

Helpful Instructions for Circus Performers

Katharine Norman

Note to performer :

These programme notes in bold, below, are an essential part of the piece. It is most important that the text is either printed, in full, in any programme booklet or read out by someone other than the performer (who should not arrive on stage until the start of the first movement.

Programme note

(roll up, roll up)

JUGGLE

Practise the illusion of having three objects in the air.

THE LADY CUT IN HALF

Wiggle your toes and wave your arms, despite the situation. Expect knives.

TIGHTROPE

Maintain the appearance of poise and balance whilst teetering on the brink.

SPINNING PLATES ACT (and the lure of the Big Top)

Don't stop for an instant. Keep going round and round. Smile. If everything falls about you, cover your ears.

(Featuring a palimpsest for Mr. Ives)

This piece was written for Simon Limbrick, and first performed at The Warehouse, London in November 2000. It is dedicated to Simon, with thanks for his helpful instruction and advice during its composition, and to the 2000-1 RAE (RAE = 'Research Assessment Exercise' - an acronym with especially percussive resonance for British academics at that time).

Performance notes

Instrument list

Bass drum
Side drum, with snares
Rototoms (5)
Bongos
Templeblocks (5)
Marimba
Xylophone
Crotales (c, fsharp, a, b, high c) (*or Glock*)
Suspended cymbal
Sizzle cymbal
Large suspended metal sheet
Two fairly large gongs, or tam tams (and additional metal sheets, optional)
Cabasa
Jingles (held in hand)
Wooden wind chimes
Two large 'stage' knives, daggers or swords.
One large spinning top*

* a very large metal spinning top, the old-fashioned humming kind that you 'pump' to wind up. In the UK you can get these from Hamley's Toy Shop (London), and a variety of other places- at time of writing you can these easily online. This kind of thing:



Layout

This piece should not be performed 'in the round'. The spatial layout is important since the performer's attempts to go from one instrument to another are very much part of the show (in particular in 'The Lady Cut in Half' and 'Spinning Plates Act').

The three 'gong'/sheet groups in the last movement should be as far apart as feasible. The performer has to run between them in the last movement, and they should be 'too far apart'.

IMPORTANT: the knives, and the spinning top, should be hidden from view until used. For instance, place them in a bag/under cloth on the floor between the rototoms and templeblocks.

LARGE METAL SHEET

Bass drum (must be just able to reach susp.
Cymbal too)

Temple blocks(knives cut here)

Rototoms

Susp cymb. Crotales

Marimba

Xylophone

Jingles,cabasa, bongos

Wood chimes, sizzle cymb.

GONGS 1

GONGS2

Side Drum - apart from the rest.
(and set Top off here)

FRONT

Helpful Instructions for playing the last movement!

This movement is a palimpsest on "The Circus Band", a song by Charles Ives. All the material is taken from his song. Some of the lyrics of the song are provided in the score. You may perform them vocally if you wish. If you do, either speak while you play the material, or instead. Don't stop moving around however.

It is important that this movement in particular is performed with deadpan humour, straight-faced until the last ROUND in which you may smile manically (or not, if you can't face it!)

The movement alternates between ROUNDS (explained below) and marimba solos.

ROUNDS instruments

Instruments for the ROUNDS: one large (as big as possible) metal sheet stationed at back centre. Two 'gongs' stationed at left and right. The 'gongs' may be tam tams, large gongs, or a combination of these - more than one for each 'station' if you like. The three 'stations' should be as far apart as feasible, so that you have to run between each to keep things going. It should appear slightly ridiculous.

Sticks - use marimba sticks for most things. Suspend a bass drum beater from the bass drum and use this for the bass drum passages only. NB - when you have to play cymbal and drum it is intended that you 'stretch' since the suspended cymbal and drum will not be placed together.

How to interpret the score:

The **ROUNDS** consist of fragments surrounding the central 'gong/sheet' material.

- You should always start the section with gongs/sheet material (there's a 'START' instruction)
- You should end the section with the relevant END material (you may play this material before this point as well)
- You should play the other fragments interspersed with gong/sheet material.

- You can play more than one fragment before returning to the gongs but you must be able to hear the gongs/sheet at all times.
- If the gong/sheet sound is dying out, you must return and play some more before getting back to the fragments.
- Do not make the ROUND sections too long, err on the side of brevity - they get shorter as they go on. By the final ROUND you should be rushing between instruments as quickly as possibly, and creating a hell of a noise.
- In the first section the fragments will predominate. In the final section the gongs will be extremely loud, the fragments virtually submerged.)

The **Marimba** material between these sections is a cadenza, based on the Ives. You should play this material in a virtuous manner, generally fast - but with some leeway.

You should use quite hard sticks and aim for a brittle tone.

Spinning Top

In the final ROUND you should set a large spinning top going at about 10-15 seconds or so before you intend to stop playing. You should aim to leave the stage abruptly after the bass drum phrase, with the top still spinning and lots of noise in the air. If the top crashes while you're still playing, start it up again.

The idea is that the audience is left watching everything die down, with no performer on stage.

NB: if possible set the top going on top of the side drum so that it will make more noise and fall off as it stops (after you leave). If this is not possible make sure the top is set up somewhere very visible at the front of the stage - run forward to set it going and then go back to what you were hitting....

A general note on performing this piece: please feel free to ham it up, but a warning that if not taken at quite a lick, it is quite a long audience experience...In particular, the last movement improvisatory sections should be kept very short – and feel free to cut sections in any movement if the situation warrants this. This piece is, primarily, a theatrical ‘jeu d’esprit’.

Katharine Norman, June 2001.

If you need to contact the composer contact the British Music Information Centre at www.bmic.co.uk

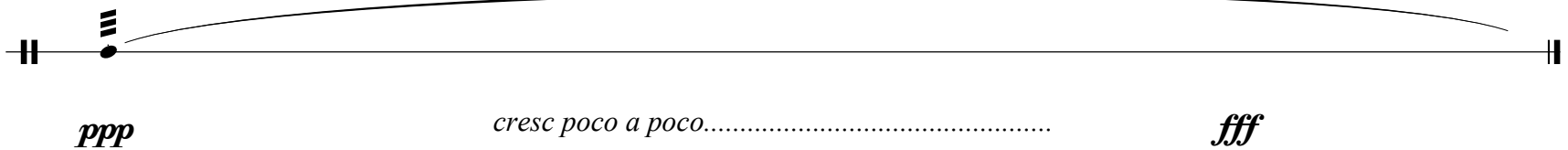
Helpful Instructions for Circus Performers

Katharine Norman

(roll up, roll up)

Walk on stage, do not acknowledge audience. Play a long snare drum roll, as indicated (start during applause if it happens).
At end of roll snap snares off, loudly. Chuck the sticks on the ground and move to position for JUGGLE. Start playing JUGGLE immediately.

with snares
15-20 seconds. The duration should be too long for comfort.

Snare drum (medium) 

ppp *cresc poco a poco.....* *fff*

JUGGLE:

practise the illusion of having three objects in the air.

as fast as possible

whilst still mechanical and precise

♩ = 120 or faster

(sweep across chimes with stick)

wooden wind chimes

sizzle cymbal

Xylophone

both chimes and cymbal: throughout, play with xylophone sticks, 'con brio' - do not stop the sounds.

use hard sticks, and play with two sticks throughout (preferably)

f *mp* *mf* *mp*

chimes

cymb.

Xyl.

f *mp* *mf*

chimes

cymb.

Xyl.

f *dim.....* *p*

15

faster 'swirl' up and down chimes

chimes

cymb.

Xyl.

f

f

ff

20

fast 'swirl' with stick

chimes

cymb.

Xyl.

f

ff

f

26

chimes

cymb.

Xyl.

f

mf

f

33

chimes

cymb.

Xyl.

mp

p

mp

p

2/16 12/16 8/16 6/16 12/16 6/16 12/16 10/16

2/16 12/16 8/16 6/16 12/16 6/16 12/16 10/16

2/16 12/16 8/16 6/16 12/16 6/16 12/16 10/16

40

chimes

cymb.

Xyl.

f

sub f

10/16 9/16 6/16 12/16 9/16

10/16 9/16 6/16 12/16 9/16

10/16 9/16 6/16 12/16 9/16

45

chimes

cymb.

Xyl.

ff

f

sfz

mp

9/16 12/16 5/16 12/16 2/16 6/16

9/16 12/16 5/16 12/16 2/16 6/16

9/16 12/16 5/16 12/16 2/16 6/16

51

chimes

cymb.

Xyl.

mp

sfz

p

f

58

chimes

cymb.

Xyl.

mp

sfz

p

f

64

chimes

cymb.

Xyl.

mp

mf

p

70

chimes

cymb.

Xyl.

mp

ff

p

mechanical s- do not rit or dim.

74

chimes

cymb.

Xyl.

no rit.

move to next piece in perfunctory manner,
with as small a pause between movements
as possible.

THE LADY CUT IN HALF:

Wiggle your toes and wave your arms, despite the situation. Expect knives.

timbale sticks or other heavy, hard sticks

RotoToms(5)

$\text{♩} = 100$

(long)

pp \longrightarrow *ff*

Musical notation for RotoToms(5) on a five-line staff. It begins with a half note G4 (marked *pp*) and a half note A4 (marked *ff*). The piece then moves through several measures of eighth notes with various articulations (accents, slurs) and dynamic markings. The notation includes a fermata over the first measure, a 5-measure phrase, and several 6-measure phrases. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 5/8, then 3/4, 2/4, 5/8, and finally 2/4.

7

roto

mf \longrightarrow *mp*

Musical notation for roto starting at measure 7 on a five-line staff. It features eighth notes with various articulations and dynamic markings. The notation includes a 5-measure phrase, two 3-measure phrases, and two 6-measure phrases. The time signature changes from 2/4 to 5/8, 3/4, 2/4, 5/8, and finally 2/4.

13

roto

f \longrightarrow *ff*

7

Musical notation for roto starting at measure 13 on a five-line staff. It features eighth notes with various articulations and dynamic markings. The notation includes three 3-measure phrases, two 5-measure phrases, and three 5-measure phrases. The time signature changes from 2/4 to 5/8, 2/4, 3/4, and finally 2/4.

19 TEMPLE BLOCKS - timbale or similar hard sticks

T. Bl.

Musical notation for measures 19-25. The staff begins with a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 19 starts with a dynamic marking of *f* and a sixteenth-note sextuplet. Measures 20-22 feature a series of notes with accents and dynamic markings of *sfz*. Measure 23 contains a triplet of eighth notes. Measures 24-25 show a series of eighth notes with accents, ending with a double bar line.

26

T. Bl.

Musical notation for measures 26-29. The staff begins with a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one sharp. Measure 26 starts with an accent ($\hat{$). Measures 27-28 feature a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note sextuplet. Measure 29 contains a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note sextuplet, ending with an accent and a double bar line.

30

T. Bl.

Musical notation for measures 30-32. The staff begins with a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one sharp. Measure 30 starts with a fiveteenth-note quintuplet. Measures 31-32 feature eighth notes with accents and dynamic markings of *sub f*, ending with a double bar line.

AD LIB - duration c. 30 seconds

LARGE METAL SHEET, with knives*

35

*place knives down,
pick up sticks*

l.v.

attaca!

fff
*(as far
as poss.)*

pp *accel.....poco.....a.....poco*

*** INSTRUCTIONS:**

Pick up two large knives or swords, one in each hand. (The knives should have been concealed until this point !)
 Use the blades and the tips to describe shapes on the metal sheet. Move slowly, also make large cutting motions in the air in the space between rototoms and templeblocks.
 This should start quietly and 'mysterioso' - NOT comical at all, but building to a loud and resonant wash of sound.

Notation: the staff represents the two extremities (top/bottom) of a large suspended metal sheet. Start with two slow downward gestures, as indicated, and end the passage with a long downward 'scrape'. Improvise ad lib.
 The passage should have a definite sense of building up, and increasing menace: it should last at least 30secs. and should be left to resonate through the subsequent material.

Furioso, a tempo

36 ♩=100

T. Bl.

roto

ff

mf

sf

mp \leftarrow *ff*

42

T. Bl.

roto

p

f

mp

48

T. Bl.

roto

p

mp

METAL SHEET - pick up knives, as before

duration c. 5-10 secs MAX!

one short gesture only, curving scrape
- both knives - top to bottom then 'cut' the air between rototoms and templeblocks, as before, to finish.

l.v.
attaca, as before

Musical score for T. Bl. and roto. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of four measures. The T. Bl. part starts with a rest in the first measure, followed by a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure, a rest in the third measure, and a sixteenth-note triplet followed by a sixteenth-note quintuplet in the fourth measure. The roto part starts with a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure, a quintuplet of eighth notes in the third measure, and a sixteenth-note triplet followed by a sixteenth-note quintuplet in the fourth measure. Dynamics include *fff* *sub*, *ff*, *f*, *mp*, *ff*, and *ff*. The instruction "stop both notes" is written below the roto staff in the fourth measure.

TIGHTROPE:

maintain the appearance of poise and balance whilst teetering on the brink.

With tongue-in-cheek Zen-ness. Slow, poised.

The musical score consists of three staves: Cabasa, Jingles, and Crotales. The Cabasa staff uses a double bar line and includes a 'slow shake' section with a wavy line, followed by notes marked 'niente' and 'p' (piano). The Jingles staff also uses a double bar line and includes a 'slow shake' section with a wavy line, followed by notes marked 'niente' and 'p'. The Crotales staff uses a treble clef and includes notes marked 'f' (forte) and 'mf' (mezzo-forte). There are three fermatas in the score: one at the end of the Cabasa section, one at the end of the Jingles section, and one at the end of the Crotales section.

Cabasa

slow shake

niente *p* *niente*

p *niente*

place cabasa down carefully
pick up crotales beater

Jingles

niente *p* *niente*

place jingles down carefully, deliberately -
while still playing cabasa

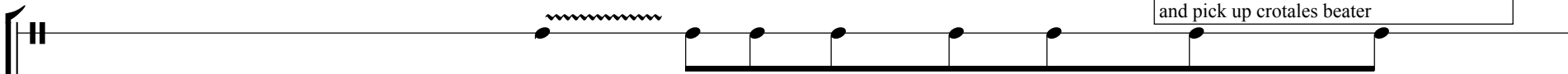
place beater down carefully, pick up
jingles (LH) and cabasa (RH), in a slow, deliberate manner

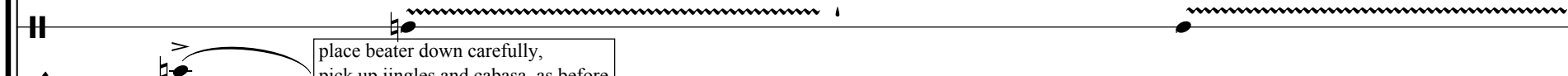
Crotales

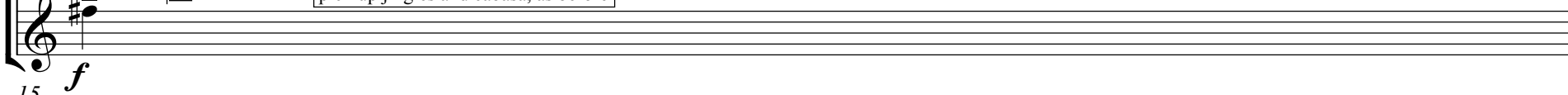
f *mf*

slowly screw this page up
into a ball, then drop it at your feet, with
ostentatious Zen-like concentration.
(this is part of the piece)


9

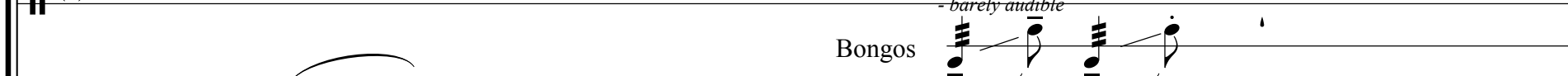
Cab.  put cabasa down while still playing jingles, and pick up crotales beater

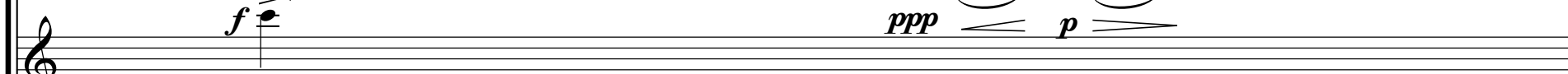
Jing.  place beater down carefully, pick up jingles and cabasa, as before


Crot.  **f**

15

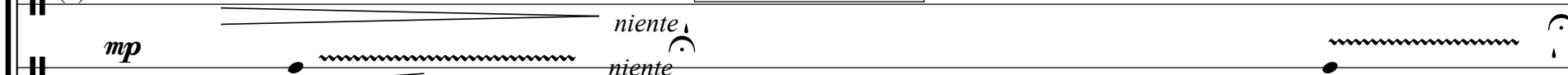
Cab.  put jingles down, carefully


Jing.  cabasa head down, roll **pp**

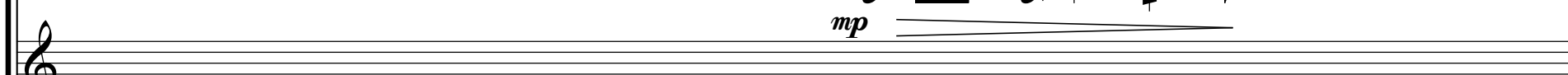
Bongos  'gliss' across lower drum as you trem, - barely audible


Crot.  **f** **ppp** **p**

21

Cab.  (accel.....rit.....) put both down, carefully

Jing.  **mp** **pp** niente niente

Bong.  **mp**

Crot.  **mp**

slowly screw this page up into a ball, then drop it at your feet, as before.

27

Cab. Jing.

Bong.

Crot.

mp *f*

34 *head down roll, ad lib*

place cabasa down while playing jingles

accel..... .rit.....

Jing.

pp *accel e cresc.....*

Bong.

Crot.

38 *niente*

Cab.

Jing.

mp *f* *mp* *sempre mp*

accel to a somewhat manic jingle.....for a moment.....then rit.....

Crot.

f *mf* *p*

Stop playing jingles, place jingles and crotales beater down without ceremony. Screw this page up into a ball, quickly, chuck it in the air. This time you are bored!

40

Cab. *place cabasa down, quickly, pick up jingles*

Jing. *niente*

Crot. *hold jingles, quickly pick up crotales beater* *put down crotales beater, quickly. SLOWLY pick up cabasa*

mp *sfz*

43

Cab. *pp*

Jing. *pp*

With cabasa in one hand and jingles in the other: start with arms lowered, at your sides, then raise arms slowly until they are outstretched (as if balancing). Shake the cabasa and jingles very slightly as you do this to produce very small sounds. Freeze for a moment in this final position, remain silent. Then plonk both instruments down suddenly, without particular care. Move hurriedly, as if late, to start next movement without preamble.

Spinning Plates Act (and the lure of the Big Top)

Don't stop for an instant. Keep going round and round.

Smile. If everything falls about you, cover your ears.

(A palimpsest for Mr. Ives !)

♩=132 (about) In quickstep time

B.D. (b.d. beater) OR Woodchimes (stick handle)

'bout big cir cus joys

Sizzle cymbal (marimba hard/med. sticks)

if END:
-rush to MARIMBA!
mf

ROUND1* c. 45 secs

Dynamics: *ppp/mp* range unless otherwise indicated.

Speech (optional): *mf/f* range.

Sizzle (hard sticks) OR B.D. (hard sticks)

comes the band, Oh!

Xyl. (hard sticks)

Down Main street,

START HERE

misterioso - start *ppp* and build to *mp*

METAL SHEET: tap or scrape with stick handles (only), ad lib.

B.D.

Down Main Street,

Woodchimes (stick handle)

both stopped

Susp. cym (hard stick)
B.D. (b.d. beater)

* read the performance instructions for this movement first!!!

hard sticks, bright tone (for all Marimba sections)

Marimba: 1 - all summer long

ad lib, quasi una cadenza

♩ = 132

con moto

poco rit...

Meno mosso

Marimba

9

accel....

rit...

sub con moto

*trem. ad lib
schmalzty...*

Mar.

18

(swooping gliss, ad lib, all over)

(gliss as before)

Mar.

25

rubato...

a tempo - con moto

no rit!

Mar.

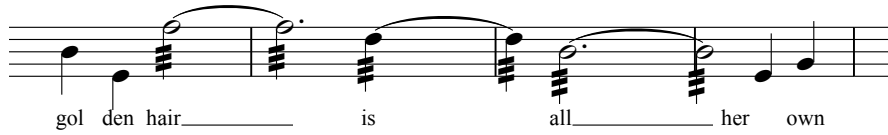
stop
and rush straight
on to ROUND 2

ROUND 2 c. 45 secs

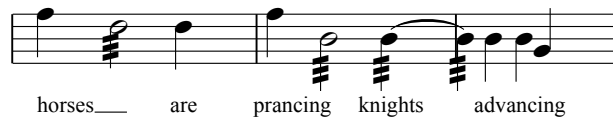
Dynamics: *mp/f* range unless otherwise indicated.
Speech (optional): *mf/ff* range.

♩=132 (about) In quickstep time

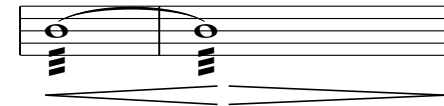
Rototoms OR T.B.



T.B.



Rototoms



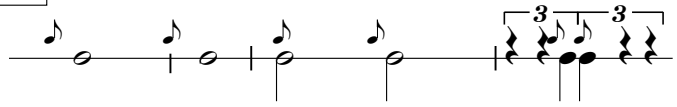
START HERE

tenebroso - build from mp up to mf

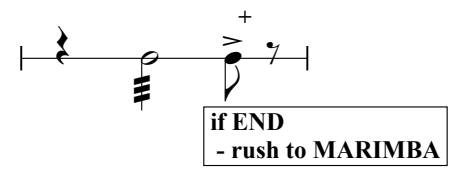
METAL SHEET: tap with stick handle, or stick or soft stick roll, ad lib

GONG 1:
tap or scrape with stick handle (only)

B.D.



B.D. (marimba sticks)



Rototoms OR T.B



Marimba: 2 - all in pink

♩ = 132

Marimba



fast swoop
gliss.
gliss.
mp
ff
ff

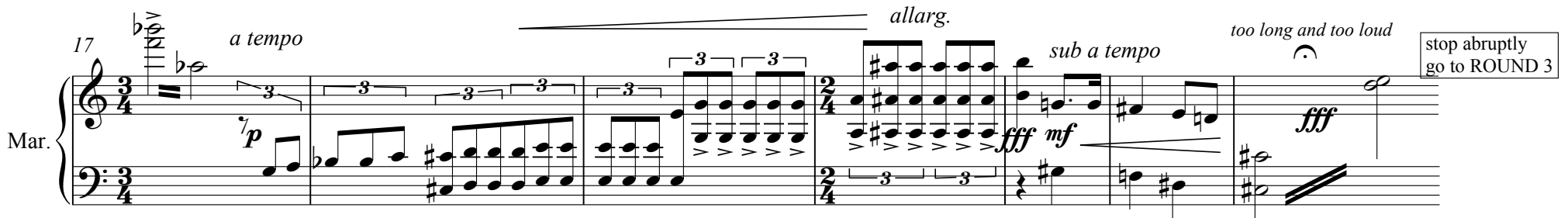
(or E and C,
and gliss up in 3rds)

Mar.



ad lib
subp
mp
ff
f
p
poco meno mosso - sickly sweet

Mar.



a tempo
allarg.
sub a tempo
too long and too loud
p
fff
mf
fff
stop abruptly
go to ROUND 3

ROUND 3 20-30 secs

Dynamics: *mf/fff* range unless otherwise indicated.
Speech (optional): *yell!*

Crotales = 120

where is the la - dy all in pink?

$\text{♩} = 132$
B.D. *marcato, frantic!*
appog. on rim

Crotales OR Bongos* (ad lib)

$\text{♩} = 120$ (no roll)

last year she waved

Jingles

$\text{♩} = 120$

can she have died?

START

più mosso, agitato becoming frantic!

METAL SHEET and GONG1: hit, scrape, tap with handle, or stick (of choice), or roll, ad lib
 GONG2: scrape or tap with handle, hit with stick (no rolls)

Dynamics: *mf/fff* - gongs and sheet predominate

Move quickly between instruments.

Cabasa = 120

$\text{♩} = 132$

Bongos

fp *ff* **END - then rush to MARIMBA**

*Bongos always with hands/fingers

Marimba: 3 - Cleopatra

♩ = 132
fast waltz time

slightly affected
...delicato

gliss.
gliss.

mp *mf* *mp* *pp*

12

brisk, matter-of-fact

f *p* *mf*

20

molto allarg. *pure schmaltz* *Grandioso, con moto*

sfz *sfz* *sfz* *molto rall...* *sub* *A tempo*

pp *f* *fff* *mf*

29

fast chromatic scale, ad lib - accel *Grandioso* *no dim, no rit.*

sfz *p cresc.....poco.....a.....poco.....molto.....* *fff* *fff*

stop abruptly.
Go to ROUND 4
(as if cut off)

ROUND 4 20 seconds - at most! (plus sound from spinning top, after you leave)
KEEP GOING ROUND AND ROUND. DON'T STOP FOR AN INSTANT.
Smile.

♩=132

B.D.

Produce Spinning Top
 - set it going
 c. 15 SECONDS BEFORE END*

START

in a manic fashion, but deadpan

METAL SHEET, GONG1, GONG2:
 the lot, ad lib - roll, hit, scrape etc.
 mf/fff range -build up until extremely
 loud and active.
 fff/ffff
 Rush between instruments.

L.V.

fff

Sizzle cymbal (hard/med. sticks)

END abruptly, walk off stage
IMMEDIATELY (don't run)
(the sound - and Top - continues)

B.D. (b.d. beater)
'cannon shots'

* SEE PERFORMANCES INSTRUCTIONS!!!