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Lancaster, David (2017) The Dark Gate - for soprano and piano. [Composition]

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The Dark Gate

For soprano and piano

By David Lancaster

Poetry by David Vogel

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The Dark Gate

This music sets five poems by David Vogel (1891-1944), sung without a break:

1) On Summer Evenings
2) How Can I See You Love
3) An Autumn Day will Breathe
4) With Gentle Fingers
5) There is One Last Solitary Coach about to Leave

In his work and life Vogel was always an outsider. In Vienna (during WWI) he was imprisoned as a Russian subject; he subsequently adopted Austrian nationality then emigrated to Palestine before returning to settle in Paris. At the outbreak of WWII Vogel was arrested in France as an Austrian subject; on the Nazi invasion of France he was released and then re-arrested as a Jew before being transported to Auschwitz, where he was murdered in 1944.

Today Vogel is chiefly remembered for two short novels but there are also some thirty poems. The only anthology published in his lifetime was *Before the Dark Gate* (Vienna, 1923) from which I take my title, but some of the poems I have set were written later. With the benefit of hindsight they seem deeply imbued with the horror of the impending holocaust but this is only made explicit in the final poem, which is probably his last work.

I learned about Vogel and his poetry two or three years ago but after visiting Auschwitz and Birkenau in January 2016 I felt compelled to compose this piece, to re-tell Vogel's words and to reflect on my own memories of that place.

1
On summer evenings
the blue mists rise
From streams, and hang trembling
Among evening whispers.

At the edges of forests
Young girls sit alone
Their hair hanging loose
Weeping tears over nothing

2
How can I see you love
Standing alone
Amid storms of grief
Without feeling my heart shake (tremble)

A deep night
Blacker than the blackness of your eyes
Has fallen silently
On the world

And is touching your hair.

Come,
My hand will clasp your dreaming
Hand
And I shall lead you between the nights,
Through the pale mists of childhood.

3
An autumn day will breathe.
With a pale, trembling hand
It will slowly strip the black dress
From your sleeping village.

In front of your white house
He naked linden will stand
Sadly swaying.

I shall return, lonely,
Out of the night
Bow gently to her and say:
Take my greeting to your mistress.

But you
Will go on softly sleeping on your bed.

4
With gentle fingers
The rain is softly
Playing sad melodies
On the black instrument of night.

Now we are sitting in darkness,
Each in their own house
Listening to the rain
Telling our sorrow.

For we have no more words.
Our feet have been leadened
By day.
There is no dance
Left in them.

5
There is one last solitary coach about to leave.
Let us get in and go,
For it won't wait.

I have seen young girls going softly
With sad faces
That look ashamed and sorry
Like purple sunsets.

And chubby pink children
Who went simply
Because they were called.

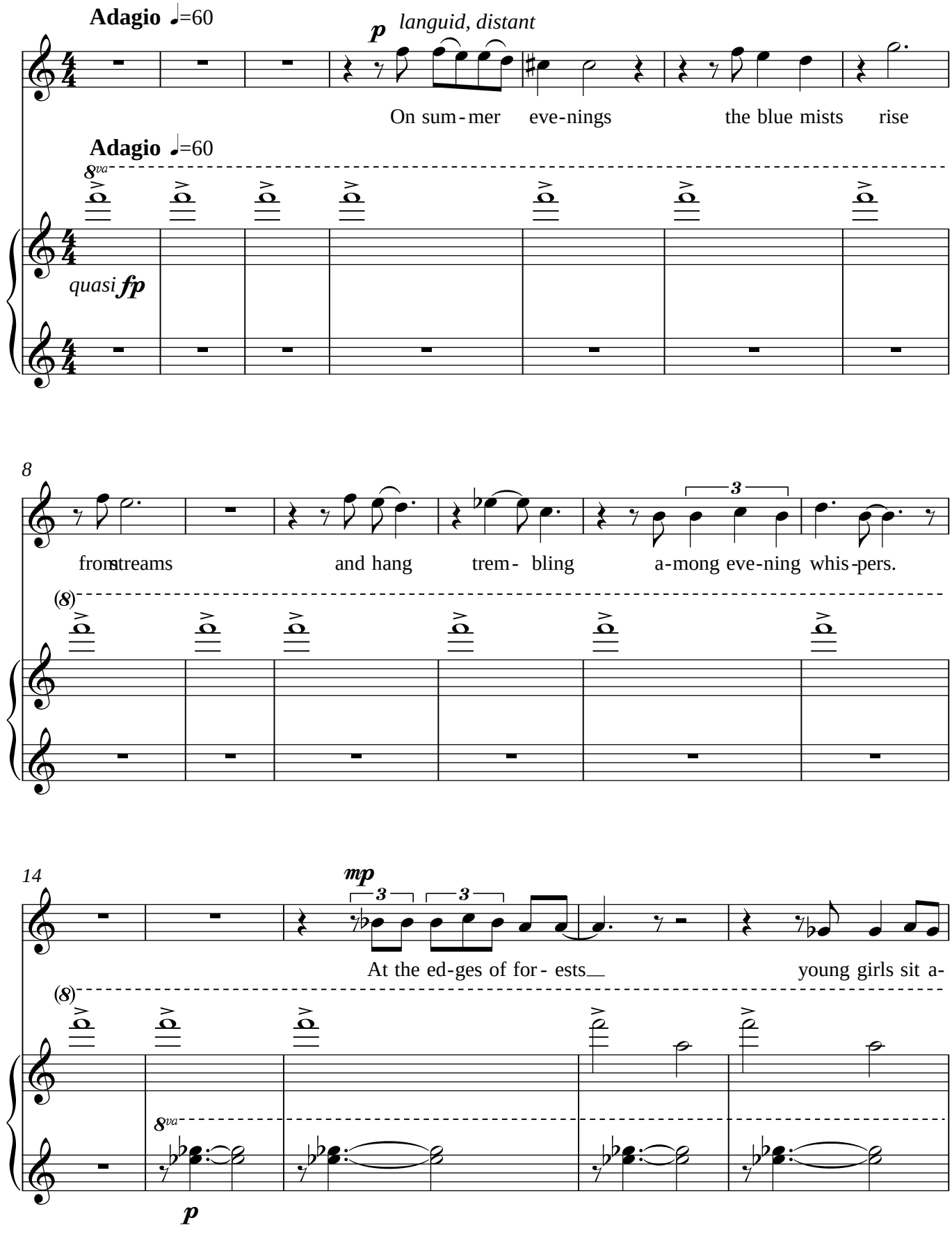
And I've seen men
Who stepped proud and straight through the streets of the world,
Far and wide,
They too got in calmly
And left.

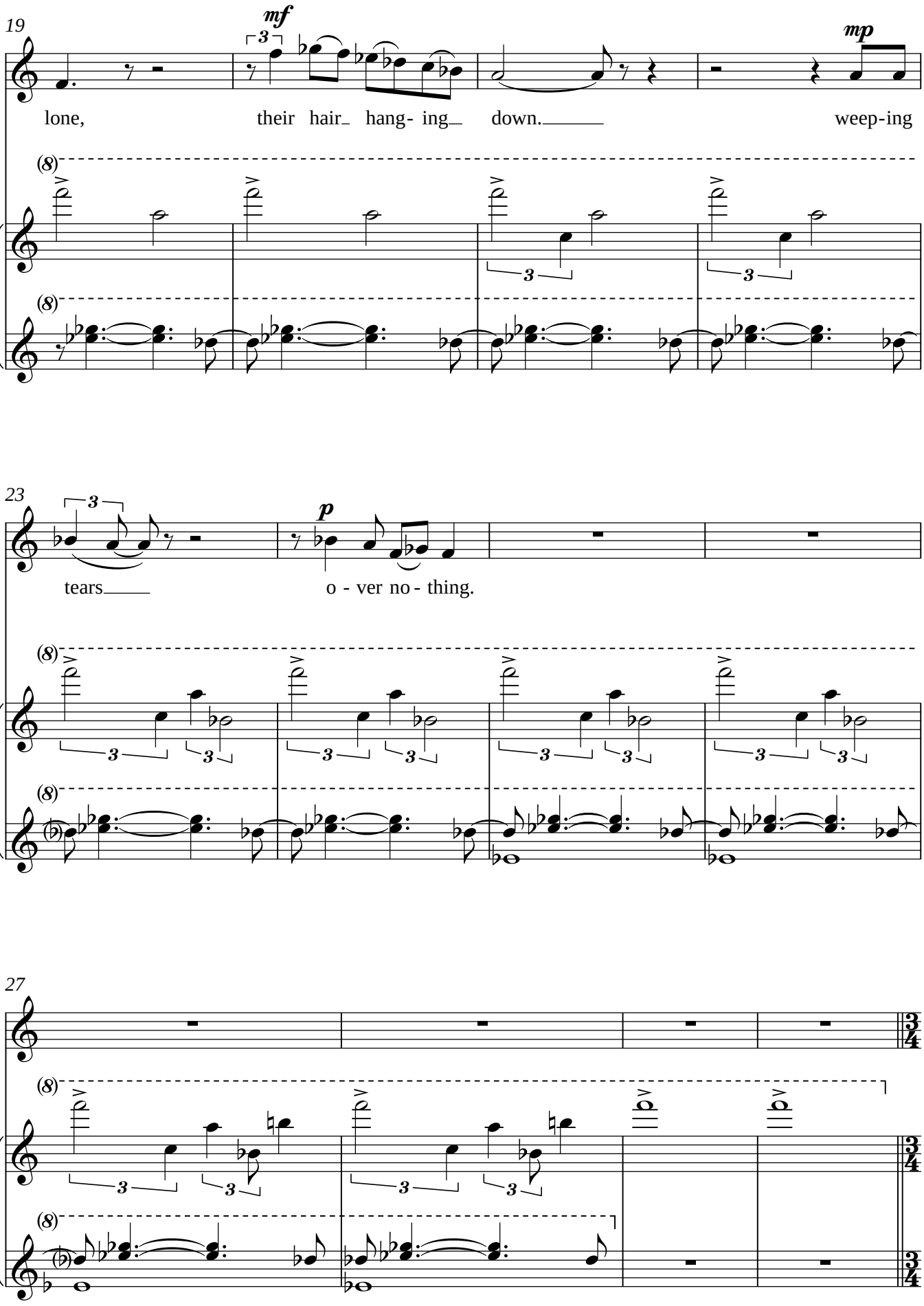
And we are the last.
Day is declining.
The last, solitary coach is about to leave.
Let us too get in quietly
And go,
For it won't wait.

The Dark Gate

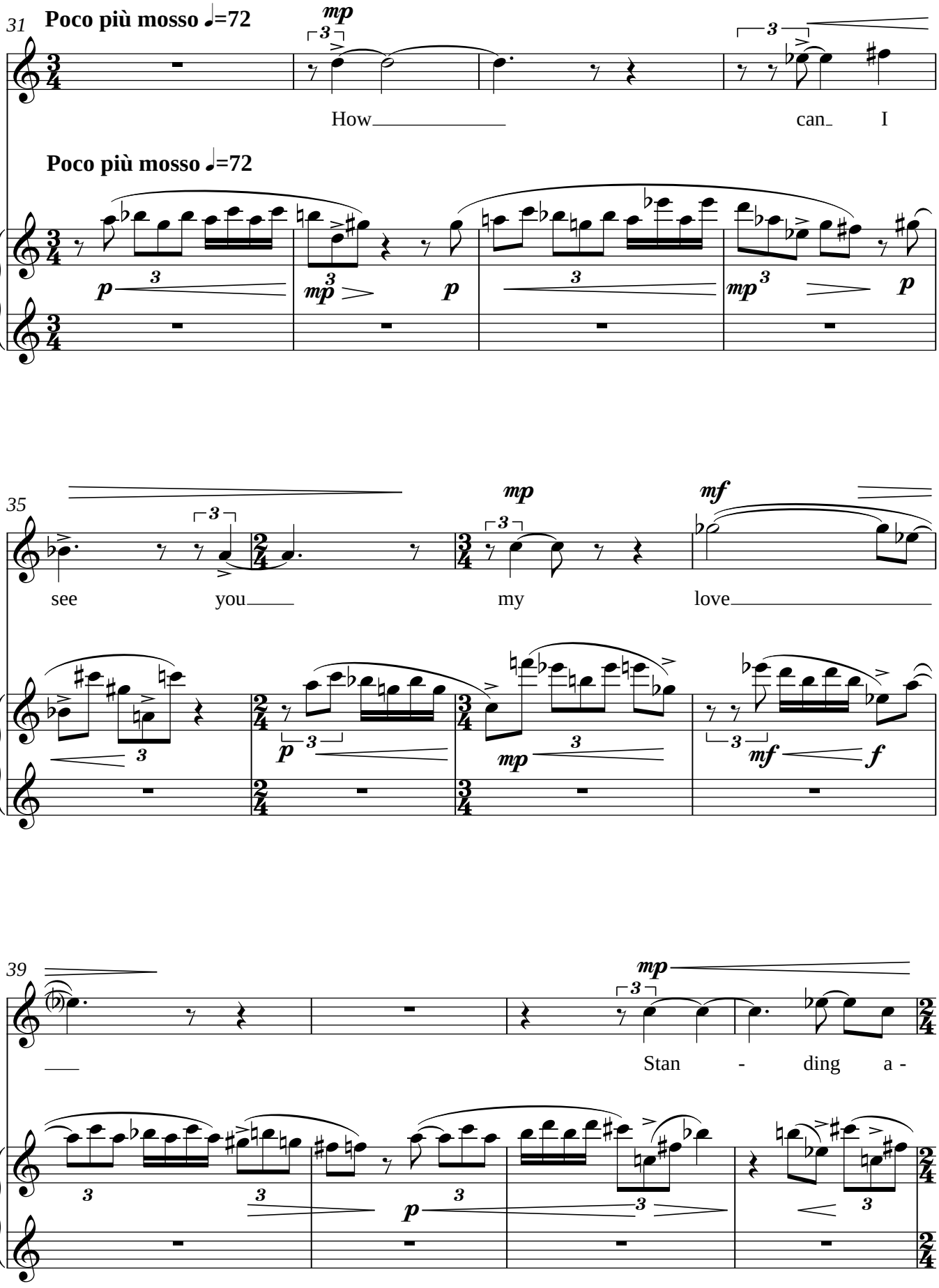
On Summer Evenings

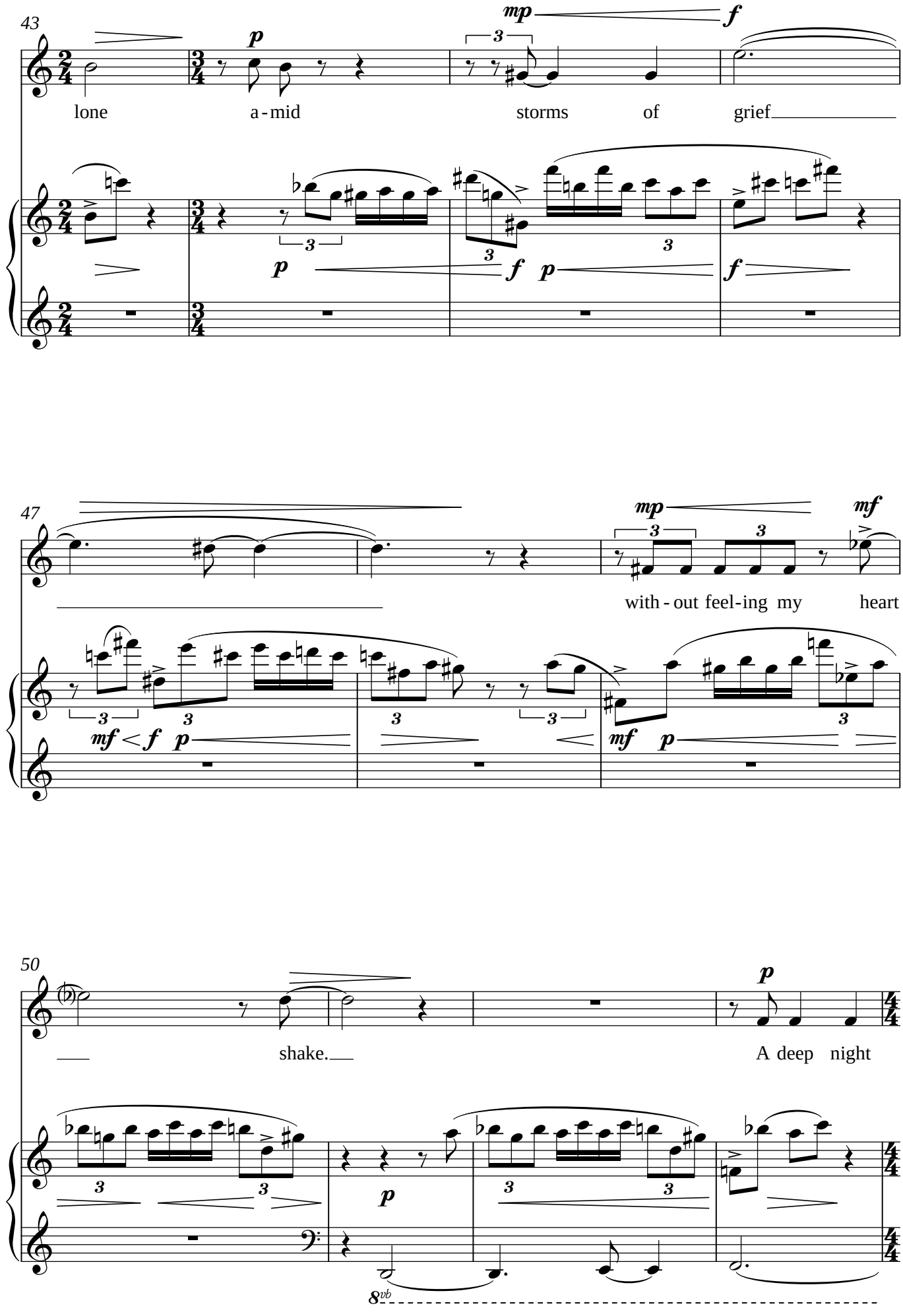
David Vogel (1891-1944?) David Lancaster

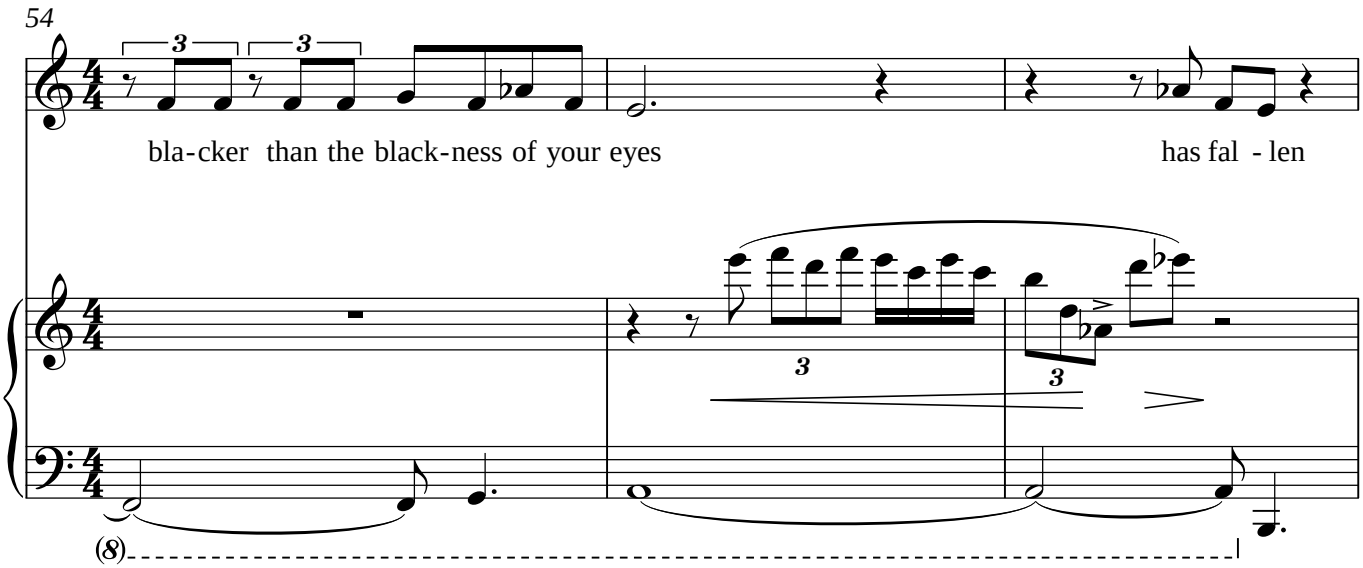


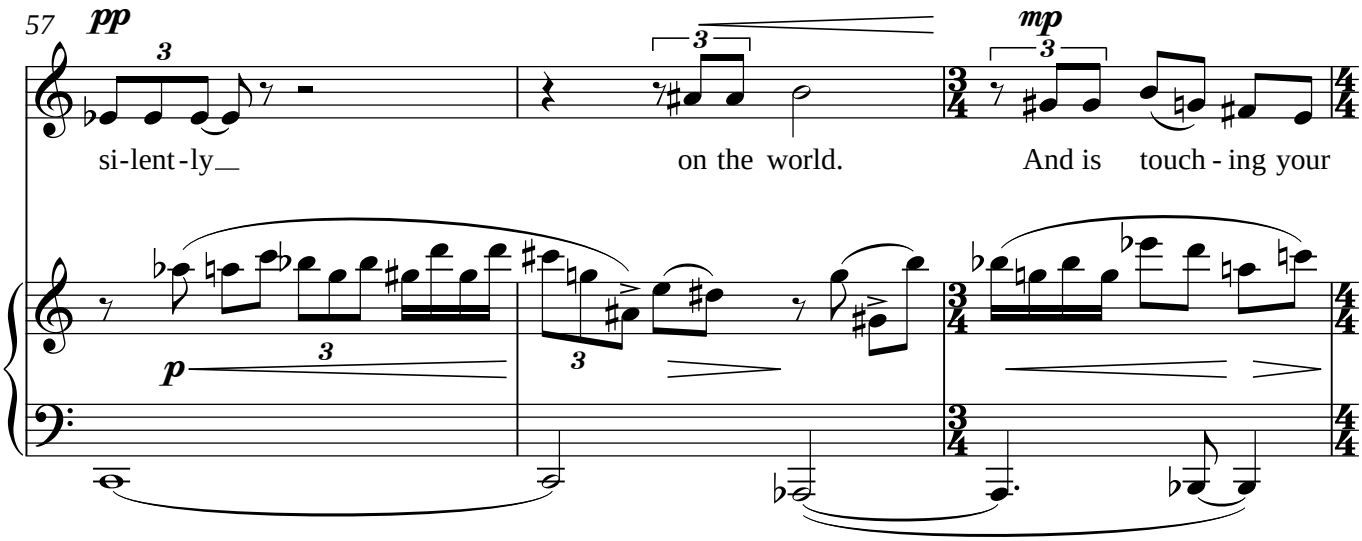

19
mf
mp
lone, their hair hang- ing down. weep-ing
23
p
tears o - ver no - thing.
27

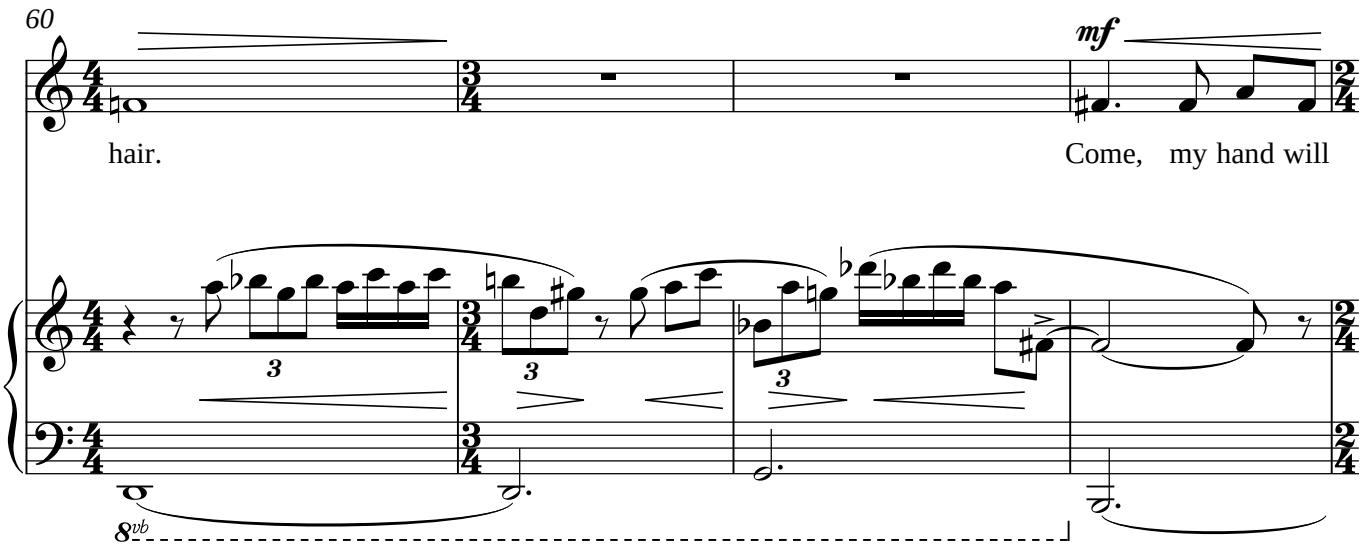
2. How Can I See You Love?

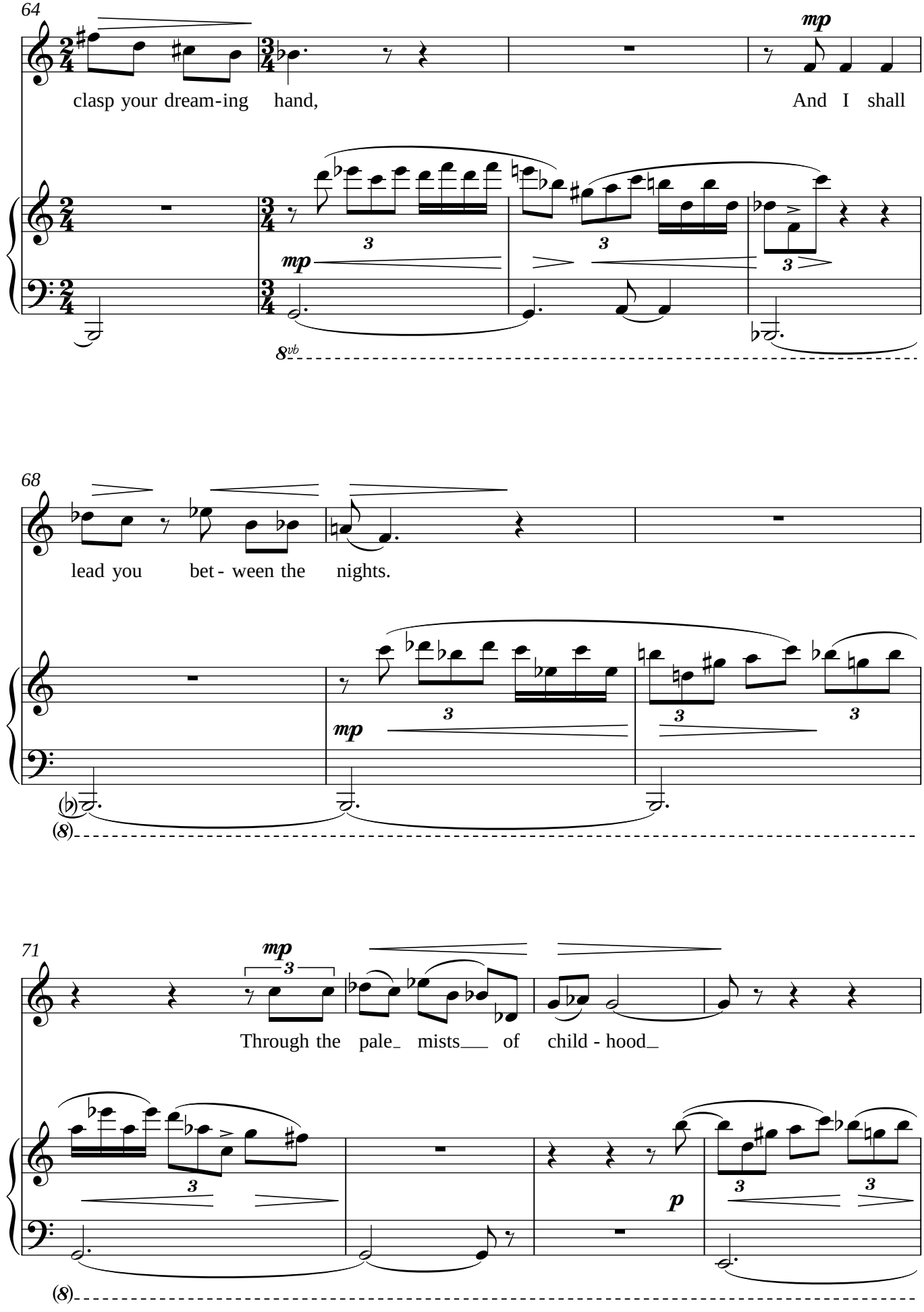


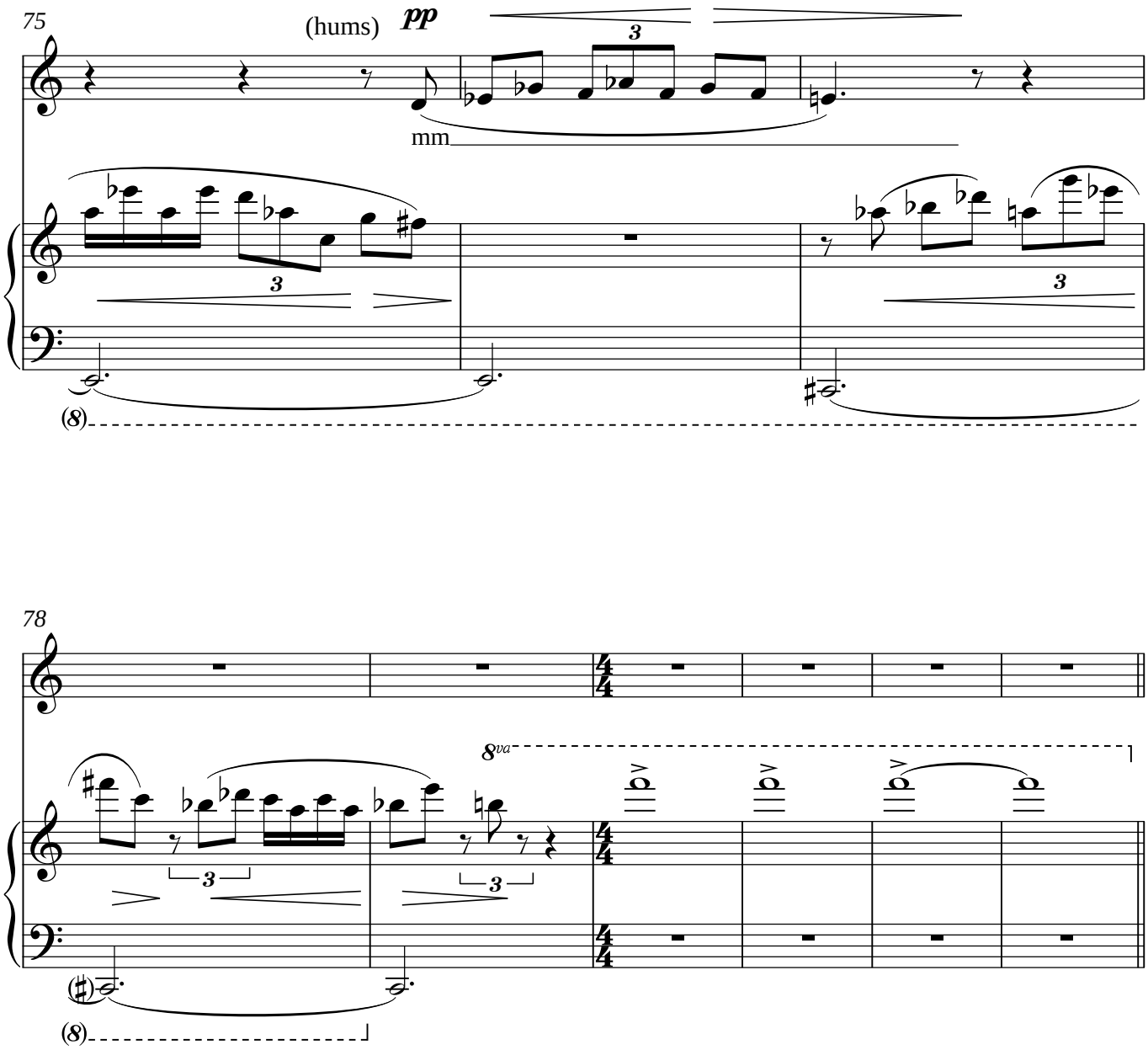

43
mp
f
p
lone
a - mid
storms
of
grief
47
mp
mf
with - out feel-ing my
heart
50
p
shake.
A deep
night
8vb


54
bla-cker than the black-ness of your eyes
has fal - len
(8)


57
pp
si-lent-ly
on the world.
mp
And is touch - ing your
p


60
hair.
mf
Come, my hand will
8vb


64
mp
clasp your dream-ing hand,
And I shall
mp
8vb
68
lead you bet - ween the nights.
mp
(8)
71
mp
Through the pale_ mists___ of child - hood_
p
(8)


75
(hums)
pp
3
mm
3
3
(8)
78
8va
3
3
(8)

3. An Autumn Day will Breathe

Lento ♩=56

84

mp *slentando*

An au-tumn day will breath, with a pale trem-bling hand

Lento ♩=56

mp

88

It will slow - ly strip the black dress from your sleep- ing vill- age.

92

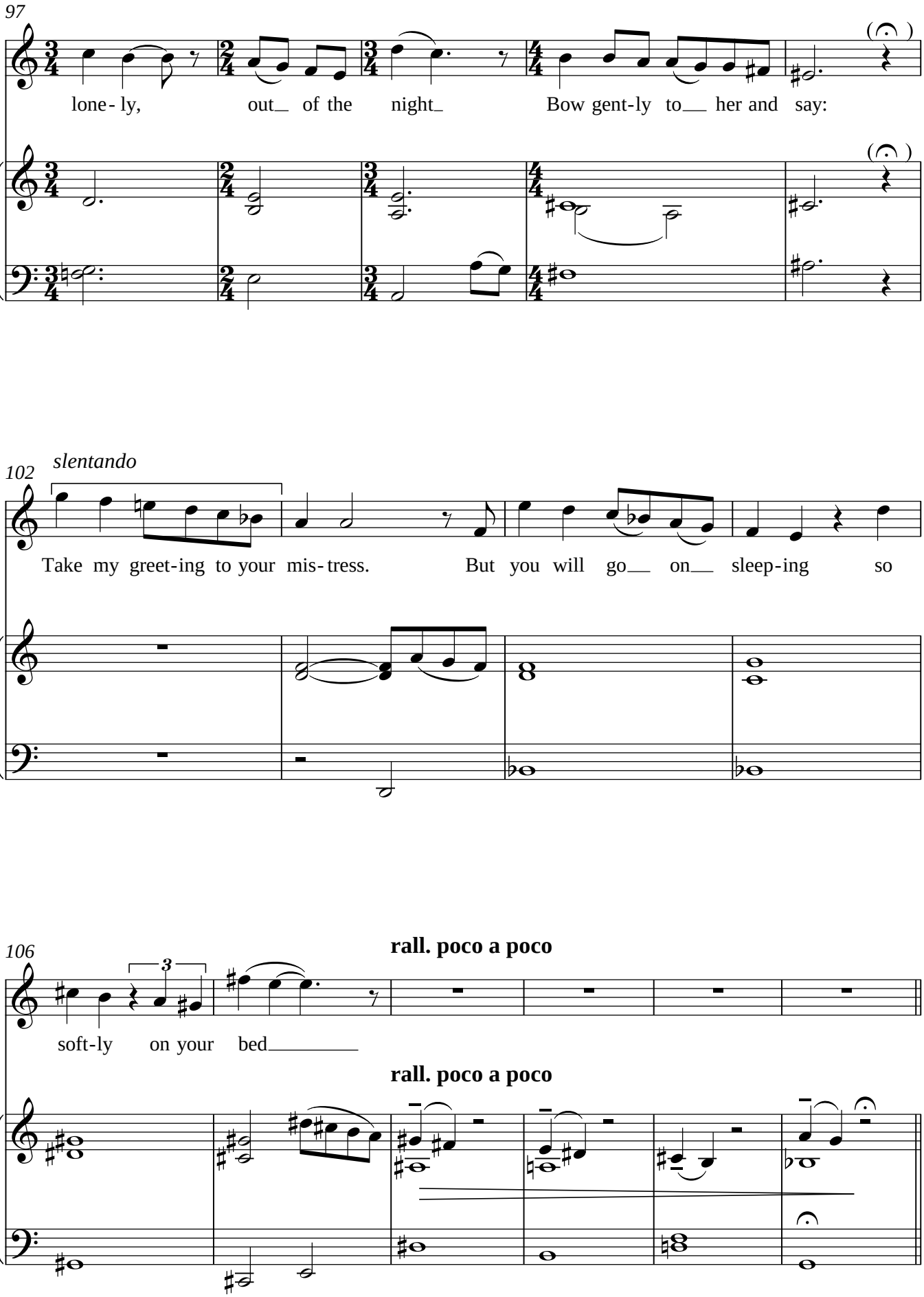
slentando

The na-ked lin-den will stand sad-ly sway ing And I shall re - turn

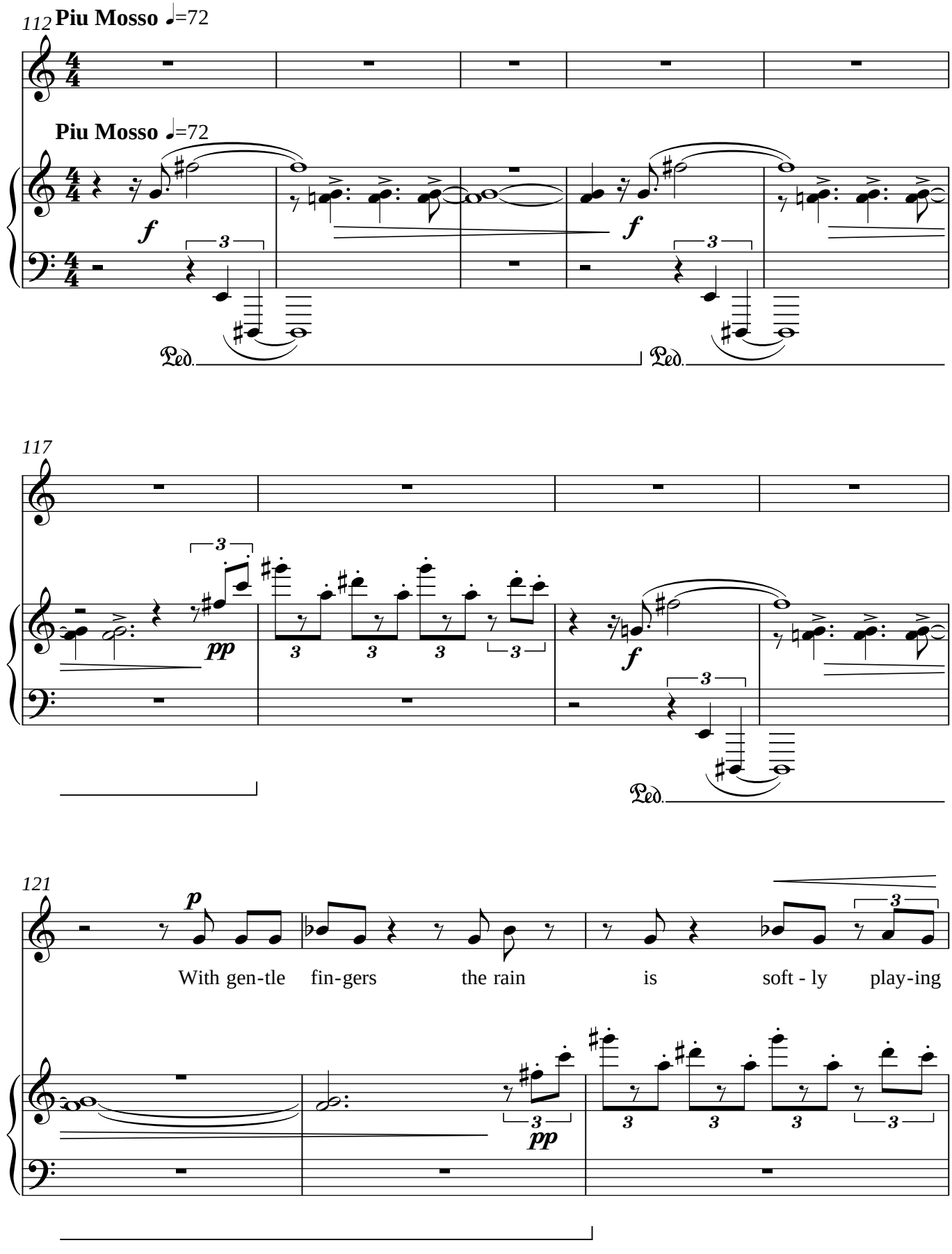
mp

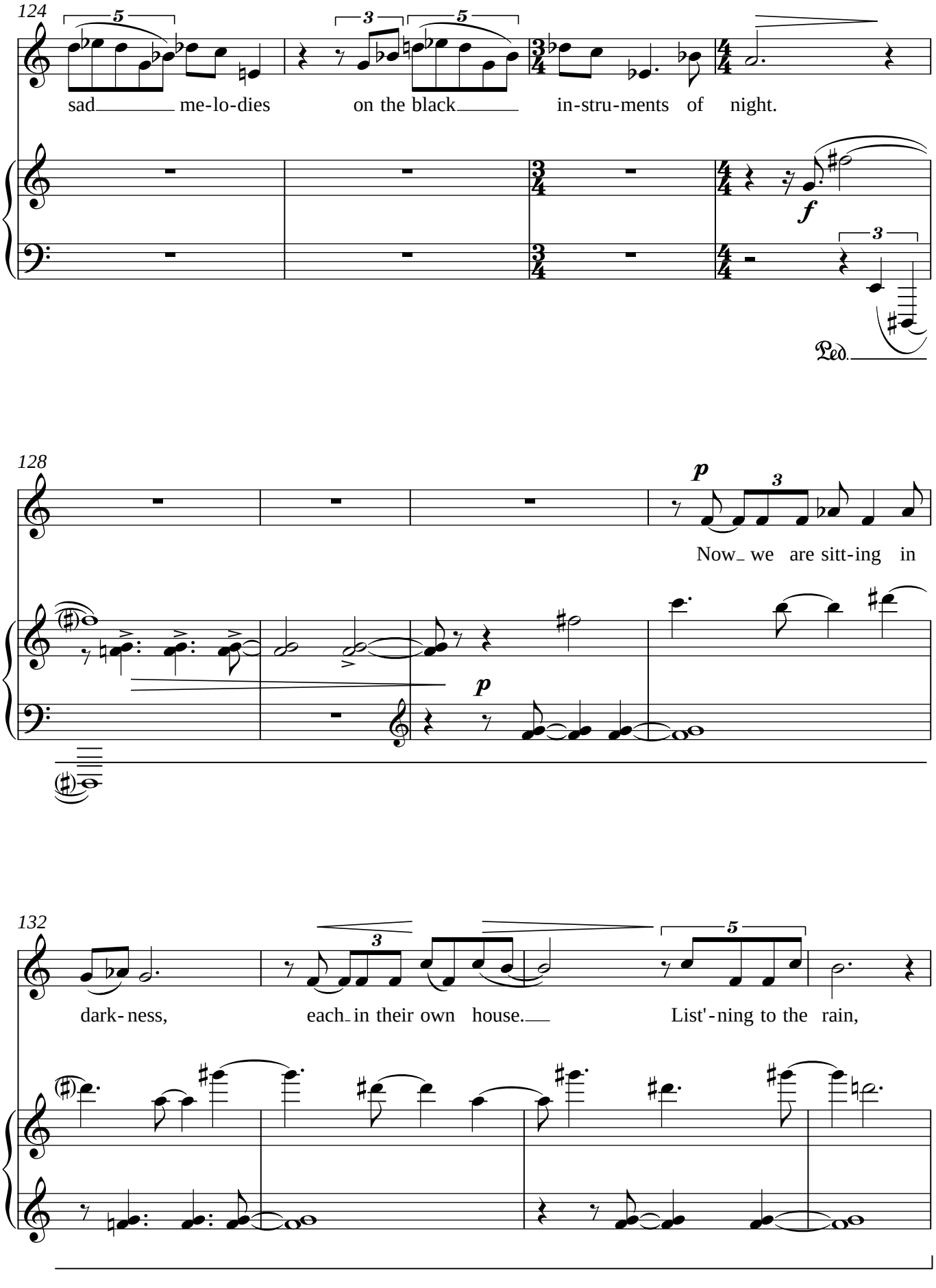
p

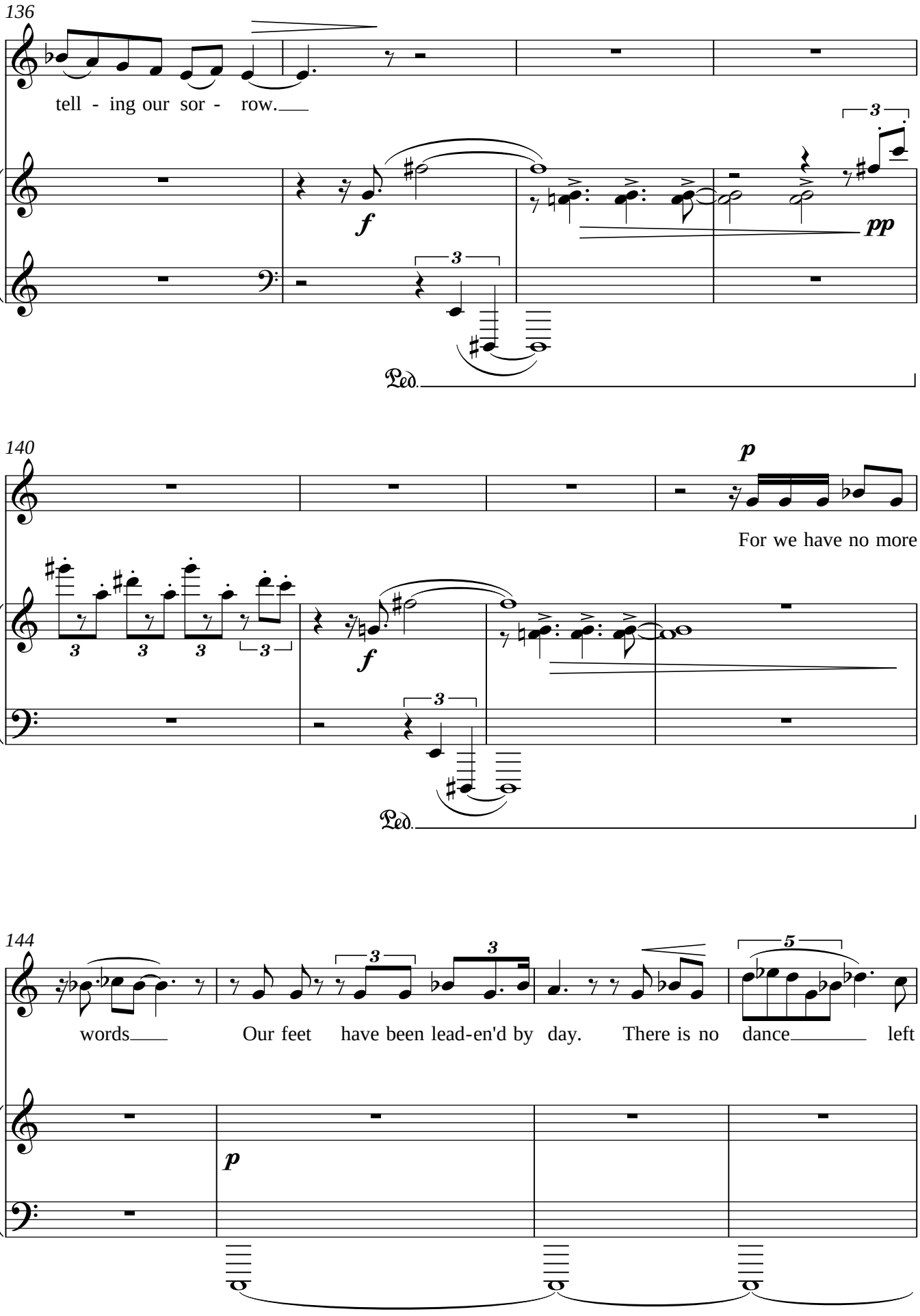
p

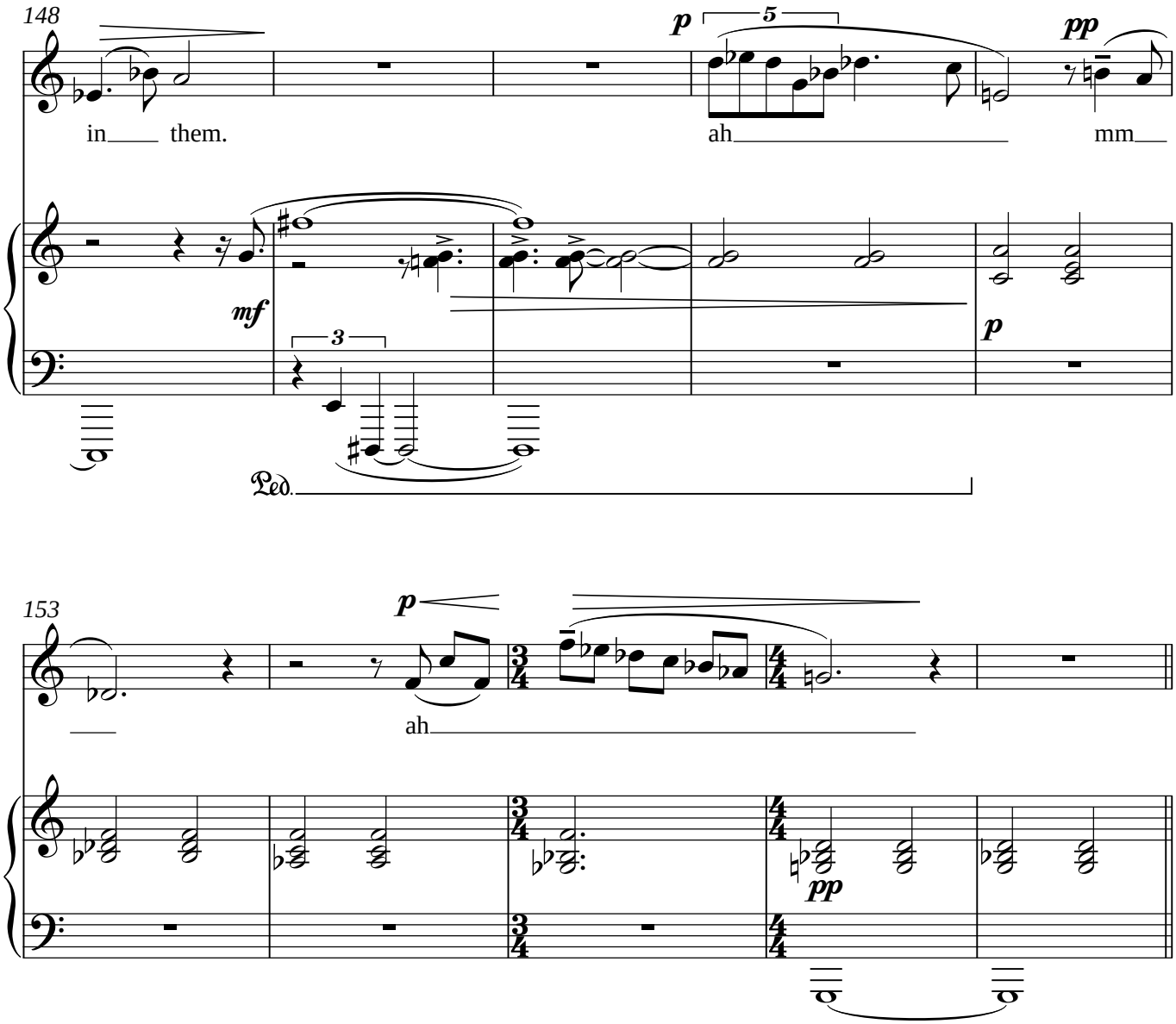

97
lone- ly, out_ of the night_ Bow gent-ly to__ her and say:
102
slentando
Take my greet-ing to your mis- tress. But you will go__ on__ sleep-ing so
106
3
soft-ly on your bed_____
rall. poco a poco
rall. poco a poco

4. With Gentle Fingers

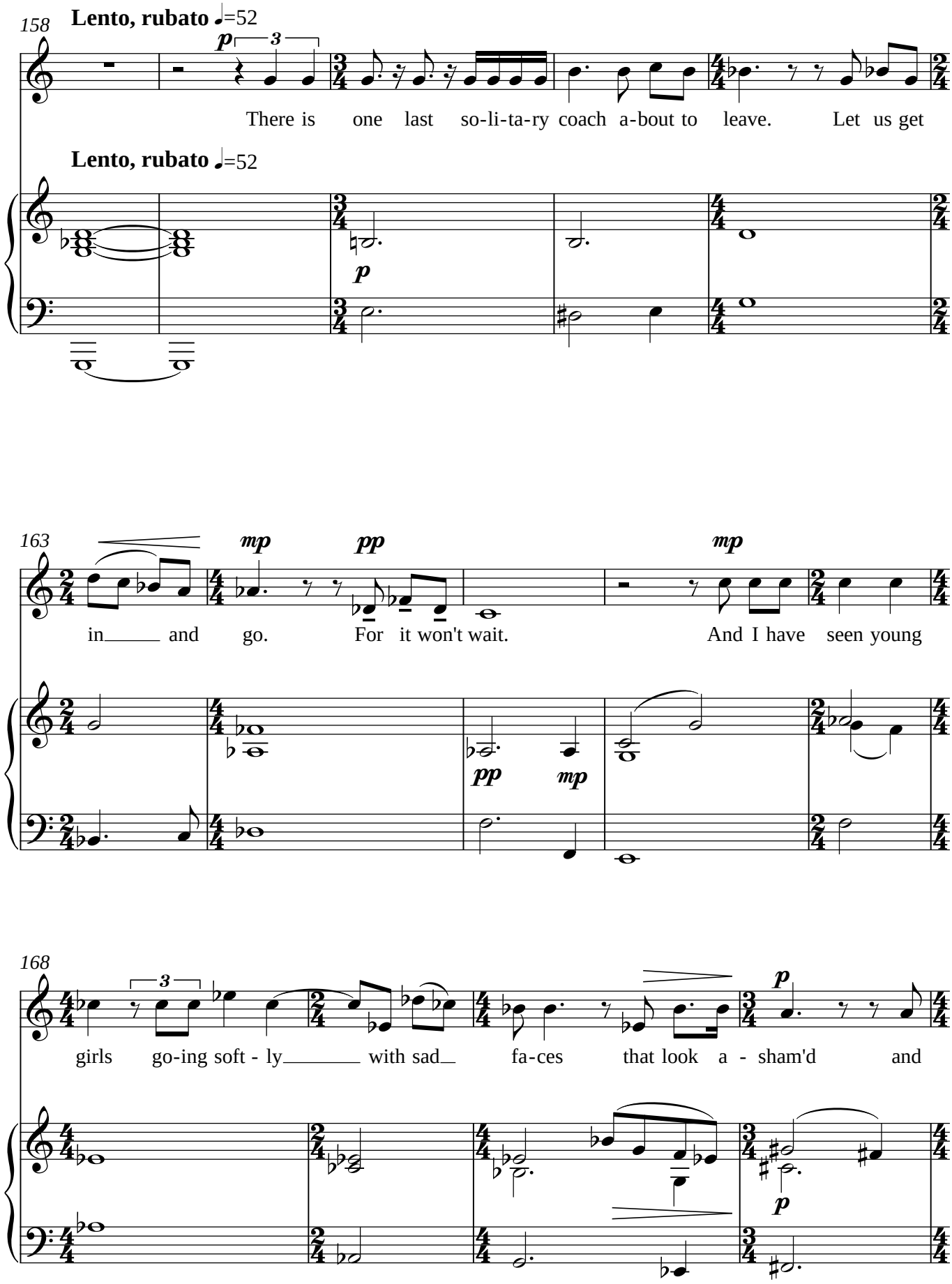


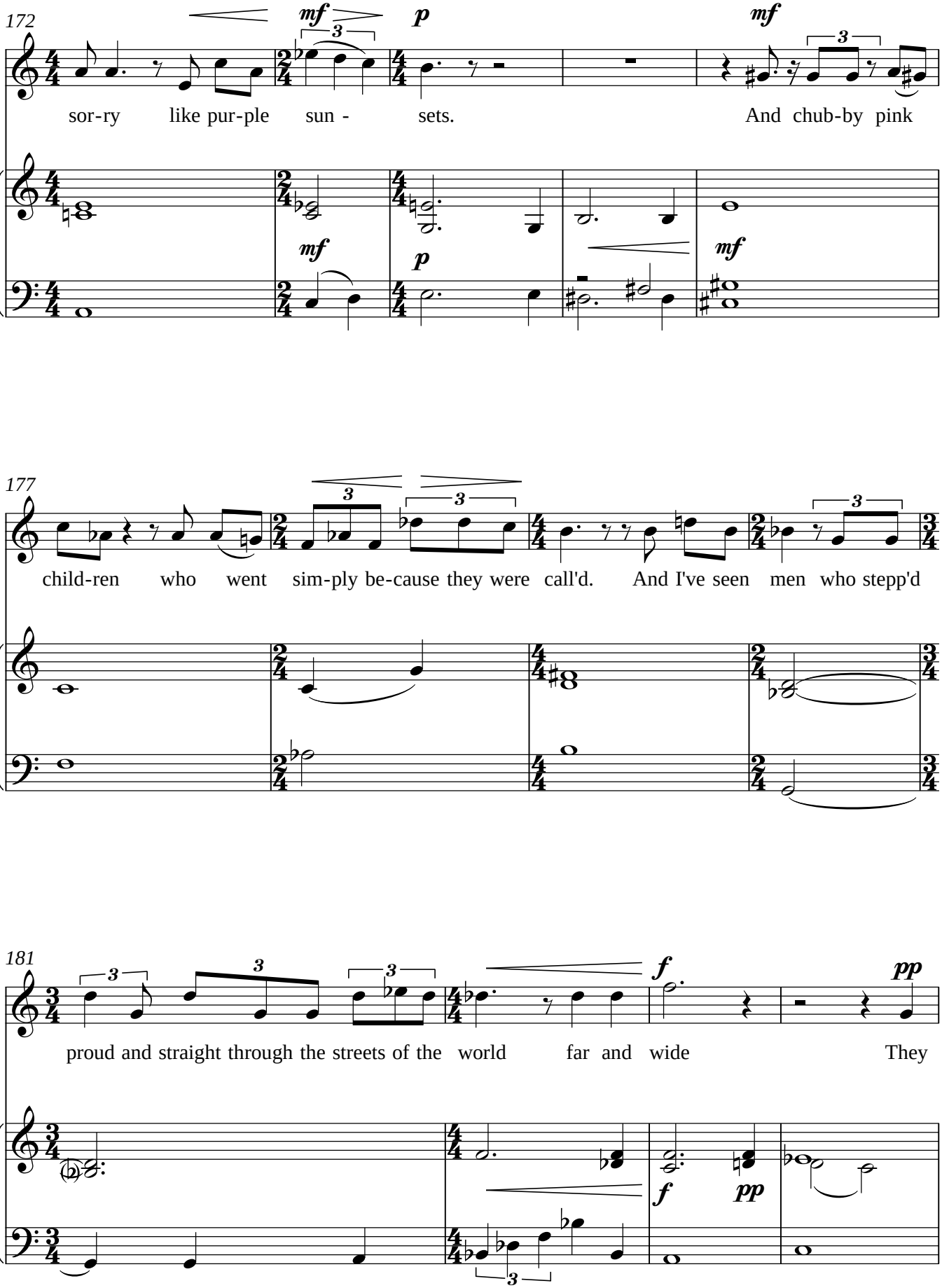

124
sad me-lo-dies on the black in-stru-ments of night.
f
Ped.
128
p
Now we are sitt-ing in
p
132
dark-ness, each in their own house. List'-ning to the rain,

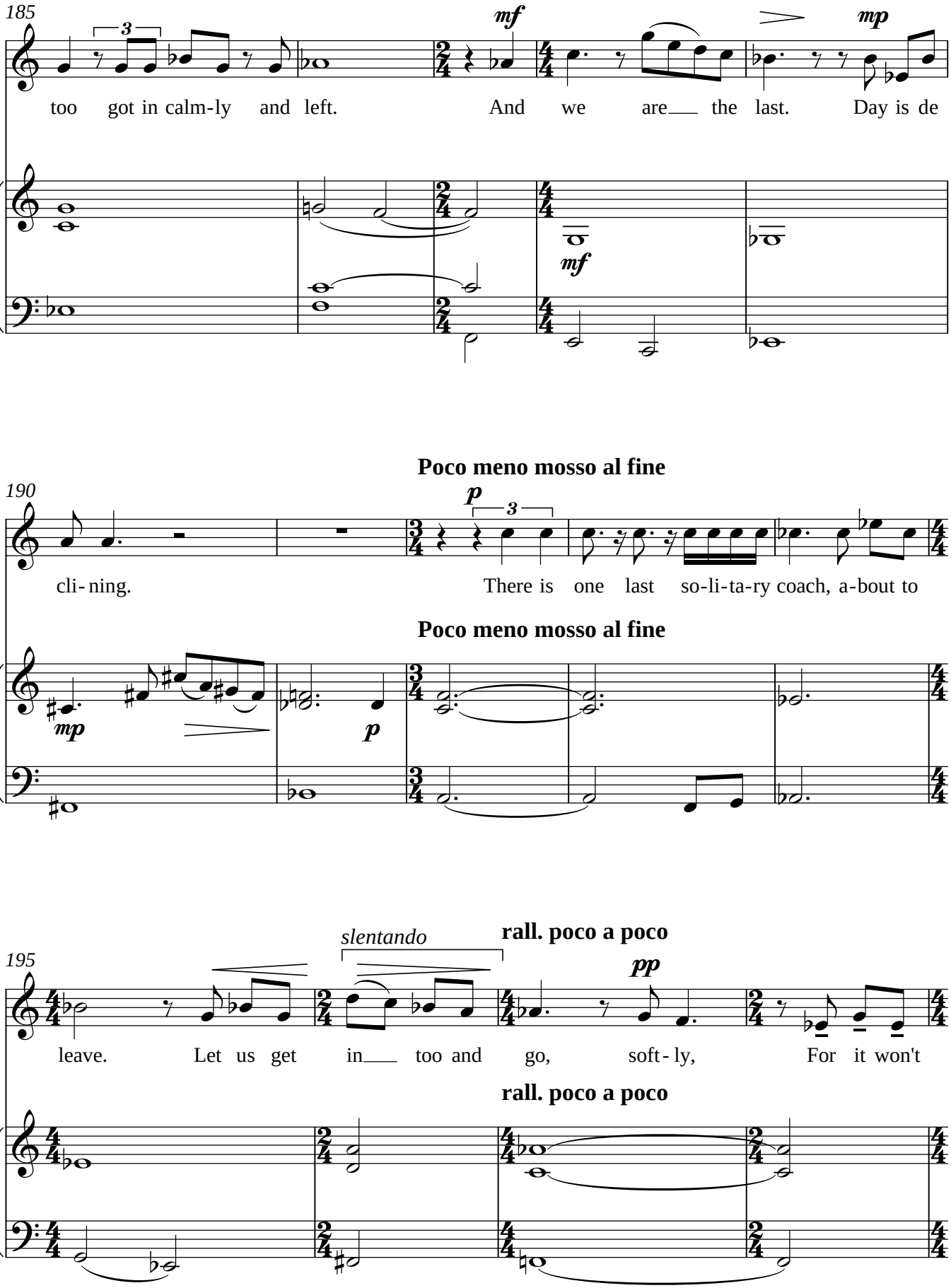

136
tell - ing our sor - row.
f
pp
Ped.
140
p
For we have no more
f
Ped.
144
words
Our feet have been lead-en'd by day. There is no dance
left
p

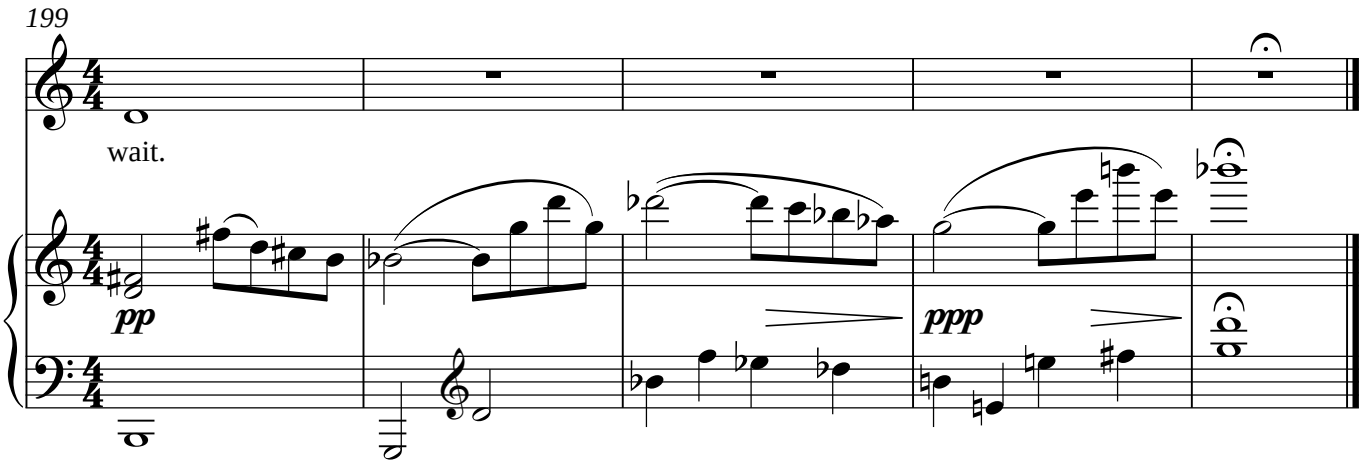

148
in them.
p
5
ah
pp
mm
mf
3
p
Ped.
153
p
ah
pp

5. There is One Last Solitary Coach about to Leave




172
mf
p
mf
sor-ry like pur-ple sun - sets. And chub-by pink
177
child-ren who went sim-ply be-cause they were call'd. And I've seen men who stepp'd
181
f
pp
proud and straight through the streets of the world far and wide They


185
mf
mp
too got in calm-ly and left. And we are the last. Day is de
mf
Poco meno mosso al fine
190
p
cli-ning. There is one last so-li-ta-ry coach, a-bout to
mp
p
Poco meno mosso al fine
195
slentando
rall. poco a poco
pp
leave. Let us get in too and go, soft-ly, For it won't
rall. poco a poco


199
wait.
pp
ppp