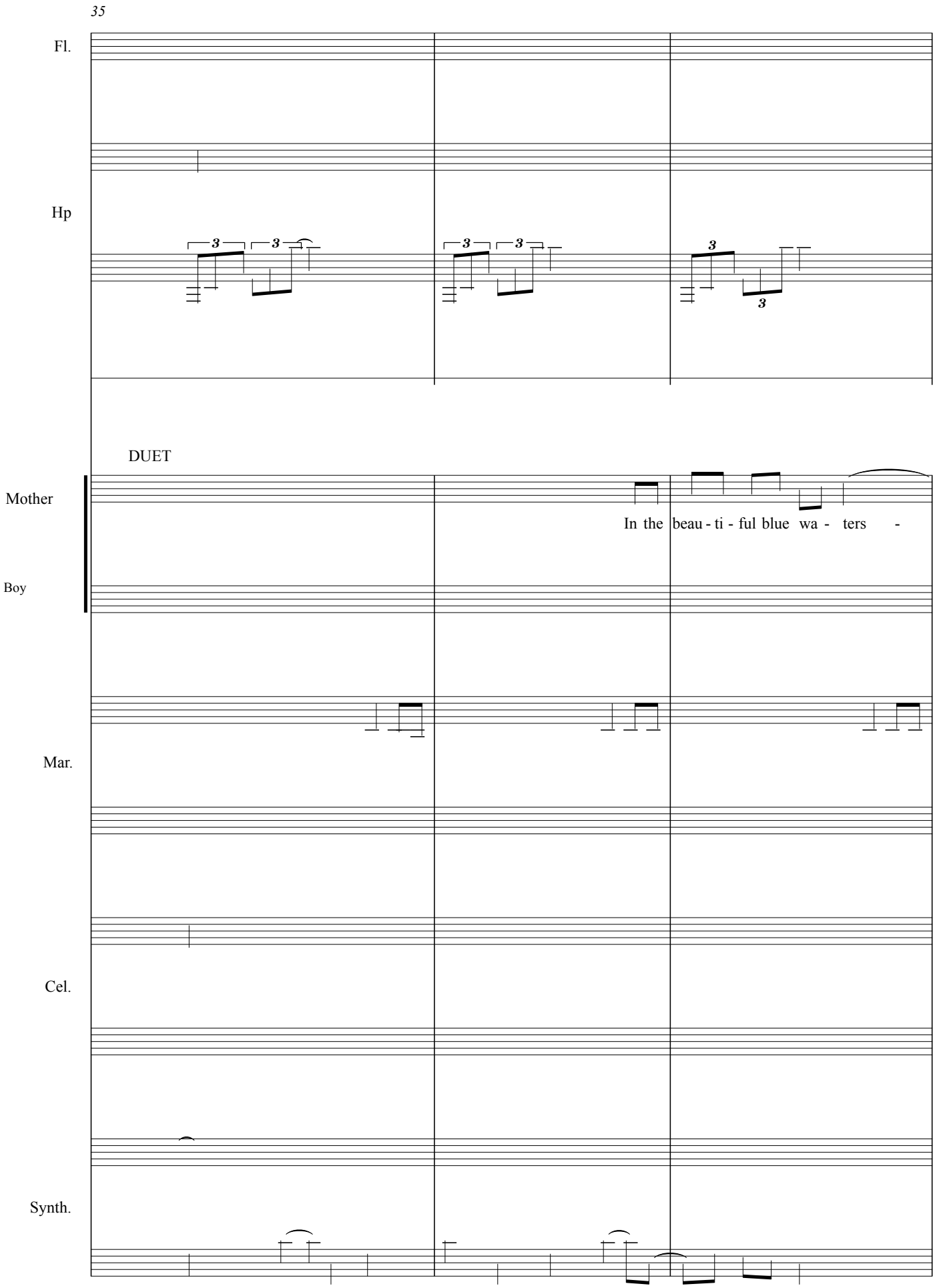
Cel.

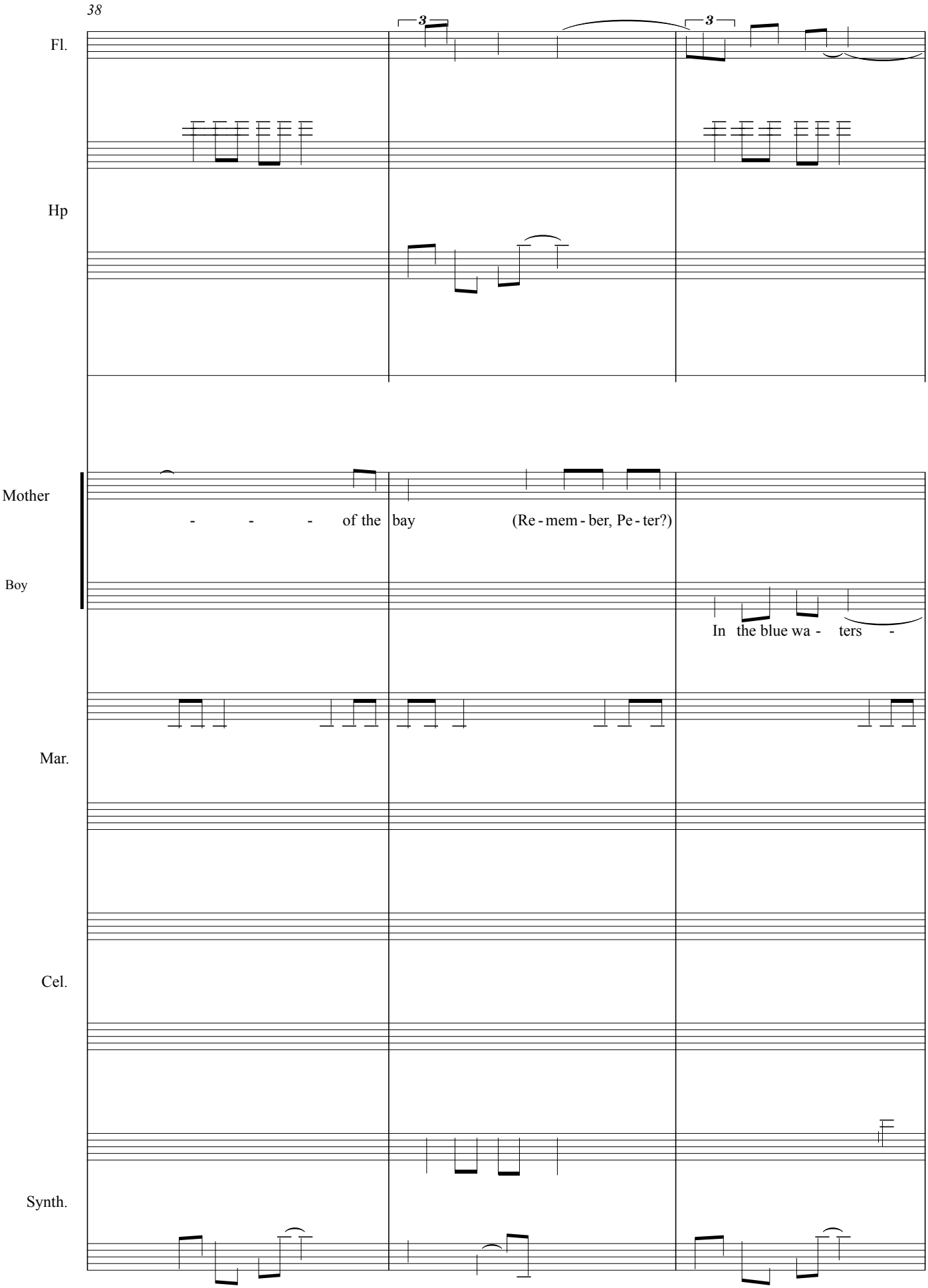
Synth.

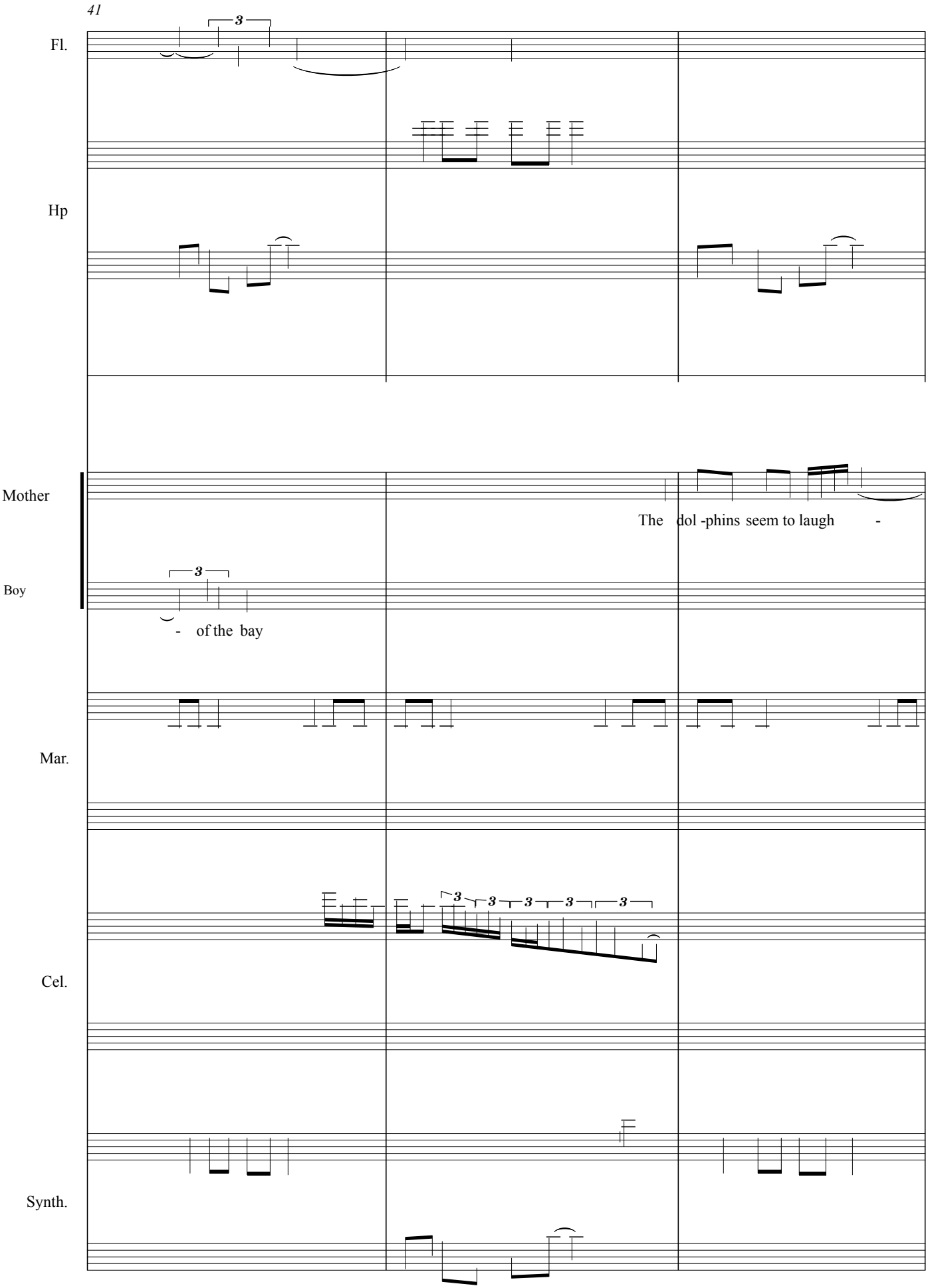

23
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Boy
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

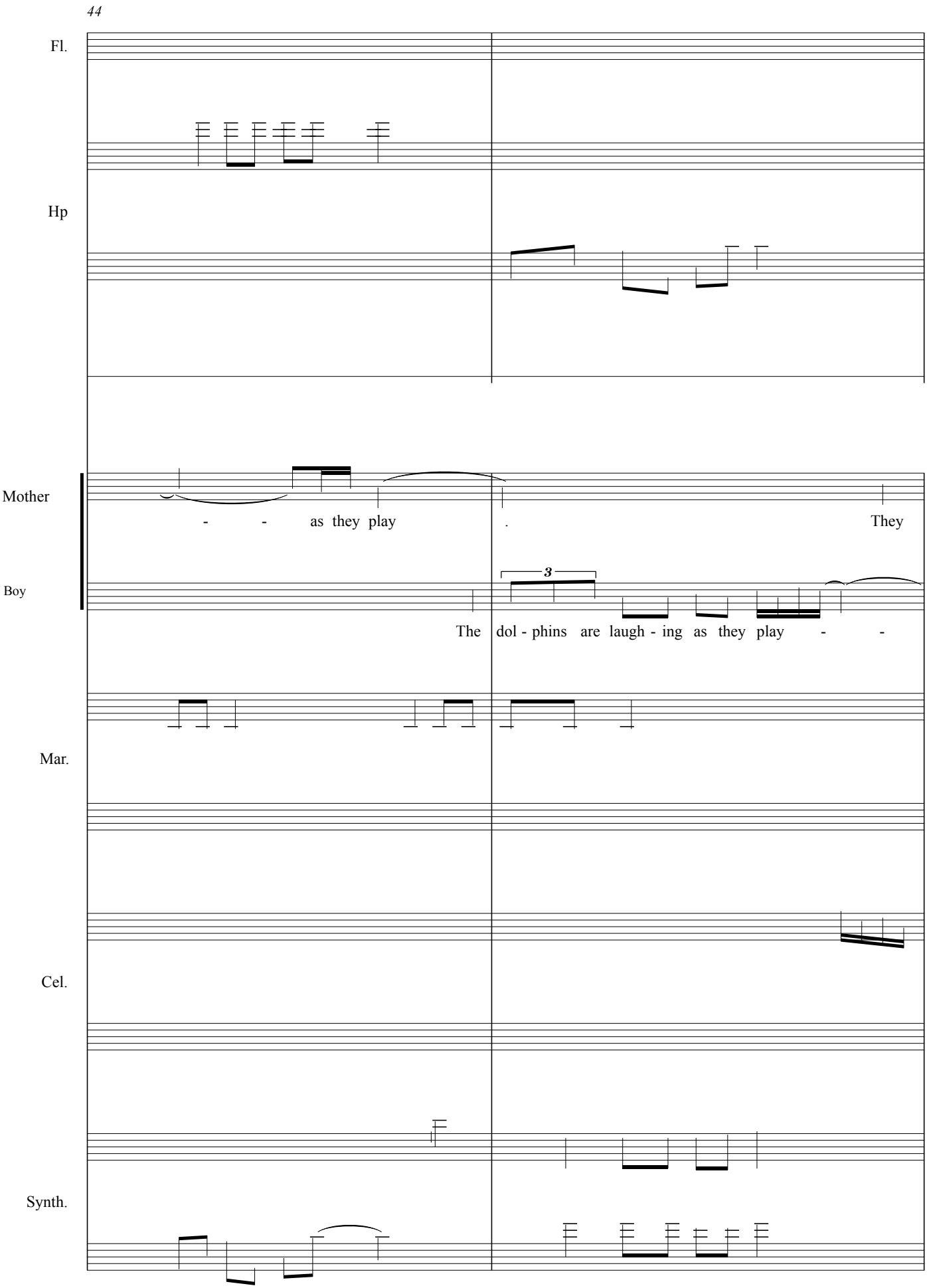

27
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Boy
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

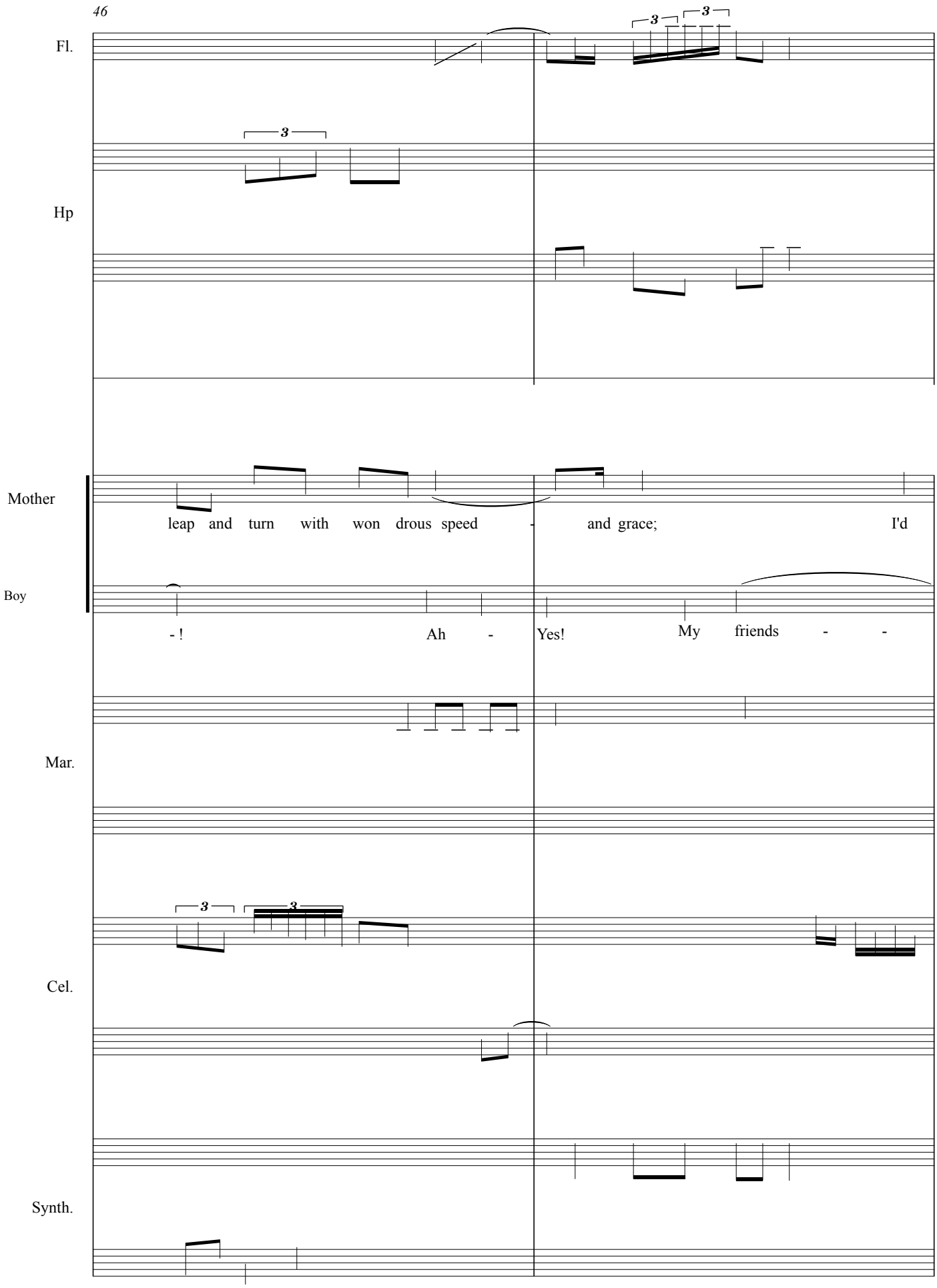

31
♩=88
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Boy
♩=88
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.


35
Fl.
Hp
DUET
Mother
In the beau - ti - ful blue wa - ters -
Boy
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.


38
Fl.
Hp
Mother
- - - of the bay (Re - mem - ber, Pe - ter?)
Boy
In the blue wa - ters -
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.


41
Fl.
Hp
Mother
The dol -phins seem to laugh -
Boy
- of the bay
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.


44
Fl.
Hp
Mother
- - as they play
. They
Boy
3
The dol - phins are laugh - ing as they play - -
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.


46
Fl.
Hp
Mother
leap and turn with won drous speed - and grace; I'd
Boy
- ! Ah - Yes! My friends - -
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

48

Fl.

Hp

3

Mother

give the world to join their joy ous race!

Ah, yes, they make you

Boy

-

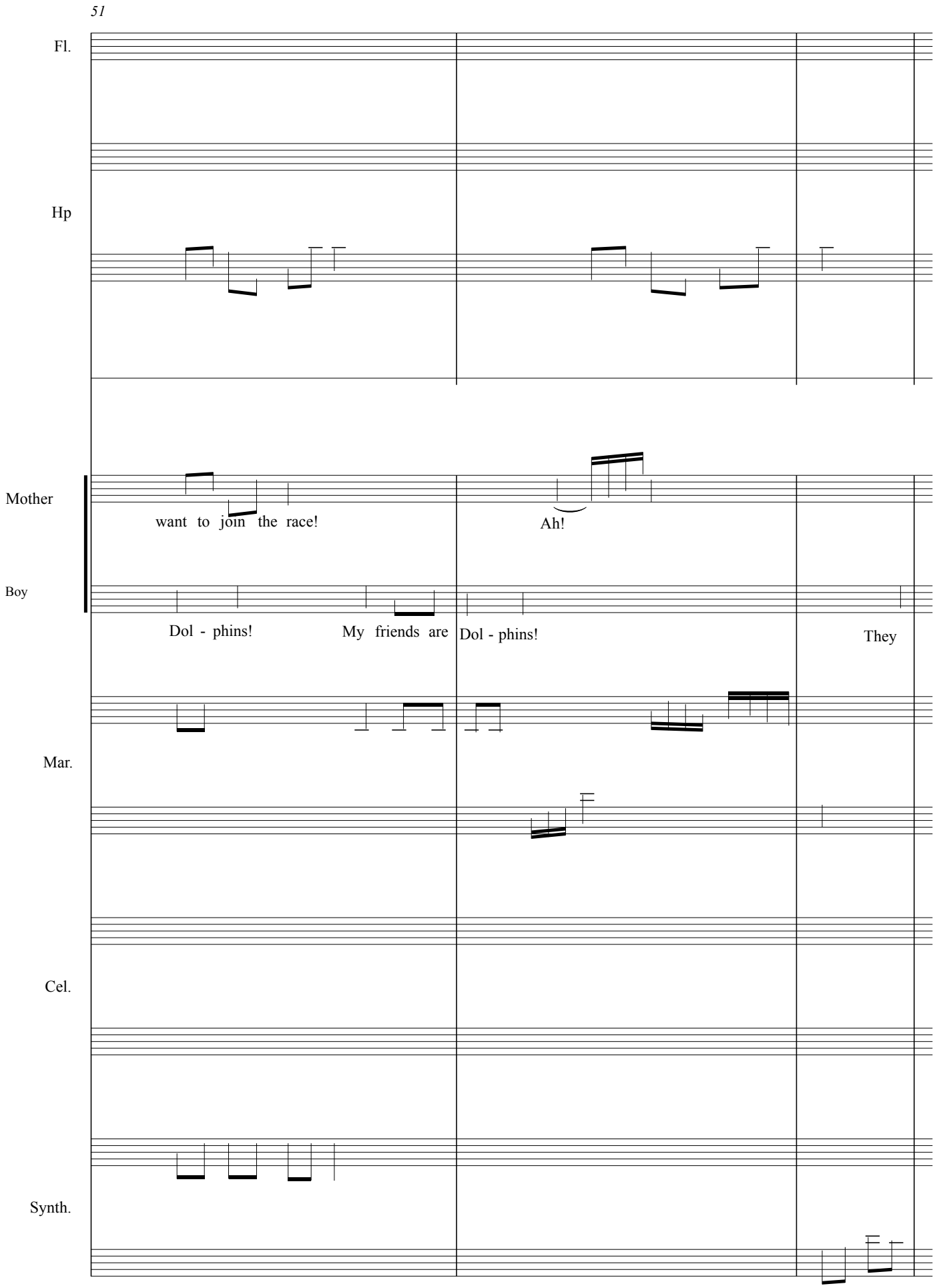
They are my friends, they are my friends, the dol phins!

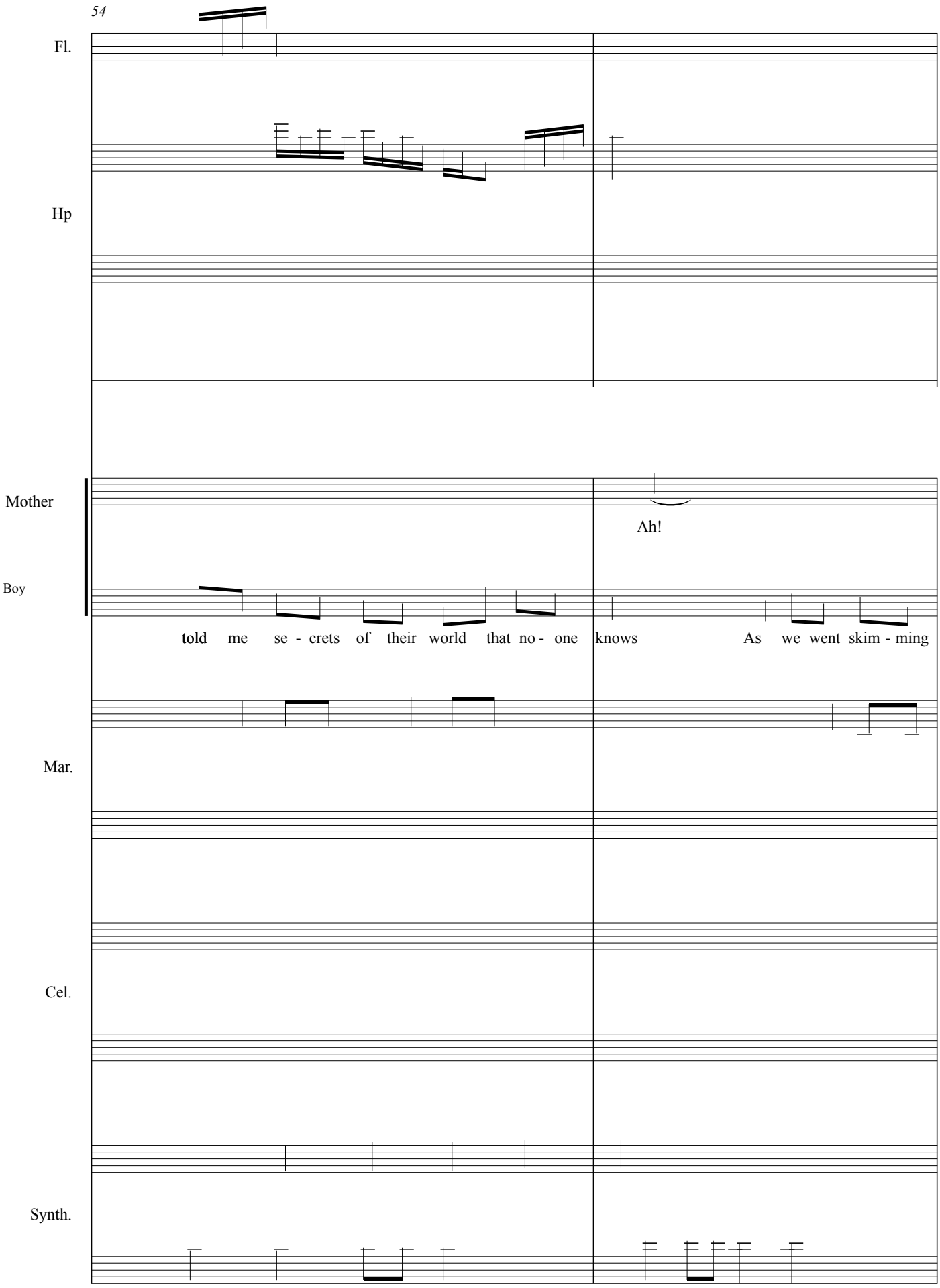
Mar.

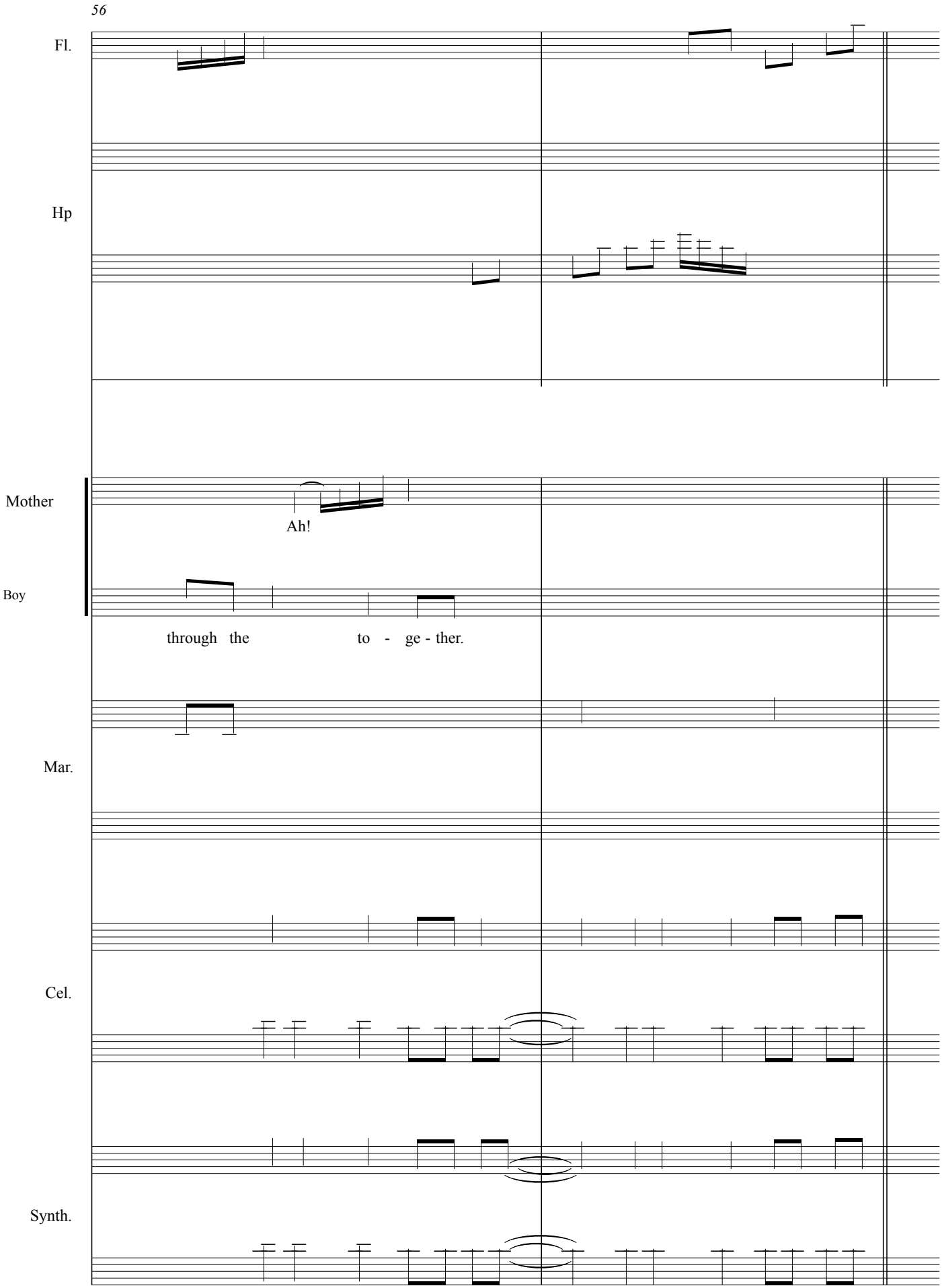
Cel.

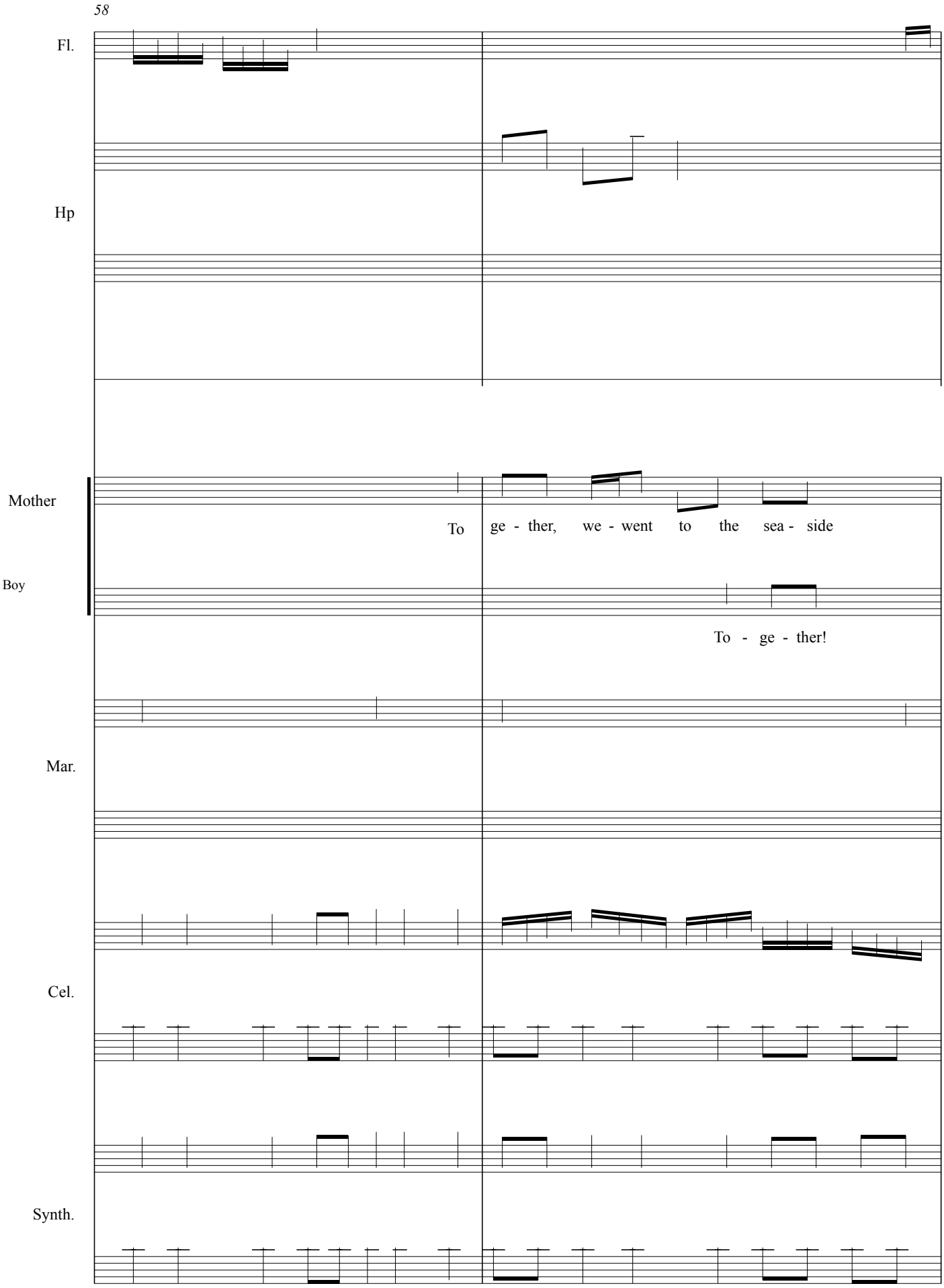
Synth.

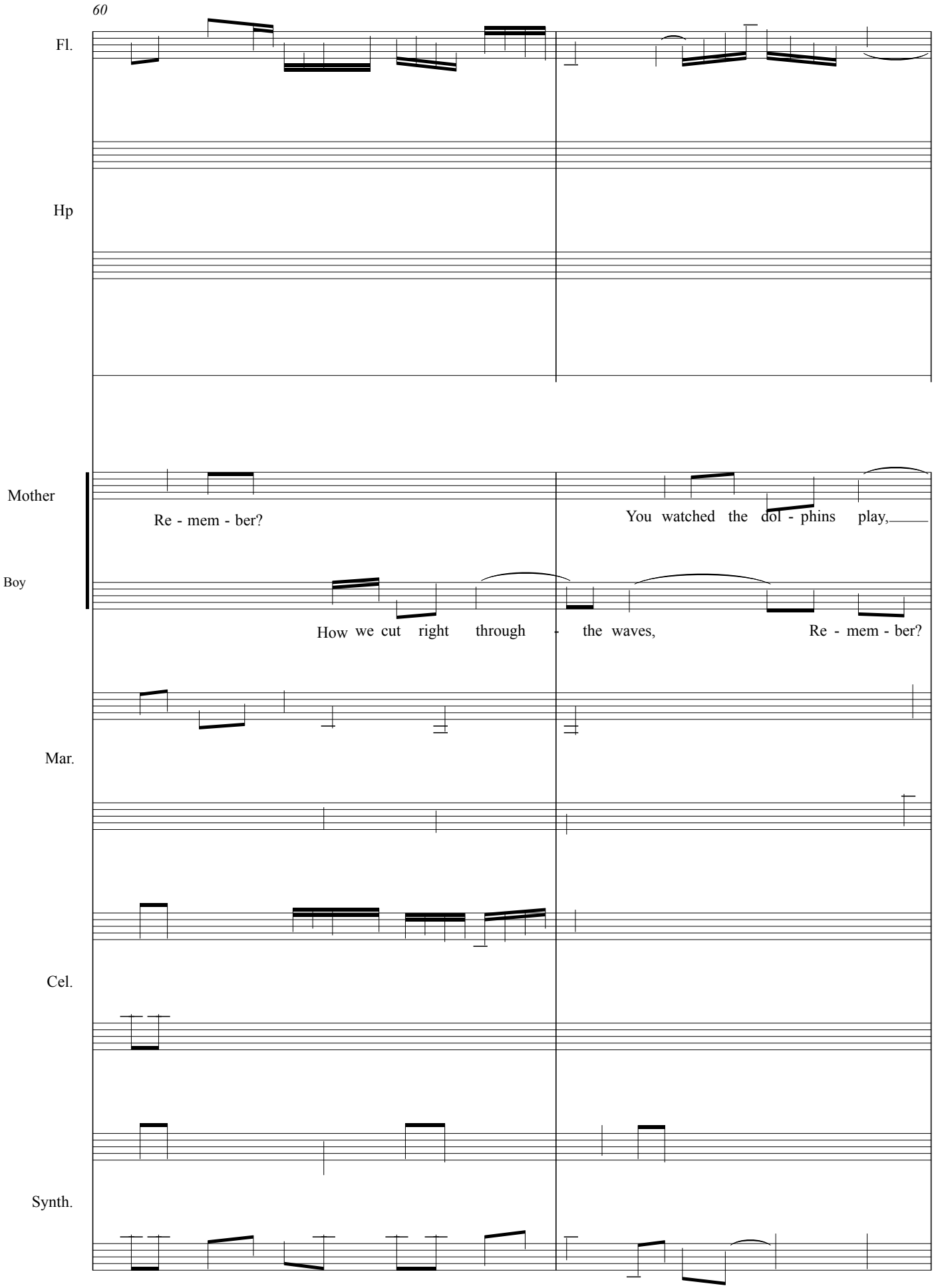
ORGAN

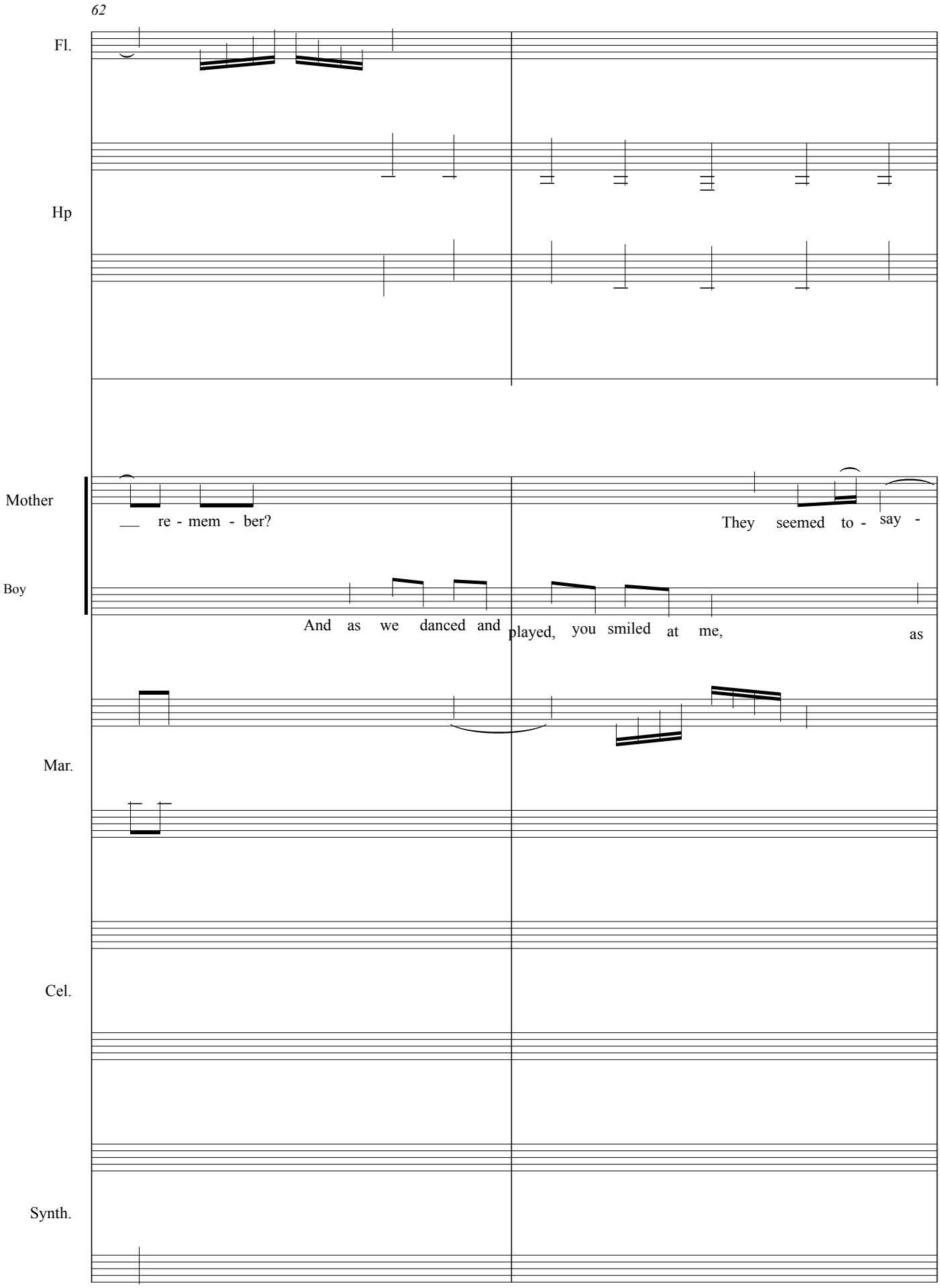

51
Fl.
Hp
Mother
want to join the race!
Ah!
Boy
Dol - phins!
My friends are
Dol - phins!
They
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

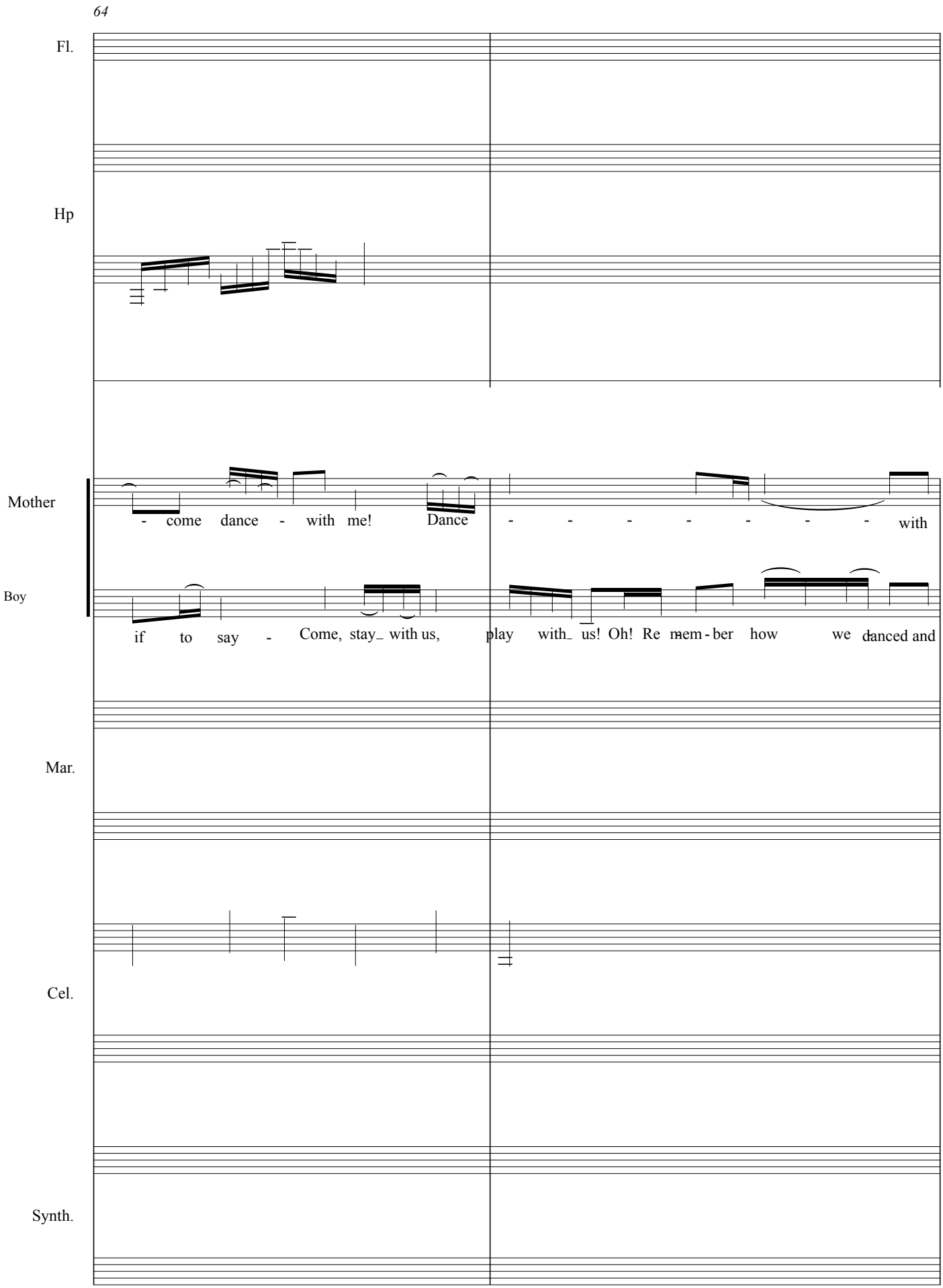

54
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Ah!
Boy
told me se - crets of their world that no - one knows As we went skim - ming
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

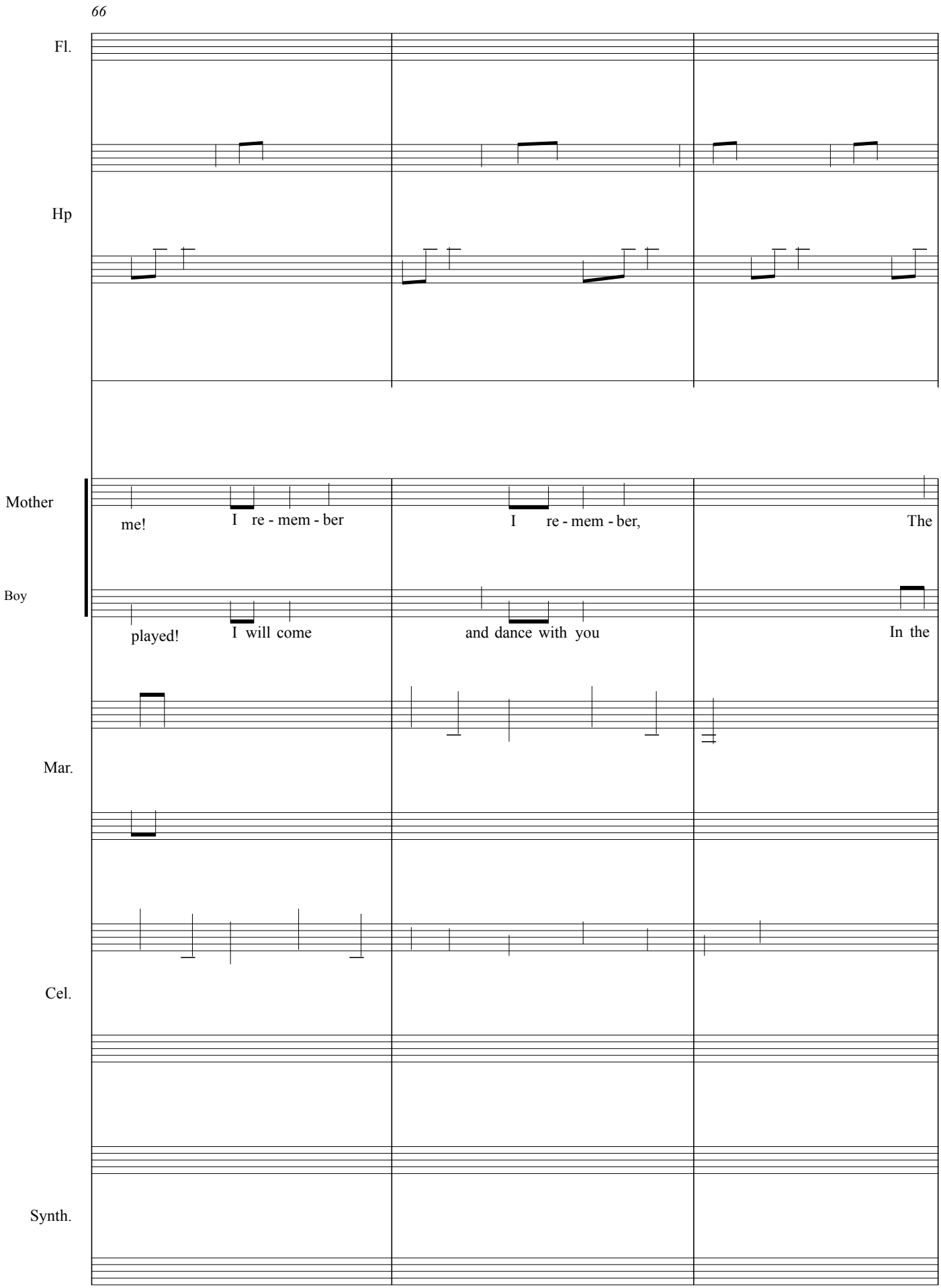

56
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Ah!
Boy
through the to - ge - ther.
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

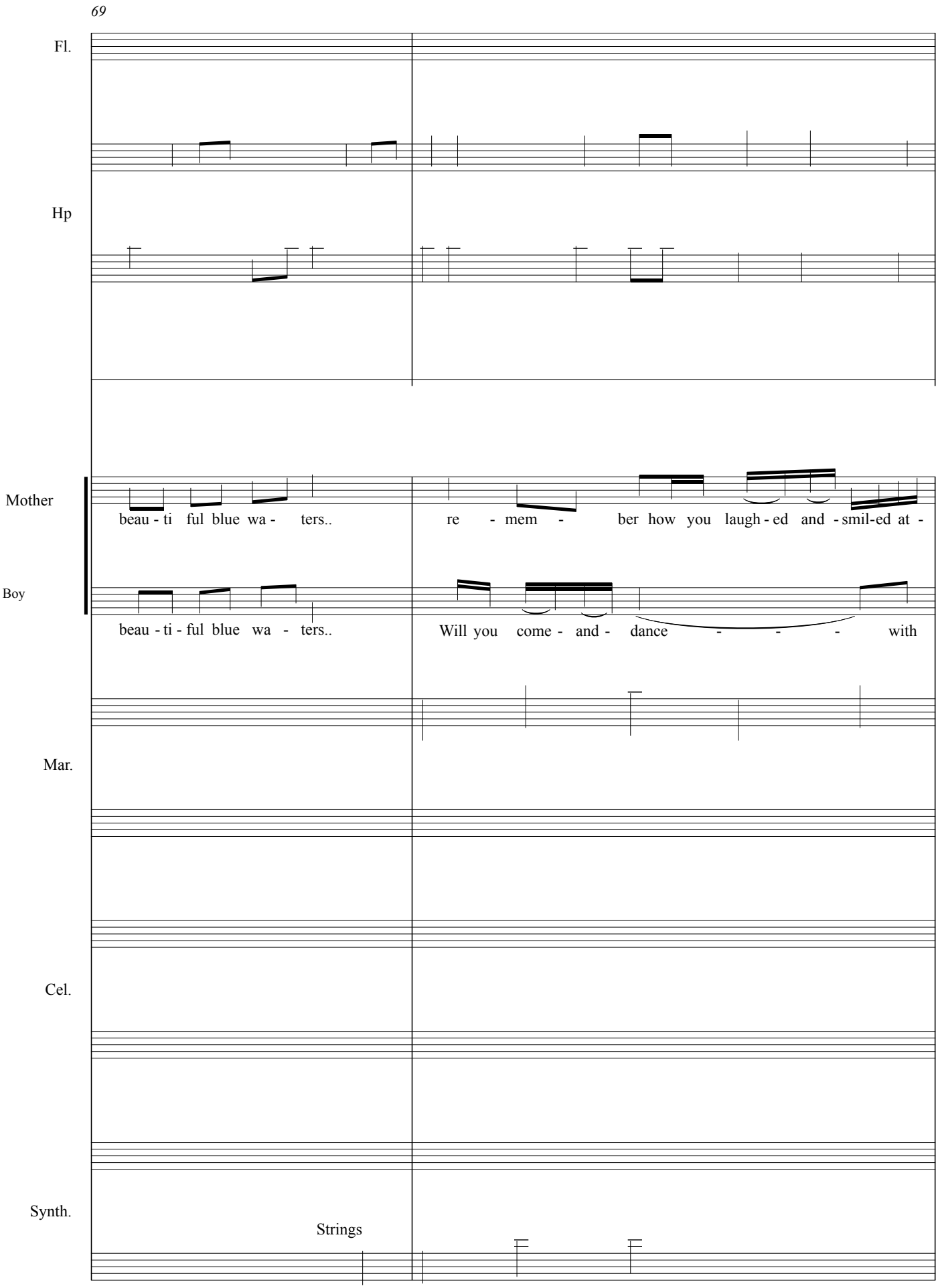

58
Fl.
Hp
Mother
To ge - ther, we - went to the sea - side
Boy
To - ge - ther!
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

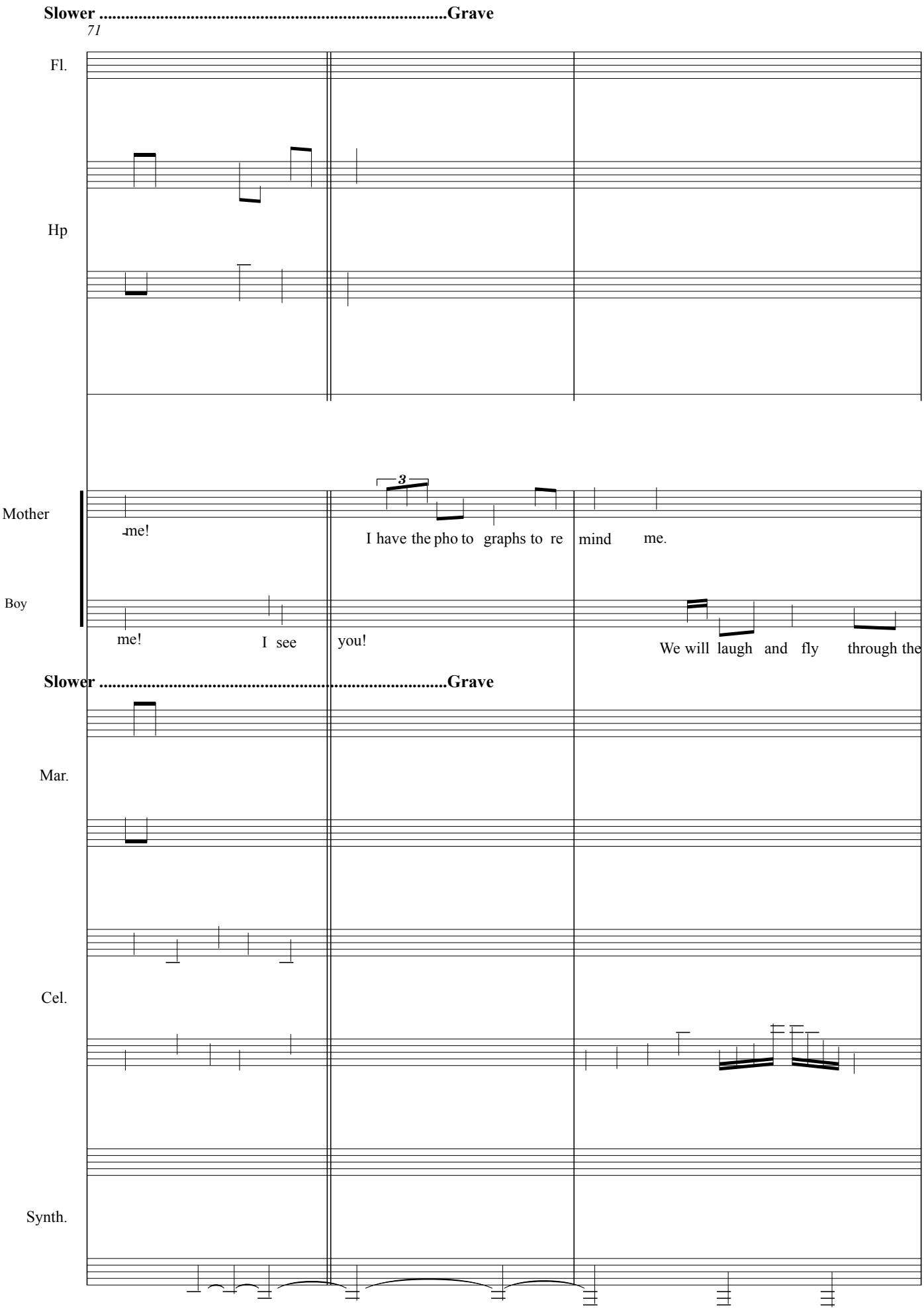

60
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Re - mem - ber?
You watched the dol - phins play,
Boy
How we cut right through - the waves,
Re - mem - ber?
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

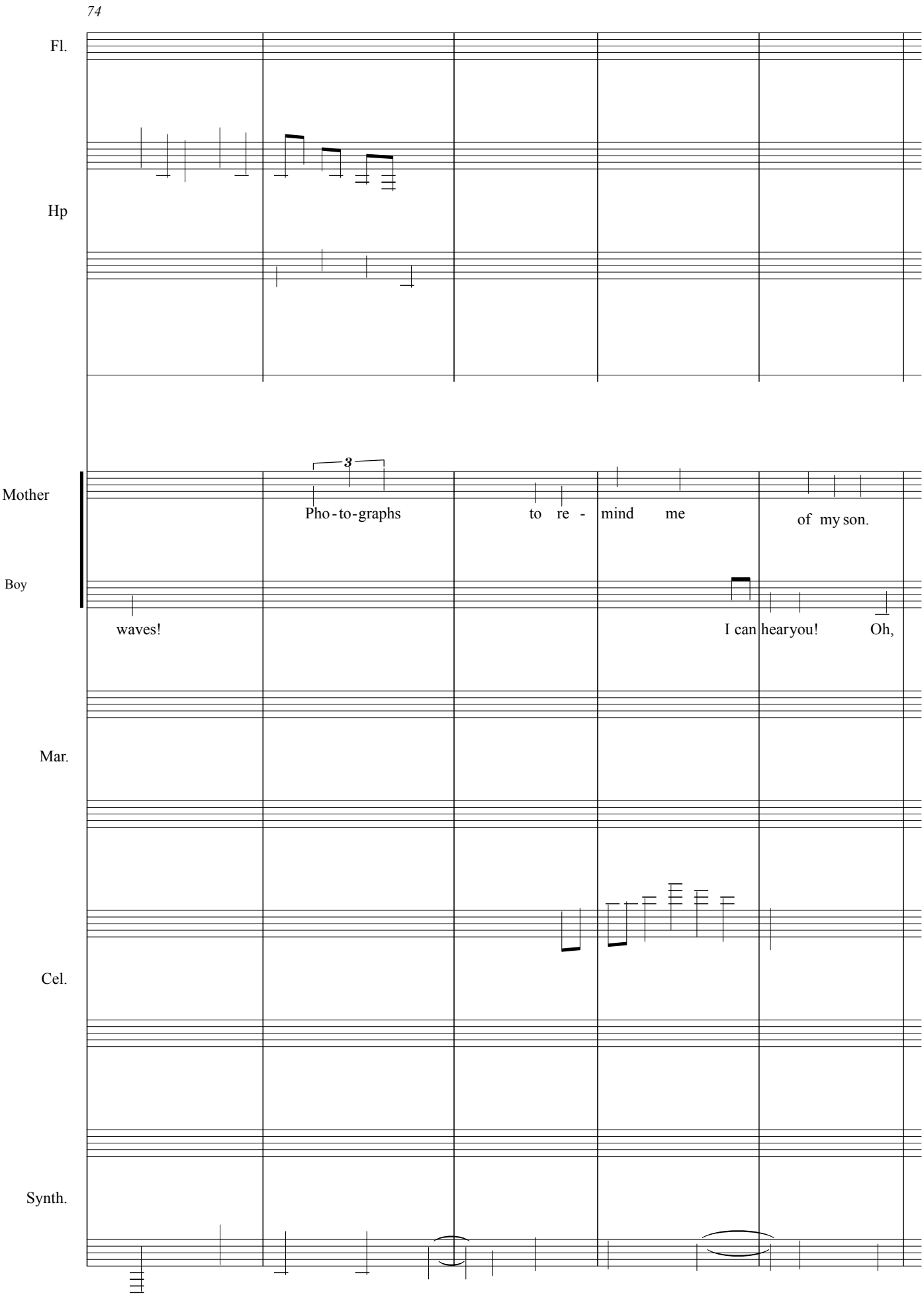

62
Fl.
Hp
Mother
re - mem - ber?
They seemed to - say -
Boy
And as we danced and played, you smiled at me, as
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

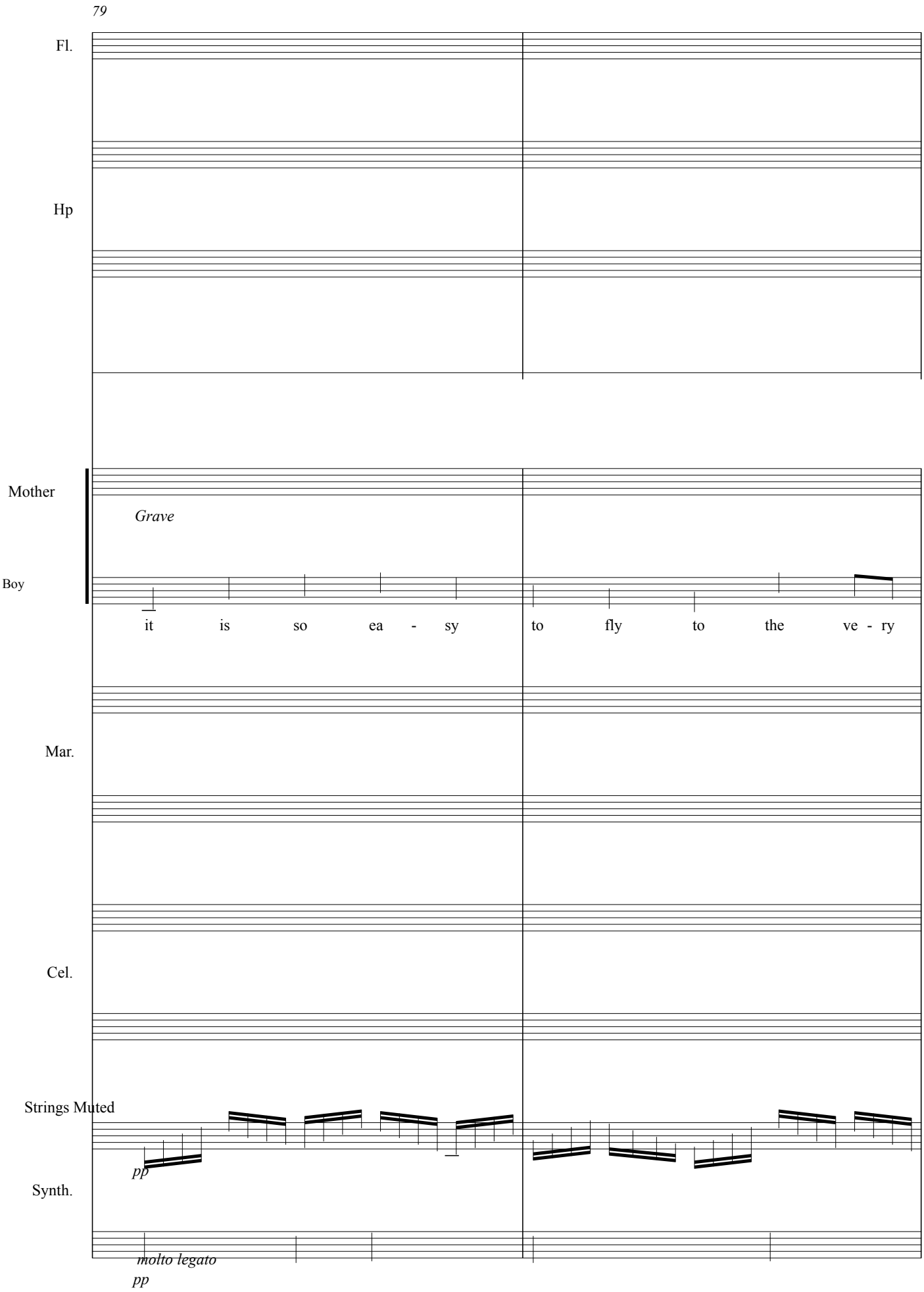

64
Fl.
Hp
Mother
- come dance - with me! Dance - - - - - - - with
Boy
if to say - Come, stay_ with us, play with_ us! Oh! Re mem - ber how we danced and
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

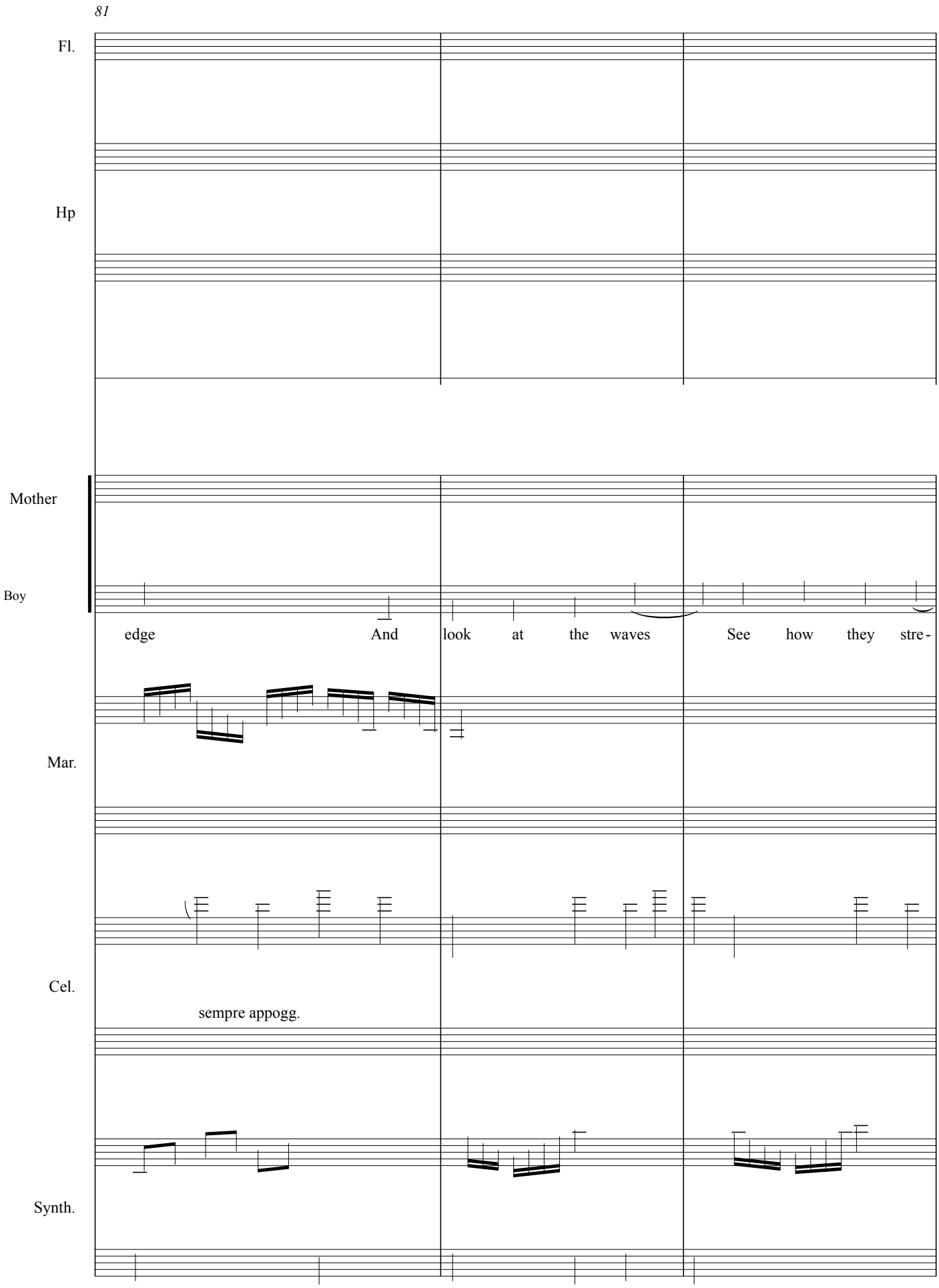

66
Fl.
Hp
Mother
me!
I re - mem - ber
I re - mem - ber,
The
Boy
played!
I will come
and dance with you
In the
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

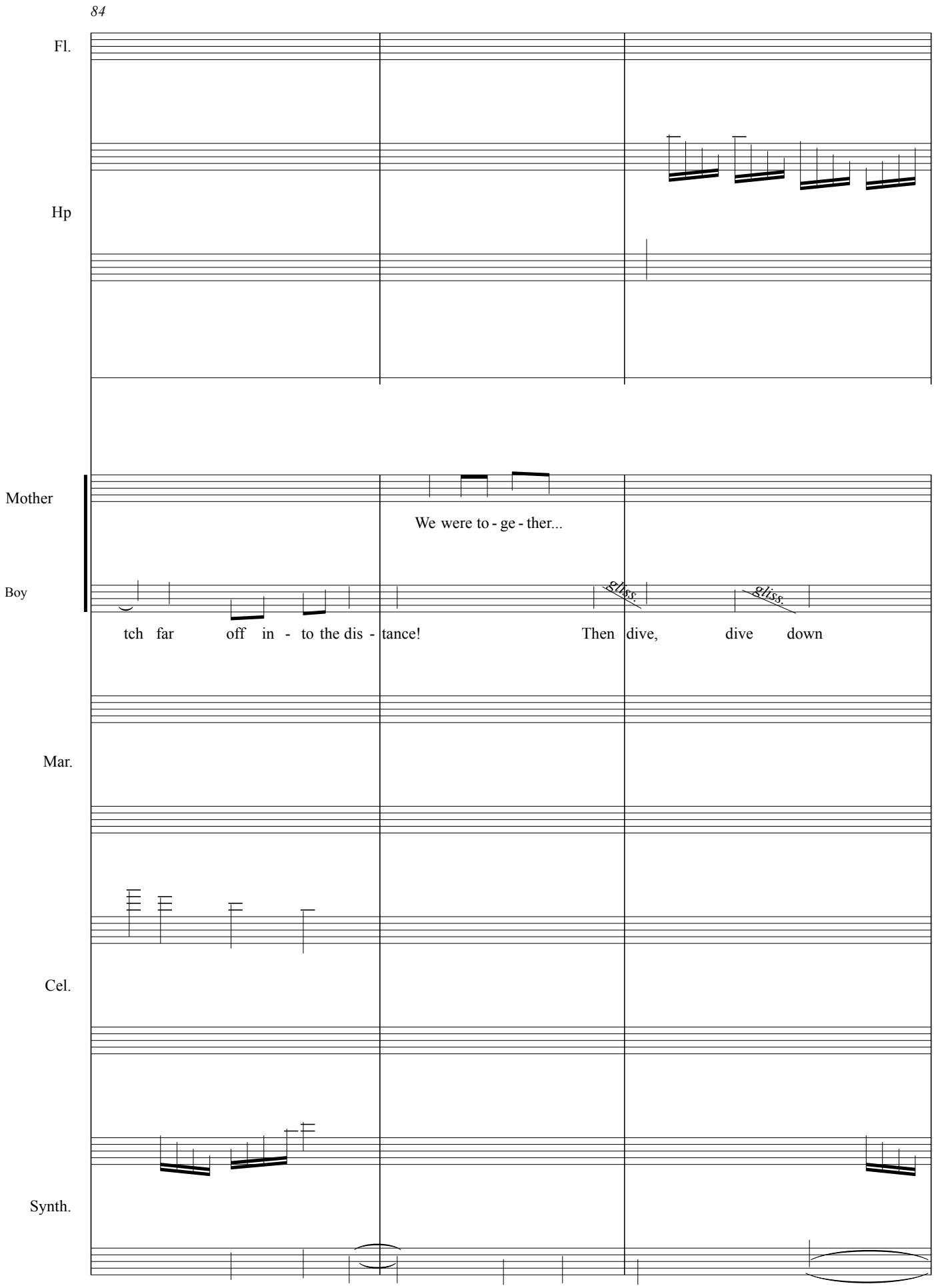

69
Fl.
Hp
Mother
beau - ti ful blue wa - ters..
re - mem - ber how you laugh - ed and - smil-ed at -
Boy
beau - ti - ful blue wa - ters..
Will you come - and - dance - - - with
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.
Strings

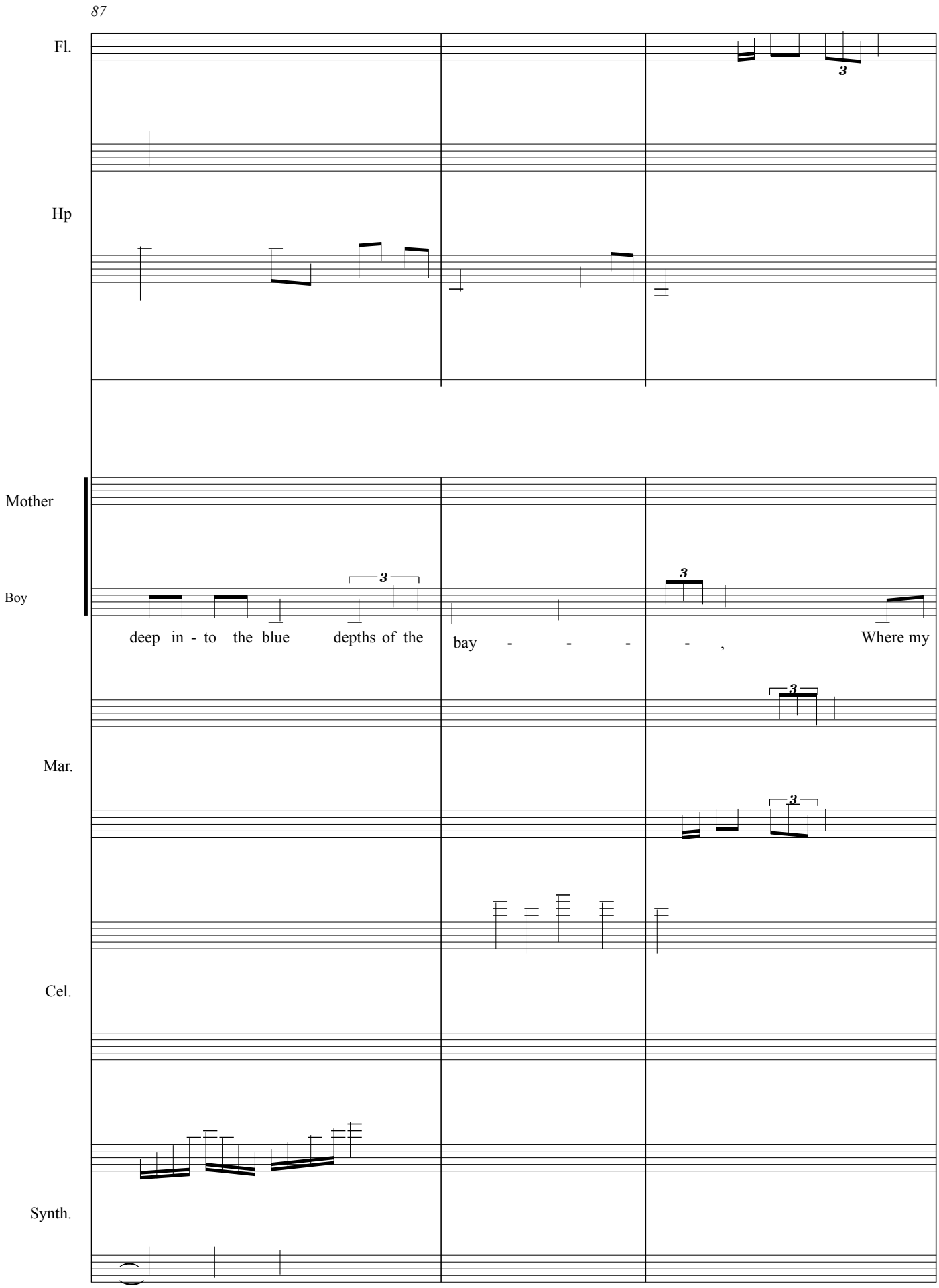

Slower .....Grave
71
Fl.
Hp
Mother
me!
3
I have the pho to graphs to re mind me.
Boy
me!
I see
you!
We will laugh and fly through the
Slower .....Grave
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

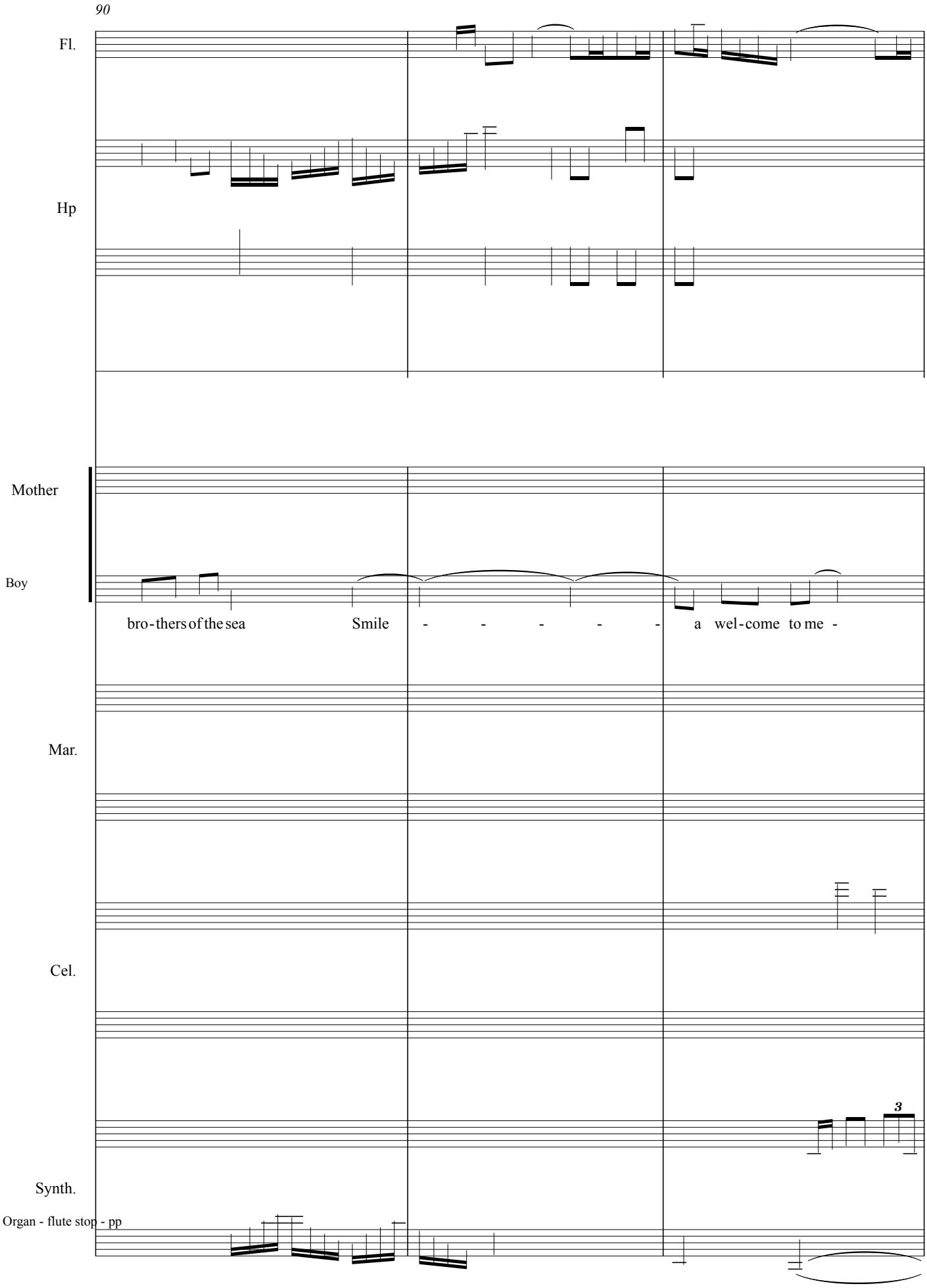

74
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Pho-to-graphs
to re - mind me
of my son.
Boy
waves!
I can hear you!
Oh,
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

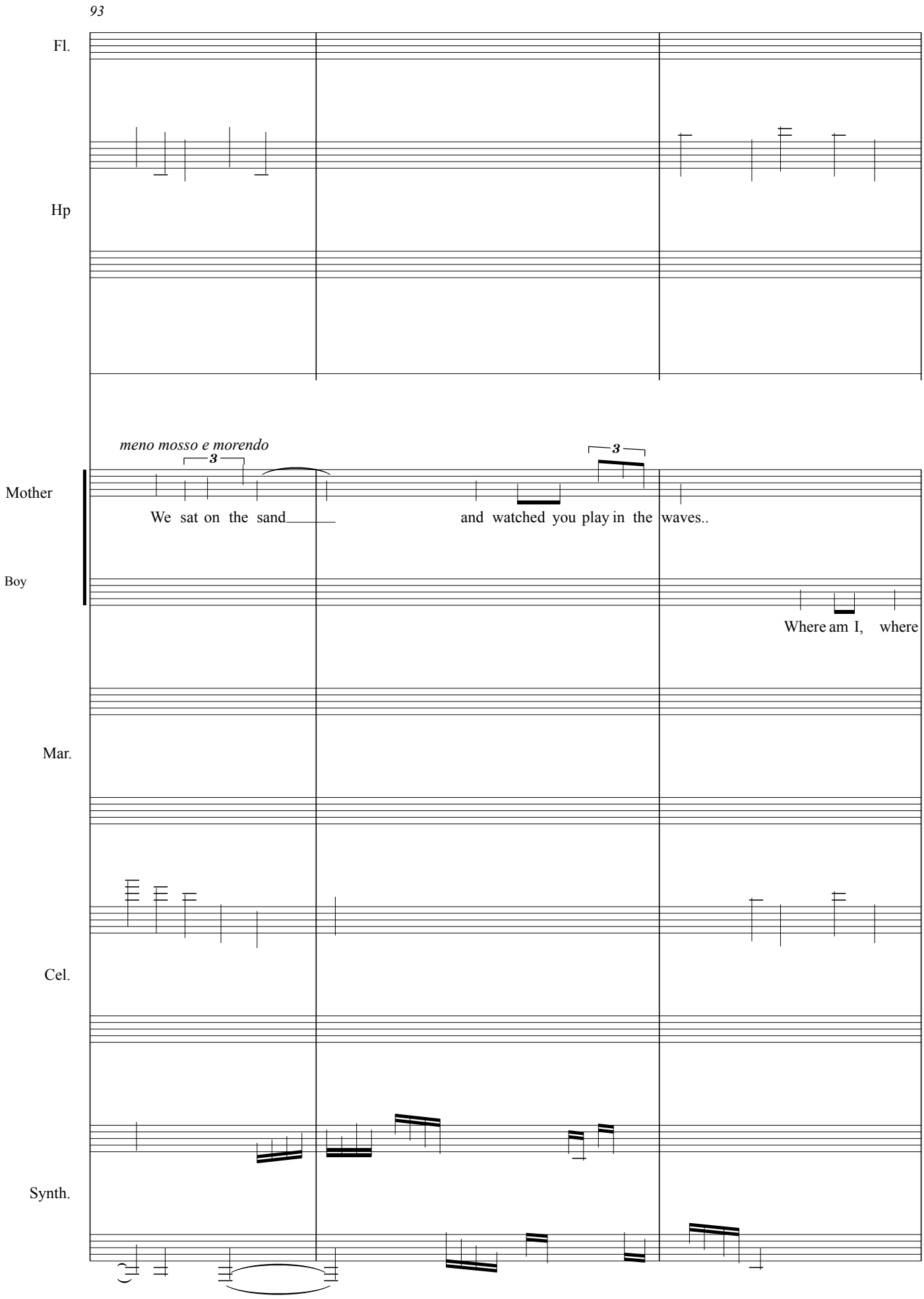

79
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Grave
Boy
it is so ea - sy to fly to the ve - ry
Mar.
Cel.
Strings Muted
pp
Synth.
molto legato
pp

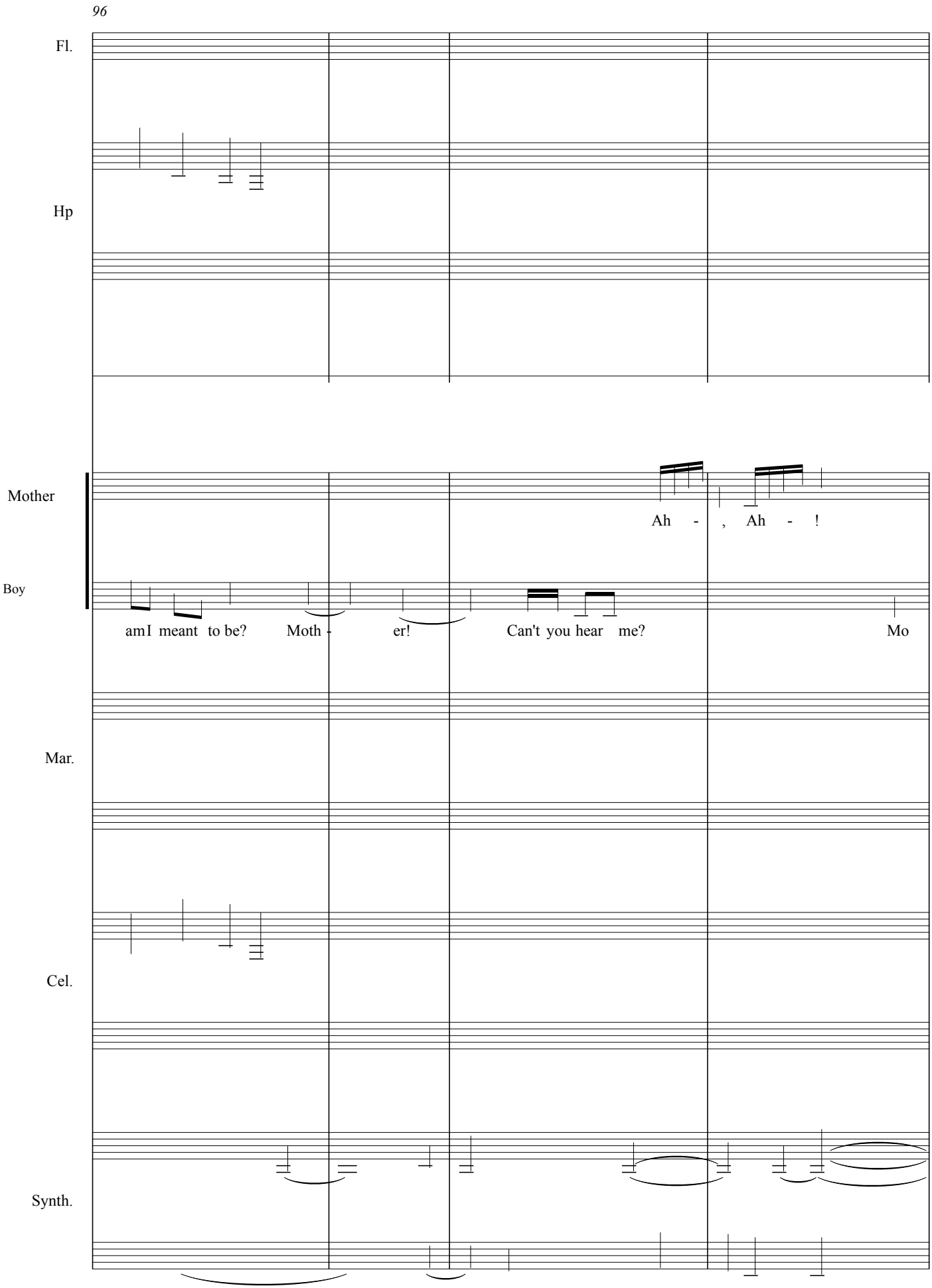

81
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Boy
edge
And
look
at
the
waves
See
how
they
stre-
Mar.
Cel.
sempre appogg.
Synth.

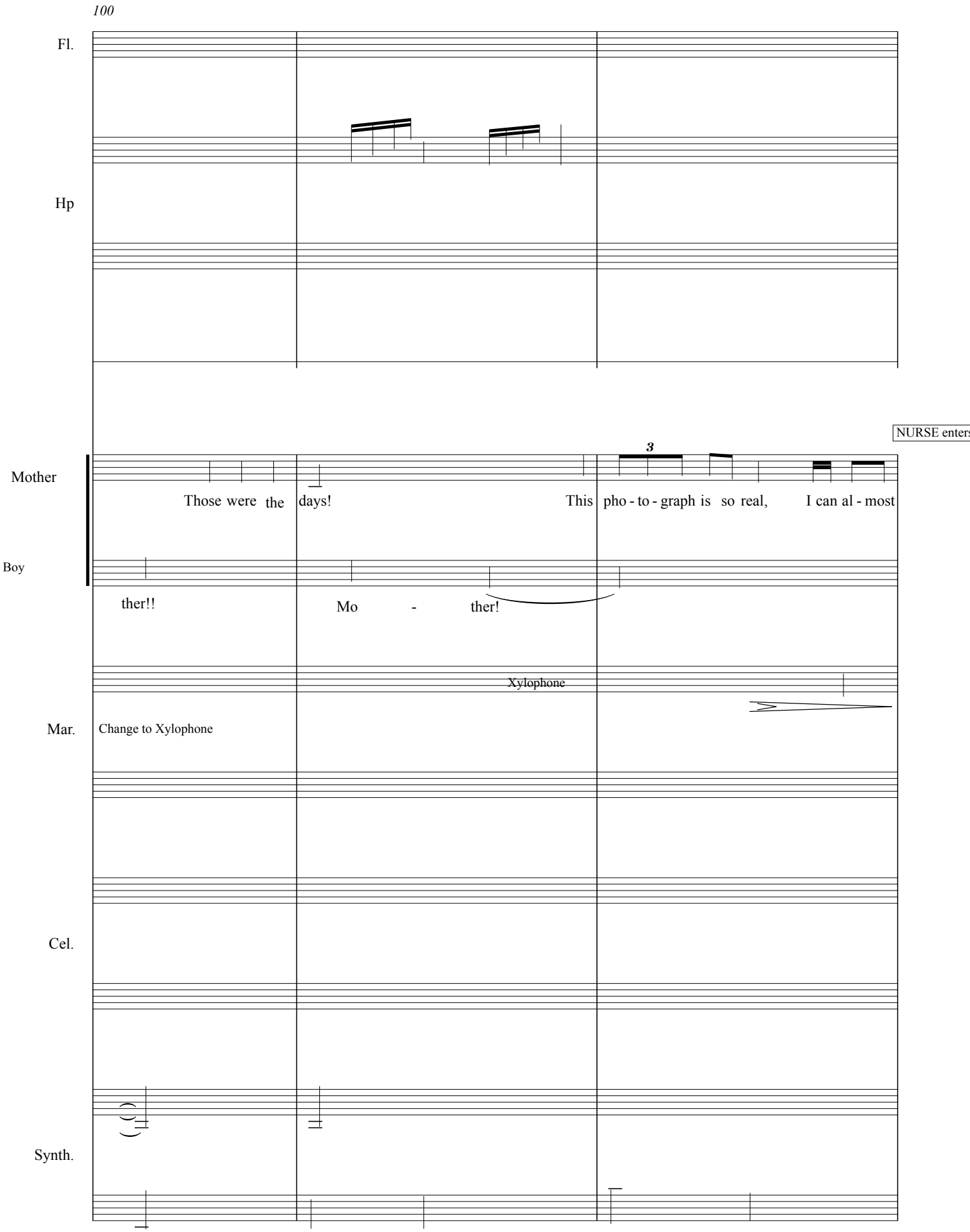

84
Fl.
Hp
Mother
We were to - ge - ther...
Boy
gliss.
gliss.
tch far off in - to the dis - tance! Then dive, dive down
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

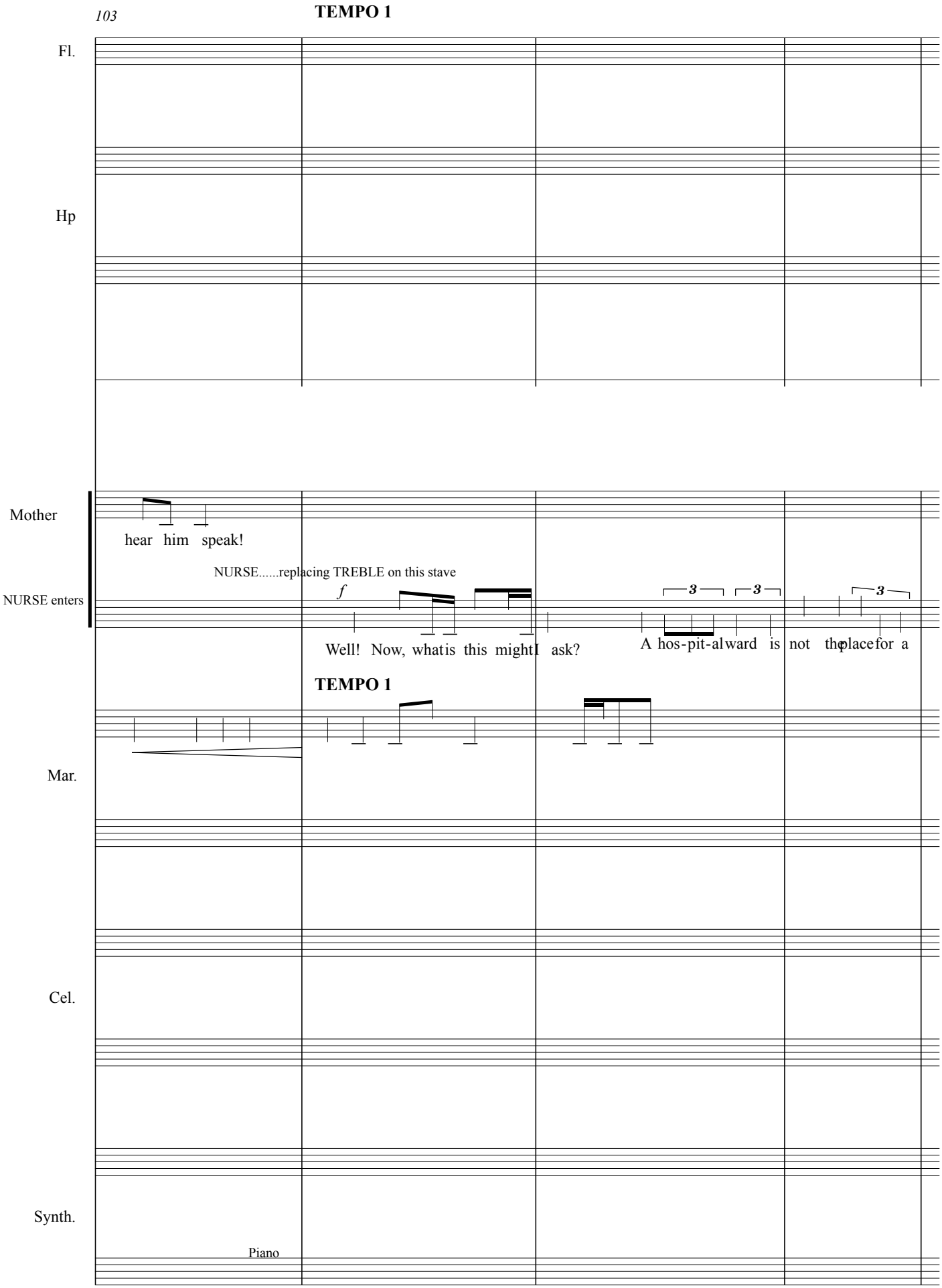

87
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Boy
deep in - to the blue depths of the bay - - - - , Where my
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

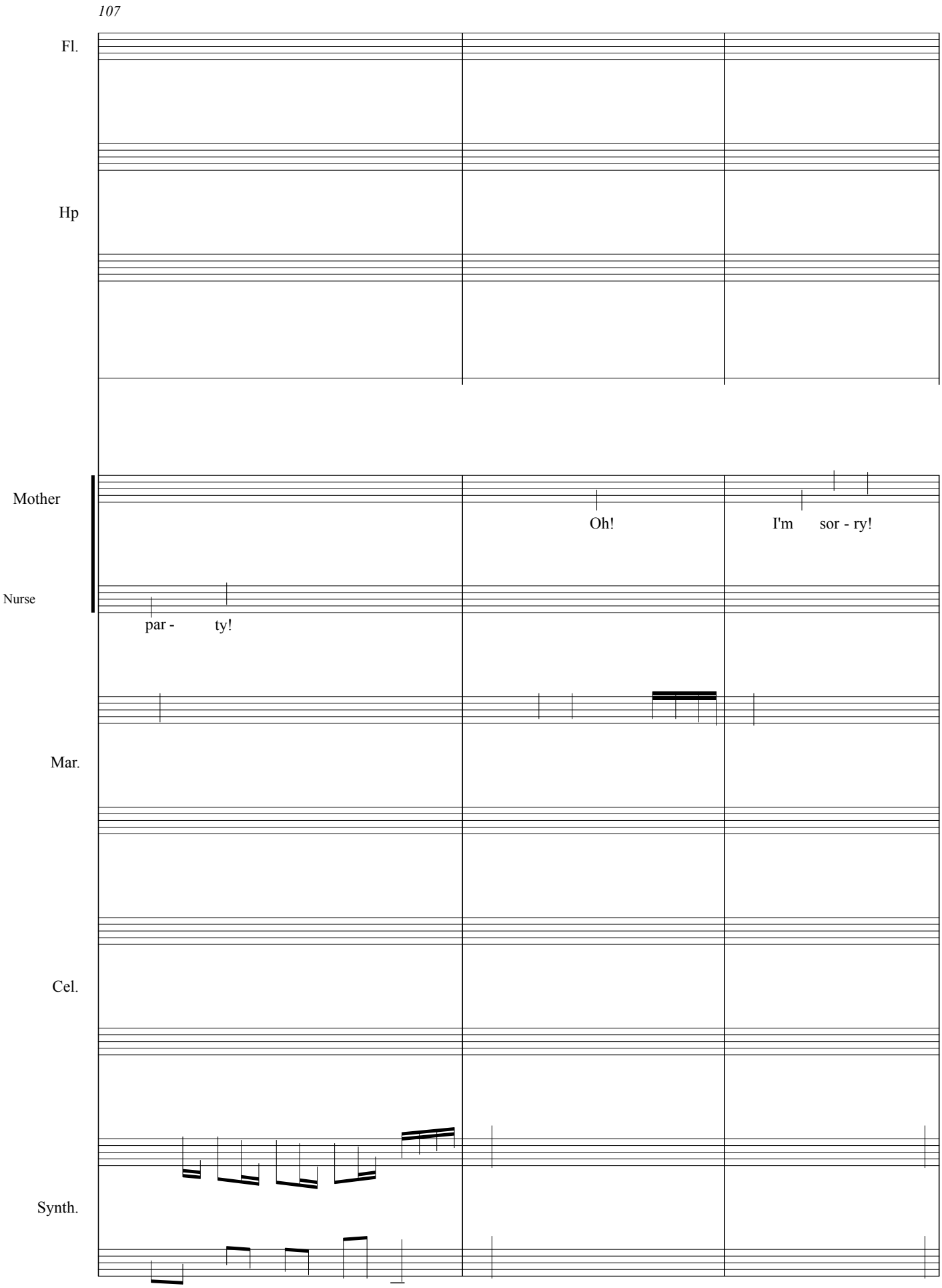

90
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Boy
bro-thers of the sea
Smile - - - - - a wel-come to me -
Mar.
Cel.
3
Synth.
Organ - flute stop - pp

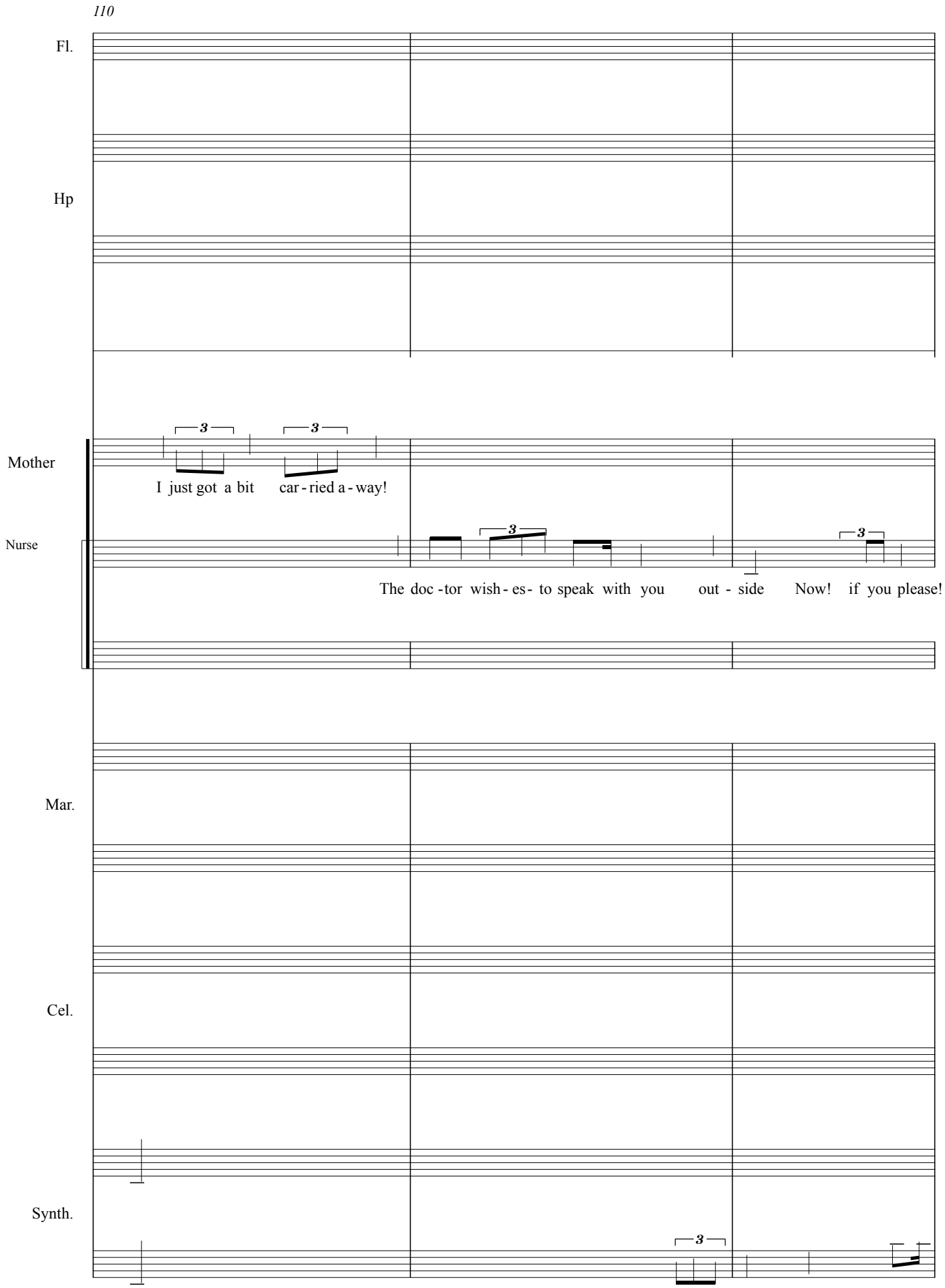

93
Fl.
Hp
meno mosso e morendo
3
3
Mother
We sat on the sand
and watched you play in the waves..
Boy
Where am I, where
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.


96
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Ah - , Ah - !
Boy
am I meant to be? Moth - er! Can't you hear me? Mo
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.


100
Fl.
Hp
NURSE enters
3
Mother
Those were the days! This pho - to - graph is so real, I can al - most
Boy
ther!! Mo - ther!
Xylophone
Mar.
Change to Xylophone
Cel.
Synth.


103
TEMPO 1
Fl.
Hp
Mother
hear him speak!
NURSE.....replacing TREBLE on this stave
NURSE enters
f
Well! Now, what is this might I ask?
A hos-pit-al ward is not the place for a
TEMPO 1
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.
Piano


107
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Oh!
I'm sor - ry!
Nurse
par - ty!
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.


110
Fl.
Hp
Mother
I just got a bit car - ried a - way!
Nurse
The doc -tor wish - es- to speak with you out - side Now! if you please!
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

113

Fl.

Hp

Feeling very embarrassed, the Mother stuffs the shawl and the flower in th case and snaps it shut; the cassette player and the cassette case lie on the bedside table. The Nurse, unamused, stands, like a wardress, holding open the door.

Mother

Yes, of course! I'll be back in a mo - ment, dar - ling! We will

Mar.

Cel.

Synth.

"SEA" BRIDGE to SCENE 1V:

115

Lentamente

Fl.

PAN PIPE effect.....

Hp

As the Mother departs, defiantly humming softly, the `blips' re-surface as the room starts to subside ver slowly into the blue depths once more.

REPEAT BAR (BLIPS ONLY) UNTIL VOCALISTS IN POSITION OFFSTAGE

Lentamente

Mother

talk some more when I come back!

Boy (Peter)

come back!

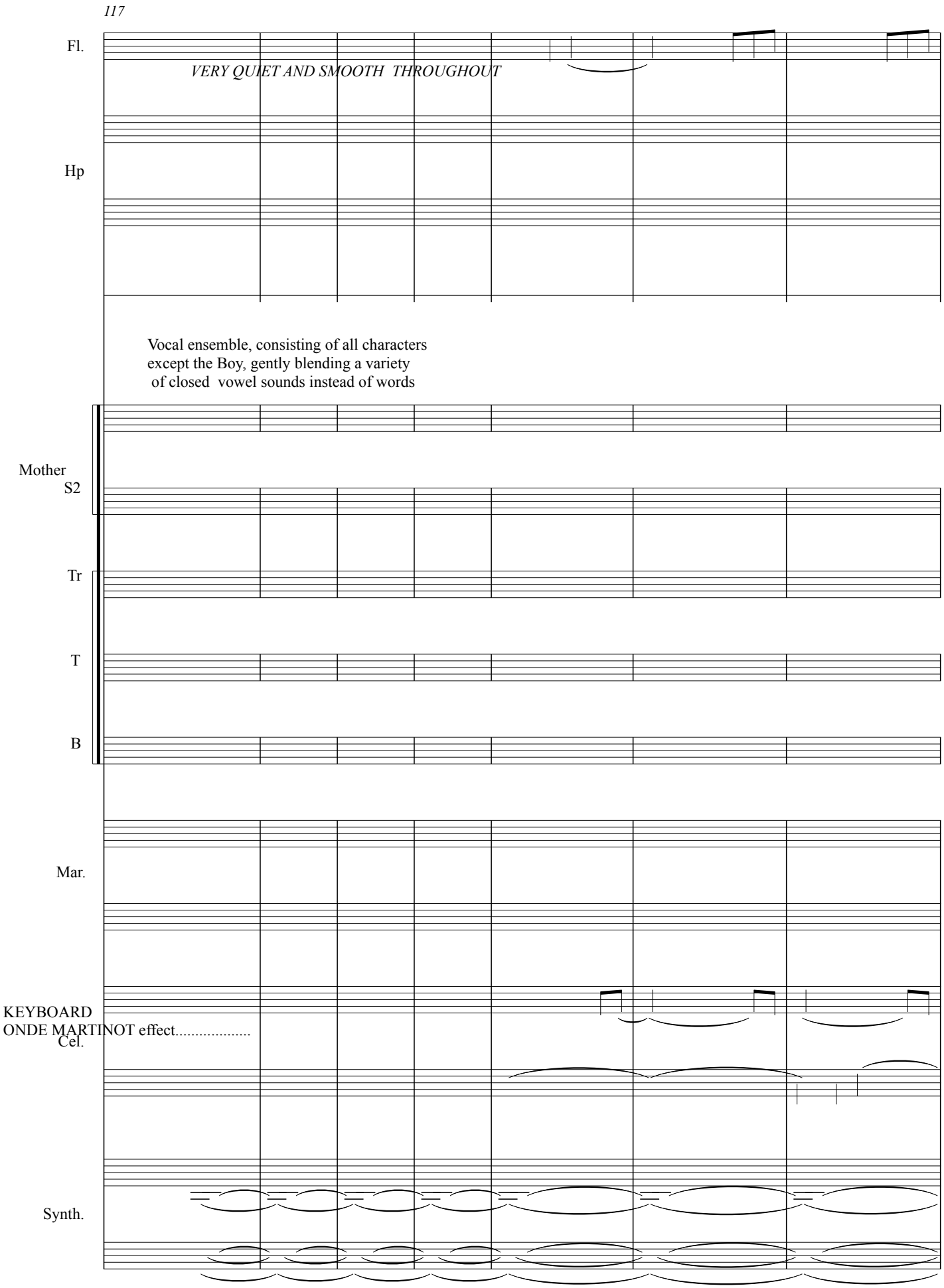
Mar.

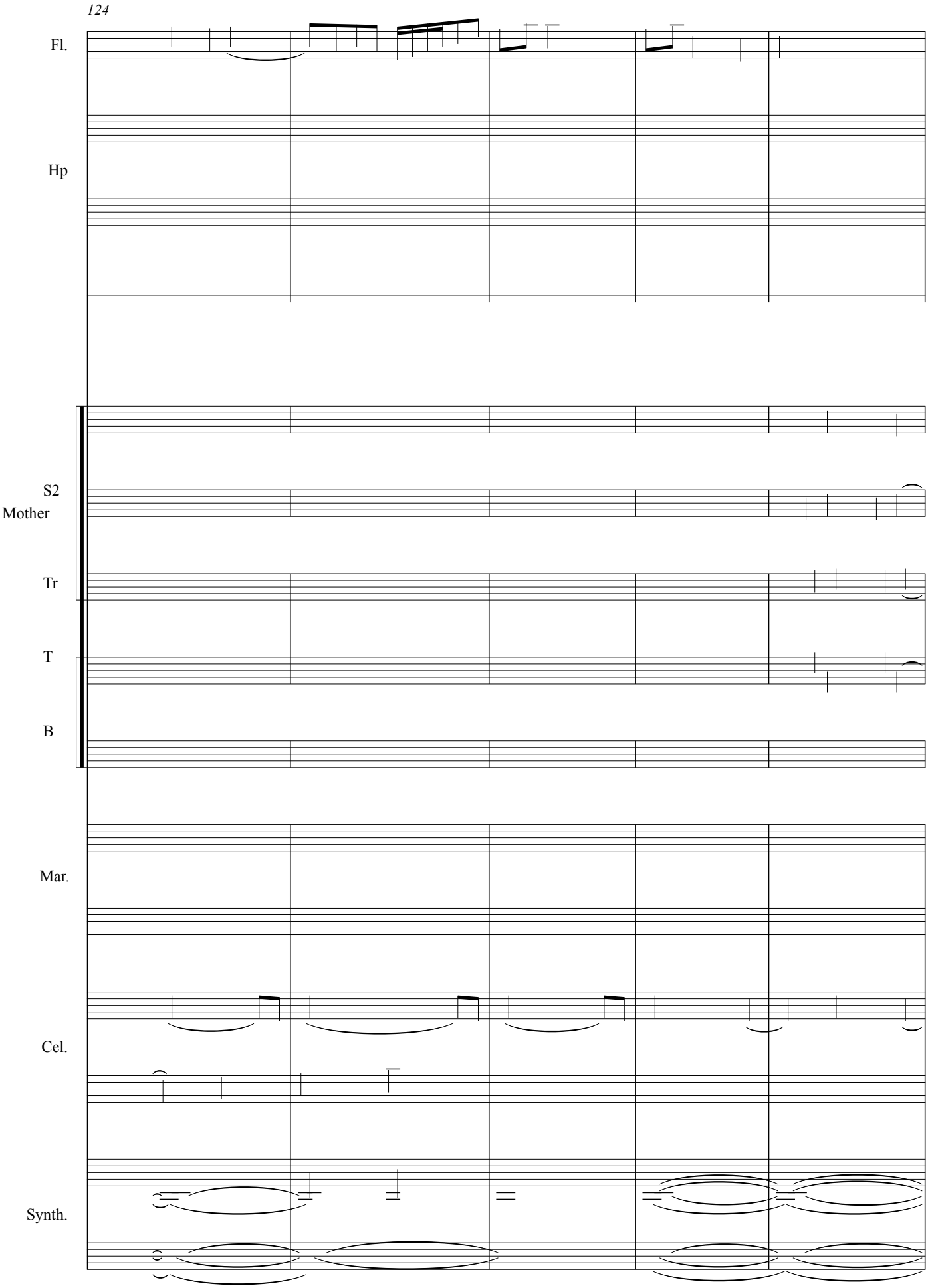
(FIRST TIME only)

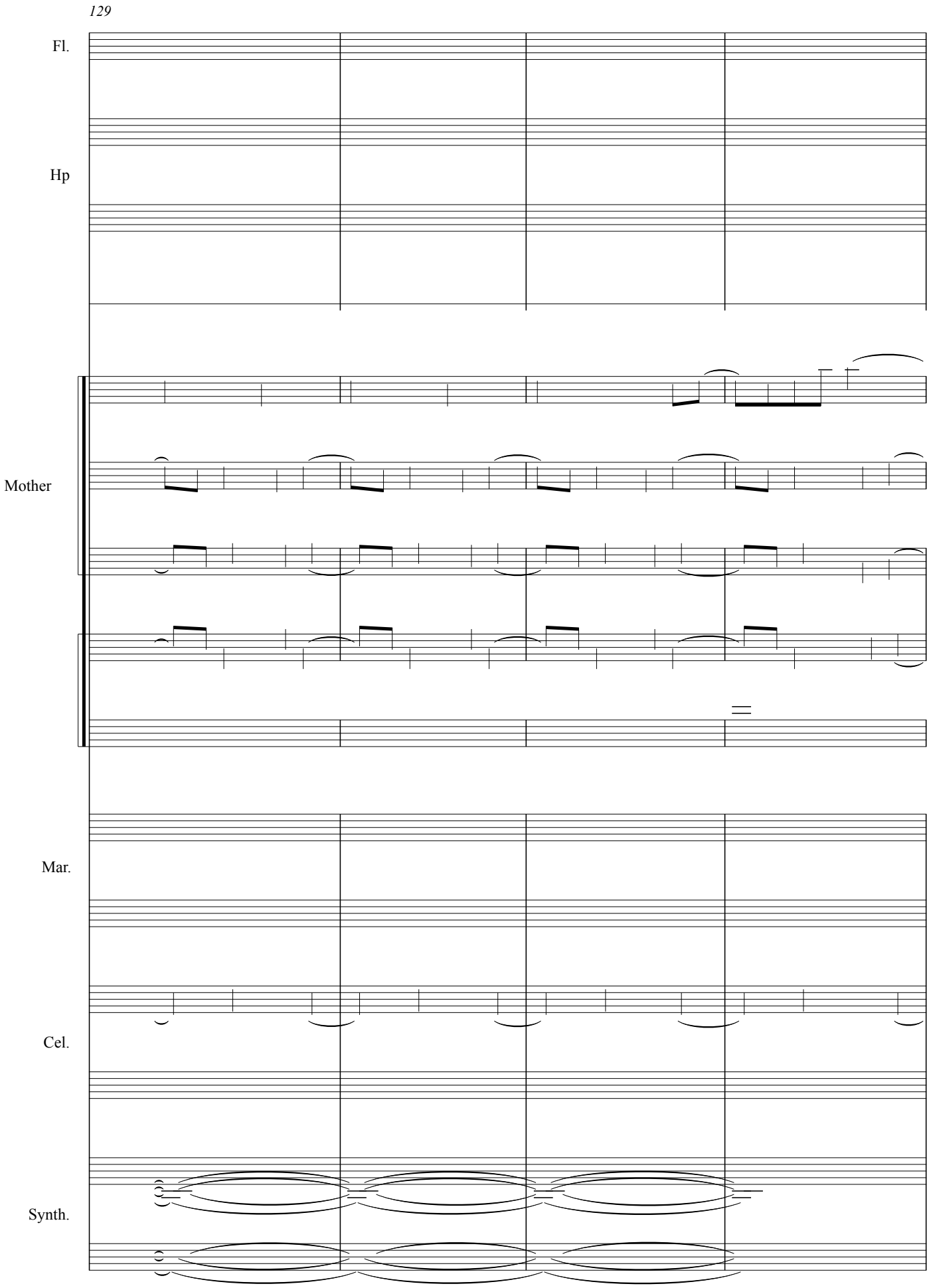
Cel.

Synth.

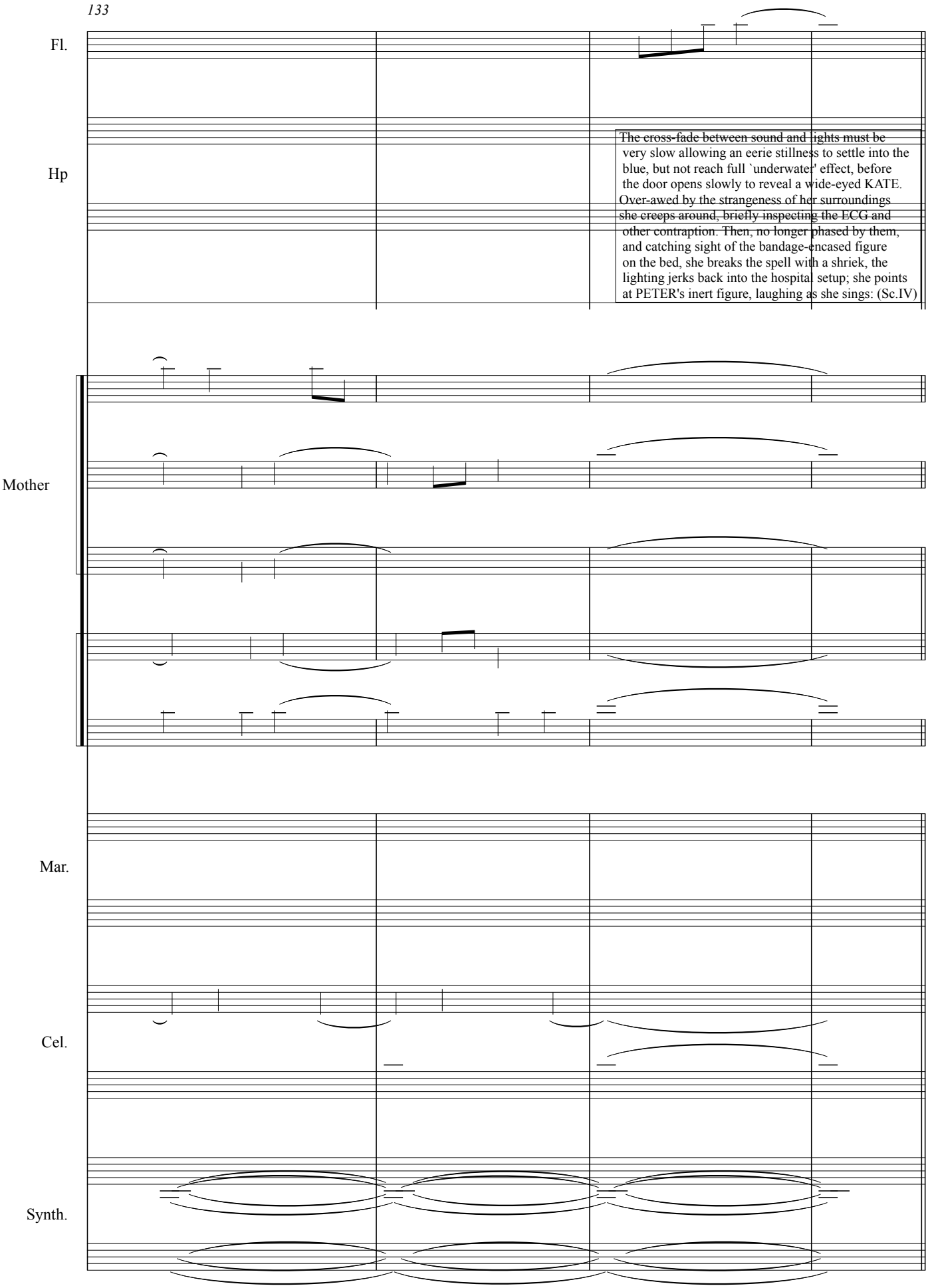
TAPE: This section, from end of repeats of Bar 116,
should be pre-recorded to allow electronic manipulation
of instruments in a blend of subdued echo and 'wave' effects.
Vocal parts to be sung live backstage, through sound system .



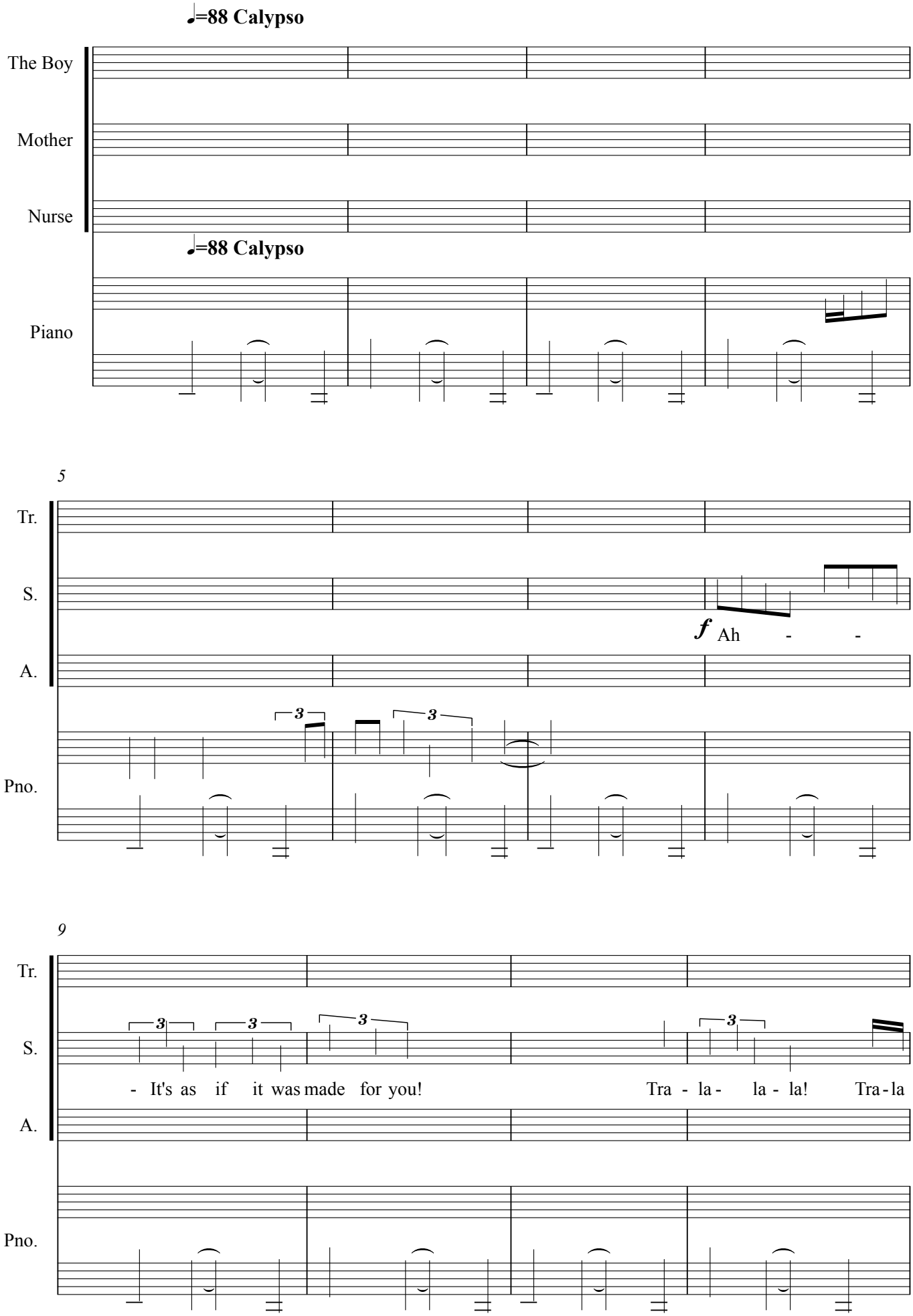

124
Fl.
Hp
S2
Mother
Tr
T
B
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

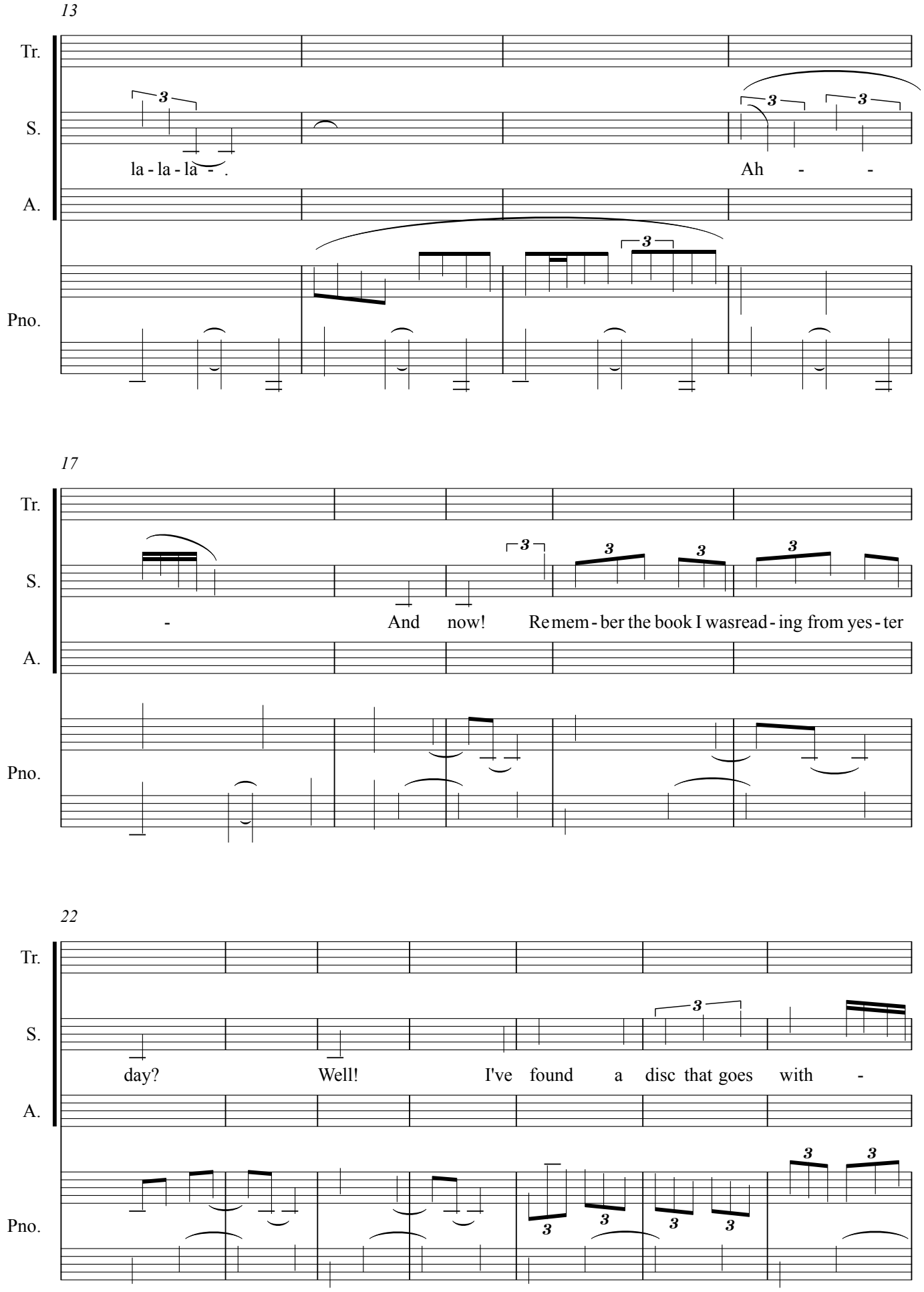

129
Fl.
Hp
Mother
Mar.
Cel.
Synth.

Last bar sustained with ripple effect, instruments more distorted after voices cease. FADE INTO SILENCE



The Boy: Scene III




13
Tr.
S.
la - la - la - .
Ah - -
A.
Pno.
17
Tr.
S.
- And now! Remem - ber the book I wasread - ing from yes - ter
A.
Pno.
22
Tr.
S.
day? Well! I've found a disc that goes with -
A.
Pno.

29

Tr.

S.

- it, Where dol - phins - laugh as they play - o - le!

A.

Pno.

35

Tr.

S.

A.

Pno.

39

Tr.

S.

A.

Pno.

43

Tr.

S.

A.

Pno.

DUET

46

Tr.

S.

In the beau-ti-ful blue wa- ters -

A.

Pno.

49

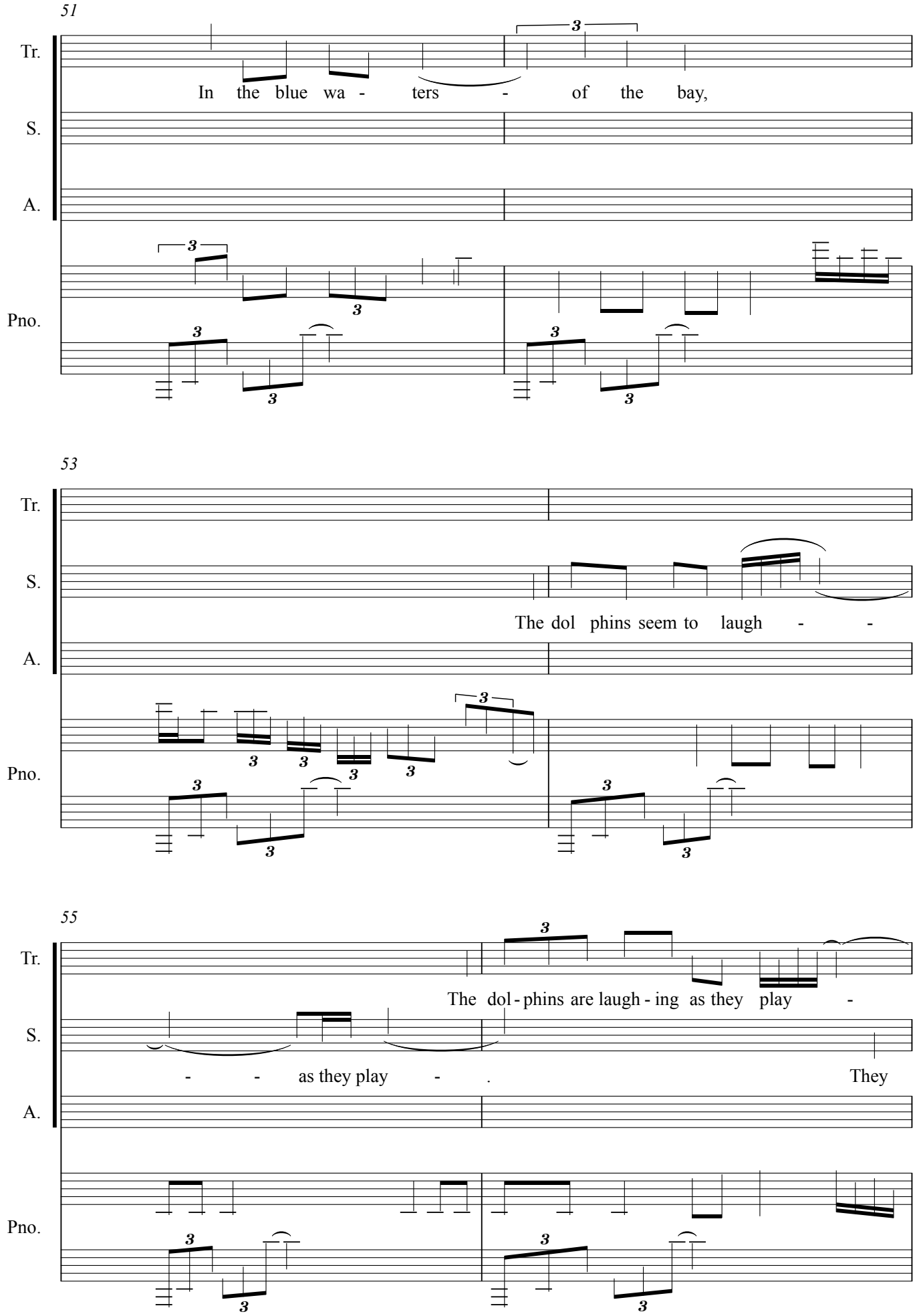
Tr.

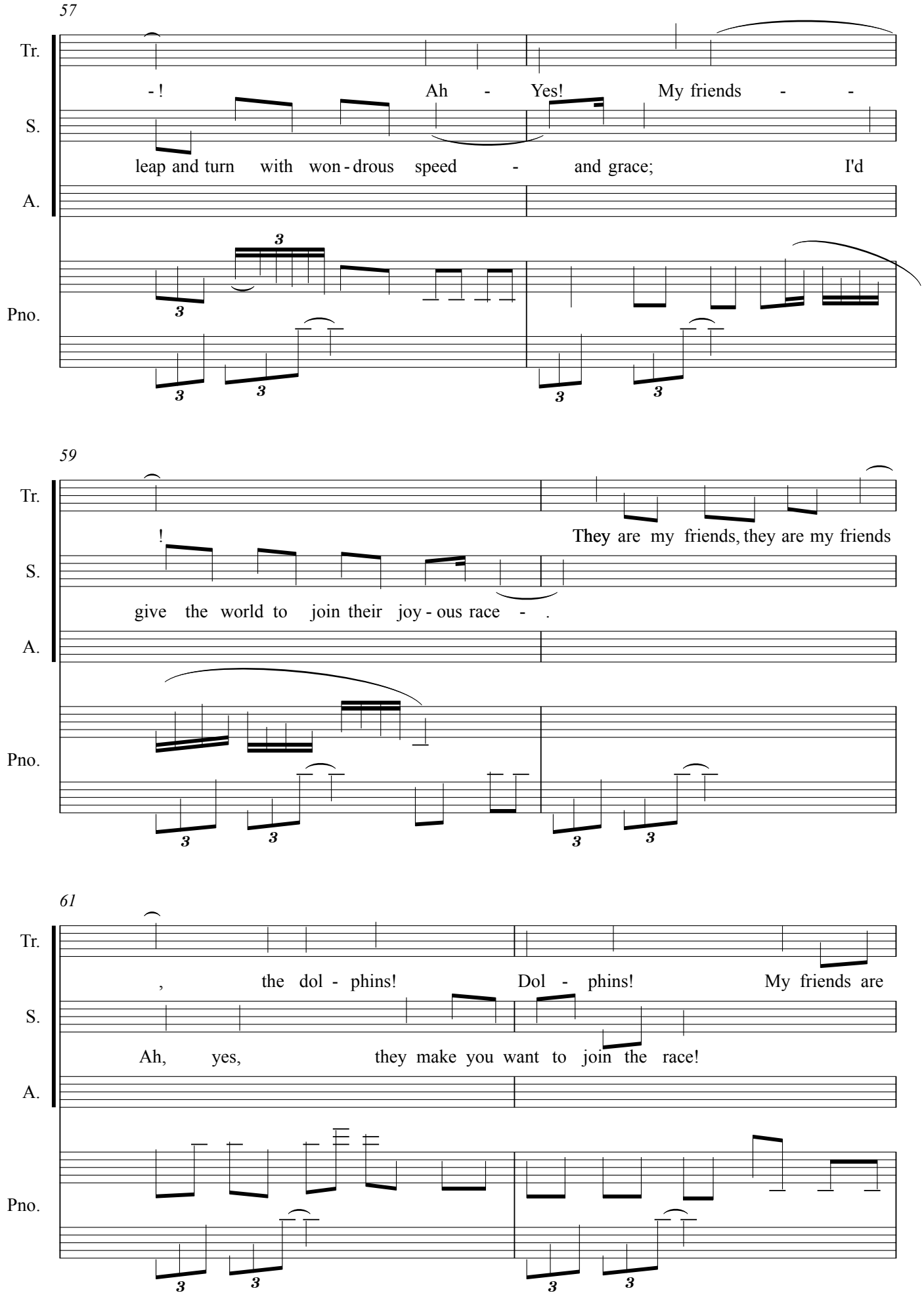
S.

- - - of the bay,(remember, Peter?)

A.

Pno.


51
Tr.
S.
A.
Pno.
In the blue wa - ters - of the bay,
53
The dol phins seem to laugh - -
55
The dol - phins are laugh - ing as they play -
- - as they play - . They


57
Tr.
-! Ah - Yes! My friends - -
S.
leap and turn with won-drous speed - and grace; I'd
A.
Pno.
59
Tr.
! They are my friends, they are my friends
S.
give the world to join their joy-ous race - .
A.
Pno.
61
Tr.
, the dol - phins! Dol - phins! My friends are
S.
Ah, yes, they make you want to join the race!
A.
Pno.

63

Tr.

dol - phins. They toldme se-crets of theirworldthat no-one

S.

Ah - !

A.

Pno.

3 3

66

Tr.

knows As we went skim - mingthroughthe waves to - ge - ther

S.

Ah - ! Ah - !

A.

Pno.

68

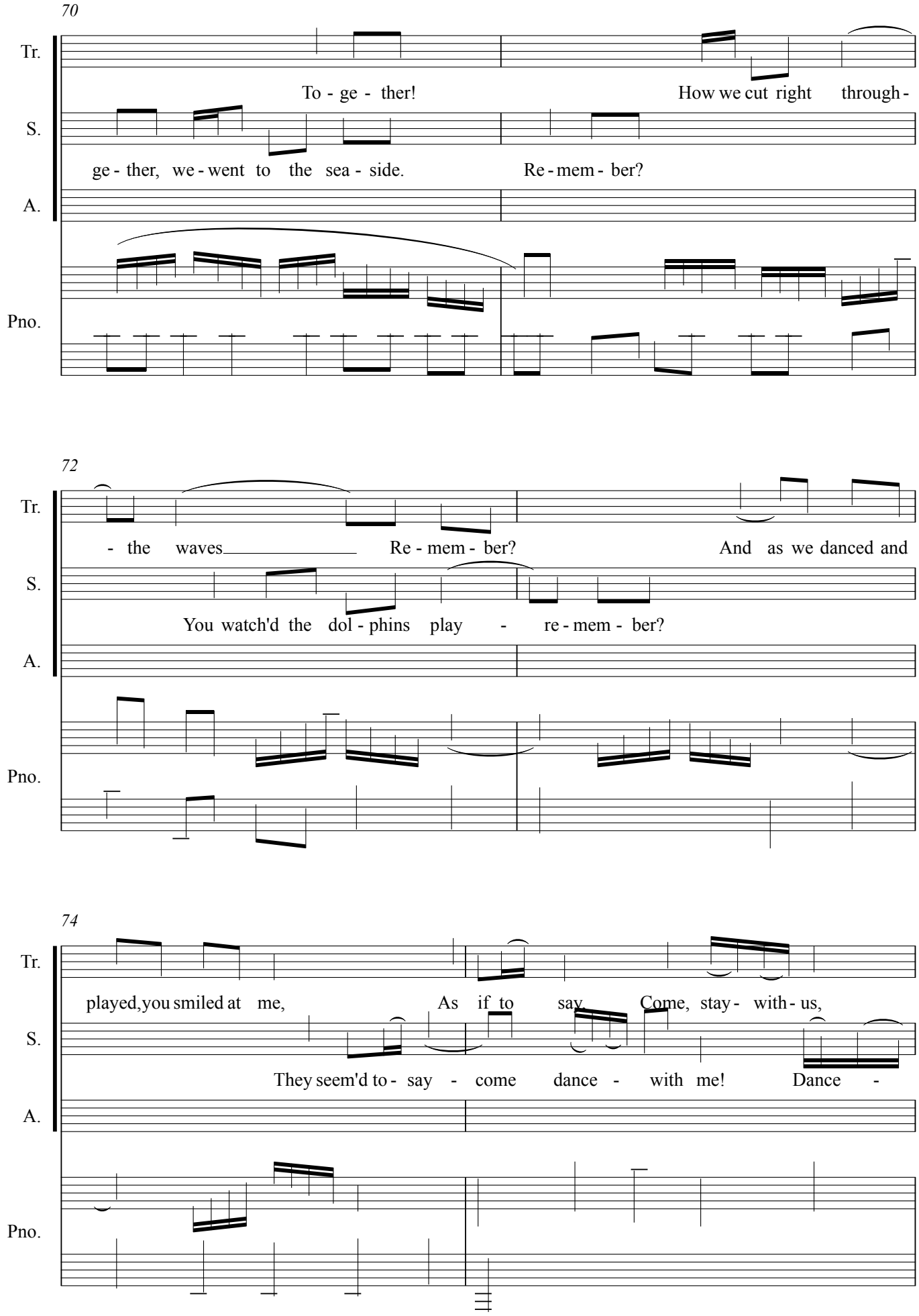
Tr.

S.

To -

A.

Pno.


70
Tr.
To - ge - ther!
How we cut right through -
S.
ge - ther, we - went to the sea - side.
Re - mem - ber?
A.
Pno.
72
Tr.
- the waves
Re - mem - ber?
And as we danced and
S.
You watch'd the dol - phins play - re - mem - ber?
A.
Pno.
74
Tr.
played, you smiled at me,
As if to say
Come, stay - with - us,
S.
They seem'd to - say - come dance - with me!
Dance -
A.
Pno.

76

Tr.

play - with - us! O, re - mem - ber how - we - danced and played! I will come

S.

, Dance - - with me! I re - mem - ber - ,

A.

Pno.

78

Tr.

and dance with you In the beau - ti - ful blue wa - ters

S.

I re - mem - ber - - - The beau - ti - ful blue wa - ters

A.

Pno.

81

allargando

Tr.

Will you come - and - dance - - - with me? I see

S.

Re - mem - ber how you laugh - and - smiled - at - me!

A.

allargando

Pno.

83 **Grave**

Tr.

you! We will laugh and fly through the waves!

S.

p I have the pho - to - graphs to - re - mind me.

A.

Grave

Pno.

p

86

Tr.

I can hear you! Oh,

S.

Pho - to - graphs to re mind me of my son.

A.

Pno.

90 *legato e espress.*

Tr.

it is so ea - sy to fly to the ve - ry

S.

A.

Pno.

pp

92

Tr.

edge And look at the waves - . See how they stre -

S.

A.

Pno.

95

Tr.

tch far off in - to the dis - tance! Then dive, dive down

S.

We were to - ge - ther..

A.

Pno.

98

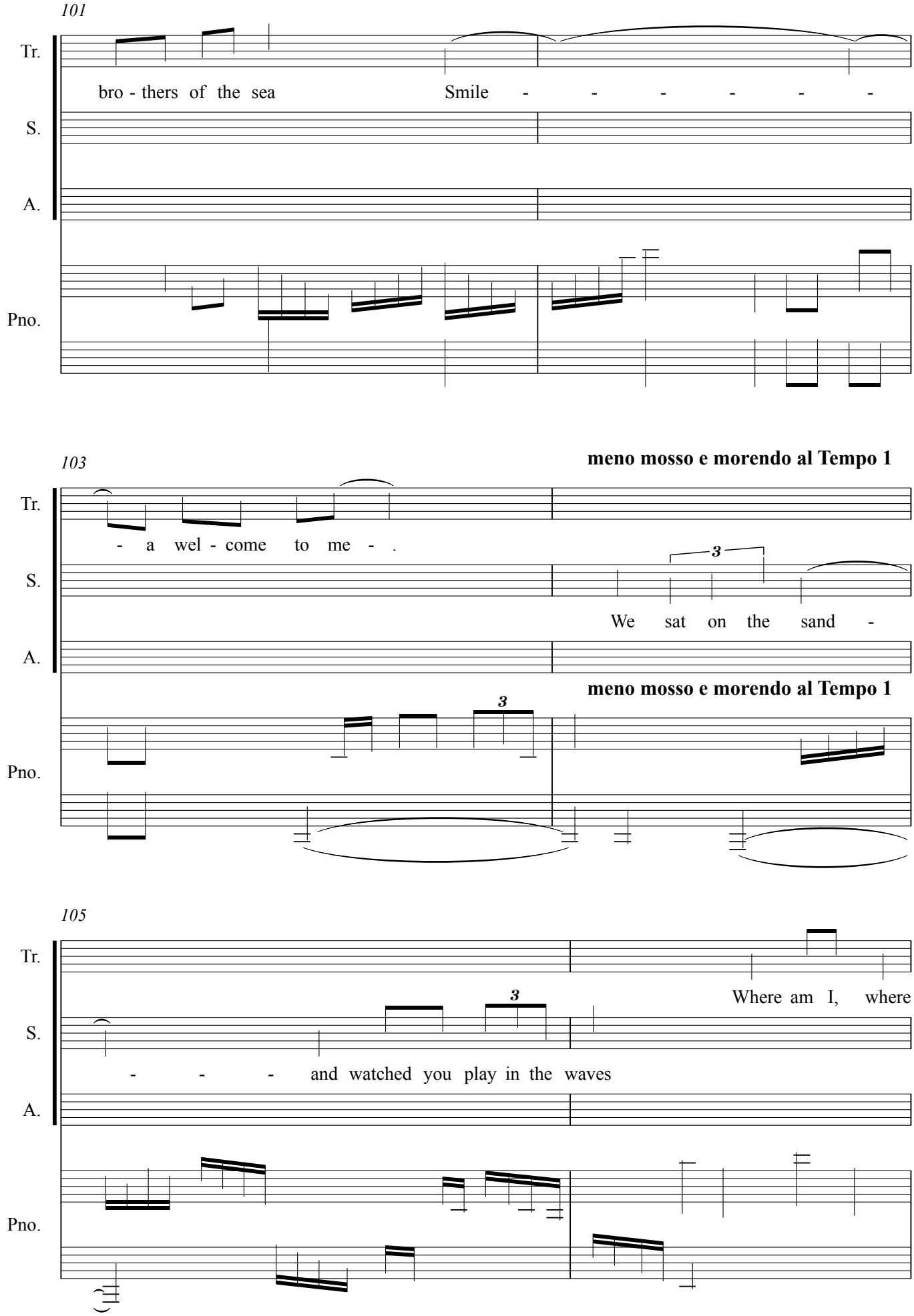
Tr.

deep in - to the blue depths of the bay - - - , Where my

S.

A.

Pno.


101
Tr.
bro - thers of the sea
Smile - - - - - -
S.
A.
Pno.
103
meno mosso e morendo al Tempo 1
Tr.
- a wel - come to me - .
S.
3
We sat on the sand -
A.
meno mosso e morendo al Tempo 1
3
Pno.
105
Tr.
Where am I, where
3
S.
- - - and watched you play in the waves
A.
Pno.

107

Tr.

am I meant to be? Mo - ther - ! Can't you hear Me?

S.

Ah -

A.

Pno.

110

Tr.

Mo - ther!! Mo - ther - !

S.

-, Ah - ! Those were the days!

A.

Pno.

cresc. ***f***

114

Tempo primo

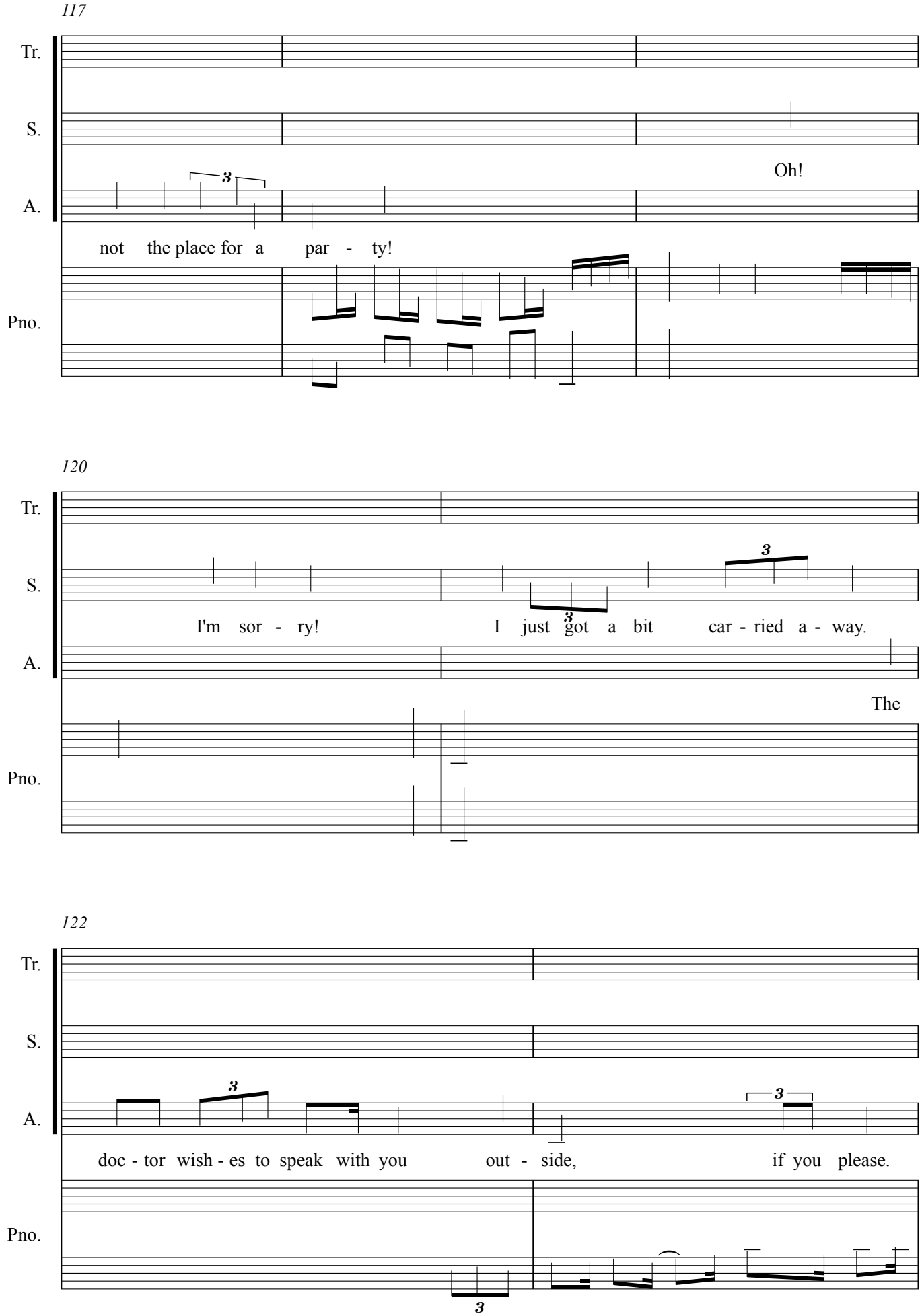
Tr.

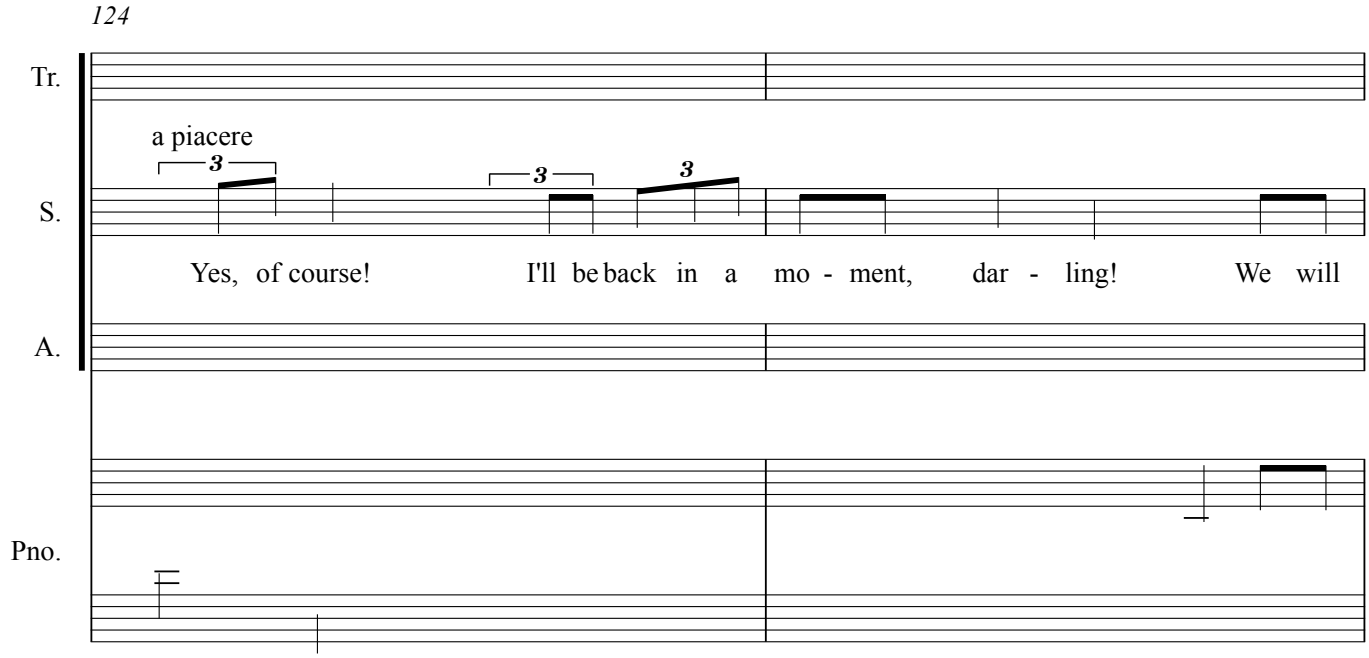
S.

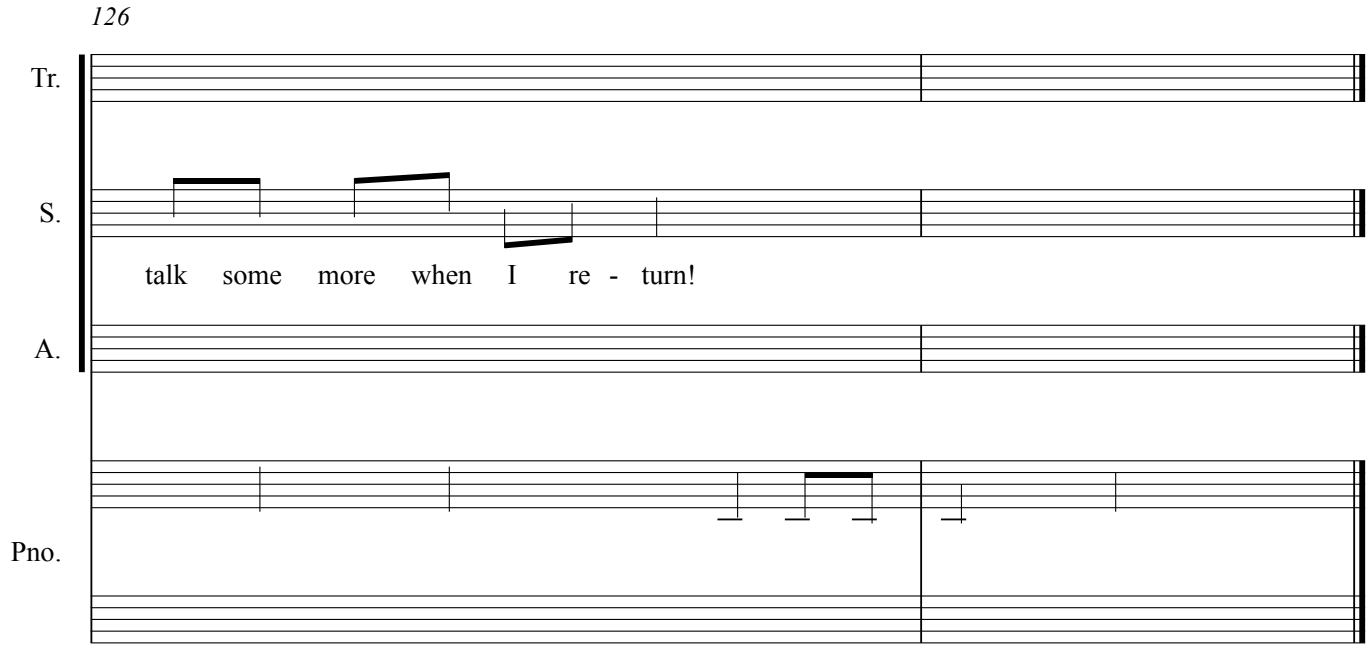
A.

Tempo primo ***ff*** Well! Now, what is this, might I ask? A hos - pit - al ward is

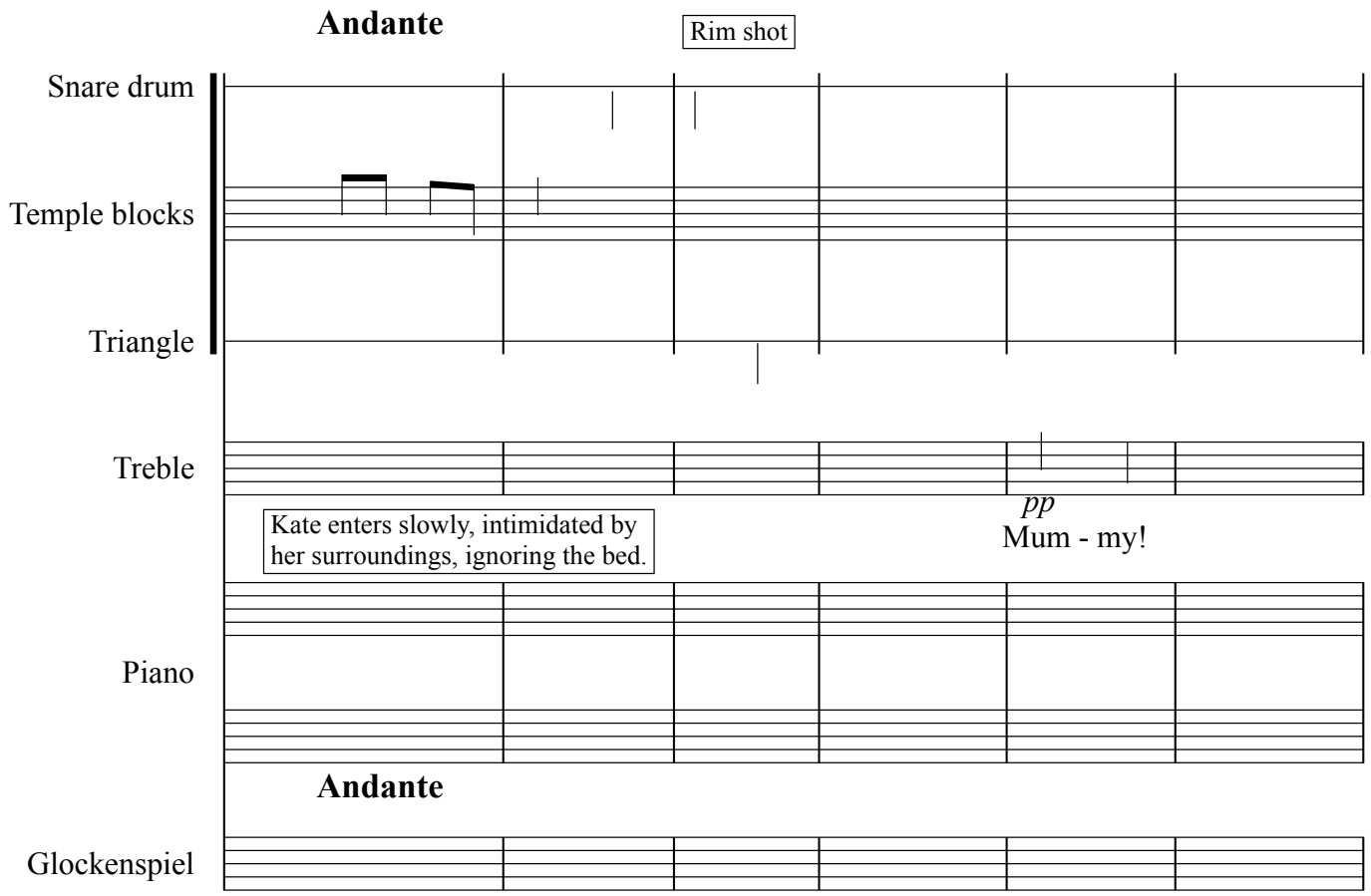
Pno.

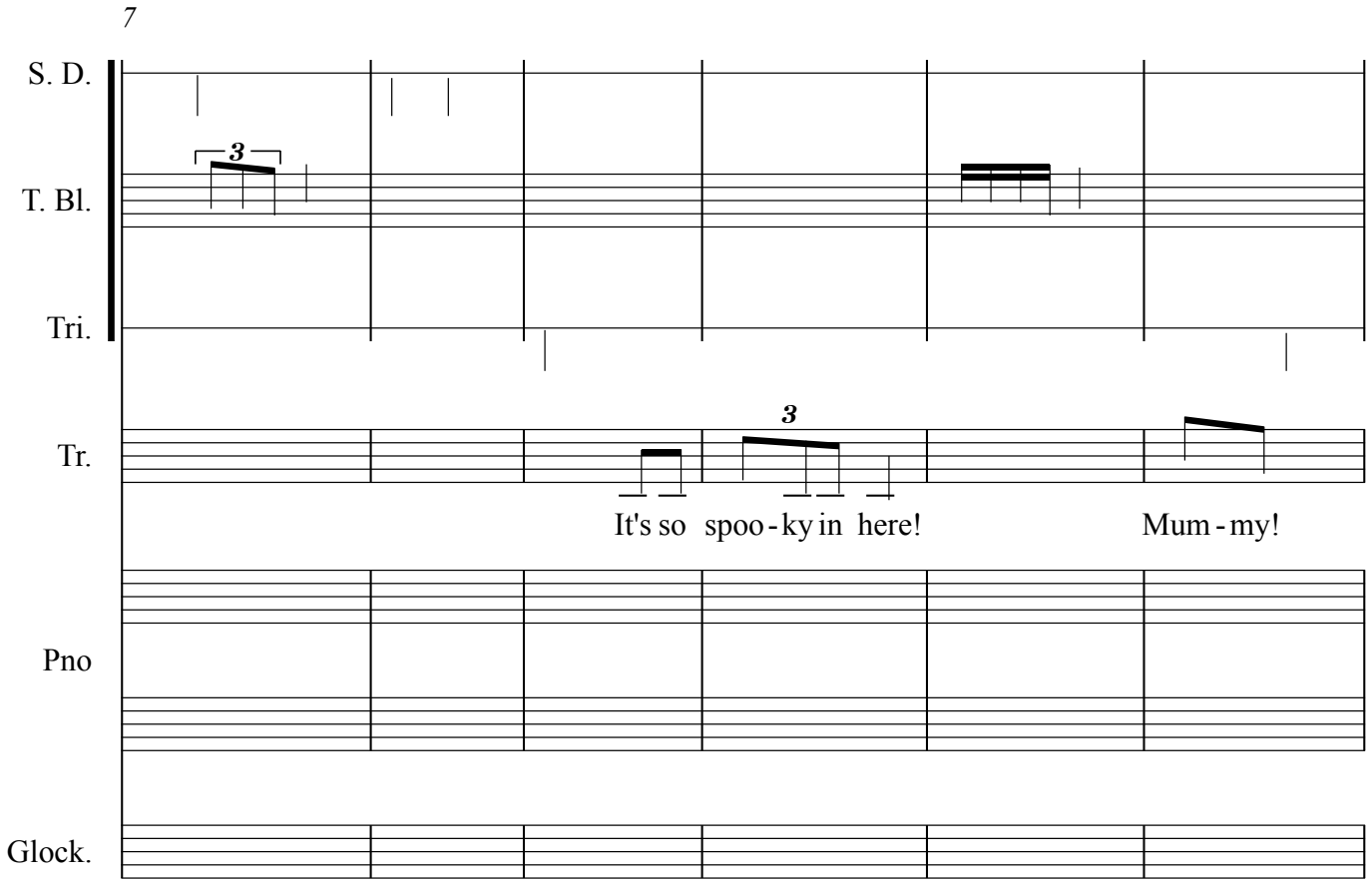

117
Tr.
S.
A.
Pno.
Oh!
not the place for a par - ty!
120
I'm sor - ry!
I just got a bit car - ried a - way.
The
122
doc - tor wish - es to speak with you out - side, if you please.

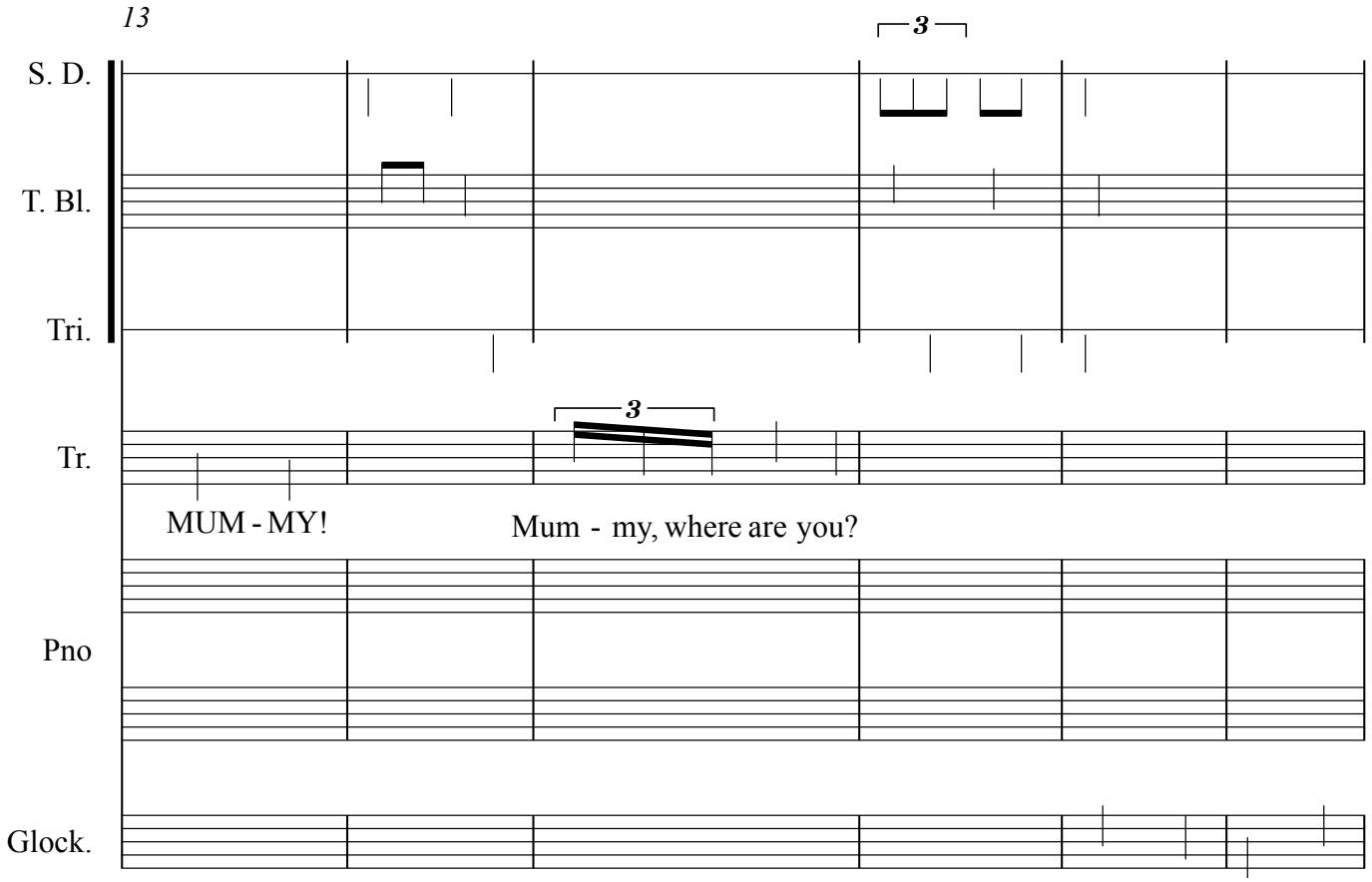

124
Tr.
a piacere
S.
Yes, of course! I'll be back in a mo - ment, dar - ling! We will
A.
Pno.

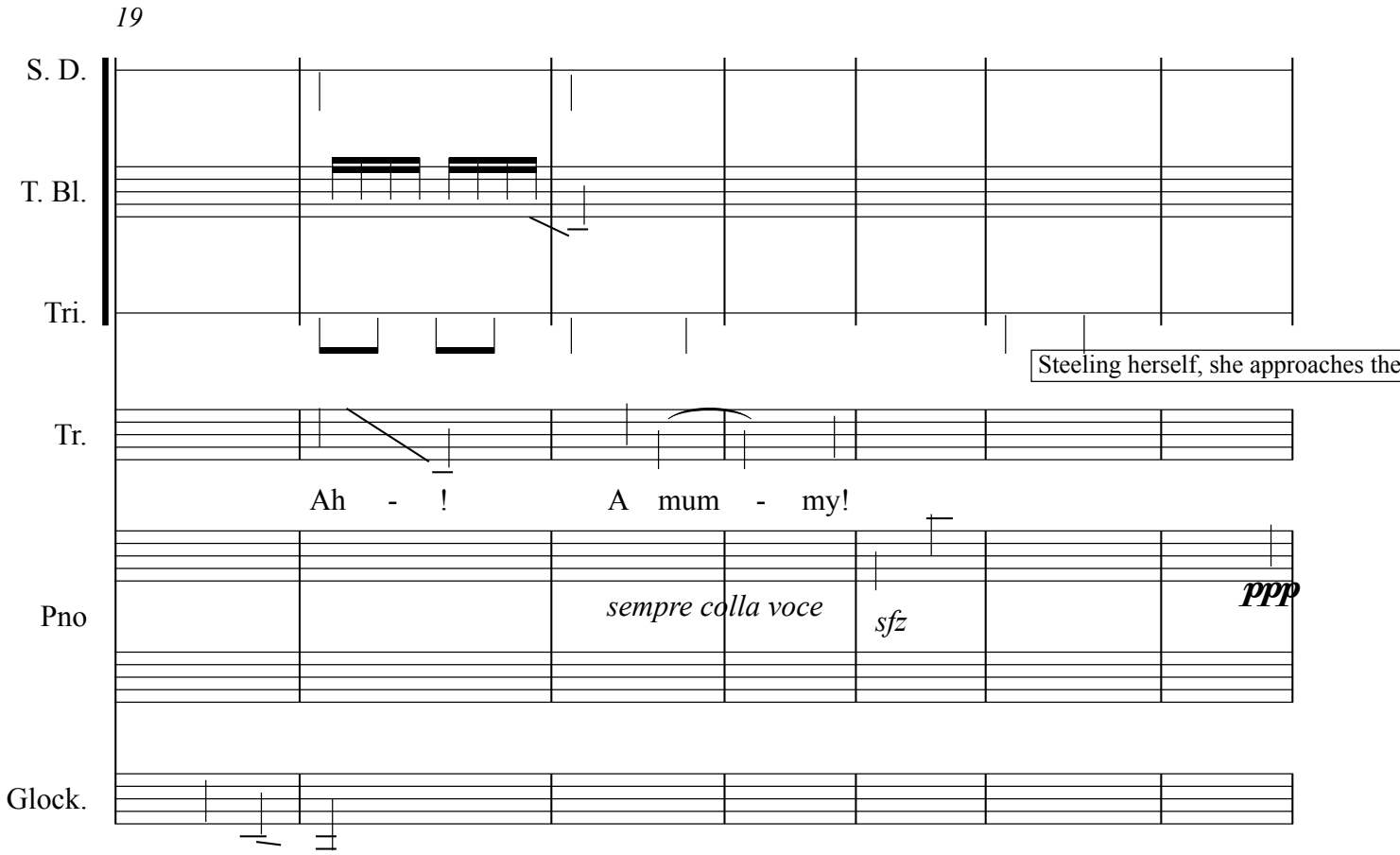

126
Tr.
S.
talk some more when I re - turn!
A.
Pno.

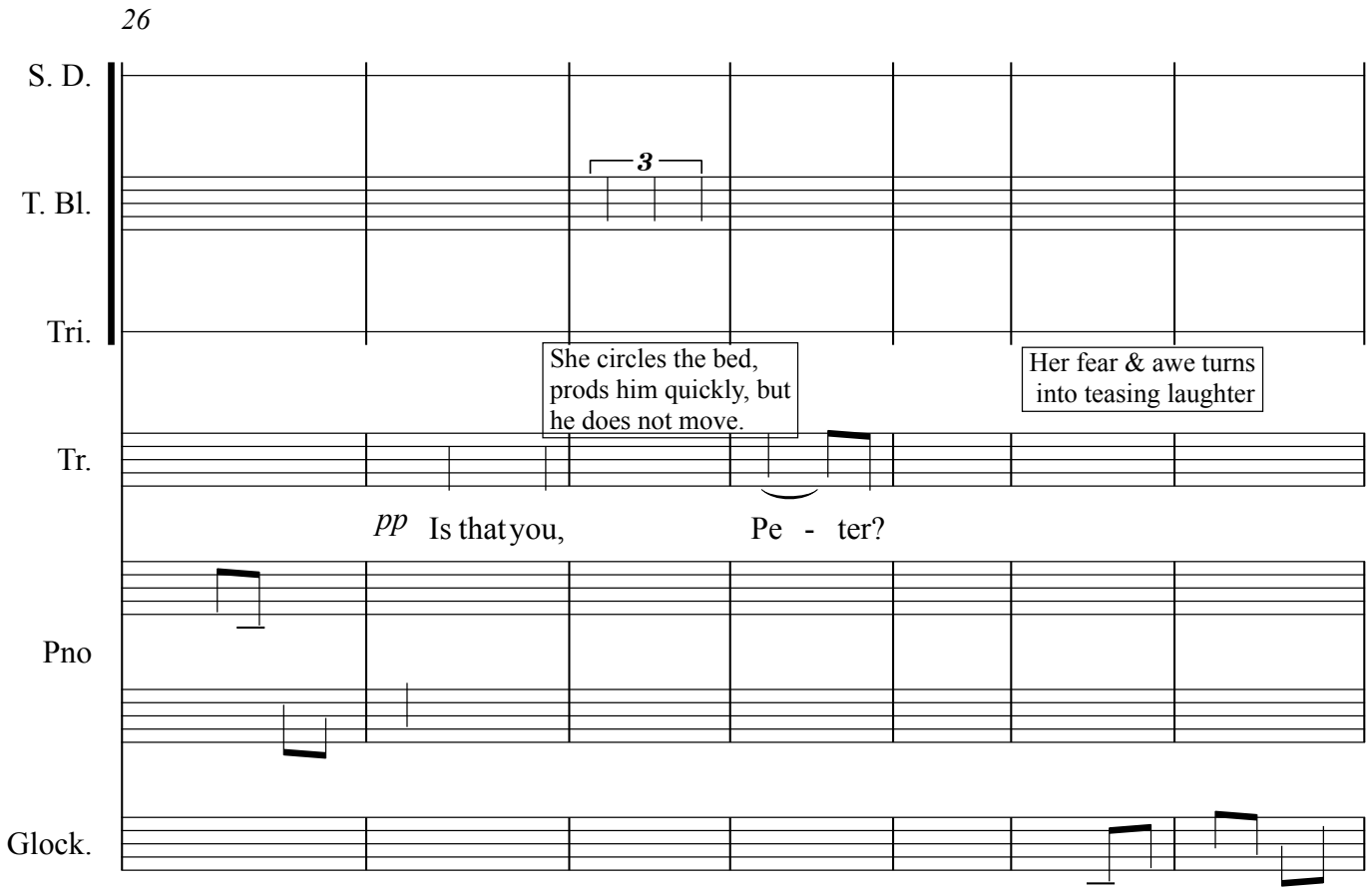
The Boy: Sc.IV

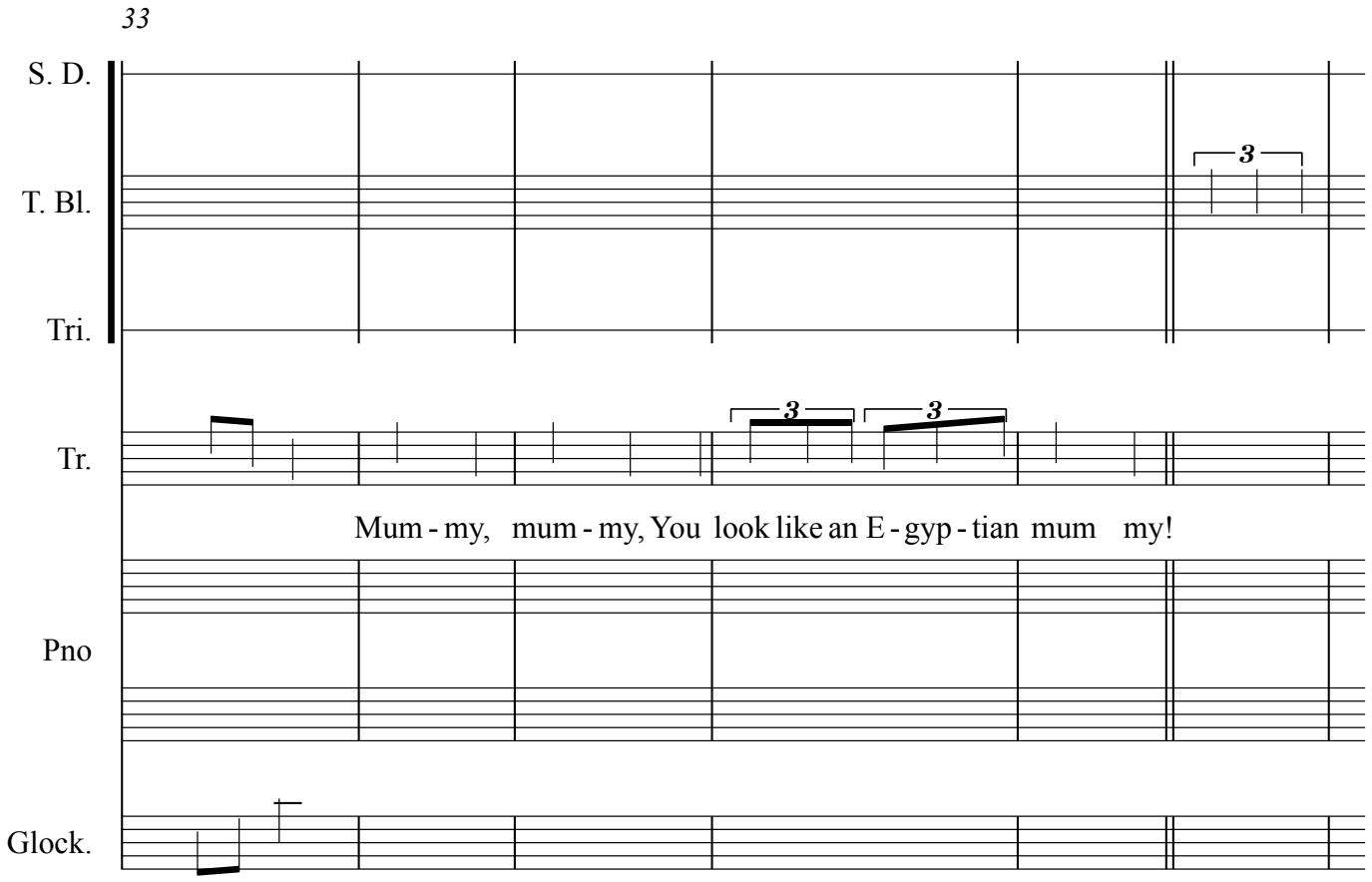

Andante
Rim shot
Snare drum
Temple blocks
Triangle
Treble
pp
Mum - my!
Kate enters slowly, intimidated by her surroundings, ignoring the bed.
Piano
Andante
Glockenspiel


7
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
3
Tr.
3
It's so spoo - ky in here!
Mum - my!
Pno
Glock.


13
3
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
3
Tr.
MUM - MY!
Mum - my, where are you?
Pno
Glock.


19
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
Steeling herself, she approaches the
Tr.
Ah - ! A mum - my!
Pno
sempre colla voce
sfz
ppp
Glock.


26
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
3
She circles the bed, prods him quickly, but he does not move.
Her fear & awe turns into teasing laughter
Tr.
pp Is that you, Pe - ter?
Pno
Glock.


33
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
3
Tr.
3
3
Mum - my, mum - my, You look like an E - gyp - tian mum my!
Pno
Glock.

39

S. D.

T. Bl.

Tri.

Kate is convulsed with laughter

Tr.

Mum - my's lit - tle dar ling Pe -ter! Pe- ter Pump kin head!!!

Pno

Glock.

42

S. D.

T. Bl.

Tri.

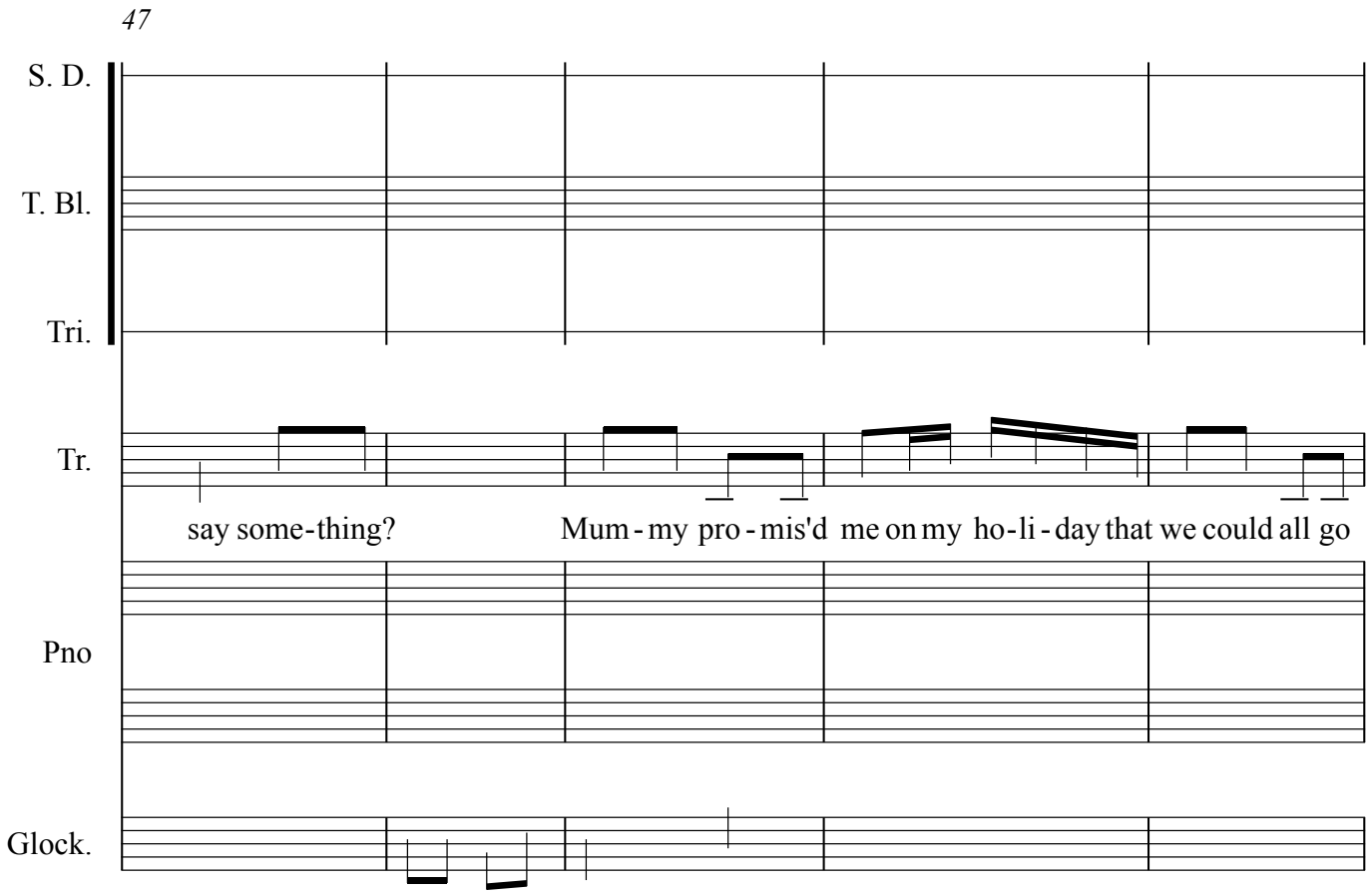
Tr.

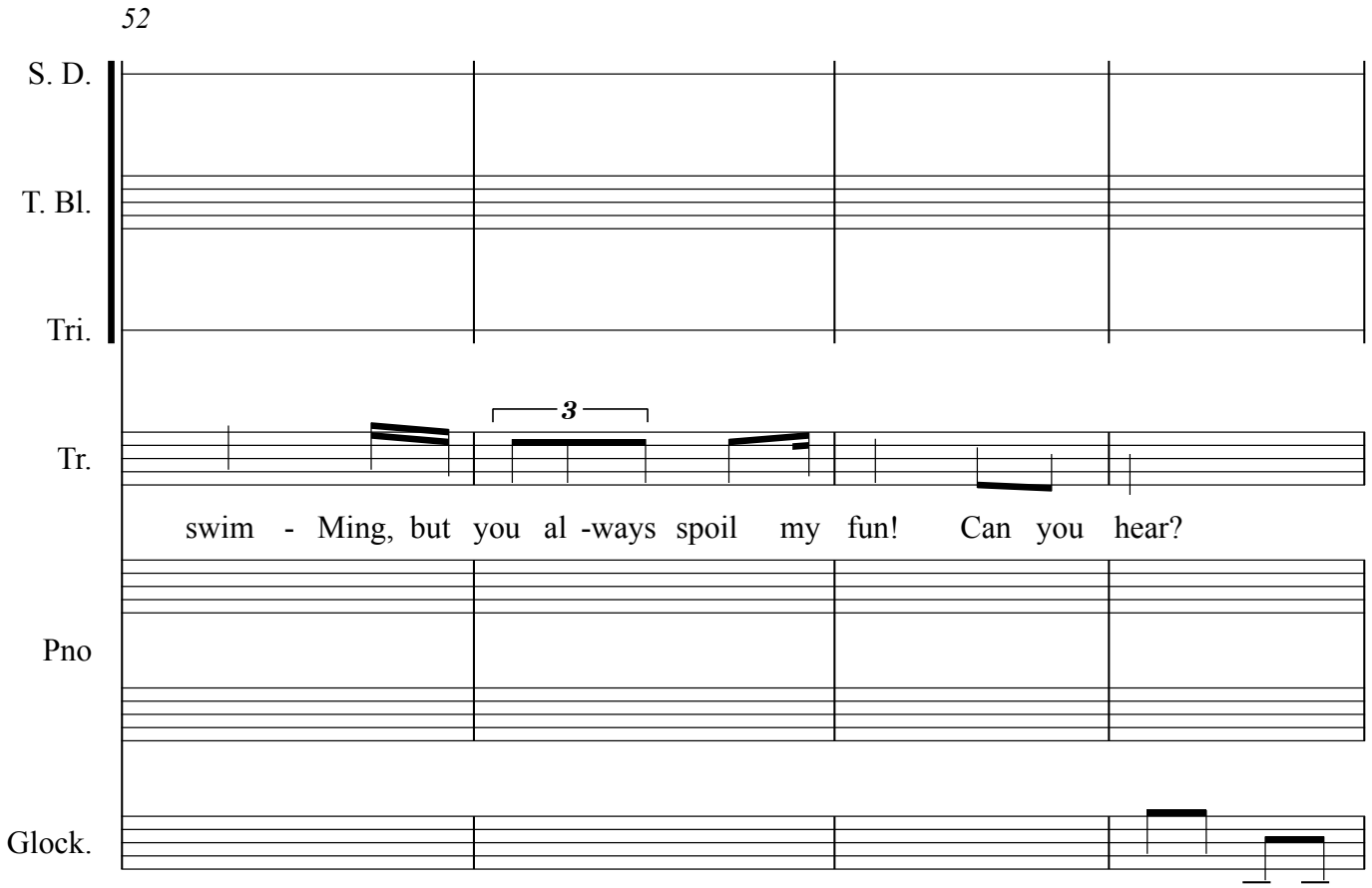
3

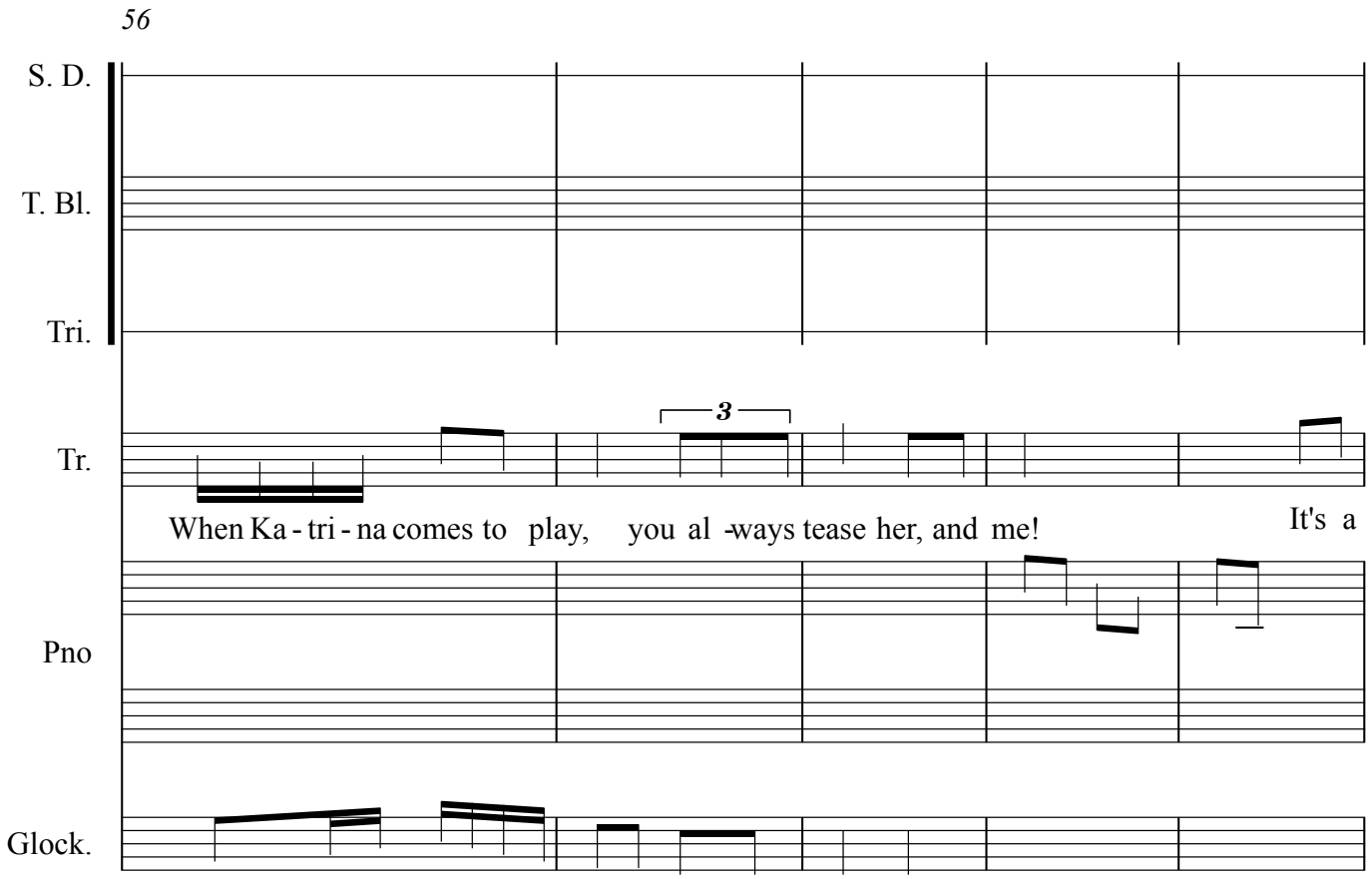
Why don't you

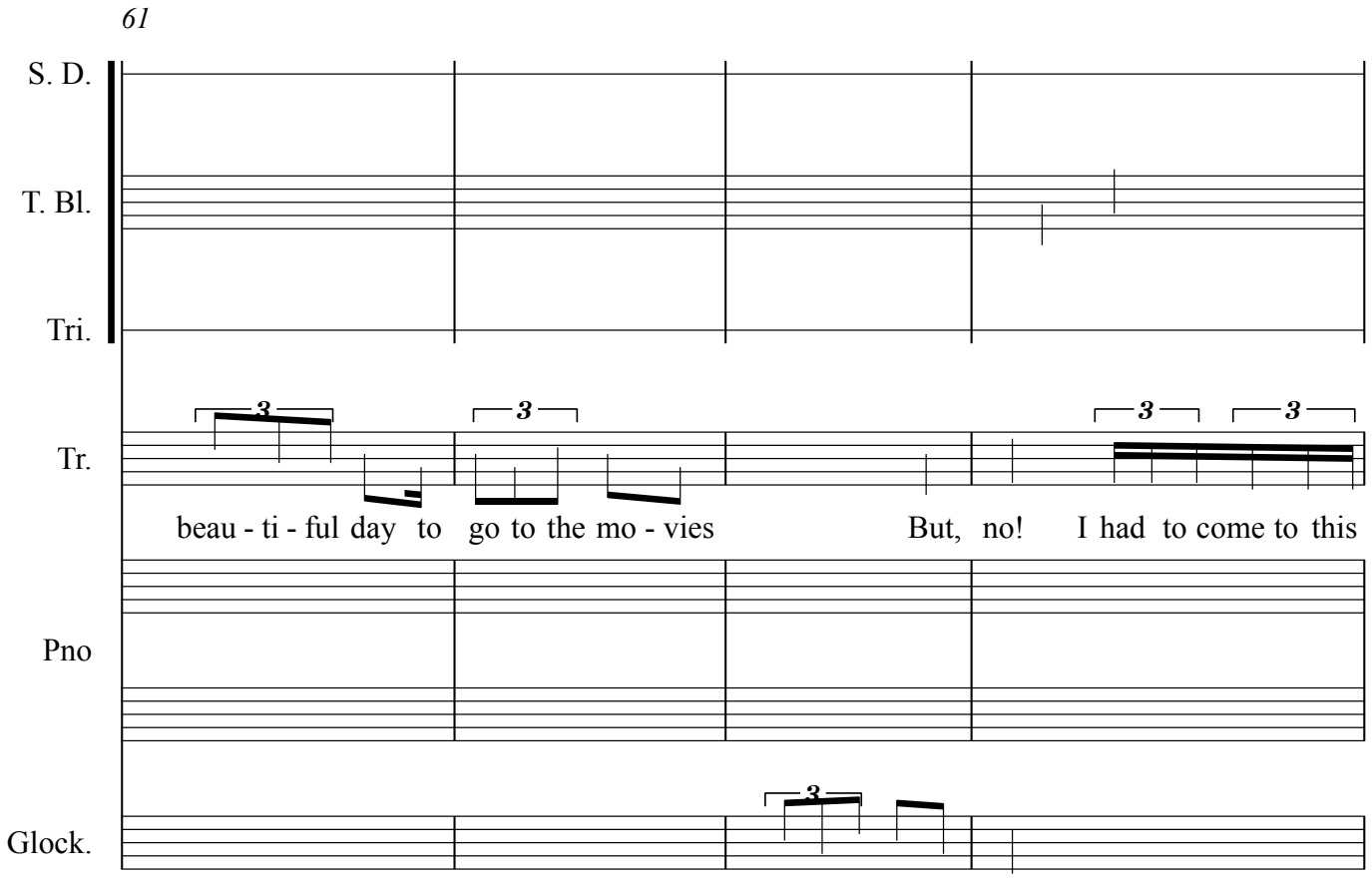
Pno

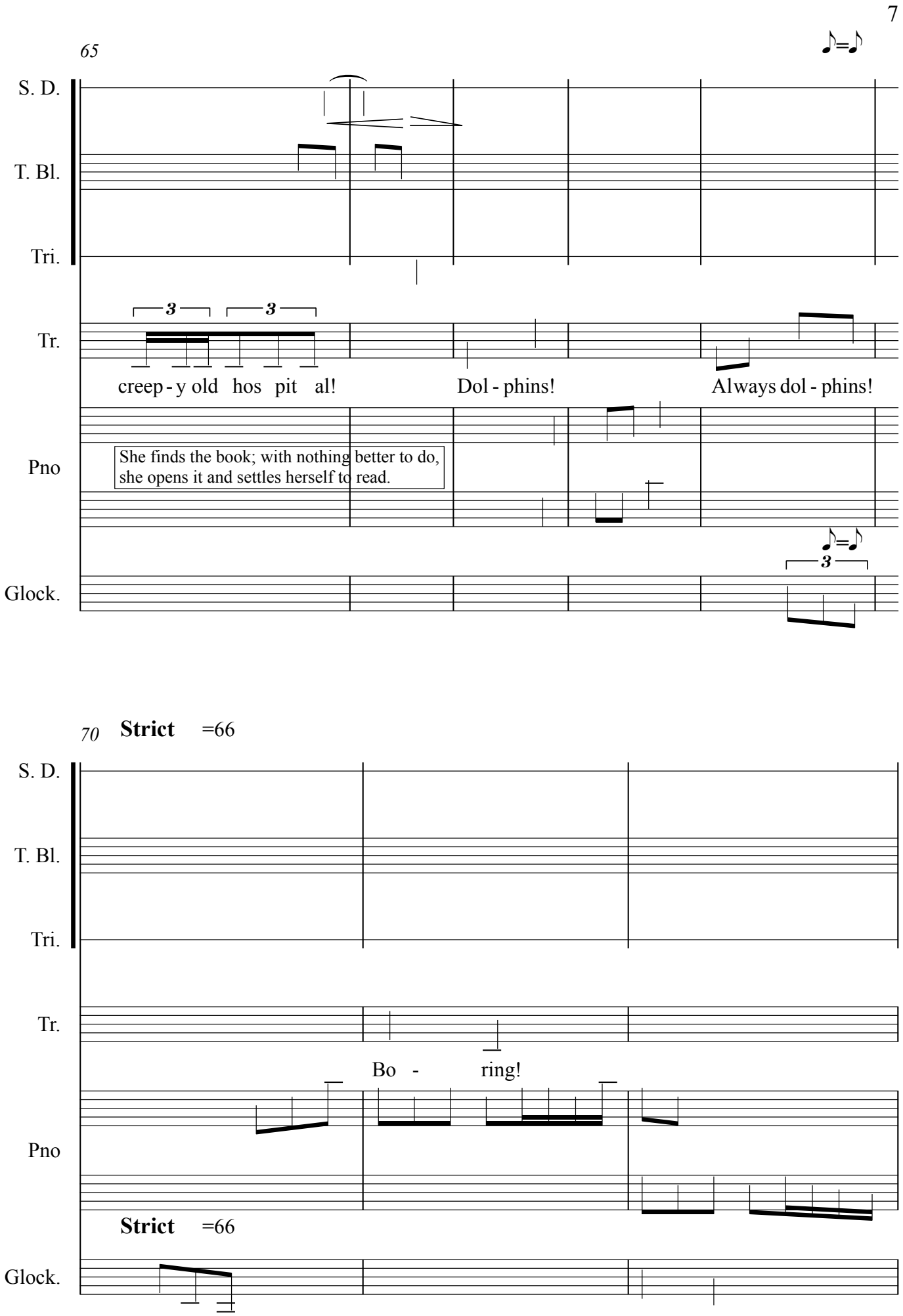
Glock.

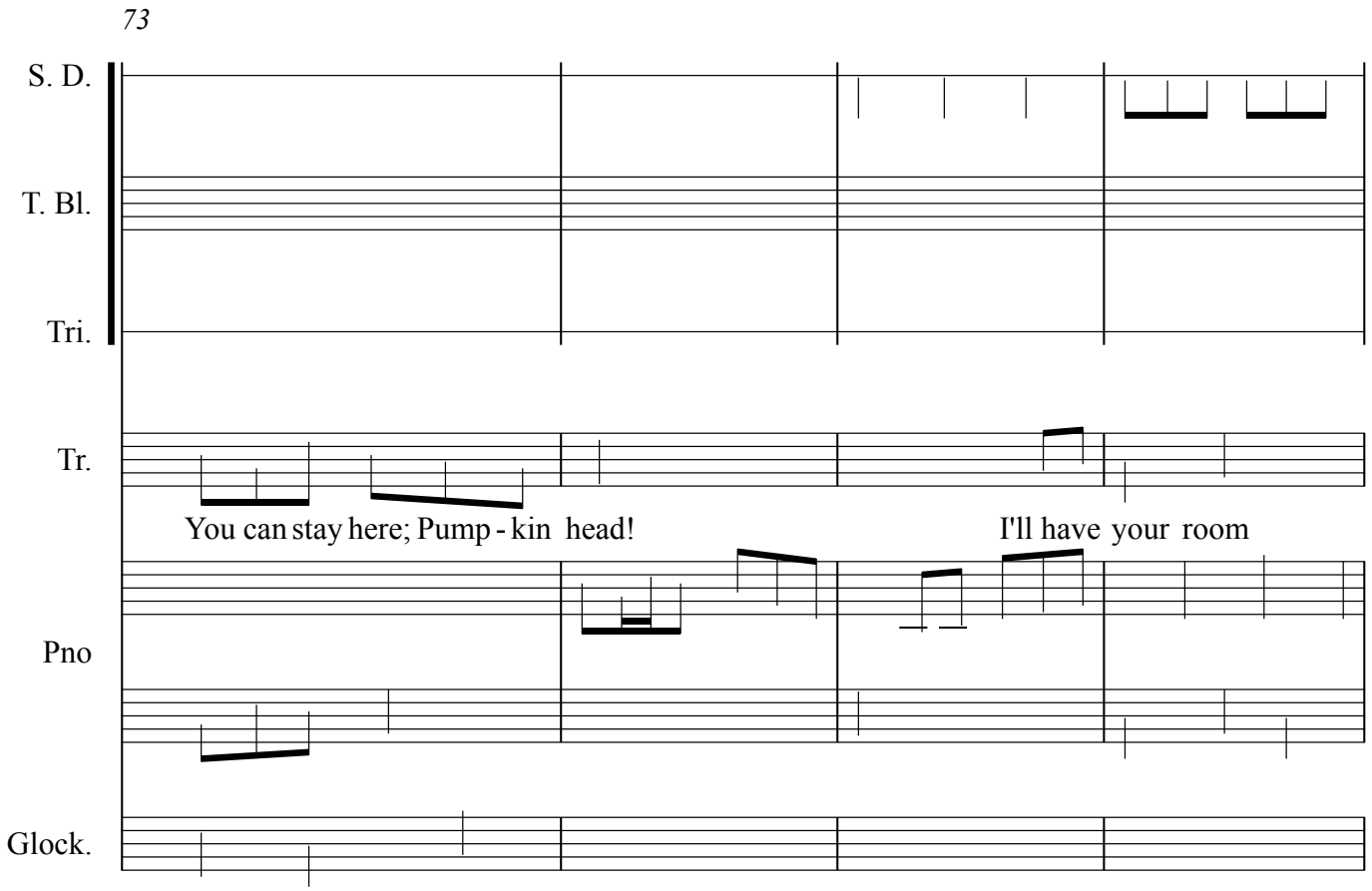

47
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
Tr.
say some-thing?
Mum - my pro - mis'd me on my ho-li - day that we could all go
Pno
Glock.

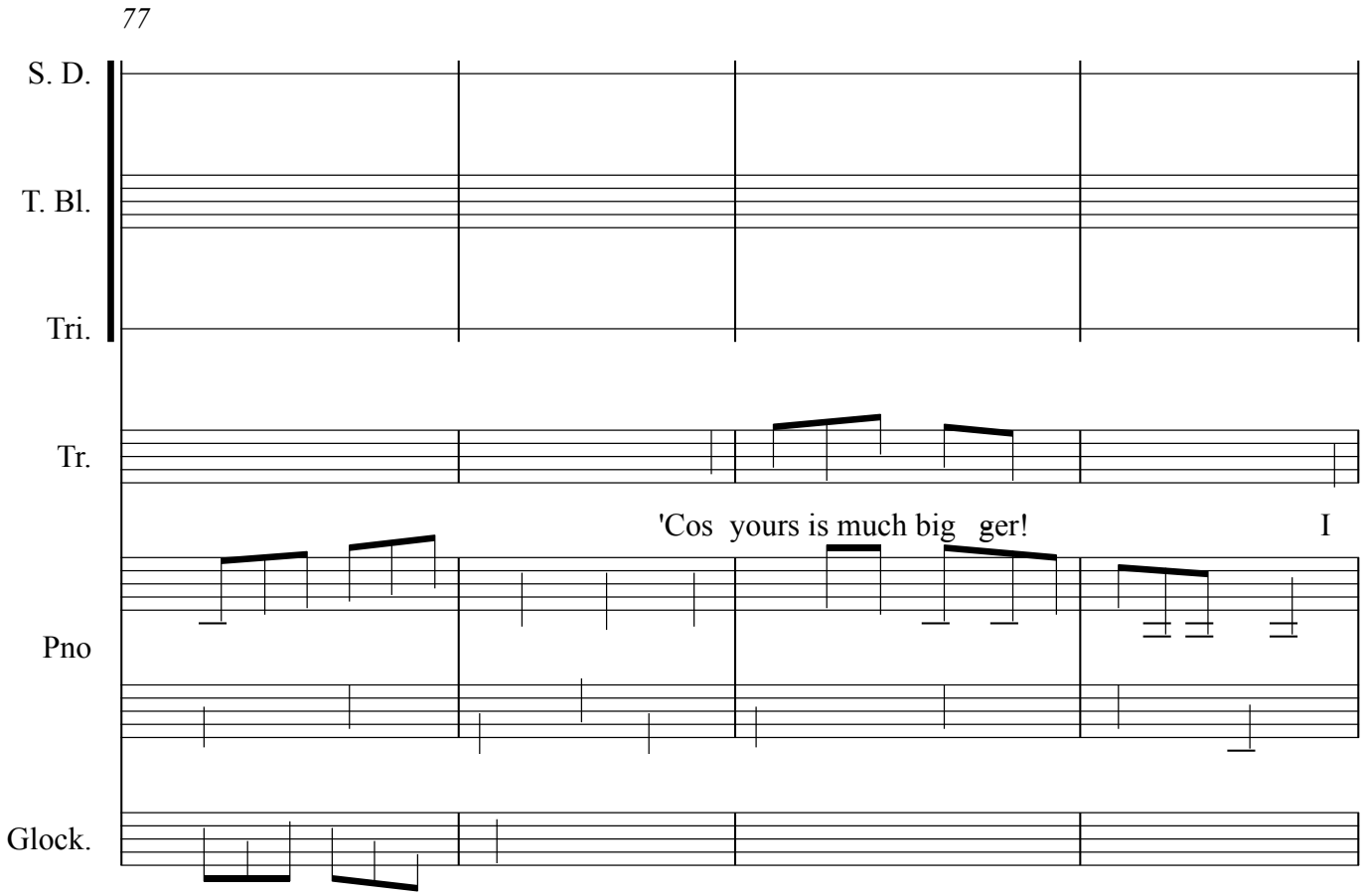

52
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
Tr.
3
swim - Ming, but you al -ways spoil my fun! Can you hear?
Pno
Glock.

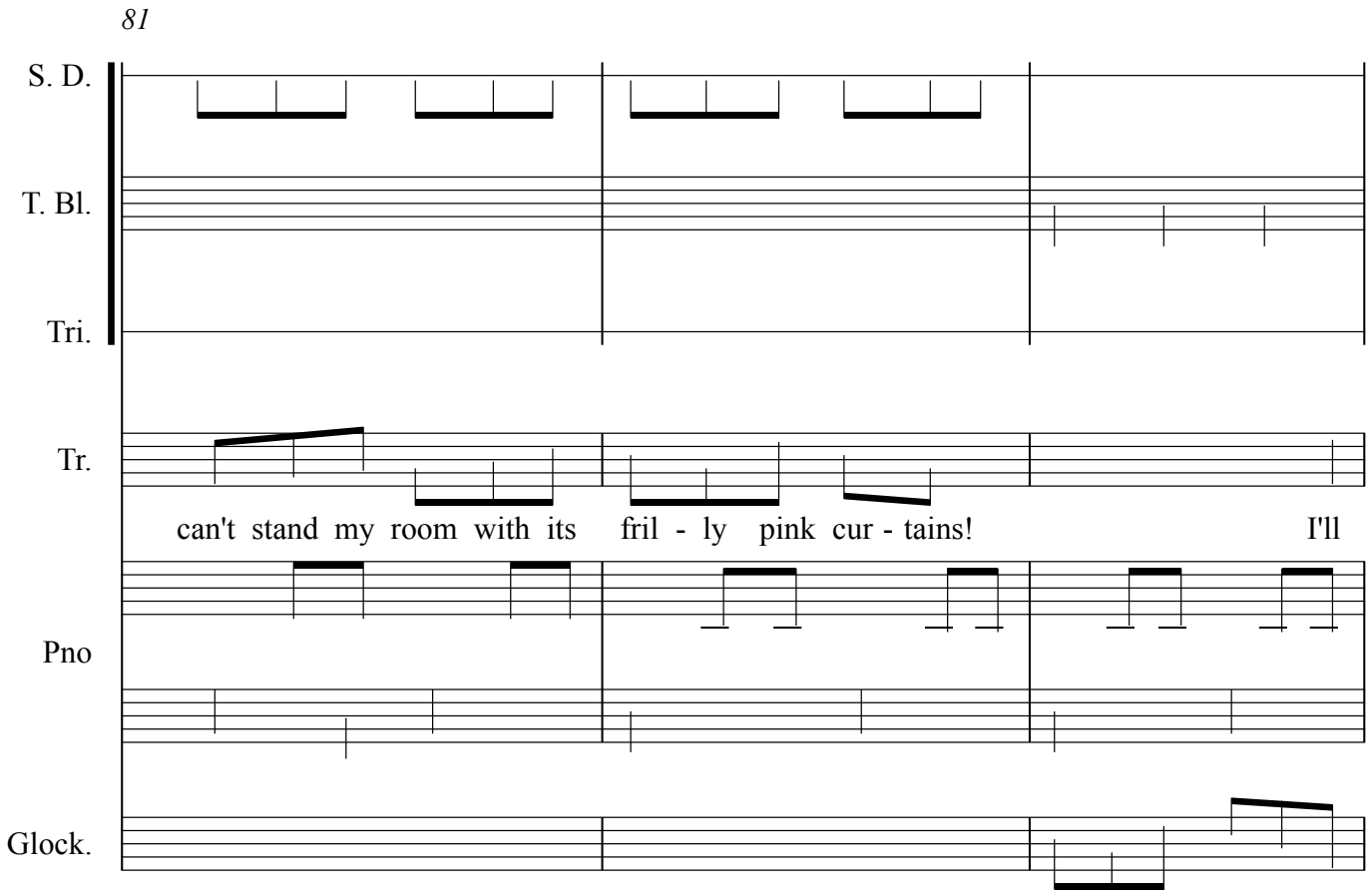

56
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
Tr.
3
When Ka - tri - na comes to play, you al -ways tease her, and me!
It's a
Pno
Glock.

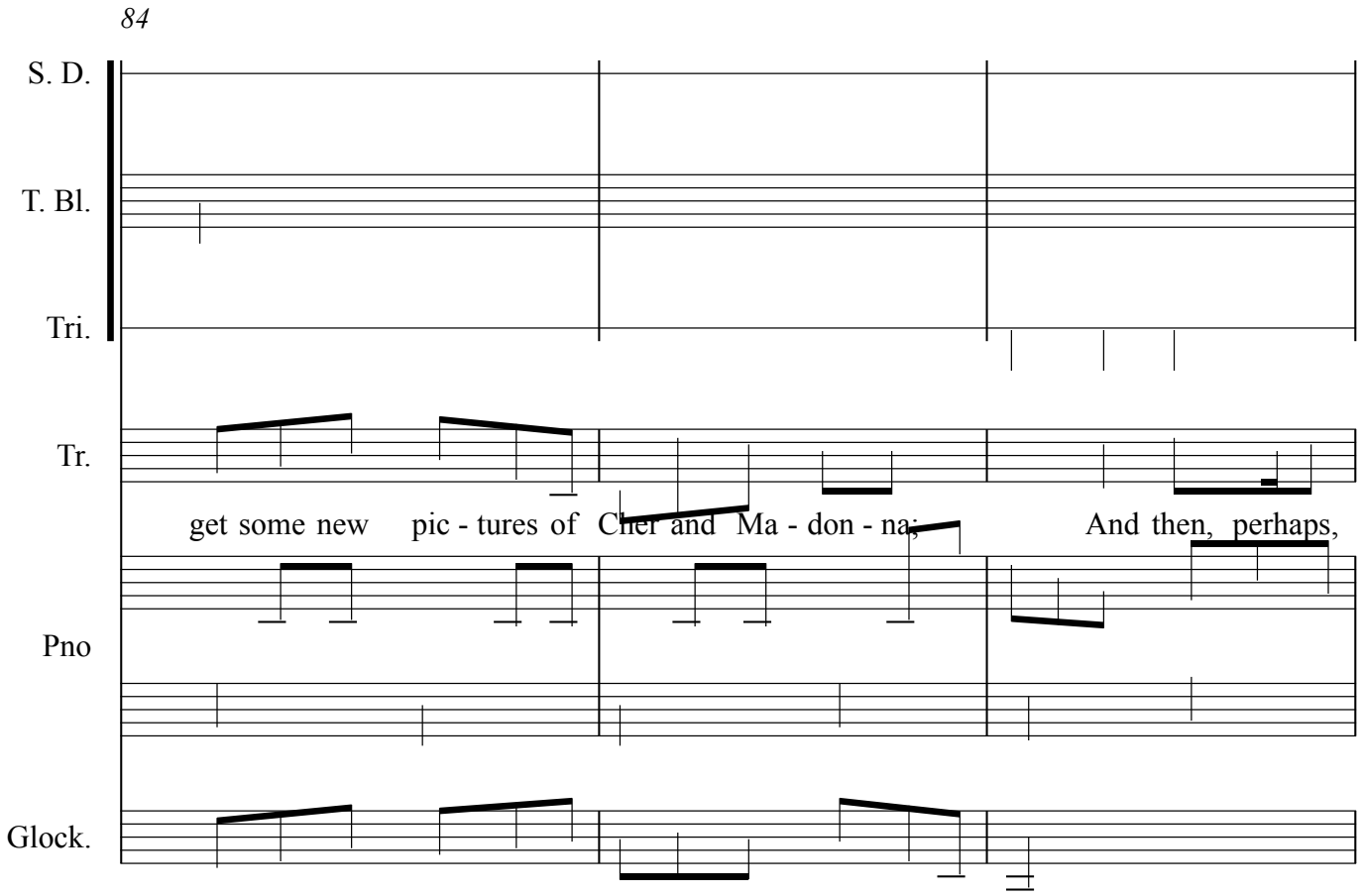

61
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
Tr.
3
beau - ti - ful day to go to the mo - vies
But, no! I had to come to this
Pno
Glock.

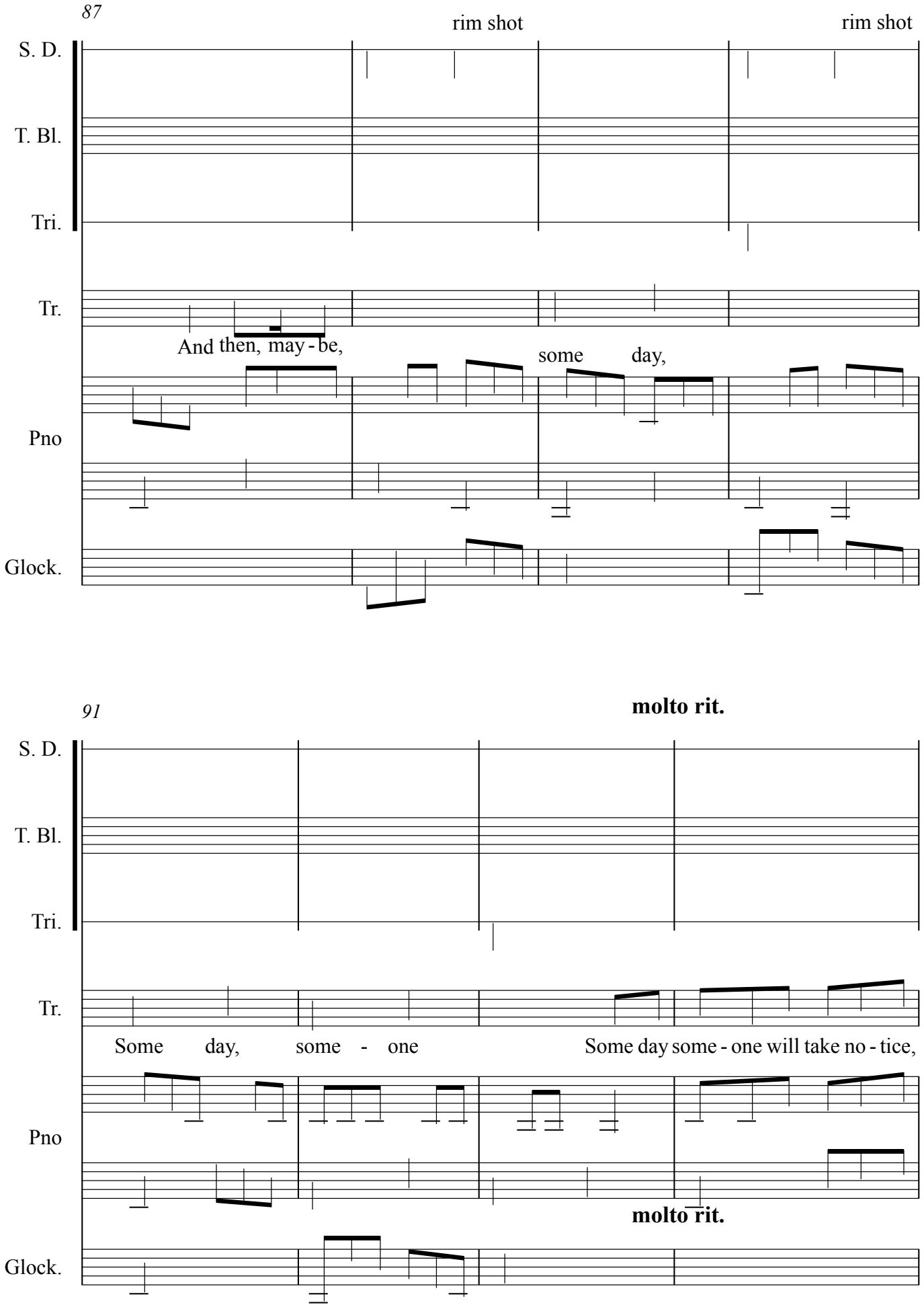

65
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
Tr.
creep - y old hos pit al!
Dol - phins!
Always dol - phins!
Pno
She finds the book; with nothing better to do,
she opens it and settles herself to read.
Glock.
70
Strict =66
Bo - ring!
Strict =66

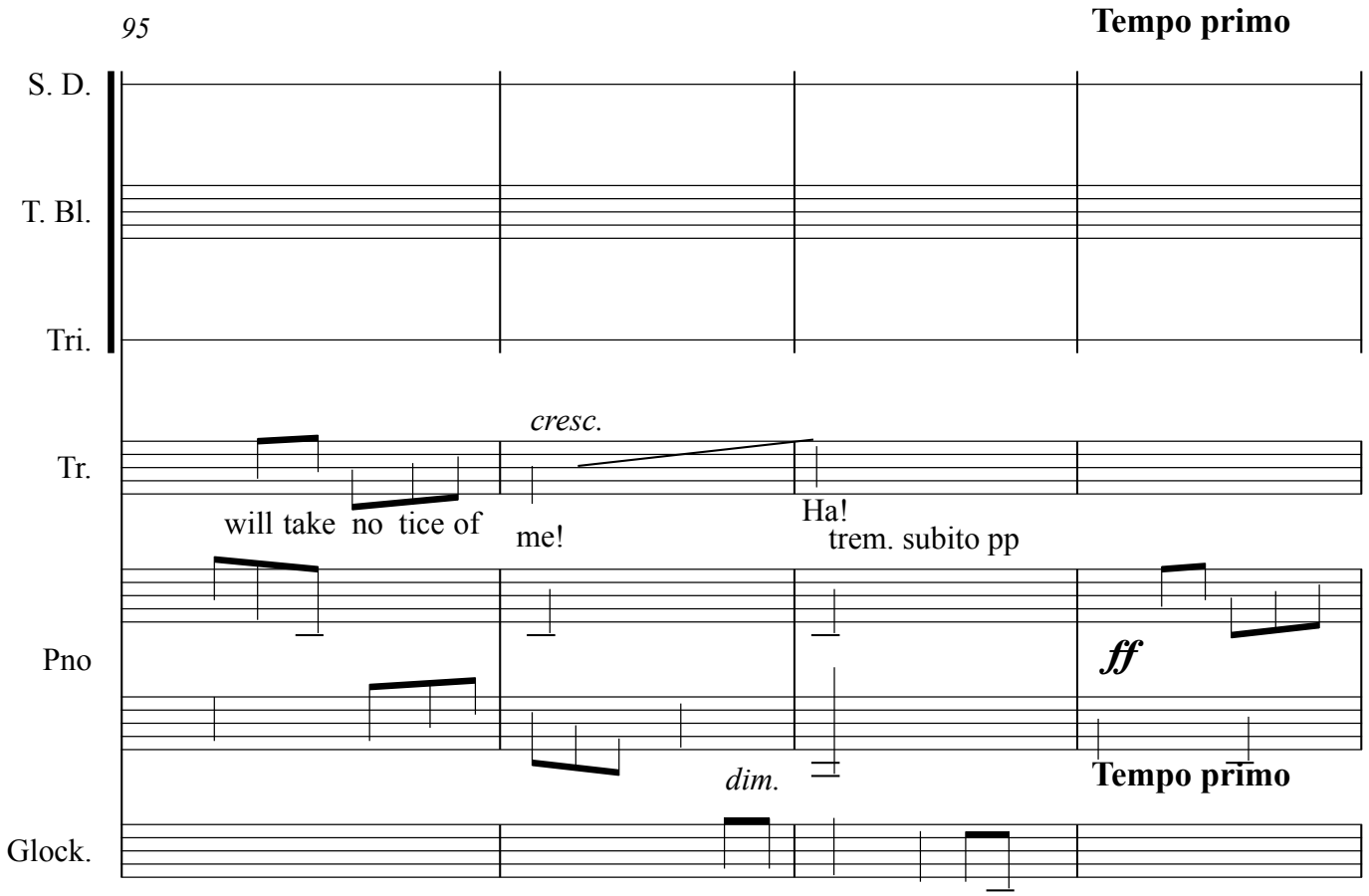

73
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
Tr.
You can stay here; Pump - kin head!
I'll have your room
Pno
Glock.

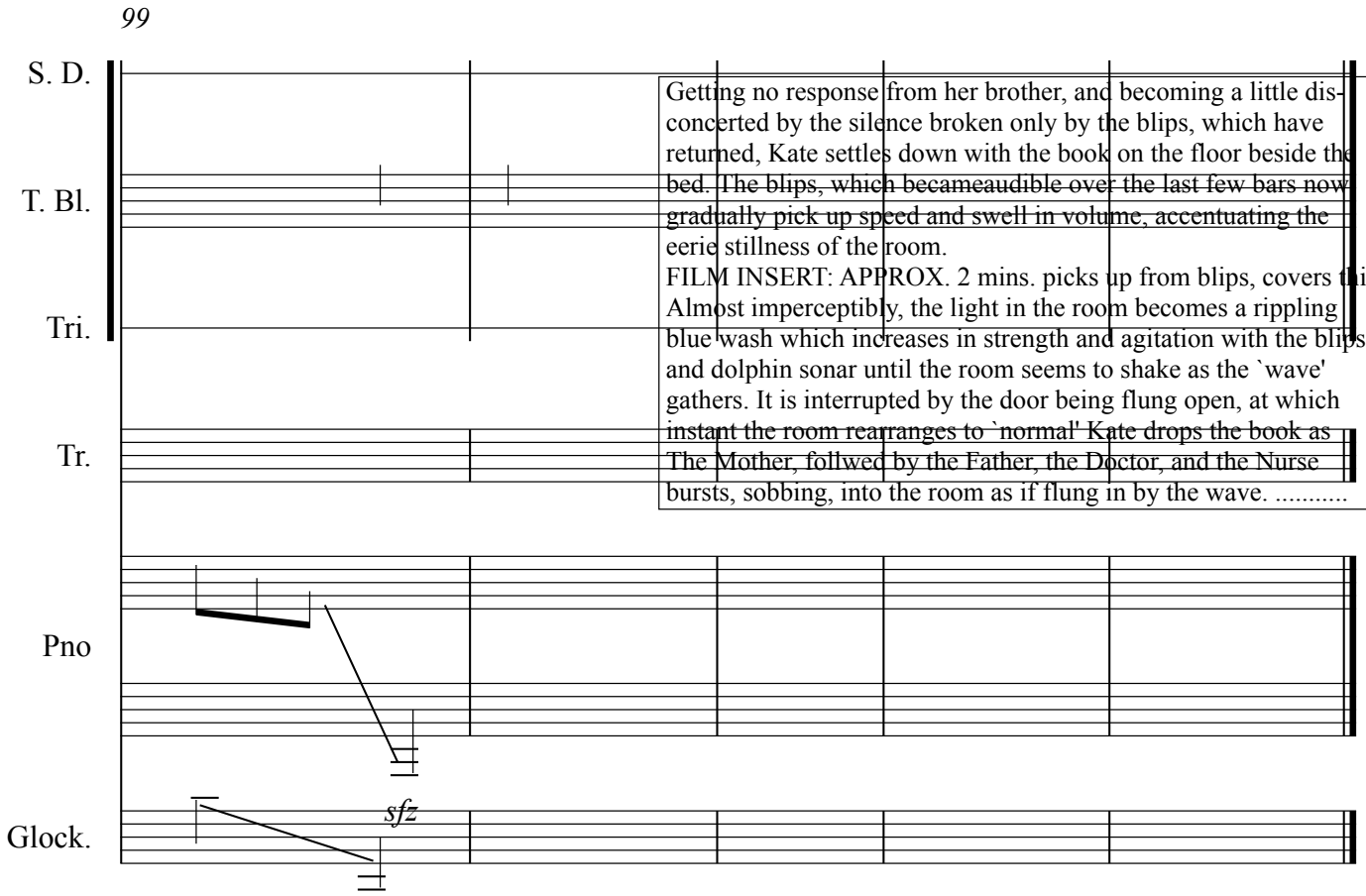

77
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
Tr.
'Cos yours is much big ger!
I
Pno
Glock.


81
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
Tr.
can't stand my room with its fril - ly pink cur - tains! I'll
Pno
Glock.


84
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
Tr.
get some new pic - tures of Cher and Ma - don - na; And then, perhaps,
Pno
Glock.

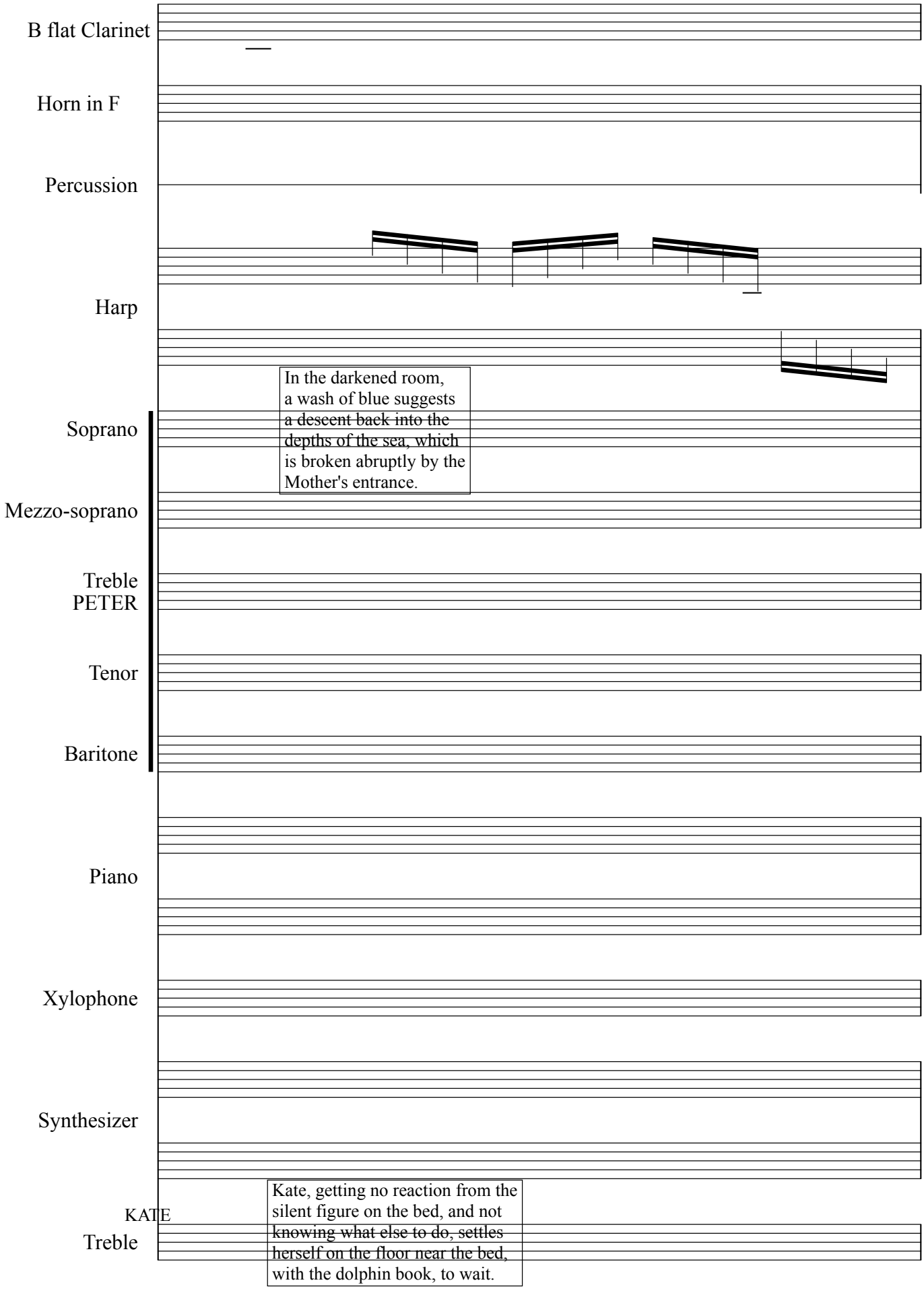

87
rim shot
rim shot
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
Tr.
And then, may - be,
some day,
Pno
Glock.
91
molto rit.
S. D.
T. Bl.
Tri.
Tr.
Some day, some - one
Some day some - one will take no - tice,
Pno
molto rit.
Glock.

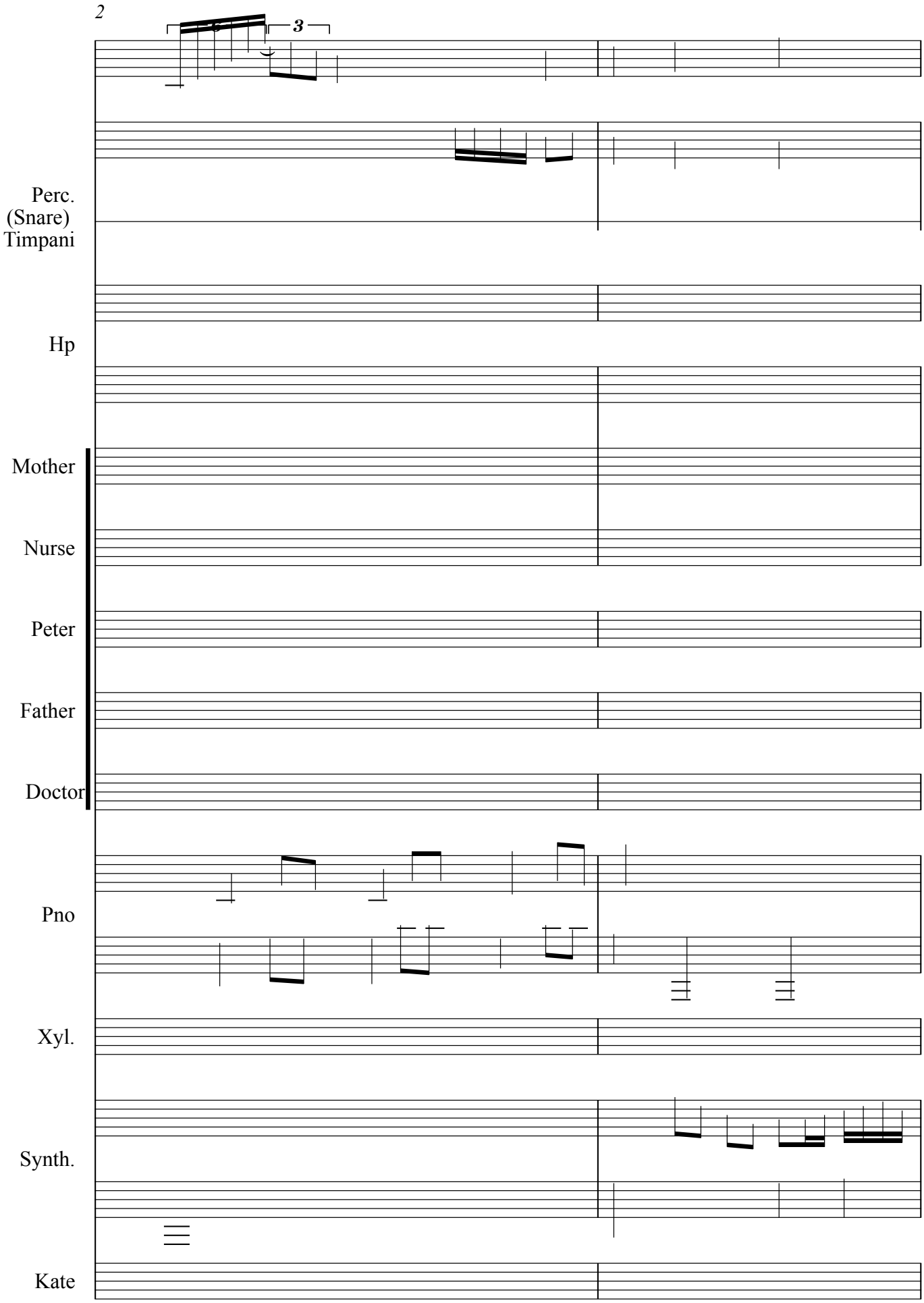


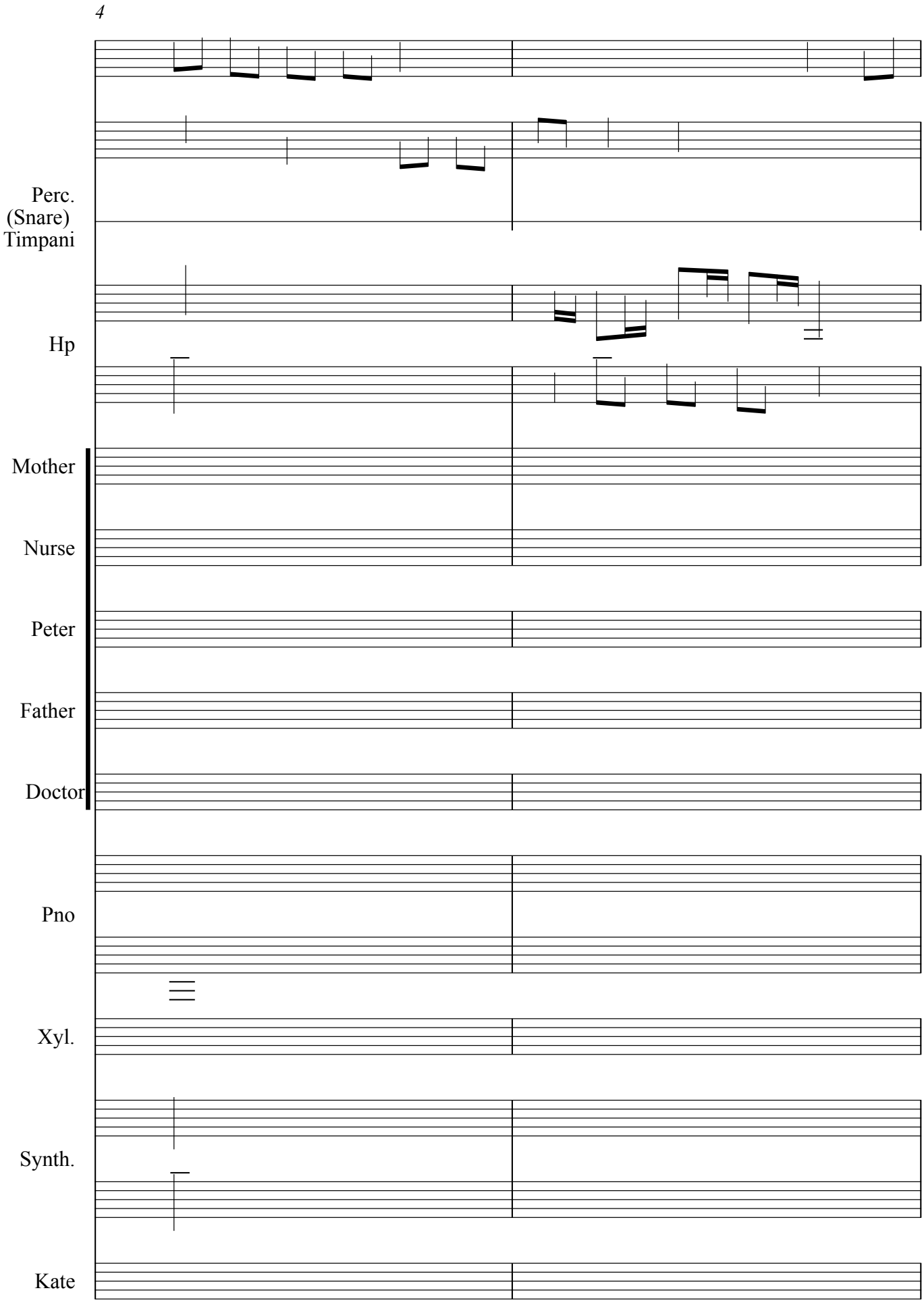


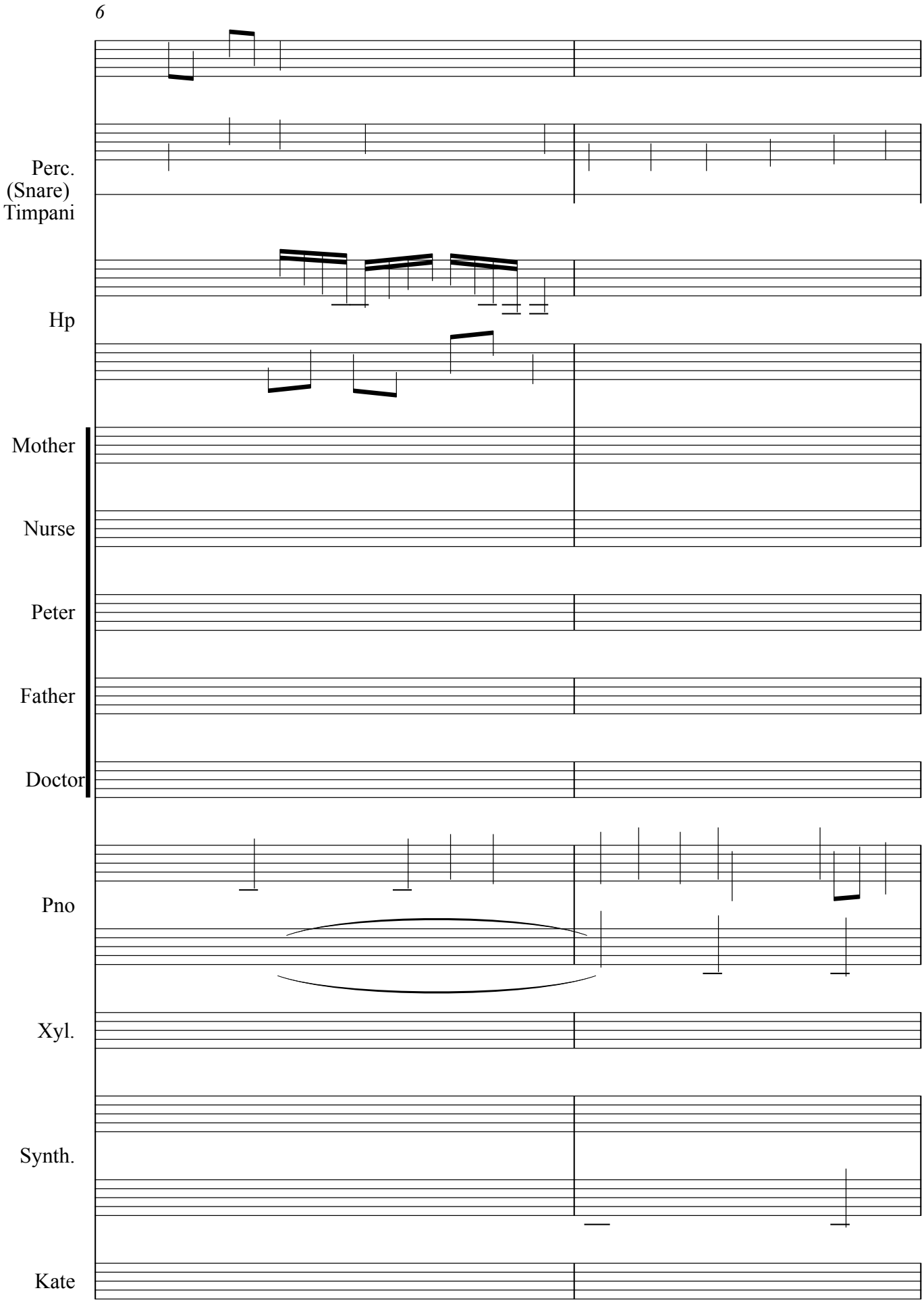
Getting no response from her brother, and becoming a little disconcerted by the silence broken only by the blips, which have returned, Kate settles down with the book on the floor beside the bed. The blips, which becameaudible over the last few bars now gradually pick up speed and swell in volume, accentuating the eerie stillness of the room.
FILM INSERT: APPROX. 2 mins. picks up from blips, covers this. Almost imperceptibly, the light in the room becomes a rippling blue wash which increases in strength and agitation with the blips and dolphin sonar until the room seems to shake as the `wave' gathers. It is interrupted by the door being flung open, at which instant the room rearranges to `normal' Kate drops the book as The Mother, follwed by the Father, the Doctor, and the Nurse bursts, sobbing, into the room as if flung in by the wave. .....

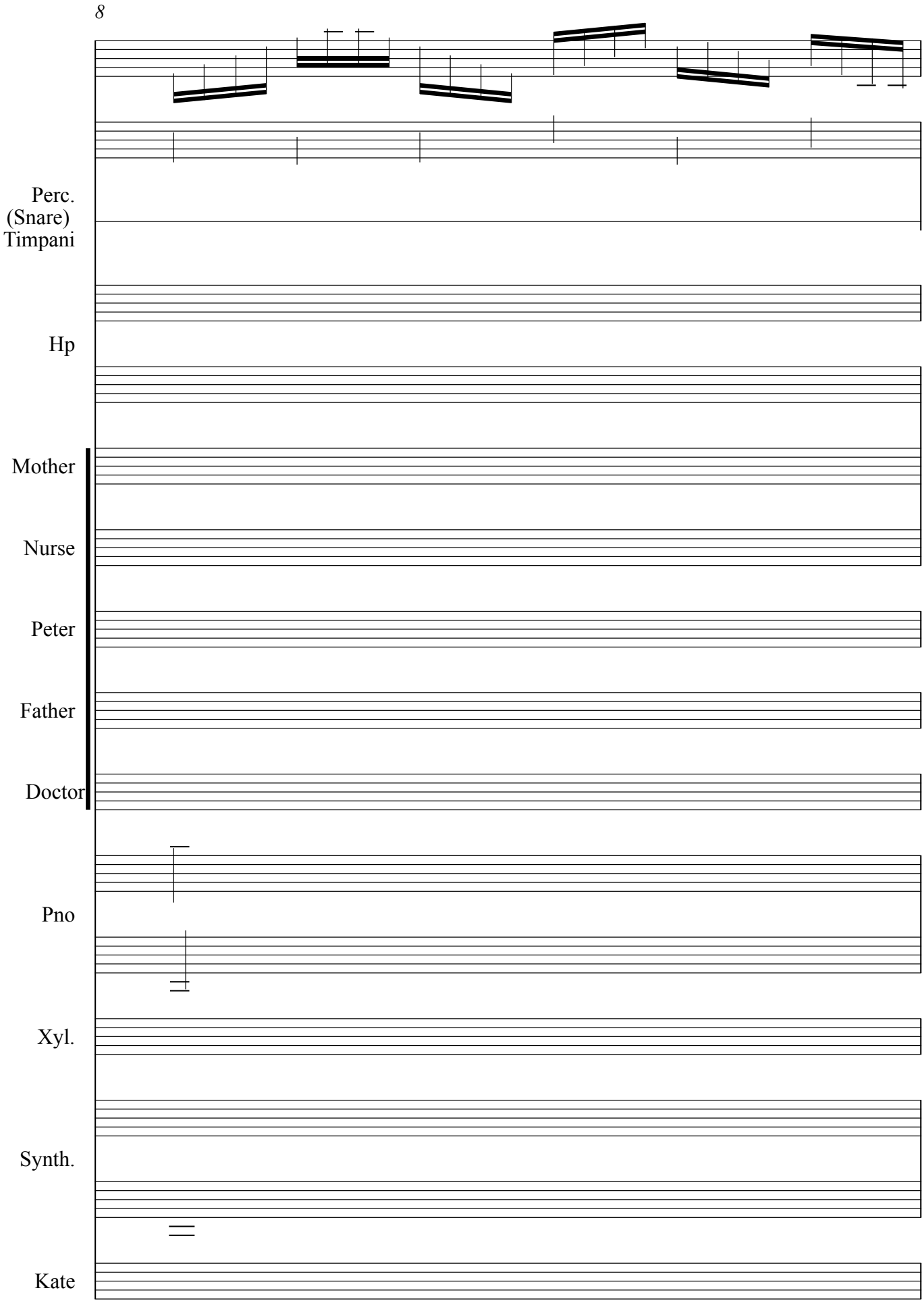
INTRO TO SCENE V

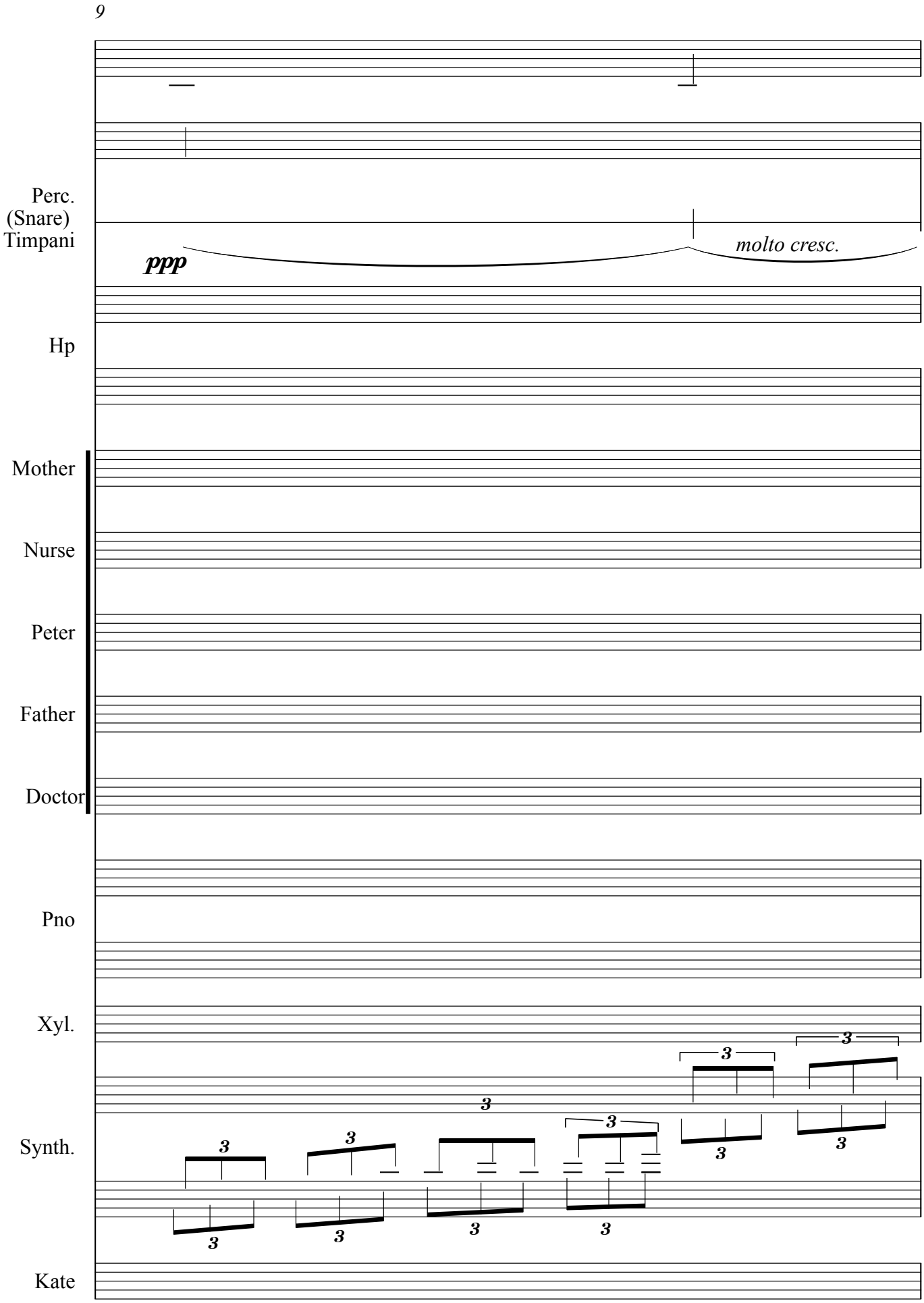



2
3
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


4
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


6
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


8
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


9
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
ppp
molto cresc.
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

SCENE V

10

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

As if projected into the room
by a wave, the Mother flies into
the room. The Father follows; try-
ing to escape makes her more frantic.

Mother

NO!

Nurse

Peter

Father

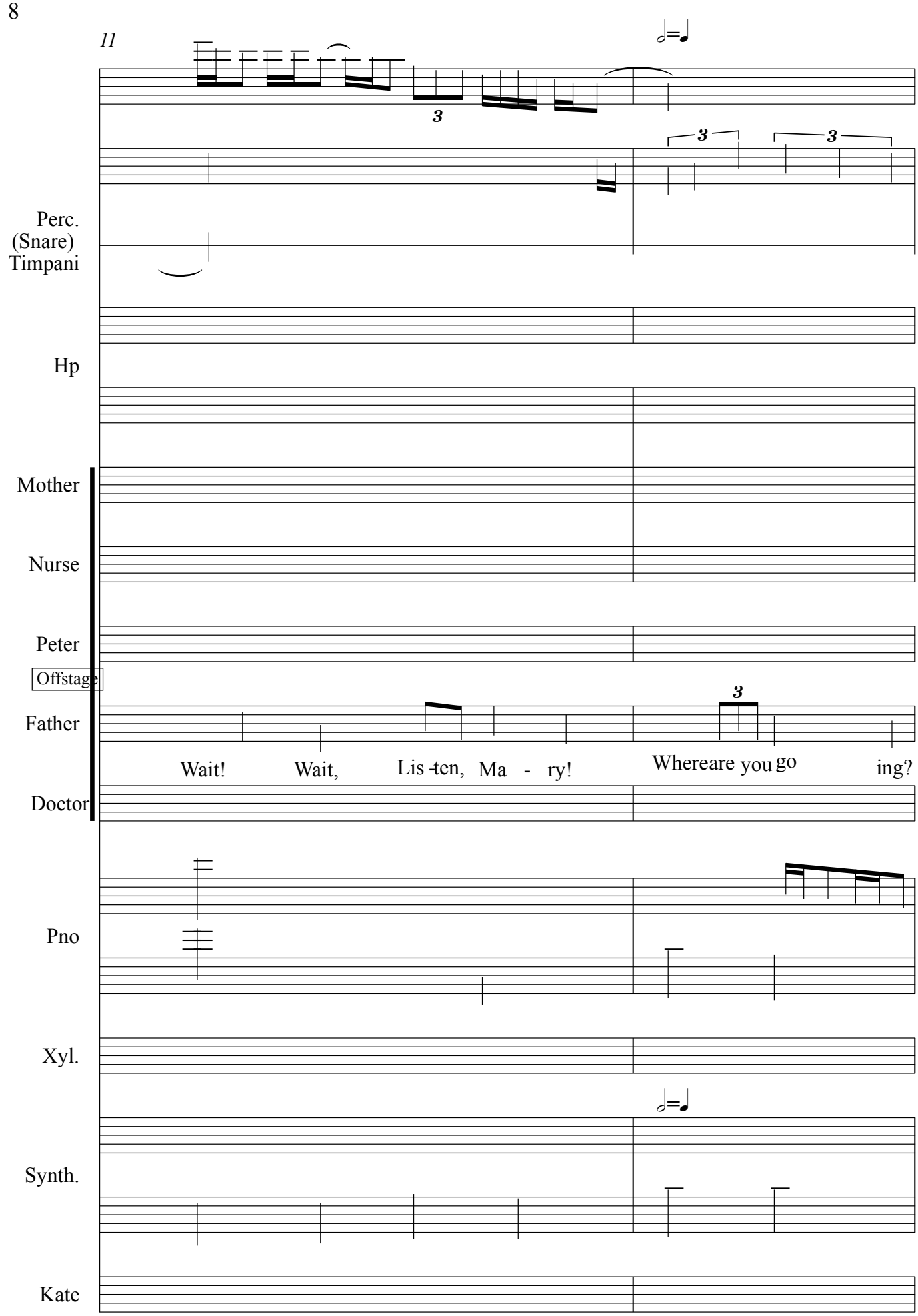
Doctor

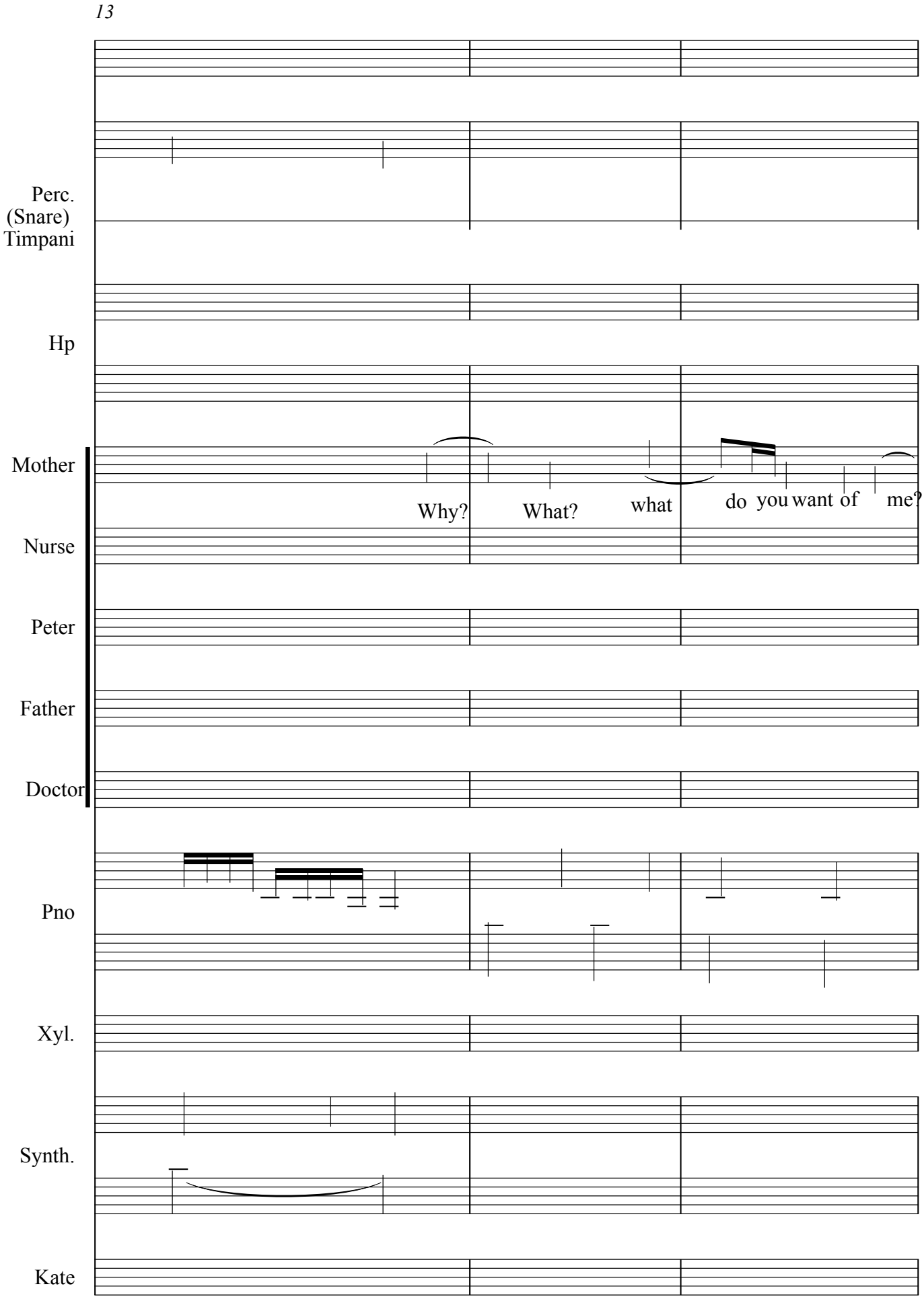
Pno

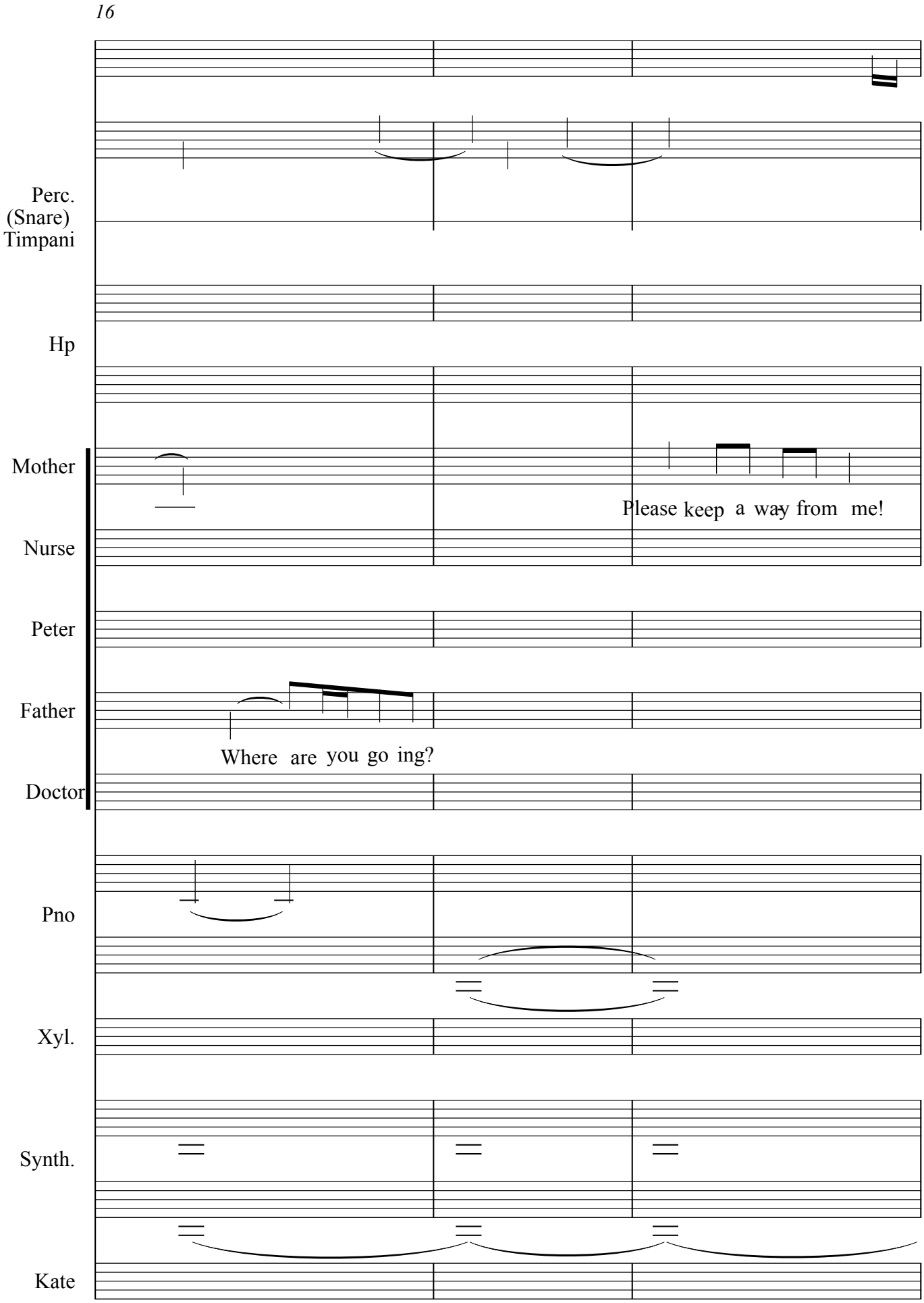
Xyl.

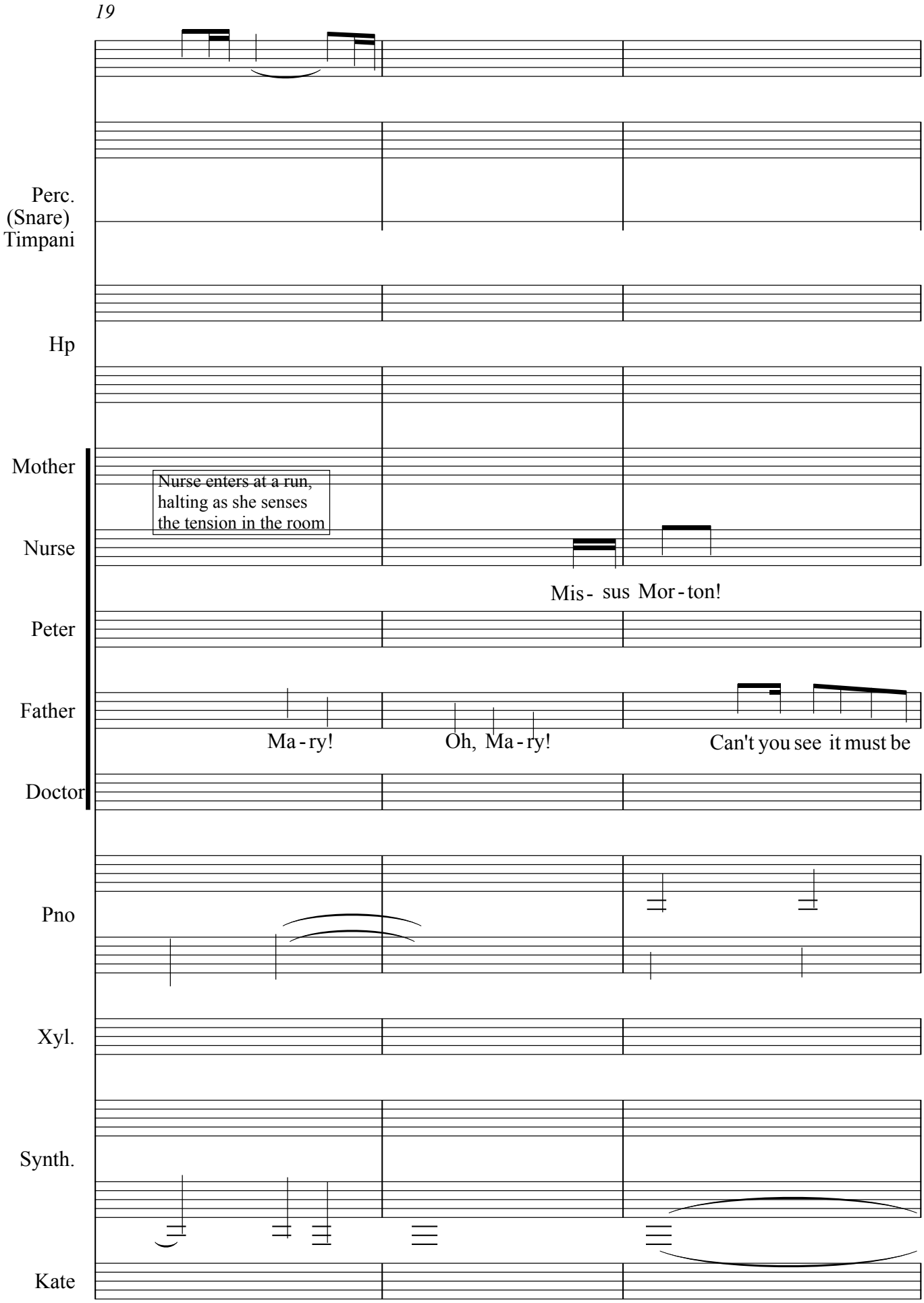
Synth.

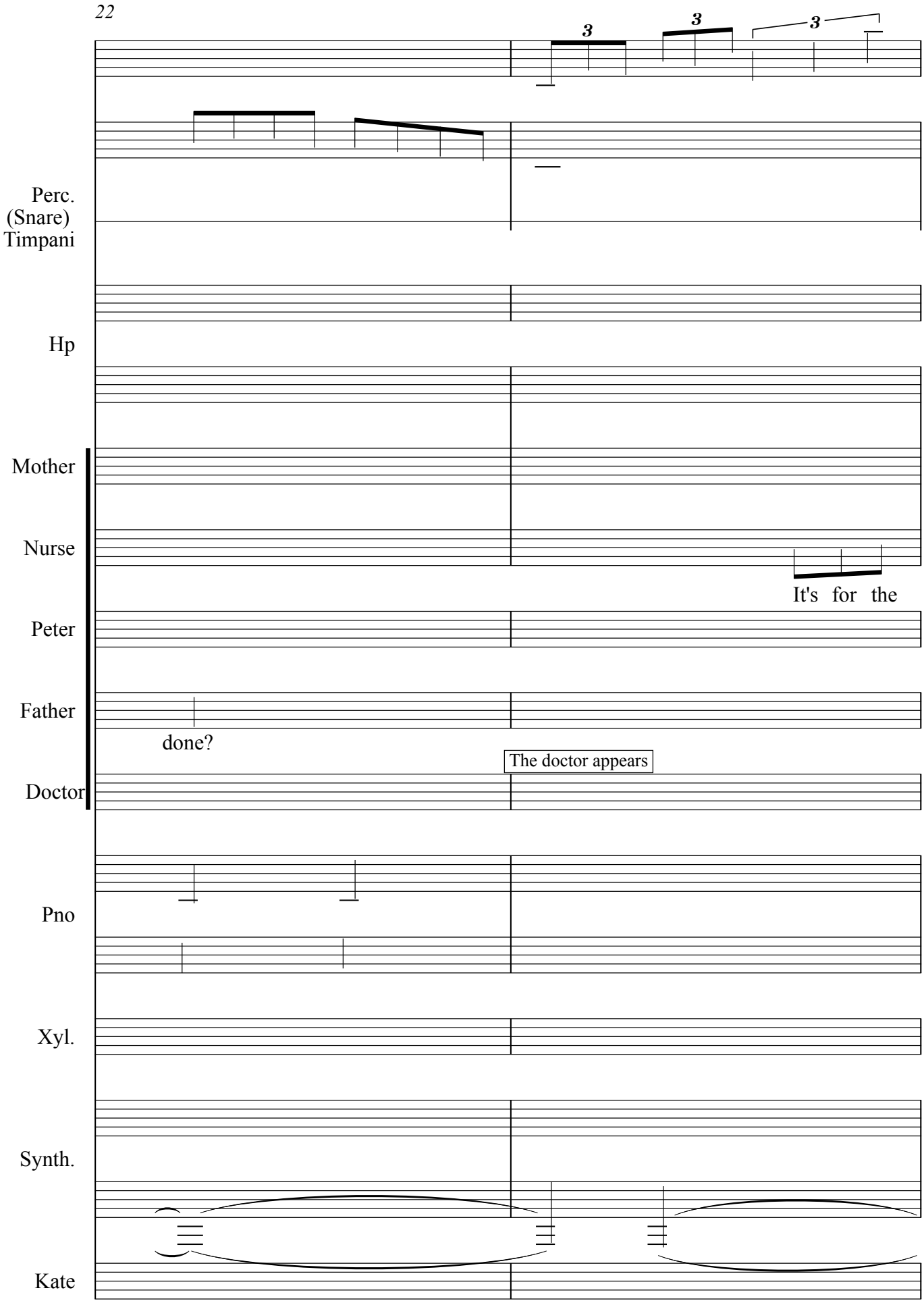
Kate

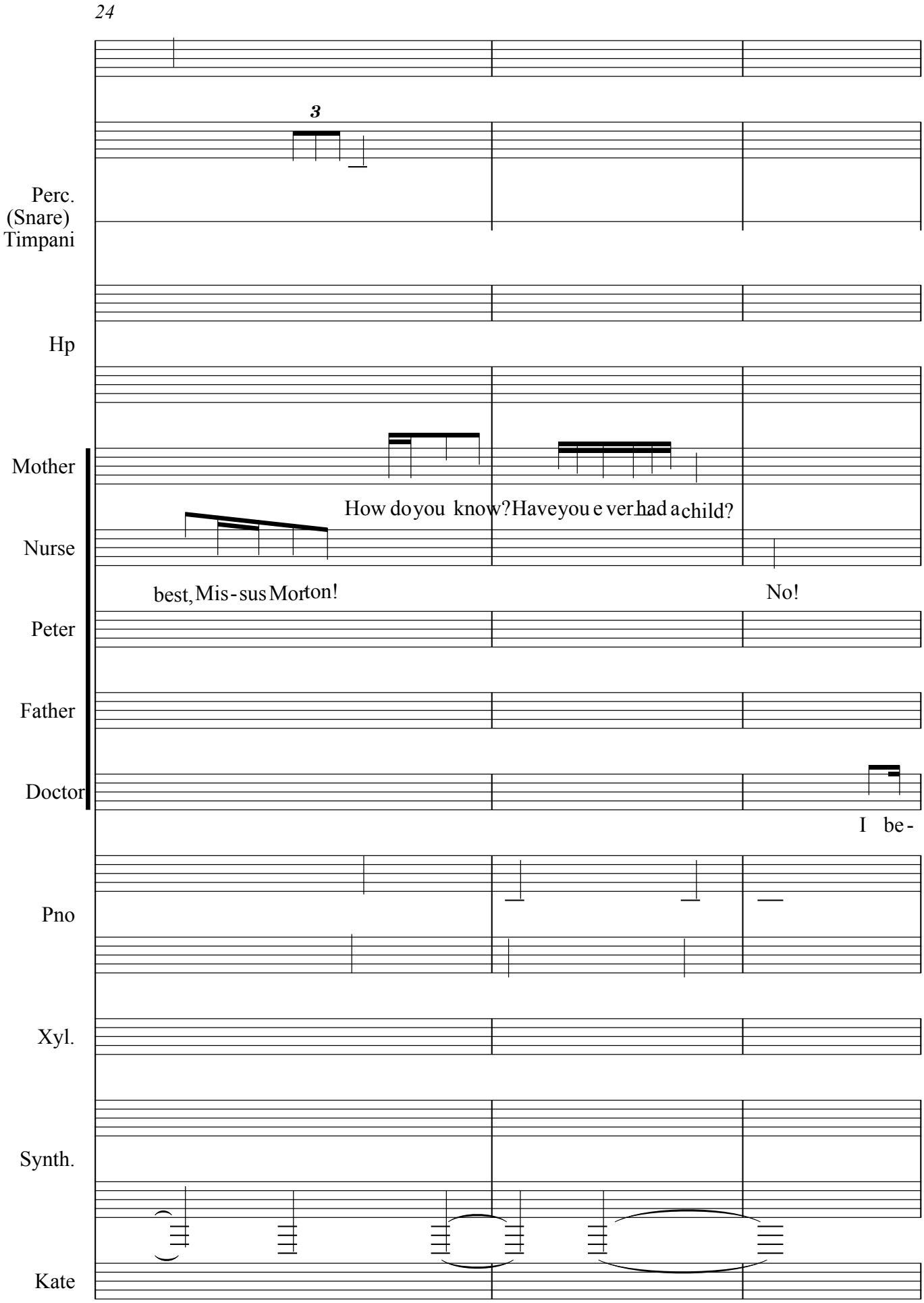

11
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Offstage
Father
Wait!
Wait,
Lis -ten,
Ma - ry!
Whereare you go
ing?
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

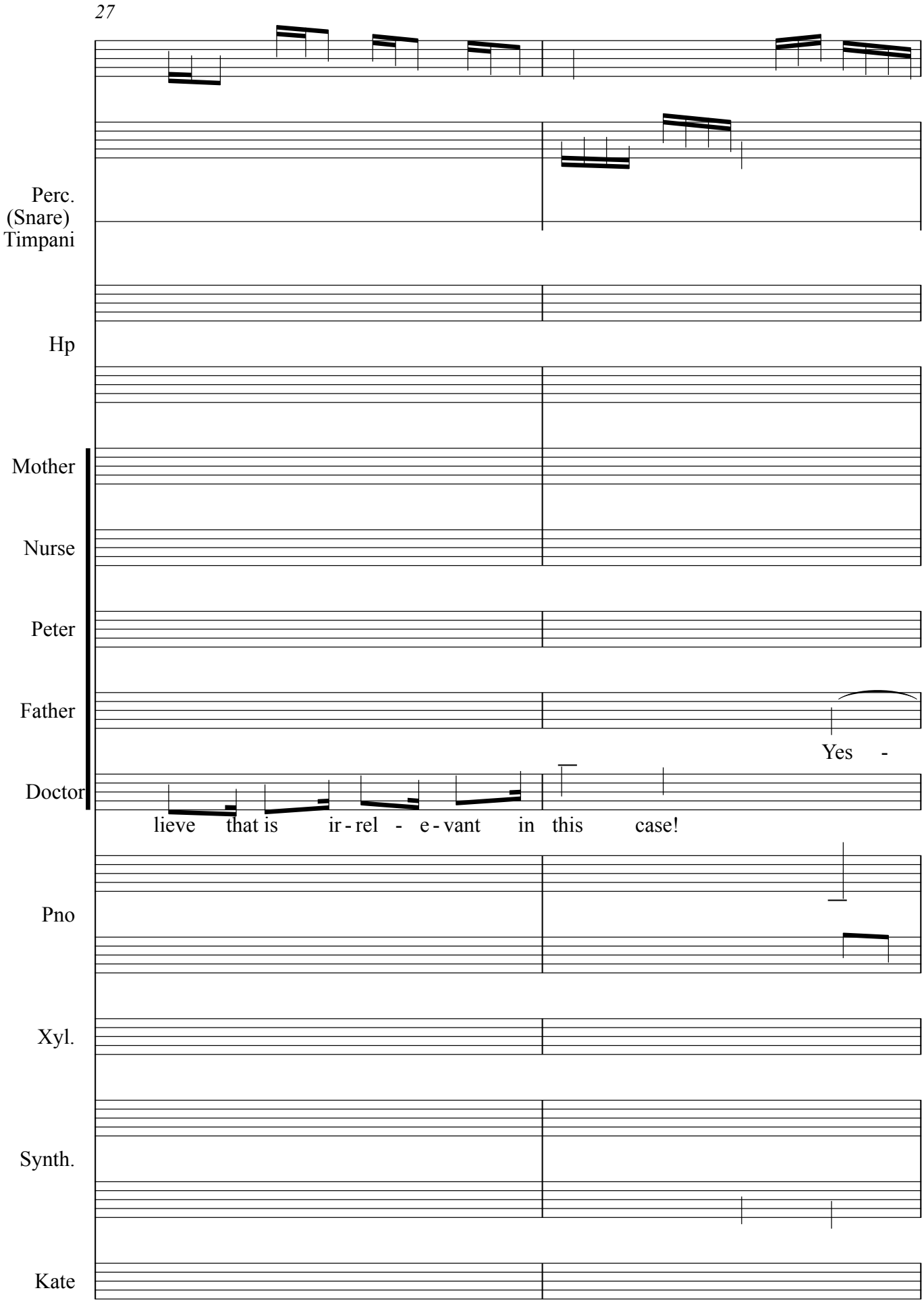

13
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Why?
What?
what
do you want of me?
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


16
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Please keep a way from me!
Nurse
Peter
Father
Where are you go ing?
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


19
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse enters at a run,
halting as she senses
the tension in the room
Nurse
Mis- sus Mor-ton!
Peter
Father
Ma-ry!
Oh, Ma-ry!
Can't you see it must be
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


22
3
3
3
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
It's for the
Peter
Father
done?
The doctor appears
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


24
3
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
How do you know? Have you ever had a child?
Nurse
best, Mis-sus Mor ton!
No!
Peter
Father
Doctor
I be-
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


27
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Yes -
Doctor
lieve that is ir - rel - e - vant in this case!
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

29

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

subito ***p***

I can't be - lieve you

Nurse

Peter

Father

3 3

, we must try to ac - cept our fate!

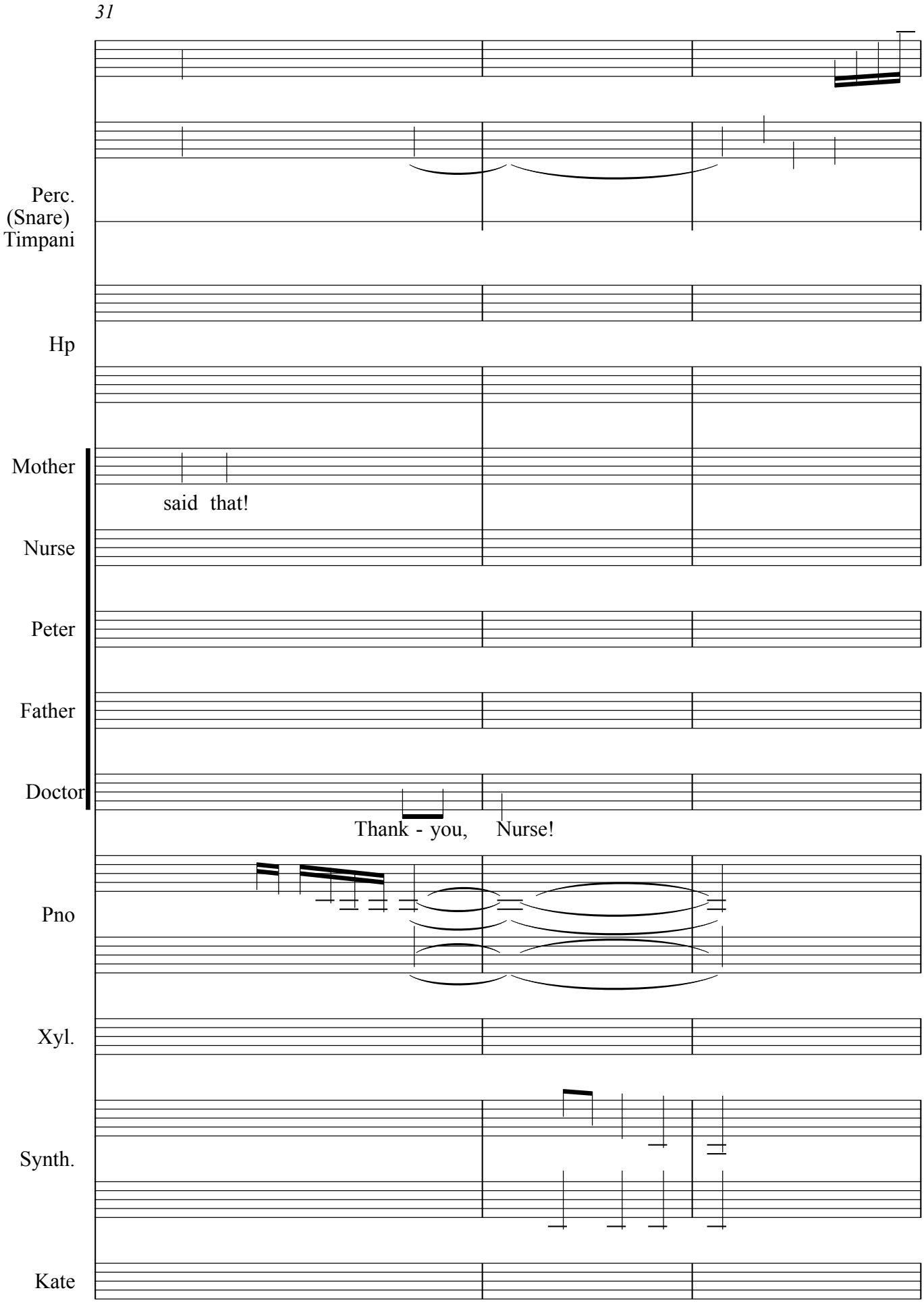
Doctor

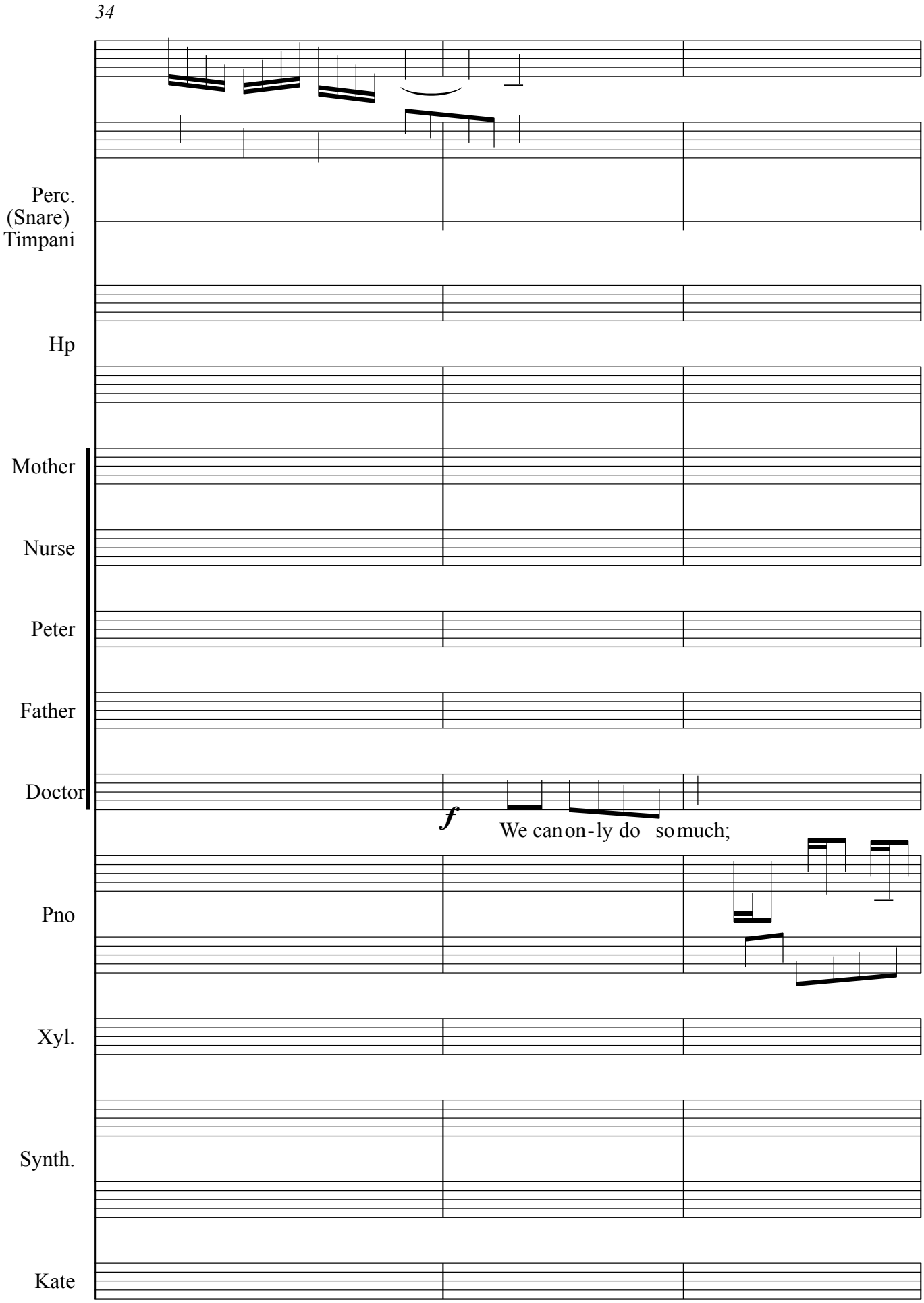
Pno

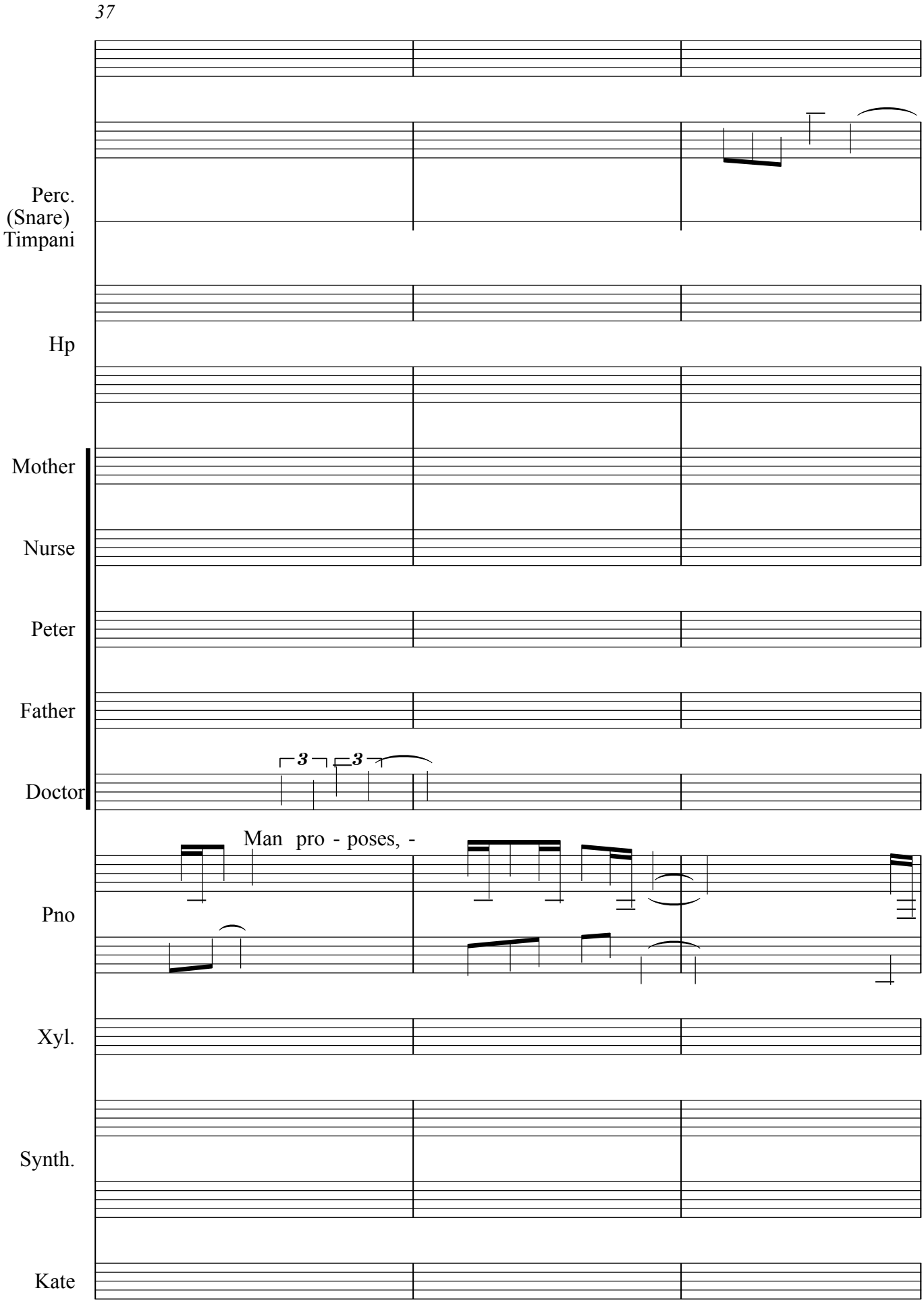
Xyl.

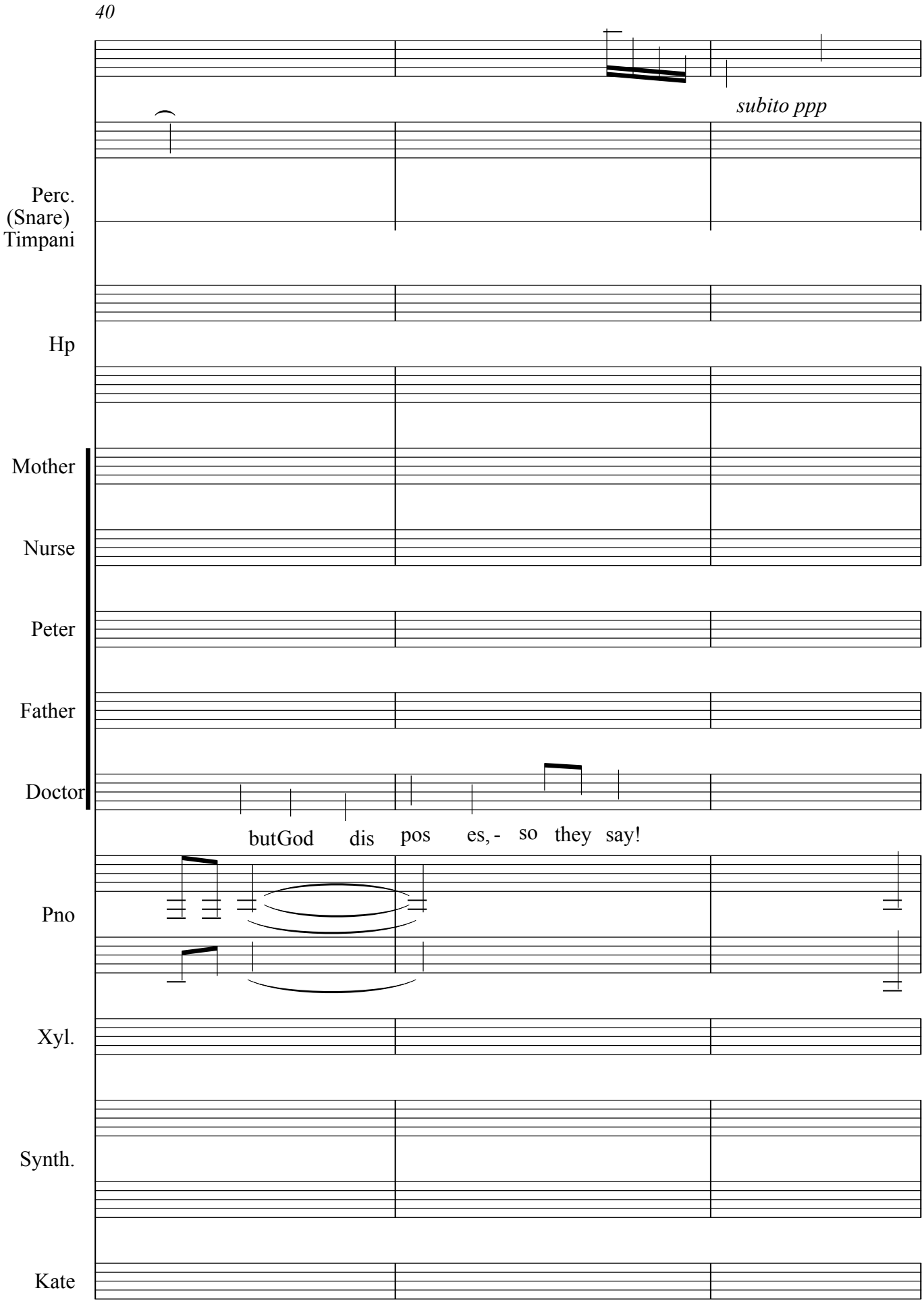
Synth.

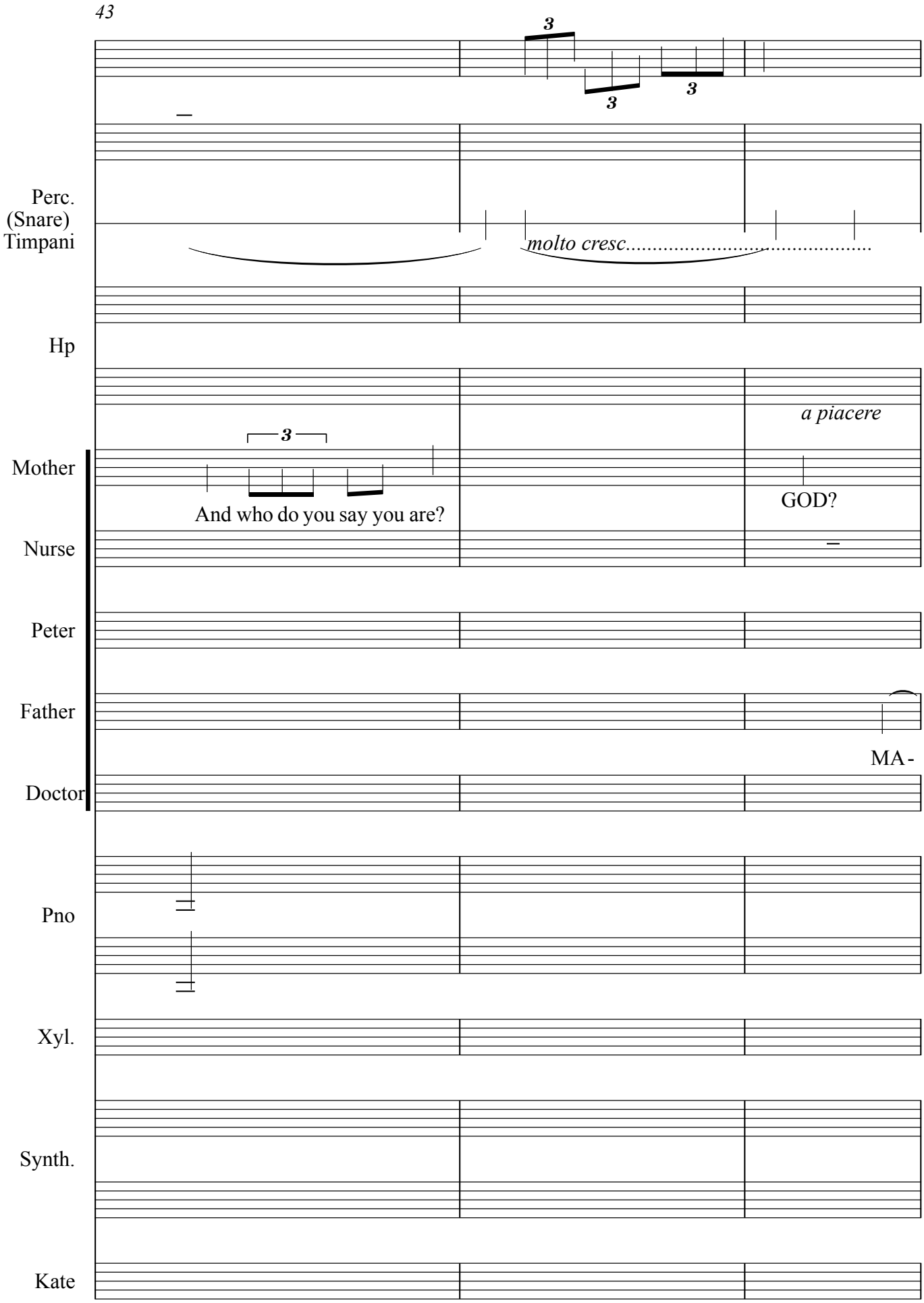
Kate

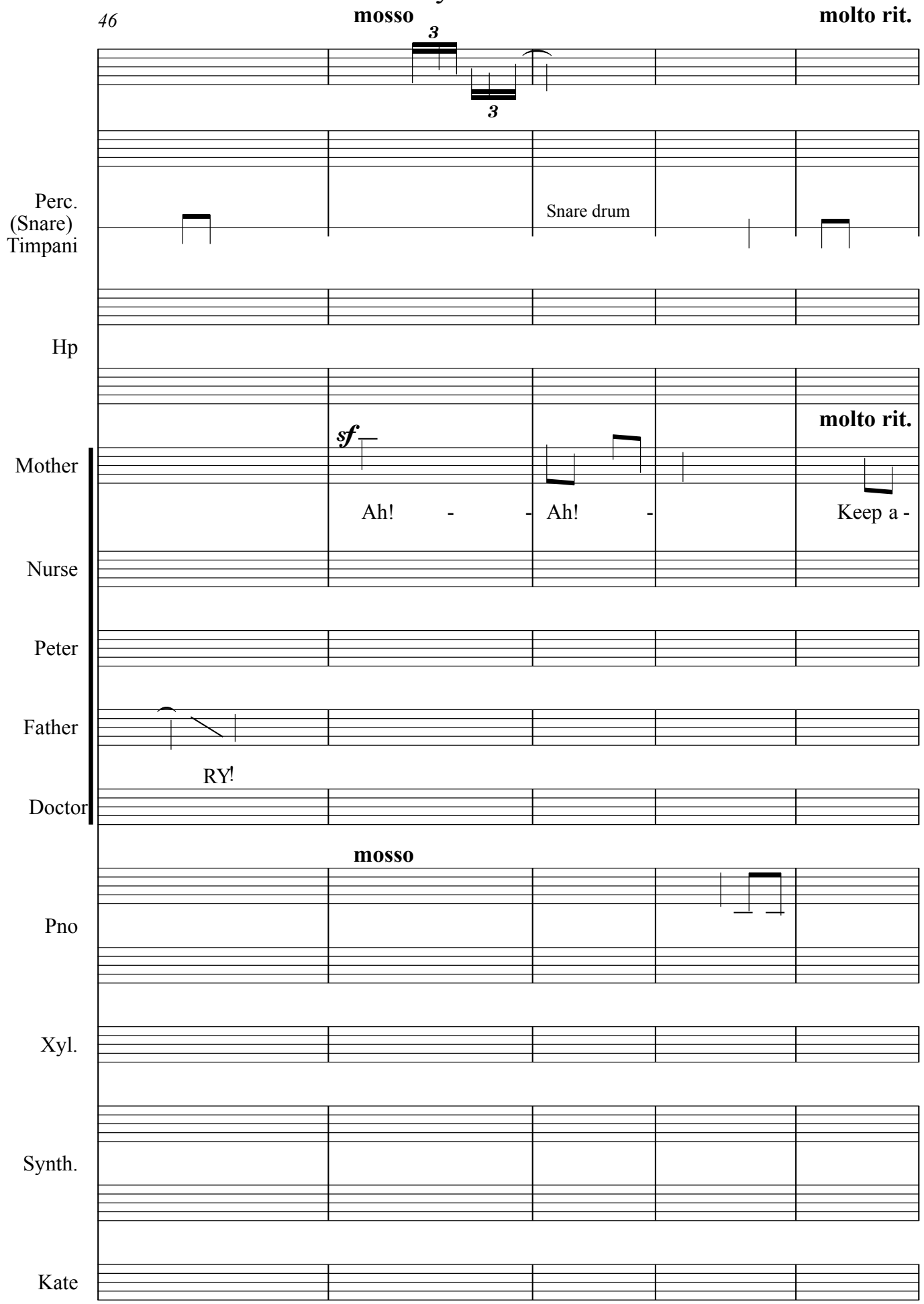

31
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
said that!
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Thank - you, Nurse!
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

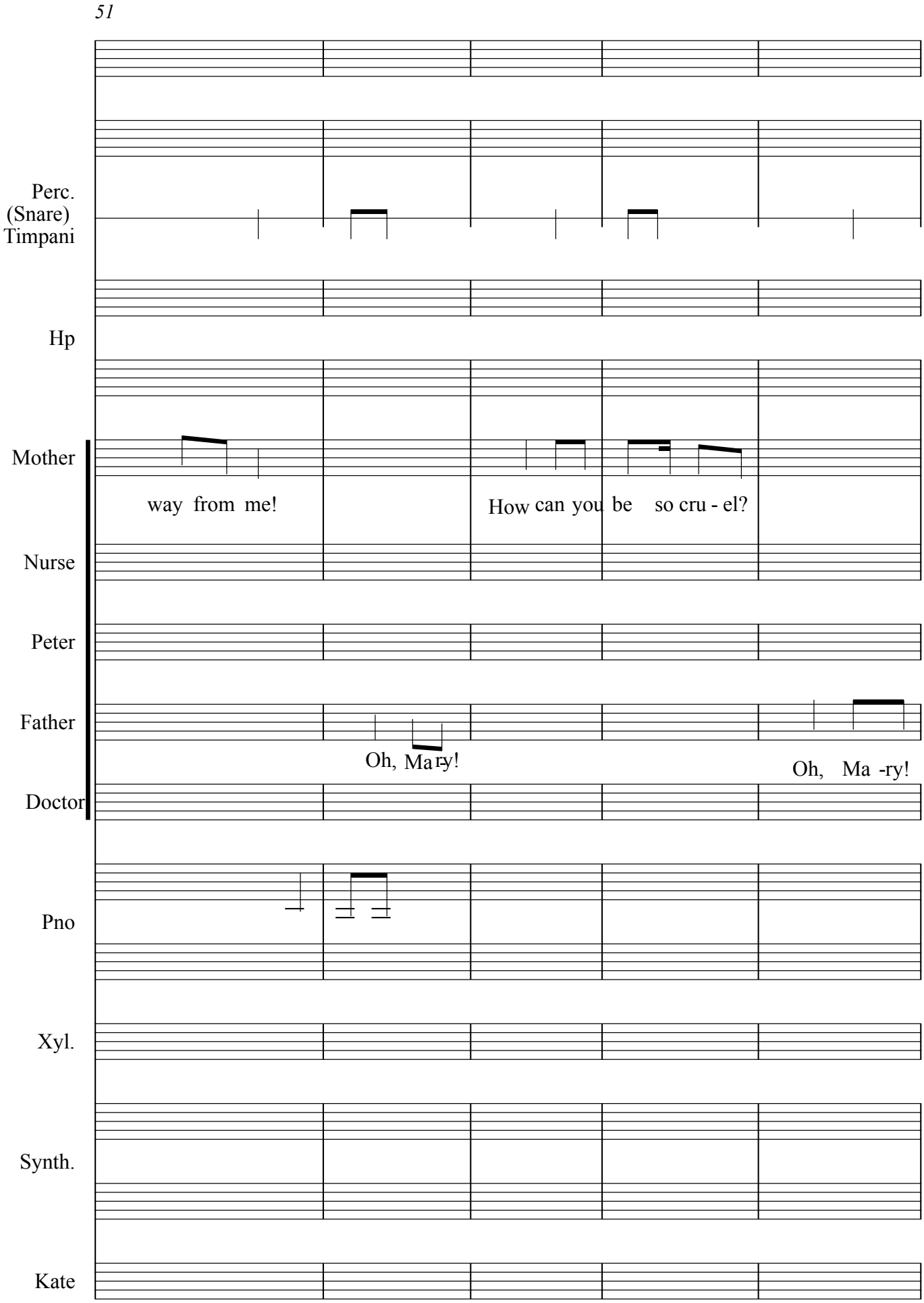

34
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
f
We can on-ly do so much;
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


37
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
3
3
Man pro - poses, -
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


40
subito ppp
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
butGod dis pos es, - so they say!
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


43
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
molto cresc.....
Hp
a piacere
Mother
And who do you say you are?
GOD?
Nurse
Peter
Father
MA-
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


46
mosso
molto rit.
3
3
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Snare drum
Hp
molto rit.
sf
Mother
Ah! - - Ah! -
Keep a -
Nurse
Peter
Father
RY!
Doctor
mosso
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


51
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
way from me!
How can you be so cru - el?
Nurse
Peter
Father
Oh, Ma-ry!
Oh, Ma -ry!
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

56

♩ = 92

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

rfz

Hp

Mother

Don't touch me!

Nurse

Peter

(He tries to comfort her)

Father

3

Please try to keep calm!

Doctor

marcato
May I re -mind you

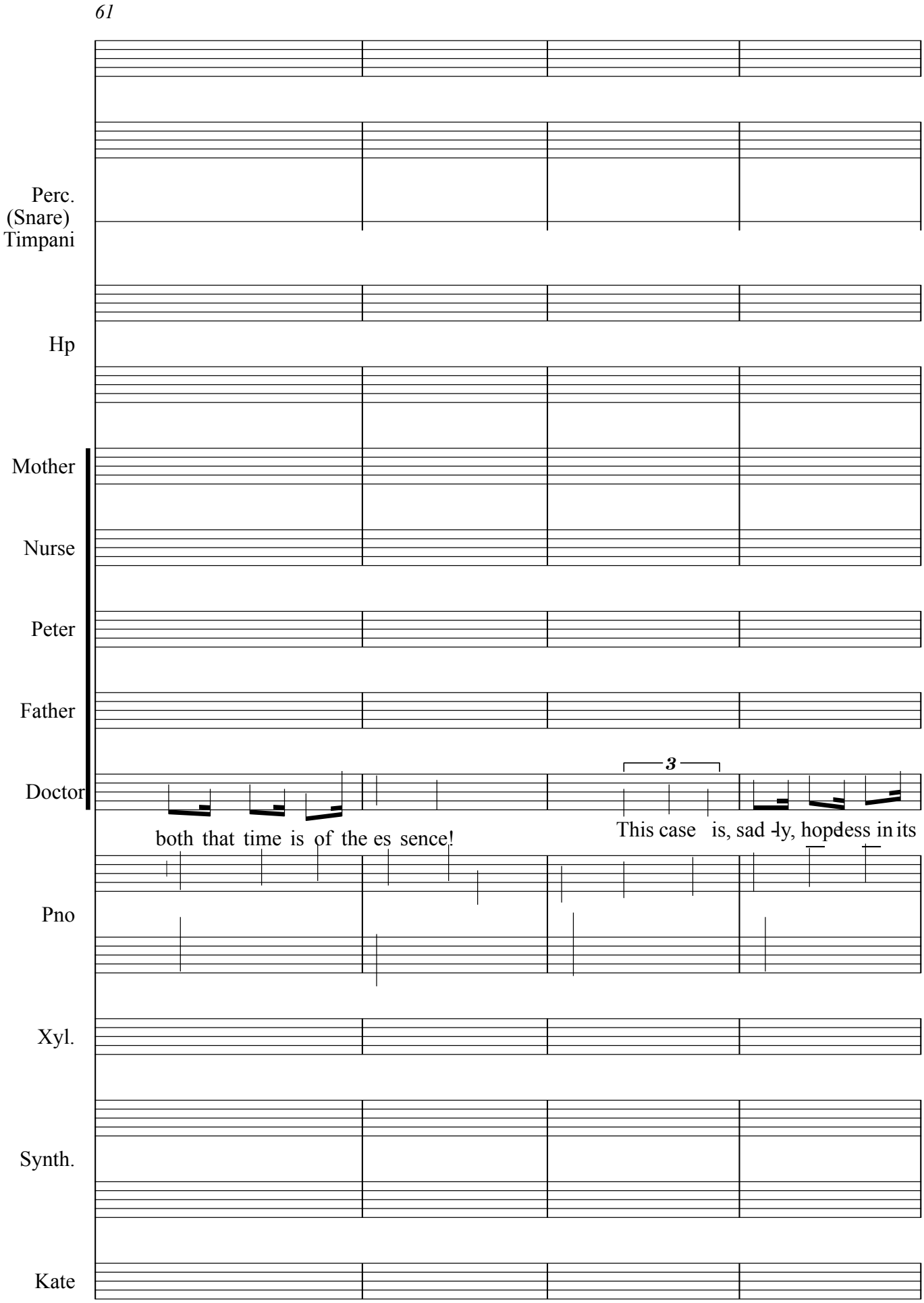
Pno

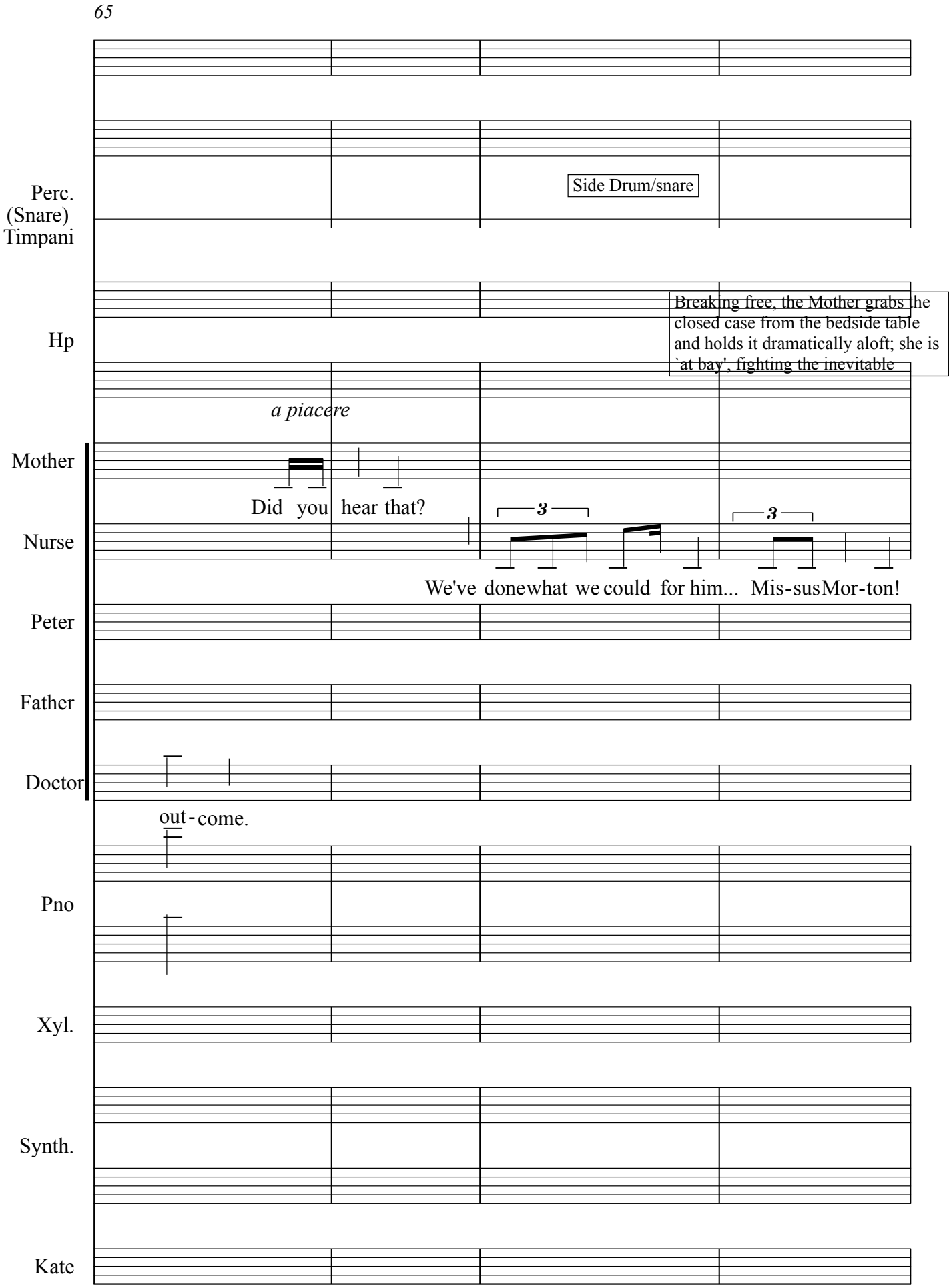
Xyl.

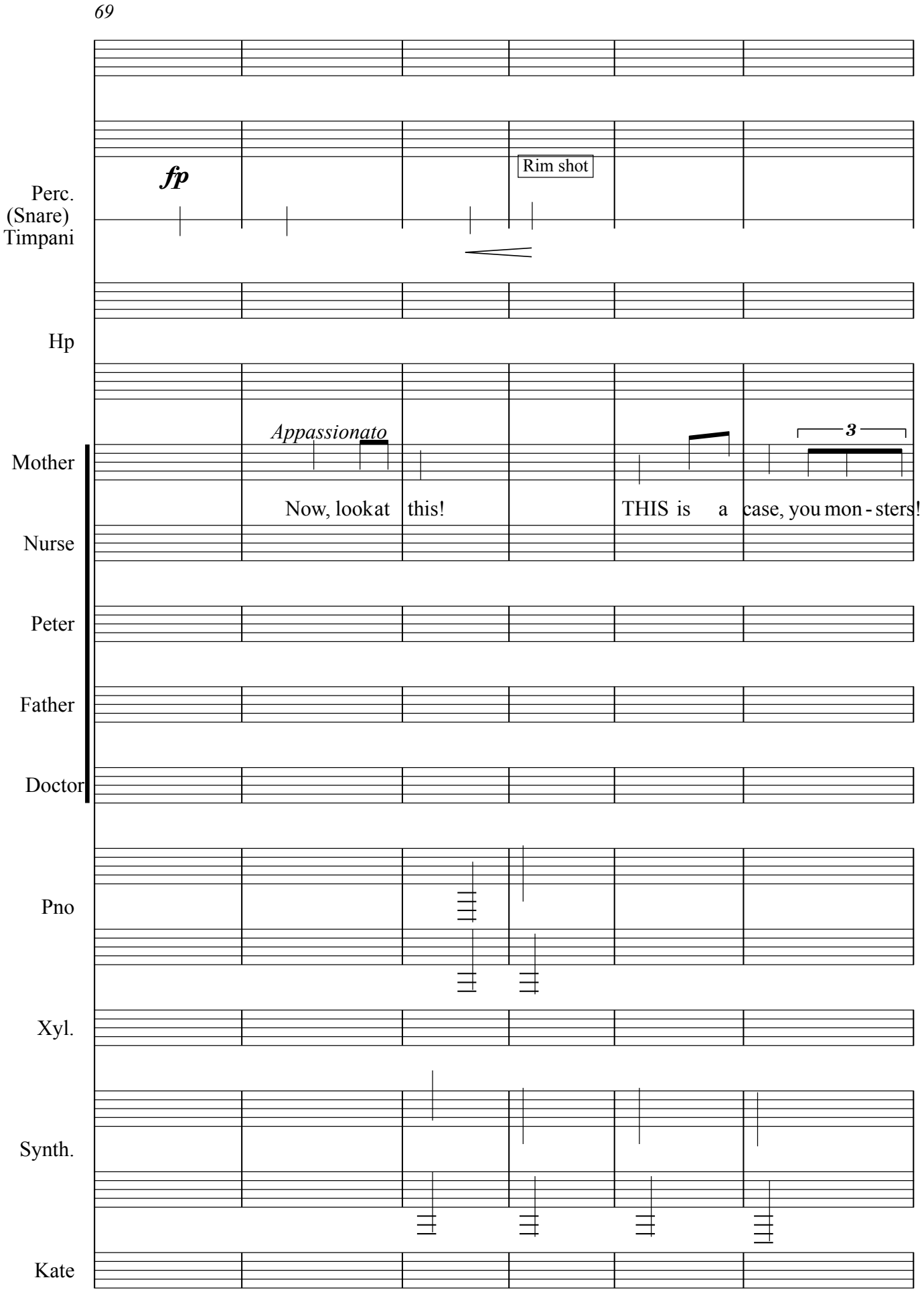
Synth.

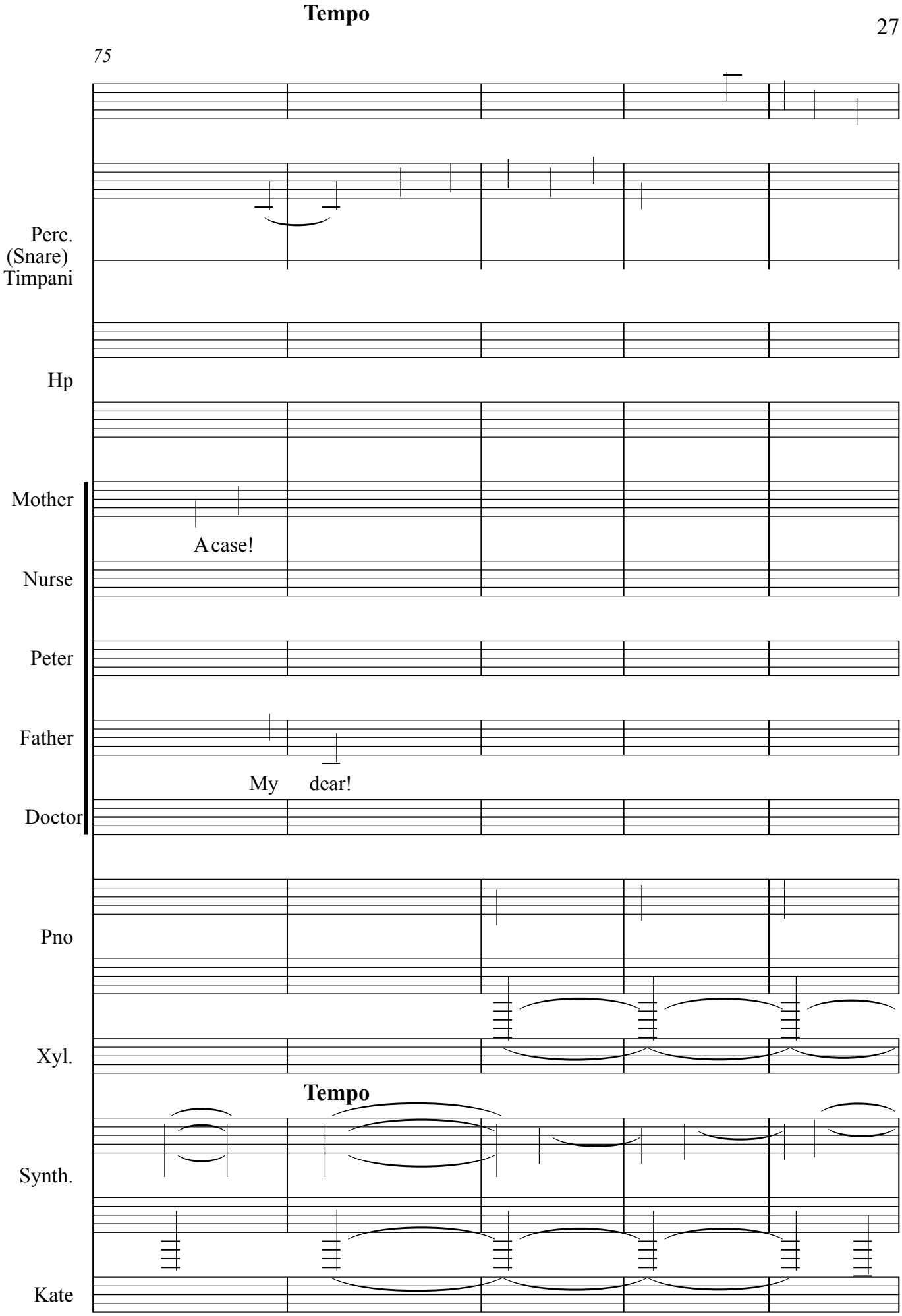
♩ = 92

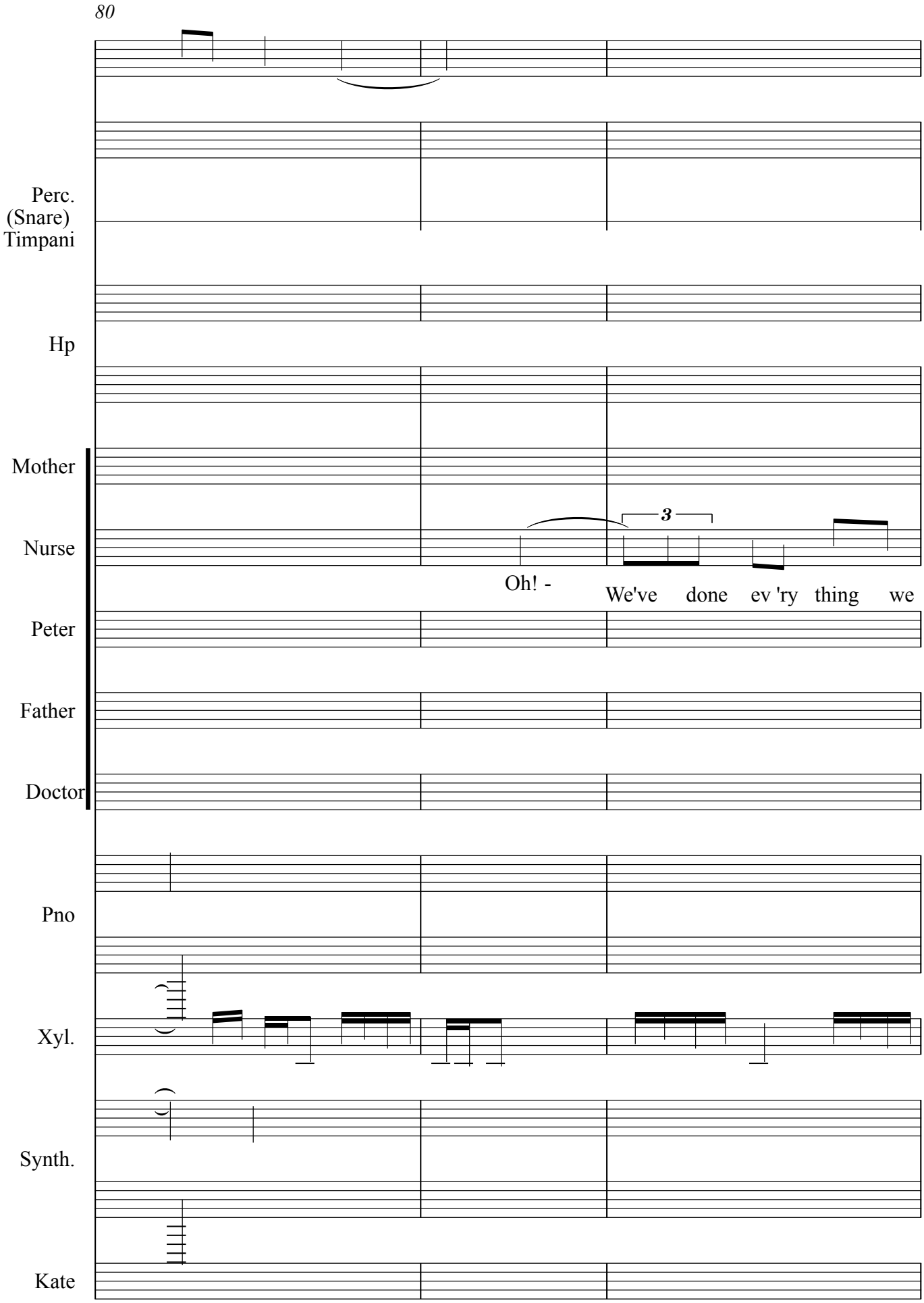
Kate

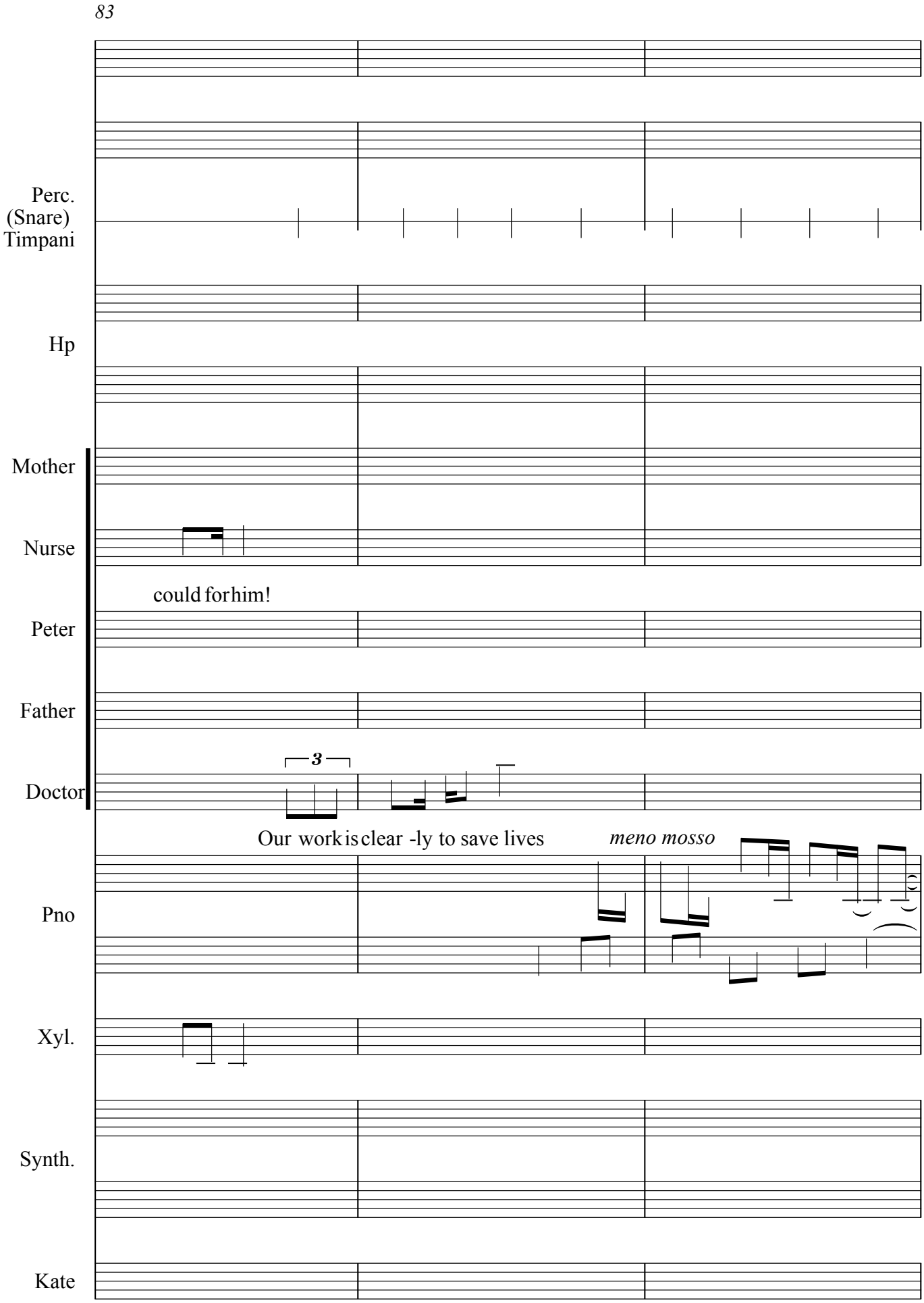

61
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
3
both that time is of the es sence!
This case is, sad -ly, hopdess in its
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

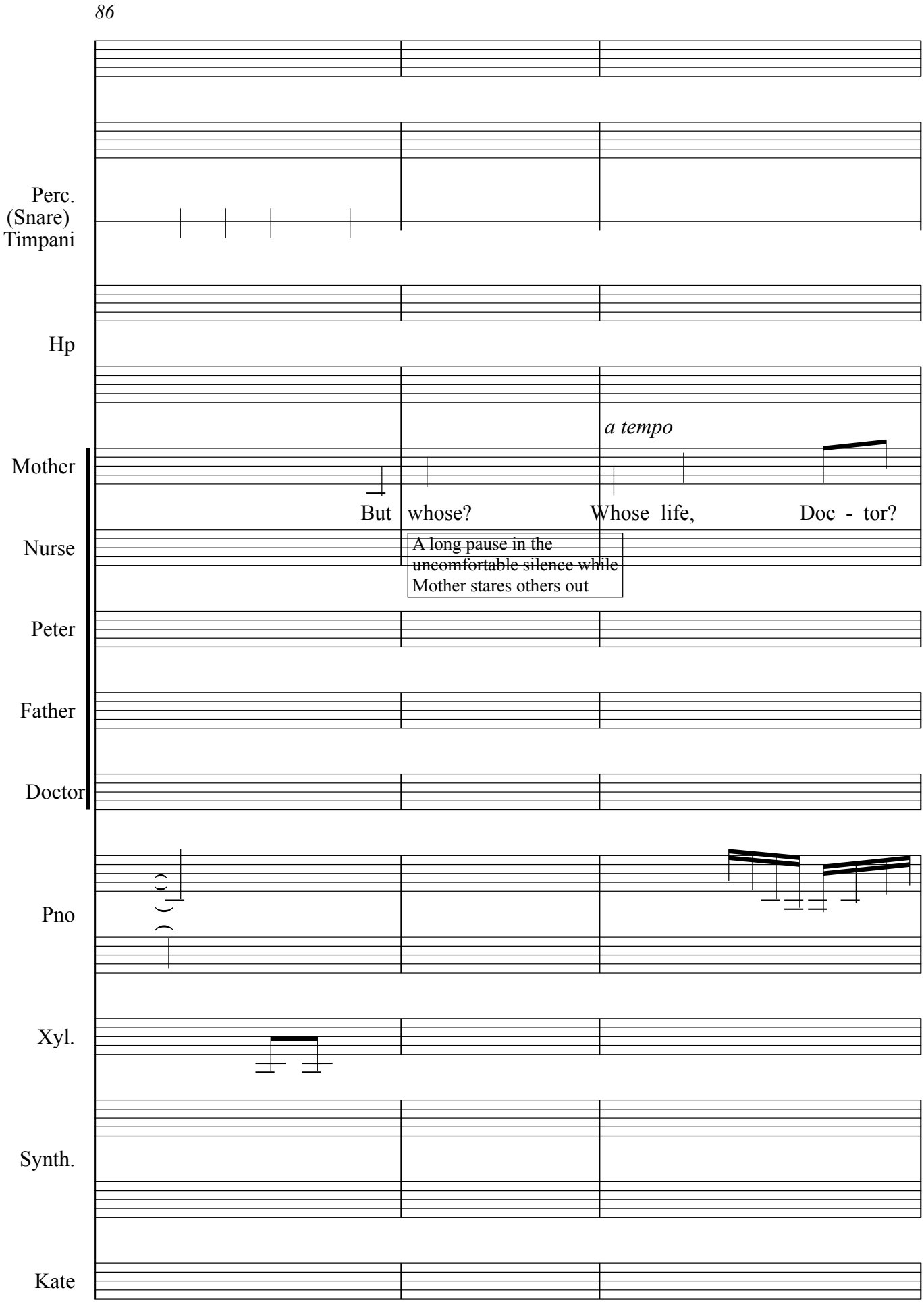

65
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Side Drum/snare
Hp
Breaking free, the Mother grabs the closed case from the bedside table and holds it dramatically aloft; she is `at bay', fighting the inevitable
a piacere
Mother
Did you hear that?
Nurse
3
3
We've done what we could for him... Mis-sus Mor-ton!
Peter
Father
Doctor
out-come.
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

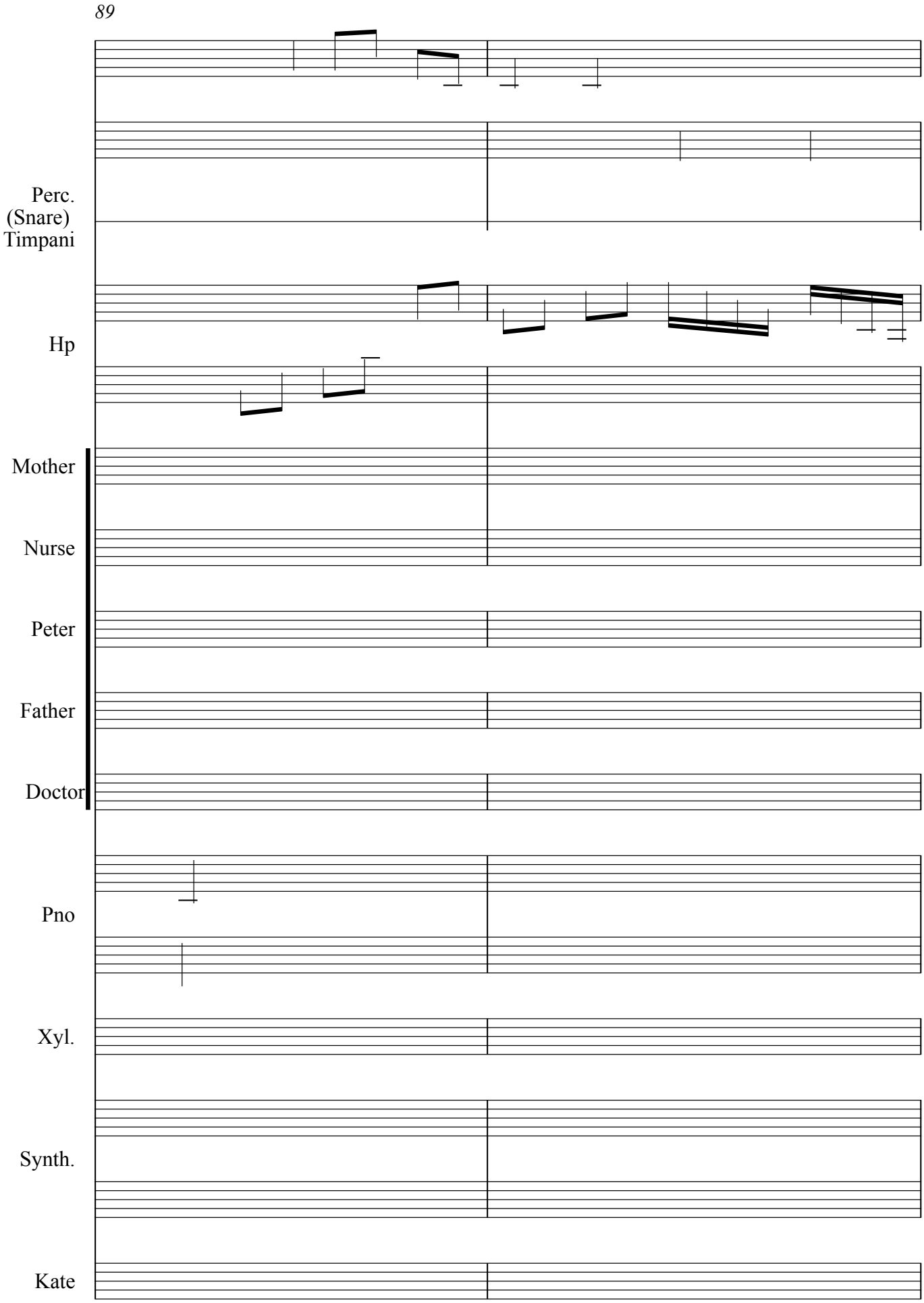

69
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
fp
Rim shot
Hp
Mother
Appassionato
3
Now, look at this!
THIS is a case, you mon - sters!
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

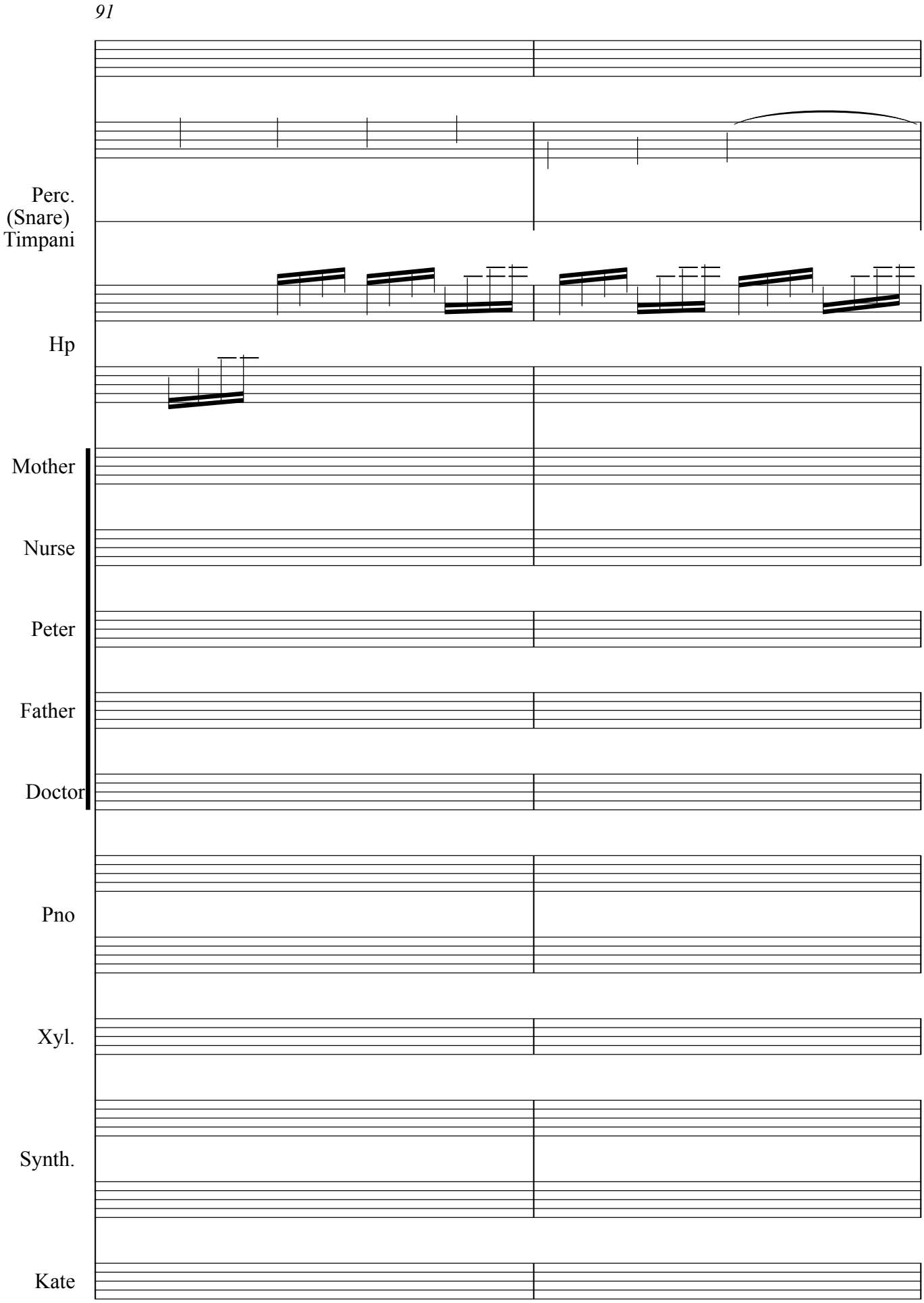

Tempo
75
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
A case!
Nurse
Peter
Father
My dear!
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Tempo
Synth.
Kate

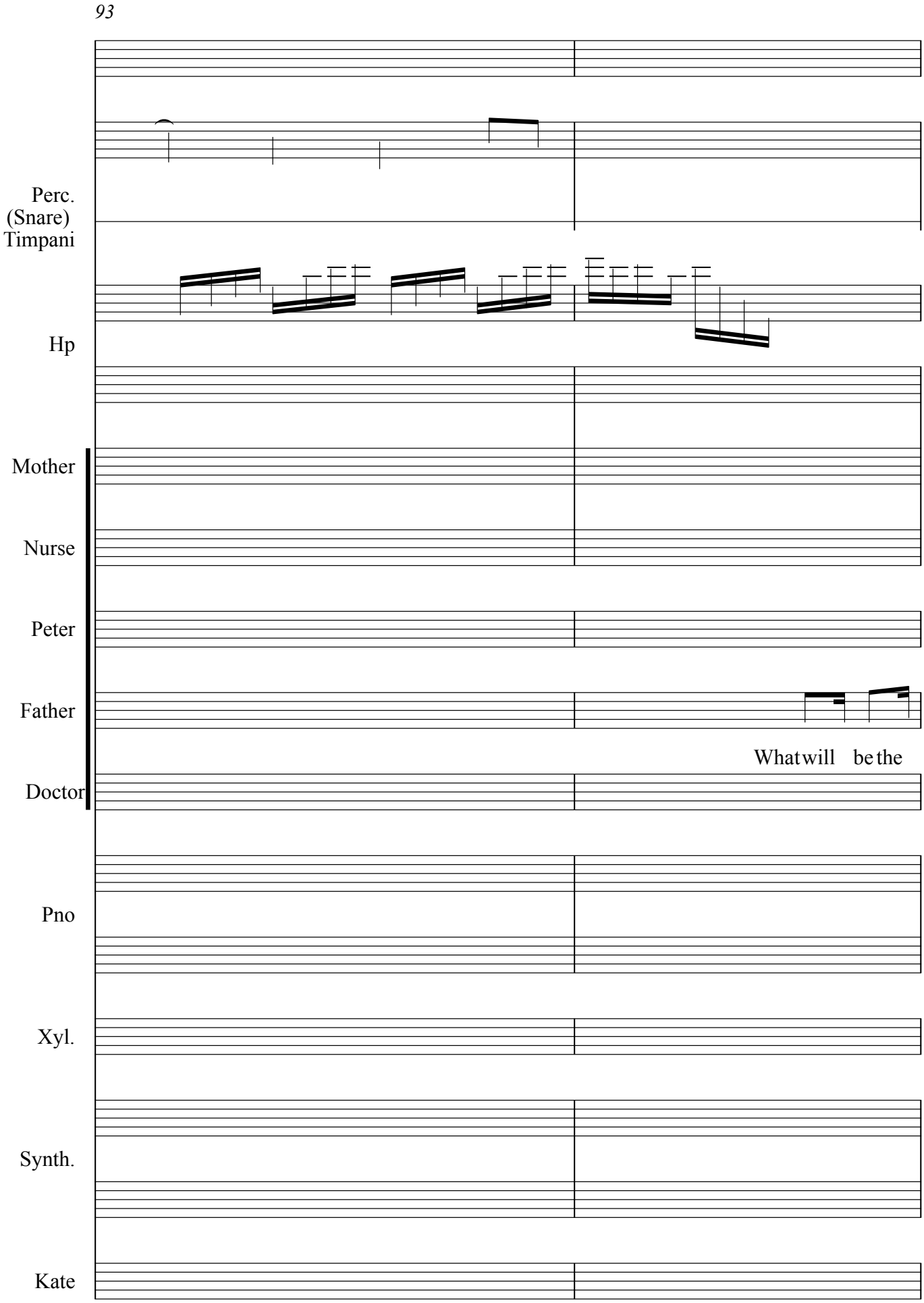

80
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Oh! -
3
We've done ev 'ry thing we
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


83
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
could for him!
Peter
Father
3
Doctor
Our work is clear -ly to save lives
meno mosso
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

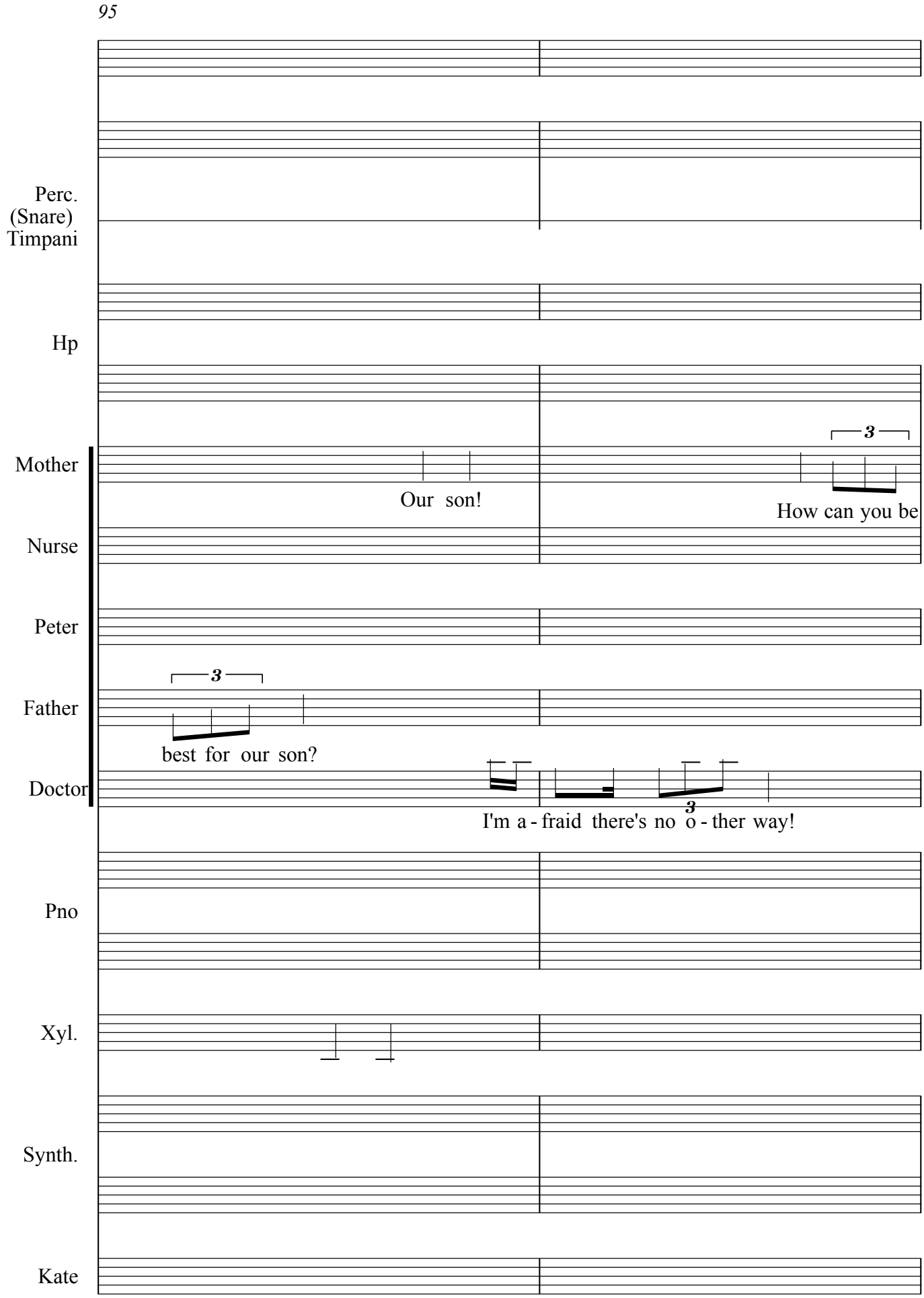

86
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
a tempo
Mother
But whose?
Whose life,
Doc - tor?
Nurse
A long pause in the uncomfortable silence while Mother stares others out
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

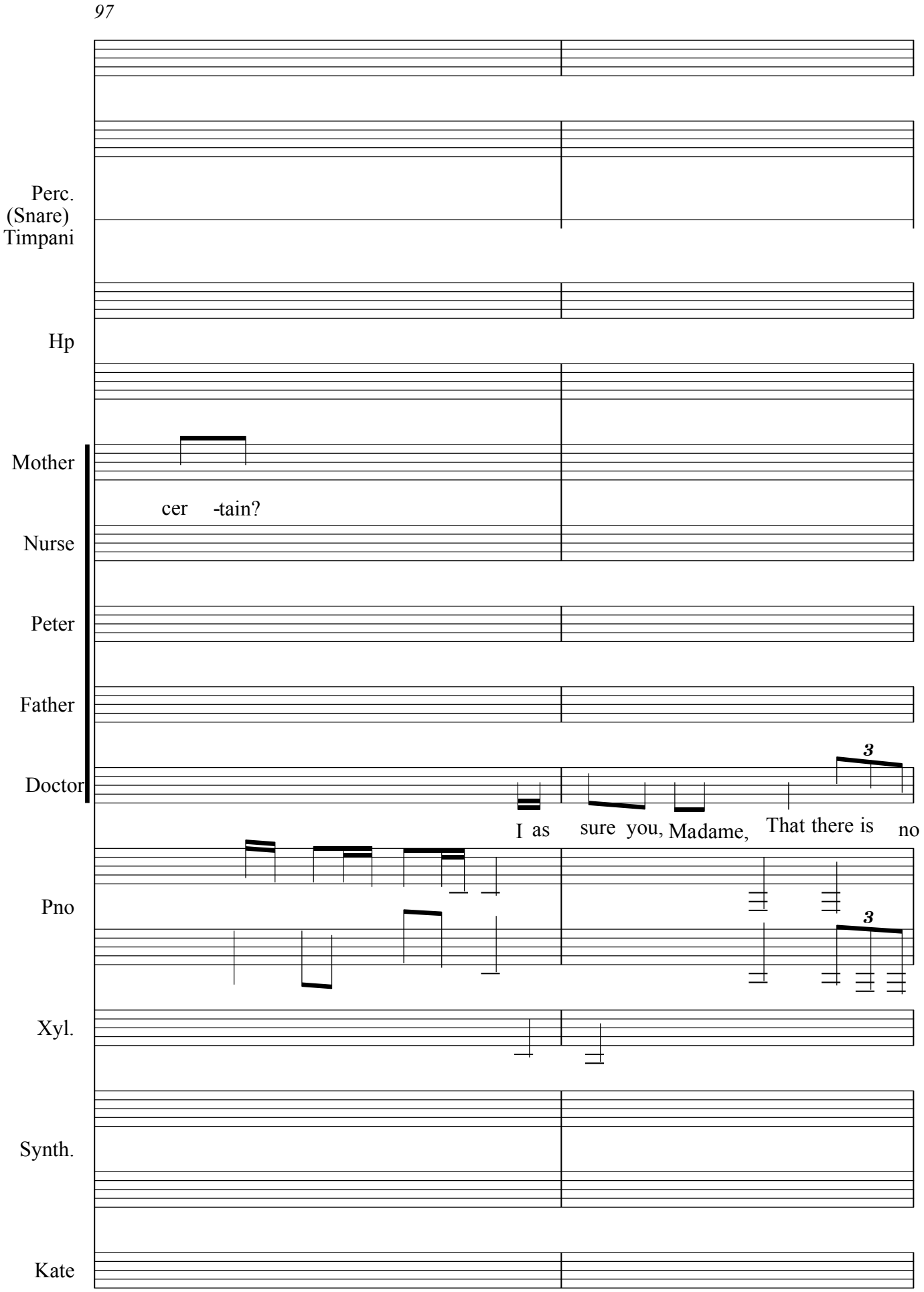

89
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

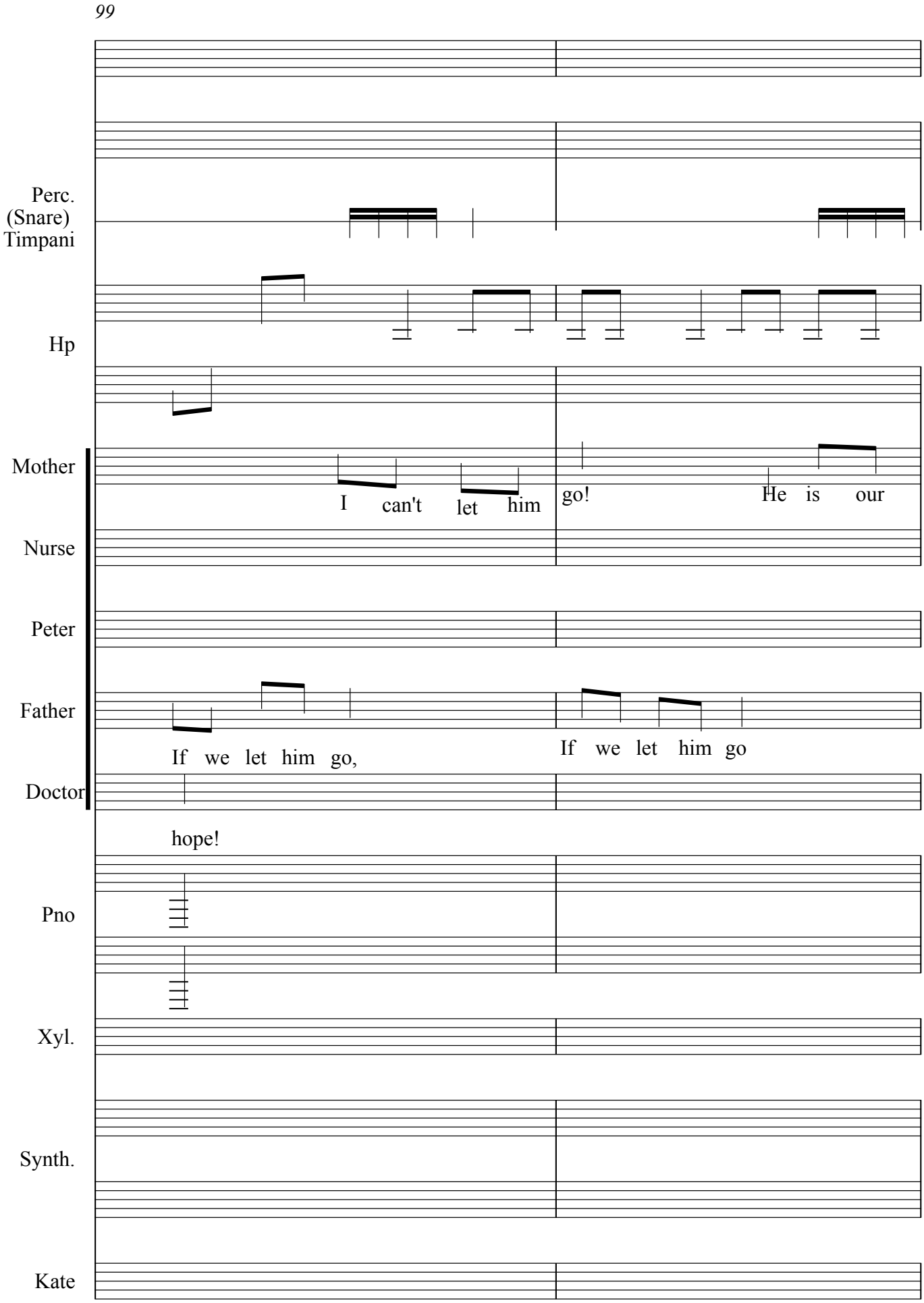

91
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

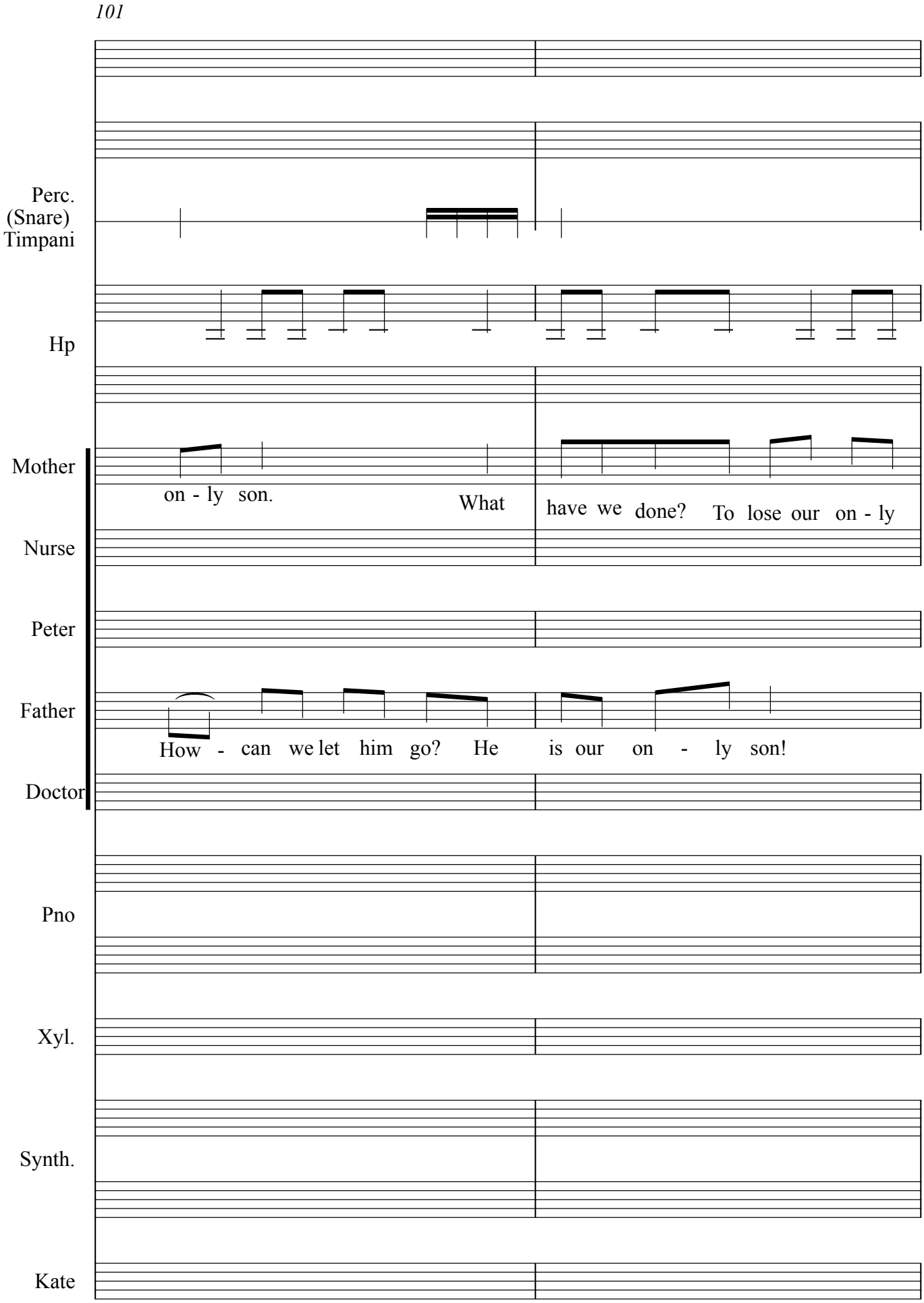

93
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
What will be the
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

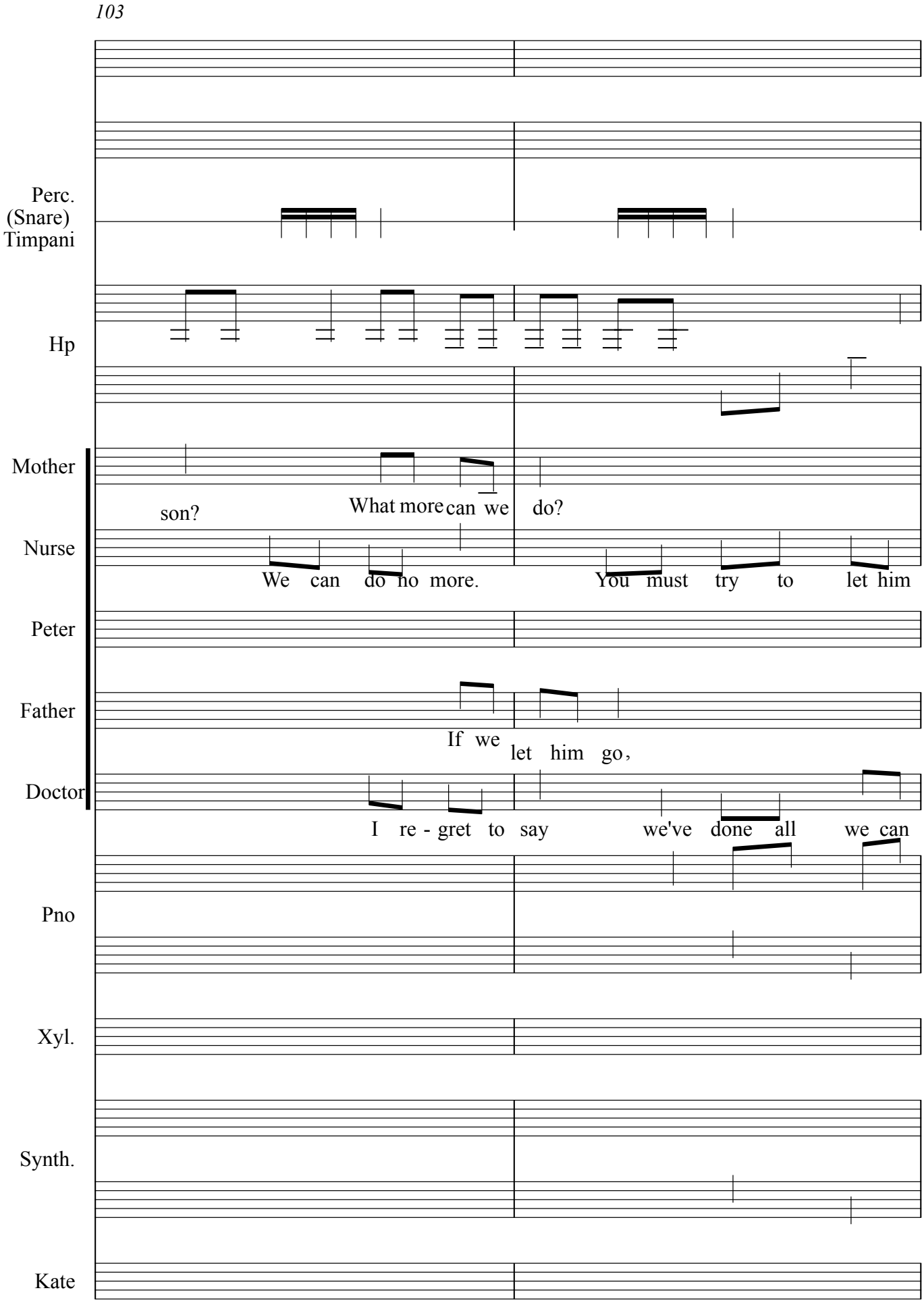
In the unaccompanied section increase the volume of the blips




97
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
cer -tain?
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
I as sure you, Madame, That there is no
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


99
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
I can't let him
go!
He is our
Nurse
Peter
Father
If we let him go,
If we let him go
Doctor
hope!
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


101
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
on - ly son.
What
have we done?
To lose our on - ly
Nurse
Peter
Father
How - can we let him go?
He is our on - ly son!
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


103
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
son?
What more can we do?
Nurse
We can do no more.
You must try to let him
Peter
Father
If we let him go,
Doctor
I re - gret to say we've done all we can
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

105

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

3

Hp

Mother

Could he live a - gain in an - oth - er

Nurse

go.

Peter

Father

he could be co-me a part of a no-ther life.

Doctor

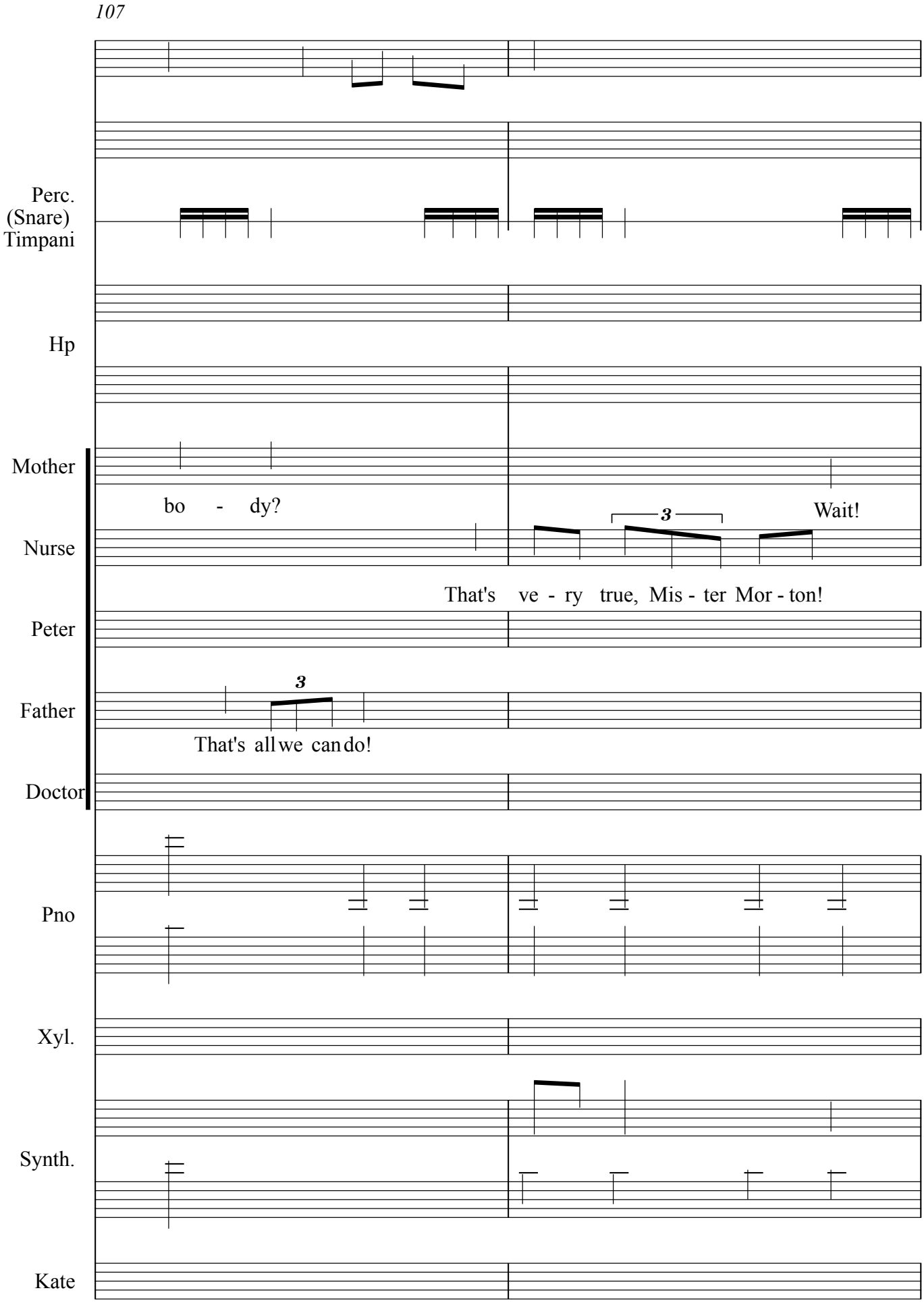
do

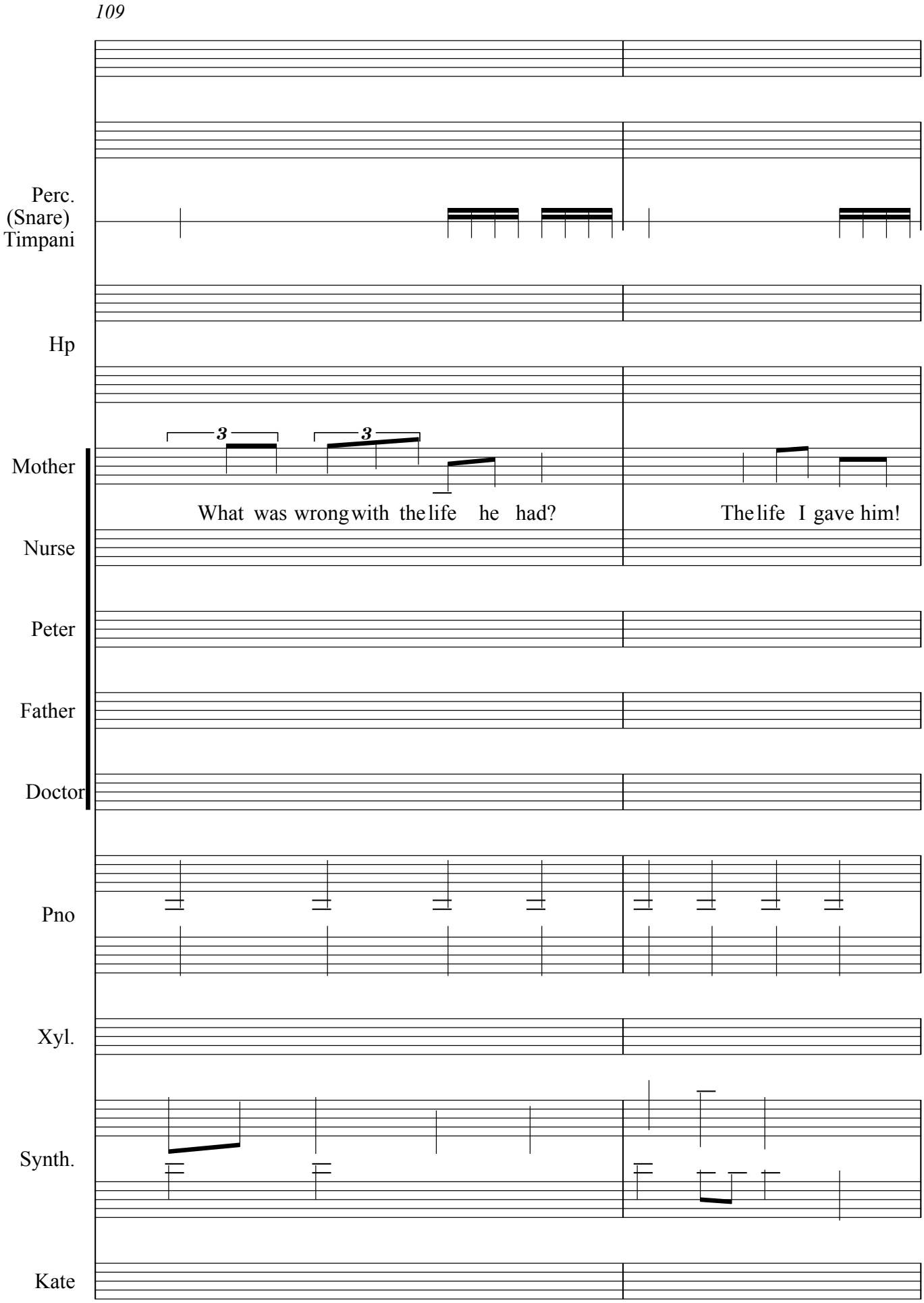
Pno

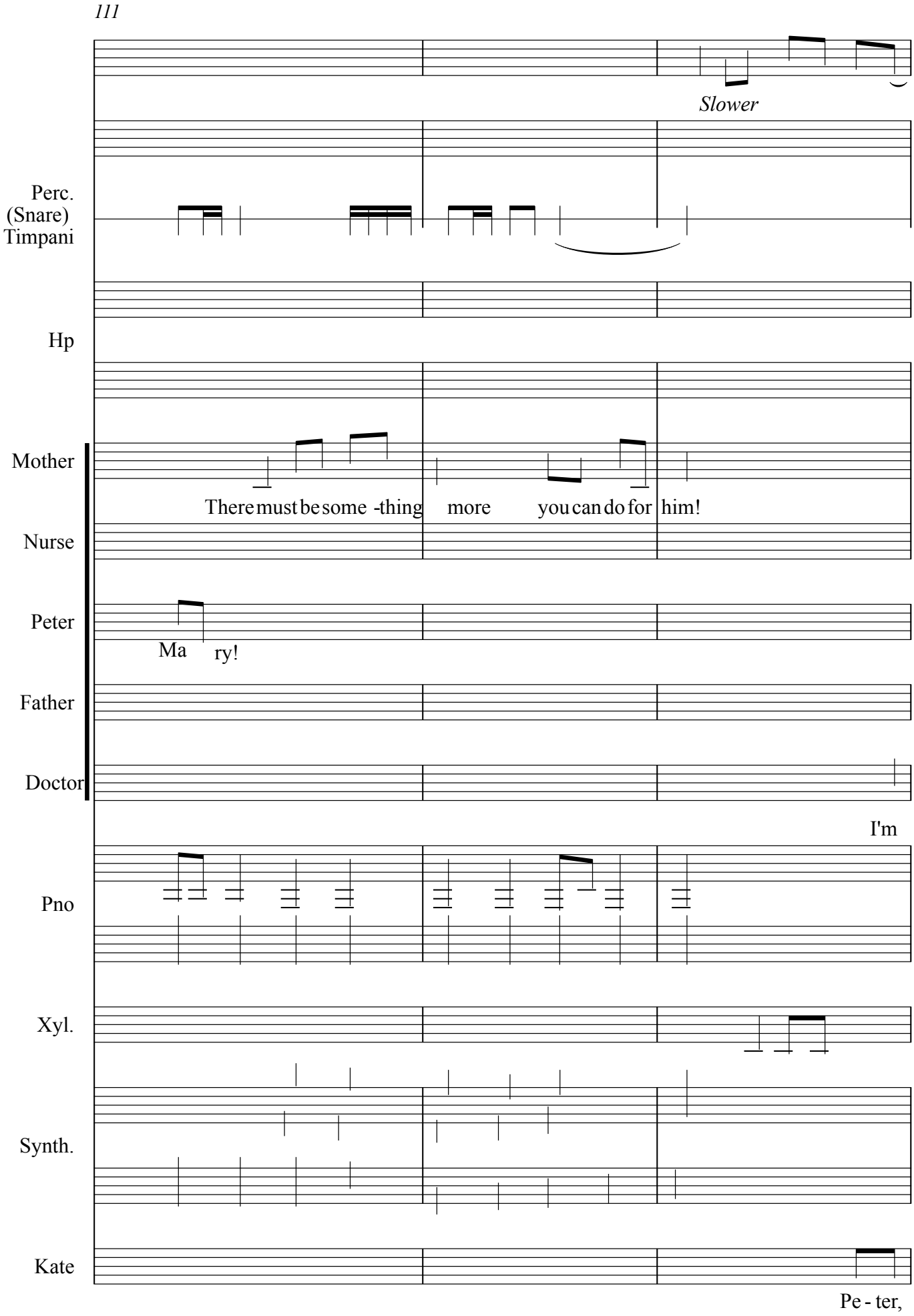
Xyl.

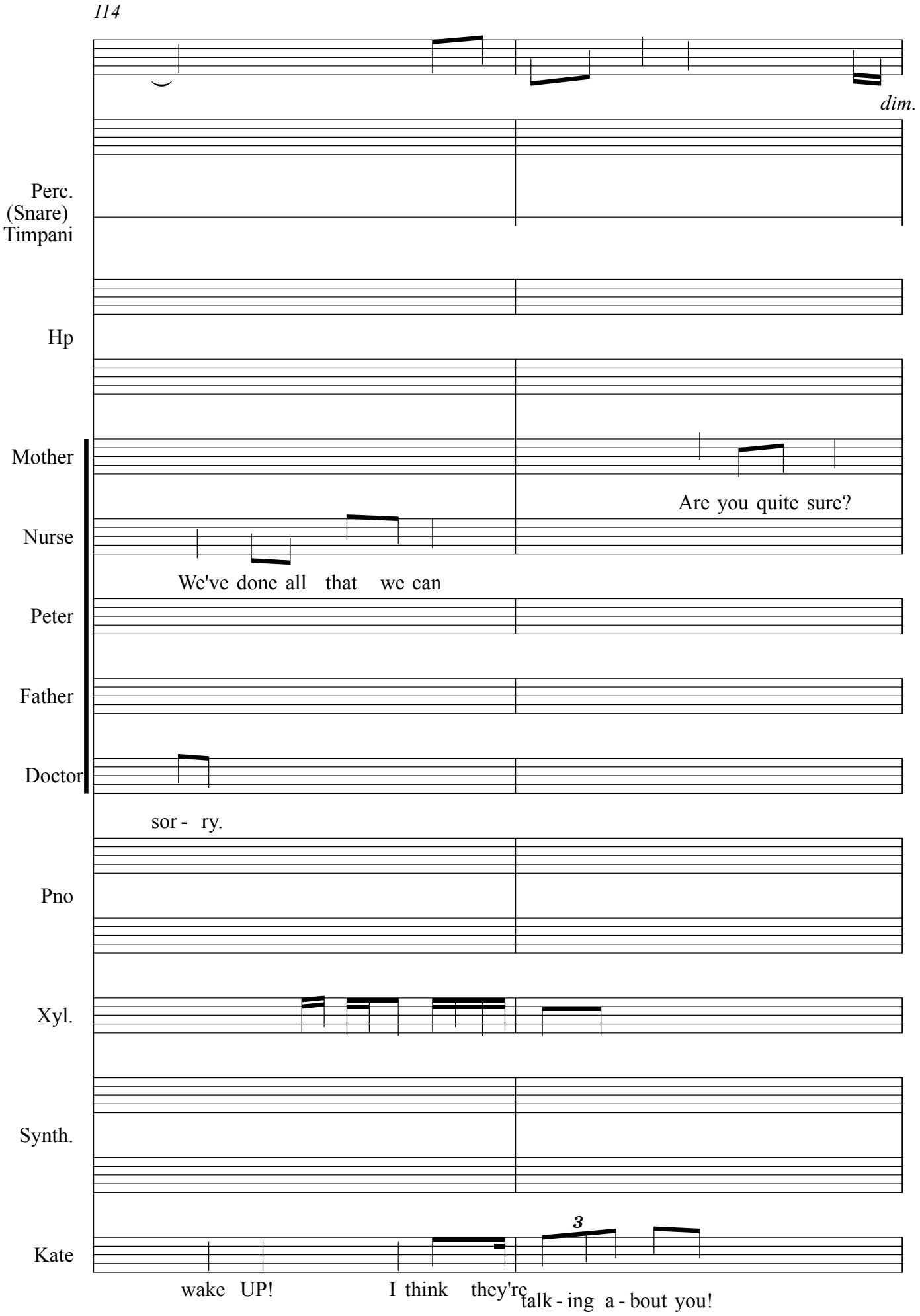
Synth.

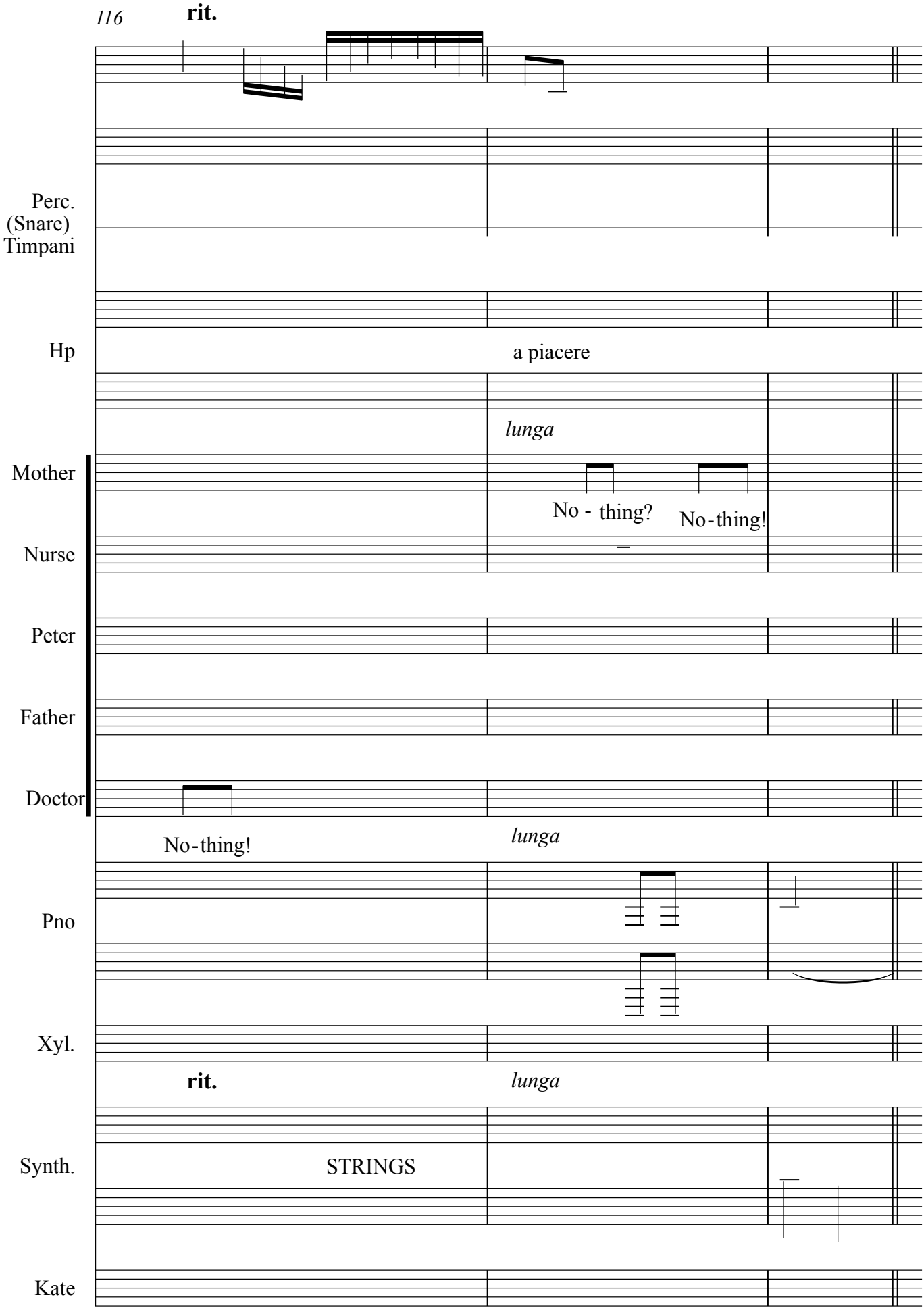
Kate

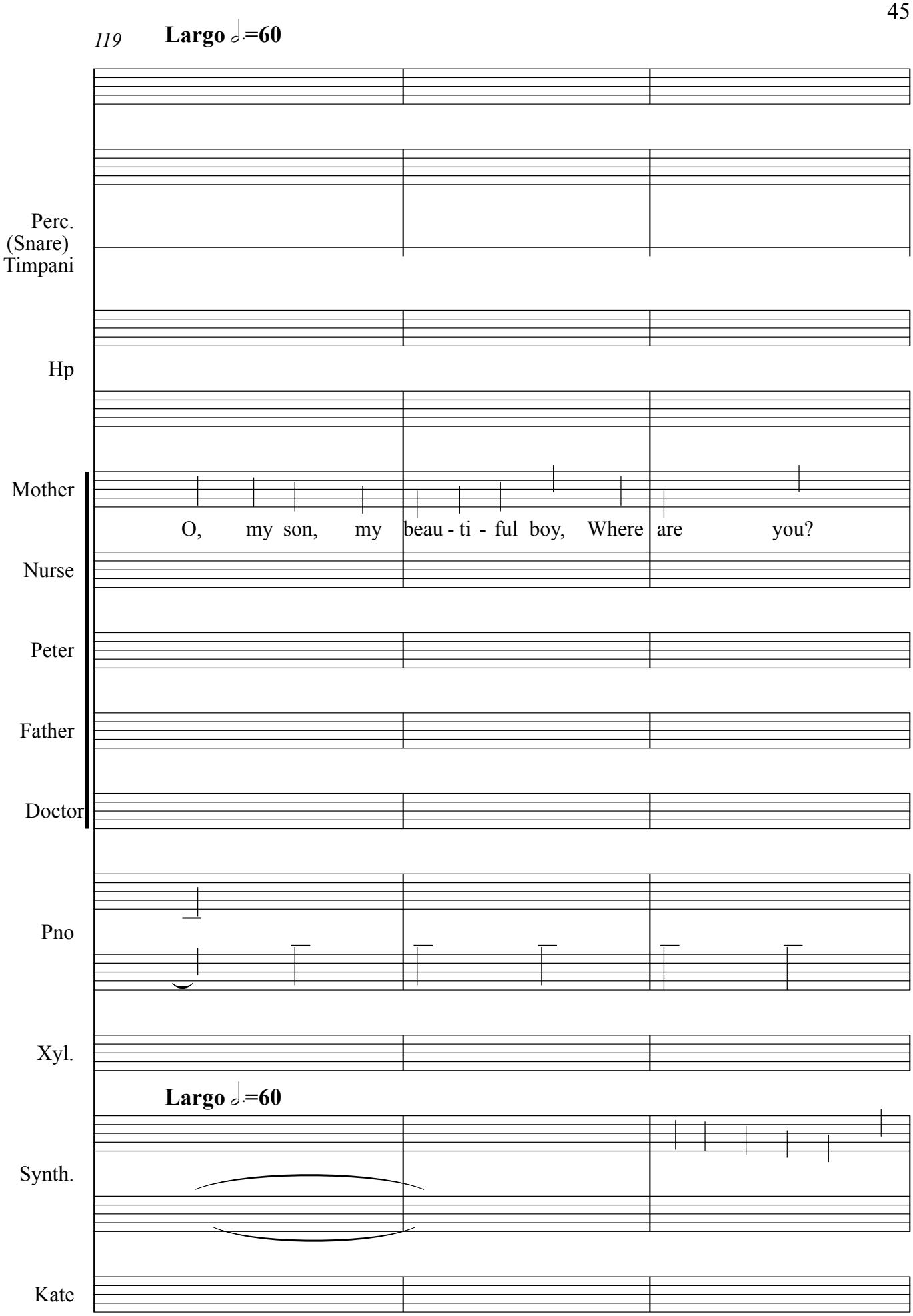

107
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
bo - dy?
Wait!
Nurse
That's ve - ry true, Mis - ter Mor - ton!
Peter
Father
That's all we can do!
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

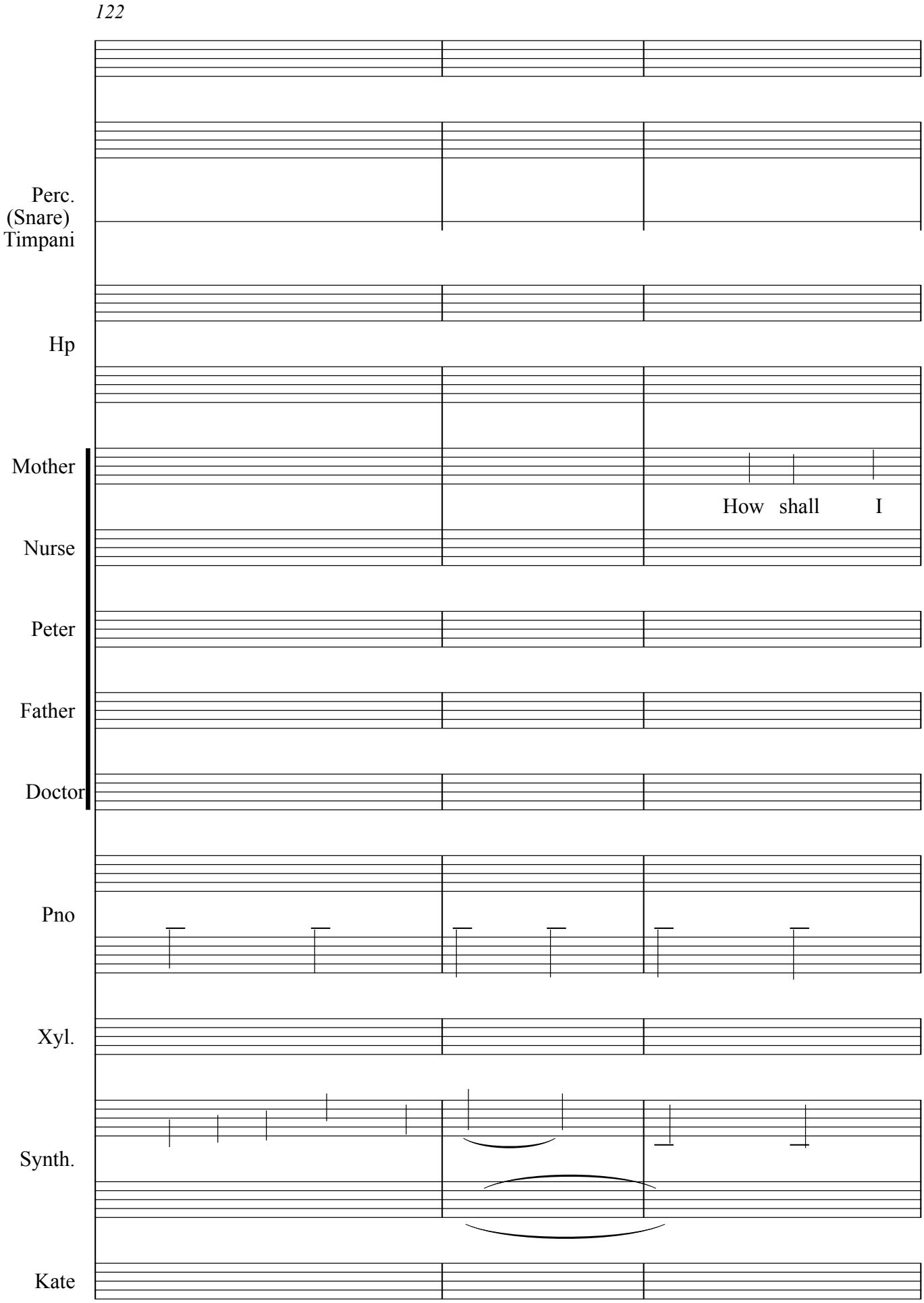

109
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
What was wrong with the life he had?
The life I gave him!
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


111
Slower
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
There must be some -thing more you can do for him!
Nurse
Peter
Ma ry!
Father
Doctor
I'm
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate
Pe - ter,


114
dim.
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Are you quite sure?
Nurse
We've done all that we can
Peter
Father
Doctor
sor - ry.
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate
3
wake UP!
I think they're
talk - ing a - bout you!


116
rit.
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
a piacere
lunga
Mother
No - thing?
No-thing!
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
No-thing!
lunga
Pno
Xyl.
rit.
lunga
Synth.
STRINGS
Kate


119
Largo 𝅗𝅥.=60
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
O, my son, my beau - ti - ful boy, Where are you?
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Largo 𝅗𝅥.=60
Synth.
Kate


122
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
How shall I
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

125

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

find you a - gain? Where are you?

Nurse

Peter

Father

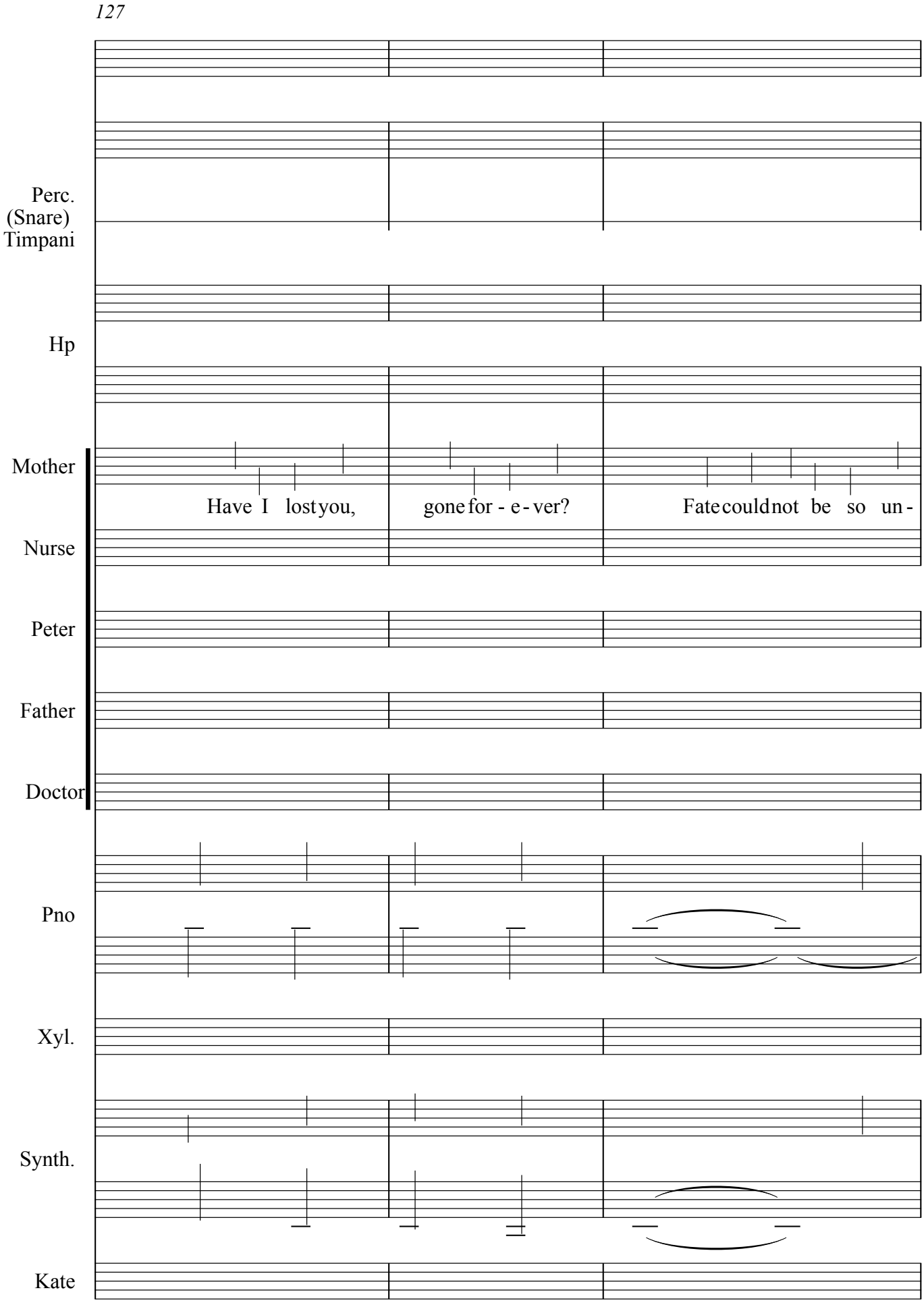
Doctor

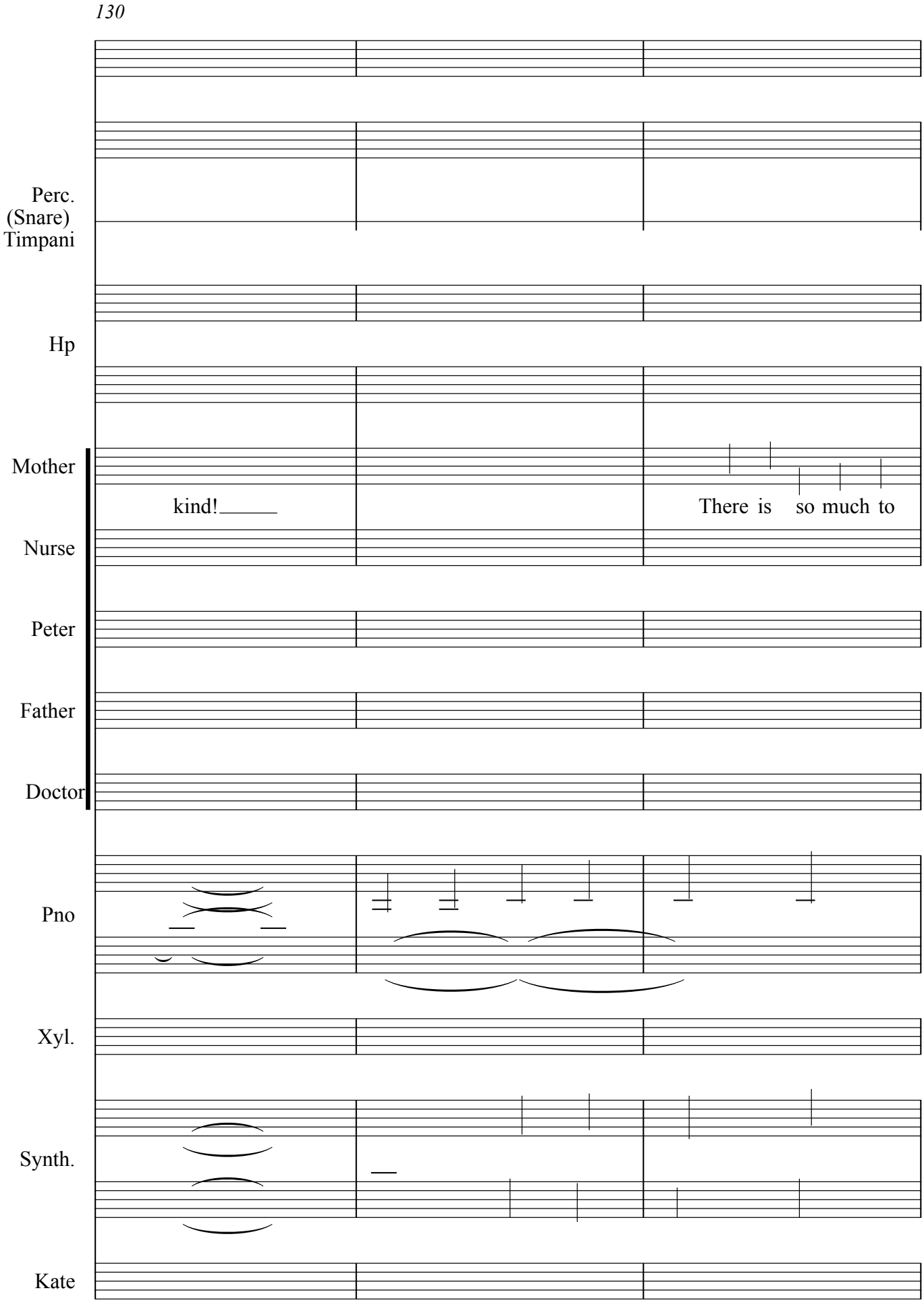
Pno

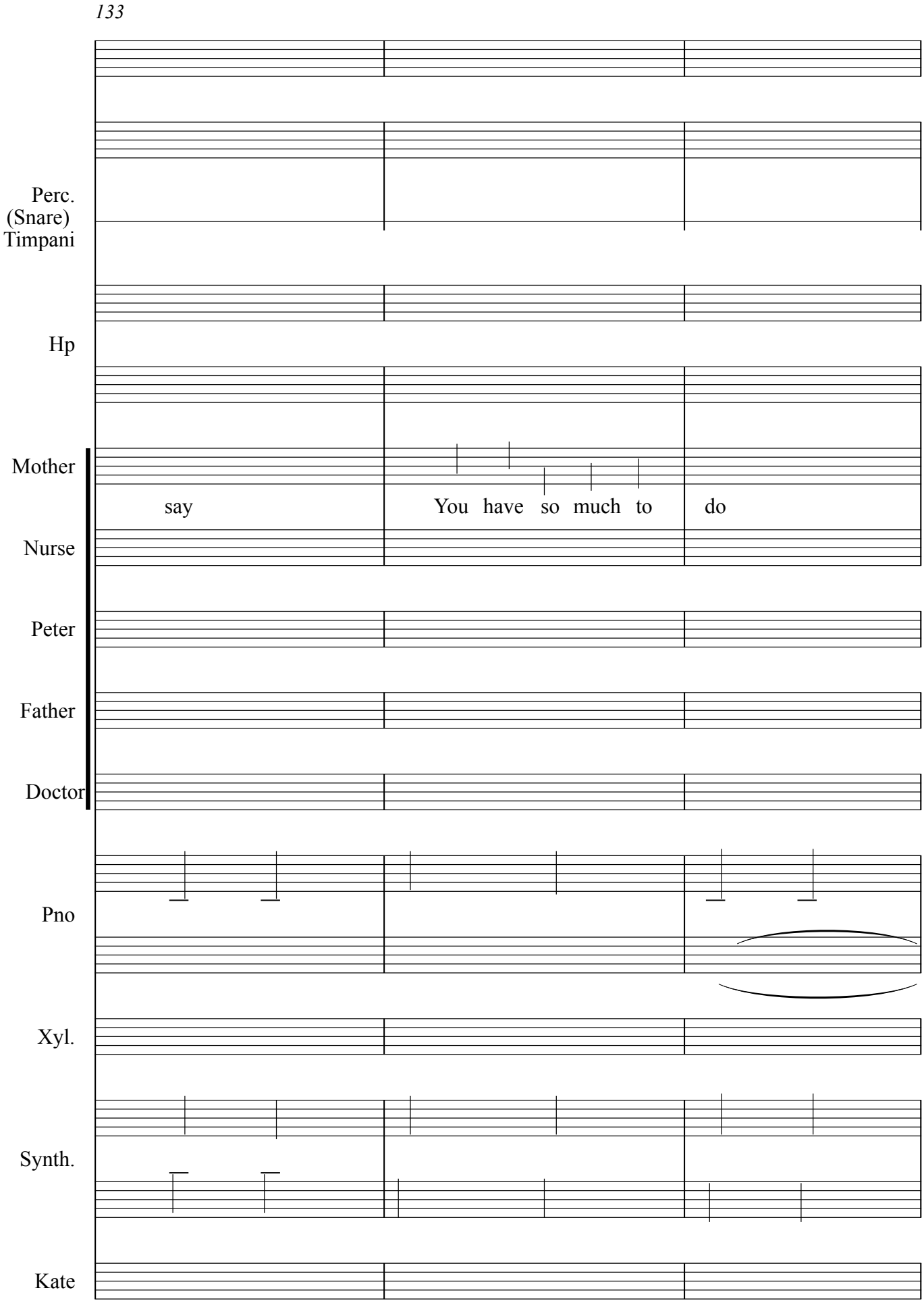
Xyl.

Synth.

Kate


127
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Have I lost you,
gone for - e - ver?
Fate could not be so un -
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


130
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
kind!
There is so much to
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


133
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
say
You have so much to
do
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

136

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

Why would you want to leave us? You know how it will

Nurse

Peter

Father

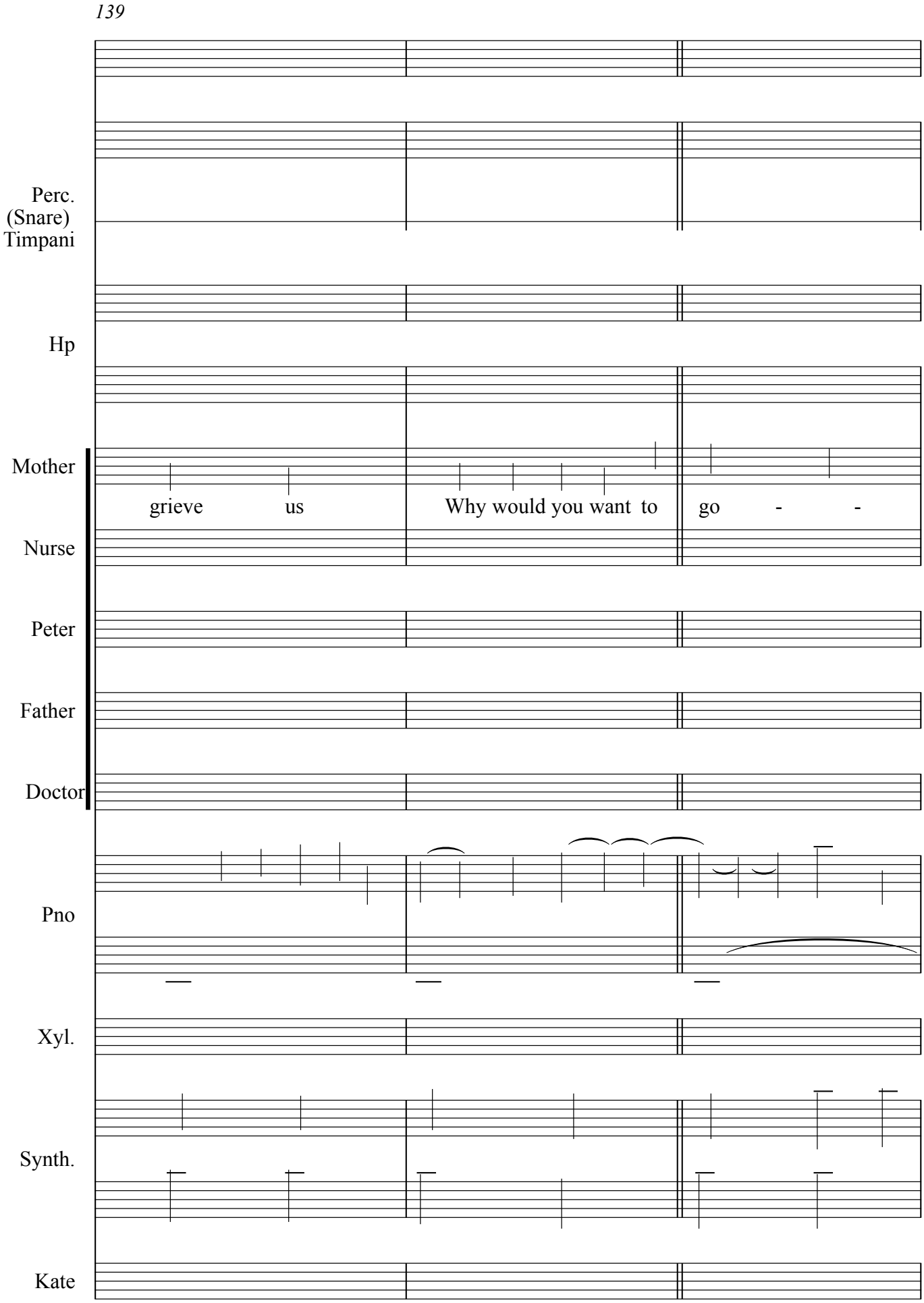
Doctor

Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate


139
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
grieve us
Why would you want to
go - -
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

142

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

- - - O, my child, my won - der - ful son, -

Nurse

Peter

Father

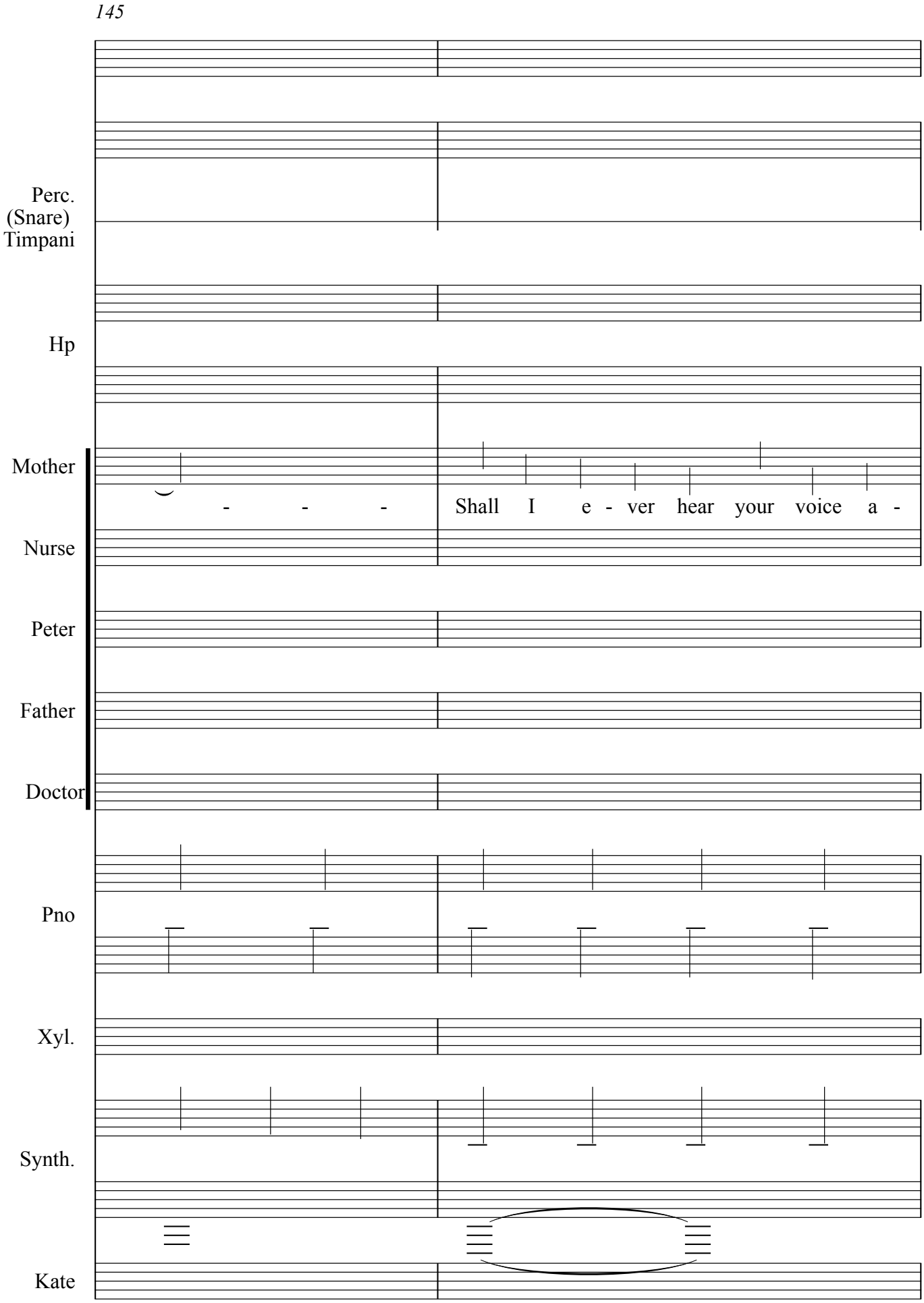
Doctor

Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate


145
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
- - -
Shall I e - ver hear your voice a -
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

147

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

gain?

Do you have to go from us so

Nurse

Peter

Father

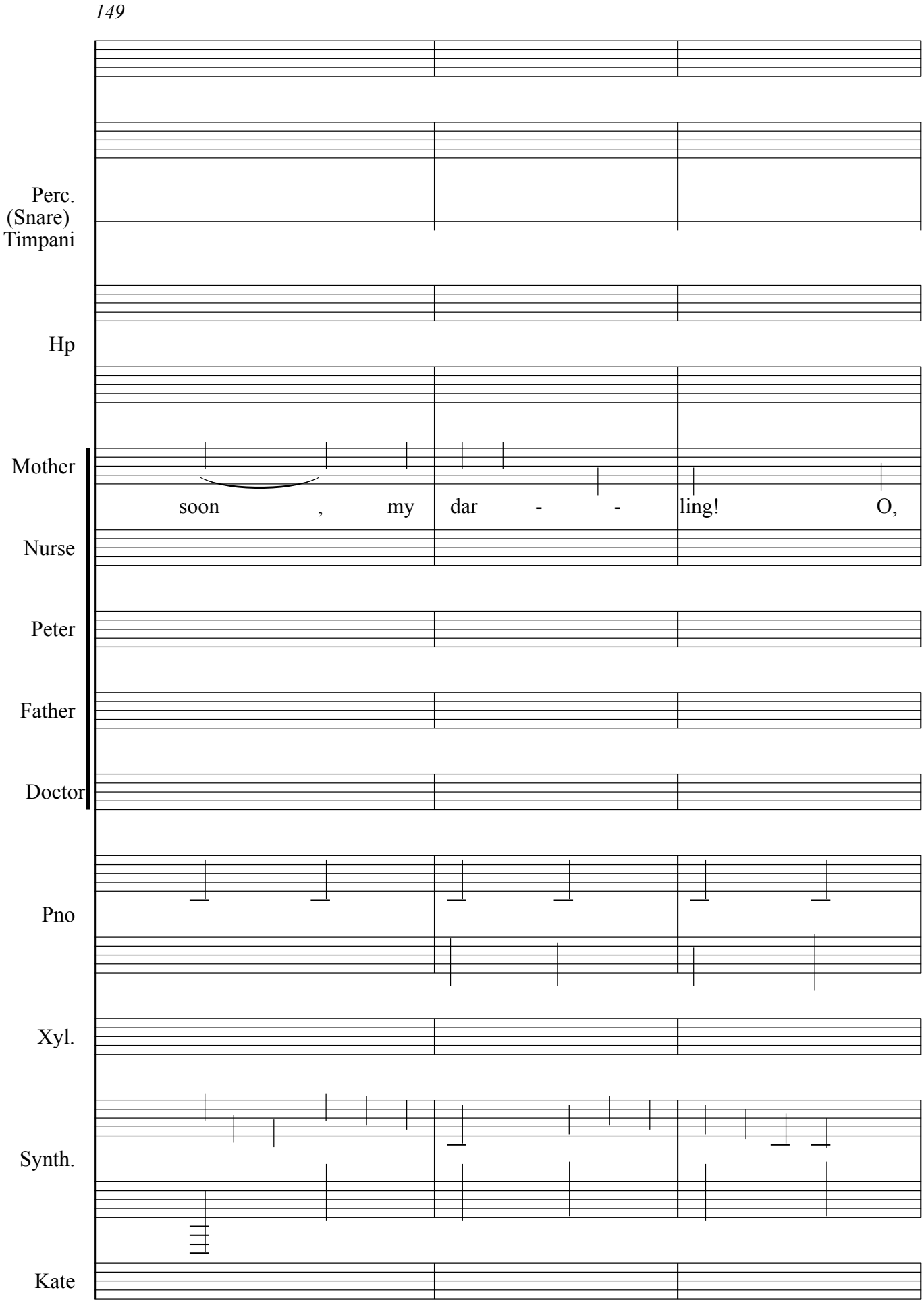
Doctor

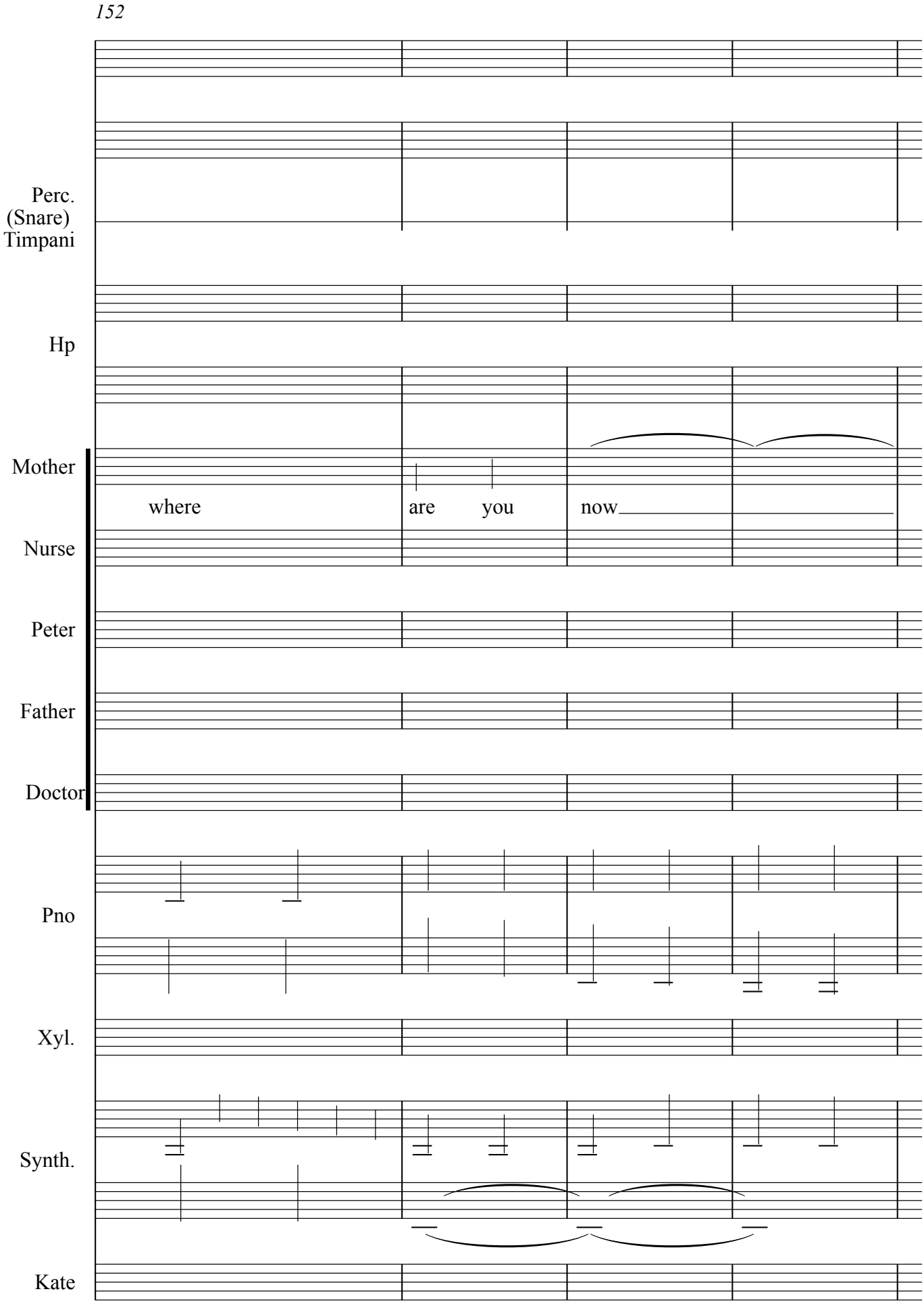
Pno

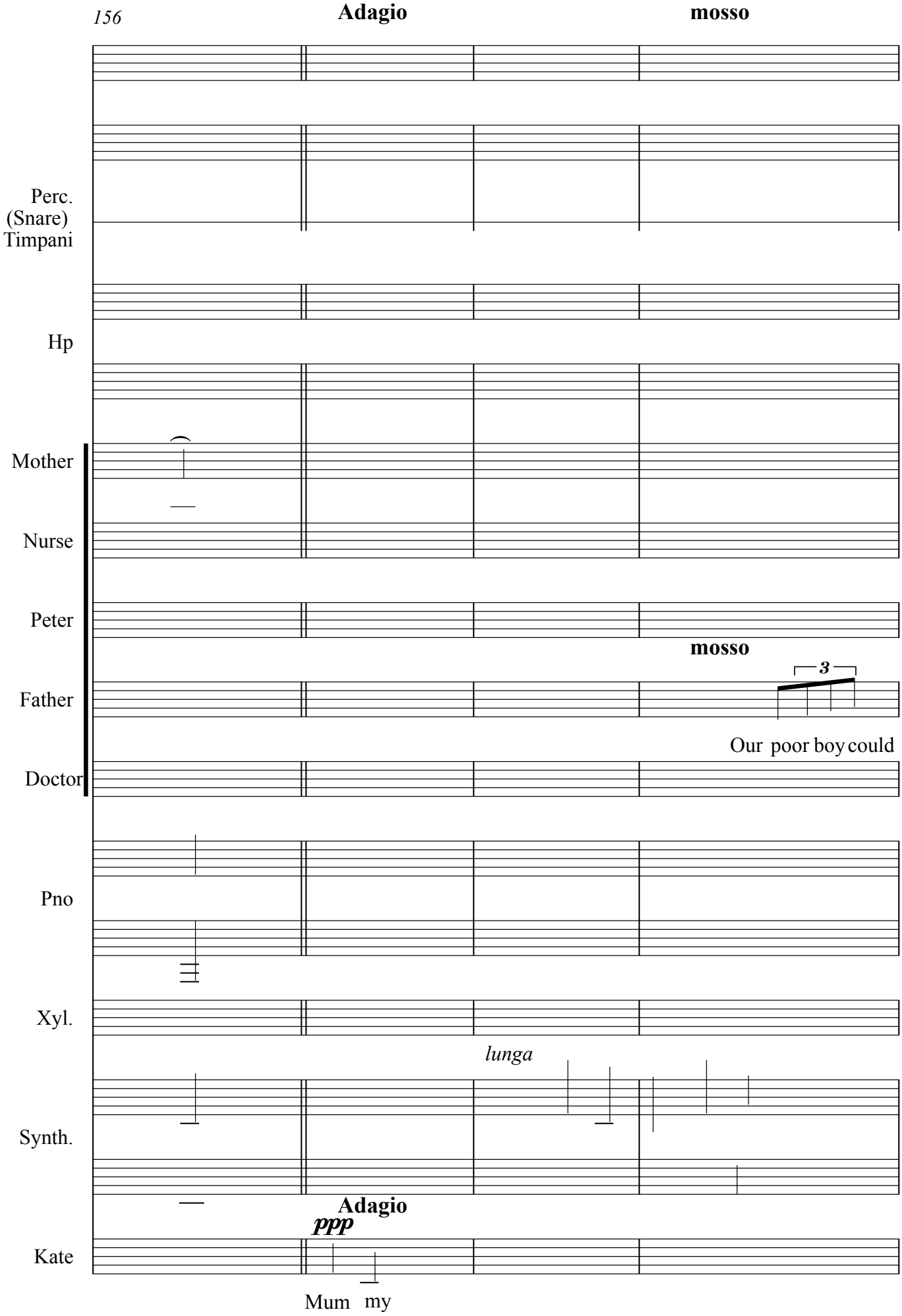
Xyl.

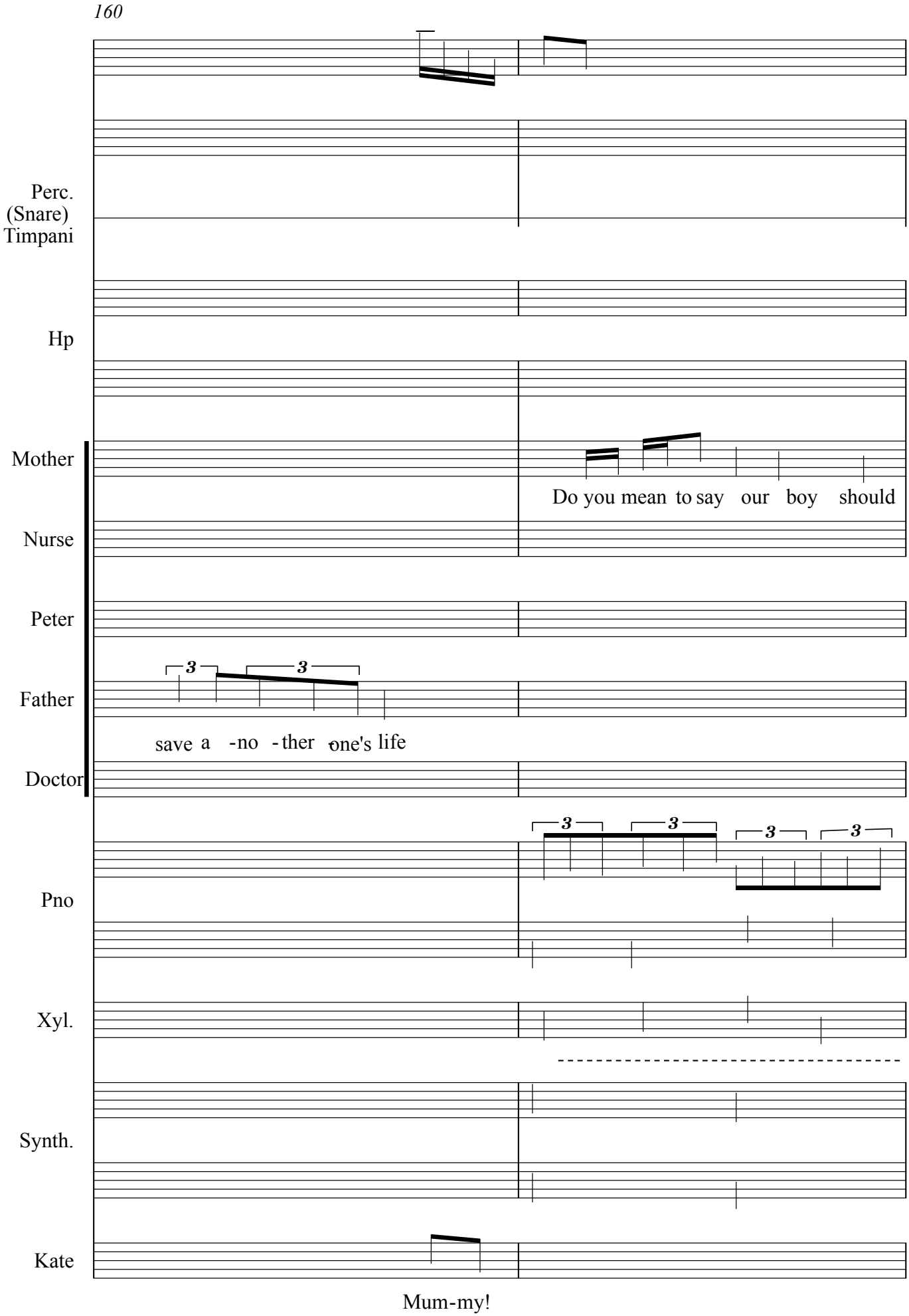
Synth.

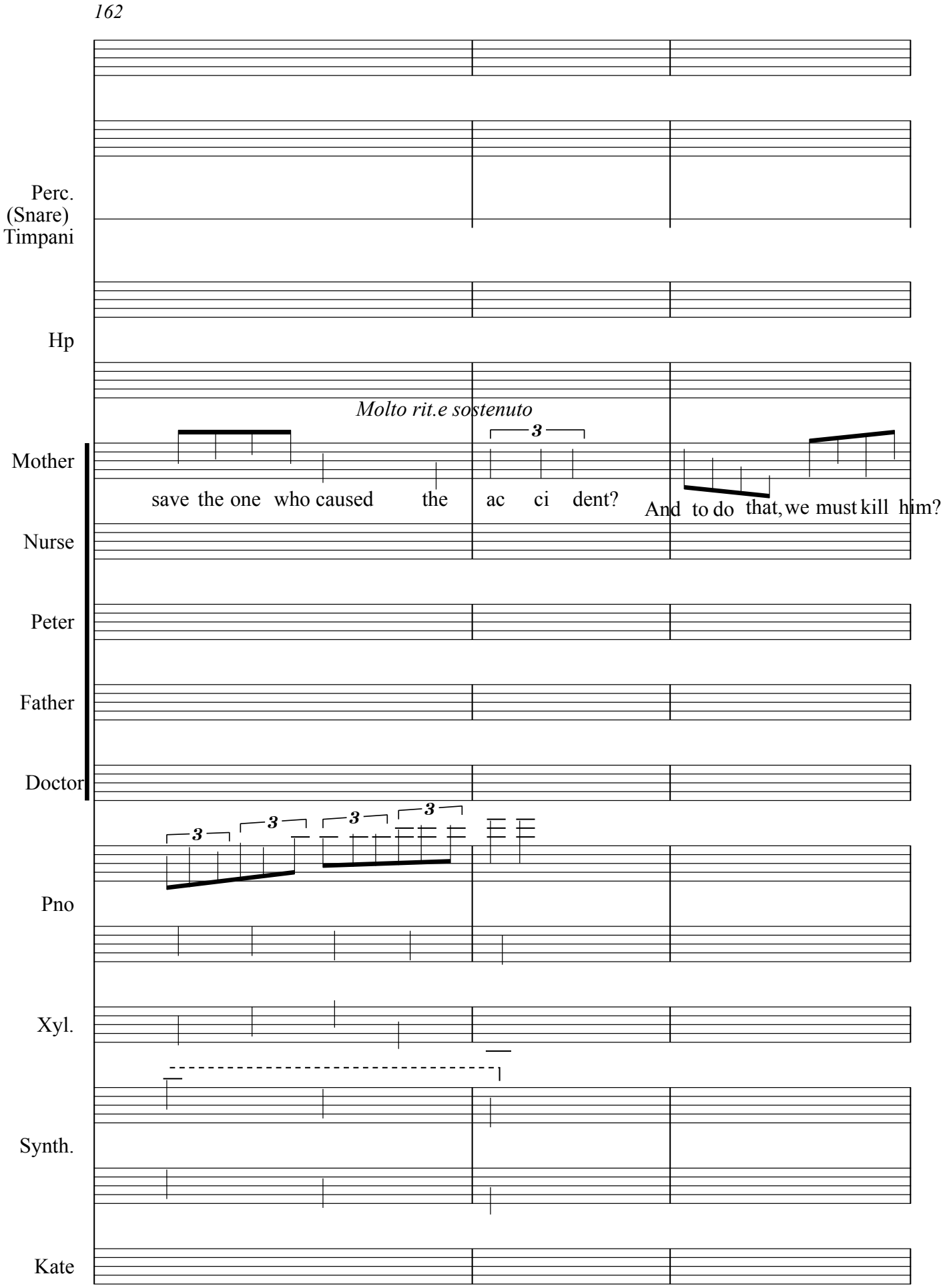
Kate

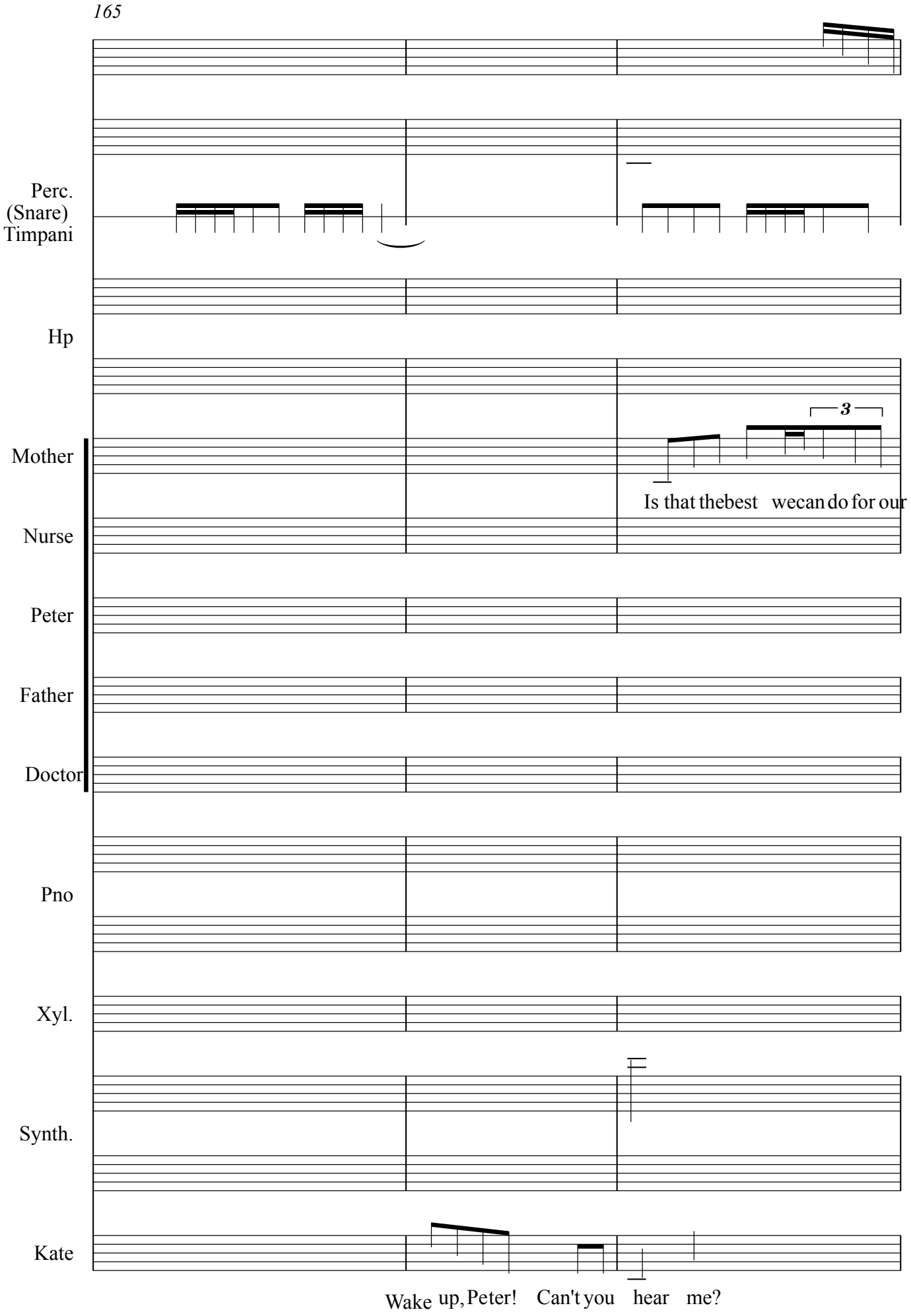

149
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
soon , my dar - - ling! O,
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

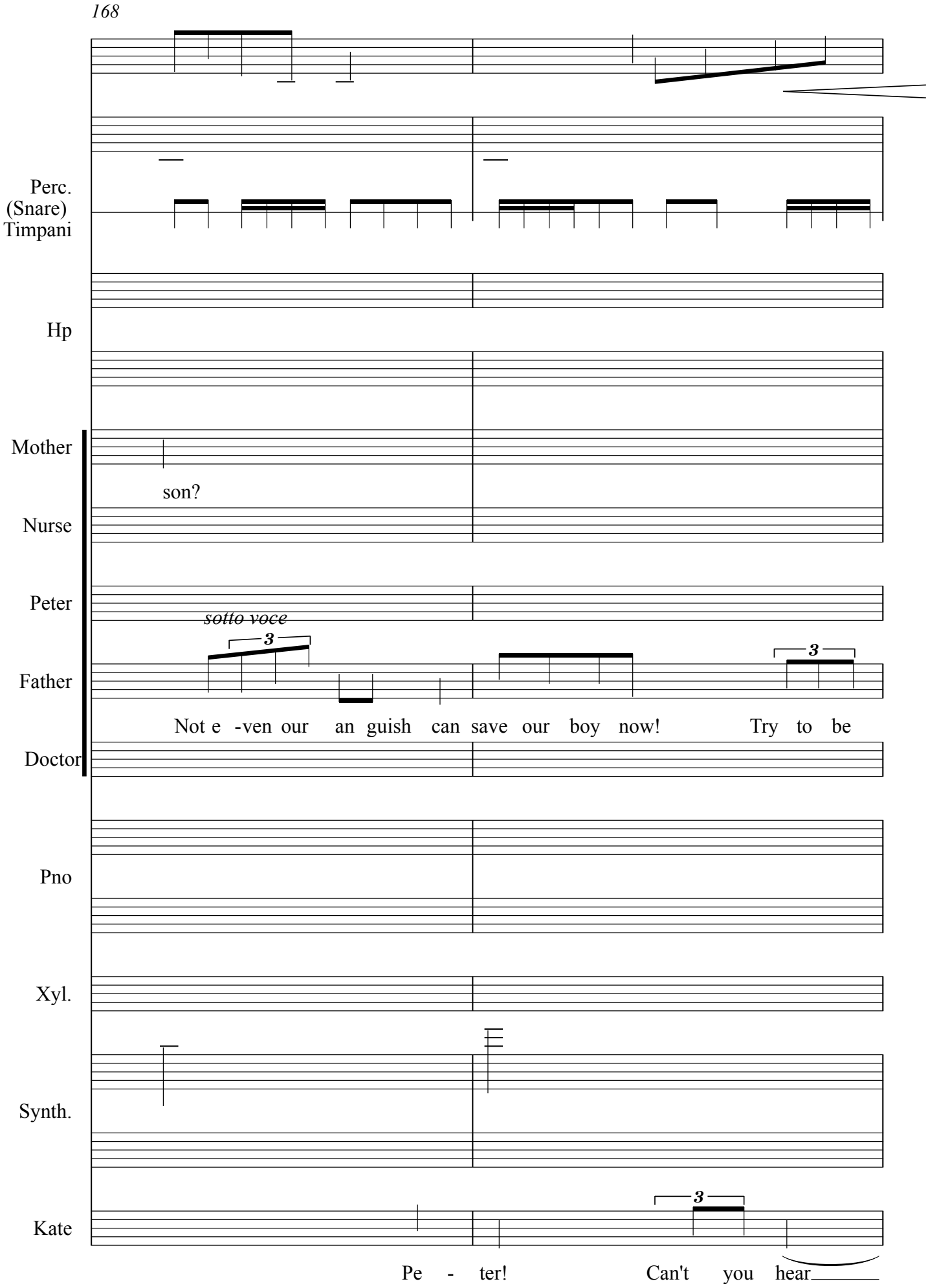

152
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
where
are
you
now
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


156
Adagio
mosso
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
mosso
3
Father
Our poor boy could
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
lunga
Synth.
Adagio
ppp
Kate
Mum my


160
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Do you mean to say our boy should
Nurse
Peter
Father
save a -no -ther one's life
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate
Mum-my!


162
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Molto rit.e sostenuto
Mother
save the one who caused the ac ci dent?
And to do that, we must kill him?
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


165
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate
3
Is that the best we can do for our
Wake up, Peter! Can't you hear me?


168
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
son?
Nurse
Peter
sotto voce
3
Father
3
Not e -ven our an guish can save our boy now! Try to be
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate
3
Pe - ter! Can't you hear

170

rit.

morendo

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

ff

Reasonable? Has it really come to this?

pp

It must be

Nurse

Peter

Father

rea sonable, and listen to the doc tor!

rit.

To Nurse

3

Doctor

You know what to do!

sotto voce

pp

Pno

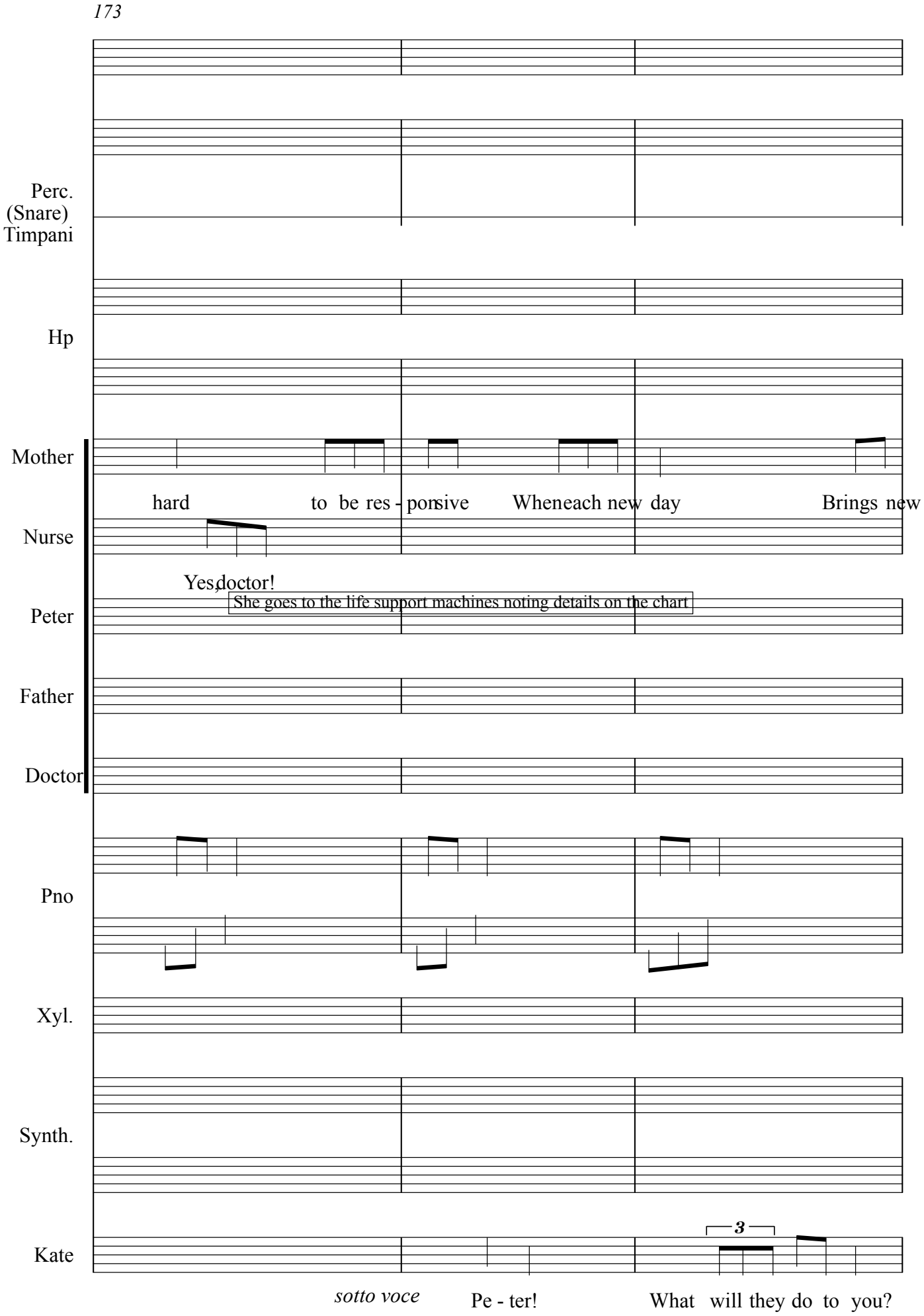
morendo

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate

them?


173
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
hard to be res - ponsive When each new day Brings new
Nurse
Yes, doctor!
Peter
She goes to the life support machines noting details on the chart
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate
3
sotto voce
Pe - ter!
What will they do to you?

176

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Like one in a dream, the Mother puts the case on the bed and stares inside it; she would pack his things, but she can't bring herself to the task

Mother

cas es to o - pen!

Nurse

We did all we could!

Peter

Father

Lento

Doctor

p

As if I

Nurse!

Pno

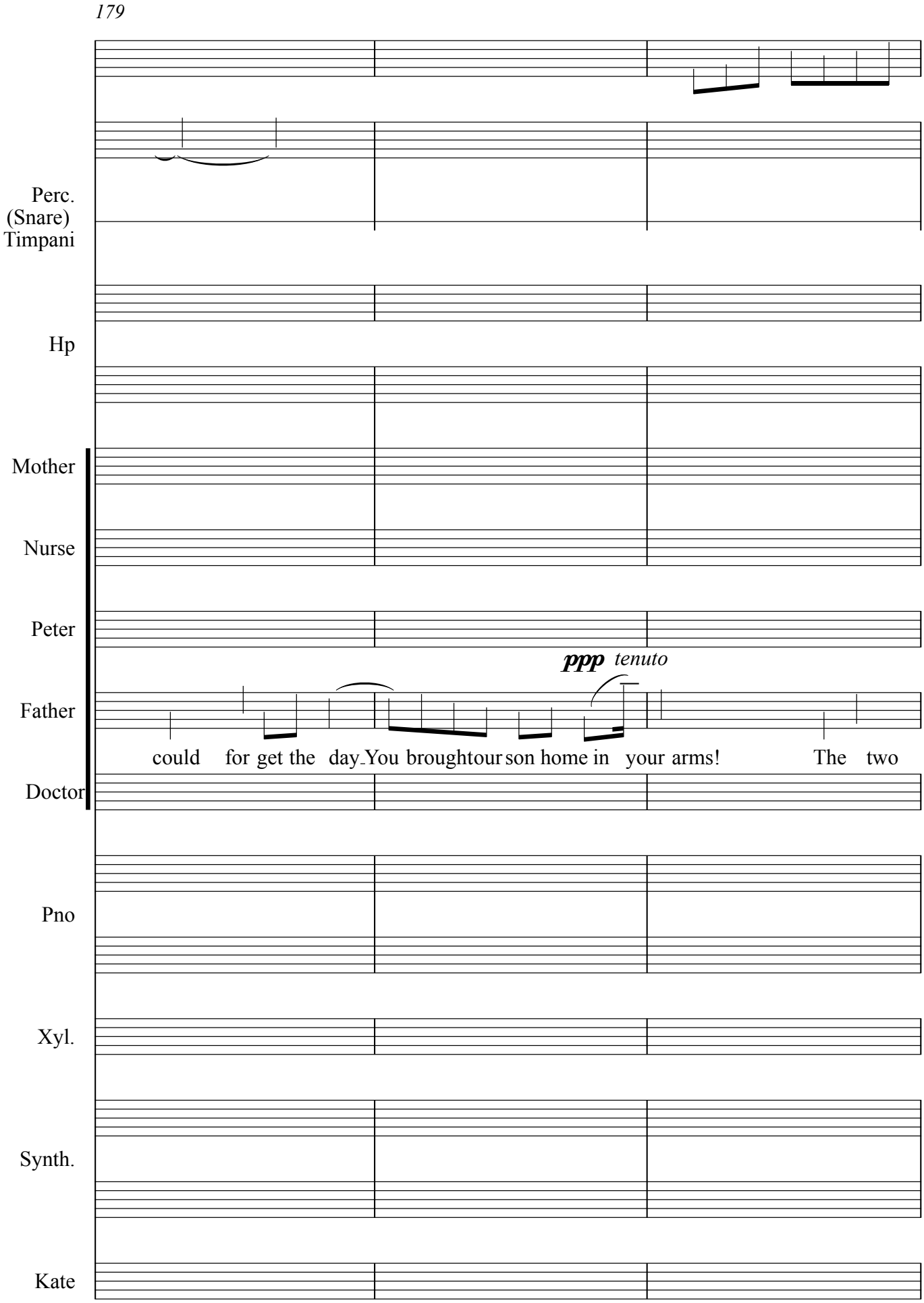
Xyl.

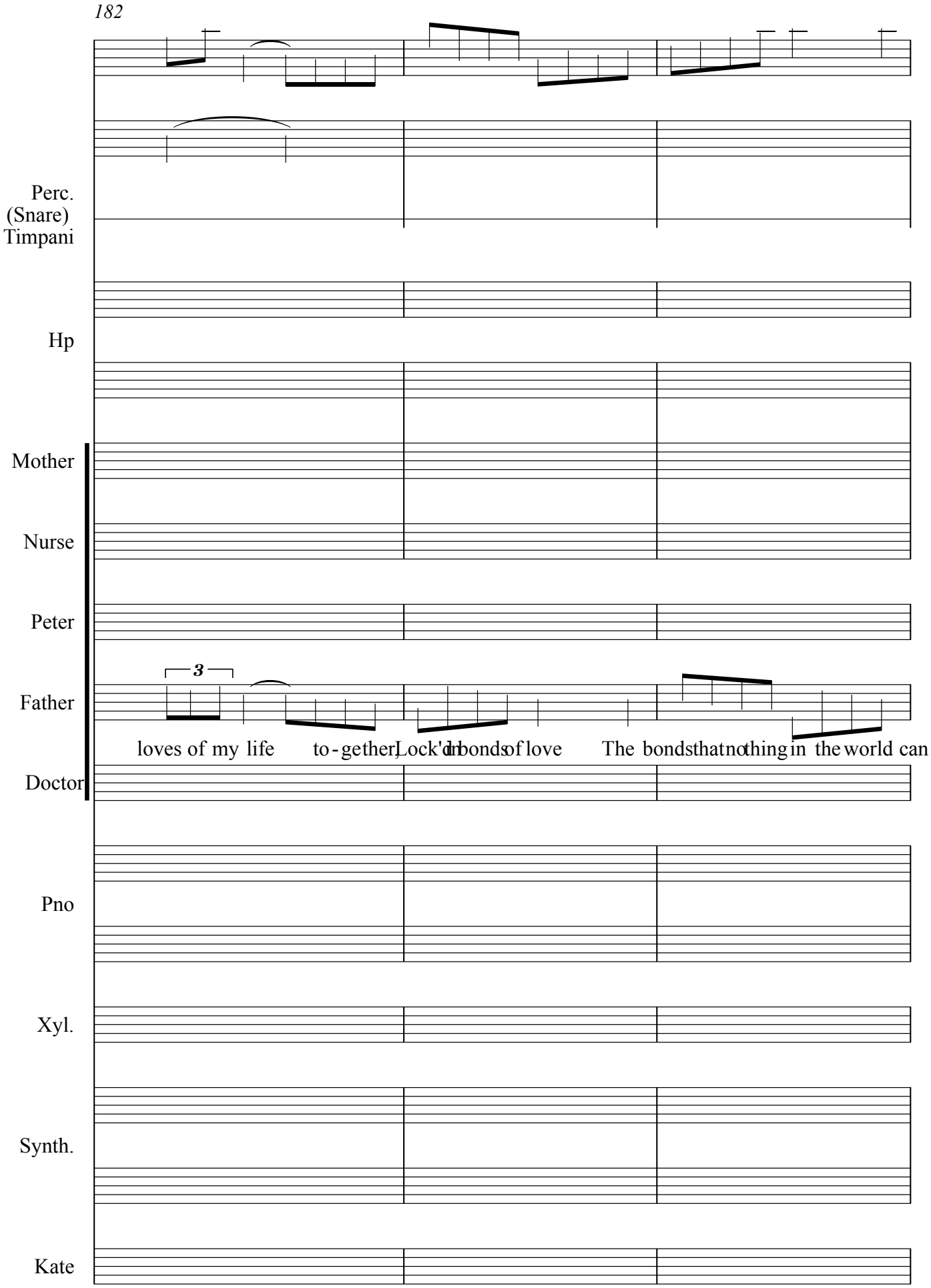
Synth.

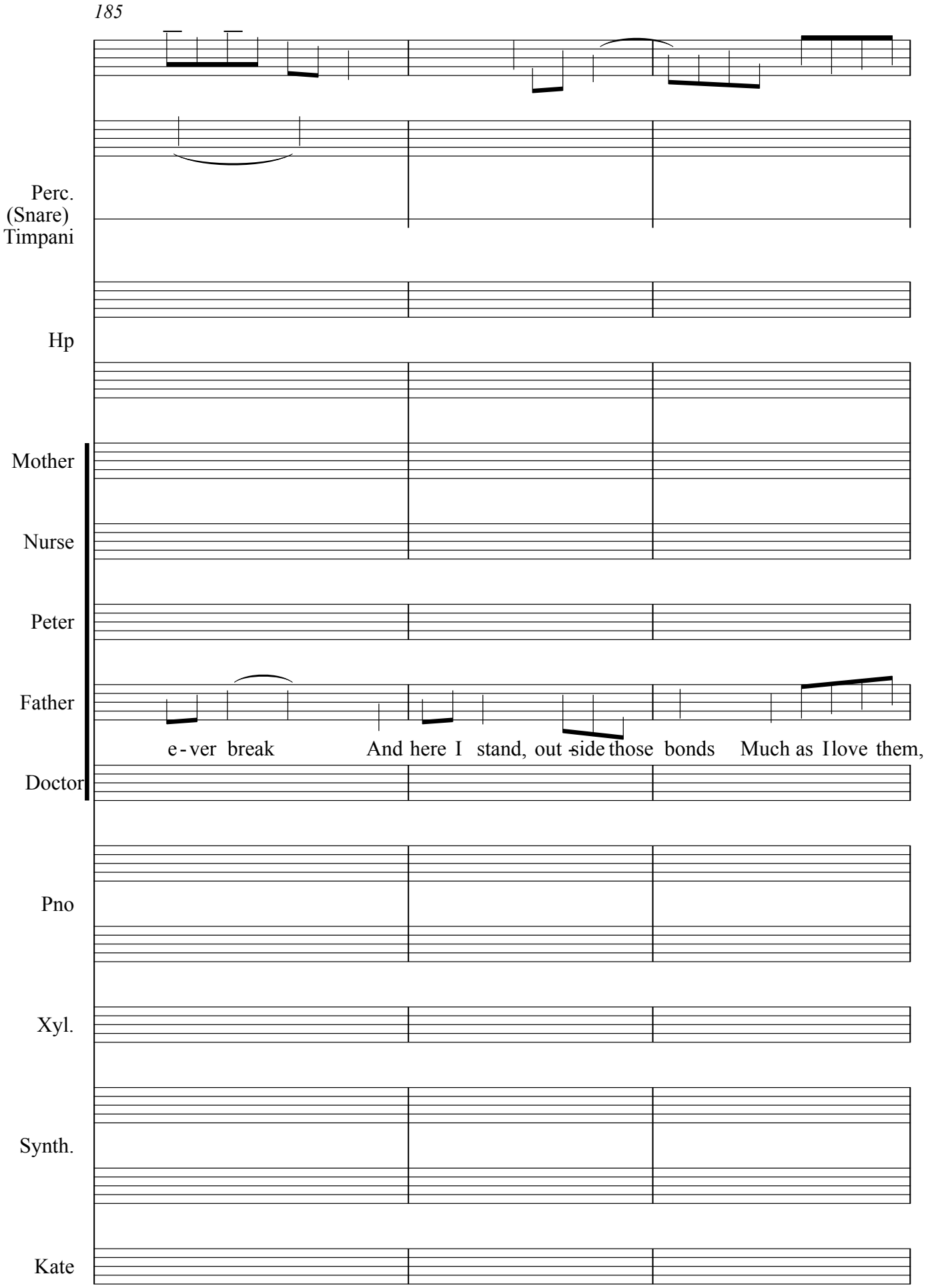
Kate

sotto voce

Pe - ter you MUST wake up! Now!


179
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate
ppp tenuto
could for get the day You broughtour son home in your arms! The two


182
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
3
loves of my life to-gether, Lock'd in bonds of love The bonds that nothing in the world can
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


185
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
e-ver break
And here I stand, out-side those bonds
Much as I love them,
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

188

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

ppp

Hp

Mother

Nurse

Peter

Father

And as they love me! I know her pain prevents her seeing how she hurts me! God give me

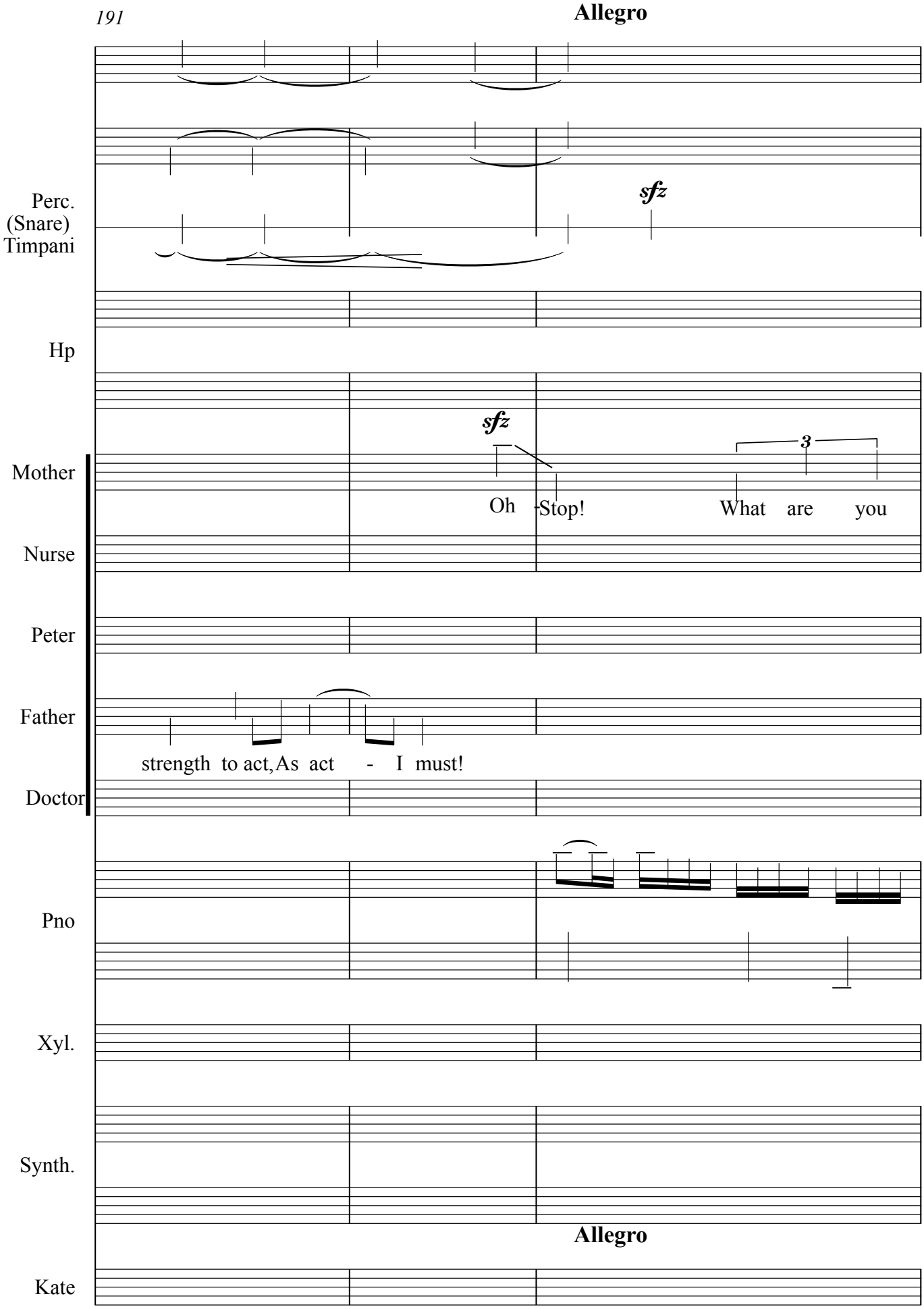
Doctor

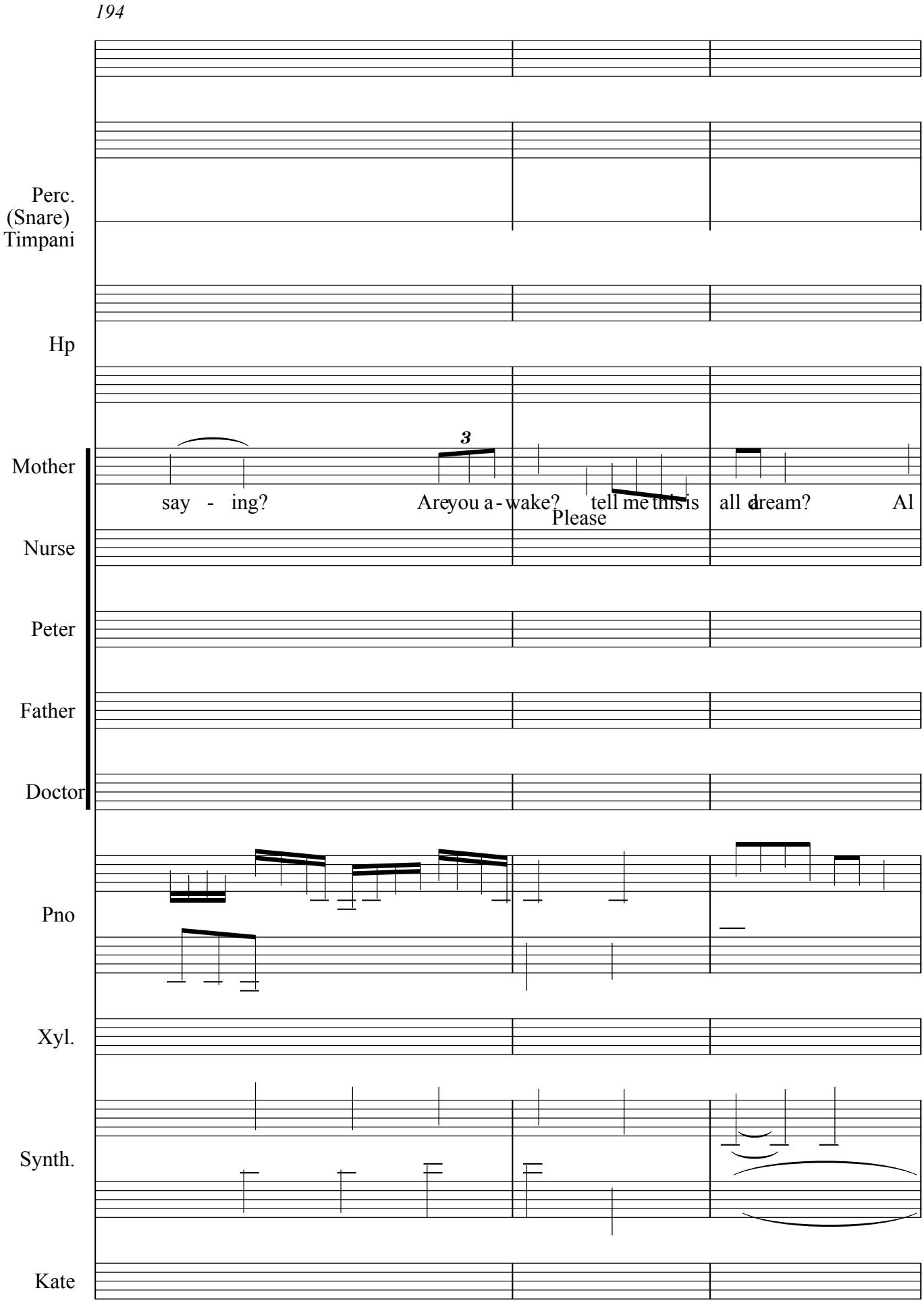
Pno

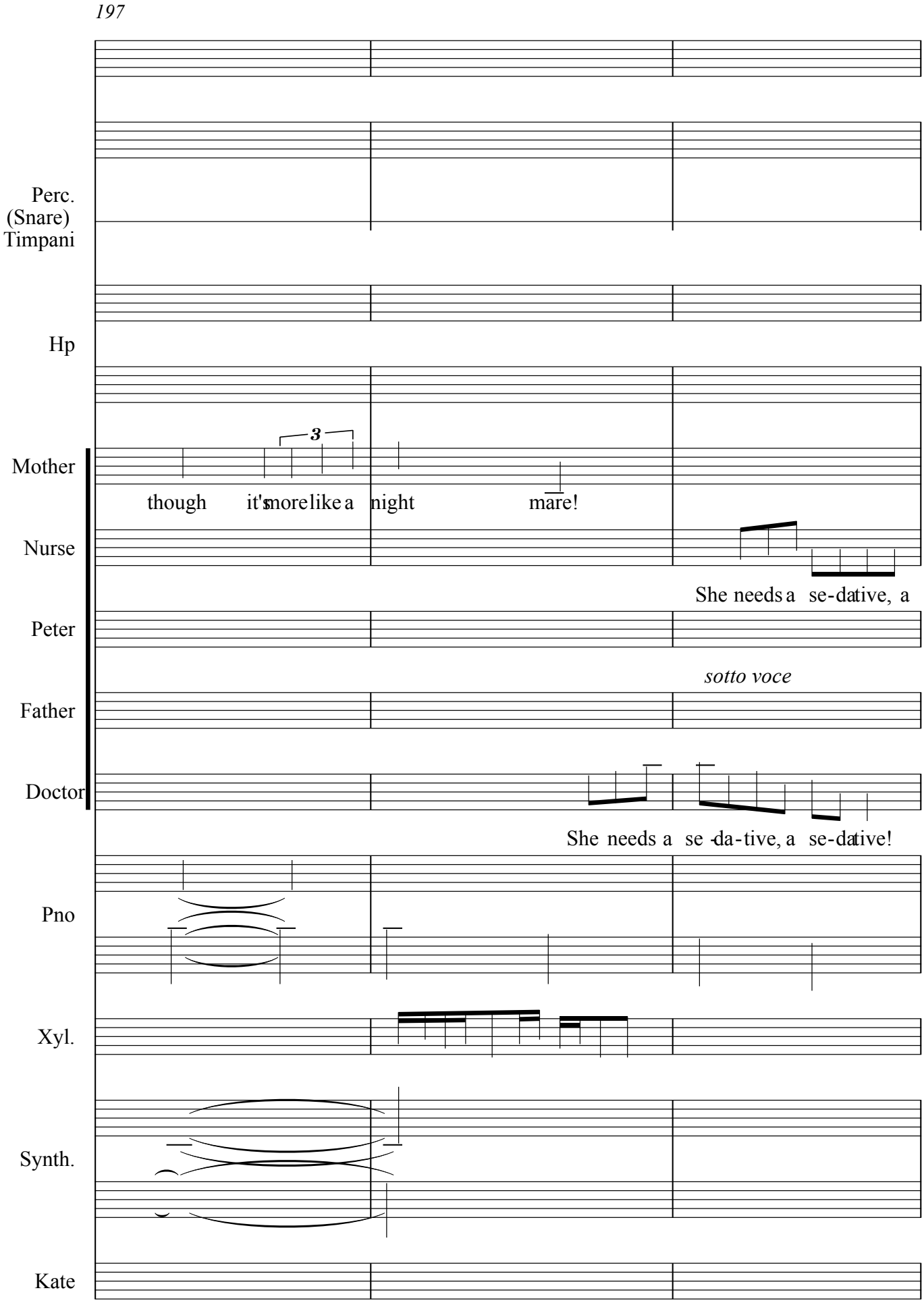
Xyl.

Synth.

Kate


191
Allegro
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
sfz
Hp
sfz
3
Mother
Oh Stop! What are you
Nurse
Peter
Father
strength to act, As act - I must!
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Allegro
Kate


194
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
3
say - ing?
Are you a - wake?
Please
tell me this is all a dream?
Al
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


197
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
3
though it's more like a night mare!
Nurse
She needs a se-dative, a
Peter
Father
sotto voce
Doctor
She needs a se-da-tive, a se-dative!
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

200

molto rit.

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

Nurse

se - dative!

Peter

Father

Doctor

Neu ro - tic wo-men!

Pno

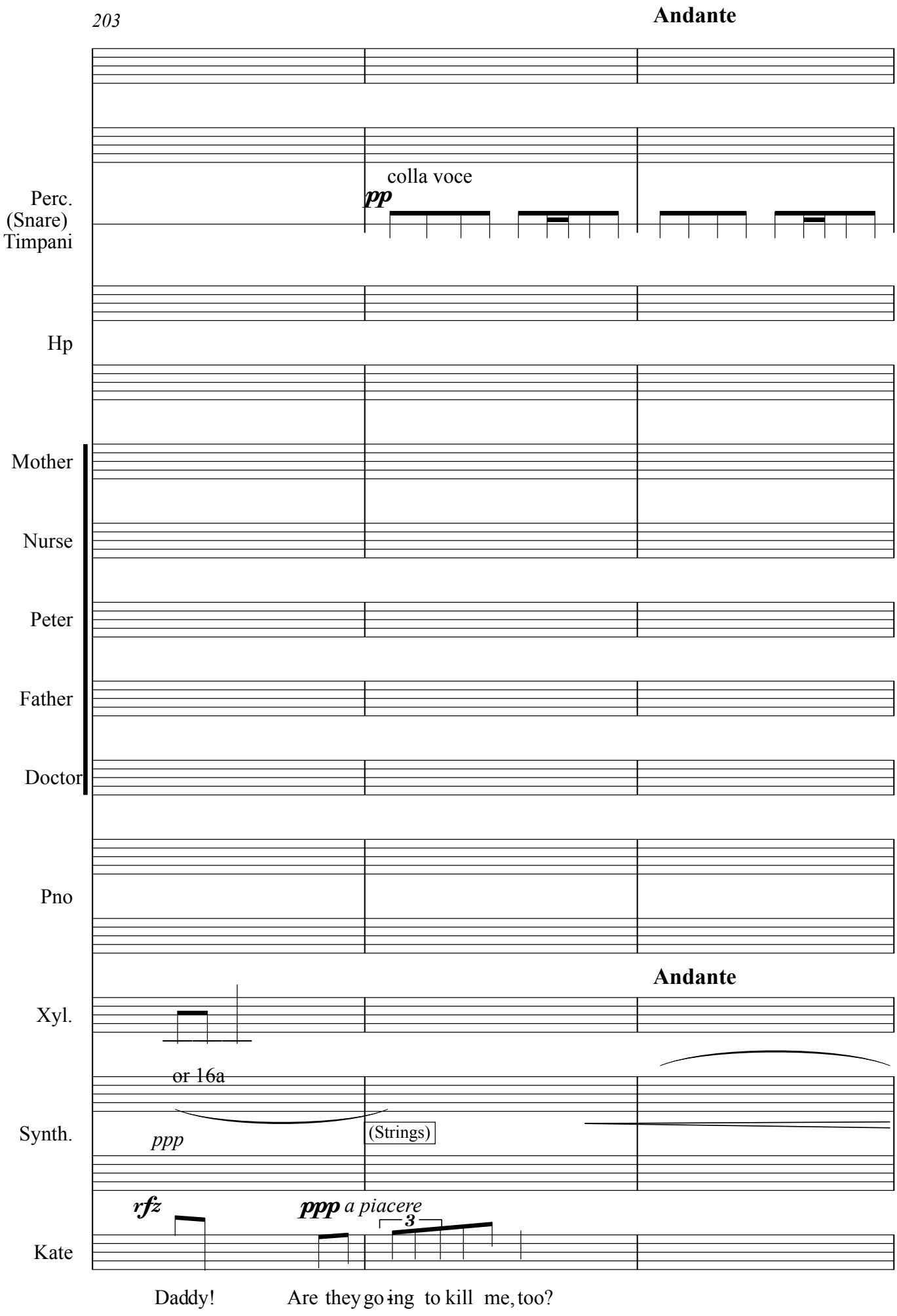
Xyl.

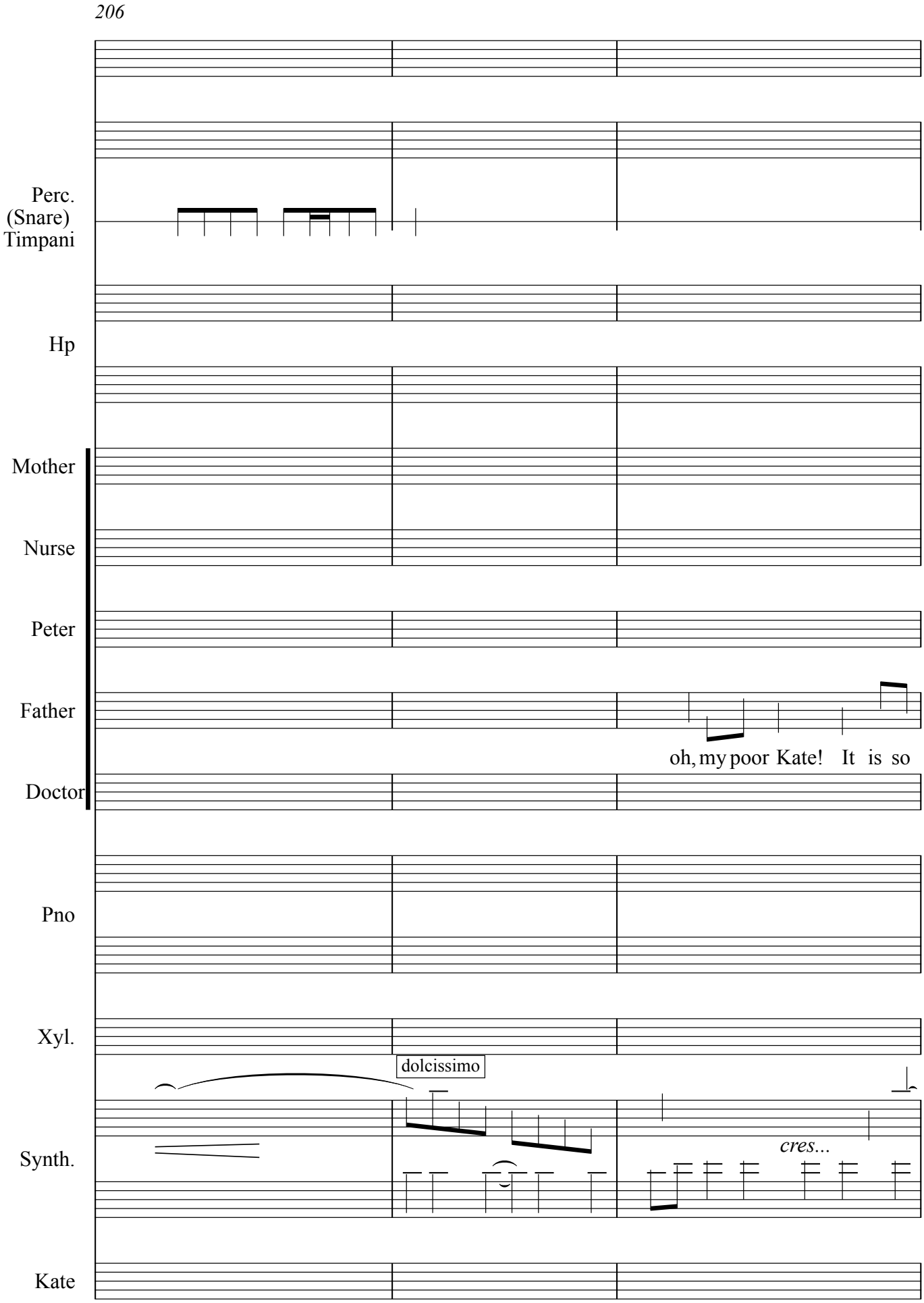
Synth.

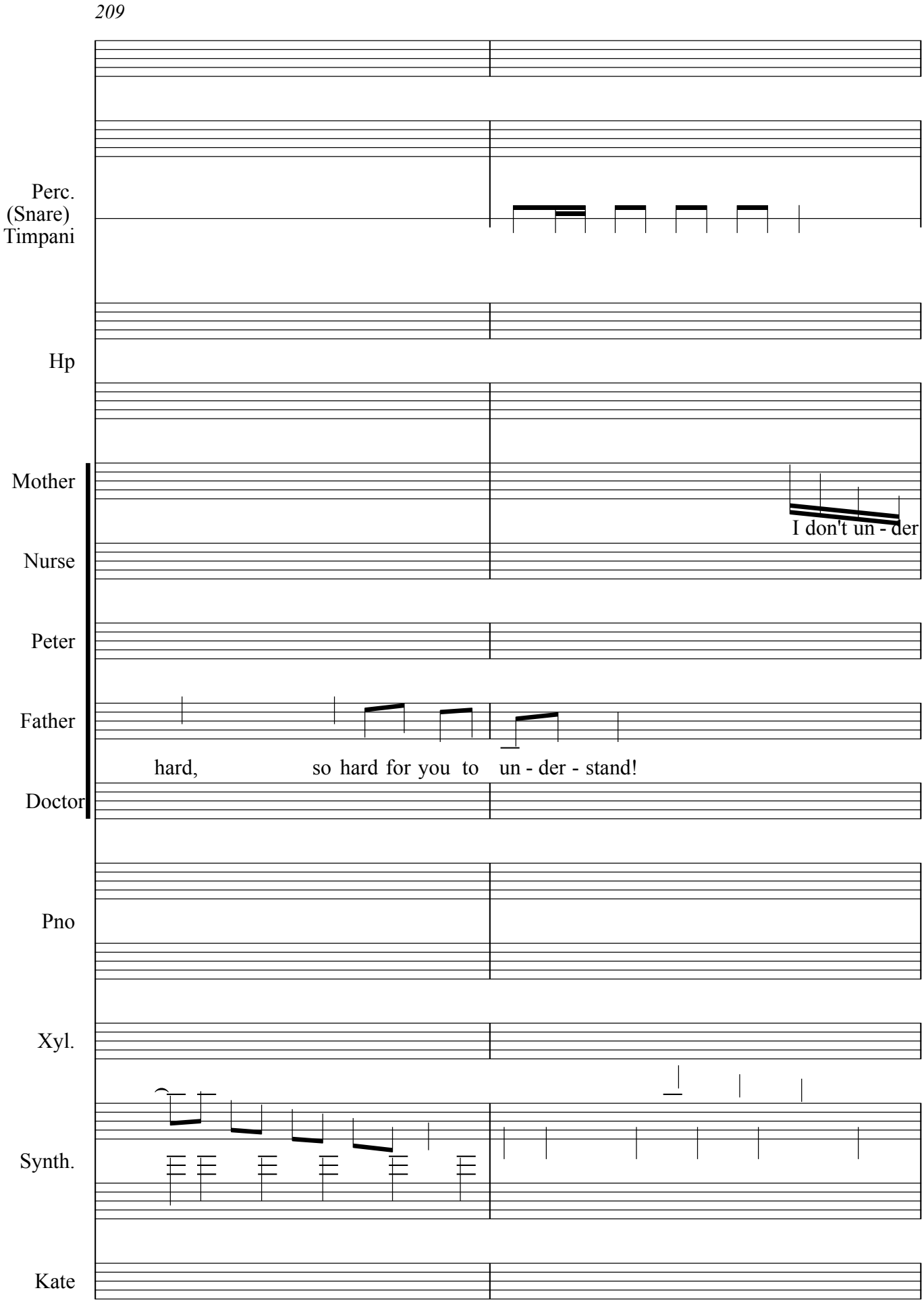
molto rit.

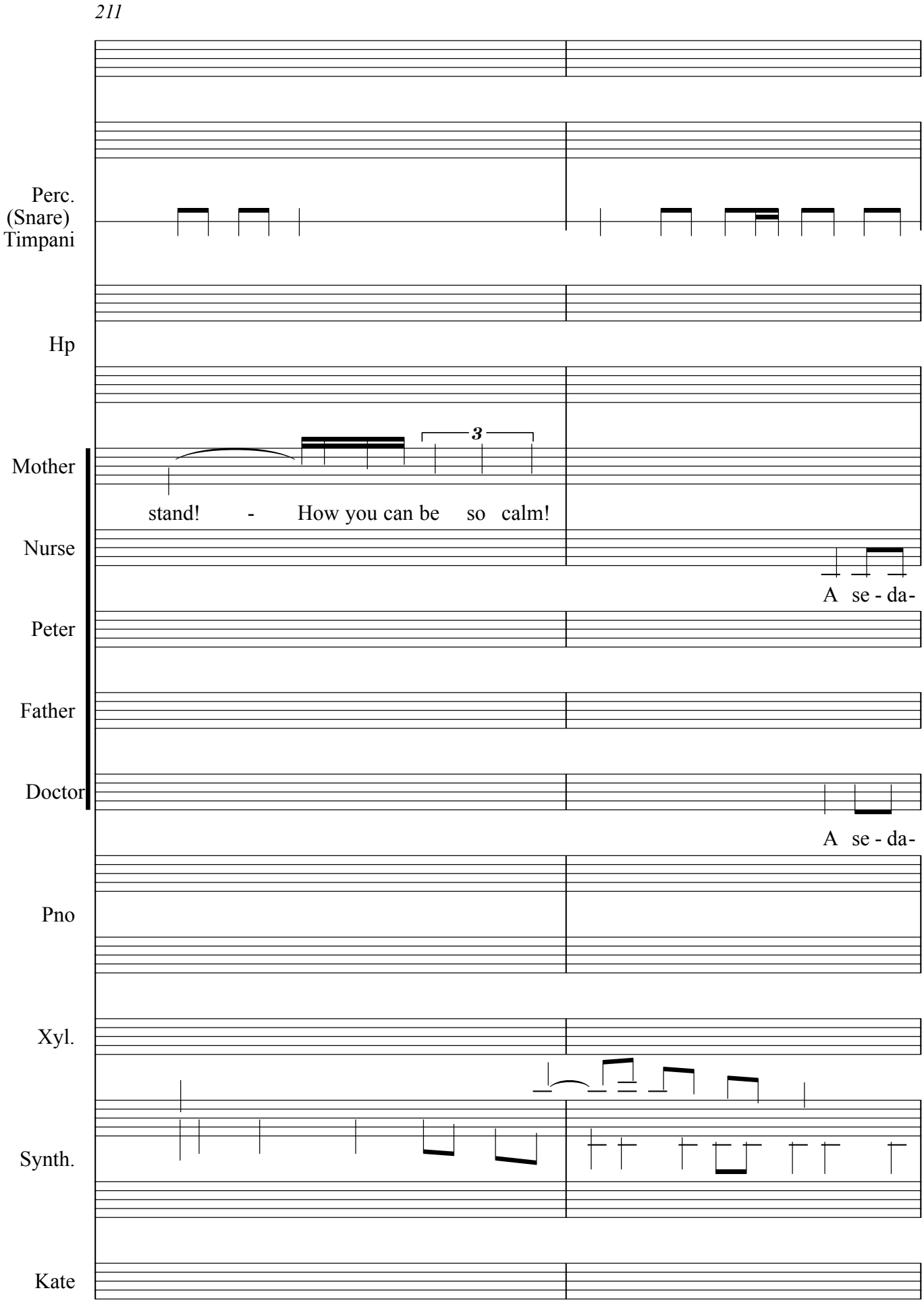
Terrified, Kate scrambles from her hiding-place, runs to her father and clings to him.

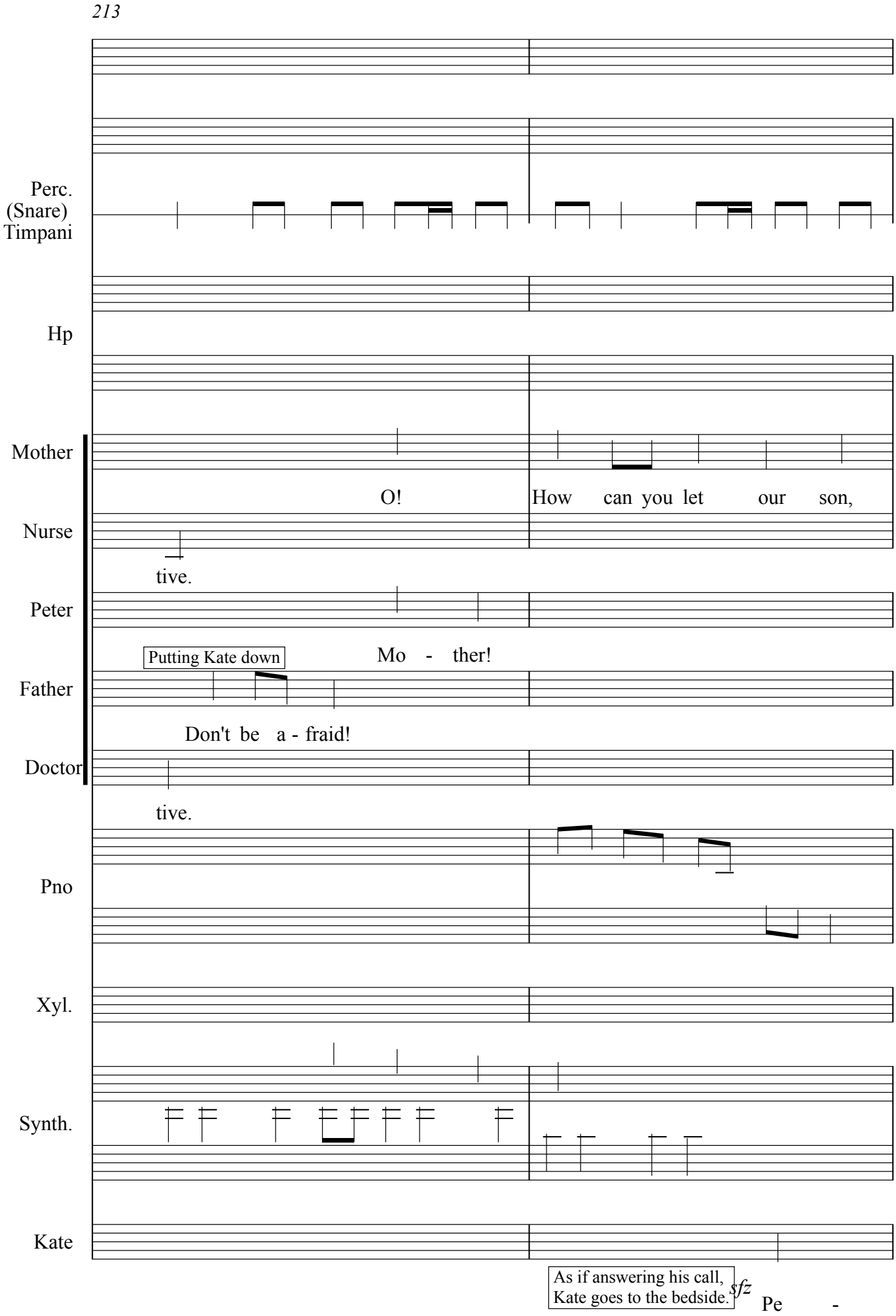
Kate

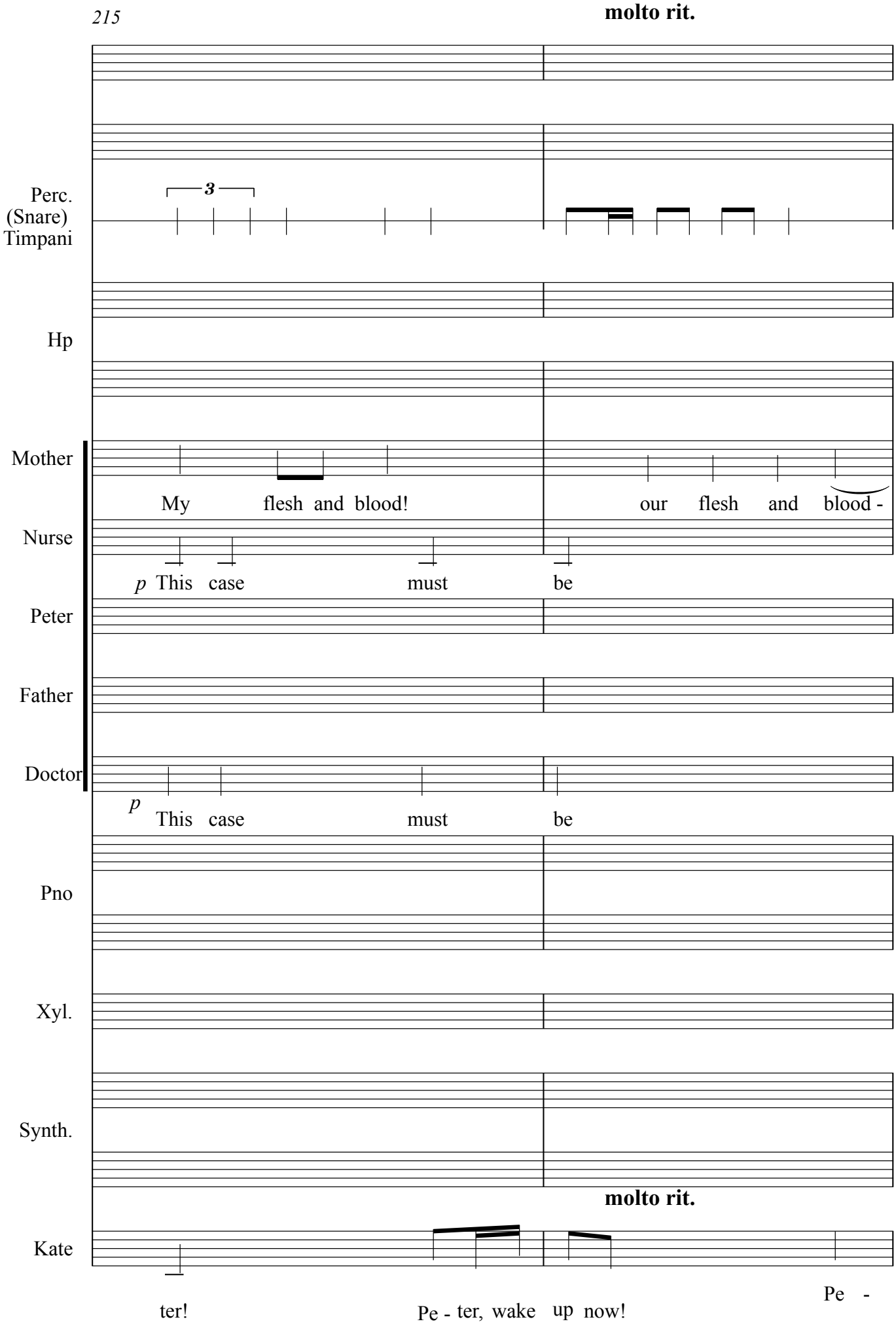

203
Andante
colla voce
pp
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Andante
Xyl.
or 16a
Synth.
ppp
(Strings)
rfz
ppp a piacere
3
Kate
Daddy!
Are they go-ing to kill me, too?

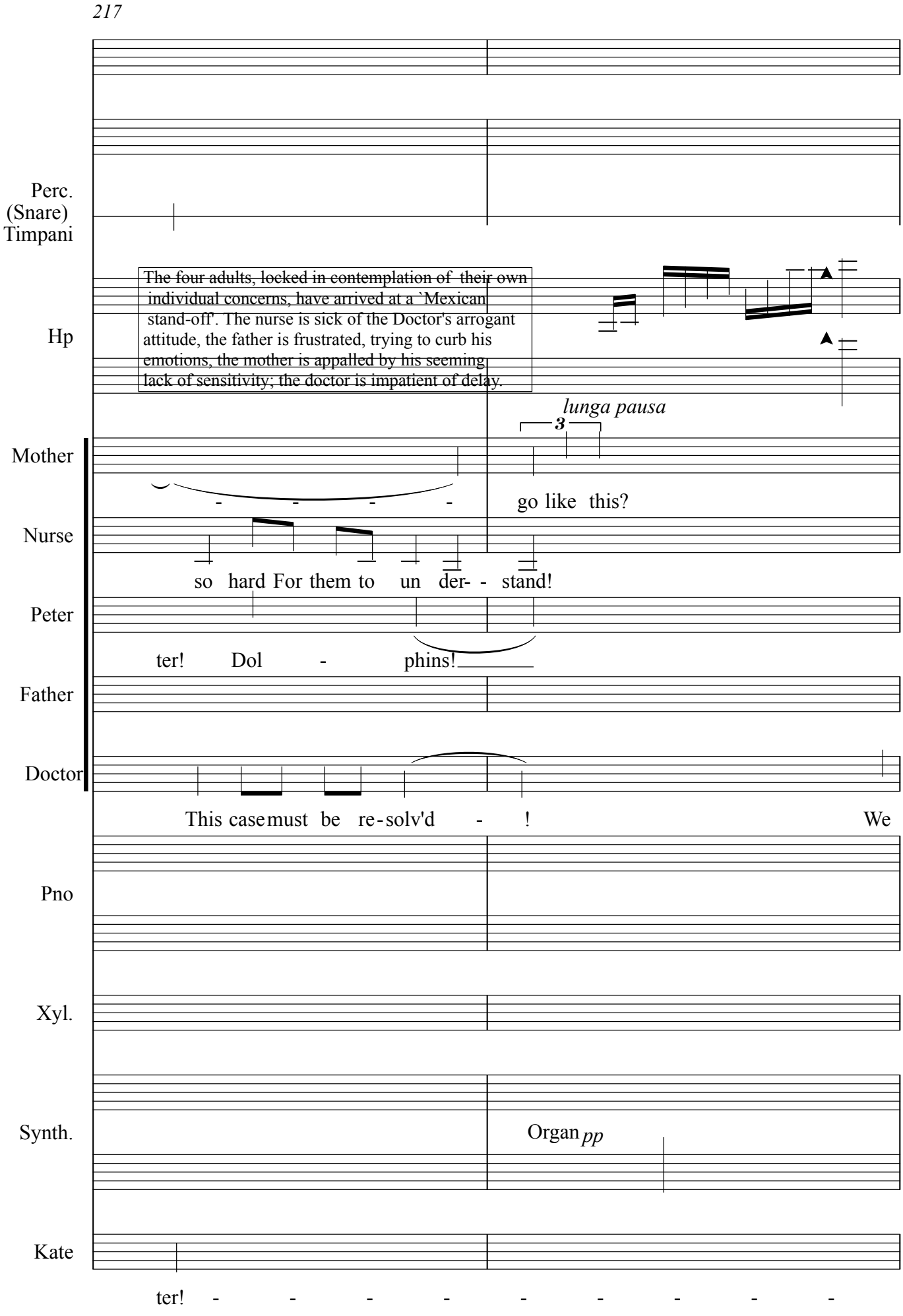

206
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
oh, my poor Kate! It is so
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
dolcissimo
Synth.
cres...
Kate

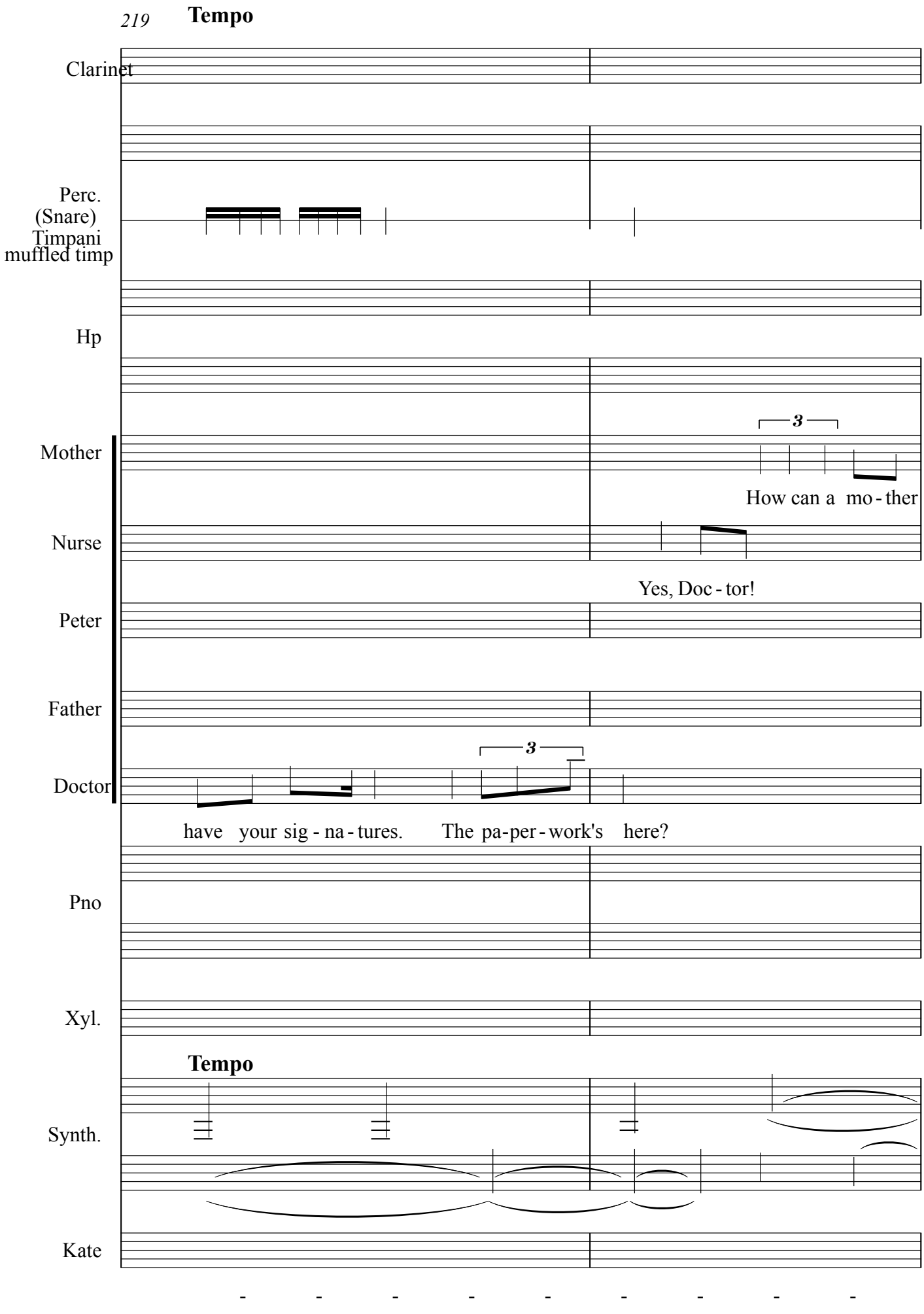

209
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
I don't un - der
Nurse
Peter
Father
hard, so hard for you to un - der - stand!
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

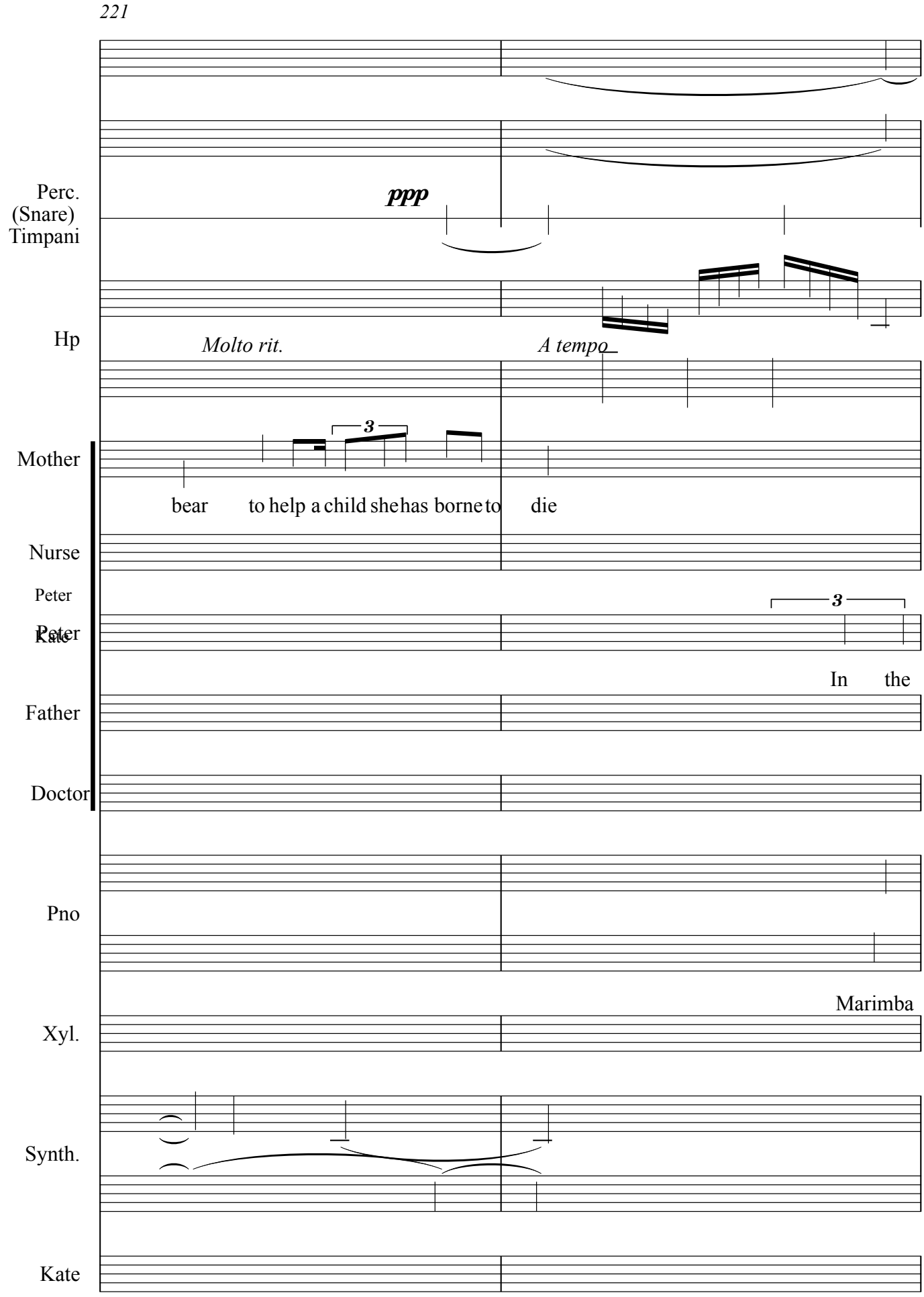

211
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
3
stand! - How you can be so calm!
Nurse
A se - da-
Peter
Father
Doctor
A se - da-
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


213
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
O!
How can you let our son,
Nurse
tive.
Peter
Mo - ther!
Putting Kate down
Father
Don't be a - fraid!
Doctor
tive.
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate
As if answering his call,
Kate goes to the bedside.
sfz
Pe -


215
molto rit.
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
3
Hp
Mother
My flesh and blood!
our flesh and blood -
Nurse
p This case must be
Peter
Father
Doctor
p This case must be
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
molto rit.
Kate
ter!
Pe - ter, wake up now!
Pe -


217
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
The four adults, locked in contemplation of their own individual concerns, have arrived at a `Mexican stand-off'. The nurse is sick of the Doctor's arrogant attitude, the father is frustrated, trying to curb his emotions, the mother is appalled by his seeming lack of sensitivity; the doctor is impatient of delay.
lunga pausa
3
Mother
- - - - go like this?
Nurse
so hard For them to un der- - stand!
Peter
ter! Dol - phins!
Father
Doctor
This case must be re-solv'd - ! We
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Organ pp
Kate
ter! - - - - - - - - -


219
Tempo
Clarinet
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
muffled timp
Hp
Mother
3
How can a mo - ther
Nurse
Yes, Doc - tor!
Peter
Father
Doctor
3
have your sig - na - tures. The pa-per - work's here?
Pno
Xyl.
Tempo
Synth.
Kate


221
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
ppp
Hp
Molto rit.
A tempo
Mother
3
bear to help a child she has borne to die
Nurse
Peter
Kate
3
In the
Father
Doctor
Pno
Marimba
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

223

molto rit.

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

Nurse

Peter

beau ti - fulblue wa - ters of the bay The dol - phins laugh -

Father

Doctor

Pno

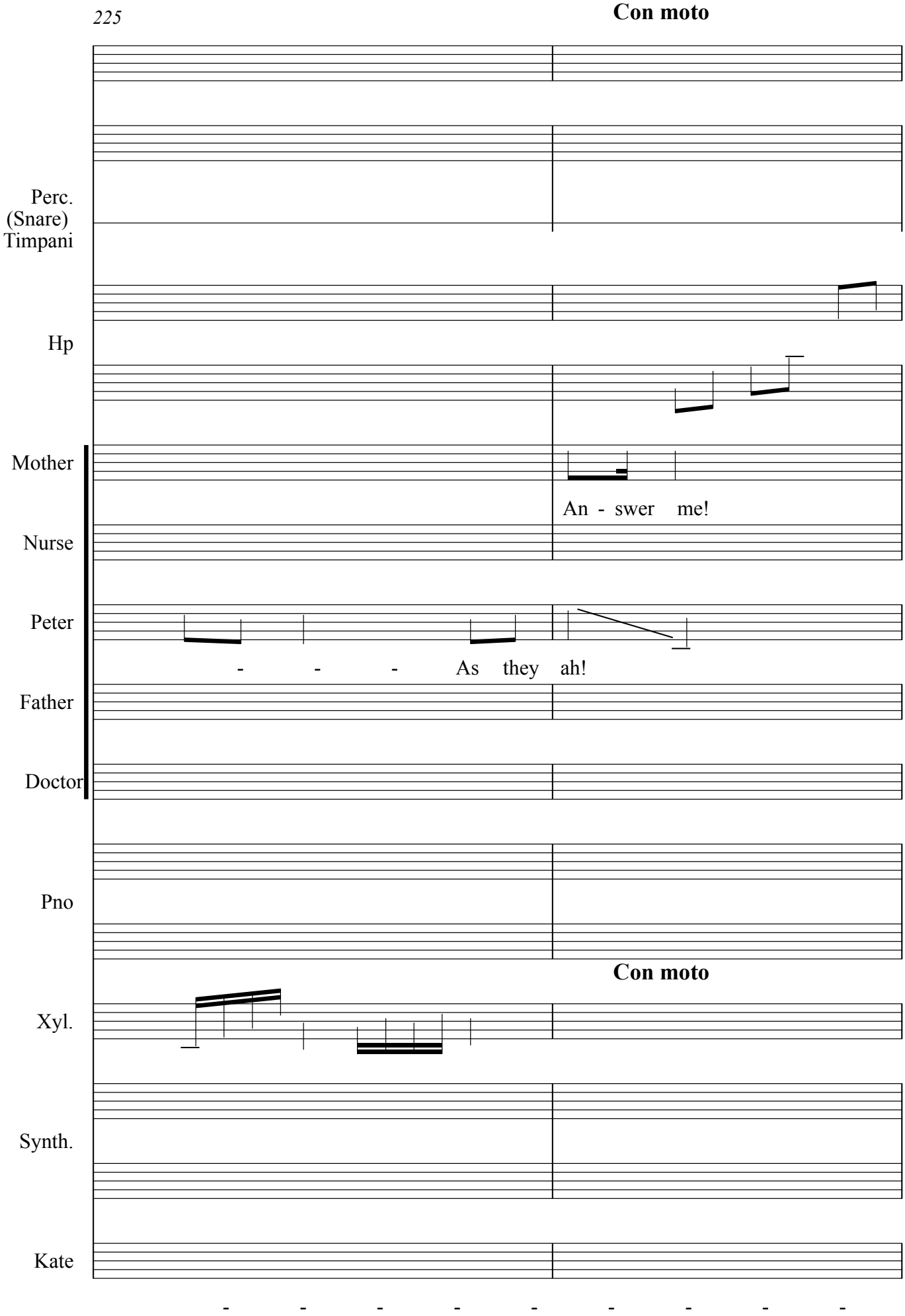
molto rit.

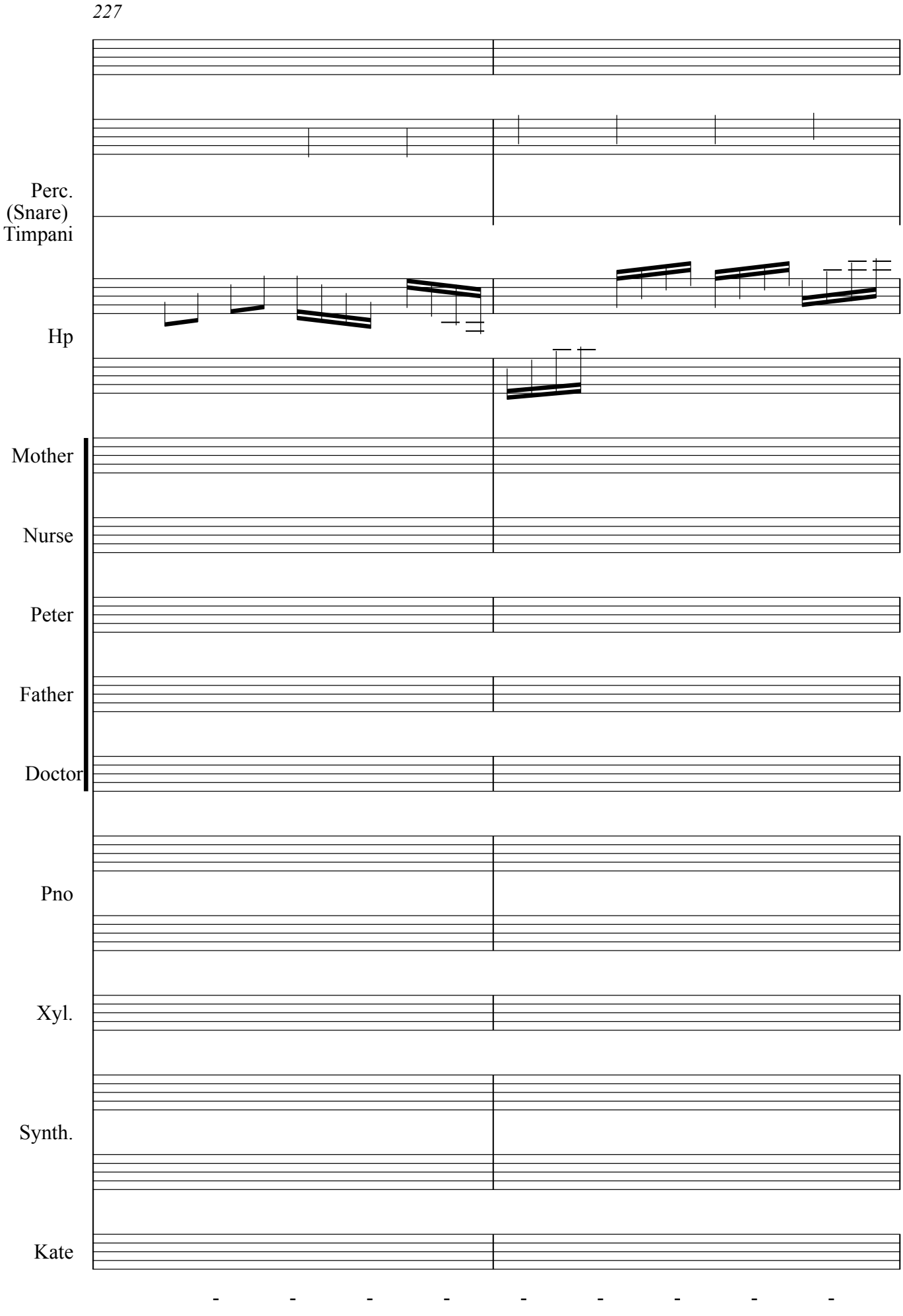
Xyl.

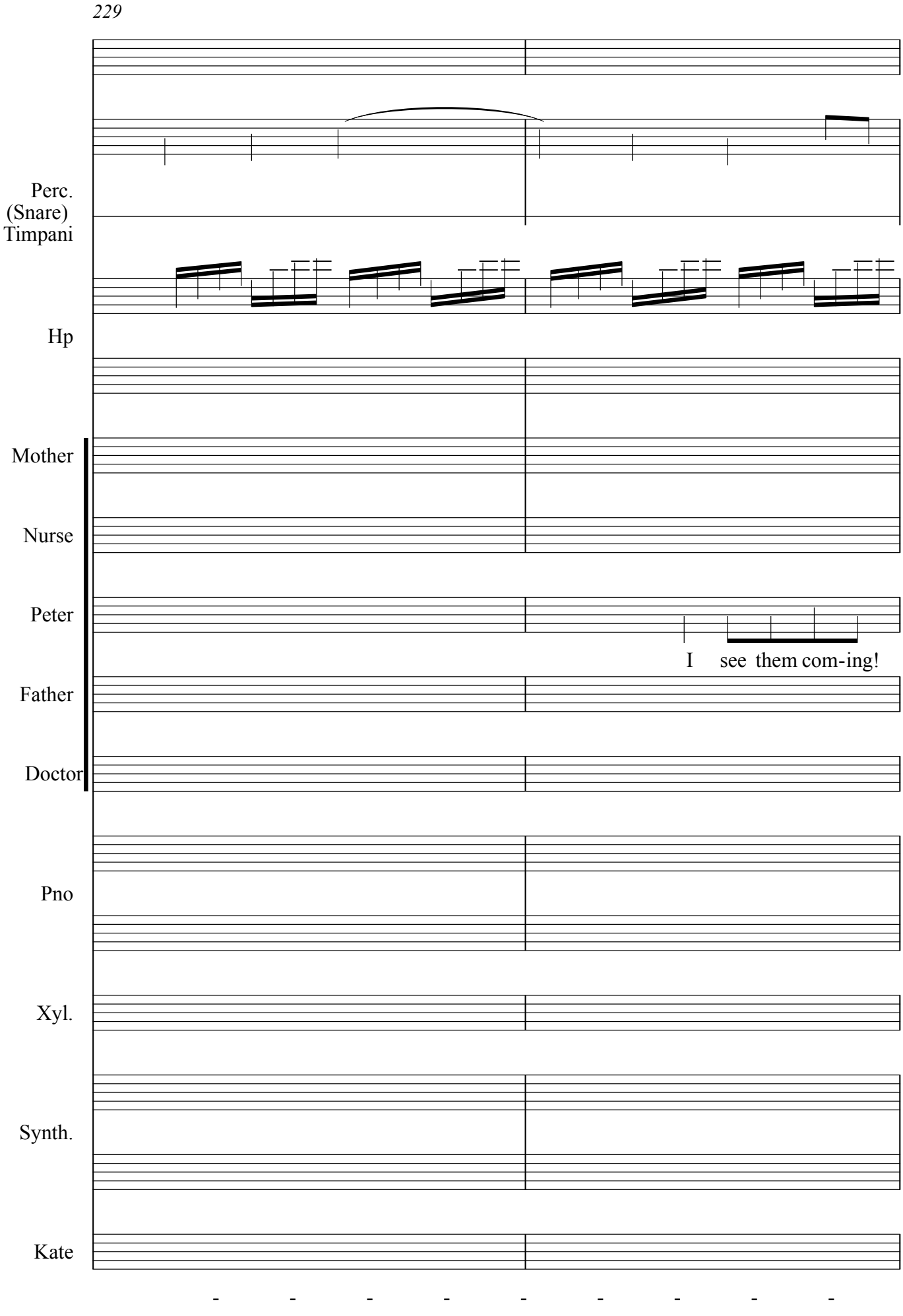
Synth.

Kate

- - - - - - - - -


225
Con moto
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
An - swer me!
Nurse
Peter
- - - As they ah!
Father
Doctor
Pno
Con moto
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate
- - - - - - - - -


227
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


229
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
I see them com-ing!
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

231

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

Well? Can't you tell me?

Nurse

Peter

Dol - - -

Father

Doctor

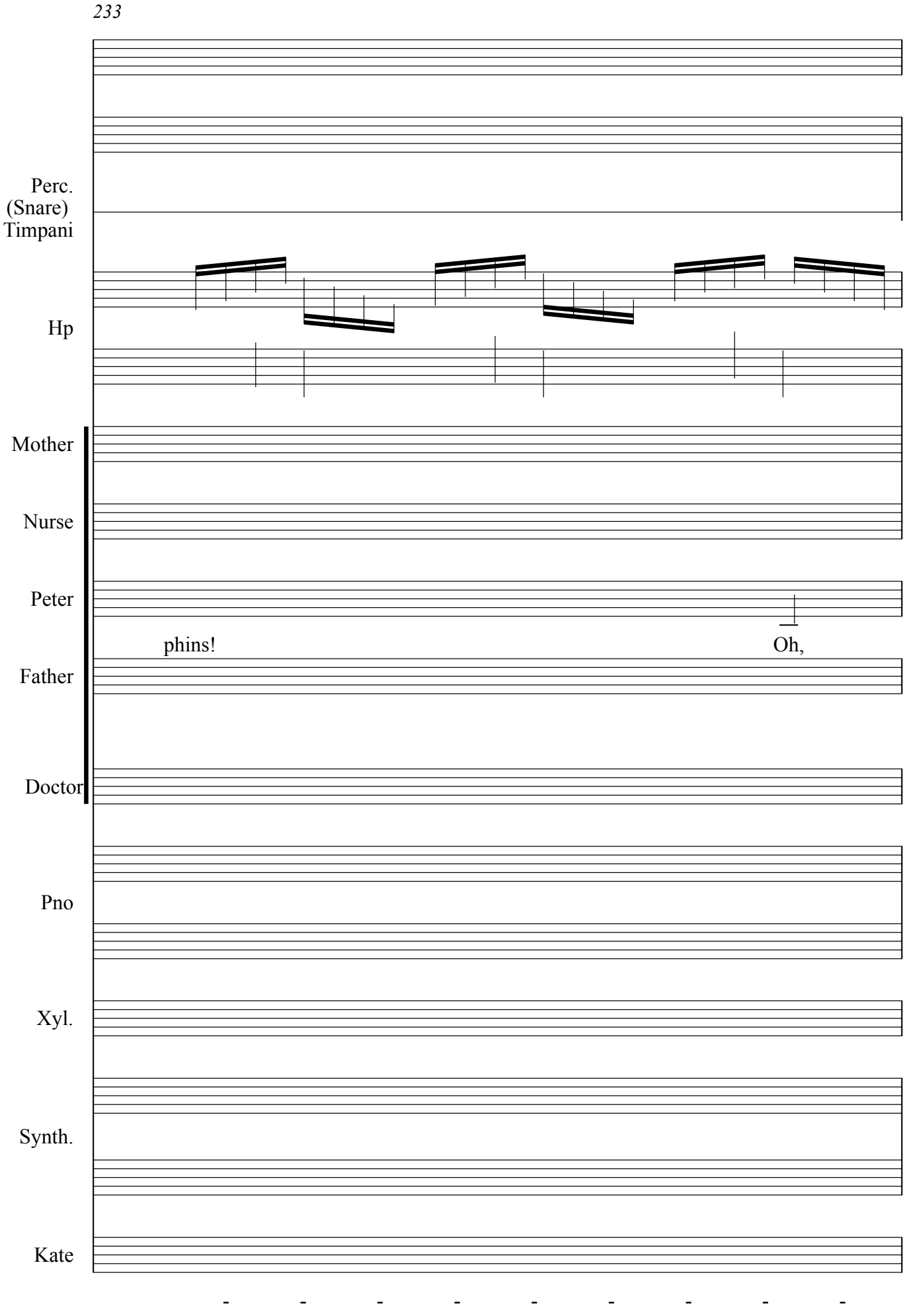
Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate

- - - - - - - - -


233
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
phins!
Oh,
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

234

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

Nurse

Peter

it is so love - ly to stand at the ve - ry edge -

Father

Doctor

Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate

- -

236

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

Nurse

Please take this You'll

Peter

Father

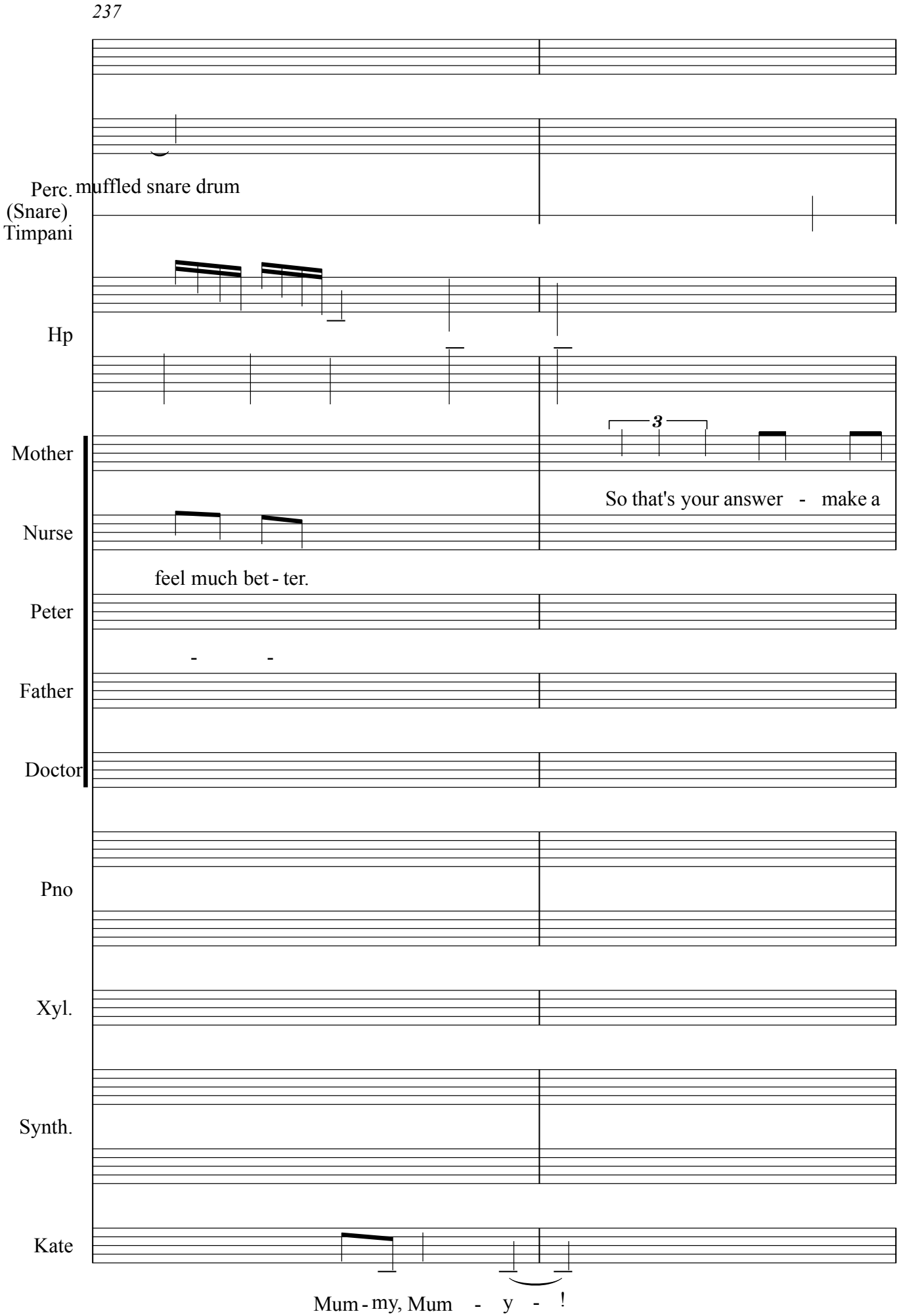
Doctor

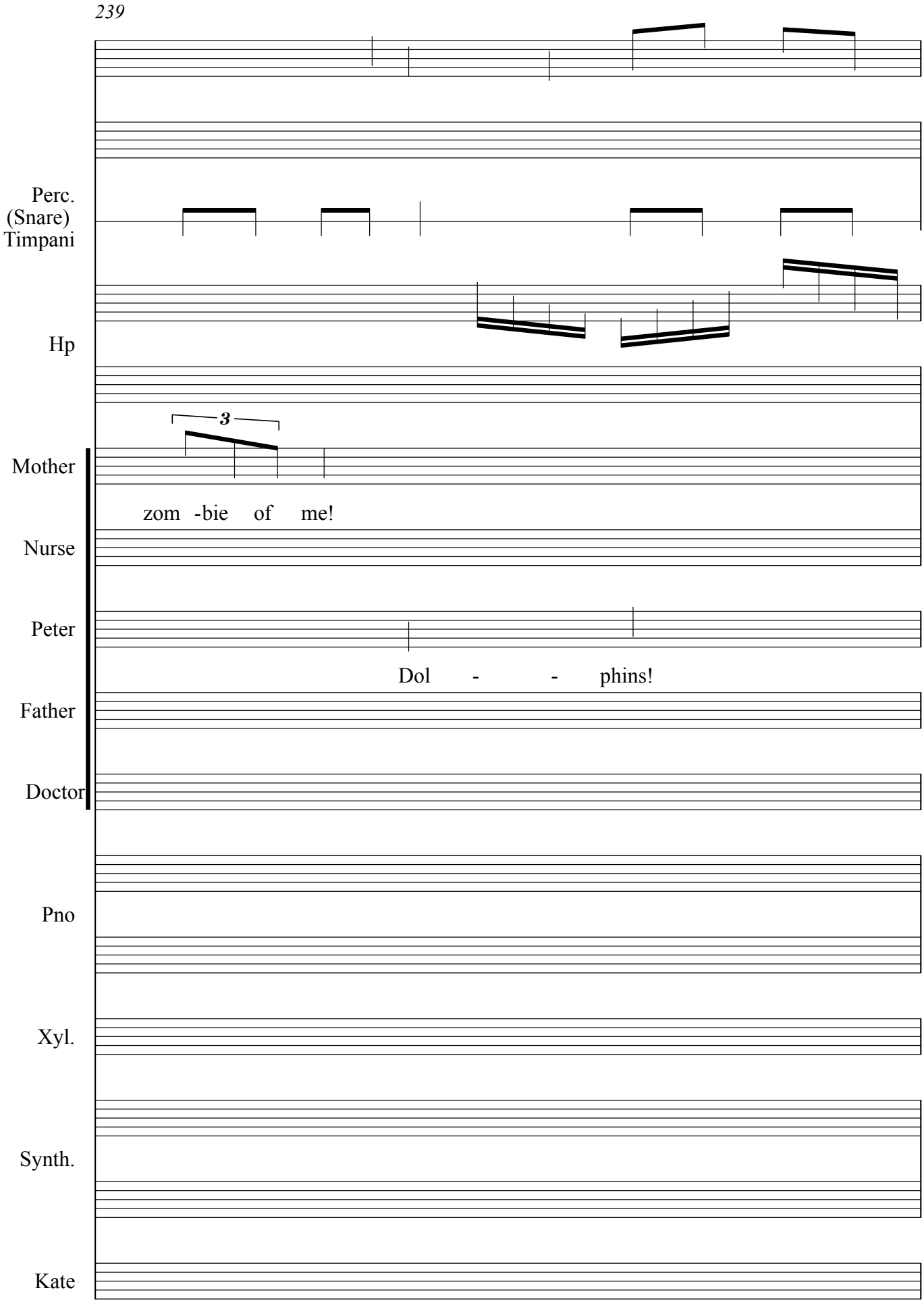
Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate


237
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
muffled snare drum
Hp
Mother
3
So that's your answer - make a
Nurse
feel much bet - ter.
Peter
- -
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate
Mum - my, Mum - y - !


239
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
3
Mother
zom -bie of me!
Nurse
Peter
Dol - - phins!
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

240

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

I'm nei -ther mad nor vio lent. But I won't let you take my son - with - out a fight!

Nurse

Peter

Father

Doctor

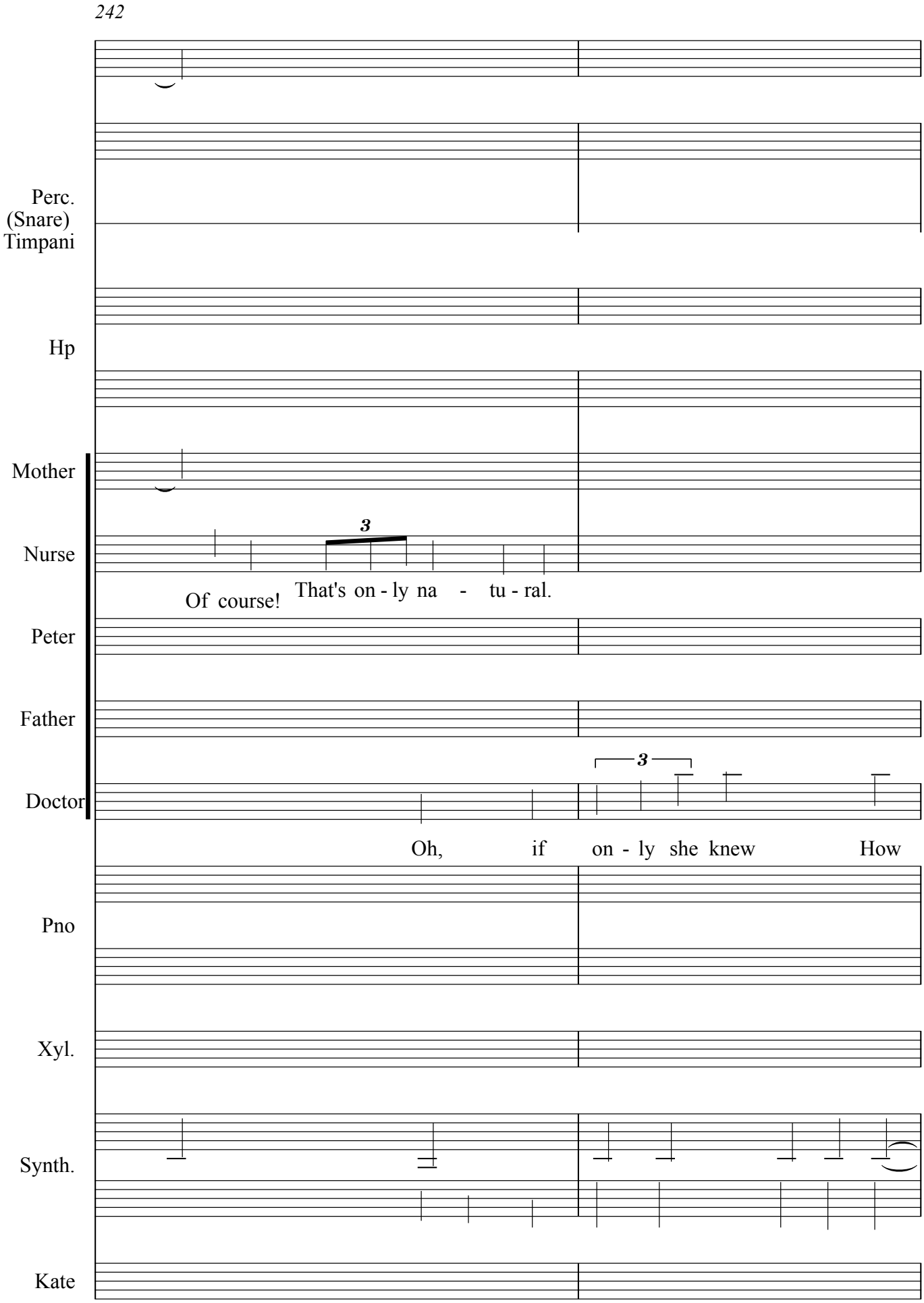
Pno

Xyl.

Strings

Synth.

Kate


242
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
3
Of course! That's on - ly na - tu - ral.
Peter
Father
Doctor
3
Oh, if on - ly she knew How
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

244

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

Nurse

But -

Peter

Father

Doctor

3 3

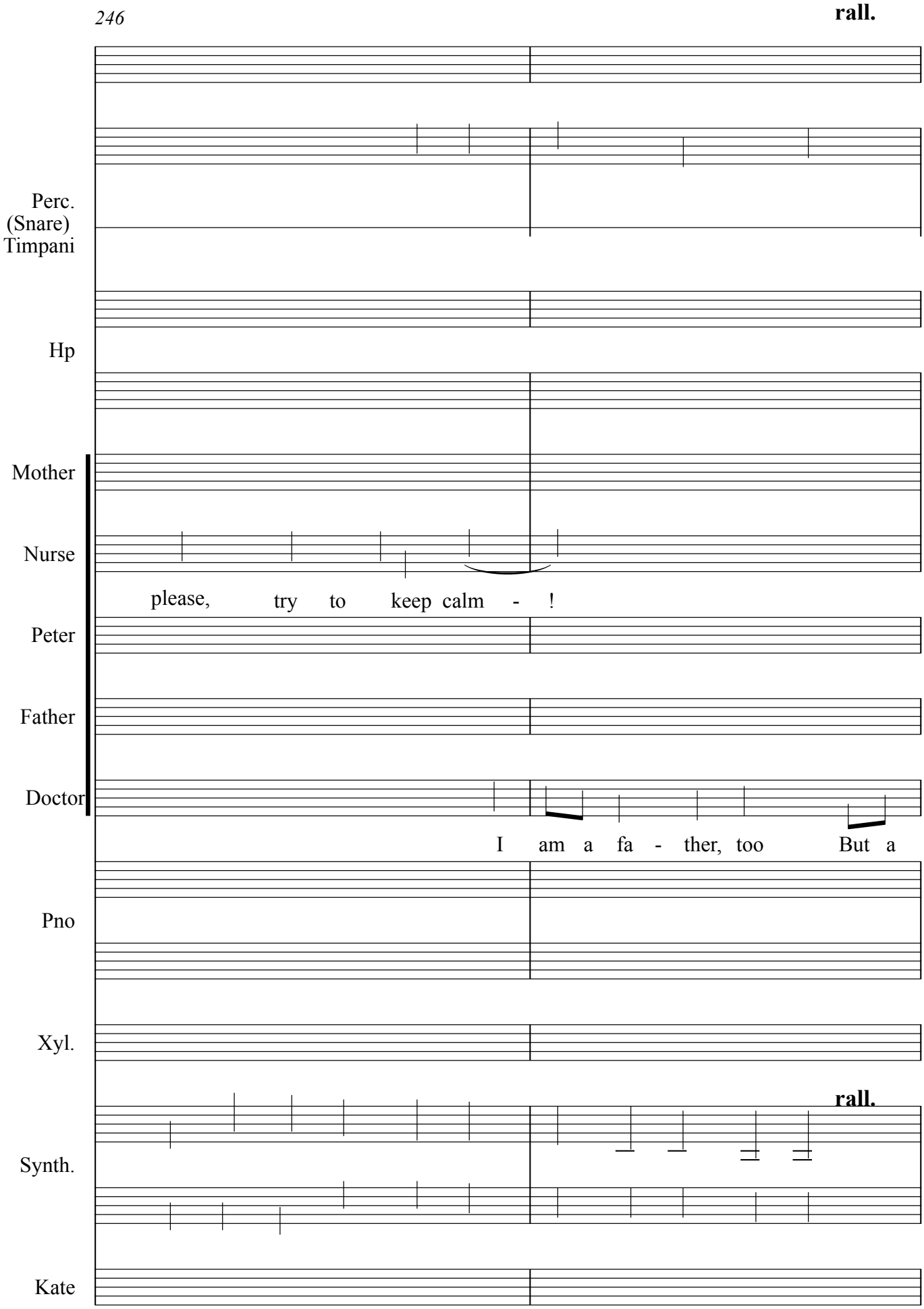
pain - ful this is For us as well!

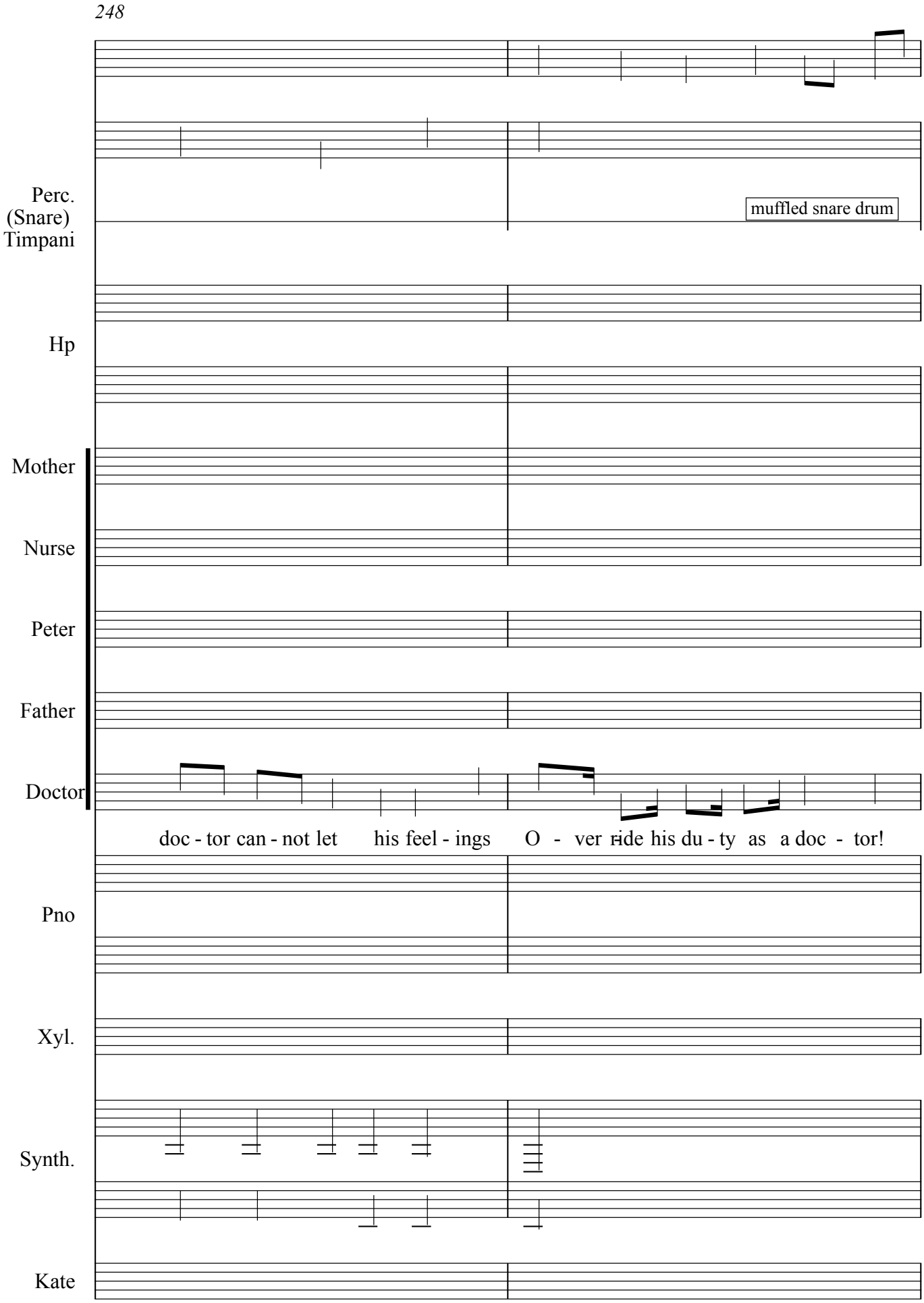
Pno

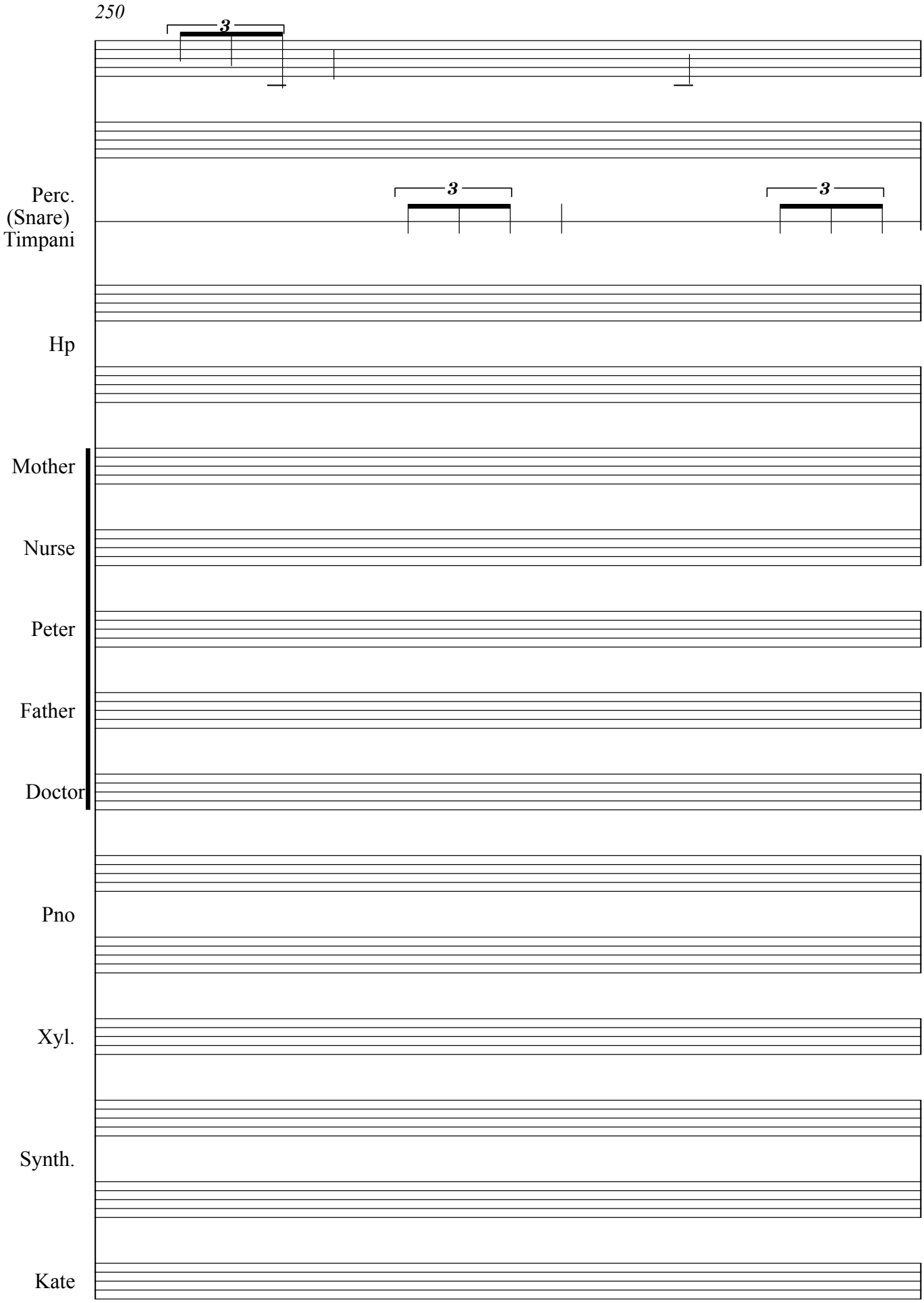
Xyl.

Synth.

Kate


246
rall.
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
please, try to keep calm - !
Peter
Father
Doctor
I am a fa - ther, too But a
Pno
Xyl.
rall.
Synth.
Kate


248
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
muffled snare drum
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
doc - tor can - not let his feel - ings O - ver ride his du - ty as a doc - tor!
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


250
3
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
3
3
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

251

Moderato

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

Nurse

Peter

Kate, having despaired of waking Peter, now becomes concerned for her mother's distress; she goes to comfort her. They cling together until, overladen with her mother's grief, she starts to sob and the Nurse takes her away.....

Father

Doctor

Taking Father aside

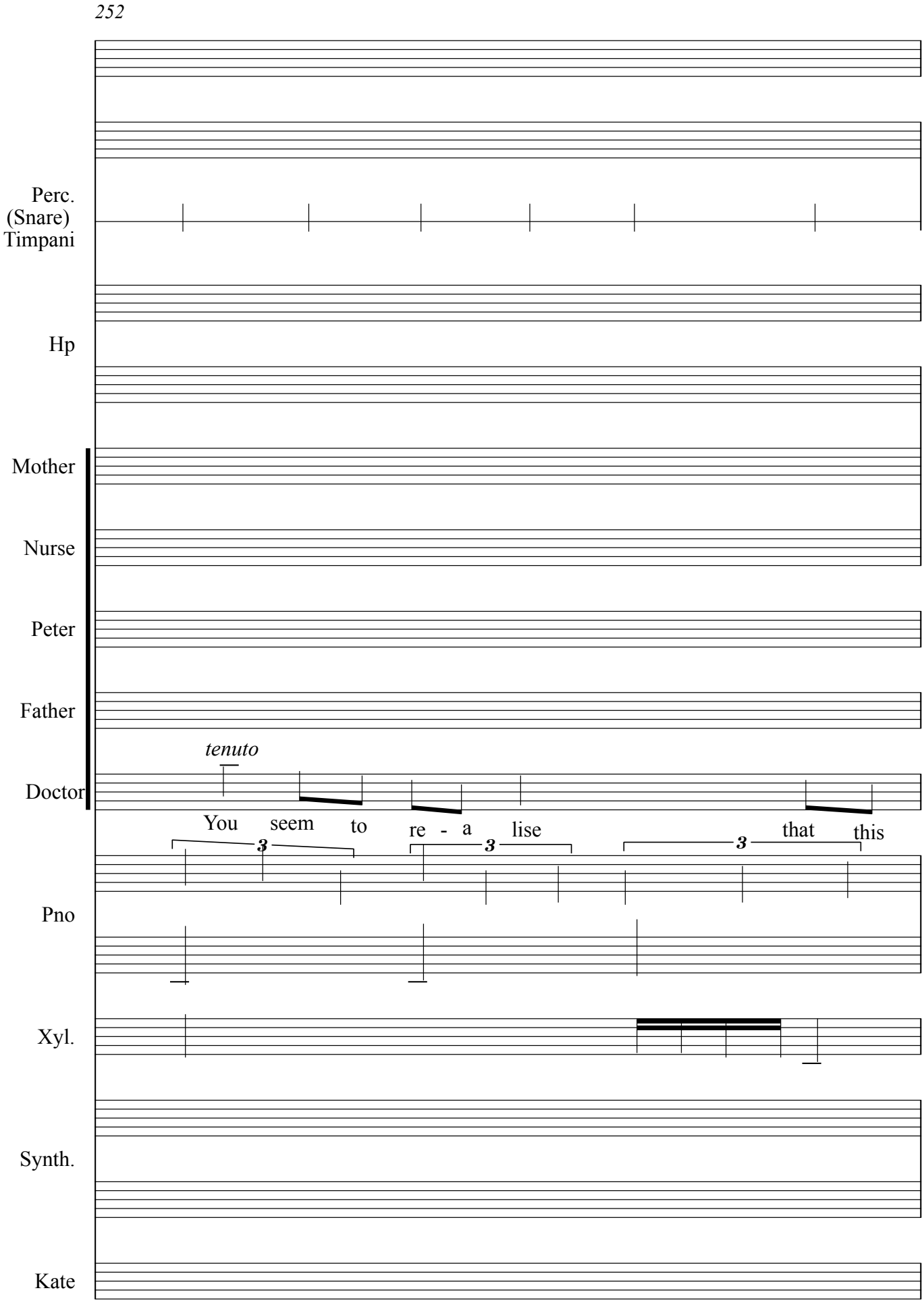
Ahem! **Moderato** My dear sir,

Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate


252
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
tenuto
You seem to re - a lise that this
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

253

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

Nurse

Peter

Father

Yes, I

Doctor

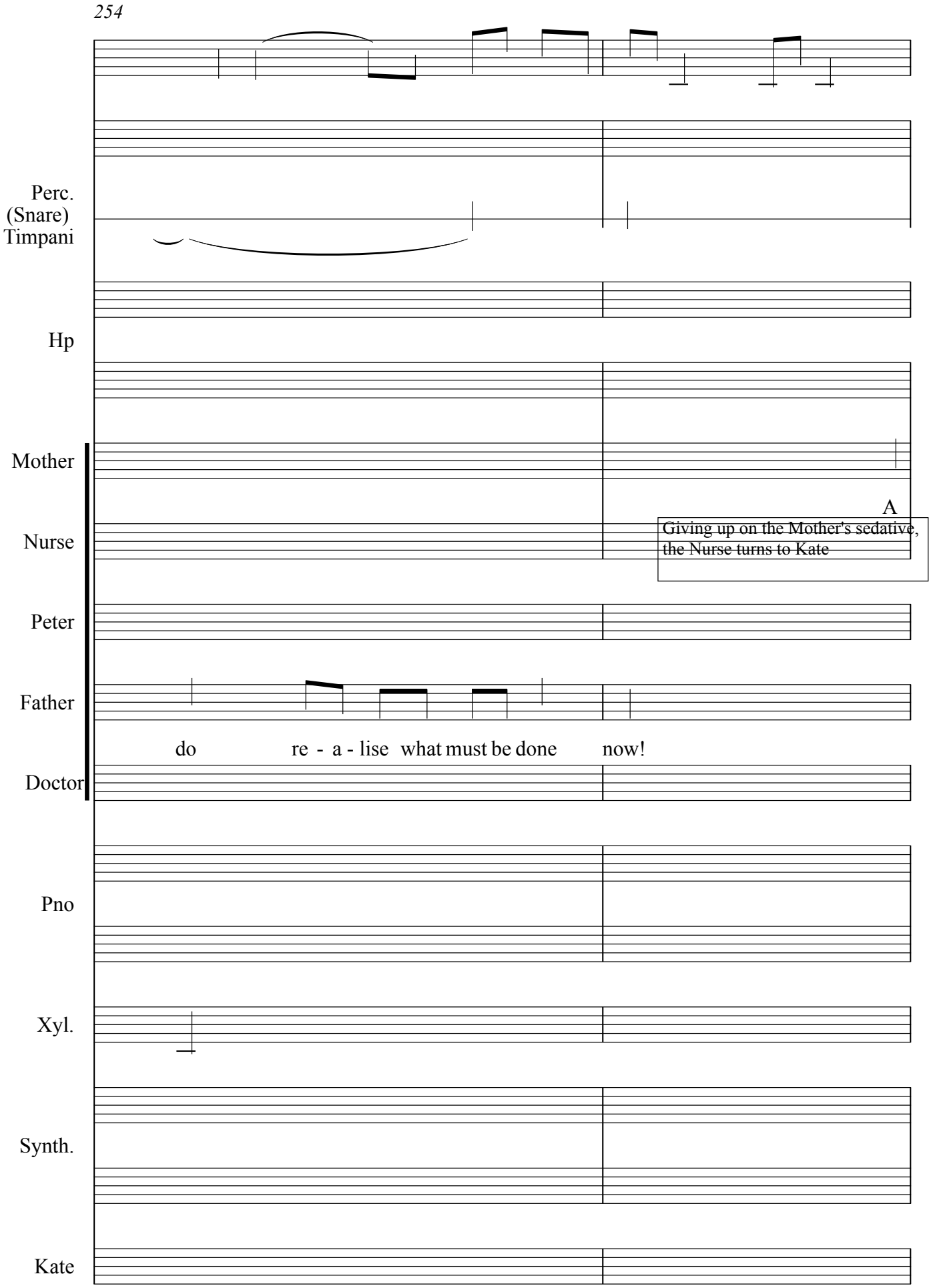
case must be (er) re solv'd.

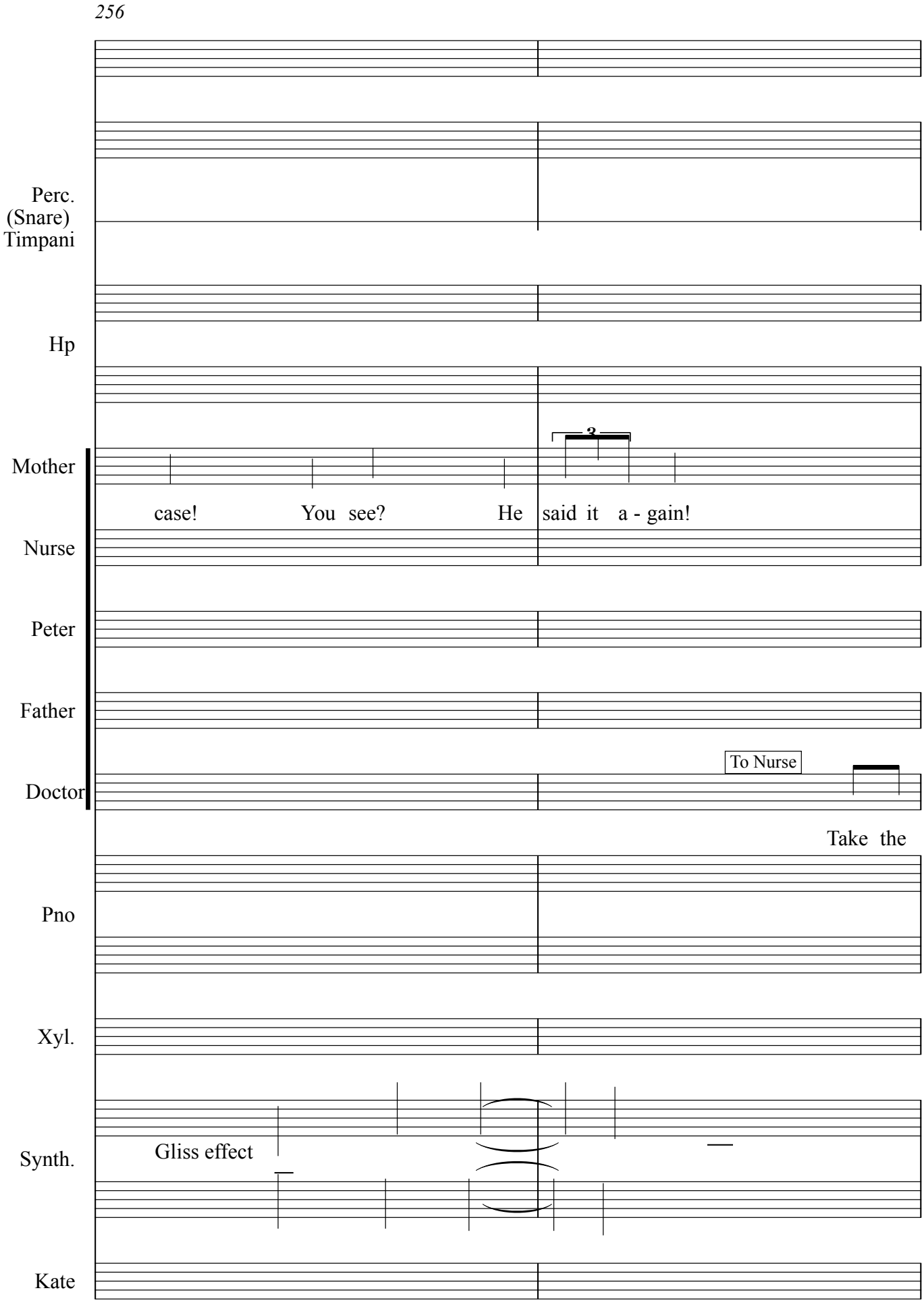
Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate


254
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
A
Giving up on the Mother's sedative, the Nurse turns to Kate
Peter
Father
do re - a - lise what must be done now!
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


256
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
case!
You see?
He
said it a - gain!
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
To Nurse
Take the
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Gliss effect
Kate

258

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

From here on, the blips from the ECG gradually penetrate the fabric of sound (or accentuate the silence between the parents), later becoming interchangeable with, and finally subsumed by, the dolphin clicks).

Hp

Mother

Nurse

Peter

To Doctor

3

Father

Give us a mo - ment.

Doctor

child!

Nodding agreement, the doctor gives the father's shoulder a consoling pat and motions the nurse to take Kate outside. It is not easy to disengage her from her mother.

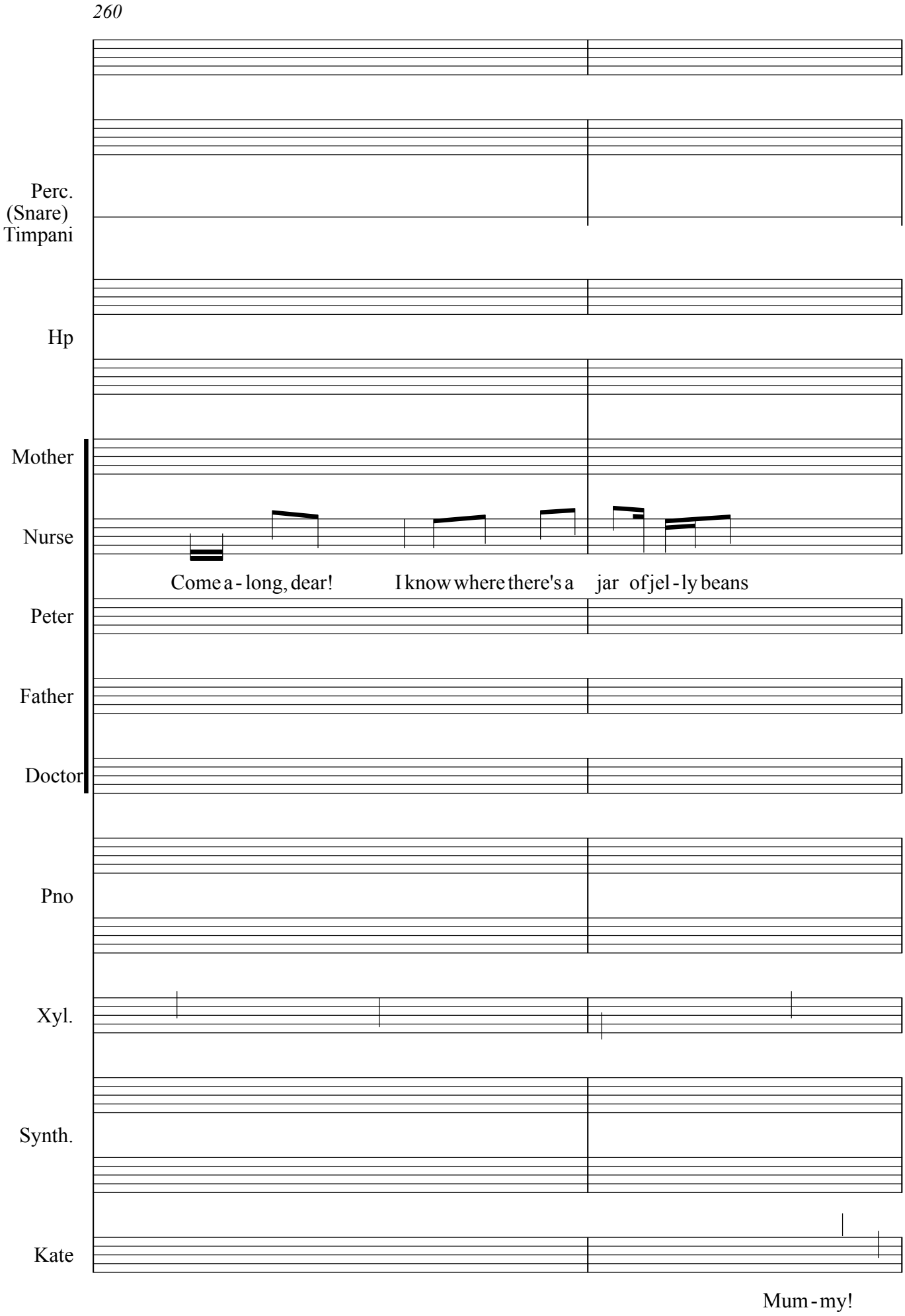
Pno

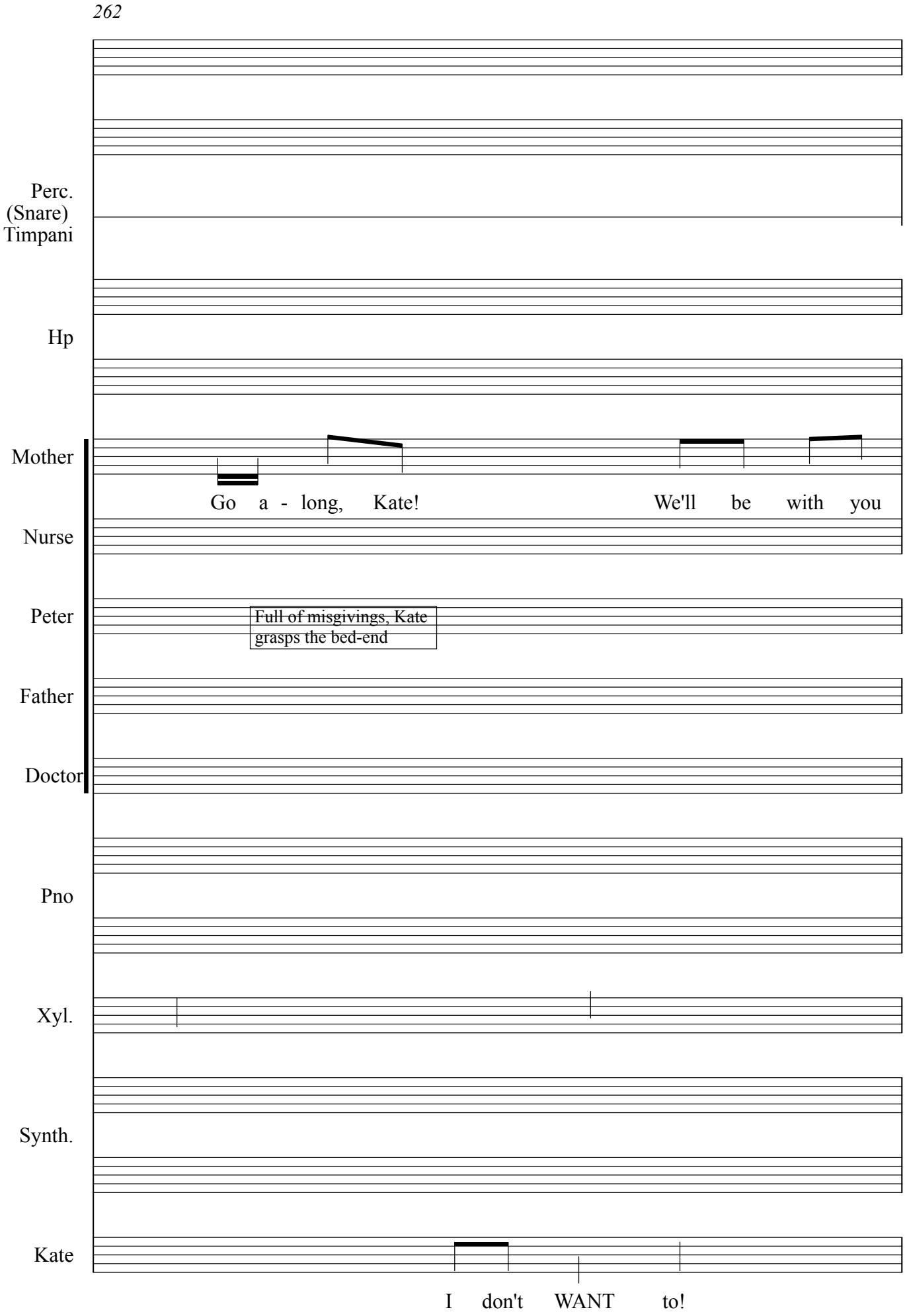
Glockenspiel

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate


260
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Come a - long, dear!
I know where there's a
jar
of jel - ly beans
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate
Mum - my!


262
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Go a - long, Kate!
We'll be with you
Nurse
Peter
Full of misgivings, Kate
grasps the bed-end
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate
I don't WANT to!

lunga pausa

263

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

soon

Nurse

3

What col - our do you like? Black is my fav - 'rite!

The Mother stands by the bed; mechanically, she packs the dolphin book that Kate has left on the bed into the case. She only responds to her husband's tentative approach when he picks up the photo and starts to reminisce.

Peter

Father

Reluctantly, Kate allows herself to be dragged away from the bed and out of the room

Doctor

Pno

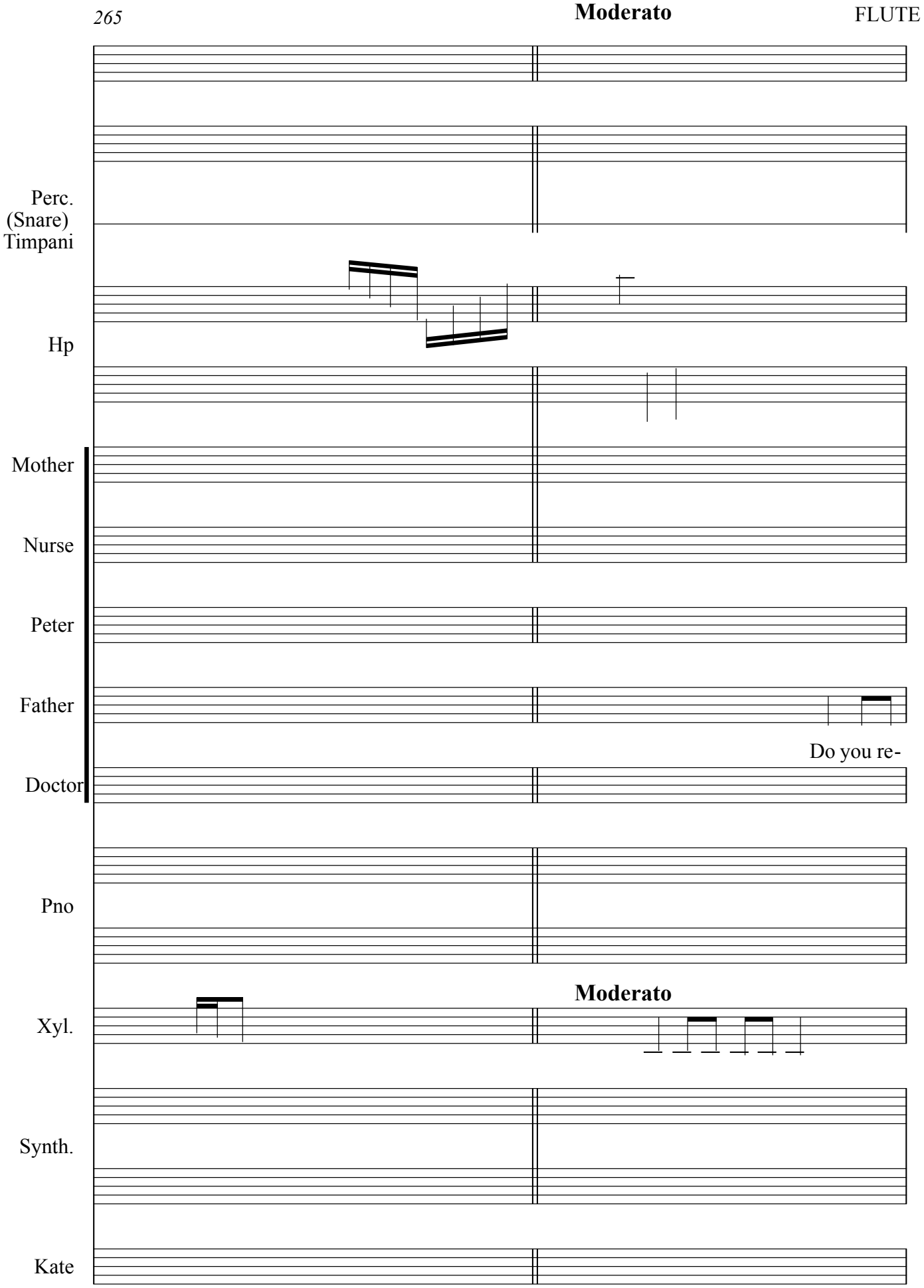
Glock

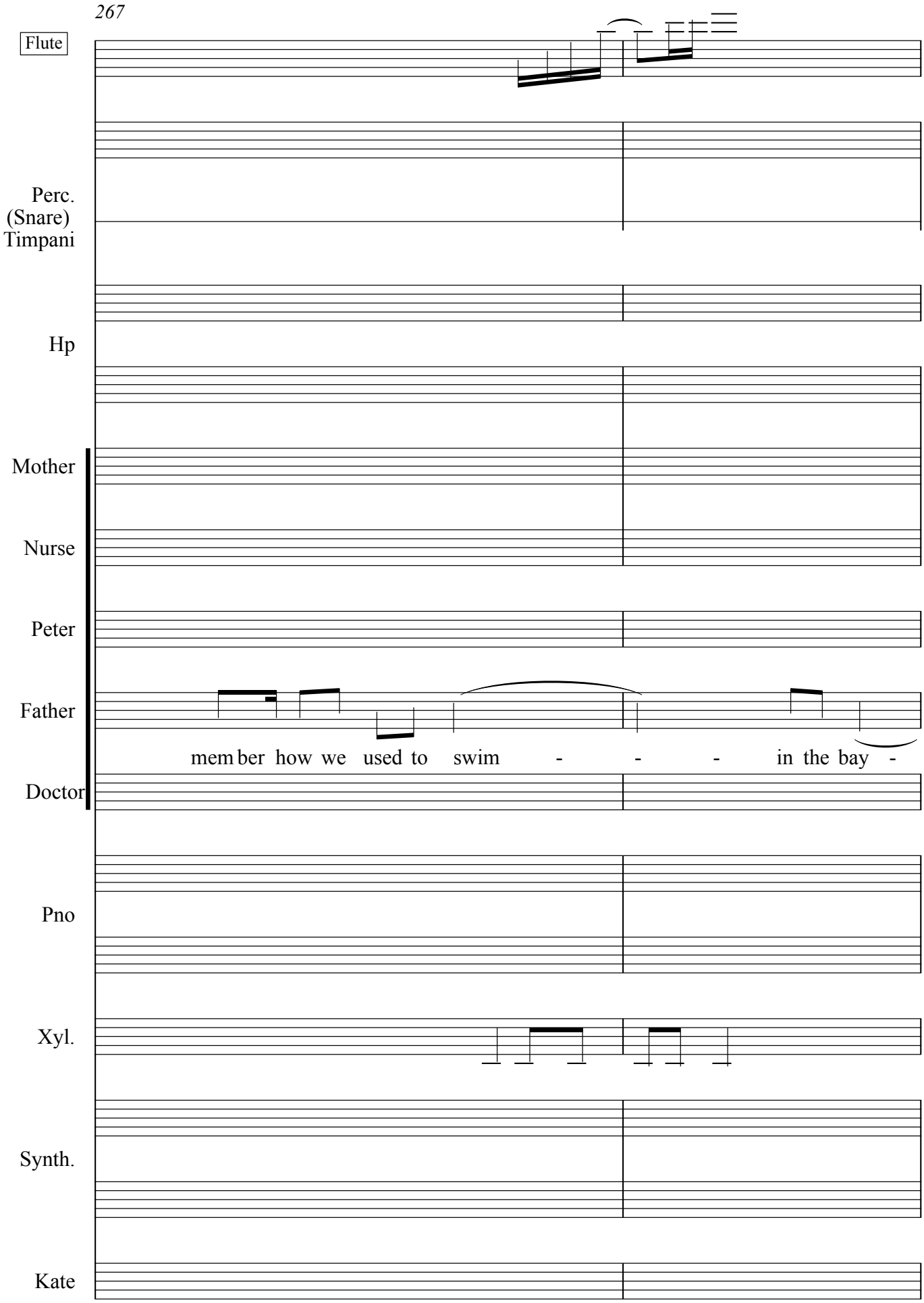
Marimba

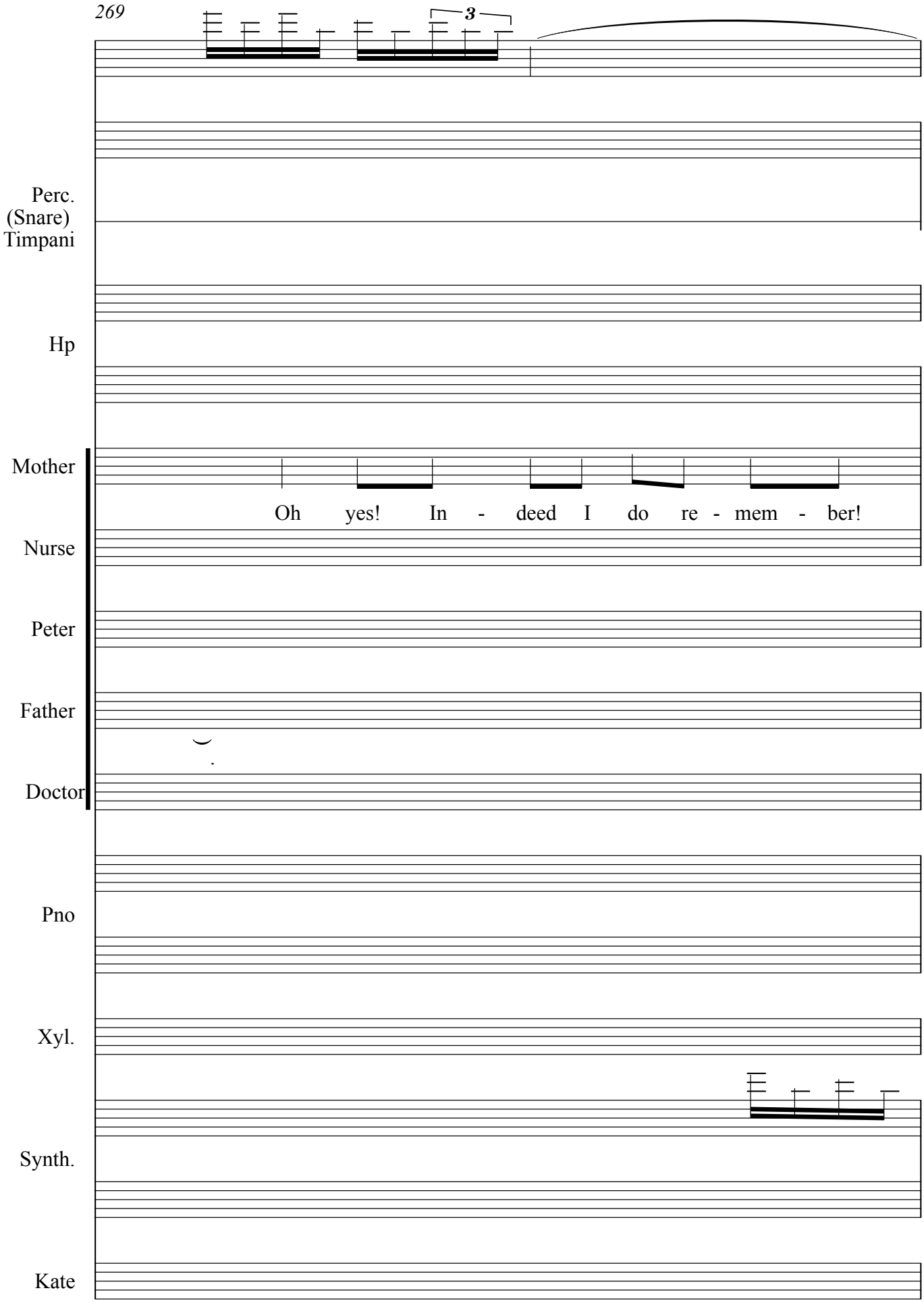
Xyl.

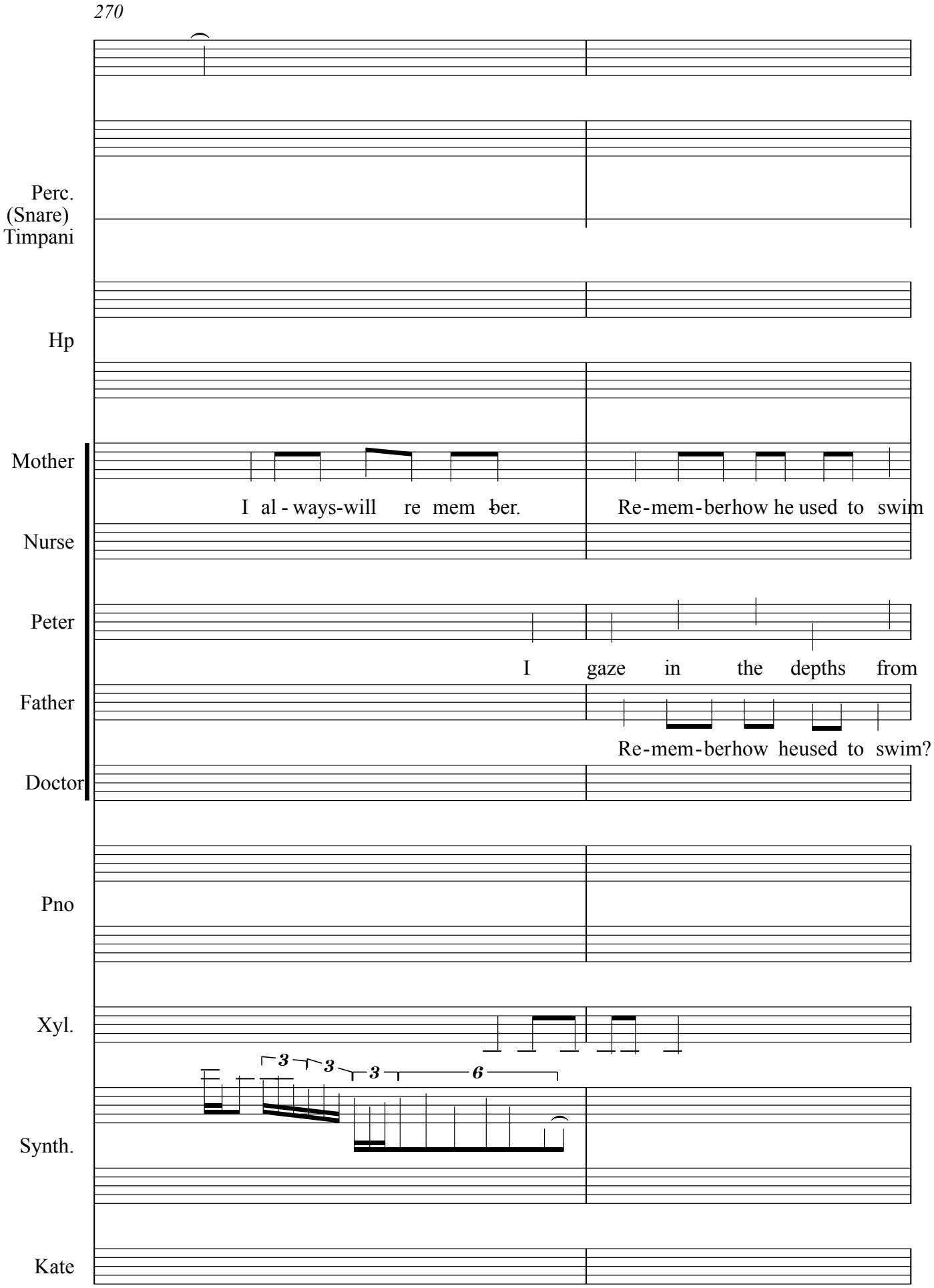
Synth.

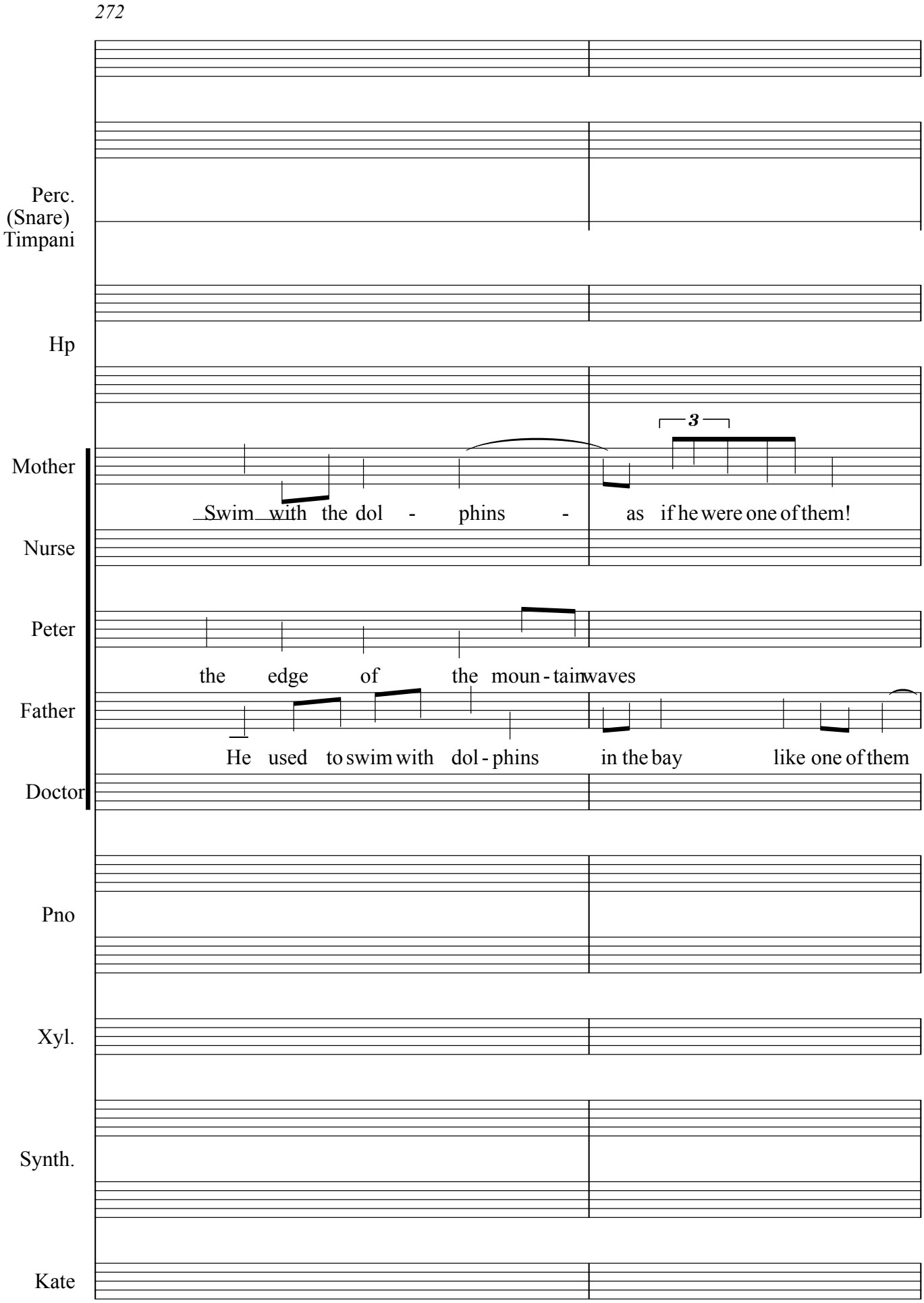
Kate

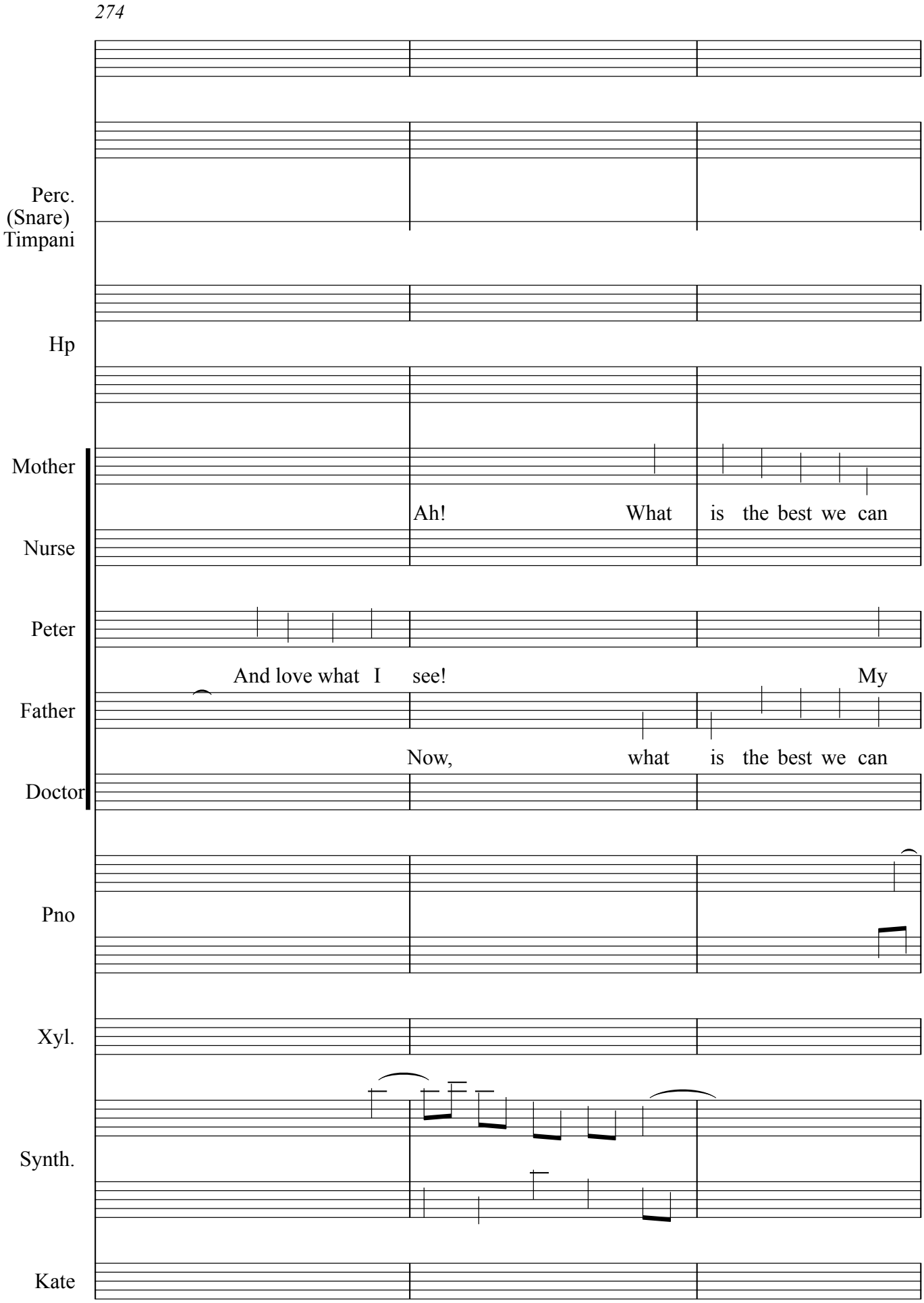

265
Moderato
FLUTE
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Do you re-
Doctor
Pno
Moderato
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

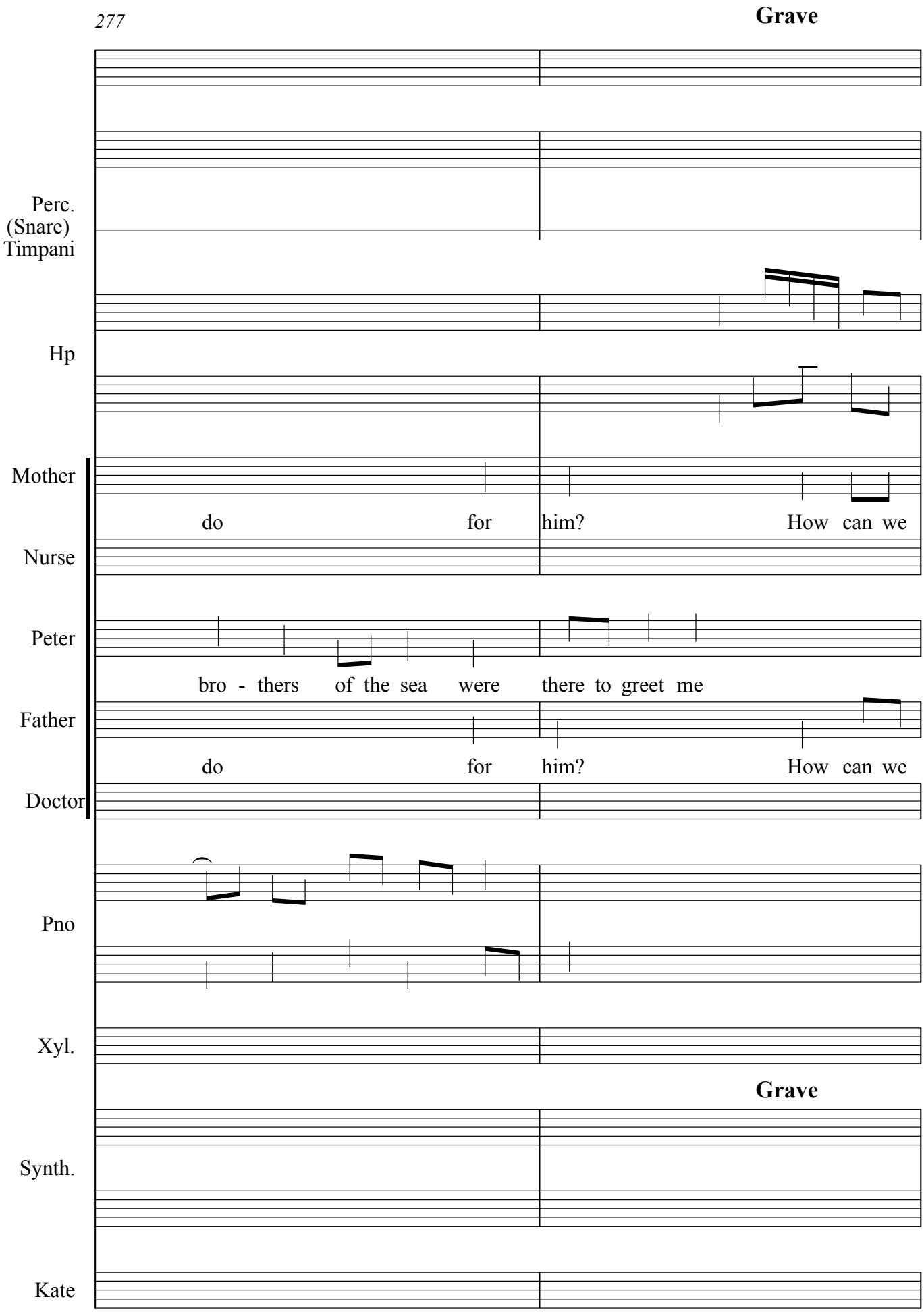

267
Flute
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
mem ber how we used to swim - - - in the bay -
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

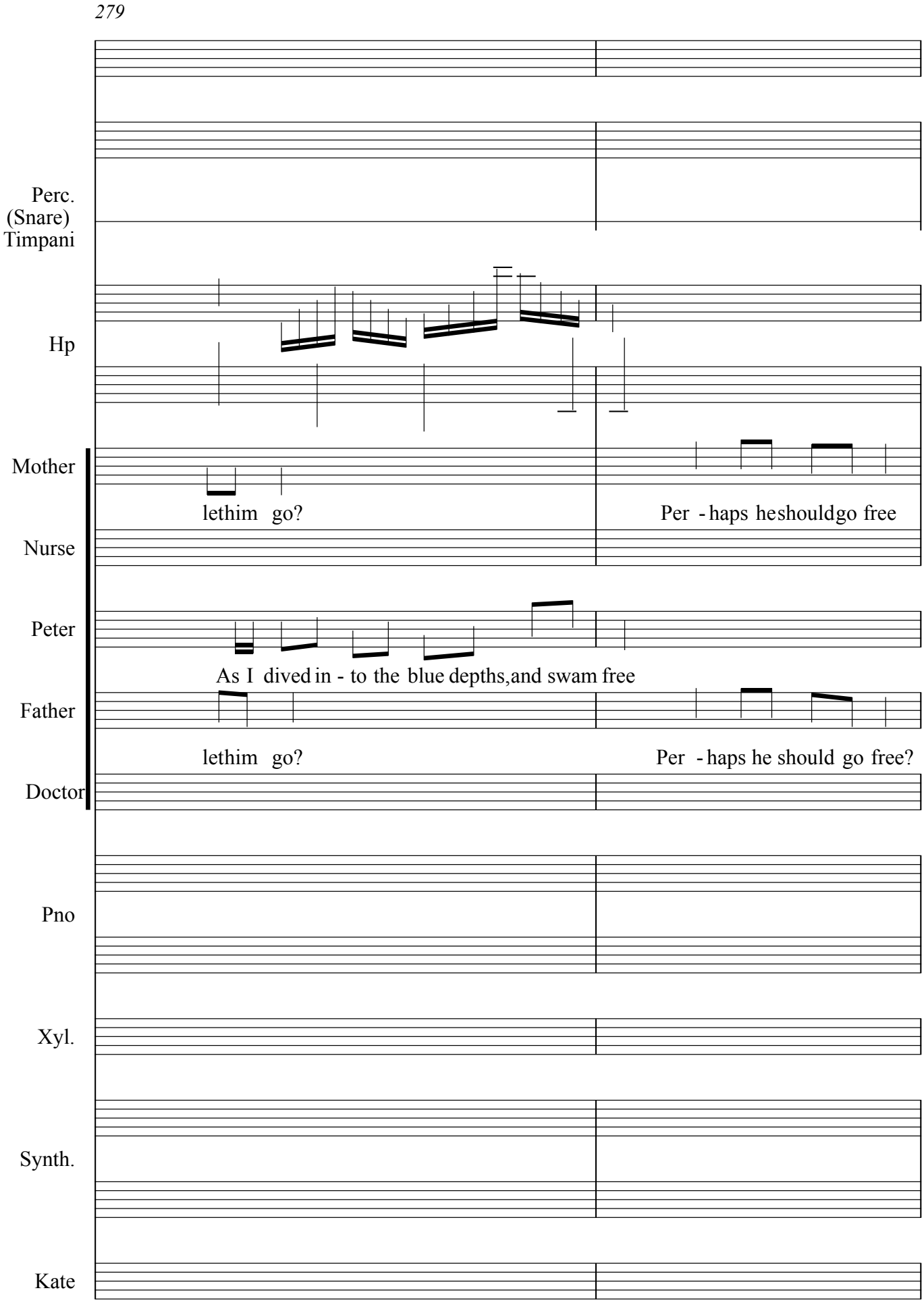

269
3
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Oh yes! In - deed I do re - mem - ber!
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


270
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
I al - ways-will re mem ber.
Re-mem-berhow he used to swim
Nurse
Peter
I gaze in the depths from
Father
Re-mem-berhow heused to swim?
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
3
3
3
6
Synth.
Kate


272
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Swim with the dol - phins - as if he were one of them!
3
Nurse
Peter
the edge of the moun - tain waves
Father
He used to swim with dol - phins in the bay like one of them
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


274
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Ah! What is the best we can
Nurse
Peter
And love what I see! My
Father
Now, what is the best we can
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


277
Grave
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
do for him? How can we
Nurse
Peter
bro - thers of the sea were there to greet me
Father
do for him? How can we
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Grave
Synth.
Kate


279
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
lethim go?
Per - haps heshouldgo free
Nurse
Peter
As I dived in - to the blue depths,and swam free
Father
lethim go?
Per - haps he should go free?
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

281

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

It is so hard to un der - stand - what is ex - pec - ted of us here!

Nurse

Peter

Father

It is time now - to let him -

Doctor

Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate

283

Slower

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Seeing the parents locked in a despairing embrace, the DOCTOR and the NURSE, re-entering, realise that a decision has been made.

Mother

What we must do!

Nurse

Peter

Dol - phins! Dol - phins!

Father

go!

Doctor

Well, now!

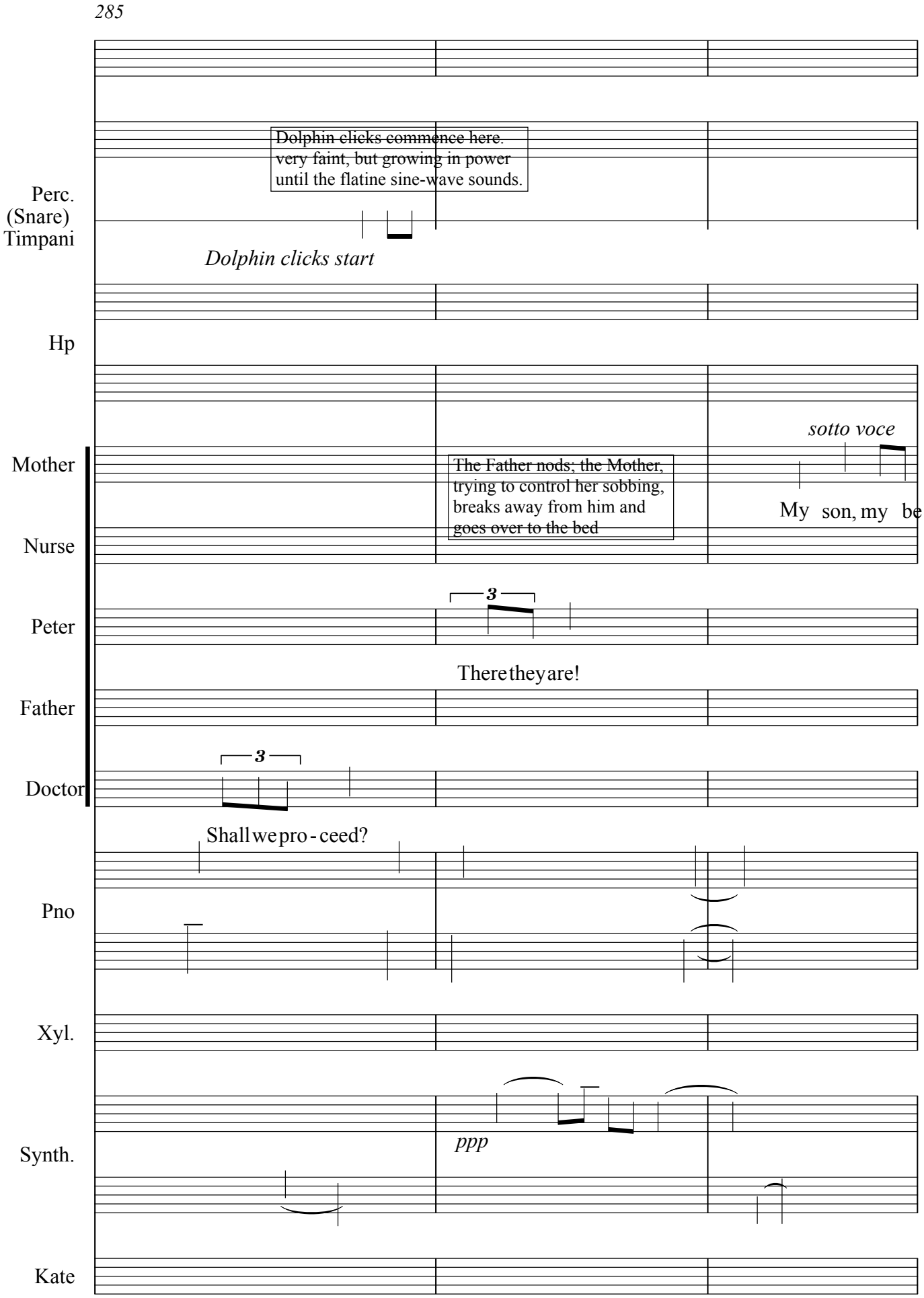
Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Slower

Kate


285
Dolphin clicks commence here.
very faint, but growing in power
until the flatine sine-wave sounds.
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Dolphin clicks start
Hp
sotto voce
Mother
The Father nods; the Mother,
trying to control her sobbing,
breaks away from him and
goes over to the bed
My son, my be
Nurse
3
Peter
There they are!
Father
3
Doctor
Shall we pro - ceed?
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
ppp
Kate

288

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

The Mother takes the flower that was in her hair and places it in Peter's hand. She kisses him farewell. As does Father.

Mother

3

lov ed son! Why won't you speak to us?

Nurse

Peter

They're call ing to me!

Father

We love you,

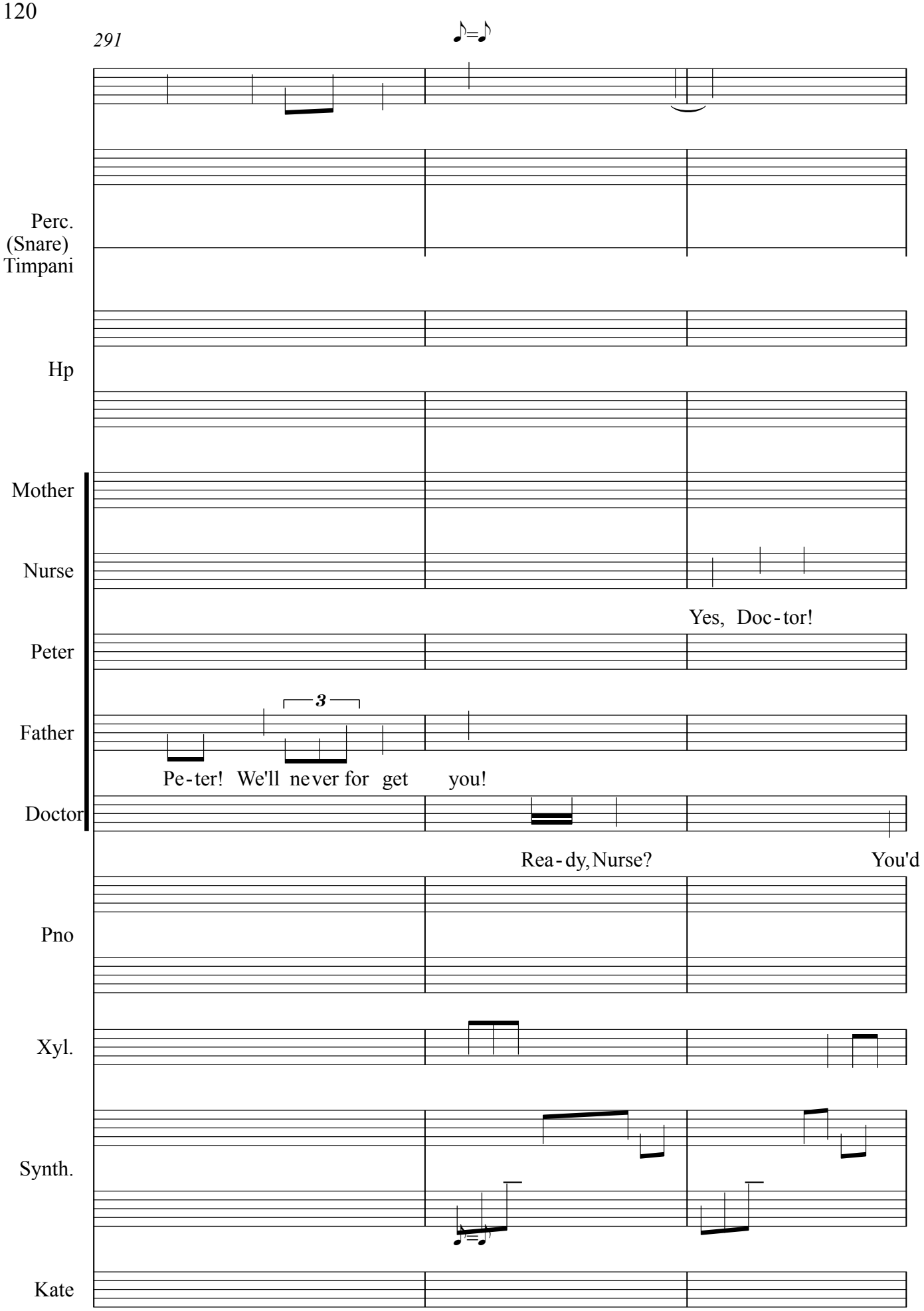
Doctor

Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate


291
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Yes, Doc-tor!
Peter
Father
3
Pe-ter! We'll ne ver for get you!
Doctor
Rea-dy, Nurse?
You'd
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

294

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

How could I know, when I held that

Nurse

It is so sad that this shouldhap-pen to

Peter

Father

Doctor

think they'd see that things would end - this way, Nurse!

Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate

296

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

ba - by in my arms - - That I'd one day, One

Nurse

them. Such a nice young Boy!

Peter

Oh, - Mo -

Father

Doctor

There real - ly is no time - to waste If we're to save - the

Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate

298

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

3

Hp

Mother

- day, I would be his mur - der - er!

Nurse

You're ma - king things more

Peter

ther! They're call - ing me!

Father

My Dear! You mus - n't

Doctor

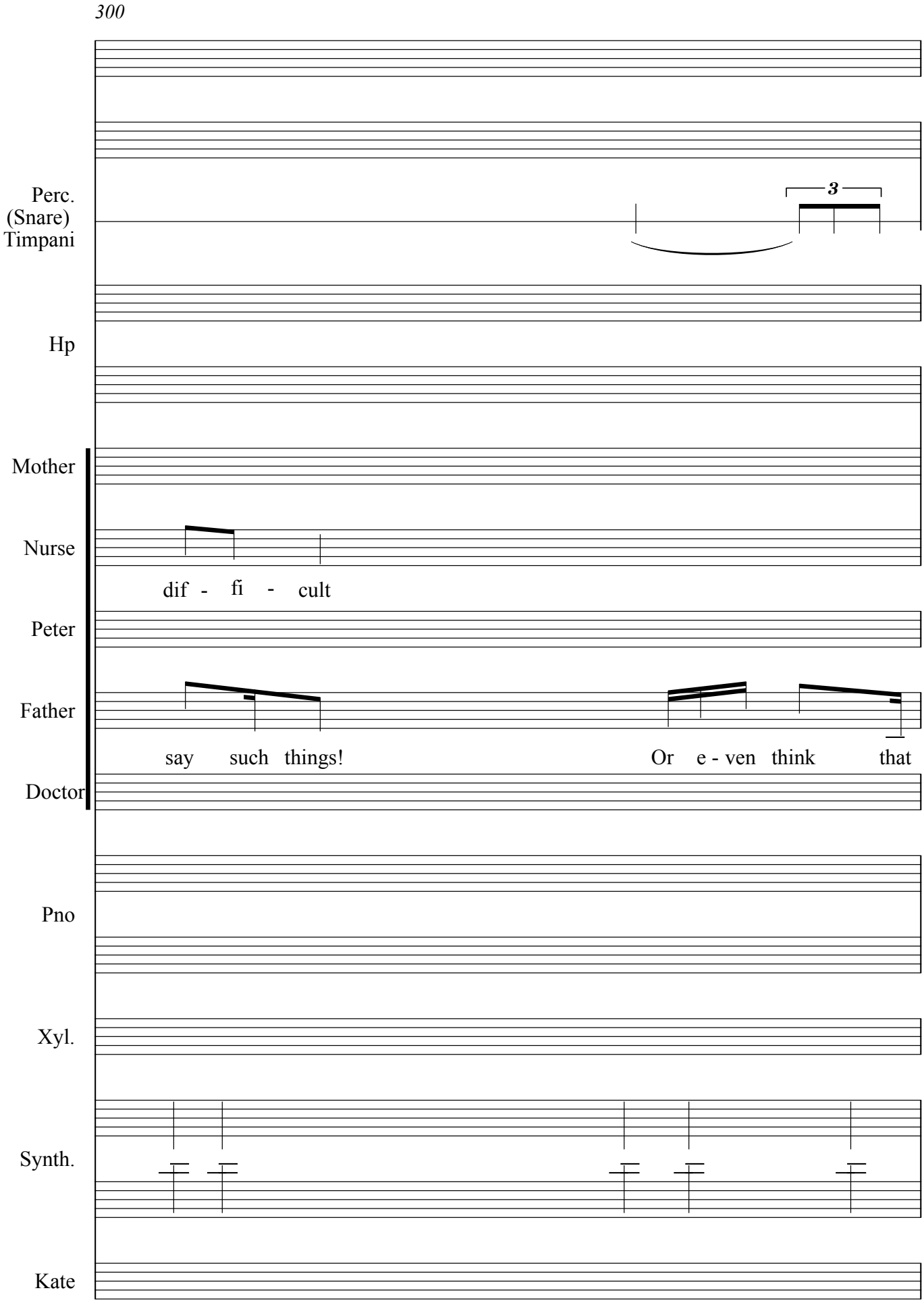
o ther boy!

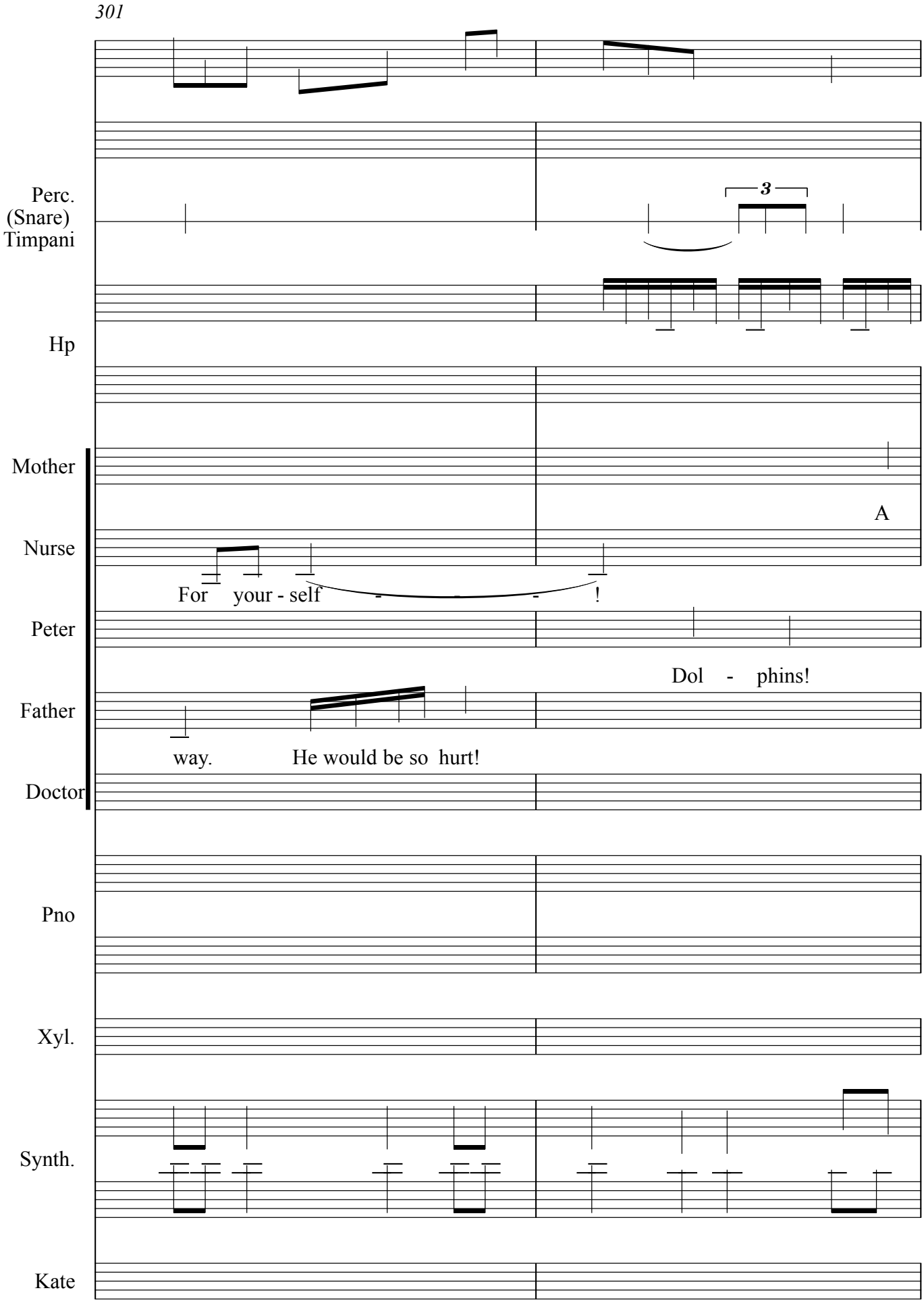
Pno

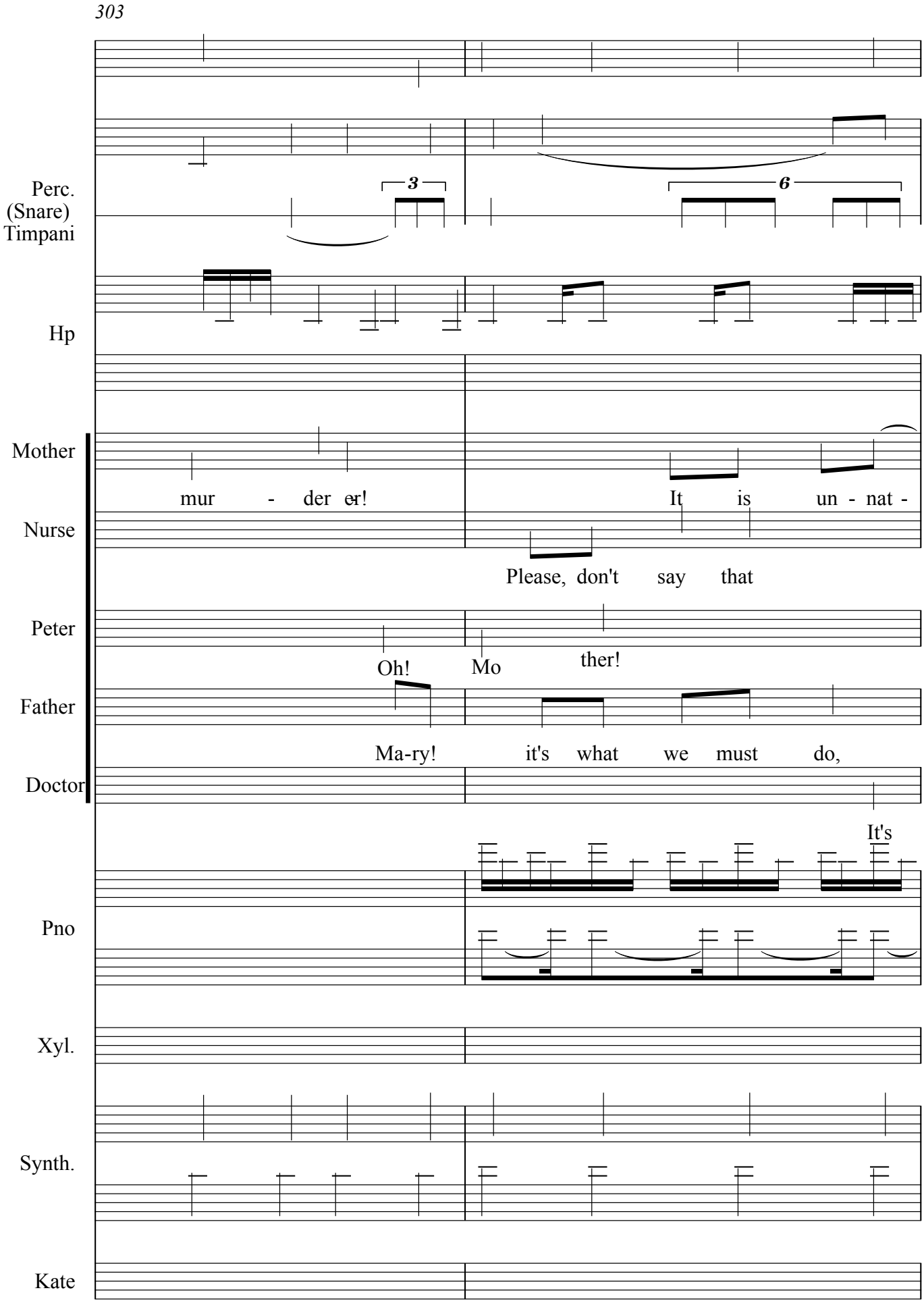
Xyl.

Synth.

Kate


300
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
3
Hp
Mother
Nurse
dif - fi - cult
Peter
Father
say such things!
Or e - ven think that
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


301
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
3
Hp
Mother
A
Nurse
For your - self - - - !
Peter
Dol - phins!
Father
way. He would be so hurt!
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


303
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
3
6
Hp
Mother
mur - der er!
It is un - nat -
Nurse
Please, don't say that
Peter
Oh!
Mo
ther!
Father
Ma-ry!
it's what we must do,
Doctor
It's
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

305

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

u ral! - - - - Oh,

Nurse

it's not true! She needs that se-da-tive

Peter

See? They beck - on me! Dol -

Father

There's no thing else - that can be done! (oh,God!)

Doctor

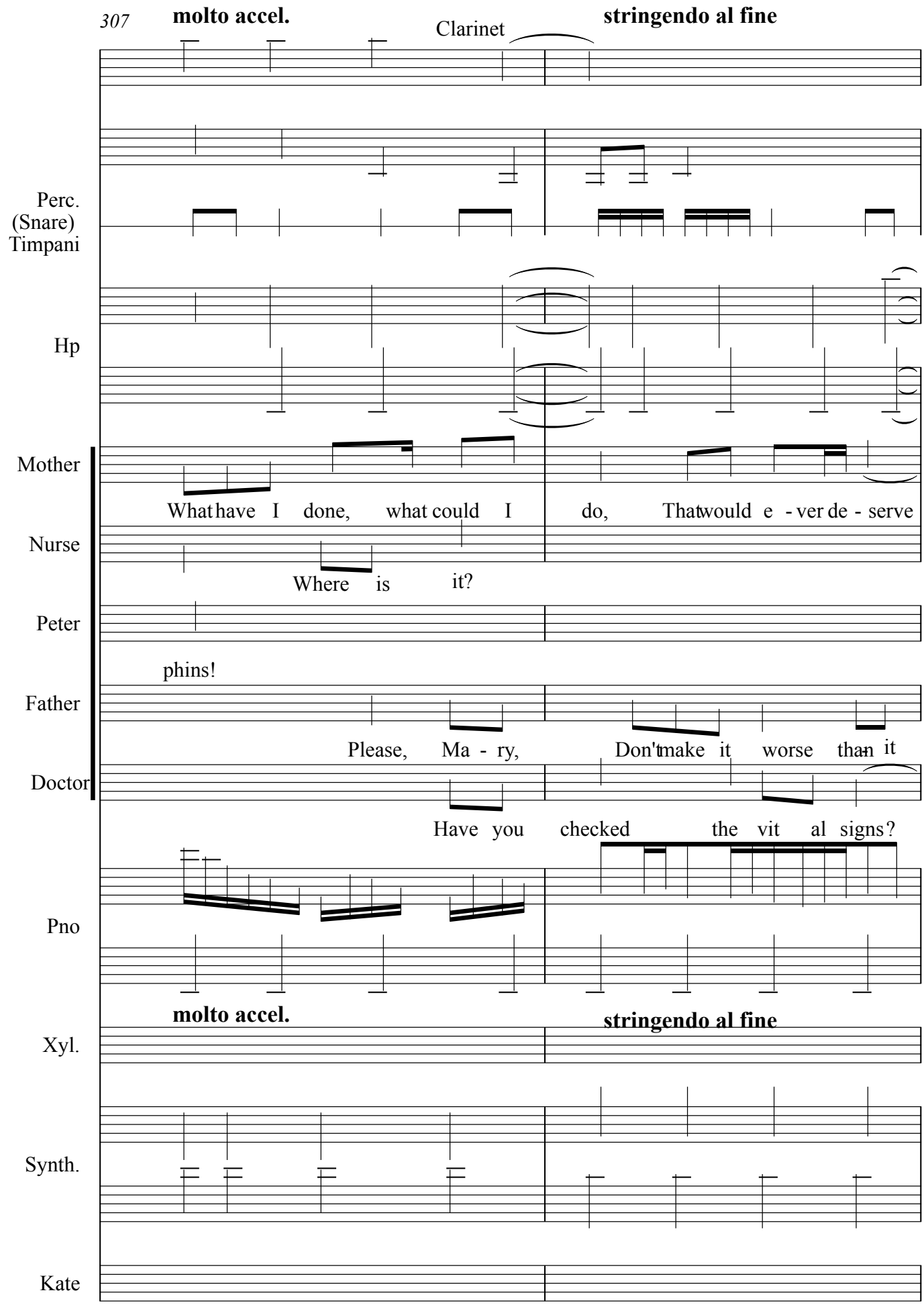
time now!

Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate


307
molto accel.
Clarinet
stringendo al fine
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
What have I done, what could I do, That would e - ver de - serve
Nurse
Where is it?
Peter
phins!
Father
Please, Ma - ry, Don't make it worse than it
Doctor
Have you checked the vit al signs?
Pno
molto accel.
stringendo al fine
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

309

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

such a fate? There must be some

Nurse

Yes, Doc-tor!

Peter

There they are! Please wait for me!

Father

- is al rea dy!

Doctor

checks patient

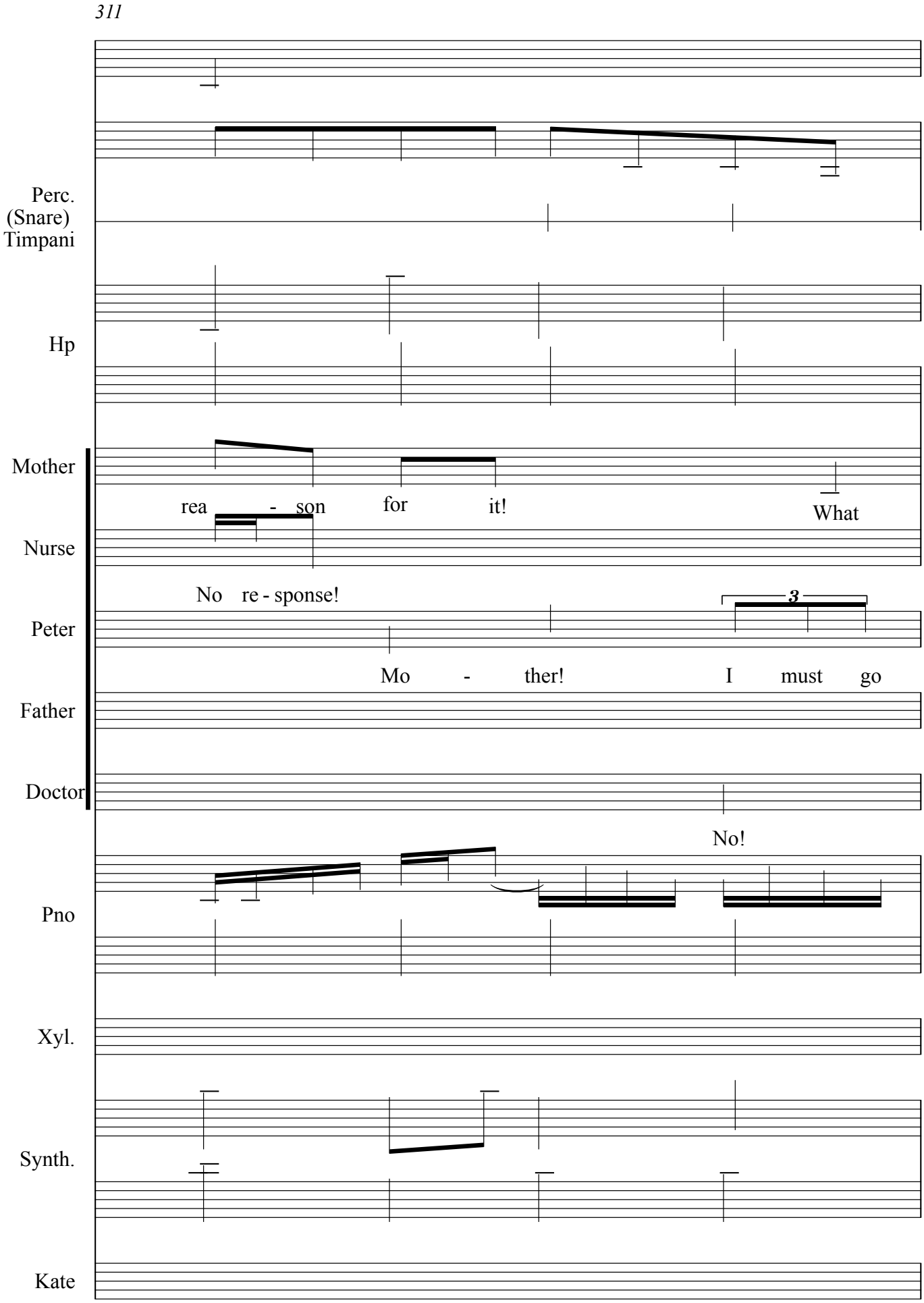
And?

Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate


311
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
rea - son for it! What
Nurse
No re - sponse!
3
Peter
Mo - ther! I must go
Father
Doctor
No!
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

312

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

could I have done - to de - serve

Nurse

Peter

with them - !

Father

Doctor

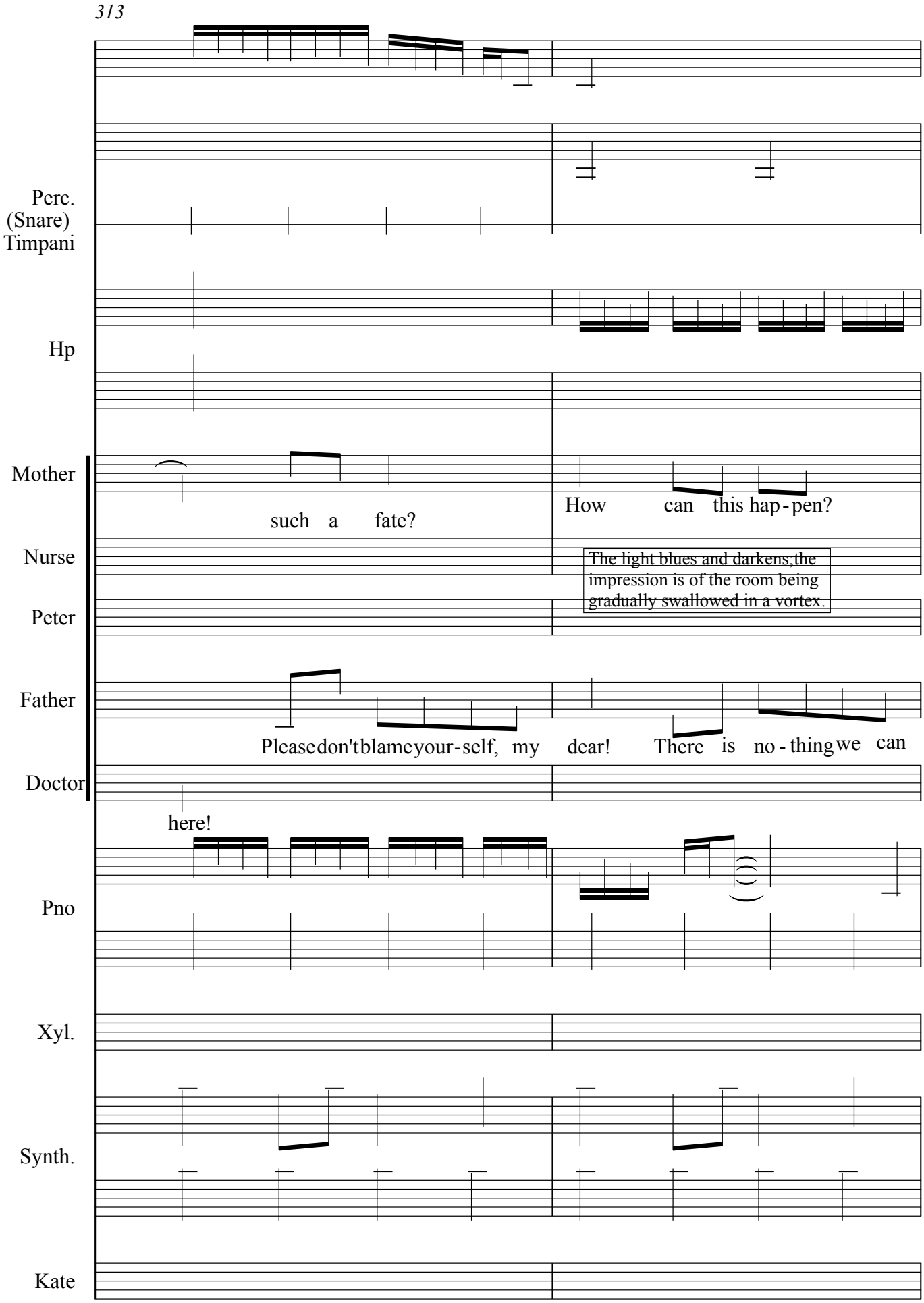
There's no- thing do - - ing

Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate


313
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
such a fate?
How can this hap-pen?
Nurse
The light blues and darkens,the impression is of the room being gradually swallowed in a vortex.
Peter
Father
Pleasedon'tblameyour-self, my dear! There is no-thingwe can
Doctor
here!
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

315

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

The room is spin ning! Ev 'ry- -thing is dark!

Nurse

Peter

The noise and confusion overrides
the warning on the ECG; only
the doctor realises what is happening.
The flat line registers. Peter is dead.

Father

do!

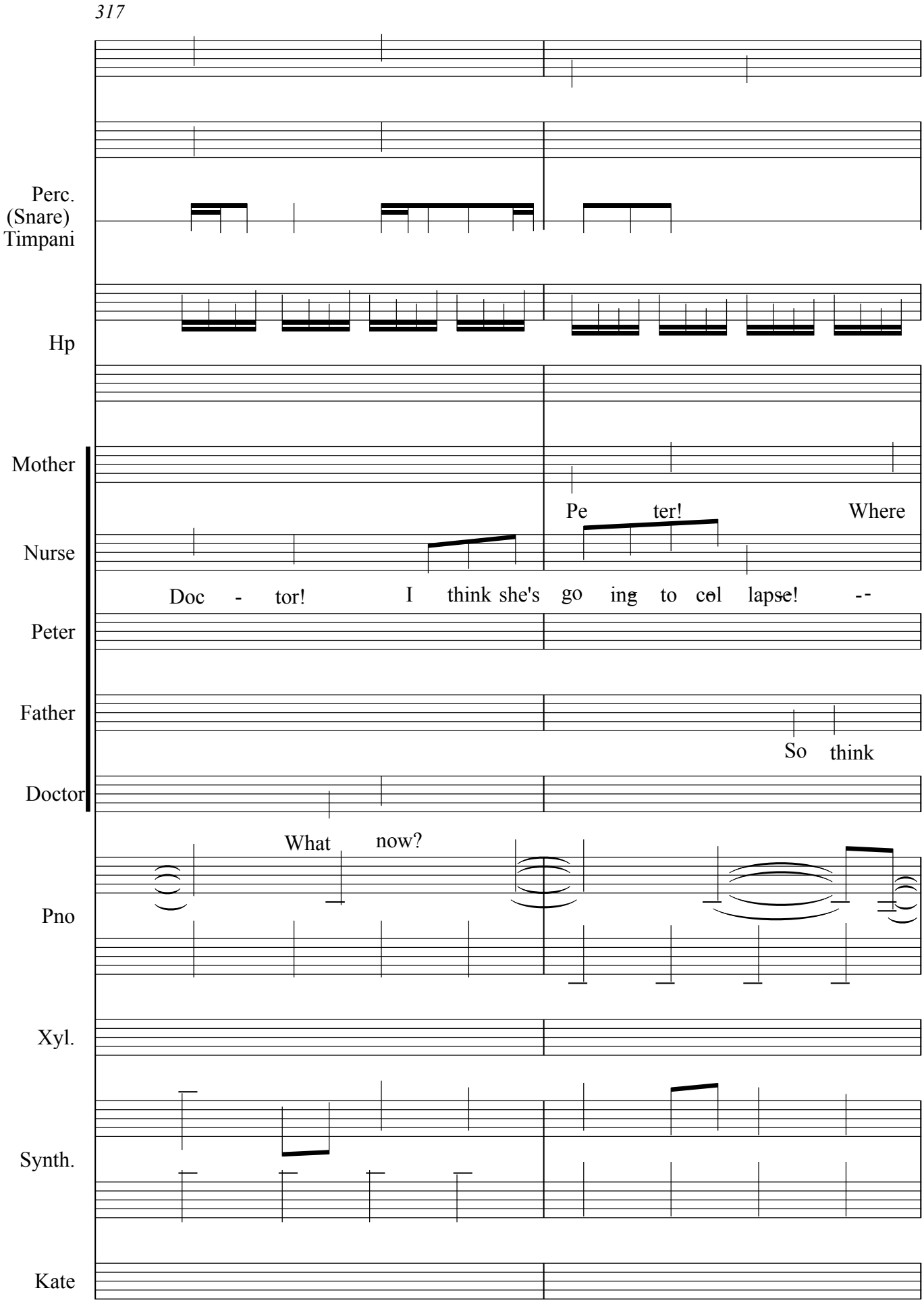
Doctor

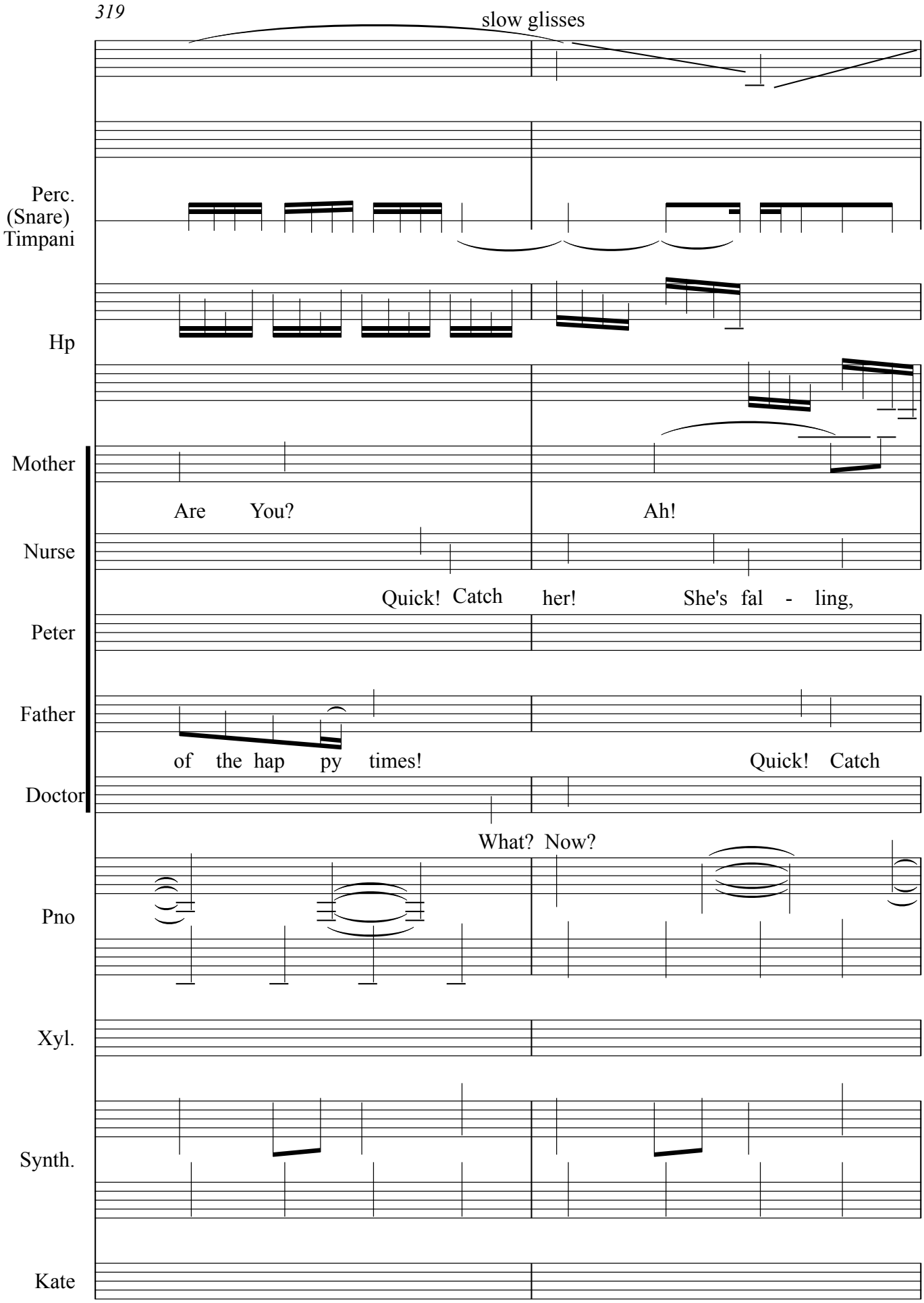
Pno

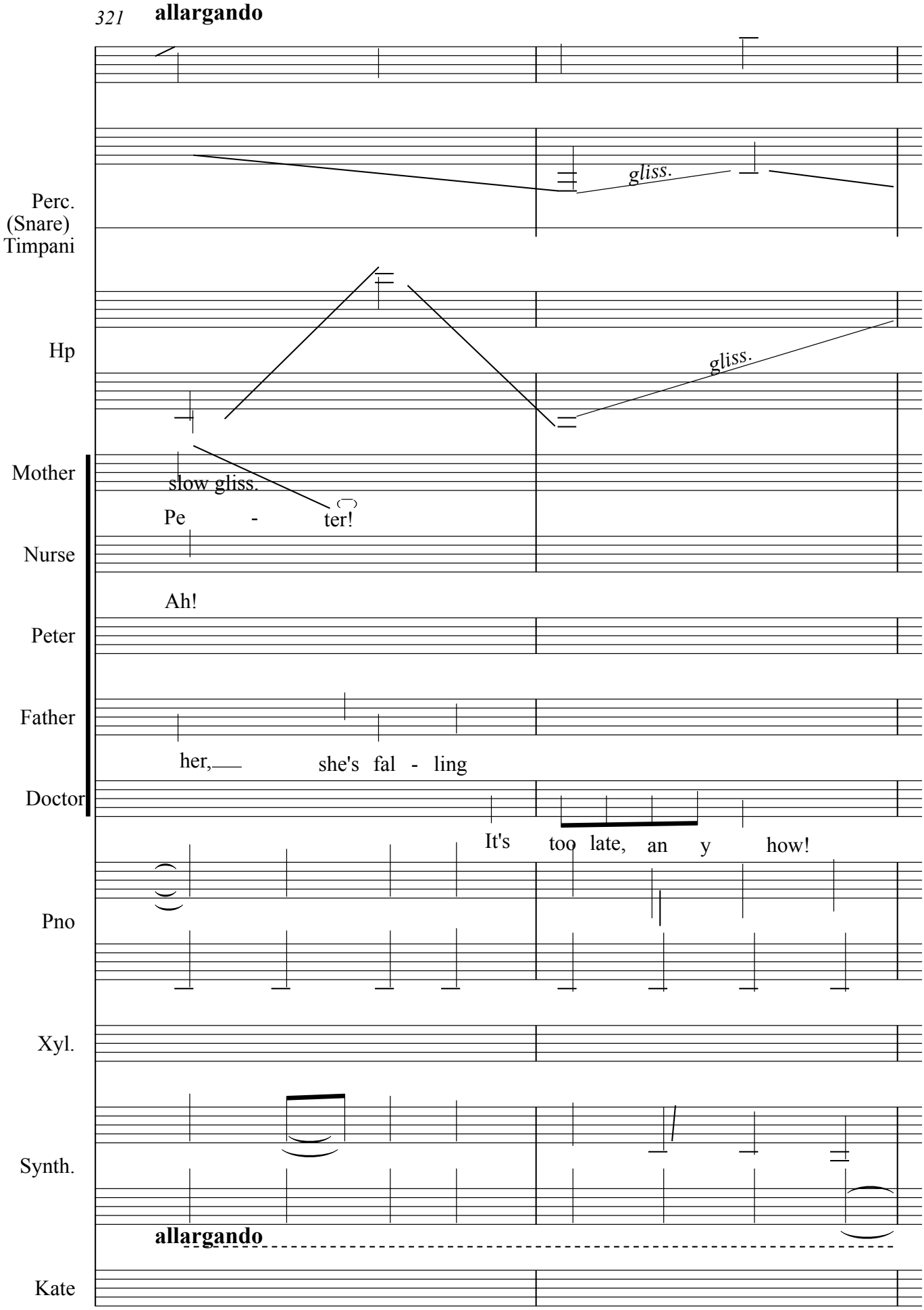
Xyl.

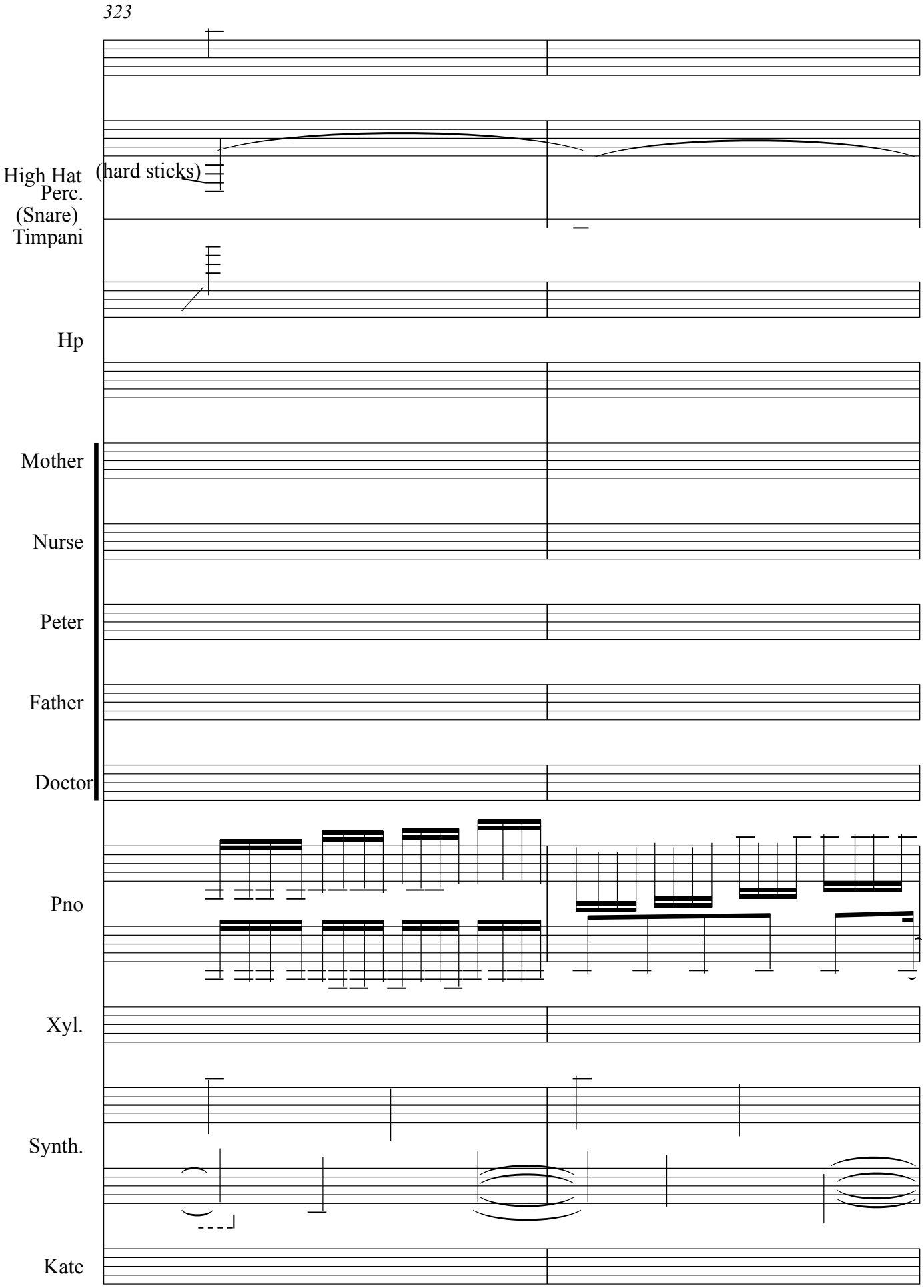
Synth.

Kate


317
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Pe ter! Where
Nurse
Doc - tor! I think she's go ing to col lapse! --
Peter
Father
So think
Doctor
What now?
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


319
slow glisses
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Are You?
Ah!
Nurse
Quick! Catch her!
She's fal - ling,
Peter
Father
of the hap py times!
Quick! Catch
Doctor
What? Now?
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


321
allargando
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
gliss.
Hp
gliss.
Mother
slow gliss.
Pe - ter!
Nurse
Ah!
Peter
Father
her, she's fal - ling
Doctor
It's too late, an y how!
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
allargando
Kate


323
High Hat
(hard sticks)
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

325

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

Nurse

Peter

Father

Doctor

Pno

Xyl.

Synth.

Kate

327

Tam Tam
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

rfz

Hp

Allow tam-tam strike to fade

The score finishes with the TamTam strike in the absence of film; the rest is synthesised under the film of the Boy swimming with dolphins as at opening.

Mother

Nurse

Peter

Father

Doctor

Pno

gliss into Elbow cluster

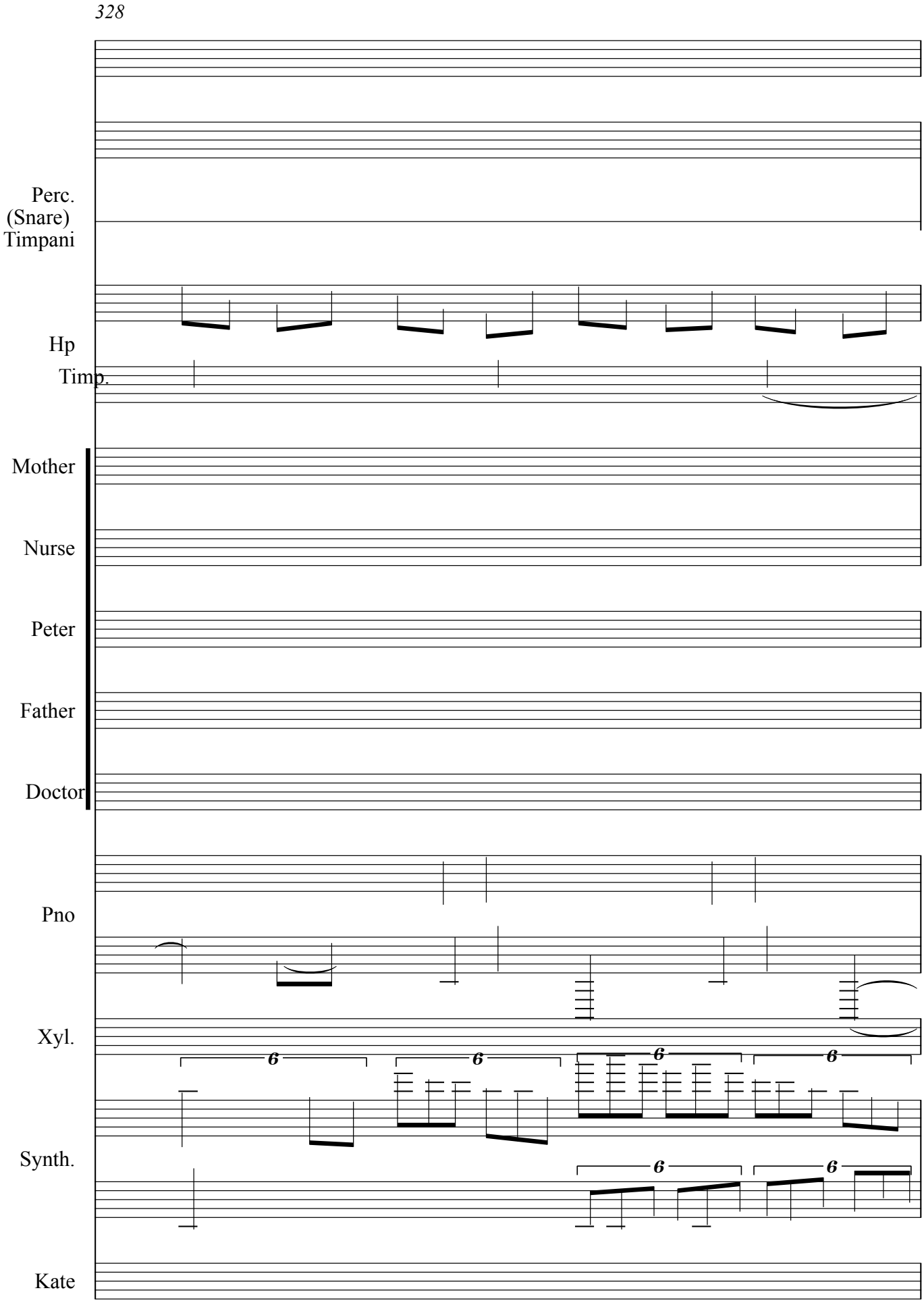
Xyl.

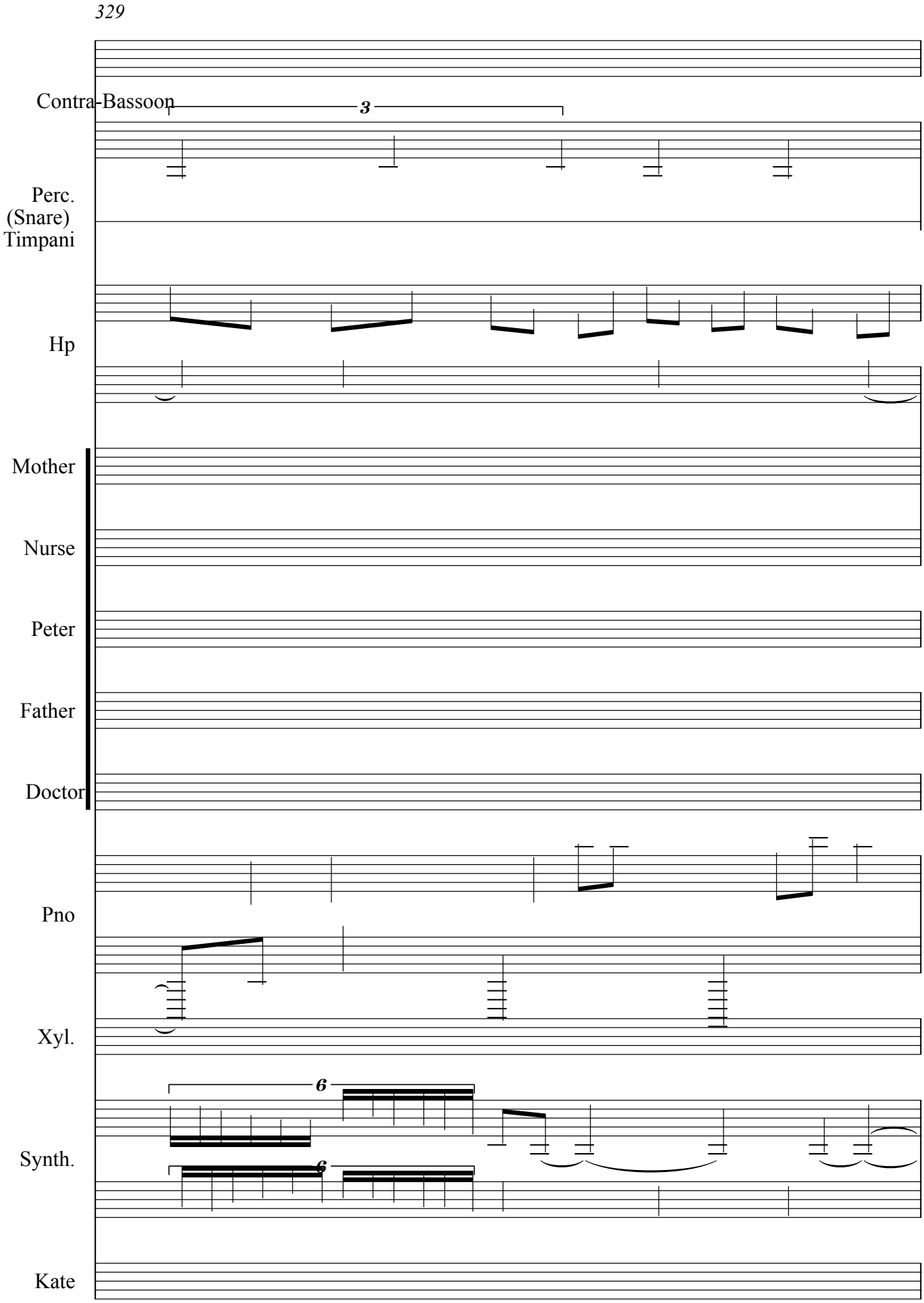
6

Synth.

6

Kate


328
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Timp.
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate


329
Contra-Bassoon
3
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Xyl.
6
Synth.
6
Kate

330

Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani

Hp

Mother

Nurse

Peter

Father

Doctor

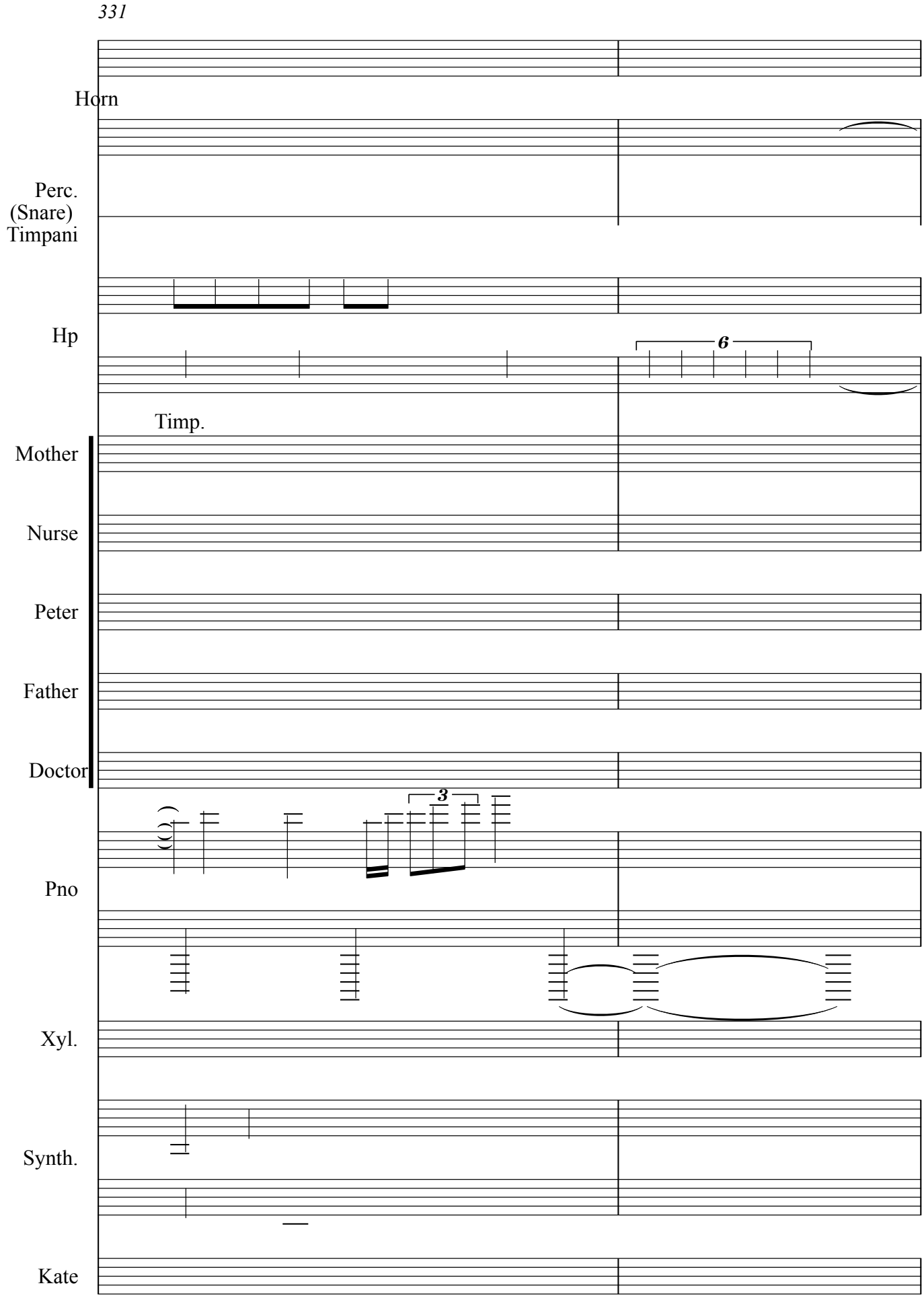
Pno

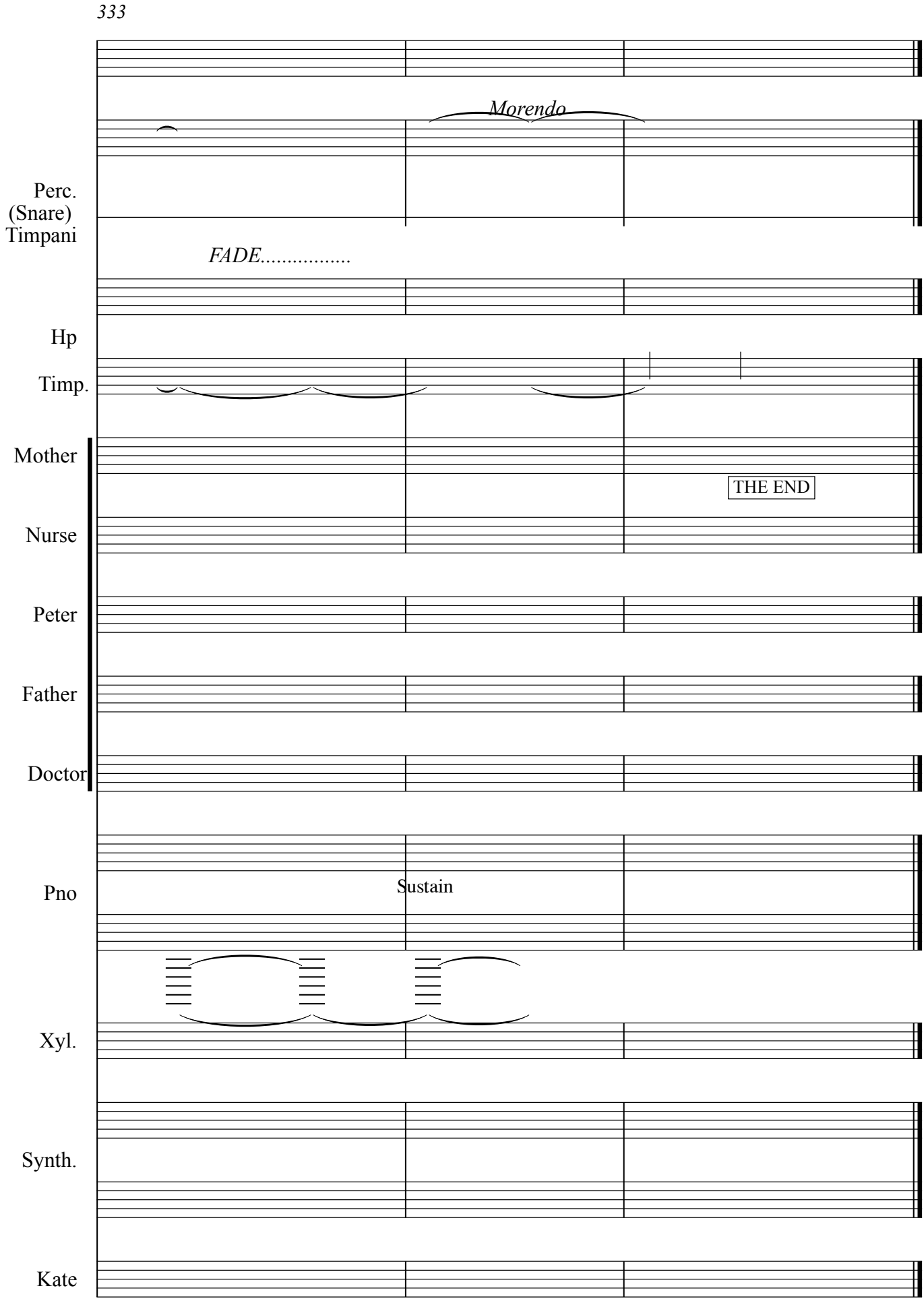
Xyl.

Synth.

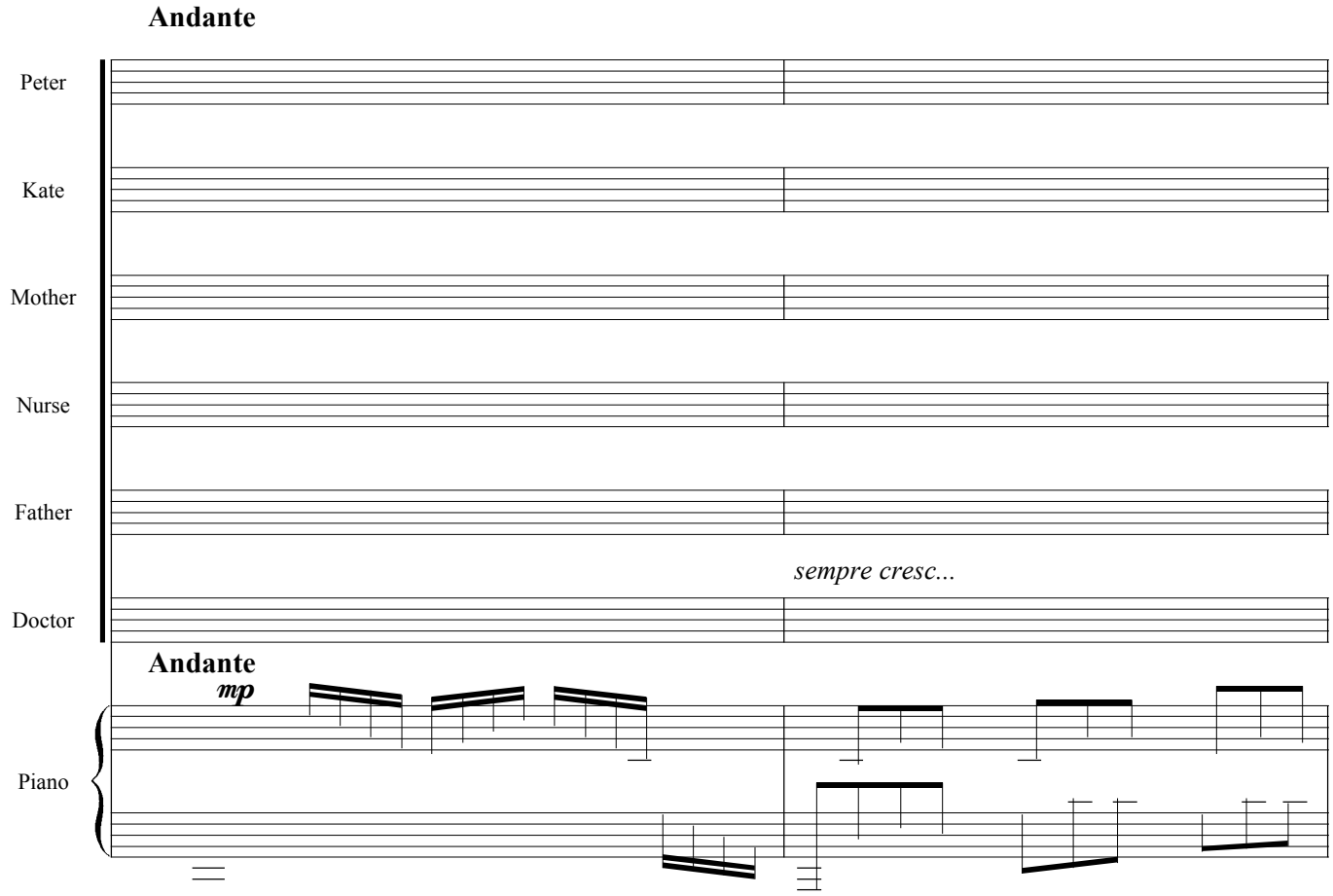
Kate

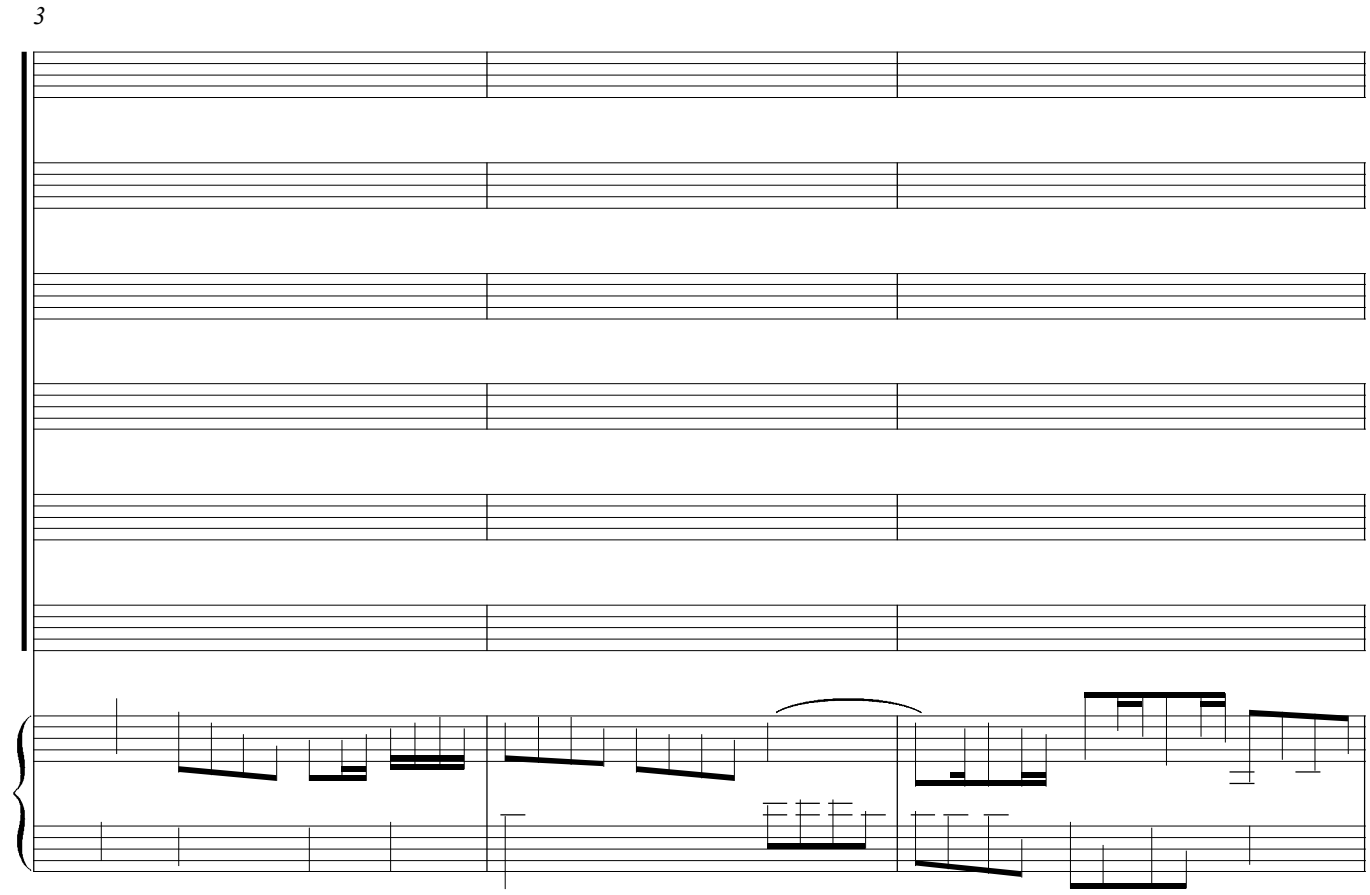
WASH: The music merges with the sounds of the deep sea; the `case' operns as the light `blues'; the sea envelopes the cluster of figures at the machine as if they are a part of the underwater formations. The boy, unseen, rises from the case. Dolphins appear, greeting him: their clicks fade as they disappear, with The Boy, in the darkness of the depths as we are returned to the sea, as at the beginning.

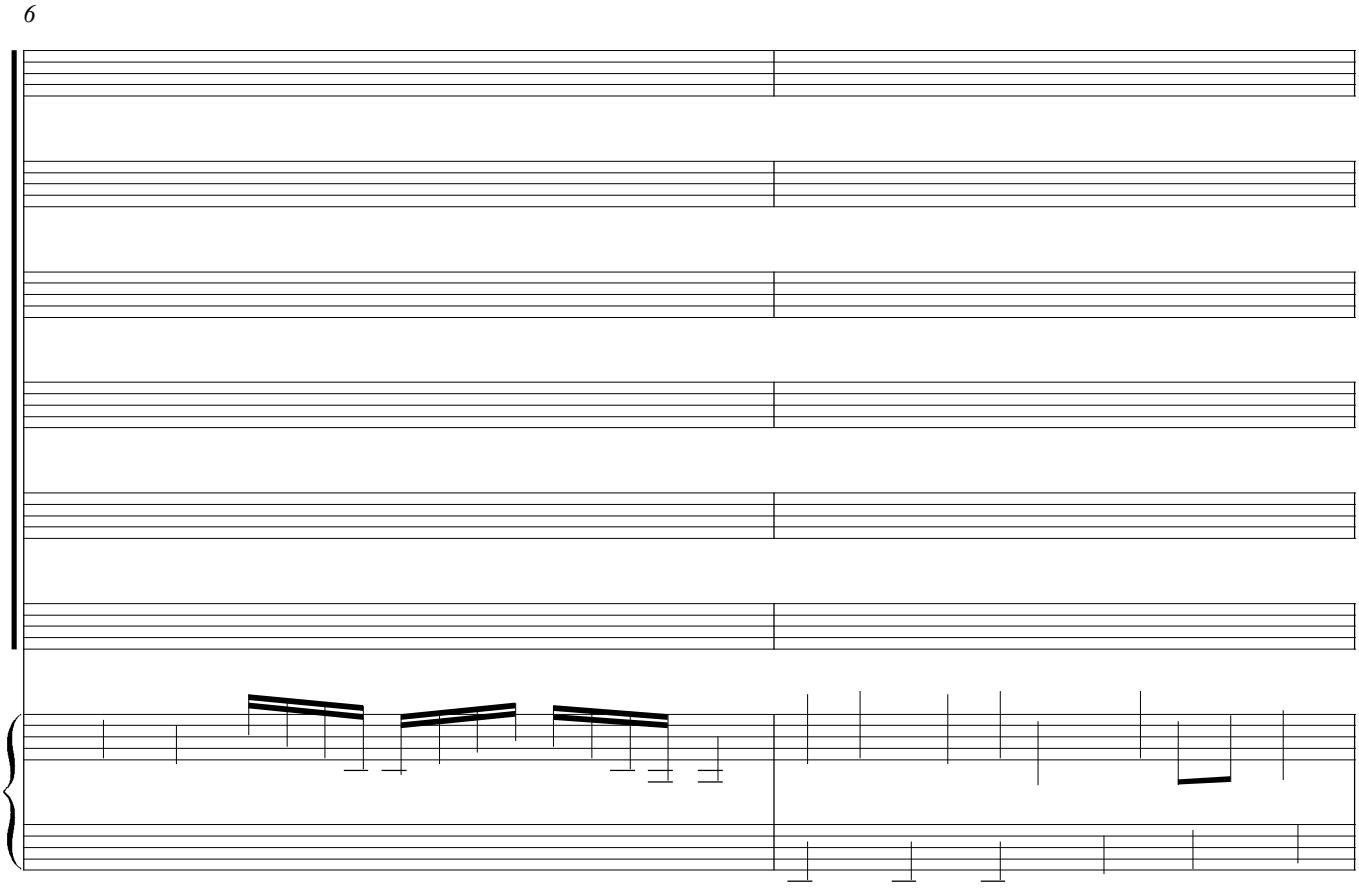

331
Horn
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
Hp
6
Timp.
Mother
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
3
Pno
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

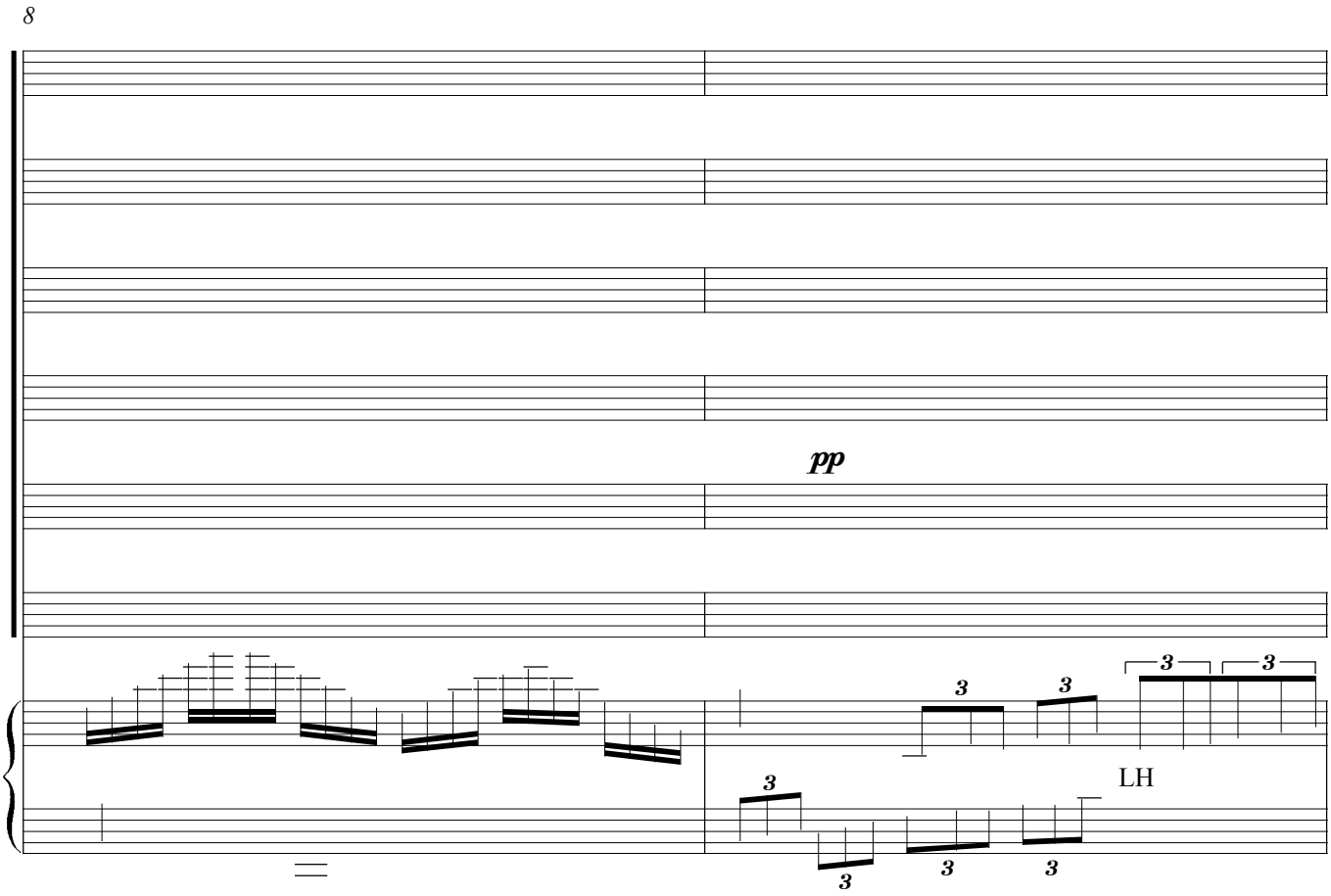

333
Morendo
Perc.
(Snare)
Timpani
FADE.....
Hp
Timp.
Mother
THE END
Nurse
Peter
Father
Doctor
Pno
Sustain
Xyl.
Synth.
Kate

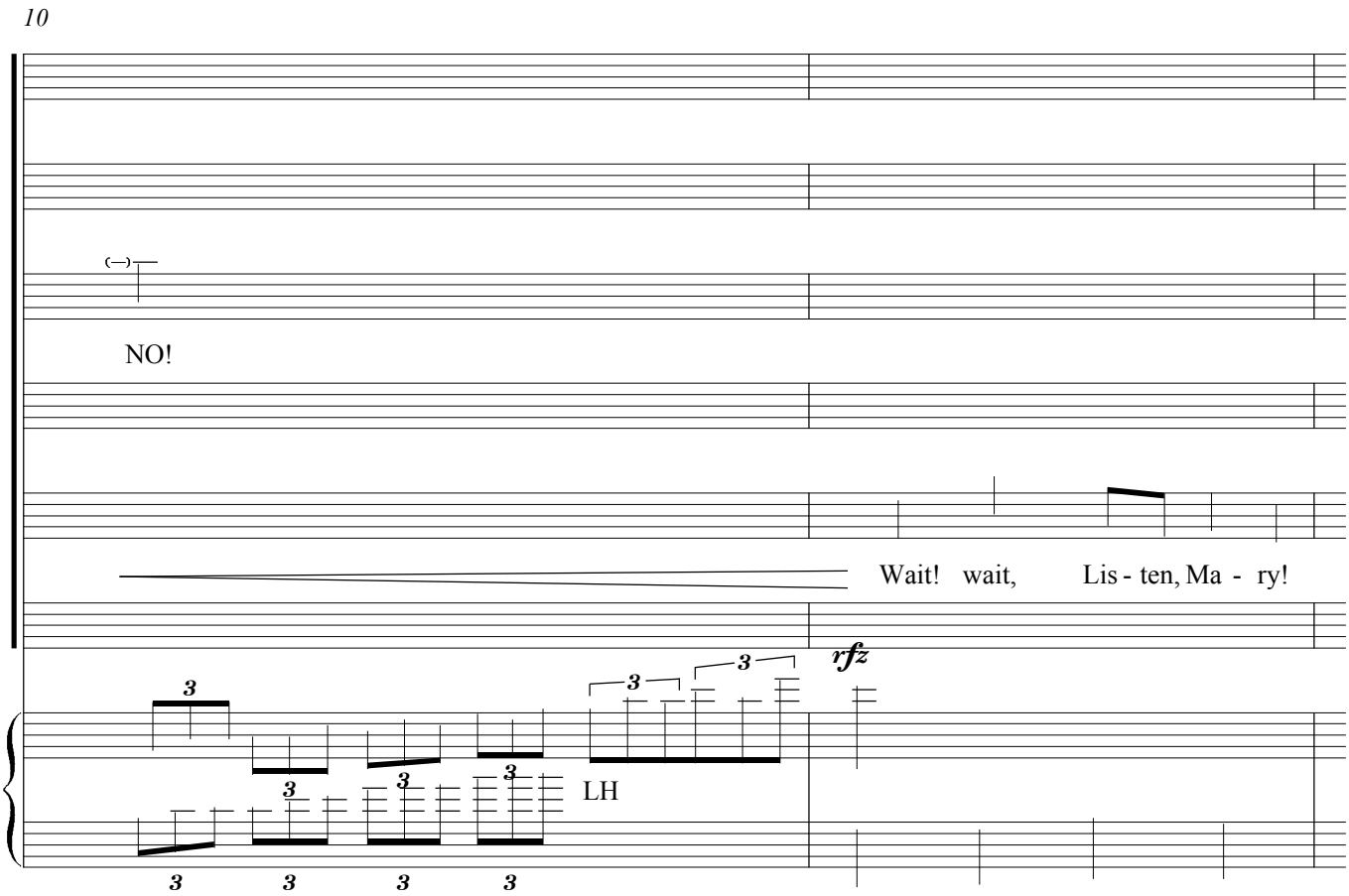
INTRO TO SCENE V

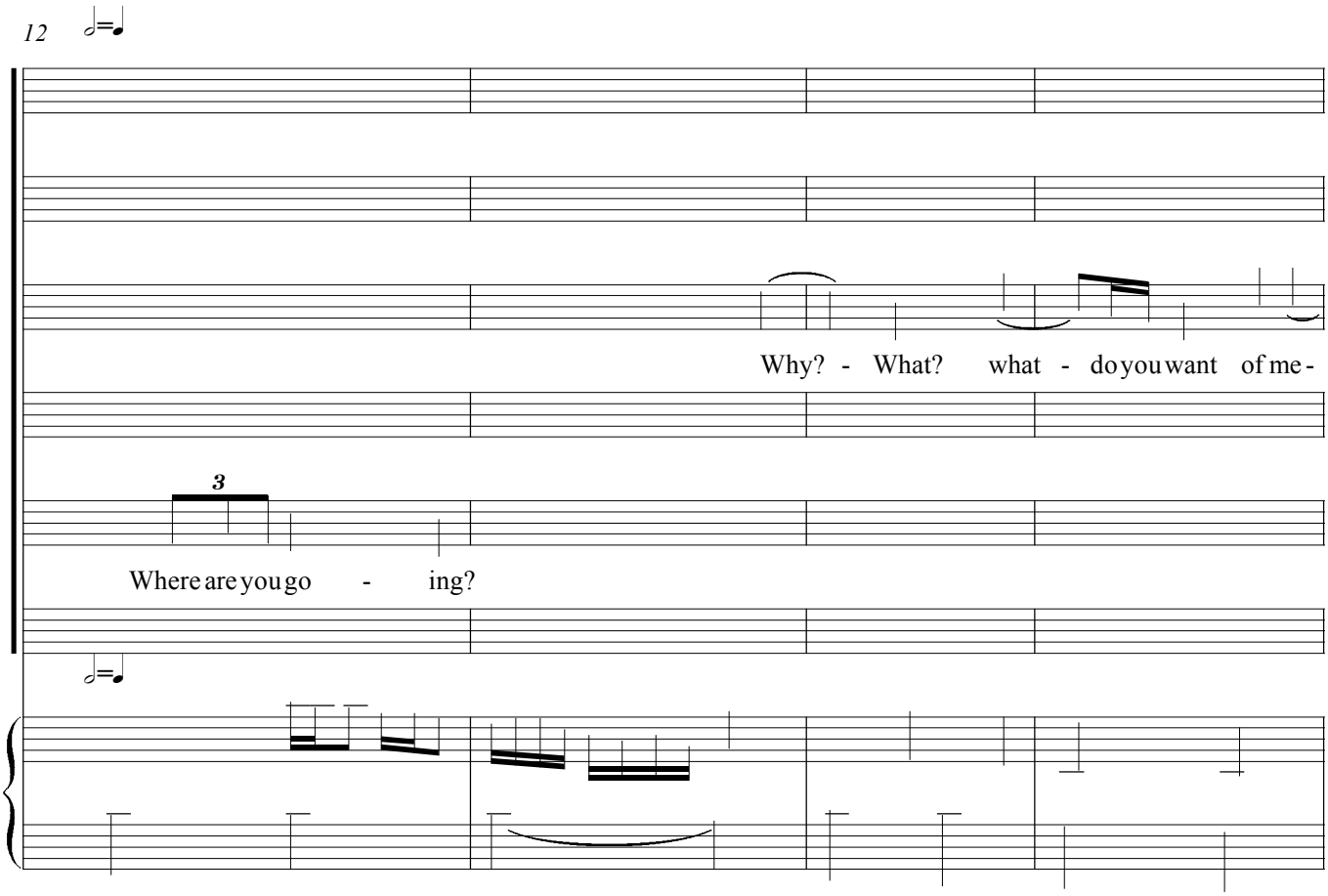





6


8
pp
3
LH


10
NO!
Wait! wait, Lis - ten, Ma - ry!
rfz
LH


12
Why? - What? what - do you want of me -
Where are you go - ing?

16

?

Please keep a - way from me!

Mis -sus

Where are you go - ing?

Ma - ry!

Oh, Ma - ry!

21

Mor - ton!

It's for the

Can't you see it must be done?

3

3

3

24

How do you know? Have you e - ver had a child?

best, Mis sus Mor ton! No.

I be

27

I can't be - lieve you

Yes - ! We must try to ac - cept our fate!

lieve that is ir - rel - e - vant - in this case!

31

said that!

Thank - you, Nurse!

35

We can on - ly do so much;

Man pro - pos - es ,

39

And who do you say you are?

but God dis - po- ses, so they say.

THE BOY - Scene V

44

molto meno mosso

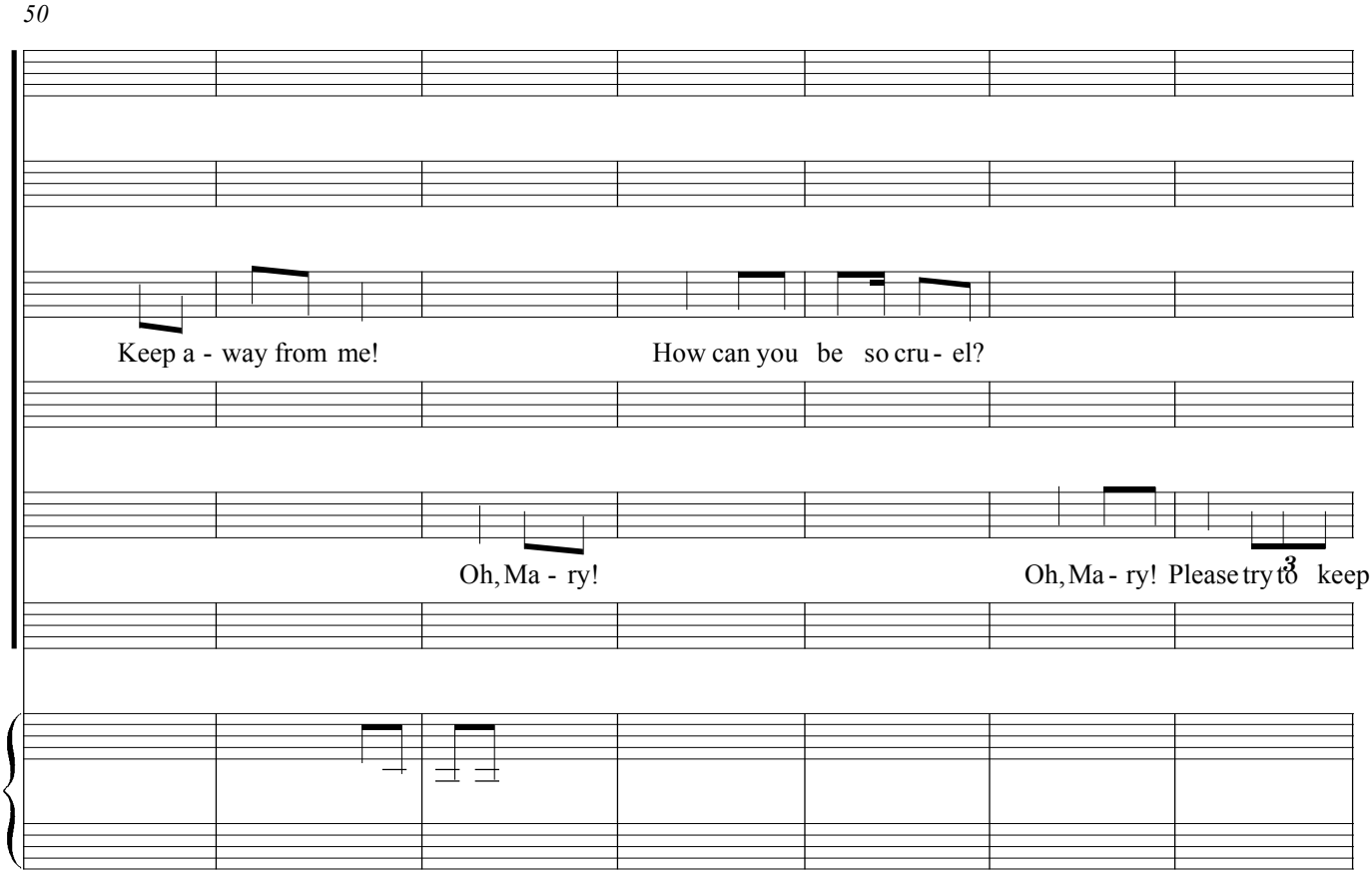
a piacere

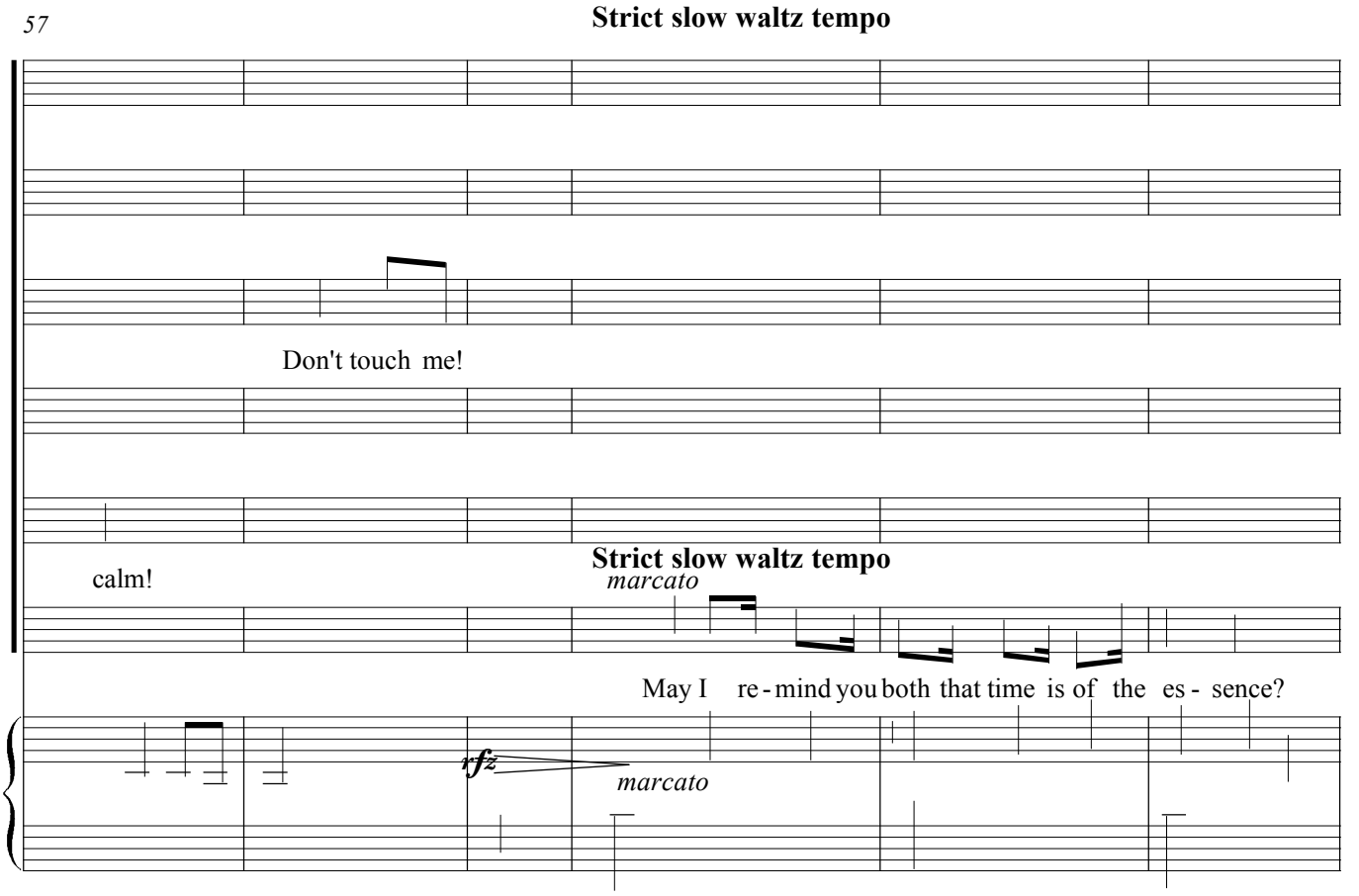
sfz

GOD? Ah Ah - !

Ma - ry!

molto meno mosso


50
Keep a - way from me!
How can you be so cru - el?
Oh, Ma - ry!
Oh, Ma - ry! Please try to keep


57
Strict slow waltz tempo
Don't touch me!
calm!
Strict slow waltz tempo
marcato
May I re - mind you both that time is of the es - sence?
rfz
marcato

63

a piacere

Did you hear that?

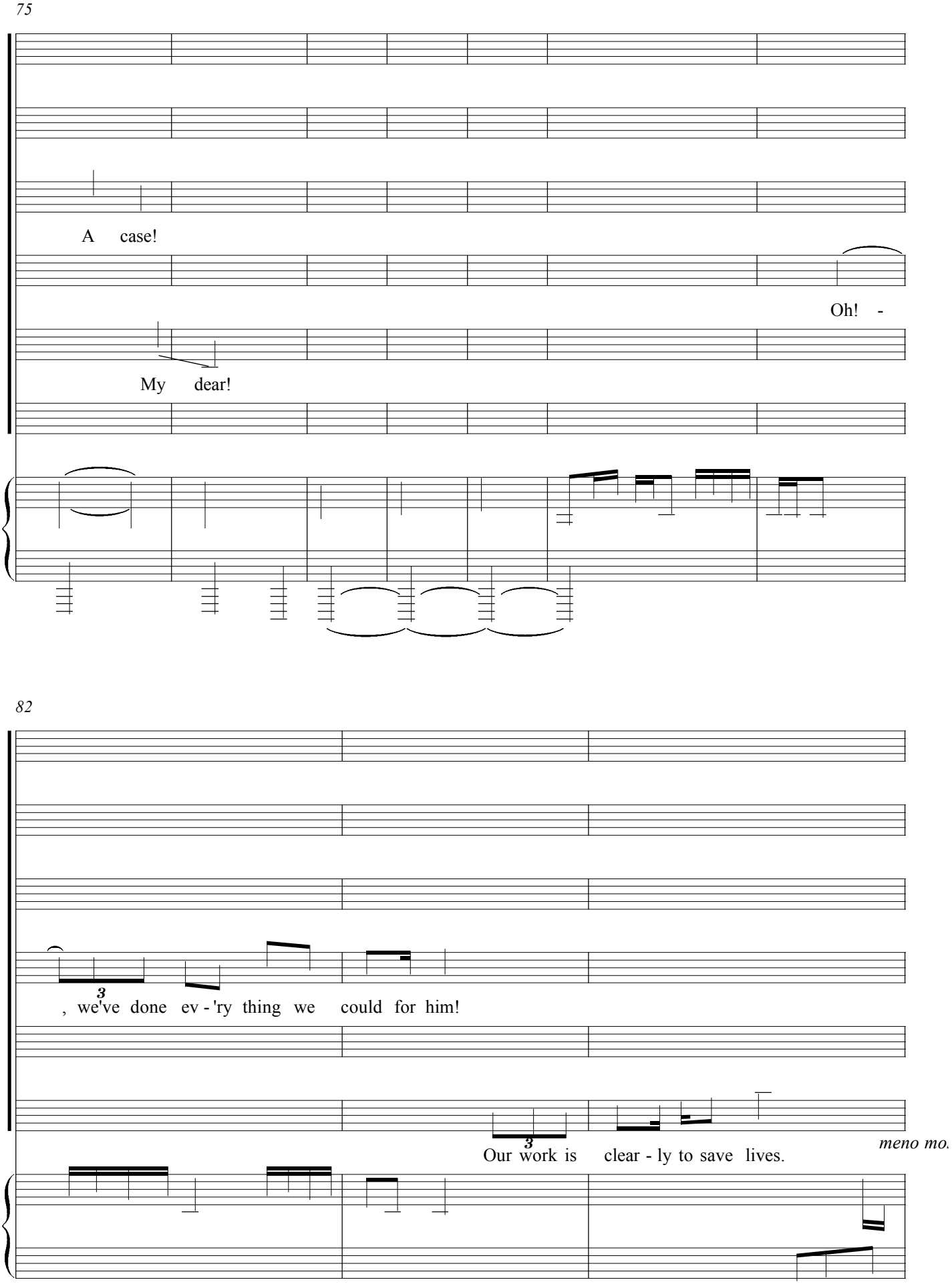
We've done what we could for him,

This case is, sad - ly, hope - less in its out - come.

68

Now, look at this! THIS is a case, you monsters!

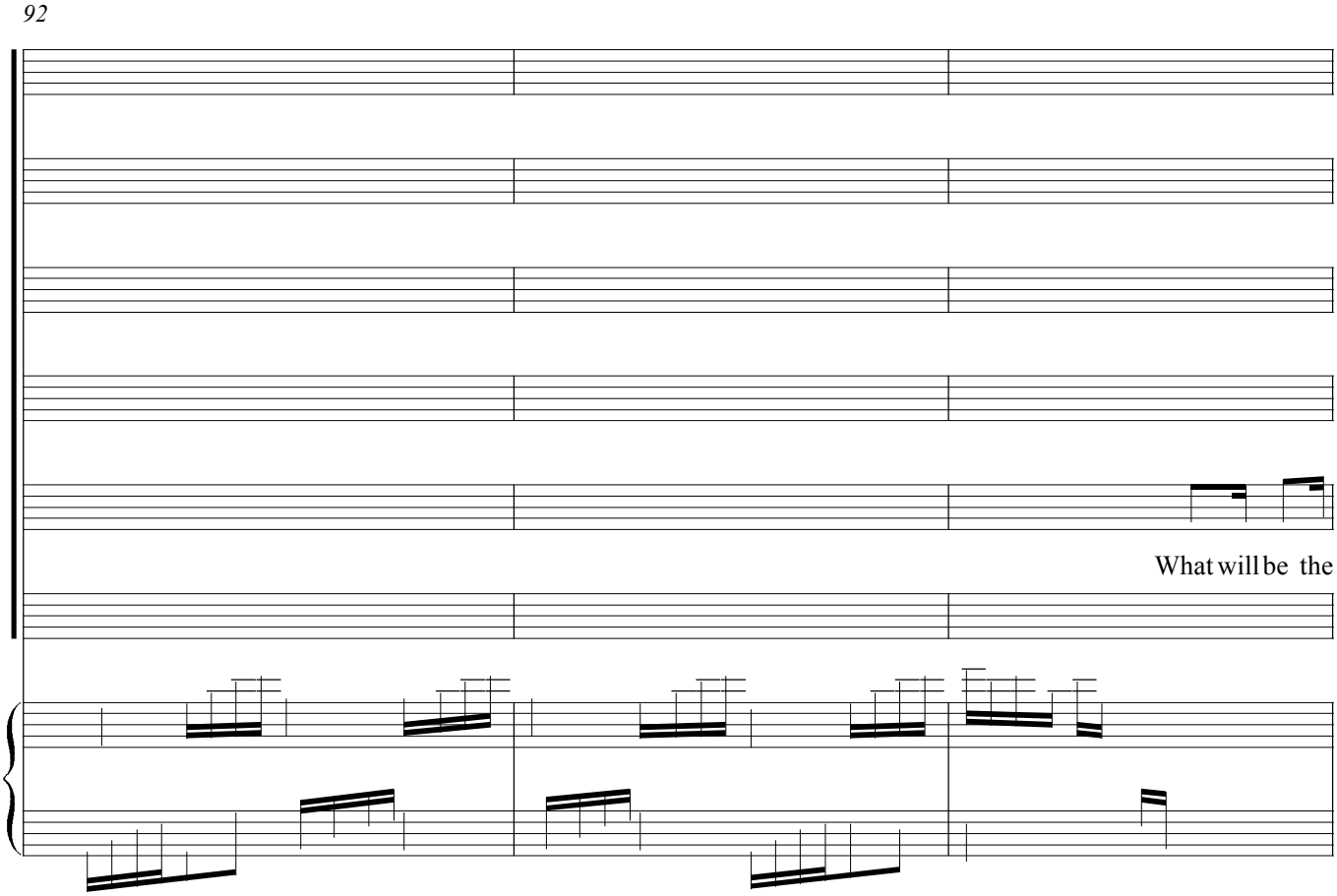
Mis - sus Mor - ton.

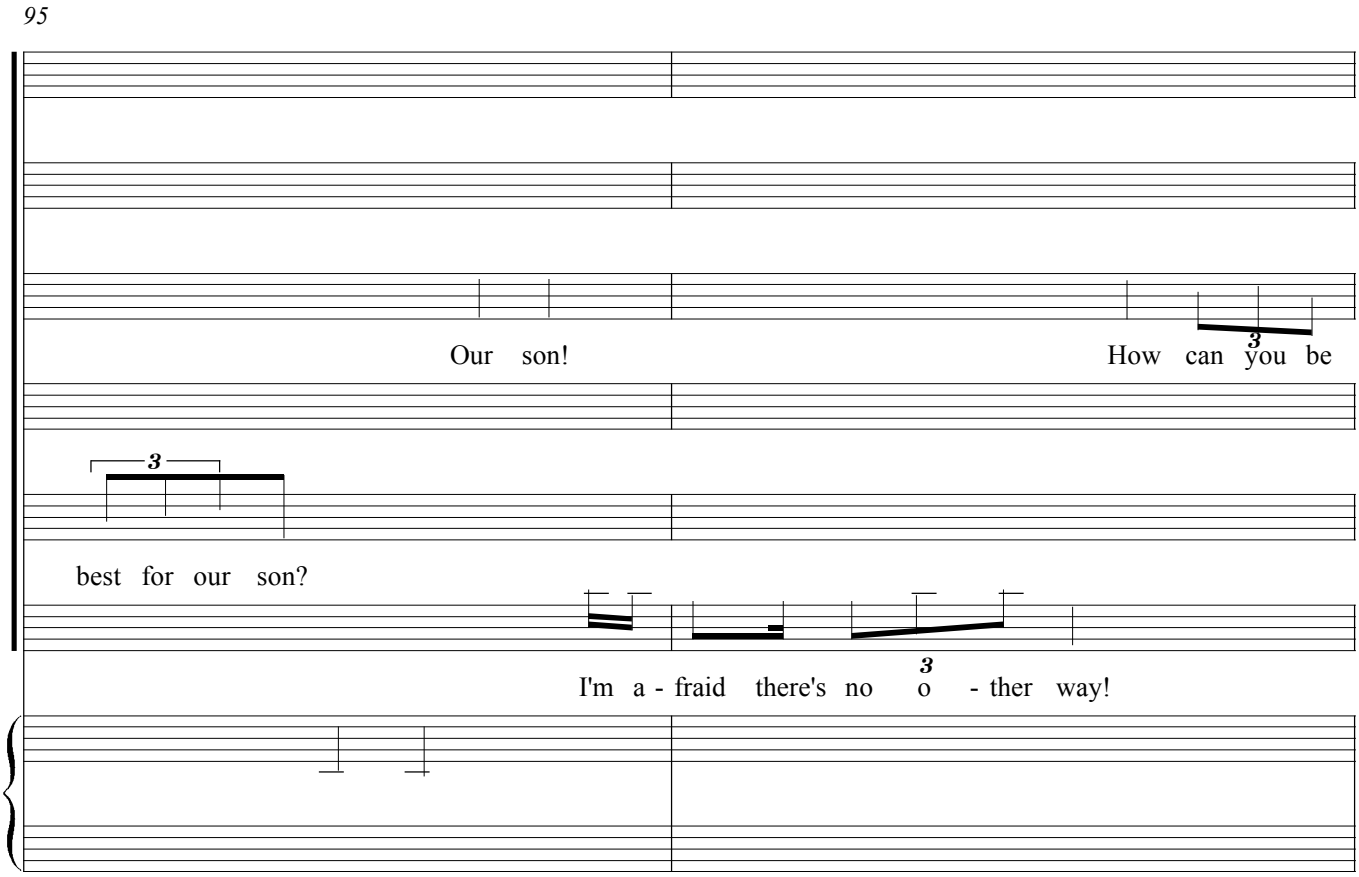

75
A case!
Oh! -
My dear!
82
, we've done ev - 'ry thing we could for him!
Our work is clear - ly to save lives.
meno mo.

85

Butwhose? Whose life, Doc tor?

89


92
What will be the


95
Our son!
How can you be
3
3
best for our son?
I'm a - fraid there's no o - ther way!
3

97

cer - tain? I can't let him

If we let him go,

I as - sure you, Ma - dame, That there is no hope!

100

go! He is our on - ly son! What have we done? To lose our on - ly

If we let him go, How - can we let him go? he is our on - ly son!

103

son? What more can we do? Could he

We can do no more. You must try to let him go.

If we let him go, he could be - come a part -

I re - gret to say, we've done all we can do.

106

live a - gain In an - oth - er bo - dy? Wait!

That's ve - ry true, Mis - ter Mor - ton.

- of an - oth - er life. That's all we can do!

109

What was wrong with the life he had? The life I gave him! There must be some - thing

Ma - ry!

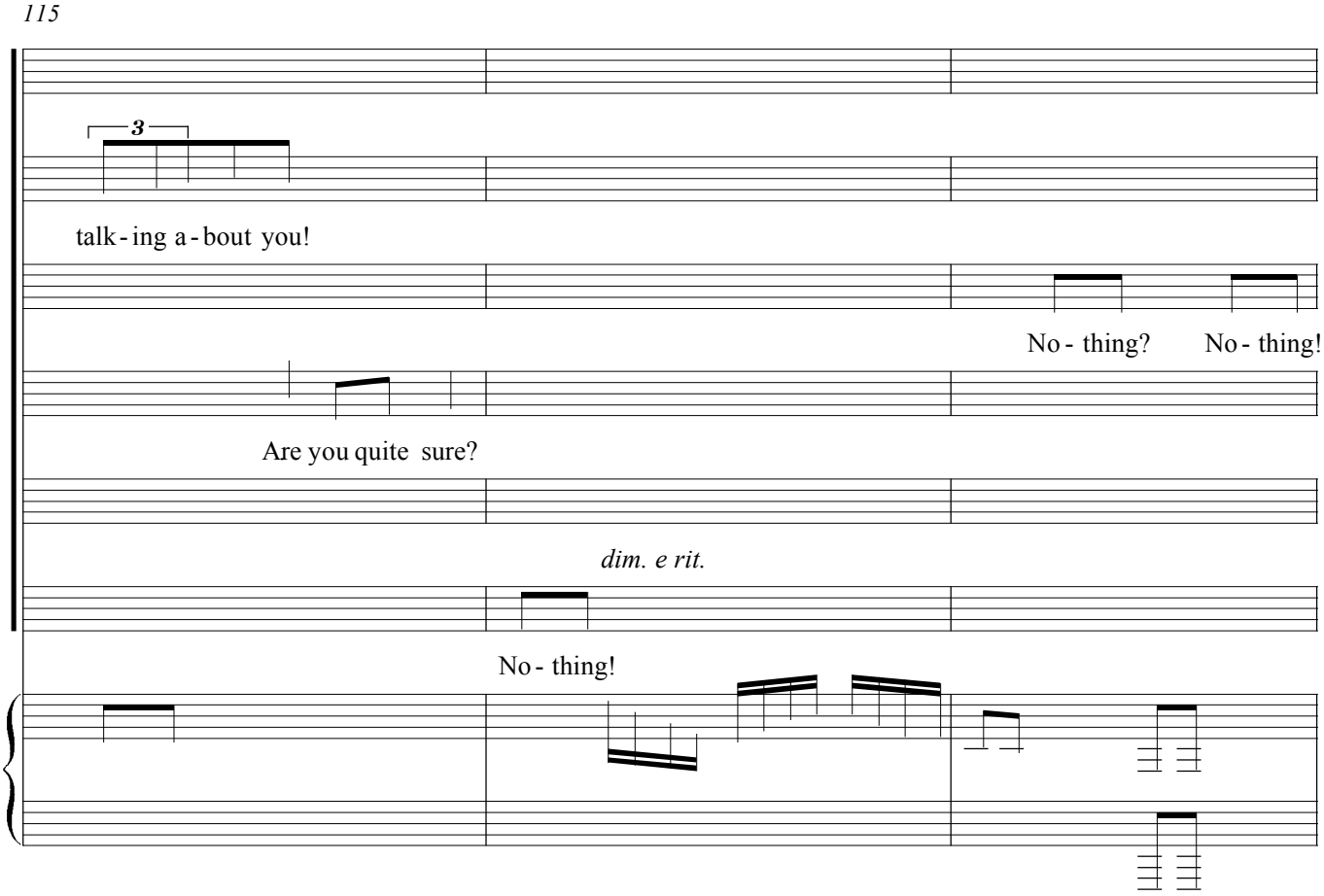
112

Pe - ter, wake UP! I think they're

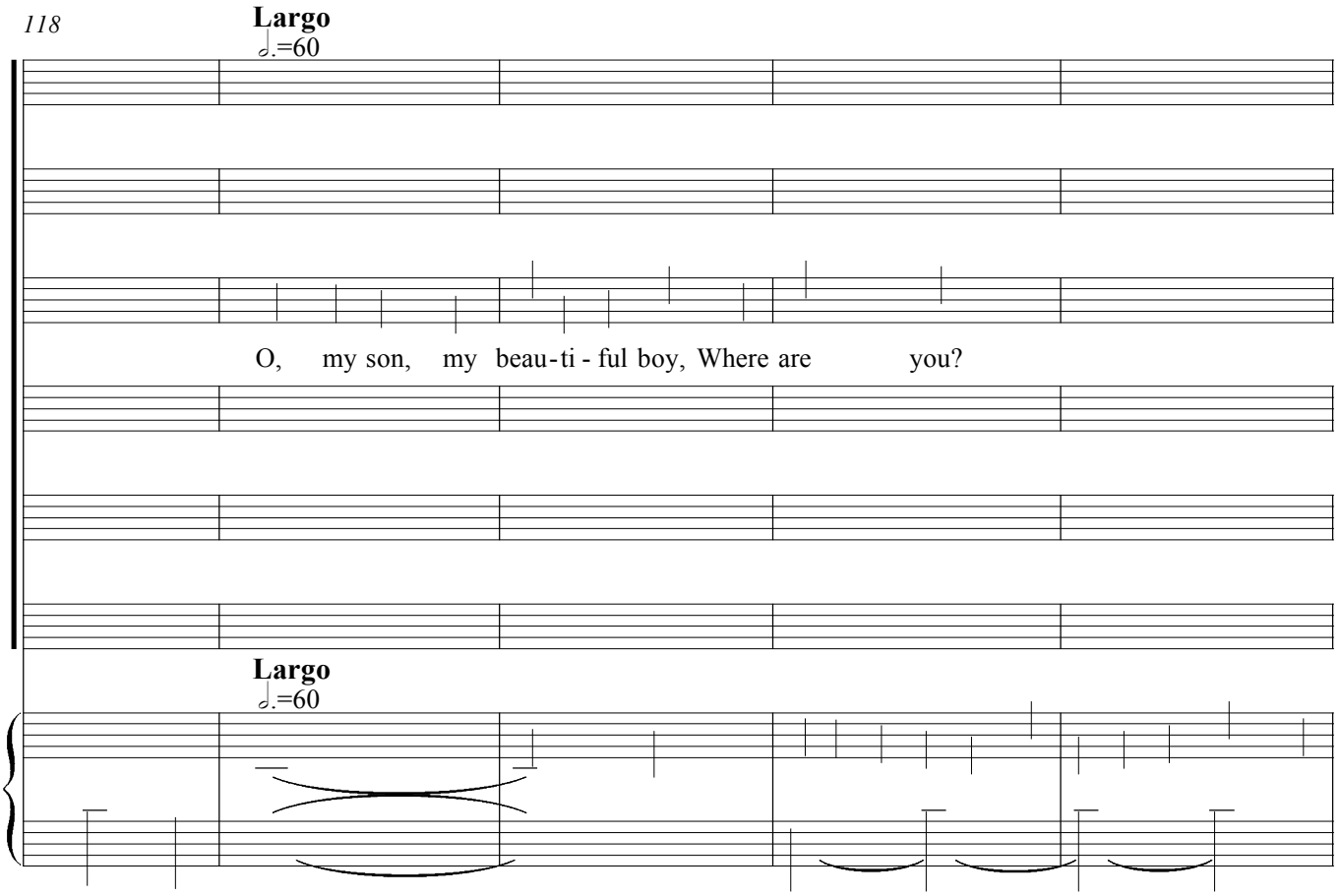
more you can do for him?

We've done all that we can.

I'm sor - ry!



Mother's Lament



123

How shall I find you a - gain? Where are you?

127

Have I lost you, gone for - e - ver? Fate could not be so un - kind - !

131

There is so much to say. You have so much to

135

do. Why would you want to leave us? You know how it will

139

grieve us. Why would you want to go - - - - -

143

-O, my child, my won-der-ful son - ! Shall I e-ver hear your voice a

147

gain? Do you have to go from us so soon, - - my

150

dar - - ling? O, where are you now? -

155

Con moto

ppp

Mum - my!

- -

Our poor boy could

Con moto

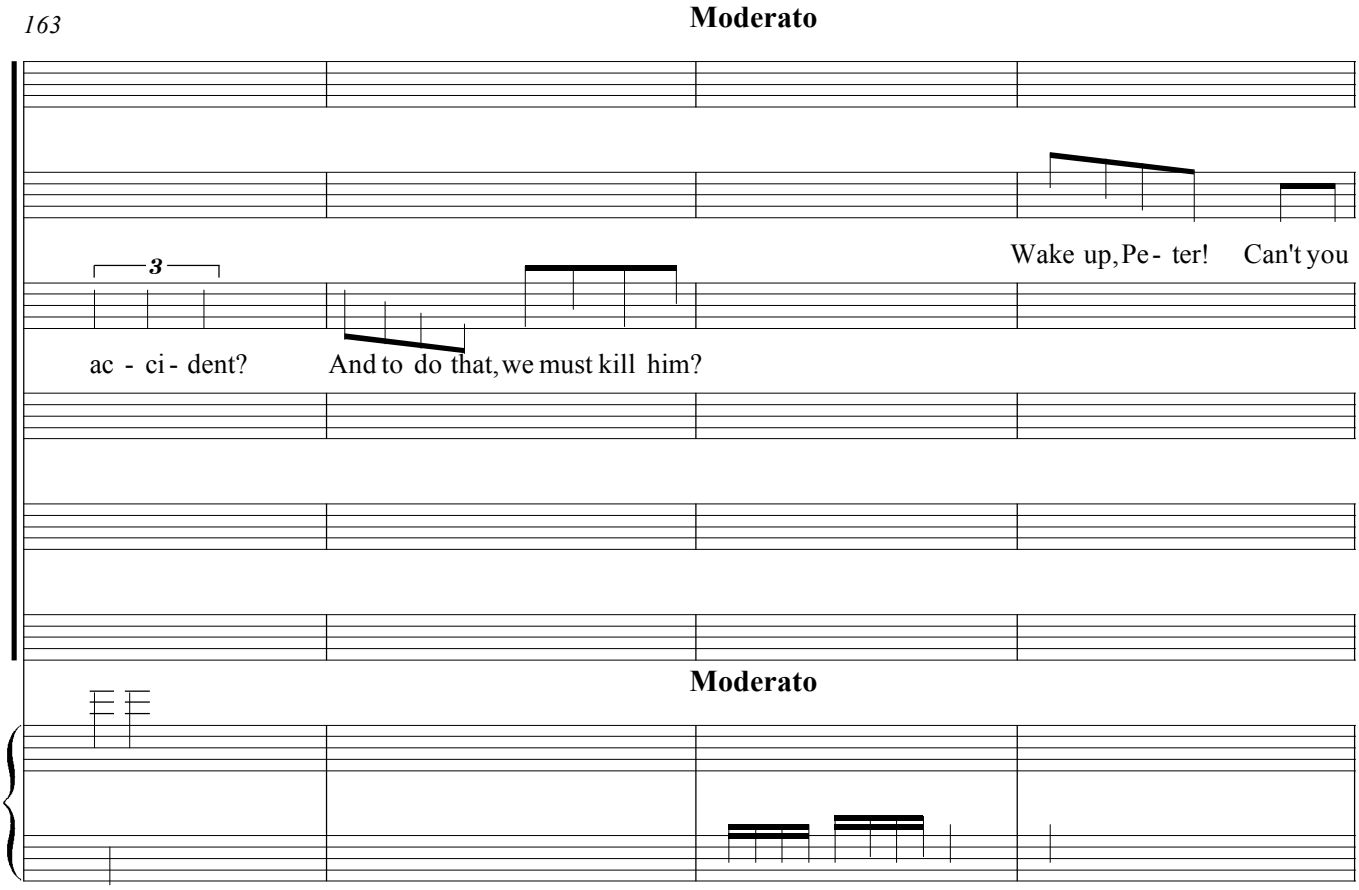
160

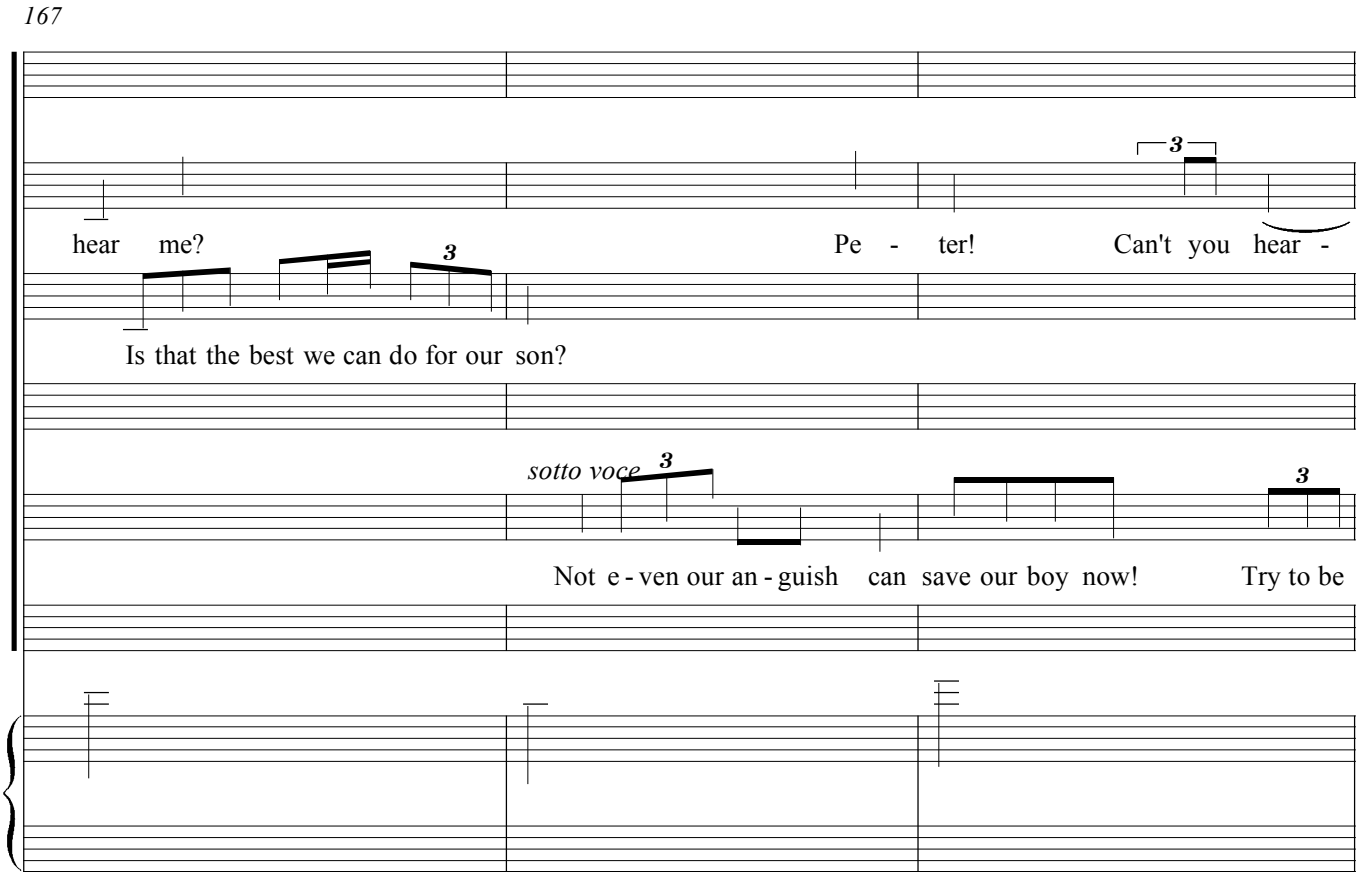
Mum- my!

molto rit. e sostenuto

Do you mean to say our boy should save the one who caused the

save an-o-ther one's life.


163
Moderato
Wake up, Pe- ter! Can't you
ac - ci - dent? And to do that, we must kill him?
Moderato


167
hear me? Pe - ter! Can't you hear -
Is that the best we can do for our son?
sotto voce
Not e - ven our an - guish can save our boy now! Try to be

170

rit.

- them?

sf

Rea-son-a- ble? Has it real-ly come to this? It must be

ff

rea-son-a- ble, and lis-ten to the doc- tor!

sotto voce

3

rit.

pp You know what to do!

173

3

Pe - ter! What will they do to you?

hard to be res - pon - sive When each new day Brings new

Yes, doc - tor!

176

Lento

Pe - ter, you MUST wake up! Now!

'cas - es' to o - pen!

We did all we could!

As if I could for - get the day

Nurse!

Lento

180

tenuto ***pp***

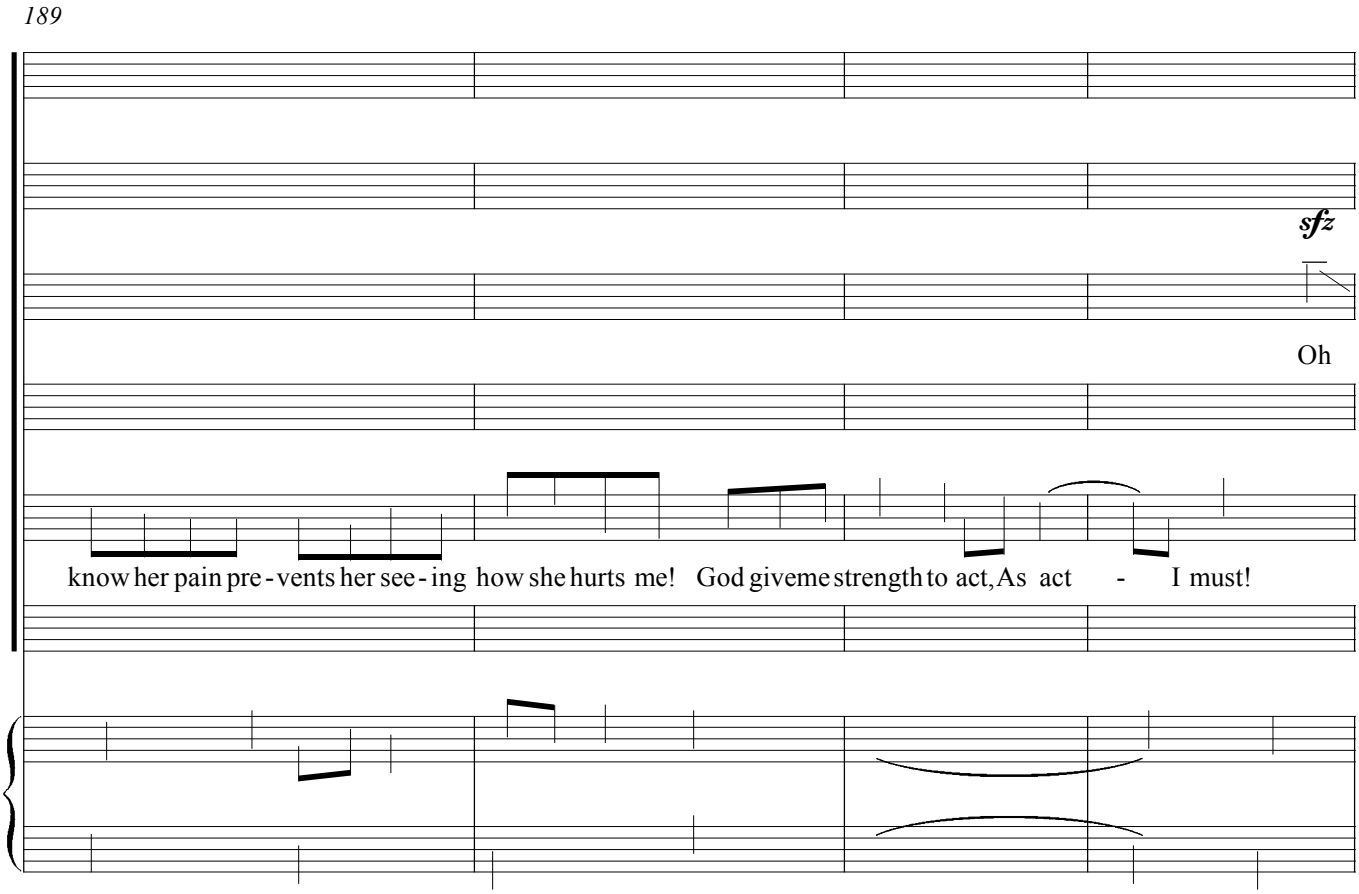
- You brought our son home in your arms! The two loves of my life - to - ge - ther,

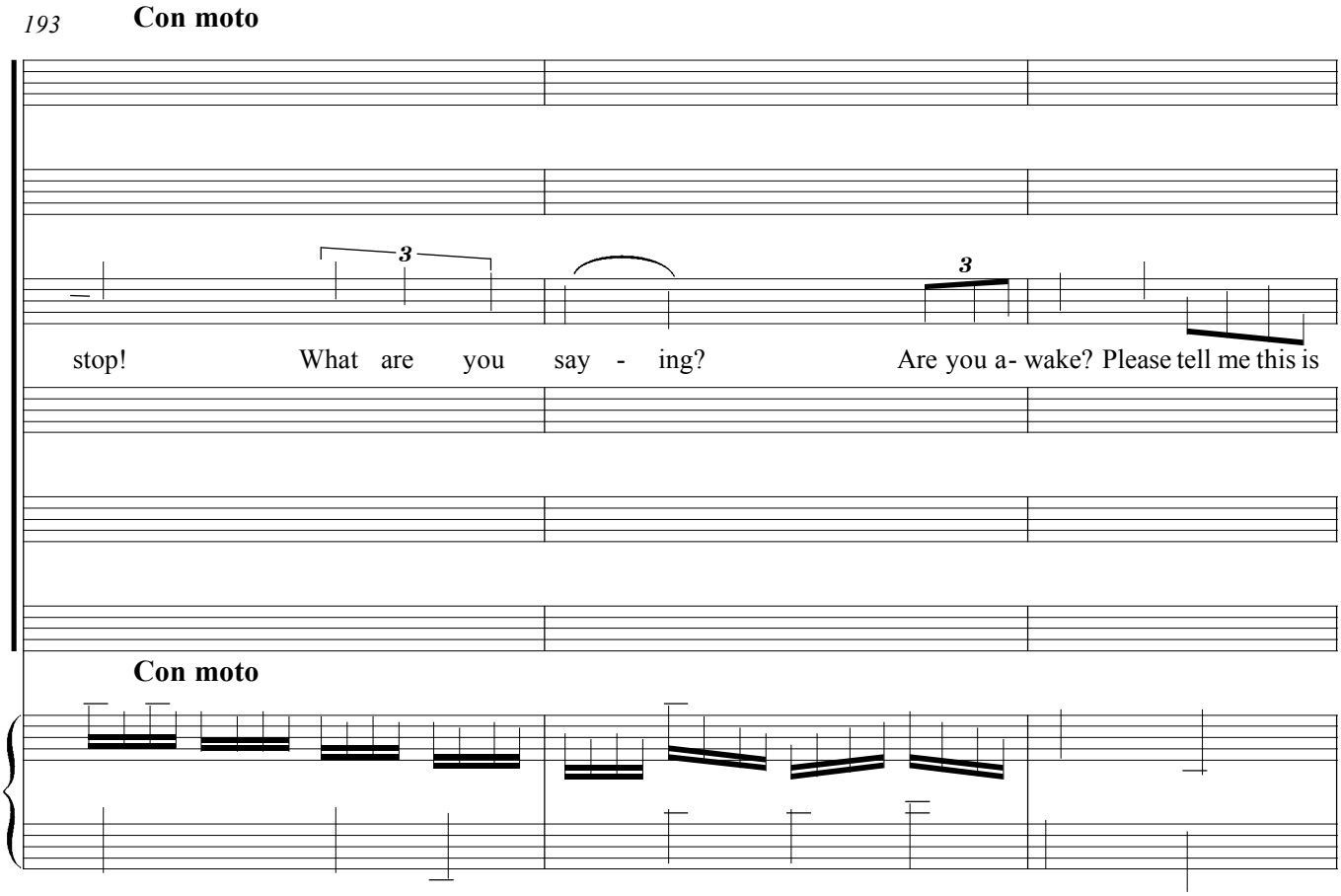
183

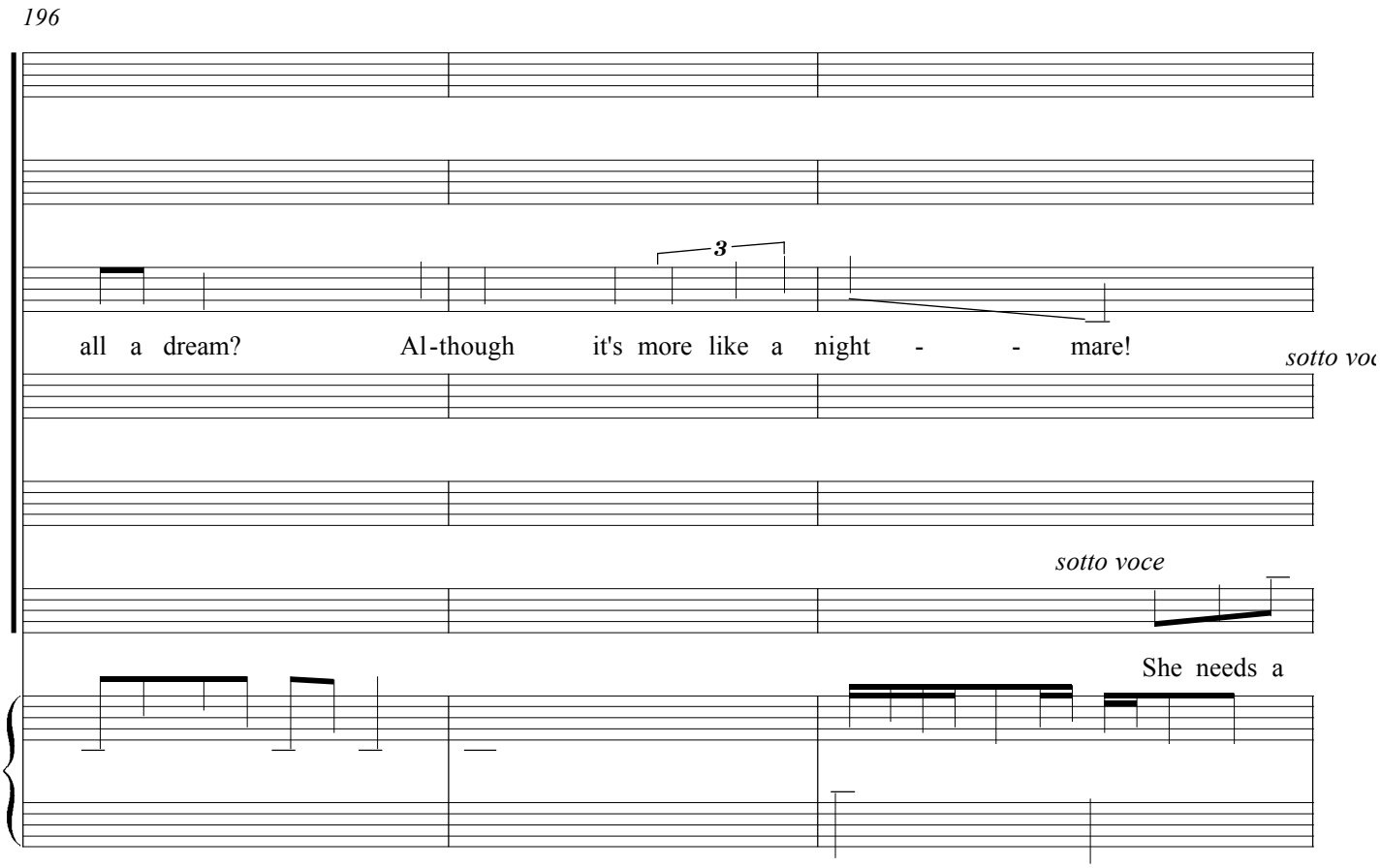
Lock'd in bonds of love. The bonds that no - thing in the world can e - ver break! And

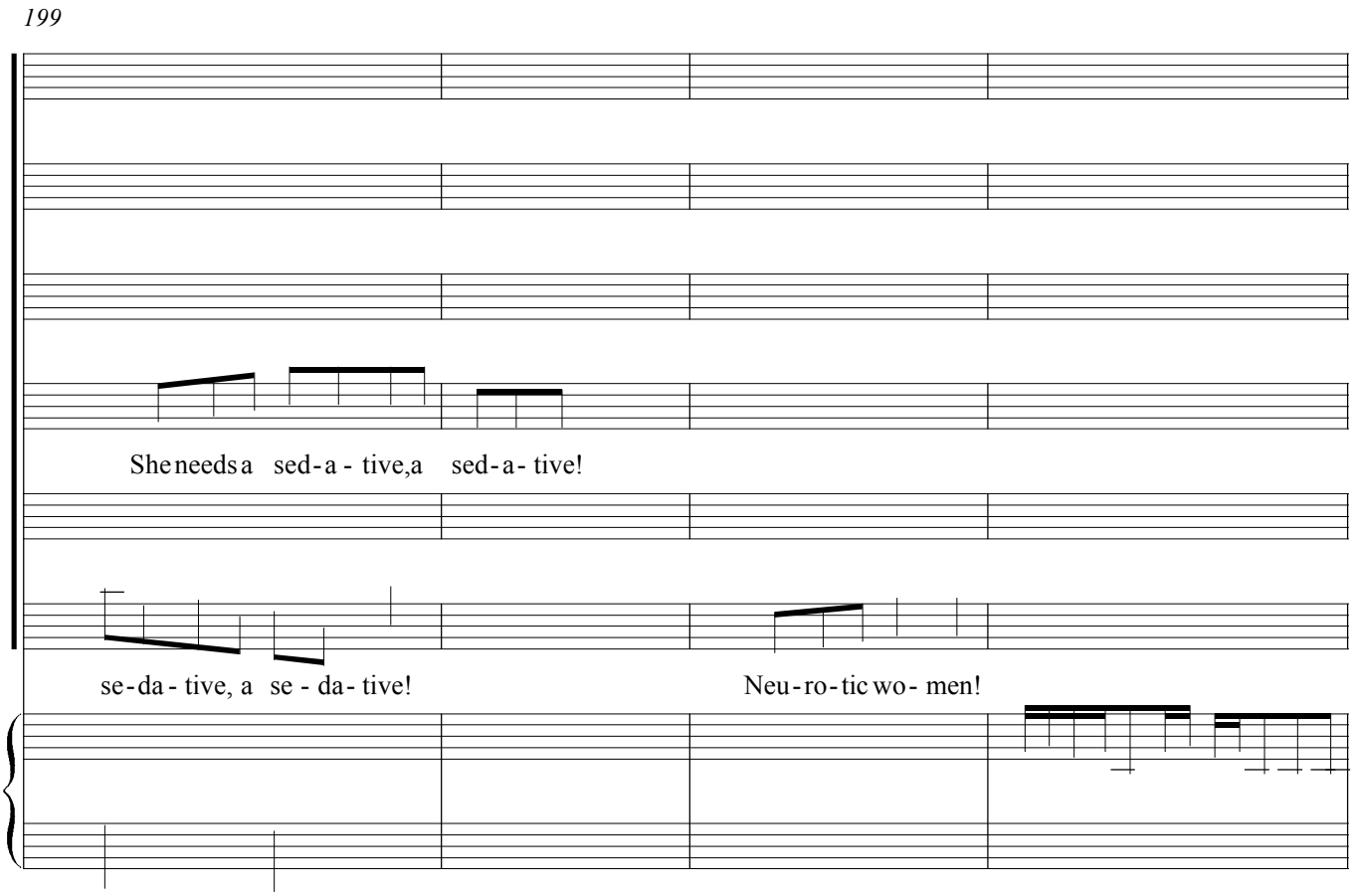
186

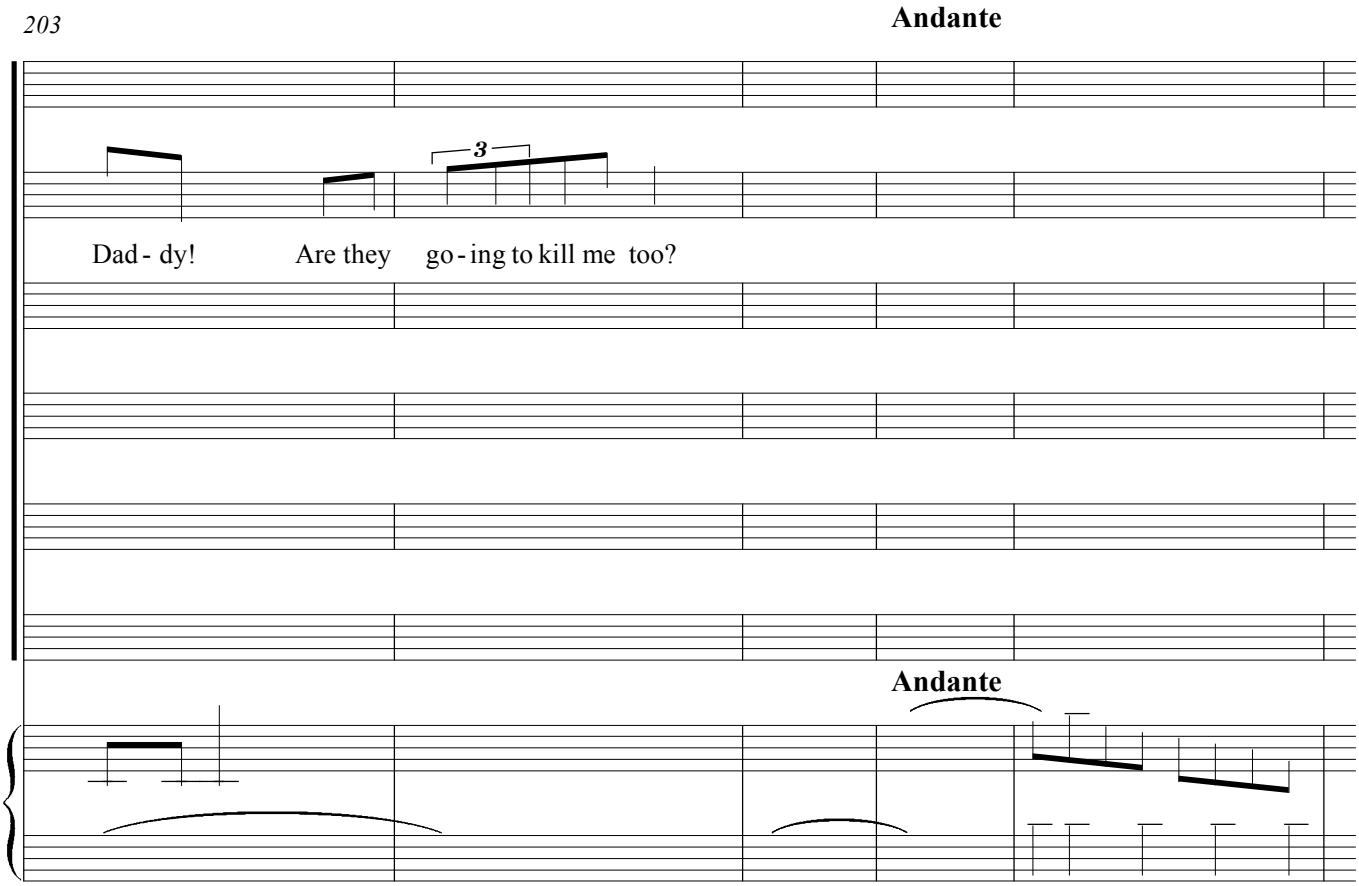
here I stand, out - side those bonds, Much as I love them, And as they love me! I

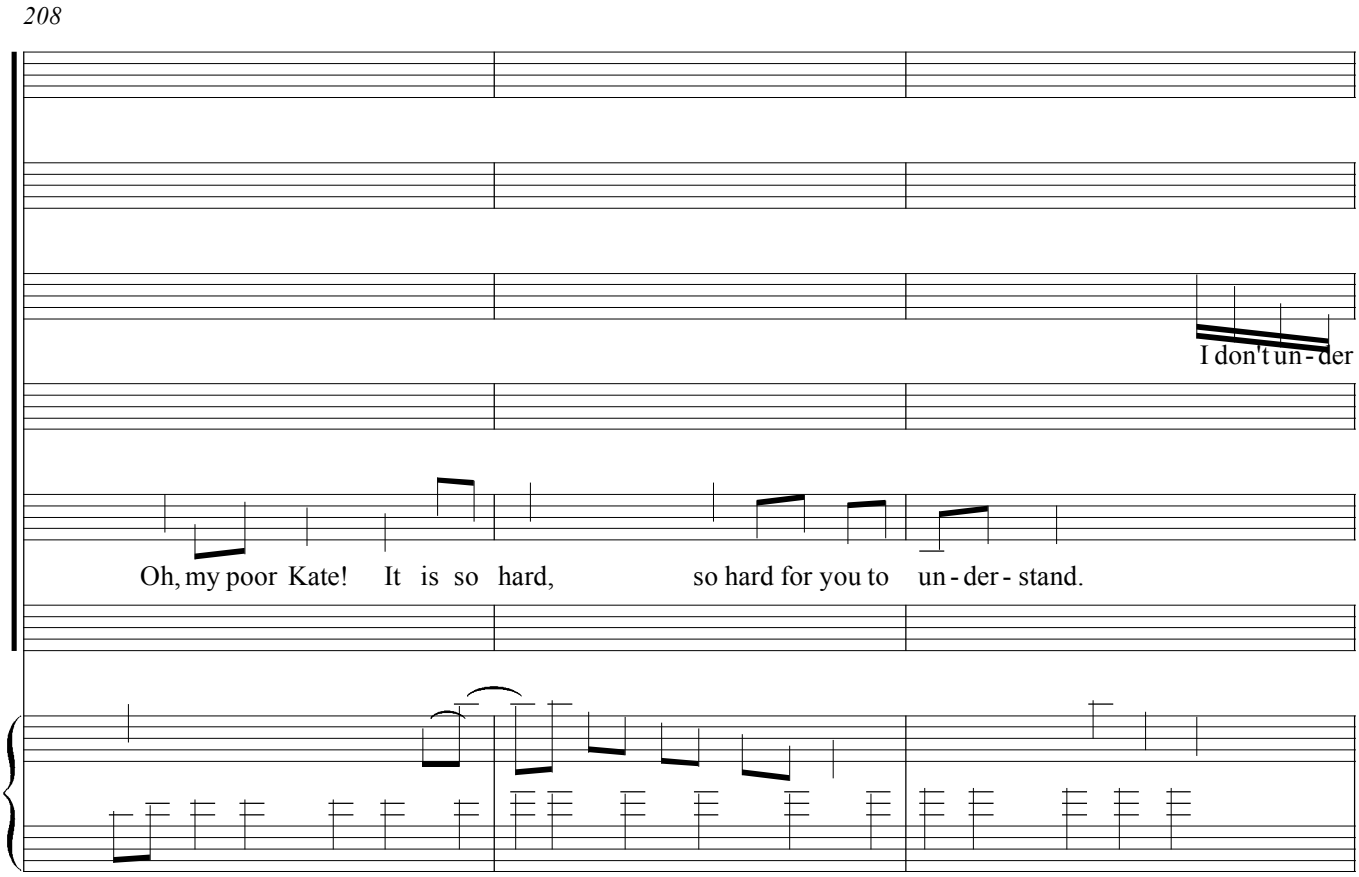

189
sfz
Oh
know her pain pre - vents her see - ing how she hurts me! God give me strength to act, As act - I must!


193
Con moto
3
3
stop! What are you say - ing? Are you a- wake? Please tell me this is
Con moto


196
3
all a dream? Al-though it's more like a night - - mare!
sotto voc
sotto voce
She needs a


199
She needs a sed-a - tive, a sed-a- tive!
se-da - tive, a se - da- tive!
Neu-ro-tic wo- men!


203
Andante
3
Dad - dy! Are they go - ing to kill me too?
Andante


208
I don't un - der
Oh, my poor Kate! It is so hard, so hard for you to un - der - stand.

211

Mo - ther!

3

stand! - How you can be so calm! O!

A sed - a - tive!

Don't be a - fraid!

A se - da - tive!

214

molto rit.

Pe - ter! Pe - ter, wake up now! Pe -

How can you let our son, My flesh and blood! our flesh and blood

This case must be

This case must be **molto rit.**

217

Dol - - phins - !

ter!

lunga pausa

- - - - - go like this?

so hard for them to un - der - stand!

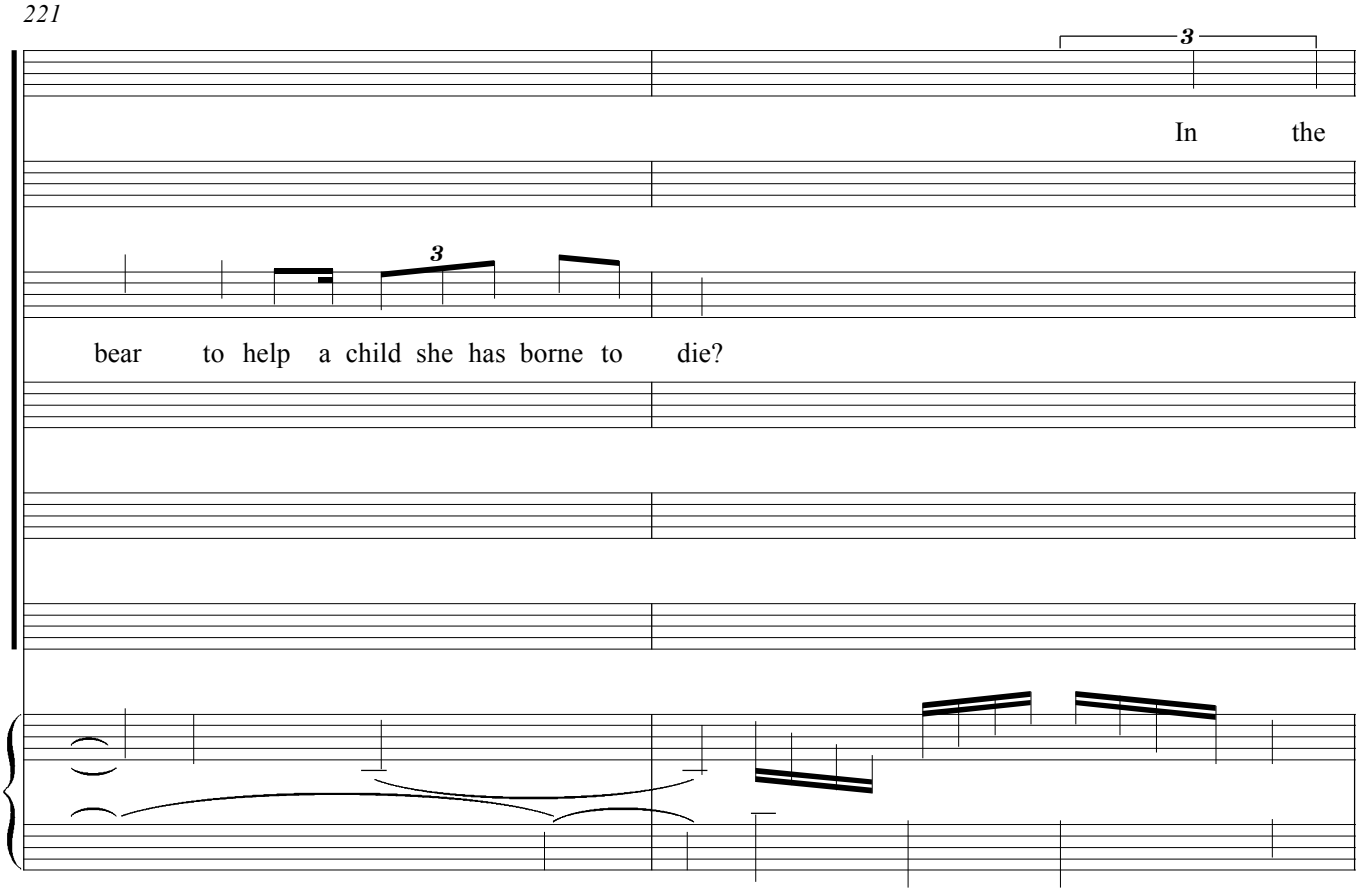
This case must be re - solv'd - ! - - - - - - We

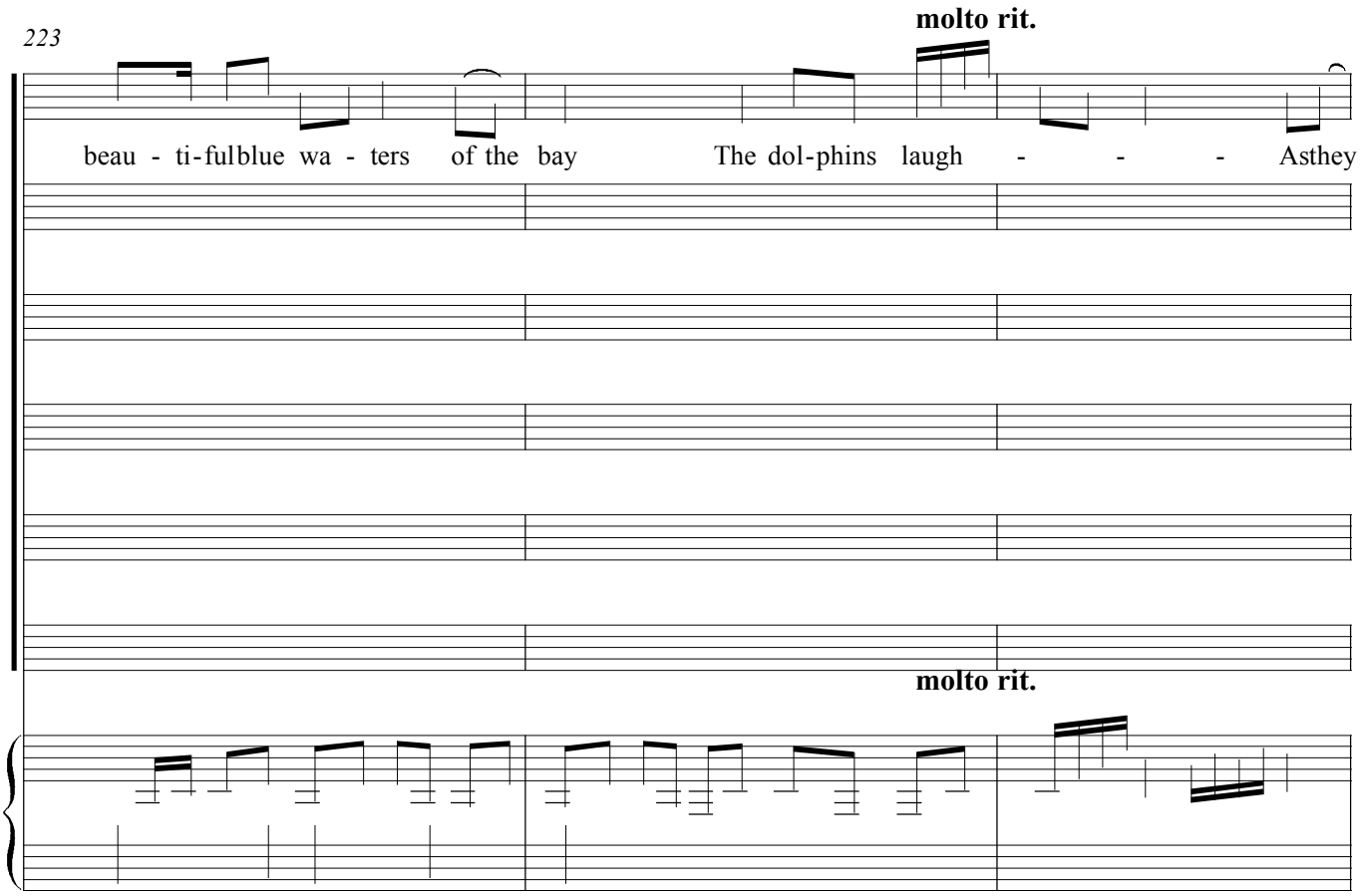
219

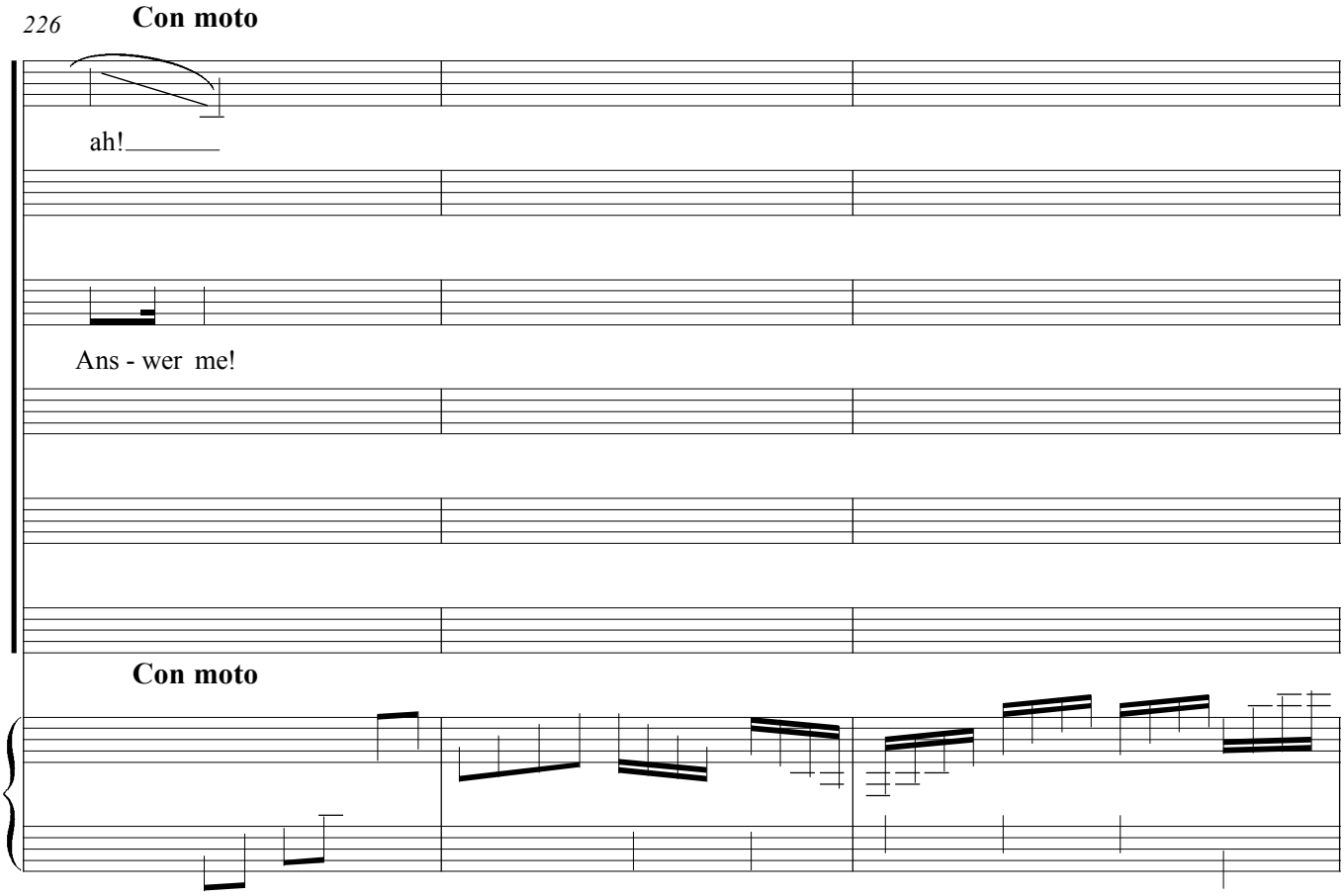
How can a mo - ther

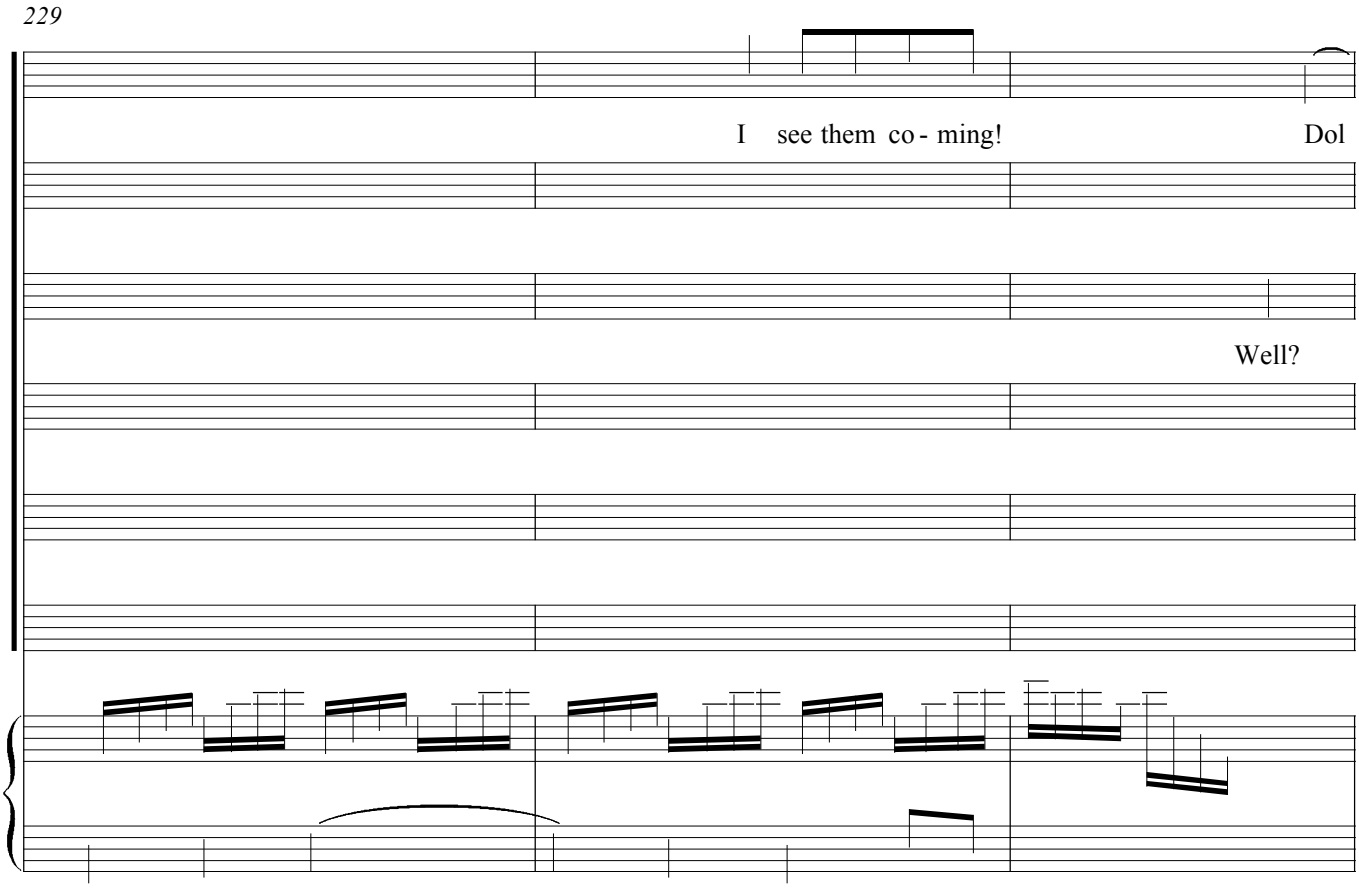
Yes, doc - tor!

have your sig - na - tures, The pa - per - work's here?


221
3
In the
3
bear to help a child she has borne to die?


223
molto rit.
beau - ti-fulblue wa - ters of the bay The dol-phins laugh - - - Asthey
molto rit.


226
Con moto
ah!
Ans - wer me!
Con moto


229
I see them co - ming!
Dol
Well?

232

- phins! Oh, it is so love - ly to

Can't you tell me?

235

stand at the ve - ry edge - ,

Please take this; You'll

237

Mum - my, Mum - my - !

So that's your ans - wer; make a

feel much bet - ter.

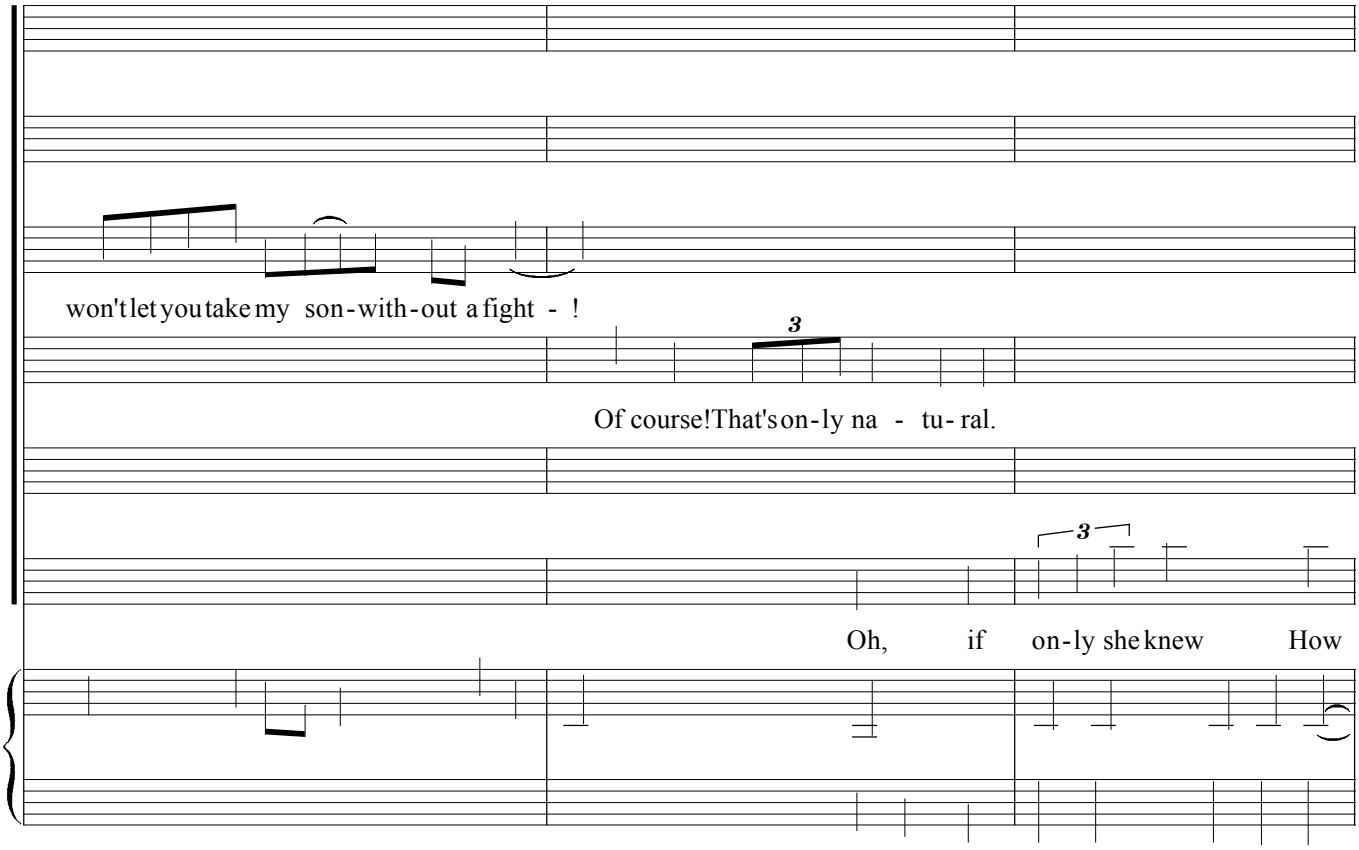
239

Dol phins!

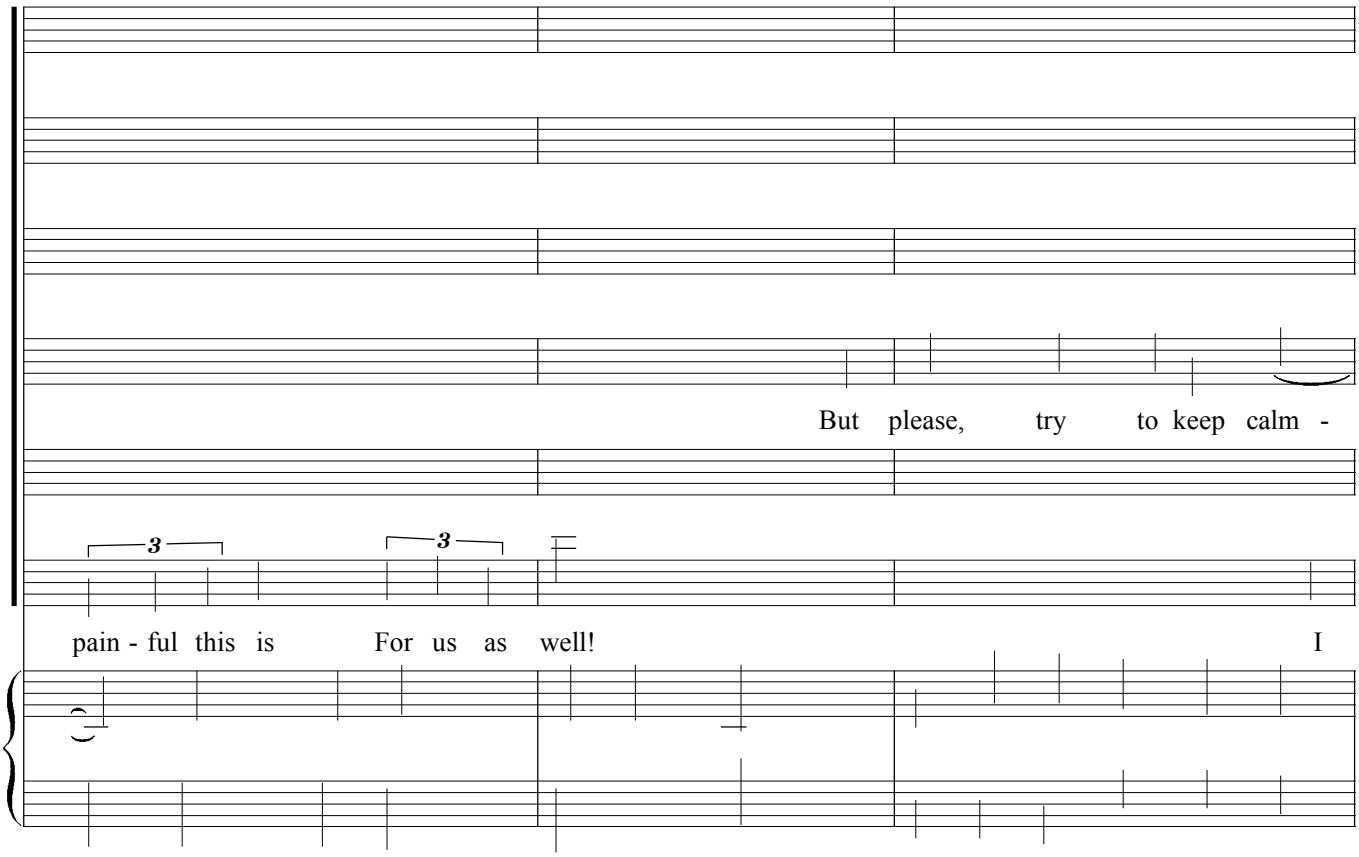
zom - bie of me!

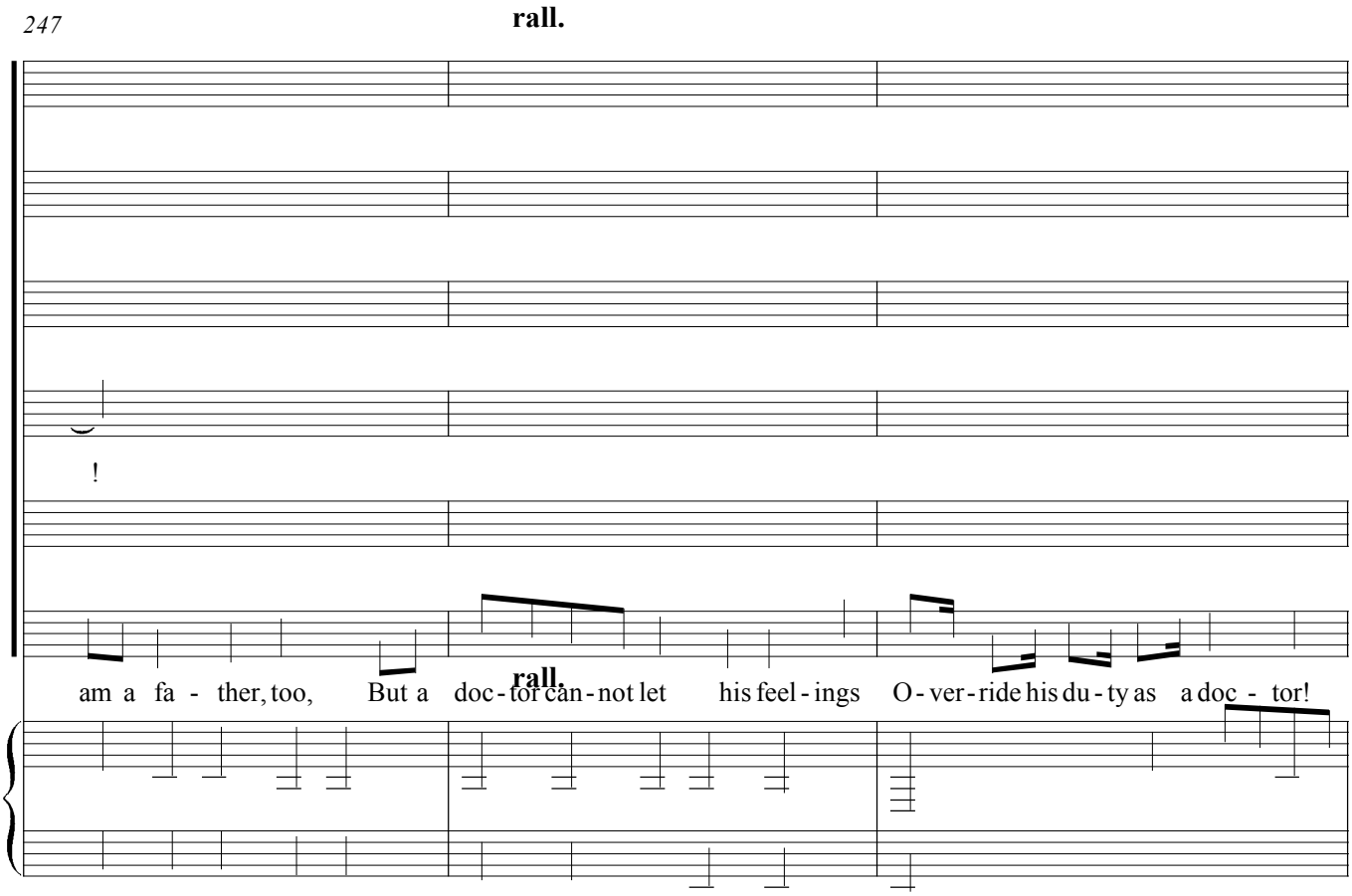
I'm nei - ther mad nor vio - lent. But I

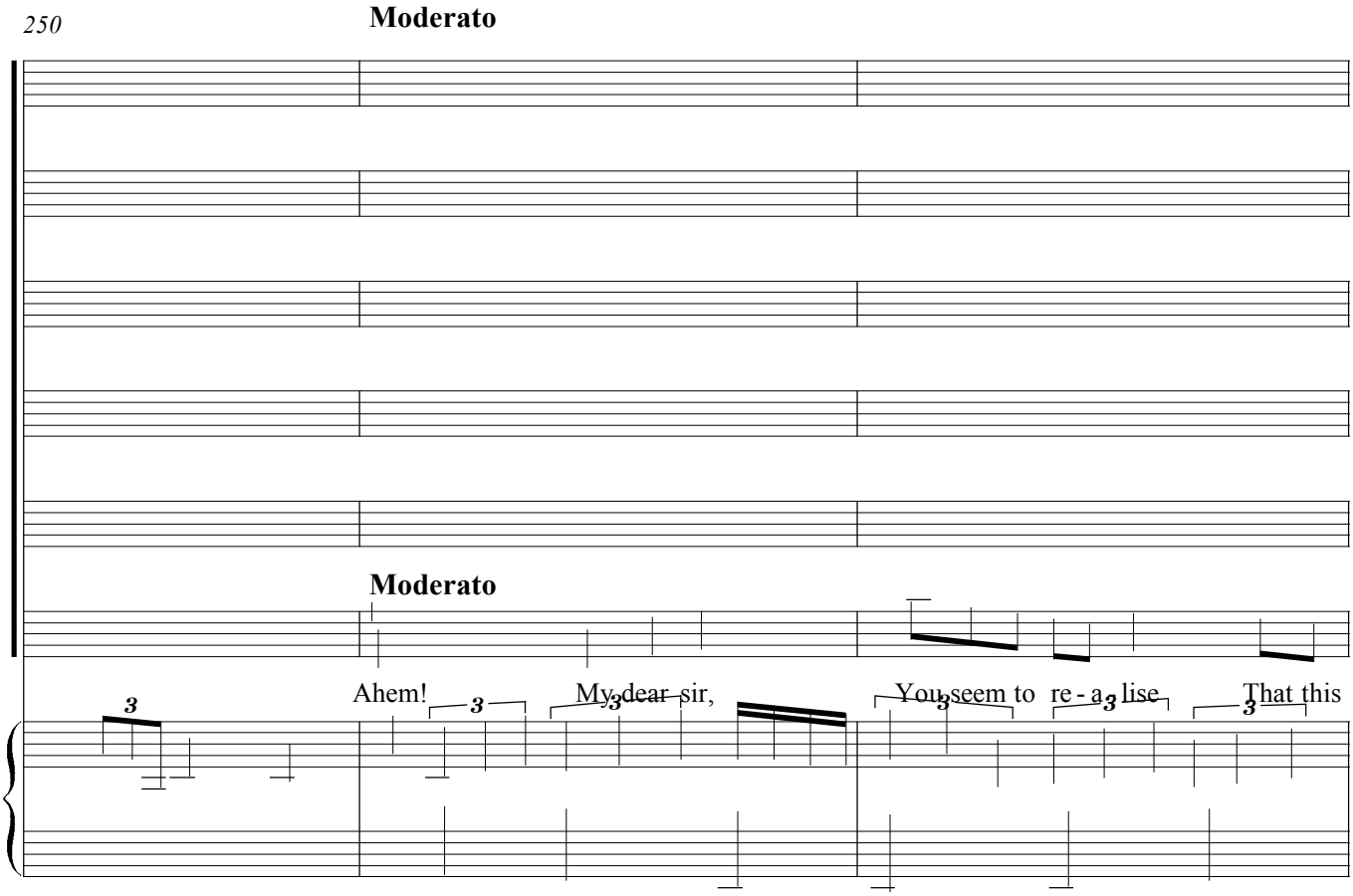
241


won't let you take my son-with-out a fight - !
3
Of course! That's on-ly na - tu- ral.
3
Oh, if on-ly she knew How

244


But please, try to keep calm -
3
3
pain - ful this is For us as well!
I


247
rall.
!
rall.
am a fa - ther, too, But a doc - tor can - not let his feel - ings O - ver - ride his du - ty as a doc - tor!


250
Moderato
Moderato
Ahem! My dear sir, You seem to re - a lise That this

253

Yes, I do re - a - lise what must be done

case must be,(er) re solv'd!

255

3

A case! You see? He said it a - gain!

now.

Take the

258

3

Come a - long, dear! I know where there's a

Give us a mo - ment.

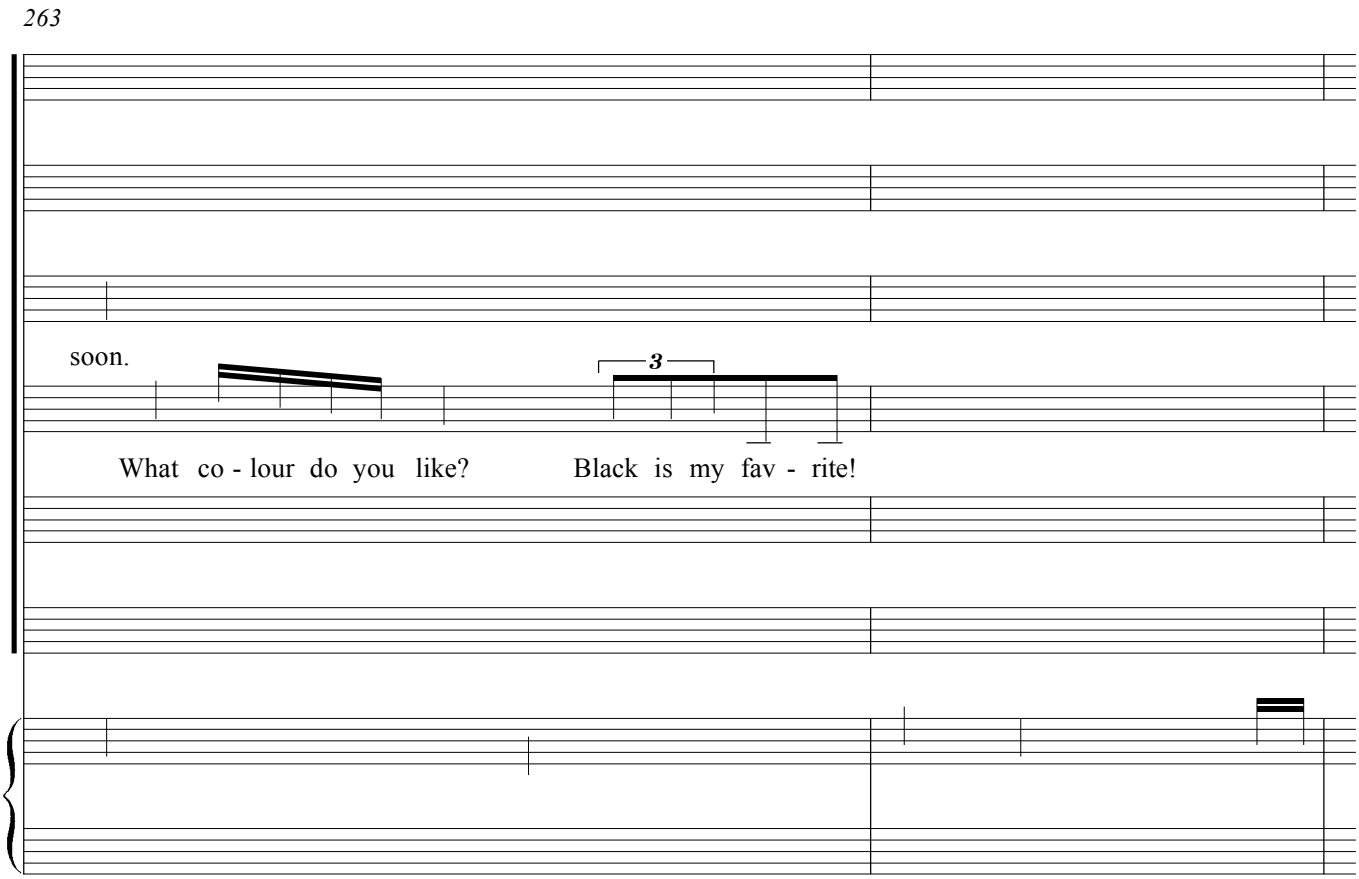
child!

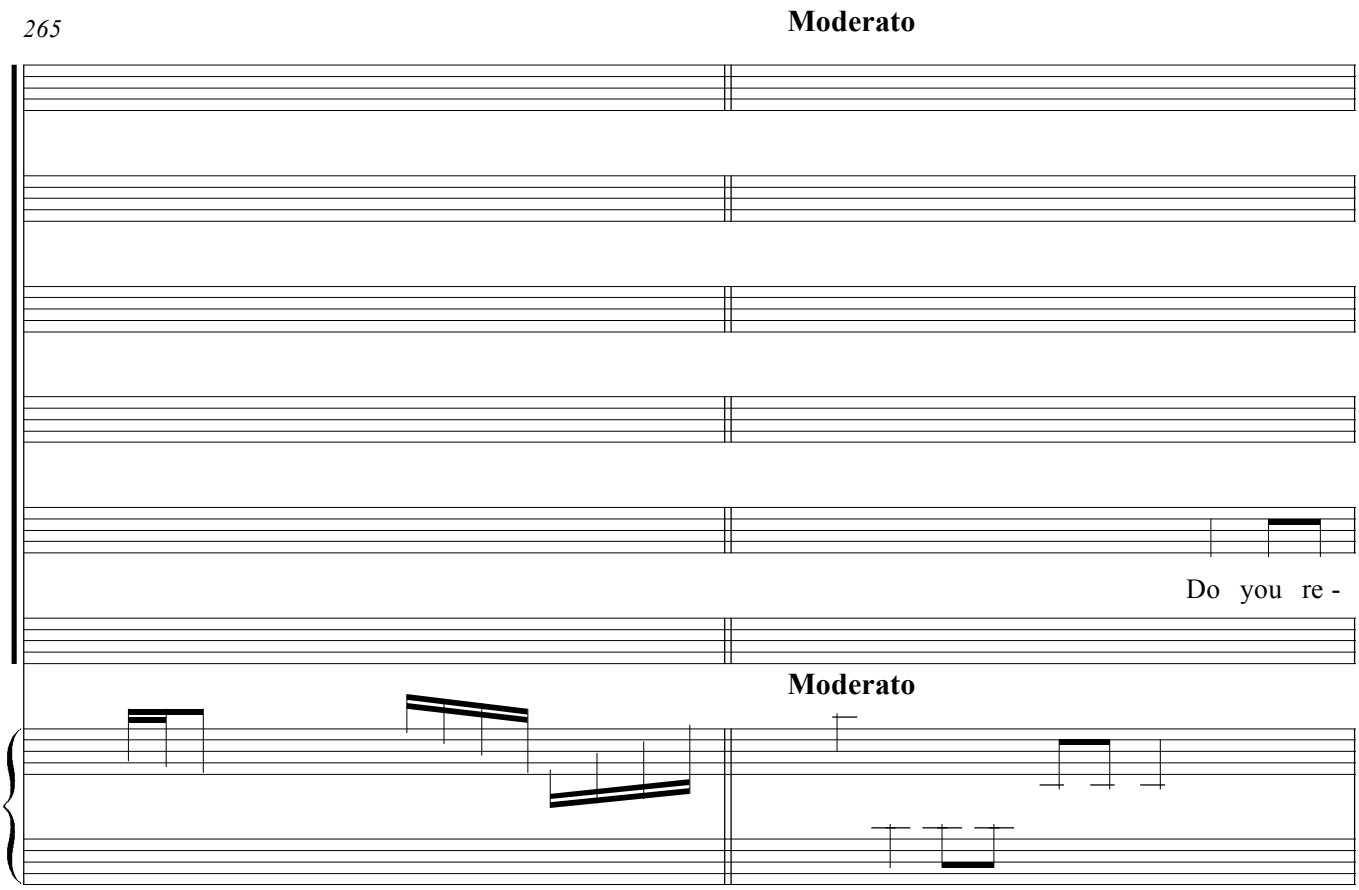
261

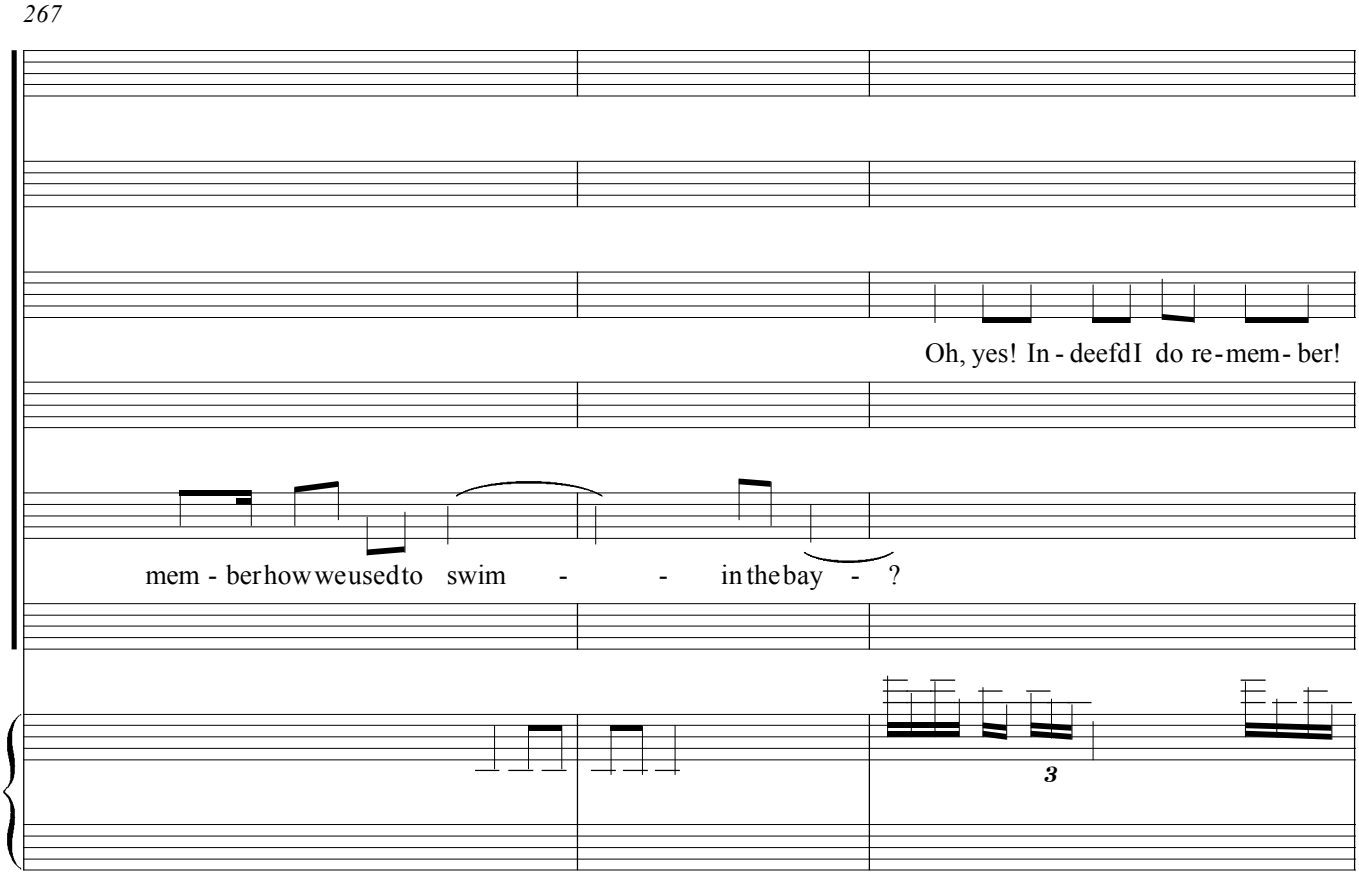
Mum - my! I don't WANT to!

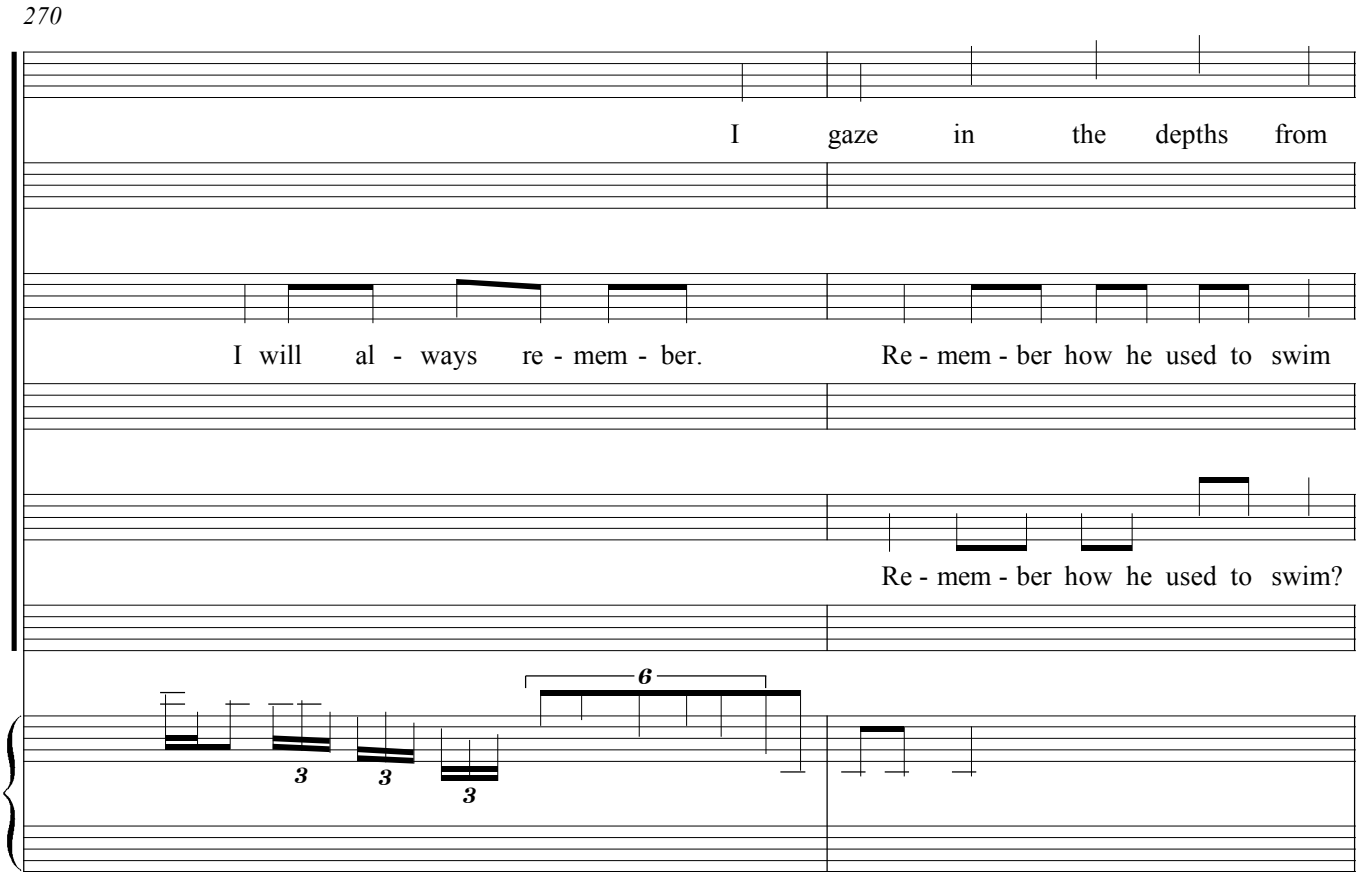
Go a - long, Kate! We'll be with you

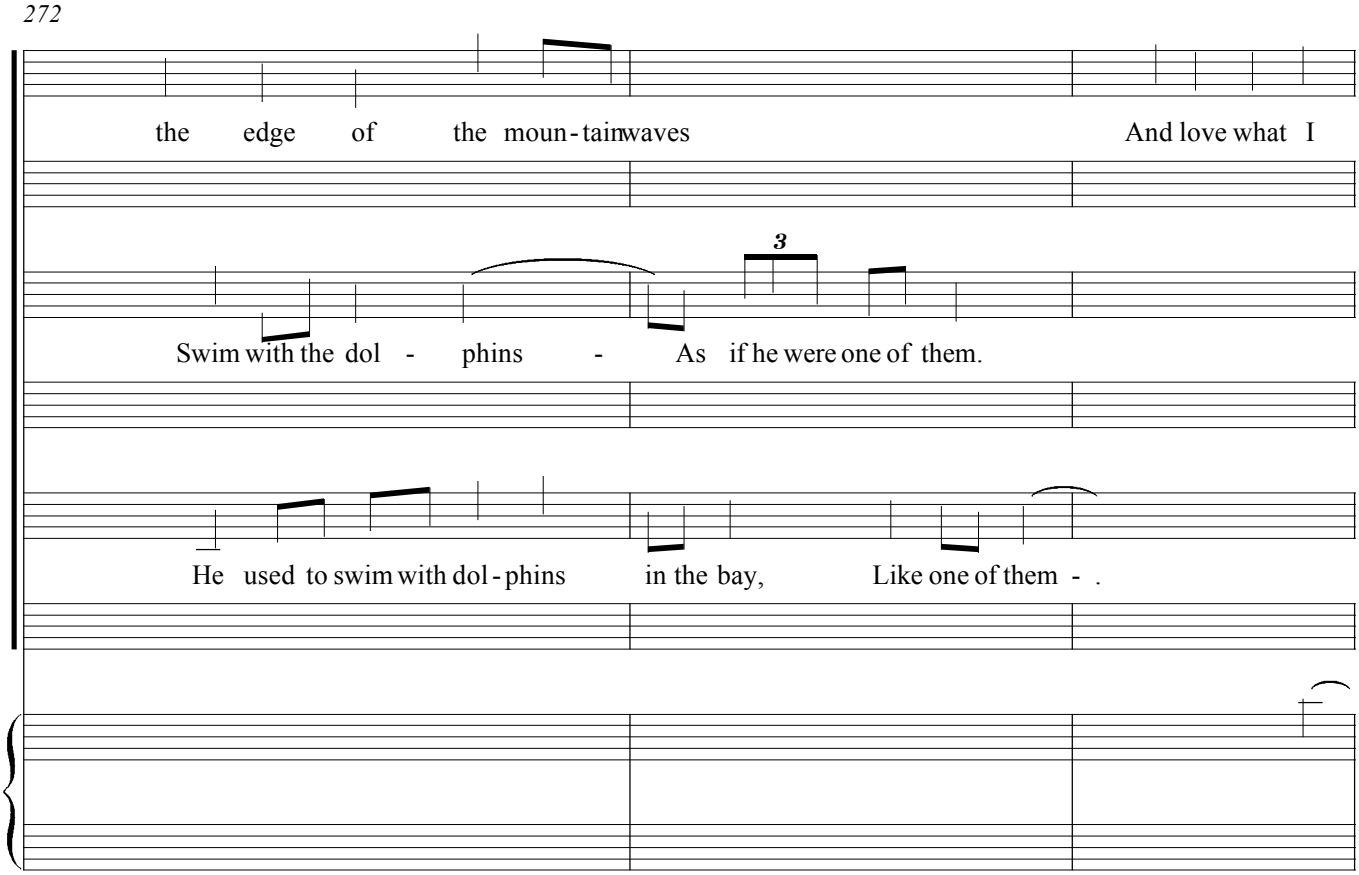
jar of jel - ly beans.

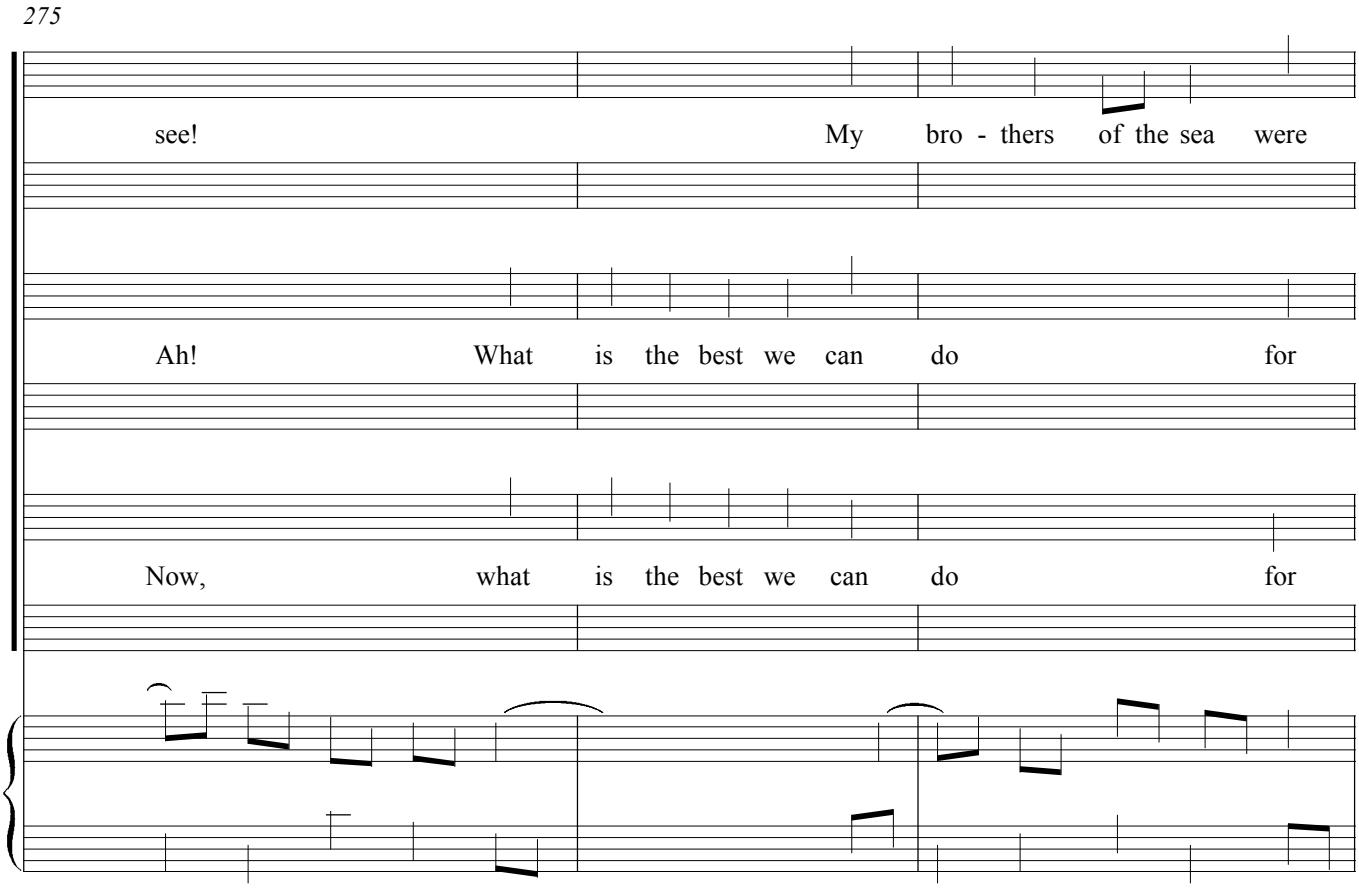

263
soon.
3
What co - lour do you like?
Black is my fav - rite!

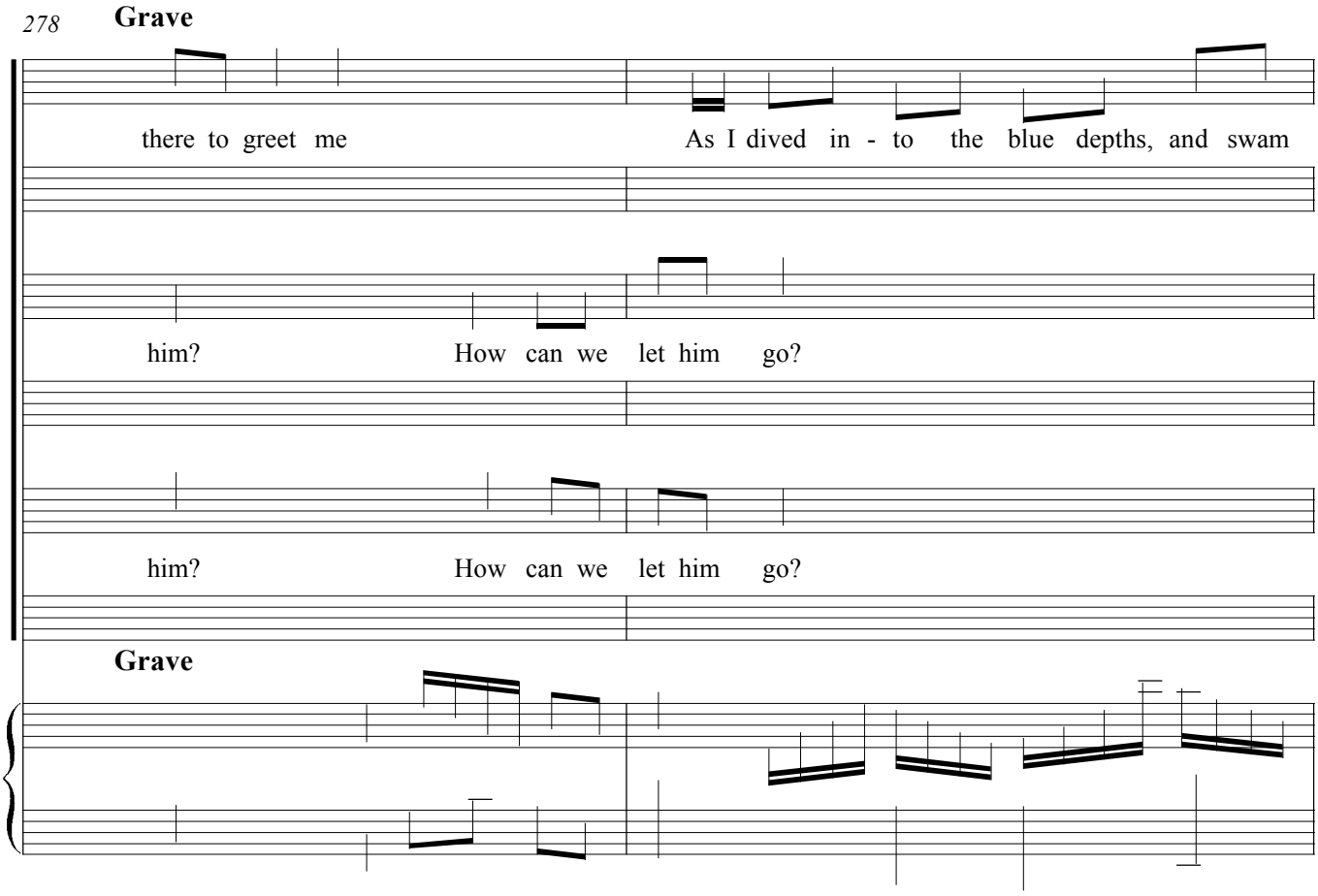

265
Moderato
Do you re -
Moderato

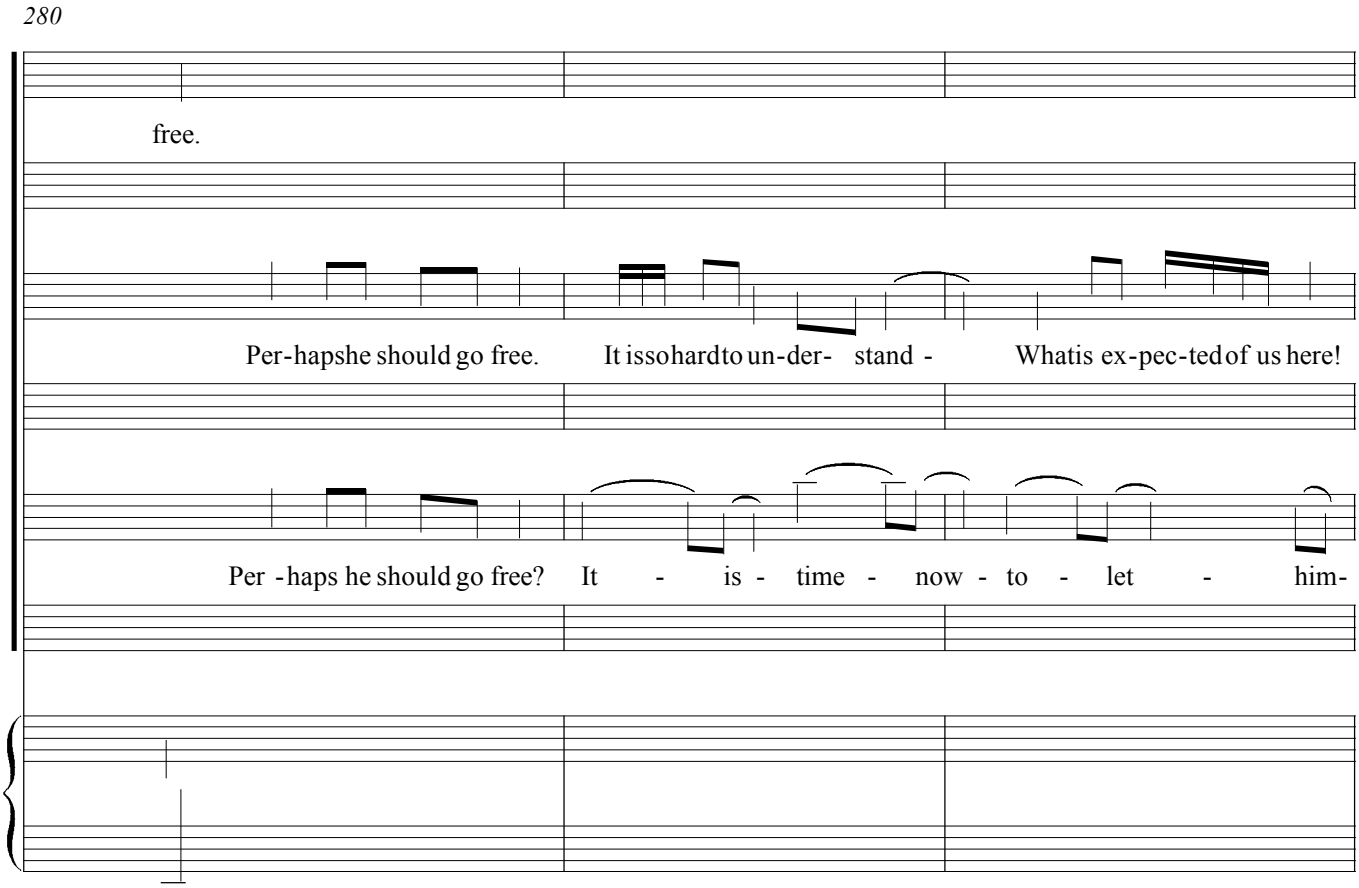

267
Oh, yes! In - deefdI do re-mem- ber!
mem - berhowweusedto swim - - inthebay - ?
3


270
I gaze in the depths from
I will al - ways re - mem - ber.
Re - mem - ber how he used to swim
Re - mem - ber how he used to swim?
6
3
3
3


272
the edge of the moun-tainwaves
And love what I
3
Swim with the dol - phins - As if he were one of them.
He used to swim with dol-phins in the bay, Like one of them - .


275
see! My bro - thers of the sea were
Ah! What is the best we can do for
Now, what is the best we can do for


278
Grave
there to greet me
As I dived in - to the blue depths, and swam
him?
How can we let him go?
him?
How can we let him go?
Grave


280
free.
Per-hapshe should go free.
It issohardto un-der- stand -
Whatis ex-pec-tedof us here!
Per -haps he should go free?
It - is - time - now - to - let - him-

283

Dol - phins! Dol - phins!

What we must do!

go!

Well now, Shall we pro - ceed?

286

There they are! They're call - ing to me!

My son, my be - lov - ed son! Why won't you

290

speak to us?

Yes, doc- tor!

We love you, Pe- ter! We'll ne- ver for- get you!

Rea- dy, Nurse? You'd

294

How could I know, when I held that ba- by in my arms -

It is so sad that this should hap- pen to them. Such a nice young

think they'd see that things must end - this way, Nurse! There real - ly is no time

297

Oh, Mo - ther! They're call-ing me.

- That I'd, one day, One - day, I would be his mur - der - er!

boy! You're ma-king things more

My dear! You mus-n't

- to waste If we're to save the o - ther boy.

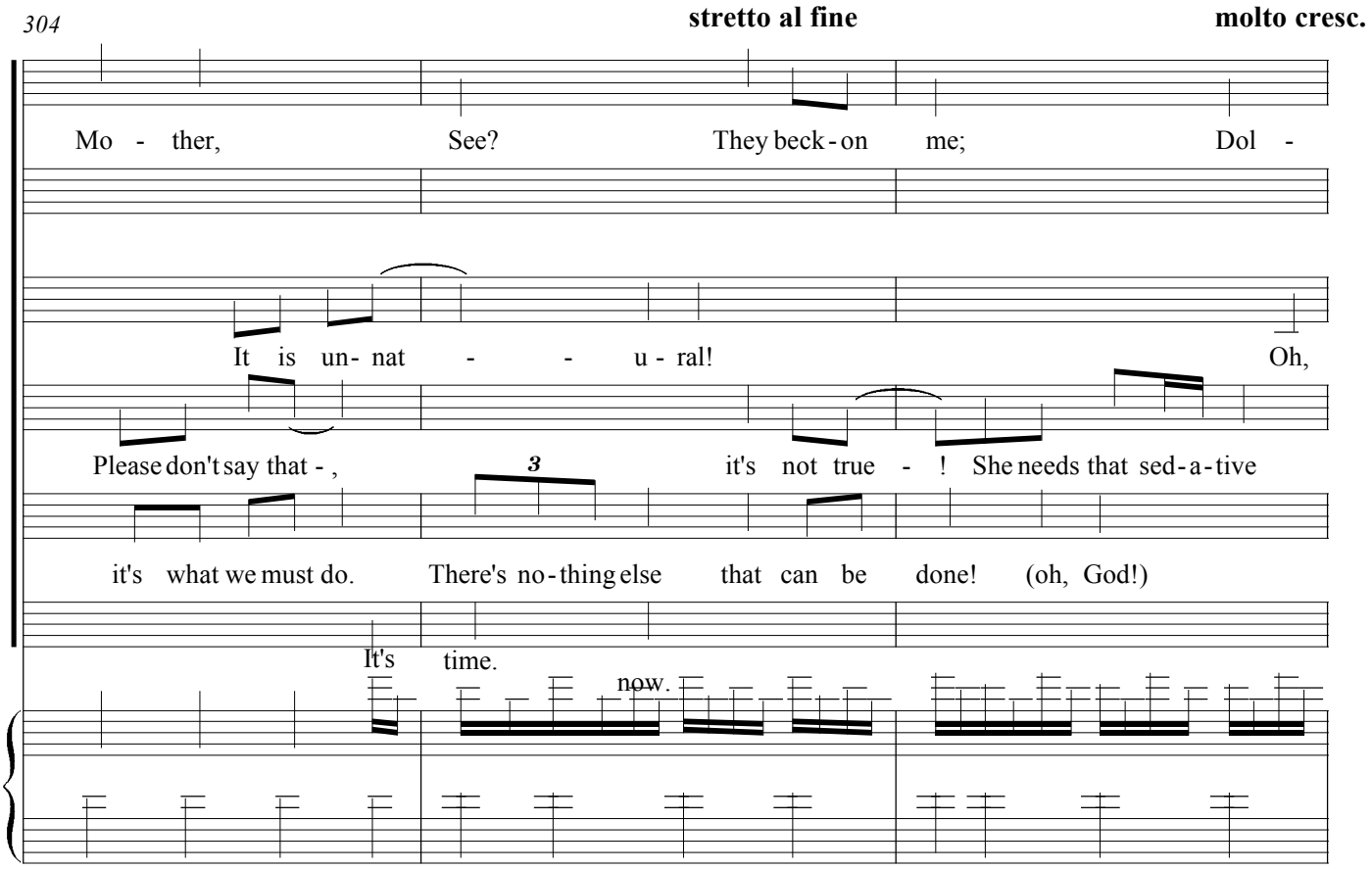
300

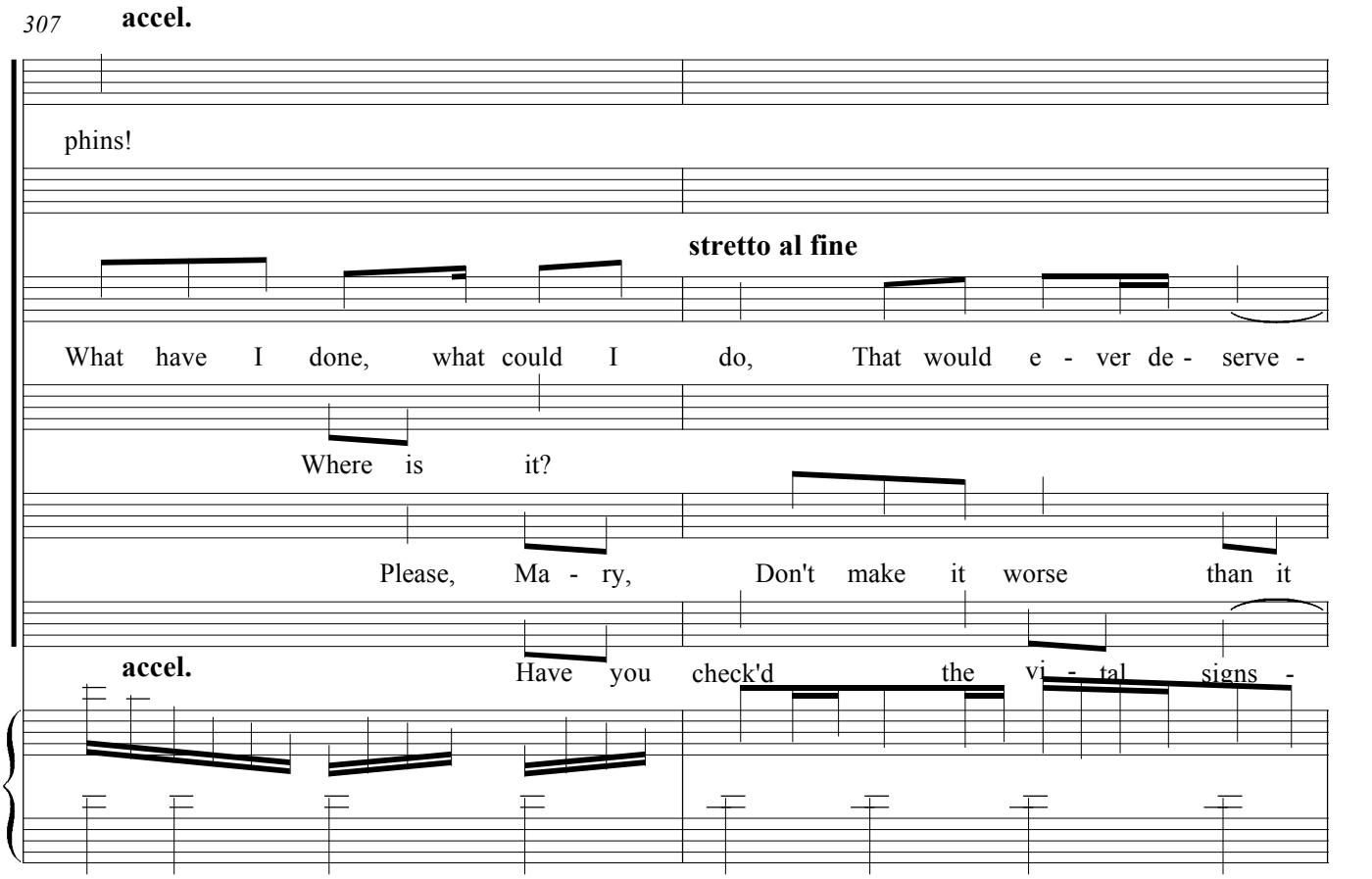
Dol phins! Oh!

A mur - der- er!

dif- fi - cult For your-self - - !

say such things! Or e-ven think that way, He would be so hurt! Ma- ry!


304
stretto al fine
molto cresc.
Mo - ther, See? They beck - on me; Dol -
It is un- nat - - u - ral! Oh,
Please don't say that - , it's not true - ! She needs that sed - a - tive
it's what we must do. There's no - thing else that can be done! (oh, God!)
It's time.
now.


307
accel.
phins!
stretto al fine
What have I done, what could I do, That would e - ver de - serve -
Where is it?
Please, Ma - ry, Don't make it worse than it
accel.
Have you check'd the vi - tal signs -

309

There they are! Please wait for me!

- such a fate? There must be some

Yes, - Doc - tor!

is al - rea - dy!

? And?

311

Mo - ther! I must go with them!

re - son for it! What could I have done to de - serve -

No res - ponse!

No! There's no - thing do - ing

313

Vivo

- such a fate? How can this hap - pen? The room is spin - ning,

There is no - thing we can do!

here!

Vivo

316

Ev - 'ry -thing is dark! Pe - ter! Where

Doc - tor! I think she's go - ing to col - lapse!

So think -

What now?

319

are you? Ah - - - Pe - ter!

Quick! Catch her! She's fall - ing, Ah!

of the hap py times. Quick! Catch her, she's fall - ing!

What? Now? It's

322

abridged playout

too late, an - y how!