Paul Salerni

Something Permanent

(poems by Cynthia Rylant on photographs by Walker Evans)

for

Soprano and Pianoforte

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

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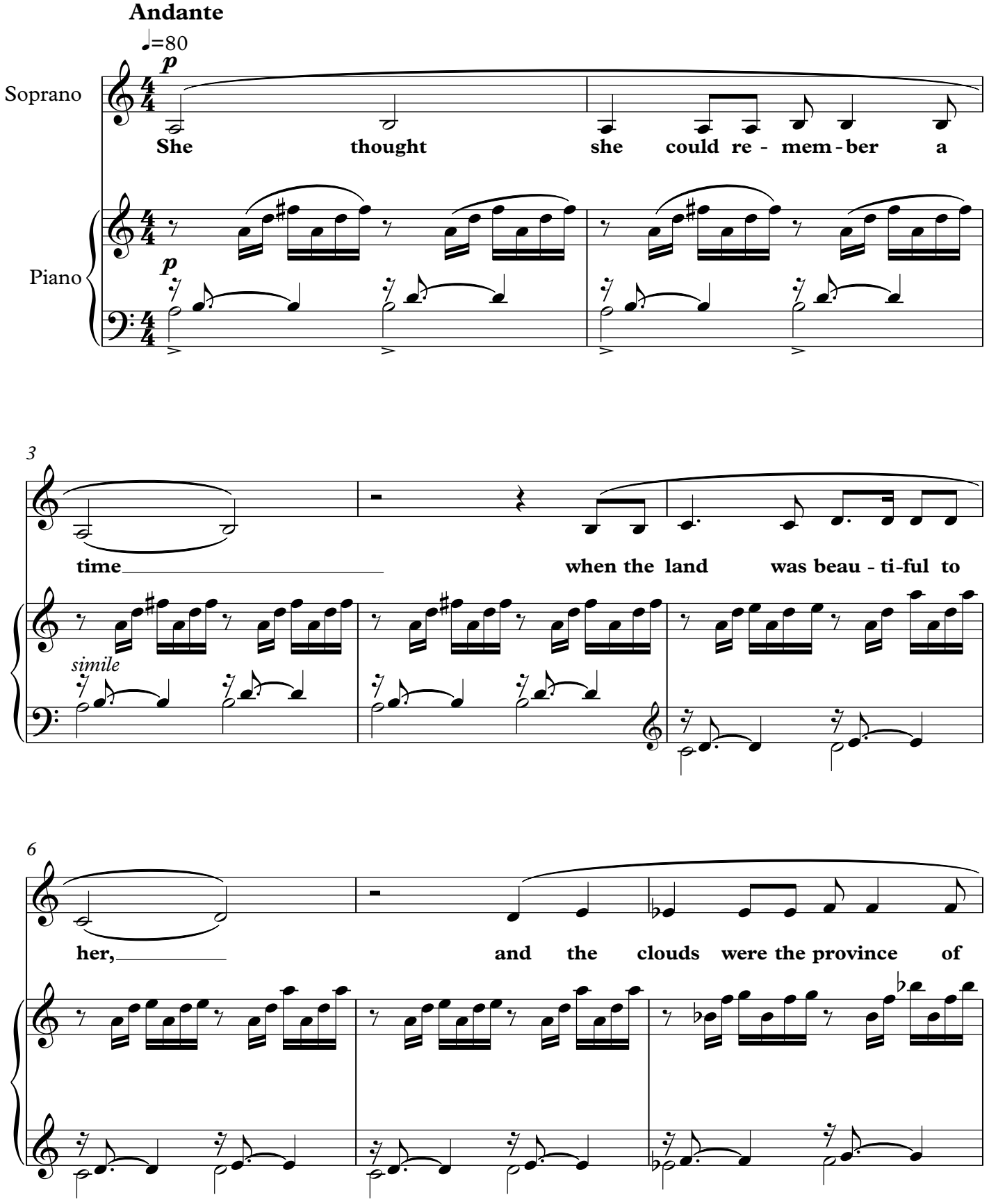
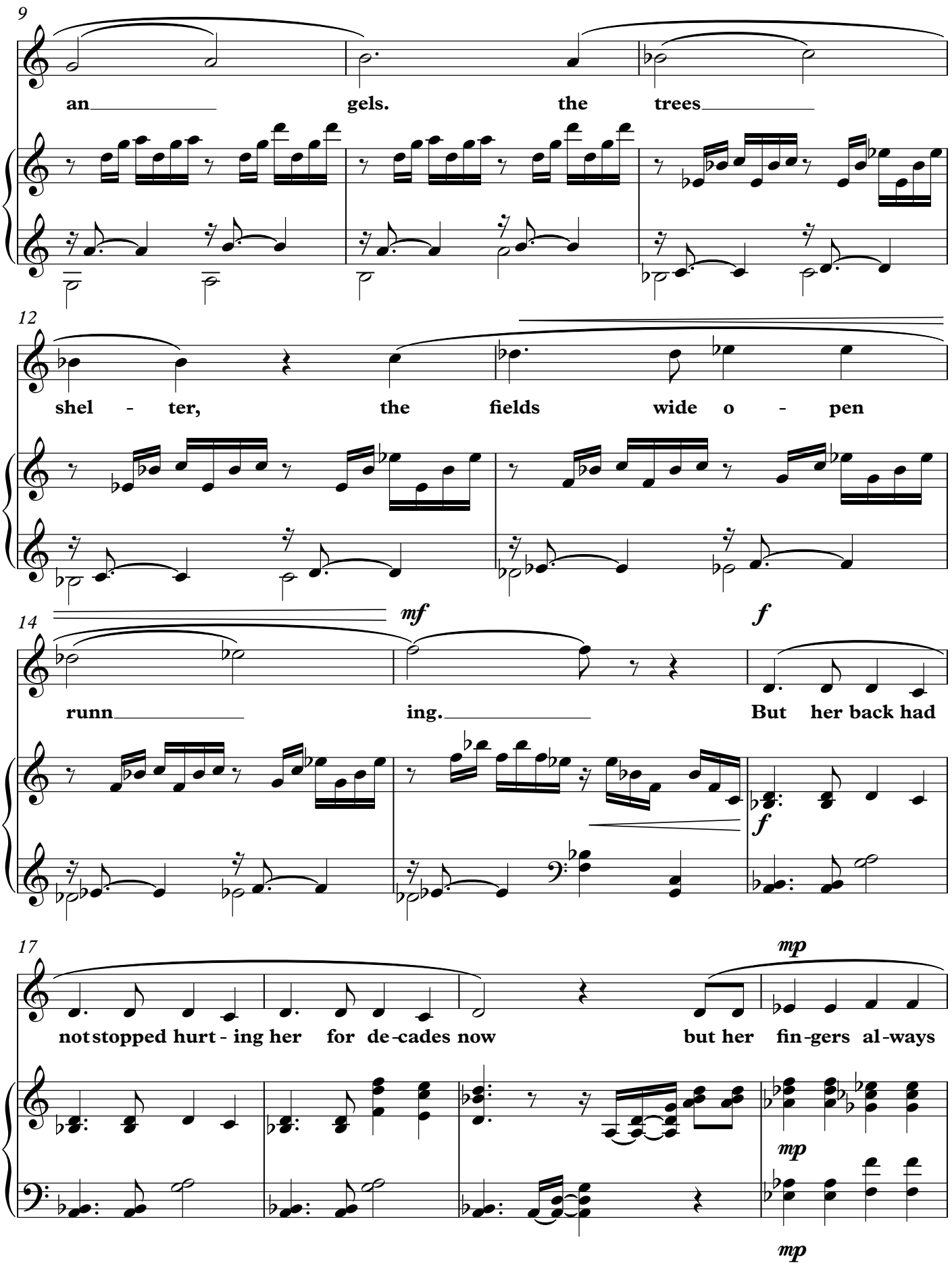
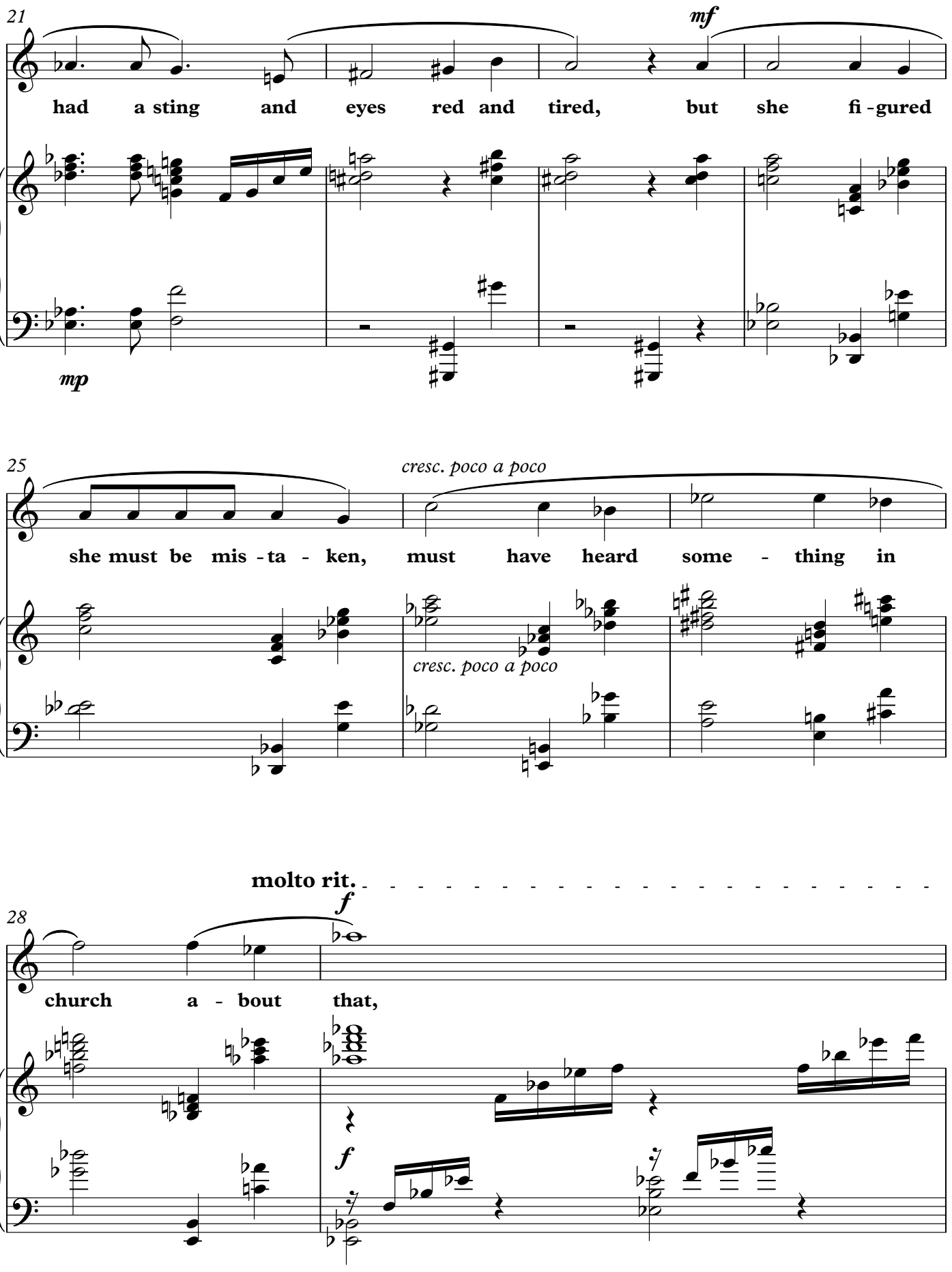
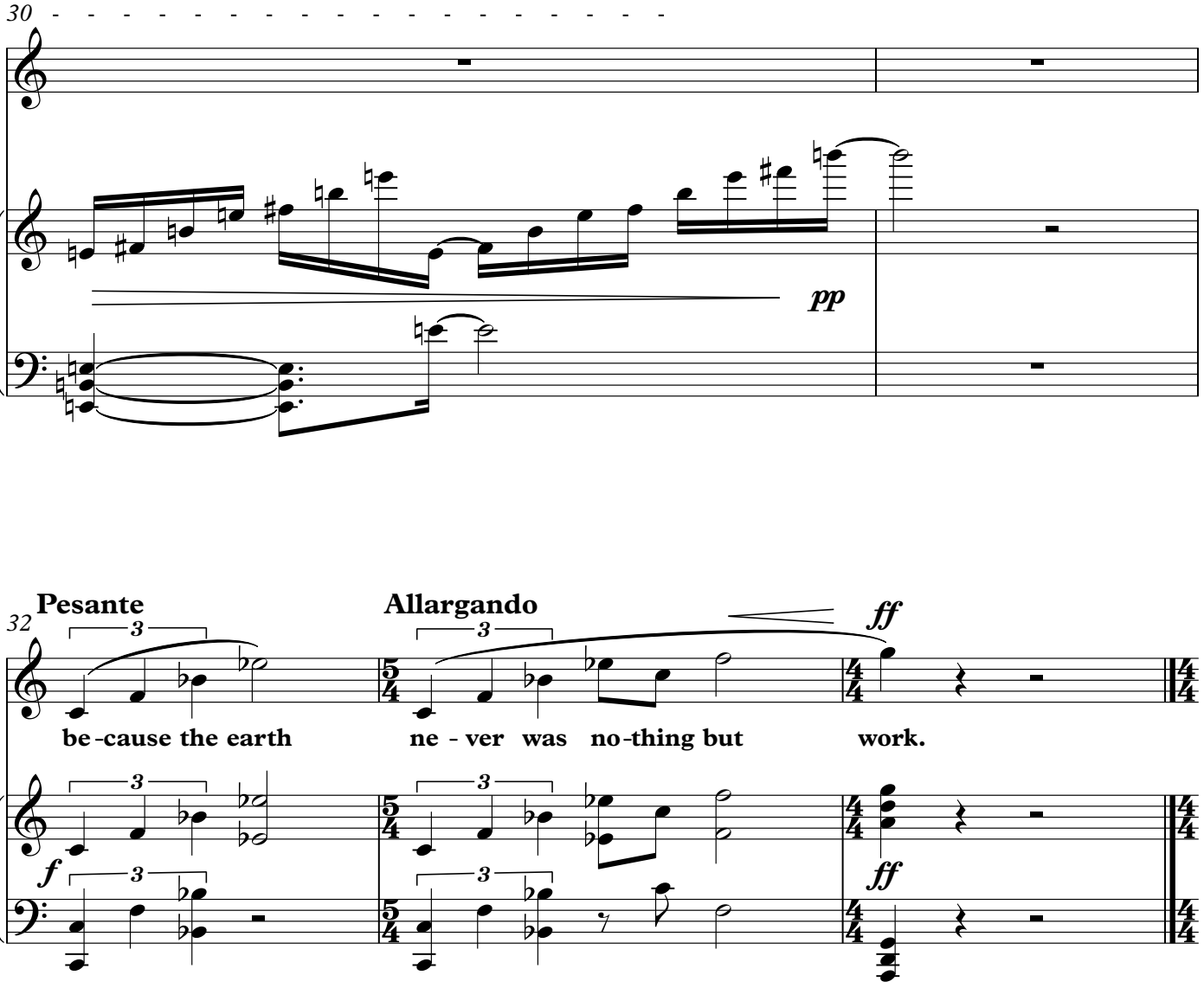
I. Land


Andante
♩=80
p
Soprano
She thought she could re - mem - ber a
Piano
p
3
time
when the land was beau - ti-ful to
simile
6
her,
and the clouds were the province of

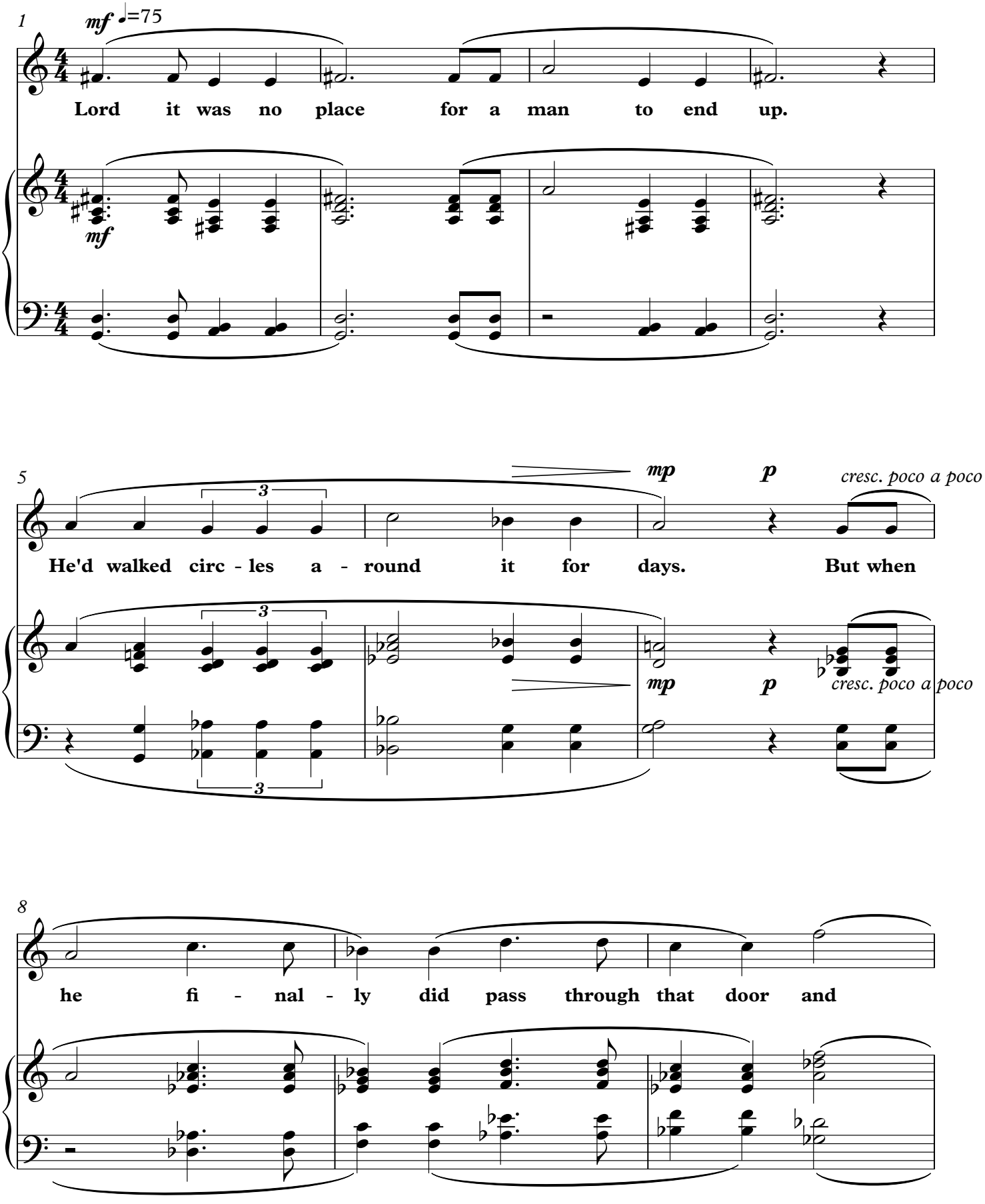

9
an gels. the trees
12
shel - ter, the fields wide o - pen
mf
f
14
runn ing. But her back had
f
17
not stopped hurt - ing her for de-cades now but her fin-gers al-ways
mp
mp
mp

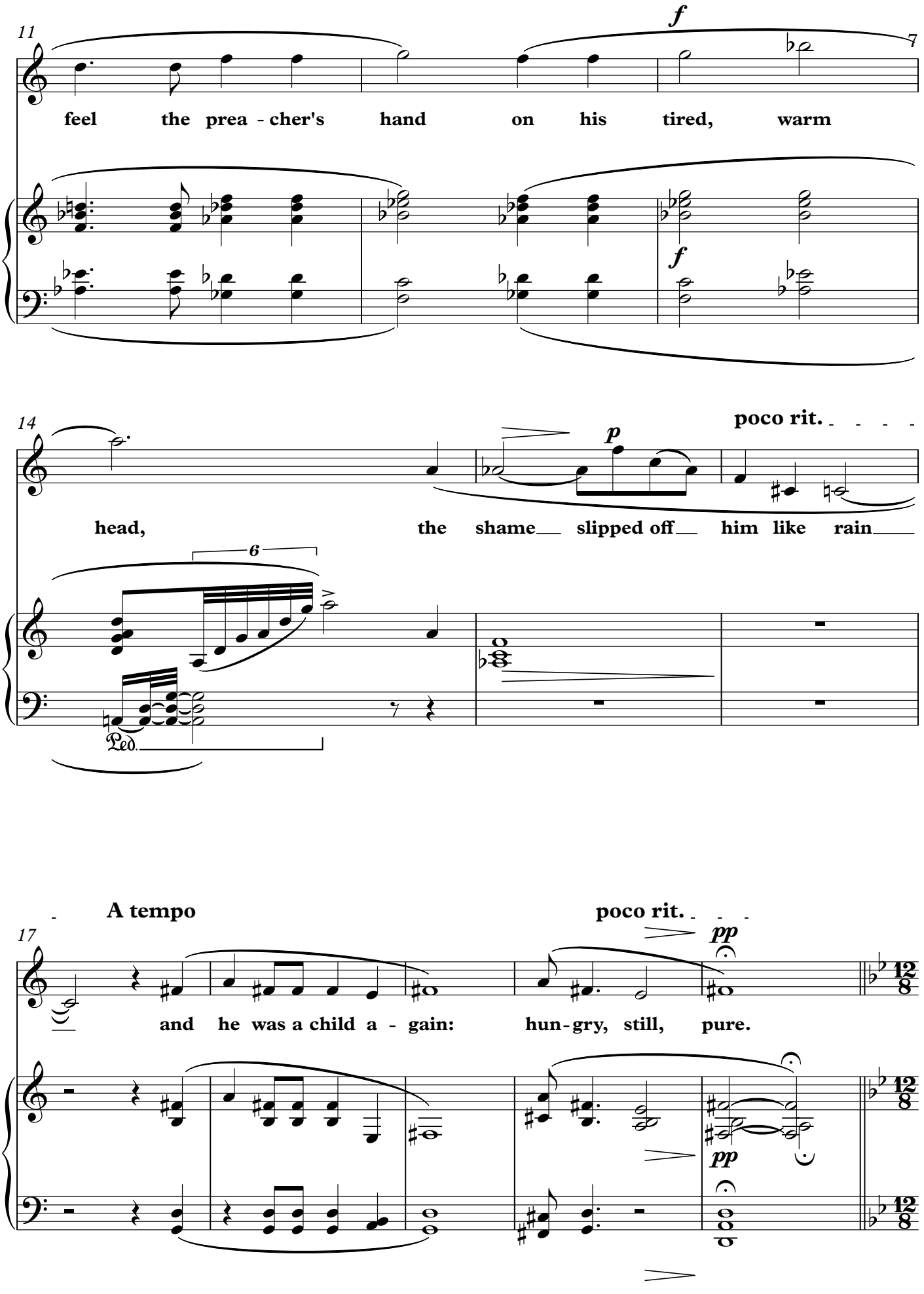

21
mf
had a sting and eyes red and tired, but she fi - gured
mp
25
cresc. poco a poco
she must be mis - ta - ken, must have heard some - thing in
cresc. poco a poco
molto rit.
28
f
church a - bout that,
f


30
pp
Pesante
Allargando
32
ff
be-cause the earth
ne - ver was no-thing but
work.
f
ff

Pesante

II. Mission




11
f
feel the prea - cher's hand on his tired, warm
f
14
poco rit.
p
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.
pp

III. Minstrels

Raggy

♩.=112

1

mf

It did-n't mat-ter if

f

mf

4

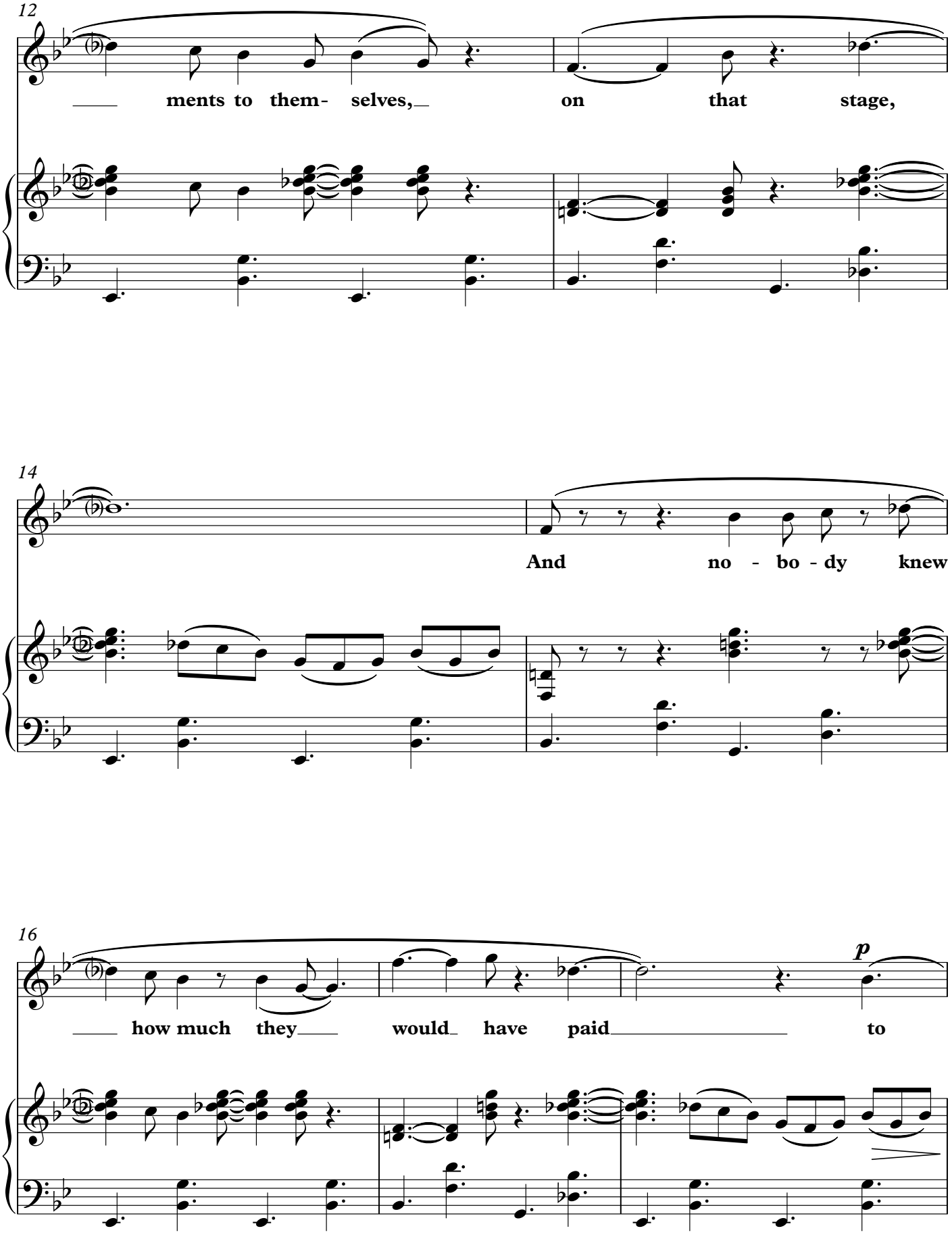
no - bo - dy re - mem -bered them la - ter on.

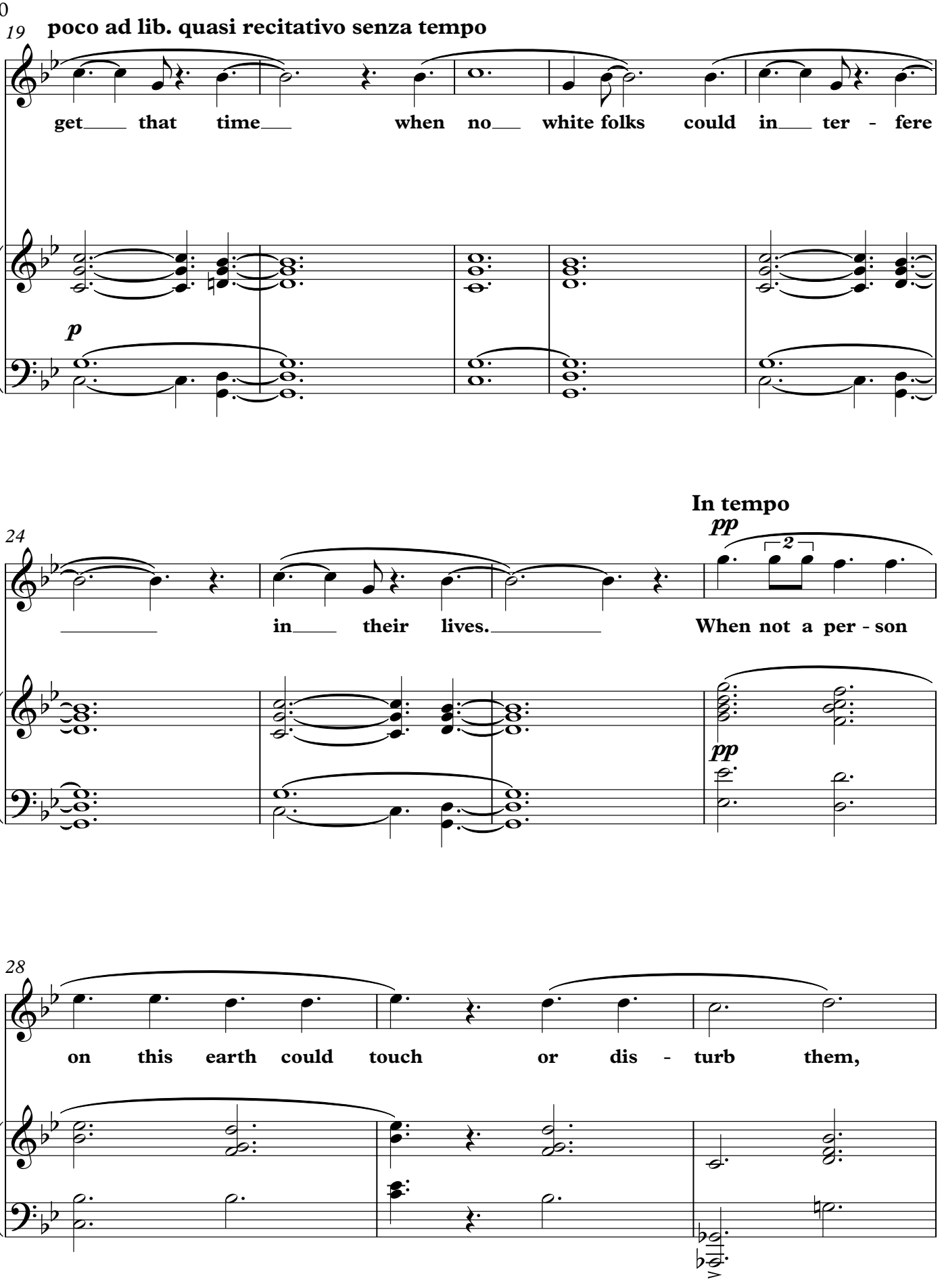
6

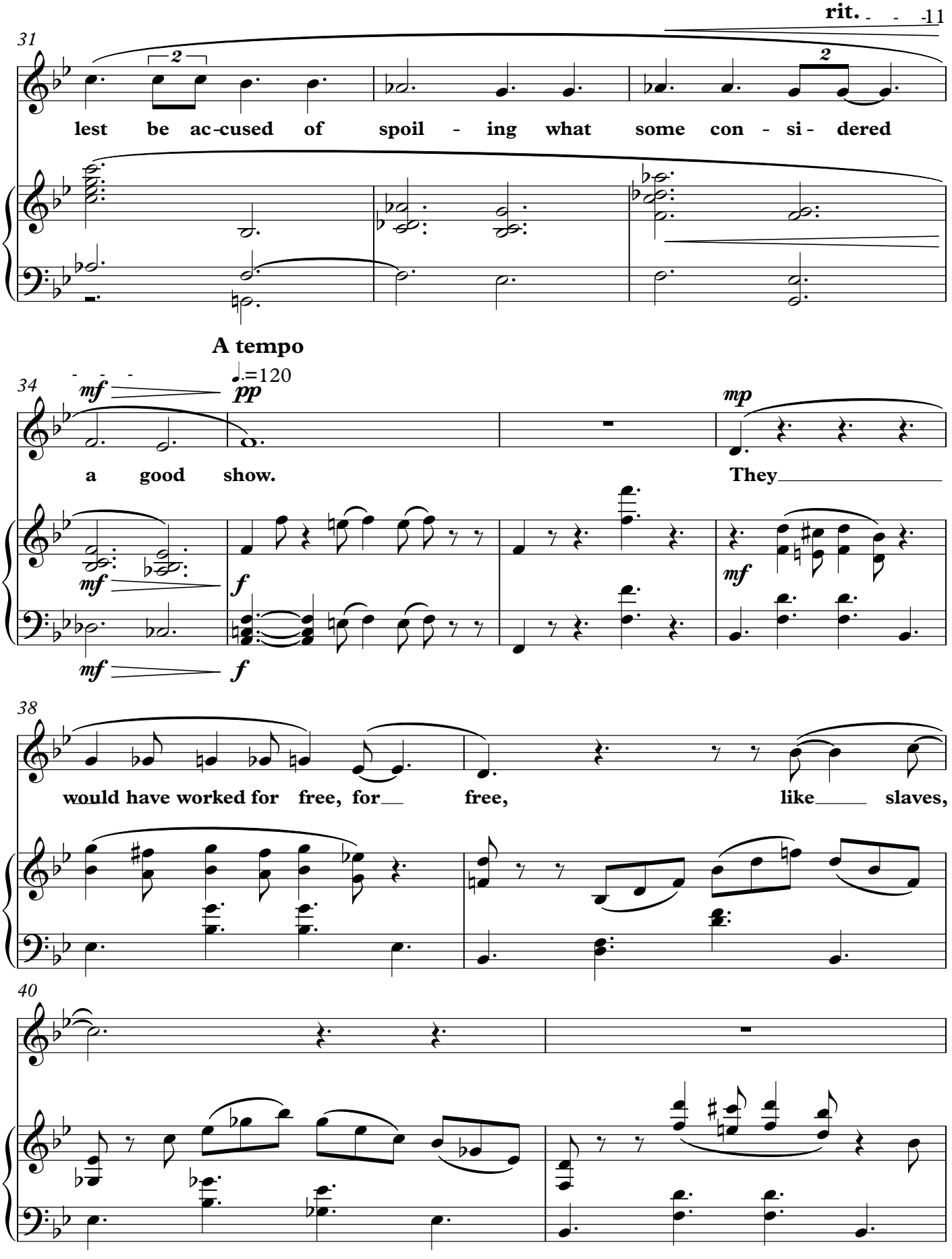
if no-bo-dy re-mem-bered

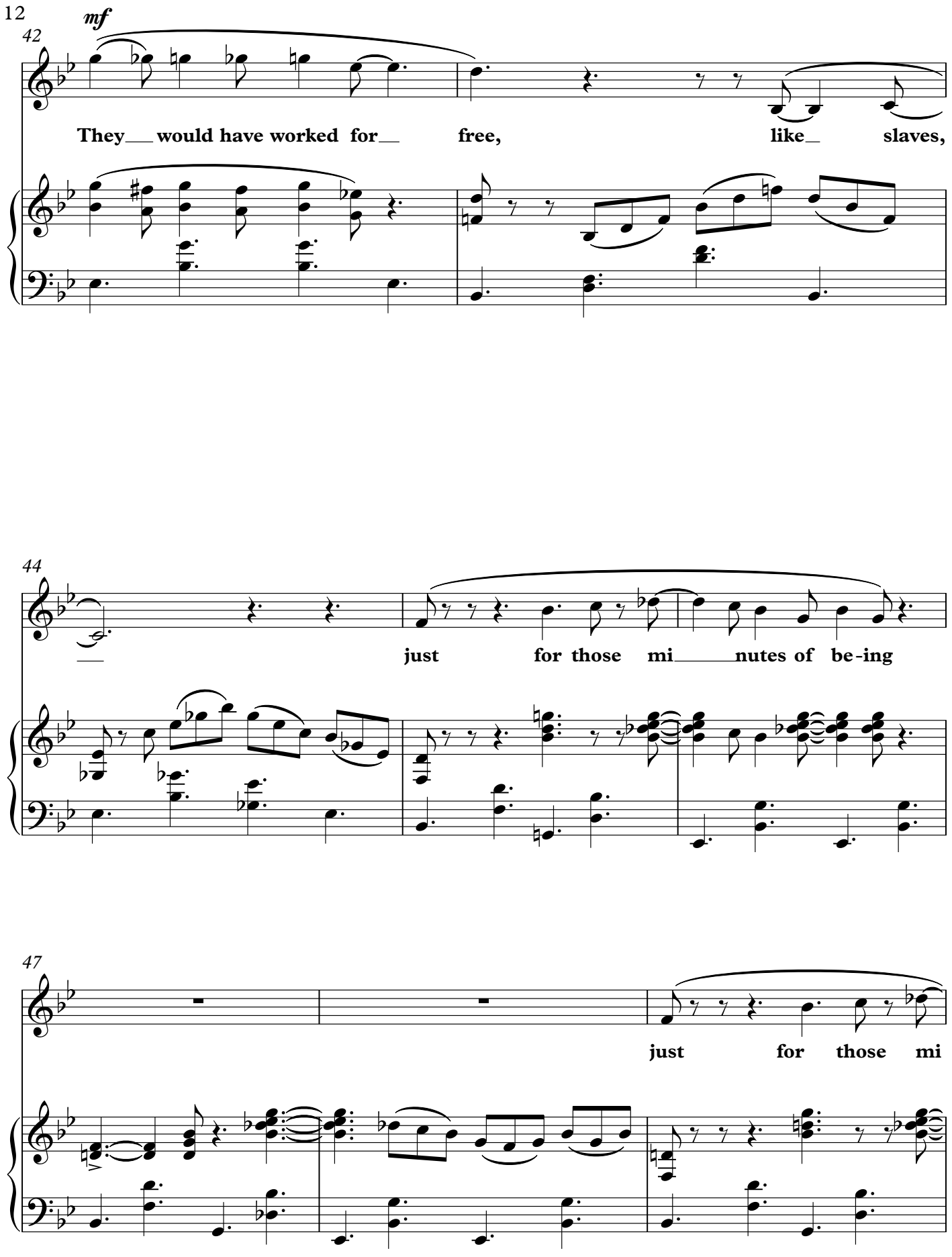
9

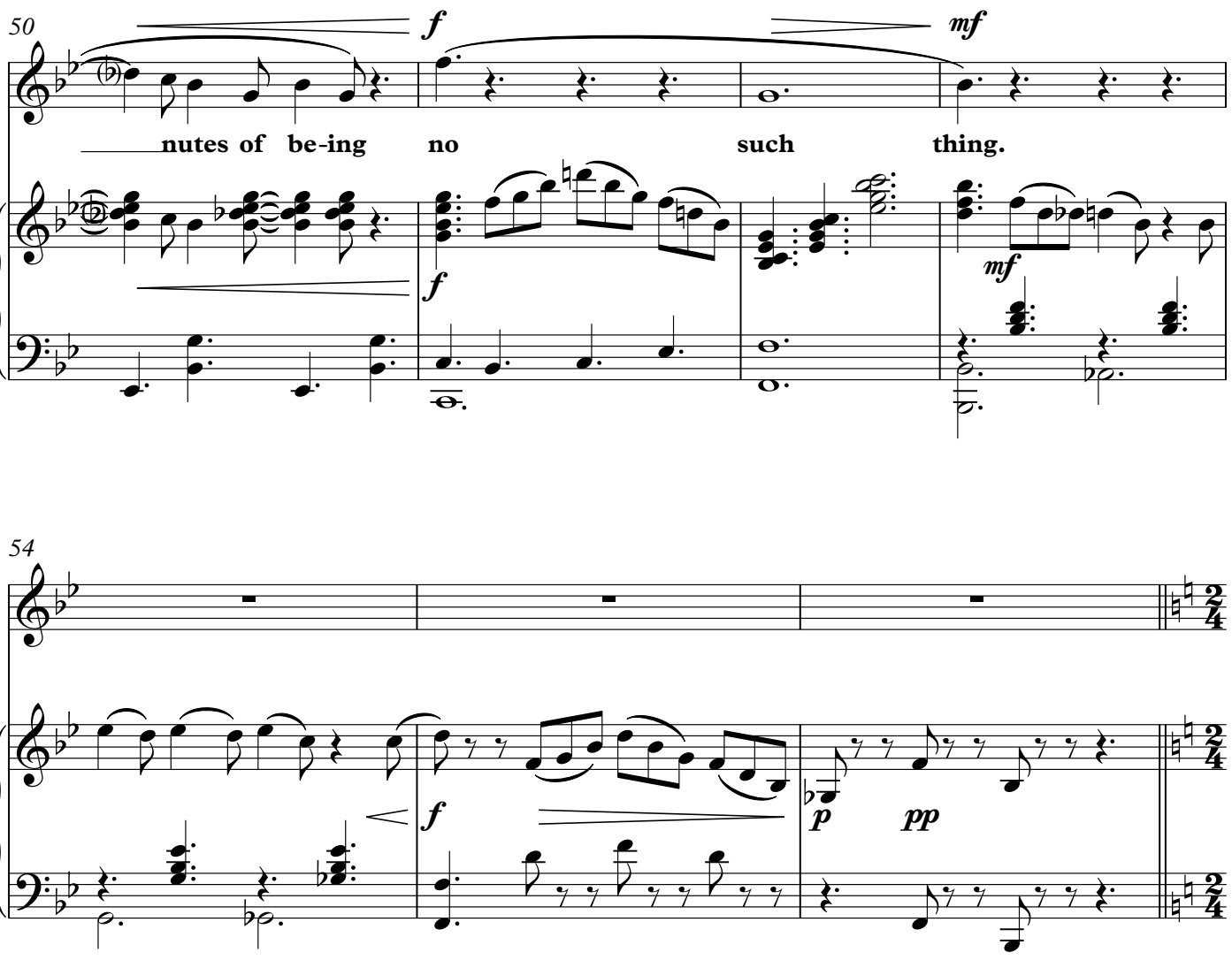
them la - ter on. They'd had a few mo


12
ments to them- selves, on that stage,
14
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
24
in their lives.
In tempo
pp
2
When not a per - son
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
♩.=120
mp
a good show.
They
mf
f
mf
f
38
would have worked for free, for free, like slaves,
40


42
mf
They would have worked for free, like slaves,
44
just for those mi nutes of be-ing
47
just for those mi


50
f
mf
nutes of be-ing no such thing.
f
mf
54
f
p
pp

IV. Boys

Sexy

♩=55

1

p

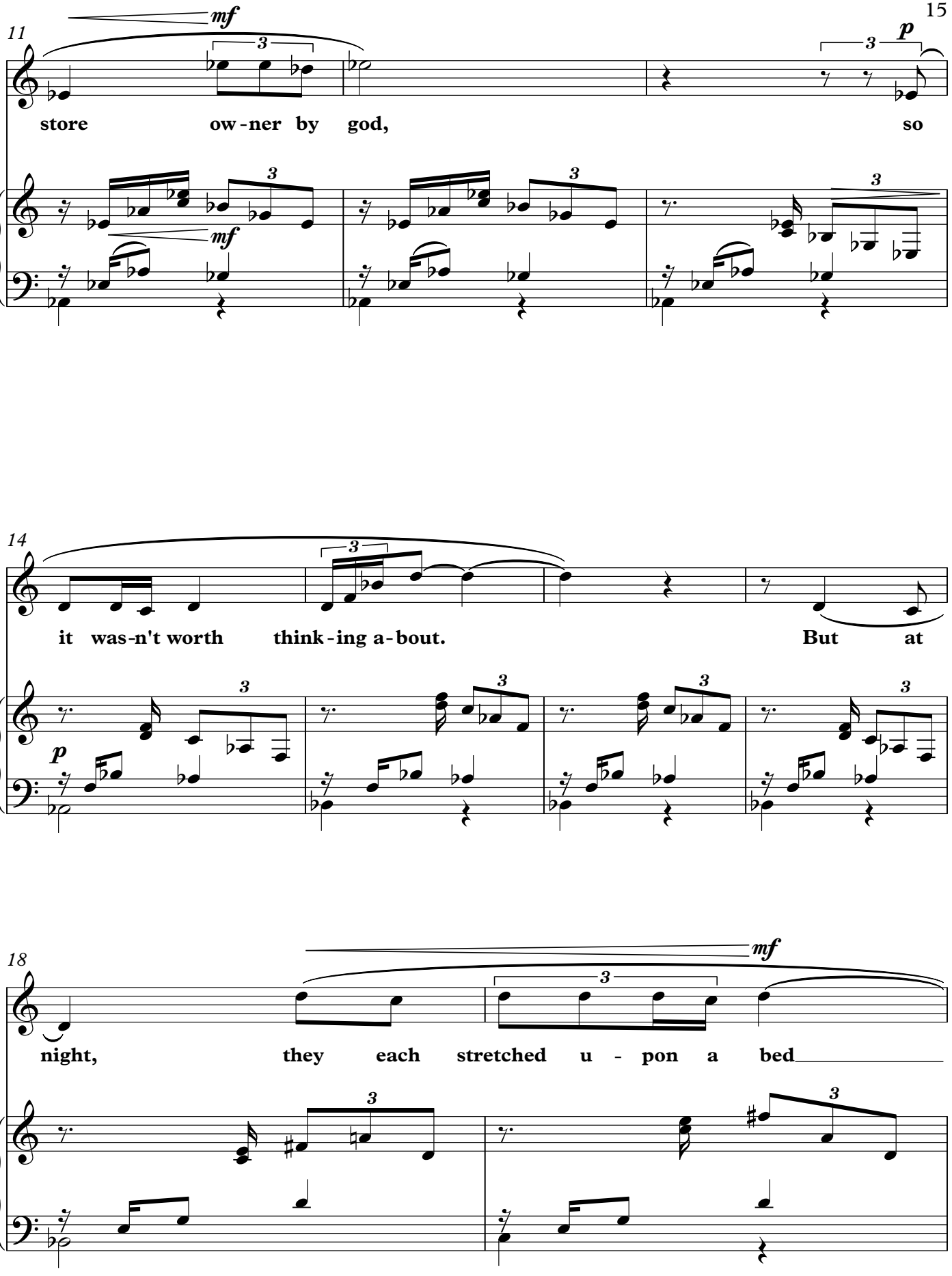
They both loved the same

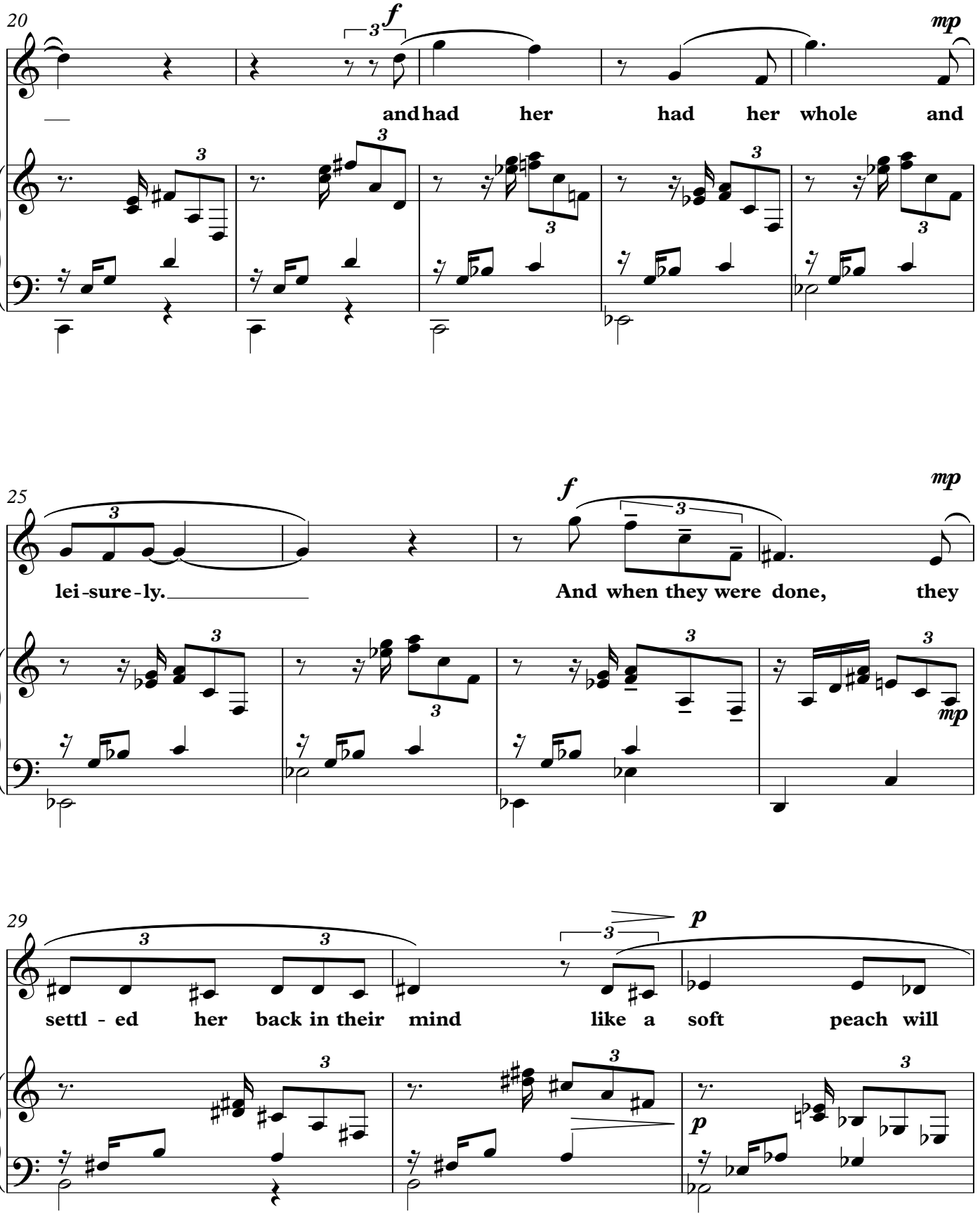
4

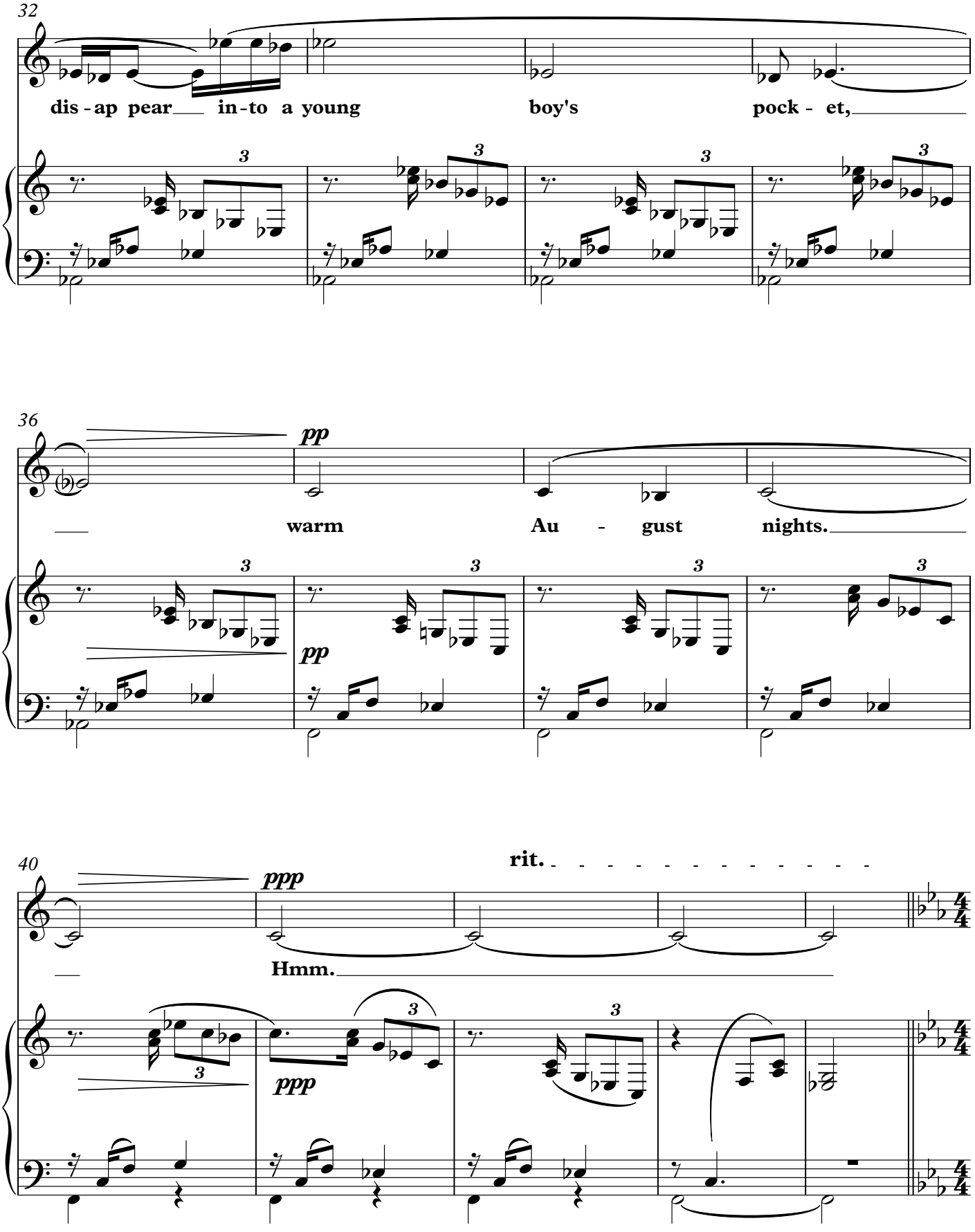
girl but she would-n't have ei-ther of them

8

be-cause she was mar-ried - and to the


11
mf
store ow-ner by god, so
p
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
mp
and had her had her whole and
25
f
mp
lei-sure-ly.
And when they were done, they
mp
29
p
settl - ed her back in their mind like a soft peach will
p


32
dis - ap pear in - to a young boy's pock - et,
36
pp
warm Au - gust nights.
pp
40
rit.
ppp
Hmm.
ppp

18

Motoric

♩=140

mf

5

When her re - la - tives

mf

4

3

from the south

3

came up for a vis - it,

8

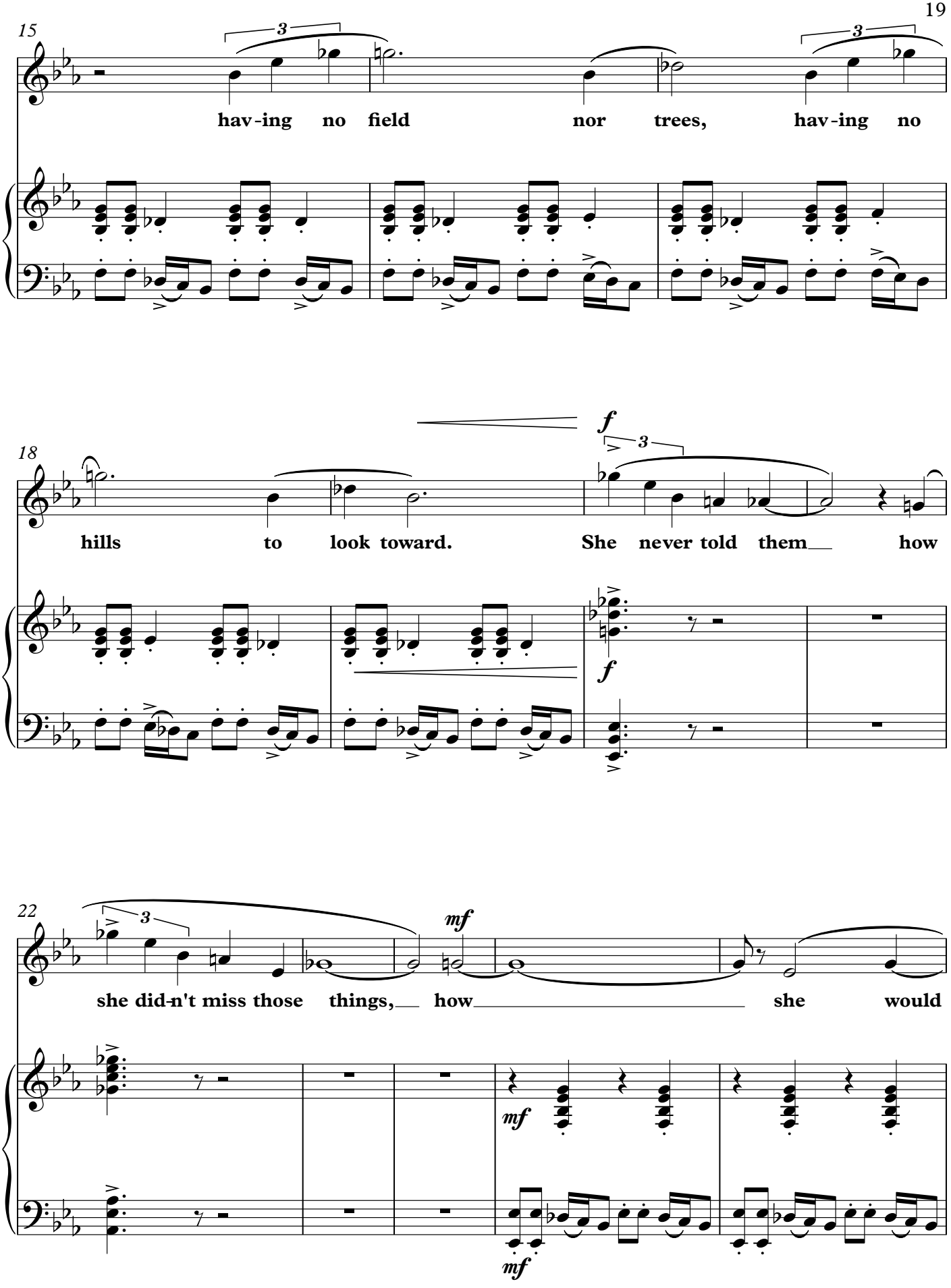
they la -ment-ed her sor-ry state,

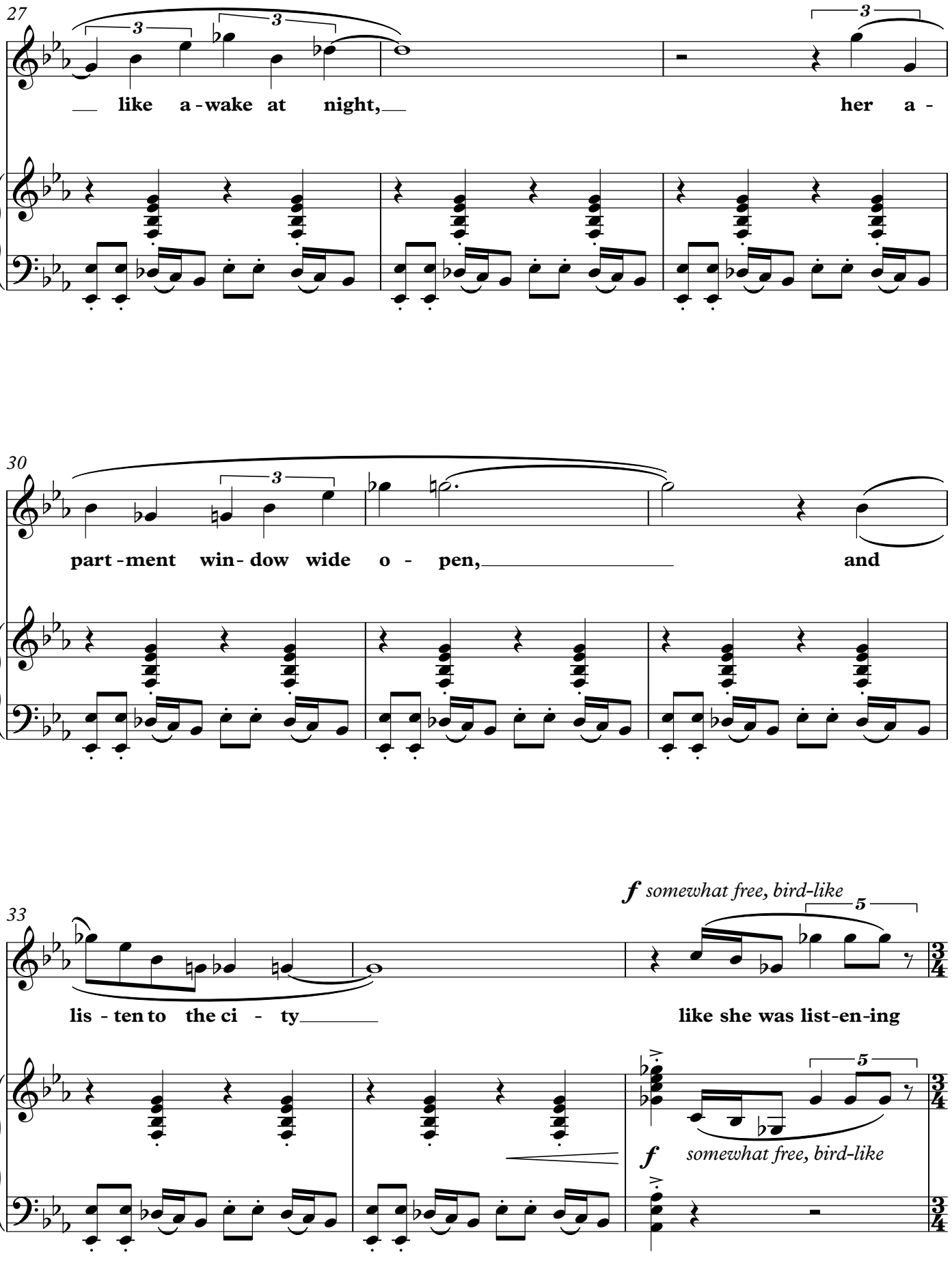
12

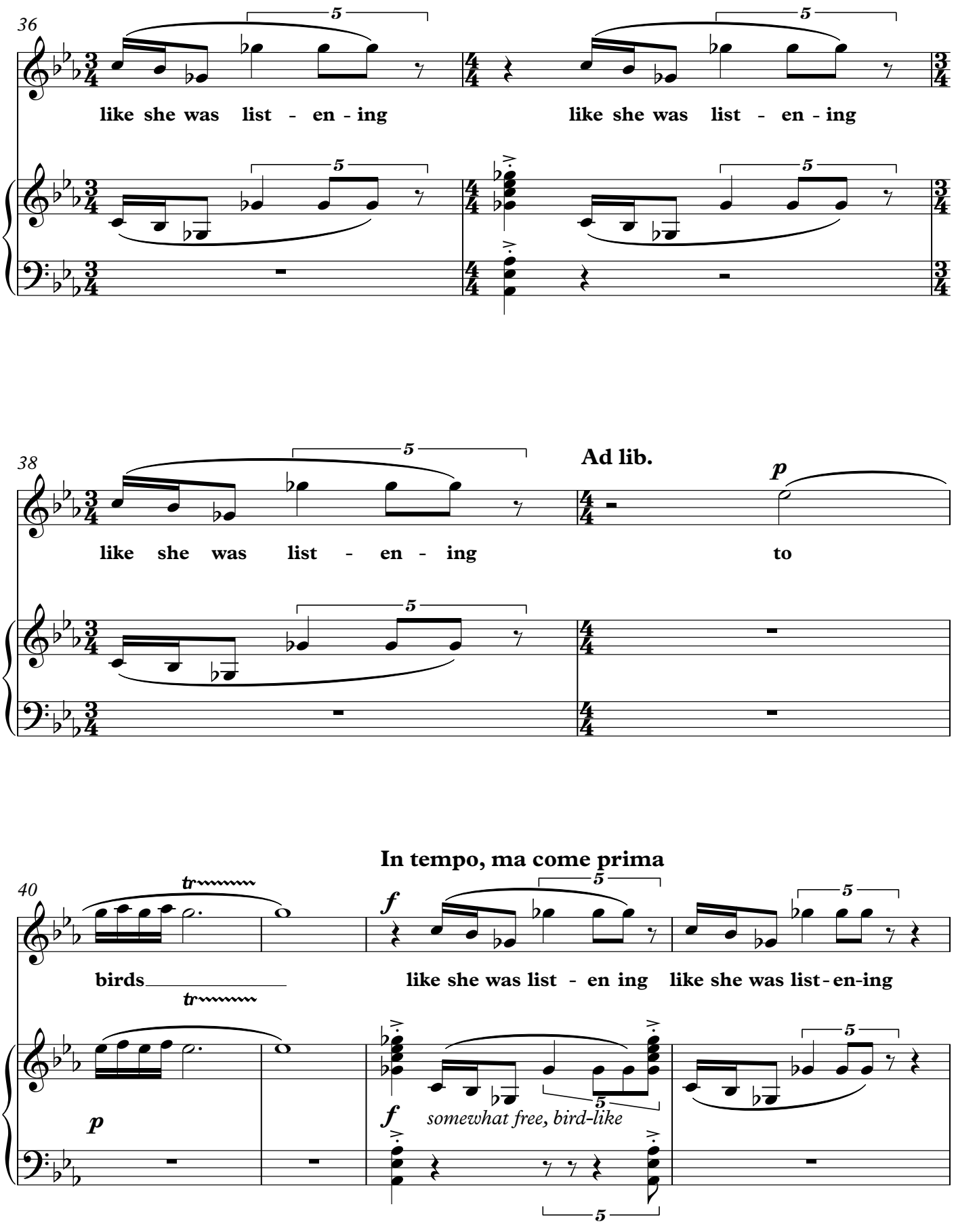
3

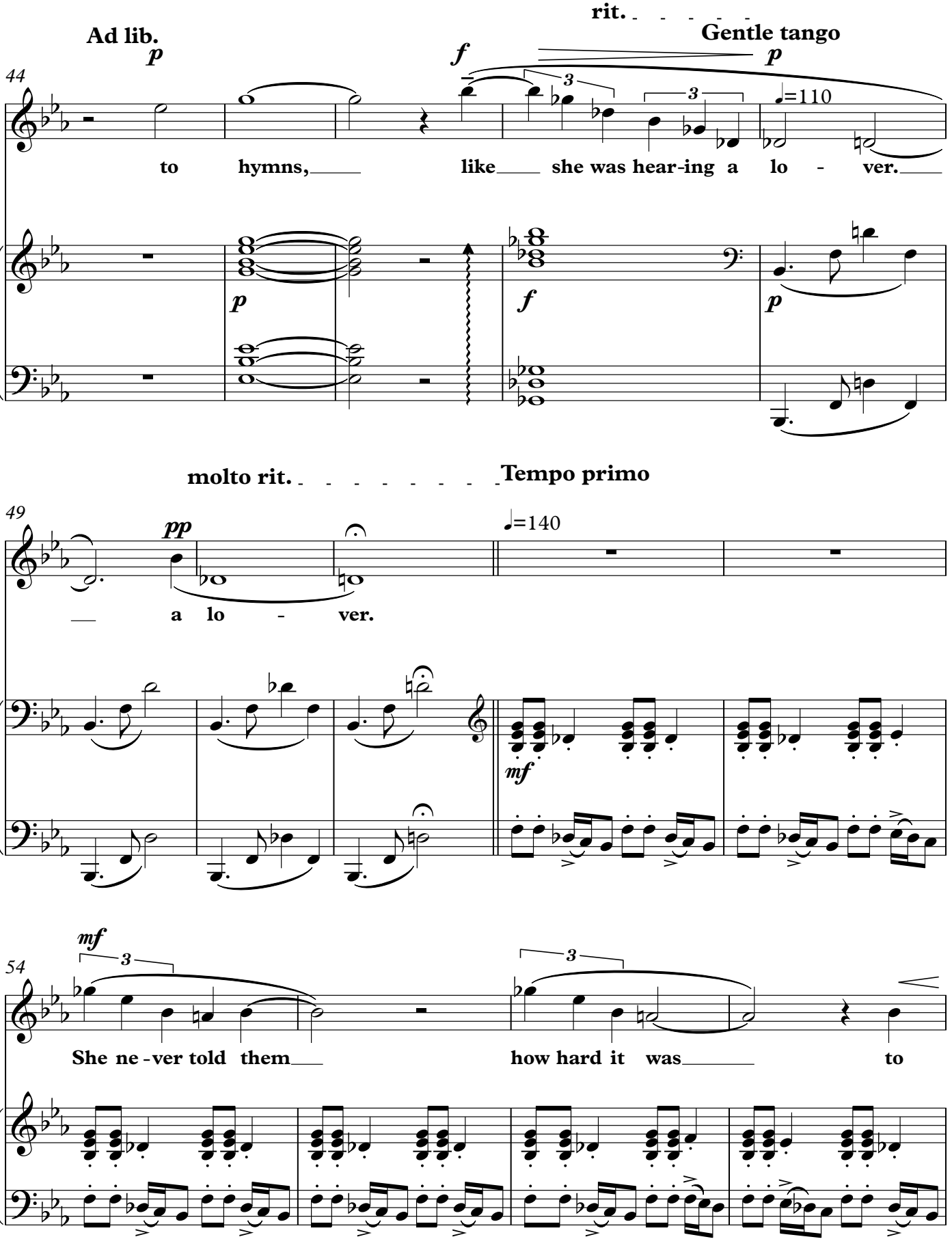
3

hav-ing to live in that lit-tle box


15
hav-ing no field nor trees, hav-ing no
18
hills to look toward. She never told them how
f
22
she did-n't miss those things, how she would
mf
mf
mf


27
like a - wake at night,
her a -
30
part - ment win - dow wide o - pen,
and
33
lis - ten to the ci - ty
f somewhat free, bird-like
like she was list-en-ing
f somewhat free, bird-like


36
like she was list - en - ing
like she was list - en - ing
38
like she was list - en - ing
Ad lib.
p
to
40
In tempo, ma come prima
tr
birds
tr
like she was list - en ing
like she was list - en-ing
f
p
f
somewhat free, bird-like


Ad lib.
p
rit.
Gentle tango
f
p
44
=110
to hymns, like she was hear-ing a lo - ver.
p
f
p
molto rit.
Tempo primo
49
pp
=140
a lo - ver.
mf
mf
54
She ne-ver told them how hard it was to

58

f

5

wipe that smile off her face

f

61

p

f

each and e - very time

p

f

Ad lib.

In tempo ma un poco meno mosso

64

♩.=130

p

they com - plained.

f

mp

pp

Gentle tango

♩=100

24

p

Of course, it was hard to make love with the child-ren in the

p

6

room

9

but that did - n't keep them from try - ing, and

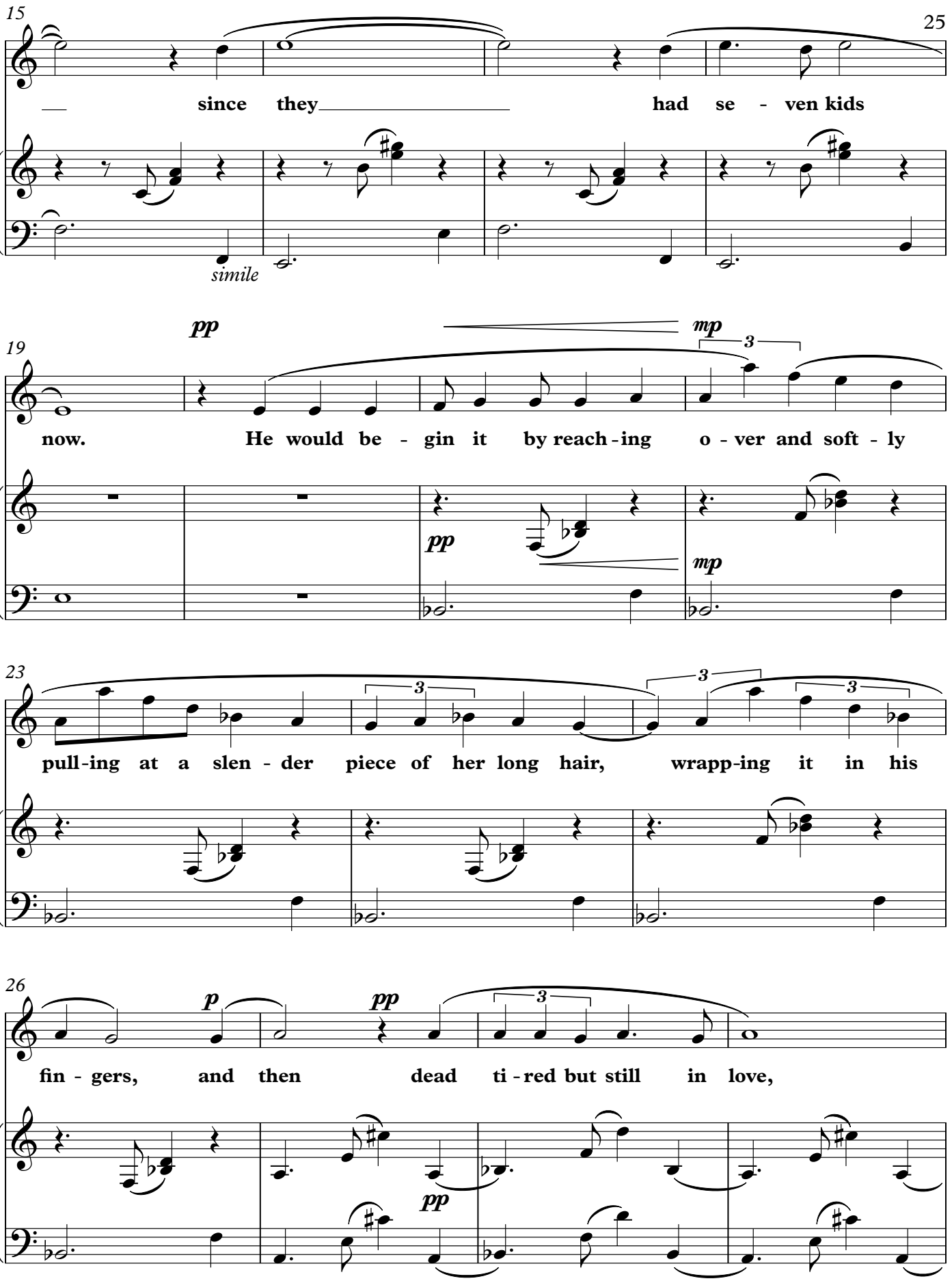
12

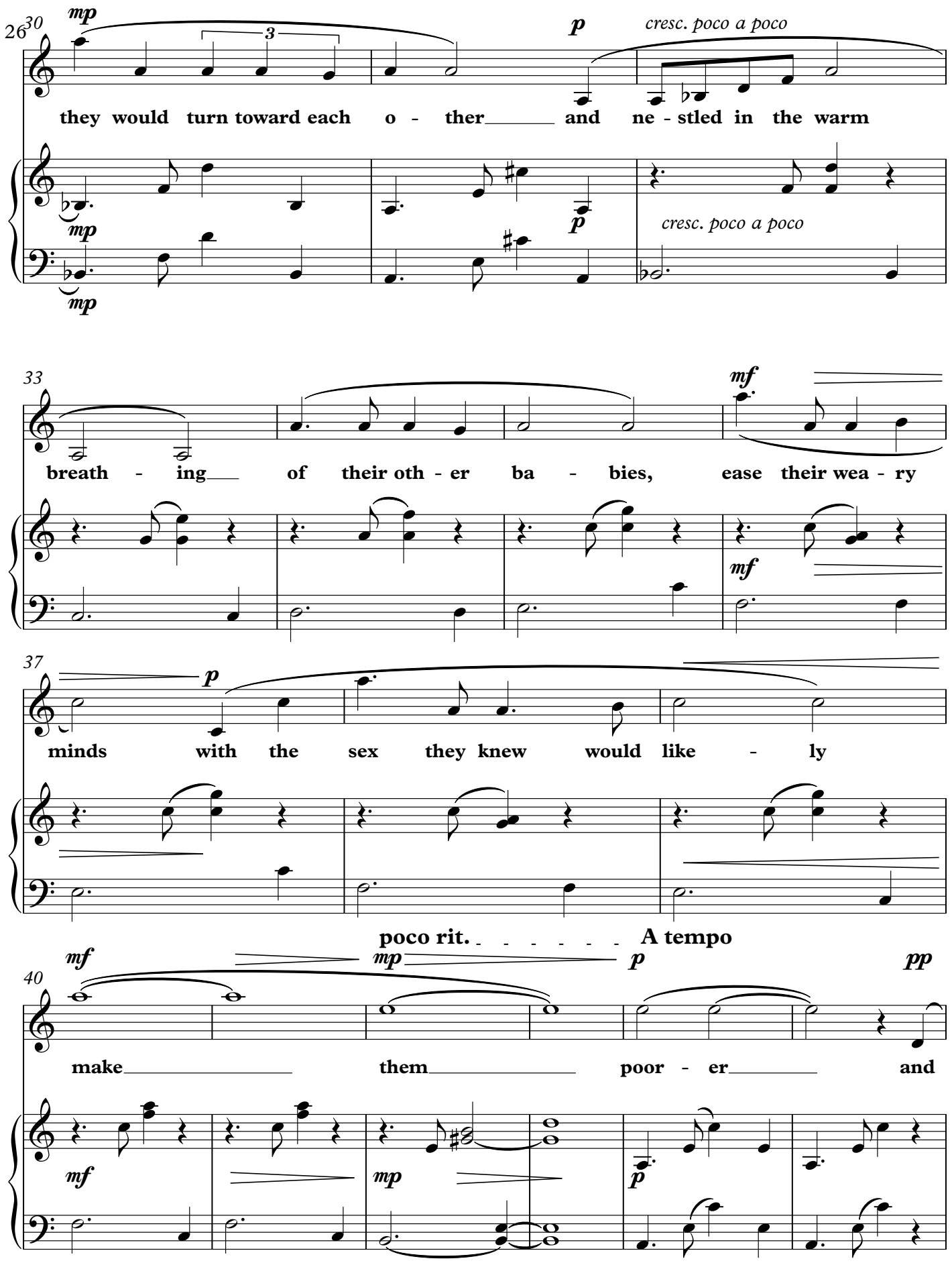
mf

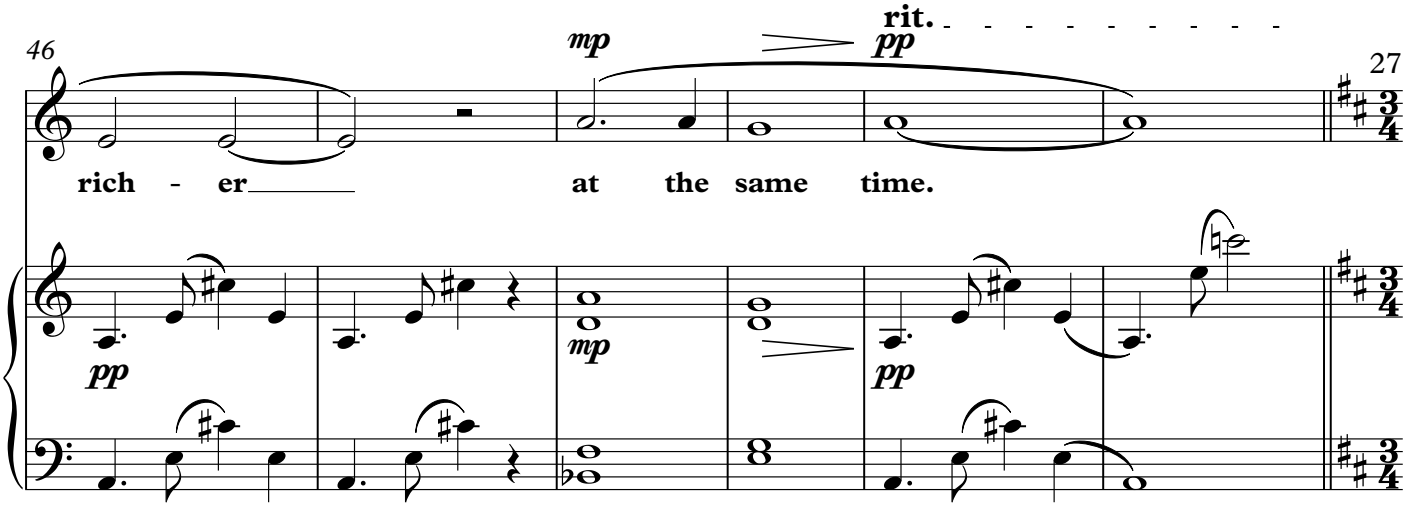
3

they were pret - ty suc - cess - ful some would say,

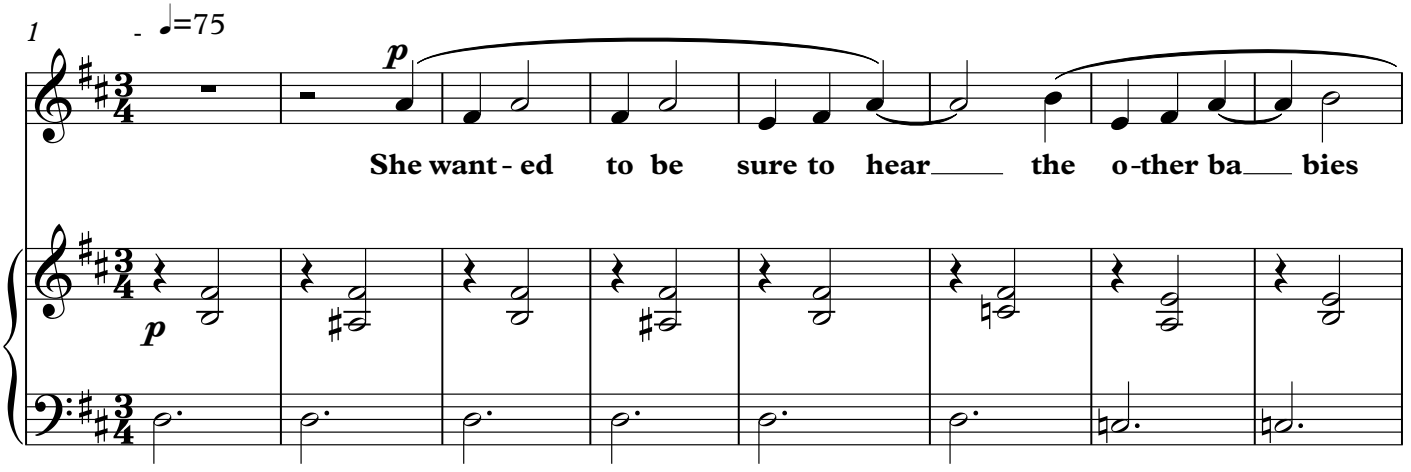
mf

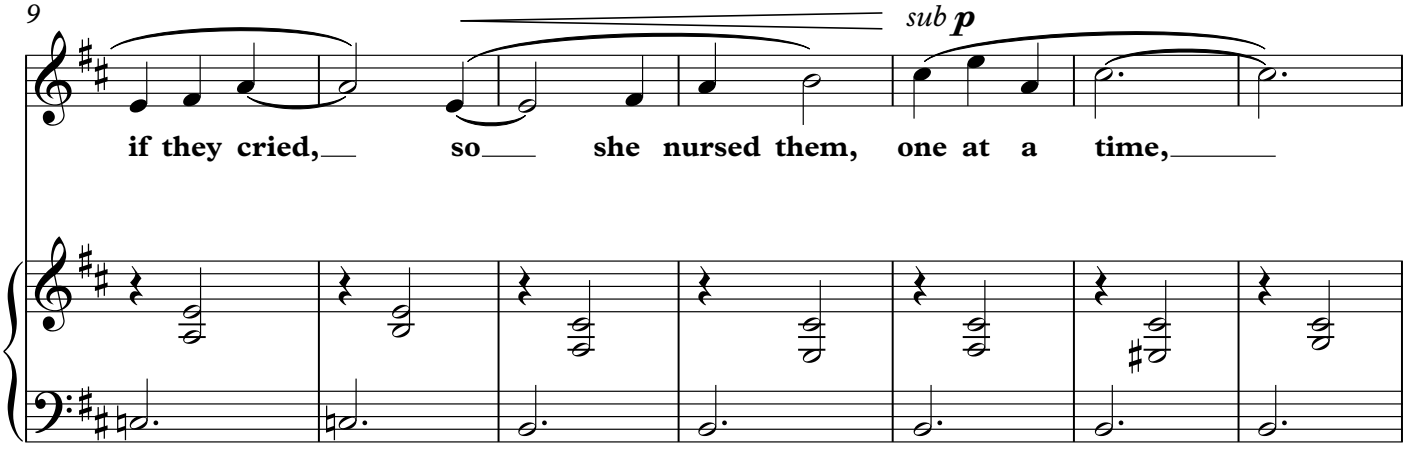

15
25
since they had se - ven kids
simile
19
pp
mp
3
now. He would be - gin it by reach - ing o - ver and soft - ly
pp
mp
23
3
3
3
pull - ing at a slen - der piece of her long hair, wrapp - ing it in his
26
p
pp
3
fin - gers, and then dead ti - red but still in love,
pp

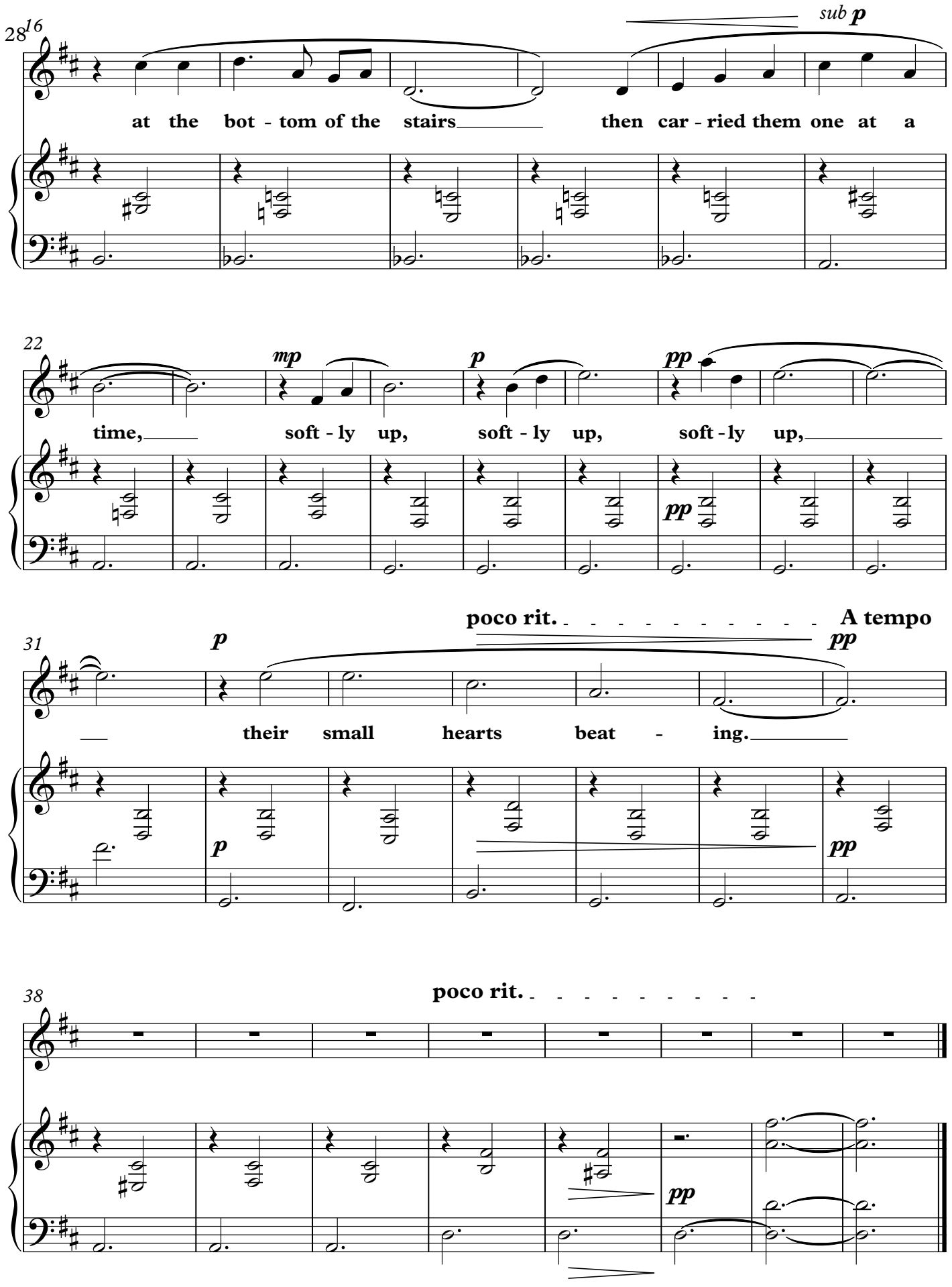

26
30
mp
3
p
cresc. poco a poco
they would turn toward each o - ther and ne - stled in the warm
mp
p
cresc. poco a poco
mp
33
mf
breath - ing of their oth - er ba - bies, ease their wea - ry
mf
37
p
minds with the sex they knew would like - ly
poco rit. A tempo
40
mf
mp
p
pp
make them poor - er and
mf
mp
p


46
rit.
mp
pp
27
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 o-ther ba bies
p


9
sub p
if they cried, so she nursed them, one at a time,


28 16
sub p
at the bot - tom of the stairs then car - ried them one at a
22
mp
p
pp
time, soft - ly up, soft - ly up, soft - ly up,
pp
poco rit.
A tempo
31
p
pp
their small hearts beat - ing.
p
pp
38
poco rit.
pp