

# DEATH OF THE CHICKEN

Music Ed Hughes

Words Peter Cant

version for:

Counter-tenor (Cockerel, Straw, Stone)

Tenor (A Hen, Nuts, Mice, Fox, Coal)

Piano

Duration c. 14 mins

Libretto adapted by Peter Cant  
from the Grimm Tale 'Death of the Little Hen'  
(2018, rev 2021)

Music by Ed Hughes (Draft 5, 2022)

This version is for experimental purposes and requires two singers to take on several roles.

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Cast list as envisioned  
in libretto First Draft:

Taken here by:

A COCKEREL	Counter-tenor
A HEN (deceased)	Tenor
NUTS (2 or more)	Tenor
MICE (2 or more)	Tenor
FOX	Mezzo-soprano
WOLF	Ct + Tenor
ELK	Ct + Tenor
LION	Ct + Tenor
BEAR	Ct + Tenor
OTHER ANIMALS	Ct + Tenor
STRAW	Counter-tenor
COAL	Tenor
STONE	Counter-tenor

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Electronic effects: one mic on piano, plus vocal mics probably on stands on the stage. Connected to a special Max/MSP patch. Speakers pointing towards audience and behind audience. The aim is to transform aspects of the sound into a new space, and produce an immersive and slightly apocalyptic effect.

The cues on the live sound part indicate key presses as follows:

G = granulation on. H = granulation off.

C = chorus on. V = chorus off.

S = spatial effect on, repress for off.

R = reverb effect on, repress for off.

P = harmoniser on. Q = harmoniser off.

x indicates the effect is off.

# Death of the Chicken

Words Peter Cant

Music Ed Hughes

♩ = 132      A COCKEREL CRIES OVER THE BODY OF A HEN      COCKEREL *mp*

Countertenor

Tenor

Live sound      [G] [C] (Apply granular and chorus effect to piano)

♩ = 132      *fp*      *fp*      *fp*      *fp*

Piano

*f*      *mf*      *f*      *pp*

6  
Ct.      *f*      *p*      *f*

las poor Chi-cken, O      Chi-cken my love      My poor poor Chi -

T.

Pno.      *fp*      *fp*      *fp*      *fp*

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for a piece titled 'Death of the Chicken'. It features five staves: Countertenor, Tenor, Live sound, Piano, and vocal parts (Ct. and T.). The Countertenor part has a single note 'A-' at the end. The Tenor part is mostly silent. The Live sound part includes a box with 'G' and 'C' and the instruction '(Apply granular and chorus effect to piano)'. The Piano part has a tempo of 132 and dynamic markings of *f*, *mf*, *f*, and *pp*. The vocal parts (Ct. and T.) have lyrics: 'las poor Chi-cken, O Chi-cken my love My poor poor Chi -'. The Ct. part has dynamic markings of *f*, *p*, and *f*. The Pno. part has dynamic markings of *fp*.

10 *mp* *f*

Ct. *mp* *f* *f* *f*

- cken hath cho - ken She gagged on a nut

T.

Pno. *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

14 *p*

Ct. *p*

Too large for her throat And now will

T.

Pno. *fp* *ff* *p*

18 *f* *mp*

Ct. ne - ver\_ be wo - - ken. MICE *f*

T. O

Sound [S] (Apply spatial effect to piano)

Pno. *ff*

22 *mf*

T. poor\_ poor\_ Cock - er-el, She was your

Pno. *8va*

26 *f*

T. friend.

Pno. *f*

29 *f*

T. How did she meet such a

Pno.

31

T. sti-cky st - cky end?

Pno.

34

T. A NUTS  
We

Sound G V S R (apply reverb to piano)

Pno. *ff* A *pp*

38

T. saw it all: the two came pe-cking on the place they call Nut

Pno.

Red.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 38 to 42. The vocal line (T.) begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The lyrics are "saw it all: the two came pe-cking on the place they call Nut". The piano accompaniment (Pno.) features a complex texture with many beamed eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand. A large slur spans across the piano part. A reduction line is shown below the piano part.

43

T. Moun-tain They swore To scratch u - pon the mound, They *p*

Pno.

Red.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 43 to 47. The vocal line (T.) continues with the lyrics "Moun-tain They swore To scratch u - pon the mound, They" and ends with a dynamic marking of *p*. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) continues with similar complex textures. A large slur spans across the piano part. A reduction line is shown below the piano part.

48

T. swore to scratch u - pon the mound And share of a-ny nut a-ny nut they

Pno. *pp* *mf* *pp*

Red.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 48 to 52. The vocal line (T.) continues with the lyrics "swore to scratch u - pon the mound And share of a-ny nut a-ny nut they". The piano accompaniment (Pno.) features dynamic markings of *pp*, *mf*, and *pp*. A large slur spans across the piano part. A reduction line is shown below the piano part.

53 COCKEREL

Ct. *f*  
 I was in the bra-cken, po-king, When I heard the chi-cken cho-king, clu-cking:

T. *f*  
 found.

Pno. *f*

Into vocal mic  
 HEN (deceased)

T. *ff*  
 Cock' - rel leave the moun-tain! Fetch me wa-ter from the foun-tain!

Apply reverb to vocal mic

Sound

Pno. *mp*

T. *f*  
 Quick - ly, quick - ly or I'll die! Fetch me wa - ter

Pno. *f*



64 *ff*

T. from the foun-tain! Quick - ly, quick - ly or I'll die.

Pno.

67 (Normal) NUTS *f*

T. If on-ly her brain had been

Sound Close vocal mic

Pno. *p* *mf*

71 MICE

T. half as big As the nut she swa-llowed, the gree - dy pig You nas-ty nuts you

Pno. *p*

75

Ct. *mf* COCKEREL *p*  
My pre-cious hen was not to blame.

T. *pp* NUTS  
su-lly her name If on-ly her brain had been

Pno. *pp*

79

Ct.

T. *ff* MICE  
half as big as the nut she swa-lloved the gree - dy pig You

Pno.

COCKEREL

82

Ct. My pre-cious hen was

T. nas-ty nuts you su-lly her name

Pno.

85

Ct. not to blame.. No, rea - lly it was I Oh,

T.

Pno.

87 *f* *p* *ff*

Ct. why?! Oh,

T.

Pno. *f*

89

Ct. why?! THE COCKEREL CRIES AGAIN

T.

Sound

Pno. *p*



105 *f* *p* *pp*

Ct. cart Then ca - rry her to her nest, ca - rry her to her rest

T. MICE *p* *mf*  
O - K, we will hitch our-selves

Pno. *f* *p* *pp* *p*

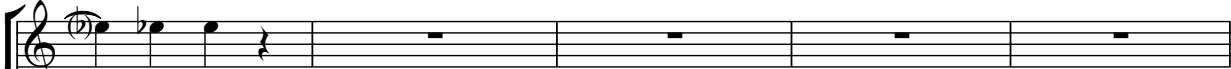
111 *f* *p*

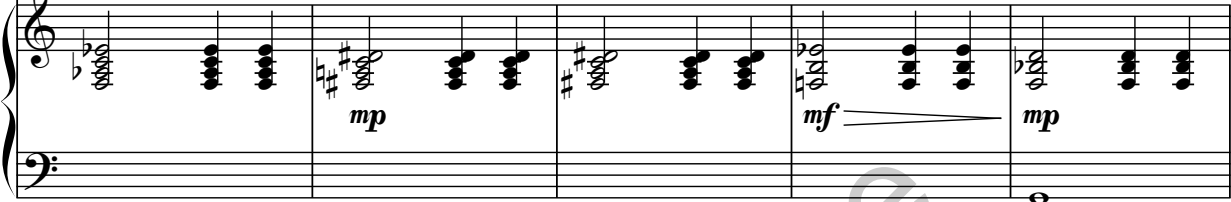
T. to the front of this cart, Then ca - rry her to her rest, ca - rry her to\_


Pno. *f* *p*

THE HEN IS PUT ON A MAKE-SHIFT CART.  
 THE MICE FASTEN THEMSELVES TO THE FRONT OF  
 THE CART, LIKE HORSES. THE COCKEREL PUTS ON  
 THE TOP HAT AND TAILS OF AN UNDERTAKER AND  
 LEADS THE PROCESSION. THE MICE DRAG THE CART.  
 THE NUTS REMOVE THEIR CAPS AND BOW THEIR  
 HEADS AS THE PROCESSION PASSES BY

117

T.    
 her rest.

Pno.    
 mp mf mp



122

Ct. 

T. 

Sound 

Pno.    
 pp mf pp ppp



D

127 ♩.=64

Ct.

T. *MICE*  
*mf*  
Now you seem a li - ttle less vexed will you tell us

D

♩.=64

sim.

Pno. *mf*

COCKEREL

CLEARs THROAT

133

Ct.

T. *f* *ff*  
what ha-ppened next? Will you tell us what ha-ppened next?

Pno. *f* *ff*



139

Ct. *mf*  
ran to the foun - tain to beg wa - ter from its lips

T.

Pno. *mf*

143

Ct. *mp* *mf*  
But the foun - tain mu - ttered "On - ly for the silk

T.

Pno. *p*

148

Ct. *f* *p*

from a brides-maid's hips. So I asked at a

T.

Pno. *f* *p* *p*

153

Ct. *f* *p*

we-dding, will you give some silk to me \_\_\_\_\_ And they

T.

Pno. *mf*

157

Ct. *said "First fetch down that poe - sy that we*

T.

Pno.


160 *f* *p*

Ct. *tossed in - to that tree."*

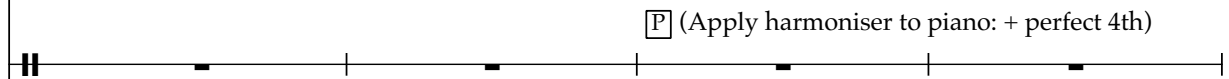
T.

Pno.

163

Ct. 

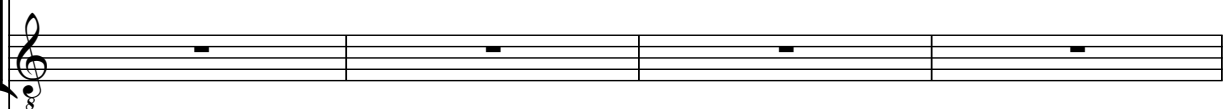
T. *MICE*  
*f*  
Slow down! Cock' - rel, the way is full of rocks.

Sound  [P] (Apply harmoniser to piano: + perfect 4th)

Pno.  *p*

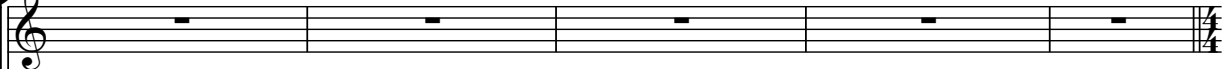
167

Ct. *COCKEREL*  
*mf*  
There's some - bo - dy a - pproa - ching.

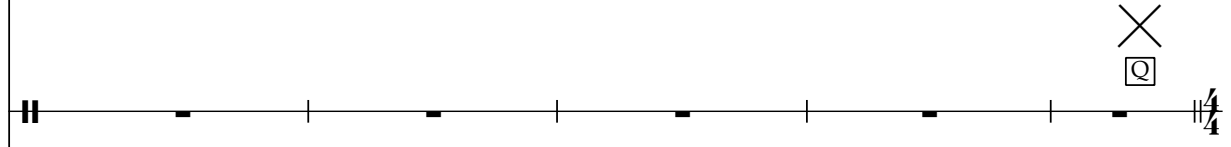
T. 

Pno. 

171

Ct. 

T. *f* MICE *ff* FOX *f*  
Who goes there? — My name is Fox.

Sound 


Pno. *f* 

Perusal Score

E

176 ♩ = 112

Ct. 

T.  [FOX] *mf*  
This way is ra-ther tri-cky, Whi-ther

E

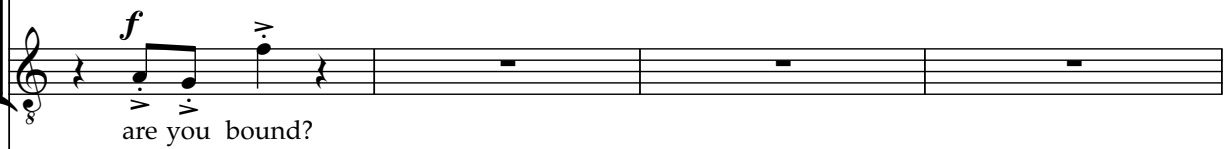
♩ = 112

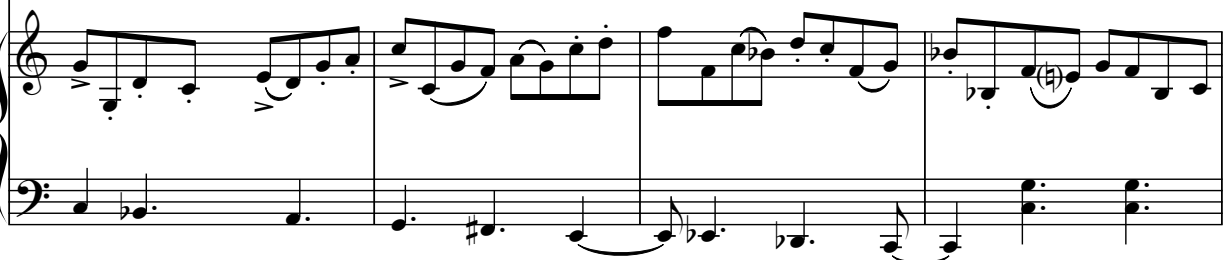
Pno.  *p*

COCKEREL

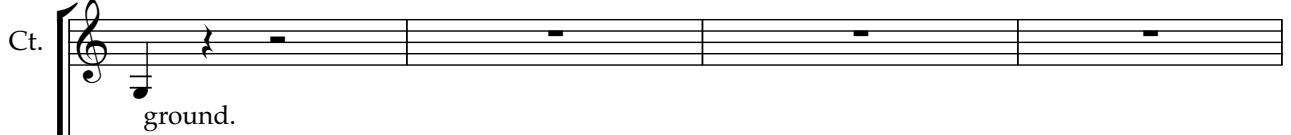
181

Ct.  *mp* *f*  
My hen is dead. I go to bu-ry her in the

T.  *f*  
are you bound?

Pno. 

185

Ct. 

T. 

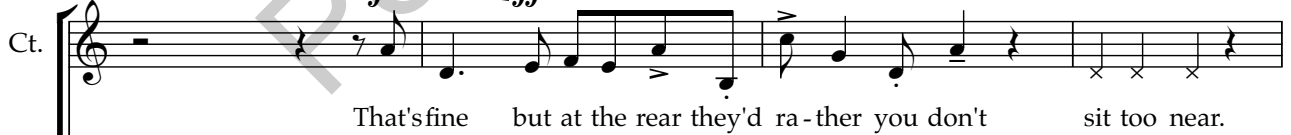
**R** (Apply reverb to piano)

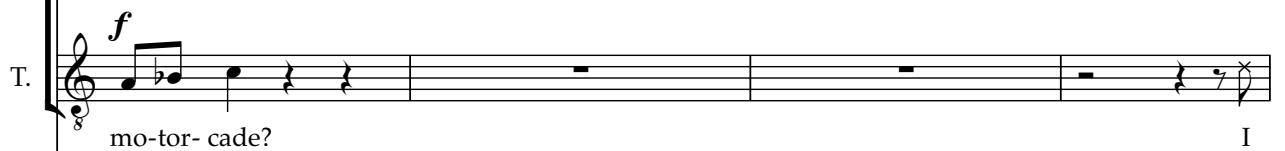
Sound 

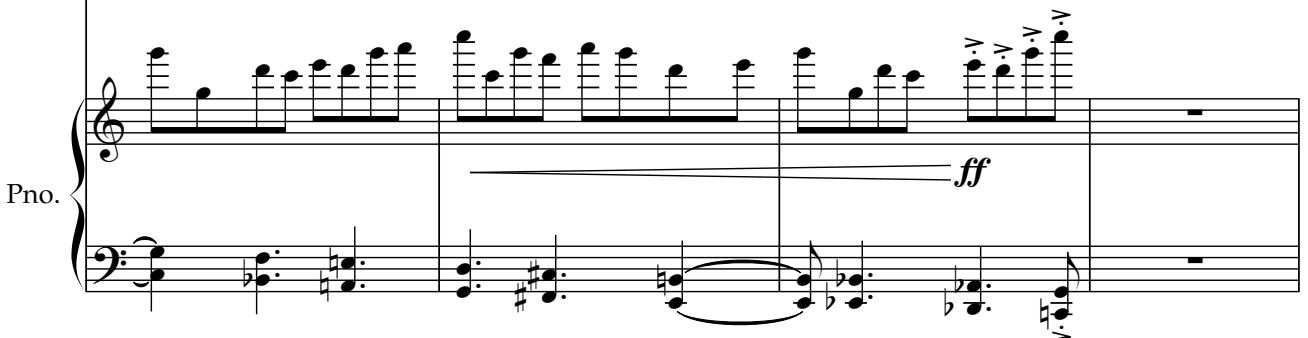
Pno. 

COCKEREL

189

Ct. 

T. 

Pno. 

193

Ct.

FOX GIVES THE CART A  
PUSH AND OFF THEY GO,  
WITH FOX SITTING ON  
THE BACK OF THE CART

T.

un - der - stand com - plete - ly. How a - bout a push?

Sound

Pno.

Perusal Score



F

191 ♩ = 120

Ct.

T.

THE FOX STARTS WAILING

FOX

*f*

O

woe, —

O

F

♩ = 120

Pno.

*pp*

*And.*

193

Ct.

T.

woe, —

a

hen

is dead!

A

*p*

Pno.

*And.*

196

Ct.

T.

Pno.

hen is

198

Ct.

T.

Pno.

dead!

O woe, O

*f* *p* *mf*

*pp* *mf*

201

Ct.

T.

8

woe, — A hen.

Pno.

*pp*

*ped.*

204

Ct.

T.

8

— is dead!

Pno.

206

T.

Pno.

Detailed description: This system contains two staves. The top staff is for Tenor (T.) and is mostly empty with a few notes. The bottom staff is for Piano (Pno.) and features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. There are slurs and accents over the piano part.

**G**

208 MICE

Ct.

Who's that co - ming up a - head?

MICE

T.

Who's that co - ming up a - head?

**G**

*mp*

Pno.

Detailed description: This system contains three staves. The top staff is for Contralto (Ct.) with lyrics: "Who's that co - ming up a - head?". The middle staff is for Tenor (T.) with lyrics: "Who's that co - ming up a - head?". The bottom staff is for Piano (Pno.) with a dynamic marking of *mp* and a complex accompaniment. A chord symbol **G** is placed above the piano part. There are slurs and accents over the piano part.

210 ANIMALS *p*  
 Ct. We heard a - bout your

T. ANIMALS *p* [To vocal mic]  
 We heard a - bout your

Sound [P] (Apply harmoniser to vocal mic)

Pno. *f* *p*  
 Red.

212 *f*  
 Ct. chi - cken And all of us were stri - cken With

T. *f*  
 chi - cken And all of us were stri - cken With

Pno. *p*  
 Red.

215

Ct. thoughts

T. thoughts

Pno.

217

Ct. of our be - gi - nnings and our ends.

T. of our be - gi - nnings and our ends.

Pno. *f*

219 COCKEREL ANIMALS

Ct. Who are you? We are wolf, elk, li - on, bear, and these are all our

T. ANIMALS  
We are wolf, elk, li - on, bear, and these are all our

Pno.

222

Ct. FRIENDS *f* He - llo. MICE *mp* Hi. *f*  
friends.\_\_\_\_\_

T. *f* FRIENDS He - llo. MICE *mp* Hi. *f*  
friends.\_\_\_\_\_

Pno. *f* *p*

225

T.

Pno.

227 ANIMALS

*f*

Ct.

We are moved be -

T.

*f* ANIMALS

We are moved be -

Pno.

*p*



229

Ct. yond a - ggre - ssion.

T. yond a - ggre - ssion...

Pno. *p* *pp*



231

Ct. *mf* And re - quest *f* to

T. *mf* And re - quest *f* to

Pno. *mf*

*And.*



233

Ct. join your sad pro - - ce - ssion.

T. join your sad pro - - ce - ssion.

Pno.

235

Ct. COCKEREL  
All - right.

T.

Sound

Pno.

*f* *mp*

THE ANIMALS ALL SIT ON THE CART AND ARE PULLED ONWARDS BY THE MICE

237

Ct.

T.

Pno.

*f*

Perusal Score

239

Ct.

T.

Pno.

*ff*

*p*

Perusal Score

243 MICE  
*p*  
 T. Cock' - rel, as it is our bur - den To ca - rry all the *f*

Pno. *pp* *f*

245  
 T. crea - tures of the wood, We wish you'd,

Pno. *pp* *ppp*

247  
 T. beg your par - don, Tell the end - ing,

Pno. *f* *f*

249 *mp*

T. *if you could?*

Pno.

251 *mf* *mp*

T. *We wish you'd, beg your par - don,*

Sound **R** (Apply reverb to piano)

Pno. *p*

253

Ct.

T. *mf* Tell the end - ing, *f* if you could?

Sound

Pno. *f* *p* *pp* *f*

**H**

256 ♩ = 108

COCKEREL

**p** **CLEARSTHROAT**

Ct. *mf*  
Up in - to the wi - llow's

T.

Sound **C** (Apply chorus to piano)

**H**

♩ = 108

Pno. *pp*

261

Ct. *f*  
bran - ches I clam - bered with my beak And stood and

T.

Pno.

266

Ct. *p*  
grasped the po - sey Then looked back u - pon the peak

T.

Pno. *f* *p*

271

Ct. *mf*

There stood Nut Moun - tain Out of reach, be - yond the four-tain And

T.

Pno. *mp* *p* *mf* *p*

Red.

277

Ct.

sil-hou-e-tted on the sky I watched my li-ttle chi-cken choke... and die

T.

Pno. *mf* *p* *f* *p*

Red.



282

Ct. *p* *mf* *p*

I watched my li-ttle chi-cken choke... and

T.

Pno. *f* *pp*

287

Ct. *pp* *mf*

die. Be - cause of all the

T.

Pno. *ppp* *mp* *mf* *pp*

292

Ct. *time I took*

T. *MICE*  
*f*  
We can't go fur - ther, we've reached a brook.

Pno. *mp* *p*

297

Ct.

T. *f*  
We can't go — fur - ther we've

Pno. *f* *mp*

302

Ct.

THE CART STOPS BEFORE A RAVINE

T. *ff* reached *f* a *p* brook.

Sound

Pno. *ff* *p* *pp*

*Red.*

306  $\text{♩} = 126$

Ct.


T. *mf* FOX  
Hey you! Bu - sy at your fish - ing


$\text{♩} = 126$  (legato, like a brook)


Pno. *pp*

*Red.*

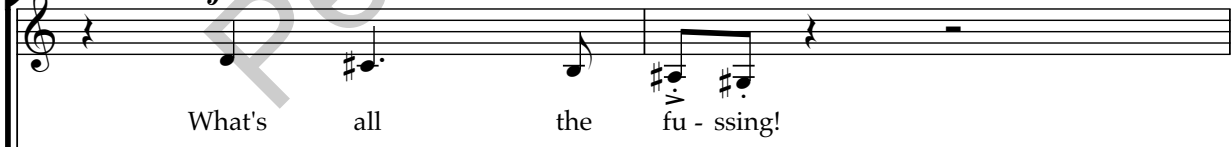
308


Ct. 


T. 

Pno. 

310

Ct. 

T. 

Pno. 

*f* STRAW

COAL

*Red.*

STONE

*mf*

312

Ct.   
 There is no

T.   
 head!

Pno.   
 *f* *p*

314

Ct.   
 cro - ssing. There is no

T.

Pno.

316

Ct. *f* ANIMALS  
cro - ssing. This hen is

T. *f* ANIMALS  
**INDIGNANT**  
This hen is

Pno. *f* *f*

318

Ct. dead! This hen is

T. dead! This hen is

Pno.

320 *ff*

Ct. *ff*  
dead!

T. *ff* [STRAW, COAL AND STONE TAKE OFF THEIR HATS]  
dead!

Pno. *ff*

STRAW

322 *mf*

Ct. *mf*  
"Stop all the clocks"

COAL

T. *mf*  
"Cut off the phone"

Pno. *p*

STONE

324 *f* STRAW

Ct. *f*  
Con - - do - - len - ces I'm

T.

Pno. *f* ————— *p*

326 STONE *f*

Ct. straw I'm Stone

T. *mf* COAL I'm Coal *f* STRAW Like a

Pno. *p* ————— *f* ————— *pp*



328

Ct.

T.

Pno.

bridge o - ver trou - bled wa - ters, I will

COCKEREL

330

Ct.

T.

Pno.

*mf*

Thank - you

*ff* lay me down *p*

332

T.

STRAW STRETCHES ACROSS THE RAVINE,  
TO MAKE A BRIDGE FOR THE CART

Pno.

*f*

334

T.

Pno.

*p*

336

Ct.

THE MICE BEGIN TO PULL THE CART  
ACROSS THE RAVINE

ALL *f*  
Now straw and mice will

T.

ALL *f* [DIRECTED OUT]  
Now straw and mice will

Pno.

*f*

J

338

Ct.

drown

STRAW BREAKS AND FALLS  
WITH THE MICE INTO THE RAVINE

COAL

*f*

T.

drown

Oh well,

Sound

R S

J

Pno.

341

Ct.

ALL *f* DIRECTED OUT

Now will coal fi-zzle and die

COAL JUMPS INTO THE RAVINE,  
TOUCHES THE WATER, HISSES  
AND DIES

T.

why don't I try?

Pno.

COCKEREL

*mf*

344

Ct. 

T. 


Pno. 

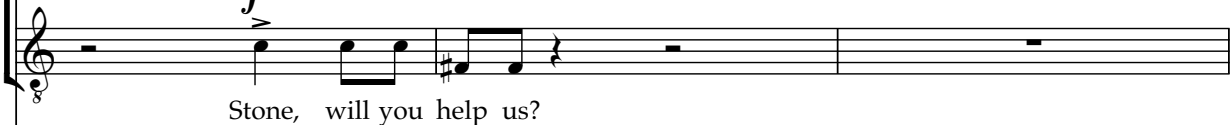
STONE LIES DOWN OVER THE RAVINE, TO MAKE A BRIDGE

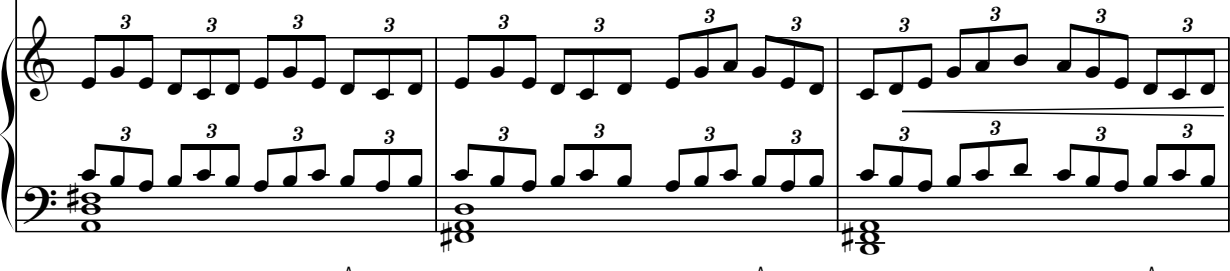
STONE

*f*

347

Ct. 


T. 


Pno. 

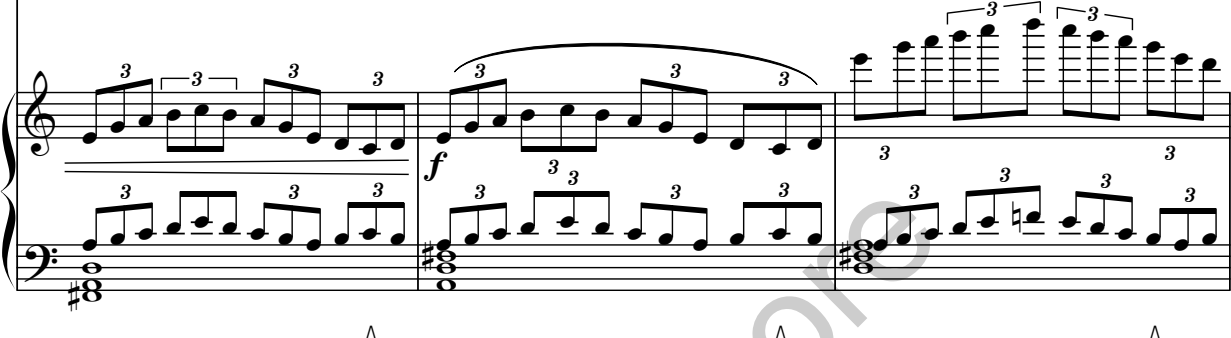
THE COCKEREL DRAGS THE CART  
ACROSS THE RAVINE WITH ALL  
THE ANIMALS ON THE BACK.  
THEY HAVE ALMOST CROSSED THE BROOK WHEN...

DIRECTED OUT 51  
COCKEREL


350

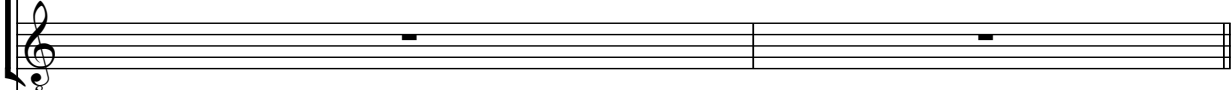
Ct.  Now

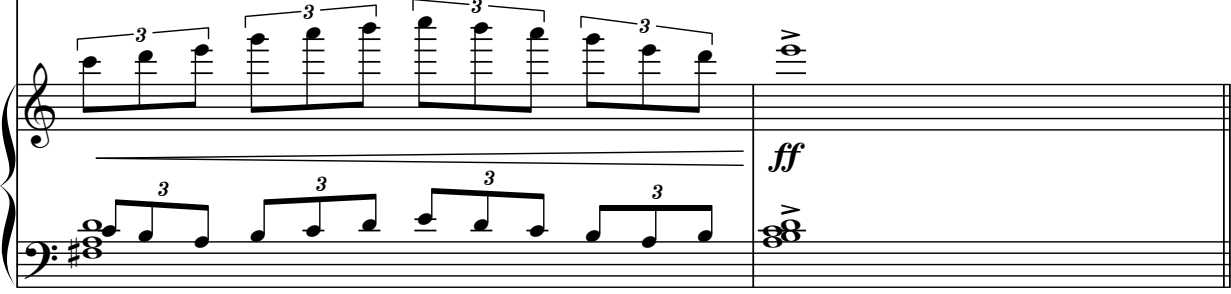
T.  **ANIMALS**  
*ff*  
We're too hea-vy, don't look down, don't look!

Pno.  *f*

353

Ct.  *ff*  
all of the an - i - mals will fall in - to the brook.

T. 

Pno.  *ff*

THE ANIMALS FALL  
OFF THE BACK  
OF THE CART -  
SPLASH! ONLY  
THE HEN REMAINS

COCKEREL DRAGS  
THE HEN FROM THE  
CART AND SETS IT  
DOWN ON THE  
GROUND

355

Ct.

T.

Sound

Pno.

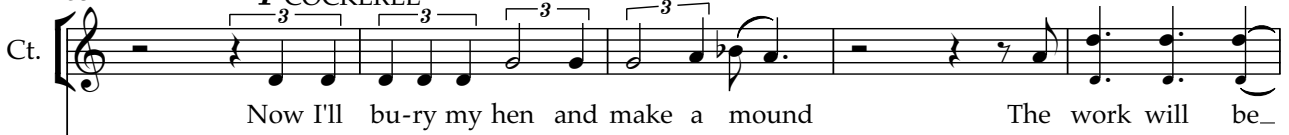
The musical score consists of five staves. The top staff is for the Cornet (Ct.), the second for the Trumpet (T.), the third for Sound effects, and the fourth and fifth for the Piano (Pno.). The score is divided into two measures. In the first measure, the Cornet and Trumpet play a half note with a fermata. The Piano has a half note in the bass clef with a fermata. The Sound staff has a double bar line. In the second measure, the Cornet and Trumpet play a half note. The Piano has a half note in the bass clef. The Sound staff has two 'X' marks, with a box containing 'S' below the first and a box containing 'R' below the second. Below the piano staves, there are three vertical lines and a symbol resembling a stylized 'R' or 'S'.

Perusal Score

K

357  $\text{♩} = 126$

*p* COCKEREL

Ct. 

G (Apply granulation effect to piano)

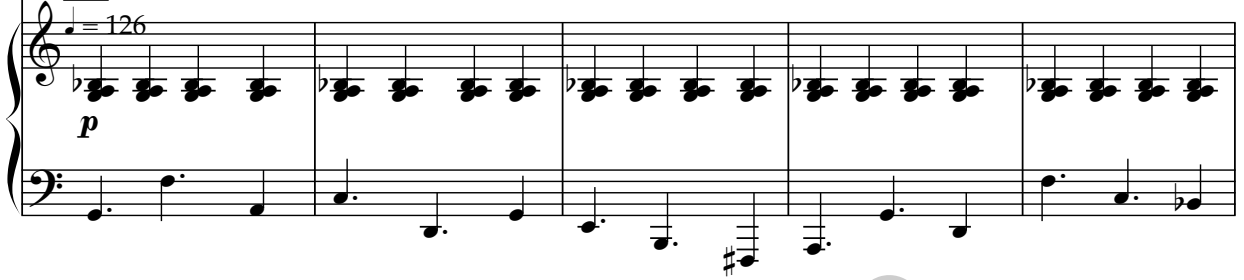
Sound

K

$\text{♩} = 126$

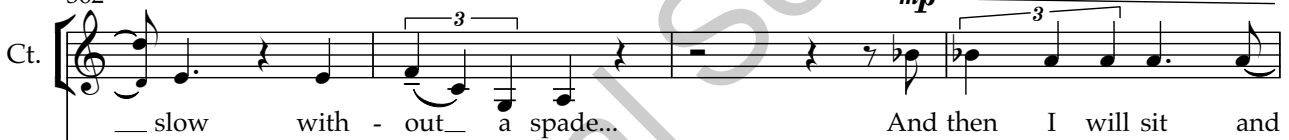
*p*

Pno.



362

*mp*

Ct. 

Pno.

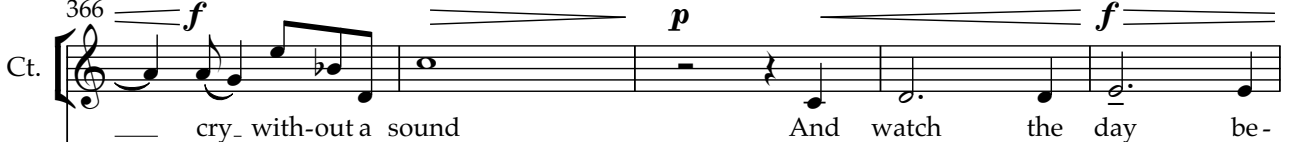


366

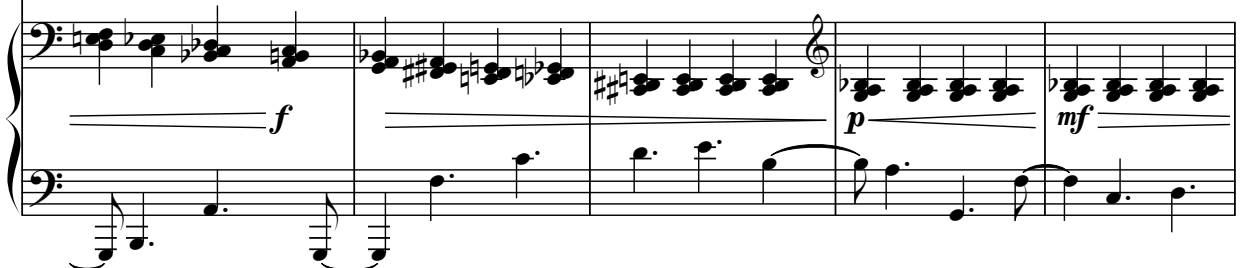
*f*

*p*

*f*

Ct. 

Pno.



371

Ct. *mp* *f*  
 gin to fade... And when the sky\_ is burn - ing

Sound  $\times$   $\square$   $\square$  (Apply chorus to piano)

Pno. *p* *pp*  
 Reo.

376

Ct. *ff* *p* *f*  
 red Then I will die... Then

Sound  $\square$  (Apply reverb to piano)

Pno. *f* *ff* *p* *pp*

381

Ct.  
 eve - ry - bo - dy will be

Pno.



384 *ff*  
Ct. *v.*  
dead.

Sound [S] (Apply spatial effect)

Pno. *ff*

387

Ct.

T.

Sound (Fade all effects)

Pno. *fff*