

# The Timbuktu Manuscripts

for flute and percussion

Erik Griswold

Commissioned by and dedicated to  
Caballito Negro – Tessa Brinckman and Terry Longshore

## **Instrumentation**

Flutist – flute, alto flute, small Indian-style brass bells, and voice

Percussionist – frame drum, prepared vibraphone, waterphone, small tray of 5 “junk” instruments, small gong, flute, ghatam, and voice.

## **Program Note**

The Timbuktu Manuscripts are a vast archive of thousands of historical manuscripts that document a golden era of Malian culture, when, between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Timbuktu was a major centre of wealth and Islamic scholarship. Writers such as Ahmed Baba covered a wide range of religious, scientific and other topics, which often placed particular emphasis on peace, tolerance and conflict resolution, for which Mali has become known.

In 2012 Islamist (Tuareg) rebels took over Timbuktu, putting the manuscripts at grave risk. From BBC Magazine: “According to their strict interpretation of Islam, they began destroying shrines they considered ‘idolatrous.’ The documents held in Timbuktu since its glory days...were equally vulnerable.”

In the face of this immanent threat, an unlikely coalition of library officials, bus drivers, taxi drivers, and canoers, led by Dr. Abdel Kader Haidara, hatched a plan to evacuate the manuscripts from Timbuktu, dramatically smuggling them, through extremist-guarded checkpoints, to safety in the capital of Bamako.

My piece weaves together fragments of this story with fragments of text from the Timbuktu Manuscripts. Part 2 features quotes from historic scholar Ahmed Baba, while part 3 quotes Leo Africanus, a “16<sup>th</sup> century traveller.” My source for this material can be found at the website of the Tombouctou Manuscript Project - <http://www.tombouctoumanuscripts.org>.

# The Timbuktu Manuscripts

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## I. Timbuktu - Mali

Relaxed Groove ♩ = 72

Flute

gliss. *mf* gliss. *p*

Voice

Tim-buk - tu Ma - li

Frame Drum

*mf* repeat ad lib *p*

4

*f* gliss. *mf* gliss.

Song - hai Tua - reg

*f* *mf*

8

*p* *f*

*p* *f*

2  
12

gliss. *mf* gliss. *p*

Mus-lim Chris-tian

15

gliss. *f* gliss. *mf* (percussive tonguing)

Know - ledge

18

gliss. *p* gliss. *f*

Pow - er

22

Flute - open improv

*p* *cresc.*

27

*f*

*f*

*f*

31

*f*

*f*

*f*

34

3 Times

gliss.

*mf*

*p*

Tim-buk - tu

Ma-li

*mf*

*p*

38

*ff*

*ff*

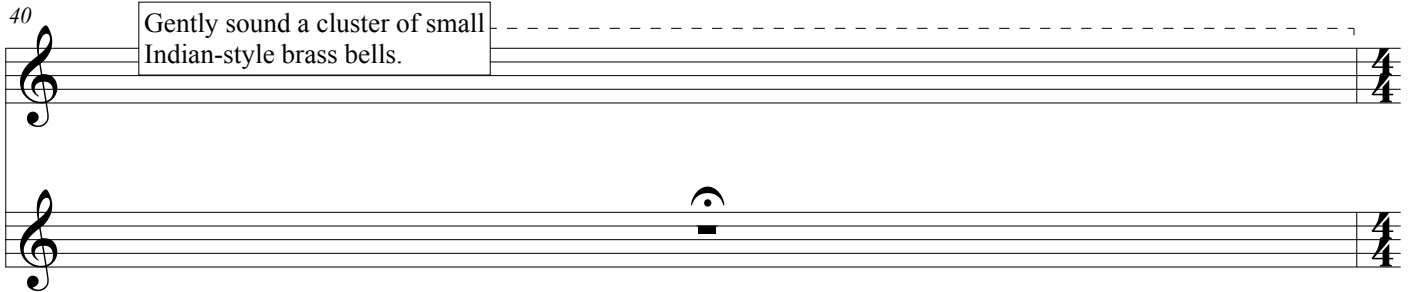
*ff*

*ff*

## 2. The library of Ahmed Baba

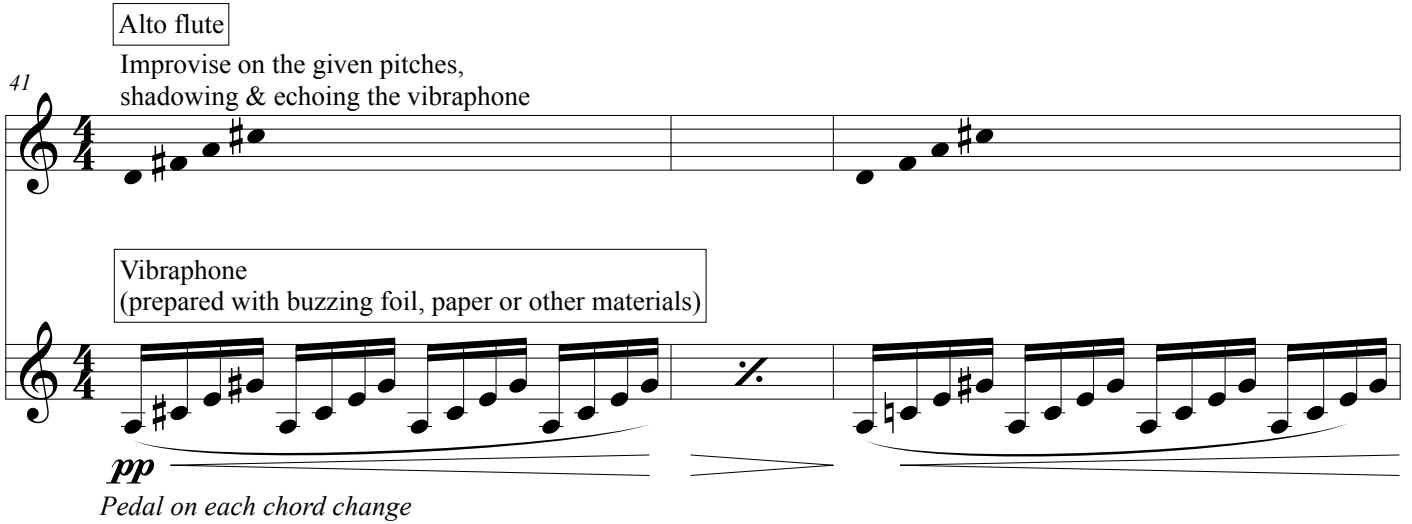
40

Gently sound a cluster of small Indian-style brass bells.



41

Alto flute  
Improvise on the given pitches,  
shadowing & echoing the vibraphone



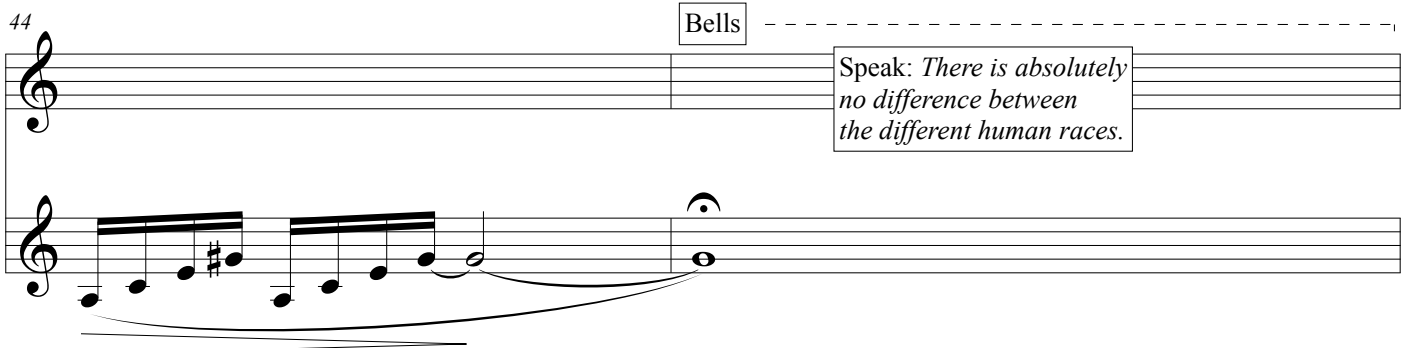
Vibraphone  
(prepared with buzzing foil, paper or other materials)

*pp*  
Pedal on each chord change

44

Bells

Speak: *There is absolutely no difference between the different human races.*



46

Alto flute

