JOHN KOSCH

PER ASPERA

Voice and Piano

2019

FULL SCORE - Medium Voice Edition

www.johnkosch.com

John Kosch

Per Aspera

Voice and Piano
Medium Voice Edition

2019

Text by
Lisa Favicchia
Megan Kaminski
Wyatt Townley

I. Spare Moments
II. Bisection
III. How We Disappear
IV. Mother Shell
V. The Key

Program Notes

The state motto of Kansas is "Ad astra per aspera," which roughly translates, "To the stars through hardship." *Per Aspera* combines settings of texts by Kansas-based poets that address the challenges of emotional turmoil and mental illness.

Total Duration		13'45"
I.	Spare Moments	2'30"
II.	Bisection	2'00"
III.	How We Disappear	2'15"
IV.	Mother Shell	2'30"
V.	The Key	4'30"

Instrumentation

Medium Voice and Piano

"Dear Sister"

Spare moments evade me, too. My memory
drips details and I prefer to watch ants scurry
across bare feet, continuing routes through
dirt onto tree trunk, carrying crumbles to some

unknown destination. The yard is abuzz today:
traffic hums through late morning and girls
chatter denim-shorted ponytails aloft. And I
wonder why I tell you all this – if you are even

there to receive these missives. My dress tore,
caught on bramble. The scrap traipsed in dirt
out behind the garden out away from the people.
Sun doesn't dapple in those fields and clover spikes

purple the expanse. The lawn burnt from winter
salt and shadow recedes until further notice. I let
my thoughts carry me back inside, bringing me
honeyed biscuits and trinkets to drape from wrist.

MEGAN KAMINSKI

"Bisection" (excerpt)

At Night I'm kept awake by the sounds of my own body
and can't escape the oceanic static
of my ear against the pillow, small pockets of air

traveling through me, getting caught
in my anxious stomach. Even when I finally enter
sleep, my body dreams then wakes me

to show that I exist outside of myself
and it's only my eyes that see
the boy at the foot of my bed,

his whistling not really there
as he walks closer, exposing the gash
in his forehead—What part of me

reaches for the light?

LISA FAVICCHIA

"SELMA"

This is how we disappear
walking without hesitation into darkness —
sacks filled with glass bottle and feather
boots lifting from gravel
forward to song and snow drift
stars pave paths through tree brush
trestle the cold in soft gambrels
country roads hold tight and tidy to
fields moon-streaked and cloud-begotten
a daughter who never returns never
disappoints
notebooks fill with sentences books barricade
doors silent in sleep each night

MEGAN KAMINSKI

"Mother Shell"

Hollow and hard, you grew
in her polished belly.

You were born from the womb
you built with your own saliva,

enameled from her birth to bear you
as you were born and would grow

and calcify, child of mollusk.
When you left her, waves howled

through her hollow husk
until she soughed up on sand,

a braid of sea silk trailing
empty nacre, the same emptiness

that now scrapes itself out
from inside of you

Lisa Favicchia

"The Key"

Here, inside the chest
a tiny fear is folded
neatly like a sweater

in the top drawer.
Take it out. Shake it.
Have a look. Open

the middle drawer.
The cries of a child
Stab through you

until her sobs are yours.
In the bottom drawer
under a stack of gowns

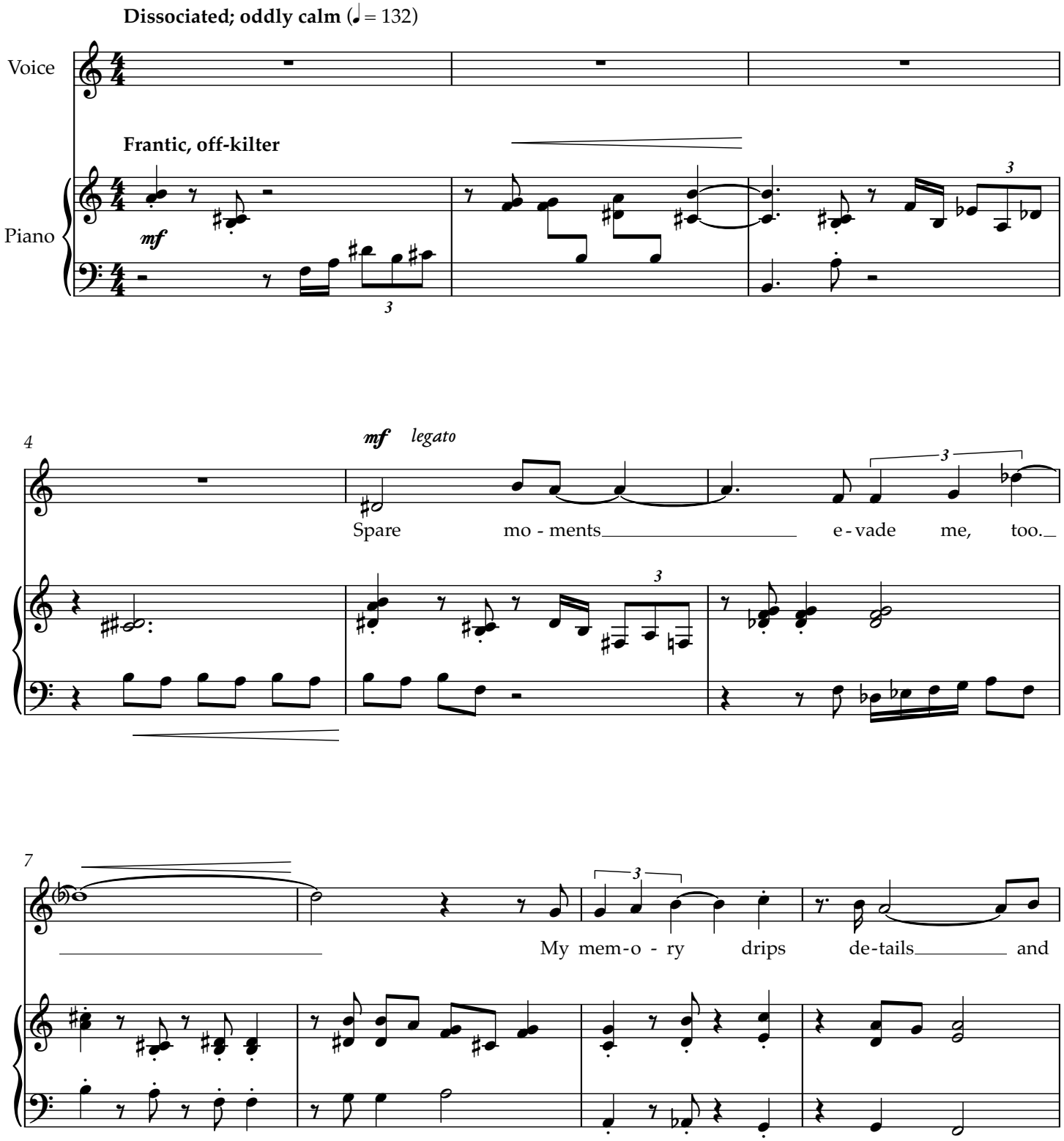
is a clenched fist.
It is holding *clink!* a key
that falls at your feet.

Wyatt Townley

I. Spare Moments

Megan Kaminski

John Kosch



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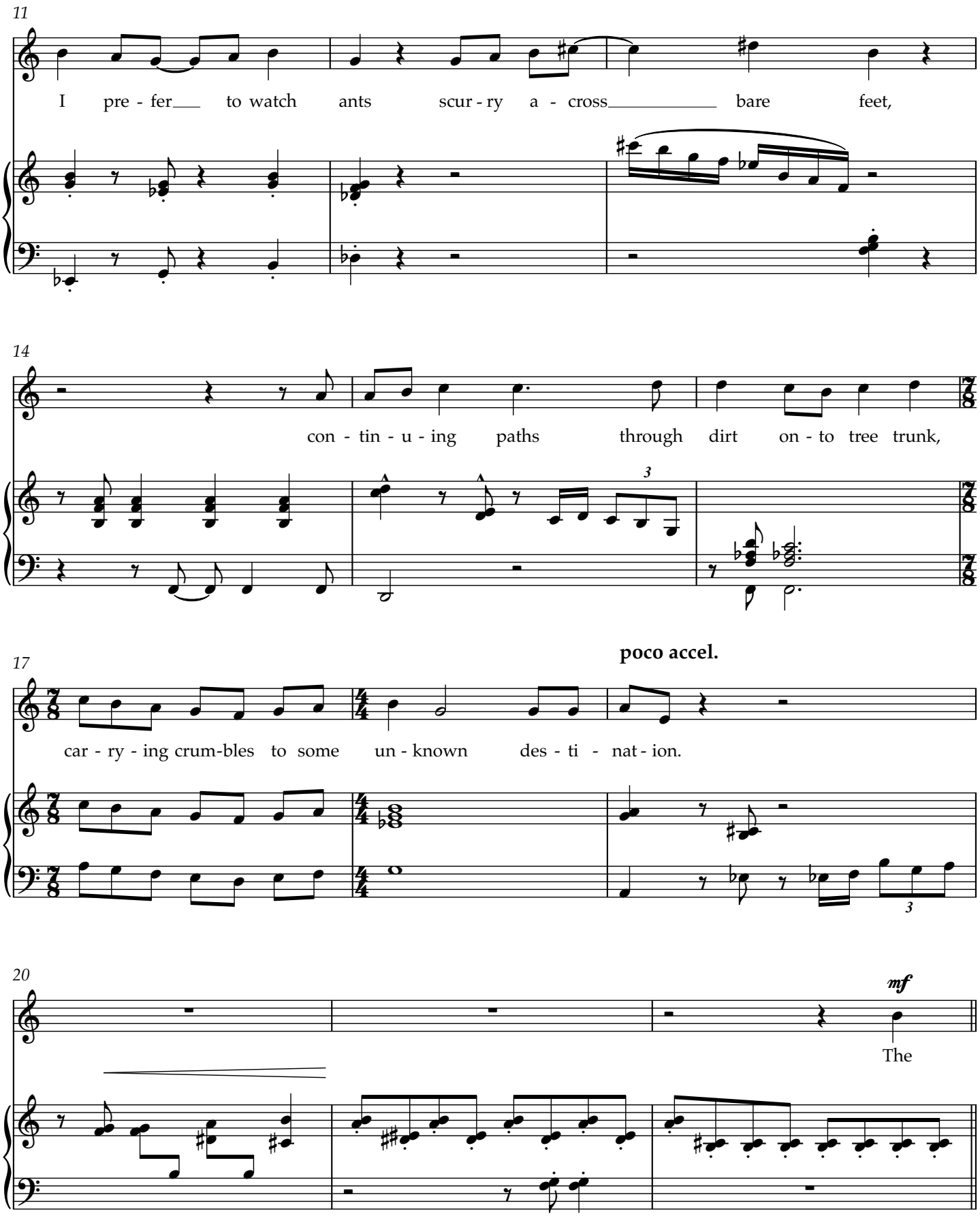

11
I pre - fer to watch ants scur - ry a - cross bare feet,
14
con - tin - u - ing paths through dirt on - to tree trunk,
3
17
poco accel.
car - ry - ing crum-bles to some un - known des - ti - nat - ion.
3
20
mf
The

23 **Bluesy, behind the beat** (♩ = 144)

yard is a - buzz to - day:

Aggressive

mf *p* *mf*

26

traf - fic hums through late morn-ing and girls chat - ter

p *mf* *p*

29

den - im short-ed po - ny tails a - loft.

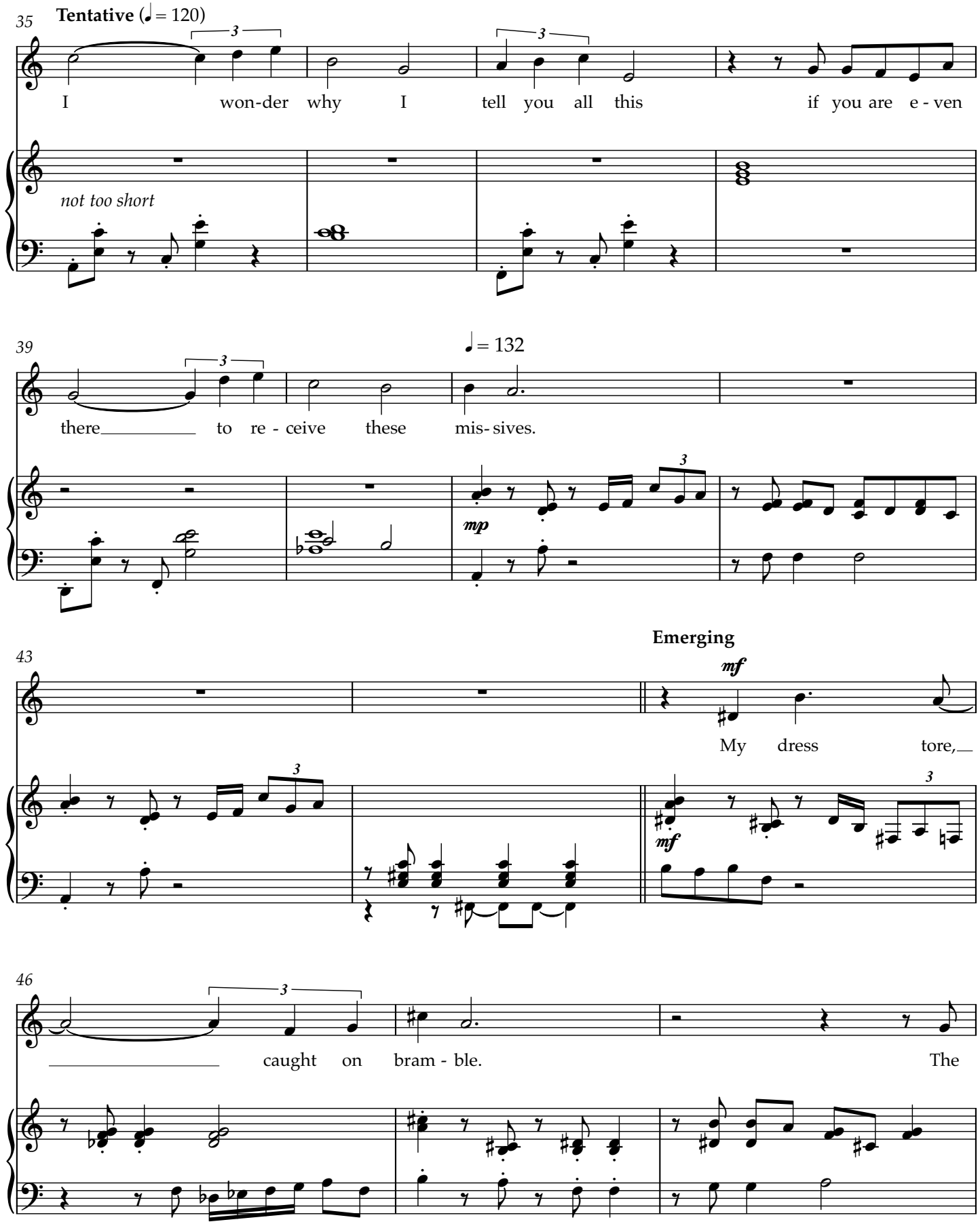
mf *p* *mf*

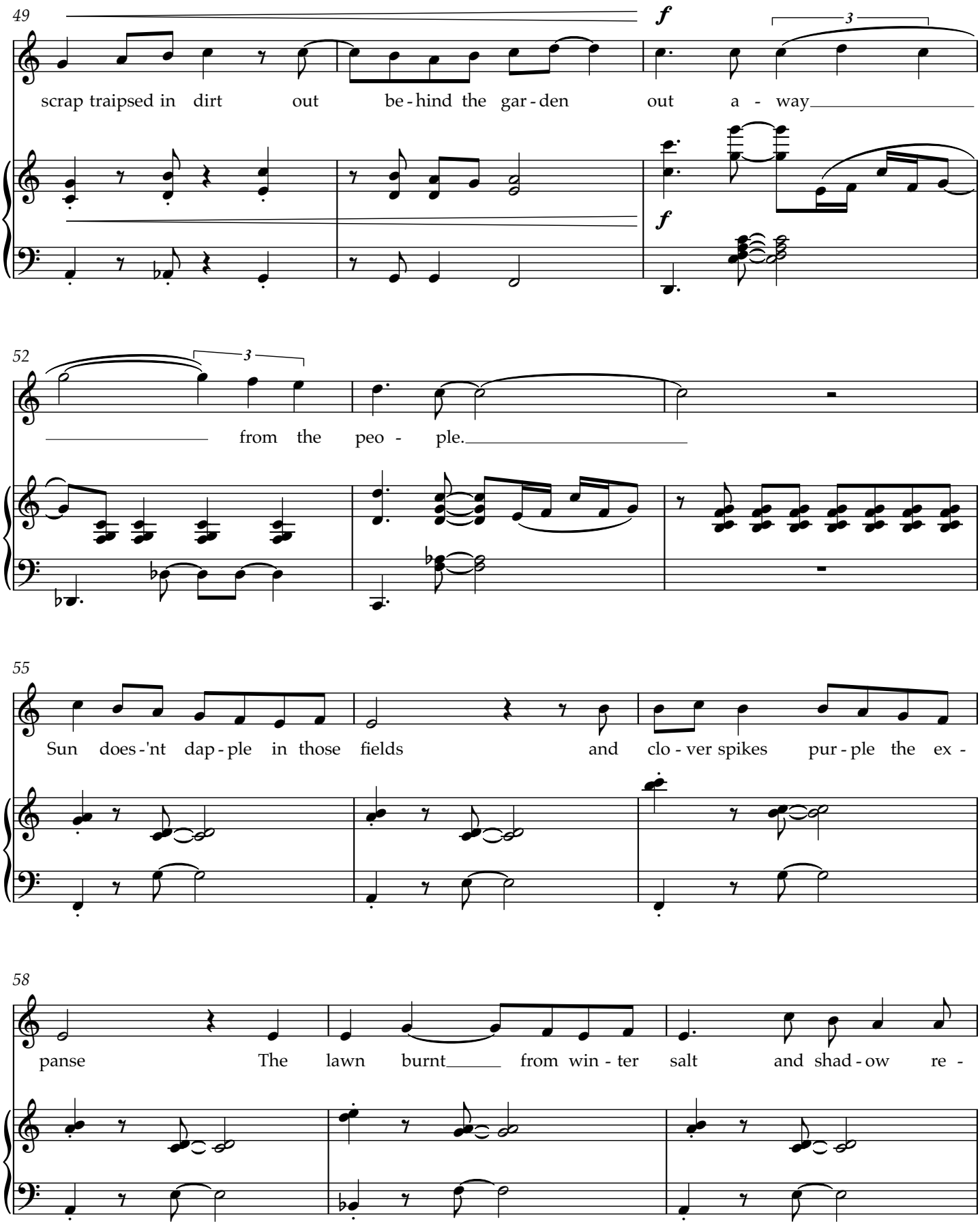
32

mp

And

p *f* *p*


35
Tentative (♩ = 120)
I won-der why I tell you all this if you are e - ven
not too short
39
♩ = 132
there to re - ceive these mis- sives.
mp
43
Emerging
mf
My dress tore,
mf
46
caught on bram - ble.
The


49
f
3
scrap traipsed in dirt out be - hind the gar - den out a - way
f
52
3
from the peo - ple.
55
Sun does - 'nt dap - ple in those fields and clo - ver spikes pur - ple the ex -
58
panse The lawn burnt from win - ter salt and shad - ow re -

rit.

61

mp

cedes un - til fur - ther no - tice.

mp

With gentle strength (♩ = 120)

64 (*mp*)

3

I let my thoughts car - ry me back in - side,

p

67

poco rit.

bring - ing me hon - eyed bis - cuits and trin - kets to drape from

70 ♩ = 132

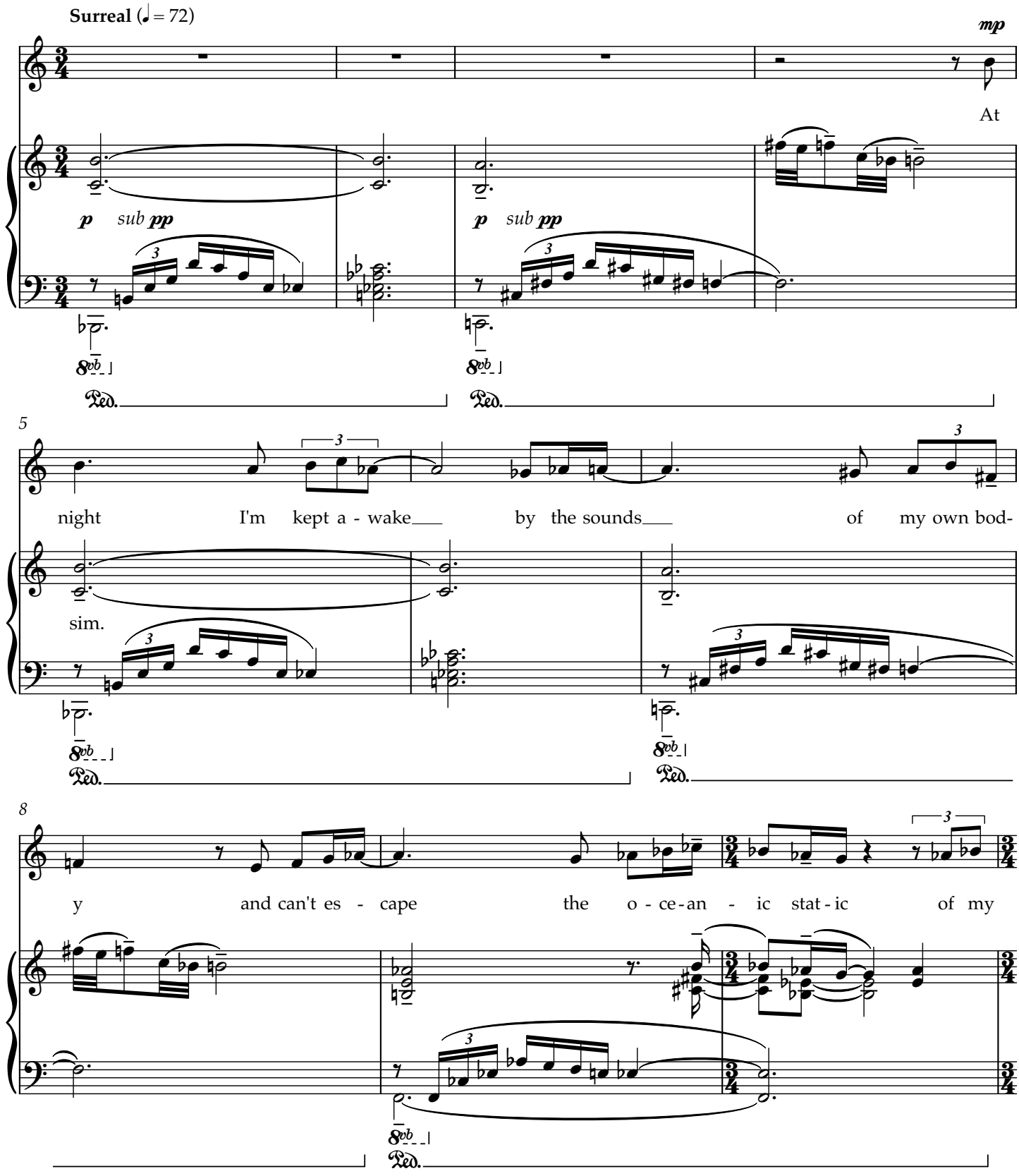
wrist.

3

3

II. Bisection

Lisa Favicchia **John Kosch**



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11

ear a - gainst the pil - low, small pock-ets of air trav'-ling

14

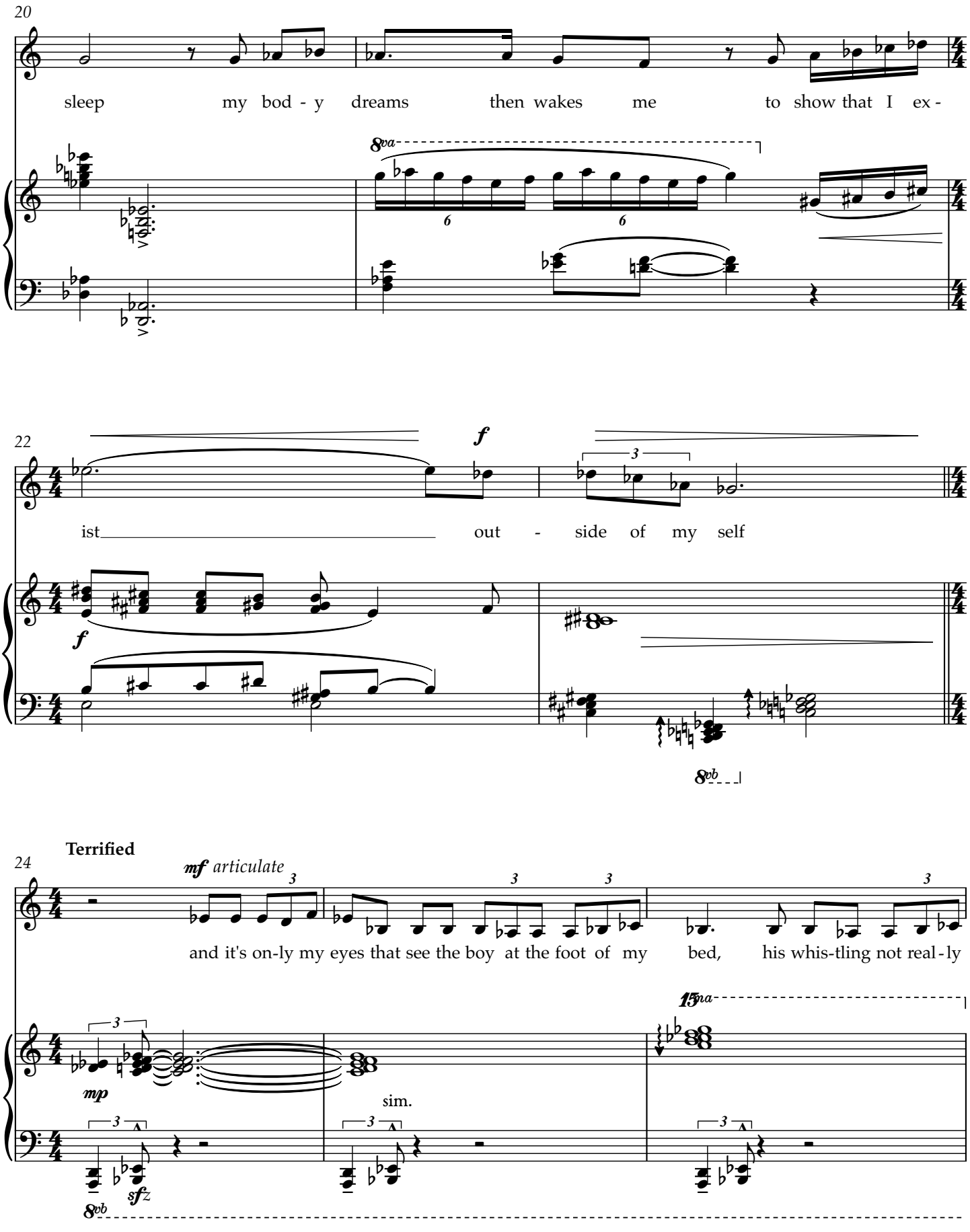
through me, get-ting caught in my anx ious stom - ach.

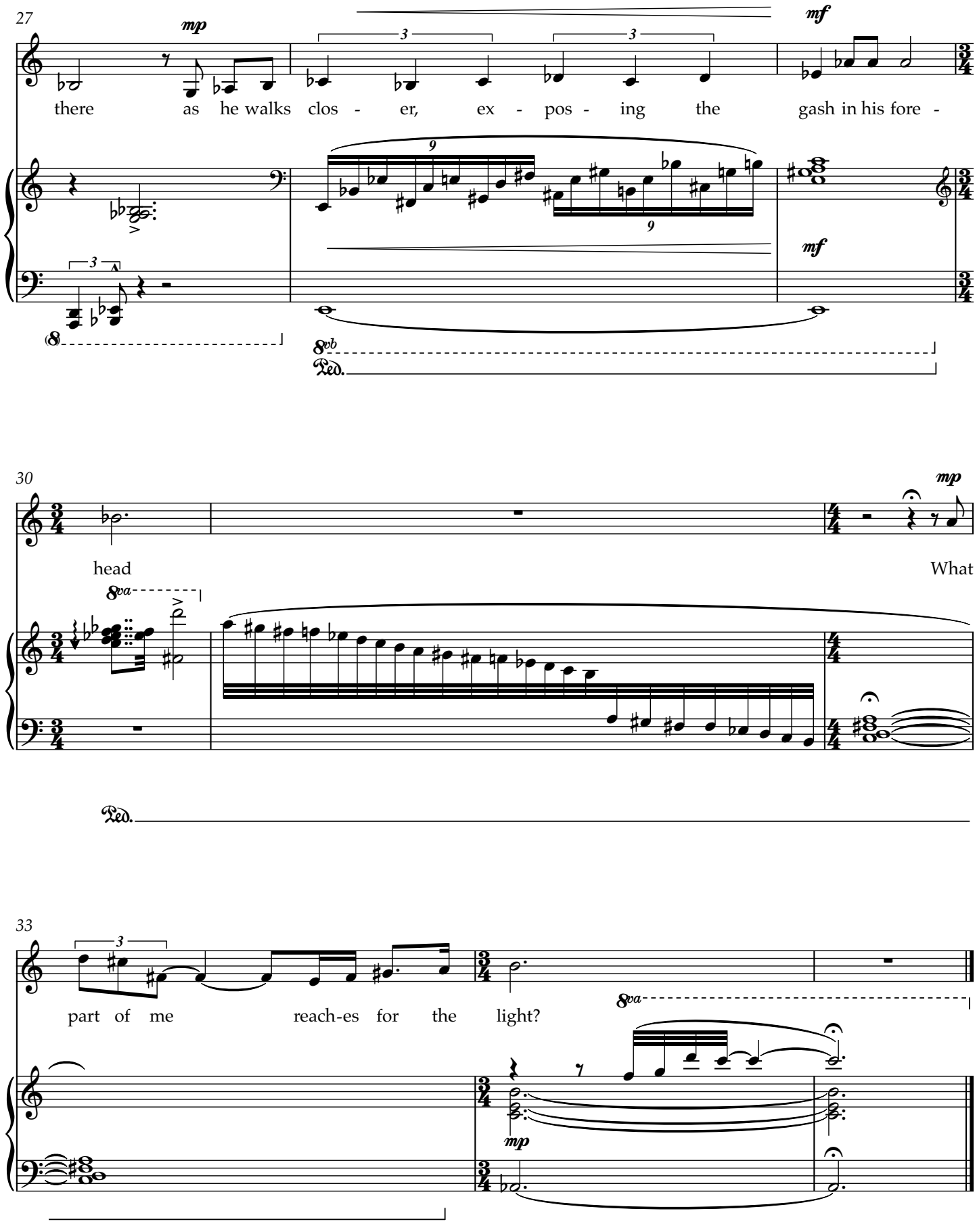
17

Momentarily Comfortable

mf

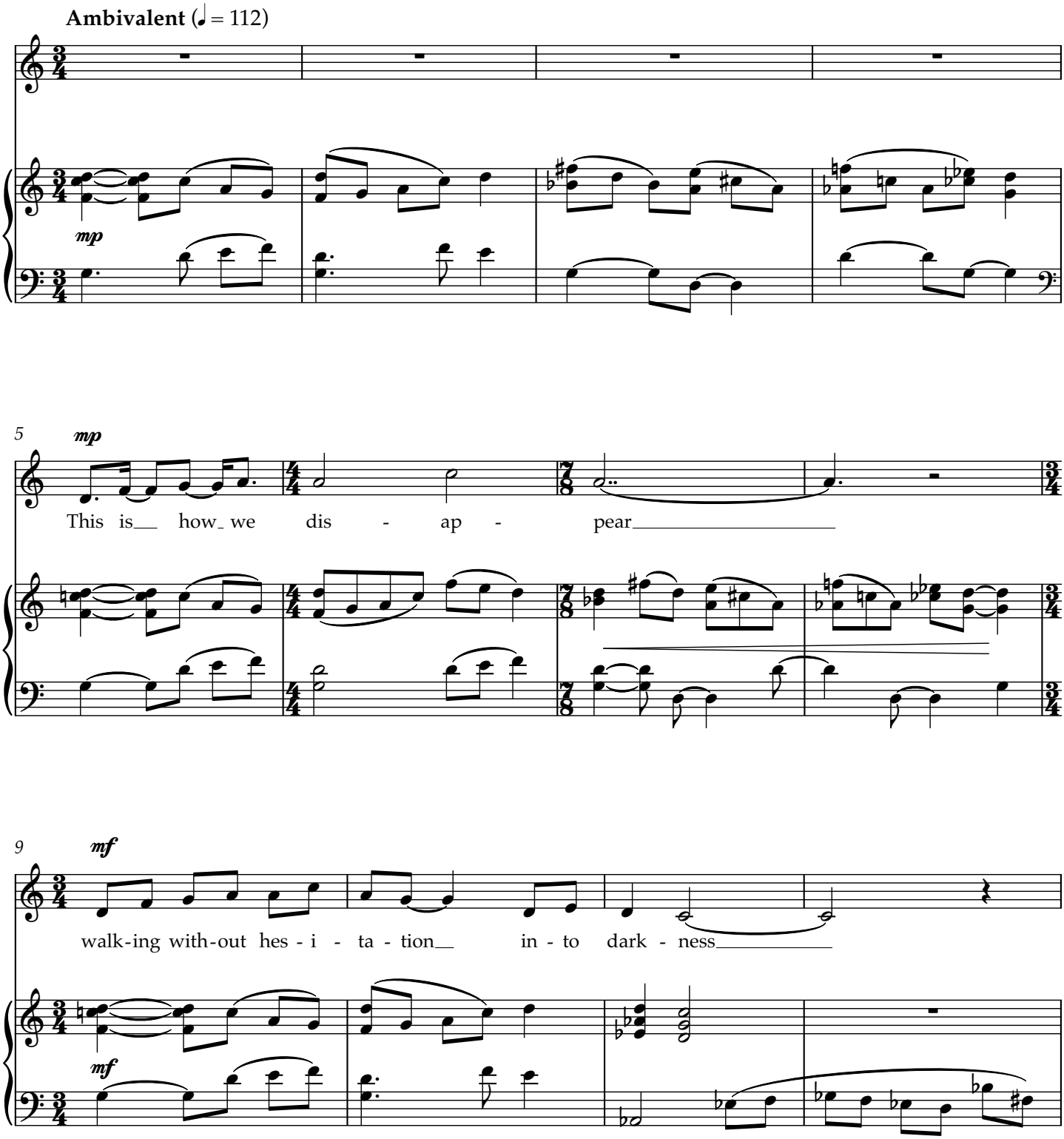
E - ven when I fi - nal - ly en - ter


20
sleep my bod - y dreams then wakes me to show that I ex -
8va
22
ist out - side of my self
f
8vb
Terrified
24
mf articulate
and it's on-ly my eyes that see the boy at the foot of my bed, his whis-tling not real - ly
mp
sim.
sfz
15ma
8vb


27
mp
mf
there as he walks clos - er, ex - pos - ing the gash in his fore -
8vb
Ped.
30
mp
head
What
8va
Ped.
33
part of me reach-es for the light?
8va
mp

III. How We Disappear

Megan Kaminski **John Kosch**



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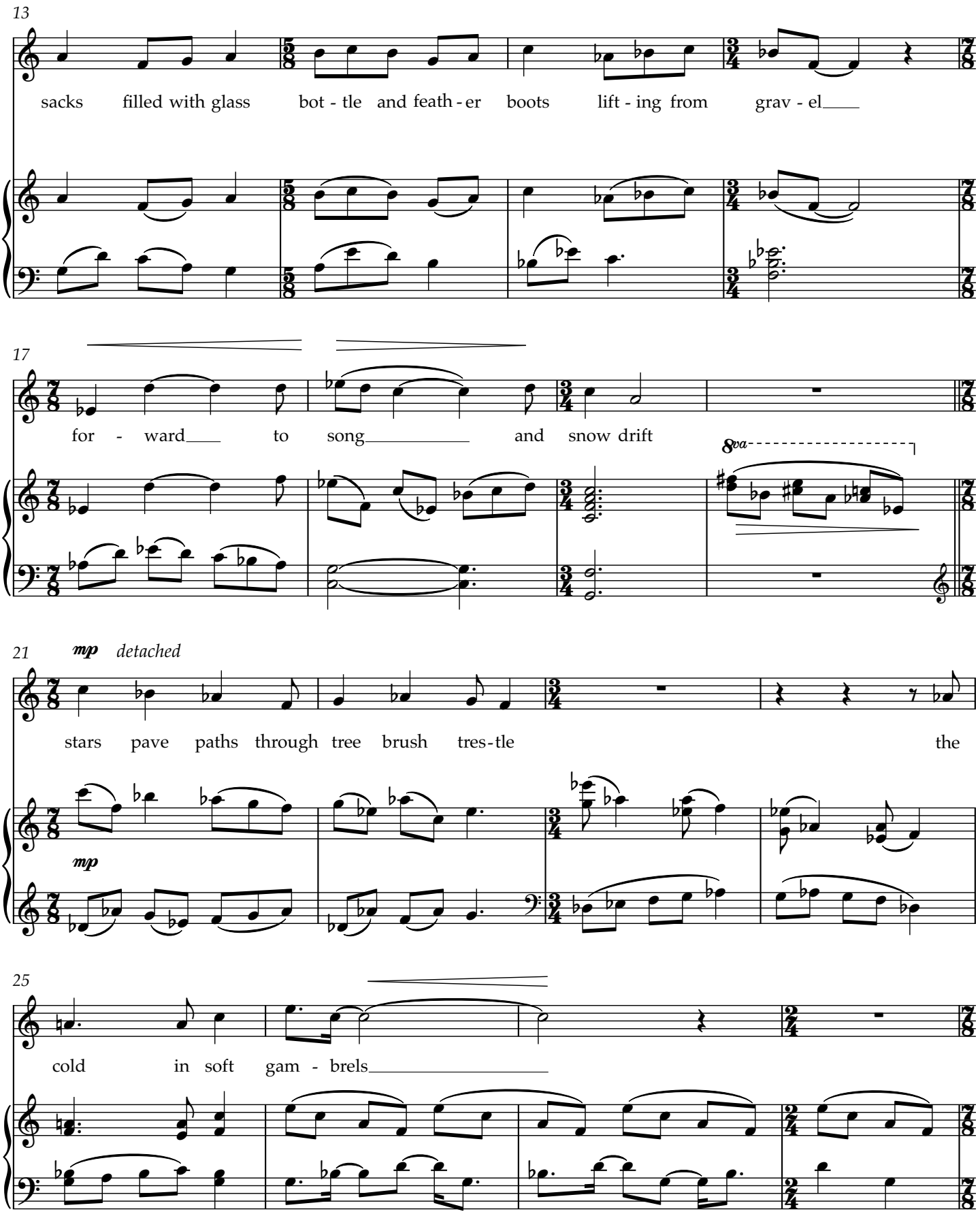
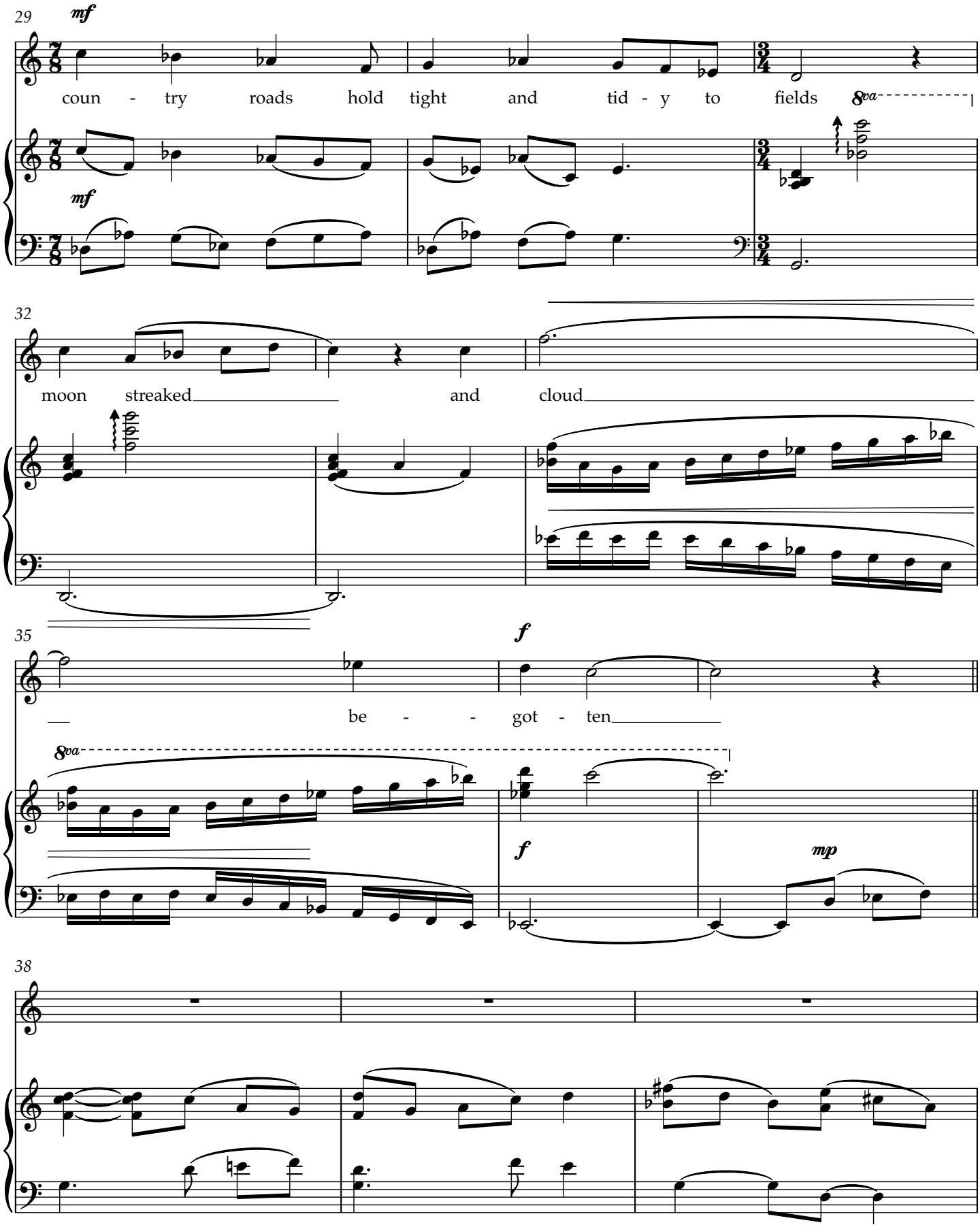
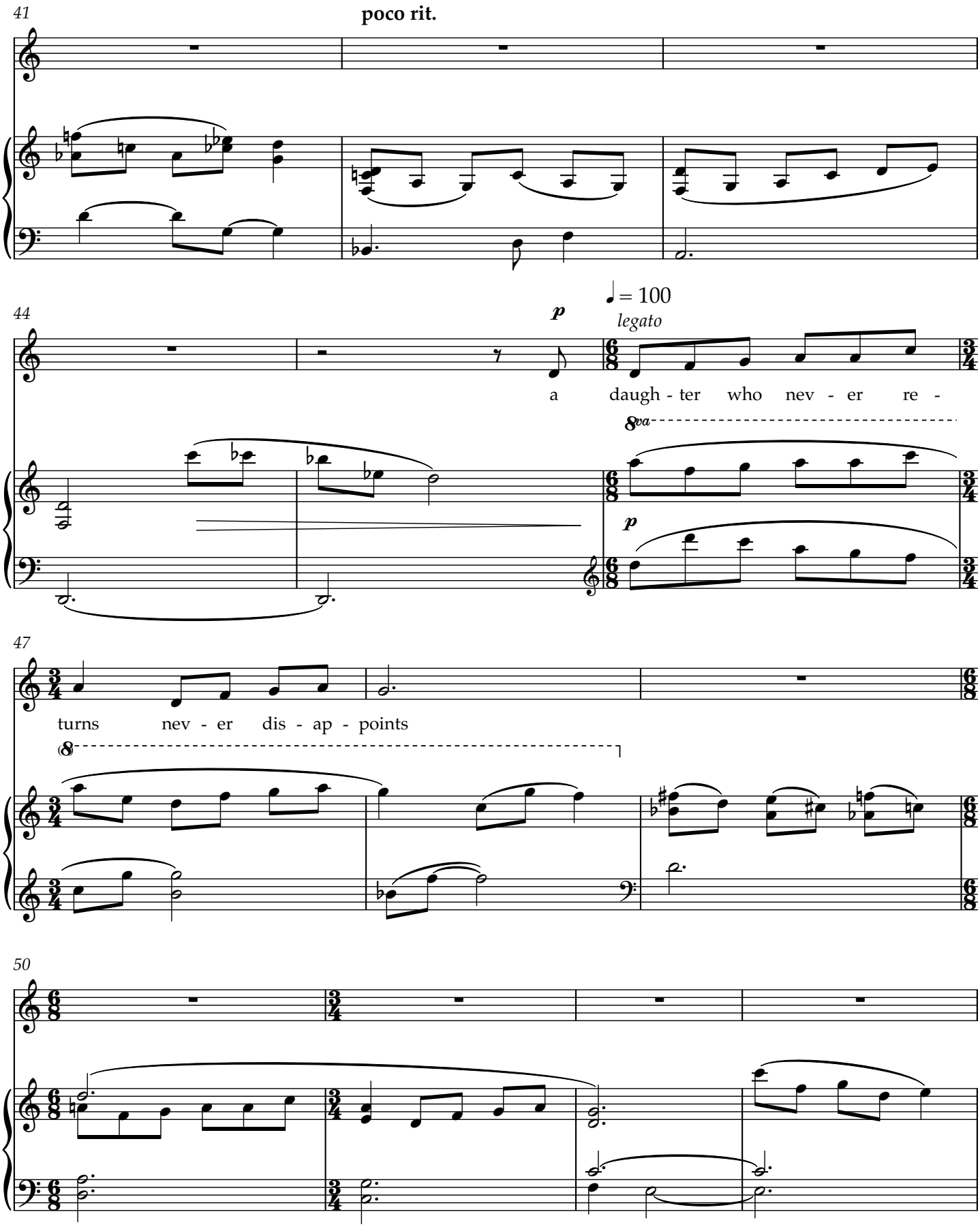
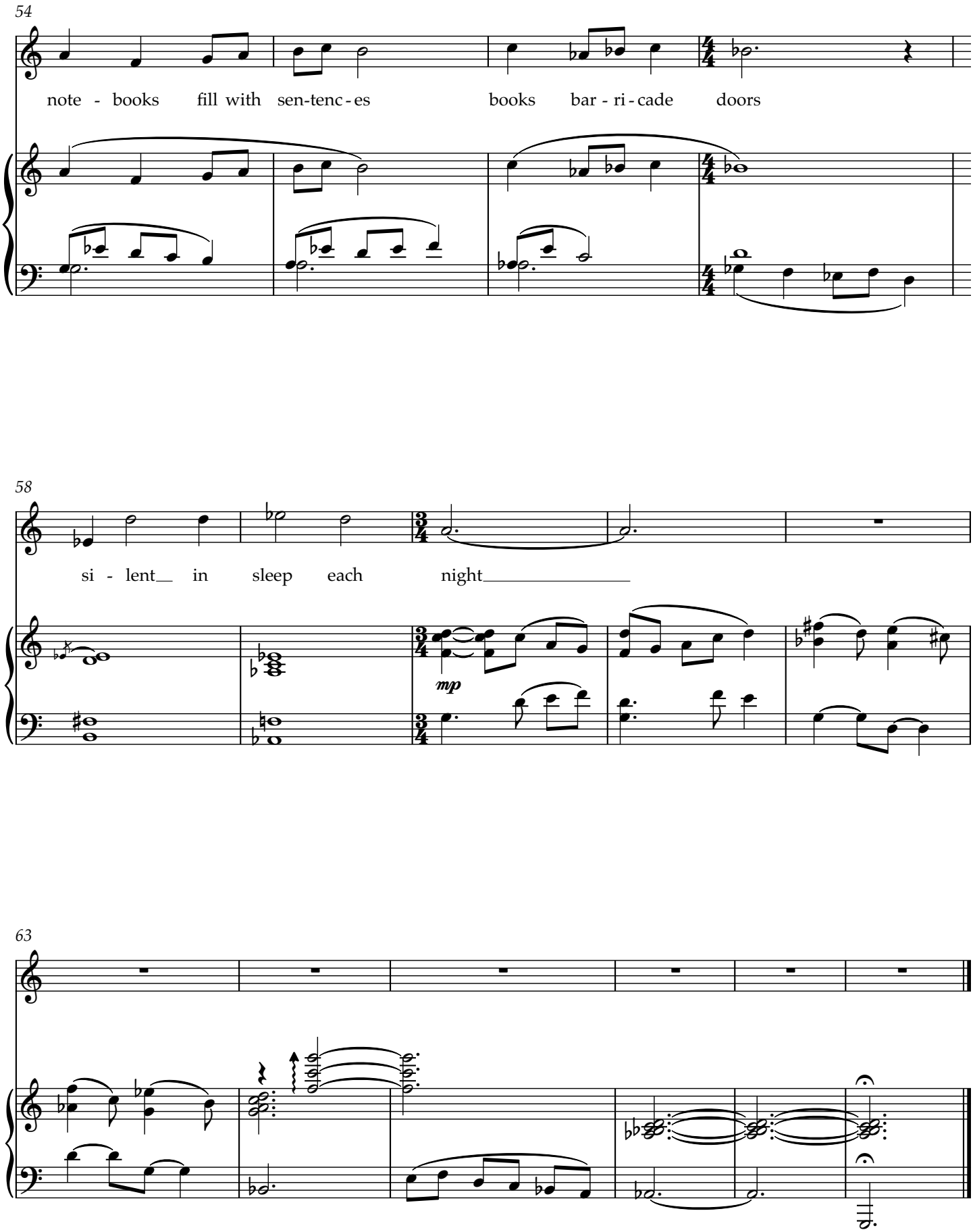

13
sacks filled with glass bot - tle and feath - er boots lift - ing from grav - el
17
for - ward to song and snow drift
8va
21
mp detached
stars pave paths through tree brush tres - tle the
mp
25
cold in soft gam - brels

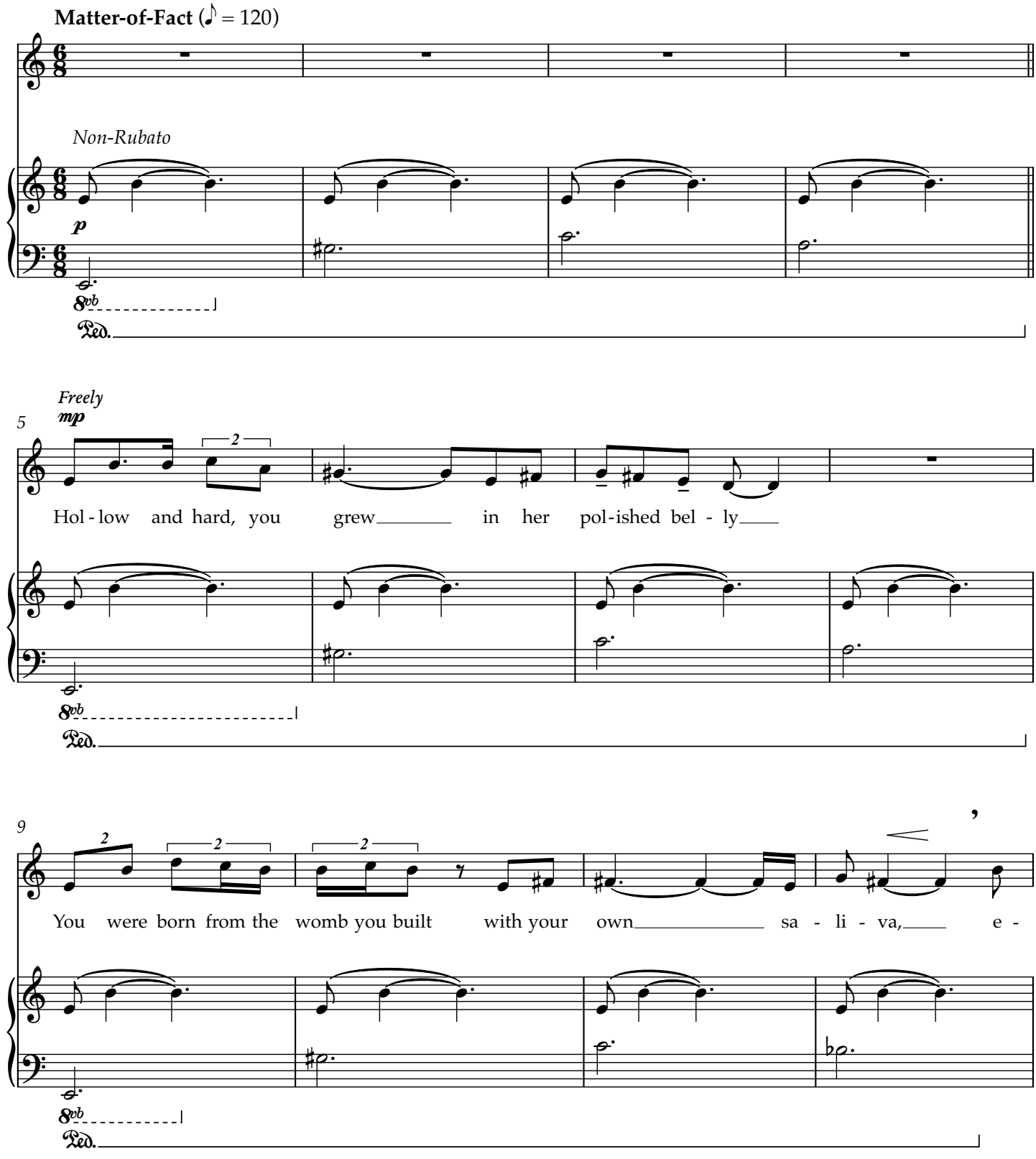

29
mf
coun - try roads hold tight and tid - y to fields
8va
mf
32
moon streaked and cloud
35
f
be - got - ten
8va
f
mp
38


41
poco rit.
44
p
♩ = 100
legato
a daugh - ter who nev - er re -
8va
p
47
turns nev - er dis - ap - points
8
50


54
note - books fill with sen-tenc-es books bar - ri-cade doors
58
si - lent in sleep each night
mp
63

IV. Mother Shell

Lisa Favicchia **John Kosch**



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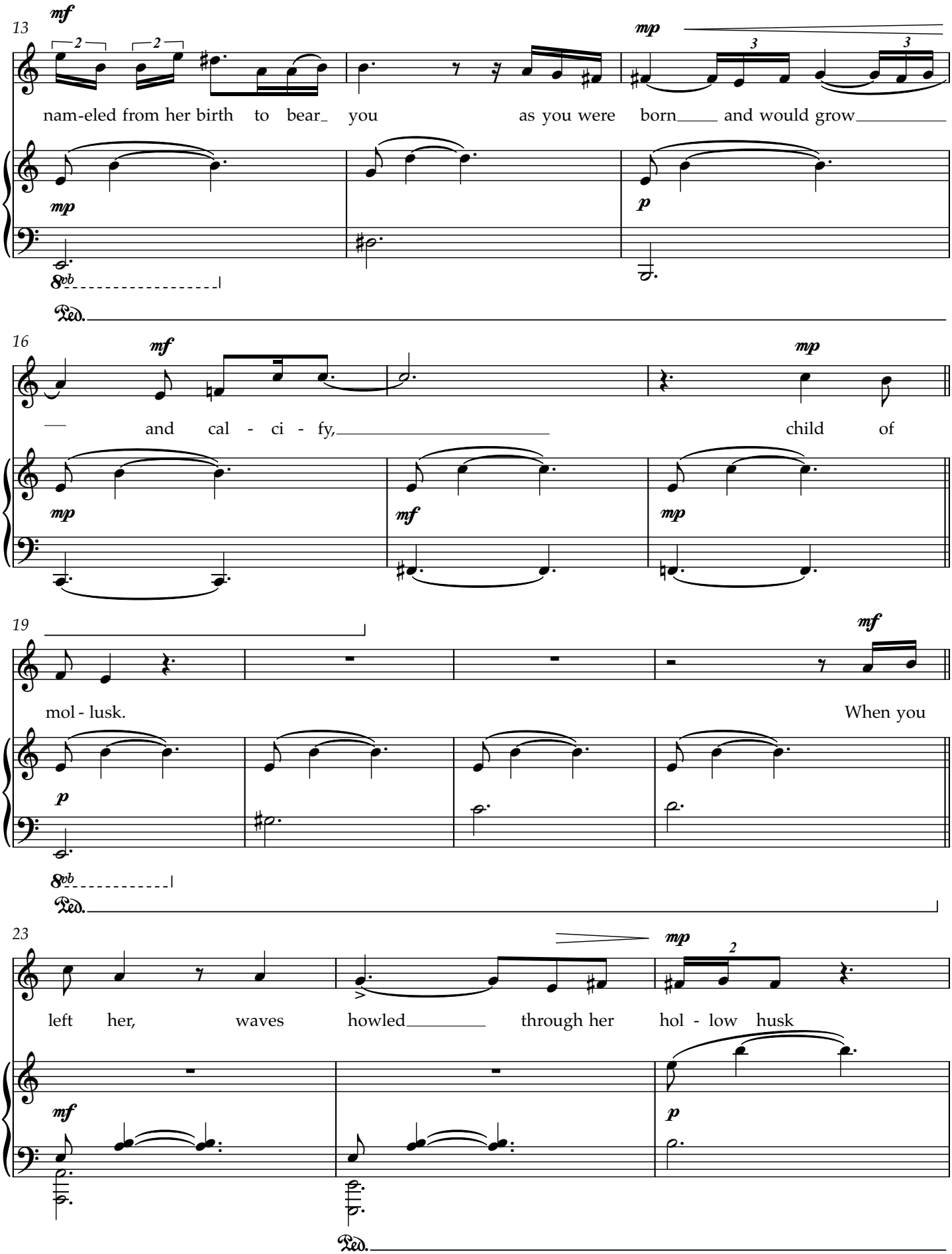
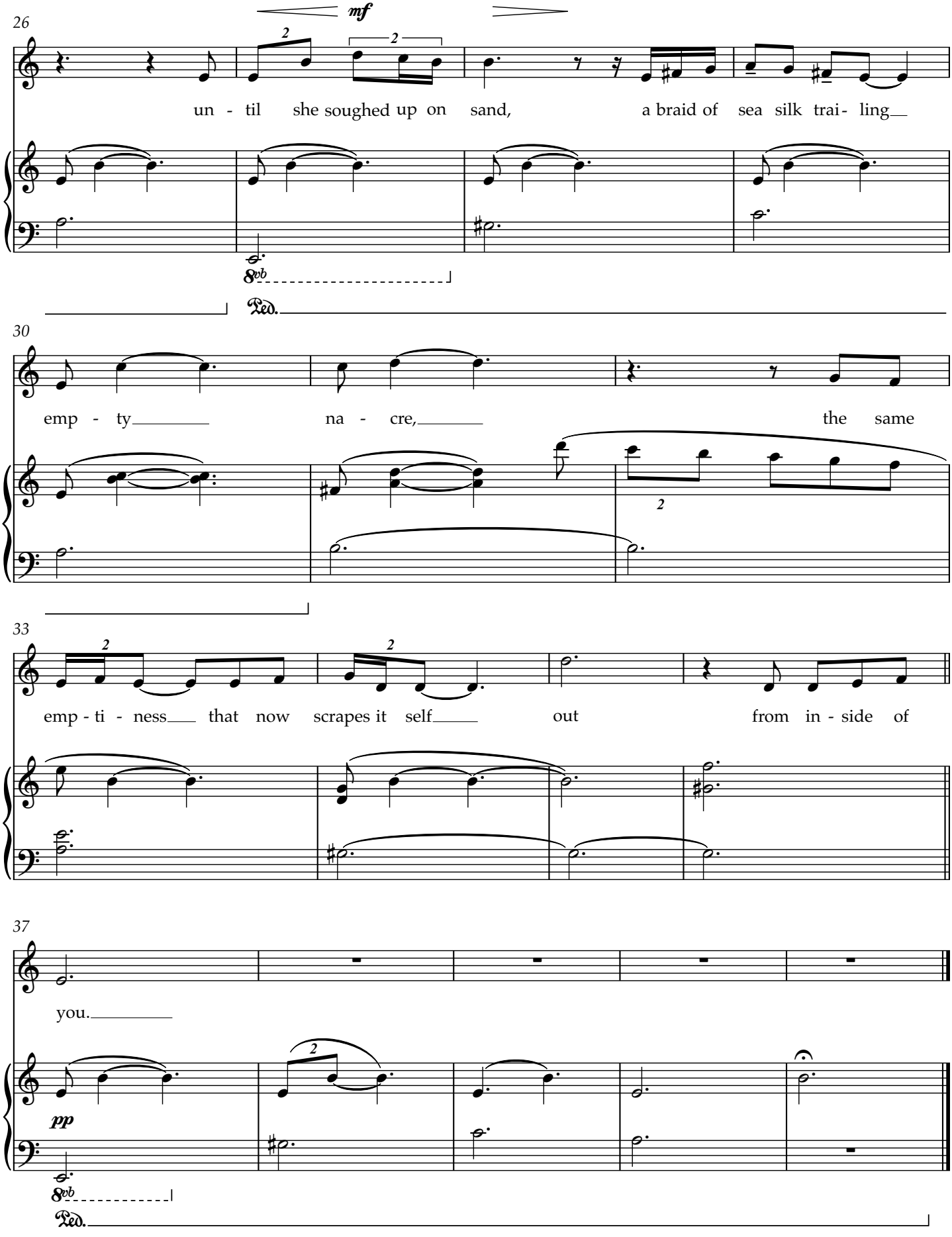
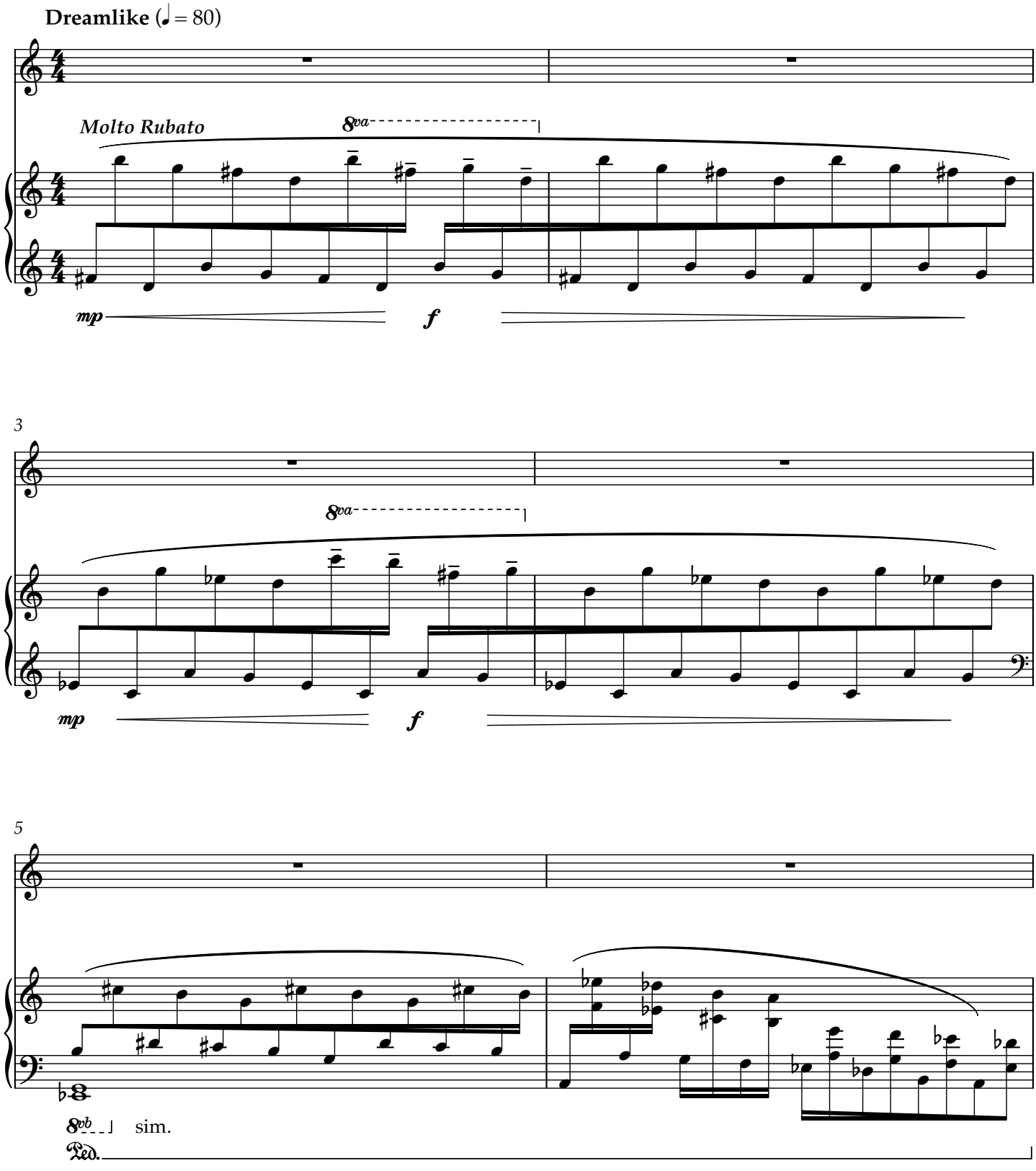

13
mf
mp
nam-eled from her birth to bear you as you were born and would grow
mp
p
8vb
Ped.
16
mf
mp
and cal - ci - fy, child of
mp
mf
mp
19
mf
mol - lusk. When you
p
8vb
Ped.
23
mp
left her, waves howled through her hol - low husk
mf
p
Ped.


26
mf
un - til she soughed up on sand, a braid of sea silk trai - ling
8vb
Ped.
30
emp - ty na - cre, the same
33
emp - ti - ness that now scrapes it self out from in - side of
37
you.
pp
8vb
Ped.

V. The Key

Wyatt Townley **John Kosch**



from THE BREATHING FIELD: MEDITATIONS ON YOGA, by Wyatt Townley, © 2002 by Bulfinch, and used with permission.

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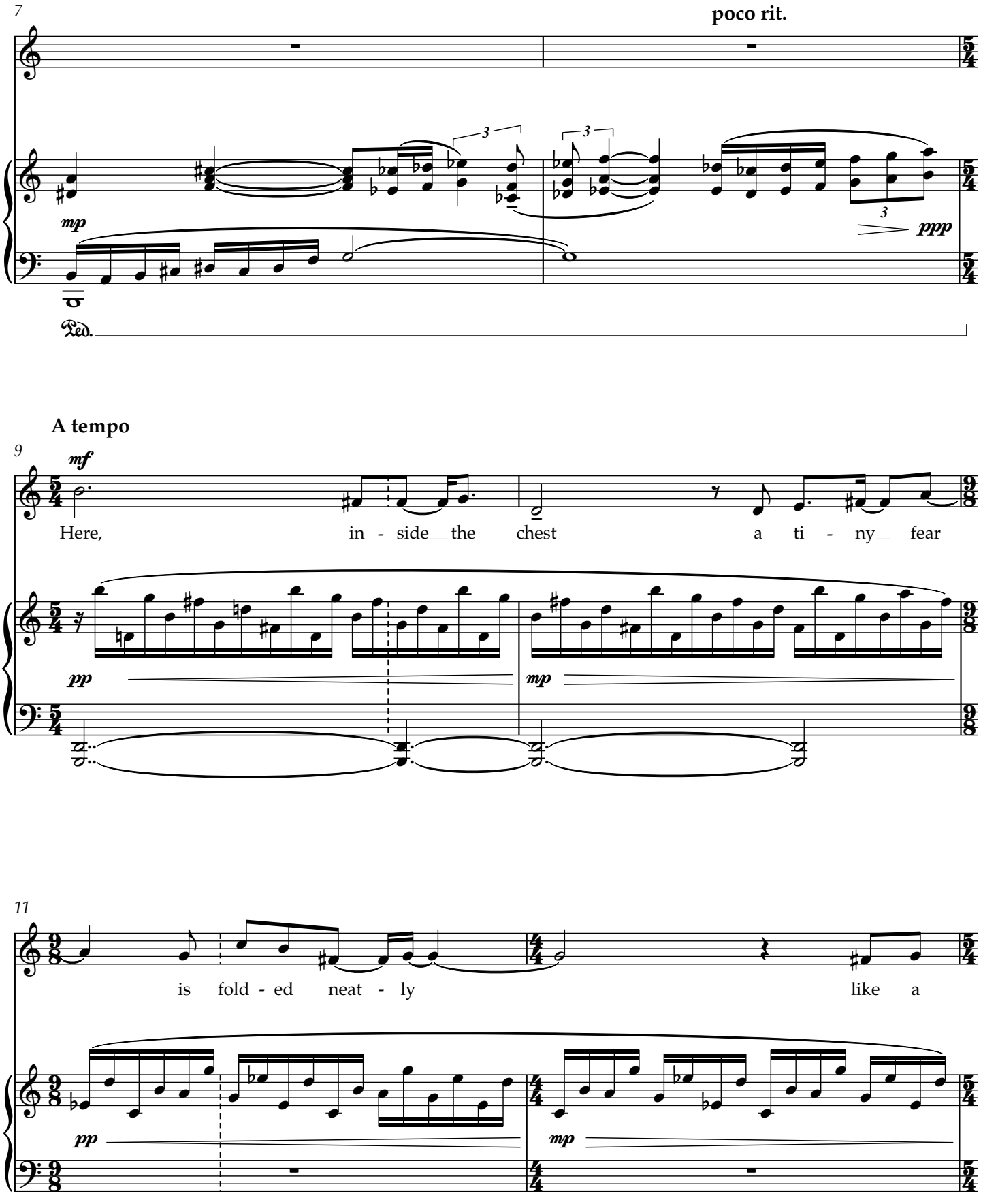
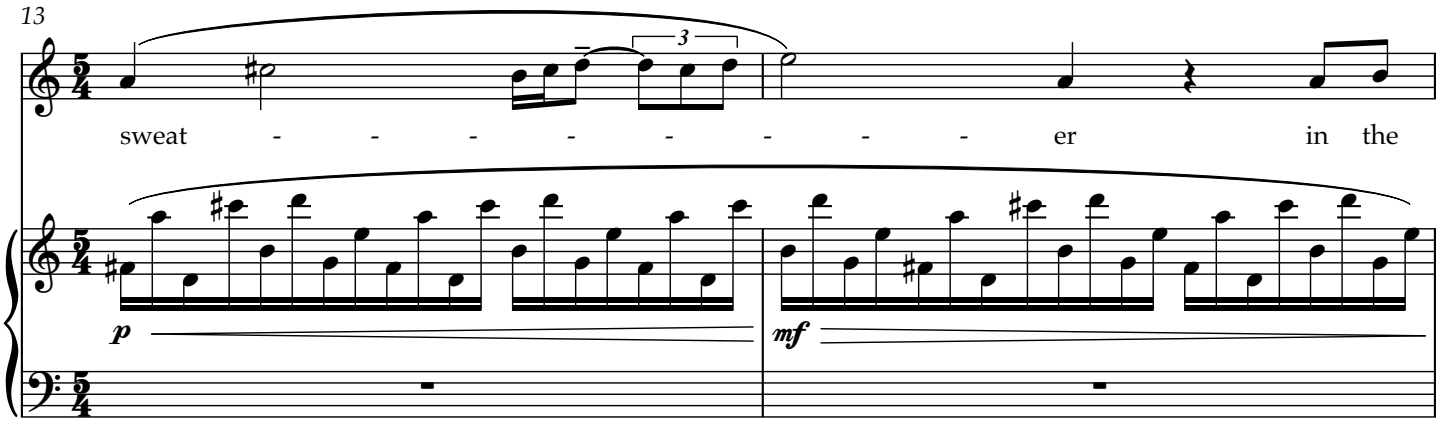
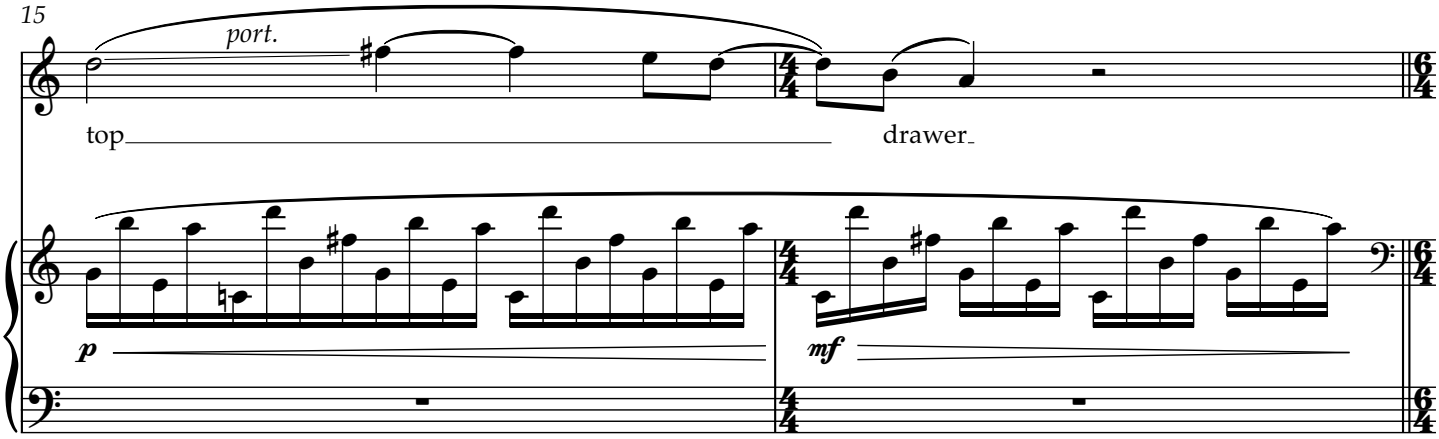

7
poco rit.
mp
ppp
Ped.
A tempo
9
mf
Here, in - side the chest a ti - ny fear
pp
mp
11
is fold - ed neat - ly like a
pp
mp

13

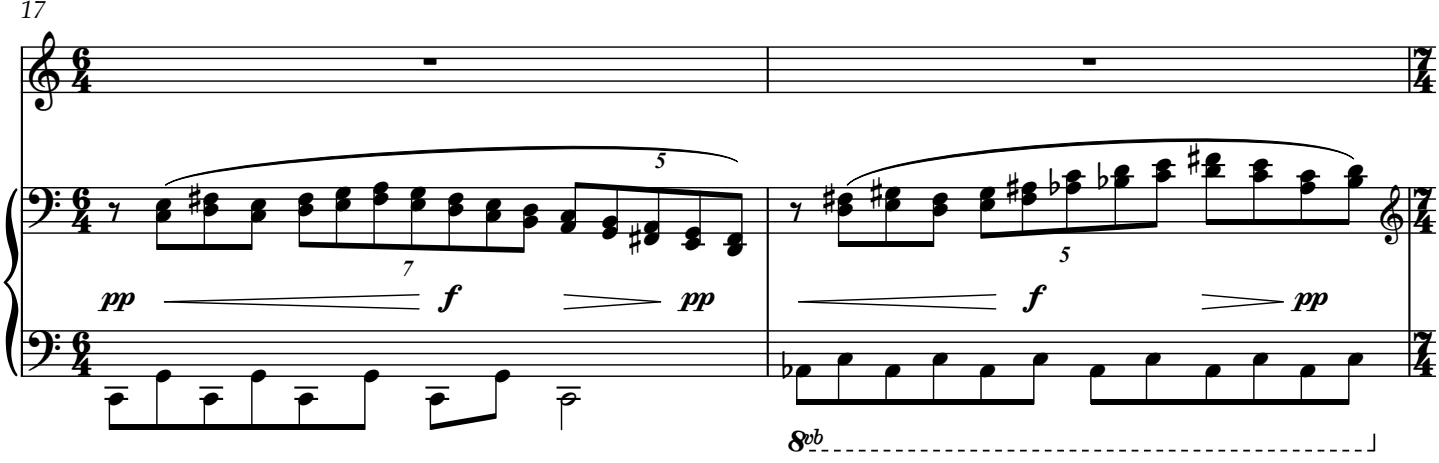


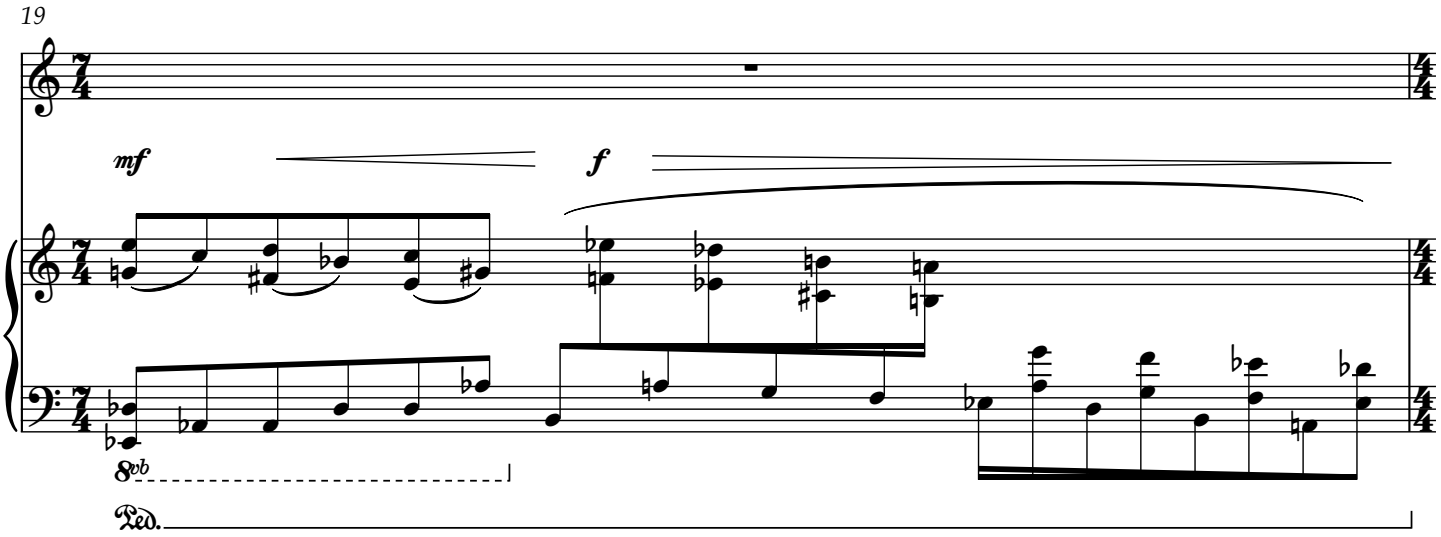
15

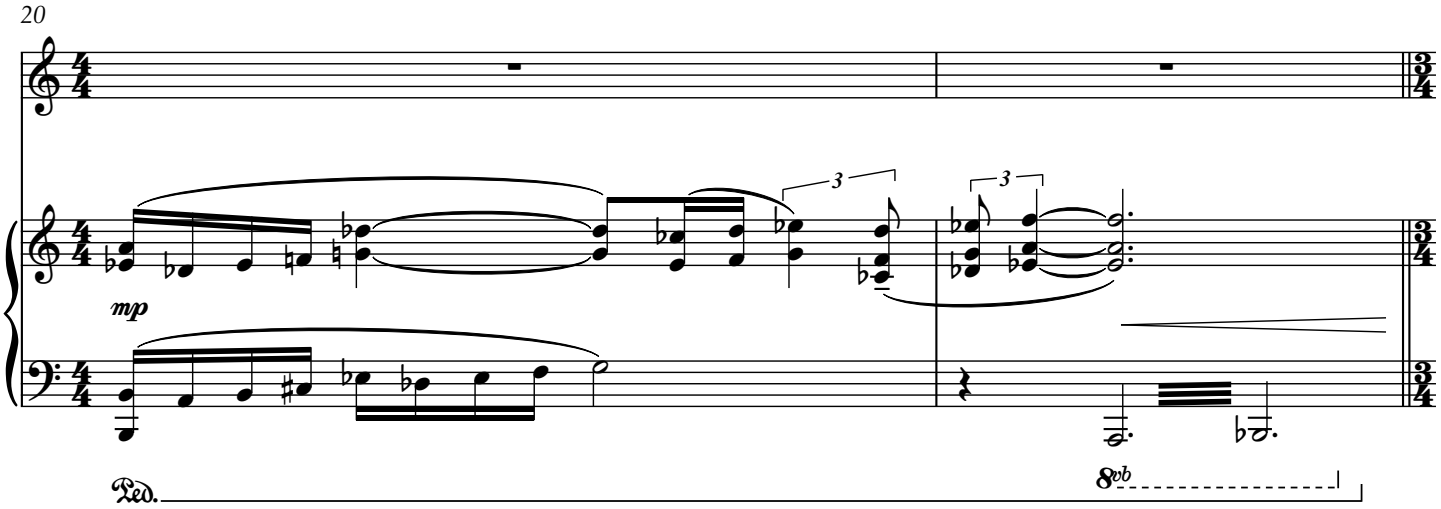


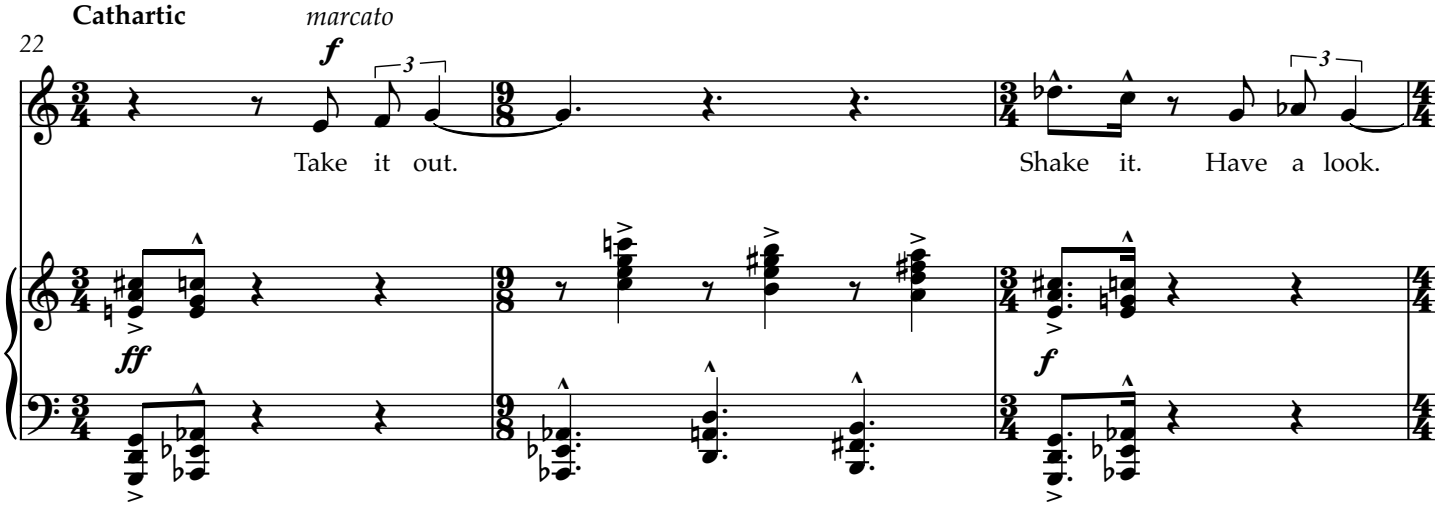
Foreboding (♩ = 96)

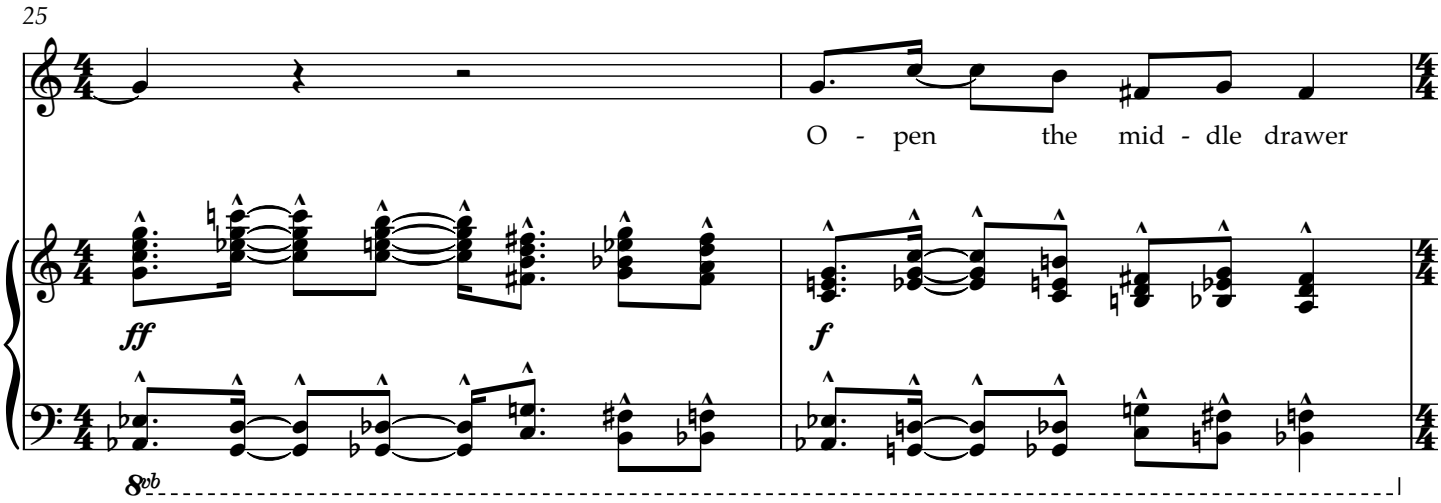
17

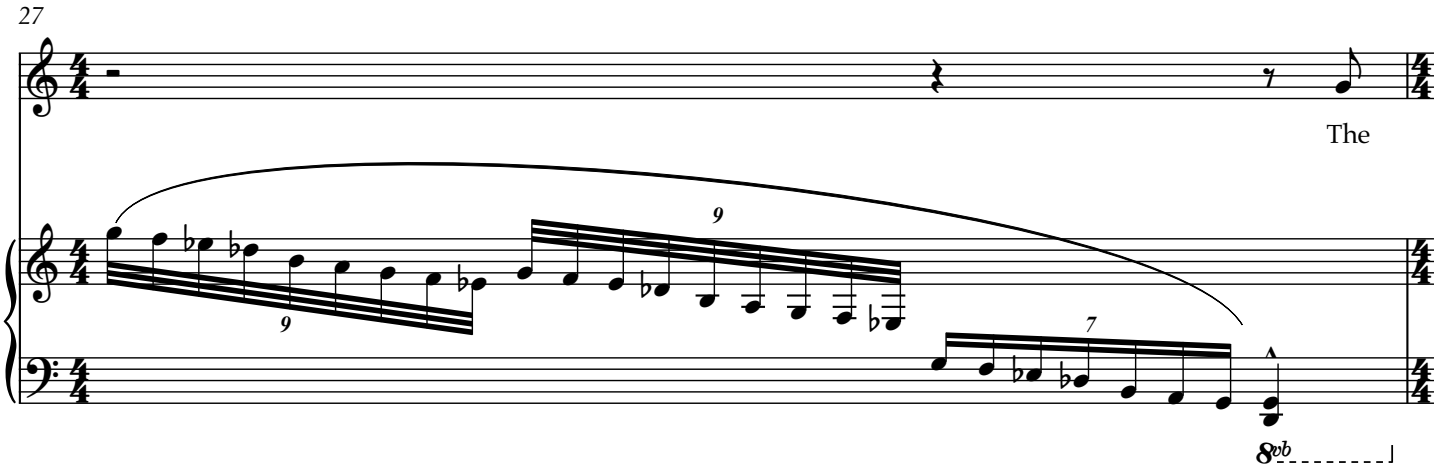


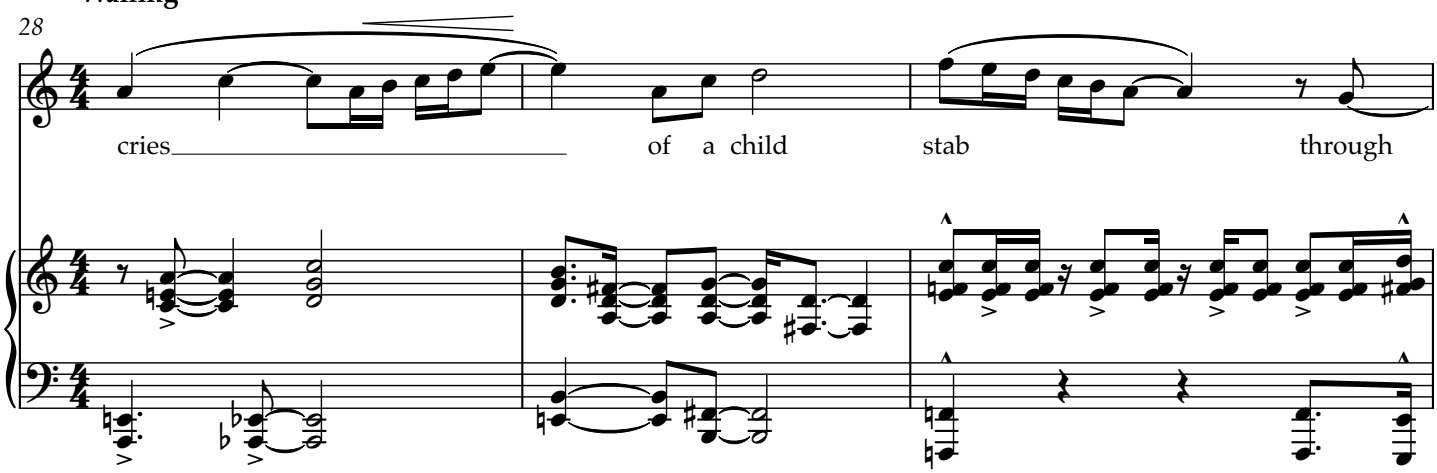

19
mf
f
8vb
Ped.

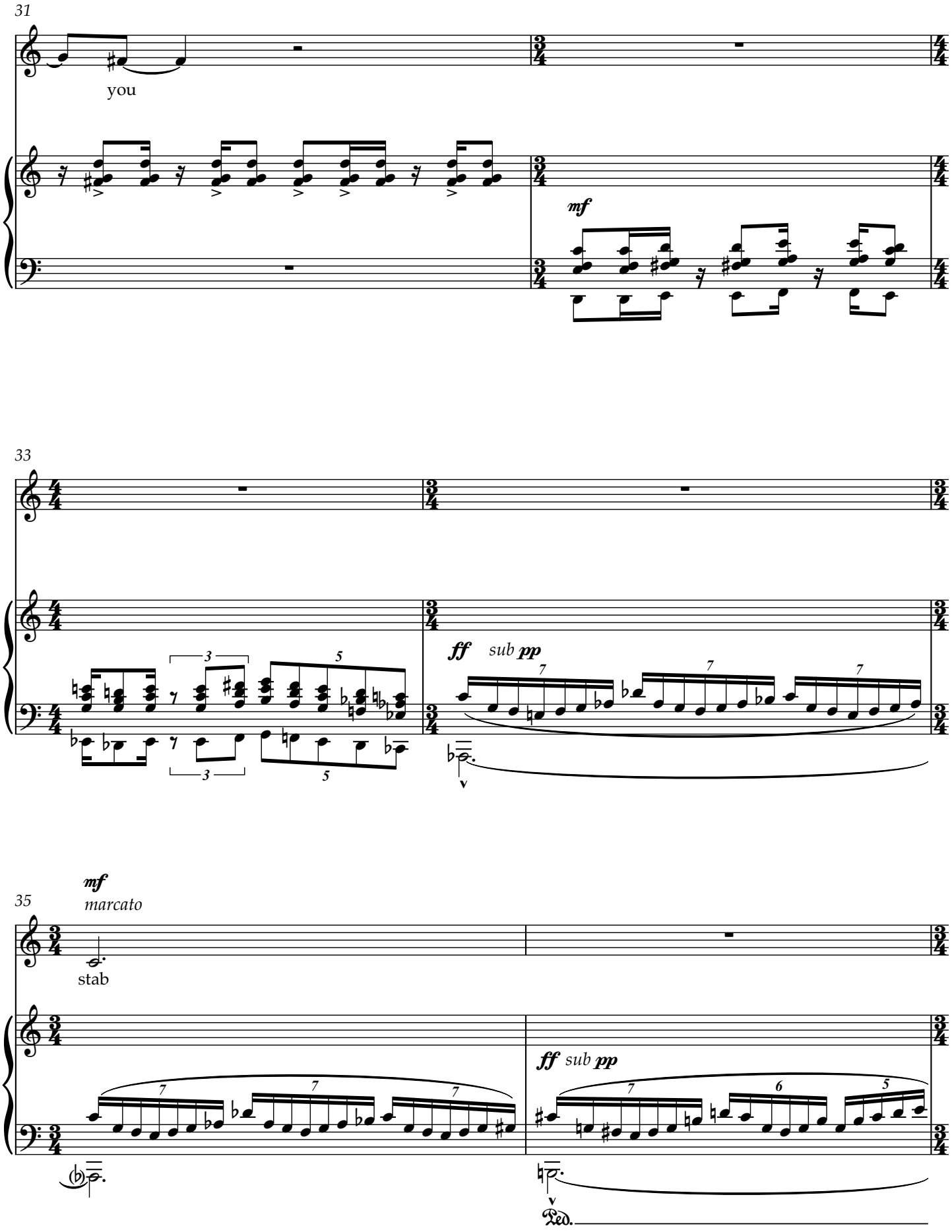

20
3
3
mp
Ped.
8vb

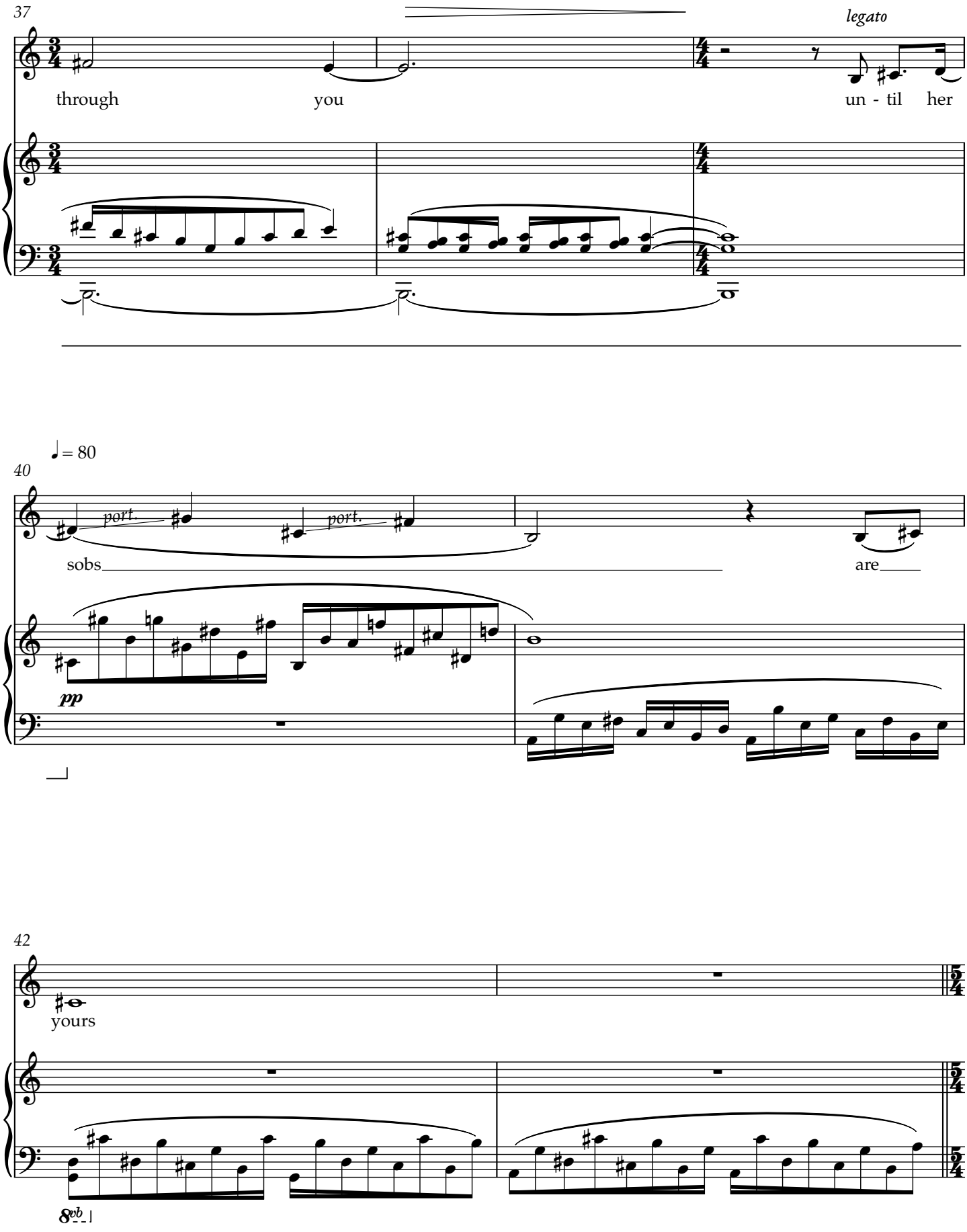

Cathartic
marcato
22
f
3
3
Take it out.
Shake it. Have a look.
ff
f


25
O - pen the mid - dle drawer
ff
f
8vb


27
The
9
9
7
8vb


Wailing
28
cries
of a child
stab
through


31
you
mf
33
ff
sub pp
35
mf
marcato
stab
ff
sub pp
Ped.


37
legato
through
you
un - til
her
♩ = 80
40
port.
port.
sobs
are
pp
42
yours
8vb

Healing

44

mf

3

In the bot - tom drawer un - der a stack

pp

46

of gowns is a

48

clenched fist. It is

mf *f* *mp*

52

hold - ing a key that

8va

mf

(clink!)

3

54

falls at your feet.

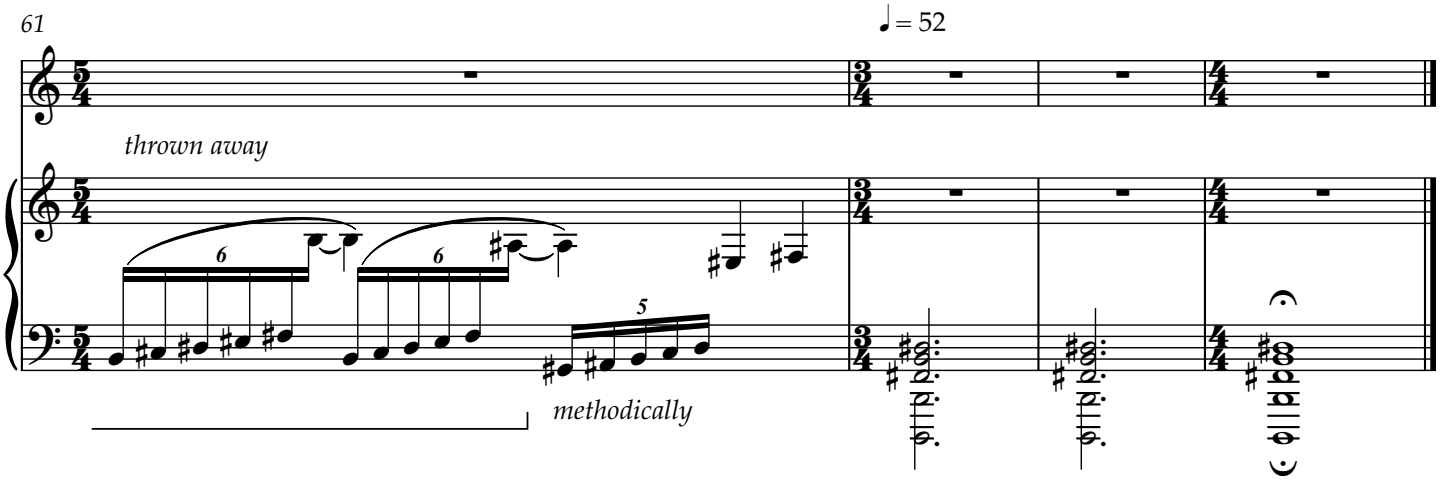
Ped.

56 **rit.** **Meditative** (♩ = 63)

p

8va

8vb


61
♩= 52
thrown away
methodically