SPECIOUSNESS

Analysis:

This composition is programmatic, complying with the following narrative:

A man is born who wants to discover the truth; the true meaning of life and existence. He is shown the ideas believed by his fellow humans but learns nothing new and simply reviews the suggestions put forth by society. War is frequently around us, in some form of conflict, and he decides that greed and power alone govern human life, overlooking the beauty that is present simultaneously. He dedicates his life to what he thinks is correct (fighting for what is 'right') and is killed in the process. After his death he experiences three prominent beliefs of "afterlife" in our society; hell, heaven and simple decomposition. But although he has died nothing has changed; the cycle of life continues despite our lack of understanding as to its purpose and meaning.

I have named this piece *Speciousness ("Specious – deceptively good, correct or pleasing")* because I think the ideas of heaven and hell are only in existence to give people a sense of purpose and hope. It is an idea that is too pleasing, too good to be true.

The form is as follows:

Bars 1- 11 = birth

Bars 12- 30 = celebration of life

Bars 31-49 = war

Bars 50-65 = death

Bars 66-88 = hell

Bars 89-108 = heaven

Bars 109-123 = nothing (decomposition)

Bars 124-138 = cycle begins again.

The instrumentation of each section is suited to the atmosphere and idea that I wish to portray. For example, during the celebration section there is the use of tambourine, which has traditionally been associated with festivity. The required instruments and props are given in appendix 2.

The first section from bars 1-11 represents birth, wonder and mystery. The celebration of life begins at bar 12 and continues until bar 30. The festive atmosphere is portrayed through the instrumentation, including tambourine. The tone row used throughout this part is taken from the pitches that occur from putting the words "The Meaning Is" into an alphabet matrix (see example 1).

Pitches	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	I took the letters in order and then took the remaining pitches and letters into another pitch matrix (see example 2).
Alphabet	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	
	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	

Example 1: Original alphabet matrix, *Speciousness.*

Pitches	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
Alphabet			A	B		C				D	E	F
			G	H		I				J		L
						M				N		O

Example 2: Second pitch matrix, *Speciousness.*

The pitch row I obtained is E C C# A G B A# F F# D# D G#. I use the words "The Meaning is" because it can be argued that when we are born we are pure and aren't worried about the meaning of life because we already know it.

Bars 31-49 shows the war aspect of the story and uses the pitch row D G# E C C# A G B A# F F# D# which were taken from the words "Is The Meaning …?". This is the time in life when people begin to ask and question the purpose of life and guess at the answer. The plucked rubber band as well as various tappings corresponds to the guns and bits and pieces of rubble falling. The multiphonics on the flute (bar 34 and 47) are representative of the drone of engines and planes, while the fluttertongue vibratissimo are supposed to sound similar to the roar of machine guns. The shaking of Chinese medicine balls (bar 36) symbolizes the ringing of alarms and the paperclip along the piano string (bar 44) is the whine of a bomb. The downwards glissando on two flute headpieces simultaneously ending in a loud cymbal crash epitomizes the whining of a bomb and the explosion that kills the man, effectively ending the war section of his life and beginning death.
Bars 50-65 are in D minor (D for Death) and includes piano (slightly out of phase in the bass and treble) to represent the church organ at a funeral. Death affects people

differently and although it happens all the time no one can really knows what happens afterwards.

Bars 66-88: "Hell". Using the tone row F D# C G# A# B F E A C# D G from the words "Is Punishment". The instruments do not need to be transposed from this row the pitches can be inserted exactly as they are. The crunching of cellophane sounds like the crackling of flames (which are present in the stereotypical image of hell), vocal hissing (bar 69) is the steaming lava and the clarinet drone is reminiscent of the ringing pressure in our ears when we're in an underground area. The screams, moaning and marching are created by the souls condemned to torture. The evil laugh in bar 83 is that of the devil and the tolling of the chime indicates the passage of time to those serving their sentences.

Bars 89-108: "Heaven". This section is in G major (G for God) since major has been traditionally used to signify goodness and happiness, and the singing is obviously the joyous choirs singing praise.

Bar 109-123: "Nothing – decomposition". The shaking material represents the wings of the bird of death flapping as it circles over the carcass, while the clarinet mouthpiece sounds are its cries. It then pecks at the body (tapping in bar 111) briefly before again flying away. The remainder of this portion of the piece is dedicated to trying to sound static and quiet using C whole tone scale.

Bars 124-138: "The cycle continues". This utilises the material from the beginning of the piece to heighten the idea of beginning again.

Appendix 1: Notes for performers, *Speciousness.*

alap – as loud as possible

SCMB – Shaking Chinese medicine ball

PTR – plucking toilet roll (actually the rubber band placed around it).

////// - A shaded bar denotes the continuation of the technique occurring in the previous bar.

↘ - Gradually lowering the pitch.

Appendix 2: Requirements, *Speciousness.*

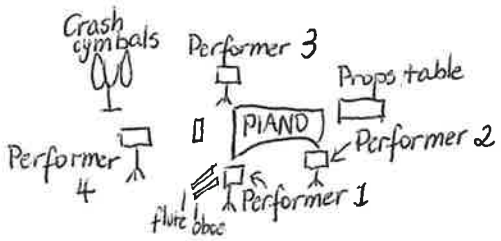
Performer 1: flute, oboe, and piano.

Performer 2: tambourine, toilet roll with rubber band around it, Chinese medicine ball/s, pen, paperclip, piano, chair, flute head joint, cellophane, chime, material (e.g. tea-towel).

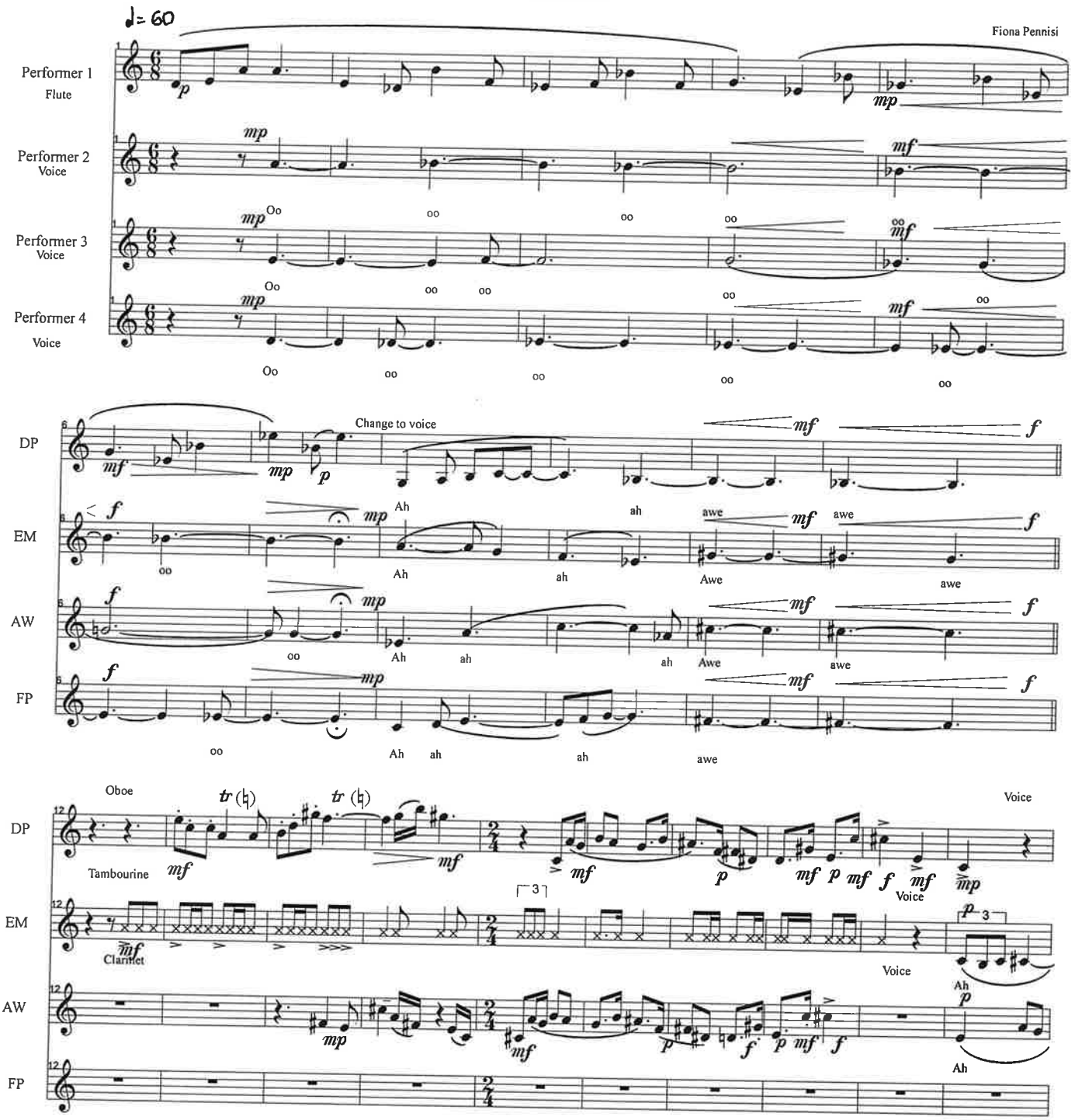
Performer 3: clarinet,

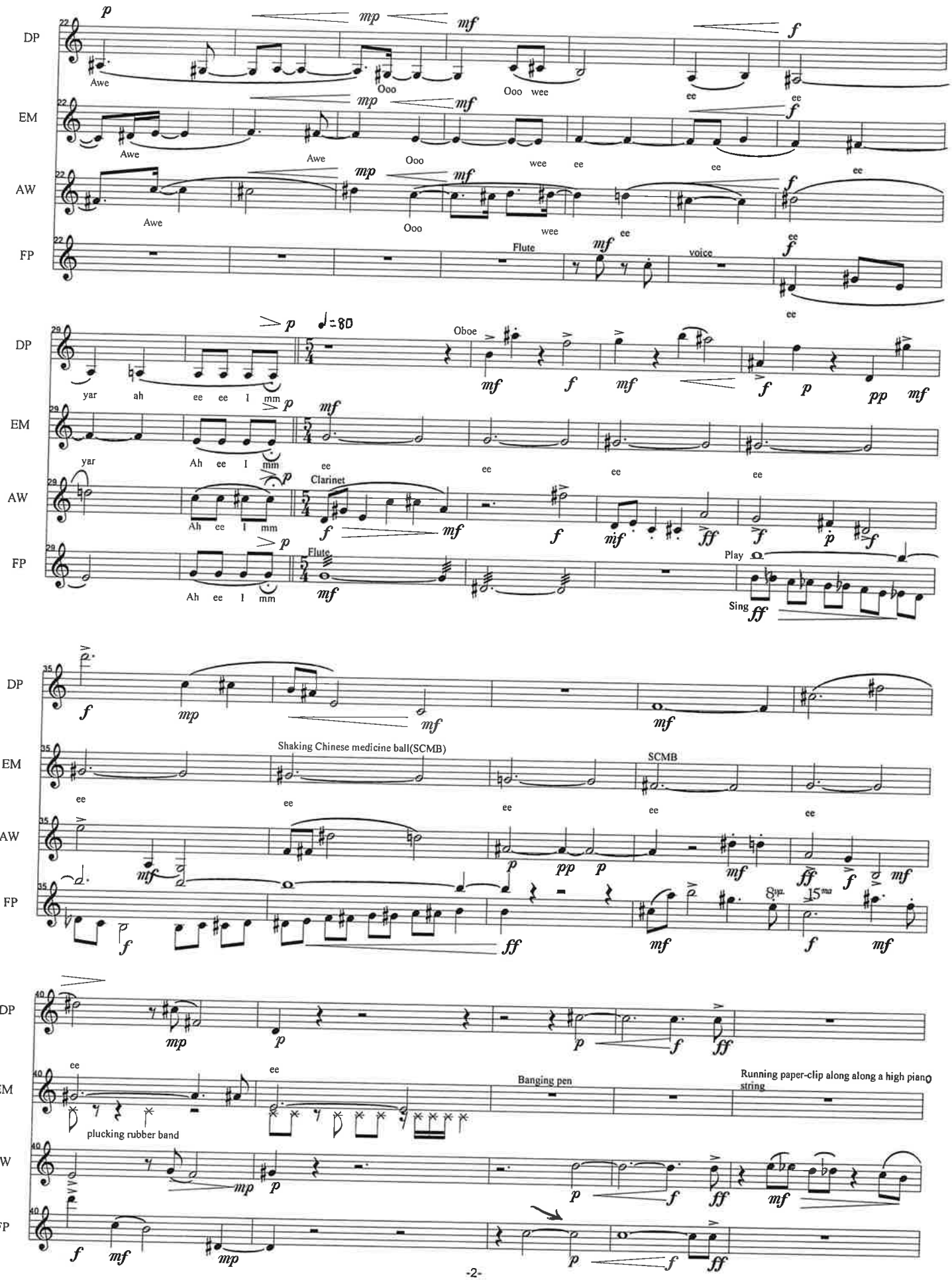
Performer 4: flute, clarinet, medicine ball, piano, chair, pencil, crash cymbals, piano.

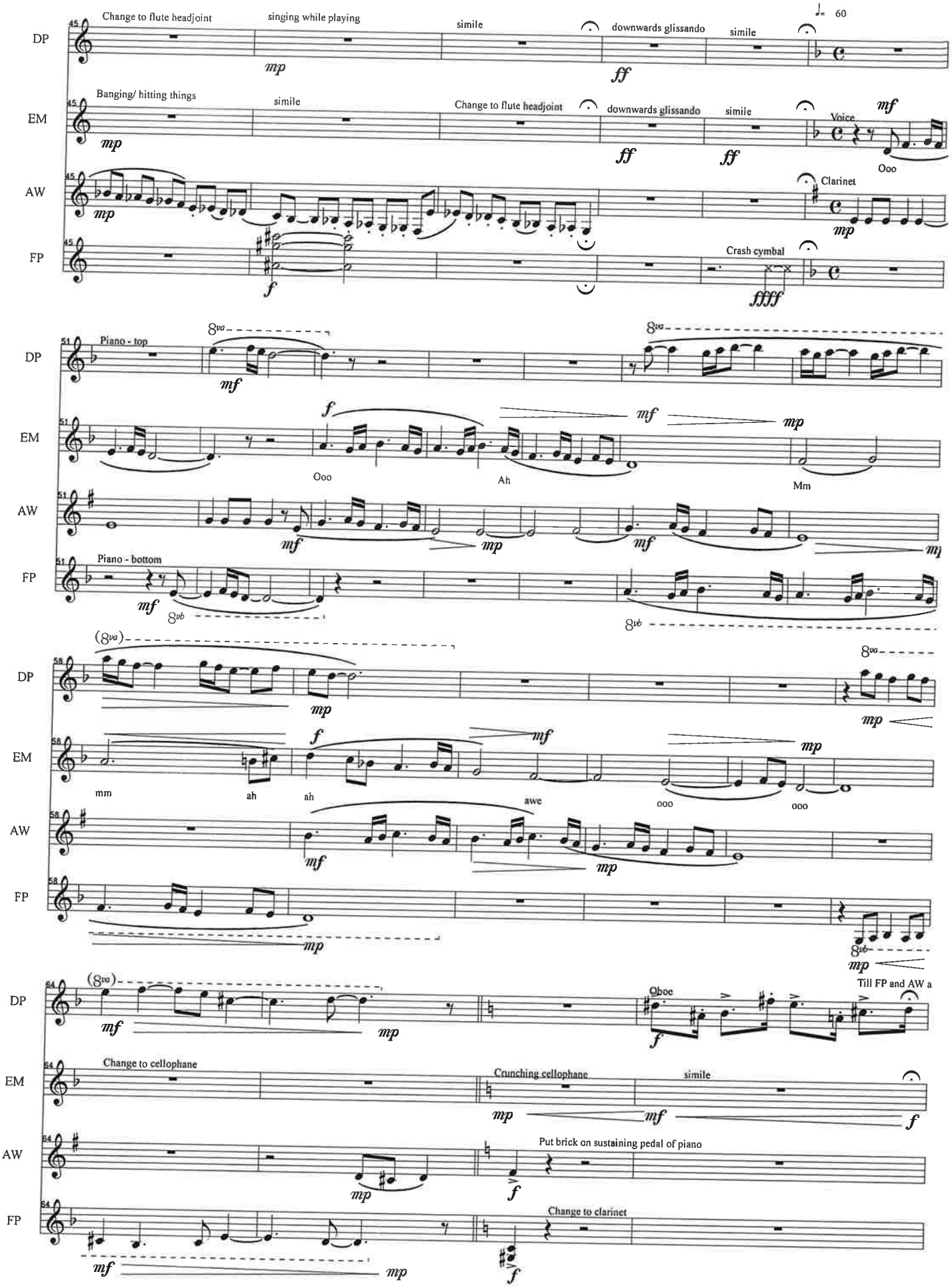
Appendix 3: Stage layout, *Speciousness.*

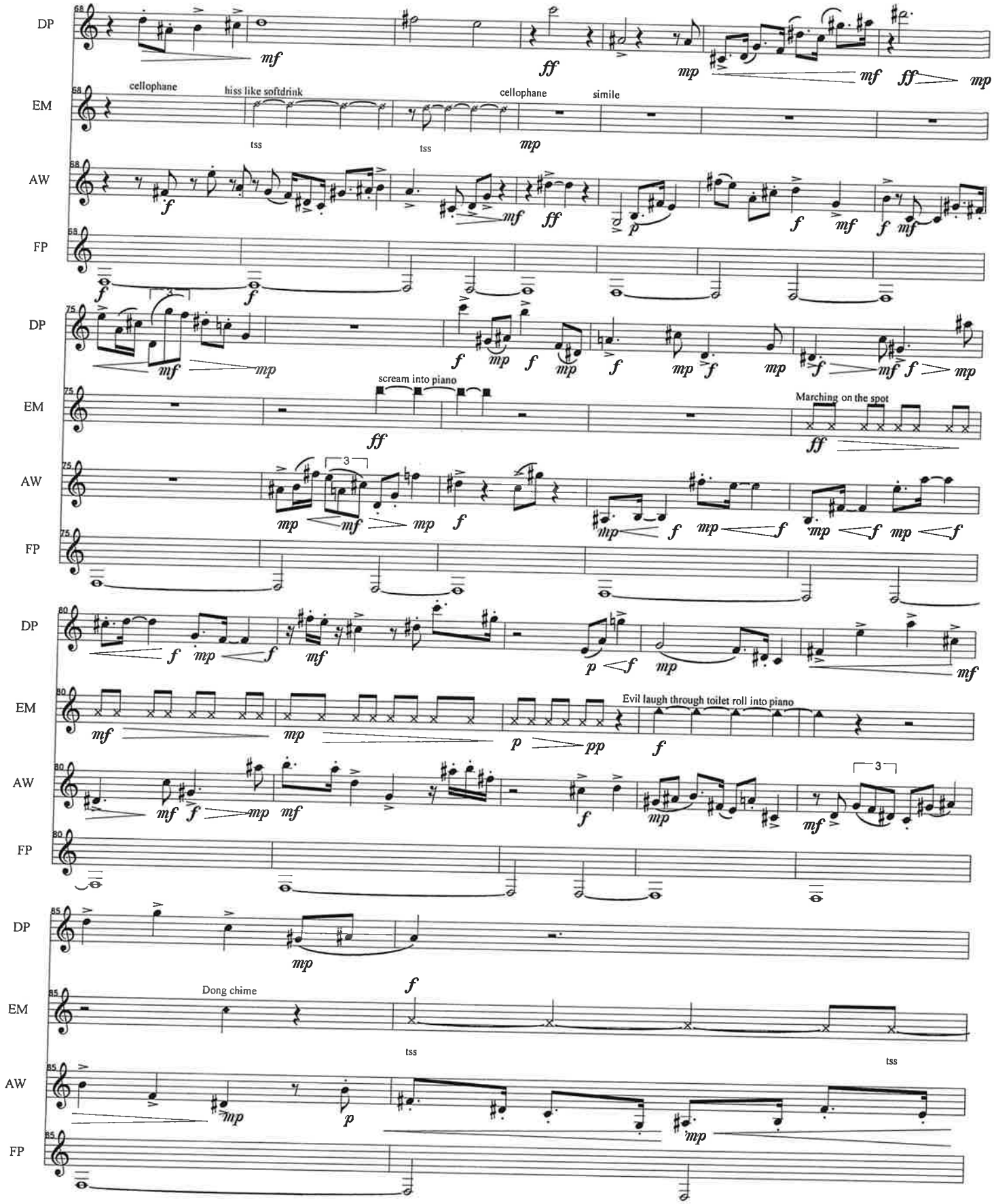


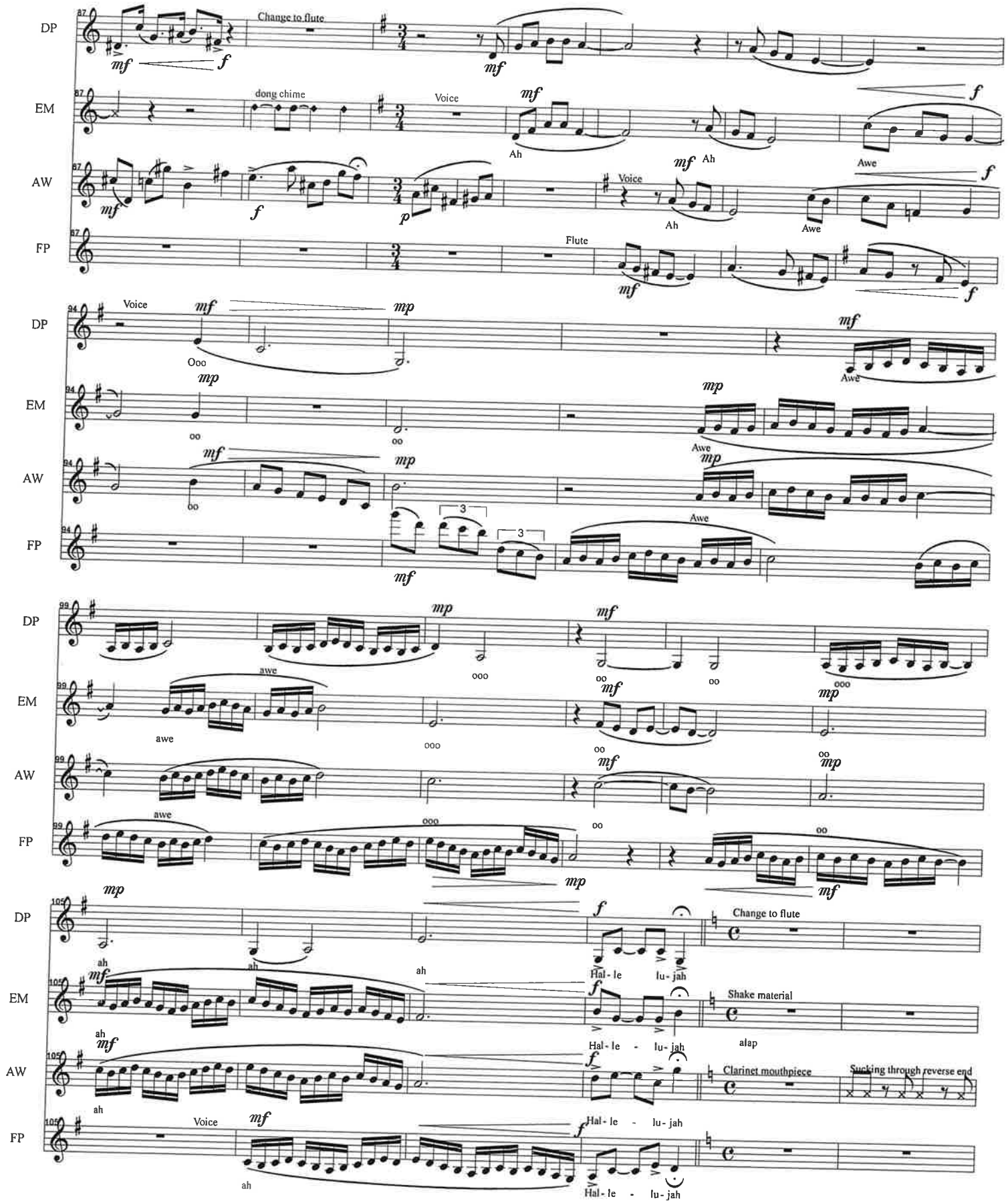
SPECIOUSNESS

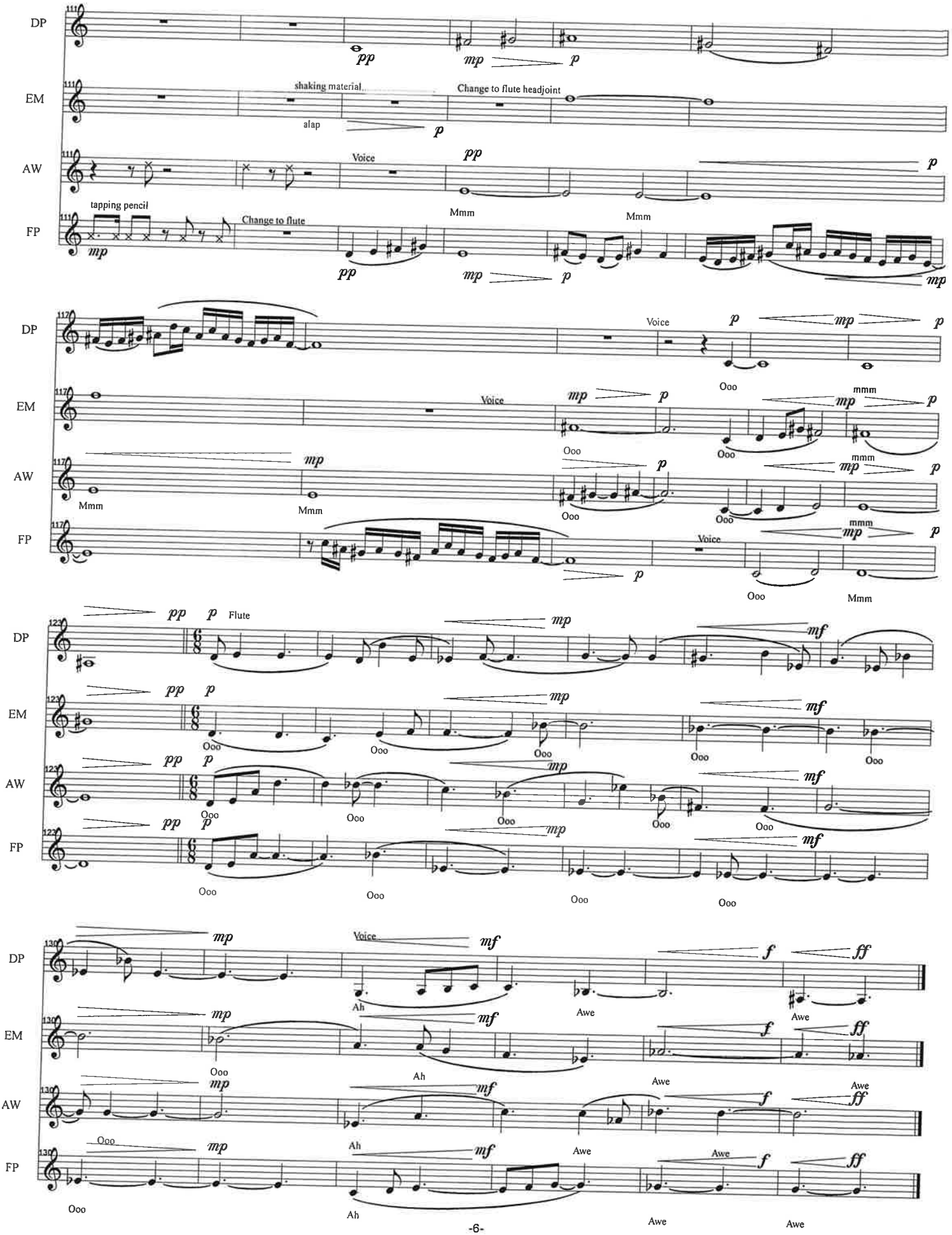



DP
EM
AW
FP
Awe
Ooo
Ooo wee
ee
Flute
voice
yar ah ee ee I mm
Oboe
Ah ee I mm
Clarinet
Play
Sing
Shaking Chinese medicine ball(SCMB)
SCMB
plucking rubber band
Banging pen
Running paper-clip along along a high piano string


♩= 60
DP
EM
AW
FP
Change to flute headjoint
singing while playing
simile
downwards glissando
simile
Banging/ hitting things
simile
Change to flute headjoint
downwards glissando
simile
Voice
Ooo
Clarinet
Crash cymbal
Piano - top
Piano - bottom
Ooo
Ah
Mm
mm
ah
ah
awe
ooo
ooo
Oboe
Till FP and AW a
Change to cellophane
Crunching cellophane
simile
Put brick on sustaining pedal of piano
Change to clarinet


DP
EM
AW
FP
cellophane
hiss like softdrink
tss
tss
cellophane
simile
scream into piano
Marching on the spot
Evil laugh through toilet roll into piano
Dong chime
tss
tss


DP
EM
AW
FP
Change to flute
dong chime
Voice
Ah
Awe
Flute
Ooo
oo
awe
ooo
ah
Hal - le
lu - jah
Shake material
alap
Clarinet mouthpiece
Sucking through reverse end


DP
EM
AW
FP
shaking material
Change to flute headjoint
alap
Voice
tapping pencil
Change to flute
Mmm
Ooo
Flute
Ah
Awe