Robinsongs

for Mezzo-Soprano, Flute, Clarinet, and Piano

Bill Robinson

Robinsongs

for Mezzo-Soprano, Flute, Clarinet in B flat, and Piano

April 30—September 11, 2012
Duration: about 14 minutes Cover photo: Parma Cathedral dome

for Joseph, Mary Kay, and Rebecca Robinson

Joseph and Mary Kay Robinson (no relation) came to a concert in 2006 featuring some of my music performed by Eric Pritchard at Duke University. Joe had a long career as principal oboist with the New York Philharmonic, and Mary Kay has performed extensively as a violinist. They asked me to write a trio for oboe, violin, and piano, which resulted in *Aditya Hridayam*. After they performed this at Duke with Thomas Warburton, I realized how lucky I was to work with musicians of this caliber. In February 2012, Mary Kay was one of the musicians performing my *Clarinet Sextet* for clarinet and strings, which was a wonderful performance.

In 2011, Joe and Mary Kay asked me to write a piece they could perform with their aspiring diva daughter Becky, with Mary Kay playing piano. I wrestled with ideas for lyrics for many months, but found this to be an exceptionally difficult assignment. After finishing *Violations* for viol consort (or string ensembles) on February 19, 2012, it was time to sit down to do *Robinsongs*, a set of songs for, well, the Robinsons. After delays and false starts with other lyrics, I managed to start scribbling Lewis Carroll's *Some Hallucinations* on April 30, but progress was quite difficult. After that came Ogden Nash's *The Purist*. (I've made a good-faith effort to find the holder of the copyright—but then, my music is so far from profitable that I don't suppose royalties will be an issue.) Finally, after much struggle and an uncommonly slow season of composition, came another Lewis Carroll poem, *You Are Old, Father William*, finished on the ominous date of September 11.

In August 2015 I made this new version of *Robinsongs* for mezzo, flute, clarinet, and piano, at the suggestion of Marianne Breneman, clarinetist and member of Conundrum, a chamber music group of soprano, flute, clarinet, and piano. In October 2022, I converted the legal-size format to letter-size.

Accidentals hold through the measure and not beyond, and do not refer to other octaves. Sometimes I include courtesy accidentals to avoid confusion. Notes retain their value through meter changes.

Bill Robinson

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billrobinsonmusic.com

Some Hallucinations

He thought he saw an Elephant,
  That practiced on a fife:
He looked again, and found it was
  A letter from his wife.
"At length I realize," he said,
  "The bitterness of life."

He thought he saw a Buffalo
  Upon the chimneypiece:
He looked again, and found it was
  His Sister's Husband's Niece.
"Unless you leave this house," he said,
  "I'll send for the Police!"

He thought he saw a Rattlesnake
  That questioned him in Greek:
He looked again, and found it was
  The Middle of Next Week.
"The one thing I regret," he said,
  "Is that it cannot speak!"

He thought he saw a Banker's Clerk
  Descending from the 'bus:
He looked again, and found it was
  A Hippopotamus.
"If this should stay to dine," he said,
  "There won't be much for us!"

–Lewis Carroll

The Purist

I give you now Professor Twist,
A conscientious scientist,
Trustees exclaimed, "He never bungles!"
And sent him off to distant jungles.
Camped on a tropic riverside,
One day he missed his loving bride.
She had, the guide informed him later,
Been eaten by an alligator.
Professor Twist could not but smile.
"You mean," he said, "a crocodile."

--Ogden Nash

You Are Old, Father William

"You are old, father William," the young man said,
"And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head--
Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

"In my youth," father William replied to his son,
"I feared it might injure the brain;
But now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again."

"You are old," said the youth, "as I mentioned before,
And have grown most uncommonly fat;
Yet you turned a back-somersault in at the door--
Pray what is the reason of that?"

"In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his grey locks,
"I kept all my limbs very supple
By the use of this ointment--one shilling the box--
Allow me to sell you a couple?"

"You are old," said the youth, "and your jaws are to weak
For anything tougher than suet;
Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak--
Pray, how did you manage to do it?"

"In my youth," said his father, "I took to the law,
And argued each case with my wife;
And the muscular strength, which it gave to my jaw,
Has lasted the rest of my life."

"You are old," said the youth, "one would hardly suppose
That your eye was as steady as ever;
Yet you balanced an eel on the end of your nose--
What made you so awfully clever?"

"I have answered three questions and that is enough,"
Said the father. "Don't give yourself airs!
Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
Be off, or I'll kick you down stairs!"

---Lewis Carroll

Robinsongs

1. Some Hallucinations [5:20]

lyrics by Lewis Carroll
music by Bill Robinson

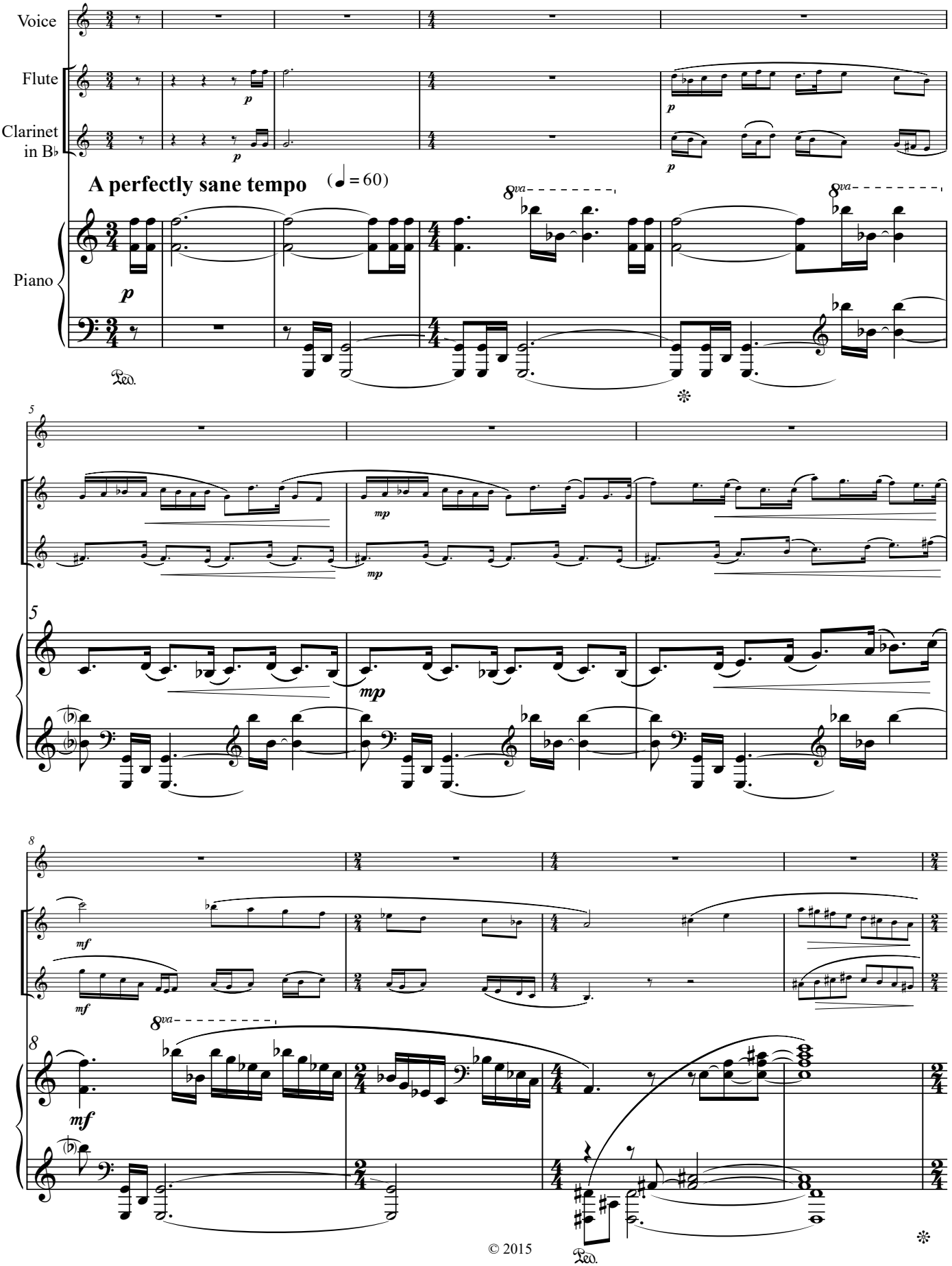
A perfectly sane tempo (♩ = 60)

Voice

Flute

Clarinet in B♭

Piano



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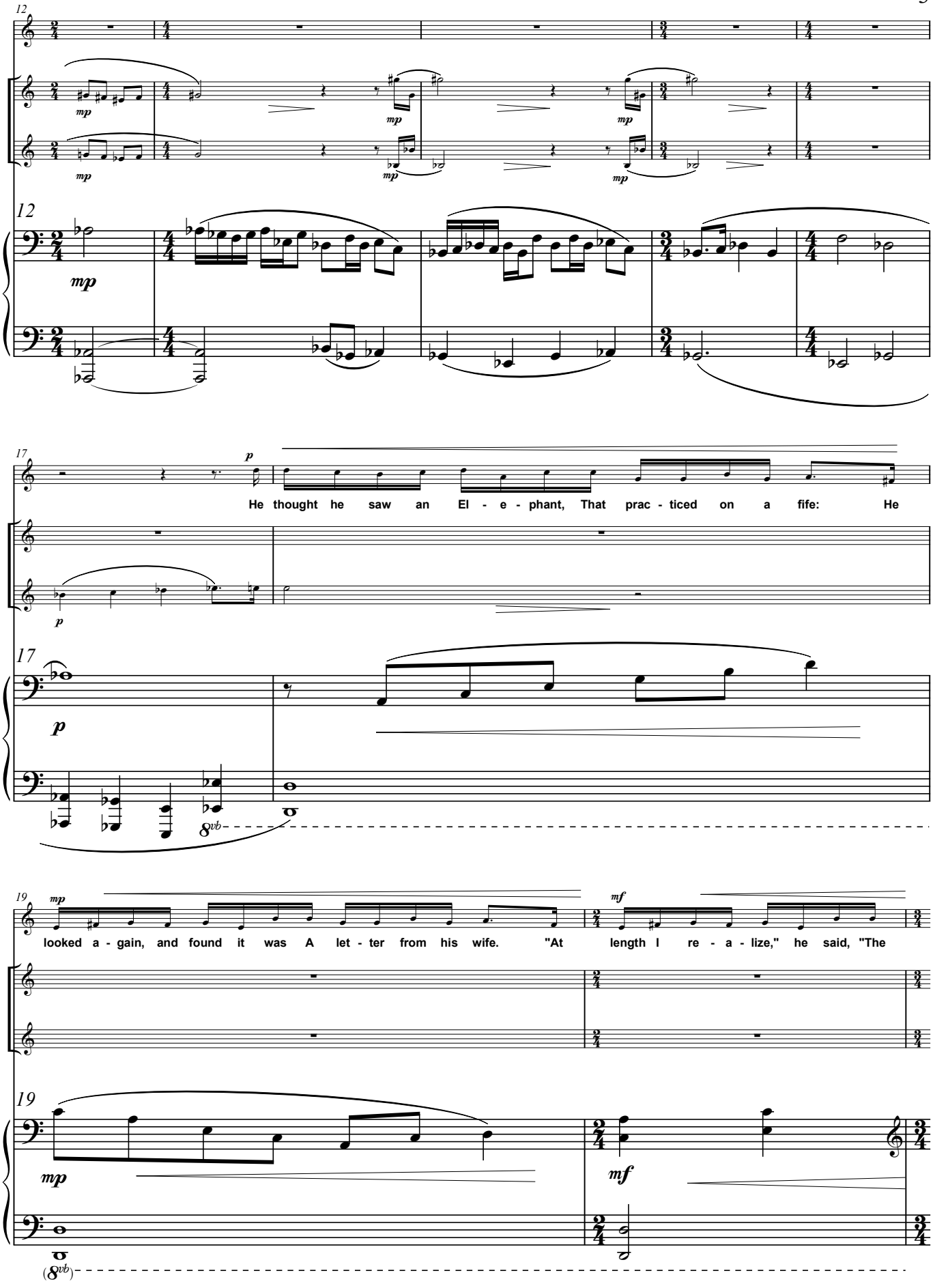
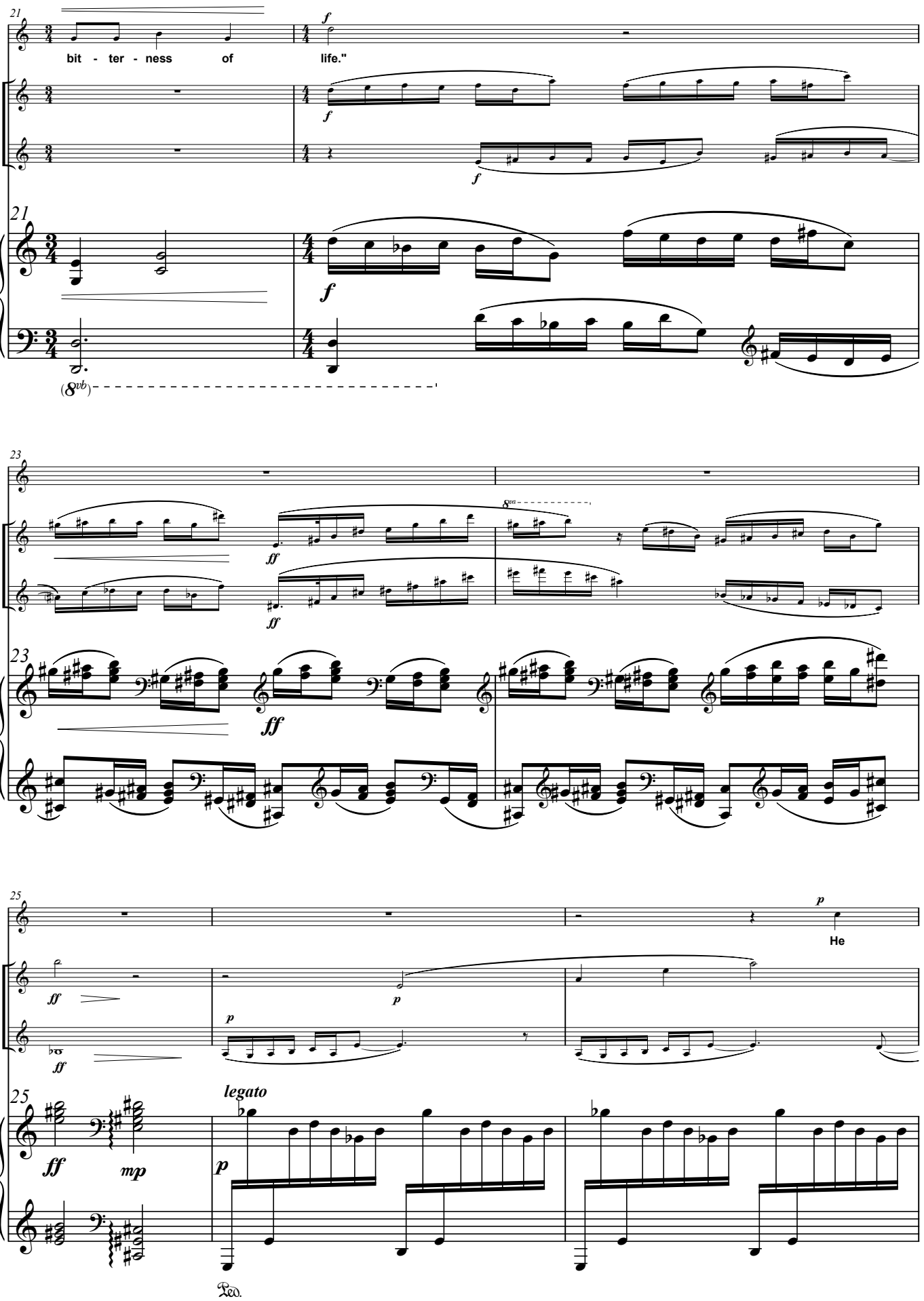
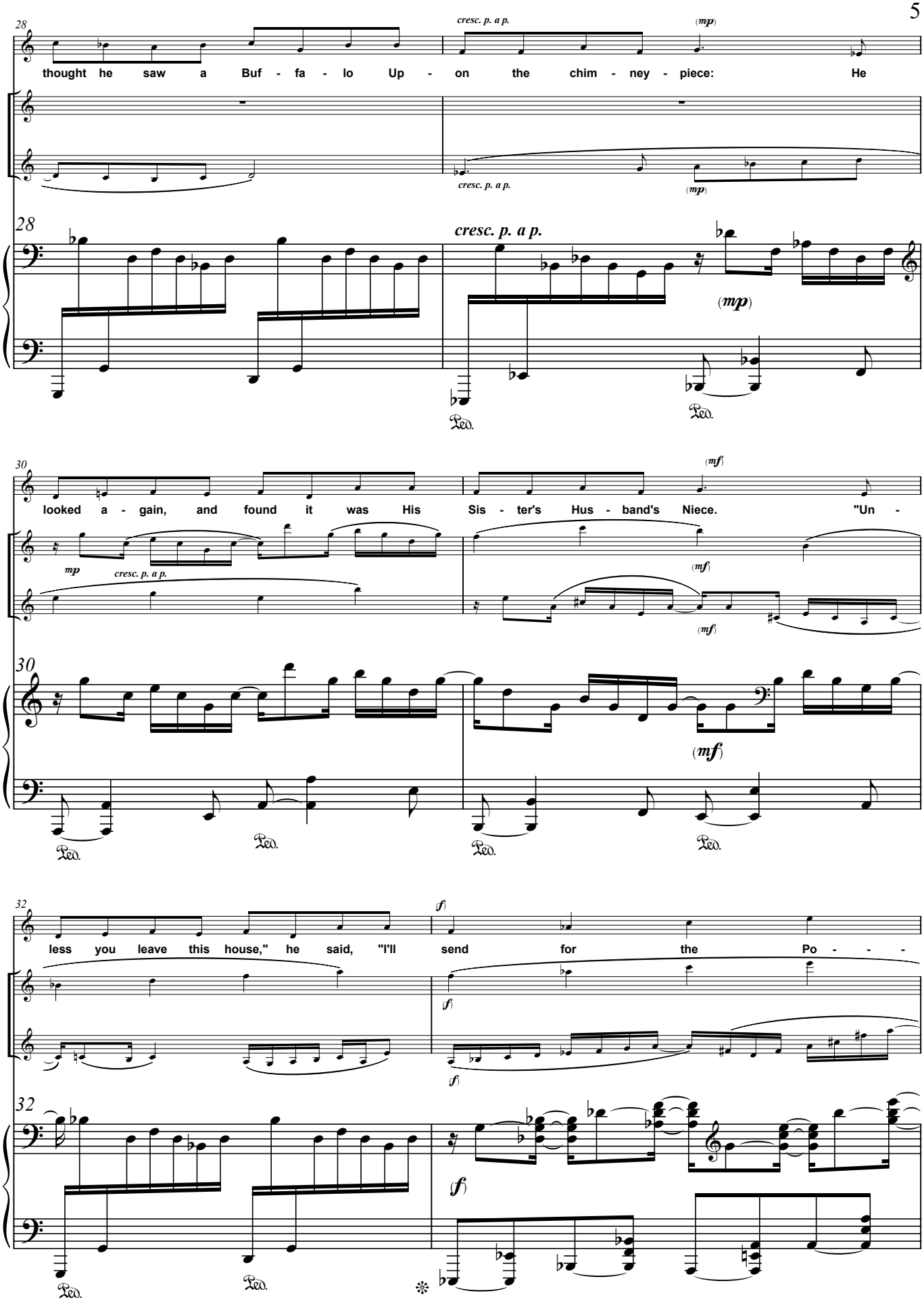
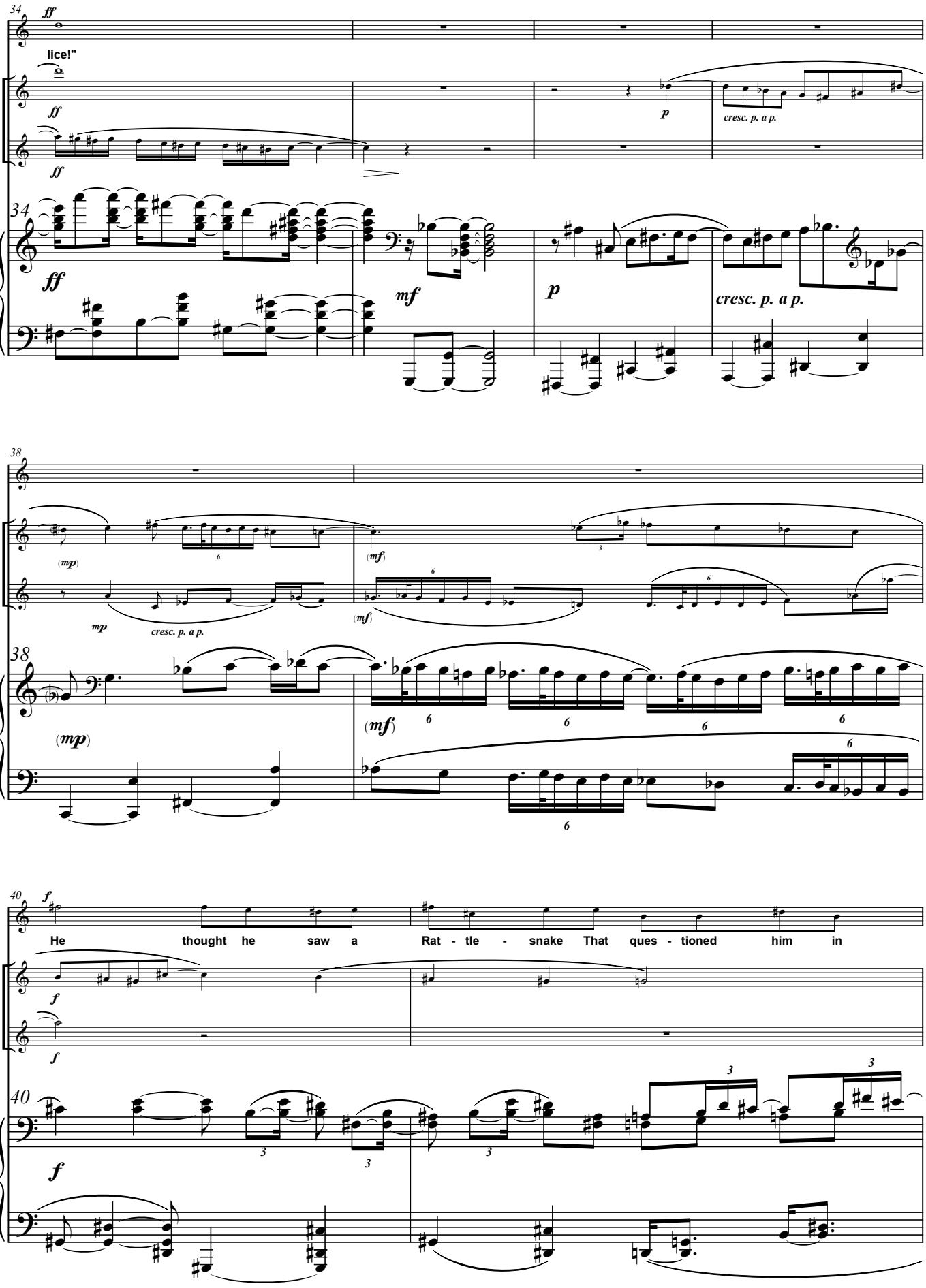
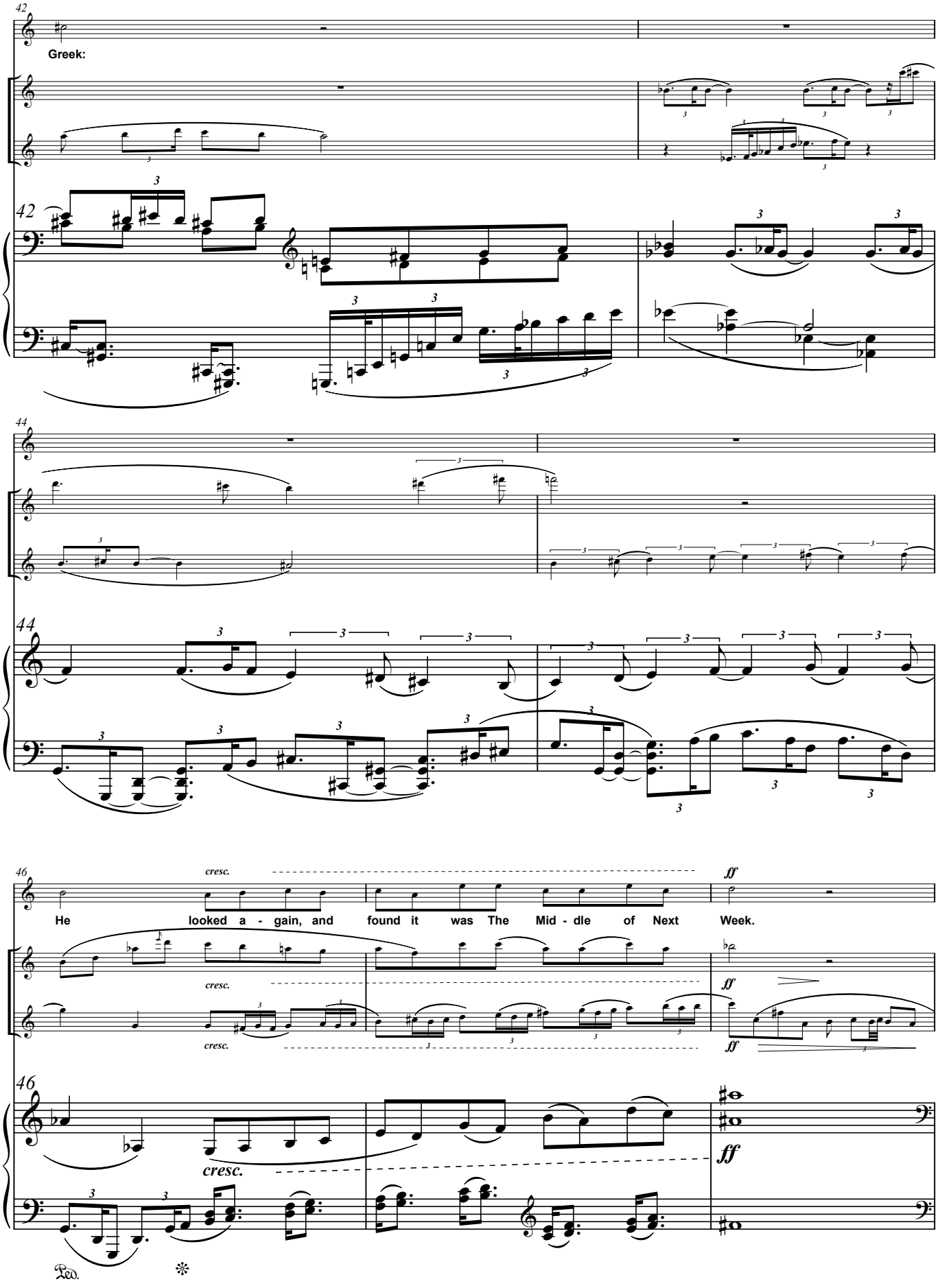
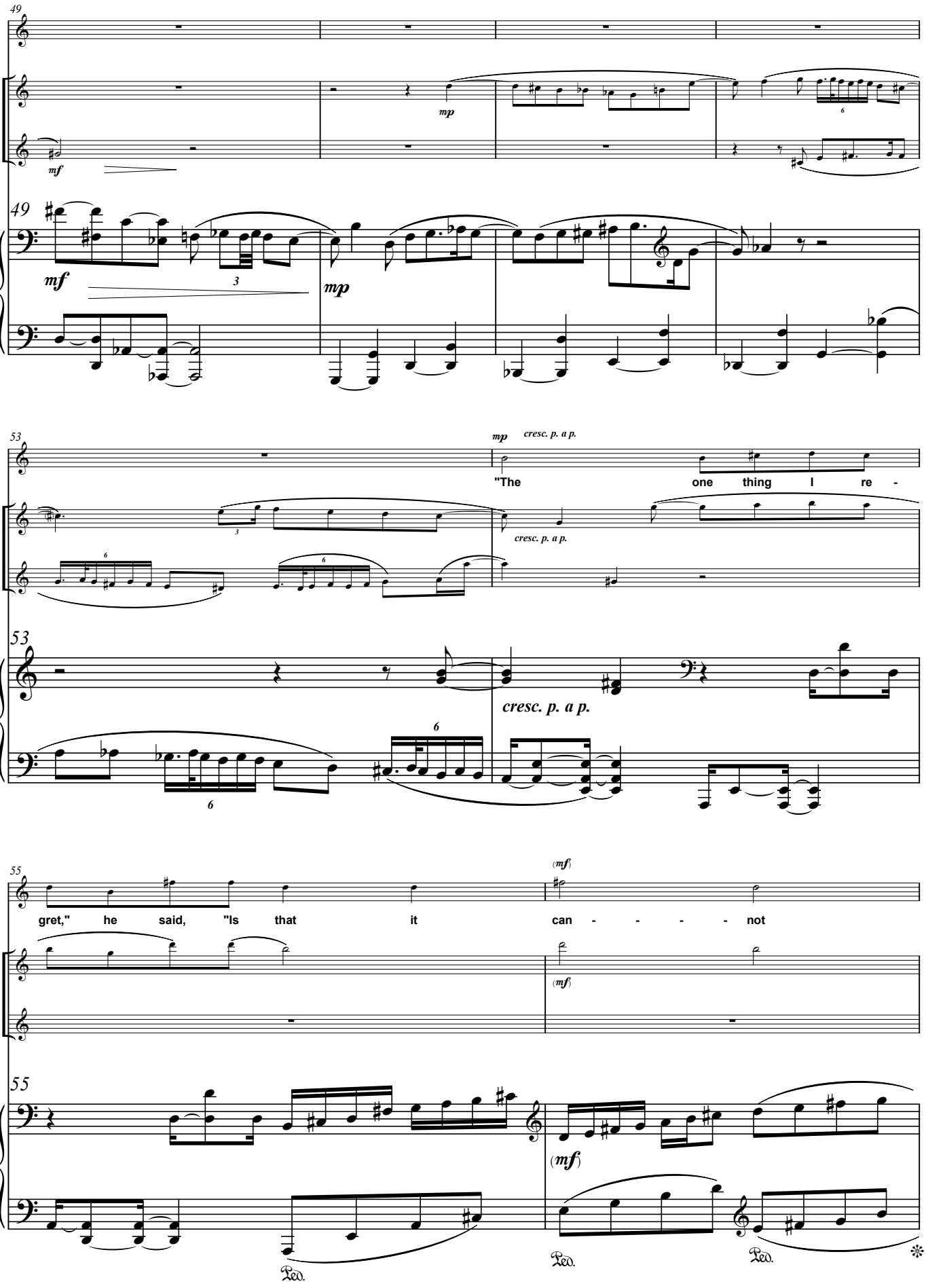

12
mp
12
mp
17
p
He thought he saw an El - e - phant, That prac - ticed on a fife: He
p
17
p
8vb
19
mp
looked a - gain, and found it was A let - ter from his wife. "At
mf
length I re - a - lize," he said, "The
19
mp
mf
(8vb)

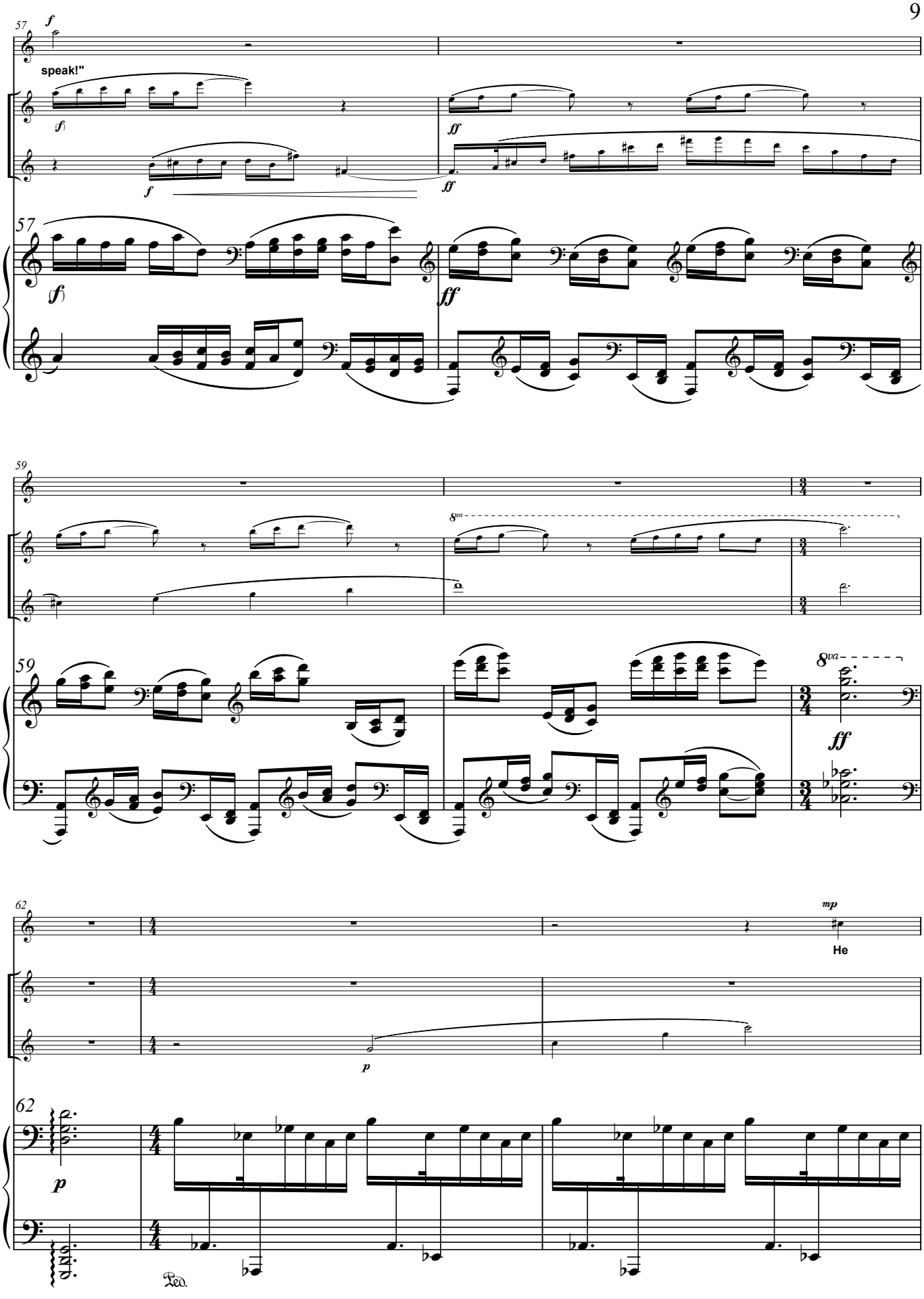

bit - ter - ness of life."
(8vb)
8va
He
legato
Ped.

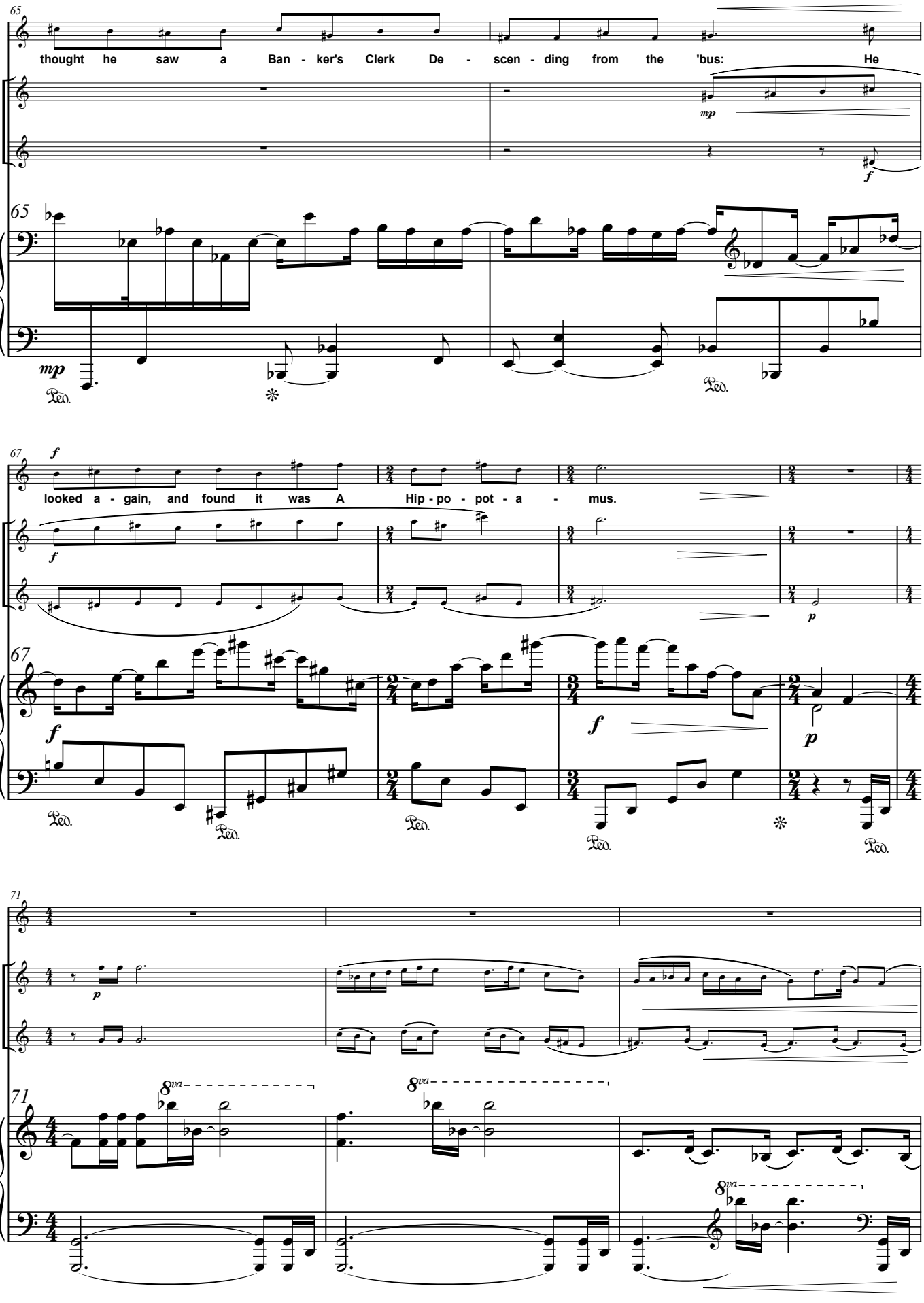

28
thought he saw a Buf - fa - lo Up - on the chim - ney - piece: He
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
28
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
Ped.
Ped.
30
looked a - gain, and found it was His Sis - ter's Hus - band's Niece. "Un -
mp
cresc. p. a p.
(mf)
(mf)
30
(mf)
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
32
less you leave this house," he said, "I'll send for the Po - - -
(f)
(f)
(f)
32
(f)
Ped.
Ped.

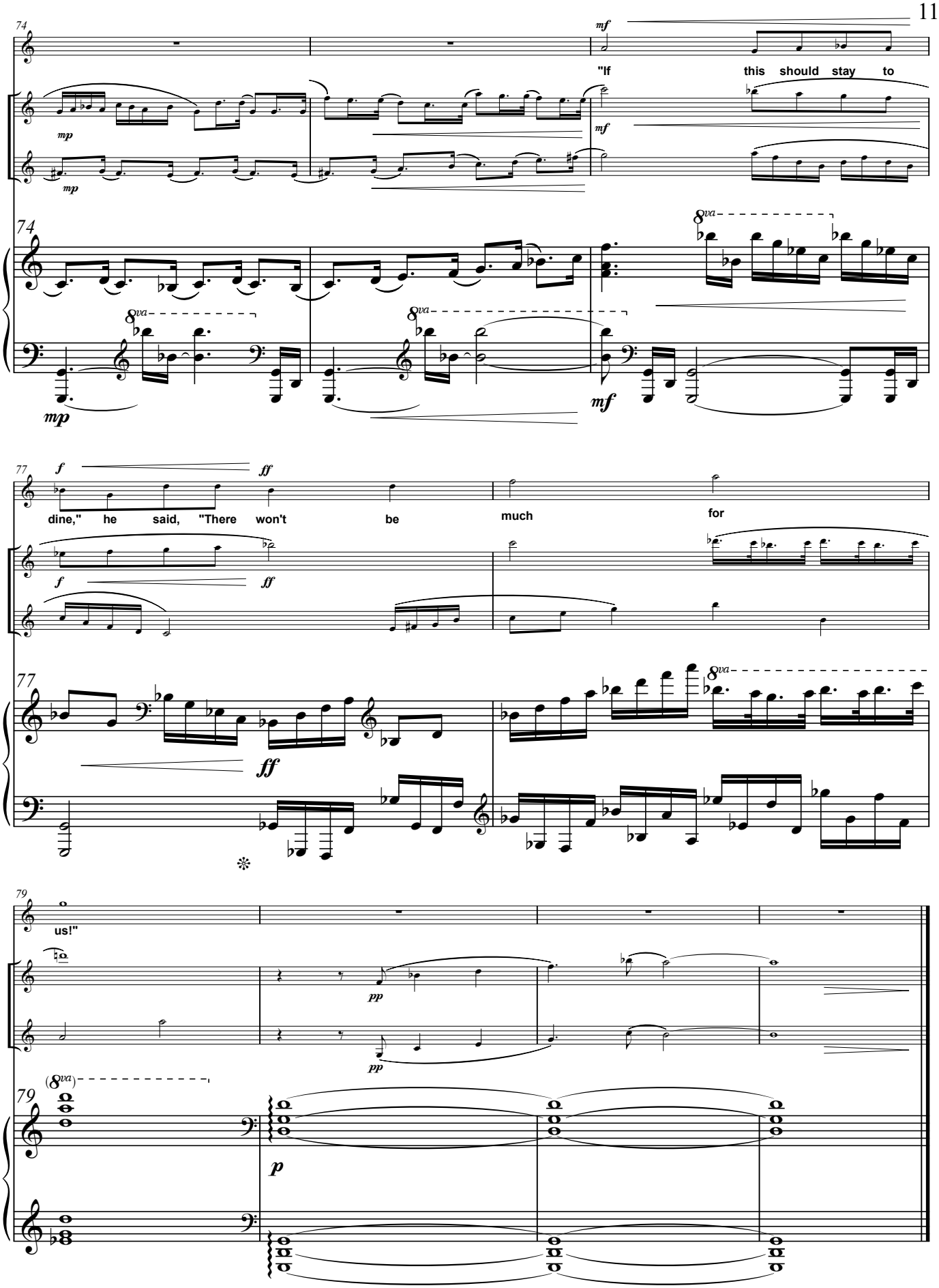

34
ff
lice!"
ff
ff
p
cresc. p. a p.
34
ff
mf
p
cresc. p. a p.
38
(mp)
mp
cresc. p. a p.
(mf)
(mf)
38
(mp)
(mf)
40
f
He thought he saw a Rat - tle - snake That ques - tioned him in
f
f
40
f


42
Greek:
42
44
44
46
cresc.
ff
He looked a - gain, and found it was The Mid - dle of Next Week.
cresc.
ff
cresc.
ff
46
cresc.
ff
Ped.


49
mf
mp
49
mf
mp
53
mp
cresc. p. a p.
"The one thing I re -
cresc. p. a p.
53
cresc. p. a p.
55
gret," he said, "Is that it
(mf)
can - - - - not
(mf)
55
(mf)
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

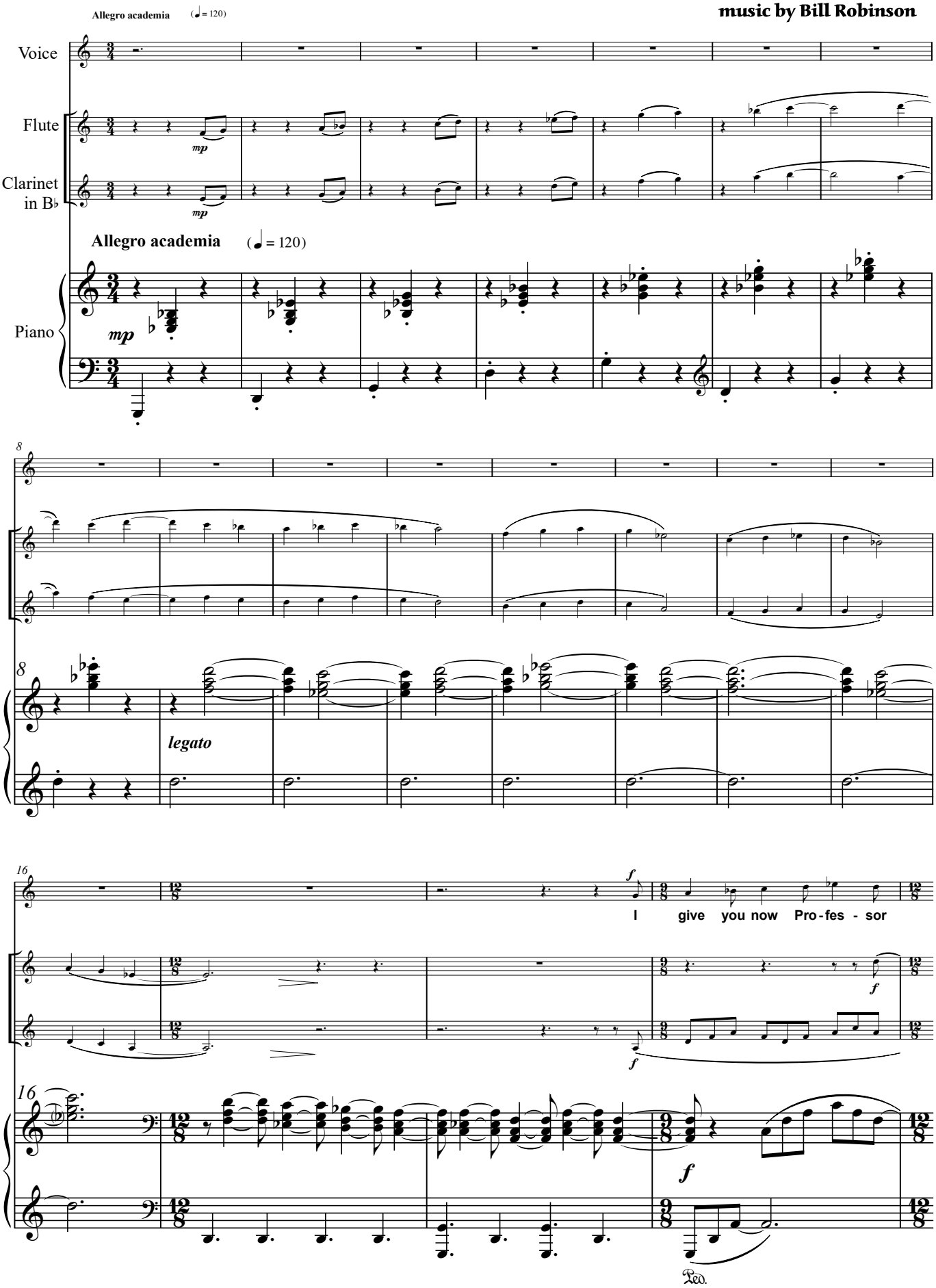

57
f
speak!"
(f)
f
ff
ff
57
(f)
ff
59
8va
59
8va
ff
62
mp
He
p
62
p
Ped.

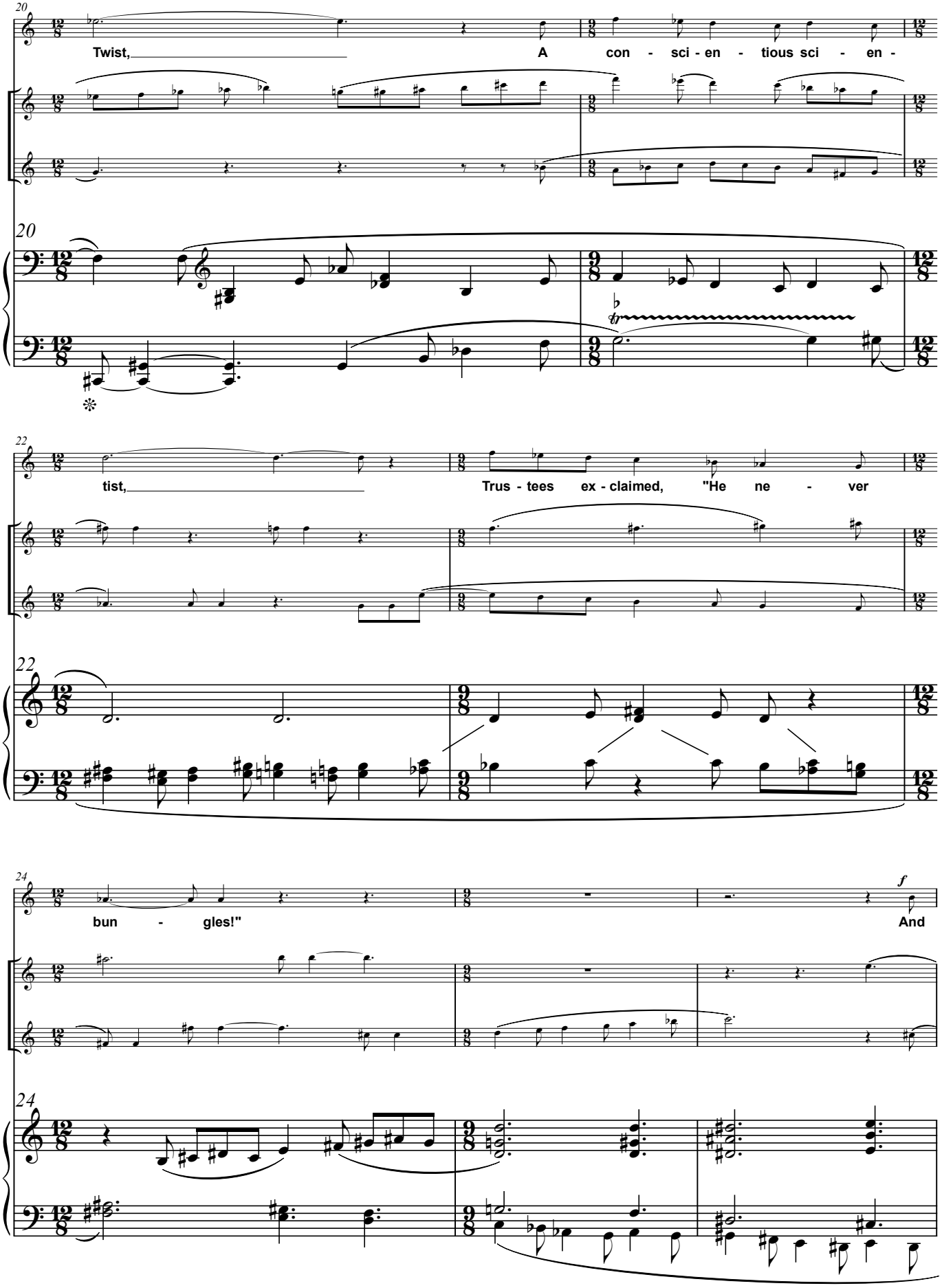

65
thought he saw a Ban - ker's Clerk De - scen - ding from the 'bus: He
mp
f
65
mp
Ped.
67
f
looked a - gain, and found it was A Hip - po - pot - a - mus.
f
p
67
f
f
p
Ped.
71
p
71
8va
8va
8va

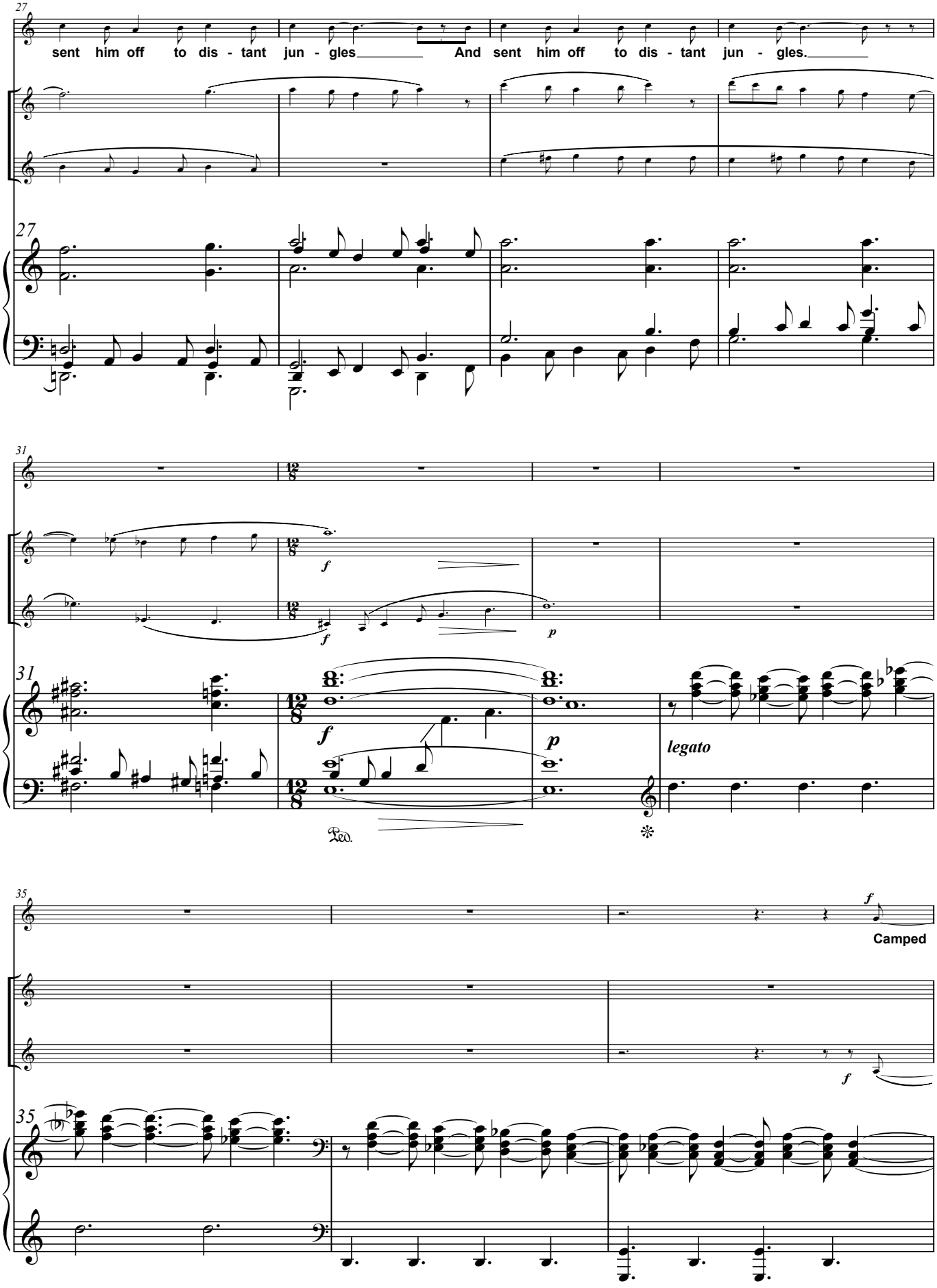

74
mf
"If this should stay to
mp
mp
74
8va
8va
8va
mp
mf
77
f
ff
dine," he said, "There won't be much for
f
ff
77
8va
ff
79
us!"
pp
pp
(8va)
79
p

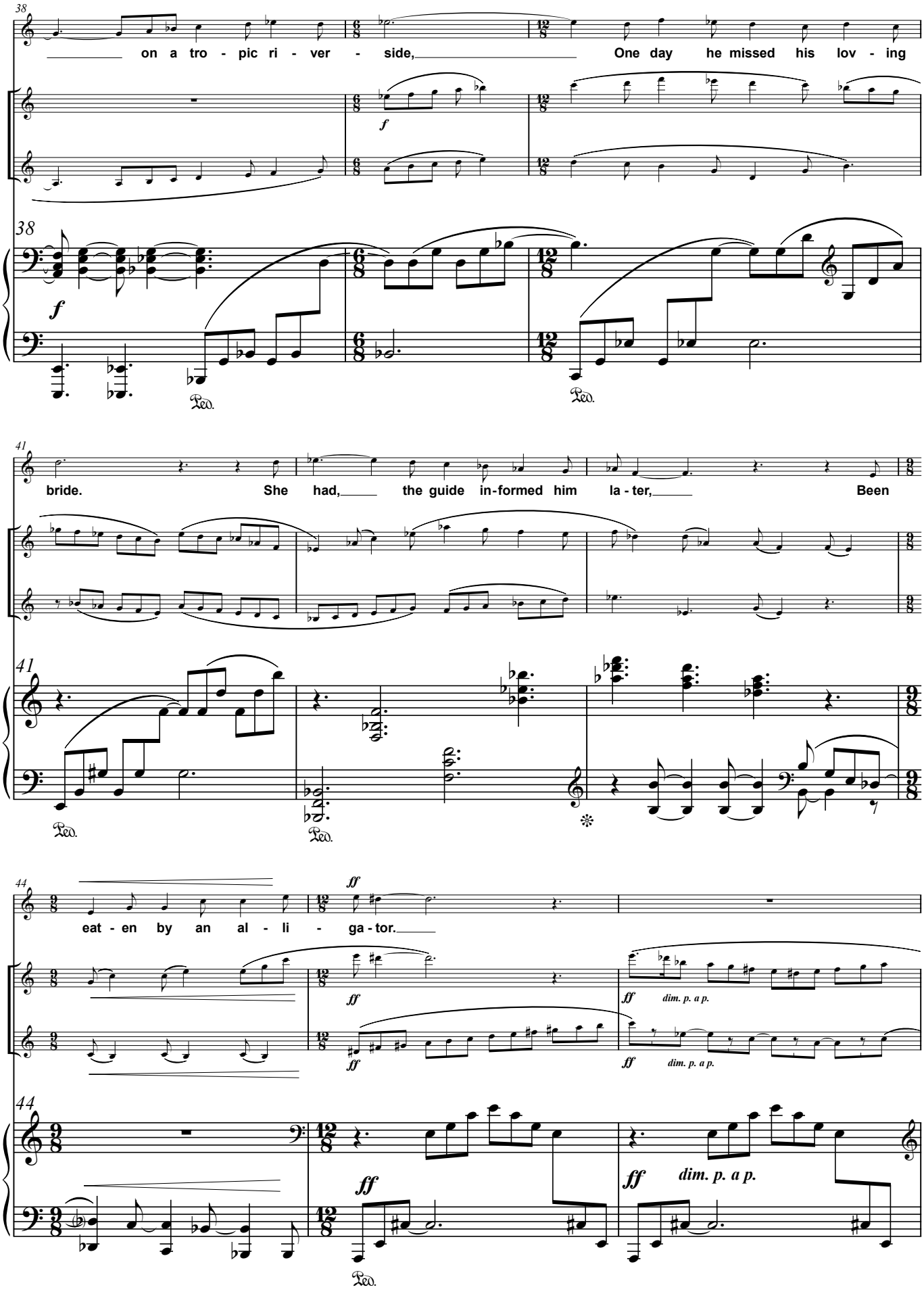
II. The Purist [3']

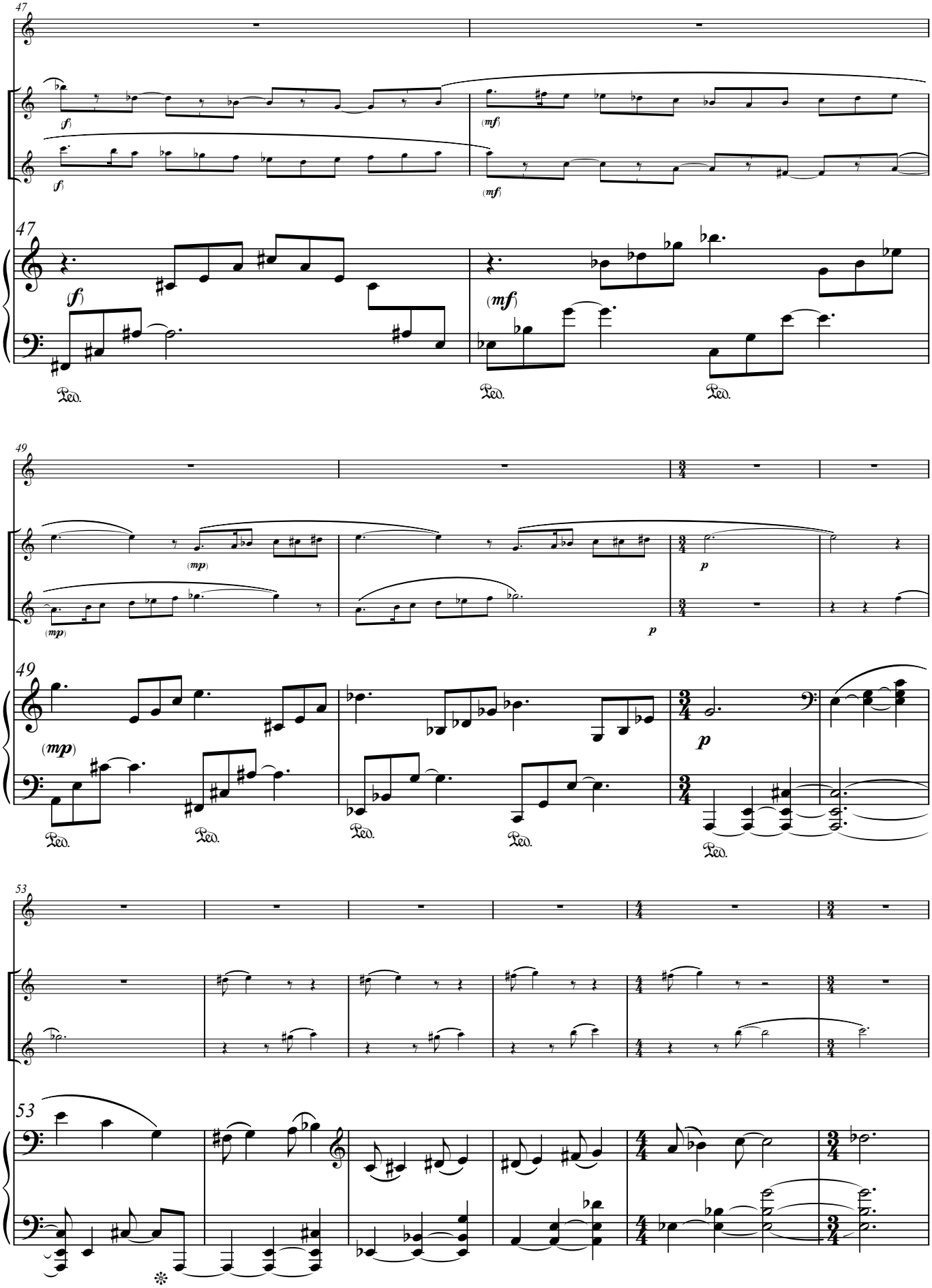
lyrics by Ogden Nash
music by Bill Robinson

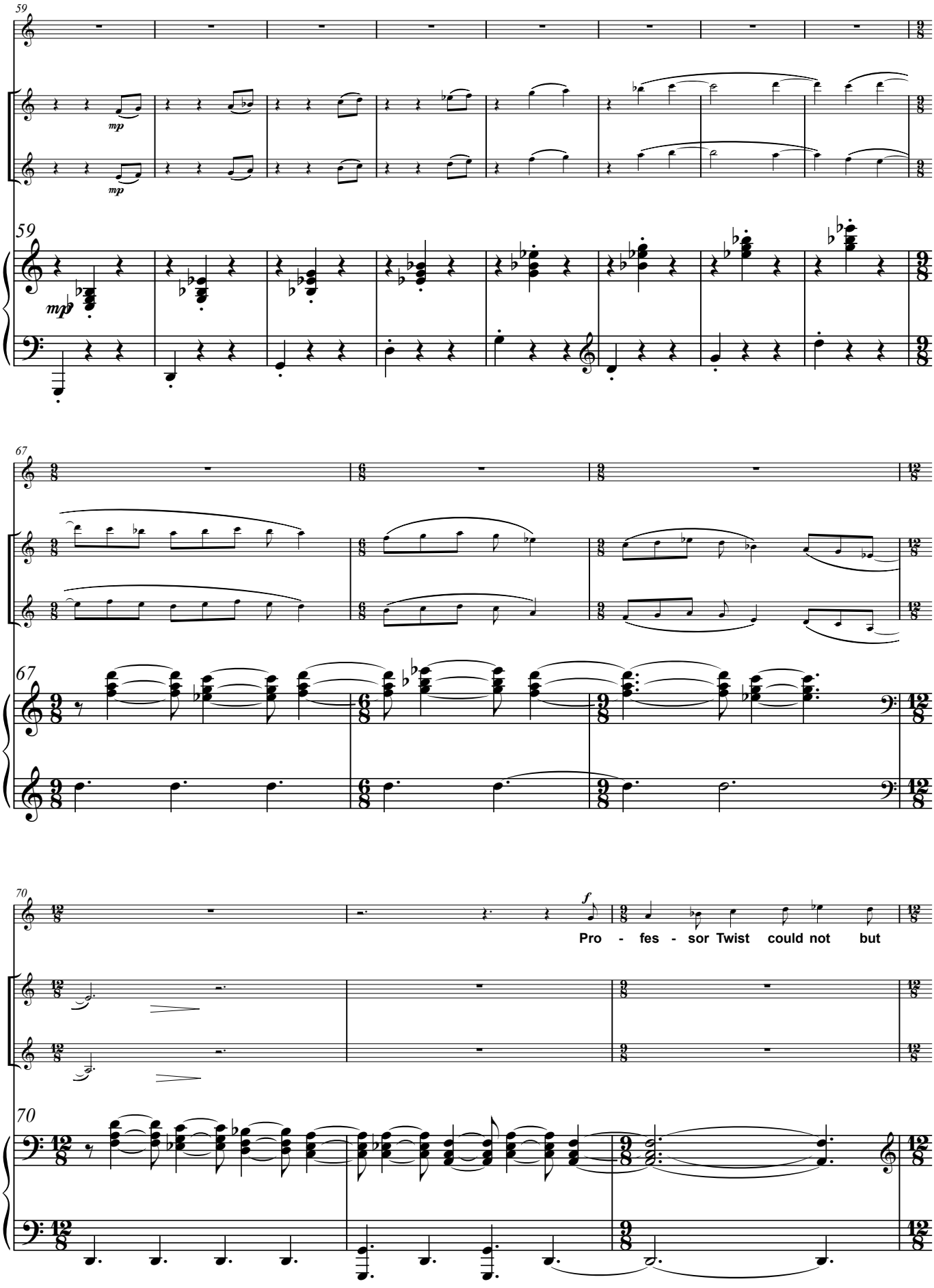


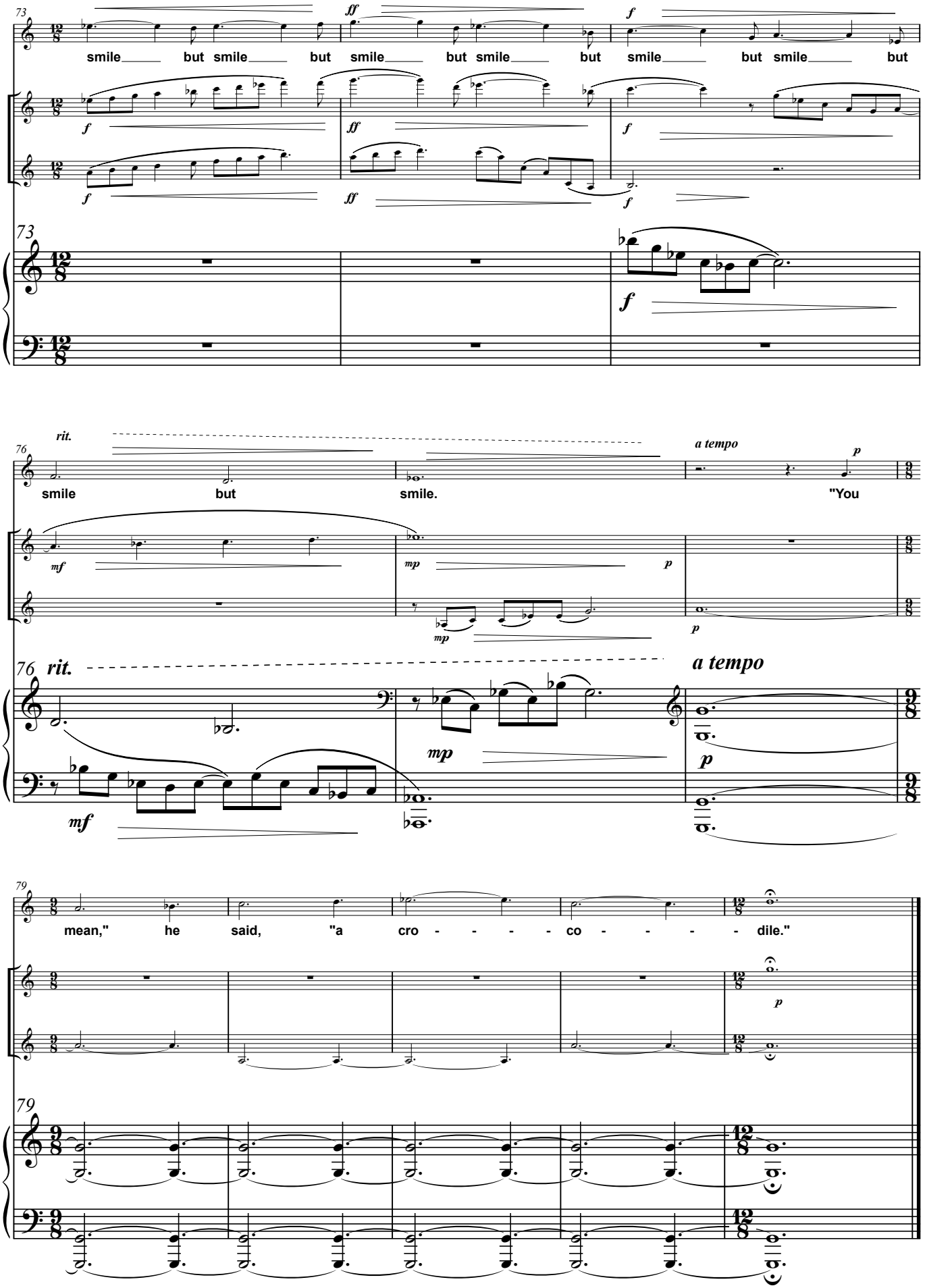

20
Twist,
A con - sci - en - tious sci - en -
20
22
tist,
Trus - tees ex - claimed, "He ne - ver
22
24
bun - gles!"
And
f
24


27
sent him off to dis - tant jun - gles And sent him off to dis - tant jun - gles.
31
f
p
legato
Ped.
35
f
Camped


38
on a tro - pic ri - ver - side,
One day he missed his lov - ing
f
38
f
Ped.
Ped.
41
bride.
She had,
the guide in-formed him la - ter,
Been
41
Ped.
Ped.
44
eat - en by an al - li - ga - tor.
ff
44
ff
ff
dim. p. a p.
ff
dim. p. a p.
ff
ff
dim. p. a p.
Ped.

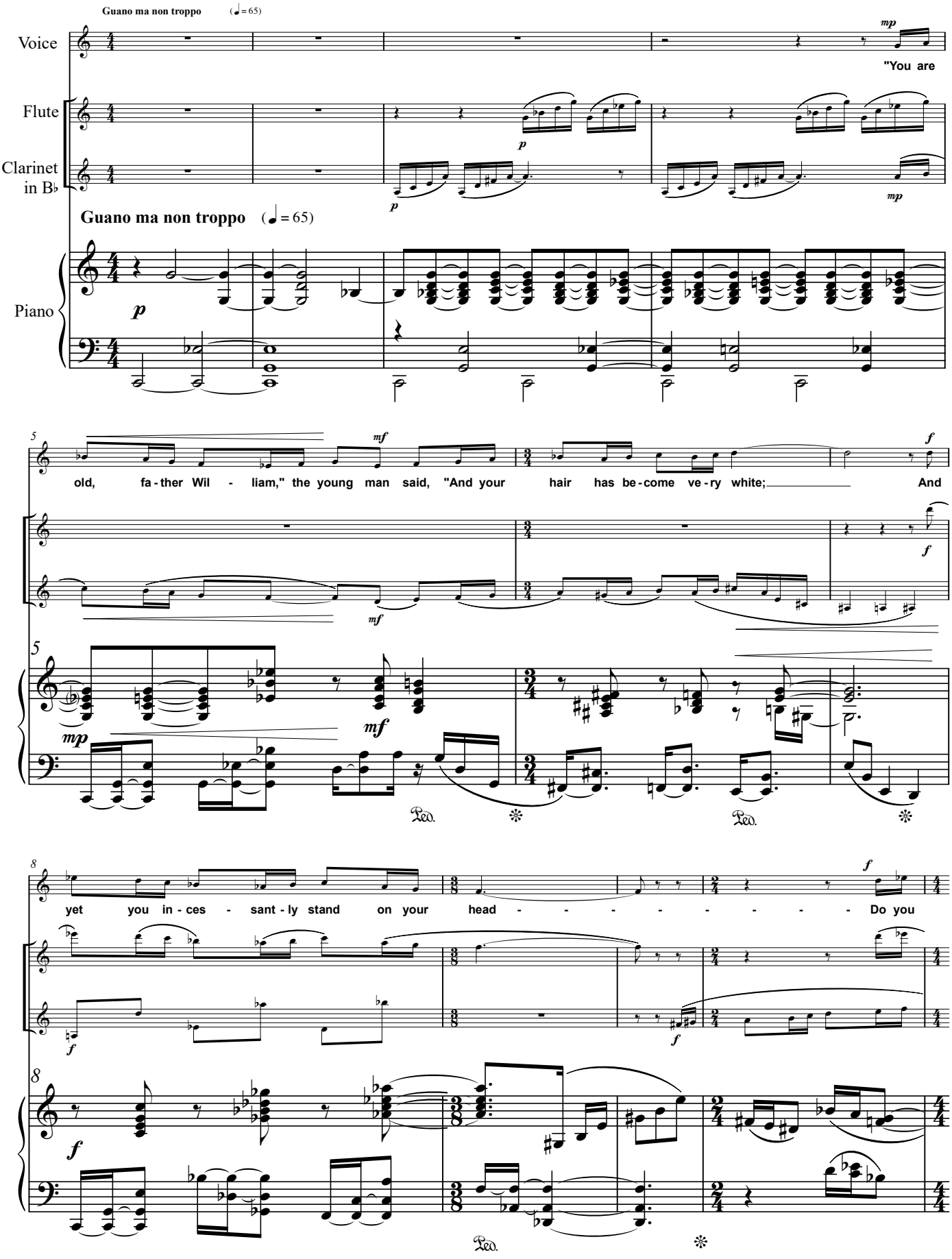

47
(f)
(mf)
Ped.
49
(mp)
p
53

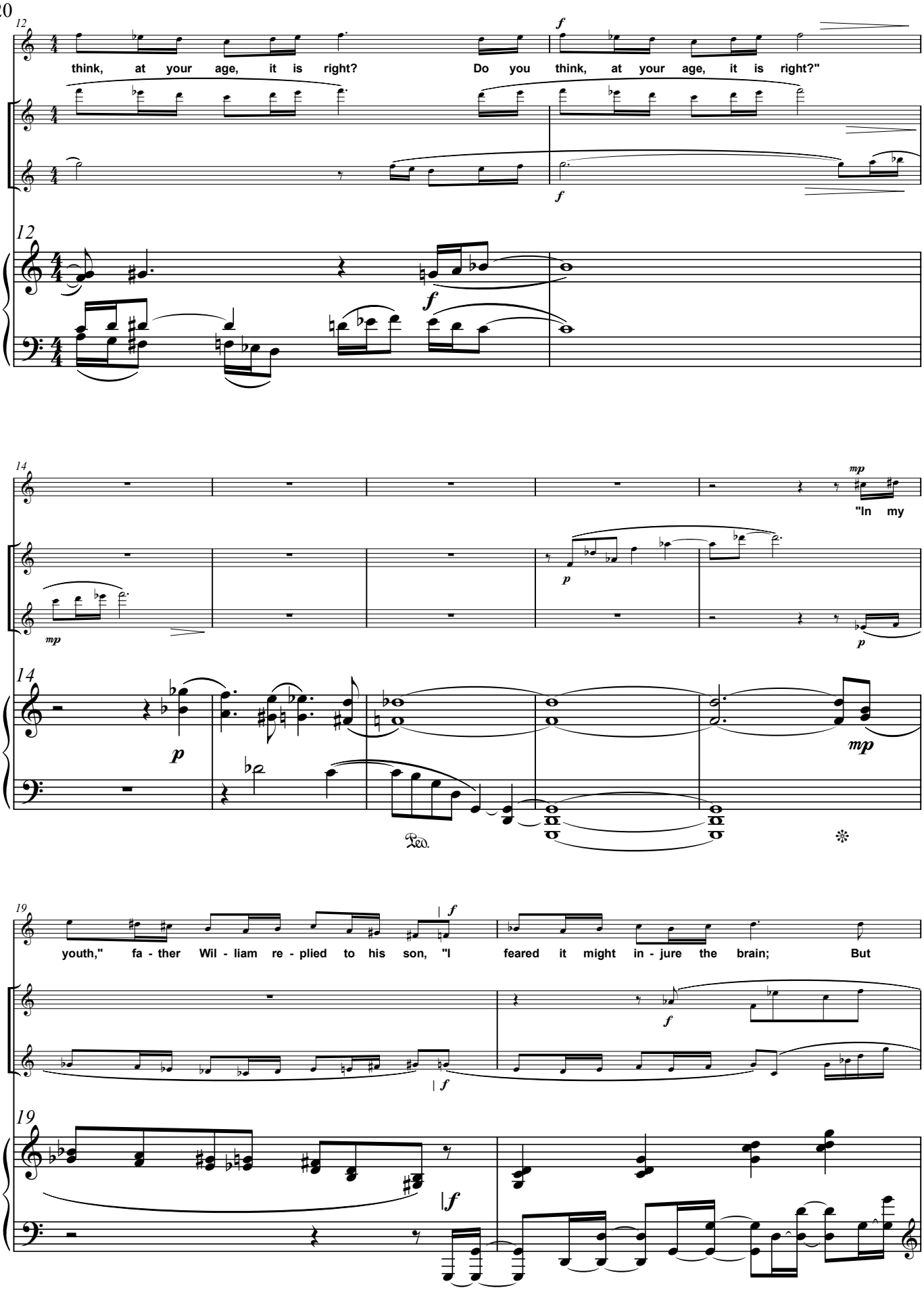

59
mp
mp
59
mp
67
67
70
f
Pro - fes - sor Twist could not but
70

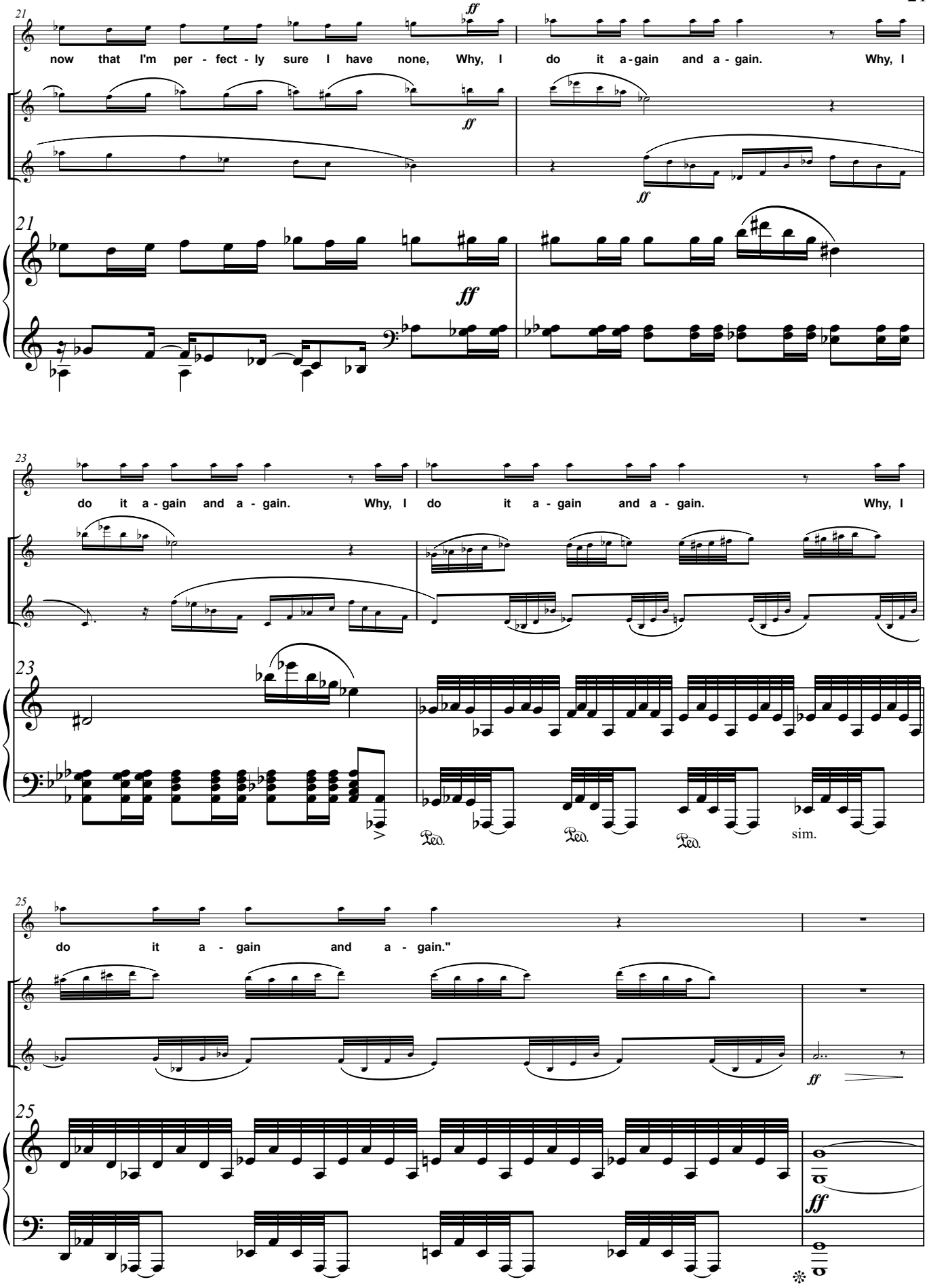

73
ff
f
smile but smile but smile but smile but smile but smile but
f
ff
f
f
ff
f
73
f
rit.
76
a tempo
p
smile but smile. "You
mf
mp
p
mp
p
76 rit.
a tempo
mp
p
mf
79
mean," he said, "a cro - - - - co - - - - dile."
p
79

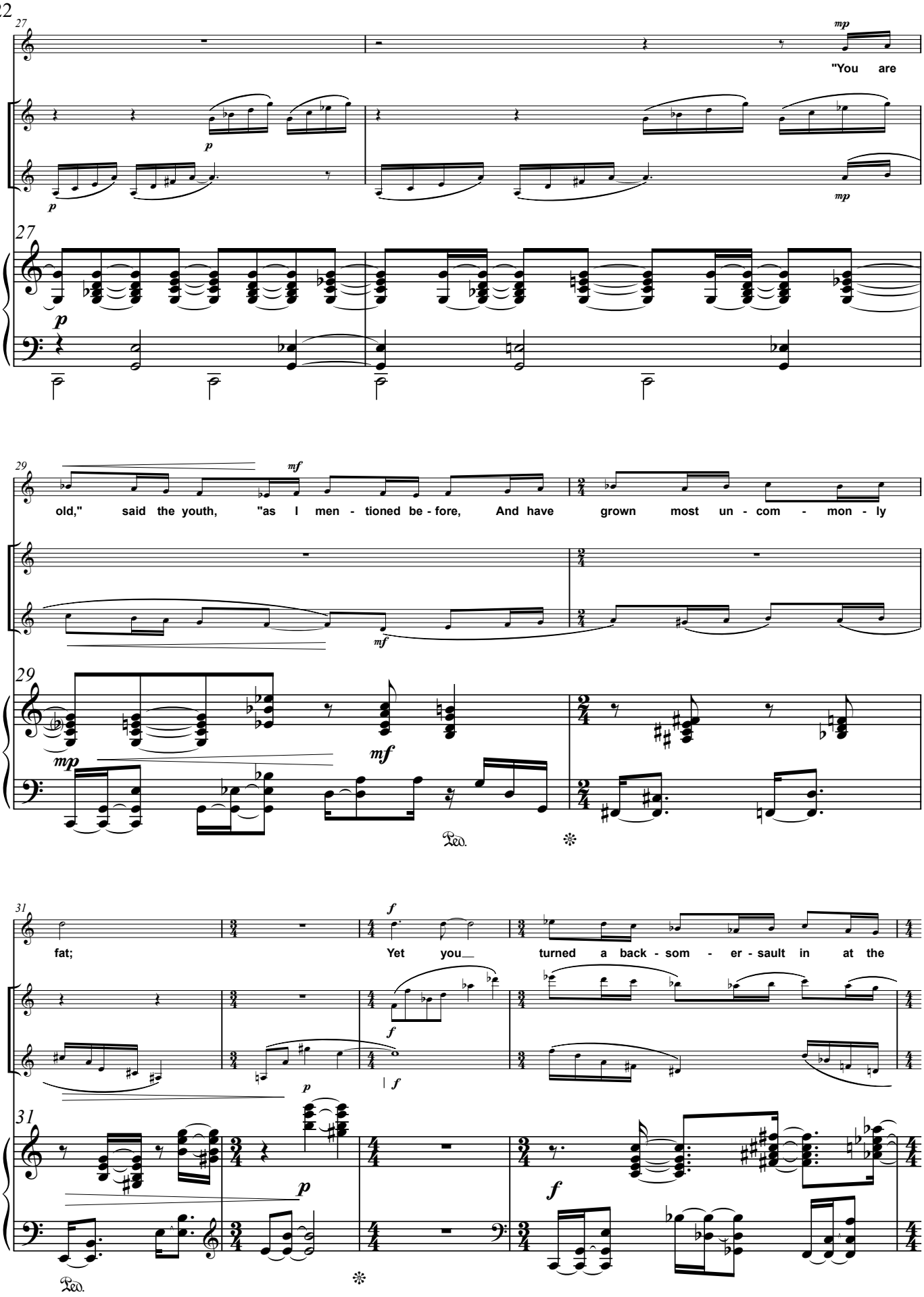
III. You Are Old, Father William [6']

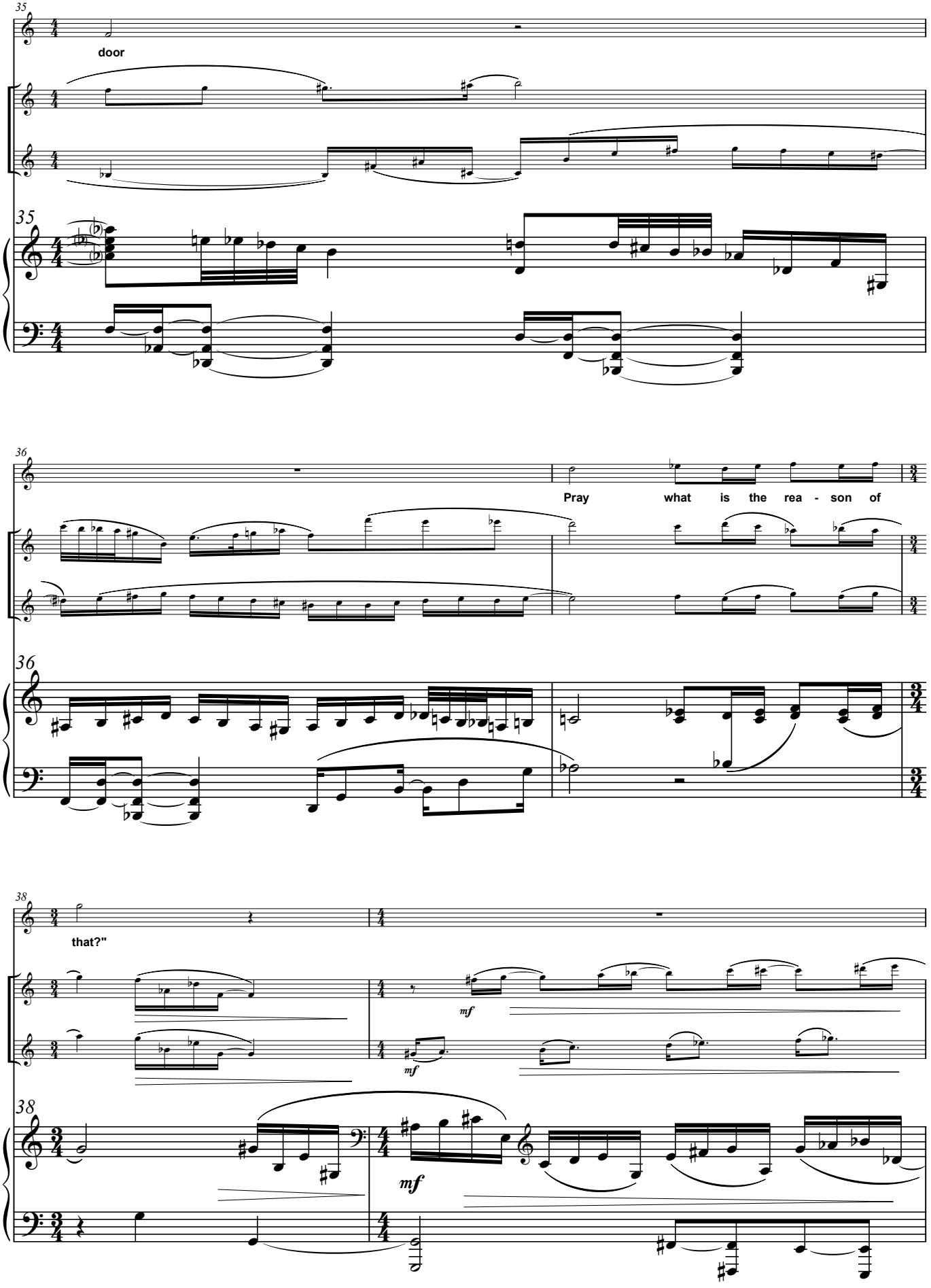
lyrics by Lewis Carroll
music by Bill Robinson

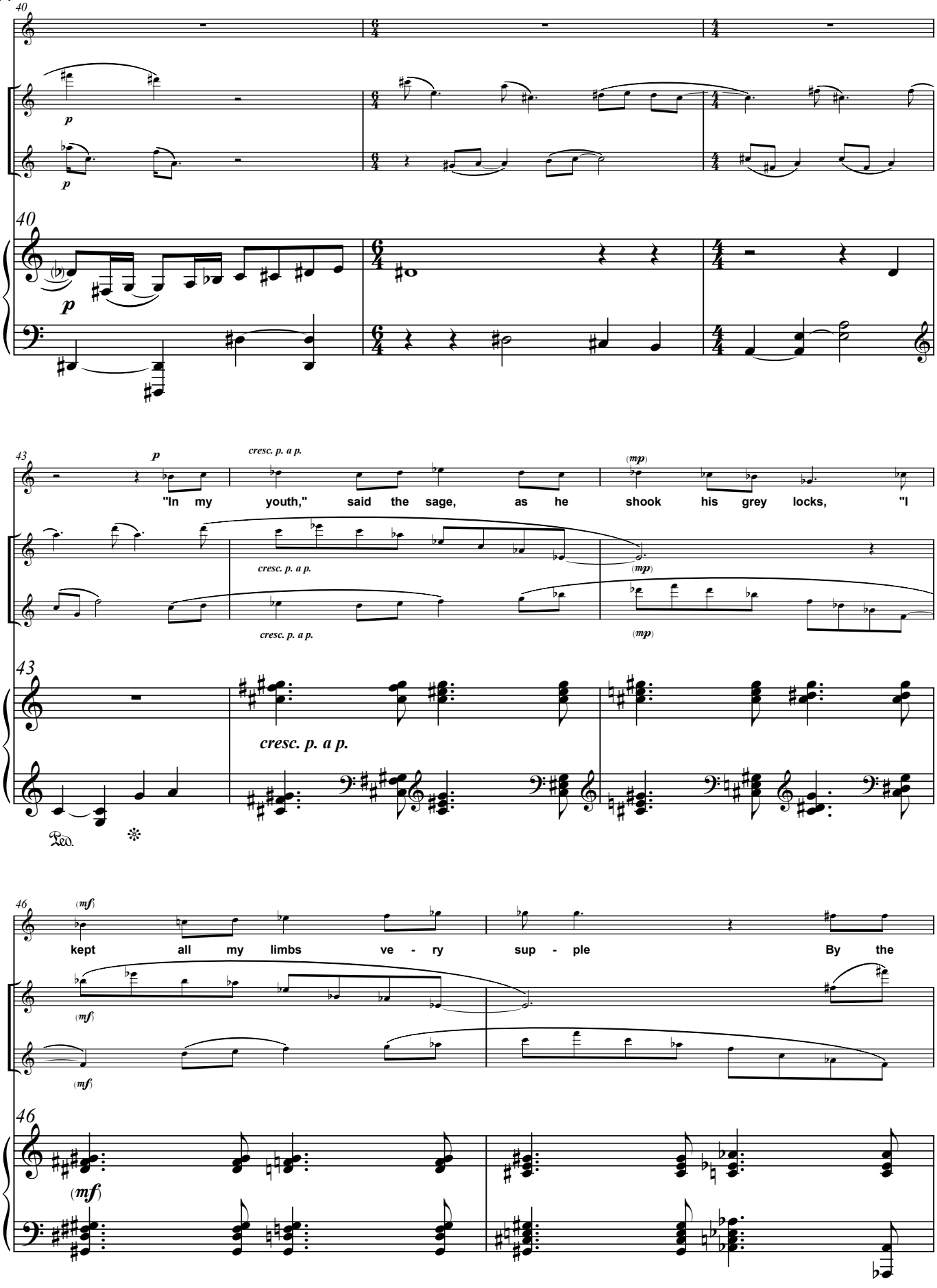


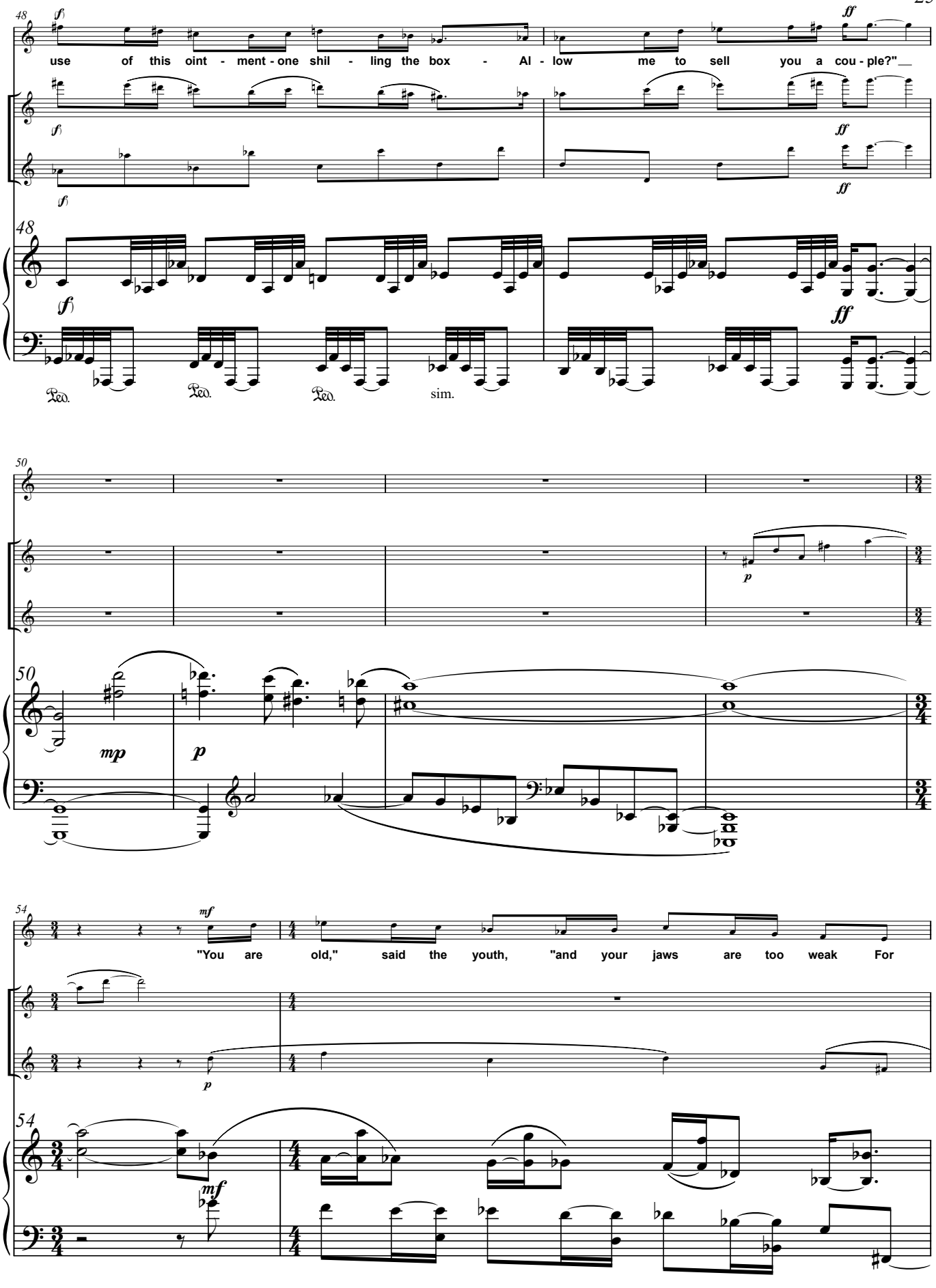

12
think, at your age, it is right? Do you think, at your age, it is right?"
f
f
12
f
14
mp
"In my
mp
p
p
14
p
mp
Ped.
19
youth," fa - ther Wil - liam re - plied to his son, "I feared it might in - jure the brain; But
f
f
19
f

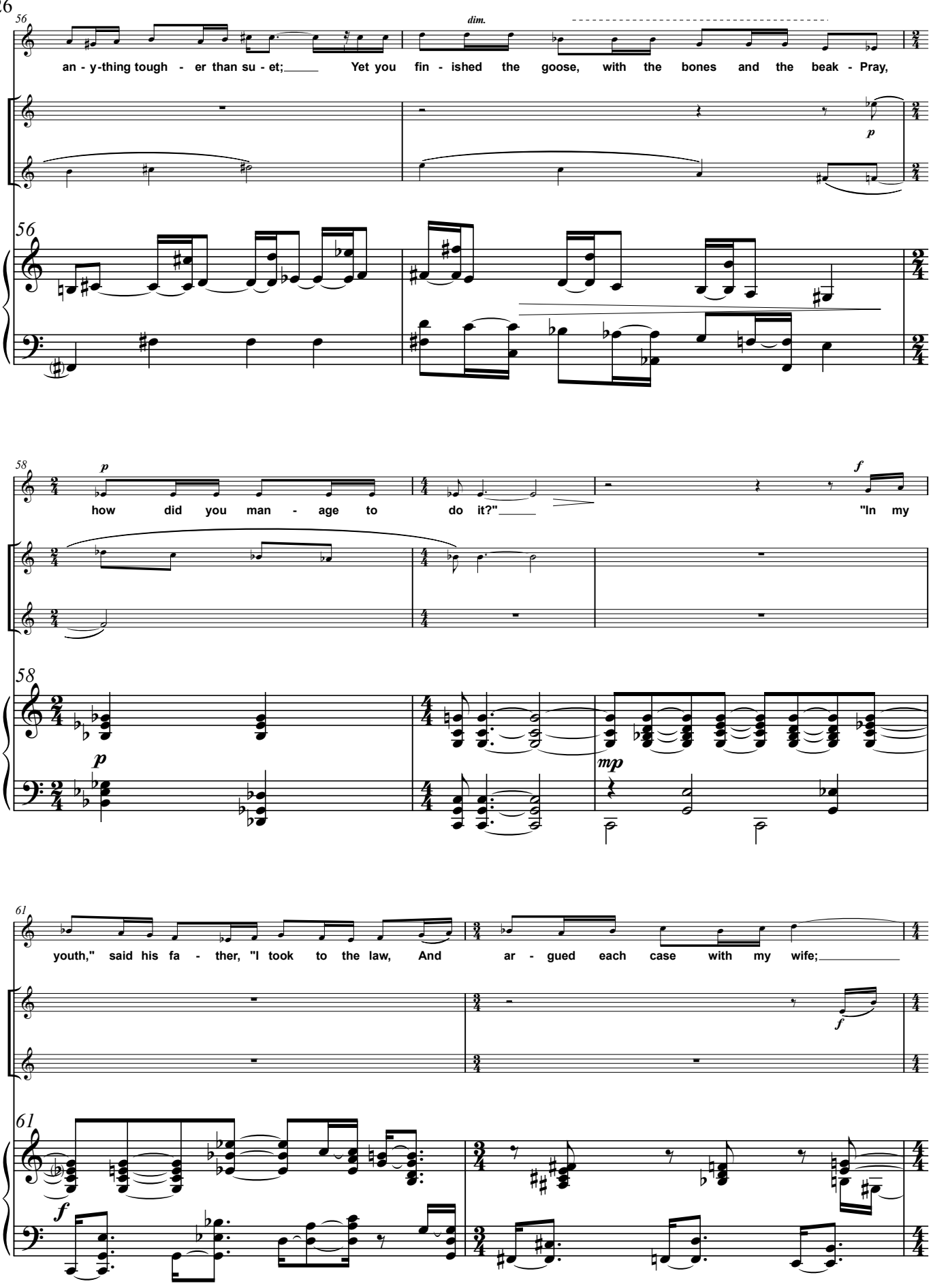

21
now that I'm per - fect - ly sure I have none, Why, I do it a - gain and a - gain. Why, I
ff
23
do it a - gain and a - gain. Why, I do it a - gain and a - gain. Why, I
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
sim.
25
do it a - gain and a - gain."

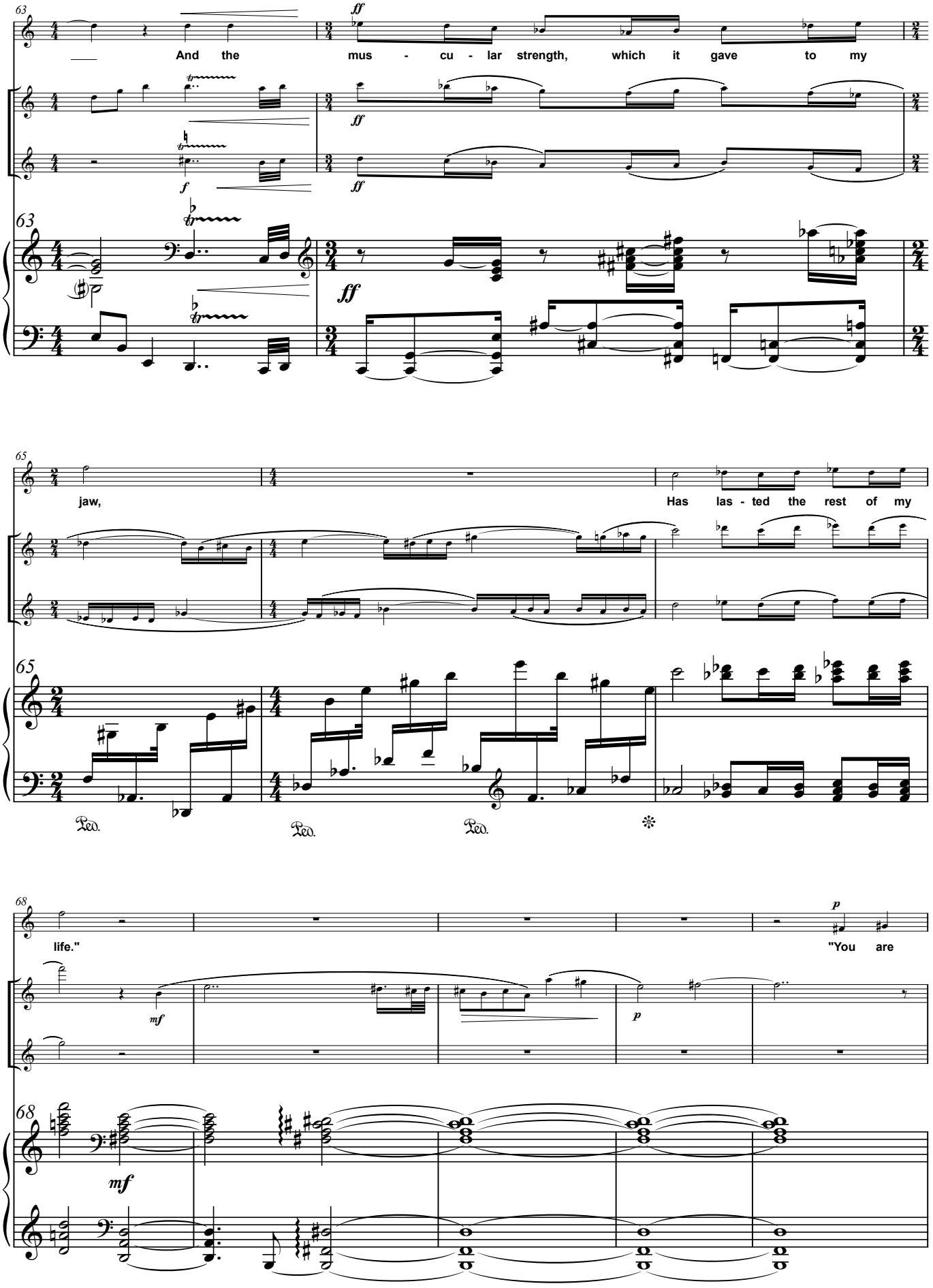

27
mp
"You are
p
p
mp
27
p
29
mf
old," said the youth, "as I men - tioned be - fore, And have grown most un - com - mon - ly
mf
29
mp
mf
Ped.
31
f
fat; Yet you turned a back - som - er - sault in at the
f
f
p
31
p
f
Ped.

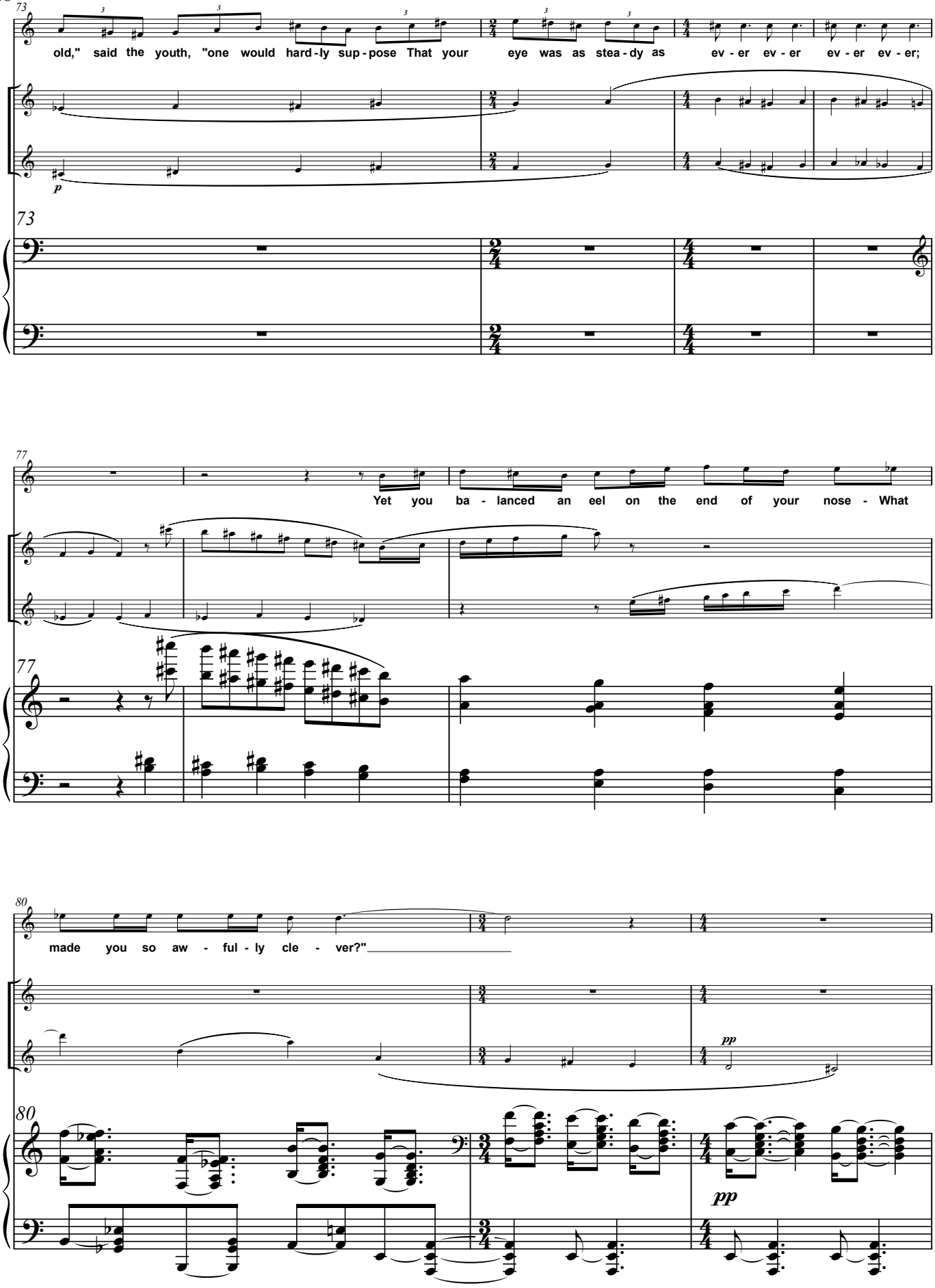

35
door
35
36
Pray what is the rea - son of
36
38
that?"
mf
mf
38
mf

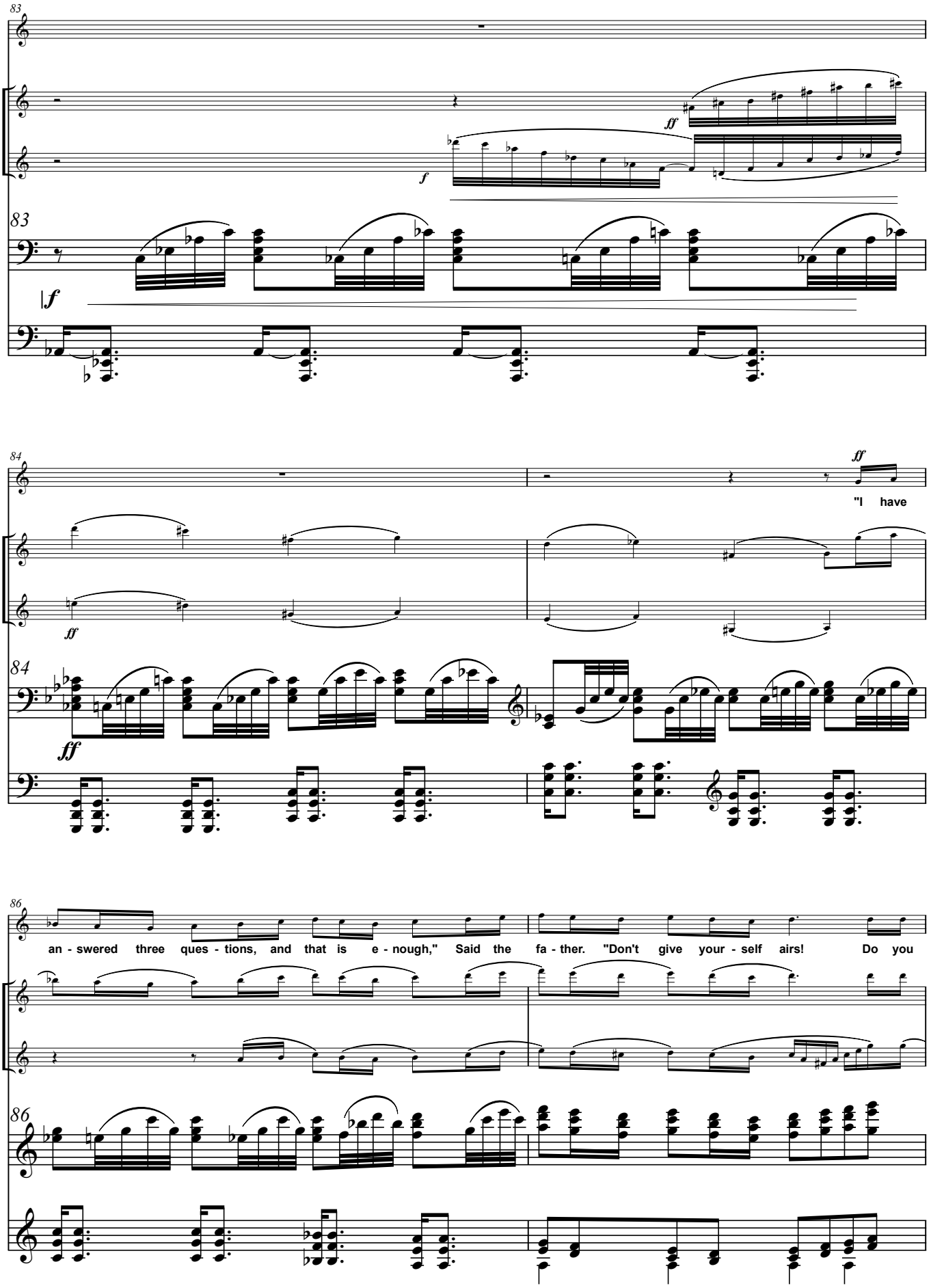

40
p
40
p
43
p
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
"In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his grey locks, "I
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
43
cresc. p. a p.
Ped.
46
(mf)
kept all my limbs ve - ry sup - ple By the
(mf)
(mf)
46
(mf)

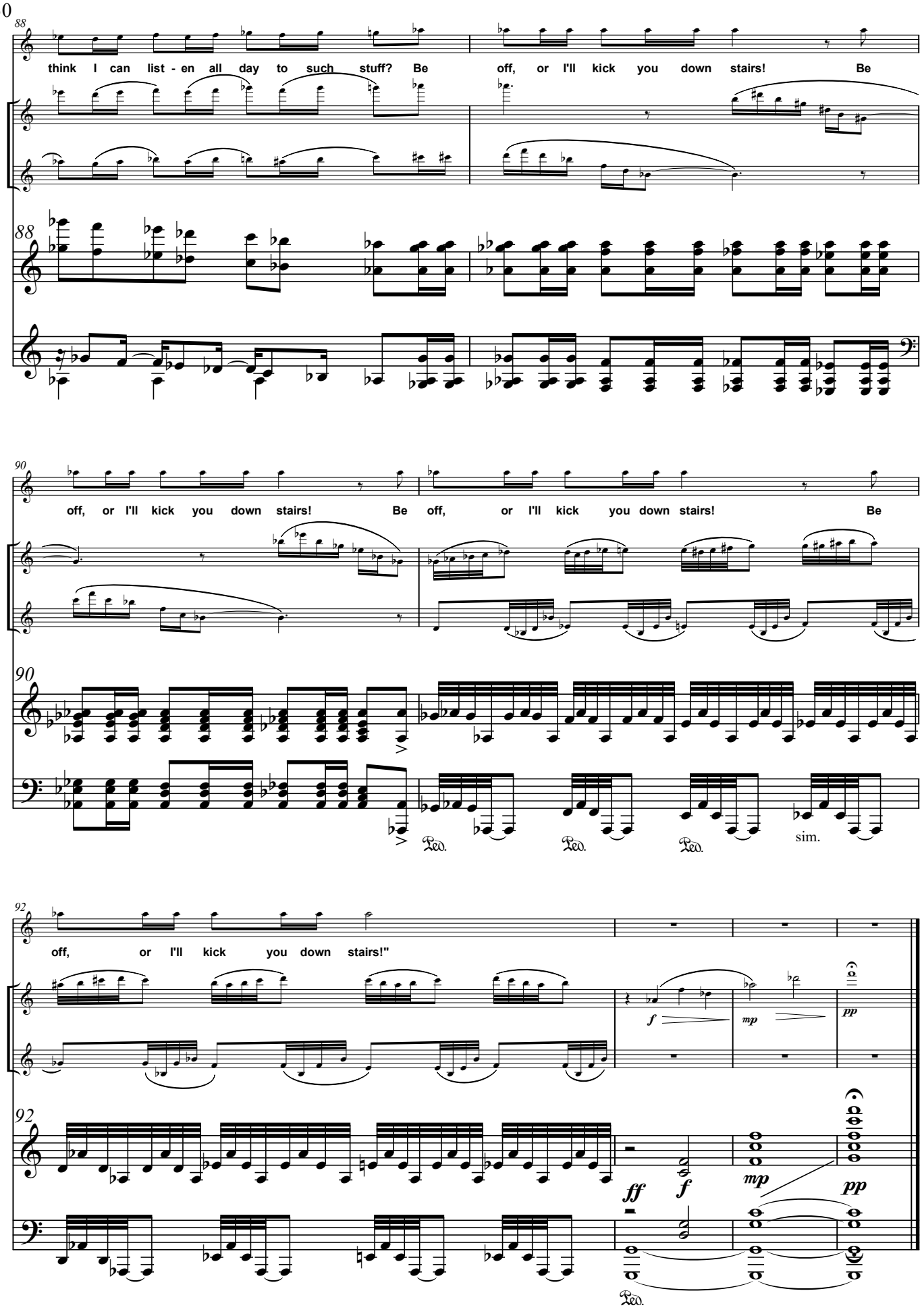

48
(f)
use of this oint - ment - one shil - ling the box - Al - low me to sell you a cou - ple?"
ff
Ped.
sim.
50
p
mp
54
mf
"You are old," said the youth, "and your jaws are too weak For


56
dim.
an - y-thing tough - er than su - et;
Yet you fin - ished the goose, with the bones and the beak - Pray,
p
58
p
how did you man - age to
do it?"
f
"In my
mp
61
youth," said his fa - ther, "I took to the law,
And ar - gued each case with my wife;
f


63
And the mus - cu - lar strength, which it gave to my
ff
f
ff
63
ff
65
jaw,
Has las - ted the rest of my
65
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
68
life."
"You are
p
mf
p
68
mf


73
old," said the youth, "one would hard - ly sup - pose That your eye was as stea - dy as ev - er ev - er ev - er ev - er;
p
73
77
Yet you ba - lanced an eel on the end of your nose - What
77
80
made you so aw - ful - ly cle - ver?"
pp
80
pp


83
ff
f
83
f
84
ff
"I have
84
ff
86
an - swered three ques - tions, and that is e - nough," Said the fa - ther. "Don't give your - self airs! Do you
86


88
think I can list - en all day to such stuff? Be off, or I'll kick you down stairs! Be
88
90
off, or I'll kick you down stairs! Be off, or I'll kick you down stairs! Be
90
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
sim.
92
off, or I'll kick you down stairs!"
92
f
mp
pp
ff
f
mp
pp
Ped.