BORROWED LOVE SONGS

ERIC SHANFIELD

BORROWED LOVE SONGS

Eric Shanfield | ENS.2006.3a

poem by John Yau

Voice

Piano

Borrowed Love Songs may be performed by any voice type, male or female. All songs can be transposed up or down within reason, taking into account musical considerations such as timbre and tessitura. Consecutive songs should preferably not take the same key.

There are two versions of song 6, the first for voice and piano, the second for voice and piano with a melody instrument. This line may be taken by any instrument in any octave (except low bass). This addition ought be something of a surprise, with the instrument performing offstage or from the audience, without however interrupting the *quasi attacca* flow of the cycle.

Pedal markings are sparse and should be considered guidelines at most.

I discovered poet John Yau's *Borrowed Love Poems* on a ladder at the Strand one day in 2001, where it lay illuminated as if waiting for me. Though I immediately knew I had to set his work, it was several years before inspiration struck. Then one day when I was in the shower I heard the fifth song singing in my head, ready to go, and I jumped out, dripping wet, ready to begin. *Borrowed Love Songs* comprises ten songs for voice and piano and lasts about 18 minutes.

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BORROWED LOVE SONGS

John Yau

1
What can I do, I have dreamed of you so much
What can I do, lost as I am in the sky

What can I do, now that all
the doors and windows are open

I will whisper this in your ear
as if it were a rough draft

something I scribbled on a napkin
I have dreamed of you so much

there is no time left to write
no time left on the sundial

for my shadow to fall back to the earth
lost as I am in the sky

2
What can I do, all the years that we talked
and I was afraid to want more

What can I do, now that these hours
belong to neither you nor me

Lost as I am in the sky
What can I do, now that I cannot find

the words I need
when your hair is mine

now that there is no time to sleep
now that your name is not enough

3
What can I do, if a red meteor wakes the earth
and the color of robbery is in the air

Now that I dream of you so much
my lips are like clouds

drifting above the shadow of one who is asleep
Now that the moon is enthralled with a wall

What can I do, if one of us is lying on the earth
and the other is lost in the sky

4
What can I do, lost as I am in the wind
and lightning that surrounds you

What can I do, now that my tears
are rising toward the sky

only to fall back
into the sea again
What can I do, now that this page is wet
now that this pen is empty

5
What can I do, now that the sky
has shut its iron door

and bolted clouds
to the back of the moon

now that the wind
has diverted the ocean's attention

now that a red meteor
has plunged into the lake

now that I am awake
now that you have closed the book

6
Now that the sky is green
and the air is red with rain

I never stood in
the shadow of pyramids

I never walked from village to village
in search of fragments

that had fallen to earth in another age
What can I do, now that we have collided

on a cloudless night
and sparks rise

from the bottom of a thousand lakes

7
To some, the winter sky is a blue peach
teeming with worms

and the clouds are growing thick
with sour milk

What can I do, now that the fat black sea
is seething

now that I have refused to return
my borrowed dust to the butterflies

their wings full of yellow flour

8
What can I do, I never believed happiness
could be premeditated

What can I do, having argued with the obedient world
that language will infiltrate its walls
What can I do, now that I have sent you
a necklace of dead dried bees

and now that I want to
be like the necklace

and turn flowers into red candles
pouring from the sun

9
What can I do, now that I have spent my life
studying the physics of good-bye

every velocity and particle in all the waves
undulating through the relapse of a moment's fission

now that I must surrender this violin
to the sea's foaming black tongue

now that January is almost here
and I have started celebrating a completely different life
10

Now that the seven wonders of the night
have been stolen by history

Now that the sky is lost and the stars
have slipped into a book

Now that the moon is boiling
like the blood where it swims

Now that there are no blossoms left
to glue to the sky

What can I do,
I who never invented anything

and who dreamed of you so much
I was amazed to discover

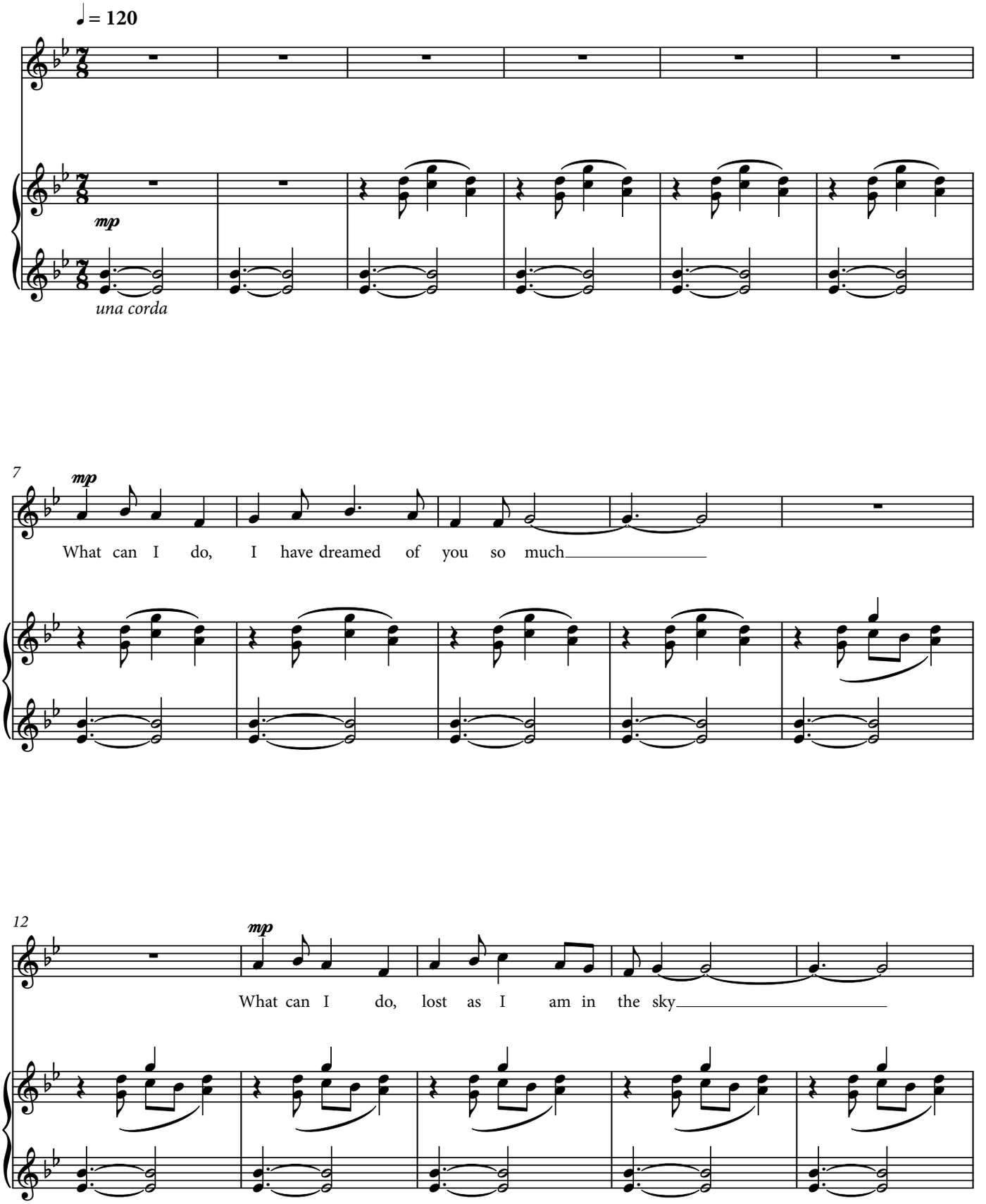
the claw marks of those
who preceded us across this burning floor

BORROWED LOVE SONGS

1

John Yau

Eric Shanfield



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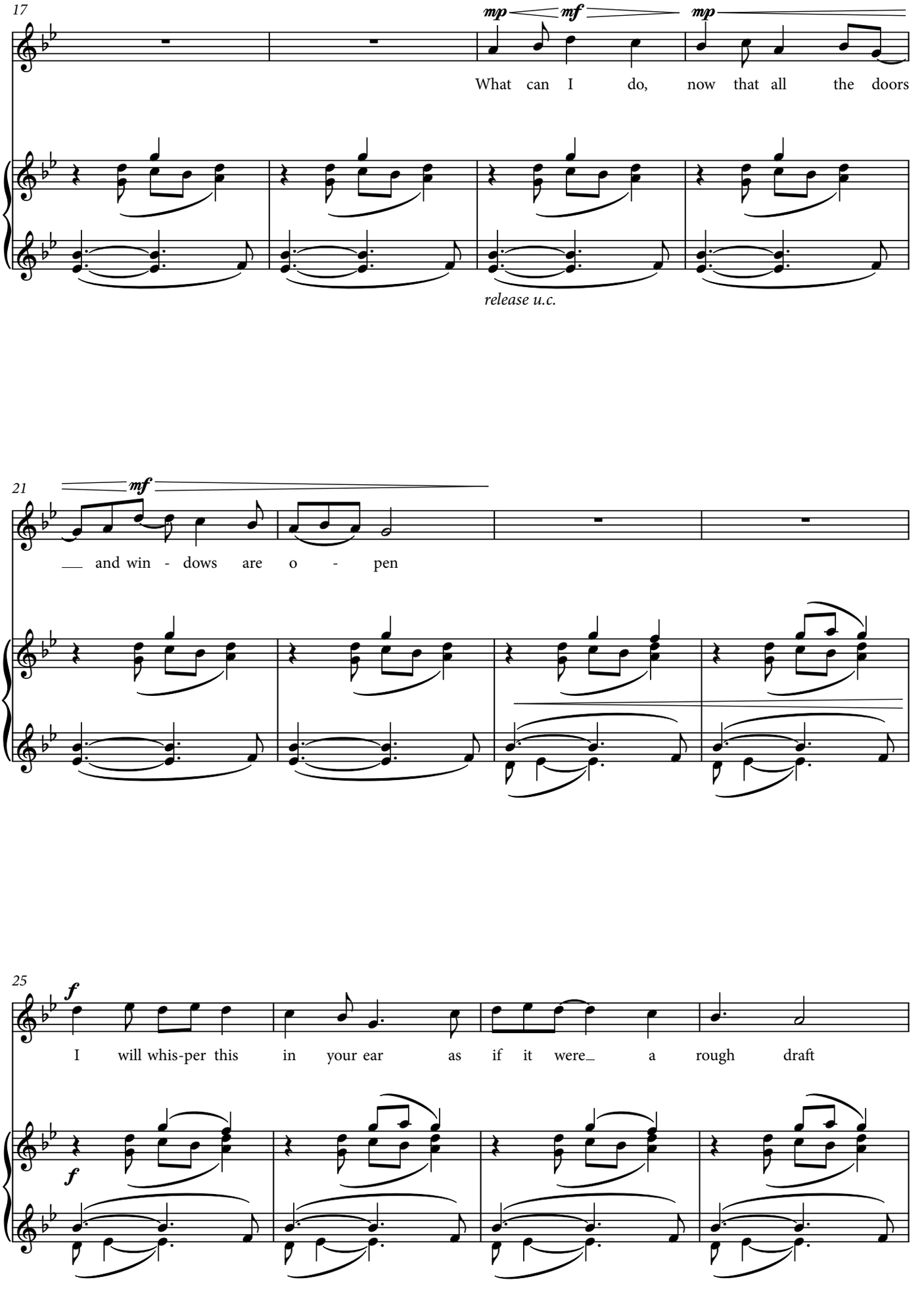
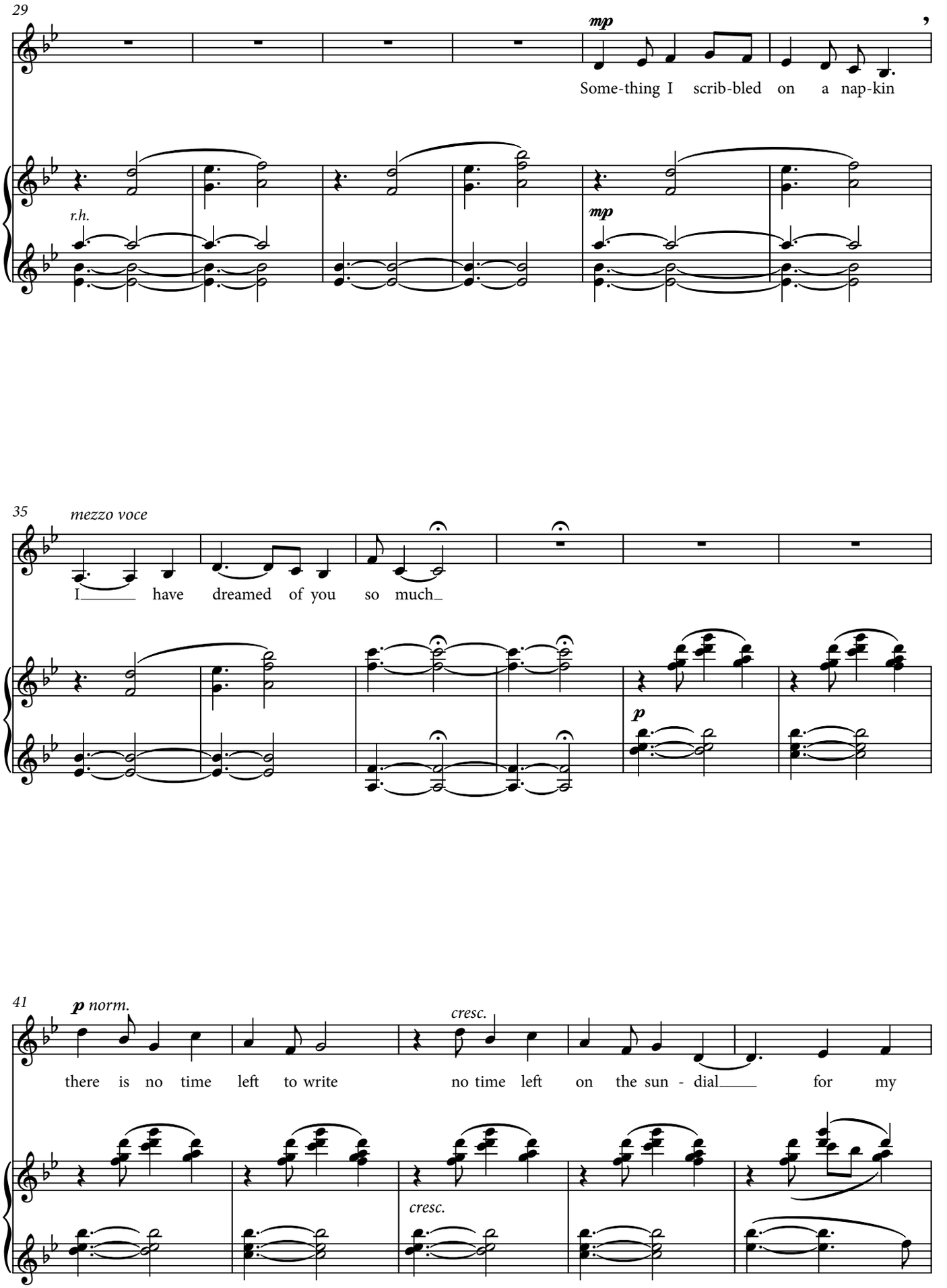
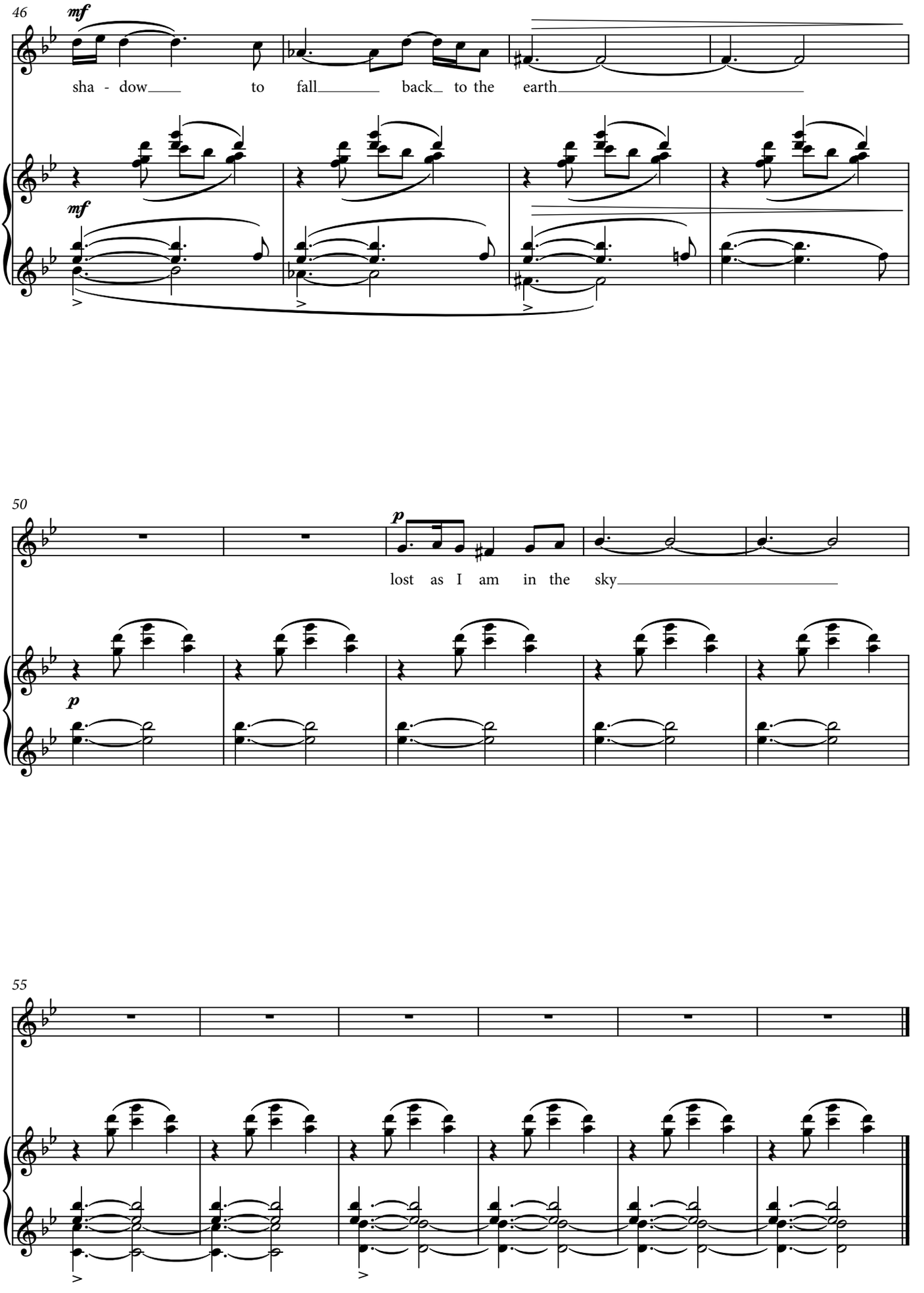

17
mp
mf
mp
What can I do, now that all the doors
release u.c.
21
mf
and win - dows are o - pen
25
f
I will whis-per this in your ear as if it were a rough draft
f


29
mp
Some-thing I scrib-bled on a nap-kin
r.h.
mp
35
mezzo voce
I have dreamed of you so much
p
41
p norm.
cresc.
there is no time left to write no time left on the sun - dial for my
cresc.

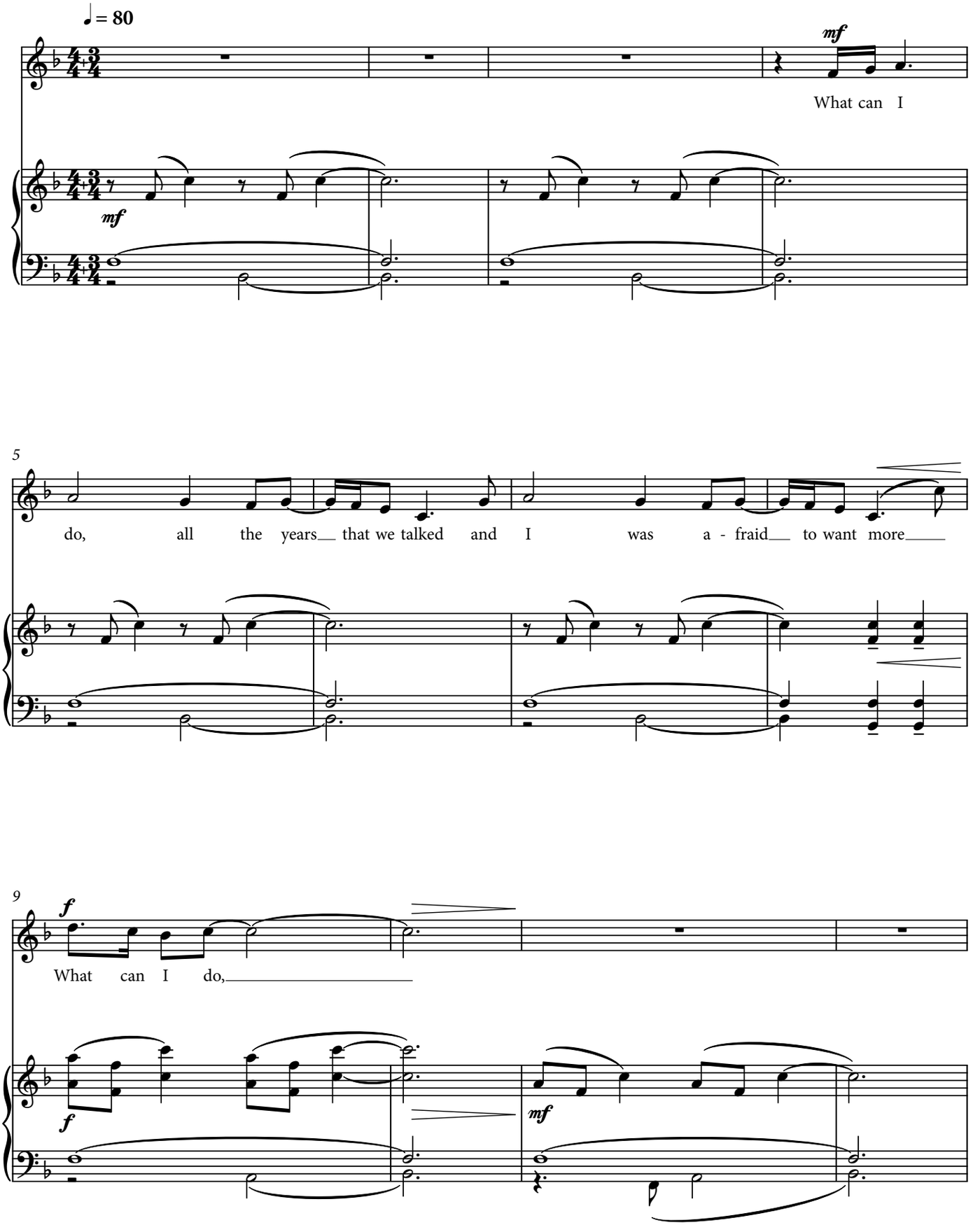

46
mf
sha - dow to fall back to the earth
mf
50
p
lost as I am in the sky
p
55

BORROWED LOVE SONGS

2

John Yau

Eric Shanfield



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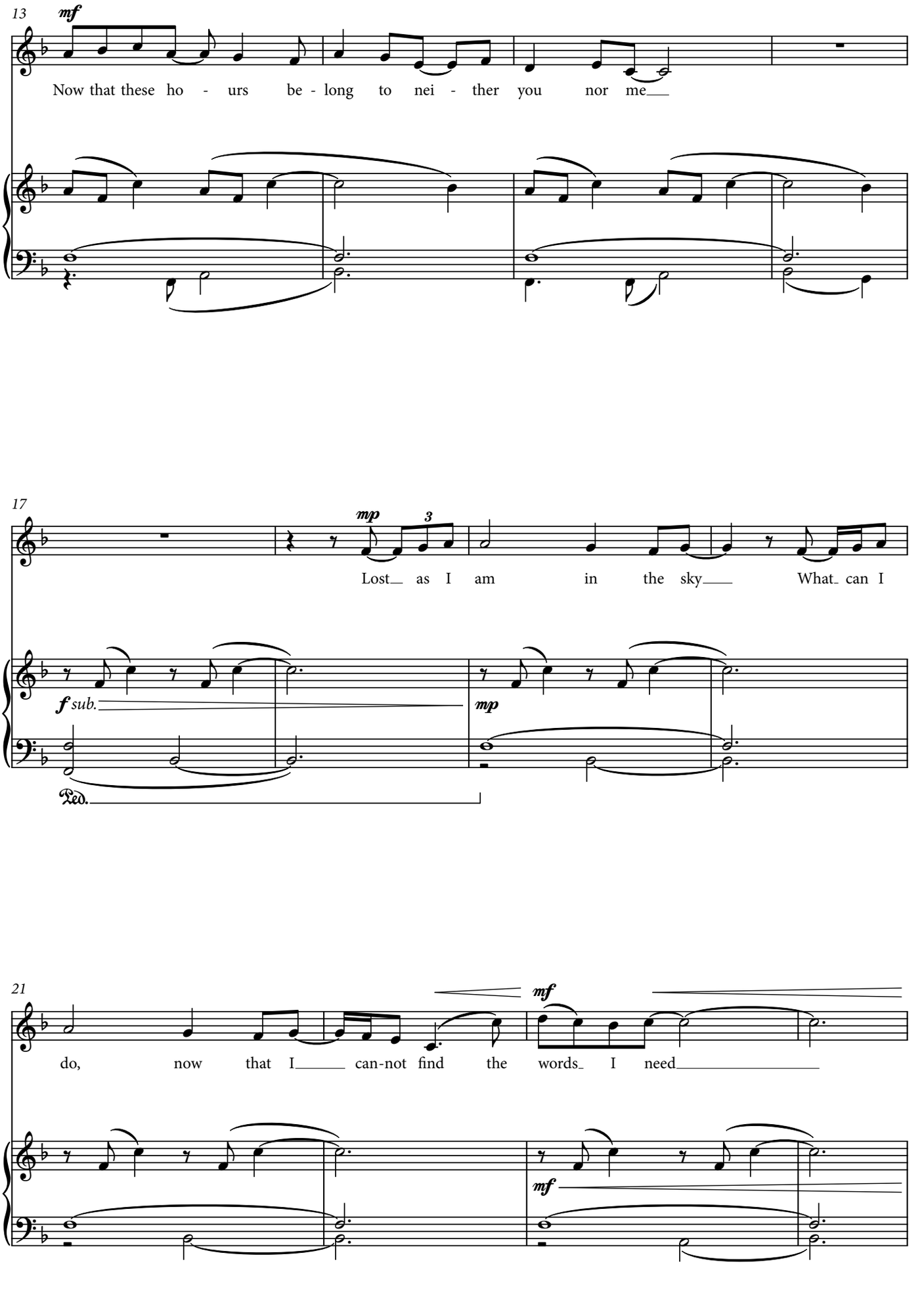
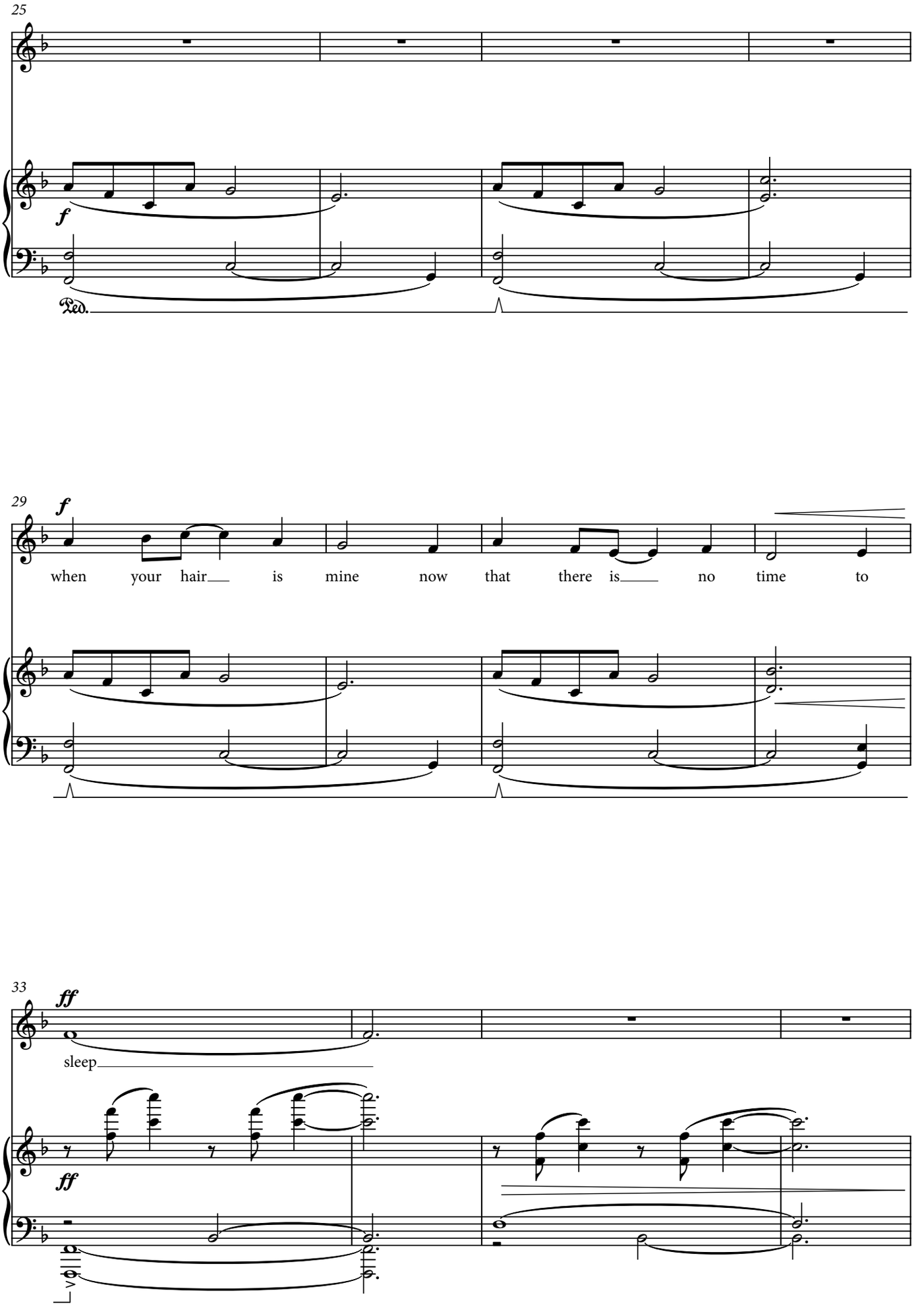
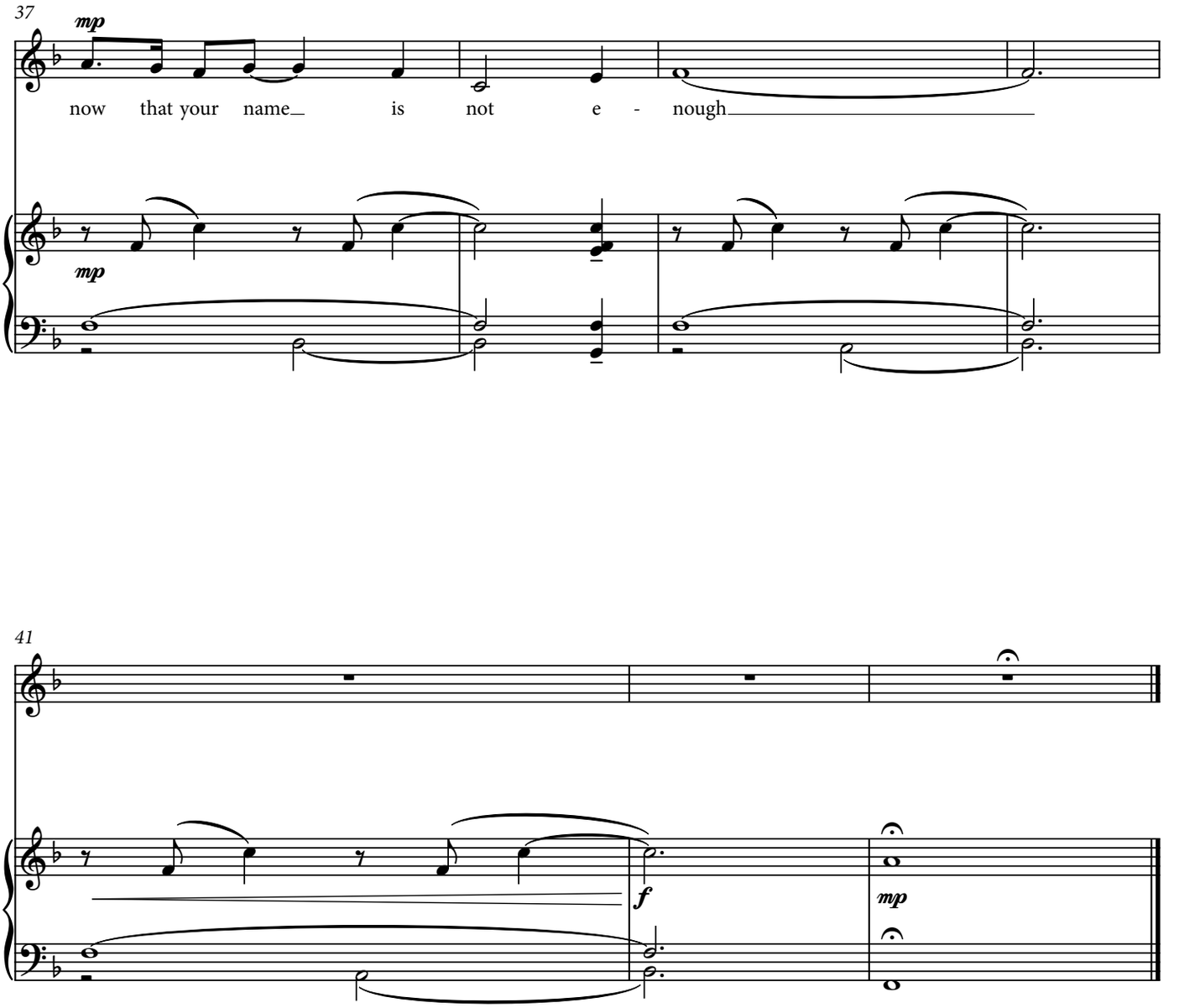

13
mf
Now that these ho - urs be - long to nei - ther you nor me
17
mp
3
Lost as I am in the sky What can I
f sub.
mp
Ped.
21
mf
do, now that I can-not find the words I need
mf


25
f
Ped.
29
f
when your hair is mine now that there is no time to
33
ff
sleep
ff


37
mp
now that your name is not e - nough
mp
41
f
mp

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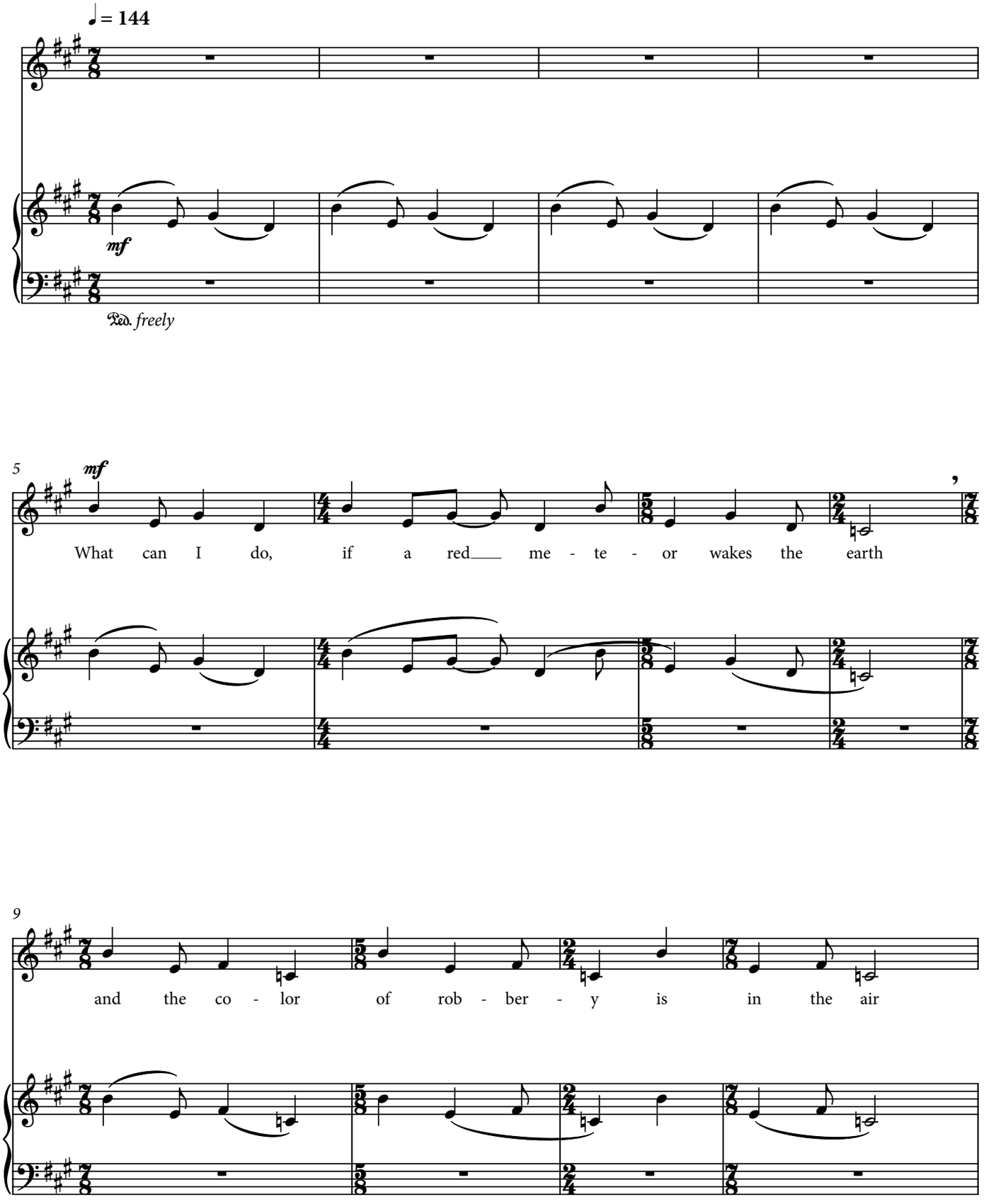

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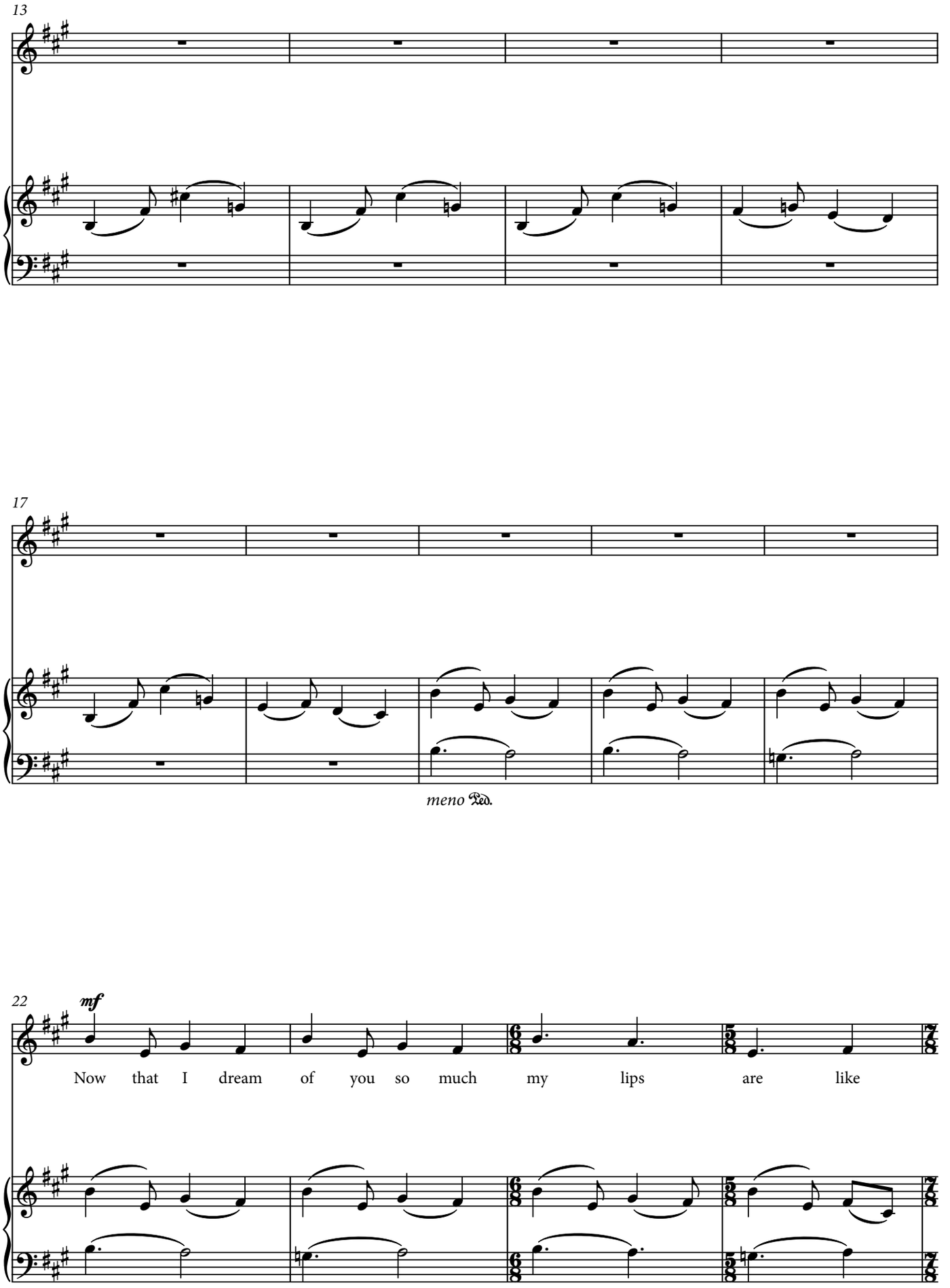
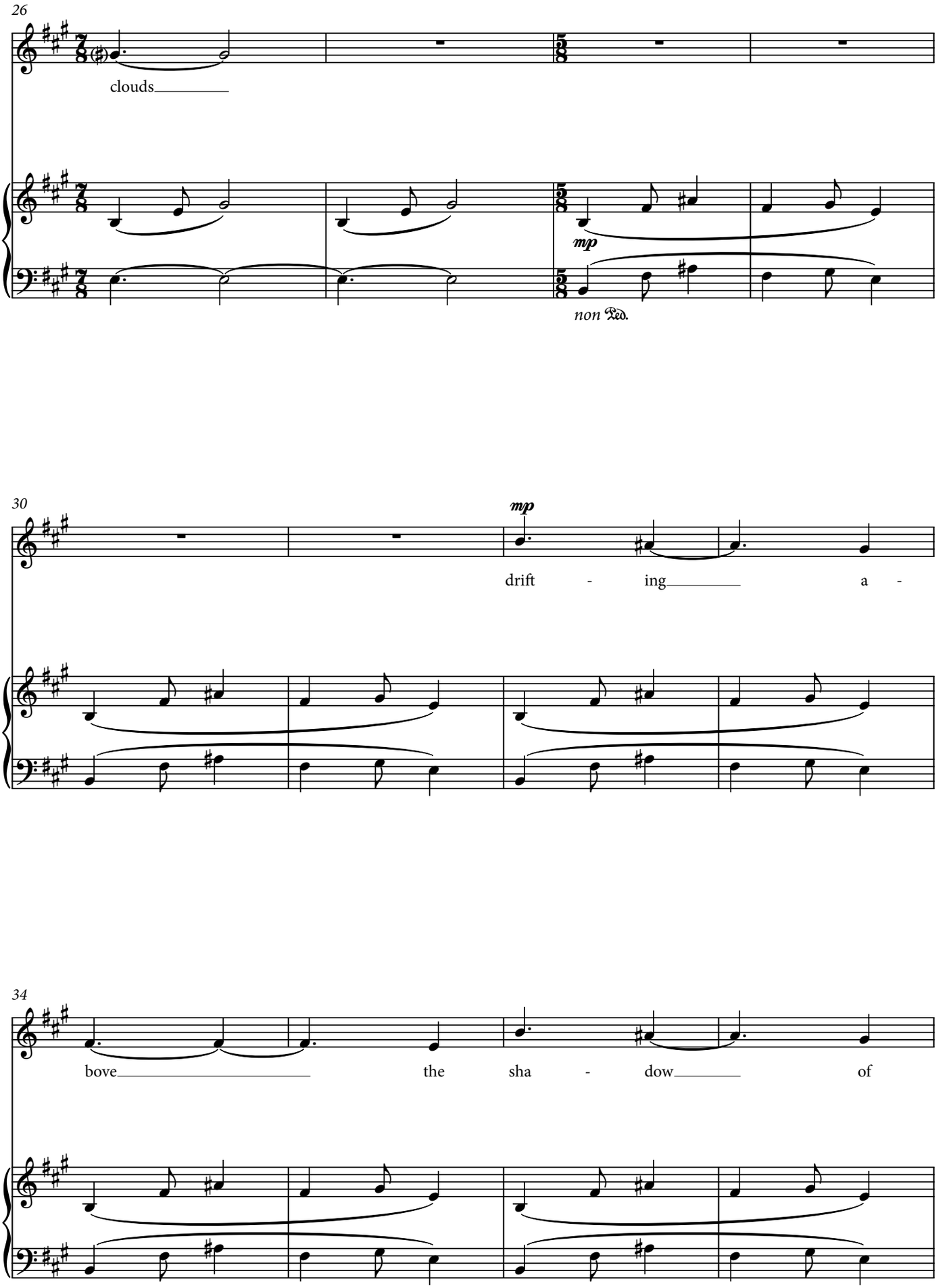
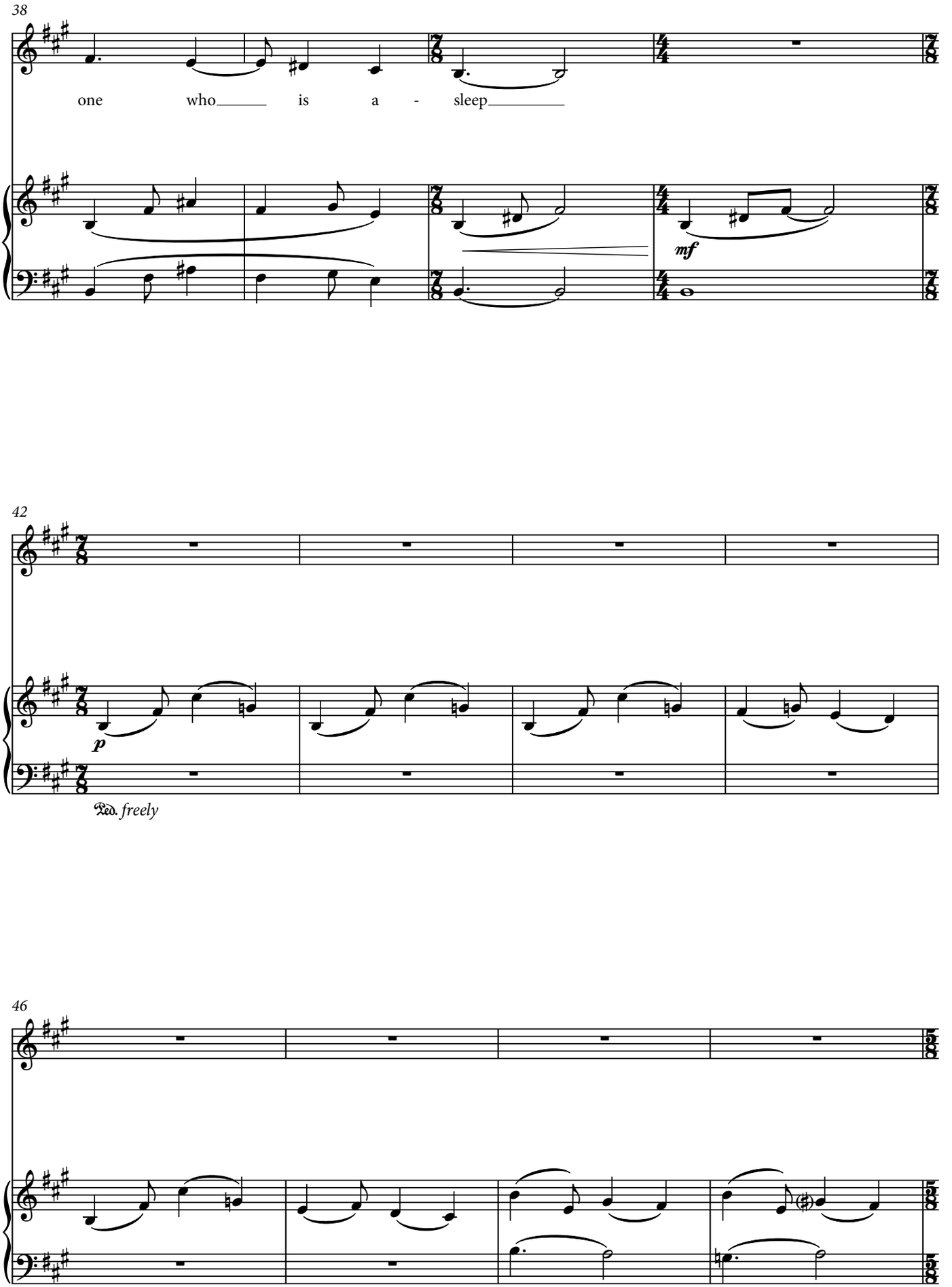
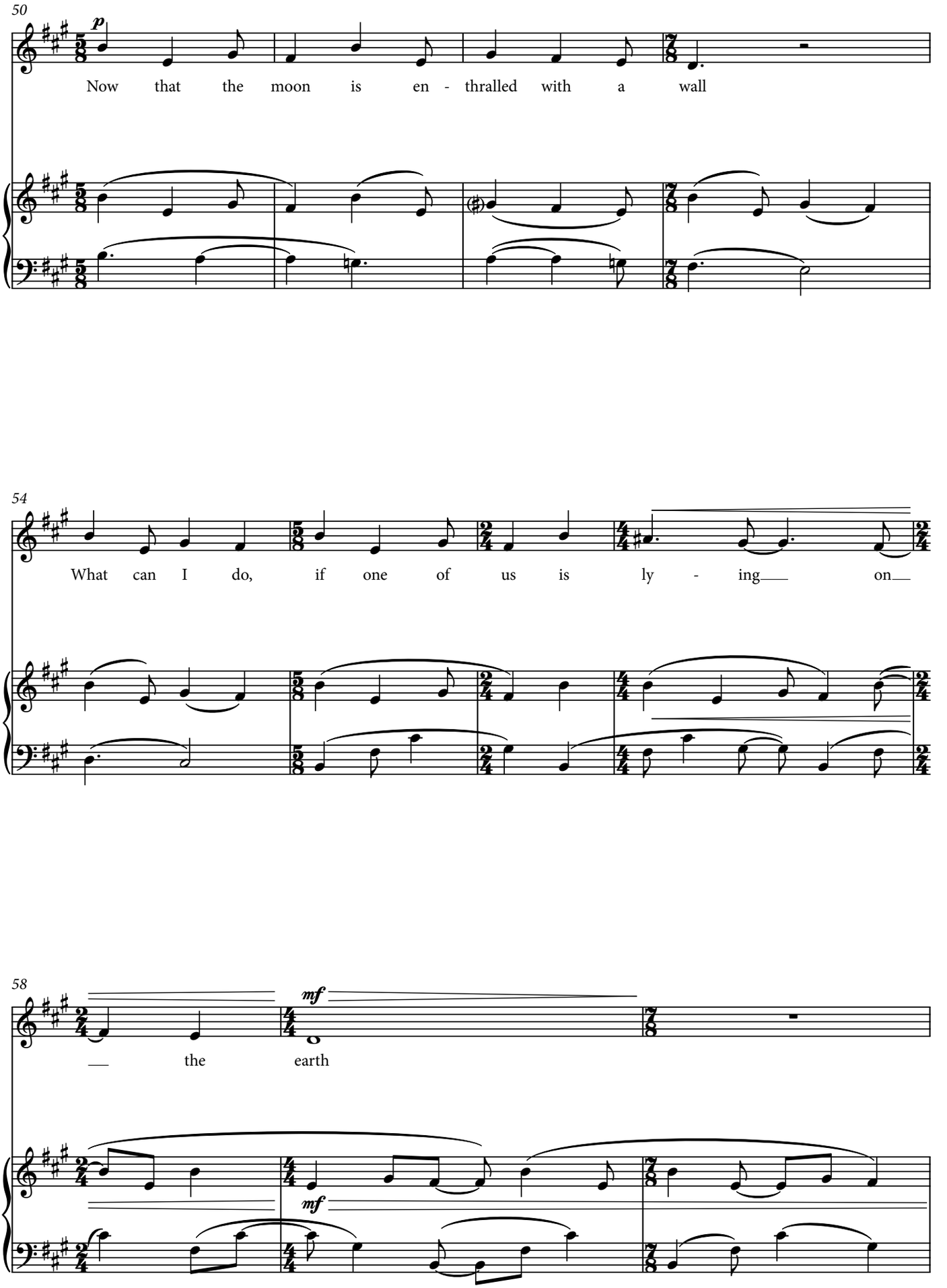
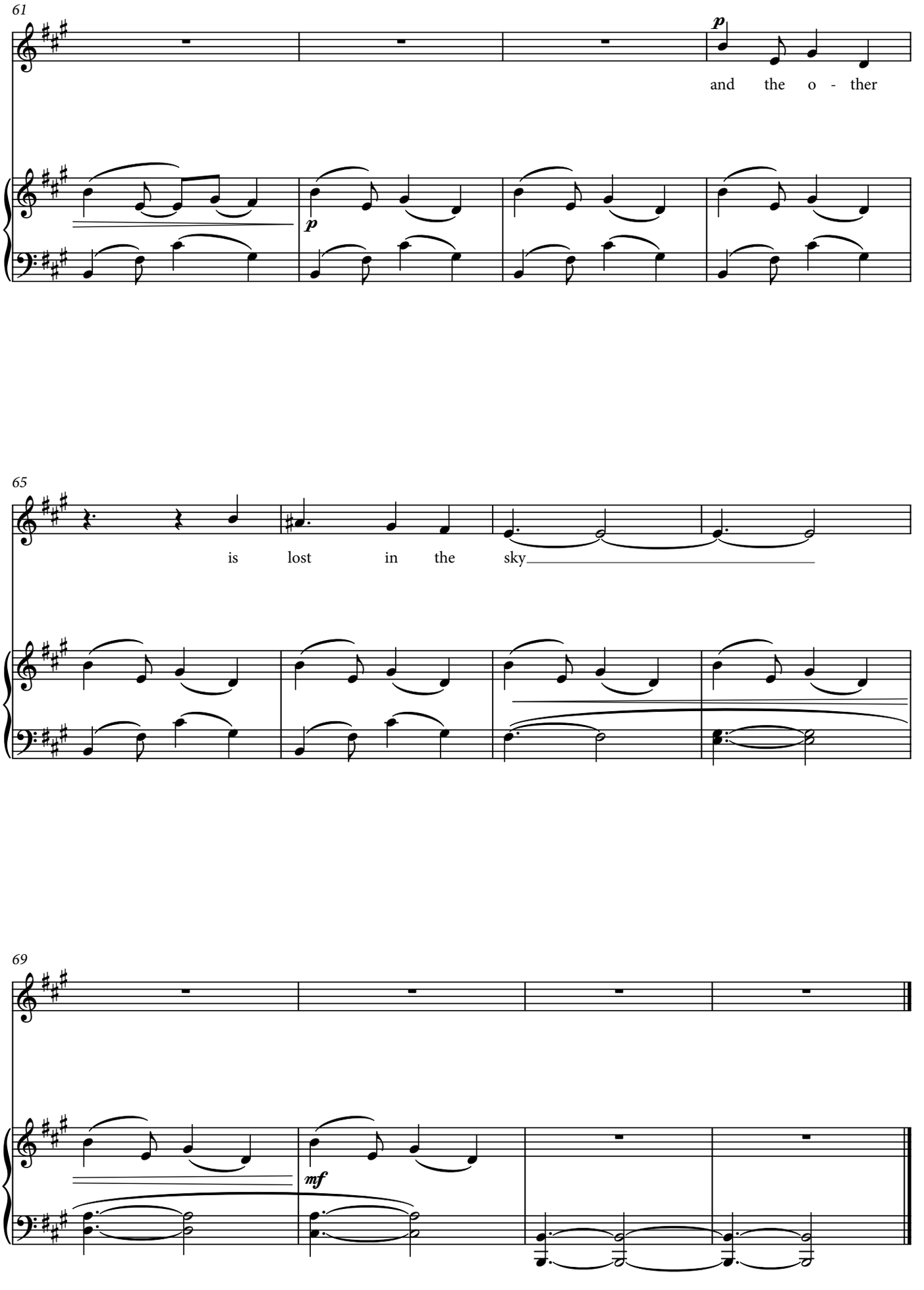

13
17
meno Ped.
22
mf
Now that I dream of you so much my lips are like


26
clouds
mp
non Ped.
30
mp
drift - ing a -
34
bove the sha - dow of


38
one who is a - sleep
mf
42
p
Ped. freely
46


50
p
Now that the moon is en - thralled with a wall
54
What can I do, if one of us is ly - ing on
58
mf
the earth
mf

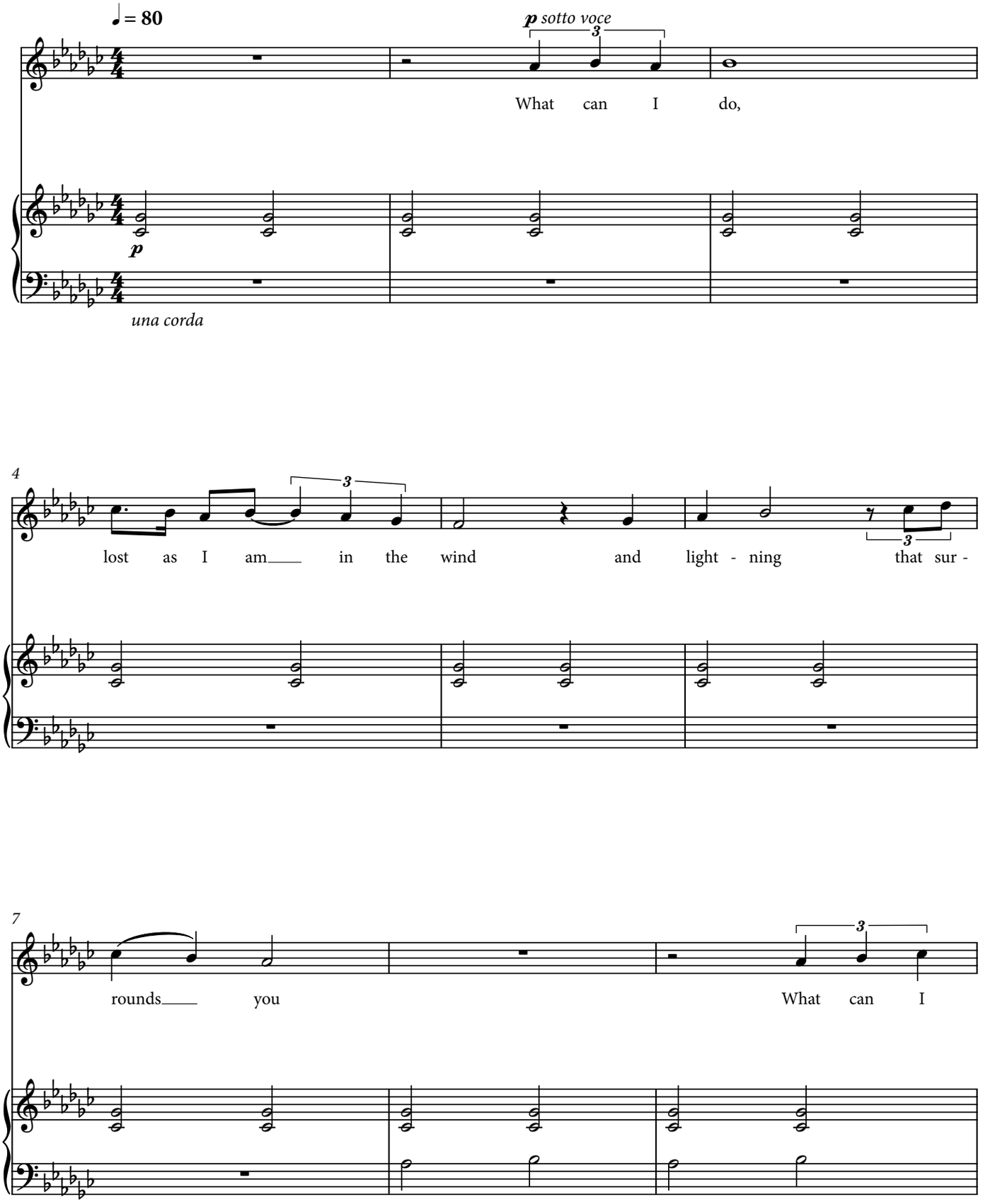

61
p
and the o - ther
p
65
is lost in the sky
69
mf

BORROWED LOVE SONGS

4

John Yau

Eric Shanfield



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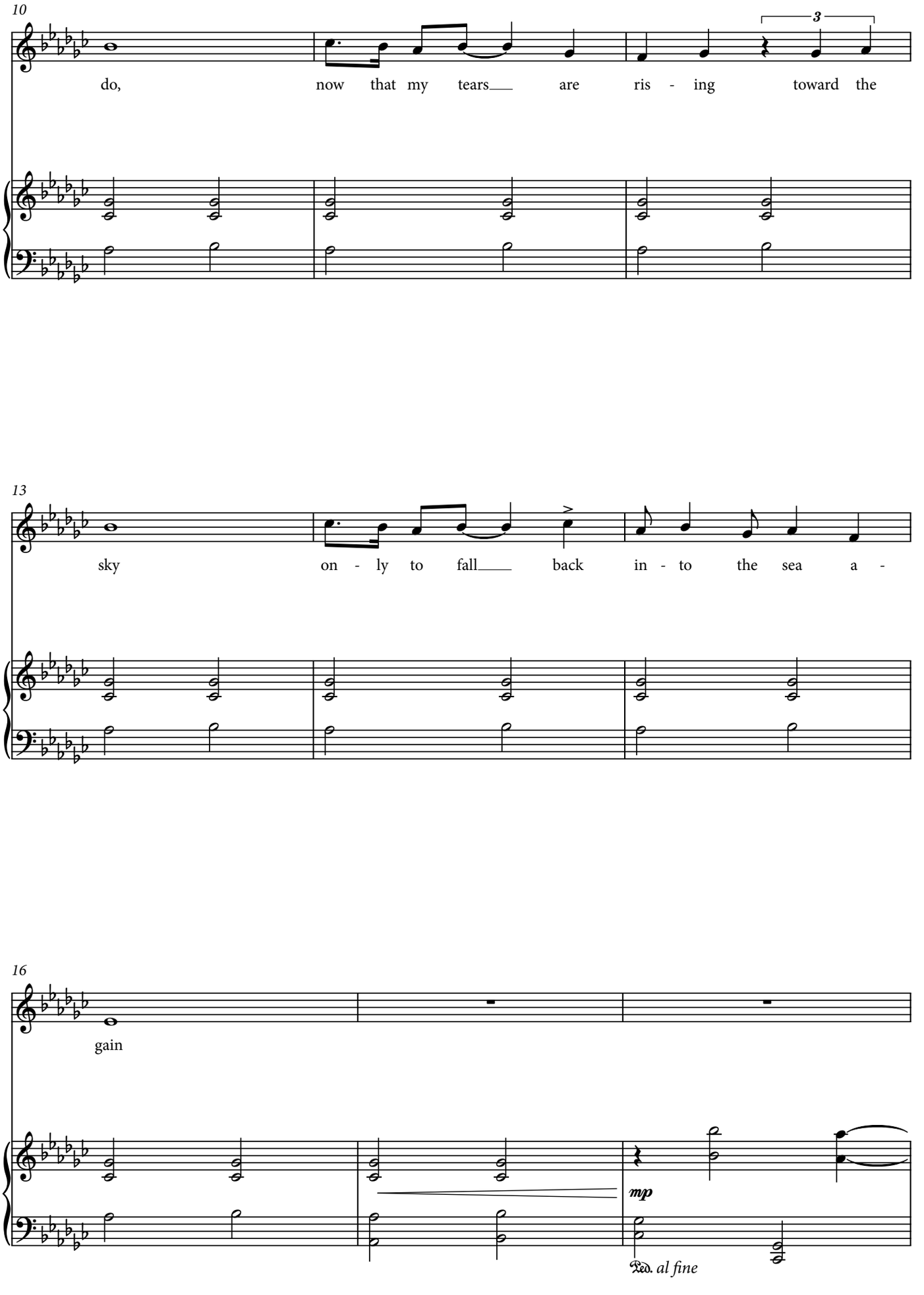
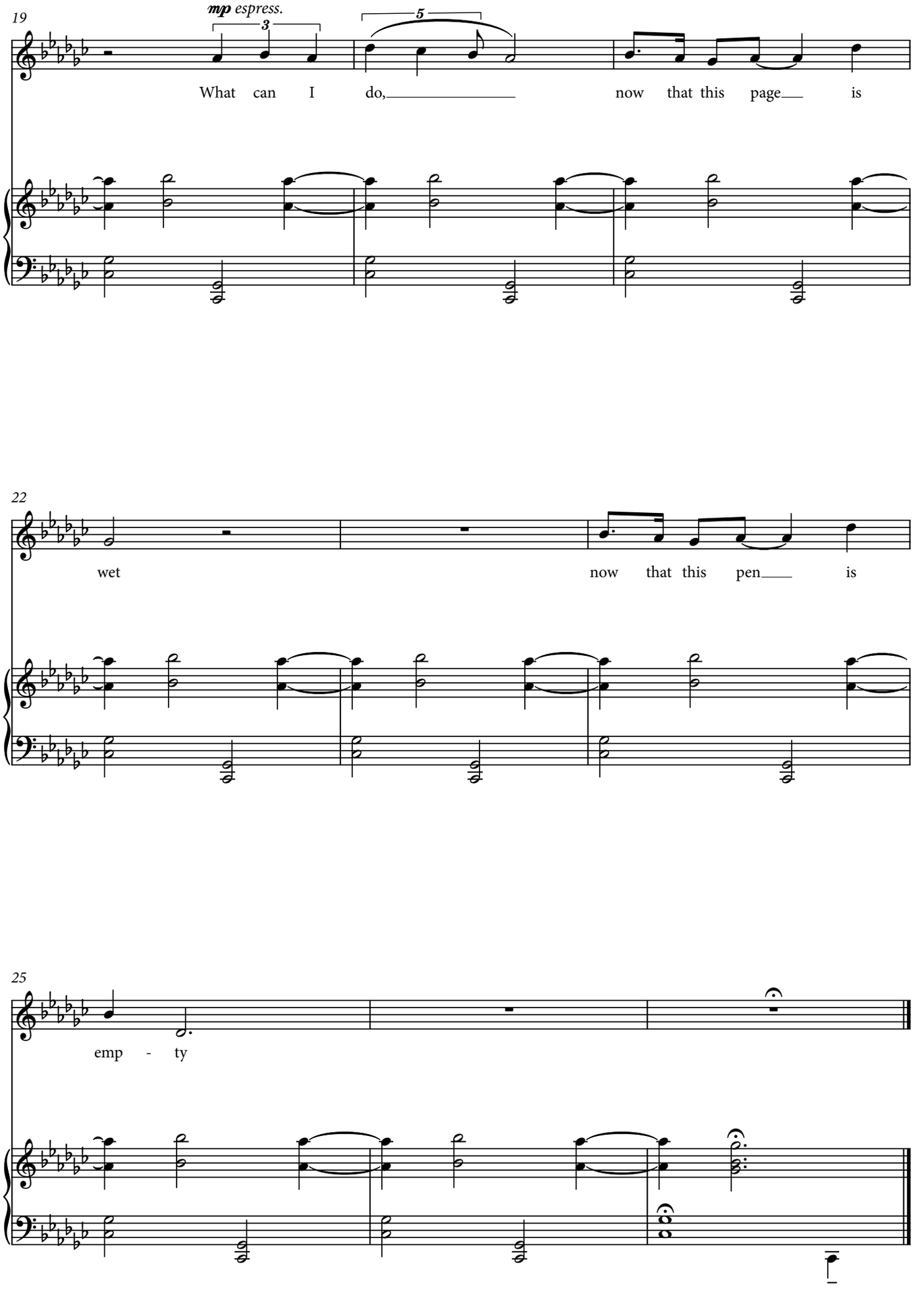

10
3
do, now that my tears are ris - ing toward the
13
sky on - ly to fall back in - to the sea a -
16
gain
mp
Ped. al fine

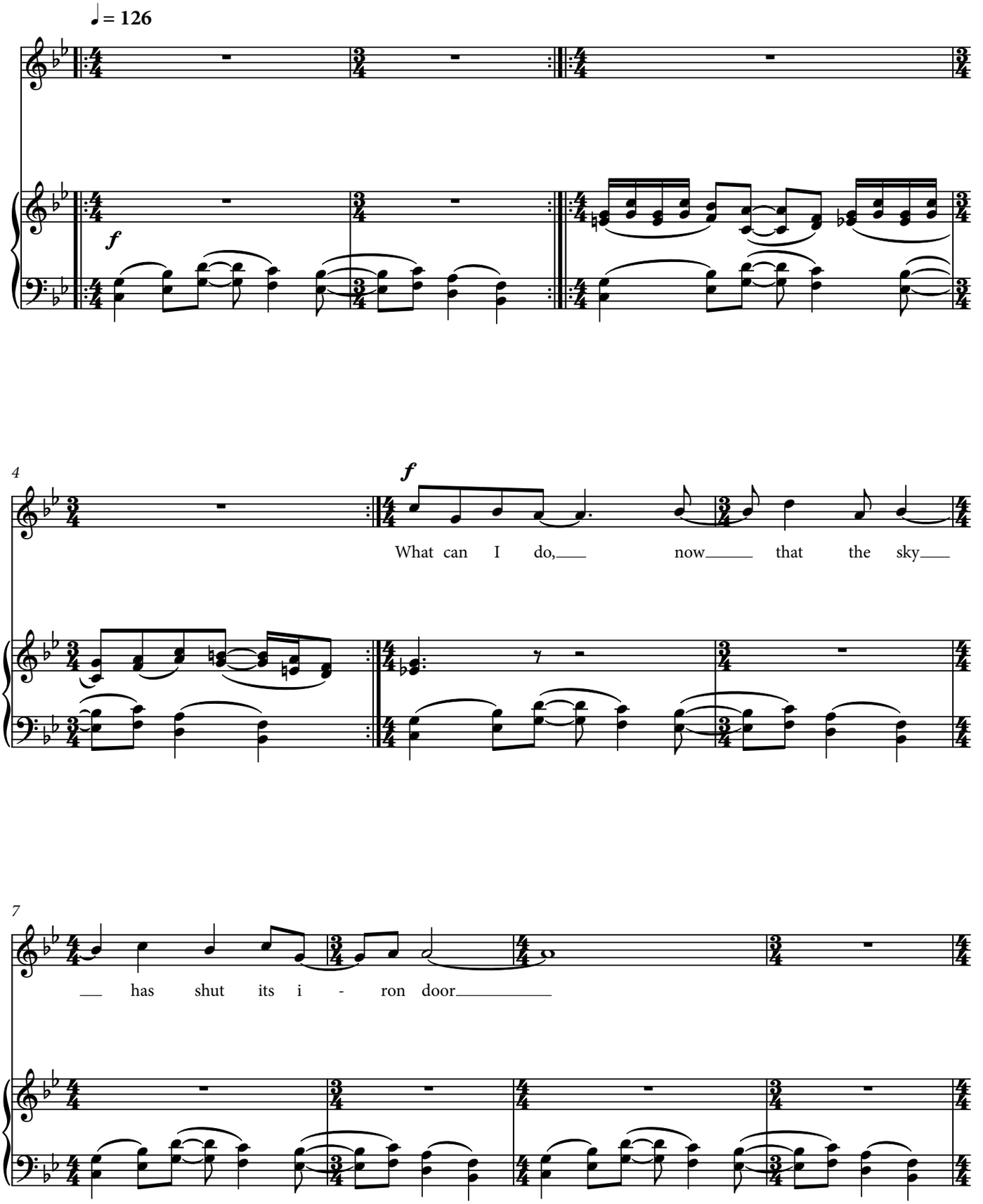

19
mp espress.
3
5
What can I do, now that this page is
22
wet now that this pen is
25
emp - ty

BORROWED LOVE SONGS

5

John Yau

Eric Shanfield



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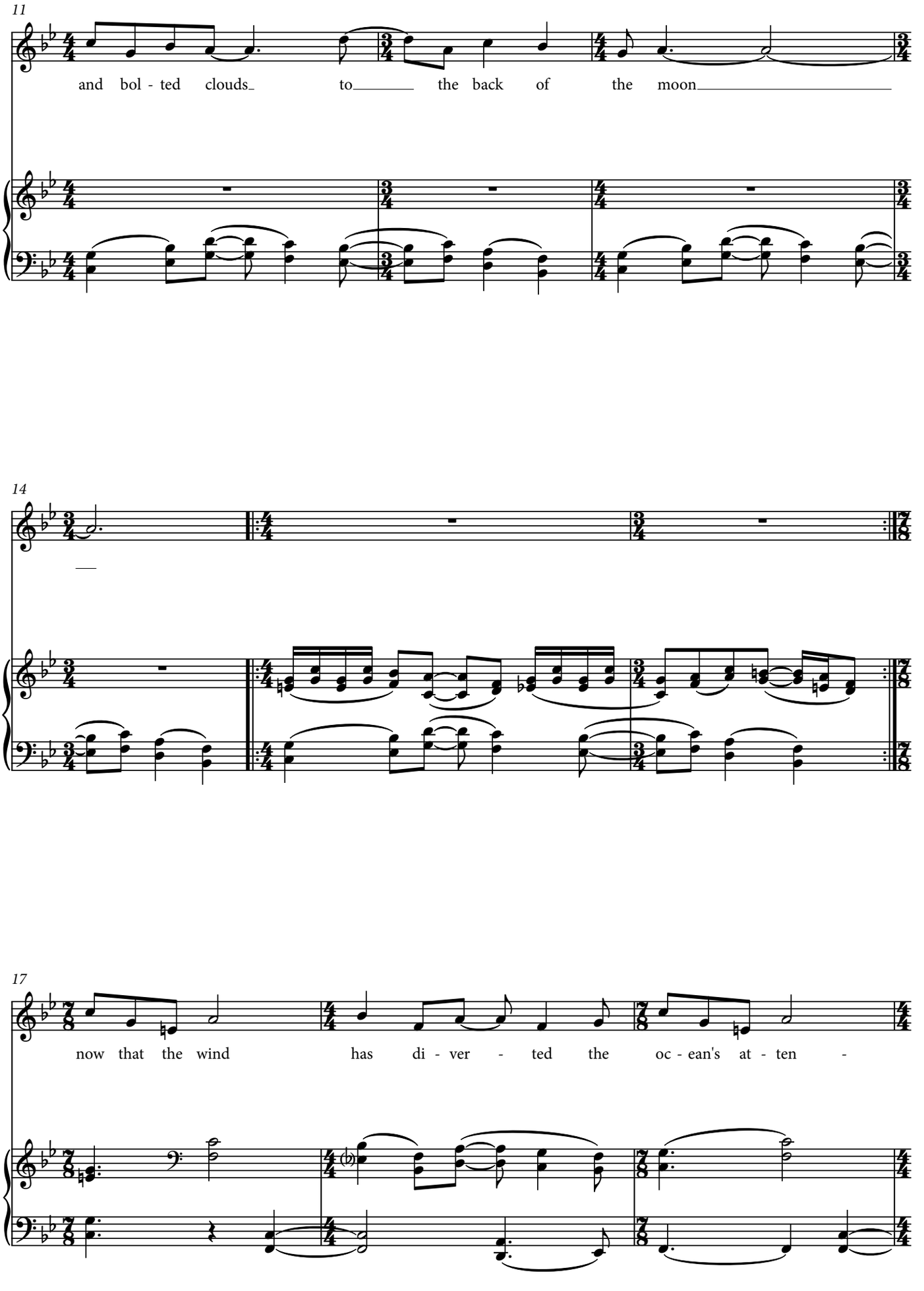
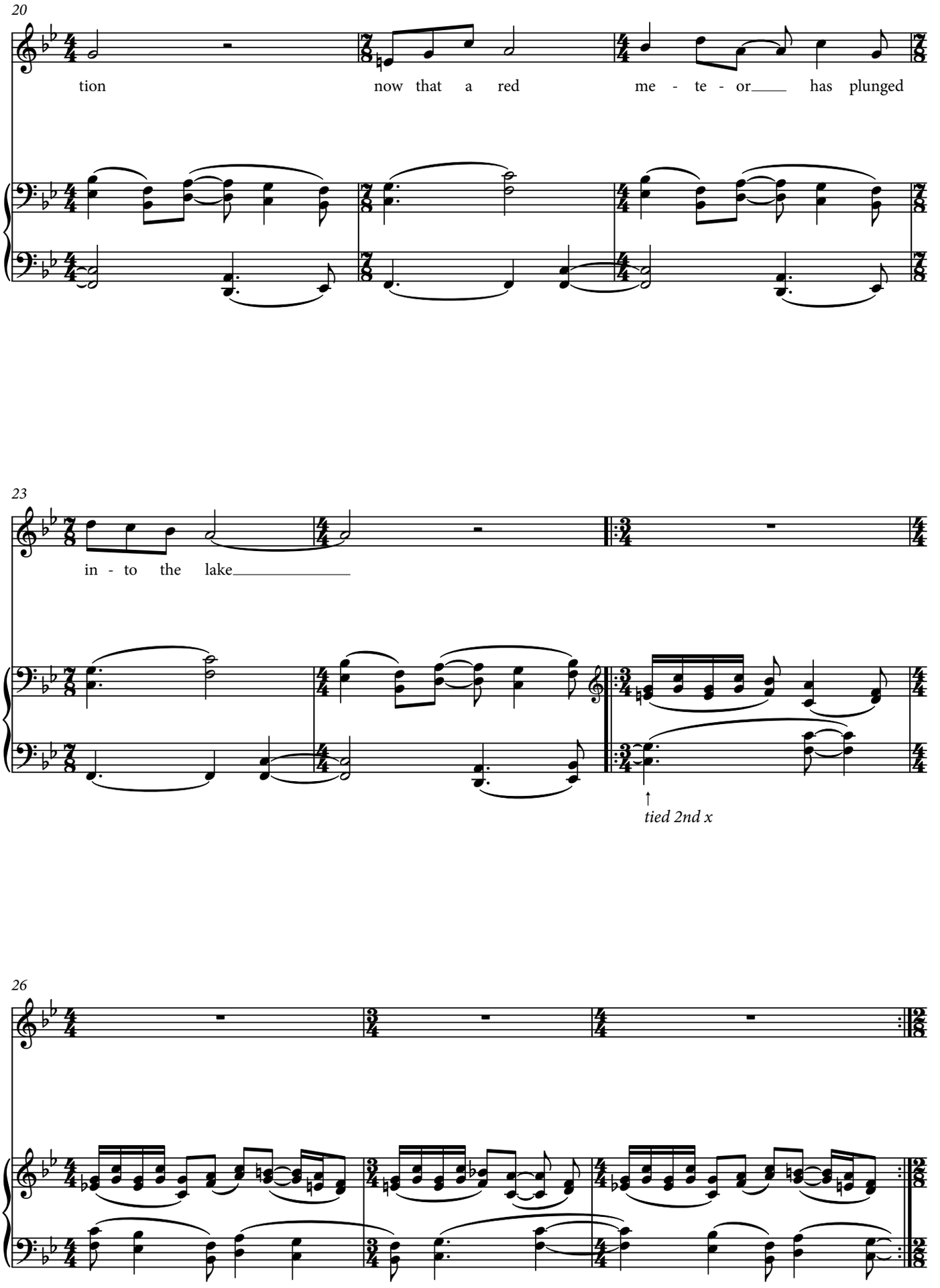
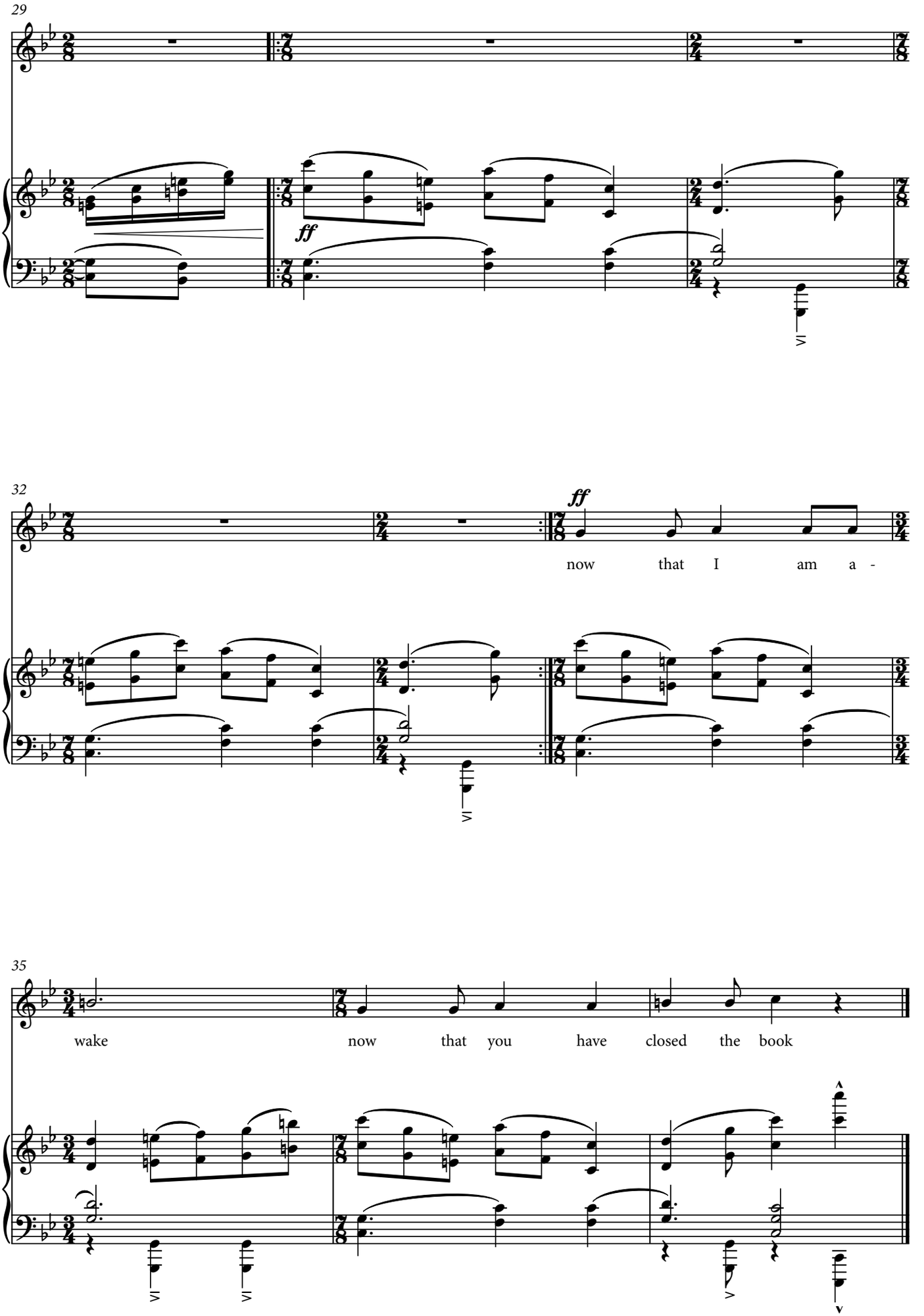

11
and bol - ted clouds to the back of the moon
14
17
now that the wind has di - ver - ted the oc - ean's at - ten -


20
tion now that a red me - te - or has plunged
23
in - to the lake
tied 2nd x
26

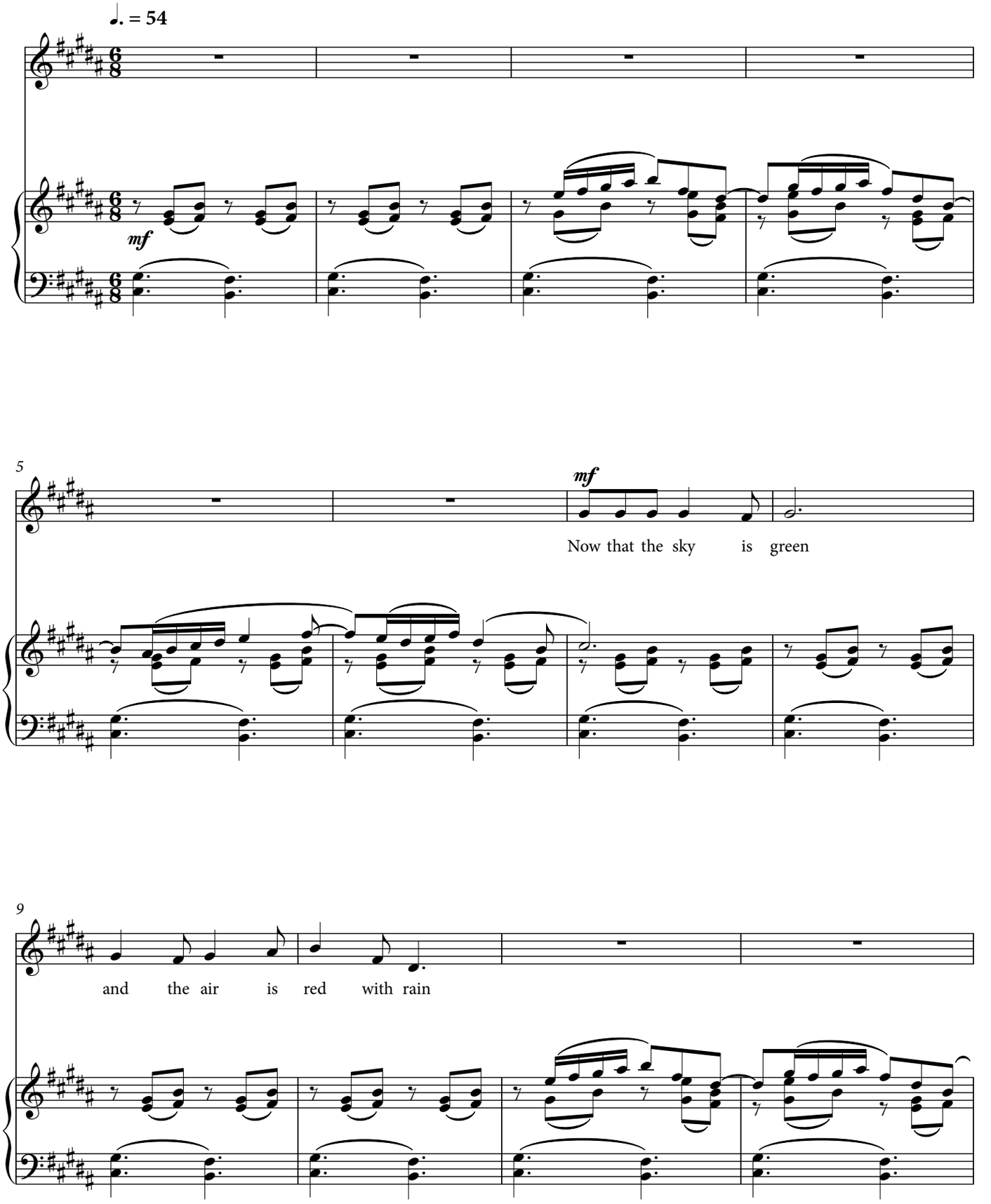

29
ff
32
ff
now that I am a -
35
wake now that you have closed the book

BORROWED LOVE SONGS

6a

John Yau

Eric Shanfield



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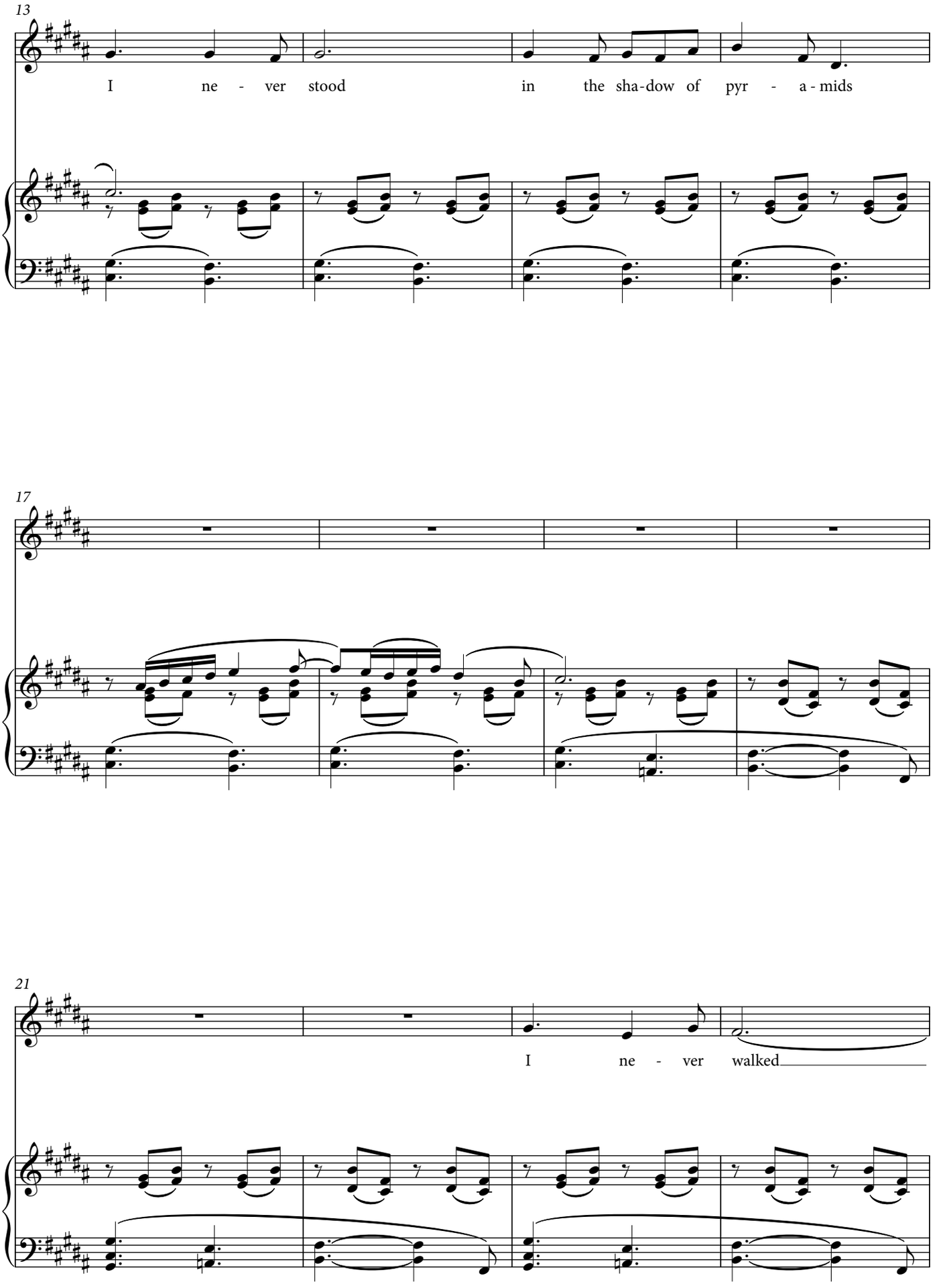
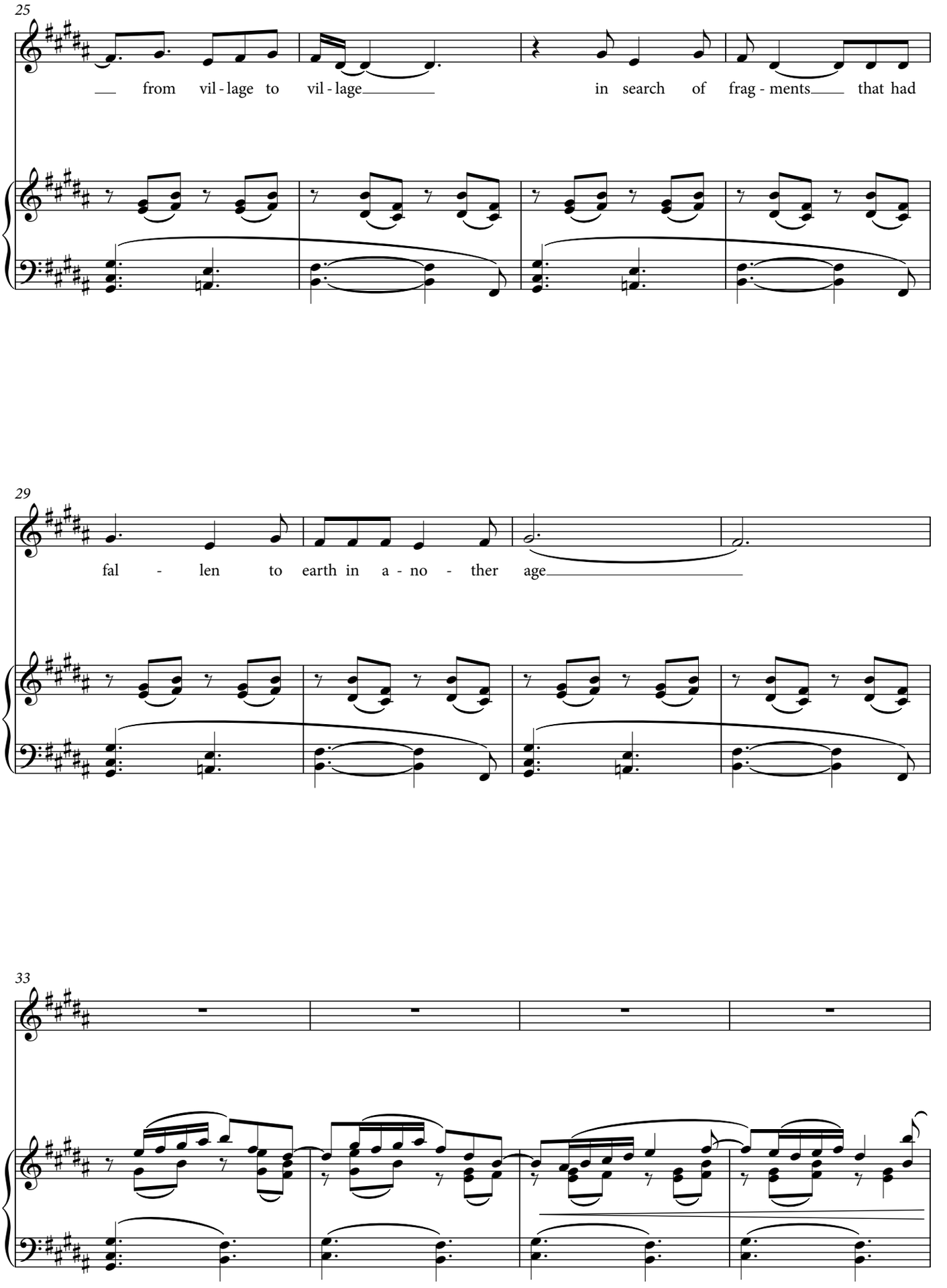
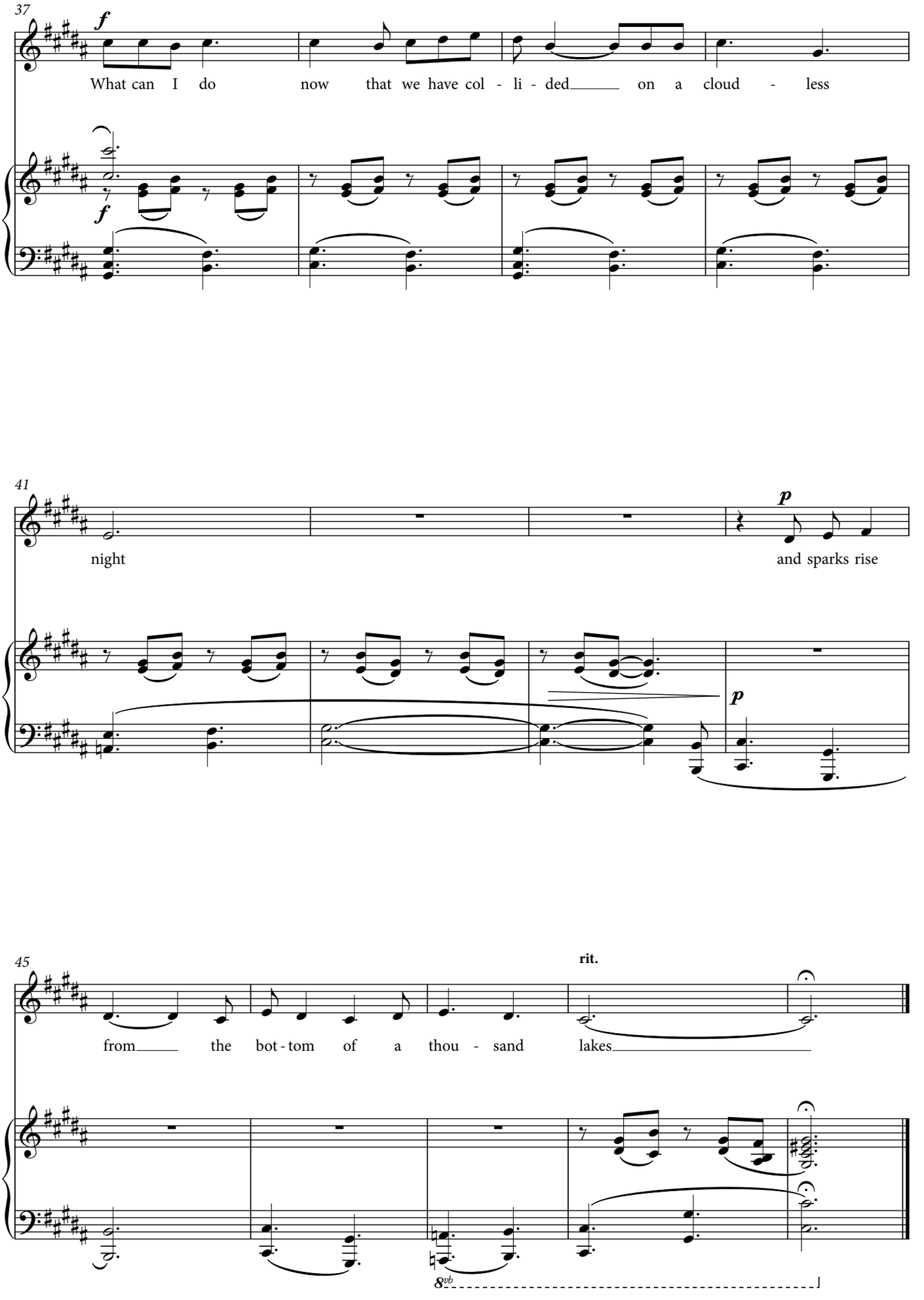

13
I ne - ver stood in the sha-dow of pyr - a-mids
17
21
I ne - ver walked


25
from vil - lage to vil - lage in search of frag - ments that had
29
fal - len to earth in a - no - ther age
33

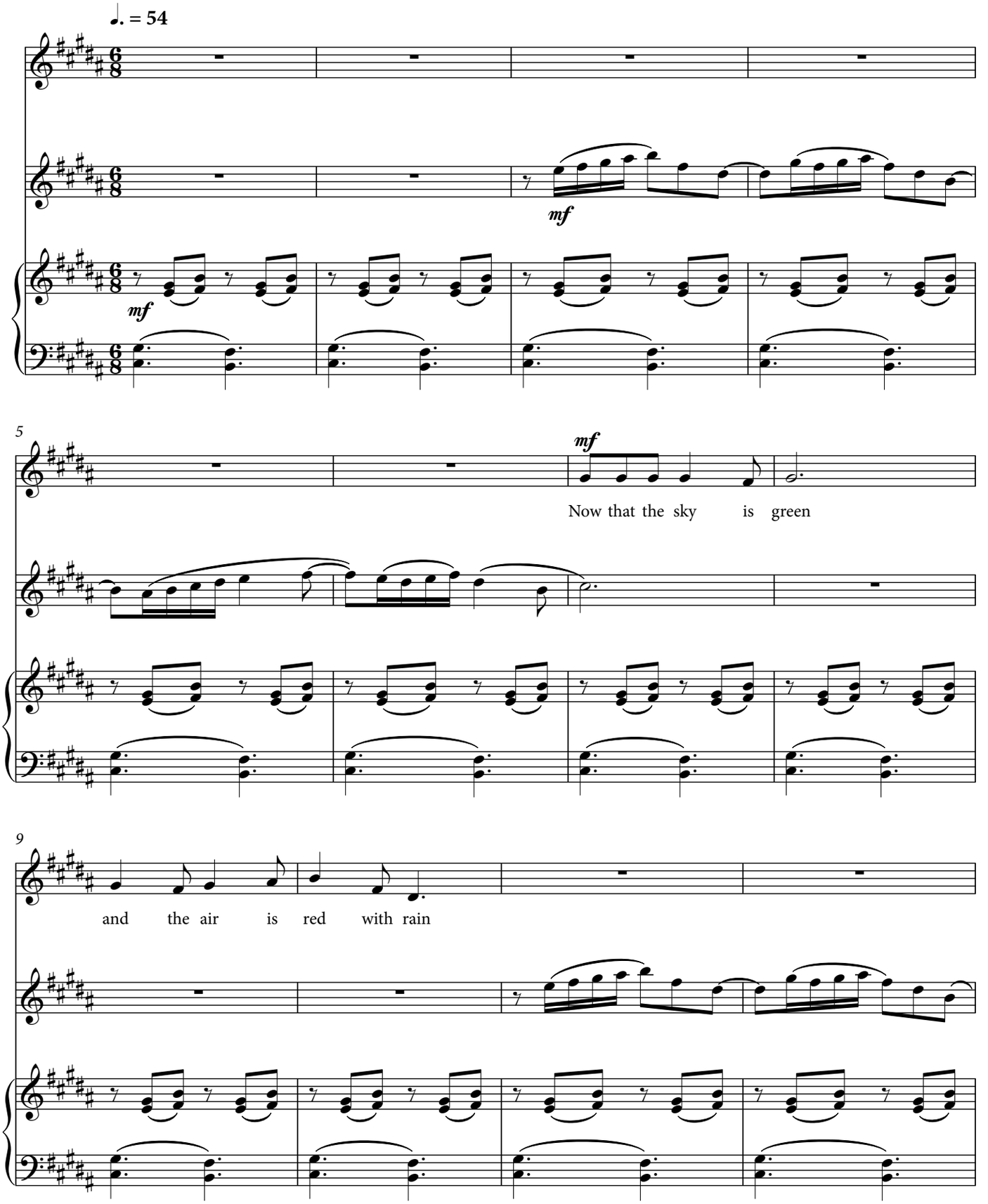

37
f
What can I do now that we have col - li - ded on a cloud - less
f
41
night
p
and sparks rise
p
45
rit.
from the bot - tom of a thou - sand lakes
8vb

BORROWED LOVE SONGS

6b

John Yau

Eric Shanfield



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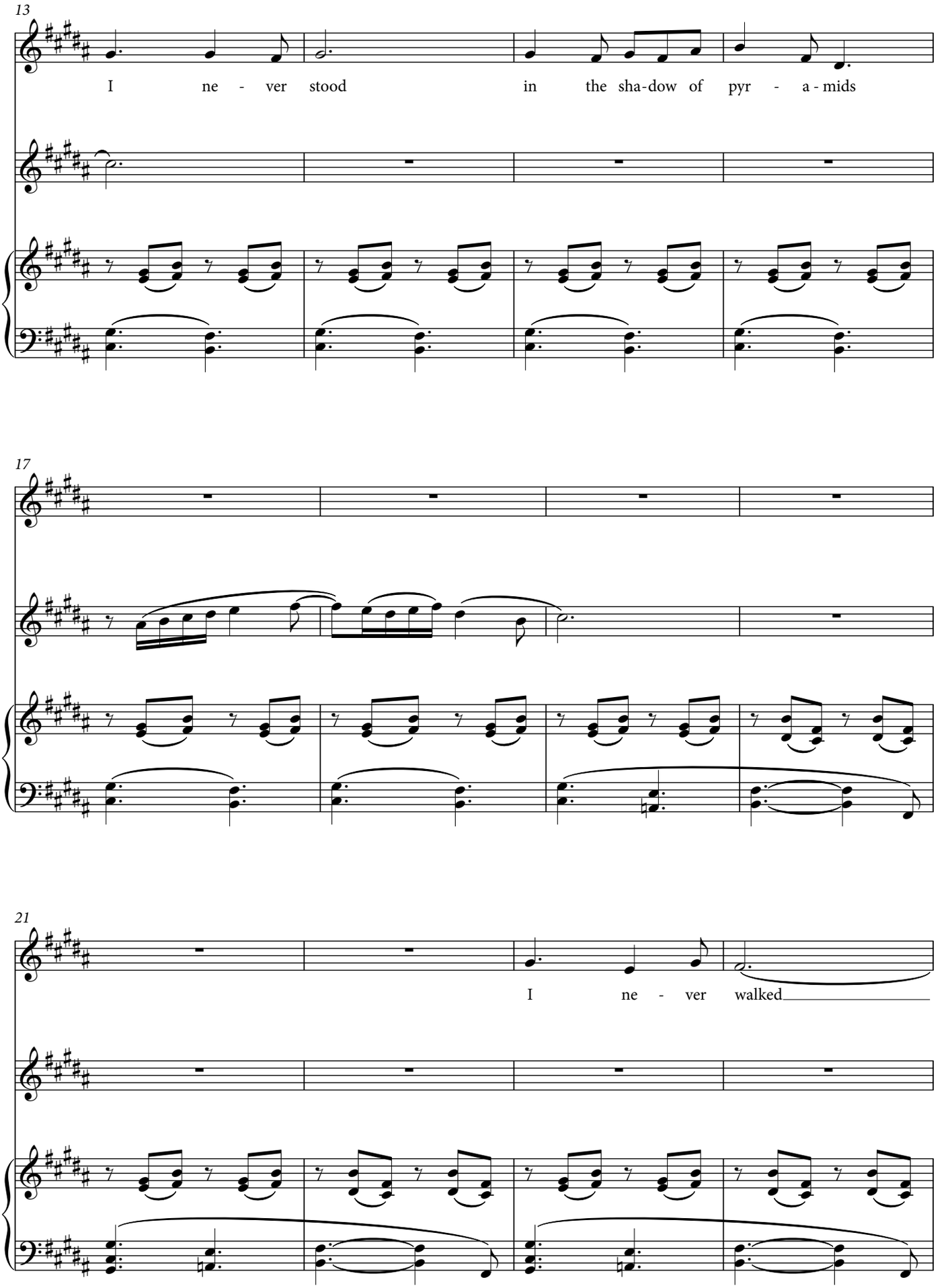
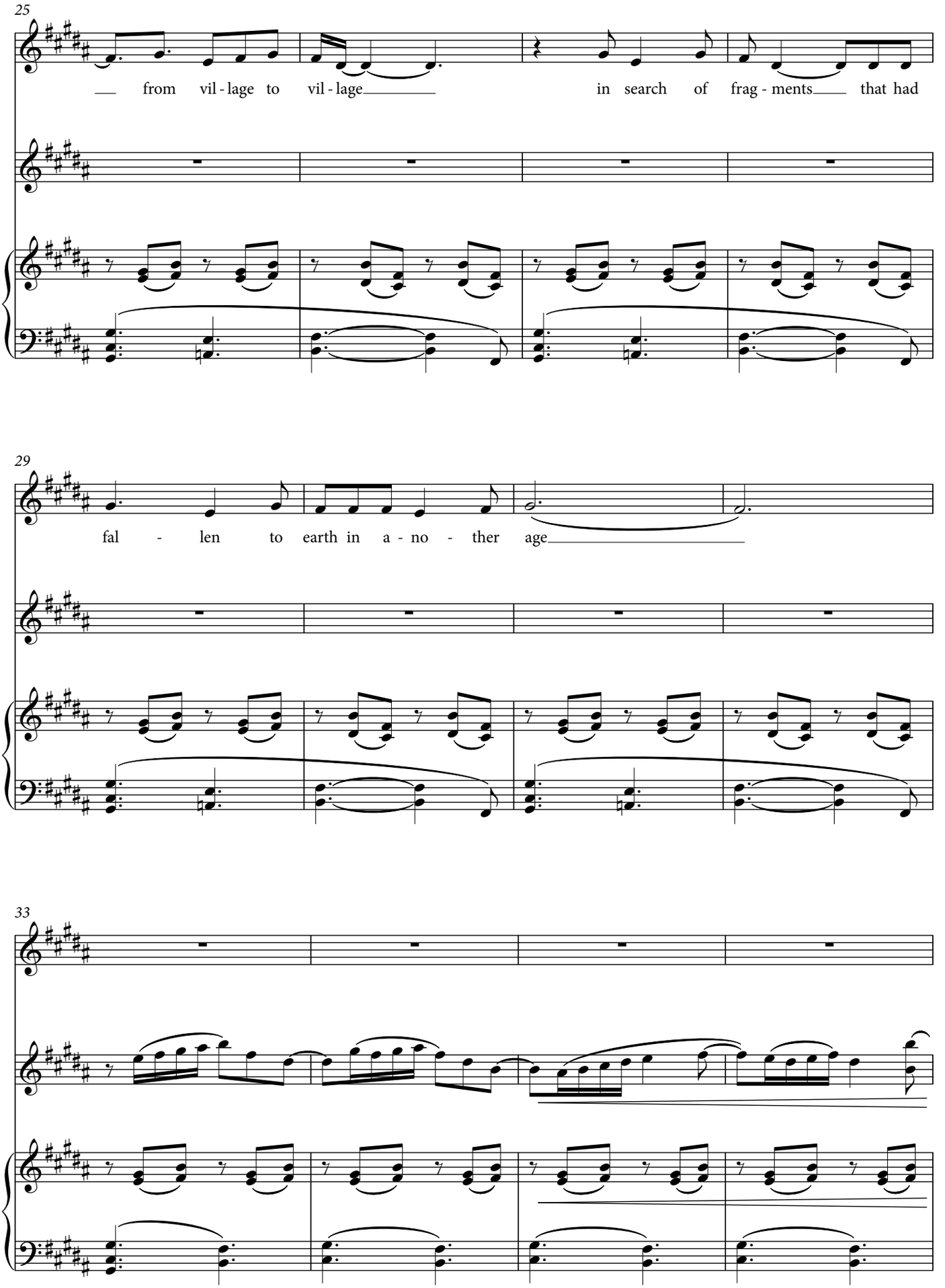
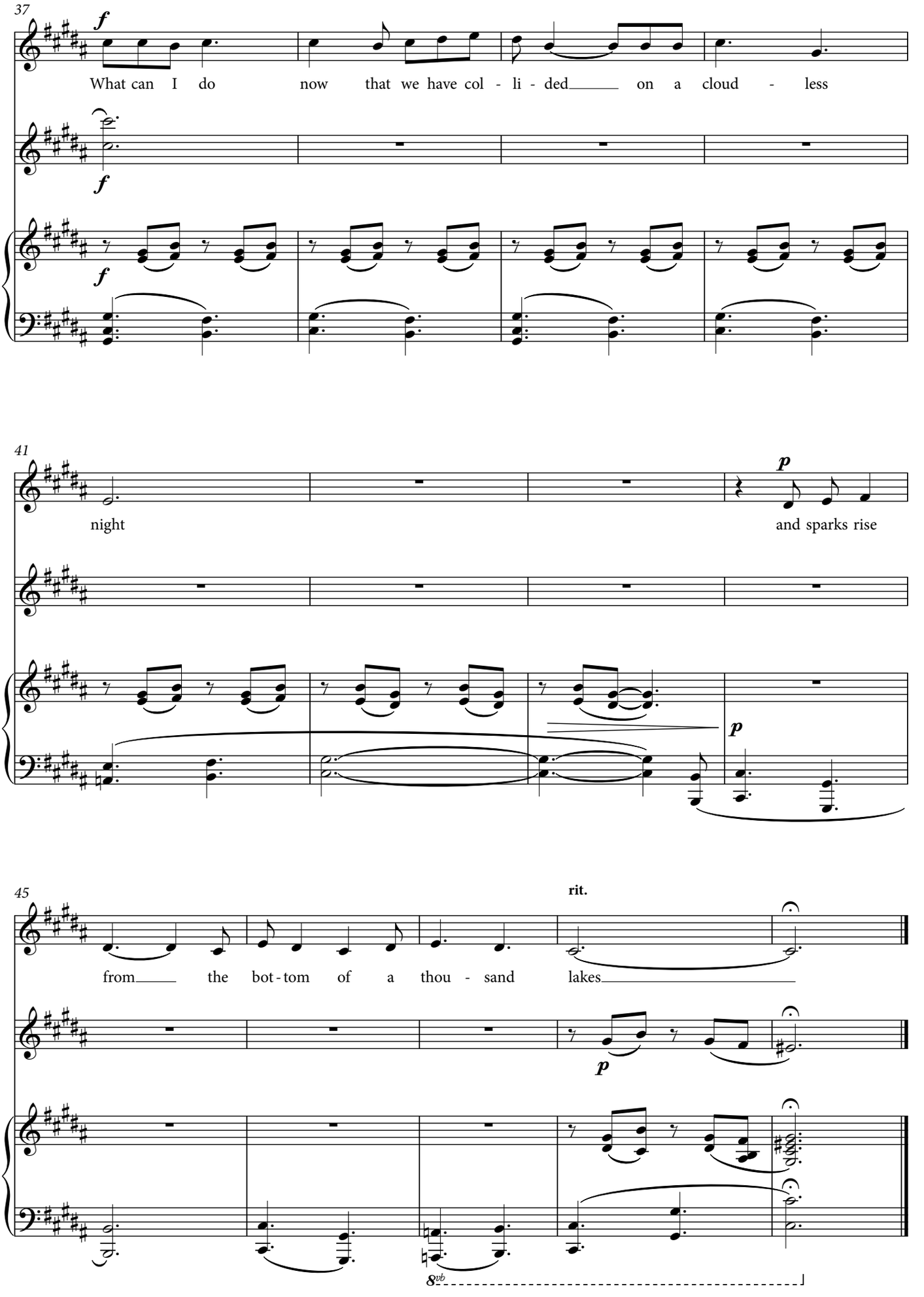

13
I ne - ver stood in the sha-dow of pyr - a - mids
17
21
I ne - ver walked


25
from vil - lage to vil - lage in search of frag - ments that had
29
fal - len to earth in a - no - ther age
33

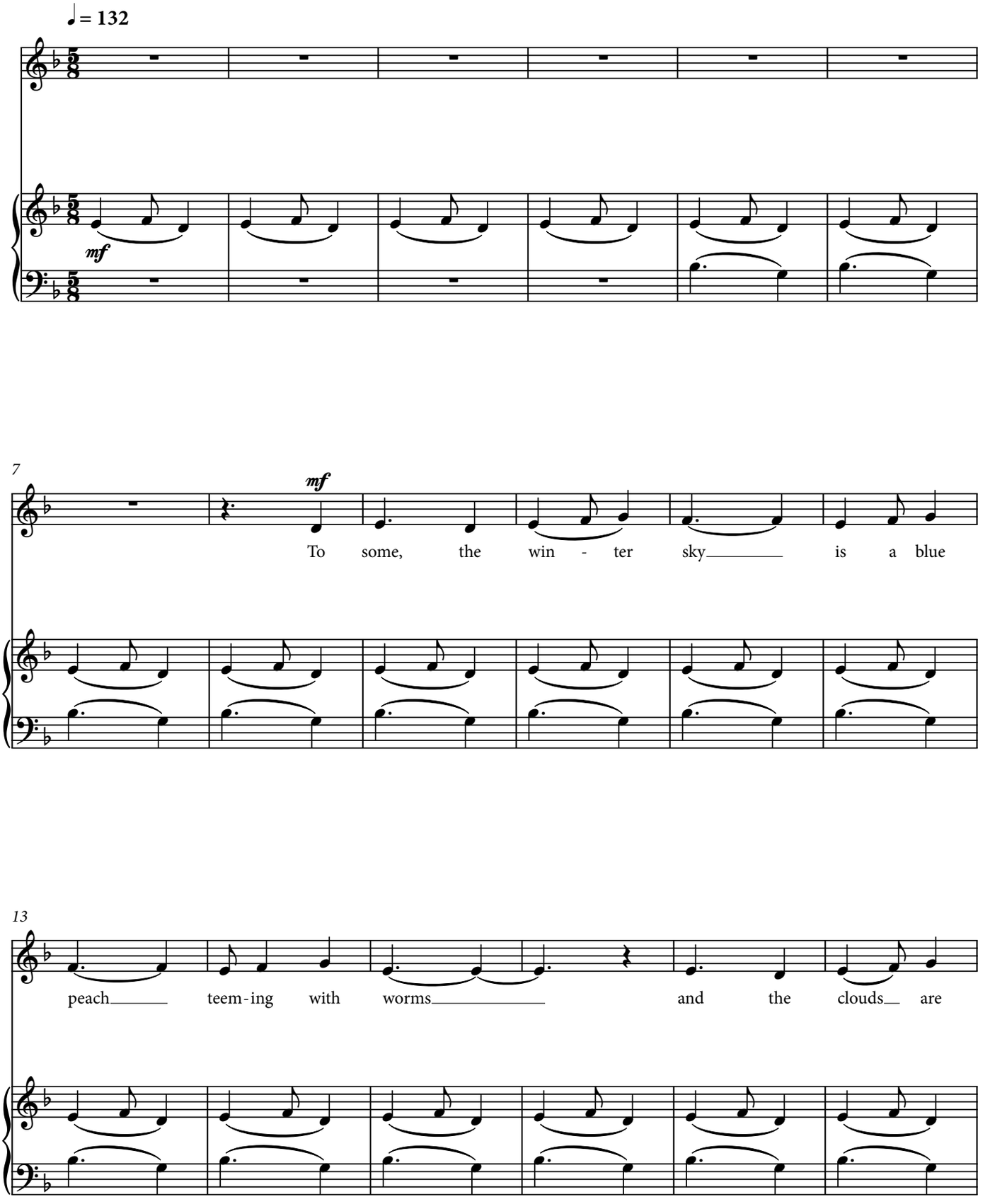

37
f
What can I do now that we have col - li - ded on a cloud - less
f
f
41
p
night
and sparks rise
p
45
rit.
from the bot - tom of a thou - sand lakes
p
8vb

BORROWED LOVE SONGS

7

John Yau

Eric Shanfield



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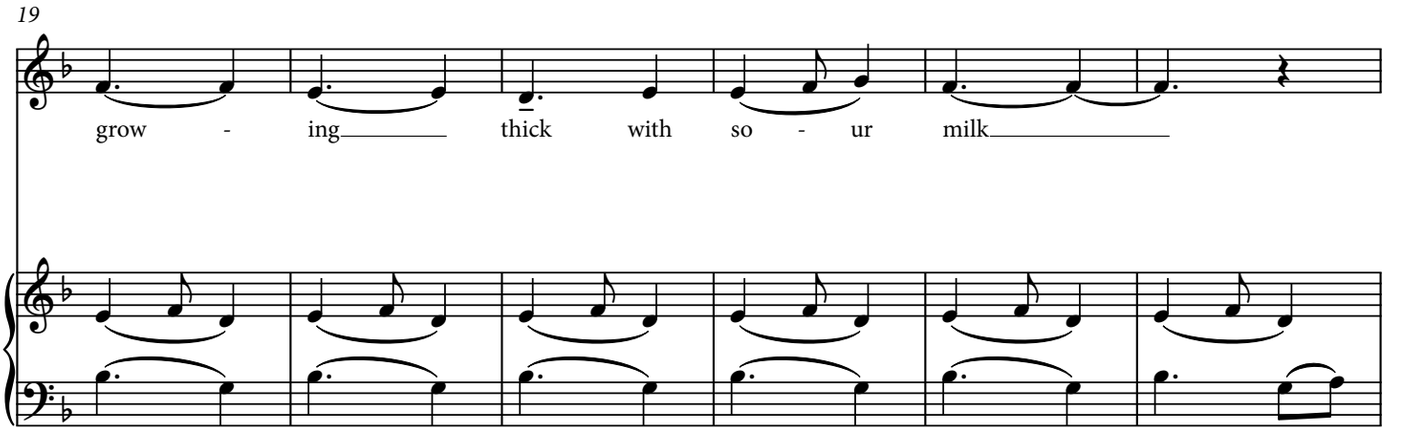
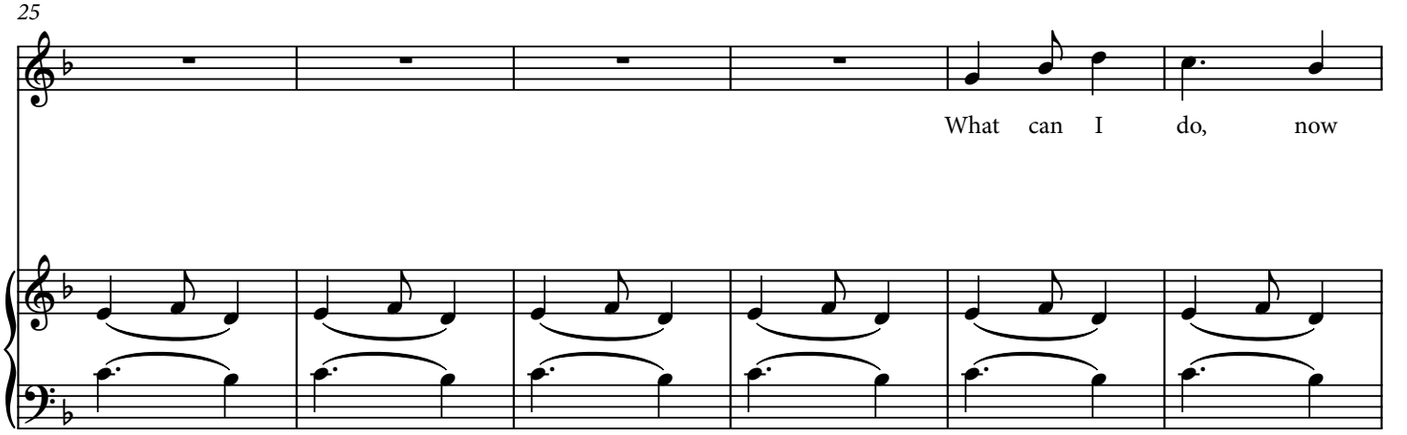
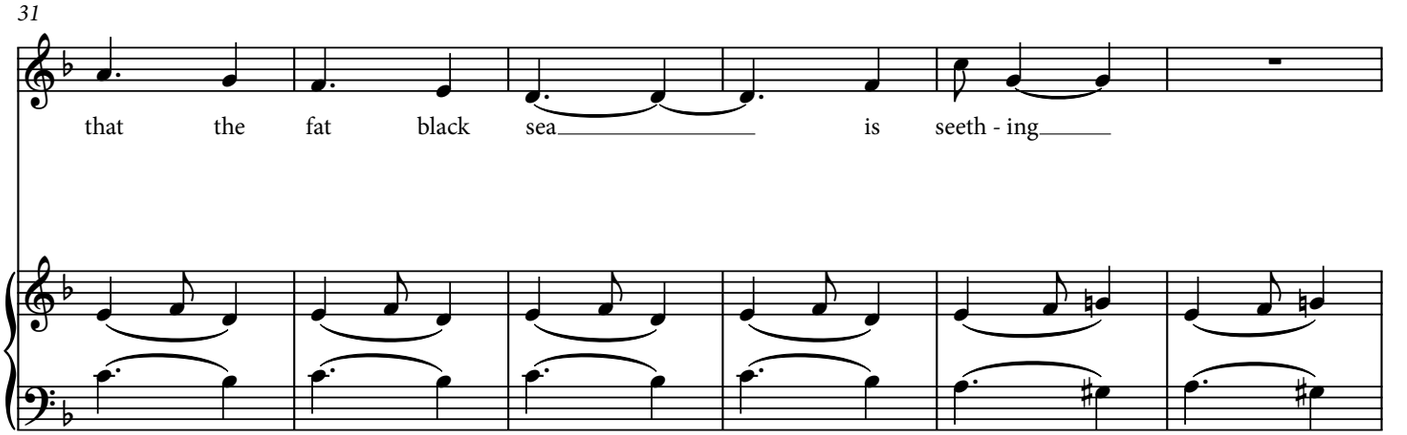
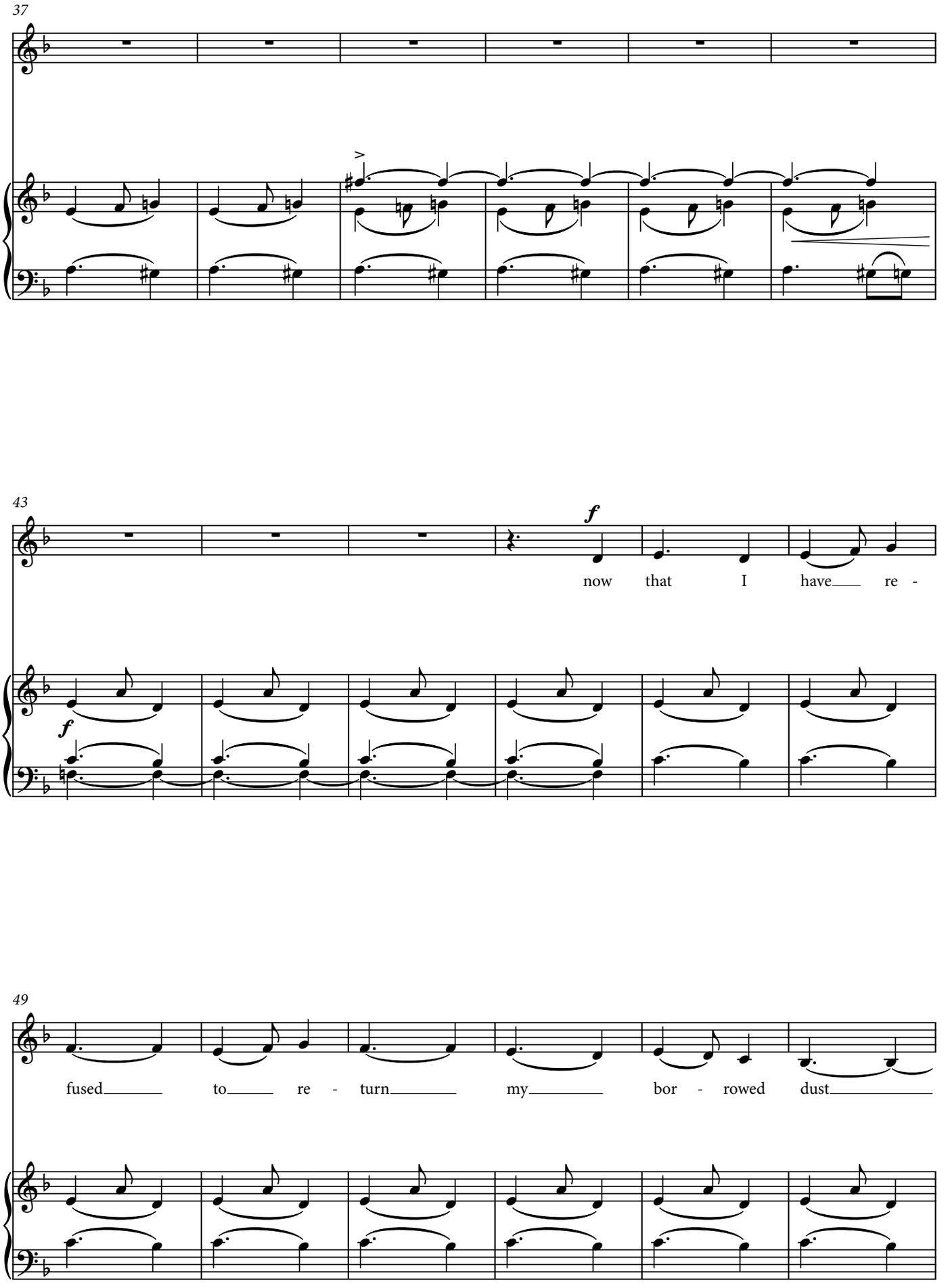
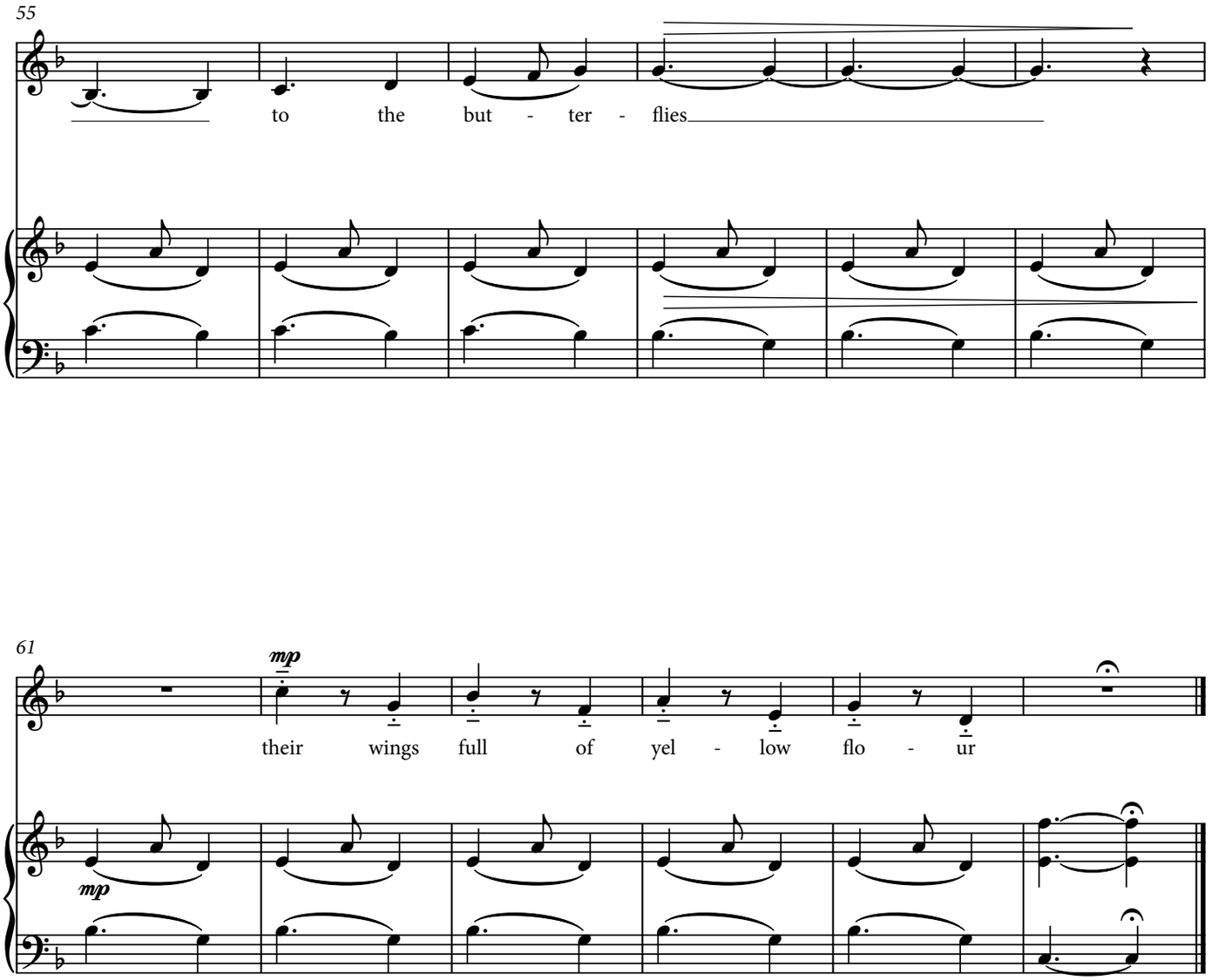

19
grow - ing thick with so - ur milk


25
What can I do, now


31
that the fat black sea is seeth - ing


37
43
f
now that I have re -
f
49
fused to re - turn my bor - rowed dust

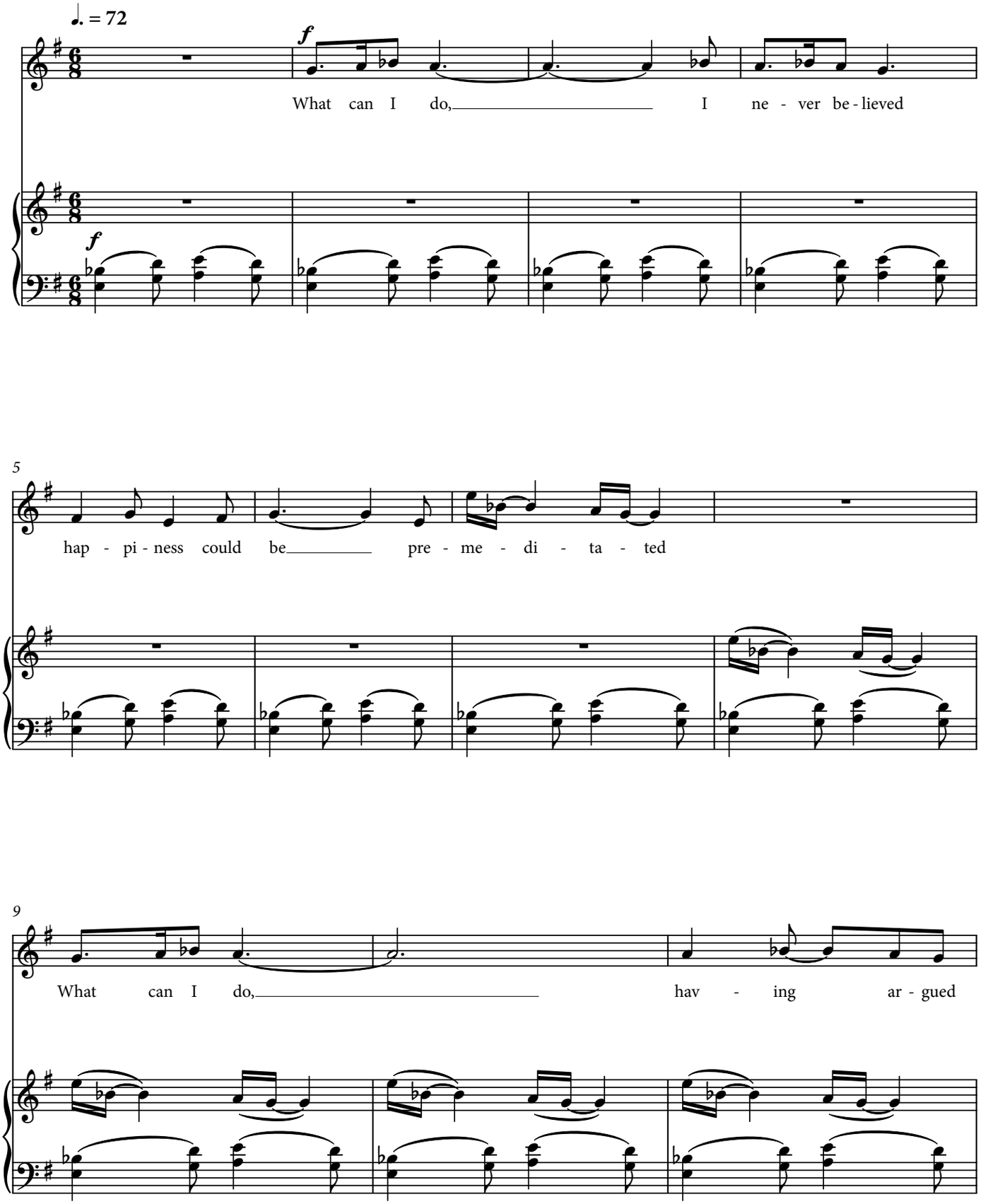

55
to the but - ter - flies
61
mp
their wings full of yel - low flo - ur
mp

BORROWED LOVE SONGS

8

John Yau

Eric Shanfield



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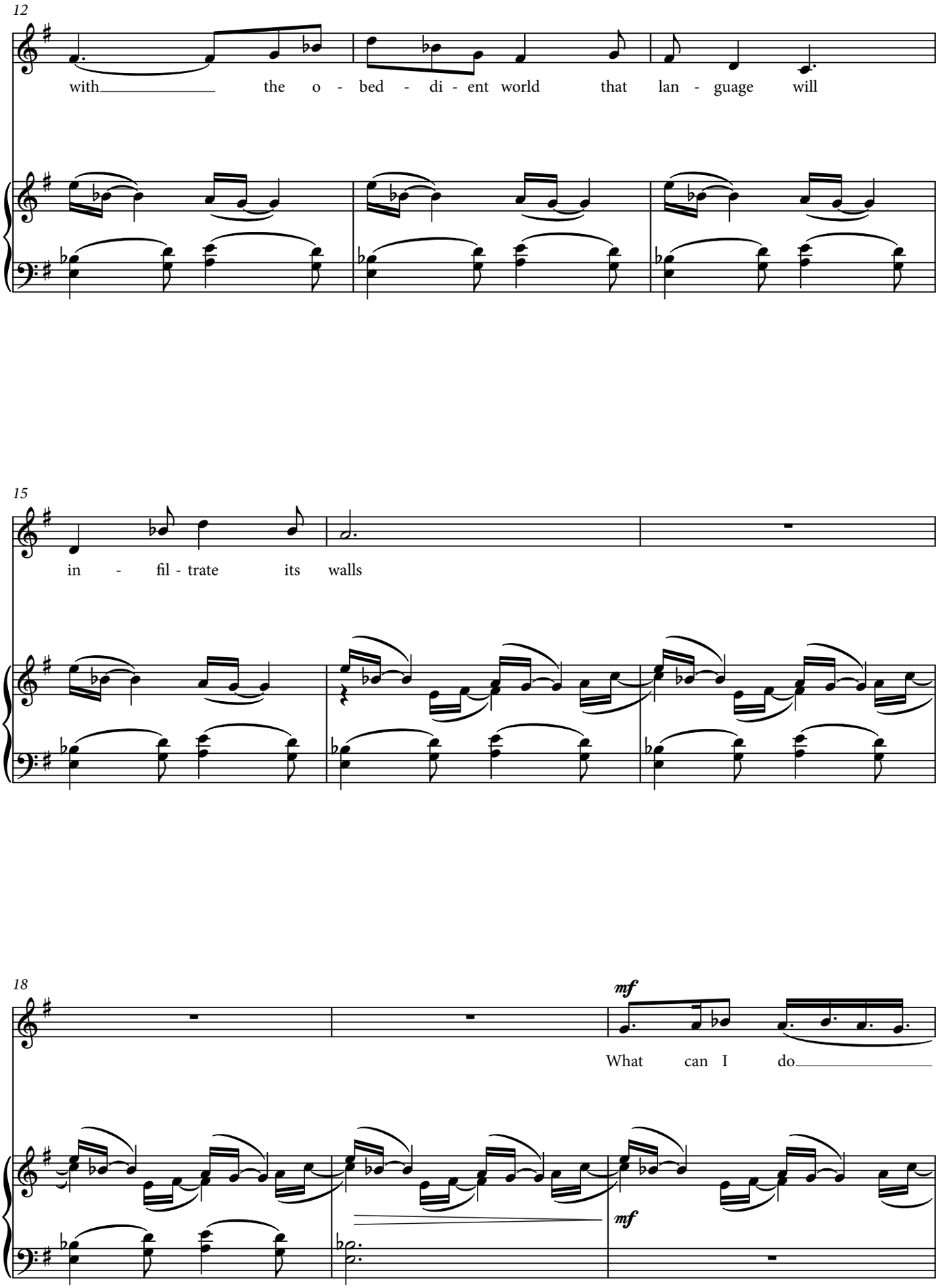
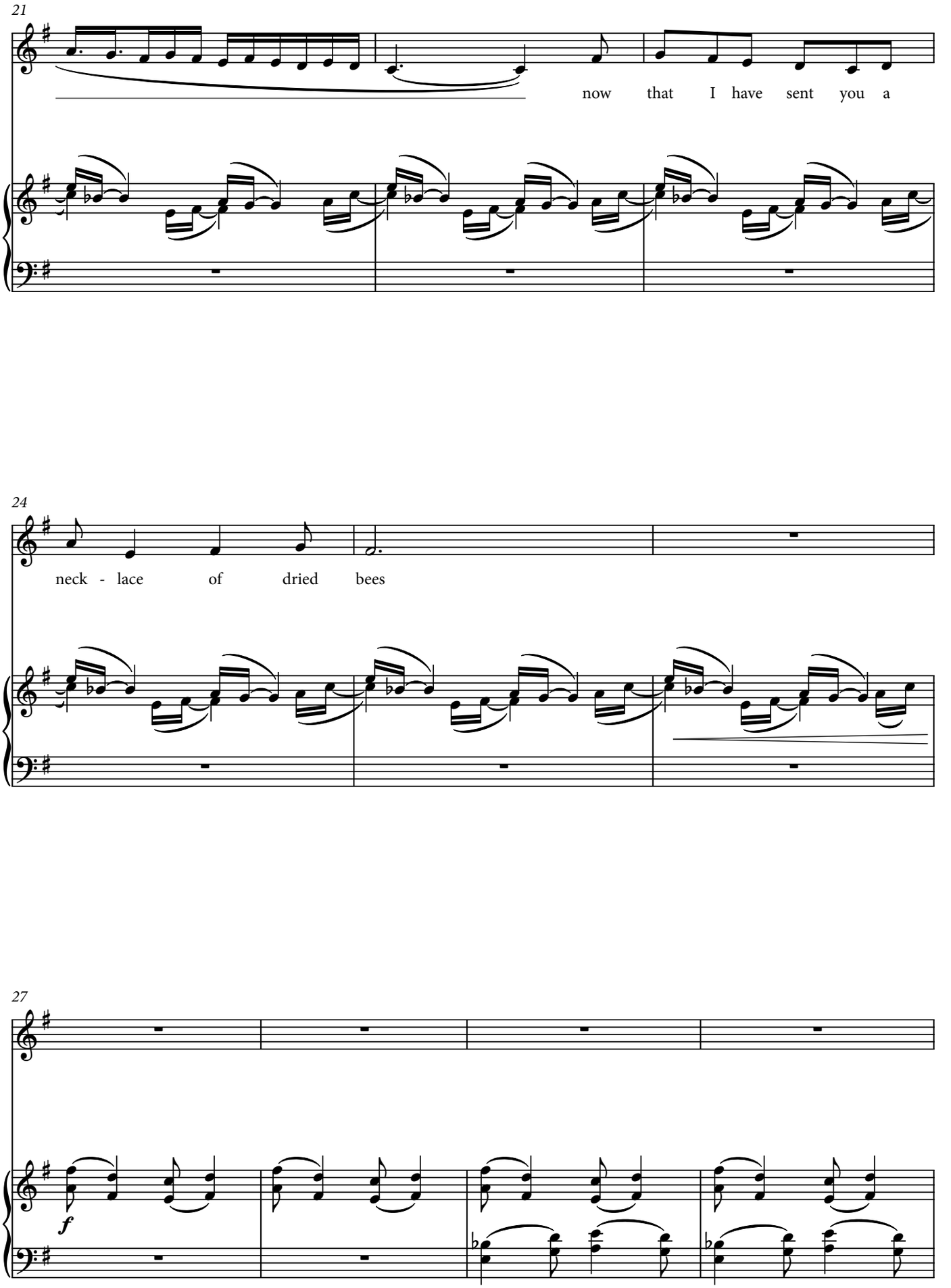
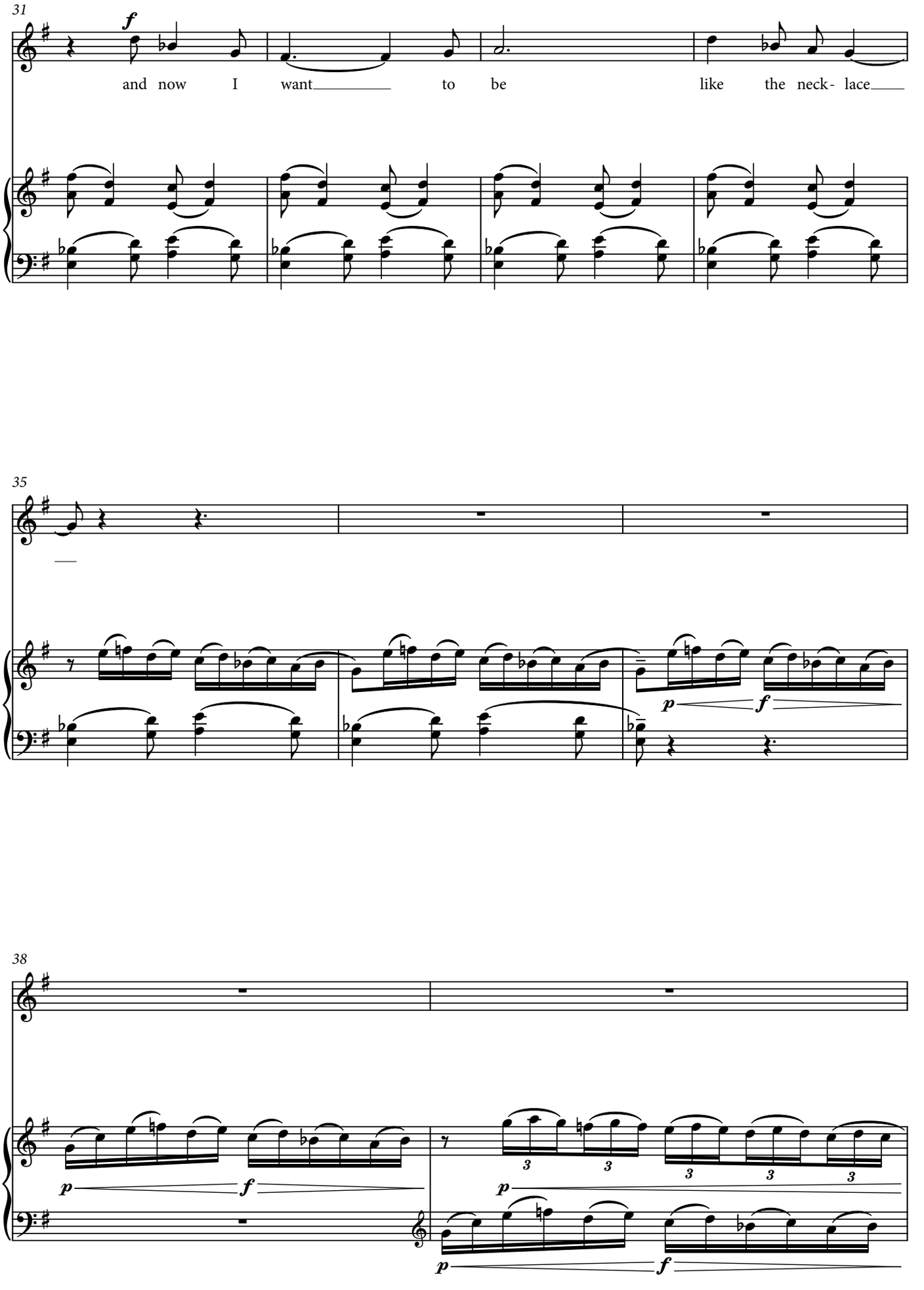
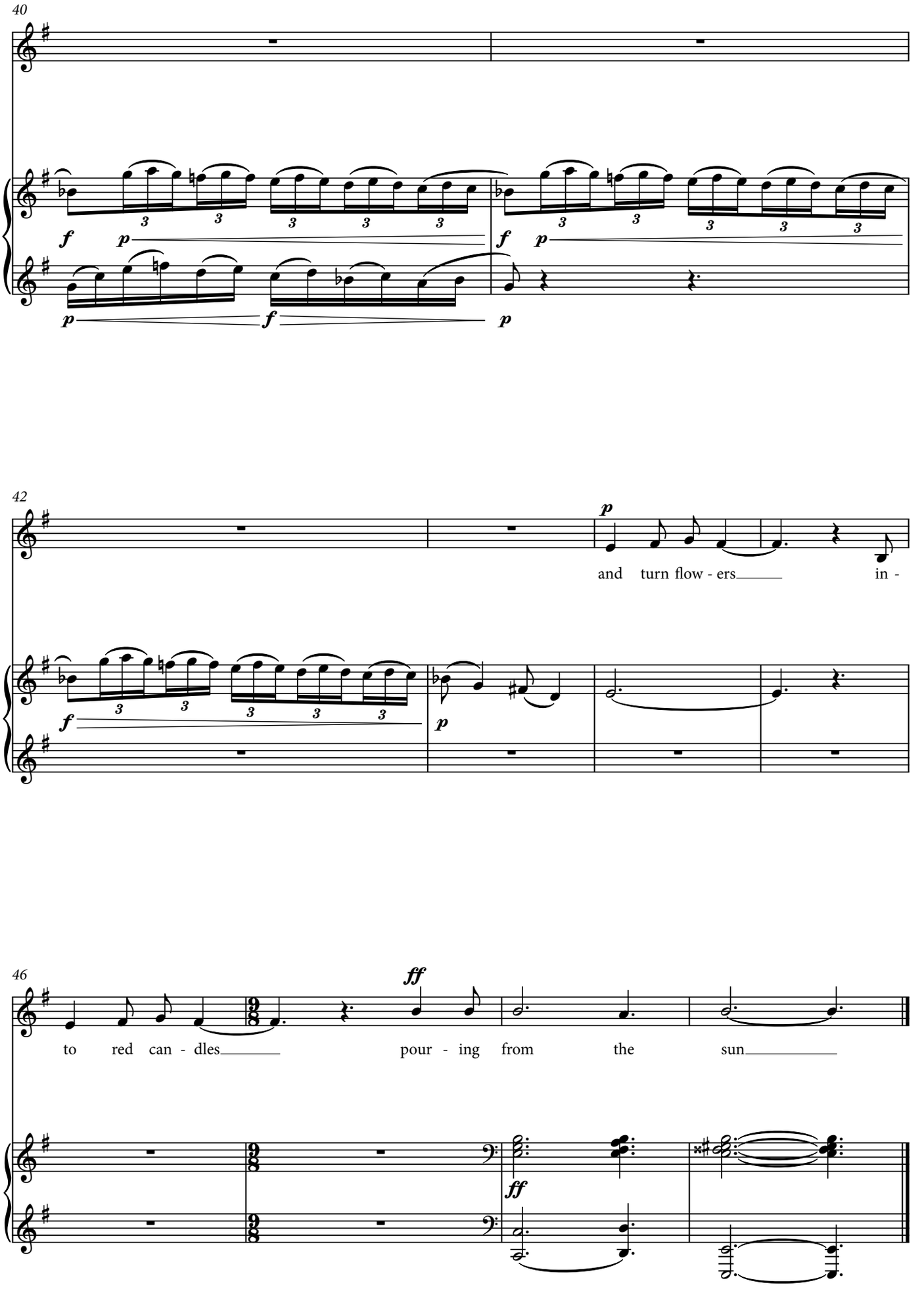

12
with the o - bed - di - ent world that lan - guage will
15
in - fil - trate its walls
18
mf
What can I do
mf


21
now that I have sent you a
24
neck - lace of dried bees
27
f

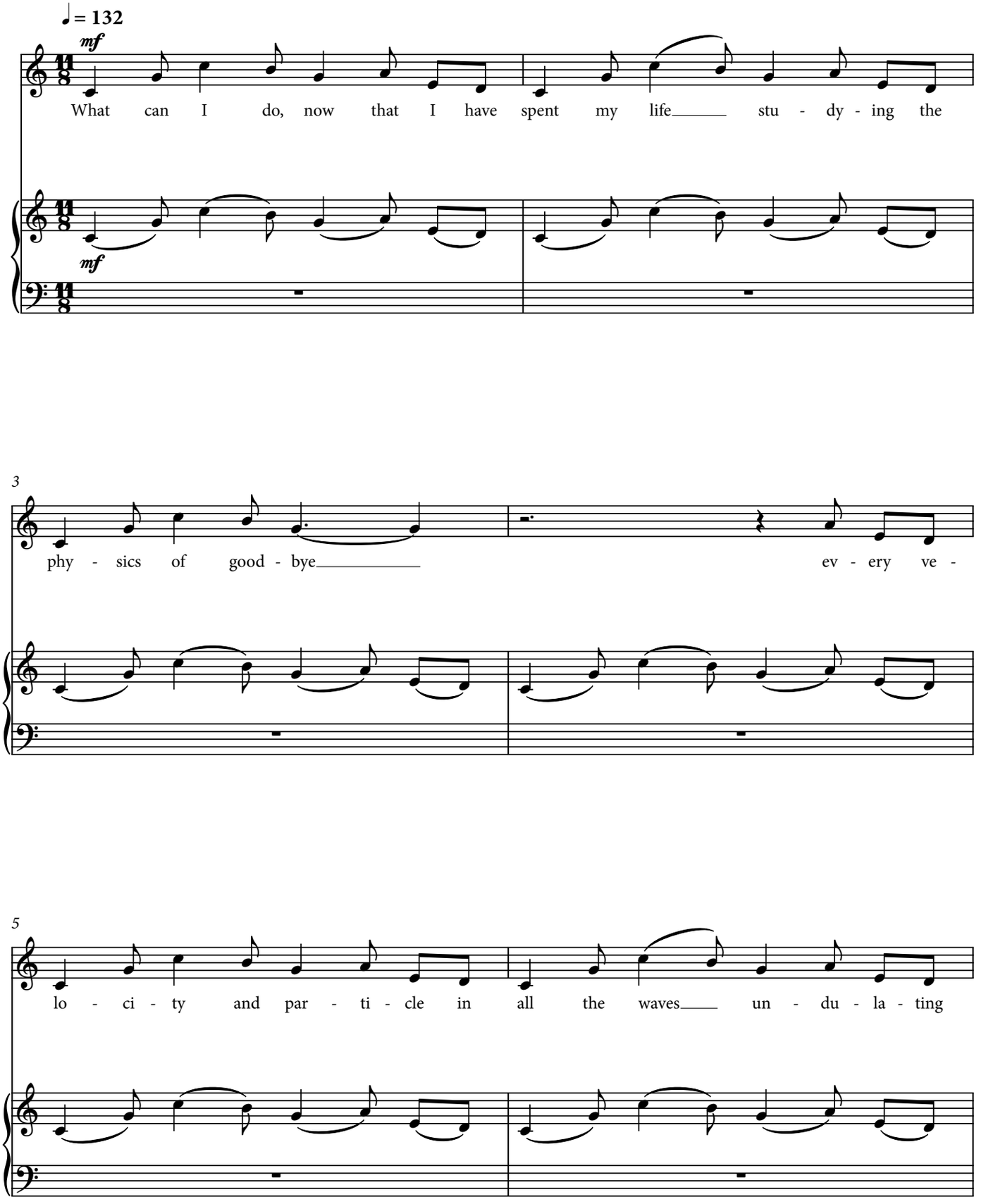

31
f
and now I want to be like the neck- lace
35
p
f
38
p
f
3
p
f


40
42
and turn flow - ers in -
46
to red can - dles pour - ing from the sun

BORROWED LOVE SONGS

John Yau

Eric Shanfield



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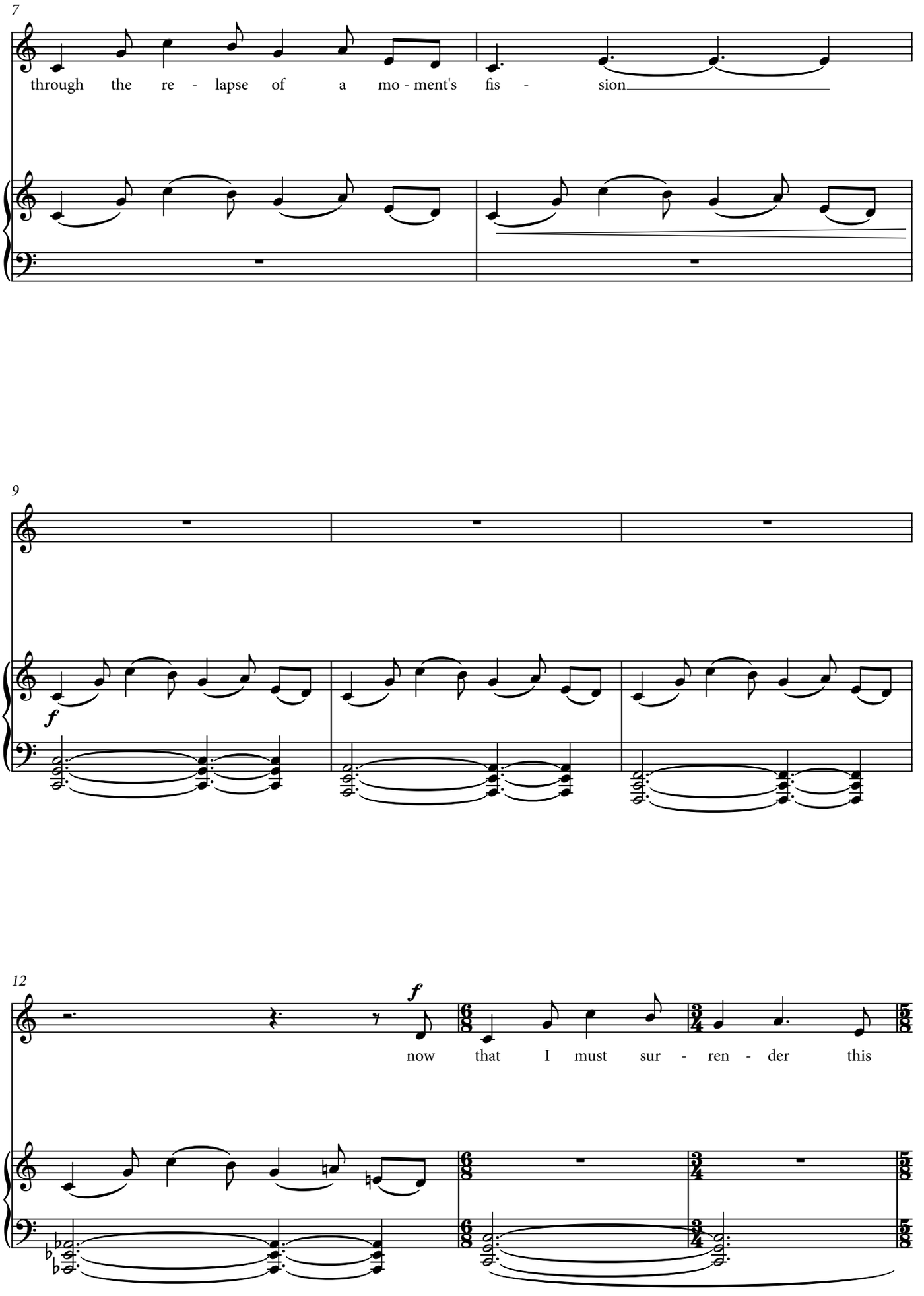
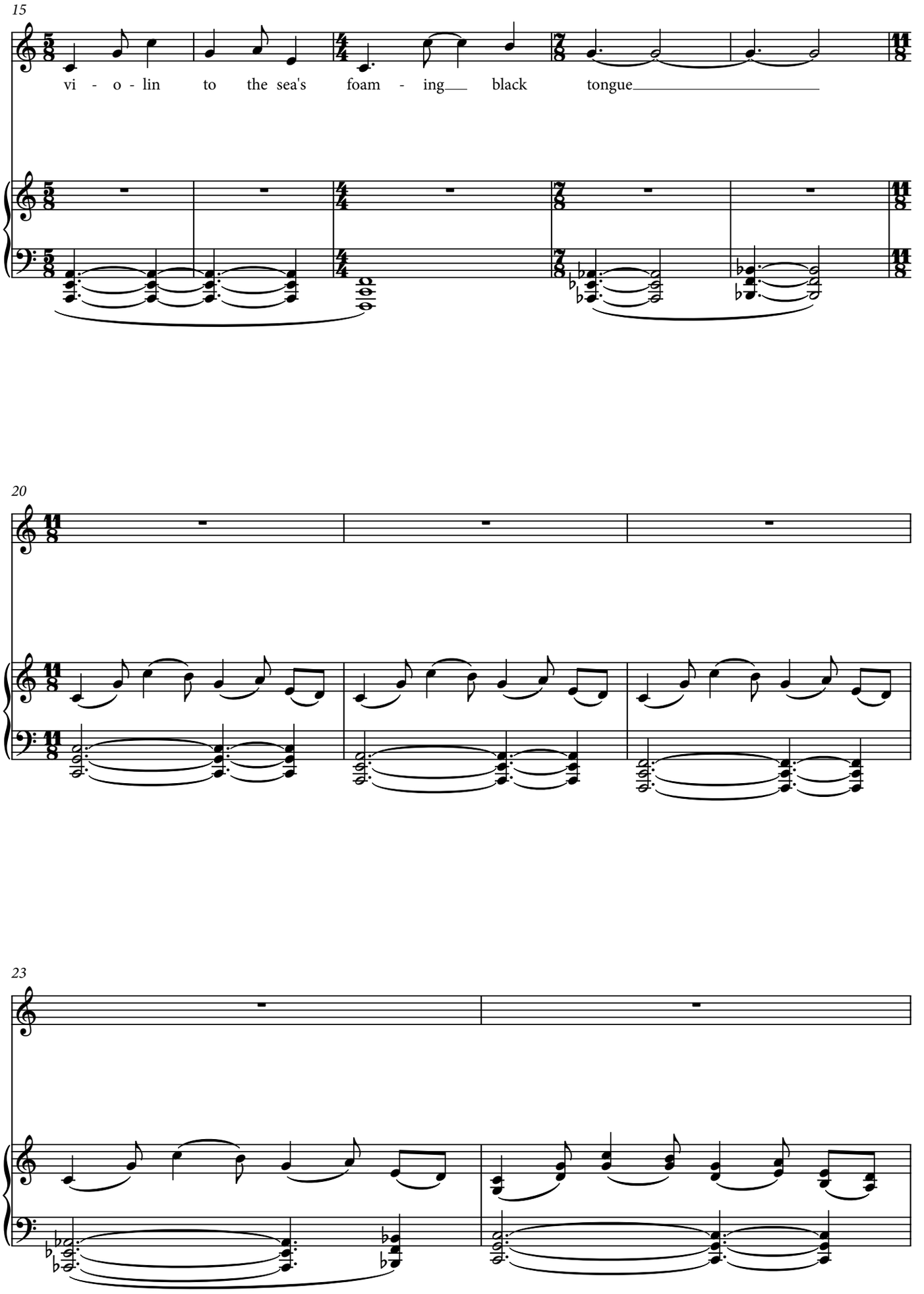
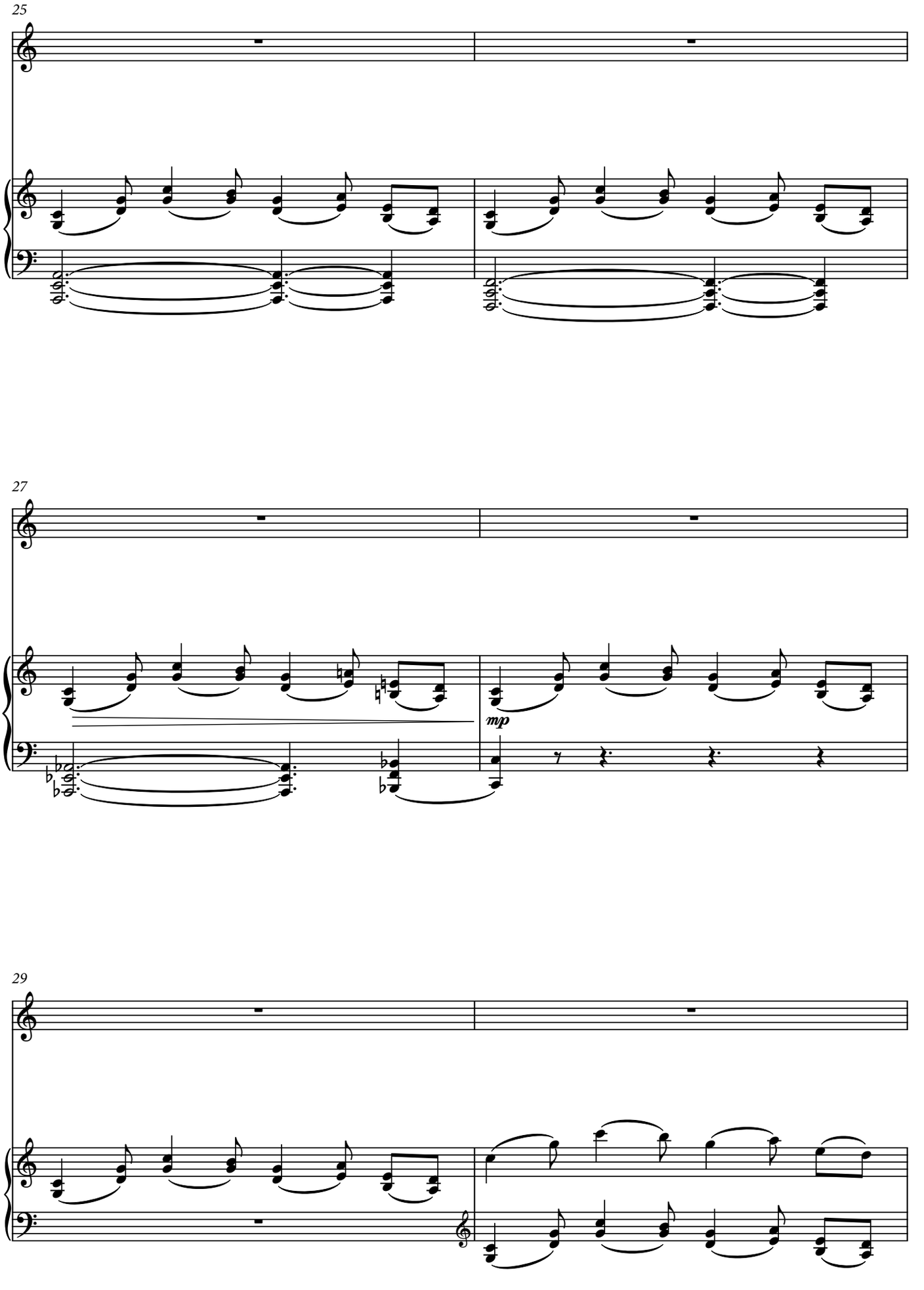
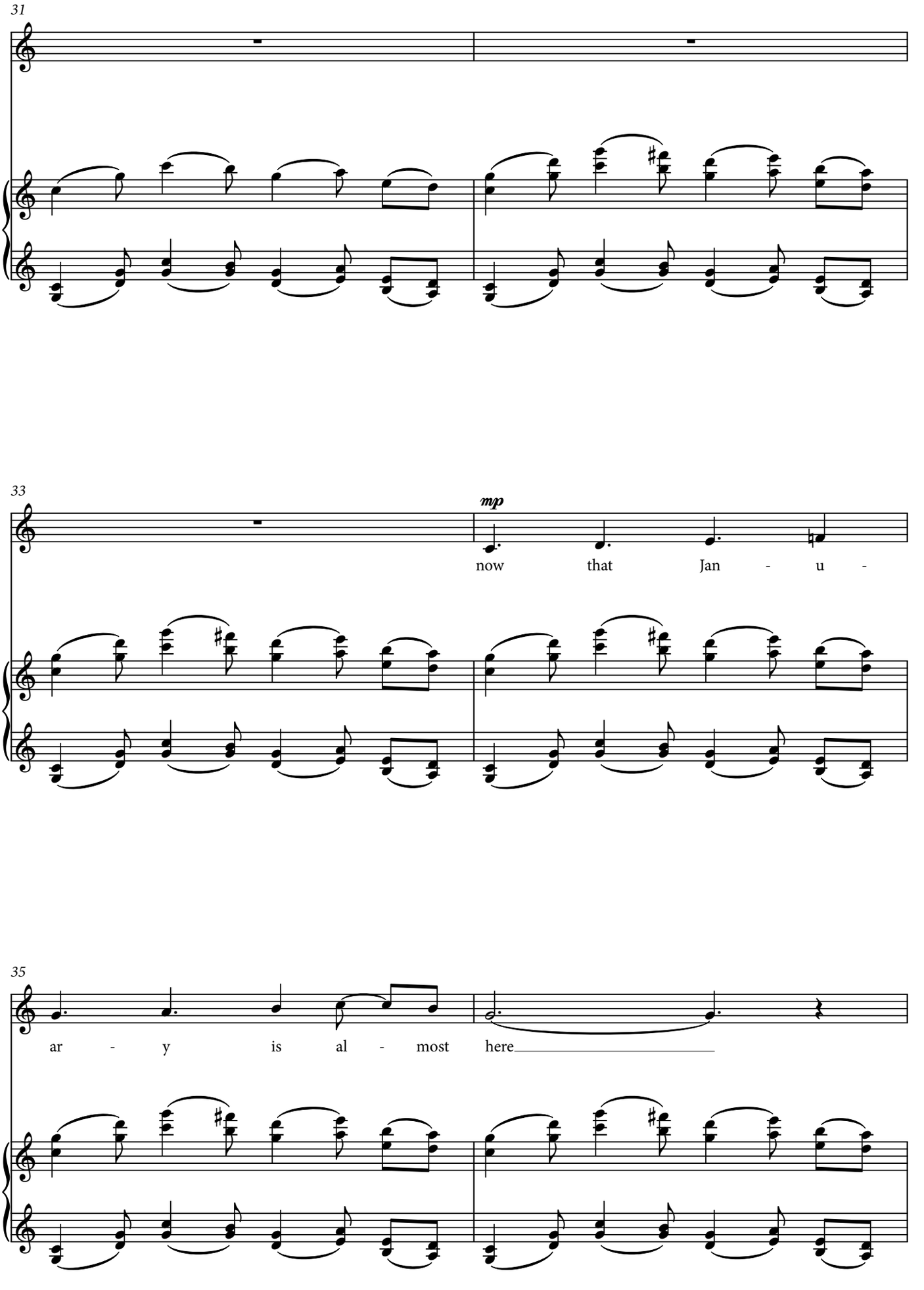
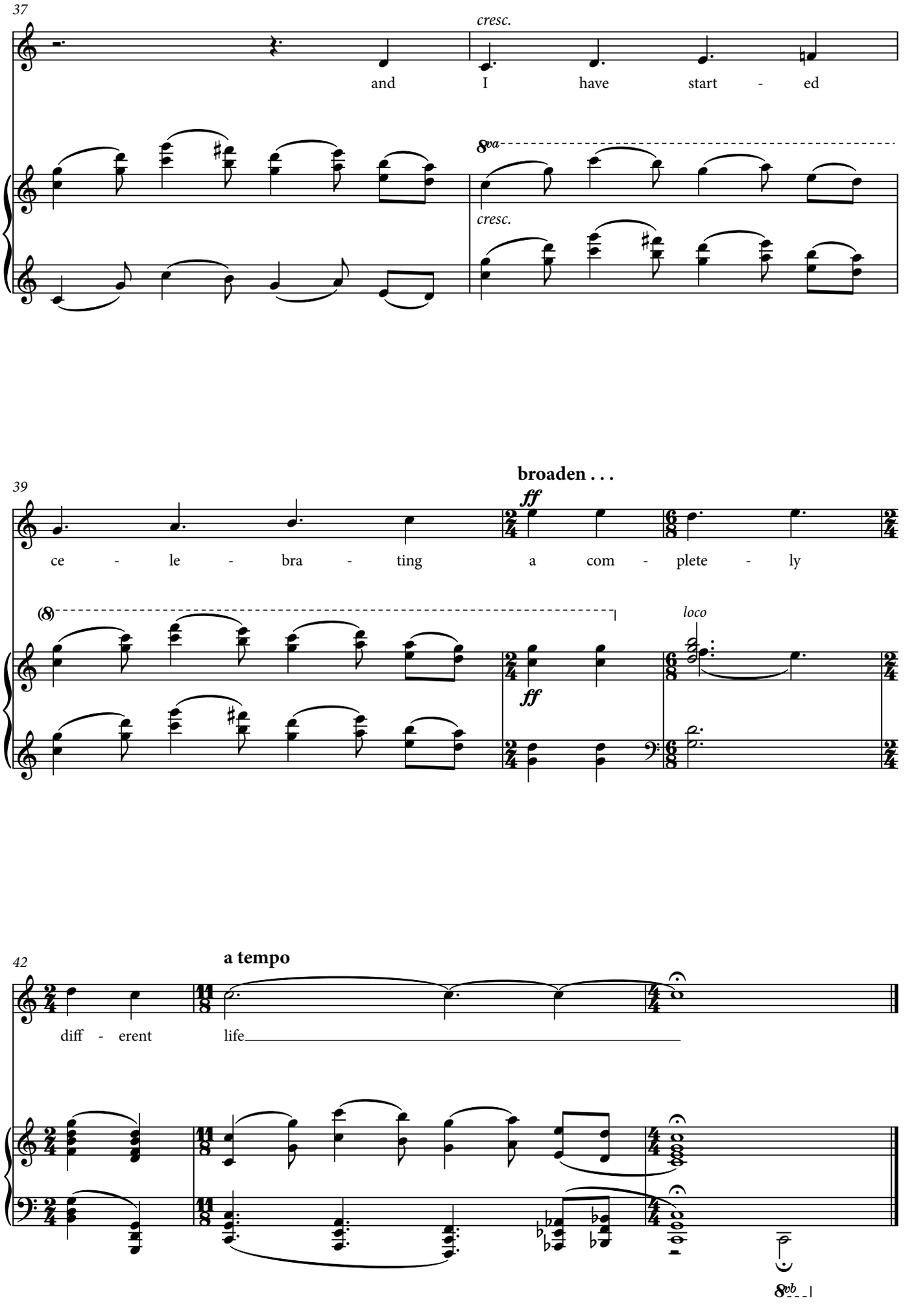

7
through the re - lapse of a mo - ment's fis - sion
9
f
12
f
now that I must sur - ren - der this


15
vi - o - lin to the sea's foam - ing black tongue
20
23


25
27
mp
29


31
33
mp
now that Jan - u -
35
ar - y is al - most here

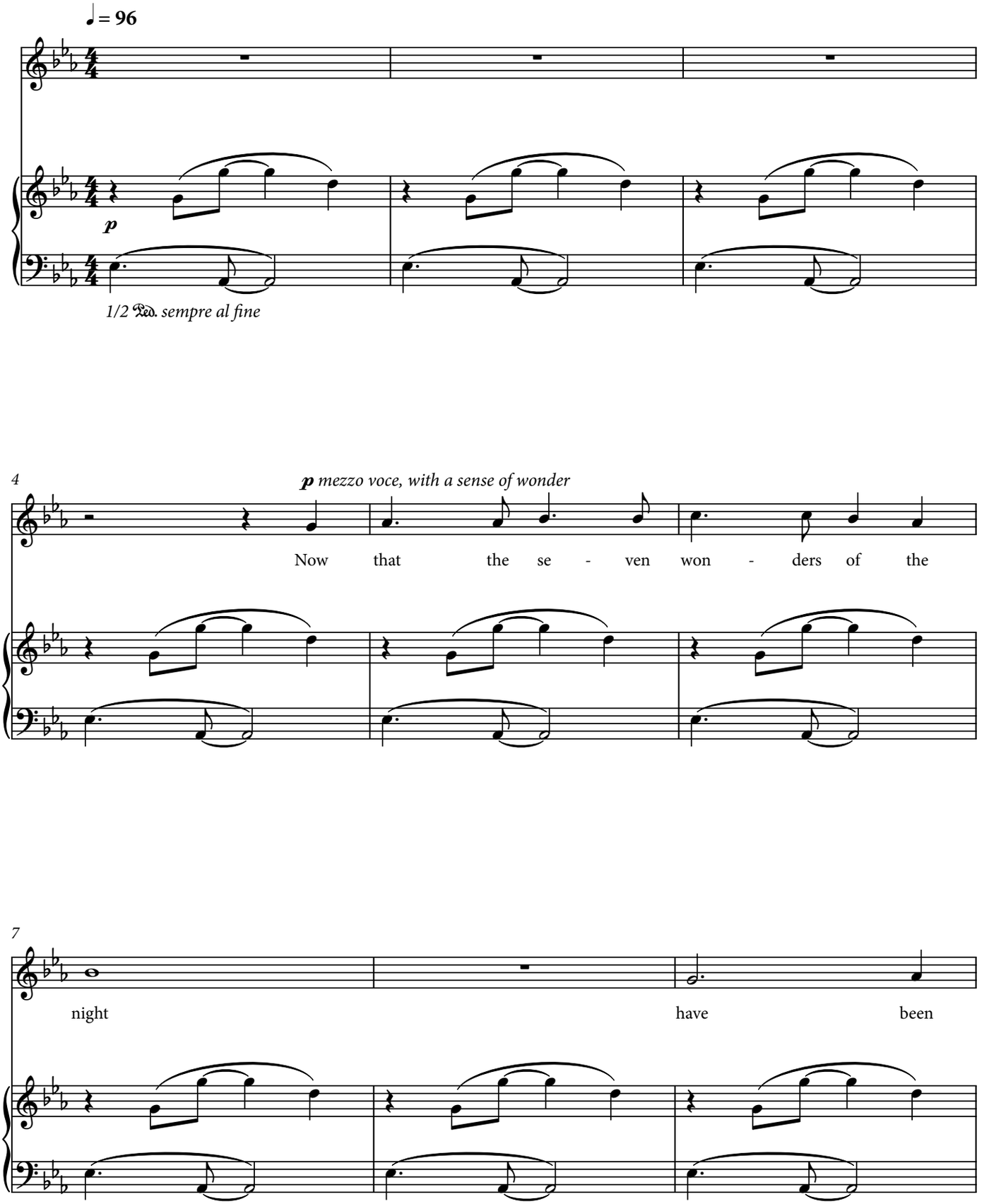

37
cresc.
and I have start - ed
8va
cresc.
39
broaden . . .
ff
ce - le - bra - ting a com - plete - ly
8
ff
loco
42
a tempo
diff - erent life
8vb

BORROWED LOVE SONGS

10

John Yau

Eric Shanfield



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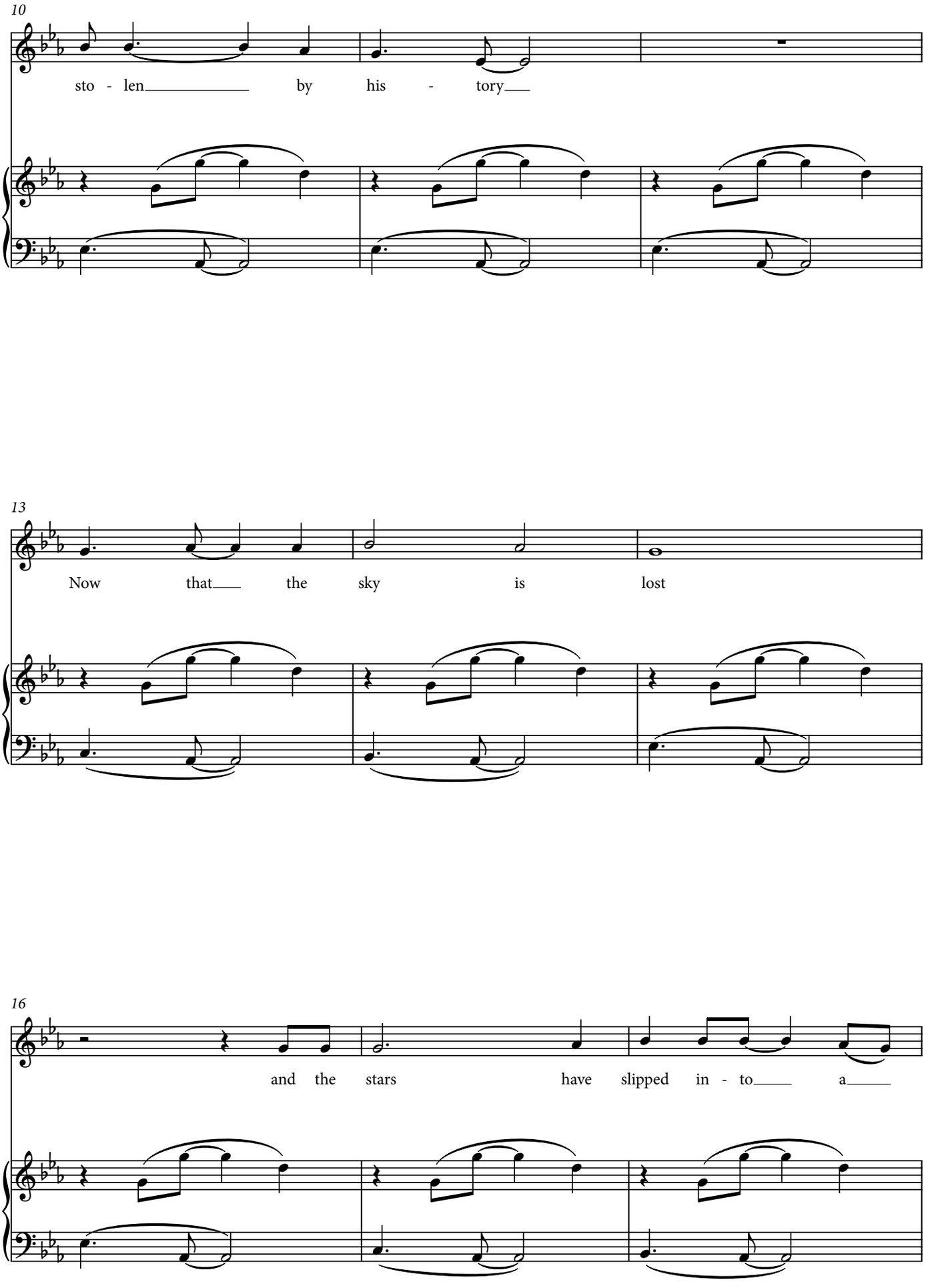
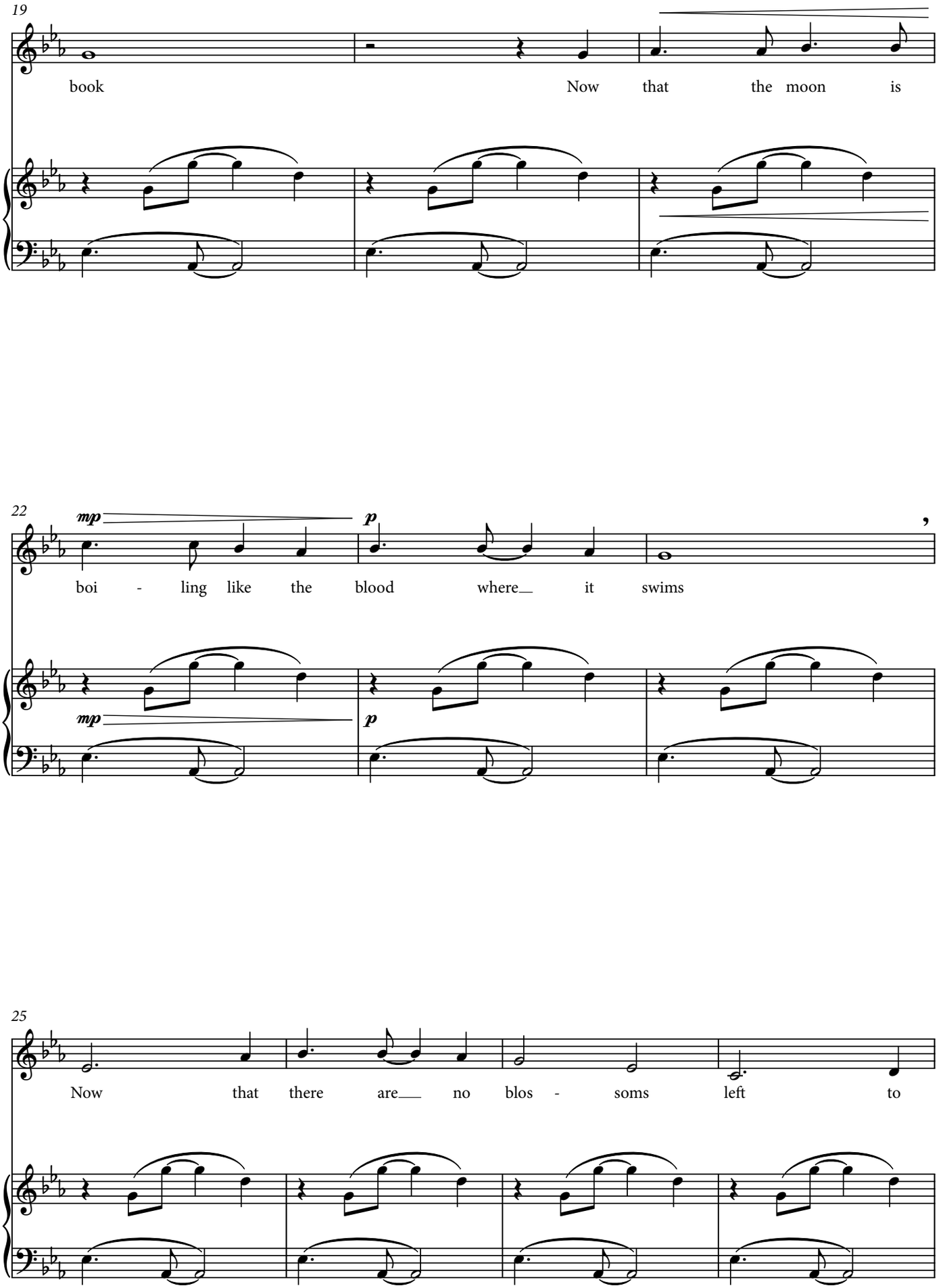
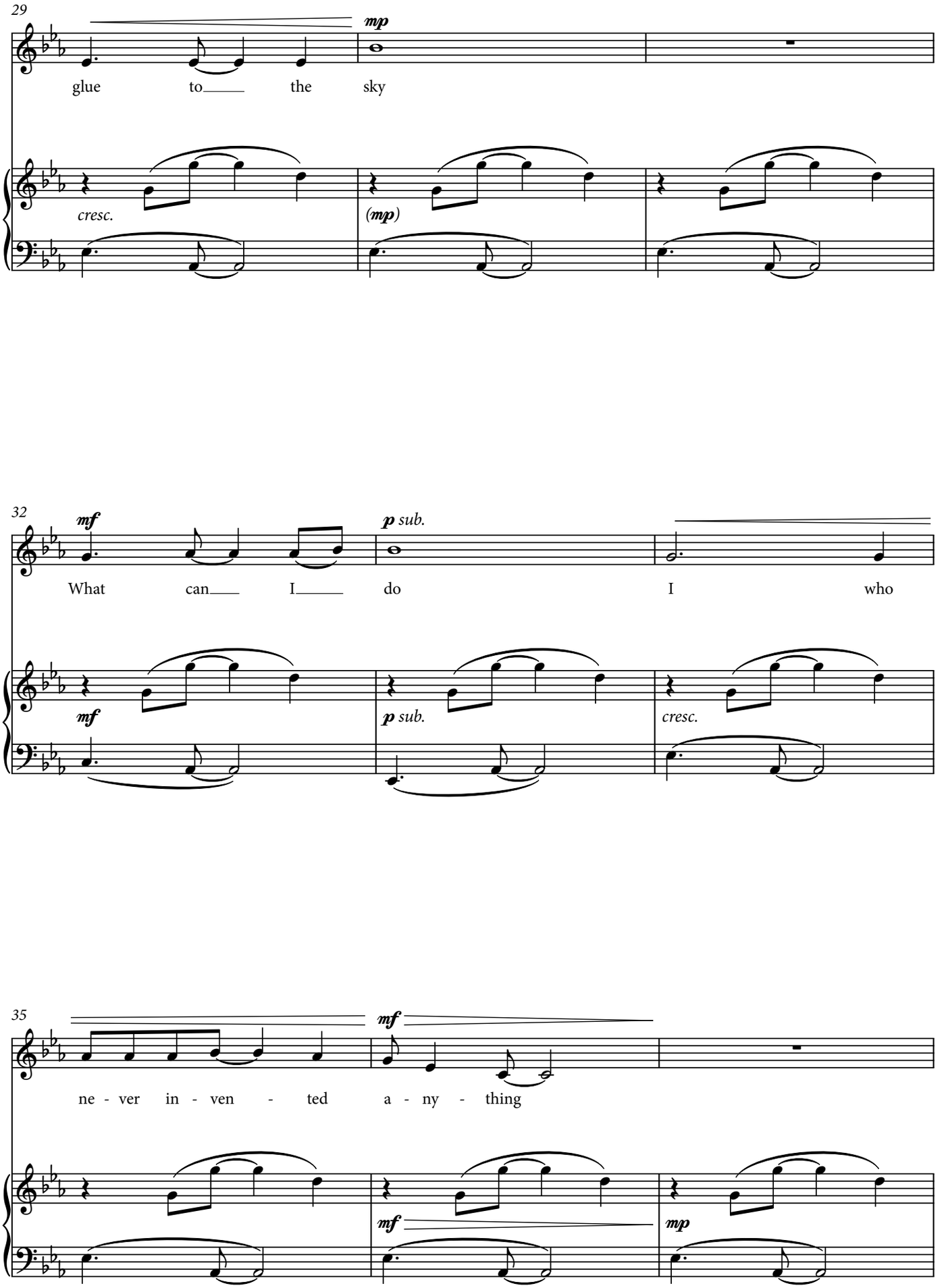
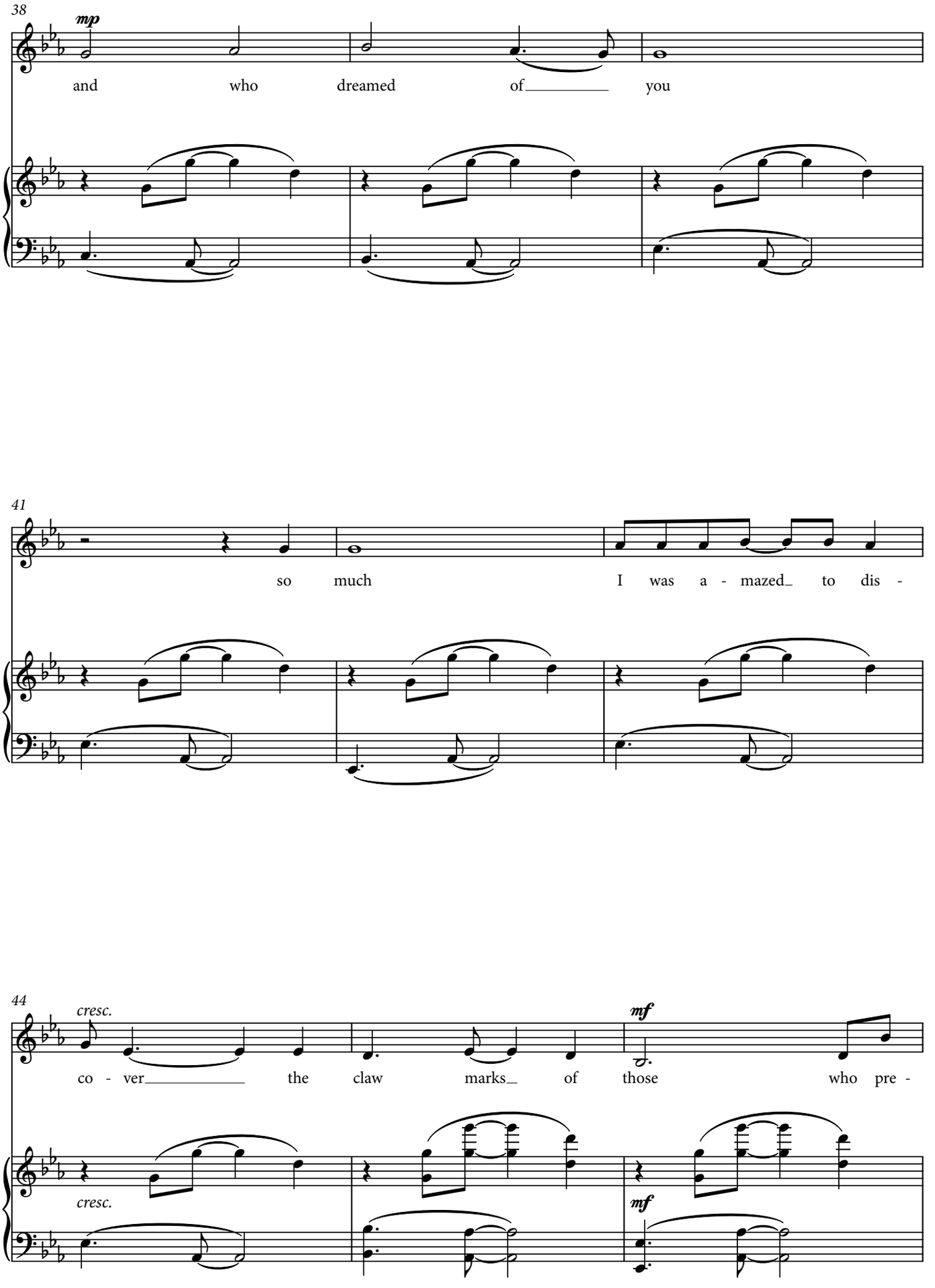
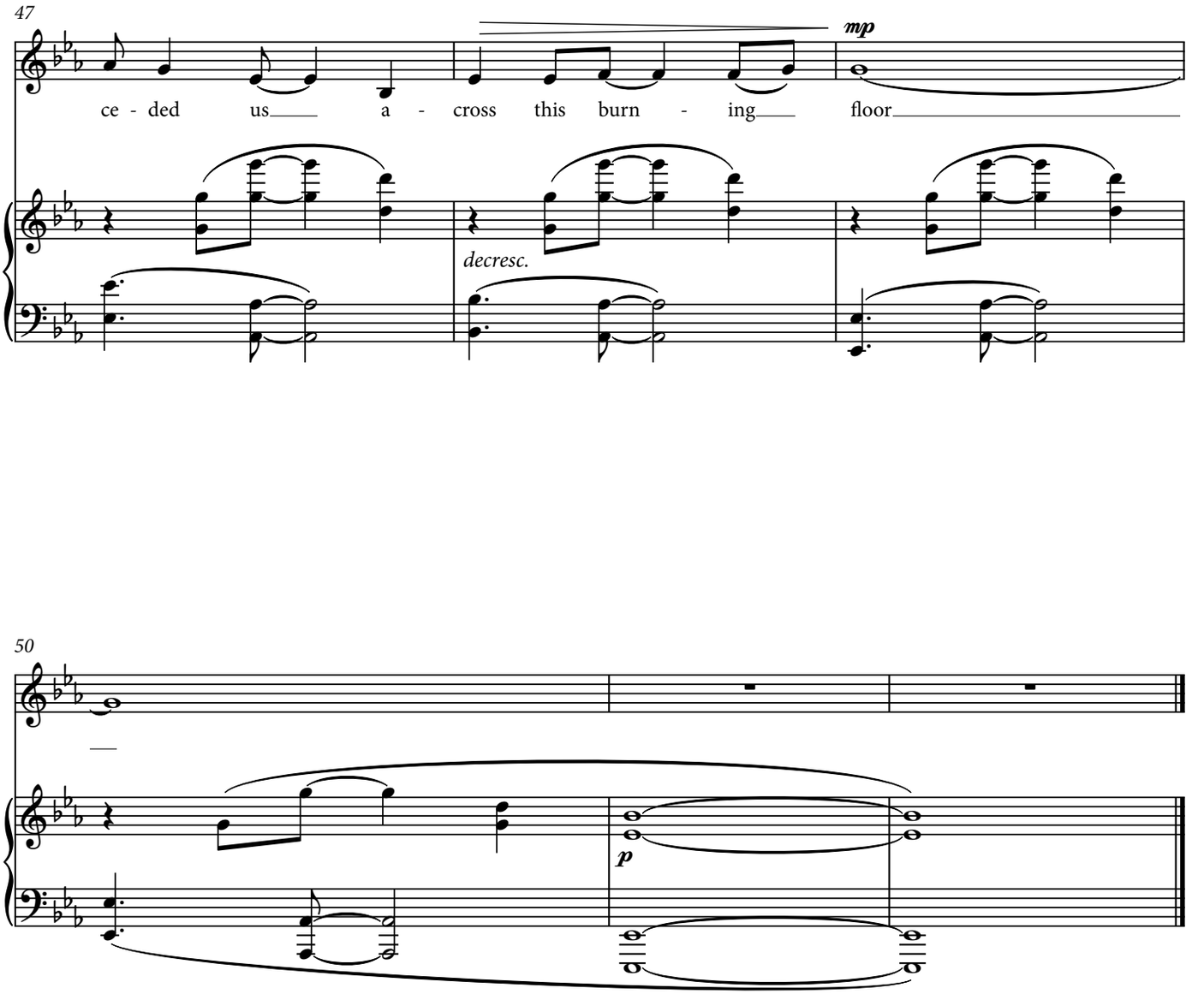

10
sto - len by his - tory
13
Now that the sky is lost
16
and the stars have slipped in - to a


19
book
Now that the moon is
22
mp
p
boi - ling like the blood where it swims
mp
p
25
Now that there are no blos - soms left to


29
mp
glue to the sky
cresc.
(mp)
32
mf
p sub.
What can I do I who
mf
p sub.
cresc.
35
mf
ne - ver in - ven - ted a - ny - thing
mf
mp


38
mp
and who dreamed of you
41
so much I was a - mazed to dis -
44
cresc.
mf
co - ver the claw marks of those who pre -
cresc.
mf


47
mp
ce - ded us a - cross this burn - ing floor
decresc.
50
p