

Ocean of Forms

for Voice and Computer

L. Scott Price

On texts by

Rabindranath Tagore

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Ocean of Forms is a cycle of five songs for solo soprano voice and electronic/computer music accompaniment. Traditionally, the song cycle provides composers a vehicle for expressing and highlighting a poet's words. Word and syllabic stress, text painting, melodic development, and formal structuring have been a primary focus of many composers working within the song cycle form. The replacement of the traditional piano accompaniment with electronic accompaniment in *Ocean of Forms* provides further possibilities for new timbral structures and transformations, expressive microtonal intonation, algorithmic and aleatoric formal structures, electroacoustic and spatialized sound, and a broad sonic palette. This work strives to provide a more fully developed expression of the text as afforded by these expanded musical means.

The texts for the cycle consist of poems by noted Bengali poet, musician, philosopher, and author Rabindranath Tagore. In particular, four of the poems were first published in *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings) and one poem is found in *The Crescent Moon*, both collections dating from 1913. Much of the poet's work concerns concepts such as love, death, and the nature of the human experience. These themes are often connected to the natural world, time, and the cosmos, often in a personal yet surprisingly universal manner. The continuing popularity of his work lies mainly in his ability to poetically capture and express such universal concepts. Notably, he worked as his own translator when rendering his works into English, becoming the first non-Western author to win a Nobel Prize in literature in 1913 for the translation of *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings). His poetry provides a particularly humane and personal expression of concepts and emotions common to the human experience.

Given the universality of these concepts, an overriding humanistic theme is clearly present throughout his work; particularly so in the selected poems. This underlying universality of the human experience is the overriding literary theme of the piece. The text setting and electronic accompaniment reflect and enhance this theme musically. The ordering of the individual poems creates an overarching narrative structure. The formal structure of the music reflects and reinforces this dramatic curve, thereby imbuing the music itself with the same dramatic tendencies as the text.

I. *Light* (Gitanjali 57)

Light, my light, the world-filling light, the eye-kissing light, heart-sweetening light!

Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the center of my life; the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love; the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.

The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light. Lilies and jasmines surge up on the crest of the waves of light.

The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems in profusion.

Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and gladness without measure. The heaven's river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is abroad.

II. *Threshold* (Gitanjali 95)

I was not aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life.

What was the power that made me open out into this vast mystery like a bud in the forest at midnight!

When in the morning I looked upon the light I felt in a moment that I was no stranger in this world, that the inscrutable without name and form had taken me in its arms in the form of my own mother.

Even so, in death the same unknown will appear as ever known to me. And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well.

The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away, in the very next moment to find in the left one its consolation.

III. *My Song* (The Crescent Moon 38)

This song of mine will wind its music around you, my child, like the fond arms of love.

This song of mine will touch your forehead like a kiss of blessing.

When you are alone it will sit by your side and whisper in your ear, when you are in the crowd it will fence you about with aloofness.

My song will be like a pair of wings to your dreams, it will transport your heart to the verge of the unknown.

It will be like the faithful star overhead when dark night is over your road.

My song will sit in the pupils of your eyes, and will carry your sight into the heart of things.

And when my voice is silent in death, my song will speak in your living heart.

IV. *Brink Of Eternity* (Gitanjali 87)

In desperate hope I go and search for her in all the corners of my room; I find her not.

My house is small and what once has gone from it can never be regained.

But infinite is thy mansion, my lord, and seeking her I have to come to thy door.

I stand under the golden canopy of thine evening sky and I lift my eager eyes to thy face.

I have come to the brink of eternity from which nothing can vanish --no hope, no happiness, no vision of a face seen through tears.

Oh, dip my emptied life into that ocean, plunge it into the deepest fullness. Let me for once feel that lost sweet touch in the allness of the universe.

V. *Ocean of Forms* (Gitanjali 100)

I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless.

No more sailing from harbor to harbor with this my weather-beaten boat. The days are long passed when my sport was to be tossed on waves.

And now I am eager to die into the deathless.

Into the audience hall by the fathomless abyss where swells up the music of toneless strings I shall take this harp of my life.

I shall tune it to the notes of forever, and when it has sobbed out its last utterance, lay down my silent harp at the feet of the silent.

Notes for Performance

Ocean of Forms is written entirely in extended seven-limit just intonation. The vocalist must familiarize herself with this intonation system in order to accurately perform the work. Each just intonation scale used in this work consists of twelve unequally spaced pitches that are approximated with traditional notation. Key signatures are used to show tonal function and the predominant mode. Six twelve-note scales are used throughout the piece, with tonics starting on C, D, Eb, G, Ab and A.

The initial key starts in C (minor), the tonic of which should be exactly the same as on an equal temperament, standard tuning (A=440) piano. This pitch remains constant throughout the entire work; all other pitches are defined in relationship to this pitch. This will give the note middle C a frequency of 261.63 Hz. A change in key signature does not necessarily indicate a change of tuning. Some key changes do occur simultaneously with tuning changes, but a key signature change may be used to simplify spelling and indicate a change in tonal focus within the current tuning system. Changes in the current tuning system are indicated in bold underline and show the new tonic as it relates to the initial C tonic in both note name and harmonic ratio. For example, the second song begins with its tonic a Pythagorean second above C and is indicated with "TONIC = D (9:8)." The exact tuning of each scale used throughout the piece is given below. All pitches in both vocal and computer part conform to the following charts. Rehearsal software is provided that will allow the vocalist to play her part in the proper tuning using a basic MIDI keyboard. It is strongly encouraged that the piece be initially learned in just intonation using this software and not learned in equal temperament with the intention of adjusting to the just tuning later.

Equivalent Keyboard Pitch												
Tonic	C	C#/Db	D	D#/Eb	E	F	F#/Gb	G	G#/Ab	A	A#/Bb	B
C	1:1	28:27	9:8	7:6	5:4	4:3	112:81	3:2	14:9	5:3	7:4	15:8
D	1:1	135:128	9/8	7:6	81:64	21:16	45:32	3:2	14:9	27:16	7:4	15:8
Eb	1:1	28:27	49:45	7:6	5:4	21:16	49:36	3:2	14:9	392:243	7:4	49:27
G	1:1	135:128	9:8	7:6	5:4	21:16	112:81	3:2	14:9	27:16	7:4	15:8
Ab	1:1	28:27	35:32	7:6	98:81	21:16	112:81	35:24	14:9	49:30	7:4	15:8
A	1:1	25:24	10:9	7:6	5:4	4:3	25:18	40:27	25:16	5:3	7:4	15:8

Chromatic Scale Degrees (relative to tonic)												
Tonic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
C (1:1)	1:1	28:27	9:8	7:6	5:4	4:3	112:81	3:2	14:9	5:3	7:4	15:8
D (9:8)	1:1	28:27	9:8	7:6	5:4	4:3	112:81	3:2	14:9	5:3	16:9	15:8
Eb (7:6)	1:1	15:14	63:56	7:6	9:7	4:3	112:81	3:2	14:9	12:7	16:9	196:105
G (3:2)	1:1	28:27	9:8	7:6	5:4	4:3	45:32	3:2	14:9	5:3	7:4	448:243
Ab (14:9)	1:1	21:20	9:8	135:112	9:7	4:3	45:32	3:2	14:9	27:16	16:9	15:8
A (5:3)	1:1	21:20	9:8	6:5	5:4	4:3	7:5	3:2	8:5	5:3	16:9	15:8

The computer part for Ocean of Forms must be advanced at each cue during performance. Each cue is marked in the score with a downward pointing triangle enclosing the cue number. This may be accomplished by a technical assistant sitting at the computer or by the vocalist using a MIDI footpedal or hand-held switch. This choice is left to the performer and may vary depending on the comfort level of the performer and availability of the necessary technology.

I. Light

Gitanjali 57

L. Scott Price
Rabindranath Tagore

1-01 TONIC = C (1:1)

Broadly, in anticipation *f*

1-02 *mf*

1-03

Voice

Recorded Voice

Acousmatic

Synth

Bass

String-like Timbre

Sustained Text

Light, my light,

Light,

f

mp

mf

f

p *f*

1-04

Vox

Rec. Vox.

Grain

Syn.

B.

the world - - - fill - ing light,

Granulated Voice

mp

p *f*

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for a piece titled 'I. Light' (Gitanjali 57) by L. Scott Price, based on the text of Rabindranath Tagore. It is a full score for a multi-media performance. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes staves for Voice, Recorded Voice, Acousmatic, Synth, and Bass. The Voice part begins with a 'Broadly, in anticipation' instruction and a dynamic of *f*. The Recorded Voice part is marked 'Sustained Text' and *mp*. The Acousmatic part features a large, dark, textured sound that tapers off. The Synth part has a 'String-like Timbre' and includes triplets. The Bass part starts with a dynamic of *f*. The second system includes staves for Vox, Rec. Vox., Grain, Syn., and B. The Vox part has dynamics ranging from *p* to *f* and includes the lyrics 'the world - - - fill - ing light,'. The Rec. Vox. part is marked 'Granulated Voice'. The Grain part is marked *mp*. The Synth part includes triplets and sextuplets. The B. part starts with a dynamic of *p* and ends with *f*. The score is marked with section numbers 1-01, 1-02, 1-03, and 1-04. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 4/4. The score is written in a clean, professional style with clear notation and dynamic markings.

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

1-05 TONIC = A (5:3)

Vox
the eye - - - - - kiss - ing light,

Rec. Vox.

Acous.

Grain

Syn.

B.

mf *p* *f* *p*

1-06

Vox
heart - - - - - sweet - - - - - en - ing light!
Ah,

Acous.

Grain

B.

1-07 **Lightly, playfully**
mf

Vox: the light _____ dan - - - - ces,

Acous.

Grain

Syn. **Algorithmically Determined Arpeggios**
mf

B.

1-09 *pp* **whispered, distant**
my dar - - - - ling,

1-10 *mf*
at the cen - ter of my life;

1-11

Vox

Acous.

Grain


Syn.

B.

1-12

fp *mf* *pp*

Vox: the light strikes, my dar - ling,

Acous. 

Grain


Syn.

B.


1-14

mp *f*

Vox: the chords of my love;

Acous. 

Grain

Syn.  *n cresc...* *... mf*

B.

1-15

Increasingly excited

p

TONIC = A \flat (14:9)

Algorithmsically Determined Melody & Arpeggios

mf

p cresc...

Vox

Syn.

B.

the sky o - pens, the wind runs wild,

1-17

f

Vox

Acous.


Syn.

B.

laugh - - - - - ter pass - - - - - es o - ver the earth.

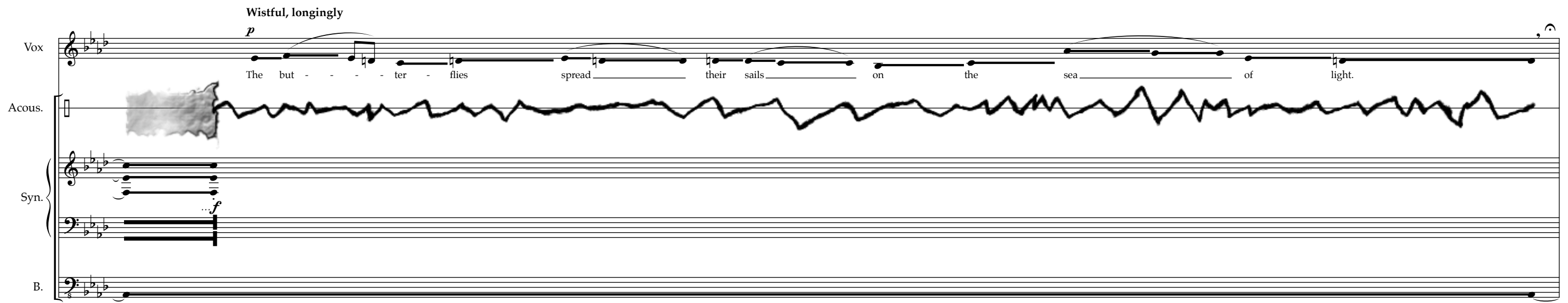
Wistful, longingly
p

Vox: The but - - - ter - flies spread their sails on the sea of light.

Acous. 

Syn. *f*

B.



1-18 1-19

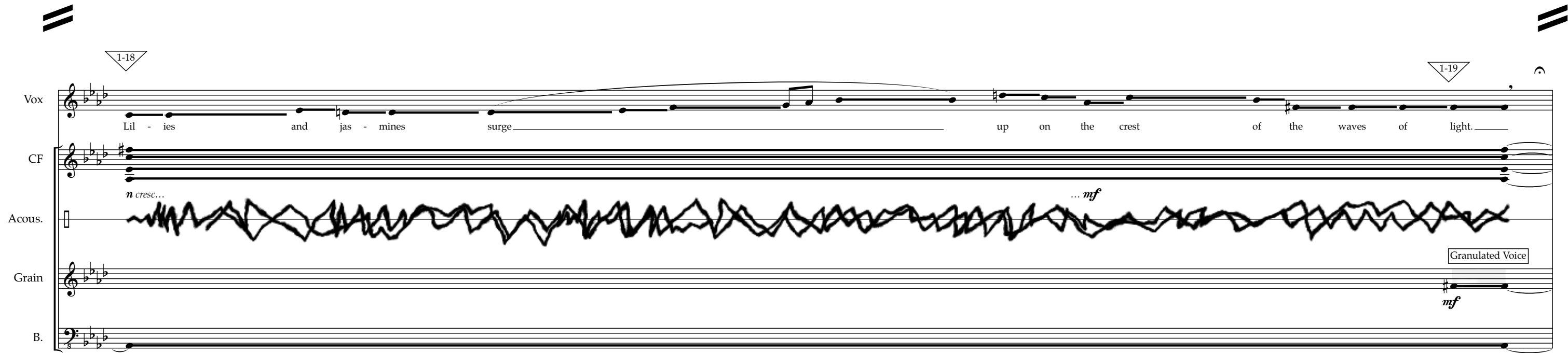
Vox: Lil - ies and jas - mines surge up on the crest of the waves of light.

CF

Acous. *n cresc...* *mf*

Grain Granulated Voice
mf

B.



1-20 *pp* whispered, distant

1-21 **Broadly, confident** *mf*

Vox: The light is shat - tered in - to gold on ev' - ry cloud,

CF: [Musical notation]

Acous.: [Acoustic texture]

Grain: [Musical notation]

B.: [Musical notation]

1-22 *pp* whispered, distant

1-23 *mf*

Vox: my dar - - - ling, and it scat - ters gems in pro - - - fu - sion.

CF: [Musical notation]

Acous.: [Acoustic texture]

Grain: [Musical notation]

B.: [Musical notation]

TONIC = G (3:2)

Exuberant, joyful

f

Vox

Mirth _____ spreads _____ from leaf _____ to leaf,

Acous.

Syn.

Algorithmically Determined Arpeggios

B.

f

1-24

pp

Vox

my dar - ling, _____ and _____ glad - - - ness _____ with - - - out _____ meas - ure.

Acous.

Syn.

B.

f

1-25

Vox

The heav - - - en's _____ riv - - - er

Acous.

Syn.

B.

Vox *mp* *ff* 1-26

has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is a - broad.

Acous.

Syn.

B.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Ocean of Forms". It consists of four staves: Vox (Vocal), Acous. (Acoustic), Syn. (Synthesizer), and B. (Bass). The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is a - broad." The vocal line starts with a half note on G4, followed by quarter notes on A4, B4, and C5. There is a fermata over the C5 note. The dynamic marking *mp* (mezzo-piano) is above the first staff, and *ff* (fortissimo) is above the second staff. A triangle containing "1-26" is positioned above the final measure. The acoustic part is a horizontal band of sound. The synthesizer and bass parts are mostly empty staves with a few notes at the beginning and end.

II. Threshold

Gitanjali 95

The musical score is divided into three systems, each marked with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The first system includes a key signature of one flat and a 9/8 time signature. It features three staves: Vox (Vocal), Grain, and Syn. (Synthesizer). The vocal line is marked with dynamics *p* and includes the instruction "Mysterious, searchingly". The lyrics for the first system are: "I was not a - ware of the mo - - - ment". The grain and synthesizer tracks provide accompaniment, with the synthesizer part labeled "p" and "Accompaniment Pattern Continues Throughout". A box labeled "Granulated Vowel Sounds" is placed over the grain track. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics: "when I first crossed the thresh - - - - old of this life." The third system includes a key signature change to two flats and lyrics: "What was the pow - - - - er". The score is annotated with measure markers 2-01, 2-02, 2-03, 2-04, and 2-05.

2-01 TONIC = D (9:8)

2-02 Mysterious, searchingly

2-03

Vox

Grain

Syn.

p

p

p

I was not a - ware of the mo - - - ment

Granulated Vowel Sounds

when I first crossed the thresh - - - - old of this life.

2-04

2-05

Vox

Grain

Syn.

What was the pow - - - - er

Accompaniment Pattern Continues Throughout

Vox
 that made me o - - - - pen out in - to this vast

Grain

Syn.

Vox
 mys - - - ter - y like a bud in the fo - - - - rest at mid - - - - - night!

Grain

Syn.

2-06
Broad, assertive

Vox
 When in the morn - ing I looked u - pon the light

Grain

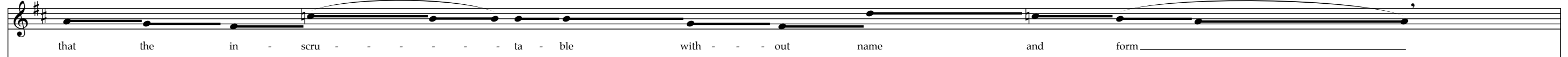
Syn.


Vox
 I felt in a mo - - - - ment that I was no stran - - - - ger in this world,


Grain


Syn.


2-07

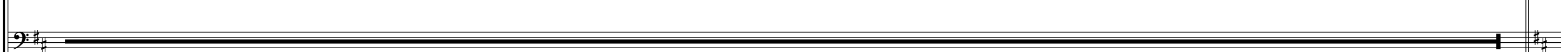
Vox 

Grain 

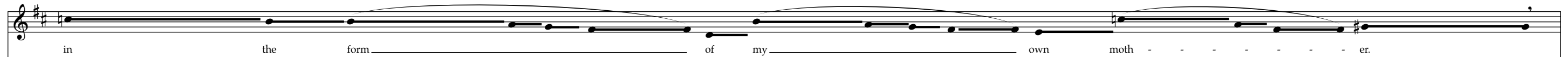
Syn. 


Vox 


Grain 

Syn. 

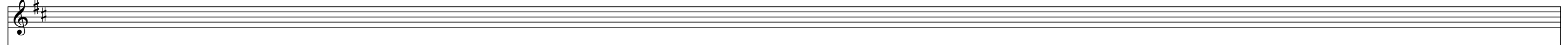
2-08


Vox 


Grain 

Syn. 

2-09

Vox 

Grain 

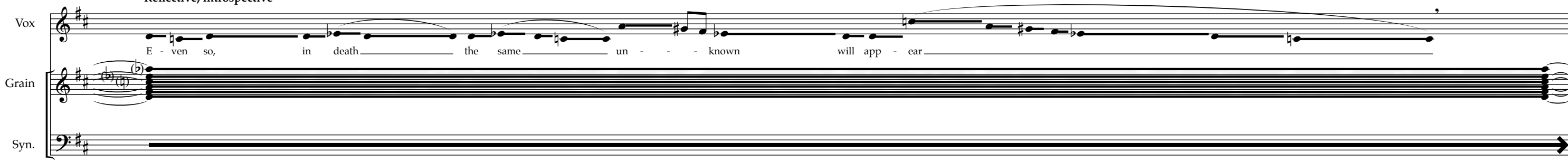
Syn. 

Reflective, introspective

Vox: E - ven so, in death the same un - - - known will app - ear

Grain: (b) (b)

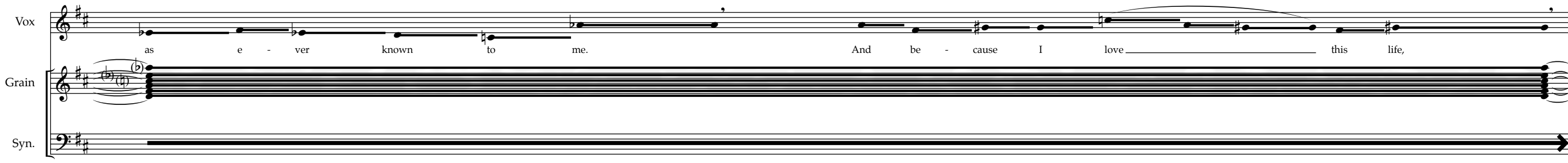
Syn.



Vox: as e - ver known to me. And be - cause I love this life,

Grain: (b) (b)

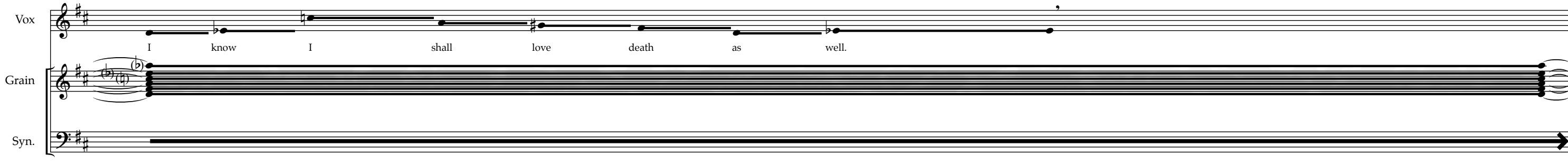
Syn.



Vox: I know I shall love death as well.

Grain: (b) (b)

Syn.



Plaintive, melancholy

2-10

Vox: The child cries _____ out

Grain: (b) (b)

Syn.

B. f

Vox: when from the right breast the moth - er takes _____ it a - way, in the ve - ry next mo - ment to find in the left one its con - sol -

Grain: (b)

Syn.

B.

2-11

Vox: a - - - - - tion.

Grain: (b) n

Syn. n

B. n n

III. My Song

The Crescent Moon 38

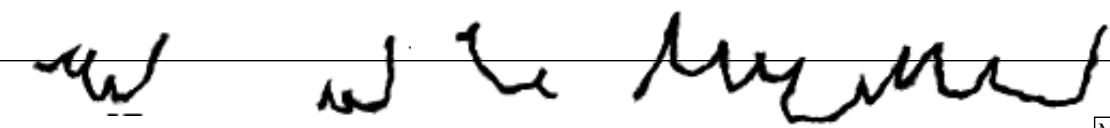
3-01

TONIC = E \flat (7:6)

Warm, inviting

f *mp*

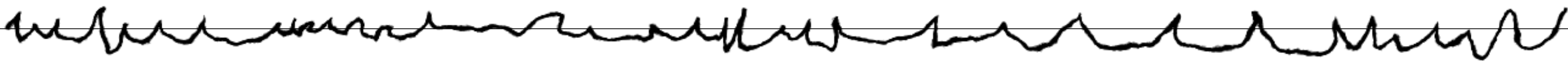
Vox: This _____ song _____ of mine

Acous.  Metallic Ringing Timbre

3-02

p cresc... *f*

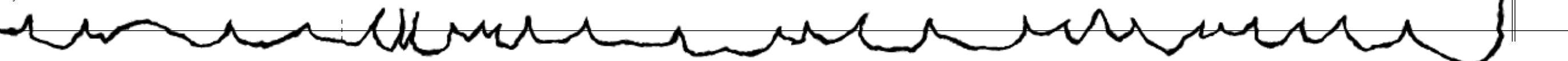
Vox: will wind _____ its mu - - - sic a - - - - round _____ you,

Acous. 

3-03 3-04 3-05


pp *mf* decresc... *p*

Vox: my child, like the fond _____ arms of love.

Acous. 

mf *f* *mp* *p*

Vox: This _____ song _____ of mine will

Syn.  Sustained String/Organ Timbre

n *mp*

3-06 *mp*

Vox touch your fore - head like a kiss of bless - ing.

Acous.

Syn. *mp*

Direct, assertive
p cresc...

Vox When you are a - lone it will sit by your side

Syn.

3-08 *pp*

Vox and whis - per in your ear, when you are in the crowd

Acous.

Syn.

3-10

mf

mp

pp

G.P.

Vox

it will fence you a - bout with a - loof - ness.

Rec. Vox

Ah,

Syn.

B.

mp

p

n

n

n

n

Vox

Acous.

Wistful, longingly yet distant

mf

mp

f

pp

mf

f

3-12

Vox

My song will be like a pair of wings

Acous.

Vox *mf* **3-13** Introspective
 to your dreams, it will trans - - - port your heart

CF *n cresc...*

Acous.

Vox **3-14** *mp* *f* **3-15**
 to the verge of the un - known.

CF *... f decresc...*

Acous.

Vox

CF *... n* *n cresc...*

Acous.

Calm, assuringly

Vox *pp*
 It will be like the faith - - - - - ful star o - - - ver - head

CF *pp*

Acous.

Vox *pp*
 when dark night is o - - - - - ver your road.

CF

Acous.

Syn. Bright, Buzzy Timbre
n cresc...

3-16

3-17

Broadly, confident

mf *f*

Vox My _____ song _____

CF *n* *mf* *n*

Acous.

Syn. *ff* *mp*

B.

mf

Vox will sit in the pu - pils of your eyes, and will car - ry your sight in - to the heart _____ of _____ things.

Acous.

B.

3-18

Urgent, agitated
p cresc...

Vox: And when my voice is si - - - - - lent

CF: *p cresc...*

Acous. *Full, Warm Timbre*

Syn.: *p cresc...*

B.: *cresc...*

3-19

Vox: in death,

CF: *...ff*

Acous. *Full, Warm Timbre*

Syn.: *...ff*

B.: *...ff*

3-20 Warm, lovingly *mp*

Vox my _____ song

3-21 *pp*

Vox will speak _____ in your liv - ing heart. _____

Rec. Vox. my _____ song

Delays

IV. Brink of Eternity

Gitanjali 87

4-01
TONIC = A \flat (14:9)

Vox

Acous.

B.

Reverb Tail

Sine Pulses

mf

Vox

Acous.

B.

Inward, with strength
mp

In des - per - ate hope I go _____ and search for her in all the cor - ners of my room;

4-02

Plaintive, consolingly
pp

4-03

Vox

I find her not.

Acous.

Syn.

B.

mf

Vox

Acous.

B.

Vox

Acous.

B.

Vox

Acous.

Syn.

B.

Sine Pulses

Accel & Gliss

5

Direct, increasingly strong and agitated
mf

Vox

Acous.

Syn.

B.

My house is small and what once has gone from it can ne - ver be re - gained.

4-04

mp ————— *f*

Vox

Acous.

Syn.

B.

But in - - - - - fin - ite

Accel & Gliss

7

Vox *mp* *pp* is thy man - - - sion, my lord,

Acous.

Syn.

B.

Vox *mp* and seek - ing her I have to come to thy door.

Acous.

Syn. *4-05* *Accel & Gliss* *II*

B.

Vox *mf cresc...* *f* I stand un - der the gold - - - - en can - o - py of thine eve' - - - ning sky

Acous.

Syn.

B.

Vox *p* ————— *f* ————— *p*

and I lift my ea - ger eyes to thy face.

Acous.

Syn.

B.

4-06

Vox *mf*

I have come to the brink

Acous.

Syn. *Accel & Gliss.* 13

B.

Vox *f*

of e - ter - - - - - ni - ty from which no - - - - -

Acous.

Syn.

B.

Vox *p*
 - - thing can van - - - - - ish no hope,

Acous.

Syn.

B.

Vox *mf* *f*
 no happ - - - - - i - ness, no vi - sion of a face

Acous.

Syn.

B.

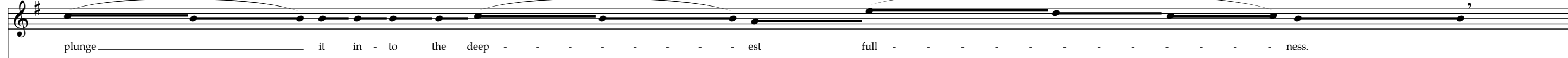
Vox
 seen through tears.


Acous.


Syn.


B.


4-07


Vox 
plunge it in to the deep - - - - - est full - - - - - ness.


Acous. 


Syn. 

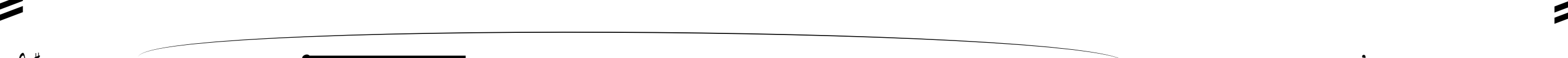
B. 

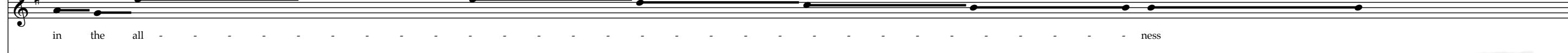
Vox 
Let me for once feel that lost sweet touch

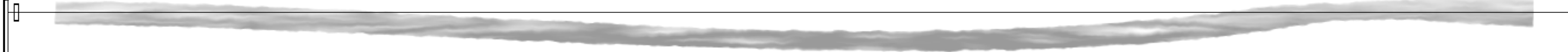
Acous. 


Syn. 

B. 

Vox 
in the all - - - - - ness

Acous. 

Syn. 

B. 

4-09

Vox

of the u - - - - - ni - - - - - verse.

Acous.

Syn.

B.

Vox

Acous.

Syn.

B.

Vox

Acous.

Syn.

B.

V. Ocean of Forms

Gitanjali 100

5-01
TONIC = G (3:2)

Vox

Acous.

Syn.

B.

Clear, Crystalline Timbre

f *p*

mf

Calm, with a sense of inevitability

I dive down

in - - - to the depth of the ocean of forms,

5-02

Vox

hop - - - ing to gain the per - fect pearl of the form - - - -

Acous.

Syn.

B.

Vox

less.

mp

Ah,

Acous.

Syn.

B.

5-03

Harmonic Pulses

Moving, agitated

Vox

No more sail - - - - ing from har - - - - bor to har - - - - bor

Acous.

B.

Vox

with this my weath - - - er - - - beat - - - en boat.

Acous.

B.

5-04

Calm, plainly

Vox

The days are long ——— The days are ——— passed when my sport was to be tossed on waves.

Acous.

B.

5-05

Vox

Acous.

Syn.

B.

Vox

Acous.

Syn.

B.

Vox

Acous.

Syn.

B.

Inward, calm, direct

Vox

Acous.

B.

And now I am ea - - - ger to die

5-06

Vox

in - - - - to the death - - - - - less.

Acous.

B.

5-07

Vox

Rec. Vox. Granulated Voice *pp cresc...*

Ah,

Acous.

Syn. *n cresc...*

B.

Vox

Rec. Vox. *...f*

Acous.

Syn. *...f*

n *n* *n* *n* *n*

B.

Vox

Rec. Vox. *decresc...* ... *n*

Acous.

Syn. *n* ... *n*

B.

Broad, plaintive yet reassuring

Vox

In - to the aud-i - ence hall by the fath - - - - - om - less a - - - - - byss

Acous.

B.

Vox

where swells up the mu - - - sic of tone - less strings

Acous.

B.

Vox

I shall take this harp

Acous.

B.

Vox

of my life.

Acous.

B.

5-08

non decresc.

decresc...

... n

TONIC = C (1:1)

Vox

I shall tune it to the notes of for - ev - - - - - er,

Acous.

B.

Vox

and when it has sobbed

Acous.

B.

Vox

out its last utt - er - ance, lay down

Acous.

B.



Vox

my si - - - - - lent harp at the

Acous.

B.



Vox

feet of the si - - - - - lent.

Acous.

B.

5-09