Rolf Gupta

The cruel mother

Concert aria for soprano & orchestra

This music is copyright protected

(2025)

The cruel mother

O´, and alelladay, O´ and alelladay

Margareth: ‘Ten thousand times good night and God be wi’ thee

The secret lover:
‘O look not so sweet my bonnie babe,
When you smile so, you smile me dead!

Margareth: ‘I loved him seven years and a day.

Hey wi’ the rose and the lindie’ O

Narrator: She leaned her back unto a thorn
And there she has her children born.

Hey and a lo and a lilly´O

She has taken out her knife,
And there she ended both their life’.

All a lee and aloney´O

She dug a grave by the light of the moon.

Sing hey alone and alonie’O

As she was walking in her father’s hall,
She saw two pretty babes playing at ball.

Fine flowers in the valley’O

Margareth ‘Pretty babes, pretty babes, if you were mine,
I’d dress you up in scarlet fine.’

Children: ‘Dear mother, dear mother, when we were thine,
You dressed us not in scarlet fine.

‘But now we’re in the heavens high,
And you’ve the pains o hell to try.

Margareth ‘Ten thousand times good night and God be wi’ thee

O´, and alelladay, O´and alelladay

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"The Cruel Mother" is a traditional English murder ballad about a woman who gives birth to two illegitimate children in the woods, kills them, and buries them. While returning home, she sees two children playing and remarks that if they were hers, she would dress them in fine garments and care for them. The children accusingly reply that she neither dressed nor tended to them, but murdered them instead, and subsequently damn her for her actions.

Instead of casting judgment, my adaptation weaves together multiple versions of the ballad to honor her, seeing in her the quiet strength of countless women who carry their grief in silence. I have also striven to frame her bond with the children's father not as a scandal, but as a hidden, yet true, love.

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Optional, alternative pitches are provided for the soprano in certain passages.

Commissioned by The Norwegian National Opera and Balletfor the Wilhelmsen Opera Studio for Young Singers (WOYS), the work was premiered on June 20, 2026
by soprano Sandra Bendrik, with Edward Gardner conducting.

Instrumentation

Flute 1/Piccolo
Flute 2/Piccolo/Alto Flute
Oboe 1
Oboe 2/Cor Anglais
Clarinet 1 in B
Clarinet 2 in B
Clarinet 3/Bass Clarinet in B
Bassoon 1

Horn 1 in F
Horn 2 in F
Horn 3 in F
Trumpet 1 in C
Trumpet 2 in C
Trumpet 3 in C
Tenor Trombone 1
Tenor Trombone 2
Bass Trombone

Timpani
Percussion
Harp
Piano/celesta

Strings (8.8.6.6.4)

Vibraphone
Marimba
Chimes
Crotales

Suspended Cymbal
Large Tam-tam
Triangle
Wind Chimes

Bass Drum
Snare Drum

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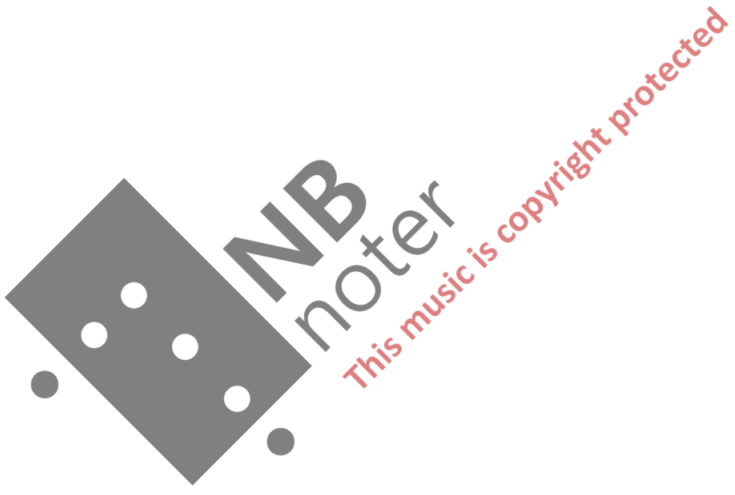
Bisbigliando (timbral trill or colour trill):
The player alternates between two different fingerings
for the same note or very nearly the same pitch.

Optional, alternative pitches are provided for the soprano in certain passages.

Score in C
Durata approx. 10 minutes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Full Score

Dedicated to all women who bear their sorrow in silence

The cruel mother

Rolf Gupta
(2025)

Fluido ♩. = 116

Flutes 1.2.

Ob. 1.2.

Bass Cl. in B

Bisbigliando

pp

Bassoon 1.

1. Bisbigliando con sord.

Horns 1.2.3.

pp *p* *pp*

Trumpets in C 1.2.3.

2. con sord. Bisbigliando

pp

1. con sord. Bisbigliando

Trombones 1.2.3.

pp *p*

Vibraphone

con arco w/motor on (fast)

pp Ped.

Harp

Bisbigliando

p

Soprano

pp

Margareth:

O, and a - le - la - day,

Fluido ♩. = 116

IV III IV *simile*

Violin I

pp

non vib. IV

Violin II

pp

p.a.p. exaggerated wide vib.

exaggerated wide vib.

p

III II III *simile*

Viola

pp

non vib. unis.

pp *mp*

I II I *simile*

Cello

pp

non vib. (norm. pitch)

poco a poco vib.

pp *mp*

(Harm. on II slightly flat)

II I II *simile*

Double Bass

pp *mp*

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5

Picc. 1.2.
Ob. 2.
Cl. 2.
Bs. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. 1
Hn. 2.3.
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2.3.
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Vib.
Hp.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

poco a poco piú vibr.
Bisbigliando
Bisbigliando
2.3. stop sord.
con sord.
bisbigliando
2.3.
con sord.
con sord.
7th/Ab 3rd pos. (1/3 flat)
mallet
arco
O, and a - le - la - day,
O, and a - le - la - day,
O, and a - le - la - day,
vibr. norm.
p.a.p. exaggerated wide vib.

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9

Picc. 1.2.
Ob. 1.
Ob. 2.
Cl. 1.2.
Bs. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. 1
Tpt.
Tpt. 2.3.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Vib.
Hp.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

Bisbigliando
molto vibrato
poco a poco vibr. norm.
2.
1.2. (norm.)
mallet
arco
O, and a - le - la - day,
exaggerated wide vib.
poco a poco non vib.
(slightly flat)
3. Bisbigliando

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13

Picc. 1.2.

To Flute
To Alto Flute

pp mp

Ob. 1.

1.

Bisbigliando

Cl. 2.

pp

Bsn.

2.

Hn.

p pp

Tpt.

pp ppp

Tpt. 2

pp ppp

Tpt. 3.

p ppp

Tbn.

p pp

Tbn.

p pp p pp p pp p pp p

B. Tbn.

pp p pp p pp p pp p pp

arco

Vib.

mallet

Hp.

p

S.

O, and a - le - la - day, Ten

Vln. I

pp

Vln. II

ppp ppp

Vla.

Vc.

pp pp

non vib.

Db.

pp

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A

Liberamente e fluido con desiderio ♩. = 58

Fl.

A.Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

1.

pp

Vib.

arco

motor off

pp

S.

thou - sand times good night and God be with Thee.

NB noter This music is copyright protected

A

Liberamente e fluido con desiderio ♩. = 58

Vln. I

(vibr. normale)

con sord.

pp espr.

p

Vln. II

(vibr. normale)

con sord.

pp espr.

p

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

23

C.A.

Solo

p *espr.*

Tpt. 1.2.

pp

Mallets

Vib.

ppp *pp* *p*

Hp.

pp *p* *mp*

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S.

Ten thou - sand times good night, and God be with Thee!

Vln. I

pp *p*

Vln. II

pp *p*

Vla.

pp

Vc.

Db.

28

ritardando

B **Oscuro (♩. = 52 - 56)** *poco rubato*

C.A.

mf *p*

Hn.

con sord.

pp *p*

Tpt. 1.2.

Tbn.

con sord.

pp *p*

ritardando

B **Oscuro (♩. = 52 - 56)** *poco rubato*

Vln. I

mf *pp*

Vln. II

mf

Vla.

slow bow

mf *p*

Vc.

con sord. sul tasto

pp

con sord. sul tasto

pp

Db.

sul tasto

pp

sul tasto

pp

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32

C.A.

Hn.

Tbn.

S.

'O look not so sweet my bon - nie

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

via sord.

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36

Luminoso

A.Fl.

C.A.

Hn.

Tbn.

Vib.

Hp.

S.

When you smile me so, you smile me dead!

Luminoso

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

senza sord.

trem. sul tasto

unis.

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41

C.A.

espr.

poco rit. **a tempo (♩. = 58)**

To Oboe

mf

Tpt.

1.2.

lontano

pp *pp*

Vib.

p *mp*

Hp.

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

S.

you smile me dead!

Margareth:

I loved him se - ven years and a day!

C

poco rit. **a tempo (♩. = 58)**

Vln. I

sul tasto

mp

Solo senza vibr.

pp

Vln. II

sul tasto

mp

Solo senza vibr.

pp

Vla.

sul tasto

mp

Solo senza vibr.

pp

Vc.

via sord.

Db.

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48

Piú mosso e accelerando (♩.= 72)

Ob.

p *espressivo*

mp

Cl.

1.2.3.

Bisbigliando (free, slow speed)

pp

mp

Bsn.

mp *espressivo*

Tpt.

1.2.3.

pp

pp

Vib.

pp

p

Triangle

p

Crotales

pp

p

Hp.

mp

S.

p

Hey wi' the rose and the lin - die 'O

mp

Hey wi' the rose and the lin - die 'O

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Piú mosso e accelerando (♩.= 72)

Vln. I

Tutti
vibr. normale

p

mp

poco a poco piú vibr.

p

Vln. II

Tutti
vibr. normale

p

mp

poco a poco piú vibr.

p

Vla.

Tutti
vibr. normale

p

mp

poco a poco piú vibr.

p

Vc.

senza sord.

poco a poco piú vibr.

p

Db.

52

♩. = 88 **Allargando** **D** **Agitato** ♩. = 126 ca.

Fl.
Ob. 1.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Timp.
Hp.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

norm.
molto vibr.
1.2.
Open
secco
gliss.

Hey wi' the rose and the lin - die 'O

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55

Fl. 1.2.
Ob. 1.2.
Cl. 1.2.
Cl. 3
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Timp.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

á 2
mp
á 2
mp
p
p
p
1.2.
p
1.2.
p
f
She leaned her back un - to a thorn

NB noter
This music is copyright protected

59

á 2

Fl. 1.2.
Ob. 1.2.
B♭ Cl.
Bs. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Timp.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

and there she had her chil - dren born. Hey and a lo and a li - ly' o

pizz.
(arco)

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63

Fl. 1.2.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Timp.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

f *mf* *mp* *p*

To open

arco

pizz.

(div.)

Hey and a lo and a li - ly' o Hey and a lo and a li - ly' o she has ta - ken out her

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67

Fl. 1.2.

Ob. 1.2.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tbn.

Gran cassa

S.

knife, ta - ken out her knife!

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

pizz.

arco

arco unis.

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E

71

Fl. 1.2.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

ff
mf
sfz
open

NB noter
This music is copyright protected

74

Fl. 1.2.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

mf

ff *pazzo*

and there she en - ded

NB noter
This music is copyright protected

78

Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tbn.
Gr.c.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

f *ff* *sfz* *cresc.* *mf* *f* both their lives! (metà)

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82

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tbn.

Timp.

Snare drum

S.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

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85

Fl. á 2 mp

Ob. á 2 mp

B♭ Cl. á 2 mp

Bsn. mp

Hn.

Tpt.

Tbn.

Trgl. mp

Gr.c. p

S. f cresc.

All a lee and a - lo - ney O All a lee and a - lo - ney O

Vln. I p cresc.

Vln. II pizz. mf f

Vla. pizz. mf f

Vc.

Db.

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89

Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Timp.
Trgl.
Gr.c.
Pno.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

F

mf ff f

Snare drum

All a lee and a - lo - ney O

arco

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92

Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Cl. 3
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Timp.
S.Dr.
Gr.c.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

simile

sfp *sfp* *sfp*

f *ff* *ff* *f* *ff* *f*

ff *ff*

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95

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Cl. 3

Bsn.

Hn.

cresc.

Tpt.

cresc.

Tbn.

cresc.

Timp.

ff

S.Dr.

f

mf

ff

pp

ff

Pno.

ff

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

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98

Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Cl. 3
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Timp.
S.Dr.
Gr.c.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

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101

Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Cl. 3
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Timp.
S.Dr.
Gr.c.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

1.2.3.

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104

Tragico ♩= 72

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bs. Cl.

To Bass Clinet

Bsn.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tbn.

1.2.

fl.z

á 3

3.

2.3.

Timp.

S.Dr.

Gr.c.

Suspended Cymbal

Pno.

Tragico ♩= 72

8va

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

(sempre)

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G

Allargando

Doloroso ♩ = 56

Piú mosso

108

Fl.

Fl.

Ob.

Bs. Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

C Tpt.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Vib.

Pno.

S.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

p

fff

To sord.

To cup mute

To cup mute

arco

damp suddenly

Ped.

Gr.c.

Tamt.

pp

ppp

(8va)

Narrator:

She dug a grave by the light of the moon,

3 soli

espr.

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114

Mesto ♩= 104

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Extremely slow bend upwards

pp cresc.

B♭ Cl.

Extremely slow bend downwards

pp cresc.

Bsn.

Hp.

f

S.

the moon.

f Chest voice

Sing hey a - lone and a - lo - nie' o,

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Mesto ♩= 104

Vln. I

p pp

III IV III *simile*

f pp

III IV III *simile*

f pp

Vln. II

p pp

III IV III *simile*

f pp

III IV III *simile*

f pp

Vla.

p pp

Vc.

Tutti pizz.

p pp

f

Db.

118

Extremely slow bend upwards

Fl. *p* *mf* *pp*

Fl. *p* *mf* *pp*

Ob.

B♭ Cl. *mp* *pp*

B♭ Cl. *mp* *pp*

Hp. *mf* *f*

S. Sing hey a - lone and a - lo - nie' o Sing hey a - lone and a - lo - nie' o

Vln. I III IV

Vln. II *pp* *pp*

Vla. *pp* II III *p*

Vc. arco *pp*

Db.

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H **Sognante** ♩ = 108

Fl. *pp*

Fl. *p* 3 3 3 3

Ob.

B♭ Cl. *p* 3 3 3 3

Bsn.

Tpt. *pp*

C Tpt. *pp*

Vibr. Ped. *p* 3 3 3 Ped. *p* 3

Chimes *p* *pp*

S. as she was wal - king in her fa - ther's

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H **Sognante** ♩ = 108

Vln. I 2 soli *p*

Vln. II 2 soli *p*

Vla. *p*

Solo

Vc. *p espressivo*

Db.

126

Fl.

Fl.

To Piccolo

Ob.

Bisbigliando. Free varying speed, quite slow.

B♭ Cl.

Bisbigliando. Free varying speed, quite slow. ppp

B♭ Cl.

ppp

Bsn.

Tpt.

To sord.

Vib.

S.

hall, she saw two pret - ty babes

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Vln. I

mp p

Vln. II

p

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

130

allargando

Fl.

Ob.

Cl. 1.

Cl. 2.

Cl. 3

Bsn.

S.

play - ing at ball.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

Tutti

(Solo)

Tutti arco

pp

mf

norm.

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I
subito piú mosso ♩. = 72

Fl. 1.
Fl. 2.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Tpt. 1
Vib.
Crotales
Hp.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

Bisbigliando (free, slow speed)
allargando
Piccolo
Solo
1.2.
con sord.
Bisbigliando. Free varying speed, quite slow.
l.v.
Margareth:
Fine flo - wers in the val - ley o, fine flo - wers in then val - ley o, fine flo - wers in the val-ley o
gli altri

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139

Andantino ♩. = 56

Picc. 2.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

mp

mp

Vib.

trgl.

pp

p

Crot.

pp

Hp.

pp

Pno.

pp

implorante

intenso

S.

pret - ty babes, pret - ty babes, pret - ty babes, pret - ty babes, if

Andantino ♩. = 56

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

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142

ritardando **Animando** ♩ = 96

Picc. 2.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tbn.
Vib.
Hp.
Pno.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

p
sord.
pp
cup mute
pp
mp
To Celesta
mf
dolce
you were mine I'd dress you up in scar let, scar - let,
pp
p

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146

J

allargando

come un fantasma ♩.= 52

Fl.

Ob. pp cantabile

B♭ Cl.

Bsn. pp cantabile

Hn. pp ppp

harm. mute closed

Tpt. pp p

To straight mute

Tbn. pp ppp

con arco w/motor on (fast)

Vib. p

Wind chimes

p

Hp. f gliss. p

Celesta Solo

Pno. mp

Ped. Ped.

S. pp

scar 3 let fine

J

allargando

come un fantasma ♩.= 52

Vln. I ppp p pp

Vln. II ppp p pp

Vla. ppp p pp

Vc. ppp p pp

Db. ppp p pp

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150

Picc. 1
Picc. II

Flz.

Picc. 1.2.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Vib.
Gr.c.
Mrb.
Hp.
Cel.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

pp

Solo

pp sinistro

con sord.

stop sord.

sinistro

Marimba (or vib. notes within range)

8va

Ped.

Ped. simile

accusando
(alternative pitches)

Dear mo - - - ther

pizz. *sinistro*

p (no octave-doubling!)

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153

Picc. 1.2.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bs. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Vib.
Gr.c.
Mrb.
Hp.
Cel.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

cantabile

p

8va

Dear mo - ther when we were thine,

(8va)

Tutti

con sord.

cantabile

p

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156

Picc. 1.2.

B♭ Cl.

ppp

Bs. Cl.

ppp

Bsn.

ppp

Tpt.

Vib.

Vib.

Hp.

mp

Cel.

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S.

You dressed - us not in scar - - - let. But now we're in the

2 soli

8va

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

pizz.

Vc.

mp

pizz.

Db.

mp

159

allargando

Picc. 1.2.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

lugubre

f pp

Bs. Cl.

lugubre

To Cl. in Bb

f pp

Bsn.

con arco motor on (fast)

Vibr.

mf ppp

S.

f

hea - vens high, and you've the pains of hell to try.

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allargando

Tutti

Half the group plays a 1/4 tone lower than Ab.

Vln. I

p f

Vln. II

p f

Half the group plays a 1/4 tone lower than Ab.

Vla.

p f

Vc.

Db.

K **Oscuro (♩. = 52 - 56)** *poco rubato*

Hn. con sord. norm. *pp* *mp* *p*

Tbn. Straight mute *pp* *p* *pp*

Timp. (Alternative: Leave out the F#) *pp* *p* *pp*

Gr.c. Tamt. *pp* *pp*

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K **Oscuro (♩. = 52 - 56)** *poco rubato*

Vln. I norm. intonation *pp* *pp*

Vln. II *pp* *pp*

Vla. *p* *p*

Vc. arco con sord. sul tasto *pp* arco con sord. sul tasto *pp*

Db. arco *pp* arco *pp*

166

C.A. Solo *p espressivo* *mf*

Hn. *mp*

Tbn. *p*

Timp. *p* *pp* *pp*

Gr.c. *pp*

(Tamt.)

S. *mp affetuoso con desiderio* *p*

Margareth: Ten thou - sand times good - night and God be

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Vln. I *mp*

Vln. II *pp* *mp*

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

169

C.A. *p*

Vib. mallets (motor off) *pp*

pp

Hp. *p*

S. *p luminoso*

with thee. Ten thou - sand times good night, and God be

Vln. I con sord. *pp espr.*

Vln. II con sord. *pp espr.*

Vla.

Vla.

via sord.

Vc. via sord.

Db.

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L

173

Largo ♩.= 54

A.Fl.

Solo *espressivo*

mp

Tpt.

practise mute

f *(sounding pp)*

Vib.

Hp.

S.

with Thee! and God be with thee, God, be

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L

Largo ♩.= 54

Vln. I

p

soli

p

Vln. II

p

Solo

p

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

178

allargando **Come una barcarola** ♩.= 50

A. Fl.

mp *pp*

C.A.

Solo

3 3

p espressivo *p*

lontano

Hn.

stop sord.

p *p* *p*

S.

with thee.

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allargando **Come una barcarola** ♩.= 50

(soli) div. á 2

Vln. I

p *pp*

gli altri

p *pp*

div. á 2

Vln. II

p *pp*

gli altri

p *pp*

Vla.

p *pp*

Vc.

Db.

181

C.A.

3

p

Hn.

p p pp

Timp.

ppp

Hp.

sonoro

p

S.

p come una ninnananna triste

3 3 3 3

O', and a - le - la - day, O', and a - le - la - day,

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Vln. I

p p

Vln. II

p p

Vla.

p pp p

pp

Vc.

senza sord. molto vib.

pp

Db.

ppp

183

A. Fl.

C.A.

B♭ Cl. 1.2.3.

Hn.

Timp.

Gr.c.

Hp.

S.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

pp

p

3

1.2.

O', and a - le - la - day, O', and a - le - la - day, O', and a - le - la - day,

molto vib.

norm. vib.

ppp

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185

Fl.

A. Fl.

Cl. 1.2.

Timp.

Gr.c.

Hp.

S.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

ppp

pp

1.

cresc.

O', and a - le la - day, O', and a - le - la - day,

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188

Fl.

A. Fl.

Cl. 1.

ppp

ppp

Hp.

mp

S.

O', and a - le - la day,

O', and a - le - la - day,

NB noter
This music is copyright protected

Vln. I

p

ppp

Vln. II

p

ppp

Vla.

p

ppp

Vc.

ppp

pp

p

Db.

pp

ppp

pp

p

191

Fl.

A. Fl.

Hp.

p

S.

non rit.

O', and a - te - la - day,

NB noter
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Vln. I

morendo al fine

Vln. II

morendo al fine

Vla.

morendo al fine

Vc.

pp

Db.

pp