WHILE THE WORLD SHALL LAST

ERIC SHANFIELD

WHILE THE WORLD SHALL LAST

Eric Shanfield | 2016 | 9’

from Edward FitzGerald’s translation of Omar Khayyam’s Rubaiyat

for Eliza Bagg

Soprano

Piano

Pauses between songs should be brief. A longer pause should separate Part 1 and Part 2.

I wanted to write a song cycle like minimalist Webern: musical Cornell boxes, stripped of excess but decorative and intricately worked. Selections from Edward FitzGerald’s famous translations of Omar Khayyam’s Rubaiyat were chosen for their brevity and rhythm and placed alongside or in opposition to a procession of small musical ideas. There are two parts corresponding to the fifth and first editions of FitzGerald, each comprising seven songs. *While the World Shall Last* was composed on January 5th and 6th, 2016, and lasts less than ten minutes.

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WHILE THE WORLD SHALL LAST

from The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam by Edward FitzGerald

PART 1 (from the Fifth Edition)

1
Wake! For the Sun, who scatter'd into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
Drives Night along with them from Heav'n, and strikes
The Sultan's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

17
Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp
Abode his destined Hour, and went his way.

40
As then the Tulip for her morning sup
Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil looks up,
Do you devoutly do the like, till Heav'n
To Earth invert you—like an empty Cup.

47
When You and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh, but the long, long while the World shall last,
Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As the Sea's self should heed a pebble-cast.

63
Oh threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise!
One thing at least is certain—*This* life flies;
One thing is certain and the rest is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

72
And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,
Lift not your hands to *It* for help—for It
As impotently moves as you or I.

83
Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall;
And some loquacious Vessels were; and some
Listen'd perhaps, but never talk'd at all.

PART 2 (from the First Edition)

1
Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight:
  And Lo! the Hunter of the East has caught
The Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light.

18
I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Caesar bled;
  That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head.

46
For in and out, above, about, below,
'Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow-show,
  Play'd in a Box whose Candle is the Sun,
Round which we Phantom Figures come and go.

51
The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit
  Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

57
Oh, Thou, who didst with Pitfall and with Gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
  Thou wilt not with Predestination round
Enmesh me, and impute my Fall to Sin?

58
Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And who with Eden didst devise the Snake;
  For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd, Man's forgiveness give—and take!

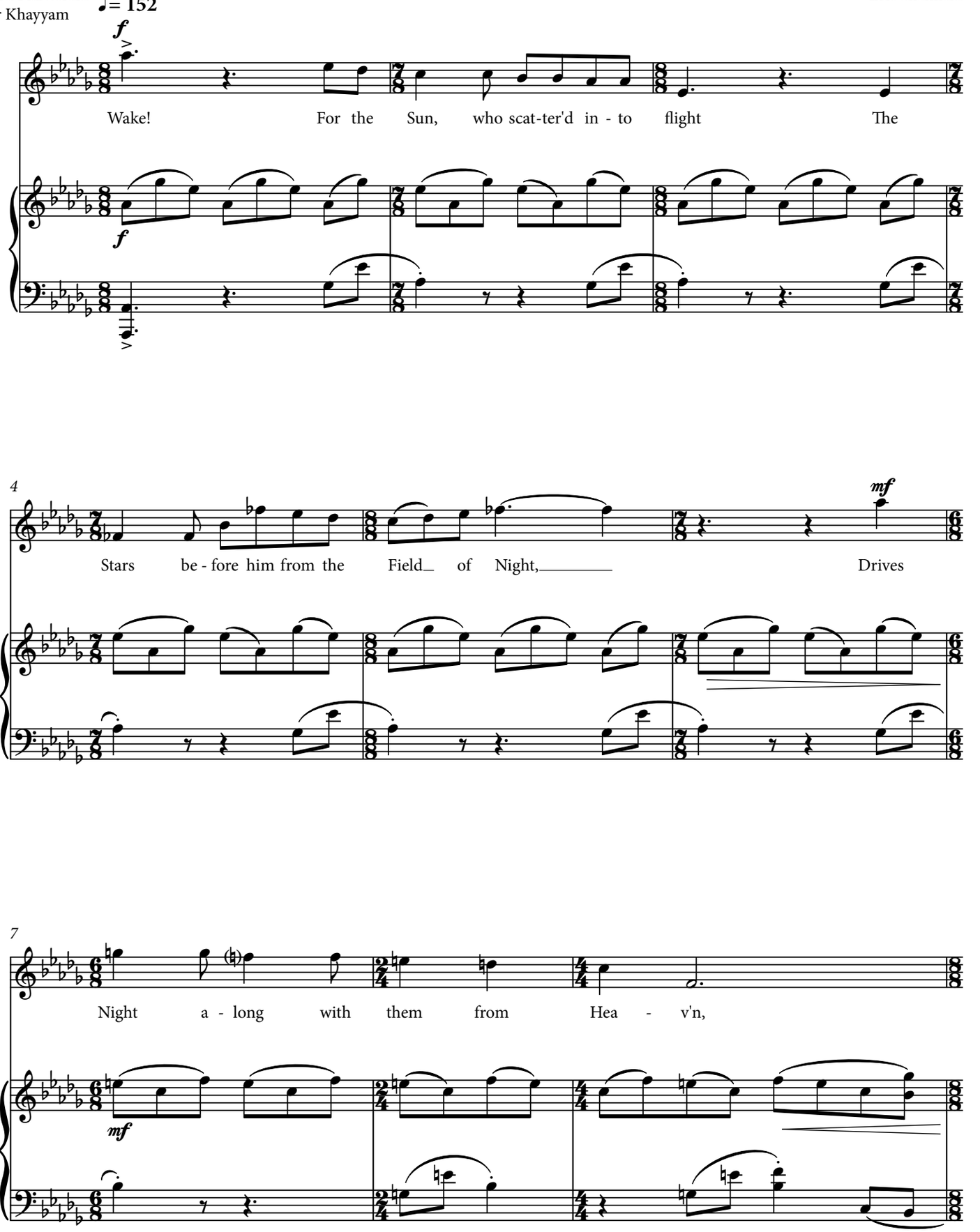
60
And, strange to tell, among that Earthen Lot
Some could articulate, while others not:
  And suddenly one more impatient cried—
"Who *is* the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?"

WHILE THE WORLD SHALL LAST

PART 1, NO. 1 (1)

Edward FitzGerald/
Omar Khayyam

Eric Shanfield



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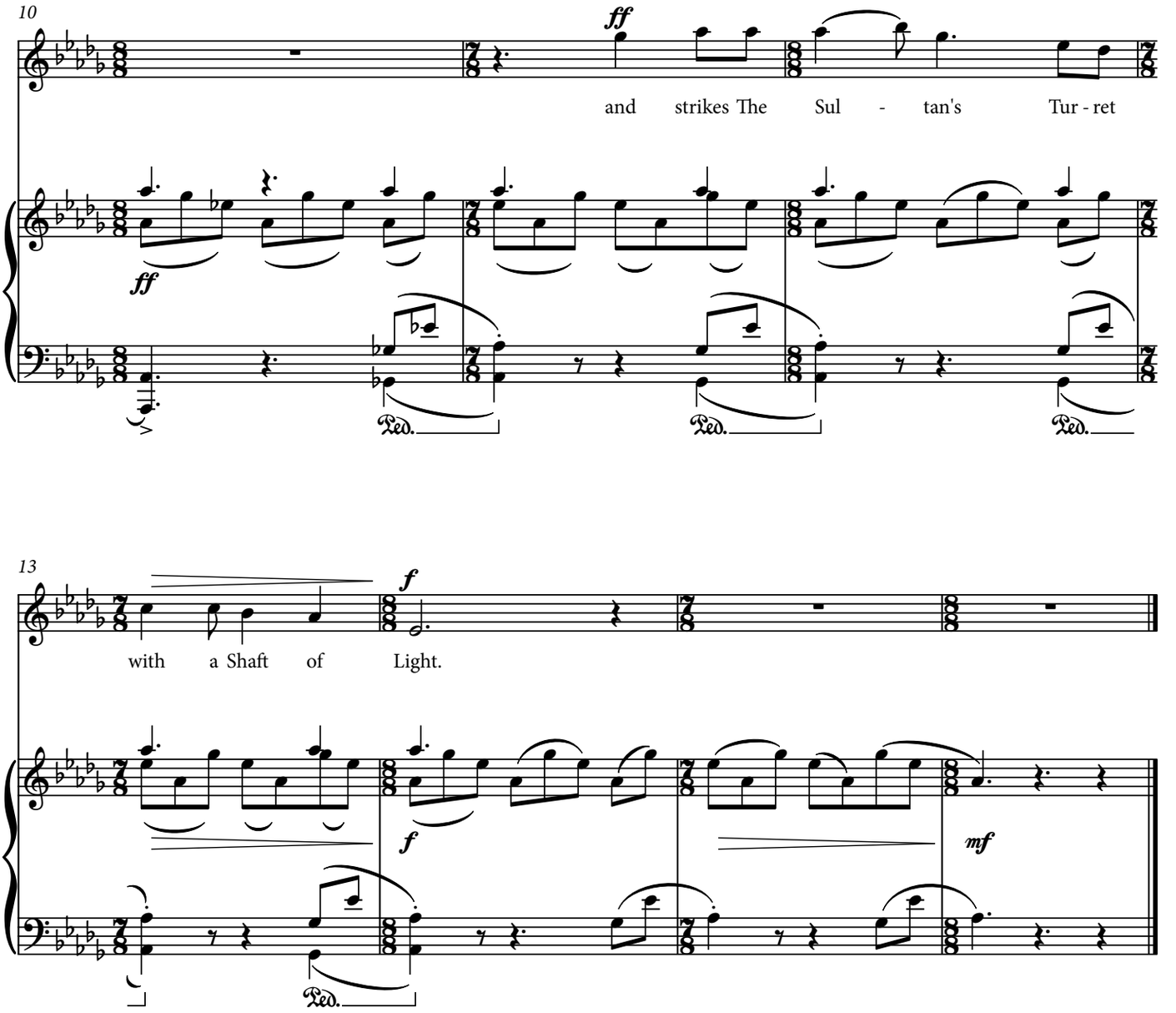

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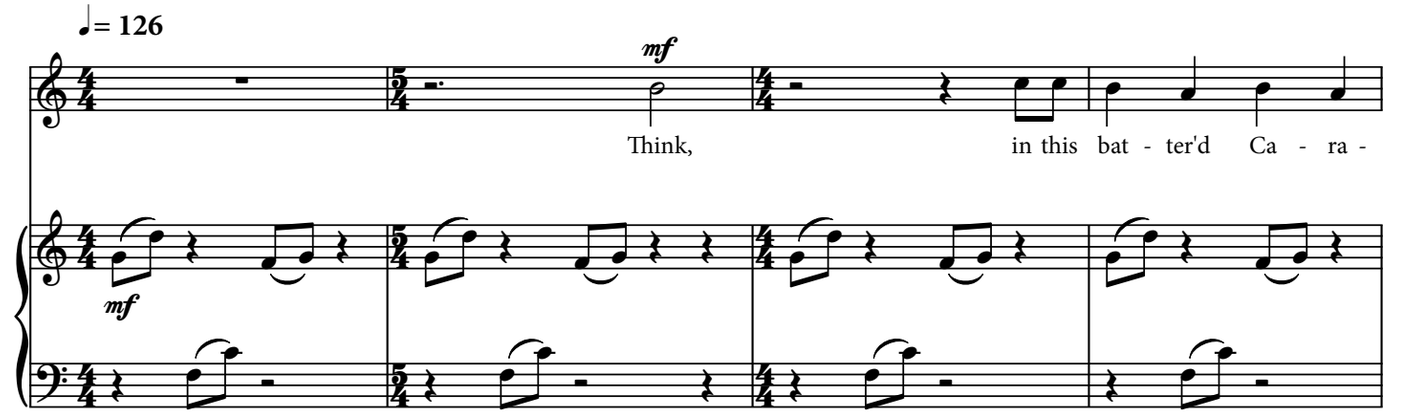

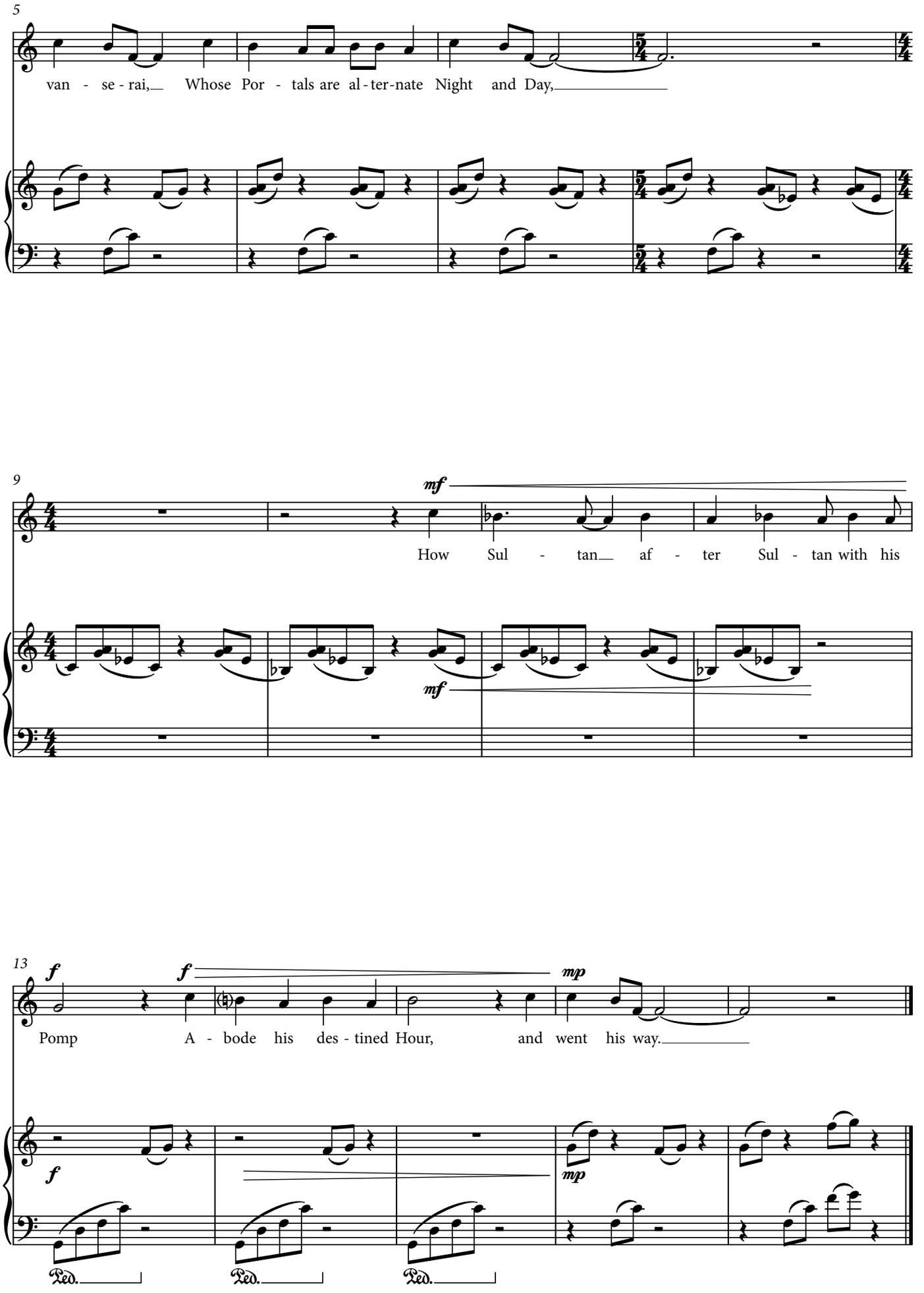
5
van - se - rai, Whose Por - tals are al - ter - nate Night and Day,
9
mf
How Sul - tan af - ter Sul - tan with his
mf
13
f
f
mp
Pomp A - bode his des - tined Hour, and went his way.
f
mp
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

WHILE THE WORLD SHALL LAST

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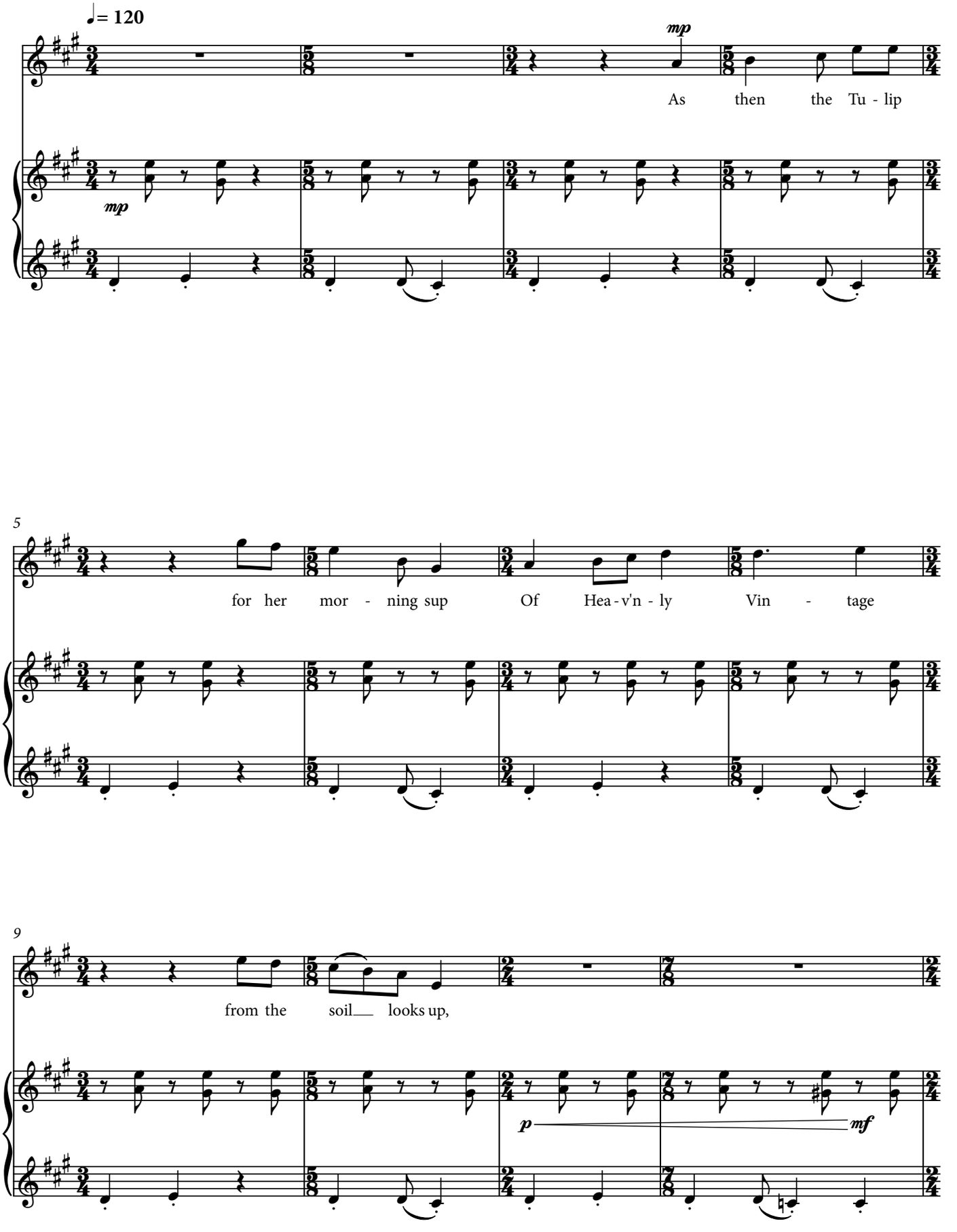

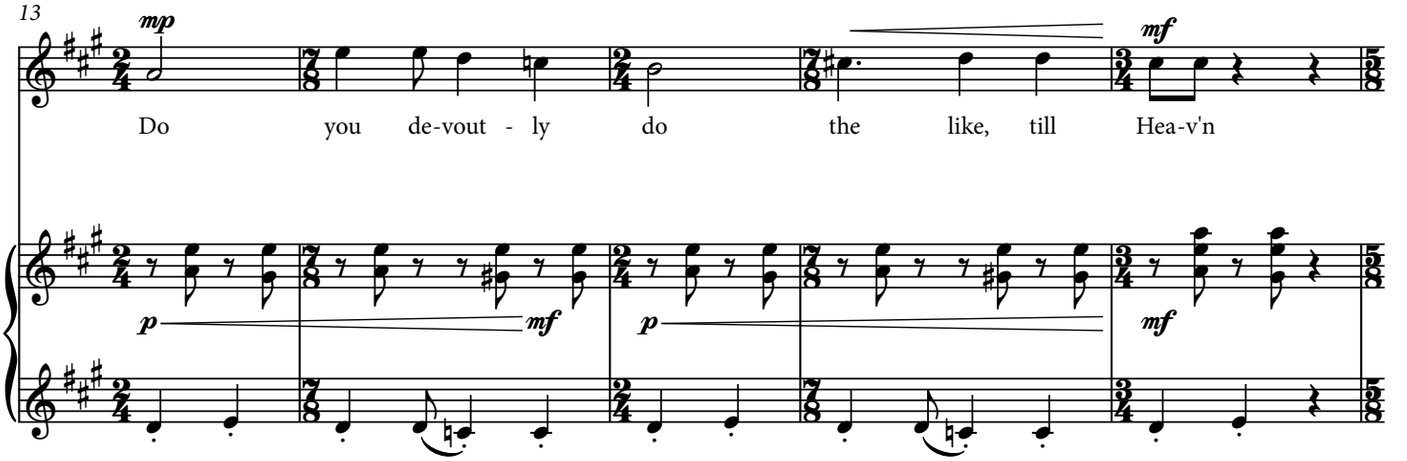

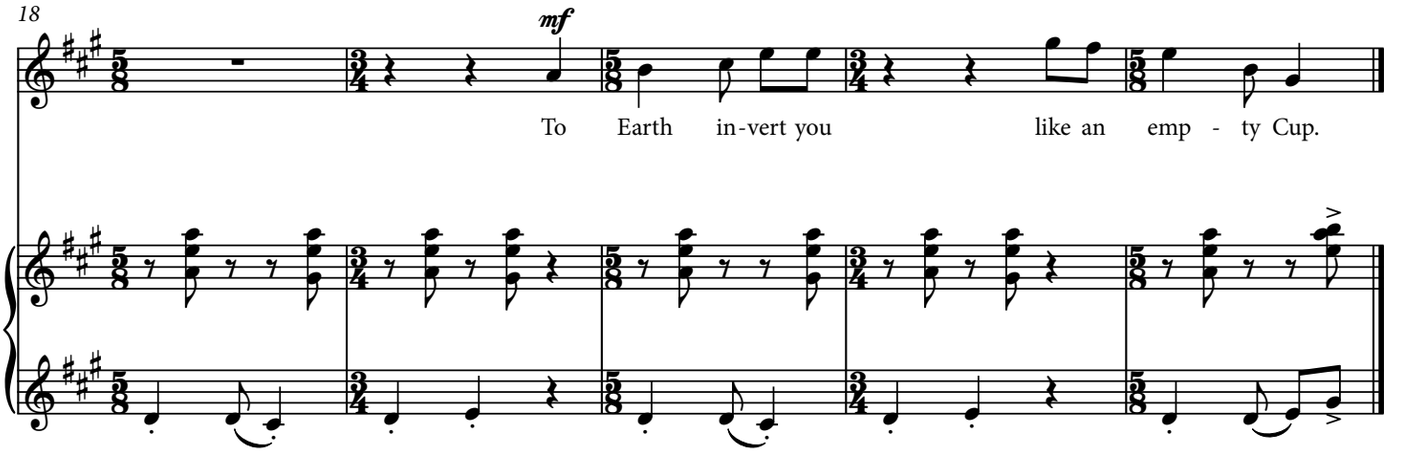

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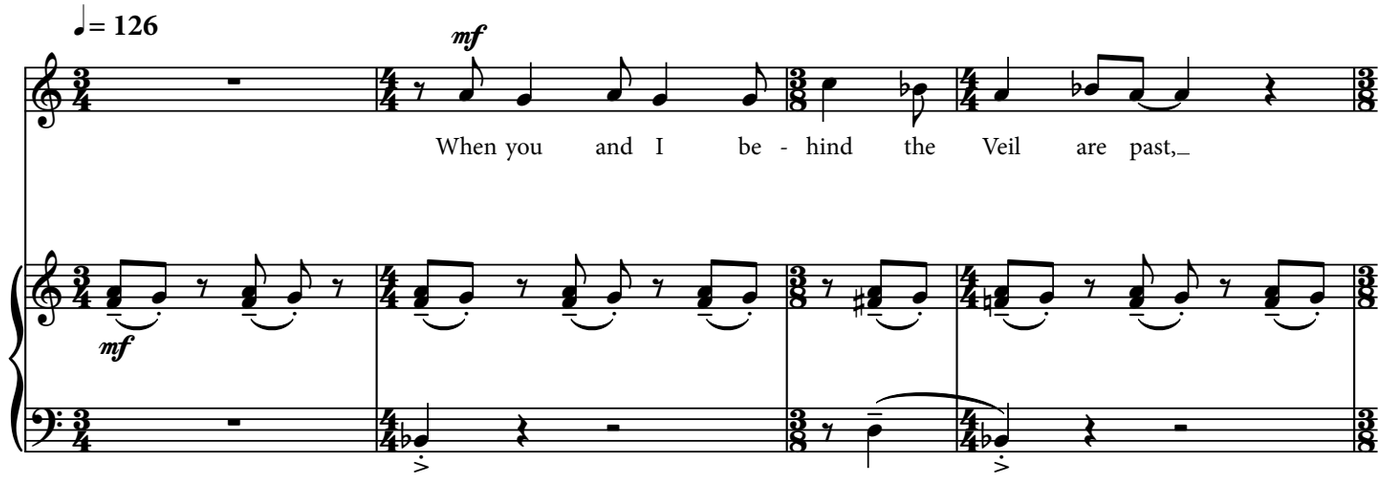
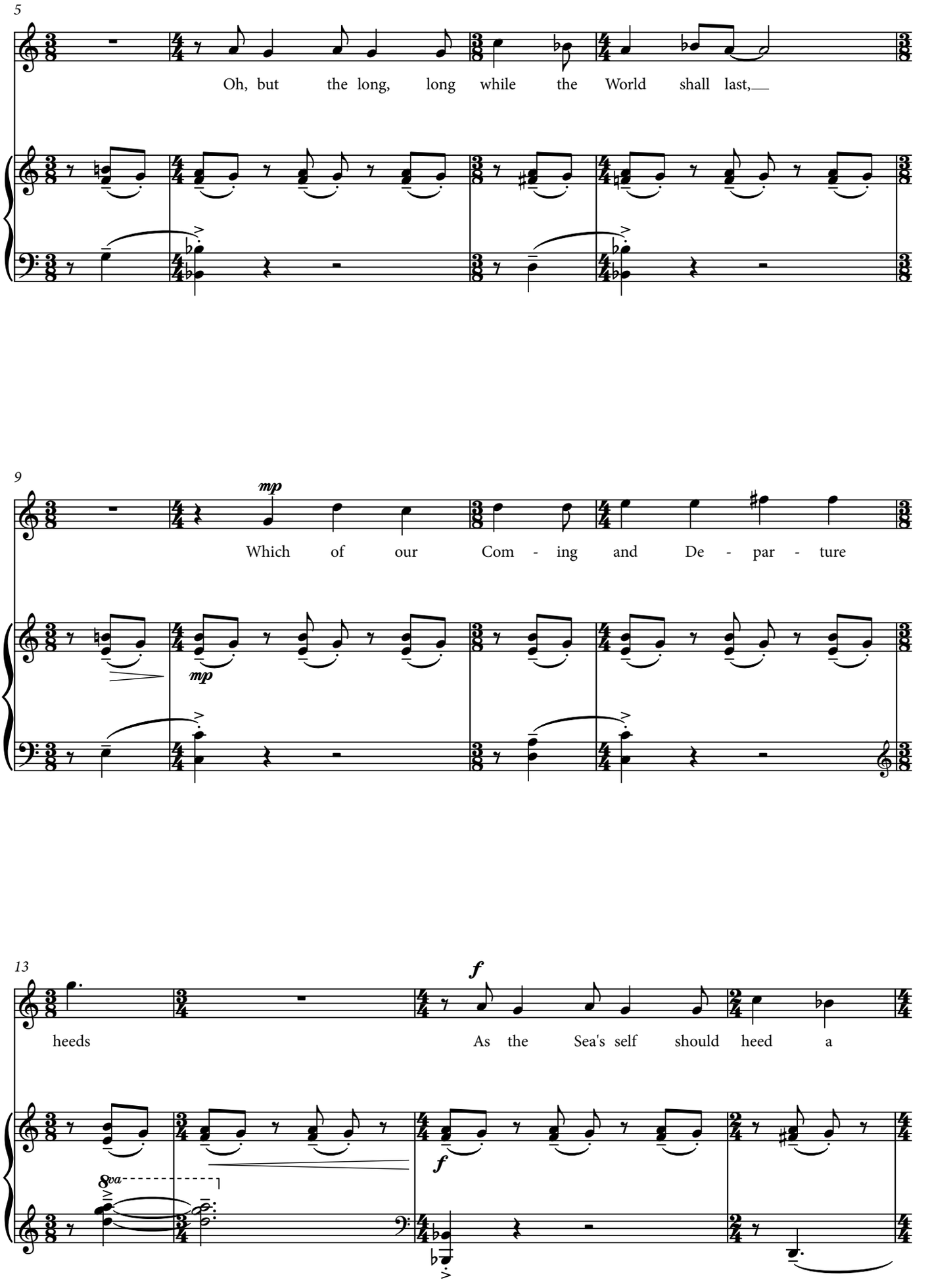
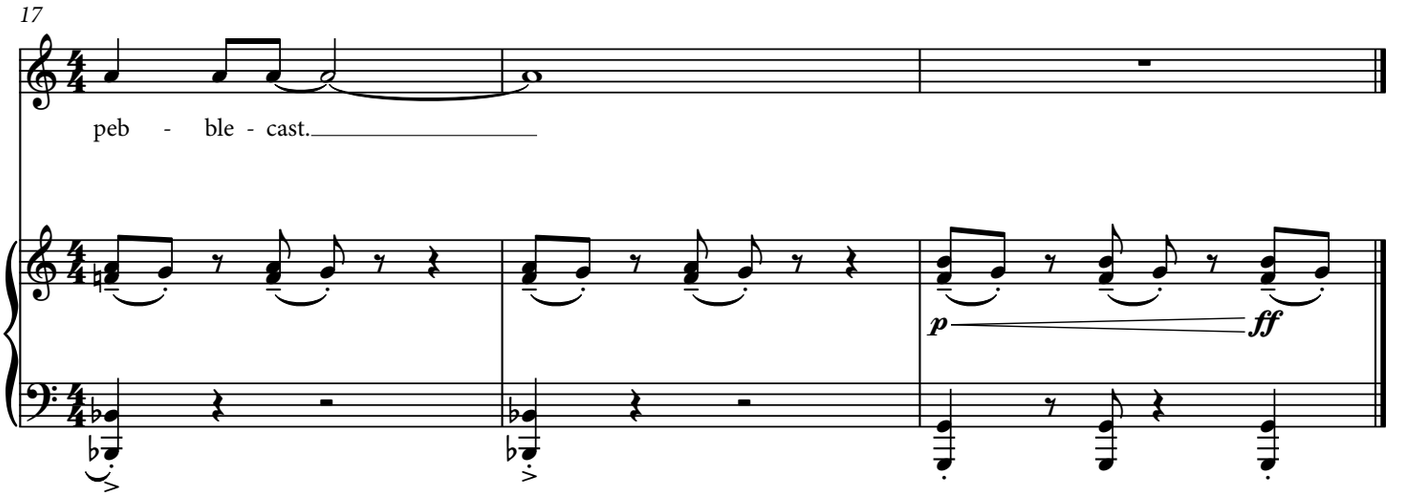



5
Oh, but the long, long while the World shall last,
9
mp
Which of our Com - ing and De - par - ture
mp
13
heeds
f
As the Sea's self should heed a
f
8va



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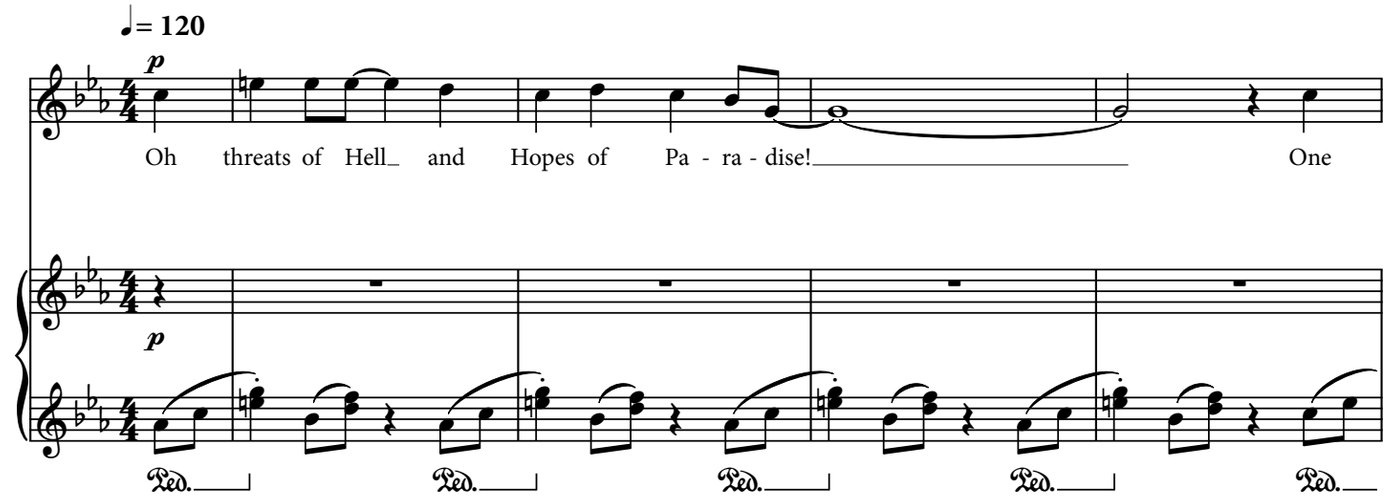

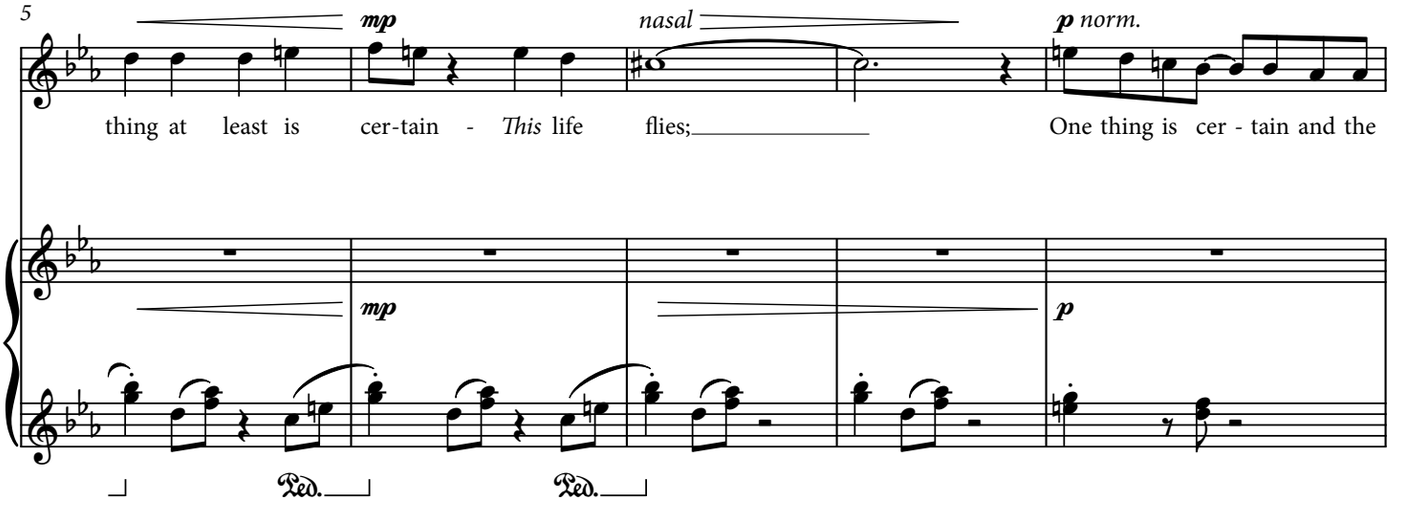

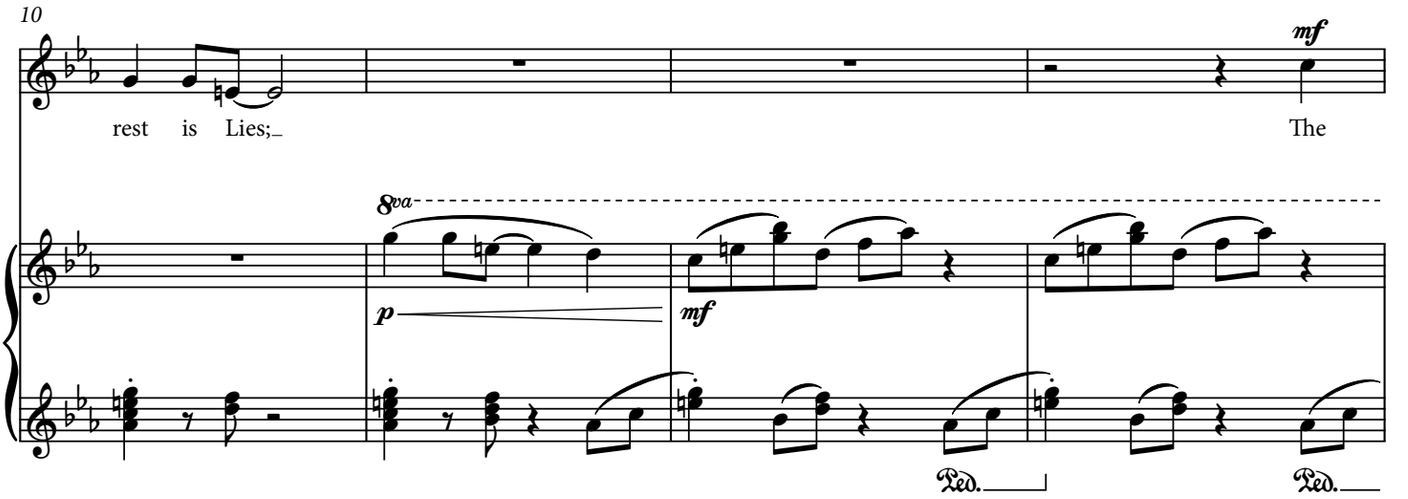

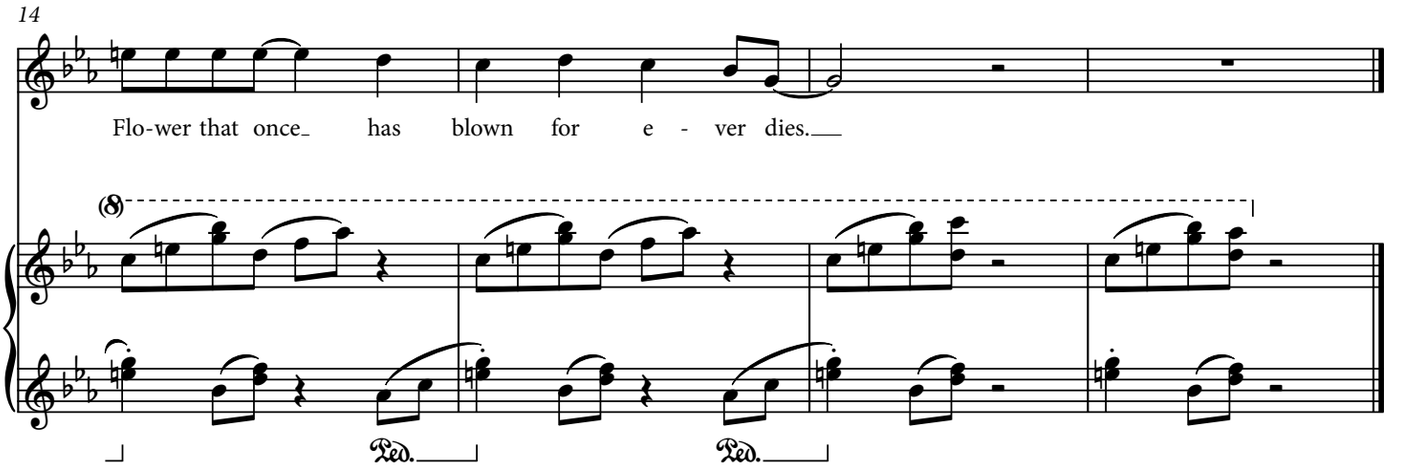

WHILE THE WORLD SHALL LAST

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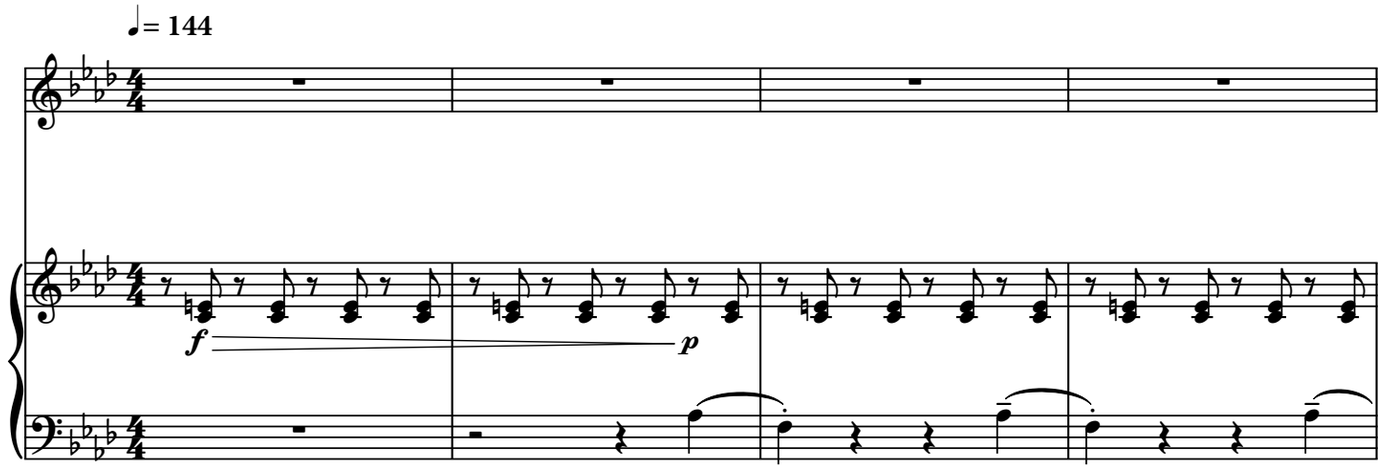
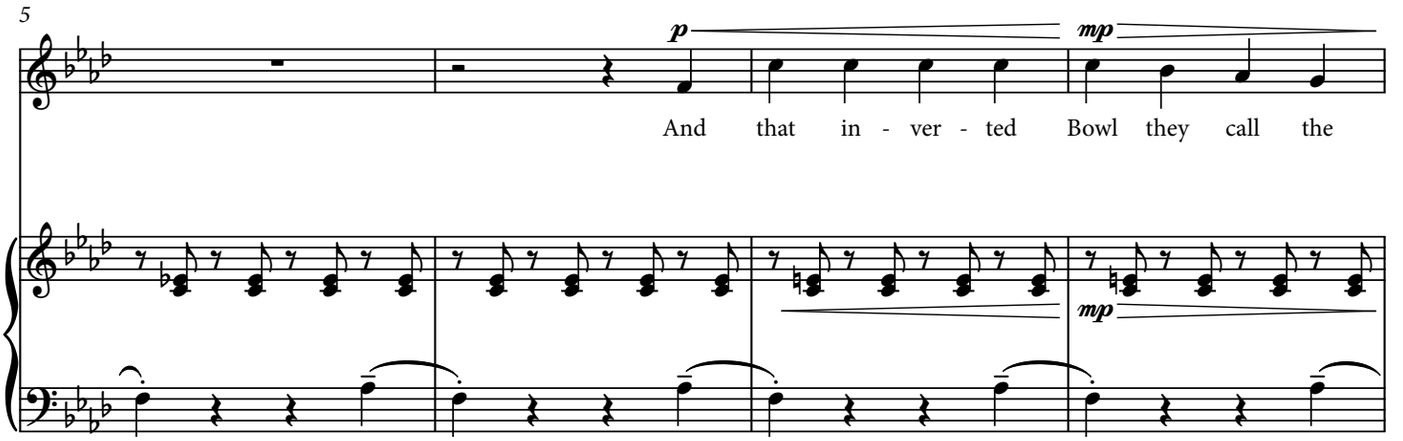
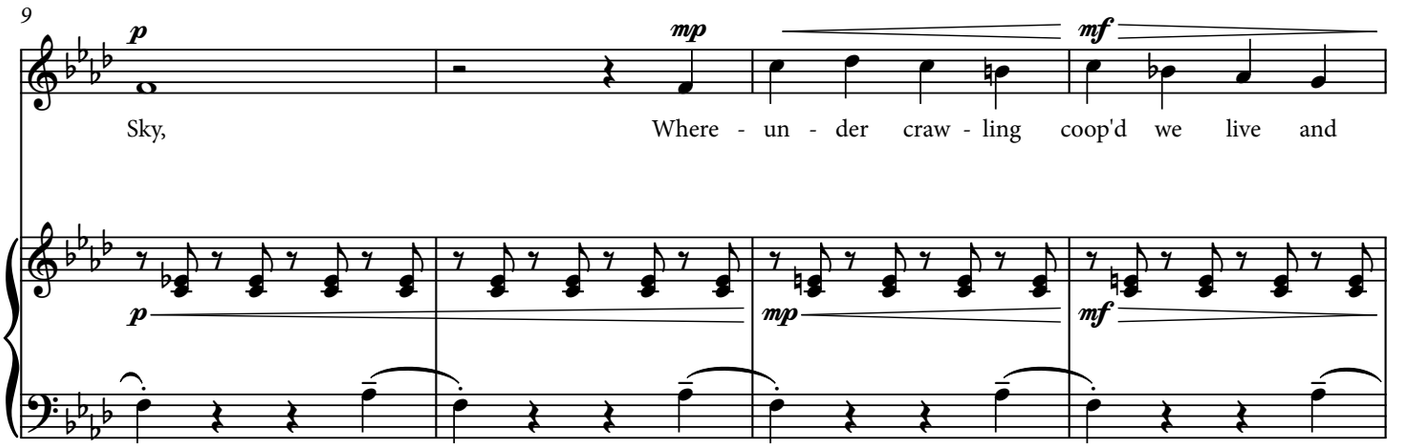
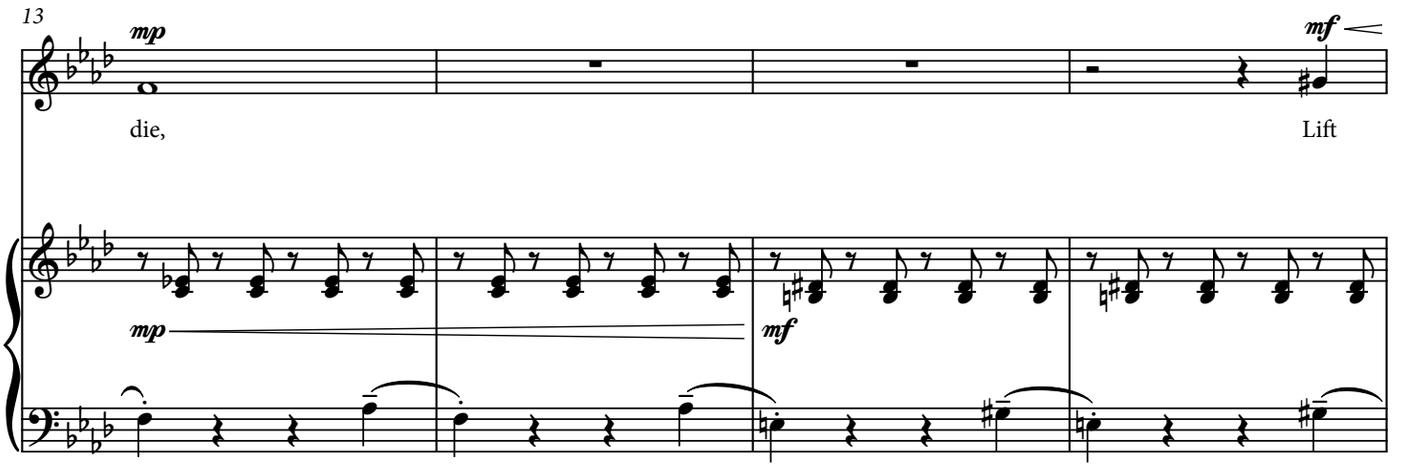
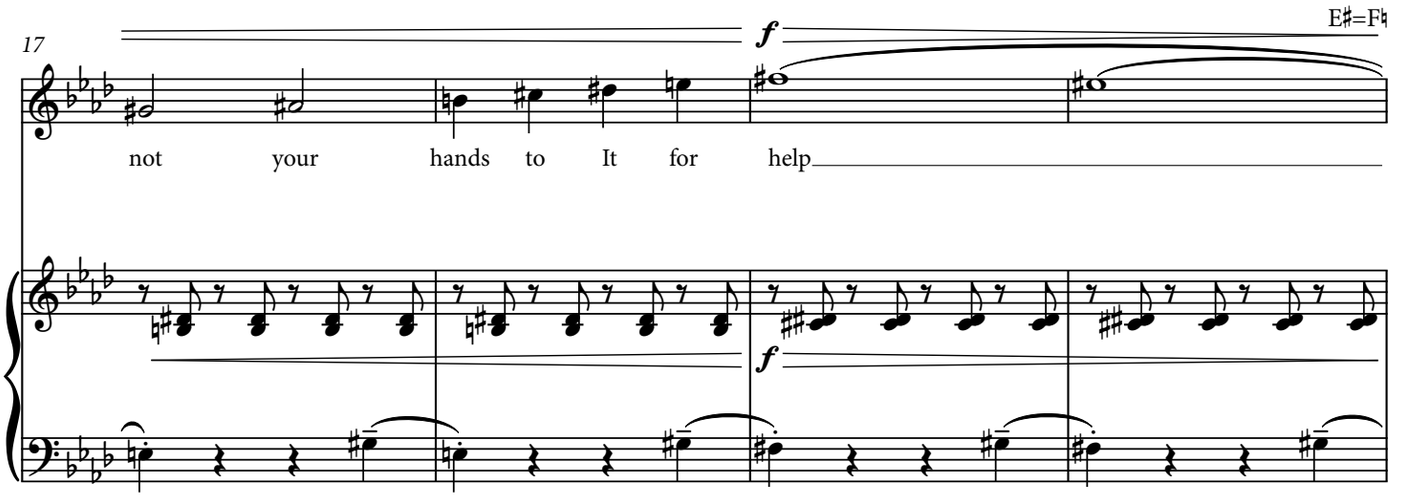
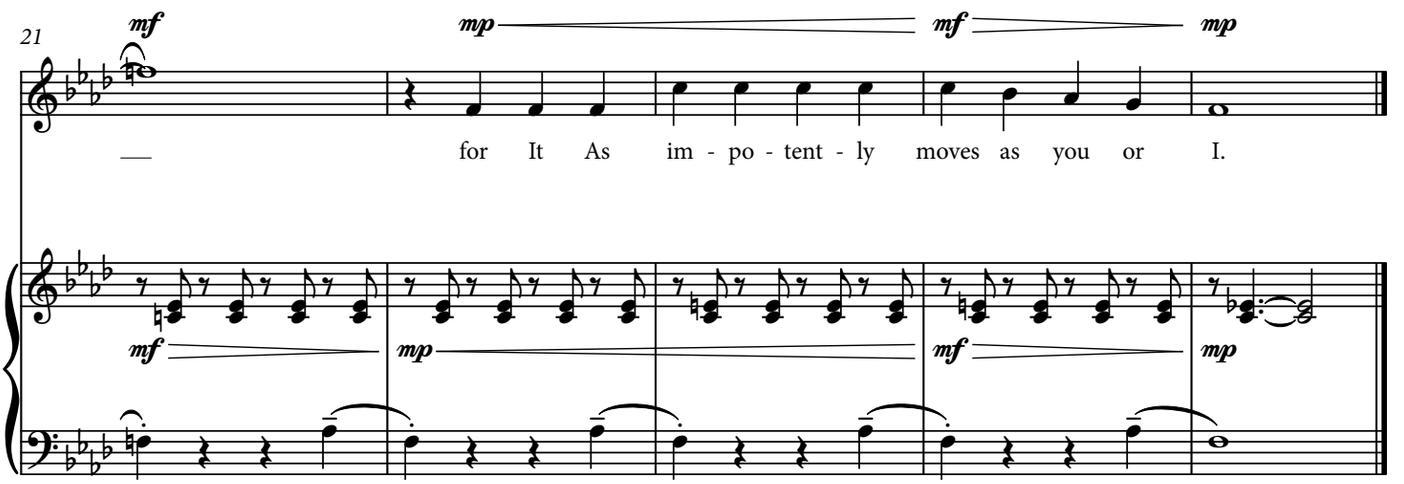



5
p
mp
And that in - ver - ted Bowl they call the
mp


9
p
mp
mf
Sky,
Where - un - der craw - ling coop'd we live and
p
mp
mf


13
mp
mf
die,
Lift
mp
mf





WHILE THE WORLD SHALL LAST

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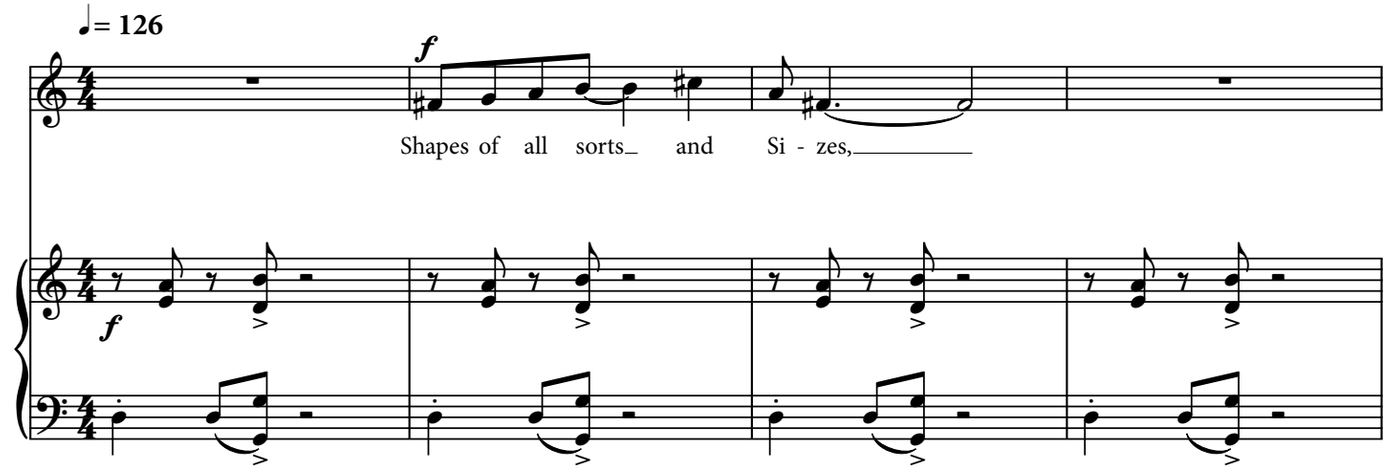
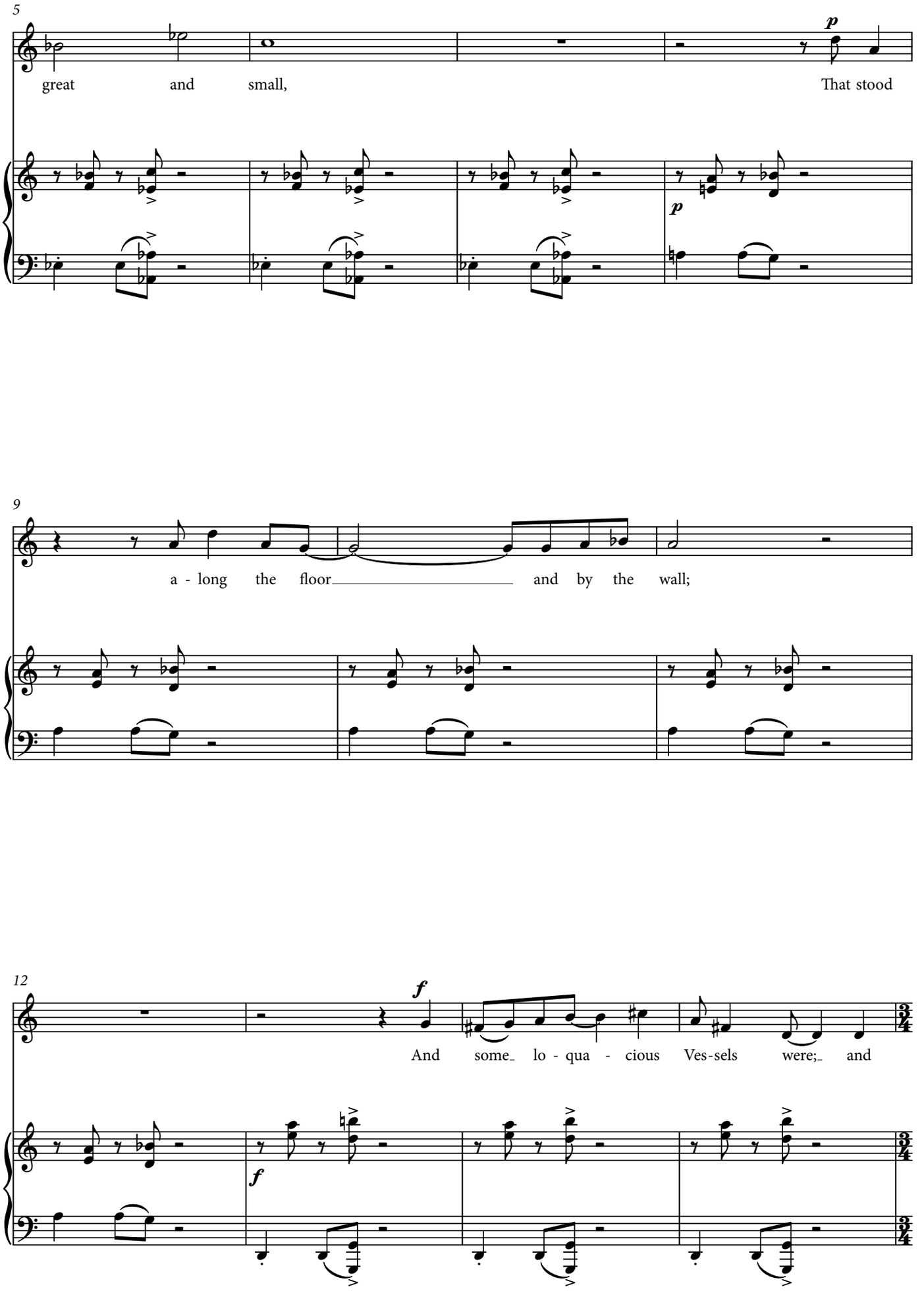
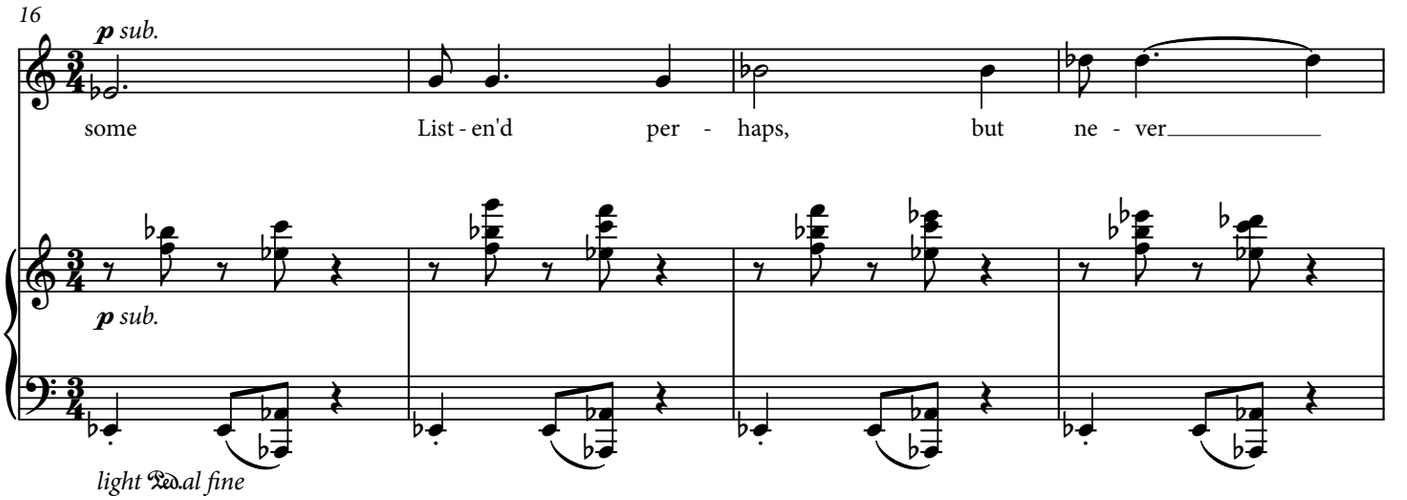
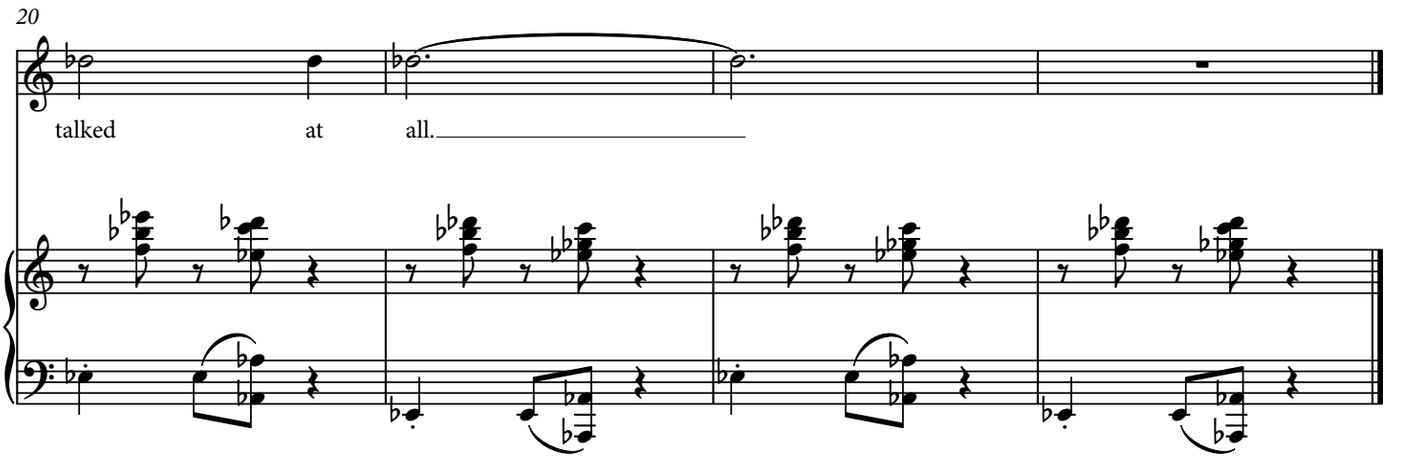



5
great and small, That stood
p
p
9
a - long the floor and by the wall;
12
f
And some lo - qua - cious Ves-sels were; and
f





WHILE THE WORLD SHALL LAST

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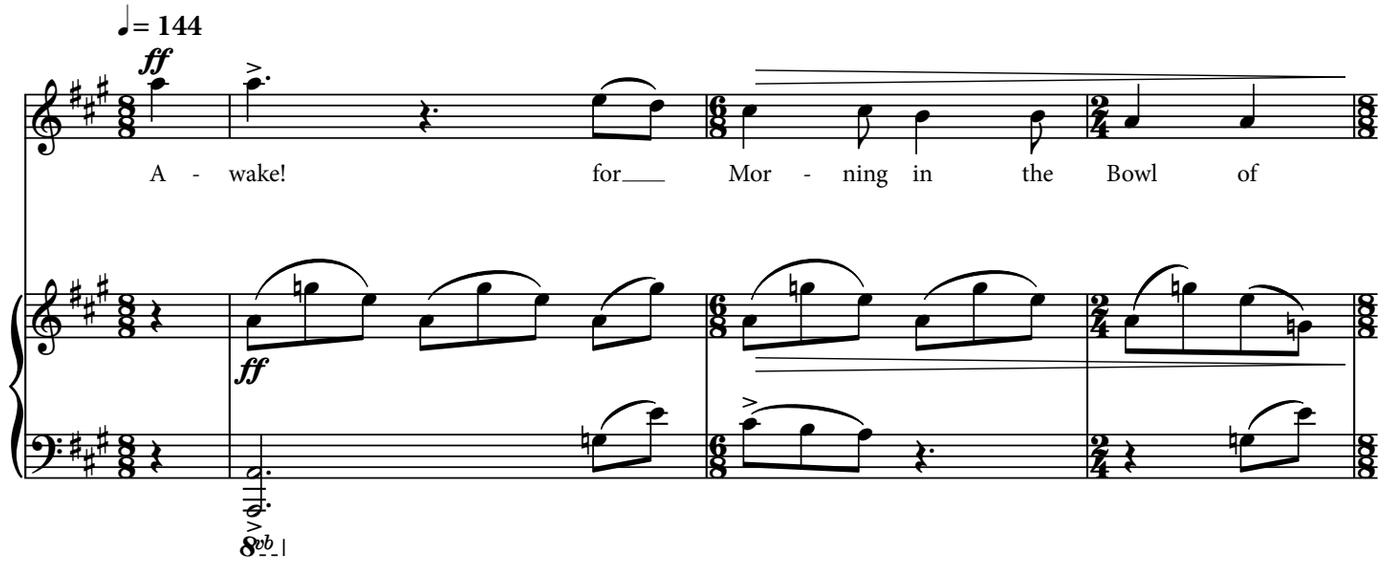
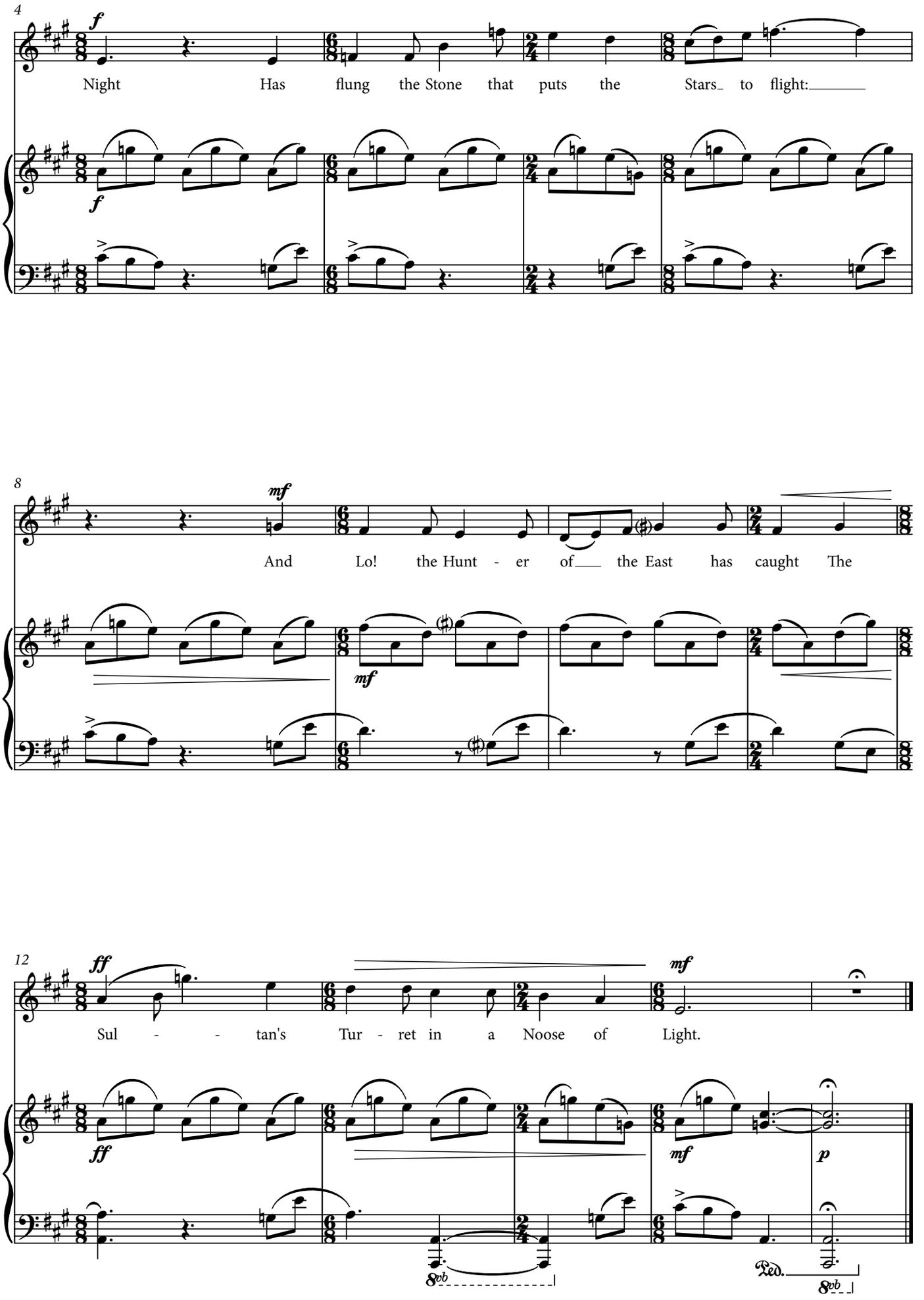
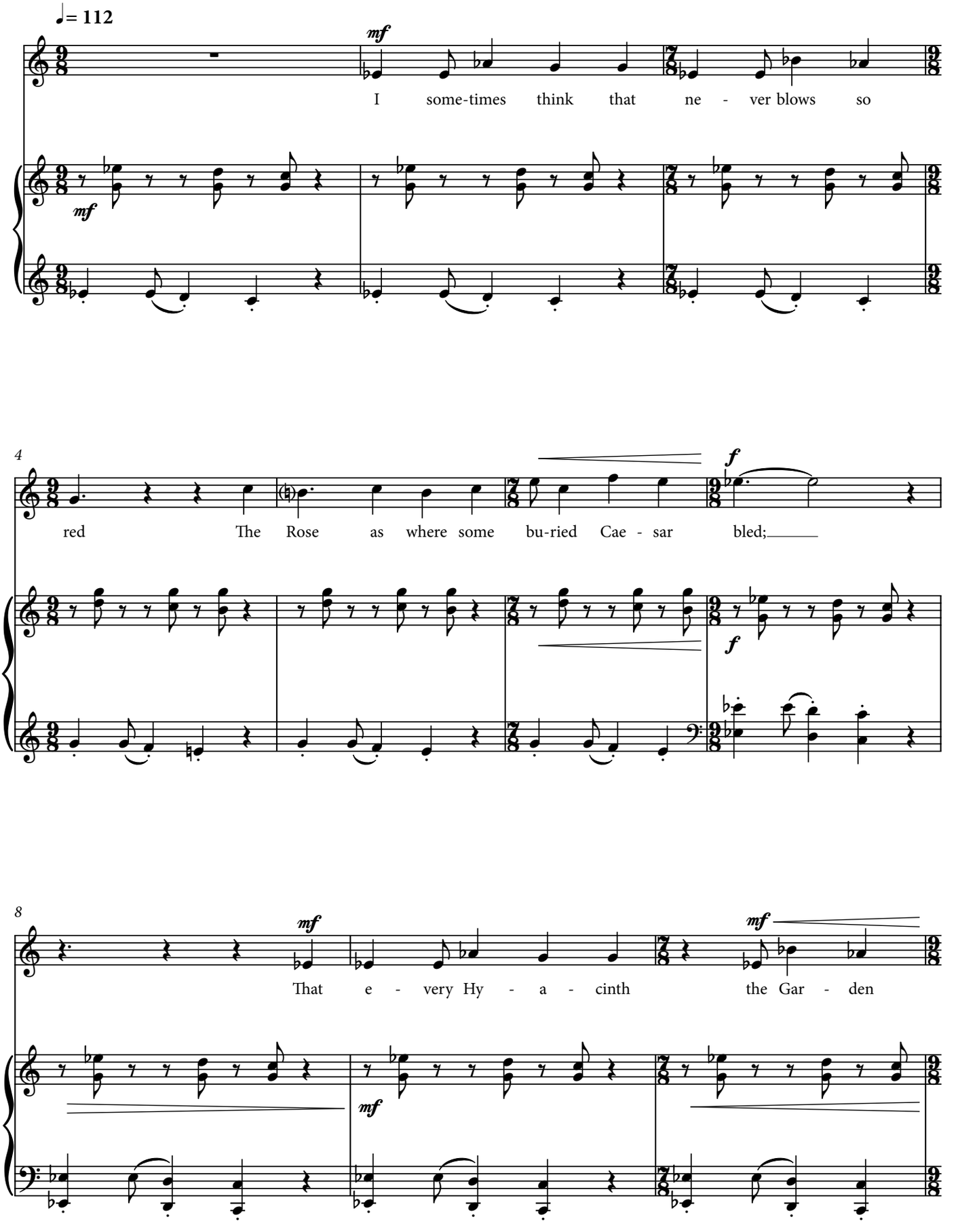
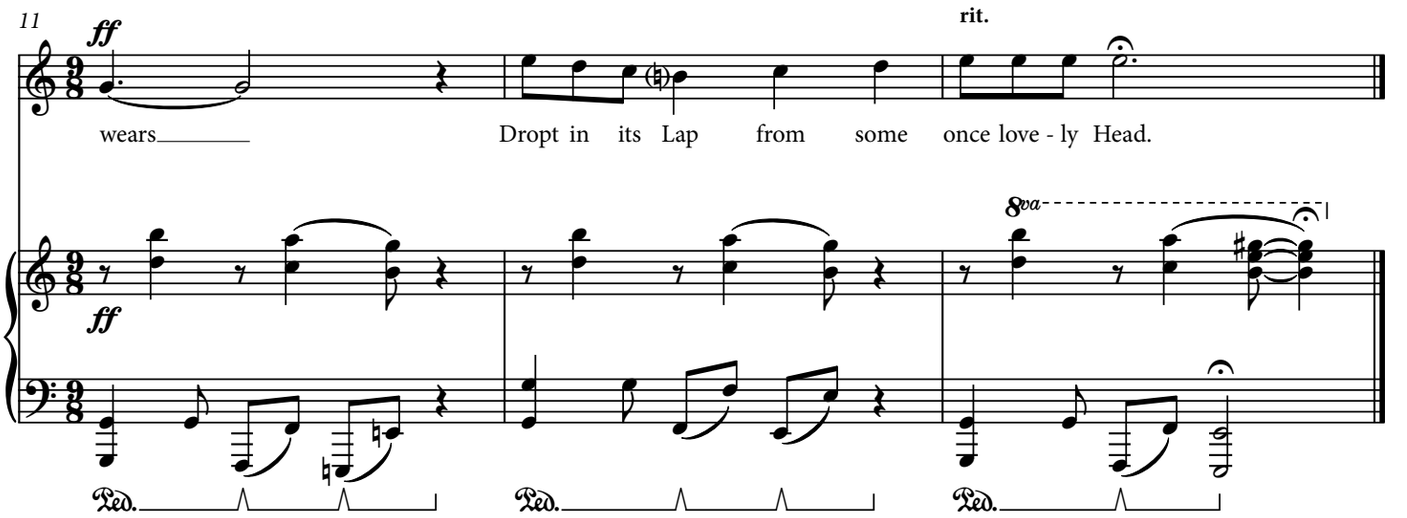



4
f
Night Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to flight:
8
mf
And Lo! the Hunt - er of the East has caught The
12
ff
Sul - - tan's Tur - ret in a Noose of Light.
mf
p
8vb
Ped.

WHILE THE WORLD SHALL LAST

PART 2, NO. 2 (18)





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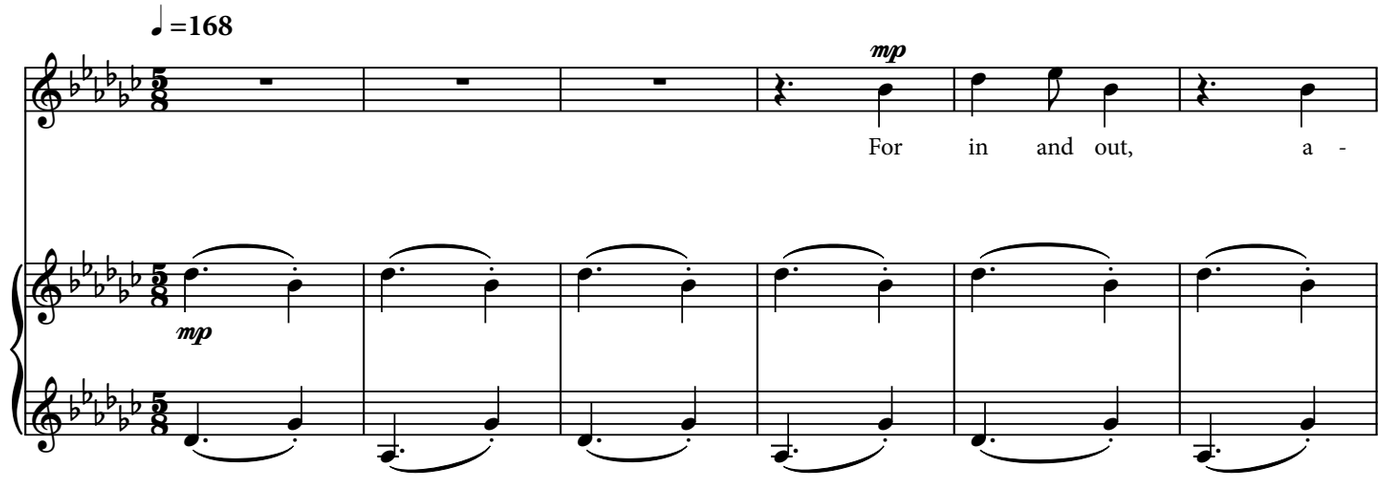
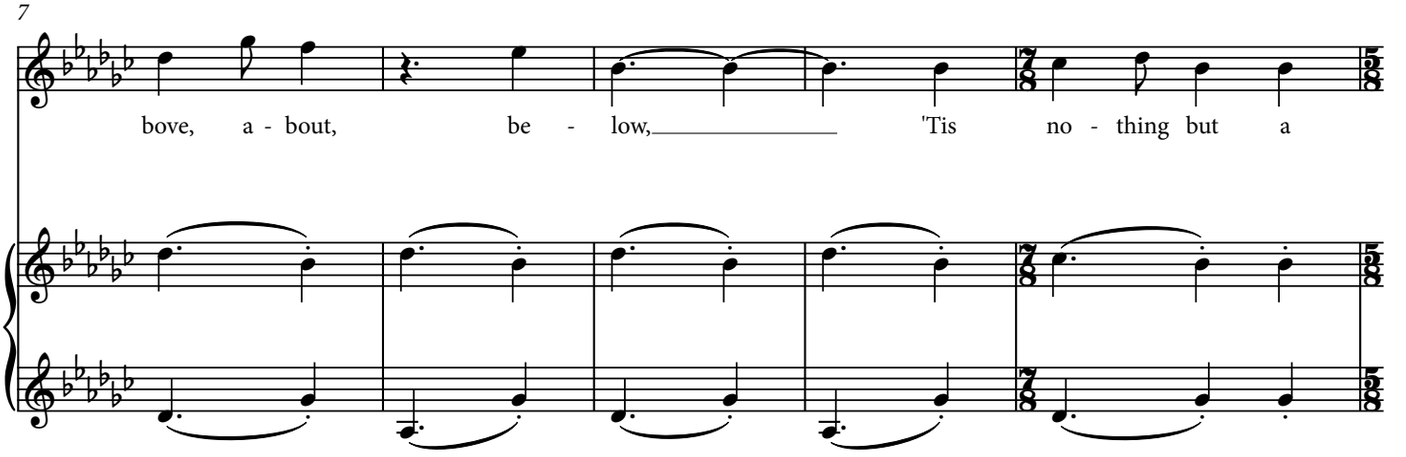
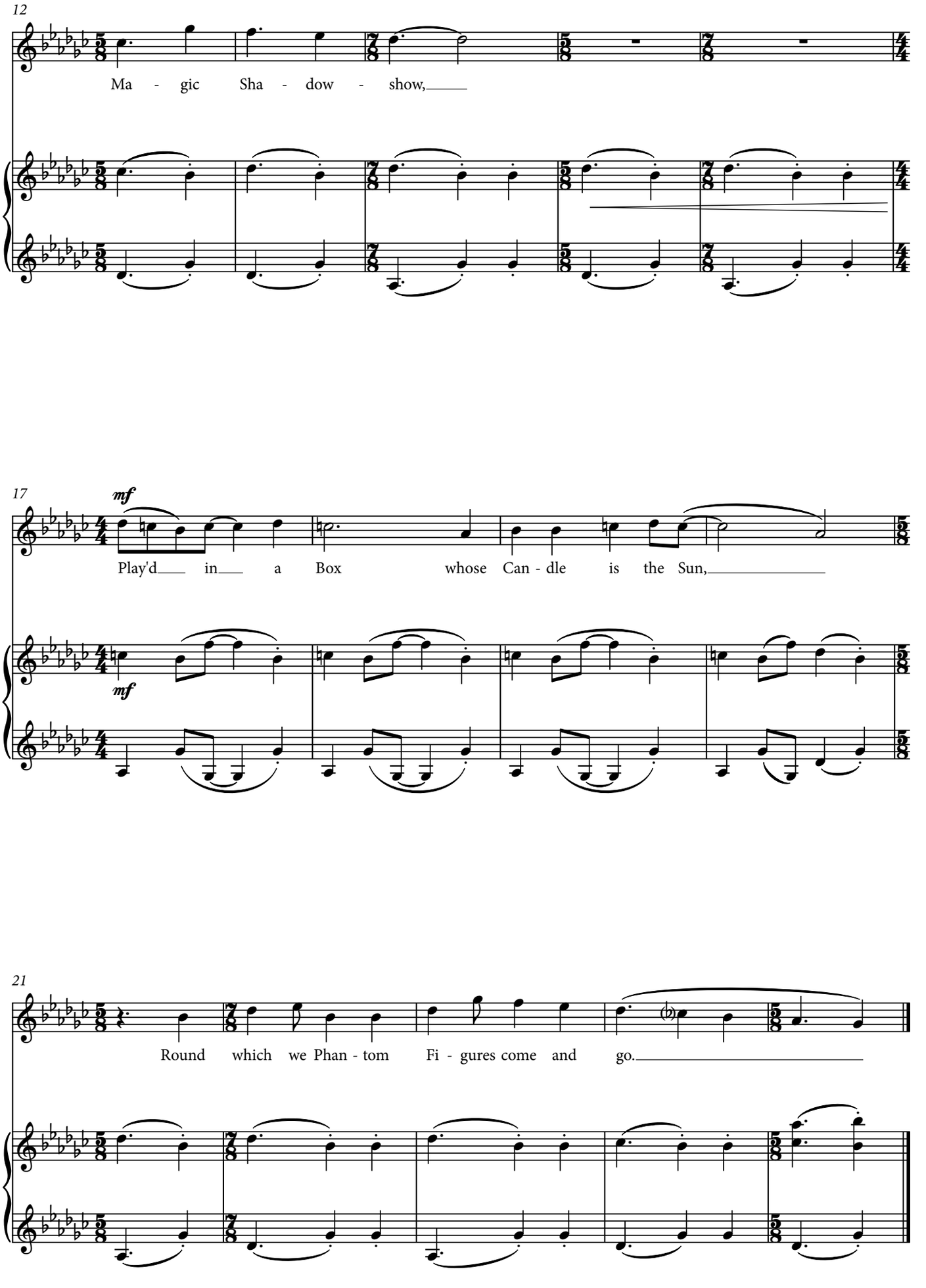
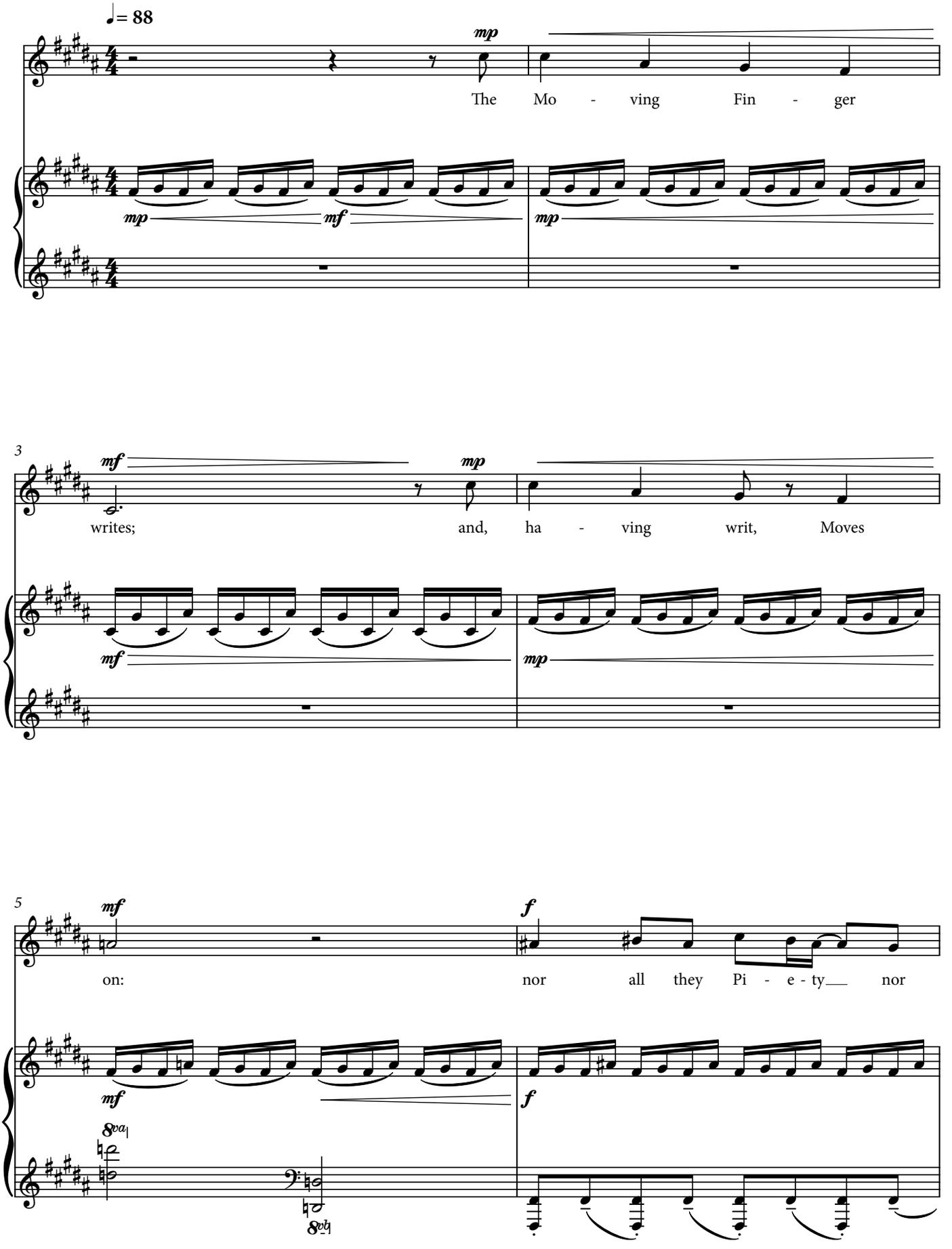


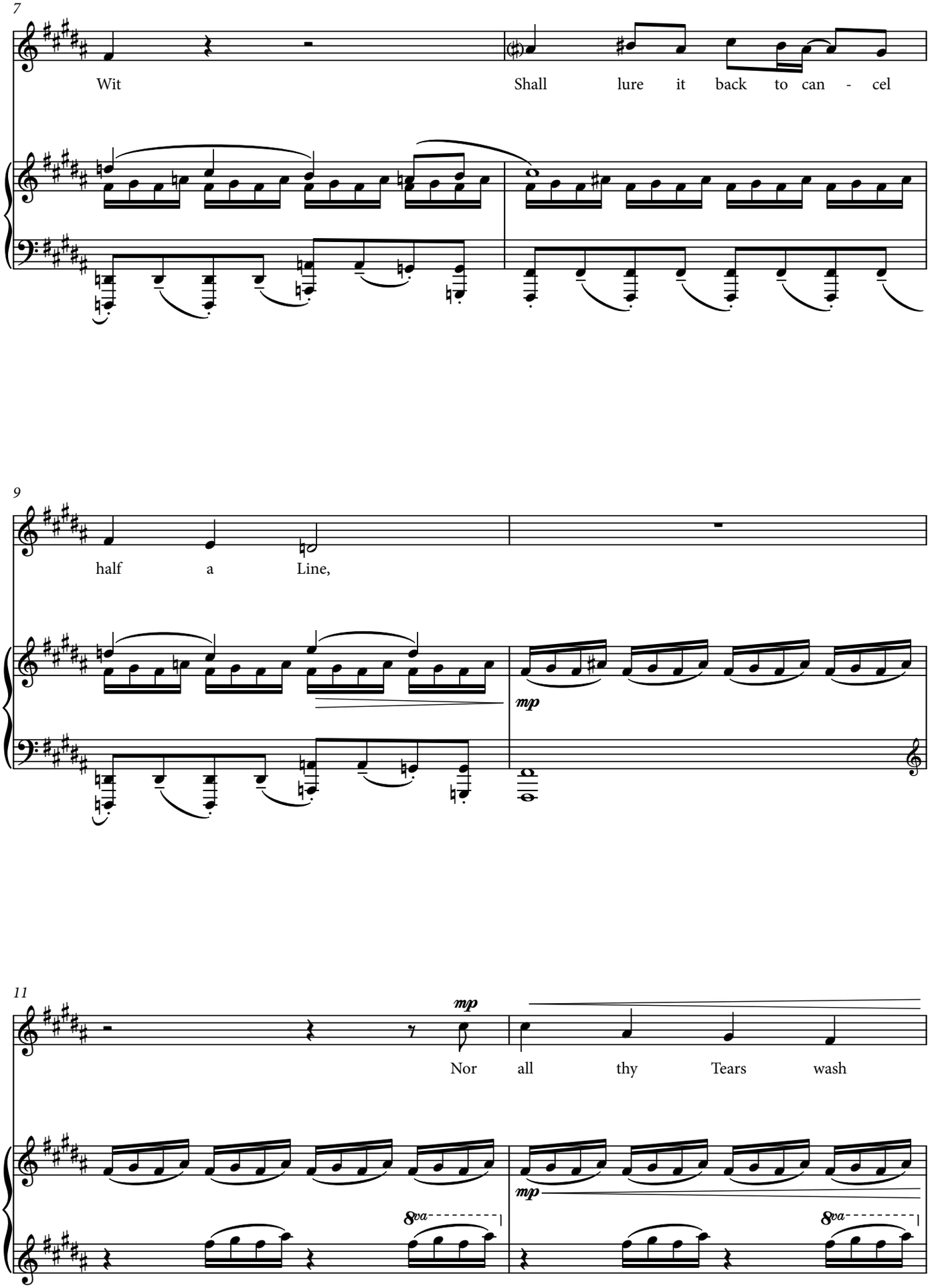


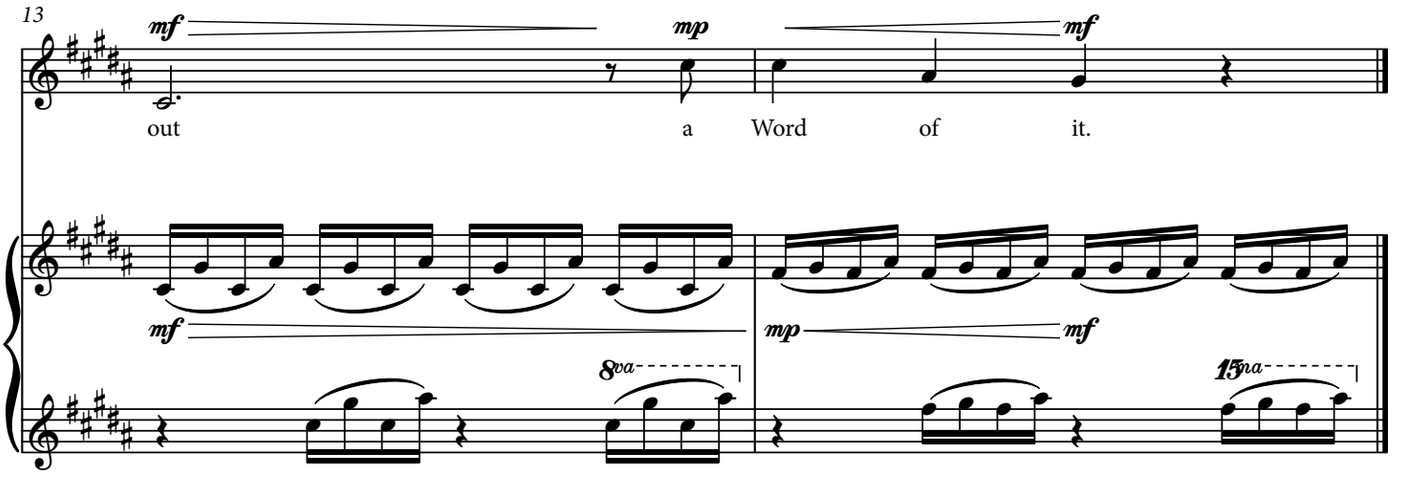

12
Ma - gic Sha - dow - show,
17
mf
Play'd in a Box whose Can - dle is the Sun,
mf
21
Round which we Phan - tom Fi - gures come and go.

WHILE THE WORLD SHALL LAST

PART 2, NO. 4 (51)




7
Wit
Shall lure it back to can - cel
9
half a Line,
mp
11
mp
Nor all thy Tears wash
mp
8va
8va



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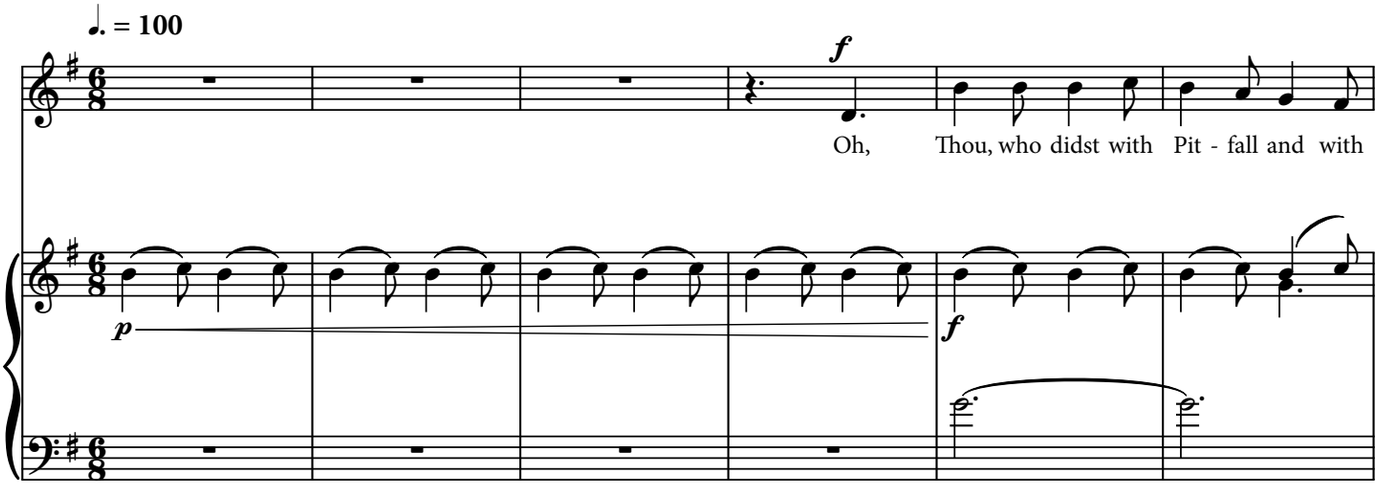

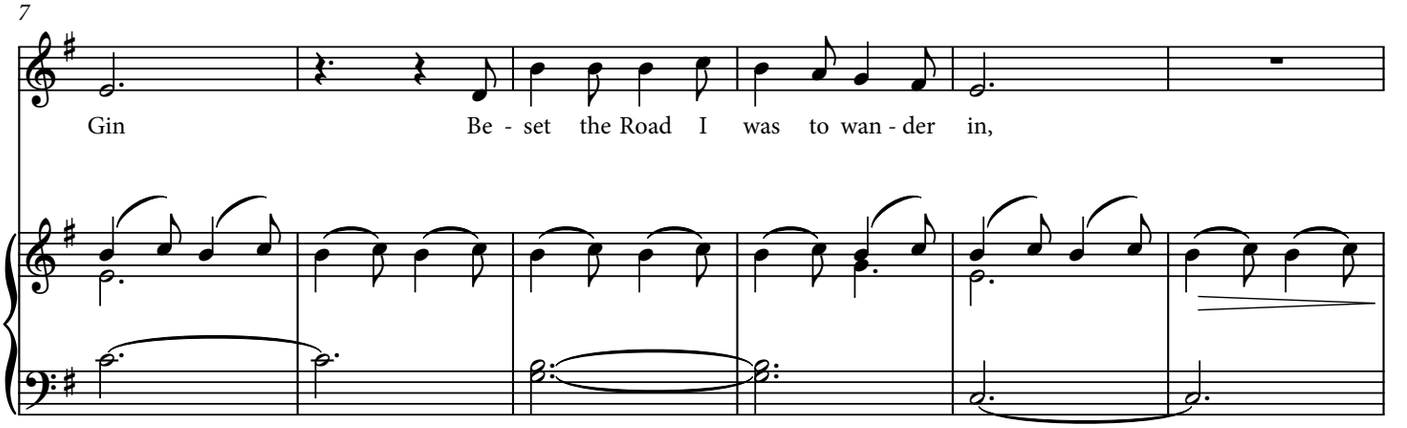

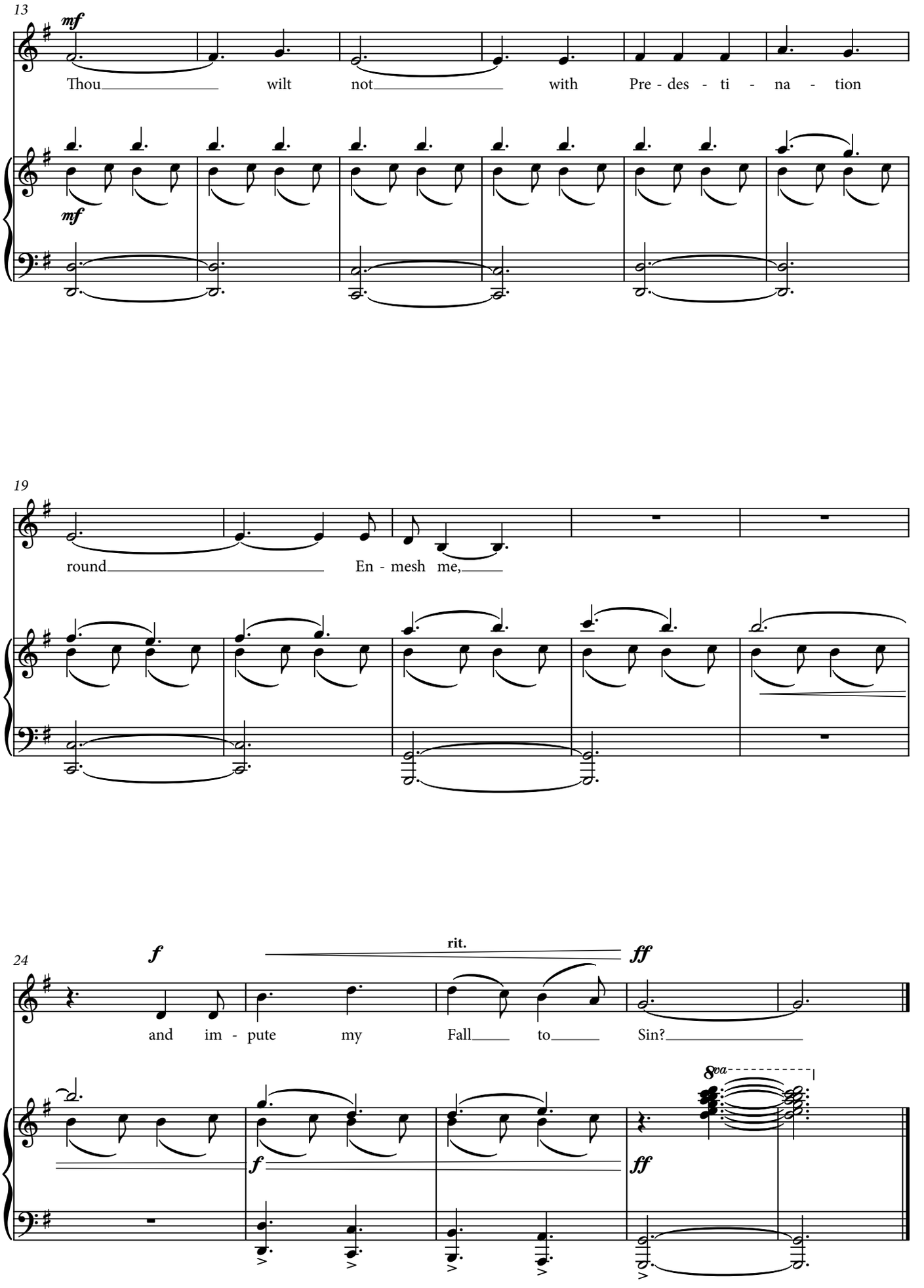
13
mf
Thou wilt not with Pre - des - ti - na - tion
mf
19
round En - mesh me,
24
f
rit.
ff
and im - pute my Fall to Sin?
8va
f
ff

WHILE THE WORLD SHALL LAST

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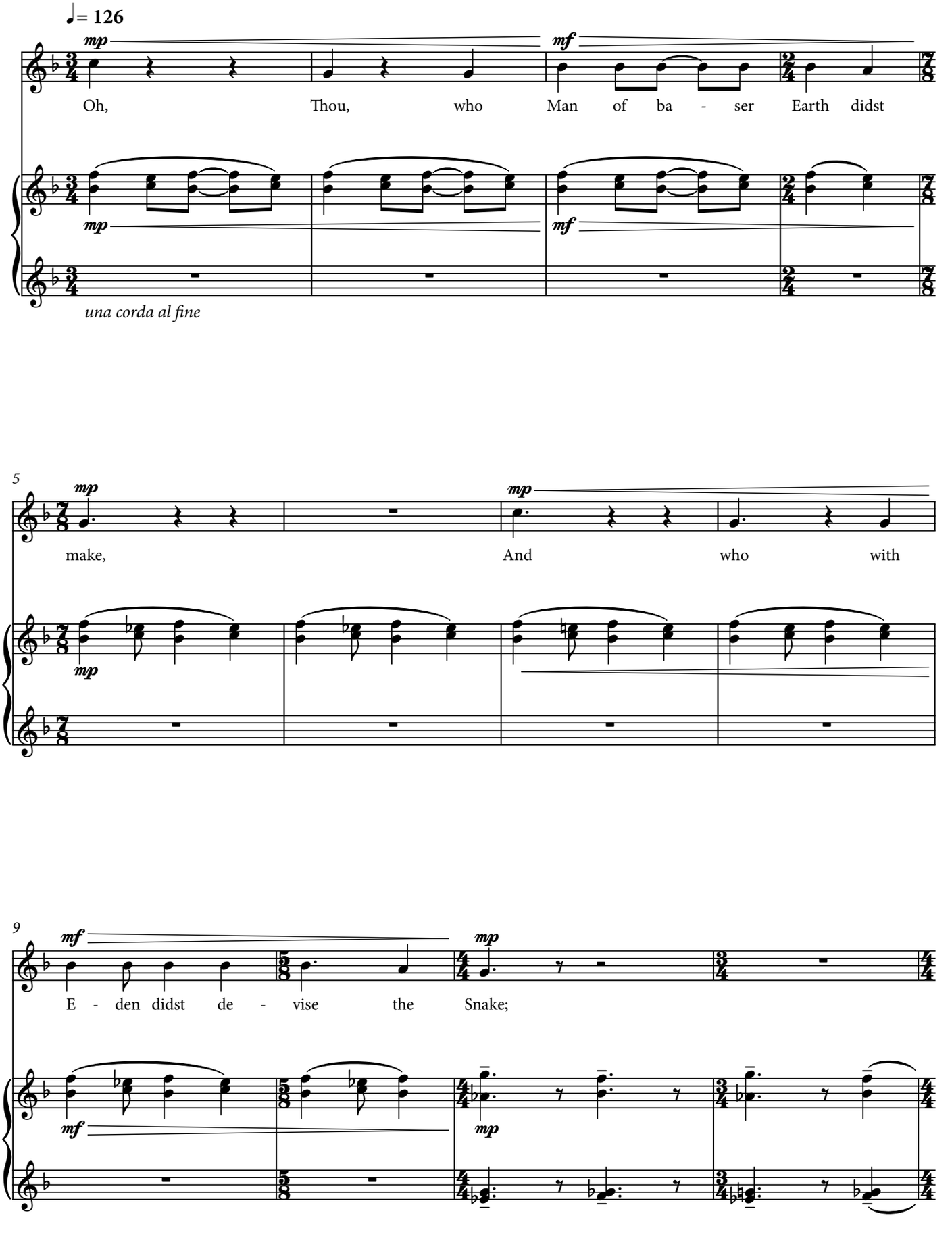

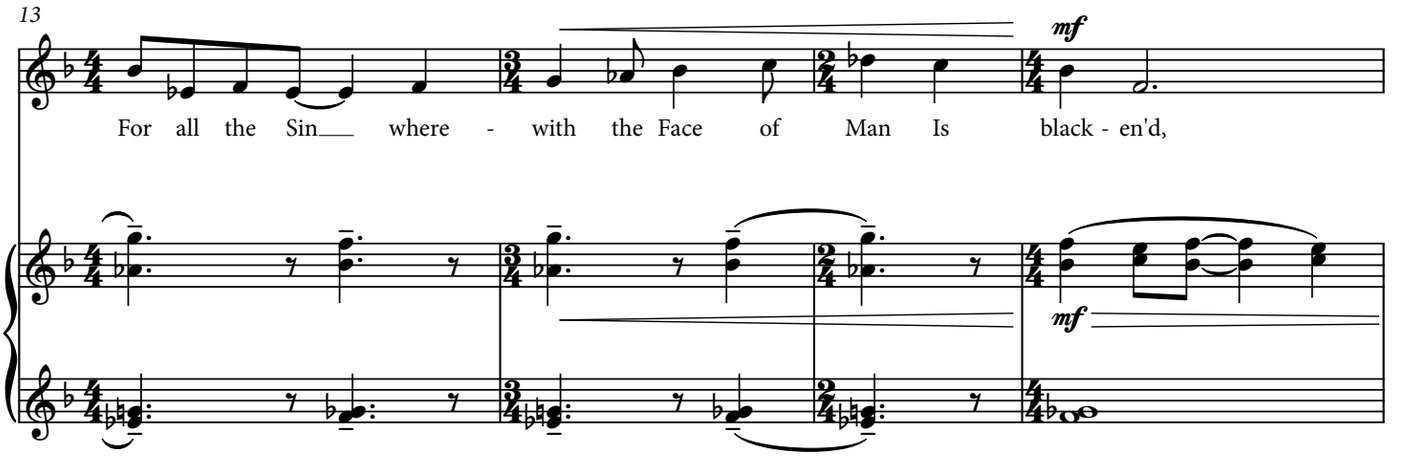

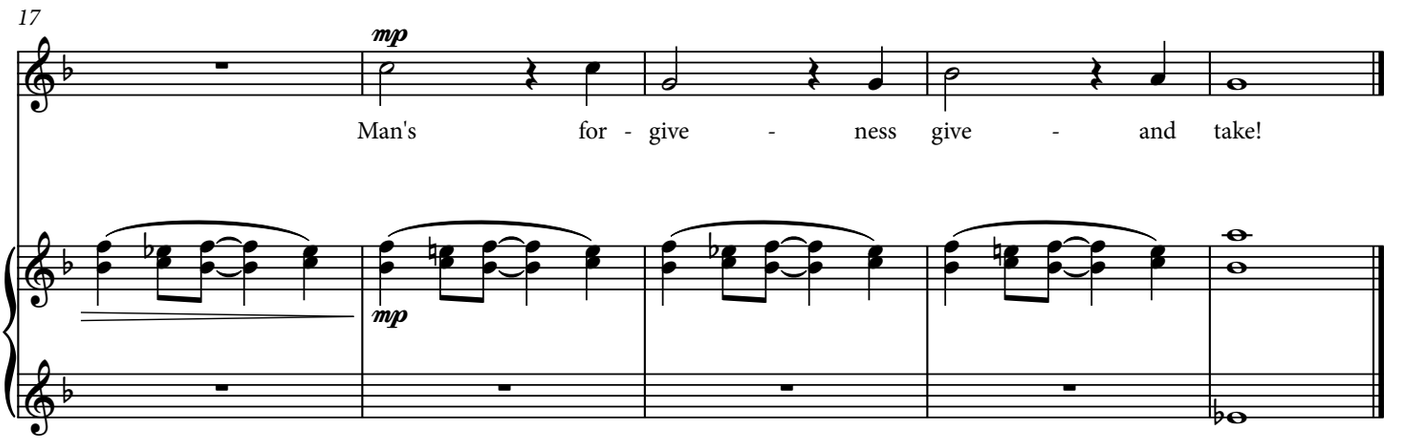

WHILE THE WORLD SHALL LAST

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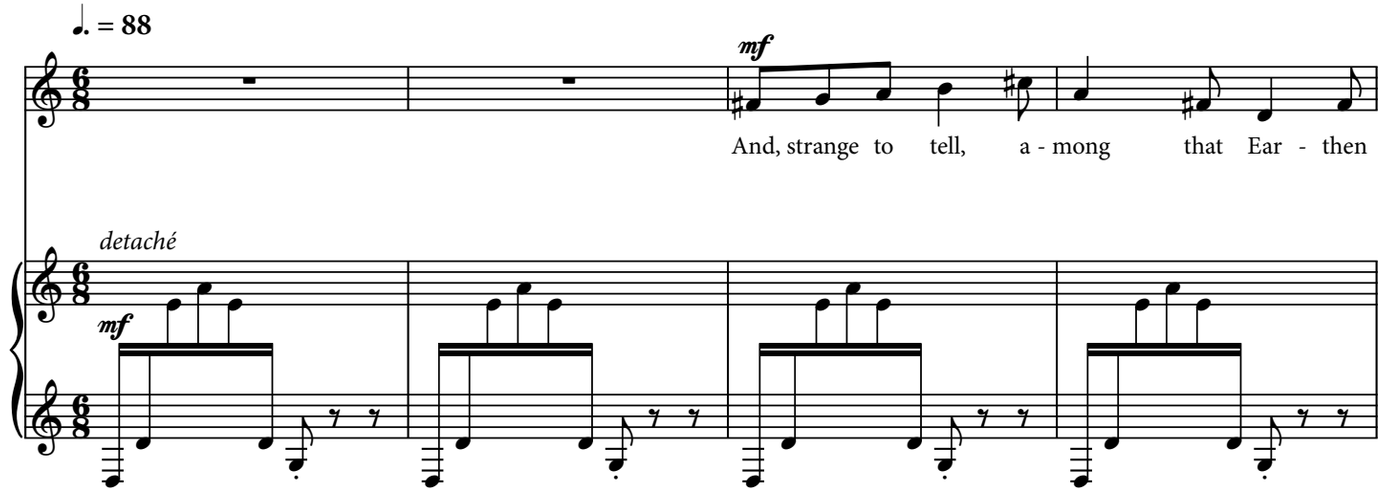

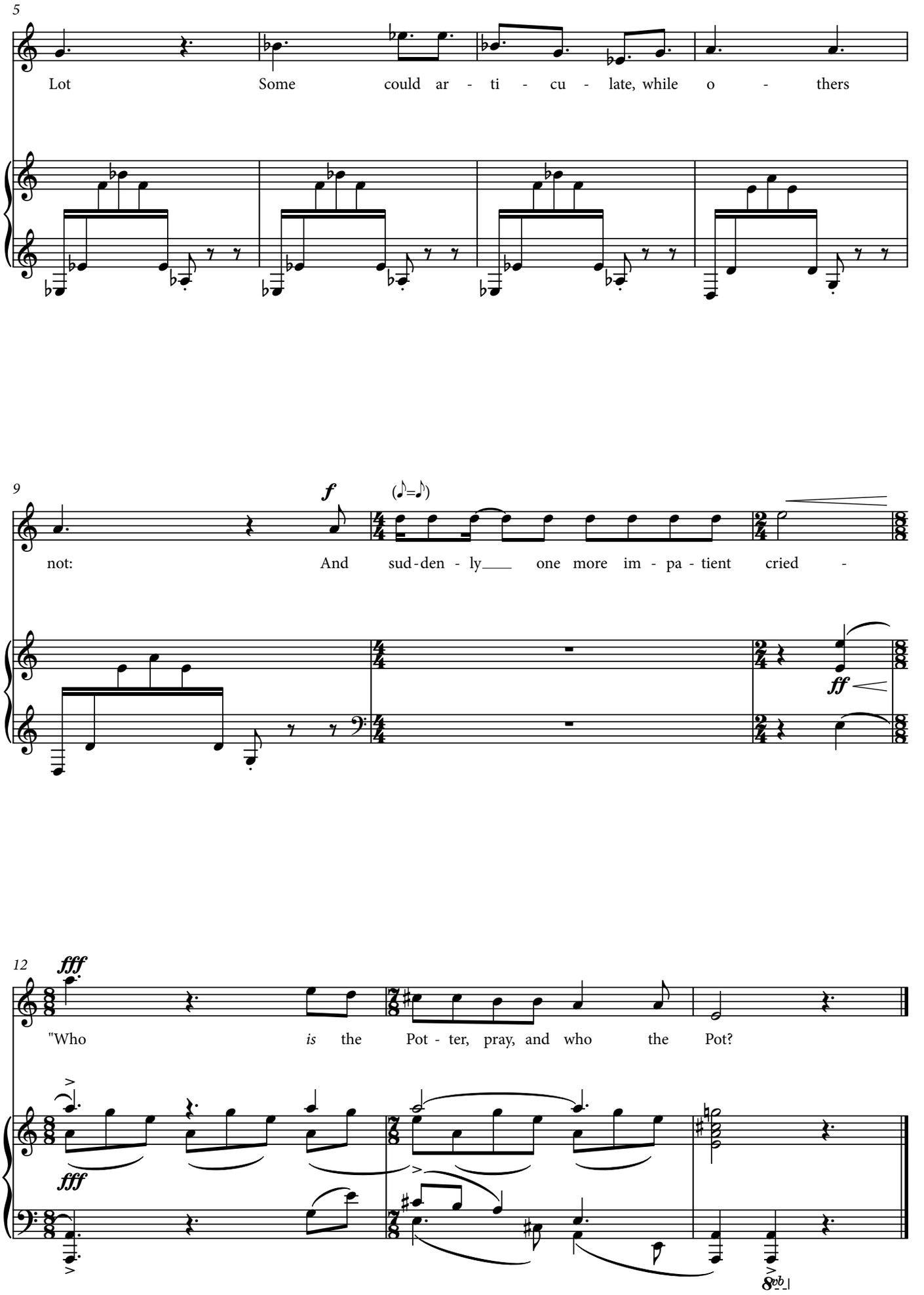
5
Lot Some could ar - ti - cu - late, while o - thers
9
f
(♪=♪)
not: And sud-den - ly one more im - pa - tient cried -
ff
12
fff
"Who is the Pot - ter, pray, and who the Pot?
fff
8vb