insects in the sun in bǎo dìng

保定的烈日下小虫自在

for mixed quartet

paul joshua lehman

2026

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we gathered, insects in the sun
violet, mushroom blue
pearl green.
fruit i’d never seen before
we let juice and pulp
fall through sticky fingers and drip
from pungent mouth
(desperate)
we laughed and wobbled in the heat
tangerine grey.
hazy.
fruit i’d never seen before
heard the pop of dry bones
stepped on.
pale ivory
marigold dust.
felt our voices between bites
hum
together
hollowed words that bend and twist in the throat
felt our voices
move
metal and engine
loud, hot,
we ate and buzzed and melted together
outside the gates by the big stone
pale, hot, tangerine grey.
bug and fruit and sun and haze
insects in the sun in bǎo dìng.

instrumentation:
piccolo flute in C
bass clarinet in Bb
cello
percussion and narration

duration: ca. 4 minutes

transposed score.

a collection of memories mangled by time.

notes: as each system is "between 12 and 15 seconds," players should look to the other staves for reference to events in time, and place their sonic events accordingly. resist the urge to rush - this music must be patient, and the tendency to move hurriedly through unexpected tensions or silences should be subdued. dynamics/noise are often indicated with line thickness or graphic density. the narration should always be able to be heard clearly.

piccolo: invite the sound of air into your tone throughout this piece. do this to blend volume and achieve a tonal quality reminiscent of wooden flutes. when stems are split, down stems are to be sung

bass clarinet:
hatch marks indicates a particularly airy tone - half pitch, half air.

cello:
'croaking' indicates the player to press the bow hair into muted strings and move the bow on an axis so as to create a grinding, croaking sound. dynamics are dictated by line thickness. the groups of headless notes above the staff as in system 2, page 1, indicate for the left hand fingers to smack the strings onto the fingerboard.

percussion:

before engaging in this piece, the percussionist is hereby instructed to gather a collection of sounds to be used as instruments. these should fit on a small table for the performance and need to be playable while speaking the narration. these can be percussion instruments or found sounds. the prompts are as follows:

bugs - imagine you one in a dense crowd of bugs, and the sounds you would hear around you. rattles, clacking, buzzing

bones - the pop of dry bones, stepped on - this could be cracking and popping, possibly with sticks and twigs or percussive rattles

sponges - imagine eating an august orange with reckless abandon. this sound should feel wet and squelchy. perhaps wet sponges in a bowl, or slime.

metal - imagine the grinding drones that occur around large machinery, groaning, clanking, metal on metal, maybe a rubber mallet pressed into a brake drum.

bells - a set of three small handbells of non-specific pitches will also be necessary.

voice - the percussionist is instructed to narrate the words that pass below the staff aloud. these should be spoken clearly and with some gentleness. be able to be heard above the ensemble. be patient and calm.

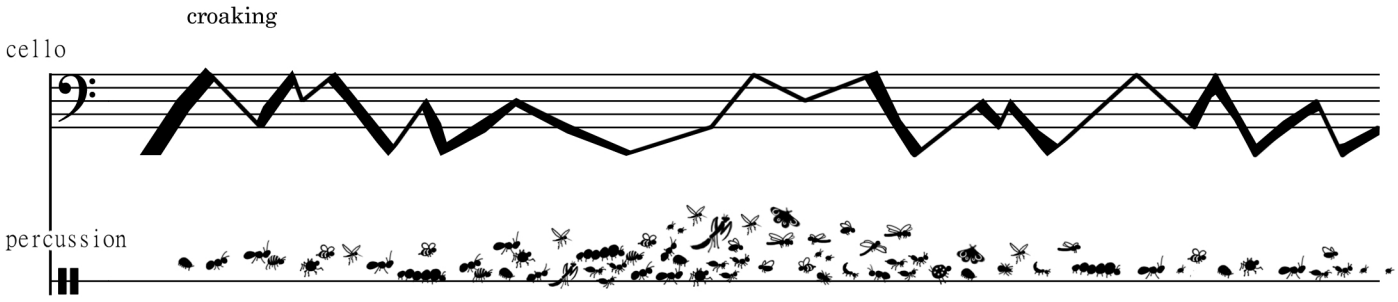
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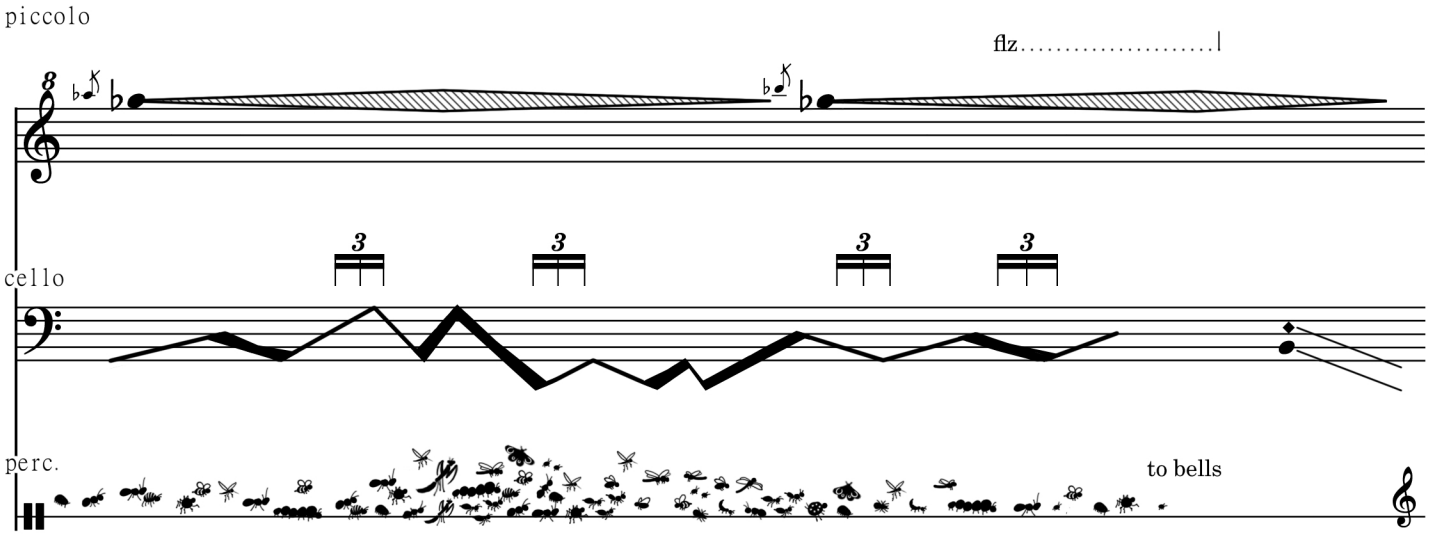
paul joshua lehman

transposed score.

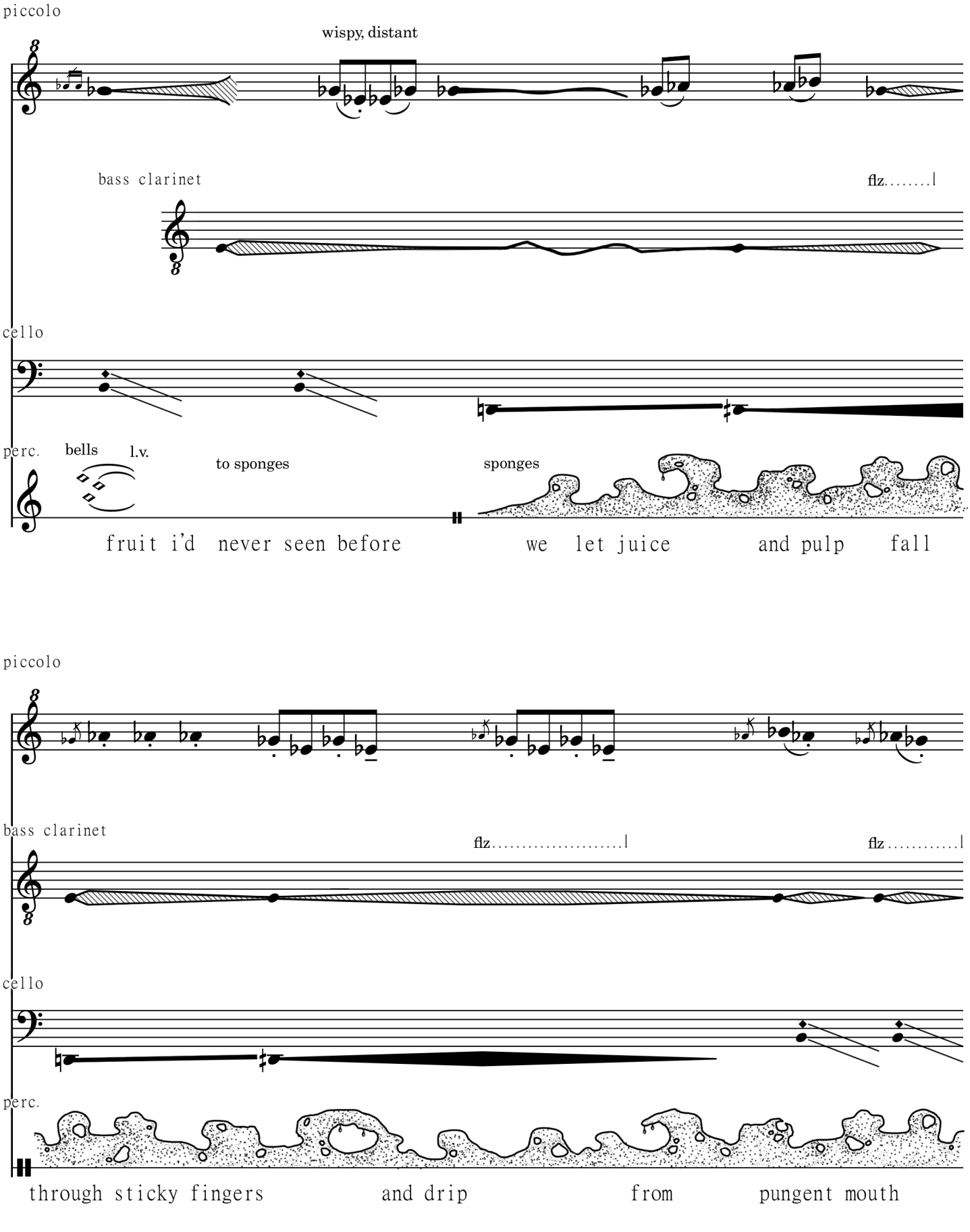
about 12 - 15 seconds per system.

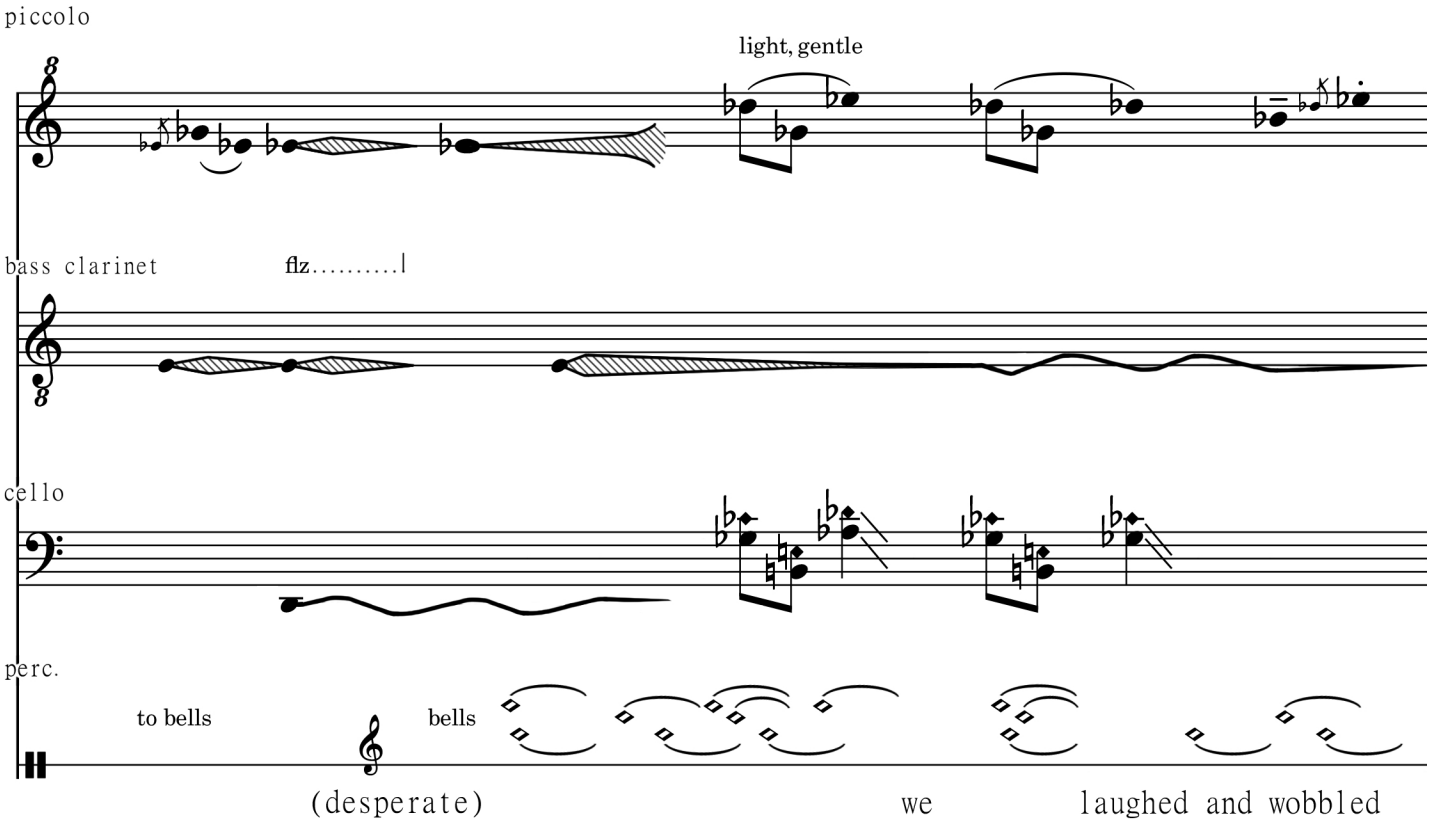


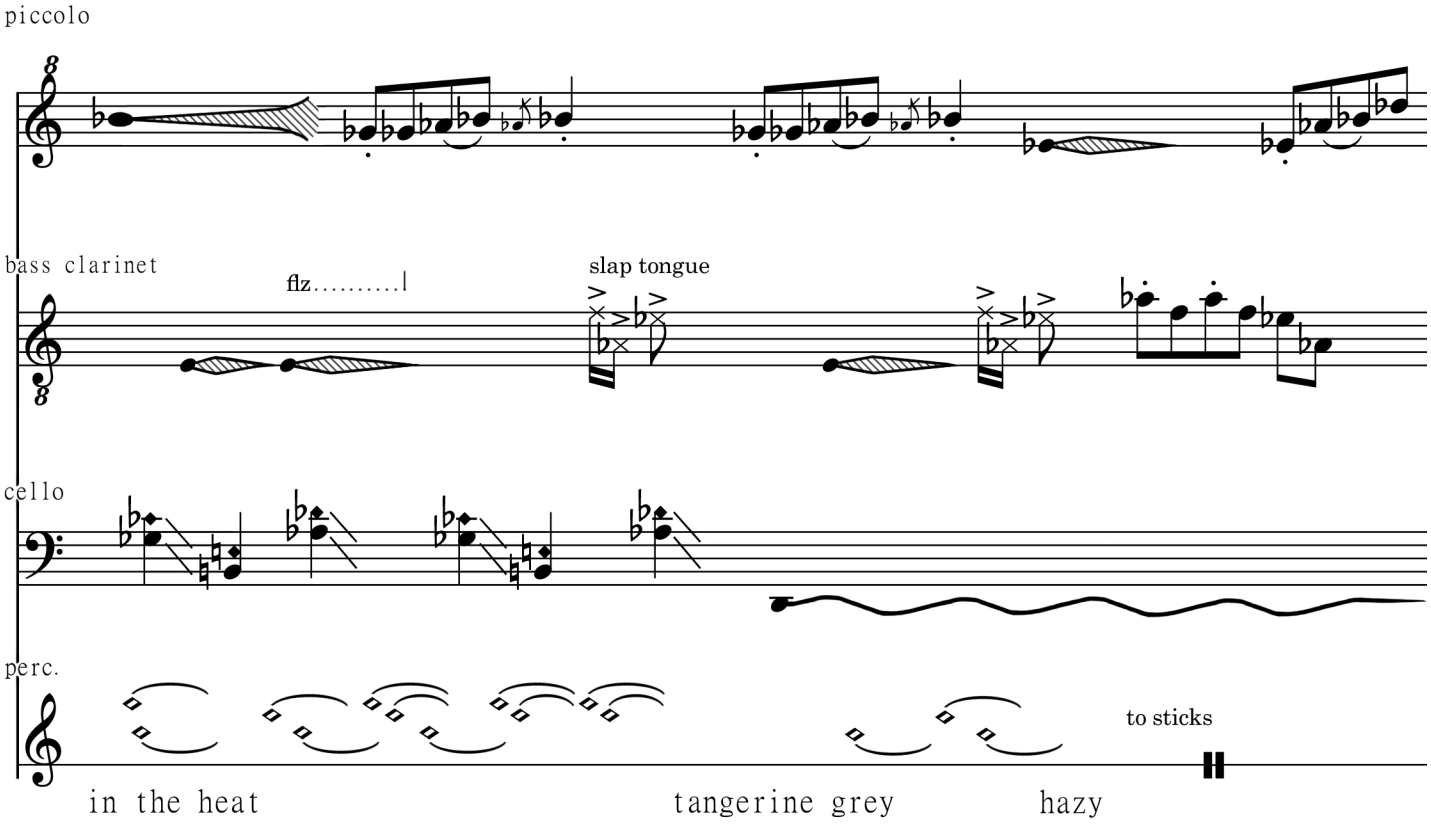
we gathered, insects in the sun

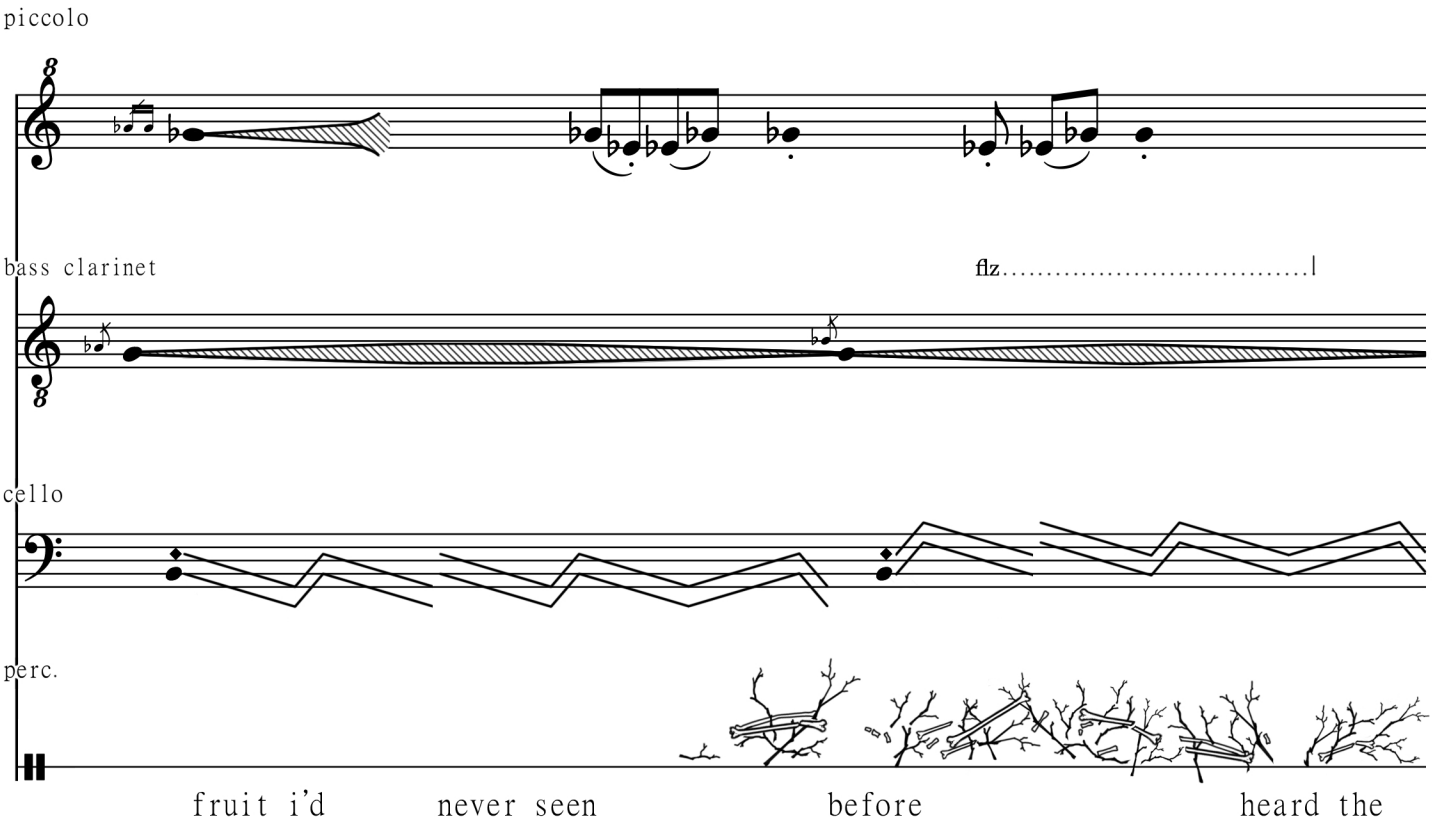


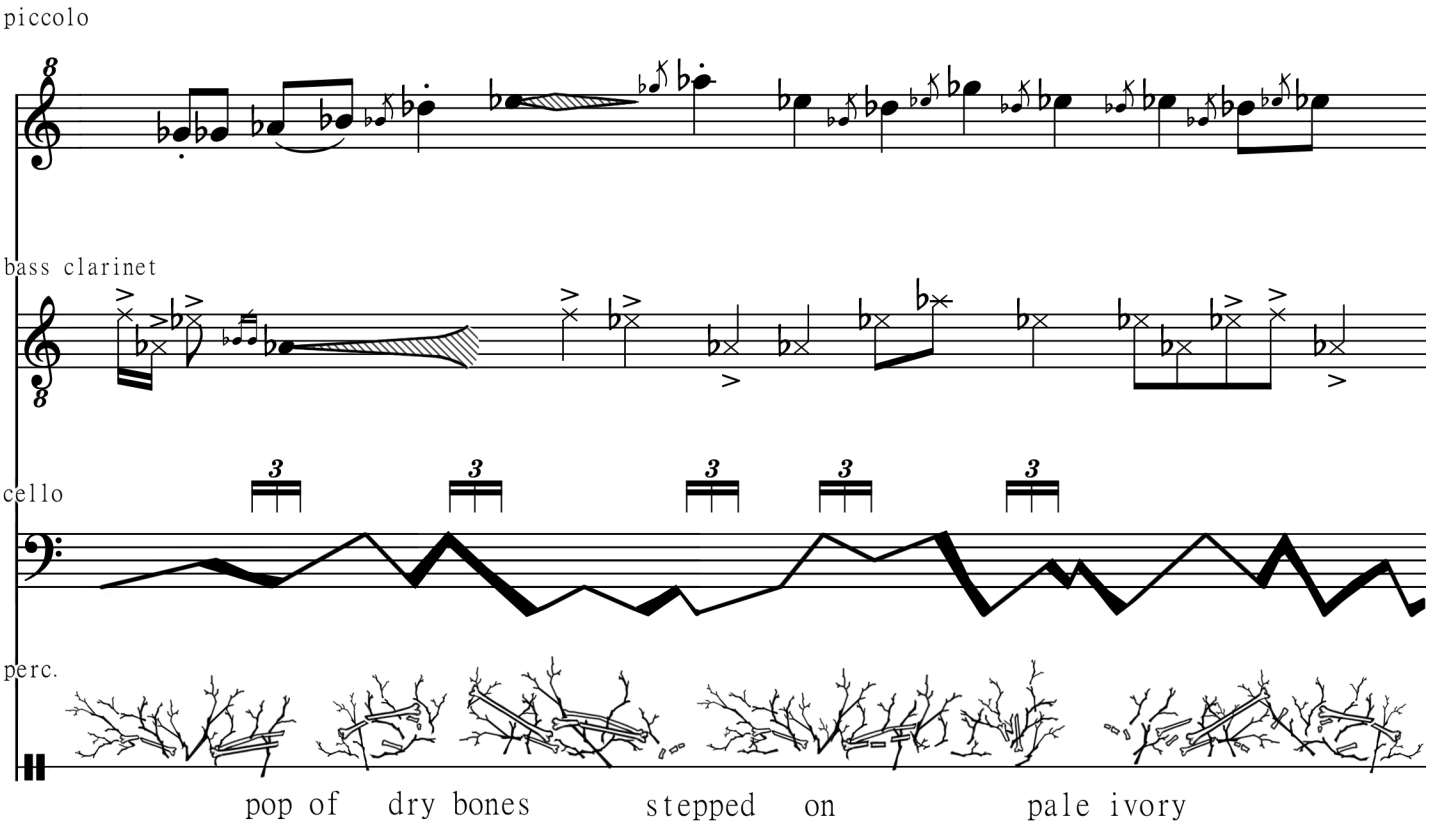
violet, mushroom blue pearl green.

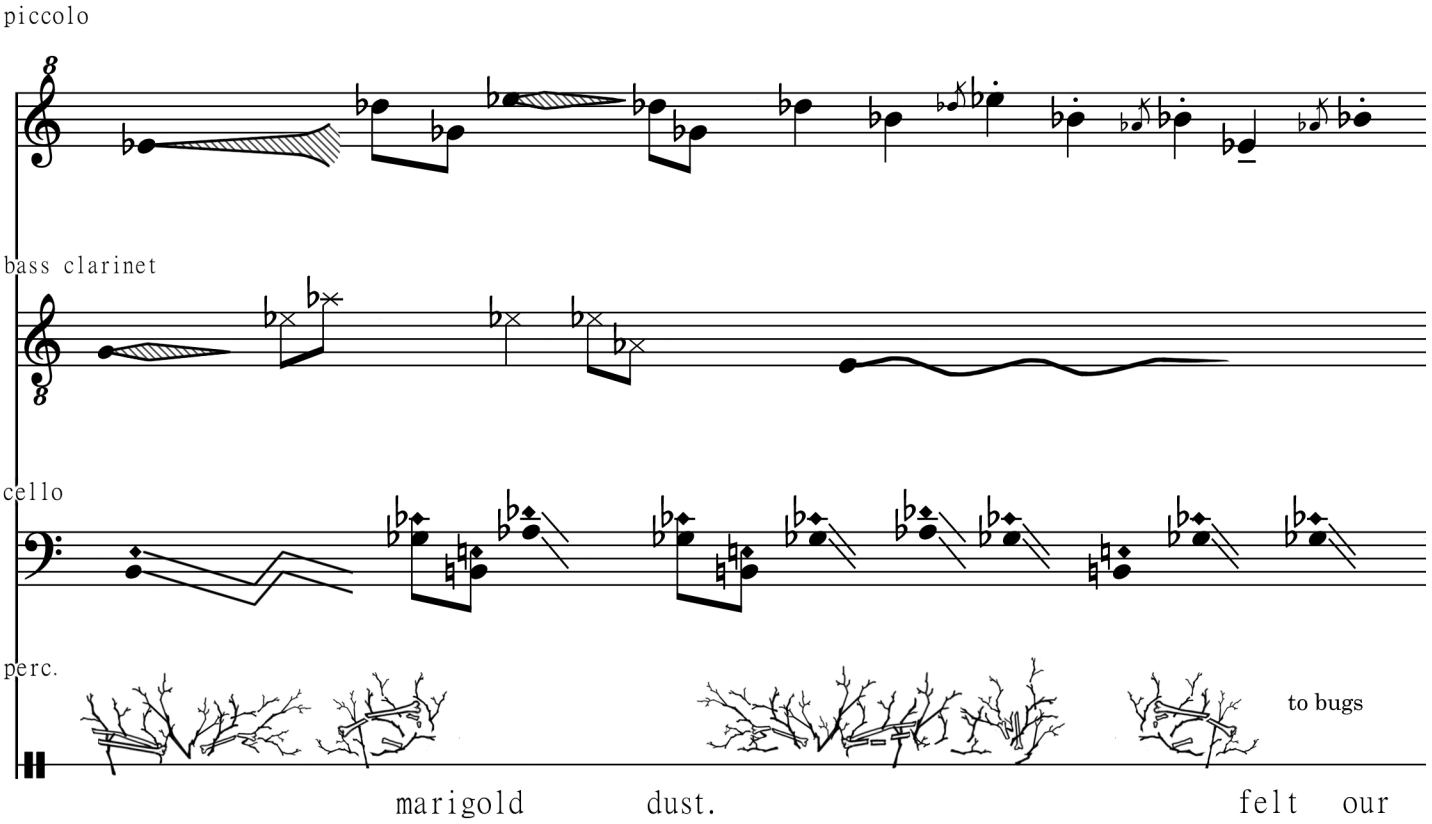

piccolo
wispy, distant
bass clarinet
flz.....|
cello
perc.
bells
l.v.
to sponges
sponges
fruit i'd never seen before
we let juice
and pulp
fall
piccolo
bass clarinet
flz.....|
flz.....|
cello
perc.
through sticky fingers
and drip
from
pungent mouth

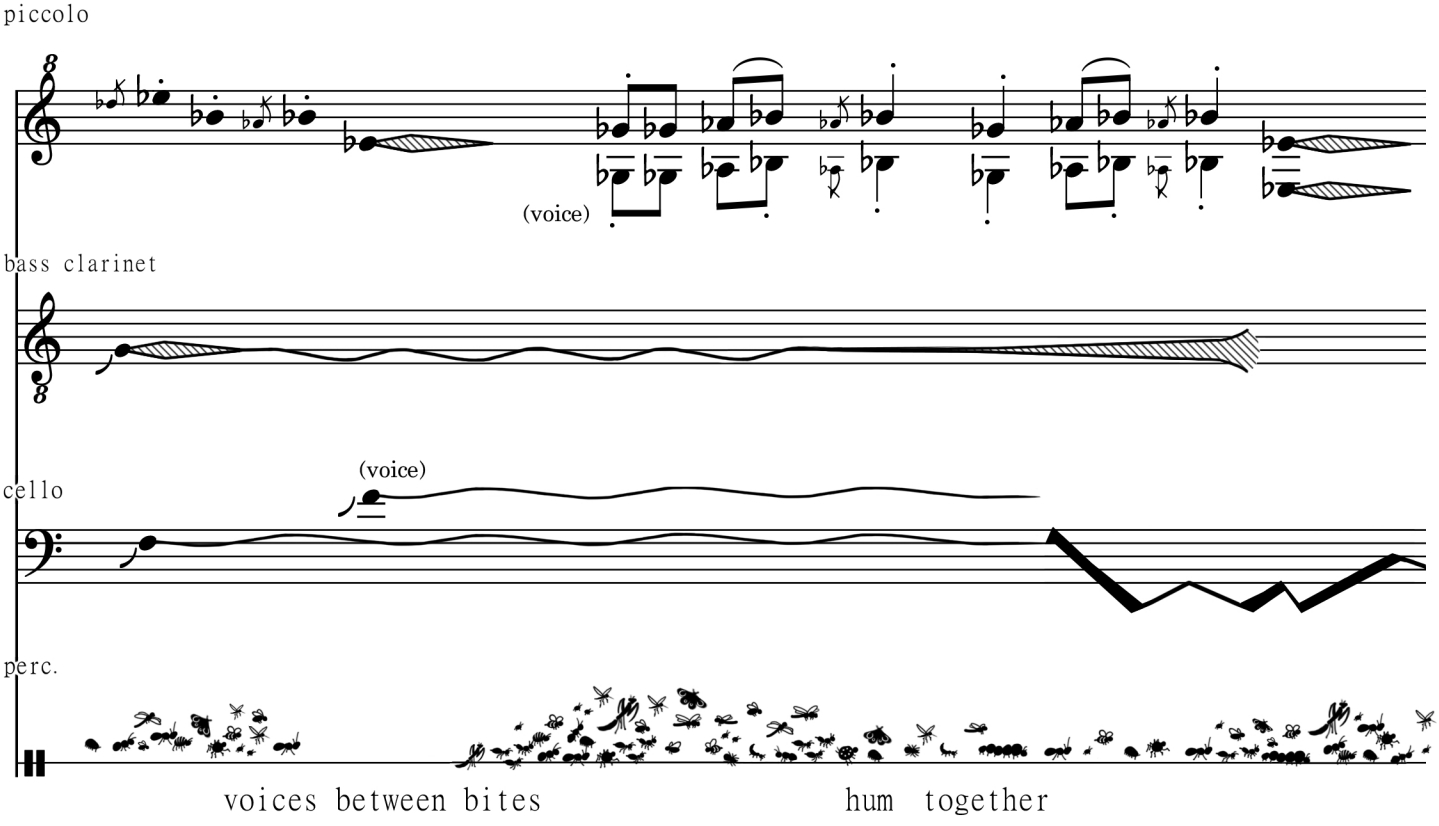

piccolo
light, gentle
bass clarinet
flz.....|
cello
perc.
to bells
bells
(desperate)
we
laughed and wobbled

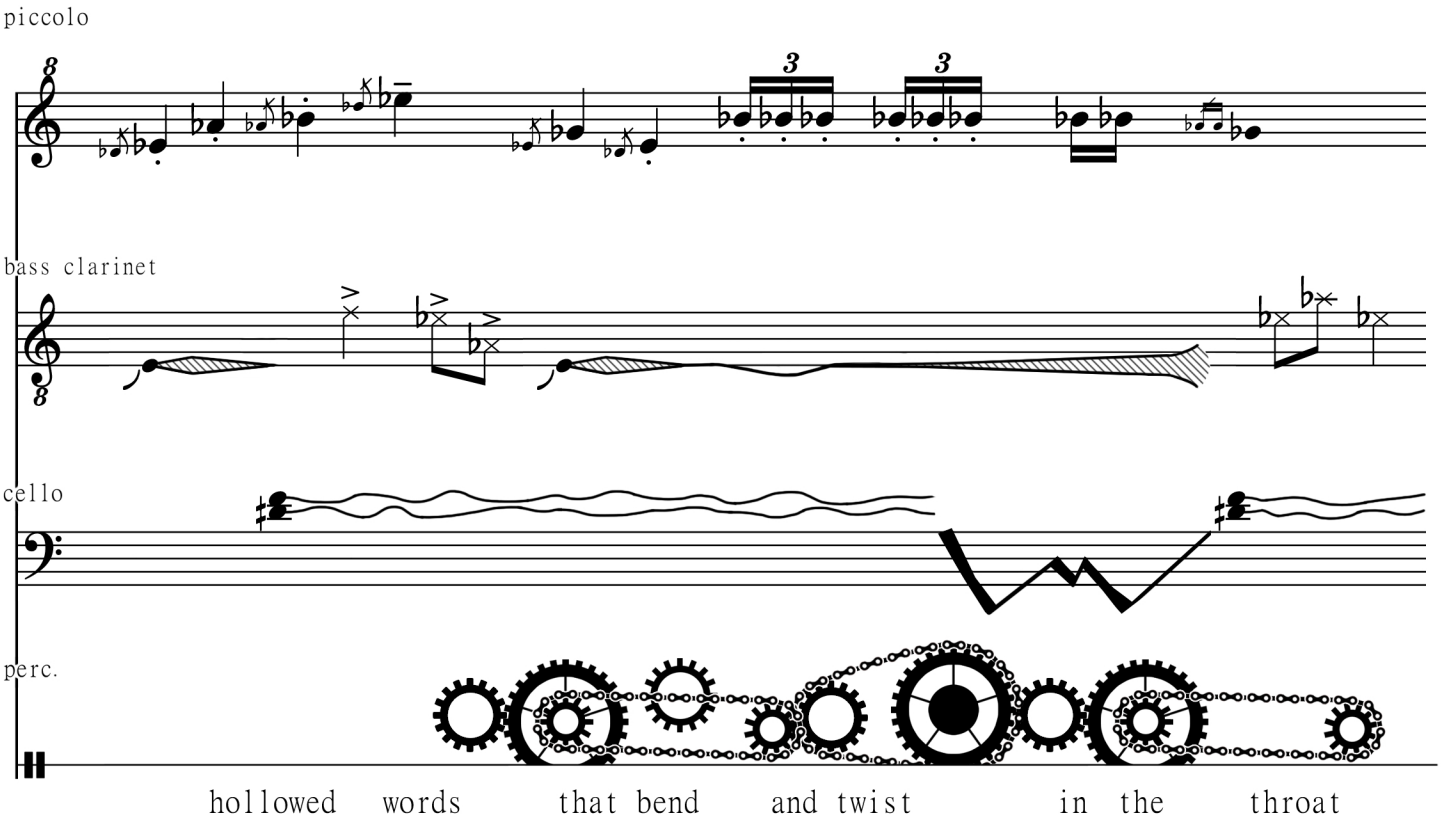

piccolo
bass clarinet
flz.....|
slap tongue
cello
perc.
to sticks
in the heat
tangerine grey
hazy

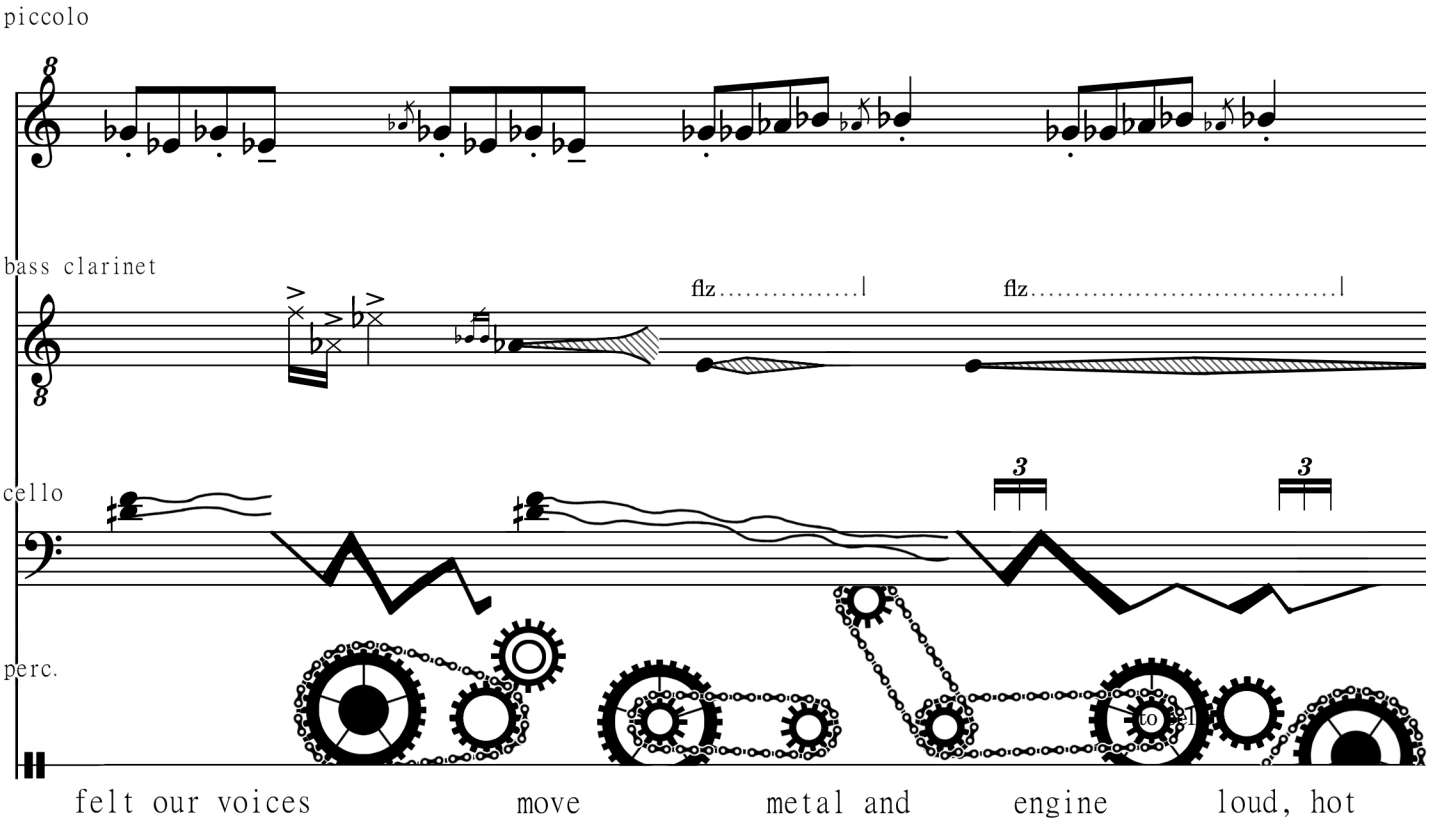

piccolo
bass clarinet
flz
cello
perc.
fruit i'd never seen before heard the

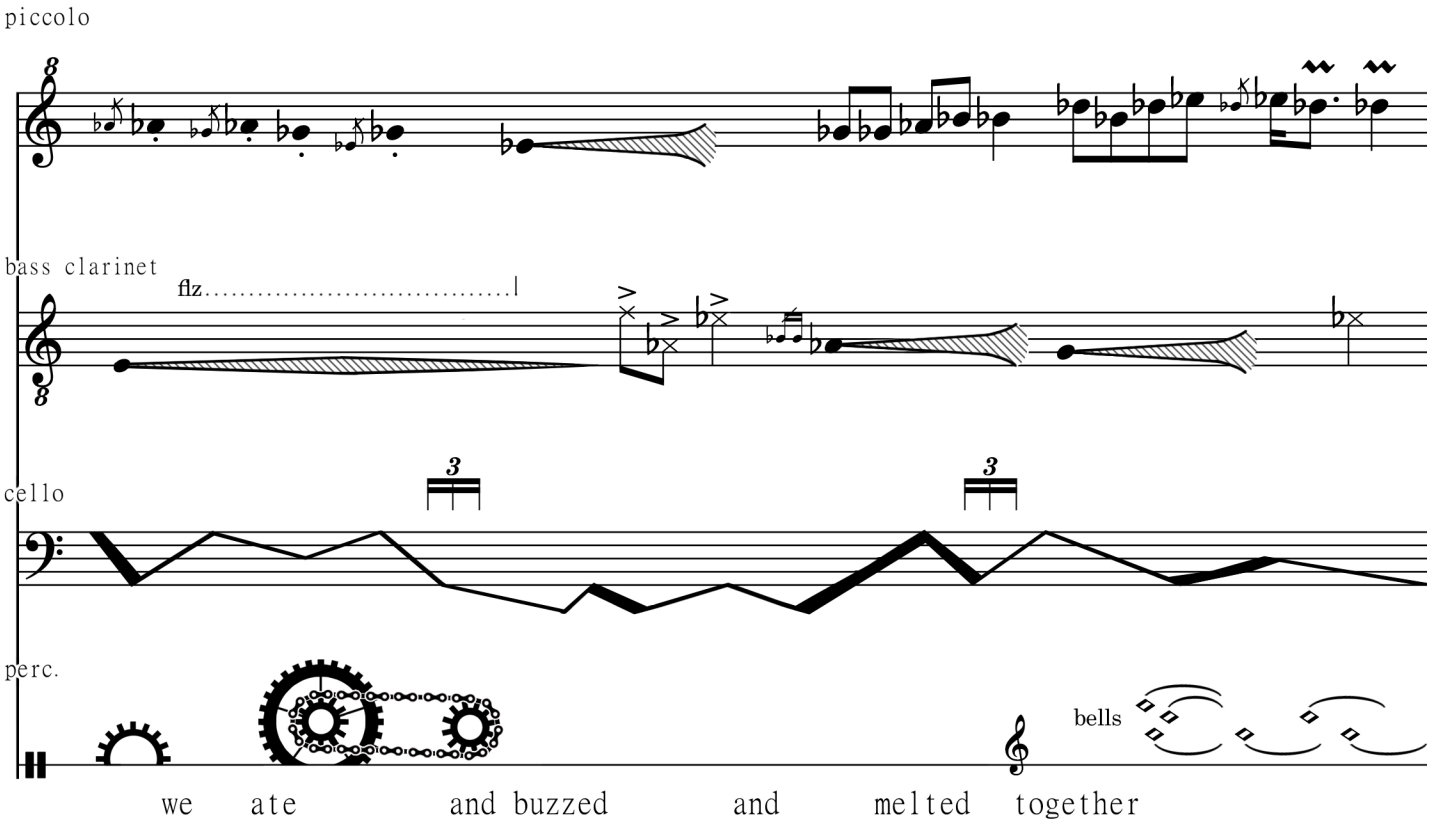

piccolo
bass clarinet
cello
perc.
pop of dry bones stepped on pale ivory

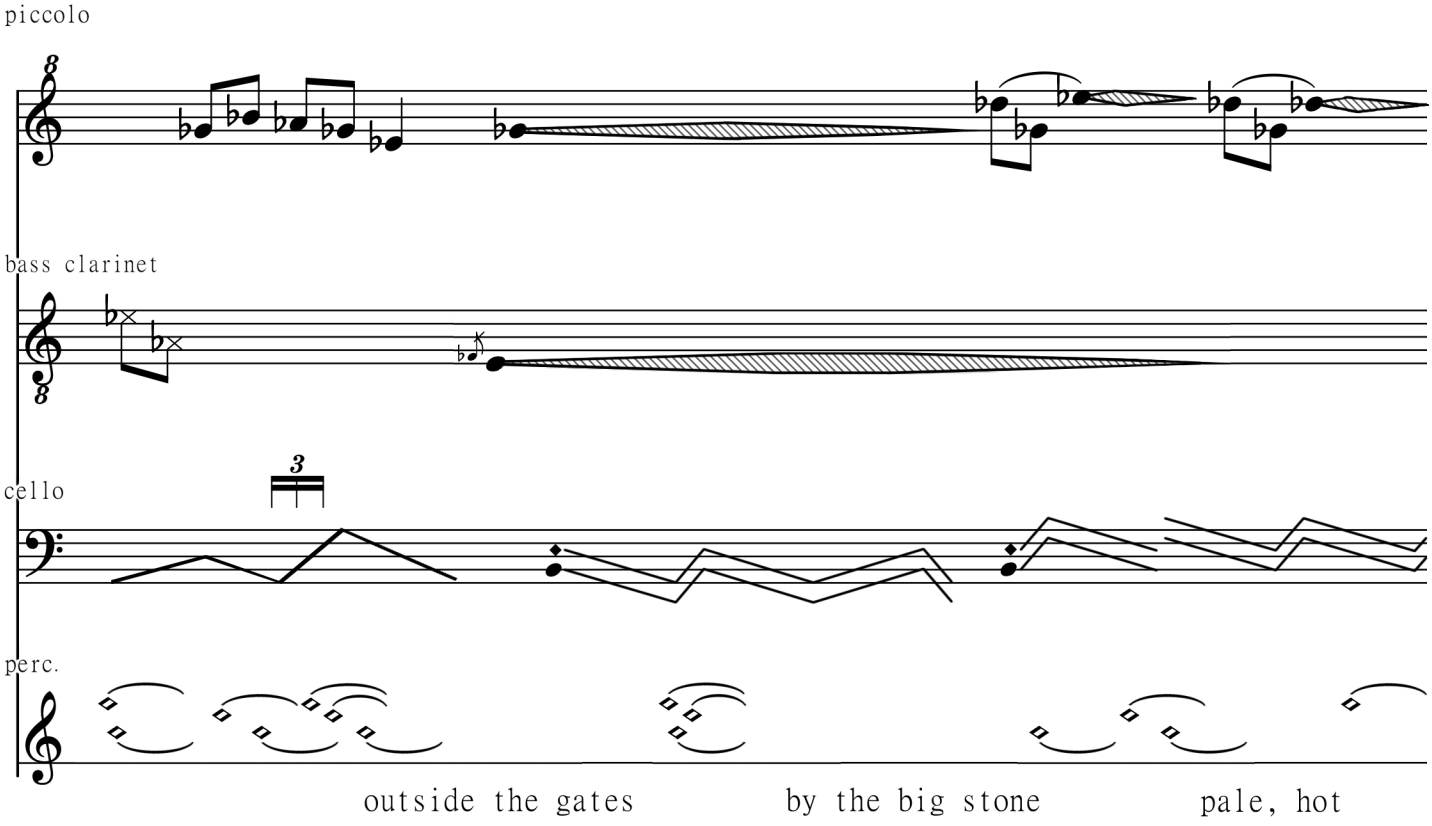

piccolo
bass clarinet
cello
perc.
to bugs
marigold dust. felt our


piccolo
(voice)
bass clarinet
(voice)
cello
perc.
voices between bites hum together


piccolo
bass clarinet
cello
perc.
hollowed words that bend and twist in the throat


piccolo
bass clarinet
flz
flz
cello
perc.
felt our voices move metal and engine loud, hot


piccolo
bass clarinet
flz
cello
3
3
perc.
bells
we ate and buzzed and melted together


piccolo
bass clarinet
cello
3
perc.
outside the gates by the big stone pale, hot

piccolo

bass clarinet

cello

perc.

tangerine grey. bug and fruit and bone and haze

piccolo

bass clarinet

cello

perc.

insects in the sun in bao ding.