THOMAS ADÈS

Life Story

for soprano and piano

Op.8a

Text by
TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

(1994)

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FABER MUSIC

LIFE STORY

After you've been to bed together for the first time,
without the advantage or disadvantage of any prior acquaintance,
the other party very often says to you,
Tell me about yourself, I want to know all about you,
what's your story? And you think maybe they really and truly do

sincerely want to know your life story, and so you light up
a cigarette and begin to tell it to them, the two of you
lying together in completely relaxed positions
like a pair of rag dolls a bored child dropped on a bed.

You tell them your story, or as much of your story
as time or a fair degree of prudence allows, and they say, Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh,
each time a little more faintly, until the oh
is just an audible breath, and then of course

there's some interruption. Slow room service comes up
with a bowl of melting ice cubes, or one of you rises to pee
and gaze at himself with mild astonishment in the bathroom mirror.
And then, the first thing you know, before you've had time
to pick up where you left off with your enthralling life story,
they're telling you their life story, exactly as they'd intended to all along,

and you're saying, Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh,
each time a little more faintly, the vowel at last becoming
no more than an audible sigh,
as the elevator, halfway down the corridor and a turn to the left,
draws one last, long, deep breath of exhaustion
and stops breathing forever. Then?

Well, one of you falls asleep
and the other one does likewise with a lighted cigarette in his mouth,
and that's how people burn to death in hotel rooms.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS
From *In the Winter of Cities*
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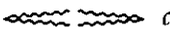
PERFORMANCE NOTES

Voice:  *cresc.* and *dim.* respectively achieved by intensification of vibrato. In considering this marking, and aspects of the vocal part in general (particularly: wide scooping glissandi swoops, displaced accentuations; and overall character) the late style of Billie Holliday is recommended as a model.

Piano: The absence of pedal indications does not imply *senza Ped.*

All grace notes *rapidissimi, quasi glissandi.*

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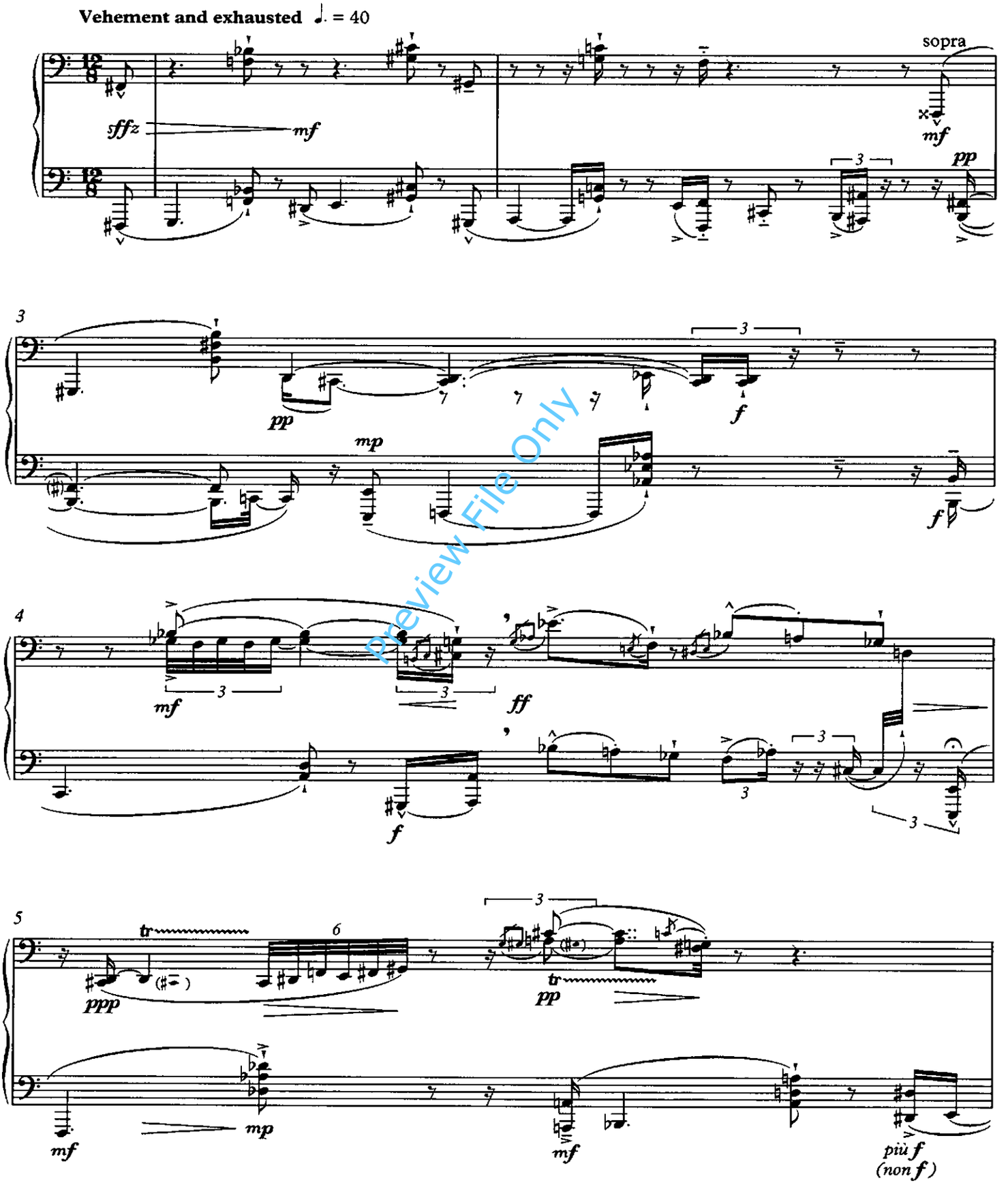

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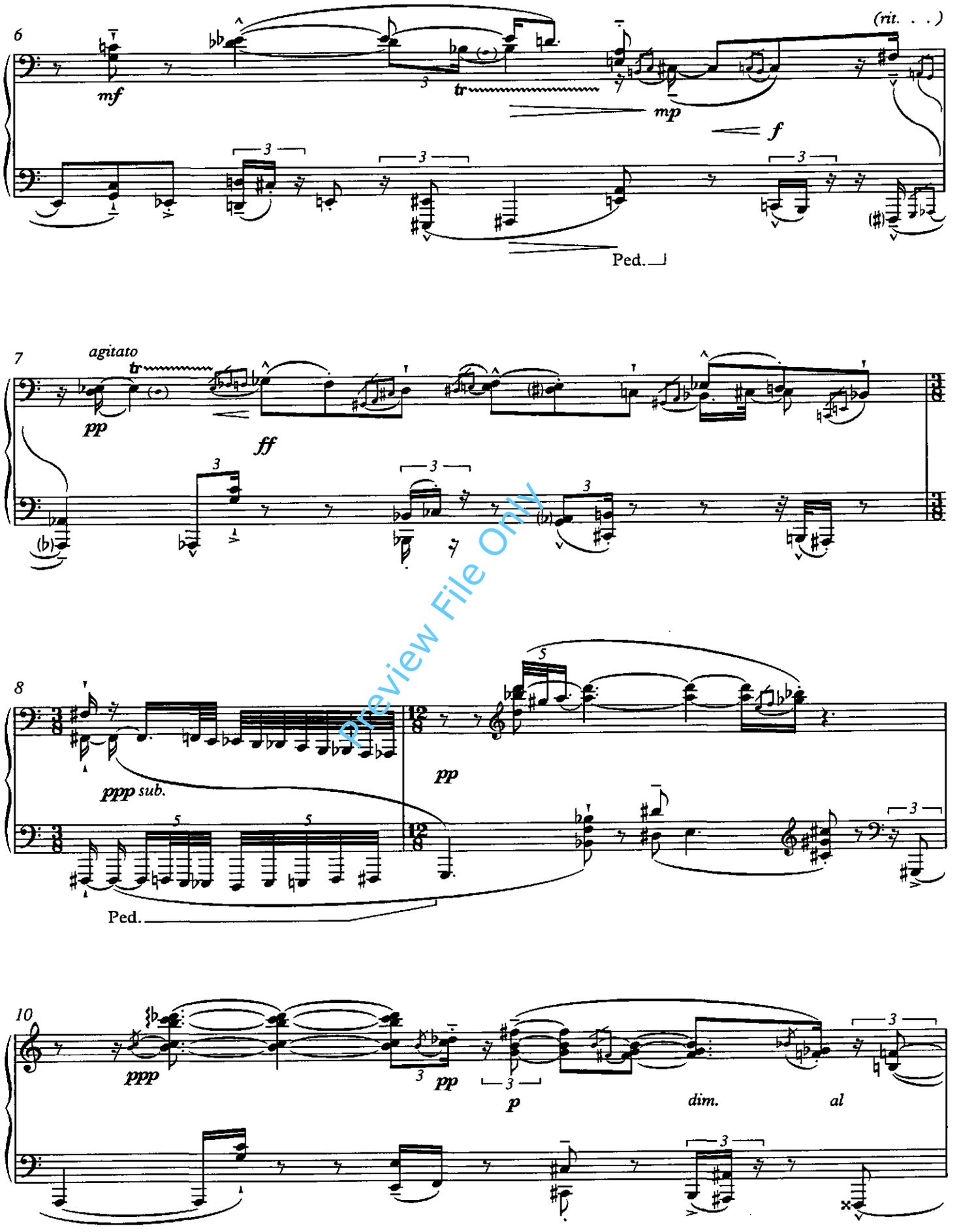

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