Evocations

For piano and optional vocalist

(Version for higher voices)

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This series of short pieces was loosely inspired by Debussy's practice of writing the titles of his Preludes for Piano at the end of each score rather than at the beginning. This back-titling has long been misunderstood as a caution against taking the titles too seriously, rather than as what it is, an affirmation of the power of evocation as opposed to description--something that Debussy learned from Mallarmé.

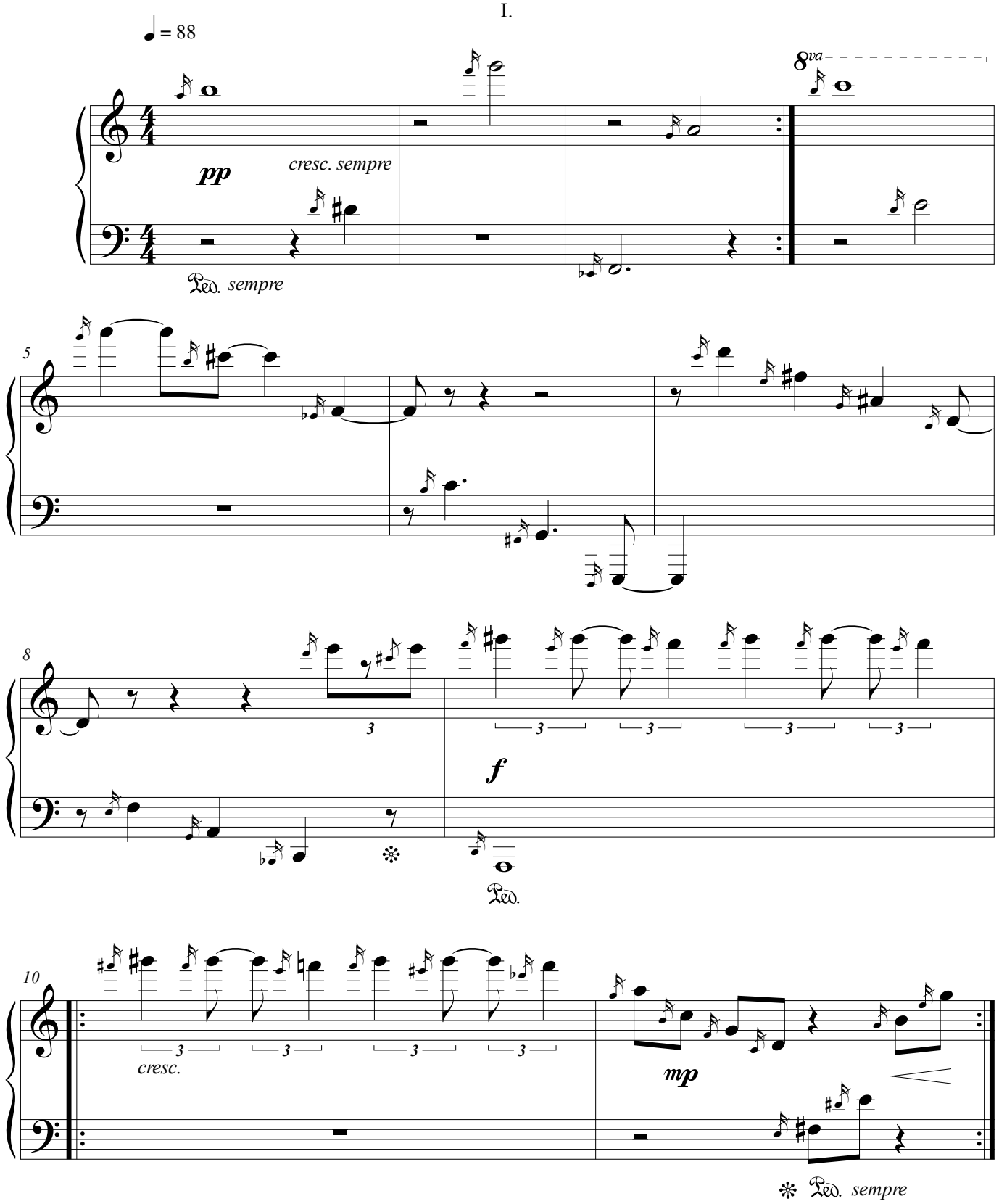
In *Evocations*, each piece concludes with an enigmatic statement that in one way or another comments on what has been heard--perhaps as an explanation or disclosure, perhaps as a critique or reflection, perhaps congenial, perhaps ironic--no one model fits. The statements come in alternate forms: one that can be spoken or sung by the pianist, and one to be performed by a singer. This score assumes high voice (the vocal lines may of course be sung either as written or an octave lower); there is a separate score for baritone.

In performances with a vocalist, the pianist is silent except when instructed otherwise. In whatever way the vocal parts are realized, the pieces are all evocations in the most literal sense of the term: they draw something out of the voice.

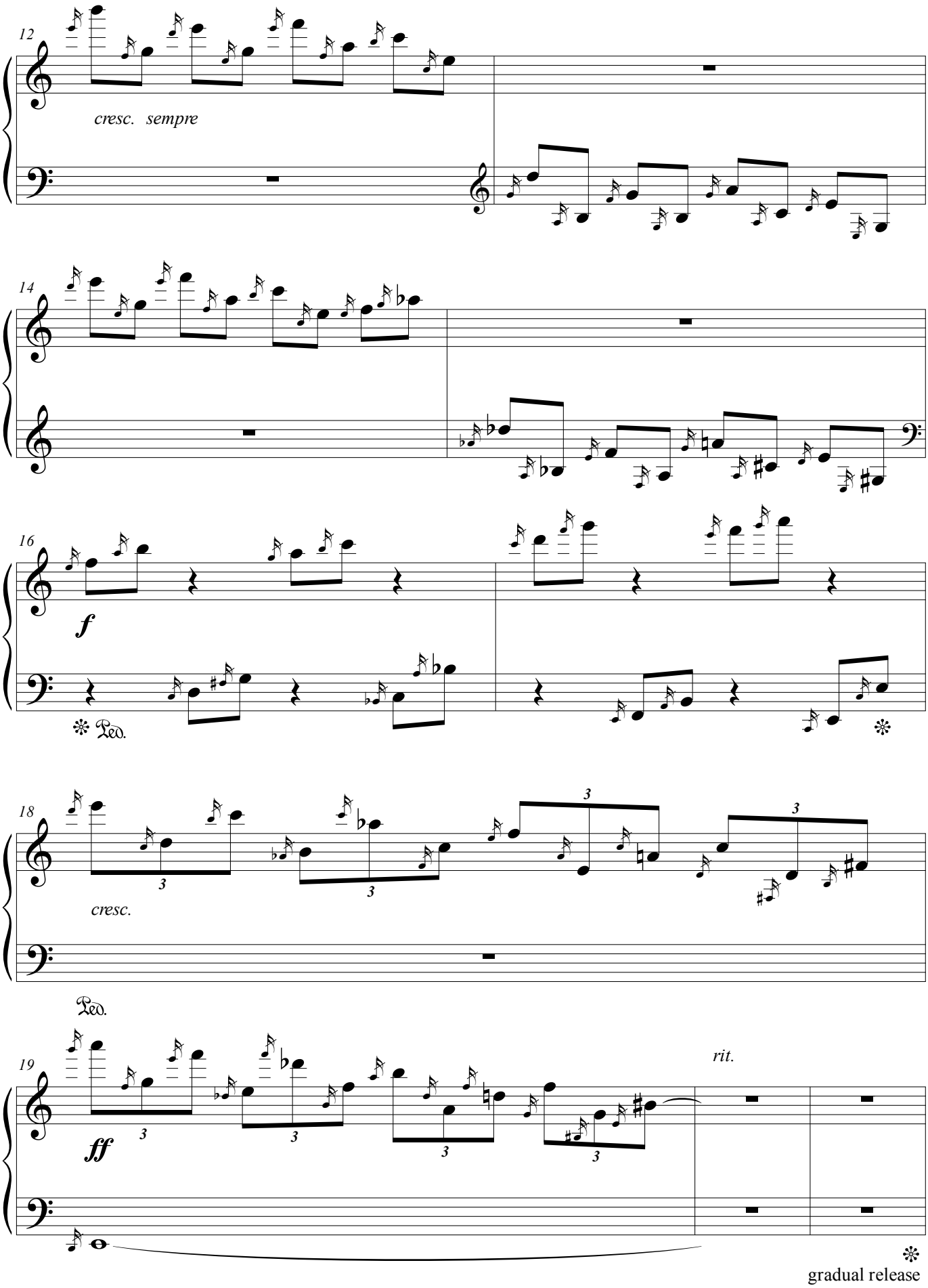
Like a collection of Preludes, this one is equally open to being played in full as a continuous whole and used as a source of short pieces to be played in any order or number as the performer(s) wish. A full performance will run about 25 minutes inclusive of pauses between pieces. The statements voiced at the end of each piece are drawn from varied sources, each used only once. All are in the public domain.

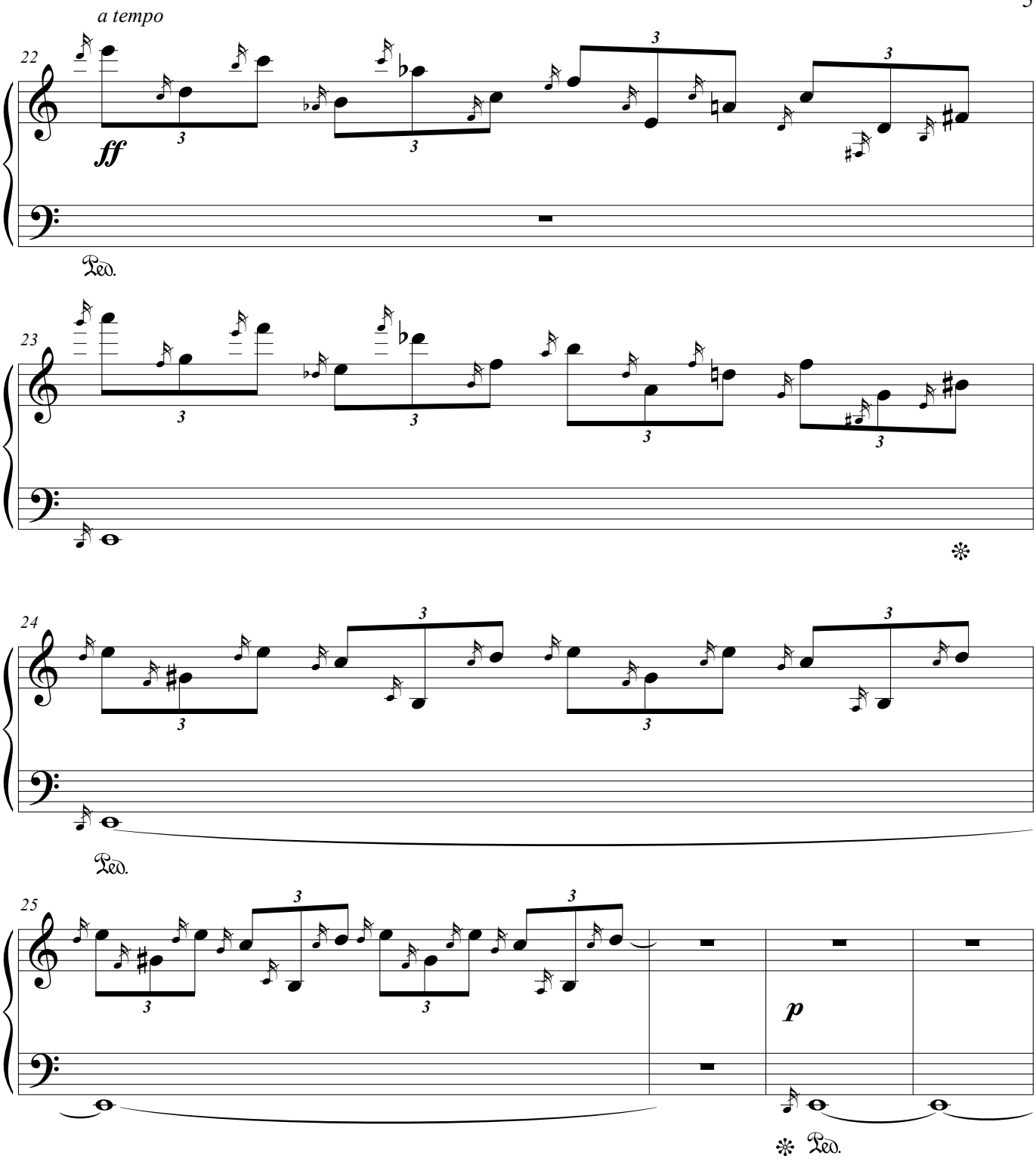
Evocations

I.

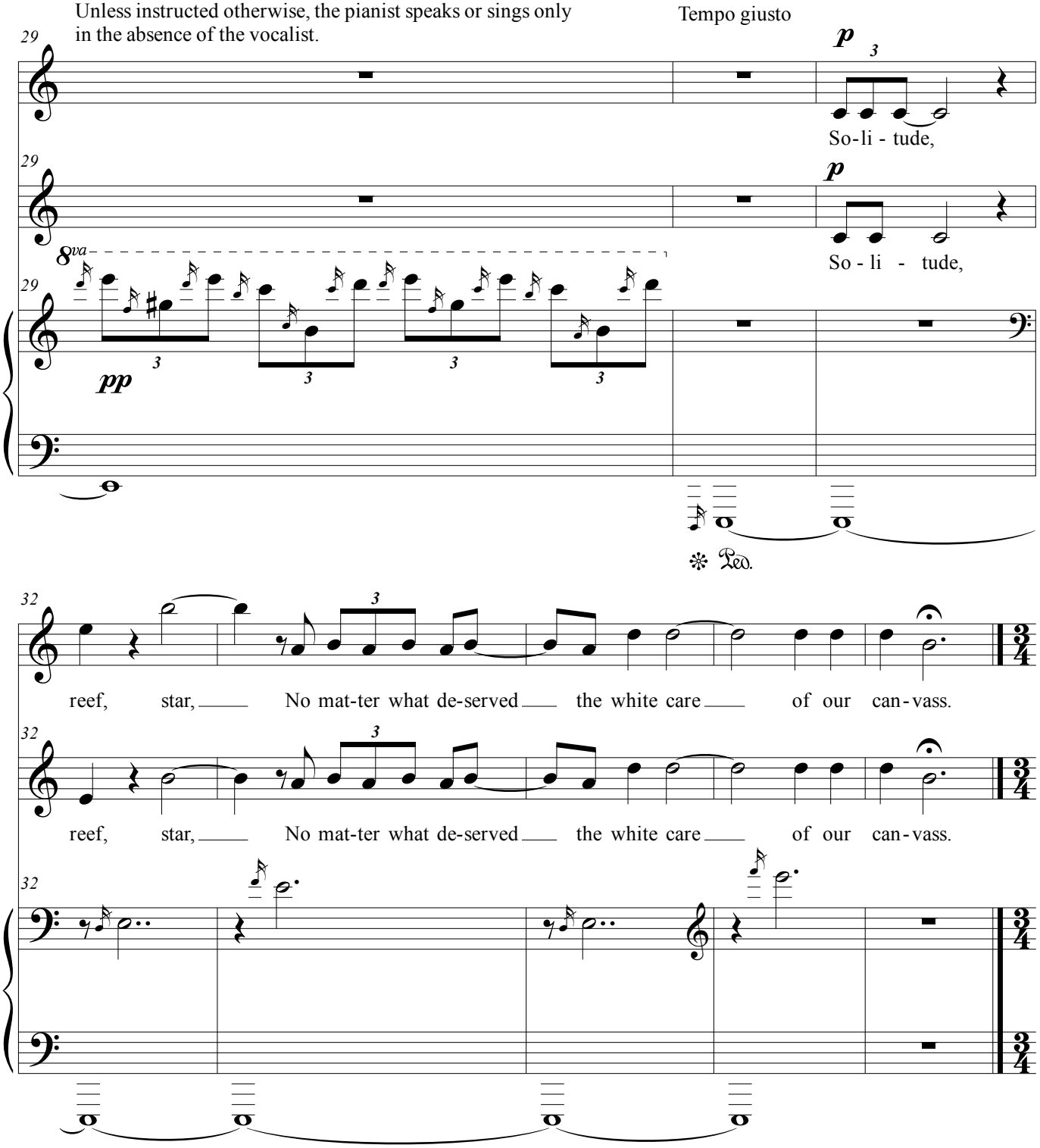


©2013


12
cresc. sempre
14
16
f
Ped.
18
3
cresc.
Ped.
19
ff
rit.
gradual release


a tempo
22
ff
Ped.
23
24
Ped.
25
p
Ped.

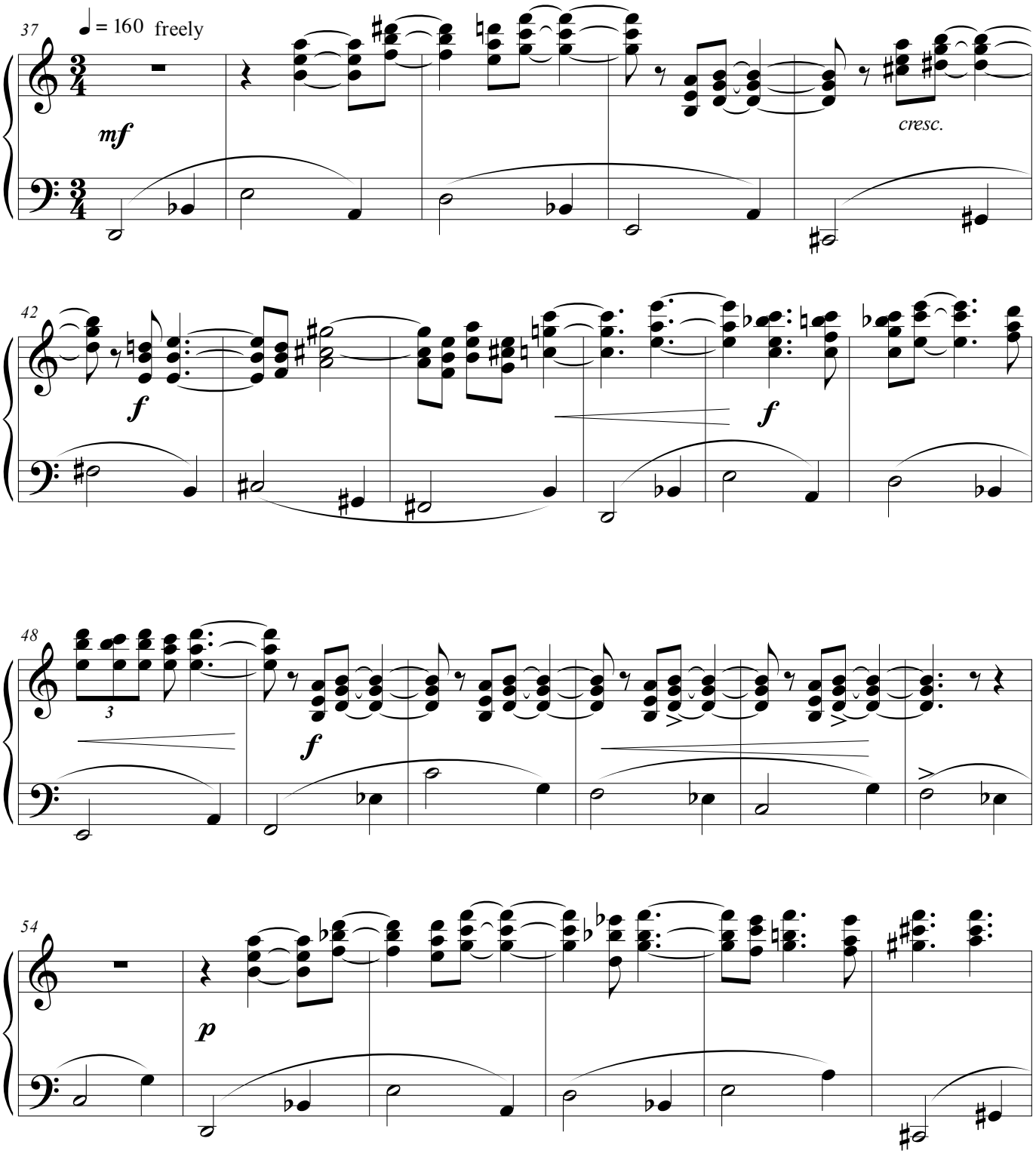
The upper staff for a vocalist; the lower staff for the pianist.
Unless instructed otherwise, the pianist speaks or sings only
in the absence of the vocalist.

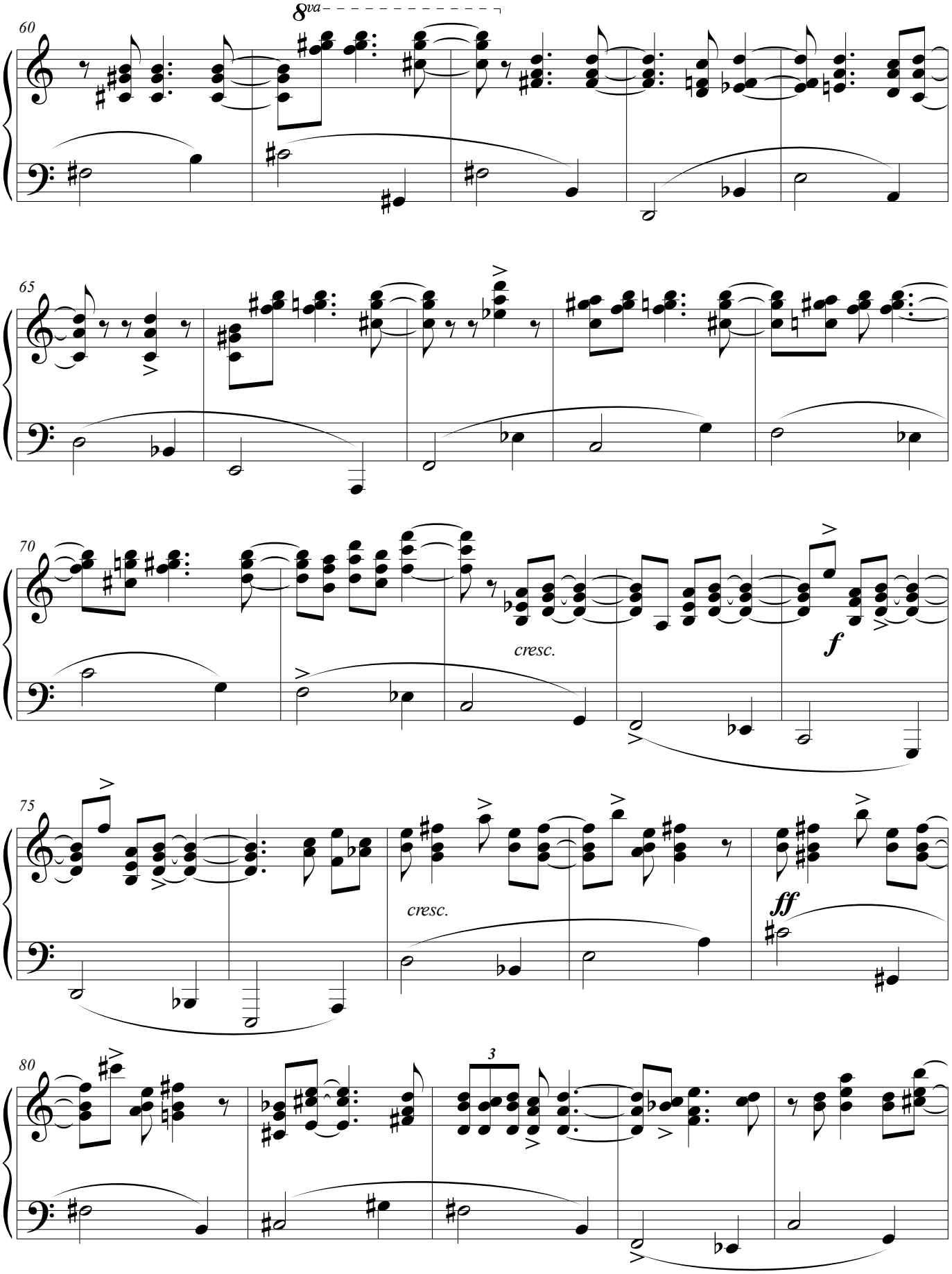


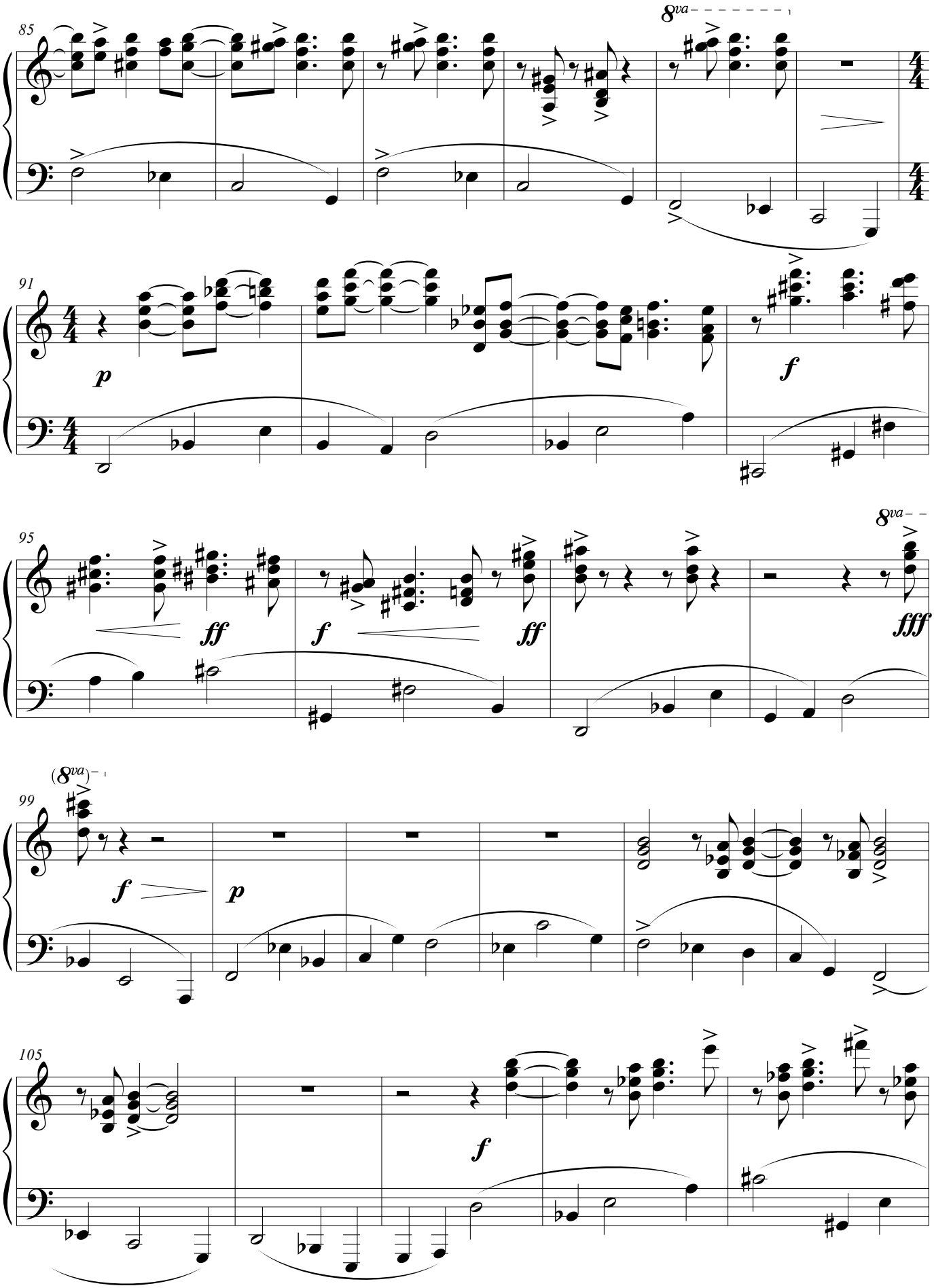
Solitude, reef, star--
No matter what deserved
The white care of our canvass.

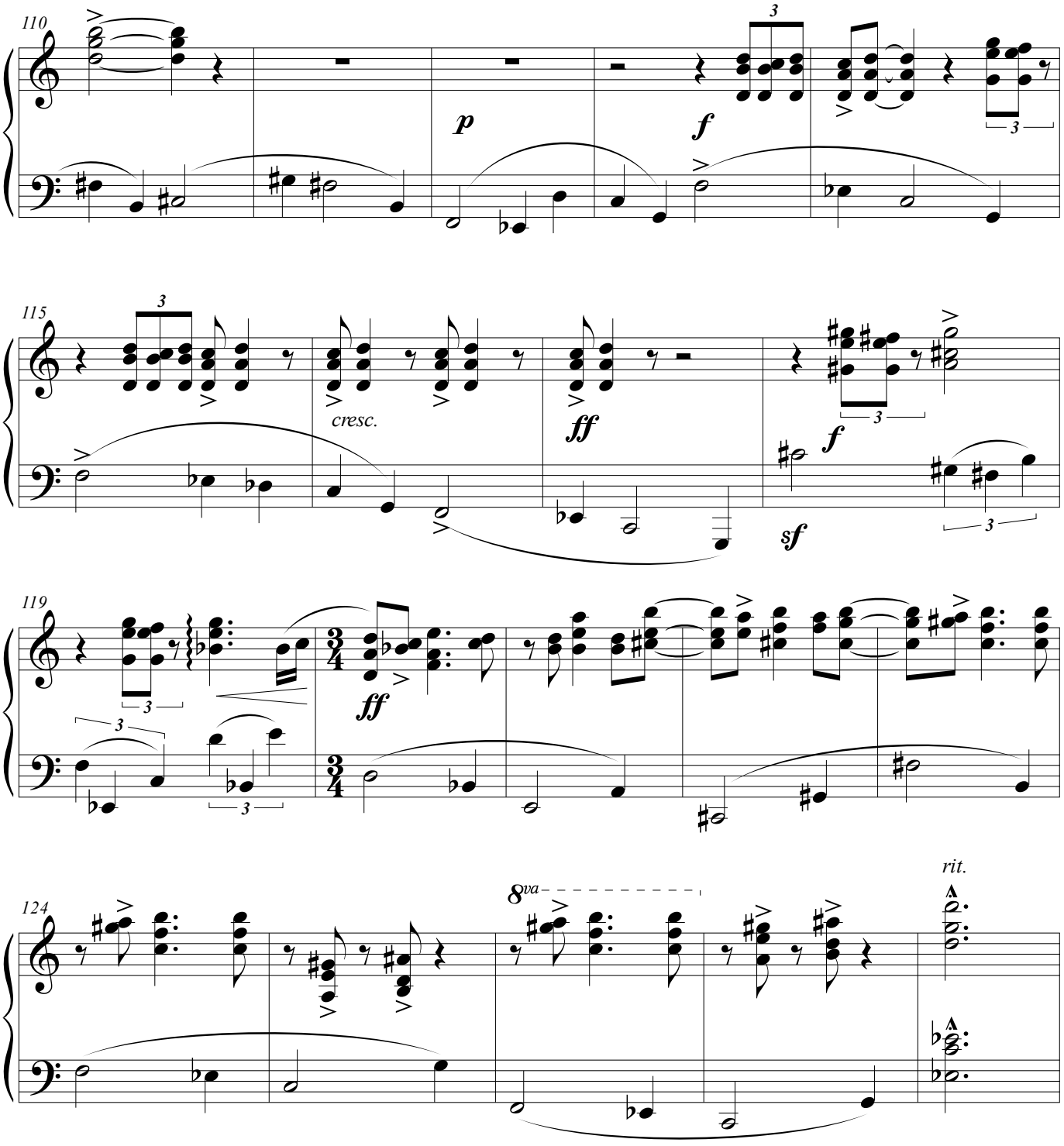
(Mallarme, "Salut")

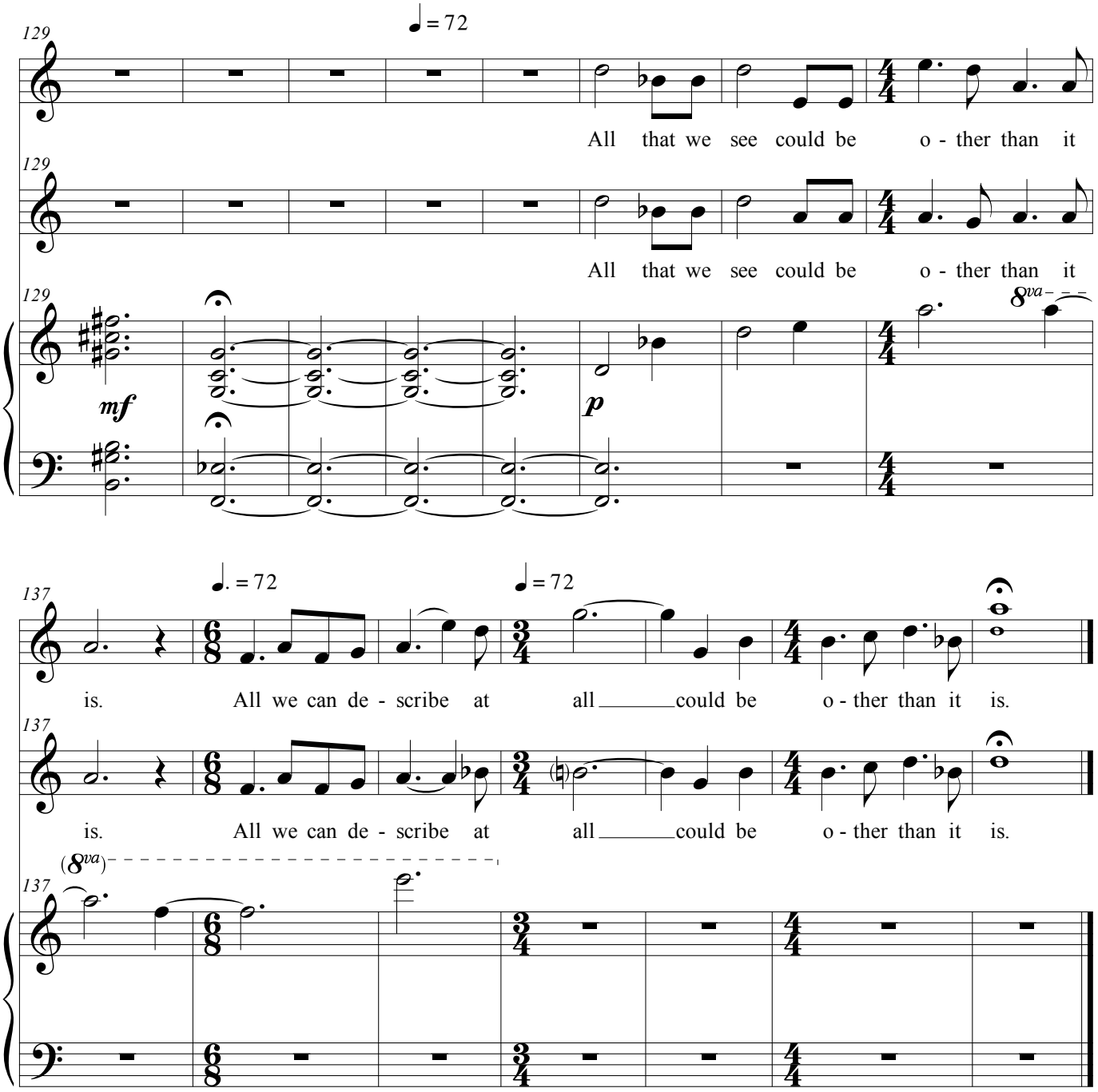
II.




8va
60
65
70
cresc.
f
75
cresc.
ff
80
3


85
8va
91
p
f
95
ff
f
ff
8va
fff
(8va)
99
f
p
105
f

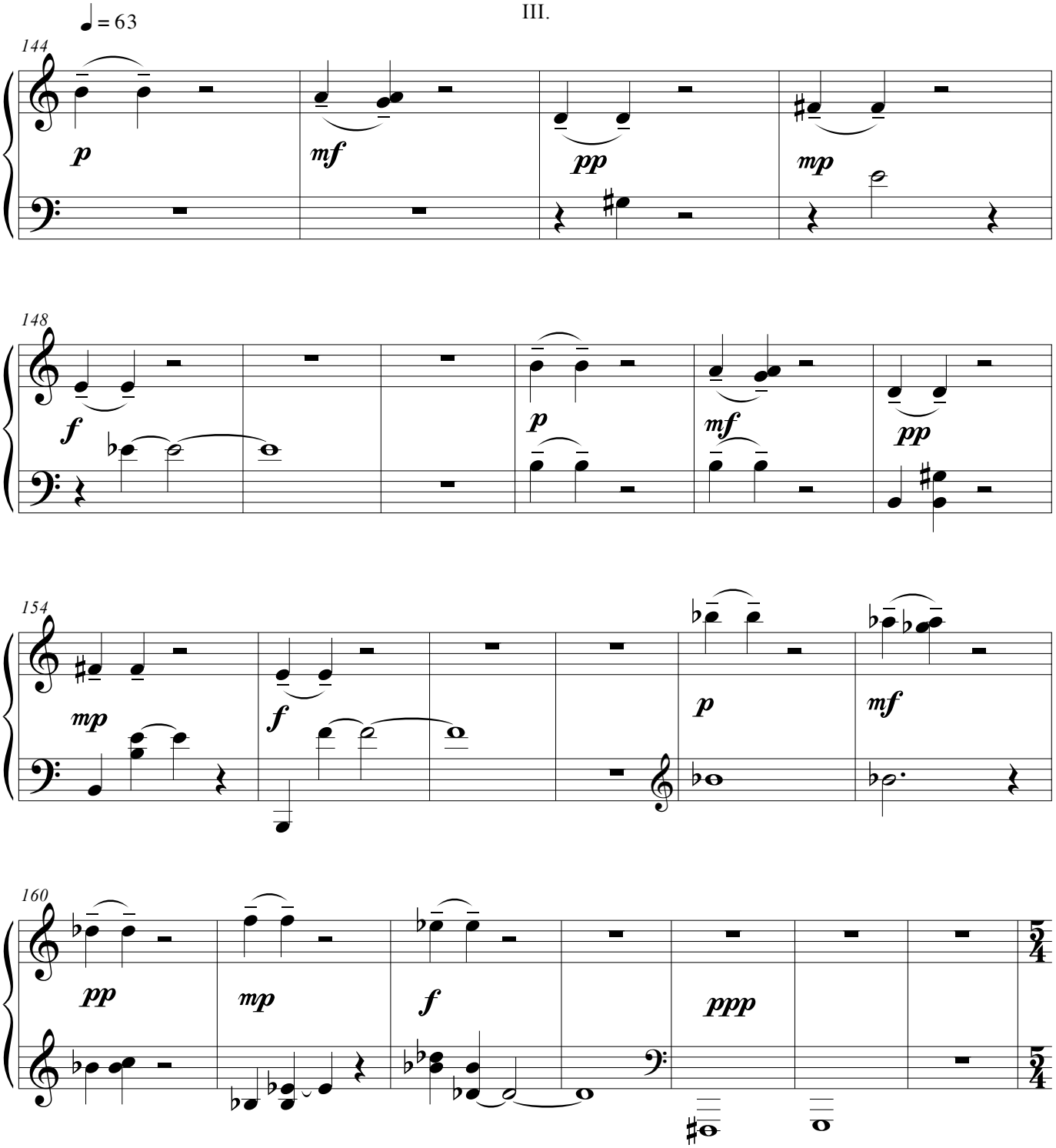

110
p
f
115
cresc.
ff
f
sf
119
ff
124
8va
rit.

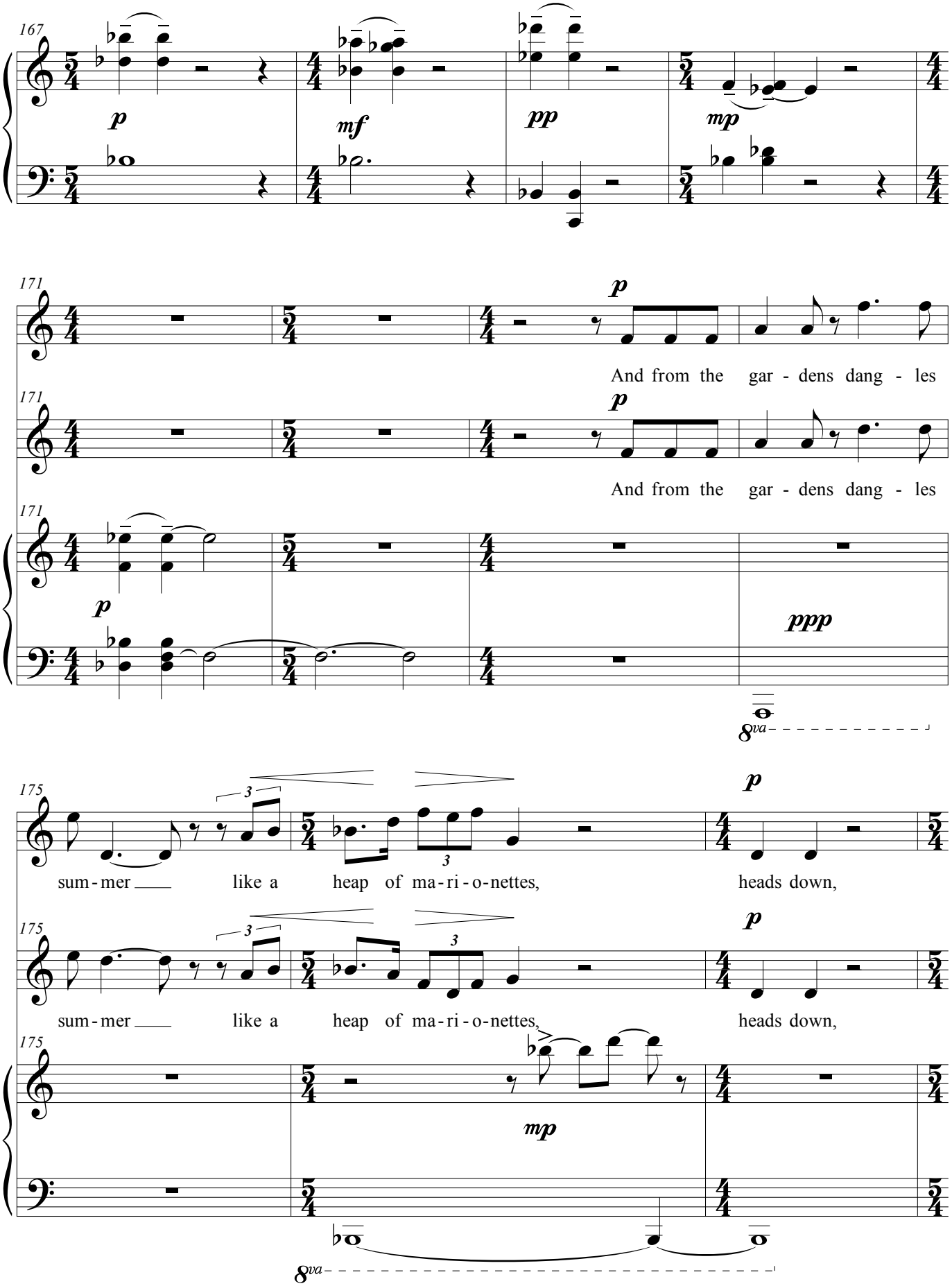


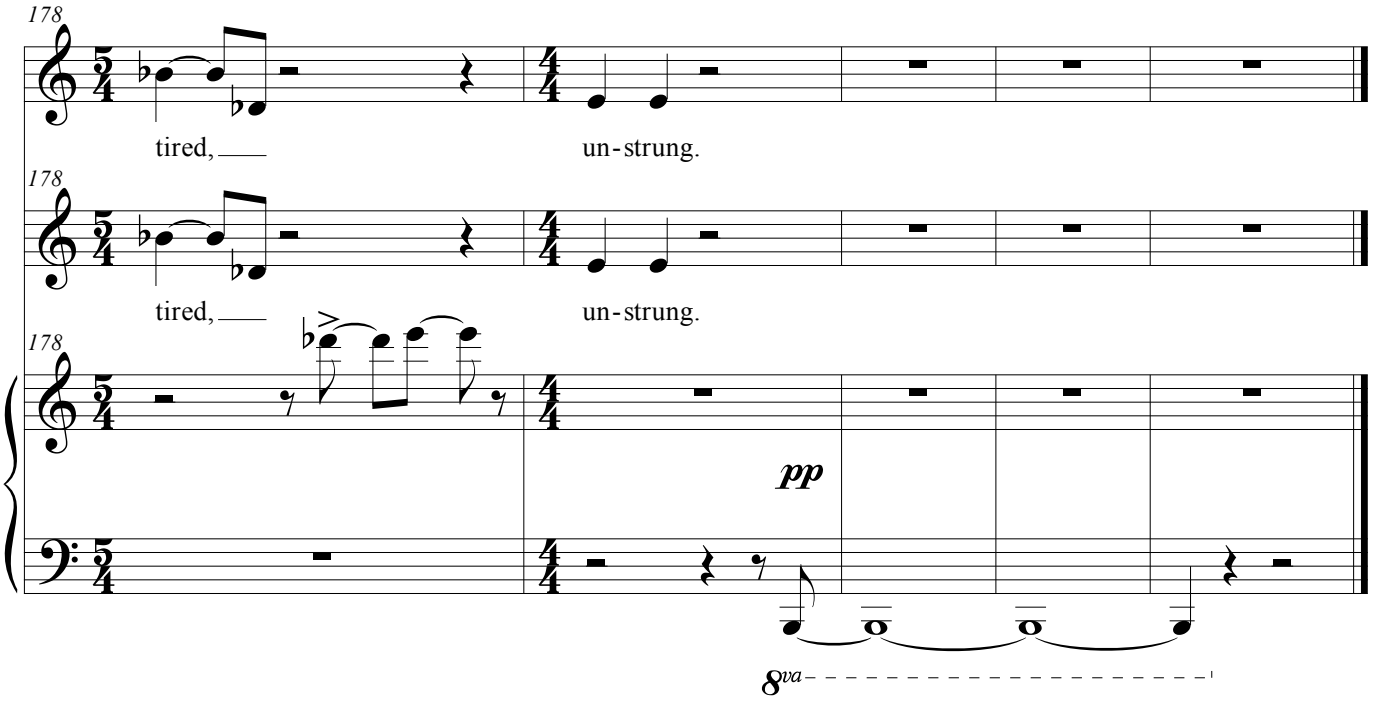
All that we see could be other than it is.
All we can describe at all could be other than it is.

(Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* 5.634)

III.



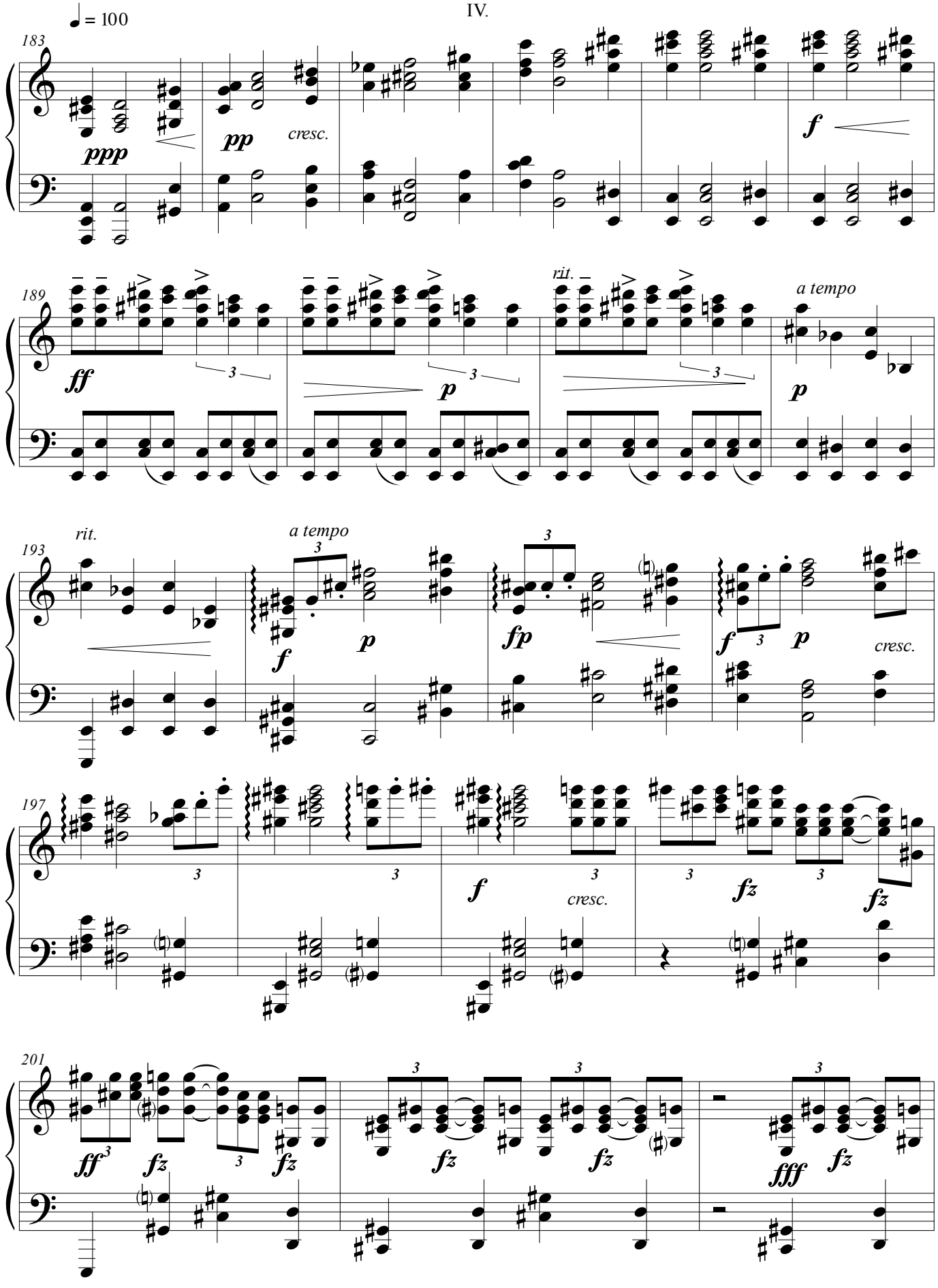

167
p
mf
pp
mp
171
p
And from the gar - dens dang - les
171
p
And from the gar - dens dang - les
171
p
ppp
8va
175
3
p
sum - mer like a heap of ma - ri - o - nettes, heads down,
175
3
p
sum - mer like a heap of ma - ri - o - nettes, heads down,
175
mp
8va

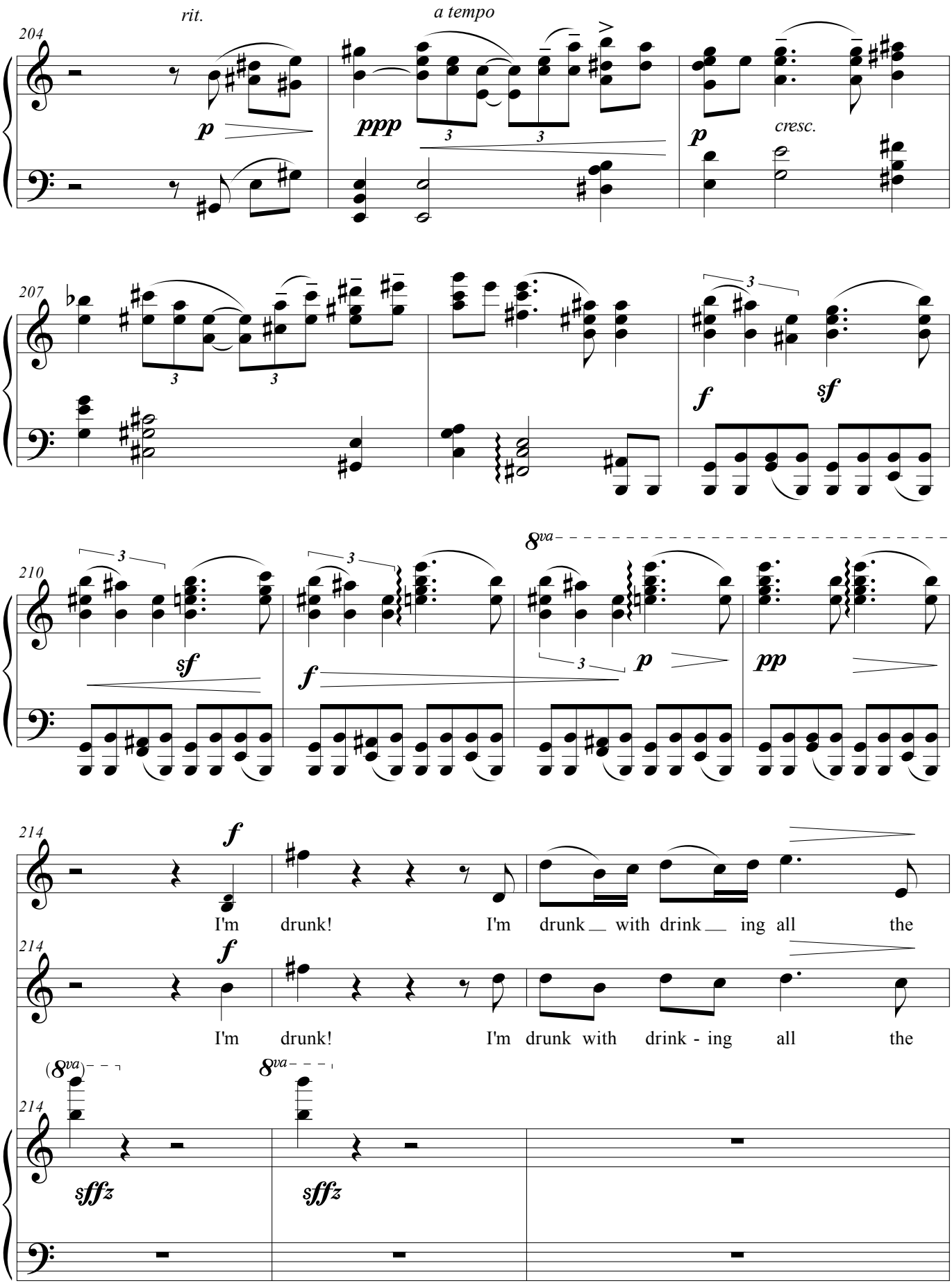


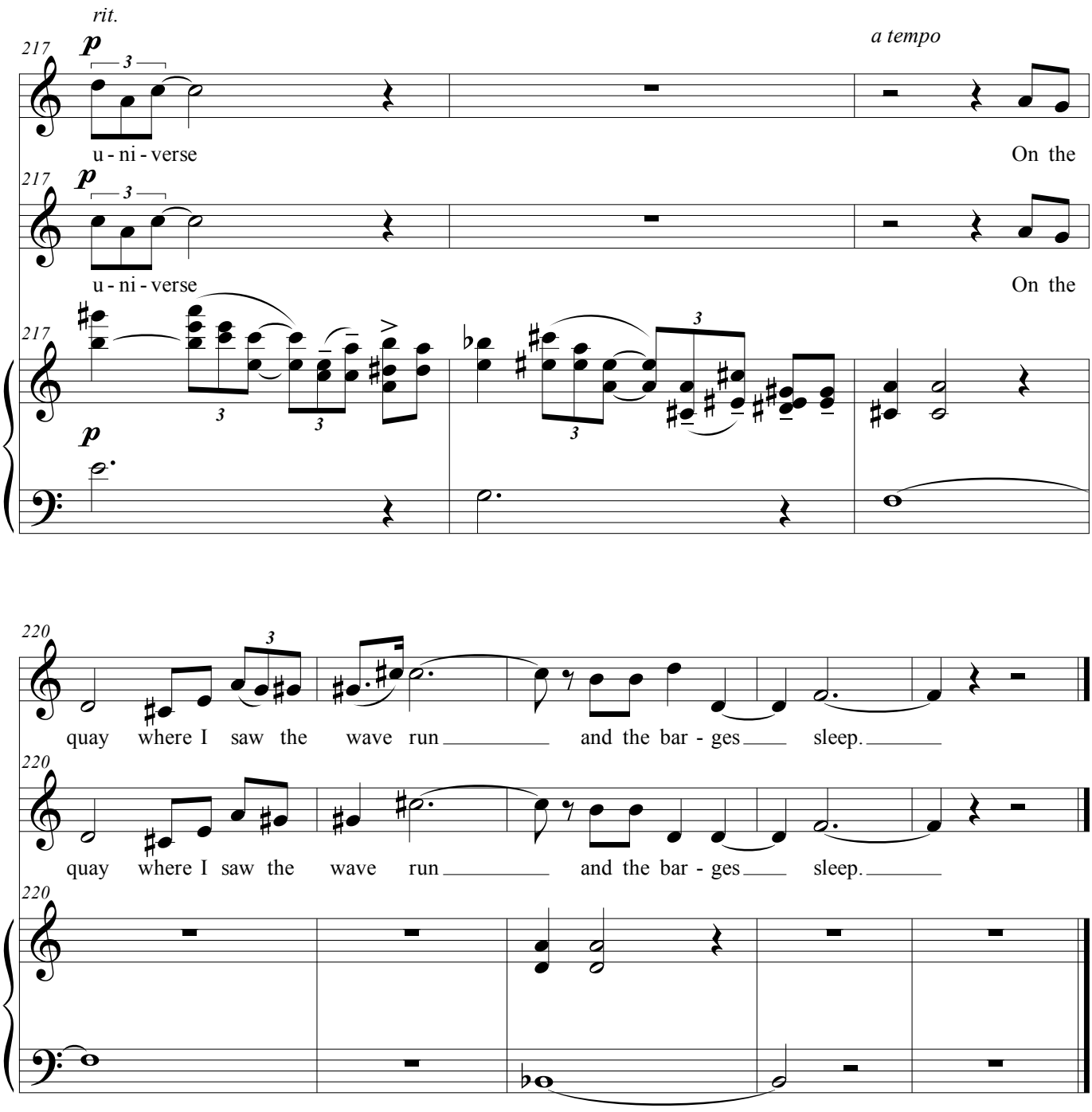
And from the gardens dangles
Summer like a heap of marionettes,
Heads down, tired, unstrung.

(Rilke, "Late Autumn in Venice")

IV.


♩ = 100
183
ppp
pp
cresc.
f
189
ff
p
rit.
a tempo
193
rit.
a tempo
f
p
fp
cresc.
197
f
cresc.
fz
201
ff
fz
fff

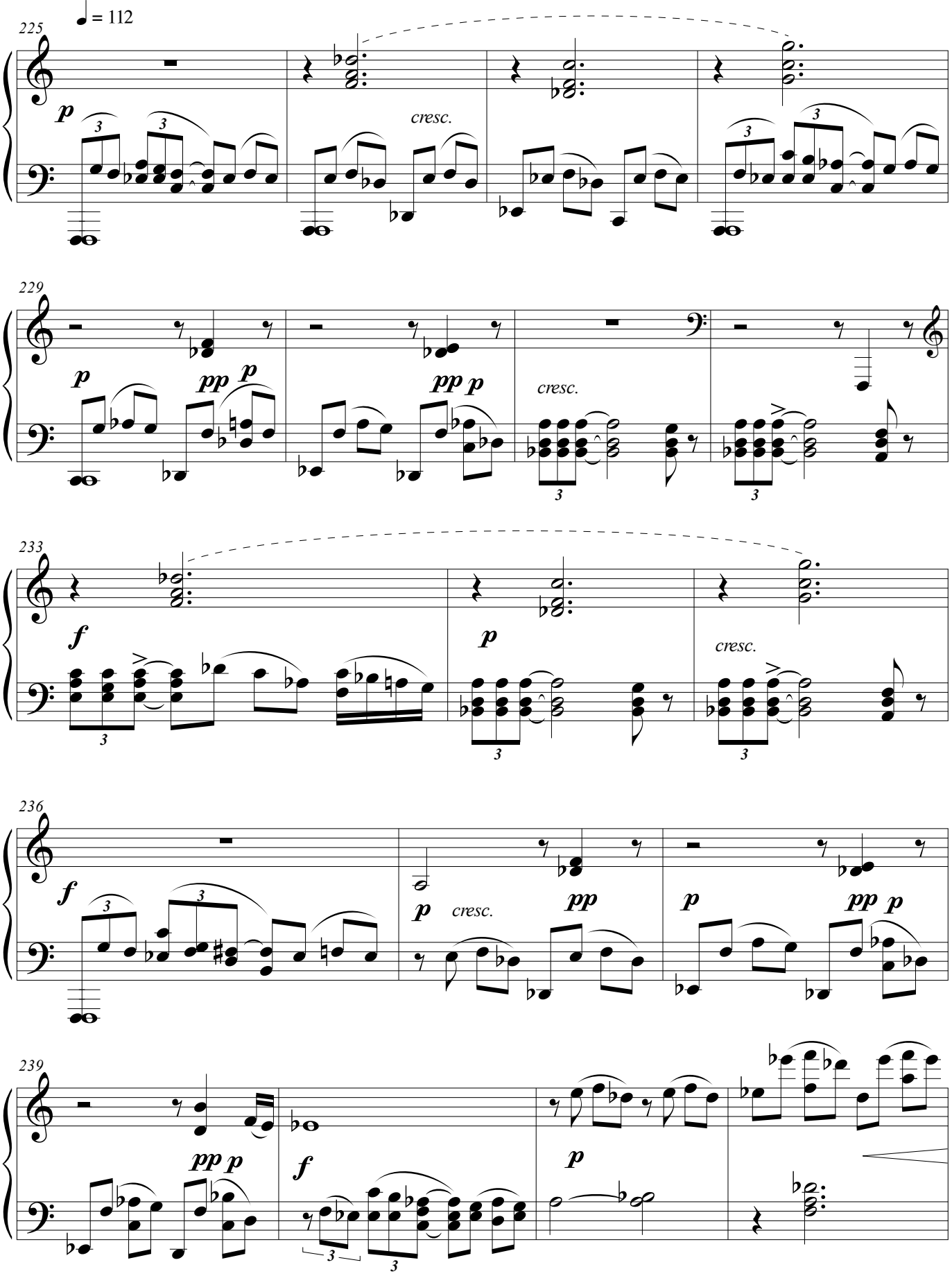

rit.
a tempo
204
p
ppp
p
cresc.
207
f
sf
210
sf
f
8va
p
pp
214
f
I'm drunk! I'm drunk with drink ing all the
f
I'm drunk! I'm drunk with drink - ing all the
(8va)
8va
sffz
sffz

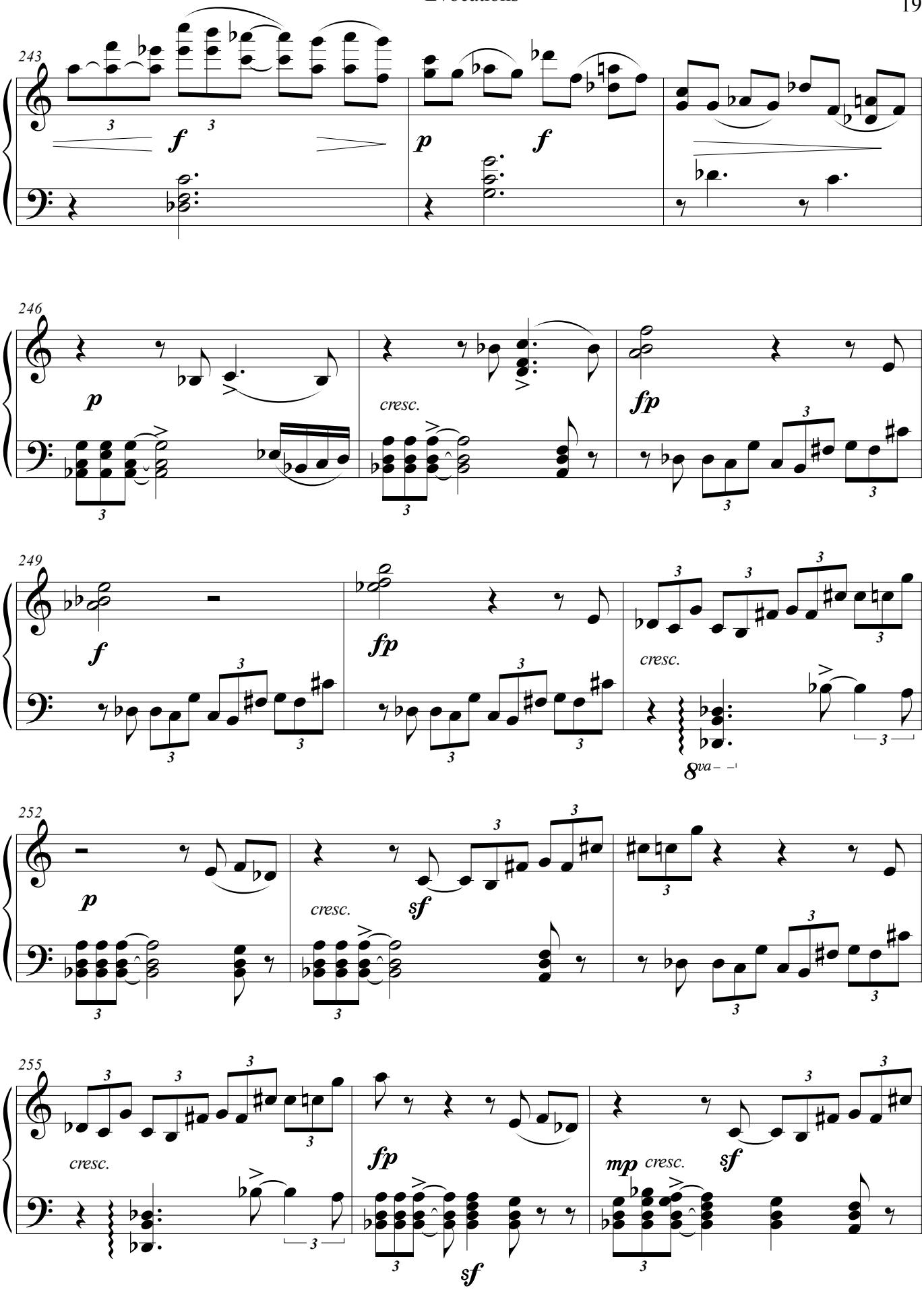


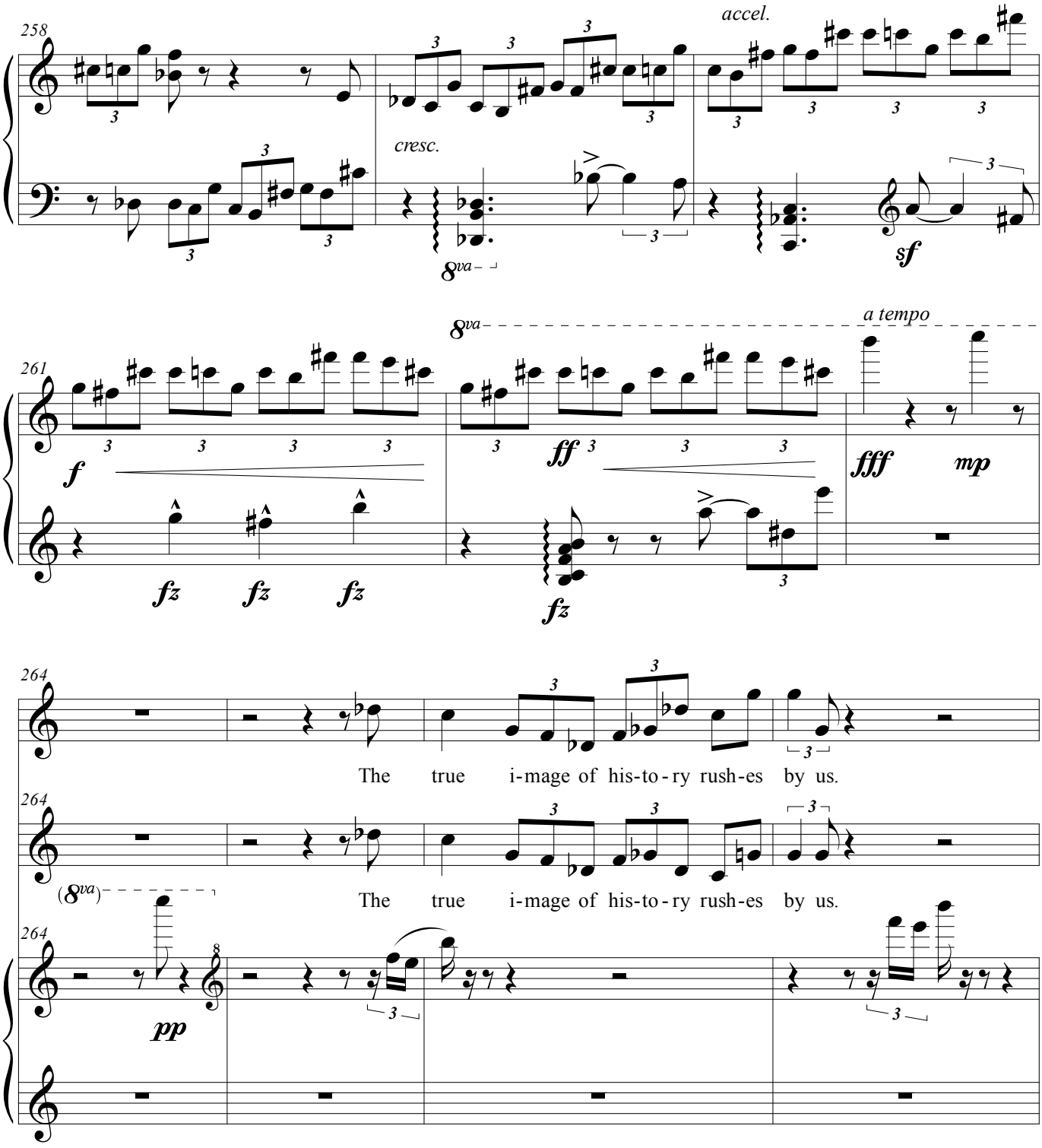
I'm drunk with drinking all the universe
On the quay where I saw the wave run and the barges sleep.

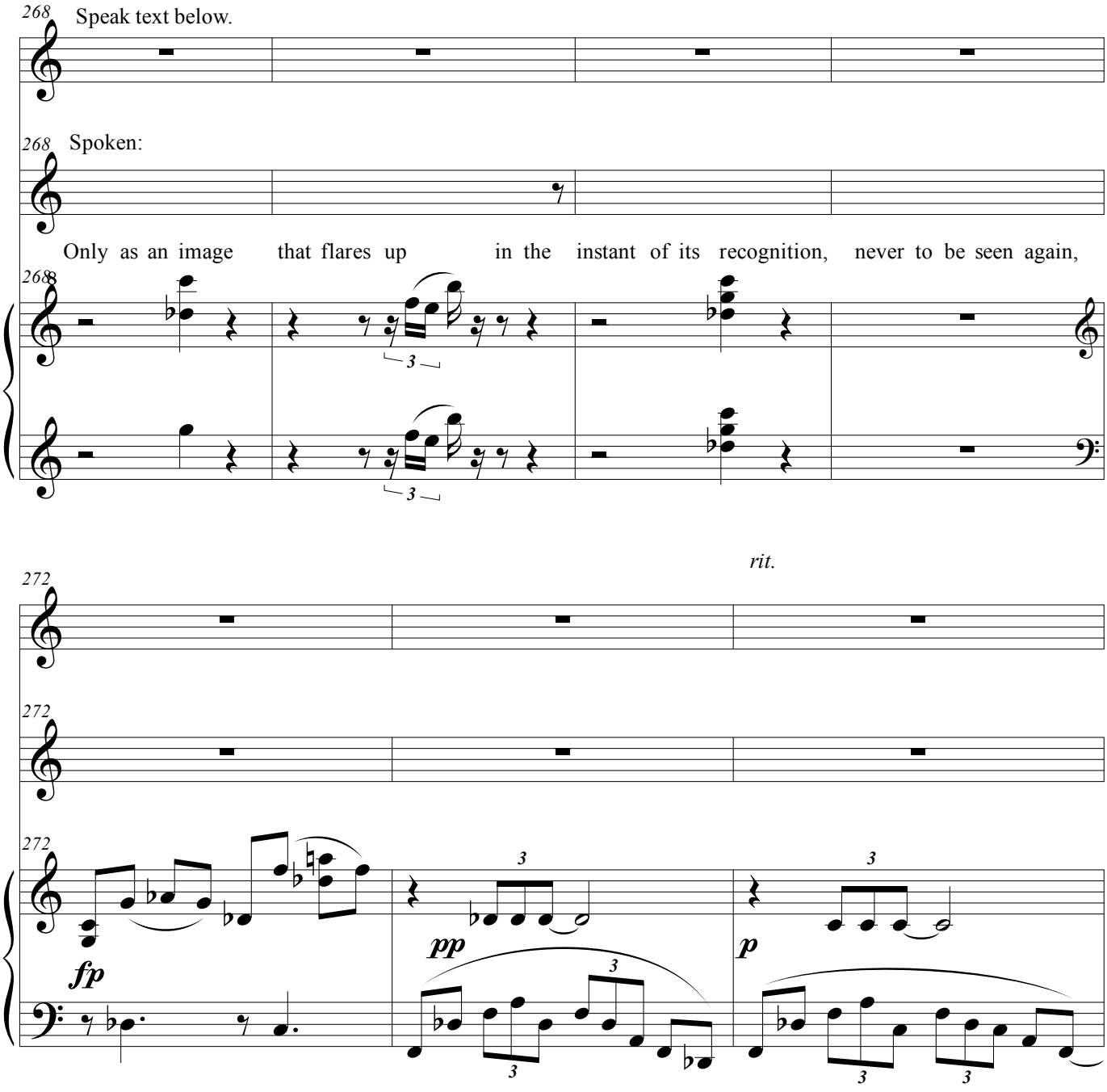
(Apollinaire, "Vendemiaire")

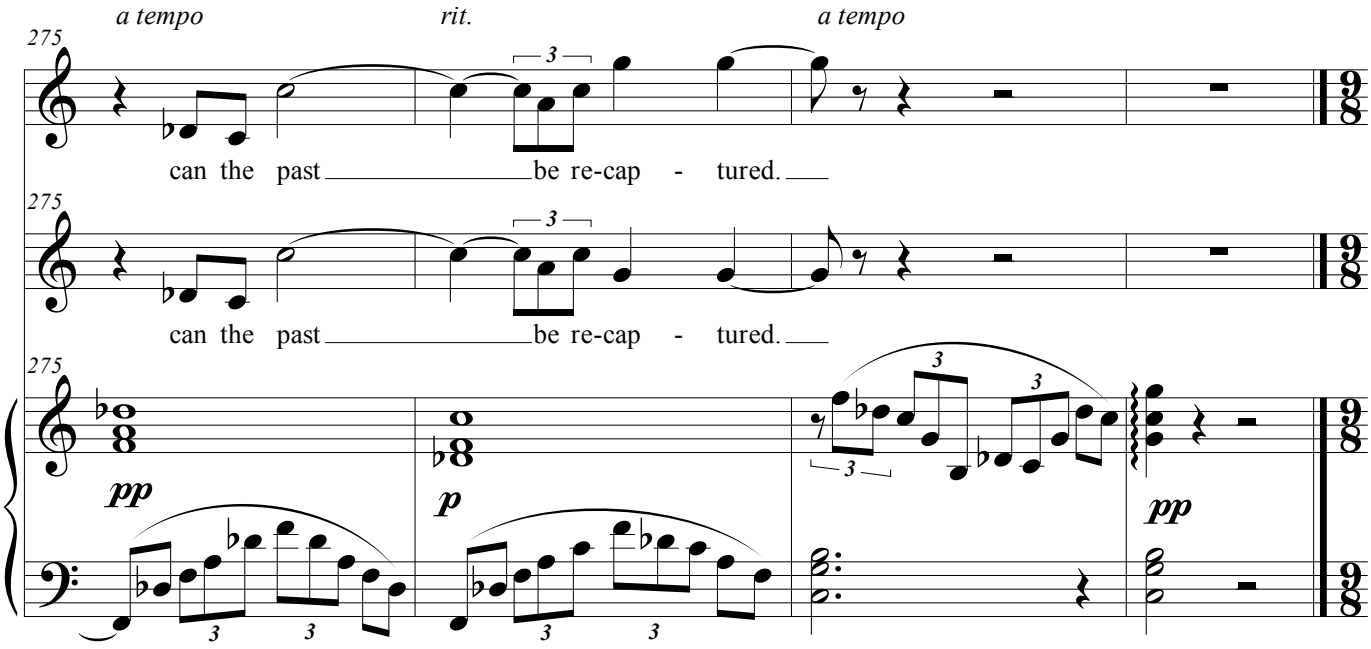
V.


225
♩ = 112
p
cresc.
229
p
pp p
pp p
cresc.
233
f
p
cresc.
236
f
p cresc.
pp
p
pp p
239
pp p
f
p


243
246
249
252
255
cresc.
8va


258
accel.
cresc.
8va
sf
261
8va
a tempo
f
ff
fff
mp
fz
fz
fz
fz
264
The true i-mage of his-to-ry rush-es by us.
264
The true i-mage of his-to-ry rush-es by us.
(8va)
264
pp

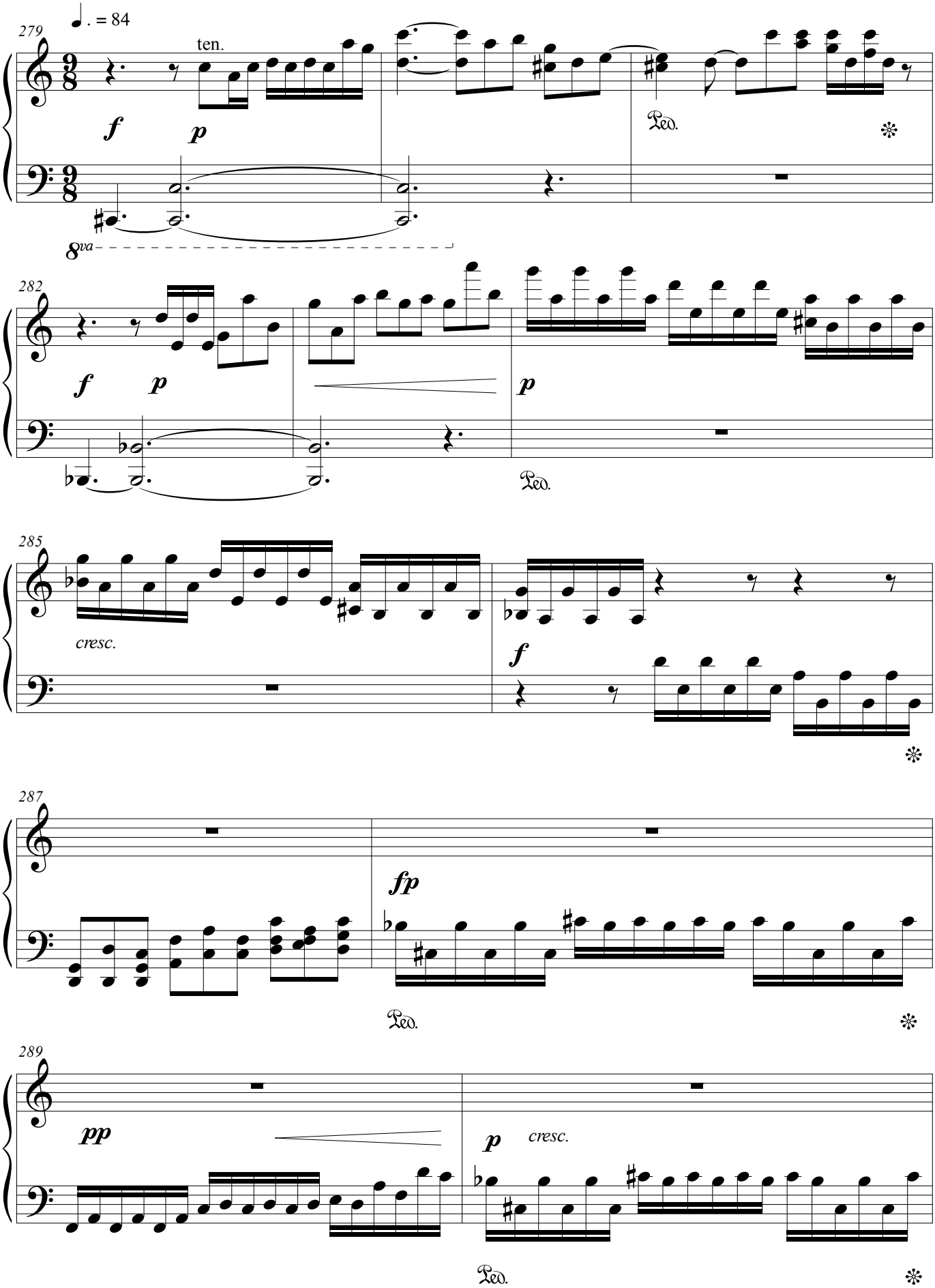

268
Speak text below.
268
Spoken:
Only as an image that flares up in the instant of its recognition, never to be seen again,
268
3
3
rit.
272
272
272
fp
pp
p
3
3
3
3
3
3

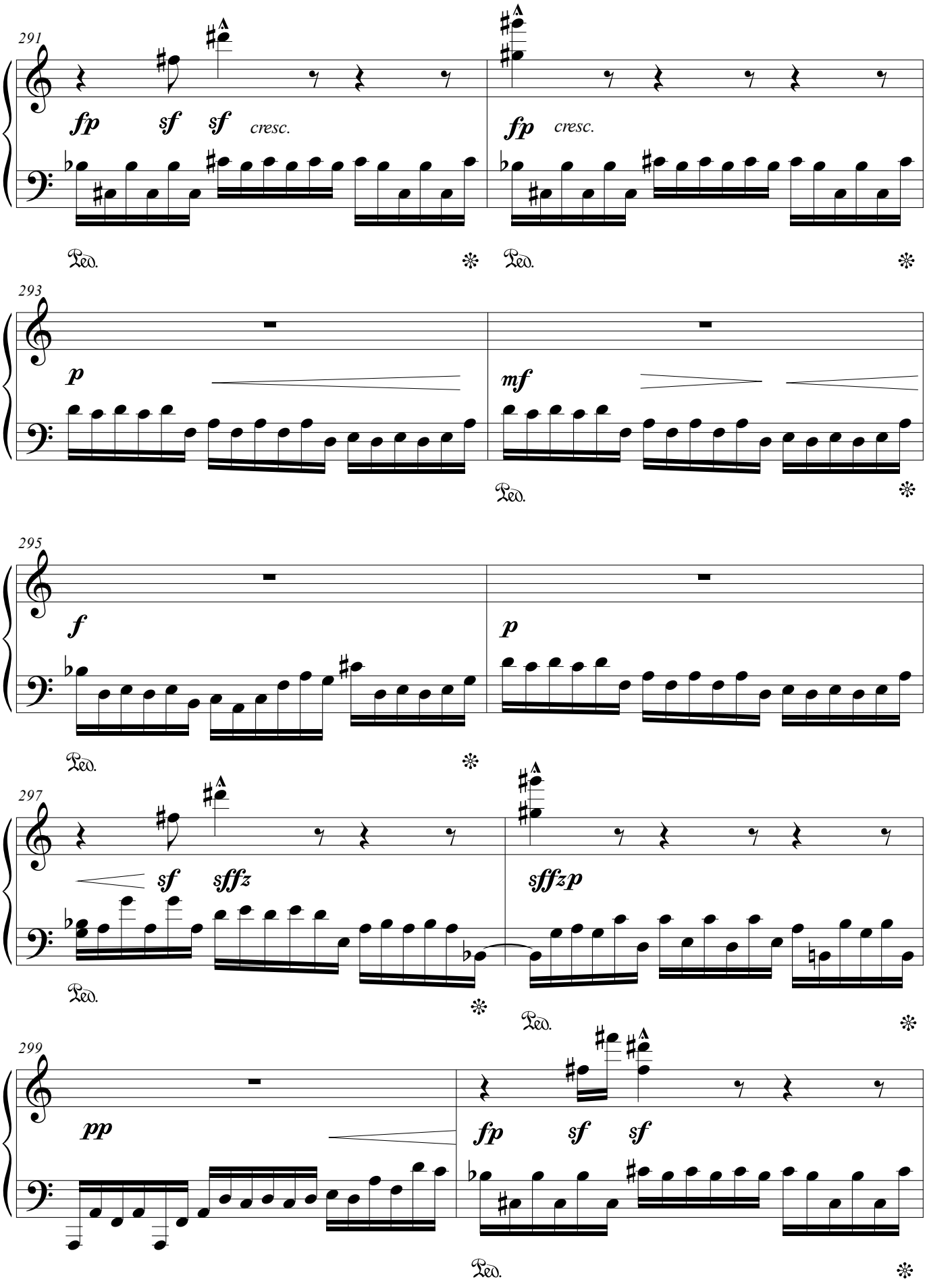


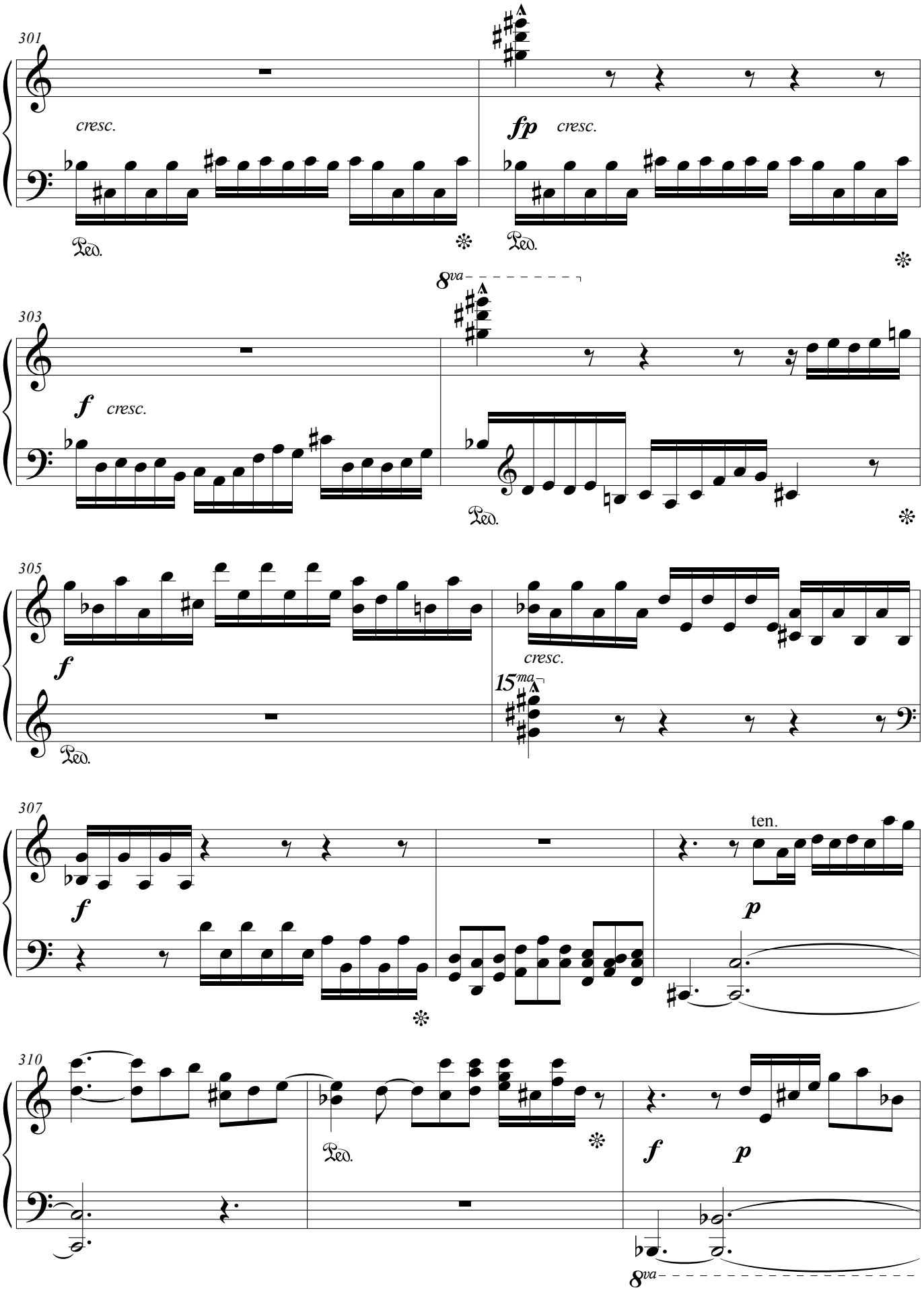
The true image of history rushes by us. Only as an image that flares up in the instant of its recognition, never to be seen again, can the past be recaptured.

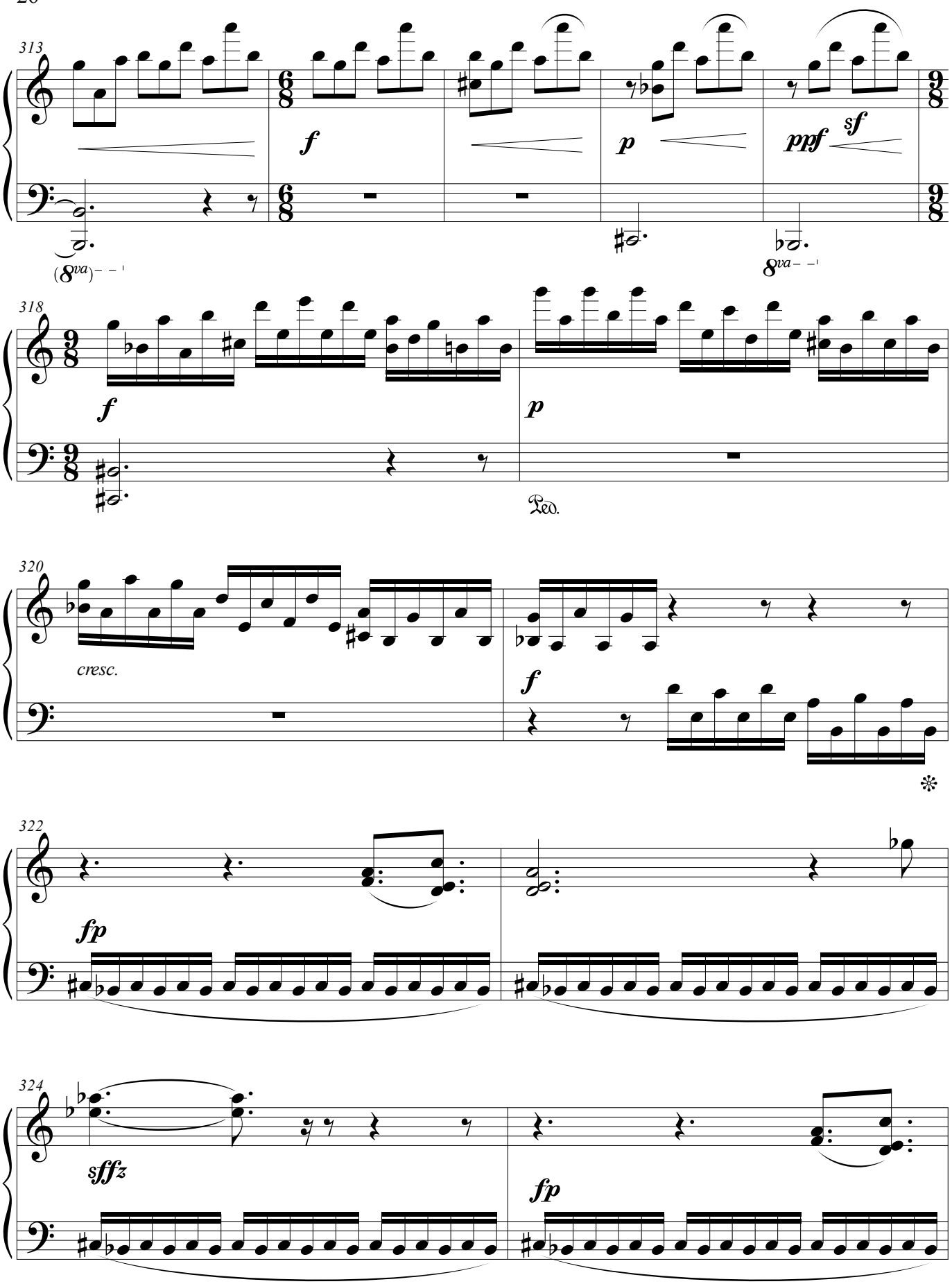
(Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History")

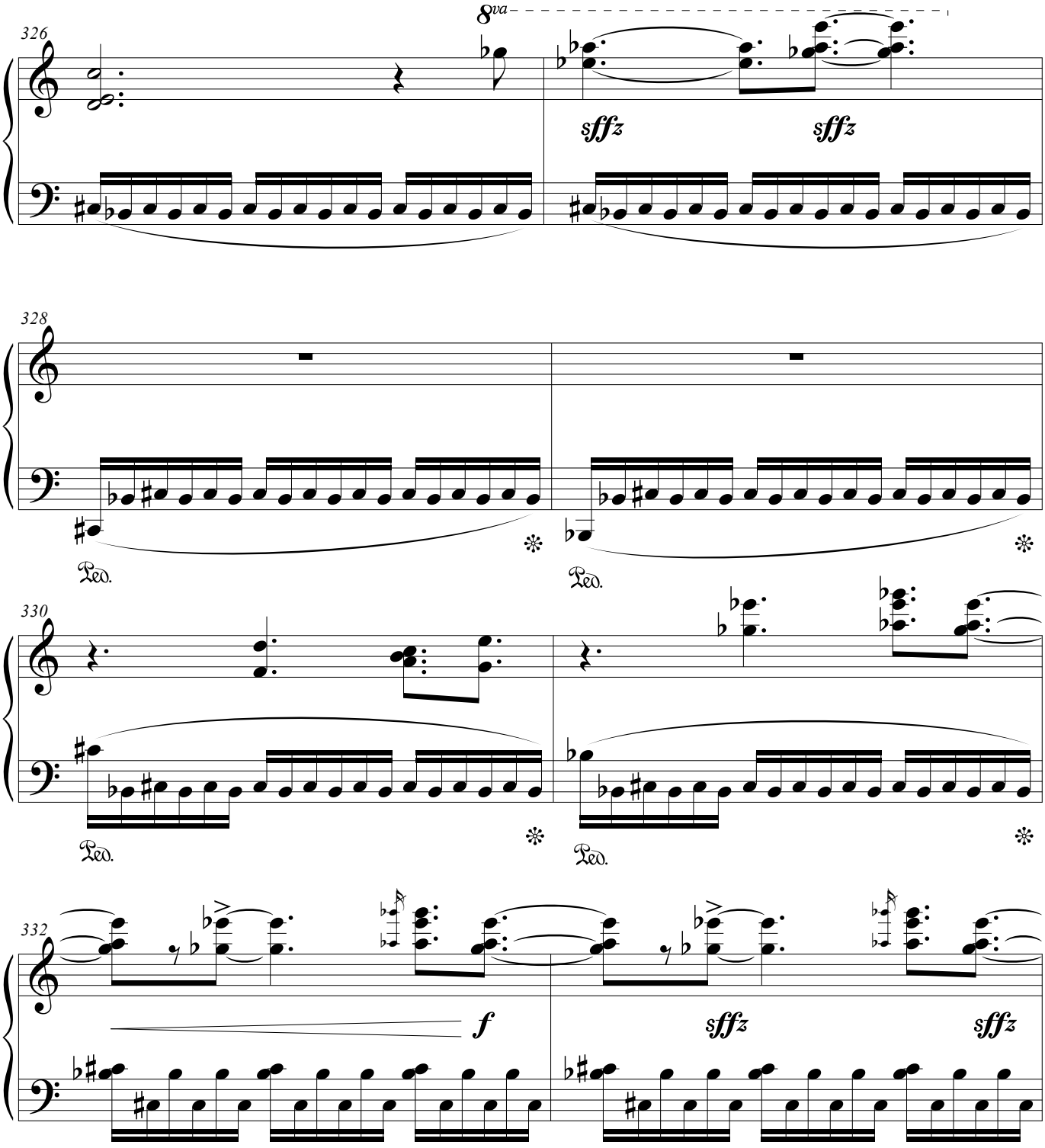
VI.

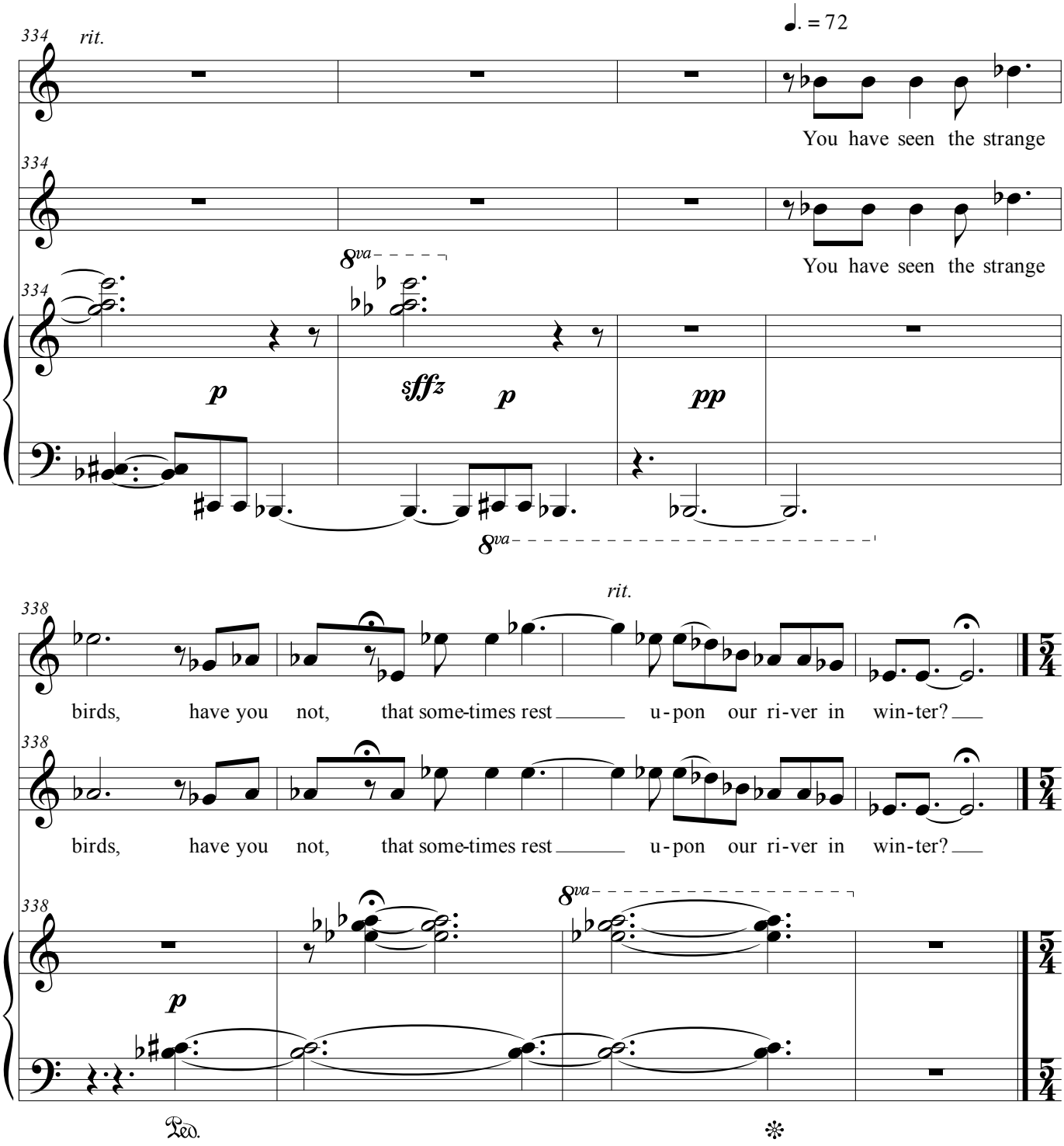

279
♩. = 84
ten.
f
p
8va
Ped.
282
f
p
p
Ped.
285
cresc.
f
287
fp
Ped.
289
pp
p
cresc.
Ped.


291
fp
sf
sf
cresc.
fp
cresc.
Ped.
293
p
mf
295
f
p
297
sf
sffz
sffzp
299
pp
fp
sf
sf


301
cresc.
fp
cresc.
Ped.
Ped.
8va
303
f
cresc.
Ped.
305
f
cresc.
15ma
Ped.
307
f
ten.
p
310
Ped.
f
p
8va

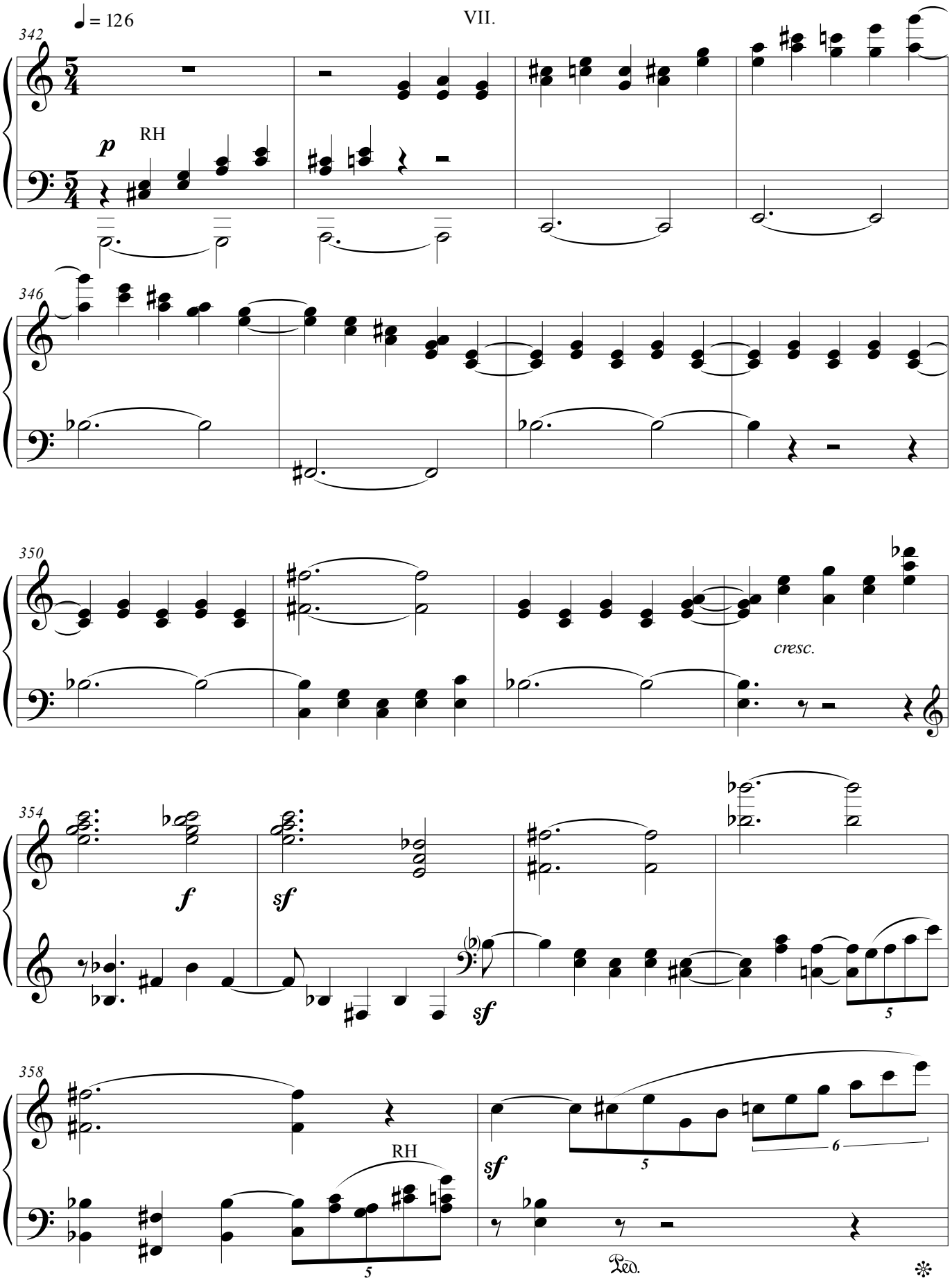

313
f
p
ppf
sf
(8va)
8va
318
f
p
Ped.
320
cresc.
f
322
fp
324
sffz
fp

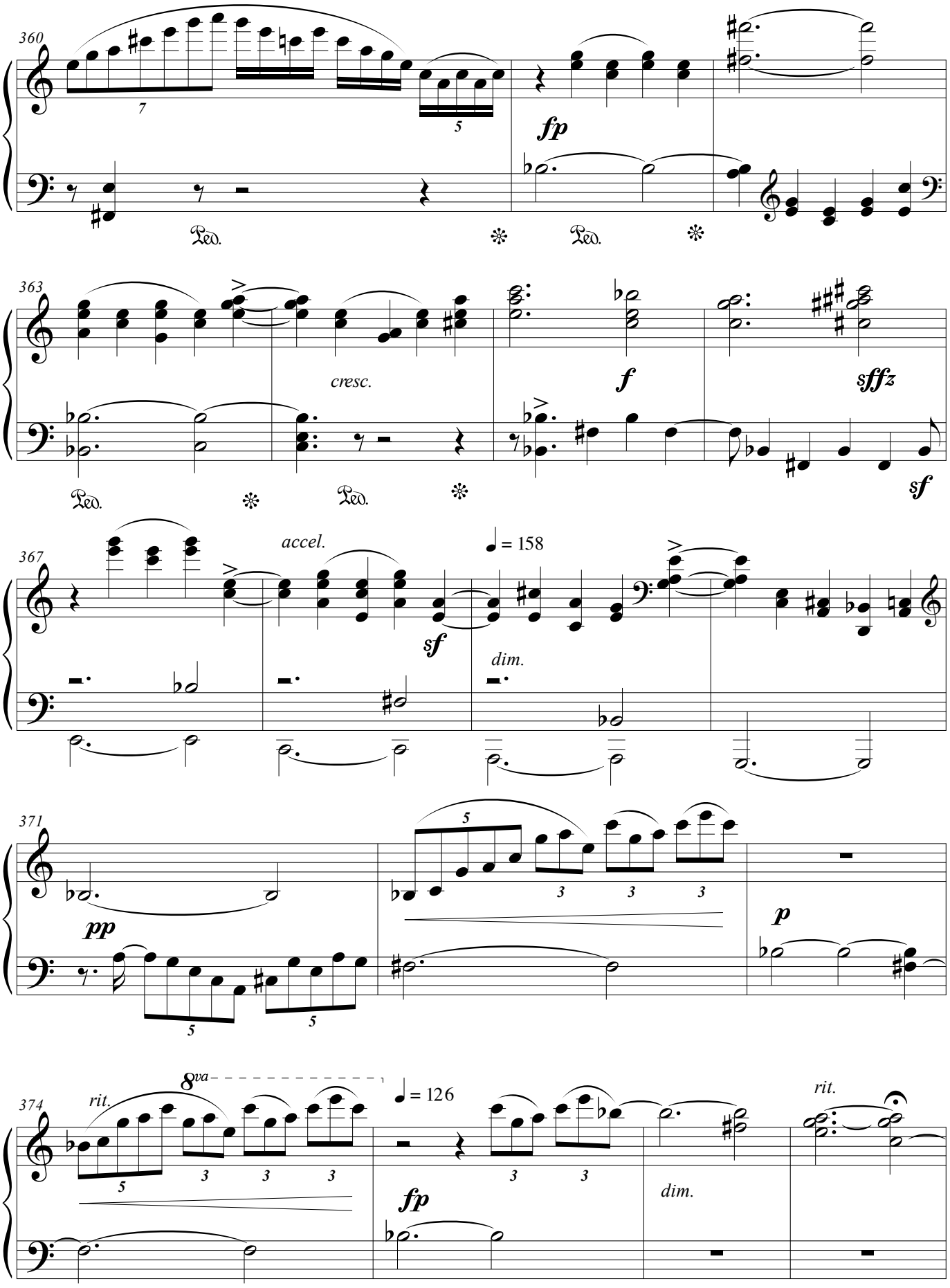

326
8va
sffz
sffz
328
Ped.
Ped.
330
Ped.
Ped.
332
f
sffz
sffz

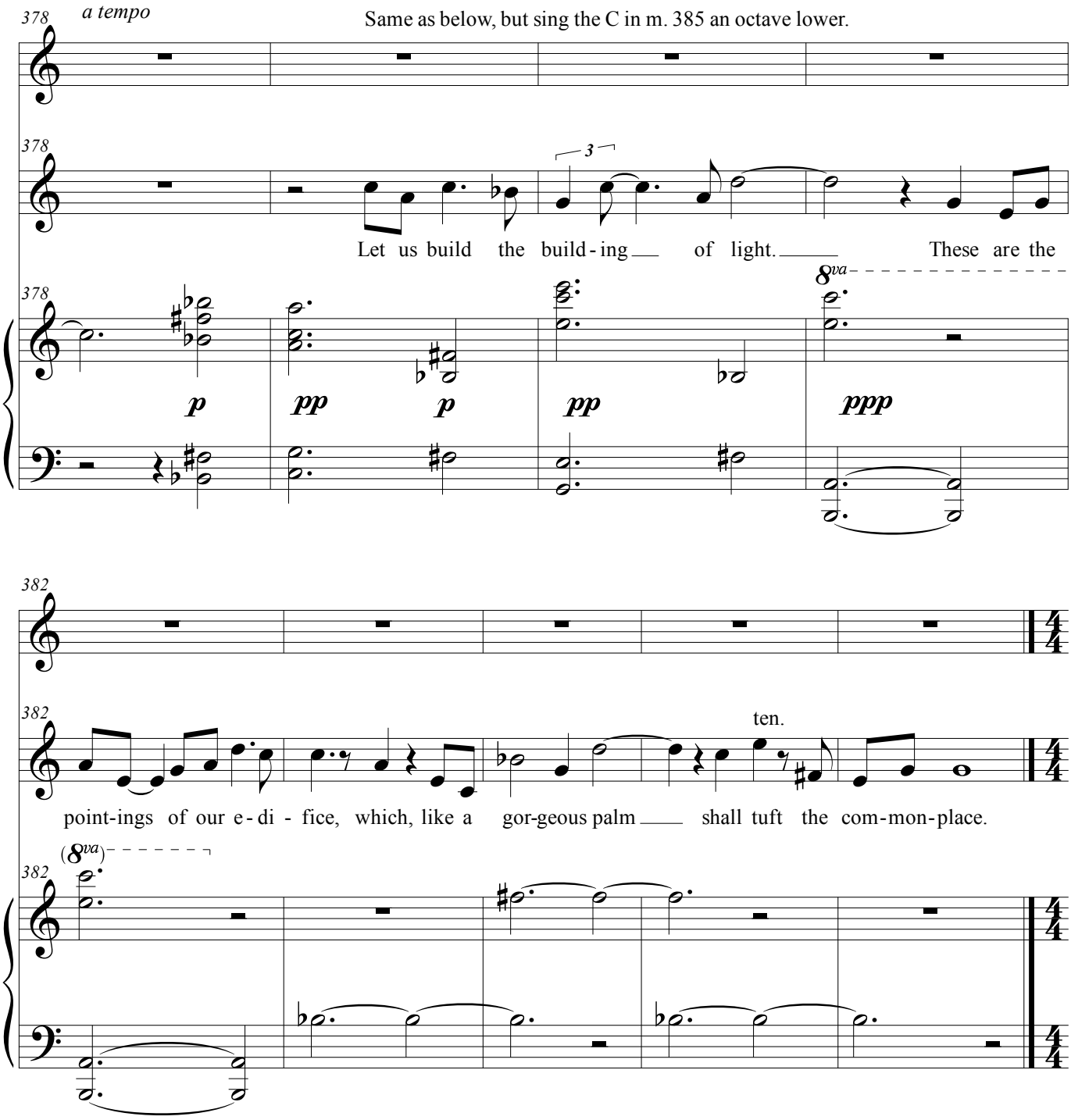


. . . you have seen
the strange birds, have you not, that sometimes
rest upon our river in winter?

(W. C. Williams, "Gulls")


VII.
♩ = 126
342
RH
p
346
350
cresc.
354
f
sf
sf
5
358
RH
sf
5
6
5
Ped.

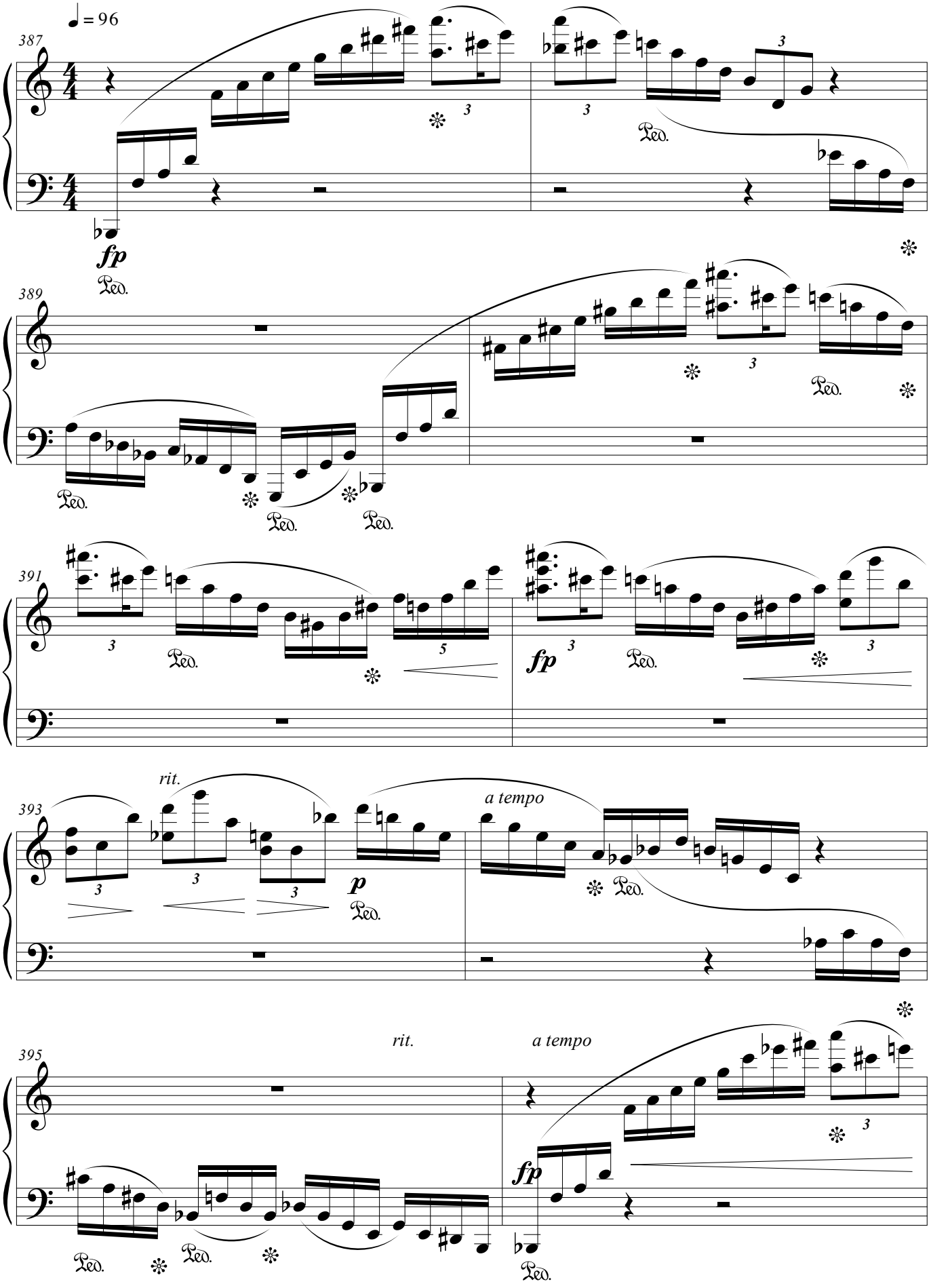

360
fp
Ped.
363
cresc.
f
sfffz
sf
367
accel.
= 158
sf
dim.
371
pp
p
374
rit.
8va
= 126
fp
dim.
rit.

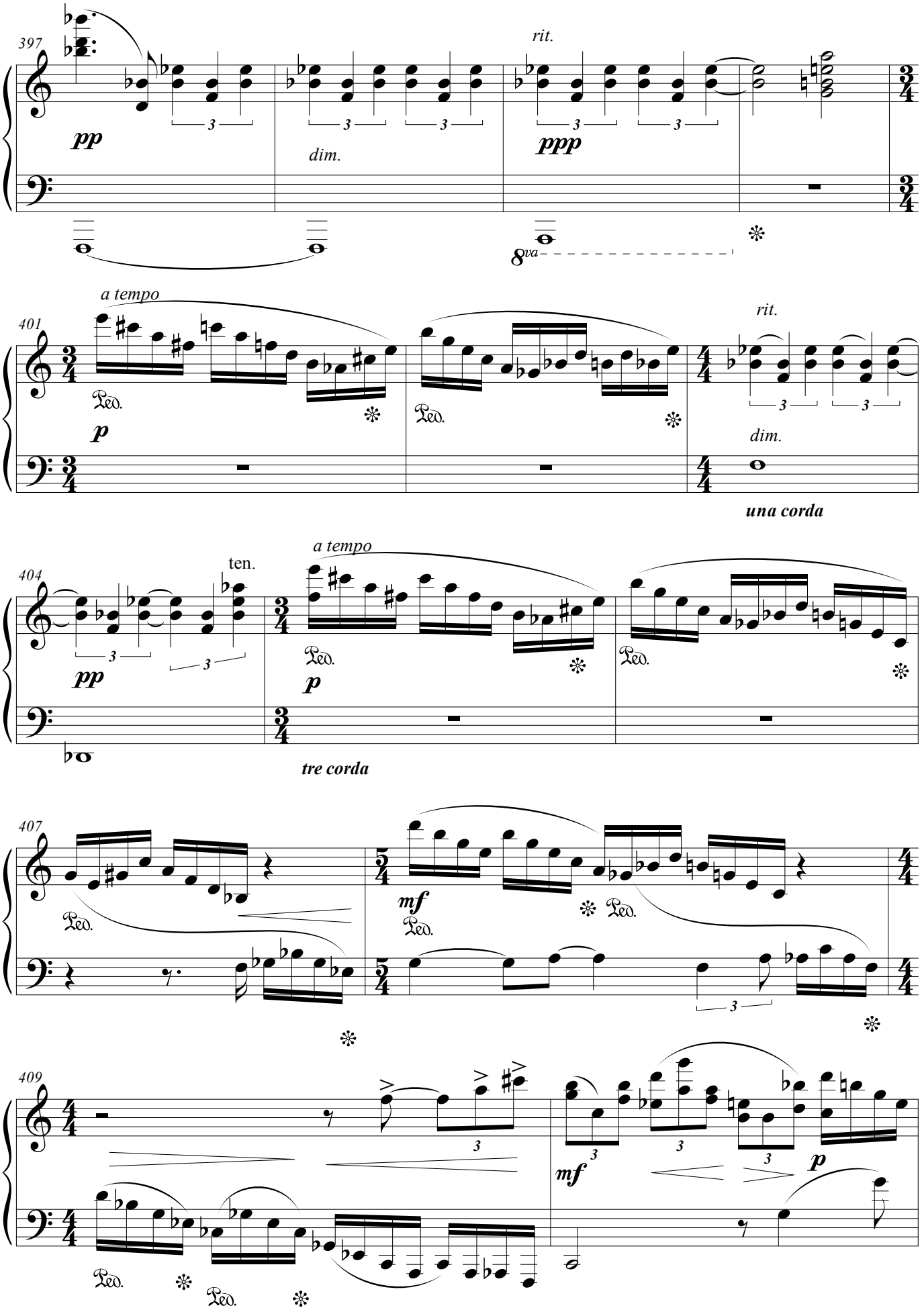


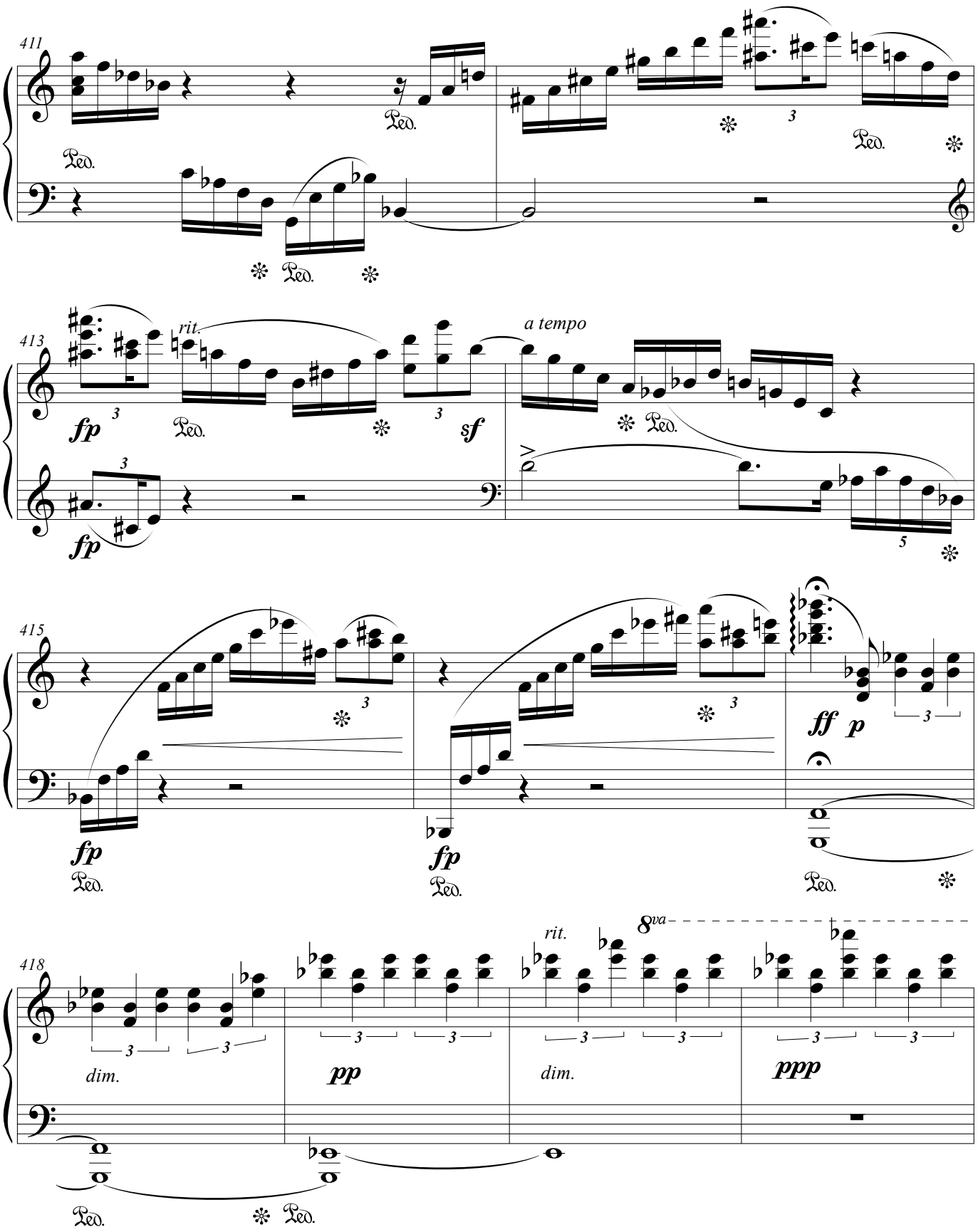
Let us build the building of light . . .
These are the pointings of our edifice,
Which, like a gorgeous palm,
Shall tuft the commonplace.

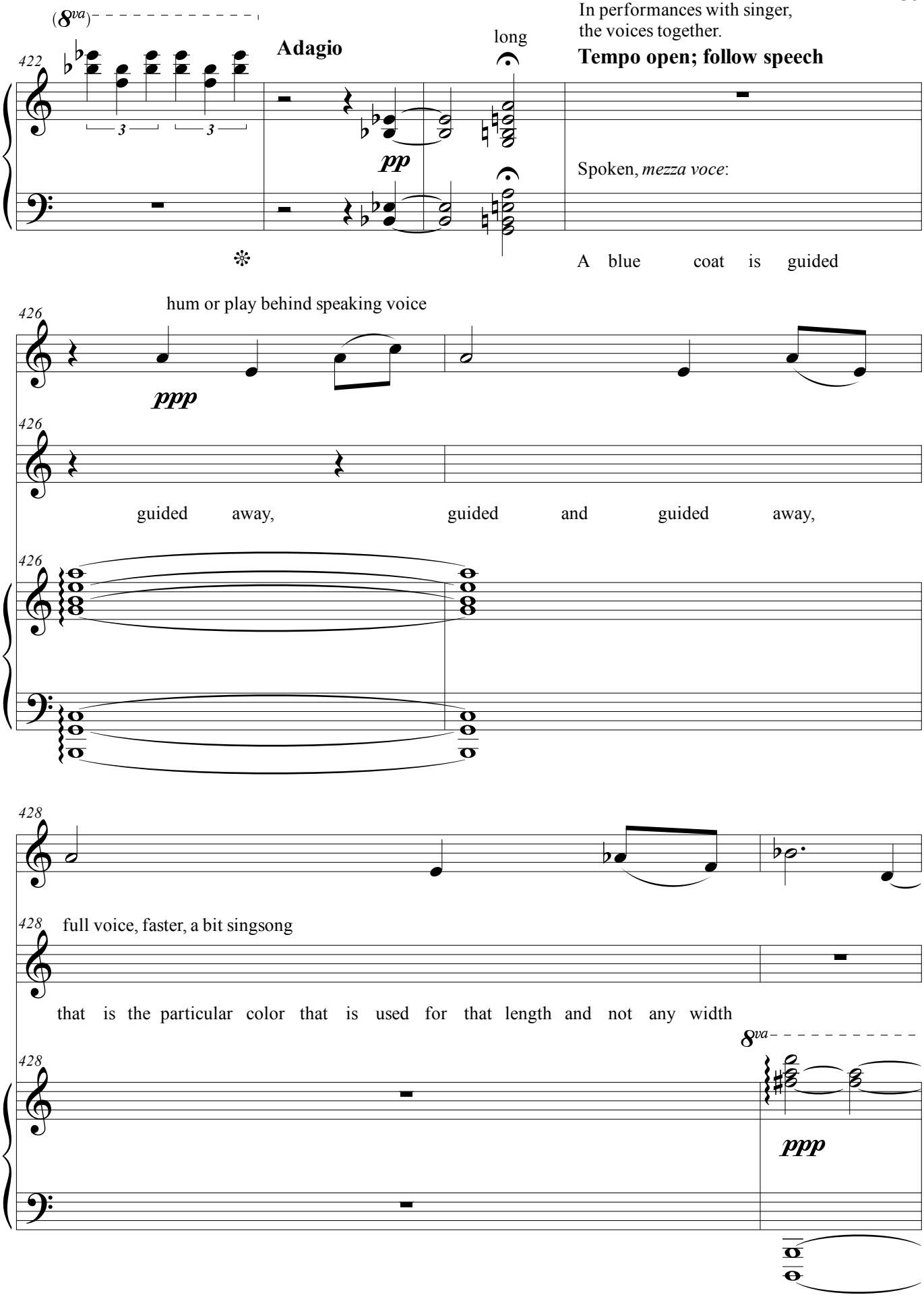
(Wallace Stevens, "Architecture")

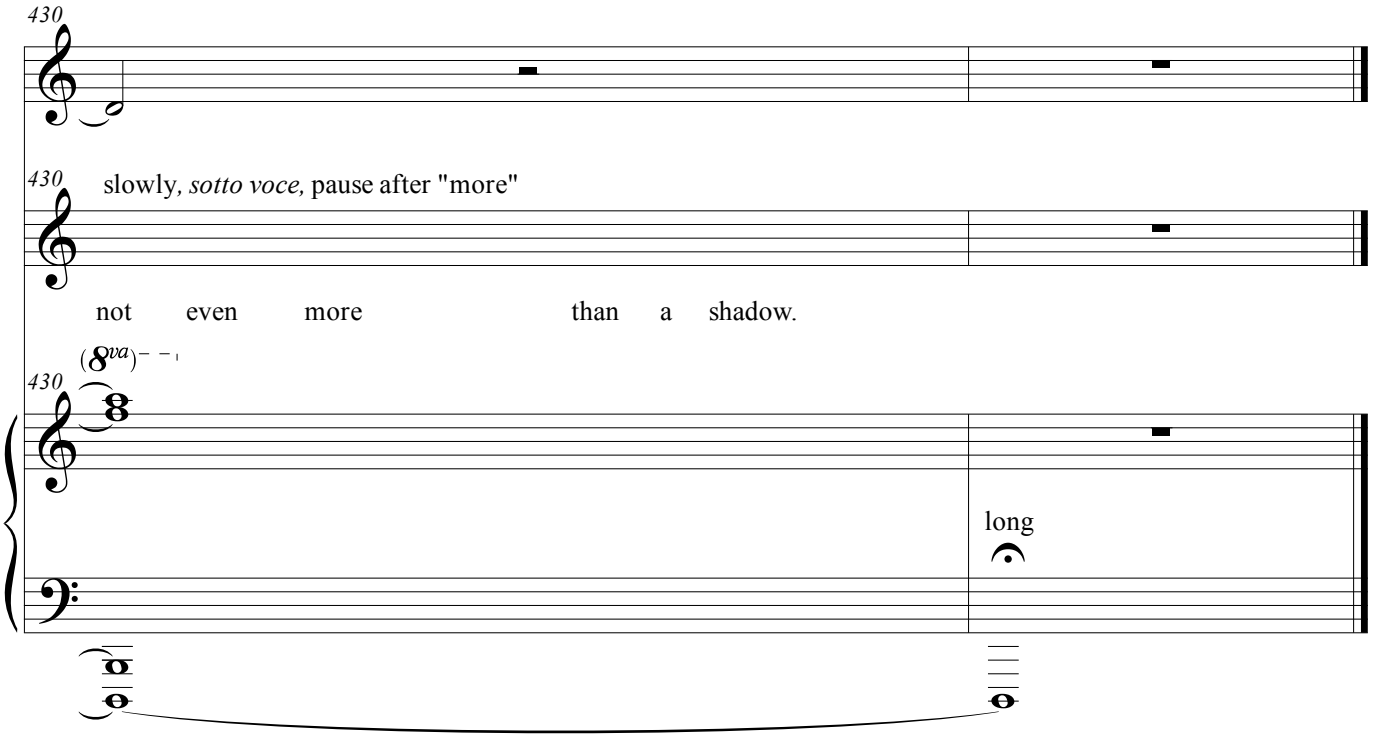
VIII.




397
pp
dim.
rit.
ppp
8va
401
a tempo
p
Ped.
rit.
dim.
una corda
404
ten.
a tempo
pp
p
tre corda
407
mf
409
mf
p


411
Ped.
413
rit.
a tempo
fp
sf
415
ff
p
418
dim.
pp
8va
ppp

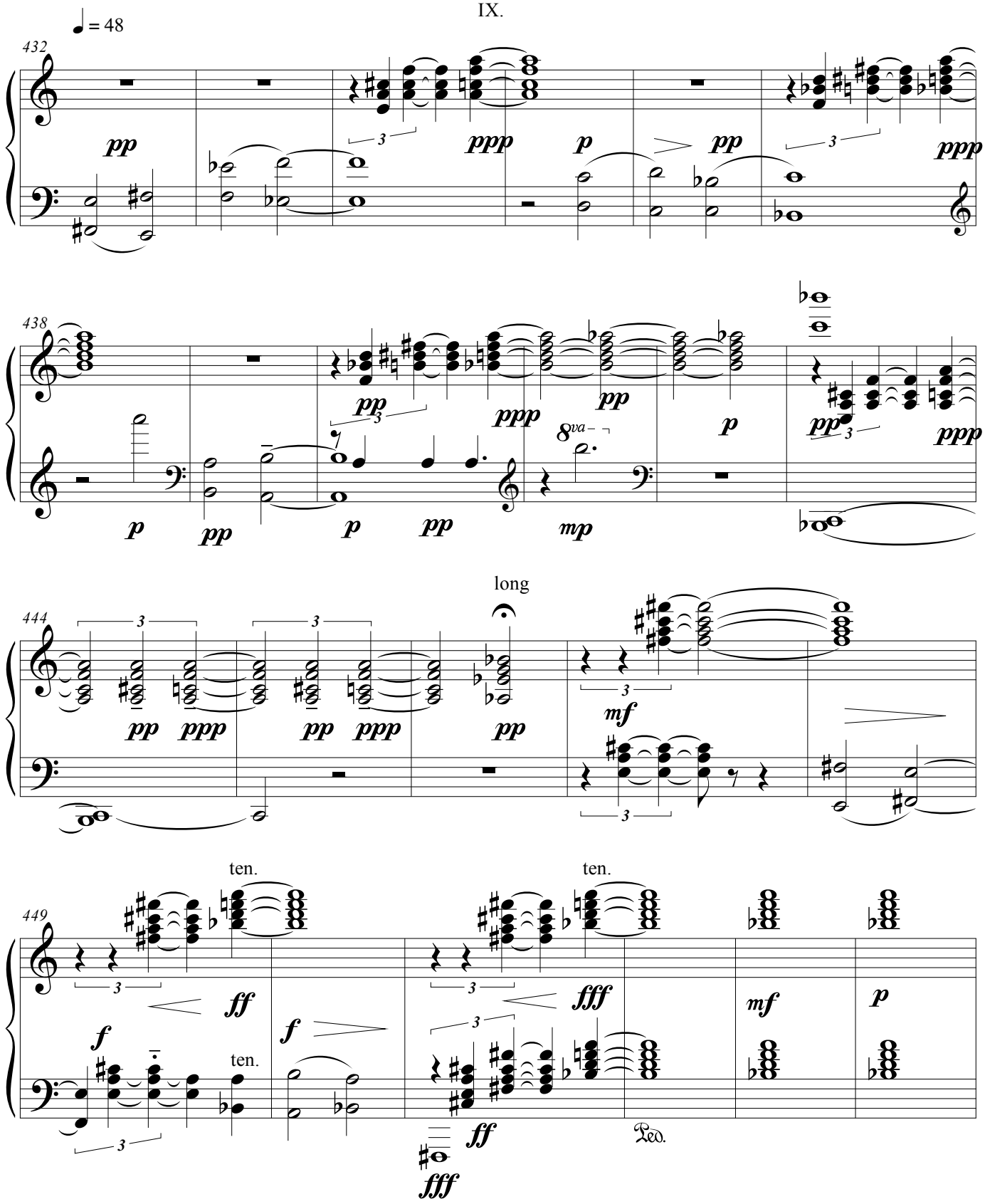

(8va)
422
Adagio
long
In performances with singer,
the voices together.
Tempo open; follow speech
pp
Spoken, mezza voce:
A blue coat is guided
hum or play behind speaking voice
426
ppp
guided away, guided and guided away,
428
full voice, faster, a bit singsong
that is the particular color that is used for that length and not any width
8va
ppp

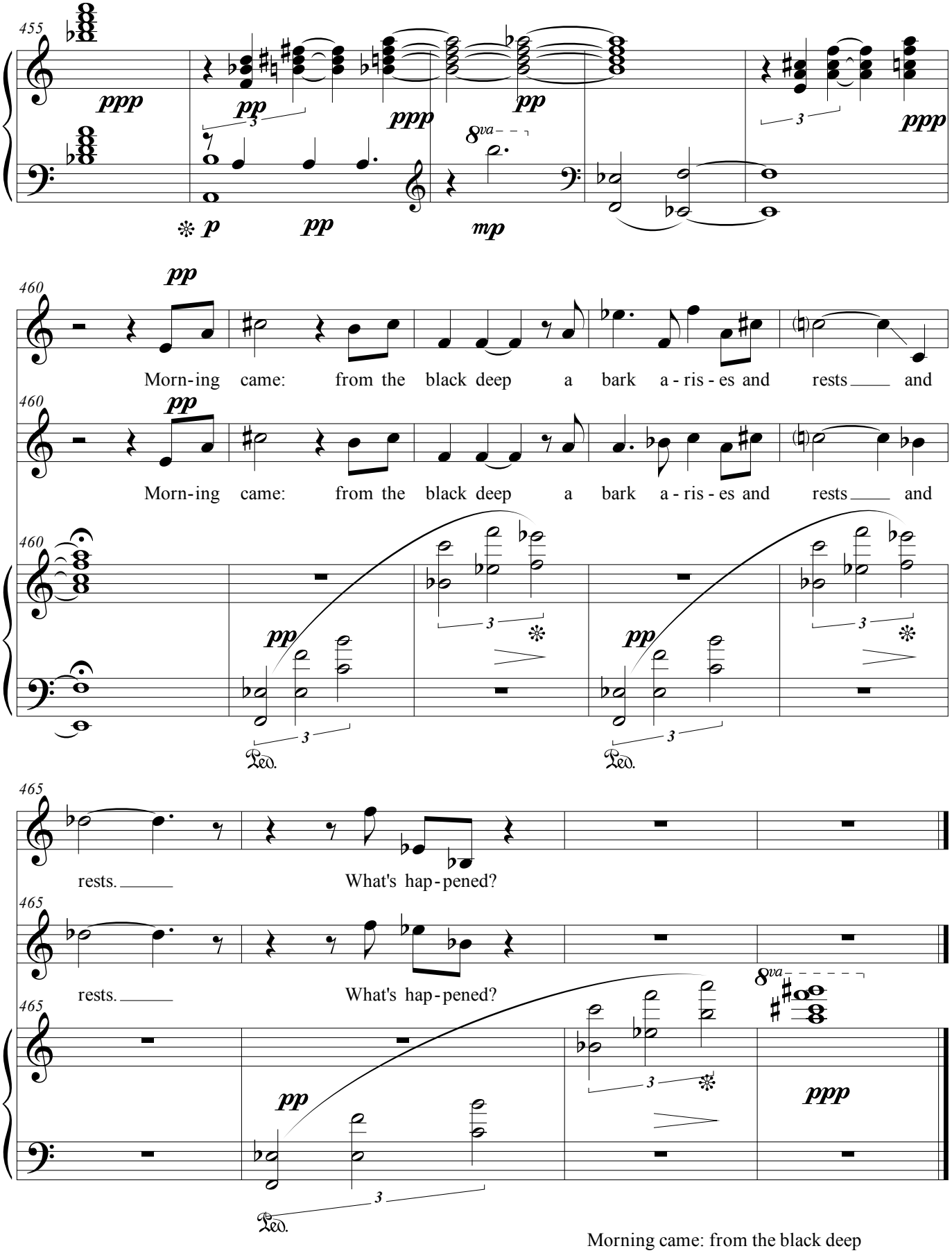


A blue coat is guided guided away, guided and guided away, that is the particular color that is used for that length and not any width not even more than a shadow.

(Gertrude Stein, "A Blue Coat")

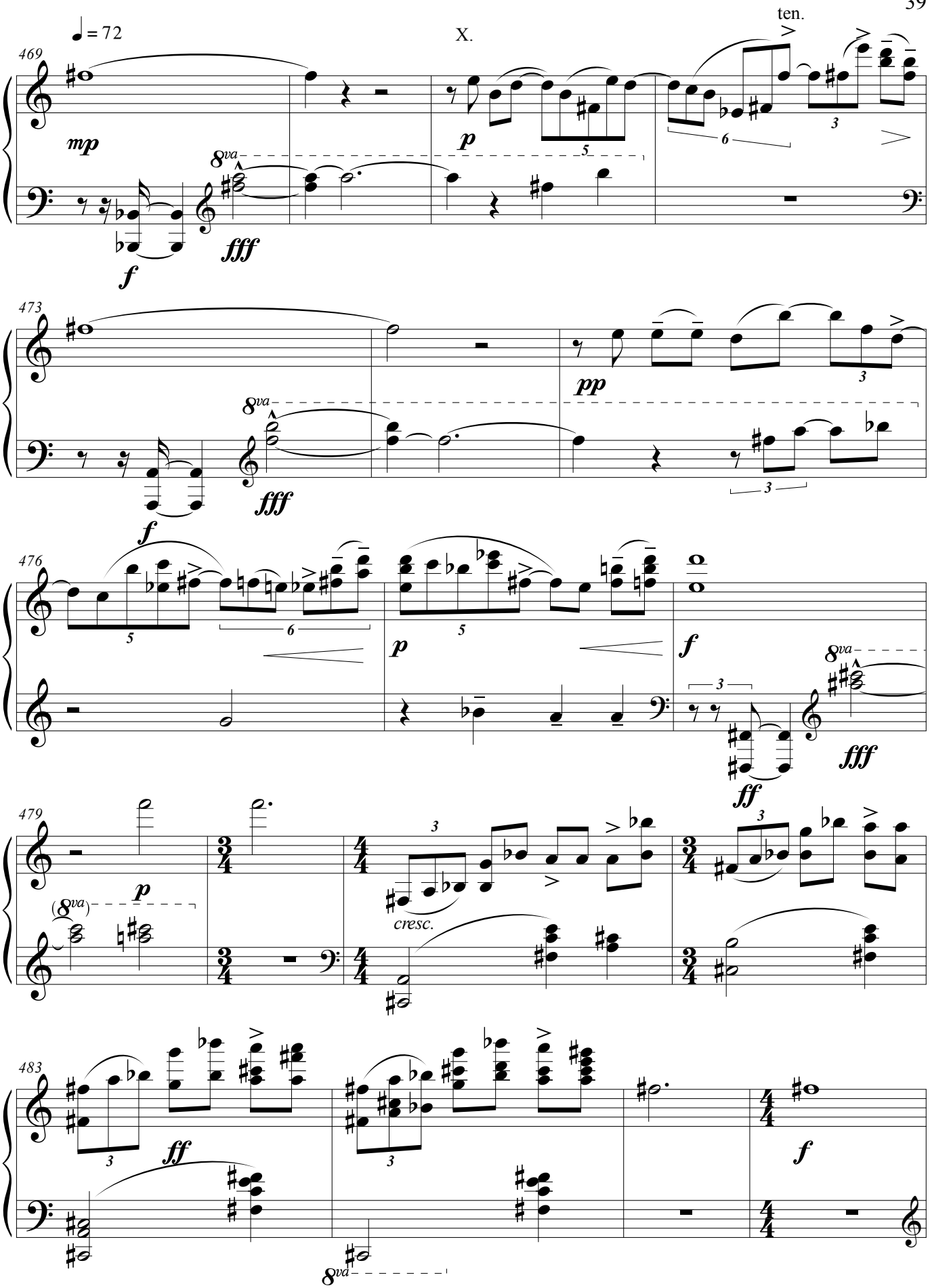
IX.

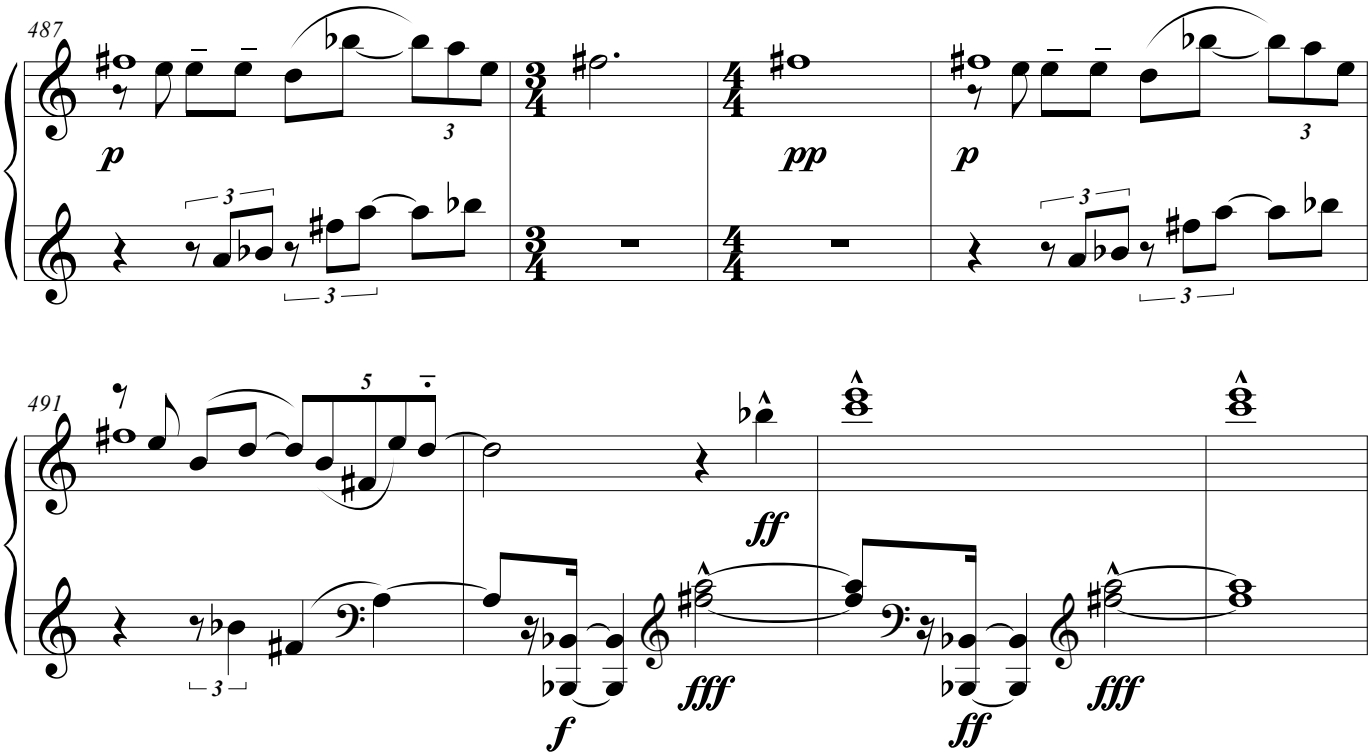

♩ = 48
432
pp
ppp
p
pp
ppp
438
p
pp
p
pp
ppp
8va
mp
pp
ppp
long
444
pp
ppp
pp
ppp
pp
mf
ten.
449
ff
f
ten.
f
ten.
fff
ff
fff
Ped.
mf
p



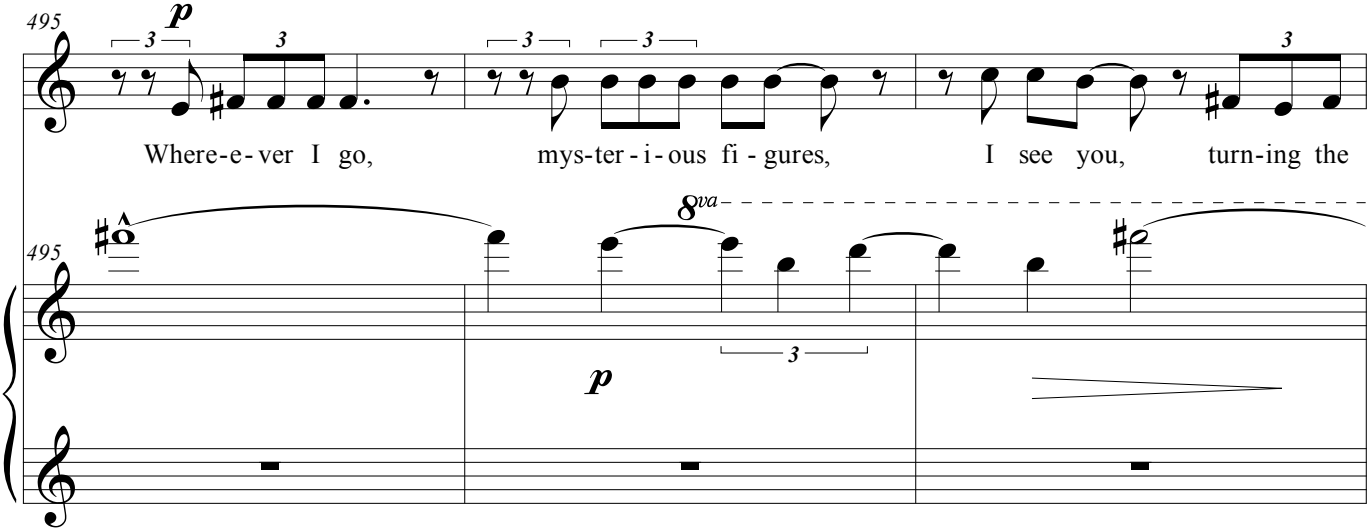
Morning came: from the black deep
A bark arises and rests and rests . . .
What's happened?

(Nietzsche, "The Mysterious Bark")


♩ = 72
X.
ten.
469
mp
f
8va
fff
p
473
pp
476
ff
479
(8va)
cresc.
483



In performances with singer,
the voices together.



Wherever I go, mysterious figures,
I see you, turning the corner, mothers
and sons; you, you, you. I hasten, I follow.

(Virginia Woolf, "An Unwritten Novel")