Paul Salerni

Something Permanent

(poems by Cynthia Rylant on photographs by Walker Evans)

for

Bass-baritone and Pianoforte

I. Land
II. Mission
III. Minstrels
IV. Boys
V. Apartment
VI. Bed
VII. Rocker

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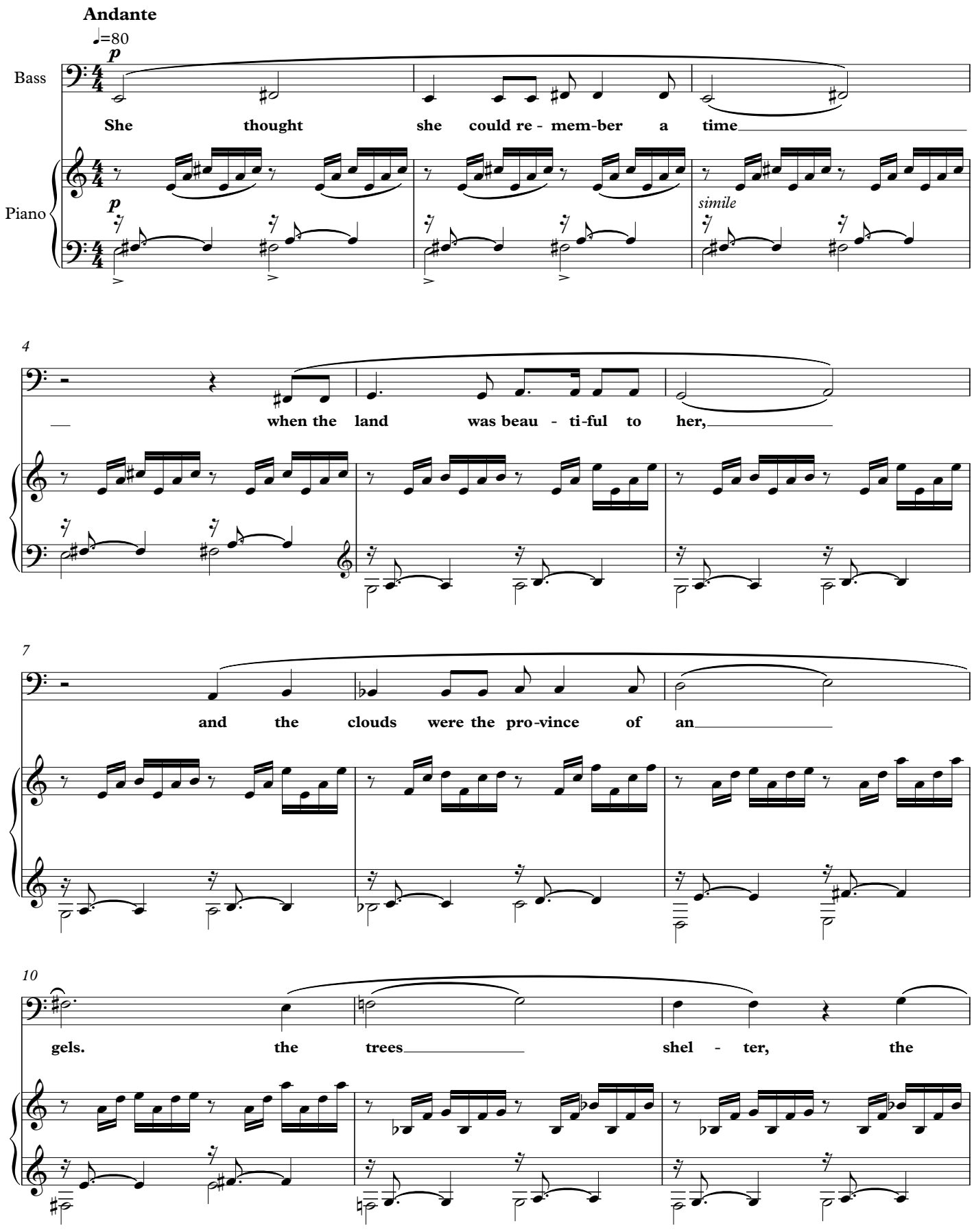
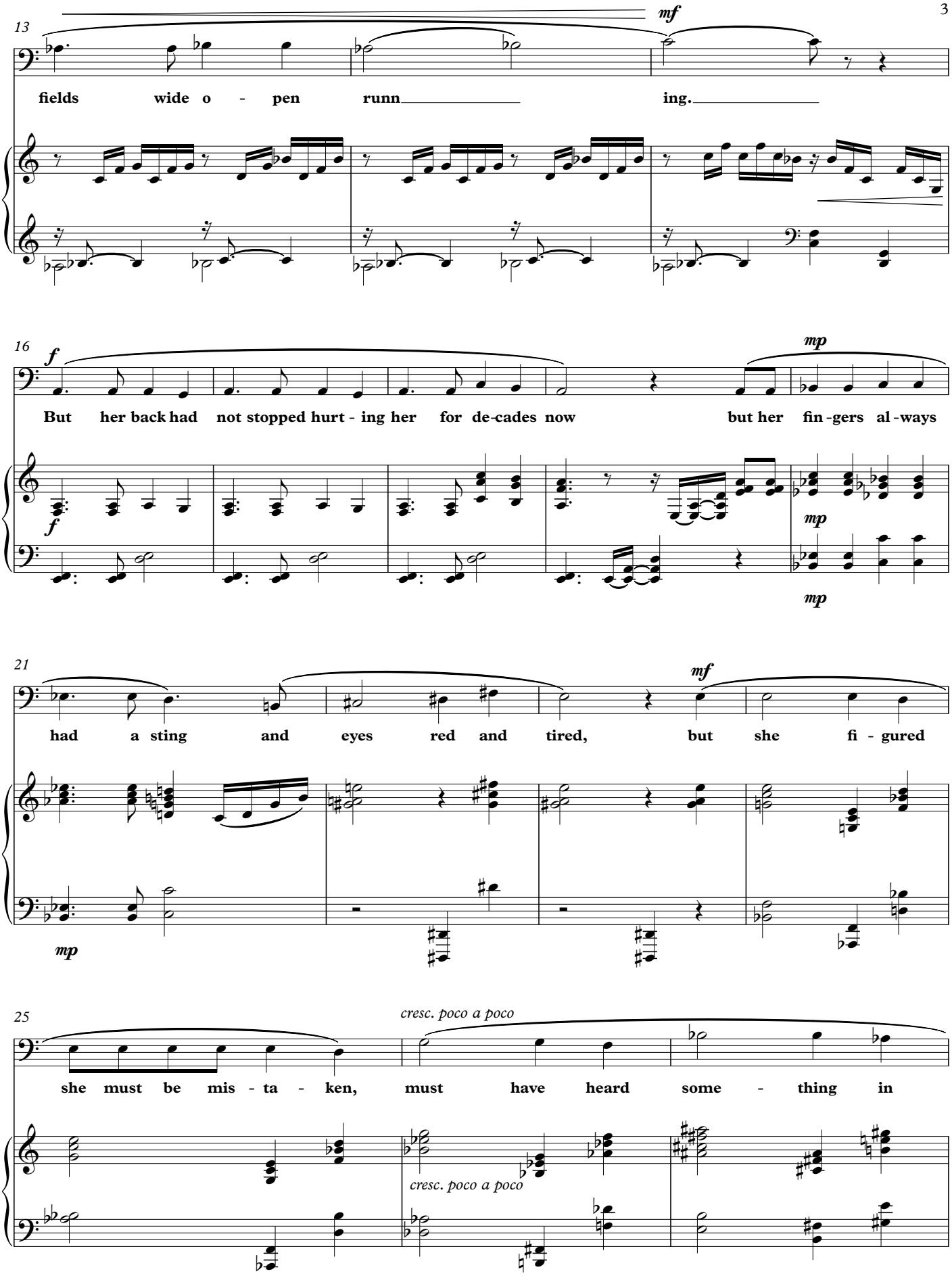
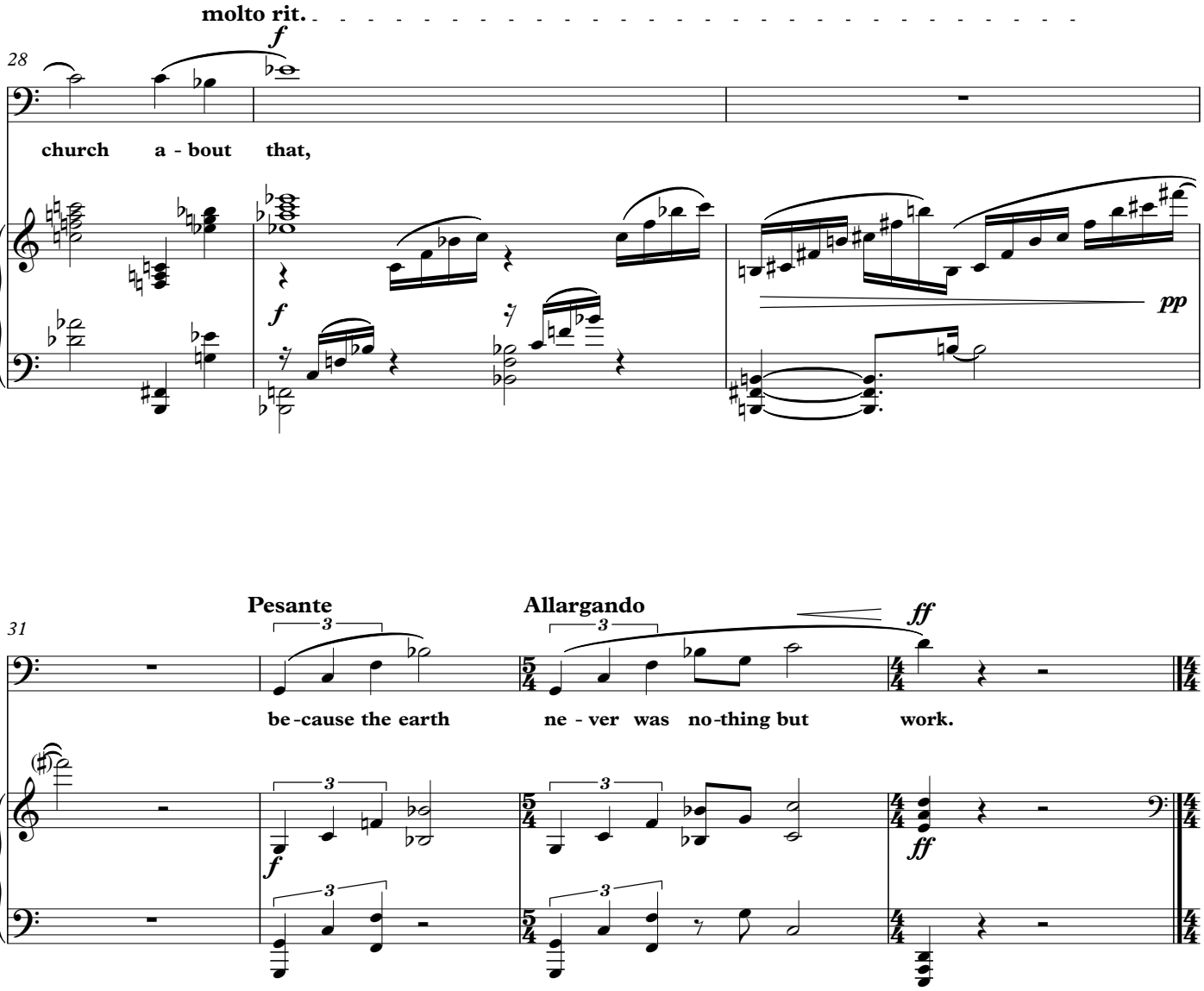
I. Land

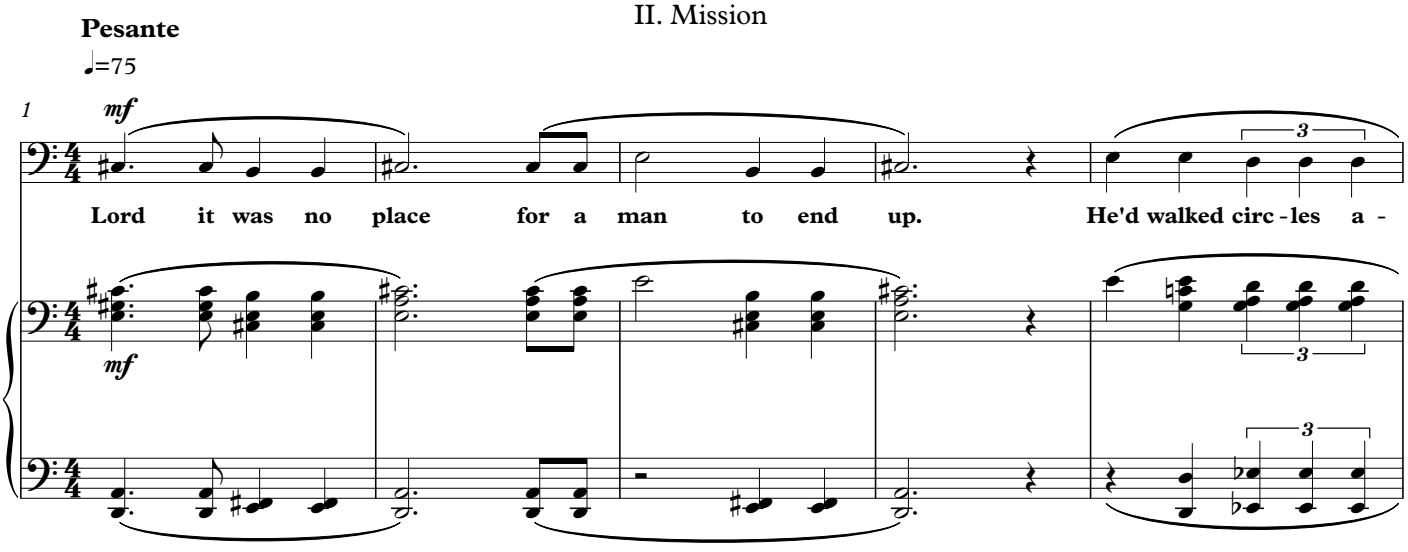

Andante
♩=80
p
Bass
Piano
She thought she could re - mem-ber a time
simile
4
when the land was beau - ti-ful to her,
7
and the clouds were the pro-vince of an
10
gels. the trees shel - ter, the

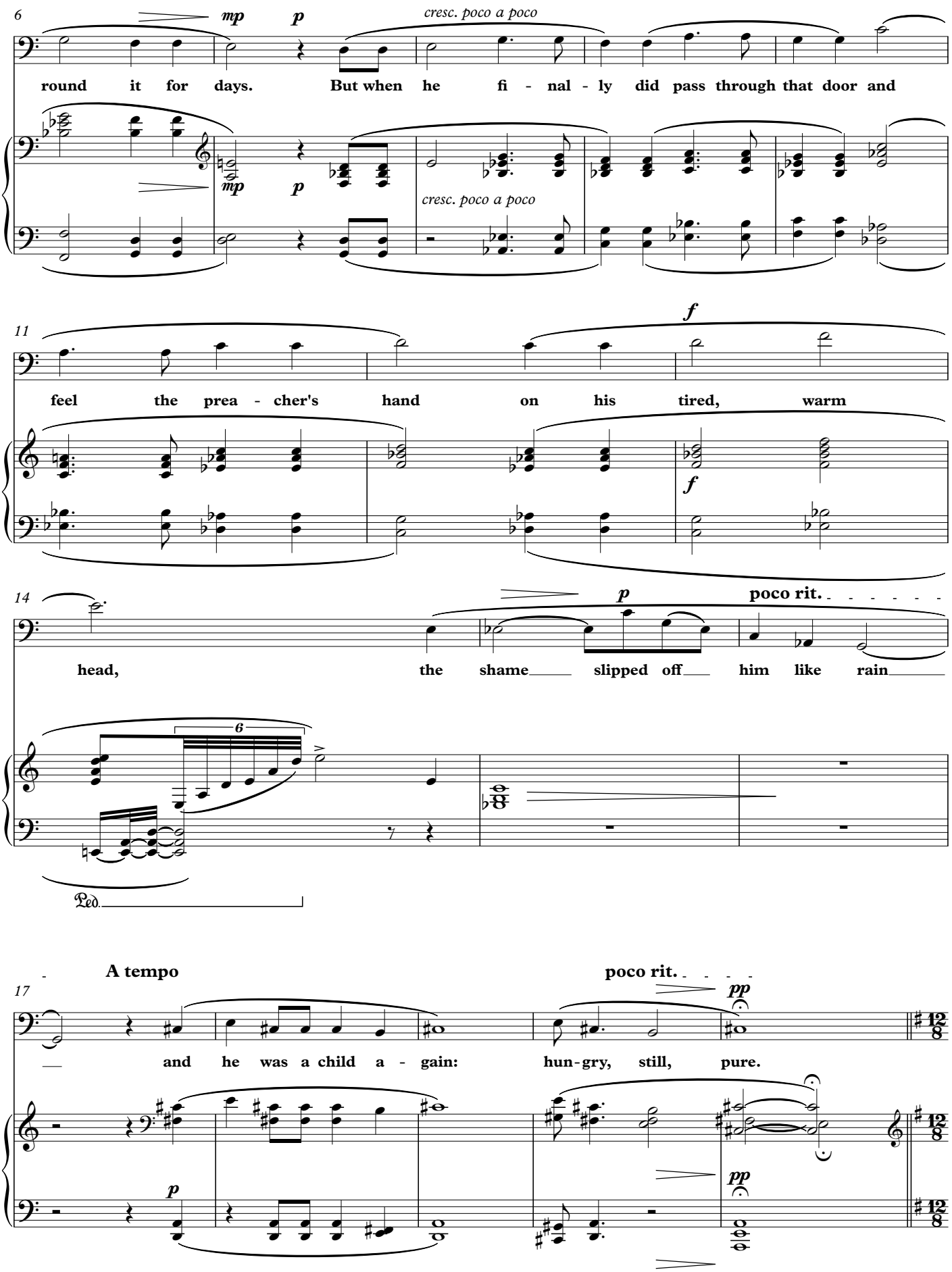

13
mf
fields wide o - pen runn ing.
16
f
mp
But her back had not stopped hurt - ing her for de-cades now but her fin-gers al-ways
21
mf
had a sting and eyes red and tired, but she fi - gured
mp
25
cresc. poco a poco
she must be mis - ta - ken, must have heard some - thing in
cresc. poco a poco


molto rit.
4 28
f
church a - bout that,
f
pp

Pesante
Allargando
31
ff
be - cause the earth ne - ver was no - thing but work.
f
ff

II. Mission


Pesante
♩=75
1
mf
Lord it was no place for a man to end up. He'd walked circ - les a -
mf


6
mp
p
cresc. poco a poco
round it for days. But when he fi - nal - ly did pass through that door and
mp
p
cresc. poco a poco
11
f
feel the prea - cher's hand on his tired, warm
f
14
p
poco rit.
head, the shame slipped off him like rain
6
Ped.
A tempo
poco rit.
17
pp
and he was a child a - gain: hun-gry, still, pure.
p
pp

III. Minstrels

Raggy

♩.=112

1

mf

It did - n't mat - ter if

f *mf*

4

no - bo - dy re - mem - bered them la - ter on.

6

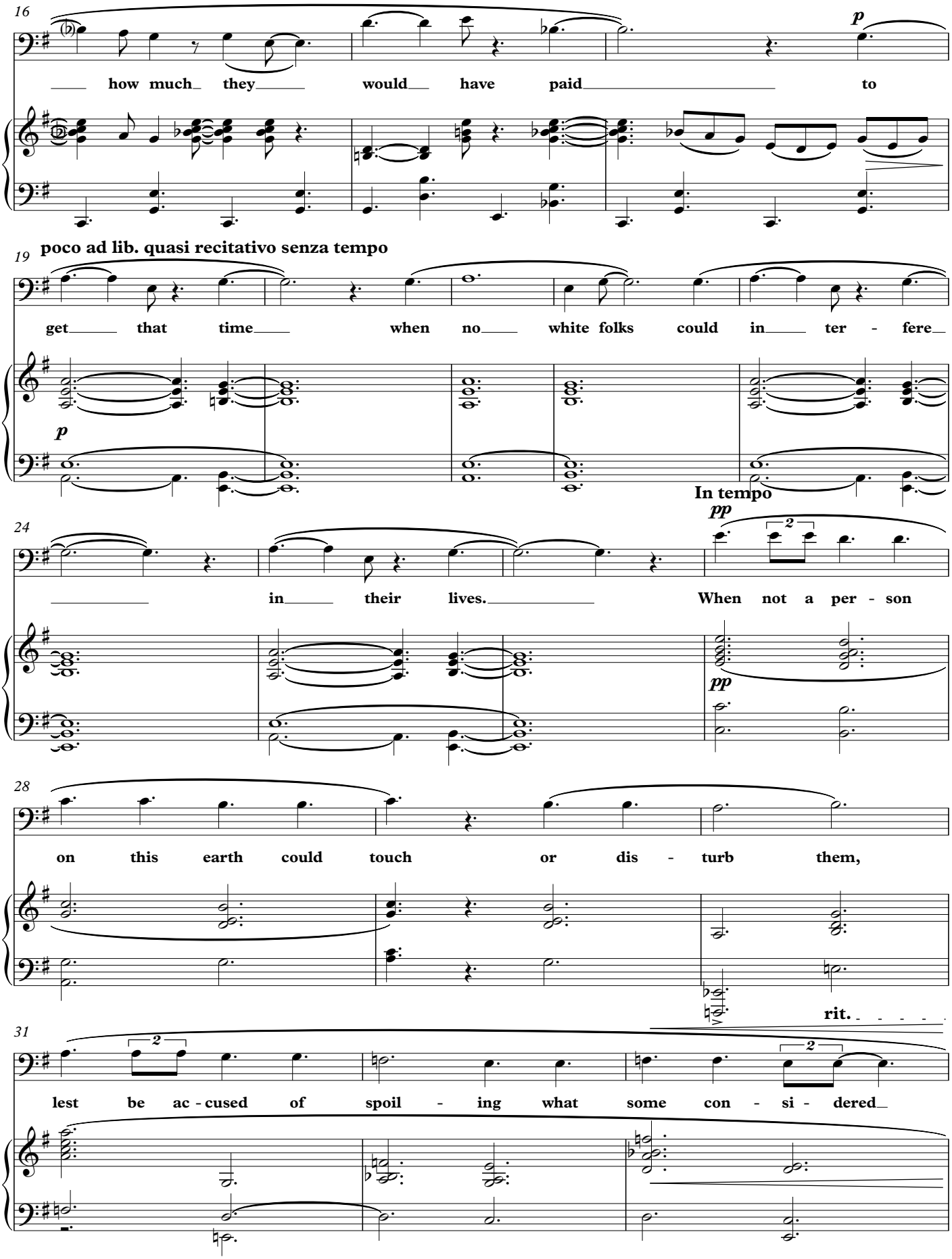
if no-bo-dy re-mem-bered them la - ter on.

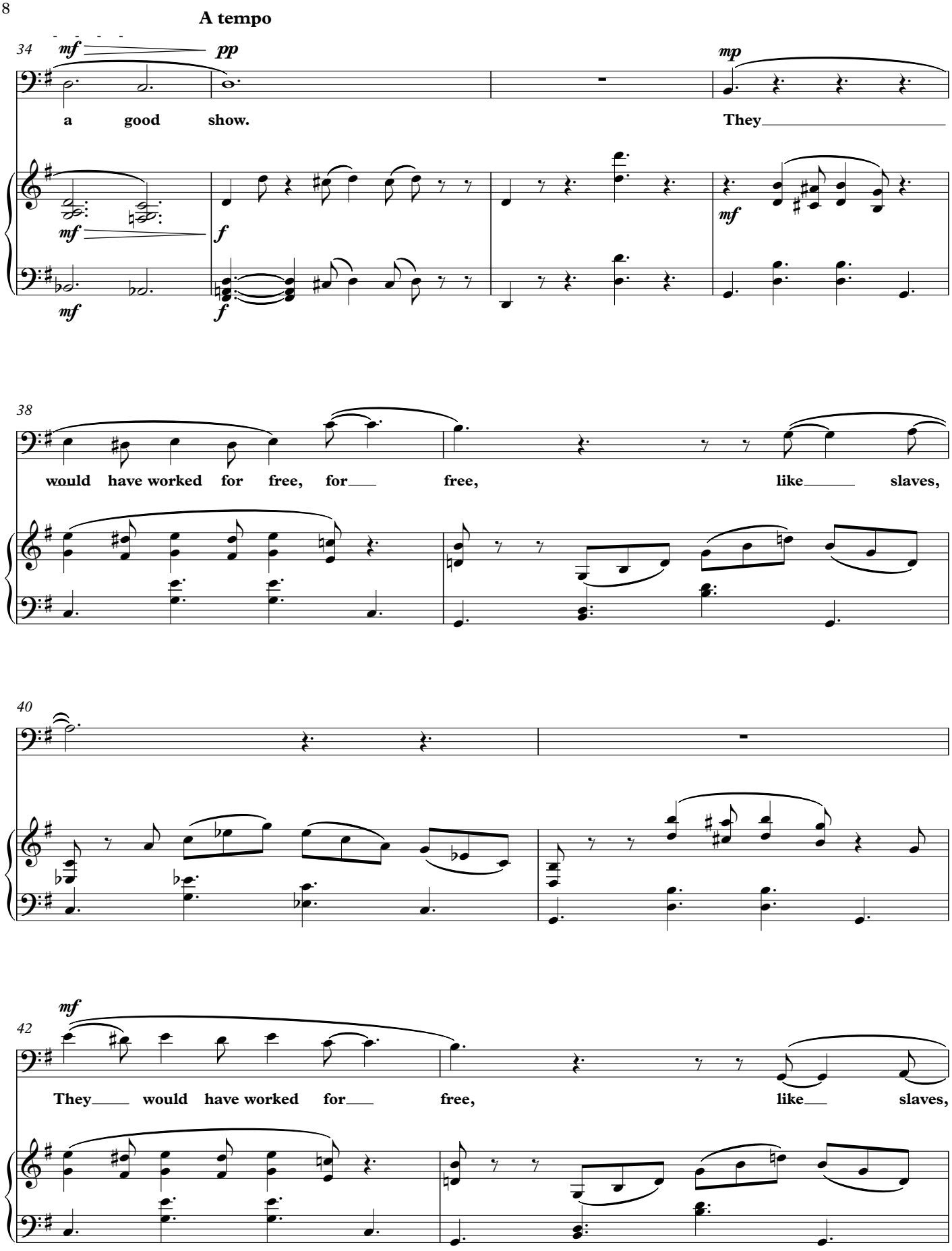
10

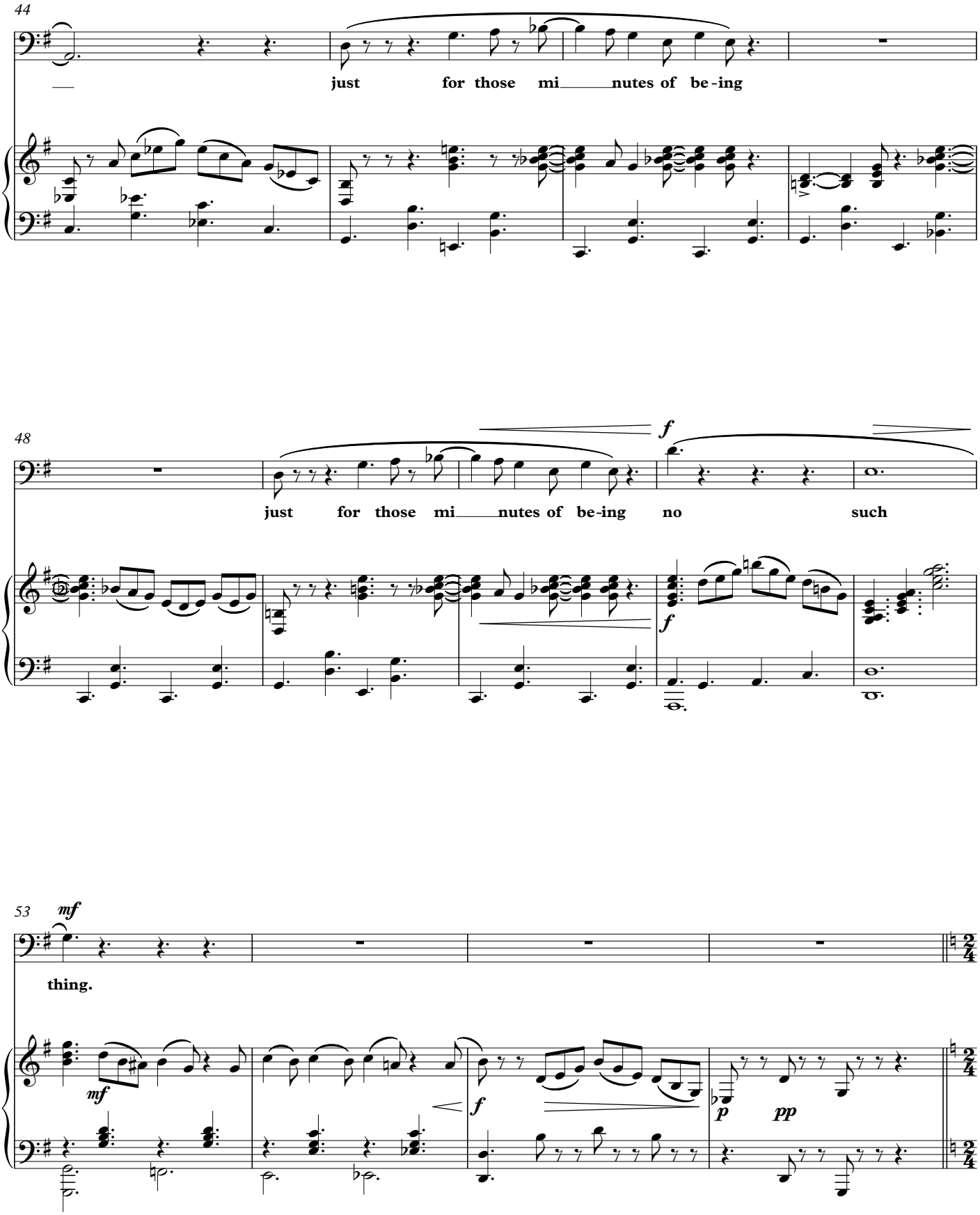
They'd had a few mo ments to them selves,

13

on that stage, And no - bo - dy knew


16
how much they would have paid to
p
19
poco ad lib. quasi recitativo senza tempo
get that time when no white folks could in ter - fere
p
In tempo
24
in their lives. When not a per - son
pp
pp
28
on this earth could touch or dis - turb them,
rit.
31
lest be ac - cused of spoil - ing what some con - si - dered

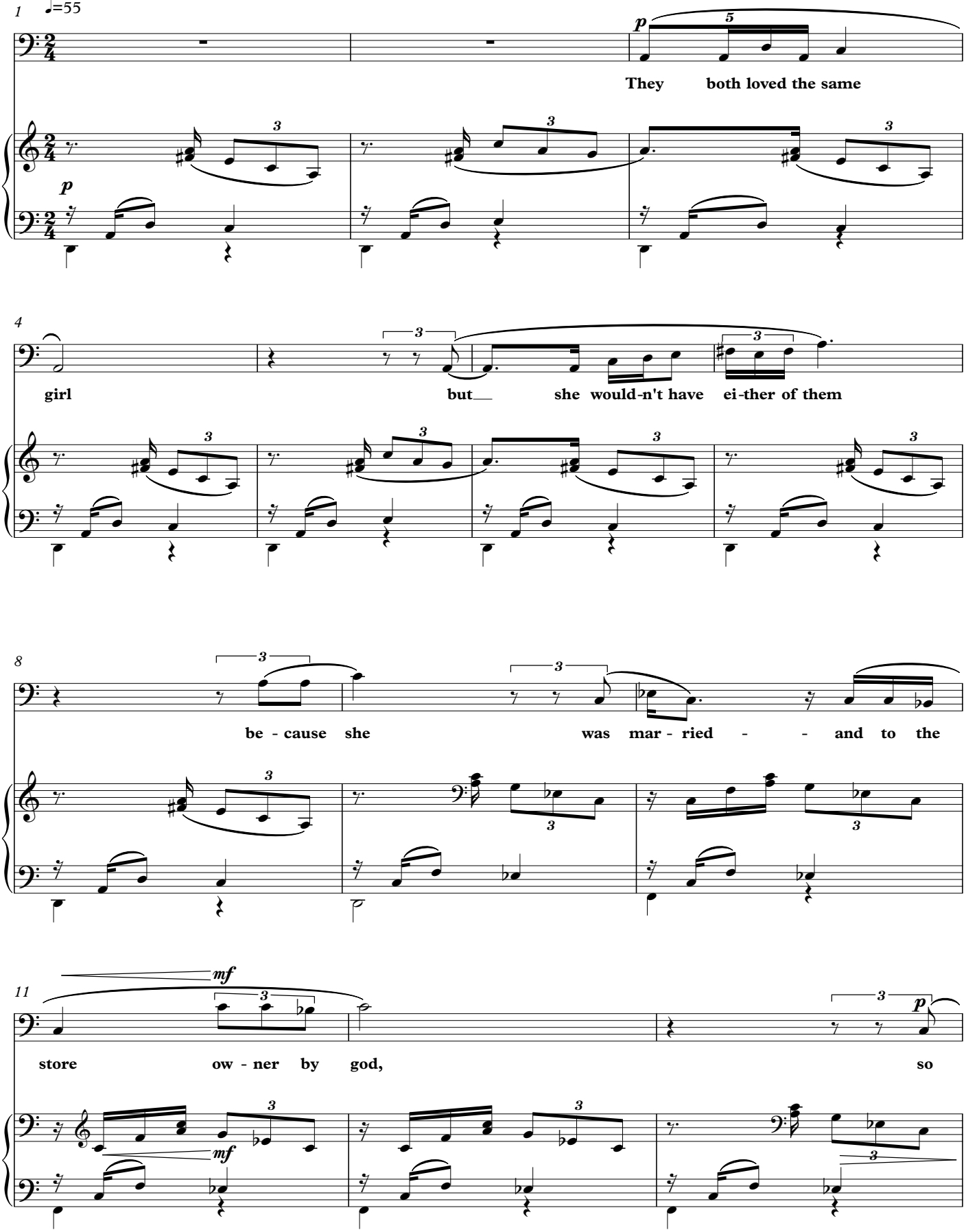

A tempo
34
mf
pp
mp
a good show.
They
mf
f
mf
f
38
would have worked for free, for free, like slaves,
40
mf
42
They would have worked for free, like slaves,

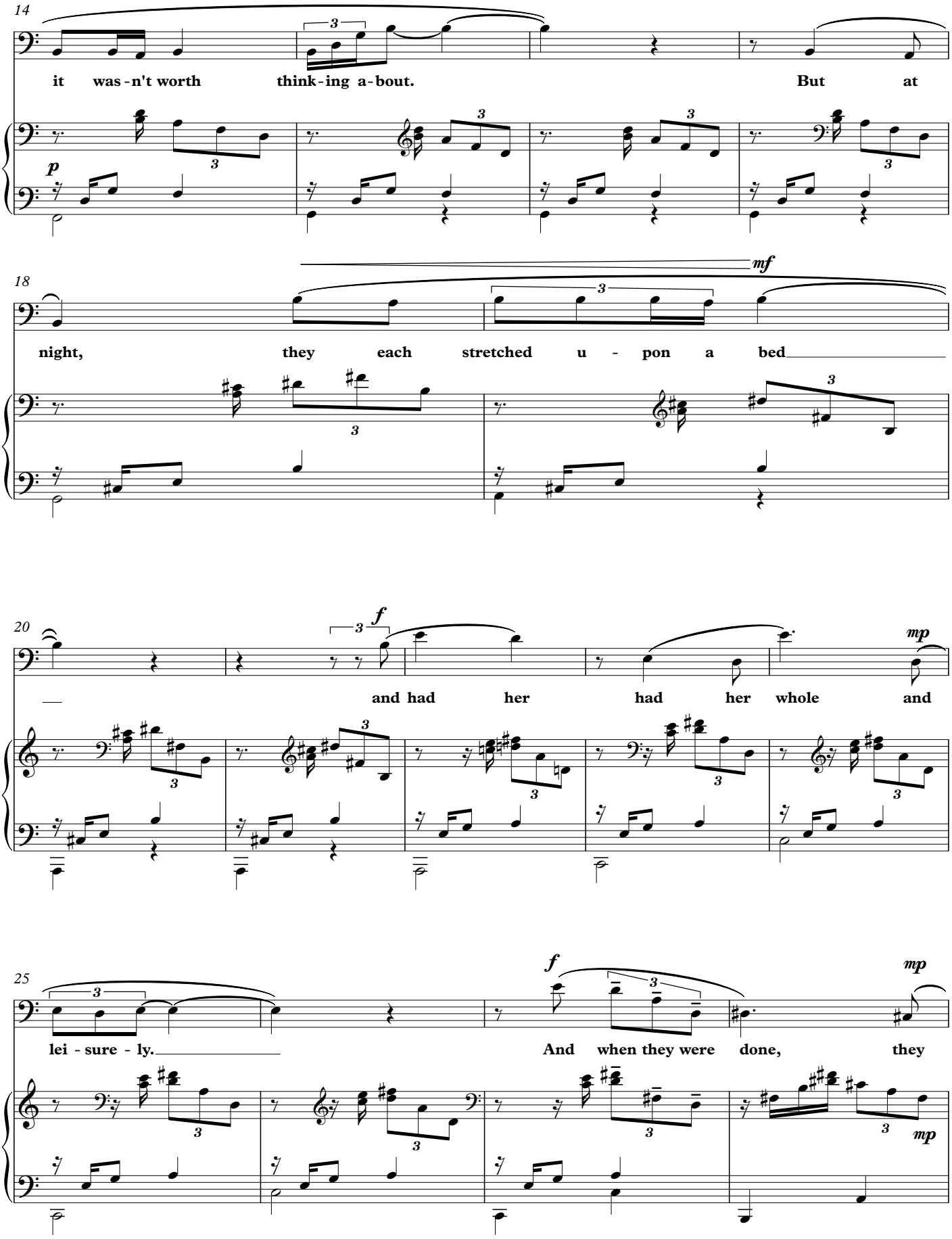

44
just for those mi nutes of be-ing
48
just for those mi nutes of be-ing no such
f
f
53
mf
thing.
mf
f
p
pp

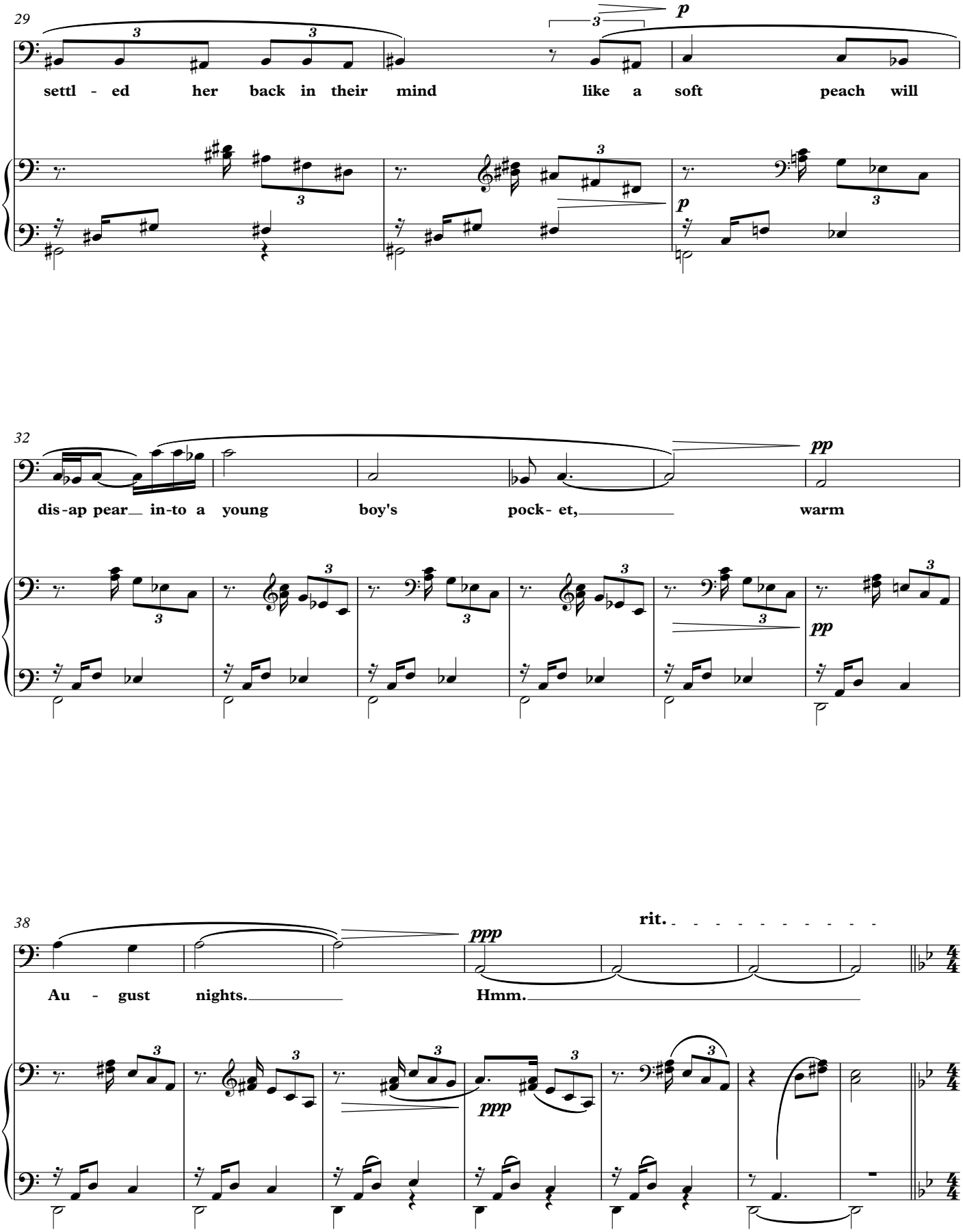
Sexy

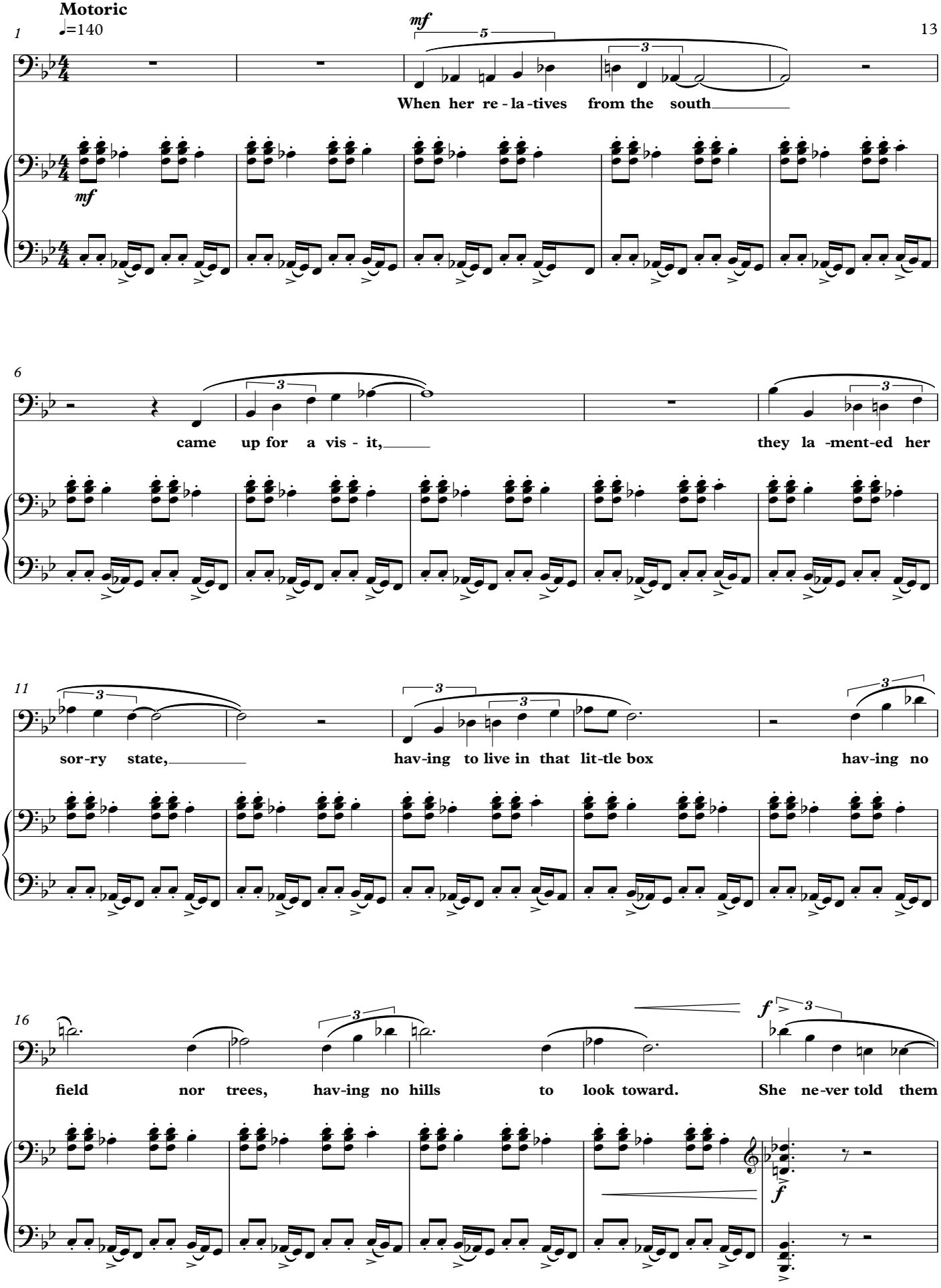
IV. Boys

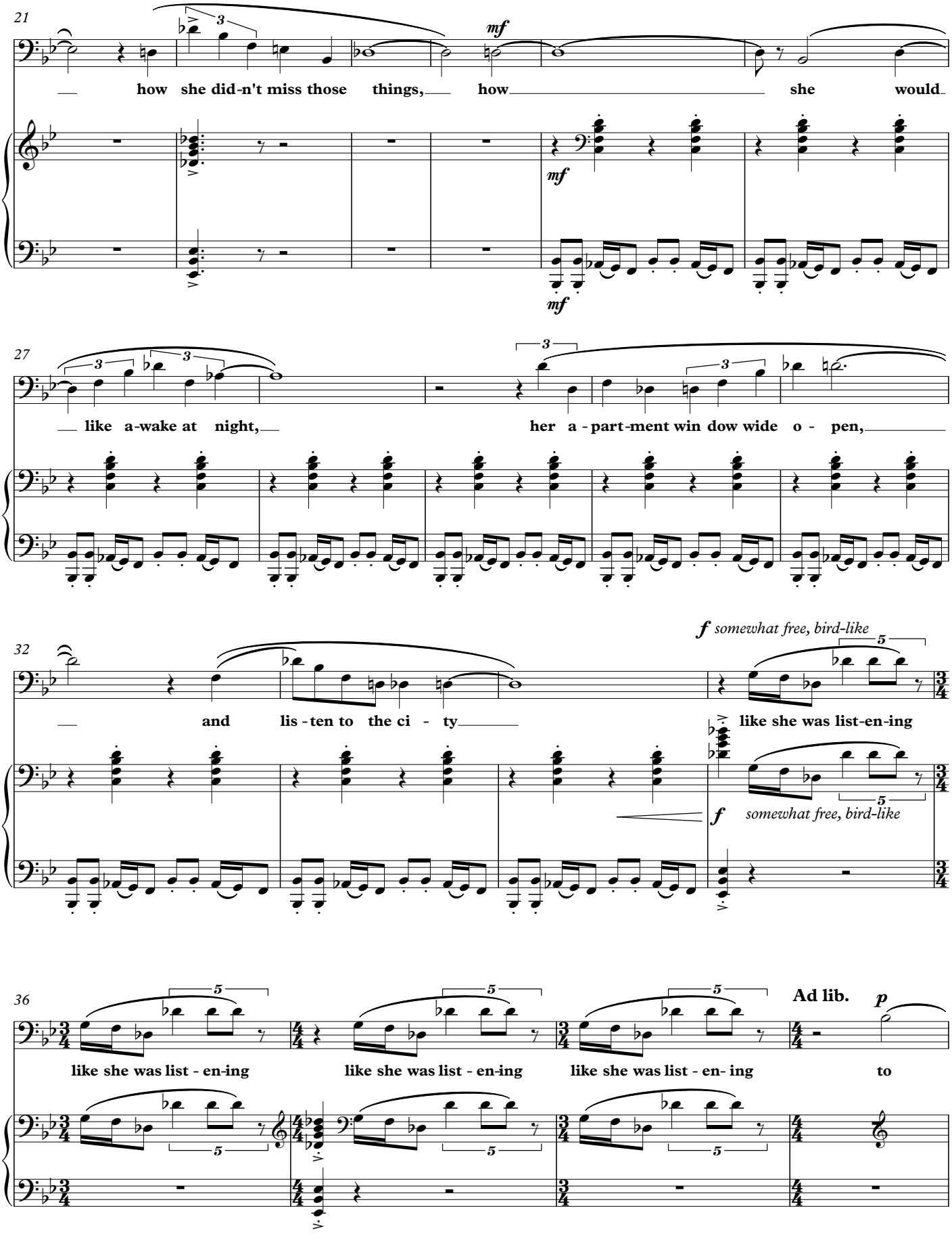
1 ♩=55

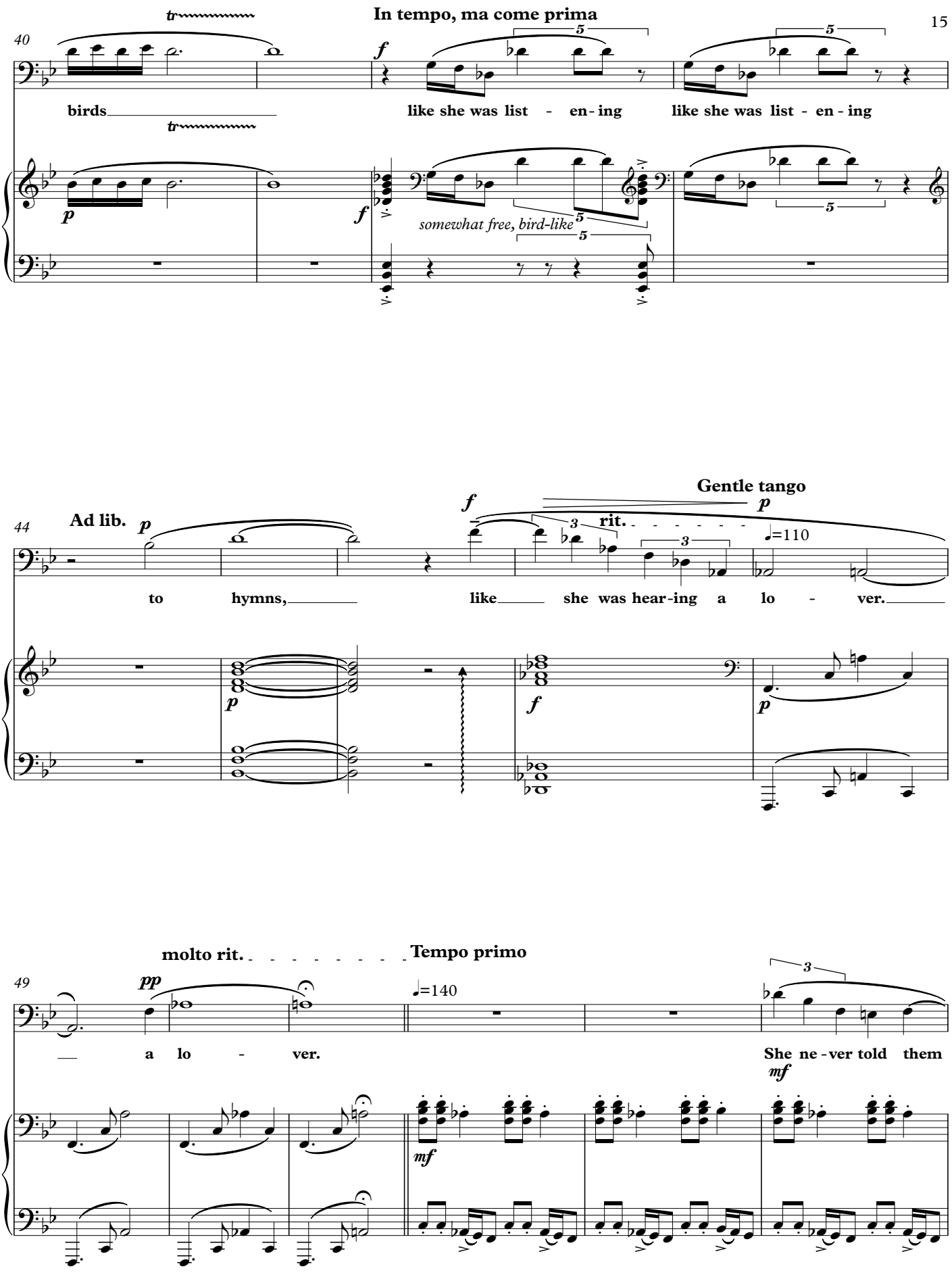


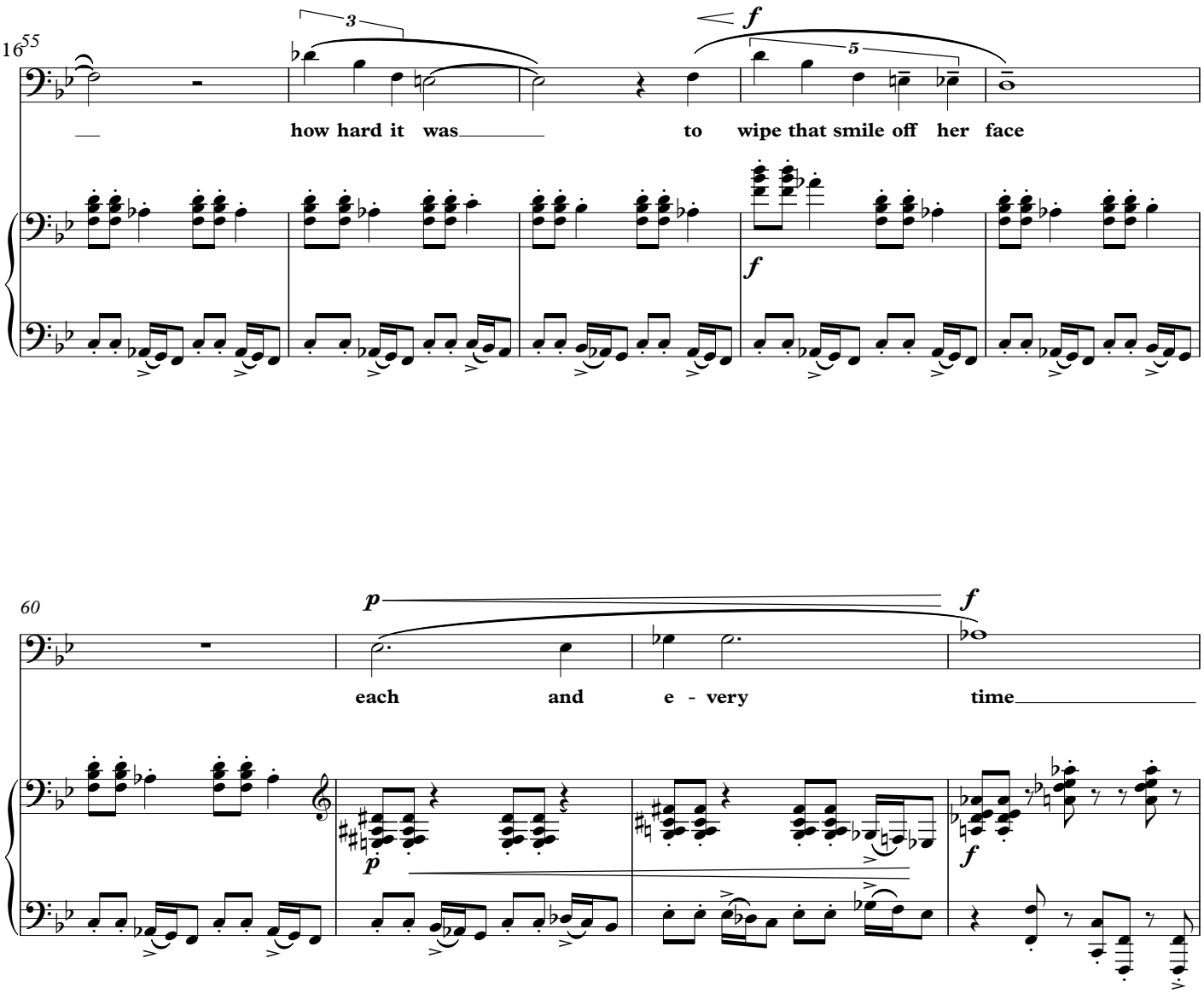

14
it was-n't worth think-ing a-bout. But at
p
18
mf
night, they each stretched u - pon a bed
20
f
and had her had her whole and
mp
25
lei - sure - ly. And when they were done, they
f
mp
mp

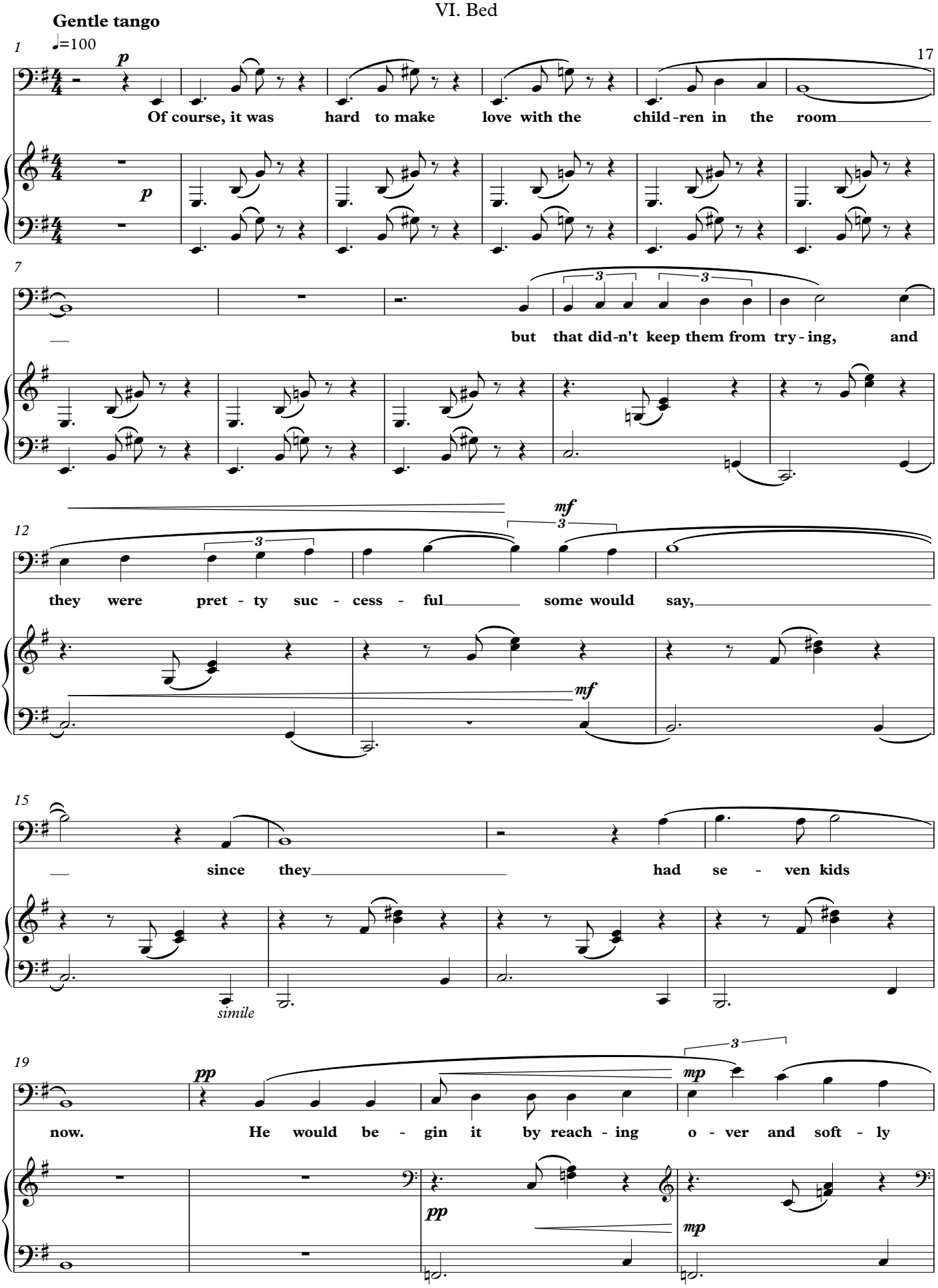

29
p
settl - ed her back in their mind like a soft peach will
32
pp
dis-ap pear in-to a young boy's pock- et, warm
38
rit.
ppp
Au - gust nights.
Hmm.

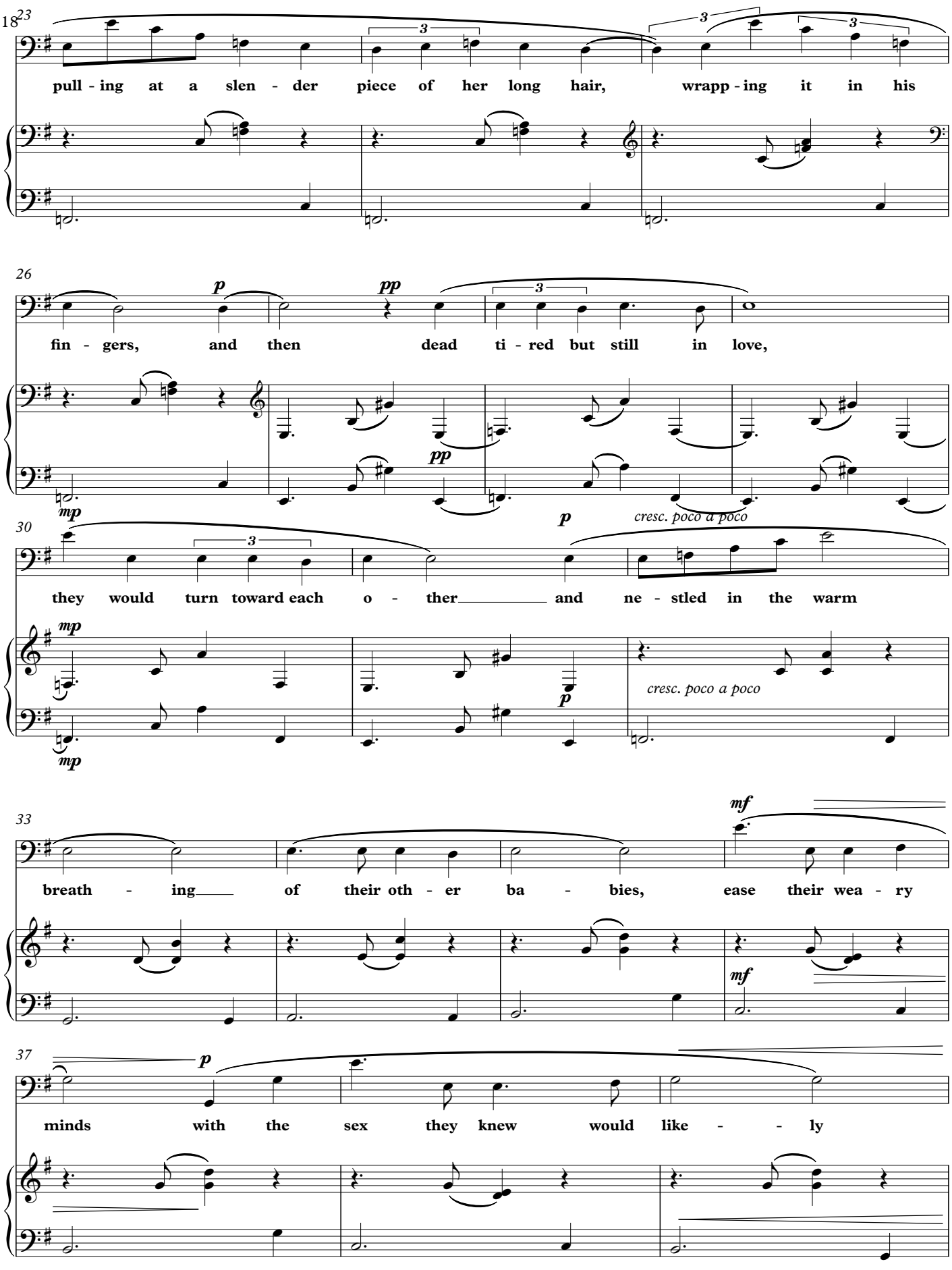

Motoric
♩=140
mf
When her re - la - tives from the south
came up for a vis - it,
they la - ment-ed her
sor-ry state,
hav-ing to live in that lit-tle box
hav-ing no
field nor trees, hav-ing no hills to look toward. She ne-ver told them
f


21
how she did-n't miss those things, how she would
mf
mf
mf
27
like a-wake at night, her a - part-ment win dow wide o - pen,
32
and lis - ten to the ci - ty
like she was list-en-ing
f somewhat free, bird-like
f somewhat free, bird-like
36
like she was list - en-ing
like she was list - en-ing
like she was list - en- ing
Ad lib.
p
to


40
In tempo, ma come prima
birds
like she was list - en - ing
like she was list - en - ing
somewhat free, bird-like
44
Ad lib.
Gentle tango
rit.
=110
to hymns,
like she was hear-ing a lo - ver.
49
molto rit.
Tempo primo
=140
a lo - ver.
She ne - ver told them


16 55
how hard it was to wipe that smile off her face
60
each and e - very time
64
Ad lib.
they com - plained.
In tempo ma un poco meno mosso
♩.=130


Gentle tango
♩=100
1
17
p
Of course, it was hard to make love with the child-ren in the room
7
but that did-n't keep them from try-ing, and
12
mf
they were pret-ty suc-cess-ful some would say,
15
since they had se-ven kids
simile
19
pp
mp
now. He would be-gin it by reach-ing o-ver and soft-ly


23
pull - ing at a slen - der piece of her long hair, wrapp - ing it in his
26
p
pp
fin - gers, and then dead ti - red but still in love,
mp
pp
30
they would turn toward each o - ther and ne - stled in the warm
mp
p
cresc. poco a poco
mp
p
cresc. poco a poco
33
mf
breath - ing of their oth - er ba - bies, ease their wea - ry
mf
37
p
minds with the sex they knew would like - - ly

poco rit. A tempo

40

mf *mp* *p* *pp*

make them poor - er and

mf *mp* *p*

46

rit.

mp *pp*

rich - er at the same time.

pp *mp* *pp*

VII. Rocker

Gently rocking

1 ♩=75

p

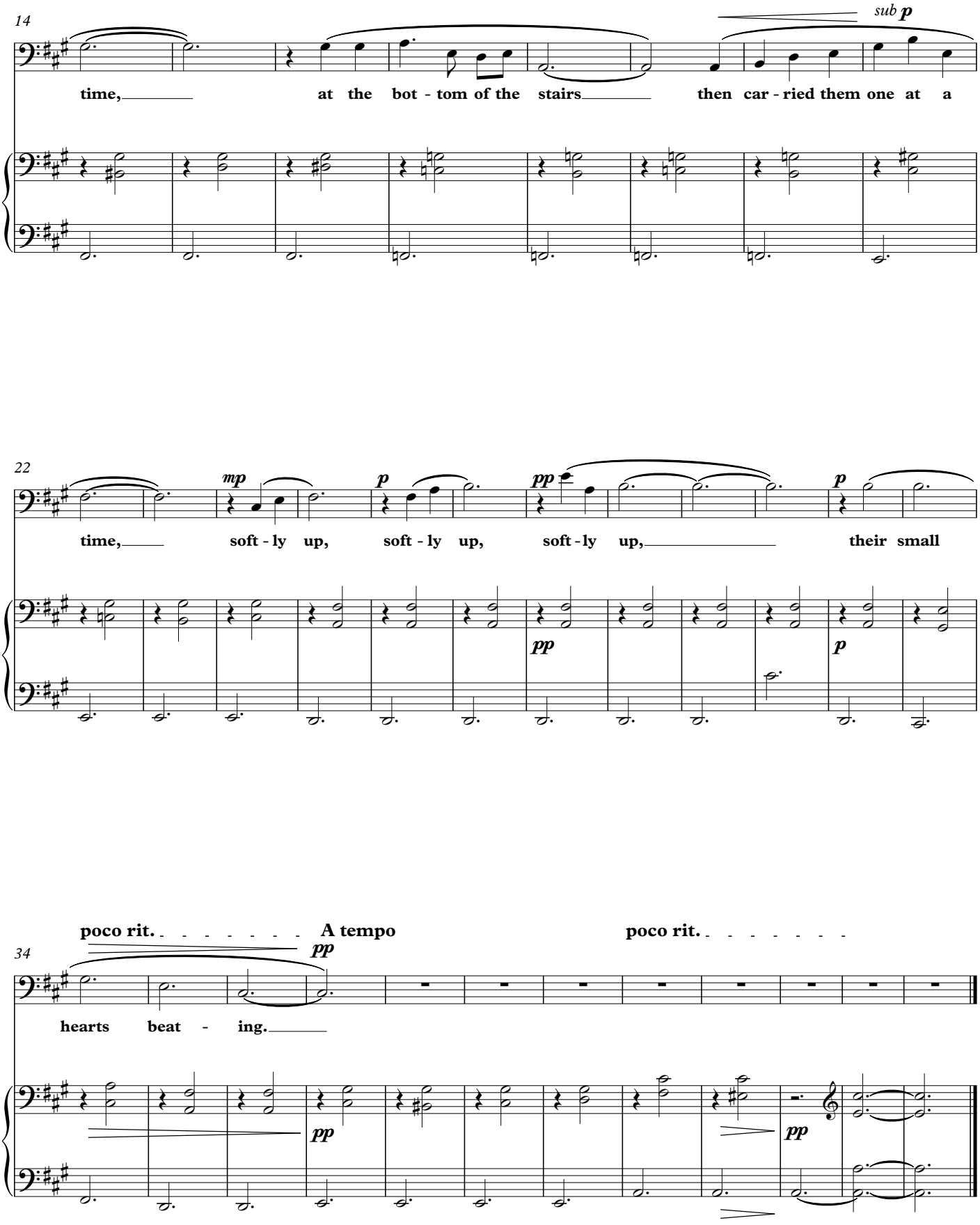
She want - ed to be sure to hear the

p

7

sub p

o - ther ba - bies if they cried, so she nursed them, one at a


14
sub p
time, at the bot - tom of the stairs then car - ried them one at a
22
mp
p
pp
p
time, soft - ly up, soft - ly up, soft - ly up, their small
pp
p
poco rit.
A tempo
poco rit.
34
pp
hearts beat - ing.
pp
pp