Chris **ARRELL**

Of Three Minds

–for soprano, piano, and computer

Texts from *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*
by Wallace Stevens (pd)

Score

Chris Arrell (*1970)

Of Three Minds (2013) for soprano, piano, and computer
Texts from *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbirds* by Wallace Stevens (PD)

First Prize: 2014 Ettelson Composer's Award

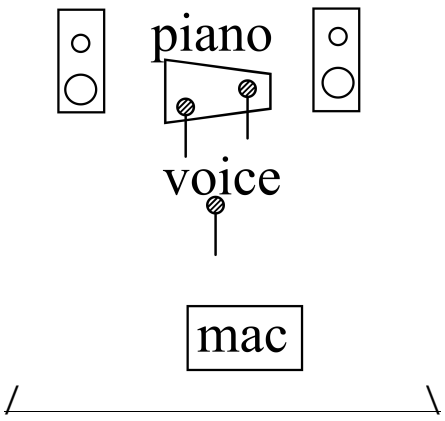
Of Three Minds, written for Tony Arnold and Jacob Greenberg, is a setting of five sections from Wallace Stevens' poem *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* (1917). Inspired by Japanese haiku, each of the poem's thirteen sections presents the image of a blackbird as the focal point for a concise study in vivid landscape and nuanced inflection. Scored for soprano, piano, and electronics, ***Of Three Minds*** enhances the traditional voice and piano duo with real-time computer-generated signal processing (distortion, echo, simulated Doppler effects, feedback) and prerecorded synthetic sounds modeled after spectral permutations of the sung voice. At times dominating the foreground and at other times adding subtle coloration, the electronics, like Stevens' winged cynosure, serve to distinguish each song while unifying the cycle.

I. I know noble accents
II. I do not know which to prefer
III. A man and a woman
IV. Among twenty snowy mountains
V. I was of three minds

Premiere given by Tony Arnold and Jacob Greenberg with Chris Arrell (computer processing) at Holy Cross College in Worcester, MA on April 2, 2013.

Technical requirements
3 microphones (one for vocalist and two (stereo) for pianist)
DAW with Max/MSP or Max/MSP Runtime
Max/MSP patches (two) and sounds
Stereo playback

Possible stage setup



Texts from *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbirds* by Wallace Stevens (1917)
All texts in the public domain

Section VIII
I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

Section V
I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

Section IV
A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.

Section I
Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

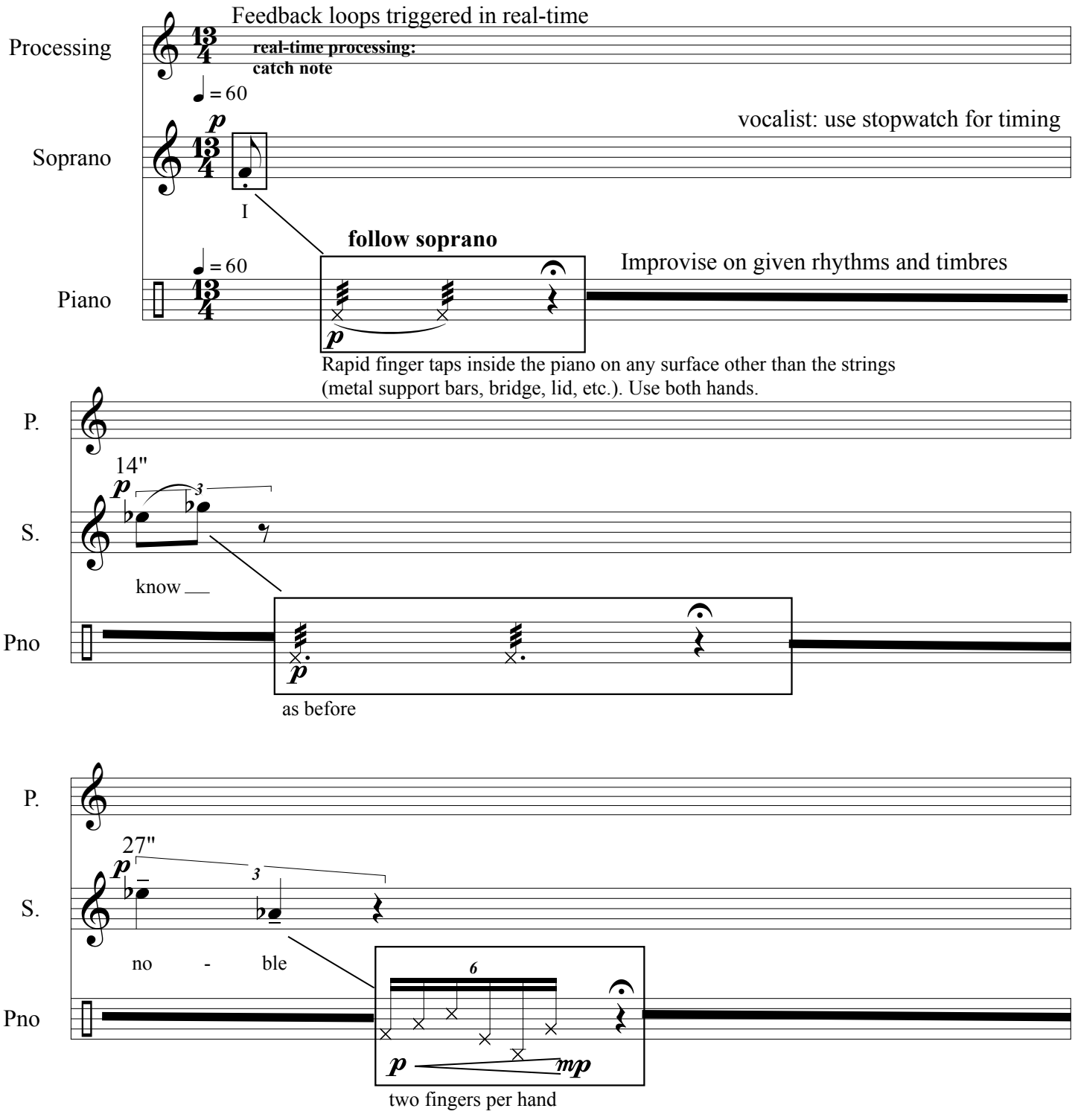
Section II
I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

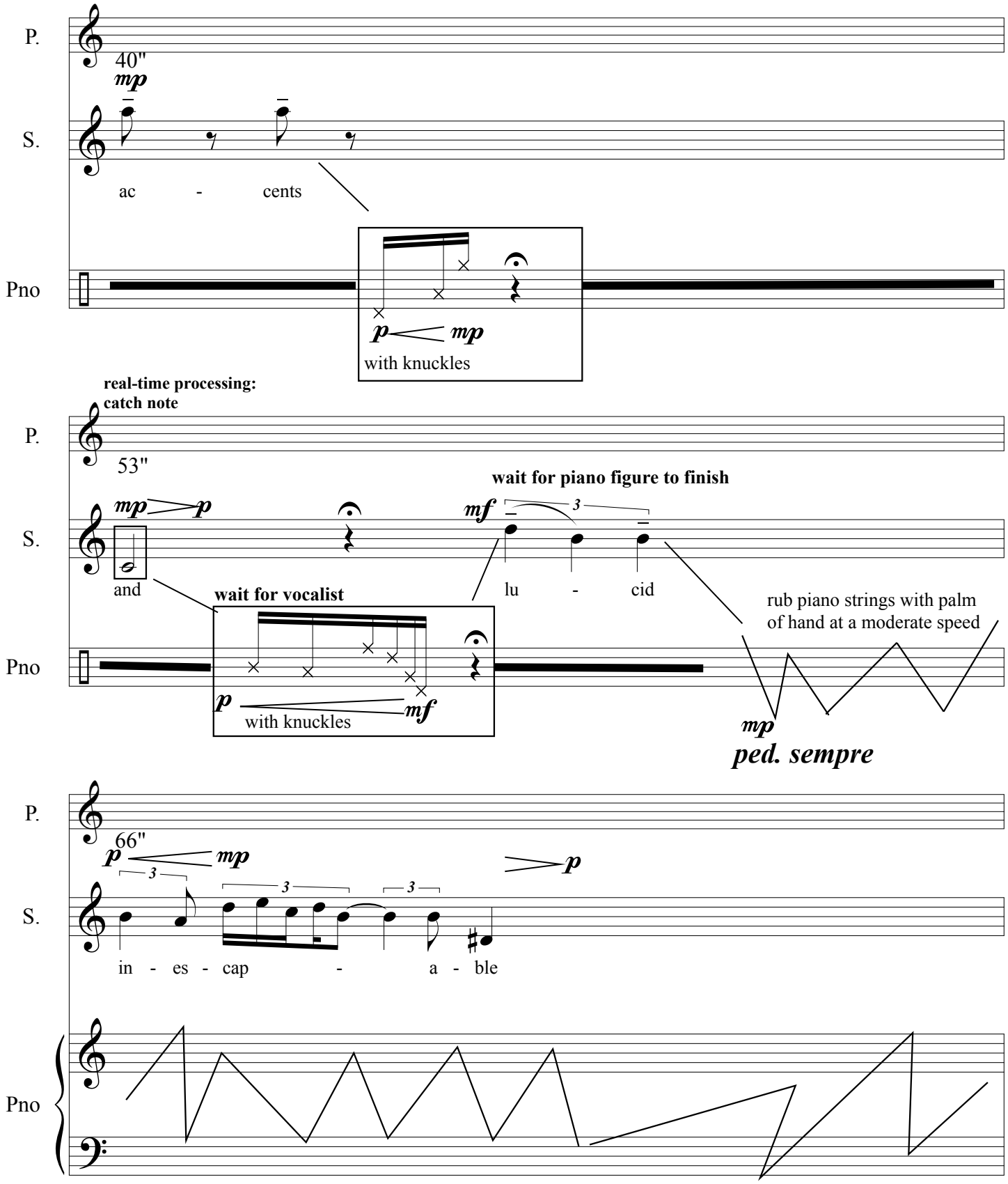
SONG ONE

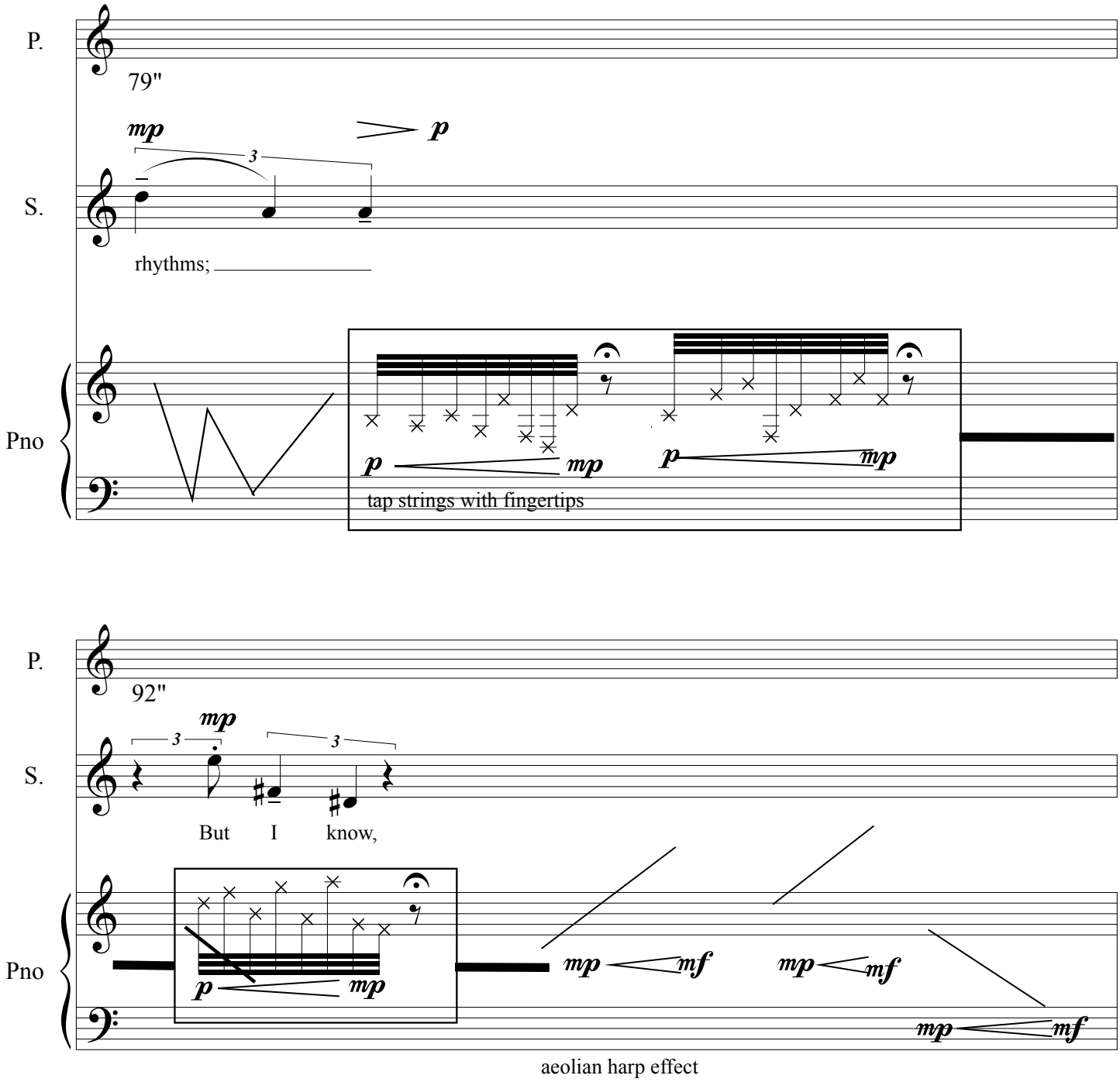
I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

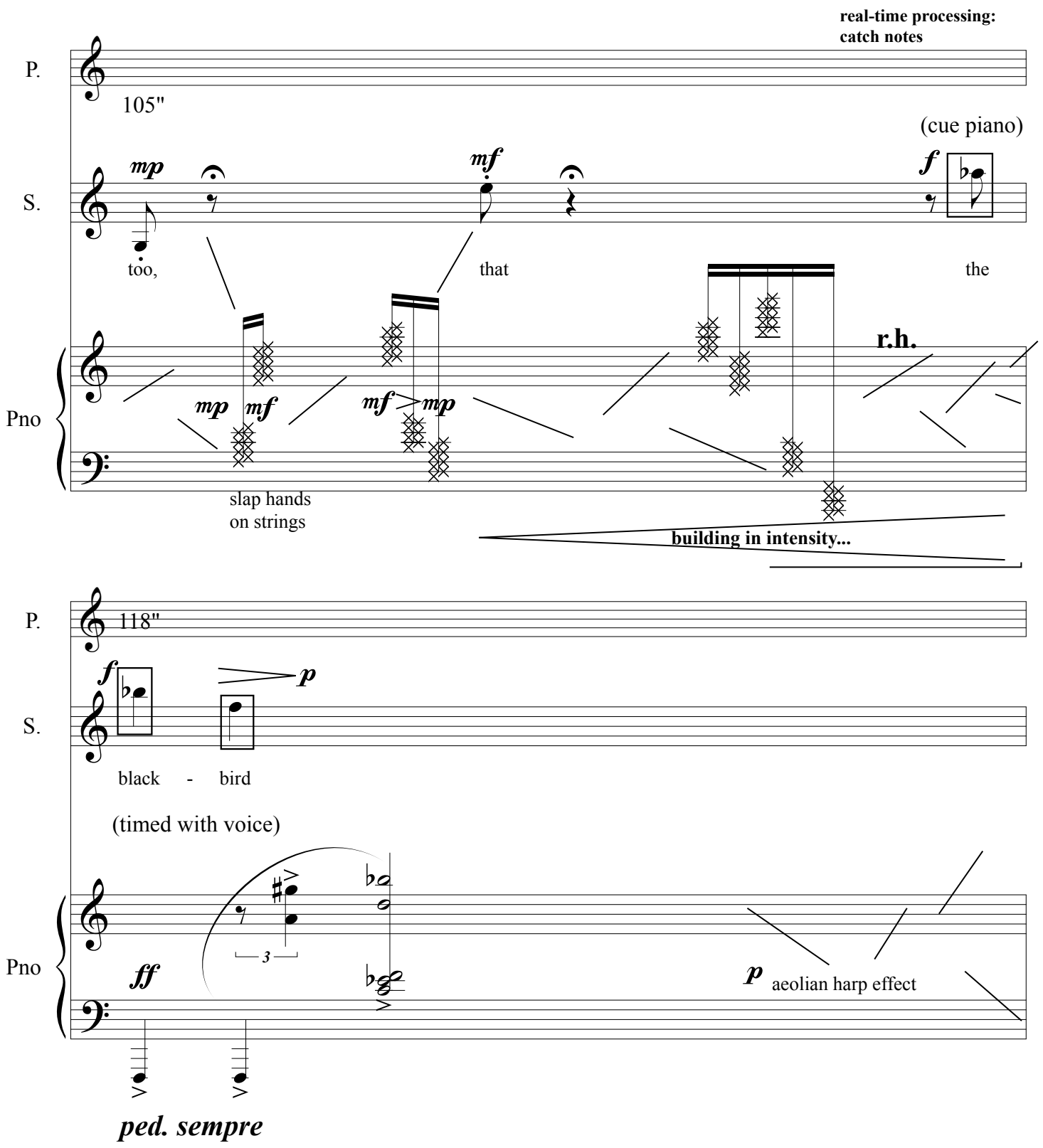
© 2013 Chris Arrell (BMI)
Texts by Wallace Stevens (PD)

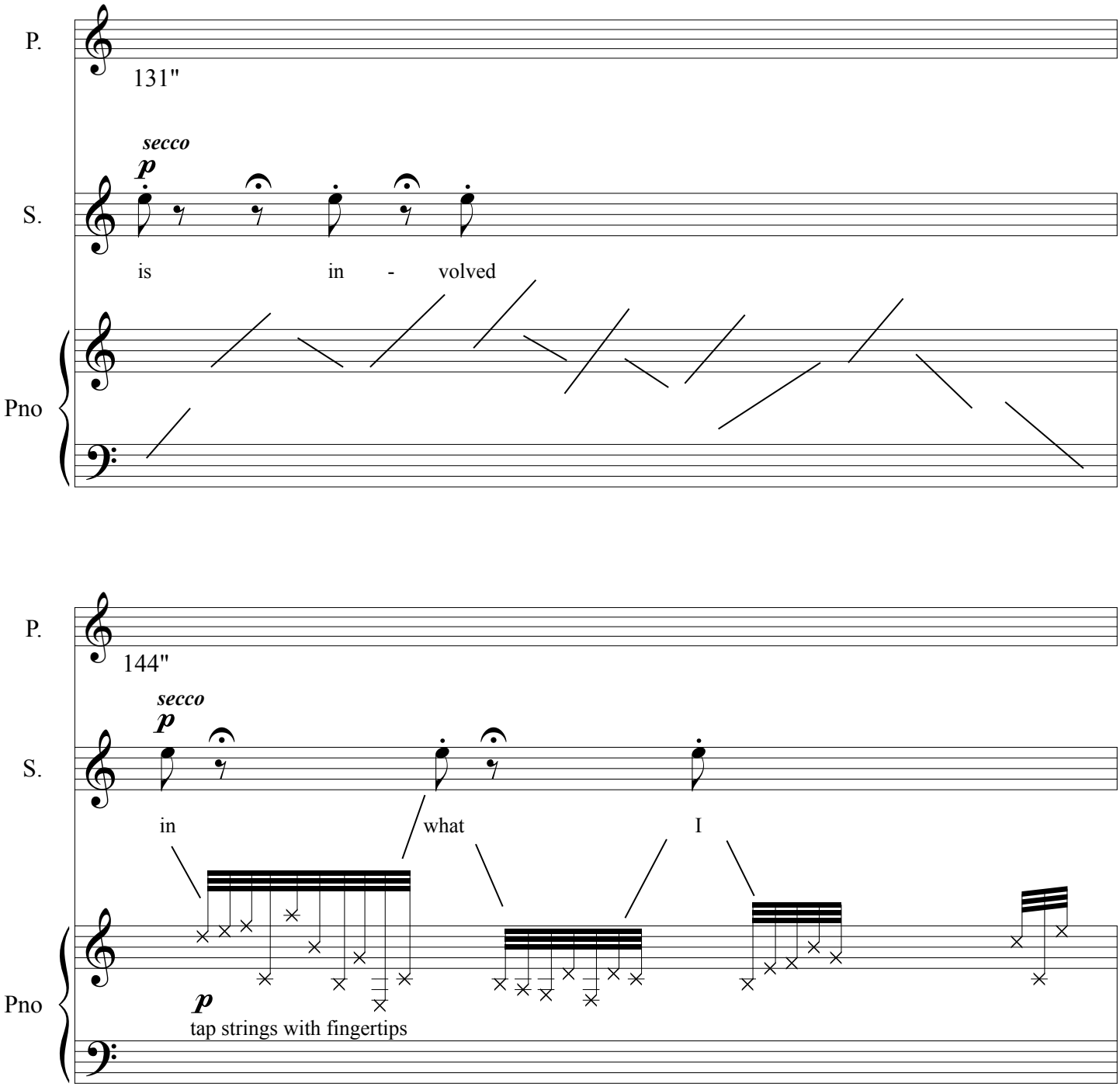
Reverb Preset: 4

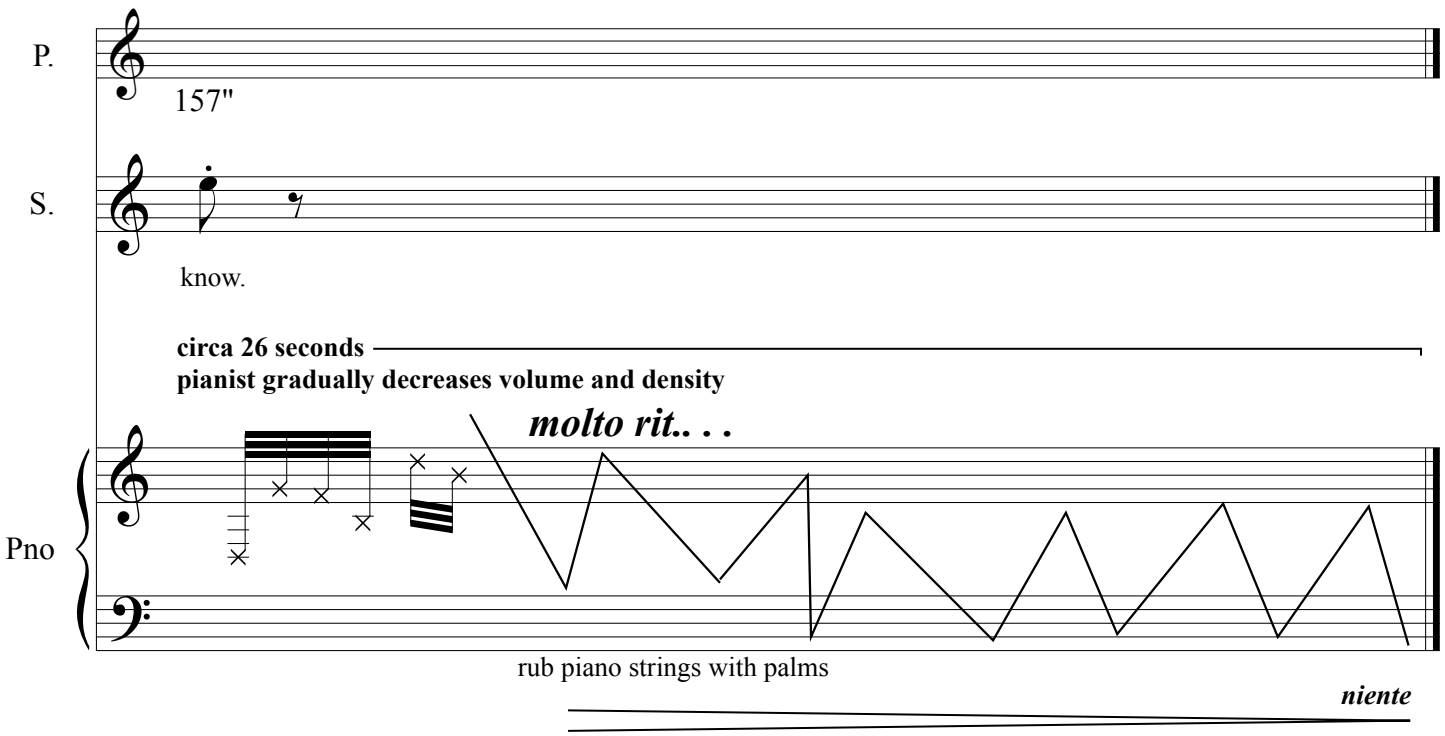



P.
S.
Pno
40"
mp
ac - cents
p mp
with knuckles
real-time processing:
catch note
53"
wait for piano figure to finish
mp p
mf
3
and
wait for vocalist
lu - cid
p mf
with knuckles
rub piano strings with palm
of hand at a moderate speed
mp
ped. sempre
66"
p mp
3
p
in - es - cap - a - ble


P.
79"
mp
p
3
S.
rhythms;
Pno
p
mp
p
mp
tap strings with fingertips
P.
92"
mp
3
3
S.
But I know,
Pno
p
mp
mp
mf
mp
mf
mp
mf
aeolian harp effect

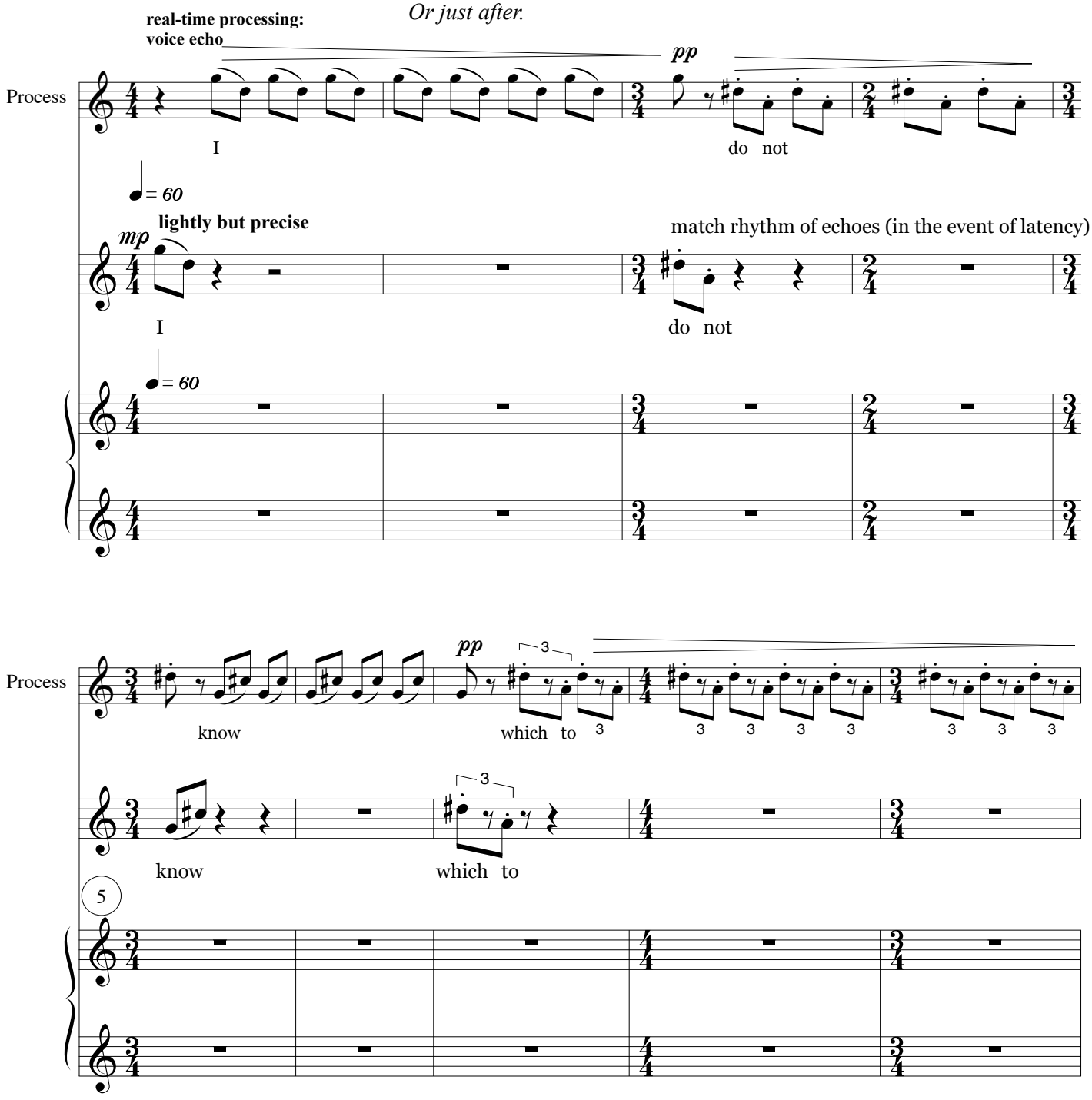

real-time processing:
catch notes
P.
105"
(cue piano)
S.
too,
that
the
Pno
r.h.
slap hands
on strings
building in intensity...
P.
118"
S.
black - bird
(timed with voice)
Pno
aeolian harp effect
ped. sempre

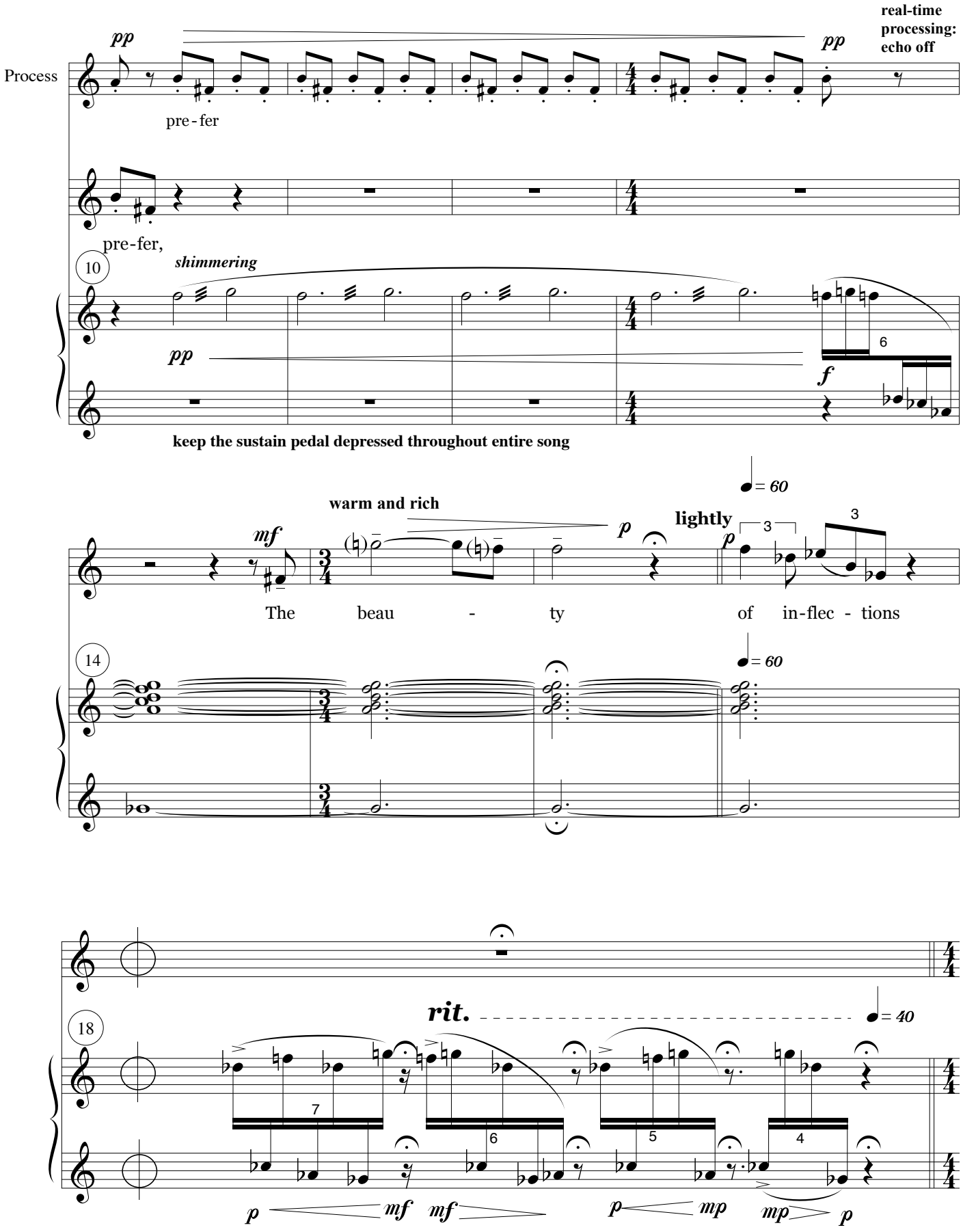

P.
131"
secco
p
S.
is in - volved
Pno
P.
144"
secco
p
S.
in what I
Pno
p
tap strings with fingertips

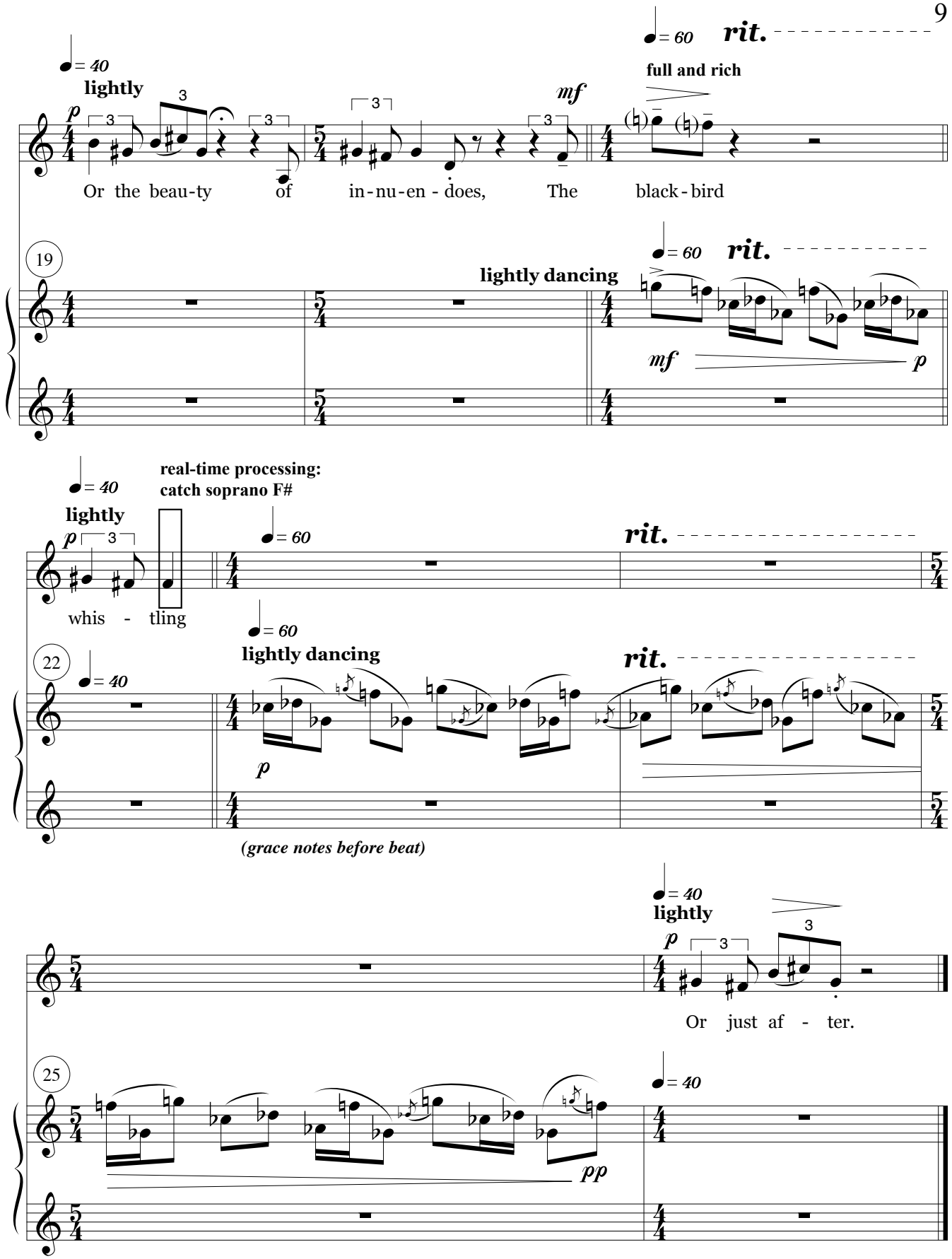

P.
157"
S.
know.
circa 26 seconds
pianist gradually decreases volume and density
molto rit.. . .
Pno
rub piano strings with palms
niente

SONG TWO

I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

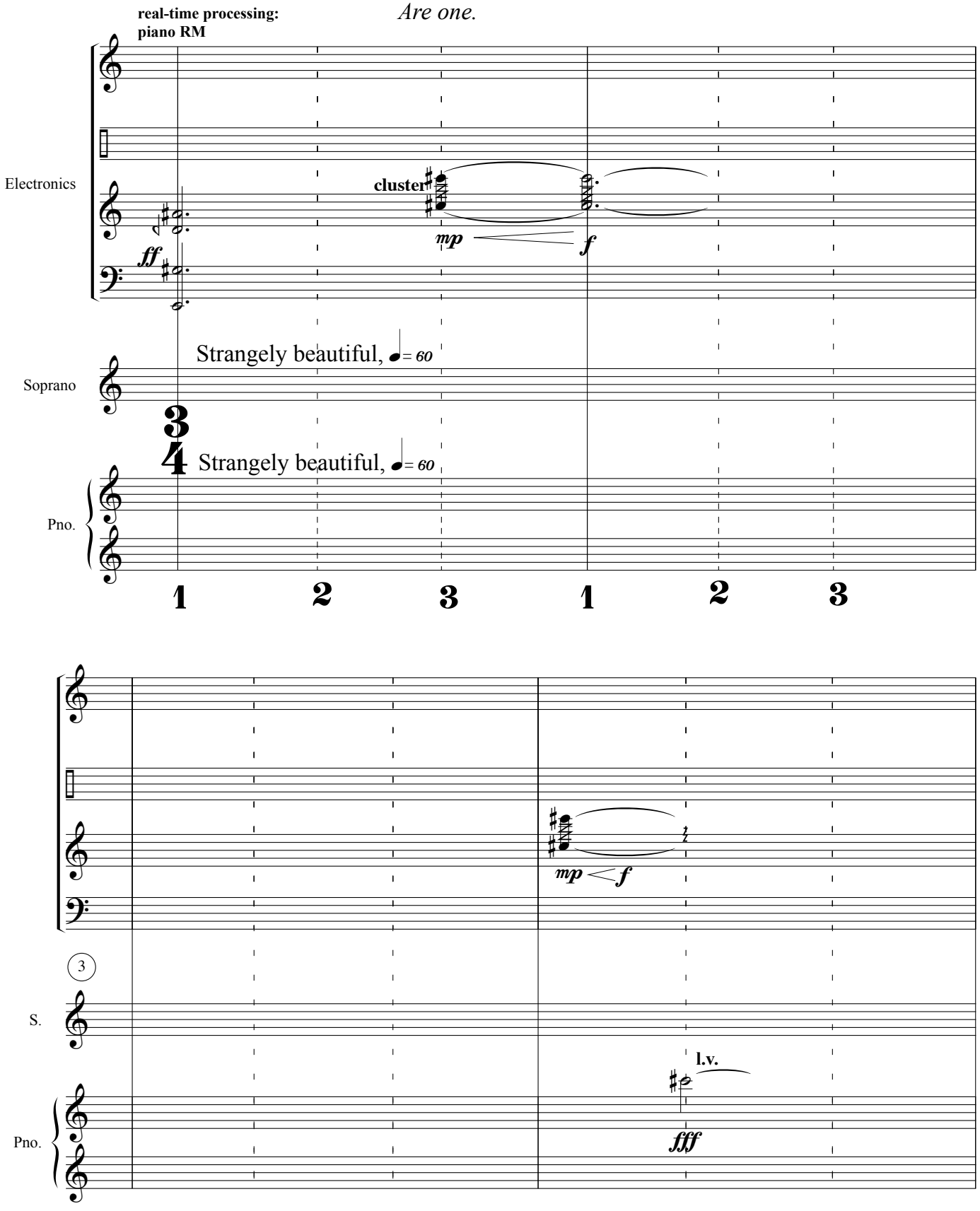


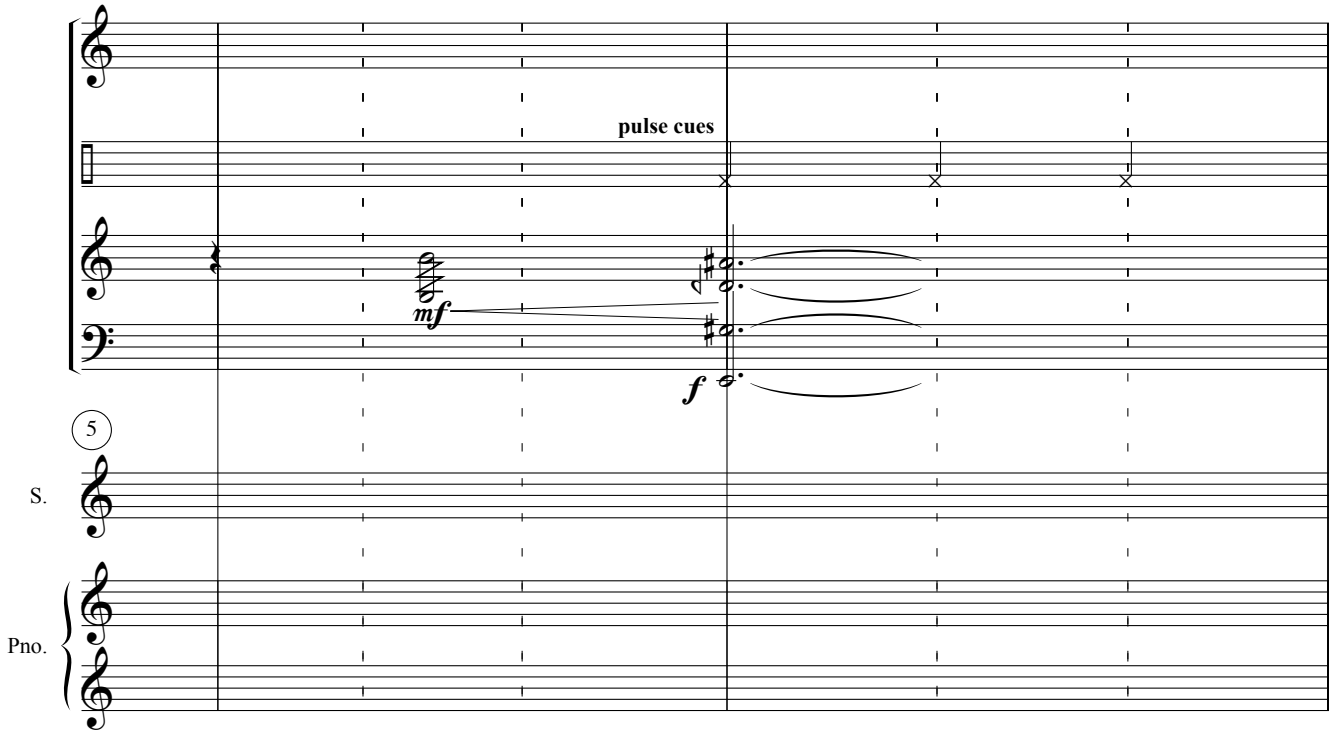

real-time
processing:
echo off
Process
pp
pp
pre - fer
pre-fer,
10
shimmering
pp
6
f
keep the sustain pedal depressed throughout entire song
warm and rich
mf
p
lightly
p
3
3
= 60
The beau - ty of in-flec - tions
14
= 60
18
rit.
= 40
7
6
5
4
p
mf
mf
p
mp
mp
p

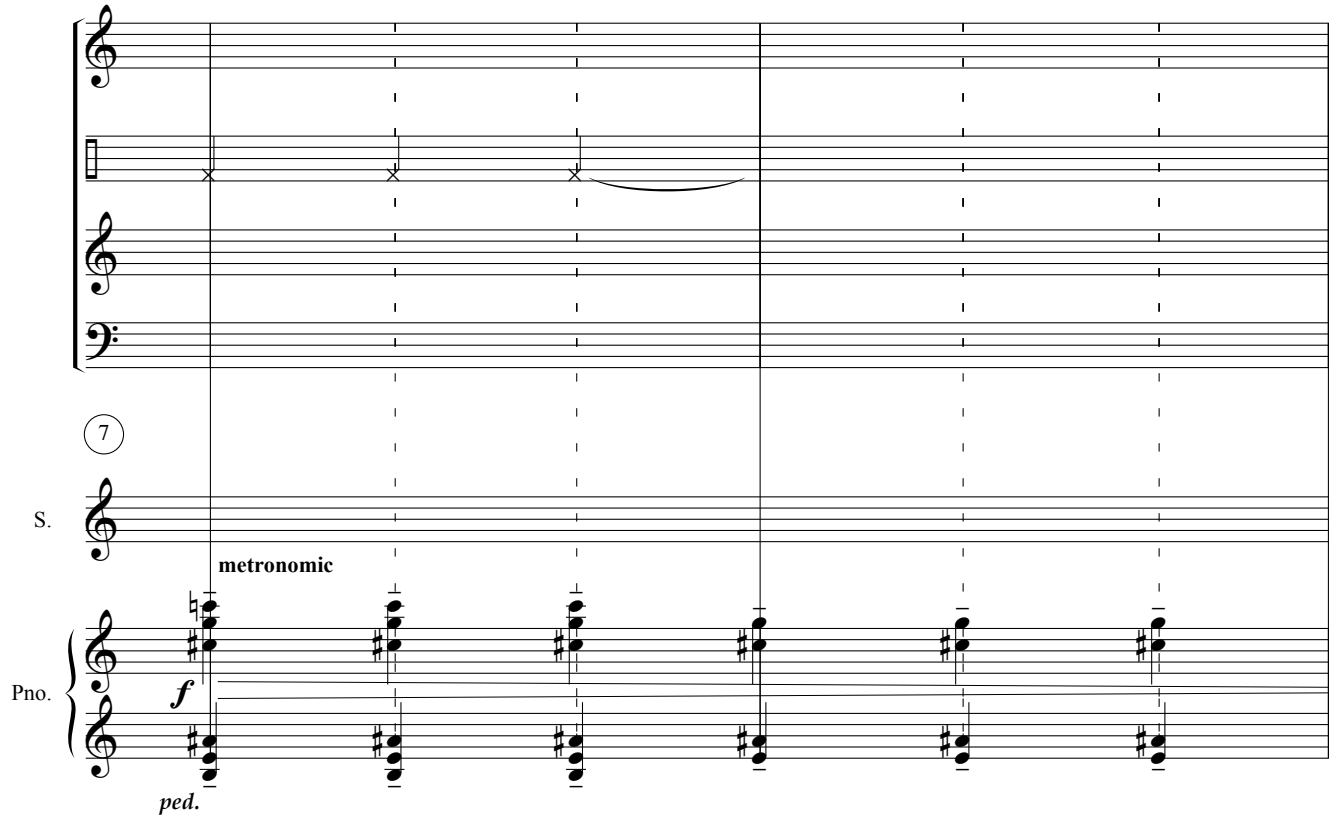

♩= 40
lightly
p
Or the beau-ty of in-nu-en-does,
mf
♩= 60
rit.
full and rich
The black-bird
19
lightly dancing
♩= 60
rit.
mf
p
real-time processing:
catch soprano F#
♩= 40
lightly
p
whis - tling
♩= 60
rit.
22
♩= 40
♩= 60
lightly dancing
rit.
p
(grace notes before beat)
♩= 40
lightly
p
Or just af - ter.
25
pp
♩= 40

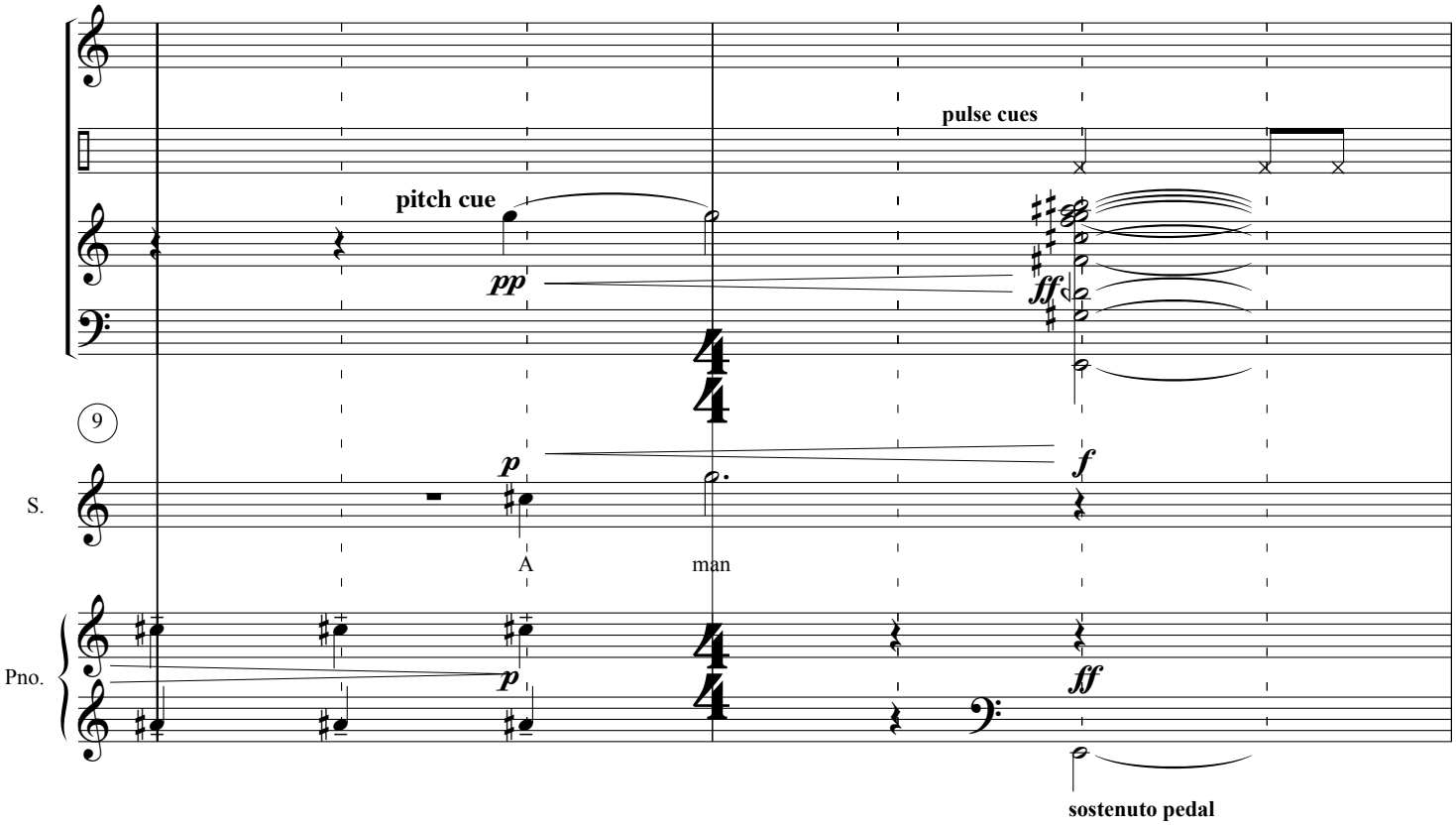
SONG THREE

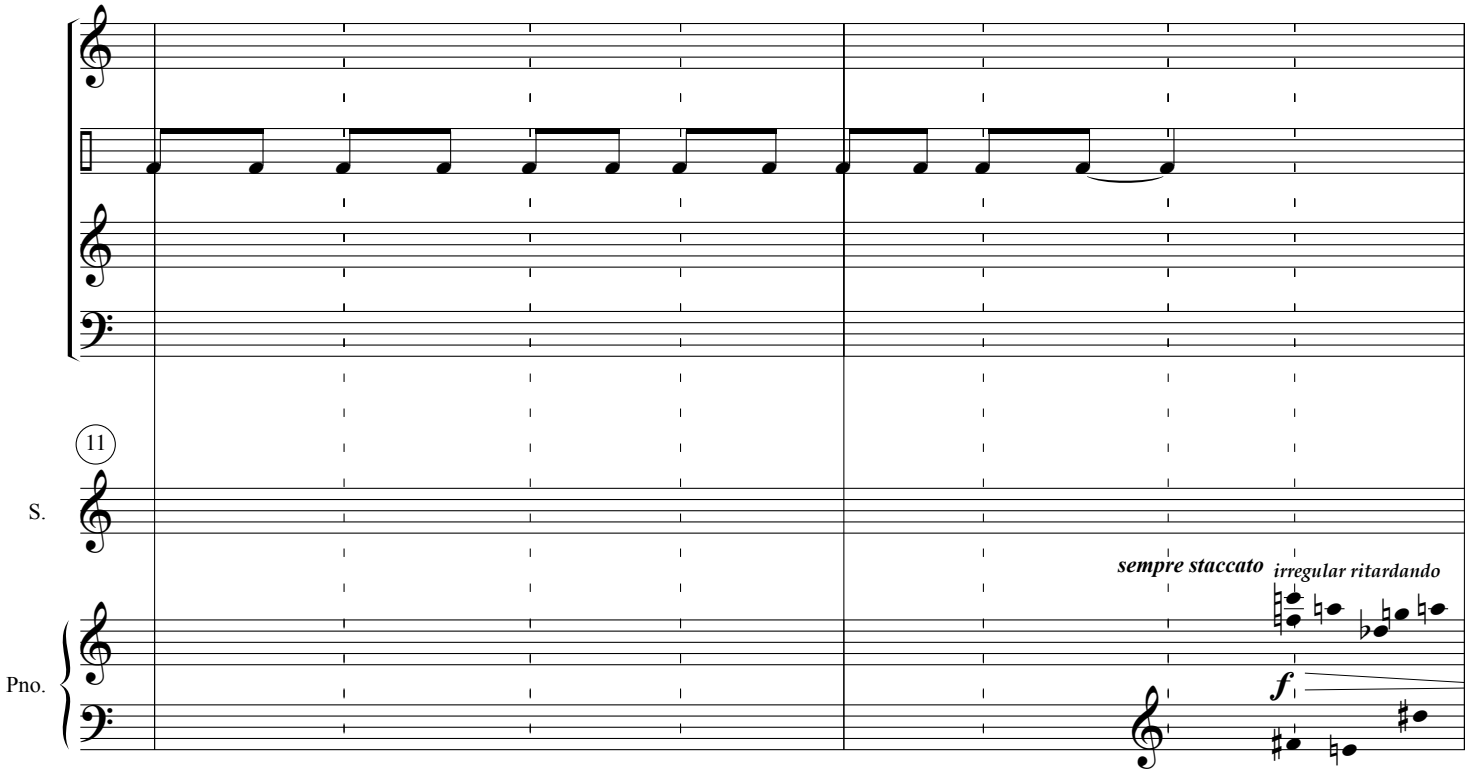
A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.

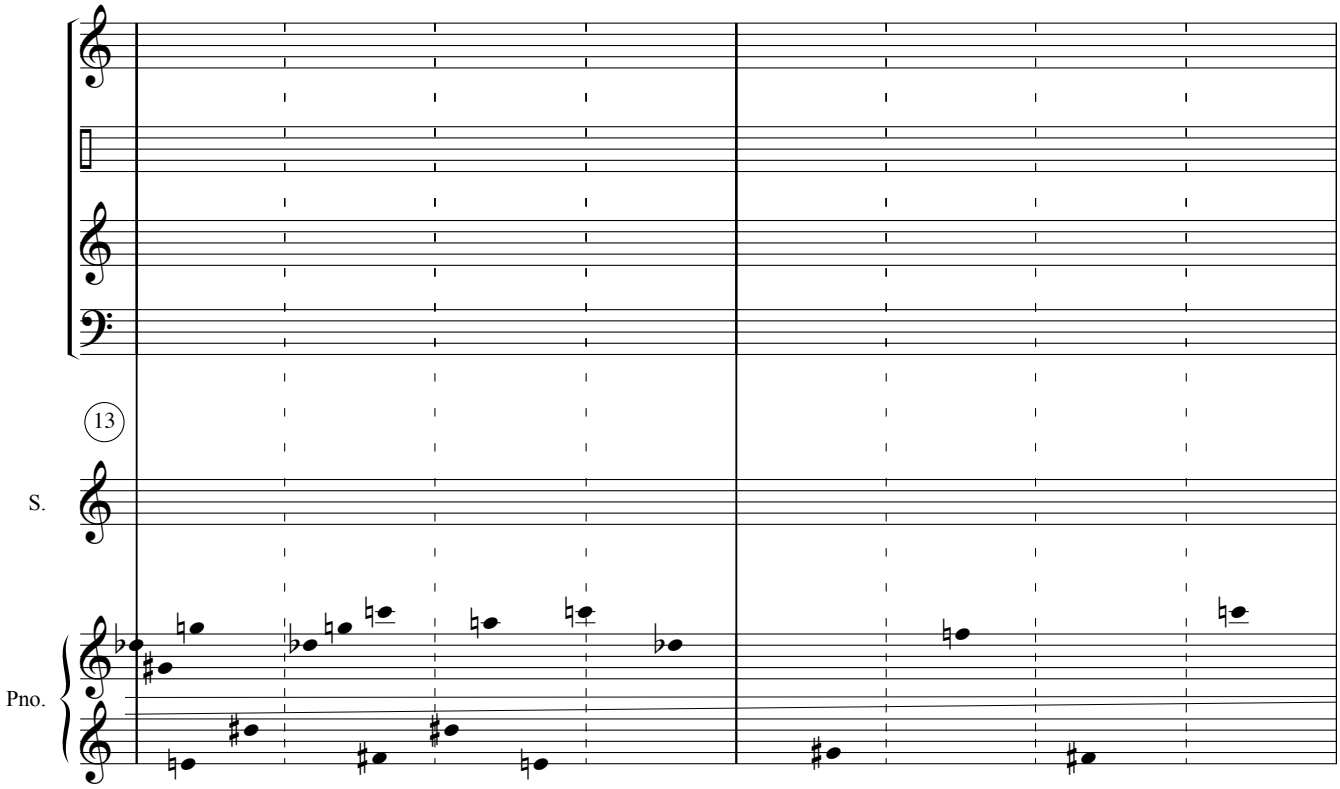


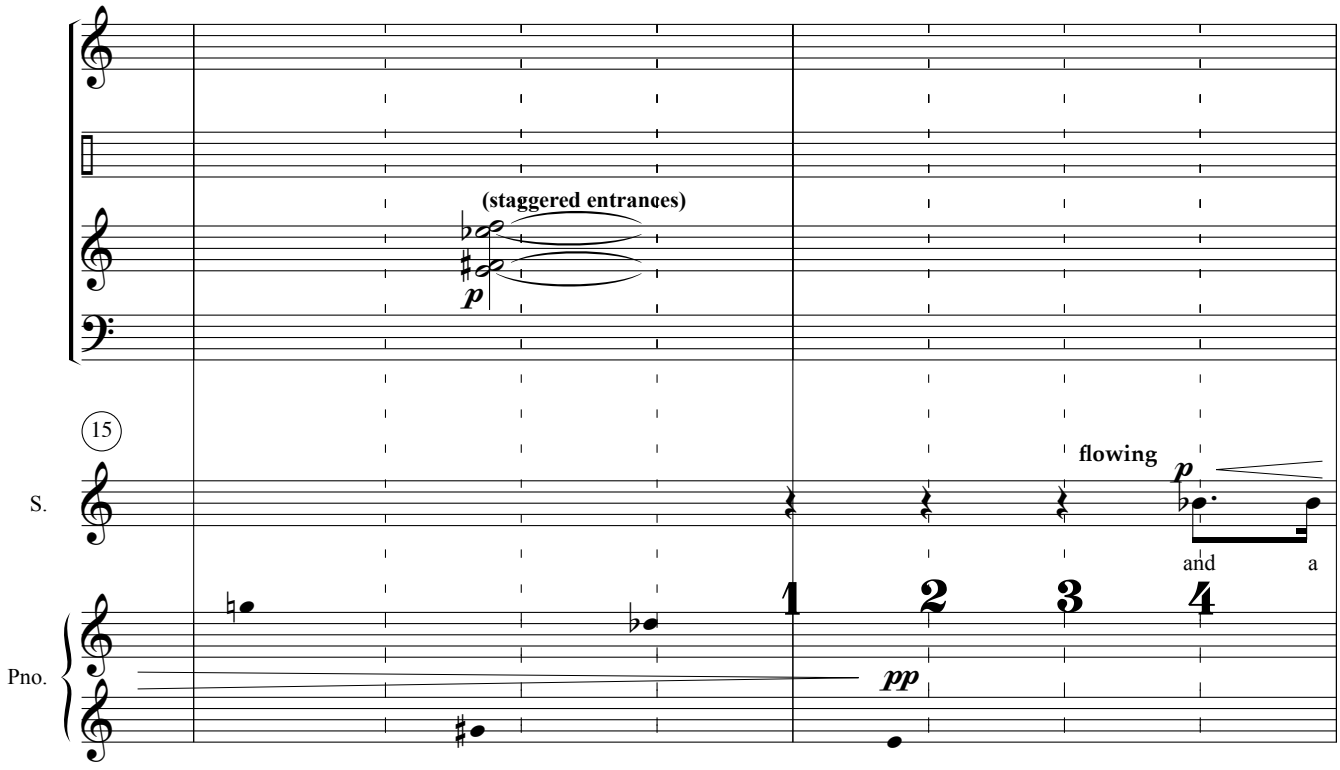

pulse cues
mf
f
5
S.
Pno.

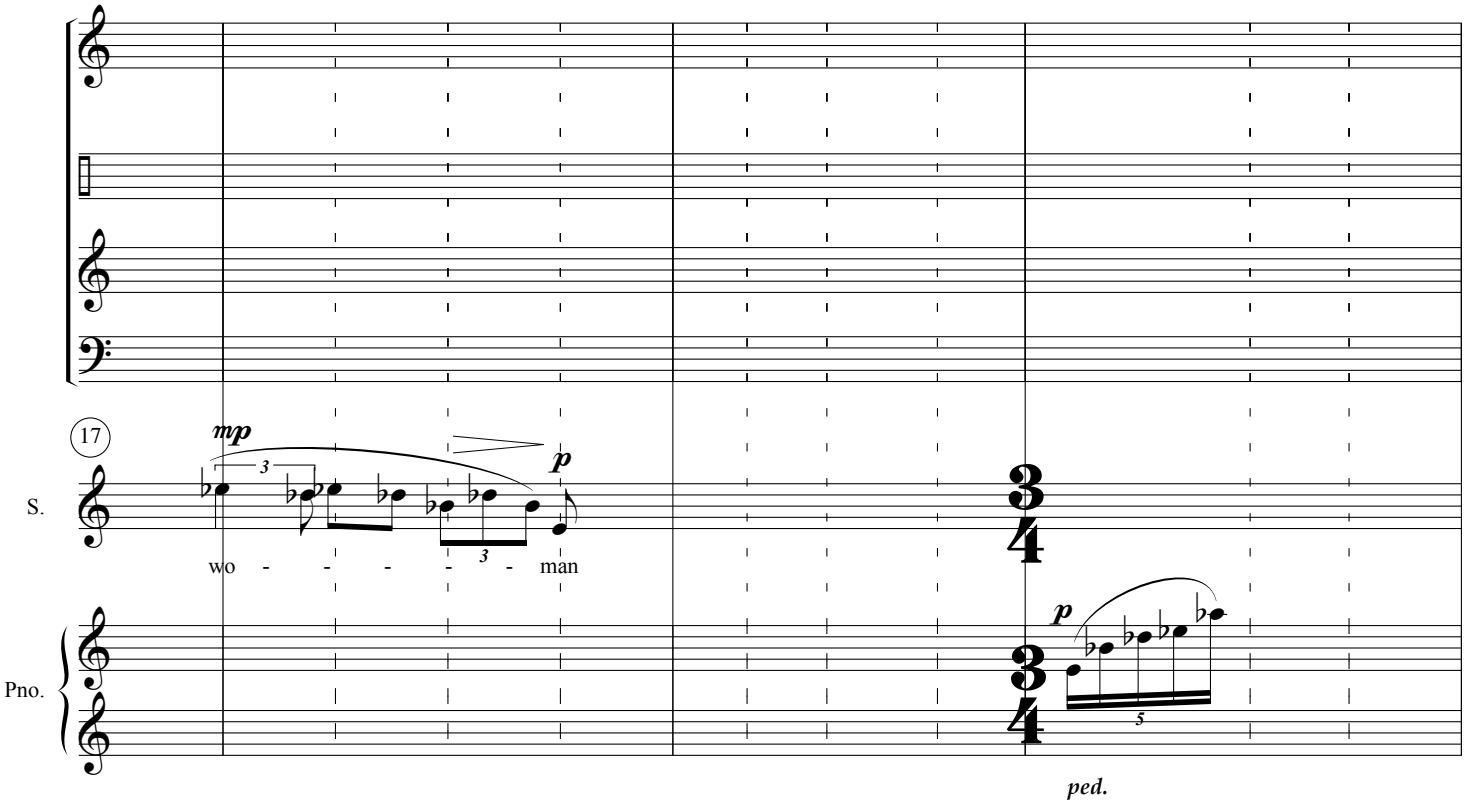

7
S.
metronomic
Pno.
f
ped.

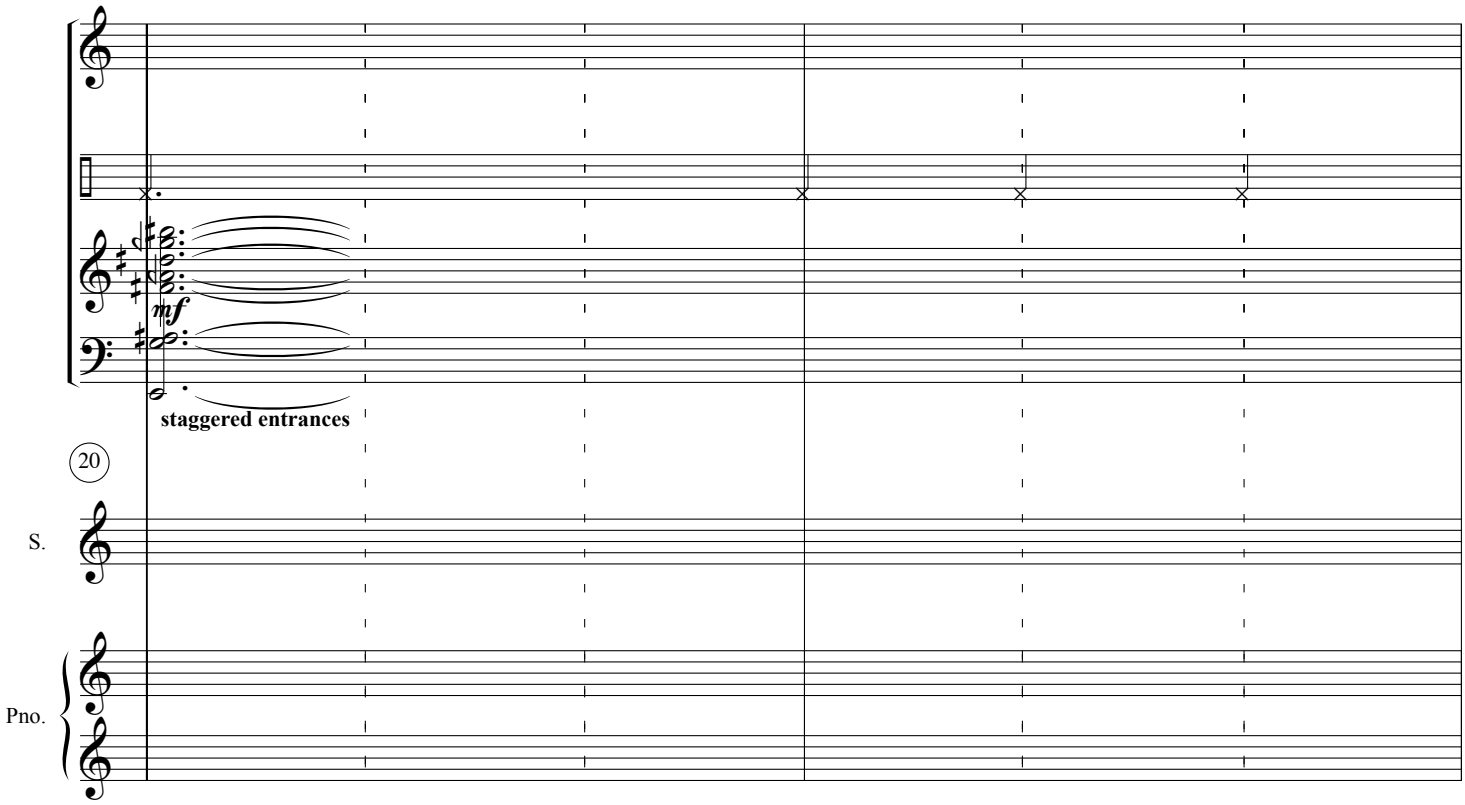

pulse cues
pitch cue
pp
ff
9
S.
p
f
A
man
Pno.
p
ff
sostenuto pedal

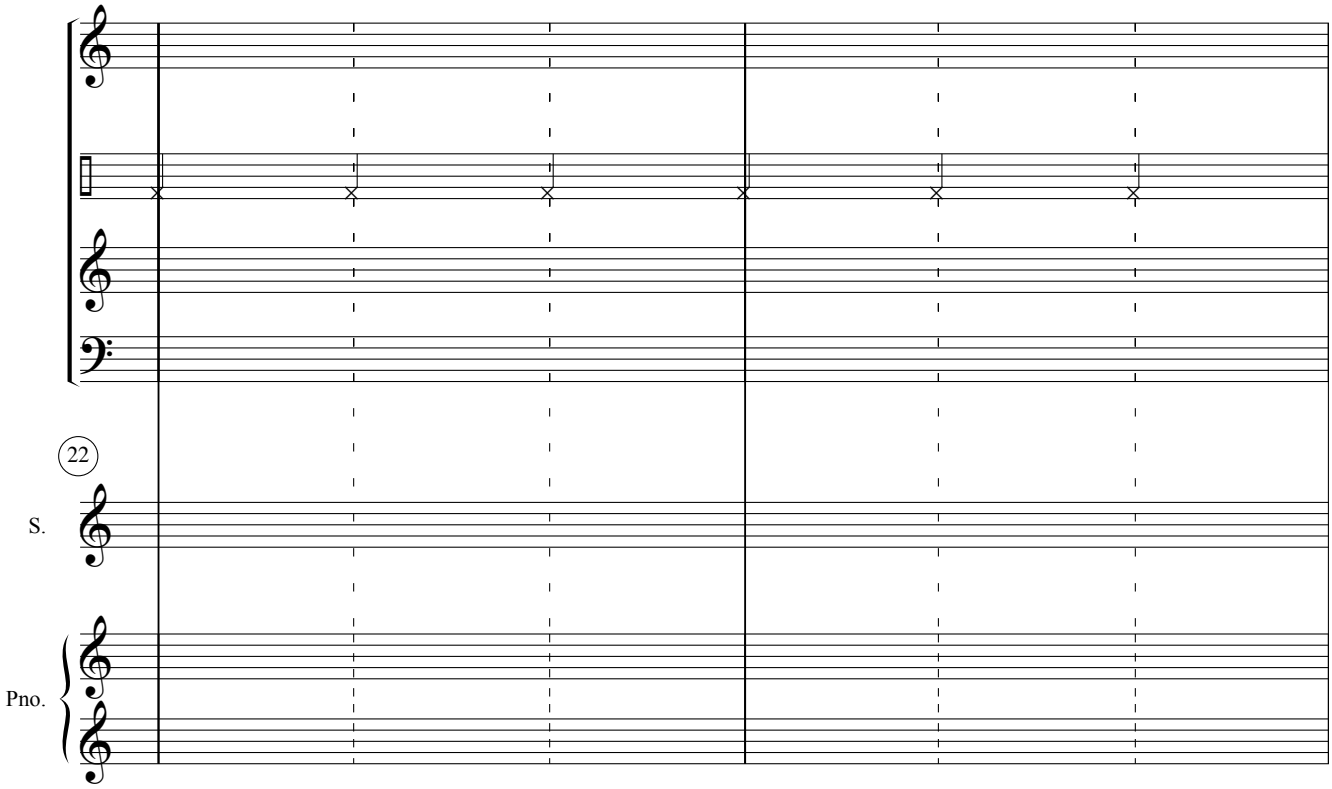

11
S.
sempre staccato
irregular ritardando
Pno.
f

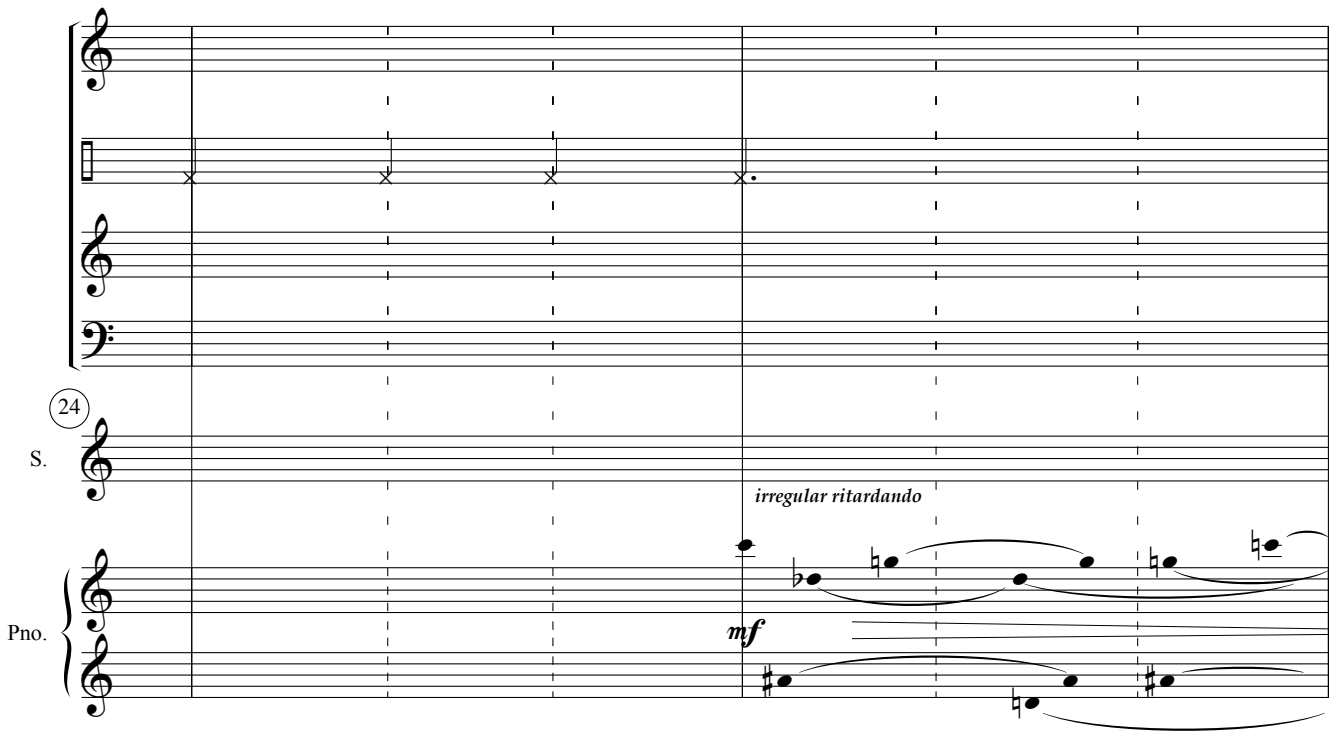

13
S.
Pno.

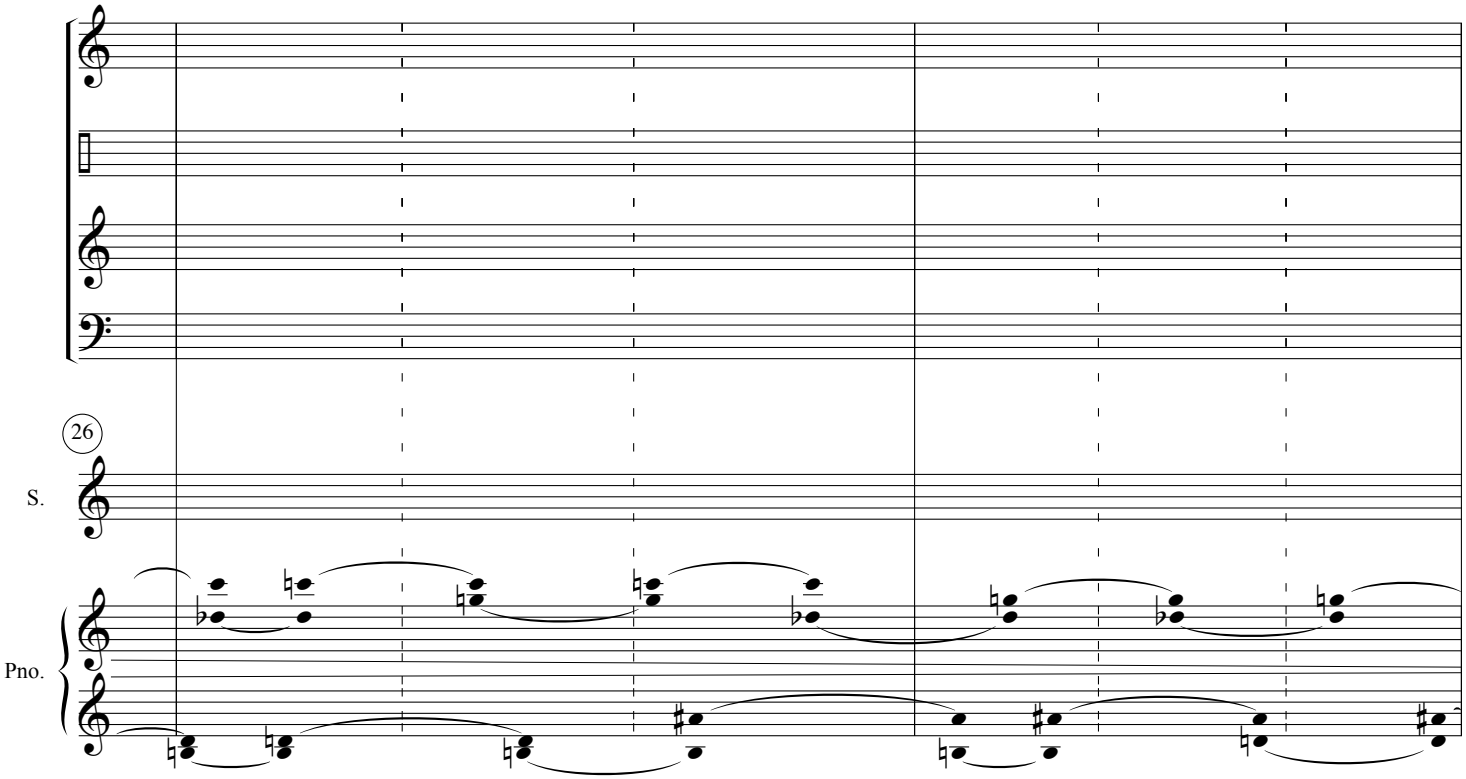

(staggered entrances)
p
15
S.
flowing
p
and
a
Pno.
1
2
3
4
pp

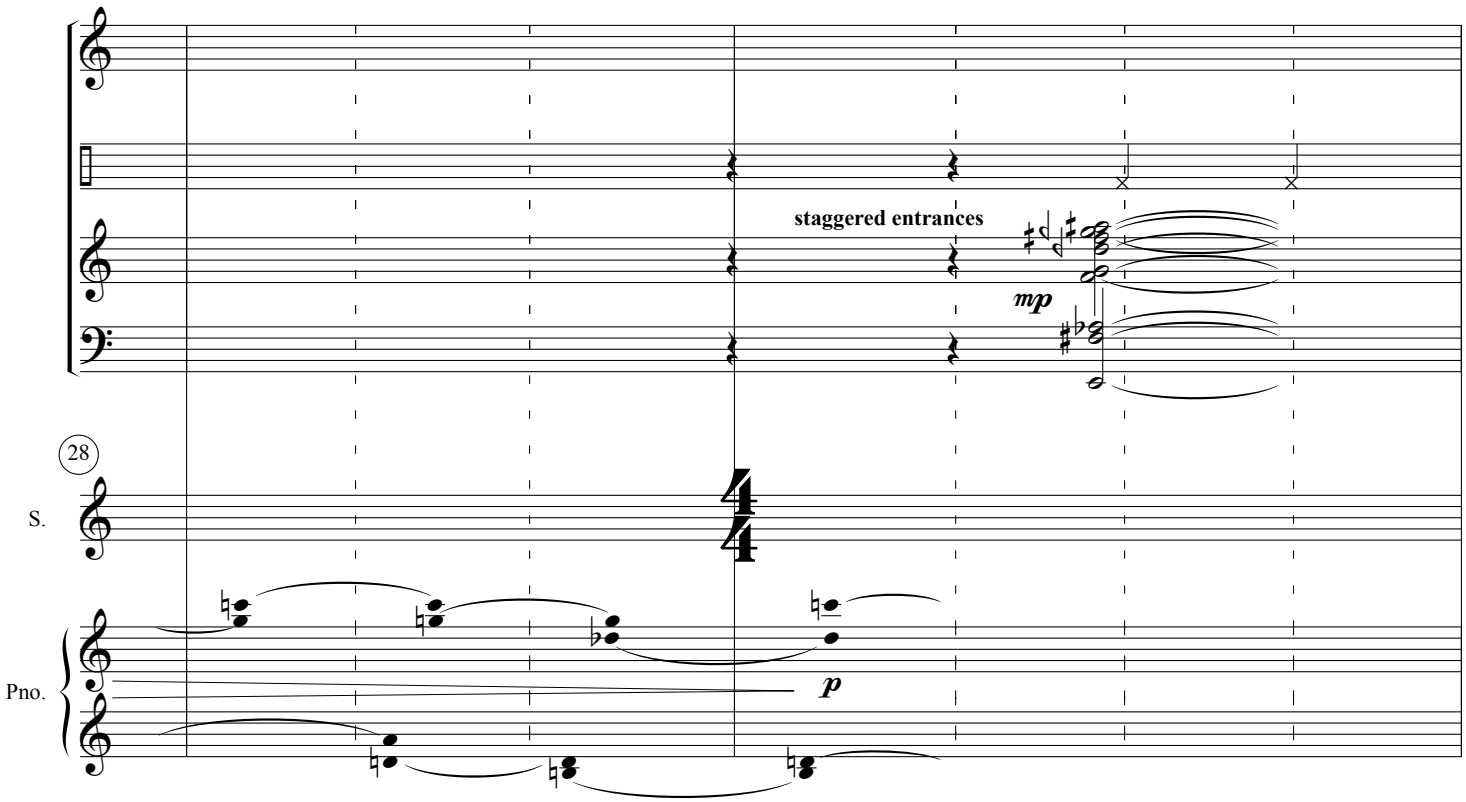

17
S.
Pno.
mp
p
wo - - - - - - man
3/4
p
ped.

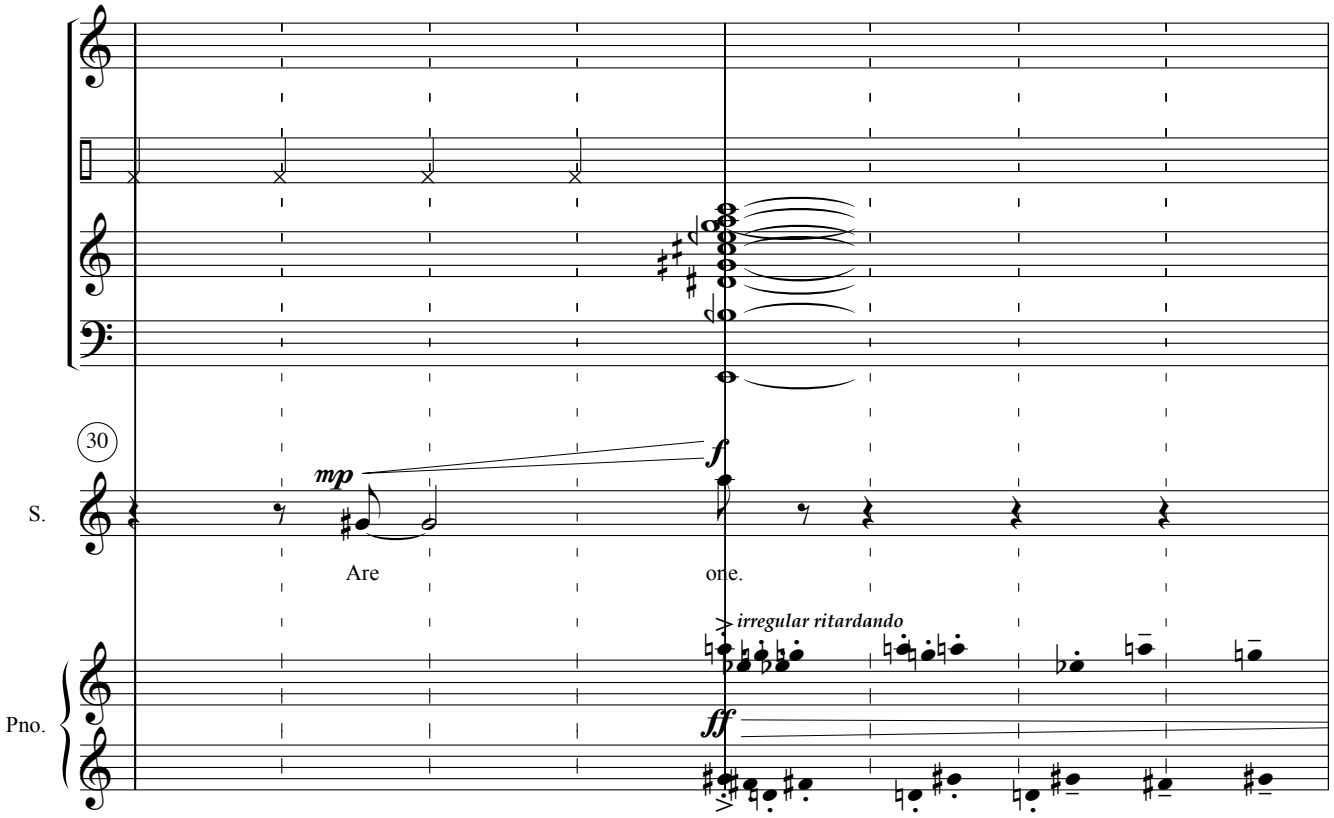

mf
staggered entrances
20
S.
Pno.

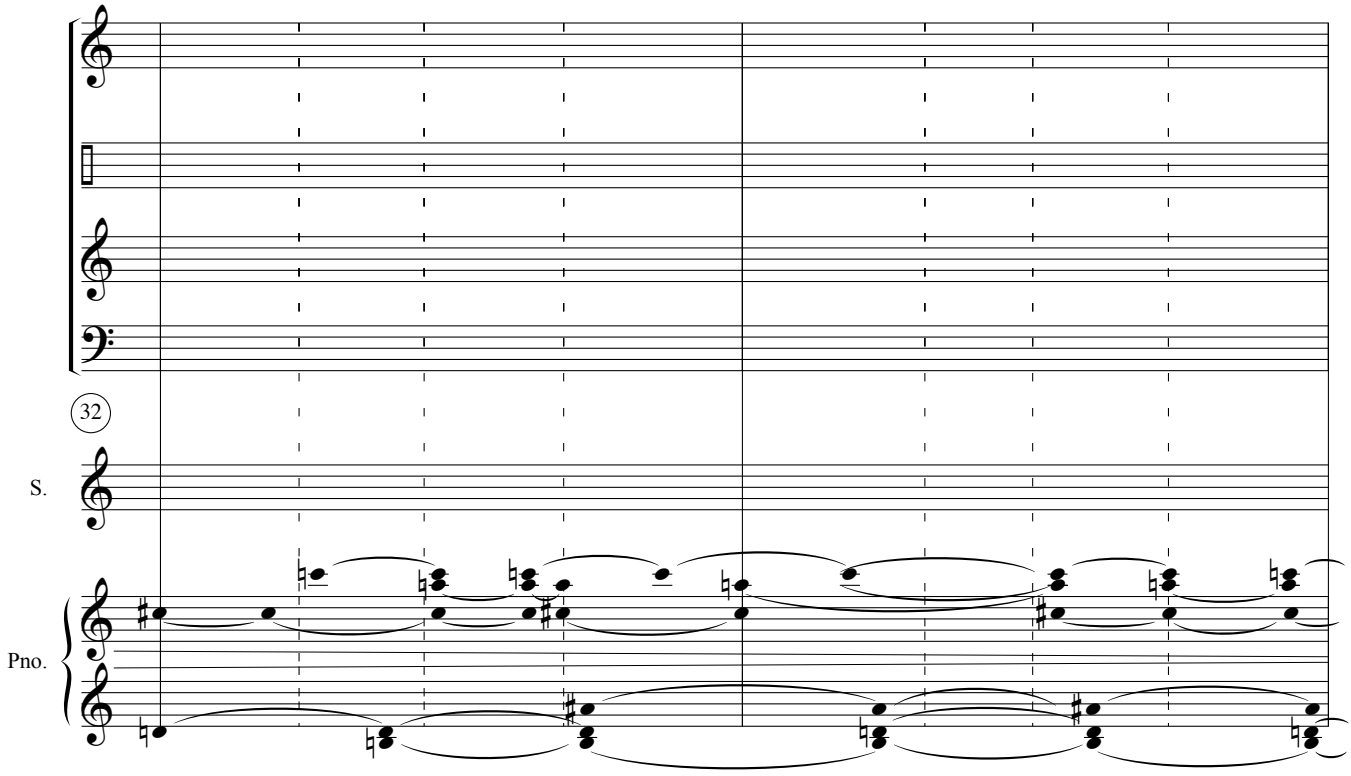

22
S.
Pno.

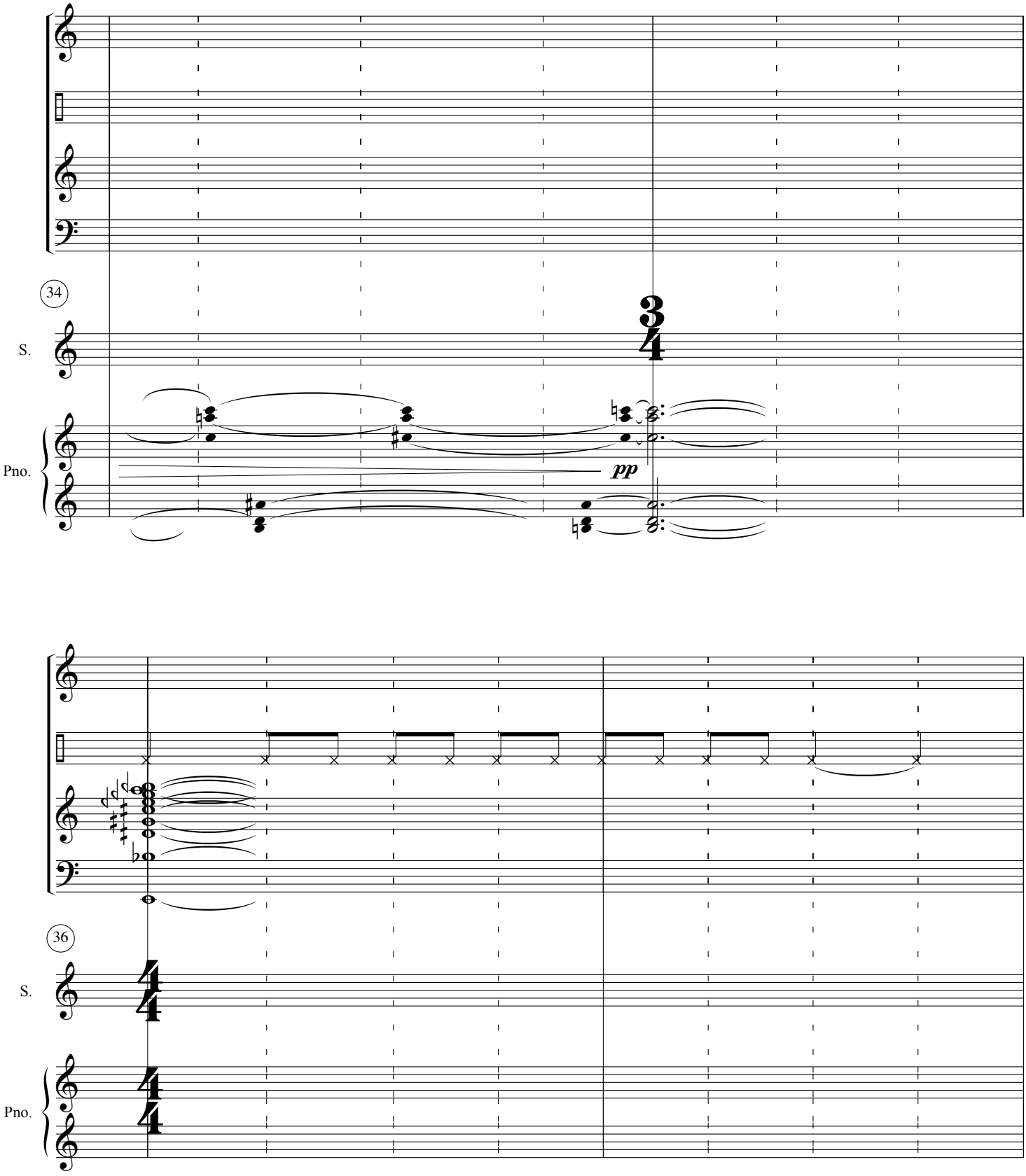

24
S.
irregular ritardando
mf
Pno.

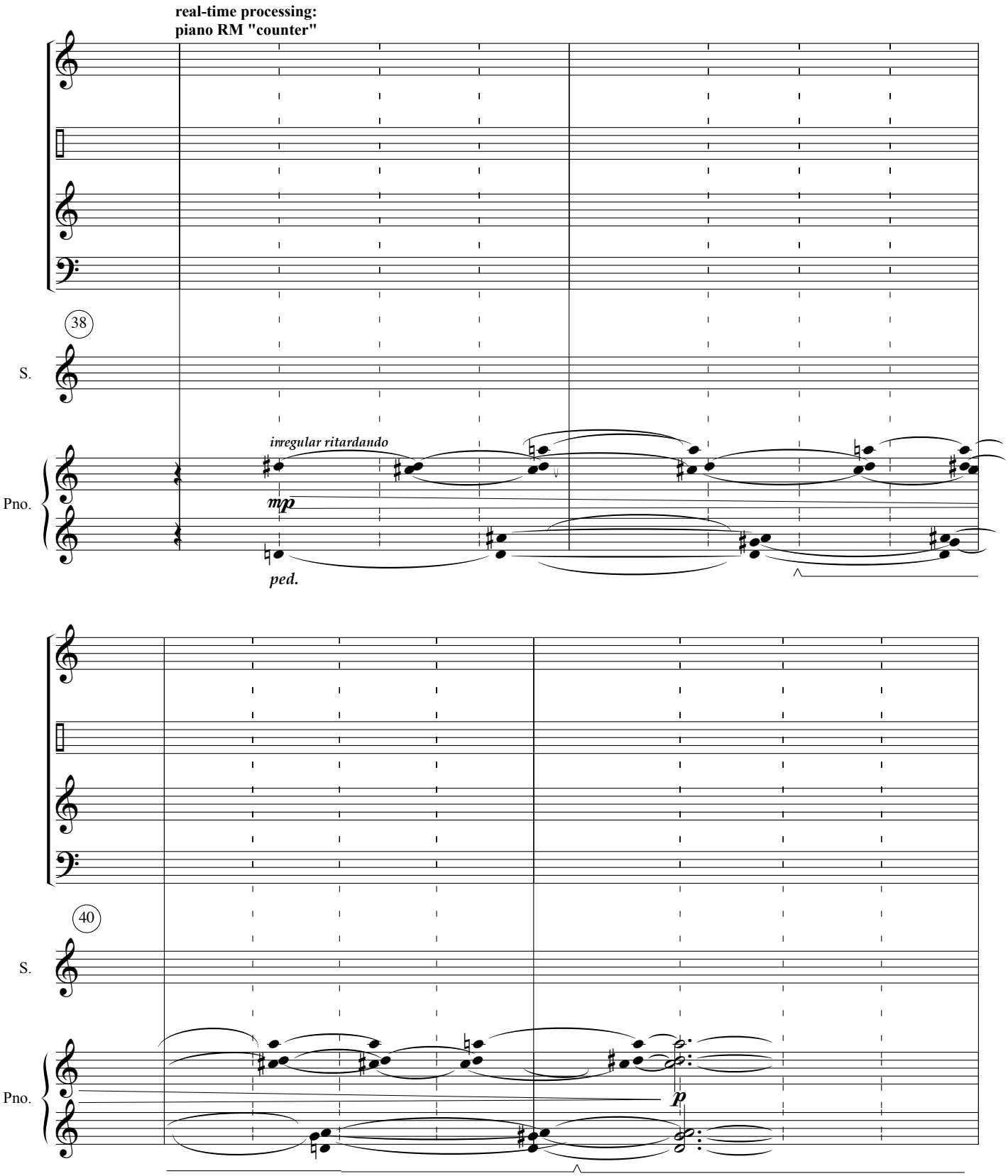

26
S.
Pno.

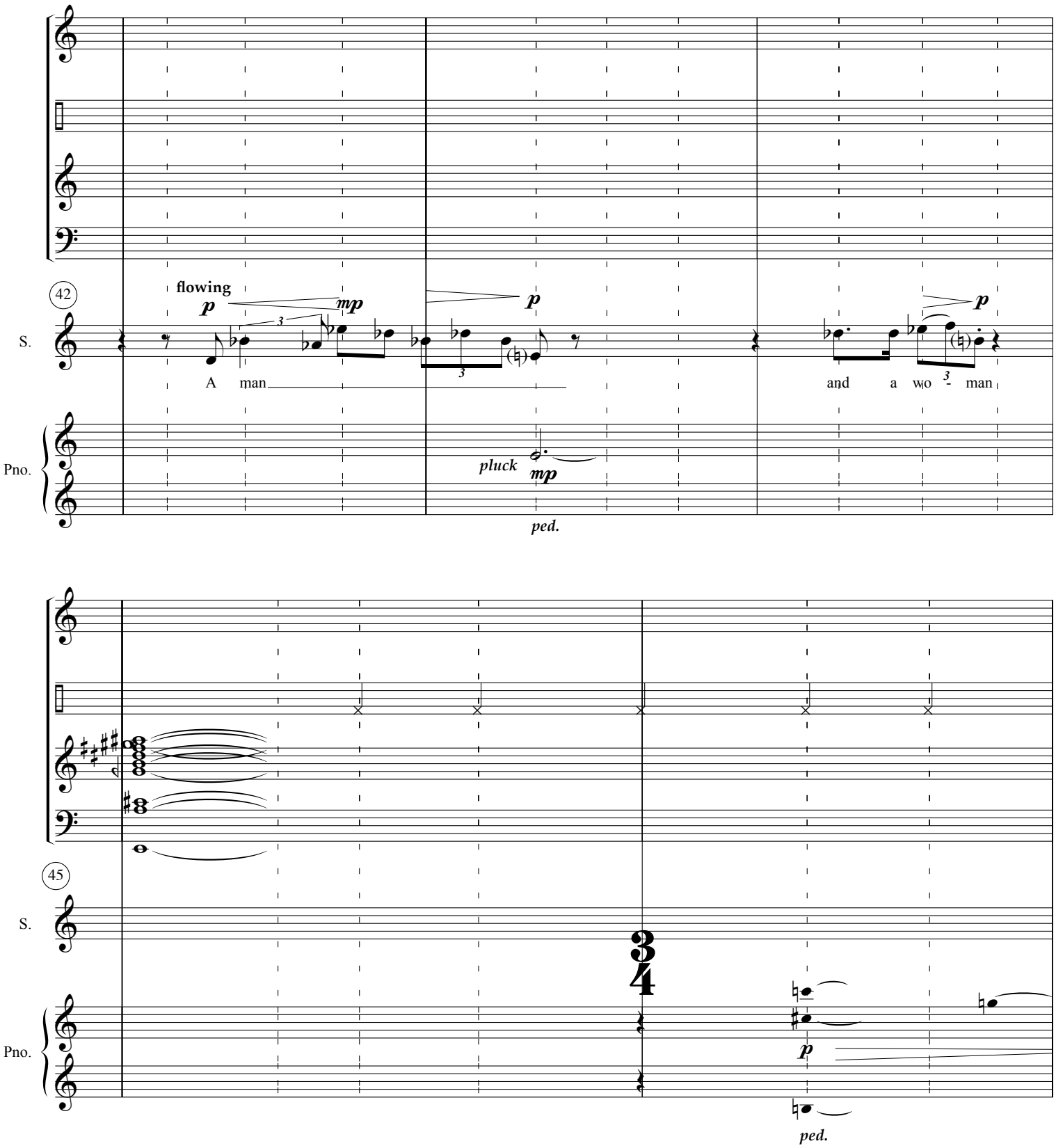

staggered entrances
mp
28
S.
Pno.
p

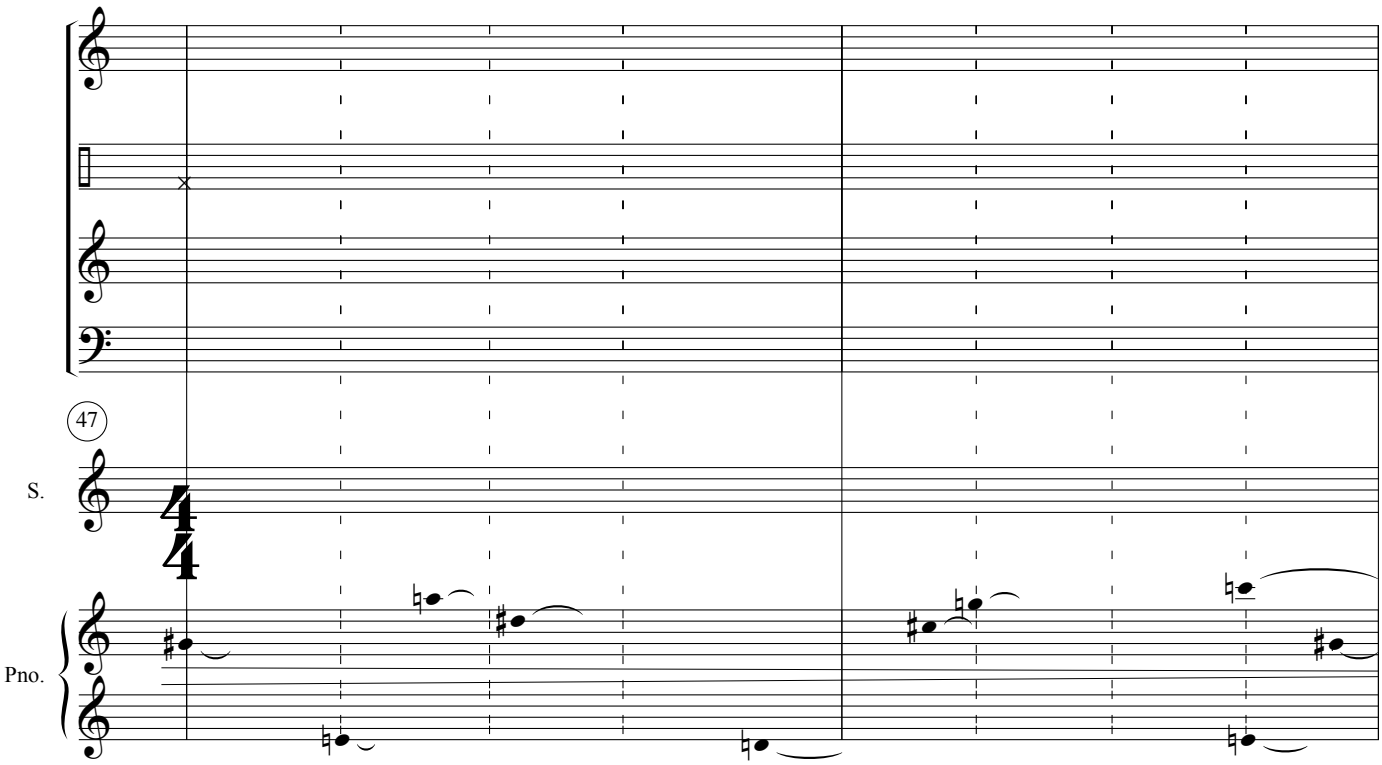

30
S.
Pno.
mp
f
Are
one.
irregular ritardando
ff

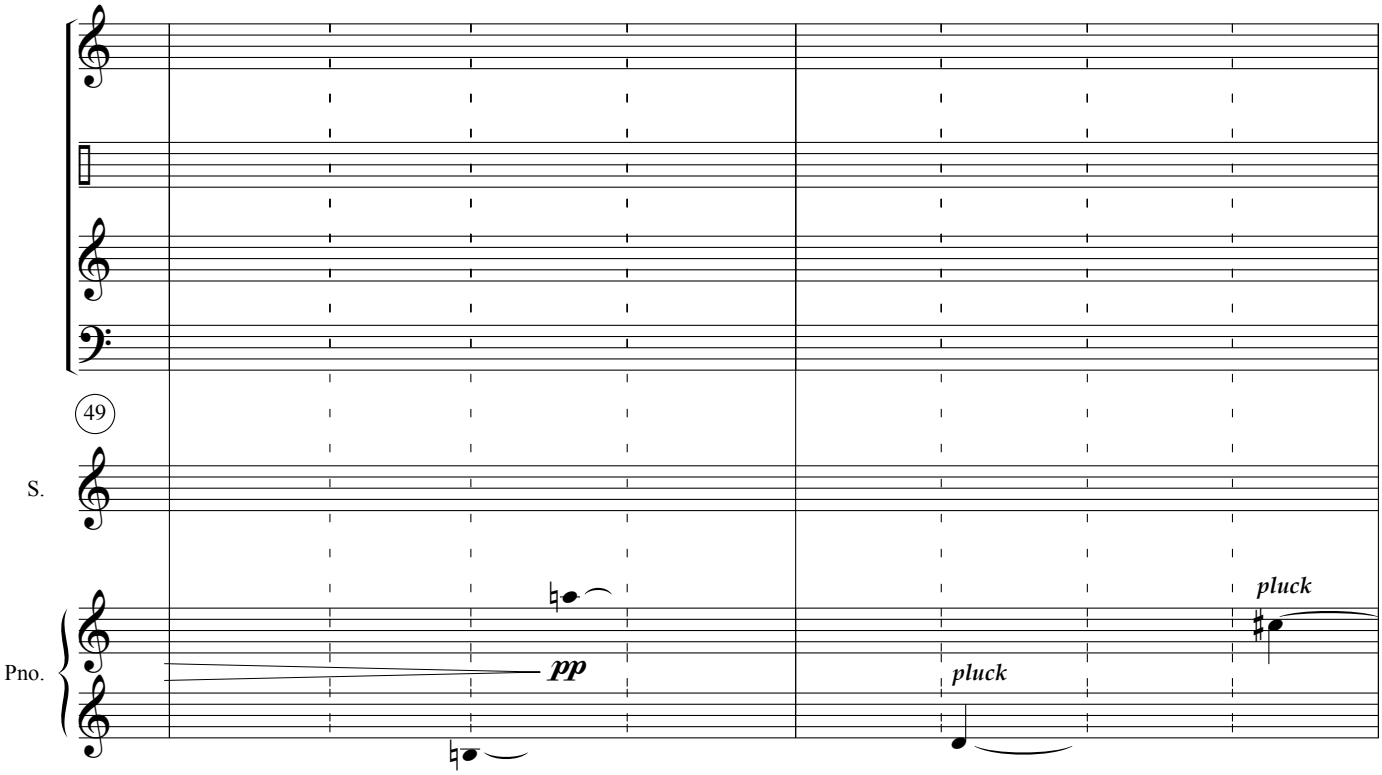

32
S.
Pno.

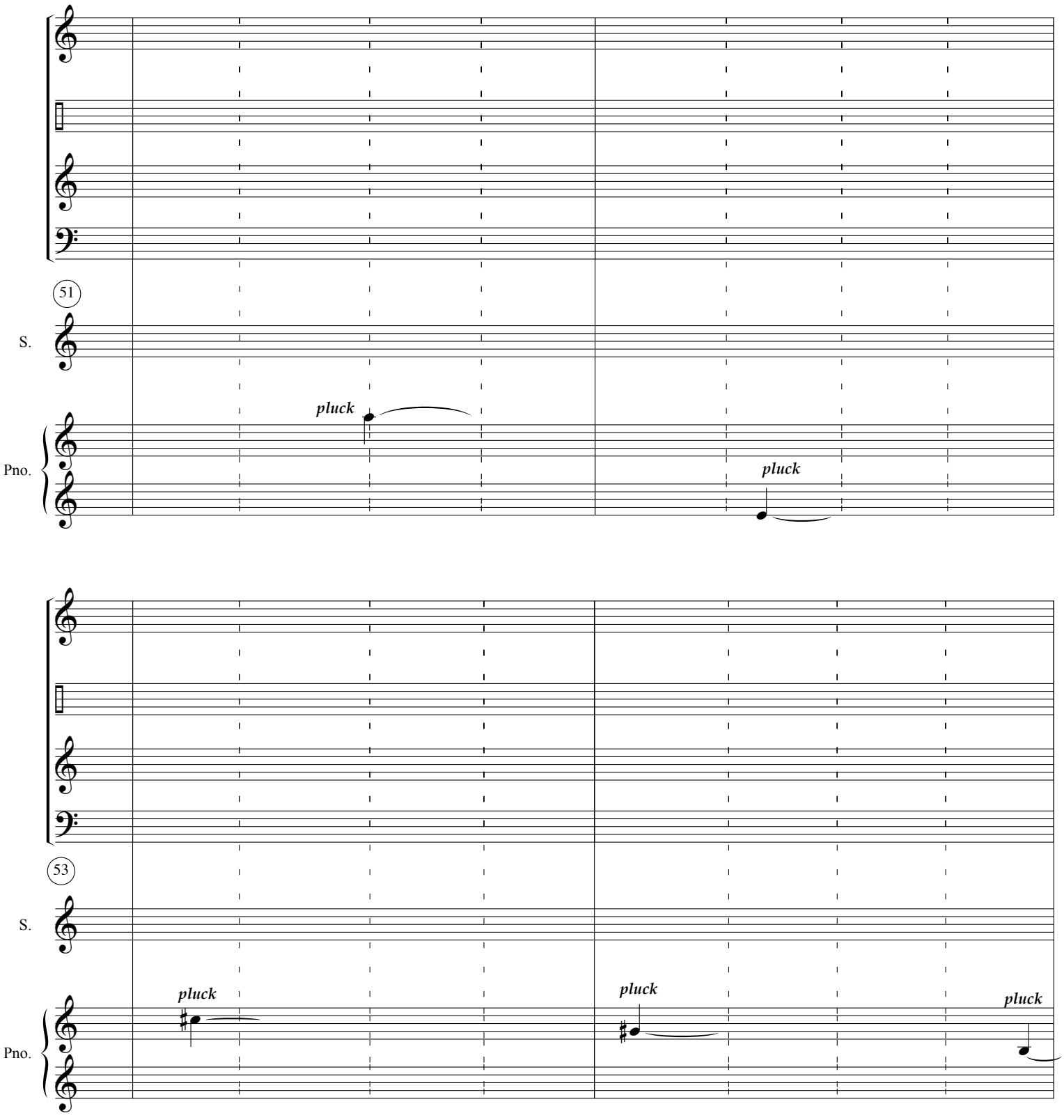

34
S.
Pno.
pp
36
S.
Pno.

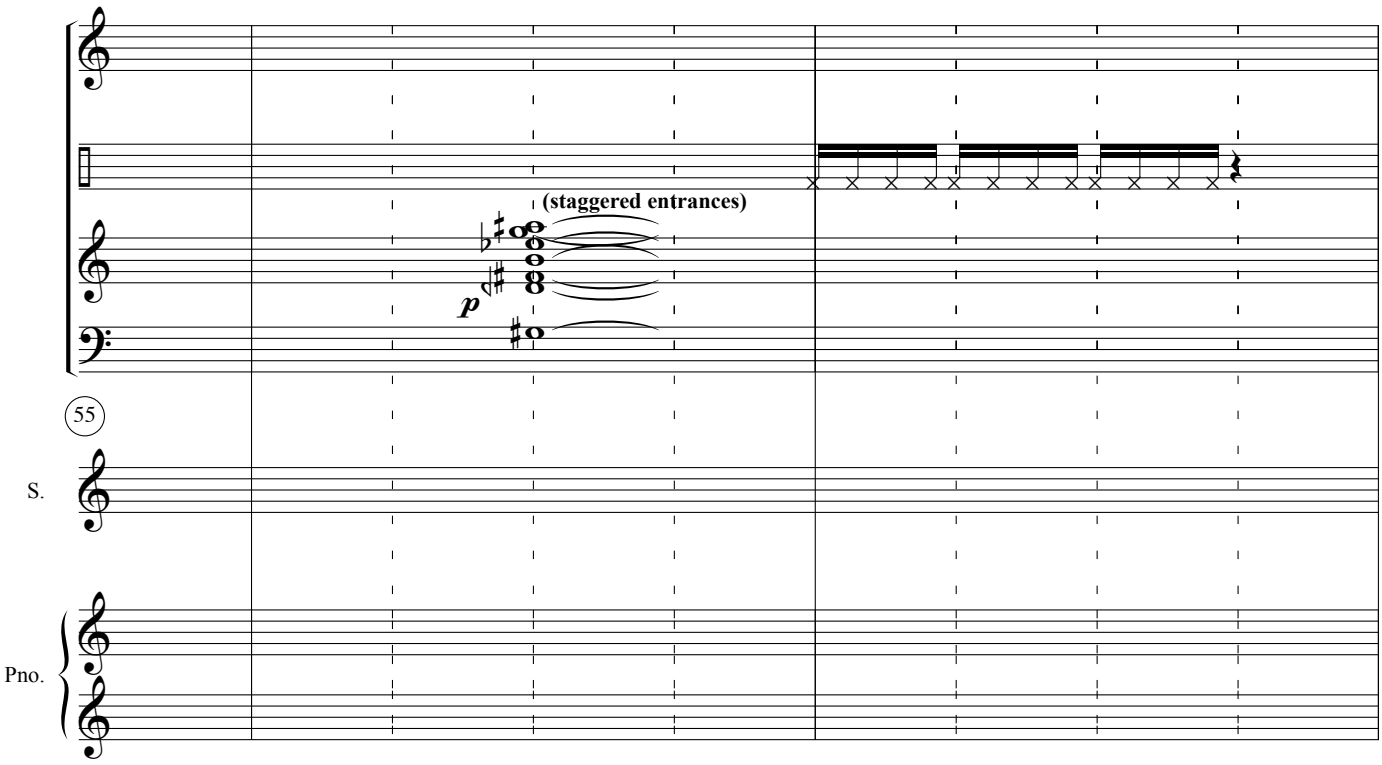

real-time processing:
piano RM "counter"
38
S.
Pno.
inregular ritardando
mp
ped.
40
S.
Pno.
p

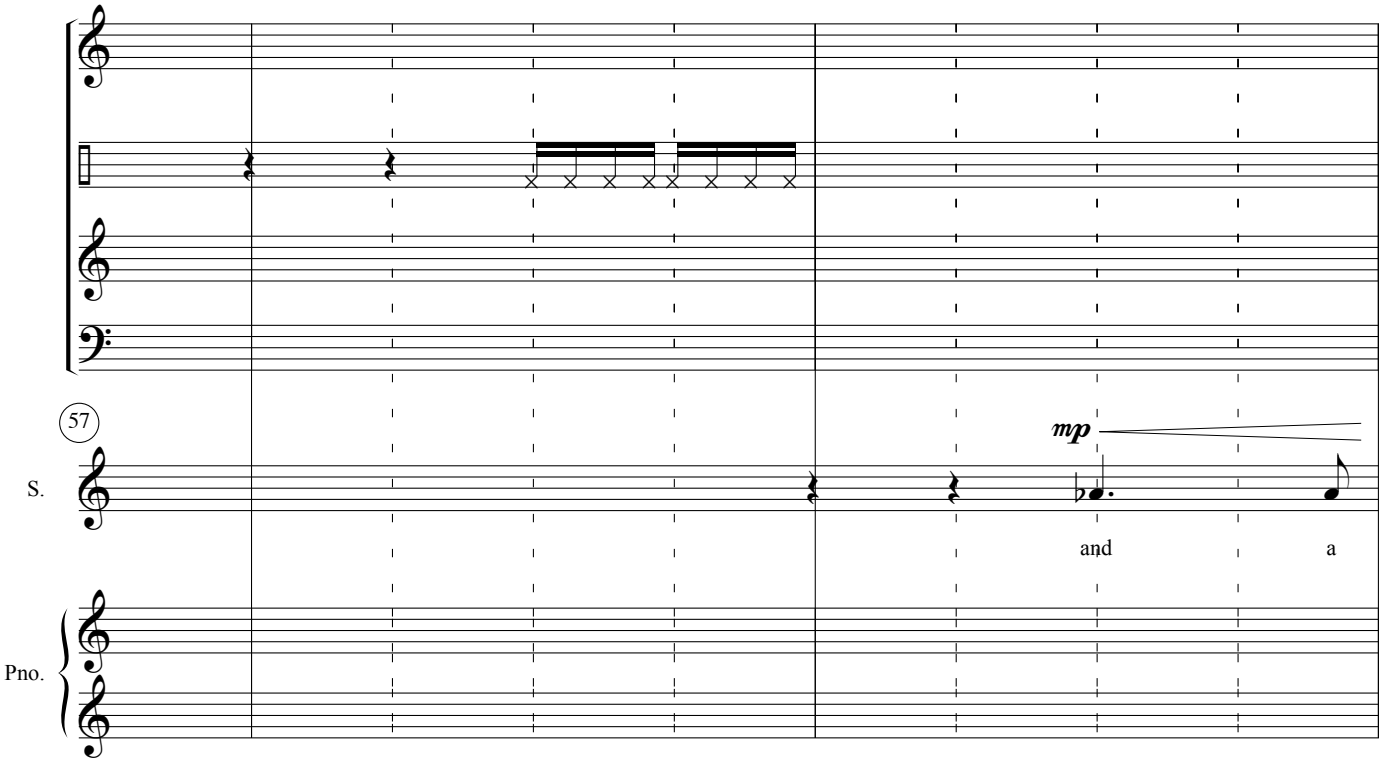

42
flowing
p
mp
p
p
S.
A man
and a wo - man
Pno.
pluck
mp
ped.
45
S.
3
4
Pno.
p
ped.

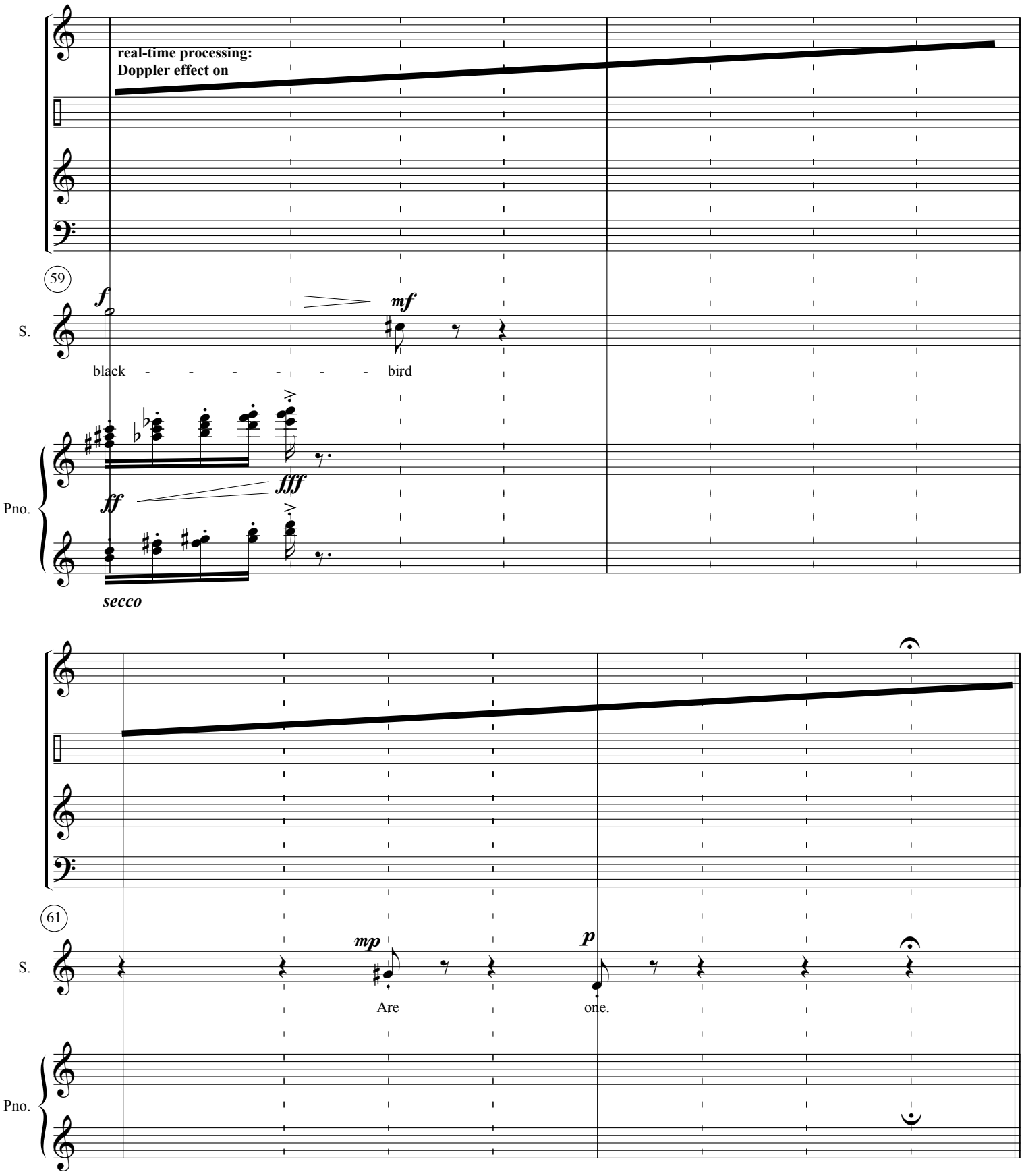

47
S.
Pno.


49
S.
Pno.
pp
pluck
pluck


51
S.
Pno.
pluck
pluck
53
S.
Pno.
pluck
pluck
pluck

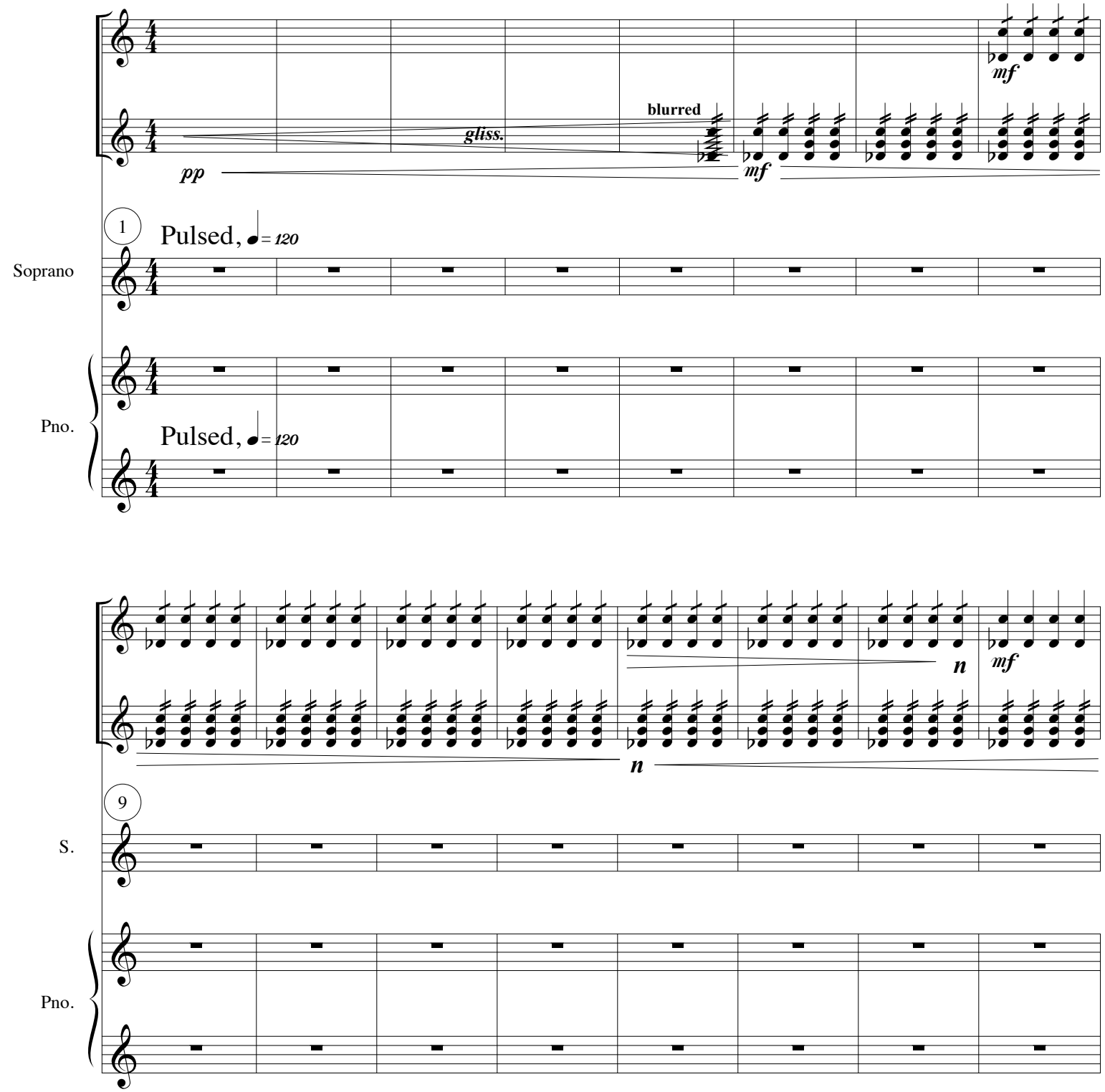

(staggered entrances)
p
55
S.
Pno.

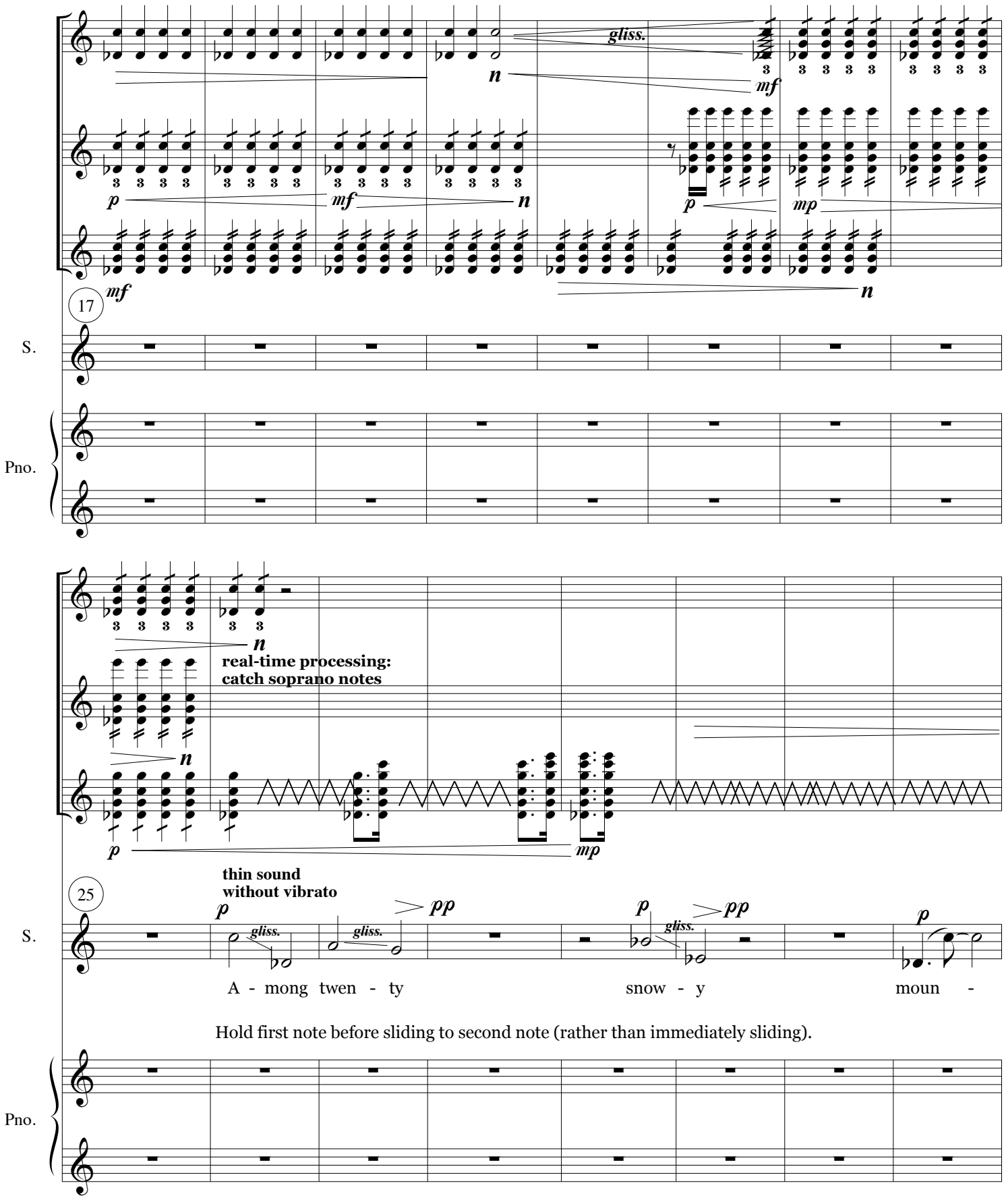

57
S.
mp
and
a
Pno.

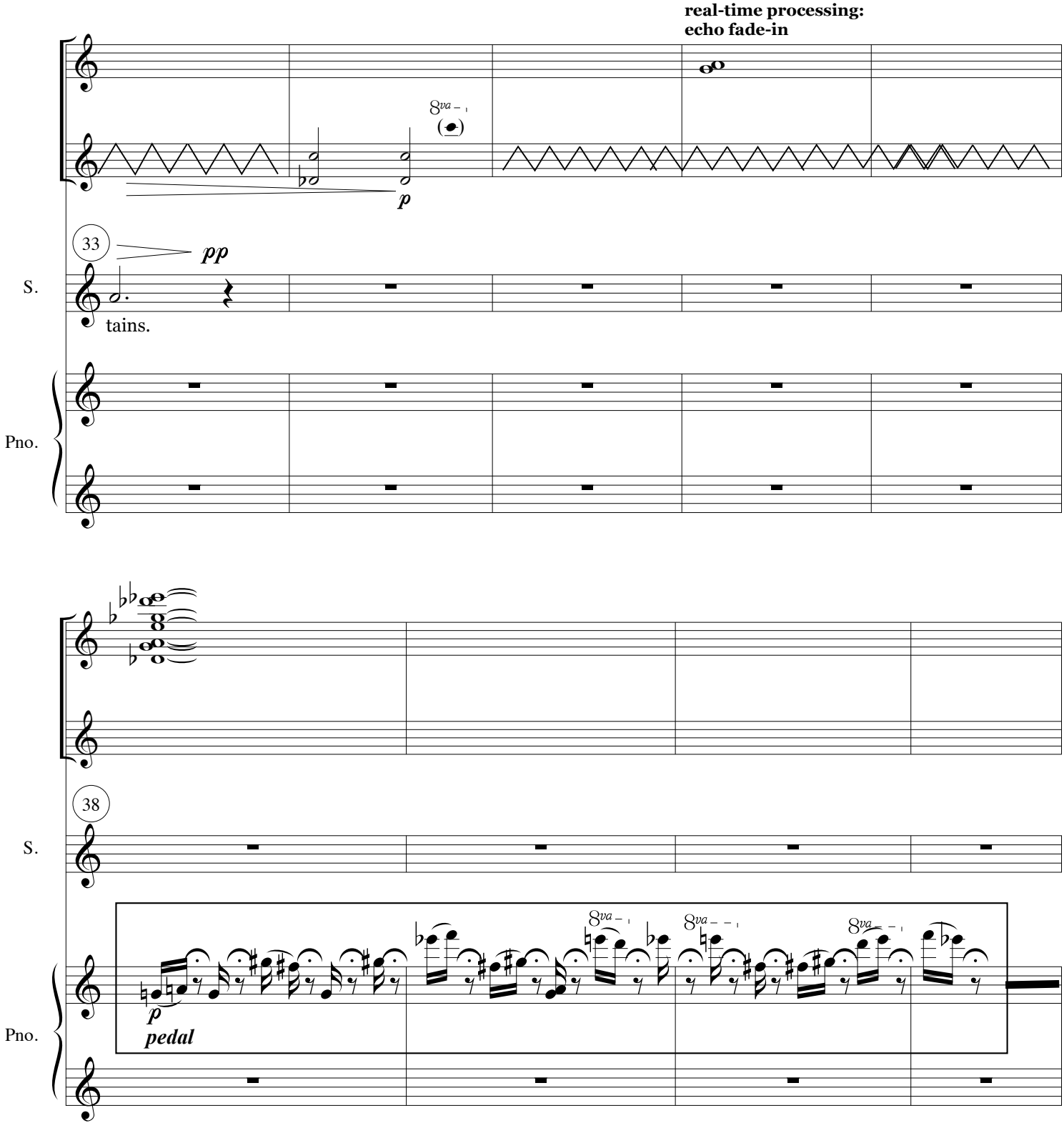

real-time processing:
Doppler effect on
59
S.
f
mf
black - - - - - - - bird
Pno.
ff
fff
secco
61
S.
mp
p
Are
one.
Pno.

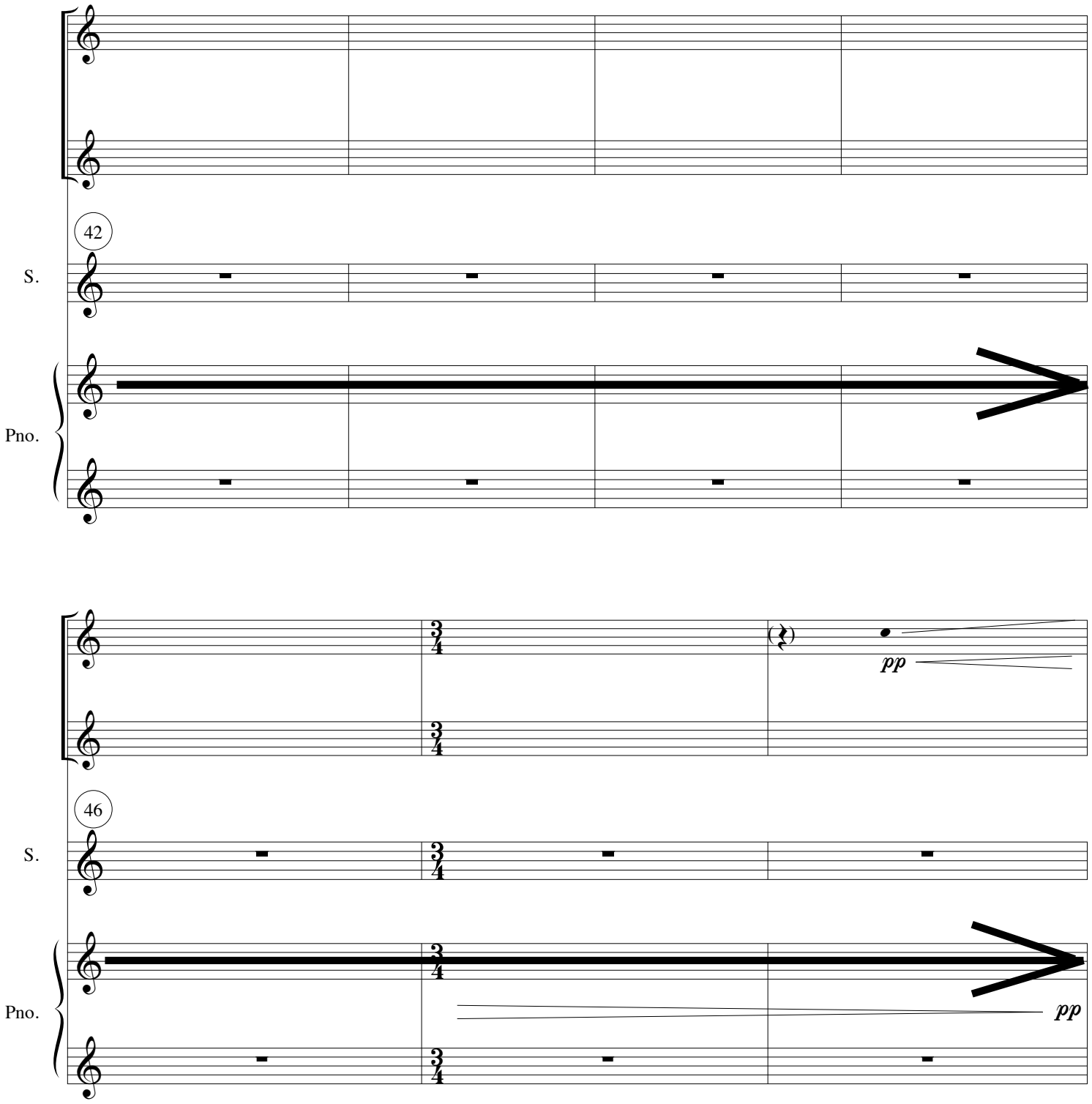
SONG FOUR

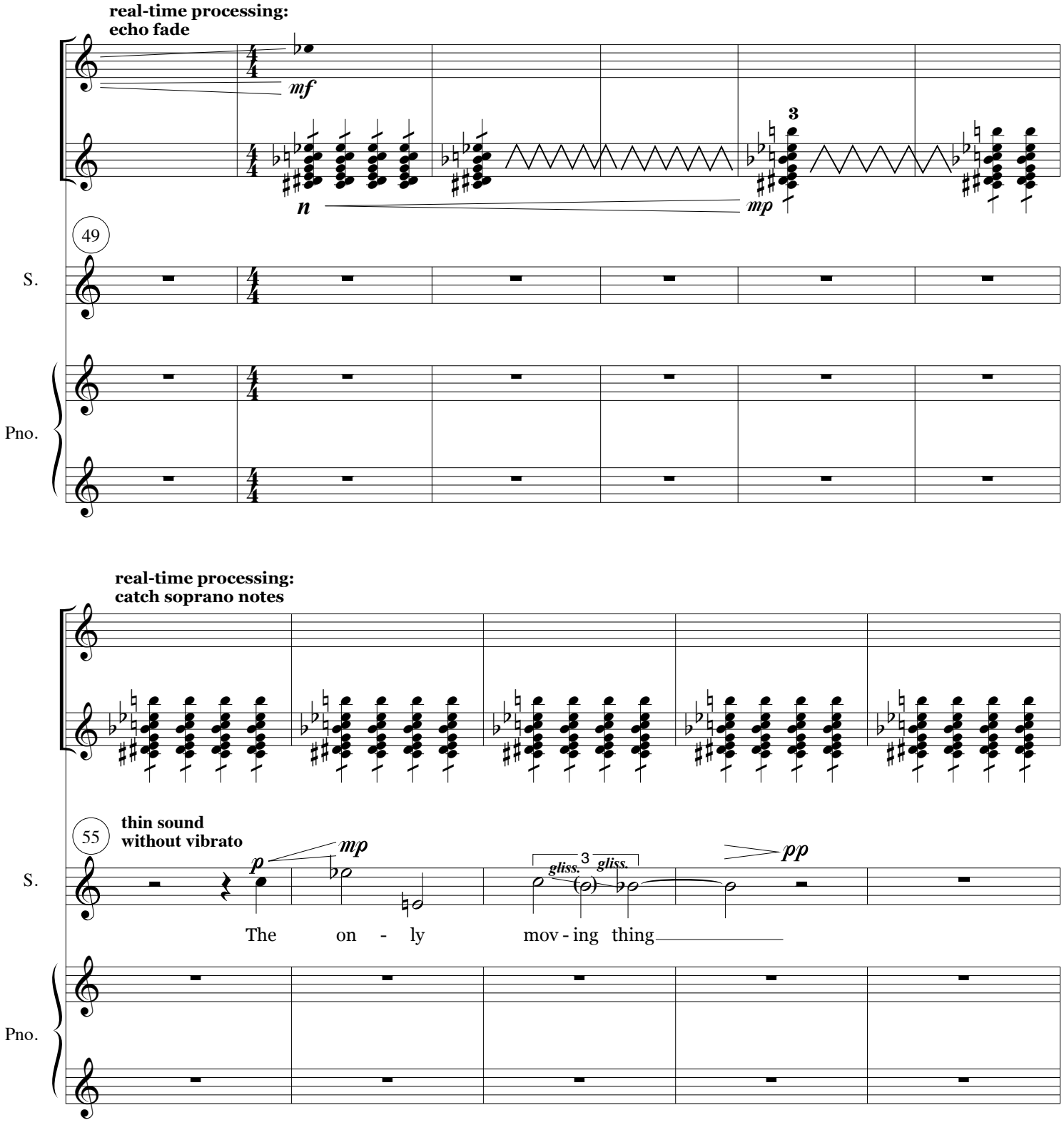
Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

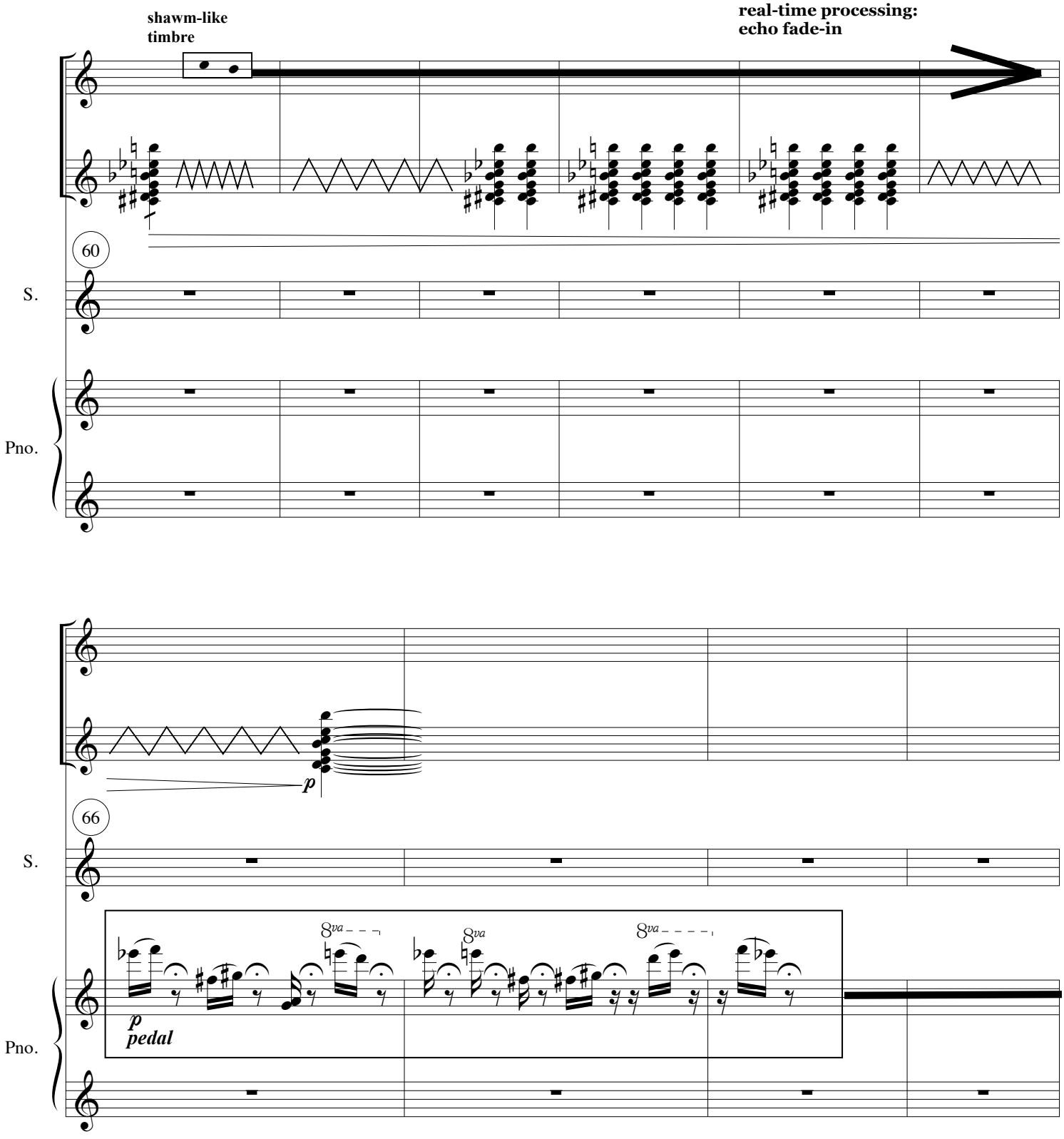


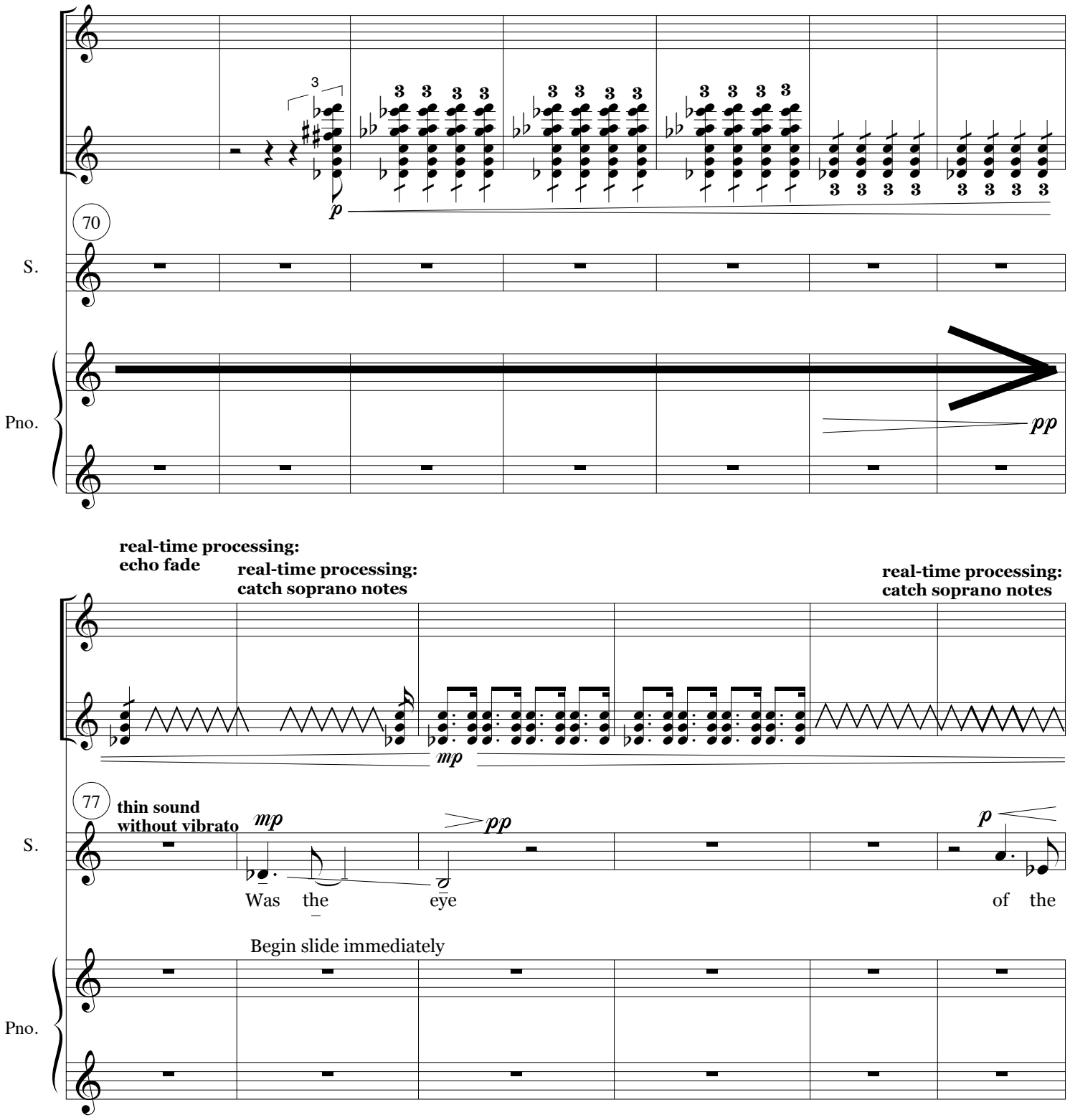

gliss.
mf
n
p
mf
n
p
mp
mf
n
17
S.
Pno.
n
real-time processing:
catch soprano notes
n
p
mp
thin sound
without vibrato
25
S.
p
gliss.
pp
gliss.
p
gliss.
pp
p
A - mong twen - ty
snow - y
moun -
Hold first note before sliding to second note (rather than immediately sliding).
Pno.

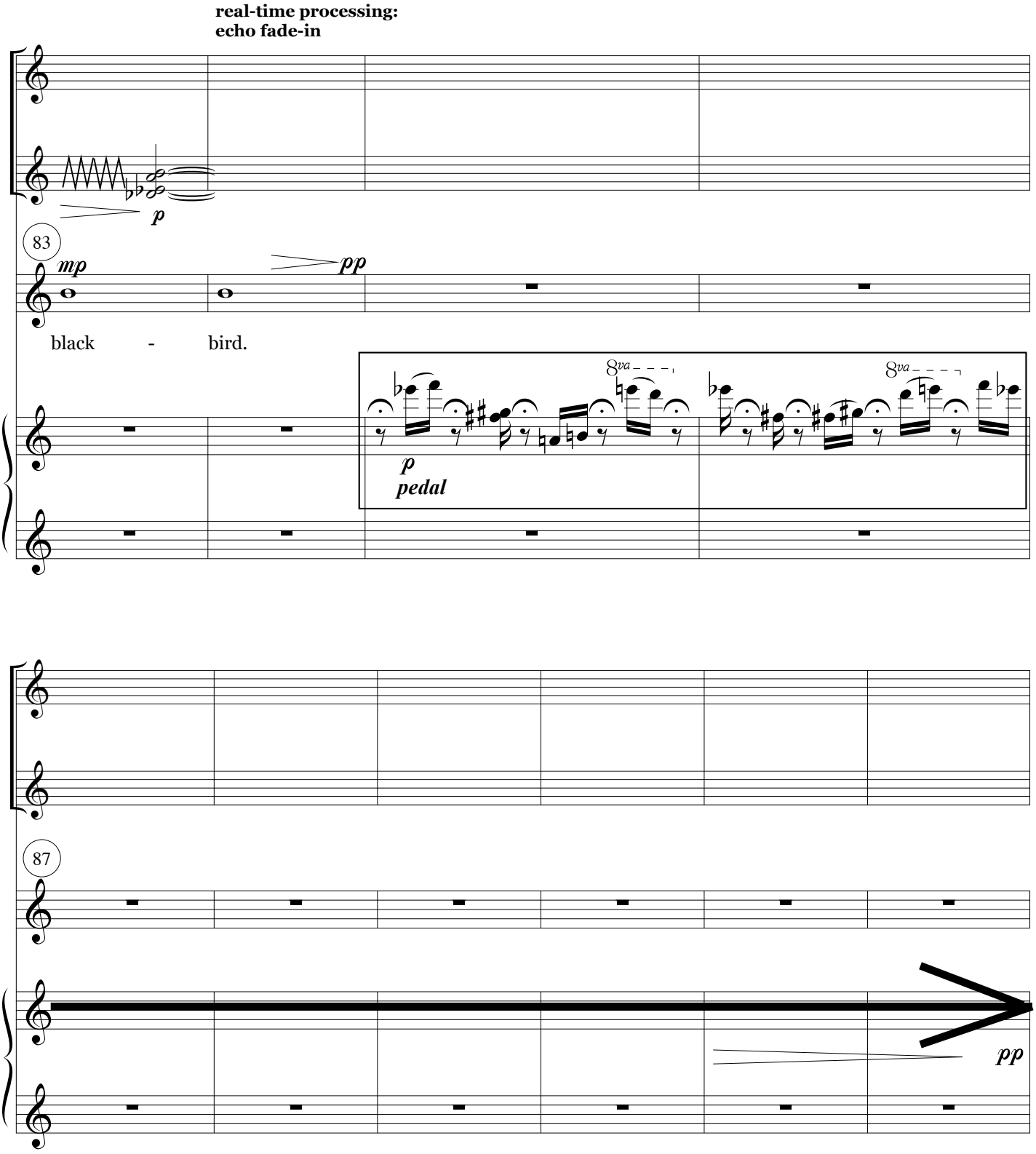

real-time processing:
echo fade-in
8va
p
33
pp
S.
tains.
Pno.
38
S.
8va
8va
8va
p
pedal
Pno.

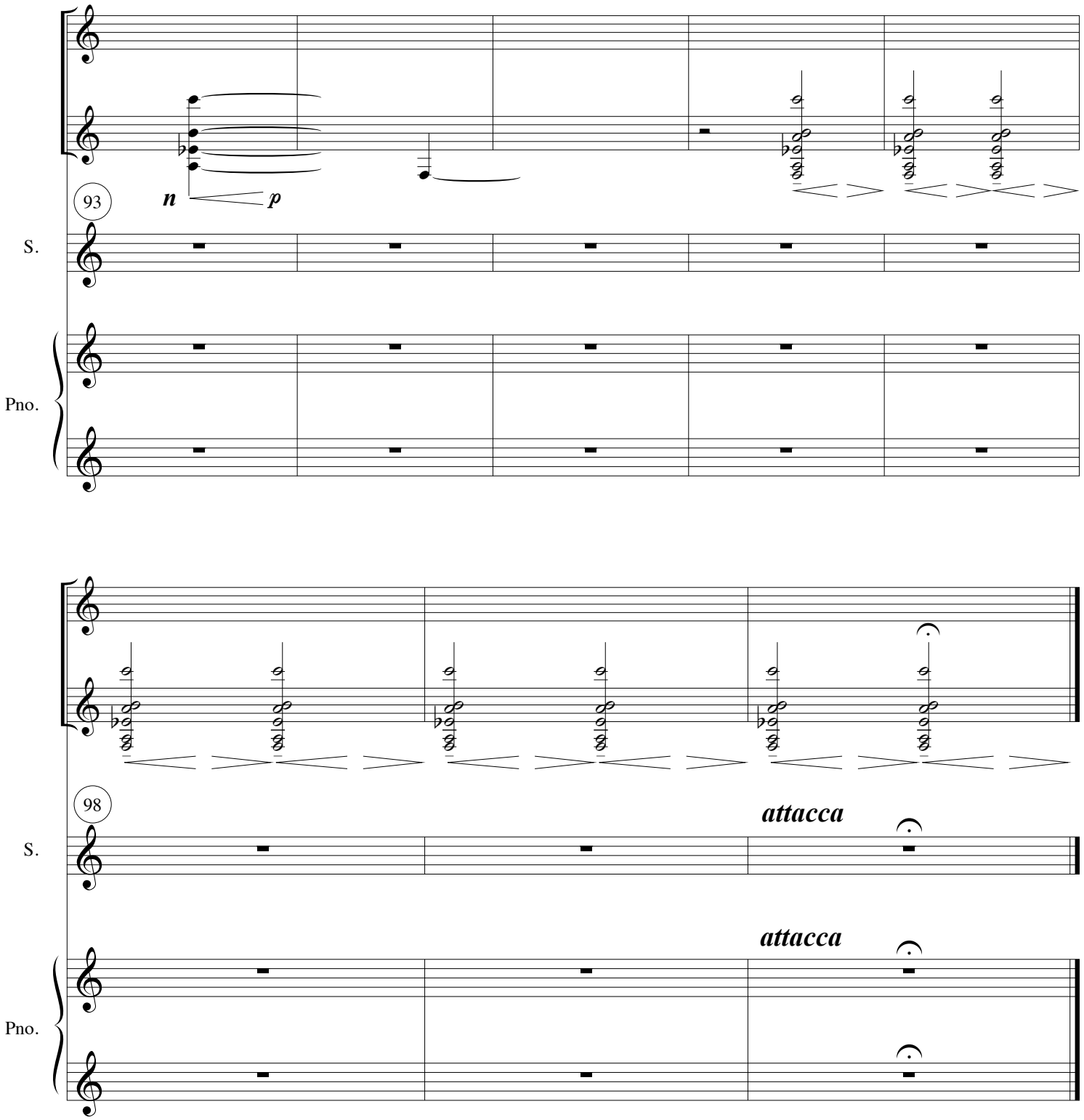

42
S.
Pno.
pp
46
S.
Pno.
pp


real-time processing:
echo fade
mf
3
n
mp
49
S.
Pno.
real-time processing:
catch soprano notes
55
thin sound
without vibrato
p
mp
gliss.
3
gliss.
pp
The on - ly mov - ing thing
S.
Pno.


shawm-like
timbre
real-time processing:
echo fade-in
60
S.
Pno.
p
66
S.
8va
8va
8va
p
pedal
Pno.

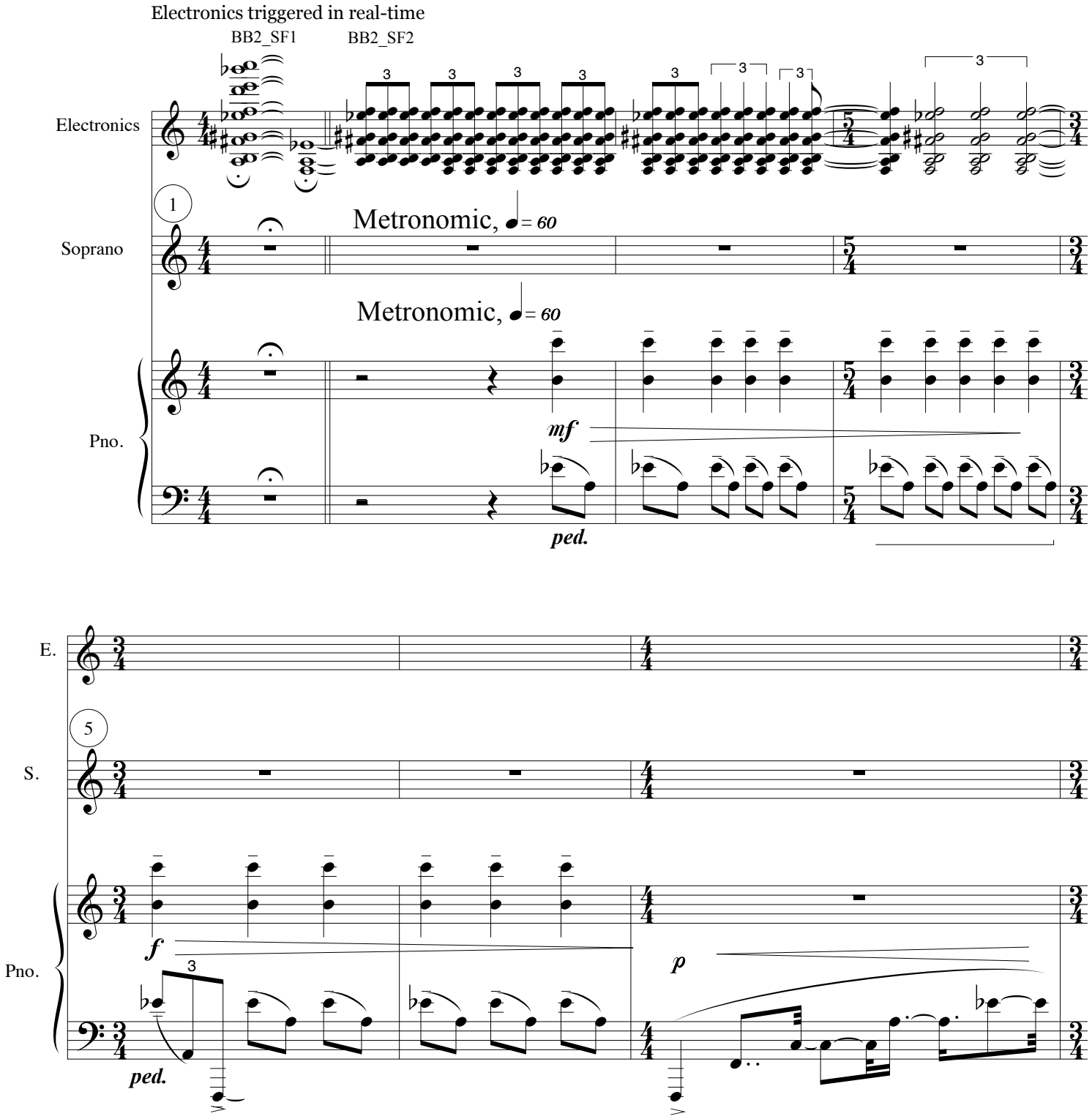

70
S.
Pno.
p
pp
real-time processing:
echo fade
real-time processing:
catch soprano notes
real-time processing:
catch soprano notes
mp
77
thin sound
without vibrato
mp
pp
p
Was the eye of the
Begin slide immediately


real-time processing:
echo fade-in
p
83
S.
mp
pp
black - bird.
8va
8va
p
pedal
Pno.
87
S.
Pno.
pp


93
n
p
S.
Pno.
98
attacca
attacca
S.
Pno.

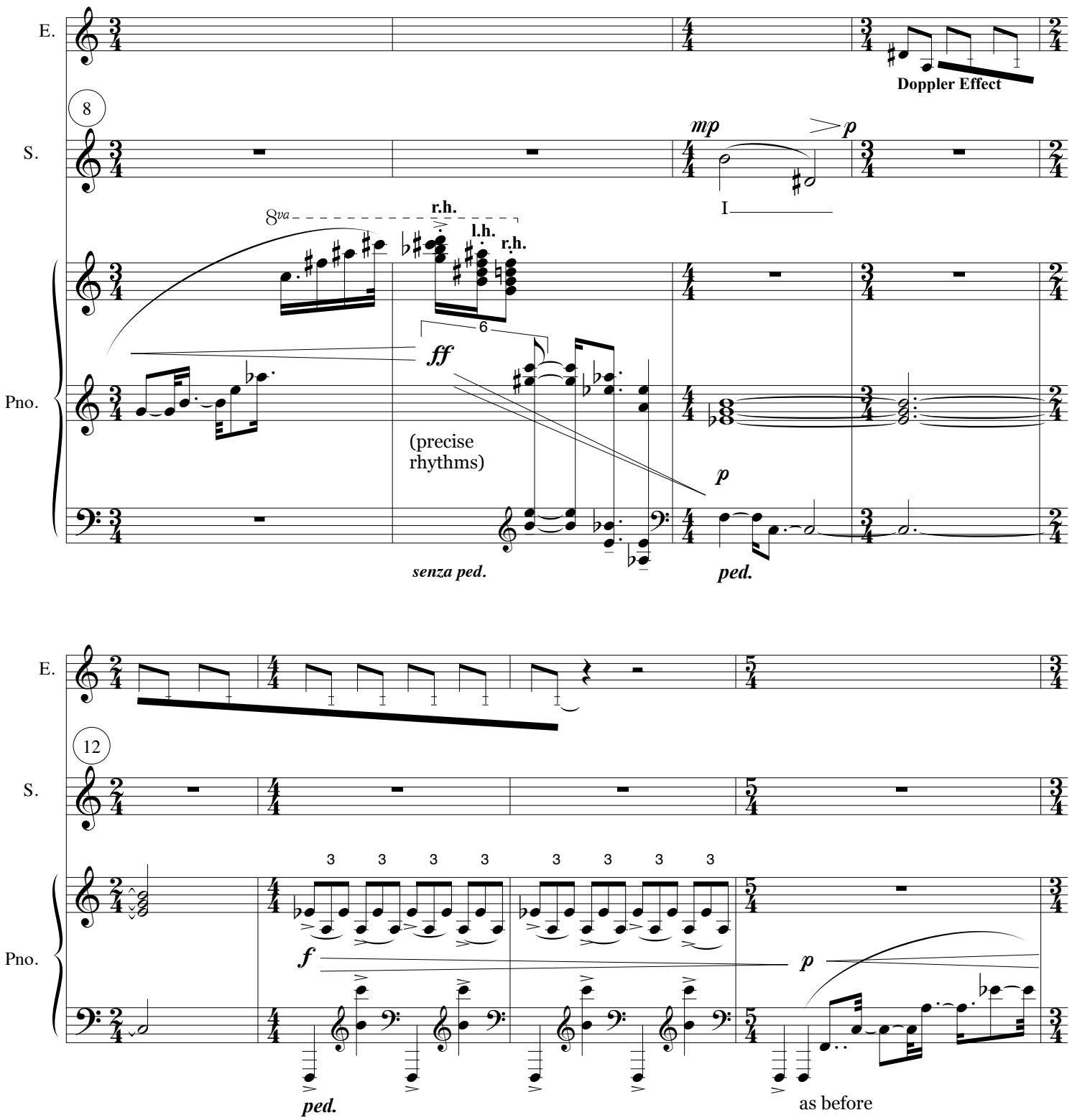
SONG FIVE

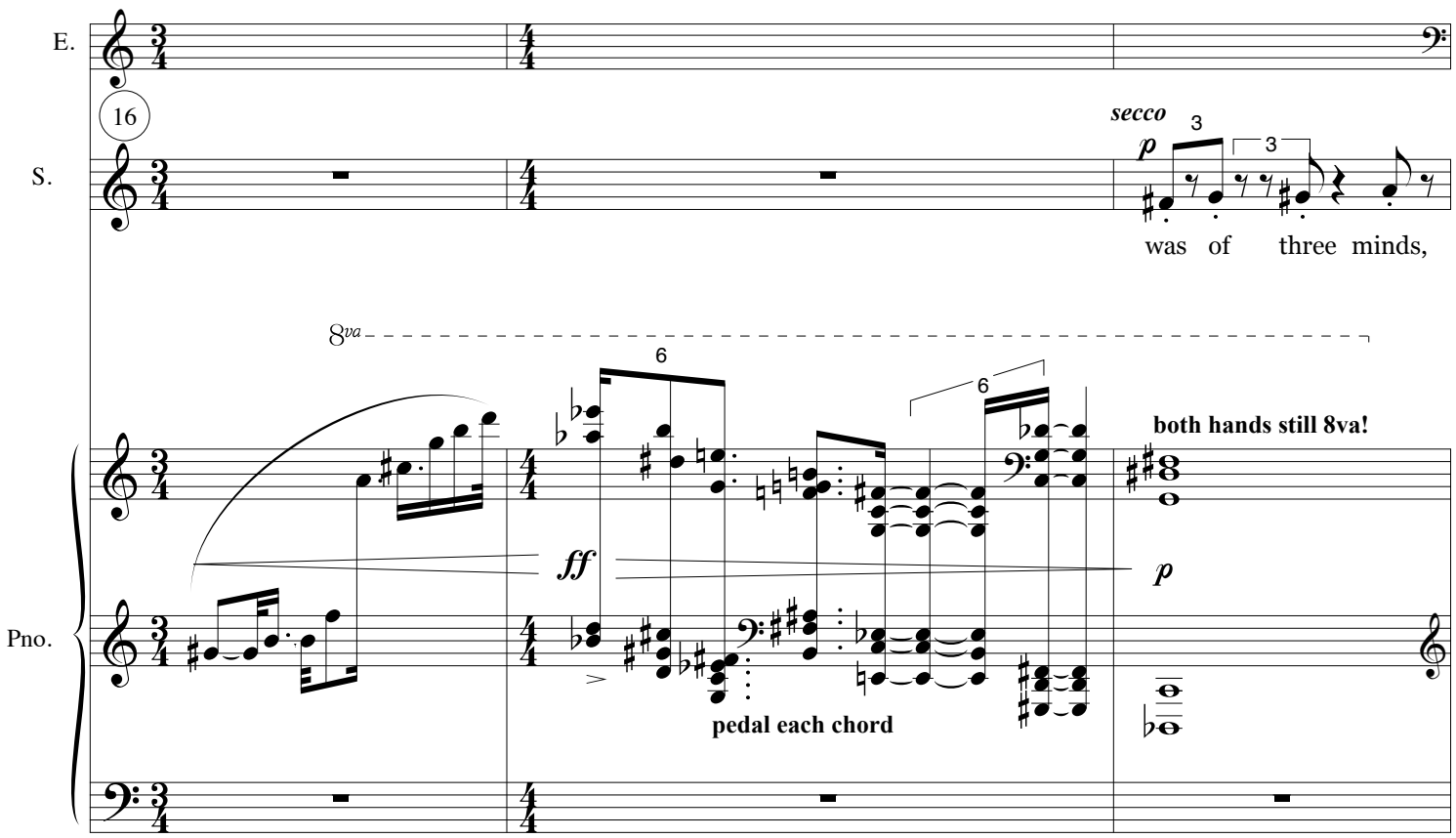
I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

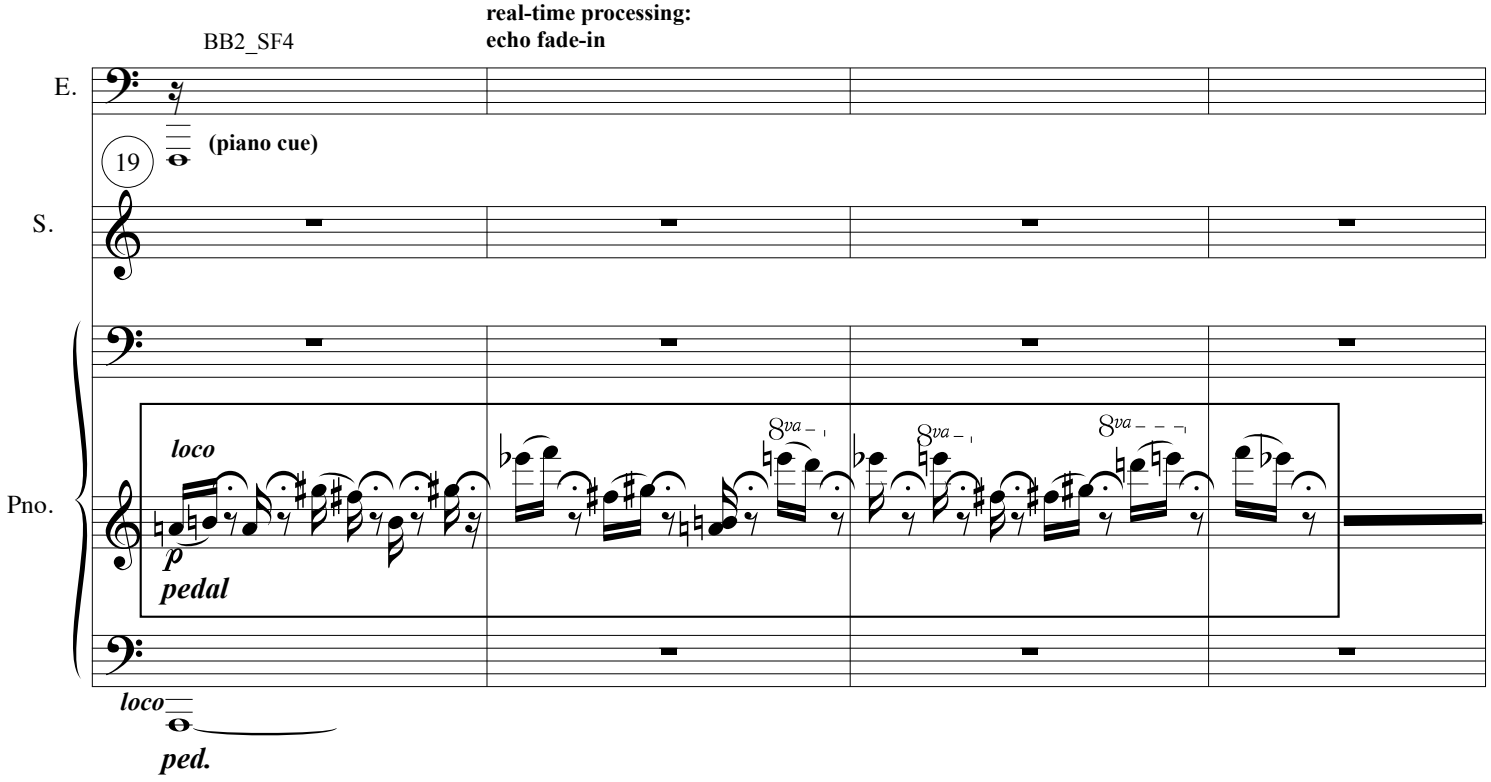


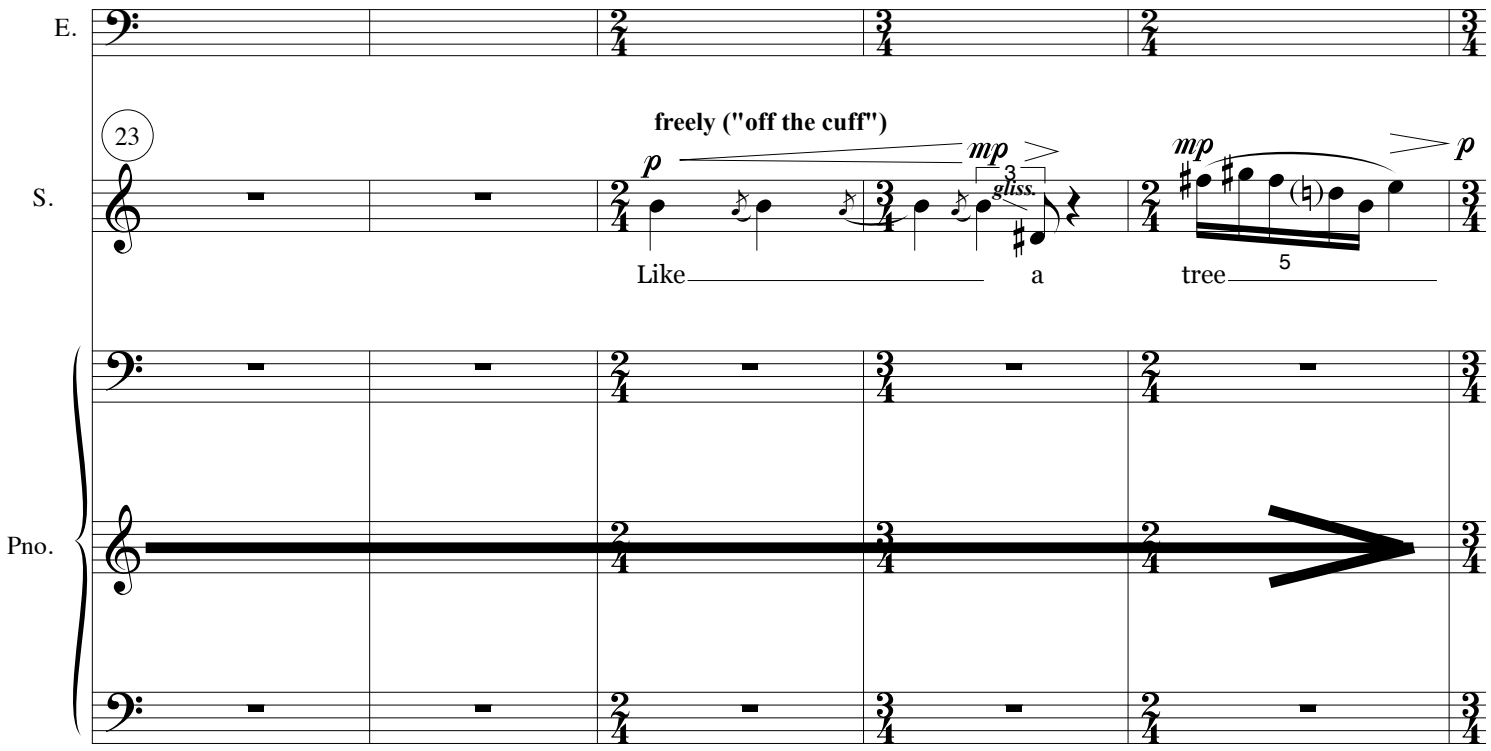
The gesture here is an accelerando over a given number of beats. Precie rhythms at not important. What is important is the gradual decreasing of note values over a steady pulse.

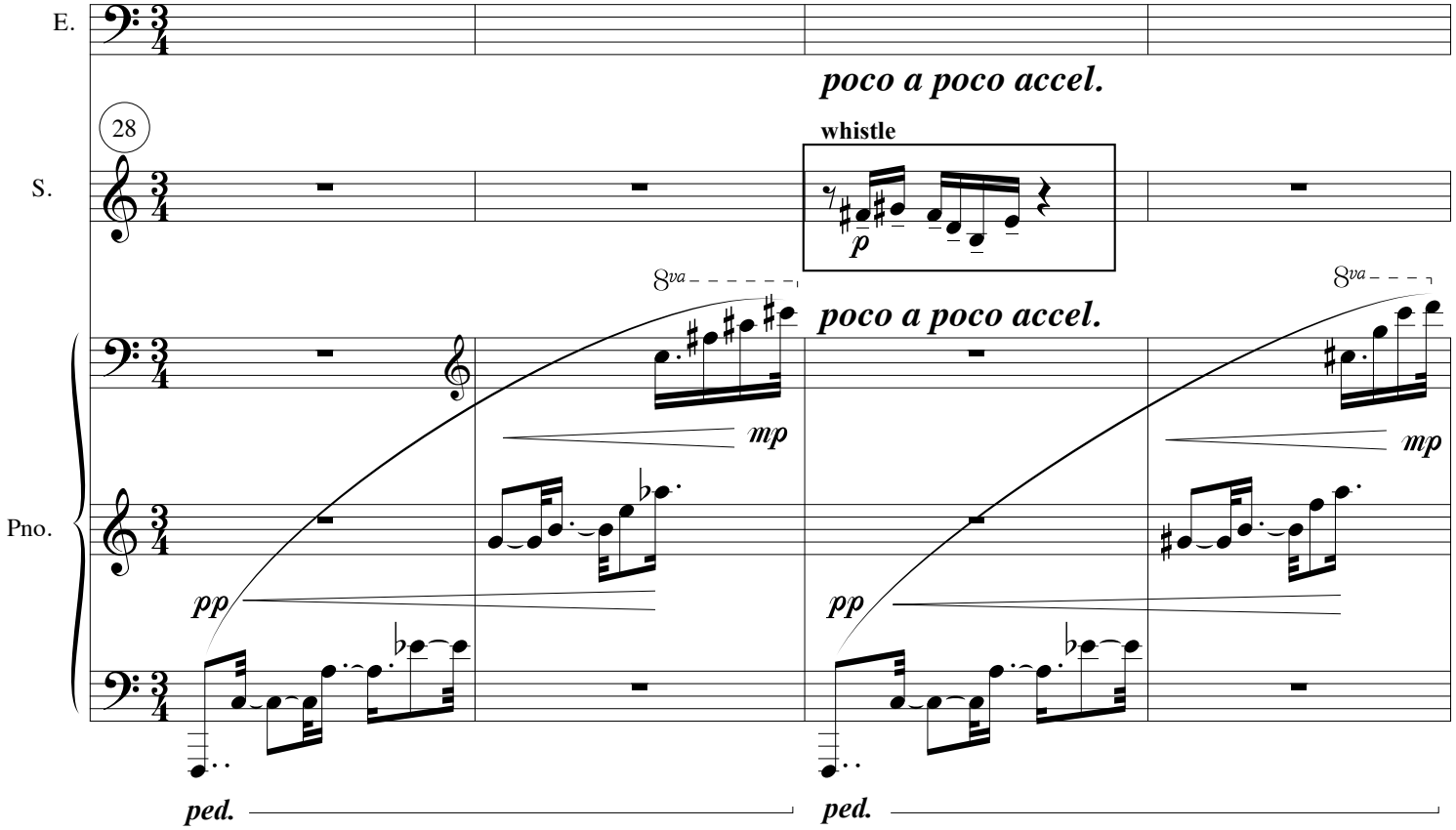
BB2_SF3


E.
Doppler Effect
8
S.
mp
p
I
8va
r.h.
l.h.
r.h.
6
Pno.
ff
(precise
rhythms)
p
senza ped.
ped.
E.
12
S.
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
Pno.
f
p
ped.
as before

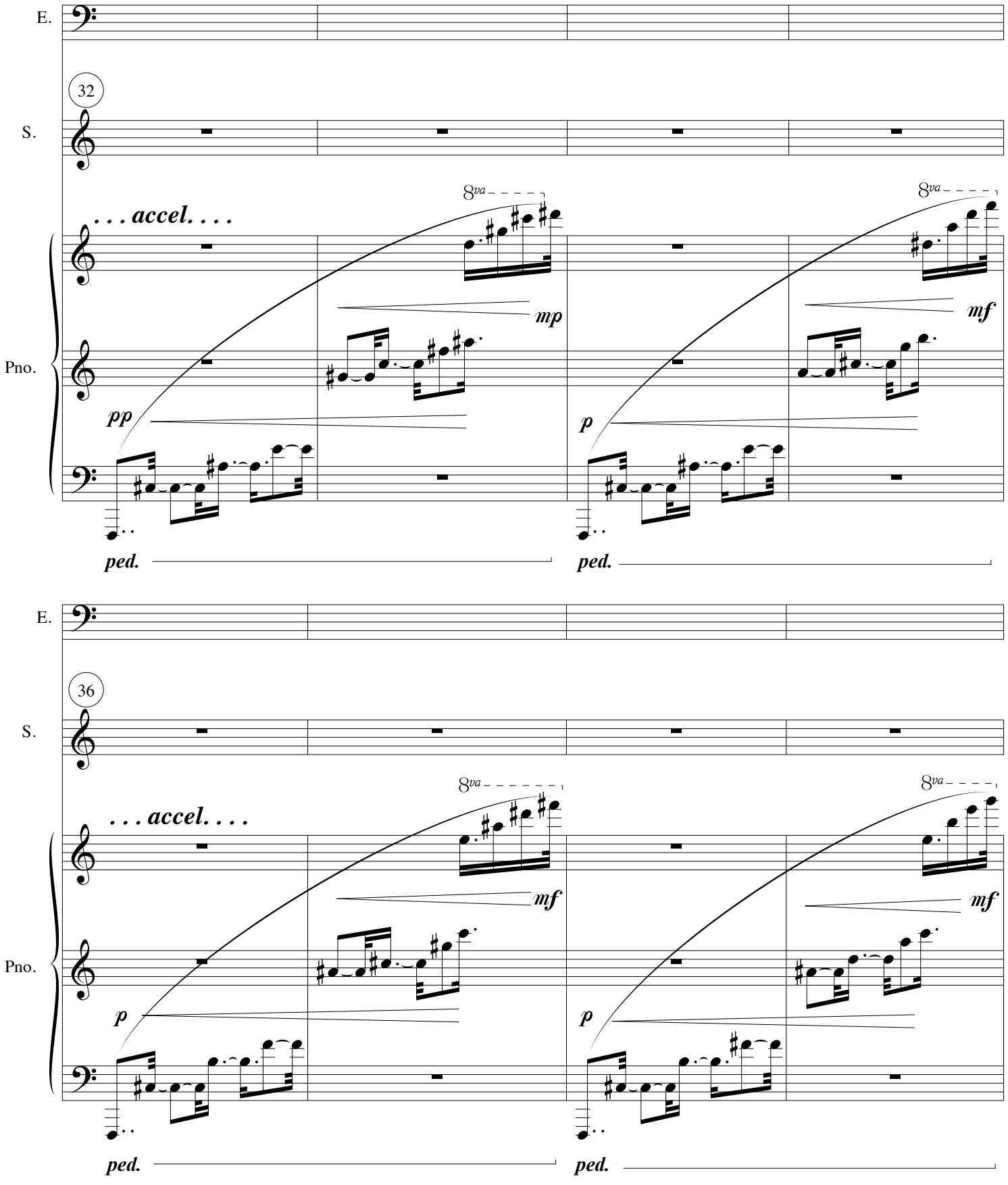

E.
16
S.
secco
p
3
3
was of three minds,
8va
6
6
both hands still 8va!
Pno.
ff
p
pedal each chord

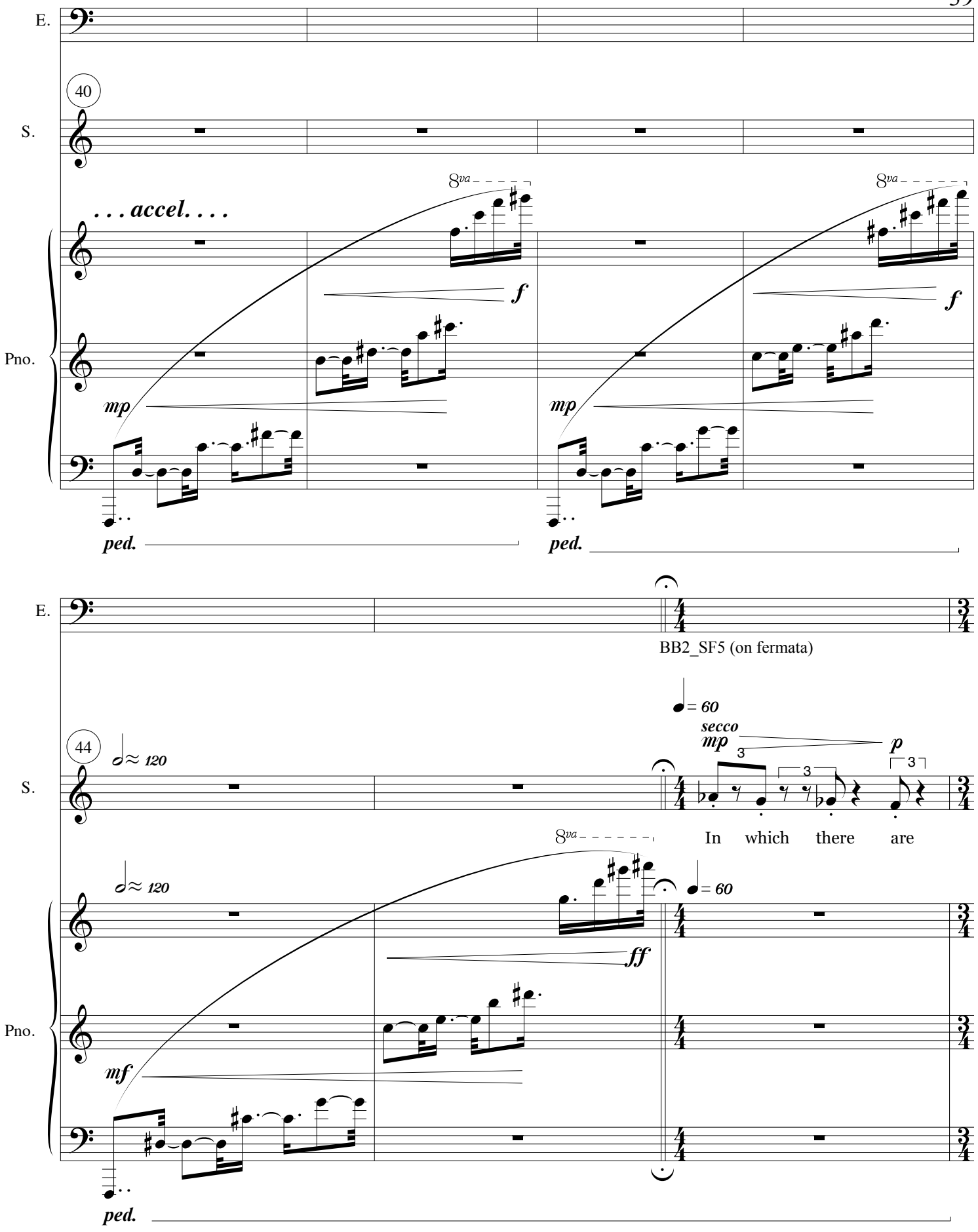

BB2_SF4
real-time processing:
echo fade-in
E.
(piano cue)
19
S.
loco
p
pedal
8va
8va
8va
Pno.
loco
ped.



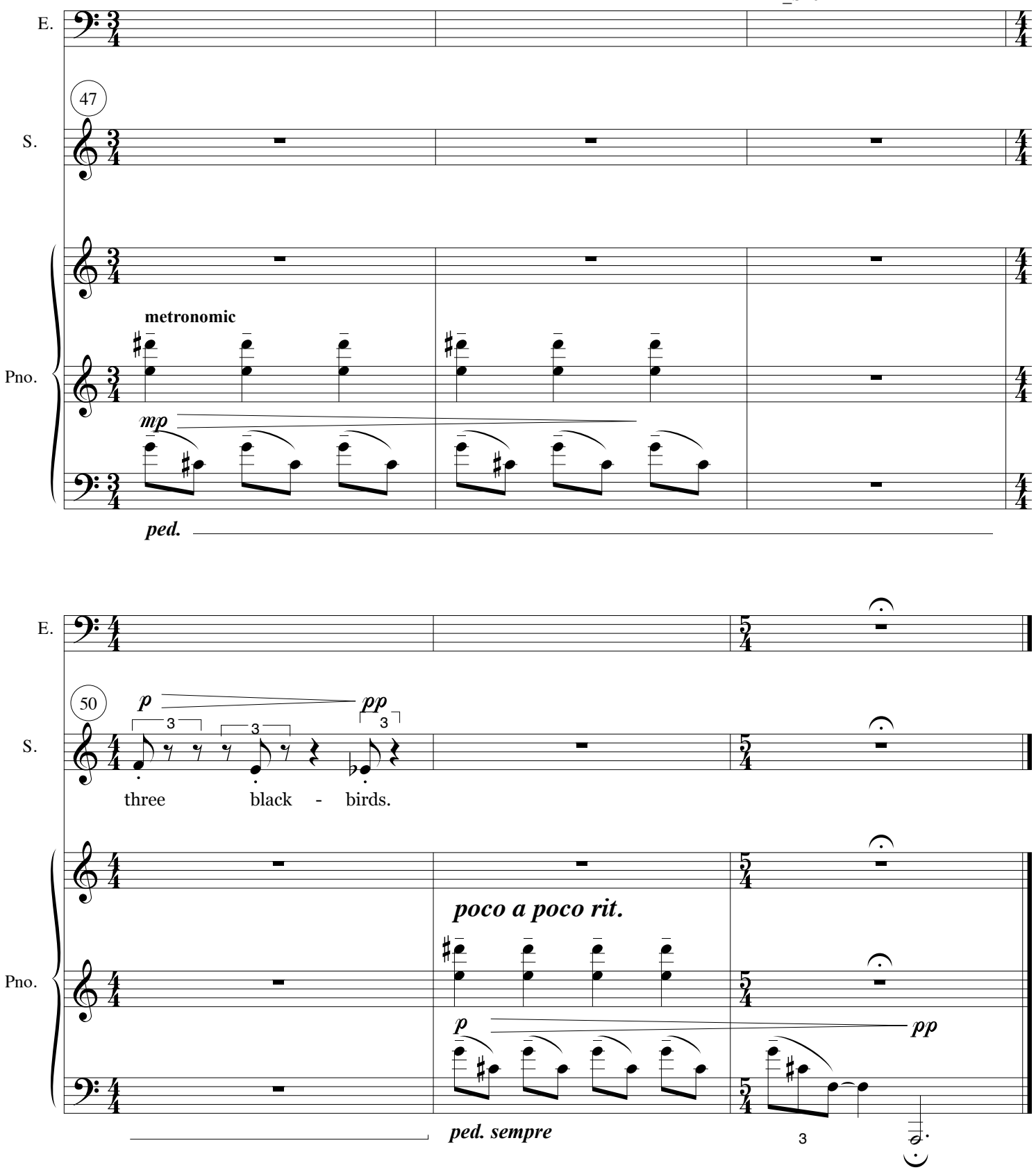


As before, but now with the addition of a tempo accelerando


E.
32
S.
. . . accel. . . .
8va
mp
mf
Pno.
pp
p
ped.
ped.
E.
36
S.
. . . accel. . . .
8va
mf
mf
Pno.
p
p
ped.
ped.


E.
40
S.
8va
. . . accel. . . .
f
Pno.
mp
ped.
8va
f
mp
ped.
E.
BB2_SF5 (on fermata)
= 60
secco
mp
p
44
≈ 120
S.
In which there are
8va
≈ 120
= 60
ff
Pno.
mf
ped.

BB2_SF6


E.
47
S.
Pno.
metronomic
mp
ped.
E.
50
p
pp
S.
three black - birds.
poco a poco rit.
Pno.
p
pp
ped. sempre
3