THE TRACKS OF ANGELS
for Bass-baritone and String Quartet

a setting of three sonnets by Francis Petrarch
translated by Nicholas Kilmer

WILLIAM HOLAB

3

Era il giorno ch' al sol si scoloraro
Per la pietà del suo fattore i rai,
Quando i' fui preso, e non me ne guardai,
Che i be' vostri occhi, donna, mi legaro.

Tempo non mi parea da far riparo
Contra colpi d'Amor: però m'andai
Secur, senza sospetto: onde i miei guai
Nel commune dolor s'incominciaro.

Trovommi Amor del tutto disarmato
Et aperta la via per gli occhi al core,
Che di lagrime son fatti uscio e varco.

Però, al mio parer, non li fu onore
Ferir me di saetta in quello stato,
A voi armata non mostrar pur l'arco.

156

I' vidi i terra angelici costumi
E celesti bellezze al mondo sole;
Tal che di rimembrar mi giova e dole,
Ché quant' io miro par sogni, ombre e fumi.

E vidi lagrimar que' duo bei lumi,
C' han fatto mille volte invidia al sole;
Et udii sospirando dir parole
Che farian gire i monti e stare i fiumi.

Amor, senno, valor, pietate e doglia
Facean piangendo un piú dolce concento
D'ogni altro che nel mondo udir si soglia;

Ed era il cielo a l'armonia sí 'ntento,
Che non si vedea 'n ramo mover foglia;
Tanta dolcessa avea pien l'aere e 'l vento!

250

Solea lontana in sonno consolarme
Con quella dolce angelica sua vista
Madonna; or mi spaventa e mi contrista,
Né di duol né di téma posso aitarme:

Ché spesso nel suo volto veder parme
Vera pietà con grave dolor mista,
Et udir cose onde 'l cor fede acquista
Che di gioia e di speme si disarme.

—Non ti sovèn di quella ultima sera,—
Dice ella, —ch' i' lasciai li occhi tuoi molli,
E sforzata dal tempo me n'andai?

I' non te 'l potei dir allor né volli,
Or te 'l dico per cosa esperta e vera:
Non sperar di vedermi in terra mai.

3

It was the day when the sun darkened, as God
Himself vanished into death, when I was taken.
I took myself in, Madam, bound by your looking at me.

It did not seem to me a fit time to take shelter
Against the stroke of love; therefore I walked on,
Without suspicion, vulnerable—whence woe to me
Begins in our common sorrow.

Love found me altogether unarmed,
My eyes, my heart's gates, opened by tears
To give free passage toward the heart.

It was dishonorable of him to take me
Unawares in my pity;
Not to have tried his weapon on your armor.

156

I saw the tracks of angels in the earth,
The beauty of heaven walking by itself on the world.
Joke or sorrow now, it seems a dream
Shadow, or smoke.

I saw a kind of rain that made the sun ashamed,
And heard her, speaking sad words, make mountains
Shift, the rivers stop.

Love, wisdom, valor, pity, pain,
Made better harmony with weeping
Than any other likely to be heard in the world.

And the air and the wind were so filled with this deep music
No single leaf moved on its still branch.

250

I am awake. She has come to me
In my sleep, as she used to do bringing comfort.
I am left this time with terrified sadness.

Her face was sad. She looked on me with pity.

“Do you remember the last evening
When I left you weeping? I
Had known it was time.

I could not quite tell you then
What must be true—
You will not see me again in the world.”

—FRANCIS PETRARCH
translated by NICHOLAS KILMER

Premiered on May 3, 1985 at Carnegie Recital Hall, New York City.
Benjamin Whiteley, bass-baritone and The Andiamo String Quartet:
Ryan Brown, John McGrosso, violins, Leslie Tomkins, viola, James Lee, cello

duration: ca. 12:00

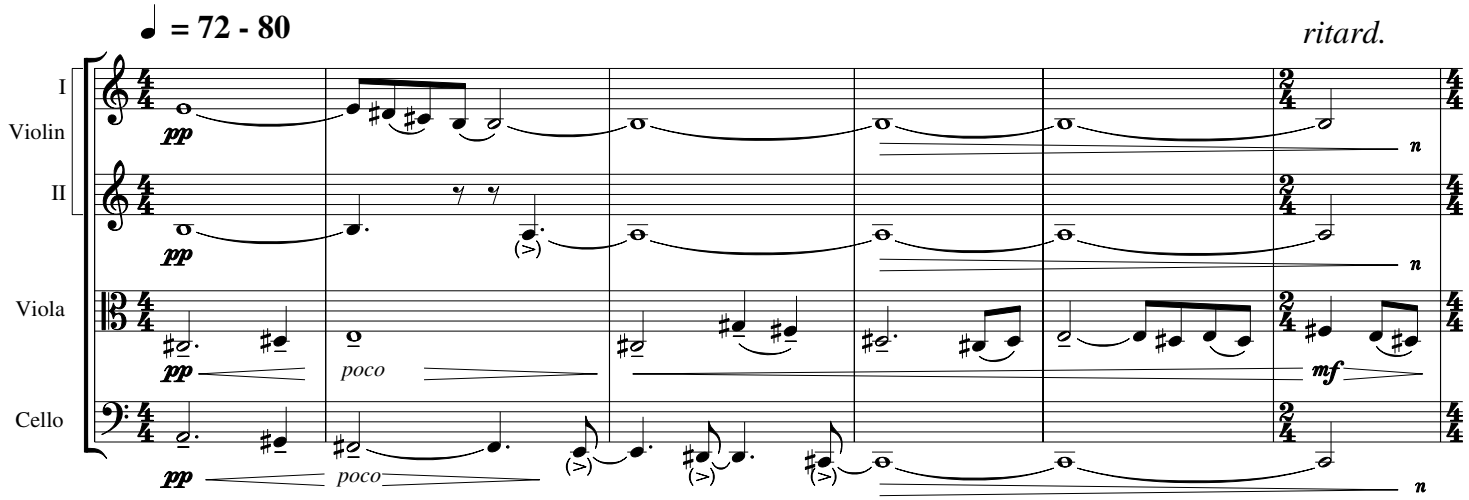
written for and dedicated to Benjamin Whiteley

THE TRACKS OF ANGELS

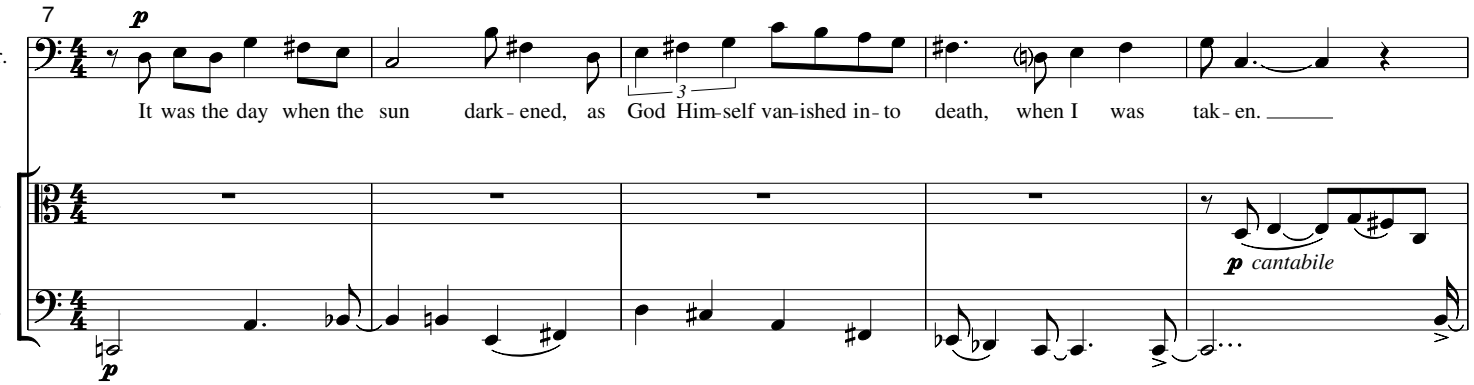
Francis Petrarch

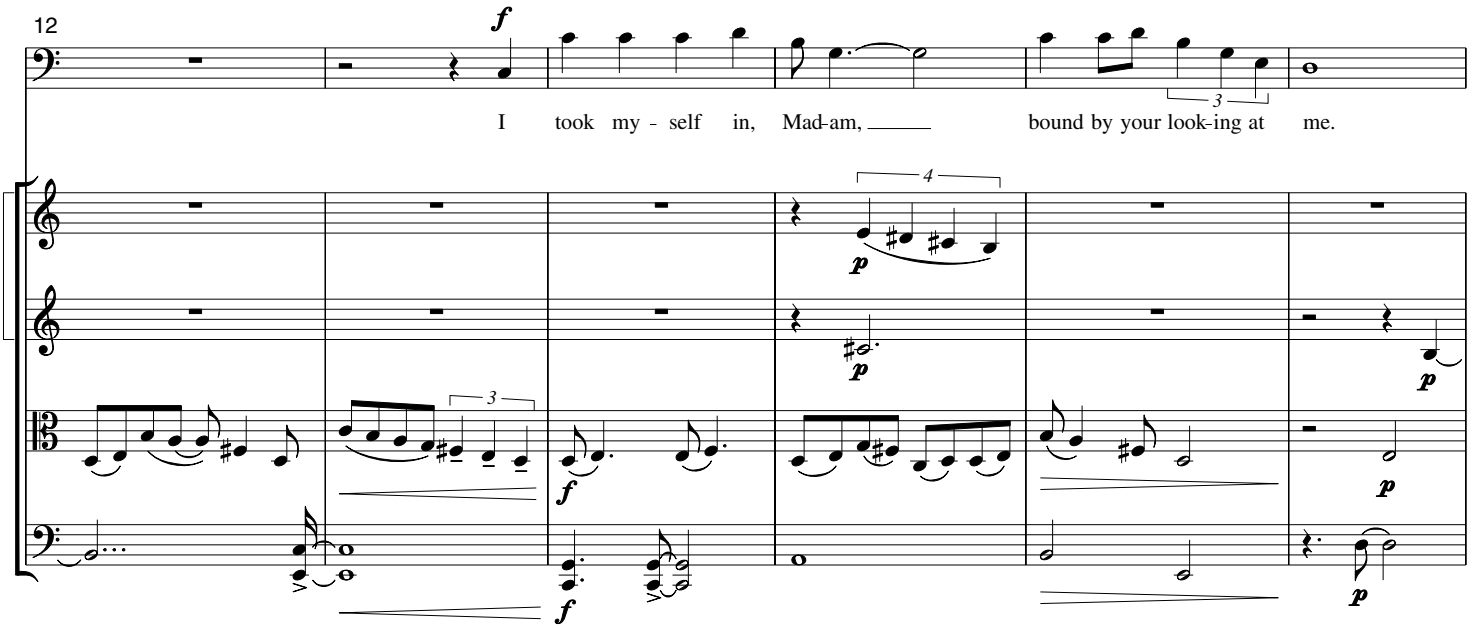
I
(no. 3)

William Holab



Poco meno mosso





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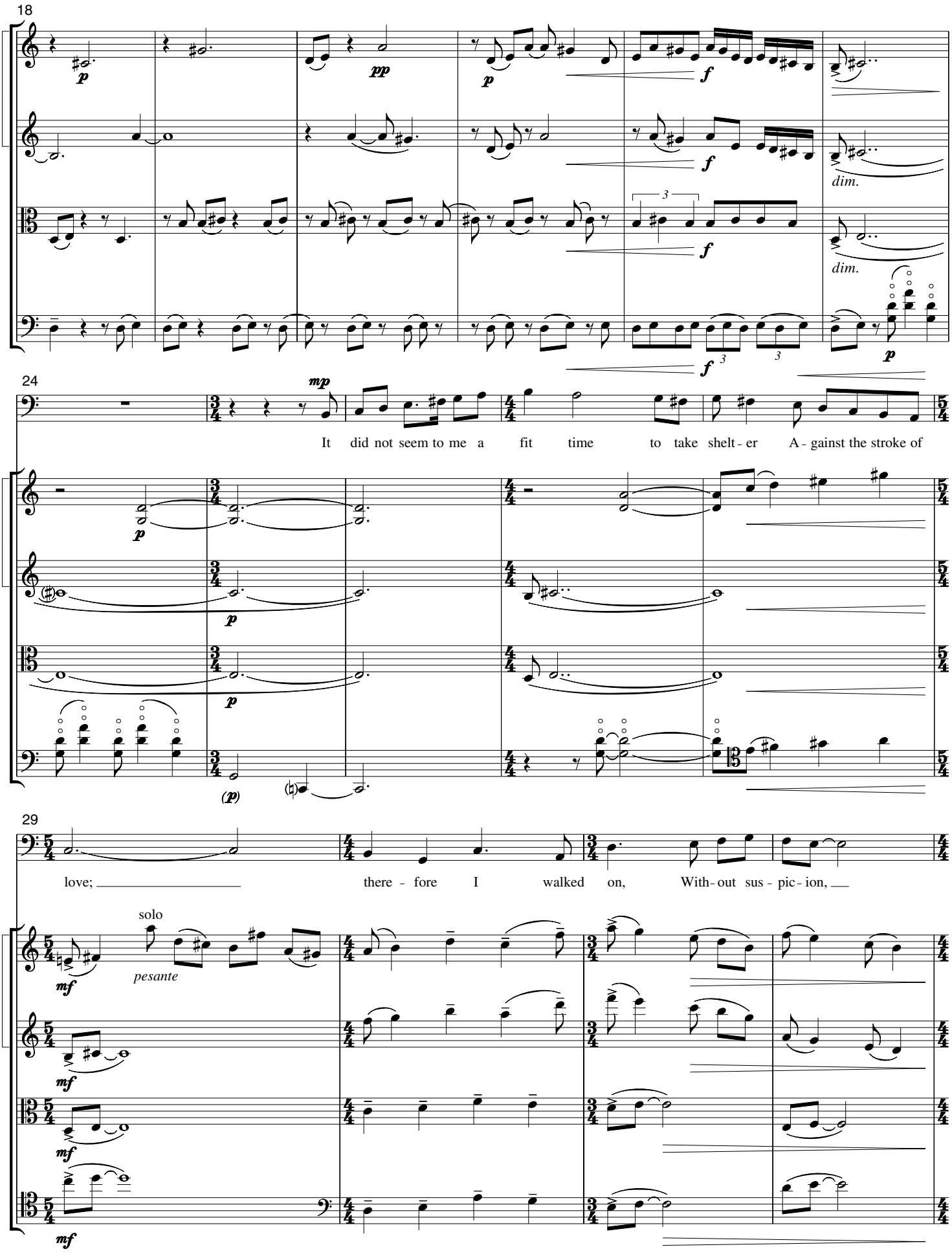

18
dim.
dim.
24
It did not seem to me a fit time to take shelt - er A - gainst the stroke of
29
love; there - fore I walked on, With - out sus - pic - ion,
solo
pesante

33

poco accelerando

vul - ner-a-ble– whence woe to me Be - gins in our com-mon sor - row.

ord.

p *mf* *pp*

p liltingly *mf* *pp*

p liltingly *mf* *pp*

p *mf* *pp*

Più mosso *accelerando poco a poco*

38

cresc. poco a poco

Love found me al - to-geth-er un - armed, My eyes, my

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

mp cresc. poco a poco

42

ff

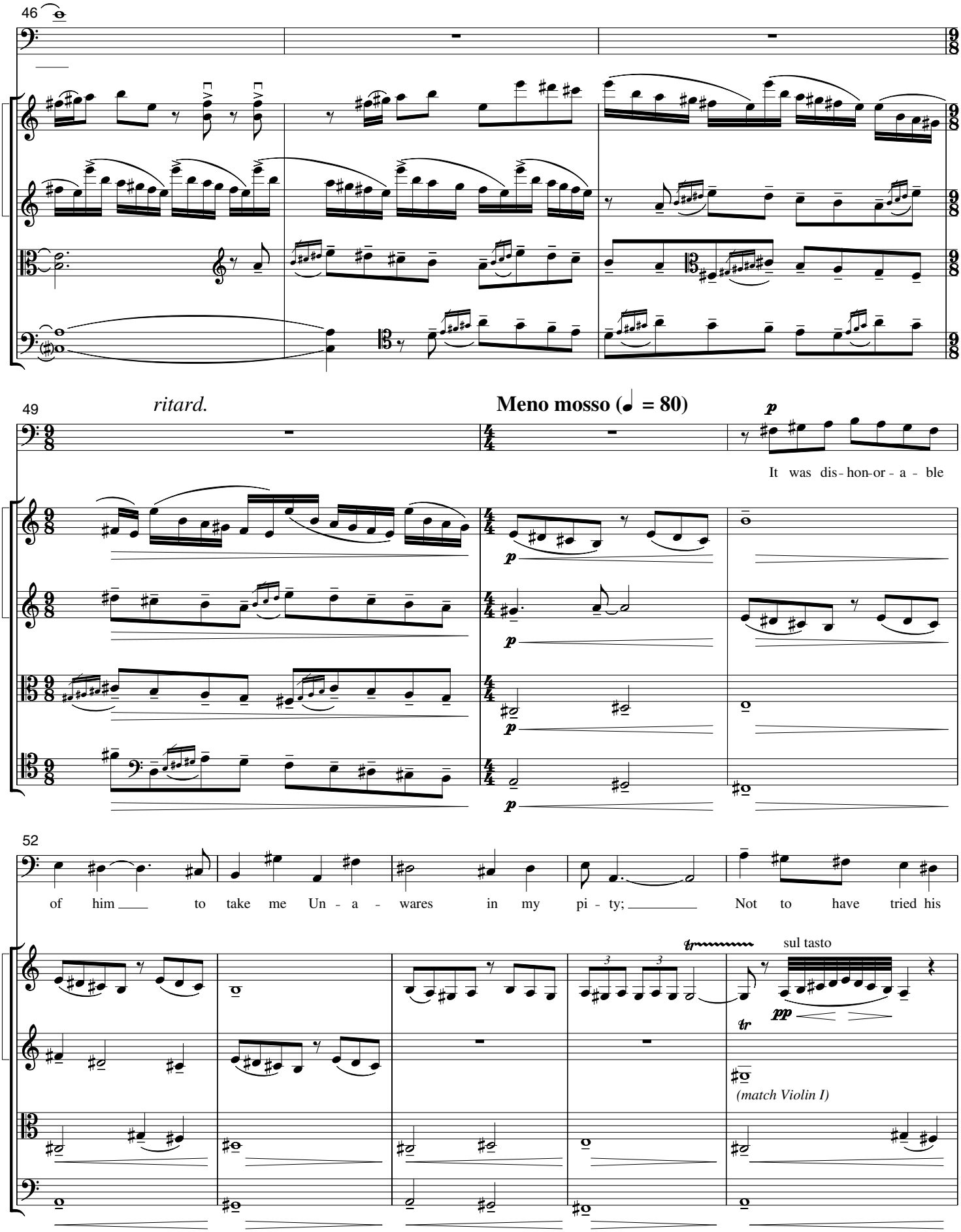
heart's gates, o - pened by tears To give free pas - sage toward the heart.

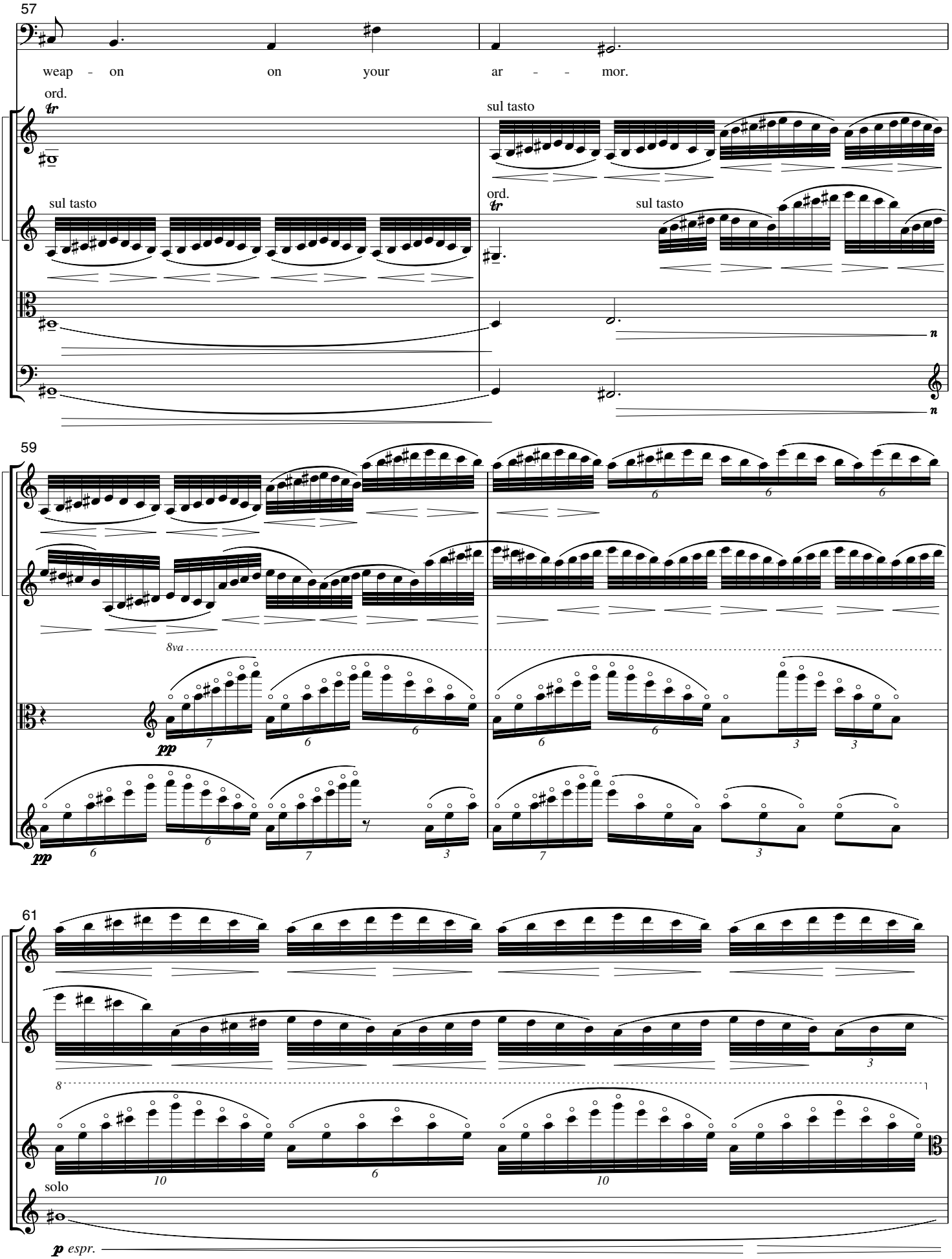
ff

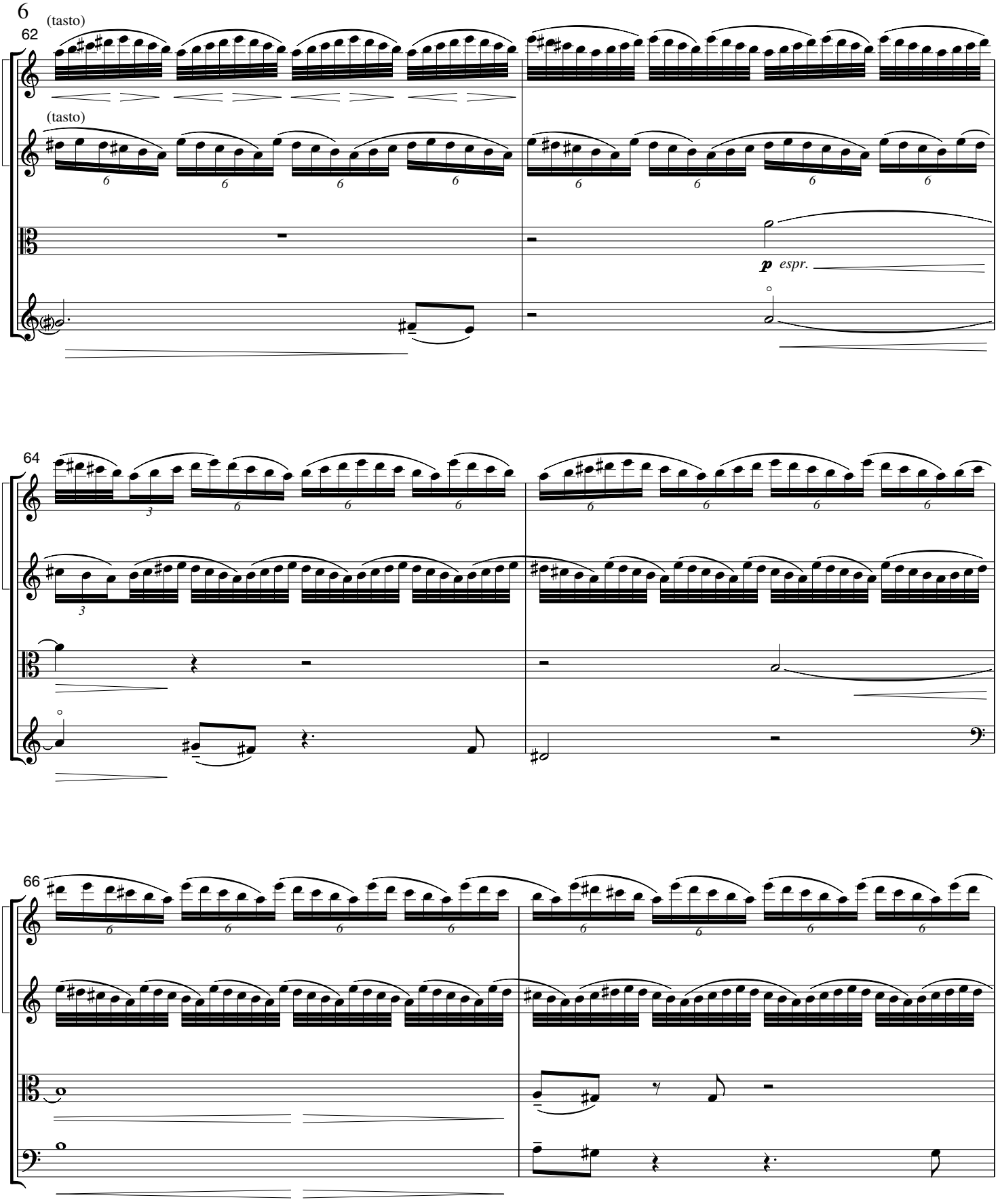
ff

ff

ff


46
ritard.
Meno mosso (♩ = 80)
49
It was dis - hon-or - a - ble
52
of him to take me Un - a - wares in my pi - ty; Not to have tried his
sul tasto
(match Violin I)


57
weap - on on your ar - - mor.
ord.
sul tasto
sul tasto
ord.
sul tasto
59
8va
61
solo
p espr.


62
(tasto)
(tasto)
p espr.
64
66

accelerando

68 (tasto)

(tasto)

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

70

ord.

ord.

attacca

II
(no. 156)

♪ = ♪ sempre

72 ♩ = 120-138

(3+2+2+2)

mf

I saw the tracks of an - gels in the

pizz. arco

pizz. arco

pizz. arco

pizz. arco

f

75

(3+2+2+2+3)

earth, The beaut - y of heav - en walk - ing by it - self on the

pizz. arco

pizz. arco

pizz. arco

pizz. arco

77

(3+2+2+3)

cresc.

(3+2+2+2+2)

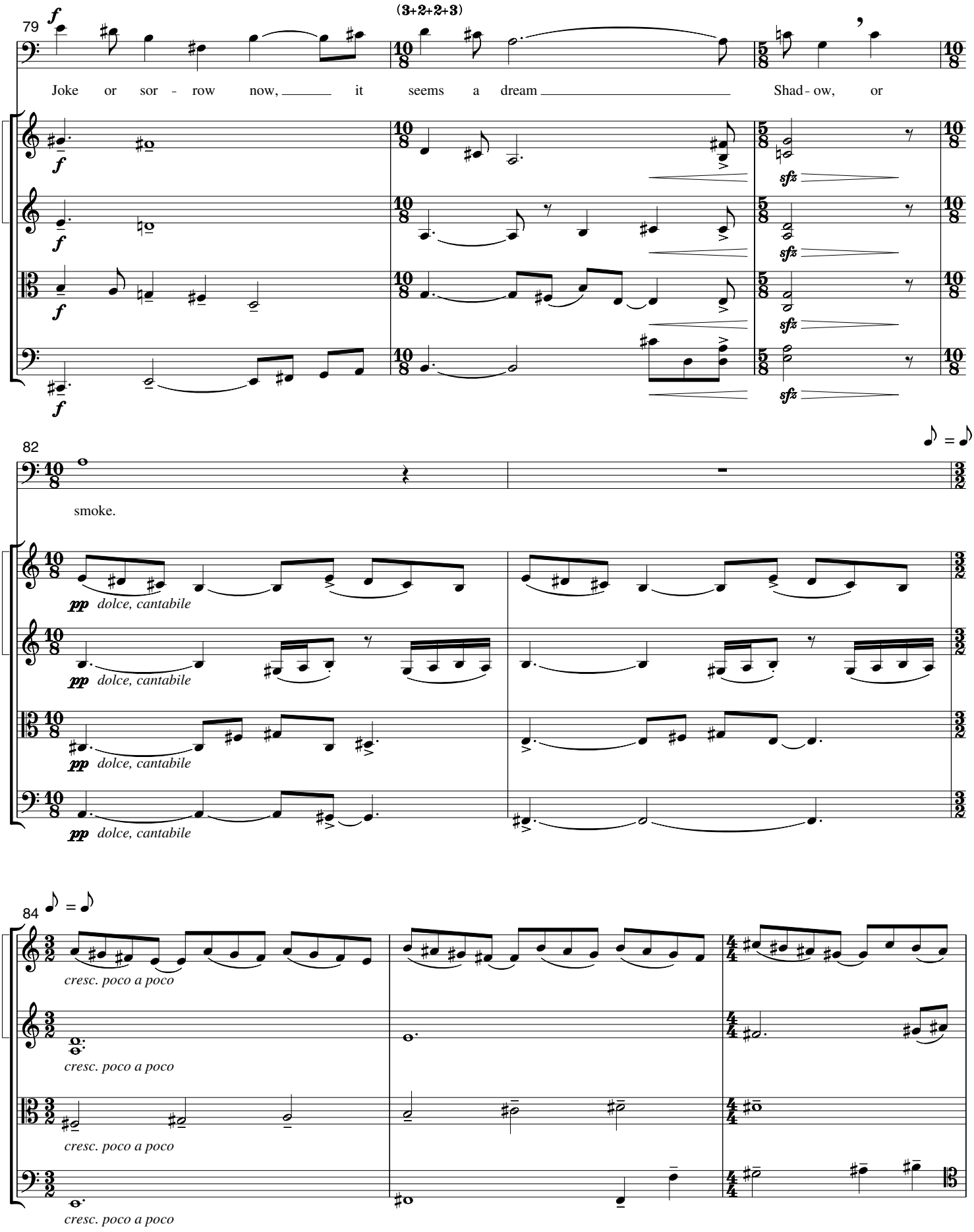
world.

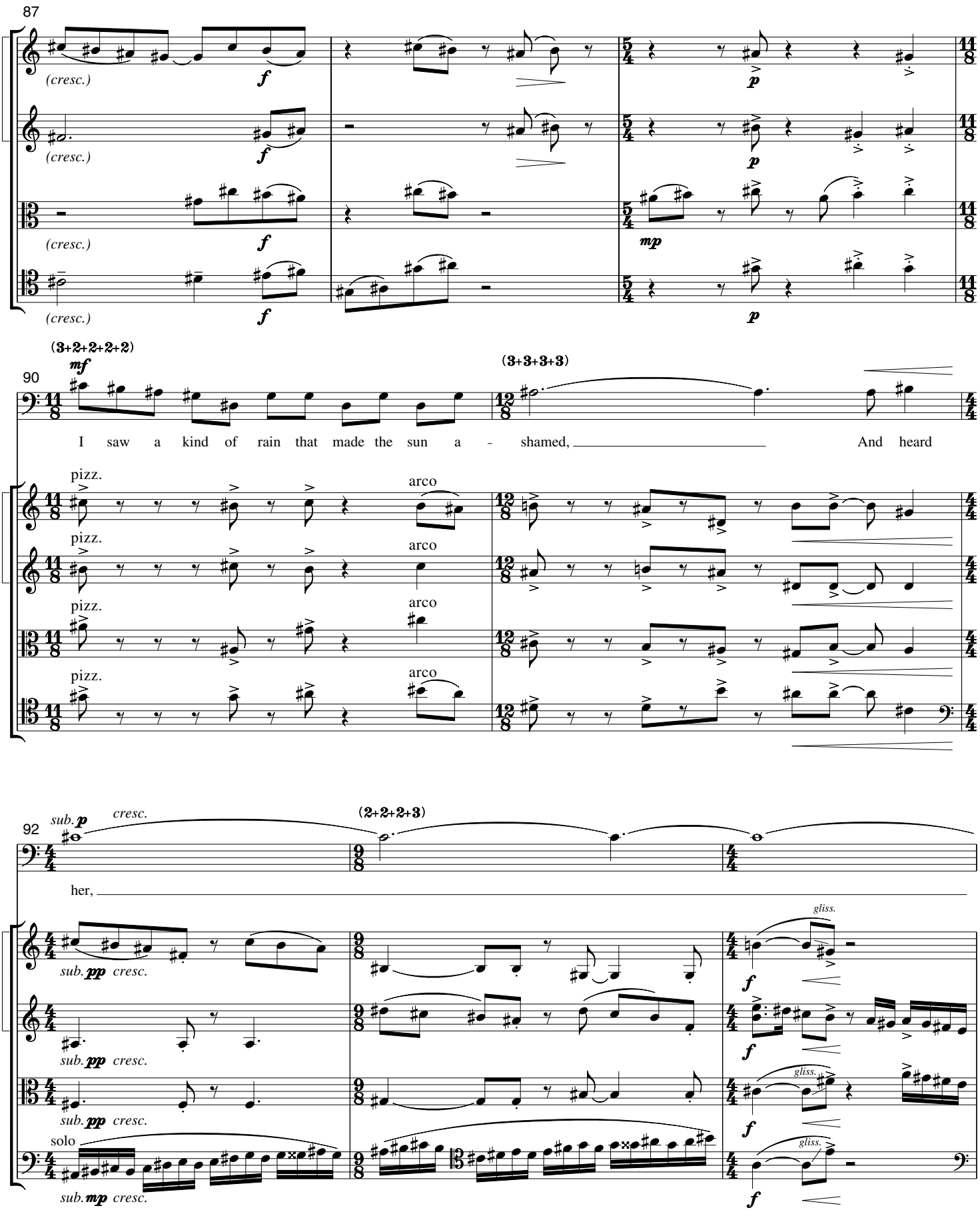
cresc. *cantabile*

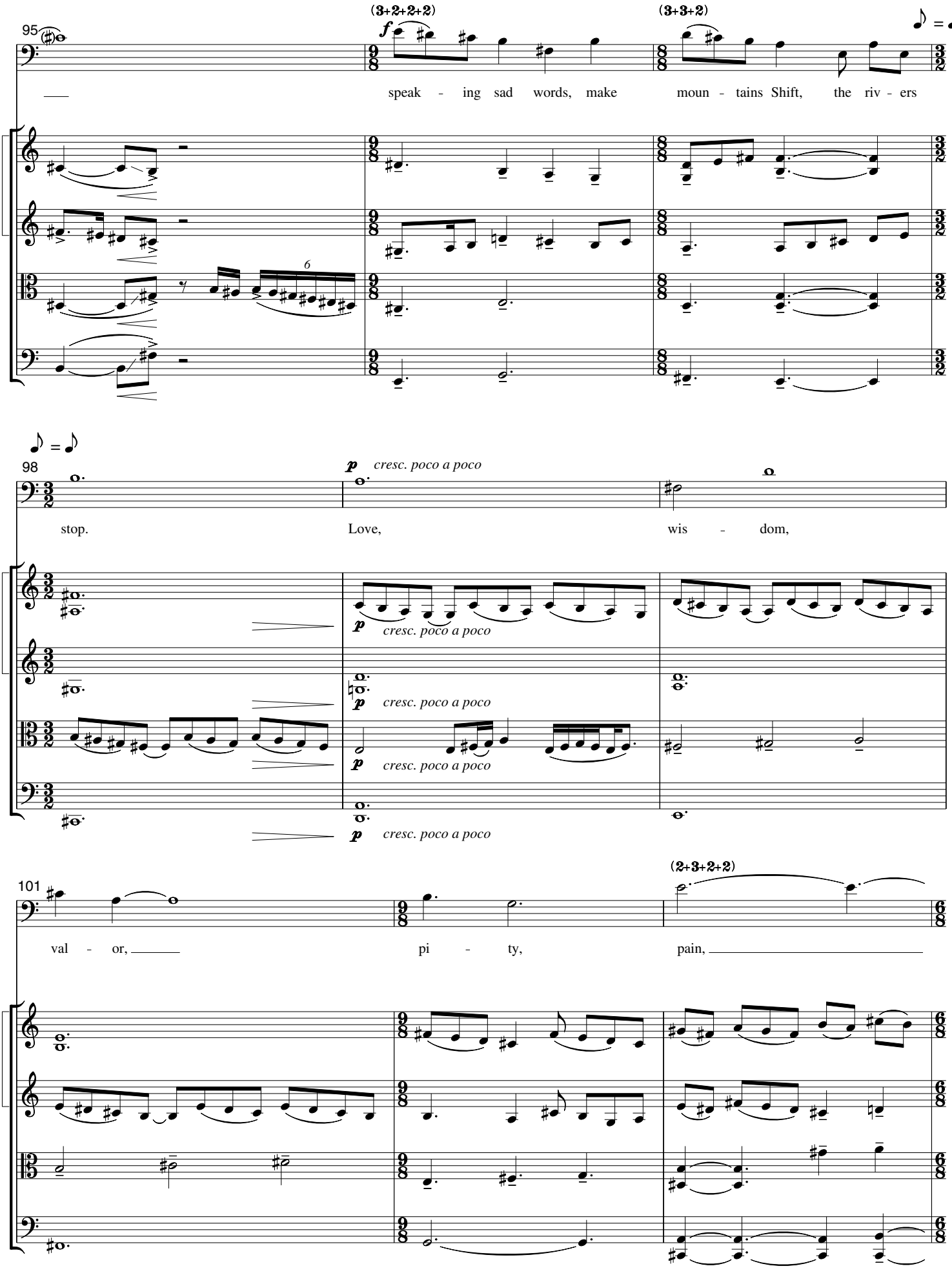
cresc. *cantabile*

cresc. *cantabile*

cresc.


79
(3+2+2+3)
Joke or sor - row now, it seems a dream Shad - ow, or
82
smoke.
pp dolce, cantabile
84
cresc. poco a poco


87
(cresc.)
f
p
mp
90
(3+2+2+2+2)
mf
(3+3+3+3)
I saw a kind of rain that made the sun a - shamed, And heard
pizz.
arco
92
sub. p
cresc.
(2+2+2+3)
her,
gliss.
sub. pp cresc.
solo
sub. mp cresc.


95
(3+2+2+2)
(3+3+2)
speak - ing sad words, make moun - tains Shift, the riv - ers
98
stop.
Love,
wis - dom,
cresc. poco a poco
101
(2+3+2+2)
val - or,
pi - ty,
pain,

Poco meno mosso (♩ = 112)

104

(cresc.)

f

Made bet - ter har - mon - y with weep - - ing Than

(cresc.)

f

(cresc.)

f

(cresc.)

f *sonabile*

(cresc.)

f *sonabile*

allargando

107

ossia:

a - ny oth - er like - ly to be heard in the world.

A tempo (♩ = 112)

pp sotto voce

111

And the air and the

punta d' arco

fff *pp*

punta d' arco

fff *pp*

fff *pp*

fff *pp*

114

wind were so filled with this deep mu - sic

p

p

117

No sin - gle leaf moved on its still branch.

ord.

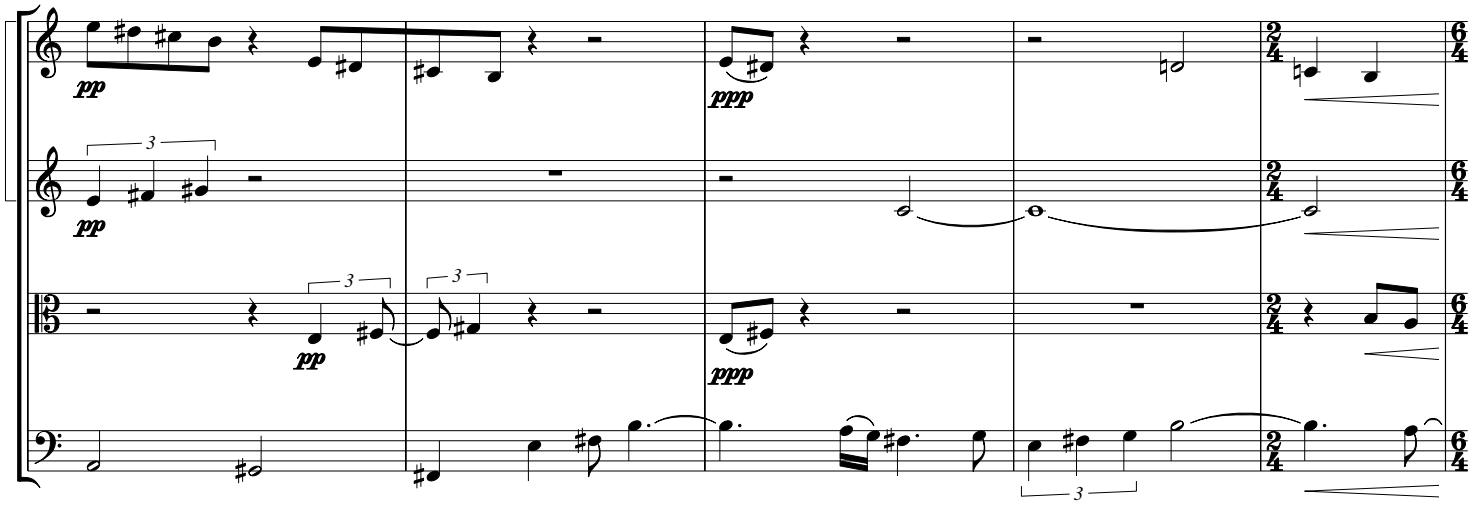
ord.

pp

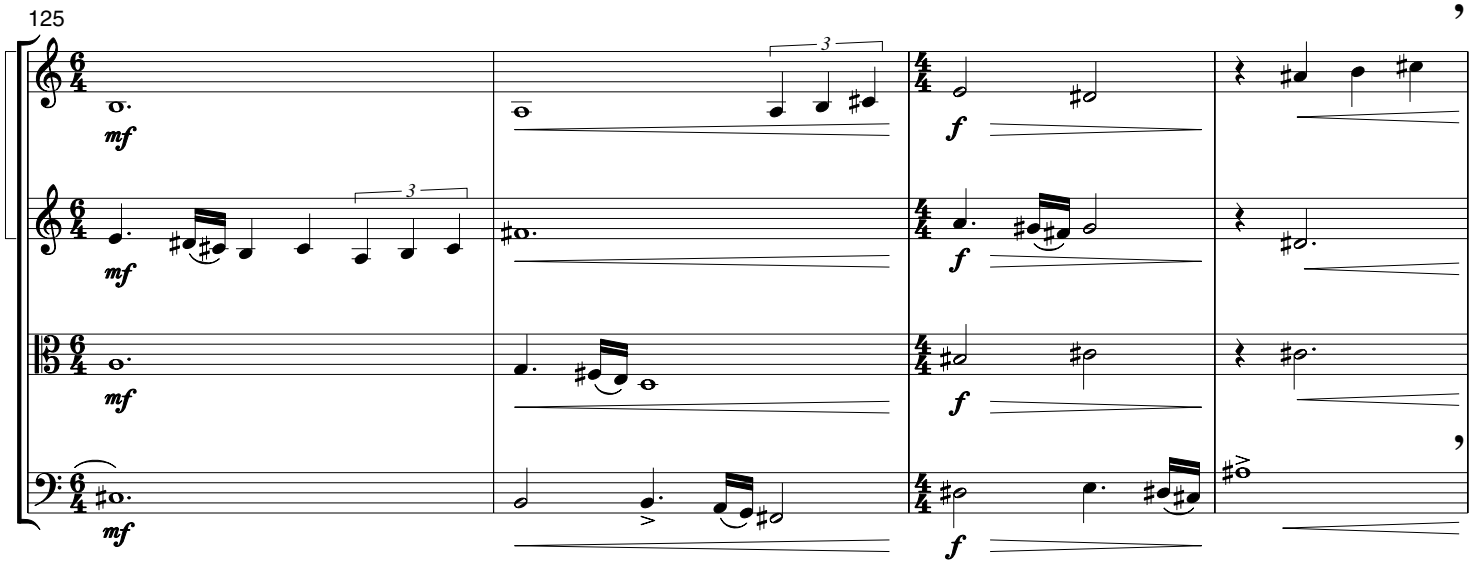
pp

Poco meno mosso

120



125



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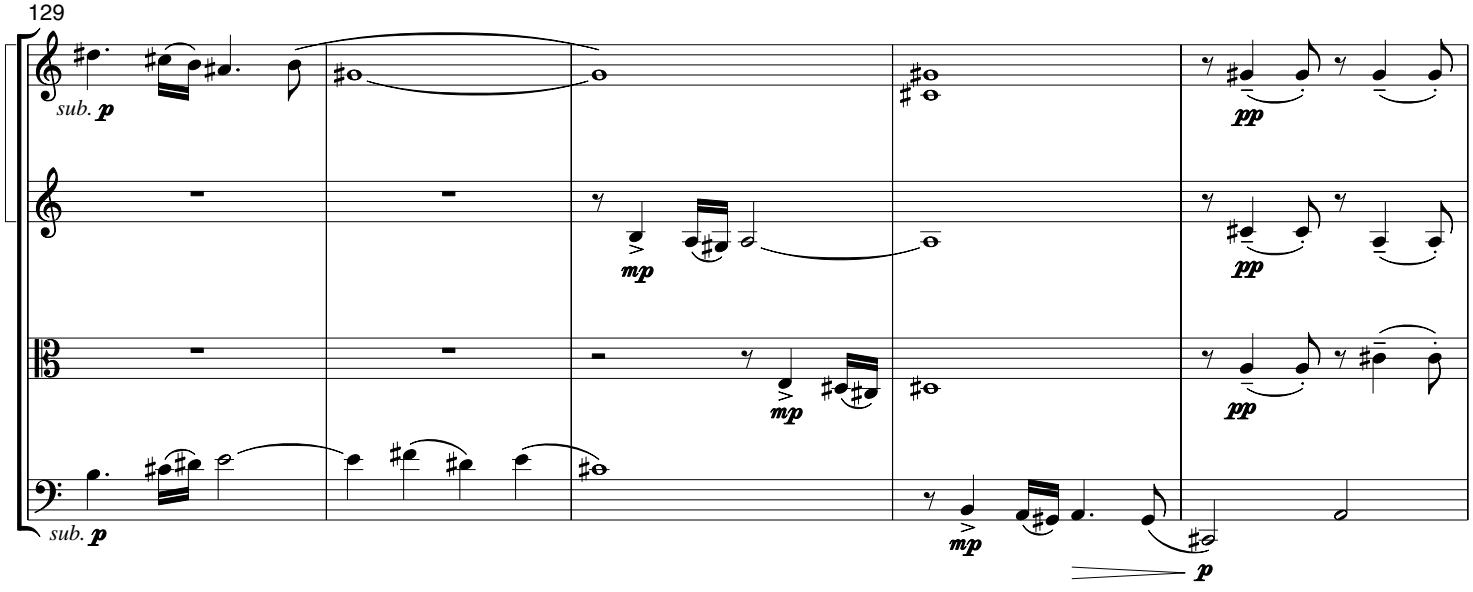
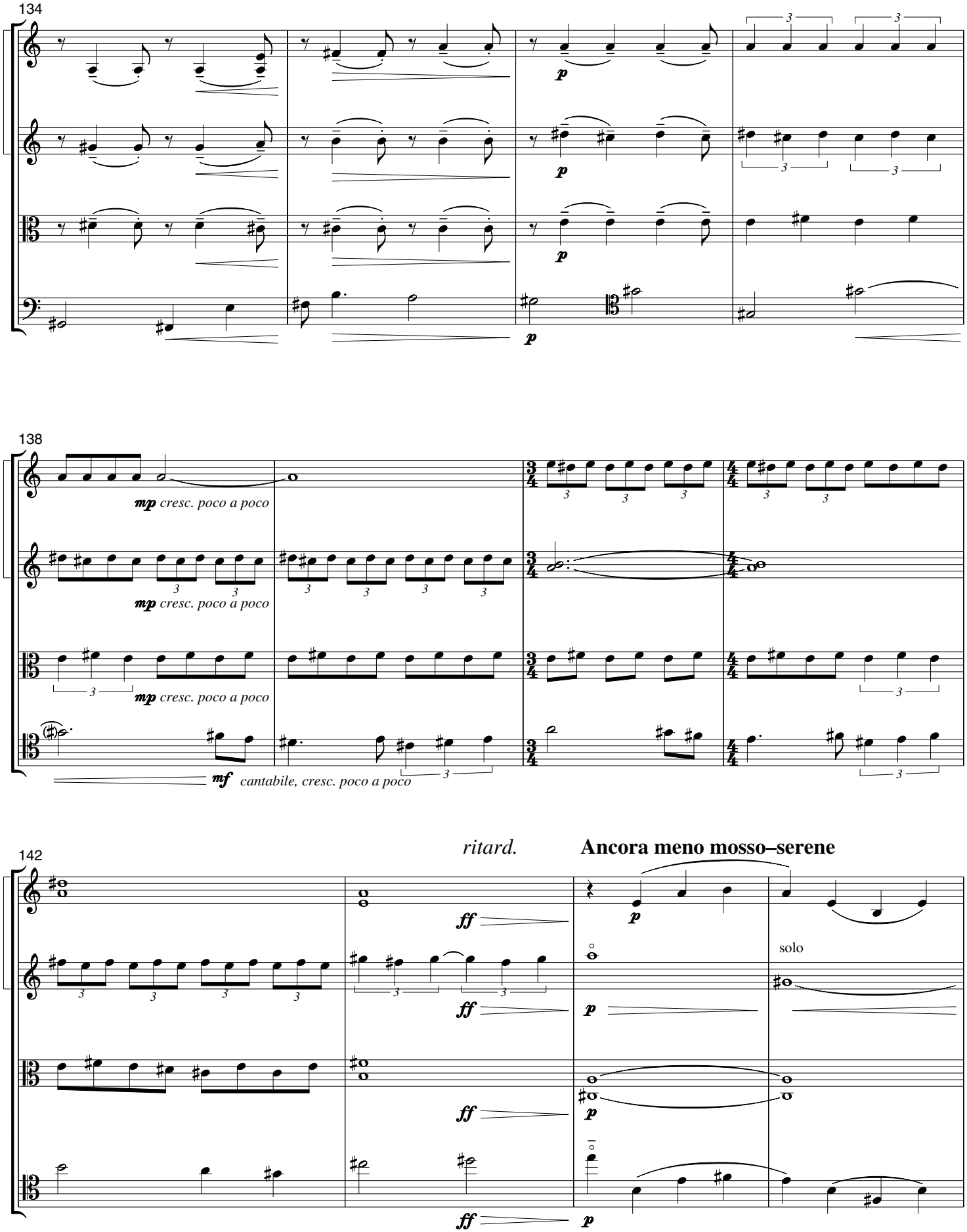
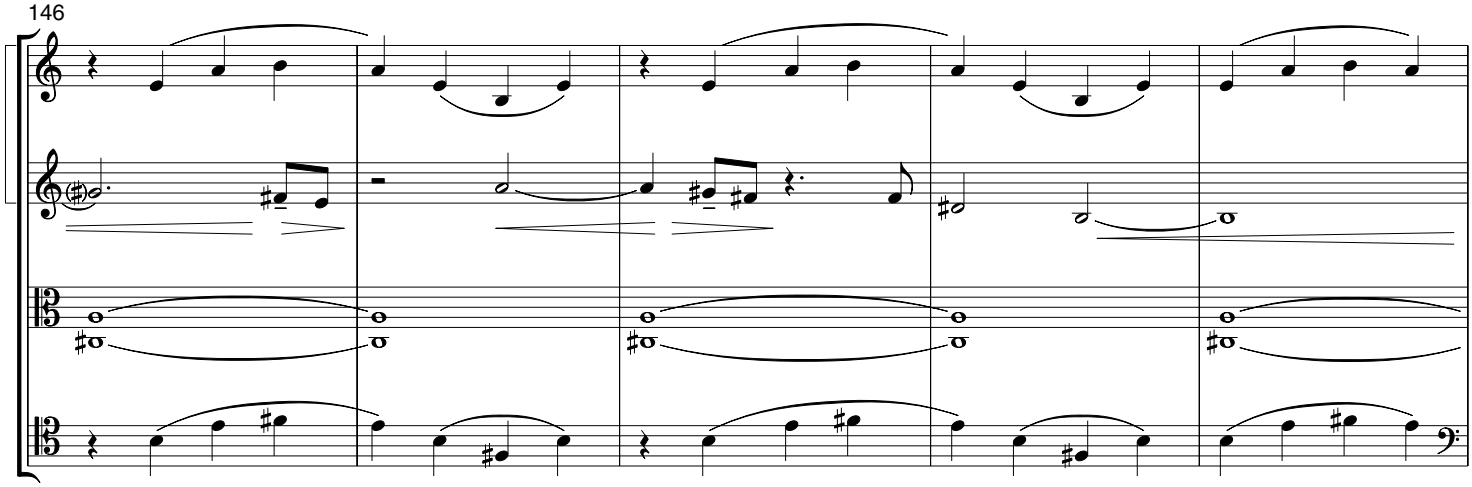



134
p
138
mp cresc. poco a poco
mf cantabile, cresc. poco a poco
142
ritard.
Ancora meno mosso–serene
ff
p
solo

146



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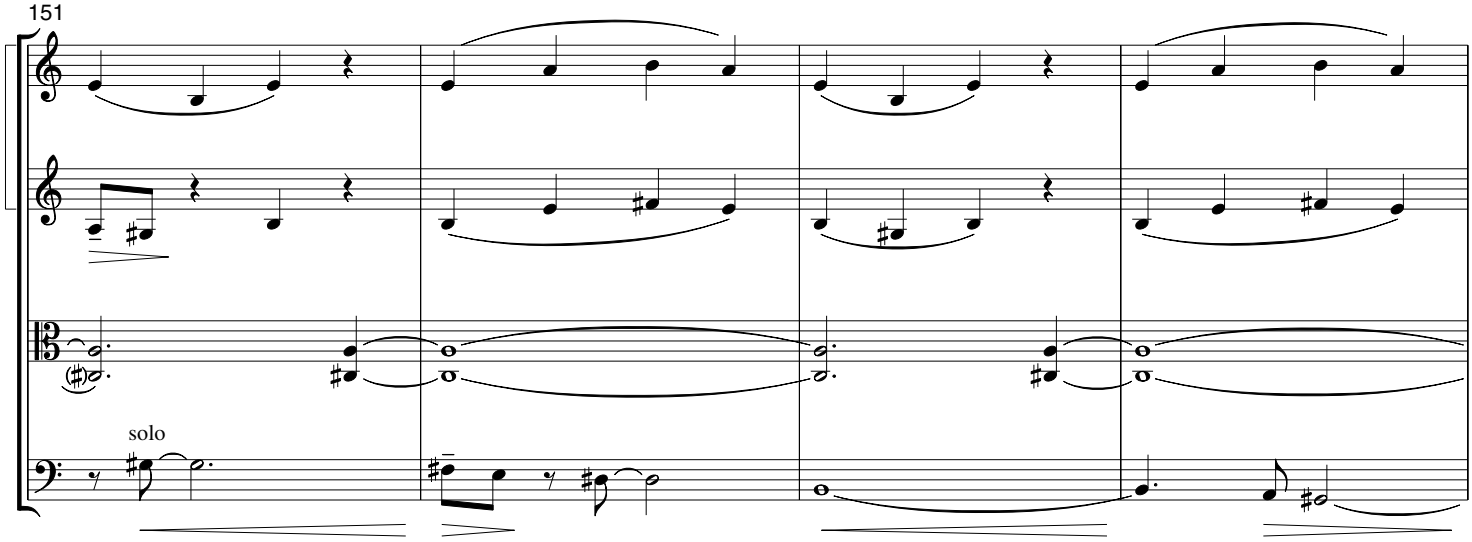

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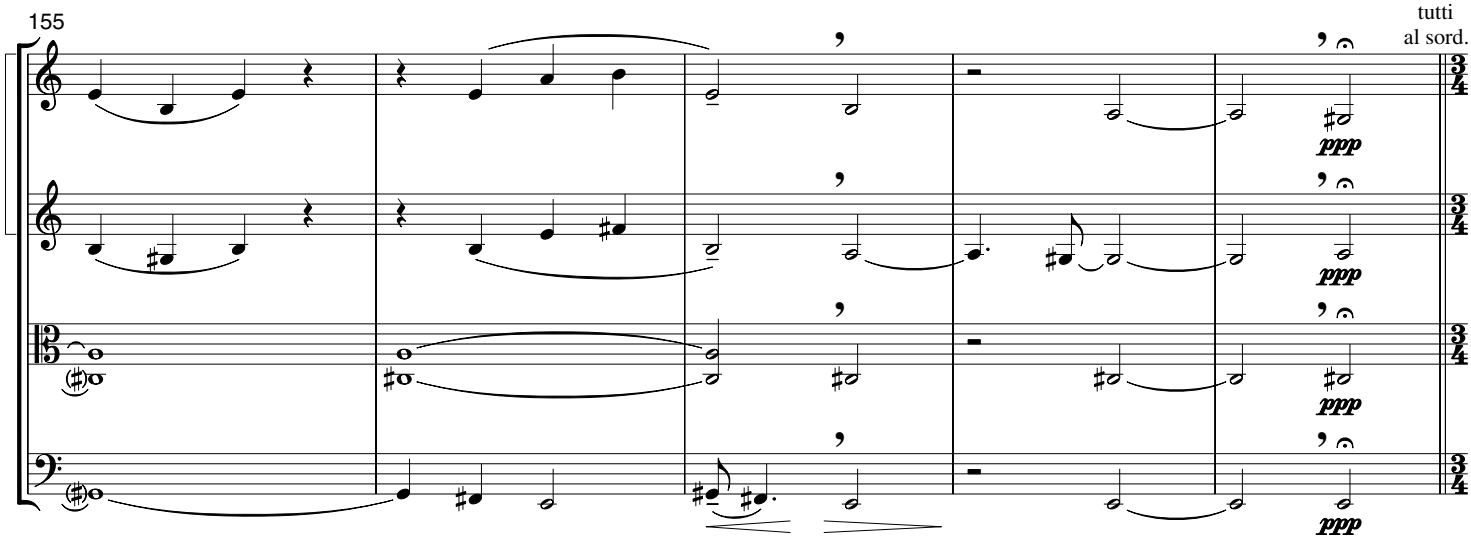


attacca

III
(no. 250)

Tempo rubato

160

mp

I am a - wake. She has come to me In my sleep, as she used to do bring-ing com-fort.

166

Bar.

I am left this time with ter - ri - fied sad - ness. Her

Vn. I

con sord.

p

Va.

con sord.

p

Vc.

con sord.

p

169

♩ = ♪ (♪ = 100-112)

face was sad. She looked on me with pi - - ty.

con sord.

p

173

Semplice, ethereal

Bar.

poco

poco

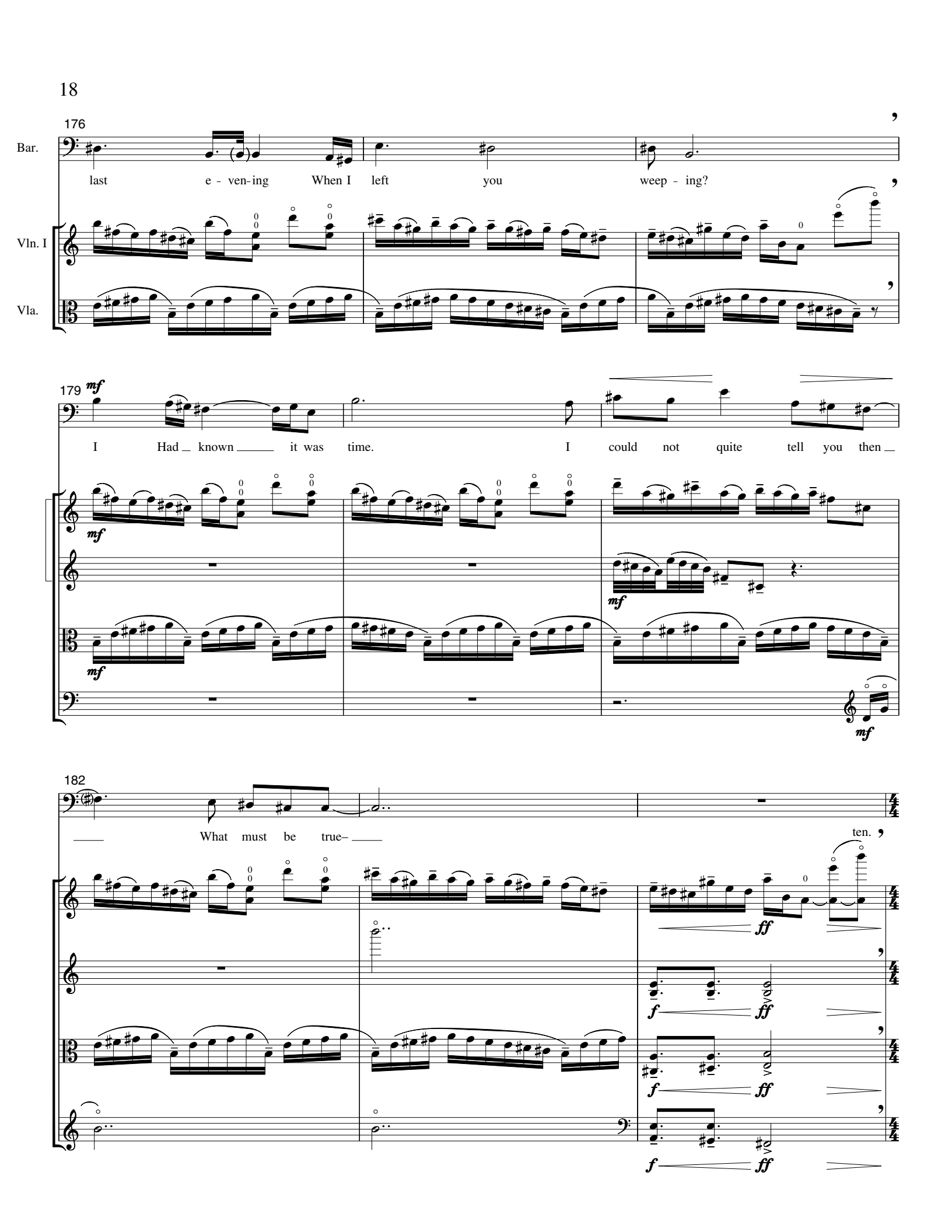
"Do you re - mem - - - ber the

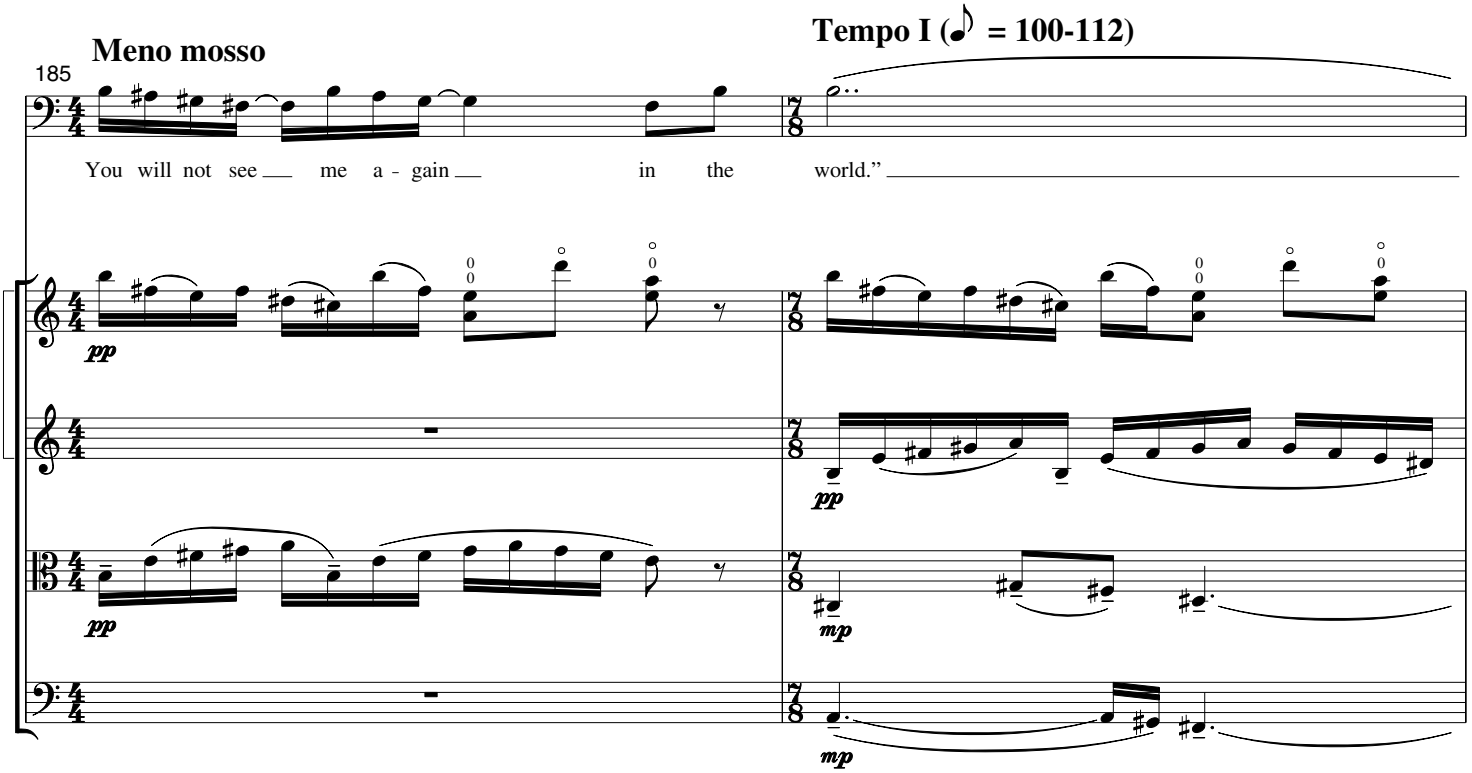
Vln. I

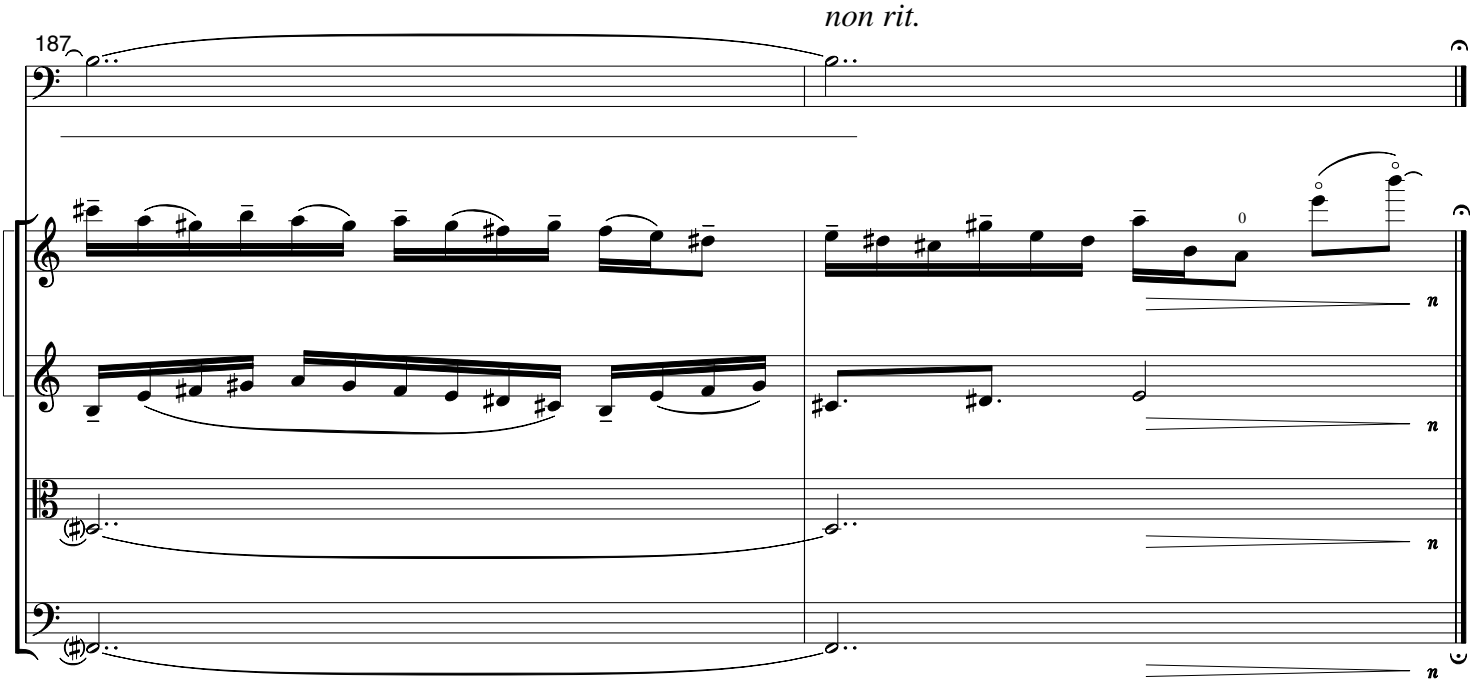
mp

Vla.

mp


176
Bar.
last e - ven-ing When I left you weep - ing?
Vln. I
Vla.
179
mf
I Had _ known _____ it was time. I could not quite tell you then _
182
What must be true– _____
ten.
ff
f


Meno mosso
Tempo I (♪ = 100-112)
185
You will not see me a - gain in the world."
pp
pp
mp
mp


non rit.
187
n
n
n
n