Island in Time was composed as an homage to John Cage in his centenary year. Cage sometimes spoke of how time (or "duration") was the most fundamental or important parameter of music, because it was the only parameter which existed in silence. And temporal organization, like equal temperament, generally continues to assume a kind of orthodoxy in compositional practice. Much of my work has focused on strategies for the navigation of musical time. At sea, one might travel with motor, or by whatever wind and current comes along.

This piece uses four types of musical motion: in relation to a clock, in relation to measured "timespace" on the page, in relation to a shared tempo ("in ensemble"), and in relation to individual intuition ("free pulse", with no clock). Their interplay over the full duration or timeframe of the work creates pockets of silences – islands in time – landings where sound and space are free.

Island in Time

(2012)

for alto flute, bass clarinet, cello, and percussion

John Kennedy

Commissioned by Other Minds,
with support from Mrs. Ralph I. Dorfman

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SCORE IN C

Island in Time

John Cage: “The most important parameter of music is time, because it is the only parameter which exists in silence.”
Silences in this piece (and those in one’s own part while others are playing) are not rests; they are as important as sounds.
Fermatas are not holds but give you the liberty of different durations of silences – islands in time.

The piece presents alternations of time as independent as well as time felt “in ensemble”, in both open time brackets and metered music.
Alertness to these changes should not govern the flow or inhibit a sense of freedom and focus on one’s part when independent.

There is no interpretative difference between sounds and conventional melodies. All sounds are to be played with beauty.

INSTRUCTIONS
Chronometers (stopwatches) are used for about the first 5’30”, then time “stops” and they are turned off.
Their start should be coordinated. Please use a device which does not beep at start and stop.

Material in boxes followed by a solid line is to be repeated or varied for the duration indicated by the line, until a silence or new box appears.
This does not imply constant activity, as fermatas within boxes allow for silence.
Sometimes a subsequent box appears marked “ADD”, which is activity to combine with what is already ongoing.

Entrance coordinated with other players

Long fermata

Short fermata

“IN ENSEMBLE” are passages in which players share pulse in a conventional manner.

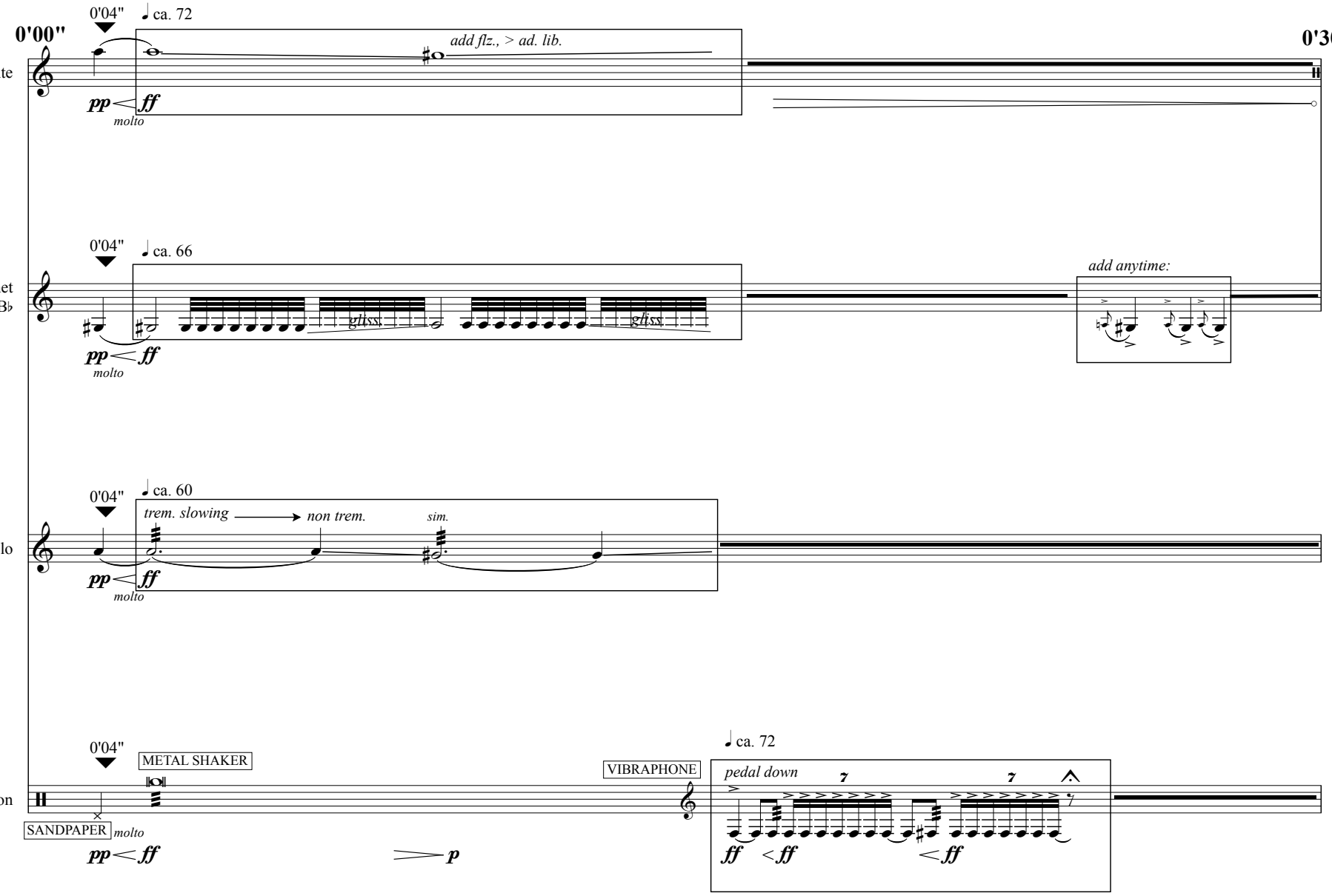
“FREE PULSE” are passages in which players follow independent tempi as indicated. Vertical alignment in the score will be lost. Long fermata silences at the end of these passages allow for pause and alignment of the start of next section with group.

PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS
Vibraphone, Bass Drum, Sandblocks (large, full sheet 8.5” x 11”, one of which rests flat), Metal shaker (loud and raucous, such as a tin can with marbles), Brake Drum, Scraped sounds of performer’s choosing (guiro, ridged shells, wire cage, etc)

Island in Time

SCORE IN C

John Kennedy (2012)



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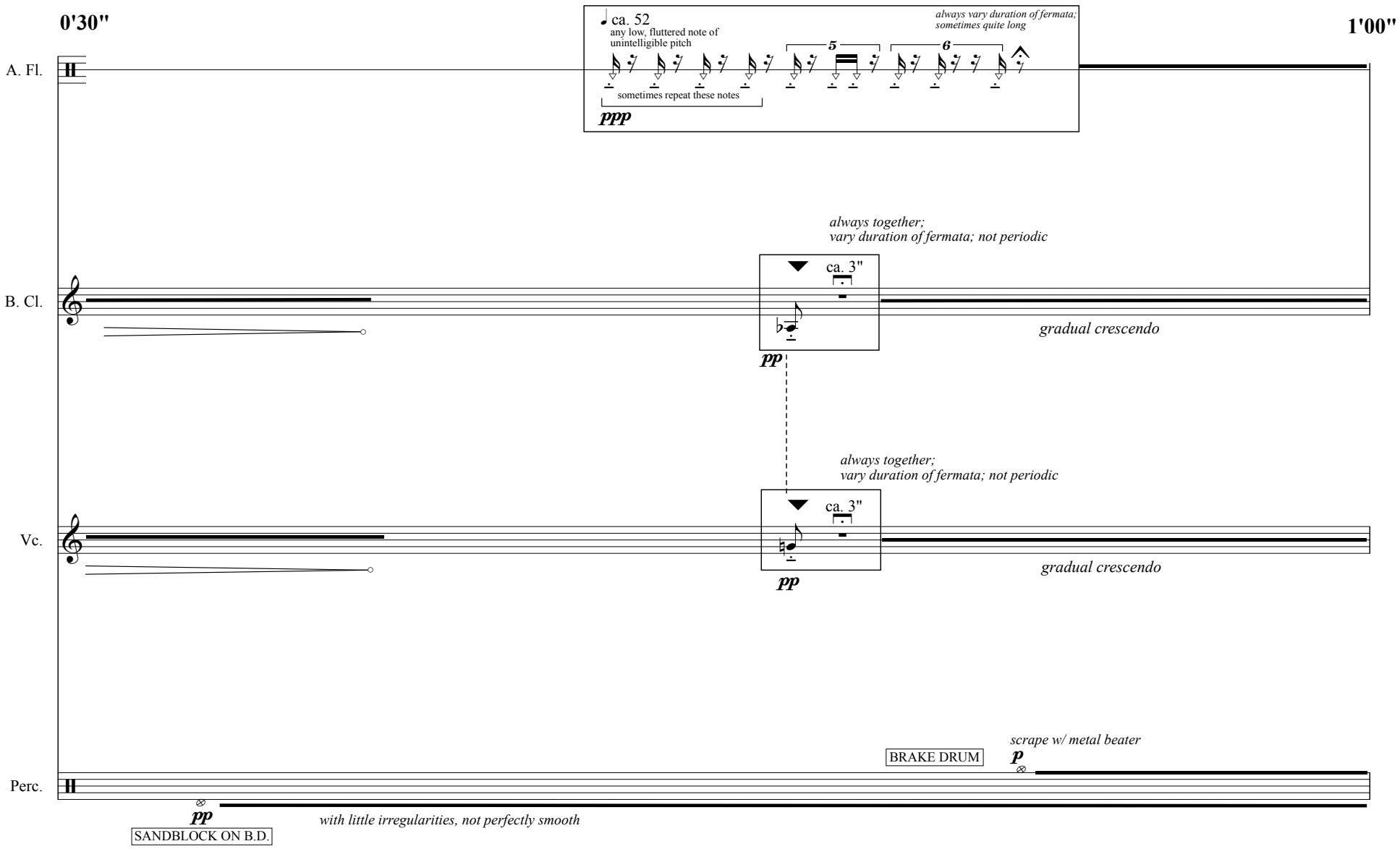

0'30"
1'00"
A. Fl.
ca. 52
any low, fluttered note of unintelligible pitch
sometimes repeat these notes
always vary duration of fermata; sometimes quite long
5
6
ppp
B. Cl.
always together; vary duration of fermata; not periodic
ca. 3"
pp
gradual crescendo
Vc.
always together; vary duration of fermata; not periodic
ca. 3"
pp
gradual crescendo
Perc.
BRAKE DRUM
scrape w/ metal beater
p
pp
SANDBLOCK ON B.D.
with little irregularities, not perfectly smooth

[CA. 4'10"]

IN ENSEMBLE

♩ ca. 72

4'00"

4'30"

A. Fl.

mf

sempre dolce
but febrile vibrato

p

B. Cl.

sempre dolce,
but febrile vibrato

pp

Vc.

sempre dolce
pizz.

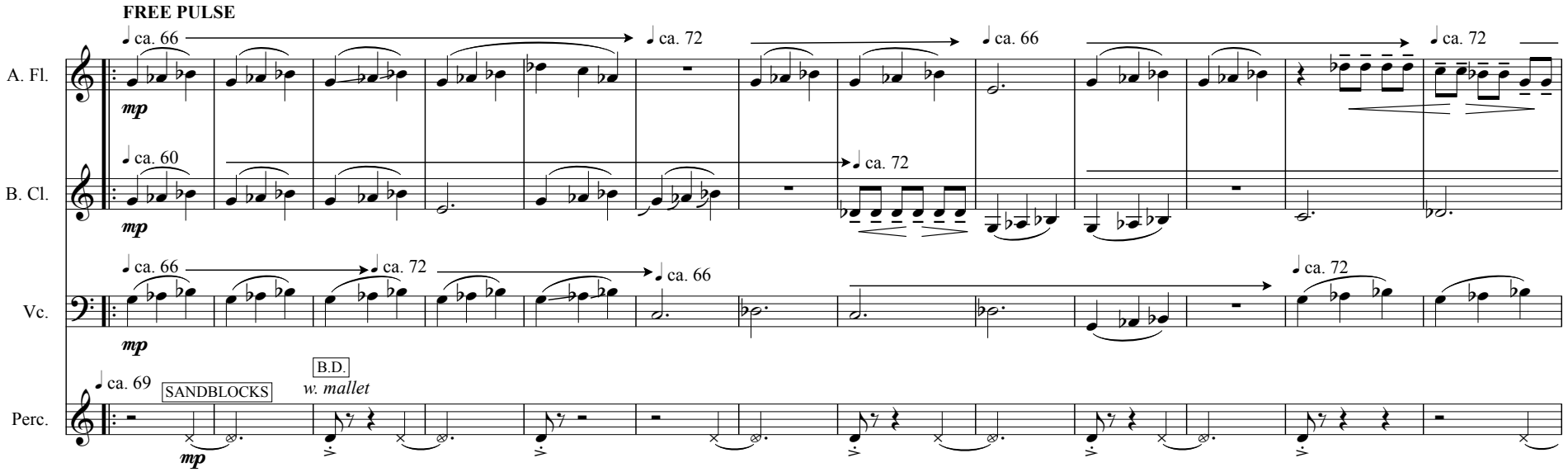
p

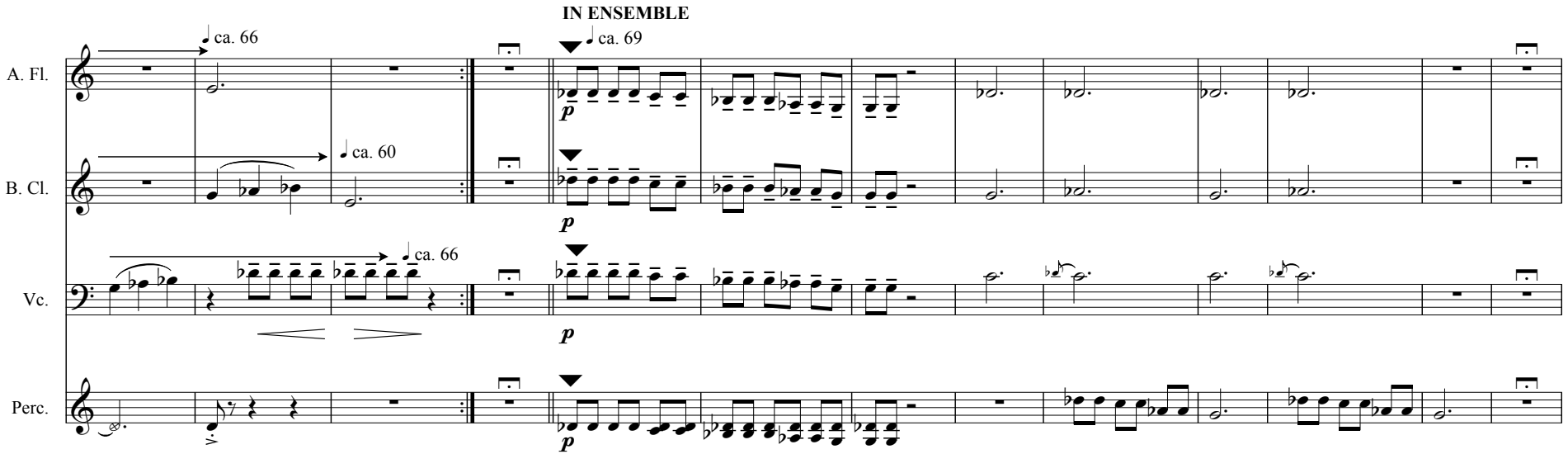
Perc.

sempre dolce, but ghostly

mp

pp


FREE PULSE
A. Fl.
B. Cl.
Vc.
Perc.
ca. 66
ca. 72
ca. 60
ca. 69
mp
SANDBLOCKS
B.D.
w. mallet


IN ENSEMBLE
A. Fl.
B. Cl.
Vc.
Perc.
ca. 66
ca. 69
ca. 60
p