The Freedom of the Earth

James Weeks

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The Freedom of the Earth JM O1 (2011)

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The Freedom of the Earth

for Chorus and Ensemble

Duration

28' (Part 1: 14', Part 2: 14')

Instrumentation

Clarinet in Bb
Alto Saxophone doubling Soprano Saxophone
Tenor Saxophone
Bass Clarinet

Violin Viola Cello Double Bass

Guitar (amplified)

Piano

SATB Chorus: at least 6 per part, divisi a2 and a3 passim.

Amplification: in order to ensure a good balance of instruments in a particular acoustic, the guitar must always be amplified, and the strings may also need to be amplified, either in Part 1 only or in both parts (see note on p.3 of the score). The conductor should take care to adjust dynamics *in situ* to create a good balance within each section of the piece – wind and piano may need to play significantly more quietly than indicated.

Performance Notes

The piece should be performed exactly at the notated tempo. Instrumental balance is of paramount importance (see above, and note on p.3 of the score).

Breathing in wind parts: the music of Part 1 has been notated without breaths or rests within each section. Players should choose individually where to breathe, usually after a relatively long note (shortening it slightly like breaths in vocal music). If this does not allow enough time for breath, the player may discreetly leave out one or two beats of music to breathe. The conductor should ensure that breaths are not taken altogether, other than where specifically indicated on the score.

Specific performance indications for Part 2 may be found at the end of Part 1.

Score in C. The double bass and guitar are notated an octave above sounding pitch other than where indicated to the contrary.

Programme Note

The Freedom of the Earth is a setting of texts taken from manifestoes and pamphlets by Gerrard Winstanley, leader of the Diggers. In using his eloquent and moving words I am not attempting something historical or nostalgic, a portrait of the life and times of a remarkable political visionary, but rather a presentation of what are still absolutely modern ideas. The Diggers were a group of landless poor who, led by Winstanley, occupied common land on St George's Hill, near Weybridge in Surrey, in 1649, attempting to become self-sufficient by growing crops in the meagre soil: 'working together, and eating the fruits of their own labours'. Winstanley's ideal, articulated in the pamphlet 'The Law of Freedom in a Platform, or True Magistracy Restored', which he dedicated to Cromwell in the hope that he would take note, was of a society in which all are equal and free, buying and selling are outlawed, land is owned and cultivated in common, and society so organised that all who contribute to it are given an equal share in its fruits. The beauty and justice of these ideas are as urgent now as ever.

The Freedom of the Earth is in two parts, representing Thought and Action respectively, and separated by a short section in which the choir sings words Winstanley claimed to have heard in a vision: 'Work together, Eate Bread together, Declare all this abroad.'

Part 1 - Revolutionary Thought This part of the work is the last in a series of South London Harmonies for mixed ensembles, in progress since 2008 (hence the subtitle *The Spitalfields Harmony*). Continuing my abiding interest in elemental or rudimentary musical materials, it is made out of roughly bundled lines, each very restricted in pitch and rhythm. The music has the character of a street demonstration, the chorus articulating the text like a crowd, usually rhythmically but often in a dense counterpoint, and moving between speech and singing.

Part 2 – Radical Action After Winstanley's vision, the second part of the work moves out from the city onto the land. Led by the guitar, the instruments move into the auditorium and pursue independent cycles of repeated 'action' motifs, transformed from the elemental materials of Part 1. The chorus, using texts from the Digger manifesto itself, describes (again in a mixture of speech and singing) the labour of the Diggers. The choral material is a hymnlike 'plain-singing', built again from very rudimentary materials into more and more complex layers as the music continues. After a fleeting glimpse of an abundant and harmonious universe ('The clouds send down raine') the music is cut short with one of Winstanley's most famous lines, a call to stop writing and to take direct action.

The Freedom of the Earth is dedicated to the singers of the New London Chamber Choir, with admiration, on the choir's 30th anniversary.

The Freedom of the Earth was commissioned by the New London Chamber Choir and Spitalfields Music, and first performed by the New London Chamber Choir and the London Sinfonietta, conducted by the composer, at the Spitalfields Music Summer Festival, Shoreditch Church, London, on 13th June 2011.

Part 1: Revolutionary Thought

'And is this not a slavery,' say the people, 'that though there be land enough in England to maintain ten times as many people as are in it, yet some must beg of their brethren, or work in hard drudgery for day wages for them,

or starve or steal and so be hanged out of the way, as men not fit to live in the earth, before they must be suffered to plant the waste land for their livelihood, unless they will pay rent to their brethren for it?'

When mankind began to buy and sell, then did he fall from his innocence; for then they began to oppress and cozen one another of their creation birthright...

Therefore this buying and selling did bring in, and still doth bring in, discontent and wars, which have plagued mankind sufficiently for doing so.

And hereupon, The Earth was hedged in to In-closures by the teachers and rulers, and the others were made Servants and Slaves:

And that Earth that is within this Creation made a Common Store-house for all, is bought and sold, and kept in the hands of a few...From the beginning it was not so.

True commonwealth's freedom lies in the free enjoyment of the earth.

Do not the ministers preach for maintenance in the earth? the lawyers plead causes to get the possessions of the earth? Doth not the soldier fight for the earth? And doth not the landlord require rent, that he may live in the fulness of the earth by the labour of his tenants?

True freedom lies where a man receives his nourishment and preservation, and that is in the use of the earth.

A man had better have no body than to have no food for it; therefore this restraining of the earth from brethren by brethren is oppression and bondage; but the free enjoyment thereof is true freedom.

And now man is fallen from his innocence, and from the glory of the spirit of common freedom, love and peace, into enmity; everyone striving to be king over one another; everyone striving to be a landlord of the earth, and to make his brother his servant to work for him.

And so the Earth is become through mans unrighteous actions over one another, to be a place, wherein one torments another.

And this...man of bondage hath held the Earth in bondage to himself, not by a meek Law of Righteousnesse, But by subtle selfish Councels, and by open and violent force;

Take notice, that England is not a Free people, till the Poor that have no Land, have a free allowance to dig and labour the Commons, and so live as Comfortably as the Landlords that live in their Inclosures...

O thou Powers of England, though thou has promised to make this People a Free People, yet thou has wrapped us in more bondage, and oppression lies heavier upon us;

Commonwealth's government governs the earth without buying and selling; and thereby becomes a man of peace, and the restorer of ancient freedom.

If true commonwealth's freedom lie in the free enjoyment of the earth, as it doth, then whatsoever law or custom doth deprive brethren of their freedom in the earth, it is to be cast out as unsavoury salt.

In that nation where this commonwealth's government shall be first established, there shall be an abundance of peace and plenty,

and all nations of the earth shall come flocking thither to see his beauty, and to learn the ways thereof;

He makes provision for the oppressed, the weak and the simple, as well as for the rich, the wise and the strong.

He beats swords and spears into pruning hooks and ploughs; he makes both elder and younger brother freemen in the earth.

The haven gates are now set ope for English man to enter: The freedom of the earth's his due, if he will make adventure.

Vision.

Work together, Eate Bread together, Declare all this abroad.

Part 2: Radical Action

In the beginning of Time, the great Creator Reason, made the Earth to be a Common Treasury, to preserve Beasts, Birds, Fishes and Man: but not one word was spoken in the beginning, That one branch of mankind should rule over another...

And the reason is this, Every single man, Male and Female, is a perfect Creature of himself; and the same Spirit that made the Globe, dwels in man to govern the Globe;

The work we are going about is this, To dig up the waste Ground, and to Sow Corn, and to eat our bread together by the sweat of our brows.

And the Reason is this, That we may lay the Foundation of making the Earth a Common Treasury,

That every one that is born in the land, may be fed by the Earth his Mother that brought him forth,

Not inclosing any part into any particular hand, but all as one man, working together, and feeding together as Sons of one Father, members of one Family...as equals in the Creation.

And this is one Reason of our digging and labouring the Earth one with another; That we may work in righteousness, and lift up the Creation from bondage.

And every one that comes to work, shall Eate the Fruit of their own labours, one having as much Freedom in the Fruit of the Earth as another.

And if the Earth be not peculiar to any one branch, or branches of mankind, but the Inheritance of all; Then is it Free and Common for all, to work together, and eate together.

And truly, you Counsellors and Powers of the Earth, know this, That wheresoever there is a People, thus united by Common Community of livelihood into Oneness, it will become the strongest Land in the World,

for then they will be as one man to defend their Inheritance; and Salvation (which is Liberty and Peace) is the Walls and Bulwarks of that Land or City.

That which does incourage us to go on in this work, is this; we find the streaming out of Love in our hearts towards all; to enemies as well as friends; we would have none live in Beggery, Poverty, or Sorrow, but that everyone might enjoy the benefit of his creation: we have peace in our hearts, and quiet rejoycing in our work, and filled with sweet content, though we have but a dish of roots and bread for our food.

The clouds send down raine...The earth sends forth grasse...The sunne gives his light and heate...

For by this work we are assured, and Reason makes it appear to others, that Bondage shall be removed, Tears wiped away, and all poor People by their righteous Labours shall be relieved, and freed from Poverty and Straits;

...yet my mind was not at rest, because nothing was acted, and thoughts ran in me that words and writings were all nothing, and must die, for action is the life of all, and if thou dost not act, thou dost nothing.

Texts extracted and edited by the composer from Gerrard Winstanley, The True Levellers Standard Advanced (1649) and The Law of Freedom in a Platform (1651) with minor insertions from other sources by the same author.

The Freedom of the Earth

Part 1

Gerrard Winstanley, 'The True Levellers Standard Advanced' (1649) and 'The Law of Freedom in a Platform' (1651)

James Weeks

=112 rigoroso: strong, rhythmic and decisive



the free

en - joy - ment_

of___ the

earth, then

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- mon - wealth's free

If true

^{*} Each singer in the Tumult to choose one of the nine lines, either singly (independently) or in pairs or small groups with adjacent singers. The conductor is to ensure that all lines are covered and that the disposition is reasonably equal.

2

in the earth

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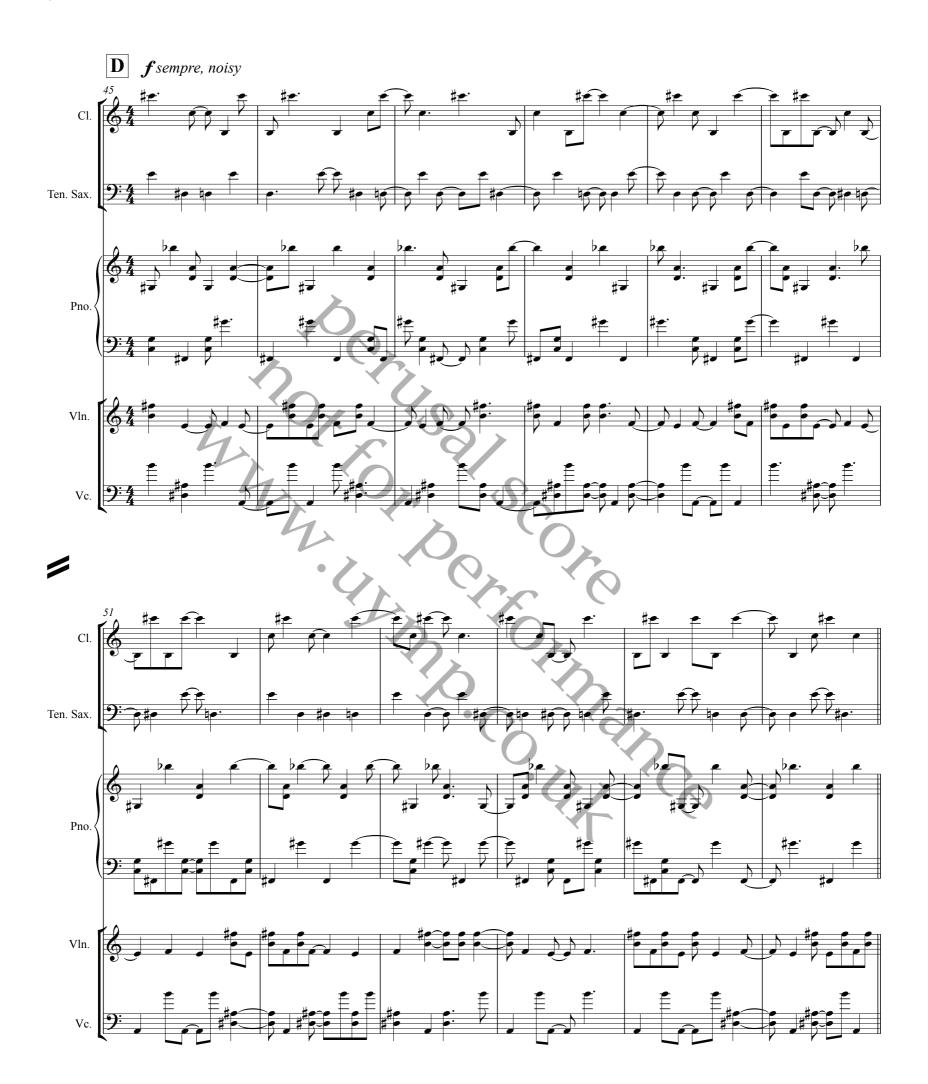
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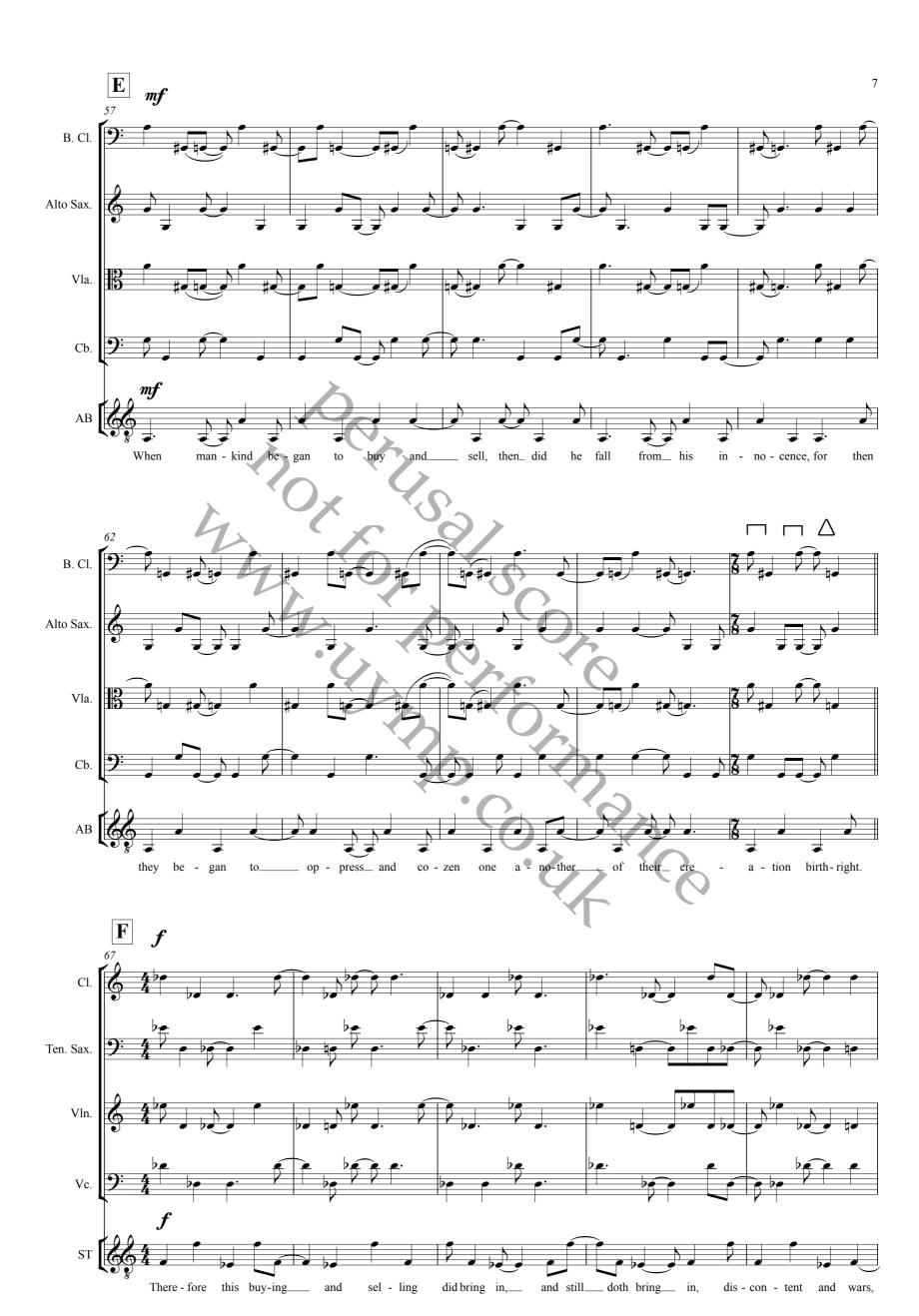


* The overall texture should be balanced between the instruments, with no one instrument dominant. The given dynamic, even if not literally adhered to in volume, indicates also the spirit in which the passage is to be played, whatever the volume.

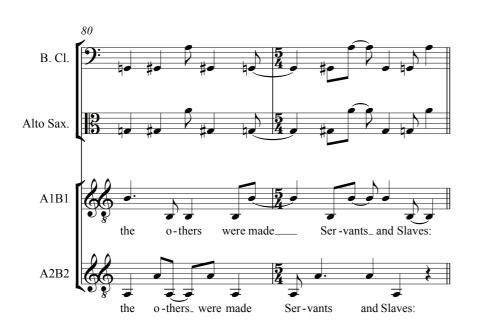




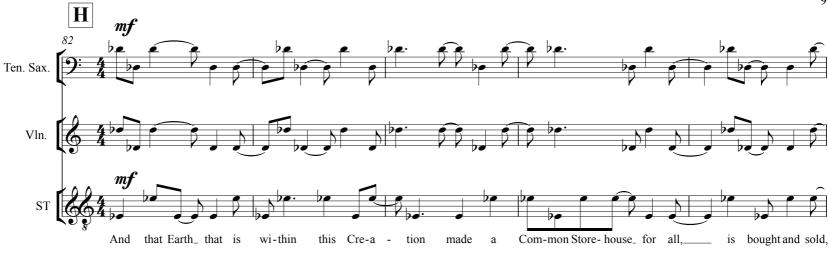








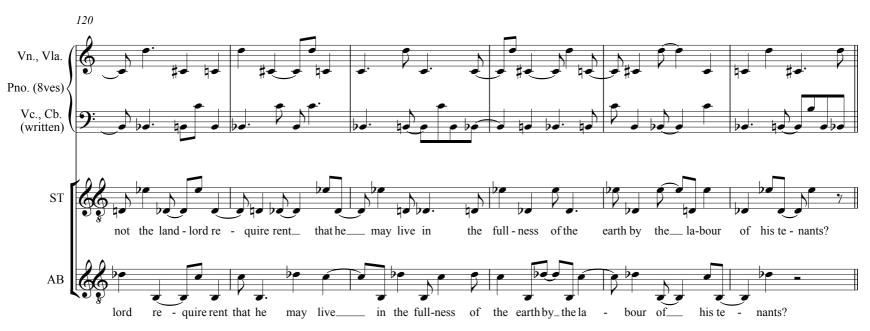


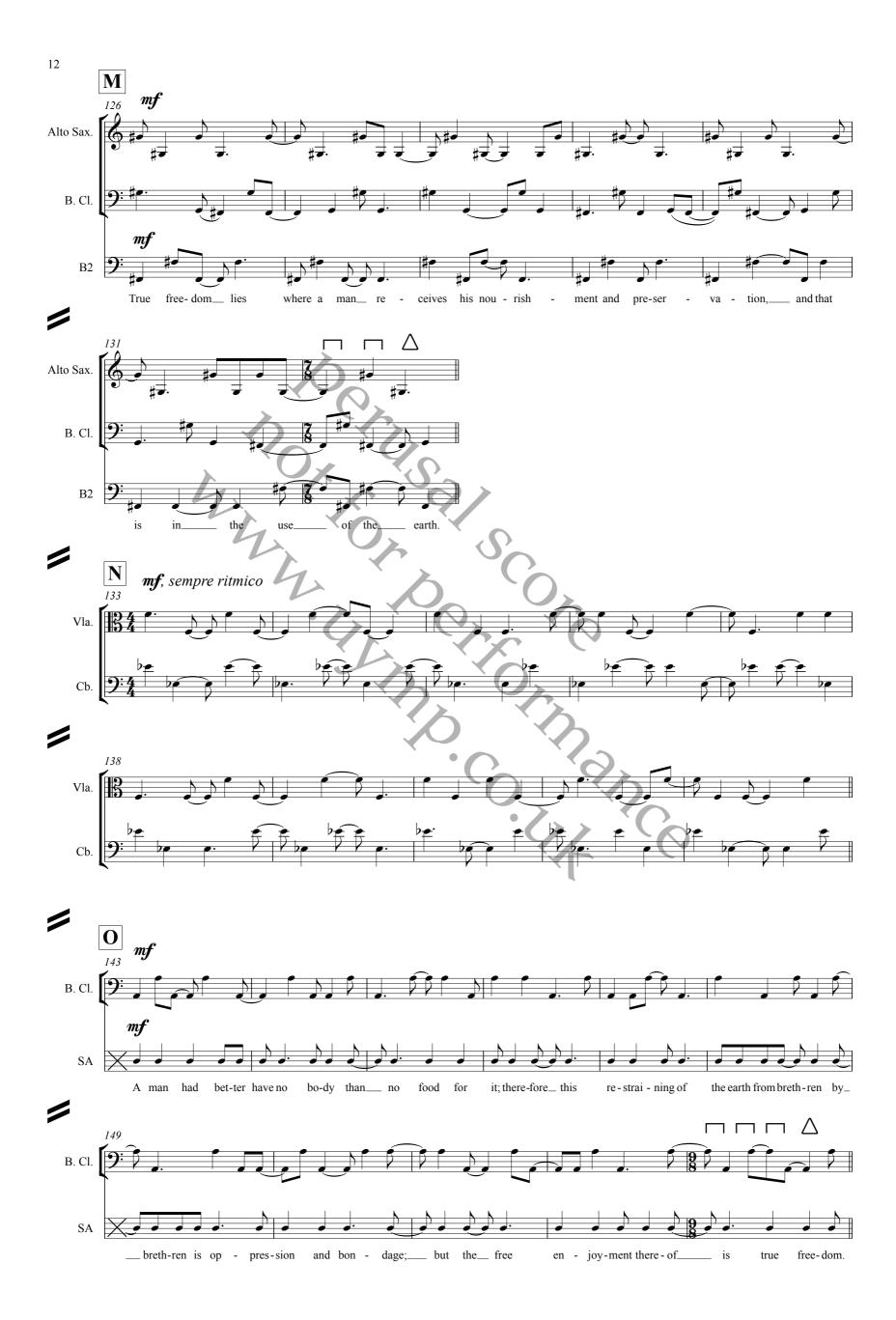




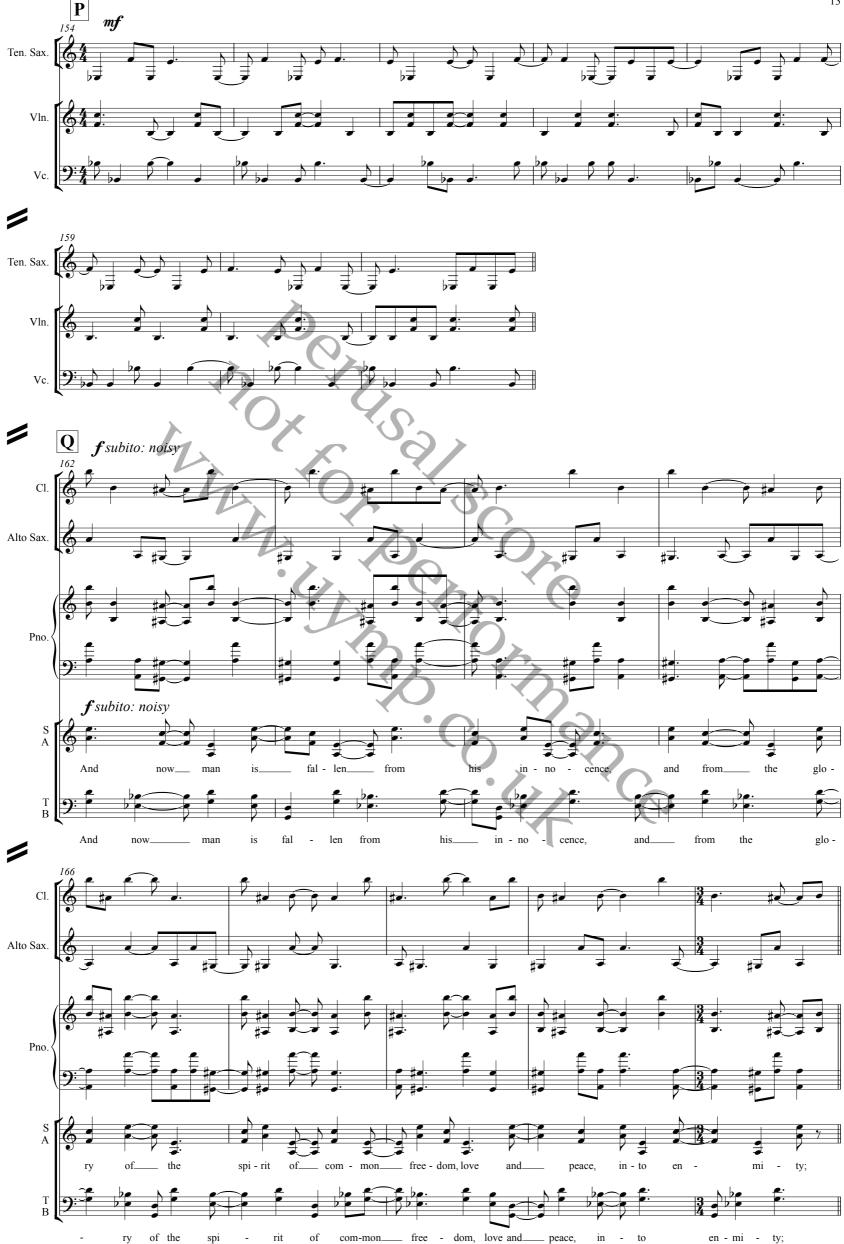










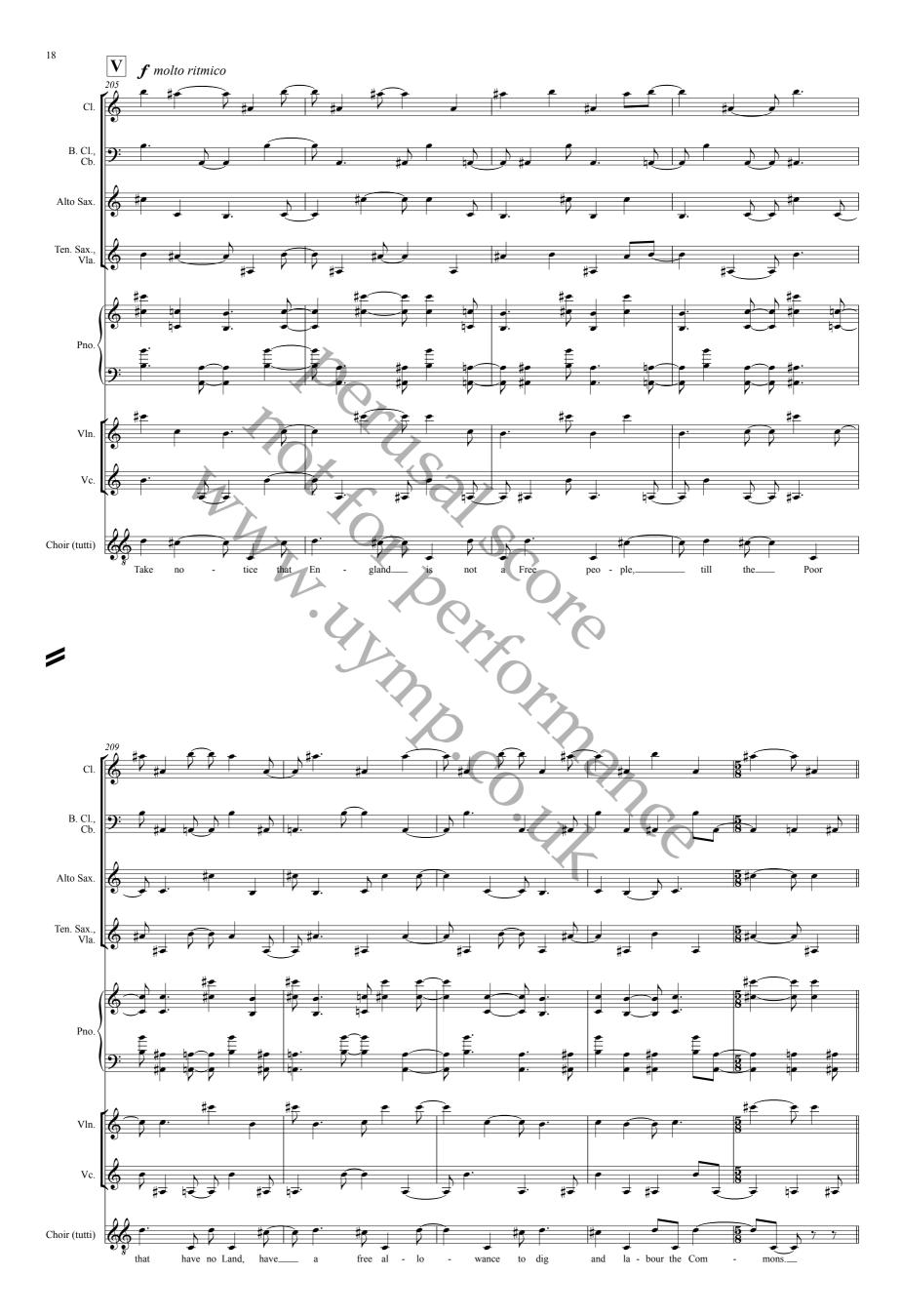








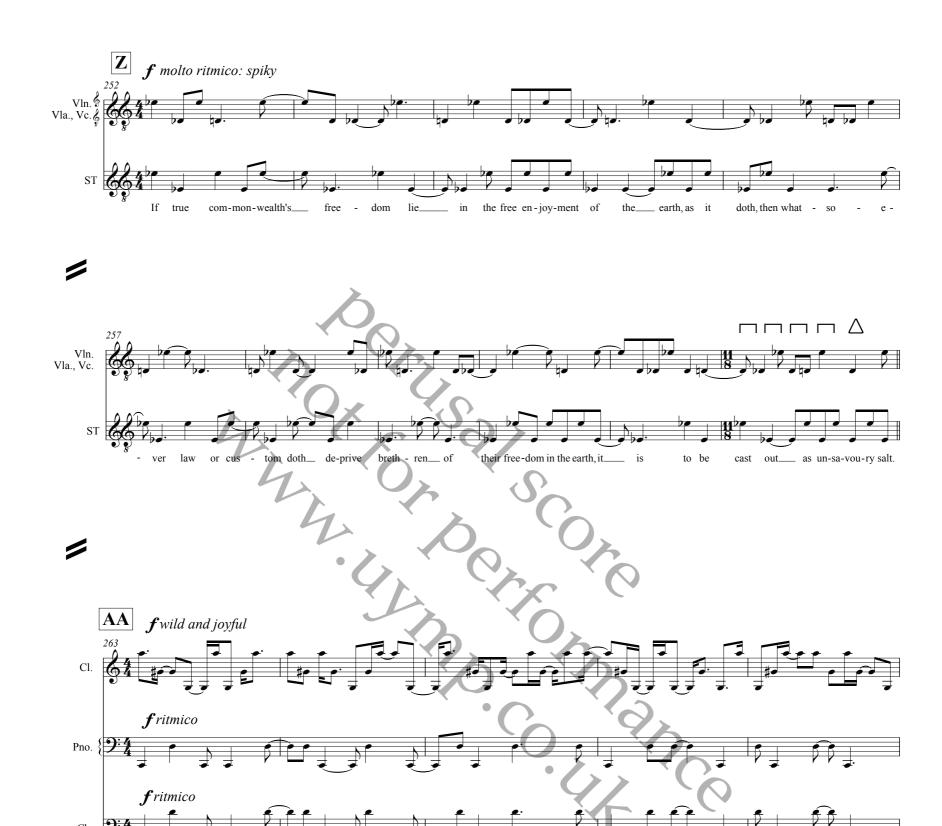




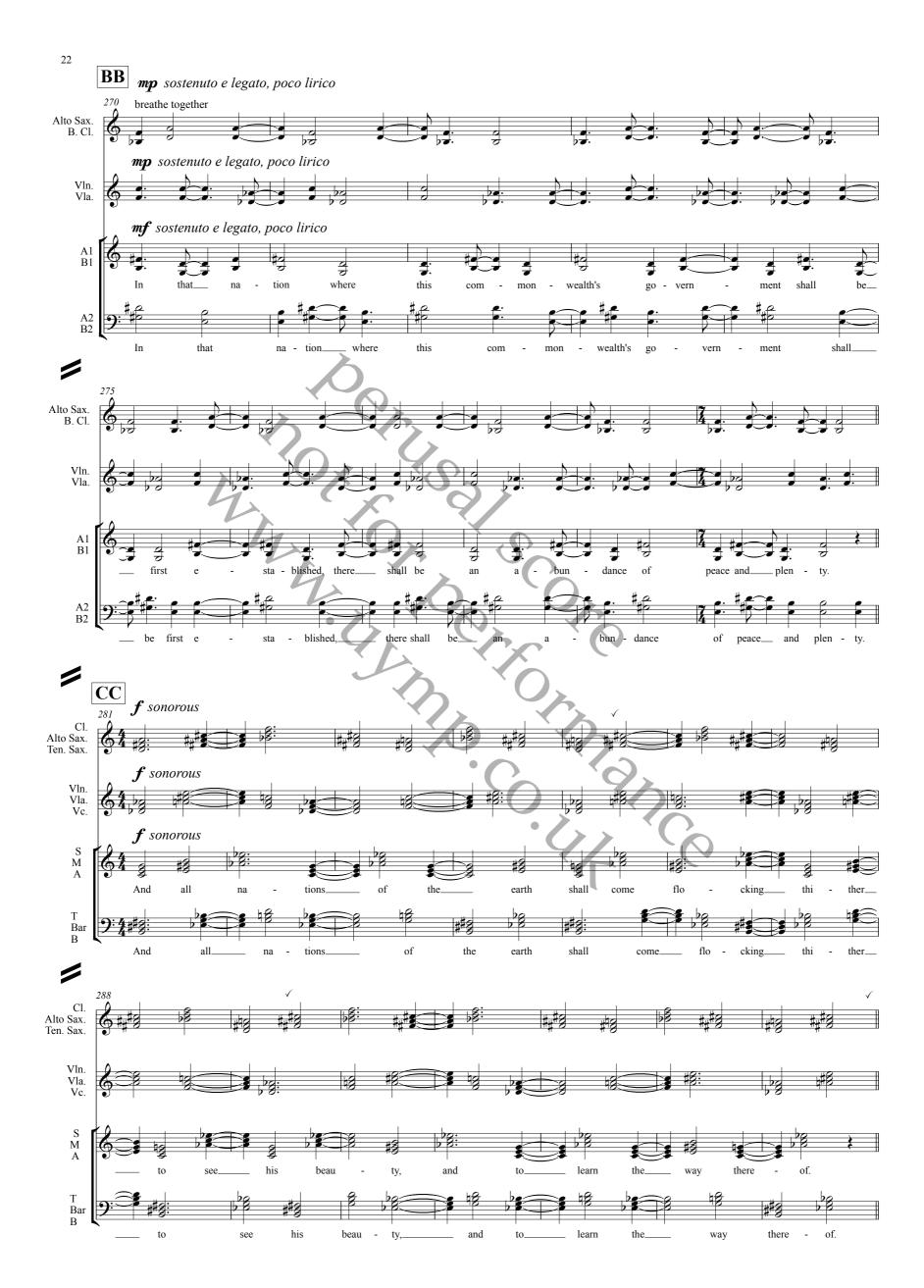


^{*} quasi Sprechgesang, but closer to a scream. Each member of the choir to choose any note contained within the cluster.







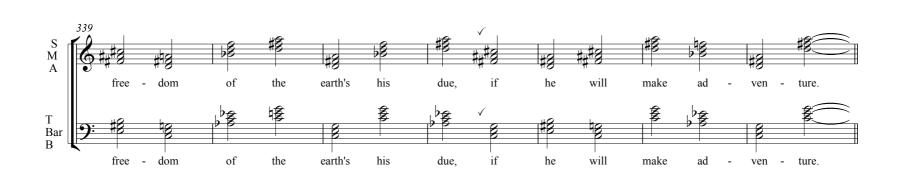


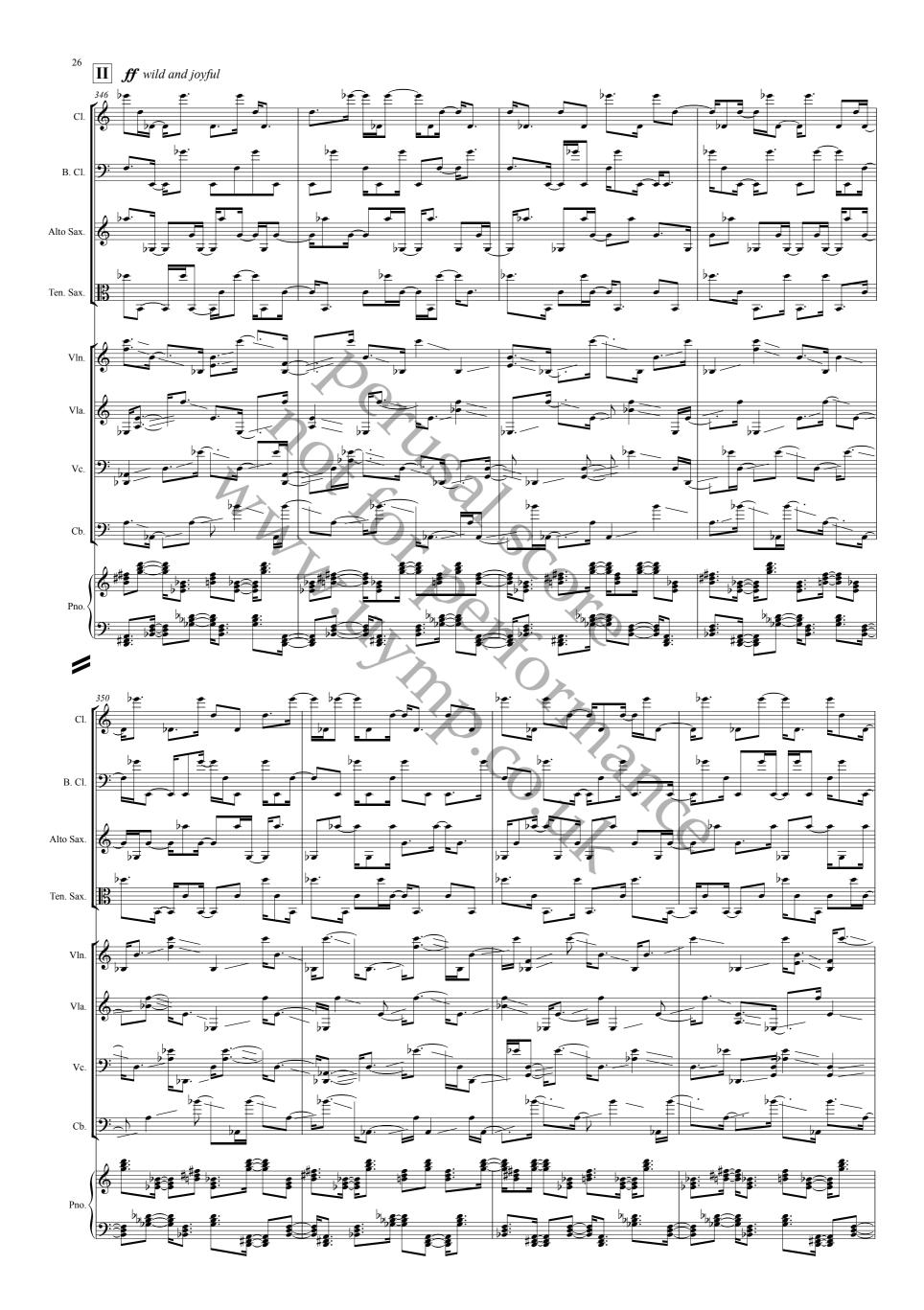




^{*} String glissandi are to be played as smearings of the initial pitches, and as such do not need to be connected smoothly to the next pitch.









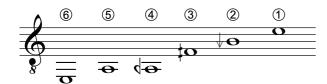


Part 2- Instructions for Conductor

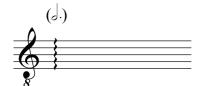
- Part 2 consists of four independent layers of material:
 - guitar
 - •lower instruments (tenor sax, bass clarinet, cello, double bass, piano)
 - •upper instruments (clarinet, soprano sax, violin, viola)
 - •choir
- The conductor and one upper instrument require stopwatches. Begin stopwatches at entry of guitar [0'00]. The conductor should bring the guitar in in tempo (J=104, *rigoroso*), and at 0'30" indicate to the other players to begin moving to their new positions. Thereafter the conductor should conduct (at J=104, in sync with the guitar) the first seven choral sections (1-7), beginning at the times indicated. There should be plenty of time (variously between 15 and 50 seconds) between choral sections. The other players proceed according to their own rules, independently of the conductor. The conductor should also signal to the guitar at the start of section 7 [10'00], as this is his/her cue to stop soon afterwards.
- The lower wind move to positions in and/or around the audience on ground level, surrounding the audience as far as possible and widely spaced.
- The upper wind move to positions <u>above</u> the audience where possible (e.g., in galleries, balconies or top of raked seating), surrounding them if possible and widely spread. If the performance room is on a single level, intersperse the upper instruments around the audience, between the lower instruments.
- Care should be taken to accomplish all walking as quietly as possible.
- At the end of choral section 7, section 8 follows immediately: a G.P. of 3 bars' duration, followed by the final words, spoken by the whole ensemble (instruments and choir and conductor) together, indicated by the conductor.

Part 2: Guitar Instructions

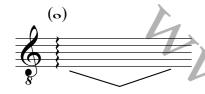
The guitar must be amplified, and the strings tuned to the following scordatura:



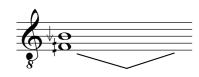
Particular care should be taken to ensure that the upper three strings are tuned in appreciably wide ('out-of-tune') fourths. Strings to be used for each figure are indicated at the first appearance of each figure.



fast strum across all strings from bottom to top; leave to resonate for a dotted minim.



as above, but bending the fifth string downwards then upwards again by approximately a semitone using the tuning peg.



bend the third string downwards then upwards again by approximately a semitone using the tuning peg.

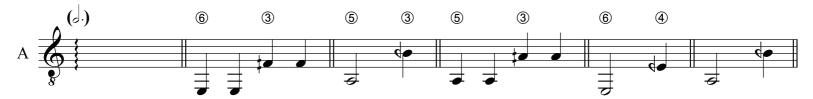
Order of performance

- The guitar begins Part 2 (indicated by the conductor) solo, and plays constantly for three quarters of its duration (c. 11 of 14 minutes).
- There are 8 lines (A-H) consisting of between 4 and 7 figures. Each figure is to be repeated 5 or 6 times, ad lib, before moving to the next.
- Start with line A, and then play the lines in any order, repeating ad lib. Reserve line H for later in the passage.
- A line does not have to be played in full (for example, the player can play the first 3 of A then the first 4 of G), but when moving to a new line one must start at the first figure and proceed in order. The minimum number of figures to be played of any line is 2.
- Four times during the passage the player may choose to 'get stuck' on a figure for between 12 and 20 repetitions (instead of the usual 5 or 6), before moving on.
- After c. 11 minutes, a high passage begins in the upper voices of the choir. The conductor should indicate this point to the guitarist, who should finish the line s/he is on and then stop.
- The final line of text ('Yet my mind...') is indicated by the conductor and spoken together.

Part 2: Guitar

J=104 tempo rigoroso sempre

 \it{mf} deliberamente sempre

















Part 2: Clarinet, Soprano Saxophone, Violin, Viola



- There are three sections, I (4 figures), II and III (6 figures each). Figures within a section may be played in any order, repeating ad lib. All pauses are c. 10 seconds. Within the general dynamics specified for each section, each figure should have a small ________. Dynamics are to be varied ad lib between the limits specified.
- Rest after each figure, playing for the following approximate proportions of time:

I: play $\frac{1}{3}$ of the time, rest $\frac{2}{3}$. II: play $\frac{1}{2}$ of the time, rest $\frac{1}{2}$. III: play $\frac{2}{3}$ of the time, rest $\frac{1}{3}$.

Play off each other sensitively. Allow silences and sparseness, particularly in I (less in III).

- To begin, all instruments start to move offstage to new positions, unhurriedly, between 30 and 90 seconds after the guitar has started. The conductor will indicate when 30 seconds have elapsed. One player should start a stopwatch as soon as possible after the guitar's entry, and indicate to the others the following timings:
- c. 3'00: begin with section I. Always play independently and do not all start at once.
- c. 5'00: begin to merge into section II over the course of 1 minute.
- c. 8'00: begin to merge into section III over the course of 1 minute.
- c. 12'00: fade out over the course of 1 minute. Just before the end, the choral texture fades, leaving sopranos alone, while basses speak the phrase 'For by this work'. Ensure you have finished before the sopranos.
- The final line of text ('Yet my mind...') is indicated by the conductor and spoken together.





Part 2: Bass Clarinet, Tenor Saxophone, Violoncello, Double Bass, Piano

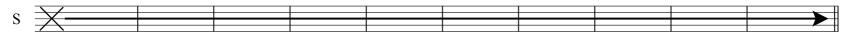


- Each instrument has eight figures, each of which is to be played between 8 and 20 times in succession, ad lib. Figures may be played in any order, and repeated ad lib. Stop to rest after each figure. Occasionally two figures may be performed consecutively without a break, but never more than two. Play for approximately one half to two-thirds of the time.
- Perform each figure at a consistent tempo (different tempi for each figure, ad lib), either choosing to synchronise with the guitar tempo (\downarrow =104), or somewhat faster or slower than the guitar. If the latter, do not attempt to synchronise with the other players. The dynamic should be a natural medium dynamic, c. *mf*, but never dominating the texture. The style should be *deliberamente*, but not crude or brash.
- The overall texture will fluctuate between dense and sparse, with anything from 0-5 players playing alongside the guitar at any one time. Do not attempt to manipulate this state of affairs: attend only to your own figure.
- To begin, all movable instruments (including Cb. if possible) <u>start</u> moving to new positions unhurriedly between 30 and 90 seconds after the guitar has begun. The conductor will indicate when 30 seconds have elapsed. Begin to play any time after starting walking (i.e., either while walking or when new positions are reached). Each instrument begins and continues independently. Immovable instruments begin any time after 30 seconds have elapsed. All instruments should have started playing approximately 2 minutes after the guitar has started.
- To end, all instruments should finish playing within 1 minute of the guitar's finishing (which occurs after the start of a high vocal passage 10 minutes into the movement). Finish independently.
- The final spoken line ('Yet my mind...') is indicated by the conductor and spoken together.

Part 2



[1'30] **mf** clearly spoken, unison, in speech rhythm



In the beginning of Time, the great Creator Reason made the Earth to be a Common Treasury, to preserve Beasts, Birds, Fishes and Man: but not one word was spoken in the beginning, that one branch of mankind should rule over another...





















^{*}Basses divide equally a3 from this point.







That which does incourage us to go on in this work, is this; we find the streaming out of Love in our hearts towards all; to enemies...



...as well as friends; we would have none live in Beggery, Poverty, or Sorrow, but that everyone might enjoy the benefit of his creation: we have peace in our hearts, and quiet rejoycing in our work, and filled with sweet content, though we have but a dish of roots and bread for our food.































...yet my mind was not at rest, because nothing was acted, and thoughts ran in me...





...that words and writings were all nothing, and must die, for action is the life of all, and if thou dost not act, thou dost nothing.