

# The true ceremony of the sun

(string quartet no.1)

Chris Williams

Commissioned by, and dedicated to, the Flinders Quartet

### **The true ceremony of the sun**

I

(darkness falls like leaves/on the loom of winter)

II

(doorway to another world - flickering/fleeting)

III

(under the broken scroll of the stars/voices like leaves of light)  
*for Jennie*

### **Program Note (draft)**

Perhaps surprisingly for a piece with 'the sun' in its title, much of *The true ceremony of the sun* is a nocturnal piece, and this apparent paradox sets up a series of oppositional cycles - night and day, winter and summer, life and death - that animate the work and its form.

The title of the piece comes from the Scottish poet George Mackay Brown's description of a famous Neolithic burial chamber, Maeshowe, on the Orkney Islands, north of mainland Scotland. This underground ceremonial chamber is oriented such that it captures the light of the sun on the winter solstice - providing numinous illumination of the dark chamber at the darkest time of the year. Although never stated explicitly, Mackay Brown's point is that the true ceremony of the sun is the finding of light in darkness.

The subtitles of the three movements are all drawn from Mackay Brown's writing or writing about the ceremonial chamber. To begin, we descend - into the tomb, but also into night, winter, darkness, and beyond. In the middle movement, the so-called 'doorway to another world' opens, as - like a flame - light fills the darkness, and finally, in the last movement (the emotional core of the piece) we return to the night transformed by the light.

The piece unfolds as a series of cycles within cycles. The first and last movements are more connected to one another than the middle, and all three movements unfold in three parts, so that we are perpetually in motion, always returning to the beginning again.

First performed by The Flinders Quartet at The David Li Sound Gallery,  
Ian Potter Centre for the Performing Arts, Monash University, Melbourne,  
on November 30 2024.

# THE TRUE CEREMONY OF THE SUN

I

(darkness falls like leaves/on the loom of winter)

Chris Williams

**♩ = 38**    *lyrico, semplice, mysterioso - patient, focussed*

**più mosso**

**più mosso**

Violin I      *pp*       $\text{♩} = 38$

Violin II      $\frac{5}{4}$       *lyrico, semplice, mysterioso - patient, focussed*      *pp*

Viola           $\frac{5}{4}$       *pp*       $\text{♩} = 38$

Violoncello     $\frac{5}{4}$       *lyrico, semplice, mysterioso - patient, focussed*      *pp*

Musical score for four staves (Treble, Alto, Bass, and a fourth staff) in 5/4 time. The score includes dynamic markings (pp, p, pp), performance instructions (accel.), and tempo markings (♩ = 46). Measures 1-4 show the first staff with dynamics and performance instructions. Measures 5-8 show the second staff with dynamics and performance instructions. Measures 9-12 show the third staff with dynamics and performance instructions. Measures 13-16 show the fourth staff with dynamics and performance instructions.

5

accel. ♩ = 46

*pp* <> o

*pp* <> *pp*

accel. ♩ = 46

<>

*p* > *pp*

accel. ♩ = 46

<>

accel. ♩ = 46

<>

<>

**A**

11

15

*ethereal*

*pp*

*ethereal*

*pp*

*ethereal*

*pp*

**B**

3

19 **meno mosso**

Musical score for section B, measures 19-22. The score consists of four staves. Measure 19 starts with a rest in 4/4 time, followed by a 3/4 measure rest. The 4/4 measure begins with a dynamic *f*, followed by *p*. Measure 20 starts with a rest in 4/4 time, followed by a 3/4 measure rest. The 4/4 measure begins with a dynamic *f*, followed by *p*. Measure 21 starts with a rest in 4/4 time, followed by a 3/4 measure rest. The 4/4 measure begins with a dynamic *f*, followed by *p*. Measure 22 starts with a rest in 4/4 time, followed by a 3/4 measure rest. The 4/4 measure begins with a dynamic *f*, followed by *p*, then *f*, then *p*.

 $\text{♩} = 42$  *intenso**tr*~~~~*tr*~~~~ $\text{♩} = 42$  *intenso* $\text{♩} = 42$  *intenso* $\text{♩} = 42$  *intenso* $\text{♩} = 42$  *intenso* $\text{♩} = 42$  *intenso*

23

Musical score for section B, measures 23-26. The score consists of four staves. Measure 23 starts with a dynamic *<f*, followed by *p*, then *<f*, then *p*. Measure 24 starts with a dynamic *tr*~~~~, followed by a 3/4 measure rest. The 4/4 measure begins with a dynamic *f*, followed by *p*, then *f*, then *p*. Measure 25 starts with a dynamic *f > p*, followed by *fp*, then *f > <f*, then *f*. Measure 26 starts with a dynamic *f*, followed by *f > p*, then *f > p*, then *f*.

accel.

27

*f > p cresc.*

*p cresc.*

*p cresc.*

*cresc.*

*accel.*

*f*

*increasing vib.*

*accel.*

*f*

*increasing vib.*

*accel.*

*f*

*increasing vib.*

**C** $\text{♩} = 72$ 

molto vib.

31

*ff*

$\text{♩} = 72$

molto vib.

$\text{♩} = 72$

molto vib.

$\text{♩} = 72$  *tight, fast*

*tight, fast*

$\text{♩} = 72$

molto vib.

*tight, fast*

34

*fff*

*ff*

*fff*

*ff*

*fff*

*ff*

*ffff*

D  $\text{♩} = 42$  ( $\square \vee$ )  
ord.

38

$\text{♩} = 42$  ( $\square \vee$ )  
ord.

*pp*

*p*

*p*

*p*

accel. . . . .      ♩ = 56

42

42

*pp*

accel. . . . .      ♩ = 56

43

accel. . . . .      ♩ = 56

44

accel. . . . .      ♩ = 56

45

mp      mp <>

46

46

p

< mp > p

mp      p

**E** *hypnotic* 7

50

*pp*      *mf*      *pp*      *mf*

*mf*      *p*      *mf*

*mf*      *p*

*mf*

*p*

*mf*

54

*p*      *mf*      *p*

*p*      *mf*      *p*

*mf*

*p*

*p*

56

,

,

,

,

**F** col leg.  
59 (bat.)

\*\*

*p*

col leg.  
(bat.)

\*\*

*p*

col leg.  
(bat.)

\*\*

*p*

*espr.*

*p*

*mp*

arco

60

**pp**

**5** 4 - 3 4 - -

arco

**pp**

**3** 4 - -

arco

**pp**

**5** 4 - 3 4 - -

**p**

**5** 4 - 3 4 - -

## II

 $\text{♩} = 82$ 

(doorway to another world - flickering/fleeting)

(senza sord.)  
gritty - agitated

64

$\text{♩} = 82$

$\text{ff}$

$\text{♩} = 82$

con sord.

$\text{♩} = 82$

con. sord.

$\text{ppp}$

$\text{pp}$

70

con sord.

$\text{ppp}$

$\text{pp}$

$\text{pp}$

$\text{ppp}$

$\text{pp}$

$\text{ppp}$

Musical score for orchestra, page 76, measures 1-4. The score consists of four staves:

- Top Staff (Treble Clef):** Measures 1-4. Key signature changes from B-flat major to A major (no sharps or flats). Measure 1: 4/4 time, sixteenth-note patterns with grace notes. Measure 2: 3/4 time, eighth-note patterns. Measure 3: 3/4 time, eighth-note patterns. Measure 4: 3/4 time, eighth-note patterns.
- Second Staff (Treble Clef):** Measures 1-4. Key signature changes from B-flat major to A major (no sharps or flats). Measure 1: 4/4 time, sustained notes. Measure 2: 3/4 time, eighth-note patterns. Measure 3: 3/4 time, eighth-note patterns. Measure 4: 3/4 time, eighth-note patterns.
- Third Staff (Bass Clef):** Measures 1-4. Key signature changes from B-flat major to A major (no sharps or flats). Measure 1: 4/4 time, sustained notes. Measure 2: 3/4 time, eighth-note patterns. Measure 3: 3/4 time, eighth-note patterns. Measure 4: 3/4 time, eighth-note patterns.
- Bottom Staff (Bass Clef):** Measures 1-4. Key signature changes from B-flat major to A major (no sharps or flats). Measure 1: 4/4 time, sustained notes. Measure 2: 3/4 time, eighth-note patterns. Measure 3: 3/4 time, eighth-note patterns. Measure 4: 3/4 time, eighth-note patterns.

Performance instructions include dynamic markings: **ppp**, **pp**, **pp**, **p**, **p**, **pp**.

Musical score for orchestra, page 79, measures 1-4. The score consists of four staves:

- Top Staff:** Treble clef, 3/4 time. Measures 1-2: Rests. Measure 3: Rest. Measure 4: **ff**, dynamic, with a grace note and a sixteenth-note pattern.
- Second Staff:** Treble clef, 3/4 time. Measures 1-2: Rests. Measure 3: **ff**, dynamic, with a grace note and a sixteenth-note pattern. Measure 4: **senza sord.** (without mute), dynamic, with a grace note and a sixteenth-note pattern.
- Third Staff:** Bass clef, 3/4 time. Measures 1-2: Rests. Measure 3: Rest. Measure 4: **ff**, dynamic, with a grace note and a sixteenth-note pattern.
- Bottom Staff:** Bass clef, 3/4 time. Measures 1-2: Rests. Measure 3: Rest. Measure 4: **ff**, dynamic, with a grace note and a sixteenth-note pattern.

12

83

senza sord.  
*growl*

*ff* < < *ff*

85

con sord.

*p*

*ff*

87

*ff*

*ff* *p*

*pp* *ff*

tasto      ord.      con sord.      *p*

89

*f*

*f*

*f*

*f*

senza sord.

*ff*

senza sord.

*ff*

senza sord.

*ff*

senza sord.

*ff*

**G**

92

ff      *p*      ff      *f*

*pizz.*      *arco*      *pizz.*      *arco*

94

*p*

*ff*      *mf*      *p*

*subito cantabile*

*ff*      *mf*

15

97

*rit.*

*ff*      *mf*      *p*

*ff*      *mf*

*subito cantabile*

*ff*      *mf*

*rit.*

*p*

*rit.*

*fp*

**H** più mosso ( $\text{♩} = 96$ )  
wild

exaggerated  
vib.

100

*f*

**più mosso** ( $\text{♩} = 96$ )

wild  
exaggerated  
vib.

*ff*

*f*

**più mosso** ( $\text{♩} = 96$ )

wild  
exaggerated  
vib.

*ff*

*mf*

**più mosso** ( $\text{♩} = 96$ )

wild  
exaggerated  
vib.

*ff*

*f*

\*On the beat, played as figure in previous tempo

16

**a tempo** ( $\text{♩} = 82$ )

105

ord.

*ff*

*f*

*f*

*a tempo* ( $\text{♩} = 82$ )

*pizz.*

wild  
exaggerated  
vib.

107

wild  
exaggerated  
vib.

wild  
exaggerated  
vib.

wild  
exaggerated  
vib.

arco

109      **più mosso** ( $\text{♩} = 96$ )

più mosso ( $\text{♩} = 96$ )

più mosso ( $\text{♩} = 96$ )

più mosso ( $\text{♩} = 96$ )

accel.

113

accel.

accel.

accel.

accel.

18 a tempo ( $\text{♩} = 82$ )

ord.

117

$\text{ff } 3$

$\text{a tempo } (\text{♩} = 82)$

a tempo ( $\text{♩} = 82$ ) ord.

$\text{ff } 3$

a tempo ( $\text{♩} = 82$ )

$\text{a tempo } (\text{♩} = 82)$

ord.

$\text{ff } 3$

118

$\text{ff } 3$

$\text{ff } 3$

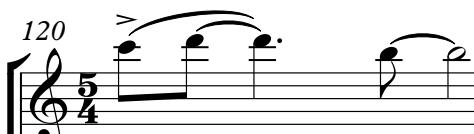
ord.

$\text{ff } 3$

$\text{ff } 3$

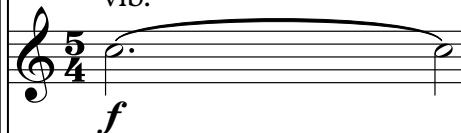
**meno mosso** ( $\text{♩} = 70$ )

wild  
exaggerated  
vib.



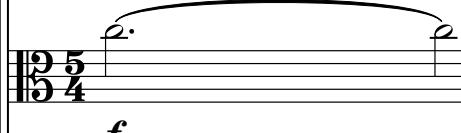
**meno mosso** ( $\text{♩} = 70$ )

wild  
exaggerated  
vib.



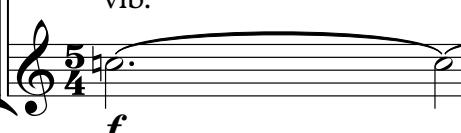
**meno mosso** ( $\text{♩} = 70$ )

wild  
exaggerated  
vib.



**meno mosso** ( $\text{♩} = 70$ )

wild  
exaggerated  
vib.



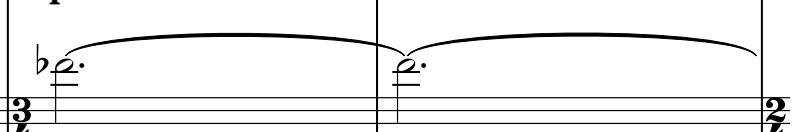
**poco rit.** . . . .  $\text{♩} = 60$



**poco rit.** . . . .  $\text{♩} = 60$

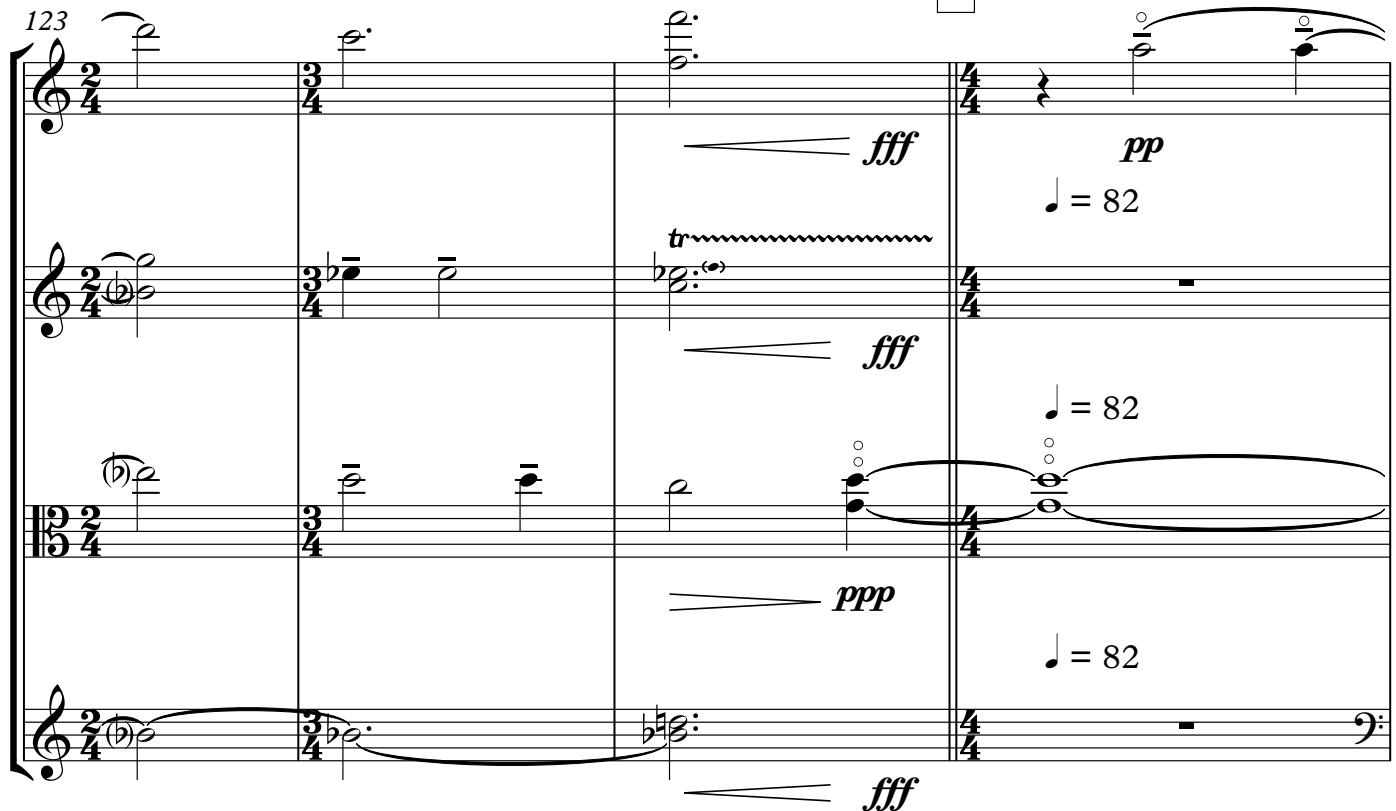


**poco rit.** . . . .  $\text{♩} = 60$



**poco rit.** . . . .  $\text{♩} = 60$

**I**  $\text{♩} = 82$



20

127

ord.

**p**

ord.

**rit.**

**p**

**rit.**

**rit.**

**rit.**

**ppp**

**133**

$\text{♩} = 60$        $\text{♩} = 82$

$\text{ff}$

$\text{♩} = 60$        $\text{♩} = 82$

$\text{mp}$

$\text{♩} = 60$        $\text{♩} = 82$

$\text{mp}$

***ppp***

***mp***

136

ff

138

ff

ff

ff

$\text{♩} = 112$  ( $\text{\(\frac{3}{2}\)} \text{♩} = \text{♩}^*$ )

139

\* 112 is actually slightly slower than the triplet pulse of the preceding tempo,  
but this metric modulation should guide you.

accel.

a tempo ( $\text{♩} = 112$ )

141

accel.

a tempo ( $\text{♩} = 112$ )

accel.

a tempo ( $\text{♩} = 112$ )

accel.

a tempo ( $\text{♩} = 112$ )

145      **poco accel.** - - - - - (♩ = 126)      **rit.** - - - - -

**poco accel.** - - - - - (♩ = 126)      **rit.** - - - - -

**poco accel.** - - - - - (♩ = 126)      **rit.** - - - - -

**poco accel.** - - - - - (♩ = 126)      **rit.** - - - - -

**poco accel.** - - - - - (♩ = 126)      **rit.** - - - - -

151      (♩ = 92) ,  
               (♩ = 92) , **fff**,  
               (♩ = 92) , **fff**,  
               (♩ = 92) , **tr** ,  
               (♩ = 92) , **fff**,  
               (♩ = 92) , **fff**, **attacca**

## III

(under the broken scroll of the stars/voices like leaves of light)  
for Jennie

$\text{♩} = 56$  semplice, flessibile, espr.

156

$\text{♩} = 56$  semplice, flessibile, espr.

$\text{♩} = 52$  *unhurried, cantabile*

158

$\text{♩} = 52$

$\text{♩} = 52$

$\text{♩} = 52$

$\text{♩} = 52$

25

160

*p*

*p mp*     $\Rightarrow p$

*pp*    *p*

*p mp*     $\Rightarrow p$

*pp*    *p*

*p mp*     $\Rightarrow p$

*pp*    *p*

\* before the beat

162

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

**K**

165

rit.

rit.

rit.

rit.

**L**

169

♩ = 42      ♩ = 56

non cresc.

♩ = 42

♩ = 56 sost.

f

mf

♩ = 42

♩ = 56 sost.

f

mf

♩ = 42

♩ = 56 sost.

f

mf

172

rit.

*mf*

rit.

rit.

*mf*

rit.

*mf*

rit.

*mf*

176

**M**  $\text{♩} = 64 (\text{♩} = 128)$  *accel.* . . . . .

*mf*

$\text{♩} = 64 (\text{♩} = 128)$   
sul pont - softly/gently noisy\*

*p*

III  
IV

$\text{♩} = 64 (\text{♩} = 128)$   
sul pont - softly/gently noisy\*

*accel.* . . . . .

*accel.* . . . . .

*accel.* . . . . .

*mf*

\*This effect should be more textural than pitched.

28  $\text{♩} = 72 (\text{♩} = 144)$ 

180

$\text{♩} = 72 (\text{♩} = 144)$

*mf*

$\text{♩} = 72 (\text{♩} = 144)$

II  
III

$\text{♩} = 72 (\text{♩} = 144)$

*mp* ————— *mf* ————— *mp* ————— *mf* —————

184 **meno mosso** ( $\text{♩} = 64$ )

*mp*

**meno mosso** ( $\text{♩} = 64$ )

**meno mosso** ( $\text{♩} = 64$ )

**meno mosso** ( $\text{♩} = 64$ )

*mp*

*mp*

190

**N**

195 → sul pont. ,  $\text{d} = 52$  ord. , rit.  $\text{d} = 42$

$\text{d} = 52$  rit.  $\text{d} = 42$

→ sul pont. ,  $\text{d} = 52$  ord. , rit.  $\text{d} = 42$

→ sul pont. ,  $\text{d} = 52$  ord. , rit.  $\text{d} = 42$

→ sul pont. ,  $\text{d} = 52$  ord. , rit.  $\text{d} = 42$

Musical score for piano, page 203, measures 1-3. The score consists of four staves. The top two staves are treble clef, the third is bass clef, and the bottom is bass clef. Measure 1: Treble staff has eighth-note pairs (mp). Bass staff has eighth-note pairs (mf). Measure 2: Treble staff has eighth-note pairs (mf). Bass staff has eighth-note pairs (mf). Measure 3: Treble staff has eighth-note pairs (mf). Bass staff has eighth-note pairs (mf). The bass staff also includes a dynamic instruction 'ord.' and a performance instruction 'f'.

206

2 2 2 2

f

mp

208

*ff*

*mf*

*ff*

*ff*

*mf*

*mp*

**P****meno mosso (  $\text{♩} = 42$  )**

210

*mp*

**meno mosso (  $\text{♩} = 42$  )**

**b** **—**

*mp*

**meno mosso (  $\text{♩} = 42$  )**

**—**

**meno mosso (  $\text{♩} = 42$  )**

**—**

*mf*

212

**f**

**mp**

**f**

*mp*

217

*pp*

*p*

*mp*

*harm. gliss.  
(freely)*

*aggressive*

*f<sup>3</sup>*

*ff*

accel.  $\text{♩} = 56$

221

*p*

*accel.  $\text{♩} = 56$*

*p*

*accel.  $\text{♩} = 56$*

*p*

*accel.  $\text{♩} = 56$*

*p*

*ff*

*ff*

224

*f*

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

226

*f*

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

**Q** suddenly ethereal  
non vib. (□ V)

228

*mf*

*pp*

*lontano*

*pp*

*lontano*

*pp*

234

*espr.*

(□ V)

*mf*

*mp*

*espr.*

(□ V)

*mf*

*mp*

*espr.*

*mp*

*mf*

*mp*

239

ord. non vib.

*p*

*mp* *p*

*f*

*p*

*mp*

*p*

*p*

*mp*

*p*

*p*

*mp*

*p*

*p*

*mp*

*p*

*p*

*mp*

244

Soprano: Sustained notes with grace notes, dynamic *p*, and *mp*.

Alto: Eighth-note patterns, dynamic markings  $\geq p$ , *mp*, and *p*.

Bass: Sustained notes, dynamic markings *mp*, and 8.

Measure numbers 1 through 5 are indicated above the staff.

248

*mf*

253 ord.

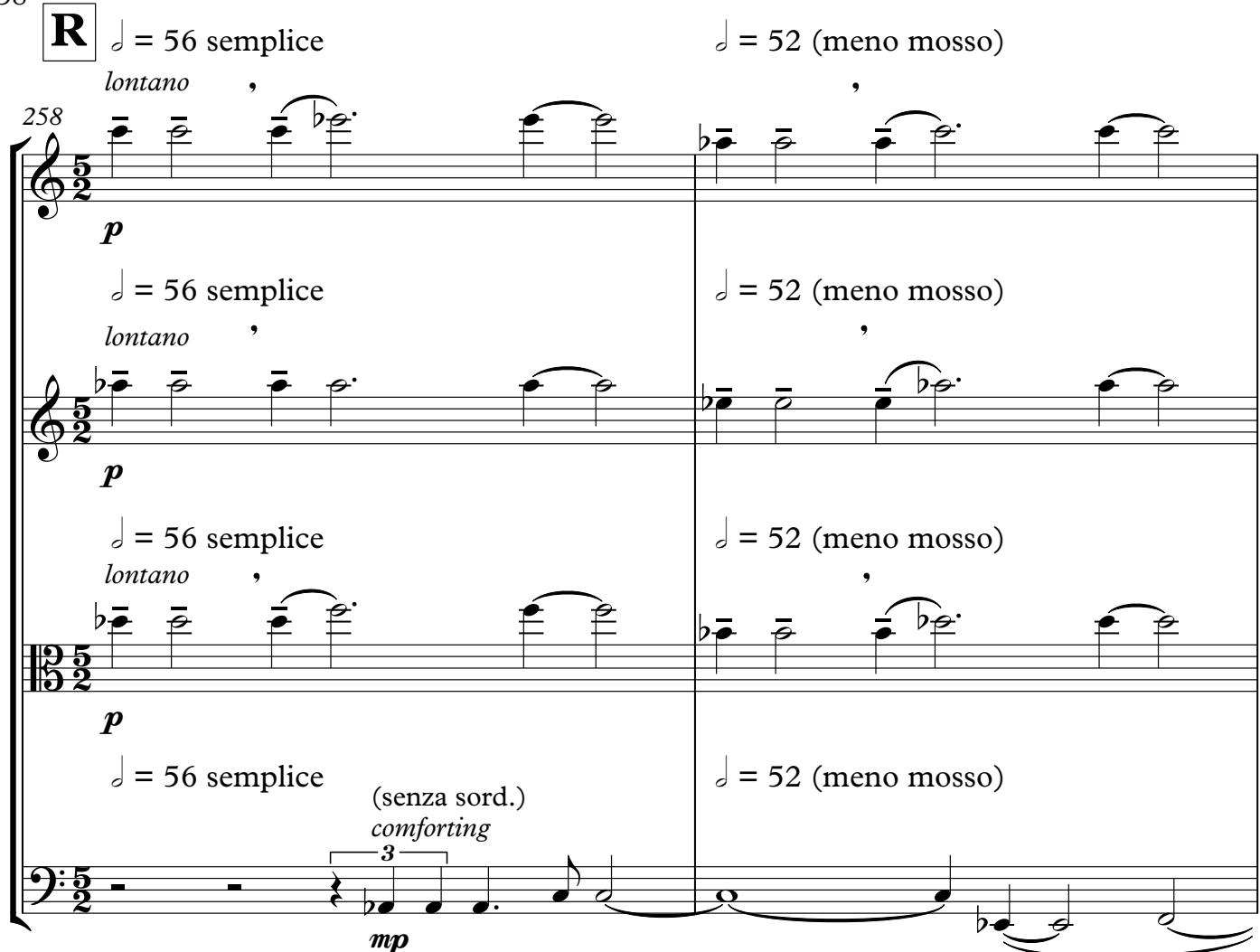
*f*

*f*

*f*

*f*

**R**  $\text{♩} = 56$  semplice  
*lontano* ,

258 

$\text{♩} = 52$  (meno mosso)  
,

$\text{♩} = 56$  semplice  
*lontano* ,

$\text{♩} = 52$  (meno mosso)  
,

$\text{♩} = 52$  (meno mosso)  
,

$\text{♩} = 52$  (meno mosso)

260 

262

Three staves of music in common time. The top two staves are in G minor (indicated by a G with a sharp), and the bottom staff is in C major (indicated by a C with a sharp). Measure 262 consists of four measures. The first measure has a single note on each staff. The second measure has eighth notes on each staff. The third measure has sixteenth notes on each staff. The fourth measure has eighth notes on each staff. Measure 263 begins with a vertical bar line. The first measure of 263 has a single note on each staff. The second measure has eighth notes on each staff. The third measure has sixteenth notes on each staff. The fourth measure has eighth notes on each staff. Dynamic markings "pp" are placed above the first, second, and third measures of 263. Measure 264 begins with a vertical bar line. The first measure has a single note on each staff. The second measure has eighth notes on each staff. The third measure has sixteenth notes on each staff. The fourth measure has eighth notes on each staff. Dynamic markings "rit." are placed above the first, second, and third measures of 264.

264

Three staves of music in common time. The top two staves are in G major (indicated by a G with a sharp), and the bottom staff is in C major (indicated by a C with a sharp). Measure 264 consists of four measures. The first measure has a single note on each staff. The second measure has eighth notes on each staff. The third measure has sixteenth notes on each staff. The fourth measure has eighth notes on each staff. Dynamic markings "p" are placed above the first, second, and third measures of 264. Measure 265 begins with a vertical bar line. The first measure has a single note on each staff. The second measure has eighth notes on each staff. The third measure has sixteenth notes on each staff. The fourth measure has eighth notes on each staff. Dynamic markings "rit." are placed above the first, second, and third measures of 265.

266

*15<sup>ma</sup>* -

II

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

1

circa 14.5 mins  
30/9/24  
N.C.