Howard Hersh

CHILDREN OF GOD

Text by Francesca Soriano Hersh

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Children of God

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I– Rachel Corrie
II – The Game
III – Four Girls

Commissioned by Alexis Tantau with assistance from the Puffin Foundation and a University of Southern California Arts Grant

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/ www.howardhersh.net

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Children of God

Children of God was composed for Alexis Tantau and is the fourth collaboration between Howard Hersh and his daughter, poet Francesca Soriano Hersh. It was commissioned with assistance from the Puffin Foundation, Inc. and the University of Southern California and premiered at USC in 2005 by Ms, Tantau and pianist Hiroyo Hatsuyama.

Each of its songs is dedicated to young victims of political violence.

Rachel Corrie was a college student and peace activist who was killed by an Israeli bulldozer while guarding a Palestinian home. Portions of the text are taken from her emails home.

The second song portrays a former child soldier who is now at a rehabilitation camp, listening to word games played by other children. At the time of the writing, child soldiers were estimated to be numbered at 300,000, involved in some 30 conflicts around the world. Many were able to re-enter society, but, as one report described, some of the recent returnees contemplated solving problems on the playground by resorting to what they had been taught best: killing.

The final song is a tribute to the four girls killed in the 1963 Birmingham church bombing: 11-year-old Denise McNair and 14-year-olds Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Addie Mae Collins. It depicts their last day, as they make their way to Sunday school, and look forward to the simple joys of the Sabbath.

The cycle closes with a setting of the hymn words (paraphrased), “There is a balm in Gilead.”

Text by Francesca Soriano Hersh

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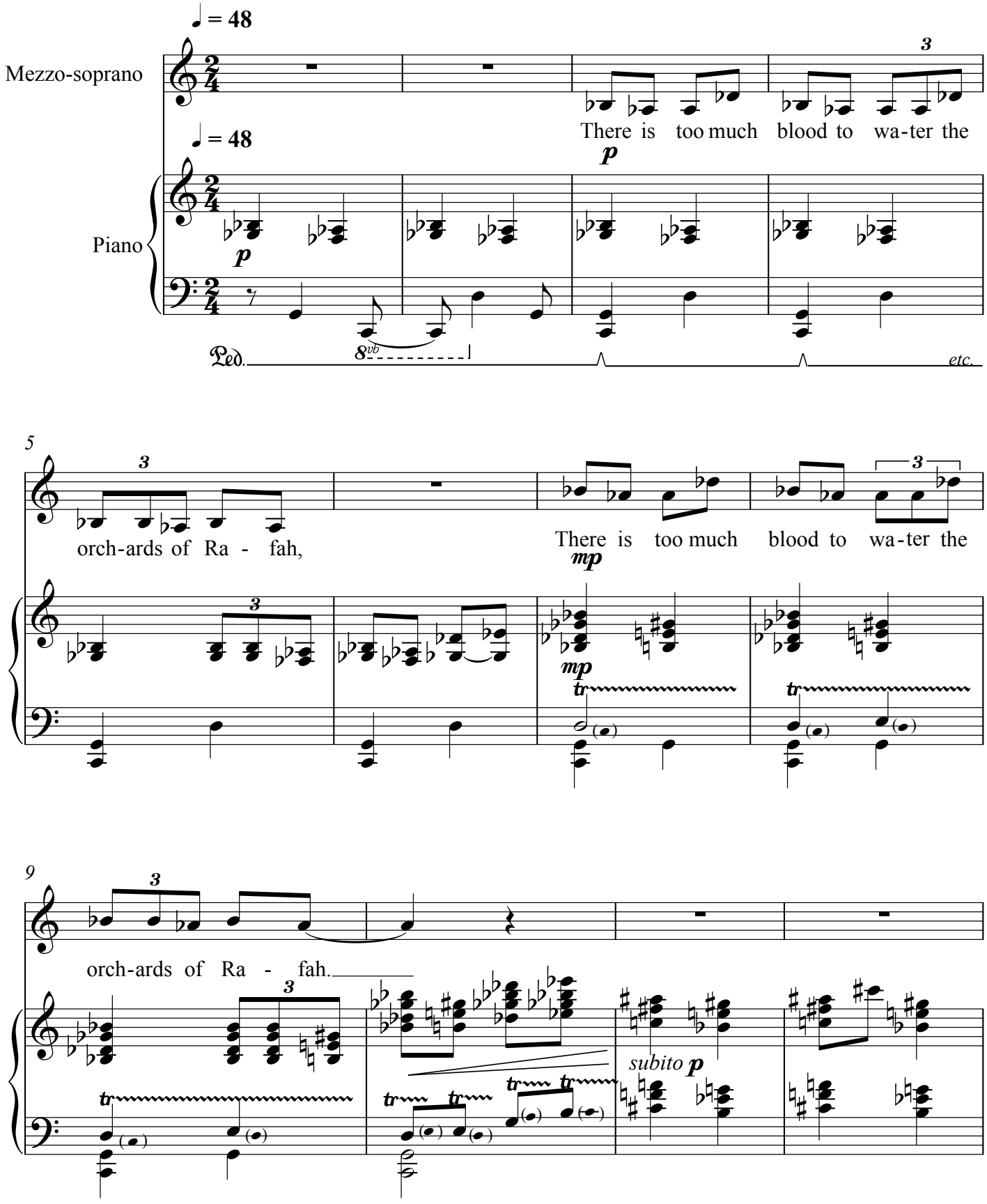
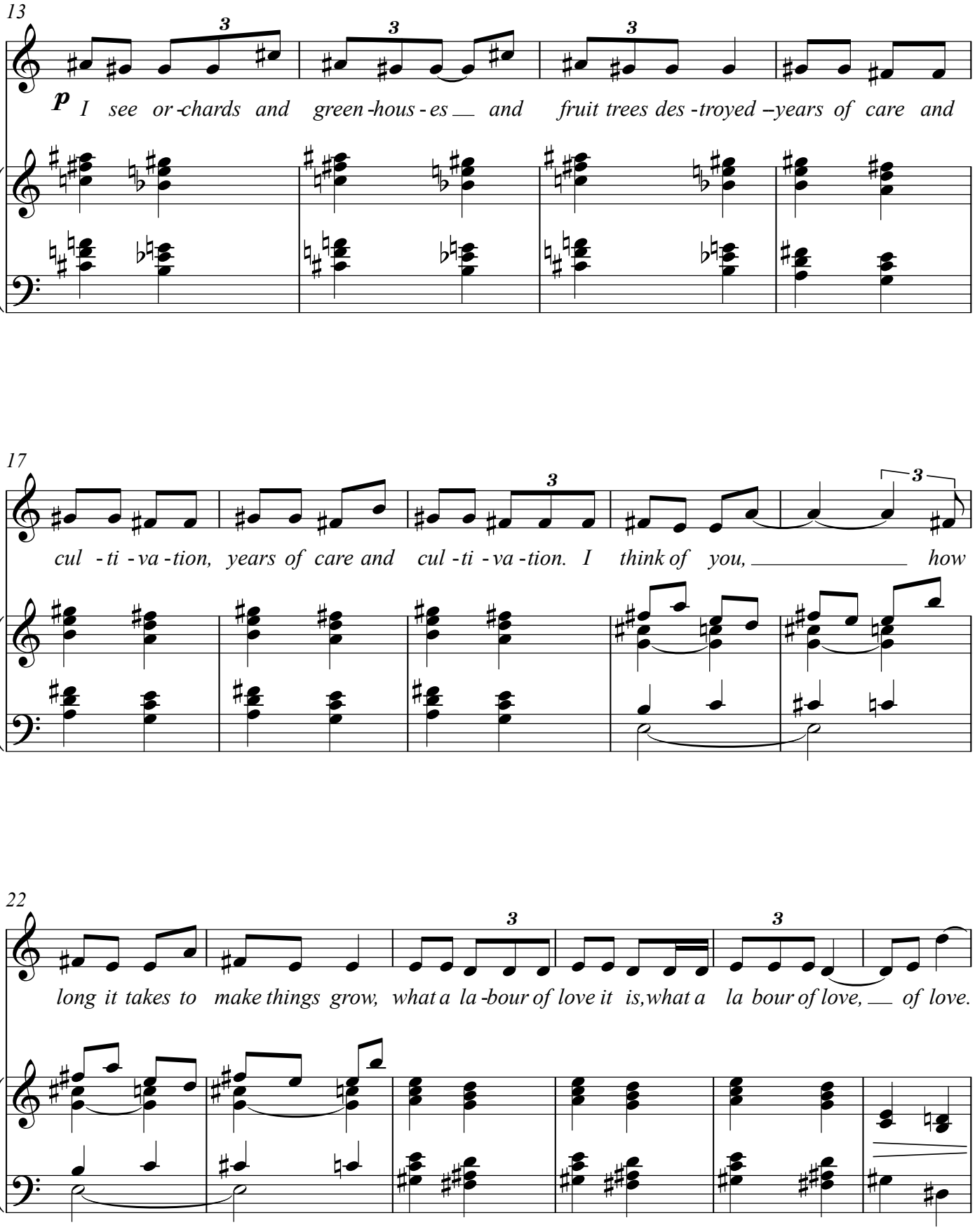
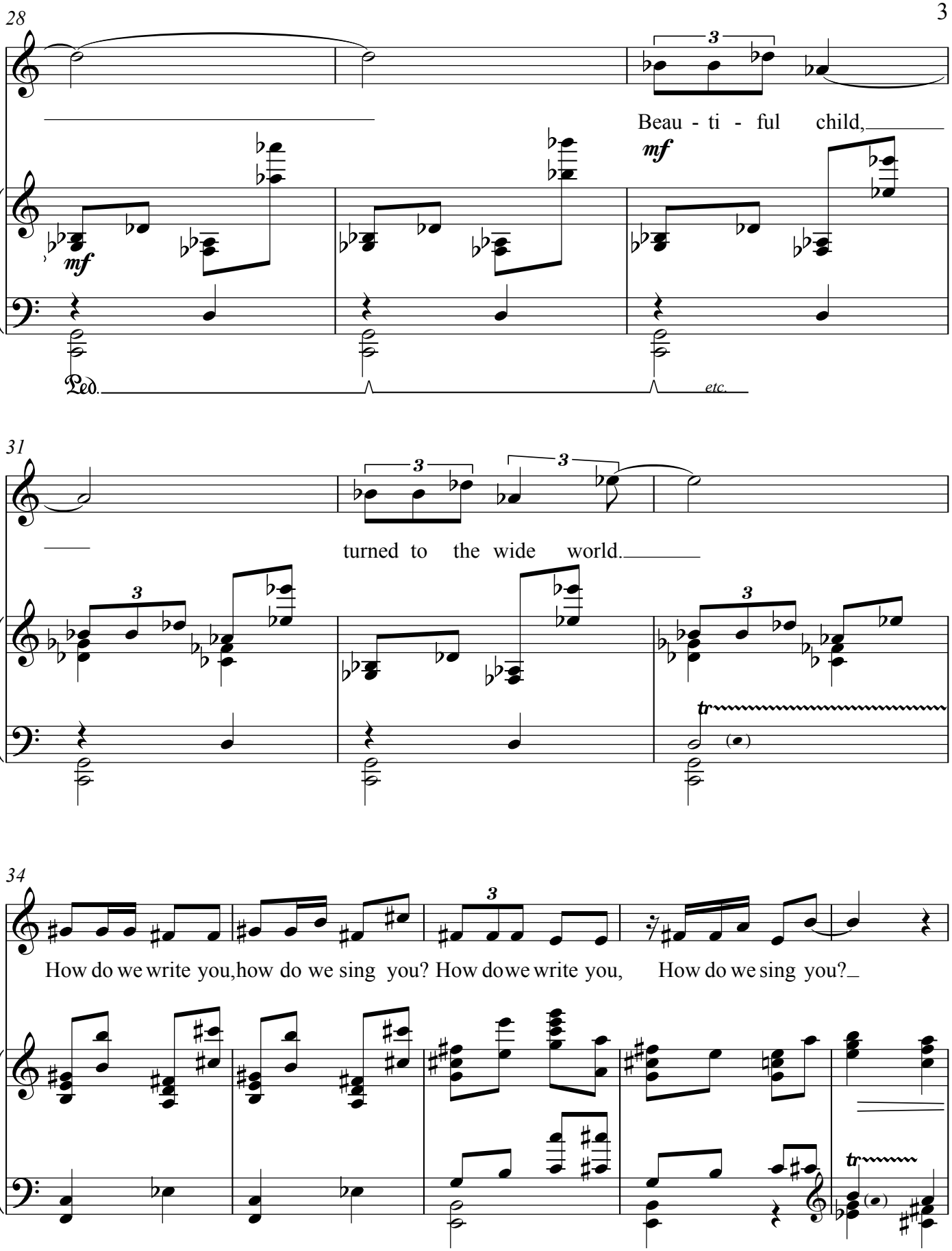
Music by Howard Hersh

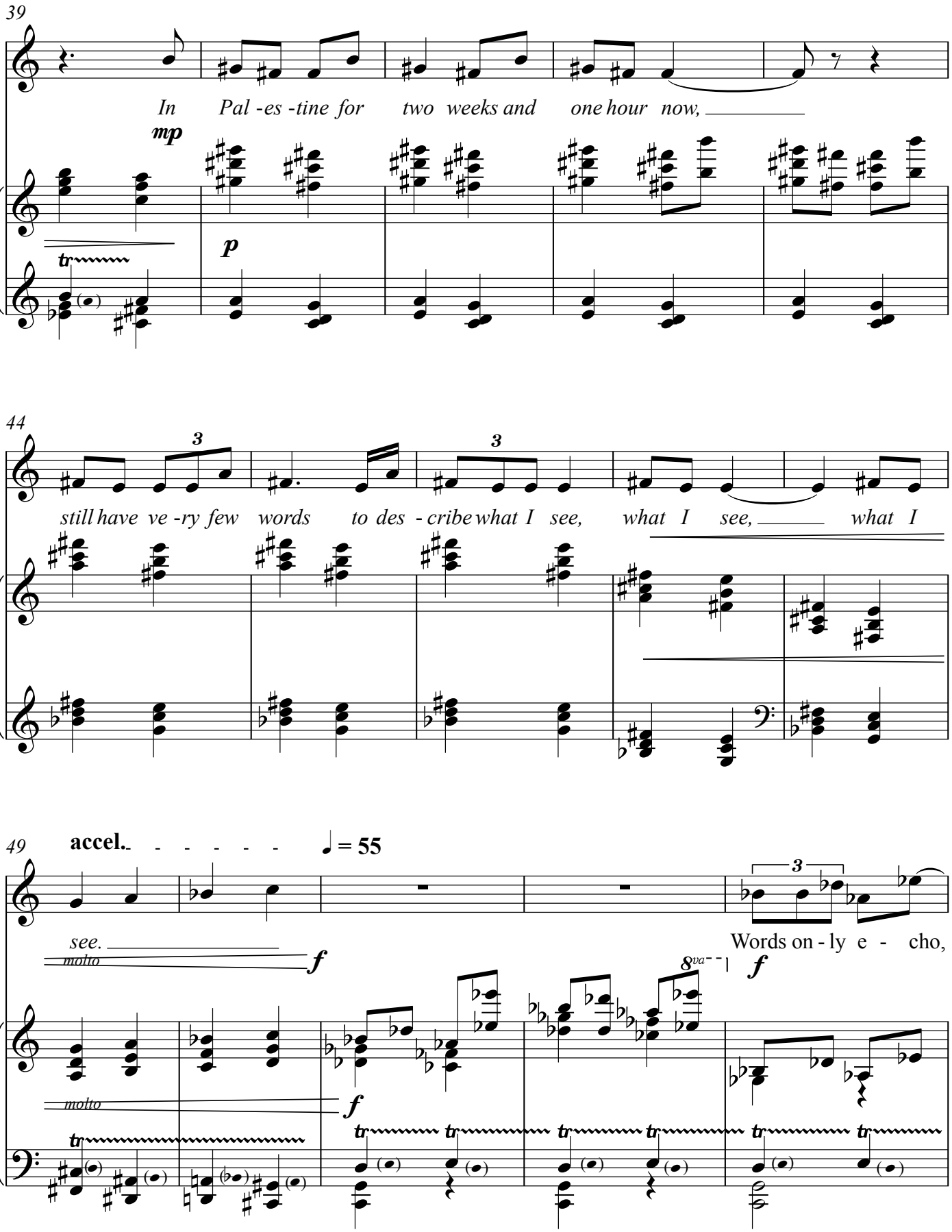
1. - Rachel Corrie

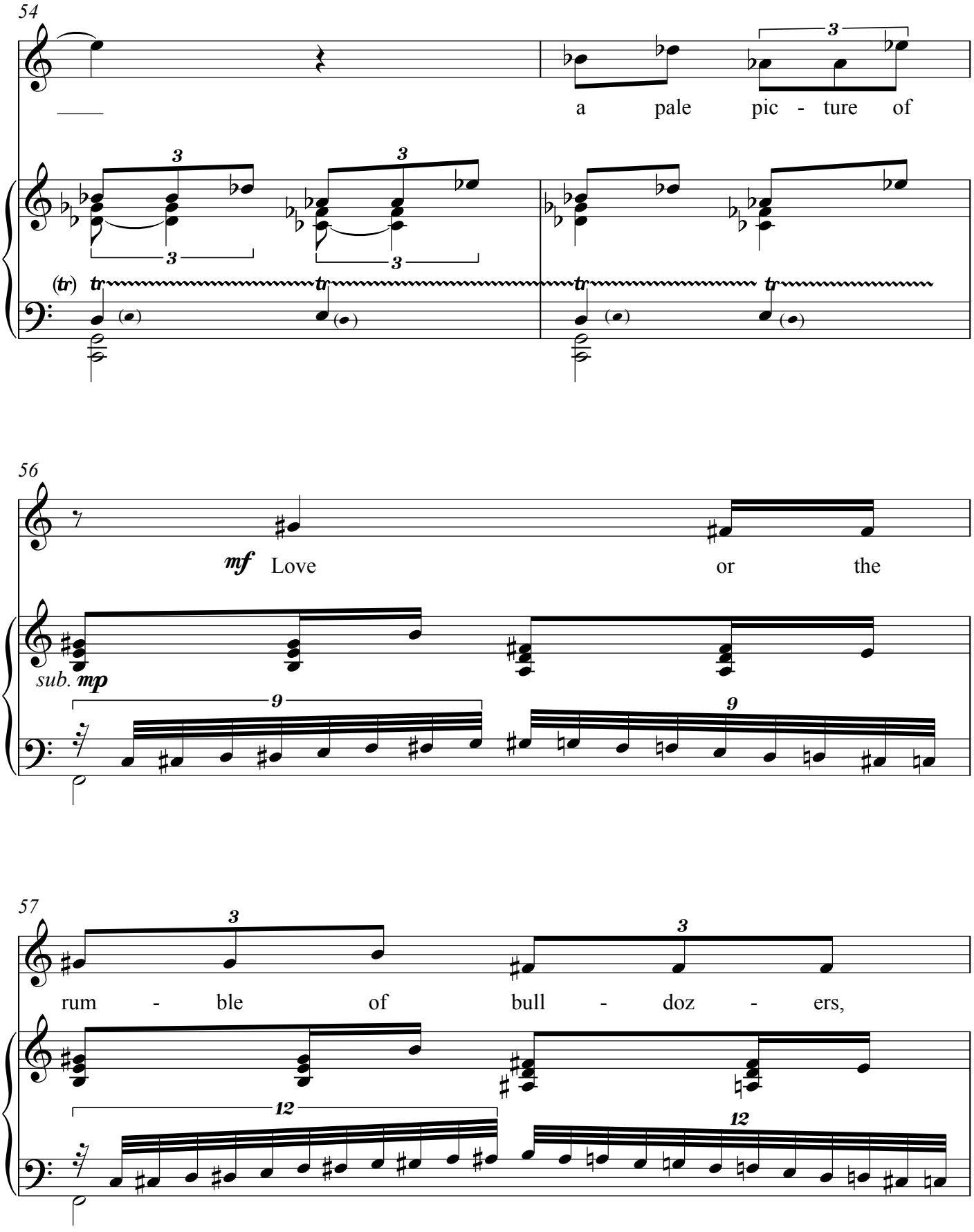


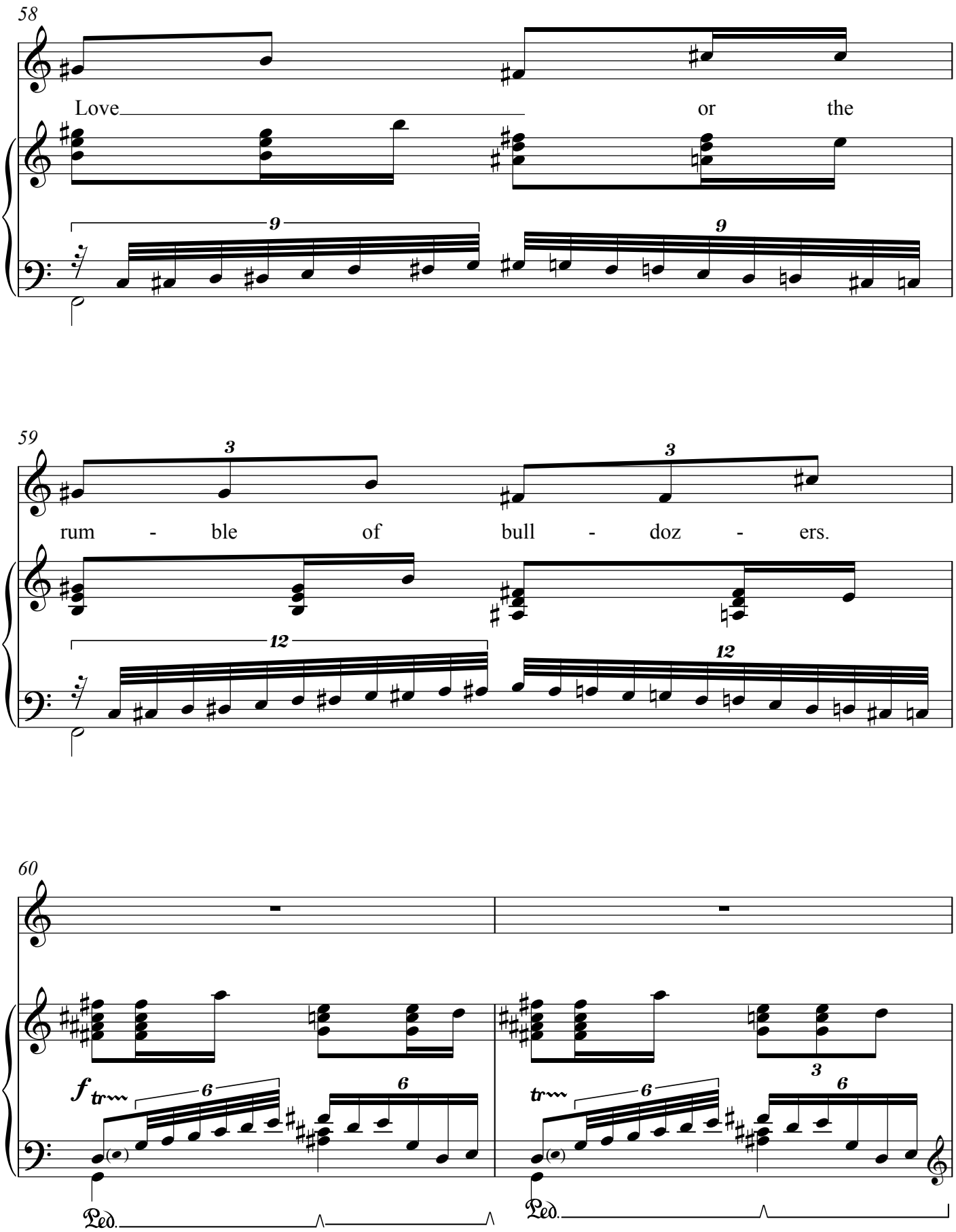
Music © 2005, Howard Hersh; Lyrics © 2005, Francesca Soriano Hersh

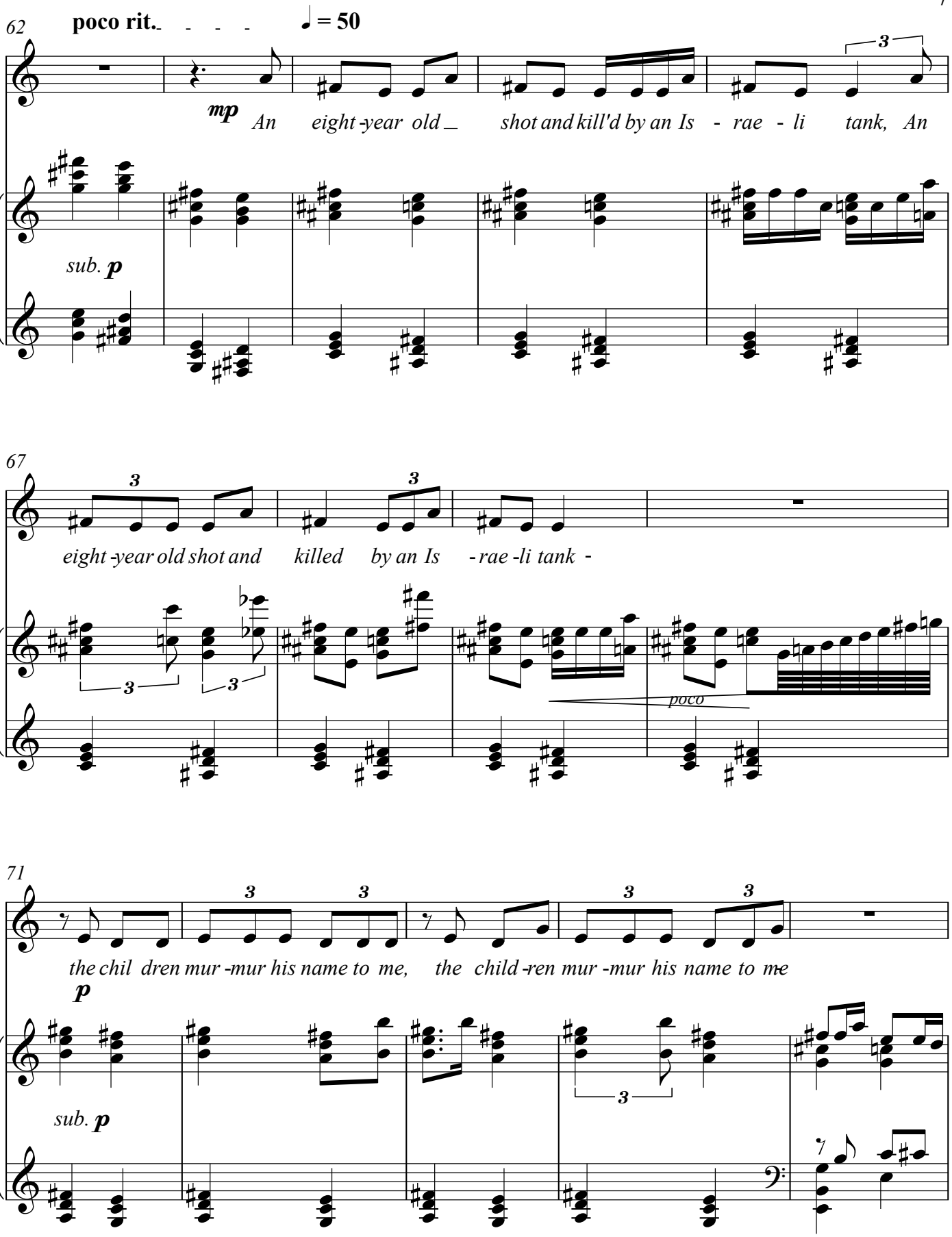

13
p
I see or-chards and green-hous-es and fruit trees des-troyed –years of care and
17
cul-ti-va-tion, years of care and cul-ti-va-tion. I think of you, how
22
long it takes to make things grow, what a la-bour of love it is,what a la bour of love, of love.

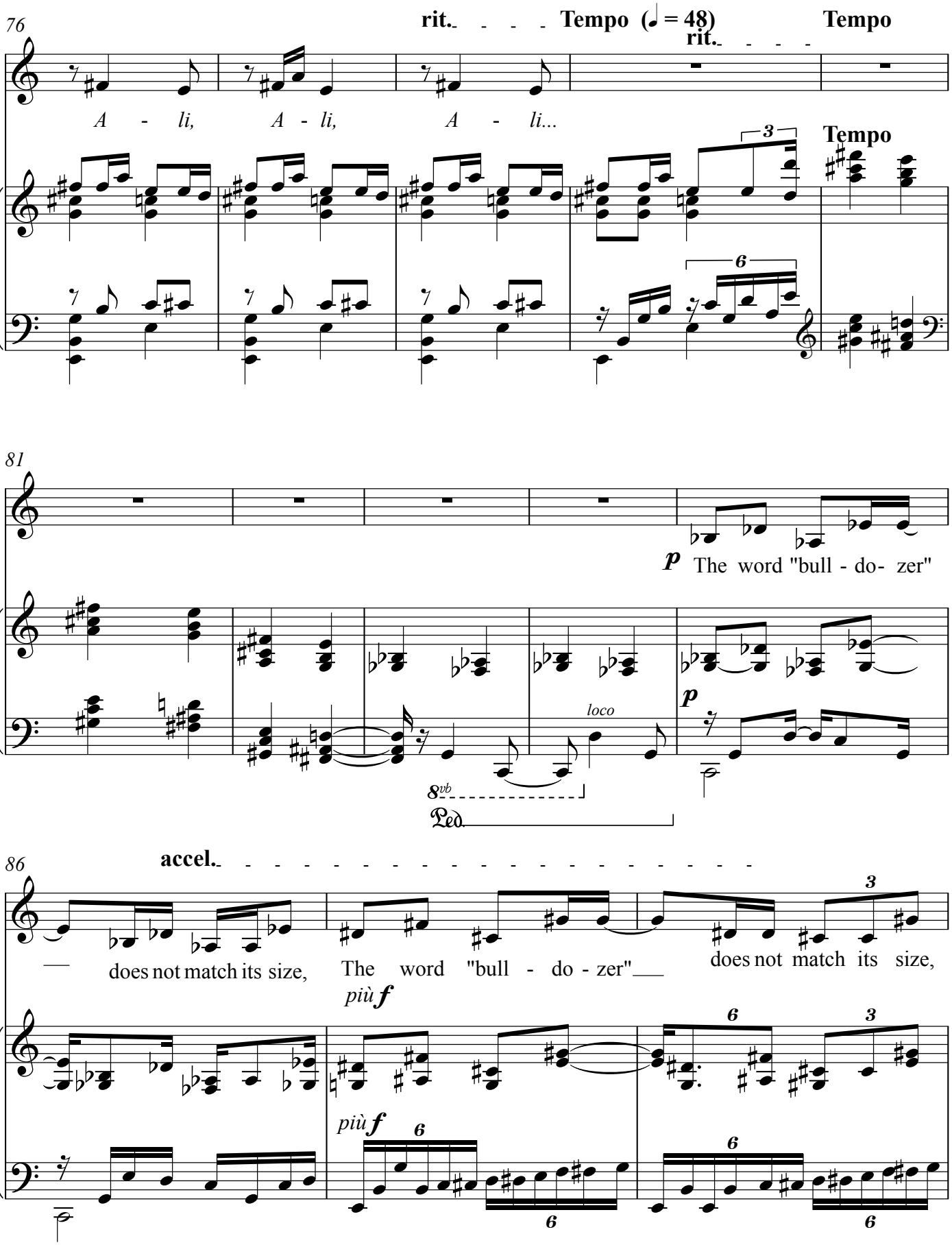

28
Beau - ti - ful child,
mf
mf
Ped.
etc.
31
turned to the wide world.
tr
34
How do we write you,how do we sing you? How dowe write you, How do we sing you?
tr


39
In Pal -es -tine for two weeks and one hour now,
mp
p
tr
44
still have ve -ry few words to des - cribe what I see, what I see, what I
3
49
accel.
♩ = 55
see.
molto
f
Words on - ly e - cho,
8va
molto
f
tr


54
a pale pic - ture of
56
mf Love or the
sub. mp
57
rum - ble of bull - doz - ers,


58
Love
or
the
59
rum - ble
of
bull - doz - ers.
60
Ped.
Ped.


62
poco rit.
♩ = 50
mp
An eight-year old shot and kill'd by an Is - rae - li tank, An
sub. p
67
eight-year old shot and killed by an Is - rae -li tank -
poco
71
the chil dren mur -mur his name to me, the child -ren mur -mur his name to me
p
sub. p


76
rit.
Tempo (♩ = 48)
rit.
Tempo
A - li, A - li, A - li...
Tempo
81
p
The word "bull - do- zer"
loco
p
8vb
Ped.
86
accel.
— does not match its size, The word "bull - do - zer"— does not match its size,
più f
più f

89

The steel blade, does not match its size, The steel blade

più f

più f

più f

più f

92

♩ = 55

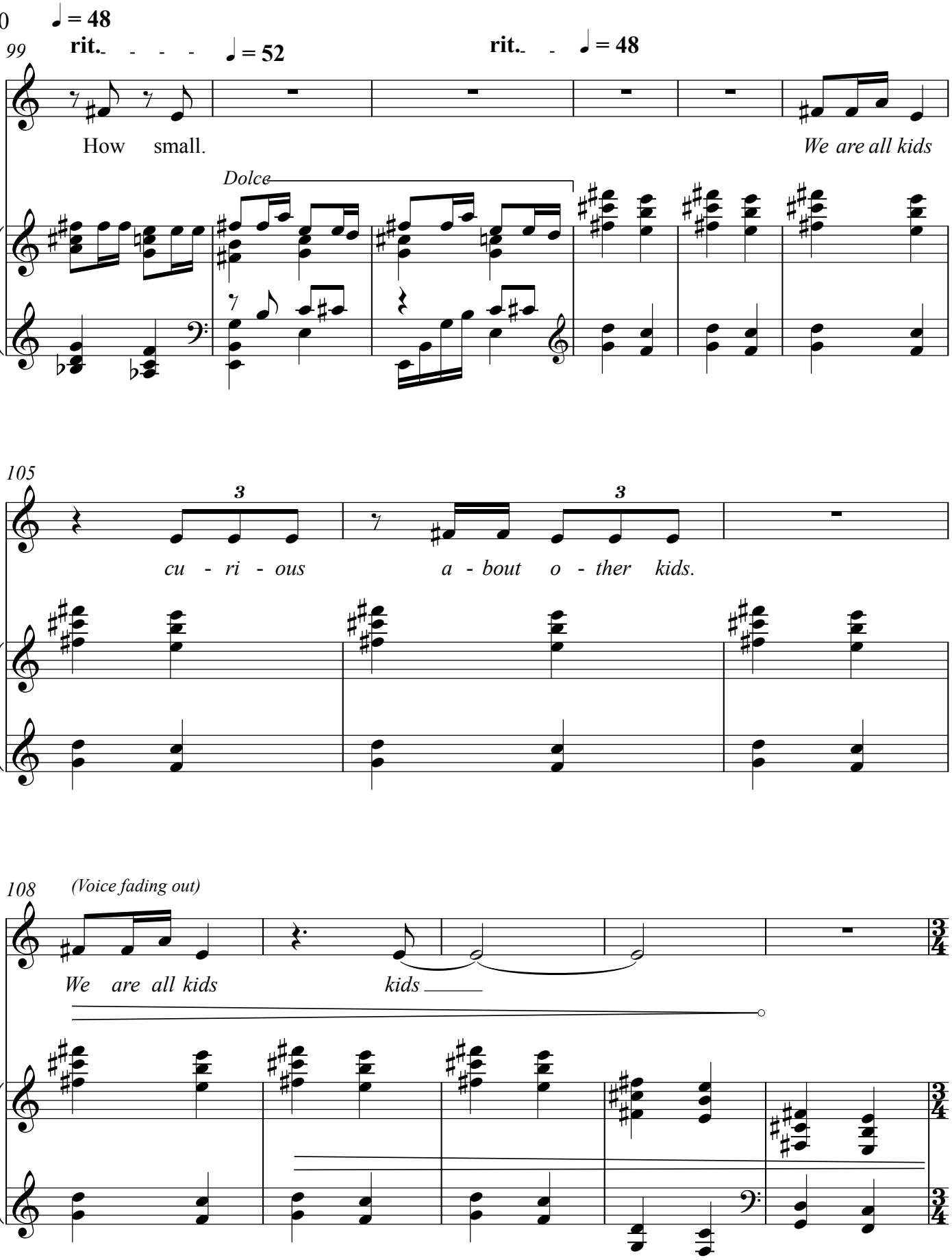
does not match its size...

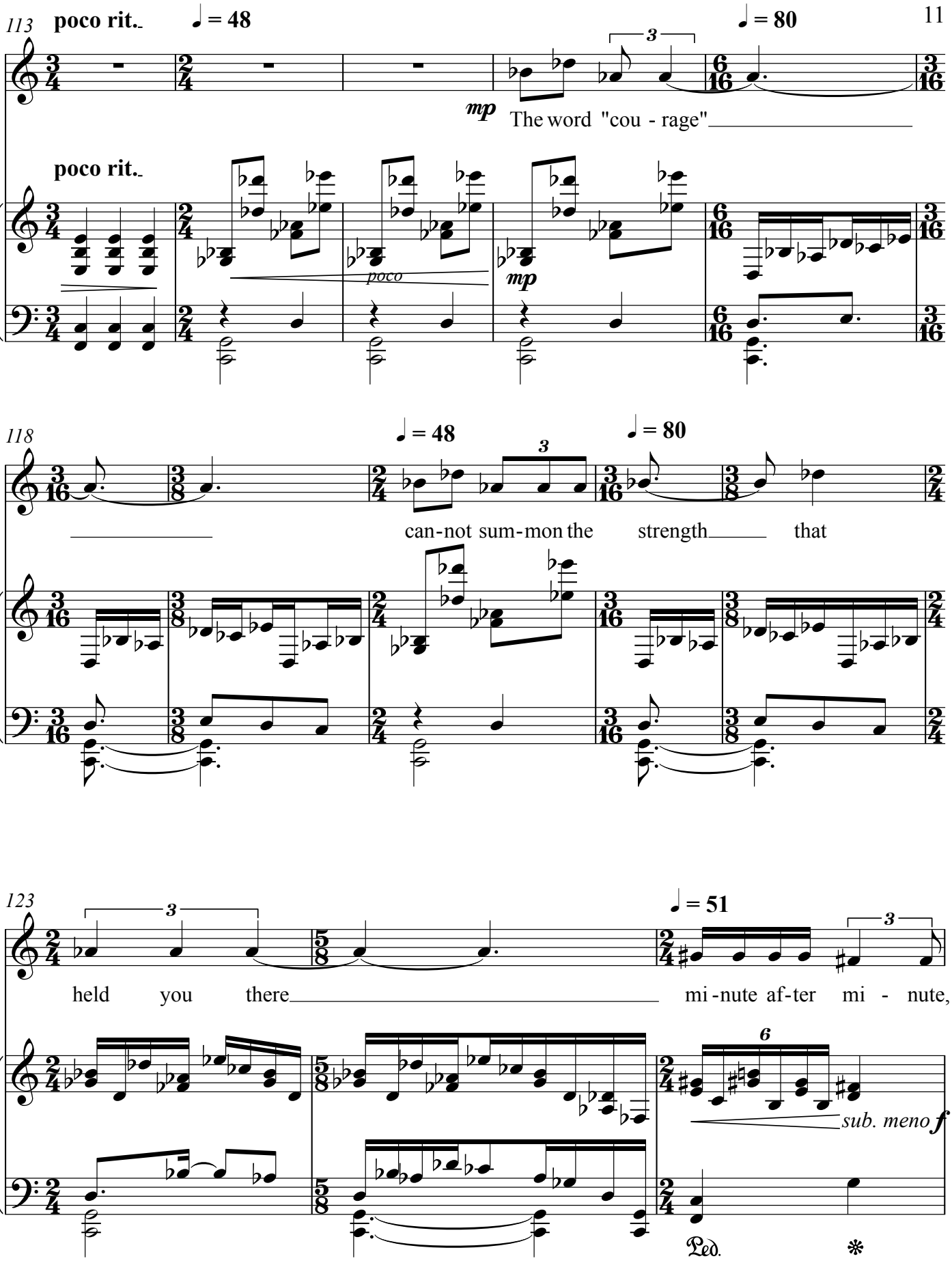
sub. p

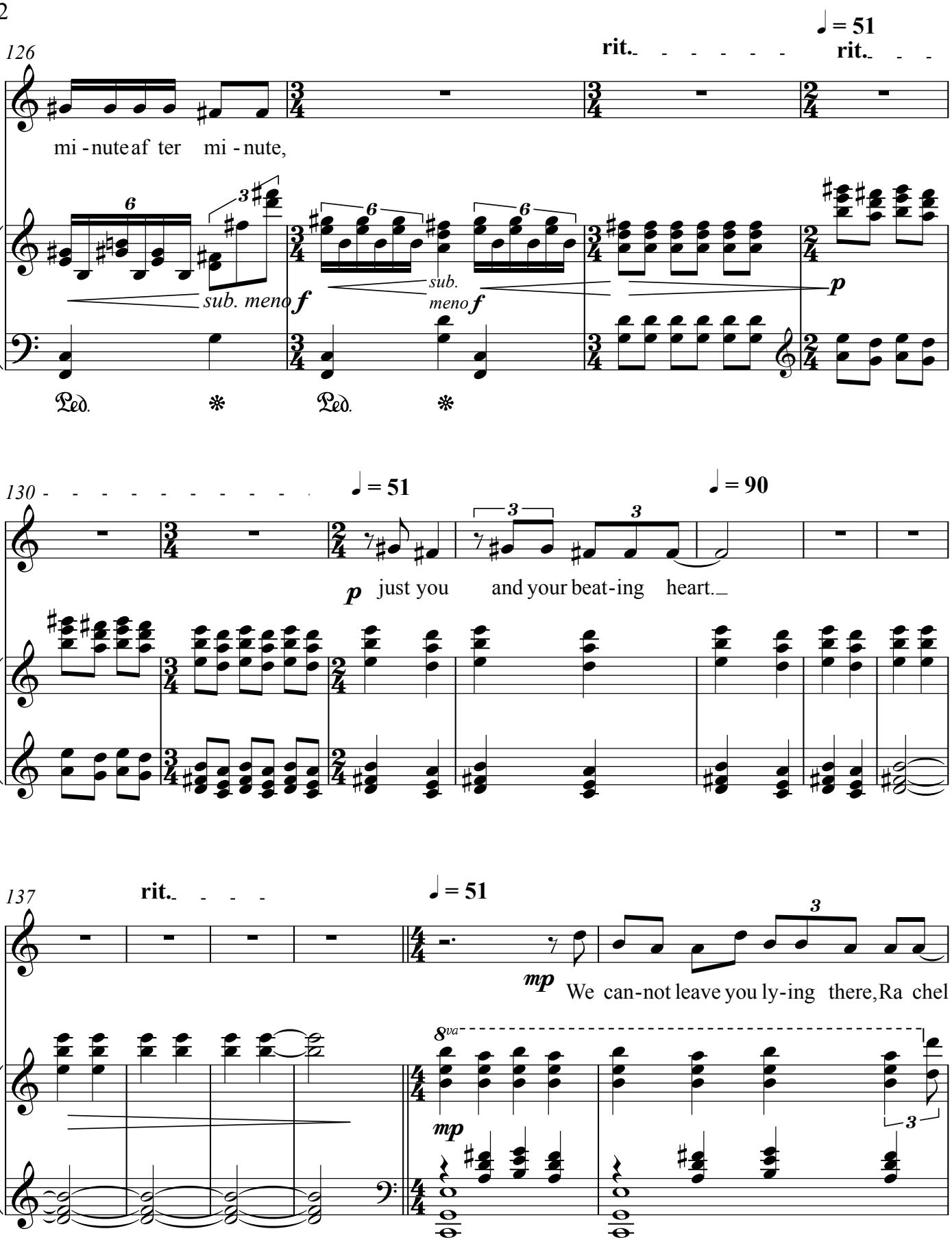
95

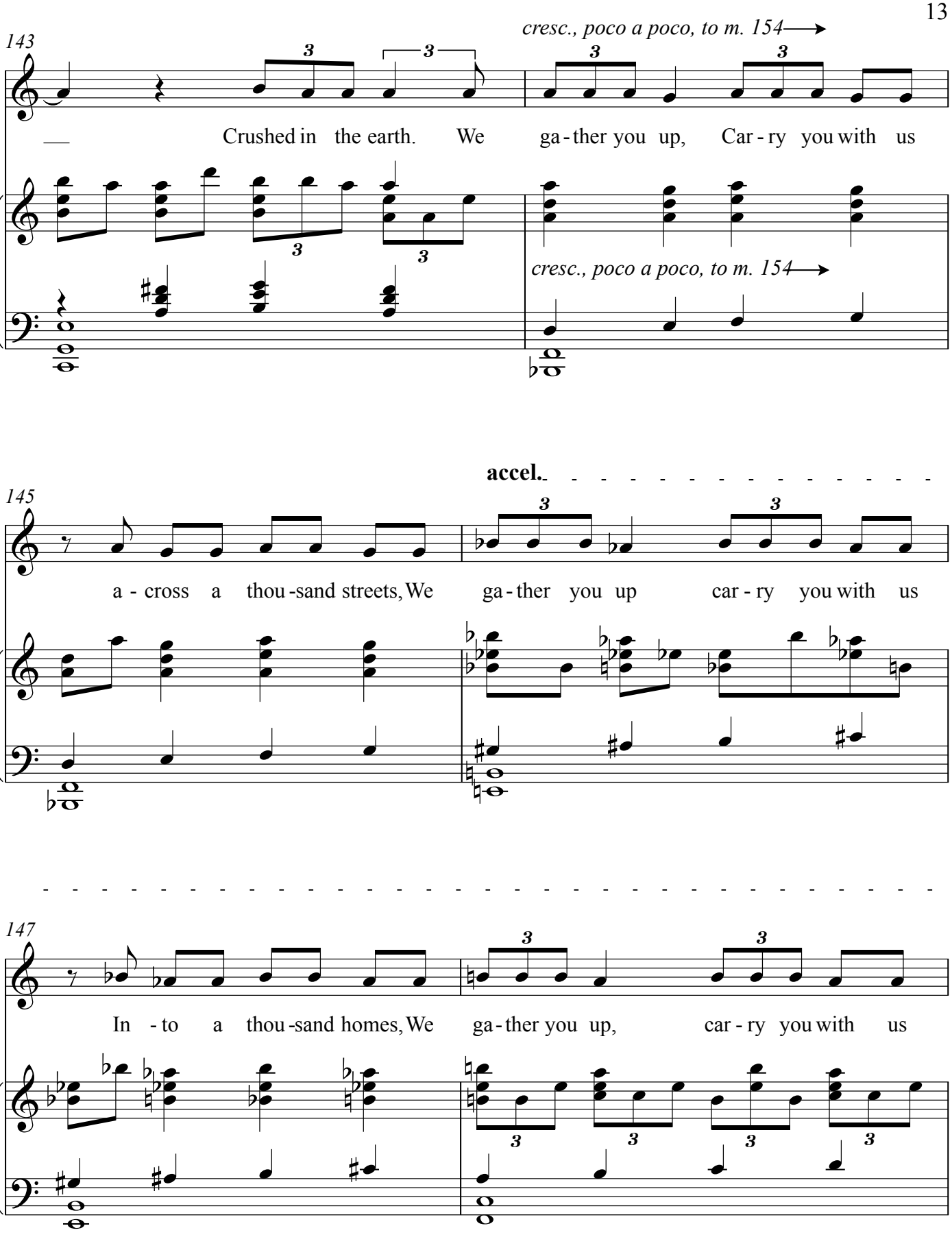
poco rit.

p How small you look, how de-li-cate How small you look, How small,


♩ = 48
99
rit.
♩ = 52
rit.
♩ = 48
How small.
We are all kids
Dolce
105
3
3
cu - ri - ous
a - bout o - ther kids.
108
(Voice fading out)
We are all kids
kids


113
poco rit.
♩ = 48
♩ = 80
mp
The word "cou - rage"
poco rit.
poco
mp
118
♩ = 48
♩ = 80
can-not sum-mon the strength that
123
♩ = 51
held you there
mi-nute af-ter mi - nute,
sub. meno f
Ped.
*


126
♩ = 51
rit.
rit.
mi - nute af ter mi - nute,
sub. meno
f
sub.
meno
f
p
Ped.
Ped.
130
♩ = 51
♩ = 90
p just you and your beat-ing heart.
137
rit.
♩ = 51
mp We can-not leave you ly-ing there, Ra chel
8va
mp


143
cresc., poco a poco, to m. 154
Crushed in the earth. We ga - ther you up, Car - ry you with us
cresc., poco a poco, to m. 154
accel.
145
a - cross a thou - sand streets, We ga - ther you up car - ry you with us
147
In - to a thou - sand homes, We ga - ther you up, car - ry you with us

149

a - cross a thou - sand streets, In - to a thou - sand homes, held in a thou - sand hearts,

152

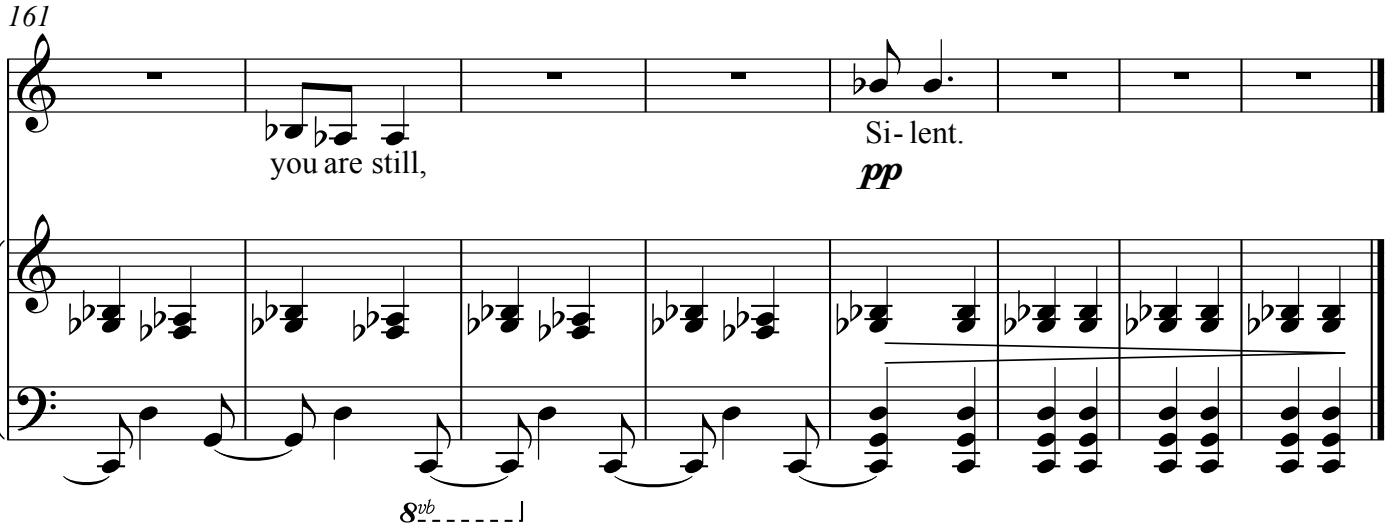
(molto *f*) **Tempo I (♩ = 48)**

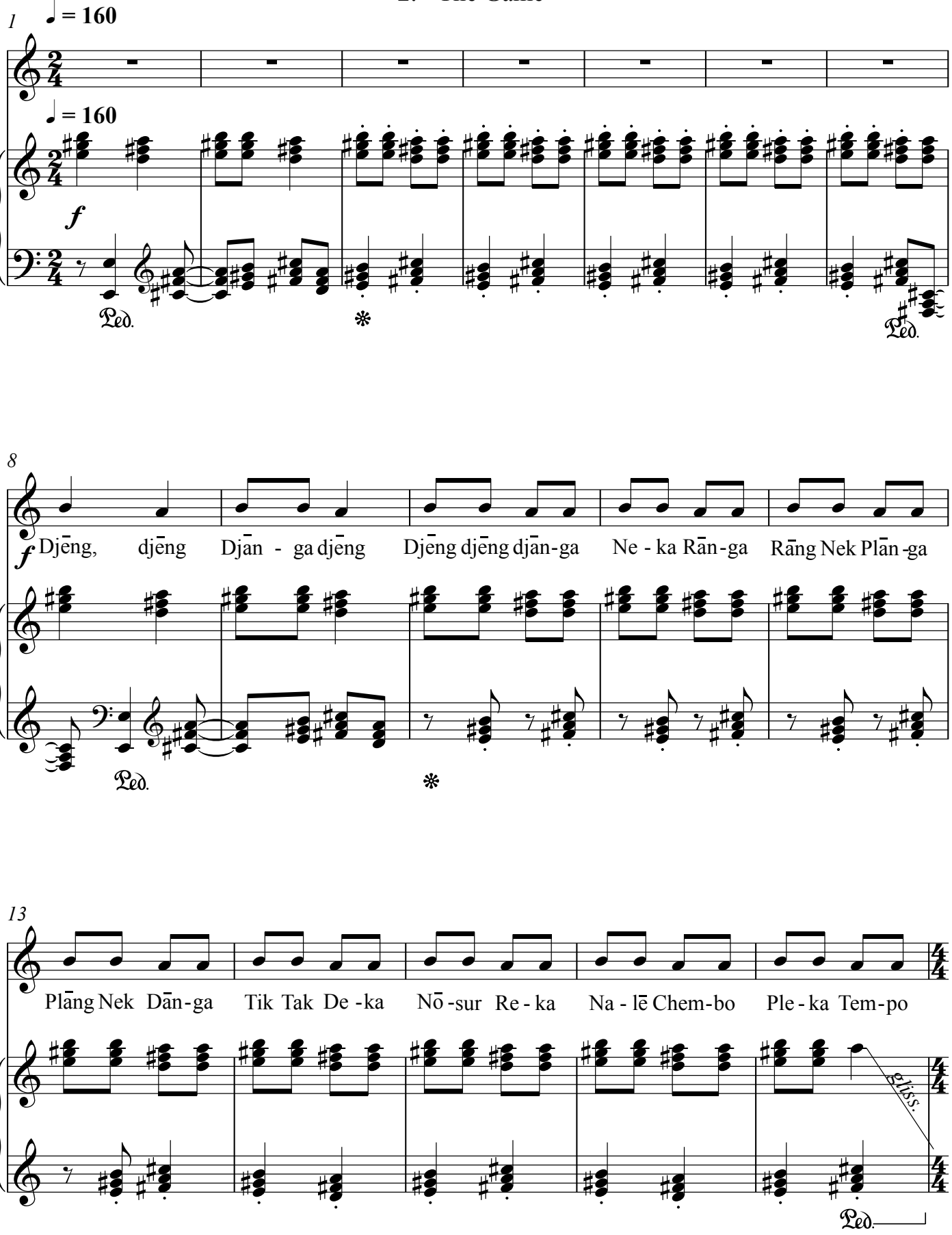
In - to a thou - sand homes, held in a thou - sand hearts,

sub. ***p***

155

But no mat - ter how we breathe on your pic - ture, Ra - chel,


161
you are still,
Si- lent.
pp
8vb


1
♩ = 160
♩ = 160
f
Ped.
8
f Djēng, djēng Djān - ga djēng Djēng djēng djān-ga Ne - ka Rān-ga Rāng Nek Plān-ga
13
Plāng Nek Dān-ga Tik Tak De-ka Nō-sur Re-ka Na - lē Chem-bo Ple-ka Tem-po
gliss.

18 **Poco più mosso (♩ = 166)**

mp I gave you my gun for some

mp

22

bread A cot to sleep in and

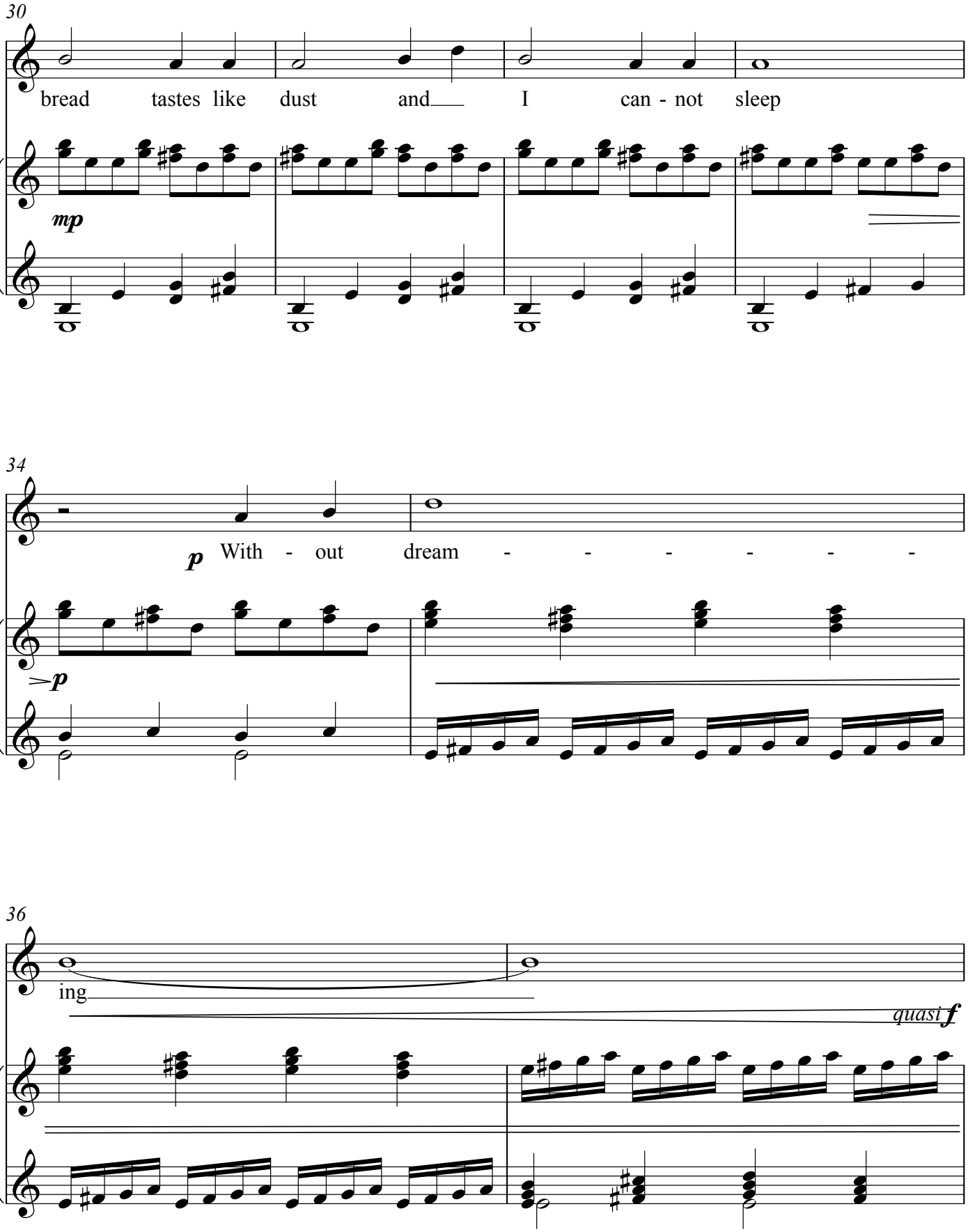
mf

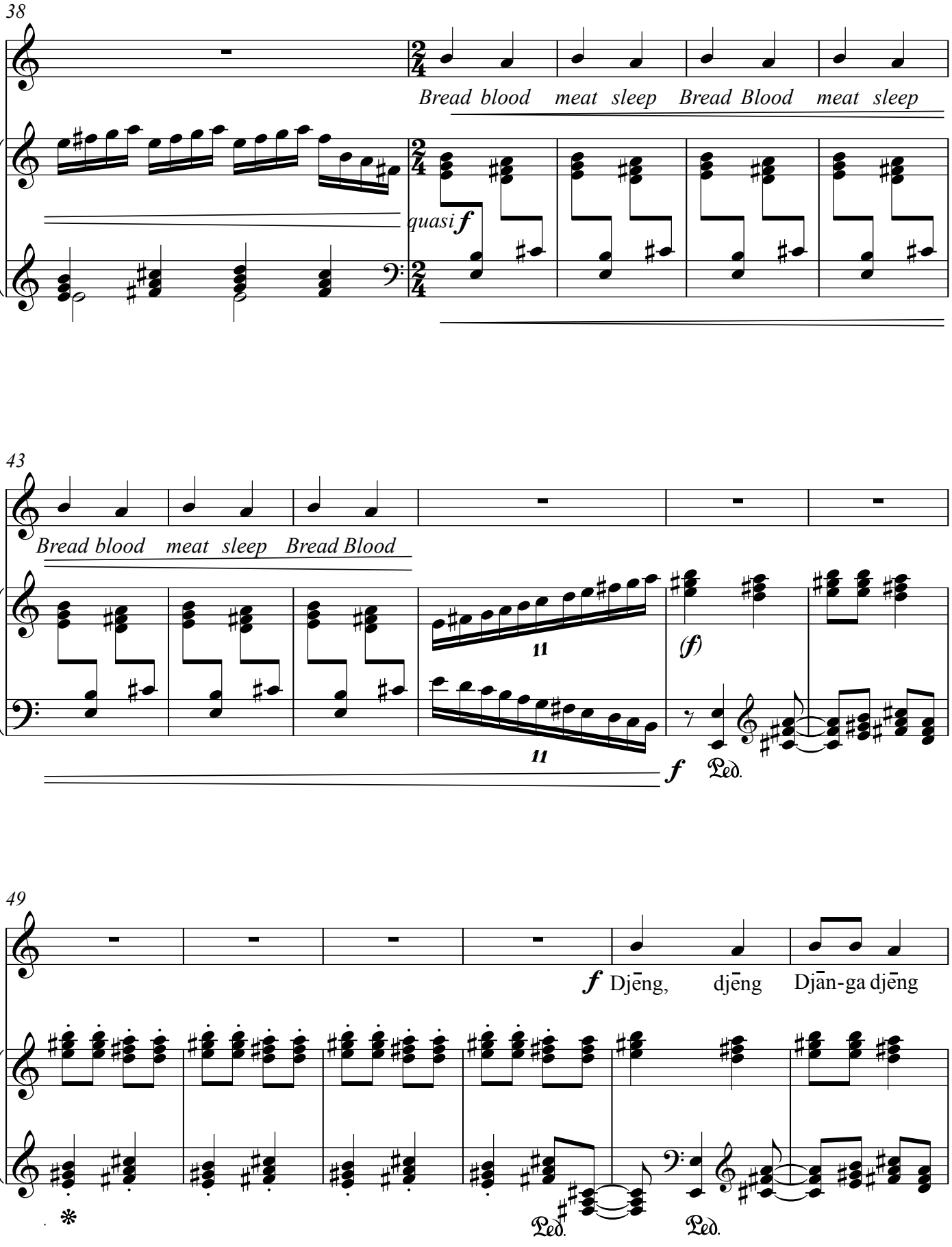
mp

26

meat twice a week. But

mf


30
bread tastes like dust and I can - not sleep
mp
34
p With - out dream - - - - - -
p
36
ing
quasi f


38
Bread blood meat sleep Bread Blood meat sleep
quasi f
43
Bread blood meat sleep Bread Blood
11
11
(f)
f
Ped.
49
f Djēng, djēng Djān-ga djēng
Ped.
Ped.

55

Djēng djēng djān-ga Ne -ka Rān -ga Rāng Nek Plān-ga Plāng Nek Dān-ga Tik Tak De - ka

60

Nō -sur Re - ka Na - lē Chem-bo Ple -ka Tem-po Djēng Djāng Dje - ka

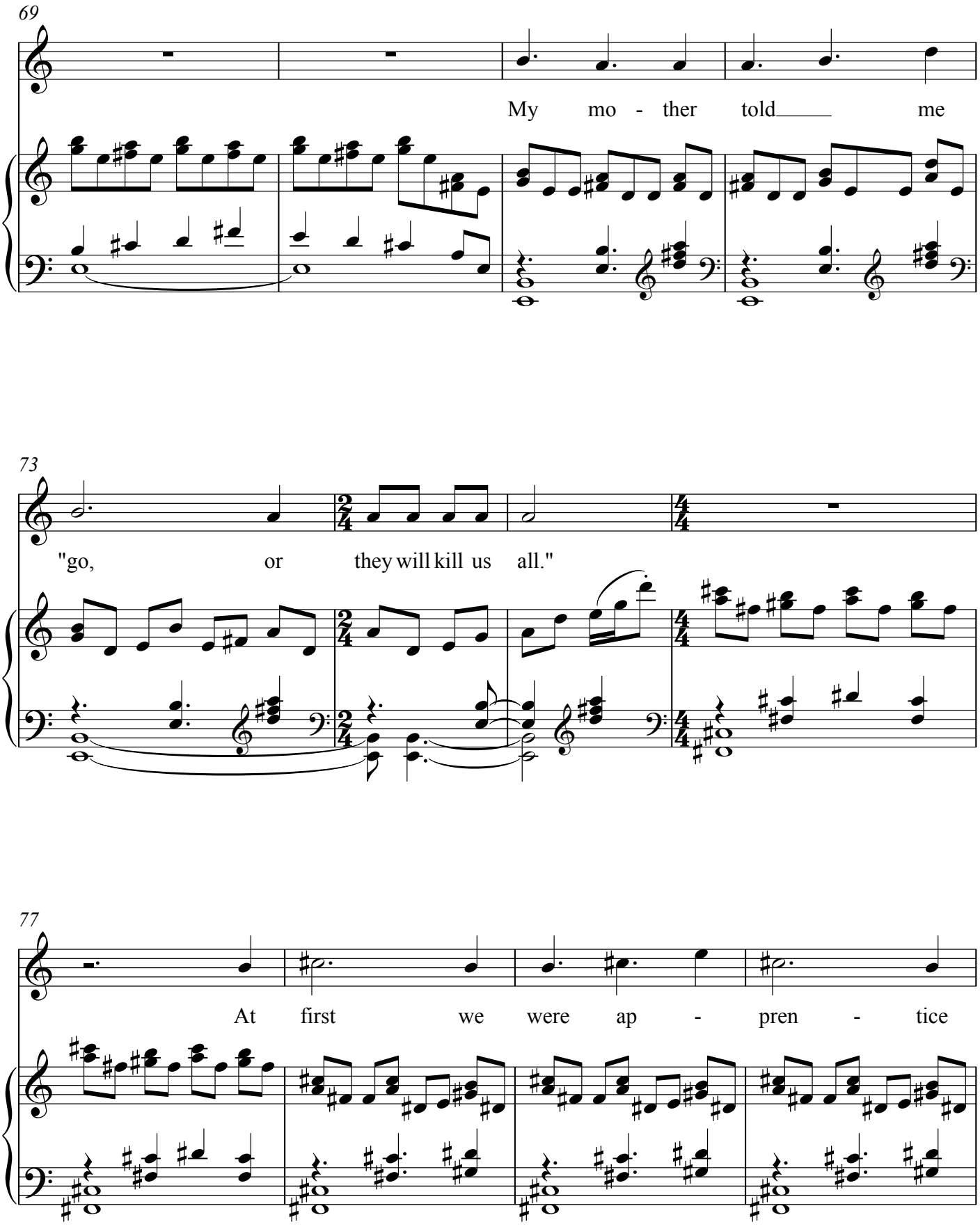
gliss.

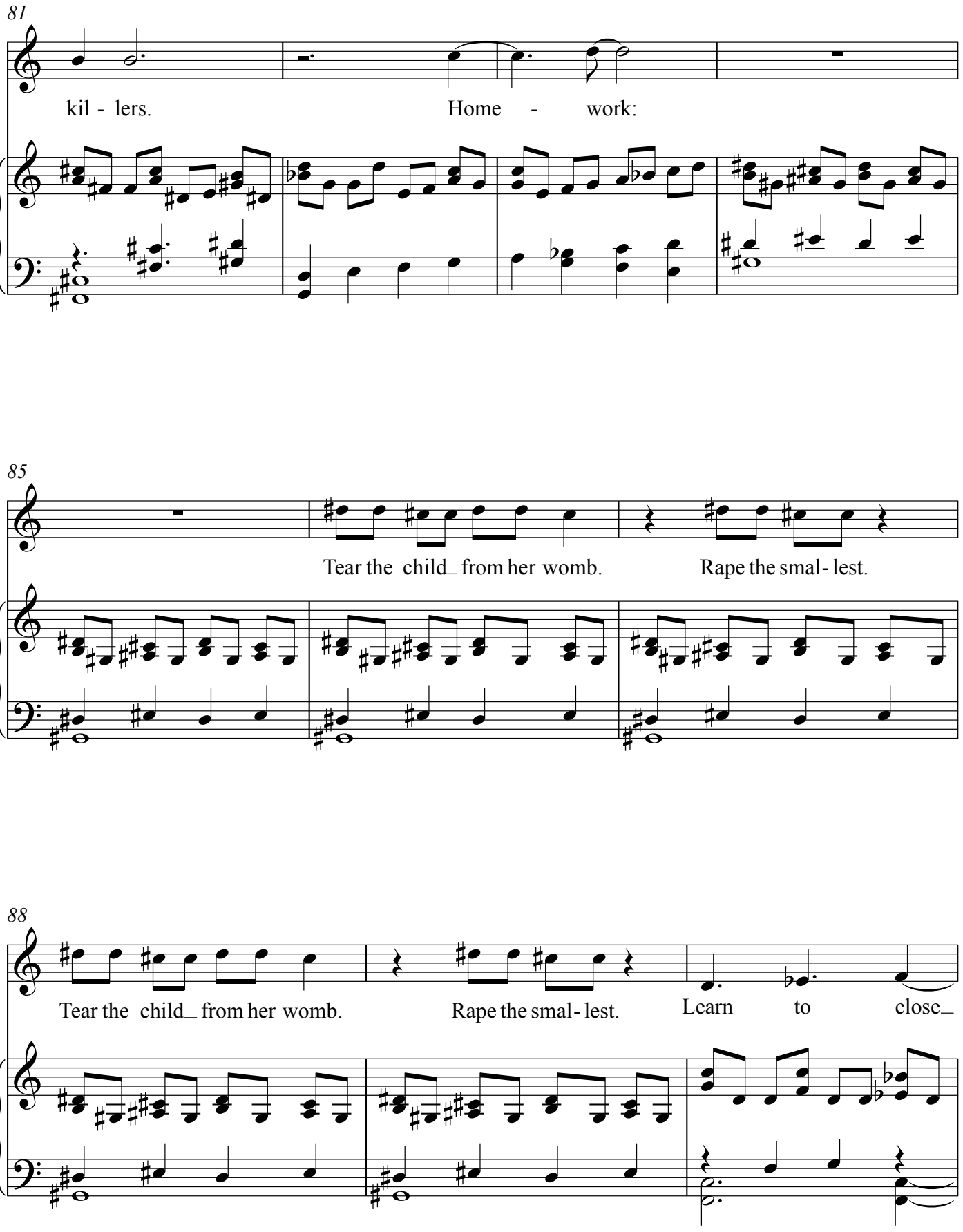
65

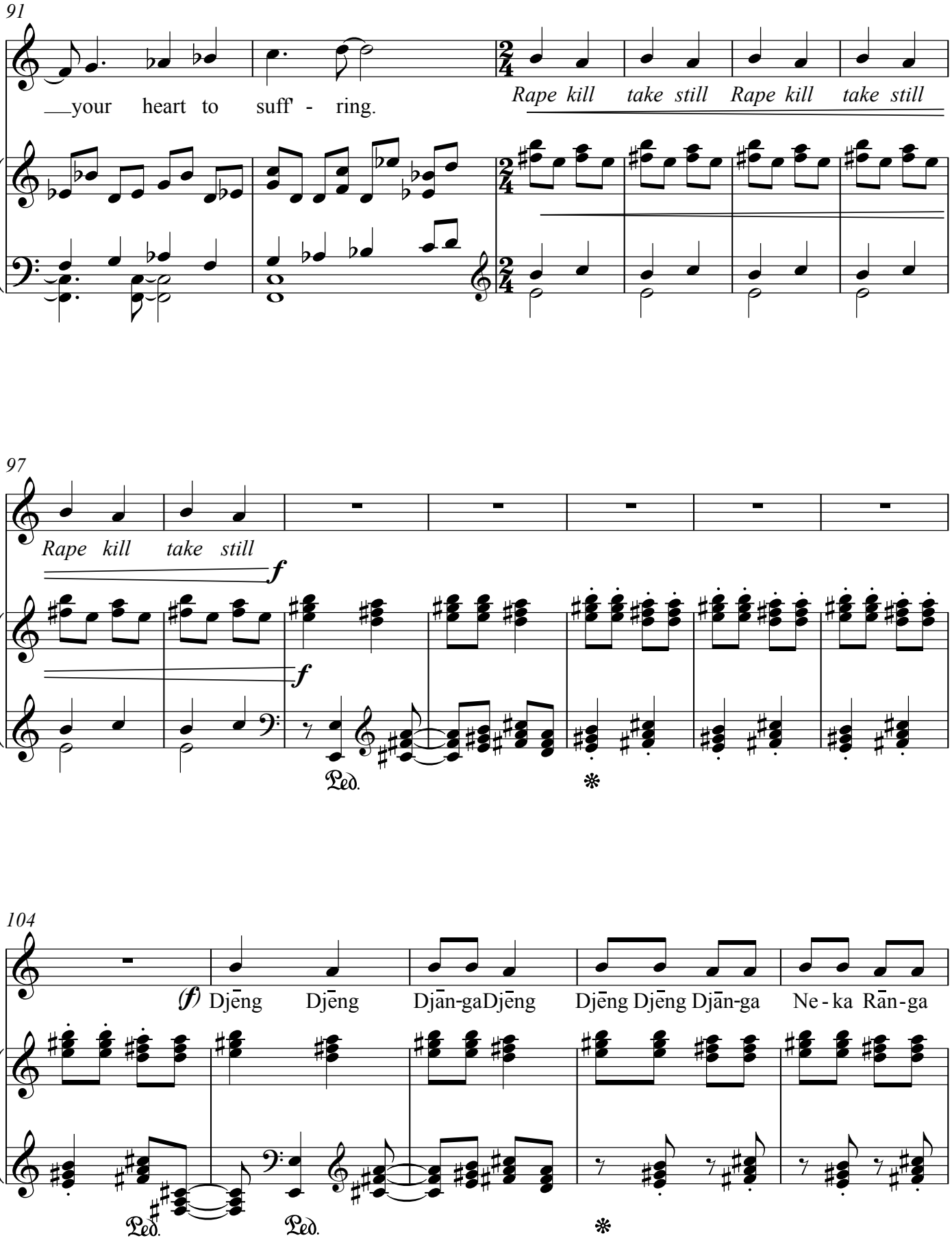
They came for me on a hot af - ter - noon.

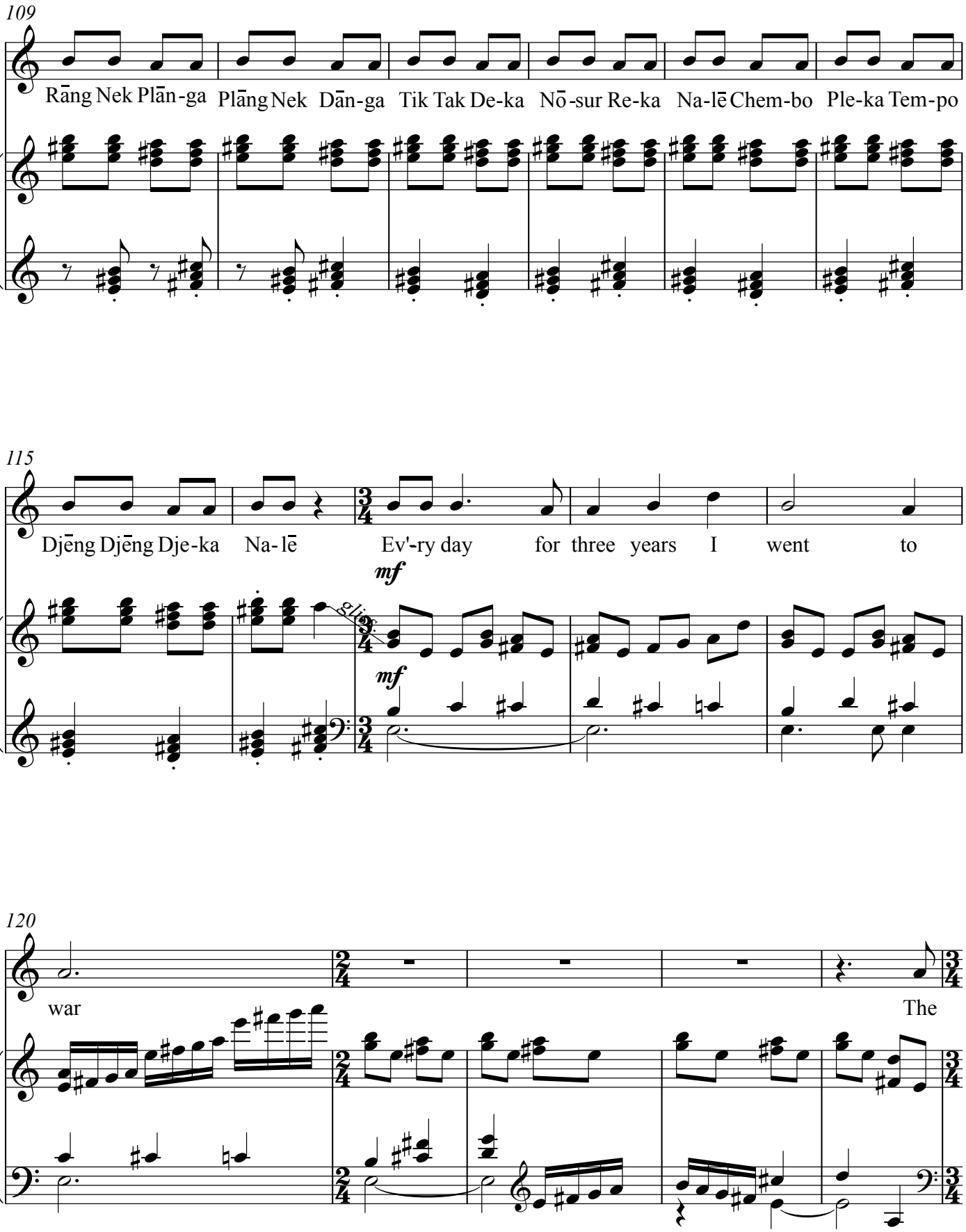
mf

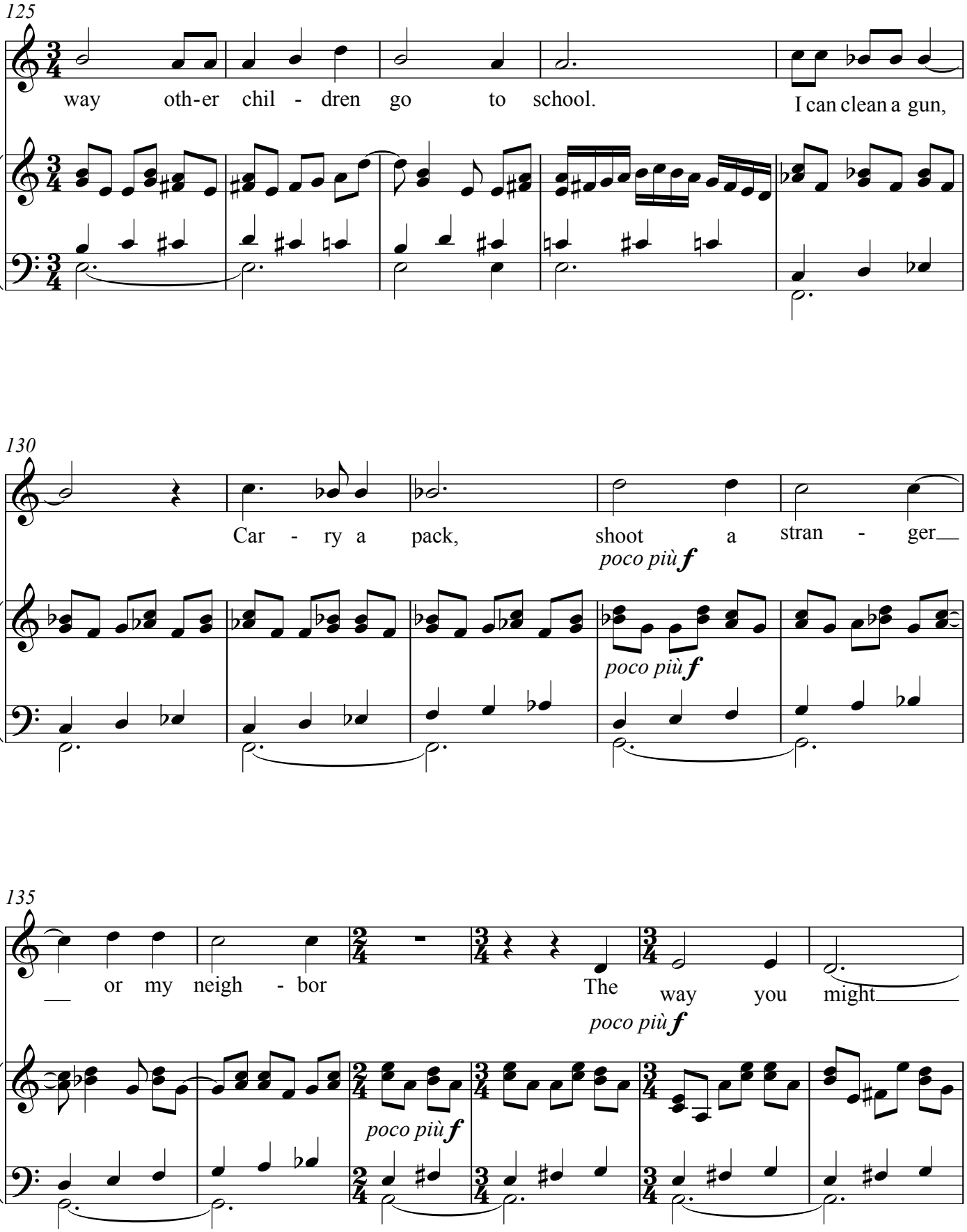
mf

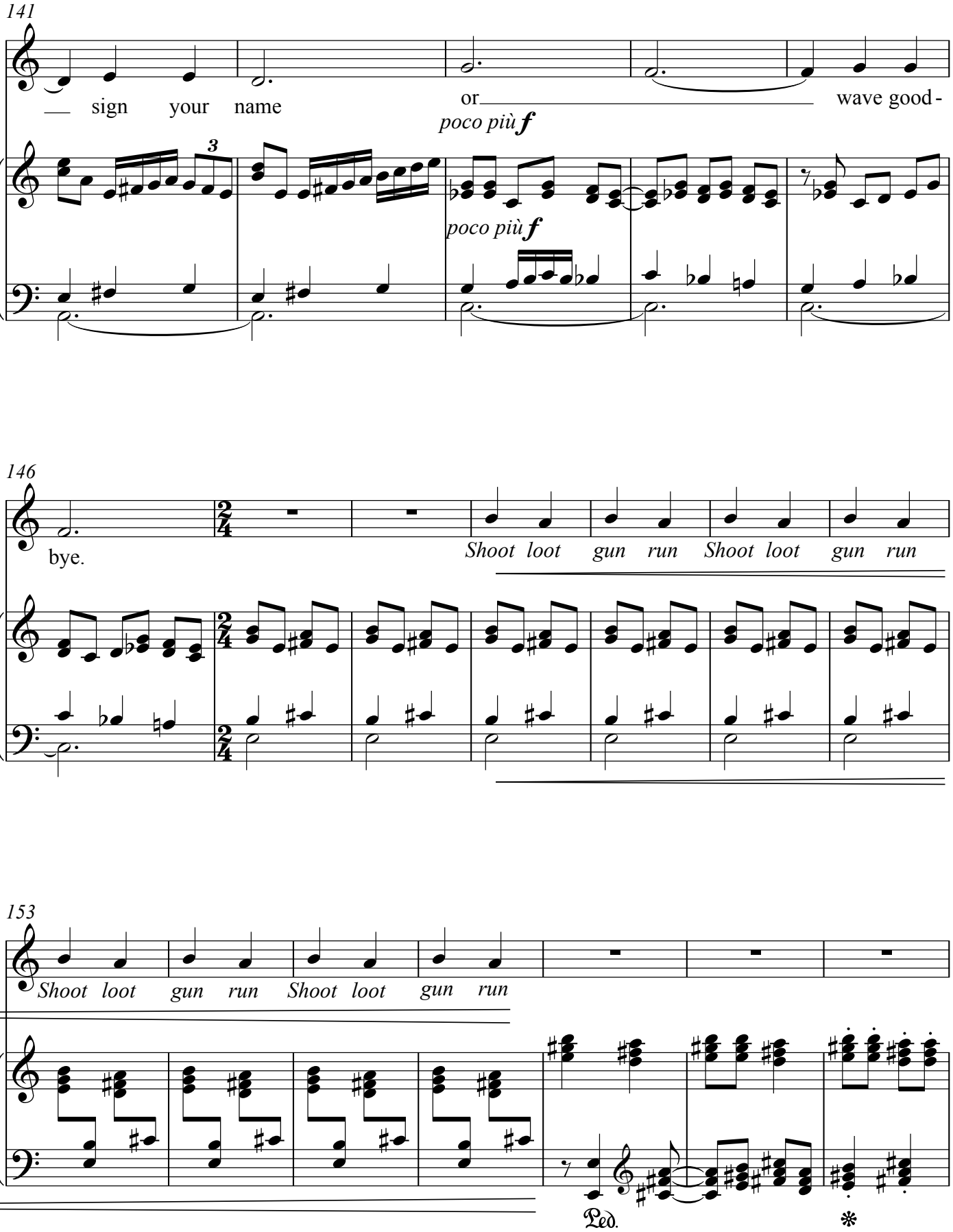

69
My mo - ther told me
73
"go, or they will kill us all."
77
At first we were ap - pren - tice

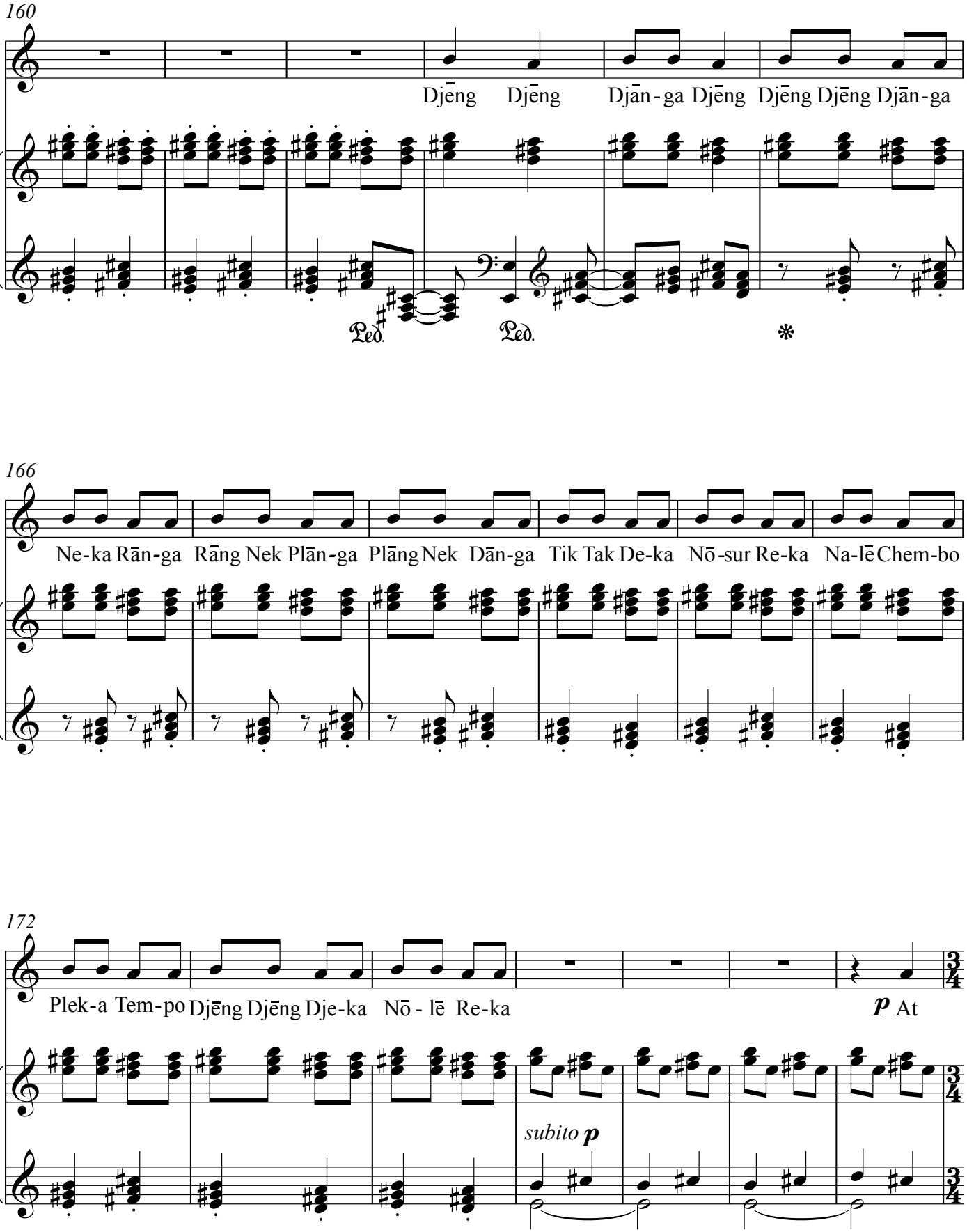

81
kil - lers.
Home - work:
85
Tear the child_ from her womb.
Rape the smal - lest.
88
Tear the child_ from her womb.
Rape the smal - lest.
Learn to close_


91
your heart to suff' - ring.
Rape kill take still Rape kill take still
97
Rape kill take still
f
f
Ped.
*
104
(f) Djēng Djēng Djān-gaDjēng Djēng Djēng Djān-ga Ne - ka Rān - ga
Ped.
Ped.
*


109
Rāng Nek Plān-ga Plāng Nek Dān-ga Tik Tak De-ka Nō-sur Re-ka Na-lē Chem-bo Ple-ka Tem-po
115
Djēng Djēng Dje-ka Na-lē Ev'-ry day for three years I went to
mf
mf
120
war
The


125
way oth-er chil - dren go to school.
I can clean a gun,
130
Car - ry a pack, shoot a stran - ger
poco più f
poco più f
135
or my neigh - bor
The way you might
poco più f
poco più f


141
sign your name
or
wave good-
poco più f
poco più f
146
bye.
Shoot loot gun run Shoot loot gun run
153
Shoot loot gun run Shoot loot gun run
Ped.
*


160
Djēng Djēng Djān-ga Djēng Djēng Djēng Djān-ga
Ped. Ped. *
166
Ne-ka Rān-ga Rāng Nek Plān-ga Plāng Nek Dān-ga Tik Tak De-ka Nō-sur Re-ka Na-lē Chem-bo
172
Plek-a Tem-po Djēng Djēng Dje-ka Nō - lē Re-ka
p At
subito p

179

night I lie a - wake and still,

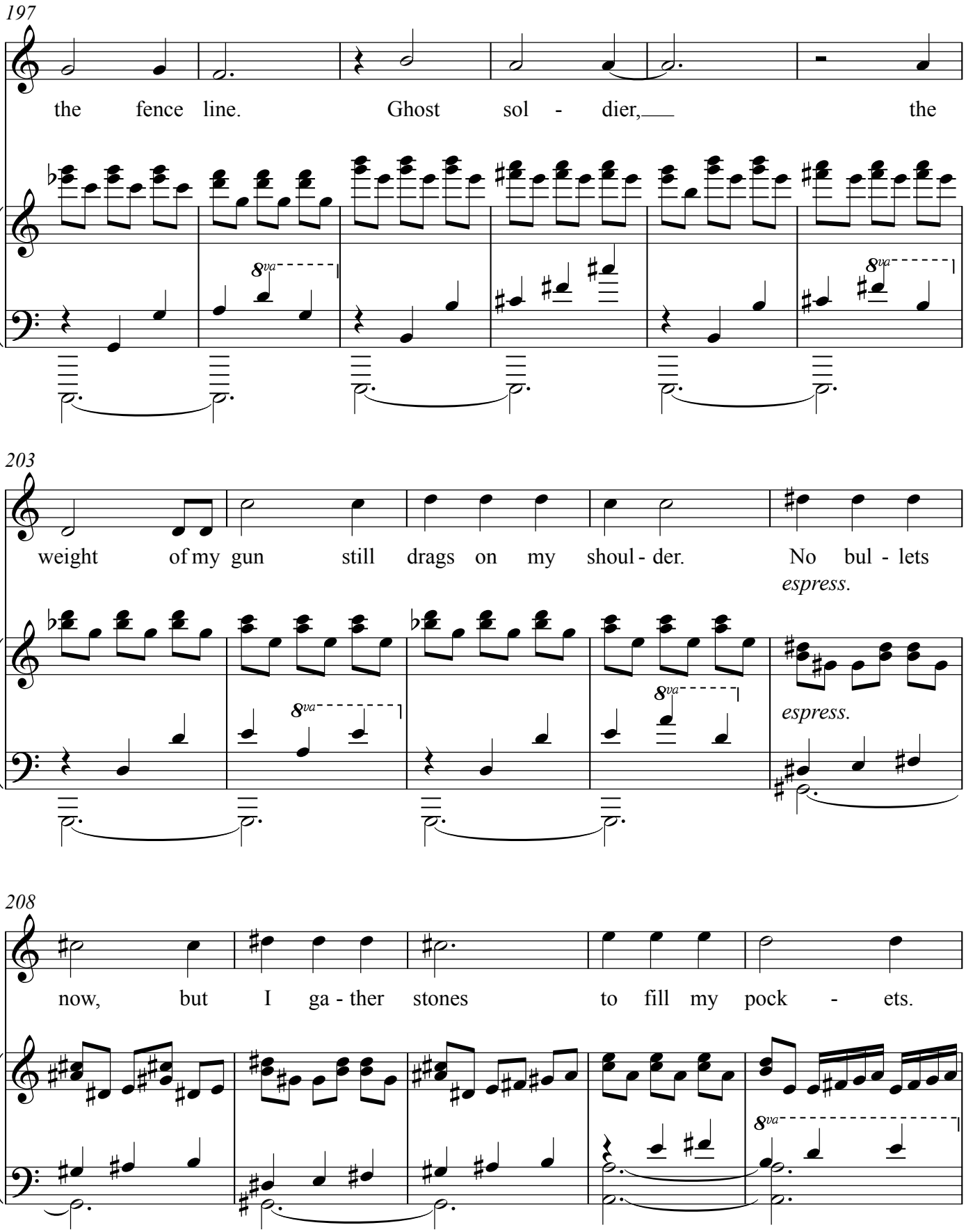
pp

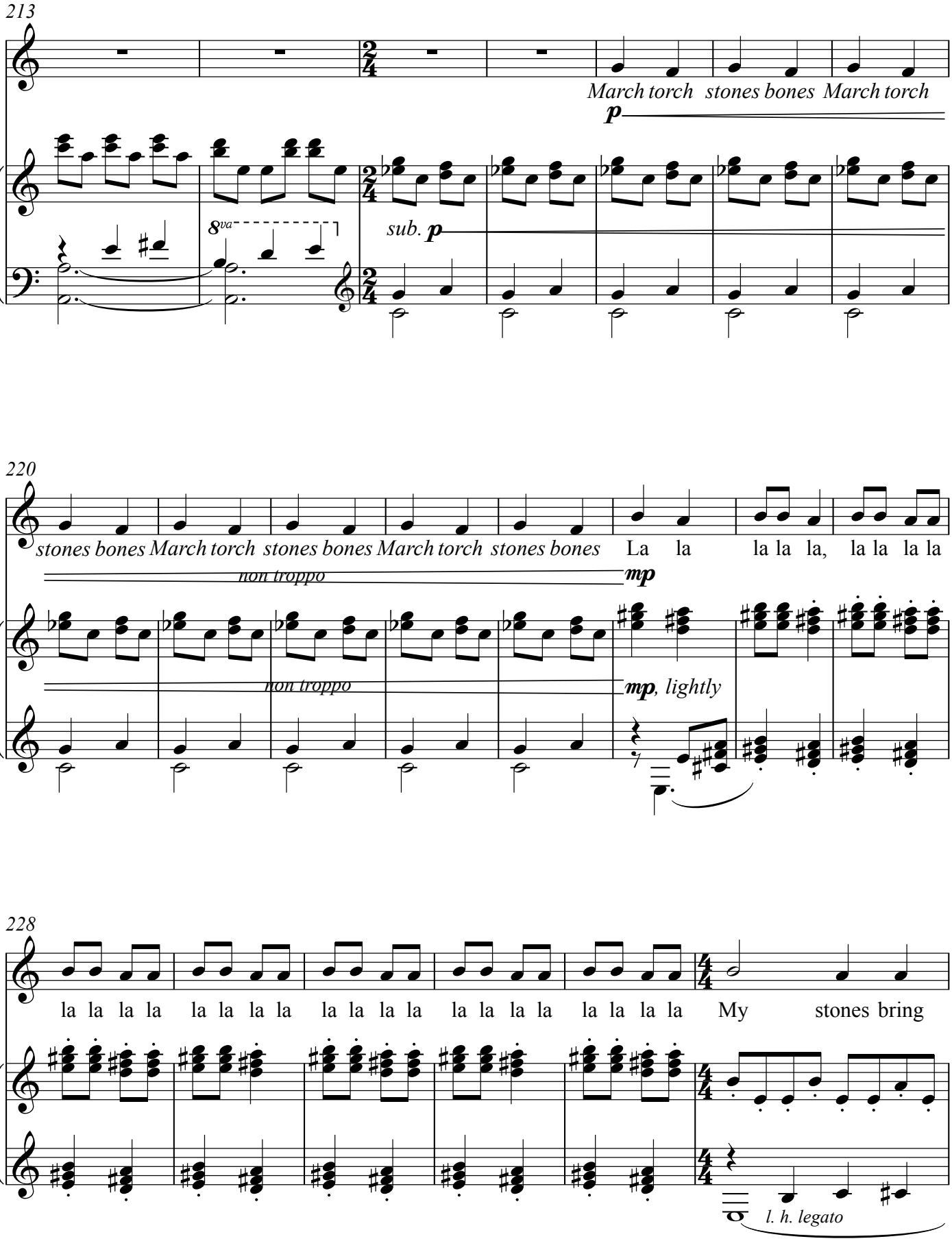
185

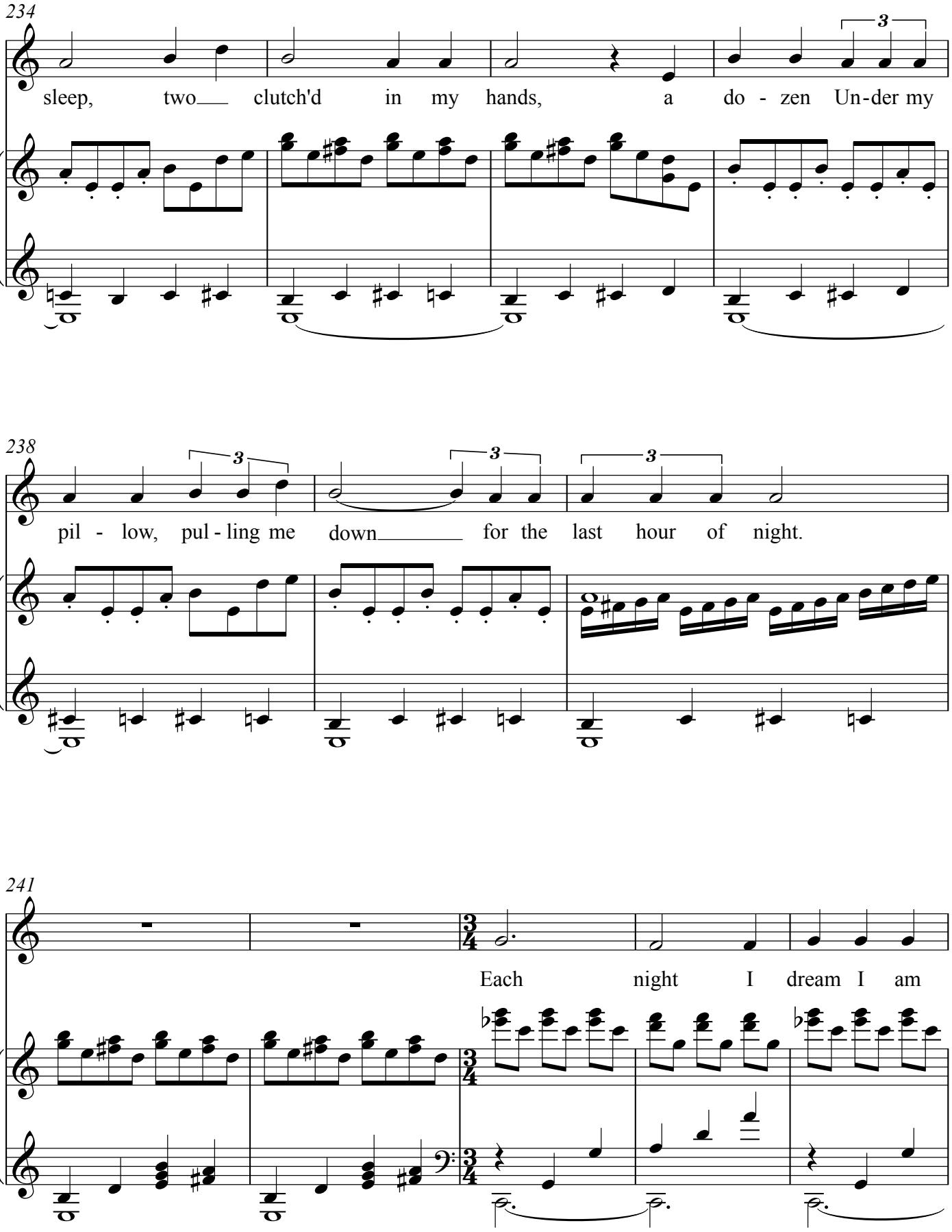
list - en to the o-ther chil - dren sleep.

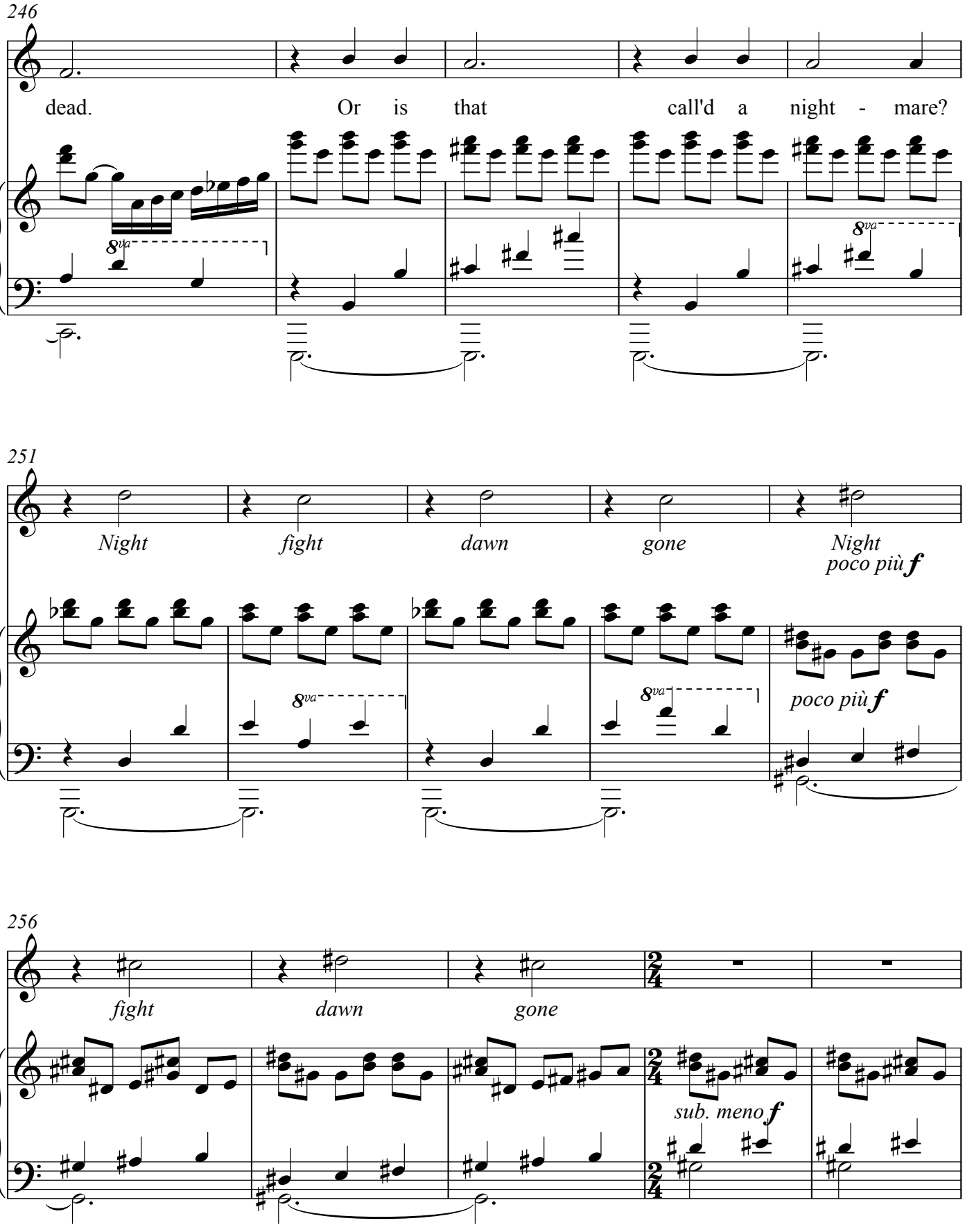
191

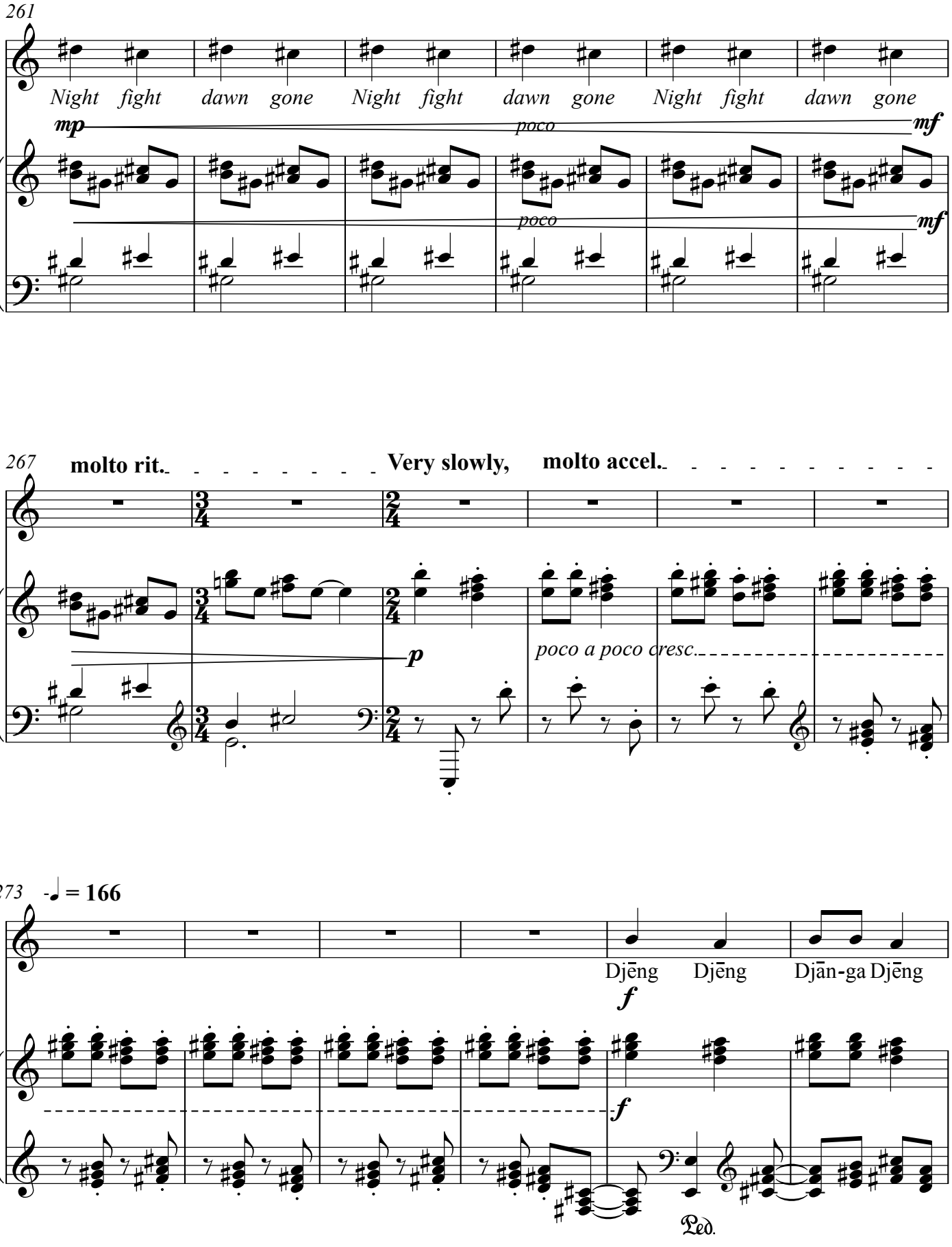
Then I march


197
the fence line. Ghost sol - dier, the
8va
8va
203
weight of my gun still drags on my shoul - der. No bul - lets
espress.
espress.
8va
8va
208
now, but I ga - ther stones to fill my pock - ets.
8va


213
March torch stones bones March torch
p
8va
sub. p
220
stones bones March torch stones bones March torch stones bones La la la la la, la la la la
non troppo
mp
non troppo
mp, lightly
228
la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la My stones bring
l. h. legato


234
sleep, two clutch'd in my hands, a do - zen Un-der my
238
pil - low, pul - ling me down for the last hour of night.
241
Each night I dream I am


246
dead. Or is that call'd a night - mare?
8va
8va
251
Night fight dawn gone Night
poco più f
8va
8va
poco più f
256
fight dawn gone
sub. meno f


261
Night fight dawn gone Night fight dawn gone Night fight dawn gone
mp
poco
mf
poco
mf
267
molto rit.
Very slowly,
molto accel.
p
poco a poco cresc.
273
♩ = 166
Djēng Djēng Djān-ga Djēng
f
f
Ped.

279

Djēng Djēng Djān-ga Ne - ka Rān - ga Rāng Nek Plān-ga Plāng Nek Dān-ga Tik Tak De - ka

284

Nō -sur Re-ka Nā - lē Chem-bo Ple ka Tem-po Tik Tak De-ka No-sur Re-ka Tik Tak De-ka

Sempre Ped.
(create a cloud)

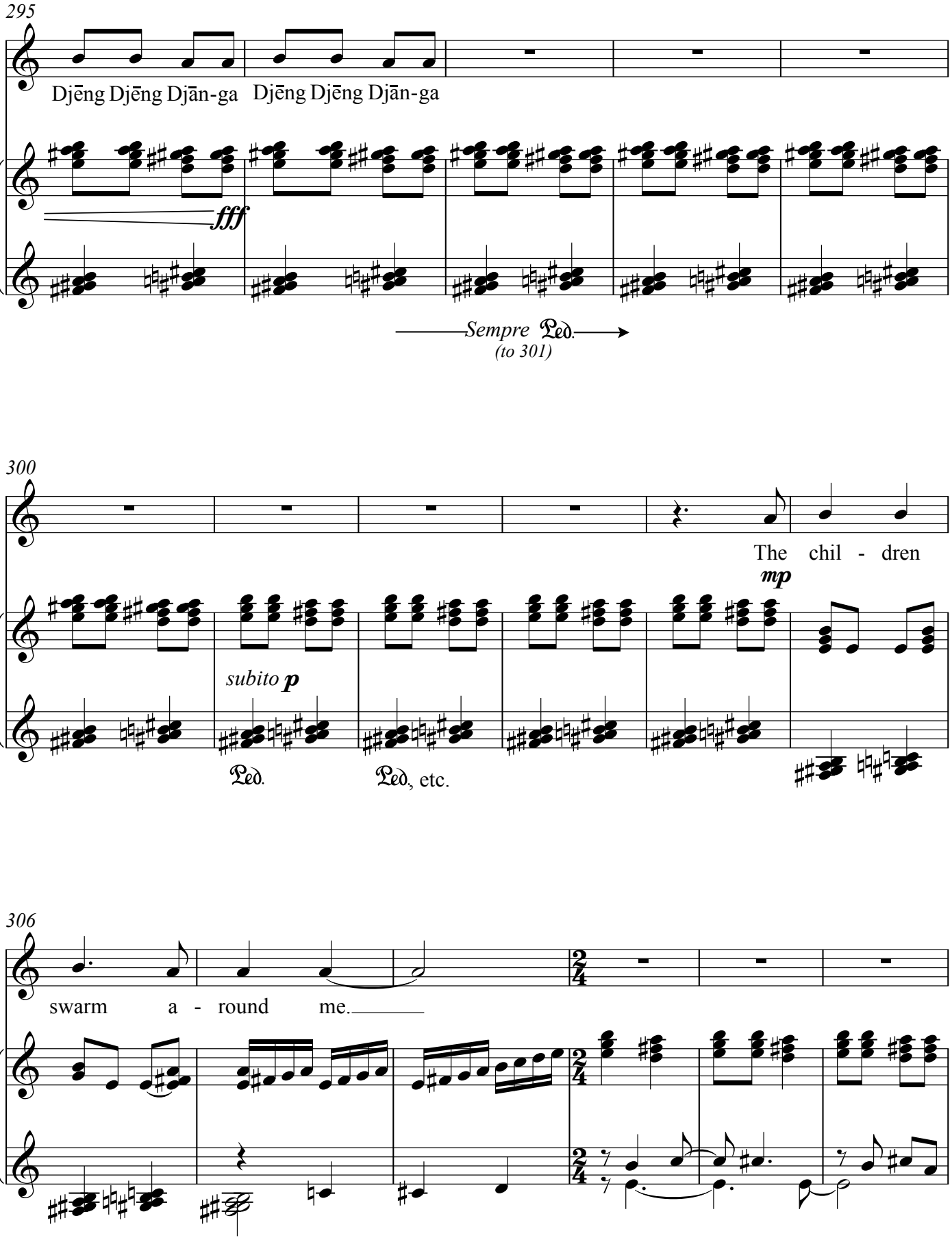
290

piano overwhelms, covers voice

No sur Re-ka Djēng Djēng Djān-ga Ne-ka Rān ga Djēng Djēng Djān-ga Djēng Djēng Djān-ga

molto

Sempre Ped.


295
Djēng Djēng Djān-ga Djēng Djēng Djān-ga
fff
Sempre Ped.
(to 301)
300
The chil - dren
mp
subito p
Ped.
Ped. etc.
306
swarm a - round me.

312

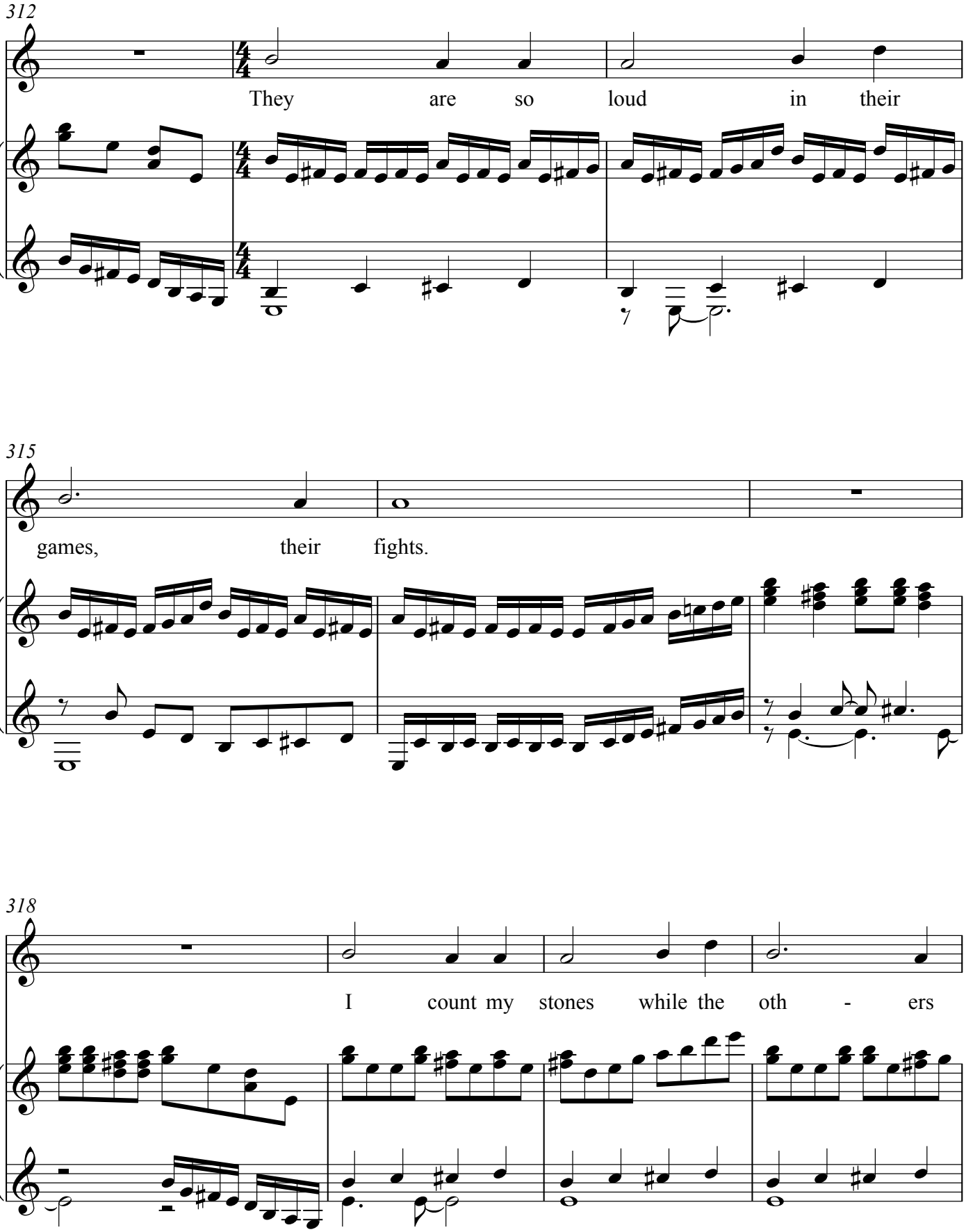
They are so loud in their

315

games, their fights.

318

I count my stones while the oth - ers



322

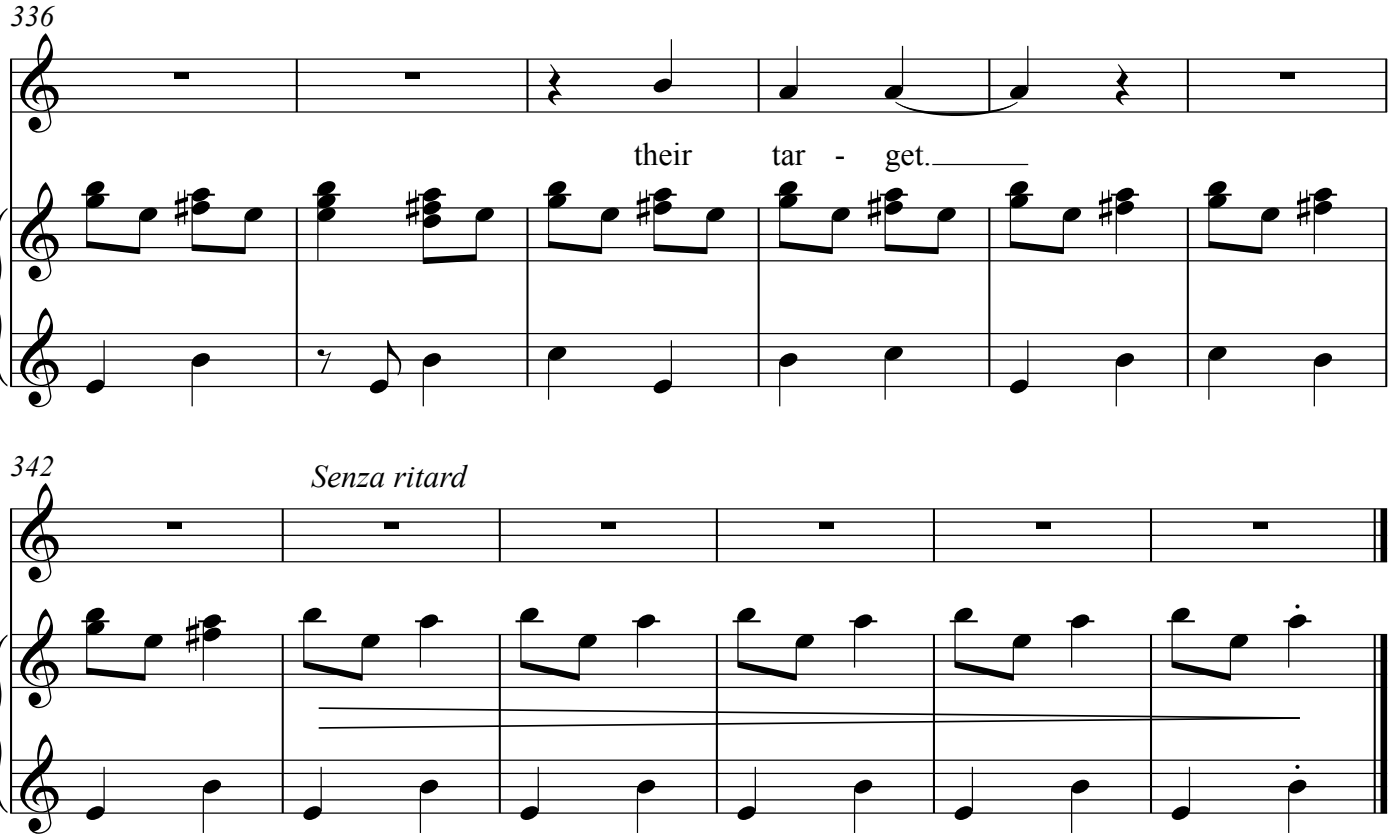
play, Mea - sure and

326

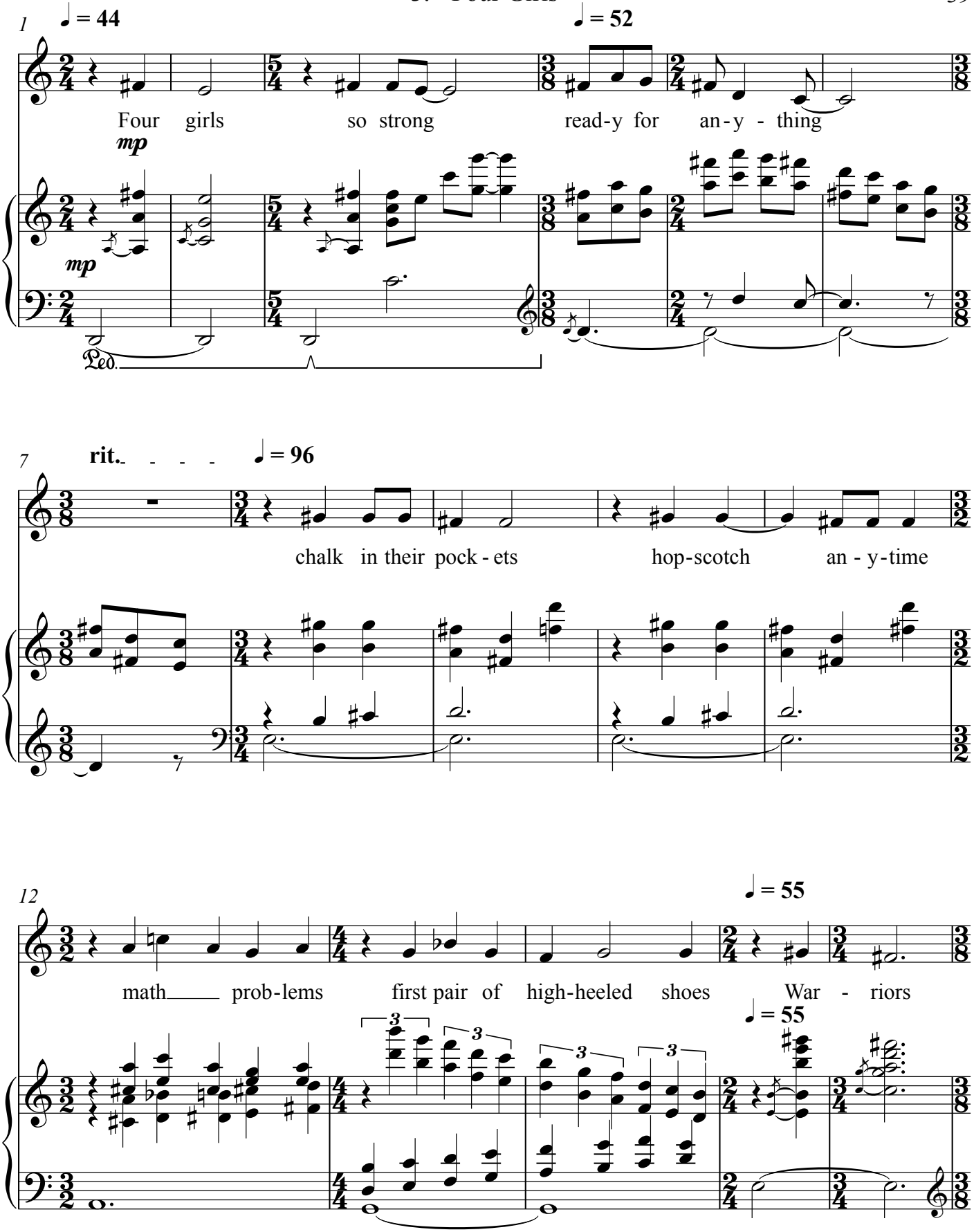
weigh them, see their

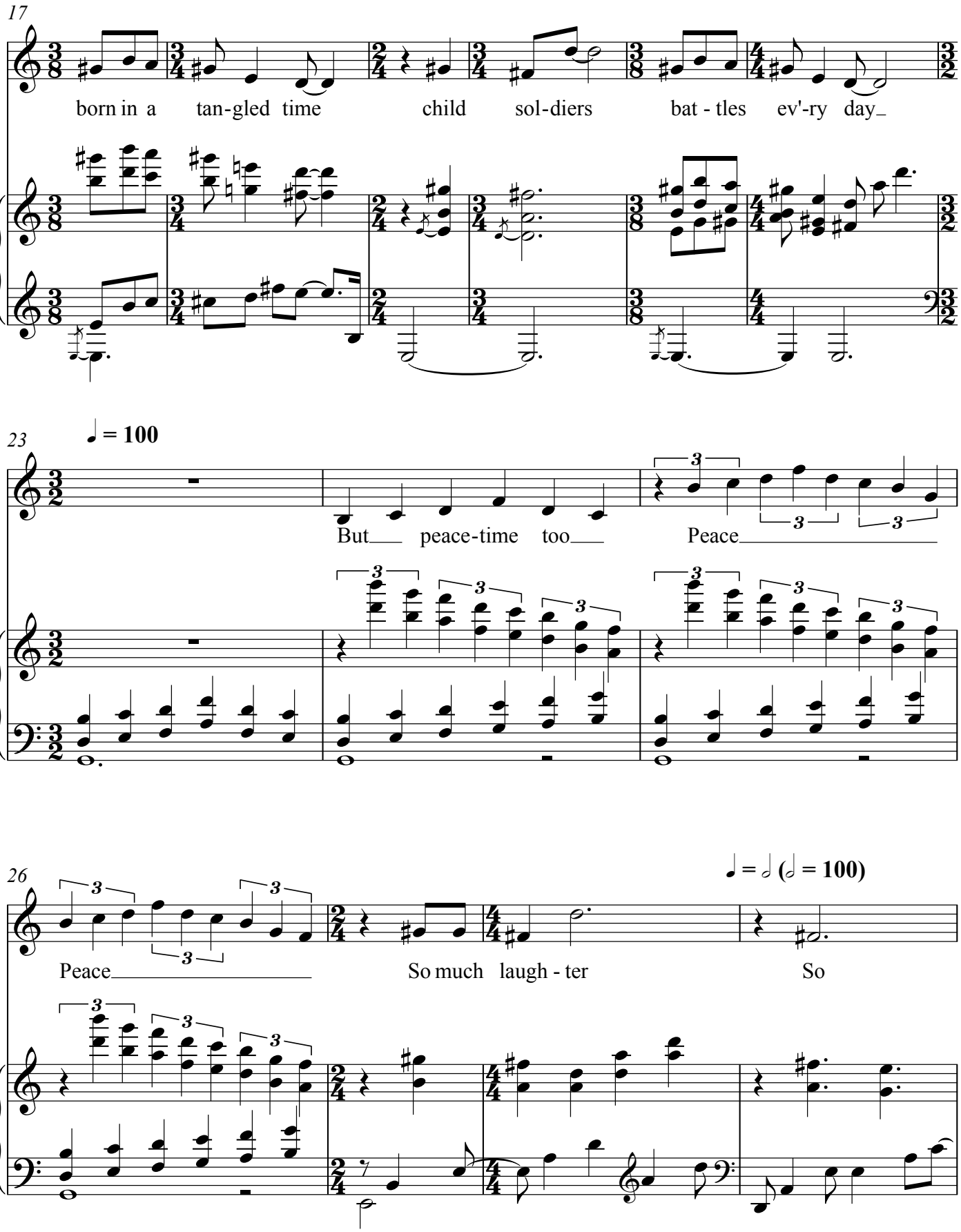
330

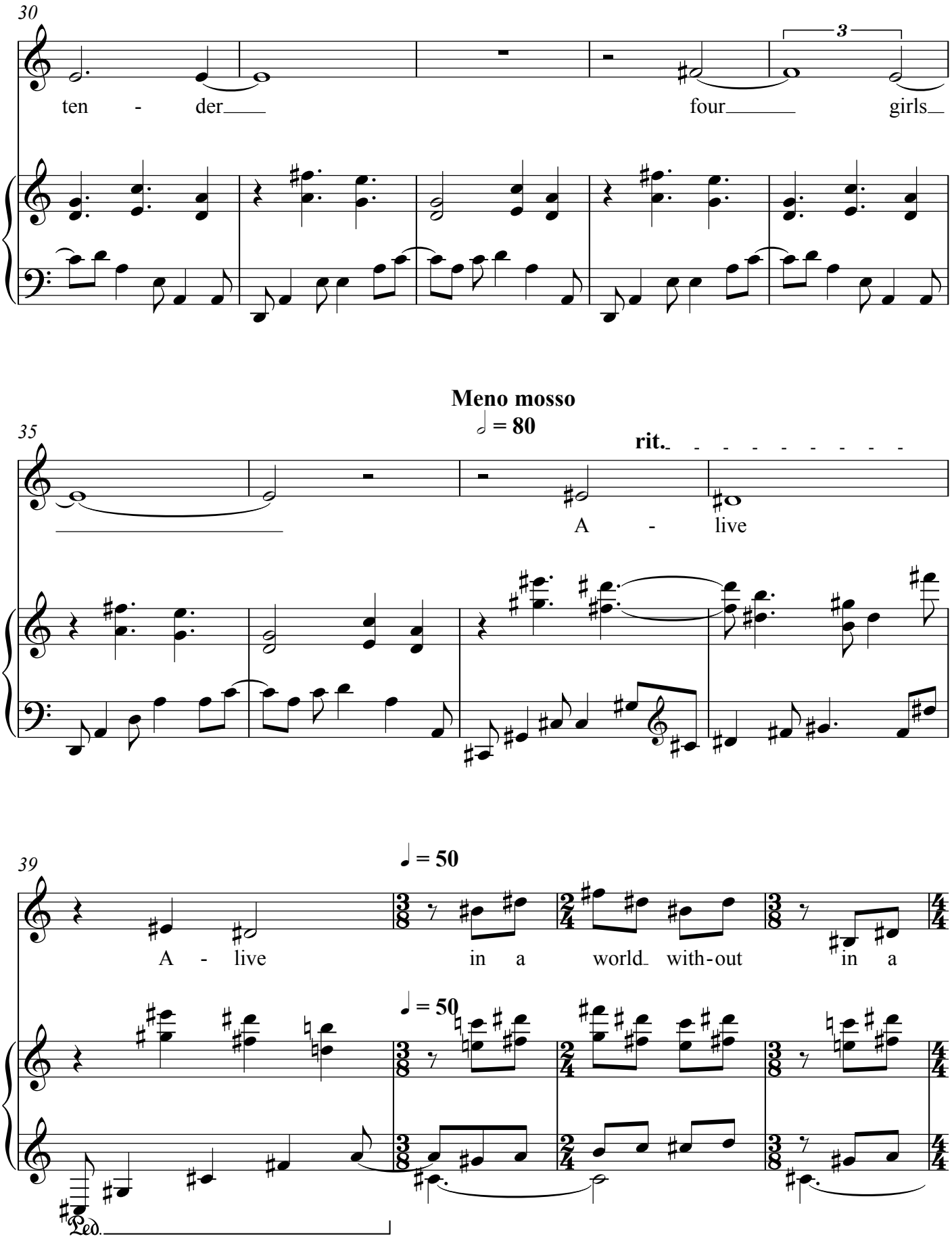
loft,

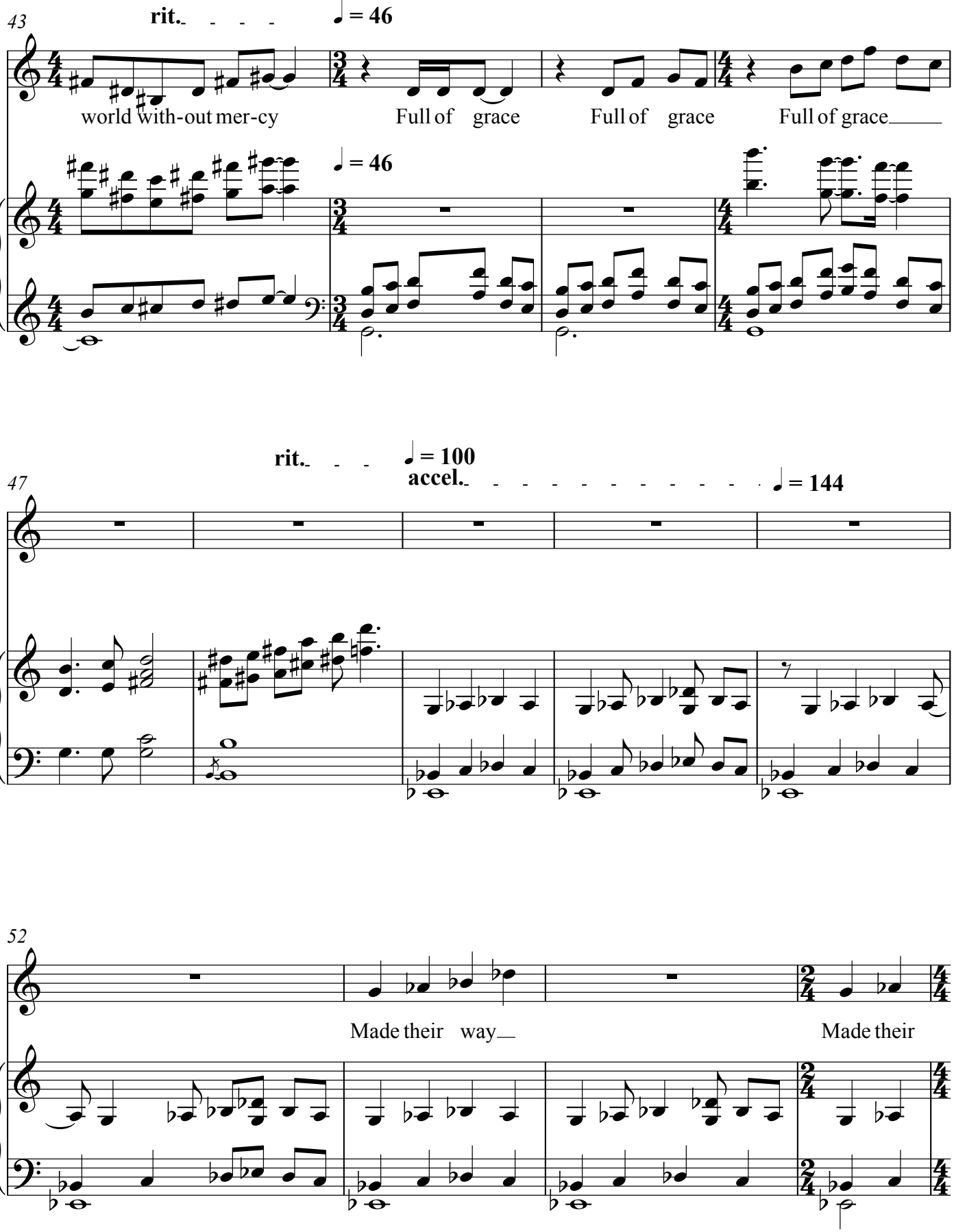

336
their tar - get.

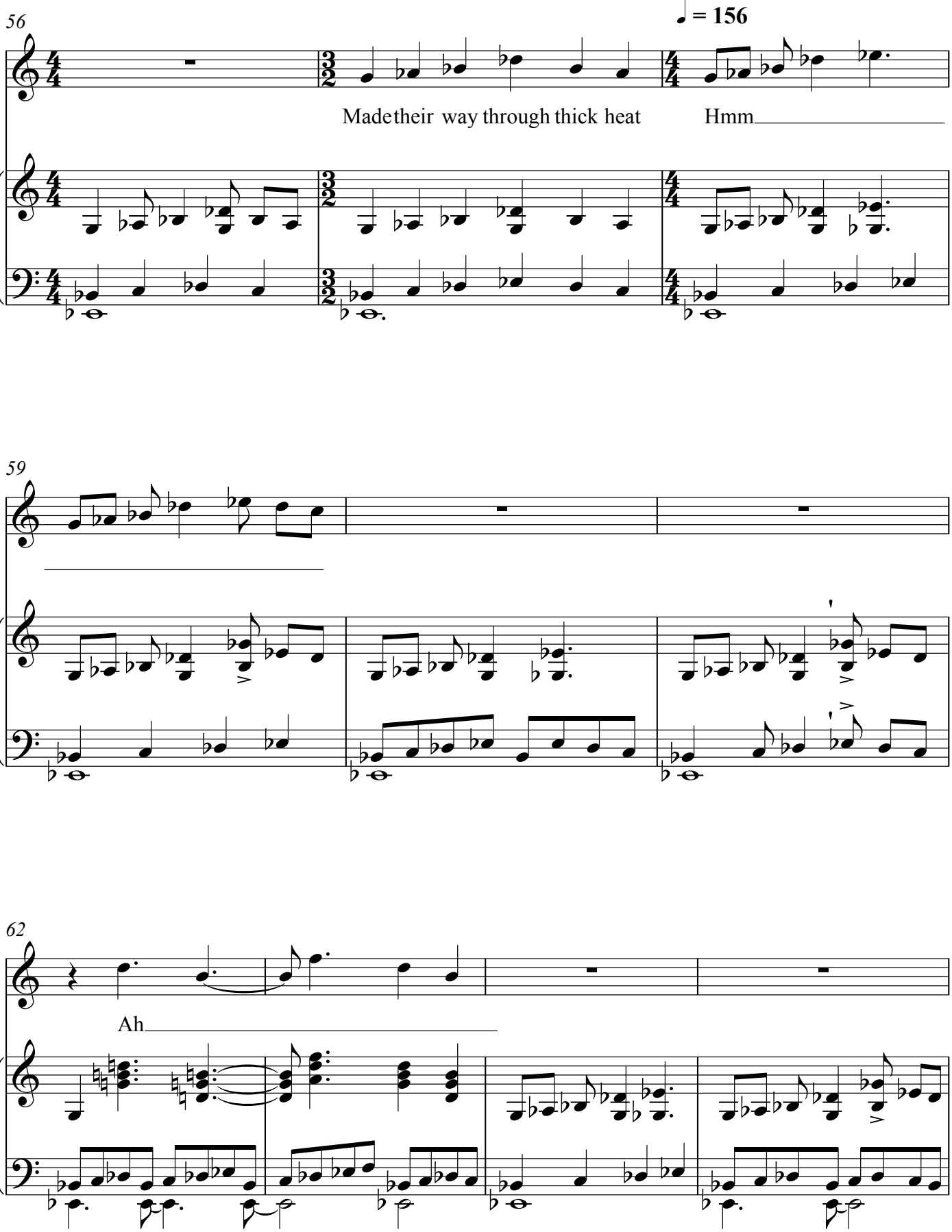
342
Senza ritard

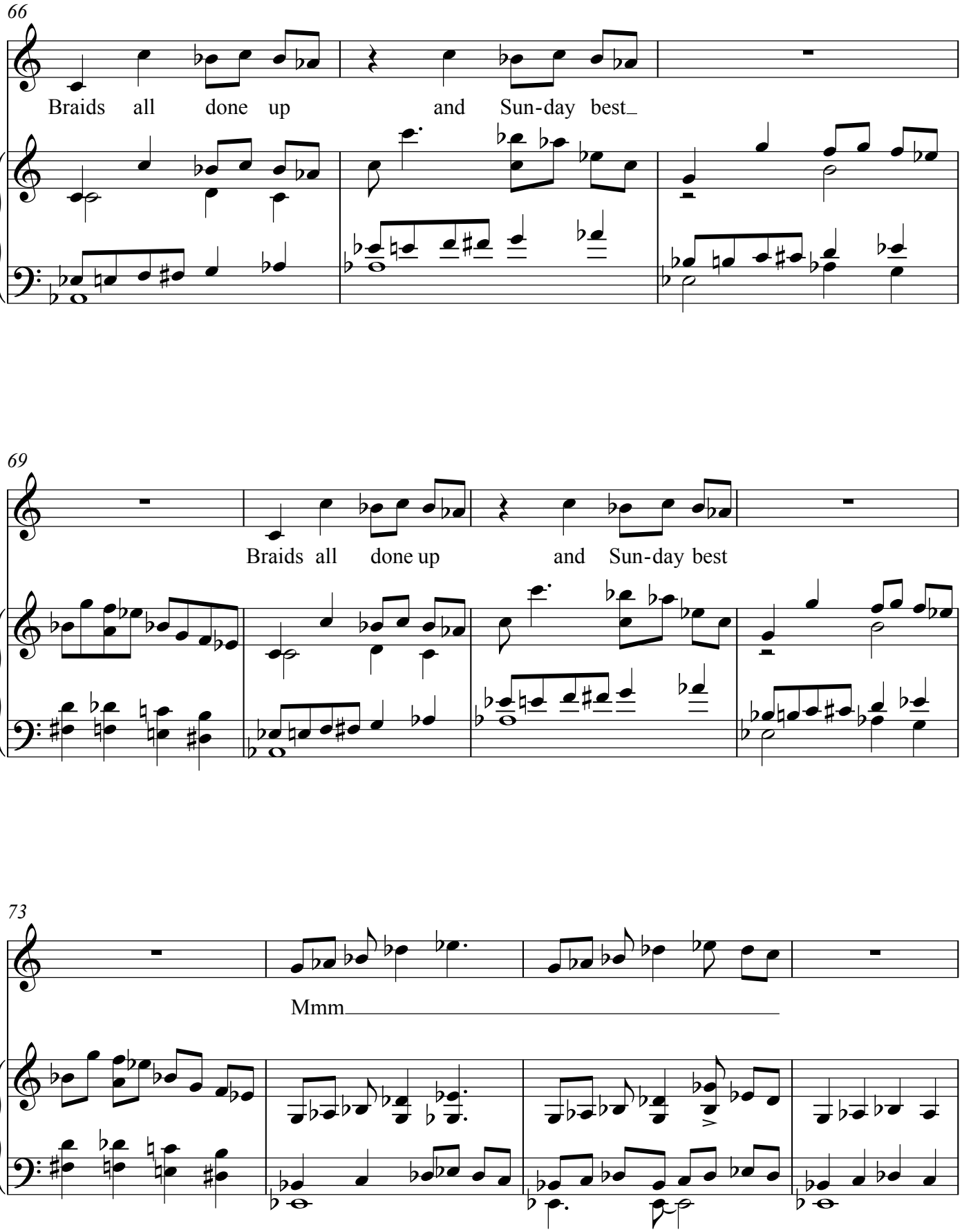

1
♩ = 44
♩ = 52
Four girls so strong read-y for an-y - thing
mp
mp
Ped.
7
rit.
♩ = 96
chalk in their pock - ets hop-scotch an - y-time
12
♩ = 55
math prob-lems first pair of high-heeled shoes War - riors
♩ = 55
3
3
3
3

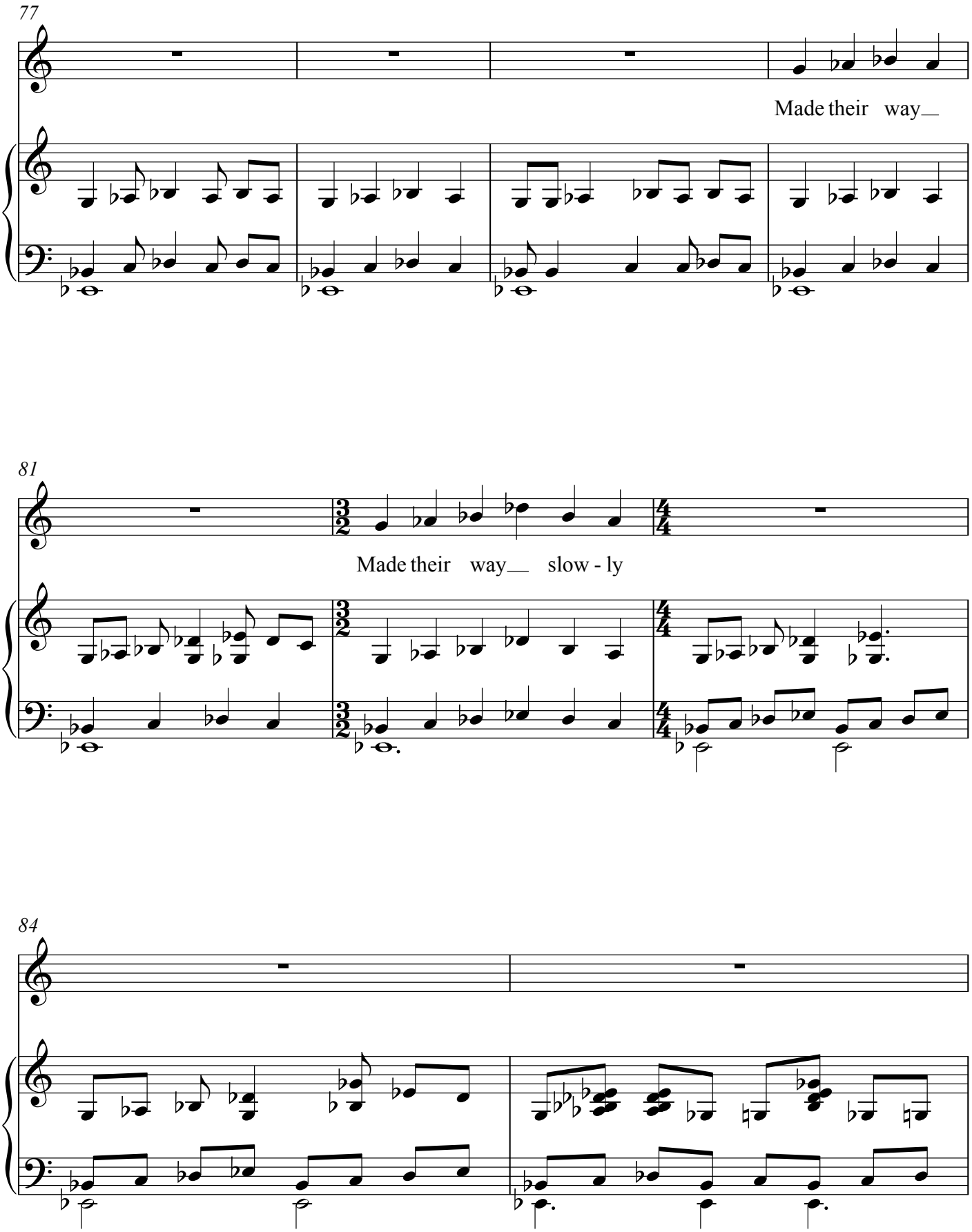

17
born in a tan-gled time
child sol-diers bat - tles ev'-ry day
23
♩ = 100
But peace-time too
Peace
26
Peace
So much laugh - ter
So
♩ = 𝅗𝅥 (𝅗𝅥 = 100)

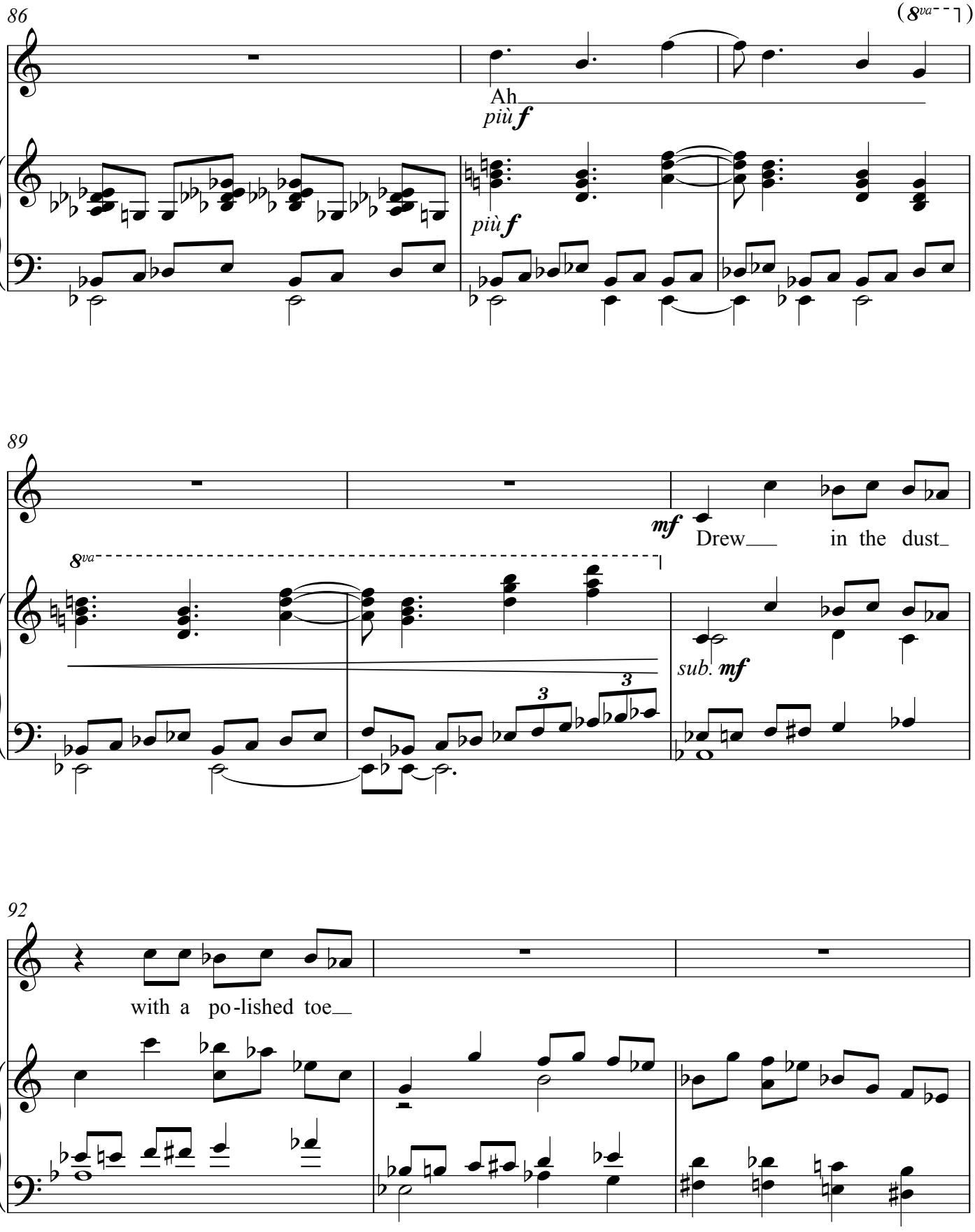

30
ten - der
four girls
3
Meno mosso
♩ = 80
35
rit.
A - live
39
♩ = 50
A - live in a world with-out in a
♩ = 50
Ped.

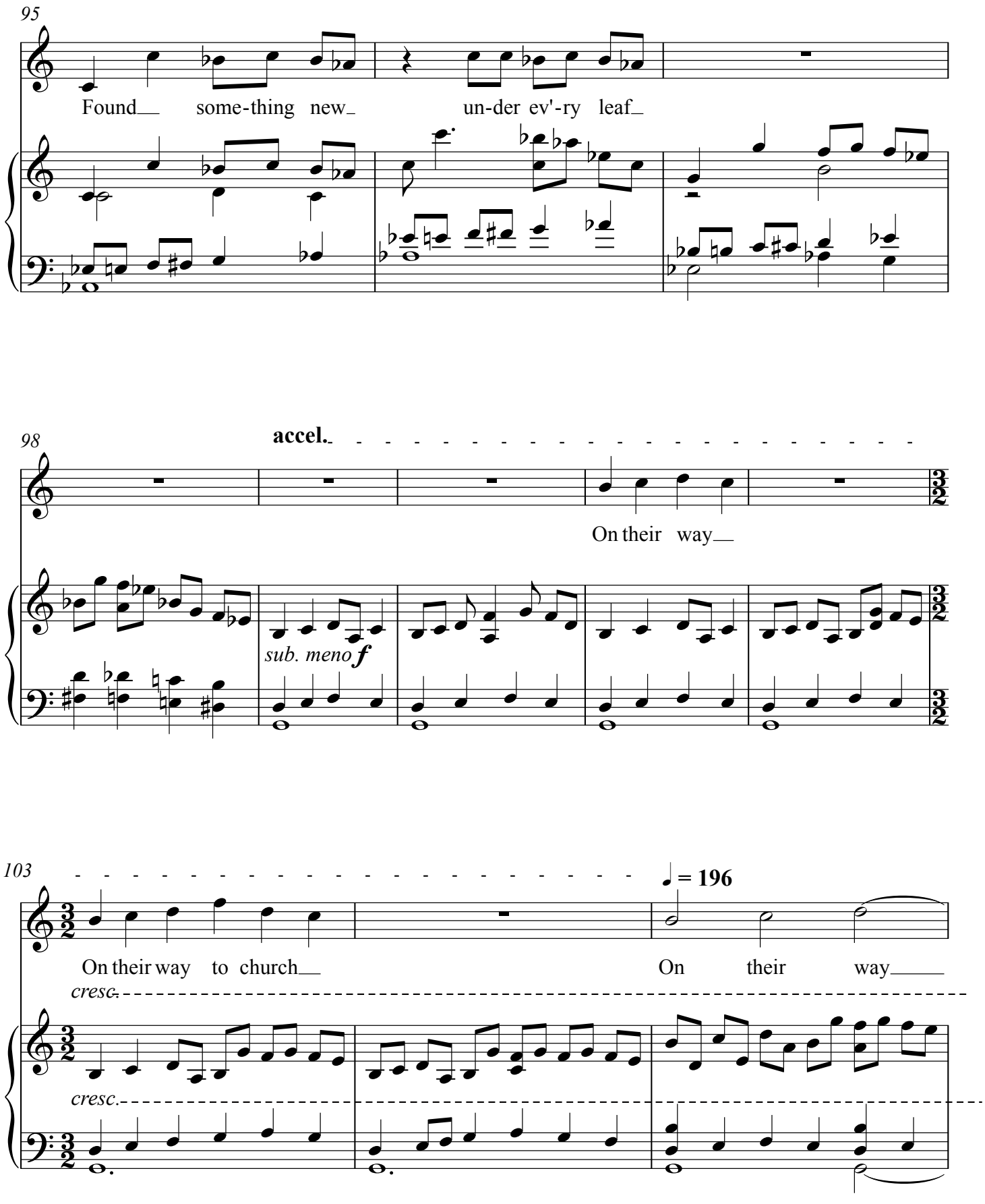

43
rit.
♩ = 46
world with-out mer-cy
Full of grace
Full of grace
Full of grace
♩ = 46
47
rit.
♩ = 100
accel.
♩ = 144
52
Made their way
Made their

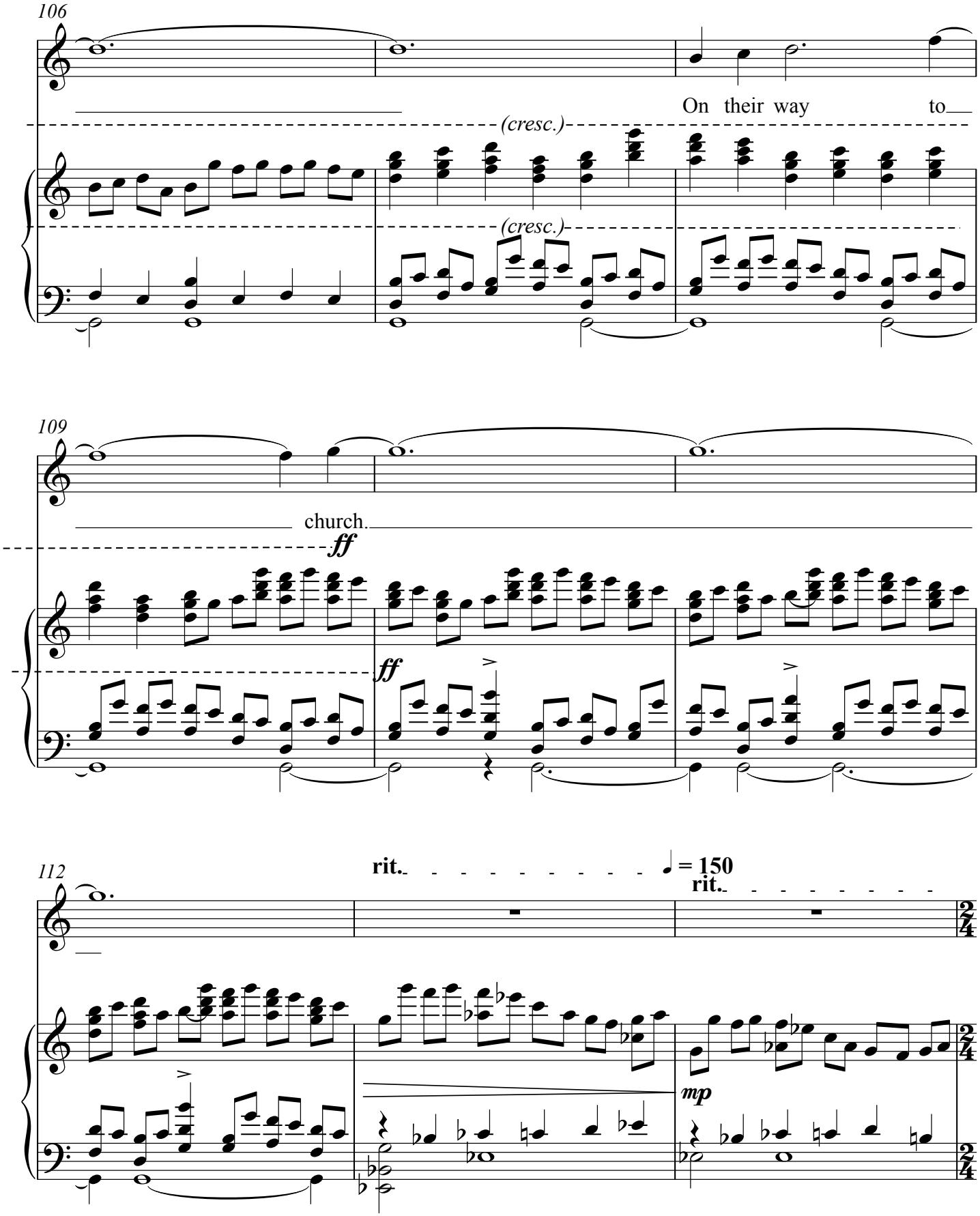

56
♩ = 156
Made their way through thick heat
Hmm
59
62
Ah

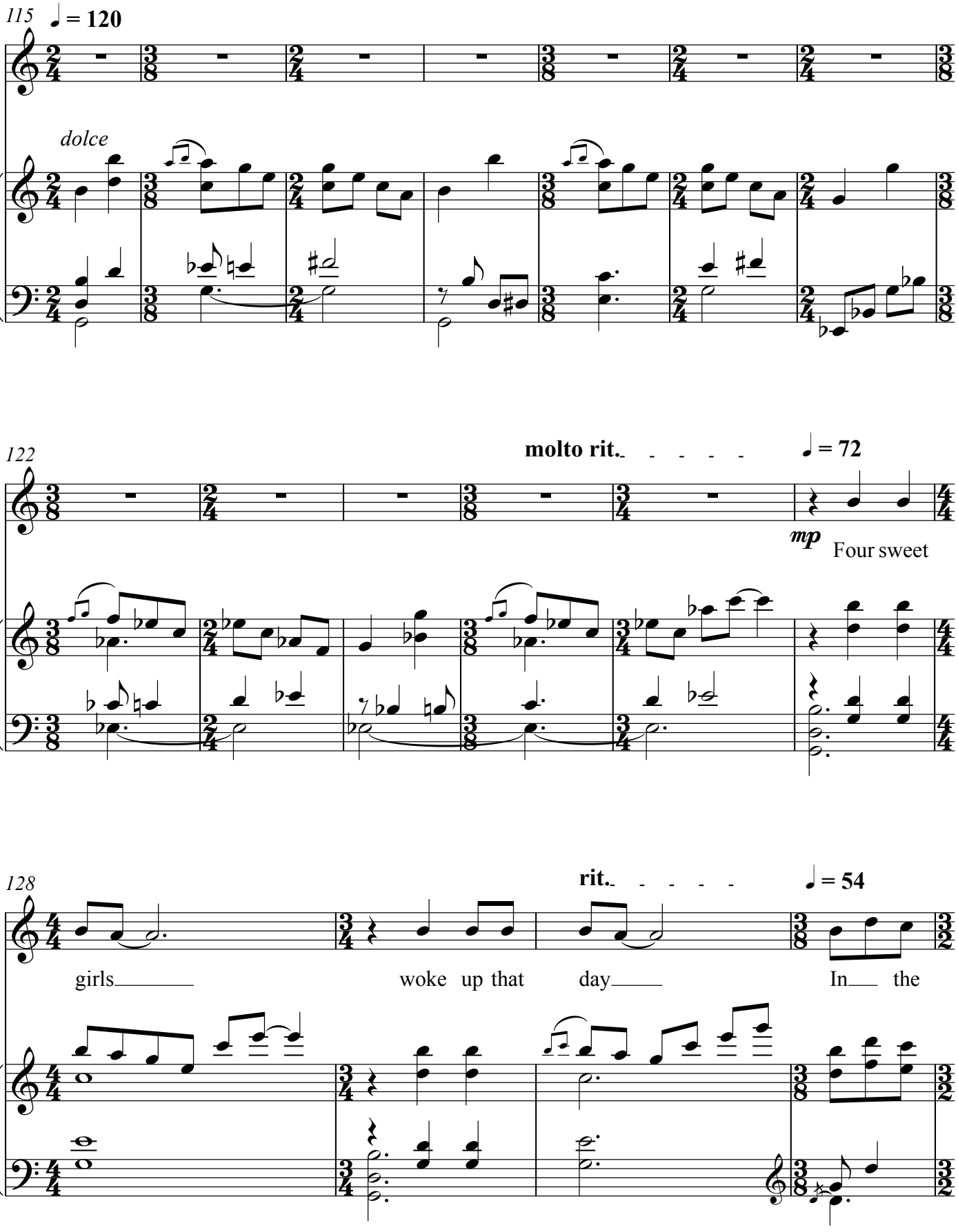

66
Braids all done up and Sun-day best_
69
Braids all done up and Sun-day best
73
Mmm

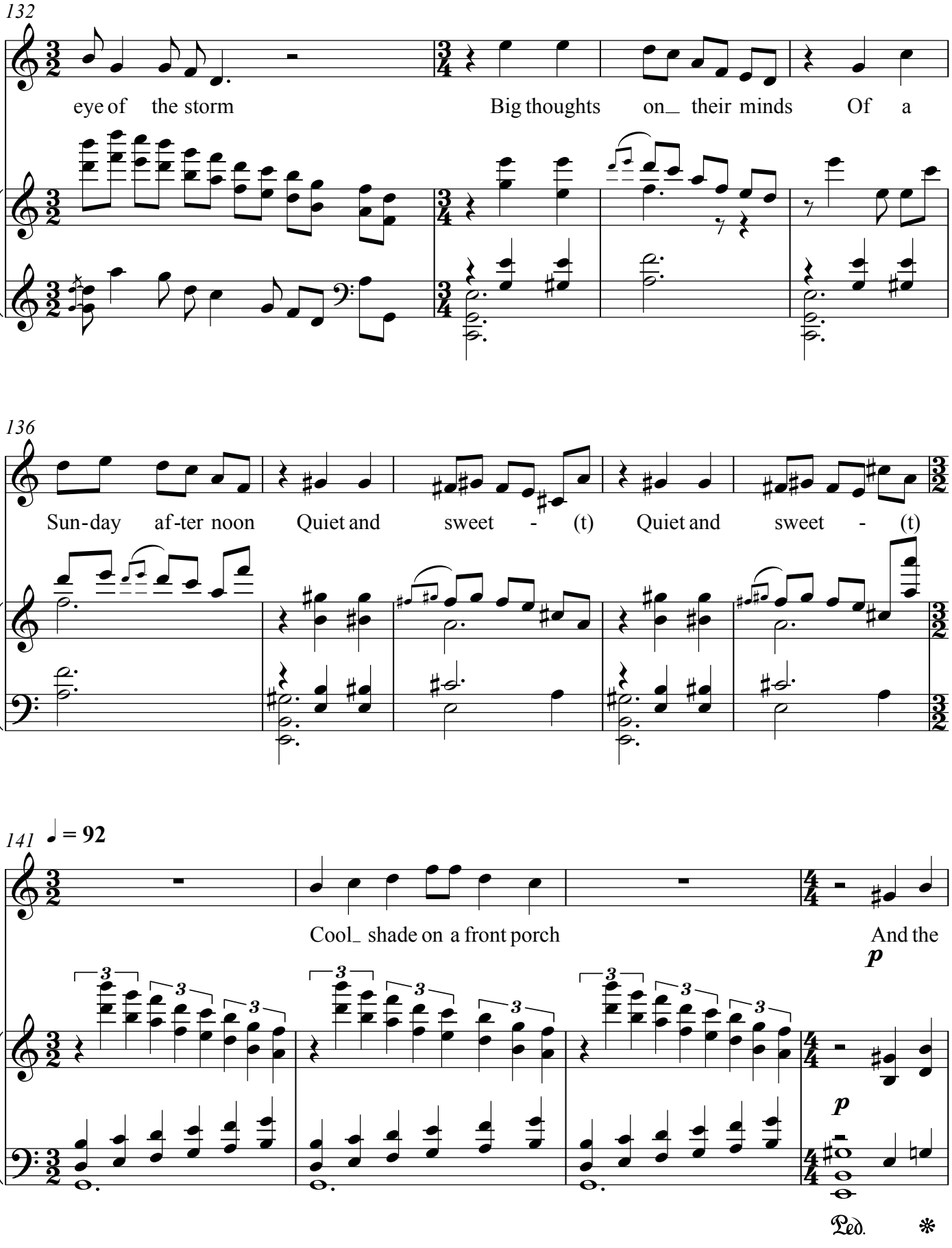

77
Made their way
81
Made their way slow - ly
84

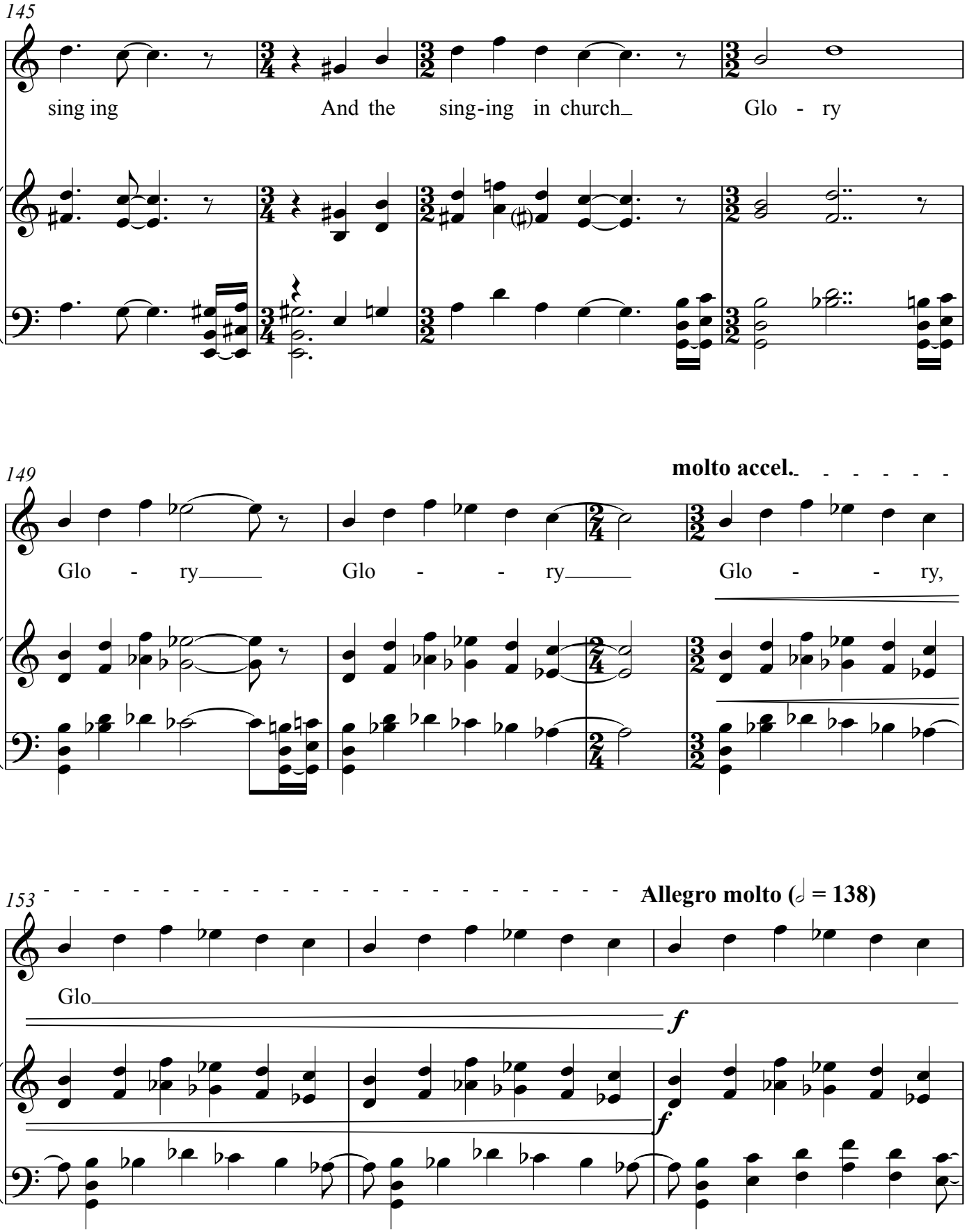

86
(8va)
Ah
più f
più f
89
8va
mf
Drew in the dust
sub. mf
3
3
92
with a po-lished toe

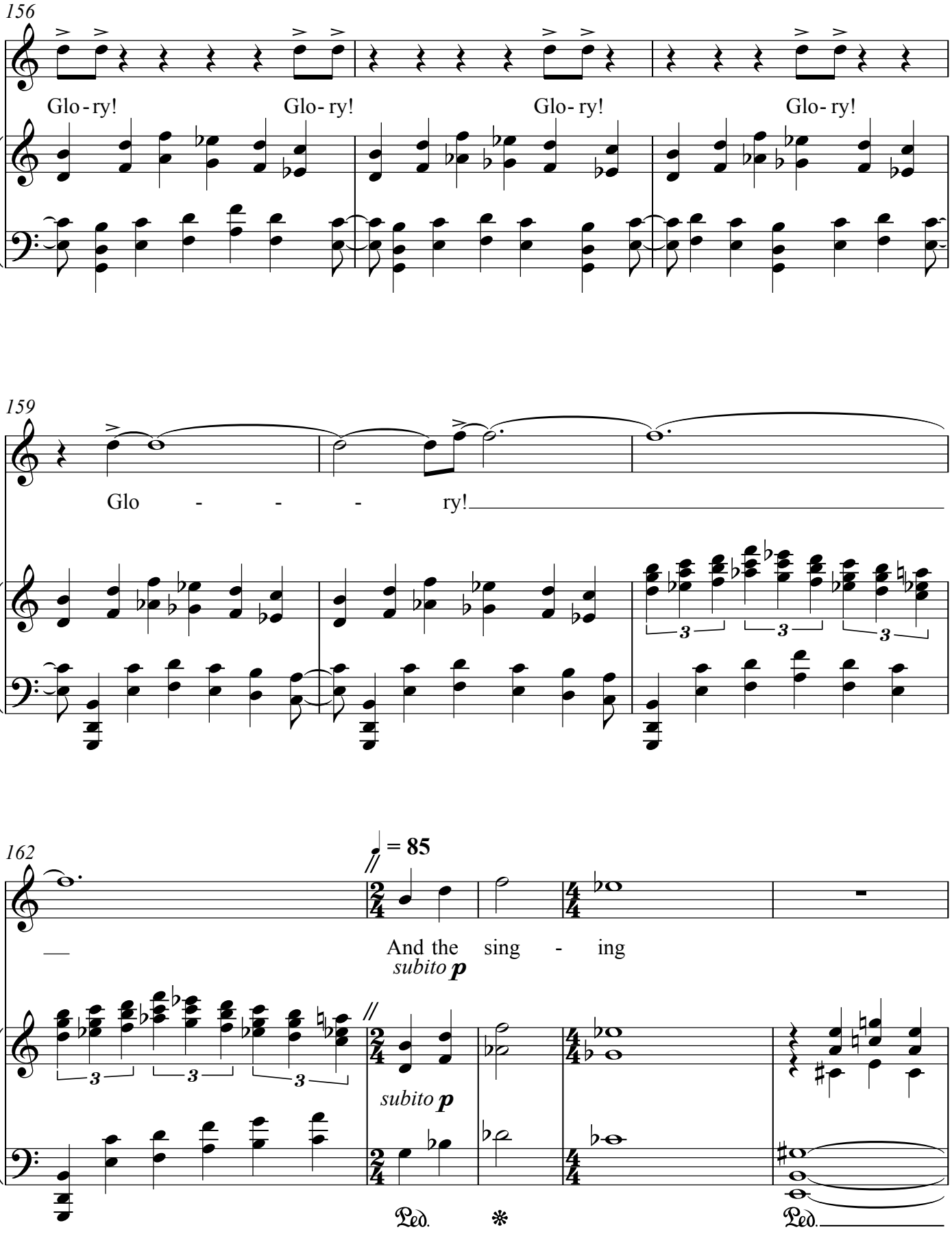

95
Found some-thing new un-der ev'-ry leaf
98
accel.
On their way
sub. meno f
103
On their way to church
On their way
cresc.
cresc.
= 196

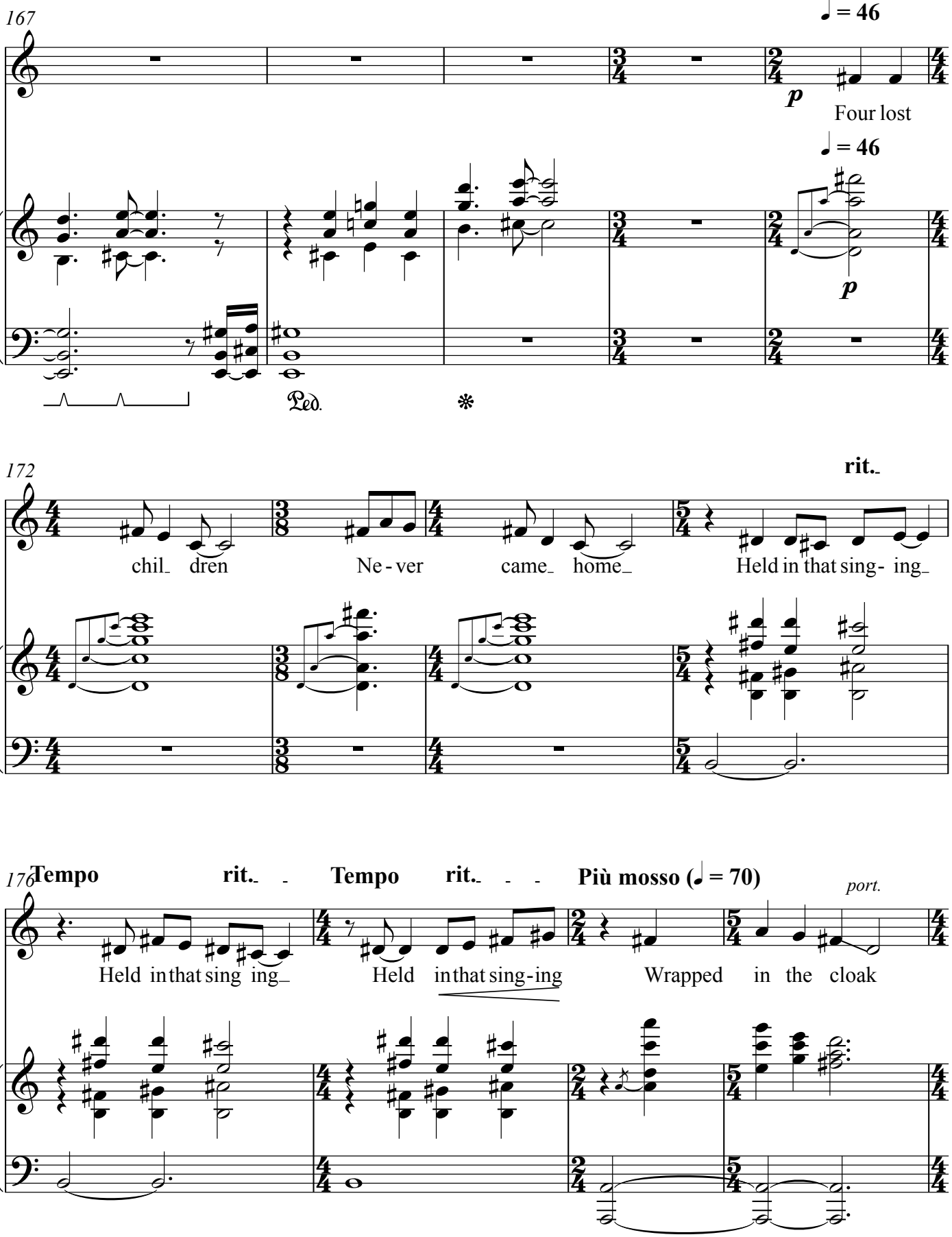

106
On their way to
(cresc.)
(cresc.)
109
church.
ff
ff
112
rit.
♩ = 150
rit.
mp

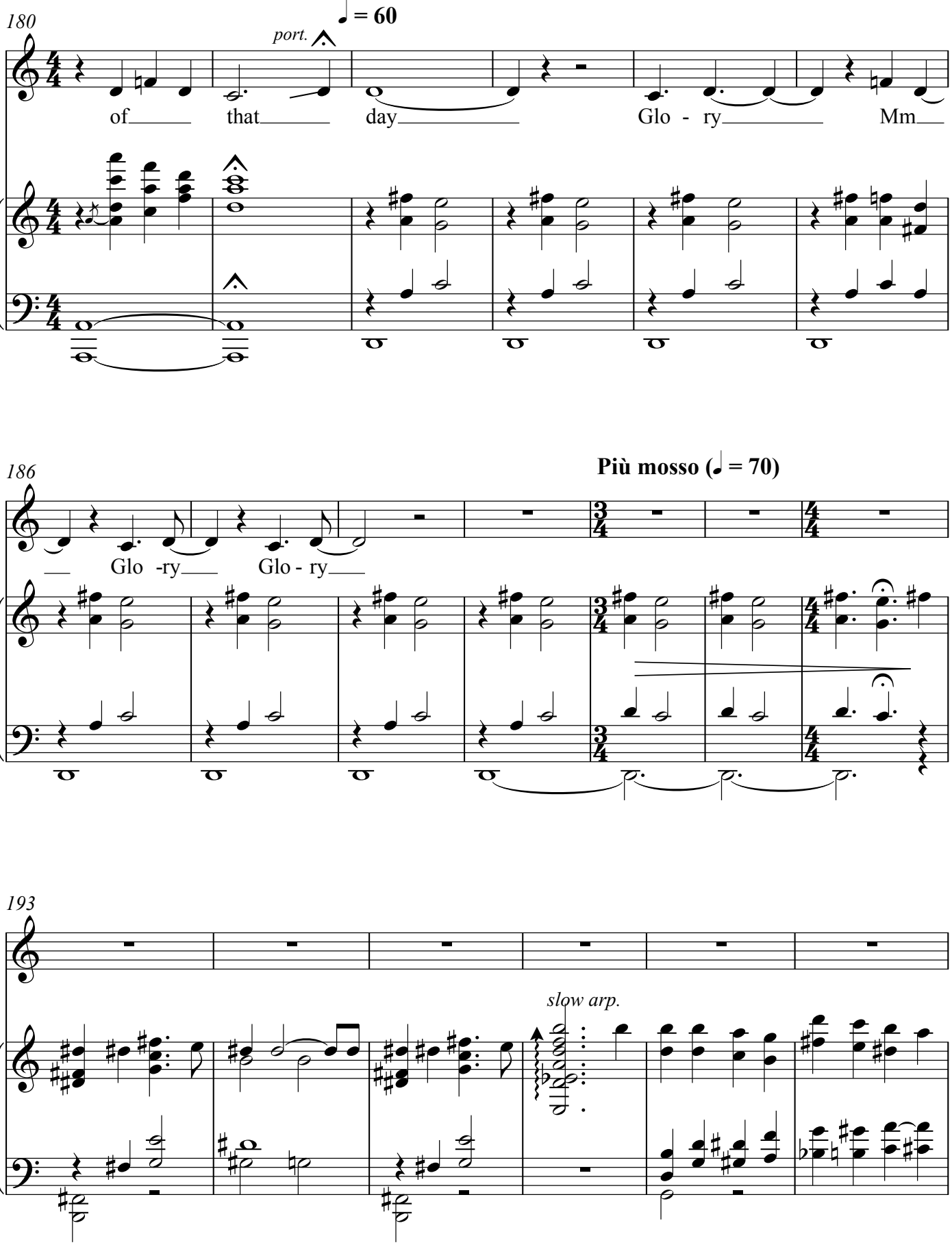

115
♩ = 120
dolce
122
molto rit.
♩ = 72
mp
Four sweet
128
rit.
♩ = 54
girls
woke up that day
In the

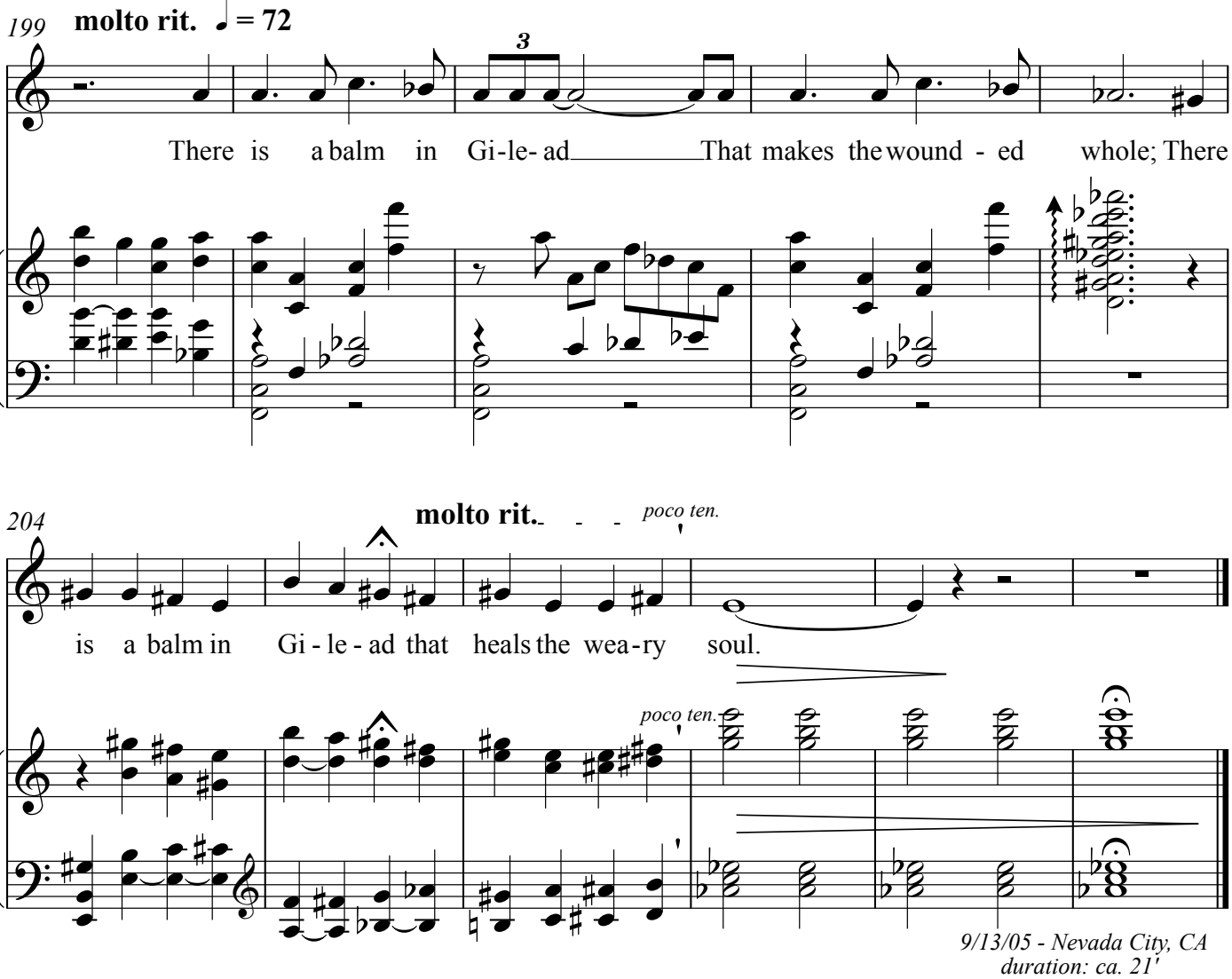

132
eye of the storm
Big thoughts on_ their minds
Of a
136
Sun-day af-ter noon
Quiet and sweet - (t)
Quiet and sweet - (t)
141
♩ = 92
Cool_ shade on a front porch
And the
p
p
Ped.
*


145
sing ing
And the sing-ing in church
Glo - ry
149
molto accel.
Glo - ry
Glo - - ry
Glo - - ry,
153
Allegro molto (𝅗𝅥 = 138)
Glo
f
f


156
Glo - ry!
Glo - ry!
Glo - ry!
Glo - ry!
159
Glo - - - ry!
162
♩ = 85
And the sing - ing
subito p
subito p
Ped.
Ped.


167
♩ = 46
p
Four lost
♩ = 46
p
Ped.
*
172
rit.
chil_ dren
Ne - ver
came_ home_
Held in that sing- ing_
176
Tempo
rit.
Tempo
rit.
Più mosso (♩ = 70)
port.
Held in that sing ing_
Held in that sing-ing
Wrapped in the cloak


180
port.
♩ = 60
of that day Glo - ry Mm
186
Più mosso (♩ = 70)
Glo -ry Glo - ry
193
slow arp.



9/13/05 - Nevada City, CA
duration: ca. 21'