for Ann Marie Daehn

Michael Murray

Butterfly Days

songs from Robert Frost's *New Hampshire*

for mezzo-soprano and piano

1. Blue-Butterfly Day
2. Looking for a Sunset Bird in Winter
3. Misgiving
4. To Earthward

(2020)

www.michaelmurraymusic.com

duration ca. 10'

from *New Hampshire* by Robert Frost (1874-1963)

1. Blue-Butterfly Day

It is blue-butterfly day here in spring,
And with these sky-flakes down in flurry on flurry
There is more unmixed color on the wing
Than flowers will show for days unless they hurry.

But these are flowers that fly and all but sing:
And now from having ridden out desire
They lie closed over in the wind and cling
Where wheels have freshly sliced the April mire.

2. Looking for a Sunset Bird in Winter

The west was getting out of gold,
The breath of air had died of cold,
When shoeing home across the white,
I thought I saw a bird alight.

In summer when I passed the place,
I had to stop and lift my face;
A bird with an angelic gift
Was singing in it sweet and swift.

No bird was singing in it now.
A single leaf was on a bough,
And that was all there was to see
In going twice around the tree.

From my advantage on a hill
I judged that such a crystal chill
Was only adding frost to snow
As gilt to gold that wouldn't show.

A brush had left a crooked stroke
Of what was either cloud or smoke
From north to south across the blue;
A piercing little star was through.

3. Misgiving

All crying, "We will go with you, O Wind!"
The foliage follow him, leaf and stem;
But a sleep oppresses them as they go,
And they end by bidding him stay with them.

Since ever they flung abroad in spring
The leaves had promised themselves this flight,
Who now would fain seek sheltering wall,
Or thicket, or hollow place for the night.

3. Misgiving (cont'd)

And now they answer his summoning blast
With an ever vaguer and vaguer stir,
Or at utmost a little reluctant whirl
That drops them no further than where they were.

I only hope that when I am free,
As they are free, to go in quest
Of the knowledge beyond the bounds of life
It may not seem better to me to rest.

4. To Earthward

Love at the lips was touch
As sweet as I could bear;
And once that seemed too much;
I lived on air

That crossed me from sweet things,
The flow of – was it musk
From hidden grapevine springs
Downhill at dusk?

I had the swirl and ache
From sprays of honeysuckle
That when they're gathered shake
Dew on the knuckle.

I craved strong sweets, but those
Seemed strong when I was young;
The petal of the rose
It was that stung.

Now no joy but lacks salt,
That is not dashed with pain
And weariness and fault;
I crave the stain

Of tears, the aftermark
Of almost too much love,
The sweet of bitter bark
And burning clove.

When stiff and sore and scarred
I take away my hand
From leaning on it hard
In grass and sand,

The hurt is not enough:
I long for weight and strength
To feel the earth as rough
To all my length.

1. Blue-Butterfly Day

Robert Frost

Michael Murray

Brightly ♩ = 120

p

f

f

It is blue - but-ter-fly day here in spring,

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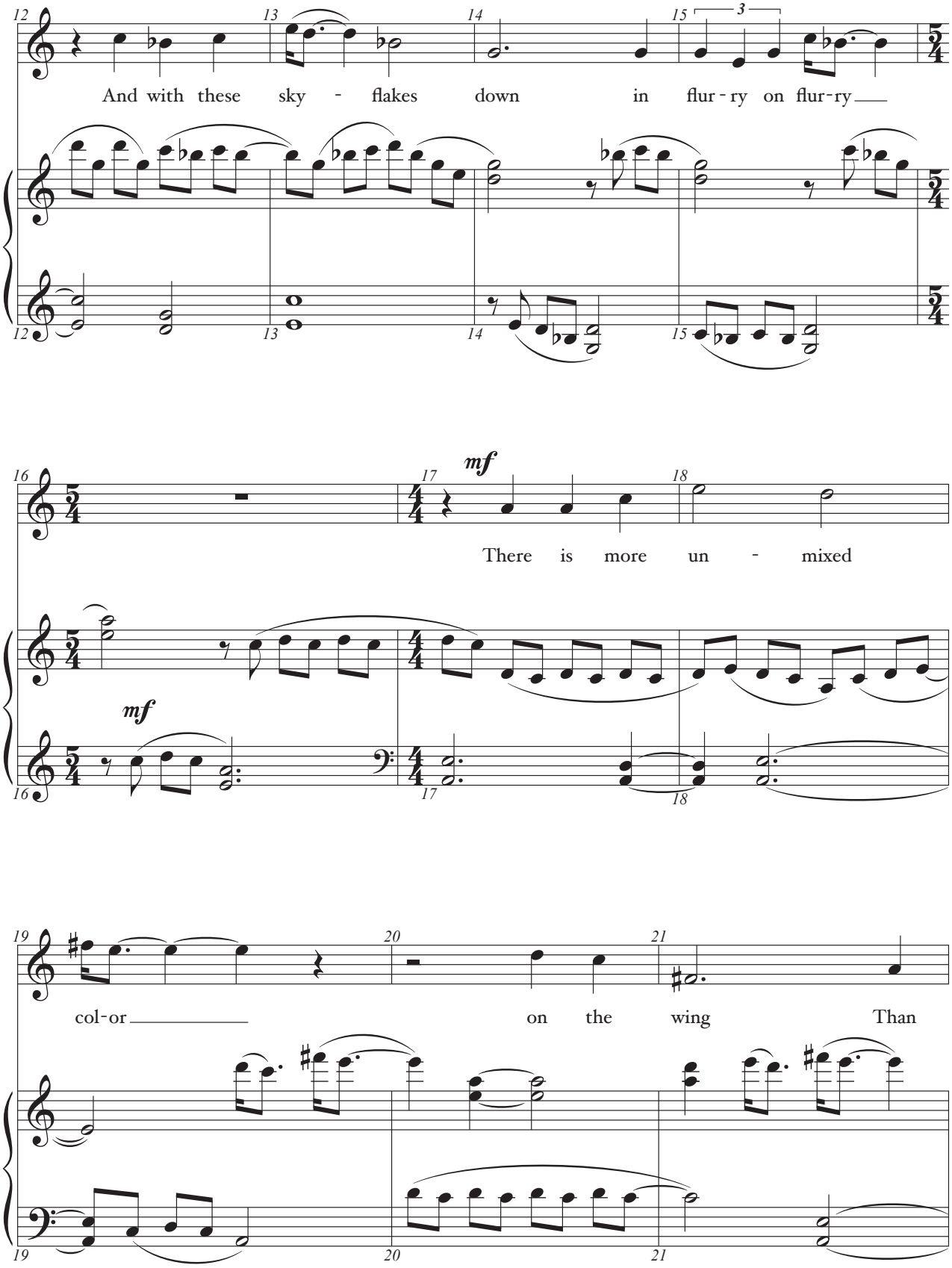
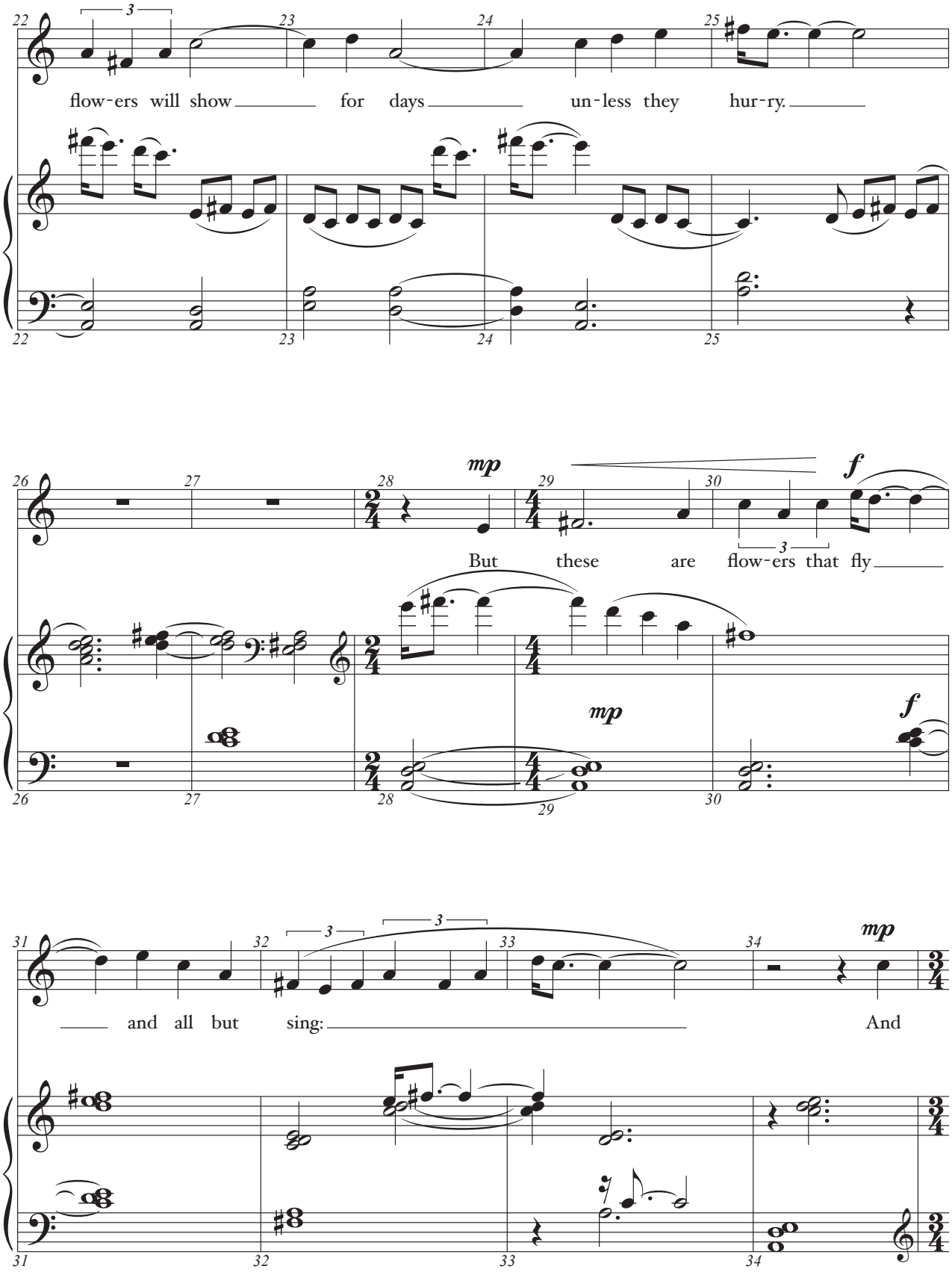
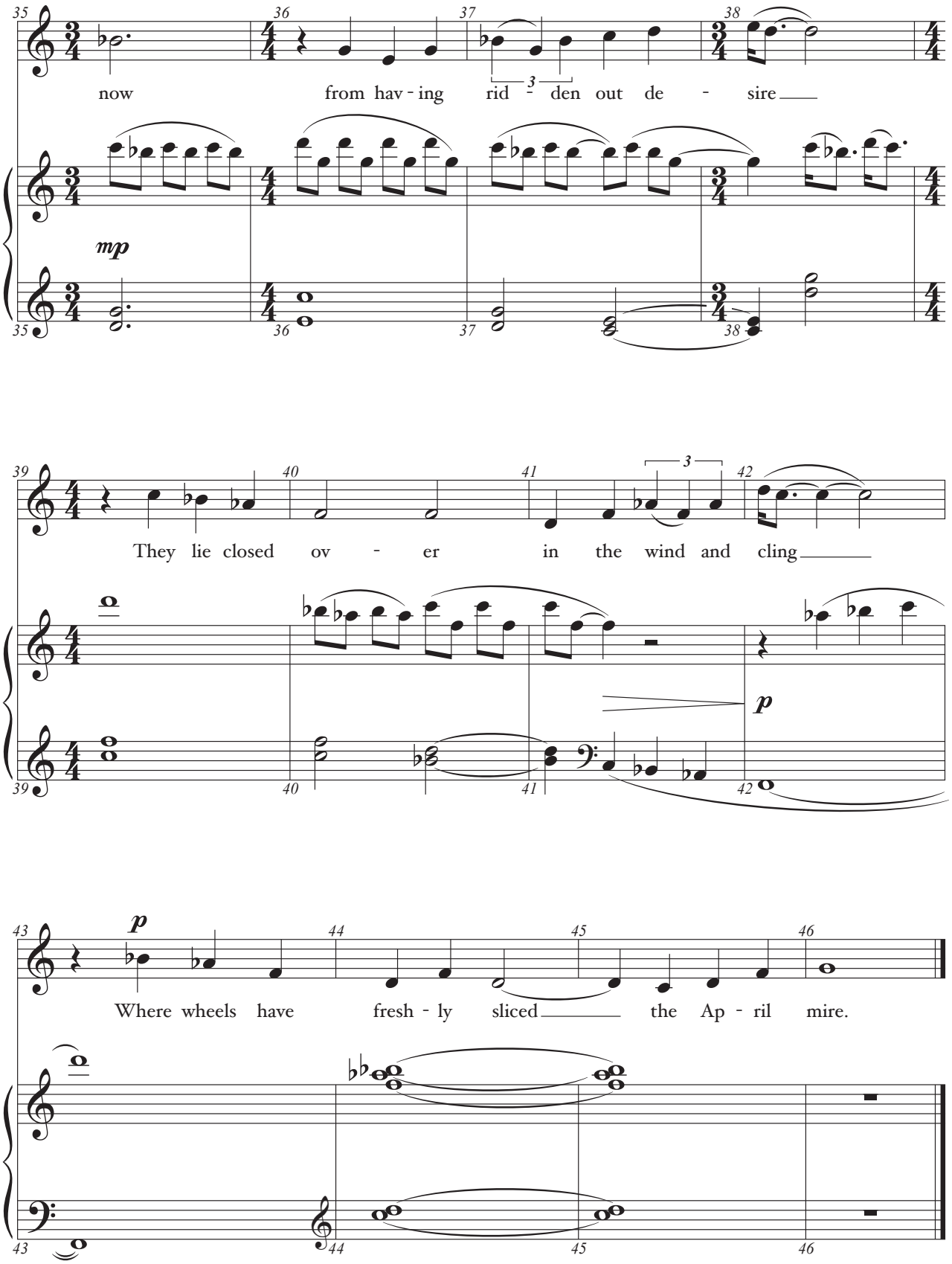

And with these sky - flakes down in flur - ry on flur - ry
mf
There is more un - mixed
mf
col - or on the wing Than


flow-ers will show for days un-less they hur-ry.
mp
f
But these are flow-ers that fly
mp
f
and all but sing:
And
mp


now from hav - ing rid - den out de - sire
mp
They lie closed ov - er in the wind and cling
p
Where wheels have fresh - ly sliced the Ap - ril mire.

2. Looking for a Sunset Bird in Winter

Robert Frost

Michael Murray

Gently ♩ = 90

mp

p

The west was get - ting out of gold,

The breath of air had died of cold,

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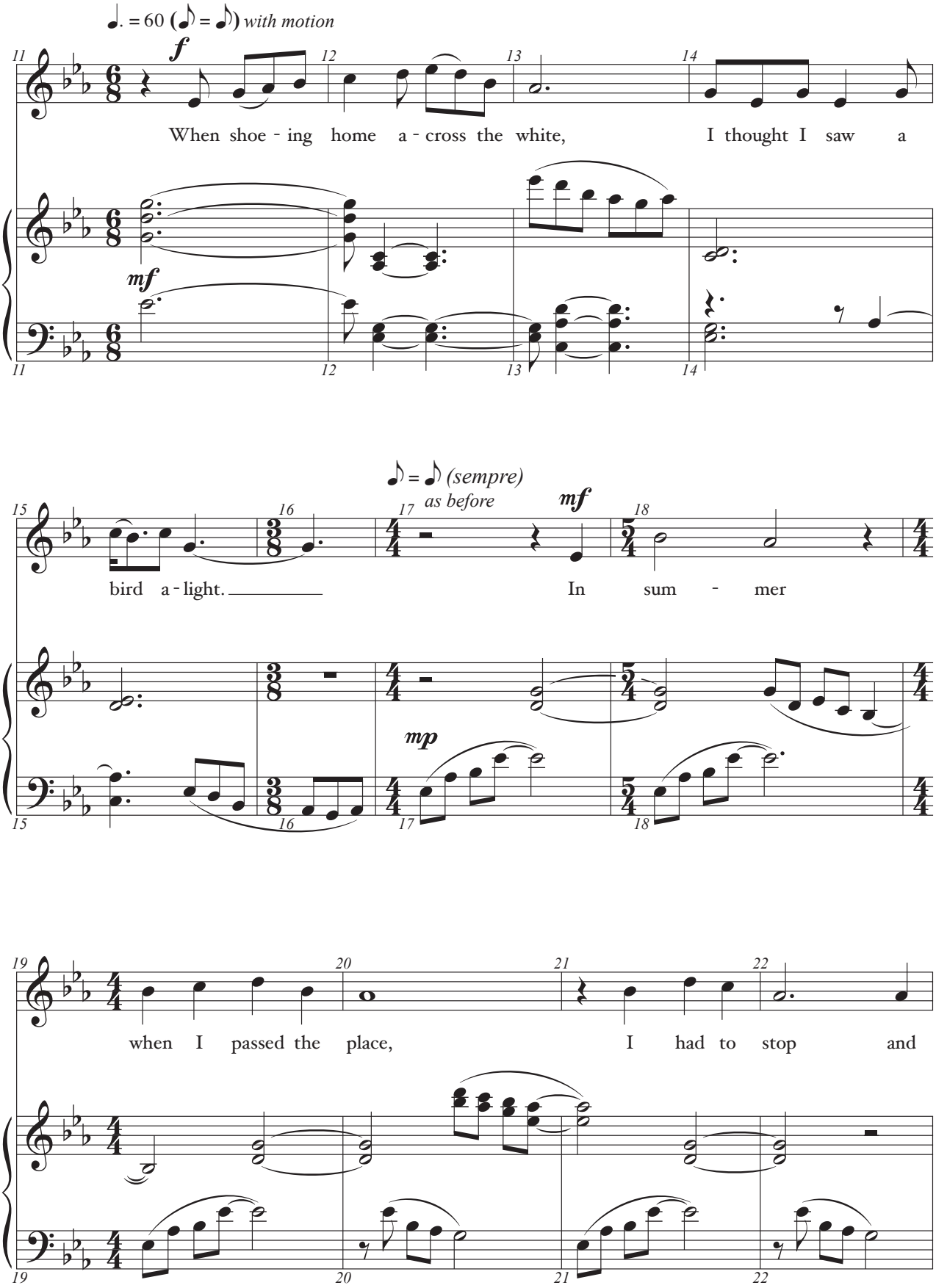
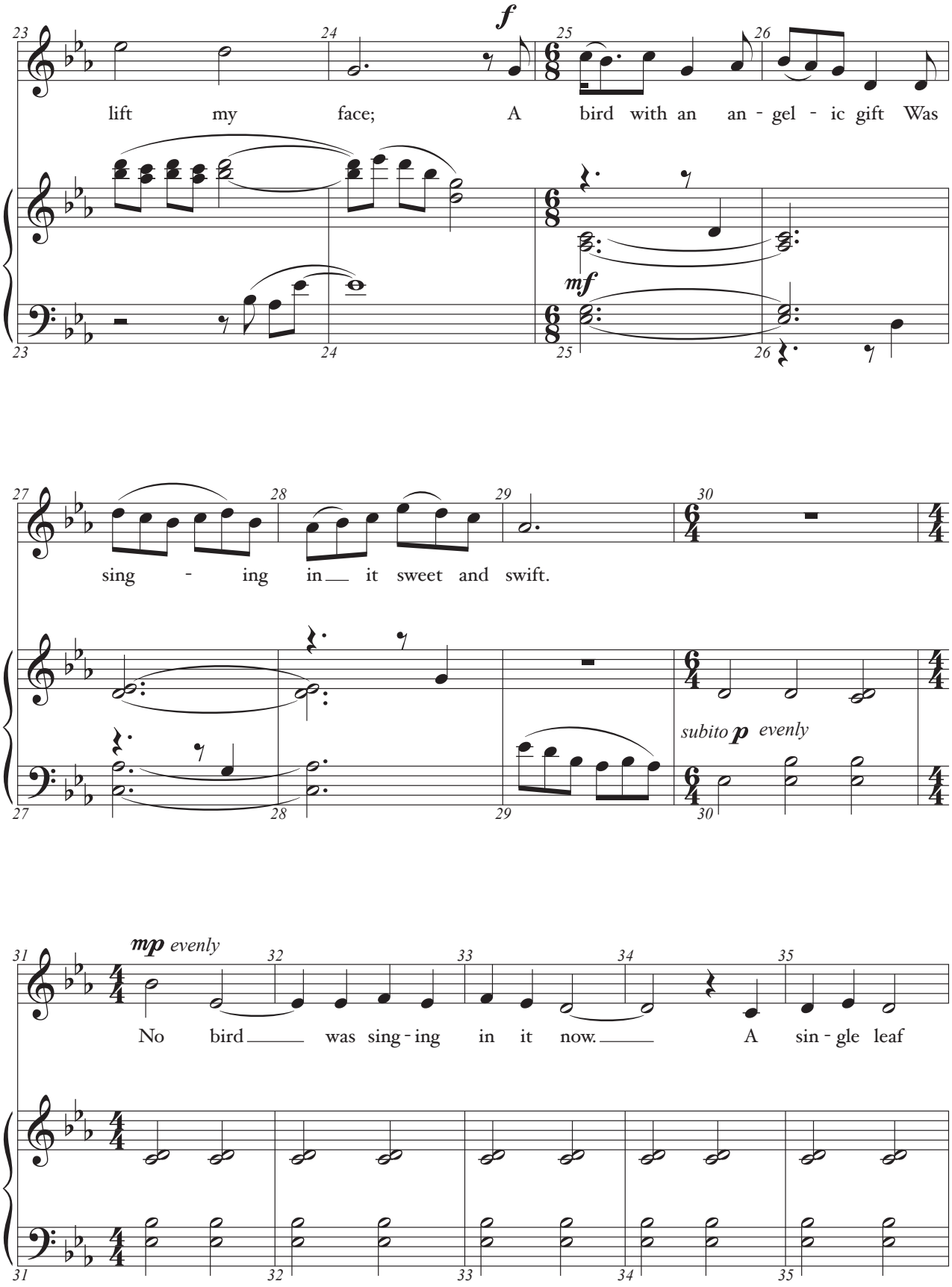

♩. = 60 (♪ = ♪) with motion
f
When shoe - ing home a - cross the white, I thought I saw a
mf
♪ = ♪ (sempre)
as before
mf
bird a - light. In sum - mer
mp
when I passed the place, I had to stop and


f
lift my face; A bird with an an - gel - ic gift Was
mf
sing - ing in it sweet and swift.
subito p evenly
mp evenly
No bird was sing - ing in it now. A sin - gle leaf

36 37 38 39 40

was on a bough, And that was all there was to see In go - ing

41 42 43 44 45 46

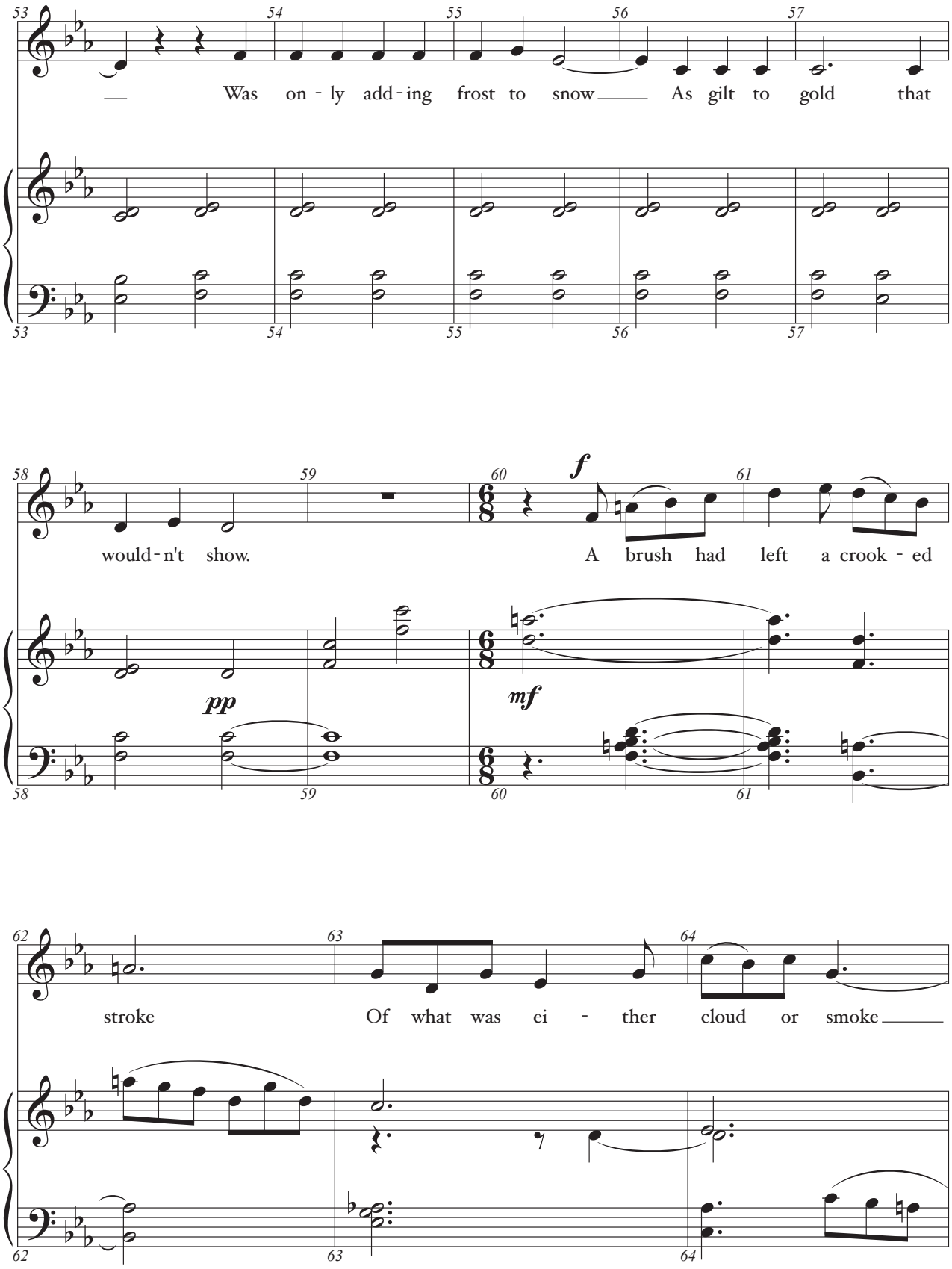
twice a-round the tree. From my ad -

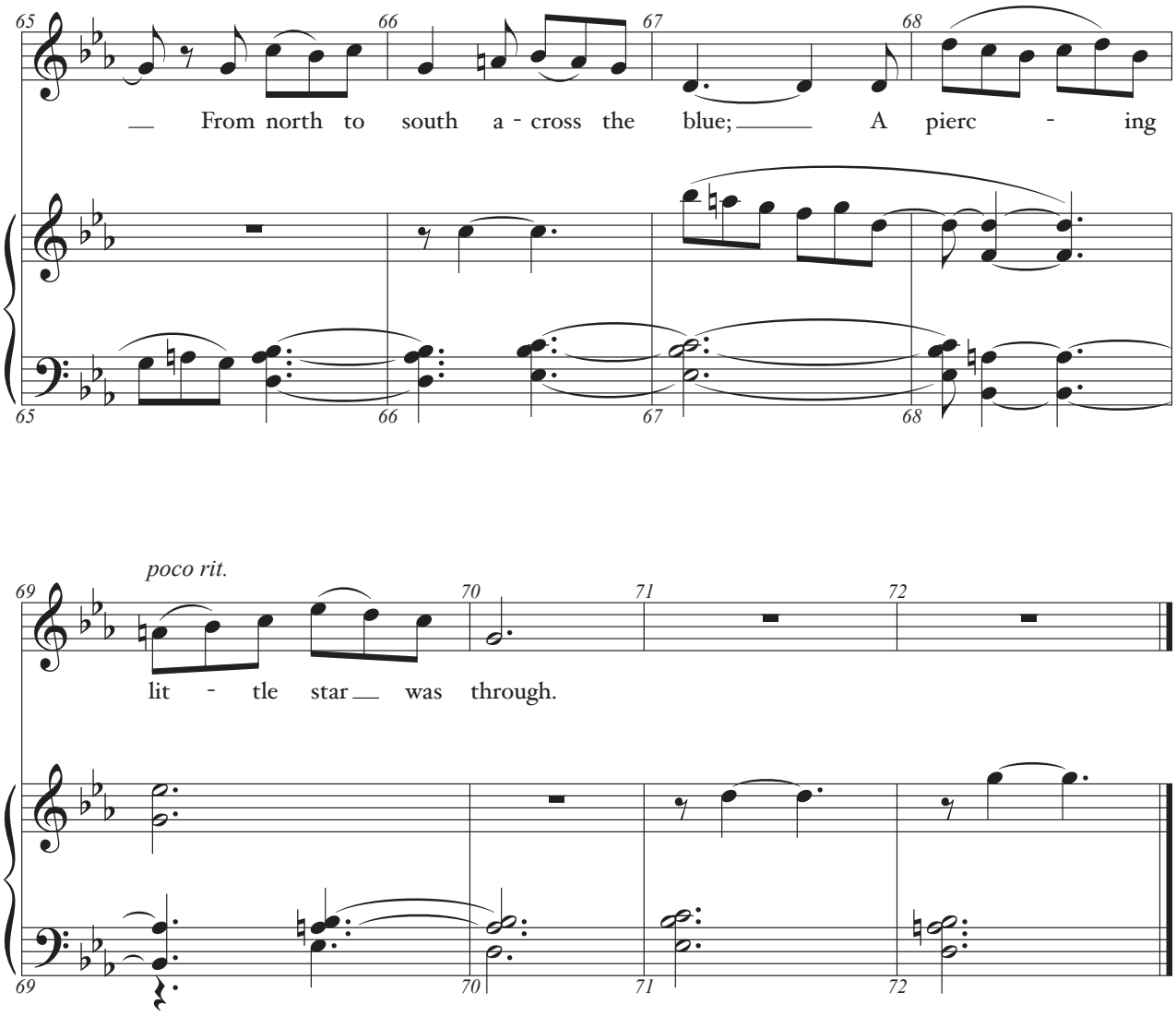
mf *p*

47 48 49 50 51 52

van - tage on a hill I judged that such a crys-tal chill

mf *p*

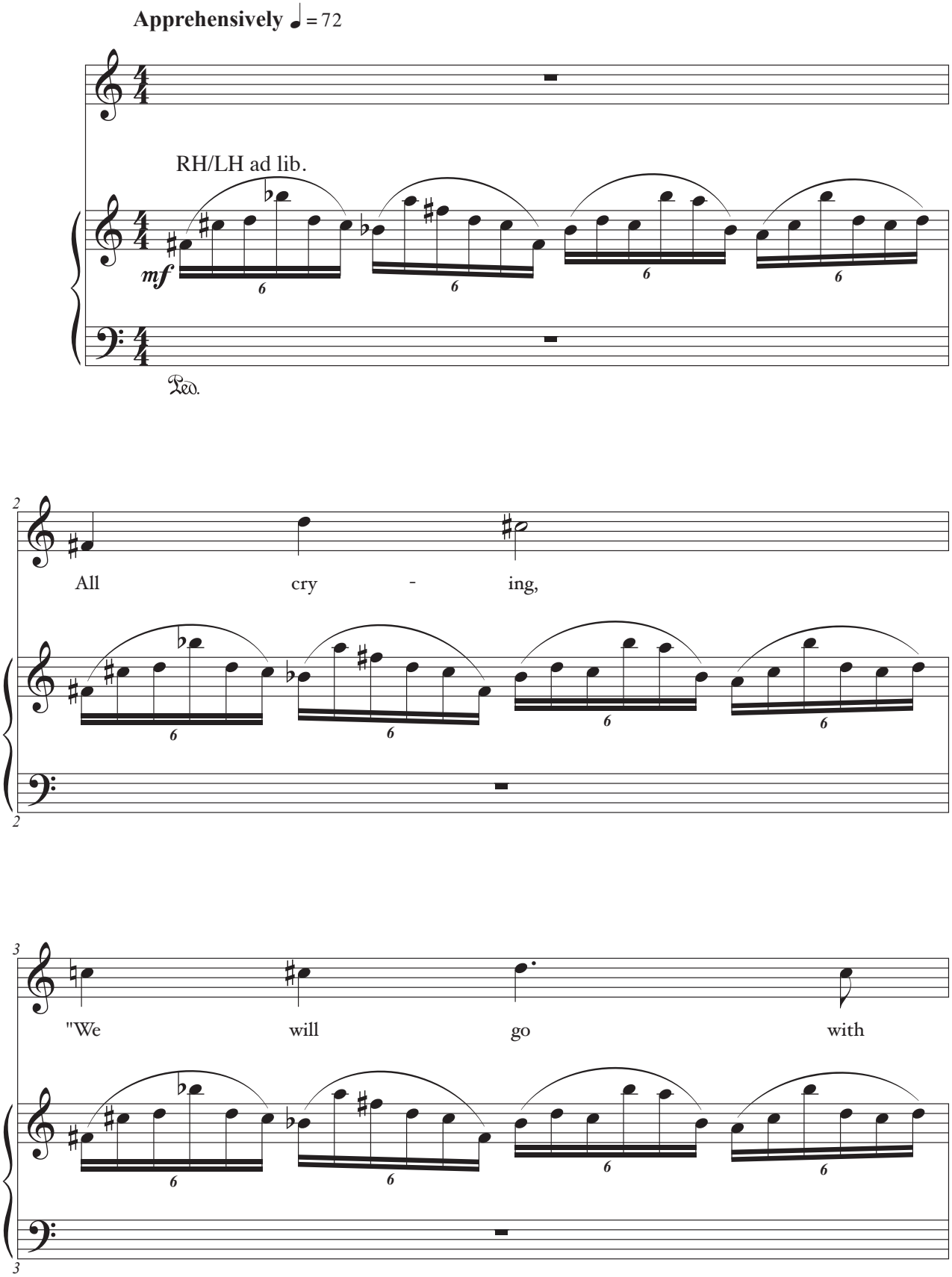

Was on - ly add - ing frost to snow As gilt to gold that
would - n't show. A brush had left a crook - ed
pp
f
mf
stroke Of what was ei - ther cloud or smoke


65
66
67
68
From north to south a - cross the blue; A pierc - ing
poco rit.
69
70
71
72
lit - tle star was through.

3. Misgiving

Robert Frost

Michael Murray



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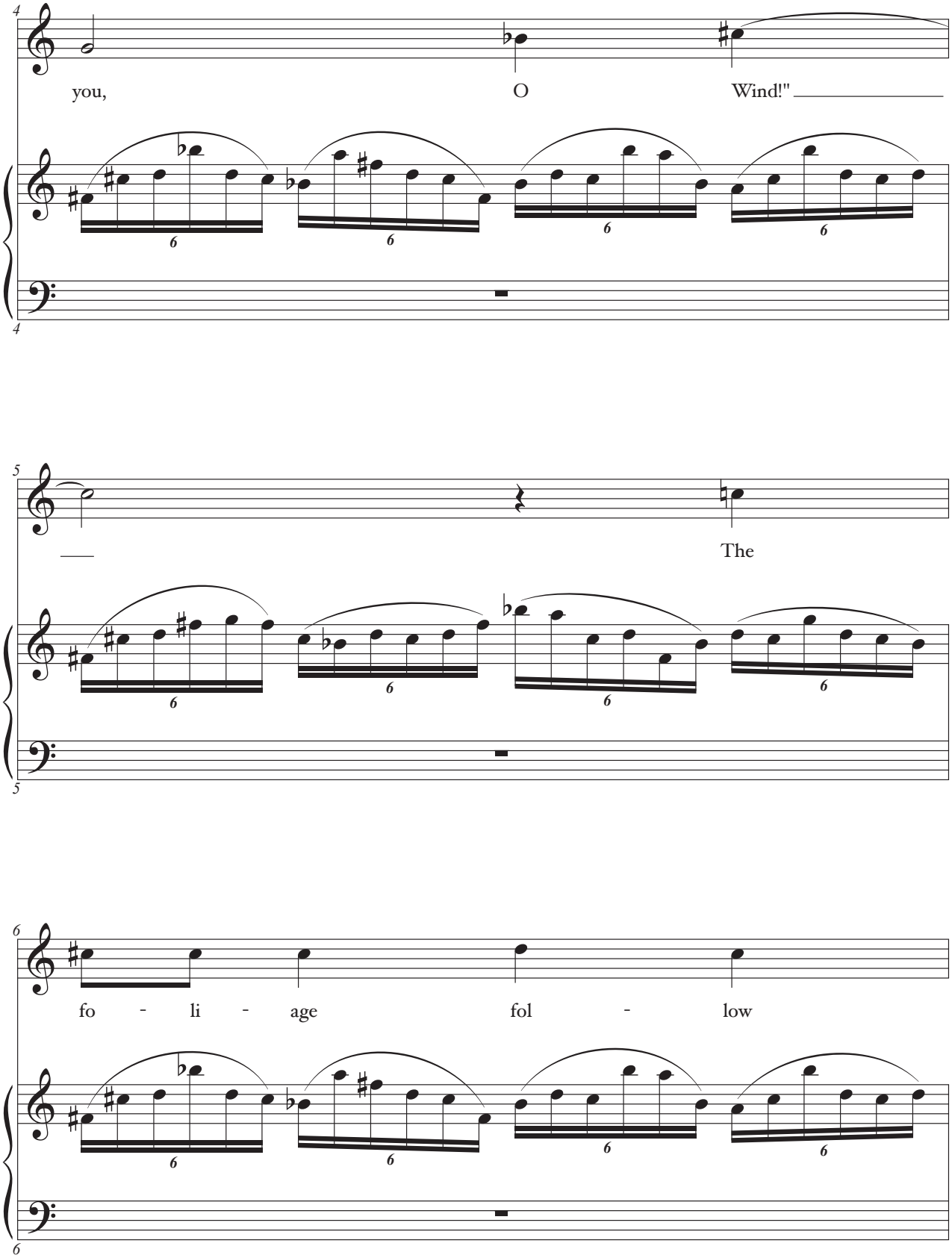
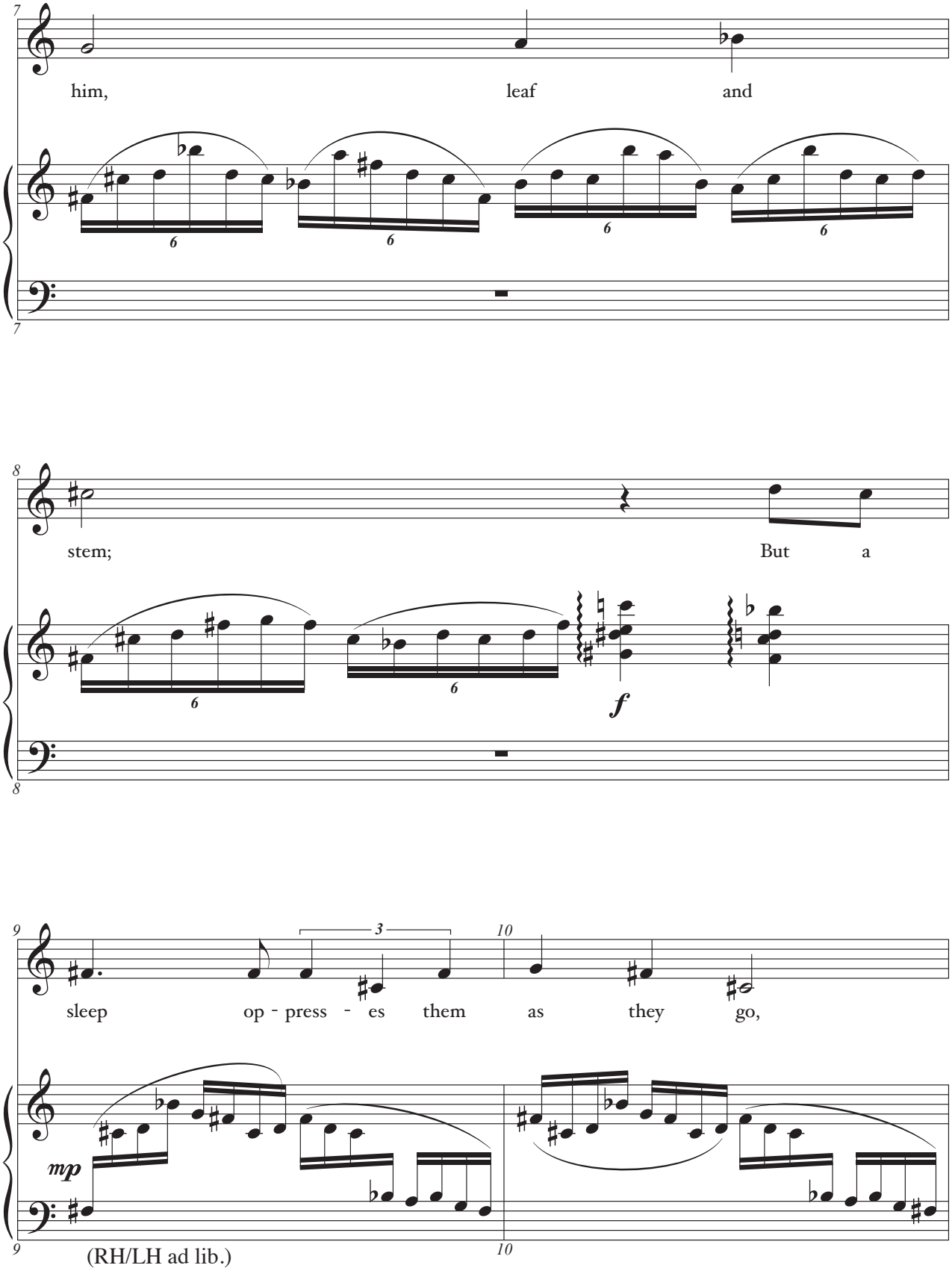
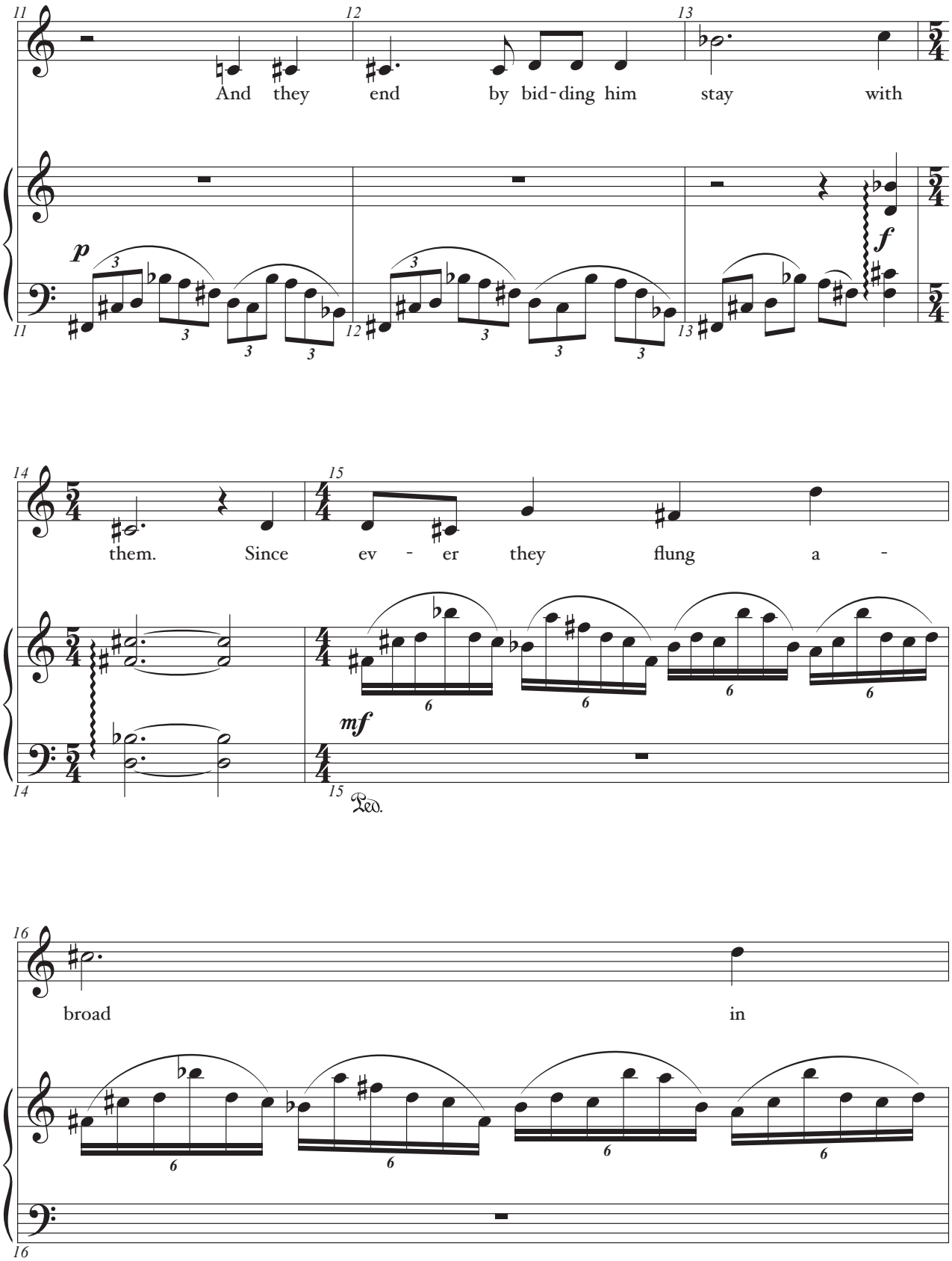
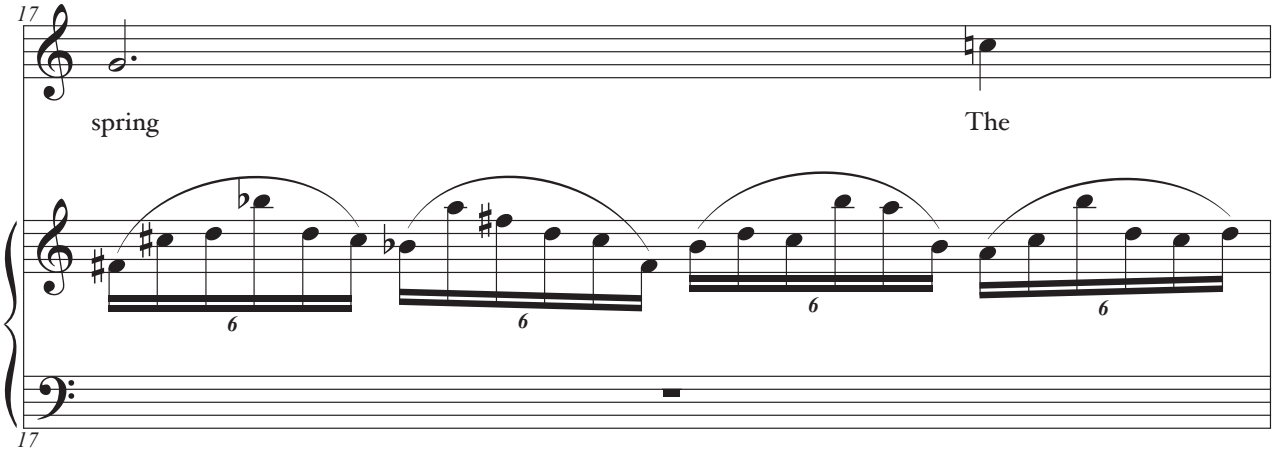
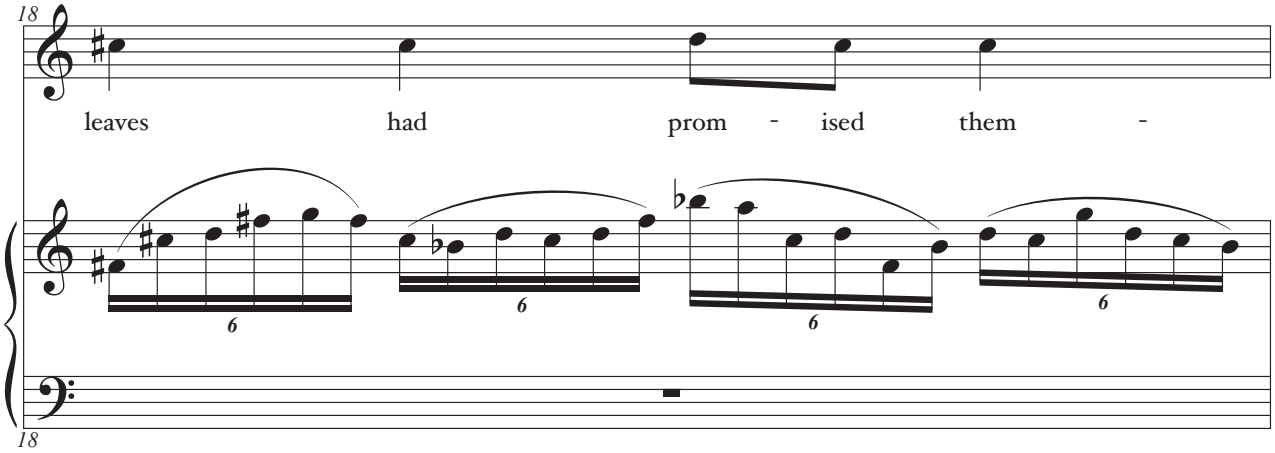
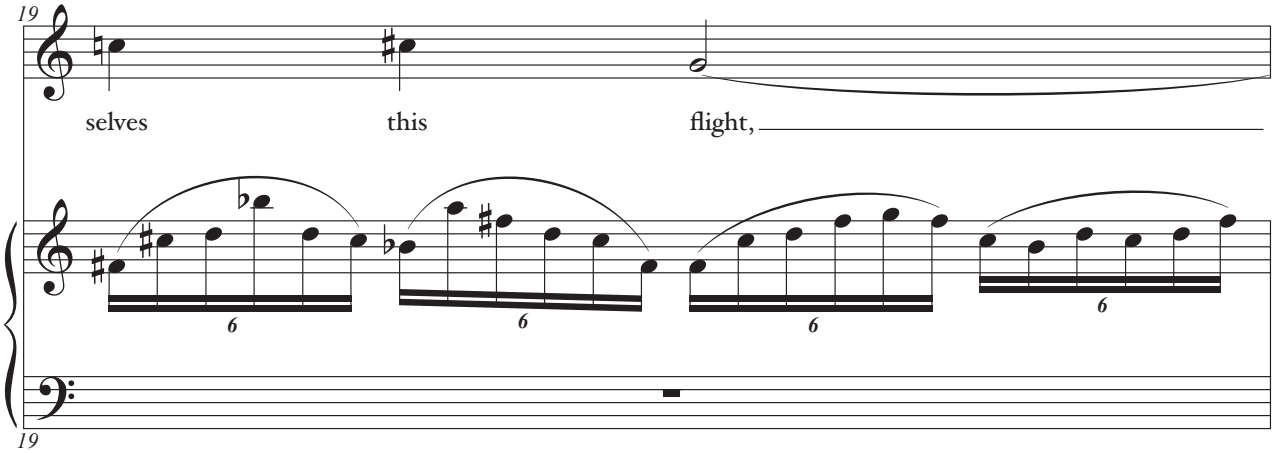

you, O Wind!"
The
fo - li - age fol - low

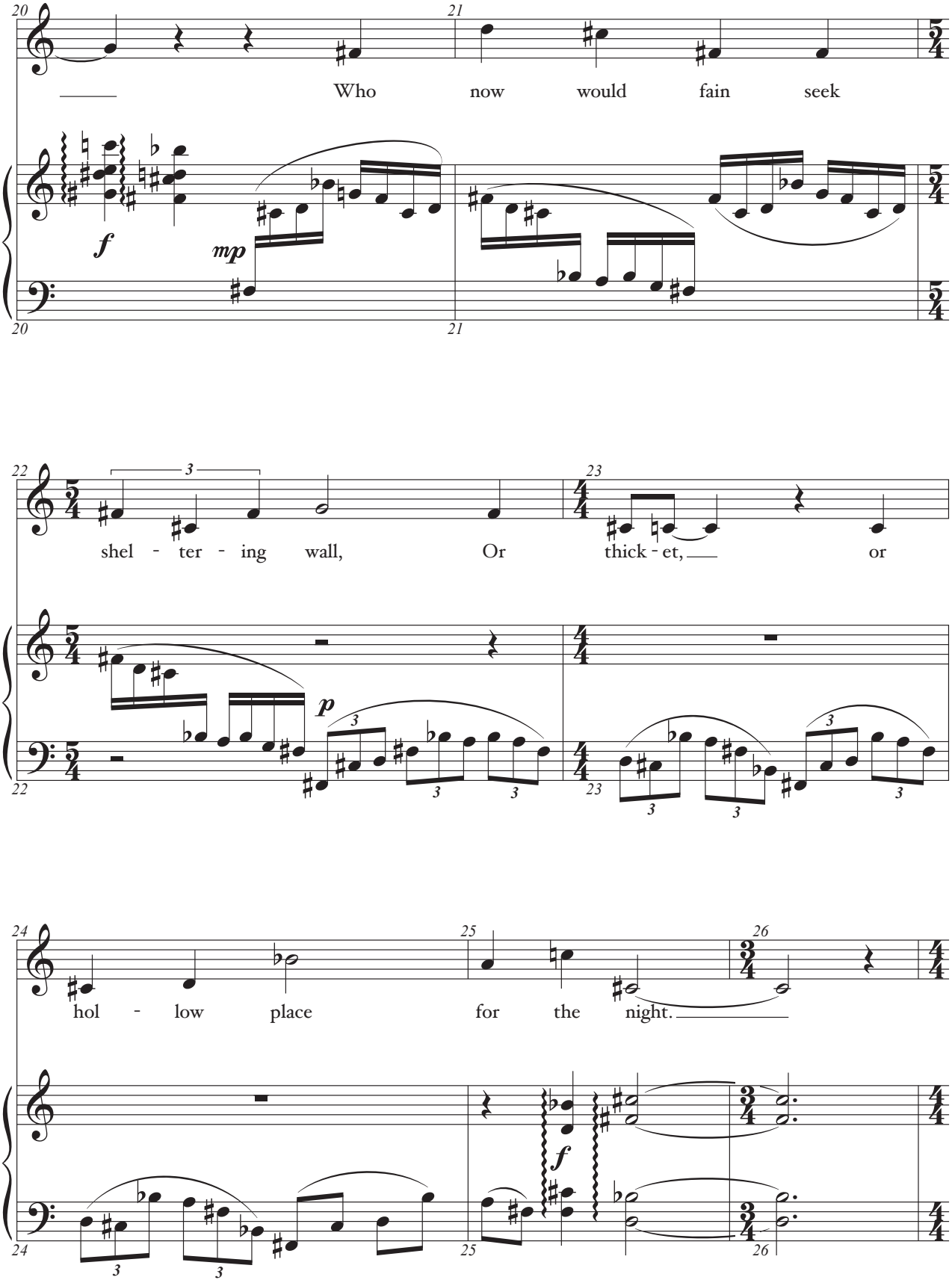

him, leaf and
stem; But a
f
sleep op - press - es them as they go,
mp
(RH/LH ad lib.)

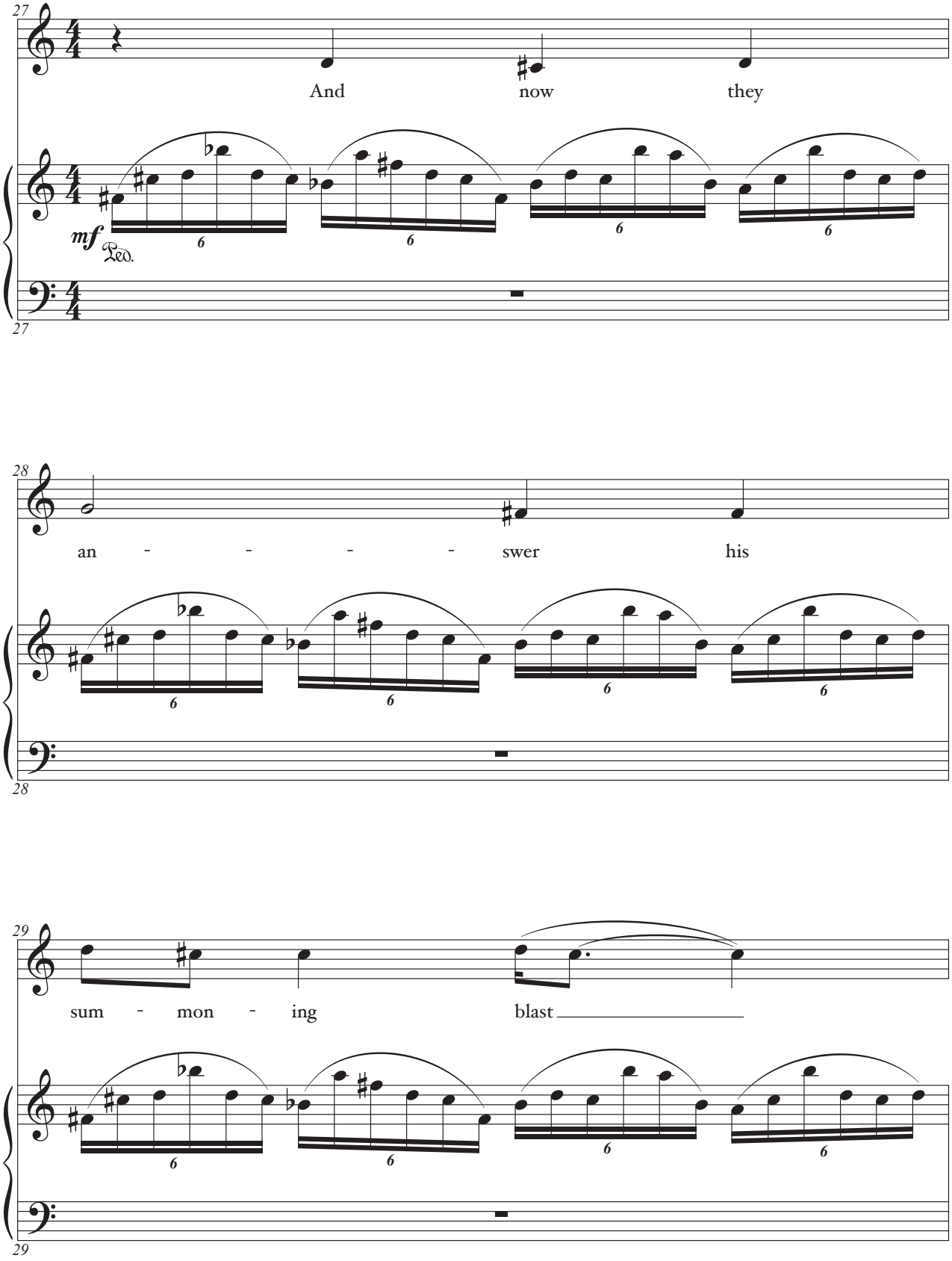

And they end by bid-ding him stay with
p
f
them. Since ev - er they flung a -
mf
broad in

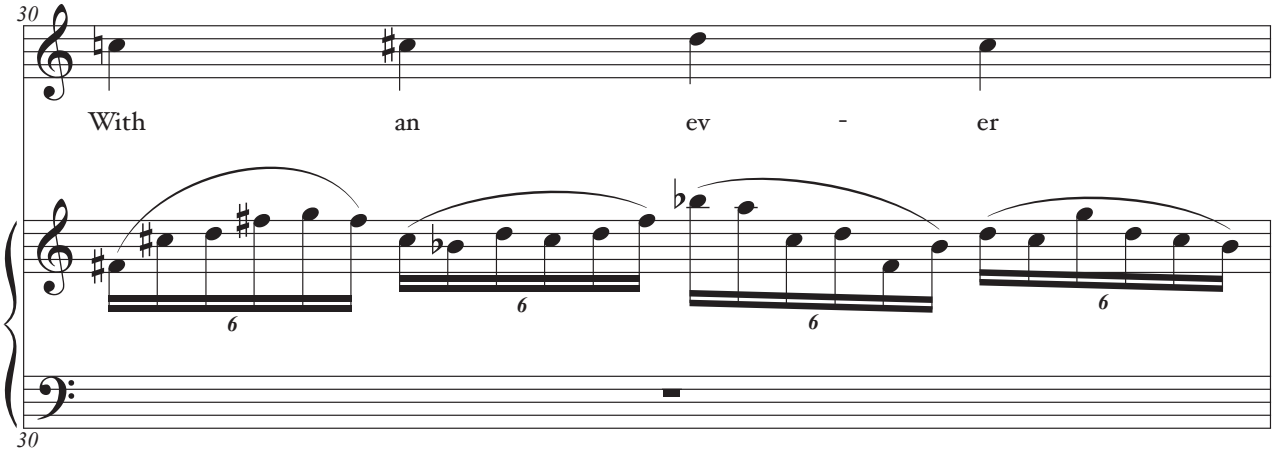

17
spring
The
6
6
6
6
17

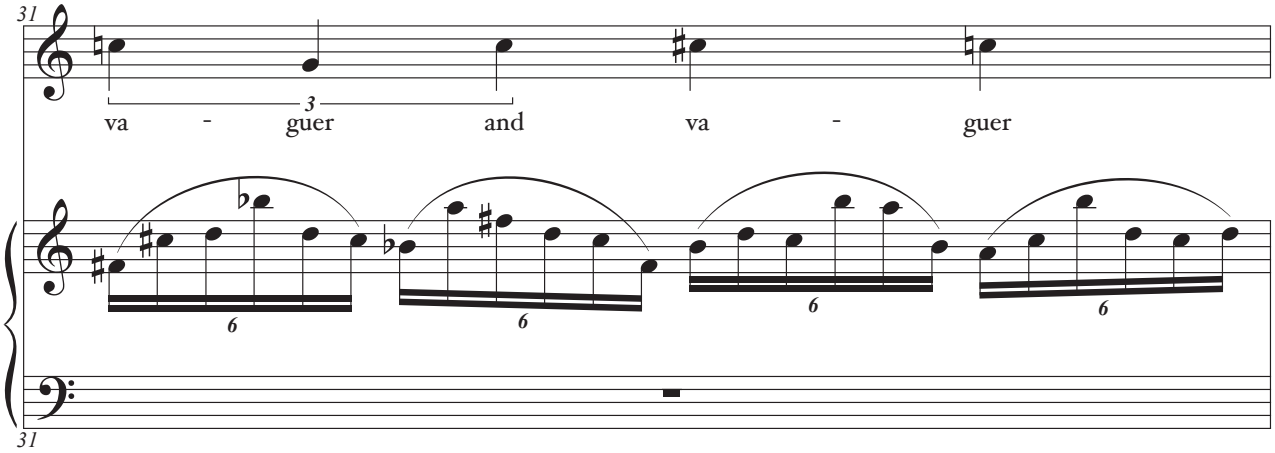

18
leaves had prom - ised them -
6
6
6
6
18

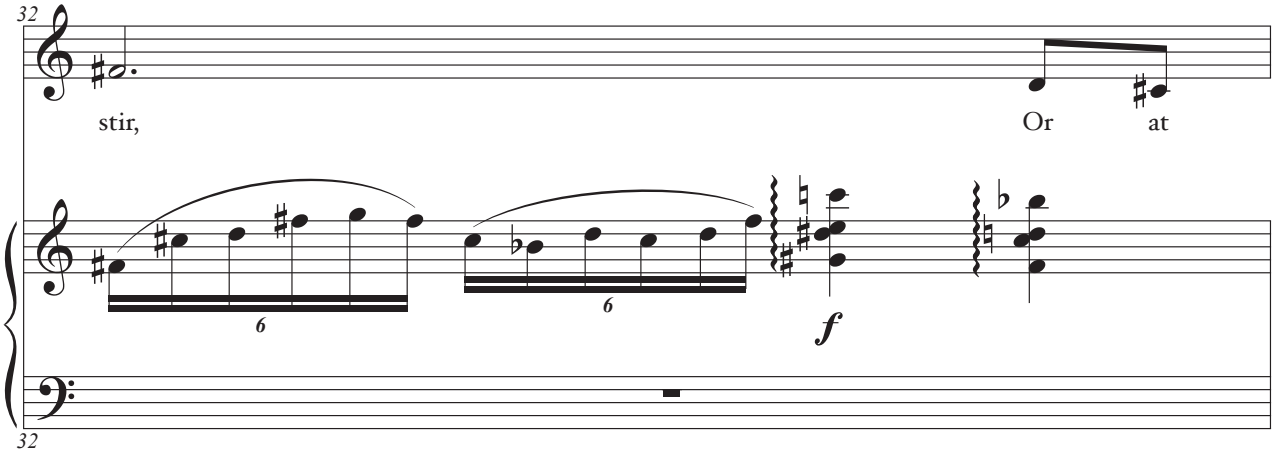

19
selves this flight,
6
6
6
6
19

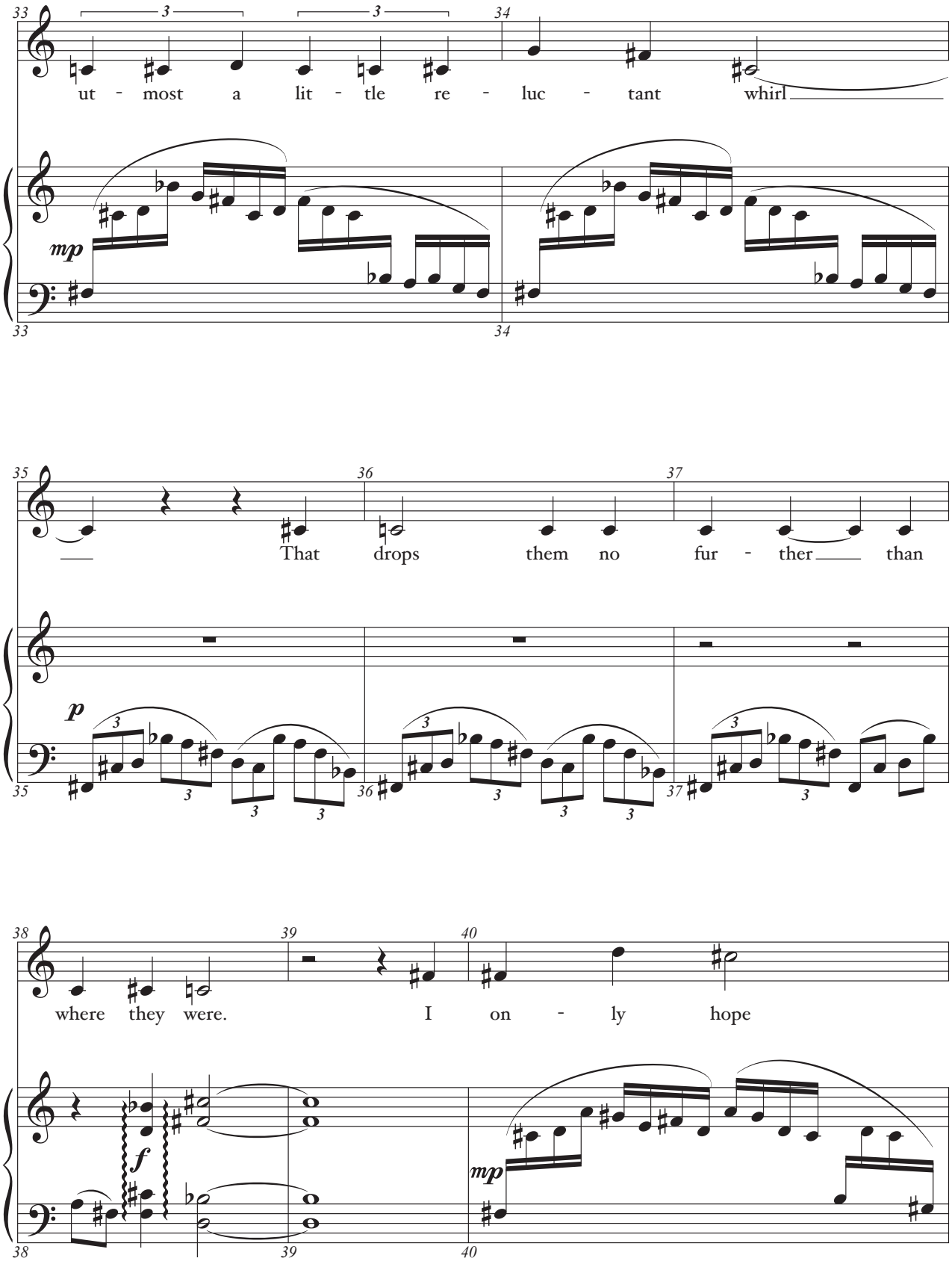

Who now would fain seek
f
mp
shel - ter - ing wall, Or thick - et, or
p
hol - low place for the night.
f

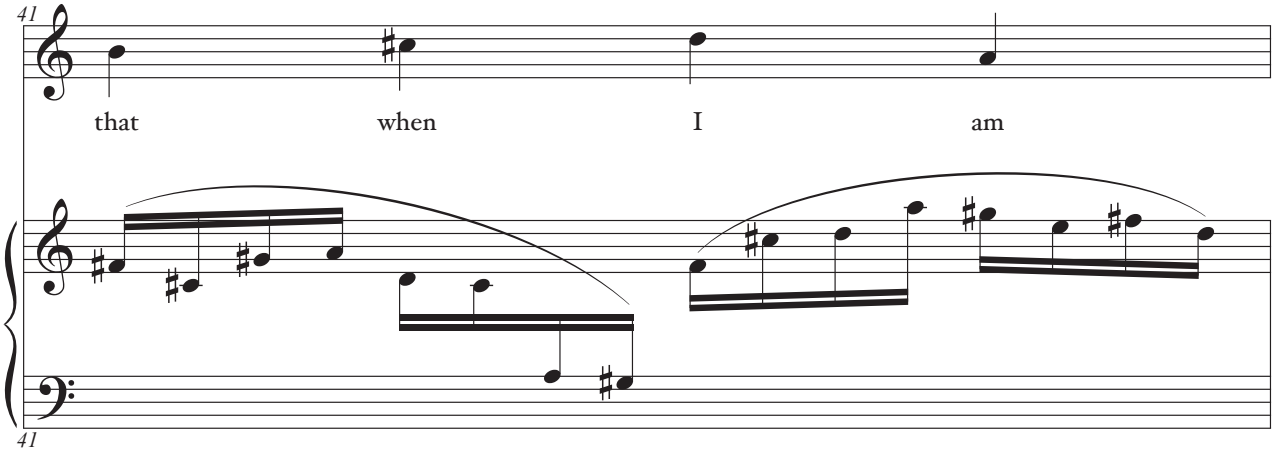

27
And now they
mf
Ped.
28
an - - - - swer his
29
sum - mon - ing blast

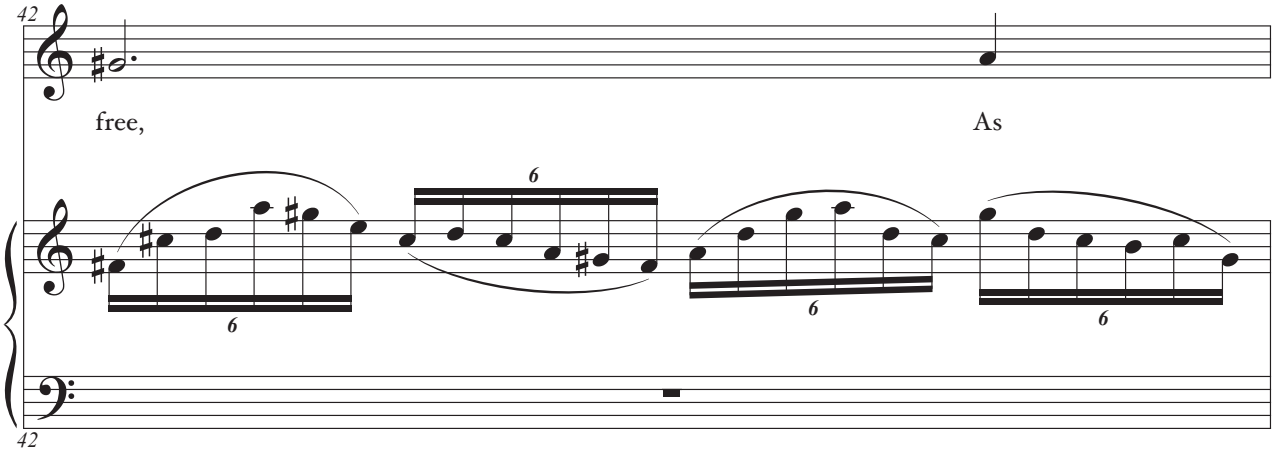

30
With an ev - er
6
6
6
6
30

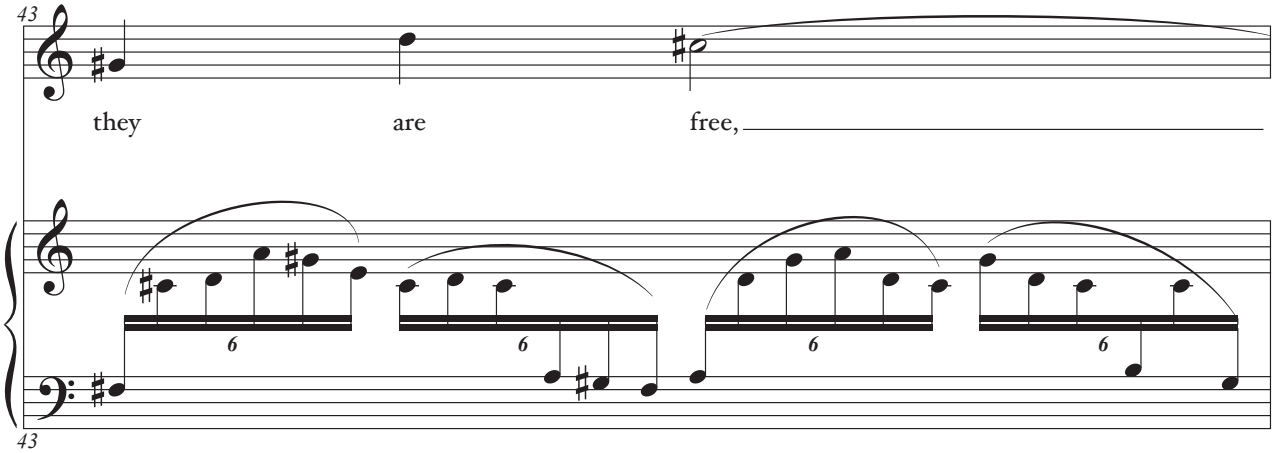

31
3
va - guer and va - guer
6
6
6
6
31

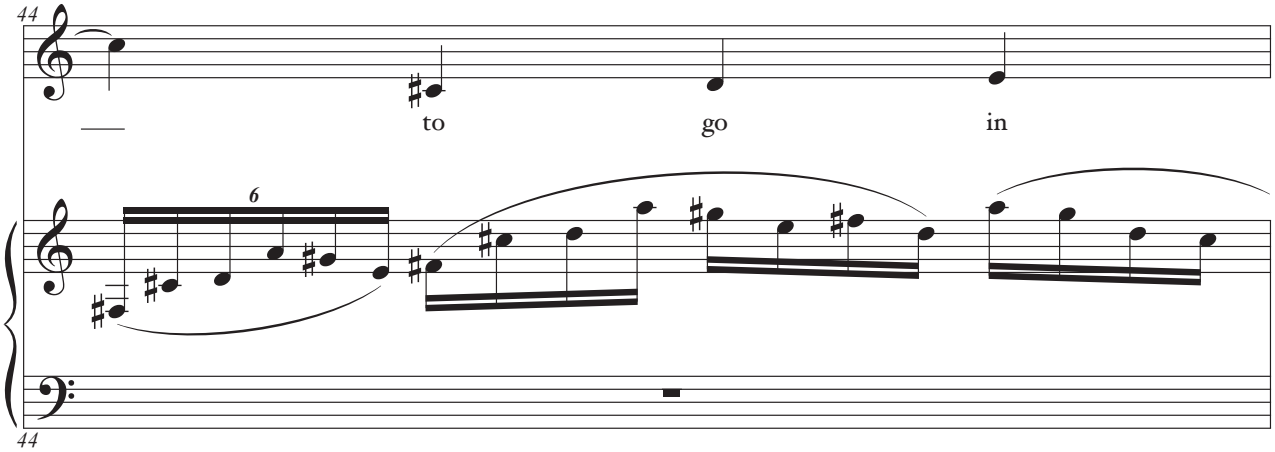

32
stir, Or at
6
6
f
32

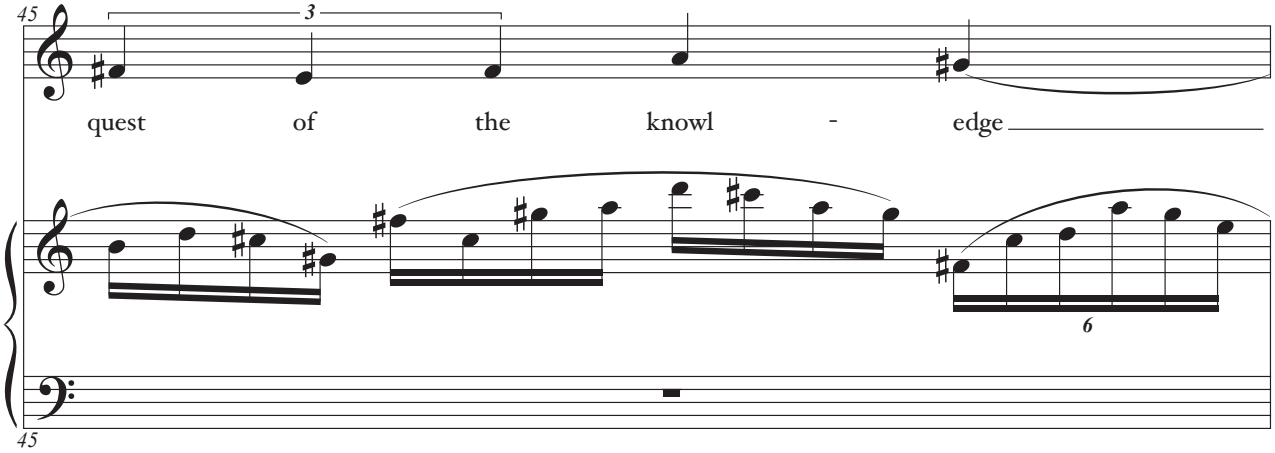

ut - most a lit - tle re - luc - tant whirl
mp
That drops them no fur - ther than
p
where they were. I on - ly hope
f
mp

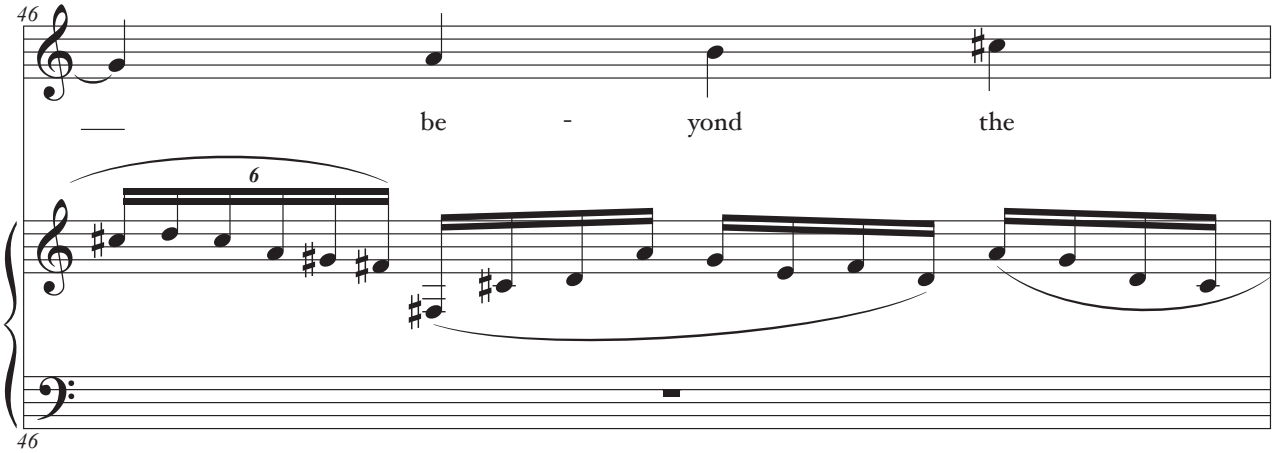

41
that when I am
41

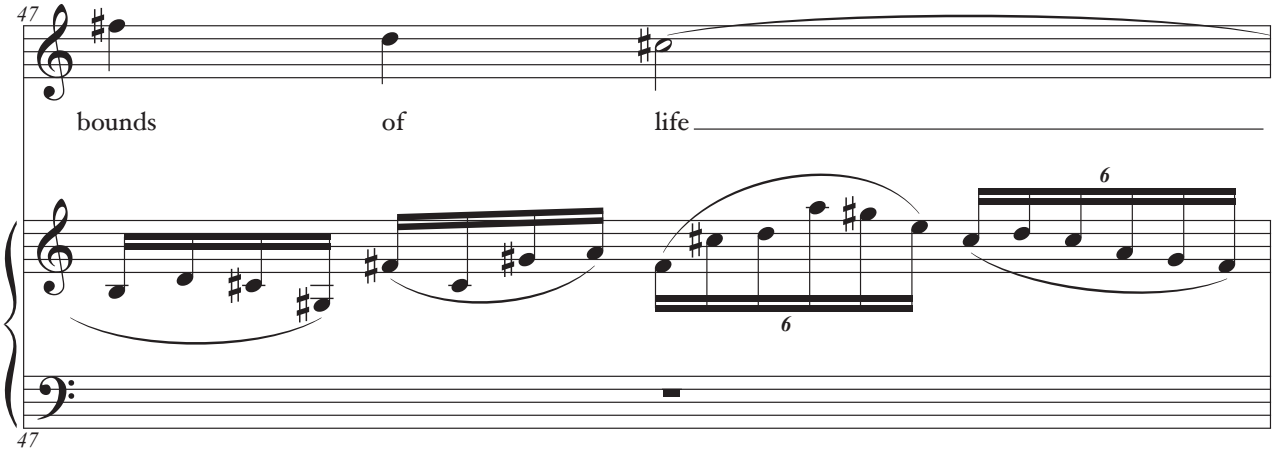

42
free, As
6
6
6
6
42

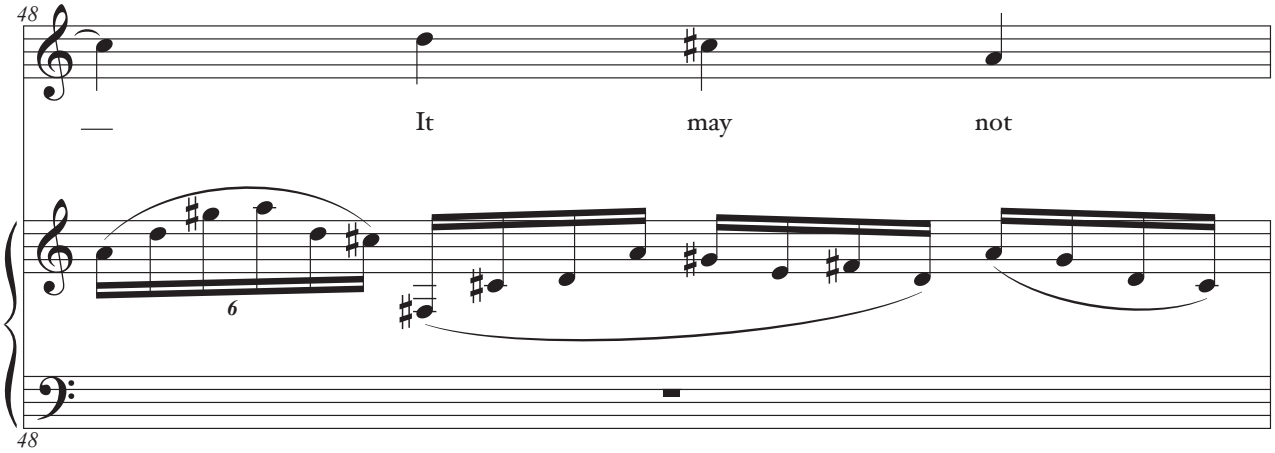

43
they are free,
6
6
6
6
43

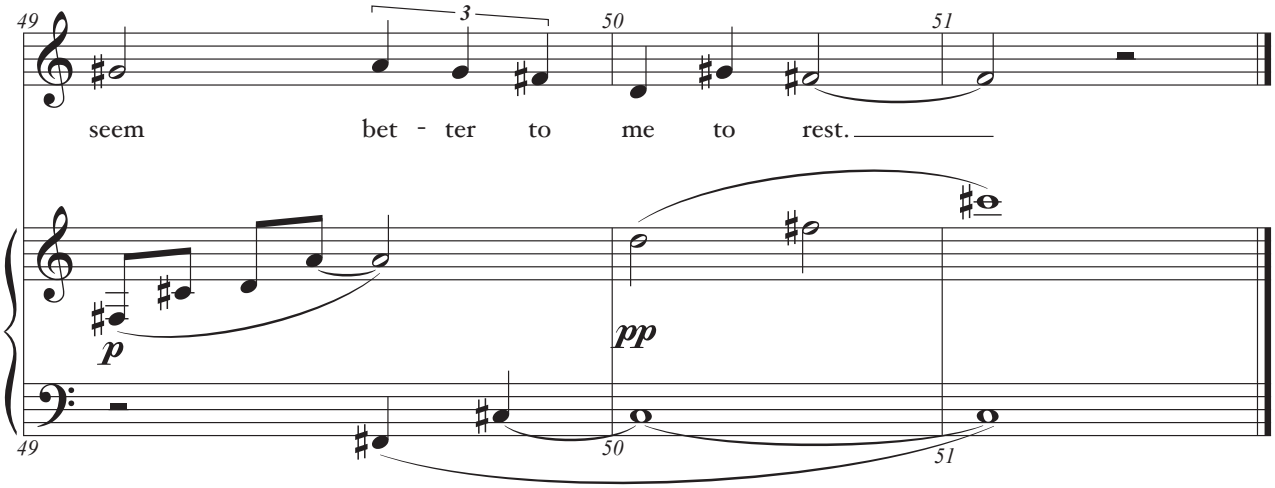

44
to go in
6
44


45
3
quest of the knowl - edge
6
45


46
be - yond the
6
46


47
bounds of life
6
6
47


48
It may not
6
48


49
3
50
51
seem bet - ter to me to rest.
p
pp
49
50
51

4. To Earthward

Robert Frost

Michael Murray

With nostalgia ♩ = 84

p

mp

mf

Love at the lips was touch As

mf

sweet as I could bear; And once that seemed too much; I lived on

p

mp

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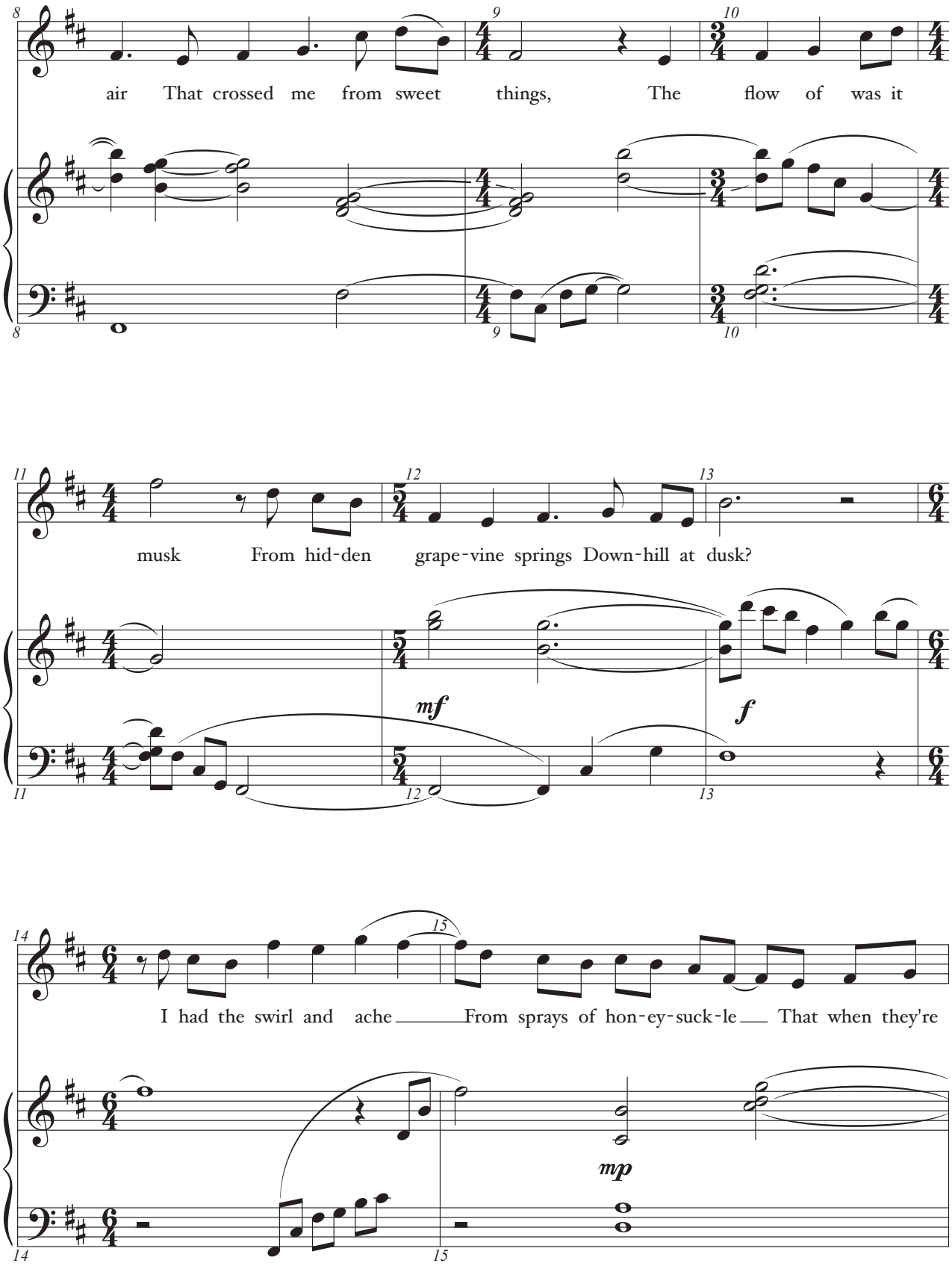
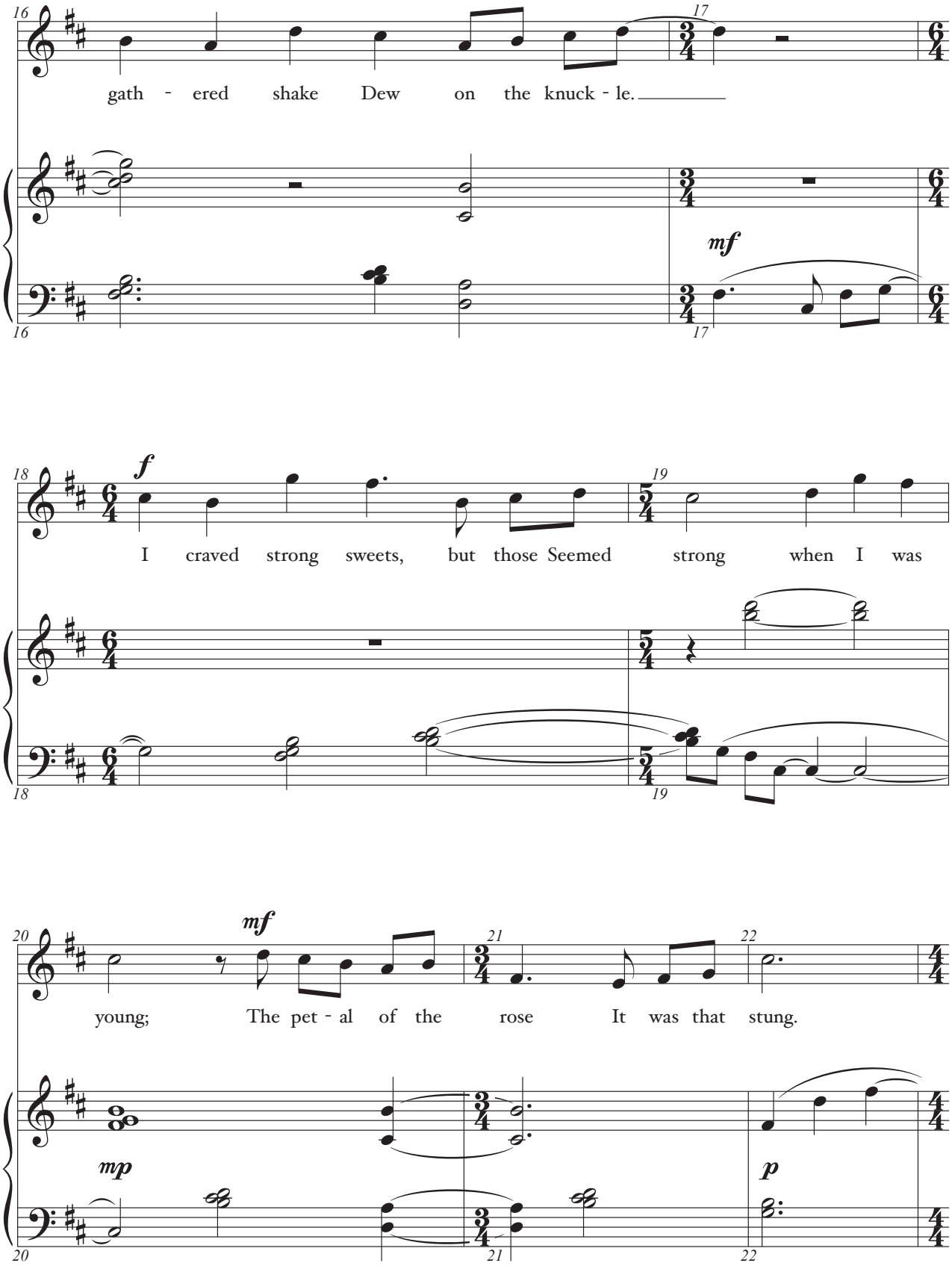
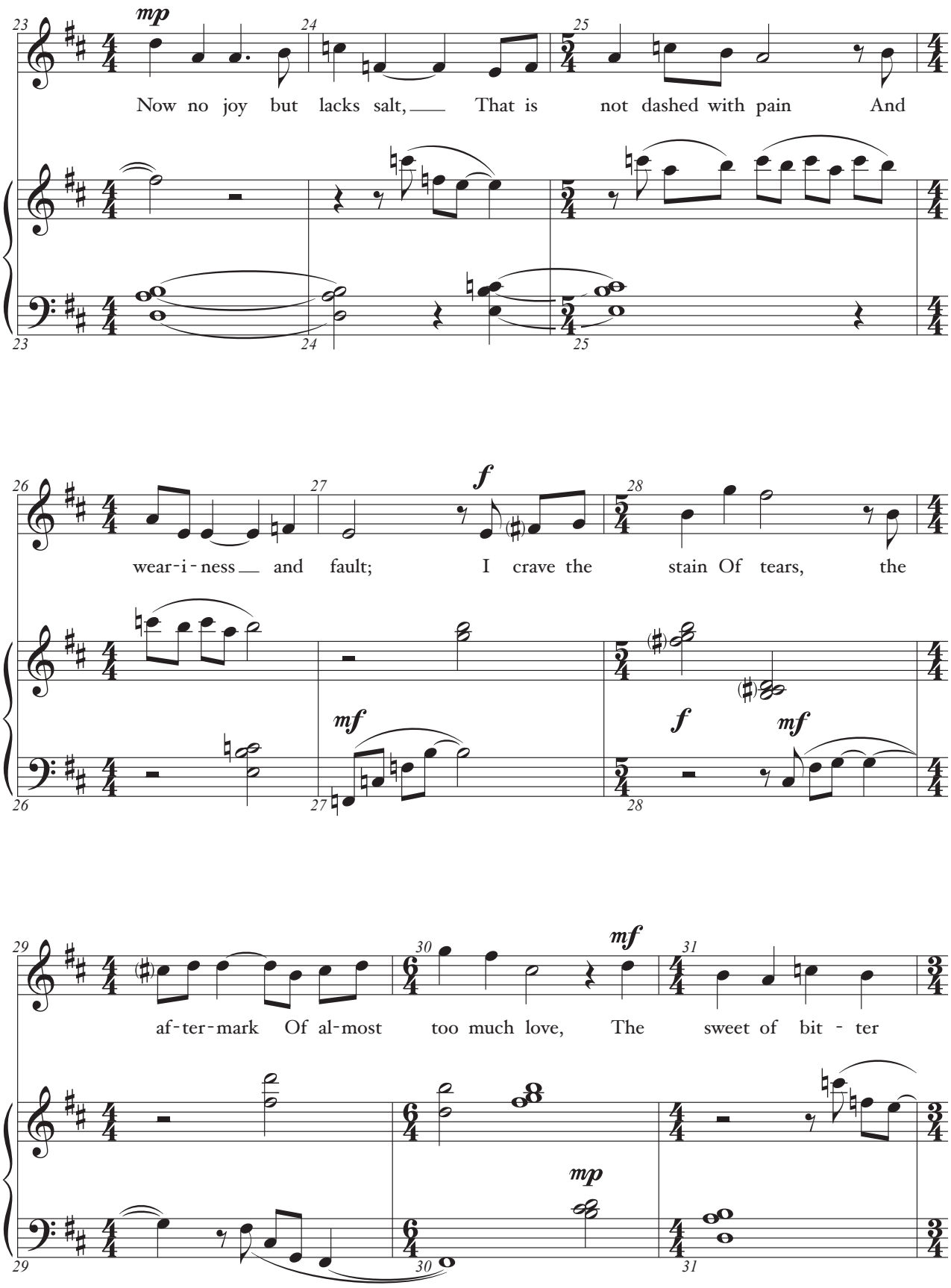
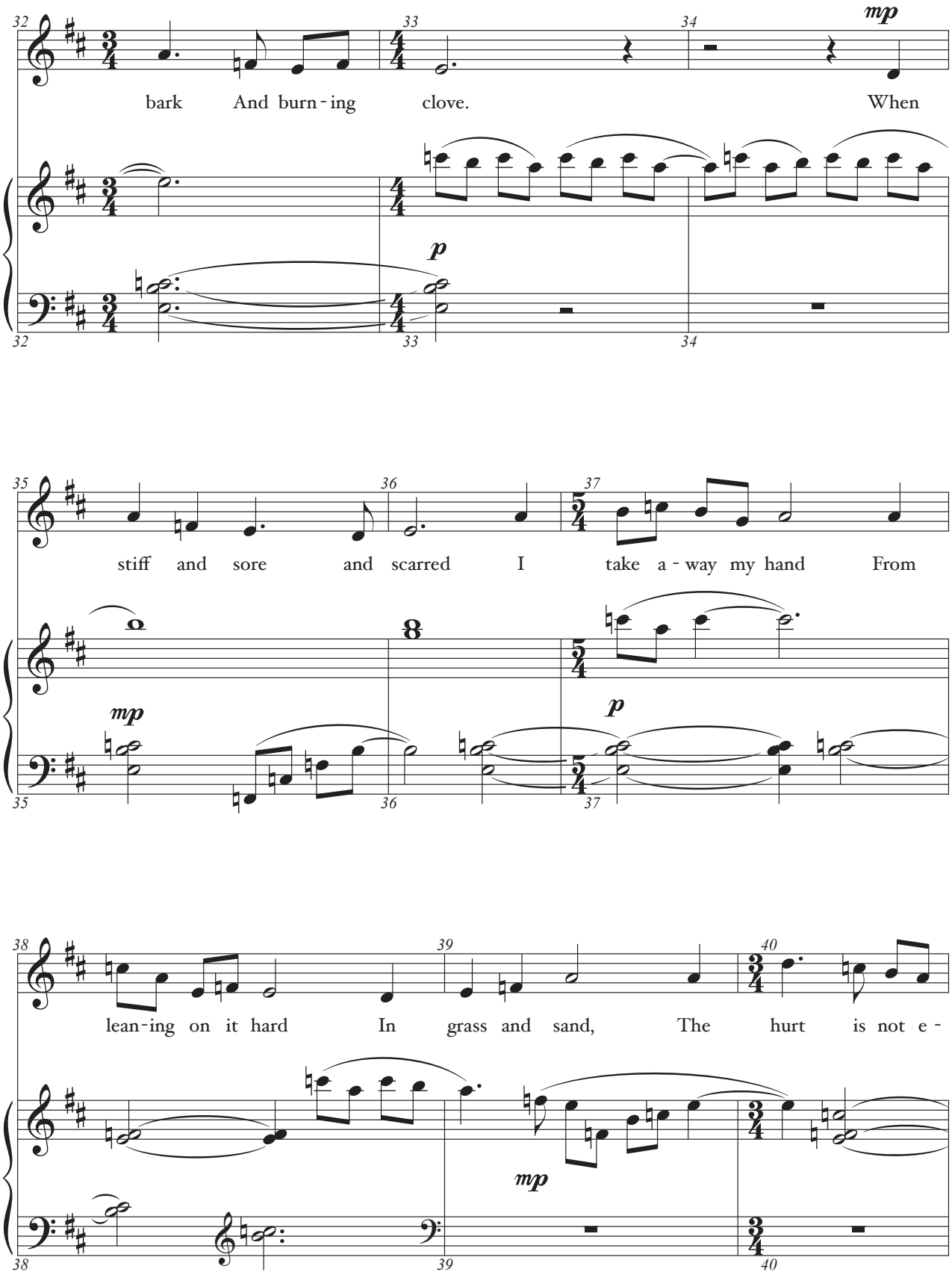
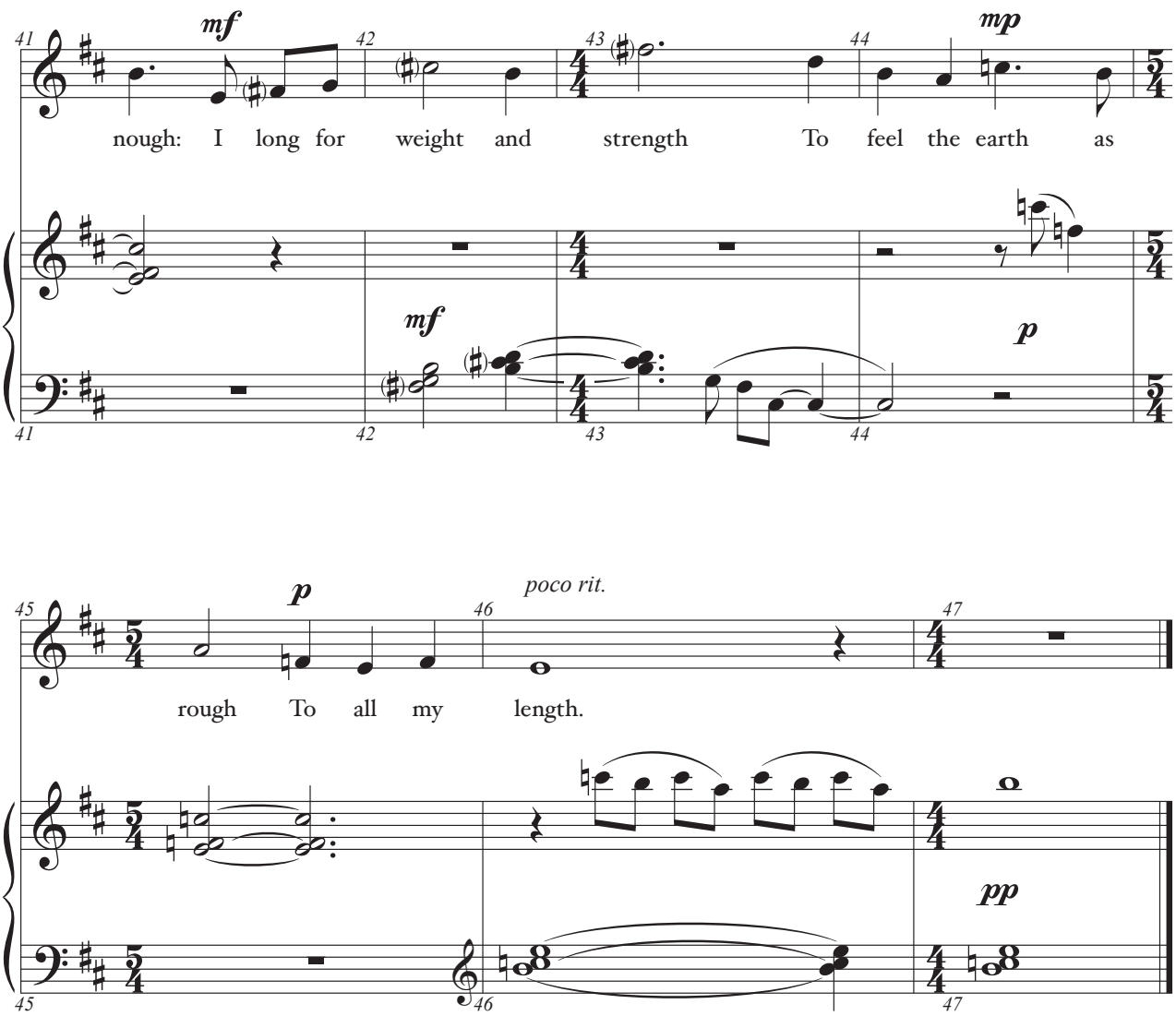

air That crossed me from sweet things, The flow of was it
musk From hid-den grape-vine springs Down-hill at dusk?
mf
f
I had the swirl and ache From sprays of hon-ey-suck-le That when they're
mp


gath - ered shake Dew on the knuck - le.
mf
f
I craved strong sweets, but those Seemed strong when I was
mf
young; The pet - al of the rose It was that stung.
mp
p


mp
Now no joy but lacks salt, That is not dashed with pain And
f
wear-i-ness and fault; I crave the stain Of tears, the
mf
f
mf
af-ter-mark Of al-most too much love, The sweet of bit - ter
mf
mp


32
33
34
mp
bark And burn - ing clove. When
p
35
36
37
stiff and sore and scarred I take a - way my hand From
mp
p
38
39
40
lean - ing on it hard In grass and sand, The hurt is not e -
mp



Hambidge - Rabun Gap, GA
and Springfield, MO
June-July, 2020