JAMES SELLARS

Miscellaneous Songs

8

Dolce Far Niente

for Voice, String Quartet, and Keyboard

HOG RIVER MUSIC
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Program Notes

The ten *Miscellaneous Songs* are for unspecified voice (optionally amplified), keyboard (preferably electronic) and string quartet. They are decidedly postmodern in style, tending to deal with the present in terms of the past and the past in terms of the present. The musical idiom ranges from a crunchy chromaticism to a lilting diatonic sweetness. Despite a degree of unity in this stylistic disunity, the songs do not constitute a cycle or even a set: one to all ten may be sung in any order as the singer(s) choose.

The texts to the *Miscellaneous Songs* deal with various contemporary ideas, from our increasingly administrated robotic lives in *Function* and the constant interruptions brought on by technology in *Discontinuous,* to a pleasant dream of escape in *Dolce Far Niente.*

Sound in My Head and *I've Decided* are, in their self-absorption, songs to oneself. *Is This a Love Song,* if not exactly self-absorption, is a self-dialog, less about the impossibility of love than about the impossibility of yet another love song. *To Write a Song* carries our millennial skepticism a step further and questions the writing of any song — except, of course, one on the subject of writing a song. *I've Never Talked to a Tree* is a doubly-coded song, sincere and satirical at the same time.

I Have Nothing to Say, a modular song, is based on John Cage's famous statement, permuted into a poem by the Scottish poet Edwin Morgan. *JNNY* is a setting of a pop tune and lyric by composer Todd Merrell (with a word and note changed here and there).

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Dolce Far Niente is the wonderful Italian phrase for "the sweetness of doing nothing," the blessing of leisure. This song is dedicated to my friend Leslie Tomkins, a free-lance violist who lives and works in New York when she is not playing concerts around the globe. Such a hectic life, I thought, deserves some sweet time off. *Dolce Far Niente* addresses that need: it is about the sweetest and most leisurely-paced music I have written.

Performance Notes

- Voice part may be amplified

- Keyboard part may be performed on an acoustic piano, electric piano, or synthesizer. The various synthesizer patches are described below.

- Patches (and patch changes) are indicated in the Keyboard part by a number in a box 1

  1: Gentle harp/flute with long release ring (5-6 sec.)
  2: Same as 1, but fairly dry release.
  3: Sustained chiff organ sound; warm, and without a lot of overtones.
  4: Synth guitar with bright piano; slightly detuned, though clear in pitch.

- A reference cassette (or DAT) of synthesizer sounds (as part of a sequencer "performance") is available from the publisher. This recording may be used by the singer in preparing for performance.

- Parts are available from the publisher:

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Dolce Far Niente

for Leslie Tomkins

Music and text
James Sellars

Leisurely
(♩=ca.52)

Voice

Violin I — *sord.* *pp* — *p* — 8va

Violin II — *sord.* *pp* — *p*

Viola — *sord.* *pp* — *p*

Violoncello — *sord.* *p* — *p*

Leisurely
(♩=ca.52)

Keyboard — 1 — *p* *(non cresc.)*

5

mp comodo

June_ twen-ty-first sum-mer sol-stice this year.

semplice

p — *pp* — *p*

5

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Hartford, Connecticut

10

—

Hot still af-ter-noons_

mp *pp*

mp *p* *p*

mp *p*

mf *p*

10

14

No-thing do-ing no-thing Dol-ce far nien-te

p *pp* ∨ *senza vib.* *vib. norm.* *p*

pp ∨ *senza vib.* *vib. norm.* *p*

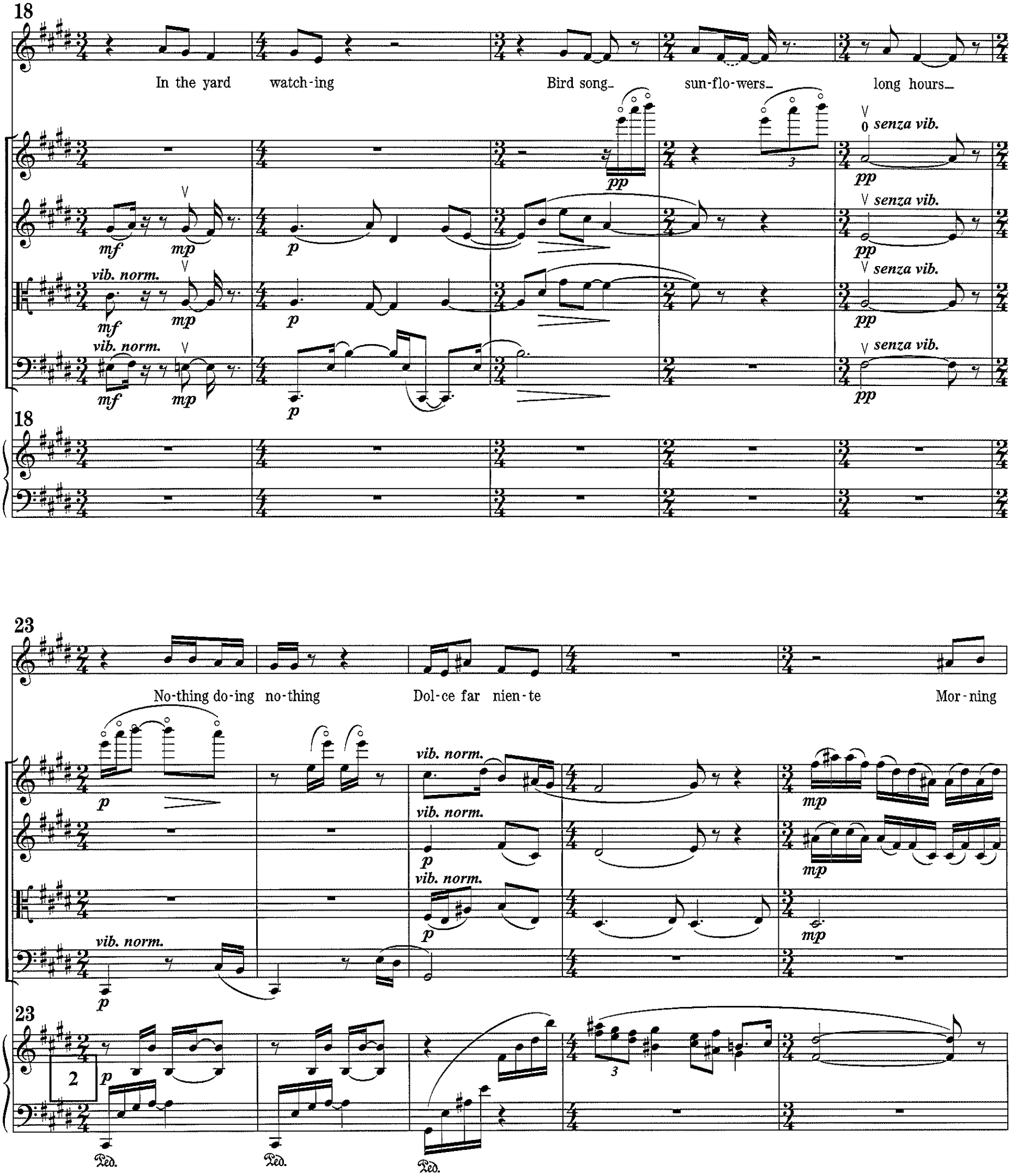
p *pp* ∨ *senza vib.*

pp ∨ *senza vib.*

14

3 3 3

pp


18
In the yard watch-ing Bird song sun-flo-wers long hours
senza vib.
vib. norm.
23
No-thing do-ing no-thing Dol-ce far nien-te Mor-ning
vib. norm.
2
Ped.

28

rain no wind far - a - way heard

mp p p p pp

28

3 mp p

33

3

mu - si - cal birds Si - lent blos - soms hot sun

mp mp mp

33

38

vi - o - let in - di - go blue green yel - low or - ange red

pp

f

38

pp legato

f *p*

42

Bees with their pol - len

p

42

48

long hours

No - thing do - ing no - thing

pp

ppp

48

pp

ppp

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

53

Dol - ce far nien - te

A breeze now

non harm. (vib.)

p

53

p molto legato

58

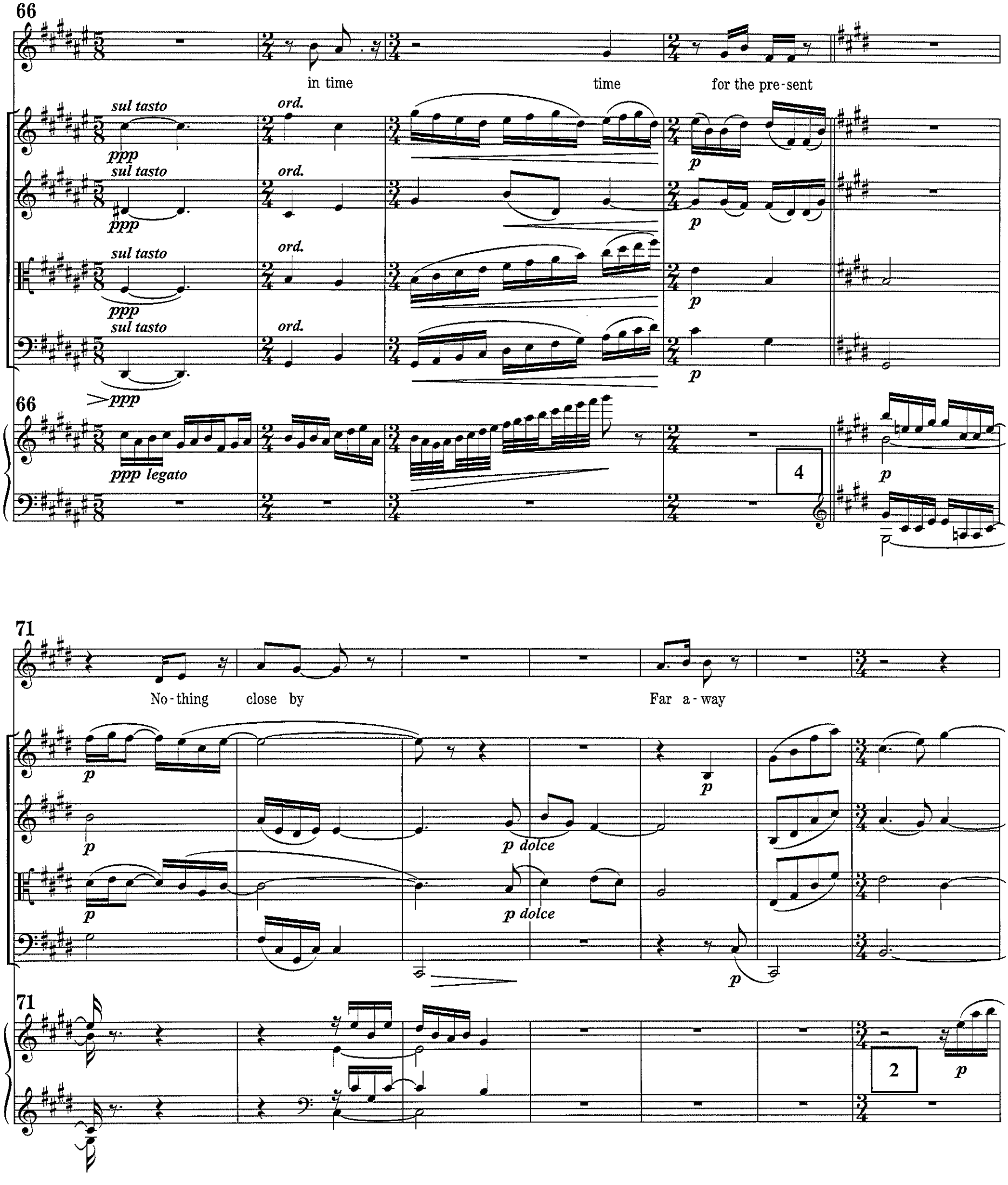
the trees sing-ing tall grass-es sway

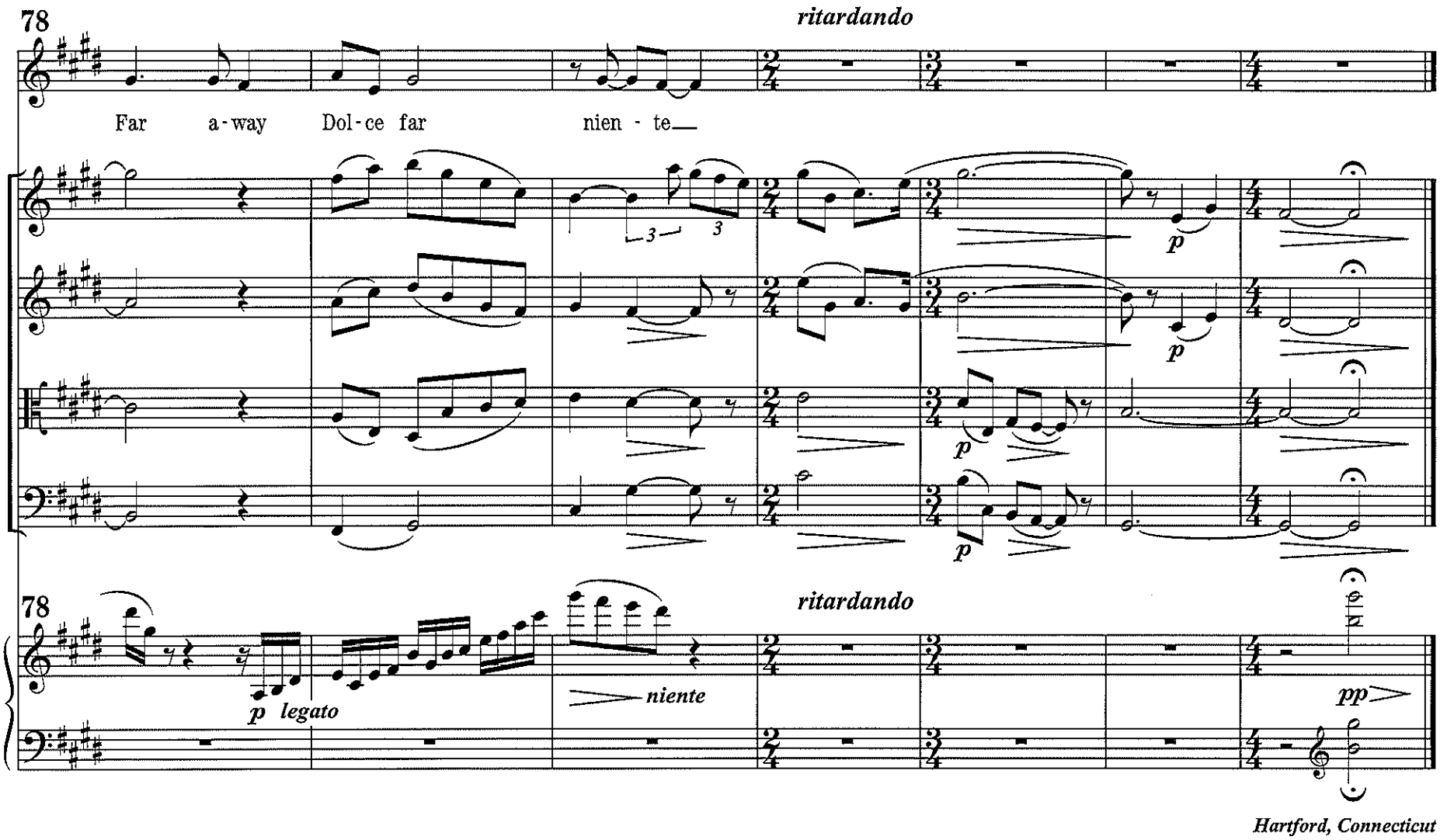
58

62

Do-ing no-thing sweet no-thing Far - a-way mus - ic

62


66
in time
time
for the pre-sent
sul tasto
ord.
ppp
p
ppp legato
4
71
No-thing
close by
Far a-way
p dolce
2



Hartford, Connecticut
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