Cézanne's Doubt,

a chamber opera for solo baritone, instruments,
live-electronic signal processing and video projection
(1996)

Daniel Rothman

Cézanne's Doubt
was composed
with funding by the

NATIONAL
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Cézanne's Doubt

a chamber opera for baritone voice,
clarinet, trumpet, cello,
and electronic signal processing

Daniel Rothman

Cézanne's Doubt a chamber opera by Daniel Rothman

In a letter to Clara Rilke, October 19, 1907, a year after Cézanne's death, Rainer Maria Rilke writes: "You surely remember... from the *Notebooks of Malte Laurids* the passage that has to do with Baudelaire and with his poem: "Une Charogne." I could not help thinking that without this poem the whole of development toward objective expression, which we now recognize in Cézanne, could have started...You can imagine how it moves me to read that Cézanne in his last years still knew this very poem entirely by heart and recited it word for word." But Cézanne himself wrote, only a month before he died at the age of 67: "I was in such great confusion that for a time I feared my weak reason would not survive... Now it seems I am better and that I see more clearly the direction my studies are taking. Will I ever arrive at the goal, so intensely sought and so long pursued? I am still learning from nature, and it seems to me I am making slow progress." The contrast between Cézanne's self-doubt and Baudelaire's confidence and humor dramatizes the meaning that the poem held for Cézanne, who memorized and recited it. Baudelaire's "Une Charogne" is a deconstruction of sight as intensely as Cézanne's own obsessive looking to see, trying to know...

Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes, in his seminal essay *Cézanne's Doubt*, that "it is Cézanne's genius that when the overall composition of the picture is seen globally, perspectival distortions are no longer visible in their own right but rather contribute, as they do in natural vision, to the impression of an emerging order, of an object in the act of appearing, organizing itself before our eyes." Rilke and Merleau-Ponty both write of Cézanne's vision, which was in opposition to the Impressionists, whom Cézanne felt that objects in their paintings were submerged, lost their proper weight, and were broken up in the spectrum. Merleau-Ponty perceives Cézanne's palette of eighteen colors—six reds, five yellows, three blues, three greens, and black—to reveal a different intention: "The use of warm colors and black shows that he wants to represent the object, to find it again behind the atmosphere." Rather than break up the tone he "graduated colors, a progression of chromatic nuances across the object's form and to the light it receives. Doing away with exact contours in certain cases, giving color priority over the outline... the object is no longer covered by reflections and lost in its relationships to the atmosphere and to other objects: it seems subtly illuminated from within, light eminates from it, and the result is an impression of solidity and substance. Moreover, Cézanne does not give up making the warm colors vibrate but achieves this chromatic sensation through the use of blue."

Obsessed and reclusive as he was, Cézanne was in constant crisis, wondering whether the novelty of his painting might not come from trouble with his eyes—that his life was based upon an accident of his body. Giacometti, in conversation with James Lord, refers over and over to Cézanne's inability to finish a piece after hundreds of sittings and slashed his canvases. His moods swung wildly between extreme arrogance about his work and despair, and his friend Zola abandonned him, considering him an idiot—"a failure and suicide." Finally, Rilke closes a letter to Clara on October 21, 1907, quoting Cézanne: "'Je continue donc mes études.' And the wish that was literally fulfilled: 'Je me suis juré de mourir en peignant.' As in some old Dance of Death picture, Death reached from behind for his hand, painting the last stroke himself, trembling with pleasure; his shadow had been lying a while on the palette and he had had time to choose from the open round of colors *the one* that pleased him best; when its turn came, he would seize the brush and paint..."

The similarities between Baudelaire's vision of nature and Cézanne's, as Rilke points out, goes beyond the invention of a technique to being the soul of its necessity. The poem is a link between Cézanne's artistic vision and his mortality while he attempts to make peace with himself; a peace made complicated by his failed relationship with Zola. But Zola, famous and rich, died before any reconciliation was possible leaving the humiliations suffered by him ringing in Cézanne's ears. At the end of his life and in a deluded state reciting (singing)*Une Charogne*, Cézanne gradually sheds his unfulfilled dependency to Zola and reconciles with himself through his son, Paul.

The combination of the text, the processing of the imagery of Mount Sainte-Victoire and Cézanne's sketches, and the music's tonal and timbral ambiguity, each contribute to a composite consciousness — Cézanne's — whose doubt is a crisis of the sublime.

Cézanne's Doubt

Performance notes

Cézanne's Doubt takes place in Cézanne's mind, his conversations with Zola, the poem of Baudelaire, his self-reflection, and his letters to his son, Paul. A performance should be dream-like and lost in time. To have such an effect requires an unusual stillness to the performance but not without a sense of forward motion. The music is extremely soft and tenuous and unfolds over a long span of time; it often connects from section to section by strands. Integrating the general musical idea with the subject, the tonal quality may be characterized by the clarinet multiphonics, which cannot be interpreted as intervals certain as a well-tuned piano. These sonorities are often made more complex due to the inherent nature of the clarinet which produces subtle acoustic resonances that allude to tones not actually played; since the harmonic spectra influences timbre, the clarinet sound is noticeably different. The tonal and timbral qualities are important for expression and projecting a mood, as well as a reference sonority for the ensemble blend, and it is therefore essential that the clarinetist develop as clear and supple a multiphonic sound possible.

I have tested all of the clarinet multiphonics on a Buffet model R-13 and a Selmer series 9* with equally satisfactory results. In many cases there are several possibilities and the ones chosen are often for their tuning and timbre, occasionally convenience of fingering overrules. The fingerings are supplied in the score below the Bb stave.

The signal processing should not over balance the chamber-like quality of the slightly amplified ensemble. The amplification serves the purposes of creating an optimal blend with the signal processing and improves the balance within the ensemble itself.

Cézanne's Doubt a chamber opera by Daniel Rothman

Text:

I.

Rappelez-vous l'objet que nous vîme, mon âme,
Ce beau matin d'été si doux:
Au détour d'un sentier une charogne infâme
Sur un lit semé de cailloux,

Les jambes en l'air, comme une femme lubrique,
Brûlante et suant les poisons,
Ouvrait d'une façon nonchalante et cynique
Son ventre plein d'exhalaisons.

Eh, oui, mon cher Emile, I often think of you...
with infinite joy I would embrace you.
You've been gone four years...

Le soleil rayonnait sur cette pourriture,
Comme afin de la cuire à point,

Yes, I stopped seeing you
— with you're fine rugs and insolent servants
— enthroned like some old dirty bourgeois...
you've grown stupid.

Et de rendre au centuple à la grande Nature
Tout ce qu'ensemble elle avait joint;

I was your fool, your suicide
Thank you — thank you for your insight...for your society.

II.

Et le ciel regardait la carcasse superbe
Comme une fleur s'épanouir.
La puanteur était si forte, que sur l'herbe
Vous crûtes vous évanouir.

The sun is terrifying...

Les mouches bourdonnaient sur ce ventre purride,
D'ou sortaient de noirs bataillons
De larves, qui coulaient comme un épais liquide
Le long de ce vivants haillons.

Tout cela decendait, montait comme une vague,
Ou s'élançait en pétillant;
On eût dit que le corps, enflé d'un souffle vague,
Vivait en se multipliant.

All went well at first but it was not long before I found myself in the dark... perhaps I shall not have time to finish

...must work carefully — how slowly nature reveals herself...
just as I begin to understand, it all evaporates...
only color exists now

Et ce monde rendait une étrange musique,
Comme l'eau courante et le vent,
Ou le grain qu'un vanneur d'un mouvement rythmique
Agite et tourne dans son van.

I should make a little hole in nature and pass through it; a minute of the world passes even as I try to grasp the full reality of what I see.

Les formes s'effaçaient et n'étaient plus qu'un rêve,
Un ébauche lente à venir,
Sur la toile oubliée, et que l'artiste achève
Seulement par le souvenir.

III. Cher Paul,
If I forget to write to you it is because I loose the awareness of time. The heat is appalling...no air at all... good for nothing but the expansion of metals... I am heavy and slow...

Dark sorrow oppresses me. I see no one, life terrifies me — Art worse... I paint. I go to church. I paint. I eat. I paint.

Derrière le rochers une chienne inquiète
Nous regardait d'un œil fâché,
Epiant le moment de reprendre au squelettre
Le morceau qu'elle avait lâché.

Cher Paul,
I rely on your guidance... at the end of my strength... illusions are no longer permitted.

— Et pourtant vous serez semblable à cette ordure,
A cette horrible infection,

I would like you near me

Etoile de mes yeux, soleil de ma nature,
Vous, mon ange et ma passion!

Oui! telle que vous serez, ô la reine de grâce s,
Après le derniers sacrements,
Quand vous irez, sous l'herbe et les floraisons grasses,
Moiser parmi les ossements.

Cher Paul, I wait impatiently for my paint box you've mended;
Cher Paul, add a palette with a hole large enough...

Hurry.

Soon a carriage will take me to the river... there are some large trees that form a vault over the water.

Alors, ô ma beauté! dites à la vermine
Qui vous mangera de baisers,
Qui j'ai gardé la forme et l'essence divine
De mes amours décomposés!

Remember, my soul, the thing we saw
    that lovely summer day?
On a pile of stones where the path turned
    the hideous carrion –

legs in the air, like a whore – displayed,
    indifferent to the last,
a belly slick with lethal sweat
  and swollen with foul gas.

The sun lit up that rottenness
    as though to roast it through,
restoring to Nature a hundredfold
    what she had here made one.

And heaven watched the splendid corpse
    like a flower open wide –
you nearly fainted dead away
    at the perfume it gave off.

Flies kept humming over the guts
    from which a gleaming clot
of maggots poured to finish off
    what scraps of flesh remained.

The tide of trembling vermin sank,
    then bubbled up afresh
as if the carcass, drawing breath,
    by *their* lives lived again

and made a curious music there –
    like running water, or wind,

or the rattle of chaff the winnower
    loosens in his fan.

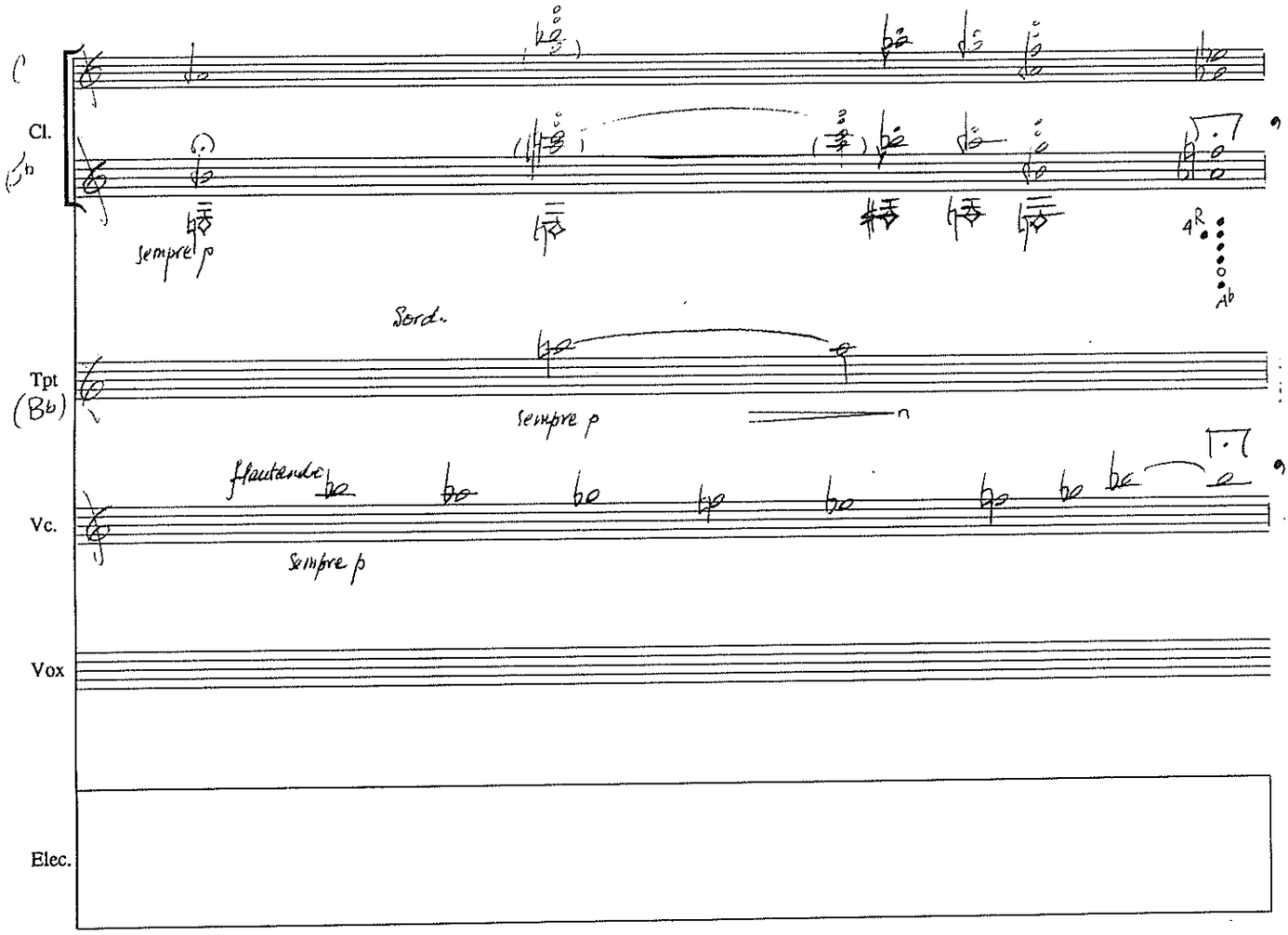
Shapeless – nothing was left but a drea
    the artist had sketched in,
forgotten, and only later on
    finished from memory.

Behind the rocks an anxious bitch
    eyed us reproachfully,
waiting for the chance to resume
    her interrupted feast.

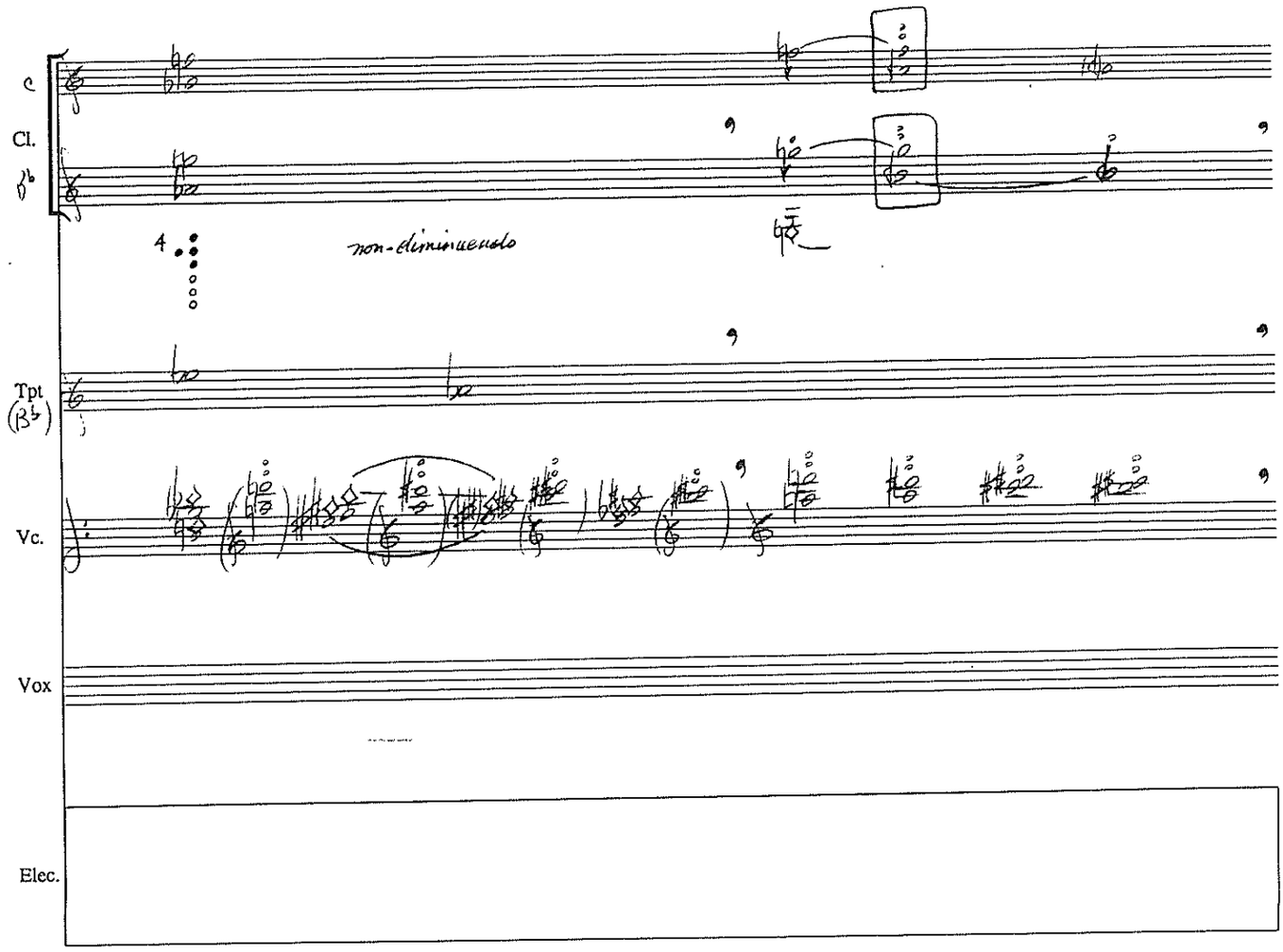
– Yet you will come to this offence,
    this horrible decay,
you, the light of my life, the sun
    and moon and stars of my love!

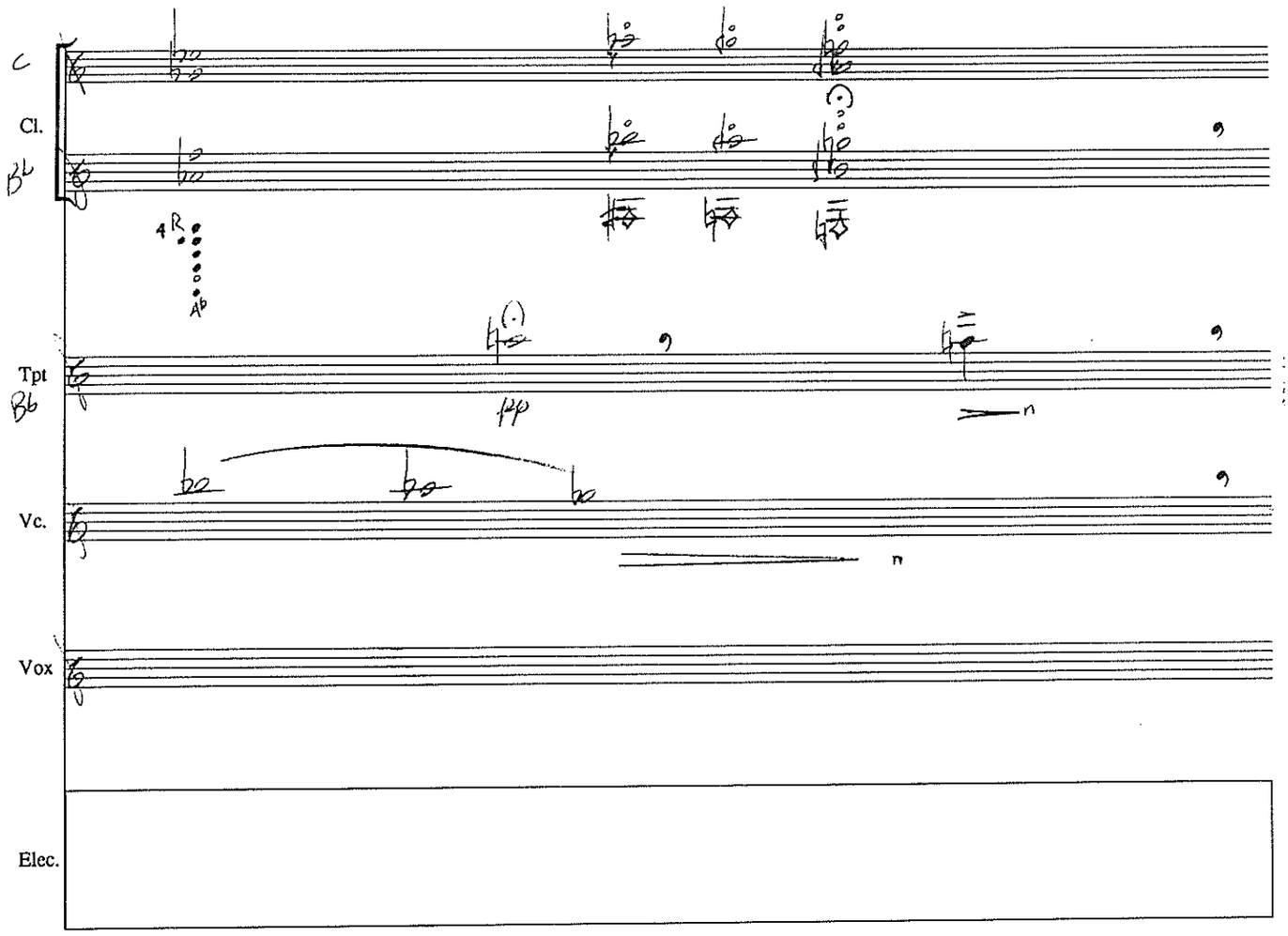
Yes, you will come to this, my queen,
    after the sacraments,
when you rot underground among
    the bones already there.

But as their kisses eat you up,
    my Beauty, tell the worms
I've kept the sacred essence, saved
    the form of my rotted loves!

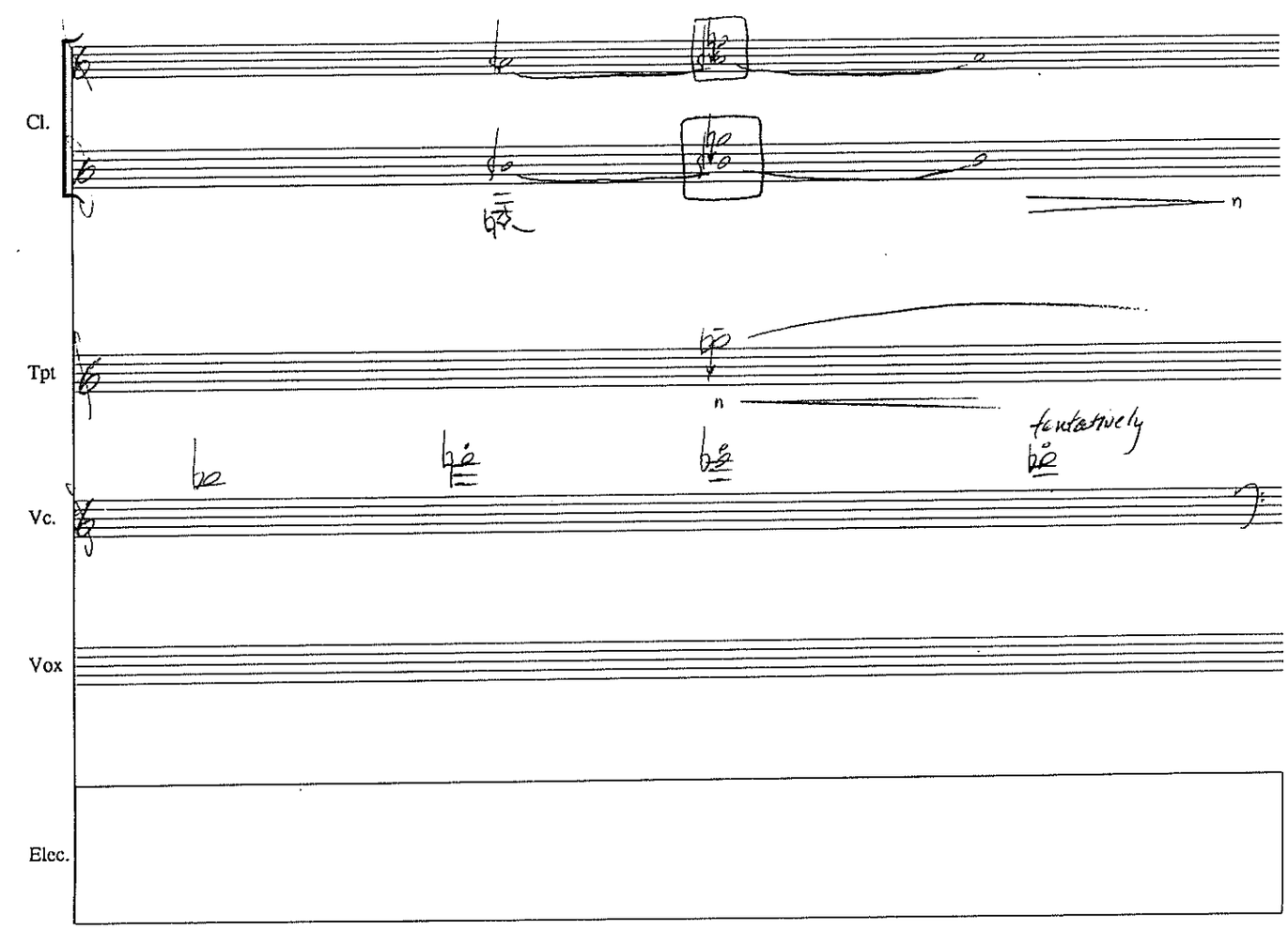


Cezanne's doubt - Rothman I-1





Cezannes Doubt · Rothman I-2



freely · dream-like but coordinated ensemble

(c)

Cl. B♭

Sord.

poco gliss

Tpt B♭

mp

flautando ord.

Vc.

freely · dream-like

(9)

Vox

Rap-pelez

vous

Elec.

Cezanne's Doubt · Rothman I-3

c.

Cl. B♭

(from clarinet)

Tpt B♭

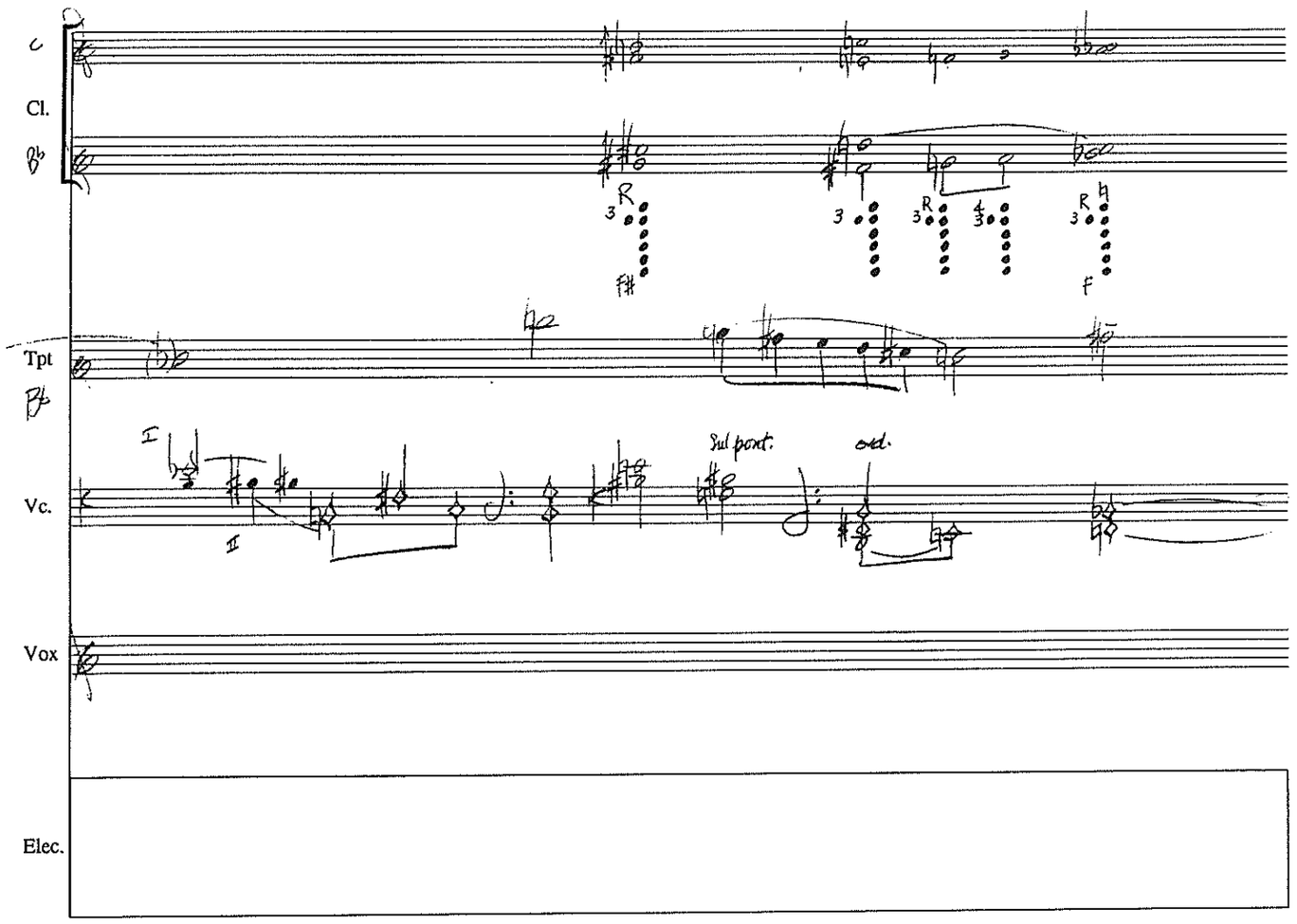
pp

Vc.

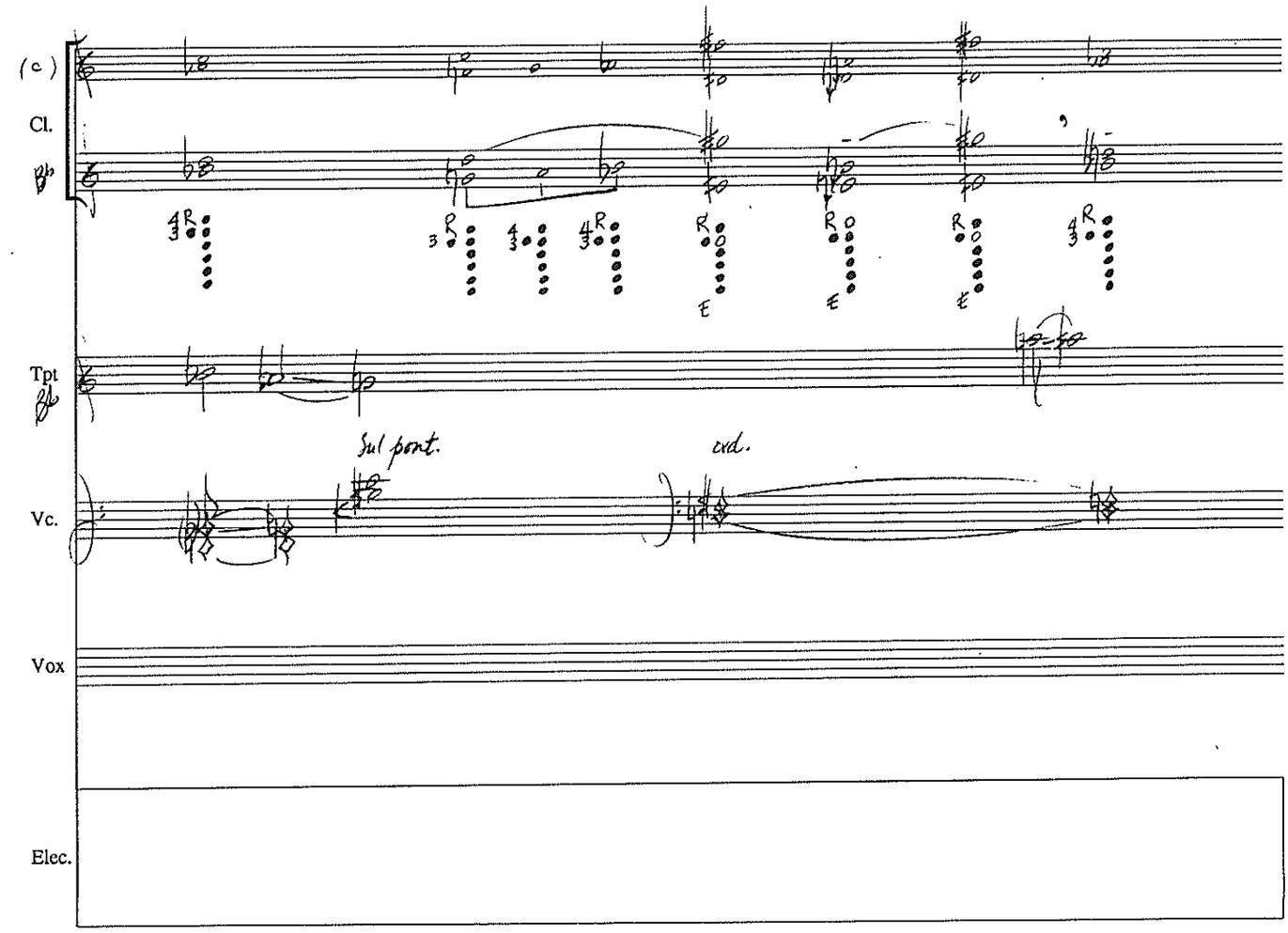
Vox

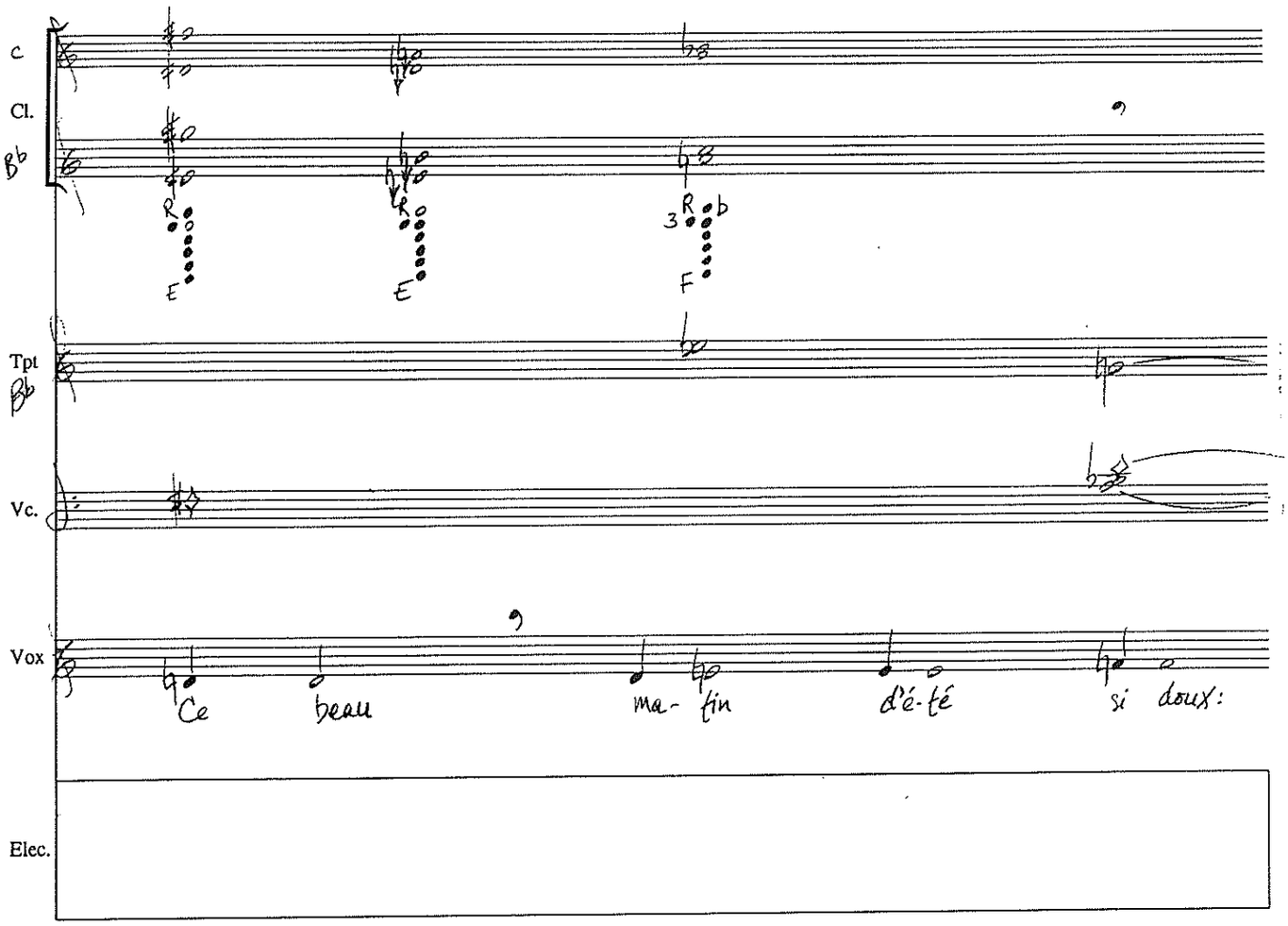
l'ob-jet que nous rême, mon âme

Elec.

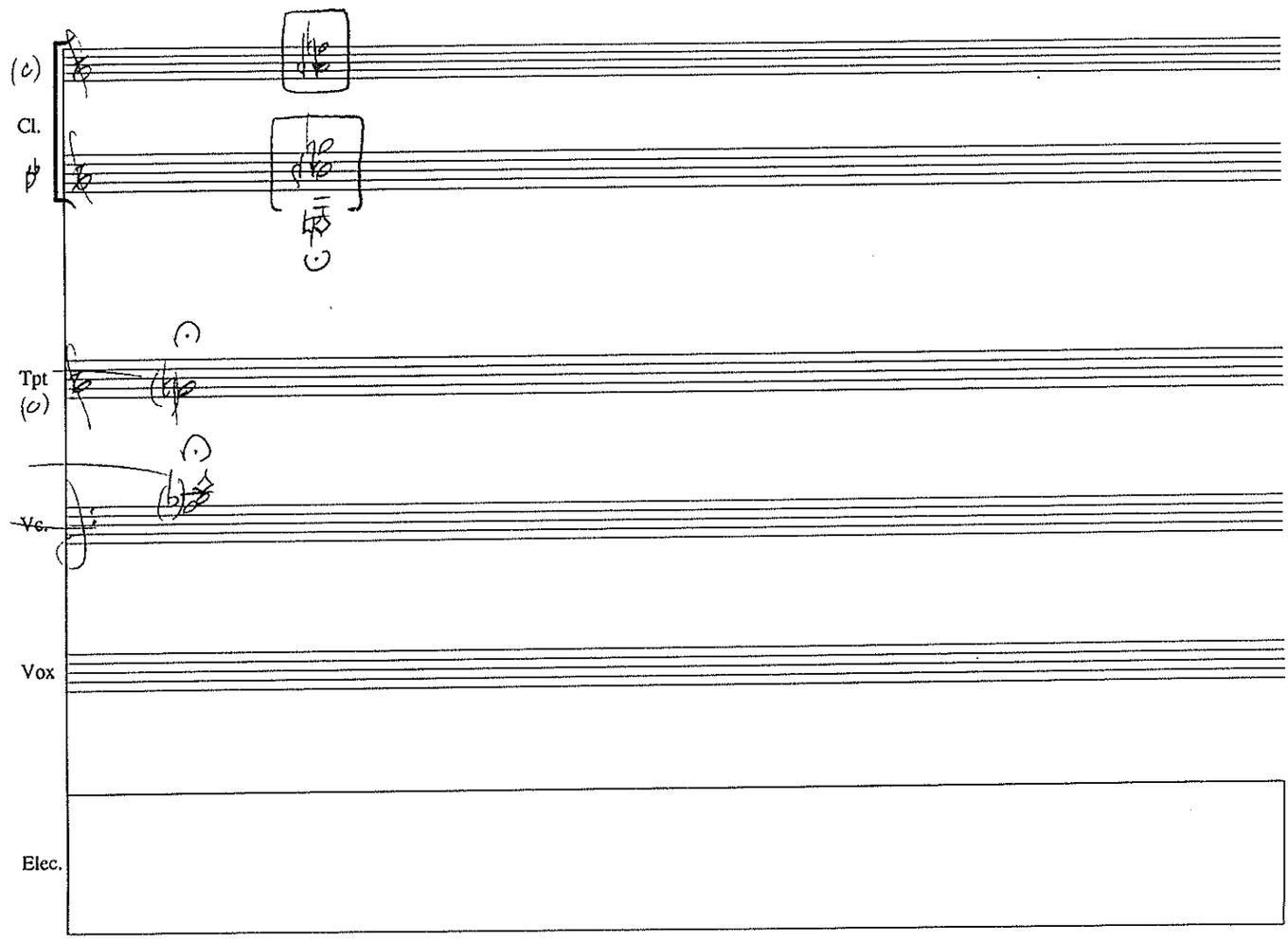


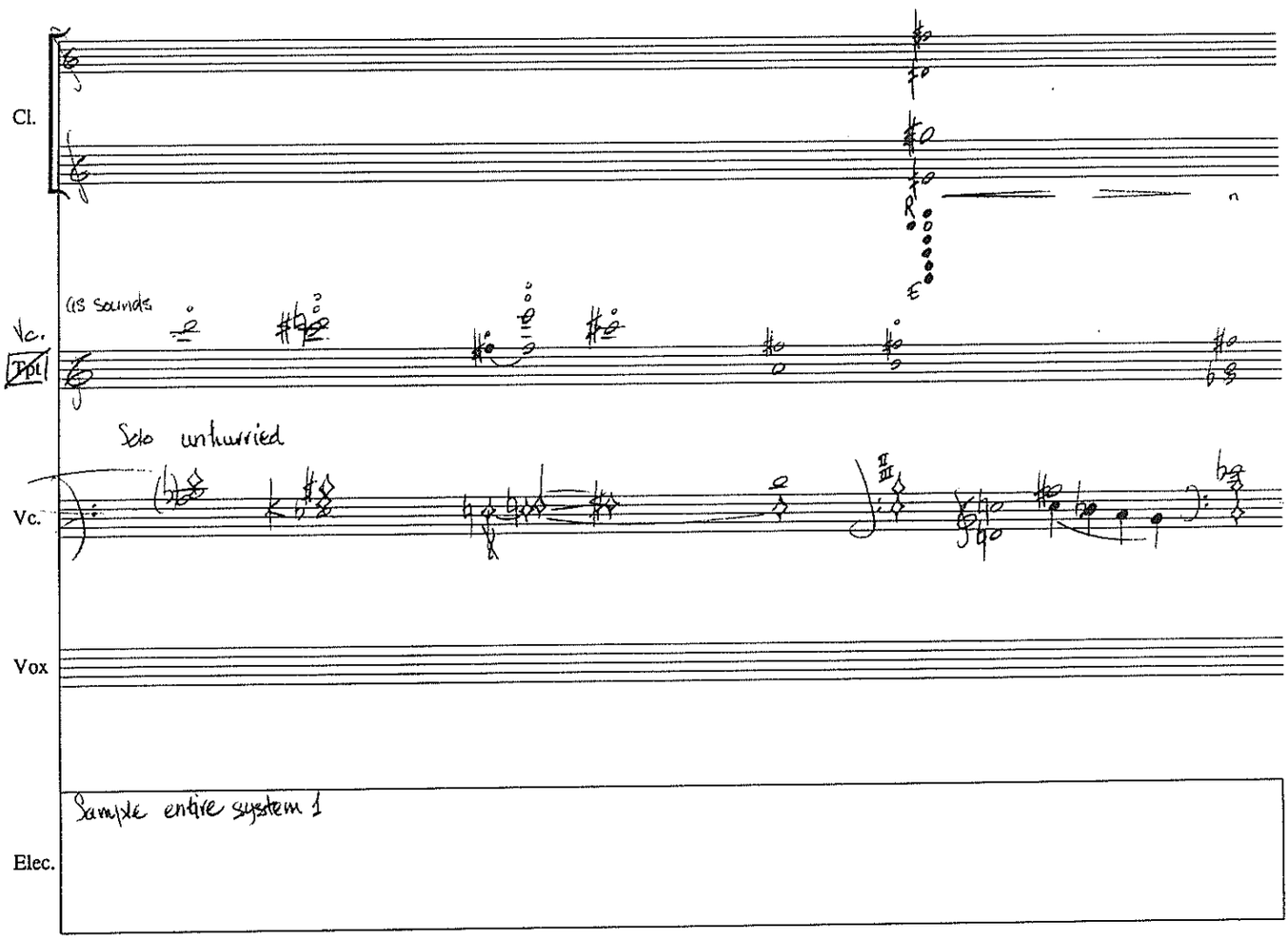
Cezanne's Doubt - Rothman I-4





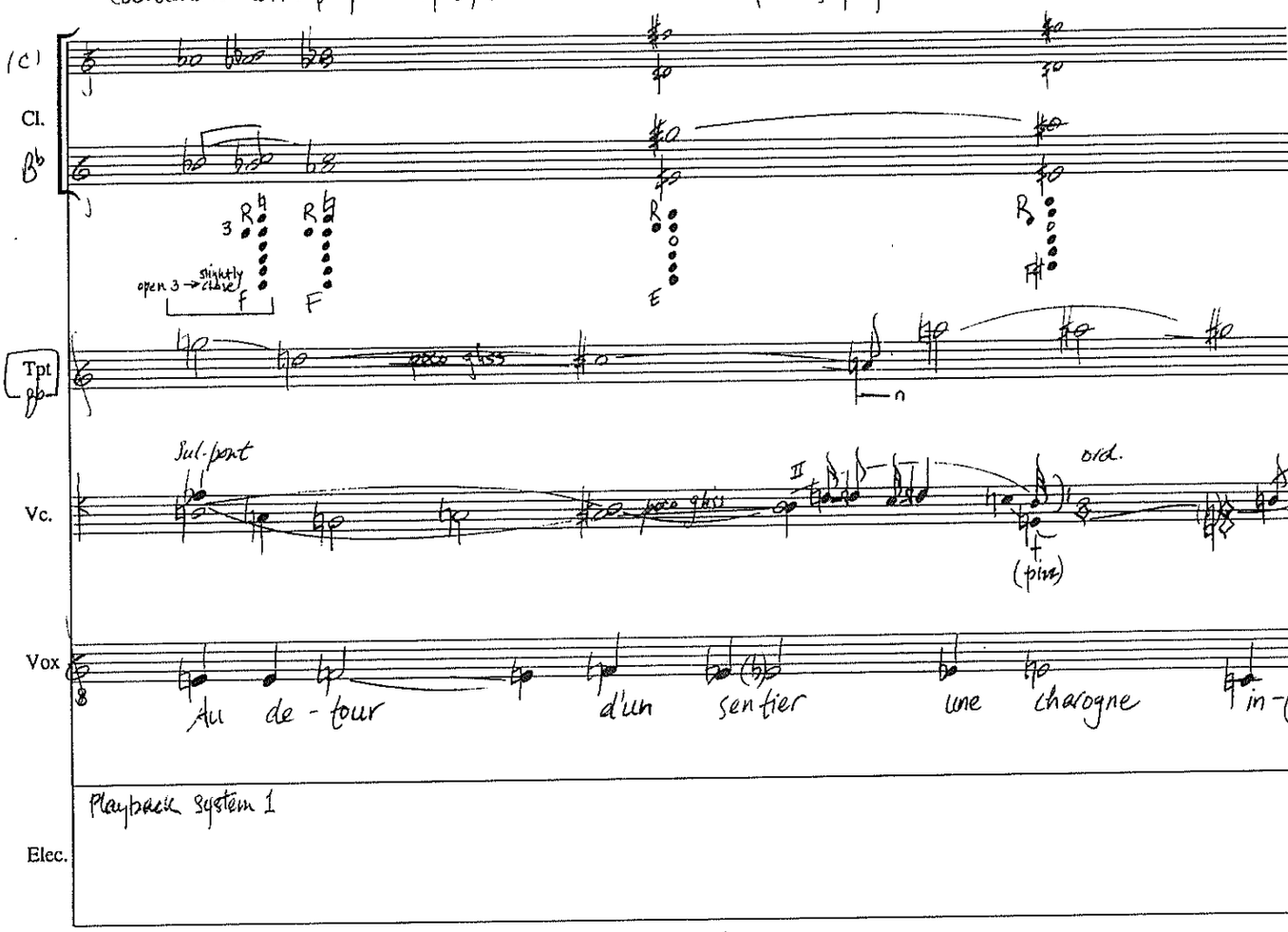
Cassandra's Doubt - Rothman I-5

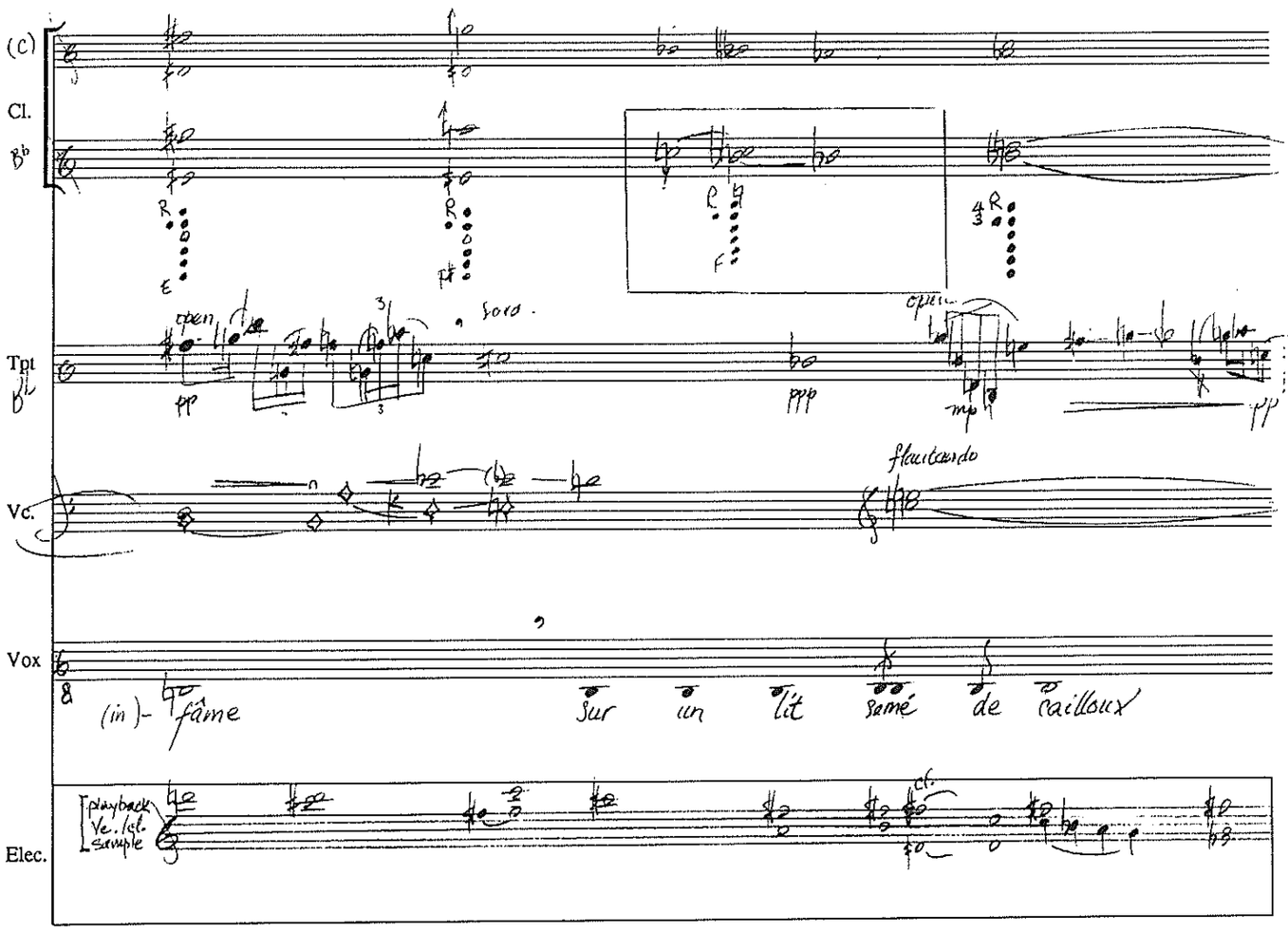




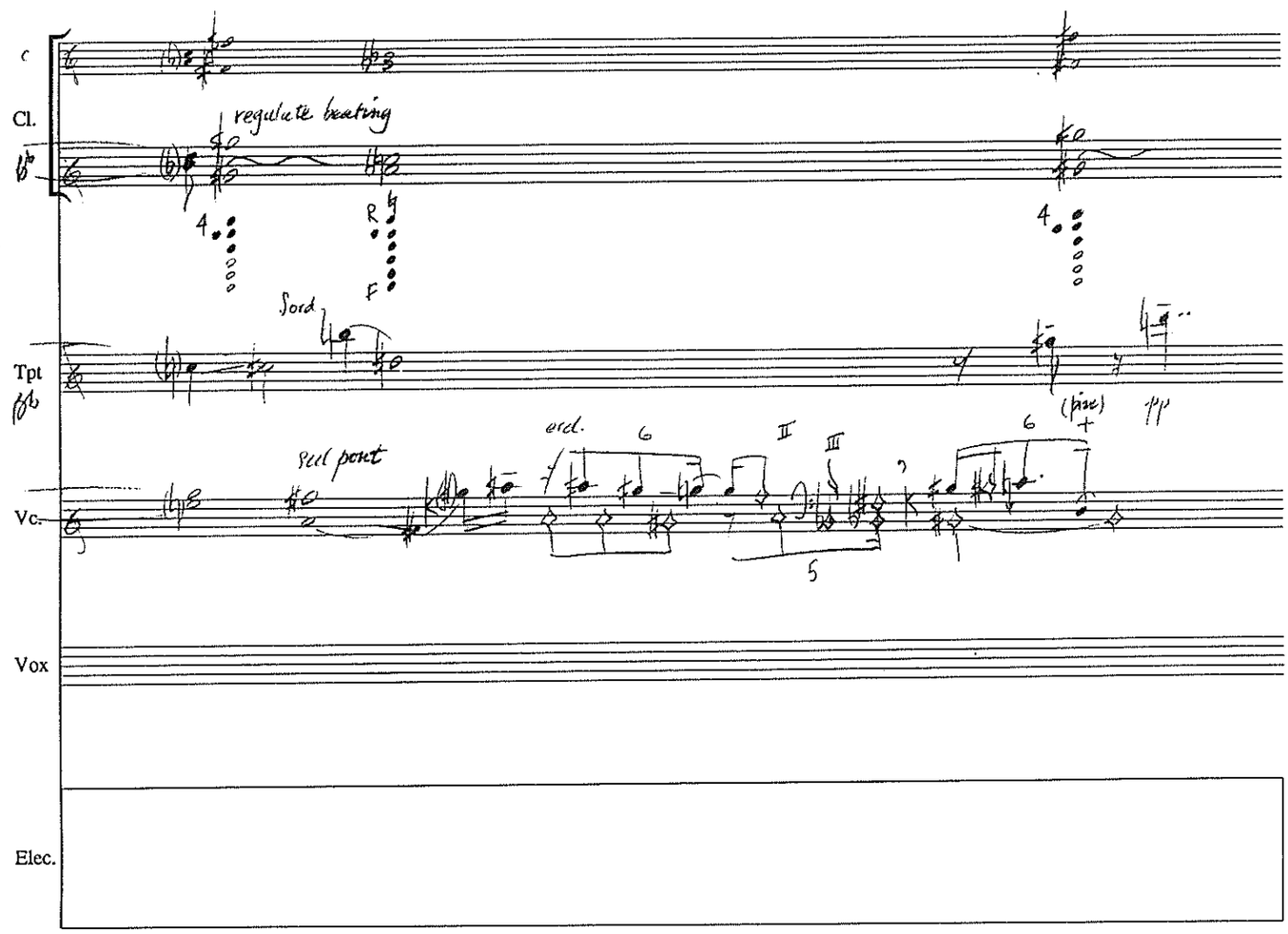
Cezanne's Doubt - Rothman I-6

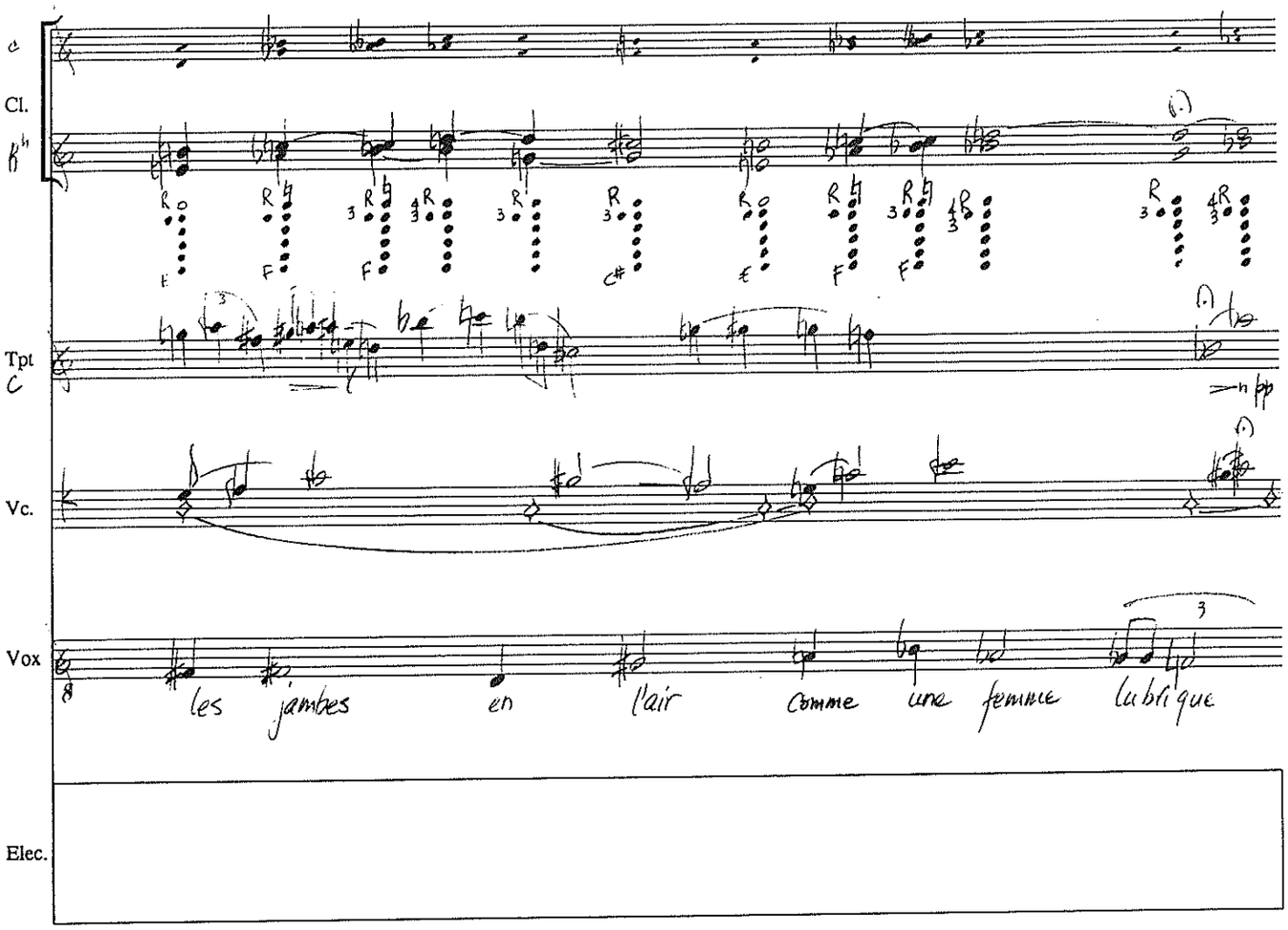
(Coordinate with playback of system 1 : notation is temporally proportionate

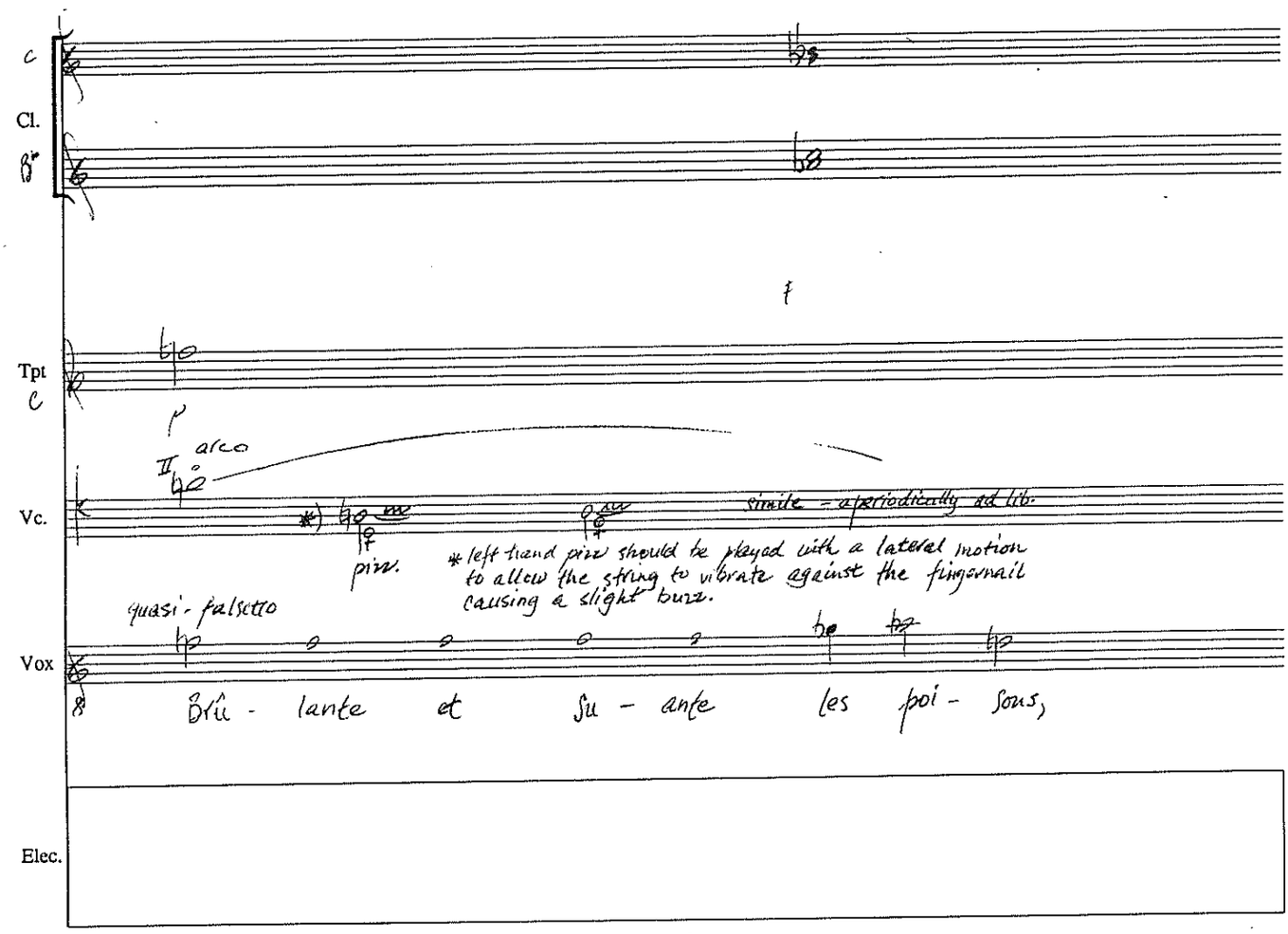


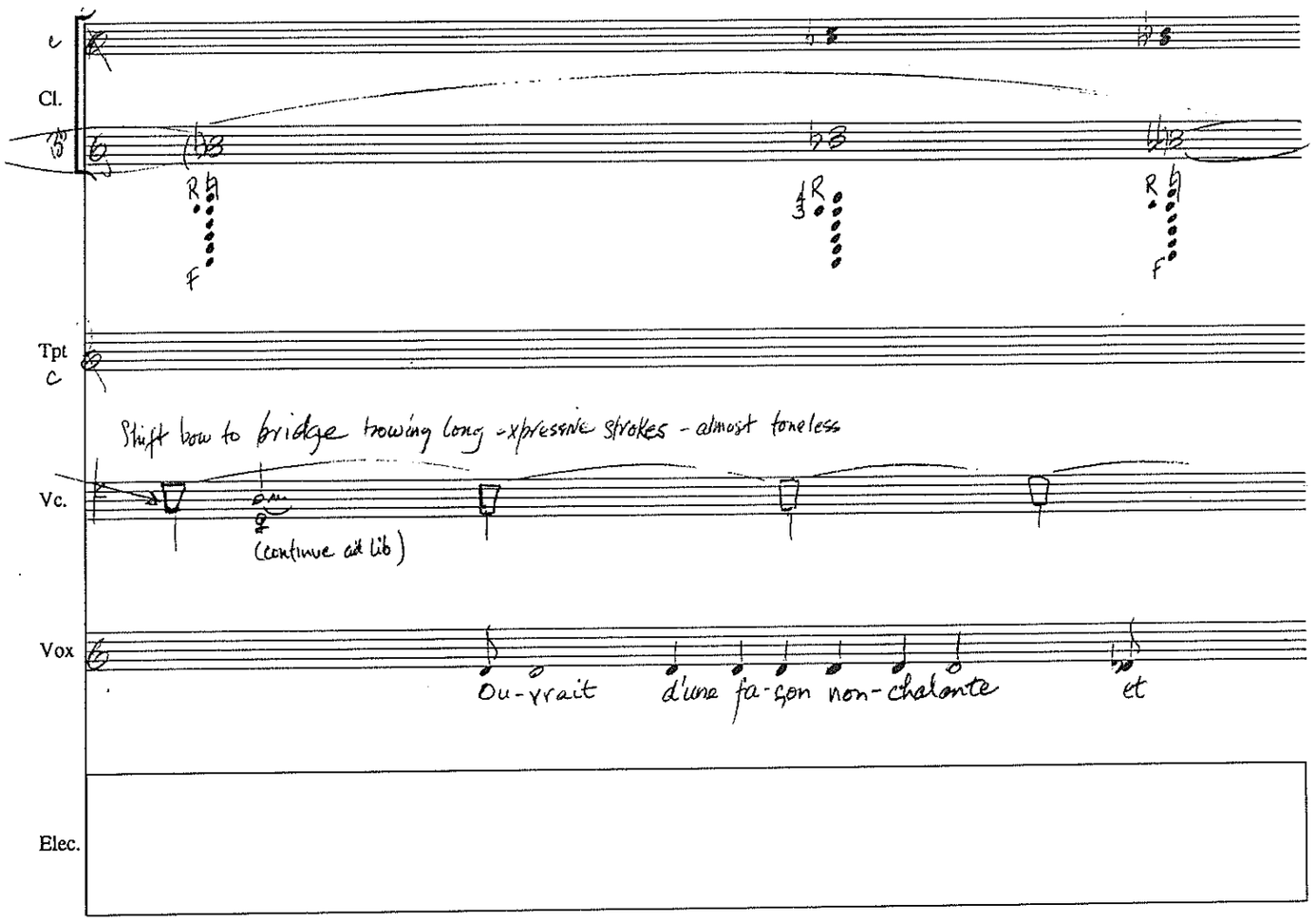


Cézanne's Doubt · Rothman I-1

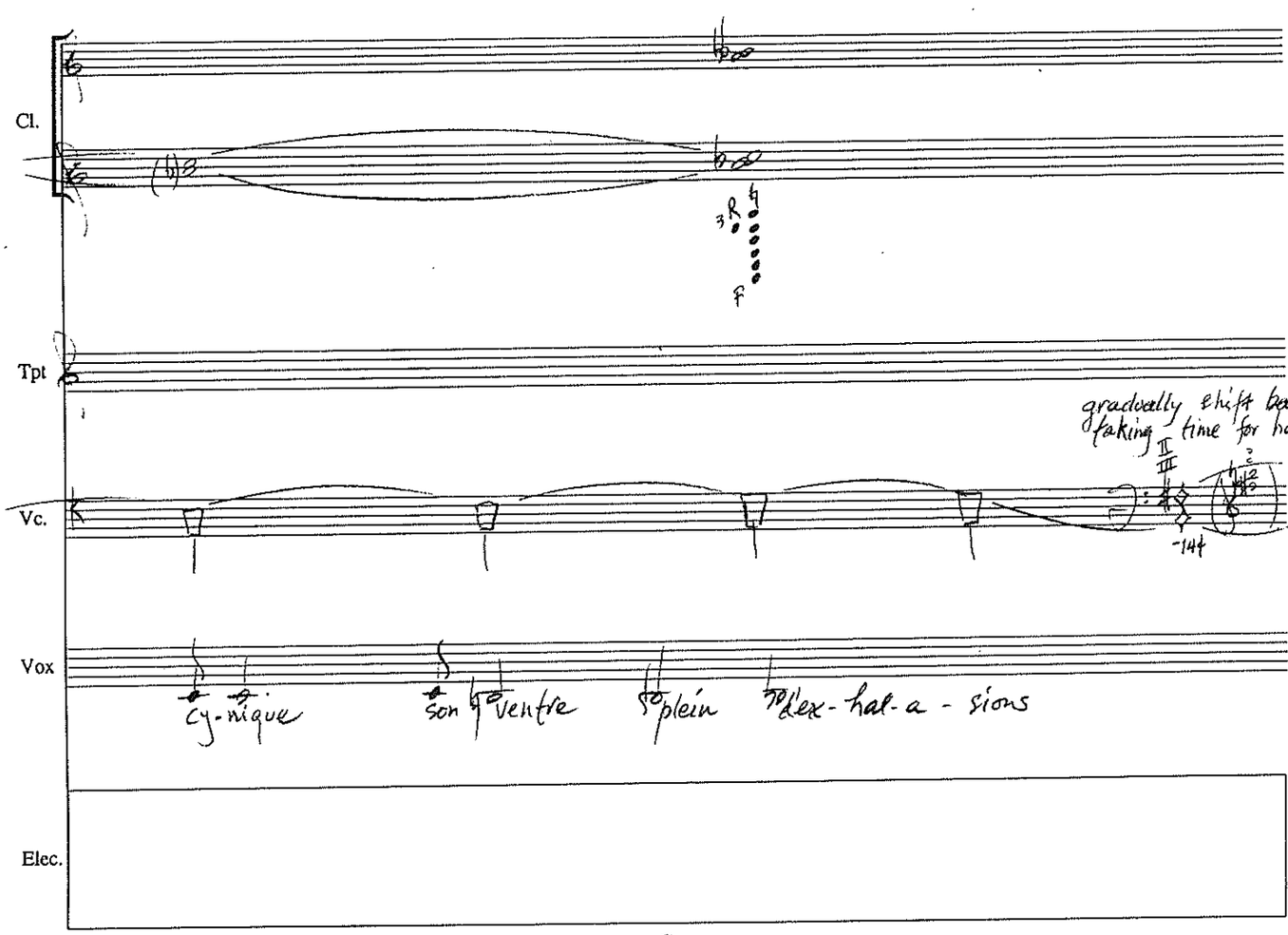


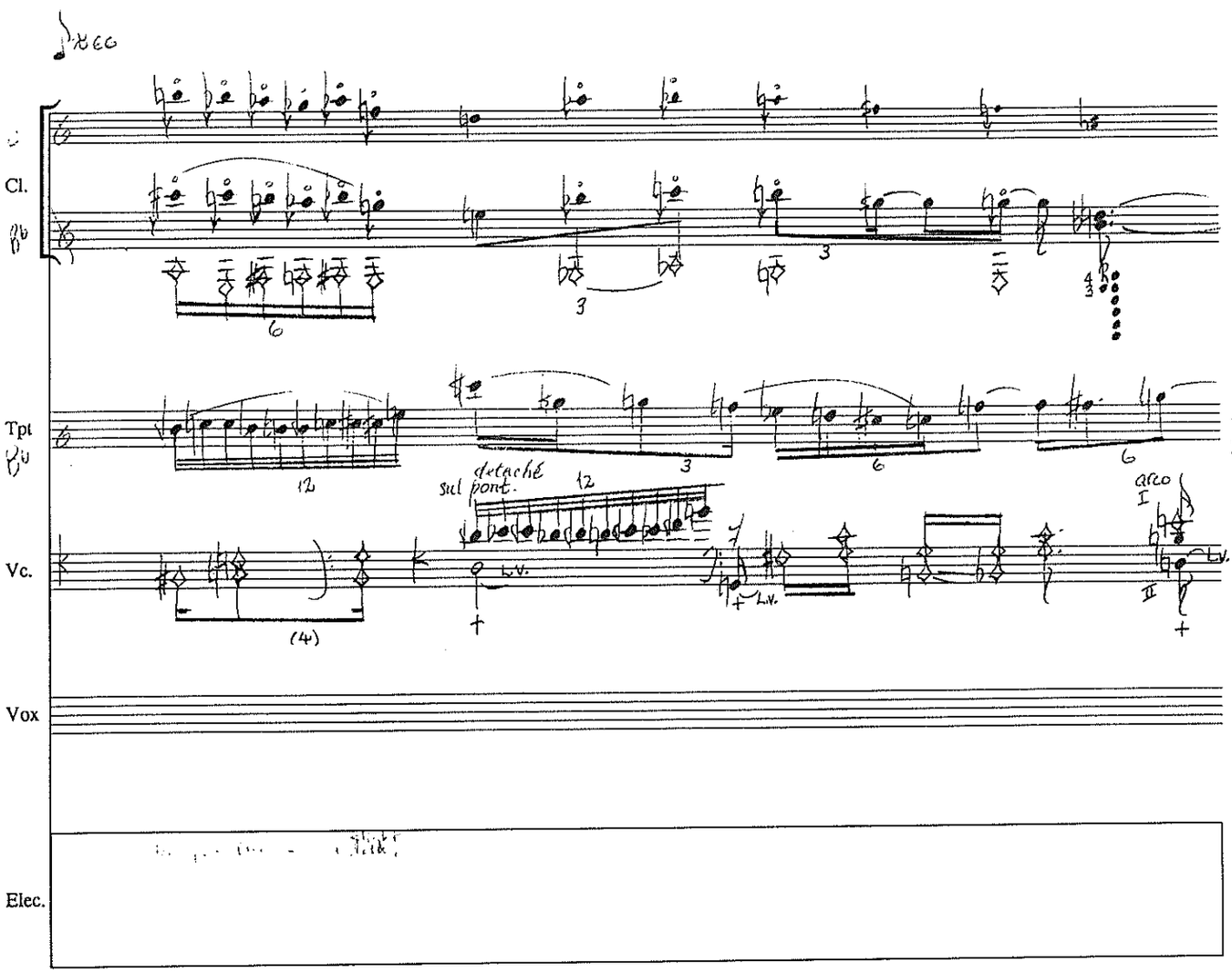

C
Cl.
Bb
Tpt
C
Vc.
Vox
les jambes en l'air comme une femme lubrique
Elec.


C
Cl.
Bb
Tpt
C
arco
Vc.
pizz.
* left hand pizz should be played with a lateral motion to allow the string to vibrate against the fingernail causing a slight buzz.
simile = aperiodically ad lib.
quasi-falsetto
Vox
Brû - lante et Su - ante les poi - sons,
Elec.

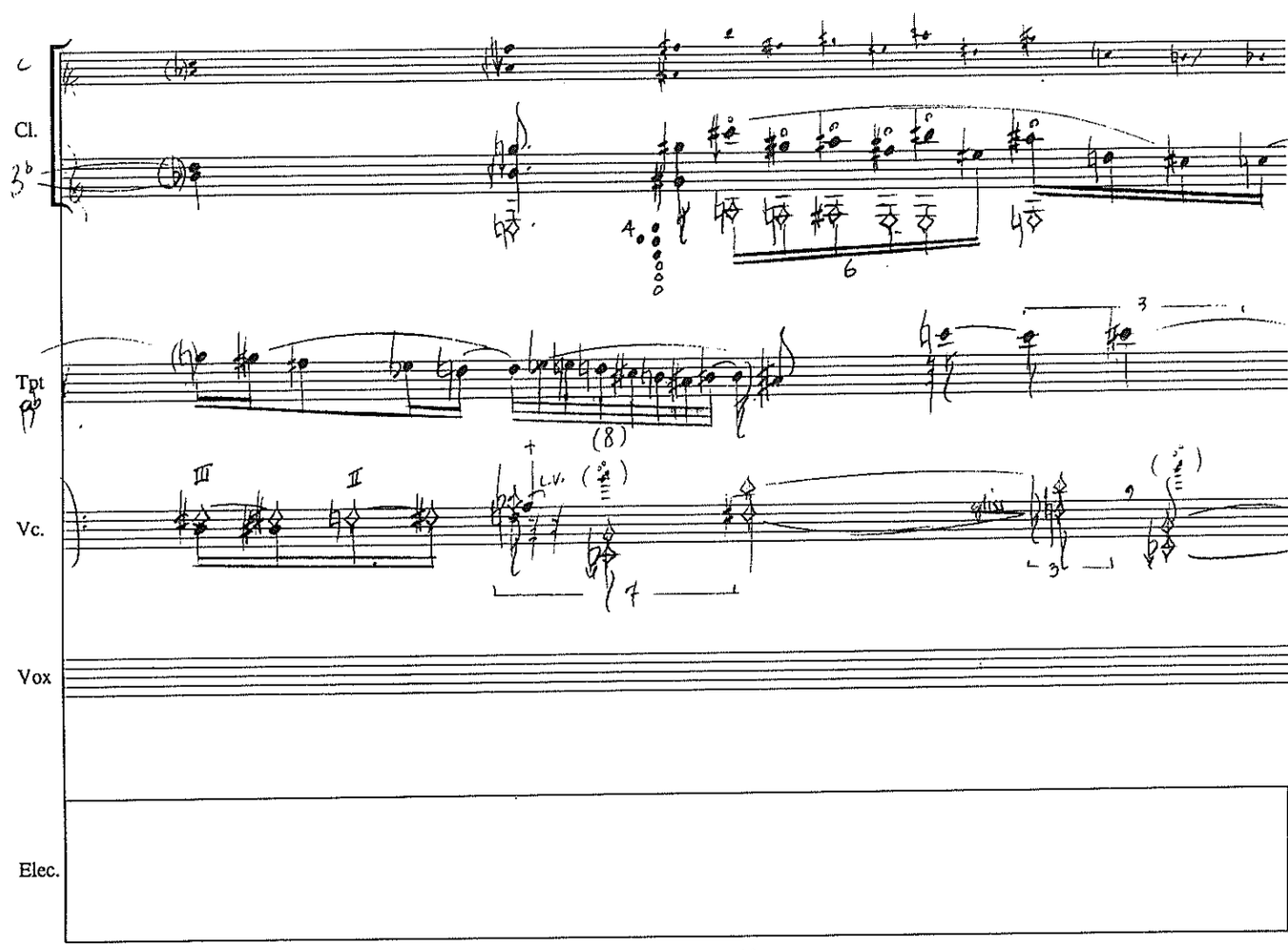


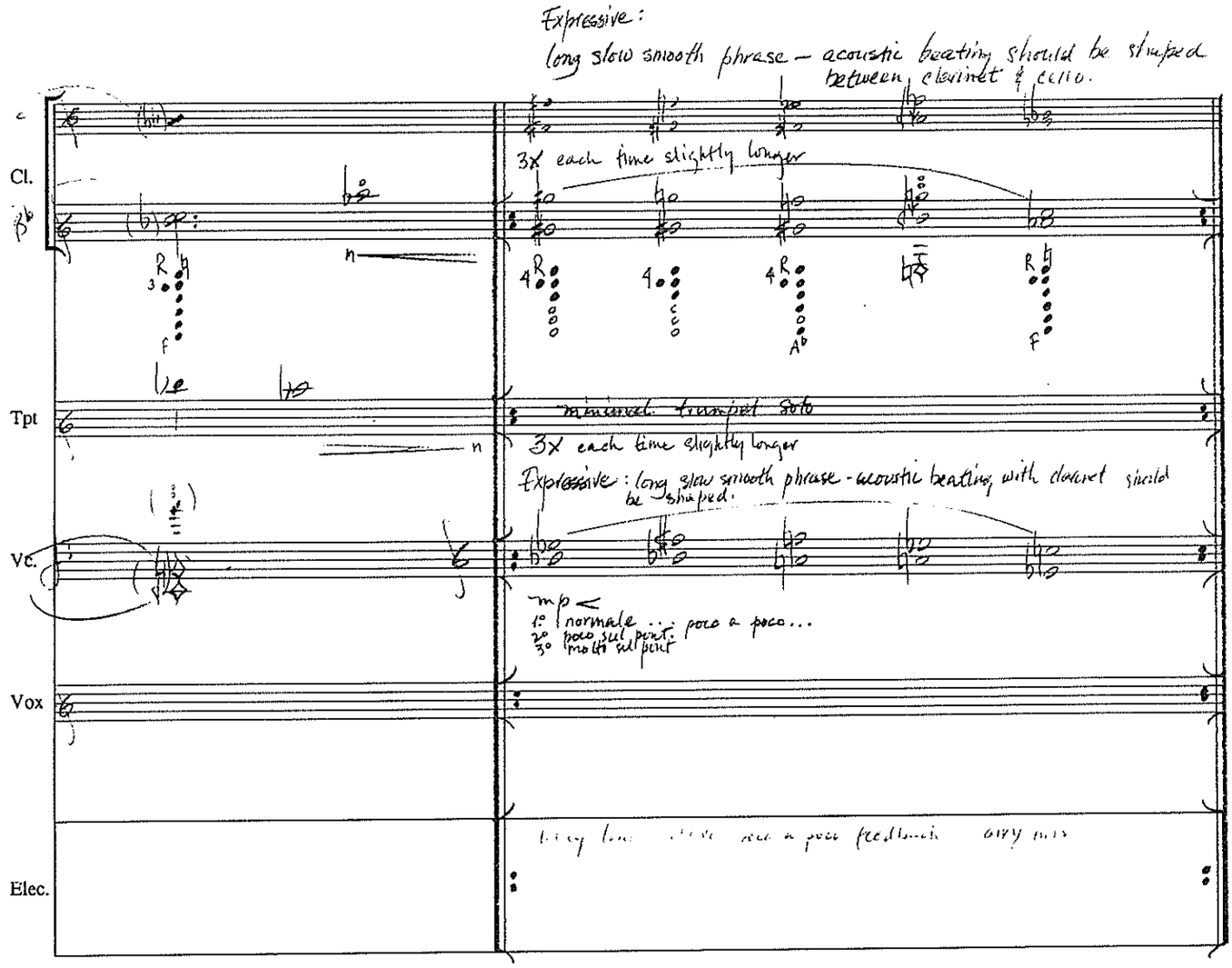
Cézanne's Doubt - Rothman I-9



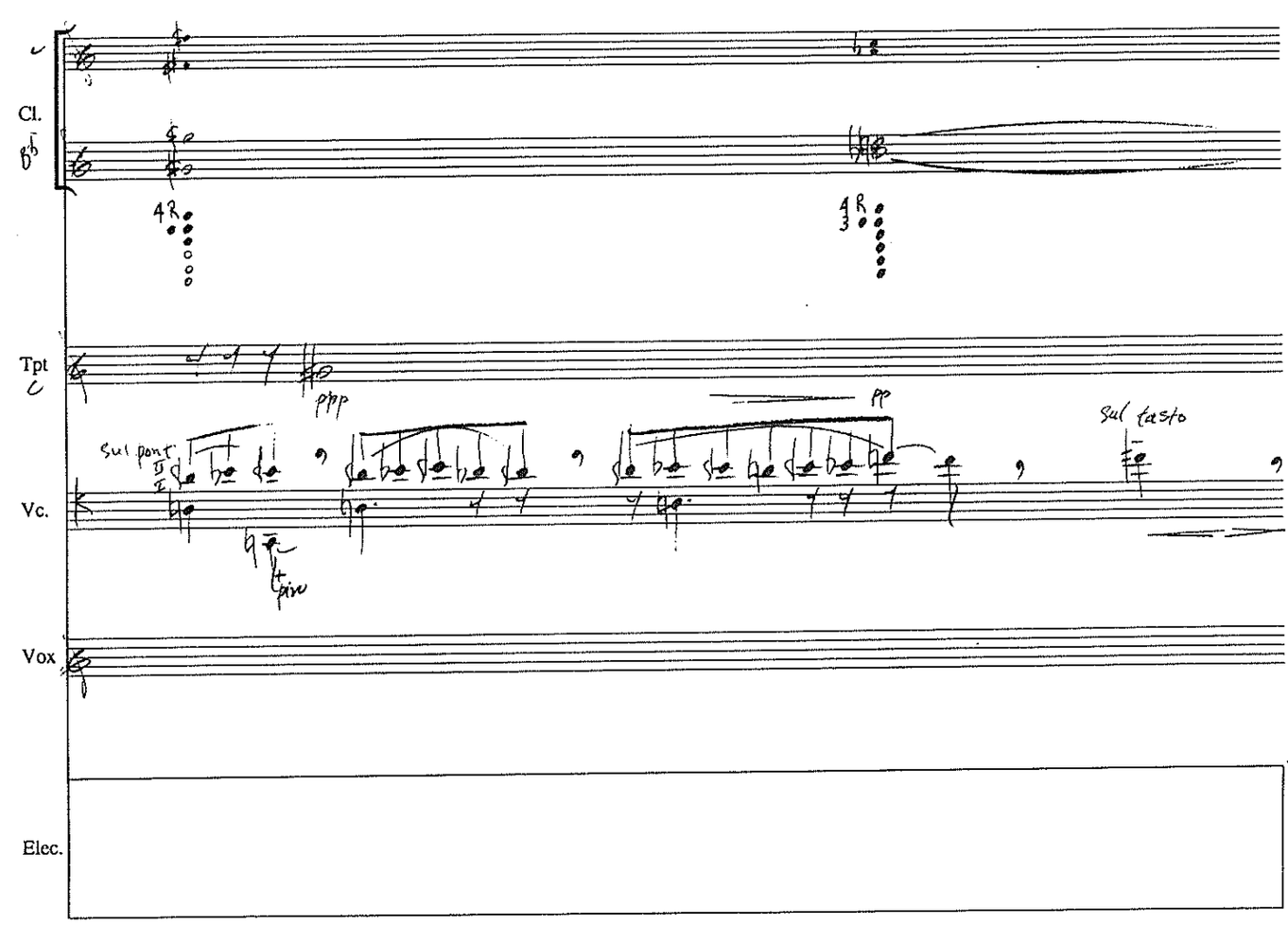


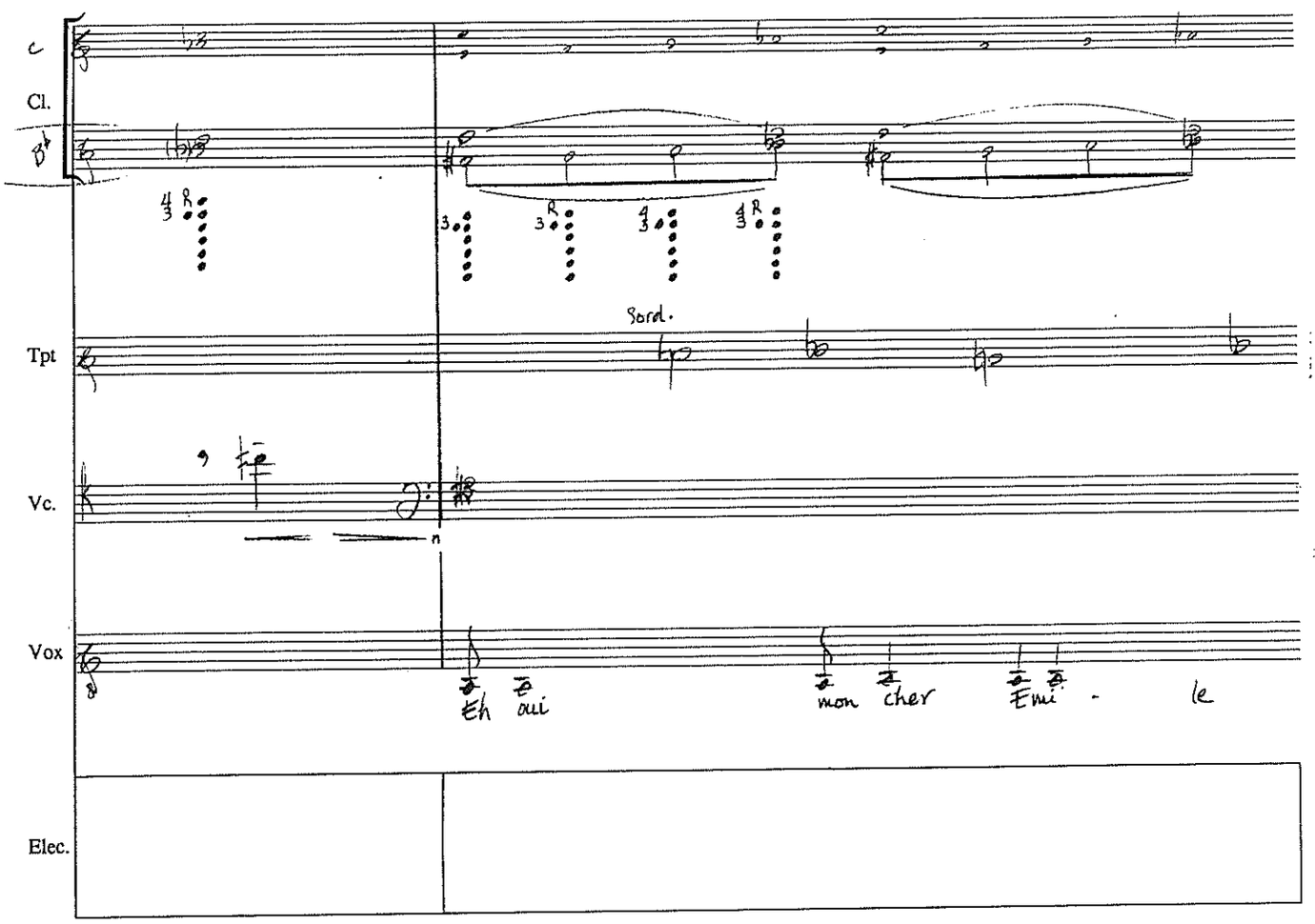
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman I-10

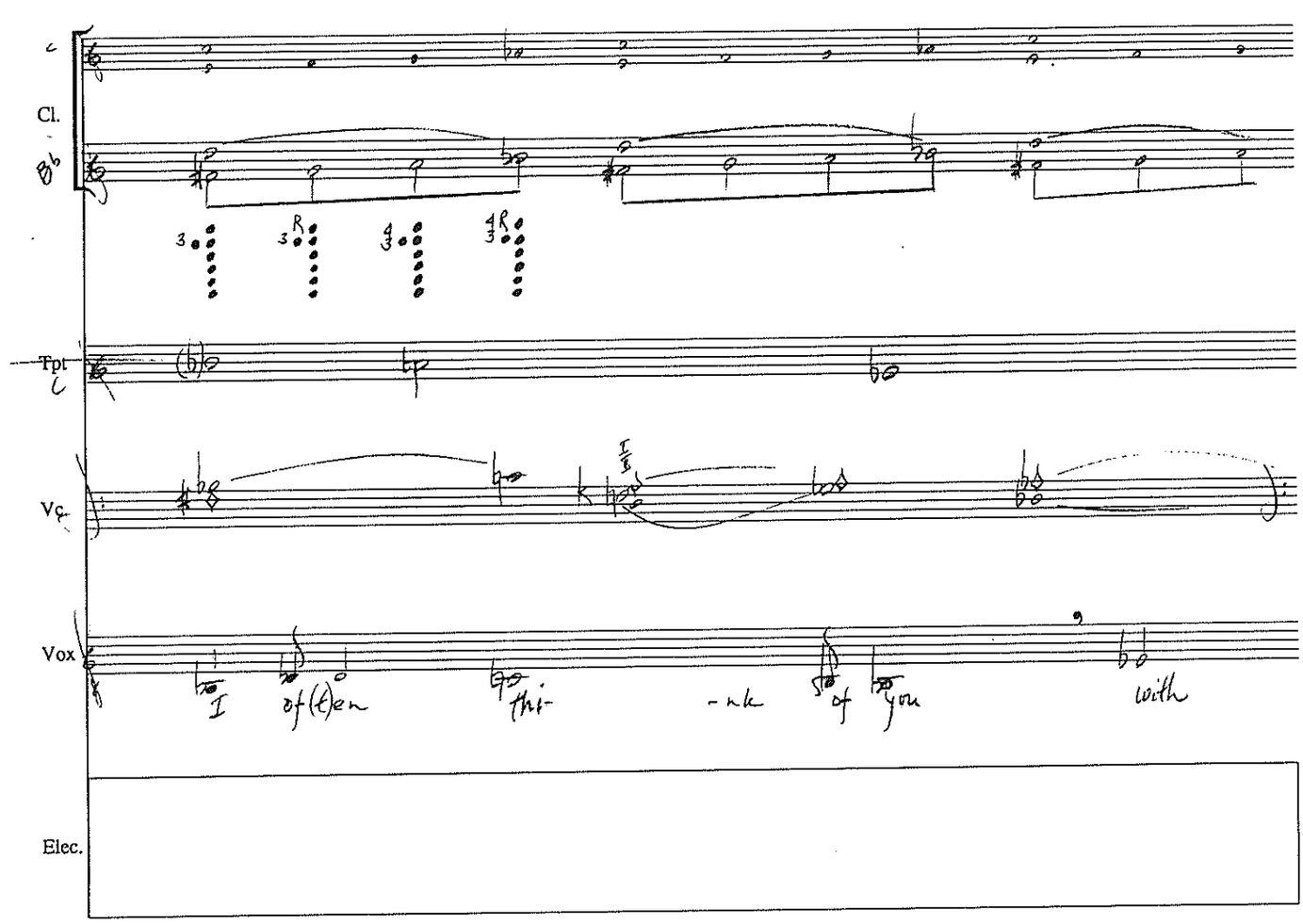


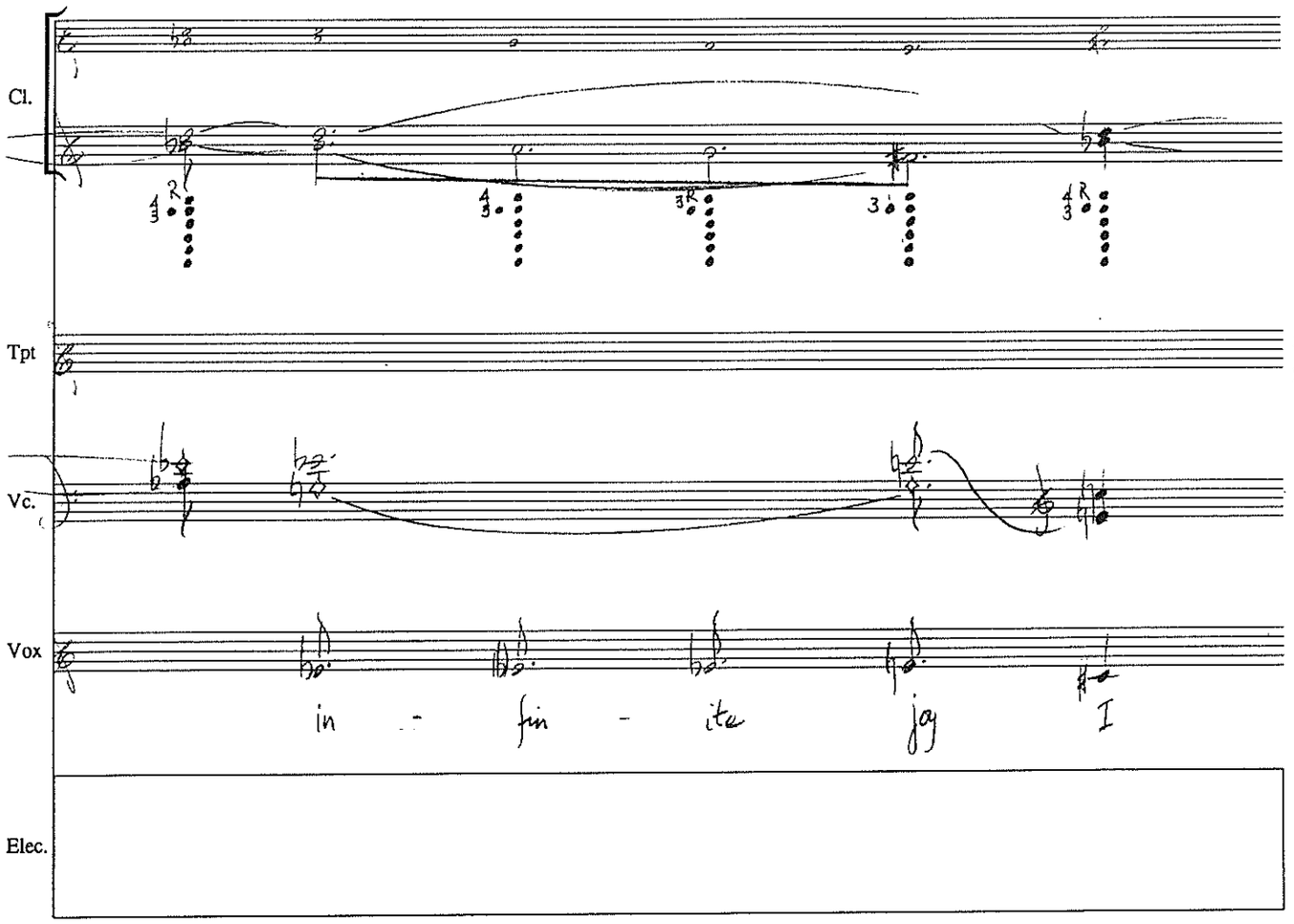


Cézanne's Doubt Rothman I-11

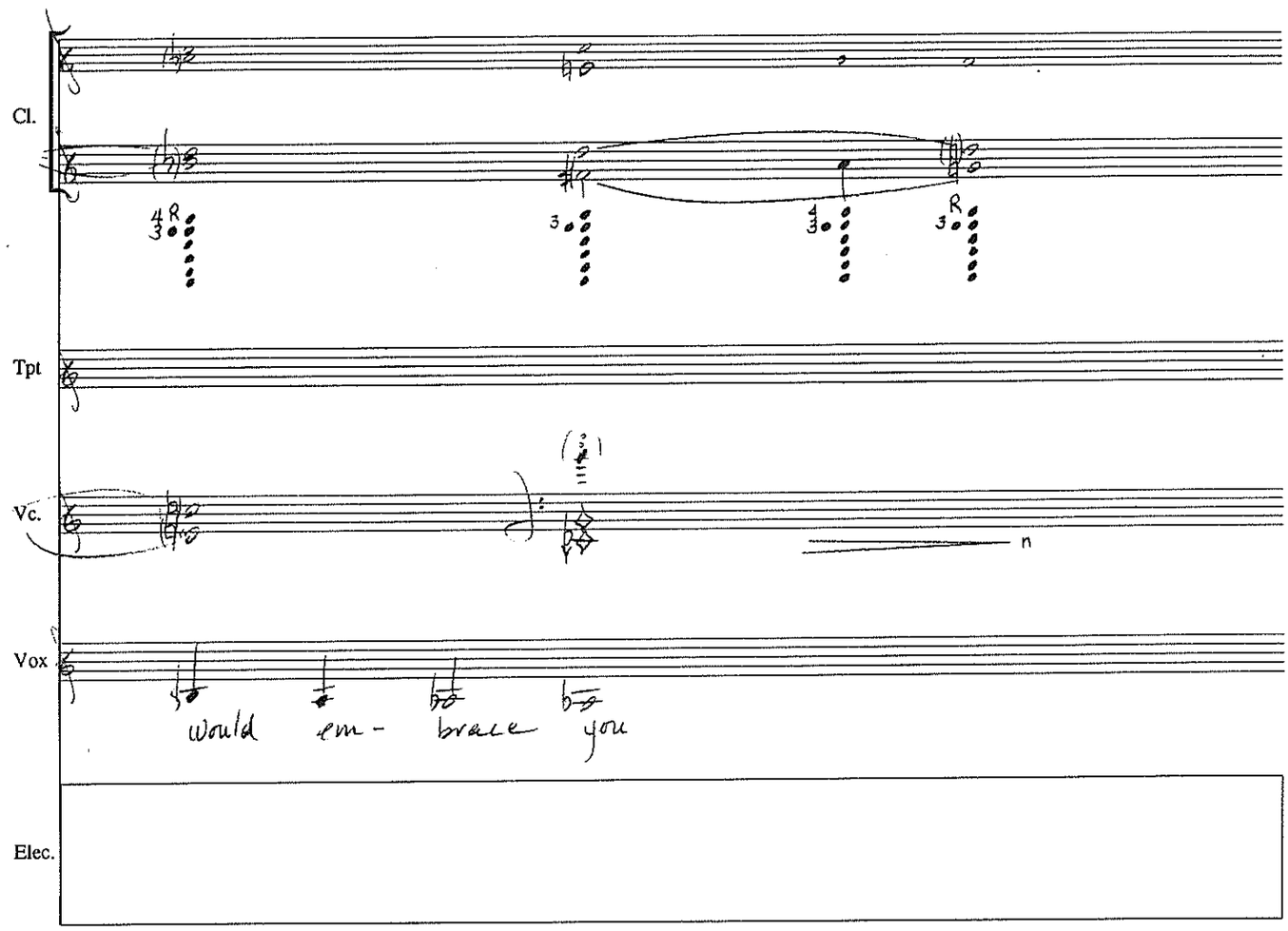


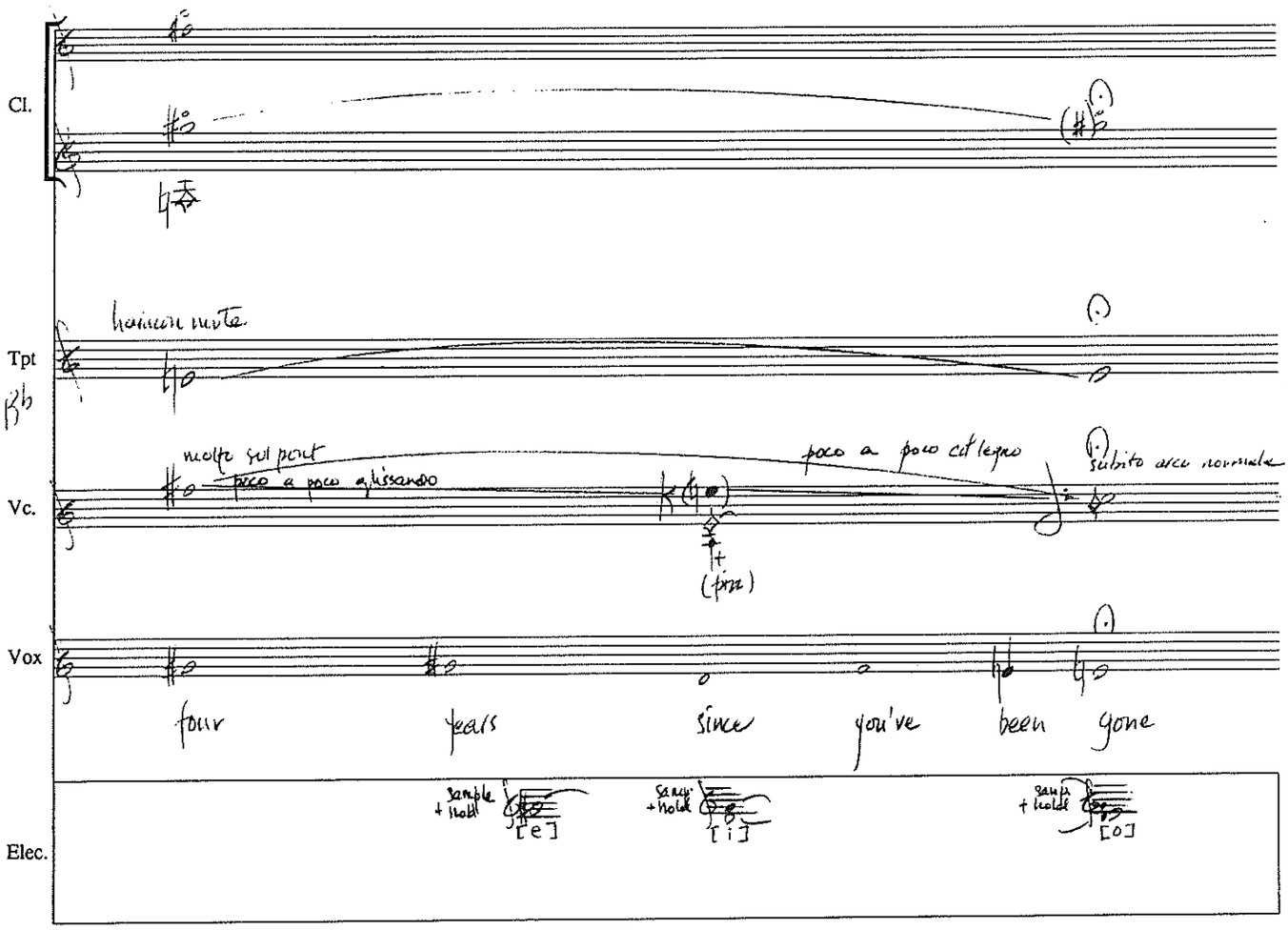

C
Cl.
B♭
Sord.
Tpt
Vc.
Vox
Eh oui
mon cher Emi - le
Elec.

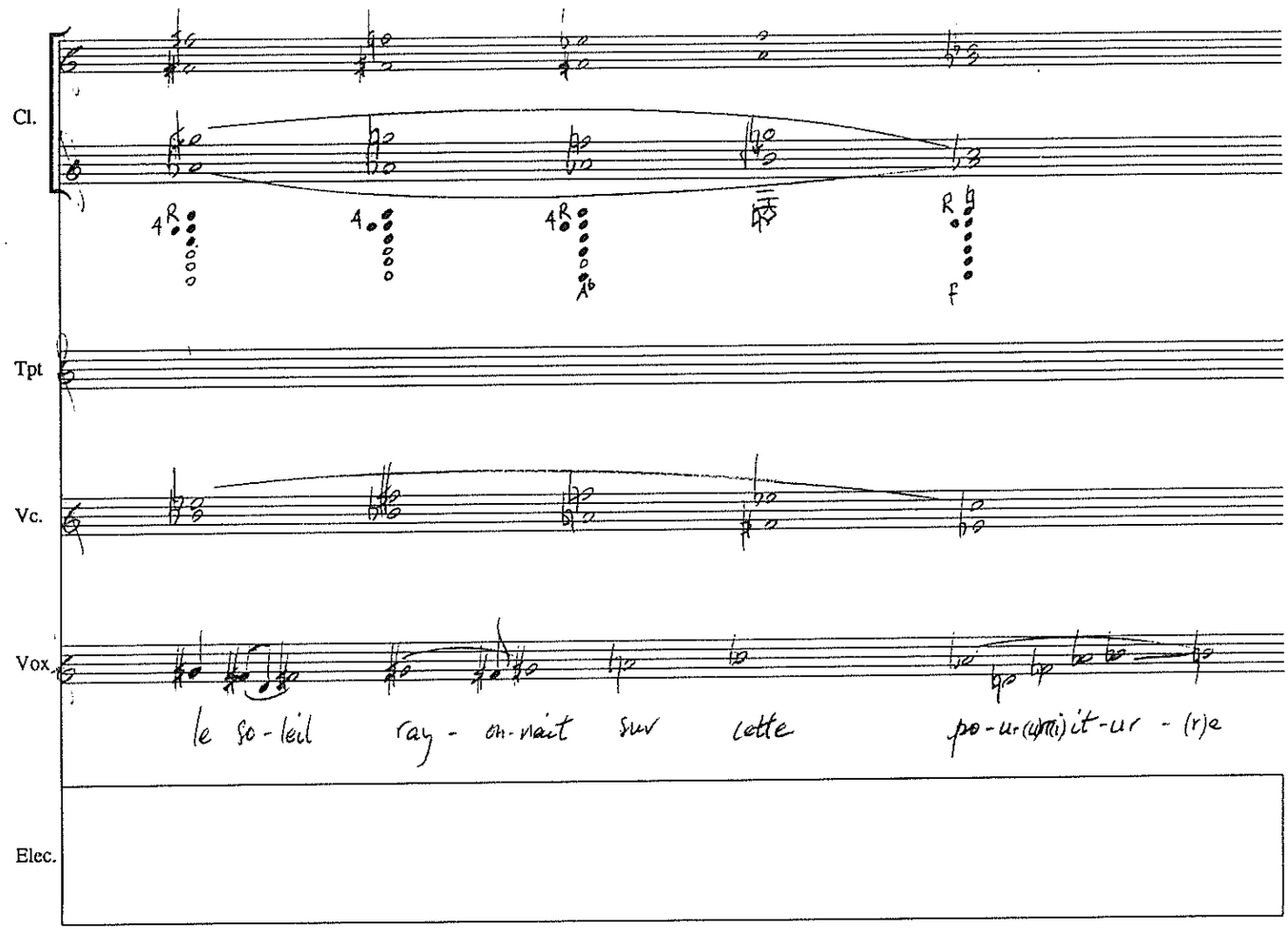

C
Cl.
B♭
Tpt
C
Vc.
Vox
I of(t)en thi- -nk of you with
Elec.

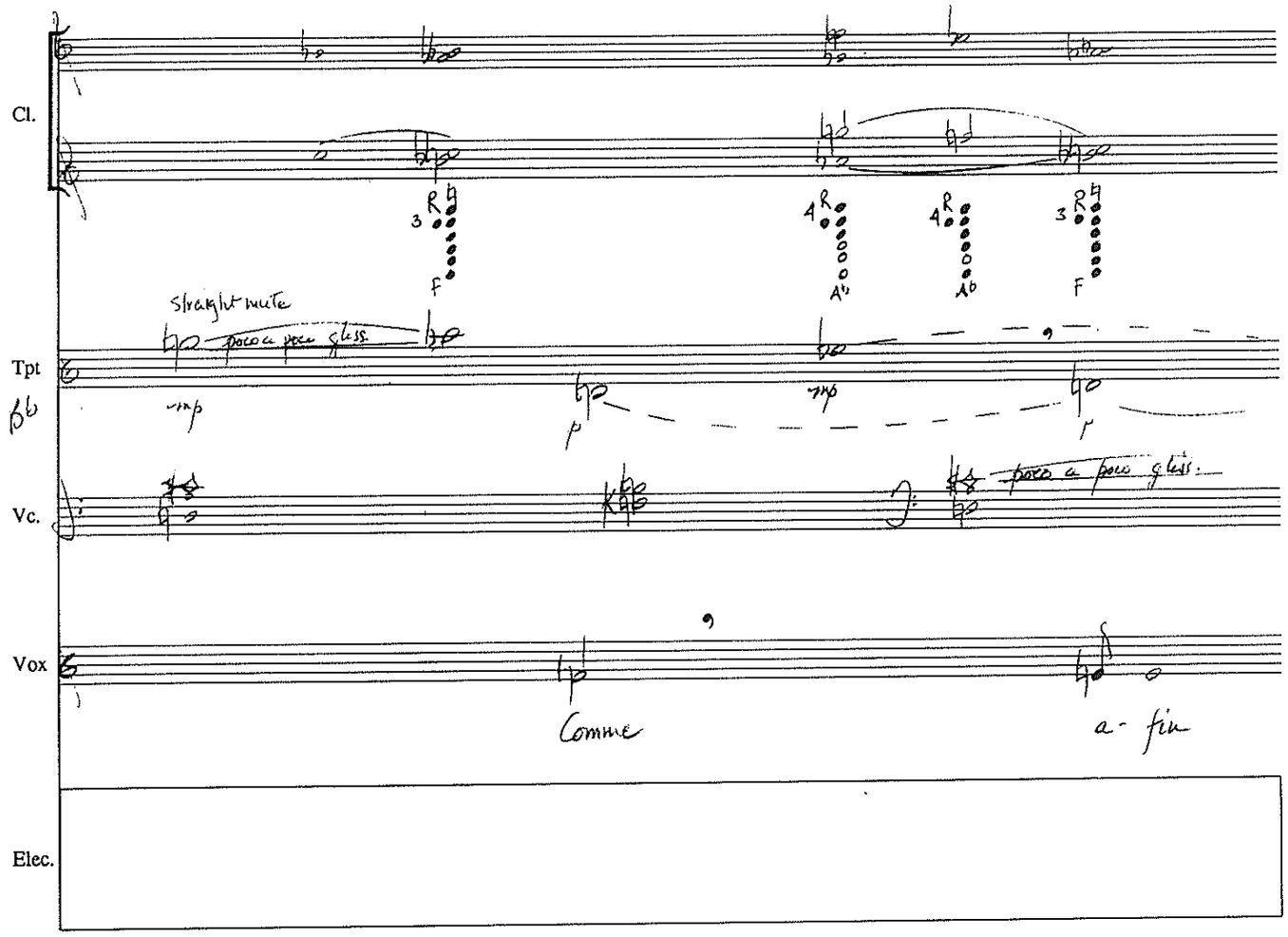


Cézanne's Doubt Rothman I-13

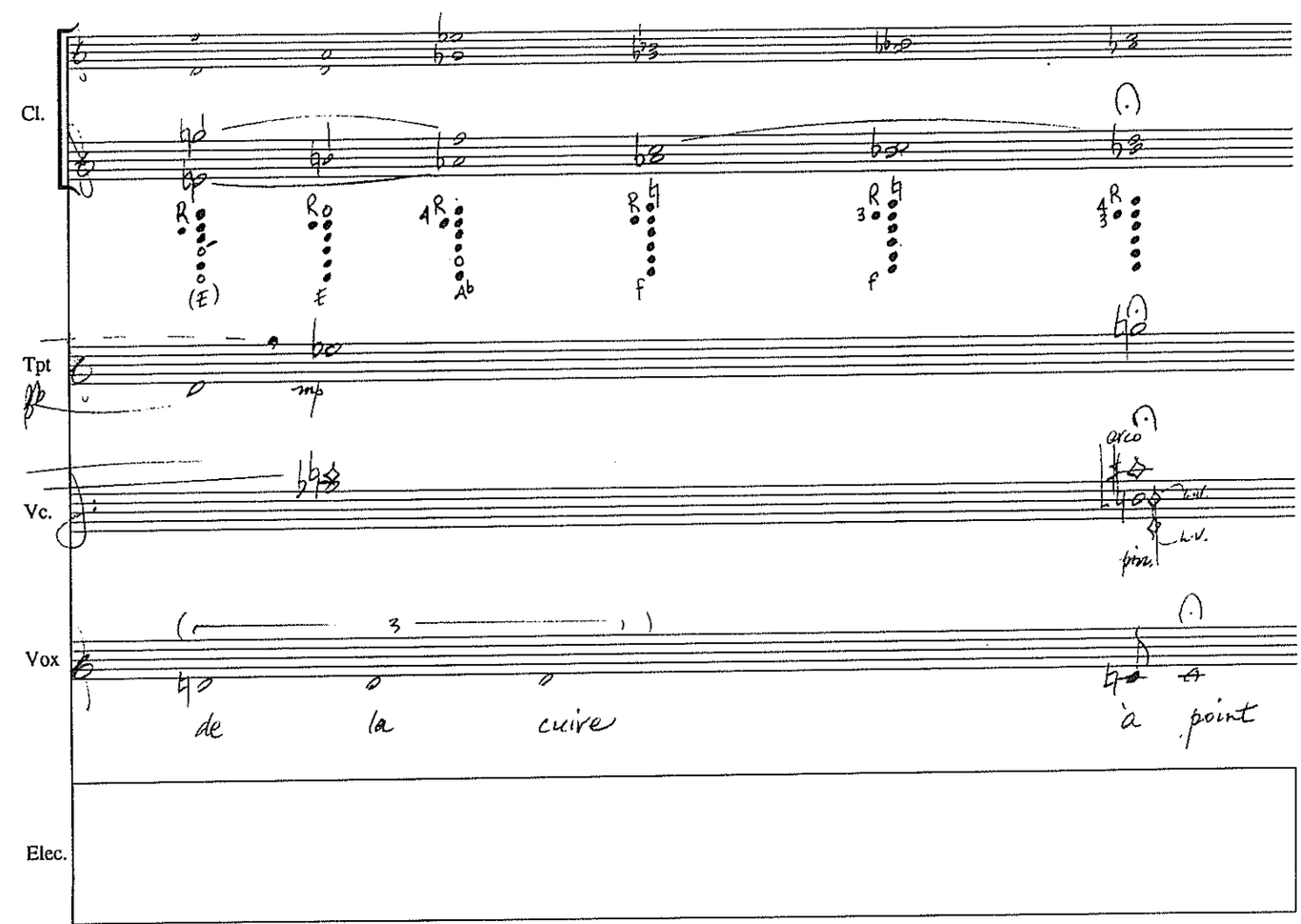


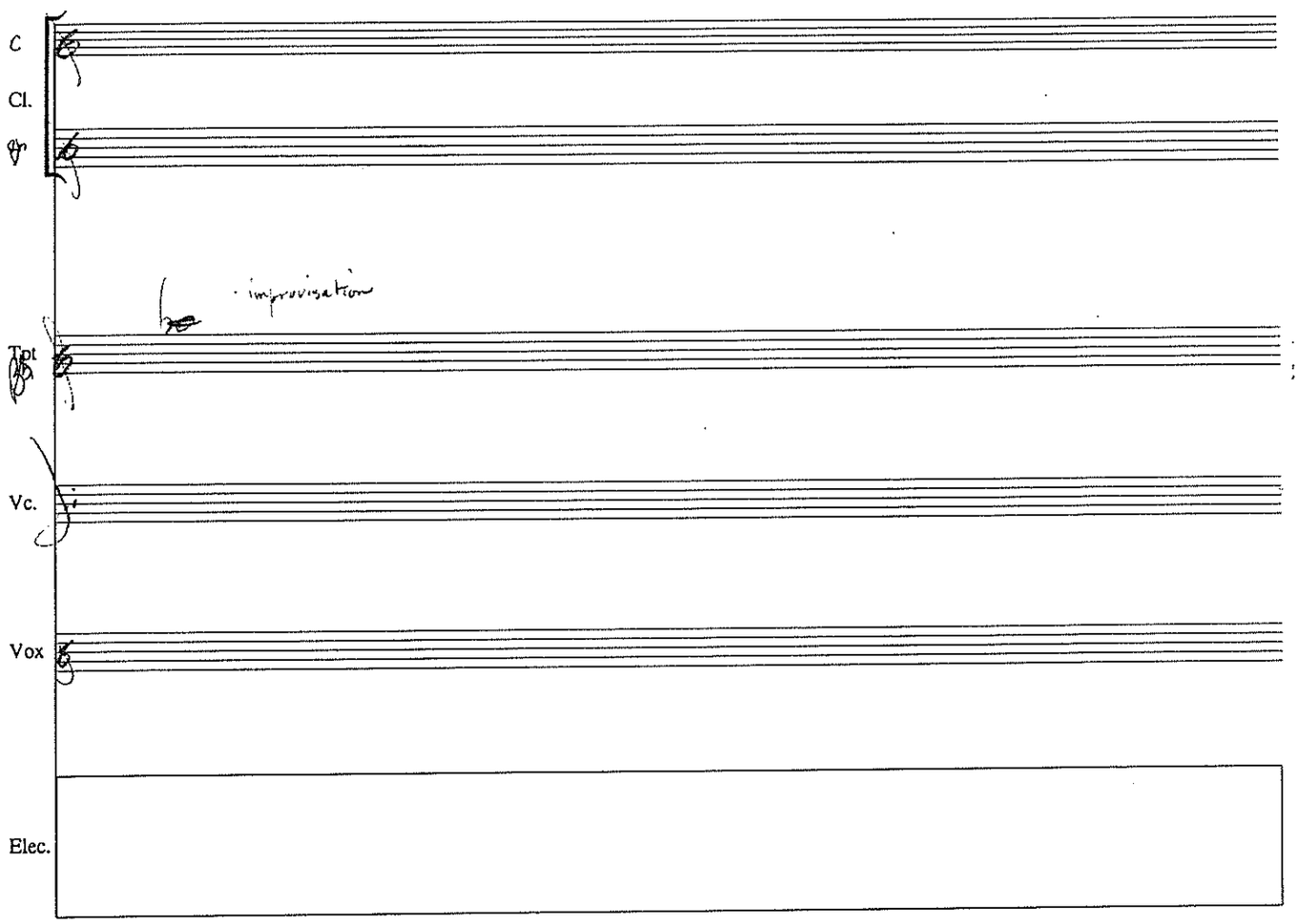

Cl.
Tpt
harmon muta
Vc.
molto sul ponte
poco a poco glissando
poco a poco col legno
subito arco normale
(pizz)
Vox
four years since you've been gone
Elec.
sample + hold
[e]
[i]
[o]


Cl.
Tpt
Vc.
Vox
le so-leil ray-on-nait sur cette po-ur(ri)it-ur-(r)e
Elec.

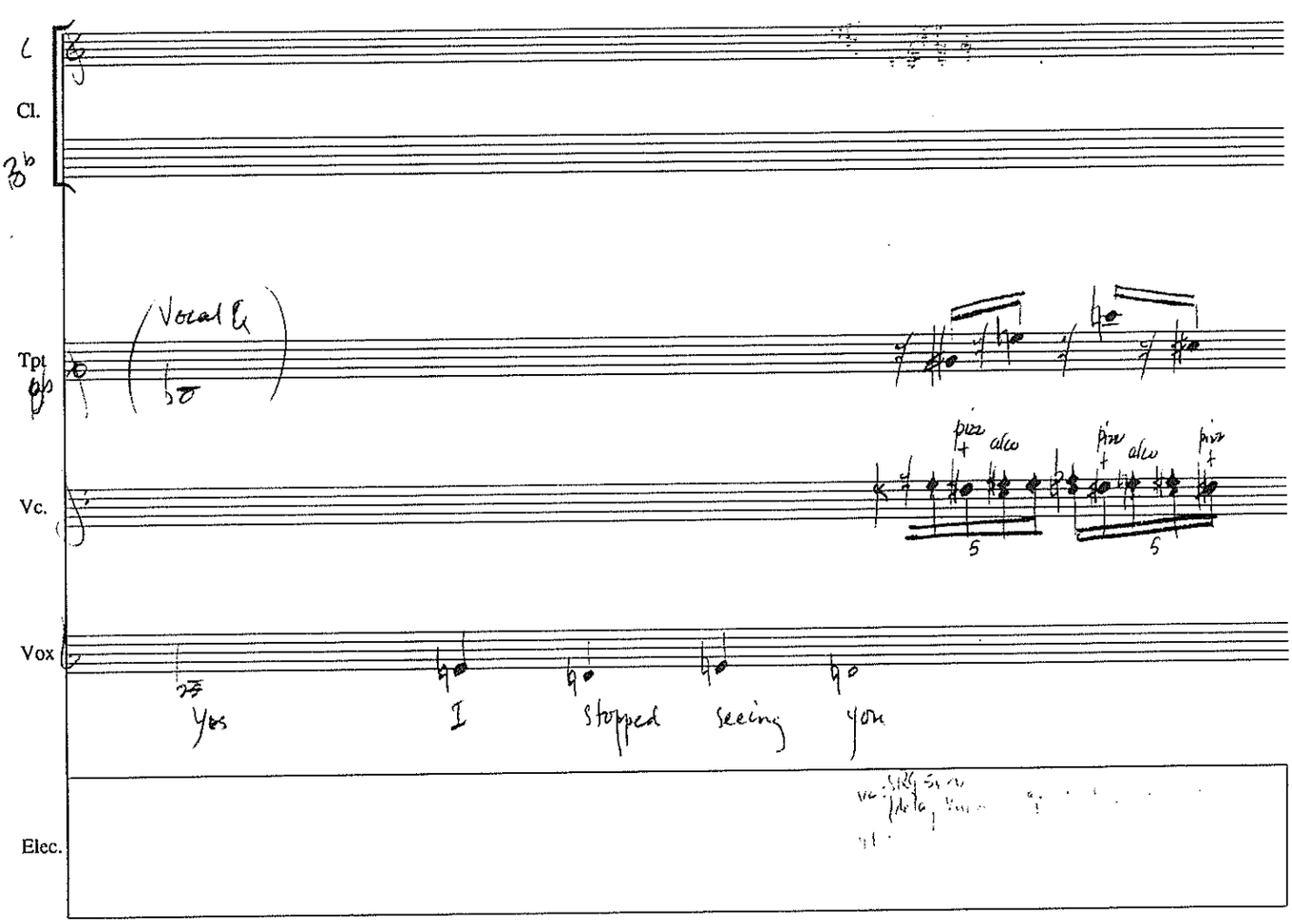


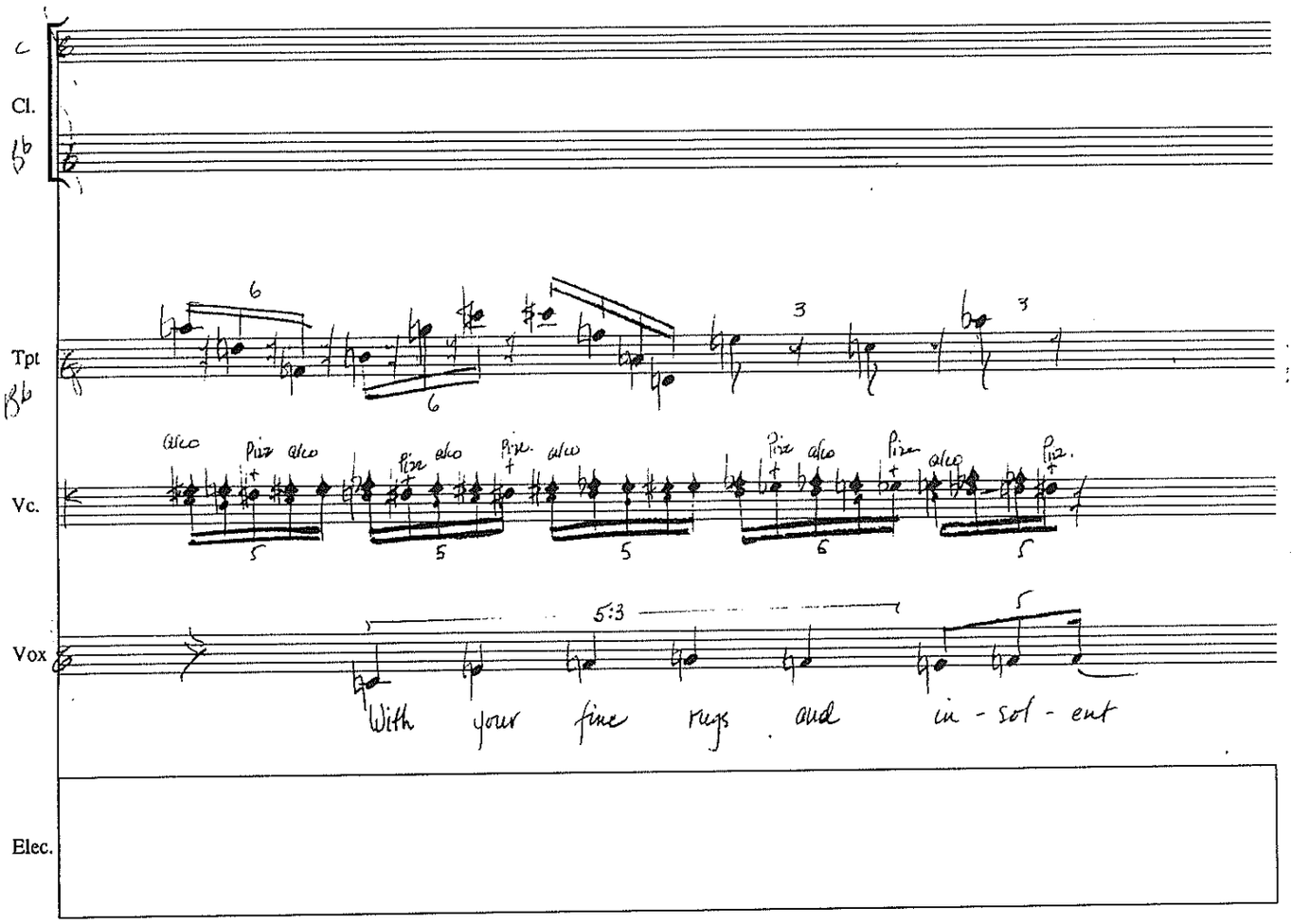
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman I-15

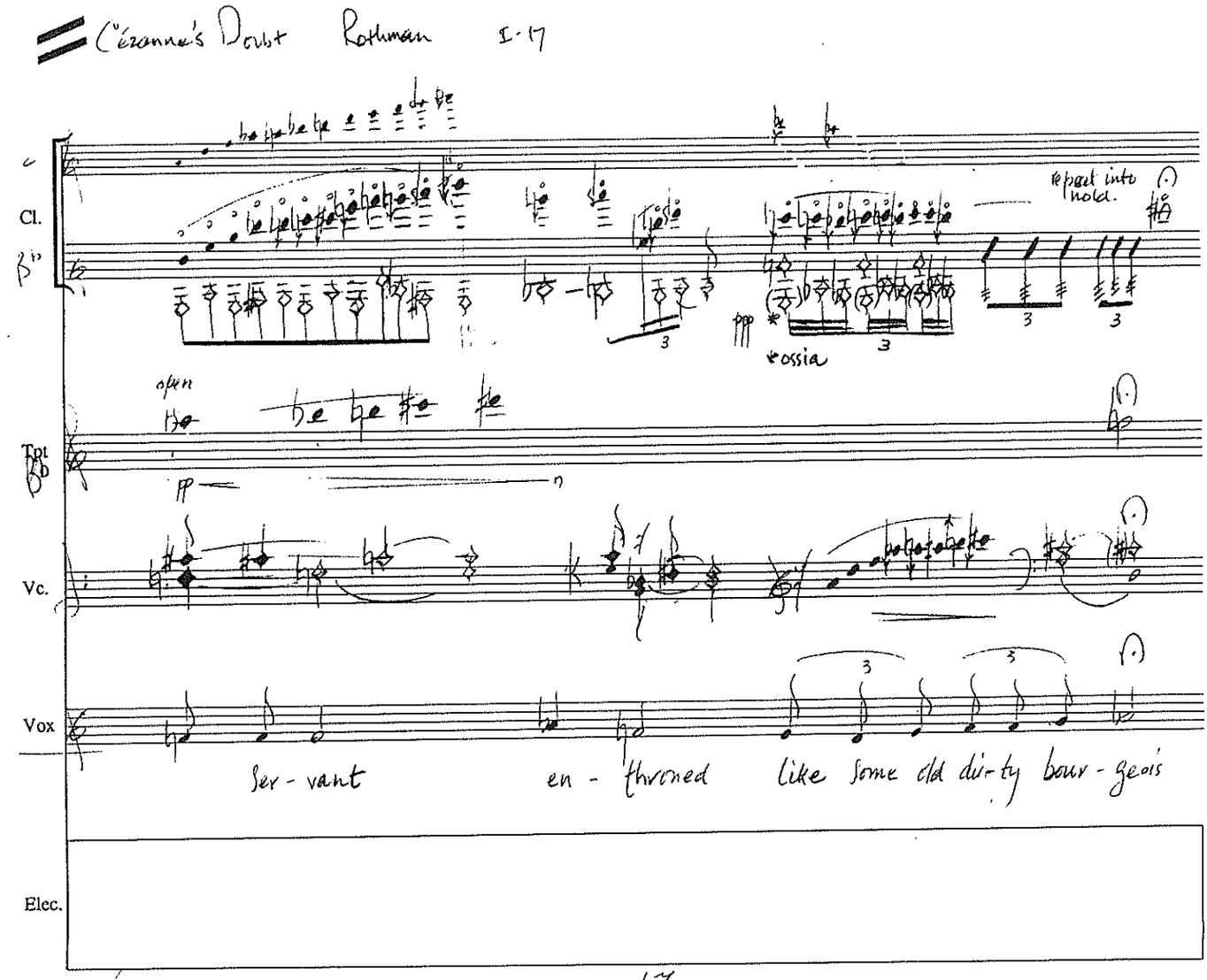


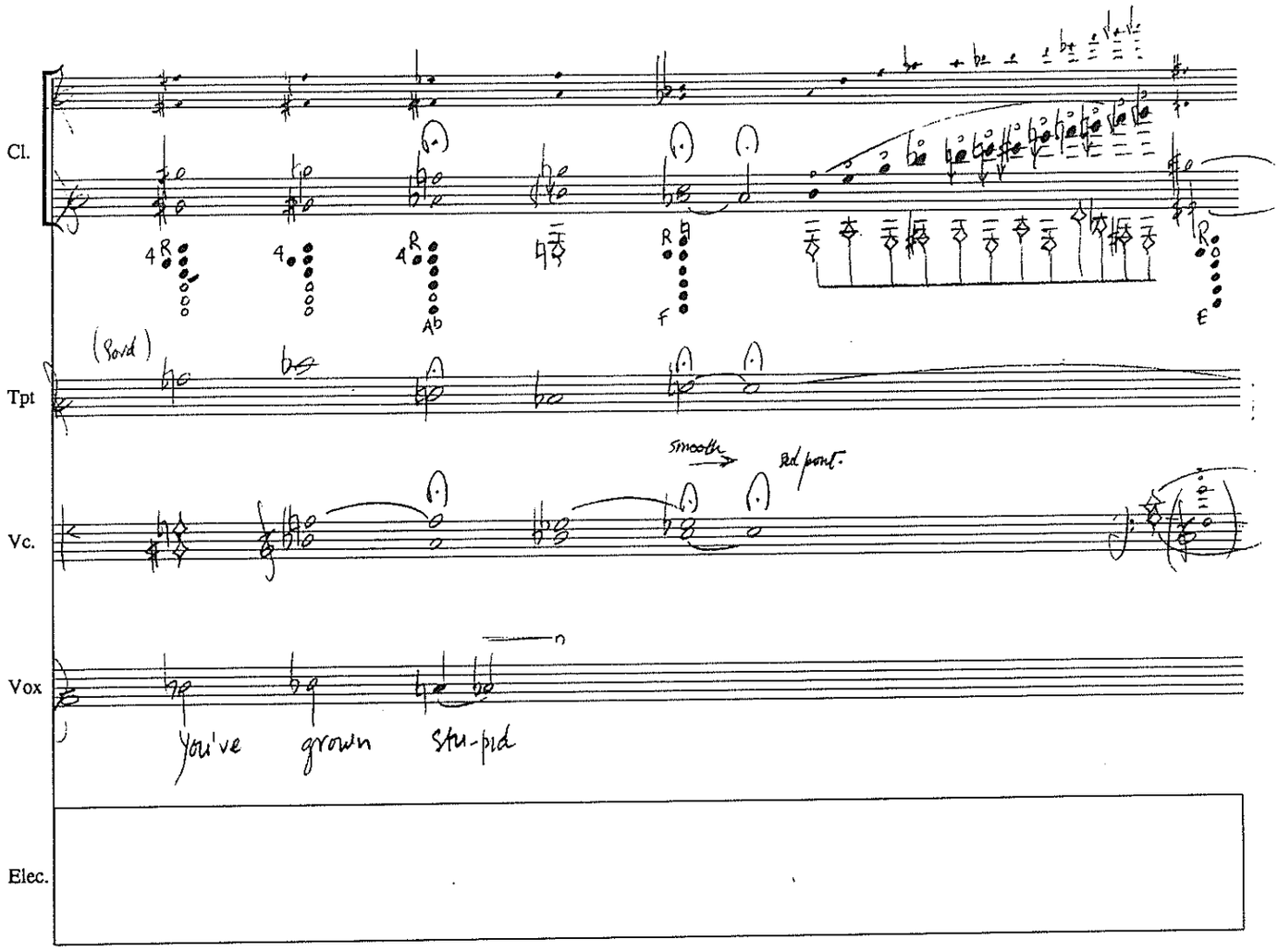


Cézanne's Doubt Rothman I-16

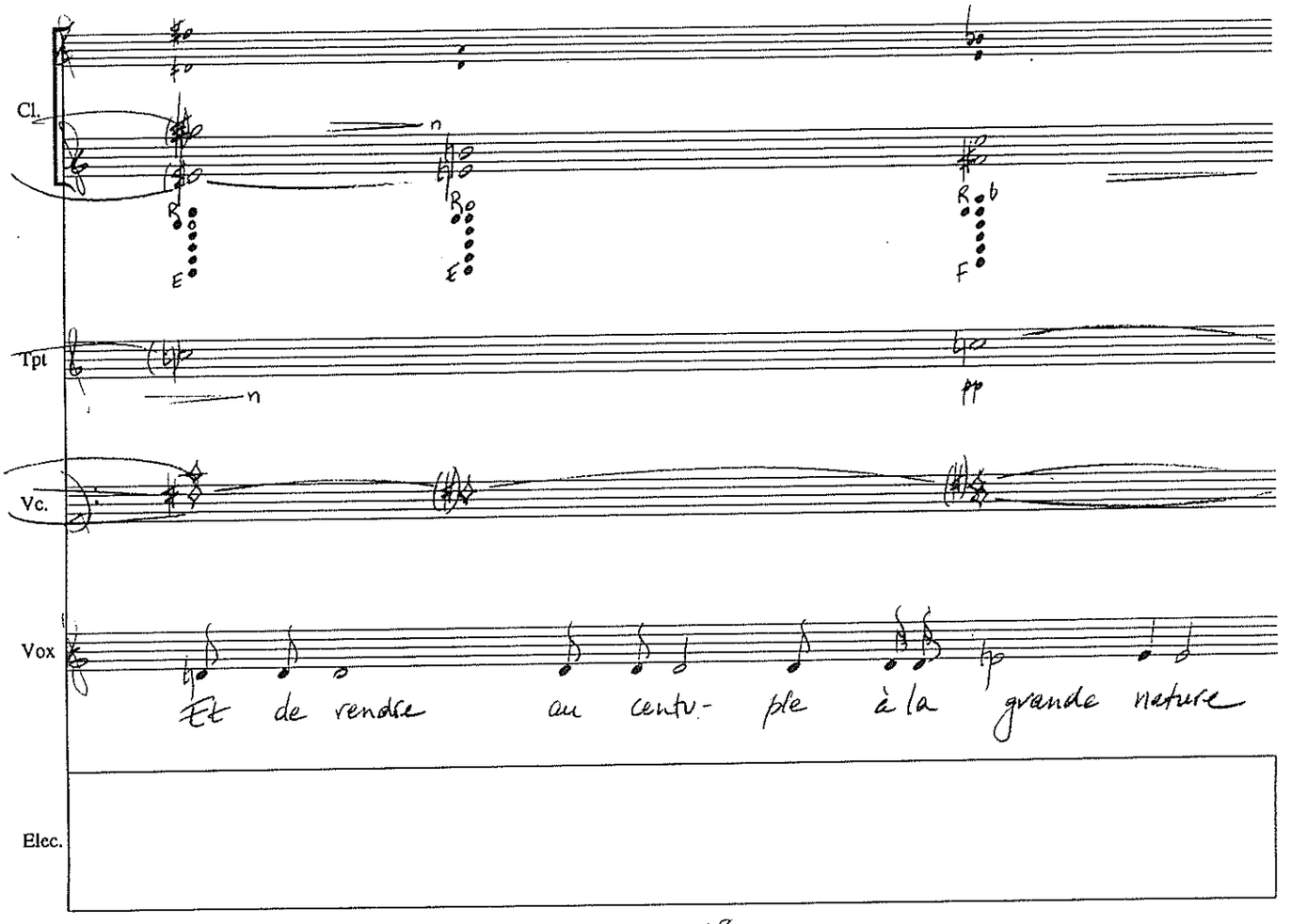


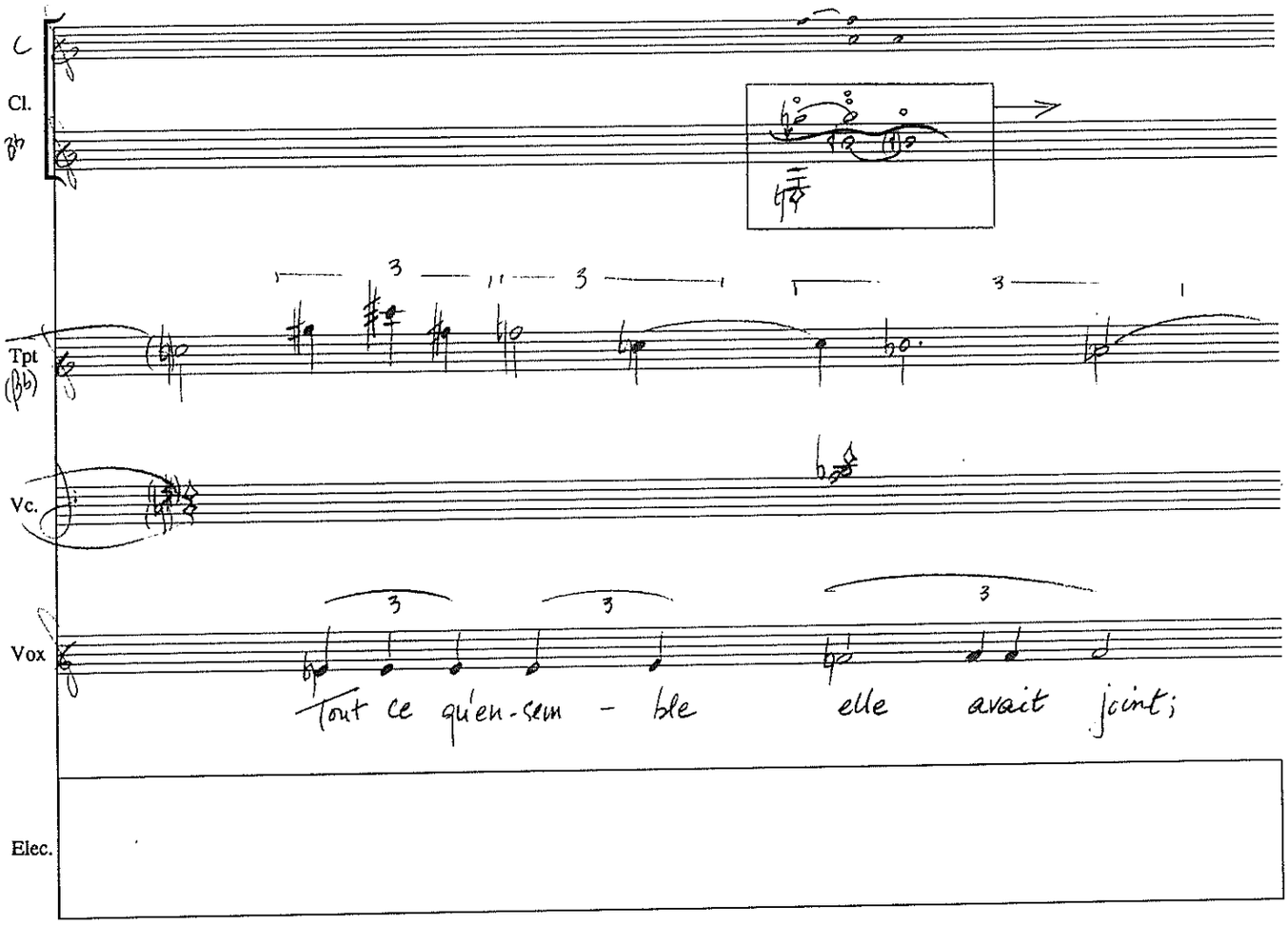

C
Cl.
Bb
Tpt
Bb
Vc.
Vox
Elec.
arco
Pizz
5:3
With your fine rugs and in - sol - ent


Cézanne's Doubt Rothman I-17
C
Cl.
Bb
repeat into hold.
ossia
open
Tpt
Bb
Vc.
Vox
Ser - vant en - throned like some old dir-ty bour - geois
Elec.

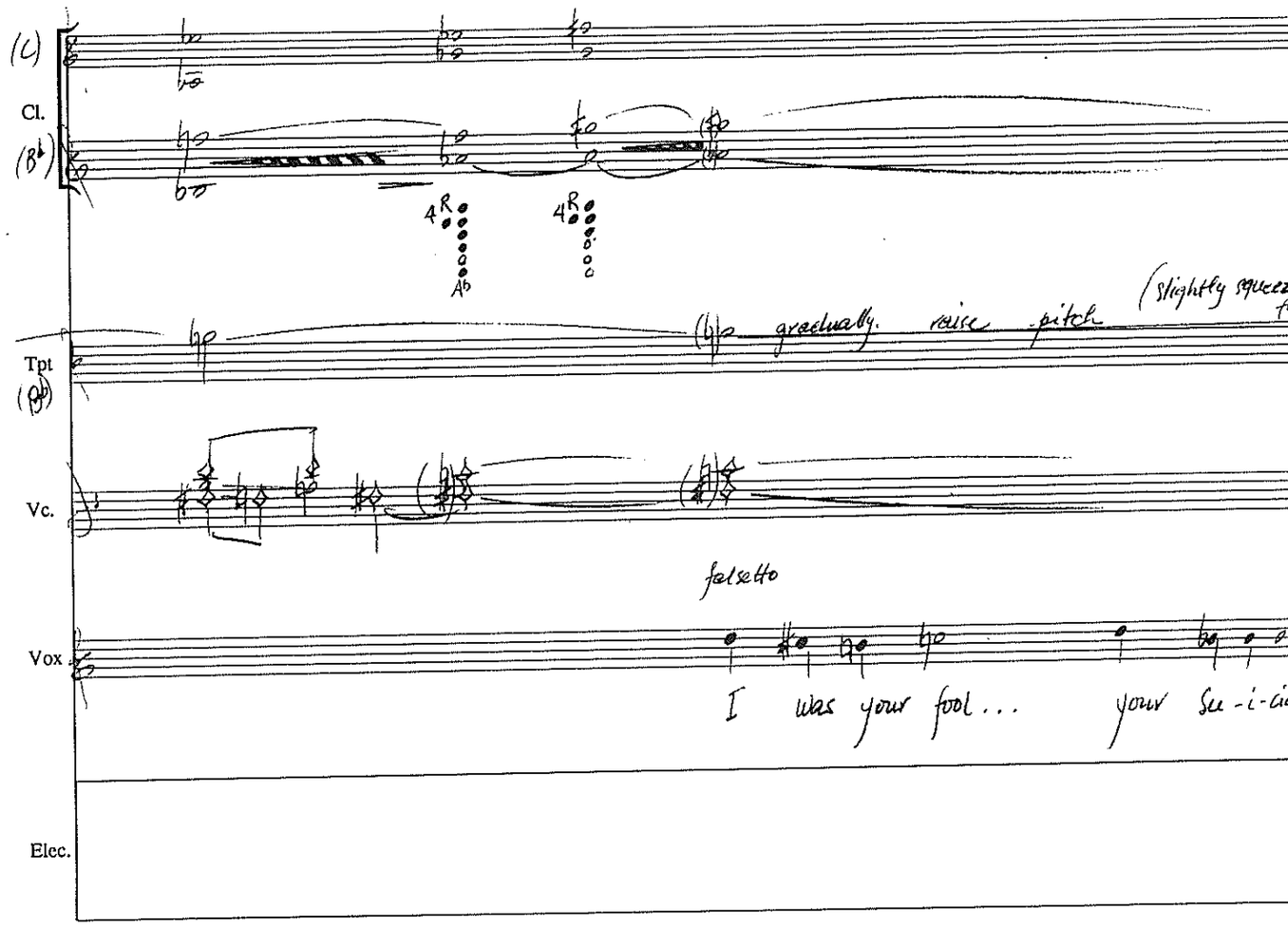


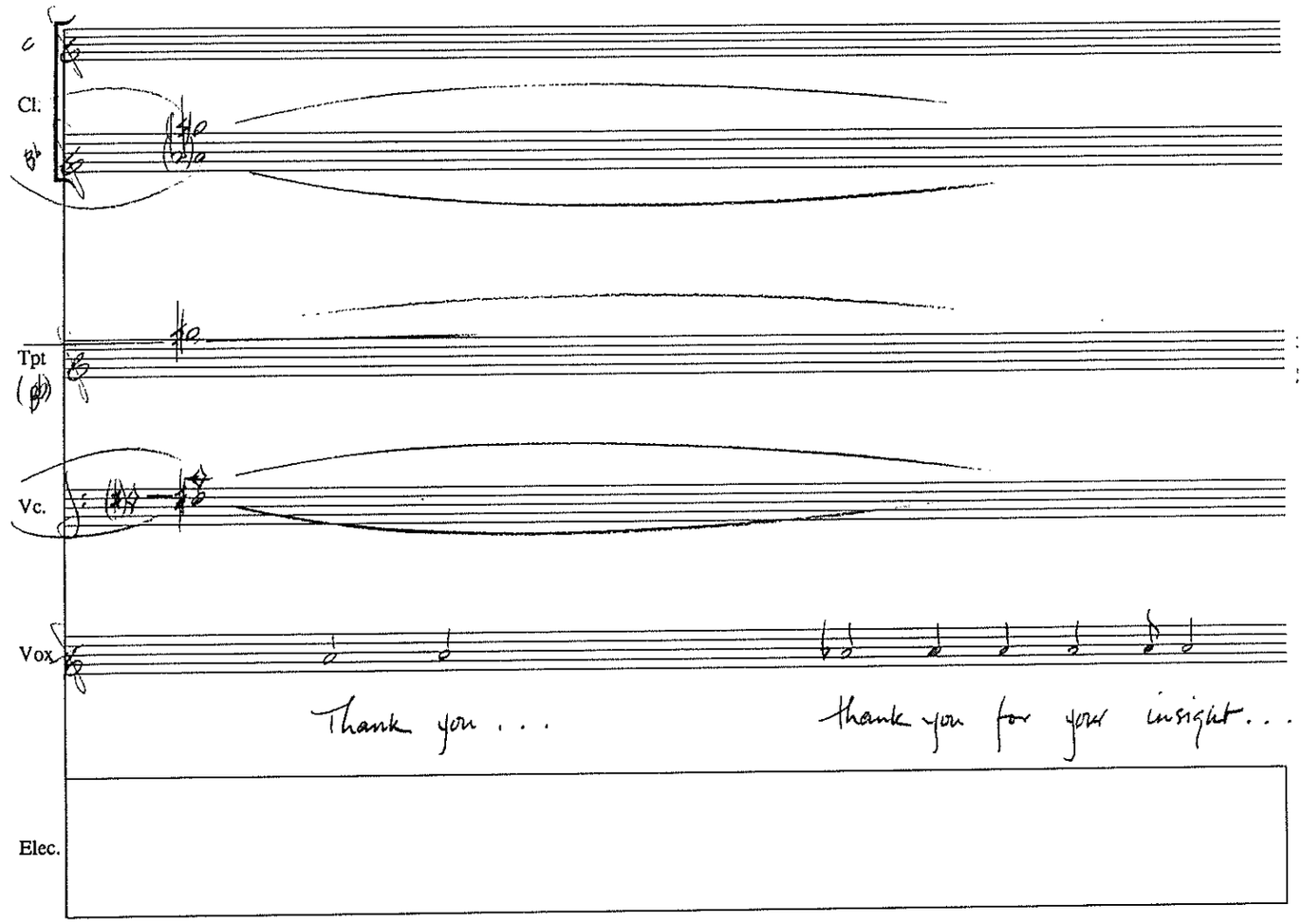
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman 1-18



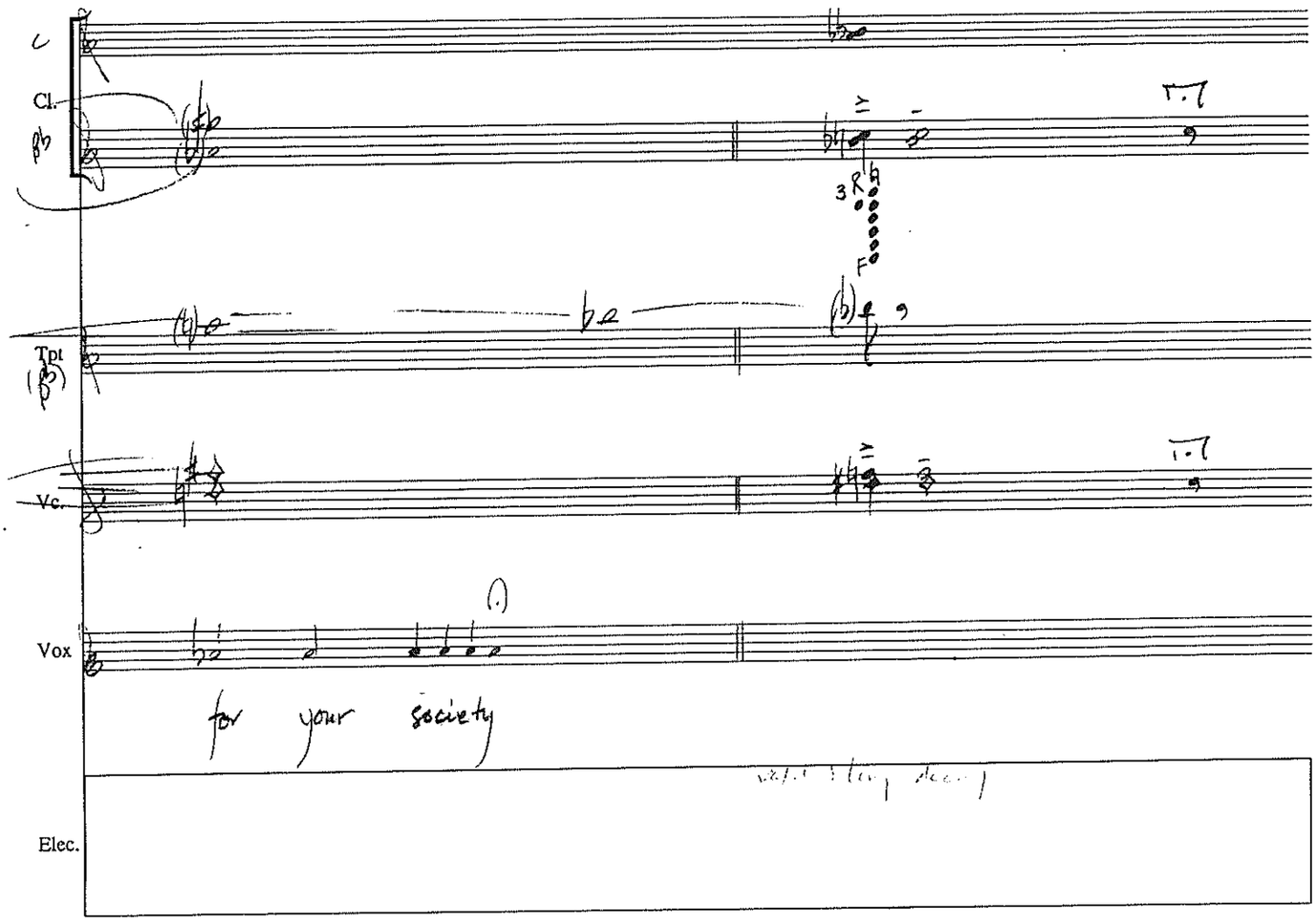


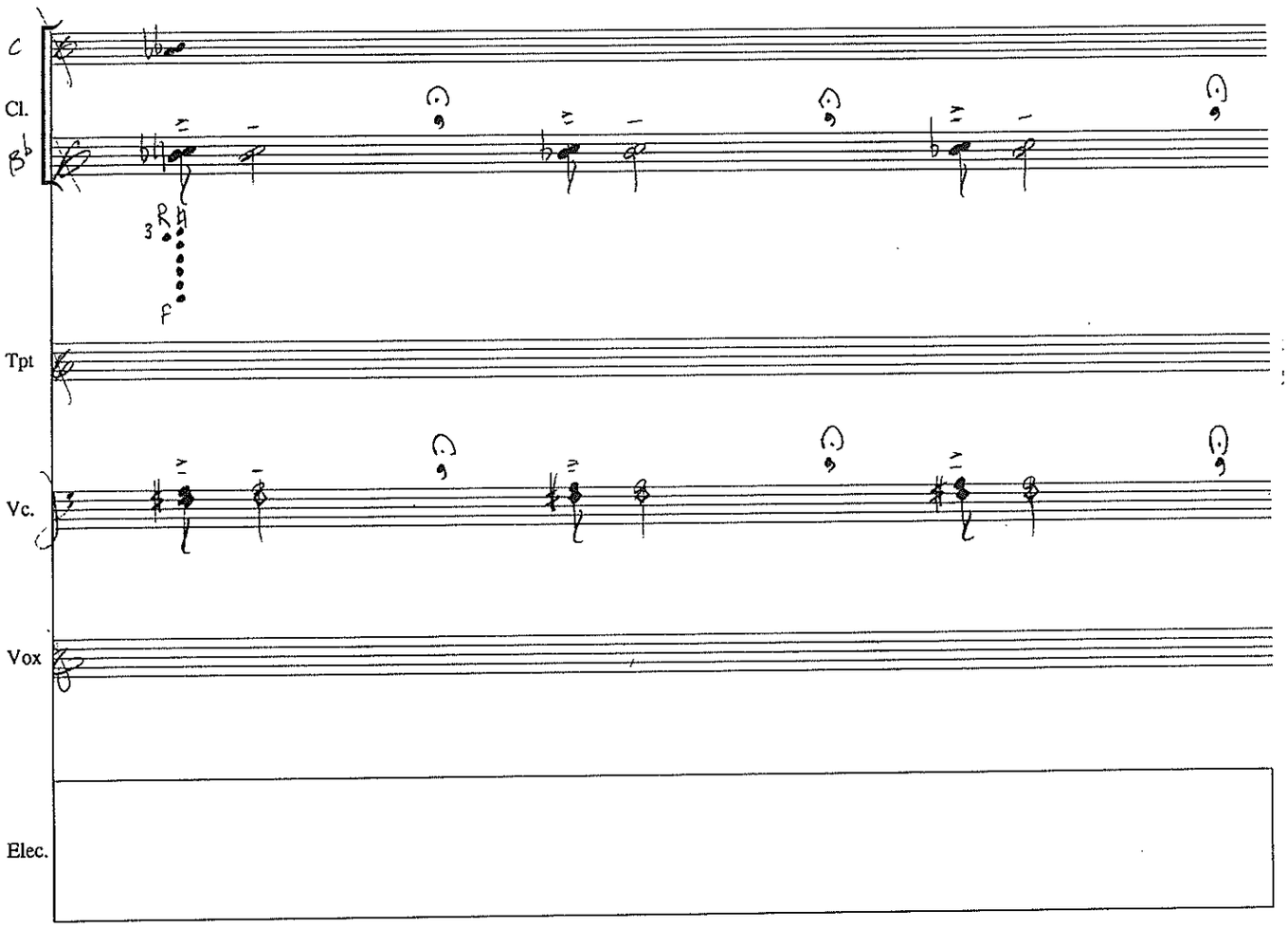
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman I-19



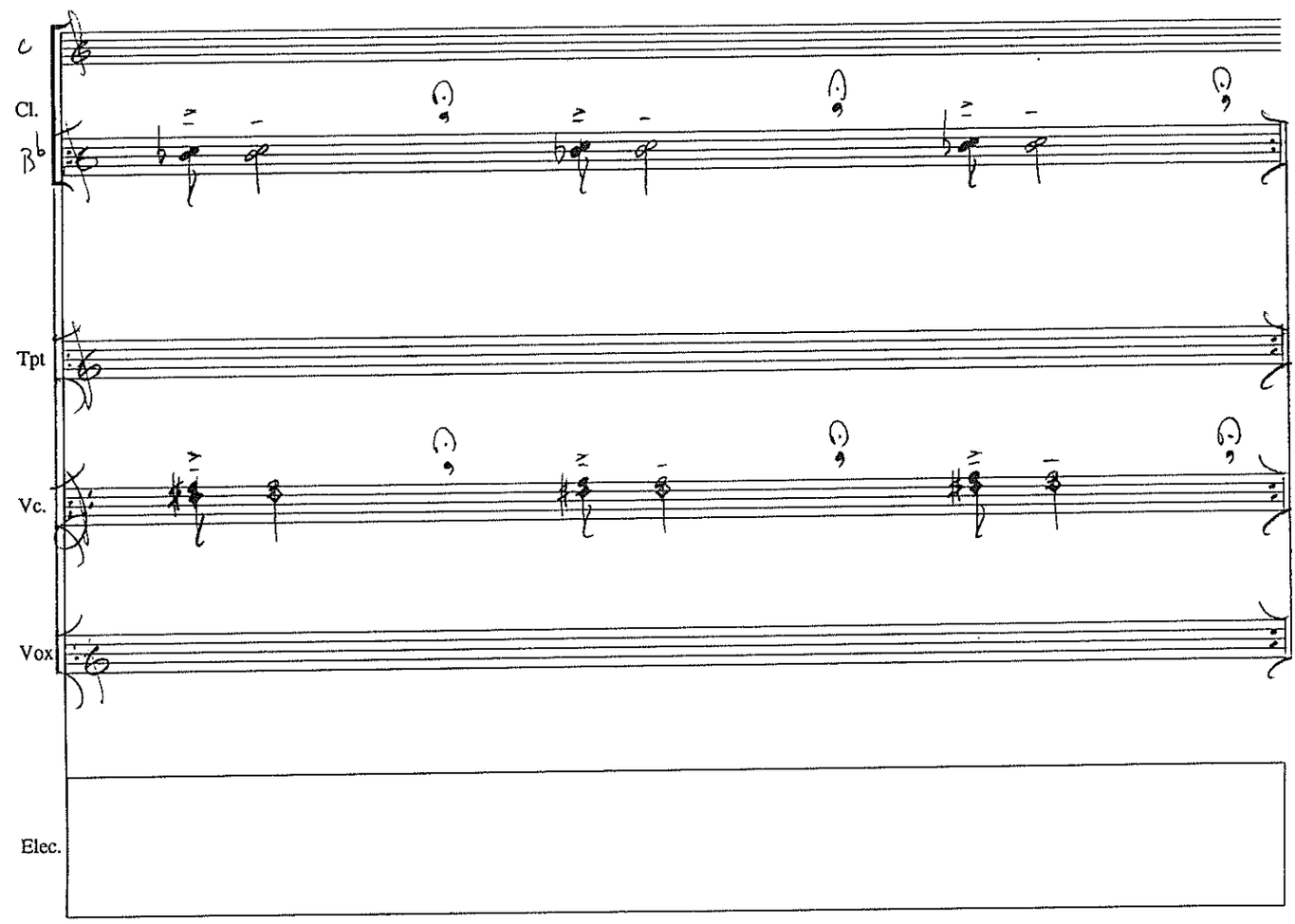


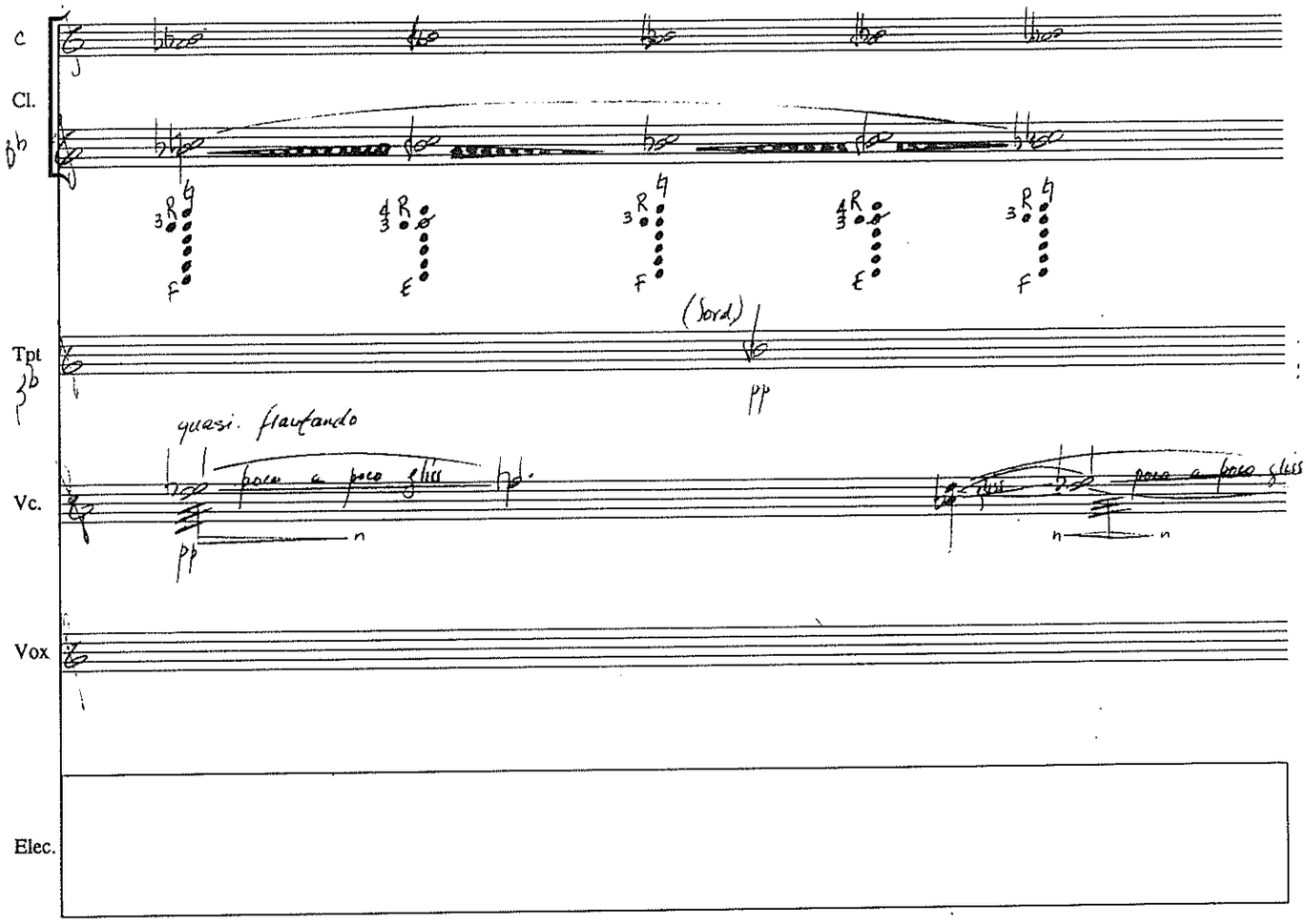
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman 5-20





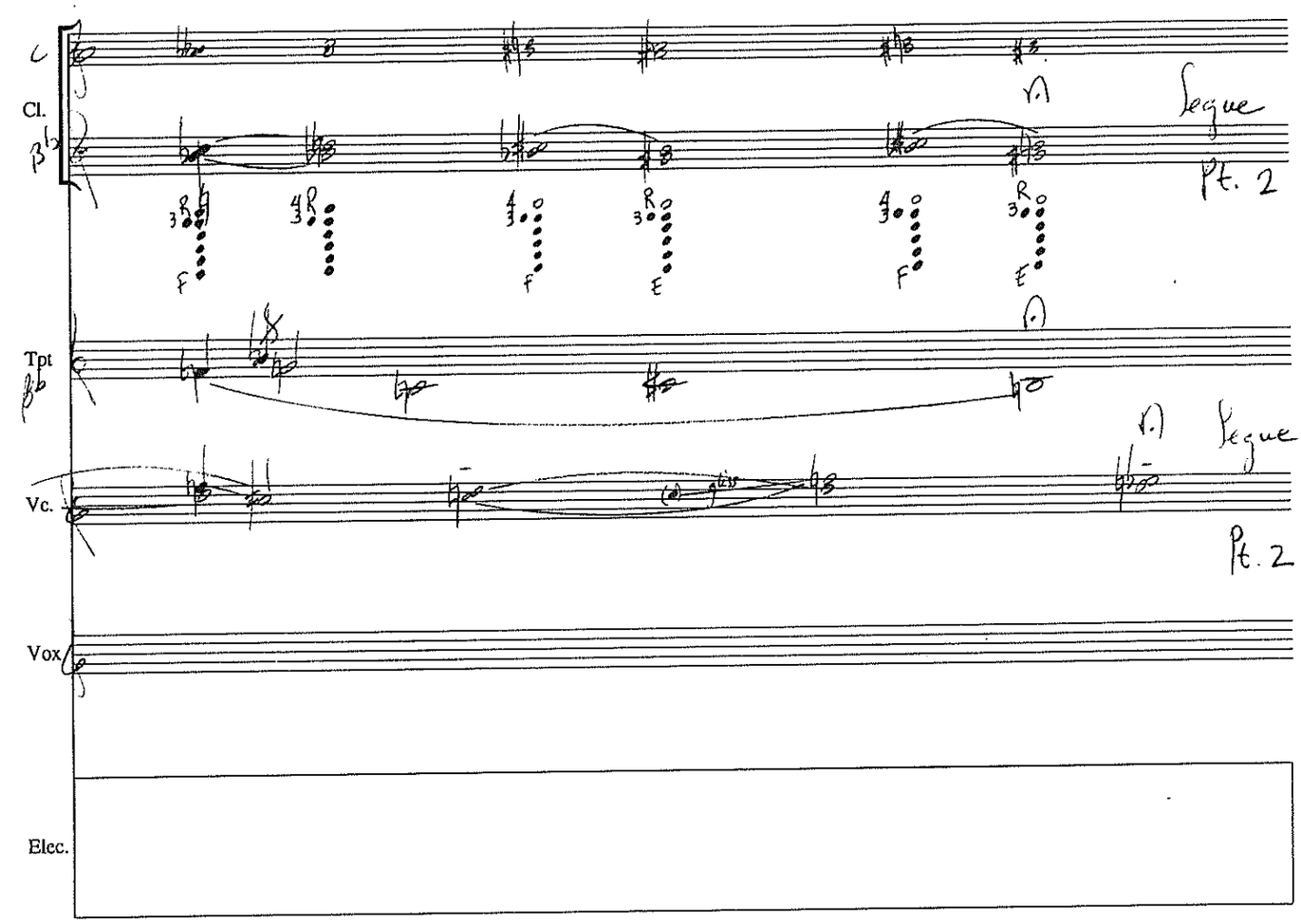
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman I-21



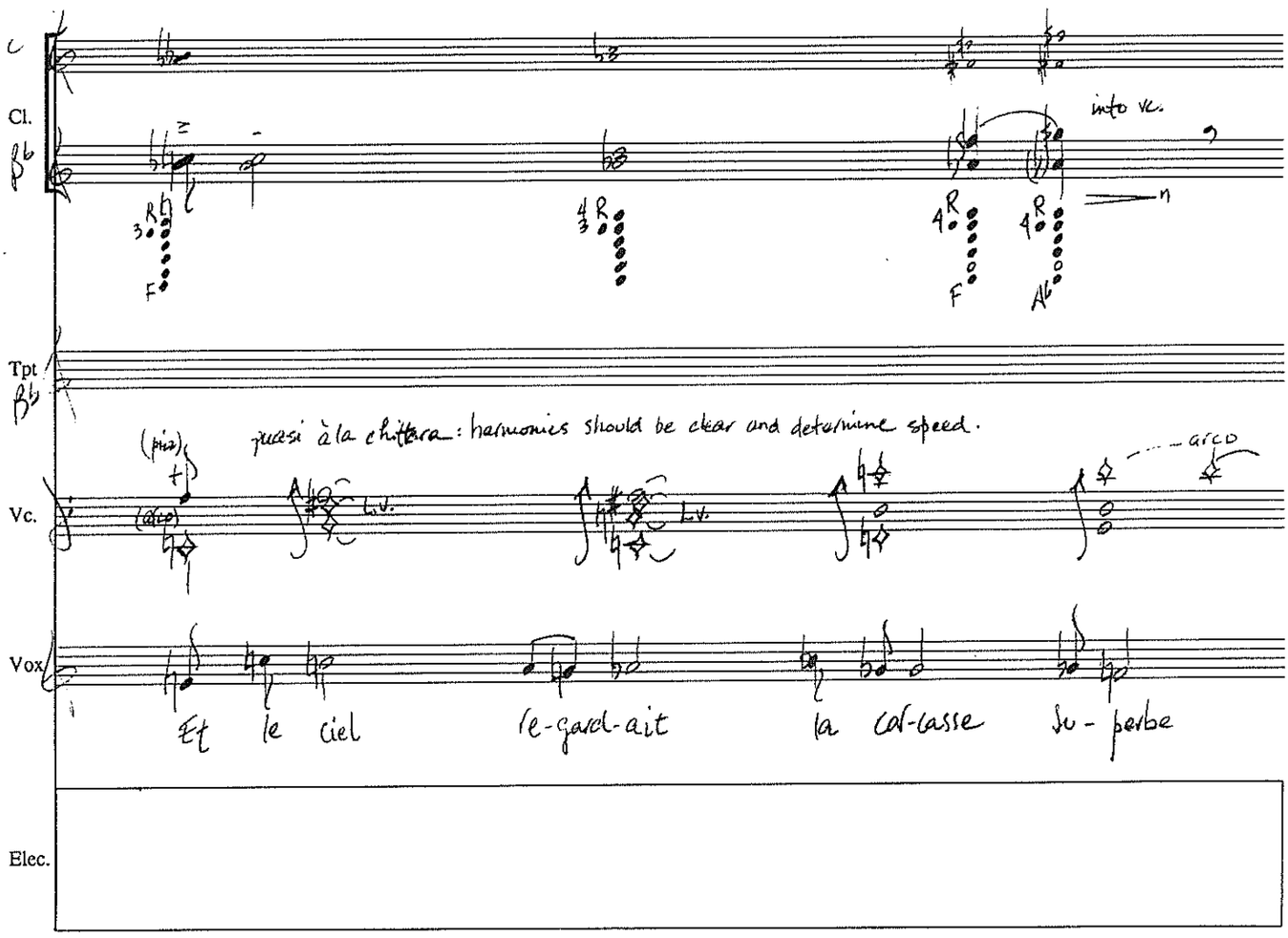


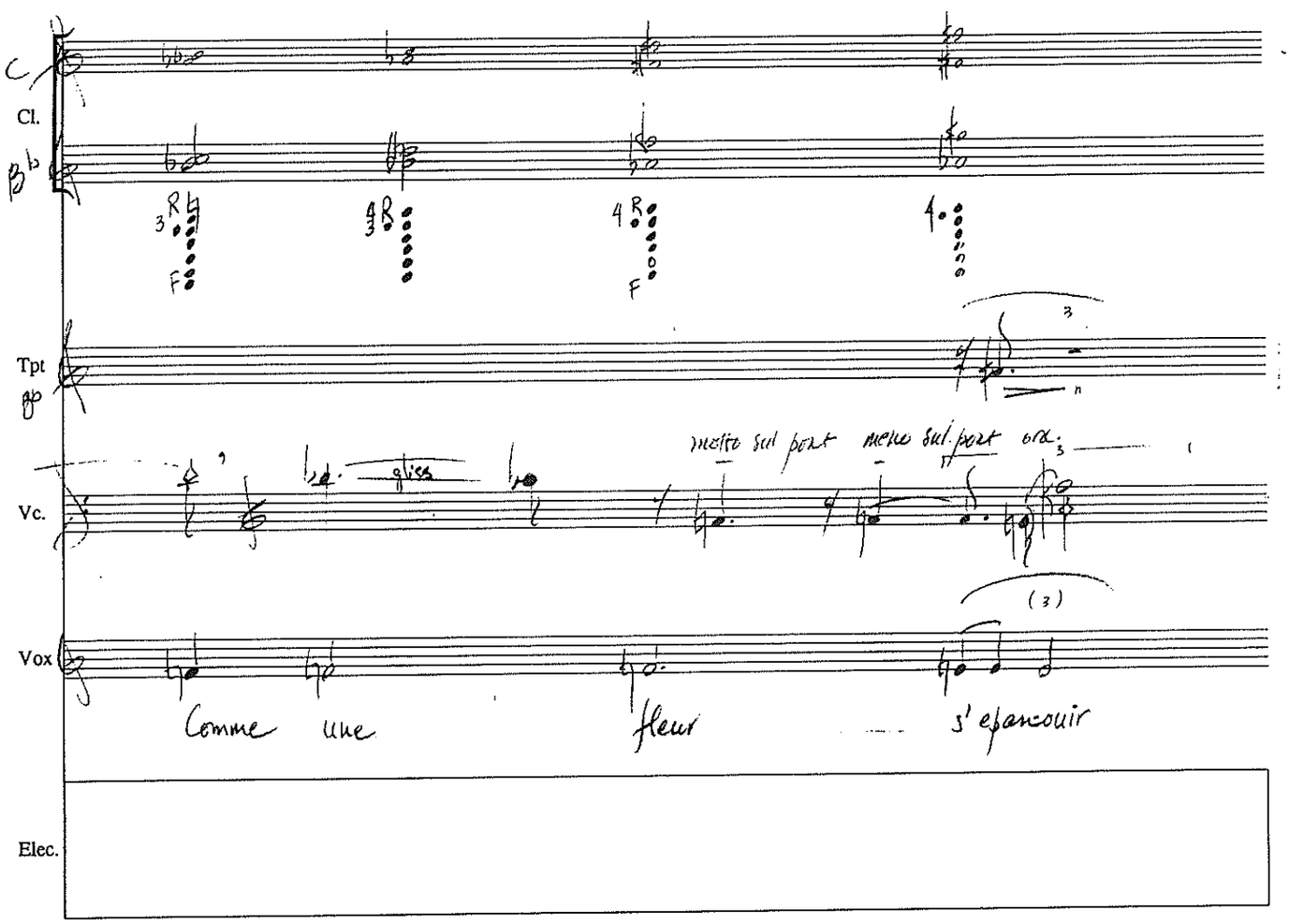
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman 5-22

End Part 1

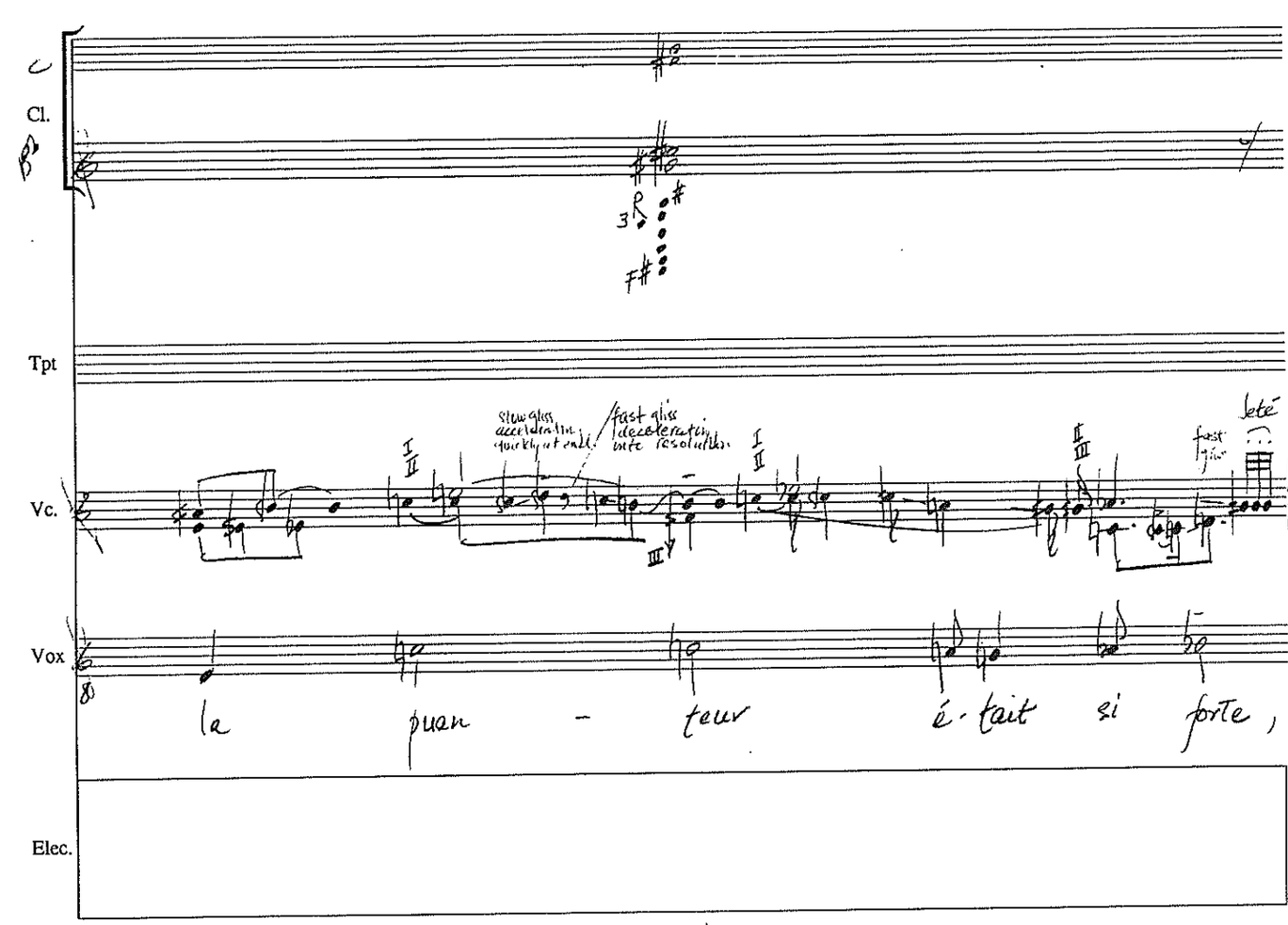


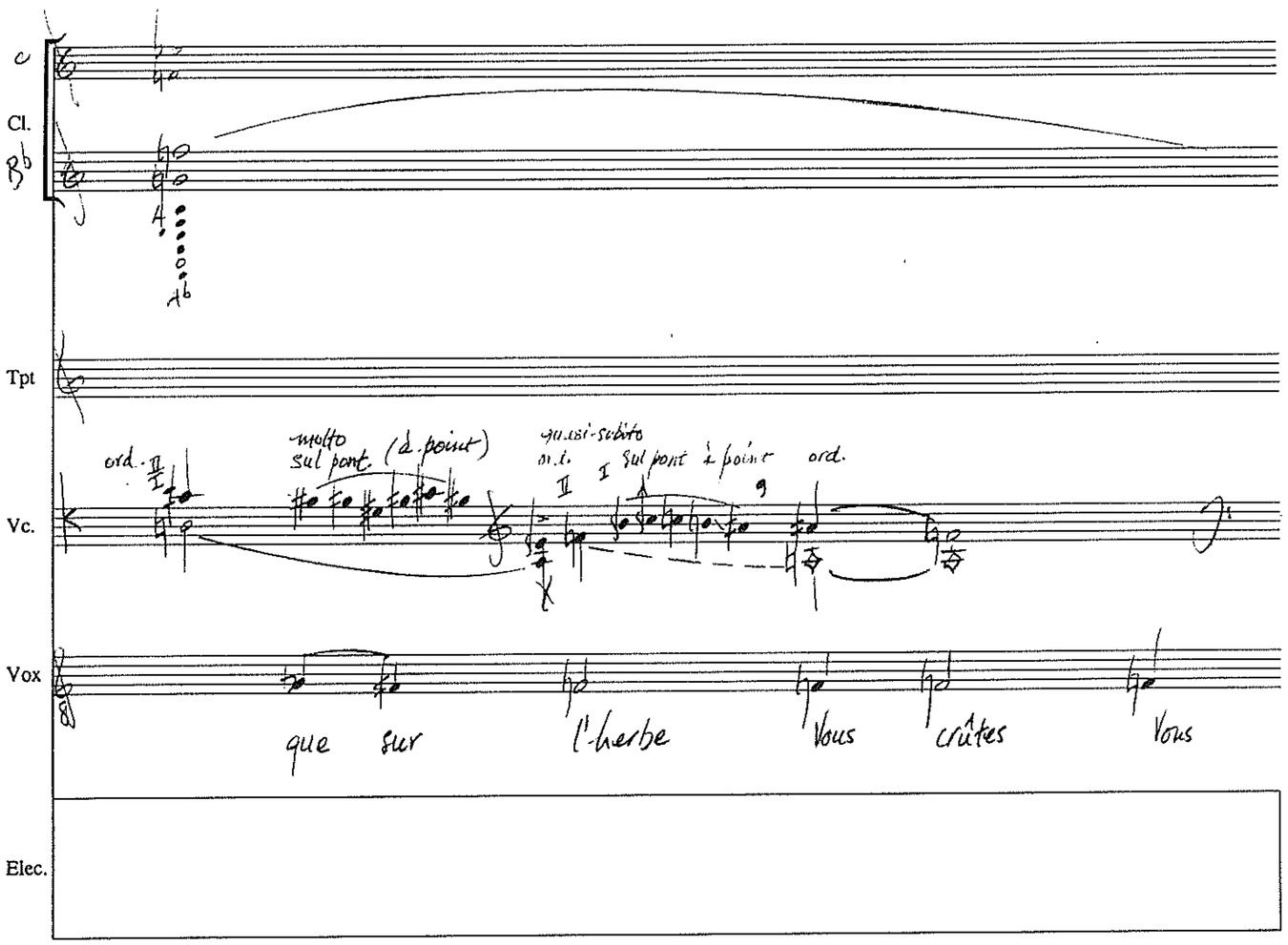
Cézanne's Doubt Part 2



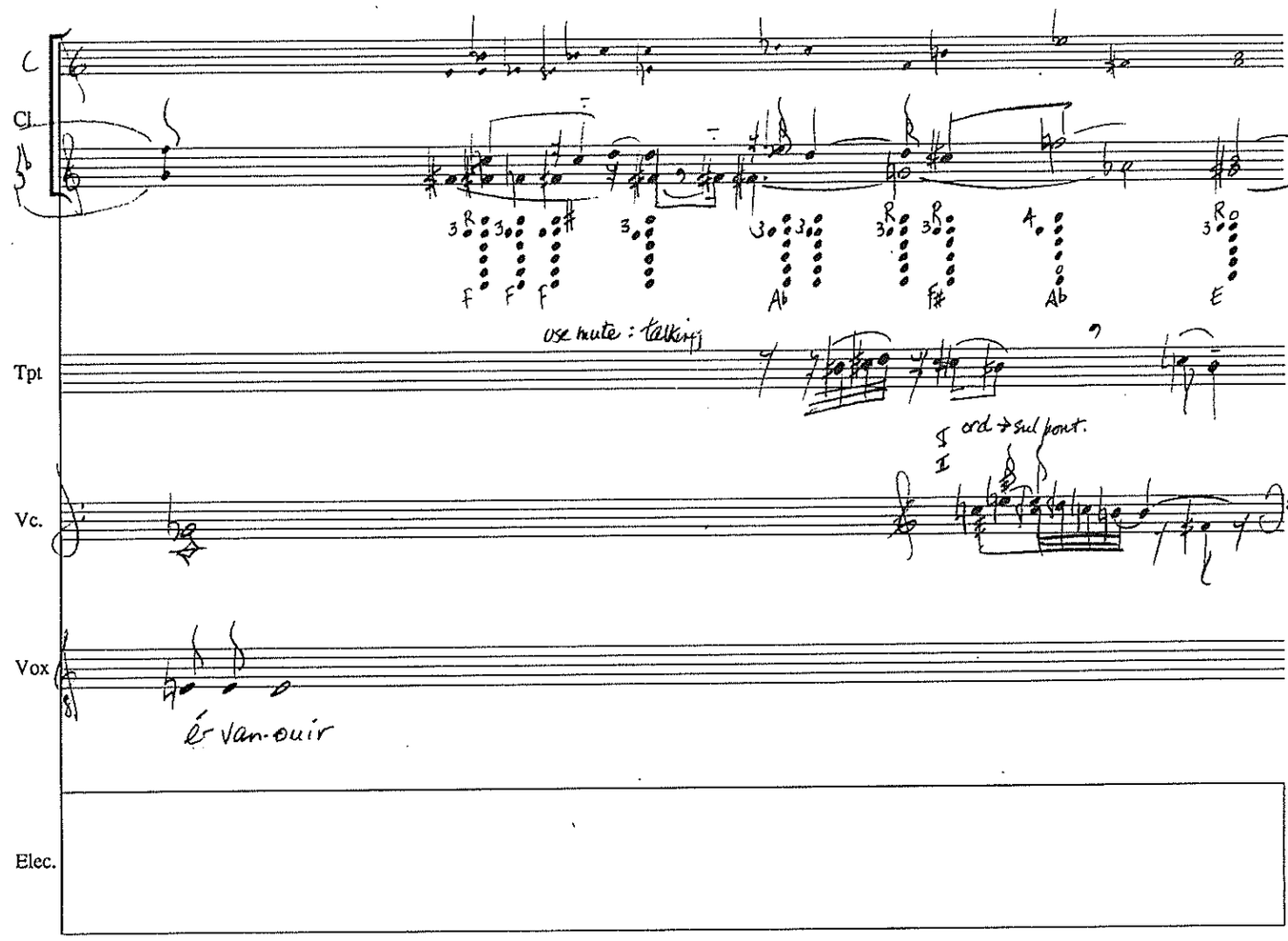


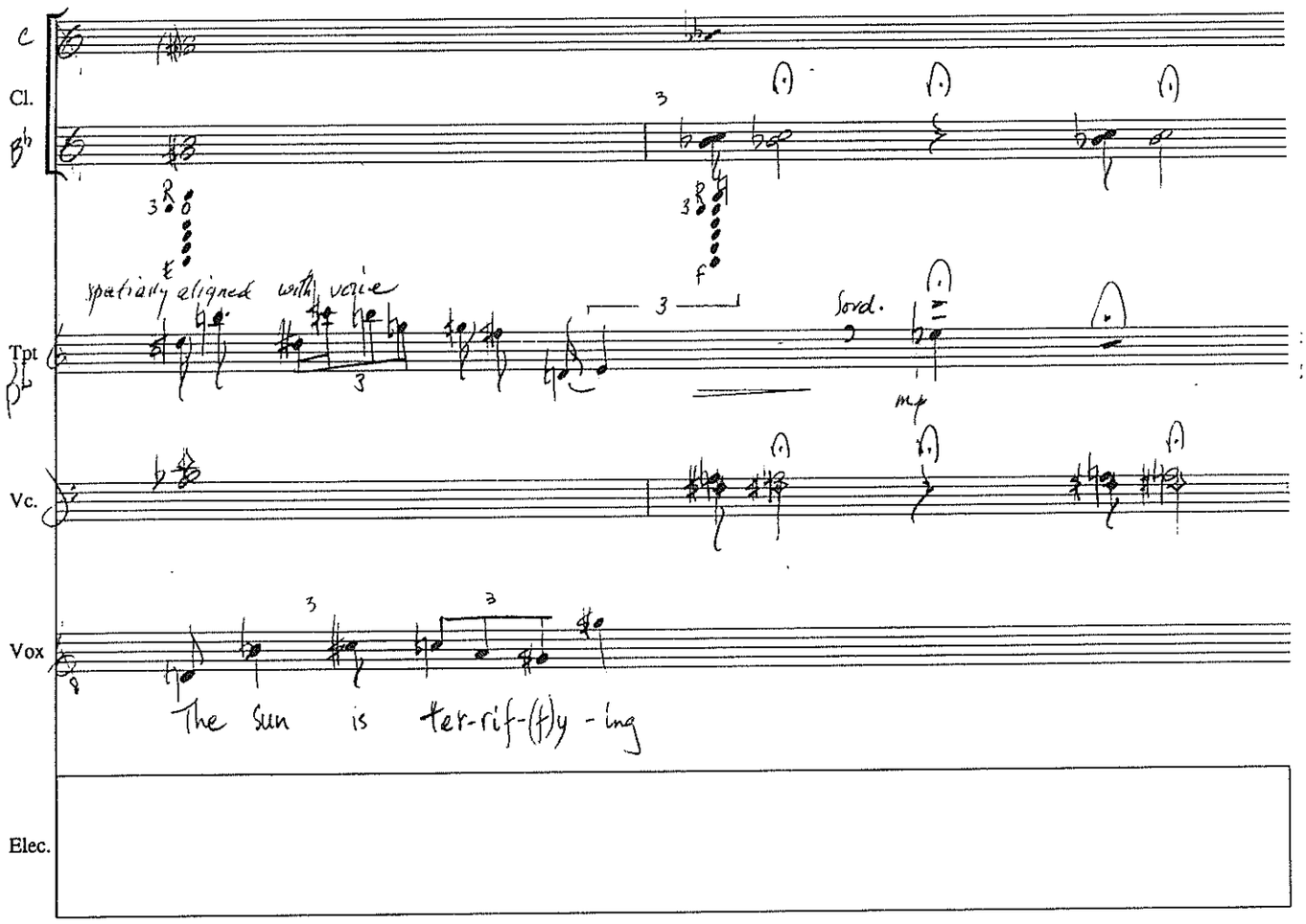
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman II-24



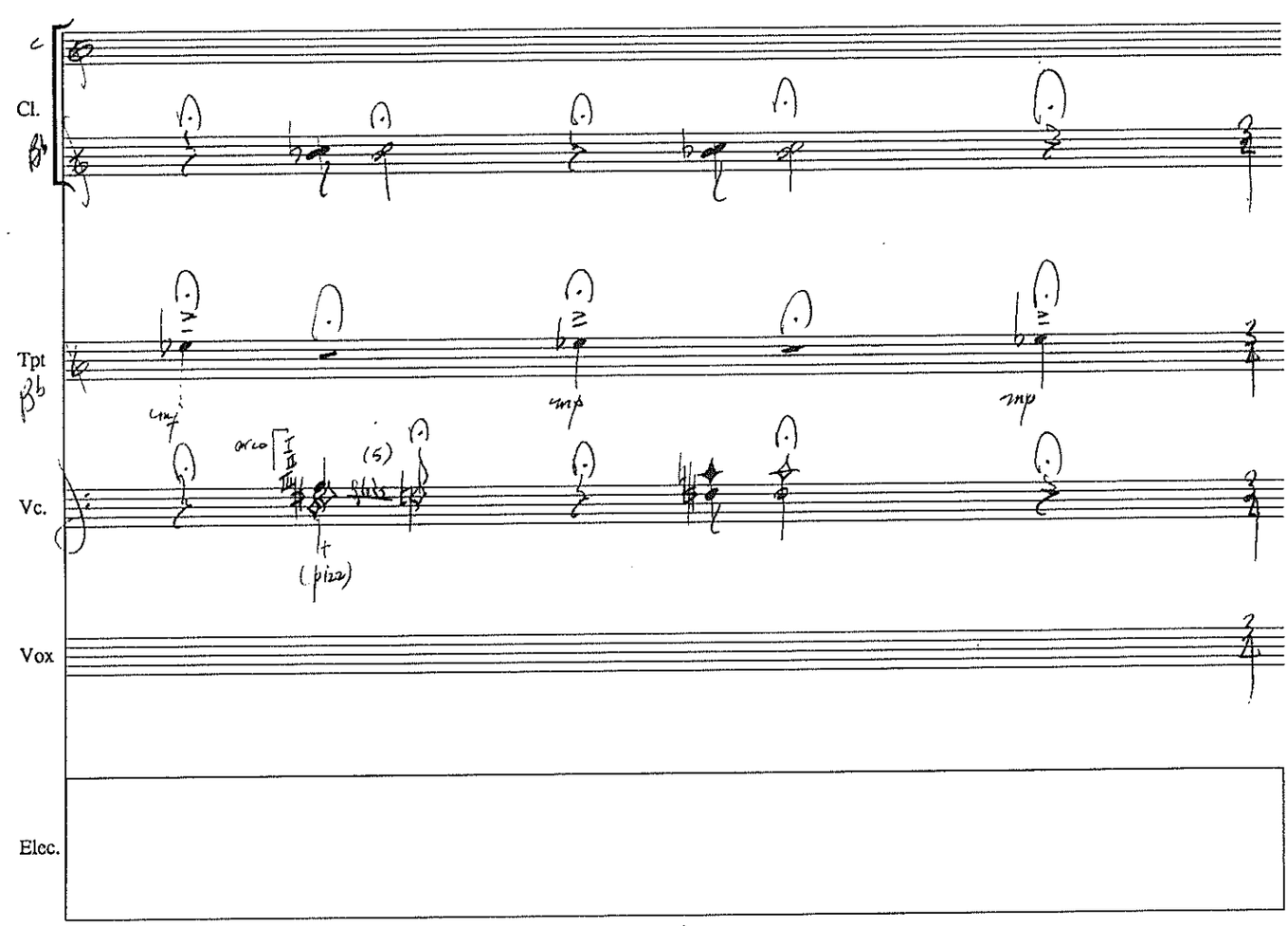


Cézanne's Doubt Rothman II-25





Cézanne's Doubt Rothman II-26



♪ ≈ 66 mm.

C

Cl. B♭

Tpt B♭

Vc.

Vox

Elec.

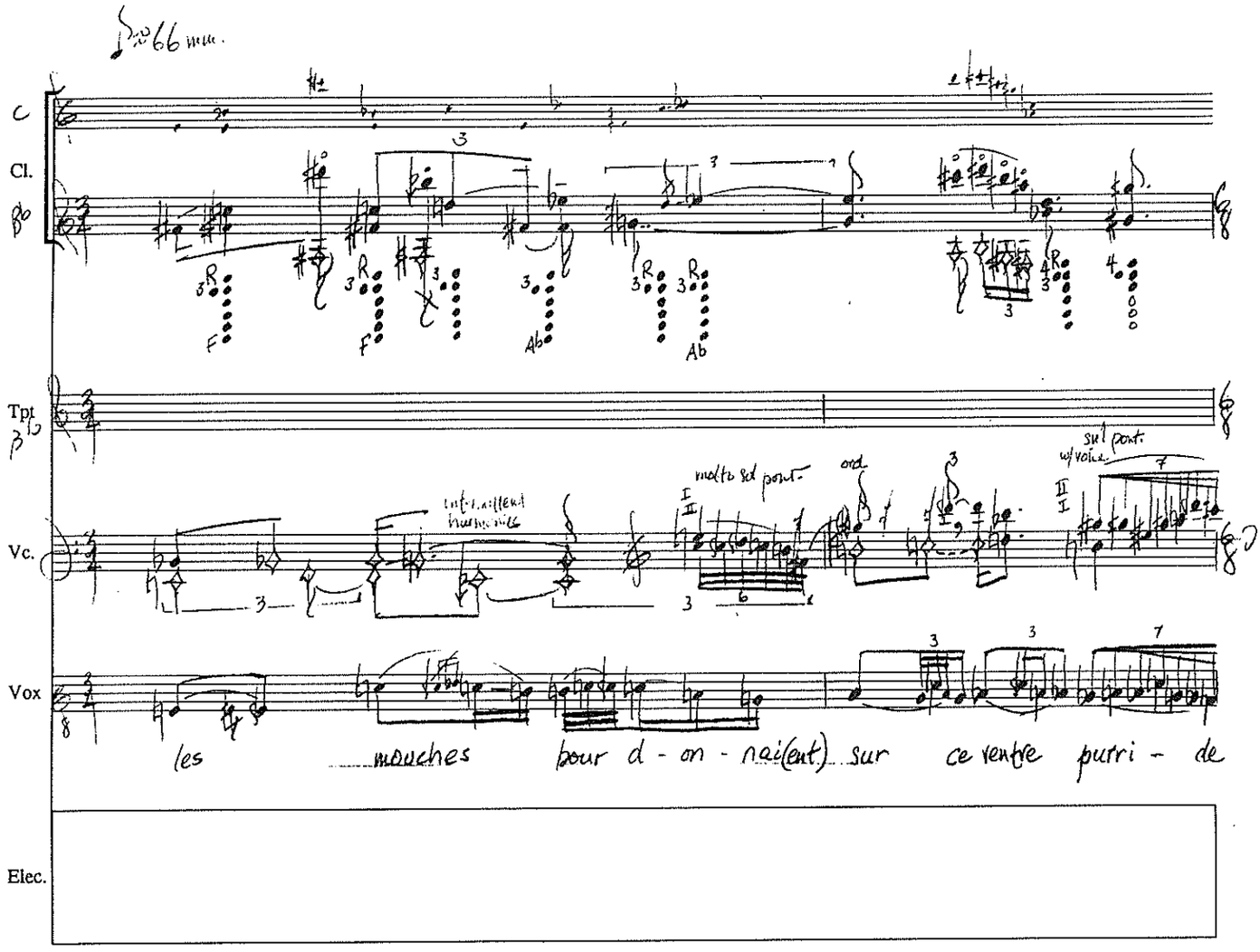
intermittent harmonics

molto sul pont.

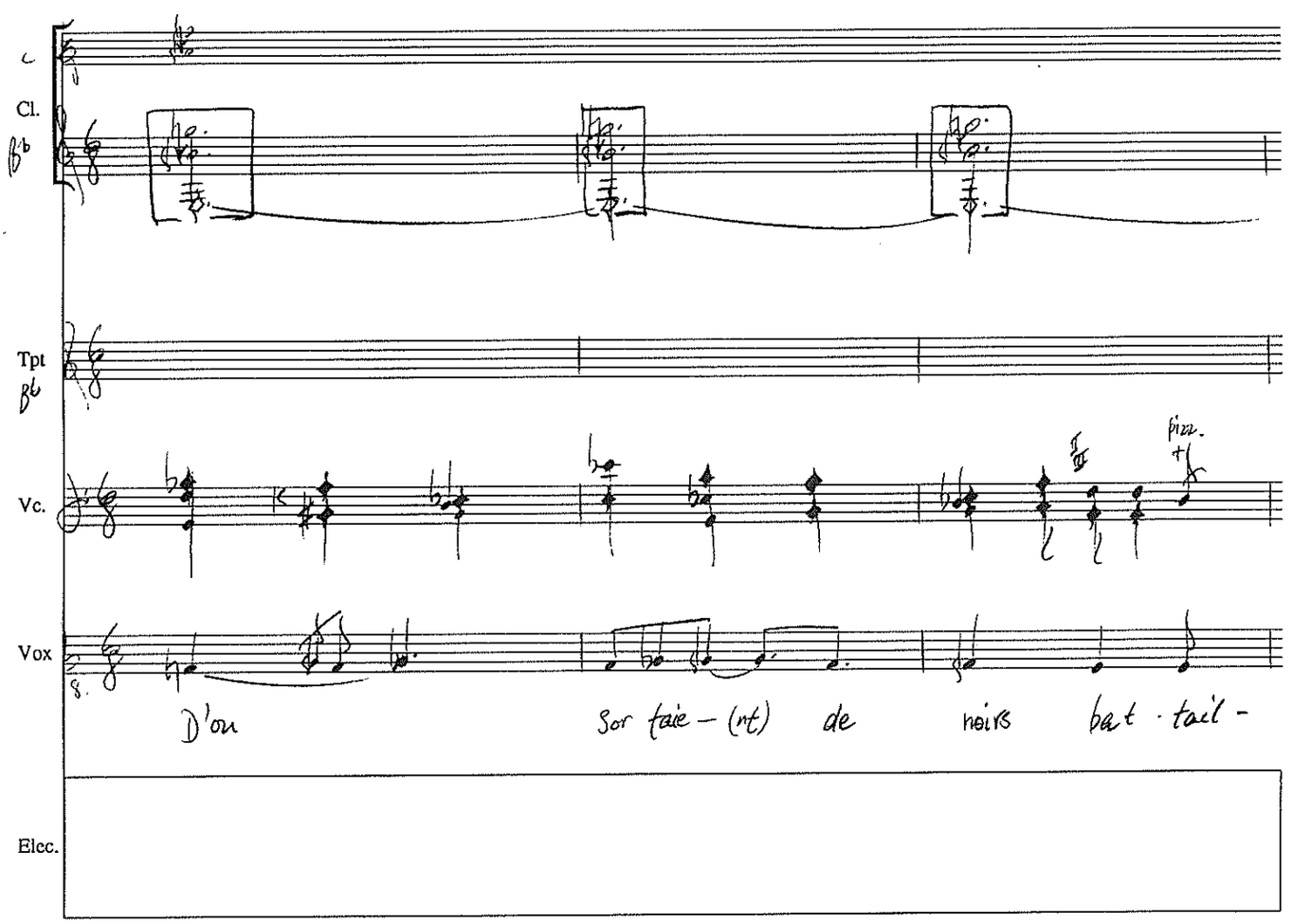
ord.

sul pont. w/ voice

les mouches bour d - on - nai(ent) sur ce ventre purri - de



Cézanne's Doubt Rothman II-27



C

Cl. B♭

Tpt B♭

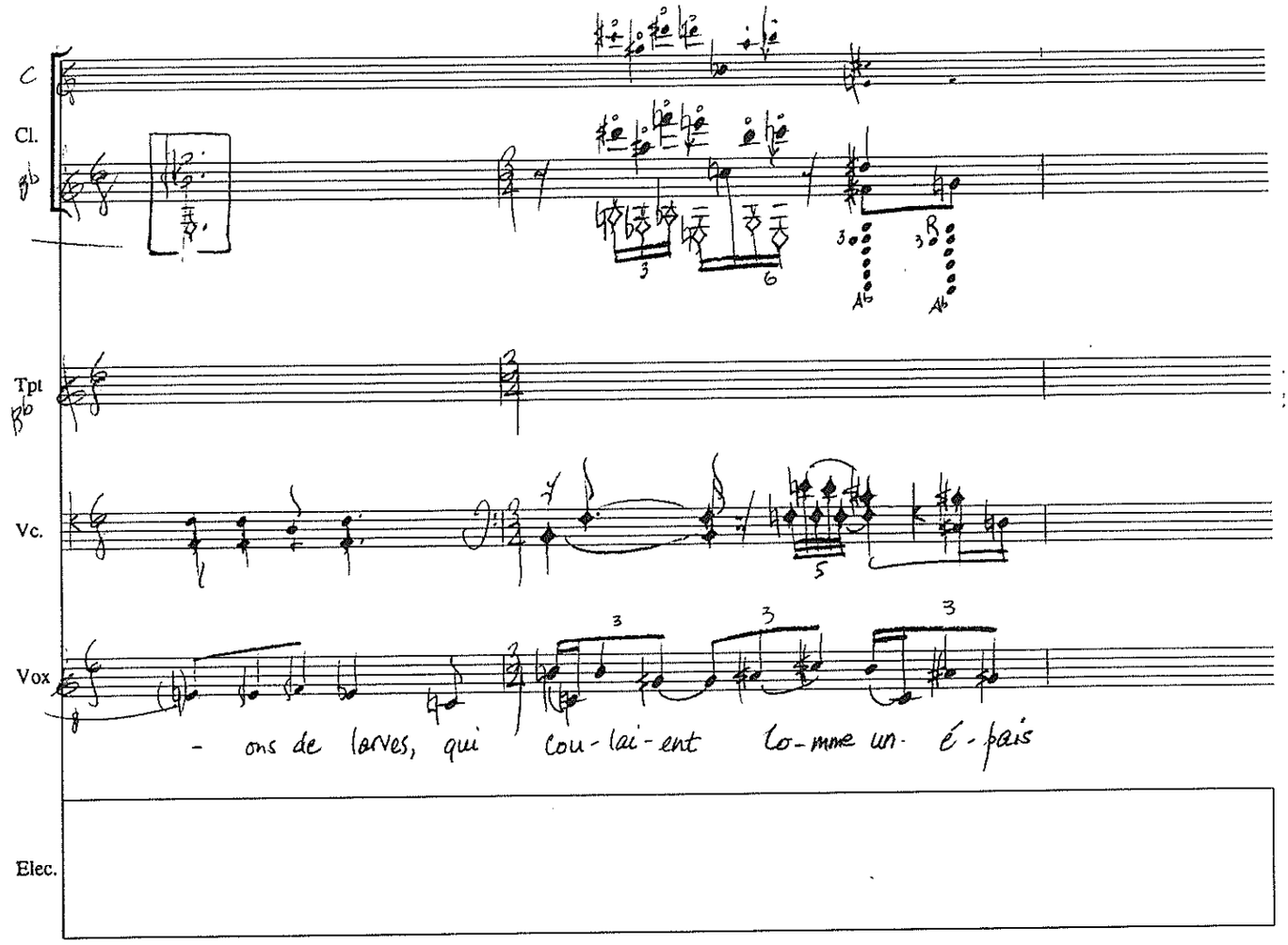
Vc.

Vox

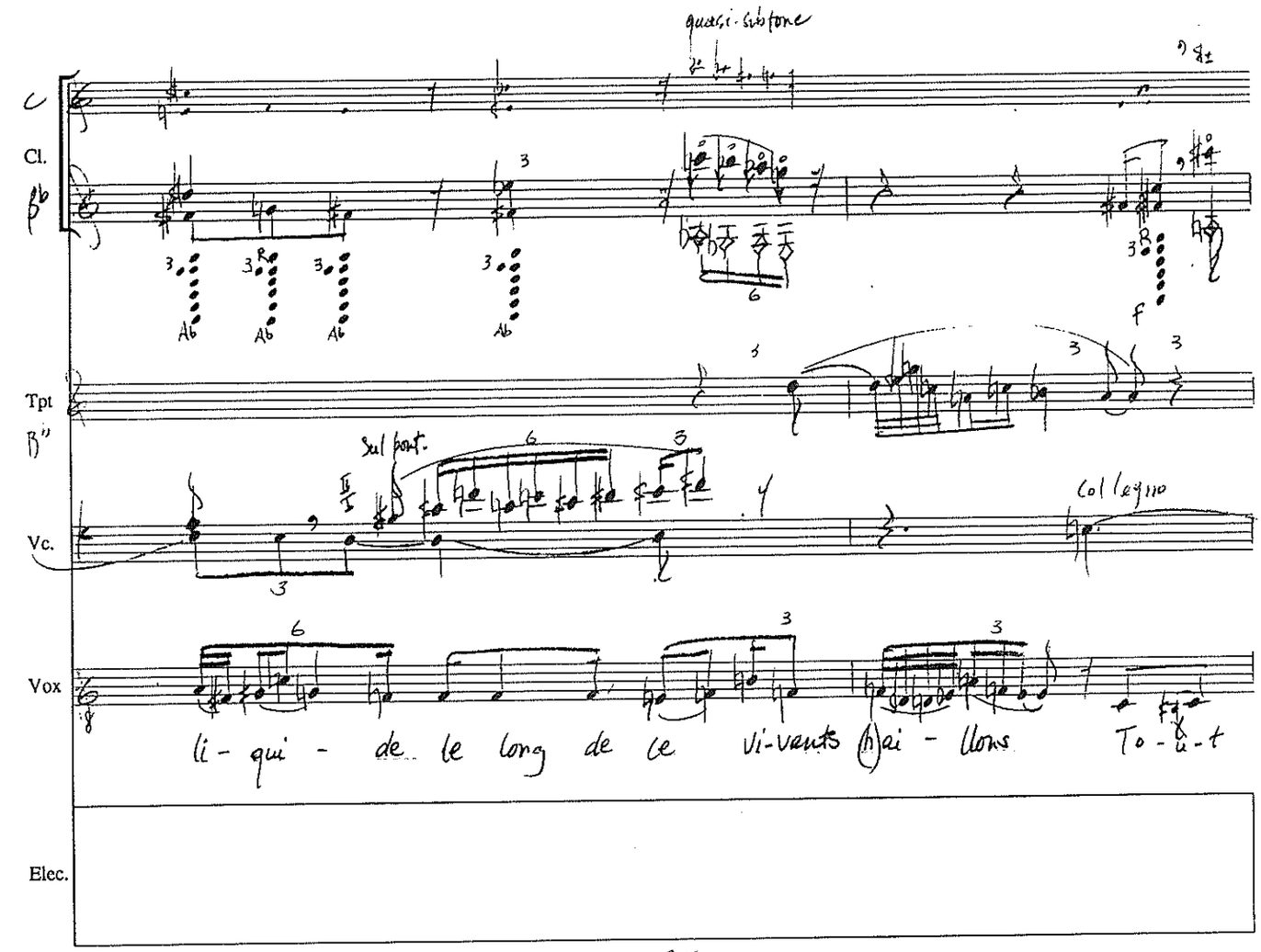
Elec.

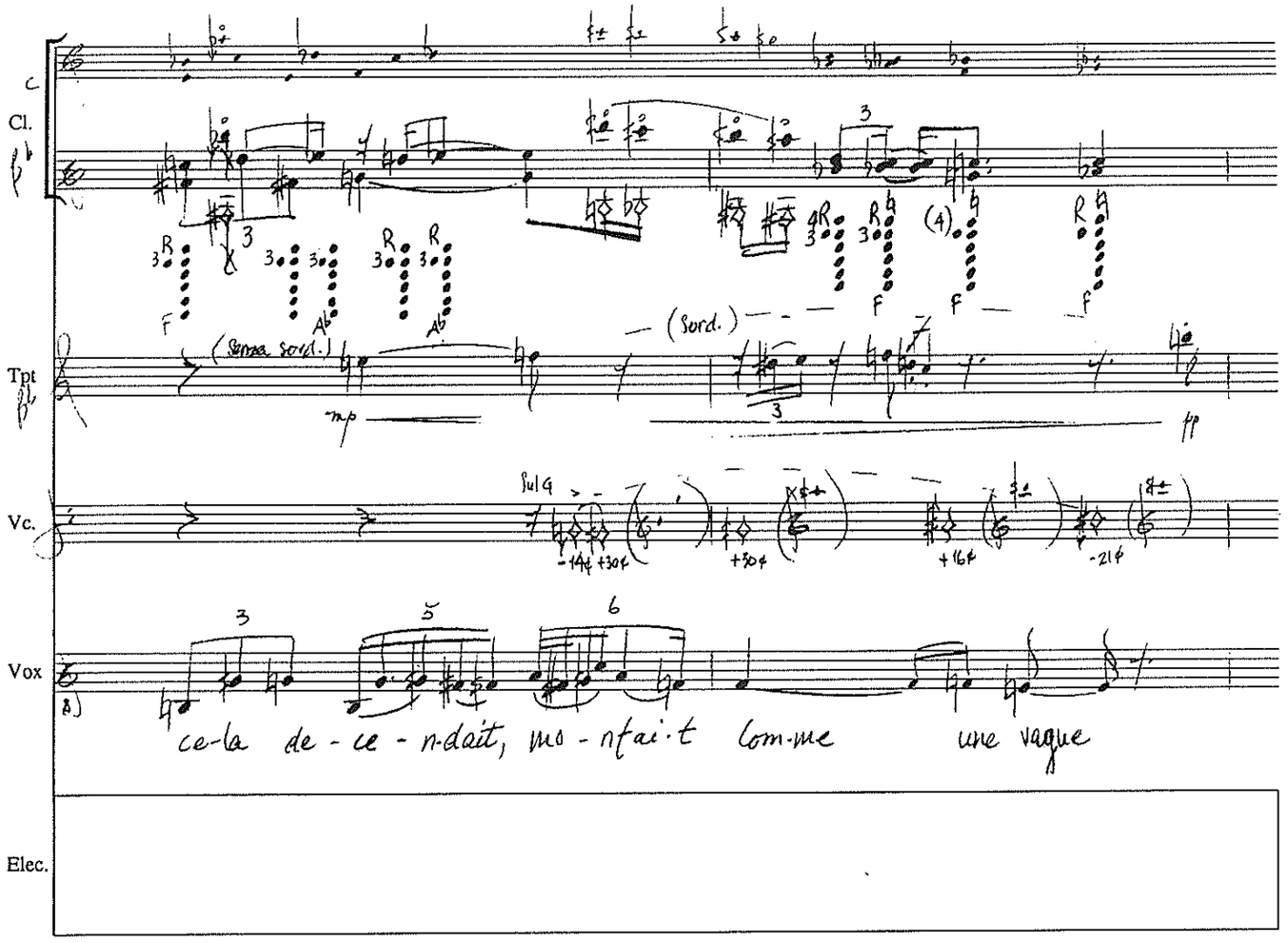
pizz.

D'ou sor taie - (nt) de noirs bat - tail -

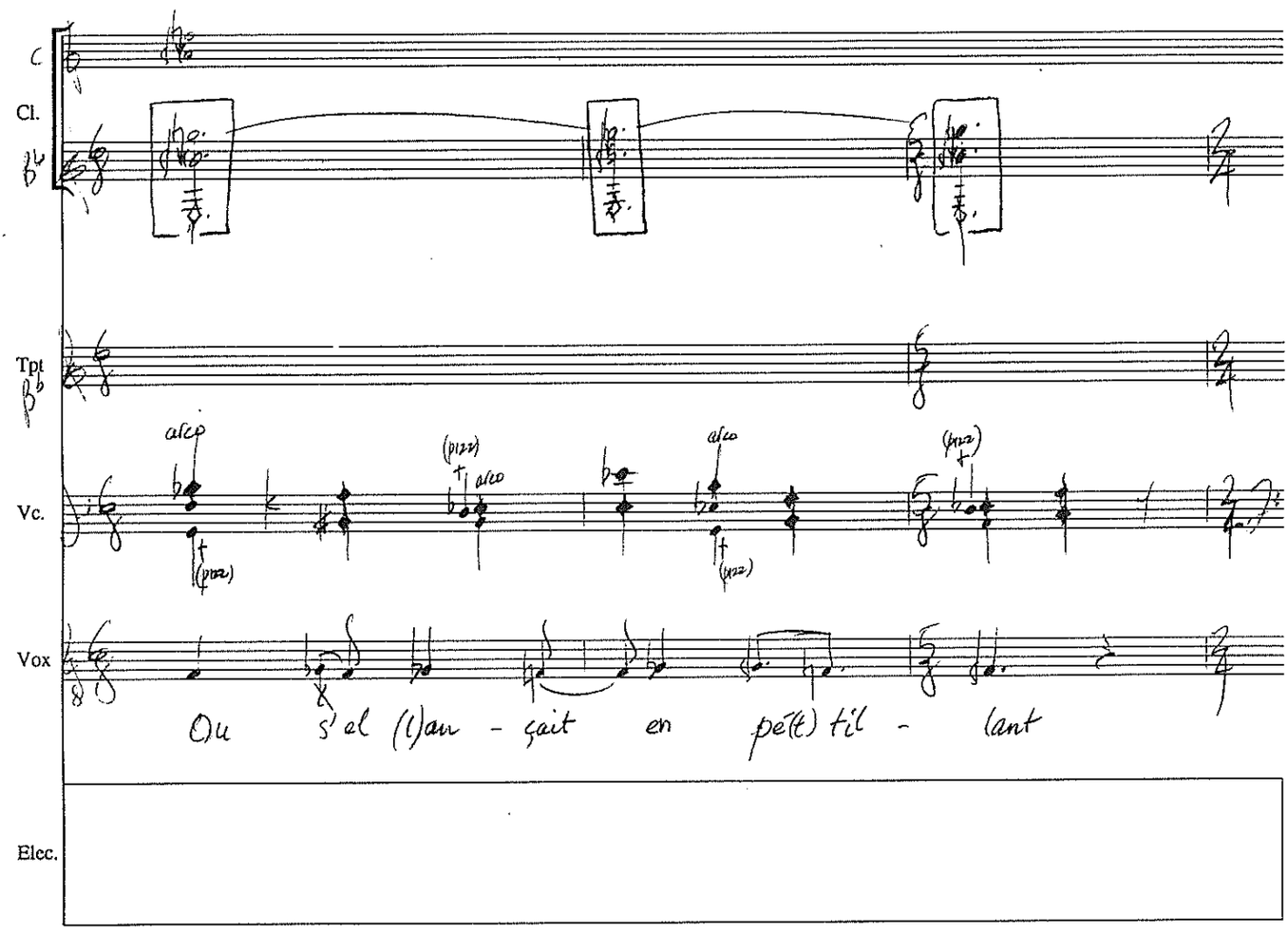


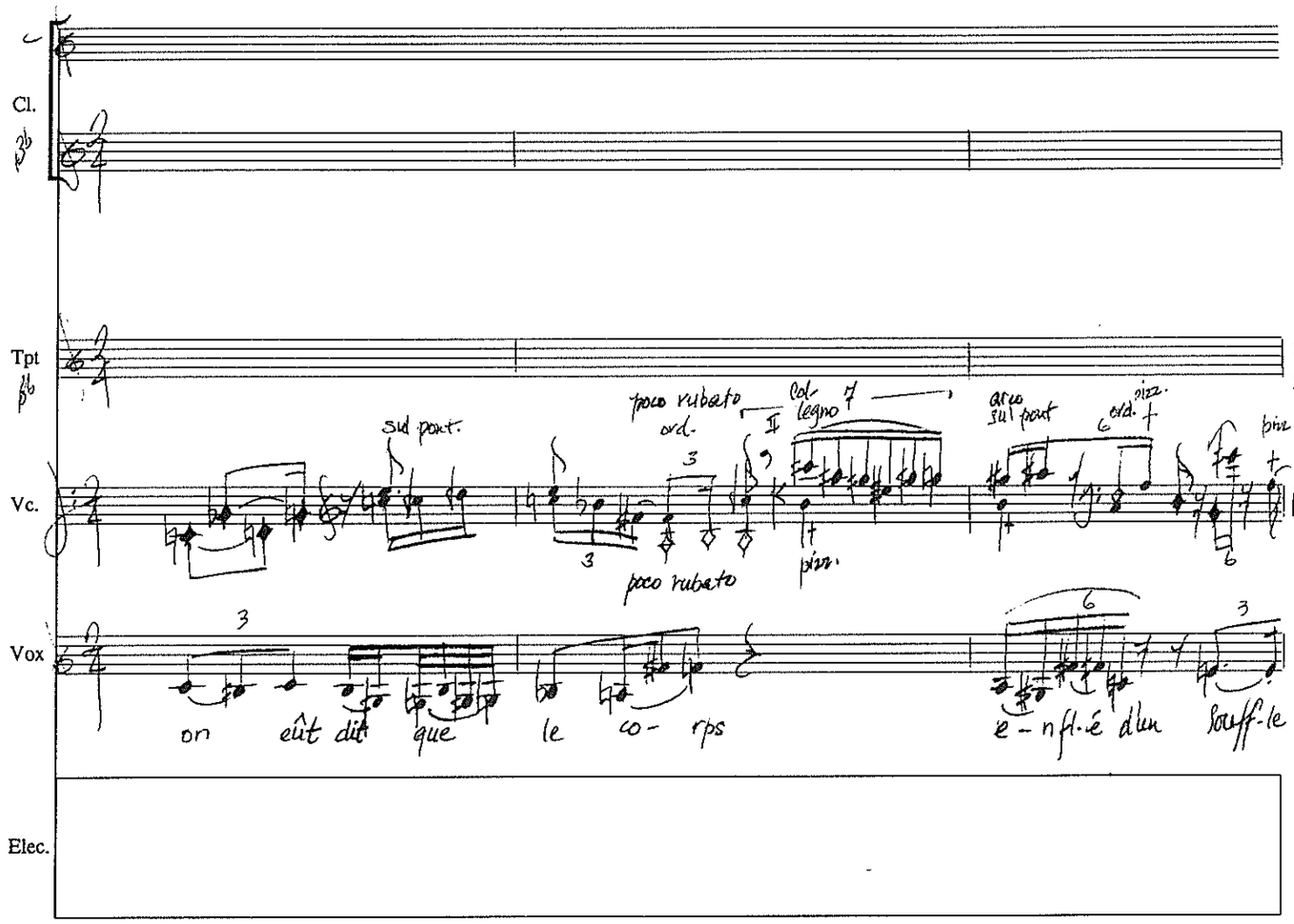
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman II-28



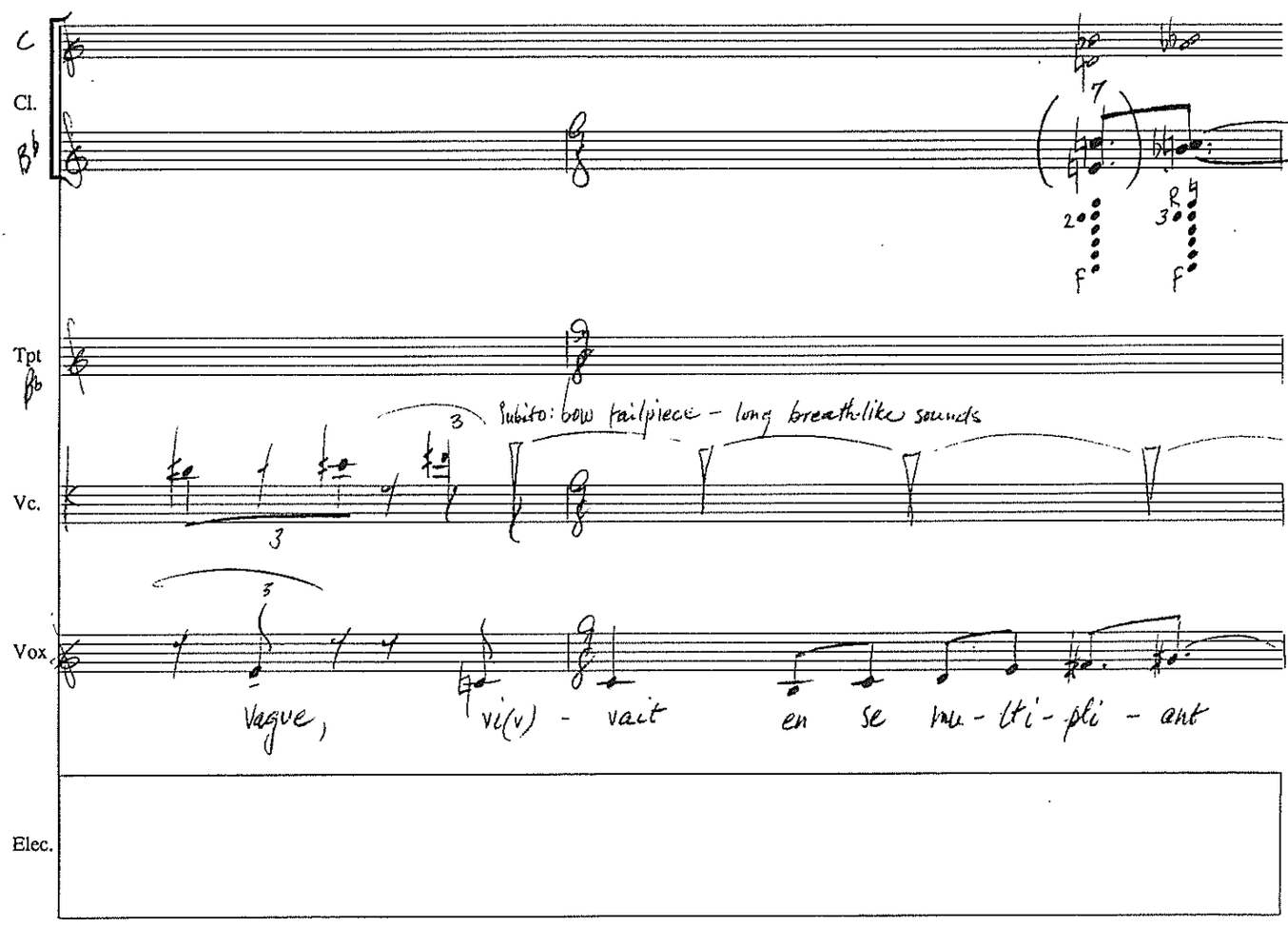


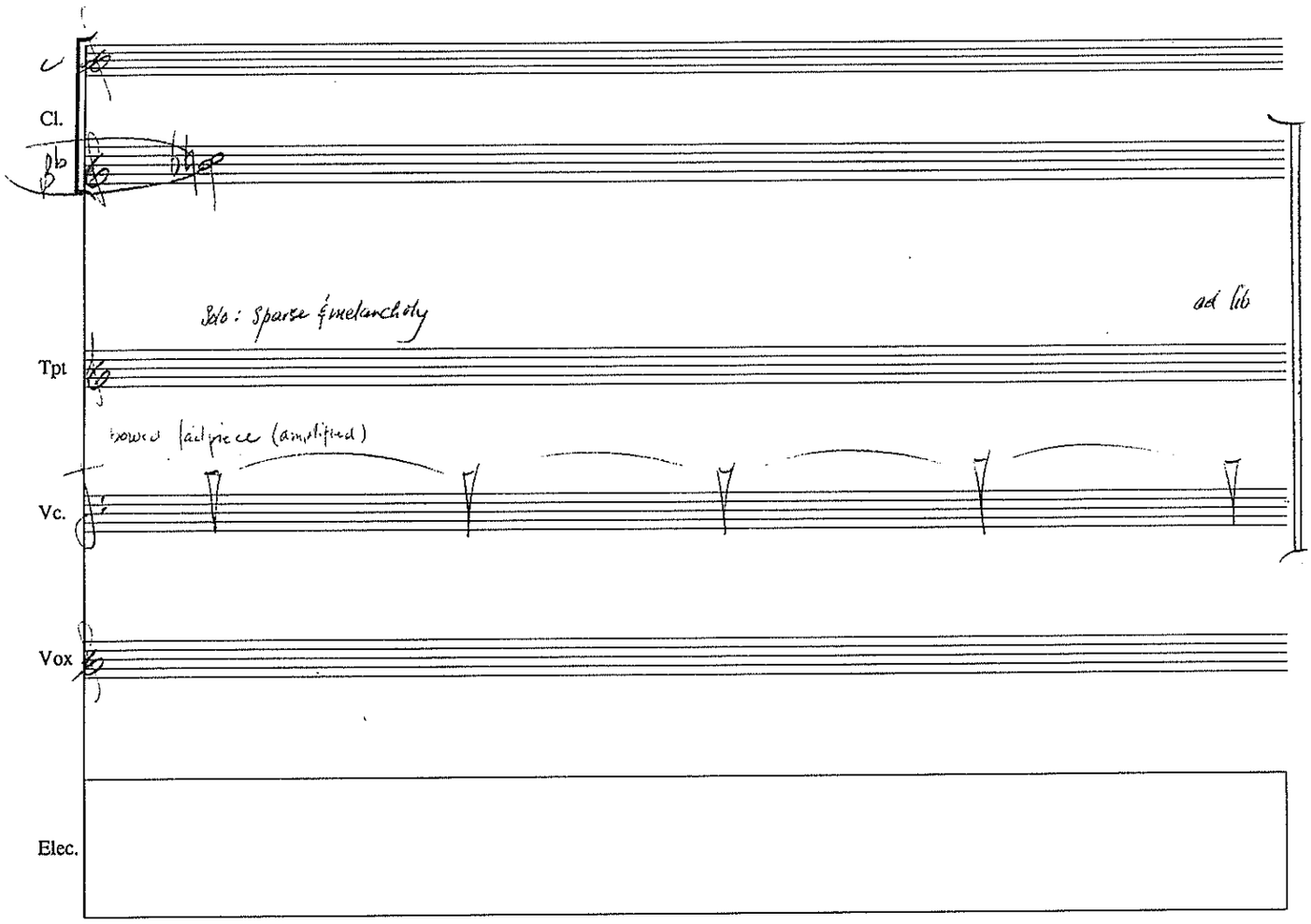
Cézannés Doubt Rothman II-29



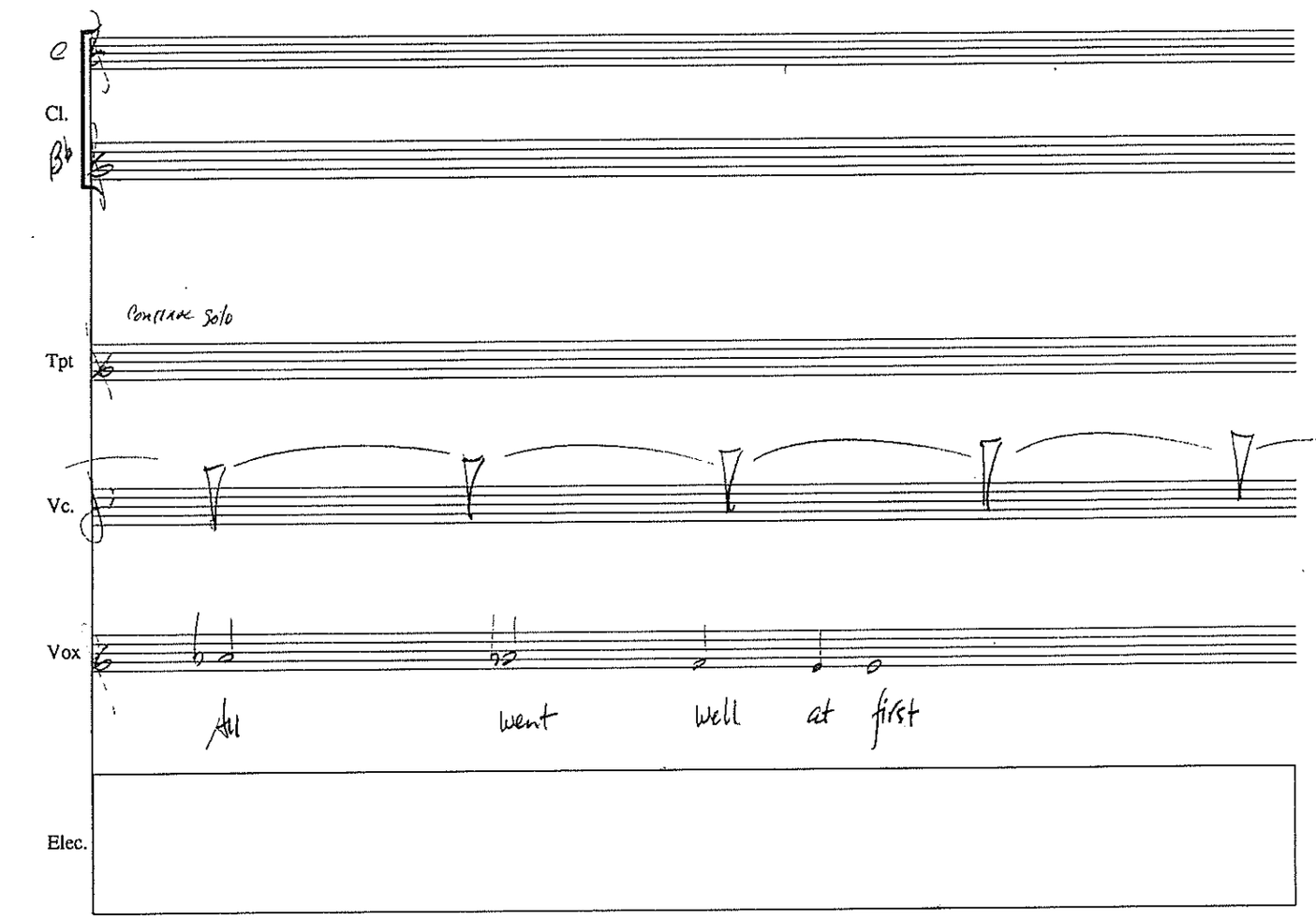


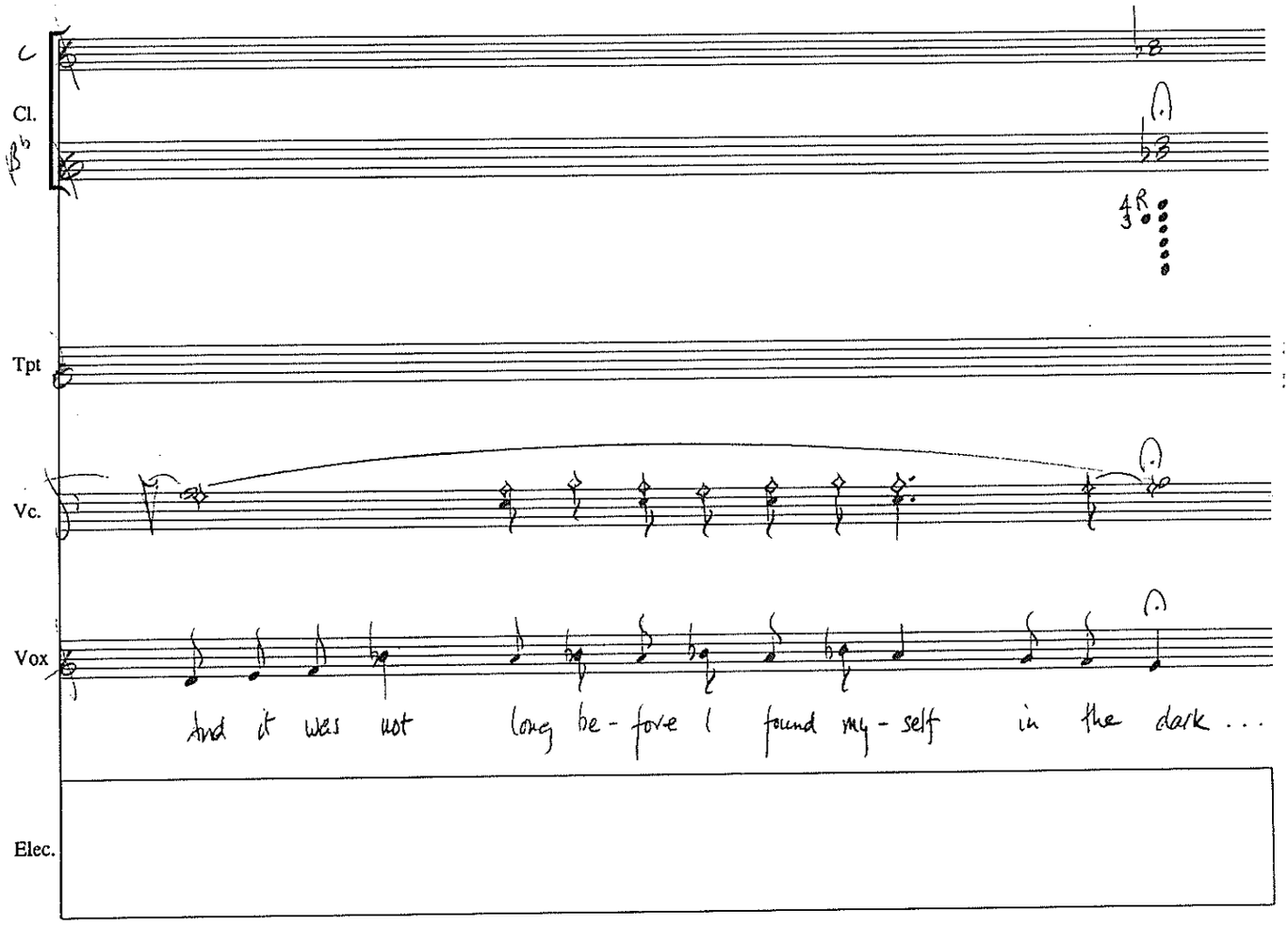
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman II-30

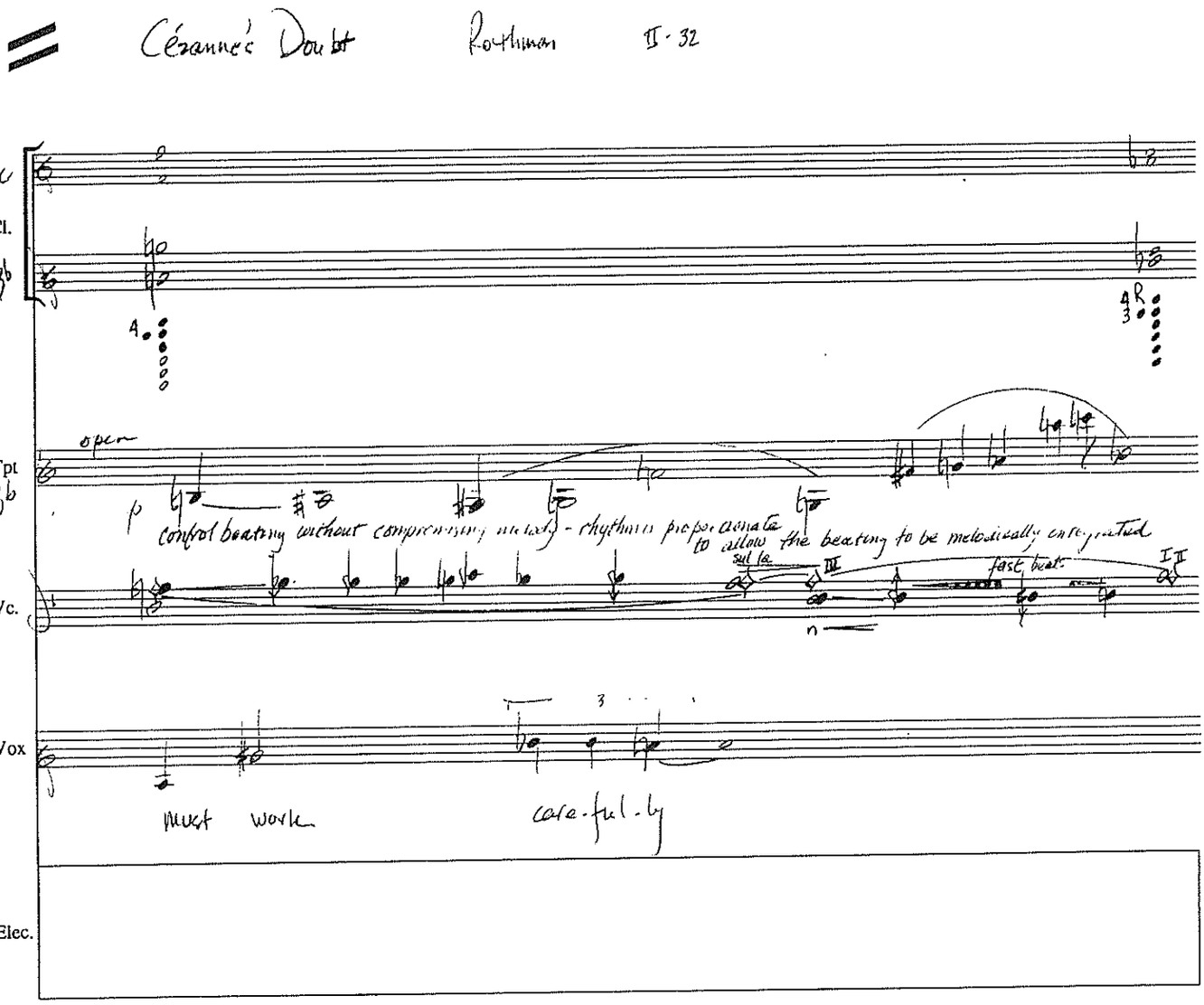


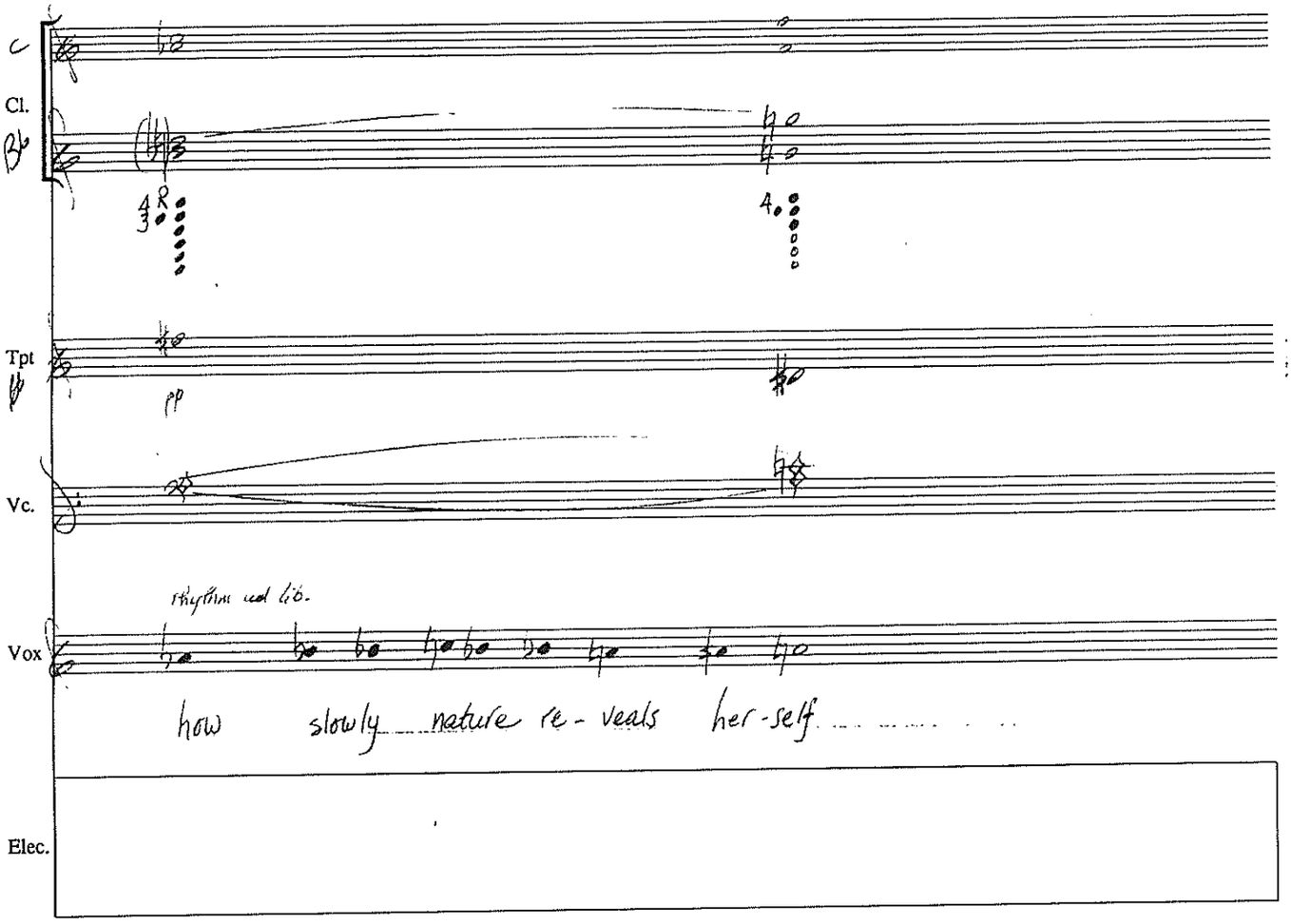


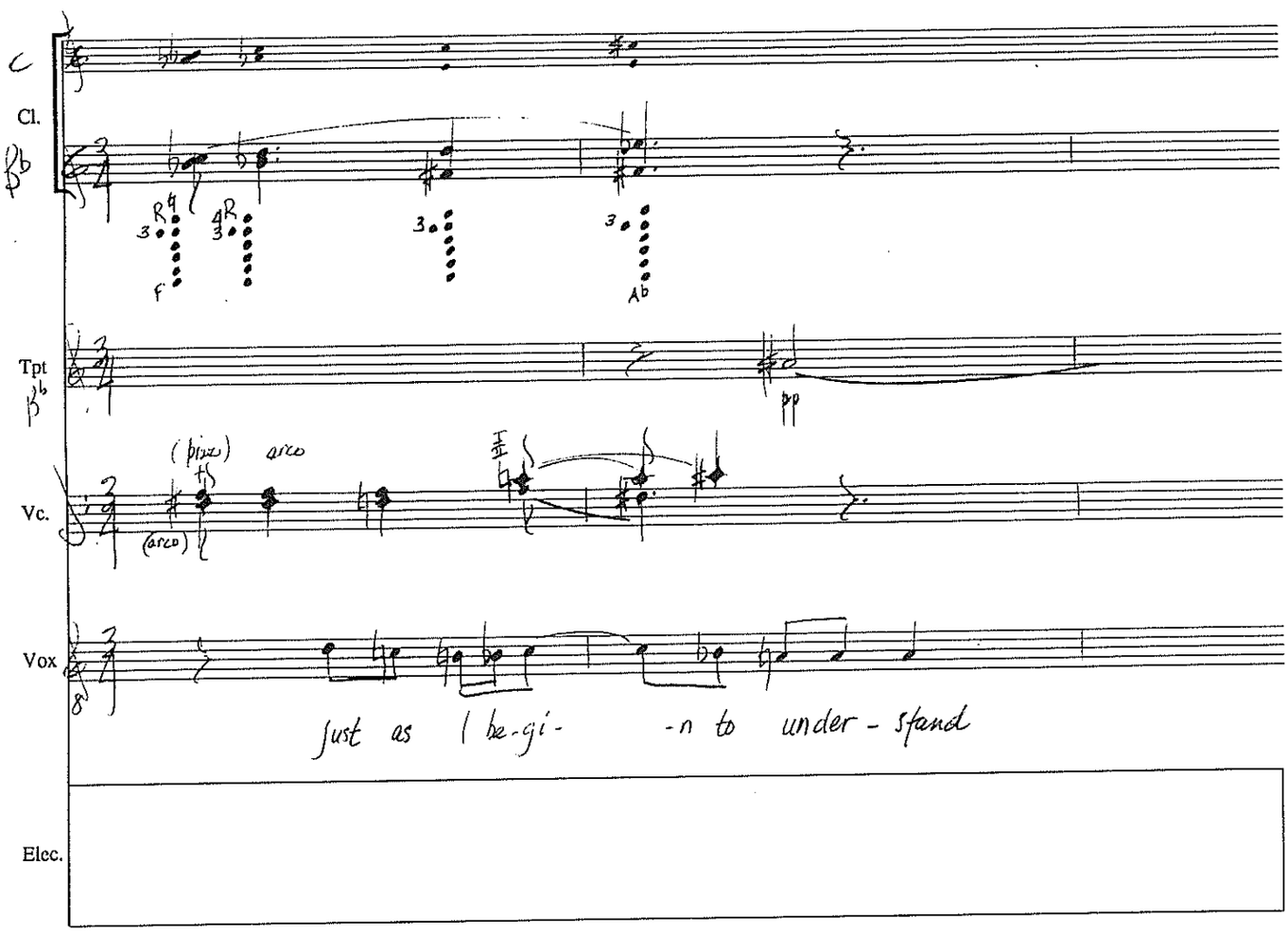
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman II-31

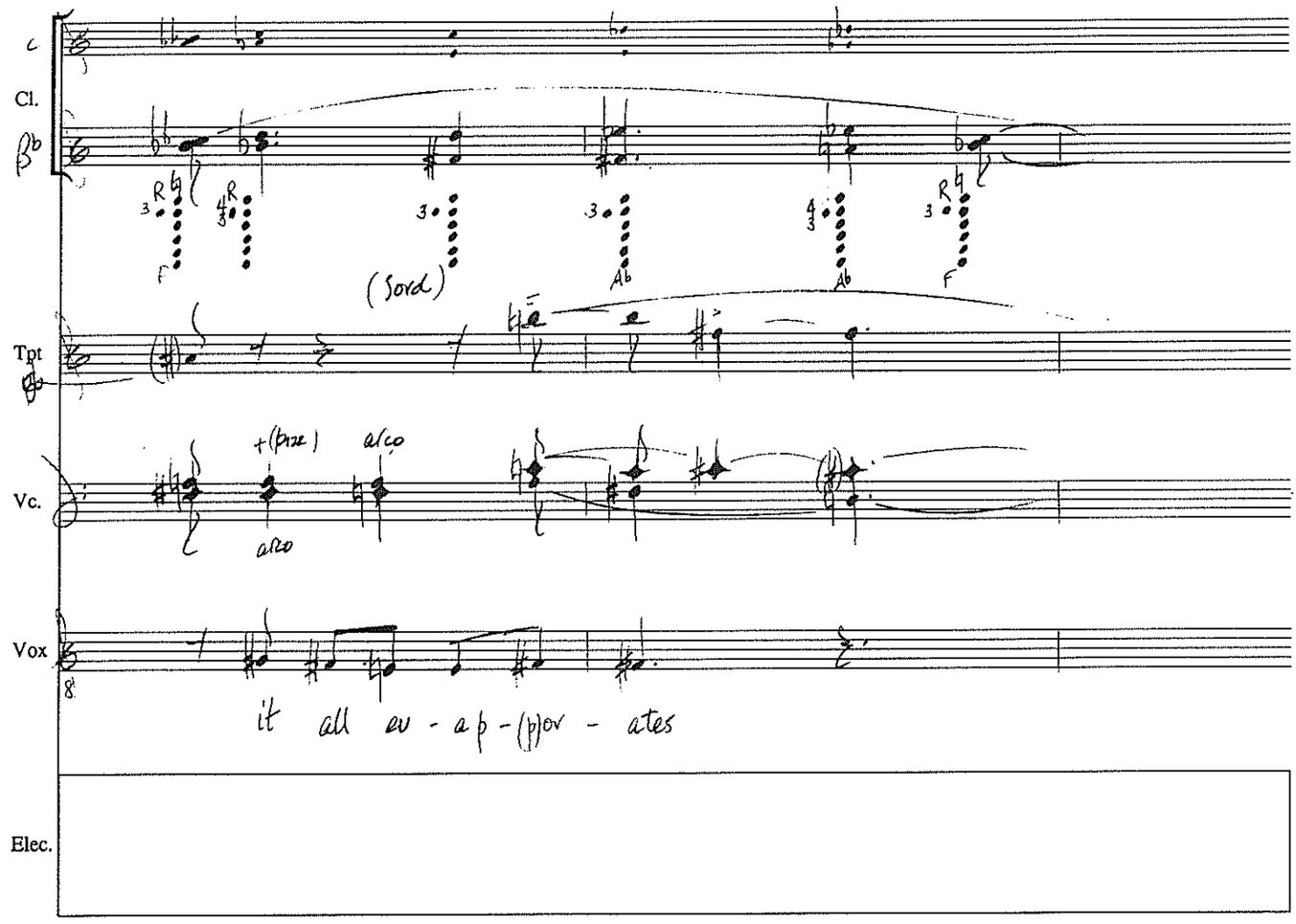


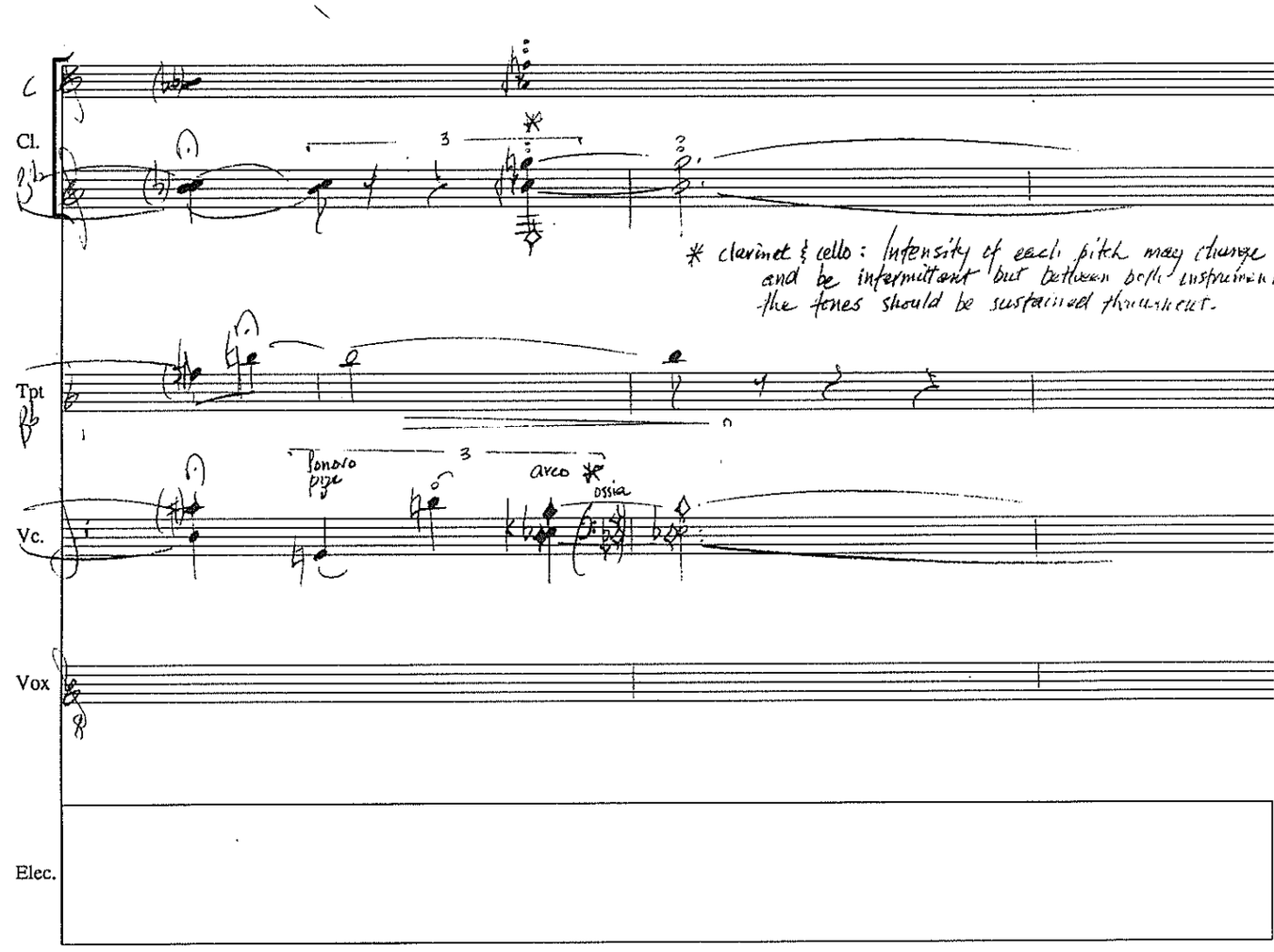

C
Cl.
B♭
Tpt
Vc.
Vox
and it was not long be-fore I found my-self in the dark . . .
Elec.

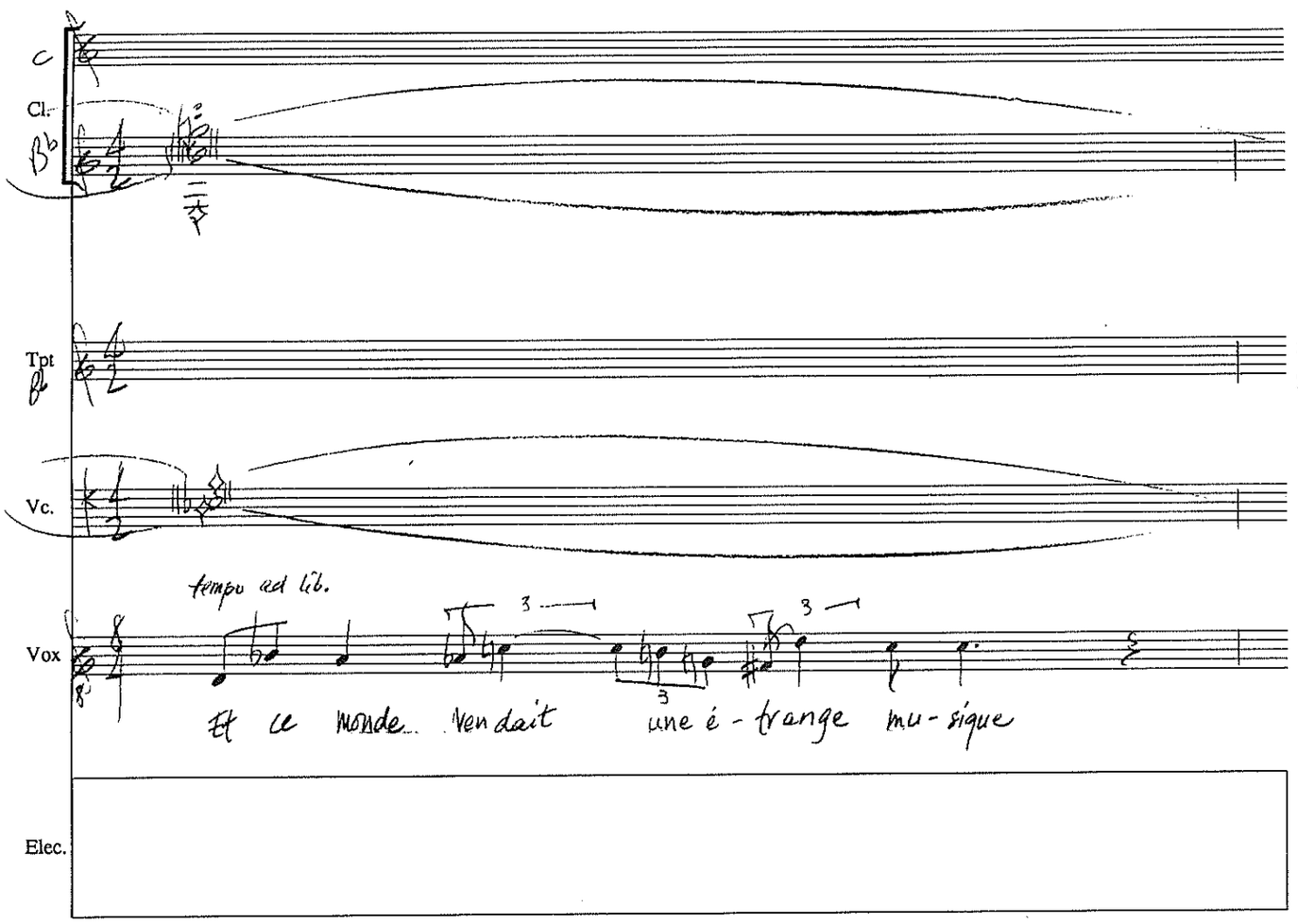

Cézanne's Doubt
Routhman
II · 32
C
Cl.
B♭
open
Tpt
control beating without compromising melody - rhythmic preparation to allow the beating to be melodically interpreted
sul ta.
fast beat
Vc.
Vox
Must work
care-ful-ly
Elec.

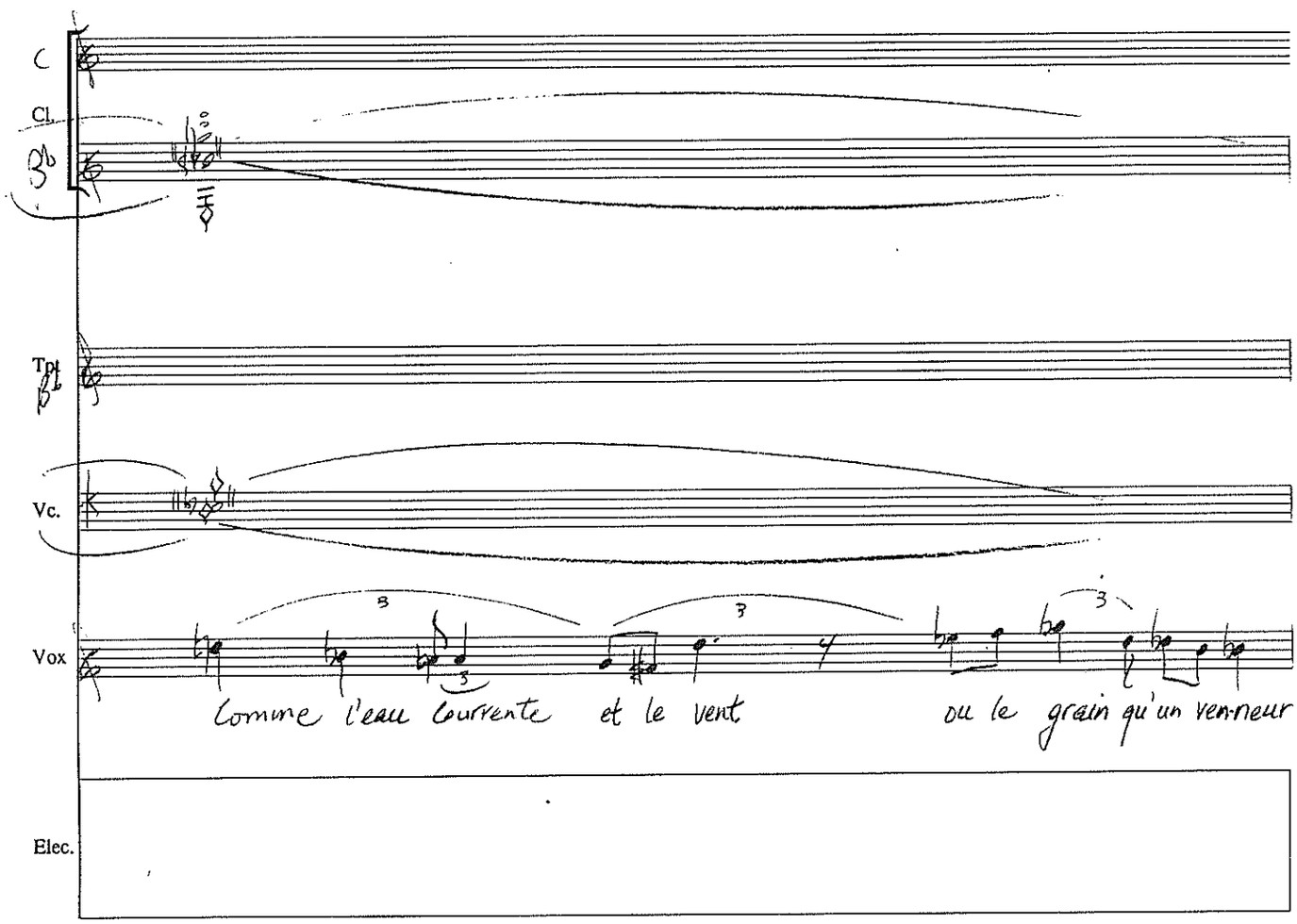

C
Cl.
B♭
Tpt
pp
Vc.
rhythm and lib.
Vox
how slowly nature re-veals her-self
Elec.

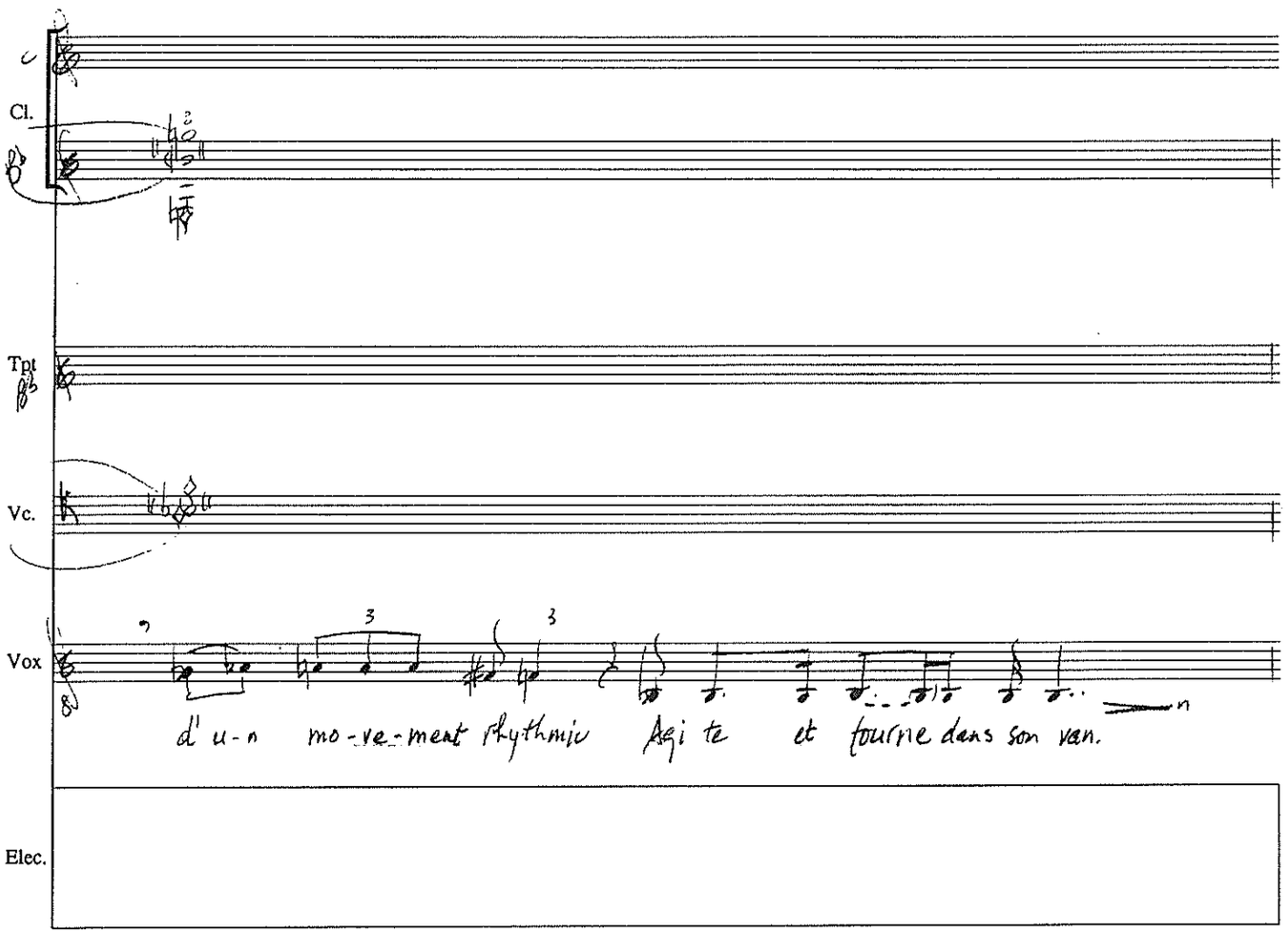

C
Cl.
B♭
F
A♭
Tpt
B♭
pp
(pizz)
arco
(arco)
Vc.
Vox
just as I be-gi- -n to under-stand
Elec.


C
Cl.
Bb
F
(sord)
Ab
Ab
F
Tpt
+(pizz)
arco
Vc.
arco
Vox
it all ev - a p - (p)or - ates
Elec.

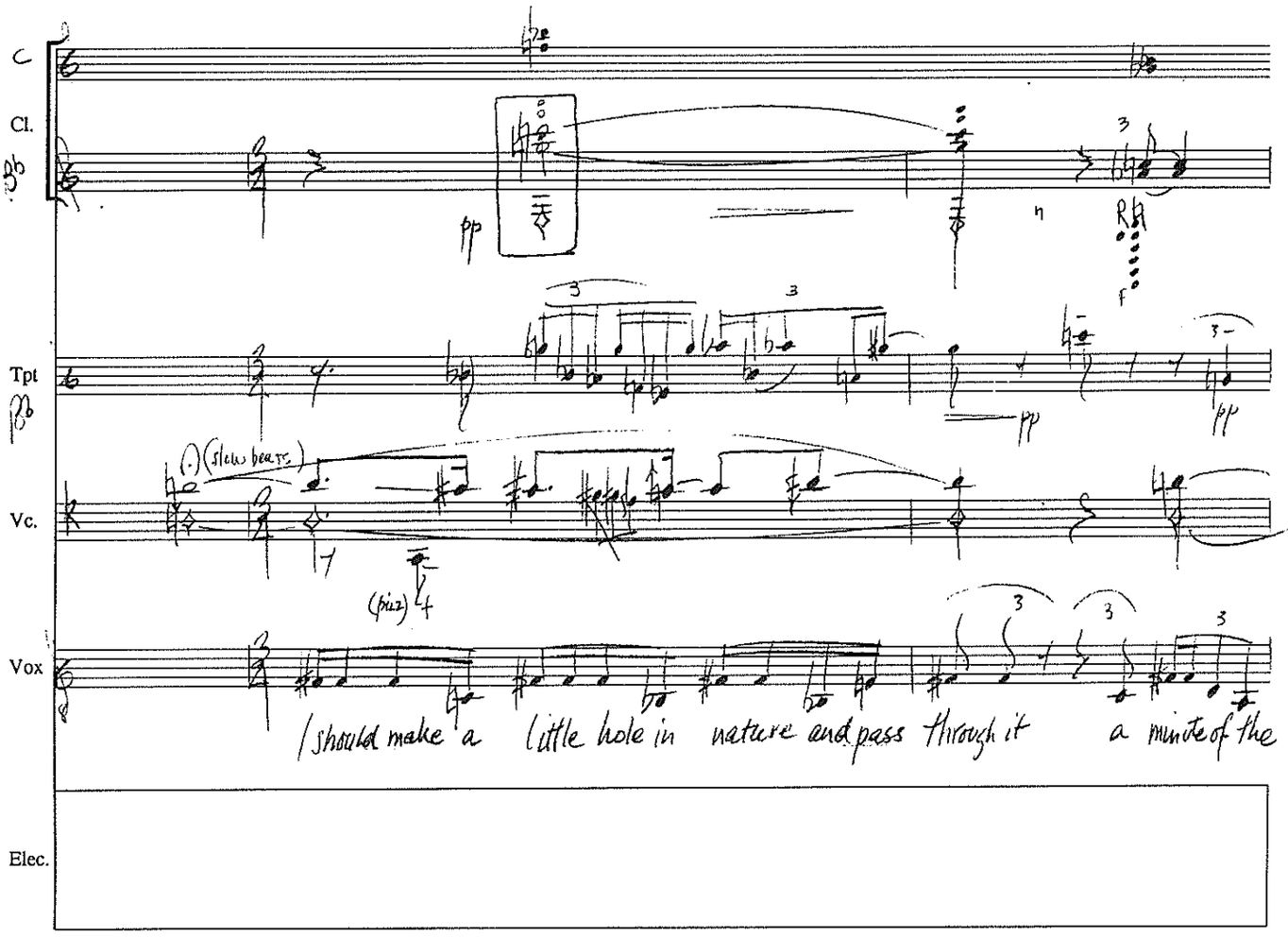

C
Cl.
Bb
* clarinet & cello: Intensity of each pitch may change and be intermittent but between both instruments the tones should be sustained throughout.
Tpt
Vc.
sonoro pizz
arco
ossia
Vox
Elec.

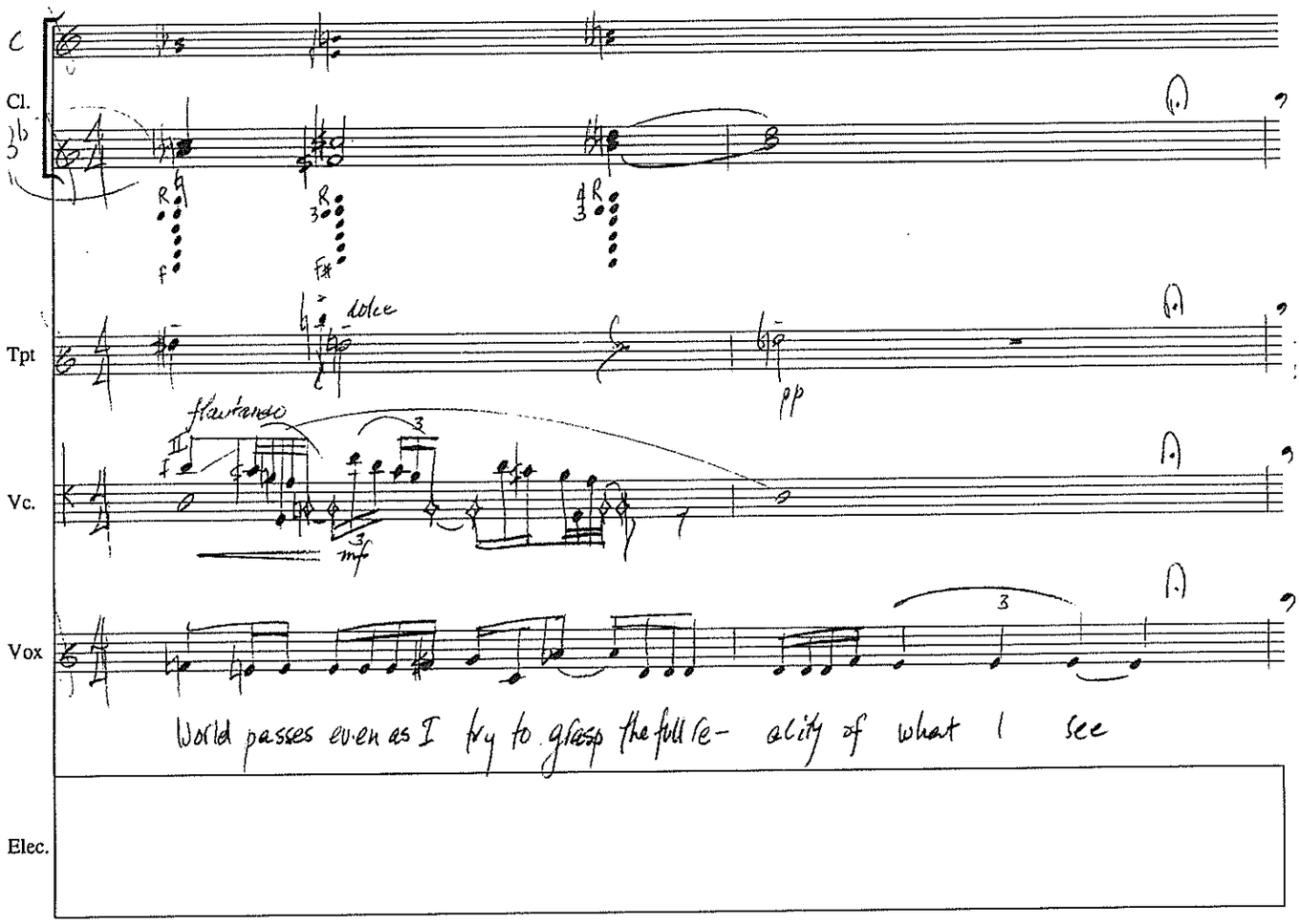

C
Cl.
B♭
Tpt
B♭
Vc.
tempo ad lib.
Vox
Et ce monde rendait une é-trange mu-sique
Elec.

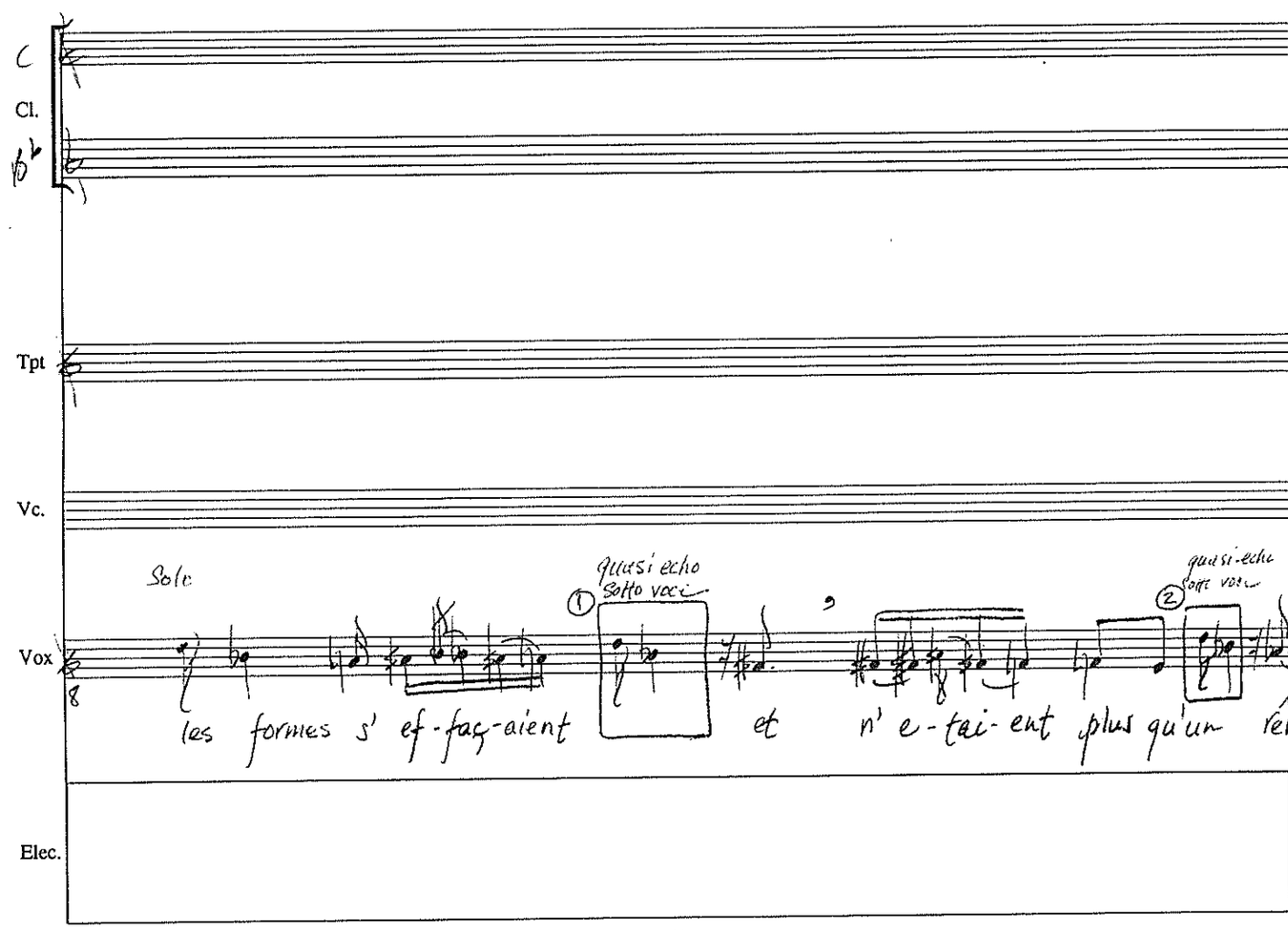

C
Cl.
B♭
Tpt
B♭
Vc.
Vox
Comme l'eau courante et le vent ou le grain qu'un vent-meur
Elec.

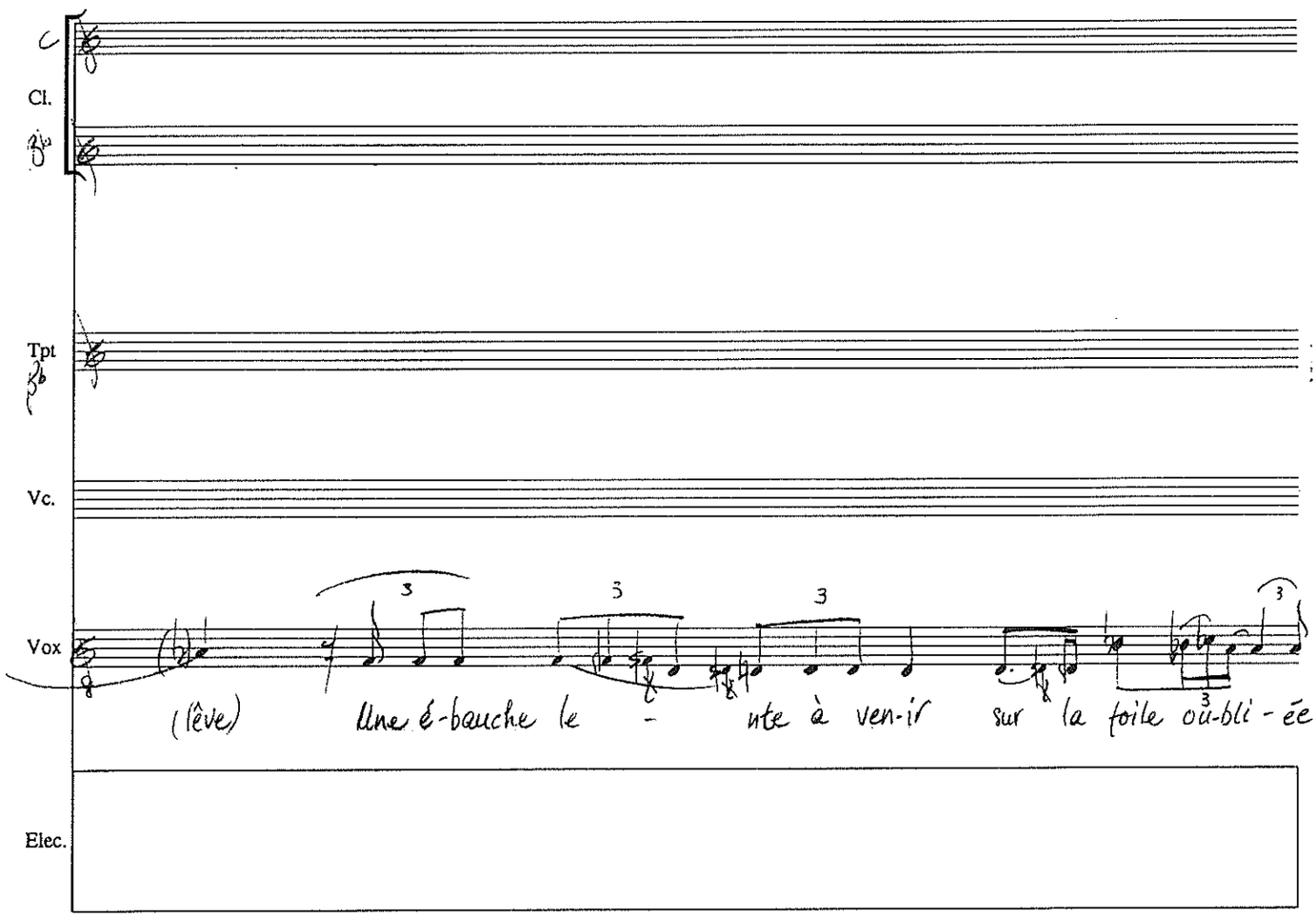


Cézanne's Doubt Rothman II · 36

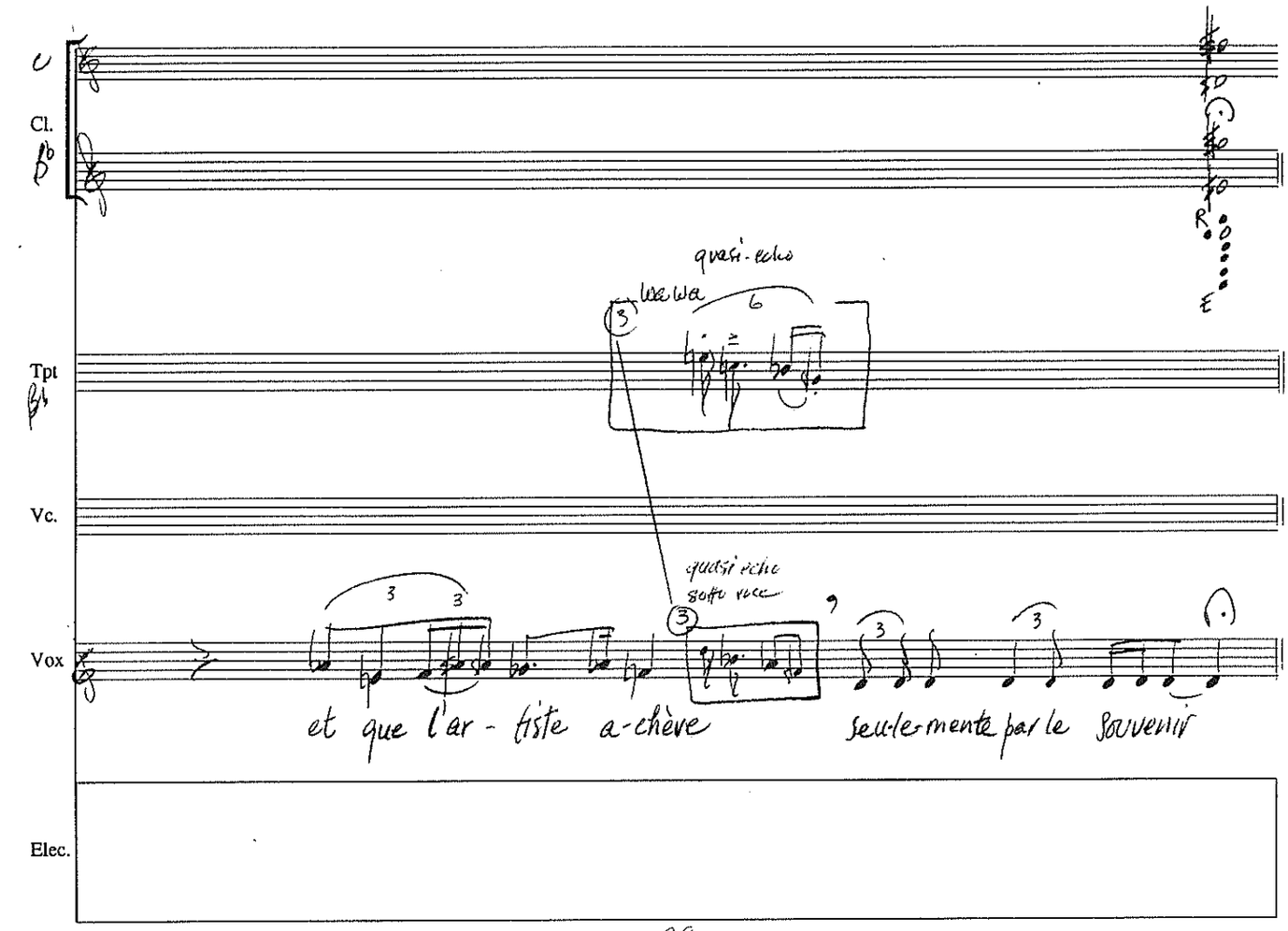


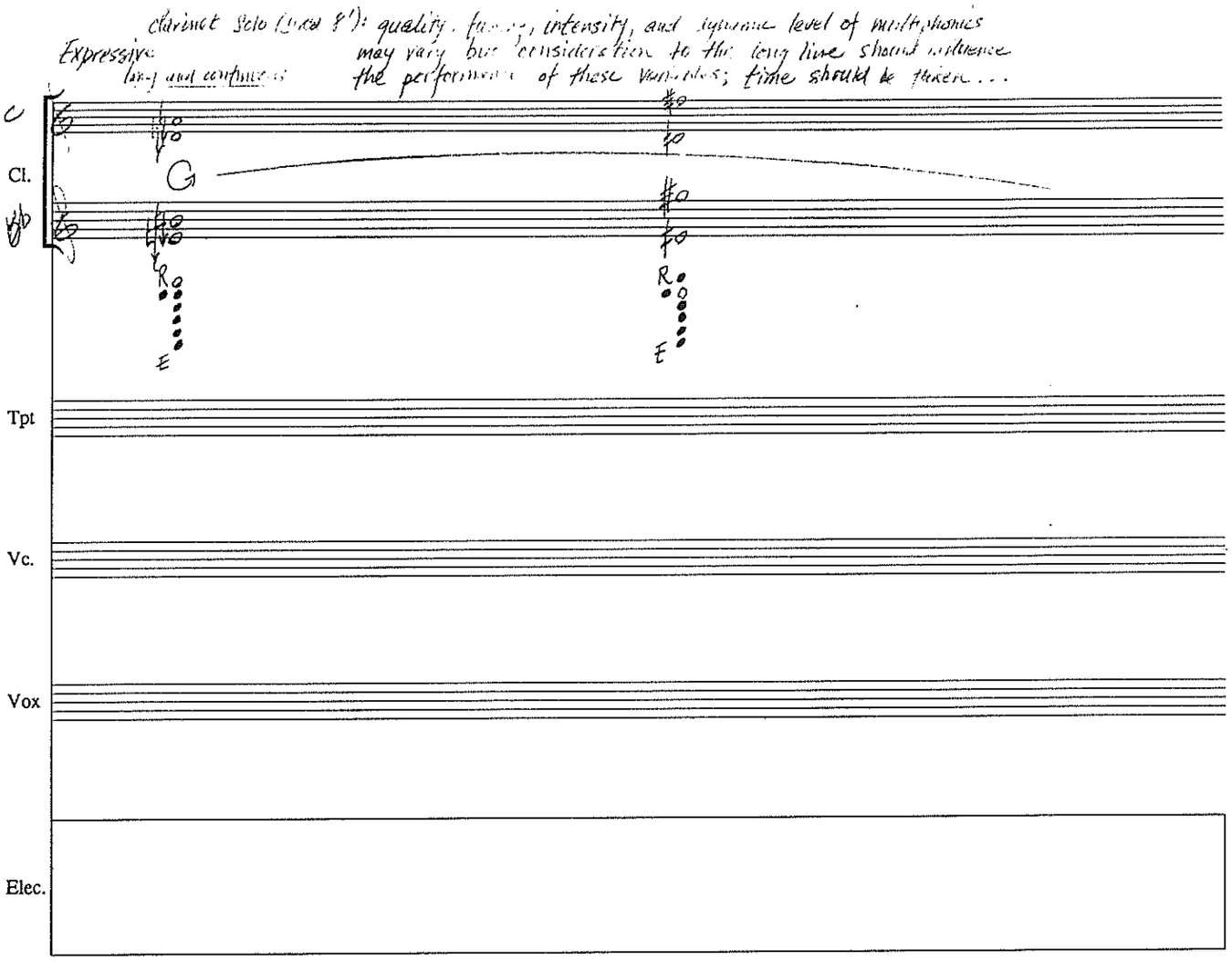

C
Cl.
Tpt
dolce
pp
flautando
Vc.
mf
Vox
World passes even as I try to grasp the full re- ality of what I see
Elec.


C
Cl.
Tpt
Vc.
Solo
quasi echo sotto voce
quasi-echo sotto voce
Vox
les formes s' ef-faç-aient et n' e-tai-ent plus qu'un rêve
Elec.



Cézanne's Doubt Rothman II-38





Clarinet Solo (Grid 8'): quality, [illegible], intensity, and dynamic level of multiphonics may vary but consideration to the long line should influence the performance of these variables; time should be taken...

Expressive
long and continuous

C
Cl.
Bb

G

R
E

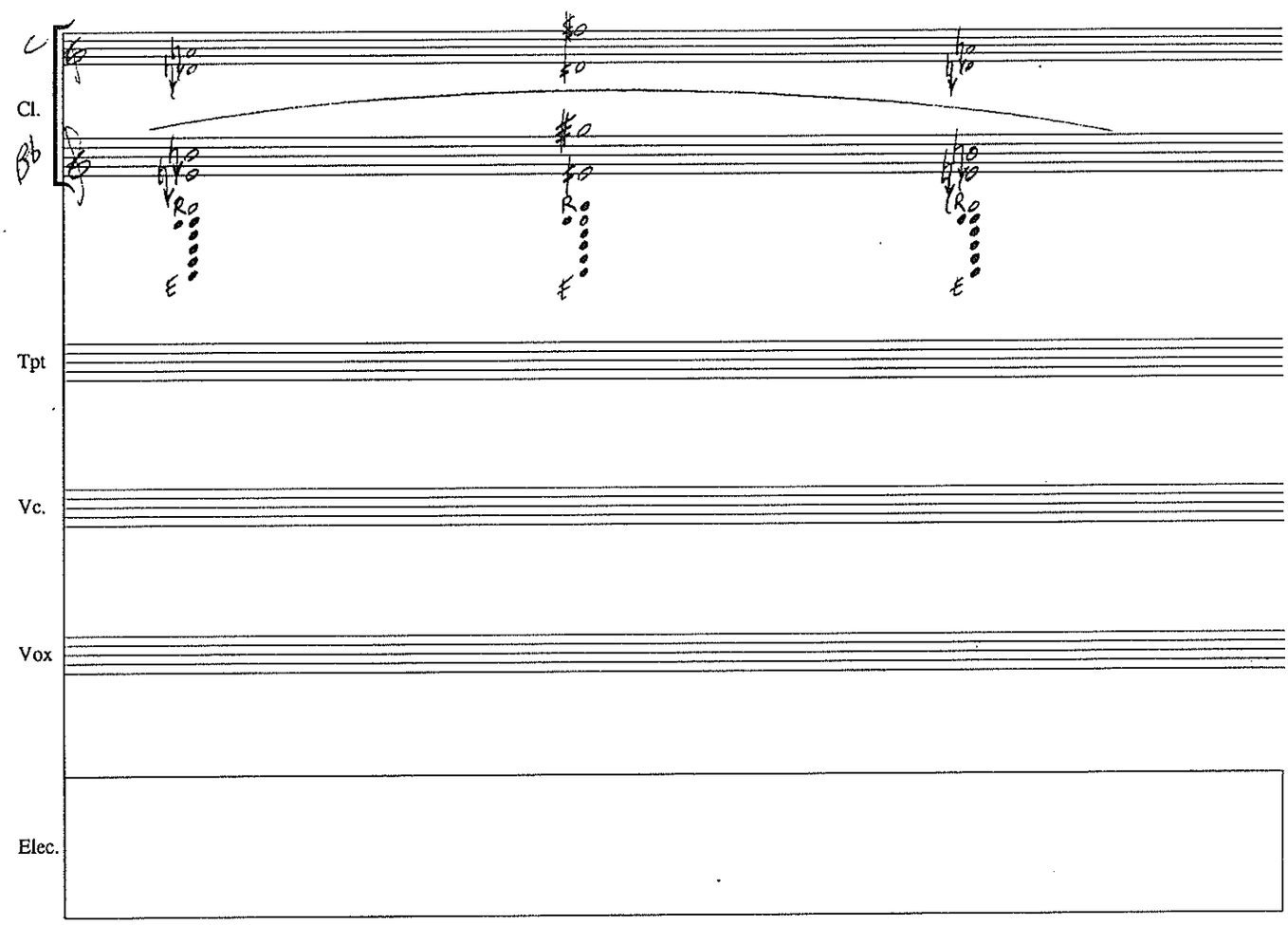
Tpt

Vc.

Vox

Elec.

Cézannés Doubt Rothman III - 39



C
Cl.
Bb

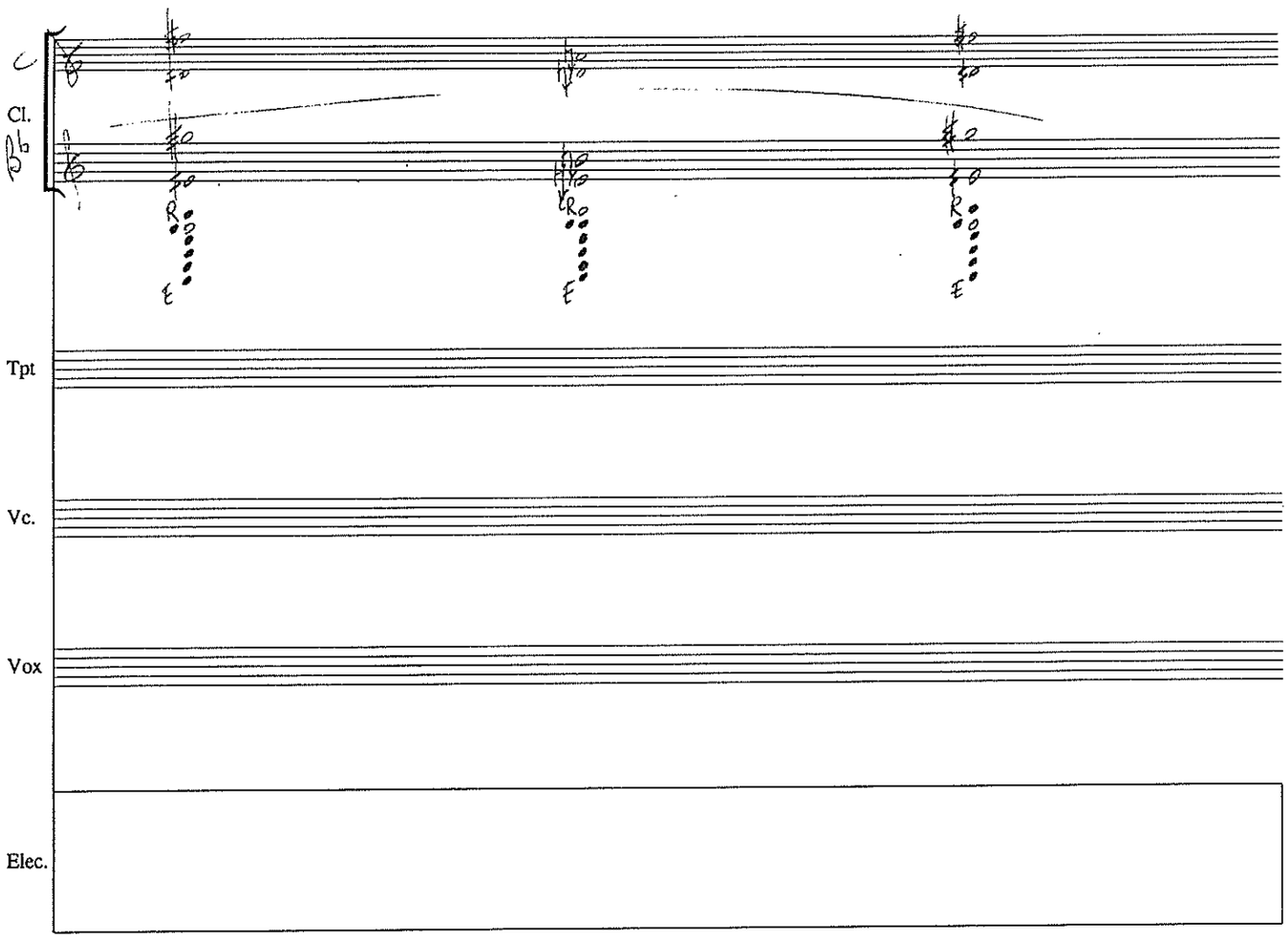
R
E

Tpt

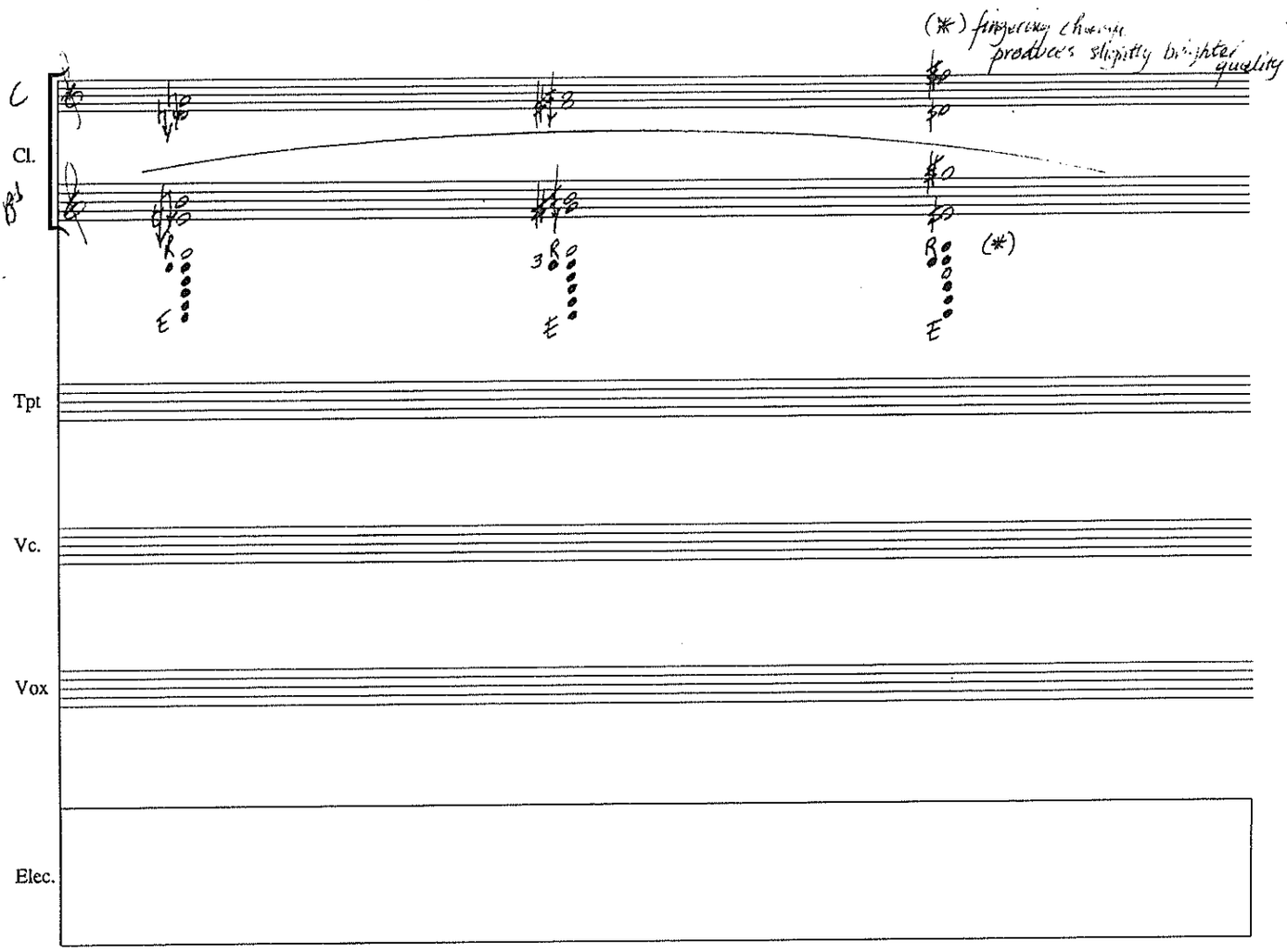
Vc.

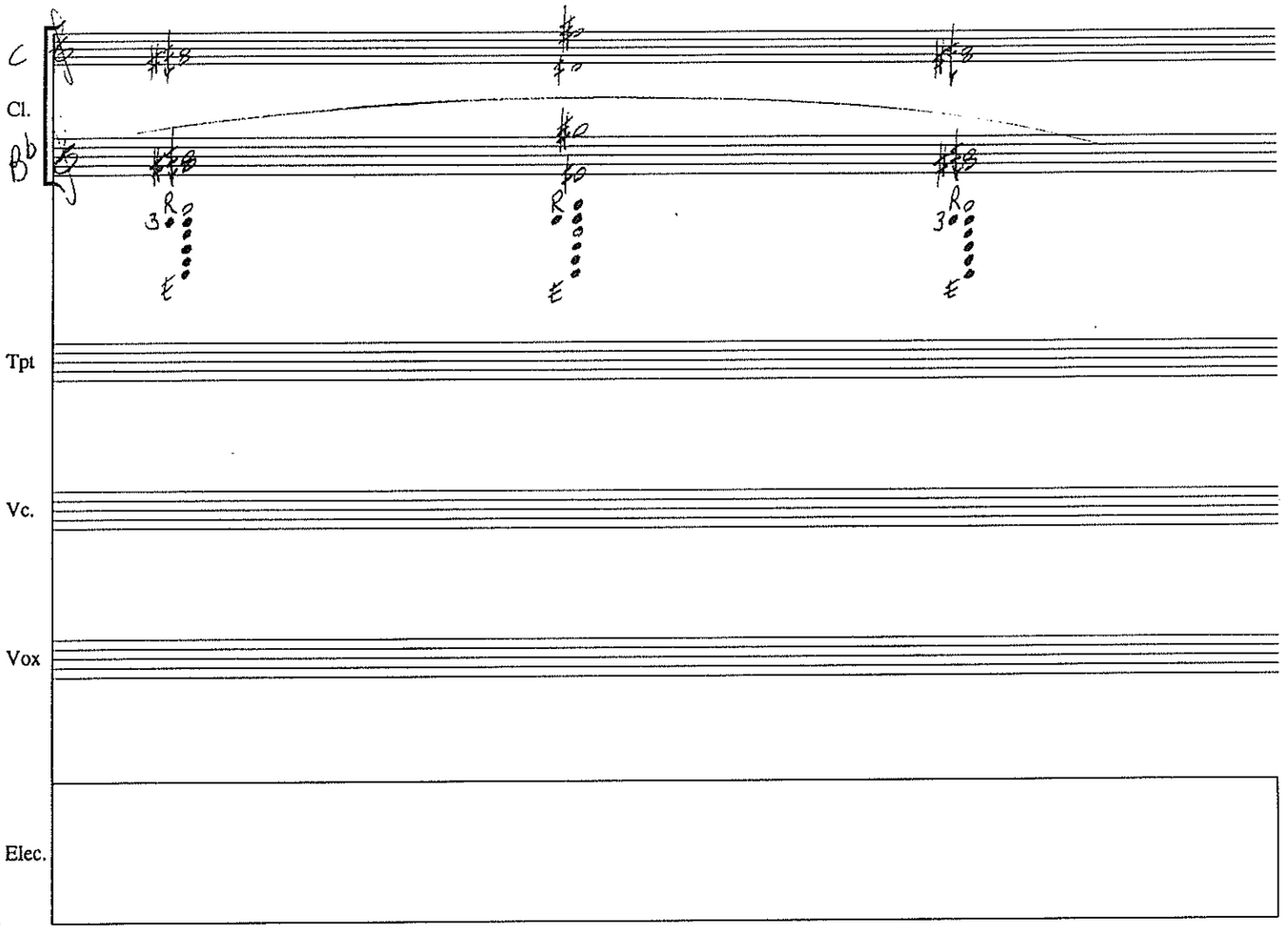
Vox

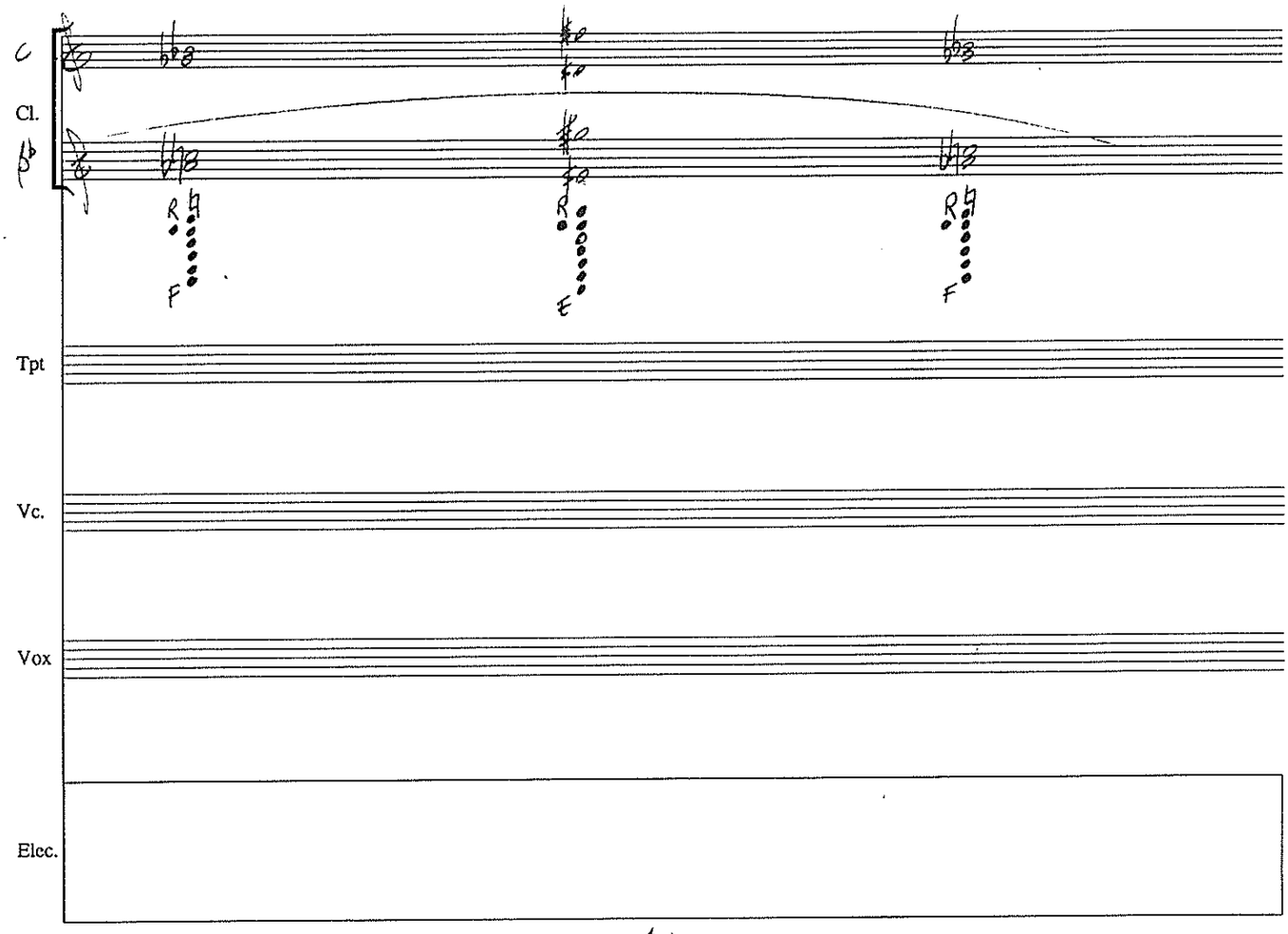
Elec.

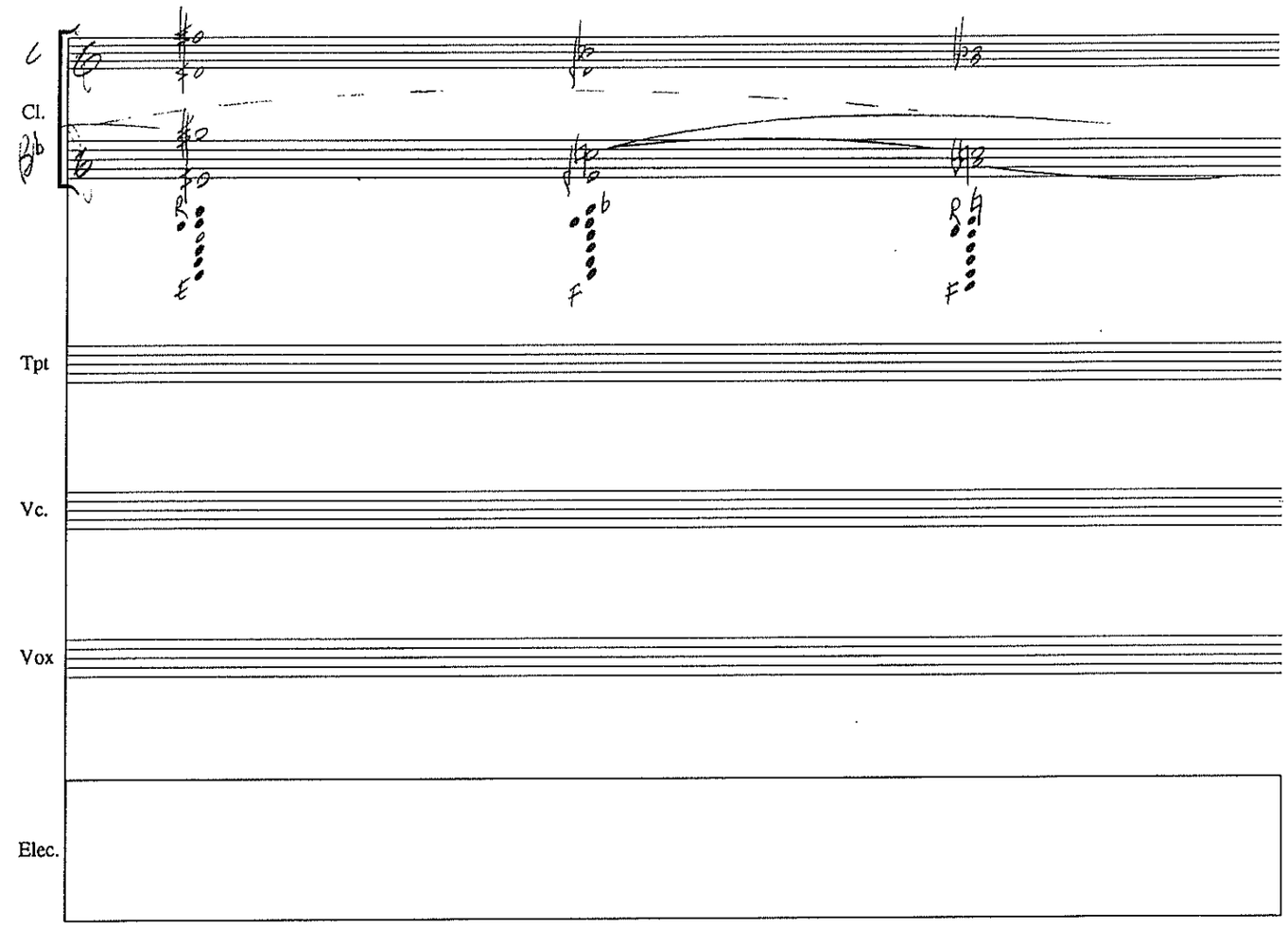


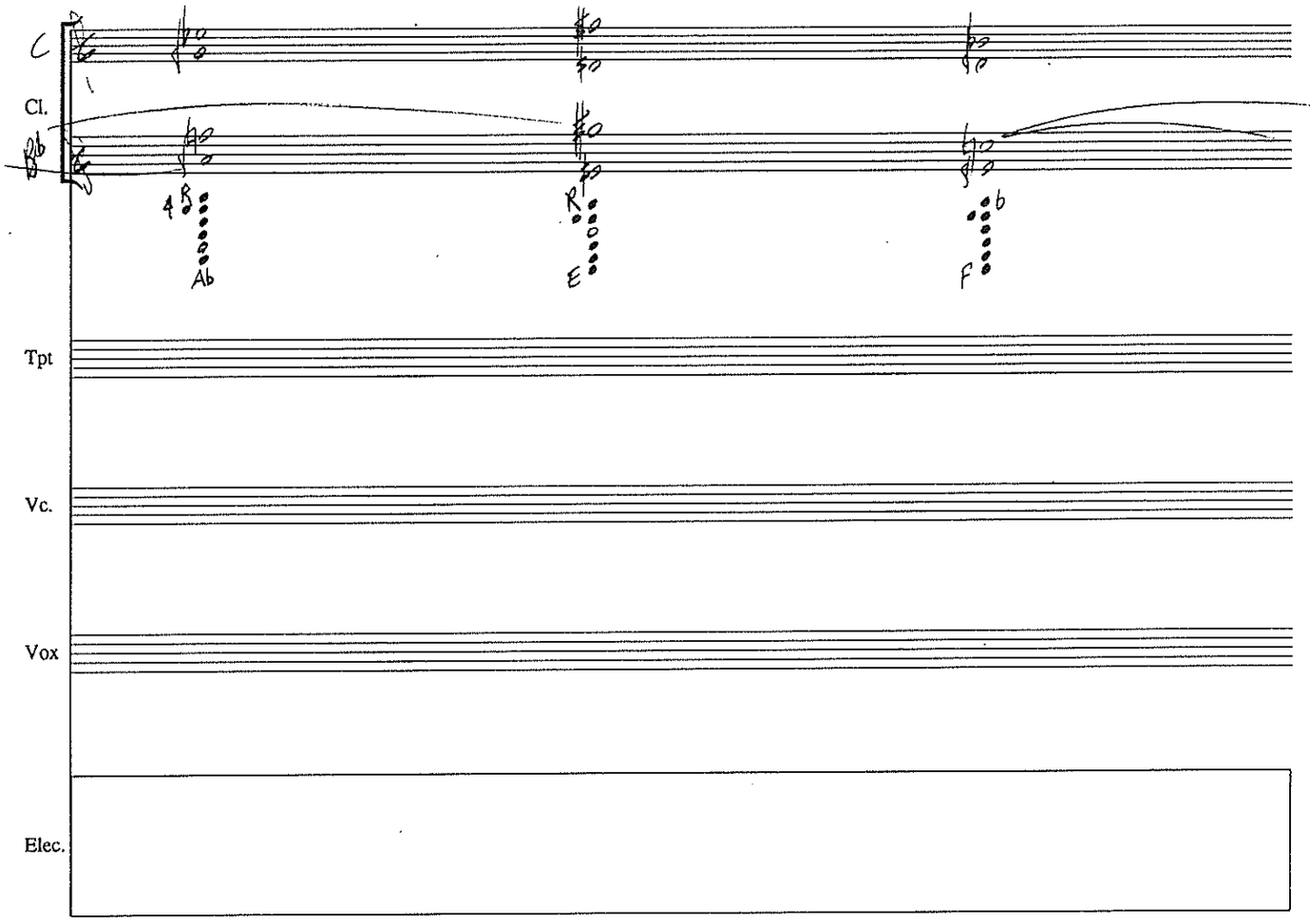
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III - 40

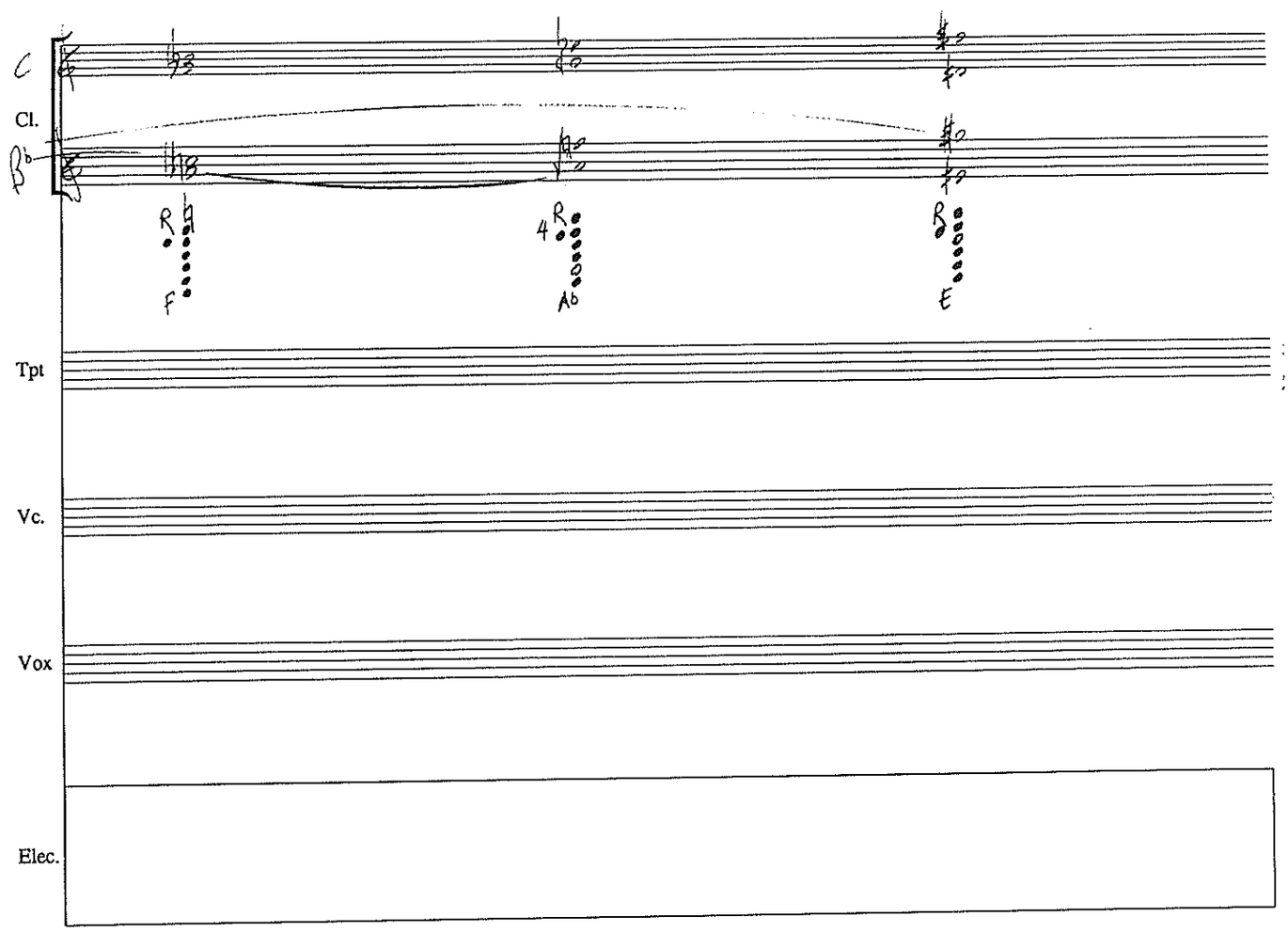



C
Cl.
B♭
Tpt
Vc.
Vox
Elec.

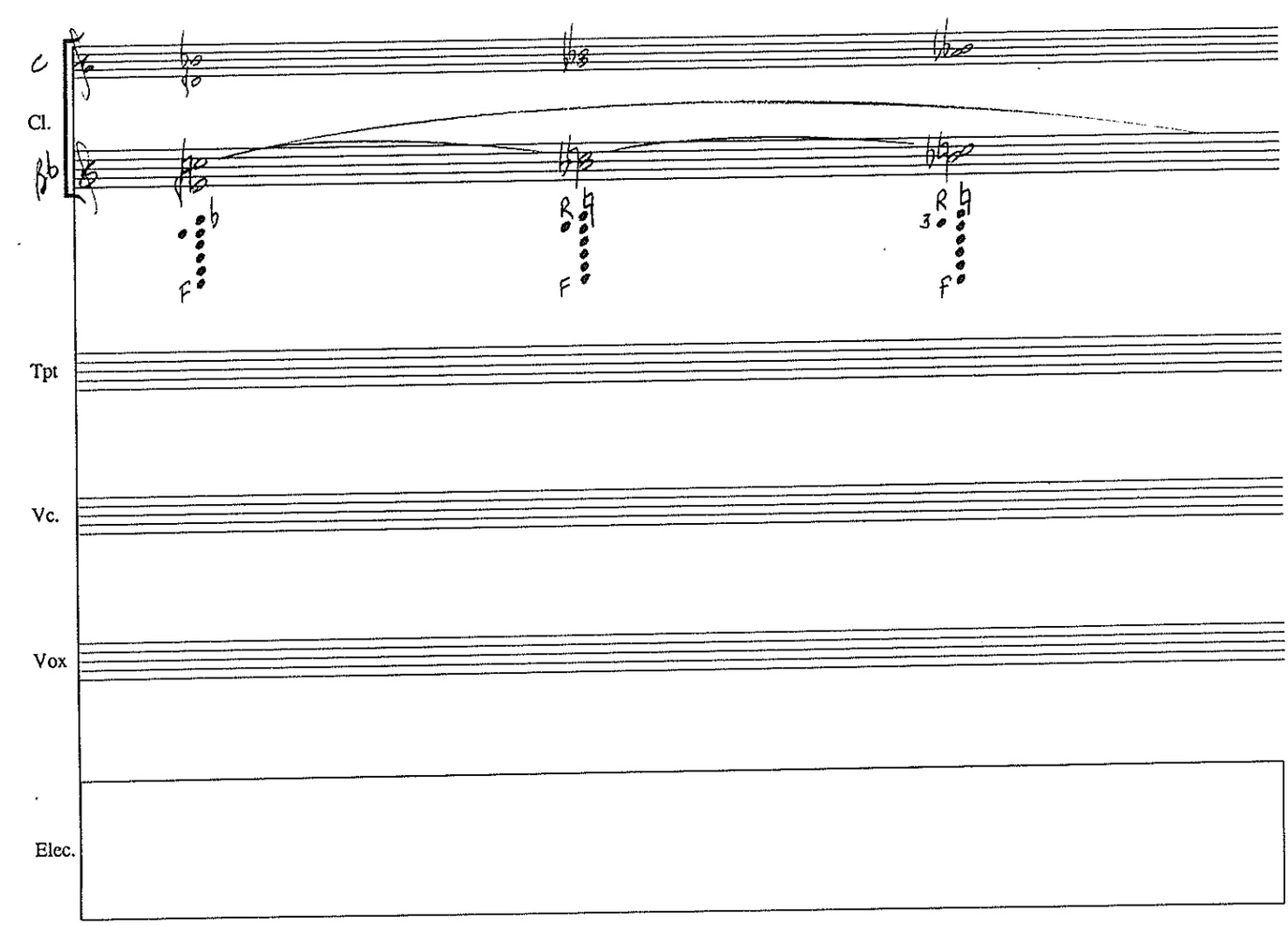

C
Cl.
B♭
Tpt
Vc.
Vox
Elec.

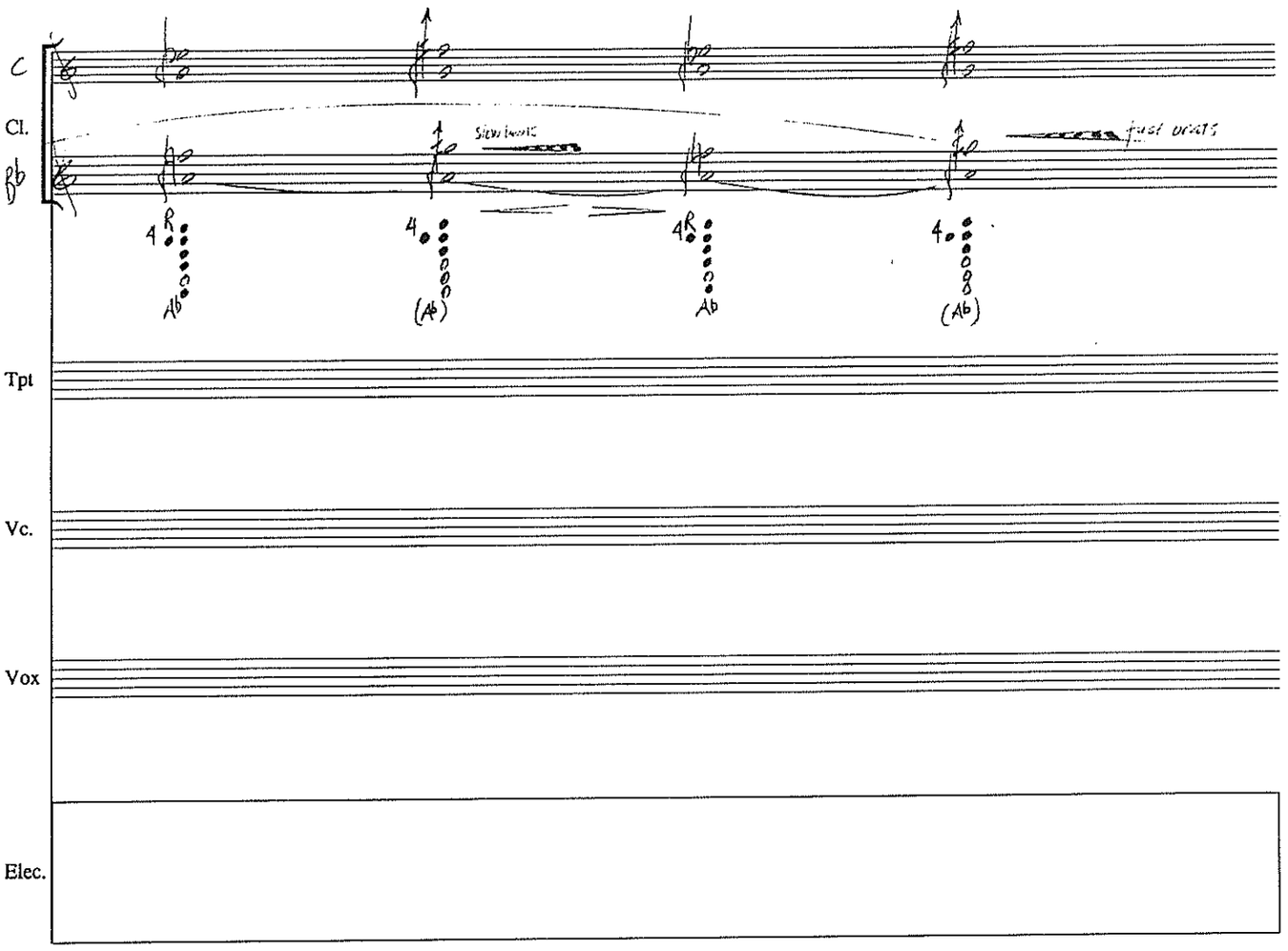

C
Cl.
Bb
Tpt
Vc.
Vox
Elec.


C
Cl.
Bb
Tpt
Vc.
Vox
Elec.

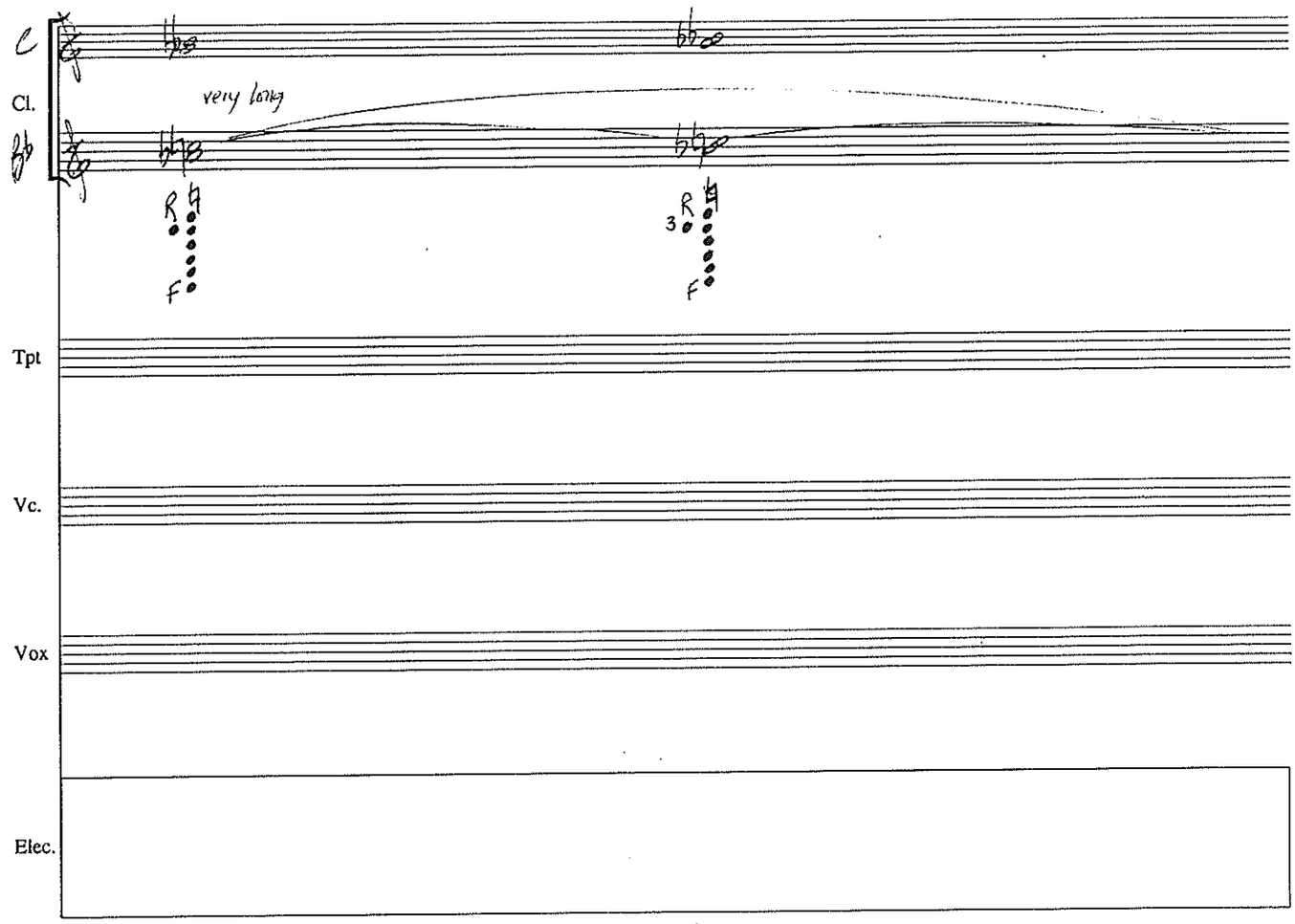


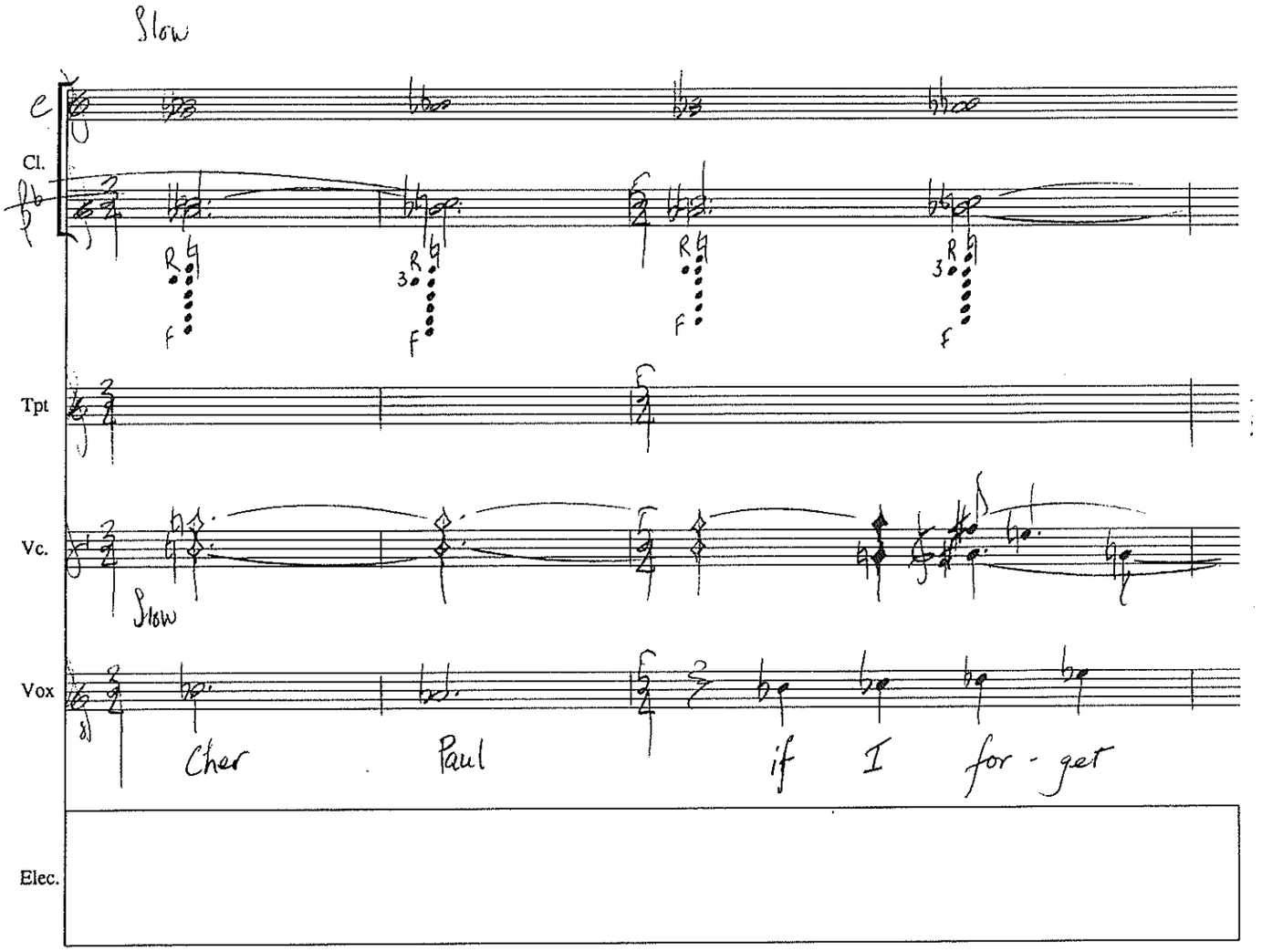
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III - 43

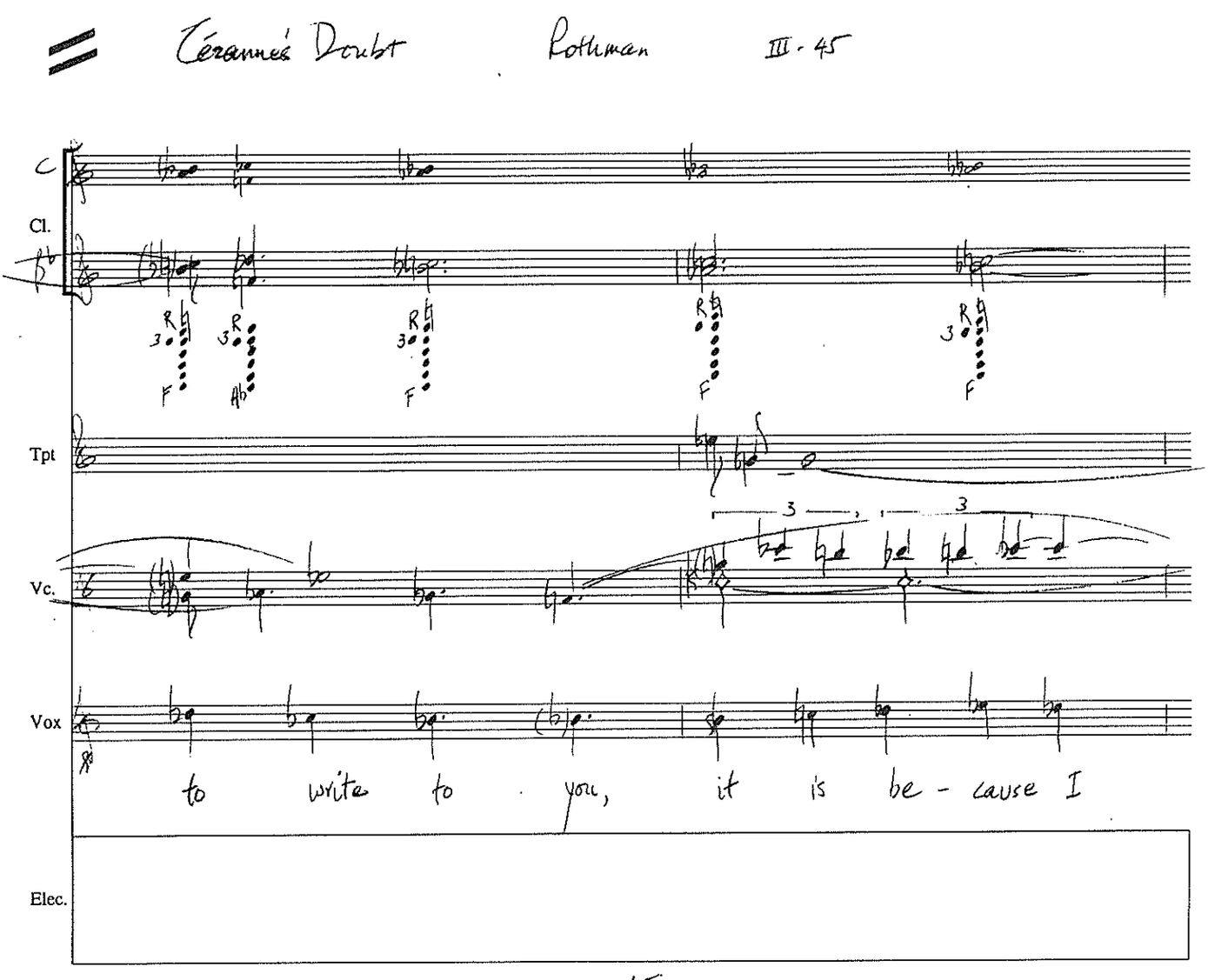


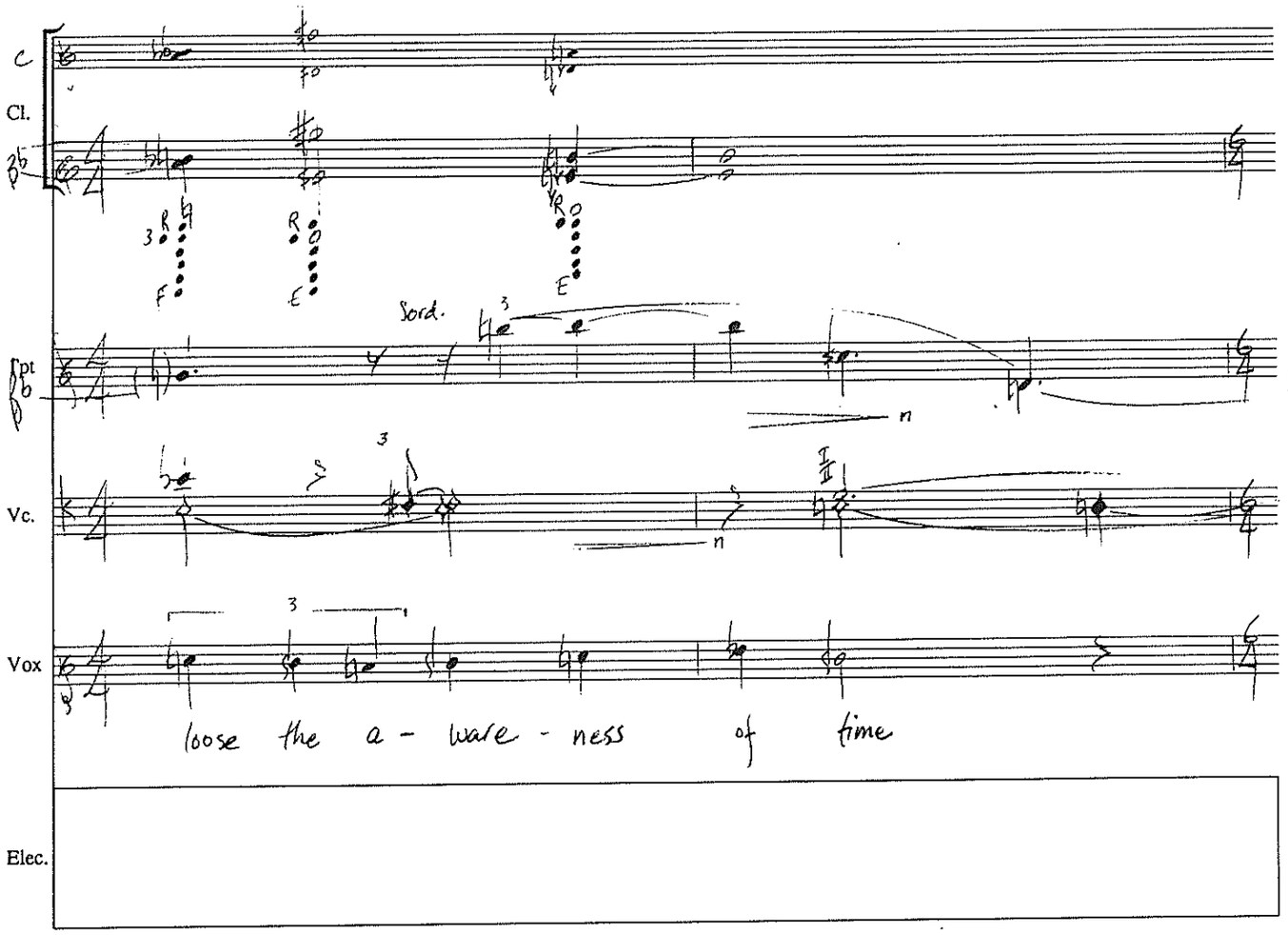


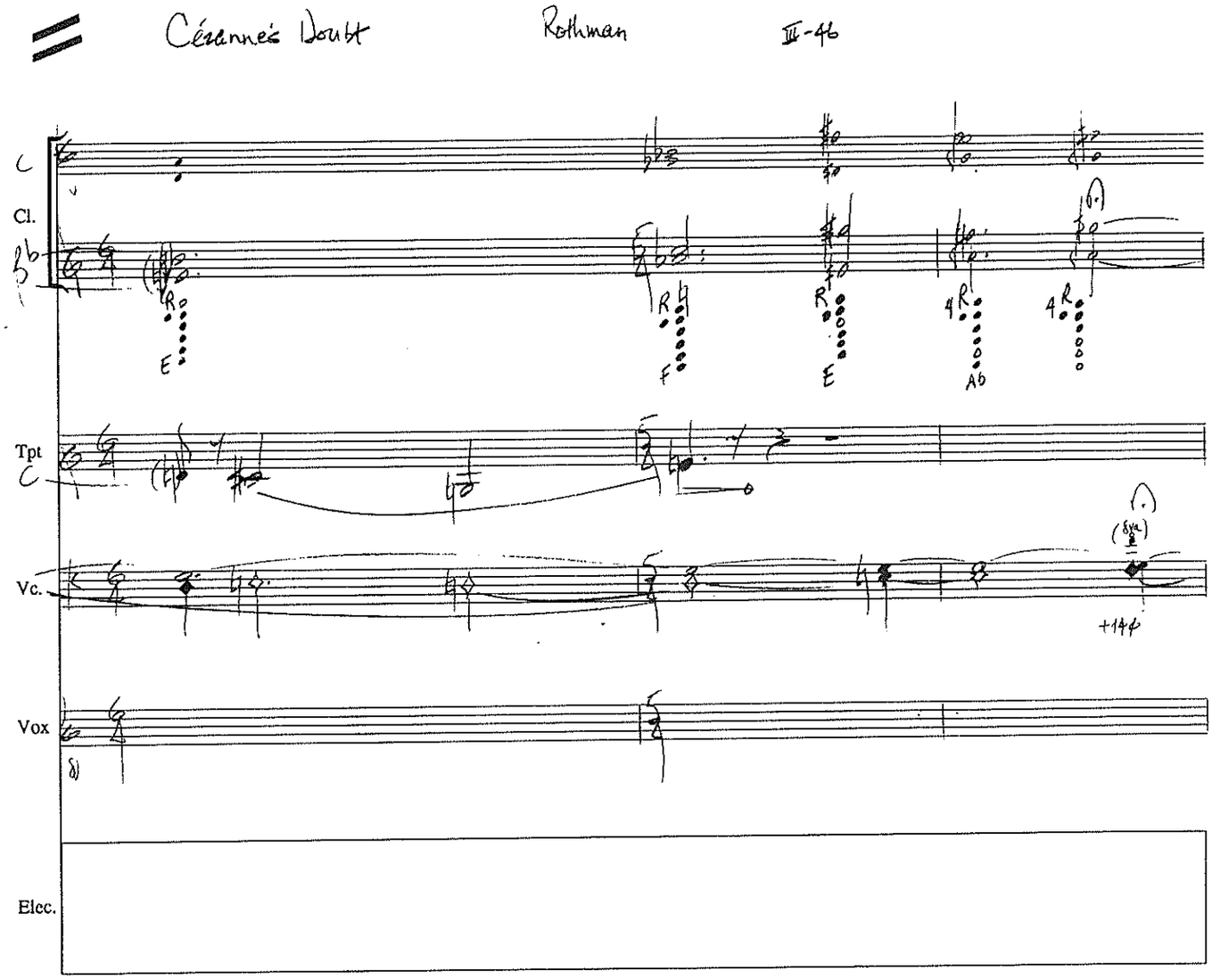
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman II-44

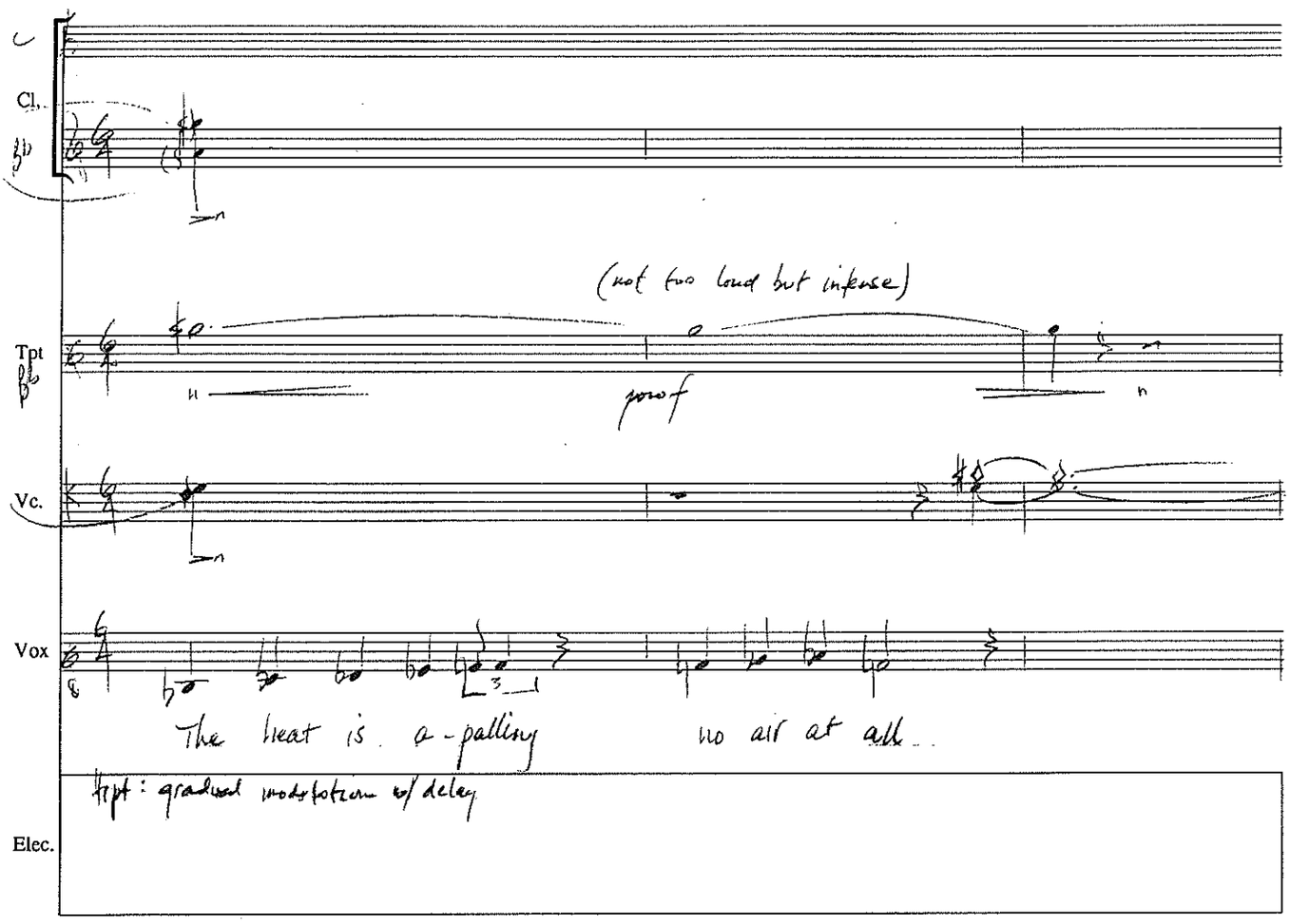



Slow
C
Cl.
Tpt
Vc.
Slow
Vox
Cher Paul if I for - get
Elec.

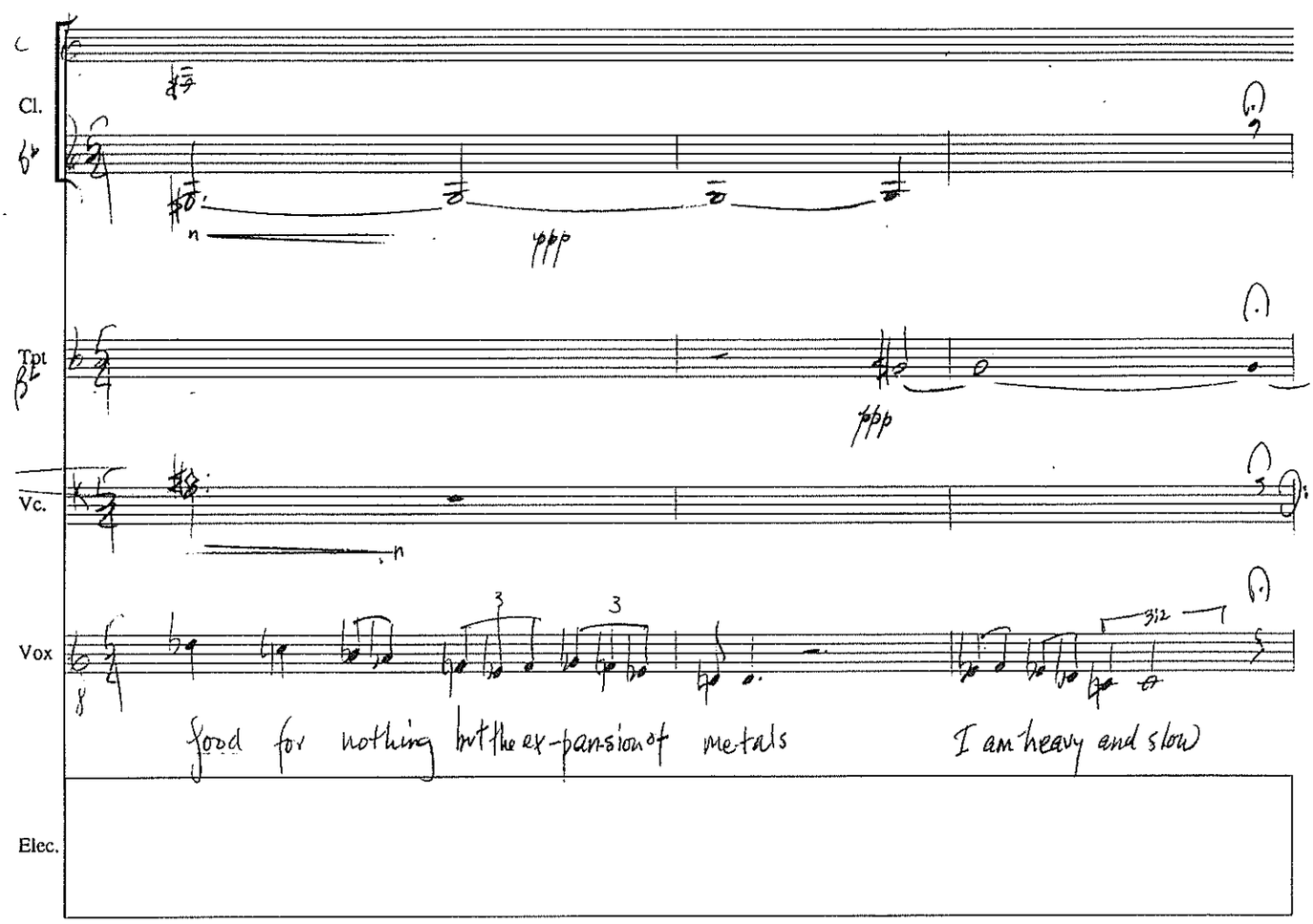

Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III - 45
C
Cl.
Tpt
Vc.
Vox
to write to you, it is be - cause I
Elec.

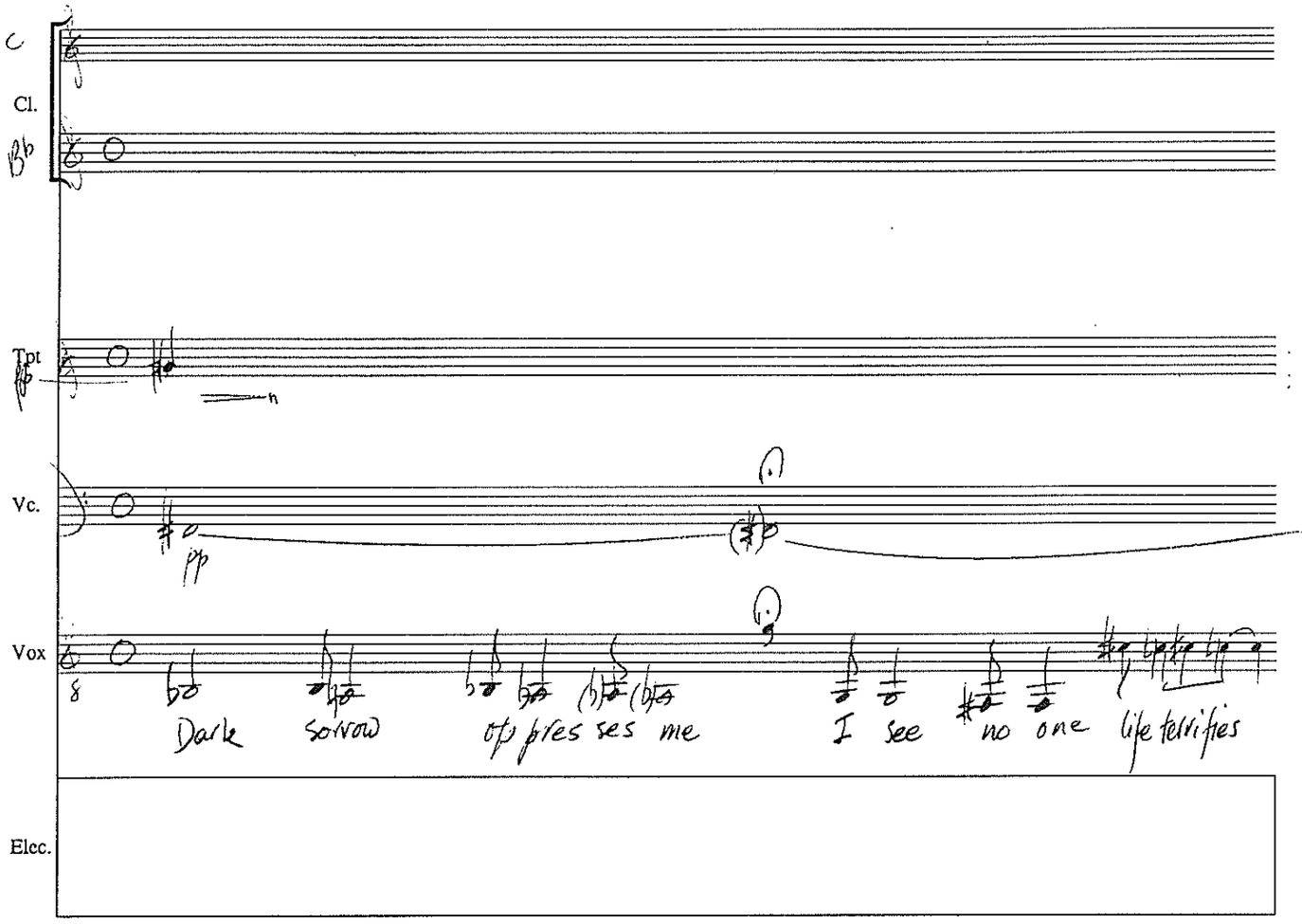

C
Cl.
B♭
Sord.
Tpt
B♭
Vc.
Vox
loose the a - ware - ness of time
Elec.


Cézanne's Doubt
Rothman
III-46
C
Cl.
B♭
Tpt
C
Vc.
Vox
Elec.

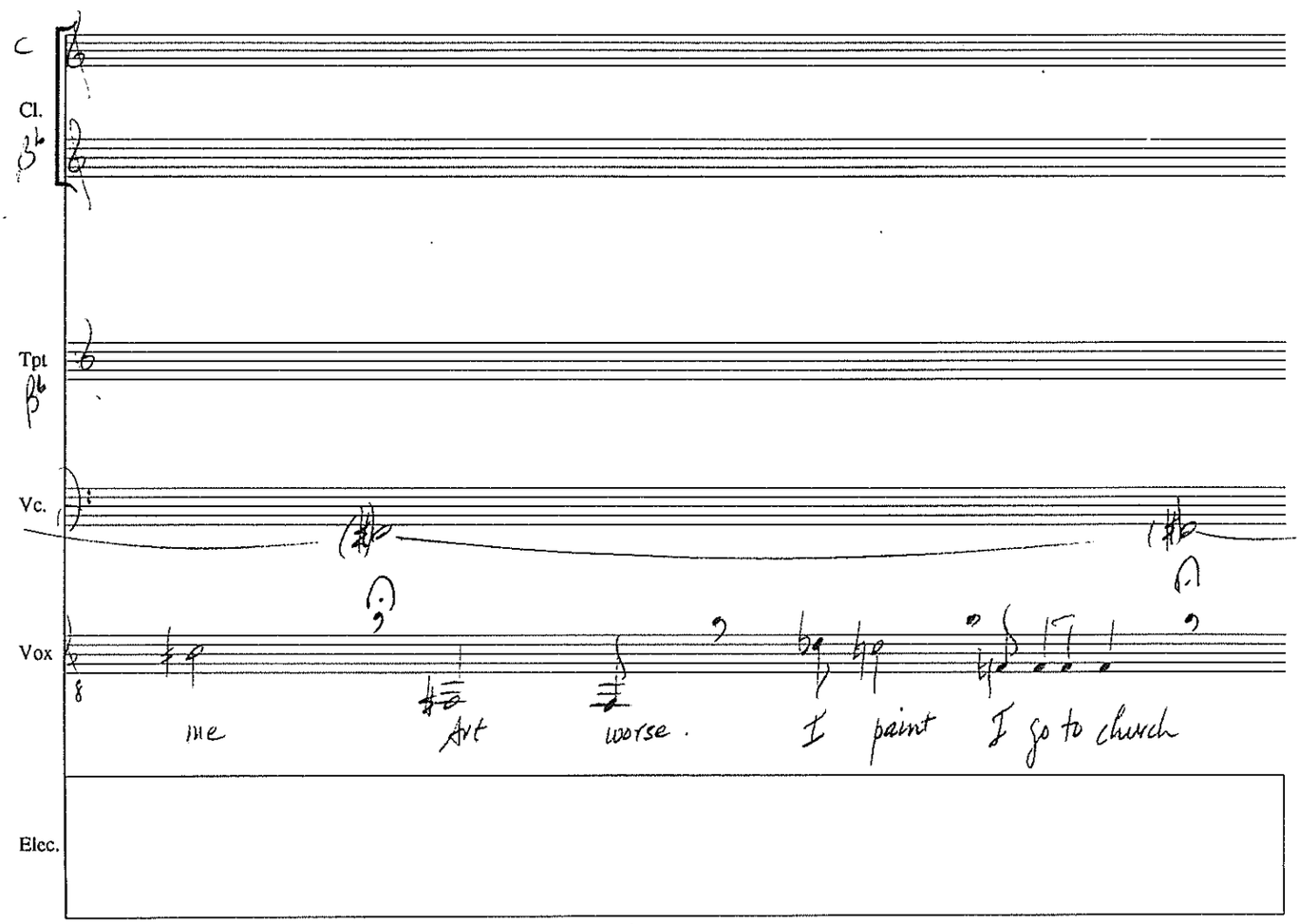


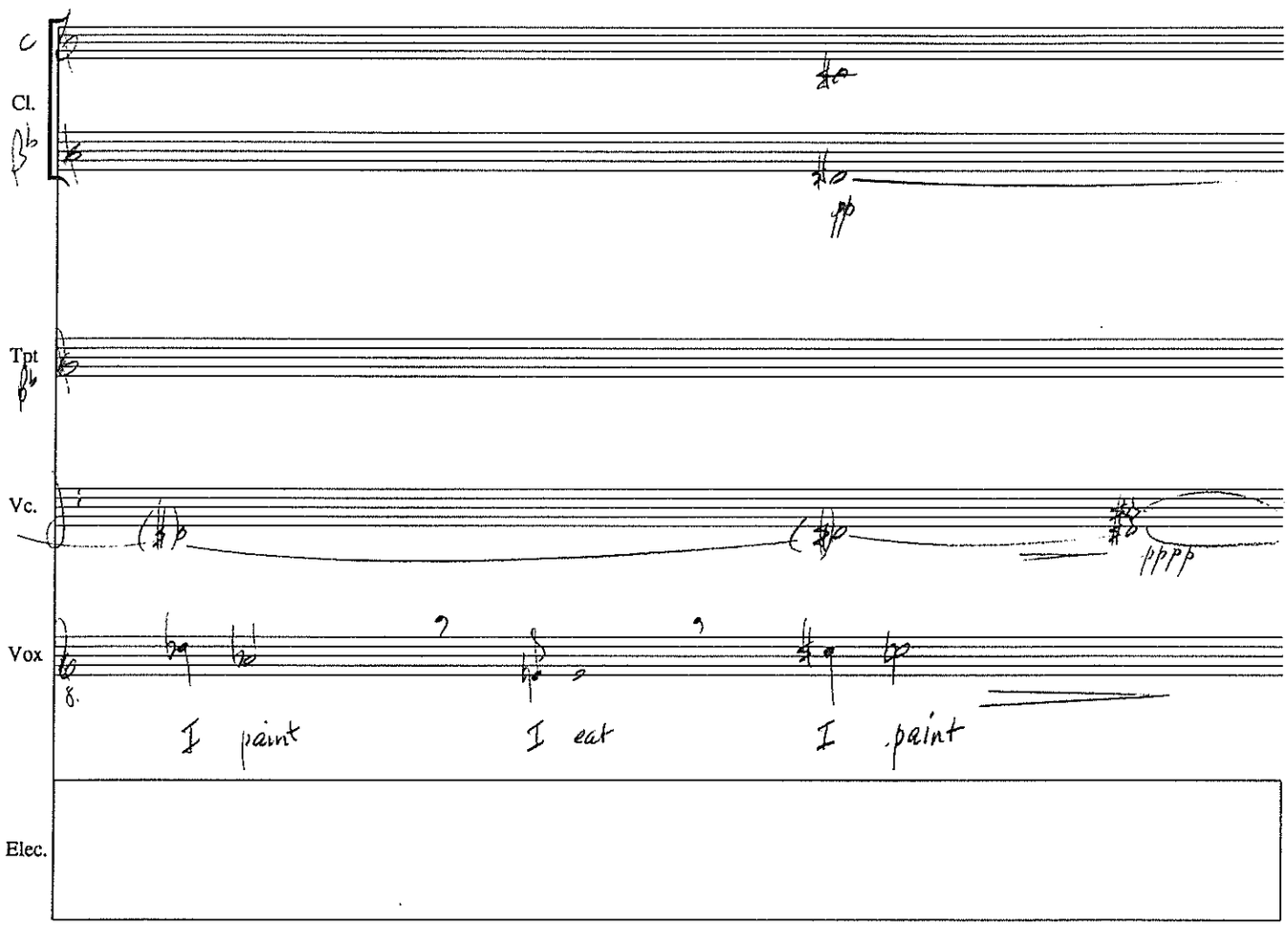
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III - 47



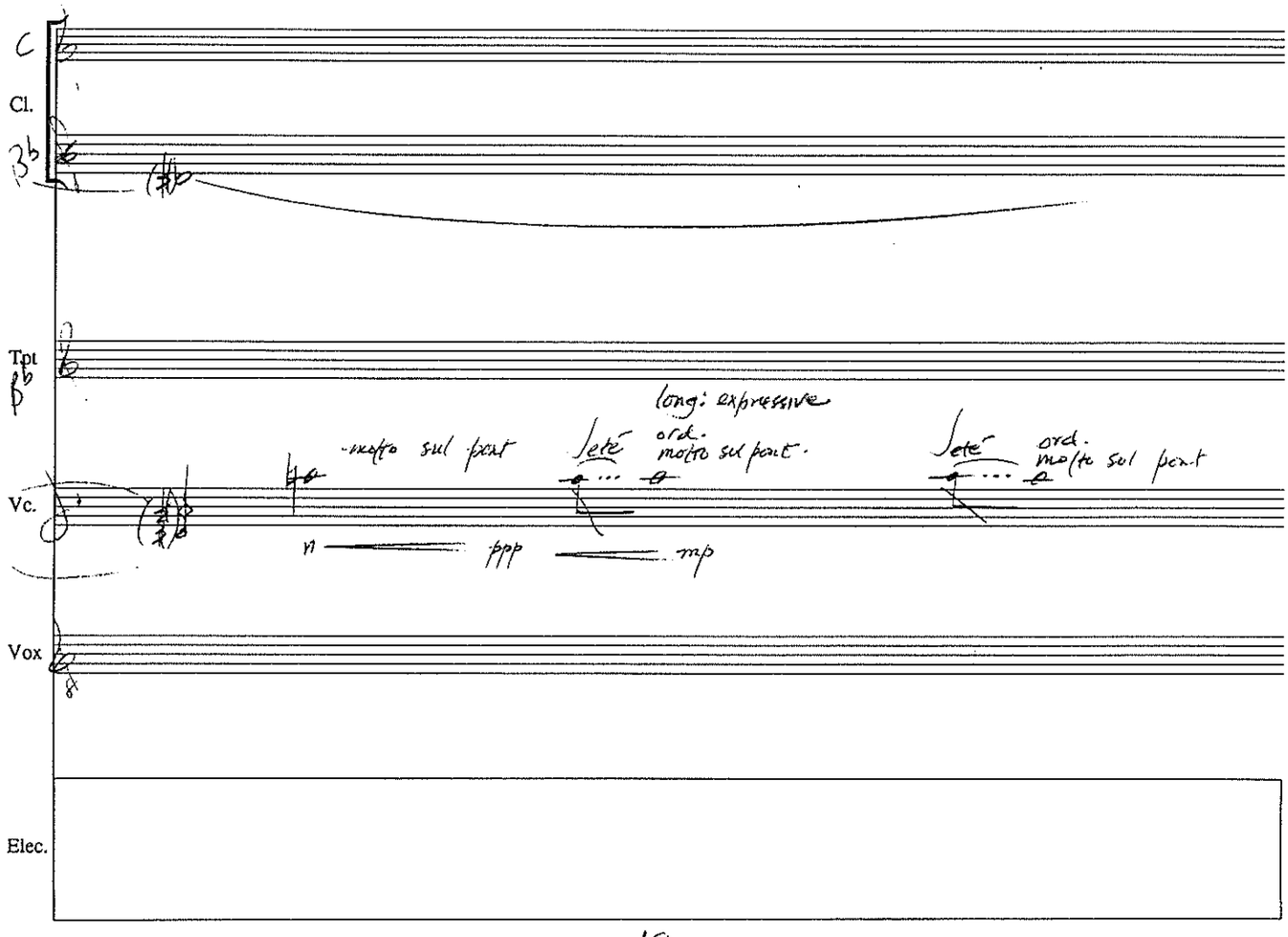


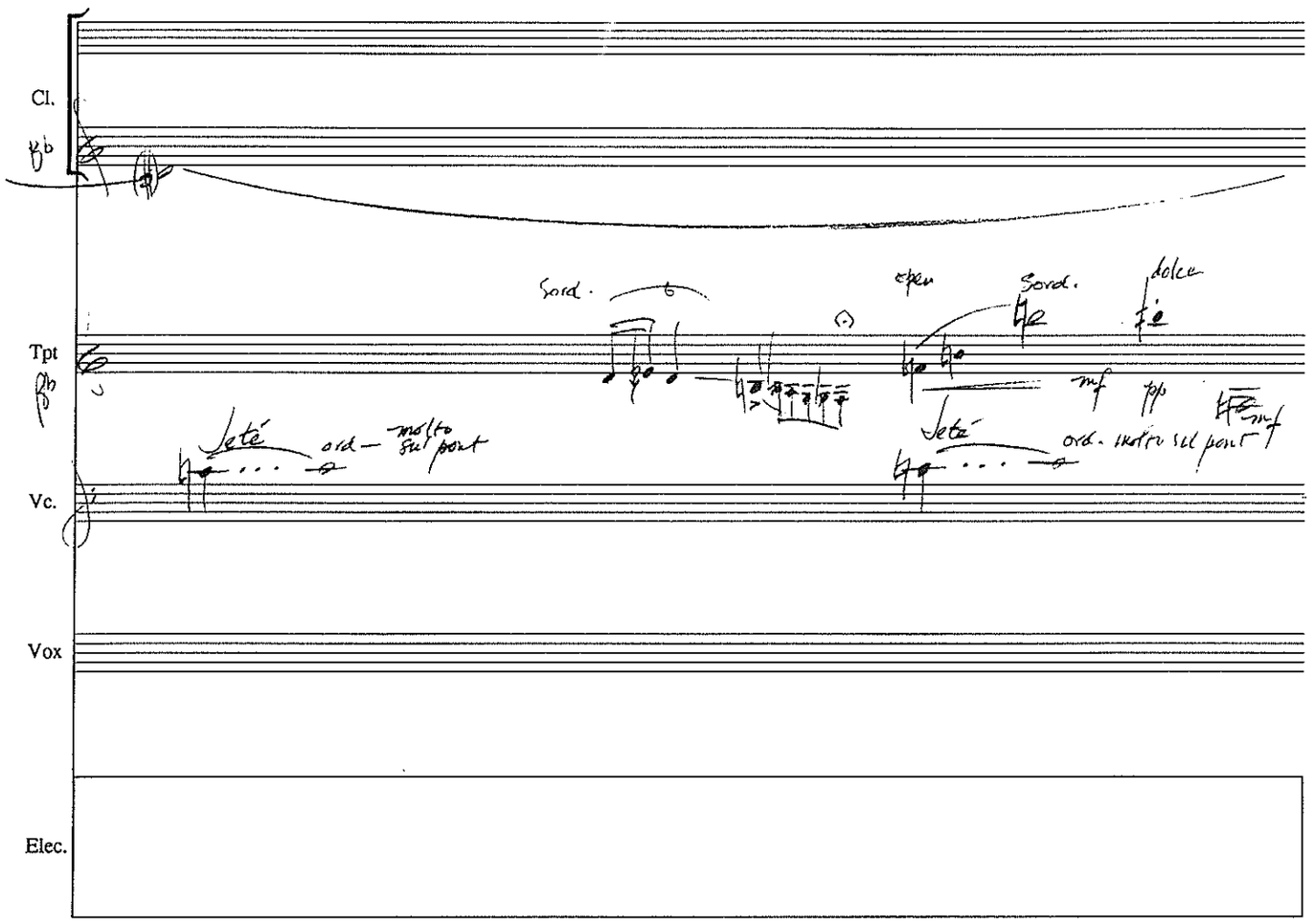
Cézanne's Doubt flothman III - 48



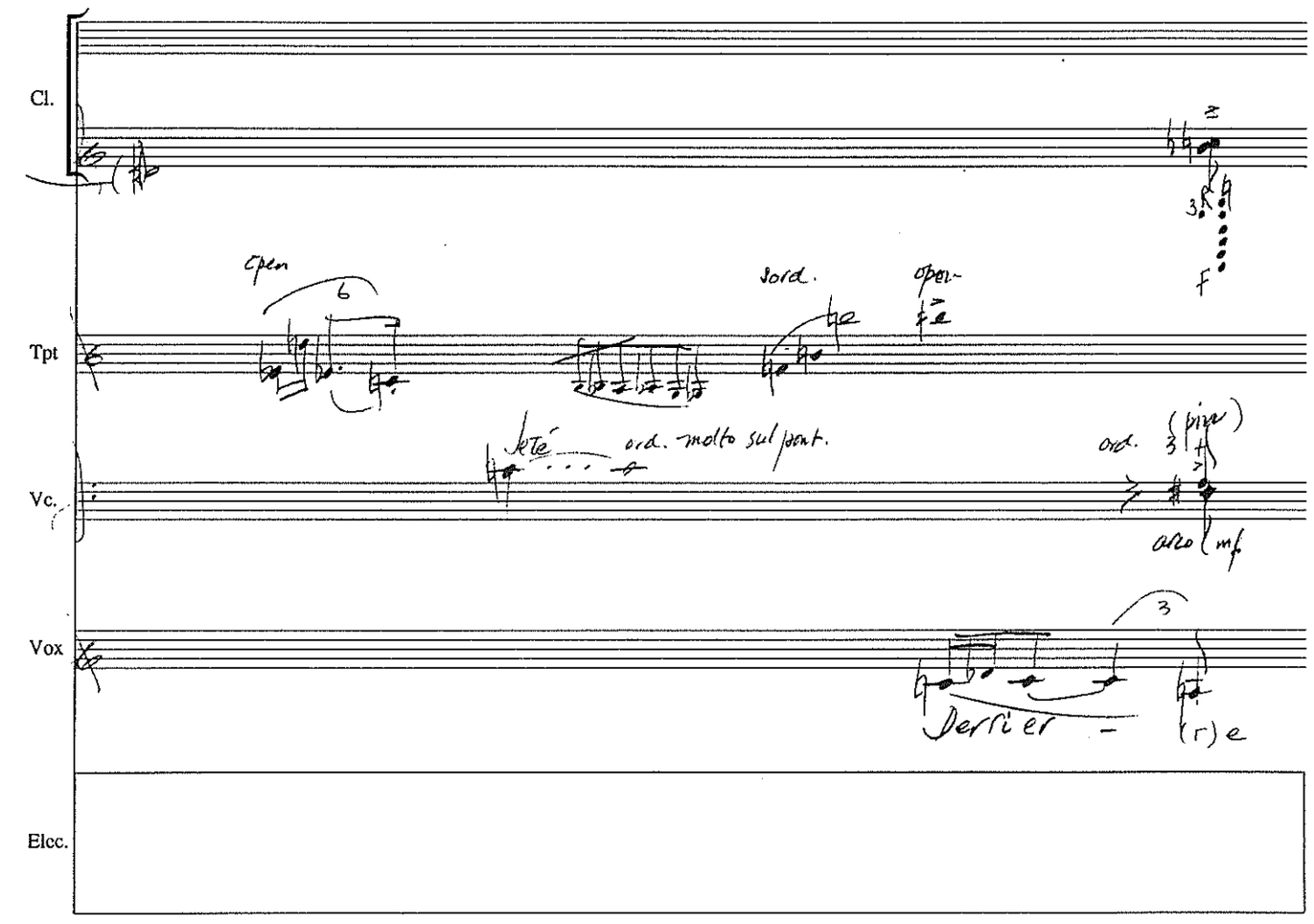


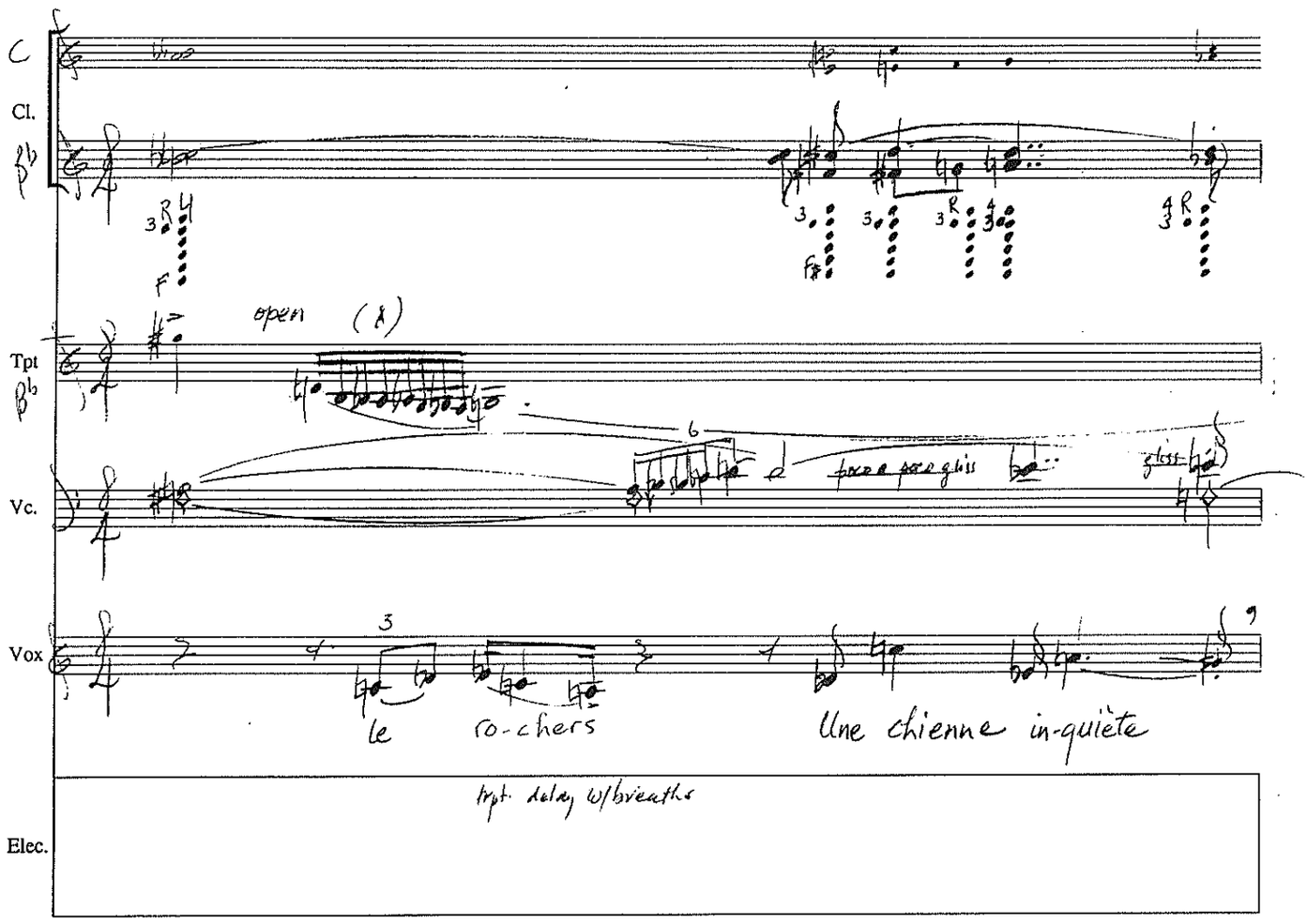
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III-49



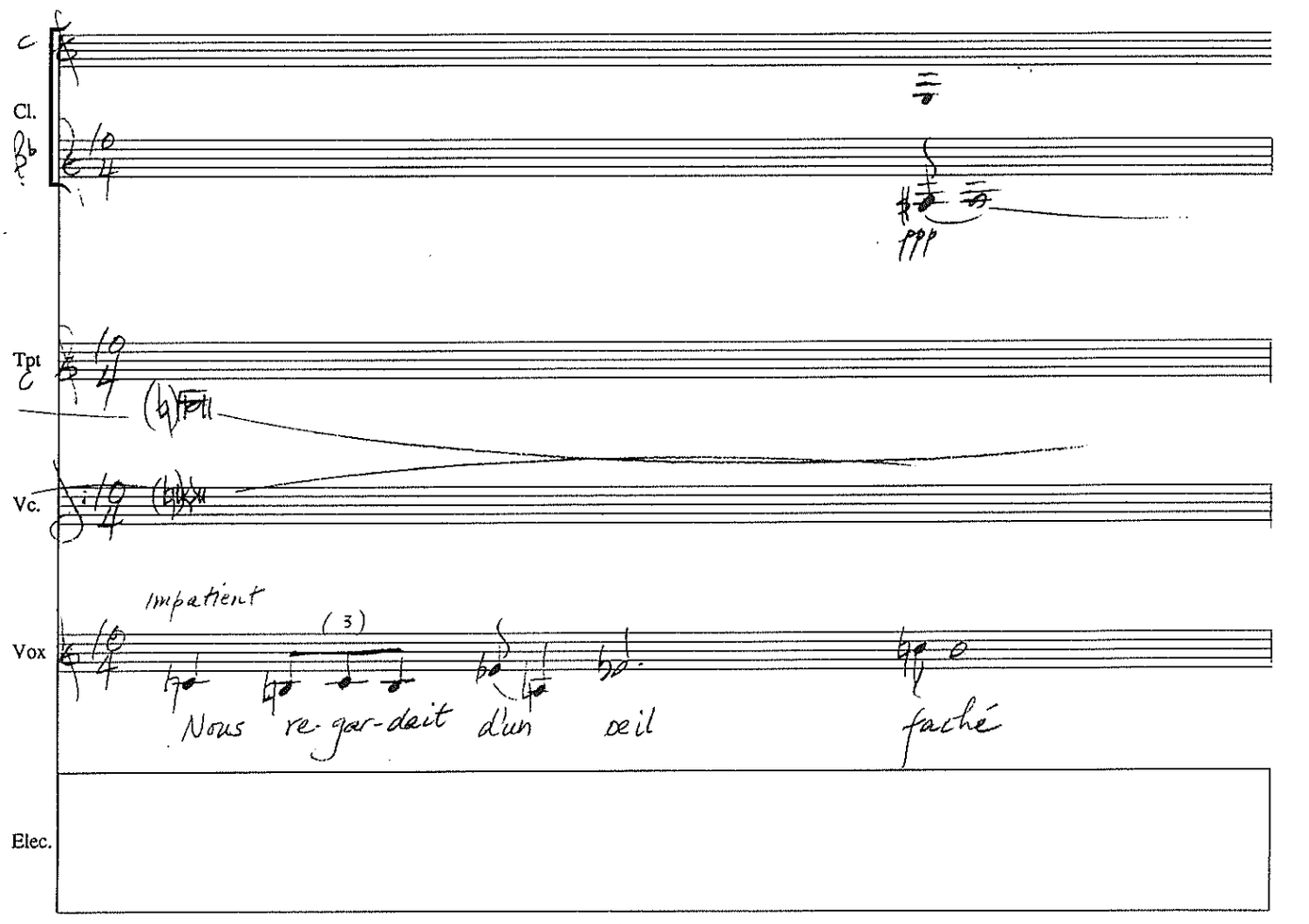


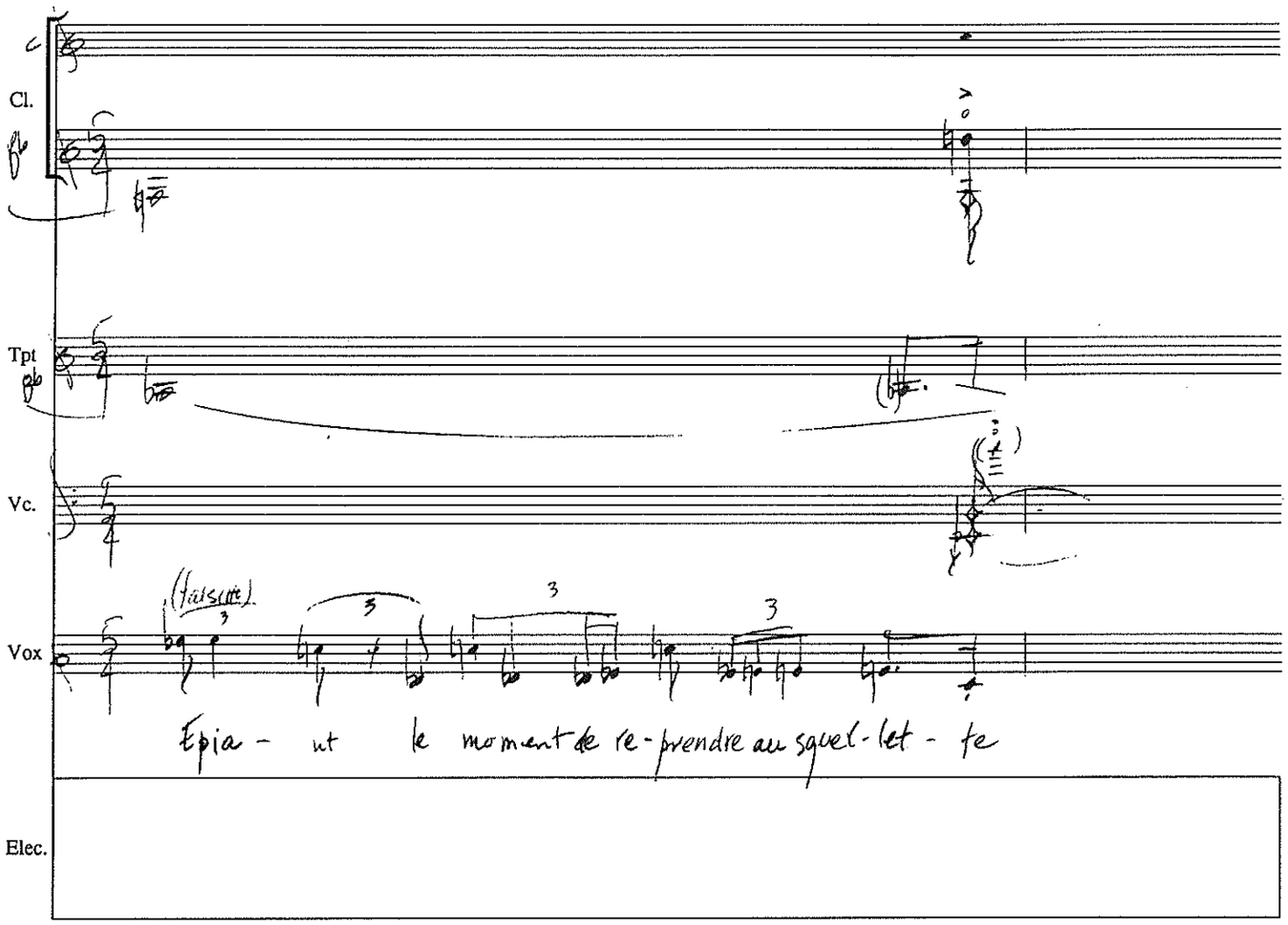
Cézannés Doubt Rothman III·50



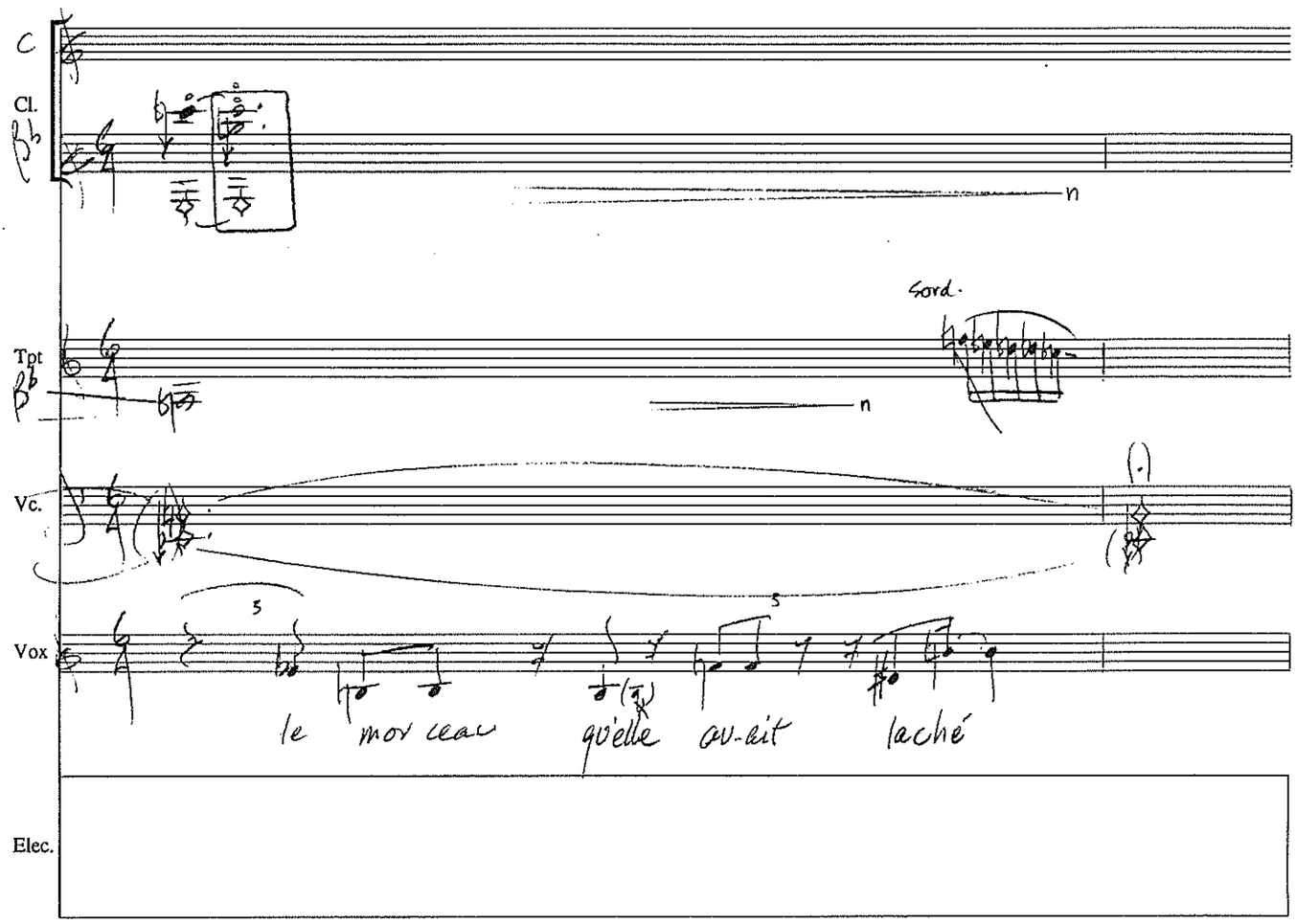


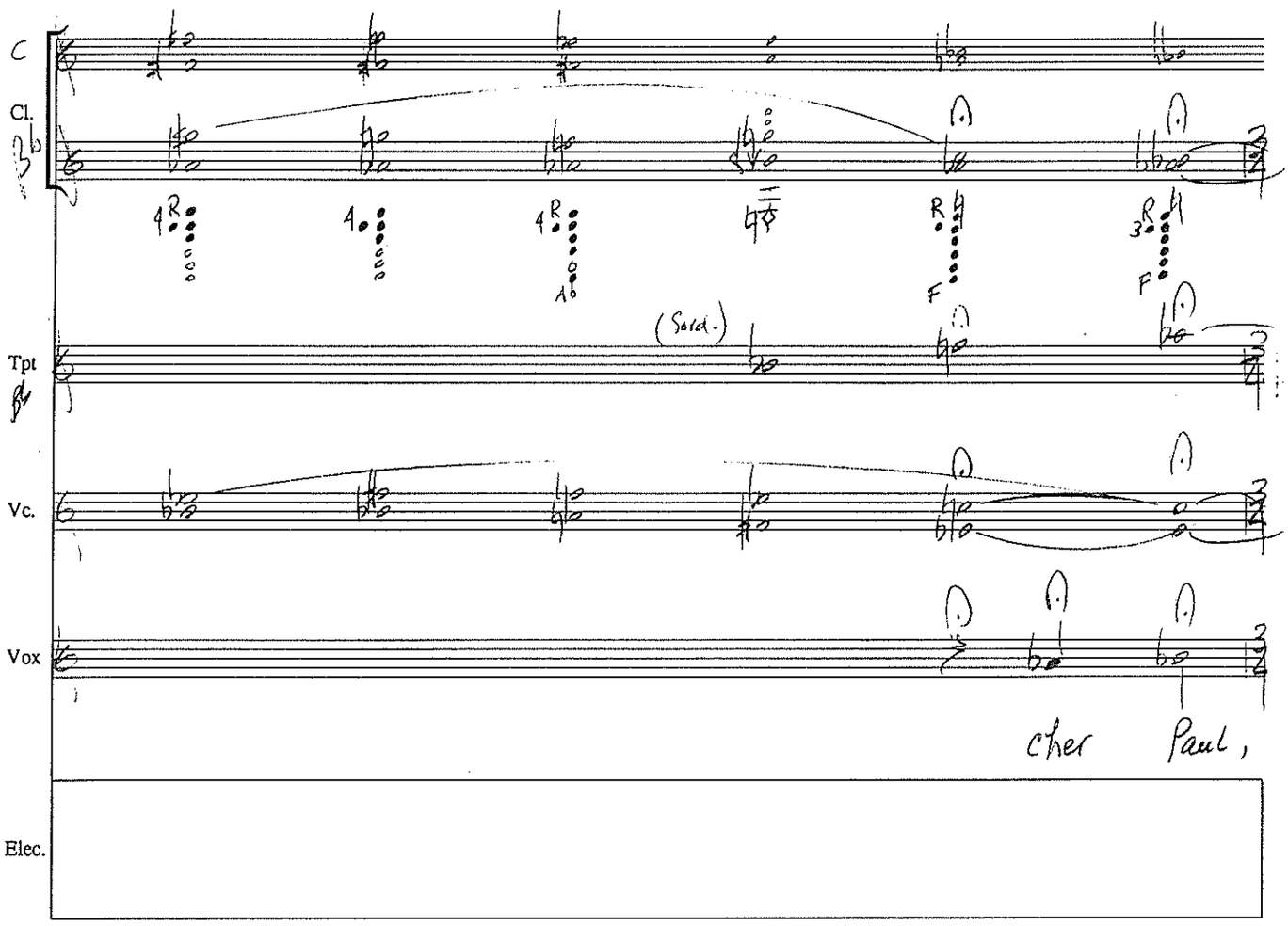
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III-51



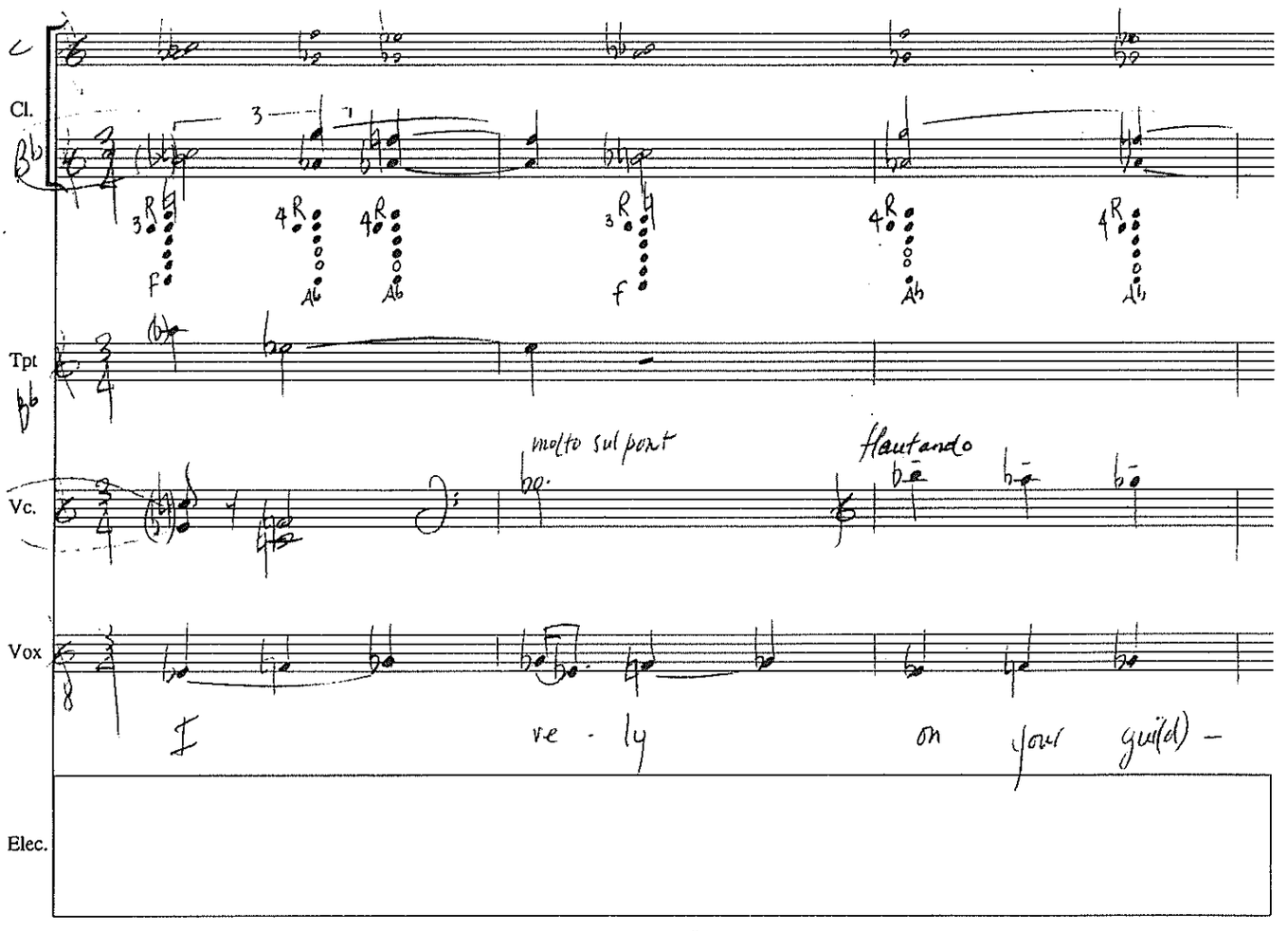


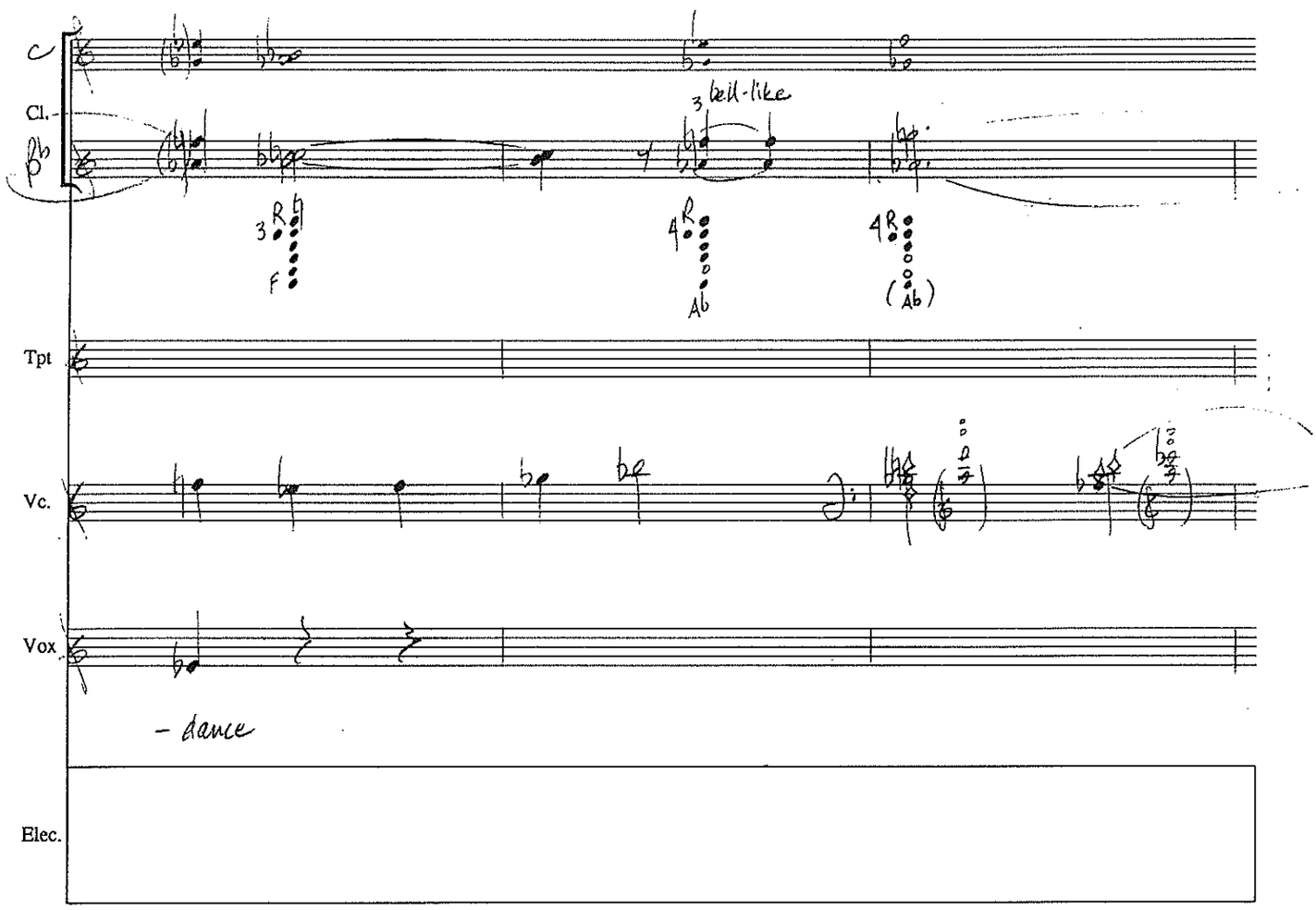
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III - 52



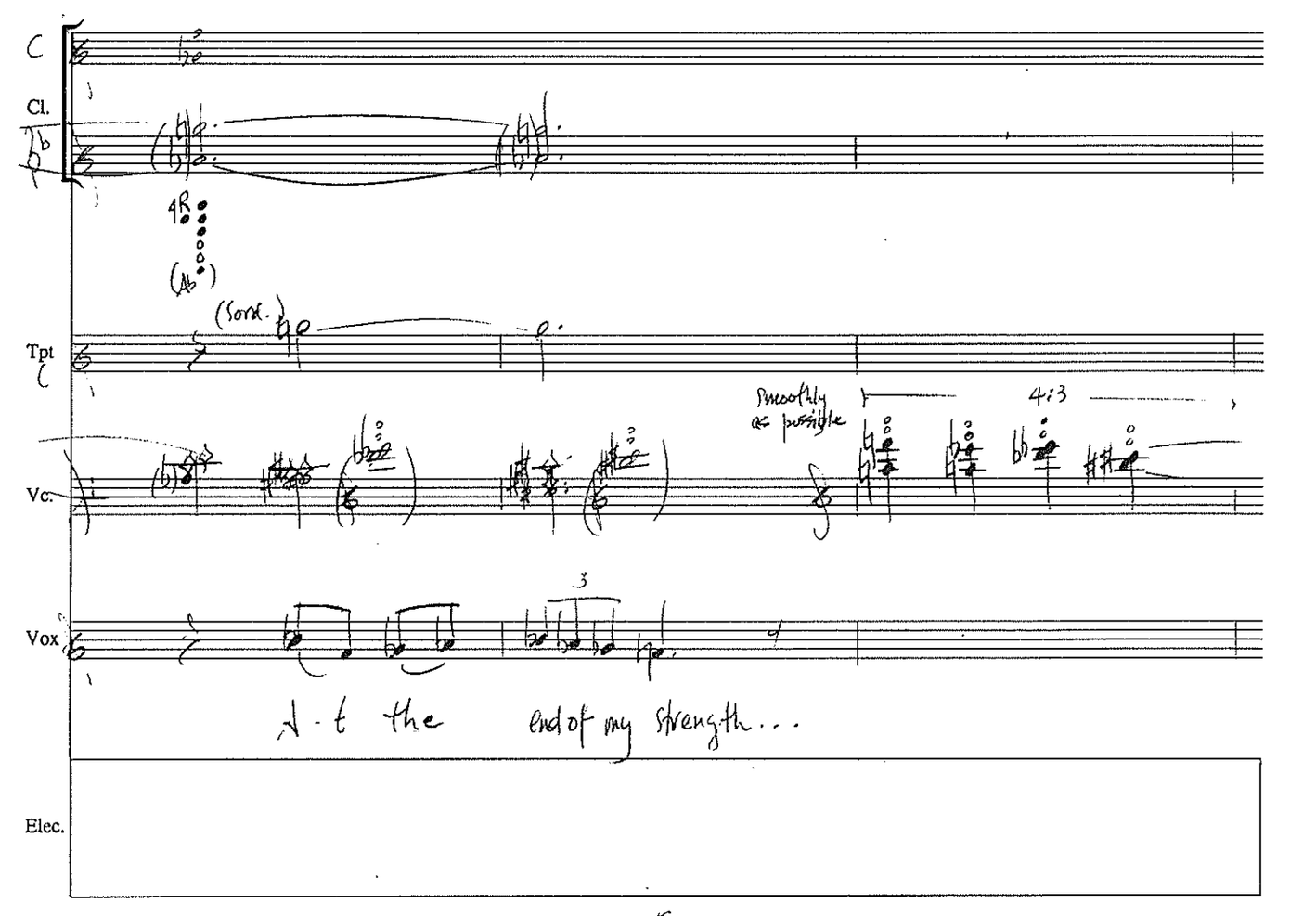


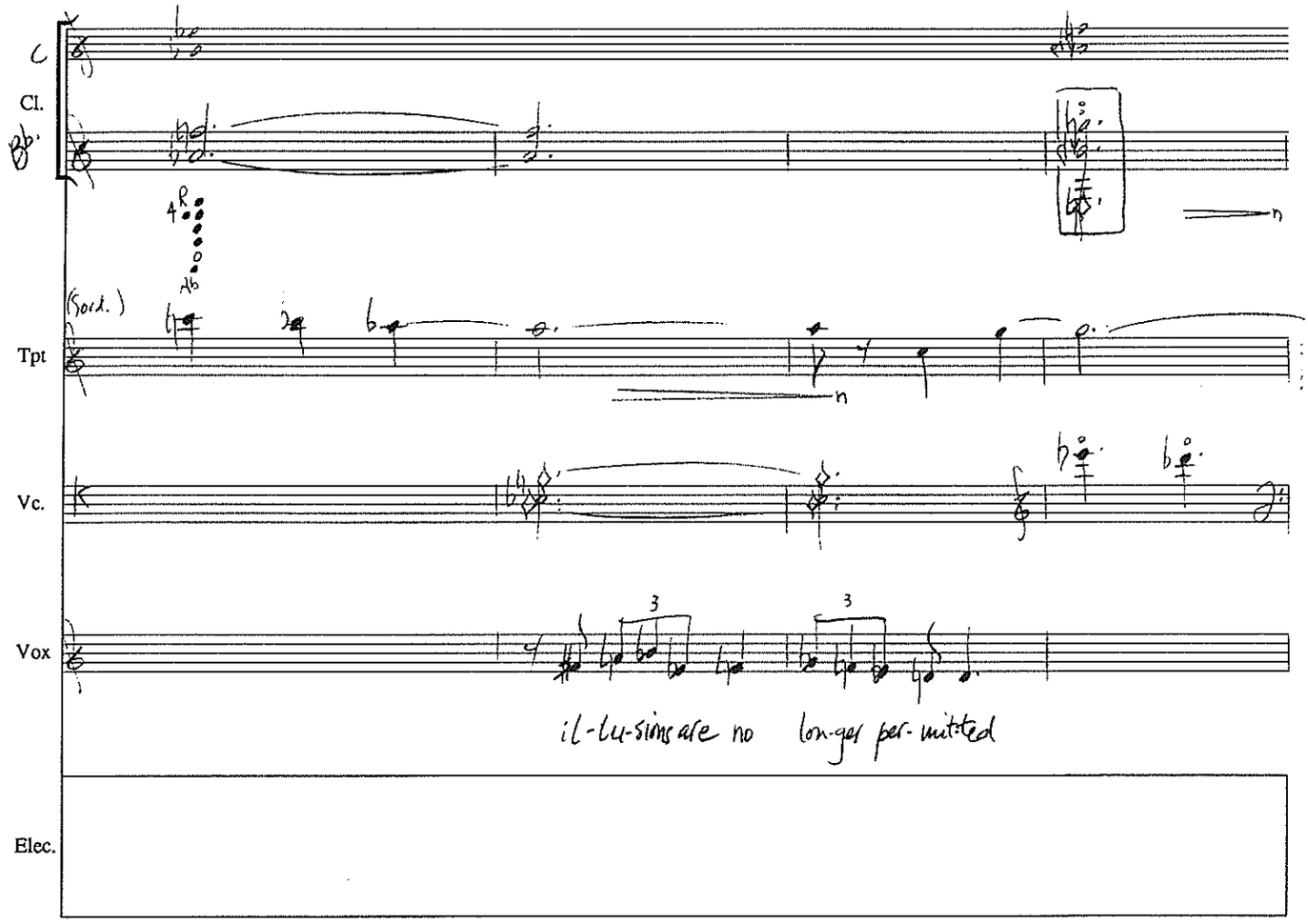
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III-53

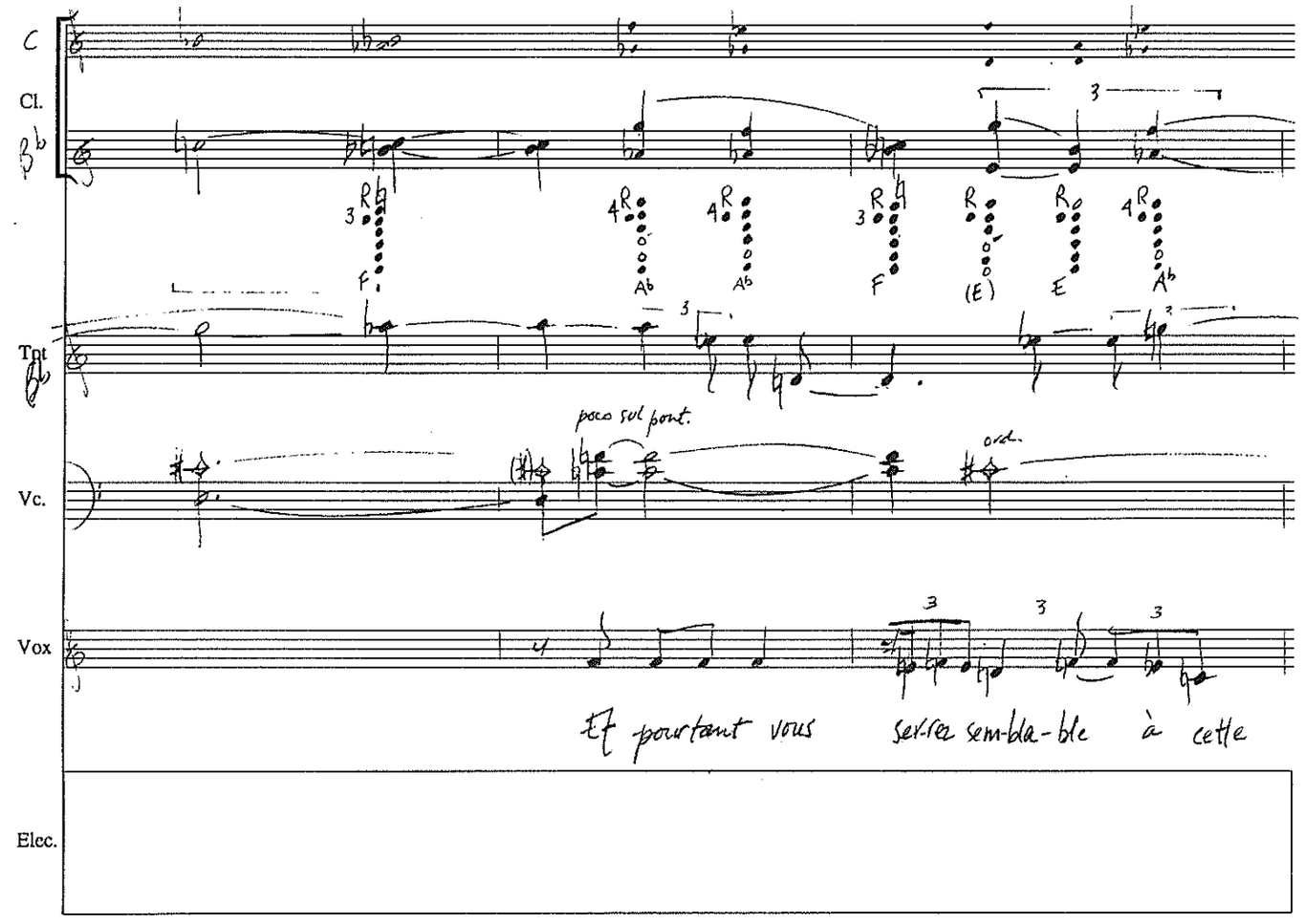


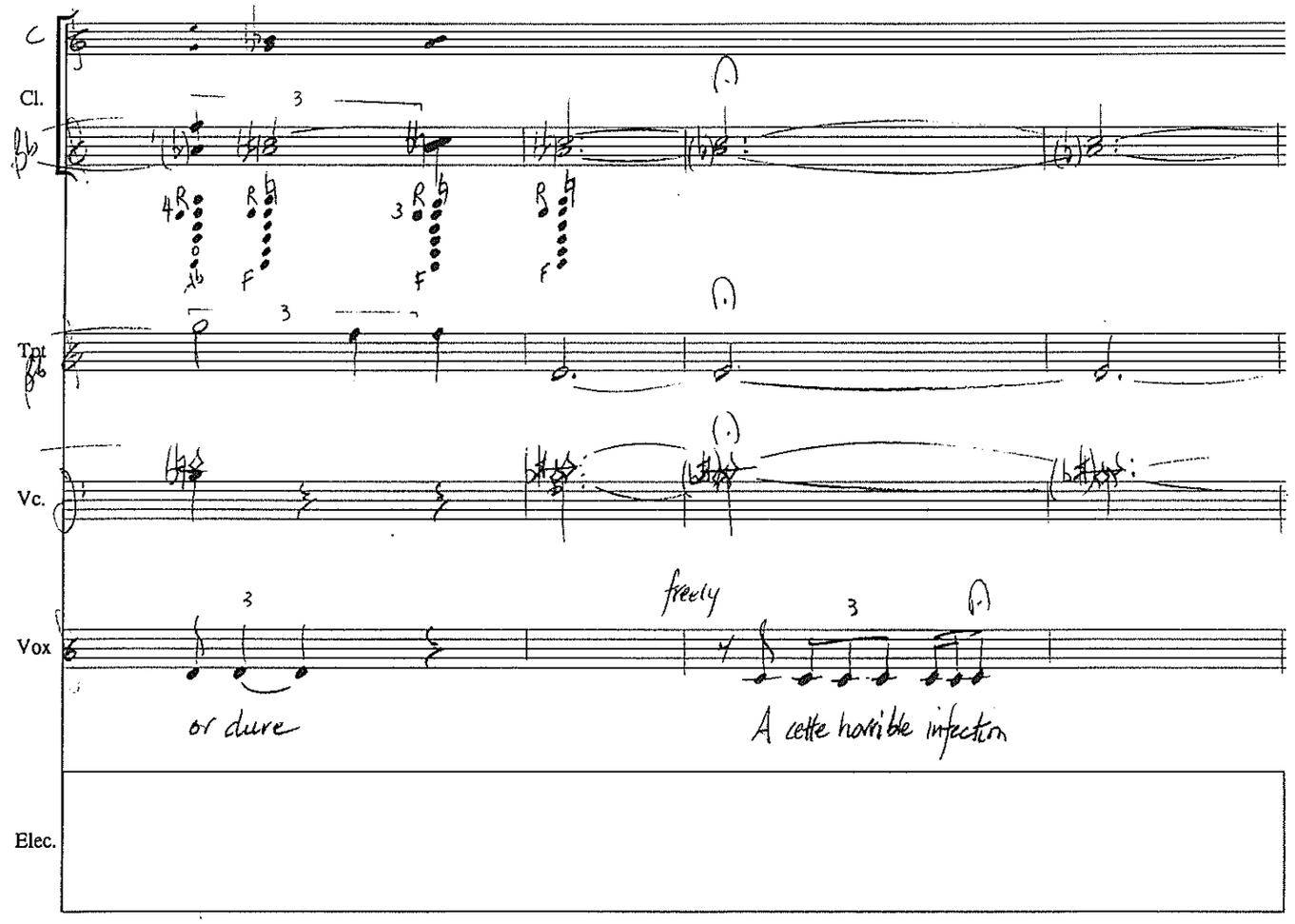


Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III-54

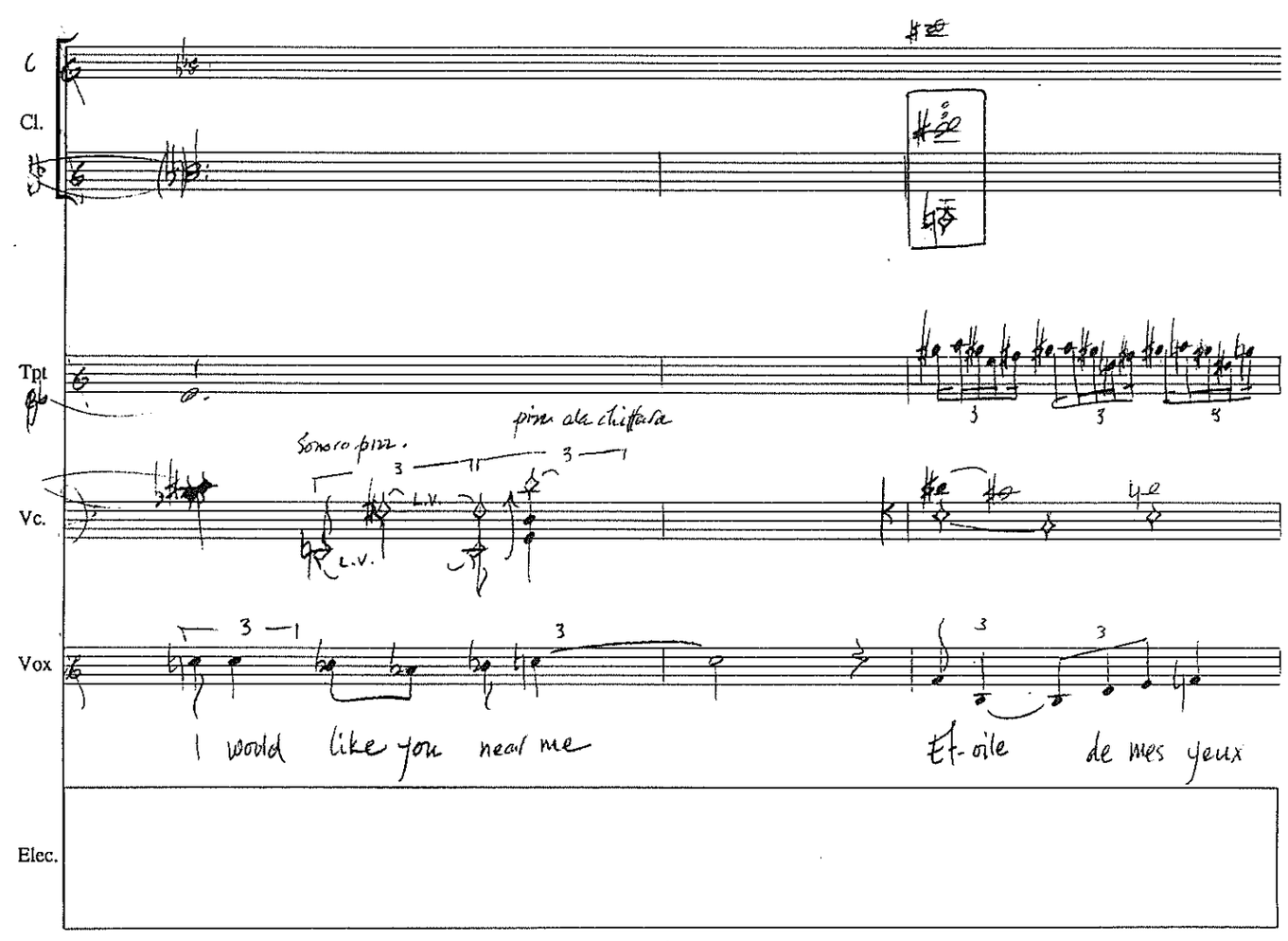


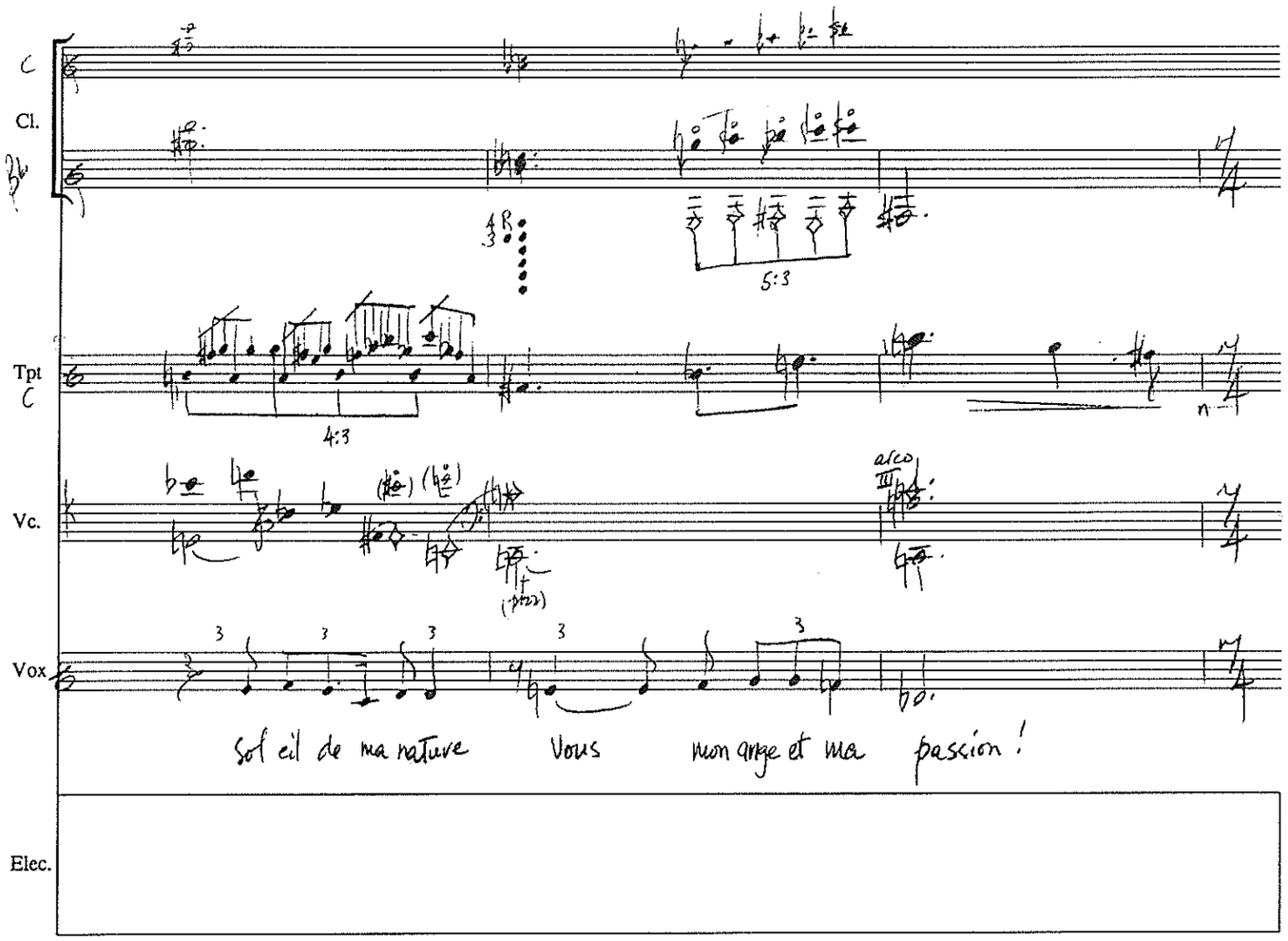

C
Cl.
B♭
(Sord.)
Tpt
Vc.
Vox
il-lu-sions are no lon-ger per-mitted
Elec.

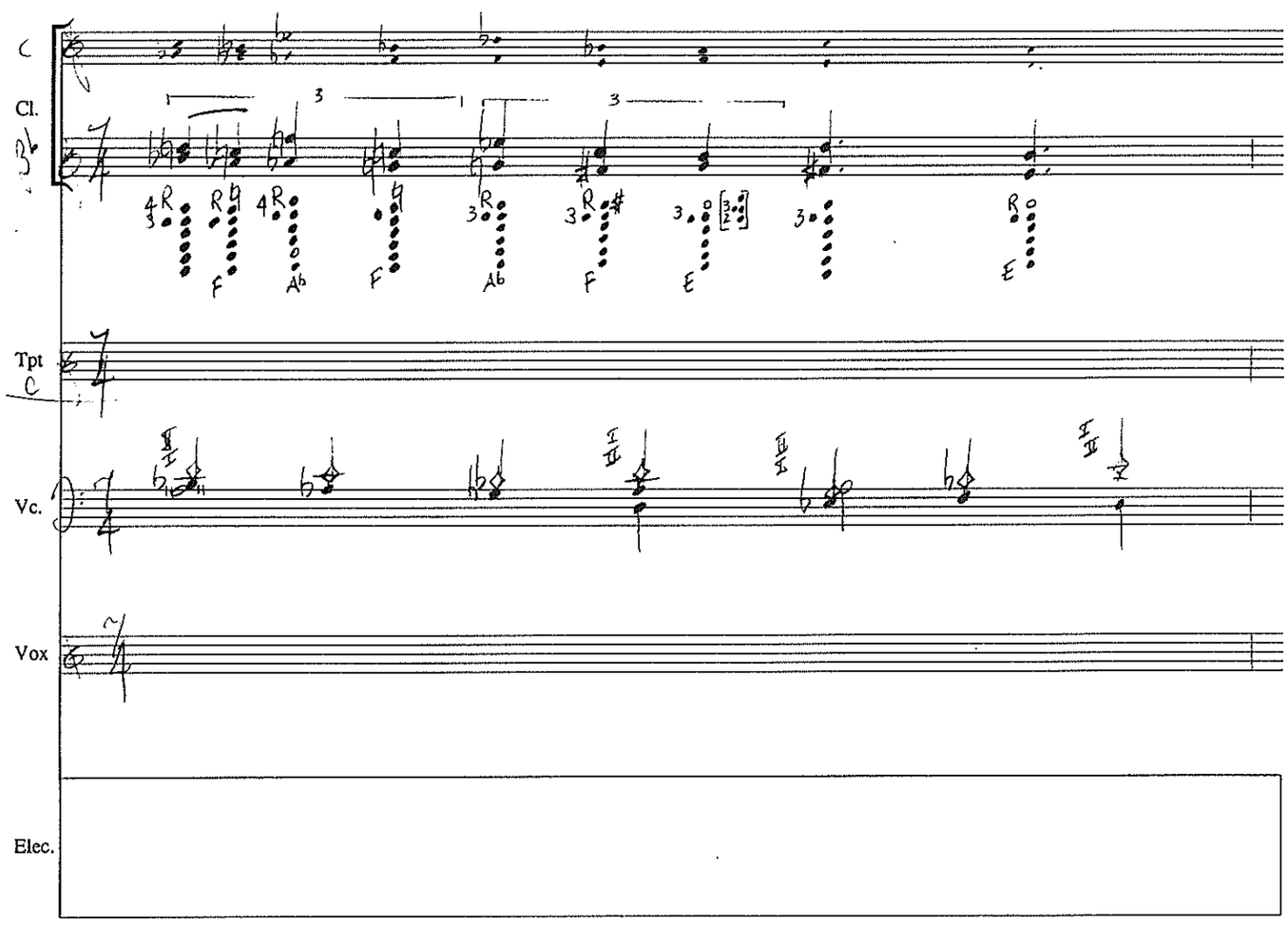

C
Cl.
B♭
Tpt
poco sul pont.
ord.
Vc.
Vox
Et pourtant vous serrez sem-bla-ble à cette
Elec.

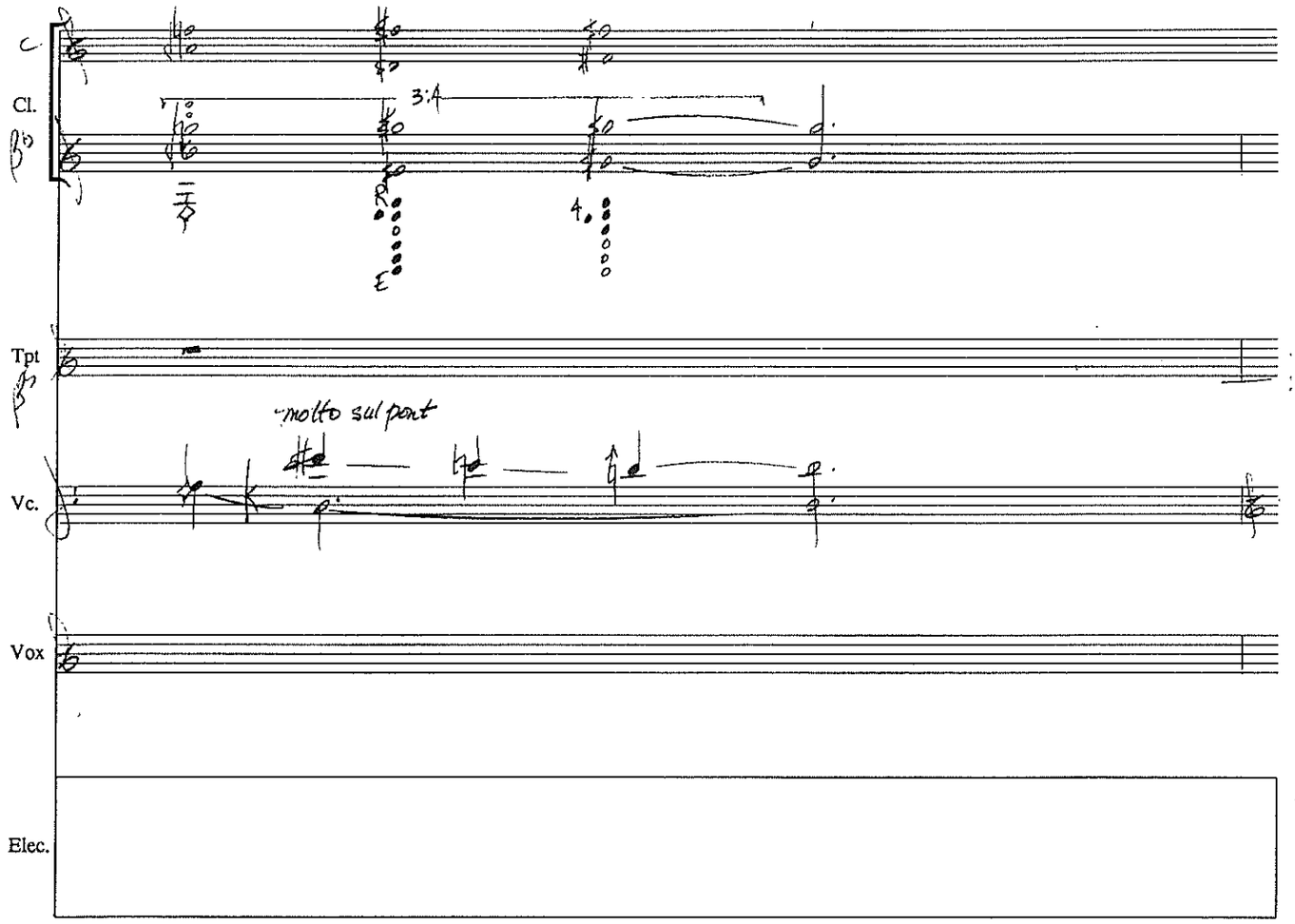


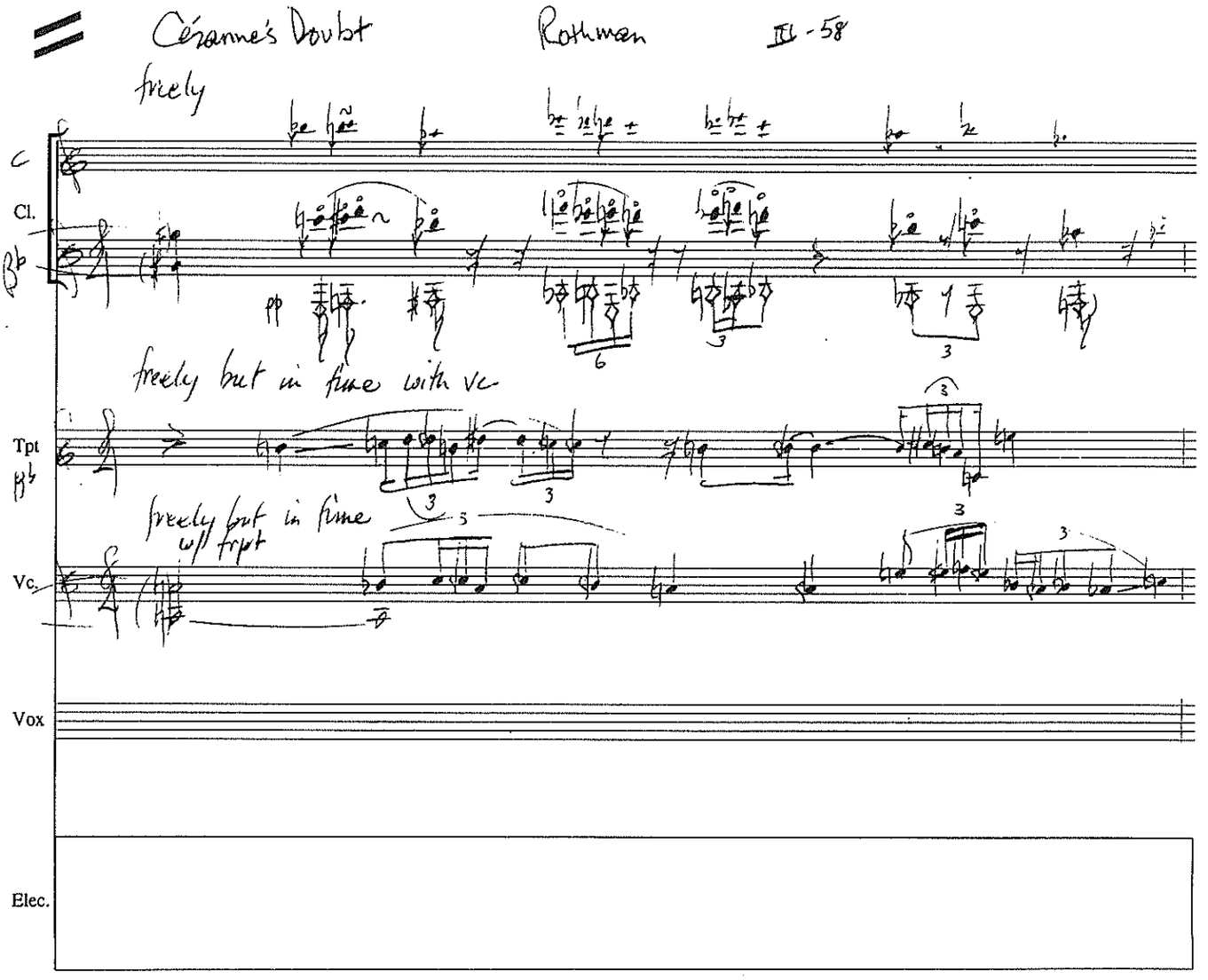
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III - 56

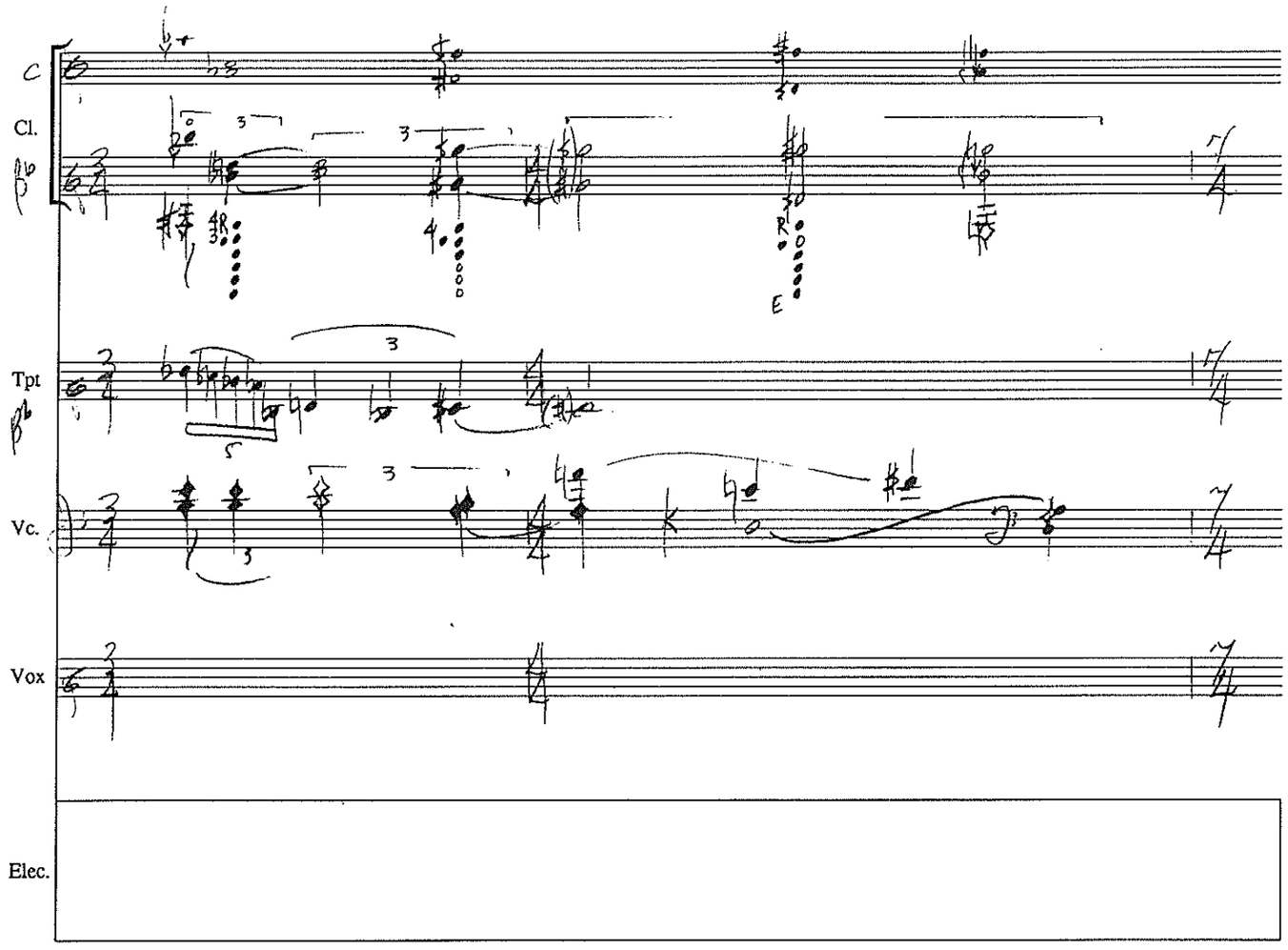



C
Cl.
5:3
Tpt
C
4:3
Vc.
arco
Vox
Sol œil de ma nature Vous mon ange et ma passion !
Elec.

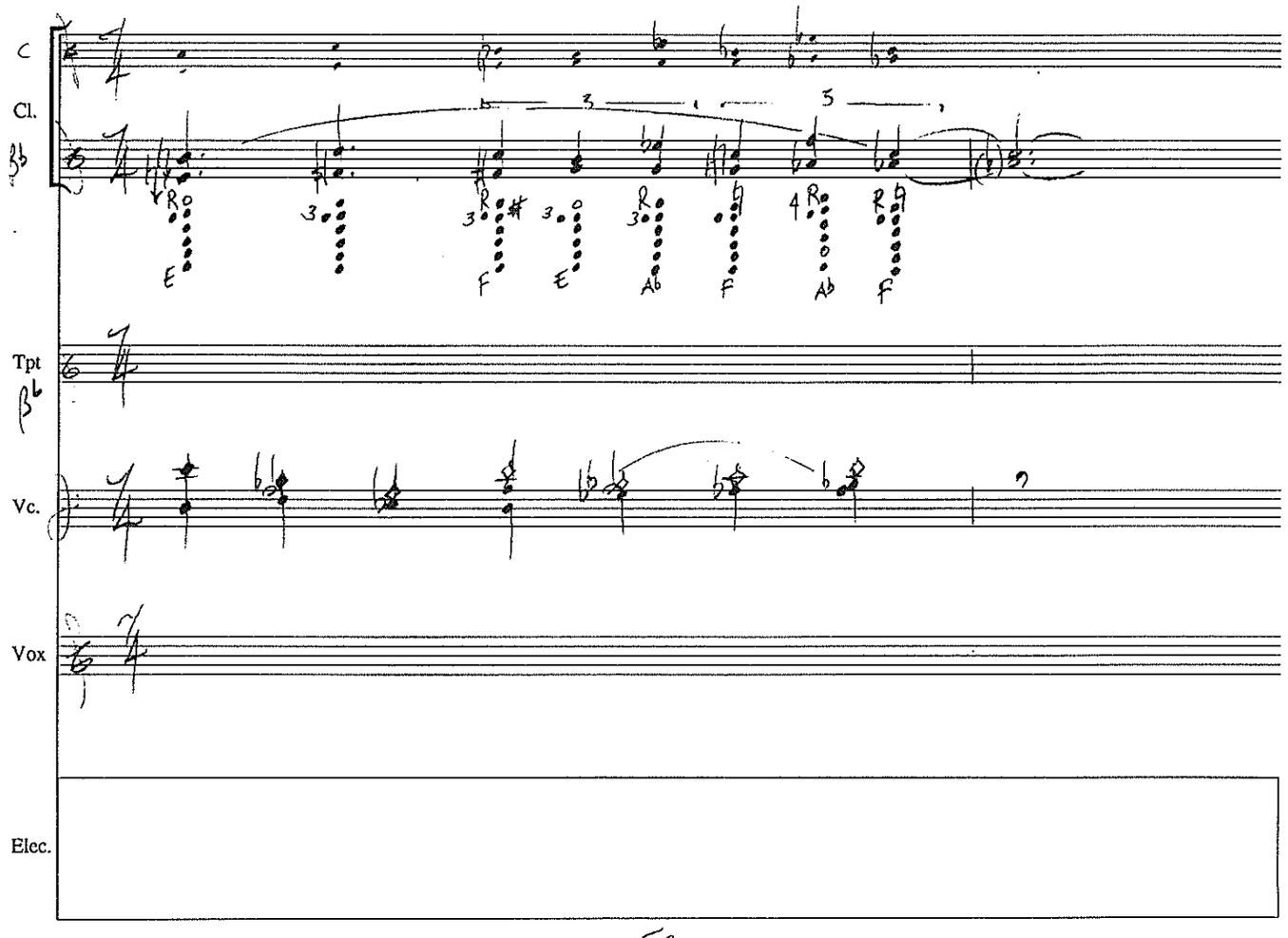

C
Cl.
F
Ab
F
Ab
F
E
E
Tpt
C
Vc.
Vox
Elec.

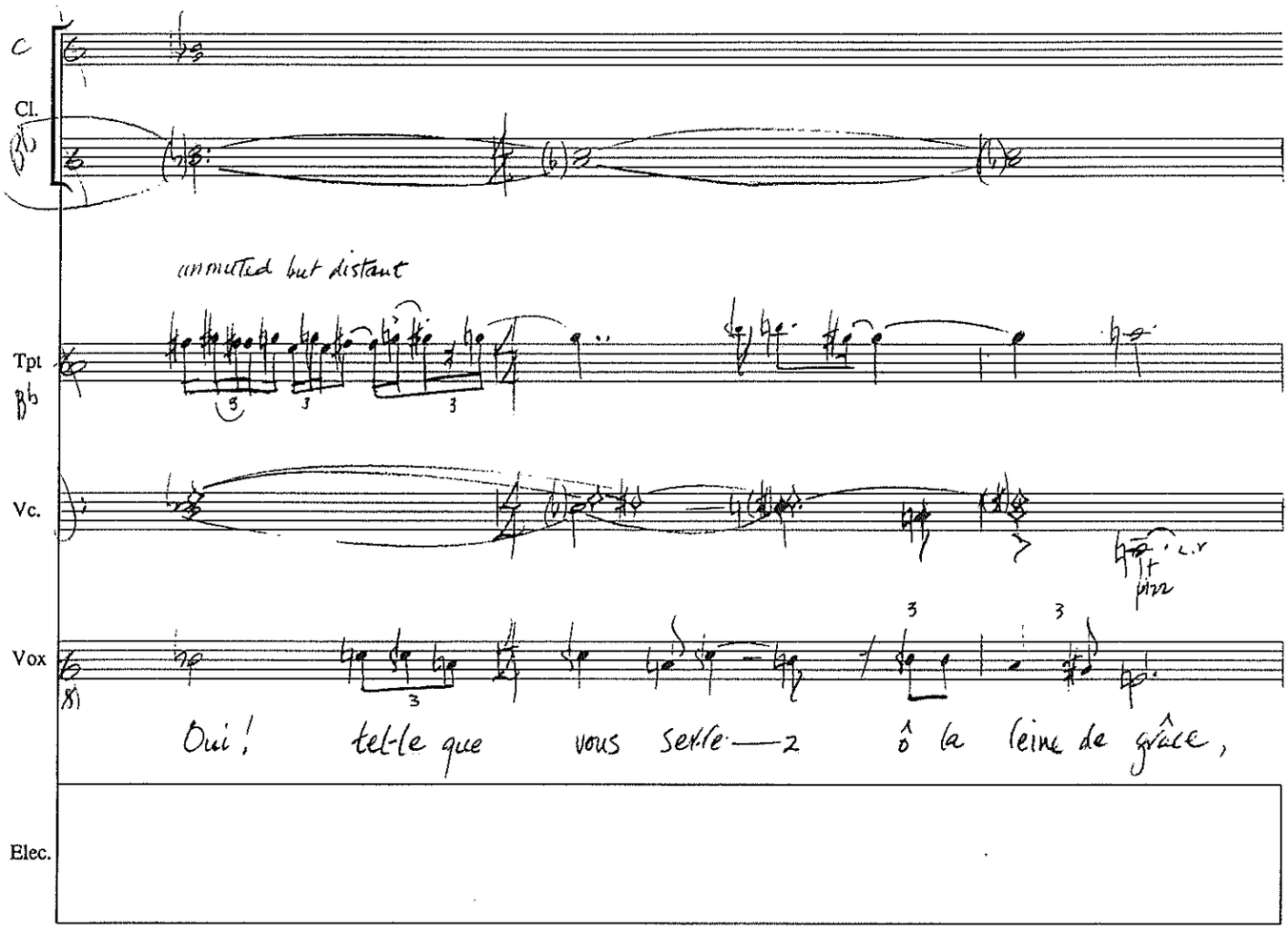

C
Cl.
B♭
3:4
Tpt
B♭
molto sul pont
Vc.
Vox
Elec.


Cézanne's Doubt
Rothman
III - 58
freely
C
Cl.
B♭
freely but in time with Vc
Tpt
B♭
freely but in time
w/ trpt
Vc.
Vox
Elec.

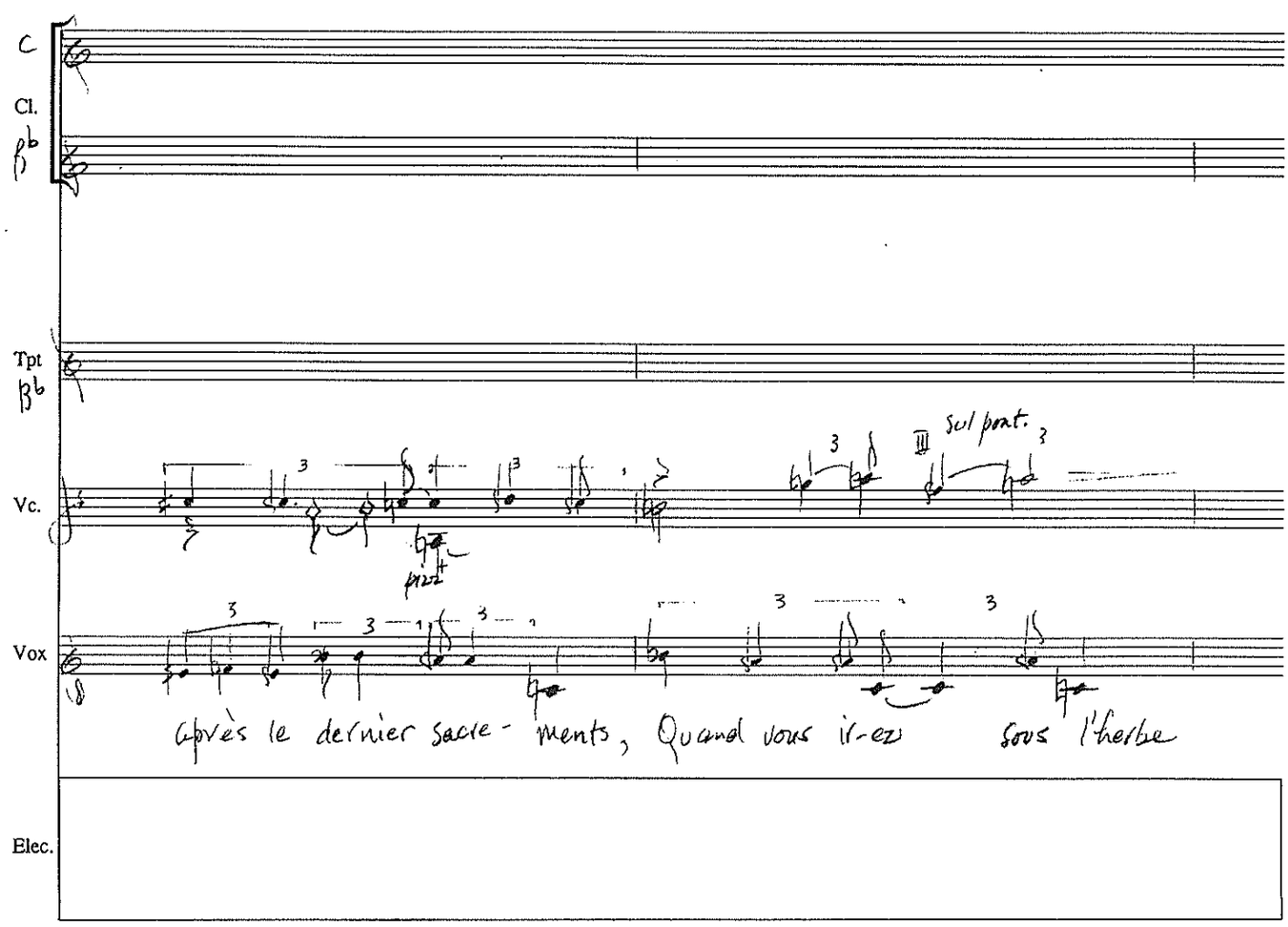


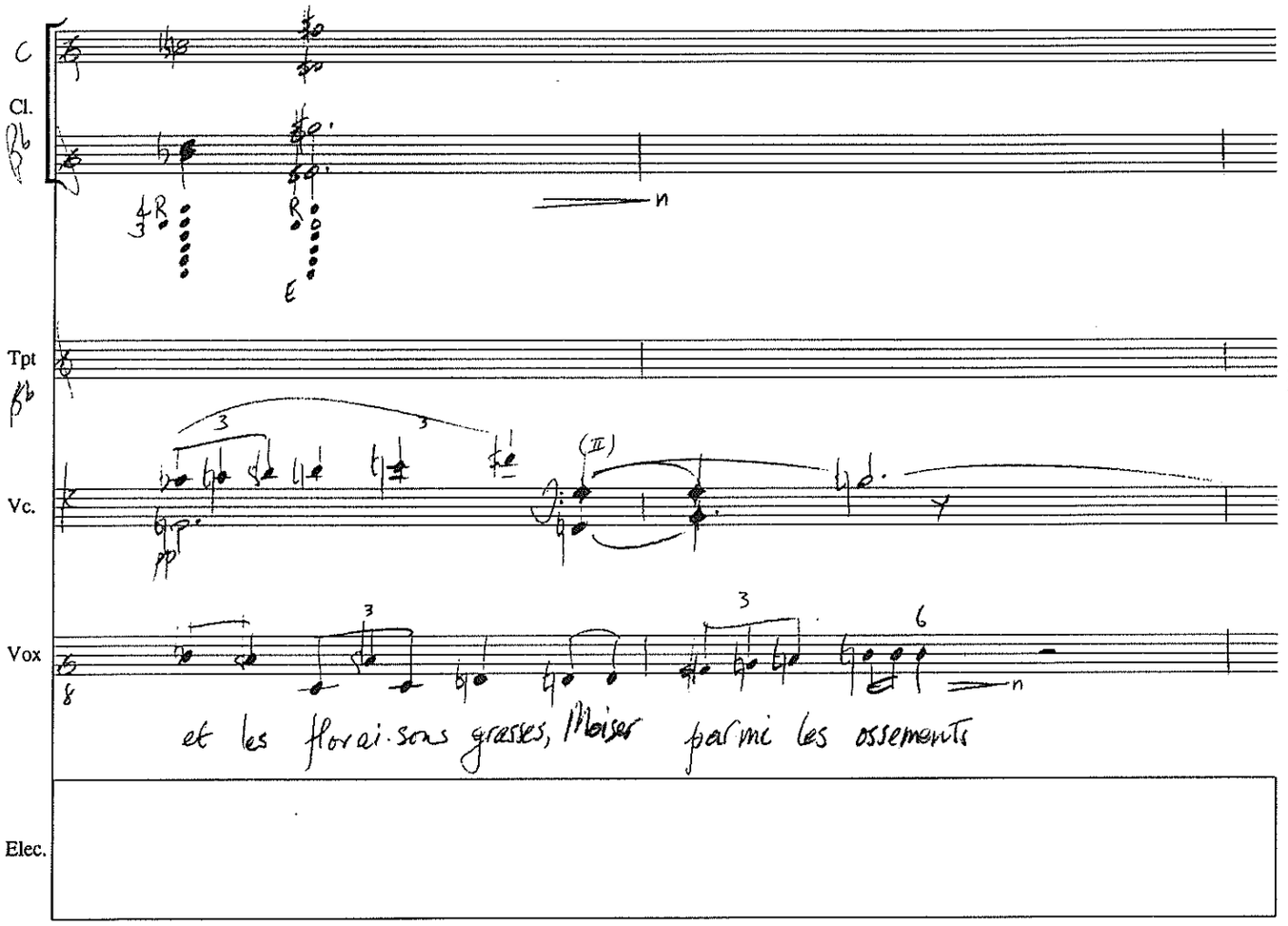
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III- 59

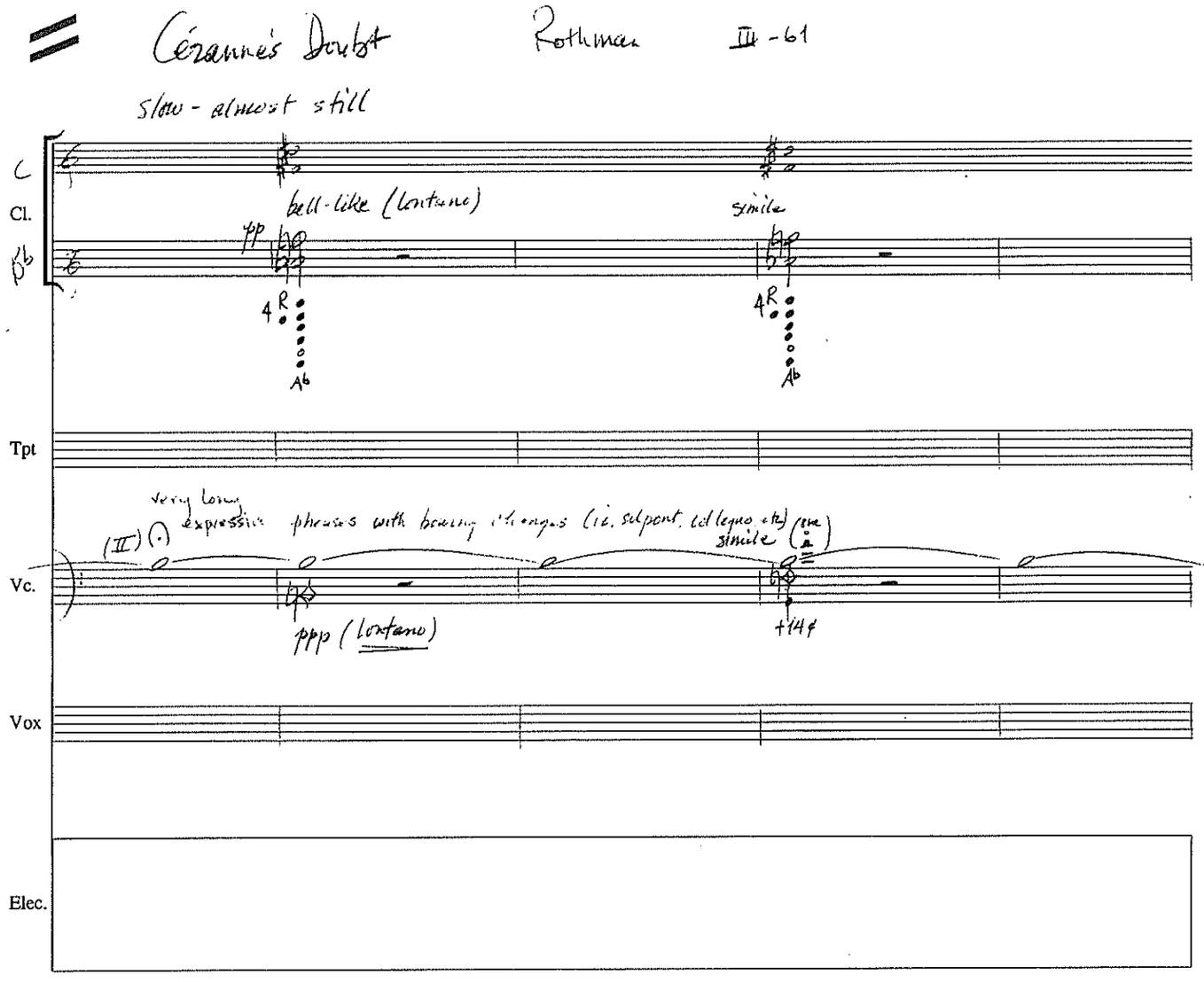


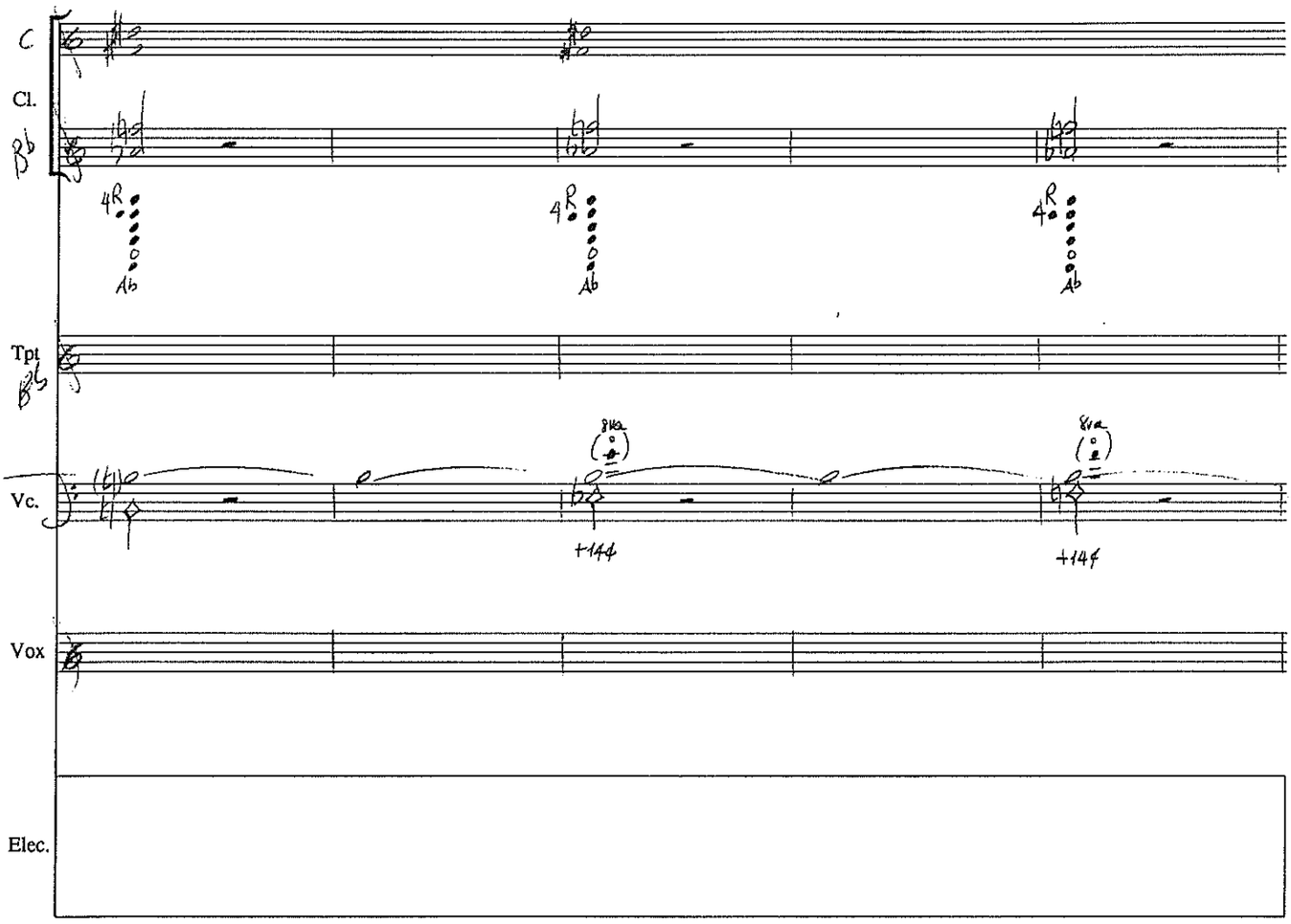


Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III - 60

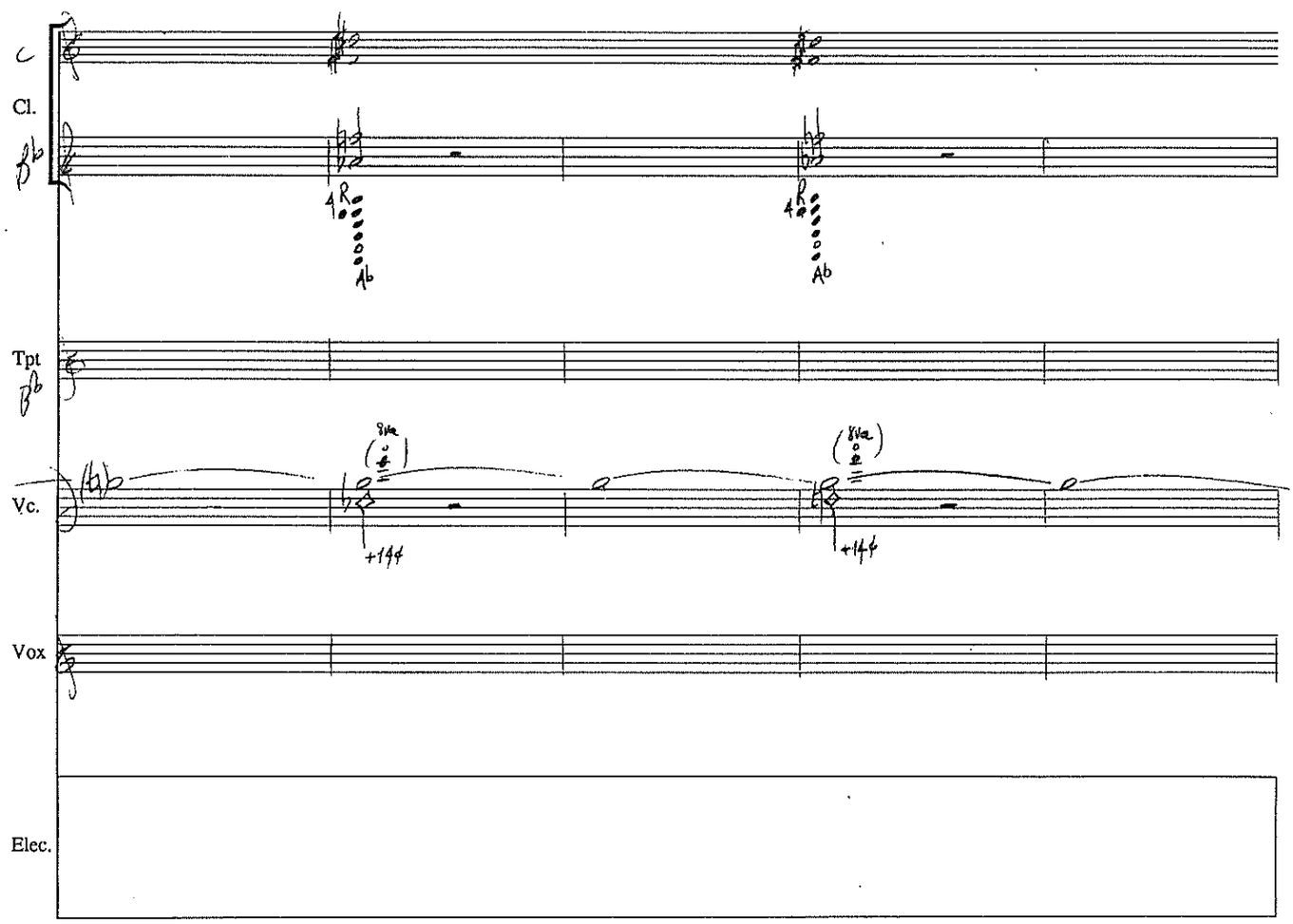


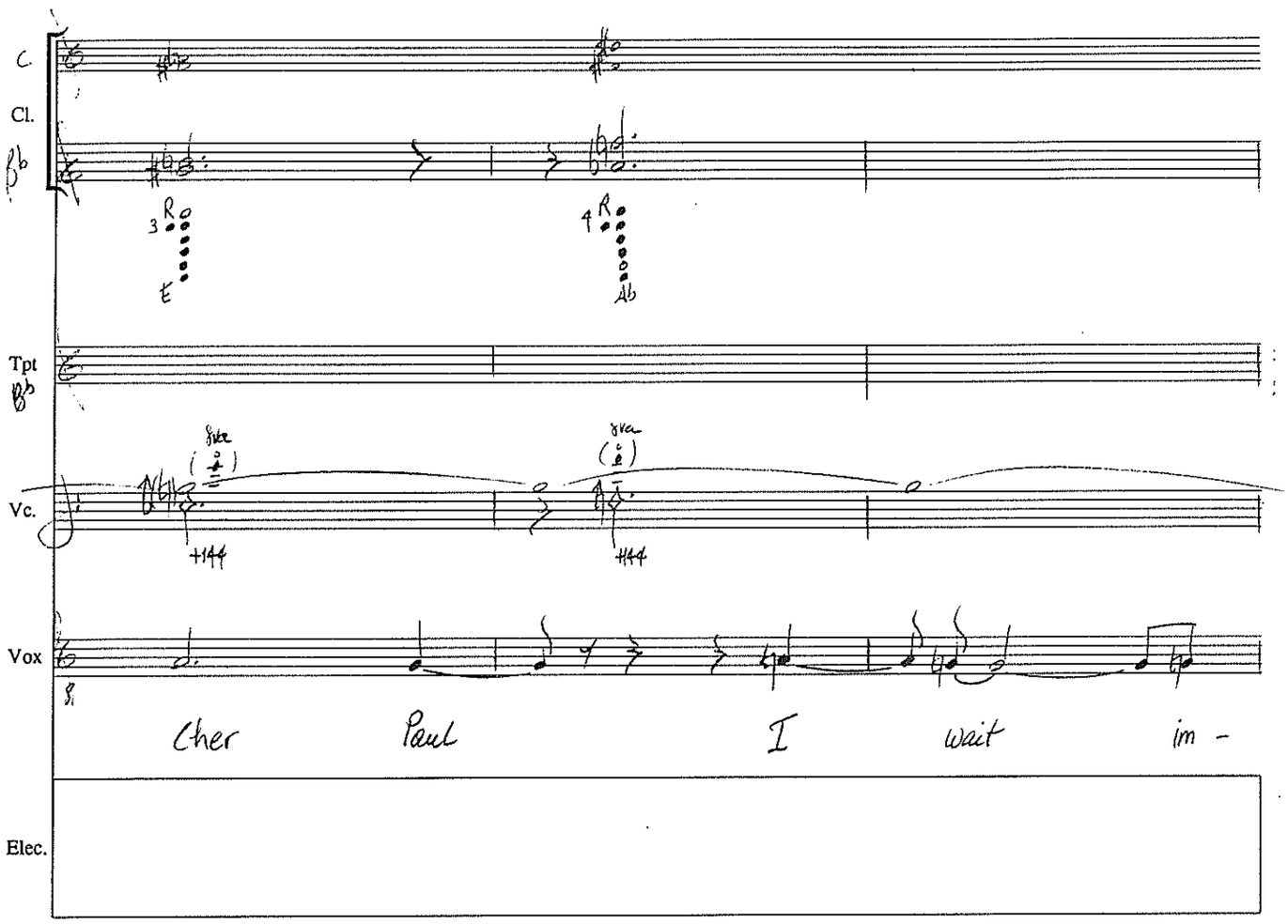

C
Cl.
Tpt
Vc.
Vox
Elec.
et les floraisons grasses, Moiser parmi les ossements

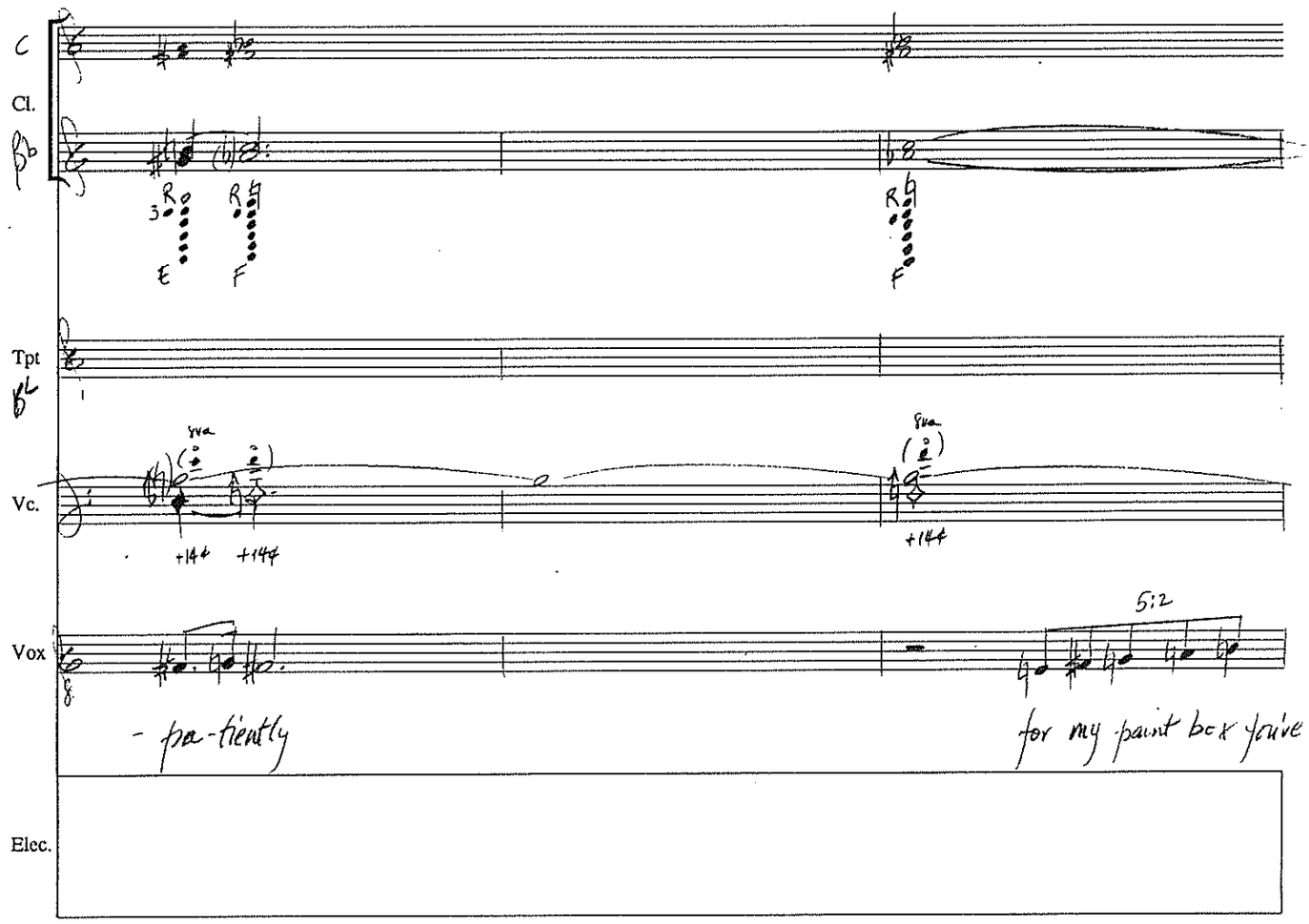

Cézanne's Doubt
Rothman
III-61
Slow - almost still
C
Cl.
bell-like (lontano)
simile
Tpt
very Long expressive phrases with bowing changes (i.e. sulpont. col legno etc.)
simile
Vc.
Vox
Elec.

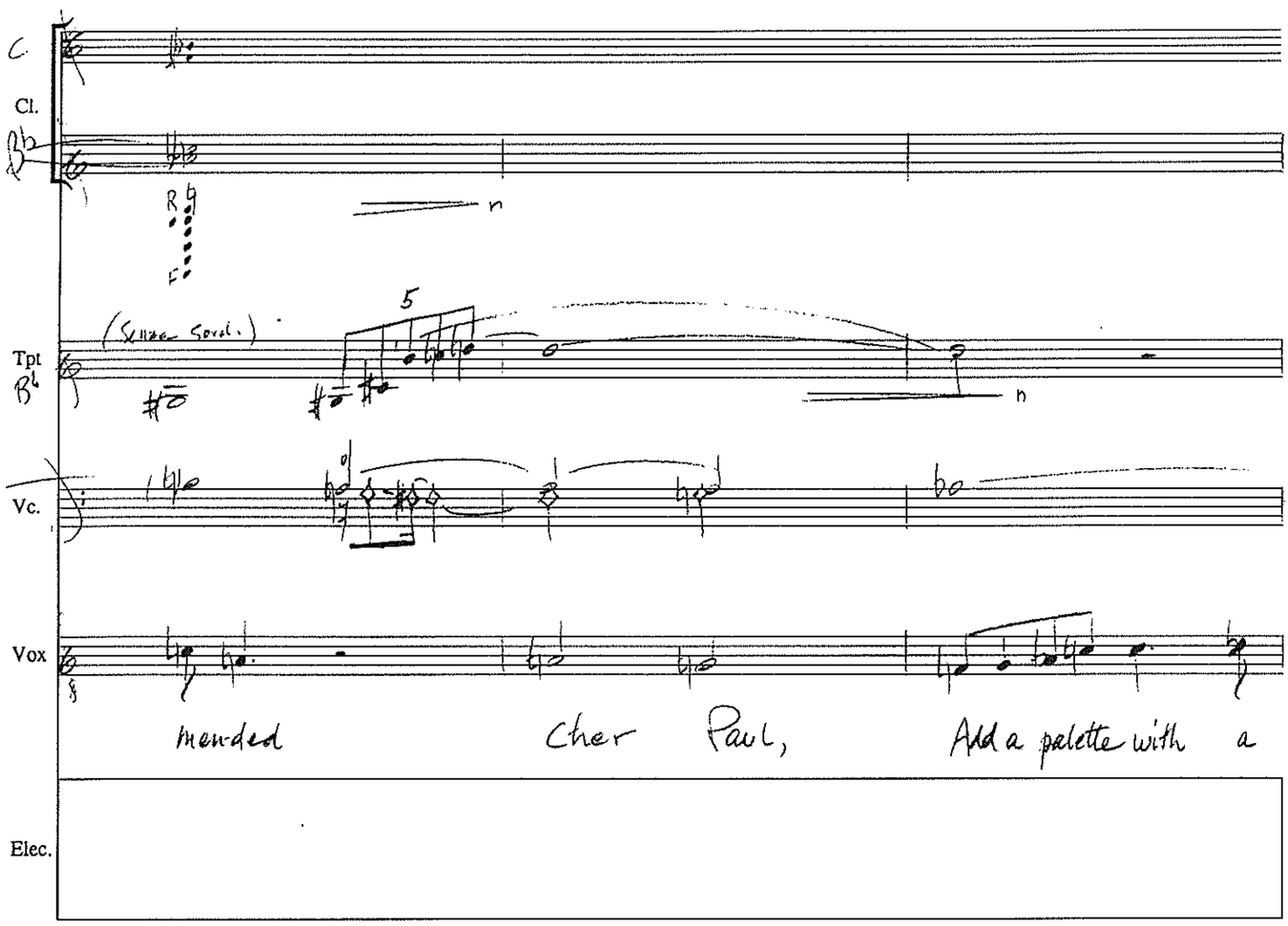


Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III - 62

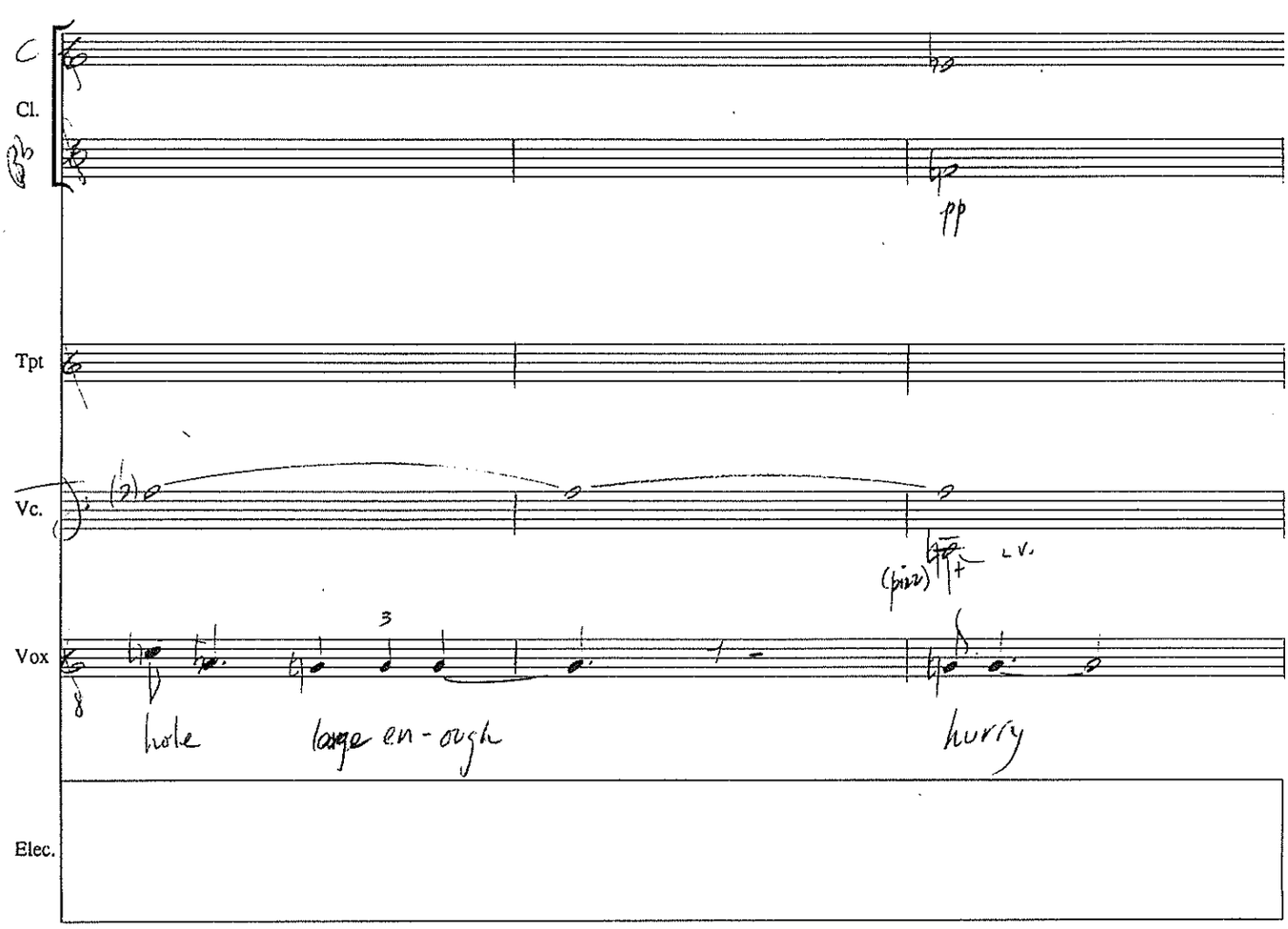


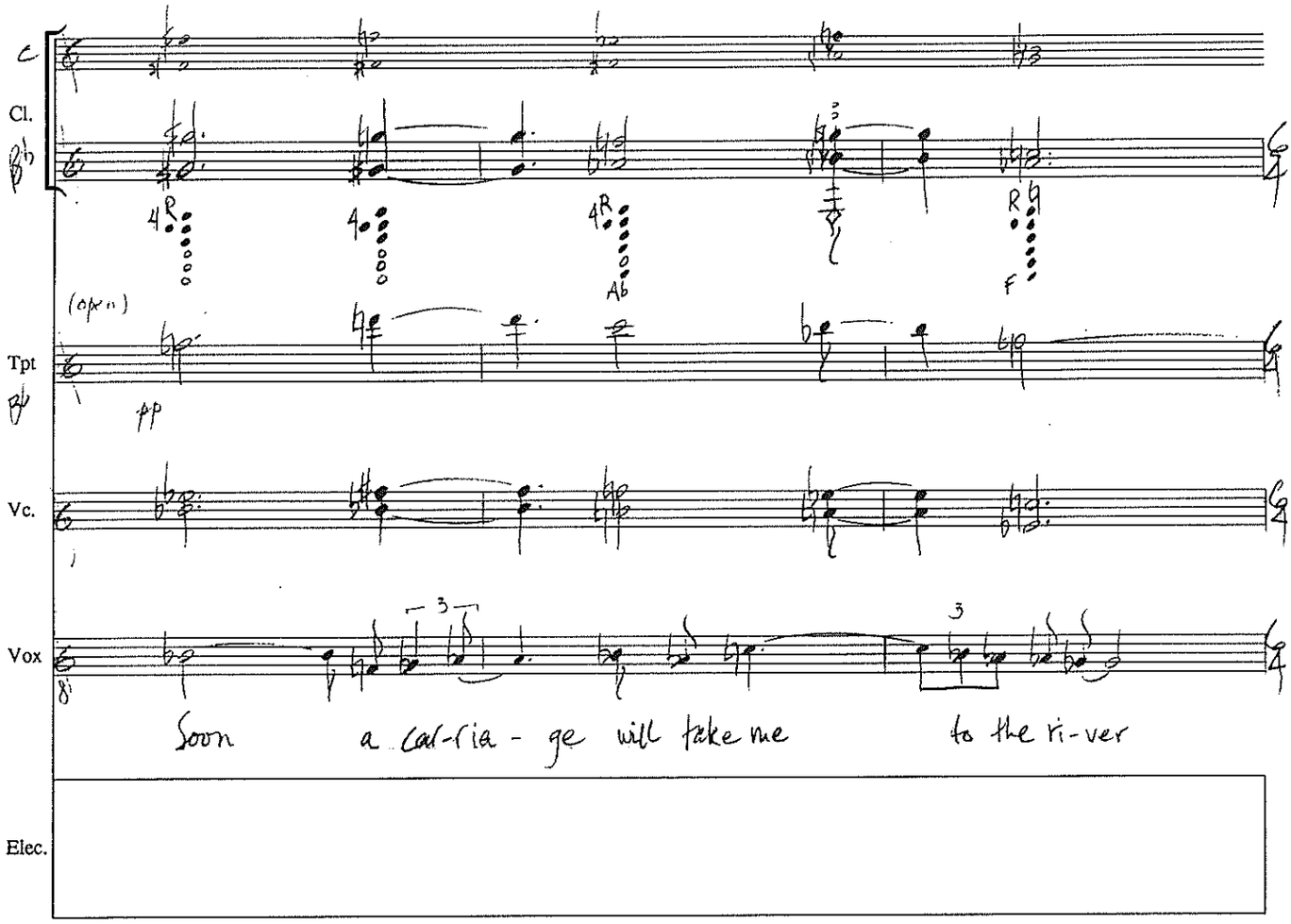

C.
Cl.
Tpt
Vc.
Vox
Elec.
Cher Paul I wait im -

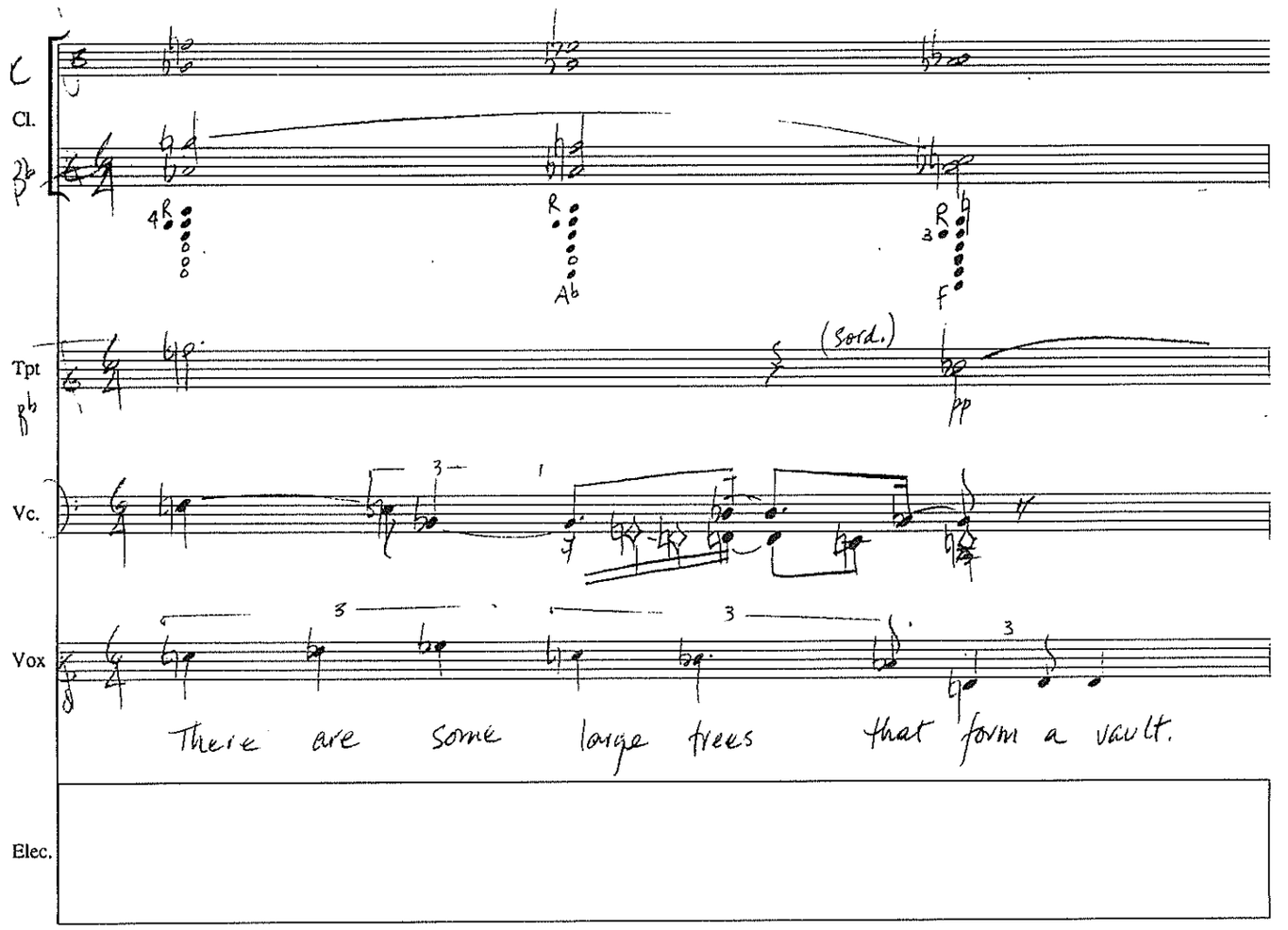

C
Cl.
Tpt
Vc.
Vox
Elec.
5:2
- pa-tiently
for my paint box you've

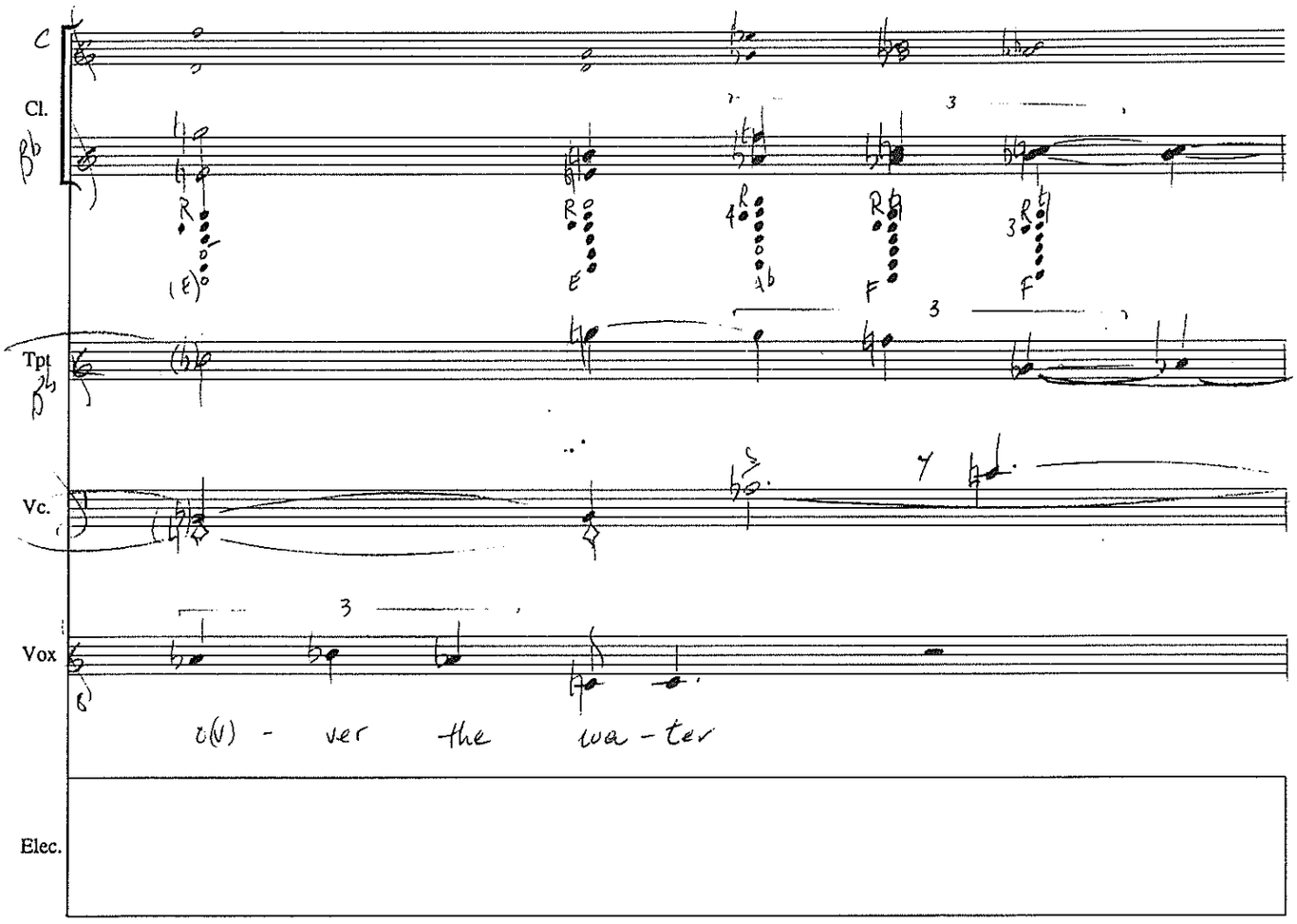


Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III-64

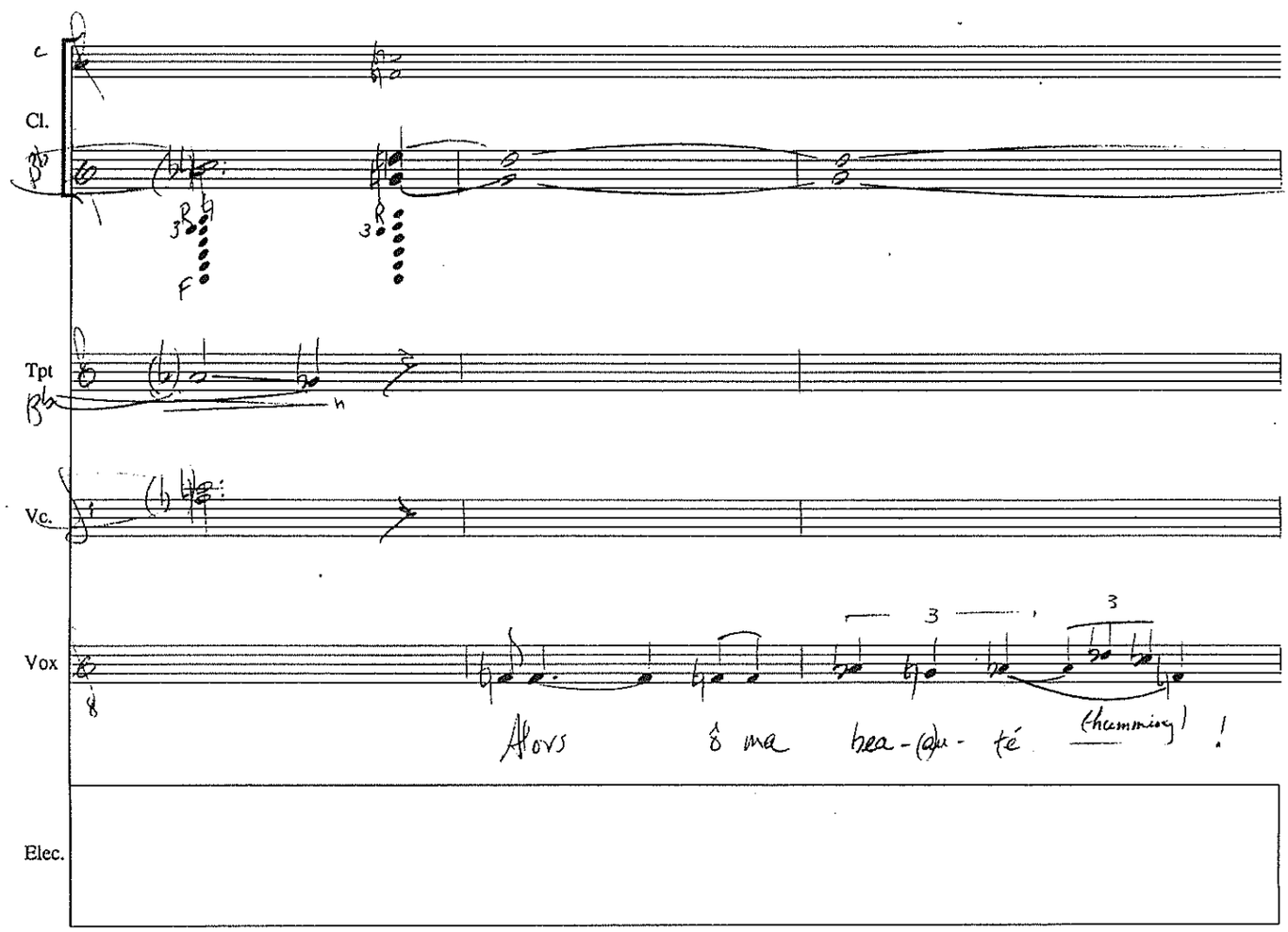


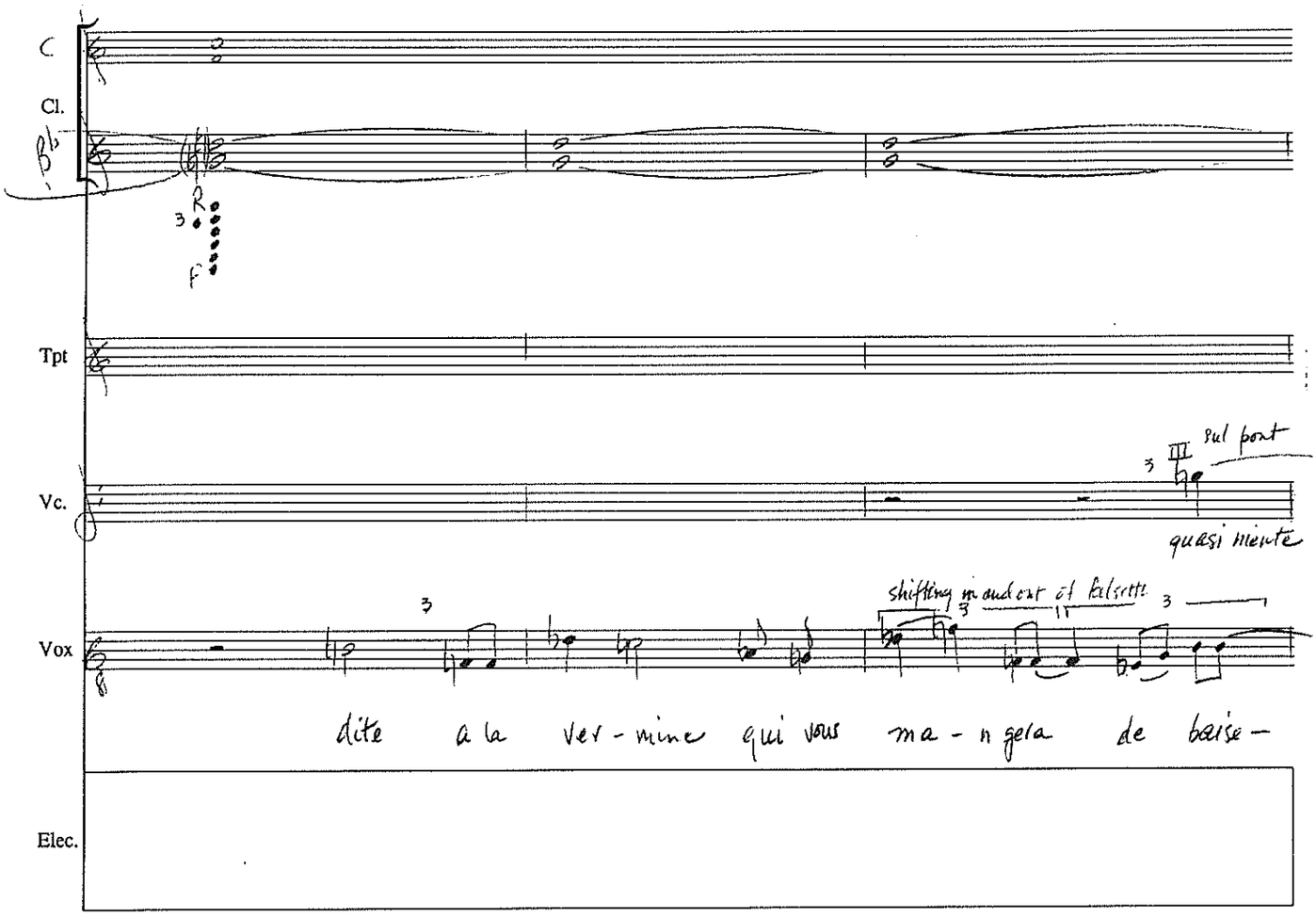

C
Cl.
B♭
4R
4
4R
Ab
R
F
(open)
Tpt
B♭
pp
Vc.
Vox
3
3
Soon a car-ria-ge will take me to the ri-ver
Elec.


C
Cl.
B♭
4R
R
Ab
3
R
F
Tpt
B♭
(sord.)
pp
Vc.
3
1
Vox
3
3
3
There are some large trees that form a vault.
Elec.

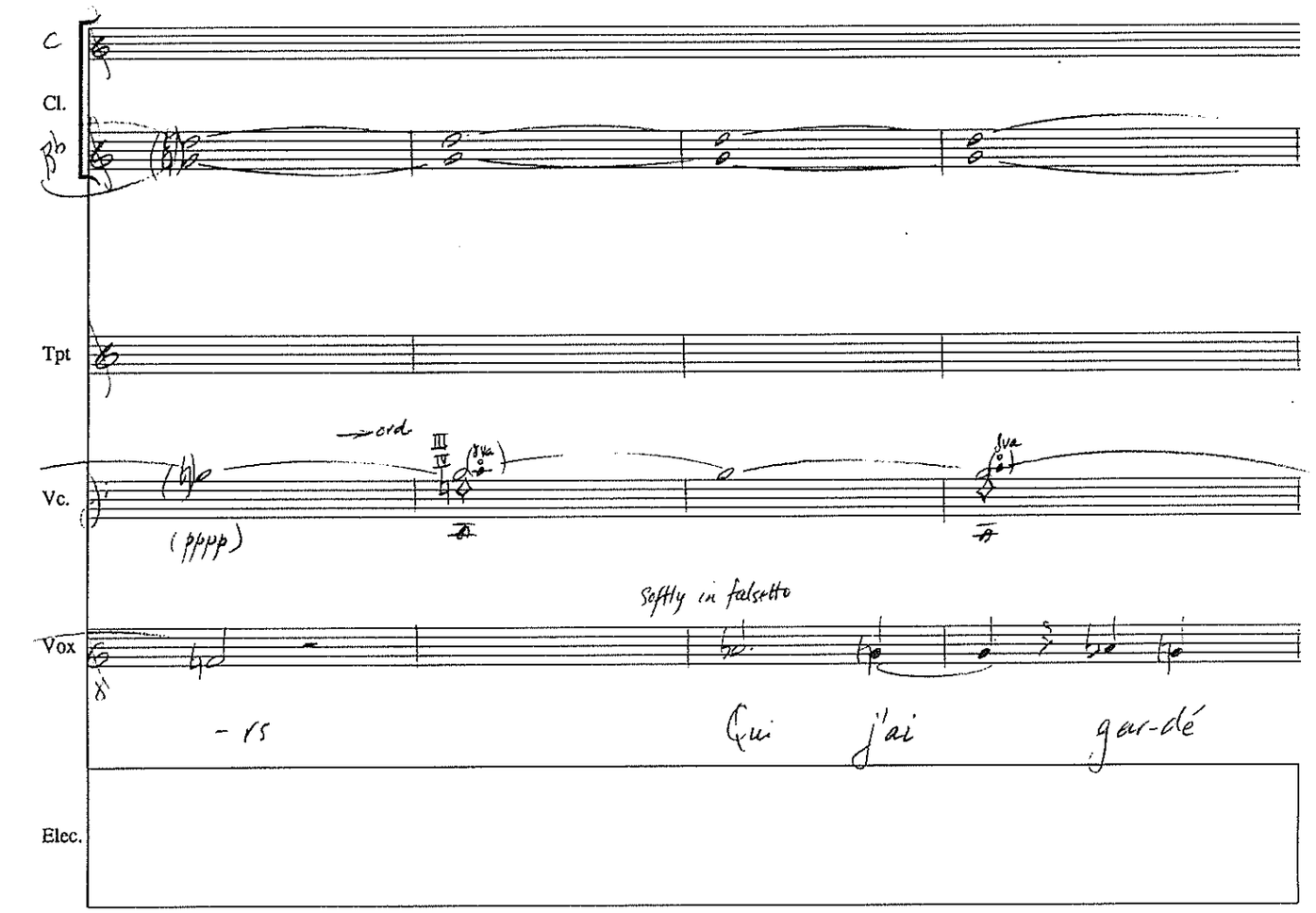


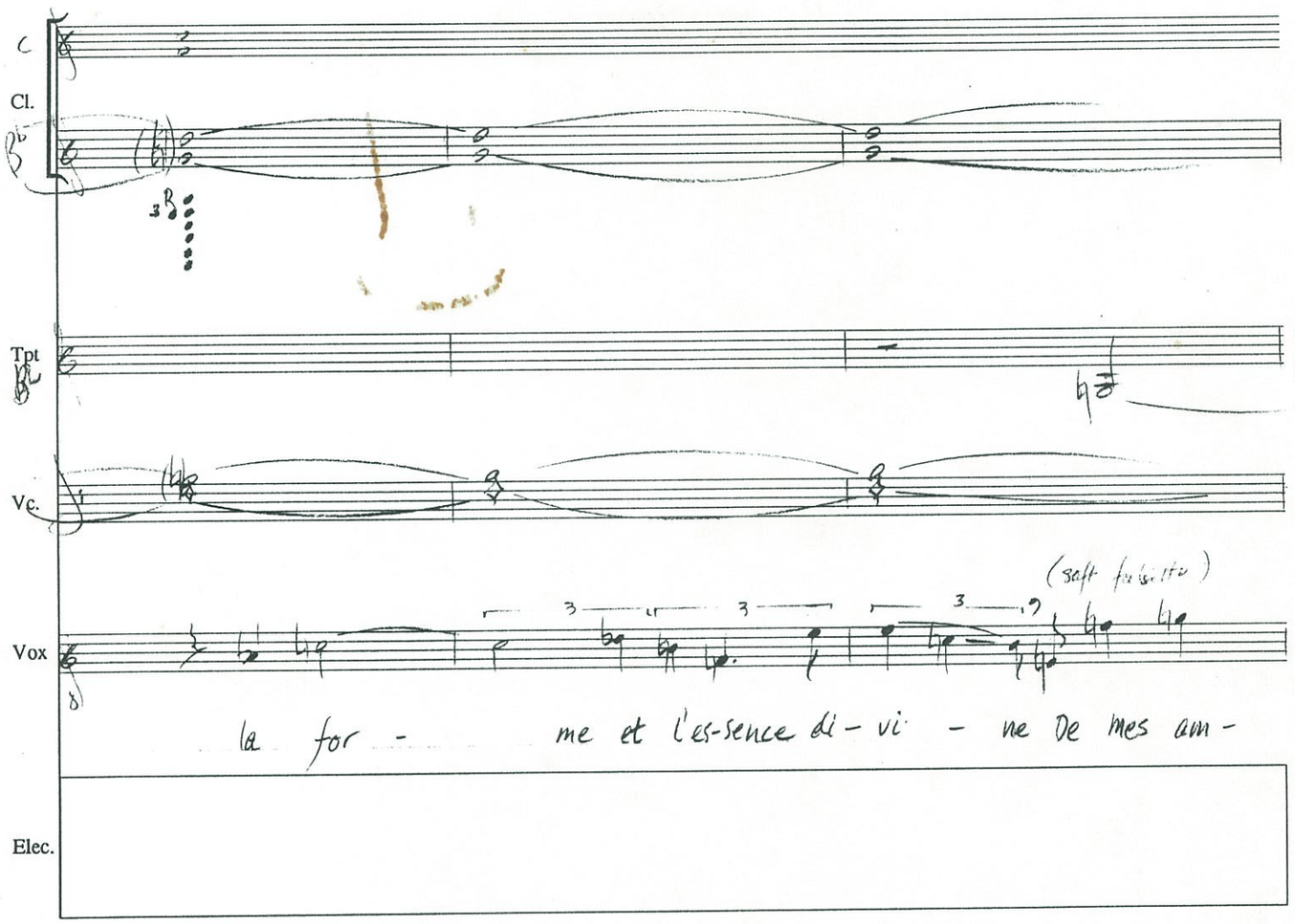
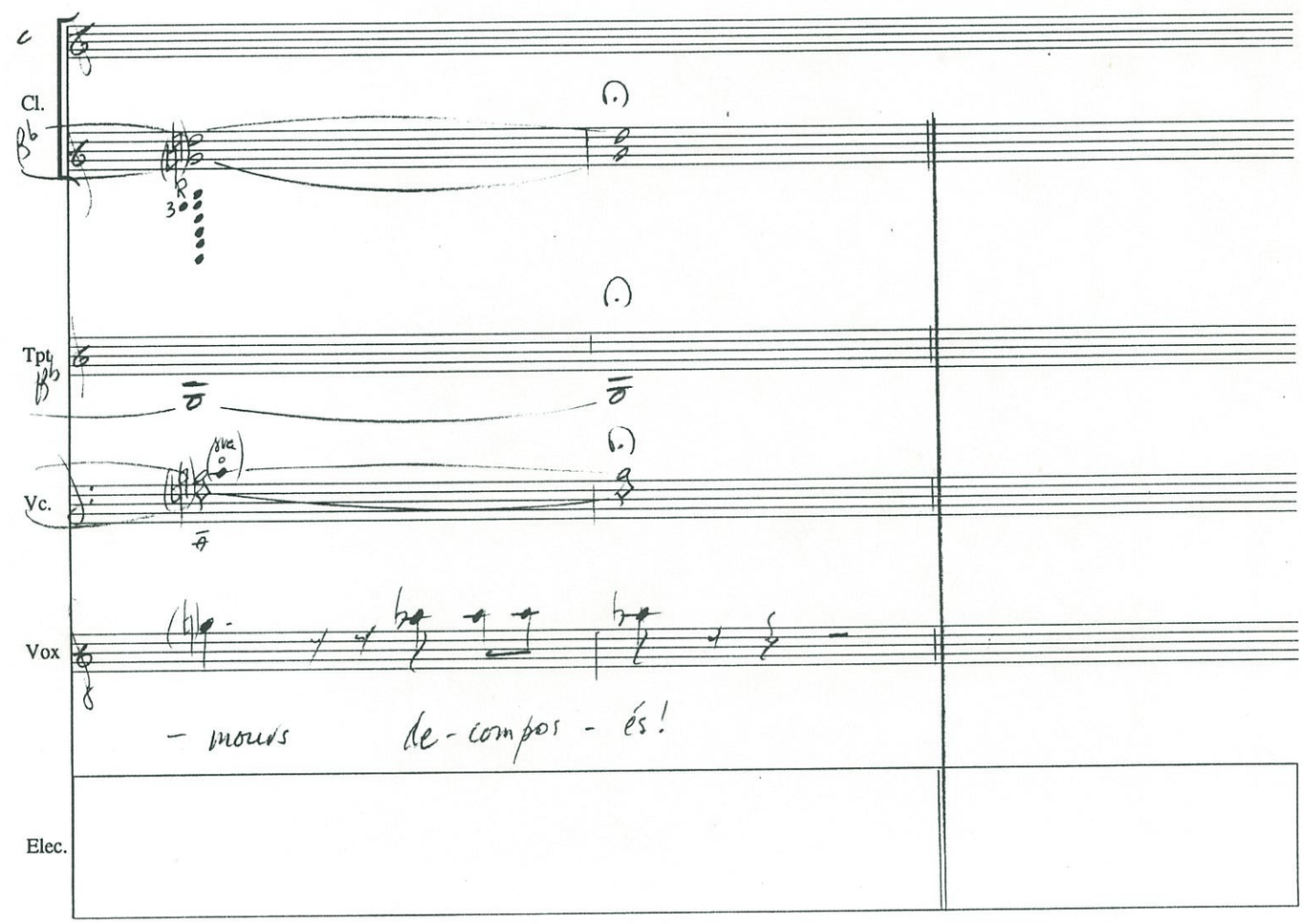
Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III-66





Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III-67





Cézanne's Doubt Rothman III-68