

Full Score

Aorta

short opera in one act

Rob Jones

Libretto: Tom Bronsema

Notes:

This short opera was a collaboration between writer Tom Bronsema and composer Rob Jones. It was written between February 2017 and January 2018 for the Opera Forward Festival 2018 in Amsterdam.

A rough English translation of the text is provided by the composer.

Storyline:

Ulrike feels that she desperately needs Eros to help her with the child, but also to save her from her greatest fear: loneliness. Lana is hopelessly in love with Eros but she doesn't know if he loves her back. Eros can't decide which women he should take, so in a moment of terrible cowardice he cuts out his heart and leaves it to speak to the women, instead of talking to them face to face. Just before Eros leaves it seems like he might choose Lana after all. Overcome by jealousy, and seeing no way out of the situation Ulrike kills Lana in her sleep. When Eros returns he finds Lana's lifeless body and Ulrike has disappeared.

Character List:

Ulrike: mezzo soprano

Lana: soprano

Eros: baritone

Ensemble:

Choir: 14 Sopranos
14 Altos
7 Tenors + Basses (always sing the same part)

The choir is positioned in an offstage stairwell for the majority of the piece. They enter the main performance space at Figure 17.

Choir always sings "ah"

Electric Organ with pedal manual, vibrato and tremolo

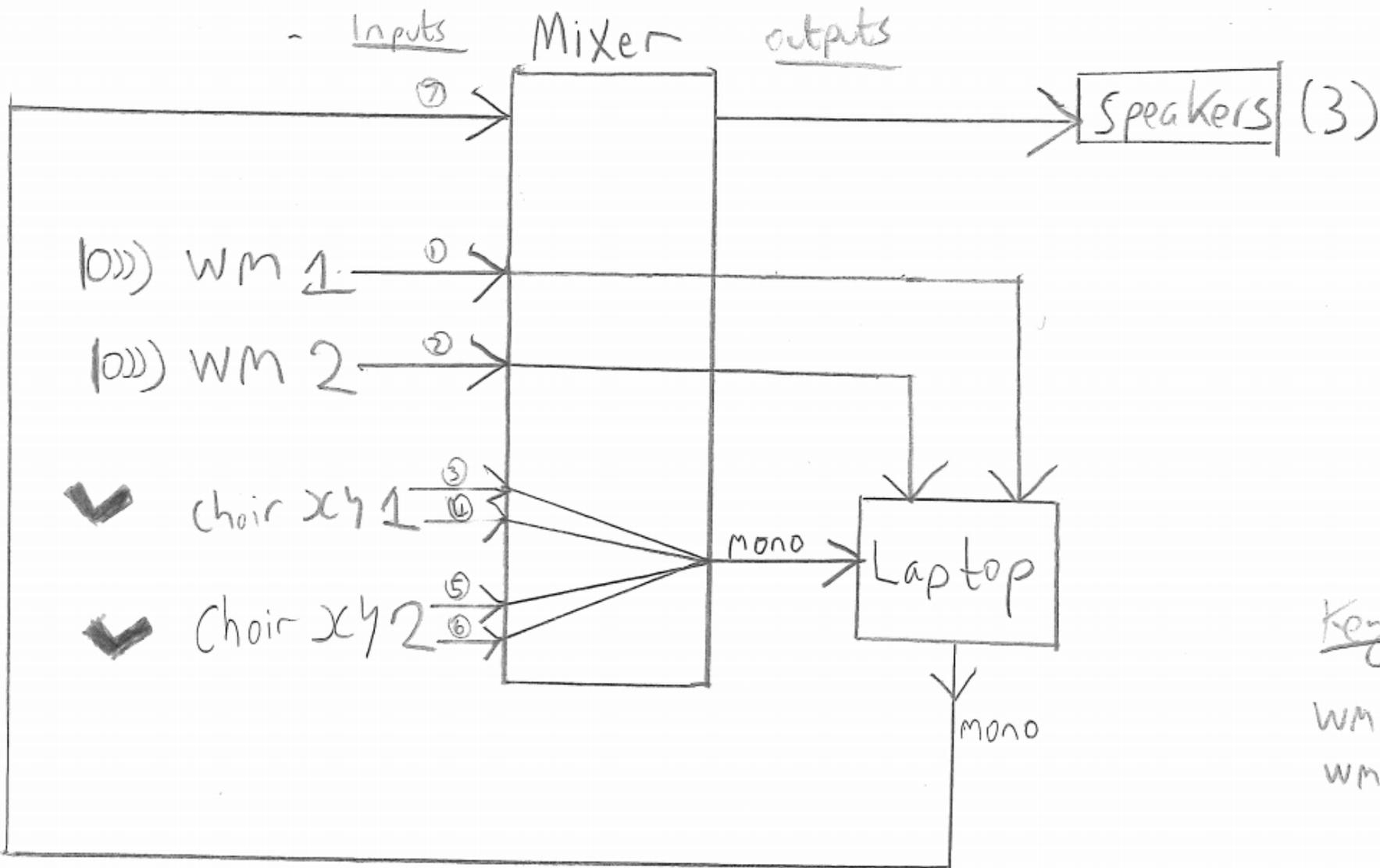
Percussion: Vibraphone (with motor), crotales, tam tam, gong, wood block

Accordion: Placed offstage with the choir, doubles all choir parts. Tacet from Figure 19 – end.

Vocoder: The voices of Ulrike and Lana should be used as modulators and the voice of the choir as the carrier. The vocoder sound should come from speakers placed towards the back of the performance space.

Duration: c. 20 mins

Technical Plan



Key:

WM 1 = wireless mic 1
WM 2 = wireless mic 2

Tech Plan (Provisional) with Sound

ONTWERP AORTA - KEVIN PIETERSE

- EL WIRE Licht strip
- DIAPROJECTOR
- BEELDBUIZEN
- BLAUWE KABEL
- TECHNIEK TAFEL
- KOOR

accordian
in staircase

electric
organ

percussion

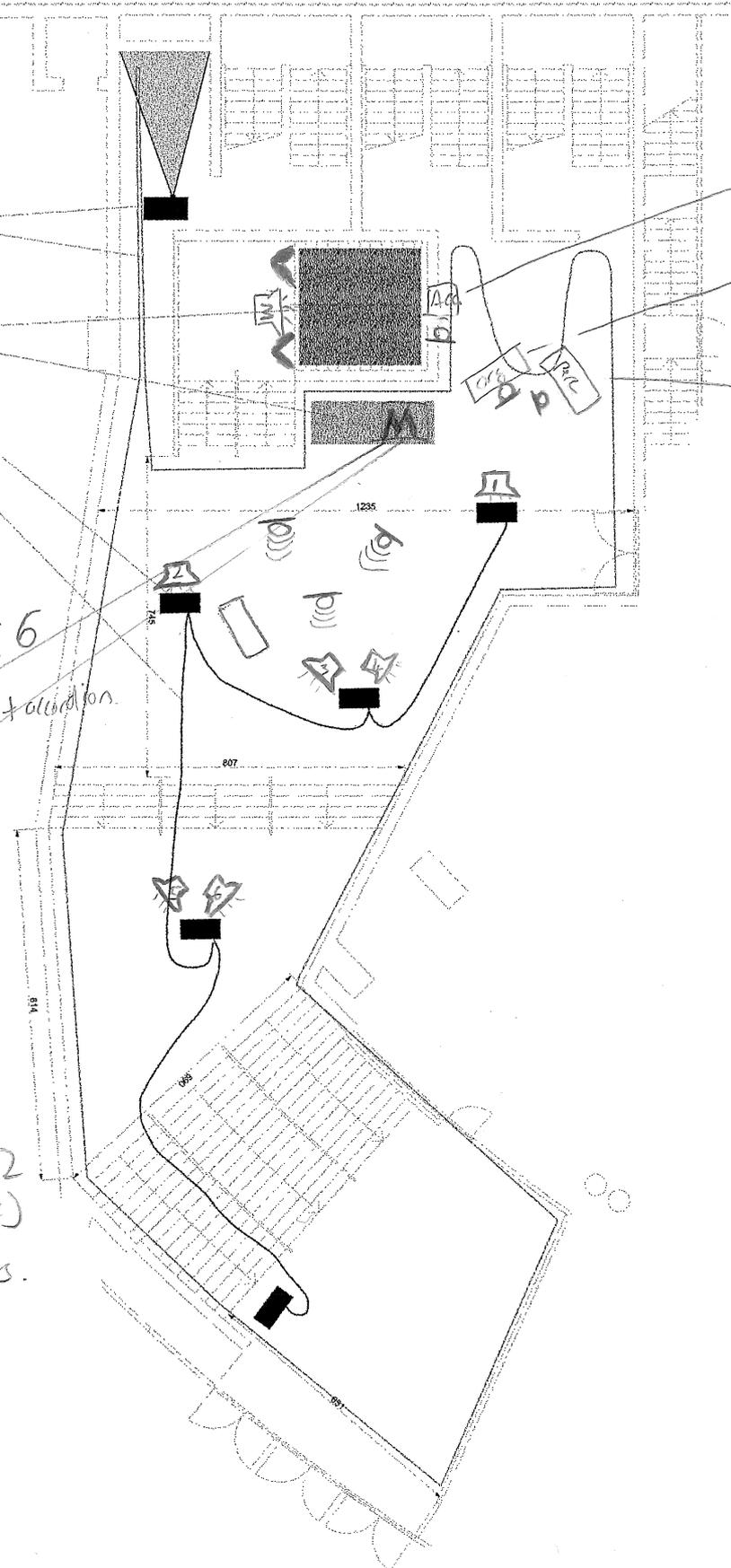
Sound design - Rob Jones

- = wireless mic for singers x 3
- = monitor for conductor
- = small speaker placed near TV screens x 6
- = mics for organ + percussion + accordian

Mixing desk

- Laptop + sound card
- = chair xy mics x 2
- other equipment:

- stands for speakers
- stand lights x 4
- music stands x 4
- power extension cables x 2 (for organ + vibraphone)
- cables for mics + speakers.



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*het koor zingt altijd "ah"
the choir always sings "ah"

Aorta

Scene 1 - Intro Ulrike and Lana

Libretto by Tom Bronsema
English Translation by Rob Jones

Rob Jones

1

Choir is offstage, Lana and Ulrike (pregnant) are in separate spaces onstage, Eros is also present.

Stage Directions: Repeat until the whole audience have entered

Tempo: ♩ = 62-72

Ulrike (mezzo): Withheld, introverted sound
pp quasi recitativo
Is dit m'n le-ven? Is dit m'n le-ven?
Is this my life?_ Is this my life?_

Percussion: Vibraphone motor on
Play mainly roll but occasionally boxed notes in any octave
colla parte, follow the soloist
mp pp mp pp

Vocoder: Modulator: Voices of Lana and Ulrike
Carrier: Choir, captured with overhead mics

Soprano: (+accordion)
colla parte, follow the soloist
p consistent, like an organ
ah

Alto: (+accordion)
colla parte, follow the soloist
p consistent, like an organ
ah

Tenor + Bass: (+accordion)
colla parte, follow the soloist
p consistent, like an organ
ah

4

Ulrike: De na - - - wee - en van zijn lief-des res - ten.
The a - - - fter - math of his love_ re-mains.

Perc.: *mp pp mp pp mp pp*

S.: *p sempre*
ah *p**

A.: *p sempre*
ah *p**

T+B.: *p sempre*
ah

7

Ulrike

De klank van stil - te in mijn huis.
The sound of si - lence in my house.

Perc.

mp pp mp pp mp pp

— \wedge *ped. sim.*

S.

A.

T+B.

**always sing with "ah"*

10

Ulrike

Ooo Ooo Ooo

Perc.

mp pp mp pp mp pp

S.

A.

T+B.

14

Ulrike

De klank van jouw naam is nu als ruis.
The sound of your name is now just noise.

Perc.

mp pp

S.

A.

T+B.

25

Lana

als het u - ni - ver - sum. Mijn hart staat op
like the u - ni - verse. My heart keeps on

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

p

29

Lana

her - ha - ling met de woor - den:
re - pea - ting the words: —

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

p

32

Lana

Ik hou van jou. Ooo
I love you.

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

p

Scene 1B - Trio, Eros can't decide

36 **3** ♩=62
 Stage. **3/4** Eros is between the two women. **3/4**

Lana

Ulrike
quasi recitativo (independent time from Eros)
mp
 Hoe te zor - gen voor je kind?
 How to care — for your child?

Eros
mp
 Ik weet niet
 I don't know
 Ik weet 't niet Ik weet niet
 I don't I don't I don't know

Perc.
hold ped. p

S.
p sempre

A.
p sempre

T+B.
p sempre



40 *mp*
 Lana
 De weg naar mijn bed?
 The way to my bed?

Ulrike

Eros
 Ik weet niet
 I don't know
 Ik weet 't niet Ik weet niet
 I don't I don't I don't know

Perc.

S.
p sempre

A.
p sempre

43

Lana

Ulrike

Eros

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

mp

Neem jij je ve - rant - woor - de - lijk - heid.
 Take on your re - spon - se - bi - li - ty.

Ik weet niet
 I don't know

Ik weet 't niet
 I don't I don't



45

Lana

Ulrike

Eros

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

p

Ik hou van jou.
 I love you.

Ik weet niet
 I don't know

Ik weet niet
 I don't know

4 (in time with perc.)

Eros *mp* *mp*

Ik weet 't niet Ik weet 't niet Ik weet niet Ik weet niet Ik weet niet Ik weet niet
 I don't I don't I don't I don't know I don't know I don't know I don't know

motor on
 l.v.
 (in time with Eros)
mf

Perc.



Eros

Ik weet niet Ik weet niet Ik weet niet Ik weet niet
 I don't know I don't know I don't know I don't know

Perc.



Eros

Ik weet Ik weet Ik weet Ik weet
 I know I know I know I know

No rit.

To Tam-Tam.

Perc.

Scene 2 - The Heart

5 $\text{♩} = 106$

62 Eros cuts out his heart and leaves it at the feet of the two women. Eros then exits the performance space.

Stage.

at any dotted line, repeat back to the beginning

Org. *mf fast vibrato and tremelo.*

70 **6** **7** The heart speaks.

Stage.

Heart

"Had ik een schaduw"
"If I had a shadow -"

Perc. Tam-Tam
pp ("Had ik een schaduw")

Voc. Modulator = voice of "Eros"
Carrier = brass synthesizer

Org. ("Had ik een schaduw")

8

76

Heart

"Dan kon ik beiden liefhebben"
 "Then I could love them both"

Perc.

Tam-Tam
p ("Dan kon ik beiden liefhebben")

Org.

("Dan kon ik beiden liefhebben")



81

Heart

Perc.

Org.



9

86

Heart

"De zon wordt mijn talisman in de liefde"
 "The son is the symbol of my love"

Perc.

Tam-Tam
mp ("De zon wordt mijn talisman in de liefde")

Org.

("De zon wordt mijn talisman in de liefde")

10

91

Heart

"Maar hoeveel mogelijkheden kent het hart?"
"But how many options does the heart have?"

Perc.

Tam-Tam
mf ("Maar hoeveel mogelijkheden kent het hart?")

Org.

("Maar hoeveel mogelijkheden kent het hart?")

94

Heart

Perc.

Org.

11

100

Heart

"Wanneer het gevangen zit in een lichaam?"
"When it's imprisoned in a body?"

Perc.

Tam-Tam
f ("Wanneer het gevangen zit in een lichaam")

Org.

("Wanneer het gevangen zit in een lichaam")

103

Heart

Perc.

Org.



108

Heart

Perc.

Org.

Scene 3A - Lana and Ulrike Duet

12 ♩=42-52

113 Lana and Ulrike have an a discussion.

Stage. **H**

Lana
in time with Ulrike
slightly quieter than Ulrike
p
 Daar kan ik niets aan doen._____
 I can't do any-thing about that.
 De lief - - - de,
 Love,_____

Ulrike
in time with Lana
mp slightly louder than Lana
 Hier kom jij niet mee _____ weg._____
 You don't come a - way _____ with me.
 Kijk _____ wat je doet._____
 Look at what you're do - ing.

Perc.
colla parte: in time with soloists
 Crotales
 l.v.
mp
 Tam-tam
mp
 Tam-tam

Voc. **H**

S.
p colla parte: follow the soloists

A.
p colla parte: follow the soloists

T+B.
p colla parte: follow the soloists

Org.
 no vib.
 4' colla parte: follow the soloists
pp
pp < *mf* > *pp*

Ped.
 no vib.
 16'
pp

115

Lana

De lief - de, die zo-maar kan toe-slaan.
 Love, _____ just like that can strike..

Die_ kun je
 You can _____

het kwa - lijk ne - men.
 blame _____ it.

Ulrike

Kijk wat je doet.
 Look at_ what_ you_ are_ do - ing.

Een on ge-bo-ren kind,
 An un - born_ child,

is nu al ge-doemd.
 Is al - rea - dy doomed.

Perc.

Tam-tam

Tam-tam

Tam-tam

Voc.

S.

A.

T+B.

Org.

mf pp

< mf > pp

< mf = pp

Ped.

118

Lana

Een mis - daad?_
A mis - take?_

Maar het ge - luk___ zou toch moe - ten lo - nen?
But hap - pi - ness___ will___ re - ward___ you?___

Ulrike

'T is___ een_ mis - daad,
It is___ a___ mis - take,

't is___ gruw - e - lijk.
it is___ hor - ri - ble.

Perc.

Tam-tam

Tam-tam

To Vib.

Voc.

S.

A.

T+B.

Org.

mf > *pp*

mp

Ped.

Scene 3B - Ulrike kills Lana

13 $\text{♩} = 96$

120 Lana and Ulrike go to their separate places.

Stage. H $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{3}{4}$ | - |

Perc. $\frac{4}{4}$ | - | $\frac{5}{8}$ | - | $\frac{4}{4}$ | - | $\frac{3}{4}$ | - |

Org. *Full sound, with subtle vibrato*
 $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{3}{4}$ |



Vibraphone
motor off

126

Perc. *mf*
 $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{3}{4}$ |

Org.
 $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{3}{4}$ |



14 132 Ulrike thinks about killing Lana,
and eventually moves towards her.

Stage. H $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{2}{4}$ | $\frac{3}{4}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ |

Lana *mp*
 $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{2}{4}$ | $\frac{3}{4}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ |

Ulrike *mp*
 Het kan toch niet zo zijn. Dat een
It can-not be this way. That a

Perc. $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{2}{4}$ | $\frac{3}{4}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ |

S. *p*
 $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{2}{4}$ | $\frac{3}{4}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ |

A. *p*
 $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{2}{4}$ | $\frac{3}{4}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ |

Org.
 $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{2}{4}$ | $\frac{3}{4}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ |

140

Lana

Ulrike

Perc.

S.

A.

Org.

niets aan doen.
anything about that.

Daar kan ik
I can't do

vrucht van
fruit of

de lief - de,
love, _____

Moet
must

149

Lana

Ulrike

Perc.

S.

A.

Org.

niets aan doen.
anything about that.

rot - ten
rot in

in de we - reld
the world _____

vol van pijn.
full of pain.

156

Lana

Ulrike

Perc.

S.

A.

Org.



162

Lana

Ulrike

Perc.

S.

A.

Org.

Daar_ kan_ ik_

I can't do

Het kan_ toch.

It is still_ pos-si - ble.

Een vrucht van de lief - de.

A fruit_ of_ love_

p

p

169

Lana

Ulrike

Perc.

S.

A.

Org.

Daar kan ik
I can't do

Moet rot ten in
Has to rot



176

Lana

Ulrike

Perc.

S.

A.

Org.

niets aan doen. Niets aan doen.
anything about that. Anything about that.

de we reld vol van pijn.
in the world full of pain.

Vocoder Stops Here

183

mf

Ulrike

In de naam van de lief - de.
In the name of love. de.

Perc.

S.

A.

Org.

Ped.

16'



190

15 Ulrike kills Lana.

Stage.

Ulrike

In de naam van mijn on - ge - bo - ren kind.
In the name of my un - born child.

Perc.

S.

A.

Org.

Ped.

Scene 3C - Choir comes onstage, Eros' Epilogue

16 Exit Ulrike, Lana's body is in the space.

17 Choir descends into performance space, led by Eros.

$\text{♩} = 104$

Stage. **H**

Perc. $\text{♩} = 104$
Wood Block
f *pp*

S. *mp* Very consistent sound, like an organ

A. *mp* Very consistent sound, like an organ

T+B. *mp* Very consistent sound, like an organ

Org. pure sound, no vib. *p*

Ped. pure sound, no vib.



201

Perc. $\text{♩} = 104$

S.

A.

T+B.

Org.

Ped.

207 **18** Repeat until the whole choir is in main performance space.

Stage.

Perc.

S. *mp* continue consistent, organ-like sound

A. *mp* continue consistent, organ-like sound

T+B. *mp* continue consistent, organ-like sound

Org.

Ped. [Play pedals only when tenors and basses reach the stairs - after around 8-9 repetitions]



212 (cresc. last time only)

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

Org.

Ped.

217 **19** Choir gathers around Lana's body, Eros sings.

Stage.

Eros *mp reflective*

vibraphone *f* *mf* gradually fade to nothing

Perc. *f*

S. *mp stagger breathing, if necessary*

A. *mp stagger breathing, if necessary*

T+B. *mp stagger breathing, if necessary*

Org.

Ped.

Har - te - loos, har - ten - bre - ker, hart - slag. Wat is de
Heart - less, heart - brea - ker, heart-beat. What is ___



224

Eros

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

Org.

Ped.

lief - de, wan-ner het twee ge - zich ten_ heeft?
love, when_ it has_ two_ fa - ces?

233

Eros

Of ma - skers draagt, _____ wie _____ er-om vraagt. _____
 Or if it wears masks, _____ who _____ cares a - bout _____

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

Org.

Ped.



241

Choir leave the space as one, they continue singing.

Stage.

Eros

_____ it _____ Of draait het toch om re - flec - tie? Heb ik _____
 If it _____ turns in - to re - flec - tion? Do I _____

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

Org.

Ped.

250

Eros

dit aan mij zelf
have my - self to thank

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

Org.

Ped.



258

Eros

te dan-ken? Laat ik mijn
for this?_ Let me te - mper_

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

Org.

Ped.

266

Eros

ge - dach - - - ten tem - - pe - ren.
 my thoughts.

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

Org.

Ped.



271 **20**

Stage. **H**

Eros

p quasi recitativo

Hoop is het ge - loof in de lief - de.
 Hope is the be - lief in love.

Tam-tam

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

Org.

Ped.