A Modern Songbook

Volume Three

Twenty Songs for Baritone and Piano

Lawrence Kramer

Juan Gris, “The Open Window.” Public Domain.

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Preface

A Modern Songbook is a three-volume collection of songs for high voice, medium voice, and baritone, respectively. The songs were composed between 2016 and 2024. Several of them appear in multiple versions to accommodate different voice types. Several others are assigned to specific voices.

Most of the poems set here date from the early twentieth century. In part this is because the years between 1900 and 1928 offer a rich trove of public domain texts, but in part it is because this was the time in which the English language assumed the modern idiom that we still use today a century later. The language of these poems has a distinct quality of freshness about it that has always attracted me. For that reason I felt no sense of discontinuity in translating several texts originally written in other languages, by Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Apollinaire, and Rilke, into the English idiom of the present.

The range of poets is broad. The big names are here, most of them represented by their earlier work, but so too are poets who have been neglected or forgotten. In a few cases the texts have been slightly altered; in others the texts are composites.

A Ball of Gold

A man saw a ball of gold in the sky;
He climbed for it,
And eventually he achieved it--
It was clay.

Now this is the strange part:
When the man went to the earth
And looked again,
Lo, there was the ball of gold.
Now this is the strange part:
It was a ball of gold.
Aye, by the Heavens, it was a ball of gold.

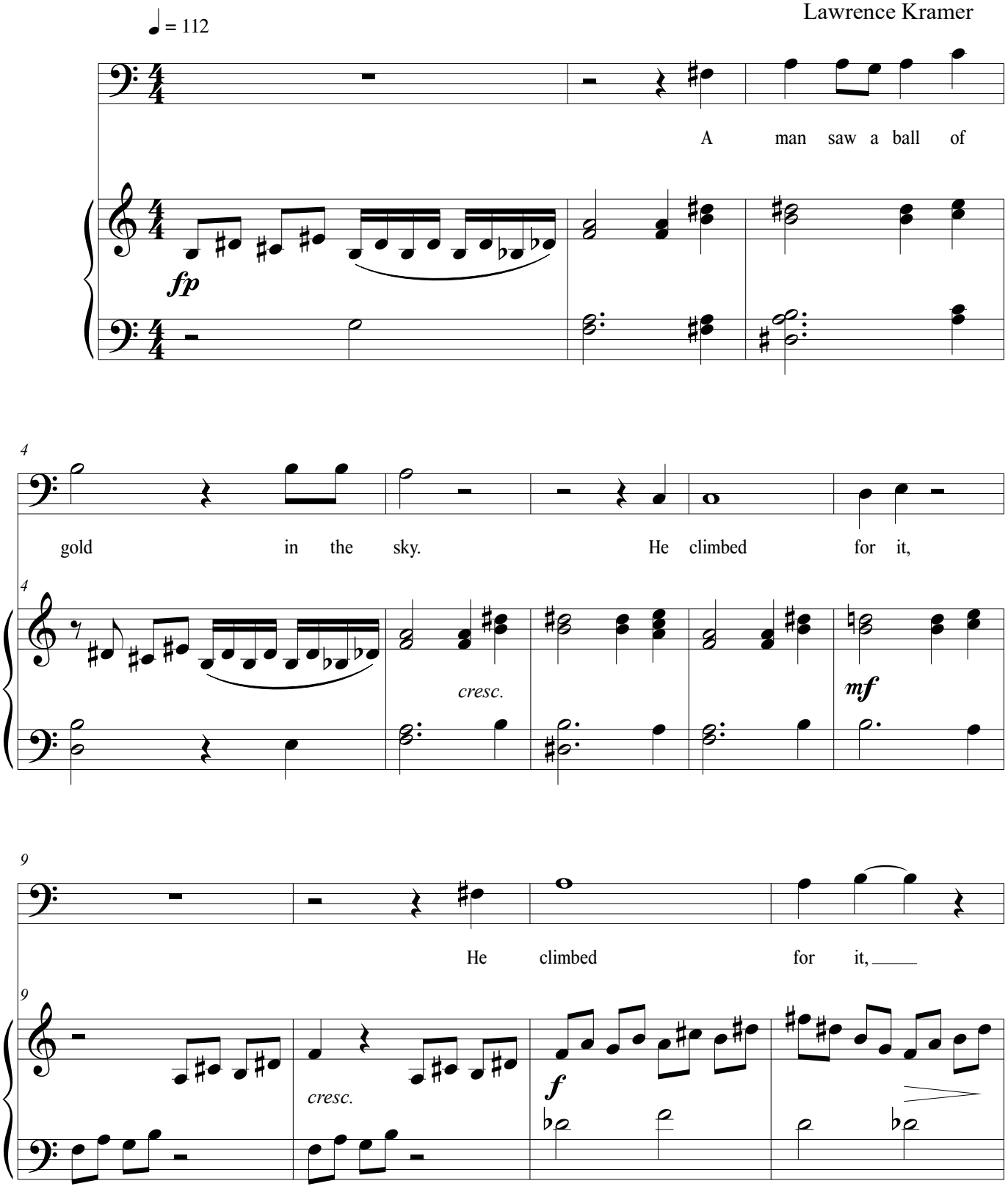
--Stephen Crane

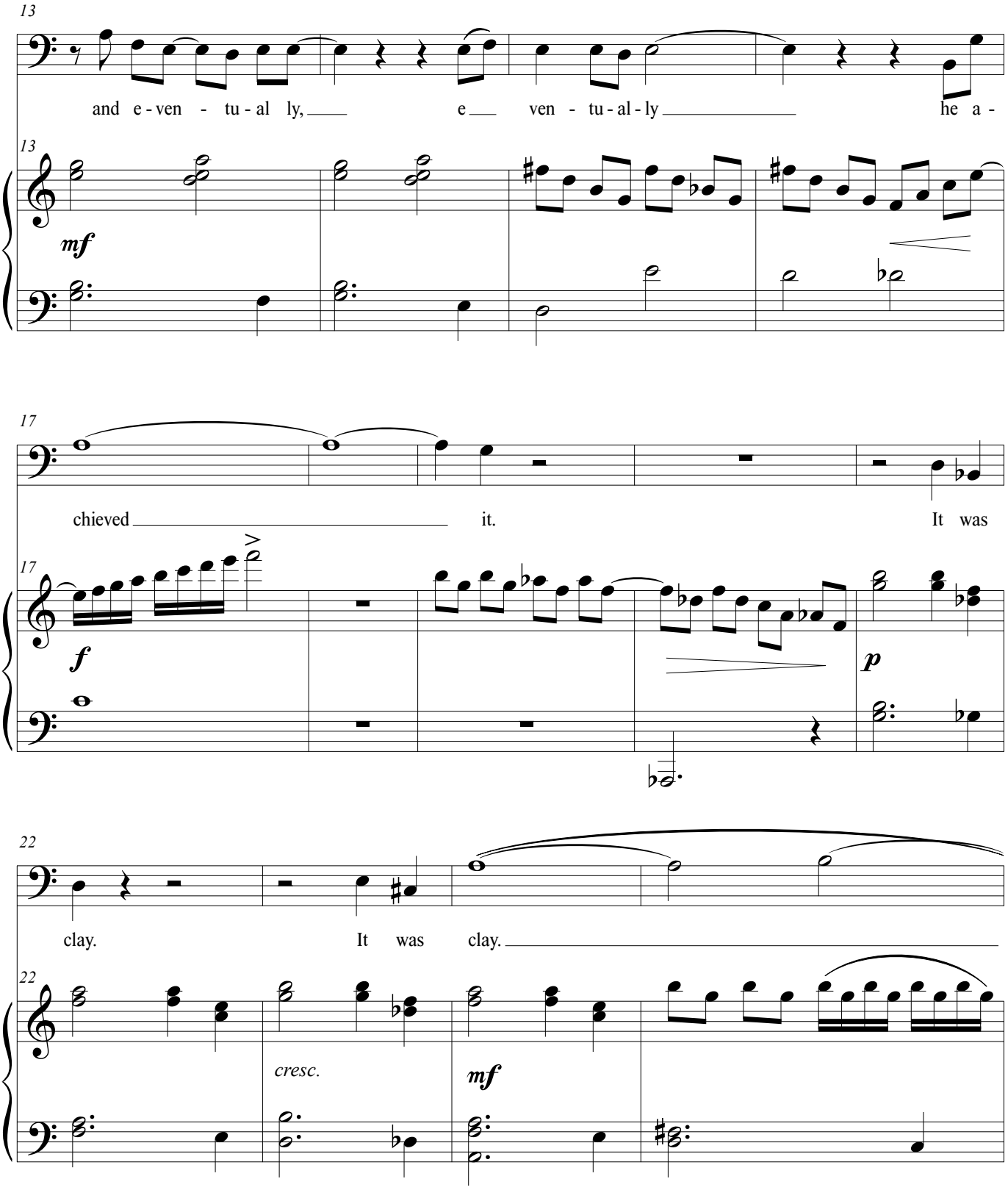
Voice Range: A2 - E4
Tessitura: C3-D4
Duration 2:40

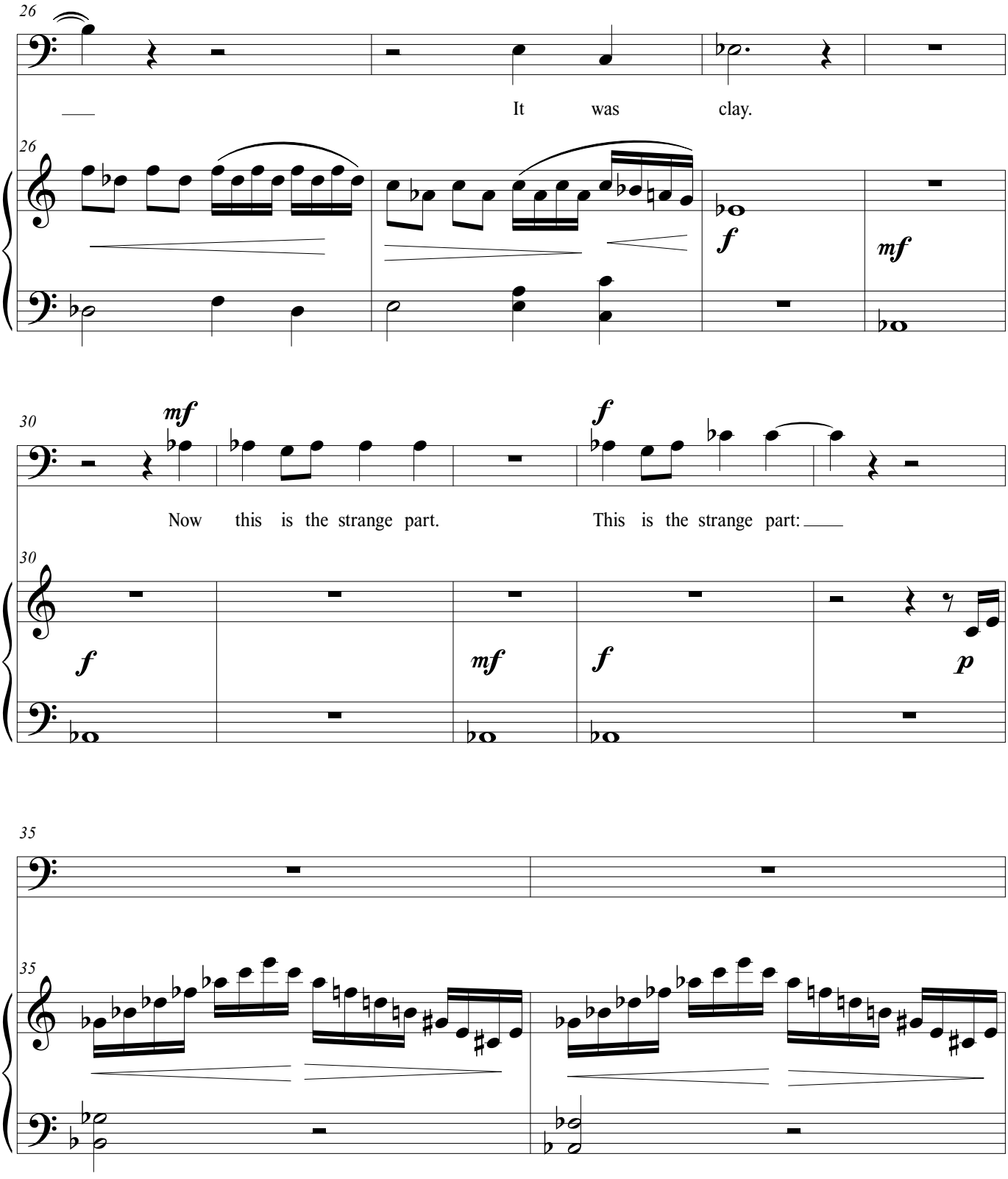
Composed 2018

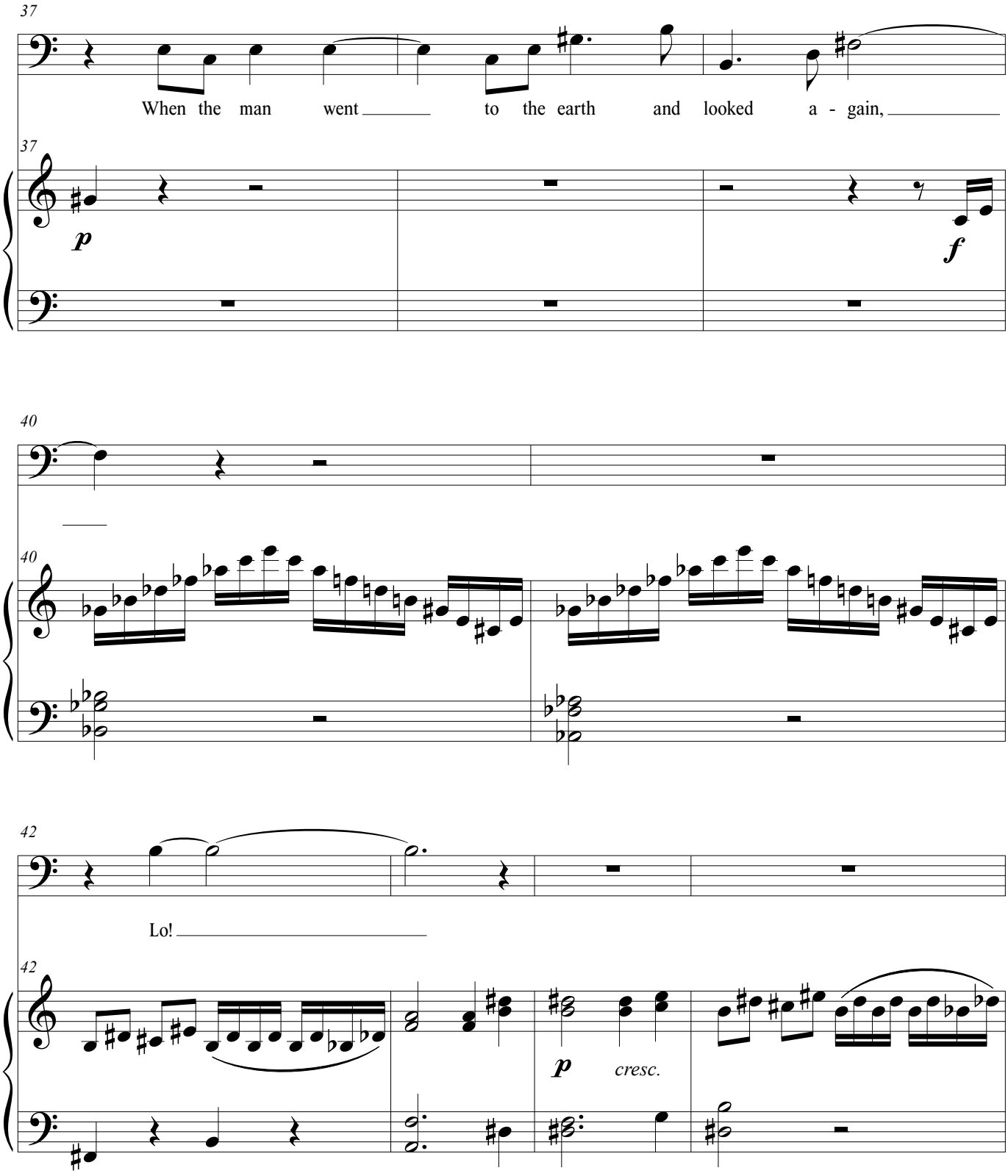
A Ball of Gold

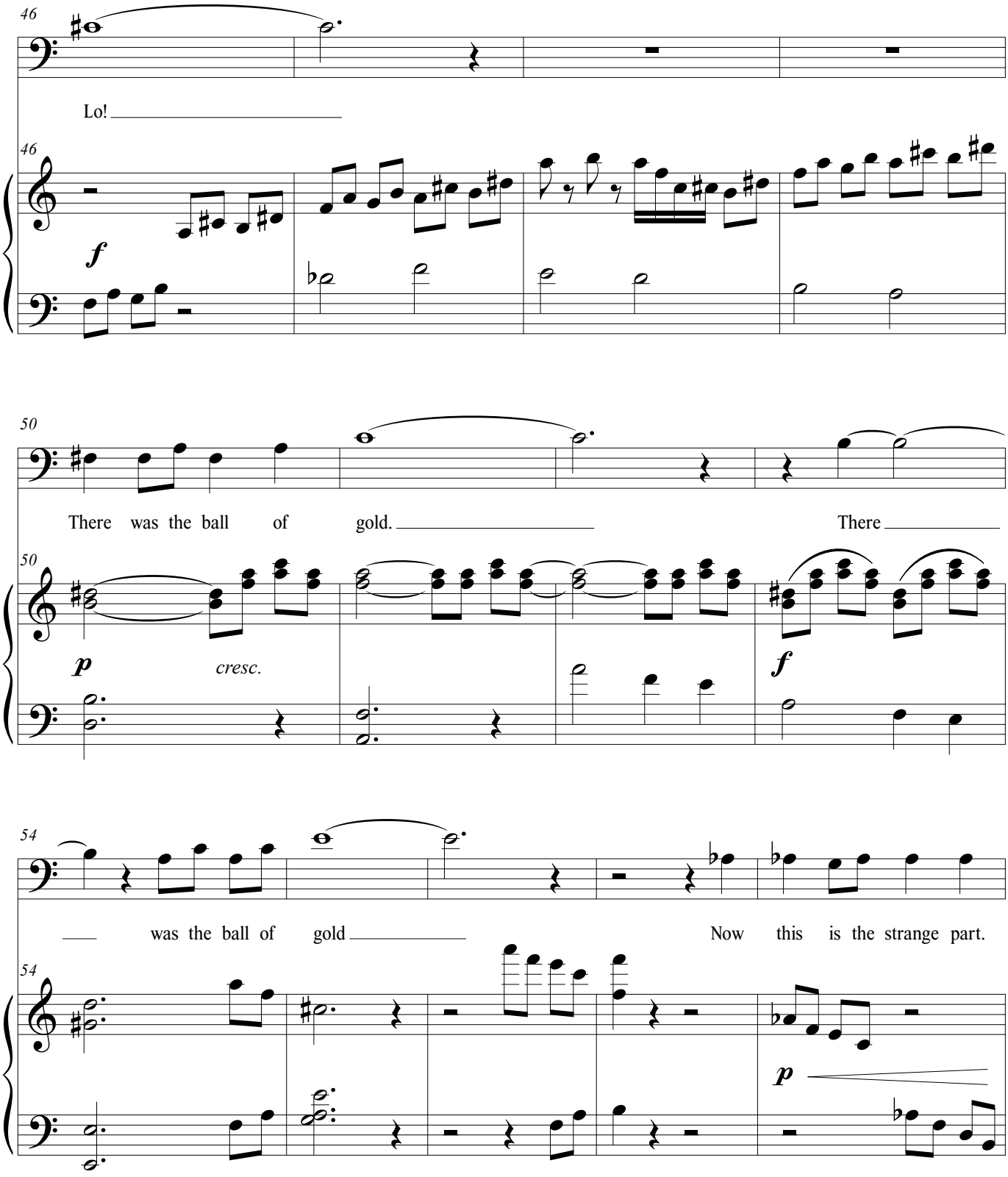
Lawrence Kramer

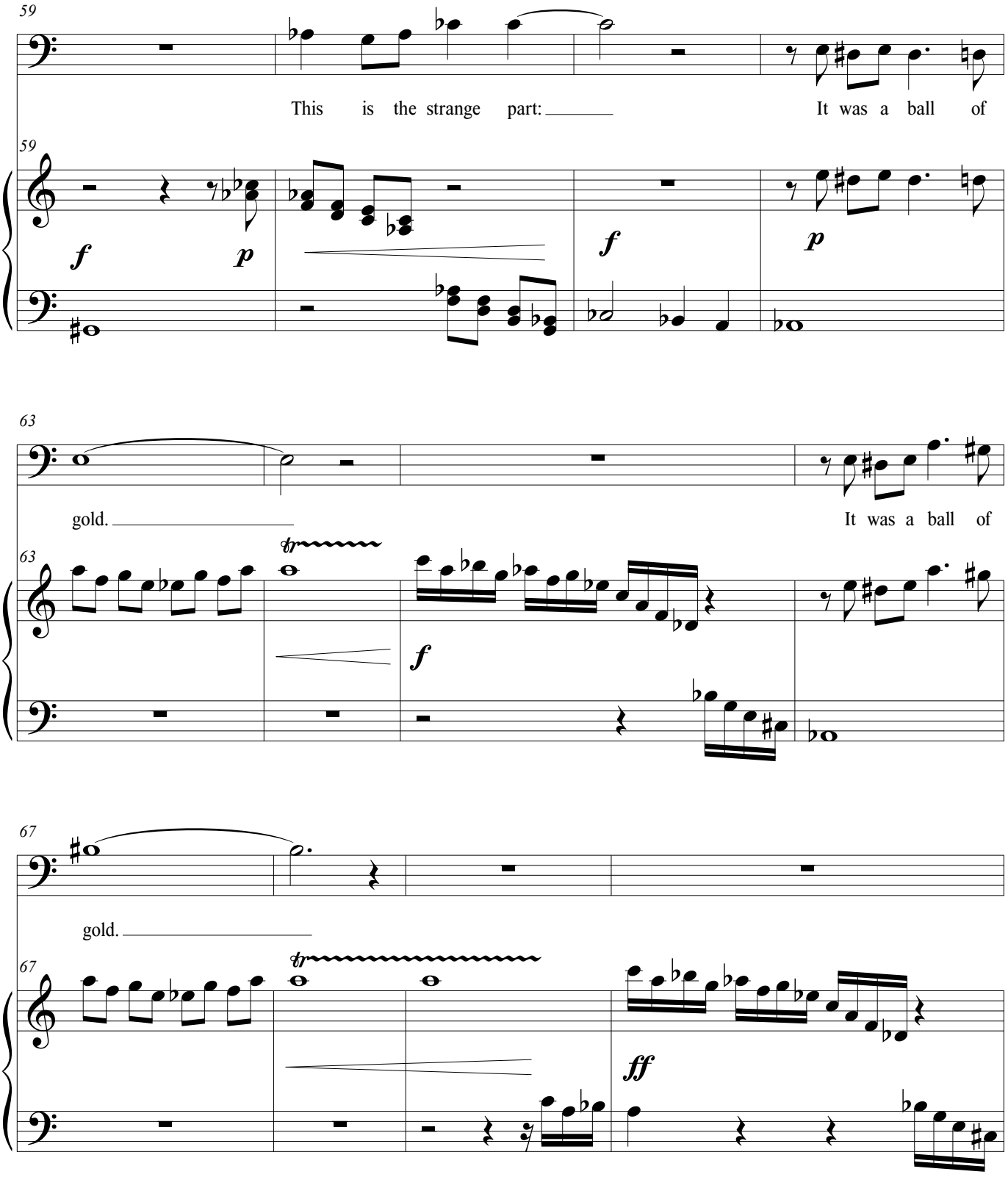


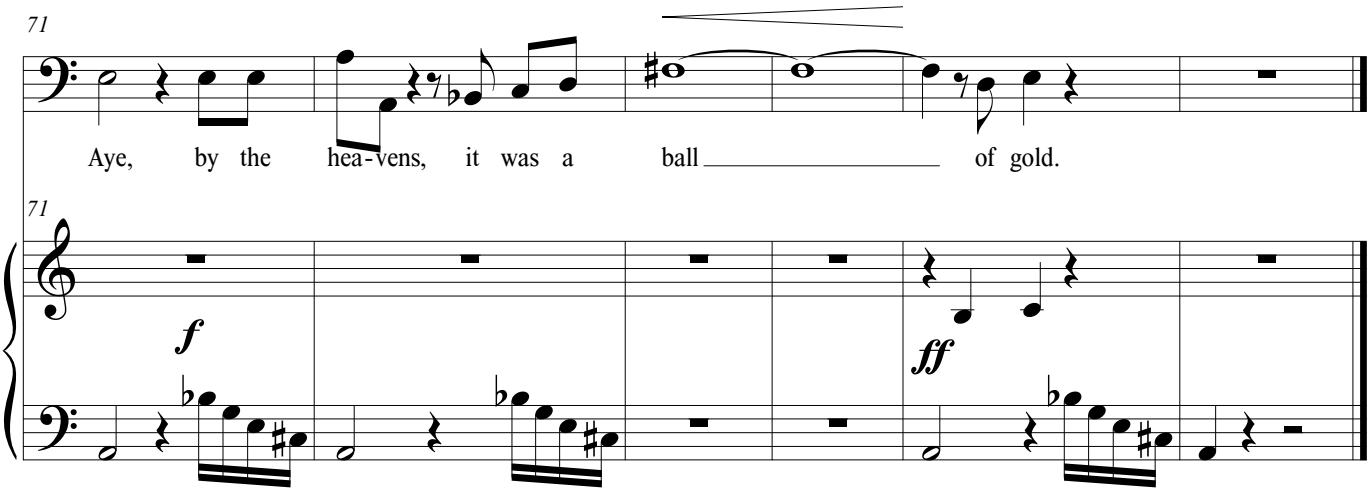

13
and e - ven - tu - al ly, e ven - tu - al - ly he a -
13
mf
17
chieved it. It was
17
f
p
22
clay. It was clay.
22
cresc.
mf


26
It was clay.
f
mf
30
mf
f
Now this is the strange part.
This is the strange part:
f
mf
f
p
35


37
When the man went to the earth and looked a - gain,
37
p
f
40
40
42
Lo!
42
p
cresc.


46
Lo!
46
f
50
There was the ball of gold.
There
50
p
cresc.
f
54
was the ball of gold
Now this is the strange part.
54
p


59
This is the strange part:
It was a ball of
59
f
p
f
p
63
gold.
It was a ball of
63
tr
f
67
gold.
67
tr
ff


71
Aye, by the hea-vens, it was a ball of gold.
71
f
ff

Autumn Rain

Baritone

There trudges one to a merry-making
With a sturdy swing,
On whom the rain comes down.

To fetch the saving medicament
Is another bent,
On whom the rain comes down.

One slowly drives his herd to the stall
Ere ill befall,
On whom the rain comes down.

This bears his missives of life and death
With quickening breath,
On whom the rain comes down.

One watches for signals of wreck or war
From the hill afar,
On whom the rain comes down.

No care if he gain a shelter or none,
Unhired moves one,
On whom the rain comes down.

And another knows nought of its chilling fall
Upon him at all,
On whom the rain comes down.

--Thomas Hardy

Voice range: D3 - F4
Tessitura: F3 - D4
Duration 4:20

Composed 2020

Autumn Rain

Like an old ballad.

Lawrence Kramer

♩ = 88

There

mf

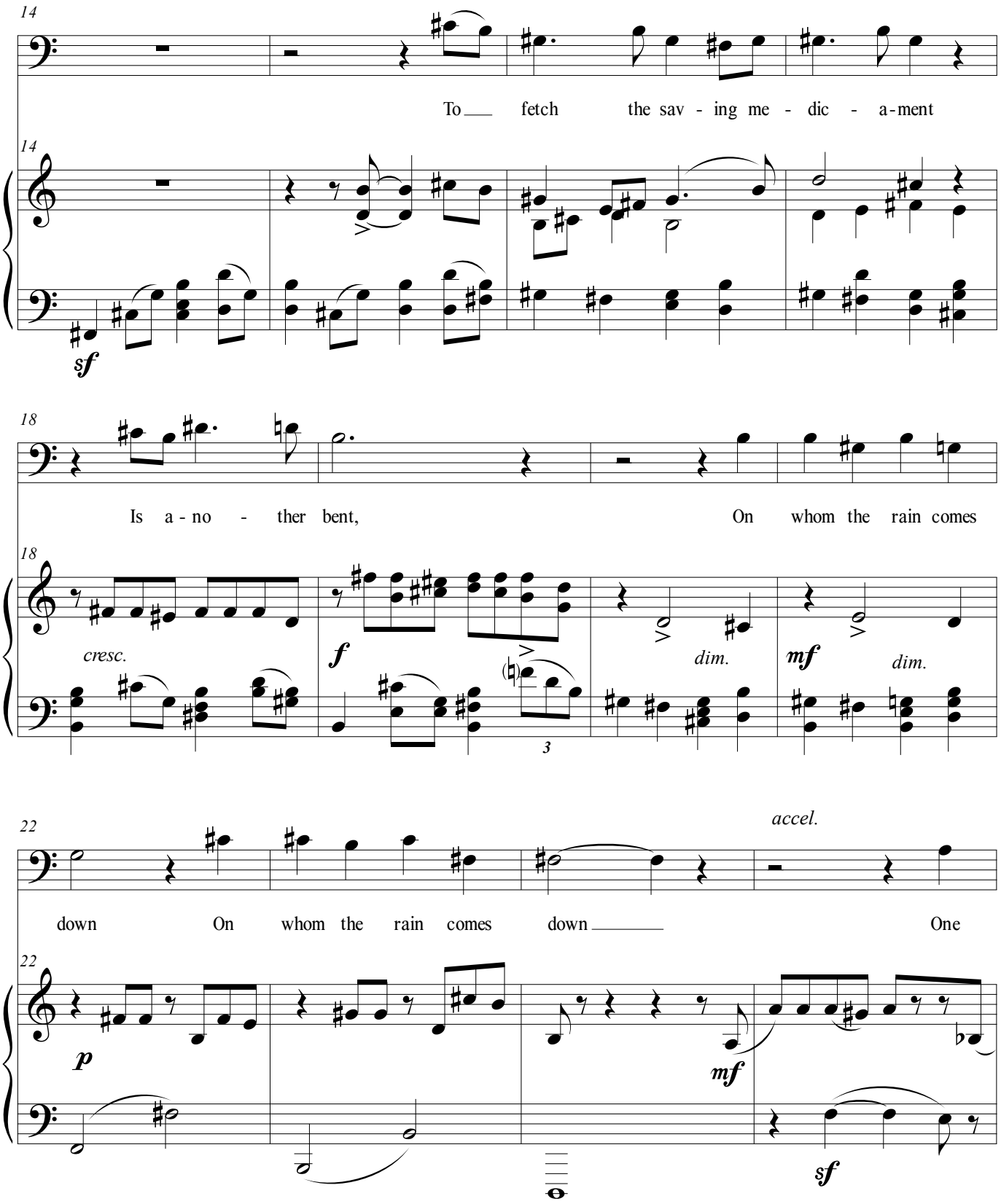
5

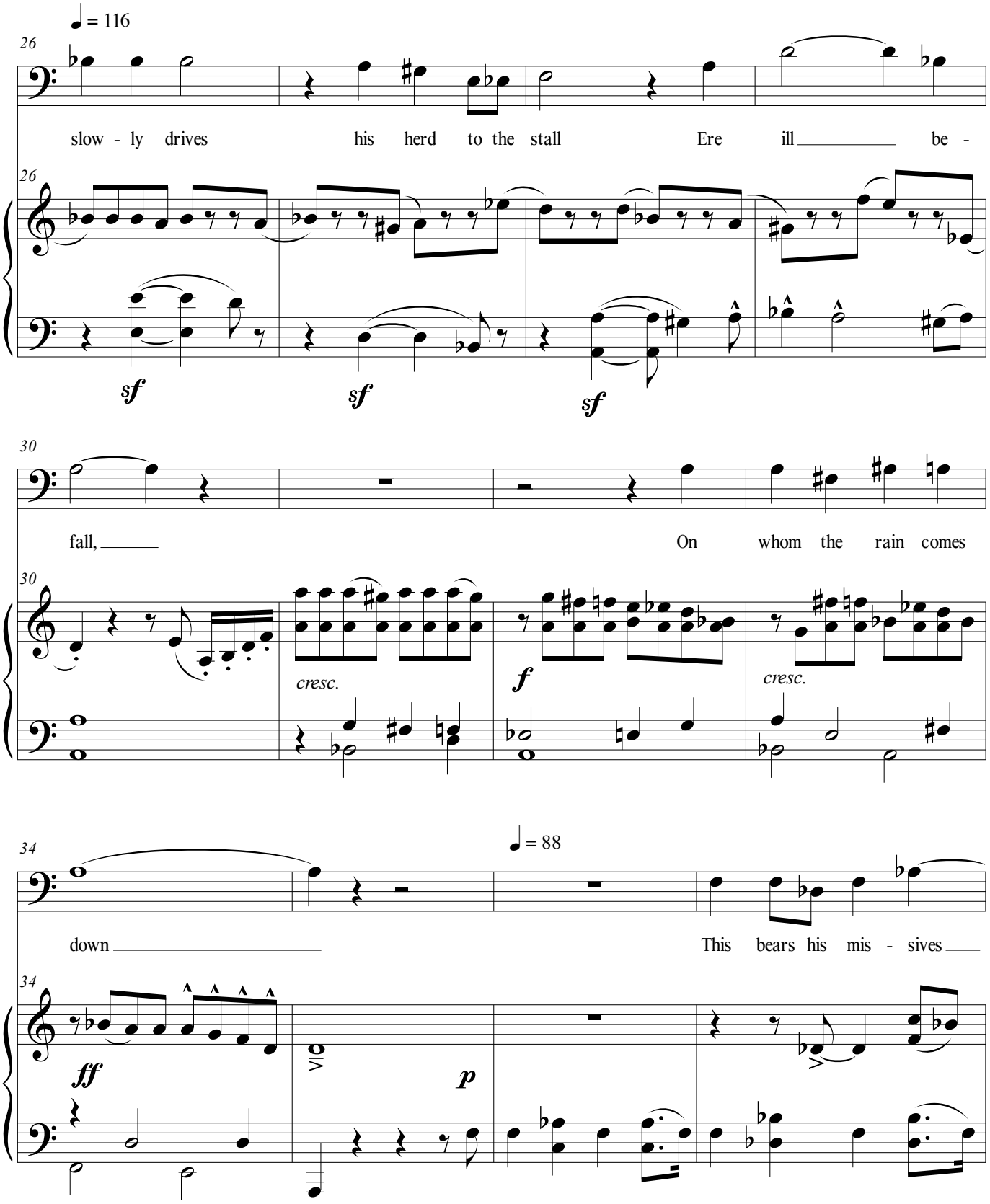
trud - ges one to a mer - ry mak - ing With a stur - dy swing,

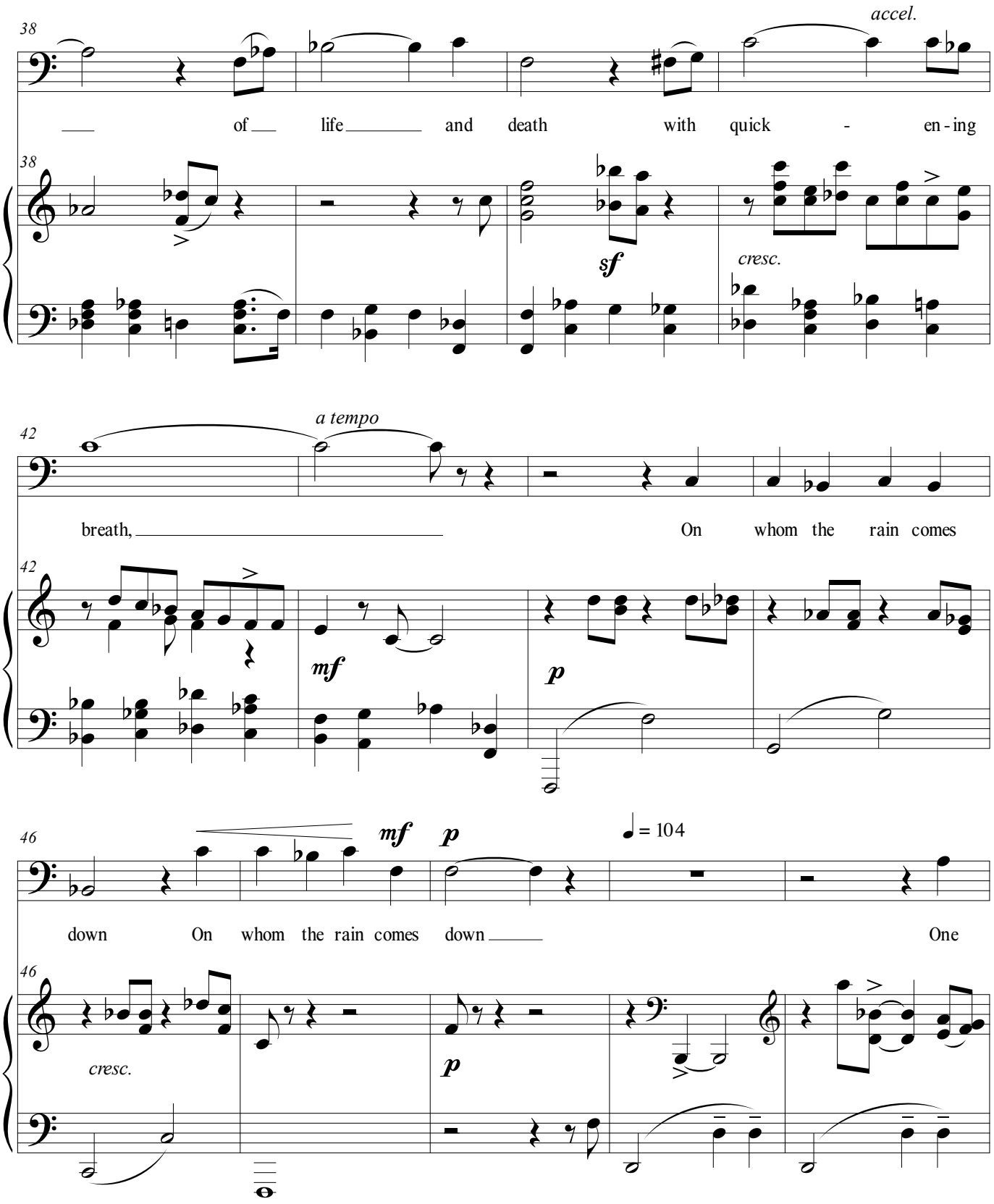
9

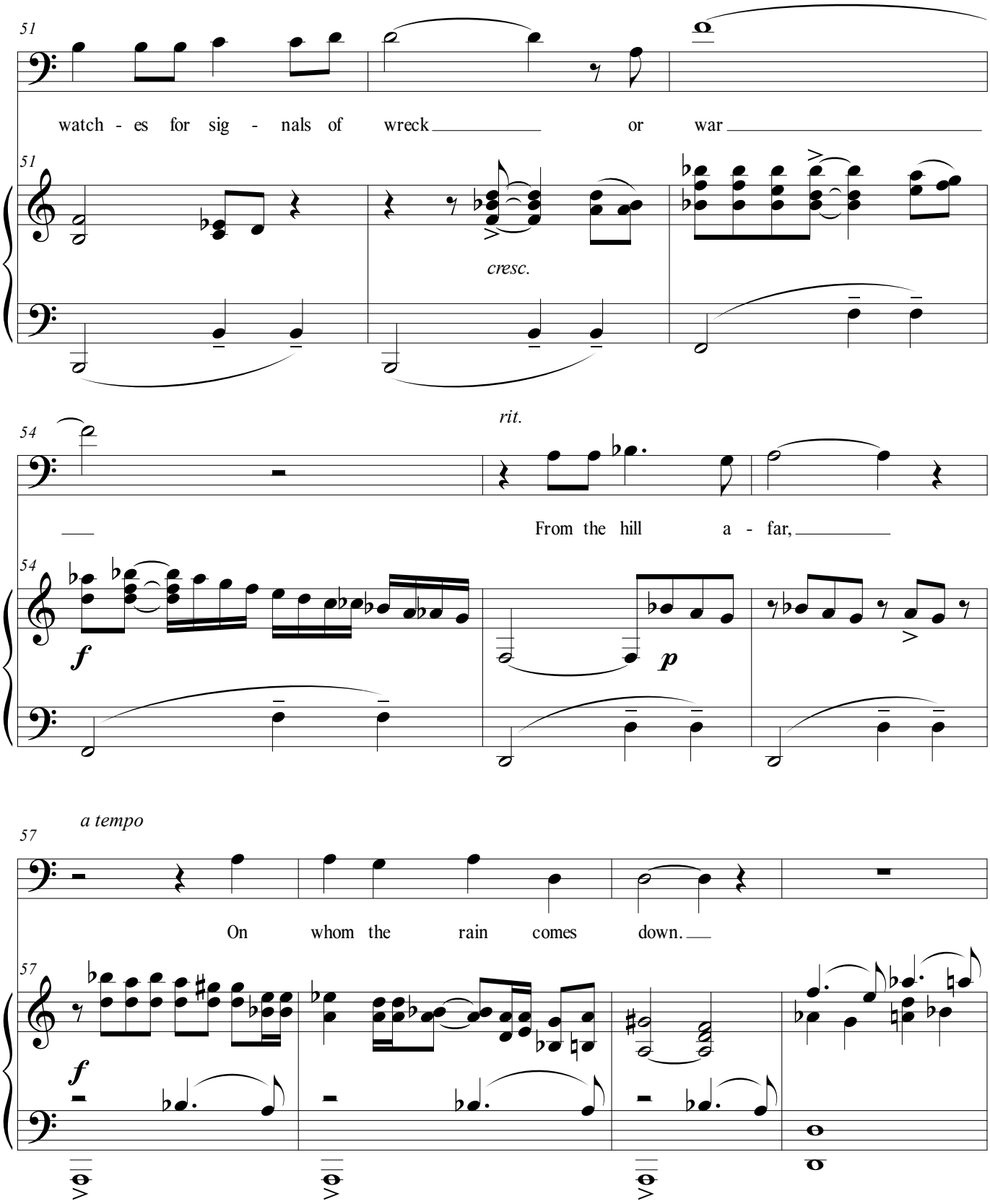
On whom the rain comes down On whom the rain comes down

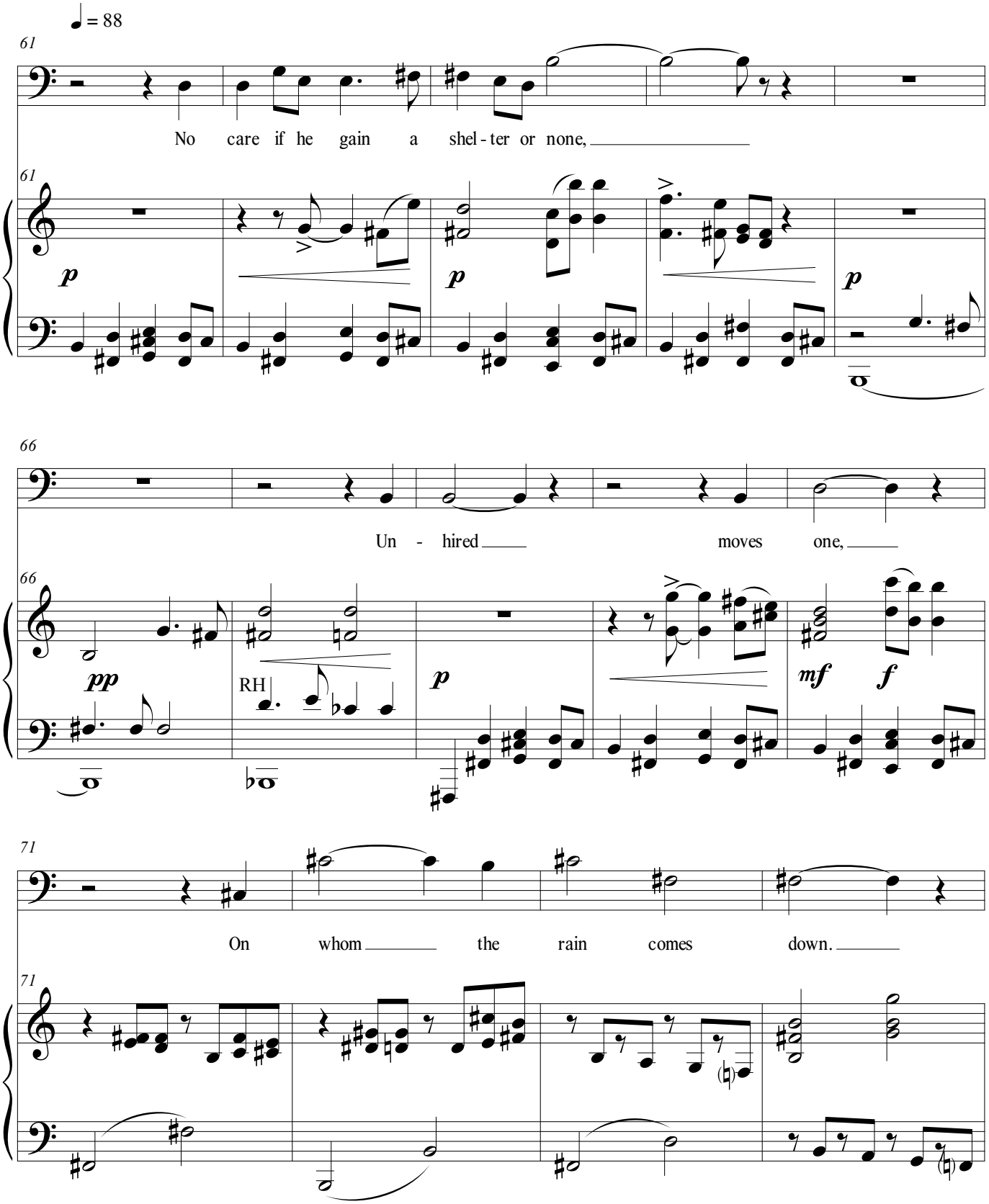
p

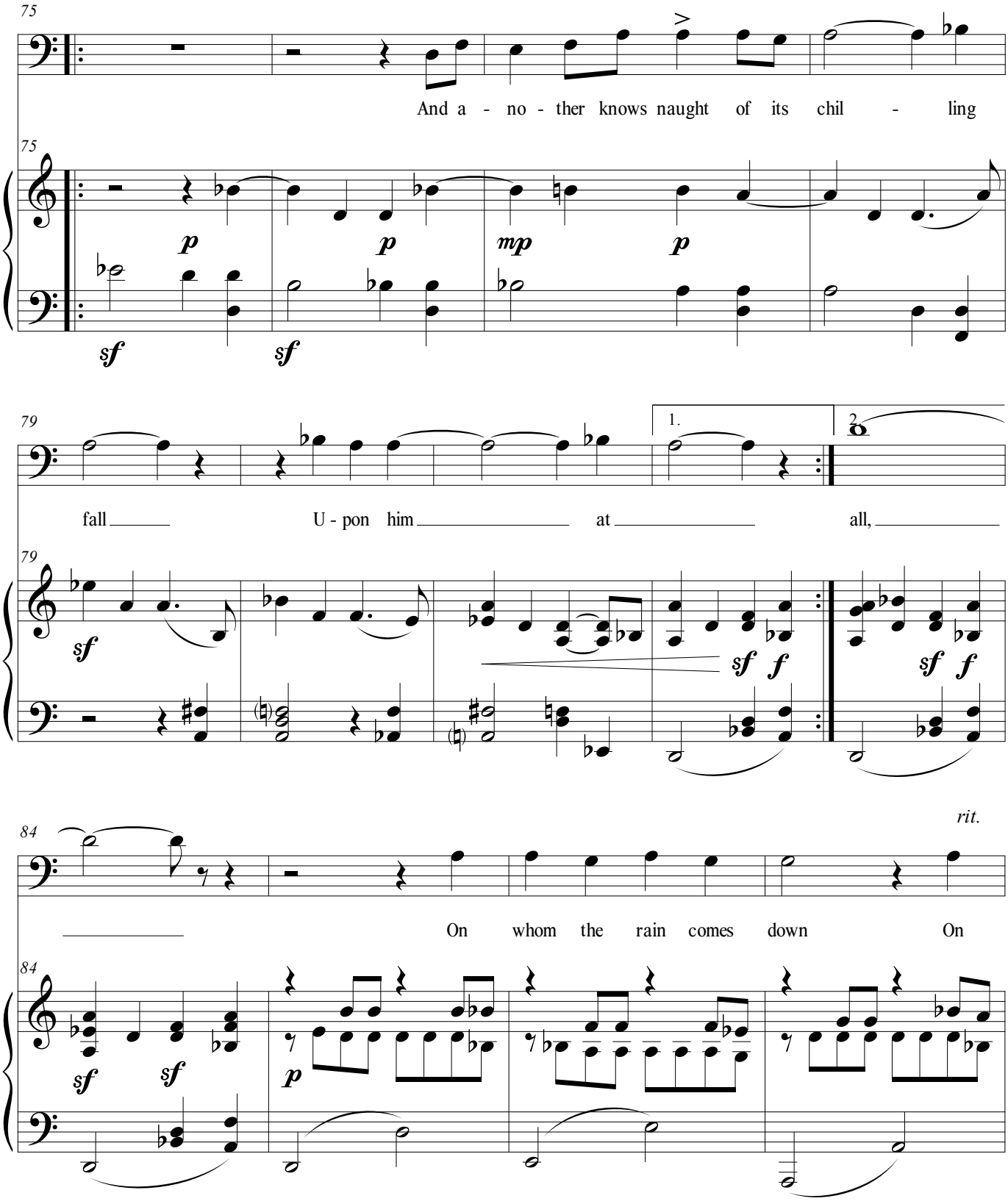

14
To fetch the sav - ing me - dic - a-ment
14
sf
18
Is a - no - ther bent, On whom the rain comes
18
cresc.
f
dim.
mf
dim.
3
22
accel.
down On whom the rain comes down One
22
p
mf
sf

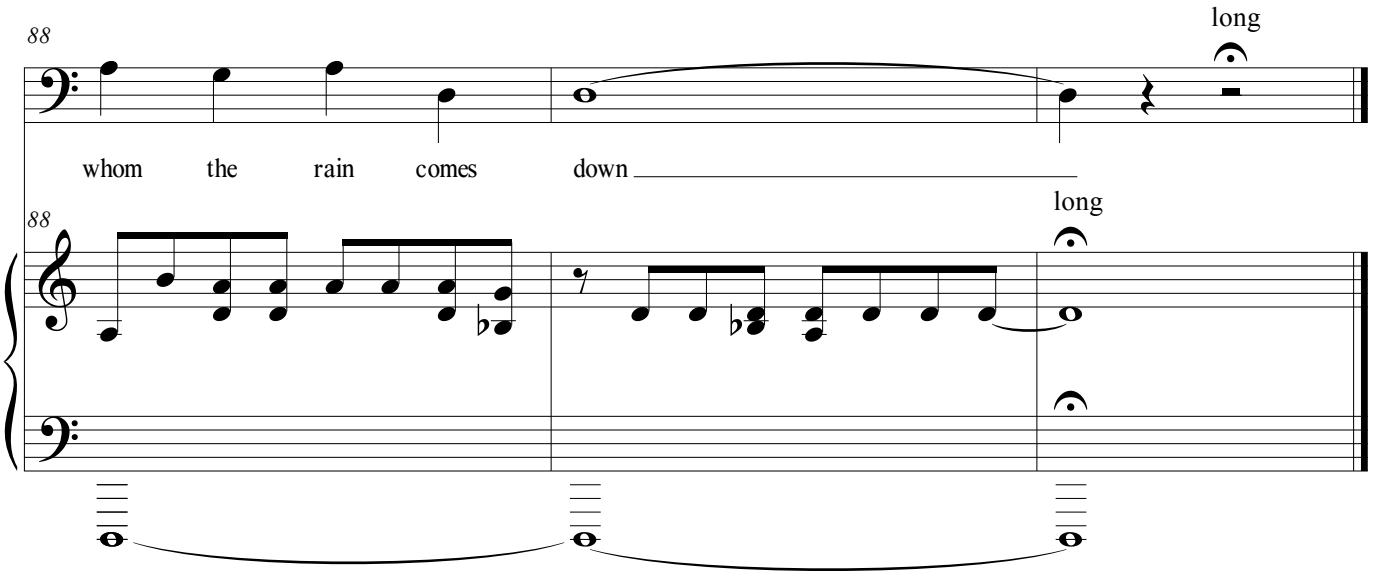

♩ = 116
26
slow - ly drives his herd to the stall Ere ill be -
26
sf
sf
sf
30
fall, On whom the rain comes
30
cresc.
f
cresc.
34
♩ = 88
down This bears his mis - sives
34
ff
p


38
accel.
of life and death with quick - en - ing
38
sf
cresc.
42
a tempo
breath, On whom the rain comes
42
mf
p
46
mf
p
♩ = 104
down On whom the rain comes down One
46
cresc.
p


51
watch - es for sig - nals of wreck or war
51
cresc.
54
rit.
From the hill a - far,
54
f
p
57
a tempo
On whom the rain comes down.
57
f


♩ = 88
61
No care if he gain a shel - ter or none,
61
p
p
p
66
Un - hired moves one,
66
pp
RH
p
mf
f
71
On whom the rain comes down.
71


75
And a - no - ther knows naught of its chil - ling
p p mp p
sf sf
79
fall U - pon him at all,
1. 2.
sf sf f sf f
84
rit.
On whom the rain comes down On
sf sf p


88
long
whom the rain comes down
88
long

Digging

Baritone

To-day I think
Only with scents,—scents dead leaves yield,
And bracken, and wild carrot's seed,
And the square mustard field ;

Odours that rise
When the spade wounds the root of tree,
Rose, currant, raspberry, or goutweed,
Rhubarb or celery;

The smoke's smell, too,
Flowing from where a bonfire burns
The dead, the waste, the dangerous,
And all to sweetness turns.

It is enough
To smell, to crumble the dark earth,
While the robin sings over again
Sad songs of Autumn mirth.

--Edward Thomas

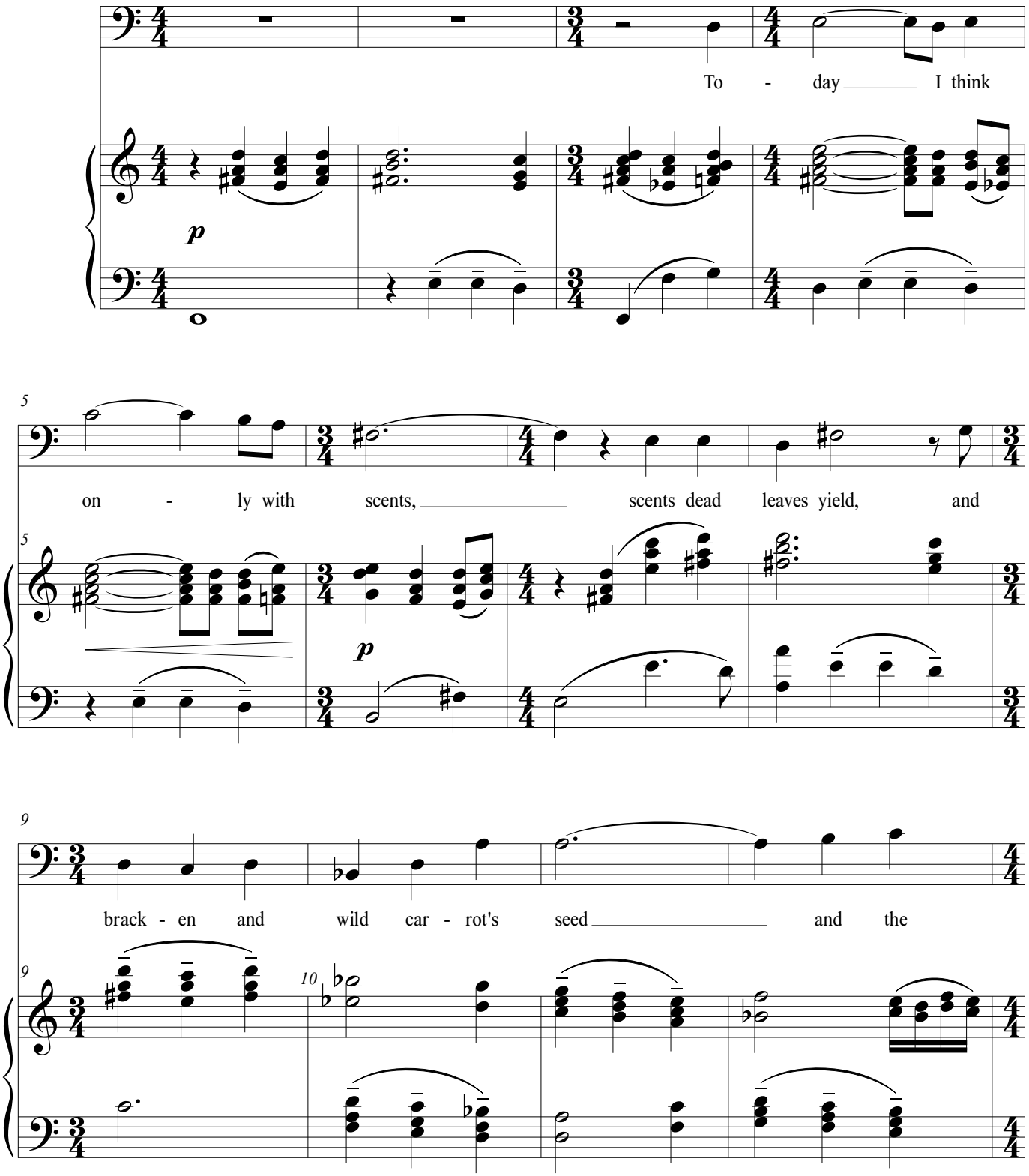
Written voice range: A3 - D5
Tessitura: E4 - C5
Duration 3:25

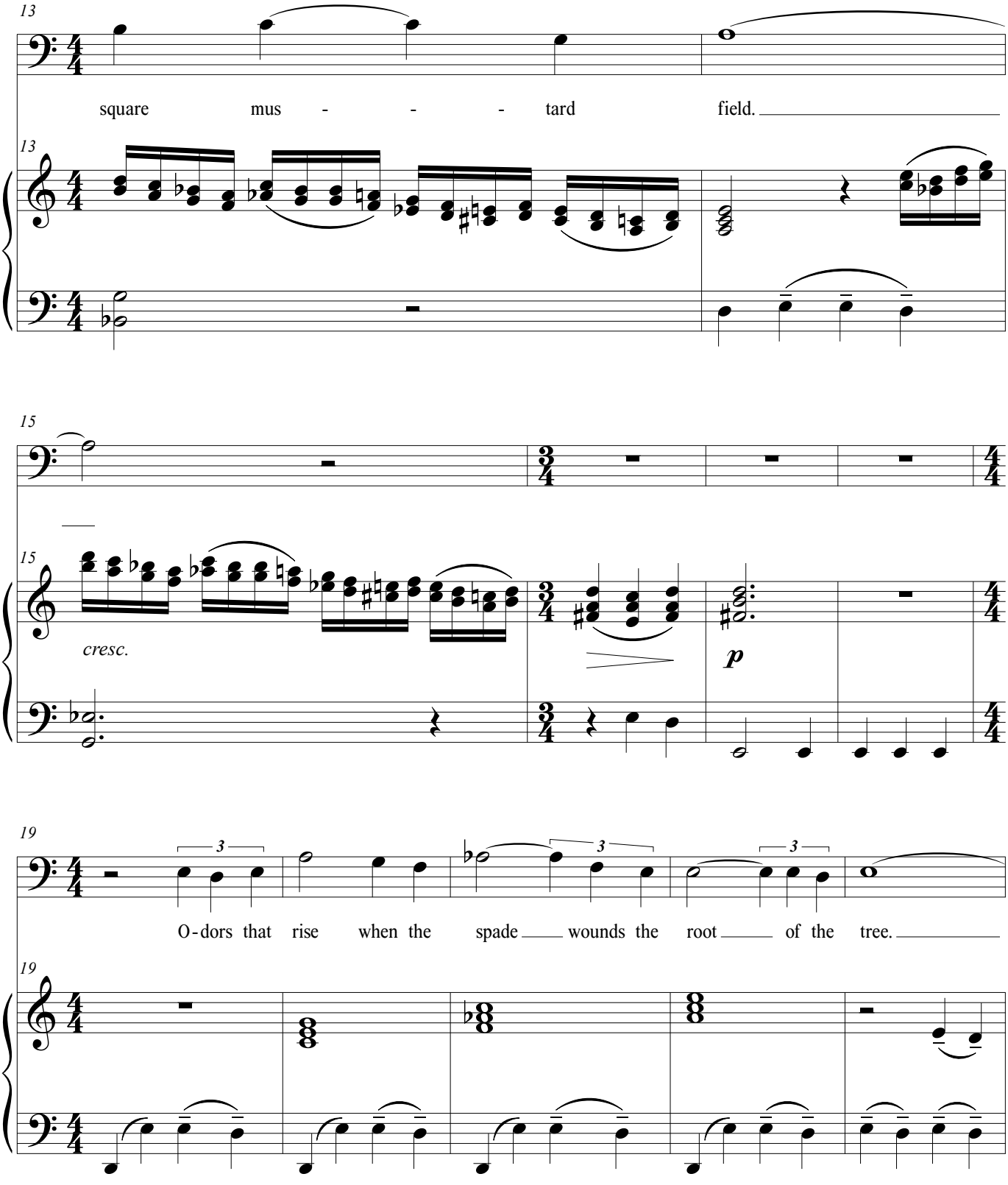
Composed 2019

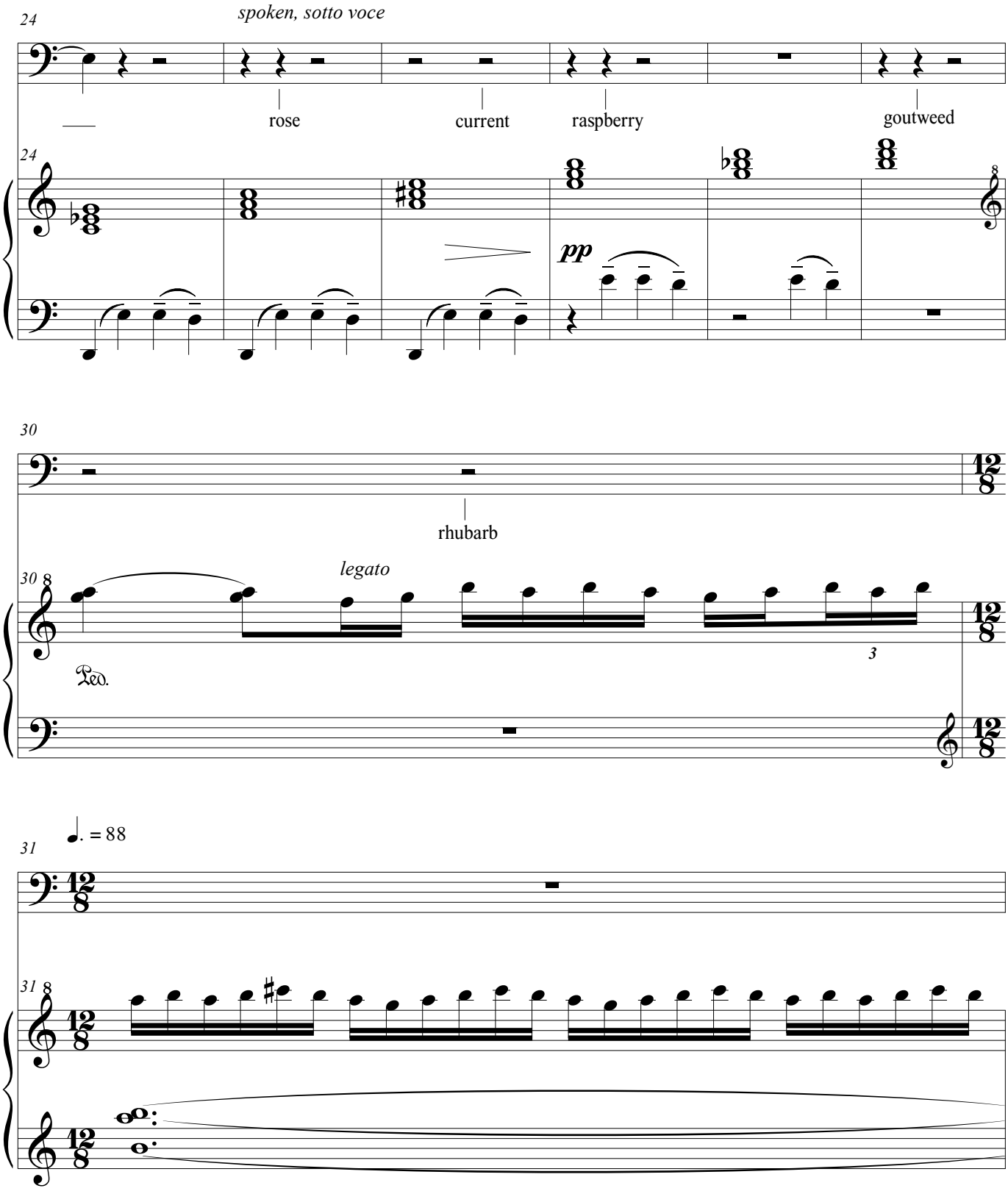
Digging

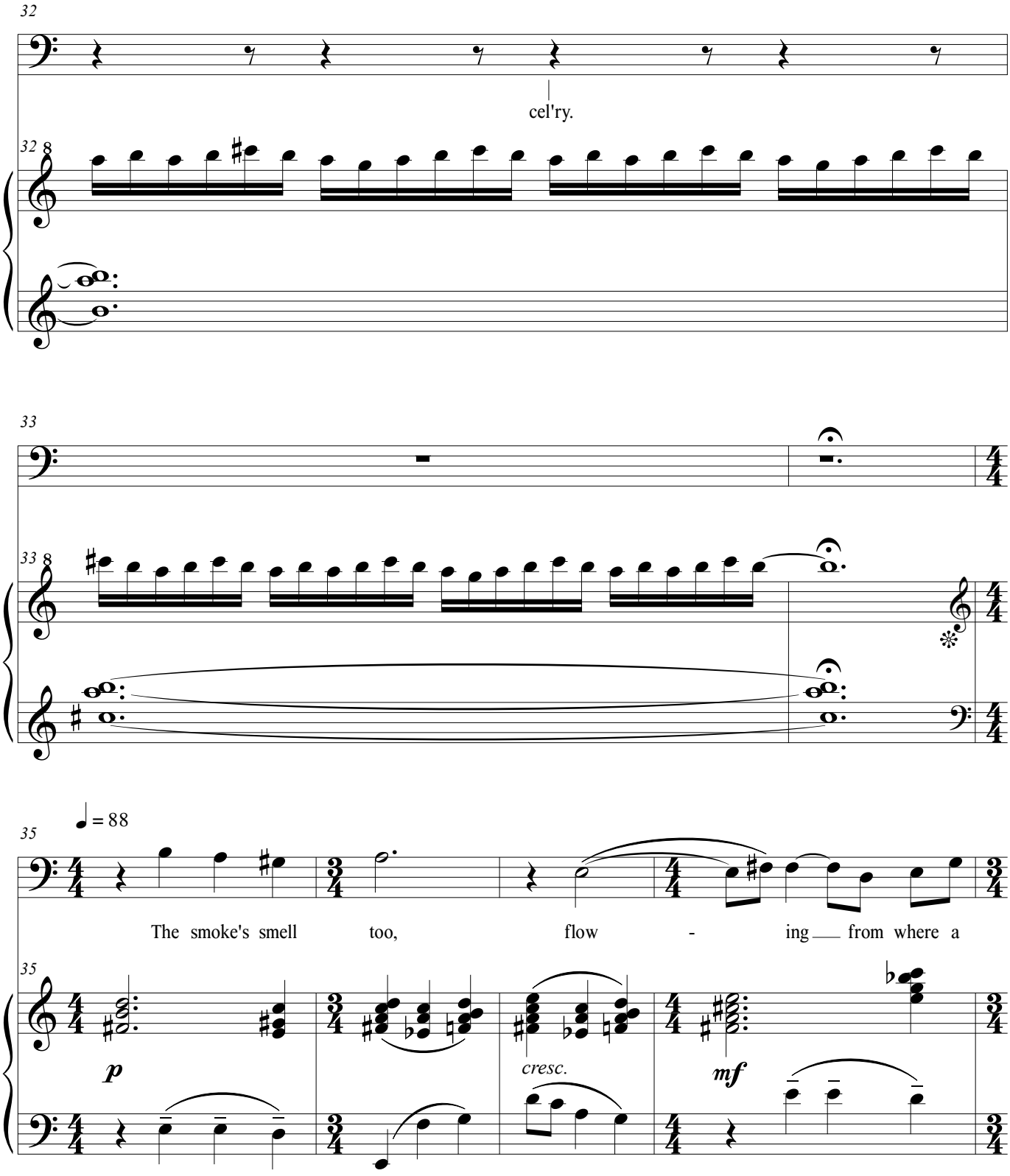
♩ = 88

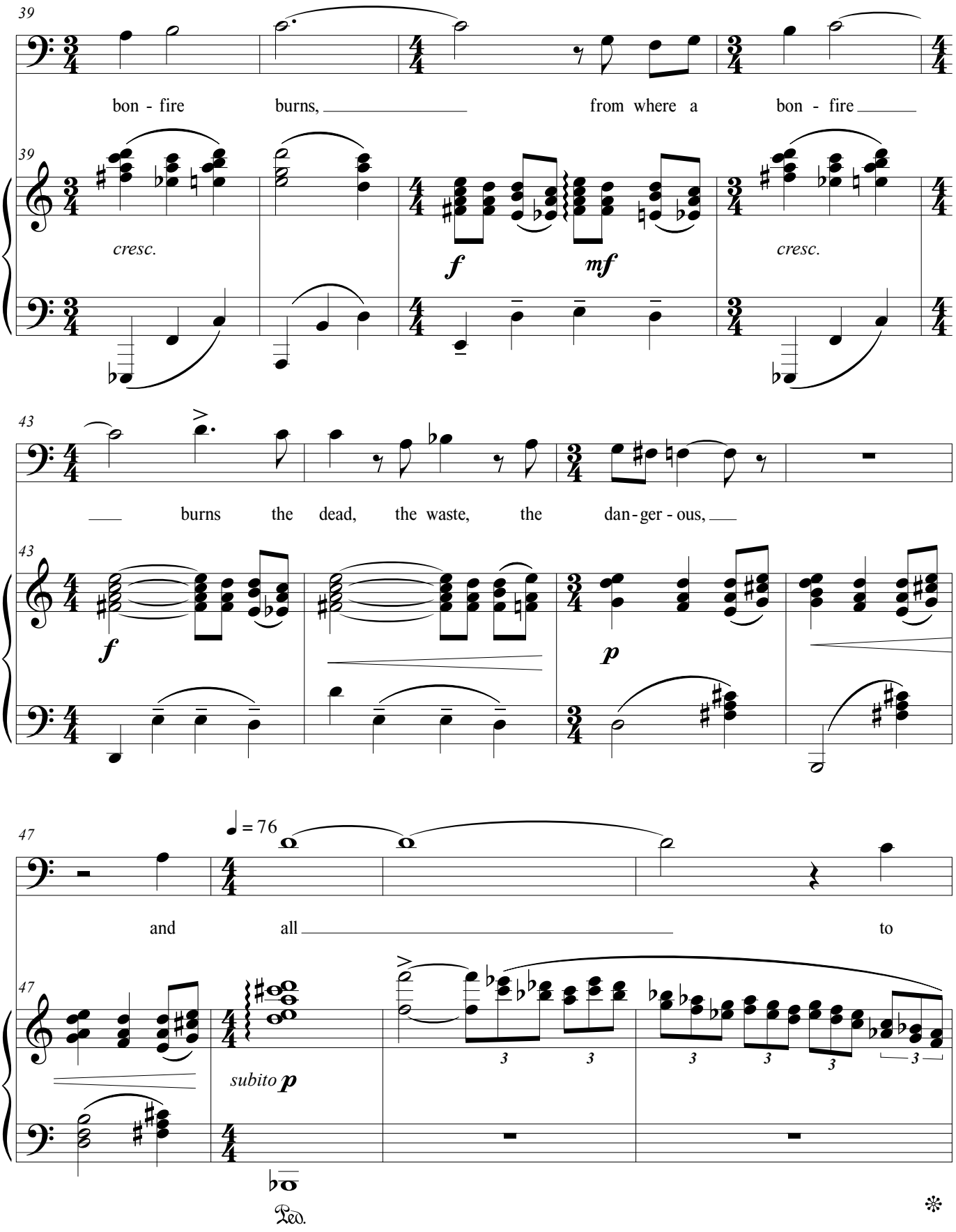
Lawrence Kramer

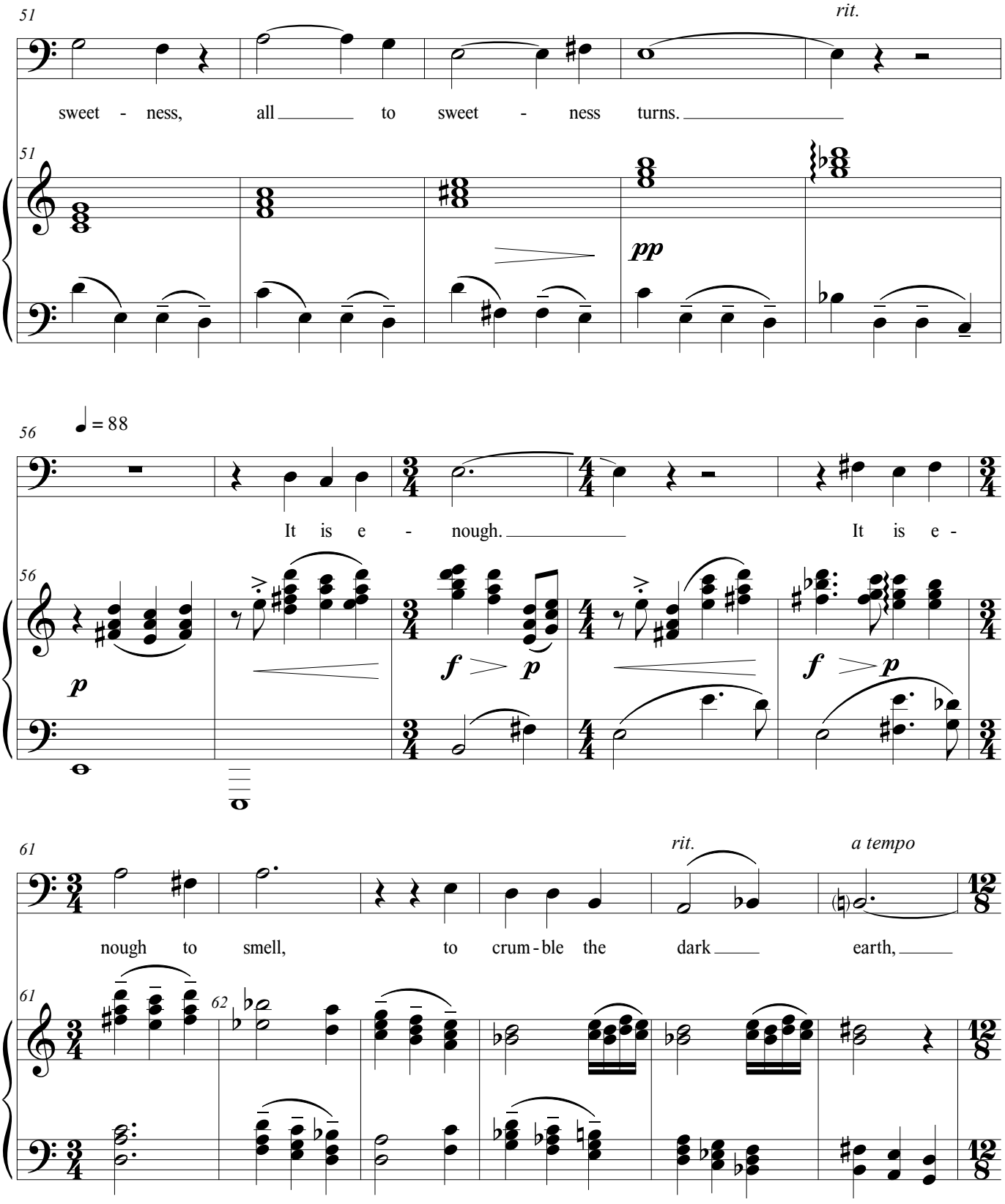


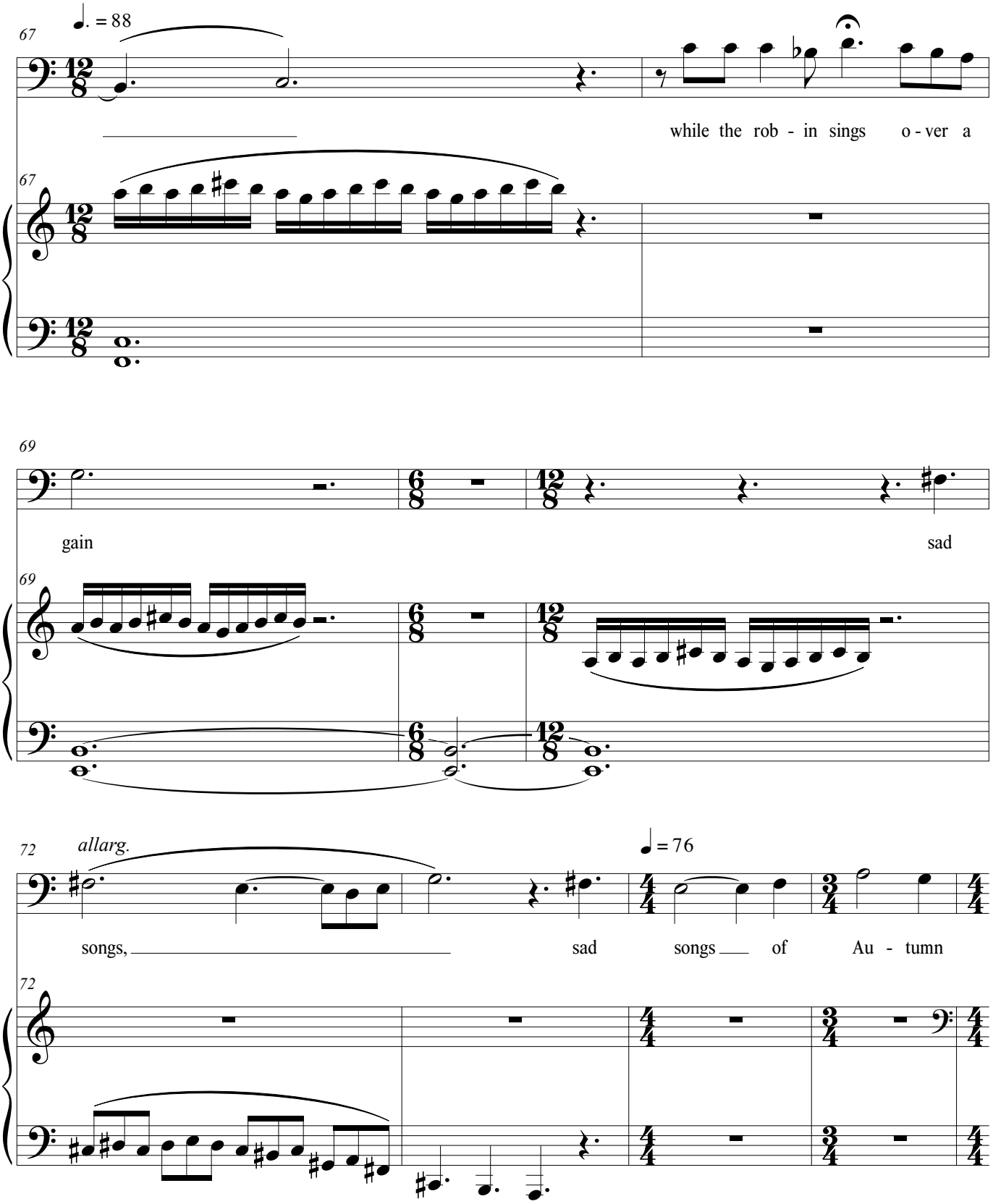

13
square mus - - - tard field.
13
15
cresc.
p
15
19
3
3
3
O - dors that rise when the spade wounds the root of the tree.
19

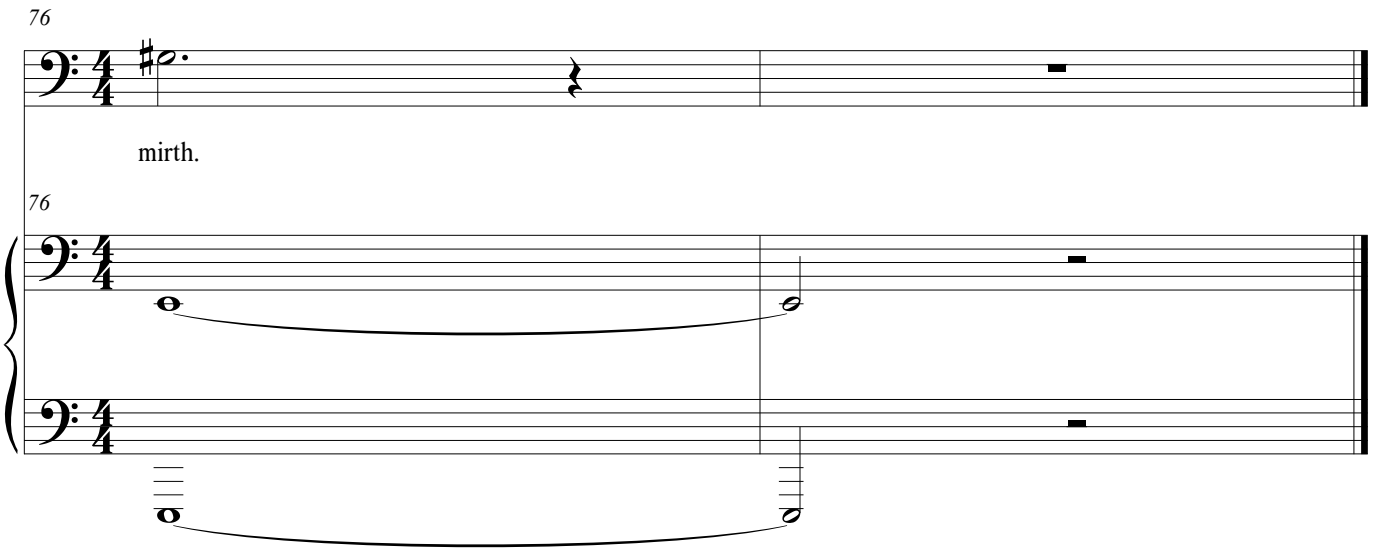

24
spoken, sotto voce
rose
current
raspberry
goutweed
pp
30
rhubarb
legato
Ped.
3
31
♩. = 88


32
cel'ry.
32 8
33
33 8
35
♩ = 88
The smoke's smell too, flow - ing from where a
35
p
cresc.
mf


39
bon - fire burns, from where a bon - fire
cresc.
f
mf
cresc.
43
burns the dead, the waste, the dan - ger - ous,
f
p
47
♩ = 76
and all to
subito p
Ped.


51
rit.
sweet - ness, all to sweet - ness turns.
pp
56
♩ = 88
It is e - nough. It is e -
p
f p
f p
61
rit.
a tempo
nough to smell, to crum - ble the dark earth,
62


67
♩. = 88
while the rob - in sings o - ver a
67
69
gain
sad
69
72
allarg.
♩ = 76
songs,
sad
songs
of
Au - tumn
72


76
mirth.
76

Gifts Of The River

Baritone

Beneath Taos mountain
flecked and pointed
Rio Grande
runs in its groove,
a violent zigzag.

To the villages
cleaving for water . . .

The flowing sound
laps the tall air
as a wave, sprayless,
slides, to fail
in the plaza. Autumn
thin, tinged
like a fish-scale.

Two Indian faces
turn as a globe turns
over a mound
of maroon and blue corn
in the cob, and pumpkins
delicate as peaches,
and striped squashes
unstained by frost.

--Glenway Wescott

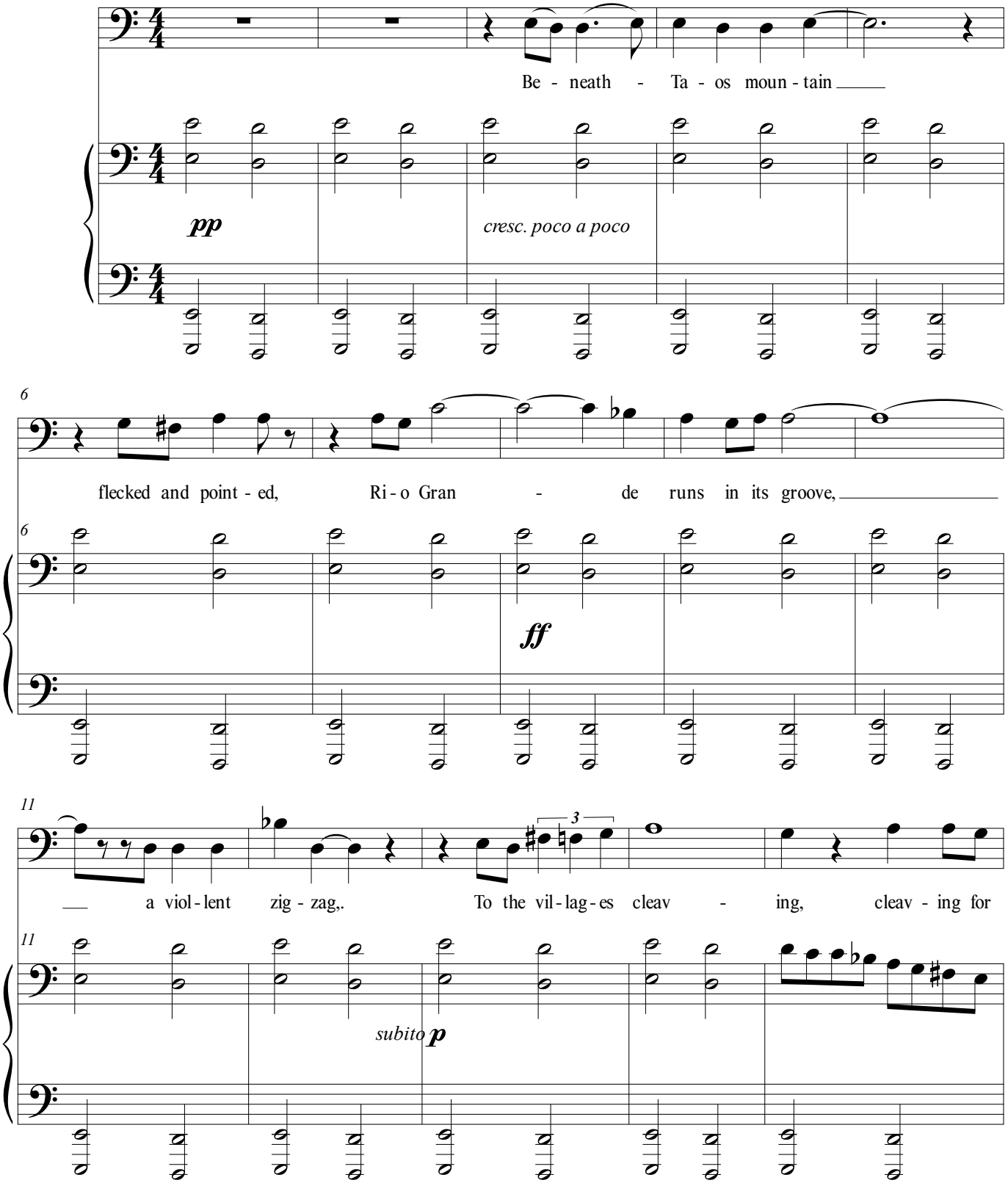
Voice range: A2-E4
Tessitura: Tesstura: D3 - D4
Duration 3:30

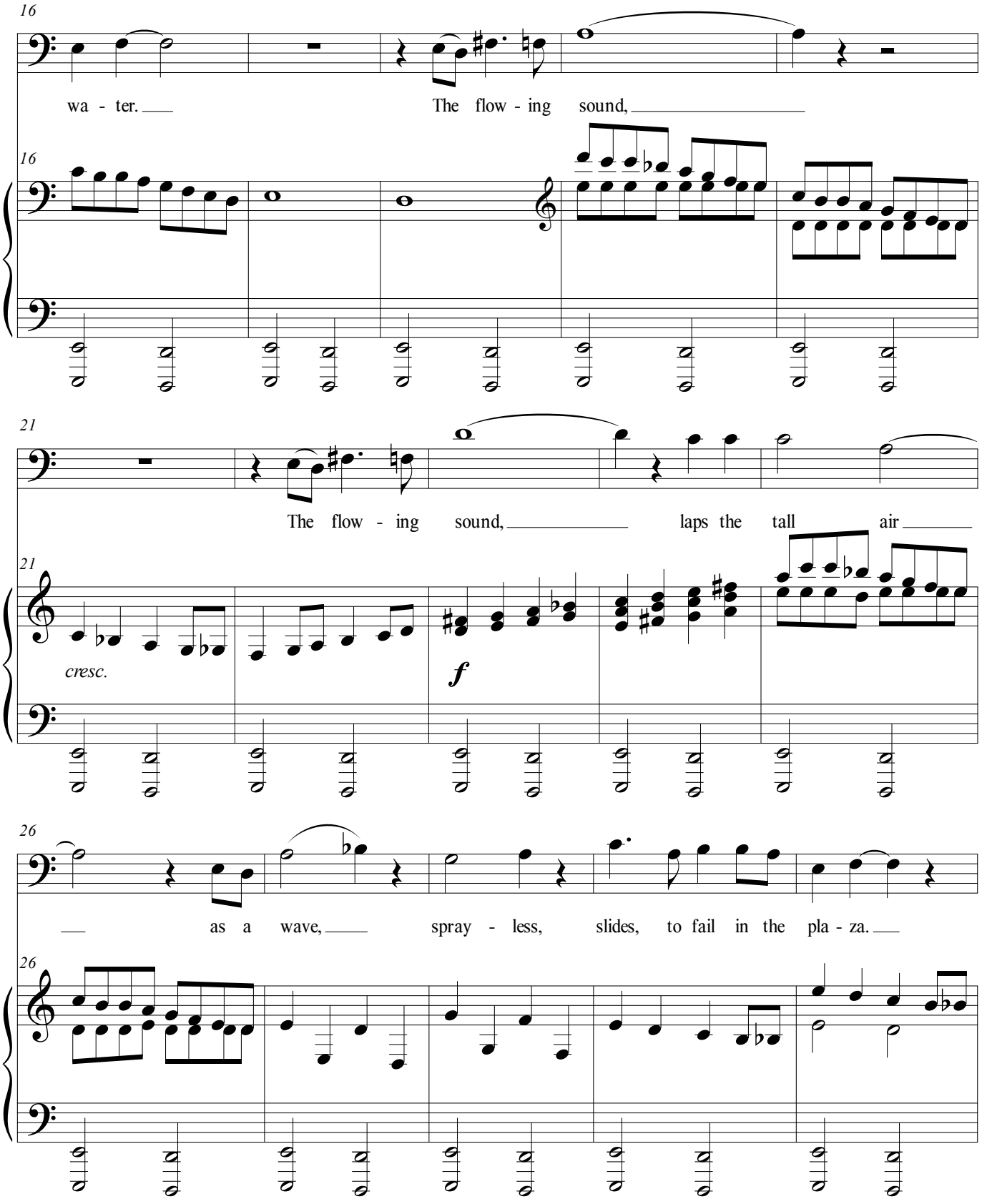
Composed 2019

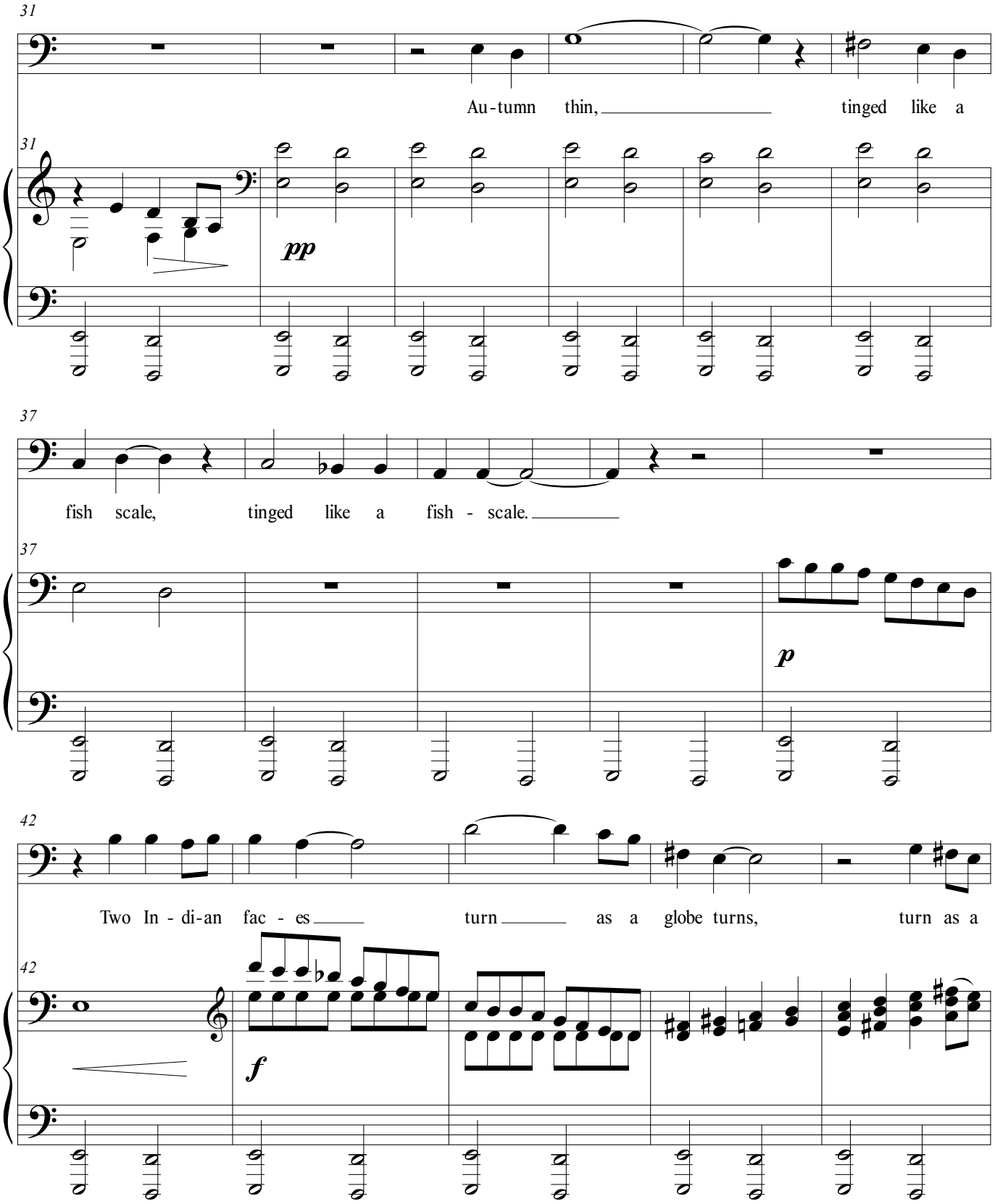
Gifts Of The River

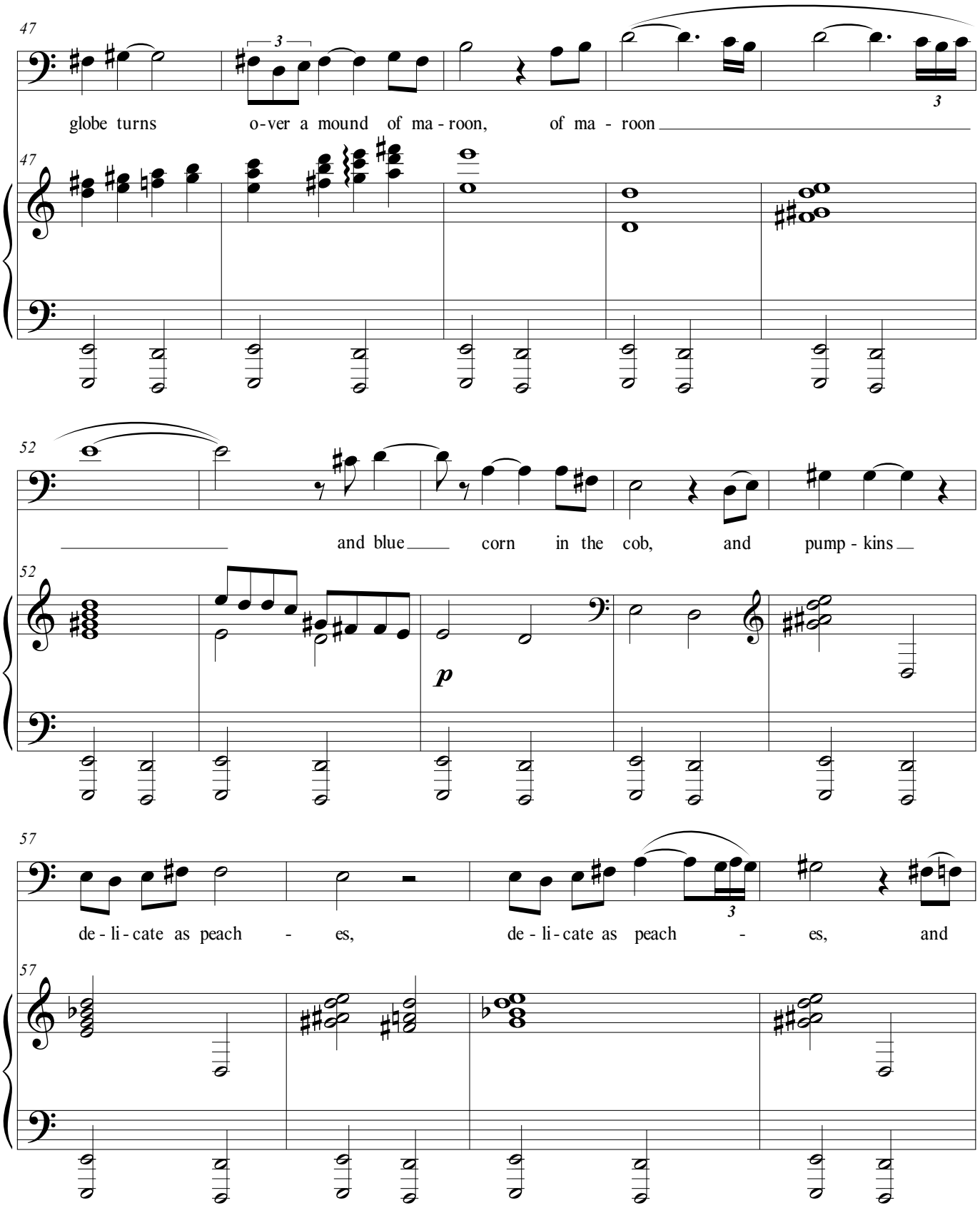
♩ = 84

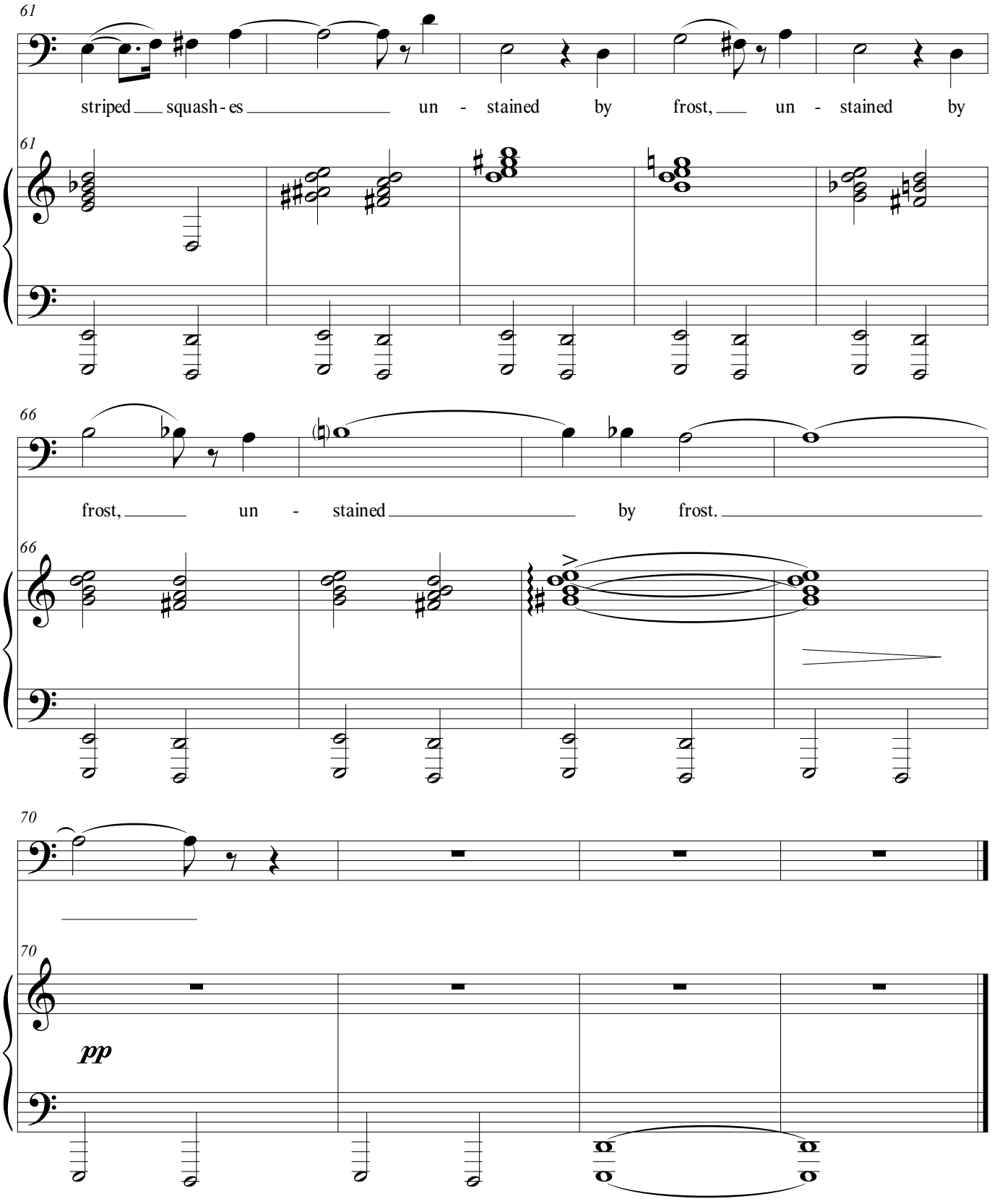
Lawrence Kramer




16
wa - ter.
The flow - ing sound,
16
21
The flow - ing sound,
laps the tall air
21
cresc.
f
26
as a wave,
spray - less, slides, to fail in the pla - za.
26


31
Au-tumn thin, tinged like a
pp
37
fish scale, tinged like a fish - scale.
p
42
Two In - di-an fac - es turn as a globe turns, turn as a
f


47
globe turns o-ver a mound of ma - roon, of ma - roon
47
52
and blue corn in the cob, and pump - kins
52
p
57
de - li - cate as peach - es, de - li - cate as peach - es, and
57


61
striped squash-es un - stained by frost, un - stained by
61
66
frost, un - stained by frost.
66
70
70
pp

Moonlight

Mellifluous moon on the lips of the lunatic
The orchards and towns are avid tonight
The stars look very much like bees
Of this luminous honey that drips from the trellises
For see how all sweet as they fall from the sky
Each ray of moonlight is a ray of honey
Now hidden I dream up the sweetest adventure
I fear the sting of fire from this Arctic bee
That sets in my hand these deceiving rays
And takes its lunar honey to the rose of winds

--Guillaume Apollinaire

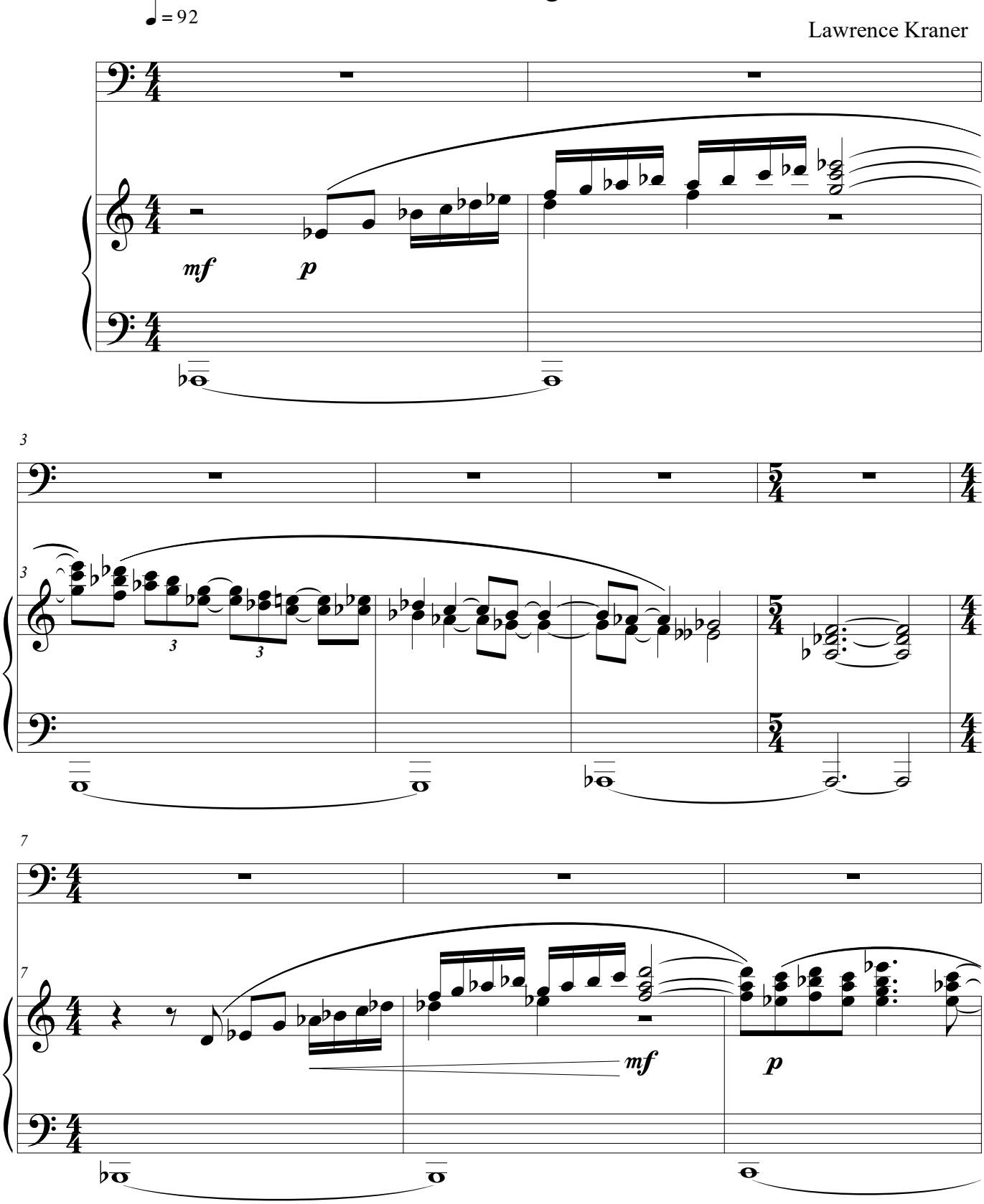
Translation by the composer

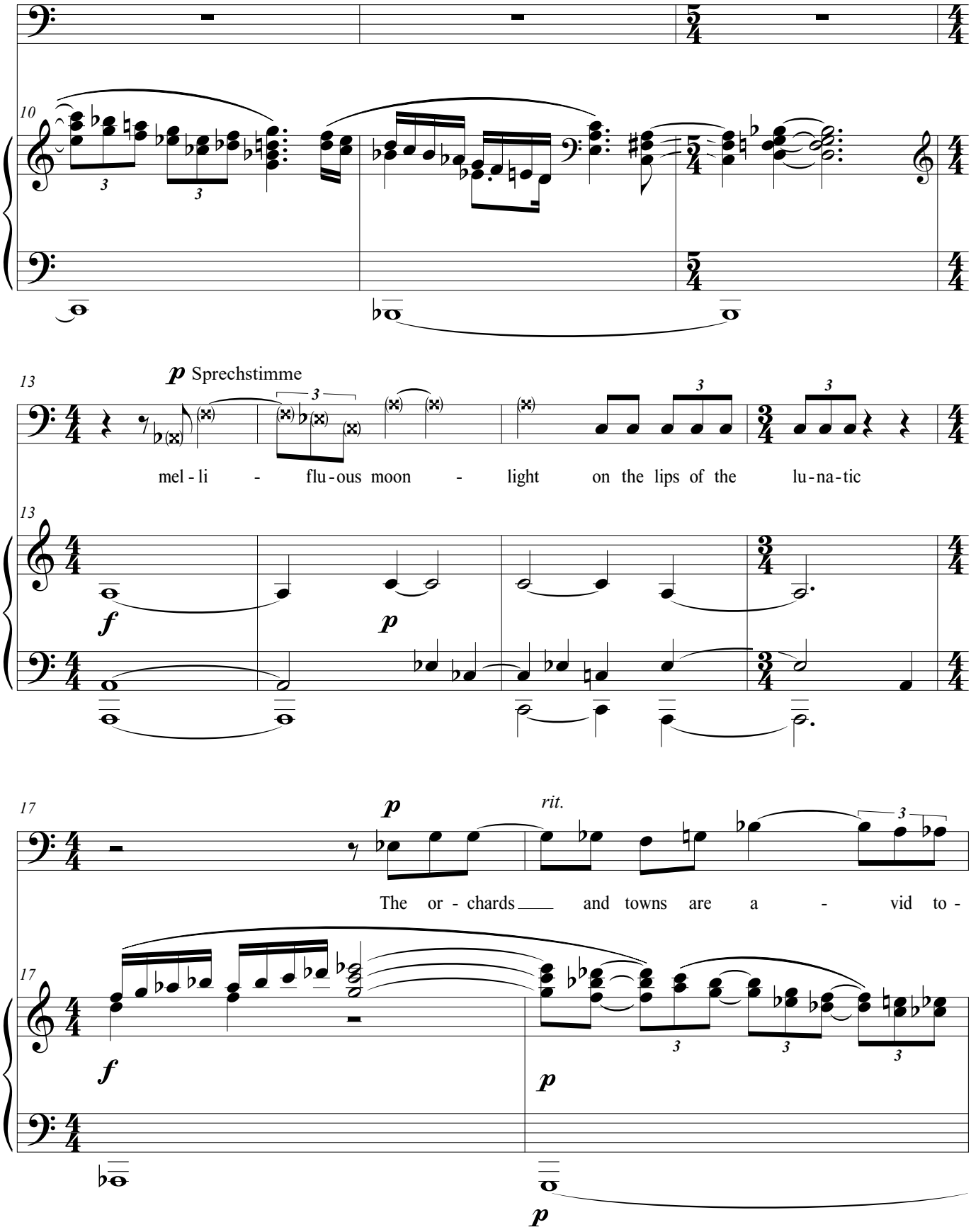
Voice range: A♭2 - E♭4, with optional G2
Tessitura: D3 - C4
Duration 3:25

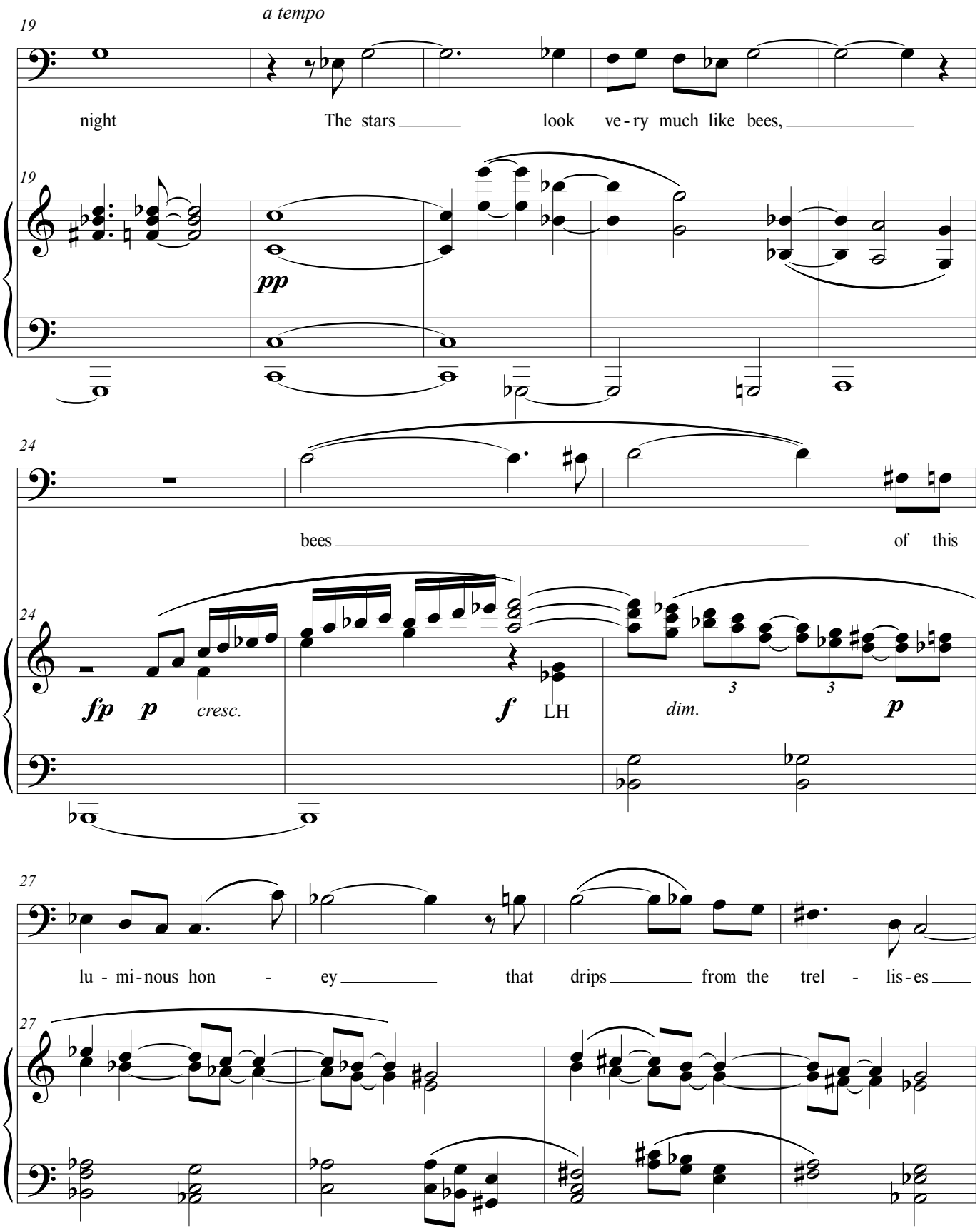
Composed 2020

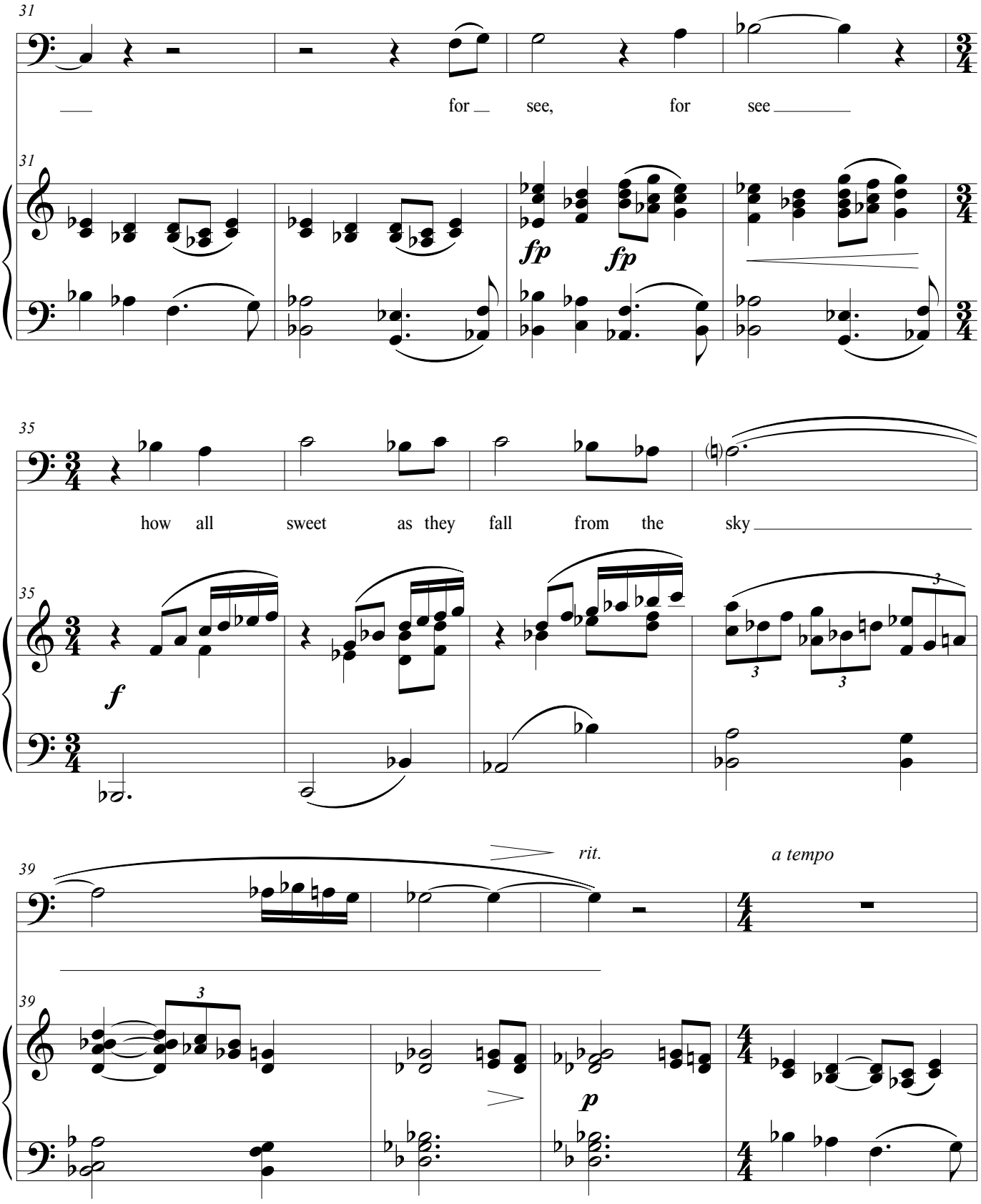
Moonlight

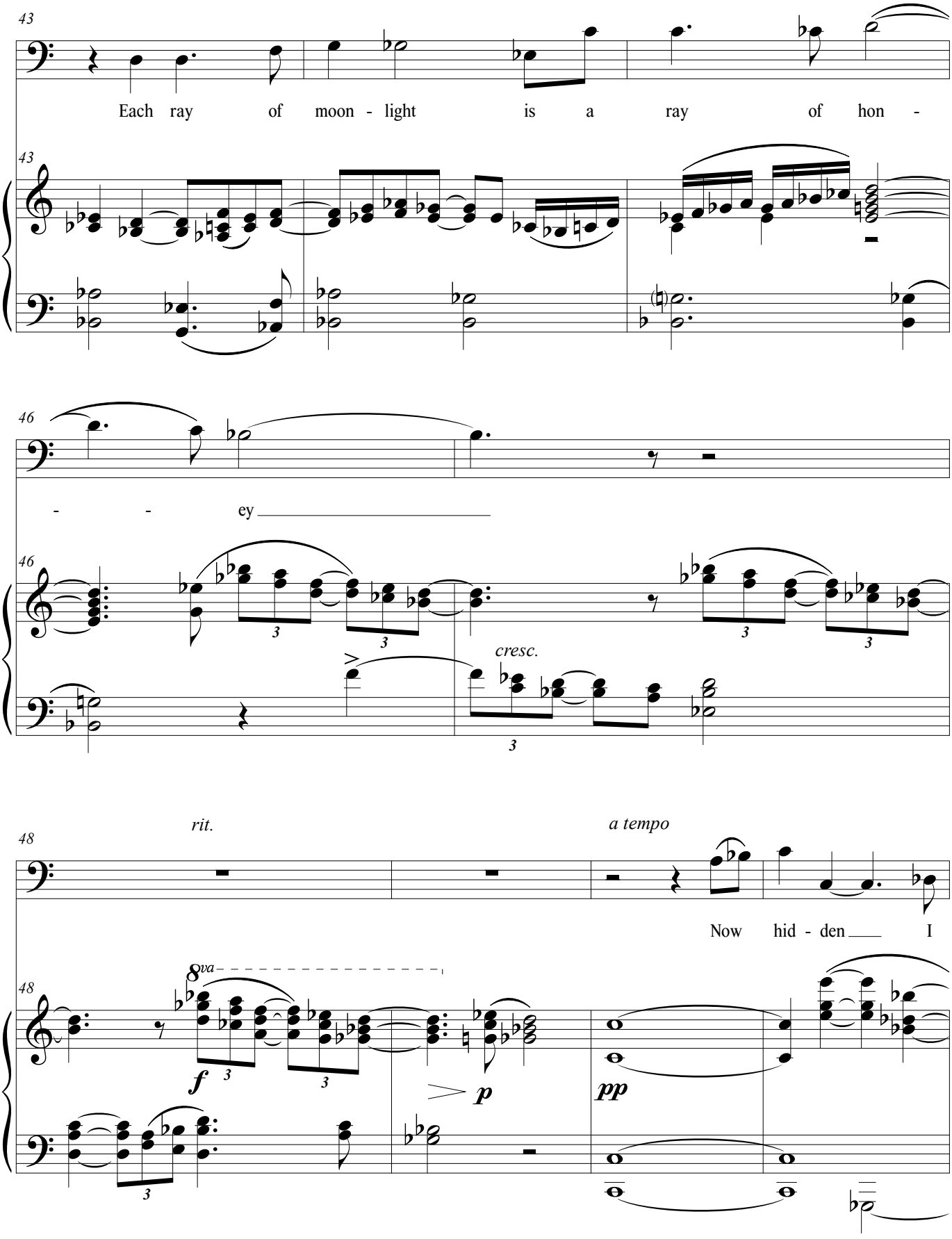
Lawrence Kraner

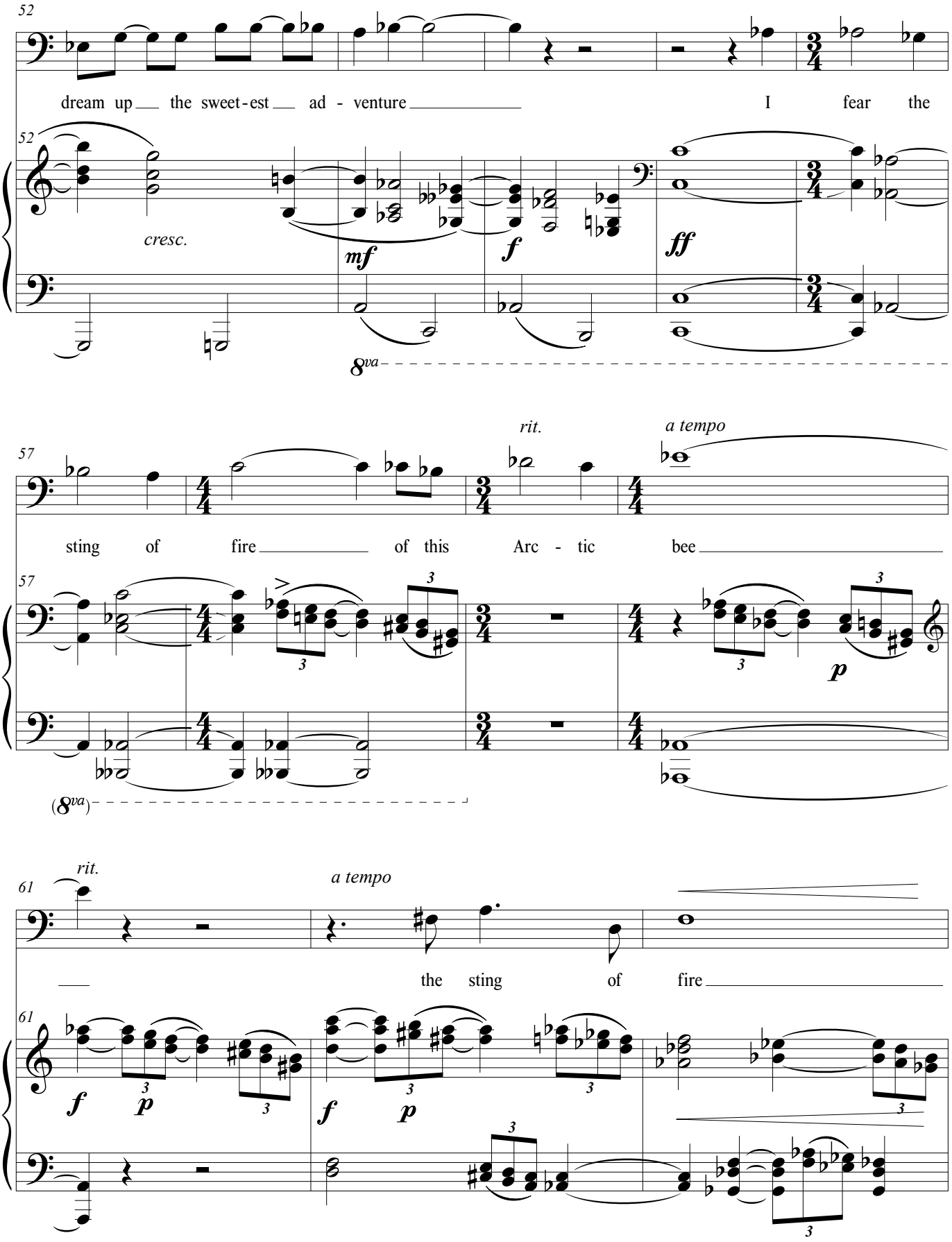


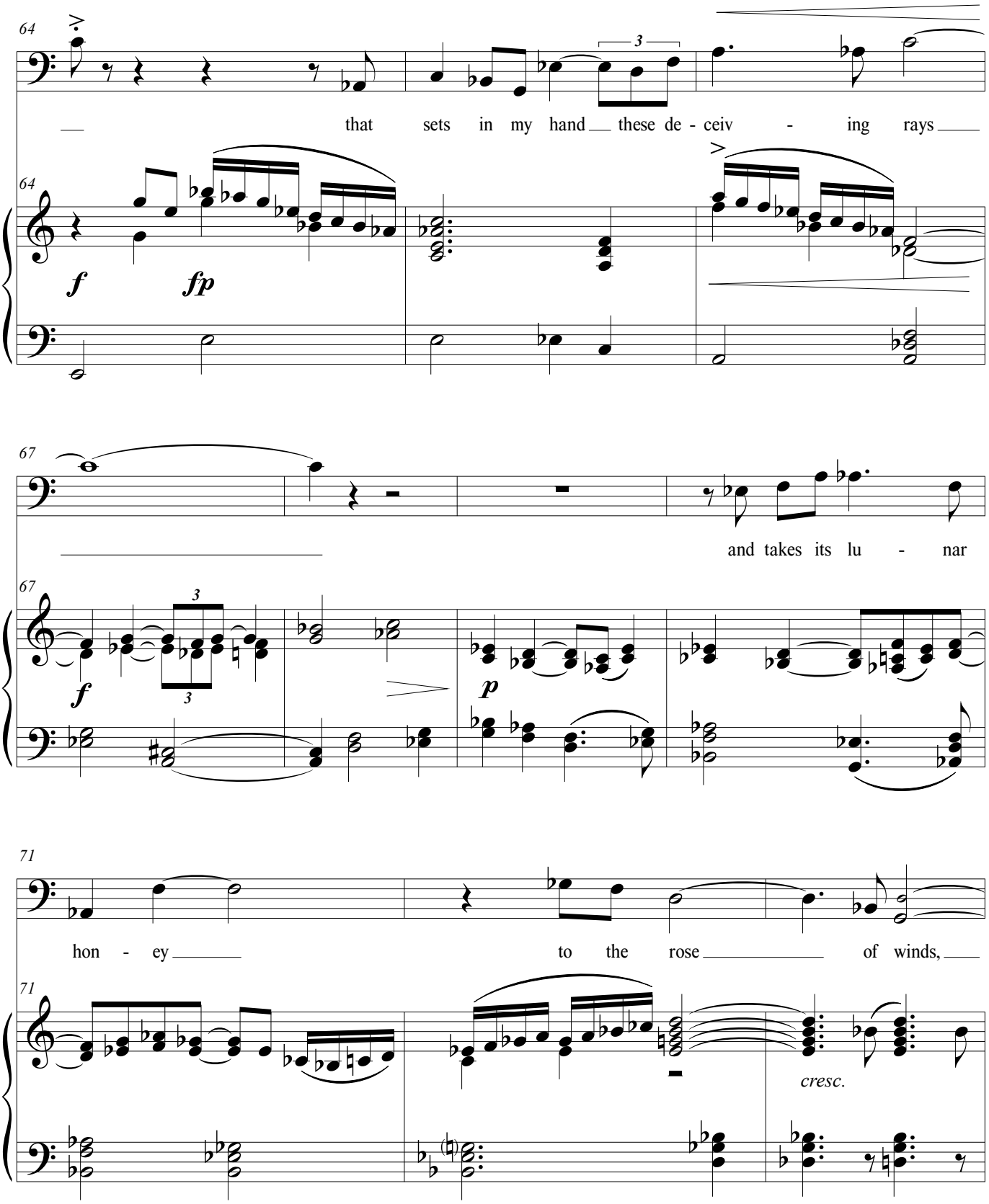

10
13
p Sprechstimme
mel - li - flu - ous moon - light on the lips of the lu - na - tic
13
f
p
17
p
rit.
The or - chards and towns are a - vid to -
17
f
p
p

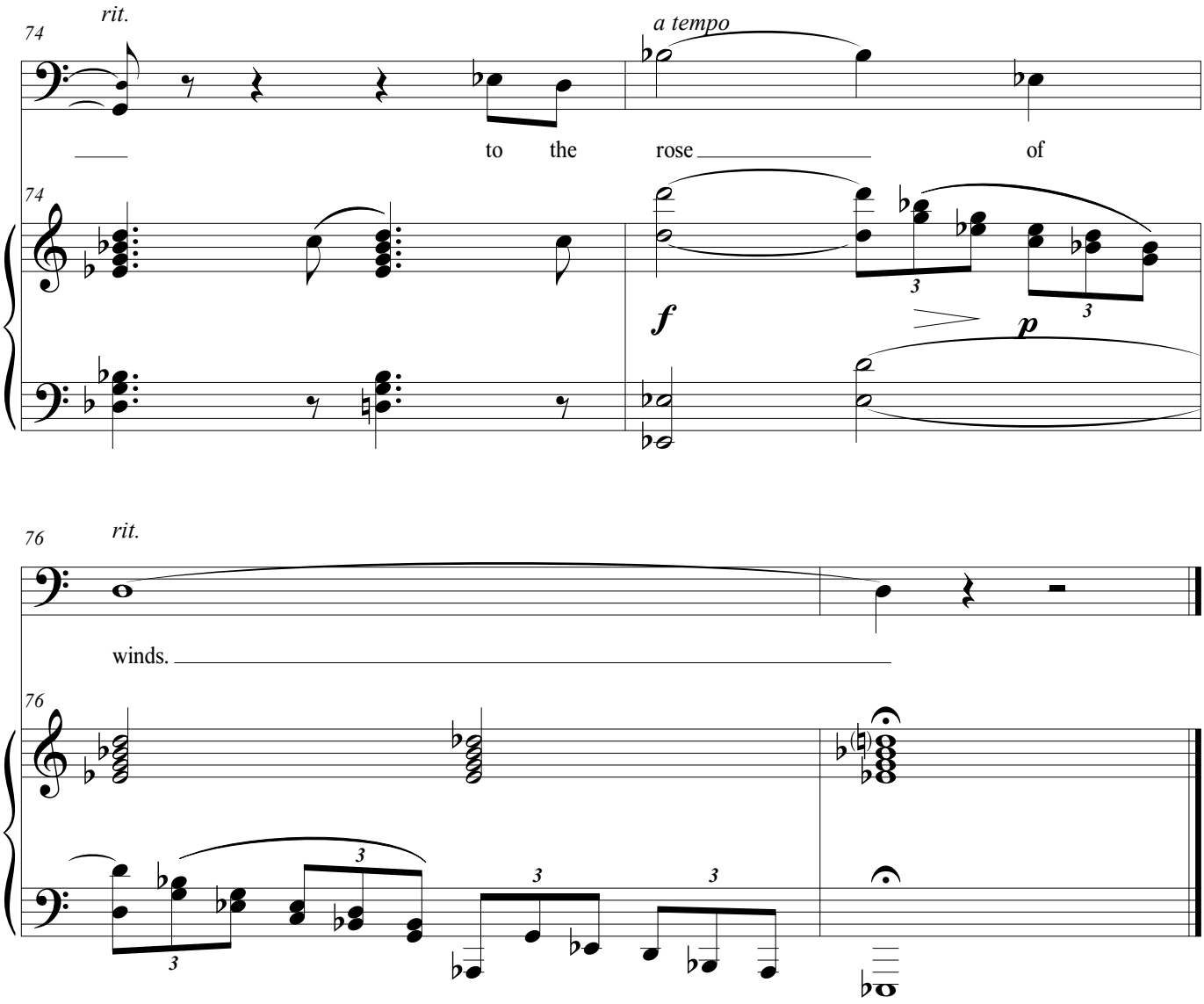

19
a tempo
night
The stars
look ve - ry much like bees,
19
pp
24
bees
of this
24
fp p cresc.
f LH
dim.
p
27
lu - mi - nous hon - ey
that drips
from the trel - lis - es
27


31
for see, for see
31
fp
fp
35
how all sweet as they fall from the sky
35
f
3
3
3
39
rit.
a tempo
39
3
p


43
Each ray of moon - light is a ray of hon -
43
46
- - ey
46
cresc.
rit.
a tempo
48
Now hid - den I
48
8va
f
p
pp


52
dream up the sweet-est ad - venture I fear the
cresc.
mf
f
ff
8va
57
rit.
a tempo
sting of fire of this Arc - tic bee
p
(8va)
61
rit.
a tempo
the sting of fire
f
p


64
that sets in my hand these de - ceiv - ing rays
64
f
fp
67
and takes its lu - nar
67
f
p
71
hon - ey
to the rose of winds,
71
cresc.


74
rit.
a tempo
to the rose of
74
f
p
76
rit.
winds.
76
3
3
3
3

Morning. San Marco.

Baritone

Once more I see the pigeons of San Marco.
The square is still, the morning lingers there.
In the soft coolness I send flocks of songs
Like swarms of pigeons in the blue aloft—
   And lure them back,
Yet one more rhyme to dangle from their wings—
   My happy lot, my happy lot.

You still and blue-lit silken roof of sky,
Afloat, a canopy for the tinted building
That I—what am I saying?—love, fear, envy—
Whose soul I'd truly drink up if I could!
   --And give it back?
Hush, no more of that, you glimpse of wonder—
   My happy lot, my happy lot.

You jutting tower, with what a lion's force
You mount on high here, splendid, free of care!
You send your deep knell clear across the square—
[. . .]
   If I kept back
Like you, I'd know from what silk-soft snares . . .
   --My happy lot, my happy lot.

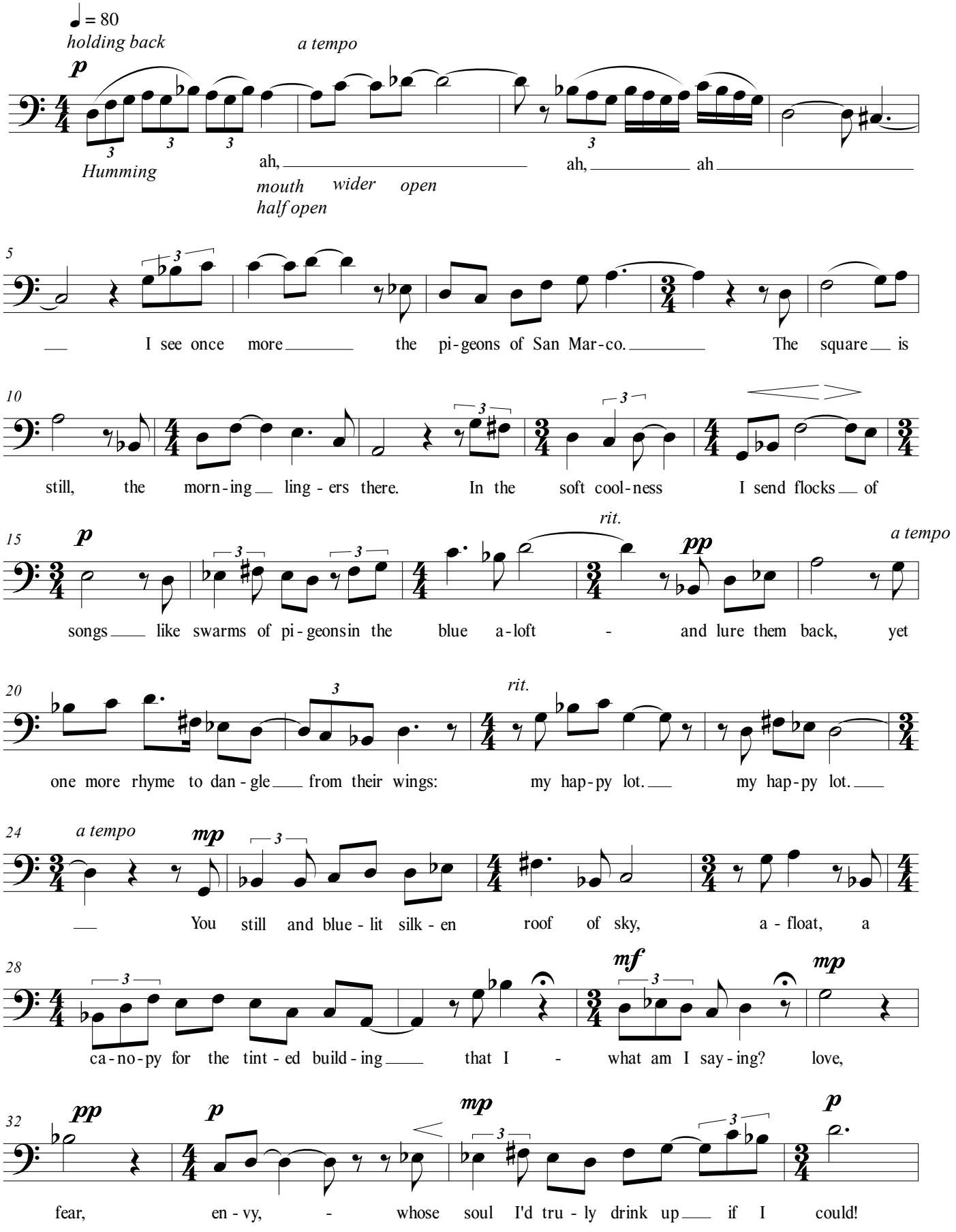
Music, hold off! . . . It's too soon for your tones;
[. . .]
   Much day remains,
Much day for shaping, slinking, murmuring
   --My happy lot, my happy lot.

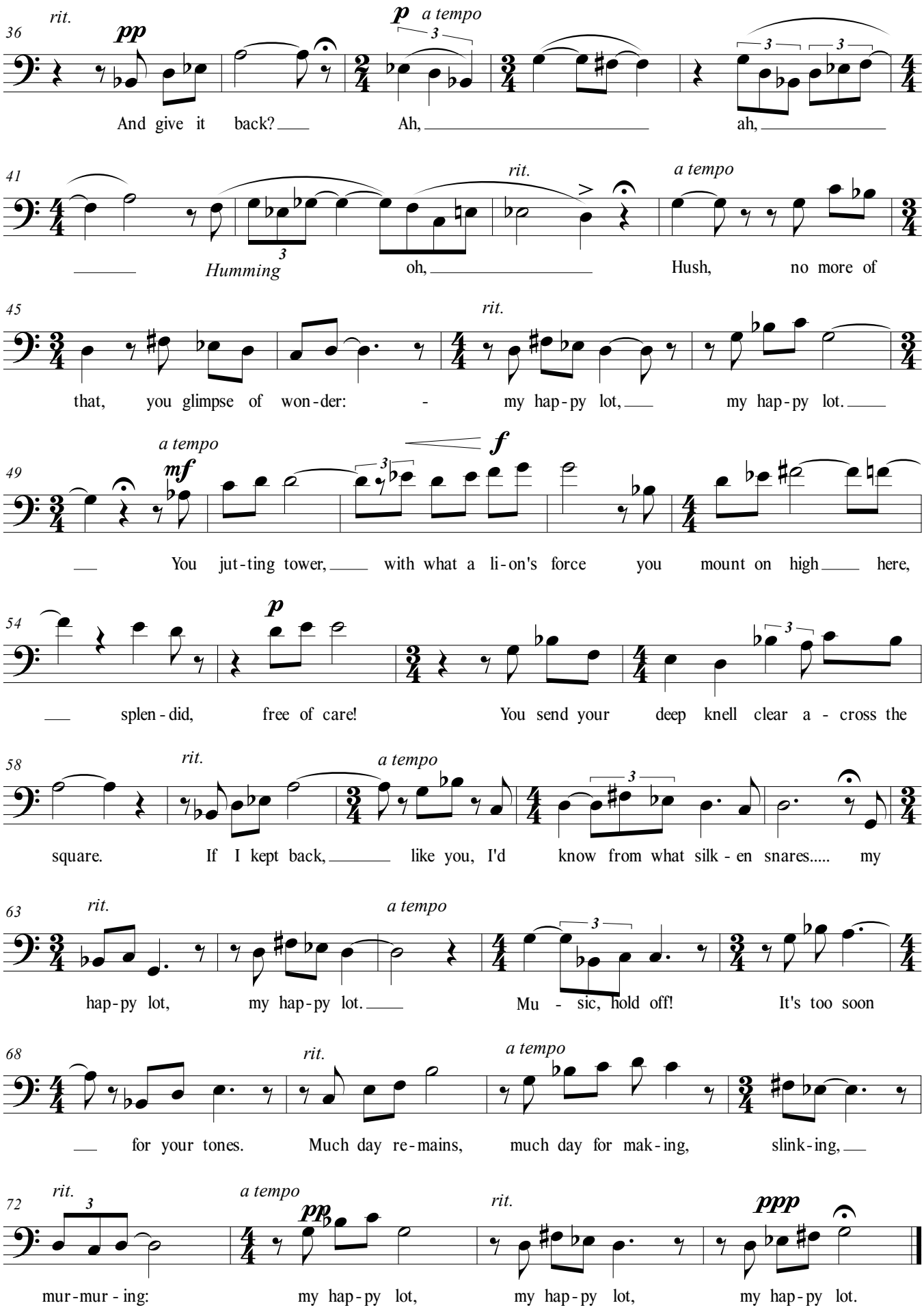
--Nietzsche, from "Postlude in Verse" to *The Gay Science*

Voice range: G2 - G4
Tessitura: B♭2 - D4
Duration 3: 45 - 4:00

Composed 2014

Venice. Morning.




36
rit.
pp
p
a tempo
3
And give it back? Ah, ah,
41
rit.
a tempo
Humming
oh, Hush, no more of
45
rit.
that, you glimpse of won-der: - my hap-py lot, my hap-py lot.
49
a tempo
mf
f
You jut-ting tower, with what a li-on's force you mount on high here,
54
p
splen-did, free of care! You send your deep knell clear a-cross the
58
rit.
a tempo
square. If I kept back, like you, I'd know from what silk-en snares..... my
63
rit.
a tempo
hap-py lot, my hap-py lot. Mu-sic, hold off! It's too soon
68
rit.
a tempo
for your tones. Much day re-mains, much day for mak-ing, slink-ing,
72
rit.
a tempo
pp
rit.
ppp
mur-mur-ing: my hap-py lot, my hap-py lot, my hap-py lot.

Nothing Gold Can Stay

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

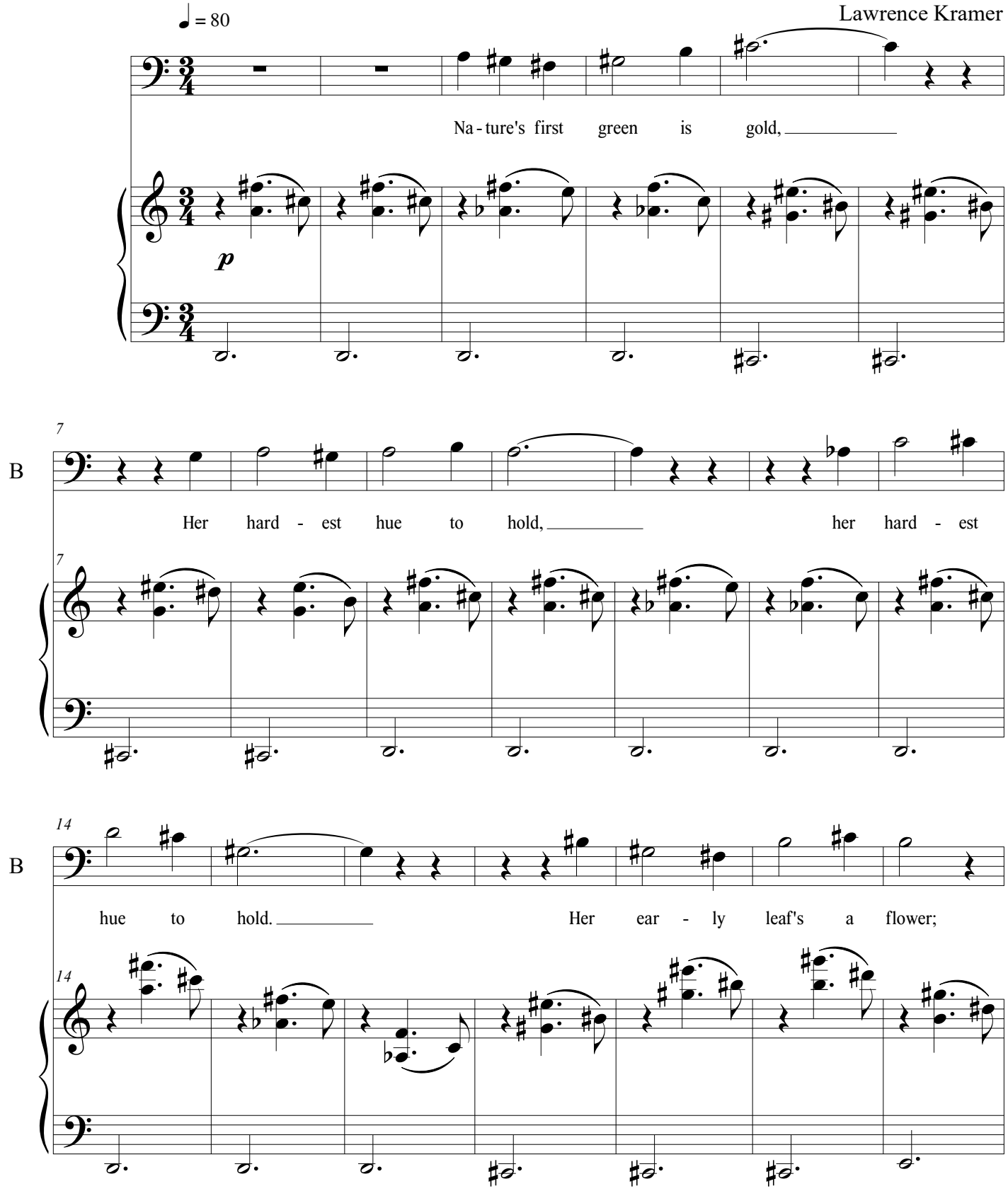
--Robert Frost

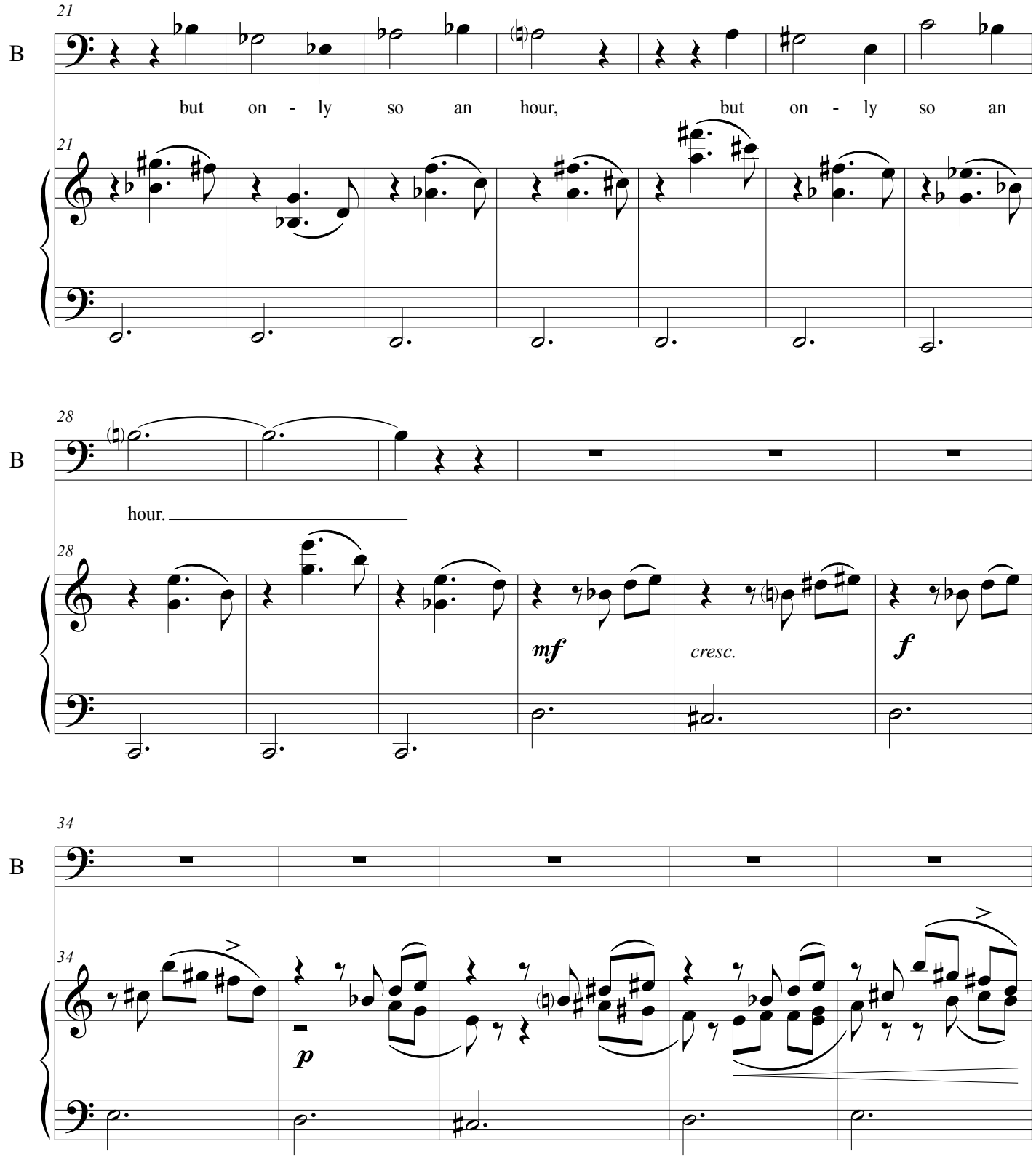
Written Voice Range: E♭4 - E5
Tessitura: F♯4 - C♯5
Duration 3:00

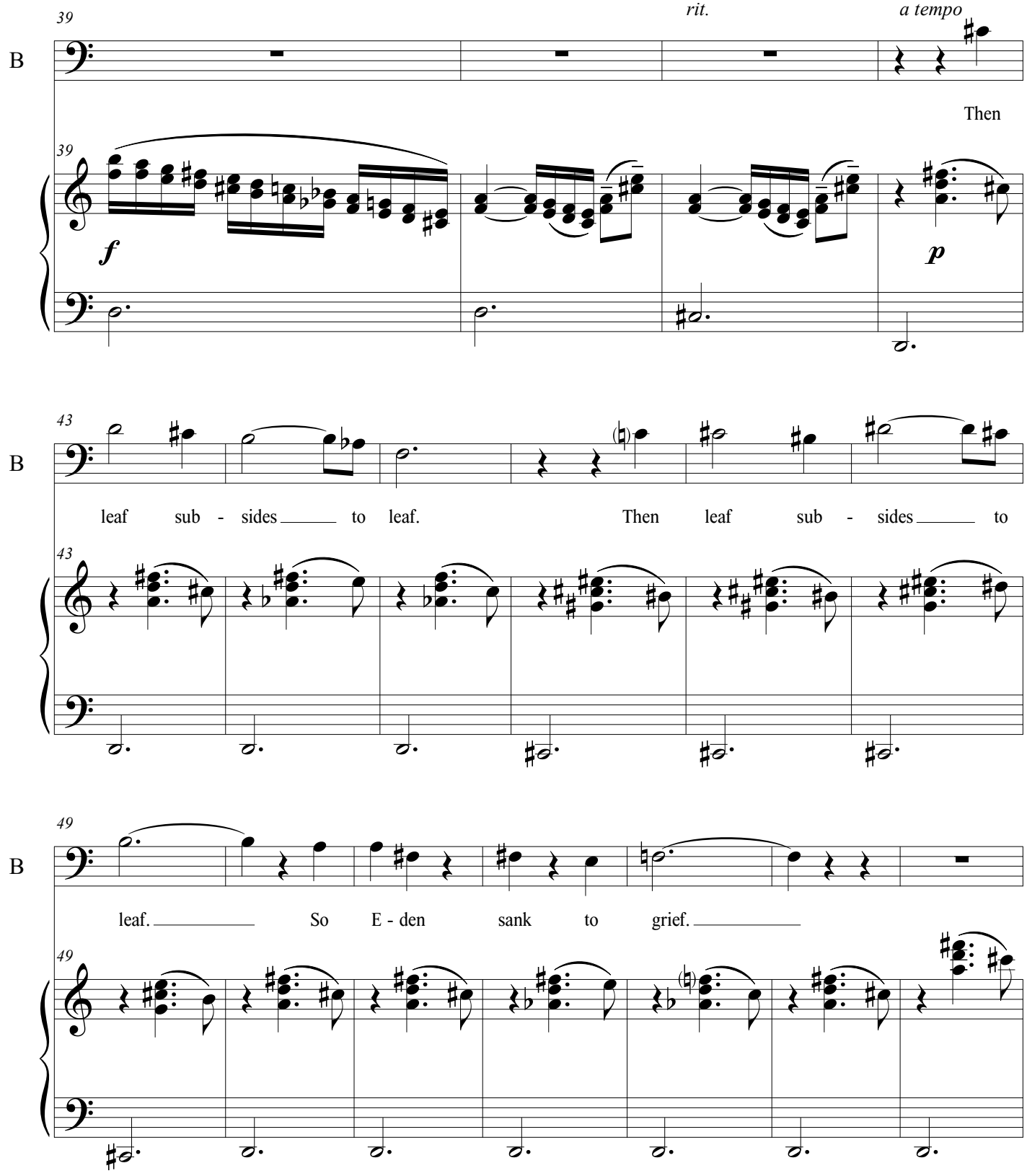
Composed 2019

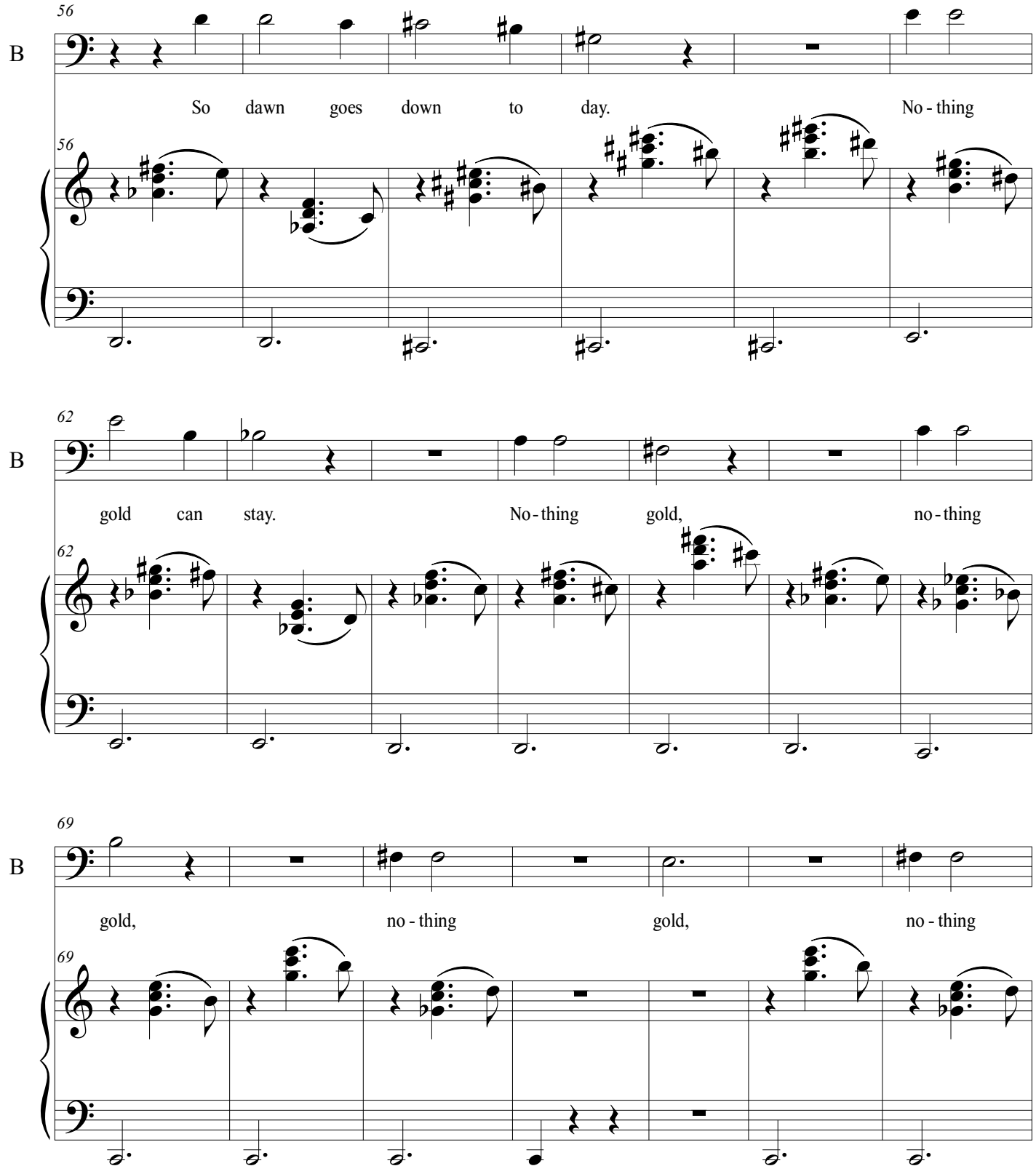
Nothing Gold Can Stay

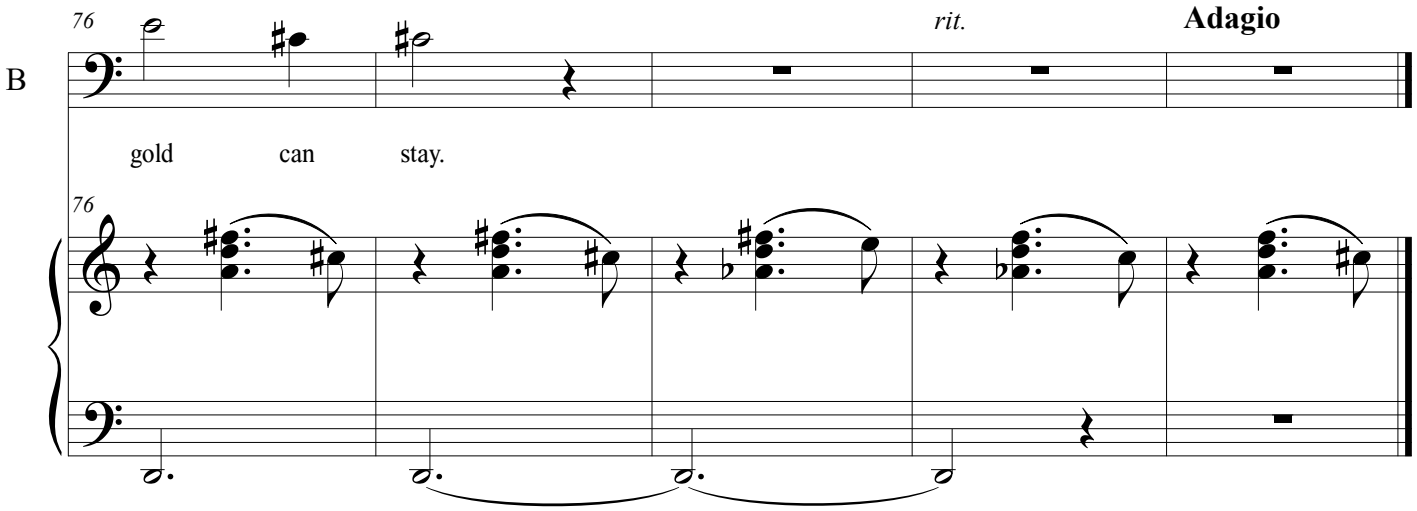
Lawrence Kramer




21
B
but on - ly so an hour, but on - ly so an
21
28
B
hour.
28
mf
cresc.
f
34
B
34
p


39
rit.
a tempo
B
Then
39
f
p
43
B
leaf sub - sides to leaf. Then leaf sub - sides to
43
49
B
leaf. So E - den sank to grief.
49


56
B
So dawn goes down to day. No - thing
56
62
B
gold can stay. No - thing gold, no - thing
62
69
B
gold, no - thing gold, no - thing
69


76
rit.
Adagio
B
gold can stay.
76

On the Way

The trees fret fitfully and twist,
  Shutters rattle and carpets heave,
  Slime is the dust of yestereve,
    And in the streaming mist
Fishes might seem to fin a passage if they list.

      But to his feet,
      Drawing nigh and nigher
      A hidden seat,
      The fog is sweet
      And the wind a lyre.

  A vacant sameness grays the sky,
  A moisture gathers on each knop
  Of the bramble, rounding to a drop,
    That greets the goer-by
With the cold listless lustre of a dead man's eye.

      But to her sight,
      Drawing nigh and nigher
      Its deep delight,
      The fog is bright
      And the wind a lyre.

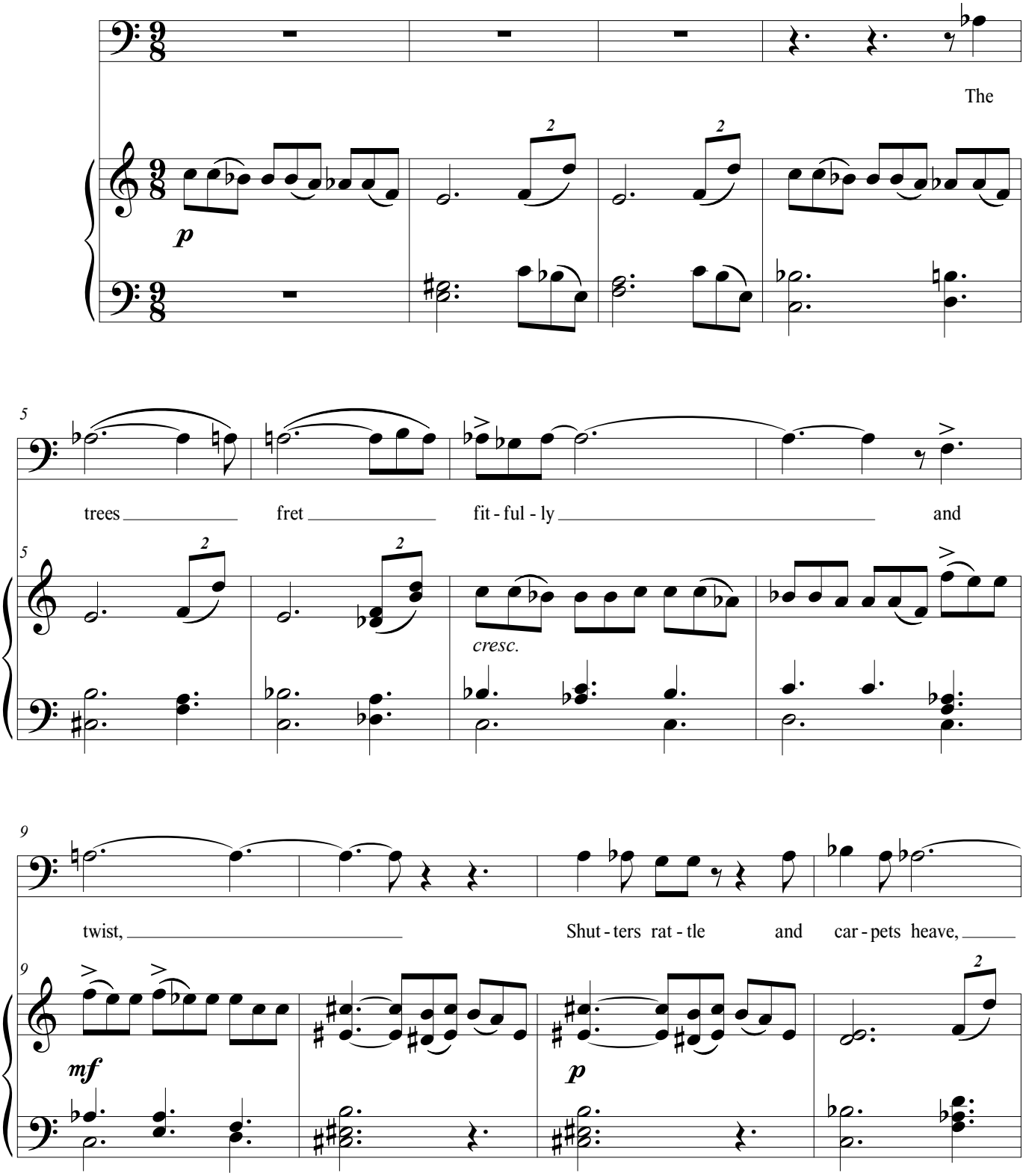
--Thomas Hardy

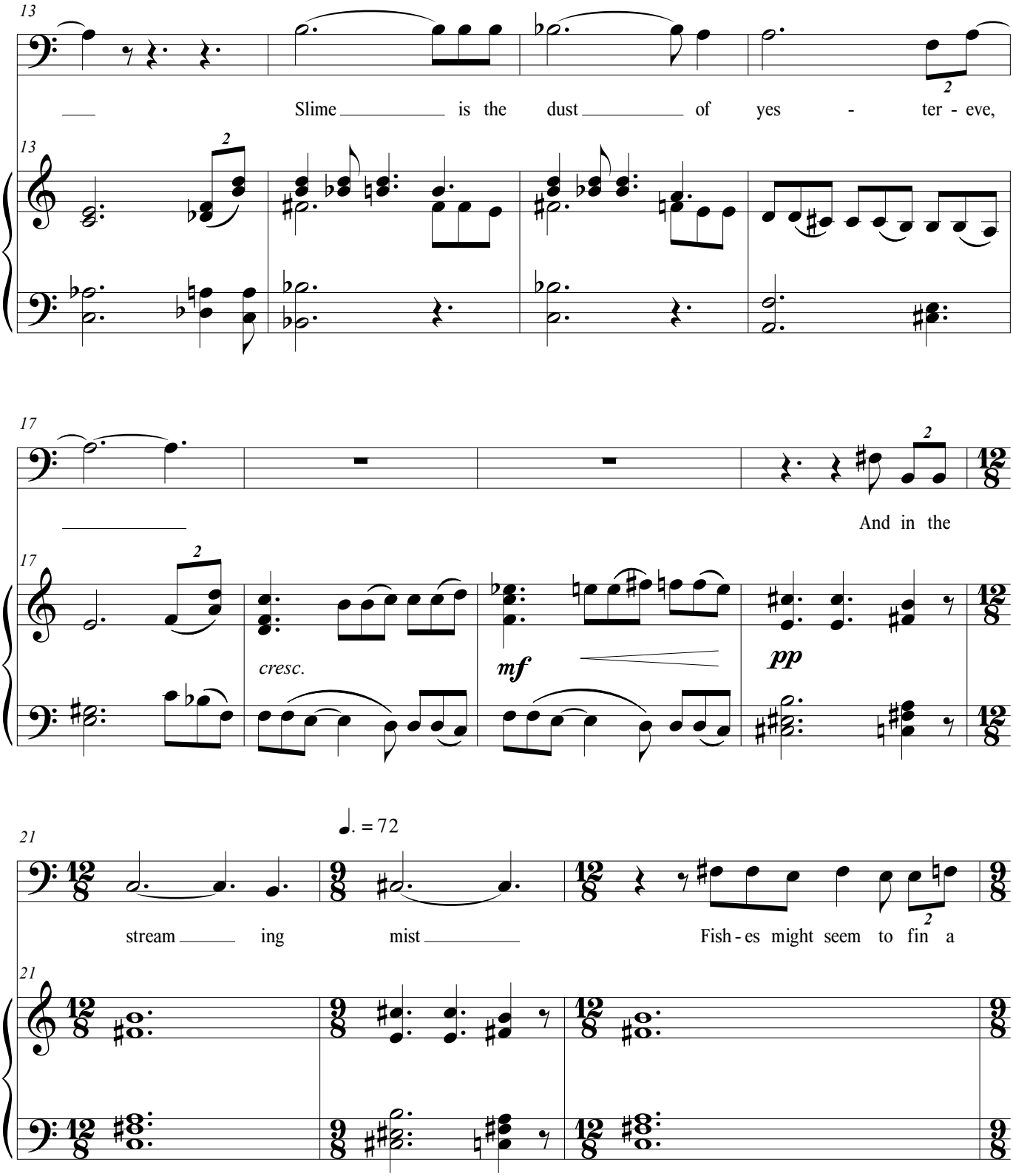
Voice Range: A2 - F4
Tessitura: E3 - D4
Duration 4:15

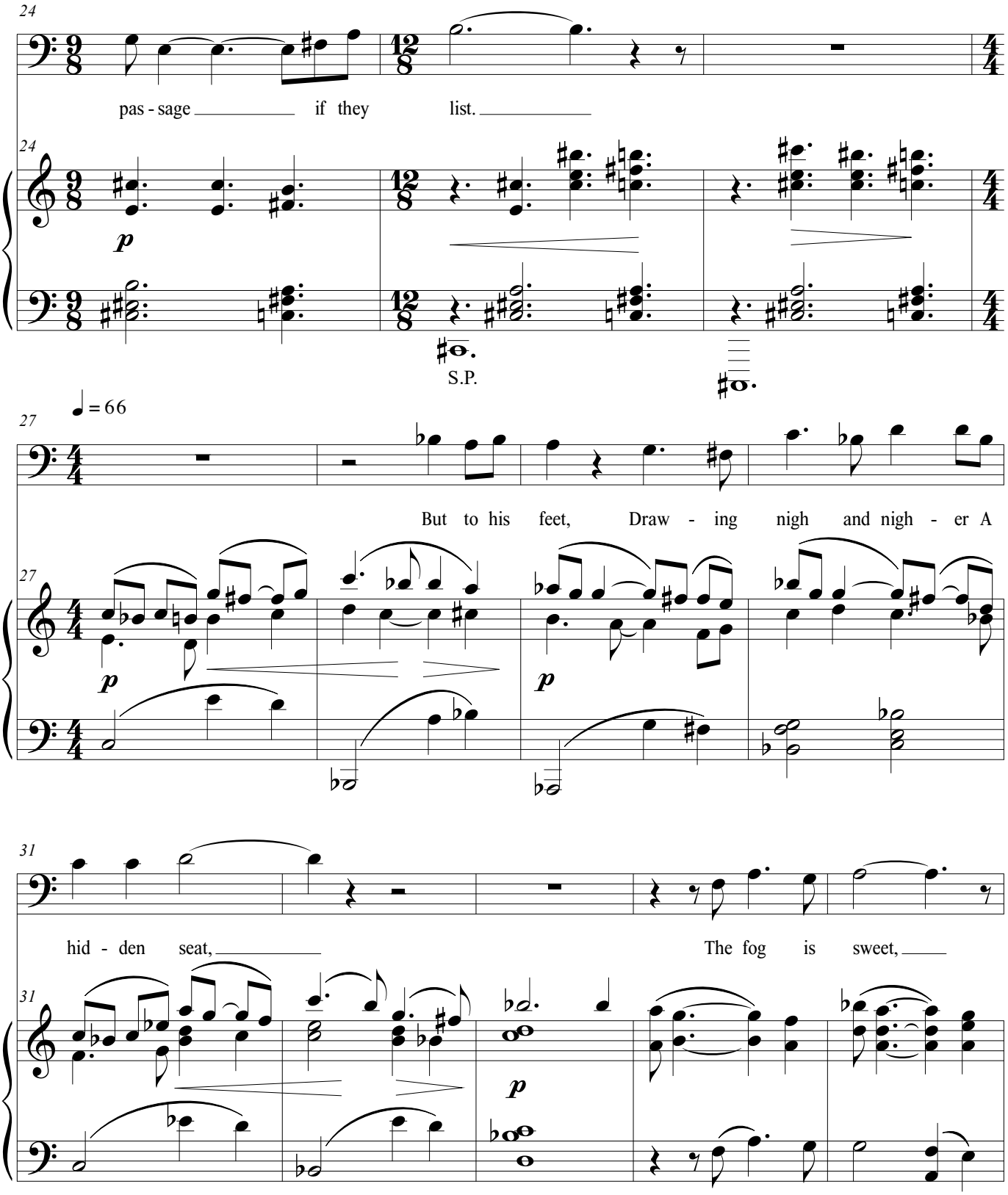
Composed 2021

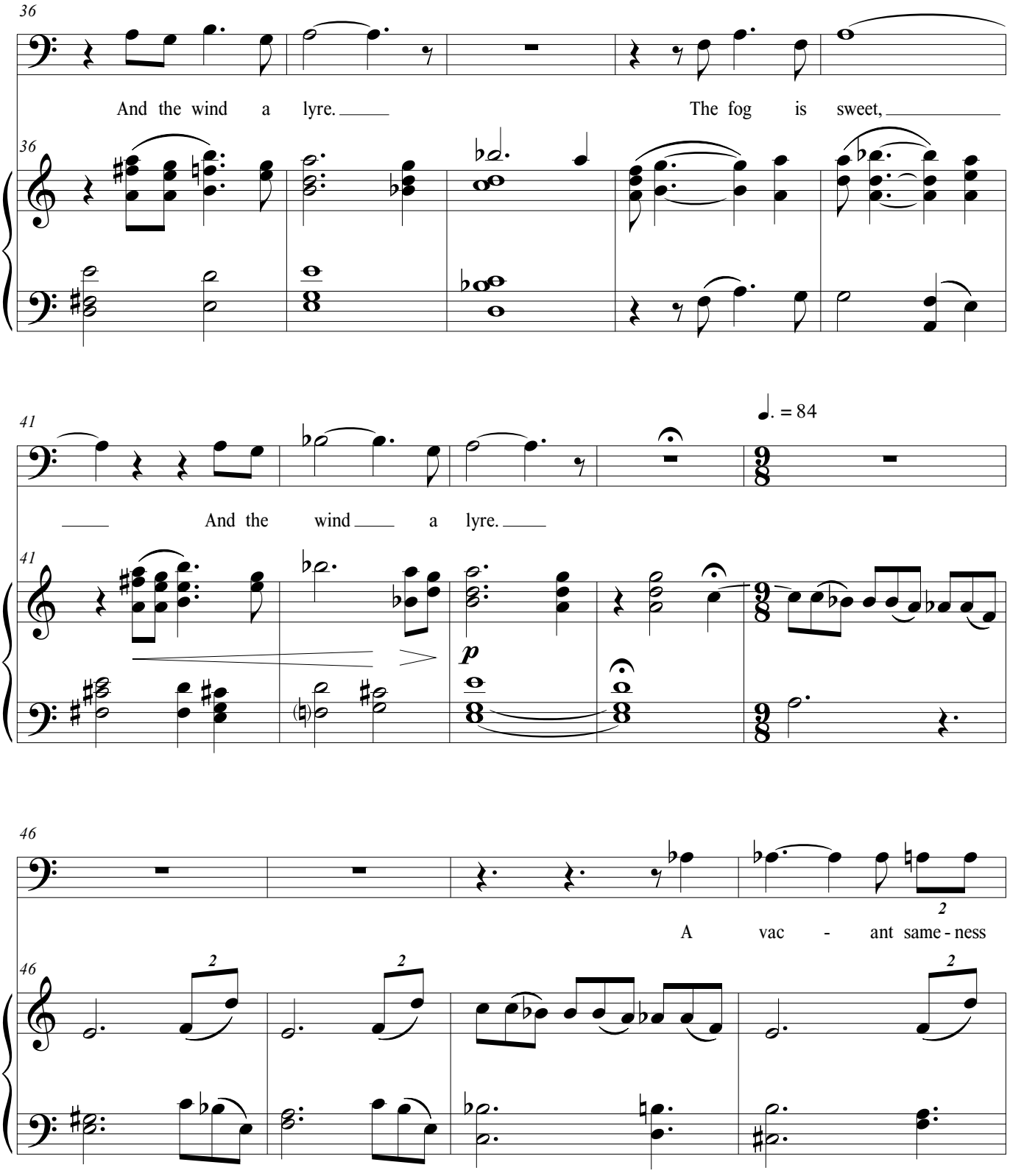
On the Way

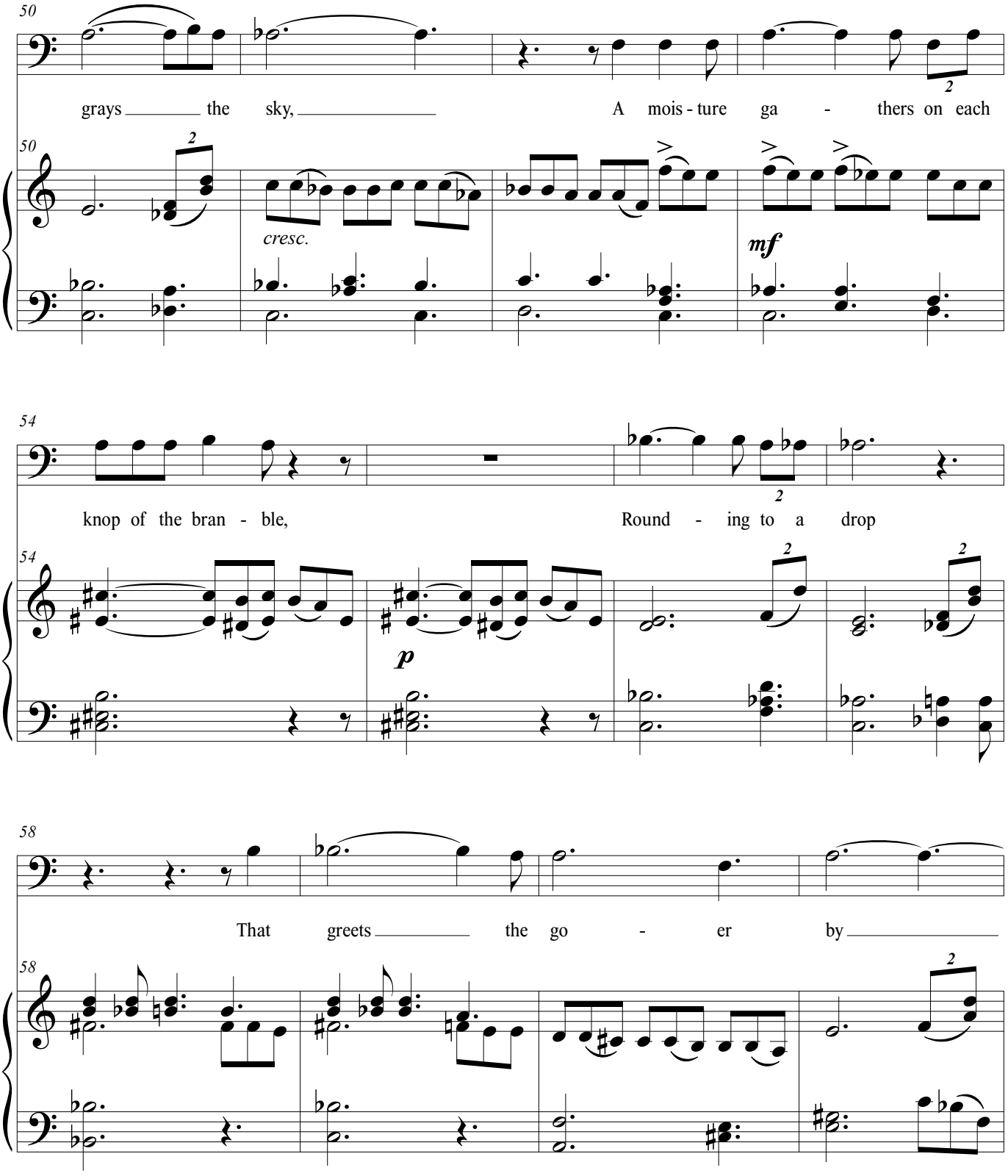
Lawrence Kramer

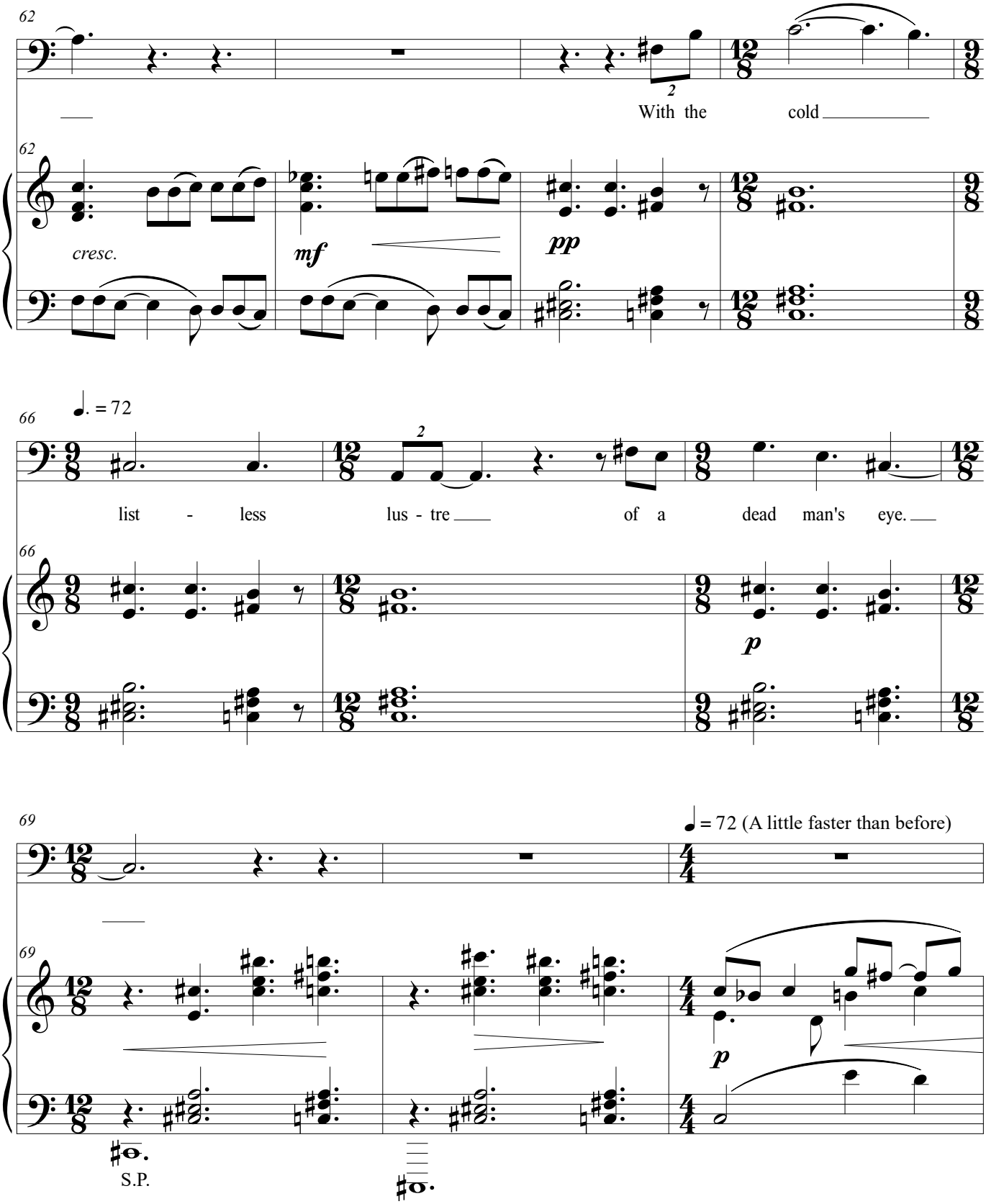


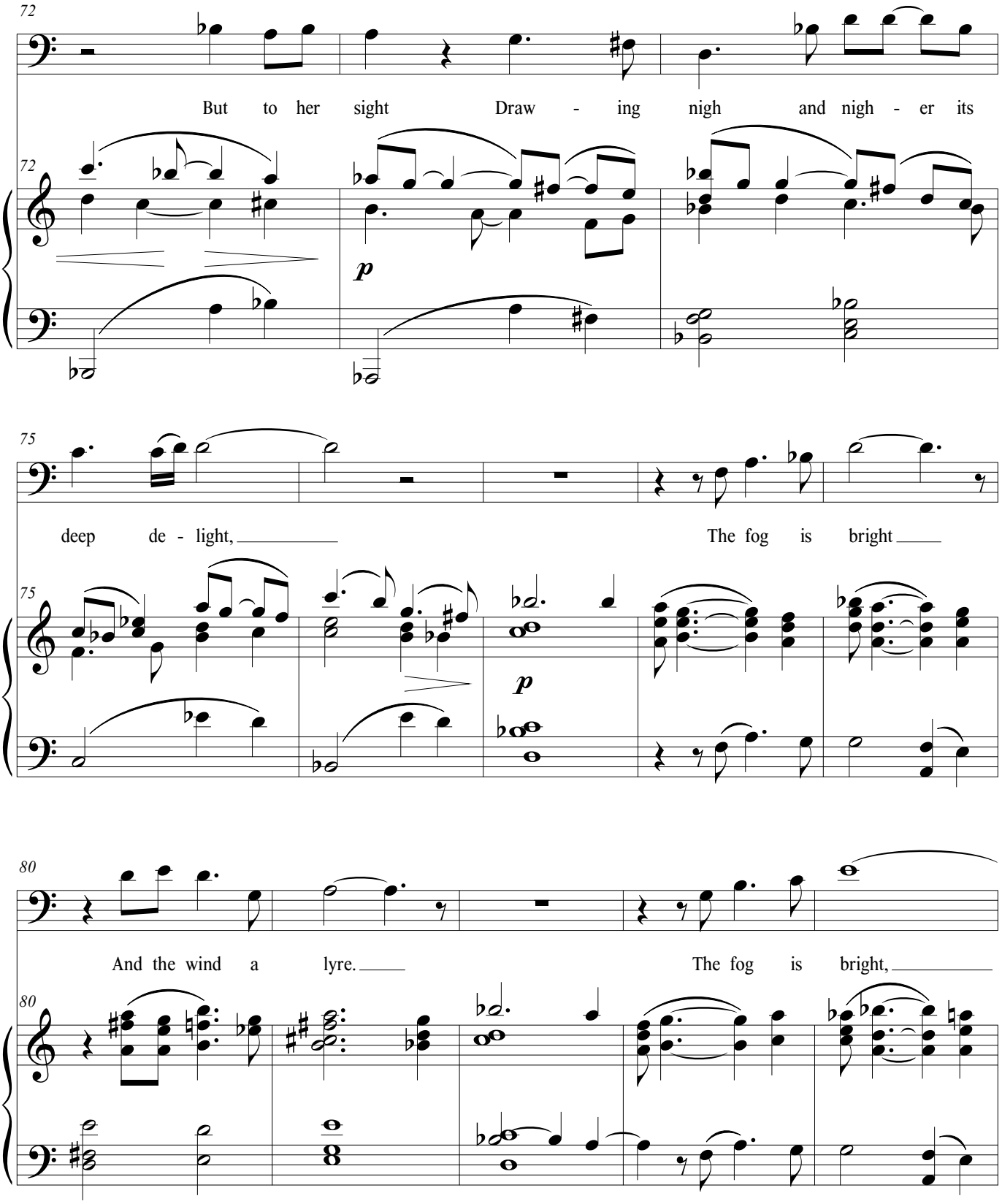

13
Slime is the dust of yes - ter - eve,
17
And in the
cresc.
mf
pp
21
♩. = 72
stream ing mist
Fish - es might seem to fin a

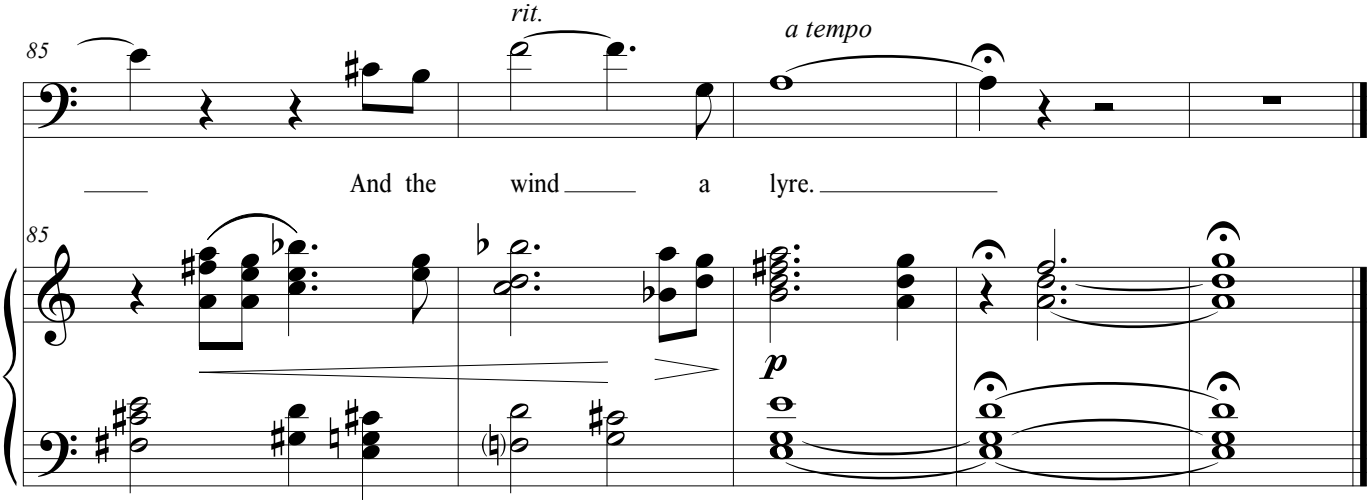

24
pas - sage if they list.
24
p
S.P.
27
♩ = 66
But to his feet, Draw - ing nigh and nigh - er A
27
p
p
31
hid - den seat, The fog is sweet,
31
p


36
And the wind a lyre.
The fog is sweet,
36
41
And the wind a lyre.
♩. = 84
41
p
46
A vac - ant same - ness
46


50
grays the sky, A mois - ture ga - thers on each
cresc.
mf
54
knop of the bran - ble, Round - ing to a drop
p
58
That greets the go - er by


62
With the cold
cresc.
mf
pp
66
♩. = 72
list - less lus - tre of a dead man's eye.
p
69
♩ = 72 (A little faster than before)
p
S.P.


72
But to her sight Draw - ing nigh and nigh - er its
72
p
75
deep de - light, The fog is bright
75
p
80
And the wind a lyre. The fog is bright,
80


85
rit.
a tempo
And the wind a lyre.
85
p

Light rain is on the light dust.
The willows of the inn-yard
Will be going greener and greener,
But you, Sir, had better take wine ere your departure,
For you will have no friends about you
When you come to the gates of Go.

--Ezra Pound

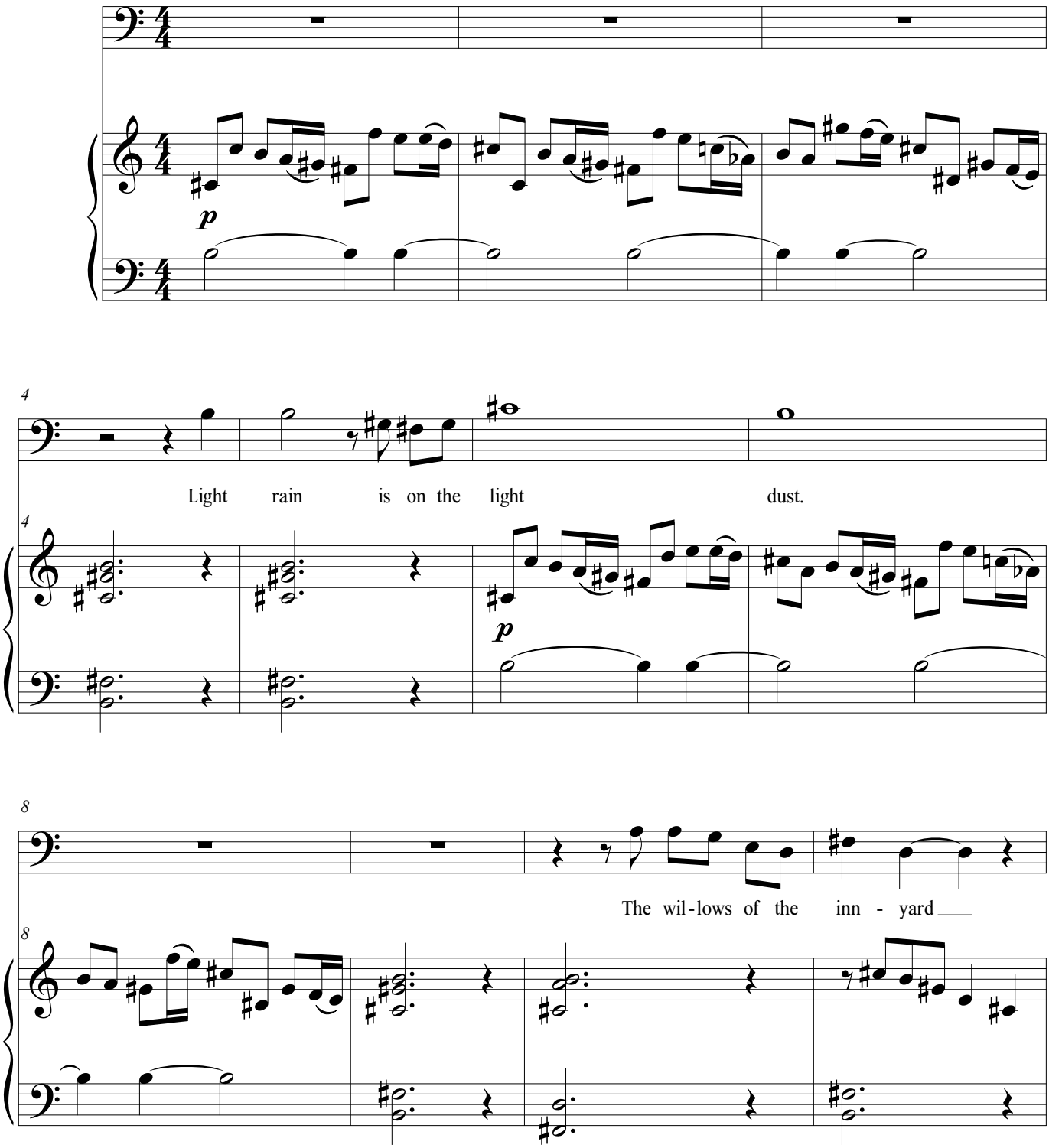
From *Cathay*, a book of "translations"--actually creative mistranslations by a poet working from imperfect English paraphrases--of classical Chinese poems.

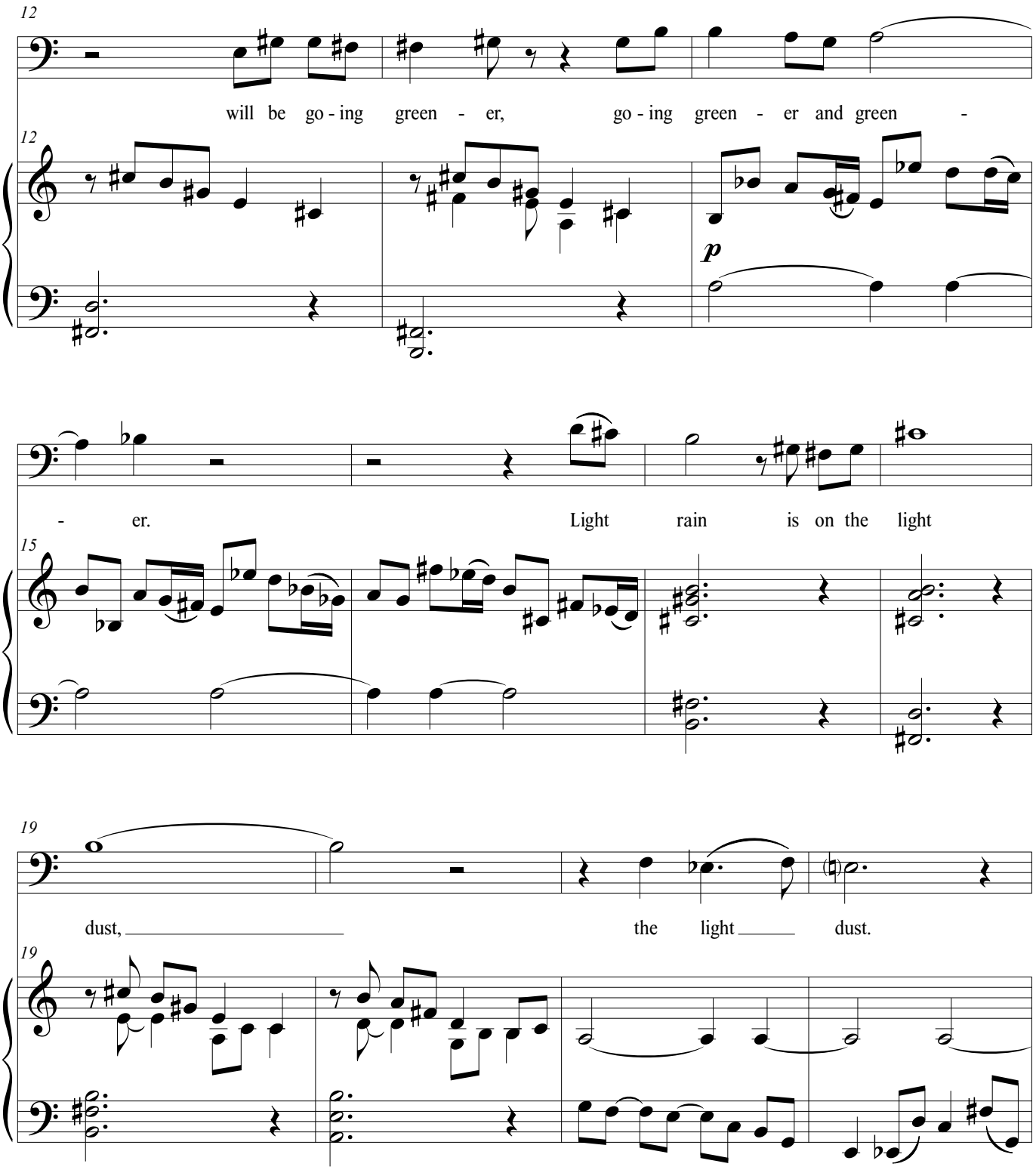
Voice range: D3 - D4
Tessitura: E3 - B4
Duration 3:25

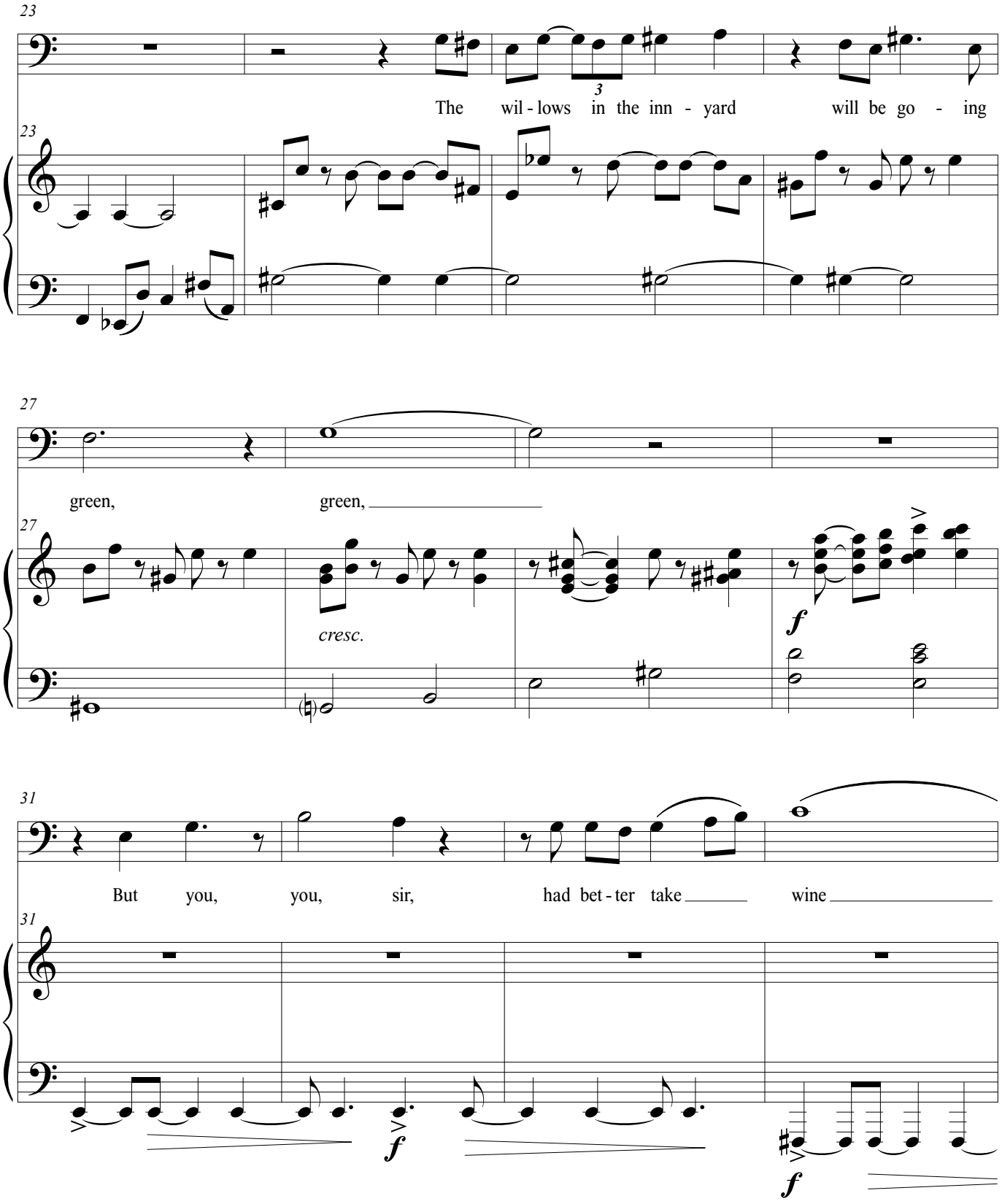
Song of Departure I

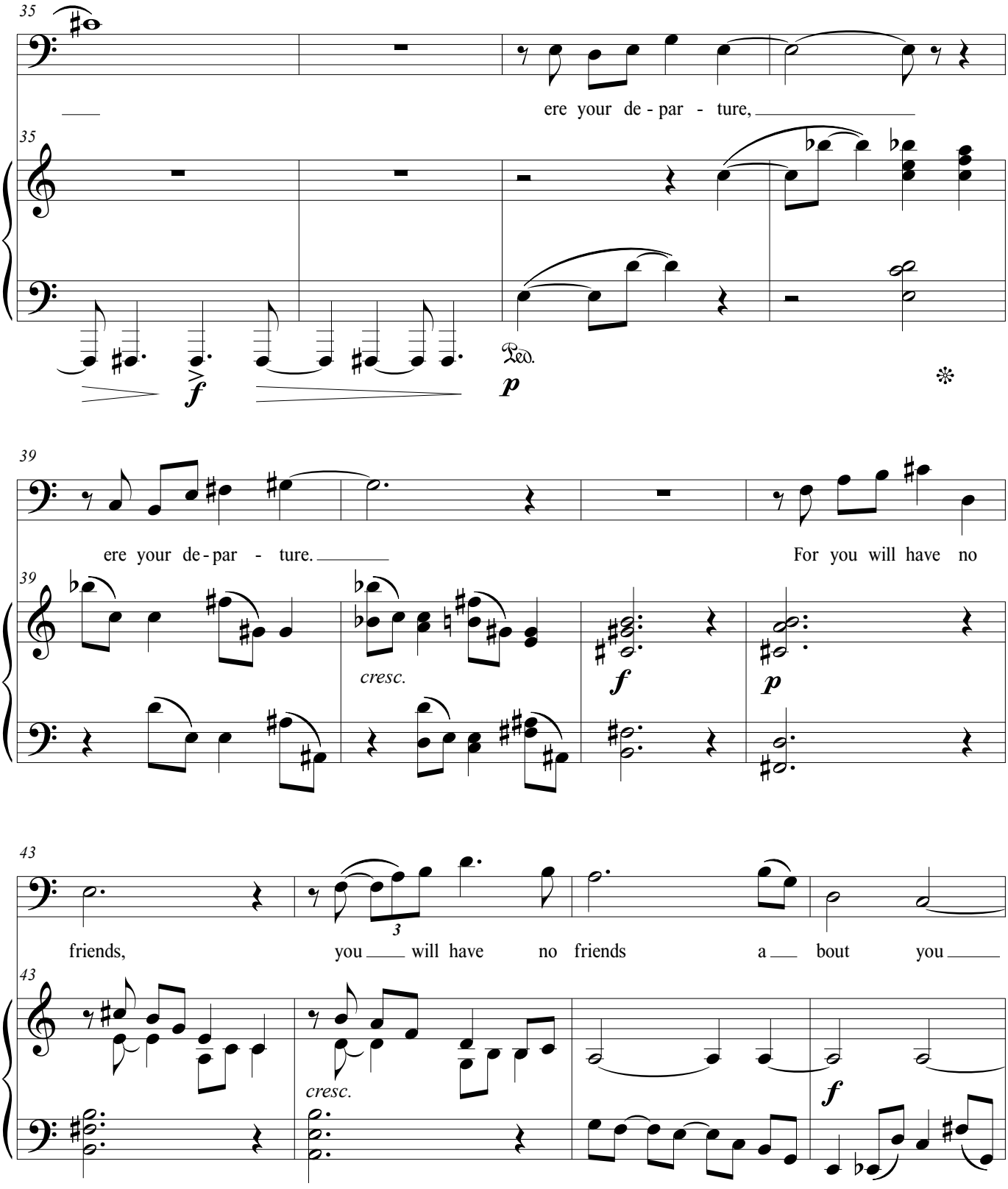
♩ = 80

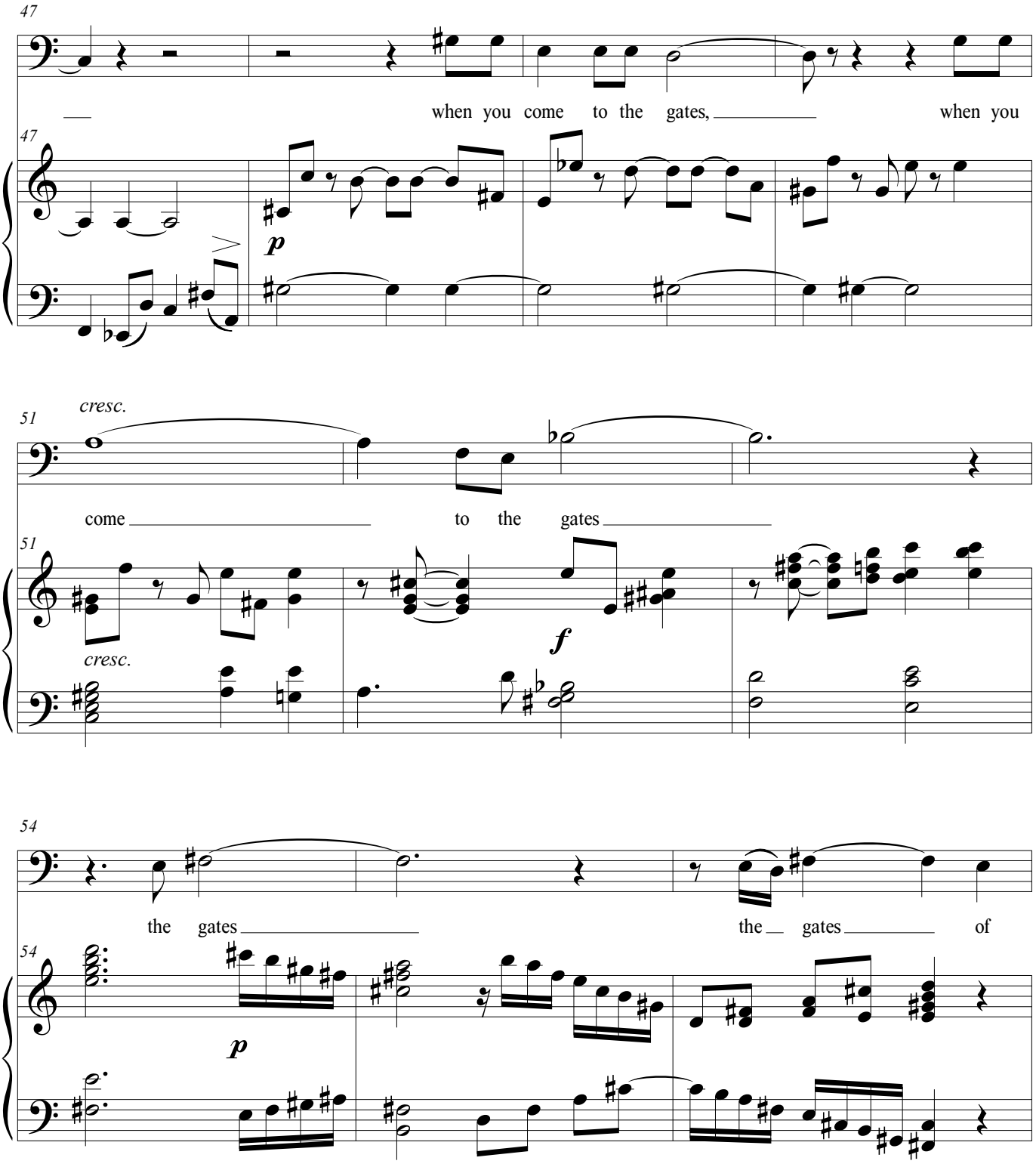
Lawrence Kramer

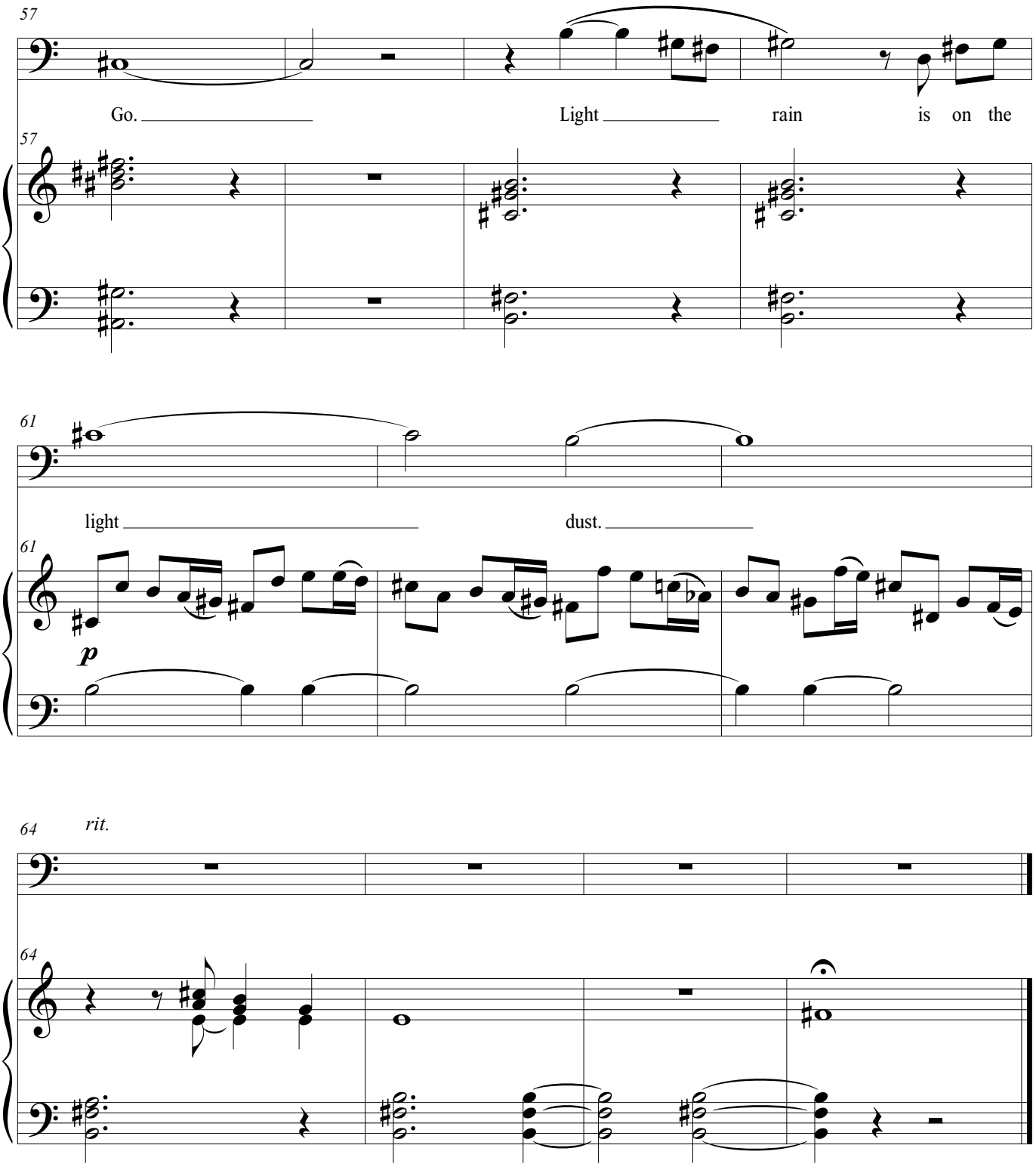



12
will be go - ing green - er, go - ing green - er and green -
12
p
- er. Light rain is on the light
15
dust, the light dust.
19
19


23
The wil - lows in the inn - yard will be go - ing
23
27
green, green,
27
cresc.
f
31
But you, you, sir, had bet - ter take wine
31
f
f


35
ere your de - par - ture,
35
Ped.
39
ere your de - par - ture.
For you will have no
39
cresc.
43
friends,
you will have no friends a bout you
43
cresc.


47
when you come to the gates, when you
47
p
51
cresc.
come to the gates
51
cresc.
f
54
the gates the gates of
54
p


57
Go.
Light
rain
is on the
57
61
light
dust.
61
p
64
rit.
64

Blue mountains to the north of the walls,
White river winding about them;
Here we must make separation
And go out through a thousand miles of dead grass.

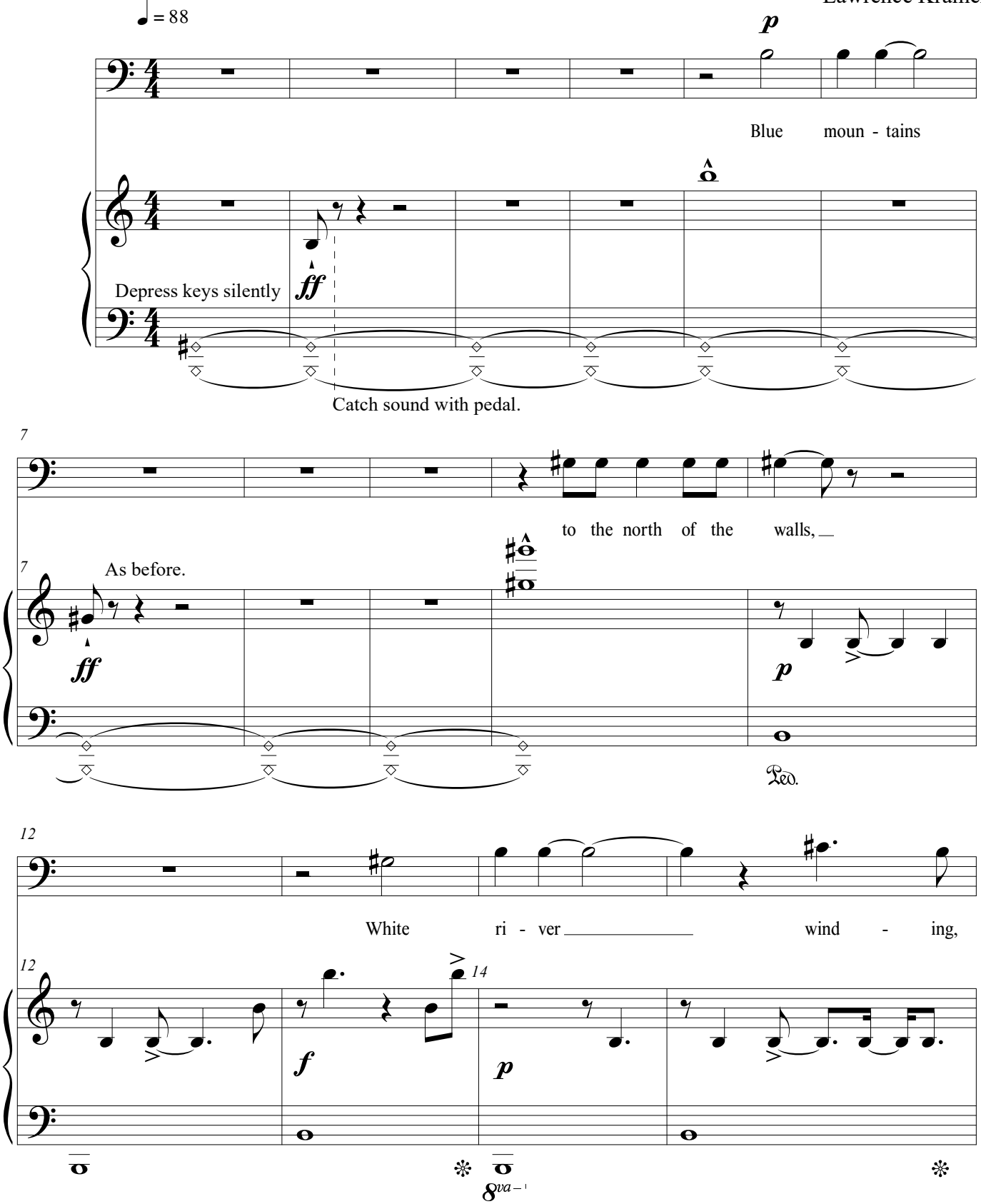
Mind like a floating wide cloud.
Sunset like the parting of old acquaintances
Who bow over their clasped hands at a distance.
Our horses neigh to each other
as we are departing.

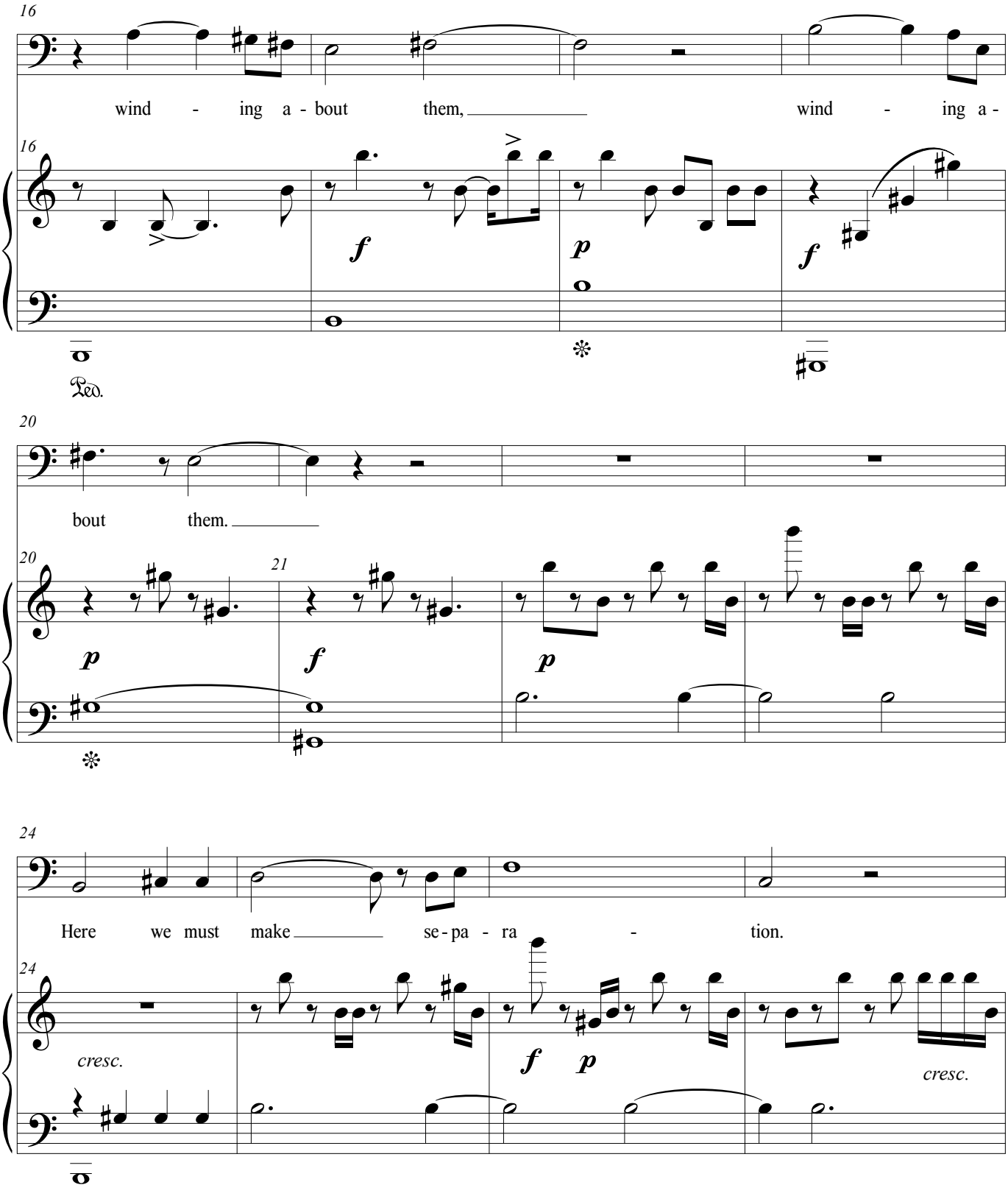
--Ezra Pound

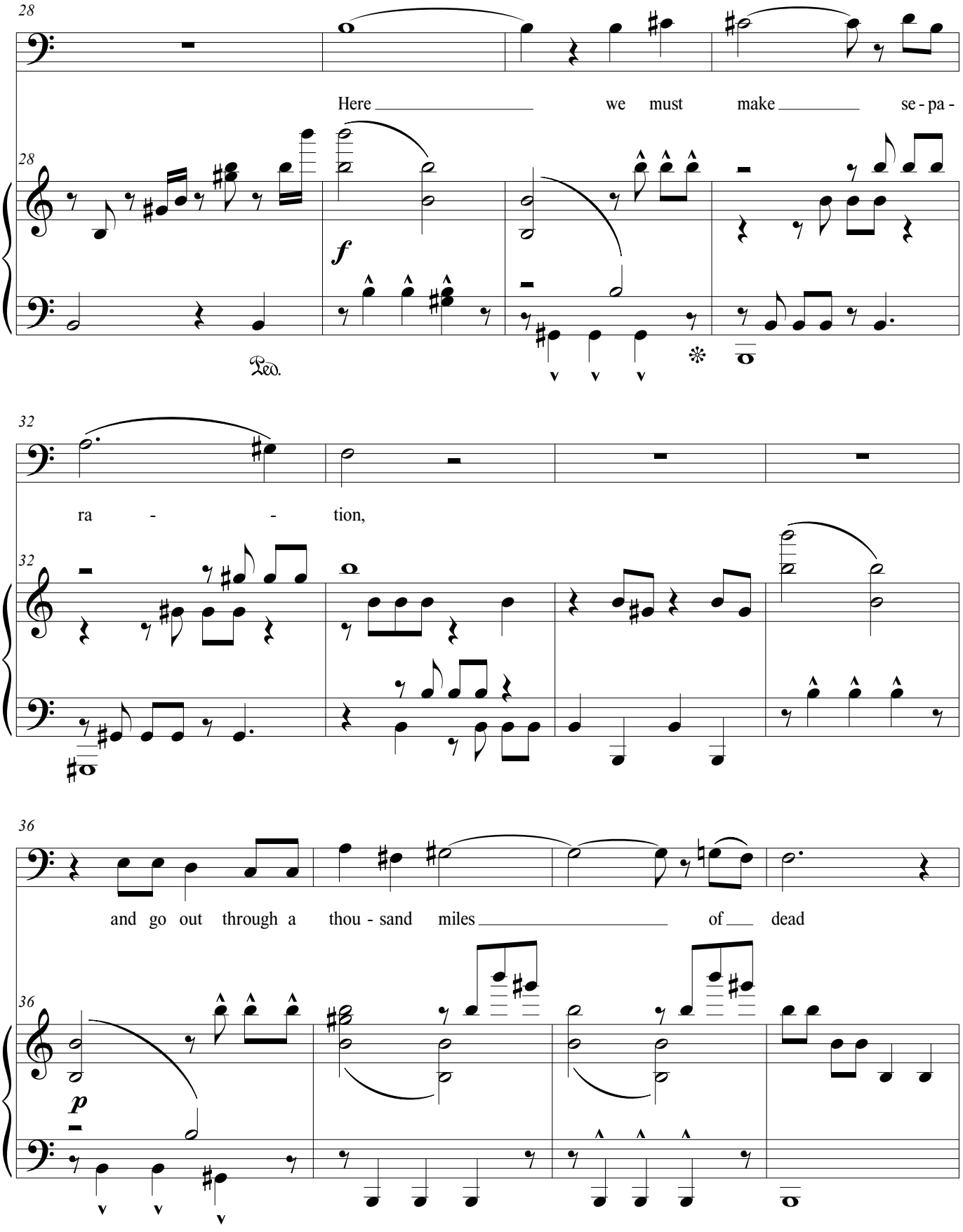
Voice range: A2 - D4
Tessitura: D3-C♯4
Duration 3:30

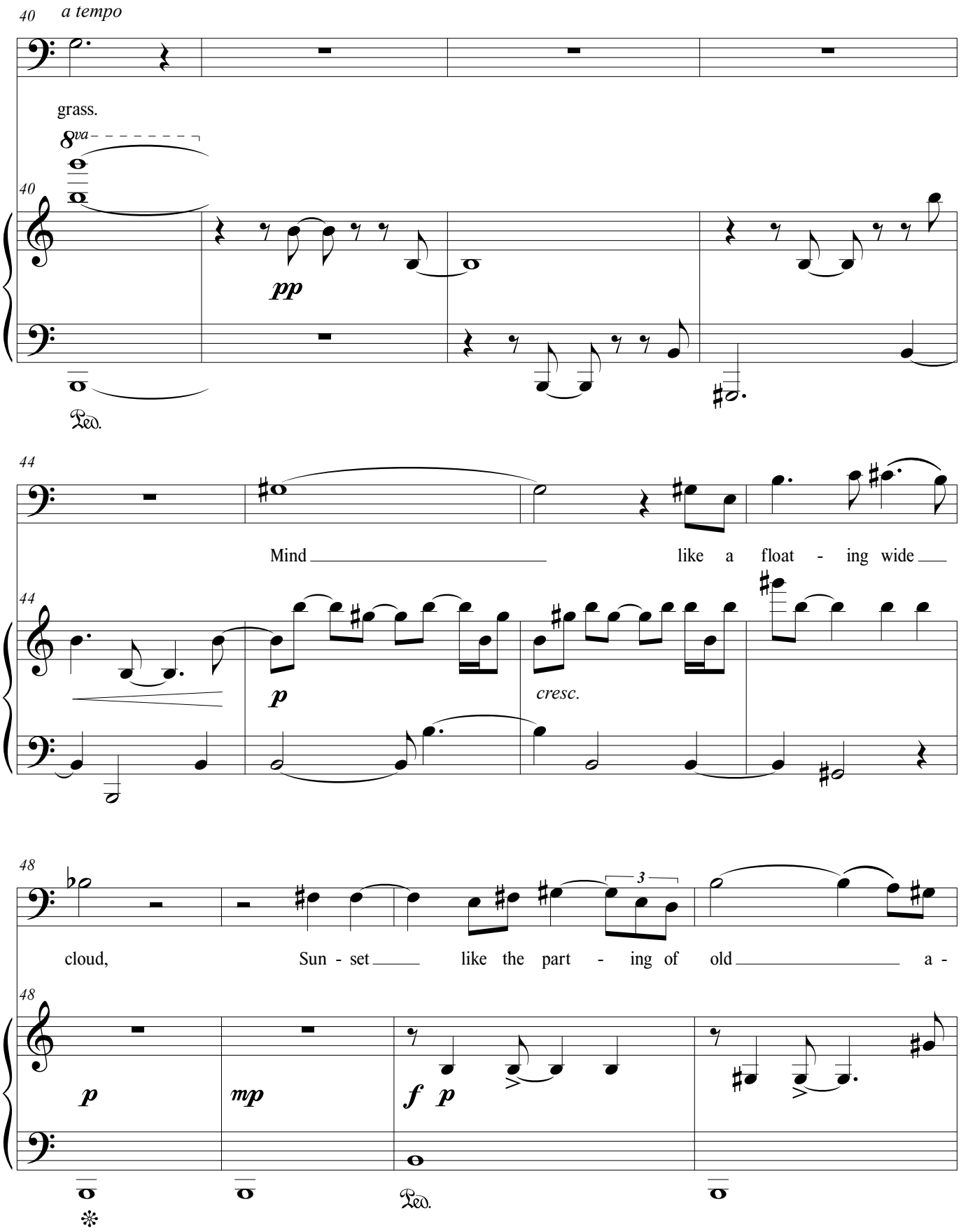
Song of Departure II

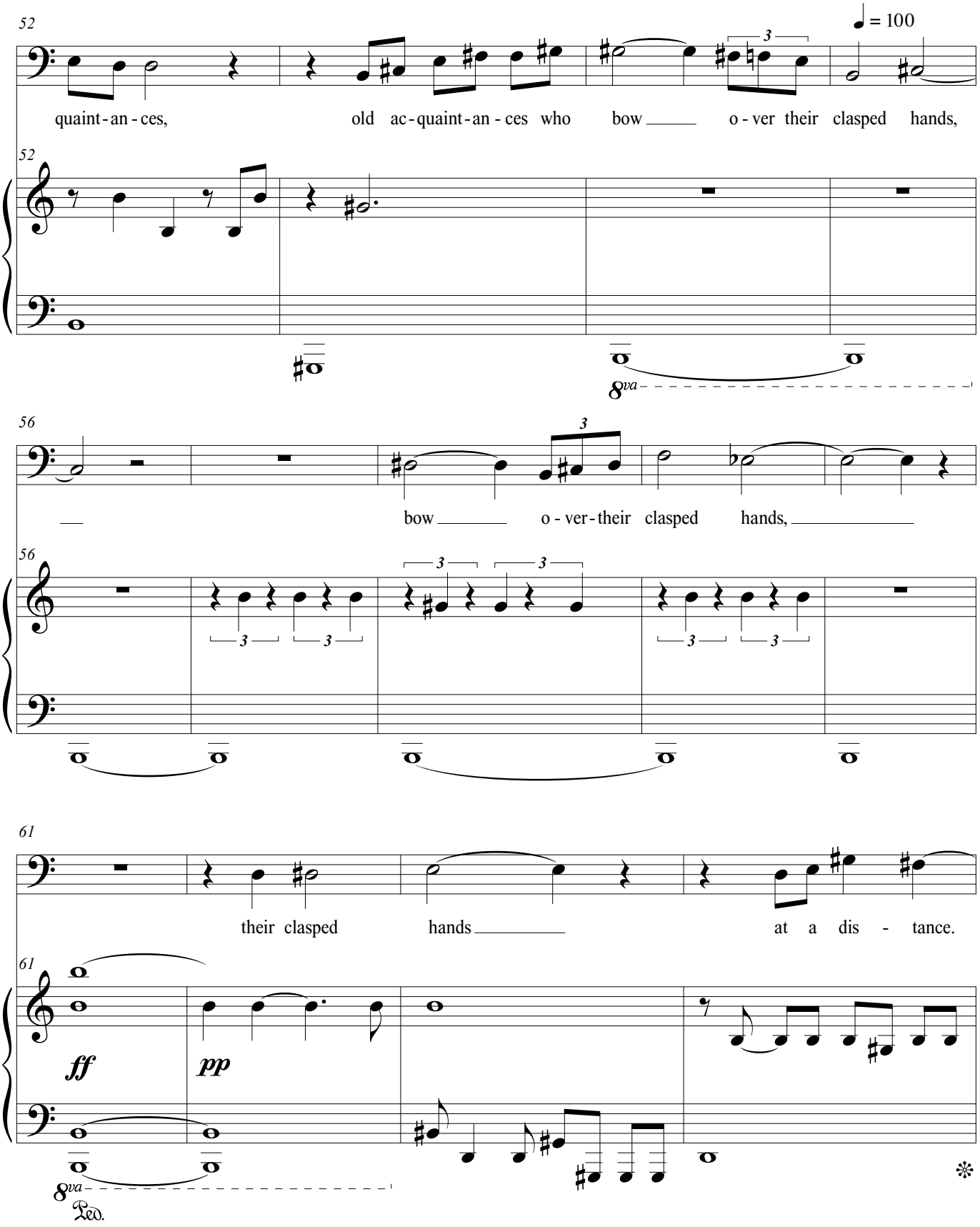
Lawrence Kramer

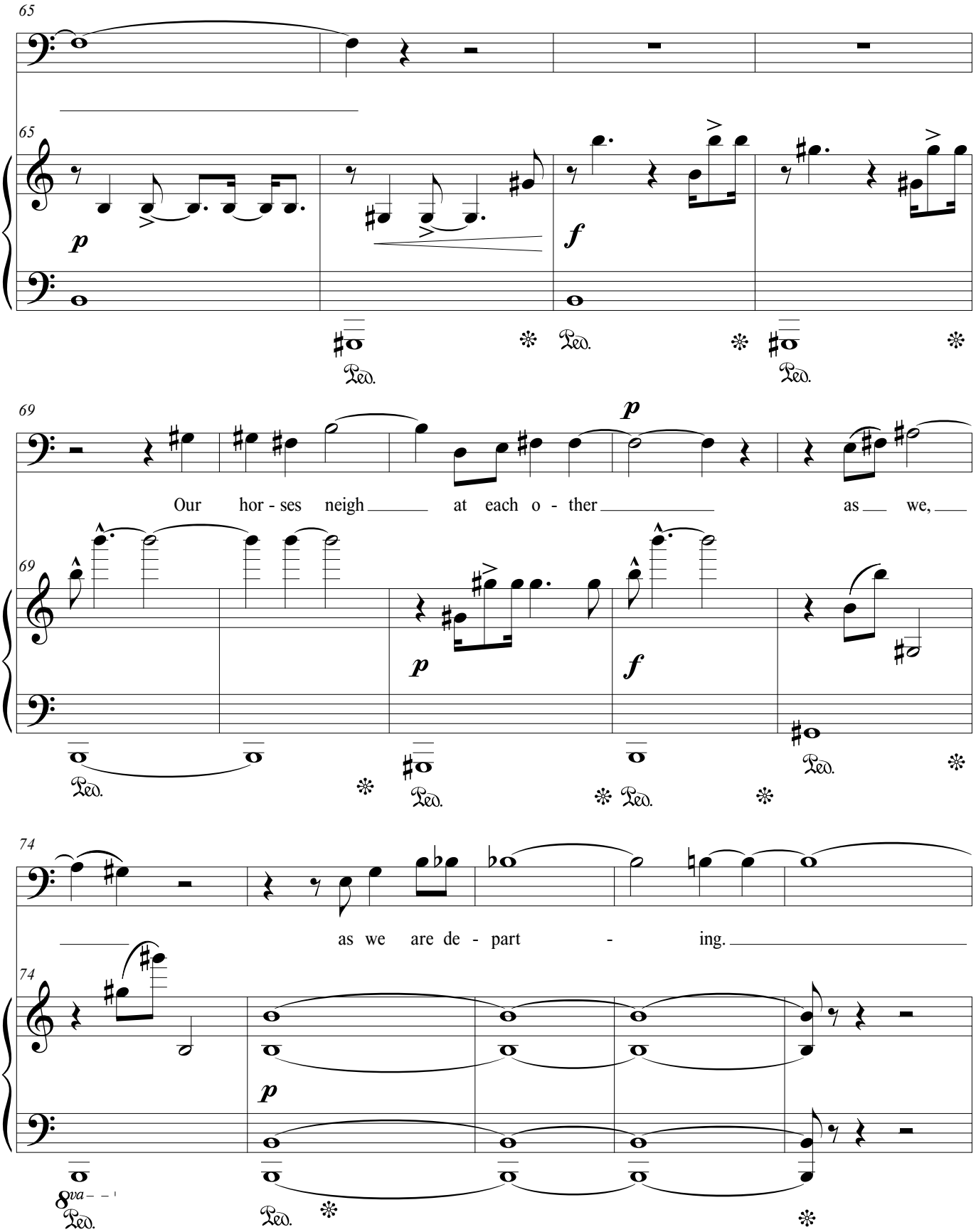


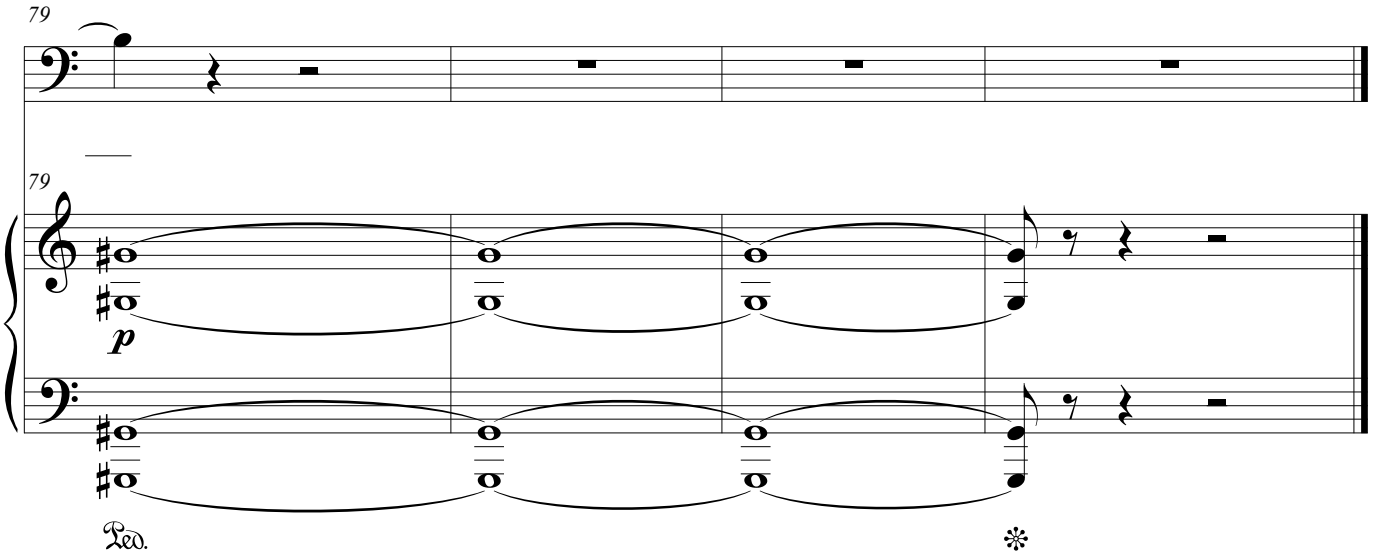

16
wind - ing a - bout them, wind - ing a -
16
f
p
f
Ped.
20
bout them.
20
21
p
f
p
24
Here we must make se - pa - ra - tion.
24
cresc.
f
p
cresc.


28
Here we must make se - pa -
28
f
Ped.
32
ra - - tion,
32
36
and go out through a thou - sand miles of dead
36
p


40
a tempo
grass.
8va
40
pp
Ped.
44
Mind
like a float - ing wide
44
p
cresc.
48
3
cloud,
Sun - set
like the part - ing of old
a -
48
p
mp
f p
Ped.


52
= 100
quaint - an - ces, old ac - quaint - an - ces who bow o - ver their clasped hands,
52
8va
56
bow o - ver - their clasped hands,
56
61
their clasped hands at a dis - tance.
61
ff
pp
8va
Ped.


65
65
p
f
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
69
p
Our hor - ses neigh at each o - ther as we,
69
p
f
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
74
as we are de - part - ing.
74
p
8va
Ped.
Ped.


79
79
p
Ped.

Stiff Wind

Baritone

A stiff wind. Walking in it.

Tatterdemalion figure, garments all askew.

A stiff wind. Walking against it.

Anonymous figure, face pinched, garments whipping, whipping.

A stiff wind. Stiff in the wind. Walking with it.

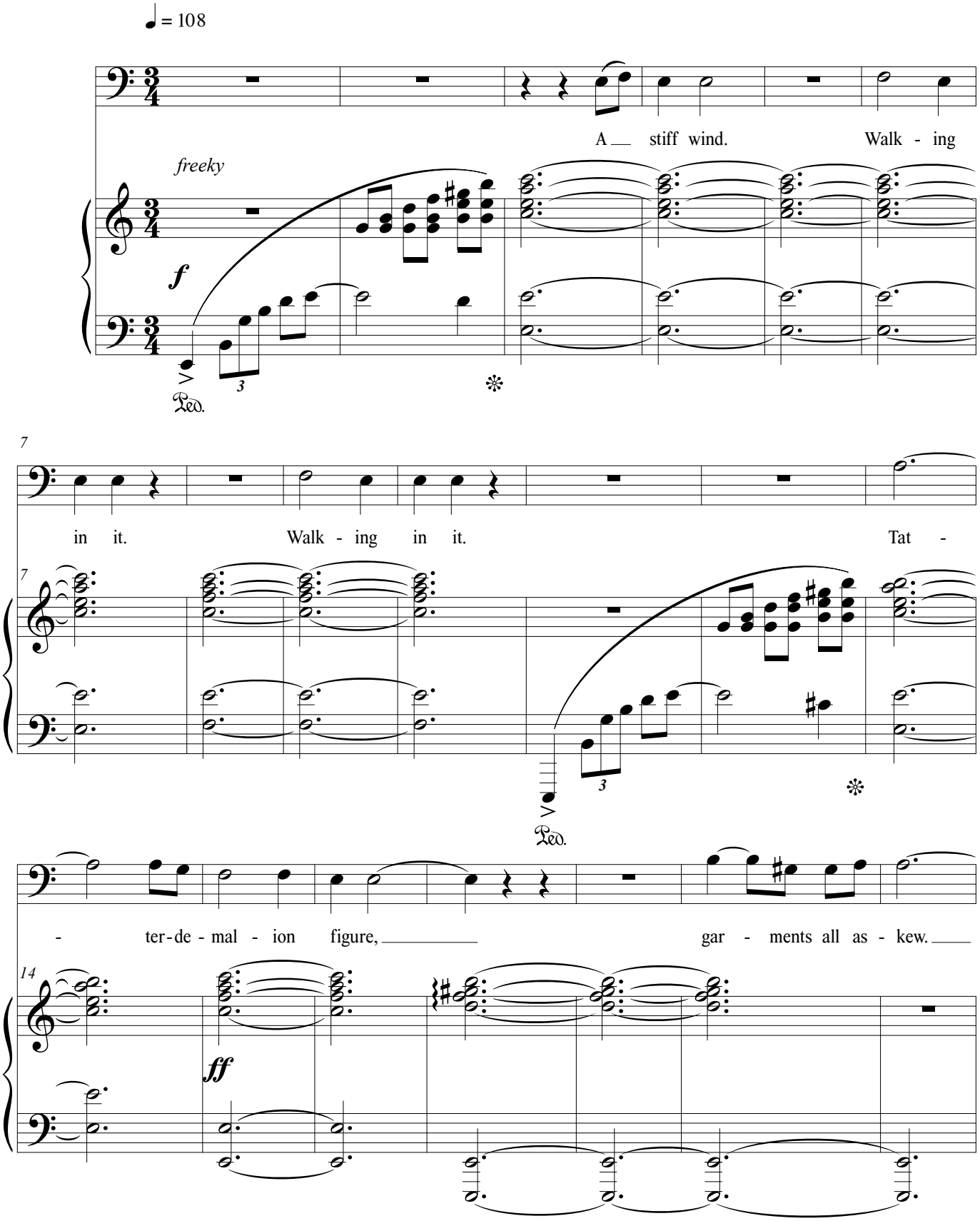
A figure anyhow. Garments clutched., head bare, face bare, facing the whip of the wind.

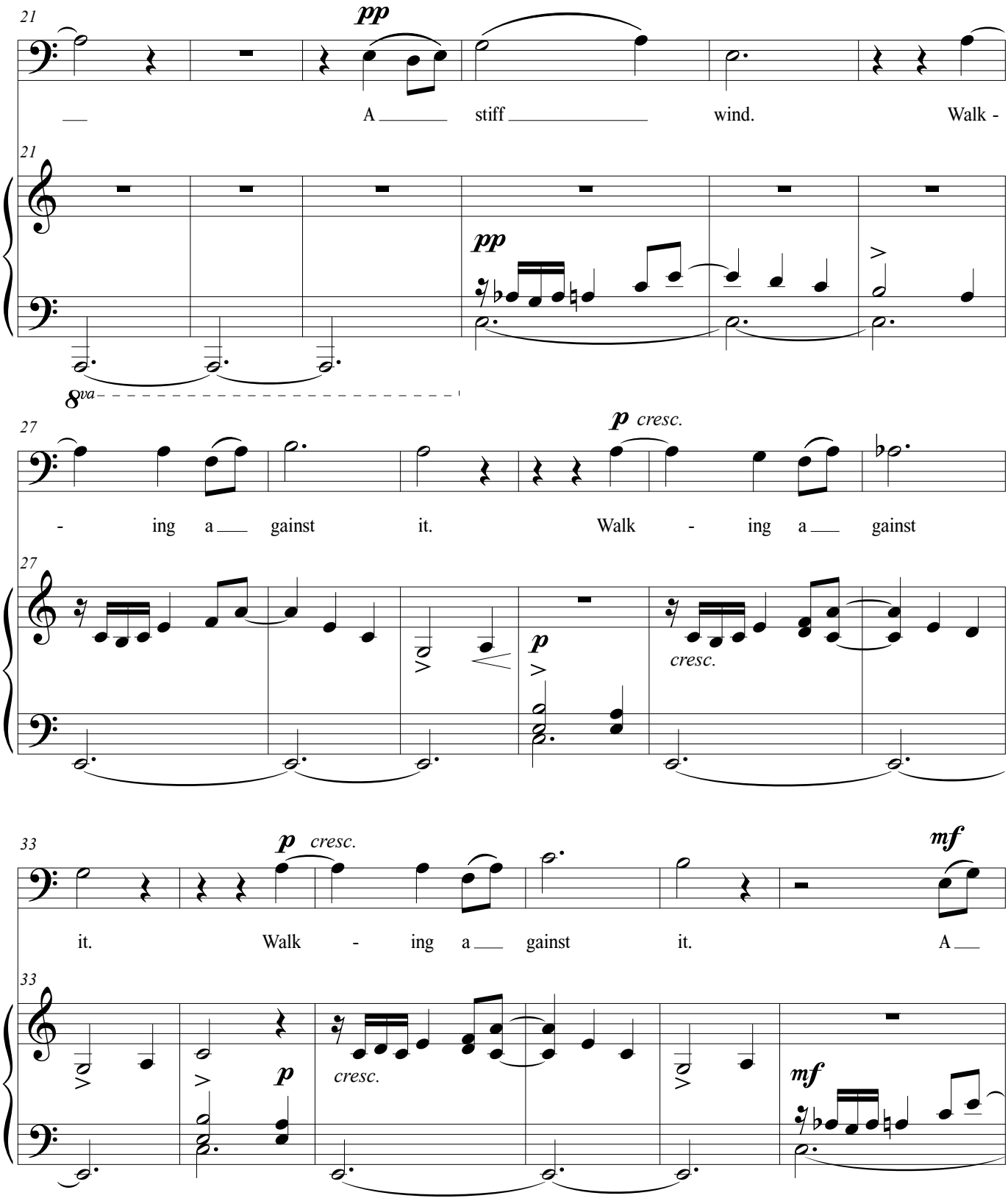
--Poem by the composer.

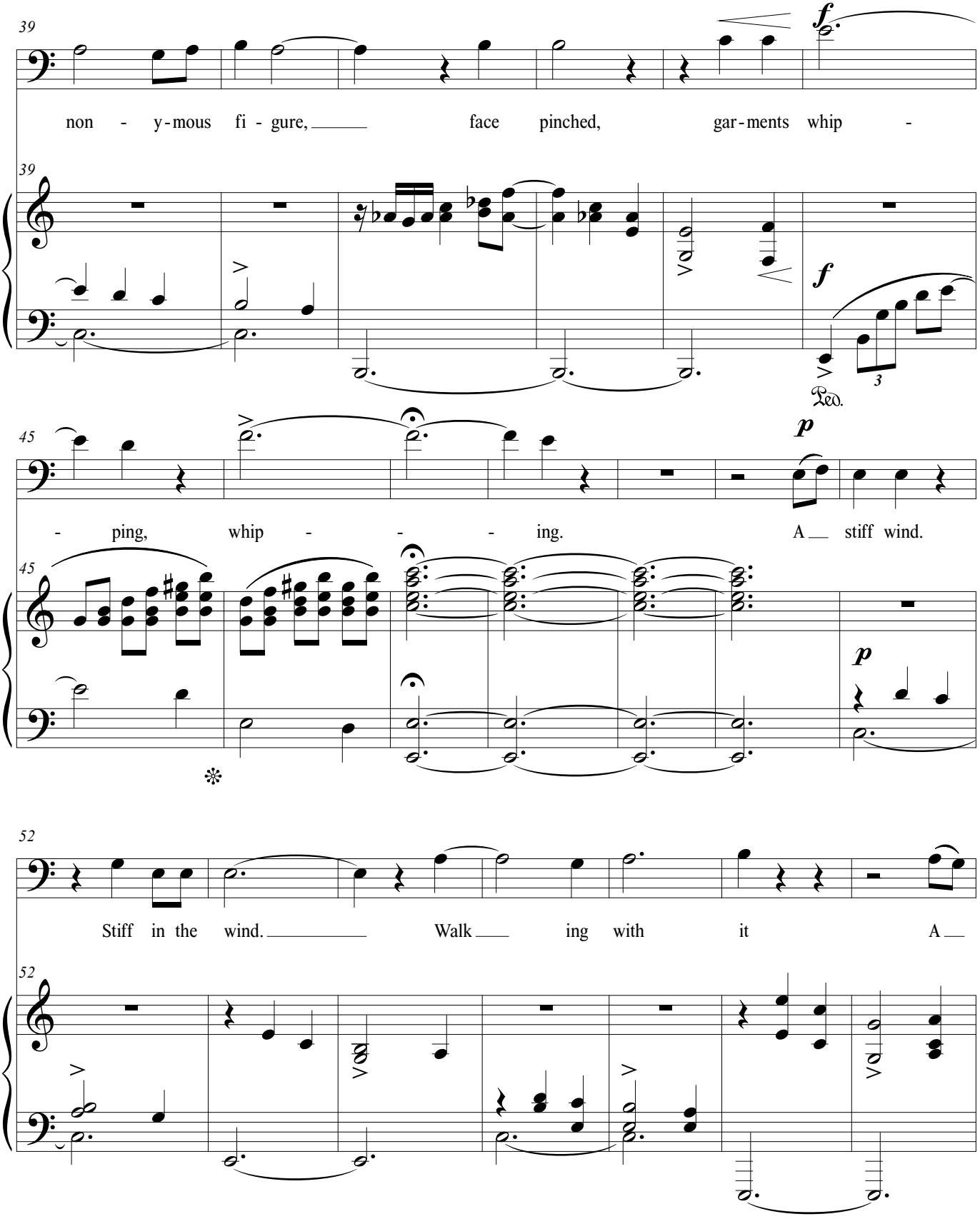
Voice range: D3 - F4
Tessitura: E3 - C4
Duration 2:30

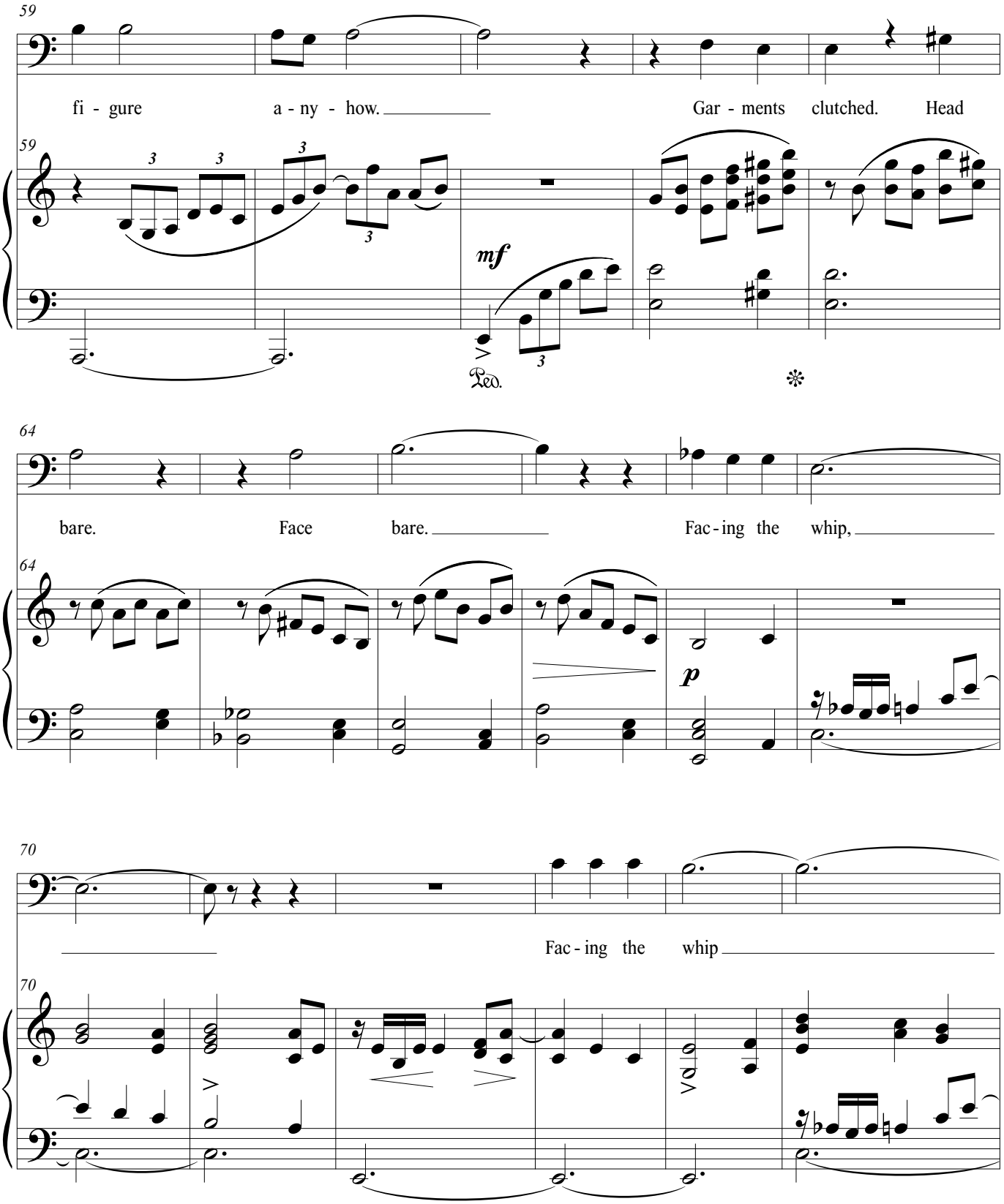
Composed 2021

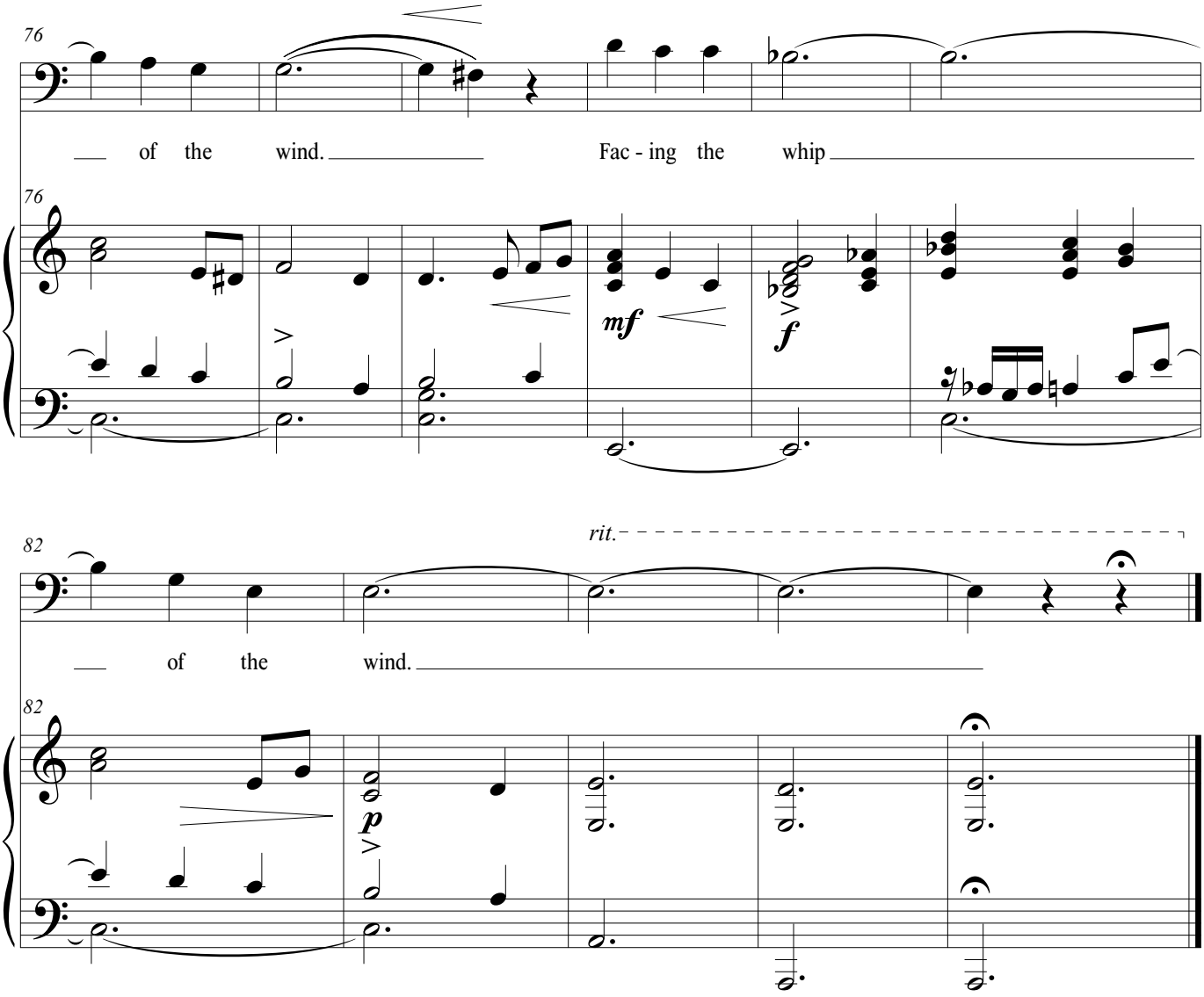
Stiff Wind


♩ = 108
A stiff wind. Walk - ing
freeky
f
Ped.
7
in it. Walk - ing in it. Tat -
- ter-de - mal - ion figure, gar - ments all as - kew.
14
ff


21
pp
A stiff wind. Walk -
21
pp
8va
27
p cresc.
- ing a gainst it. Walk - ing a gainst
27
p
cresc.
33
p cresc.
it. Walk - ing a gainst it. A
33
p
cresc.
mf


39
non - y-mous fi - gure, face pinched, gar-ments whip -
f
39
f
Ped.
3
45
- ping, whip - - ing. A stiff wind.
p
45
p
52
Stiff in the wind. Walk ing with it A
52


59
fi - gure a - ny - how.
Gar - ments clutched. Head
mf
Ped.
64
bare. Face bare.
Fac - ing the whip,
p
70
Fac - ing the whip


76
of the wind.
Fac - ing the whip
76
mf
f
82
rit.
of the wind.
82
p

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Baritone

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

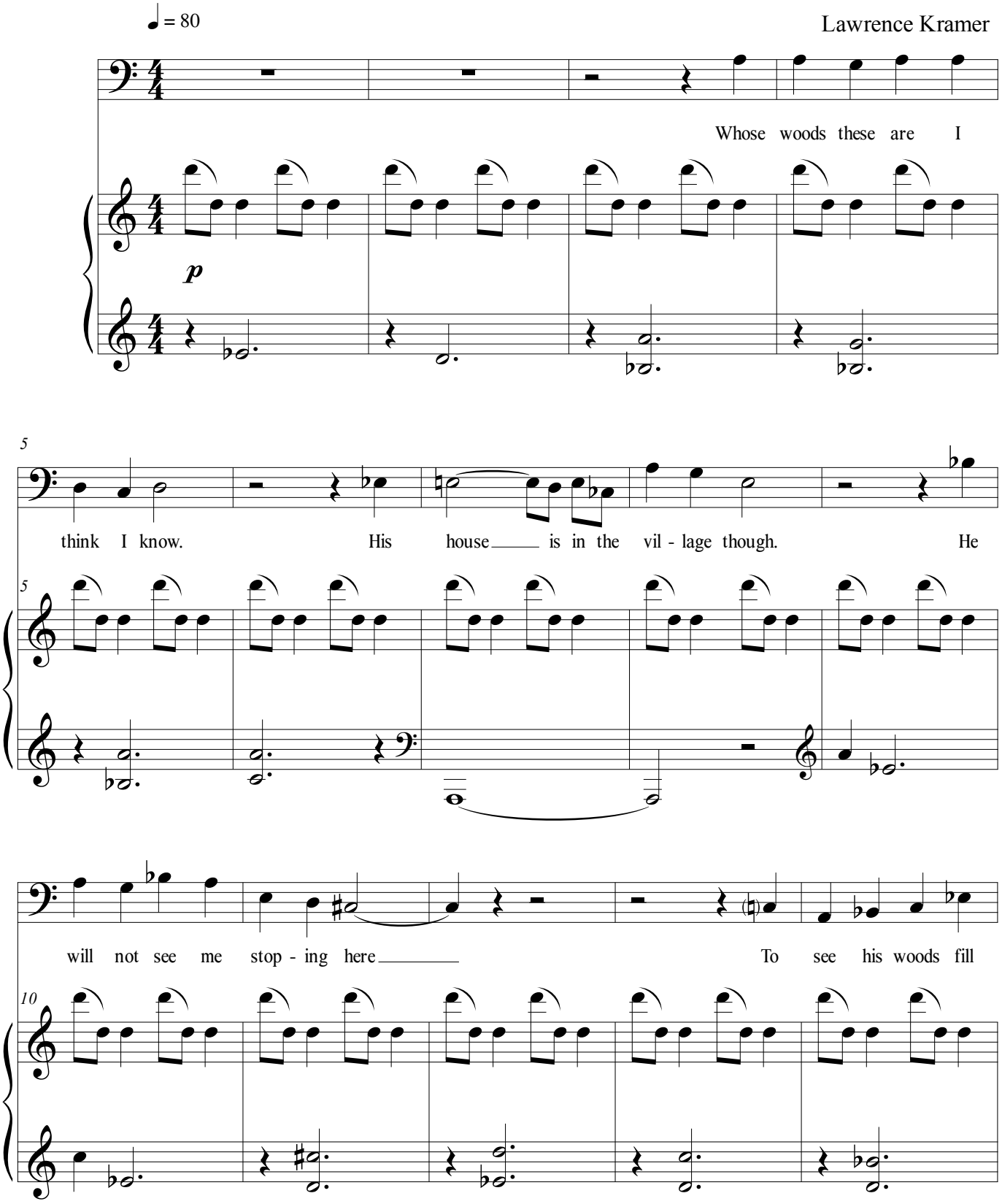
The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

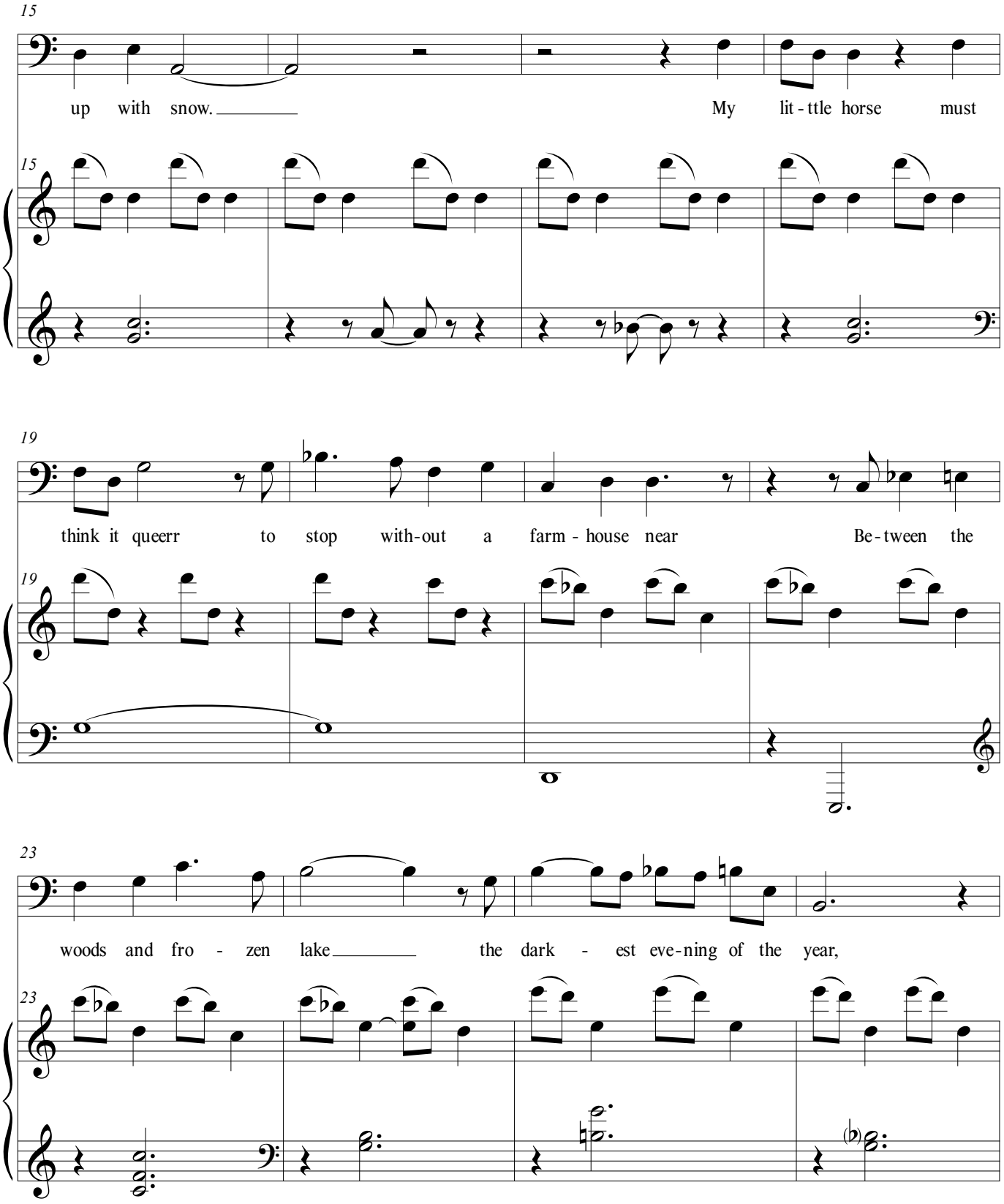
--Robert Frost

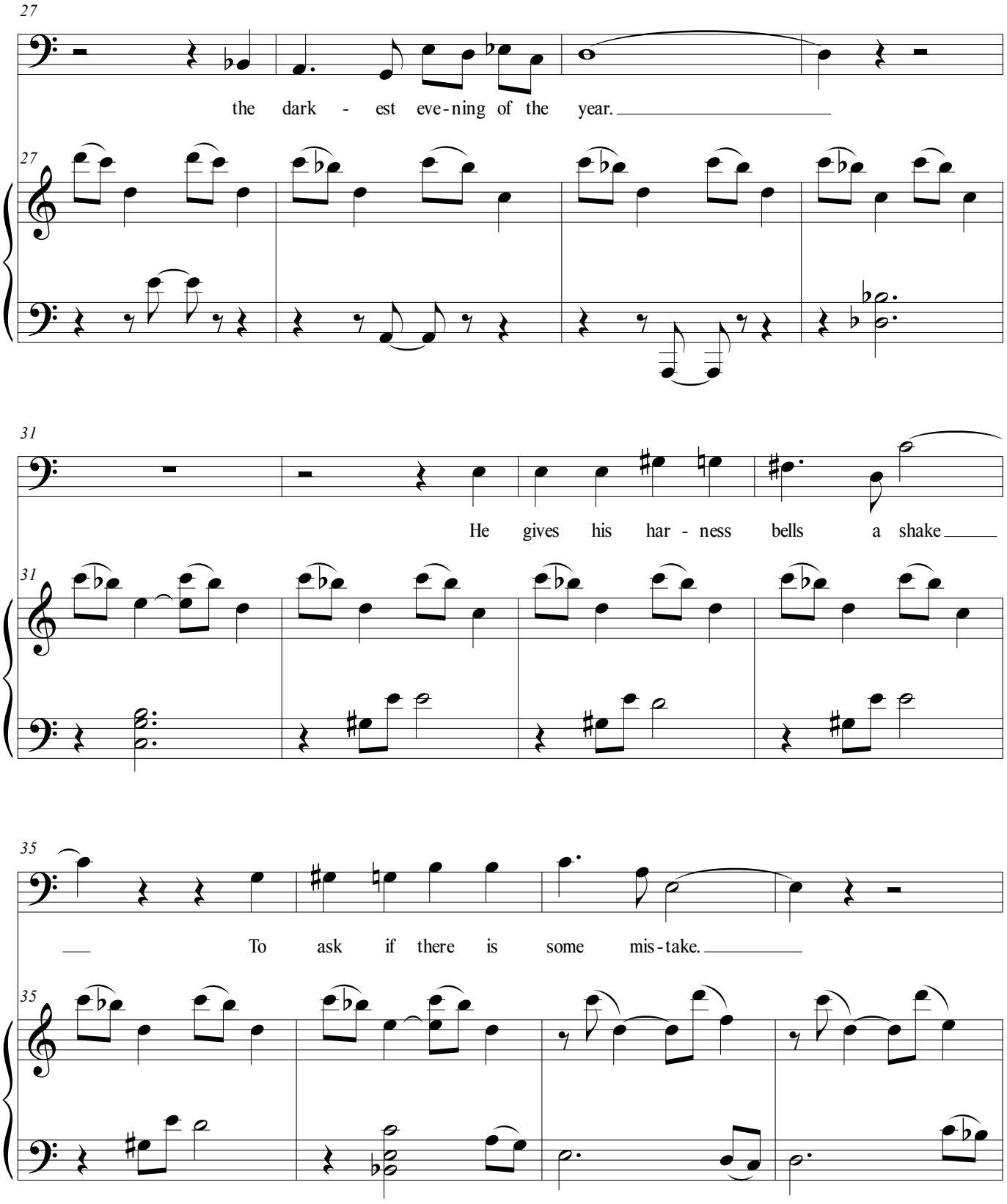
Voice range: G2 - E4
Tessitura: D3 - B3
Duration 3:40

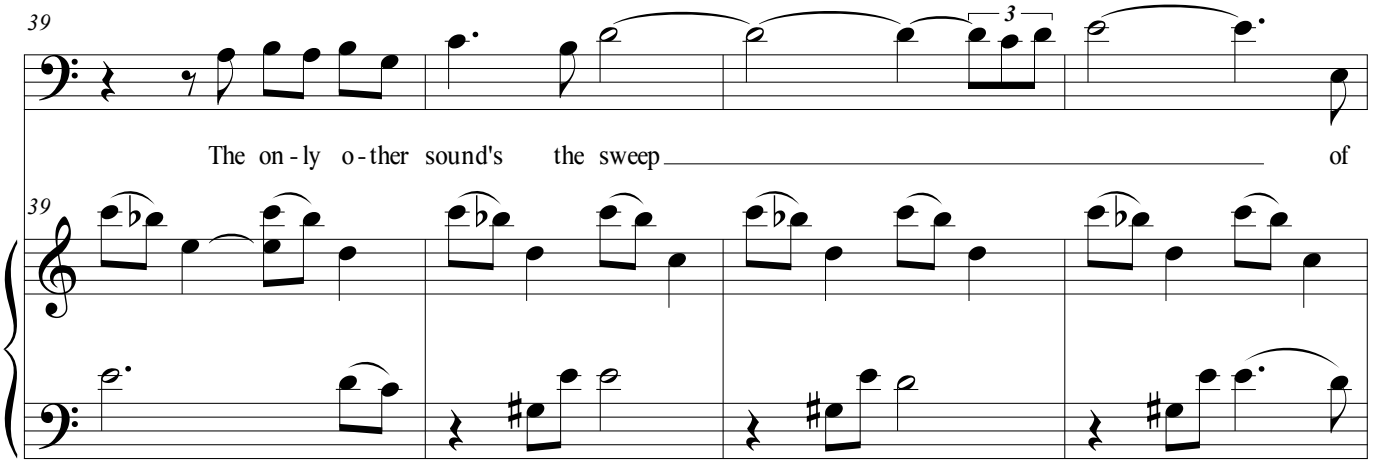
Composed January 1, 2019

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

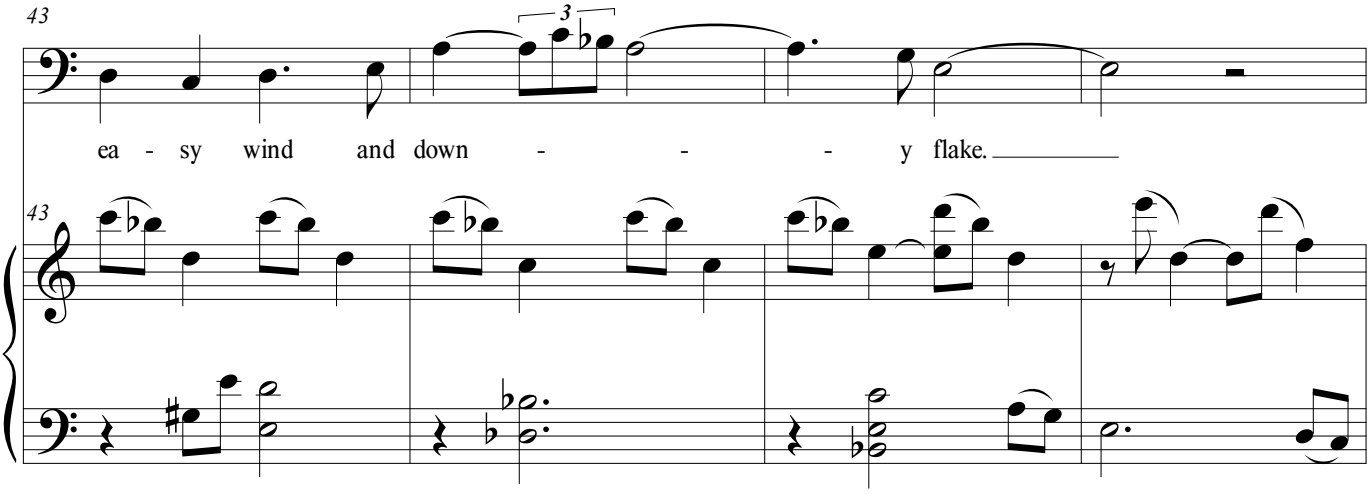


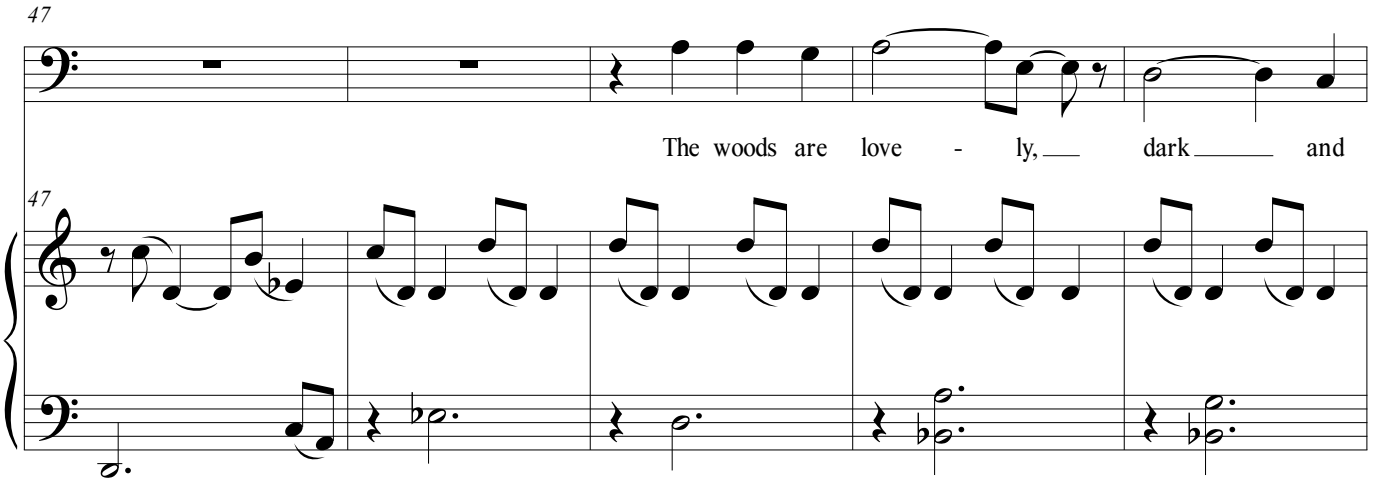

15
up with snow. My lit - ttle horse must
15
19
think it queerr to stop with-out a farm - house near Be - tween the
19
23
woods and fro - zen lake the dark - est eve-ning of the year,
23

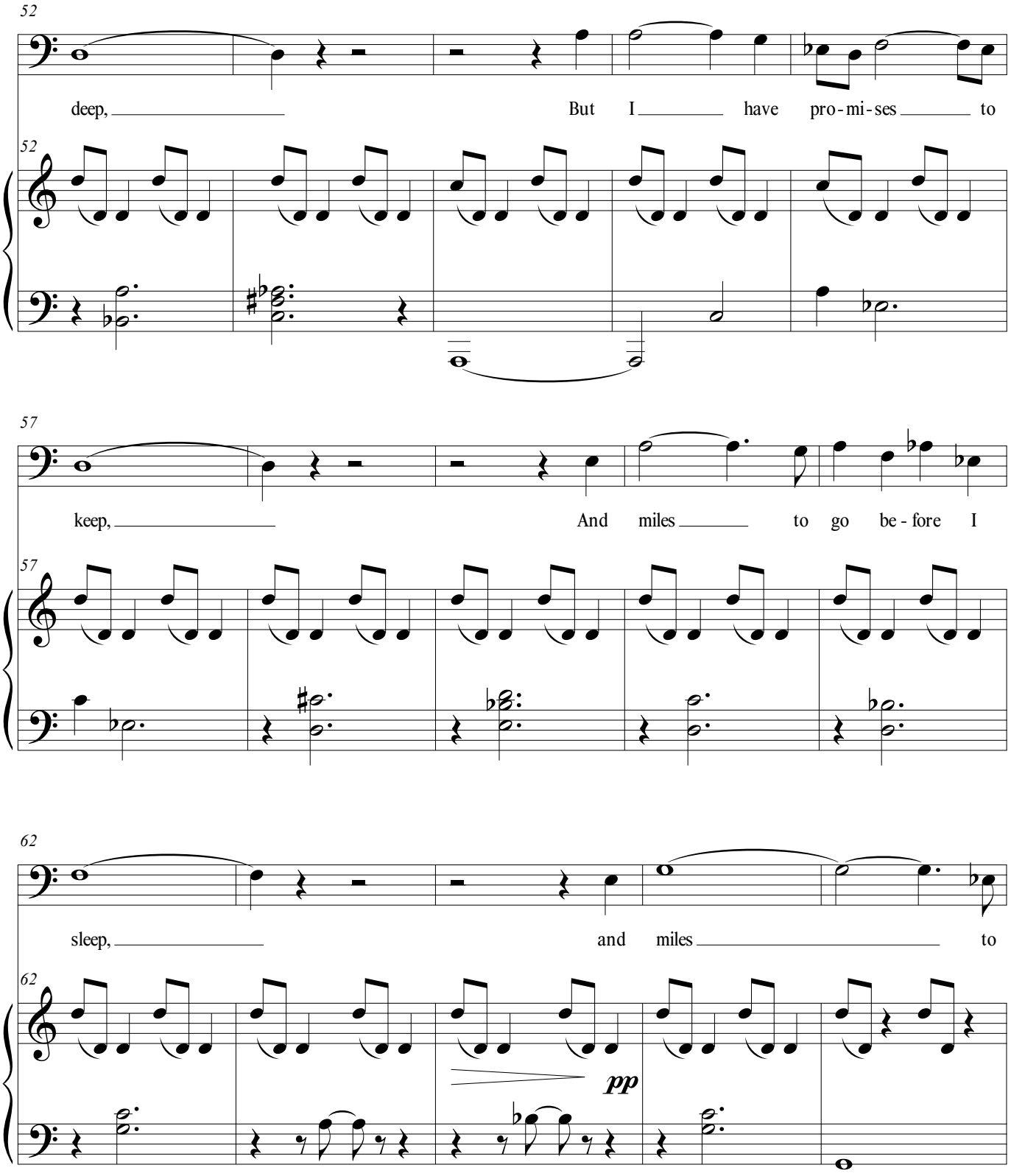

27
the dark - est eve-ning of the year.
31
He gives his har - ness bells a shake
35
To ask if there is some mis-take.

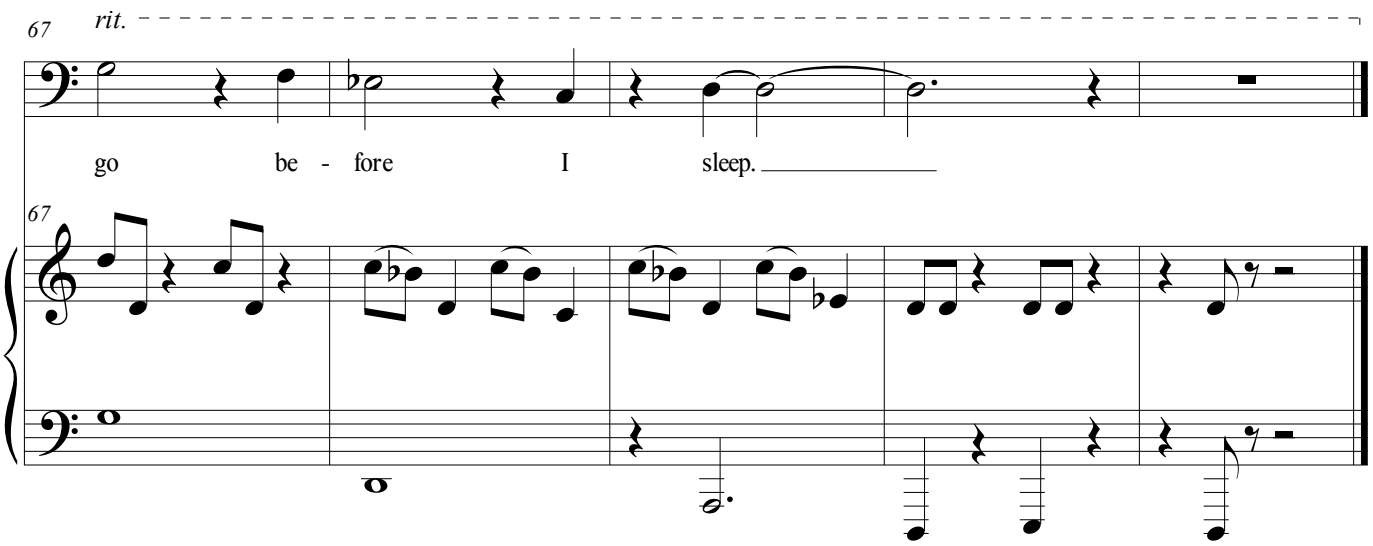


Mm. 39-42: dynamics follow voice.






52
deep, But I have pro-mi-ses to
52
57
keep, And miles to go be-fore I
57
62
sleep, and miles to
62
pp


67
rit.
go be - fore I sleep.
67

The Silver Ploughboy

A black figure dances in a black field.

It seizes a sheet—from the ground, from a bush—as if spread there by some washwoman
for the night.

It wraps the sheet around its body, until the black figure is silver.
It dances down a furrow, in the early light, back of a crazy plough, the green blades following.

How soon the silver fades in the dust! How soon the black figure slips from the wrinkled sheet!
How softly the sheet falls to the ground!

--Wallace Stevens

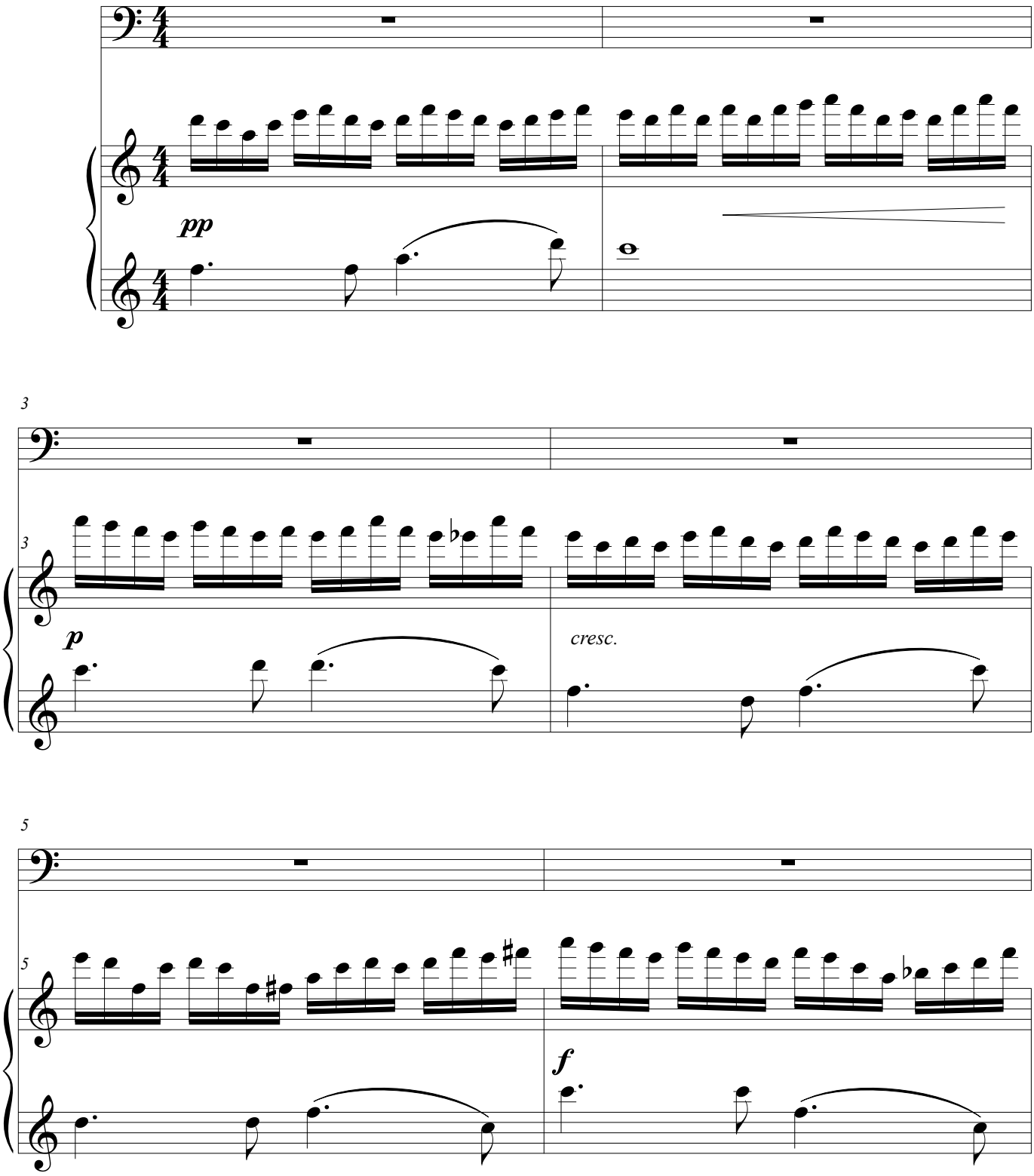
Written voice range: C4 - F5
Tessitura: D4 - C5
Duration 3:15

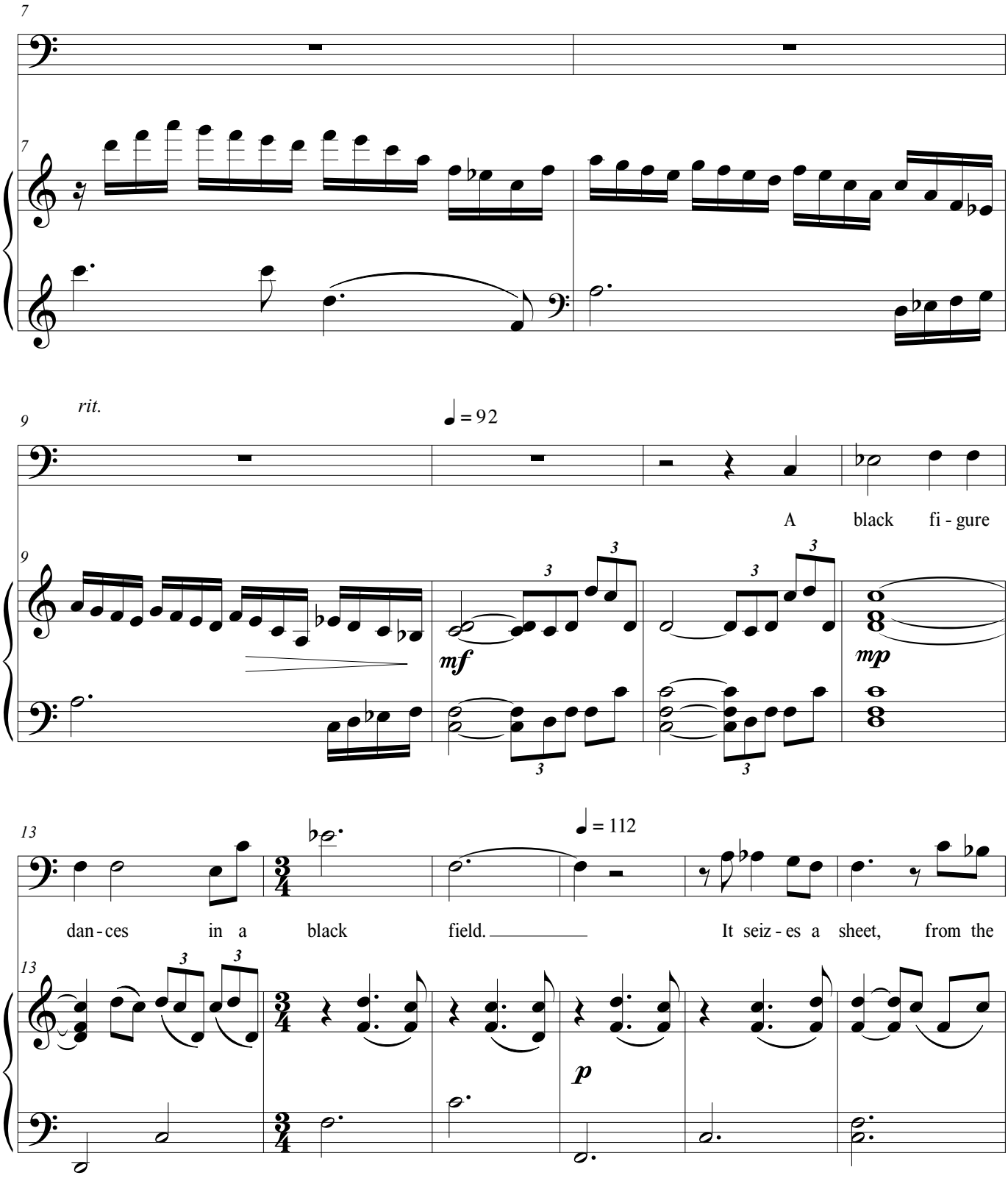
Composed 2022

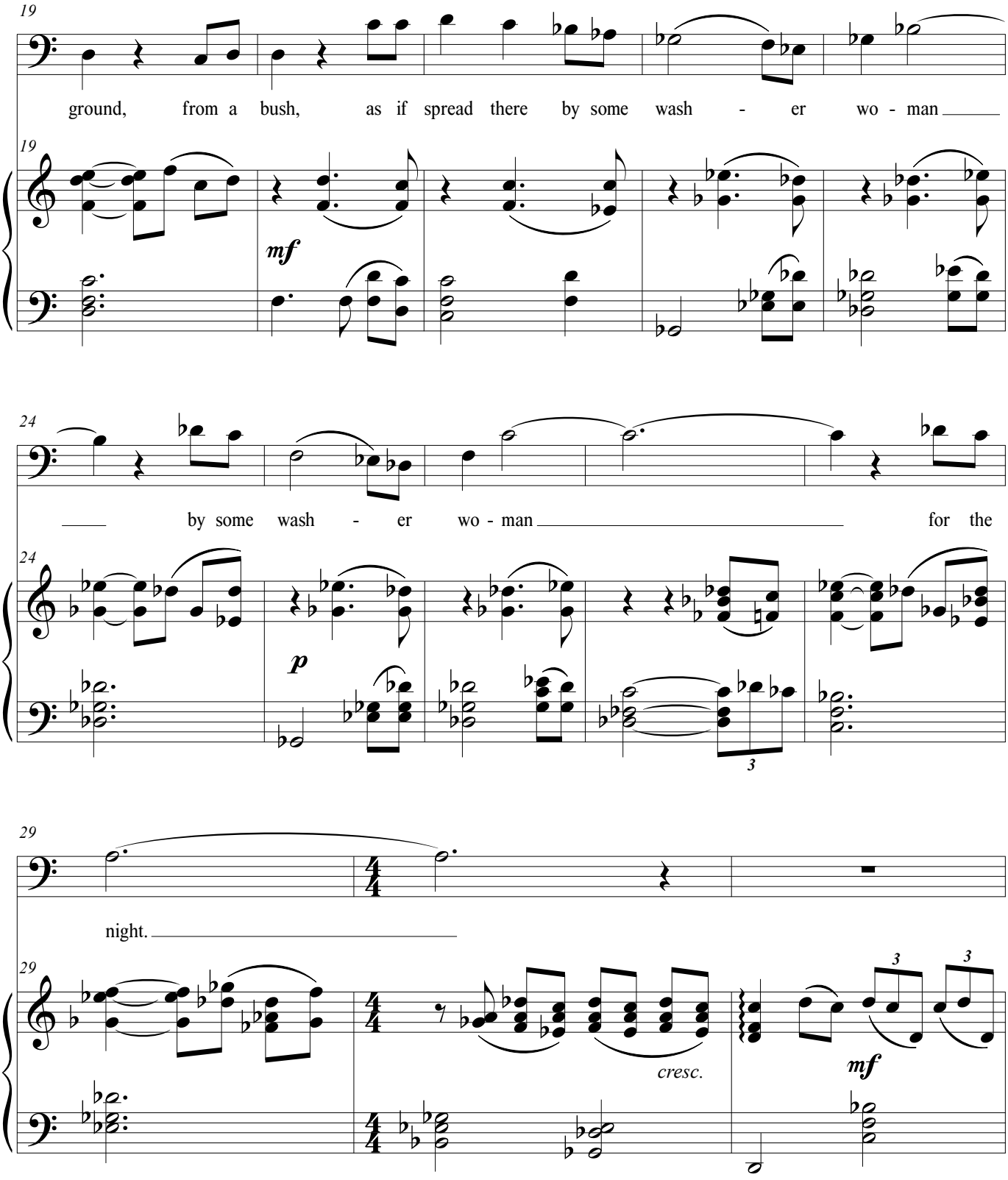
The Silver Ploughboy

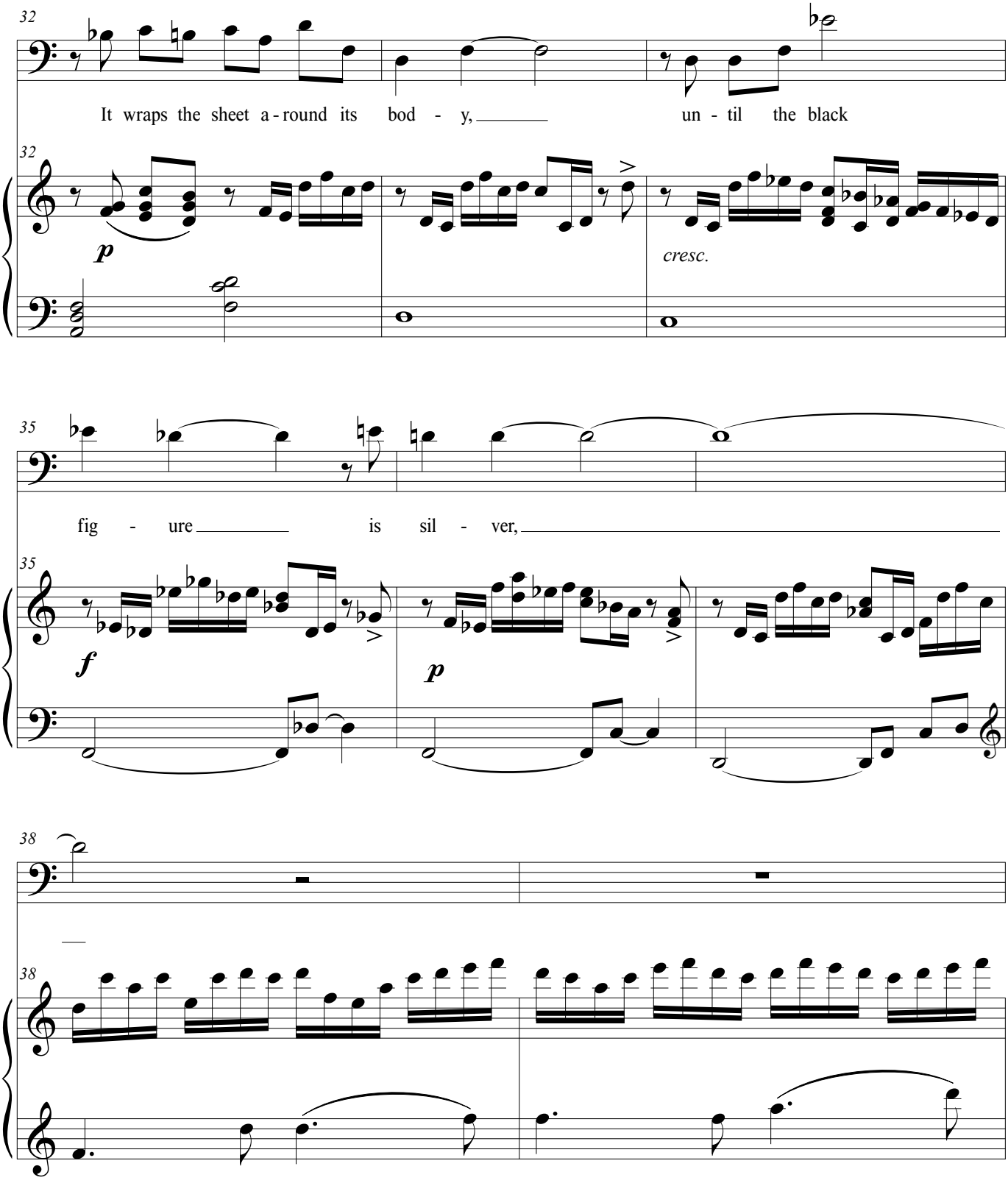
♩ = 112

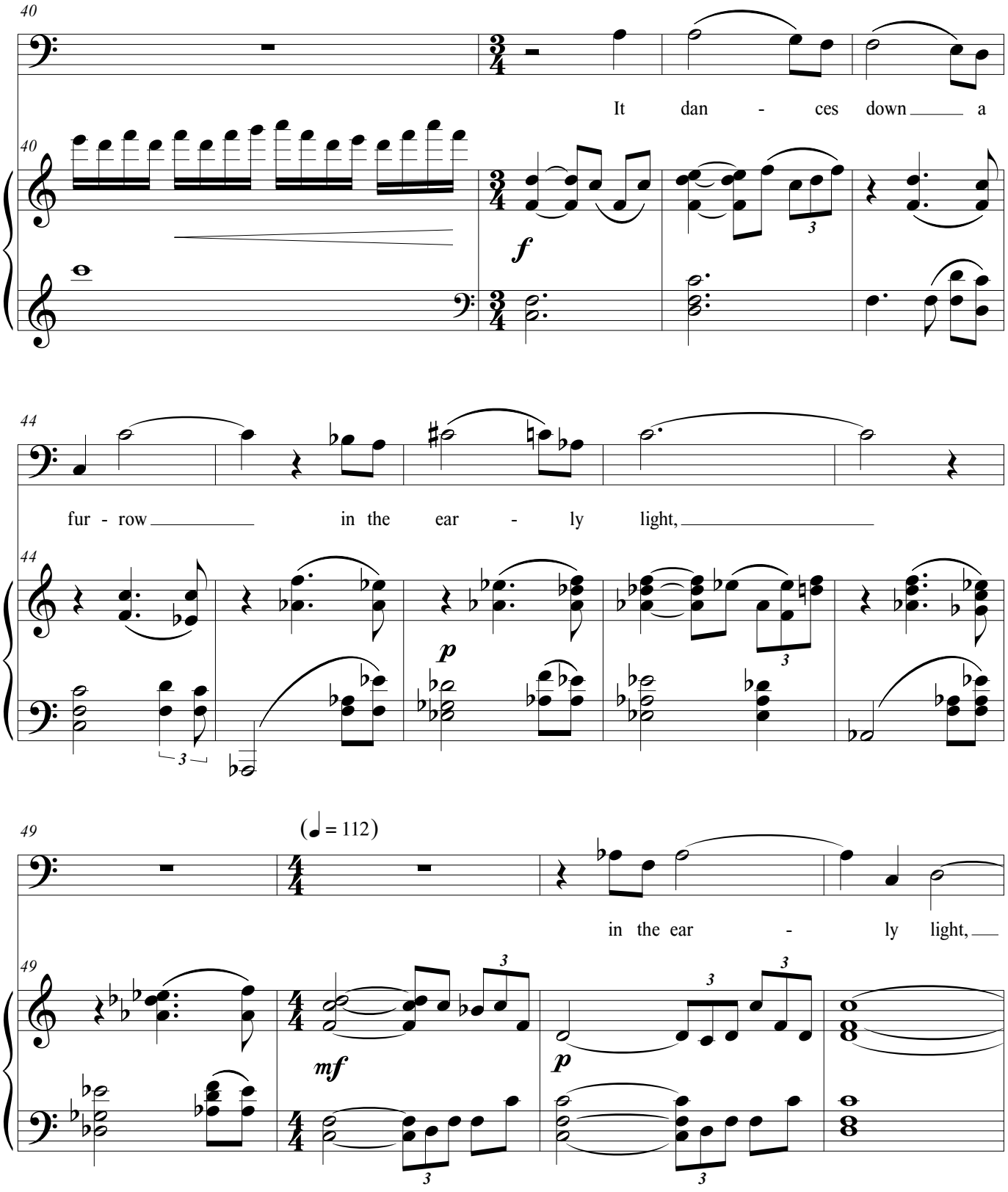
Lawrence Kramer

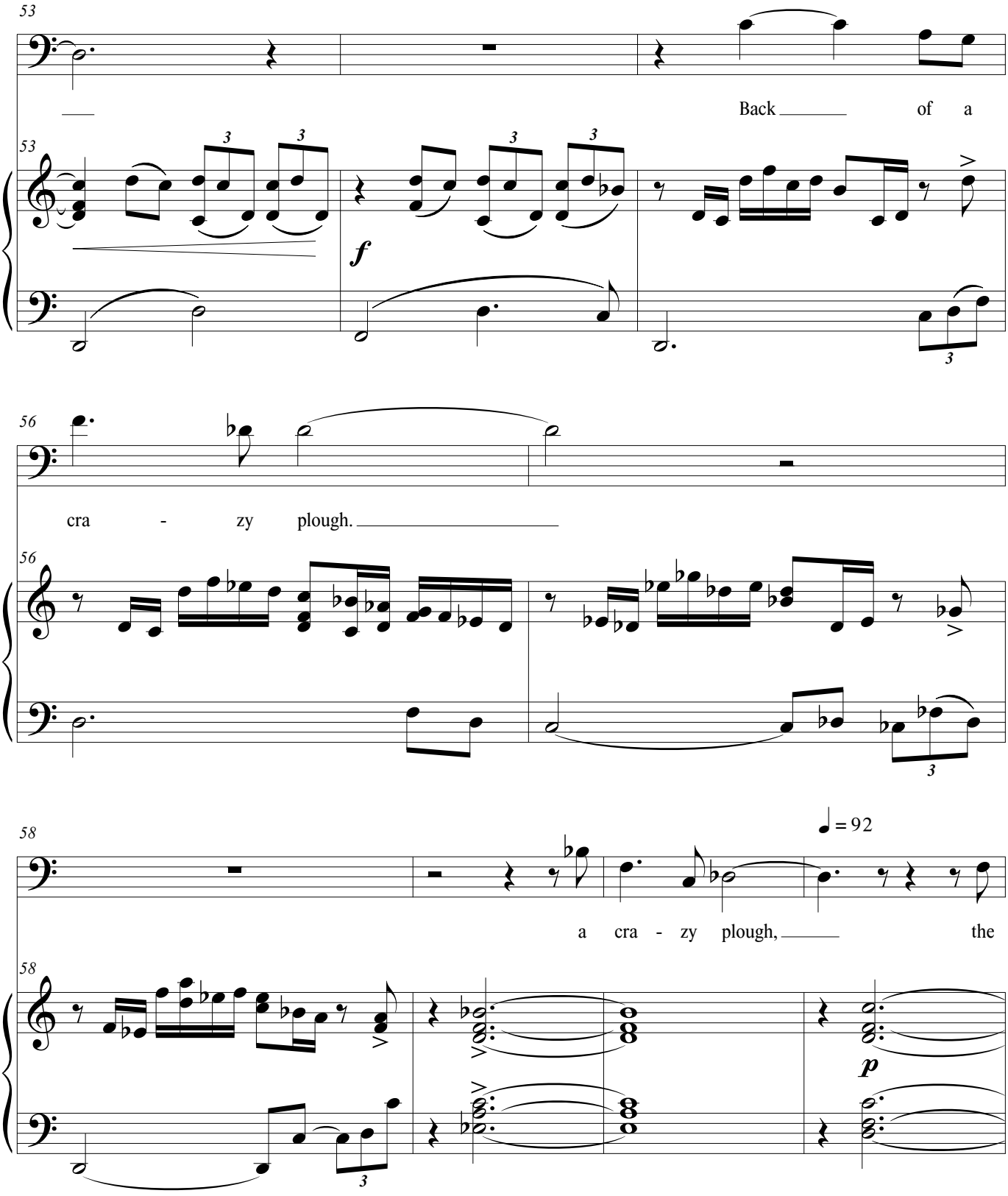


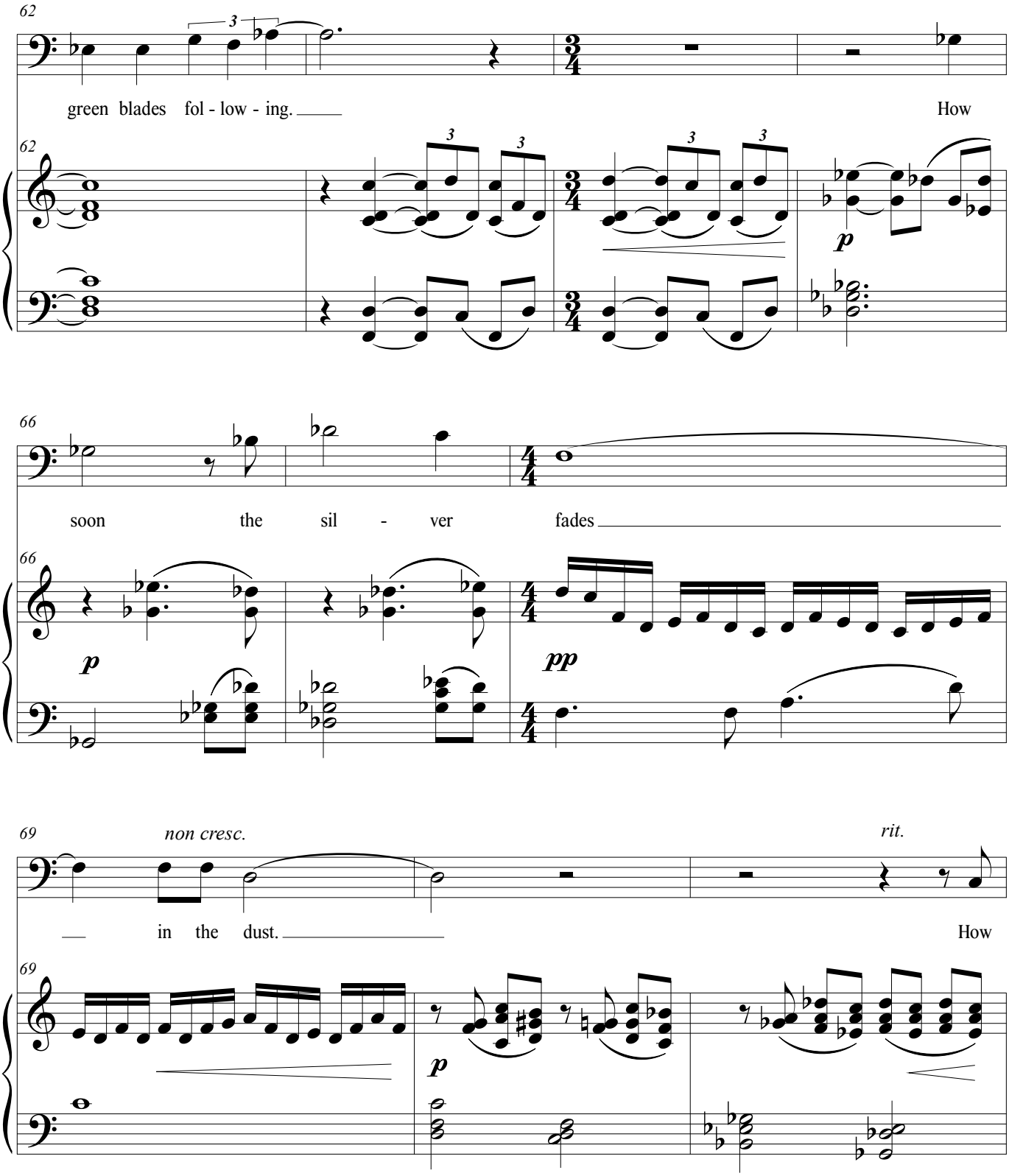

7
7
9
rit.
♩ = 92
A black fi - gure
9
mf
mp
13
♩ = 112
dan - ces in a black field. It seiz - es a sheet, from the
13
p

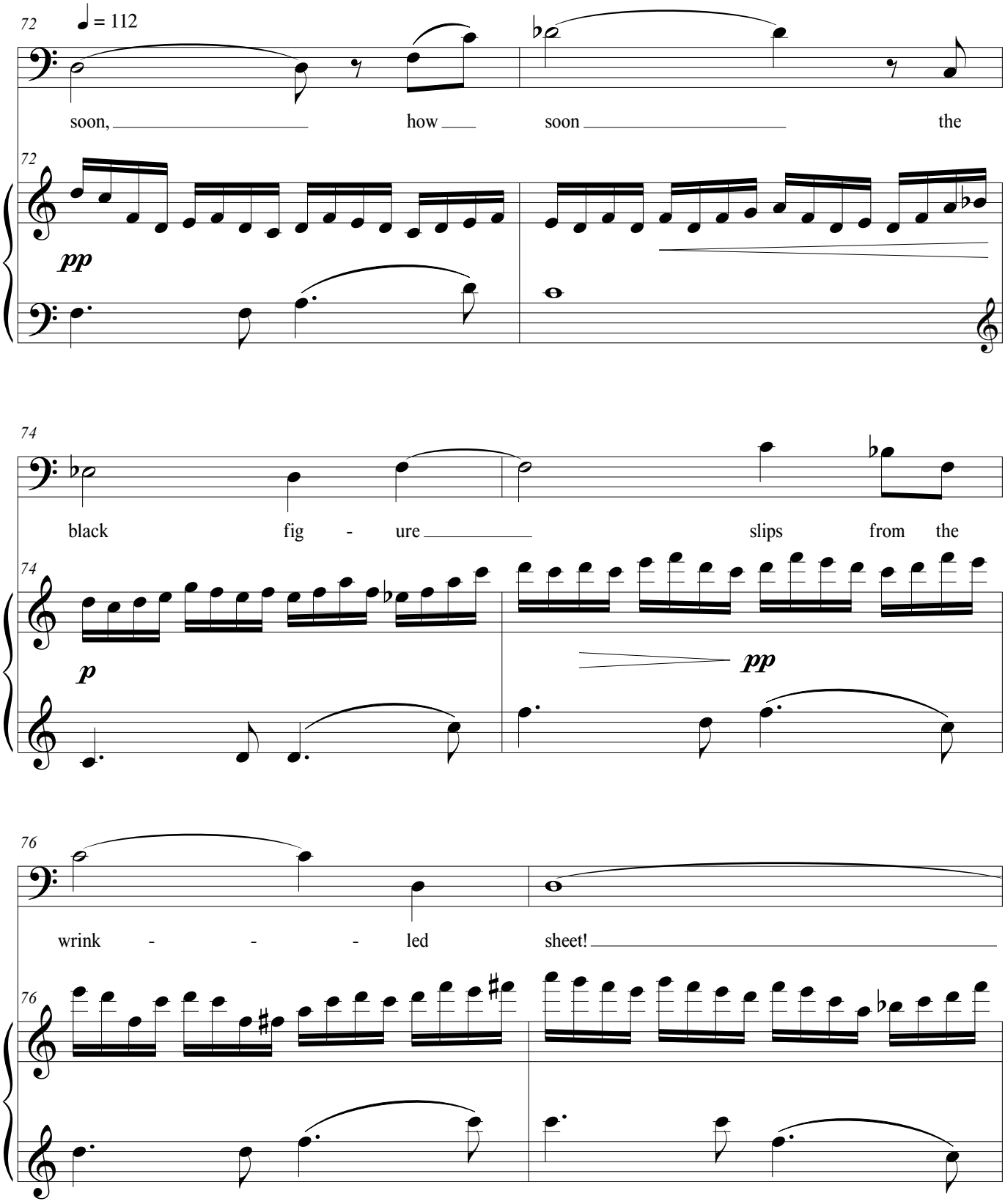

19
ground, from a bush, as if spread there by some wash - er wo - man
19
mf
24
by some wash - er wo - man for the
24
p
3
29
night.
29
cresc.
mf
3
3

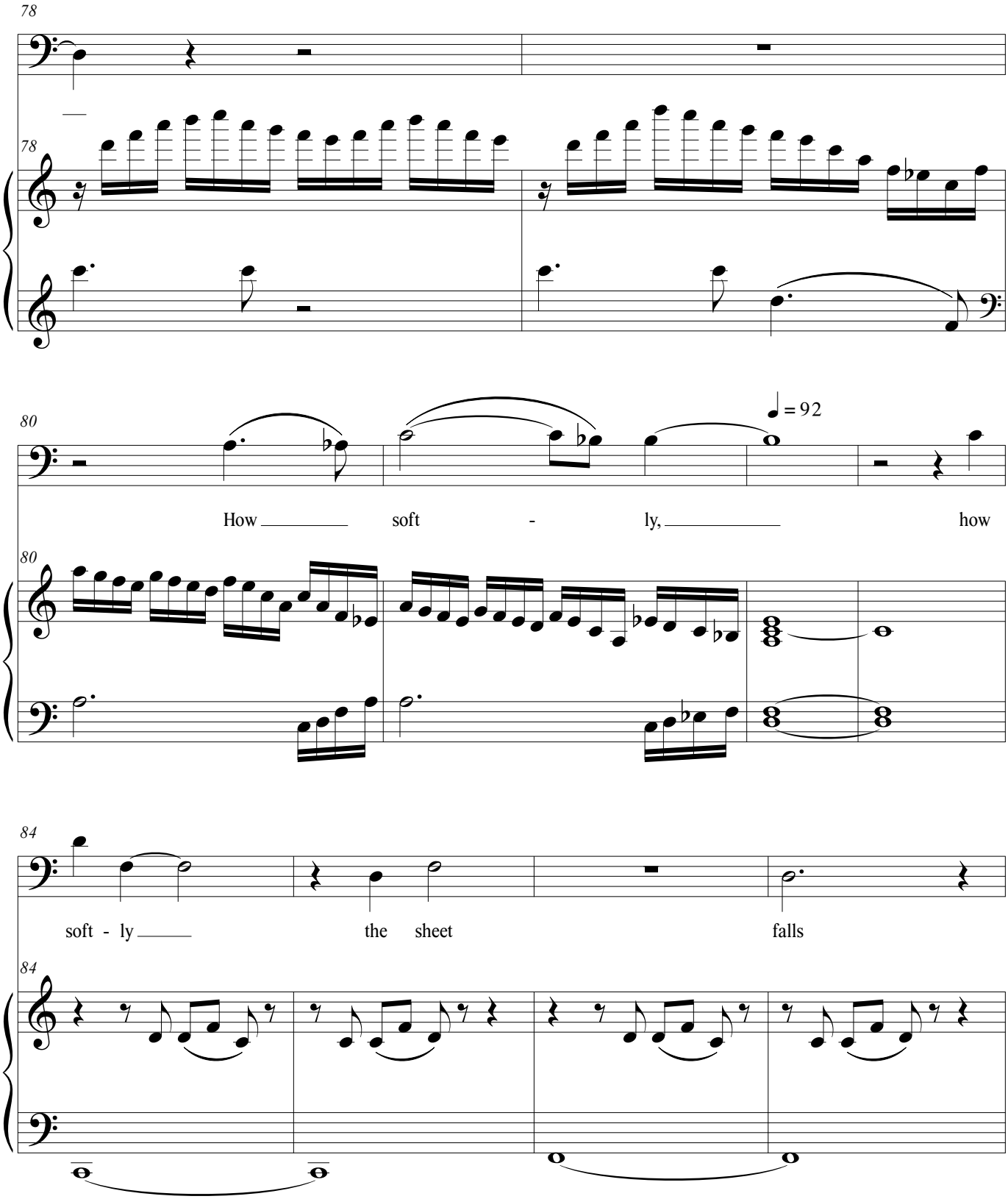

32
It wraps the sheet a - round its bod - y, un - til the black
32
p
cresc.
35
fig - ure is sil - ver,
35
f
p
38
38

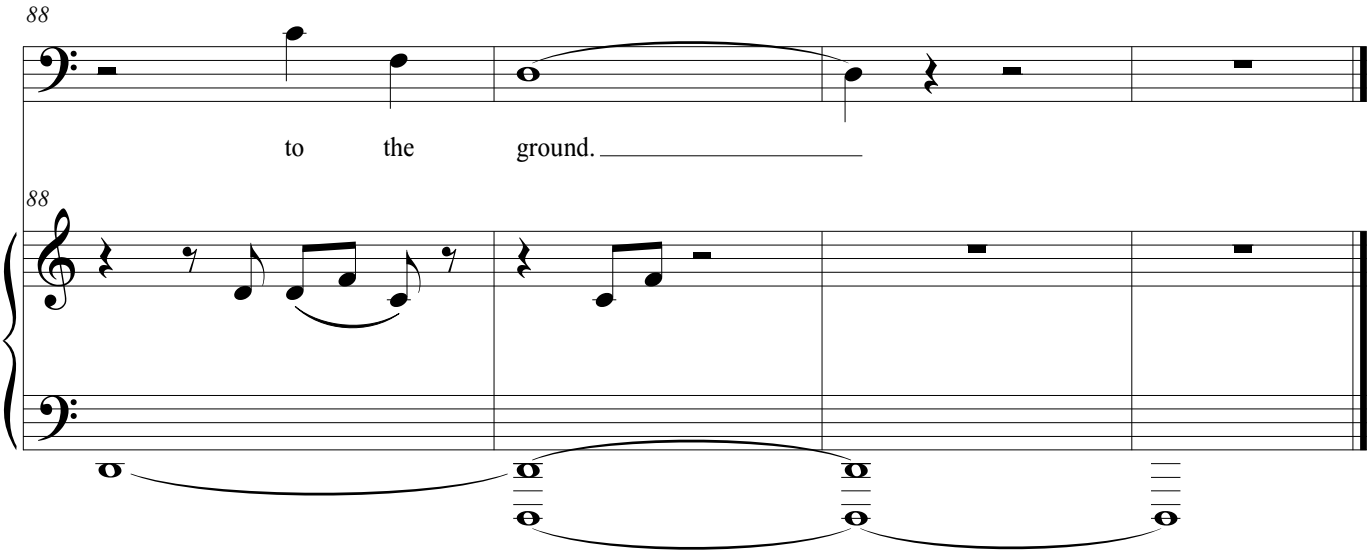

40
It dan - ces down a
f
44
fur - row in the ear - ly light,
p
49
(♩ = 112)
in the ear - ly light,
mf
p


53
Back of a
53
f
56
cra - zy plough.
56
58
= 92
a cra - zy plough, the
58
p


62
green blades fol - low - ing.
How
62
p
66
soon the sil - ver fades
66
p
pp
69
non cresc.
rit.
in the dust.
How
69
p


72
♩ = 112
soon, how soon the
pp
74
black fig - ure slips from the
p
pp
76
wrink - - - led sheet!


78
78
80
80
How soft - ly, how
84
84
soft - ly the sheet falls


88
to the ground.
88

The Soldier's Tale

Baritone

I am an ancient reluctant conscript.

On the soup wagons of Xerxes I was a cleaner of pans.
On the march of Miltiades' phalanx I had a haft and head;
I had a bristling gleaming spear-handle.

Red-headed Cæsar picked me for a teamster.
He said, "Go to work, you Tuscan bastard,
Rome calls for a man who can drive horses."

The units of conquest led by Charles the Twelfth,
The whirling whimsical Napoleonic columns:
They saw me one of the horseshoers.

I trimmed the feet of a white horse Bonaparte swept the night stars with.

Lincoln said, "Get into the game; your nation takes you."
And I drove a wagon and team and I had my arm shot off
At Spottsylvania Court House.

I am an ancient reluctant conscript.

--Carl Sandburg

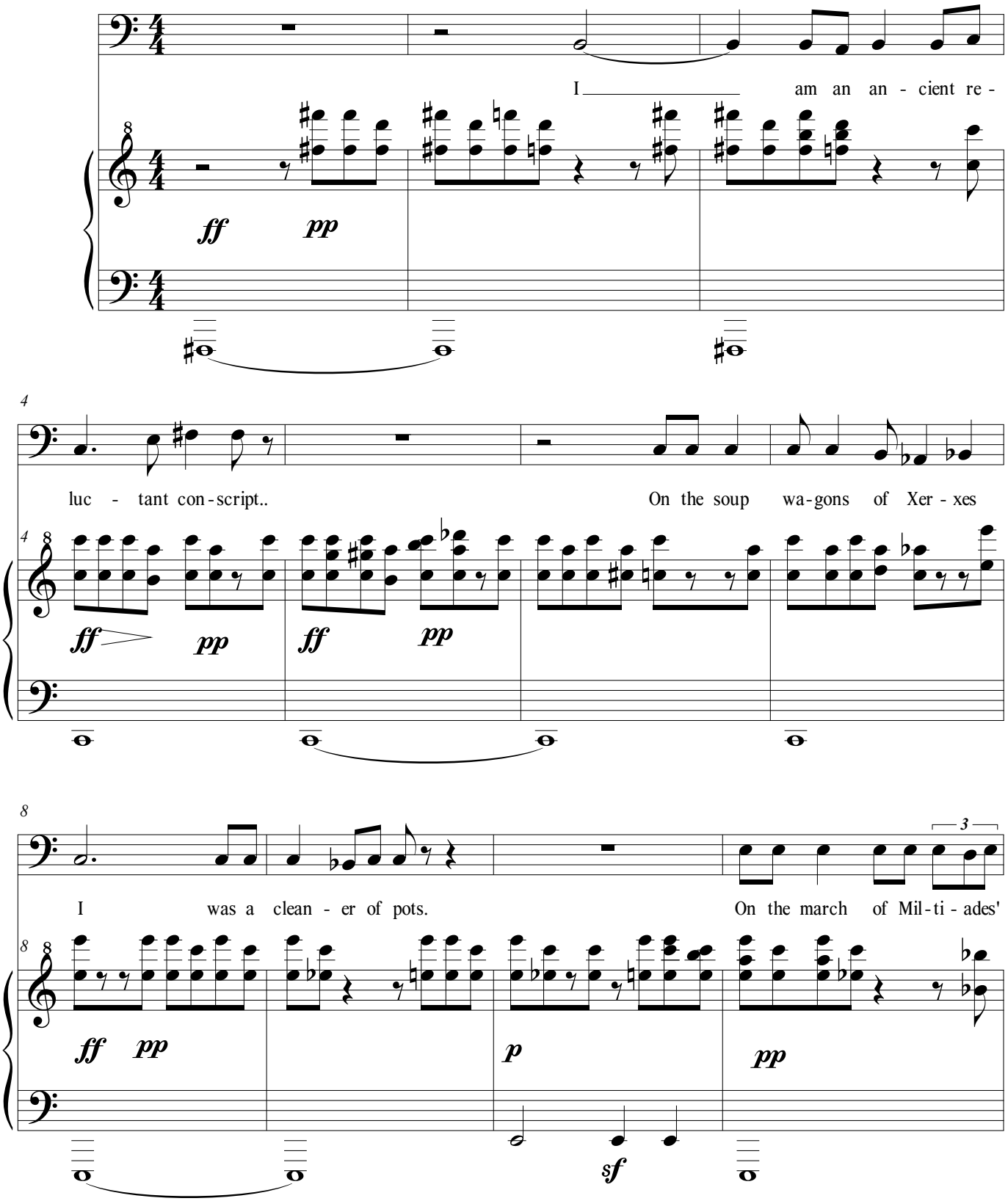
Voice range: G2 - E4
Tessitura: B2 - B3
Duration: 4 minutes

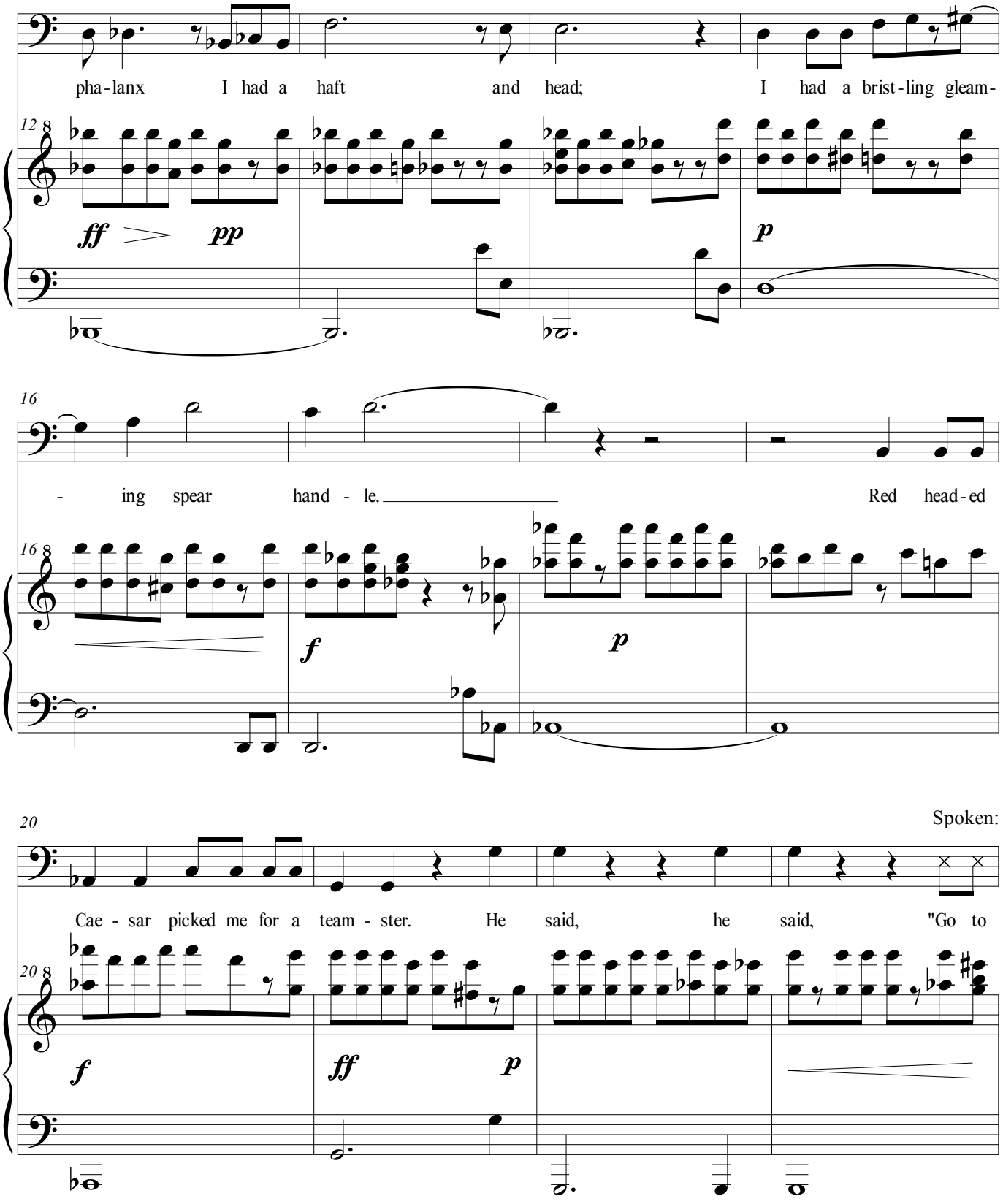
Composed 2017

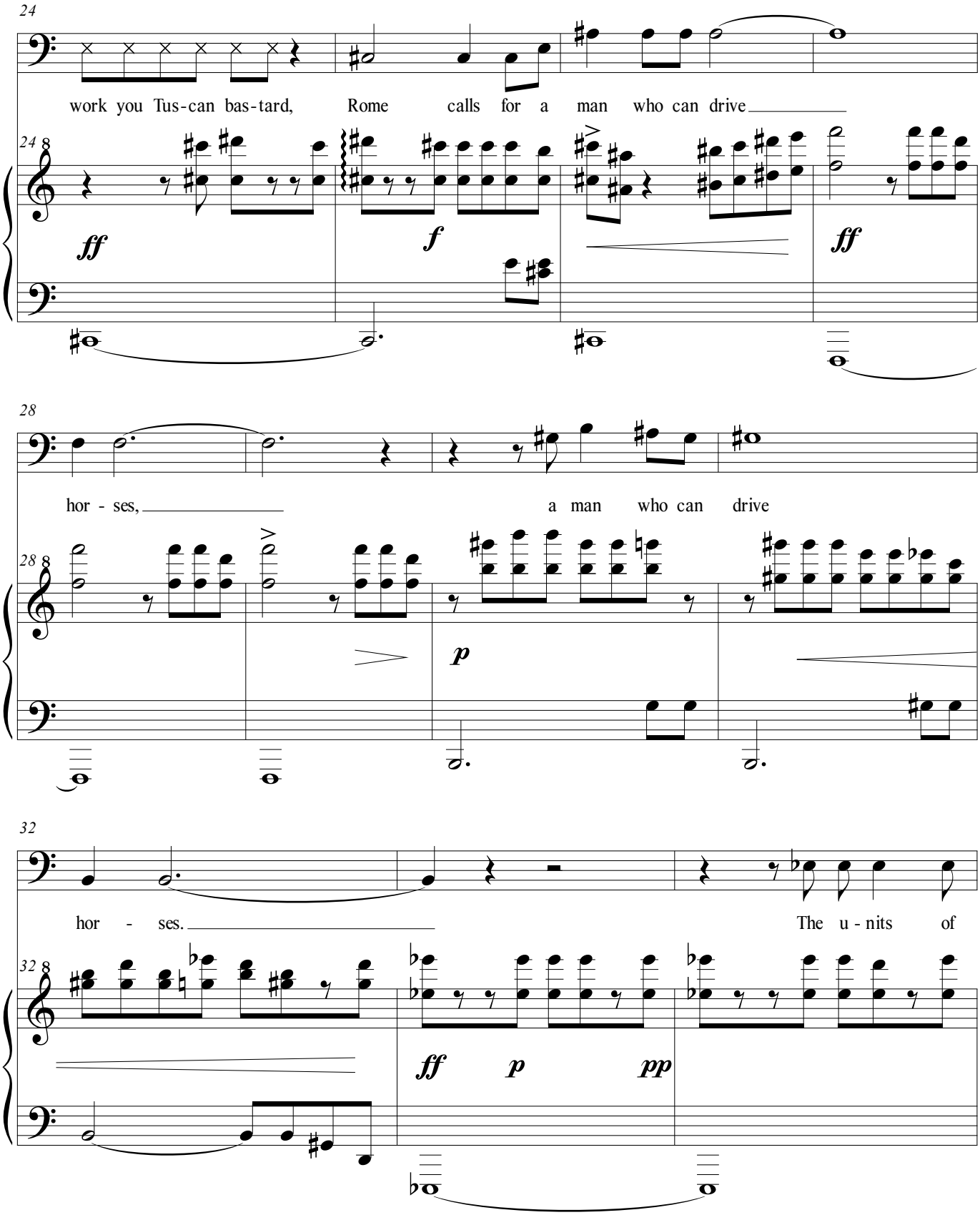
The Soldier's Tale

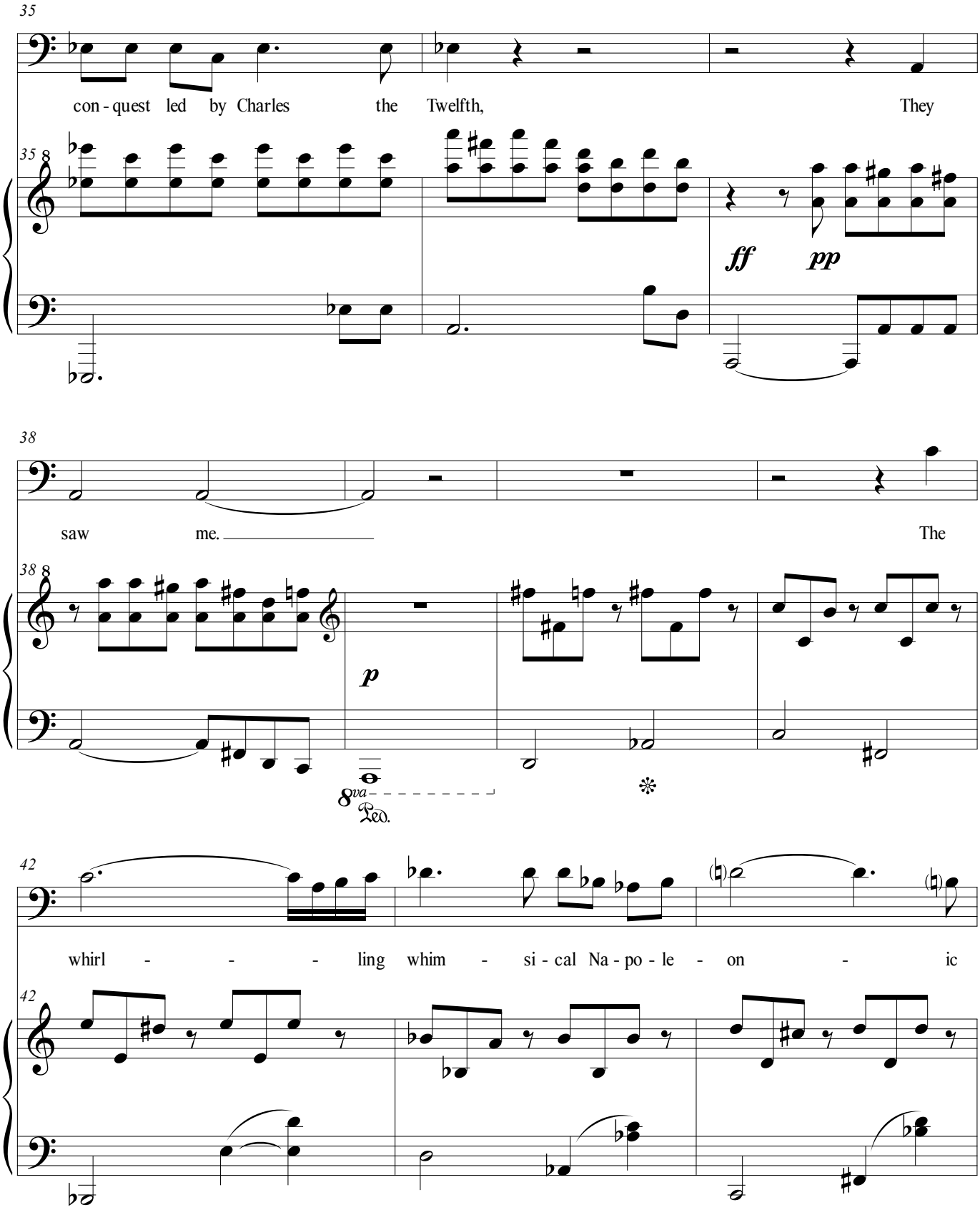
Moderato (♩ = c. 108)

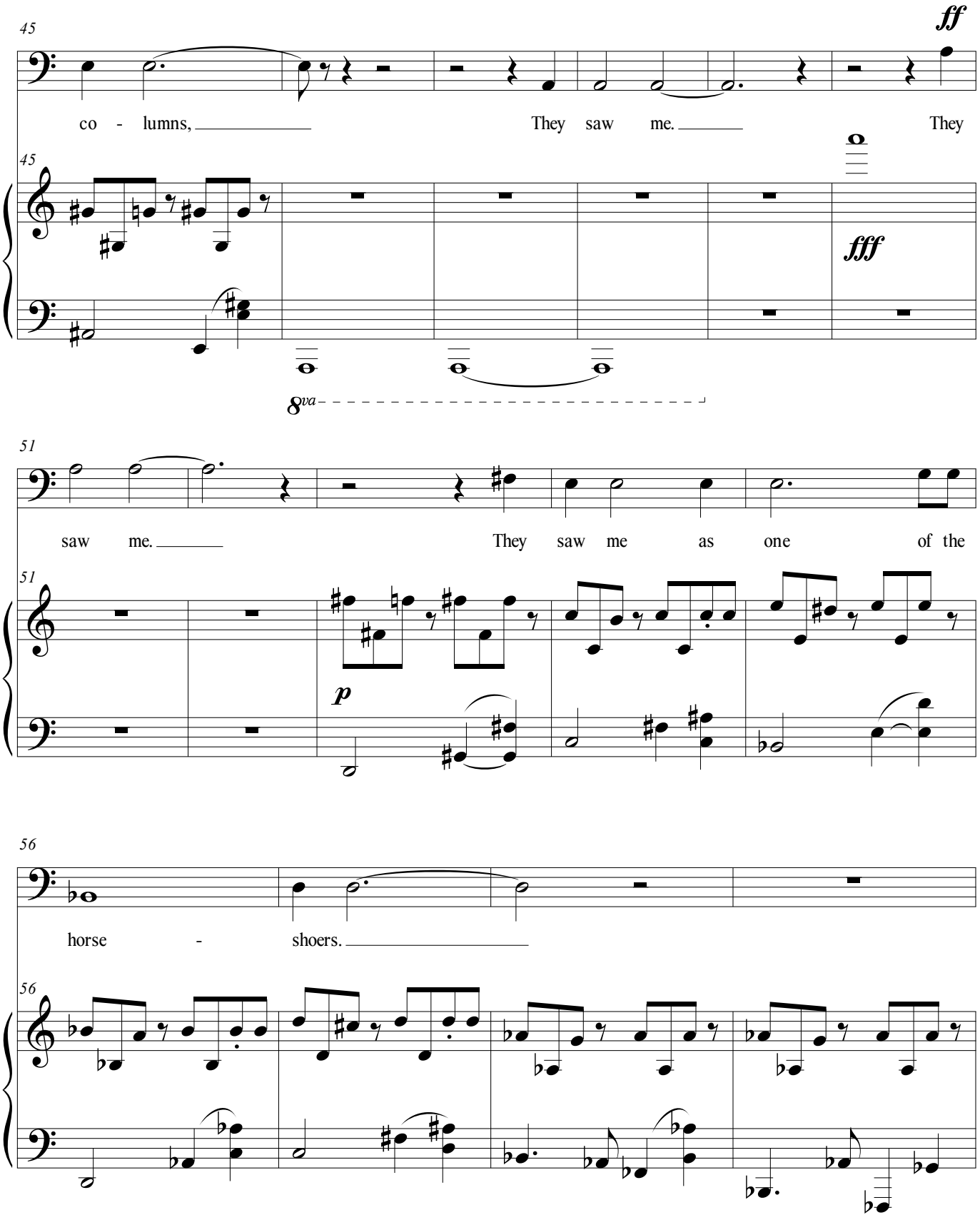
Lawrence Kramer

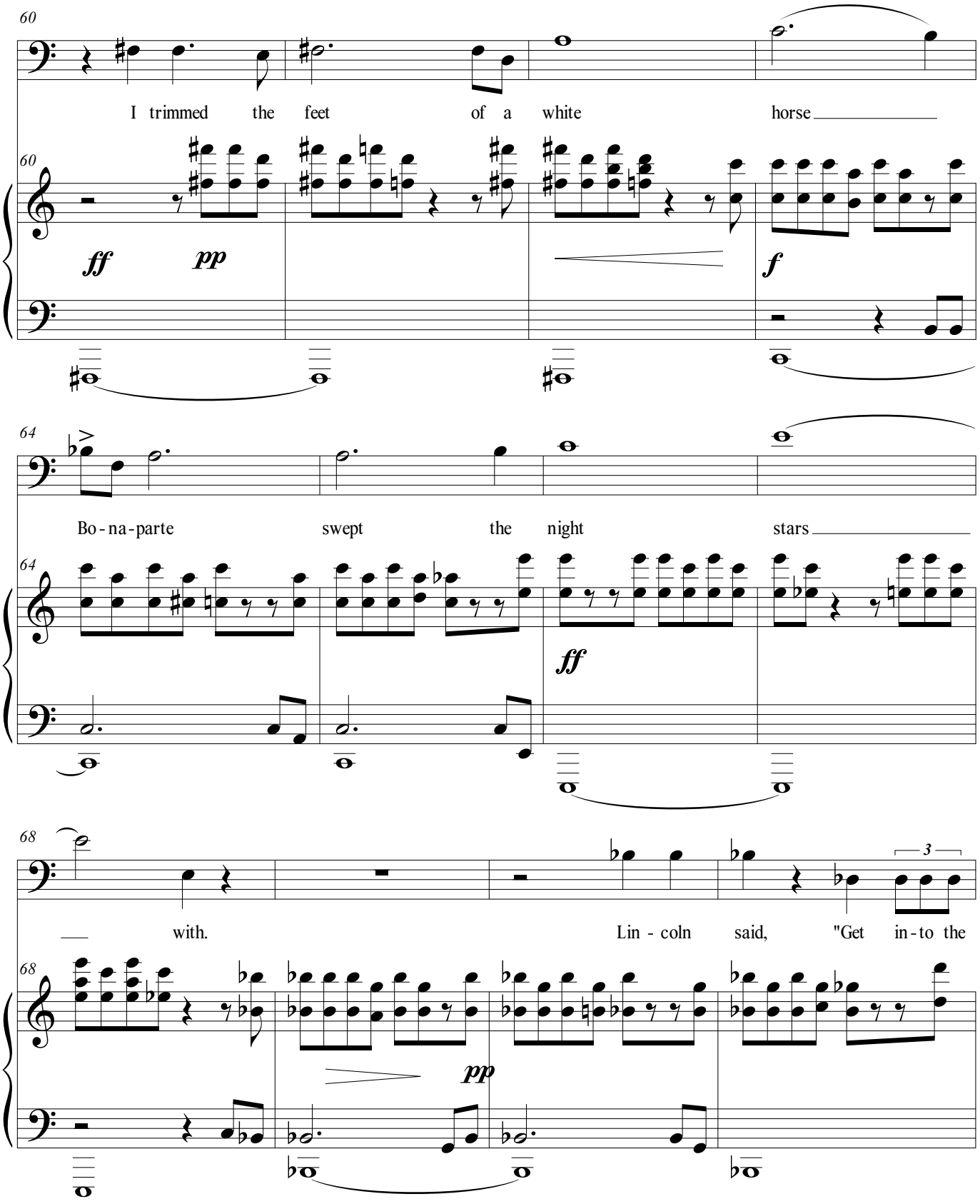


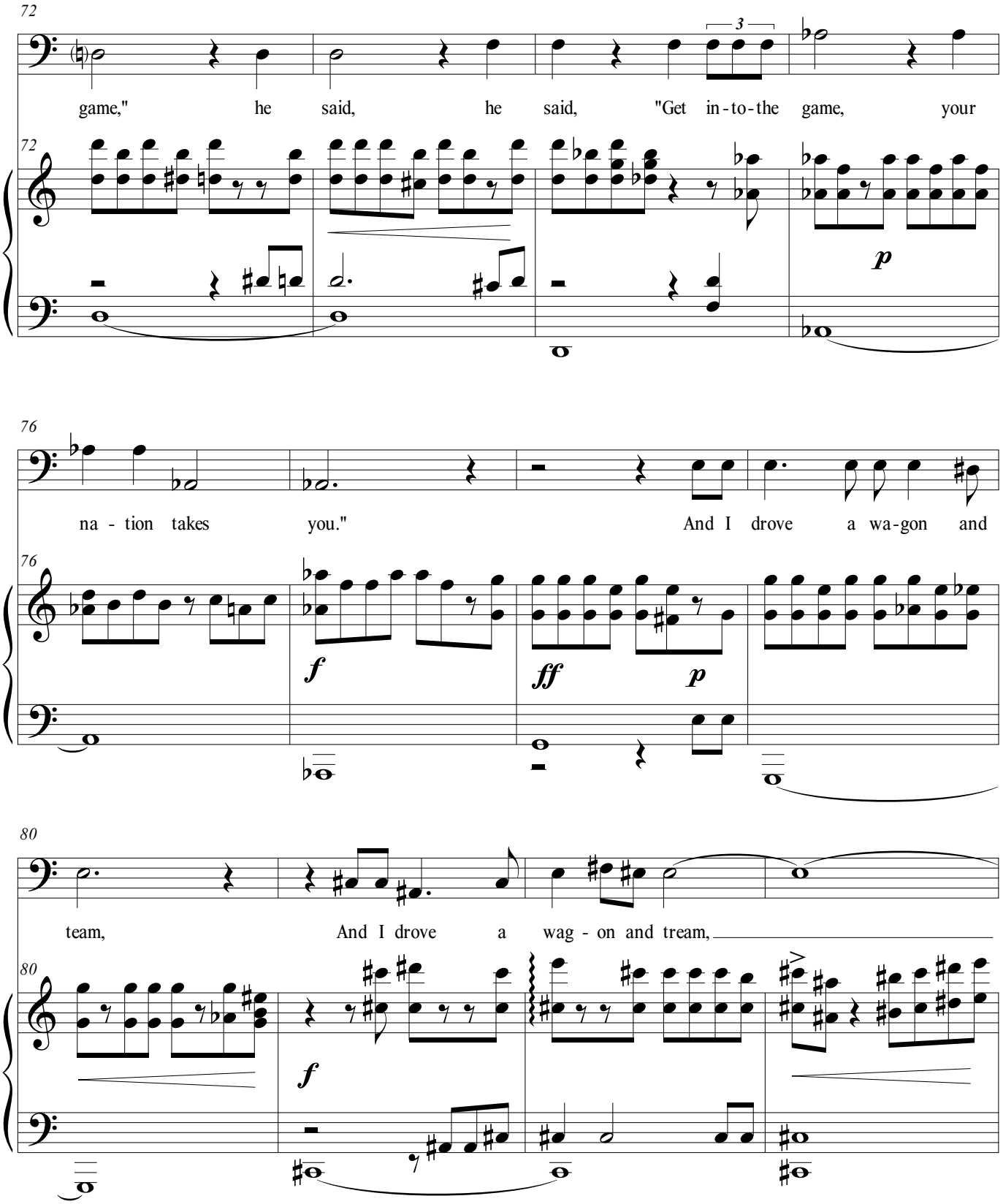

pha-lanx I had a haft and head; I had a brist-ling gleam-
12
ff pp
p
16
- ing spear hand - le. Red head-ed
16
f
p
20
Spoken:
Cae - sar picked me for a team - ster. He said, he said, "Go to
20
f
ff
p

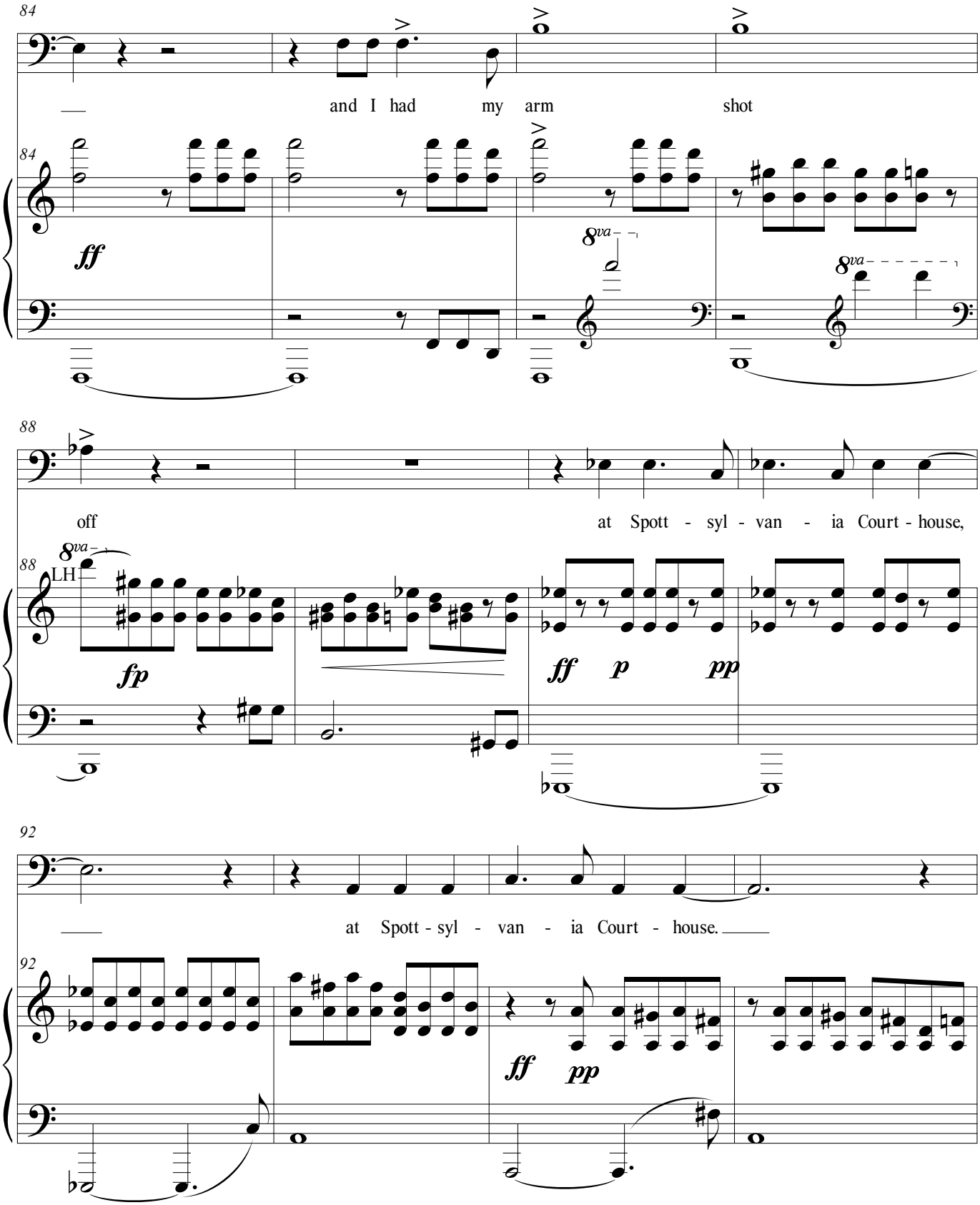

24
work you Tus-can bas-tard, Rome calls for a man who can drive
ff
f
ff
28
hor - ses, a man who can drive
p
32
hor - ses. The u - nits of
ff p pp

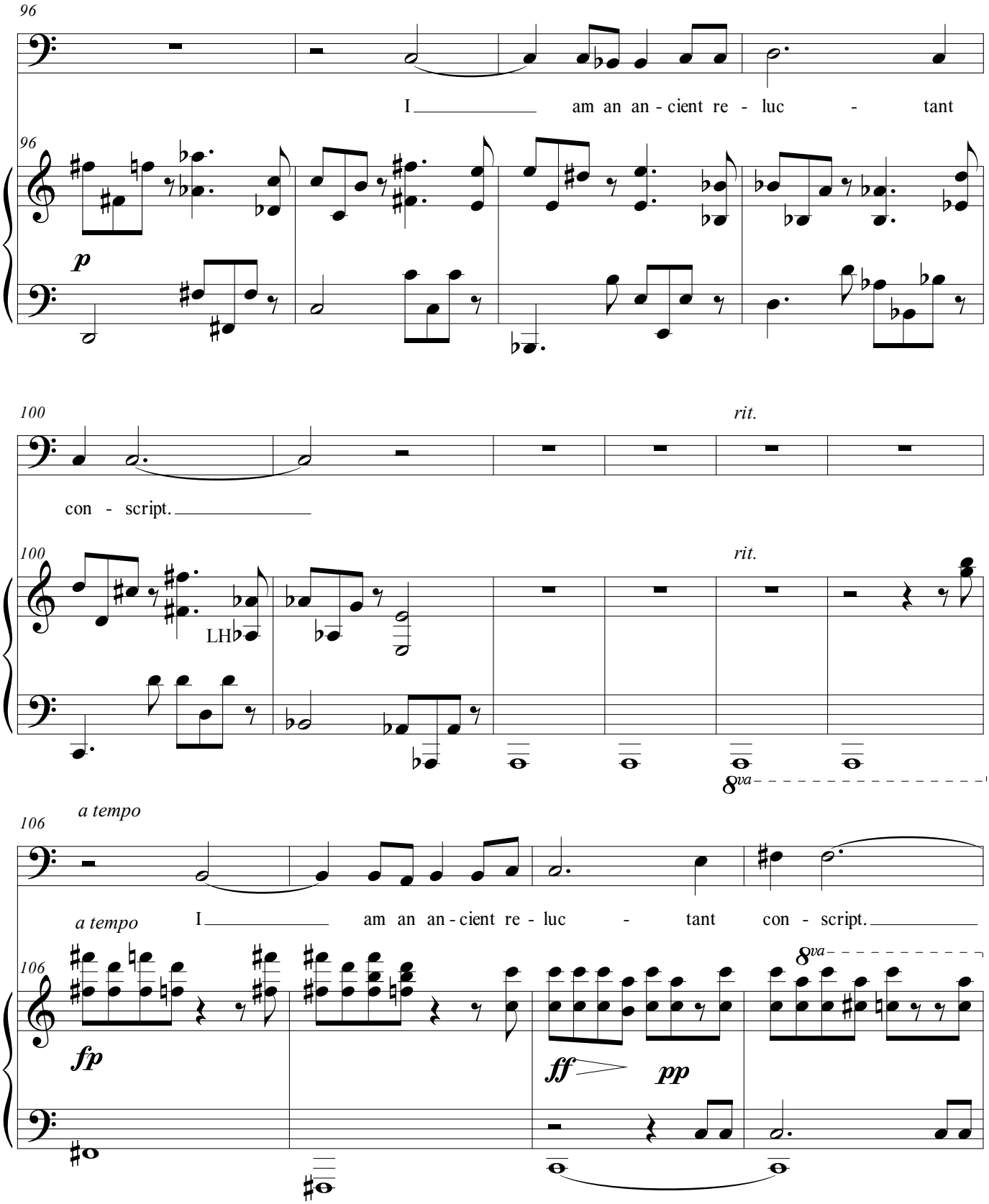

35
con - quest led by Charles the Twelfth, They
35
ff
pp
38
saw me. The
38
p
8va
Ped.
42
whirl - - - ling whim - si - cal Na - po - le - on - ic
42

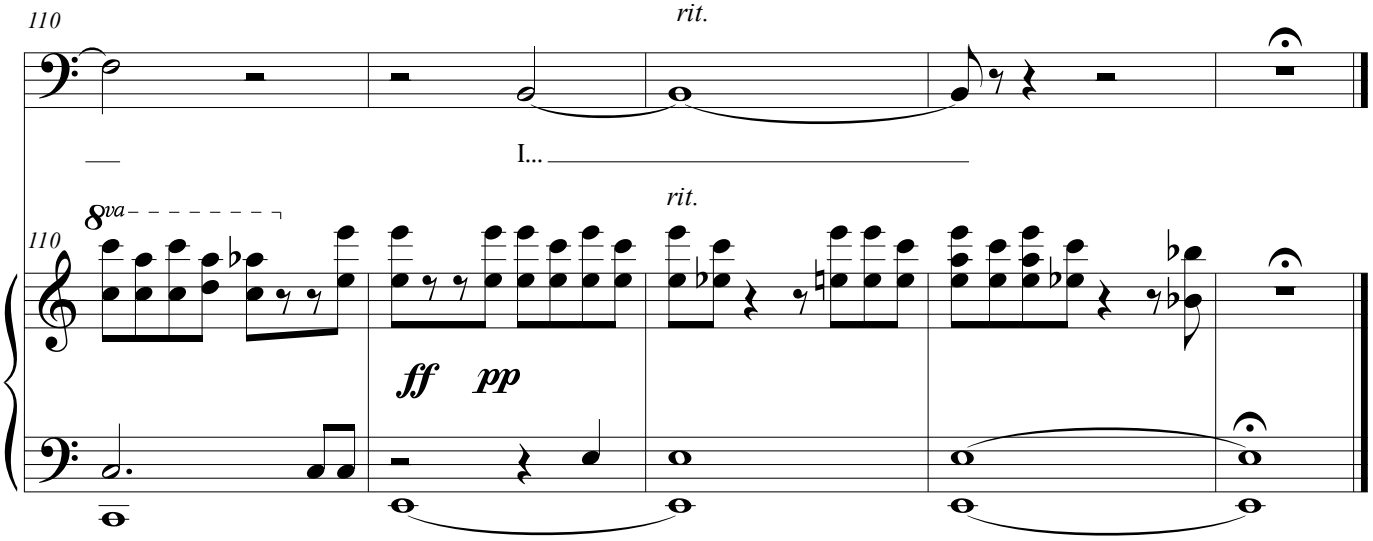

45
ff
co - lumns,
They saw me.
They
45
fff
8va
51
saw me.
They saw me as one of the
51
p
56
horse - shoers.
56


60
I trimmed the feet of a white horse
ff
pp
f
64
Bo - na - parte swept the night stars
ff
68
with.
Lin - coln said, "Get in - to the
3
pp


72
3
game," he said, he said, "Get in-to-the game, your
72
p
76
na - tion takes you." And I drove a wa-gon and
76
f
ff
p
80
team, And I drove a wag - on and tream,
80
f


84
and I had my arm shot
ff
8va
88
off at Spott - syl - van - ia Court - house,
LH
fp
ff p pp
92
at Spott - syl - van - ia Court - house.
ff pp


96
I am an an - cient re - luc - tant
p
100
rit.
con - script.
LH
8va
106
a tempo
I am an an - cient re - luc - tant con - script.
fp
ff
pp


110
rit.
I...
rit.
8va
110
ff
pp

The Veritable Night

Baritone

From *Spring and All*

The veritable night
of wires and stars

the moon is in
the oak tree's crotch

and sleepers in
the windows cough

athwart the round
and pointed leaves

and insects sting
while on the grass

the whitish moonlight
tearfully

assumes the attitudes
of afternoon —

But it is real
where peaches hang

recalling death's
long promised symphony

whose tuneful wood
and stringish undergrowth

are ghosts existing
without being

save to come with juice
and pulp to assuage

the hungers which
the night reveals

so that now at last
the truth's aglow

with devilish peace
forestalling day

which dawns tomorrow
with dreadful reds

the heart to predicate
with mists that loved

the ocean and the fields —
Thus moonlight

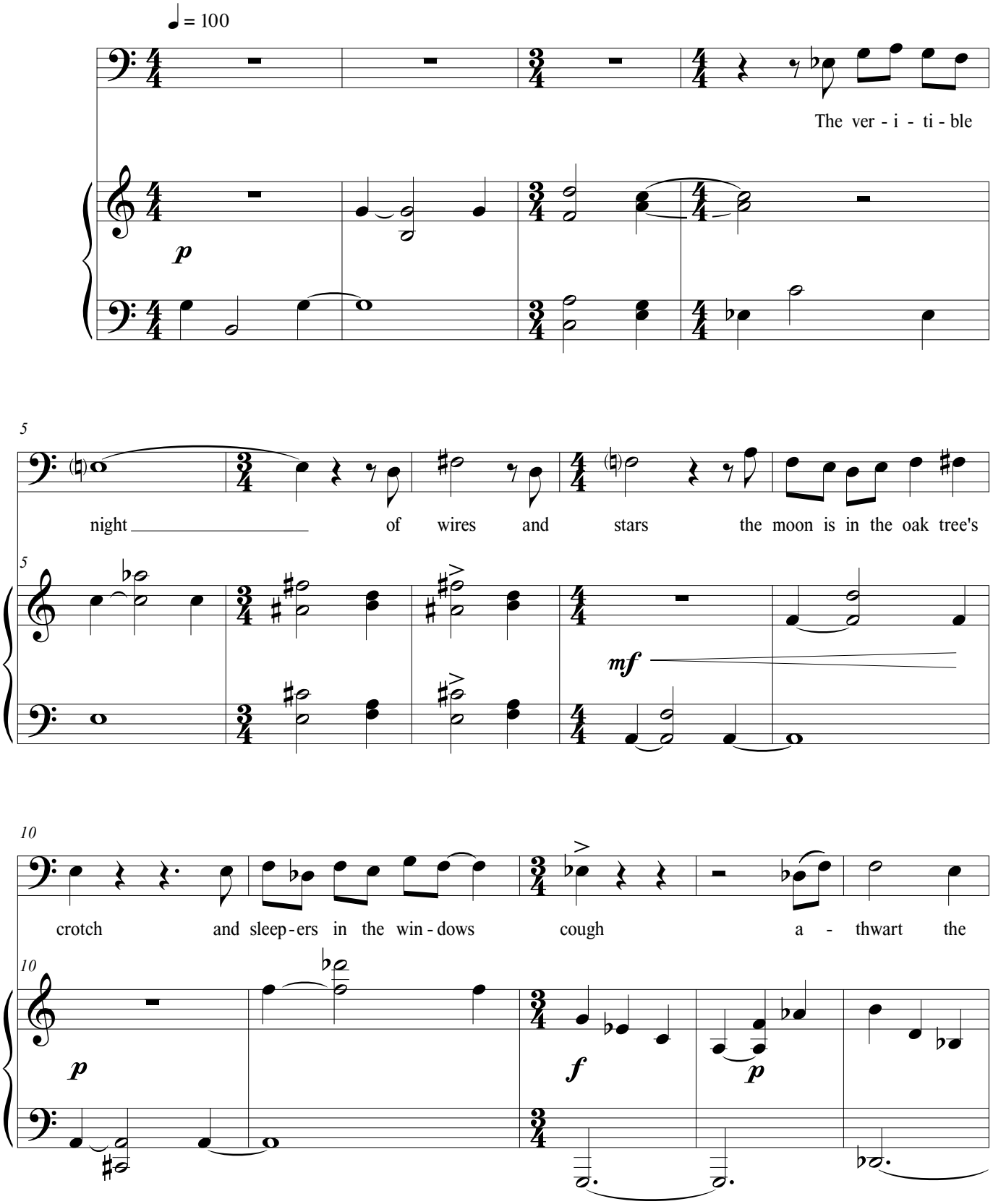
is the perfect
human touch

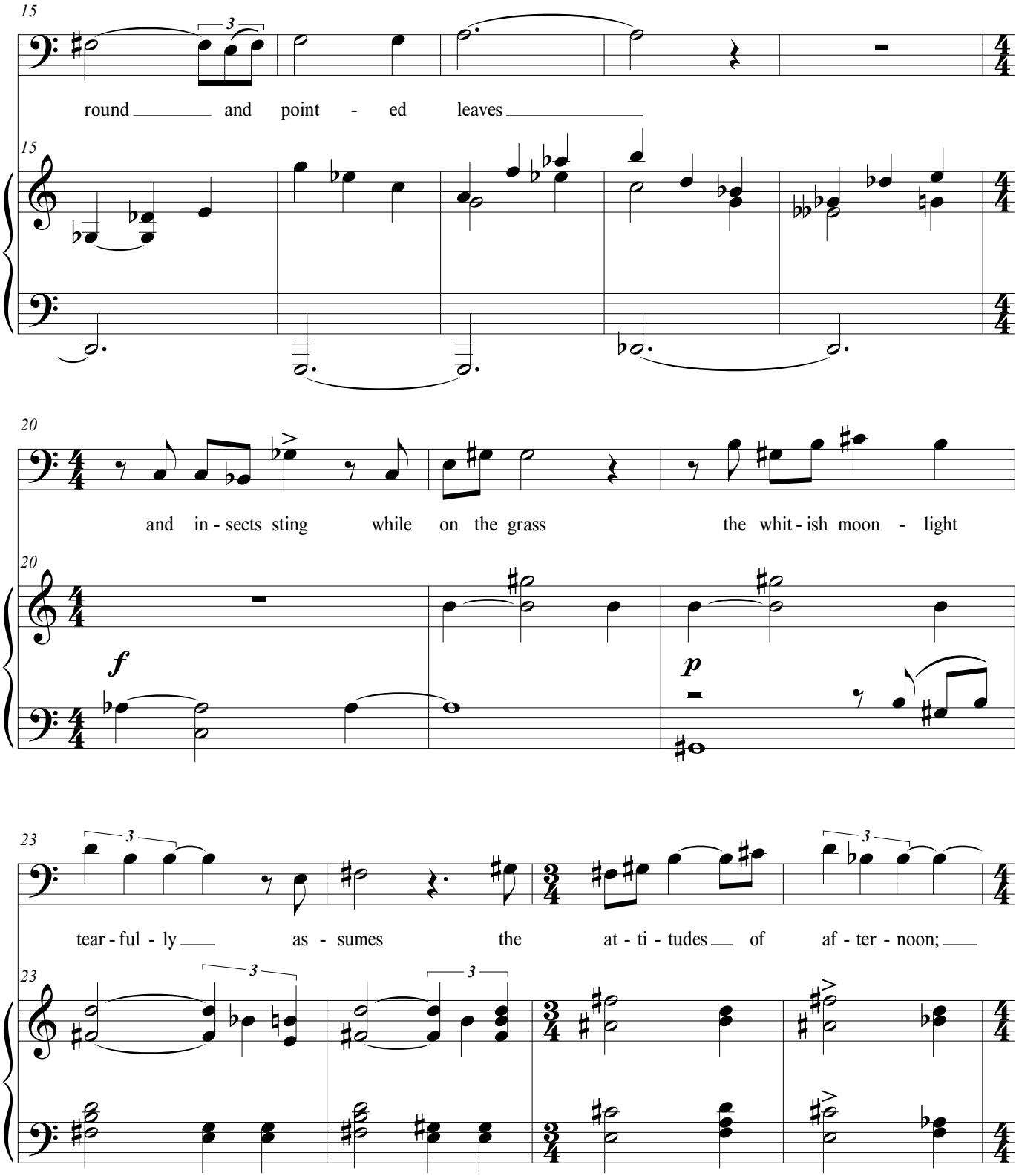
--William Carlos Williams

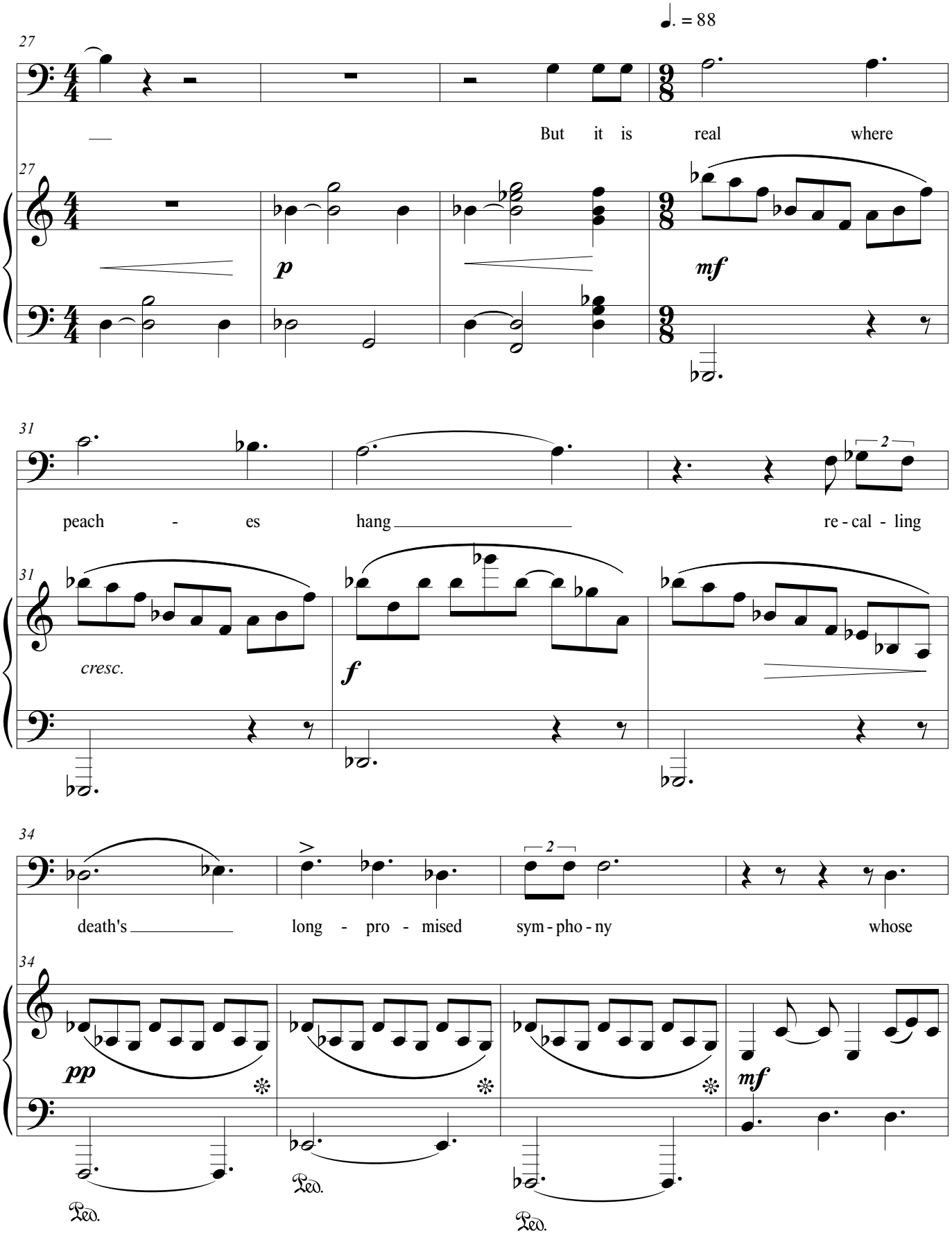
Range: G2 - E4
Tessitura: D♭3 - D♭4
Duration 4:05

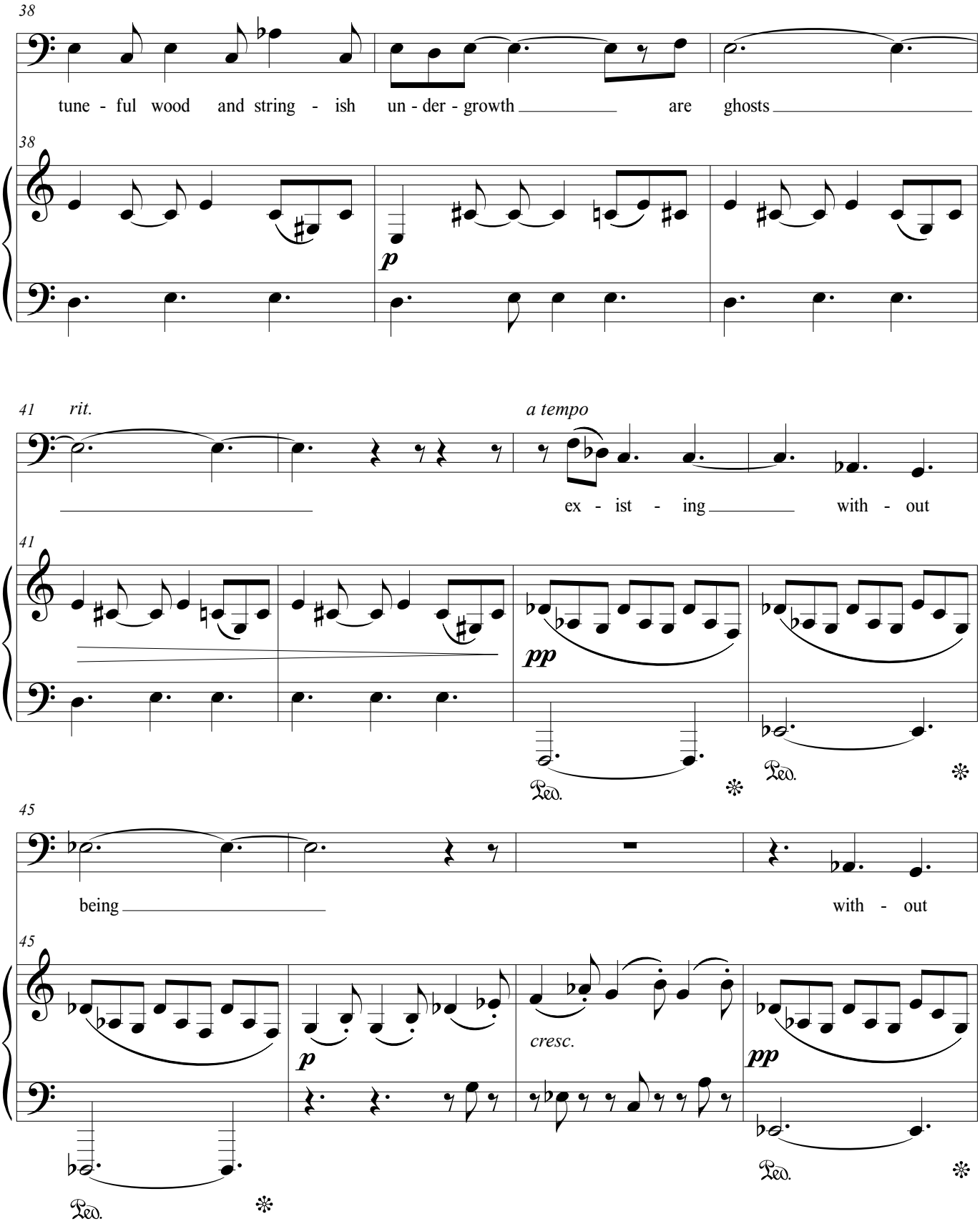
Composed 2022

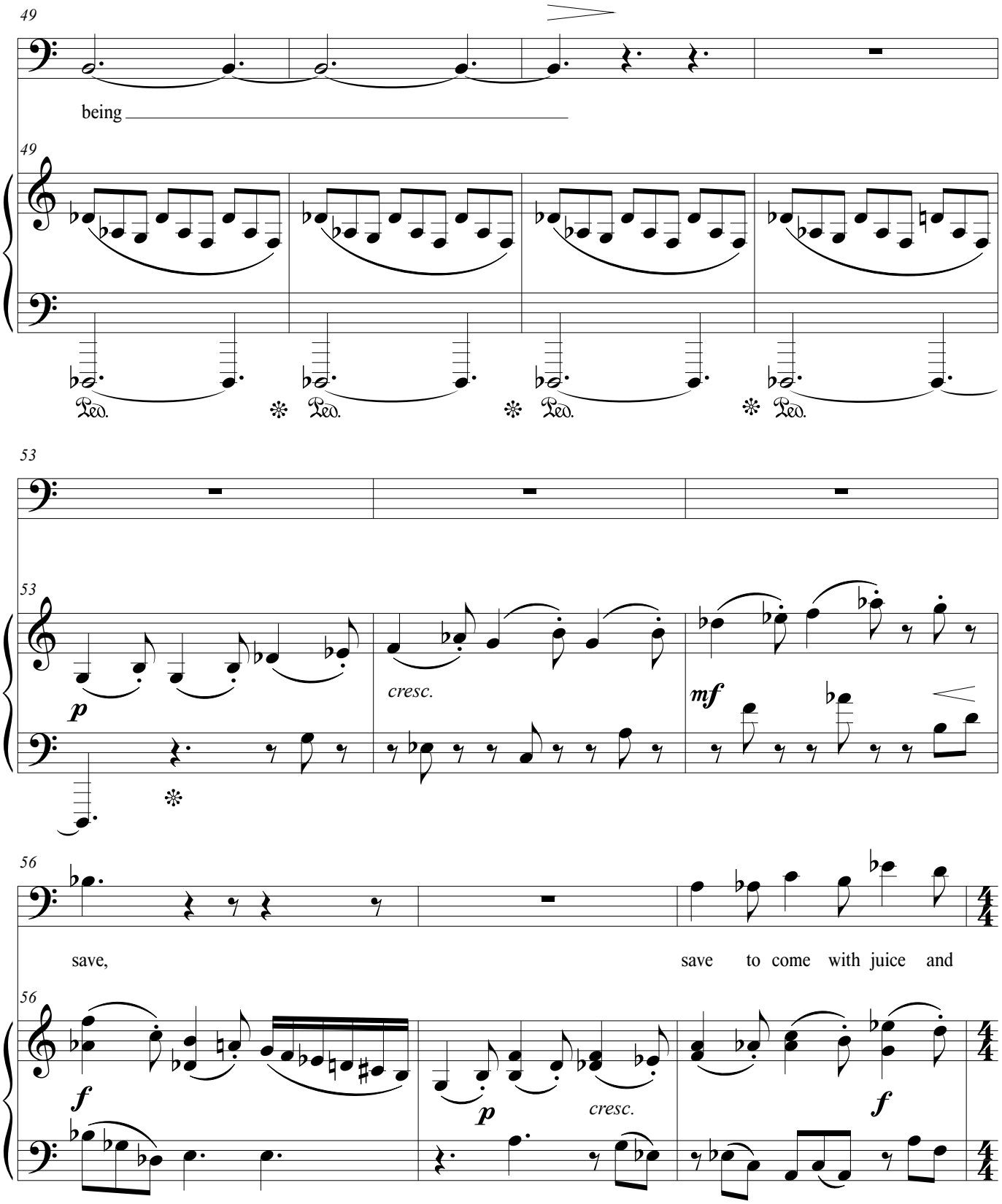
The Veritable Night

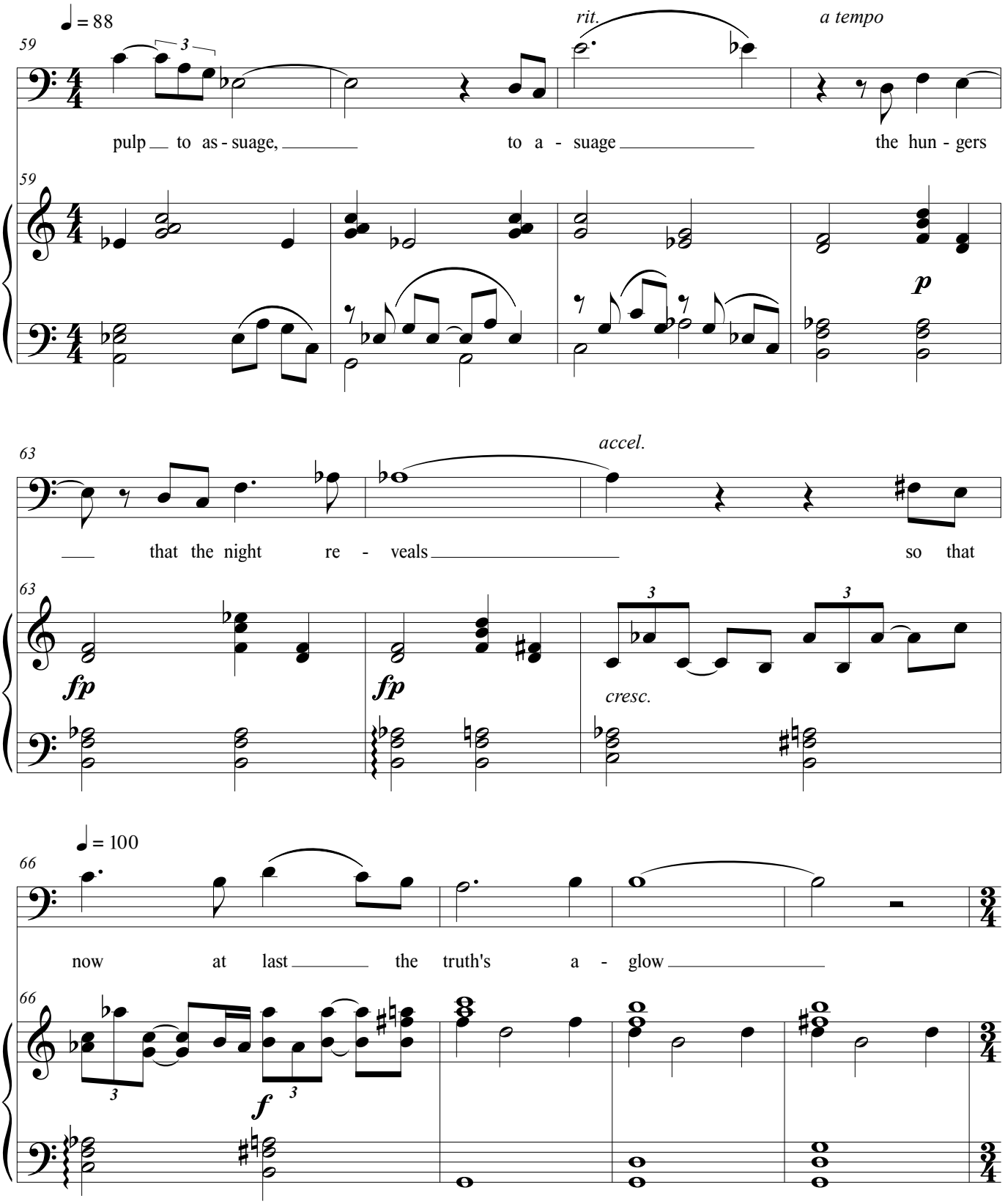


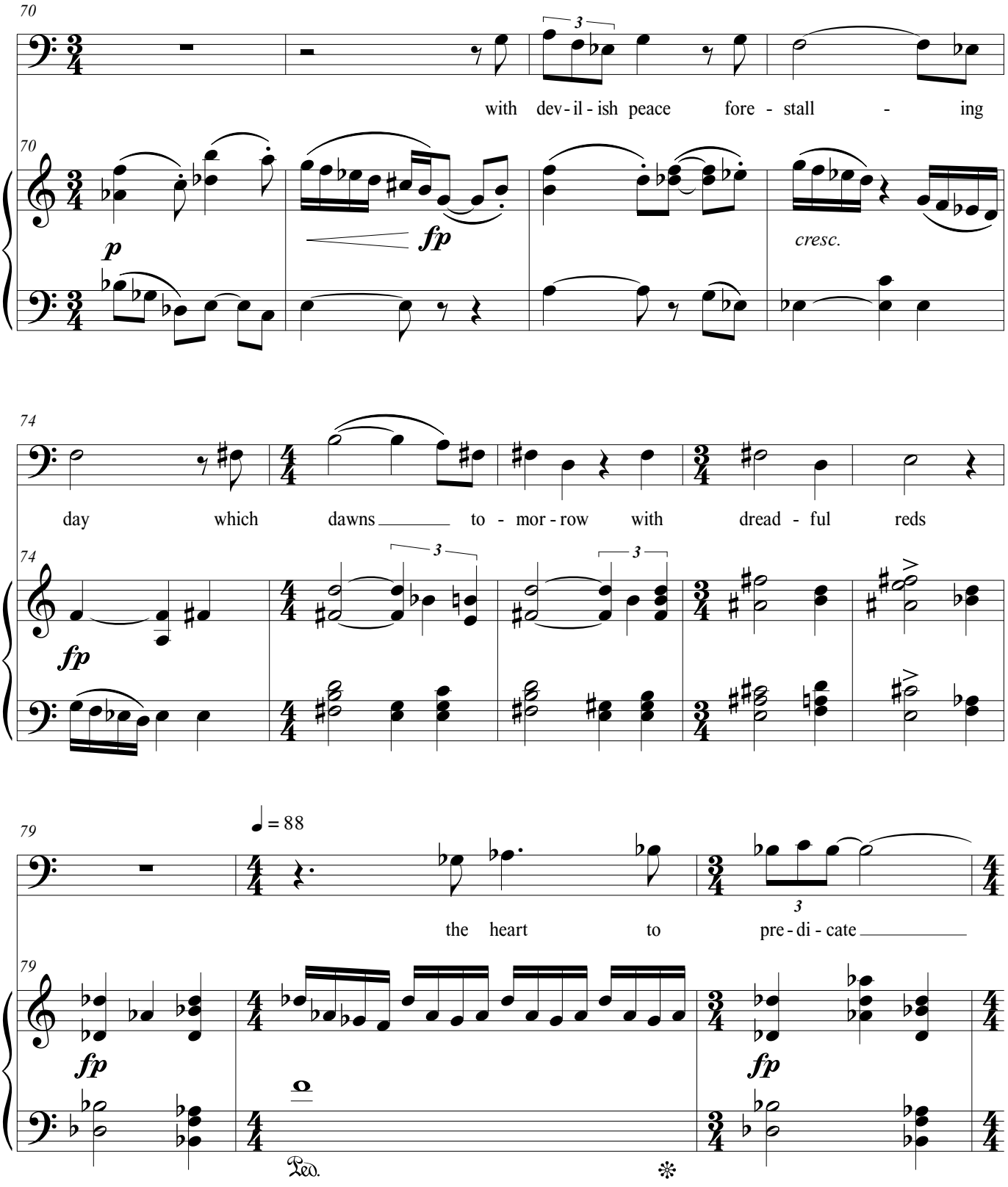

15
round and point - ed leaves
15
20
and in - sects sting while on the grass the whit - ish moon - light
20
f
p
23
tear - ful - ly as - sumes the at - ti - tudes of af - ter - noon;
23

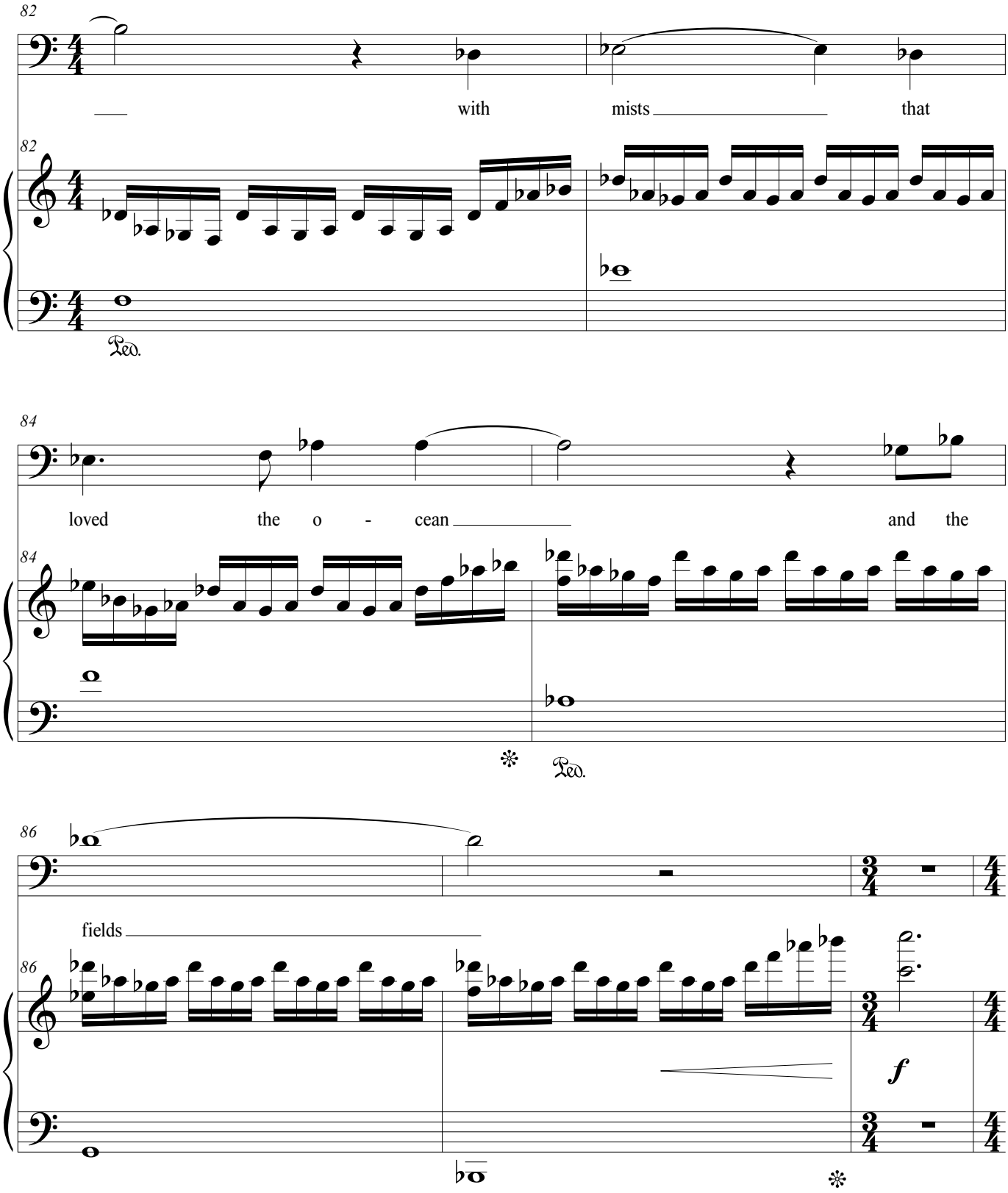

♩. = 88
27
But it is real where
p
mf
31
peach - es hang re - cal - ling
cresc.
f
34
death's long - pro - mised sym - pho - ny whose
pp
mf
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

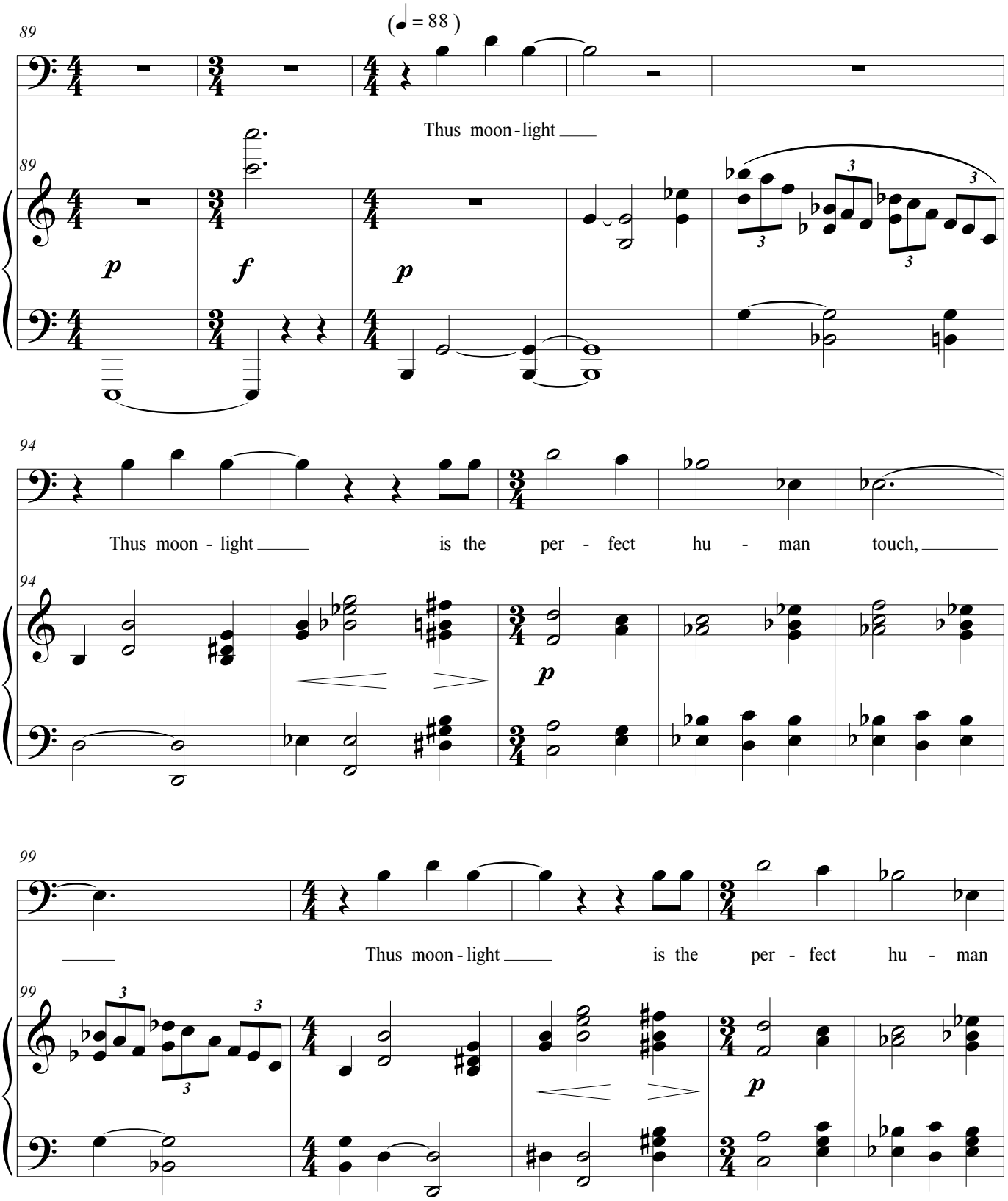

38
tune - ful wood and string - ish un - der - growth are ghosts
38
p
41 rit.
a tempo
ex - ist - ing with - out
41
pp
Ped.
Ped.
45
being with - out
45
p
cresc.
pp
Ped.
Ped.

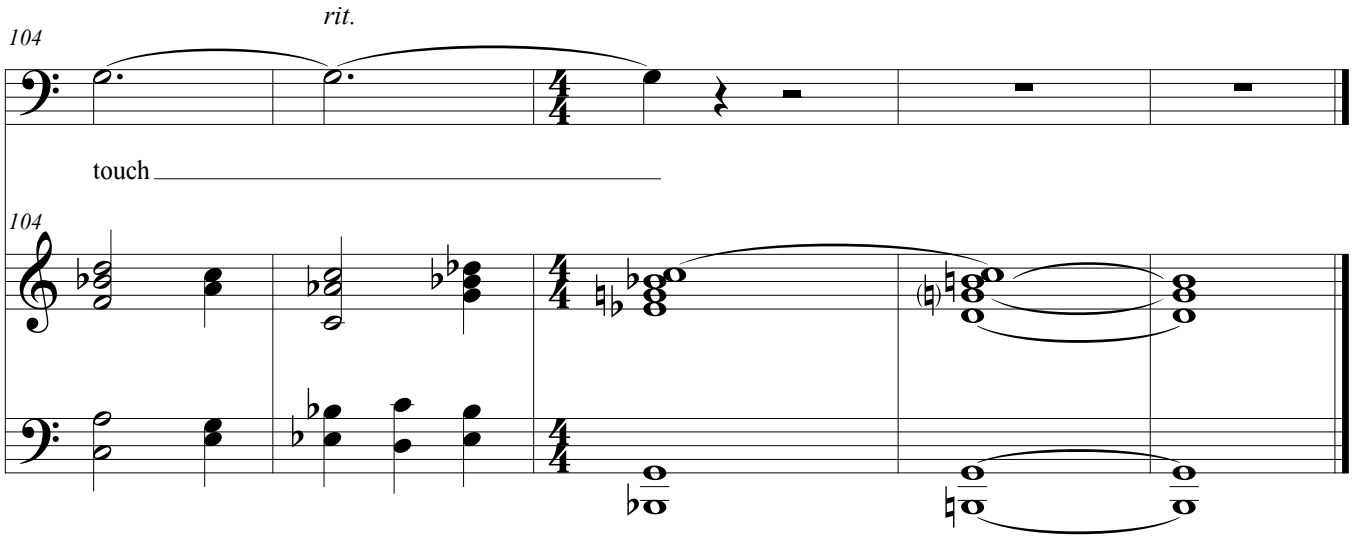

49
being
49
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.
53
53
p
cresc.
mf
56
save,
save to come with juice and
56
f
p
cresc.
f


♩ = 88
59
rit.
a tempo
pulp to as - suage, to a - suage the hun - gers
p
63
accel.
that the night re - veals so that
fp
fp
cresc.
♩ = 100
66
now at last the truth's a - glow
f


70
with dev - il - ish peace fore - stall - ing
p
fp
cresc.
74
day which dawns to - mor - row with dread - ful reds
fp
79
♩ = 88
the heart to pre - di - cate
fp
fp
Ped.


82
with
mists
that
82
Ped.
84
loved
the
o
-
cean
and
the
84
Ped.
86
fields
86
f


(♩= 88)
89
Thus moon - light
p
f
p
94
Thus moon - light is the per - fect hu - man touch,
p
99
Thus moon - light is the per - fect hu - man
p


104
rit.
touch
104

The Travelers

Baritone

"Truth," said a traveller,
"Is a rock, a mighty fortress;
Often have I been to it,
Even to its highest tower,
From whence the world looks black."

"Truth," said a traveller,
"Is a breath, a wind,
A shadow, a phantom;
Long have I pursued it,
But never have I touched
The hem of its garment."

And I believed the second traveller;
For truth was to me
A breath, a wind,
A shadow, a phantom,
And never had I touched
The hem of its garment.

--Stephen Crane

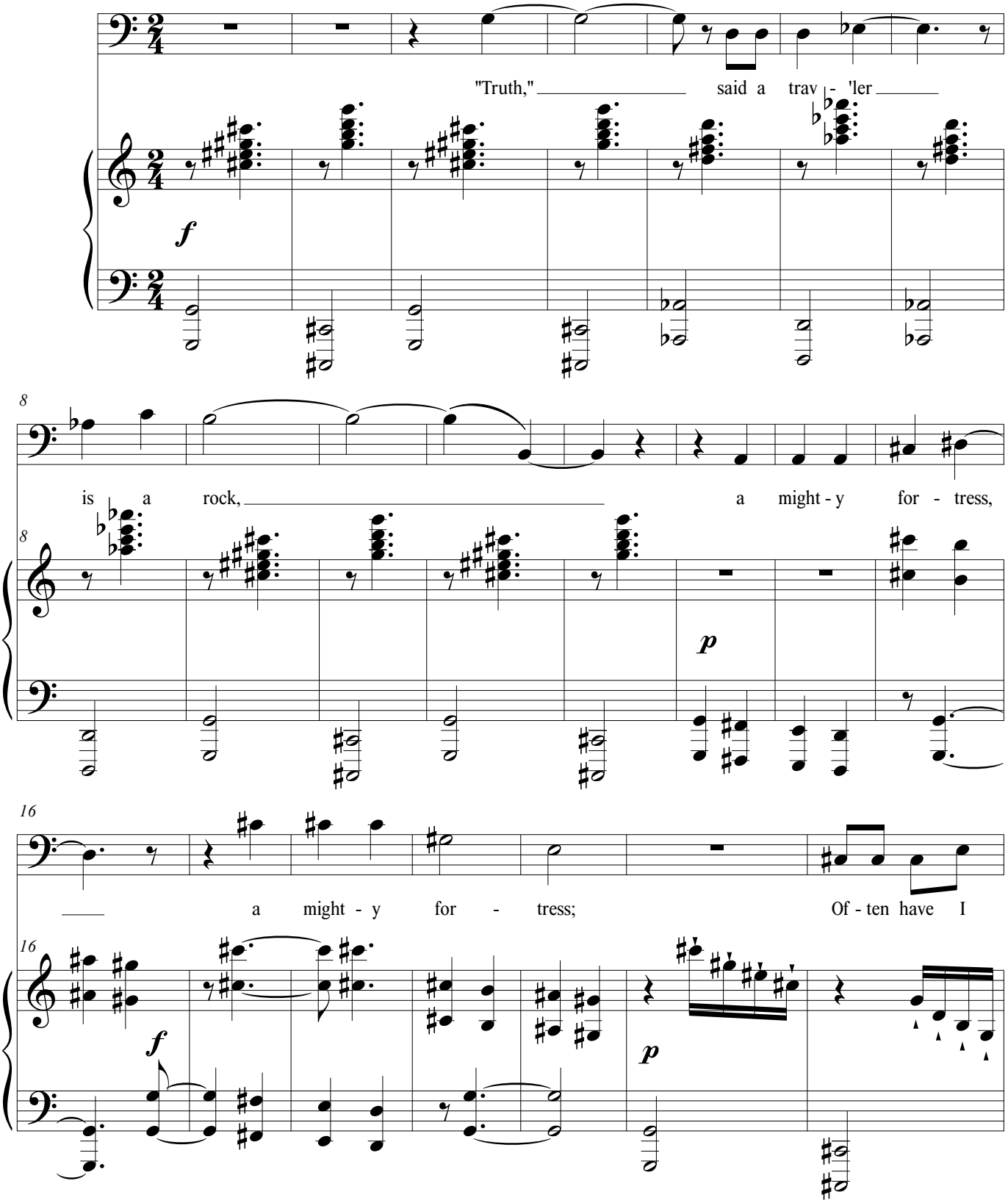
Voice Range: A2 - E4
Tessitura: D3 - C4
Duration: 3:30

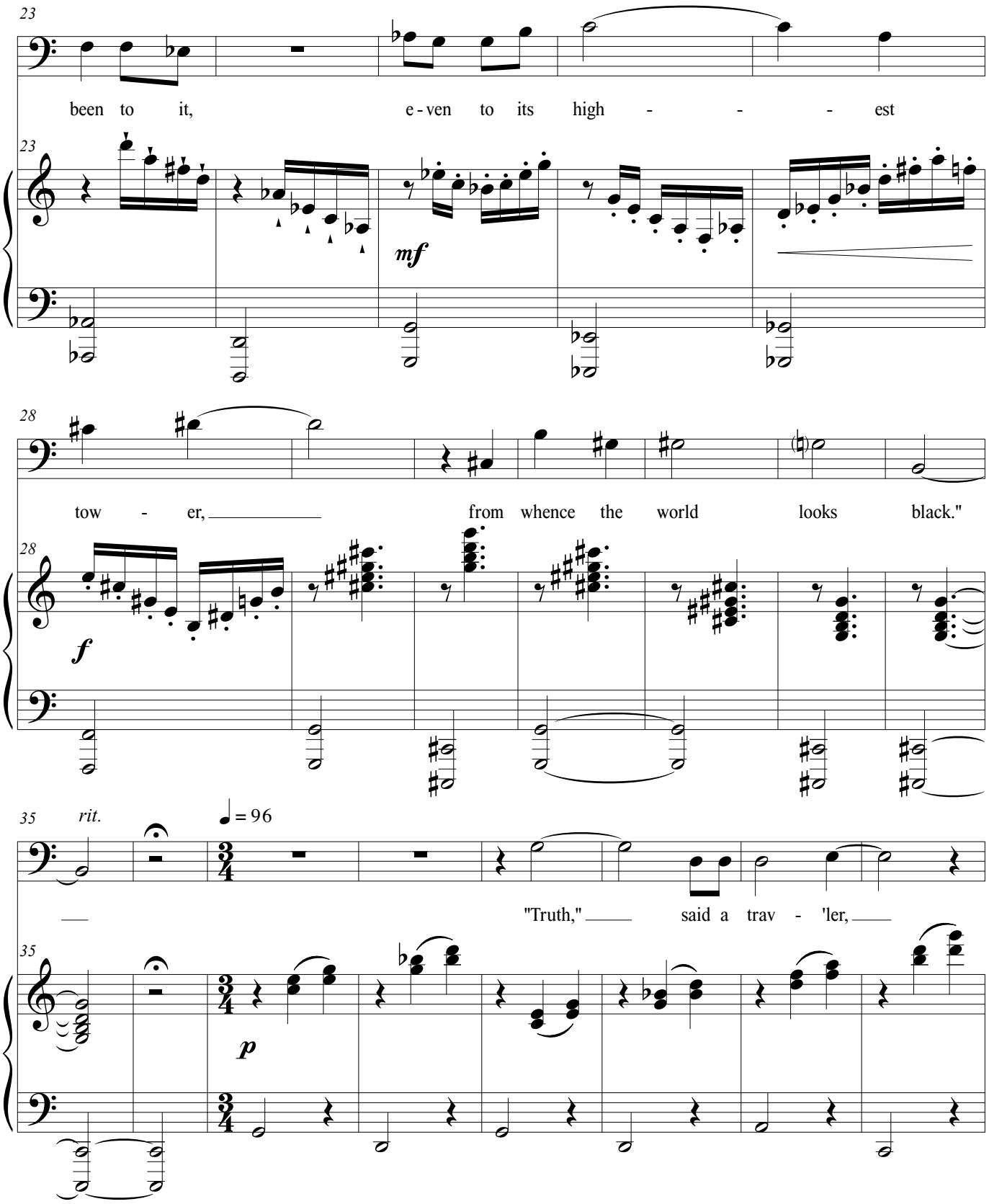
Composed 2017

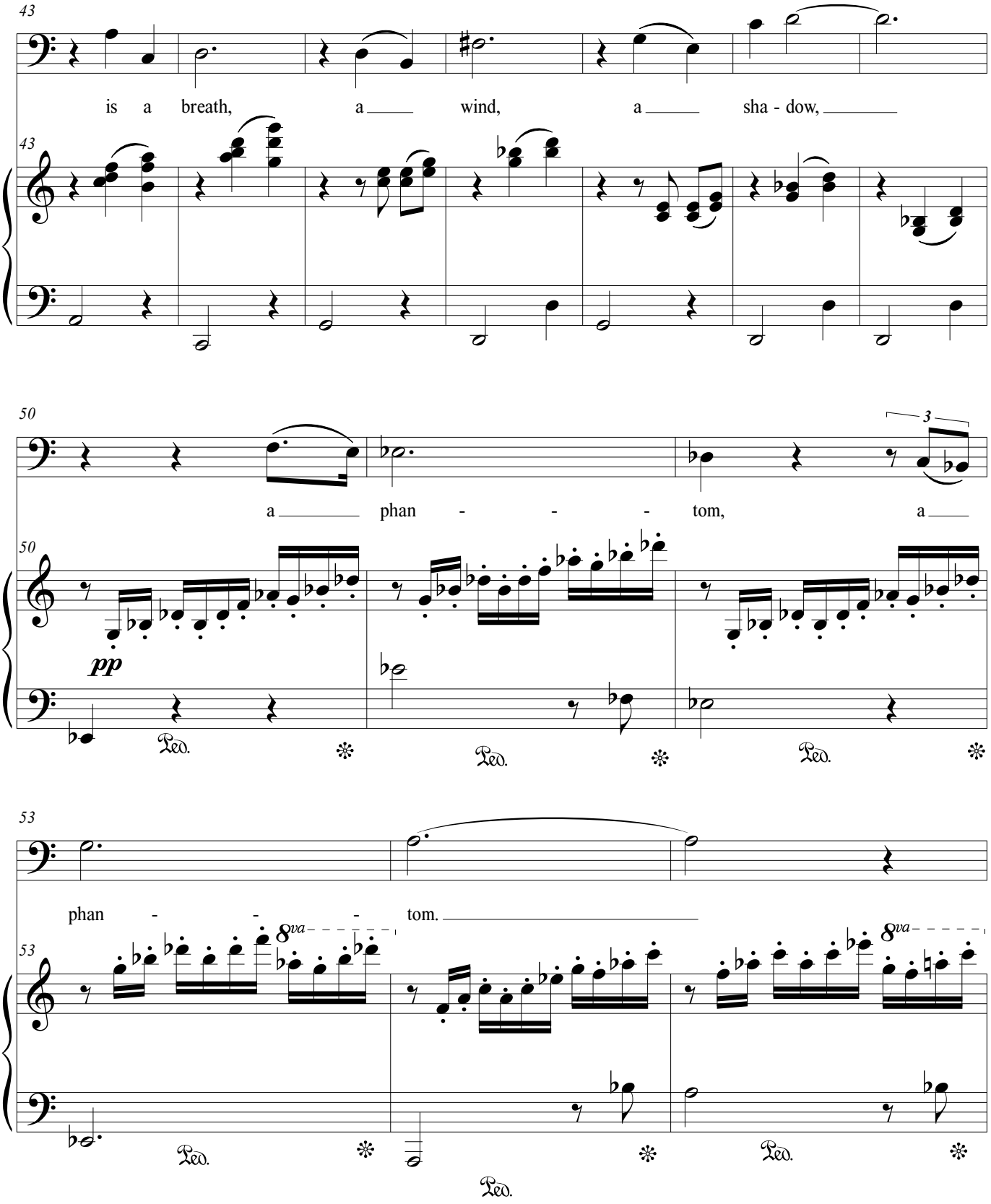
The Travelers

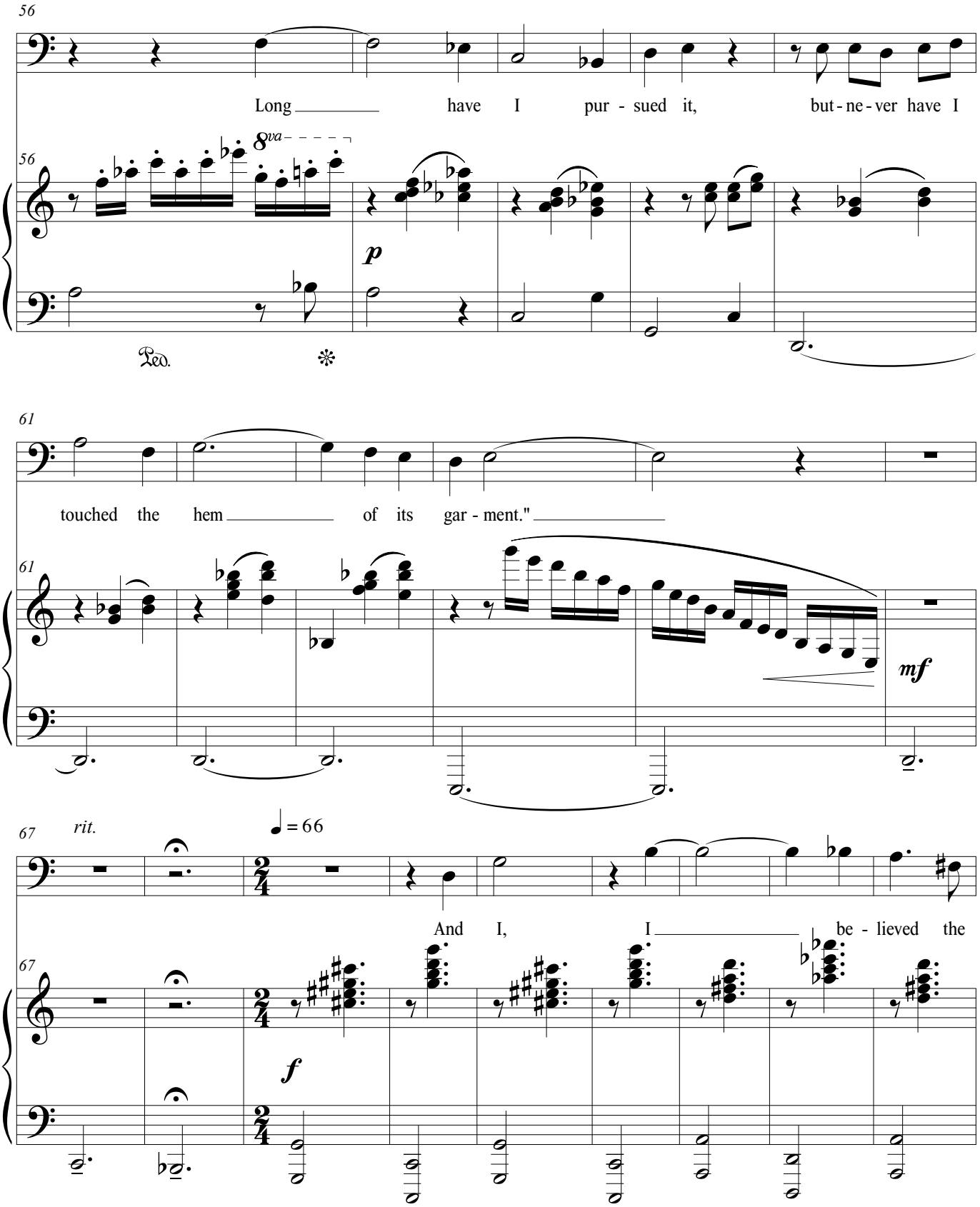
♩ = 66

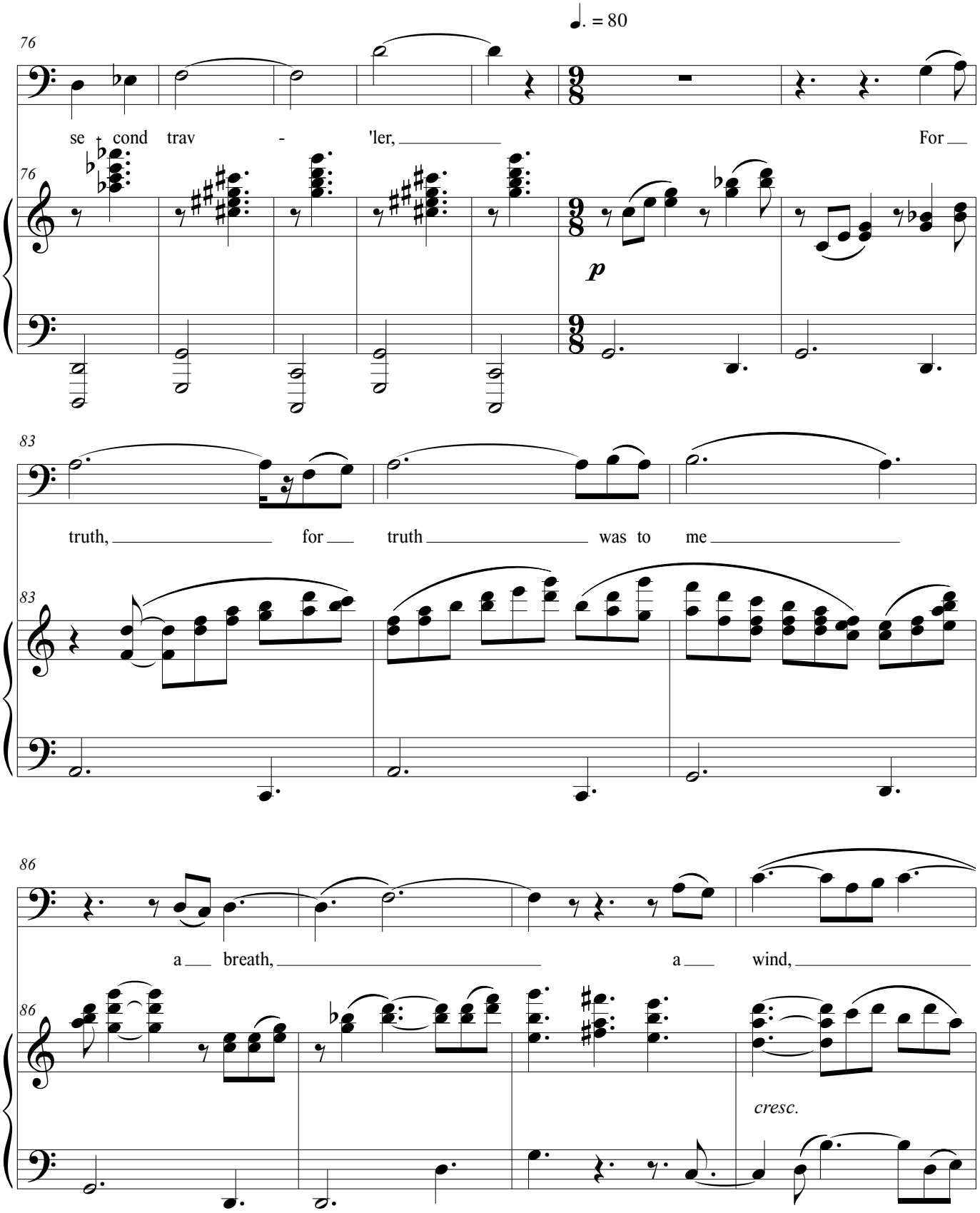
Lawrence Kramer

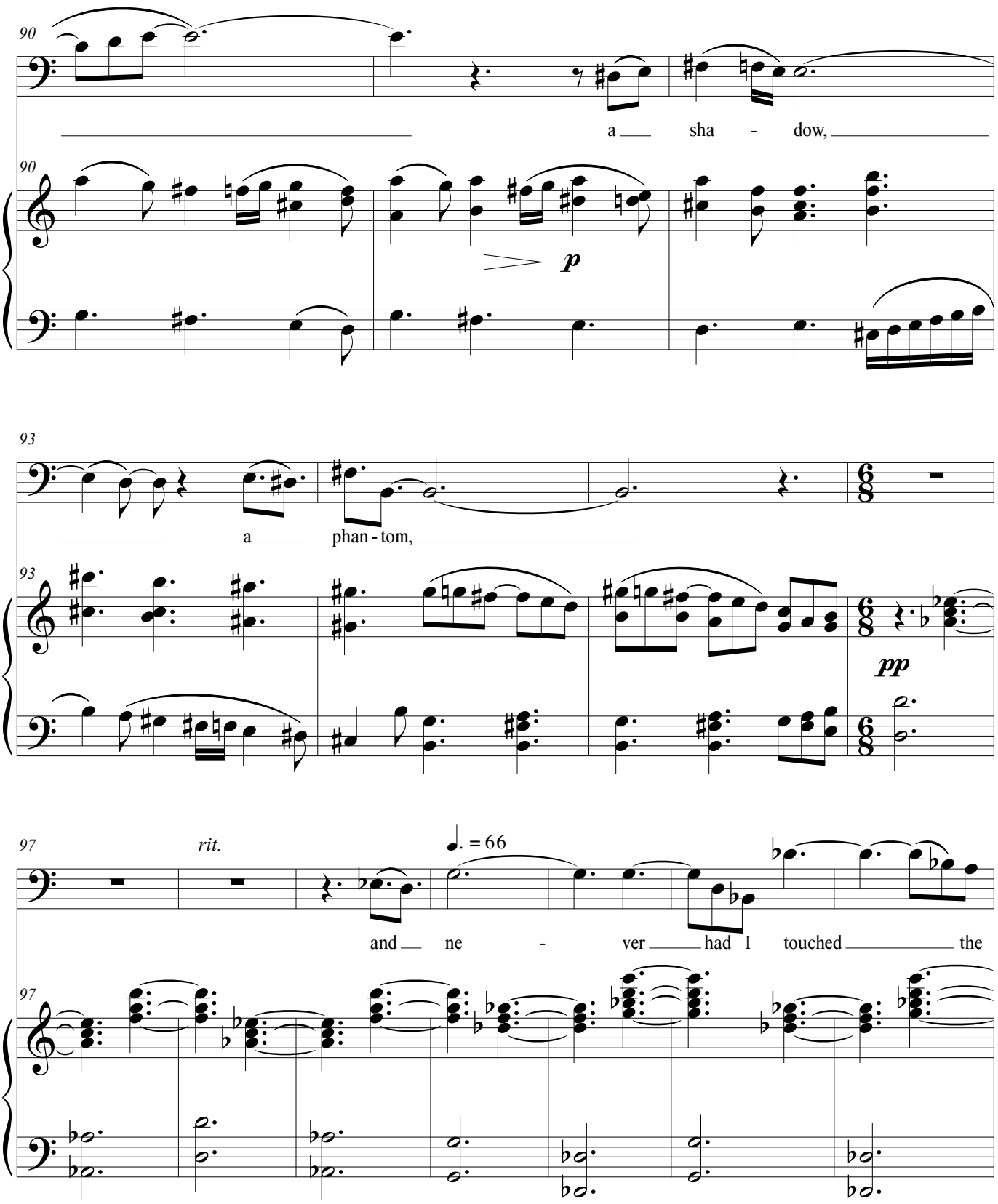


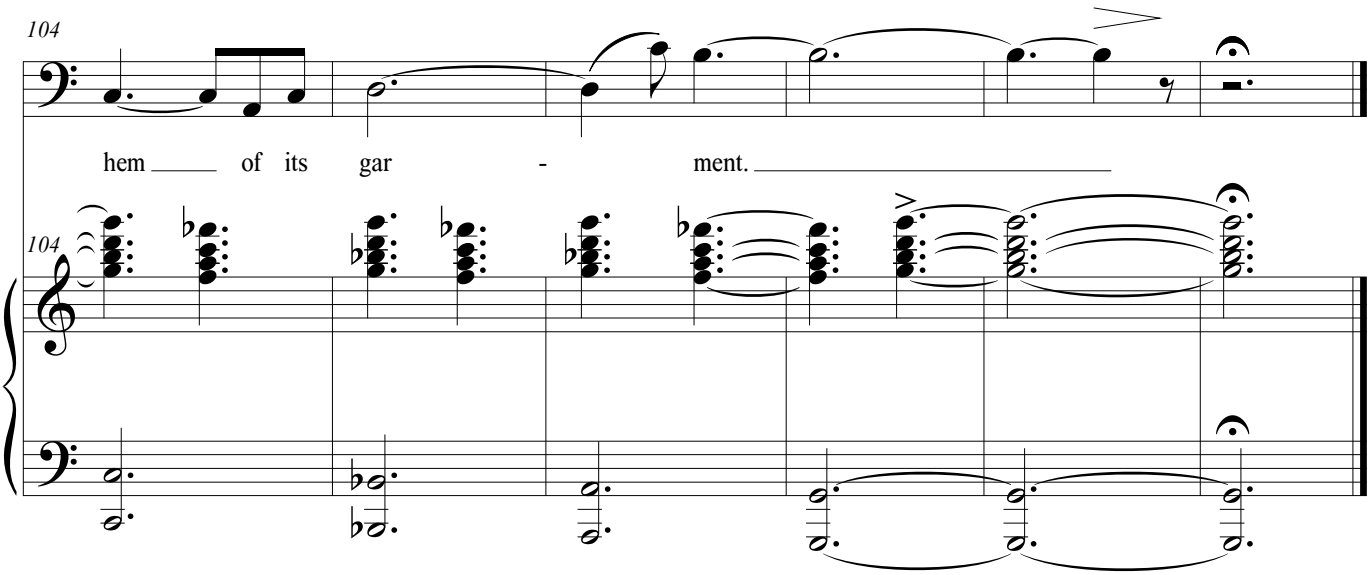

23
been to it, e - ven to its high - - - est
mf
28
tow - er, from whence the world looks black."
f
35
rit.
♩ = 96
"Truth," said a trav - 'ler,
p


43
is a breath, a wind, a sha - dow,
43
50
a phan - - - tom, a
3
50
pp
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
53
phan - - - tom.
8va
8va
53
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.


56
Long have I pur - sued it, but - ne - ver have I
8va
p
Ped.
61
touched the hem of its gar - ment."
mf
67
rit.
♩ = 66
And I, I be - lieved the
f


♩. = 80
76
se - cond trav - 'ler, For
76
p
83
truth, for truth was to me
83
86
a breath, a wind,
86
cresc.


90
a sha - dow,
90
p
93
a phan - tom,
93
pp
97
rit.
♩. = 66
and ne - ver had I touched the
97


104
hem of its gar - ment.
104

Tuscan Cypresses

Tuscan cypresses,
What is it?

Folded in like a dark thought
For which the language is lost,
Tuscan cypresses,
Is there a great secret?
Are our words no good?

The undeliverable secret,
Dead with a dead race and a dead speech, and yet
Darkly monumental in you,
Etruscan cypresses. . .
[You]sinuous flame-tall cypresses . . .
You supple, brooding, softly-swaying pillars of dark flame . . .

What business, then?
[The] tongues are dead, and words are hollow as seed-pods,
Having shed their sound and finished all their echoing
Etruscan syllables,
That had the telling.

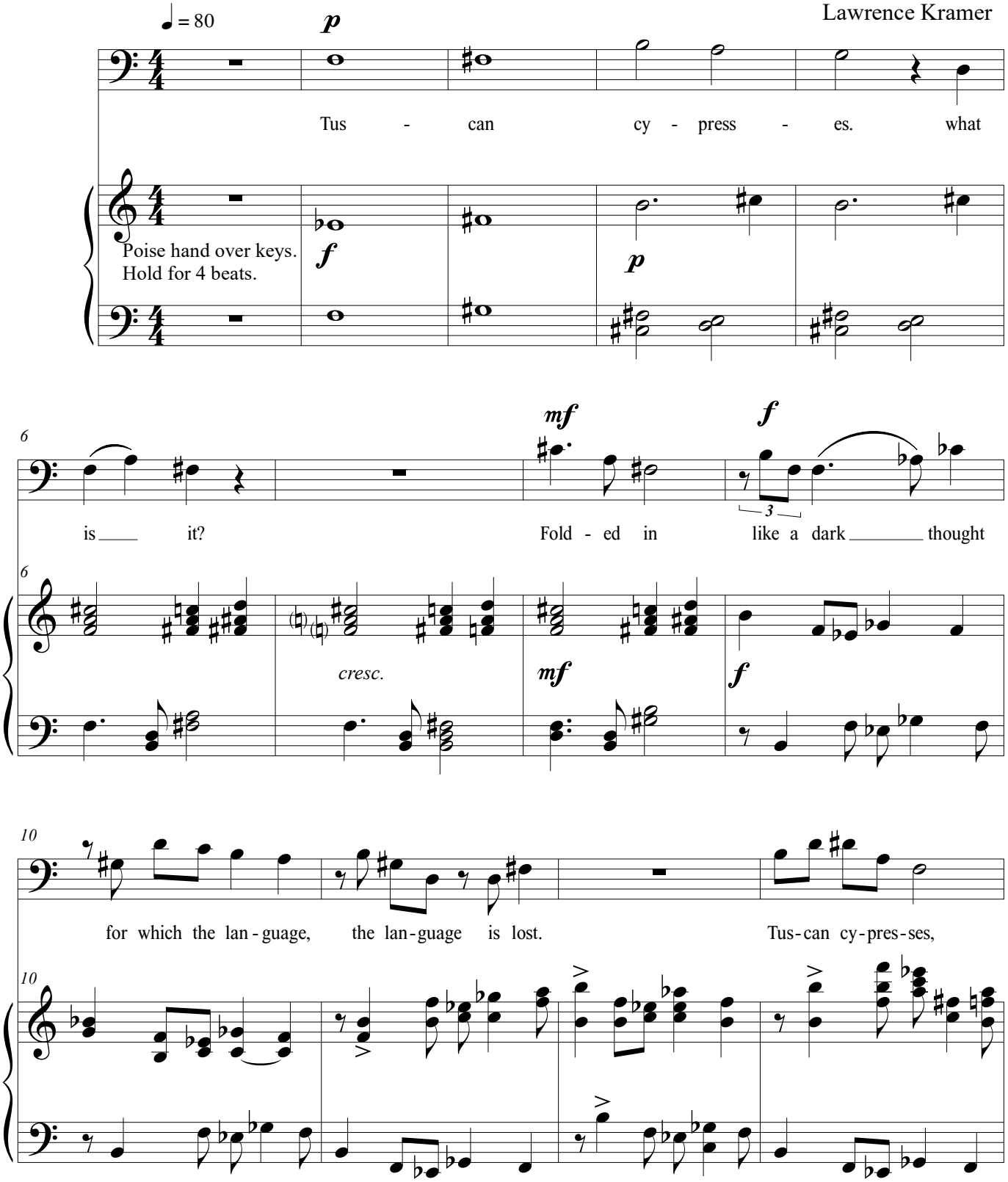
They say the fit survive,
But I invoke the spirits of the lost.
Those that have not survived, the darkly lost,
To bring their meaning back into life again,
Which they have taken away
And wrapped inviolable in soft cypress-trees,
Etruscan cypresses.

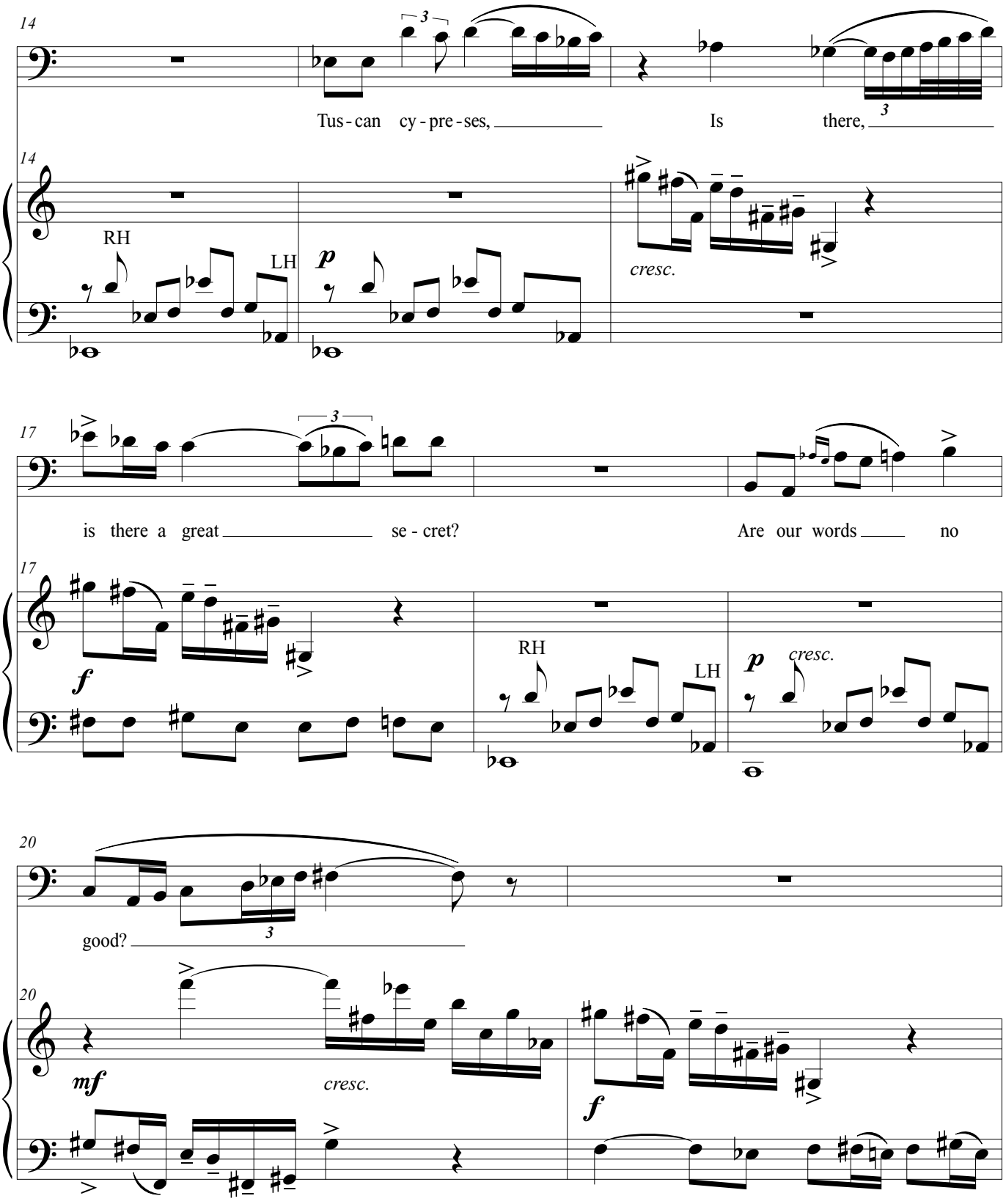
"Tuscan Cypresses" describes a search for a buried secret, a hidden design lost to history along with Etruscan civilization. The poem identifies that secret with the cypress trees that stand tall and wavy like unextinguished flames. The setting translates the secret to the Fibonacci sequence, a mathematical pattern in which each number is the sum of the previous two, often associated with symmetry in nature.

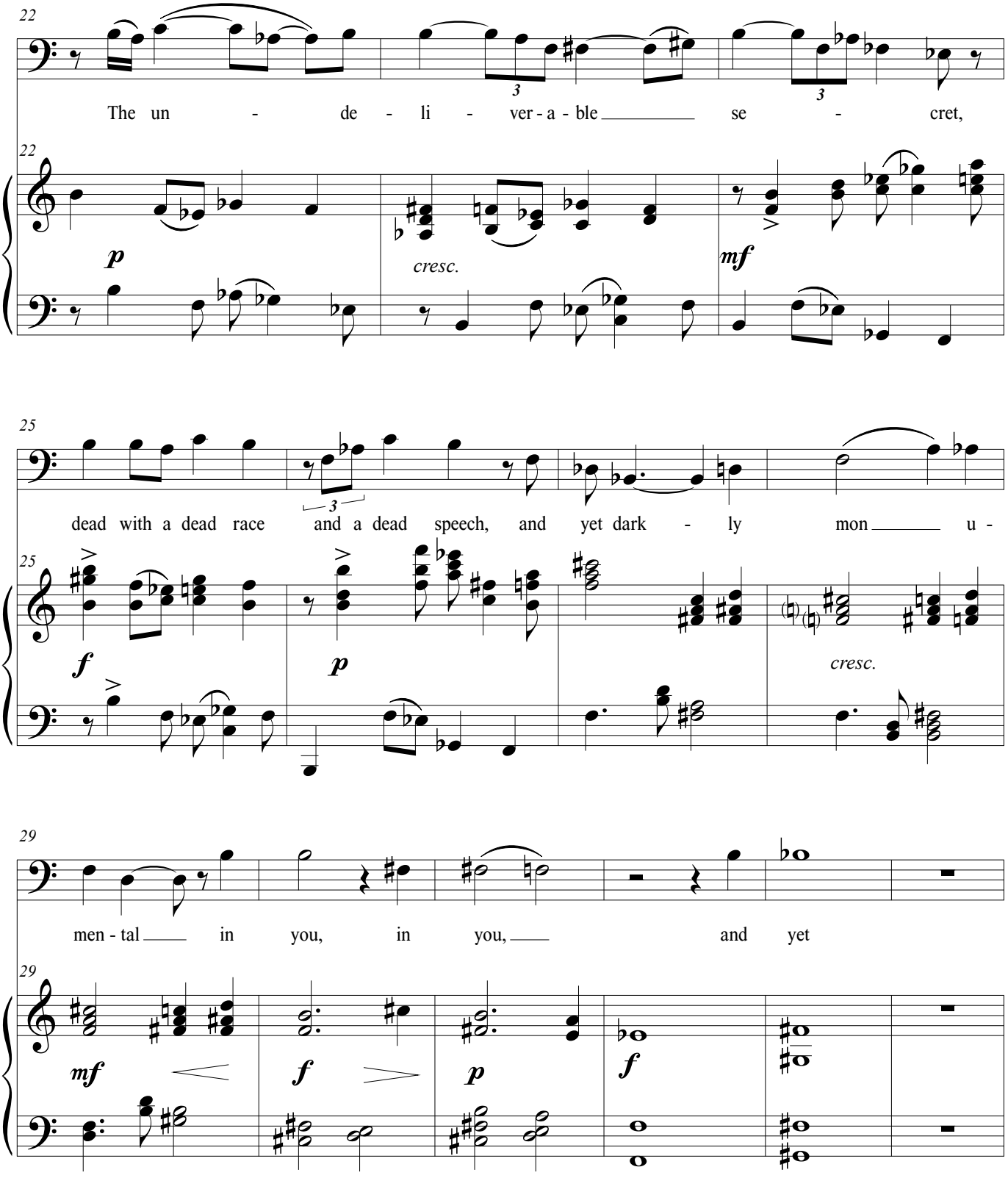
The song is based on the first seven numbers of the sequence: 0 1 1 2 3 5 8. In the music, each number corresponds to a rhythmic-melodic figure. Each figure: 1) is one measure long, 2) has its own set of characteristic intervals, and 3) contains the number of notes or chords per staff equal to its number. Apart from 0, each figure is repeated consecutively the number of times equal to its number. This cycle repeats in an arc pattern pivoting around the final term, 8, in the music's extract from the infinite sequence. Near the end, however, the voice and piano parts fall out of synchrony, in keeping with Francis Bacon's observation that "There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion."

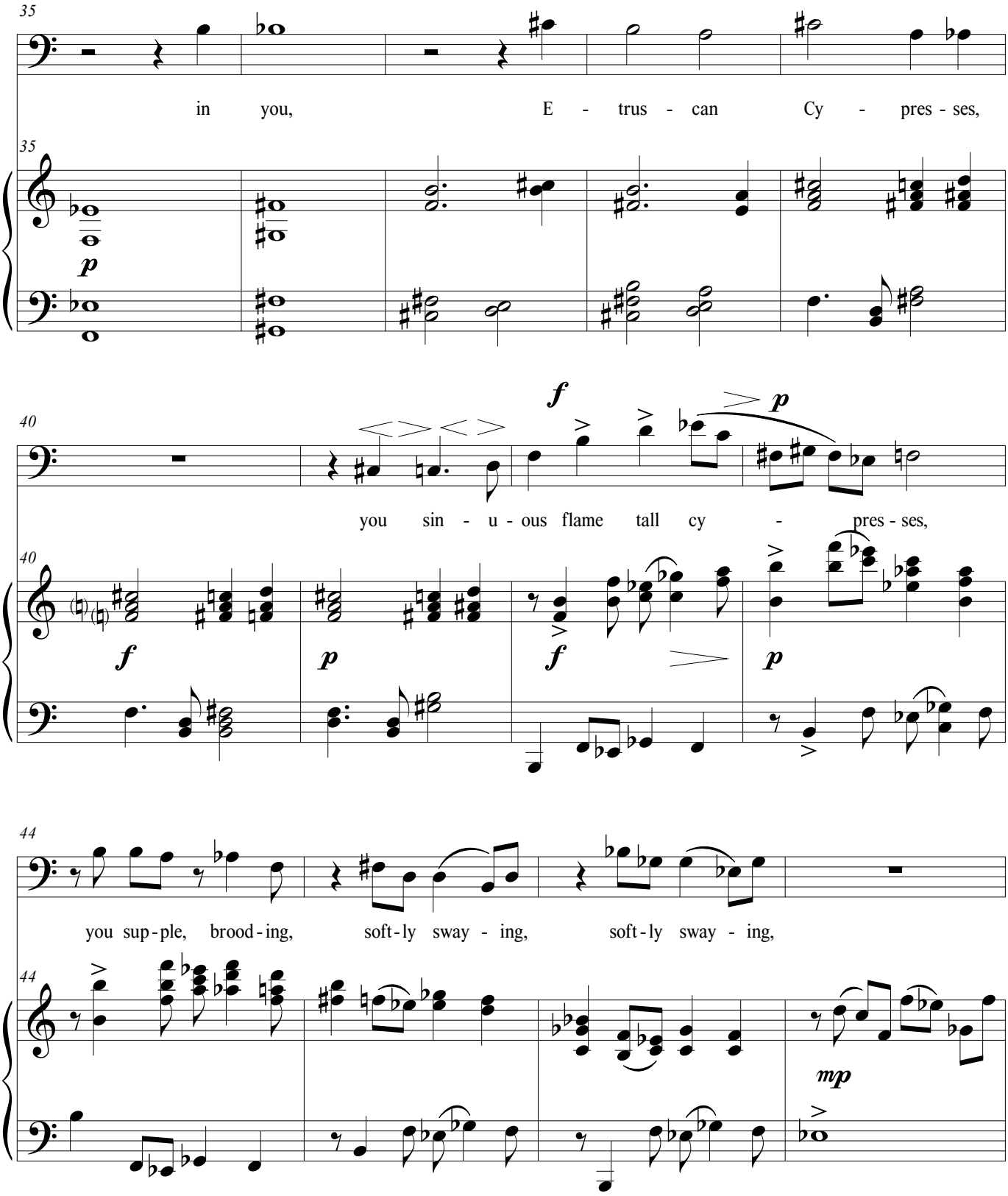
Written voice range: G3 - G5 Tessitura: D4 - D5
Duration: 6:00 Composed 2022

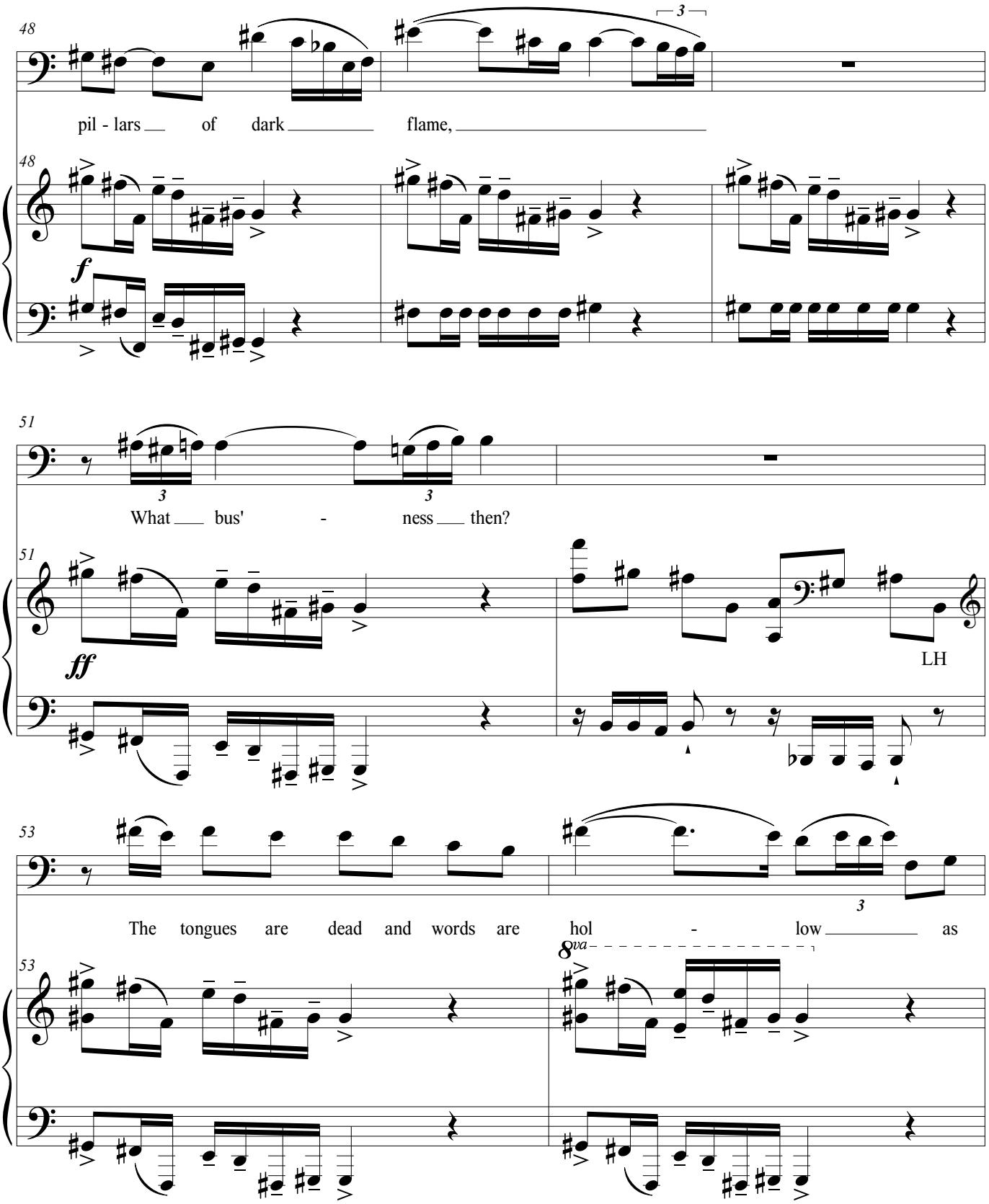
1. Tuscan Cypresses

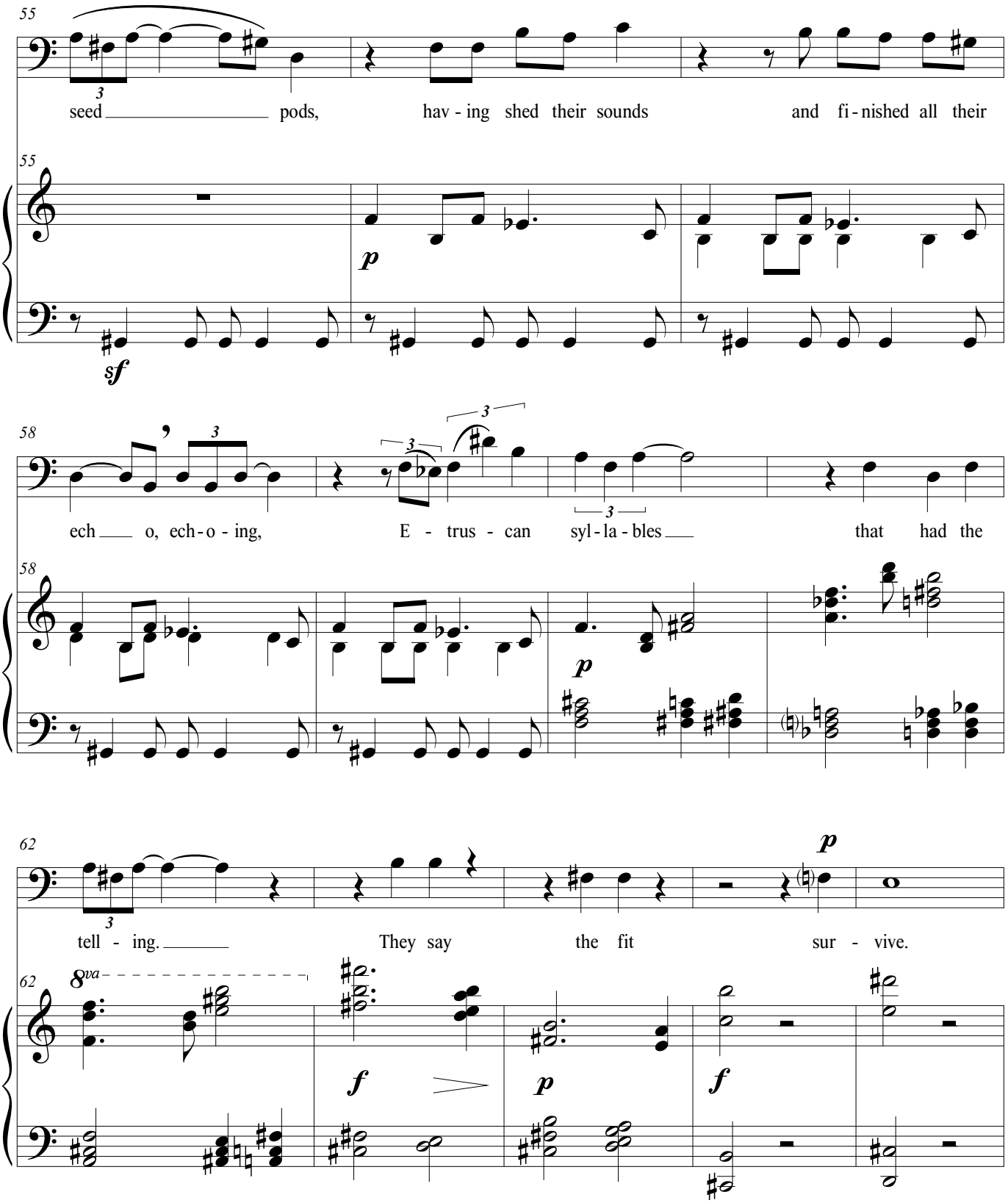


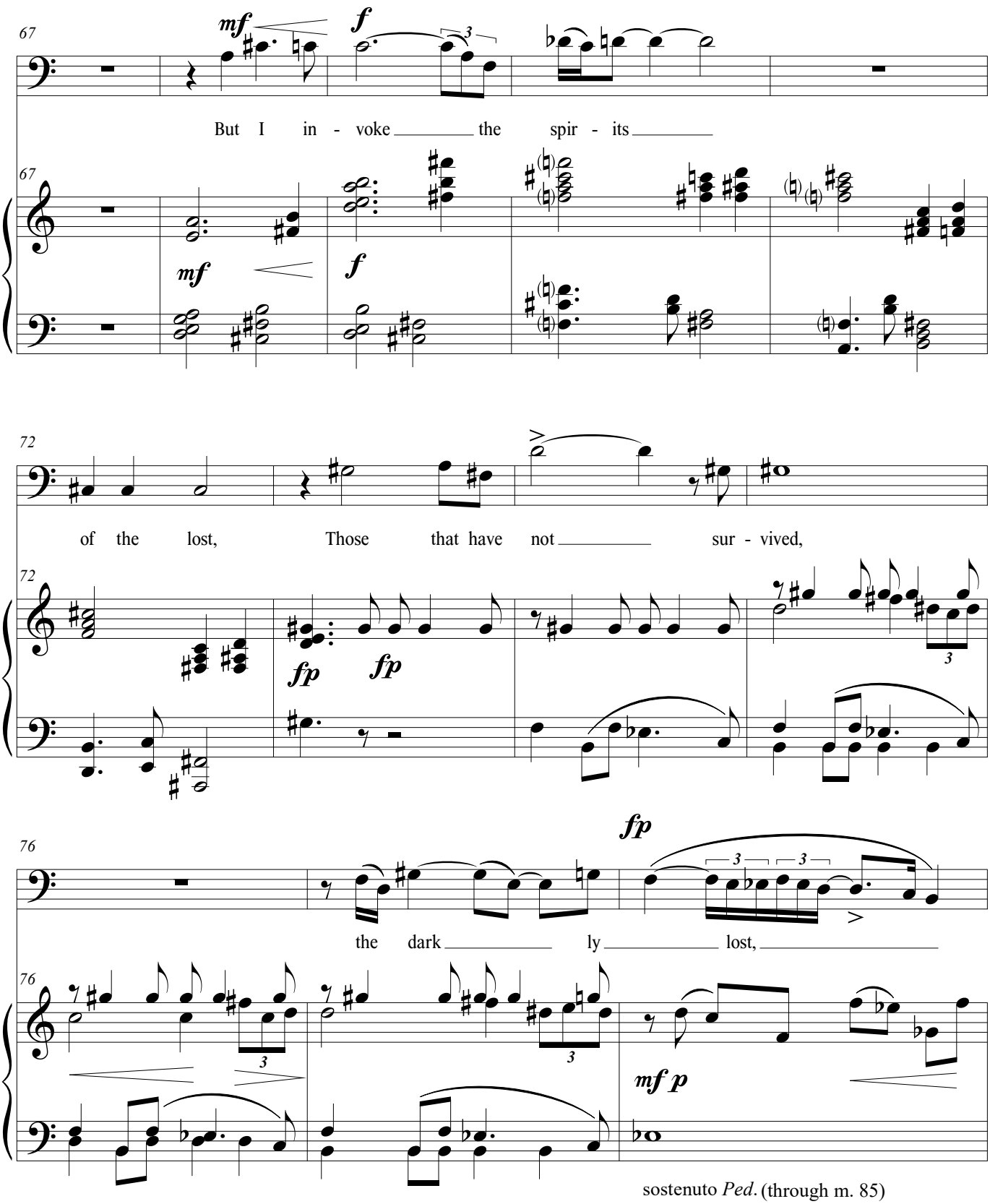

14
Tus - can cy - pre - ses,
Is there,
RH
LH
p
cresc.
17
is there a great
se - cret?
Are our words
no
f
RH
LH
p
cresc.
20
good?
mf
cresc.
f

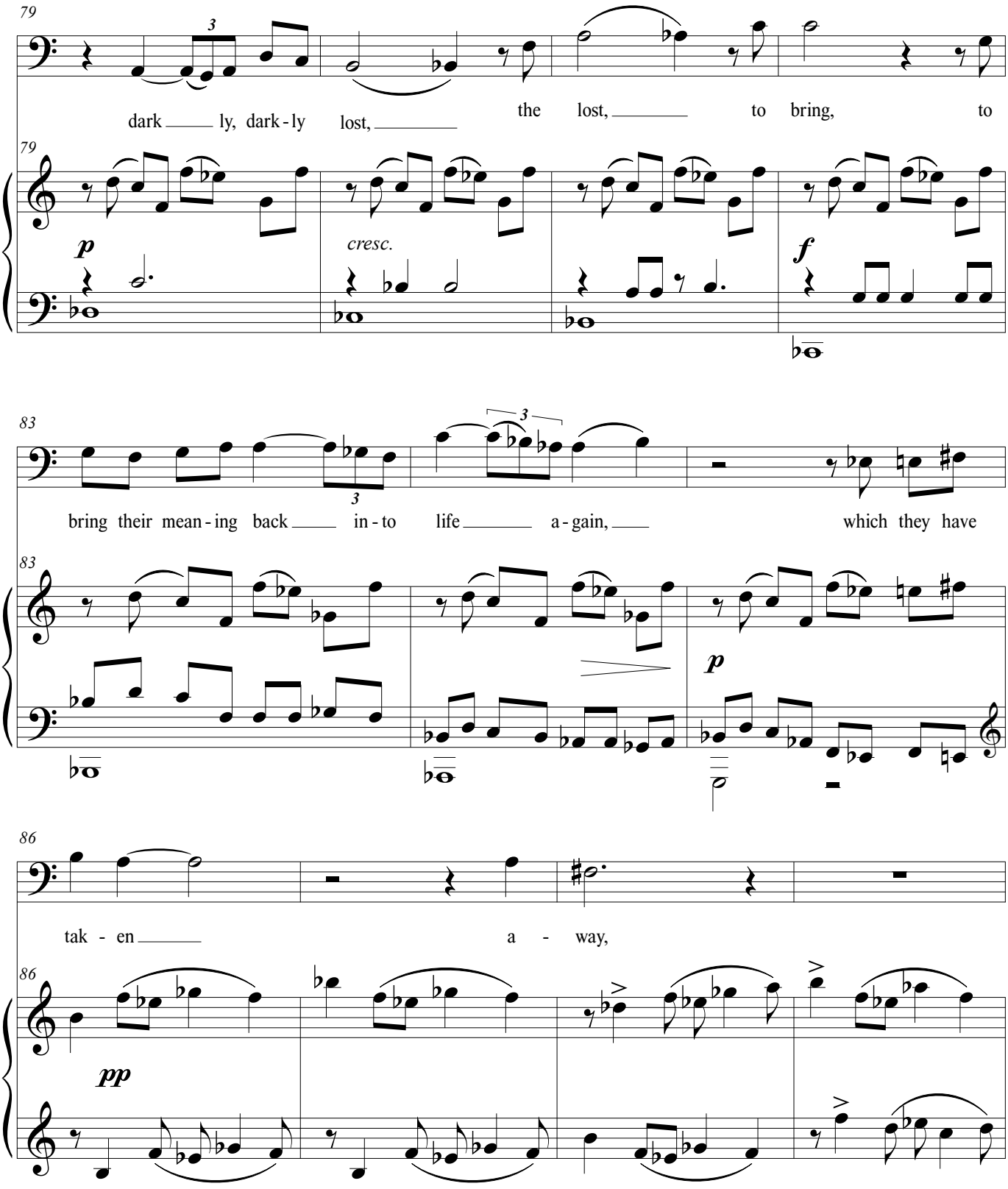

22
The un - de - li - ver - a - ble se - cret,
22
p
cresc.
mf
25
dead with a dead race and a dead speech, and yet dark - ly mon u -
25
f
p
cresc.
29
men - tal in you, in you, and yet
29
mf
f
p
f

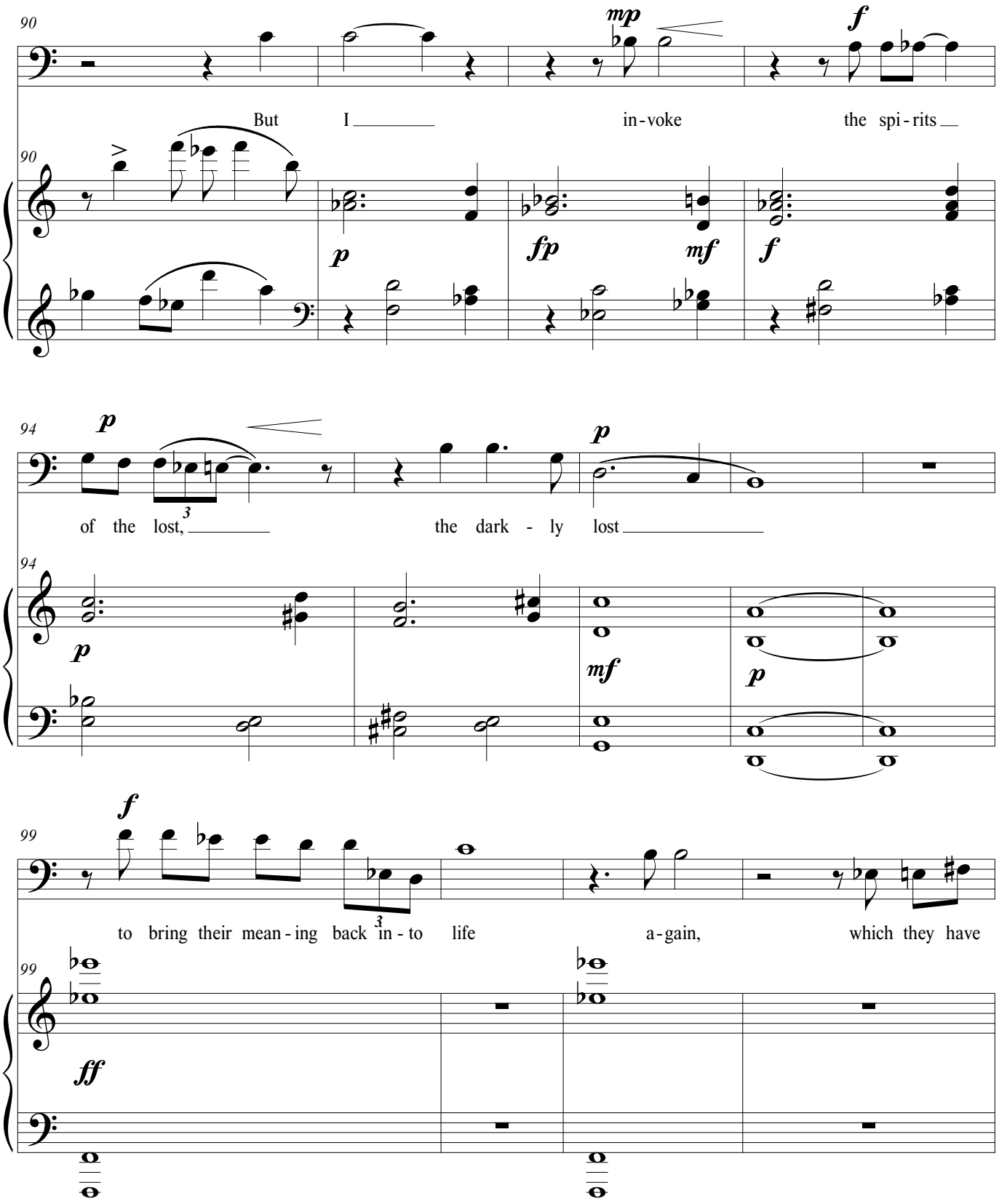

35
in you, E - trus - can Cy - pres - ses,
35
p
40
you sin - u - ous flame tall cy - pres - ses,
40
f
p
f
p
44
you sup - ple, brood - ing, soft - ly sway - ing, soft - ly sway - ing,
44
mp

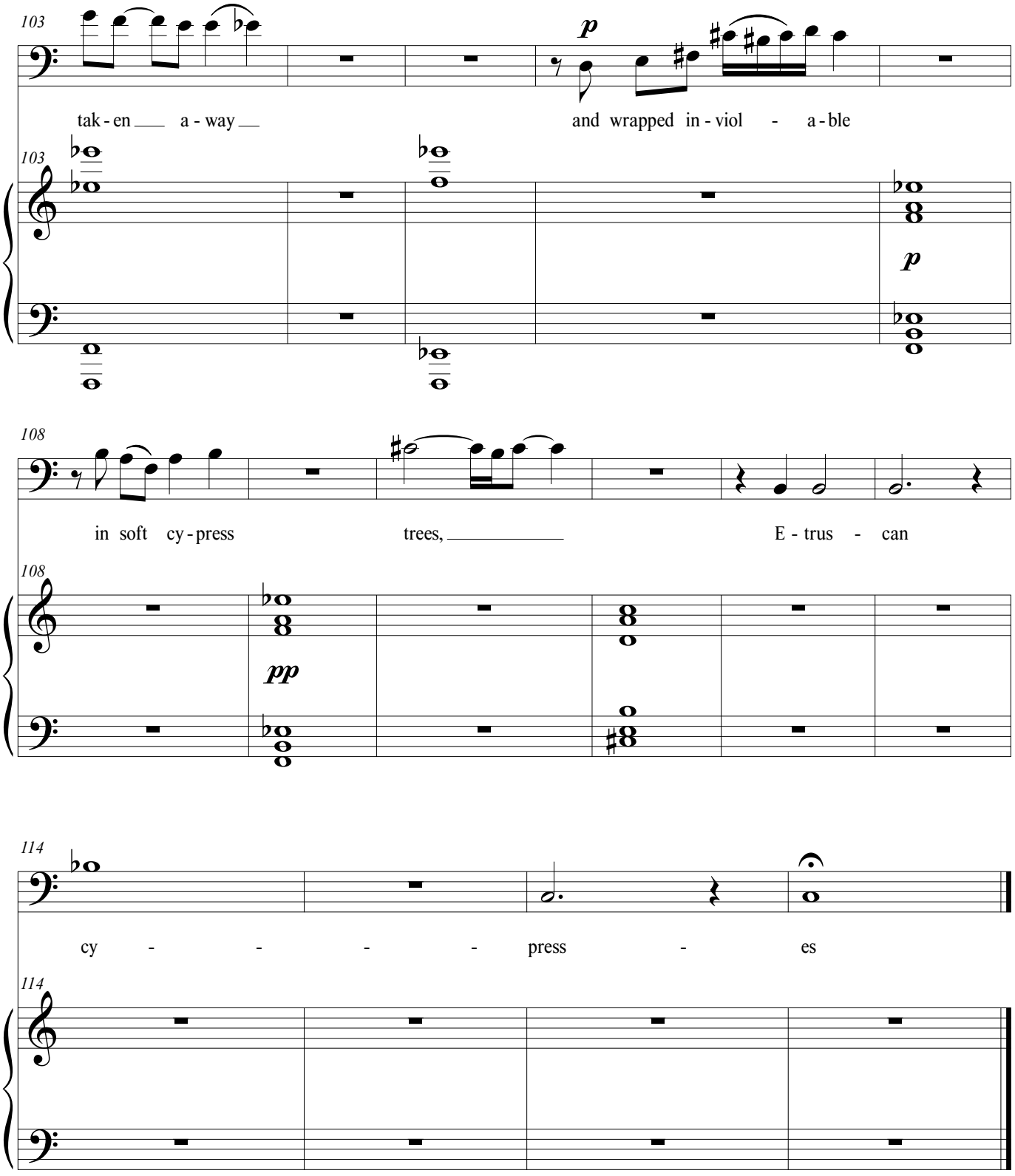

48
pil - lars of dark flame,
48
f
51
What bus' - ness then?
51
ff
LH
53
The tongues are dead and words are hol - low as
53
8va


55
seed pods, hav - ing shed their sounds and fi - nished all their
55
p
sf
58
ech o, ech - o - ing, E - trus - can syl - la - bles that had the
58
p
62
tell - ing. They say the fit sur - vive.
p
62
8va
f
p
f


67
mf
f
But I in - voke the spir - its
67
mf
f
72
of the lost, Those that have not sur - vived,
72
fp
fp
76
fp
the dark ly lost,
76
mf p
sostenuto Ped. (through m. 85)


79
dark ly, dark-ly lost, the lost, to bring, to
p
cresc.
f
83
bring their mean-ing back in-to life a-gain, which they have
p
86
tak-en a-way,
pp


90
mp
f
But I in-voke the spi-rits
90
p
fp
mf
f
94
p
of the lost, the dark - ly lost
3
94
p
mf
p
99
f
to bring their mean-ing back in-to life a-gain, which they have
3
99
ff


103
p
tak - en a - way
and wrapped in - viol - a - ble
103
p
108
in soft cy - press
trees,
E - trus - can
108
pp
114
cy - - - - press - es
114

Windrose

Baritone

Fresh and rosy red the sun is mounting high,
On floats the sea in distant blue careering through its channels,
On floats the wind over the breast of the sea setting in toward land,
The great steady wind from west or west-by-south,
Floating so buoyant with milk-white foam on the waters.

But I am not the sea nor the red sun,
I am not the wind with girlish laughter,
Not the immense wind which strengthens, not the wind which lashes,
Not the spirit that ever lashes its own body to terror and death,
But I am that which unseen comes and sings, sings, sings,
Which babbles in brooks and scoots in showers on the land,
Which the birds know in the woods mornings and evenings,
And the shore-sands know and the hissing wave.

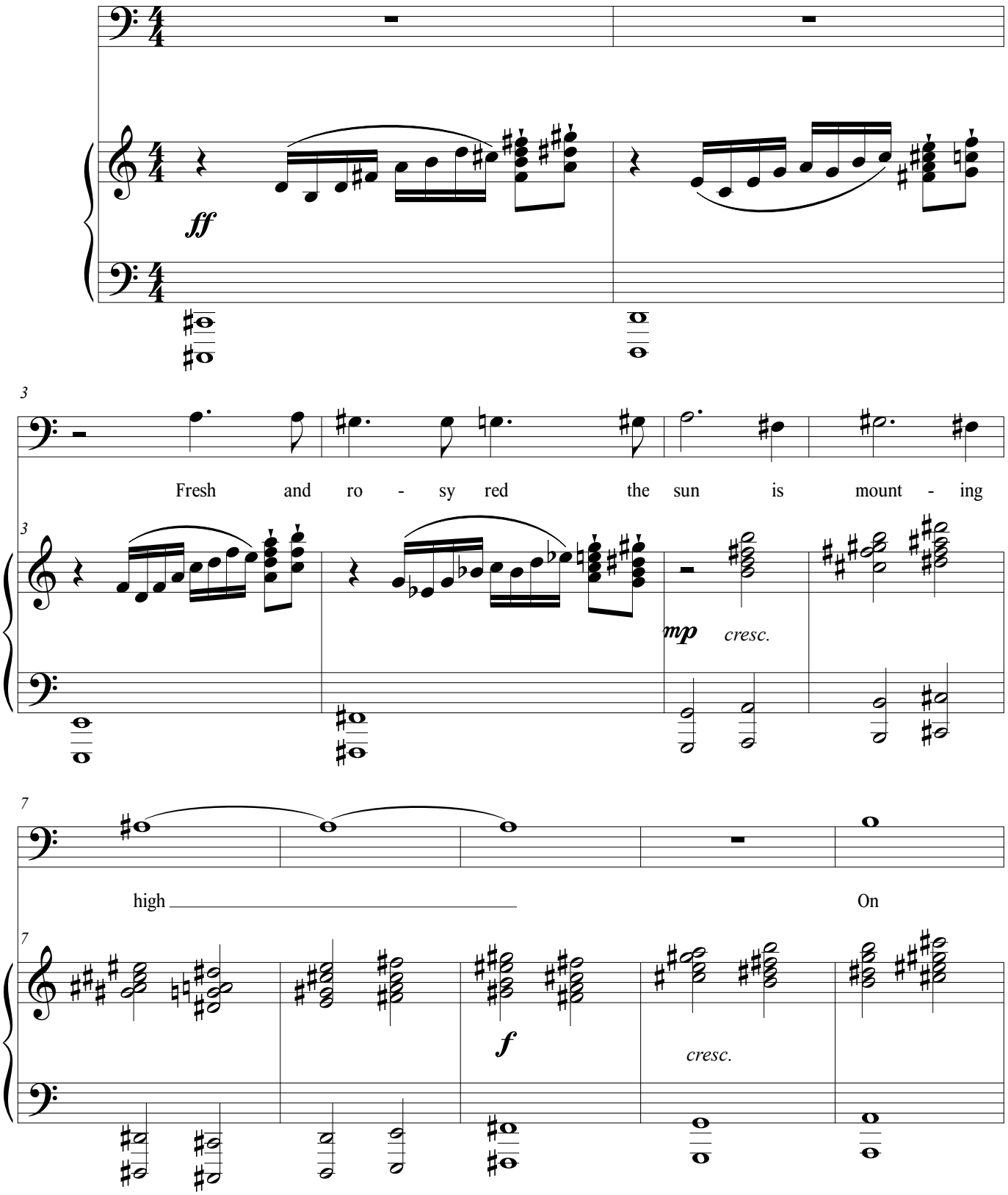
From "Song of the Banner at Daybreak"

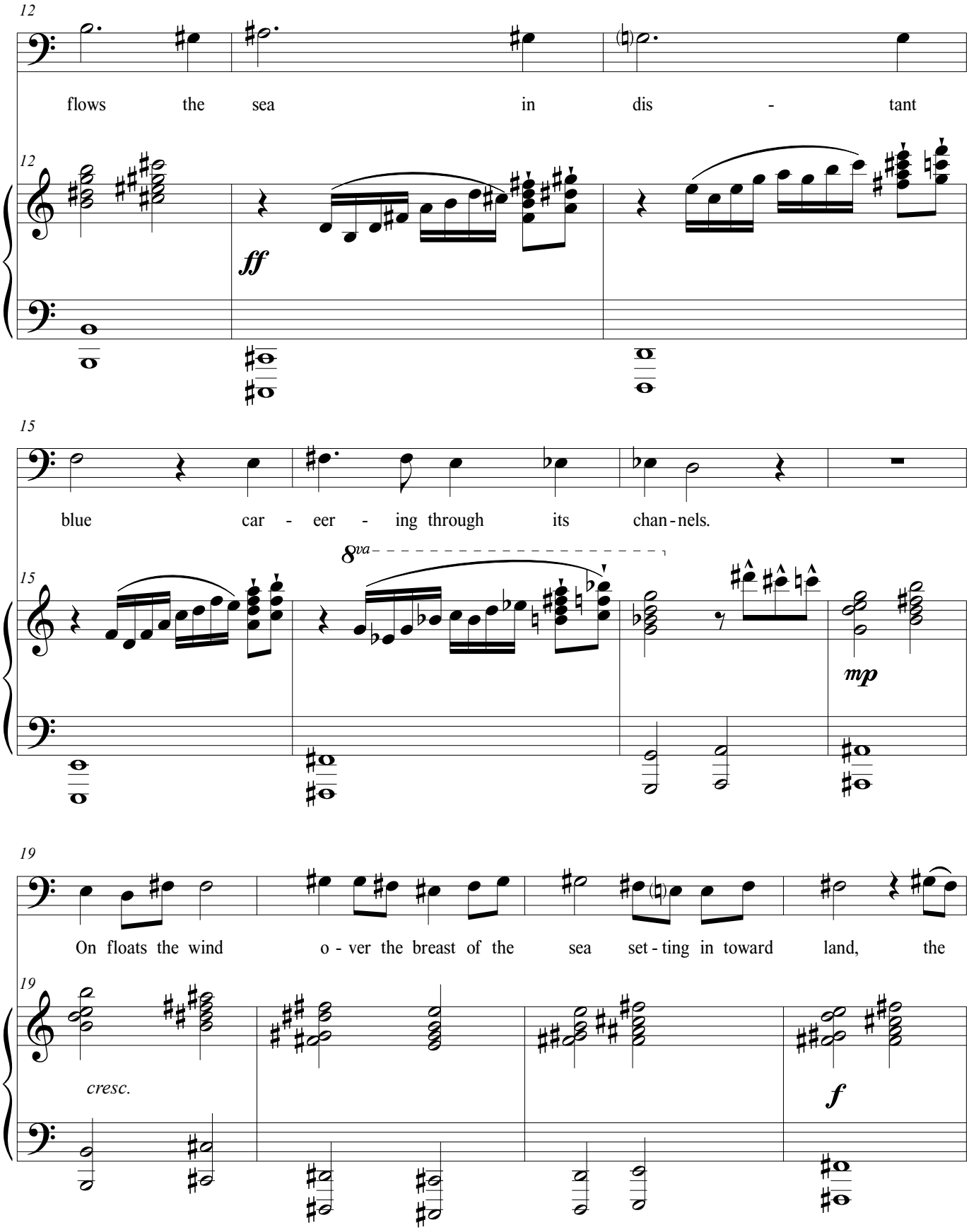
Voice range: B♭2-F♯4
Tessitura: F♯3 - D♯4
Duration: 4 minutes

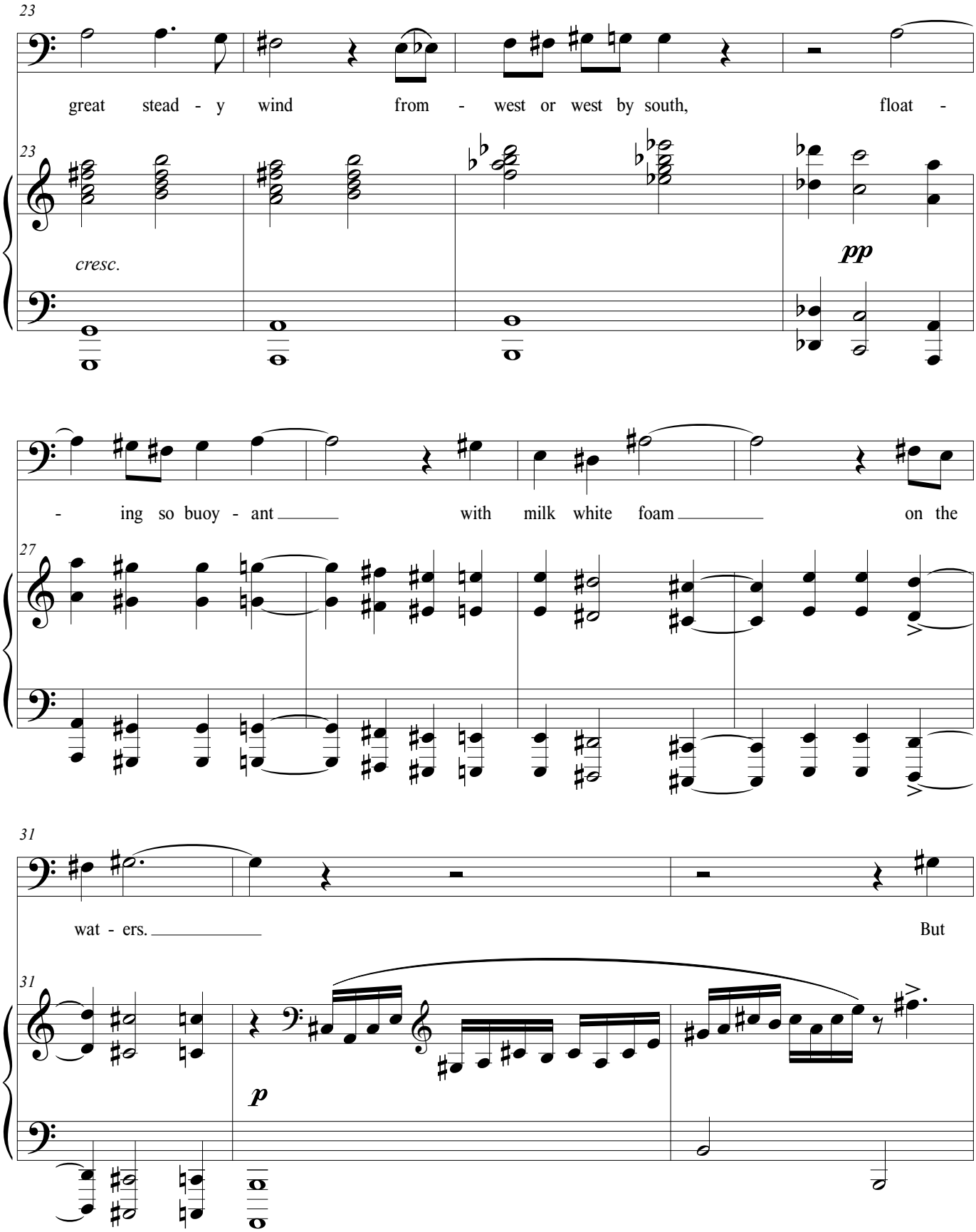
Windrose

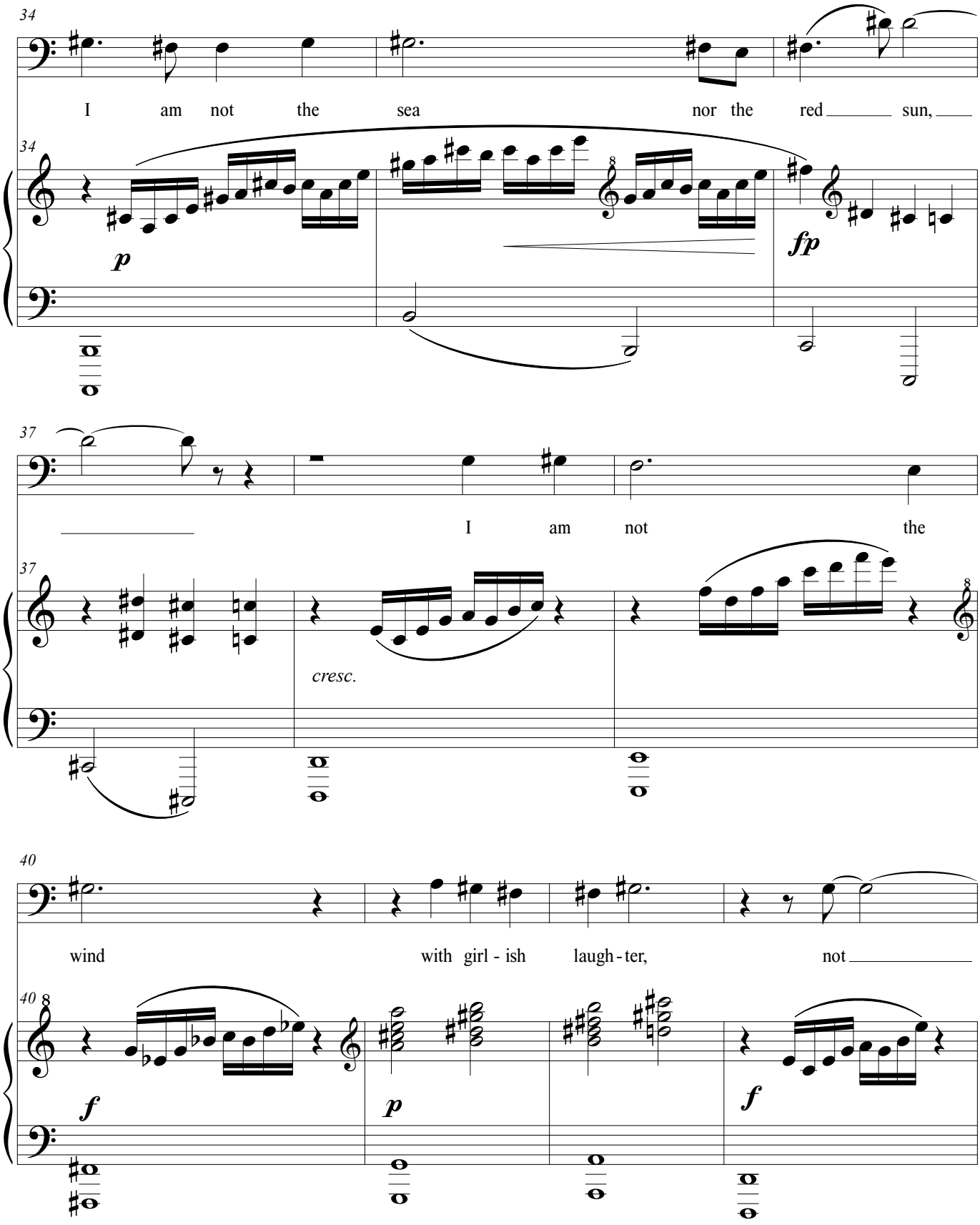
♩ = 126

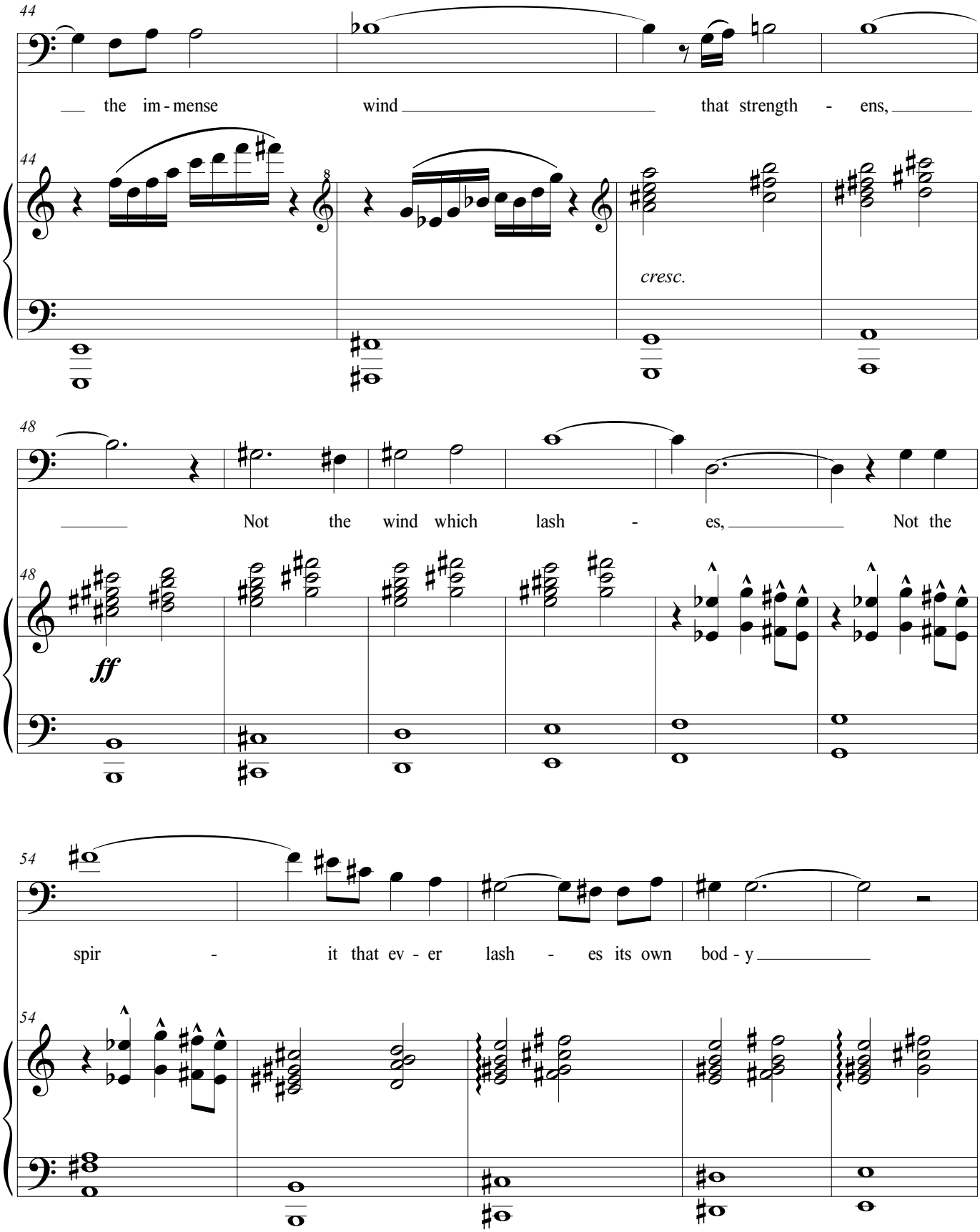
Lawrence Kramer

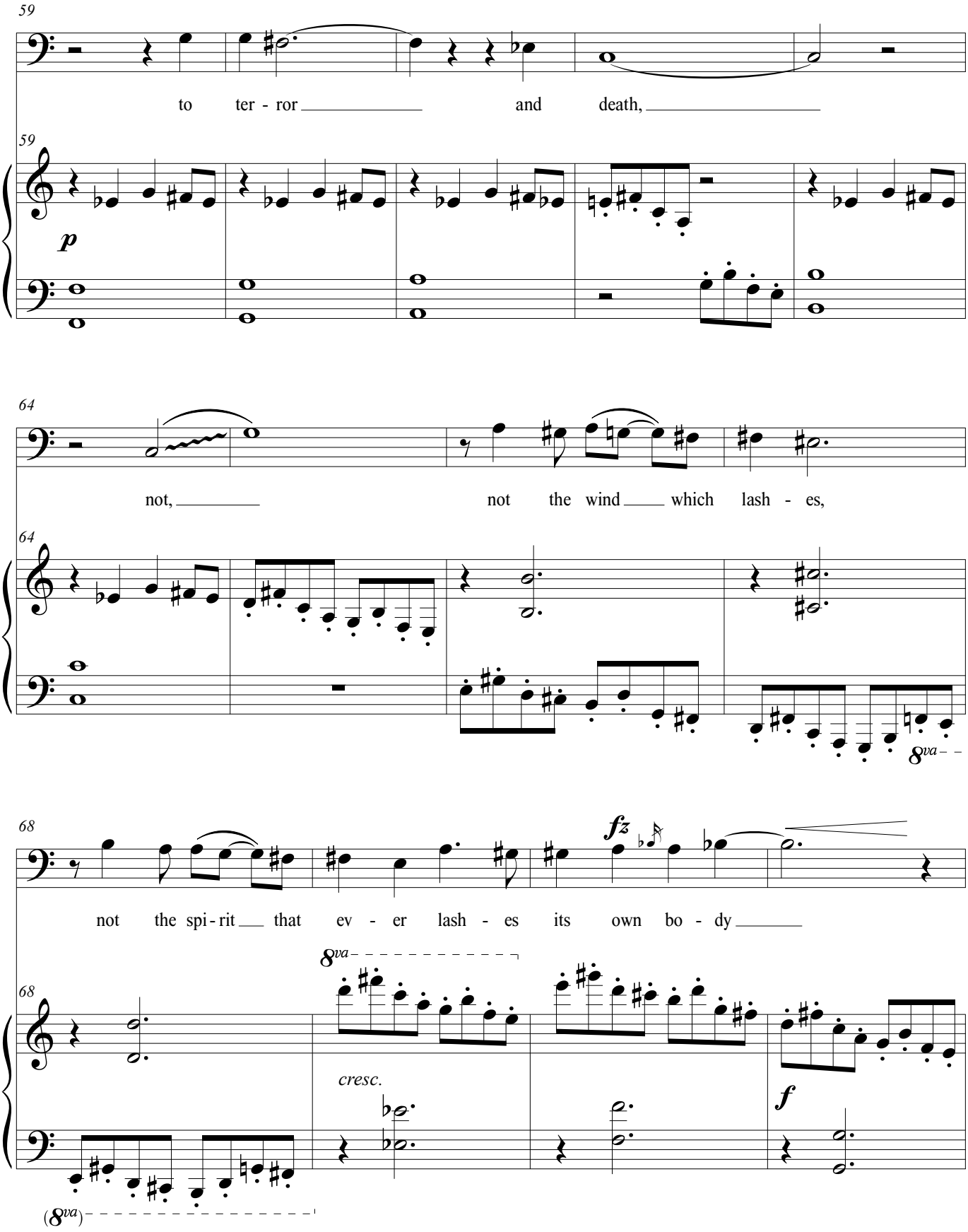


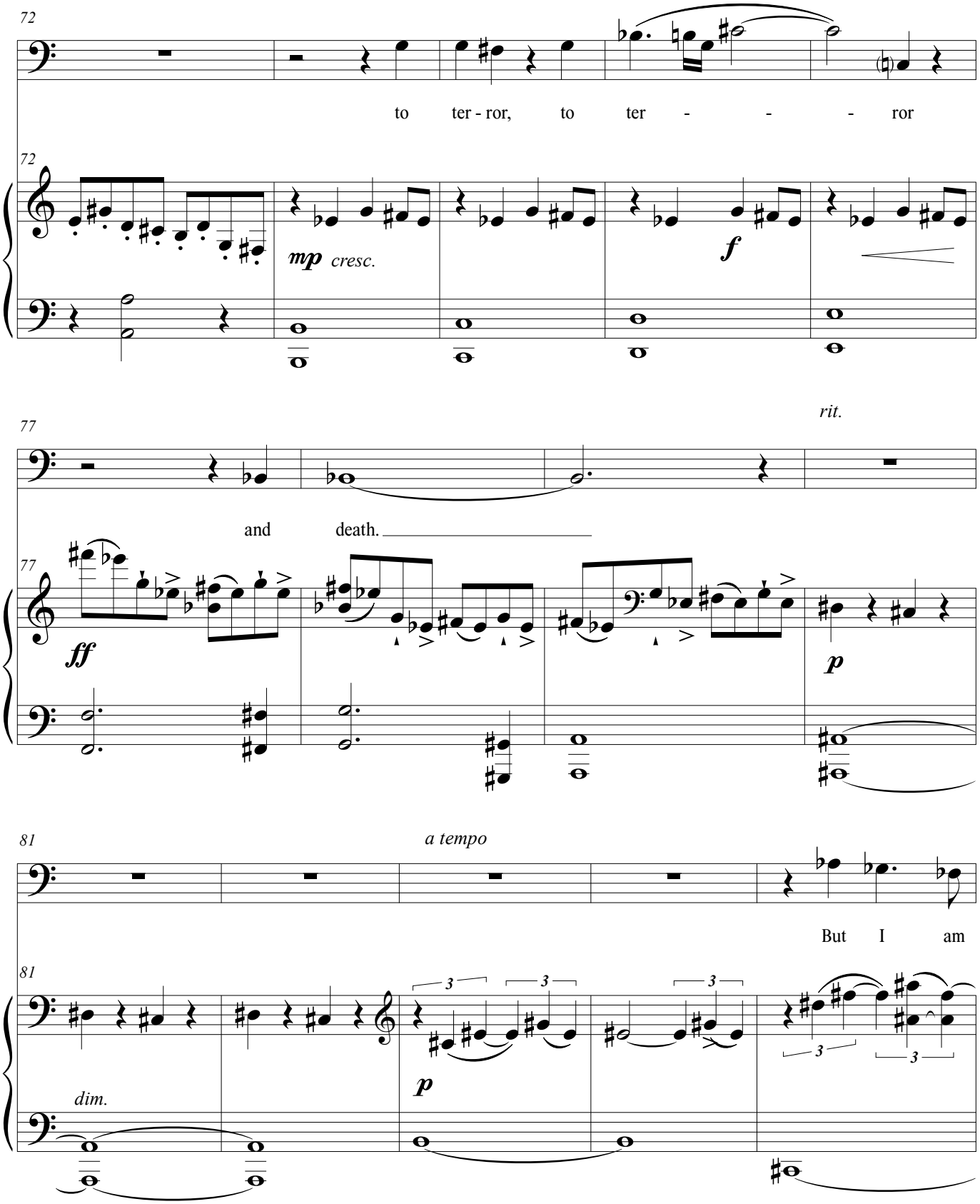

12
flows the sea in dis - tant
ff
15
blue car - eer - ing through its chan - nels.
8va
mp
19
On floats the wind o - ver the breast of the sea set - ting in toward land, the
cresc.
f

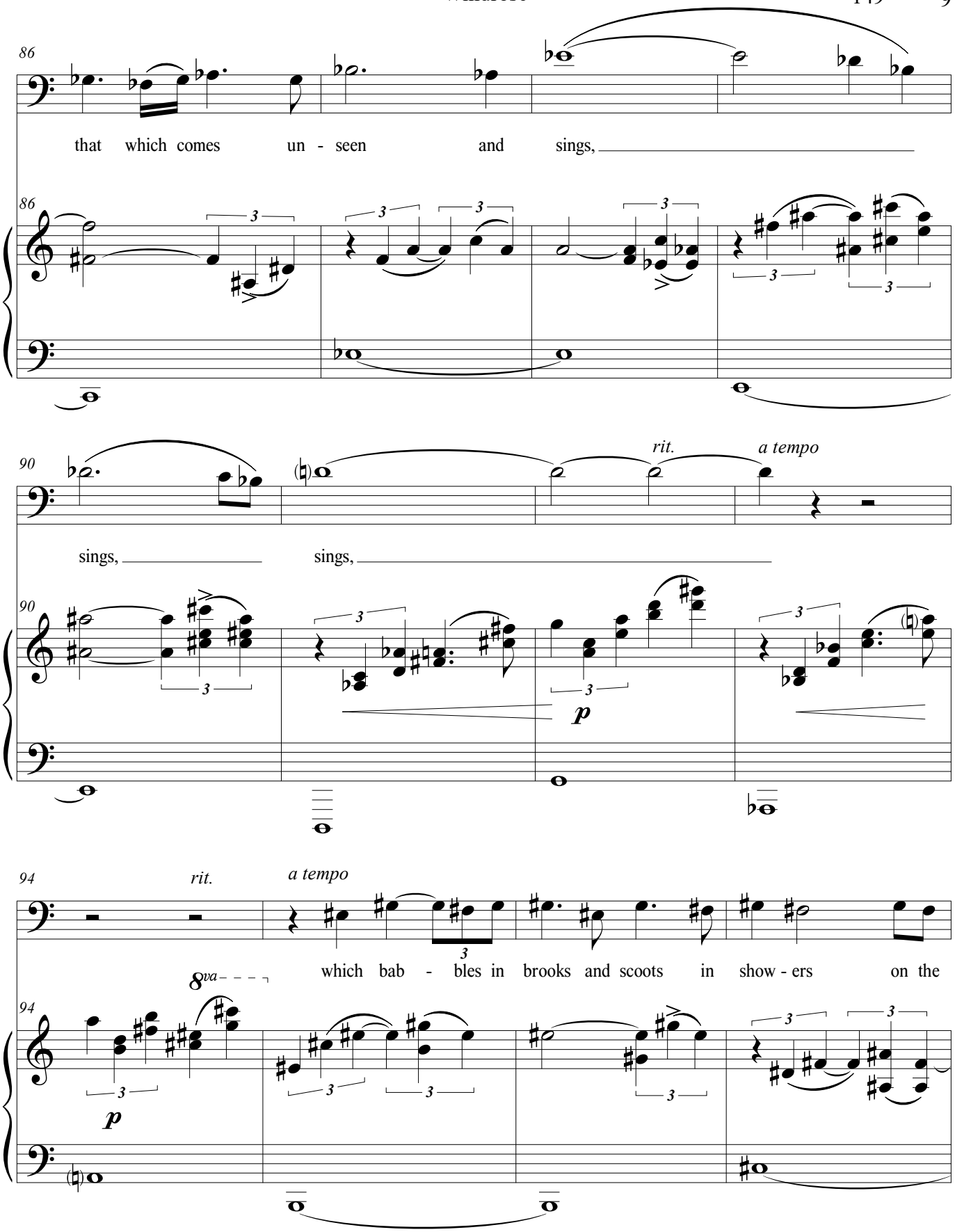

23
great stead - y wind from - west or west by south, float -
23
cresc.
pp
- ing so buoy - ant with milk white foam on the
27
31
wat - ers. But
31
p

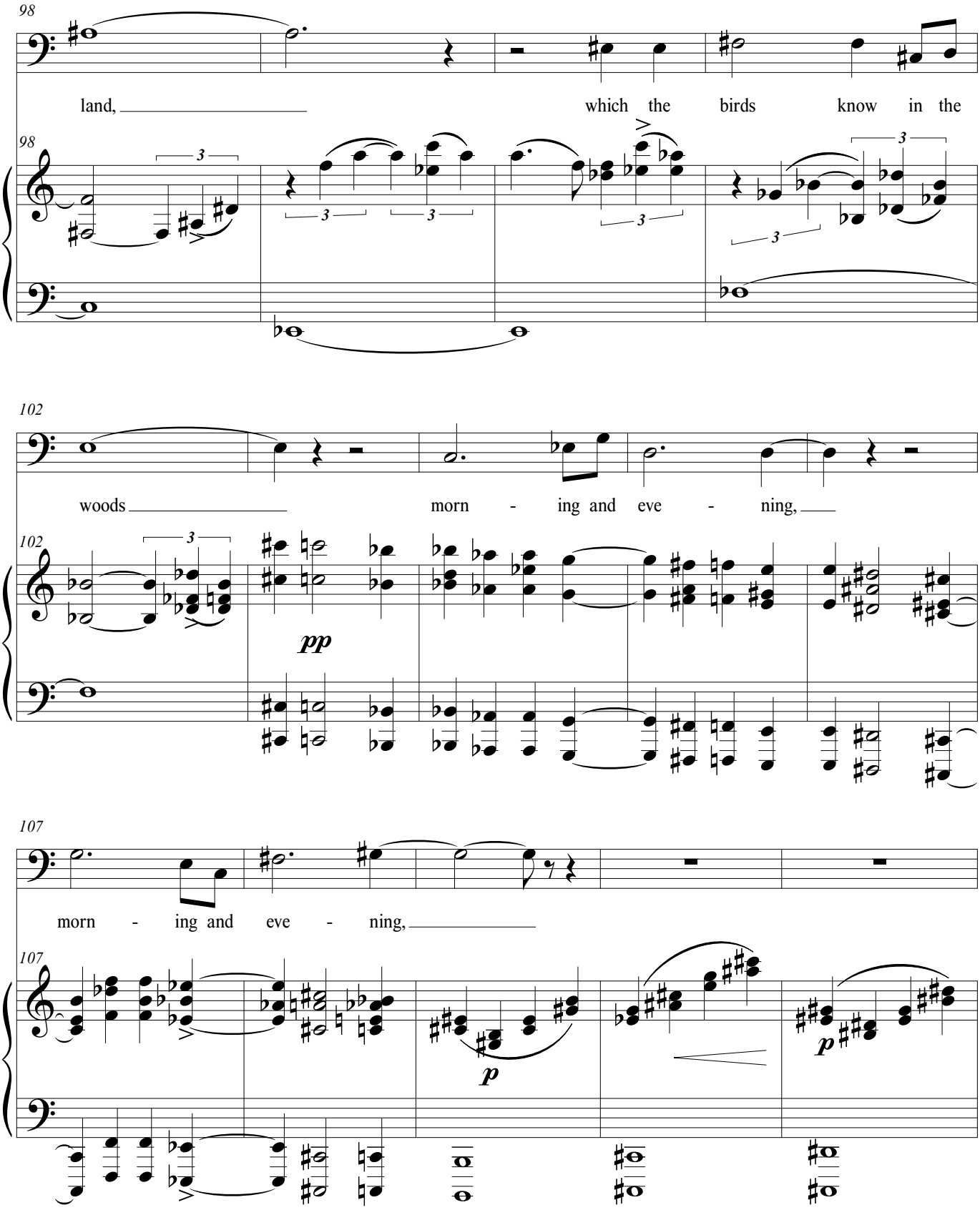

34
I am not the sea nor the red sun,
p
fp
37
I am not the
cresc.
40
wind with girl - ish laugh - ter, not
f
p
f

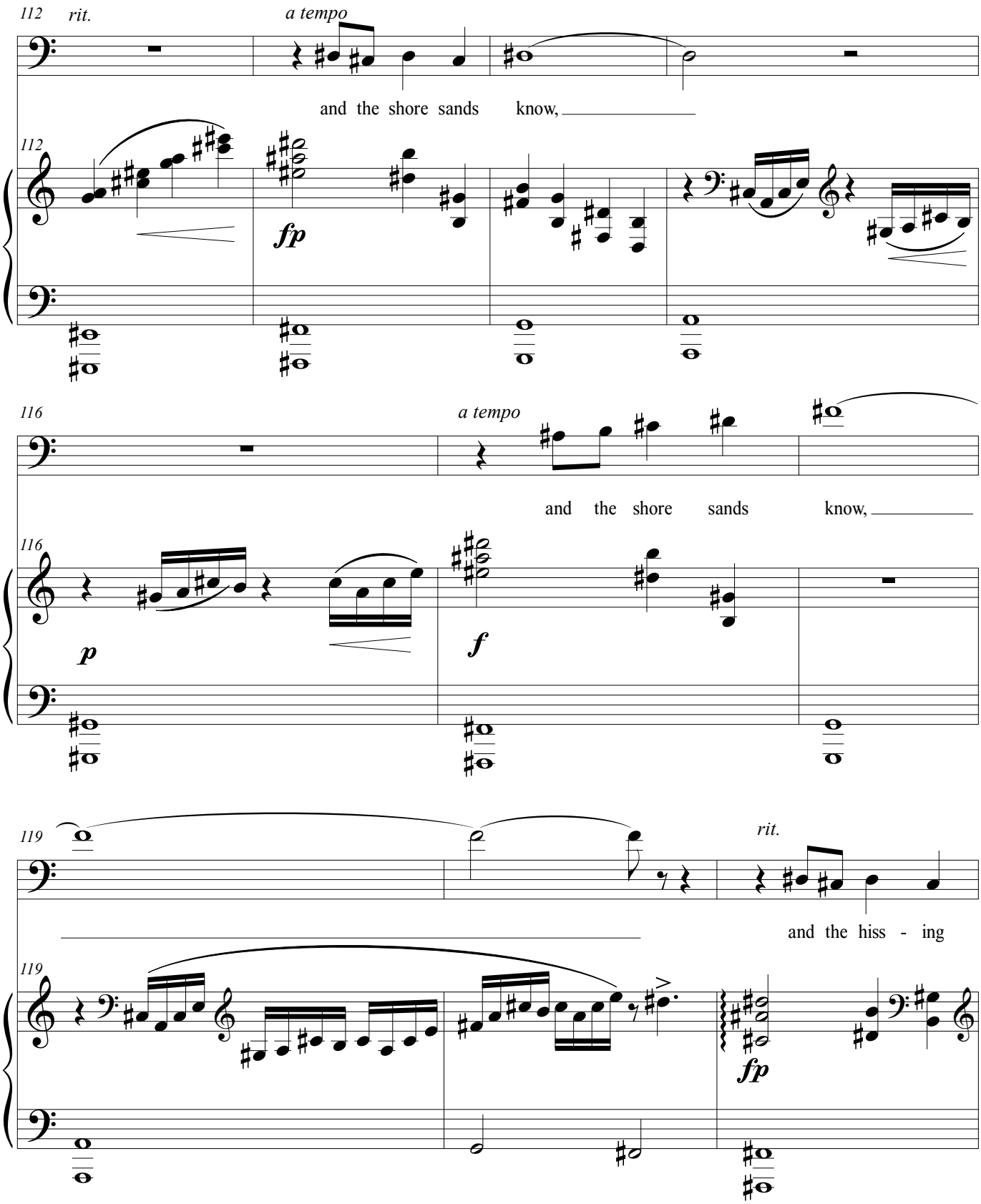

44
the im - mense wind that strength - ens,
cresc.
48
Not the wind which lash - es, Not the
ff
54
spir - it that ev - er lash - es its own bod - y

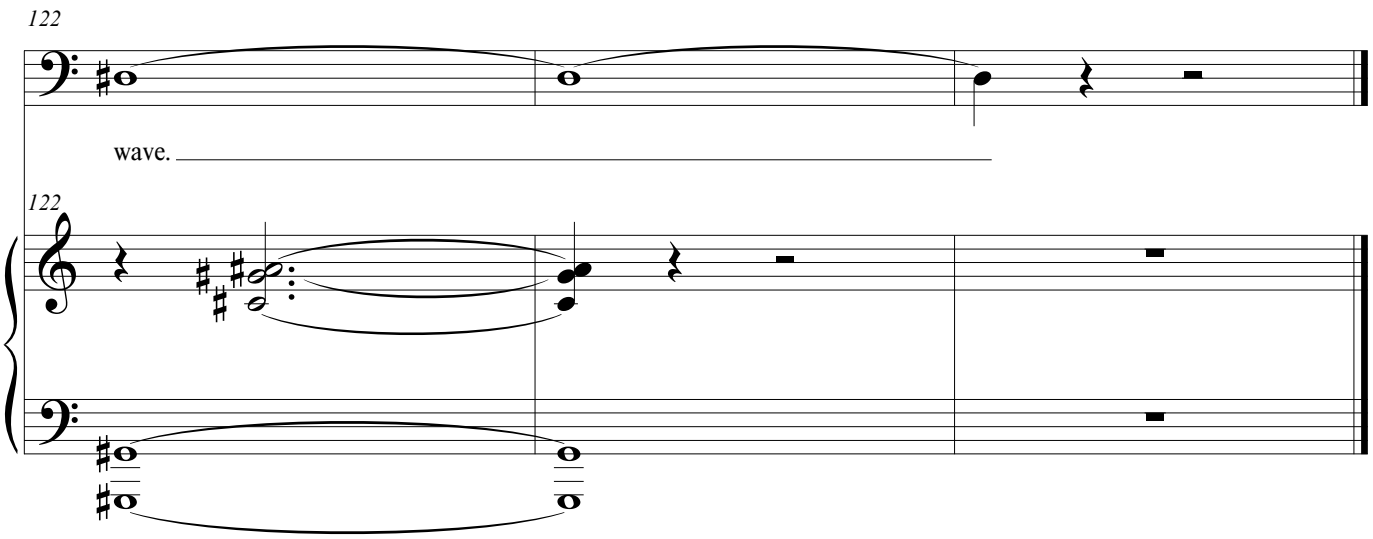

59
to ter - ror and death,
59
p
64
not, not the wind which lash - es,
64
8va
68
fz
not the spi - rit that ev - er lash - es its own bo - dy
8va
68
cresc.
f
(8va)


72
to ter - ror, to ter - - - ror
72
mp cresc.
f
77
rit.
and death.
77
ff
p
81
a tempo
But I am
81
dim.
p
3
3
3
3
3


86
that which comes un - seen and sings,
86
90
sings, sings,
rit.
a tempo
90
94
rit.
a tempo
which bab - bles in brooks and scoots in show - ers on the
8va
94


98
land, which the birds know in the
98
102
woods morn - ing and eve - ning,
pp
102
107
morn - ing and eve - ning,
107
p
p


112
rit.
a tempo
and the shore sands know,
112
fp
116
a tempo
and the shore sands know,
116
p
f
119
rit.
and the hiss - ing
119
fp


122
wave.
122

Winter Trees

Baritone

All the complicated details
of the attiring and
the disattiring are completed!

Leaves are greygreen,
the glass broken, bright green.

A liquid moon
moves gently among
the long branches.

Leaves are greygreen,
the glass broken, bright green.

Thus having prepared their buds
against a sure winter
the wise trees
stand sleeping in the cold.

--William Carlos Williams

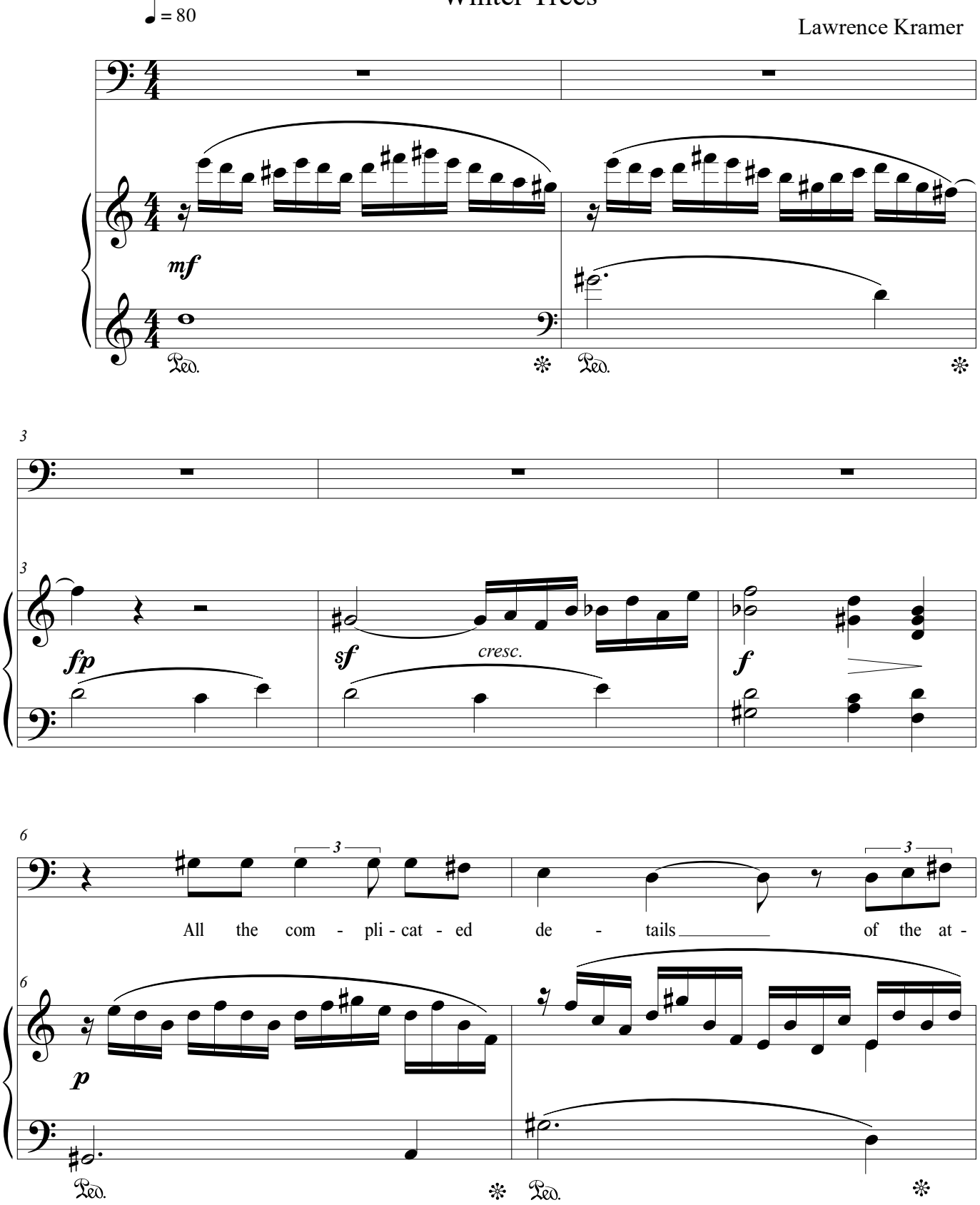
The text interleaves the couplet "Lines" between segments of "Winter Trees."

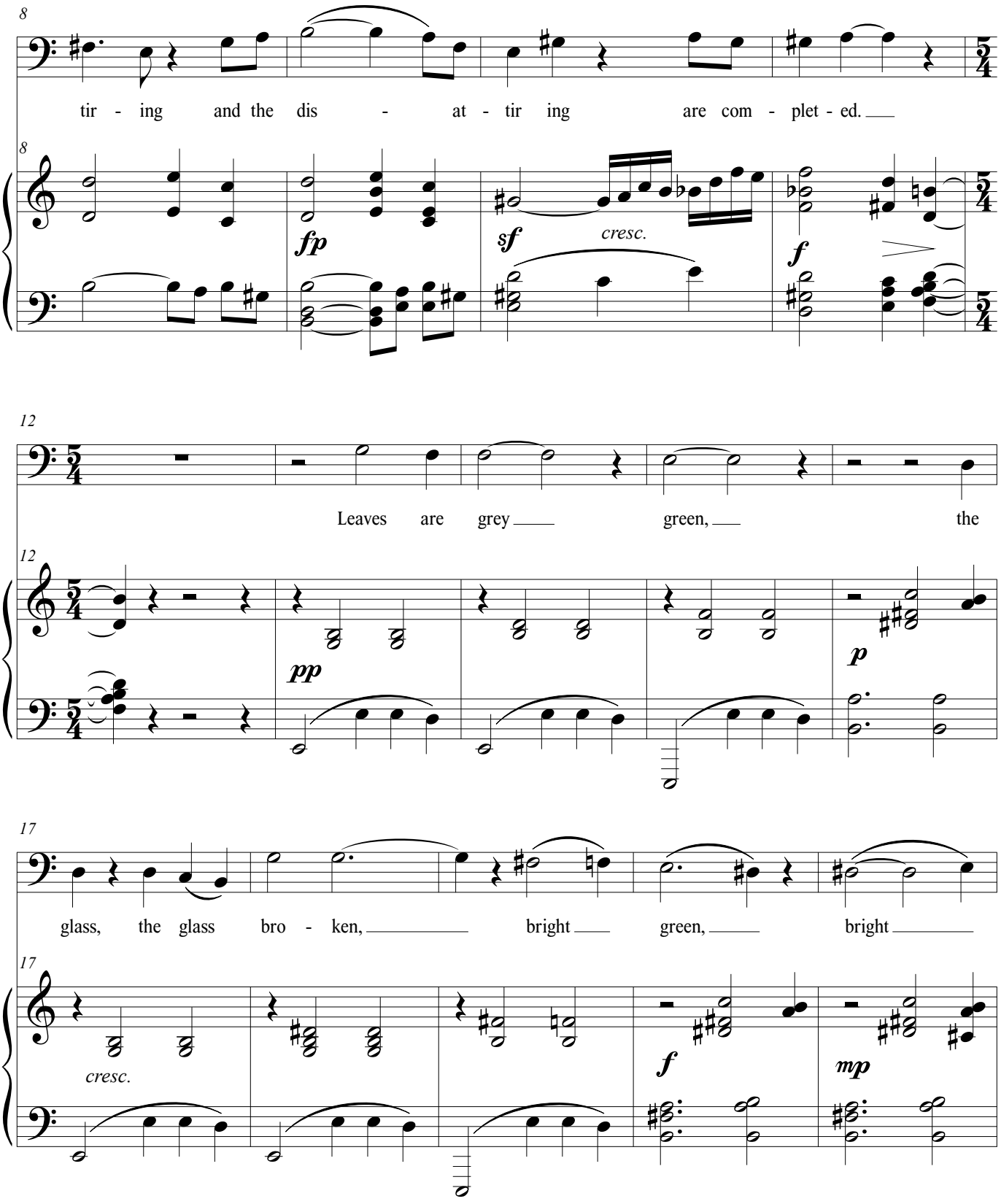
Voice range: C3 - D4
Tessitura: D3 - B4
Duration 3:30

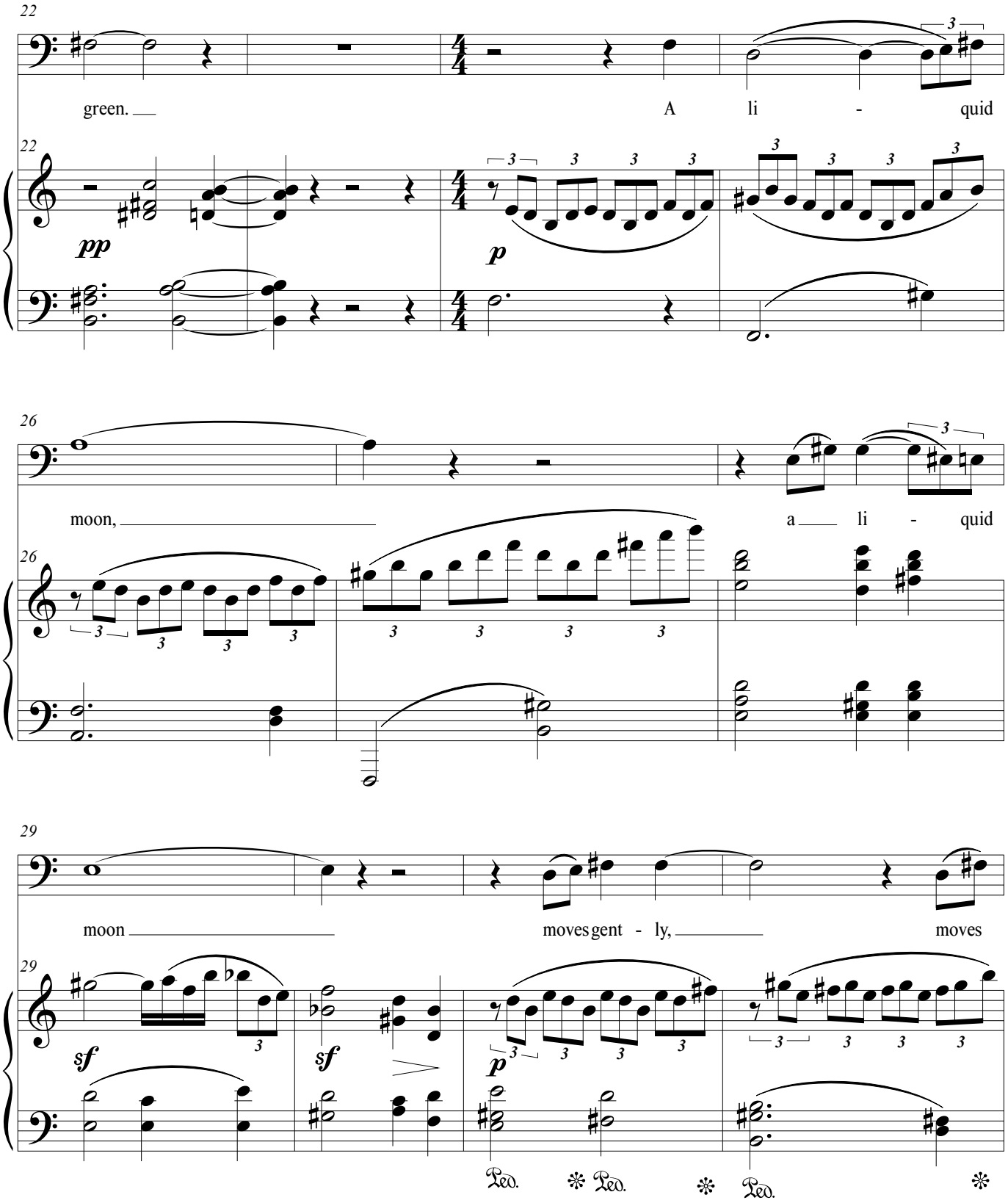
Composed 2019

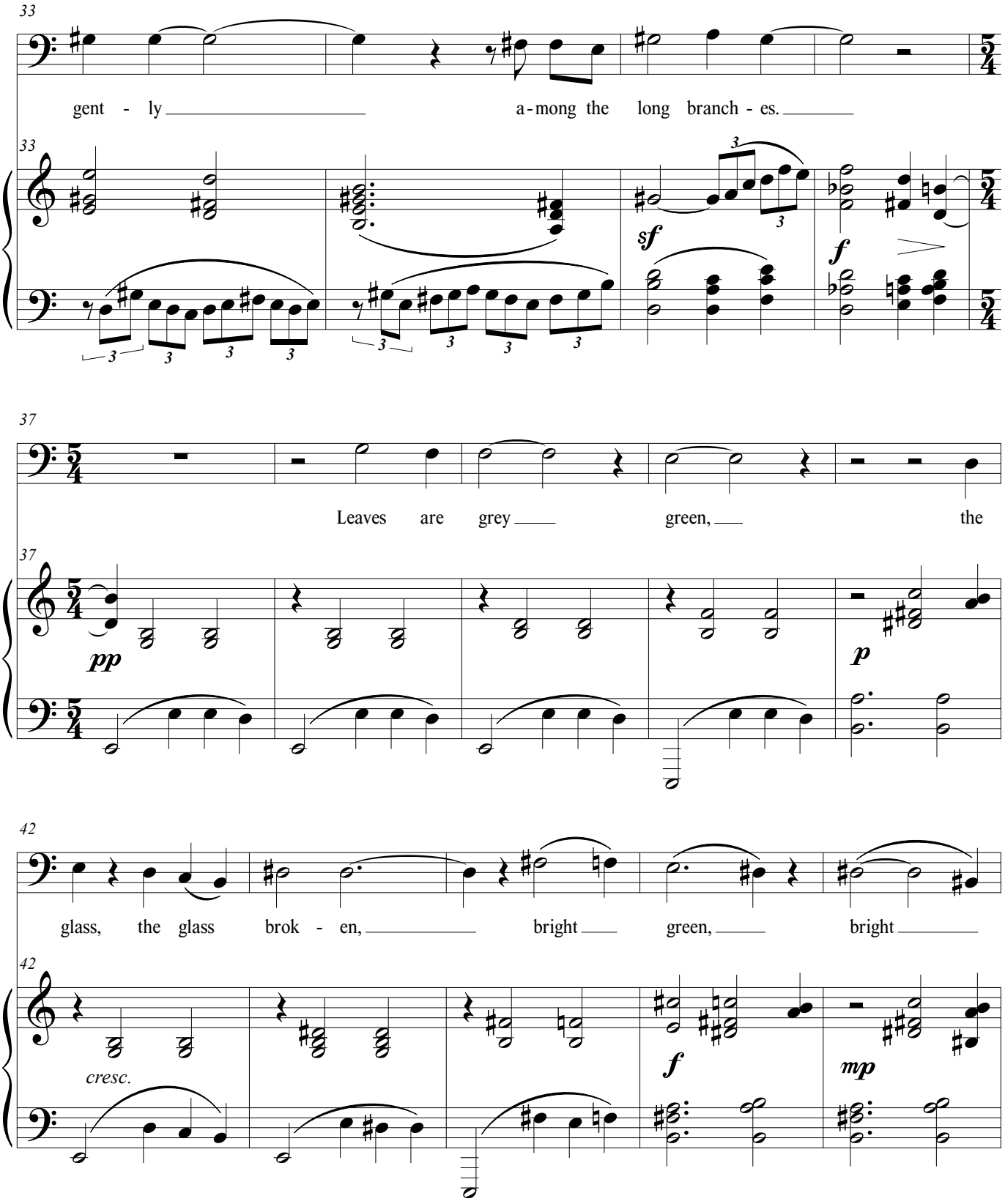
Winter Trees

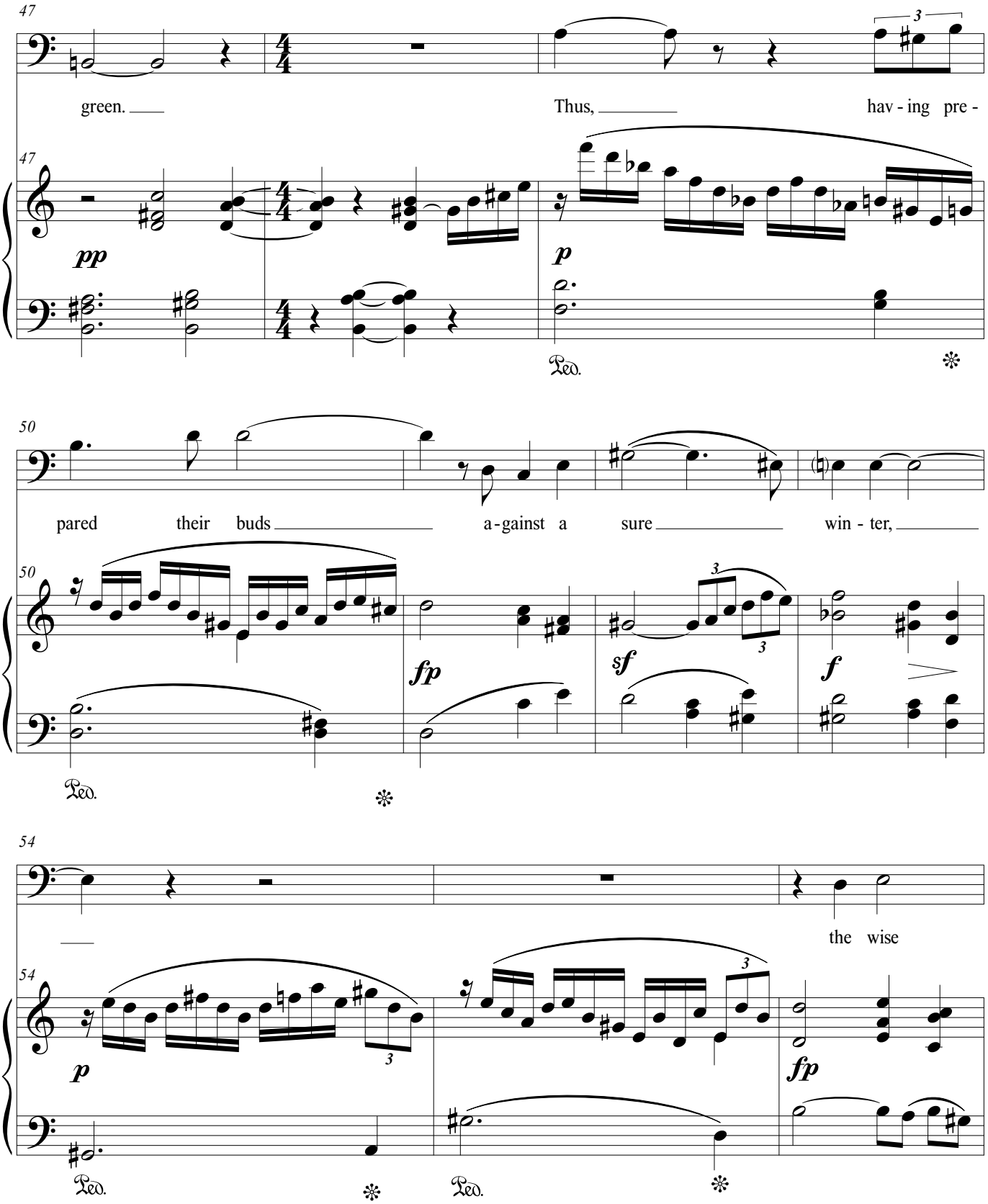
Lawrence Kramer

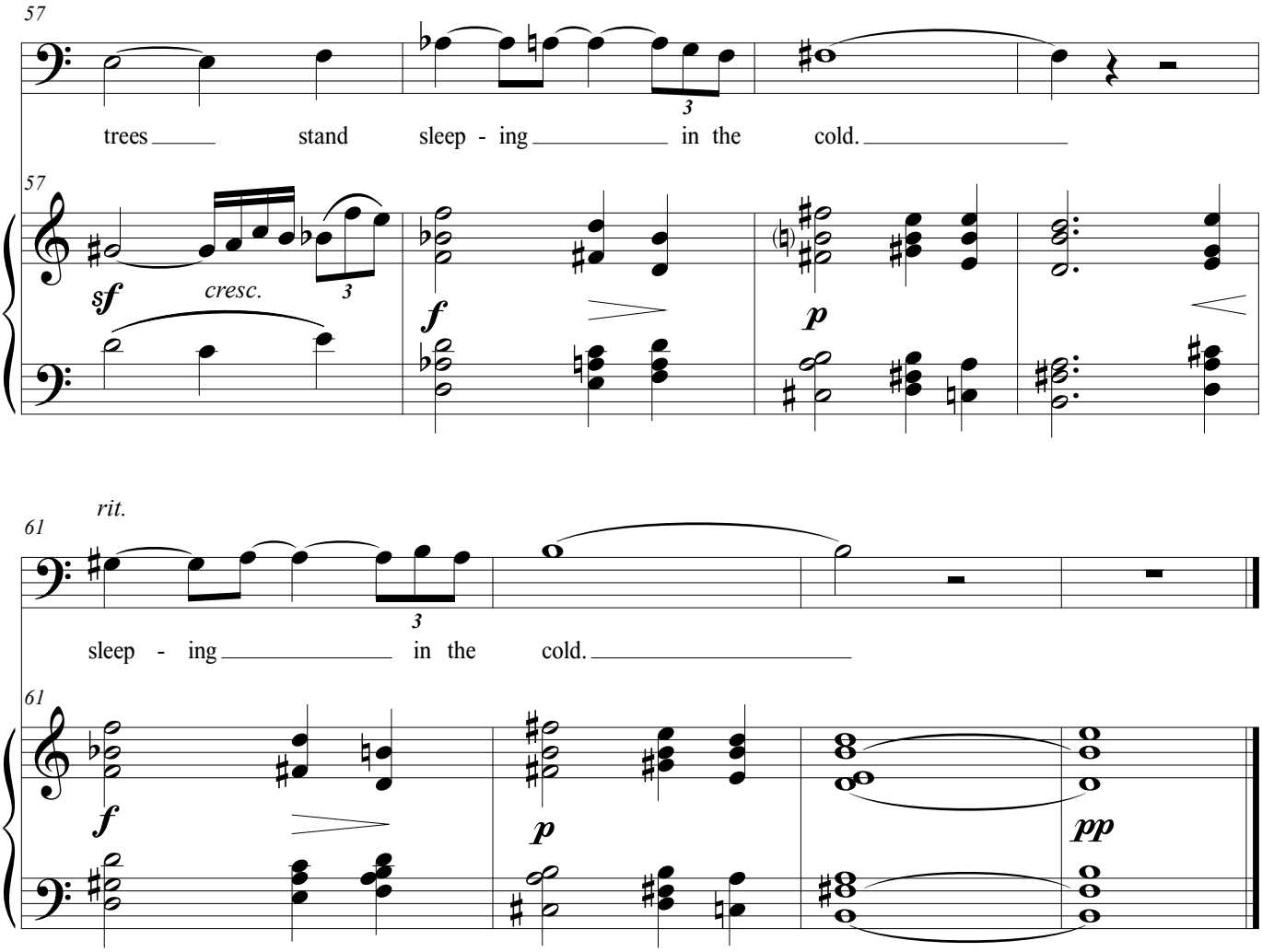



8
tir - ing and the dis - at - tir ing are com - plet - ed.
fp
sf
cresc.
f
12
Leaves are grey green, the
pp
p
17
glass, the glass bro - ken, bright green, bright
cresc.
f
mp


22
green.
A li - quid
pp
p
26
moon,
a li - quid
29
moon
moves gent - ly,
moves
sf
sf
p
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.


33
gent - ly a - mong the long branch - es.
sf
f
37
Leaves are grey green, the
pp
p
42
glass, the glass brok - en, bright green, bright
cresc.
f
mp


47
green.
Thus,
hav - ing pre -
pp
p
Ped.
50
pared their buds
a - gainst a sure
win - ter,
fp
sf
f
Ped.
54
the wise
p
fp
Ped.
Ped.


57
trees stand sleep - ing in the cold.
57
sf
cresc.
f
p
rit.
61
sleep - ing in the cold.
61
f
p
pp

A Winter Walk

I had for my winter evening walk--
No one at all with whom to talk,
But I had the cottages in a row
Up to their shining eyes in snow.
And I thought I had the folk within:
I had the sound of a violin;
I had a glimpse through curtain laces
Of youthful forms and youthful faces.
I had such company outward bound.
I went till there were no cottages found.
I turned and repented, but coming back
I saw no window but that was black.
Over the snow my creaking feet
Disturbed the slumbering village street
Like profanation, by your leave,
At ten o'clock of a winter eve.

--Robert Frost

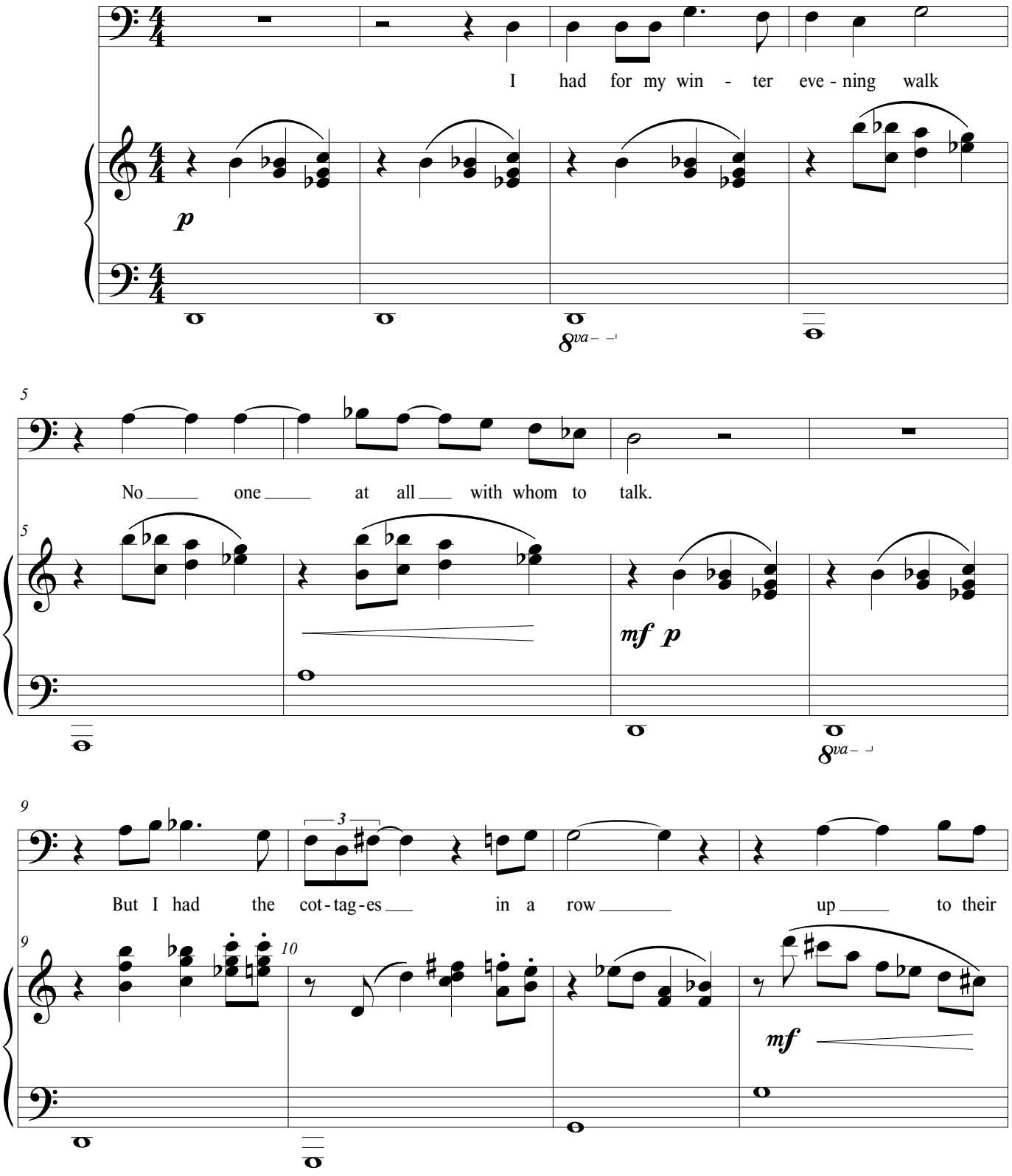
Voice range: A2-D4
Tessitura: Tessitura: D3 - B4
Duration 3:15

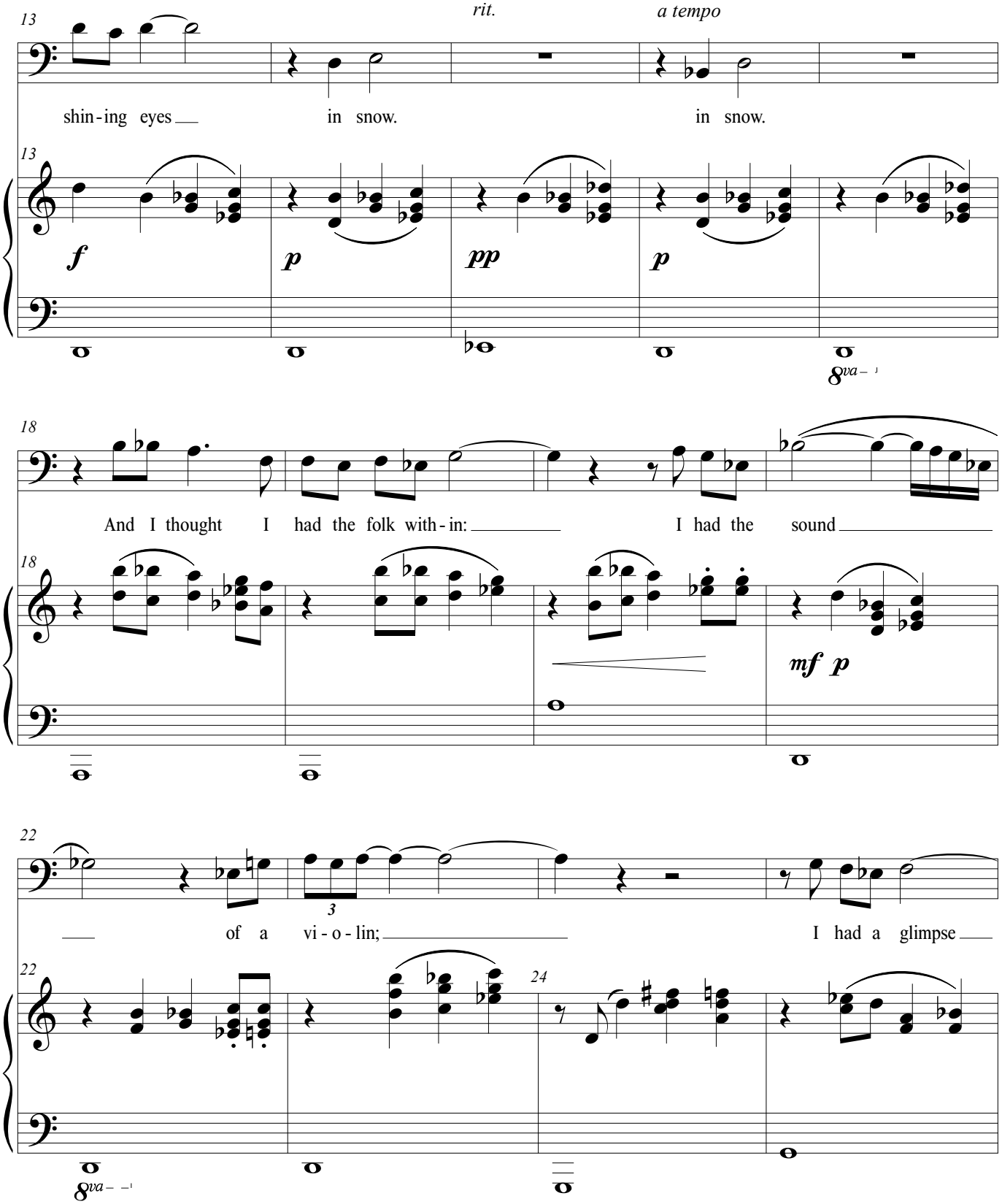
Composed 2020

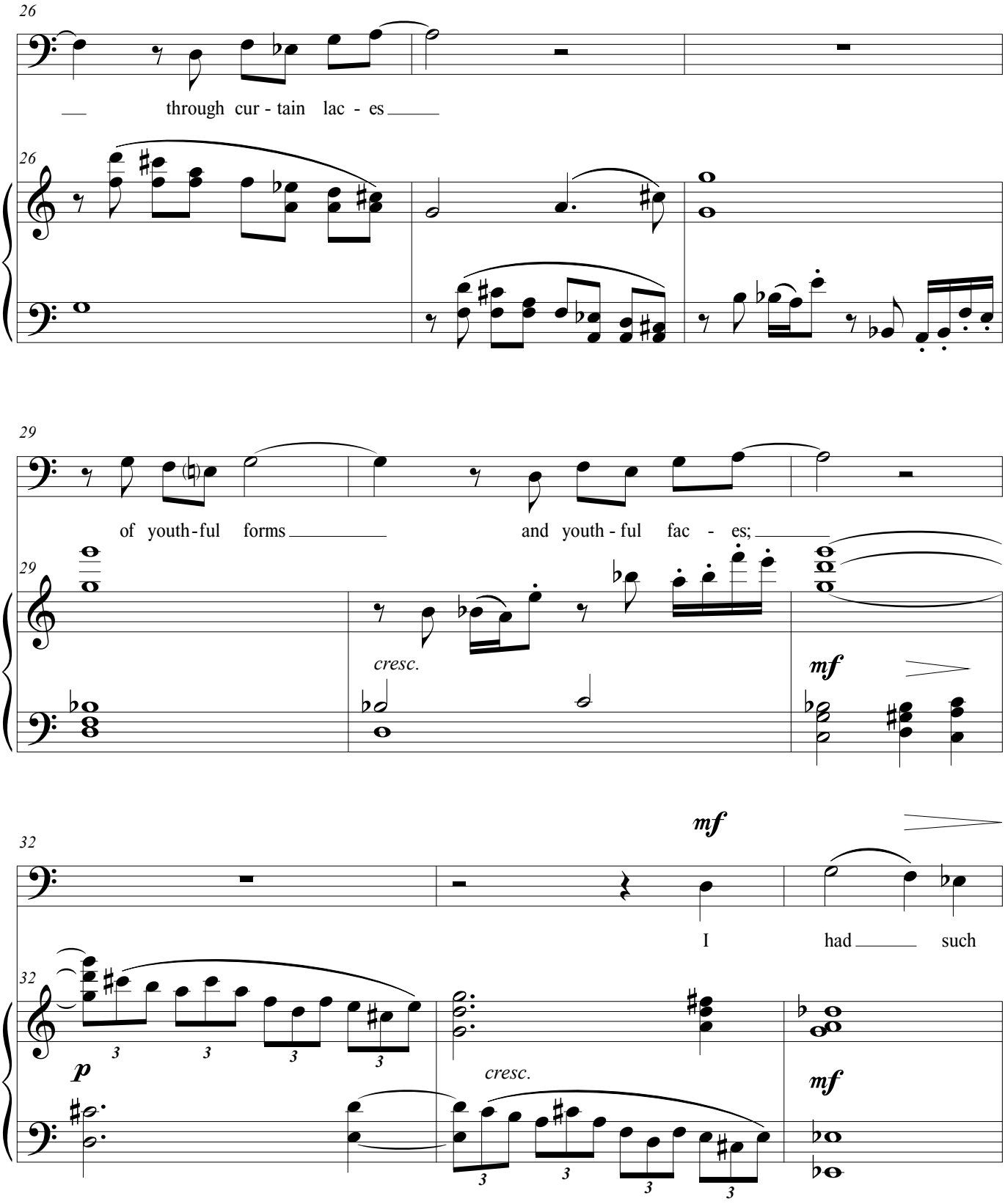
A Winter Walk

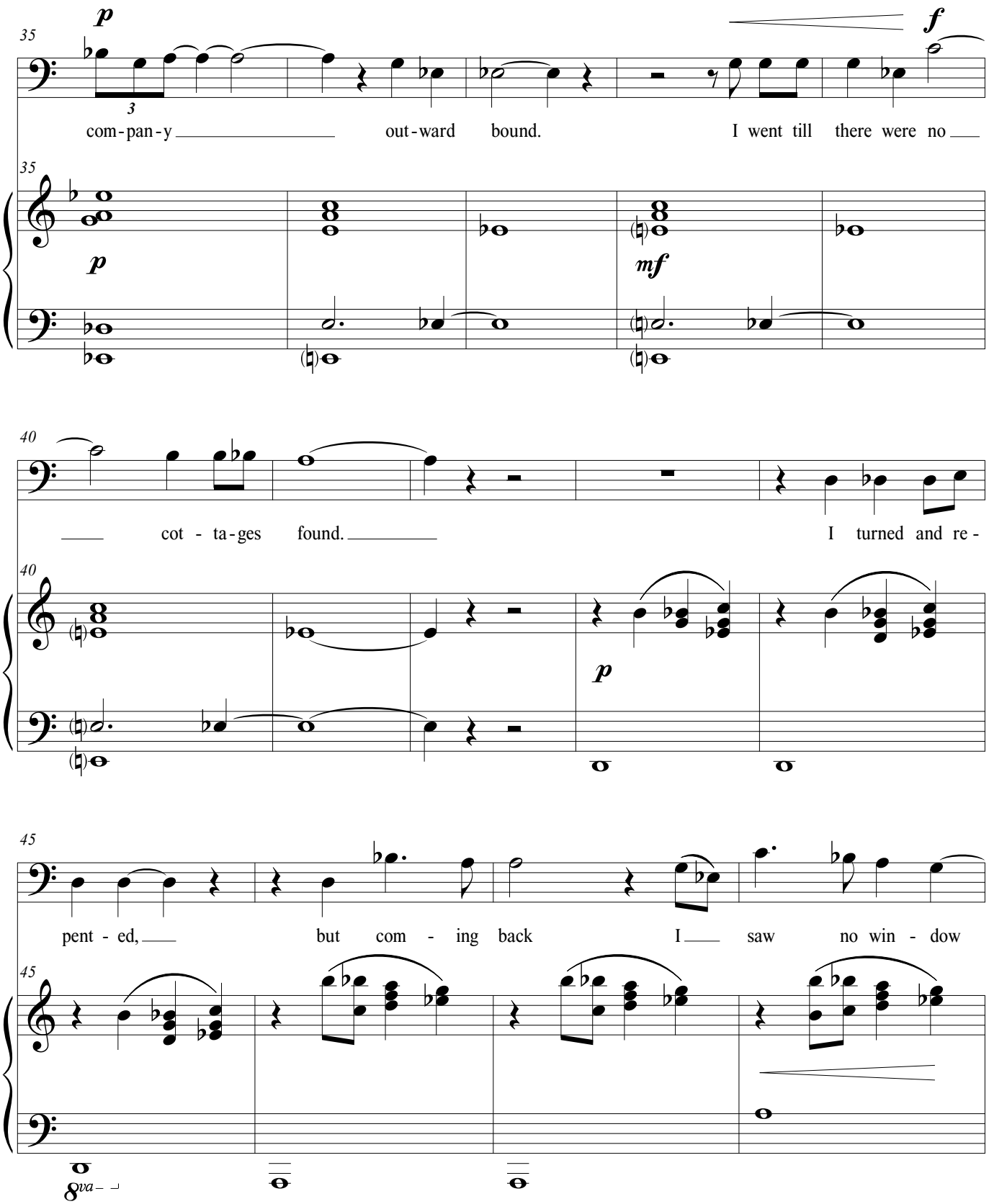
♩ = 88

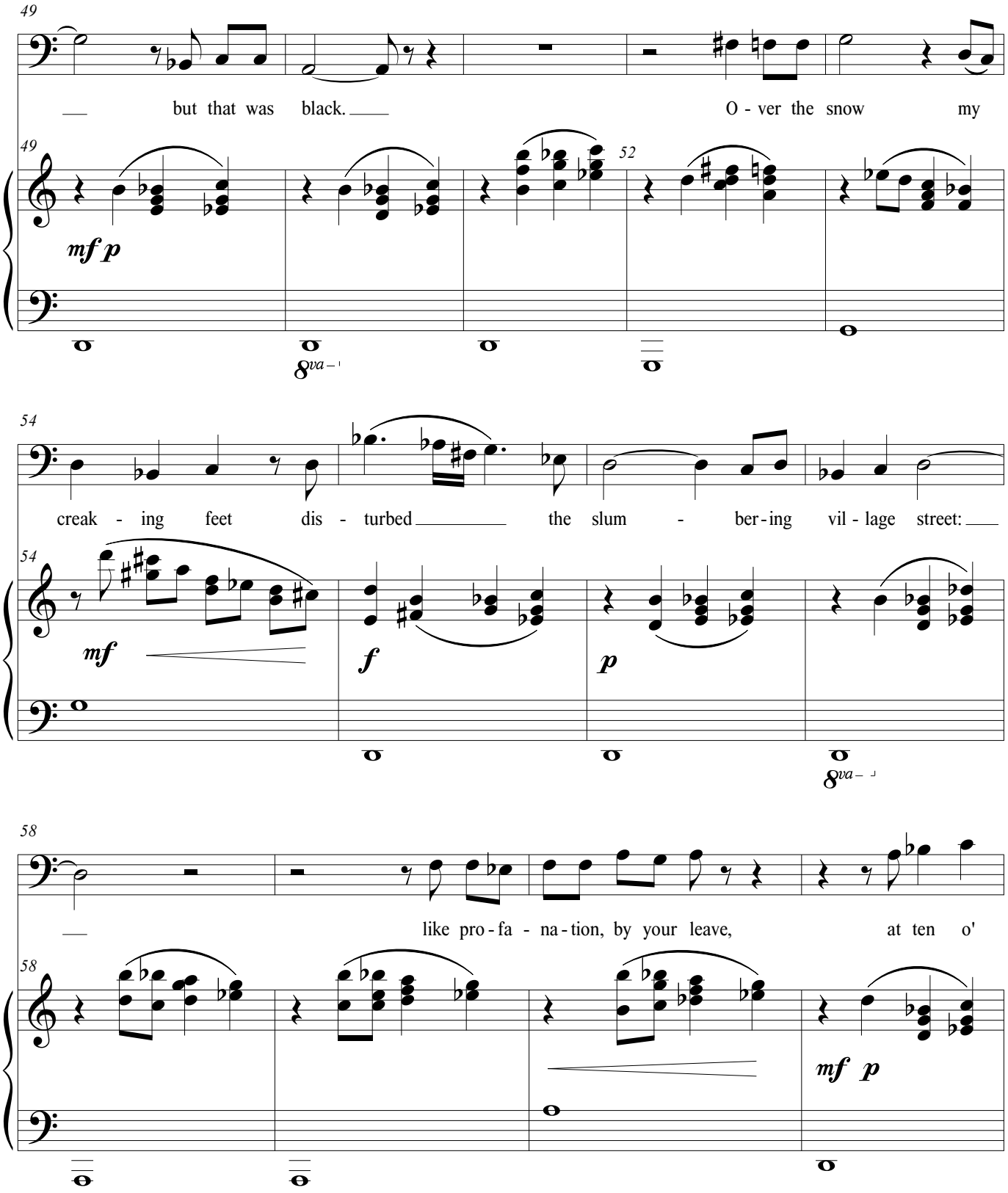
Lawrence Kramer

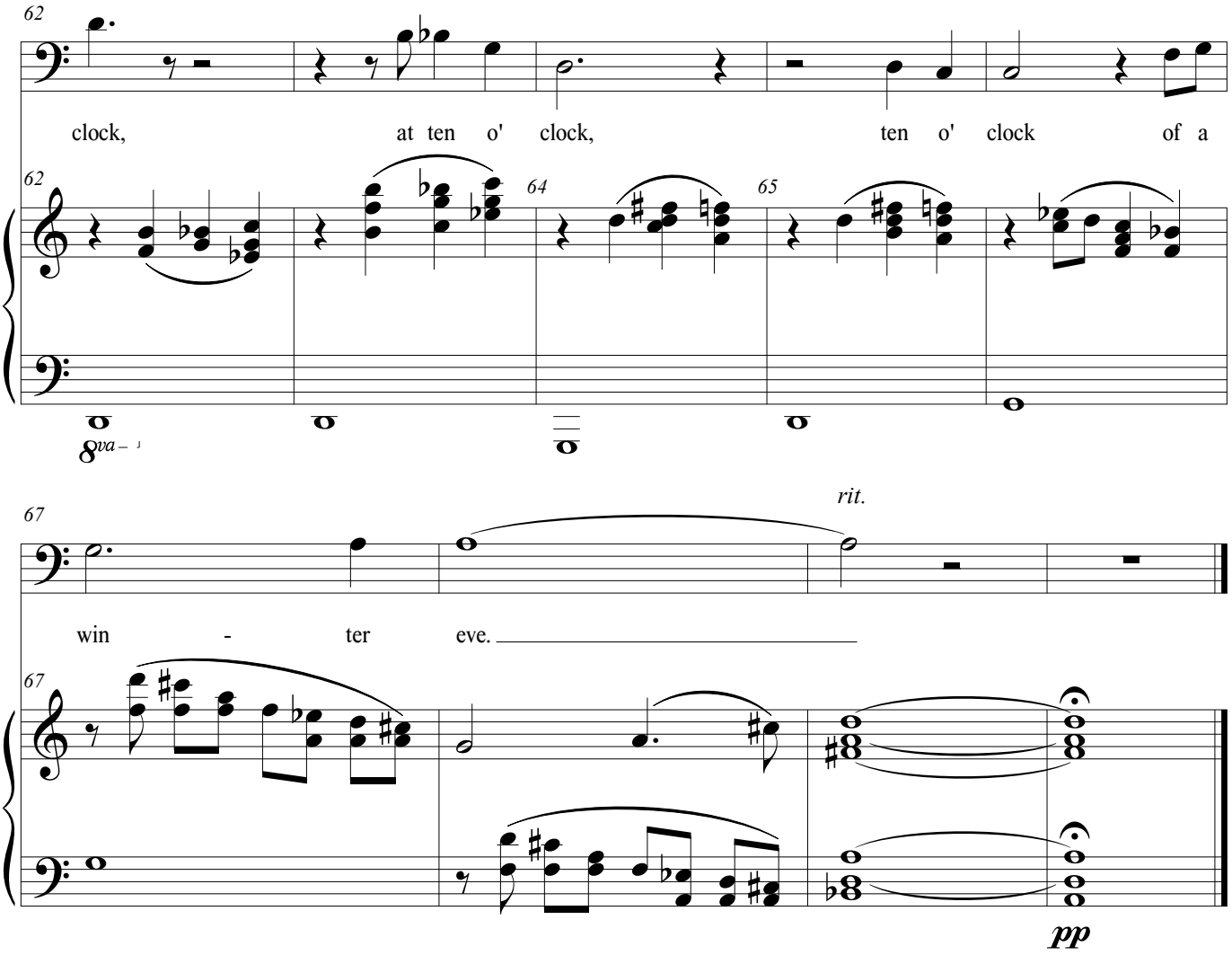



13
rit.
a tempo
shin - ing eyes in snow. in snow.
13
f
p
pp
p
8va
18
And I thought I had the folk with - in: I had the sound
18
mf p
22
of a vi - o - lin; I had a glimpse
22
24
8va


26
through cur - tain lac - es
29
of youth - ful forms
and youth - ful fac - es;
cresc.
mf
32
mf
I had such
p
cresc.
mf


35
p
f
com-pan-y out-ward bound. I went till there were no
p
mf
40
cot - ta-ges found. I turned and re-
p
45
pent - ed, but com - ing back I saw no win - dow
8va


49
but that was black.
O - ver the snow my
49
52
mf p
8va
54
creak - ing feet dis - turbed the slum - ber - ing vil - lage street:
54
mf
f
p
8va
58
like pro - fa - na - tion, by your leave, at ten o'
58
mf p


62
clock, at ten o' clock, ten o' clock of a
62
64
65
8va
67
rit.
win - ter eve.
67
pp