Alice Beckwith

Five Armitage Songs

for High Voice and Piano

Duration approximately 12 minutes

Commissioned by the 2024 &Piano Festival

The first performance was given by Sarah Fox, Joe Shovelton, and Christopher Pulleyn
at the &Piano Festival on 25 May 2024

Texts by Simon Armitage, Copyright (c) Simon Armitage

the event horizon

a signal silence / the gathered knot of
amplified quiet after the tuning up and
the last cough / every qualia poised
and set at the starting line of the
opening bar / moments cued to a
noiseless threshold / atoms tensed for
the first contact of horsehair and gut /
all instruments tempered and torqued
as the planet spins on the tapered nib
of a white wand and a note bubbles up
in the singer's throat / till that
greenflash of sound / the yaw and roll
as we're pitched into music / tipped to
where raw music comes pitching
into the soul

Simon Armitage

the event horizon

Simon Armitage

Alice Beckwith

Freely, quasi recitative, ♩=60-72

poco accel.

mp

a sig - nal si - lence the gath - ered

f

mf

rit.

p

In time

knot of amp - li - fied qui - et af - ter the tun - ing up and the last

colla voce

p

Moving on

mf

cough ev - ery qua - lia poised and set at the

f

mf

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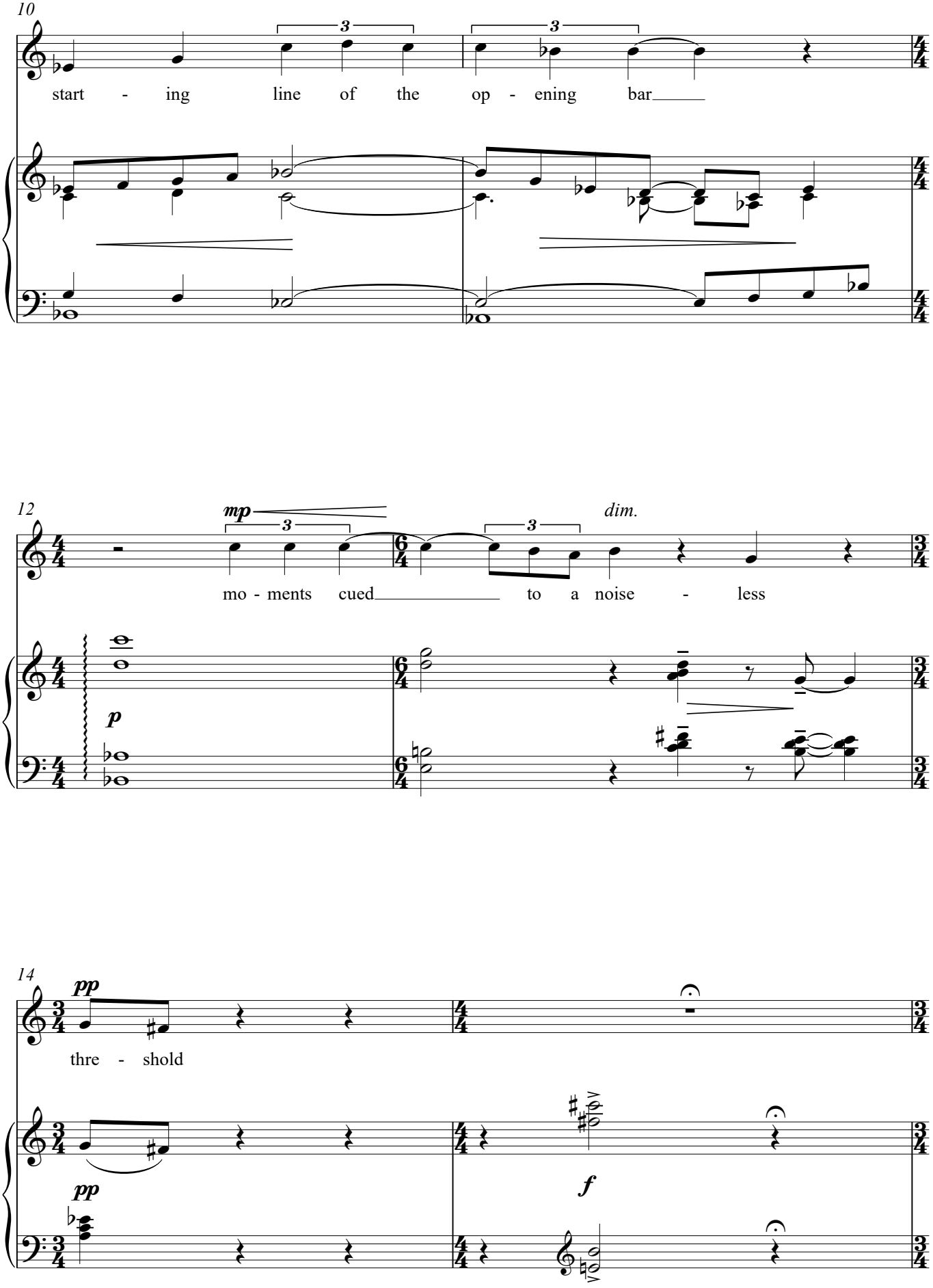

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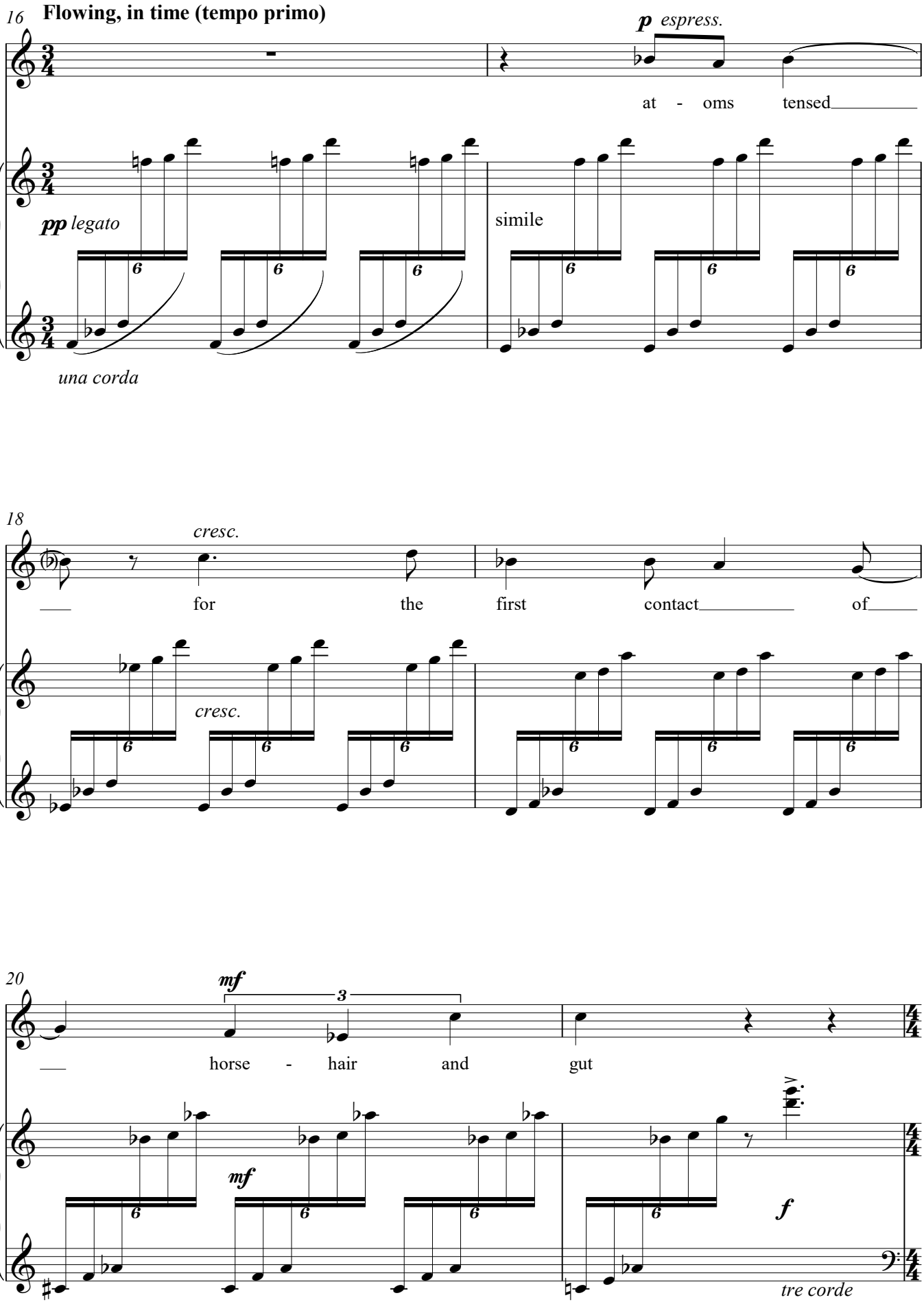

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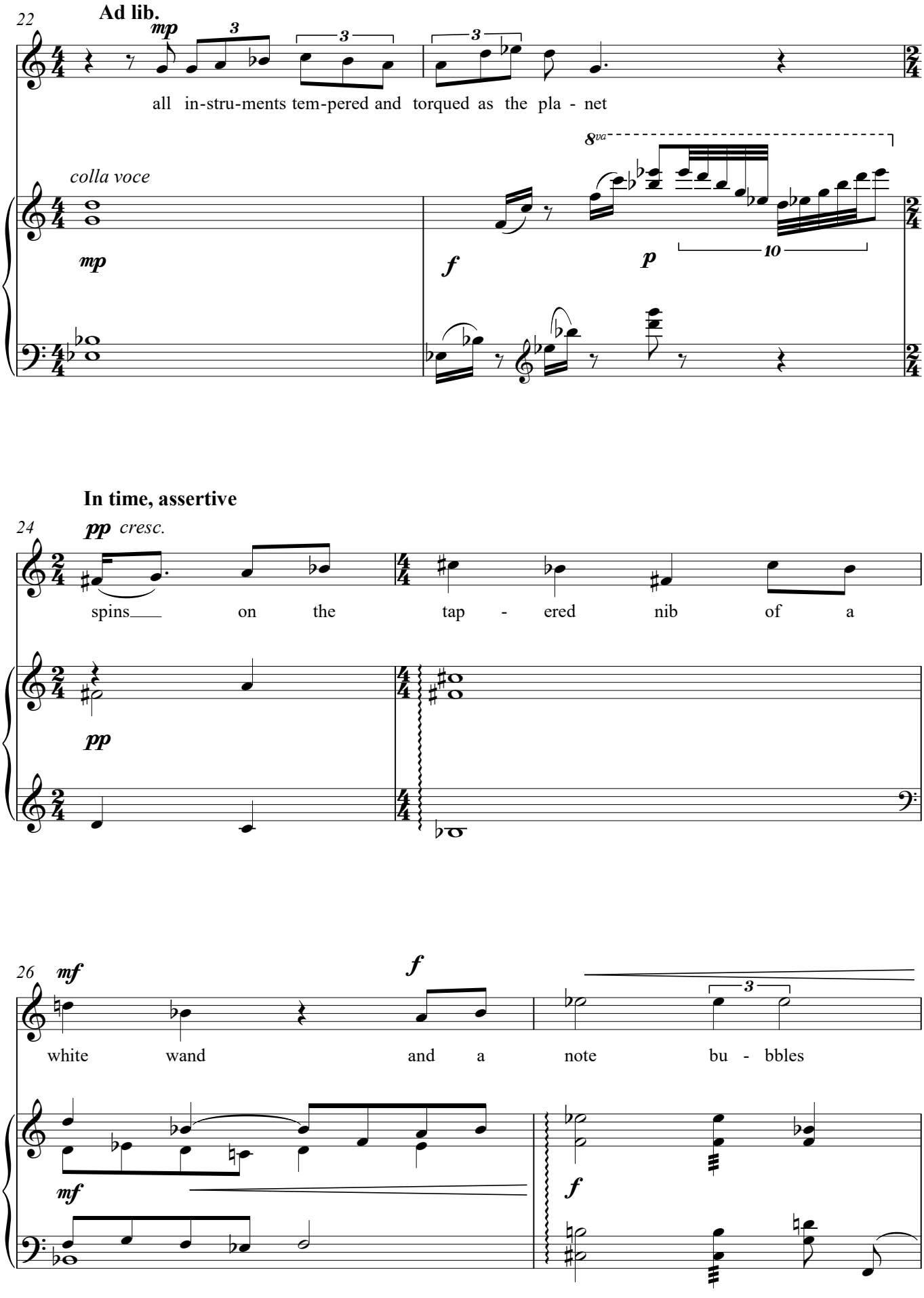

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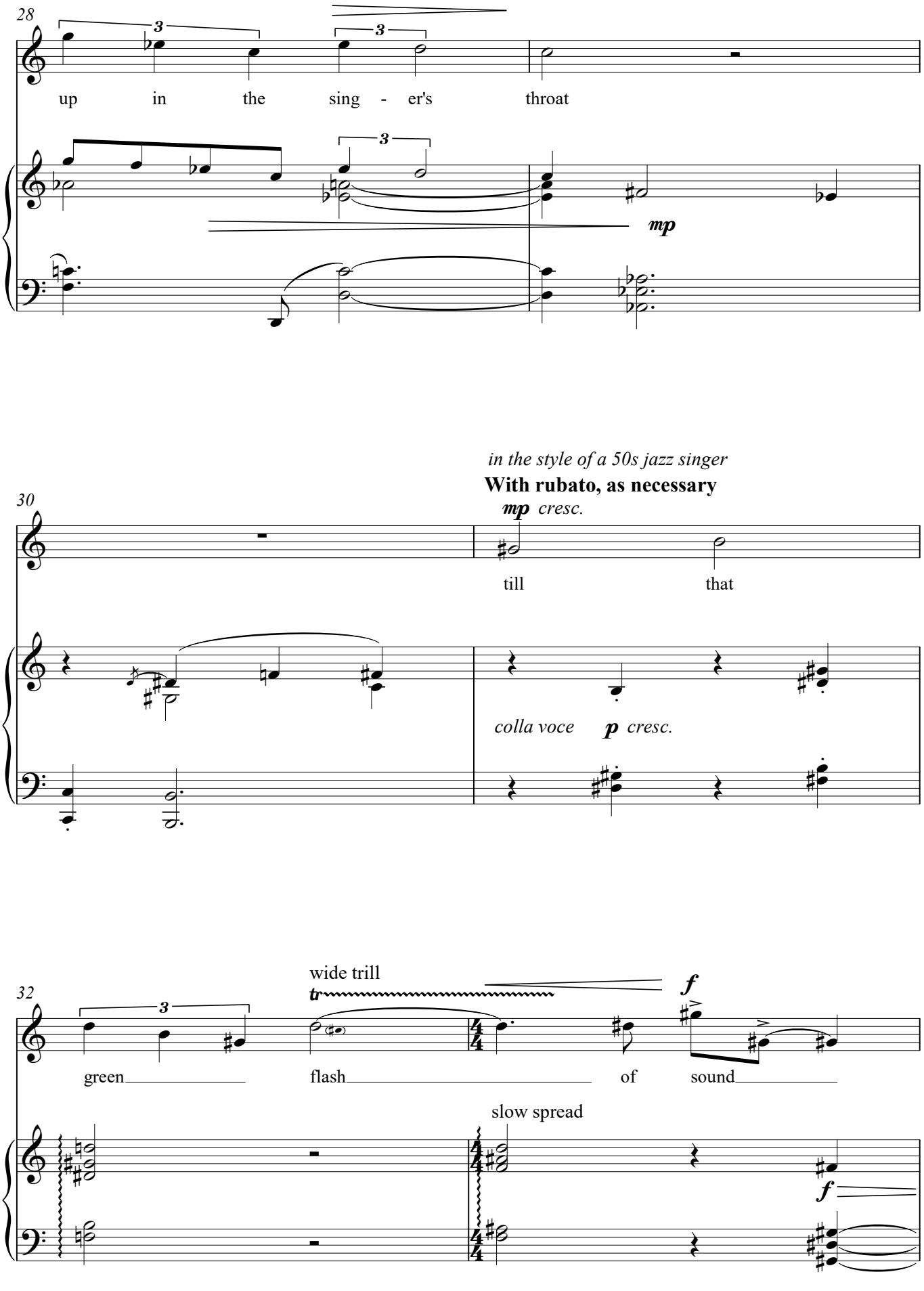

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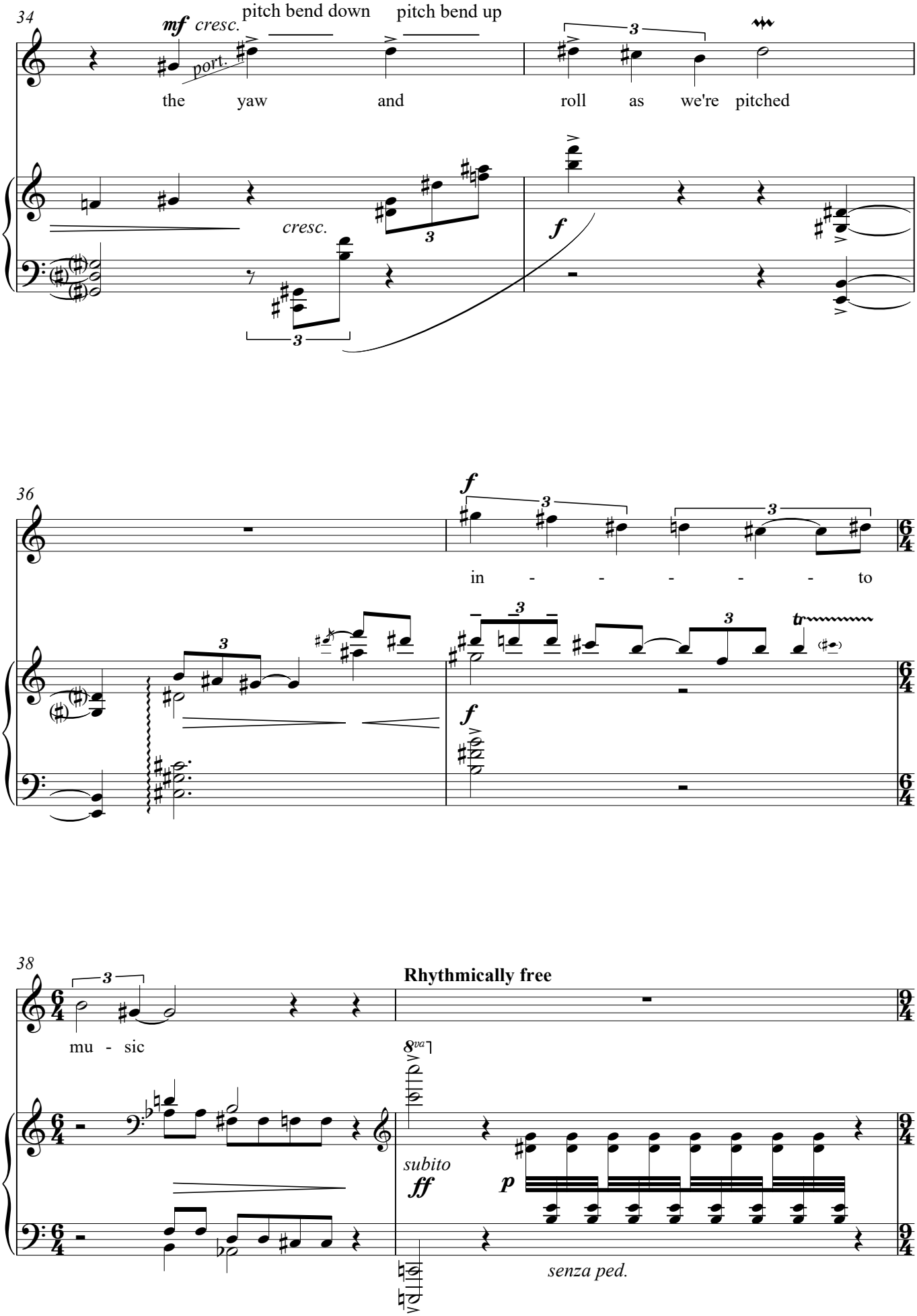

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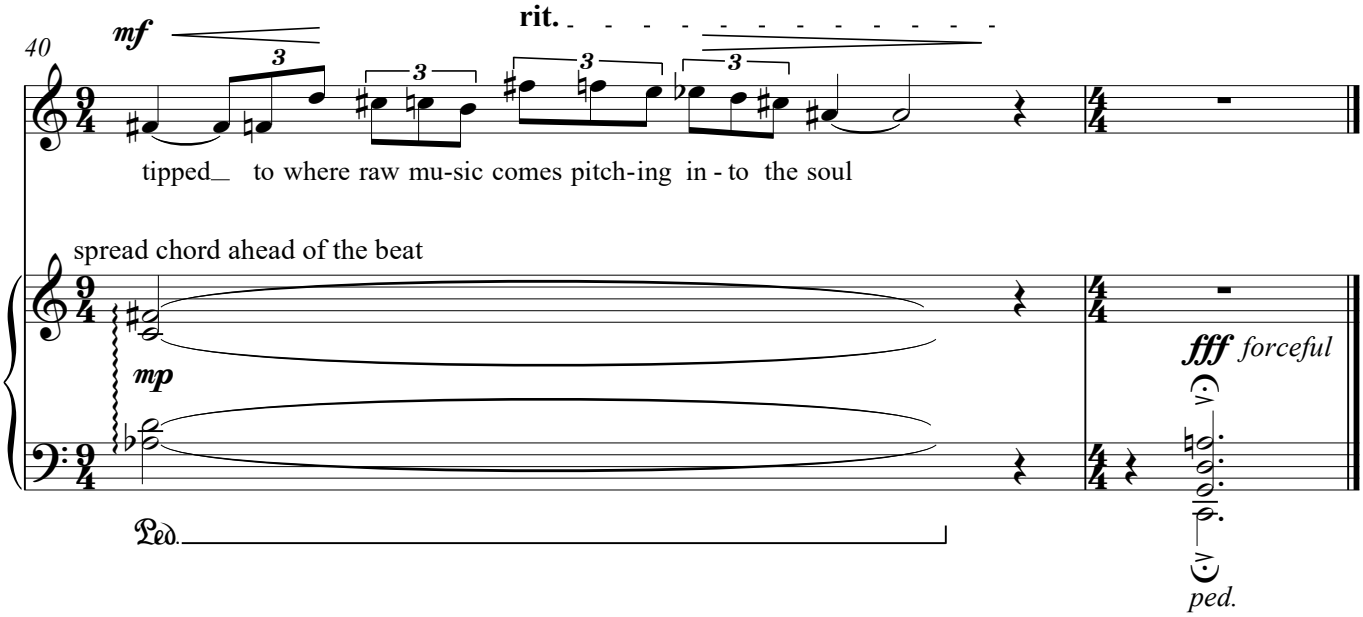
40
mf
rit.
tipped_ to where raw mu-sic comes pitch-ing in - to the soul
spread chord ahead of the beat
mp
fff forceful
ped.

Close Season

Winter arrived this morning.
She'd flown overnight
and was tired and tetchy,
throwing her bags in the boot
and trapping her coat in the car door,
a full-length snow leopard fur
which she cheerfully told me
was *not fake*.

For a woman of such stark glamour
and minimalistic chic
she takes up a lot of space;
already she's claimed the boxroom
and several empty drawers.
She's painted the windows grey
and stands behind me, unnervingly,
if I pick up a book.

When she goes outside
to shrink-wrap the garden
and lock up the pond
I open her wardrobe,
press a cold white linen blouse
to my face, daren't even caress
the silk camisole top
stitched only by frost.

She has switched the cherry tree off.
The silvery-blue negligee
she draped on the bed
is just breath.

Simon Armitage

Close Season

Simon Armitage

Alice Beckwith

Playful, with freedom ♩ = 84

mf

heavily

3

6

mp

Win - ter arr - ived this mor - ning. She'd

mp

8

spoken

flown ov - er night and was ti - red and tet - chy,

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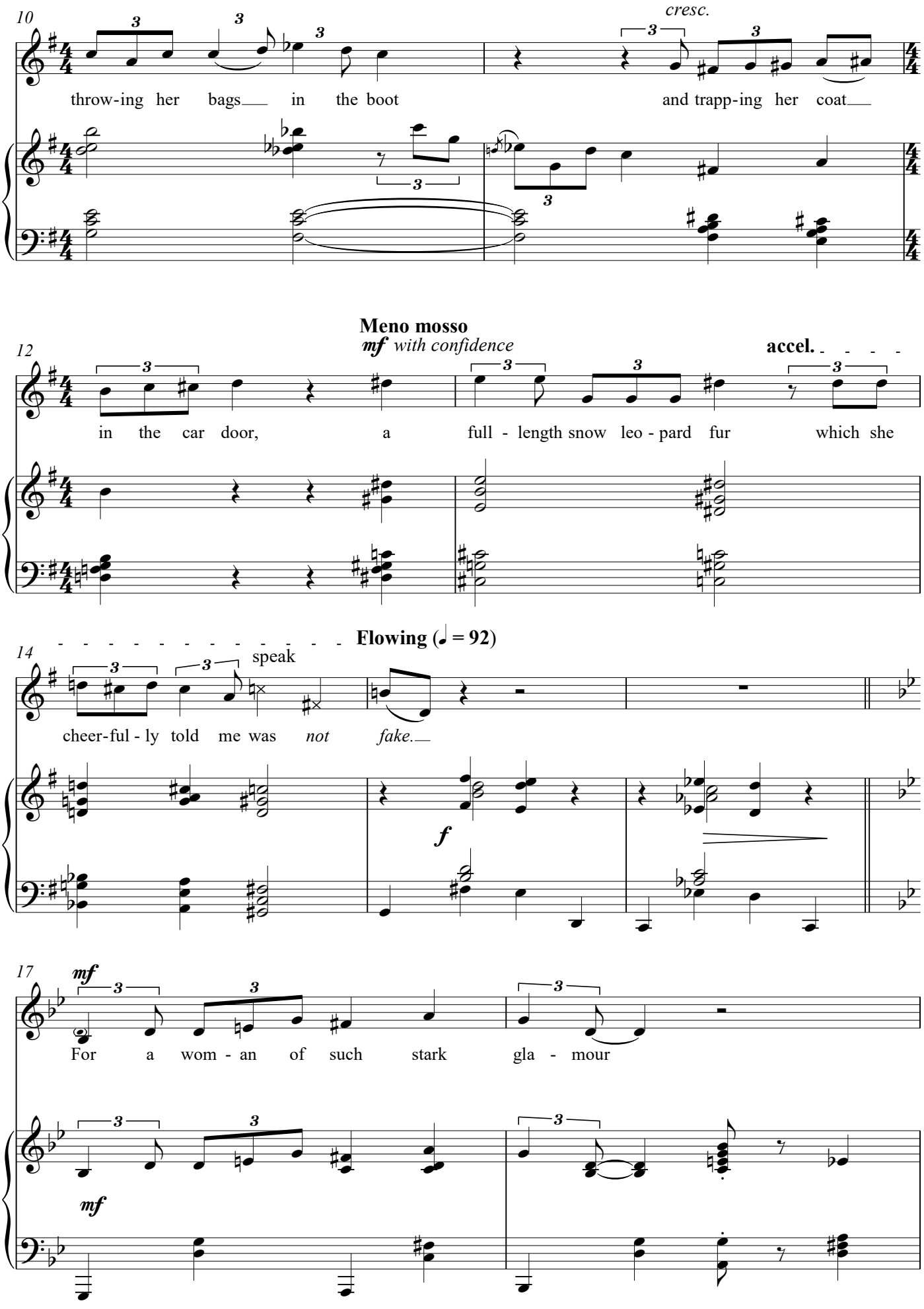

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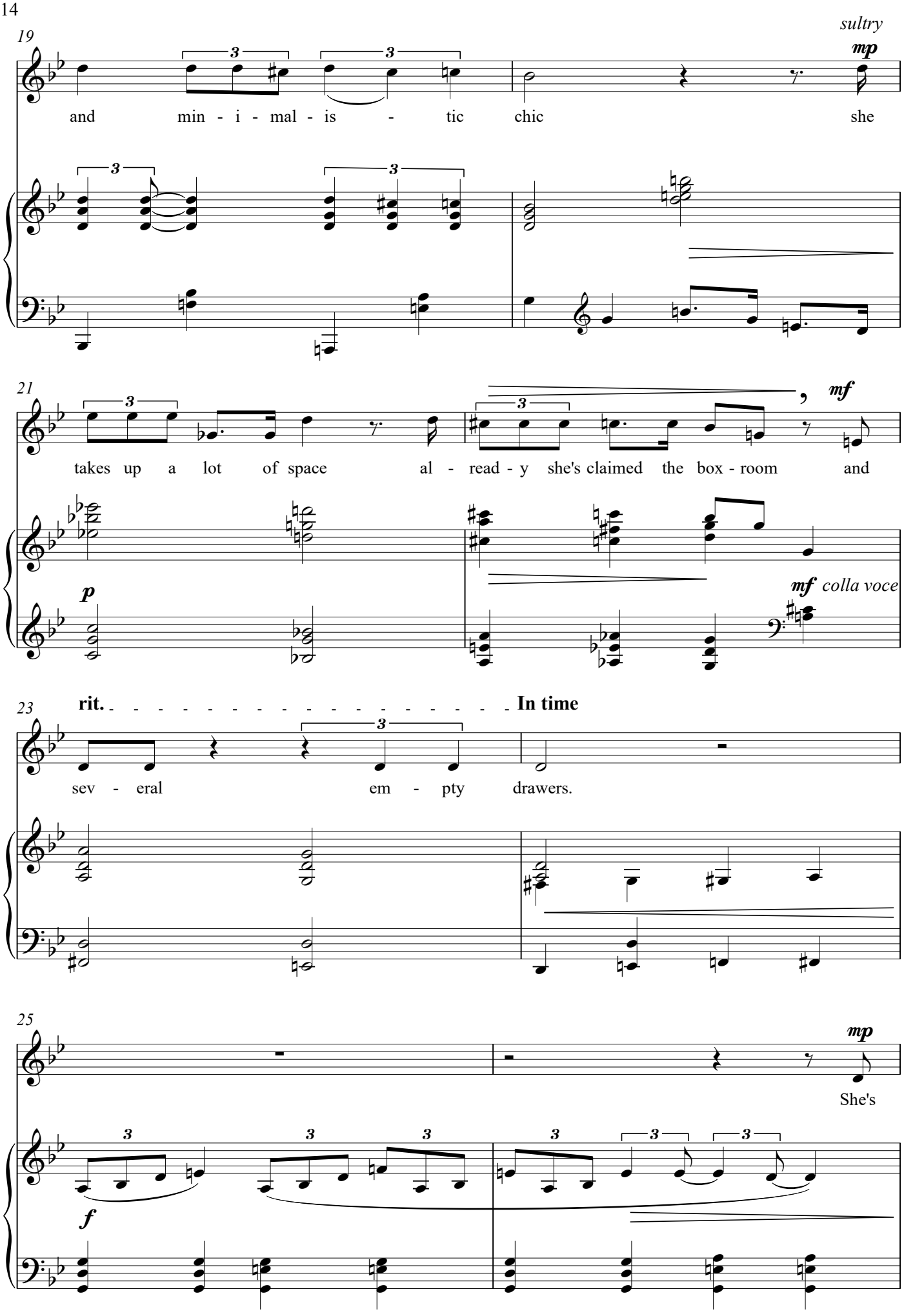

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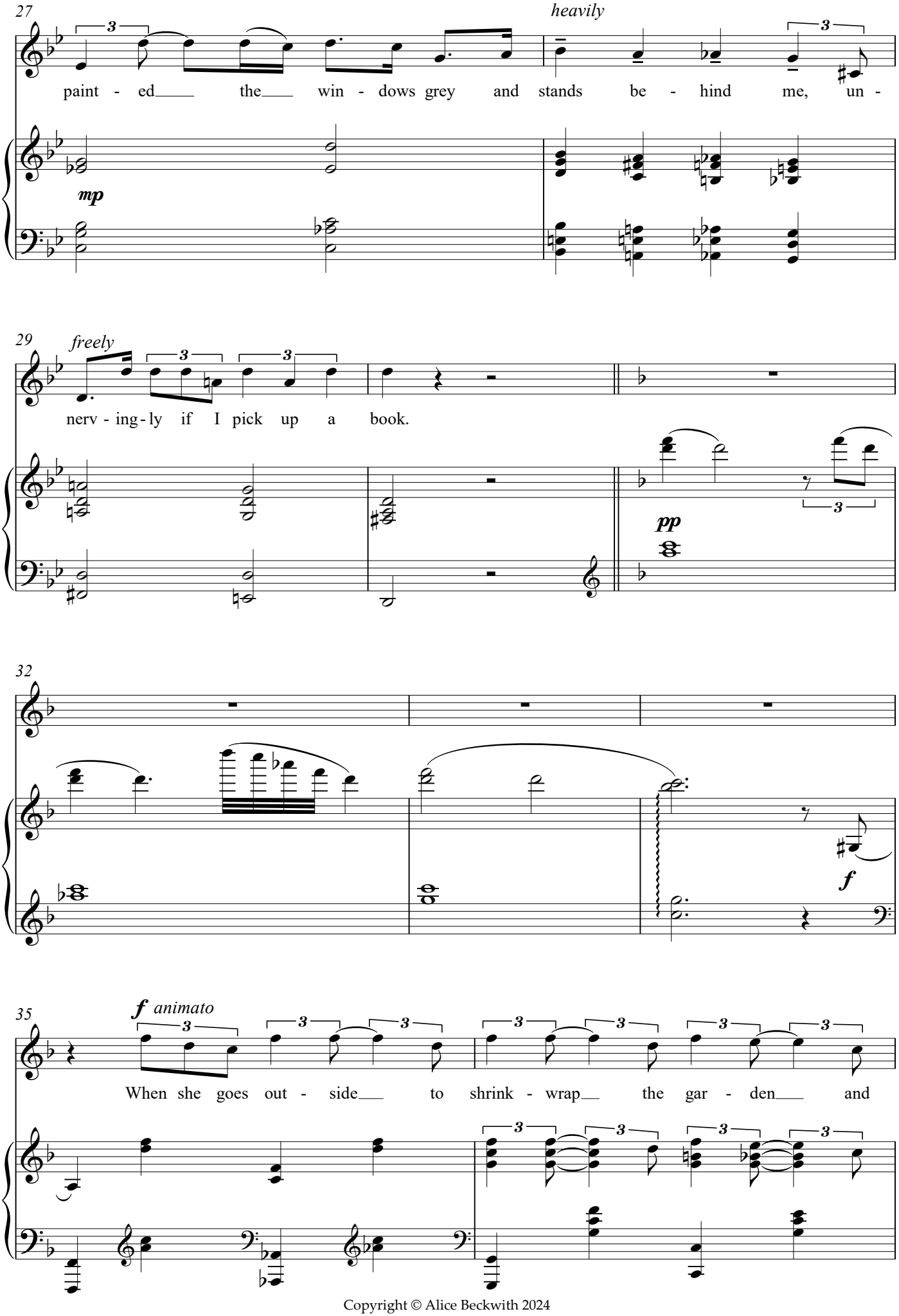

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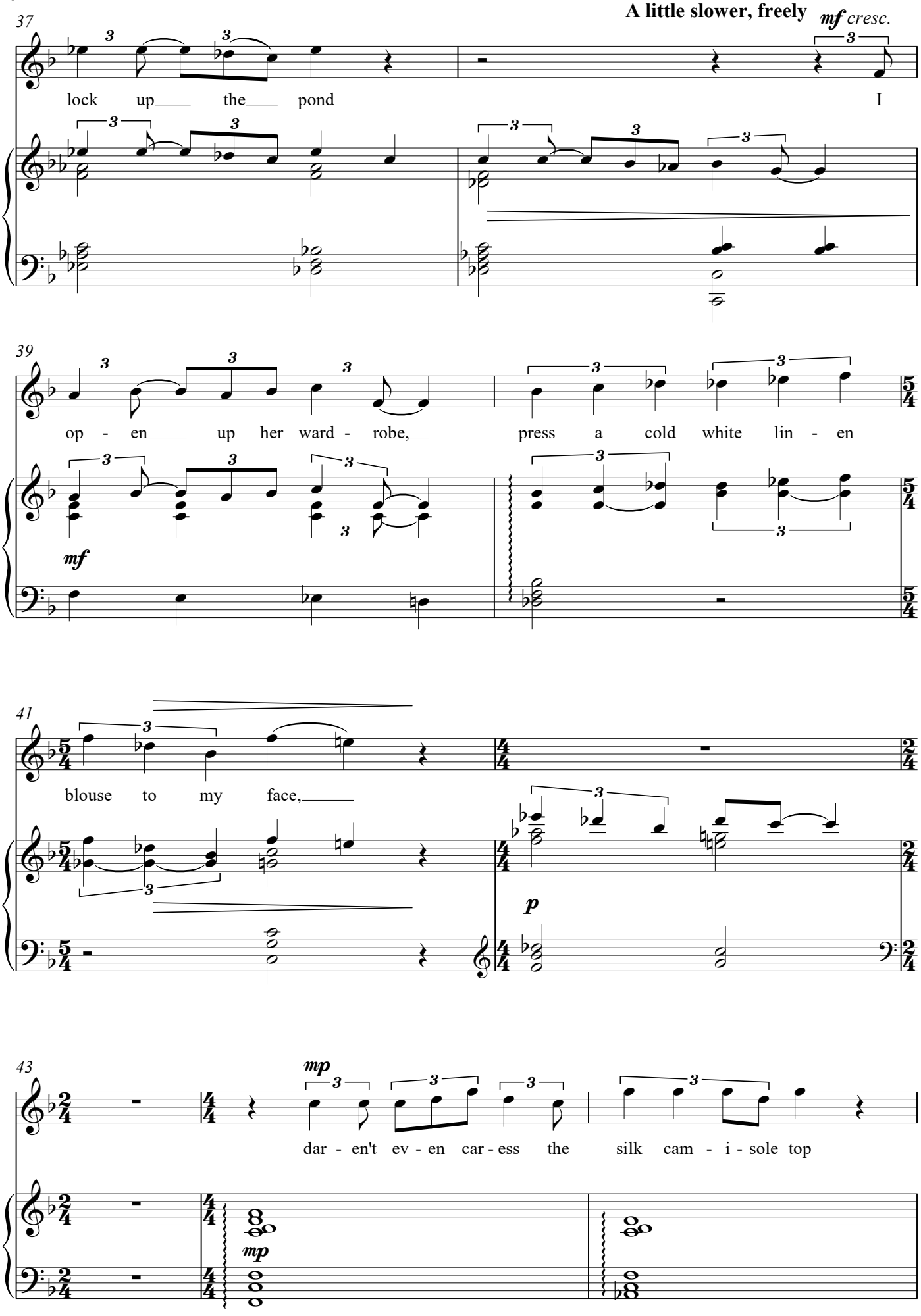

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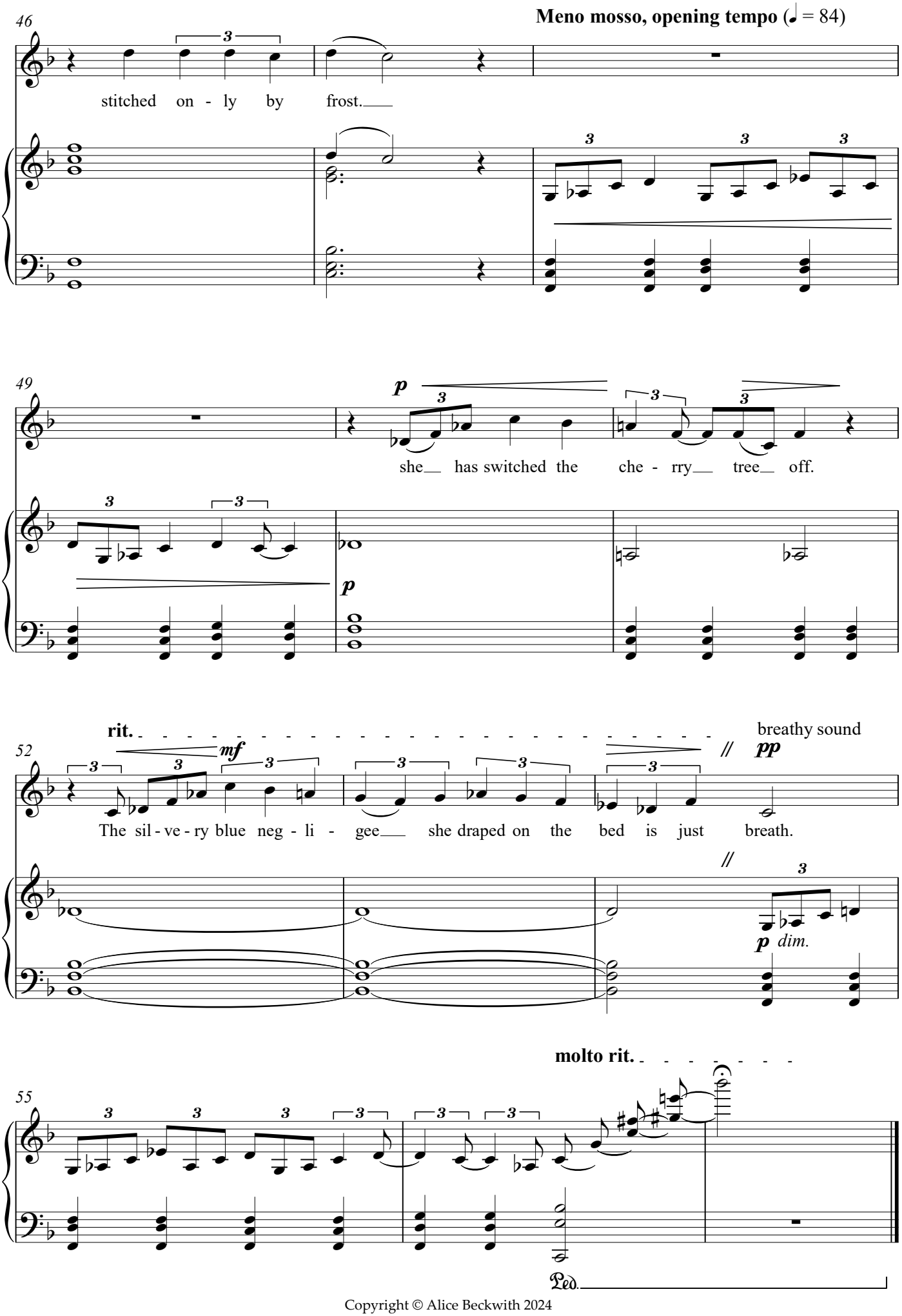

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The Catch

Forget
the long, smouldering
afternoon. It is

this moment
when the ball scoots
off the edge

of the bat; upwards,
backwards, falling
seemingly

beyond him
yet he reaches
and picks it

out
of its loop
like

an apple
from a branch,
the first of the season.

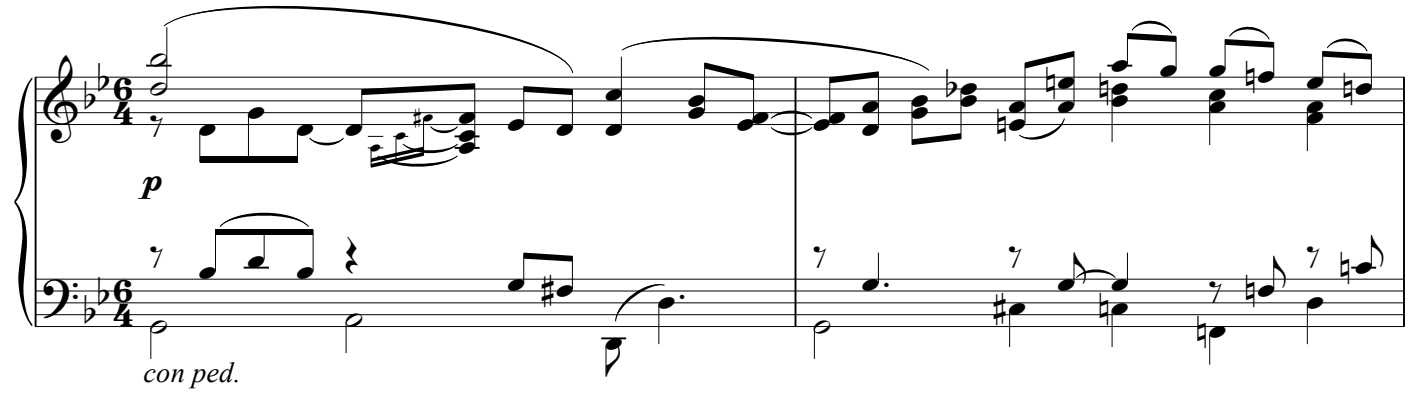
Simon Armitage

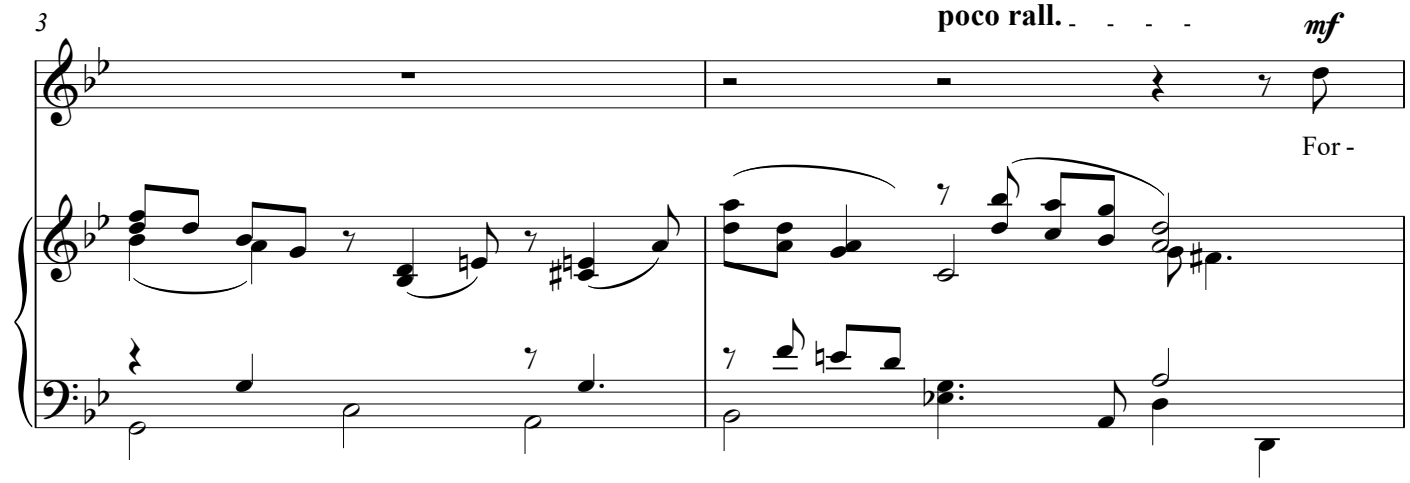
The Catch

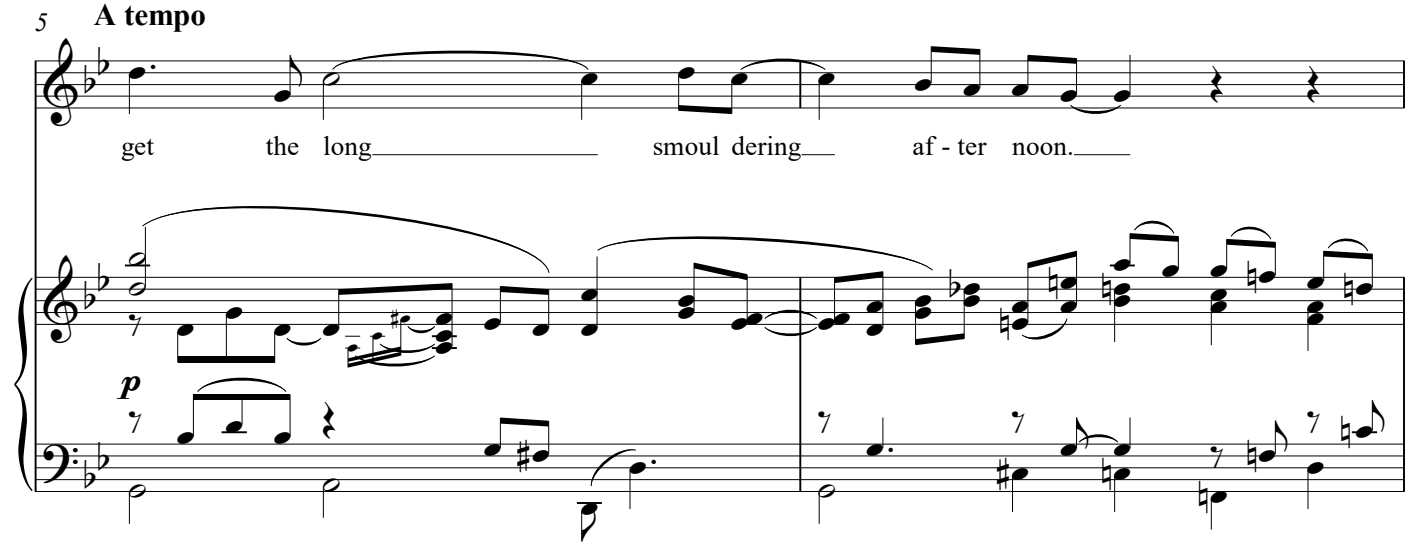
Simon Armitage

Alice Beckwith

Languorous and relaxed (♩. = 40)







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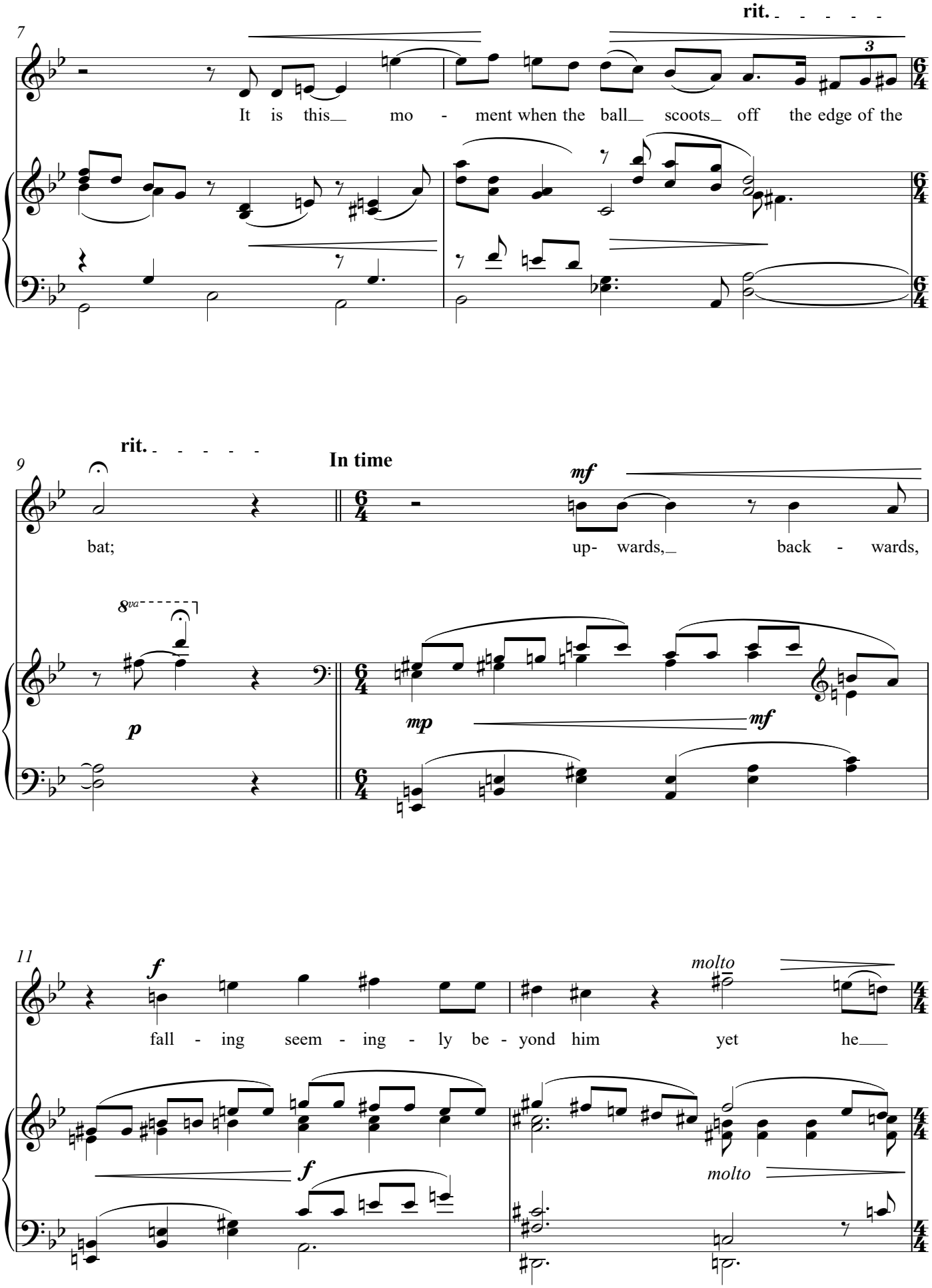

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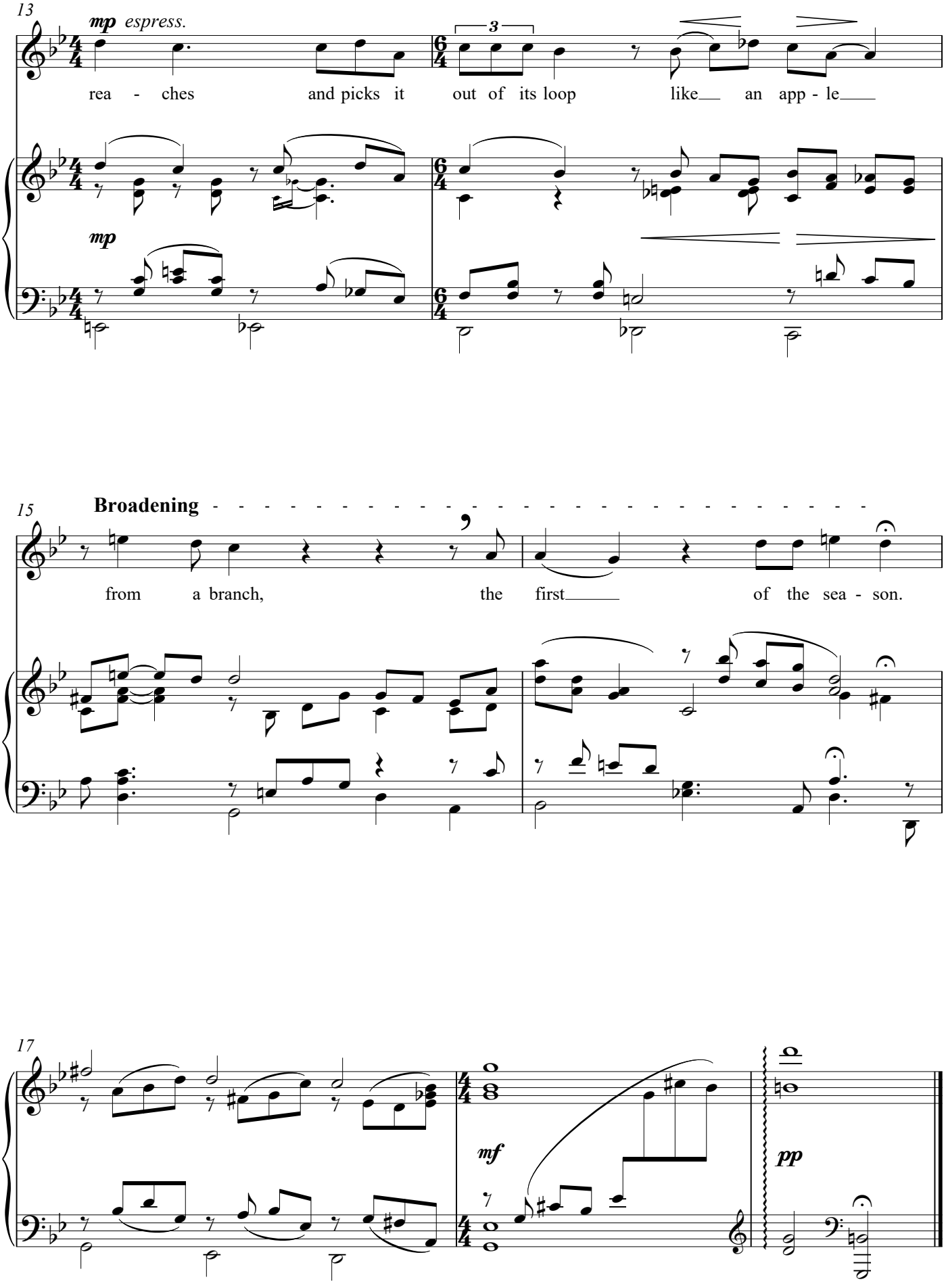

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Give

Of all the public places, dear
to make a scene, I've chosen here.

Of all the doorways in the world
to choose to sleep, I've chosen yours.
I'm on the street, under the stars.

For coppers I can dance or sing.
For silver-swallow swords, eat fire.
For gold-escape from locks and chains.

It's not as if I'm holding out
for frankincense or myrrh, just change.

You give me tea. That's big of you.
I'm on my knees. I beg of you.

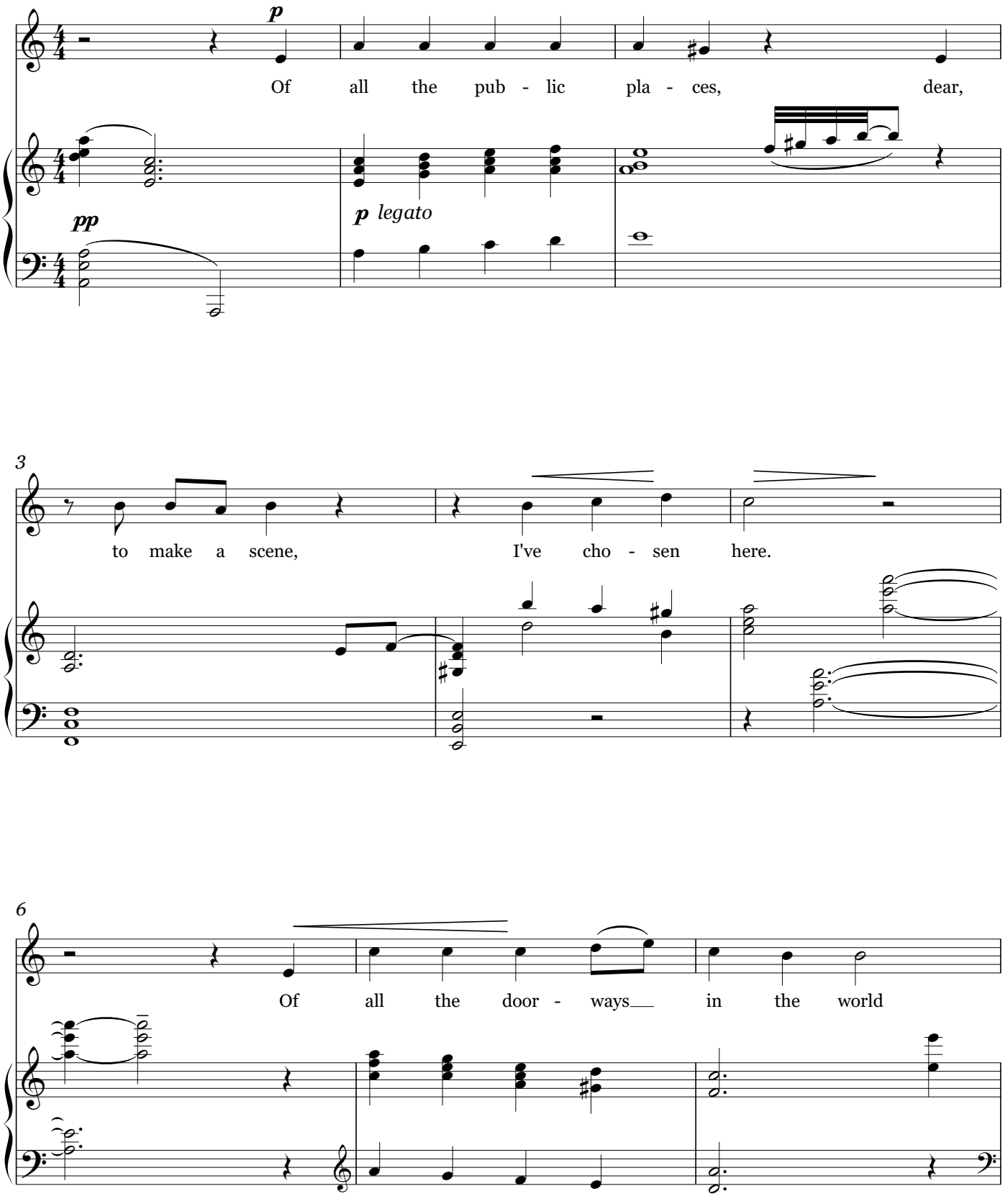
Simon Armitage

Give

Simon Armitage

Alice Beckwith

Moderato, plaintive ♩ = 84



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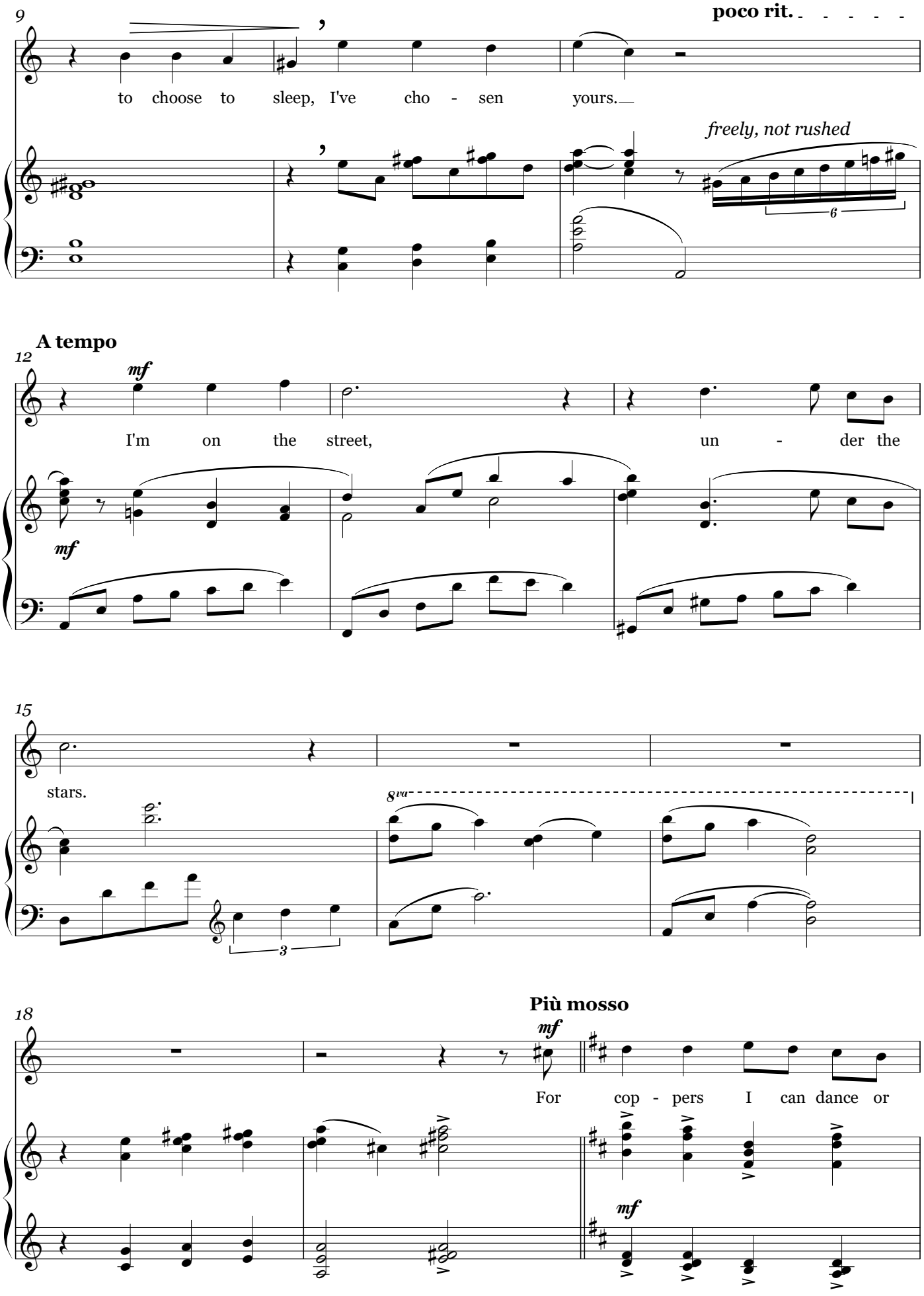

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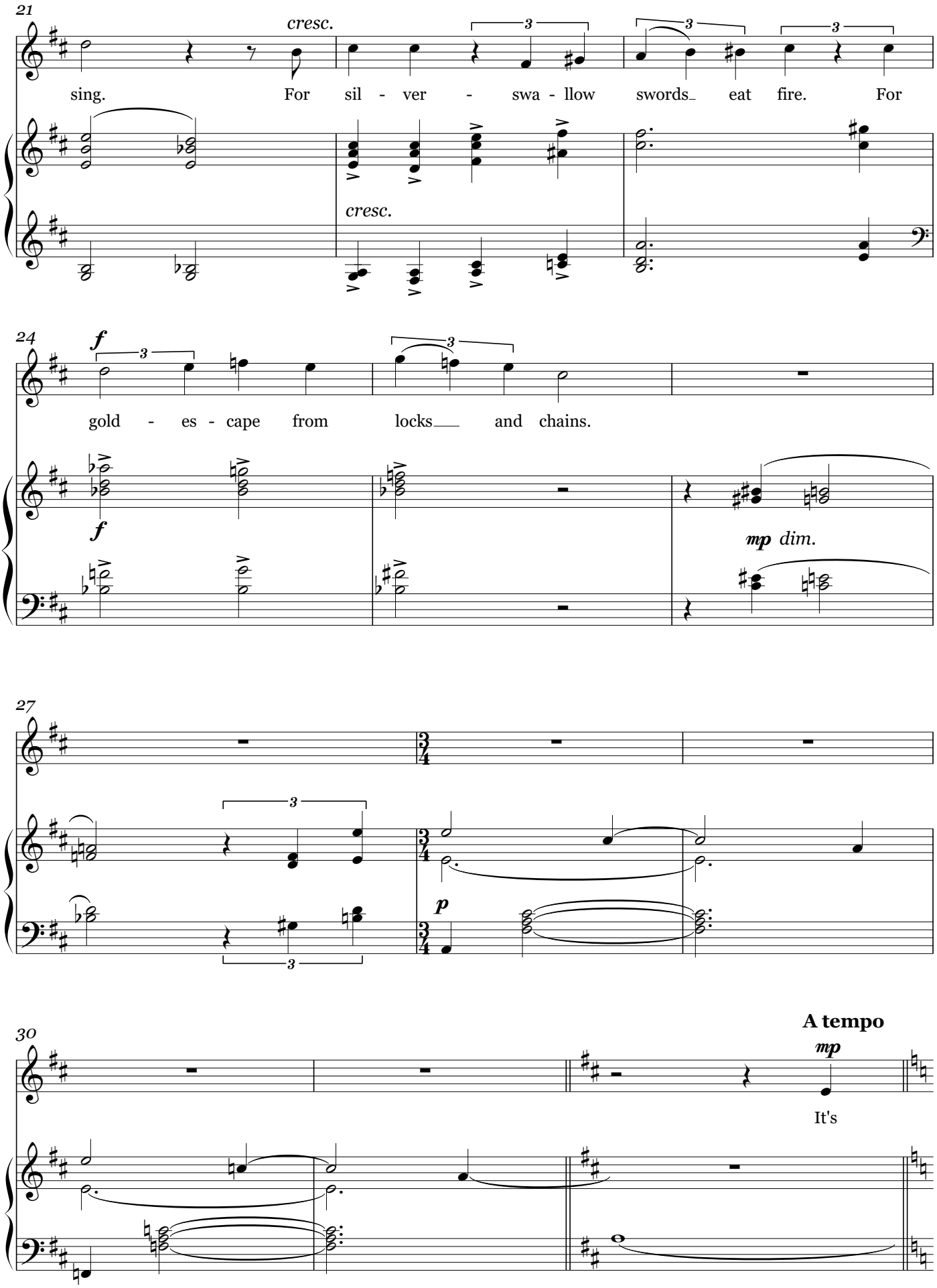

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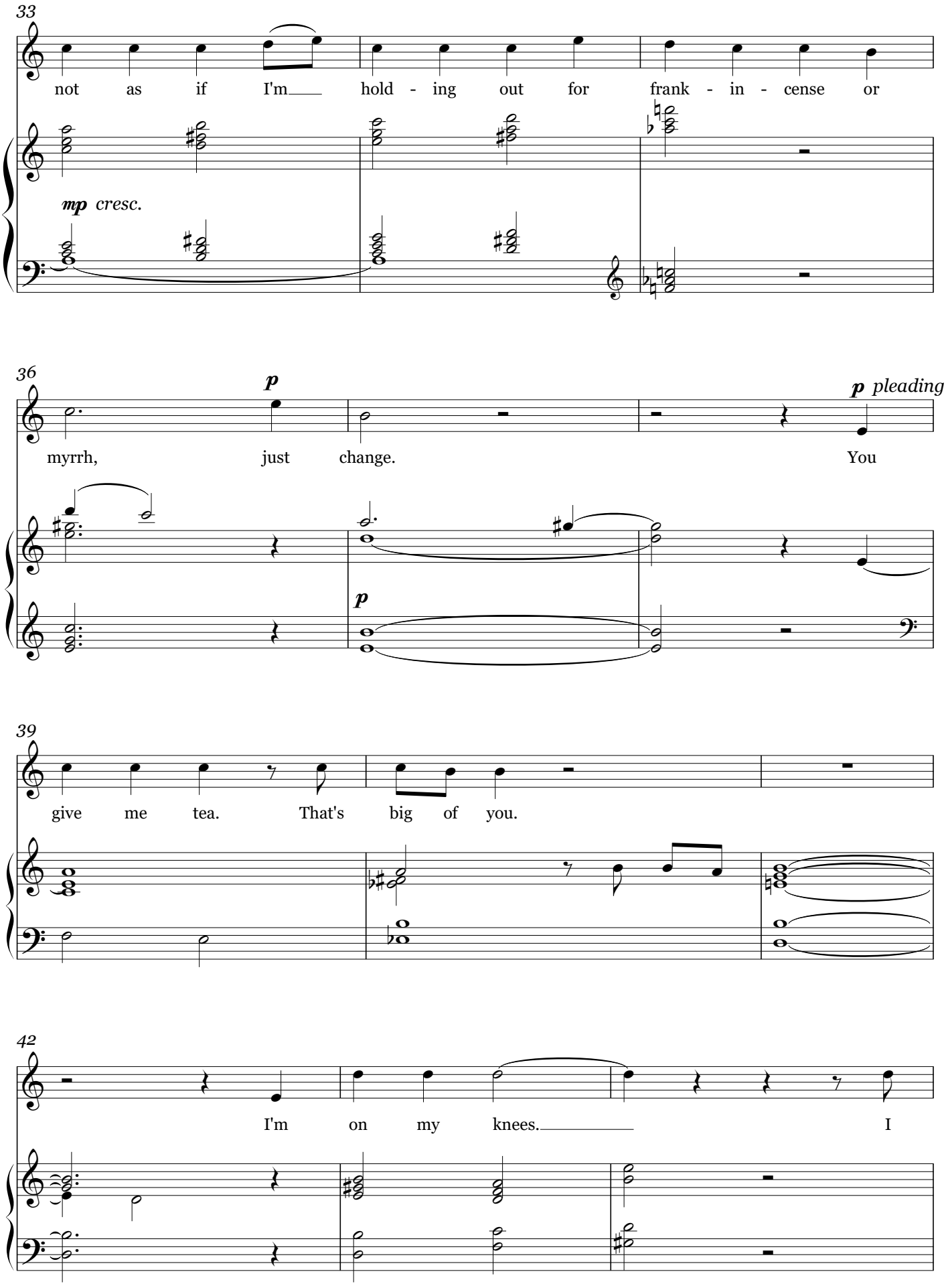

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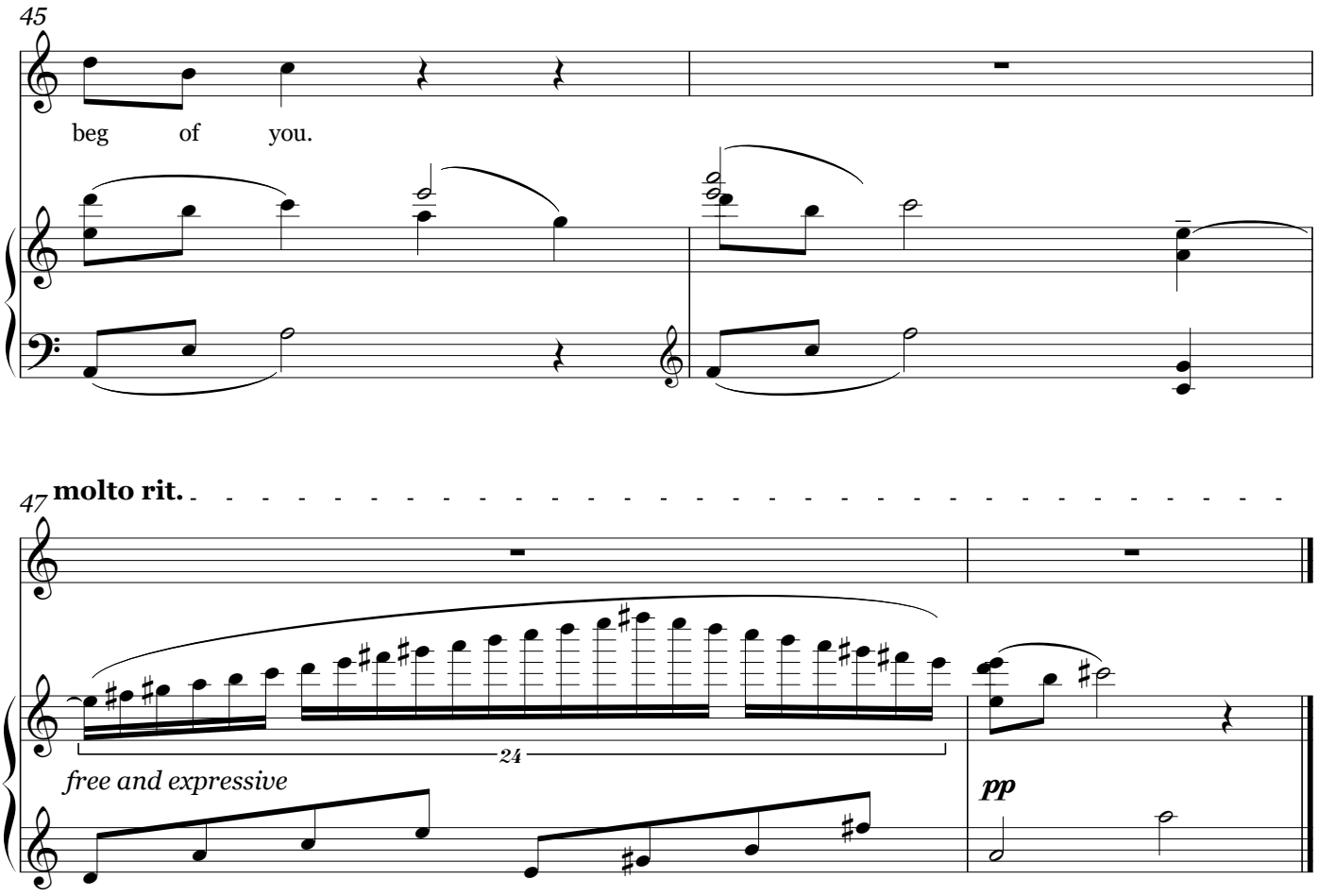

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Mist

Who does it mourn?
What does it mean,
such nearness,
gathering here
on high ground
while your back was turned,
drawing its net curtains around?
Featurless silver screen, mist
is water
in its ghost state,
all inwardness,
holding its milky breath,
veiling the pulsing machines
of great cities
under your feet,
walling you
into these moments,
into this anti-garden
of gritstone and peat.

Given time
the edge of your being
will seep
into its fibreless fur;
you are lost, adrift
in hung water and blurred air,
but you are here.

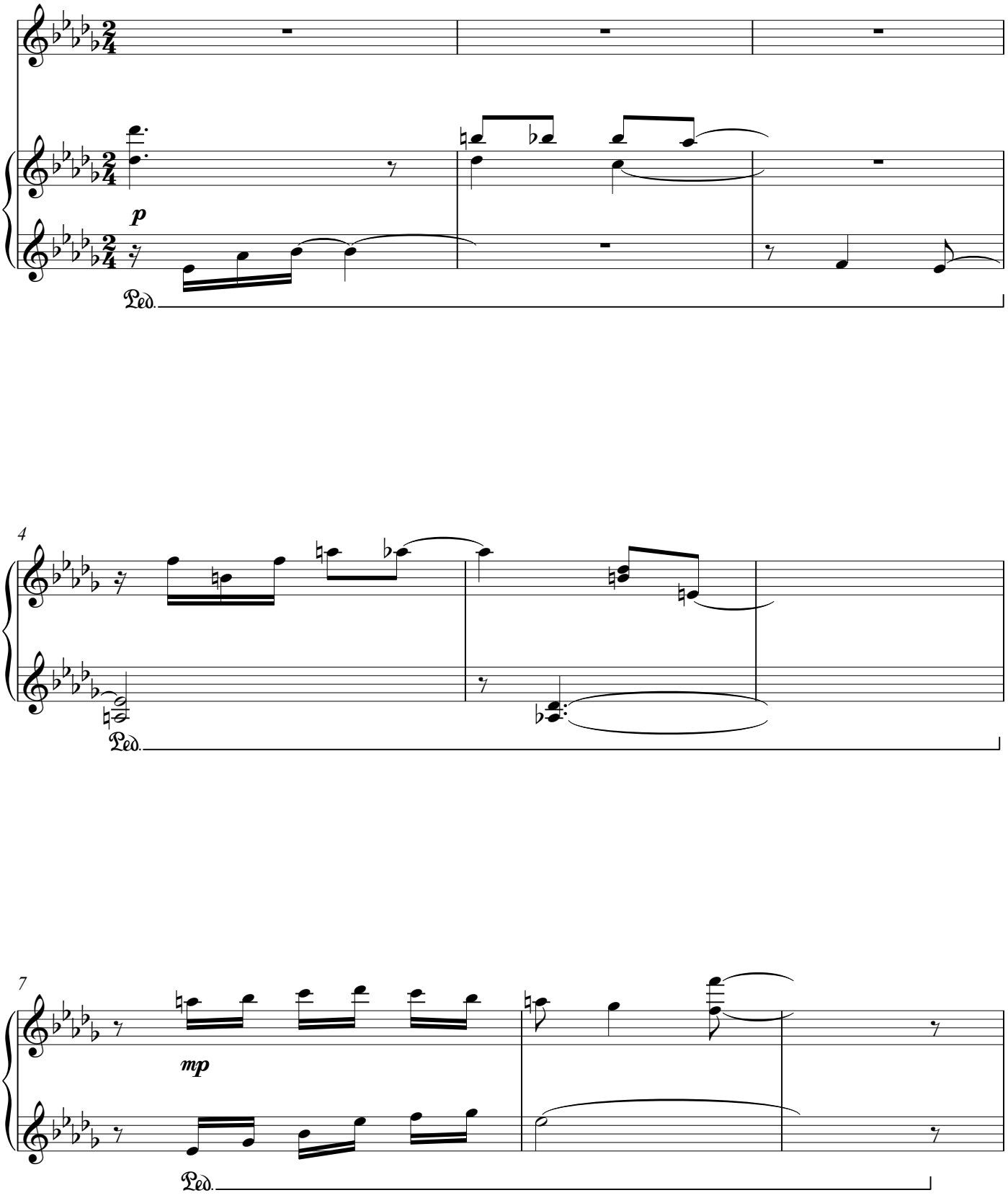
Simon Armitage

Mist

Simon Armitage

Alice Beckwith

Mysteriously, unrushed (♩ = 56)



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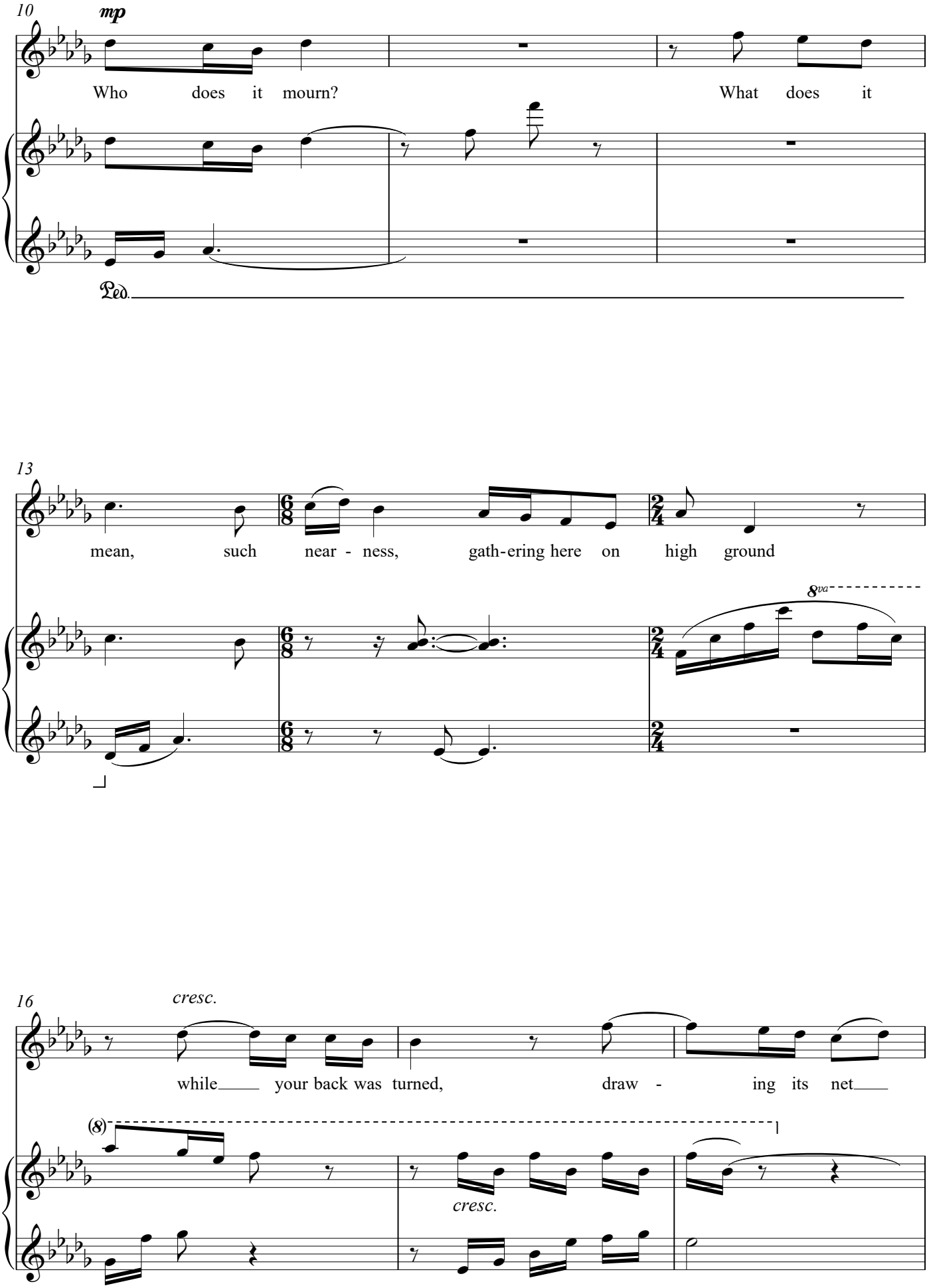
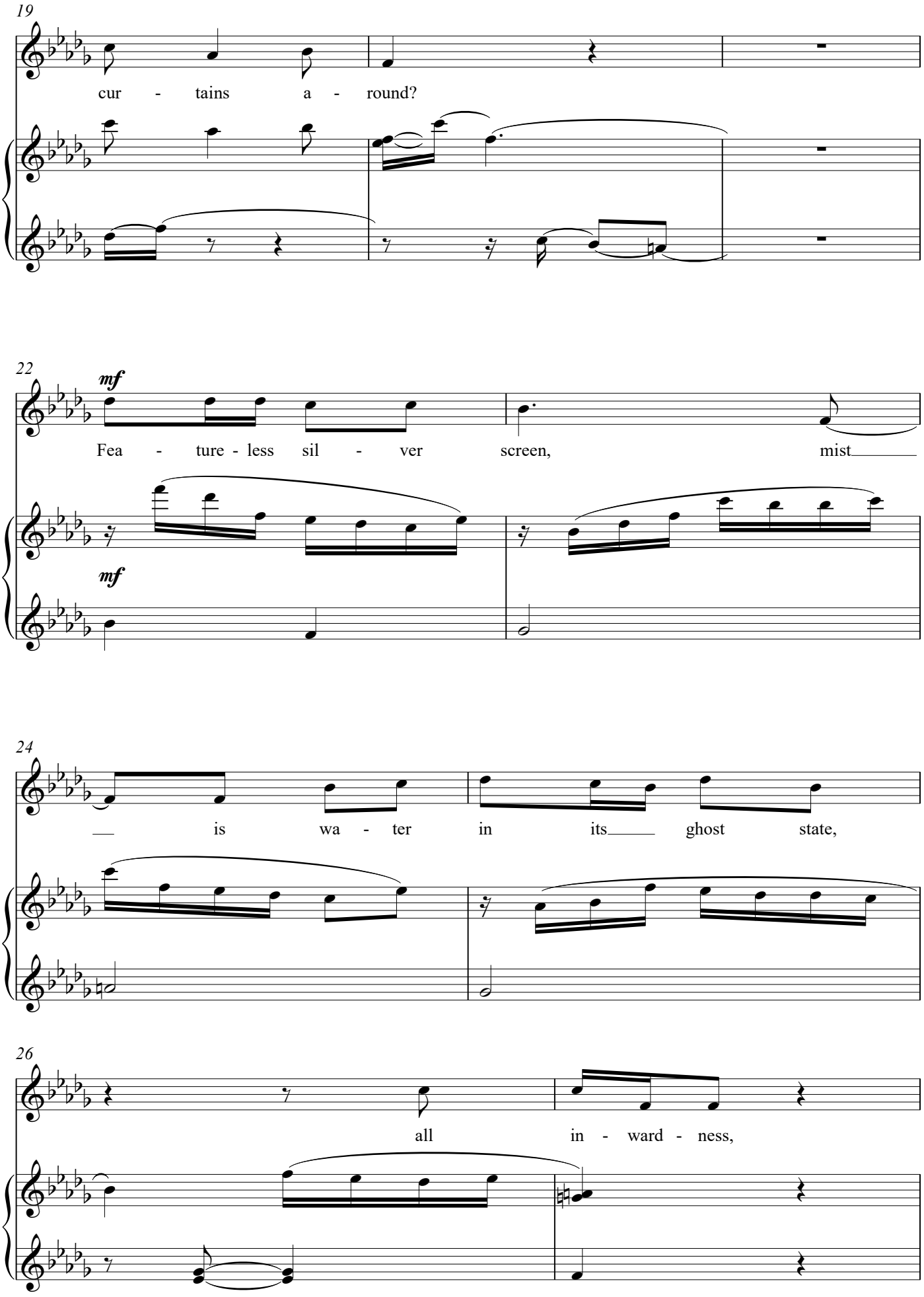

10
mp
Who does it mourn? What does it
Ped.
13
mean, such near - ness, gath-ering here on high ground
8va
16
cresc.
while your back was turned, draw - ing its net
(8)
cresc.



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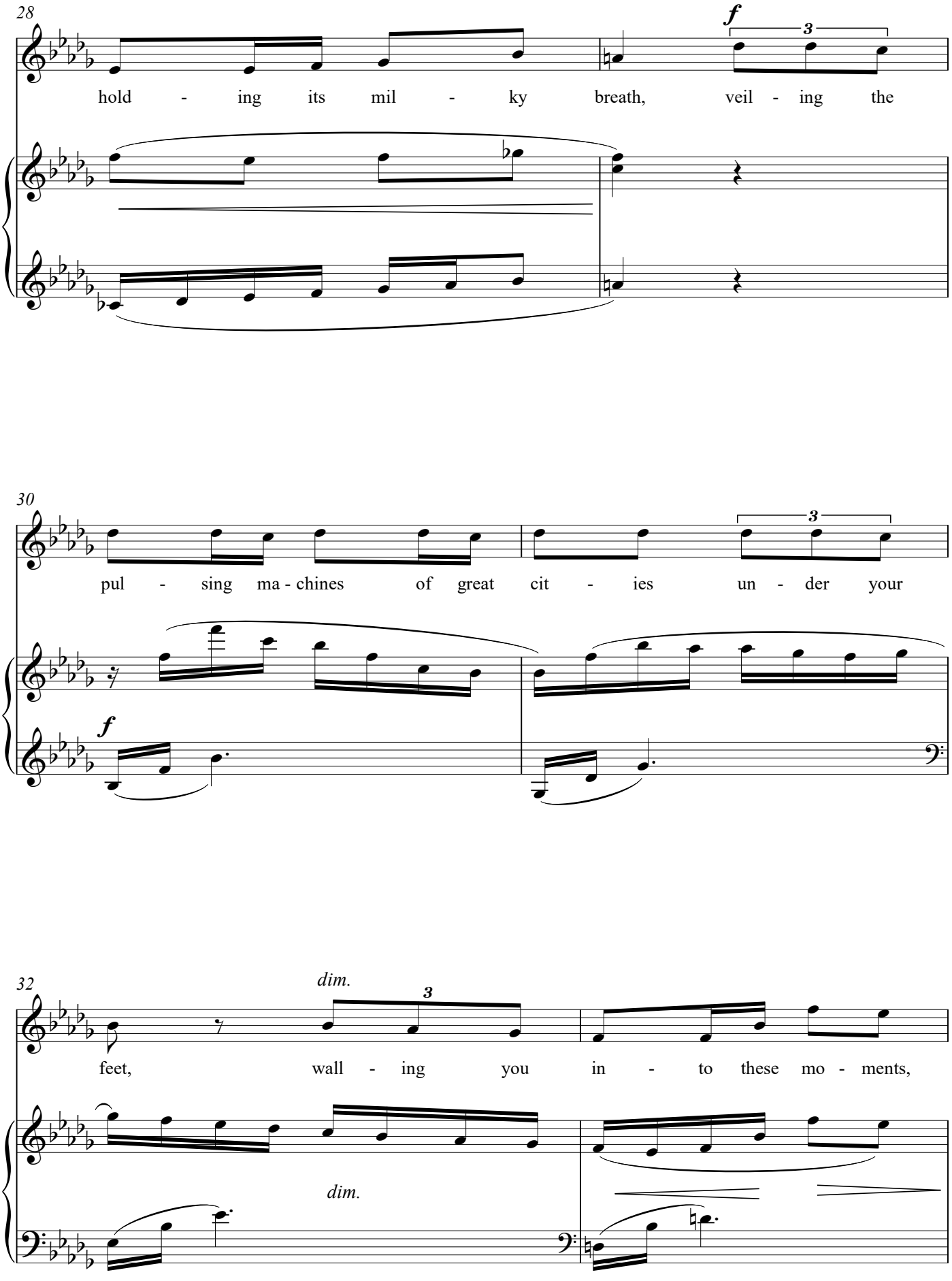

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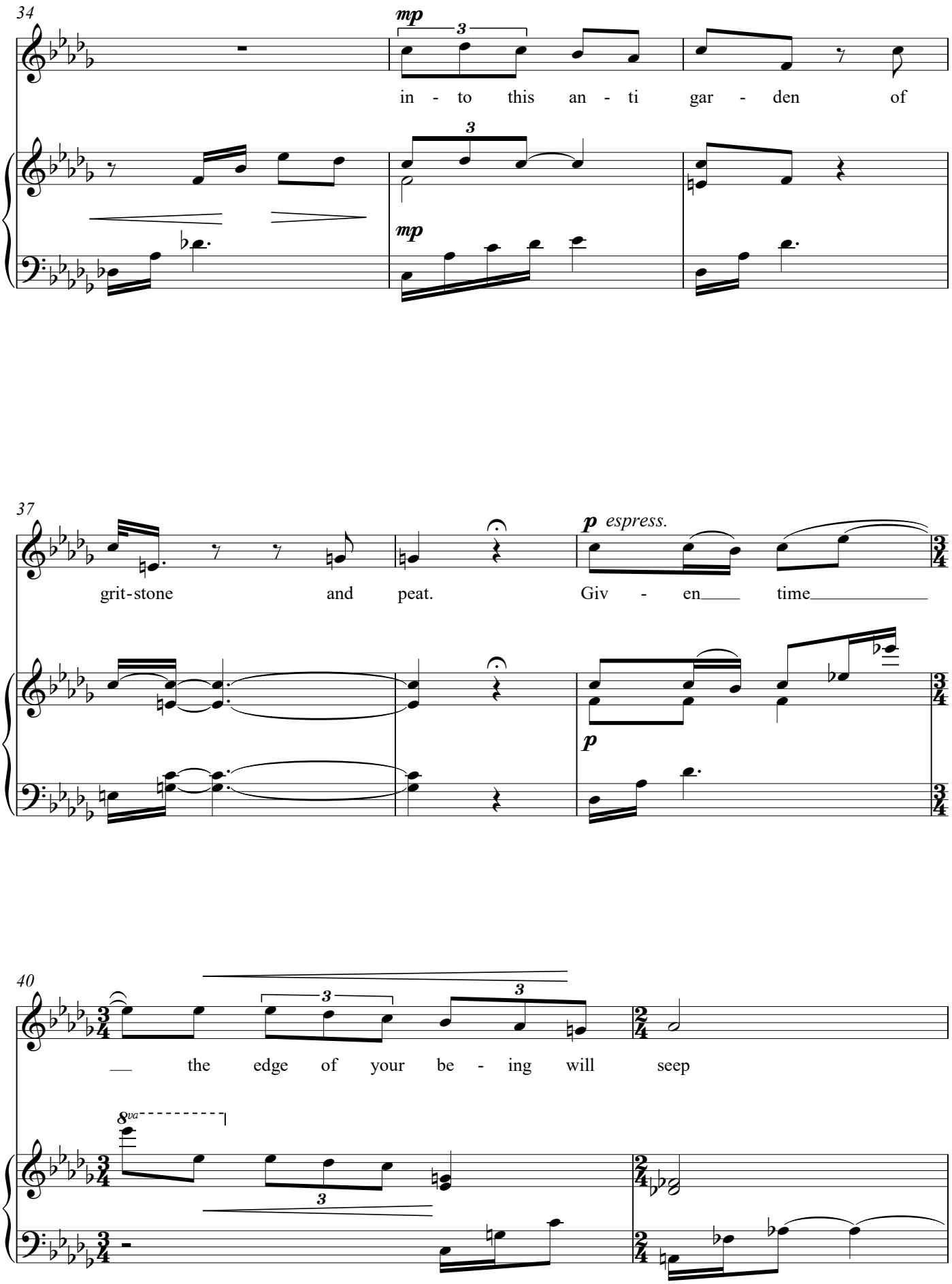

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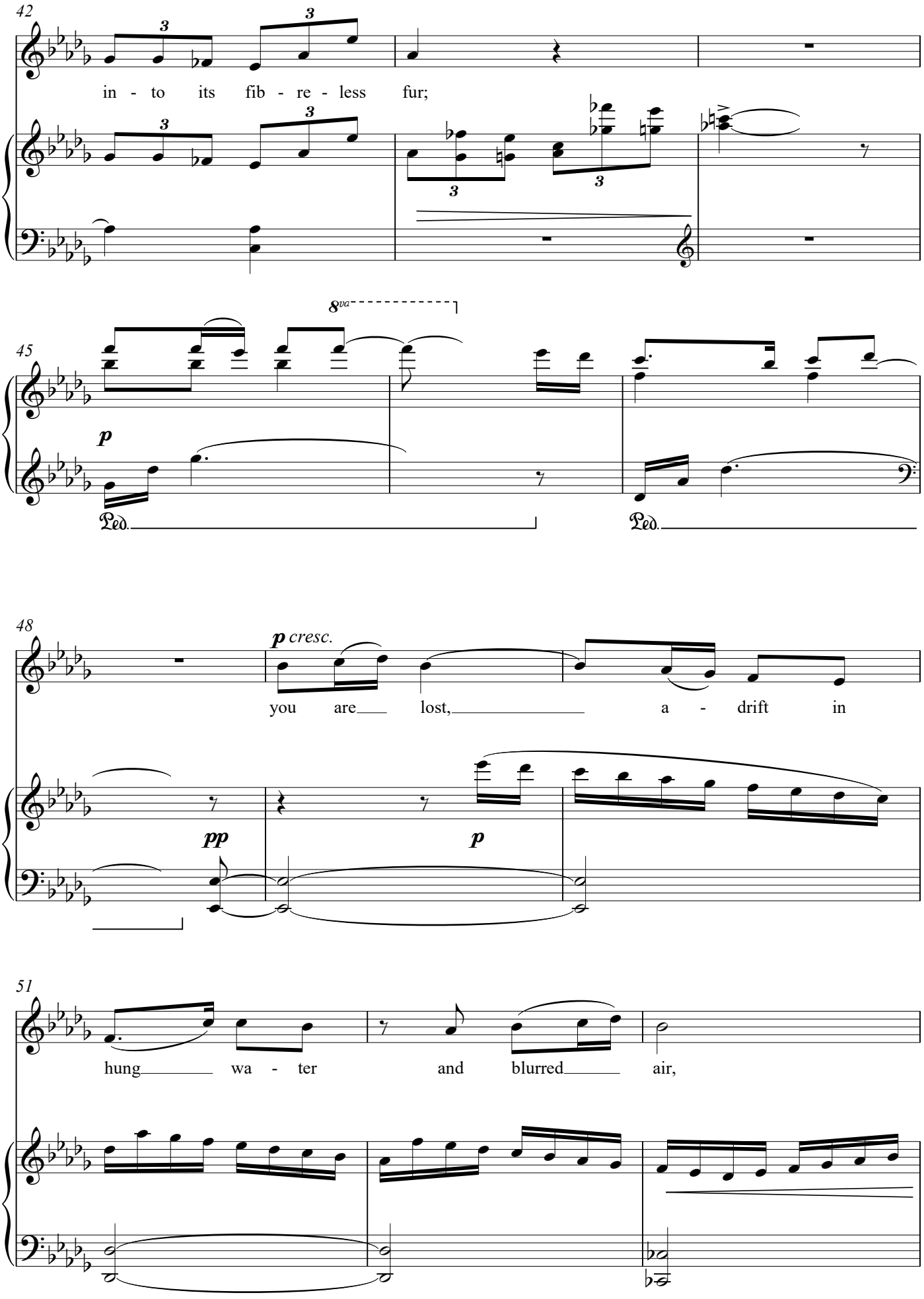

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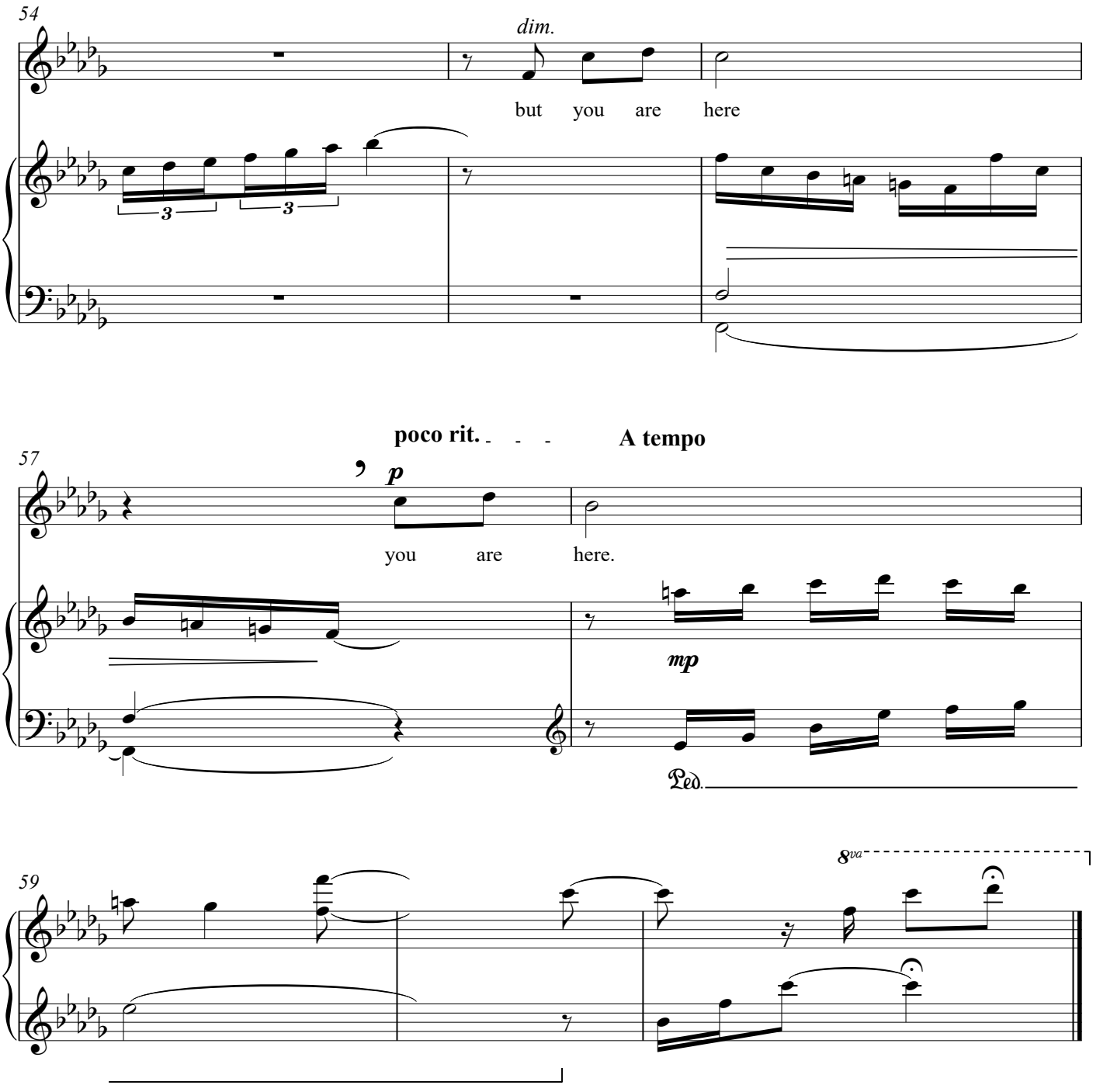

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