BLACK EARTH
ERIC SHANFIELD

BLACK EARTH

Poems by Sappho, translated by Anne Carson

Eric Shanfield | ENS.2025.3

July 2007/June 2025 | 13’

Soprano

4 Horns in F

2 Trumpets in Bb

2 Tenor Trombones

Bass Trombone

Tuba

> Score is *transposed.*

BLACK EARTH

Black Earth first suggested itself to me from a purely technical standpoint: there are twelve scale degrees and two basic kinds of triads, major and minor, which makes forty-six possible two-part permutations of major and minor triads, so I set myself the task of composing a piece which exhausted these possibilities as its principle organizing structural device. Because each section therefore consists entirely of an oscillation between two chords, in addition I determined that the rhythm of each chord should also follow a permutational series, each measure being of a given length, from two to eleven eighth notes. This structure being set, it seemed obvious that if I were composing a vocal piece I should set some kind of fragments, so I looked to the past. Fragments of ancient poetry have always held a certain fascination; from the *Lyra Graeca* to Guy Davenport's lapidary translations, these evocative shards not only hold the tantalizing promise of great works lost to time but stand as extraordinarily beautiful miniatures on their own. The great poet, thinker, and translator Anne Carson made a gorgeous version of Sappho's poetry, *If Not, Winter*, which was published in a beautiful edition with two colors and a page layout that dramatized the broken remains she worked from. Of these scraps I selected fifty-five to set for soprano with brass ensemble, a combination evoking everything from Balkan brass bands to American hymns to Renaissance polyphony.

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BLACK EARTH
Fragments of Sappho, translated by Anne Carson

1.4
heart
absolutely
I can
would be for me
to shine in answer
face
having been stained

2.6
so
Go
so we may see
lady
of gold arms
doom

3.9
invites
all not
feast
for Hera
as long as

4.12
thought
barefoot

5.15A
blessed
to loose all the wrongs he did before
by luck of the harbor

6.19
waiting
in sacrifices
having good
but going
for we know
of works
after
and toward
says this

7.20
gladness and
with good luck
to gain the harbor
of black earth

8.21
pity
trembling
flesh by now old age
covers
flies in pursuit
noble
taking
sing to us
the one with violets in her lap
mostly
goes astray

9.24A
you will remember
for we in our youth
did these things
yes many and beautiful things

10.24C
we live
the opposite
daring

11.24D
in a thin voice

12.25
quit
luxurious woman

13.26
you, I want
to suffer
in myself I am
aware of this

14.29A
deep sound

15.32
who honored me
by giving their works

16.34
stars around the beautiful moon
hide back their luminous form
whenever all full she shines
on the earth
silvery

17.36
I long and seek after

18.37
in my dripping (pain)
the blamer may winds and terrors
carry him off

19.38
you burn me

20.41
for you beautiful ones my thought
is not changeable

21.42
their heart grew cold
they let their wings down

22.43
beautiful he
stirs up still things
exhaustion the mind
settles down
but come O beloveds
for day is near

23.44Ab
of the Muses
makes and of the Graces
with slender
for mortals: there is a share

24.45
as long as you want

25.46
and I on a soft pillow
will lay down my limbs

26.52
I would not think to touch the sky with two arms

27.53
pure Graces with arms like roses
come here daughters of Zeus

28.54
having come from heaven wrapped in a purple cloak

29.56
not one girl I think
who looks on the light of the sun
will ever
have wisdom
like this

30.68B
playing
for me harsh

31.73A
Aphrodite
sweetworded desires
throw
holding
sits
dews

32.78
nor
desire
but all at once
blossom
desire
took delight

33.80
all
but different
hair

34.82B

and if
nothing
but now
don't
more finely shaped

35.102
sweet mother I cannot work the loom
I am broken with longing for a boy by slender Aphrodite

36.103B
of the chamber
bride with beautiful feet

37.103Cb
they heard
maidens

38.104B
of all stars the most beautiful

39.107
do I still yearn for my virginity?

40.108
O beautiful O graceful one

41.113
for no
other girl
O bridegroom
such as this one now

42.118
yes! radiant lyre speak to me
become a voice
43.120
but I am not someone who likes to wound
rather I have a quiet mind

44.122
gathering flowers so very delicate a girl

45.*123*
just now goldsandaled Dawn

46.125
I used to weave crowns

47.126
may you sleep on the breast of your delicate friend

48.129B
or you love some man more than me

49.136
messenger of spring
nightingale with a voice of longing

50.153
girl sweetvoiced

51.161
guard her
bridegrooms
kings of cities

52.163
my darling one

53.165
that man seems to himself

54.185
honeyvoiced

55.188
Mythweaver

Transposed Score

BLACK EARTH

Sappho
trans. Anne Carson

Eric Shanfield

♩= 138

Soprano

heart ab - so - lute - ly I

Horn 1 in F

Horn 2 in F

Horn 3 in F

Horn 4 in F

wide mariachi vibrato

Trumpet 1, 2 in B♭

Tenor Trombone 1, 2

Bass Trombone

Tuba

Sop.

can would be for me to shine in an - swer

Hn. 1, 2

Hn. 3, 4

Tpt. 1, 2

Tbn. 1, 2

B. Tbn.

Tba.

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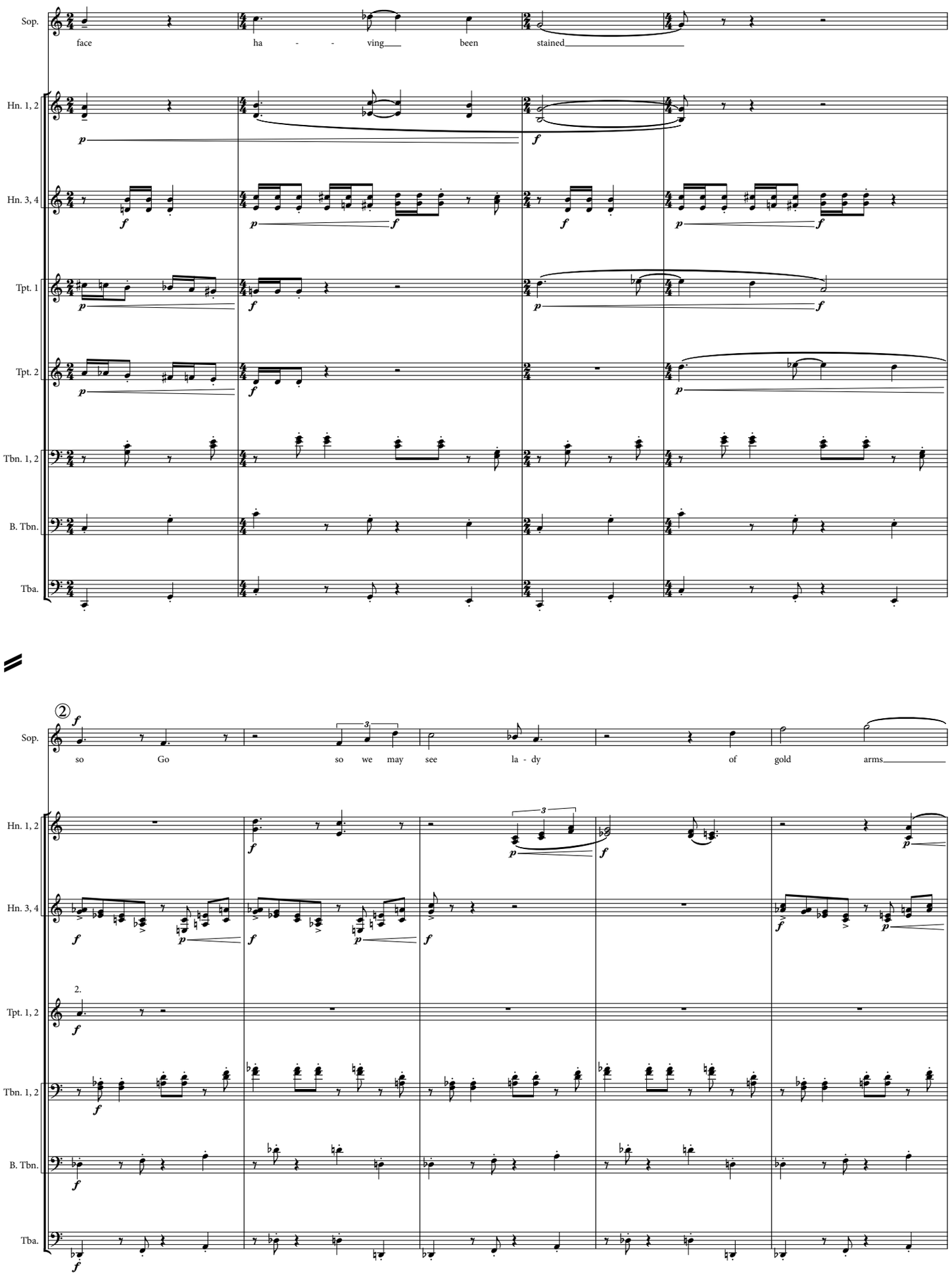
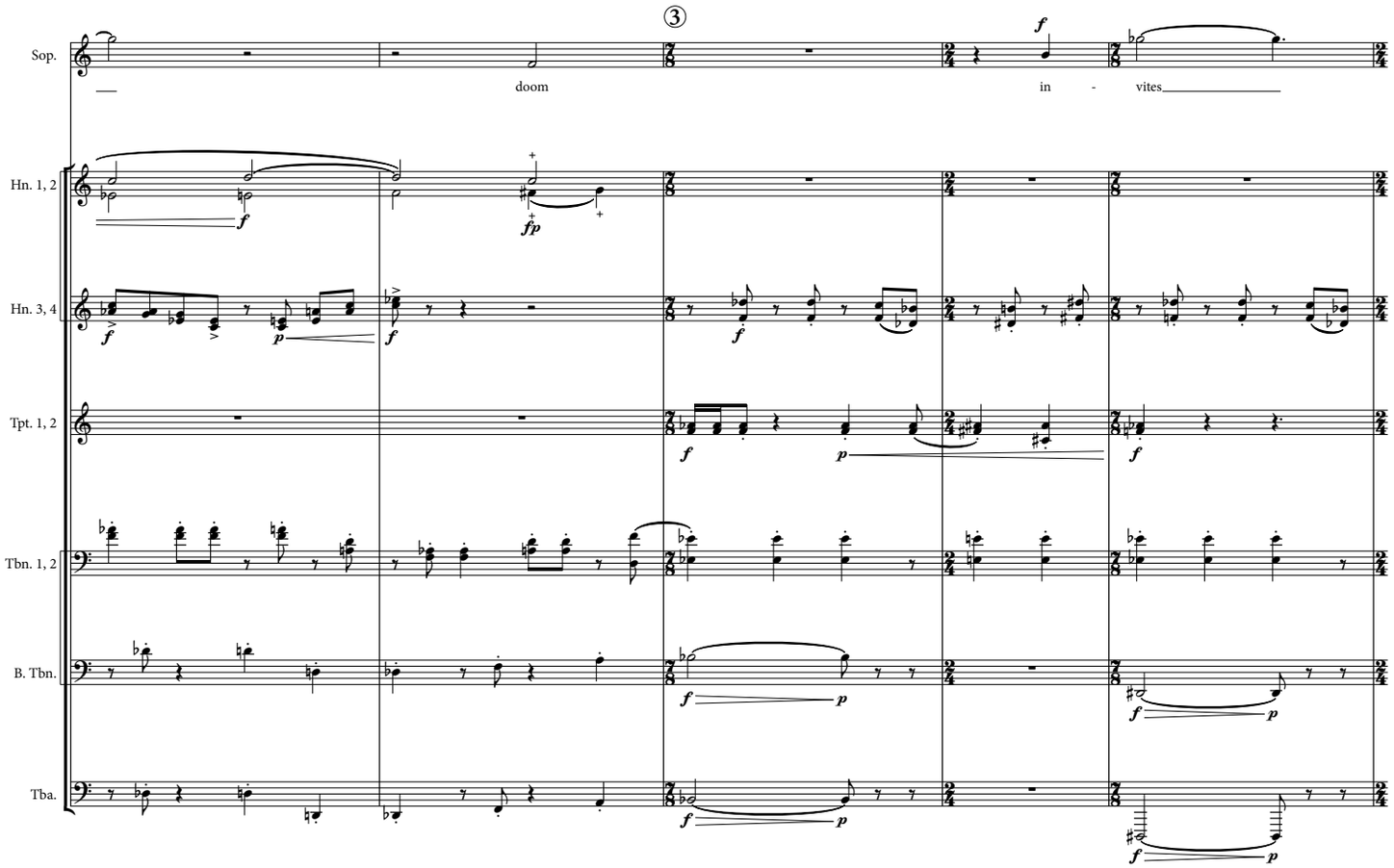
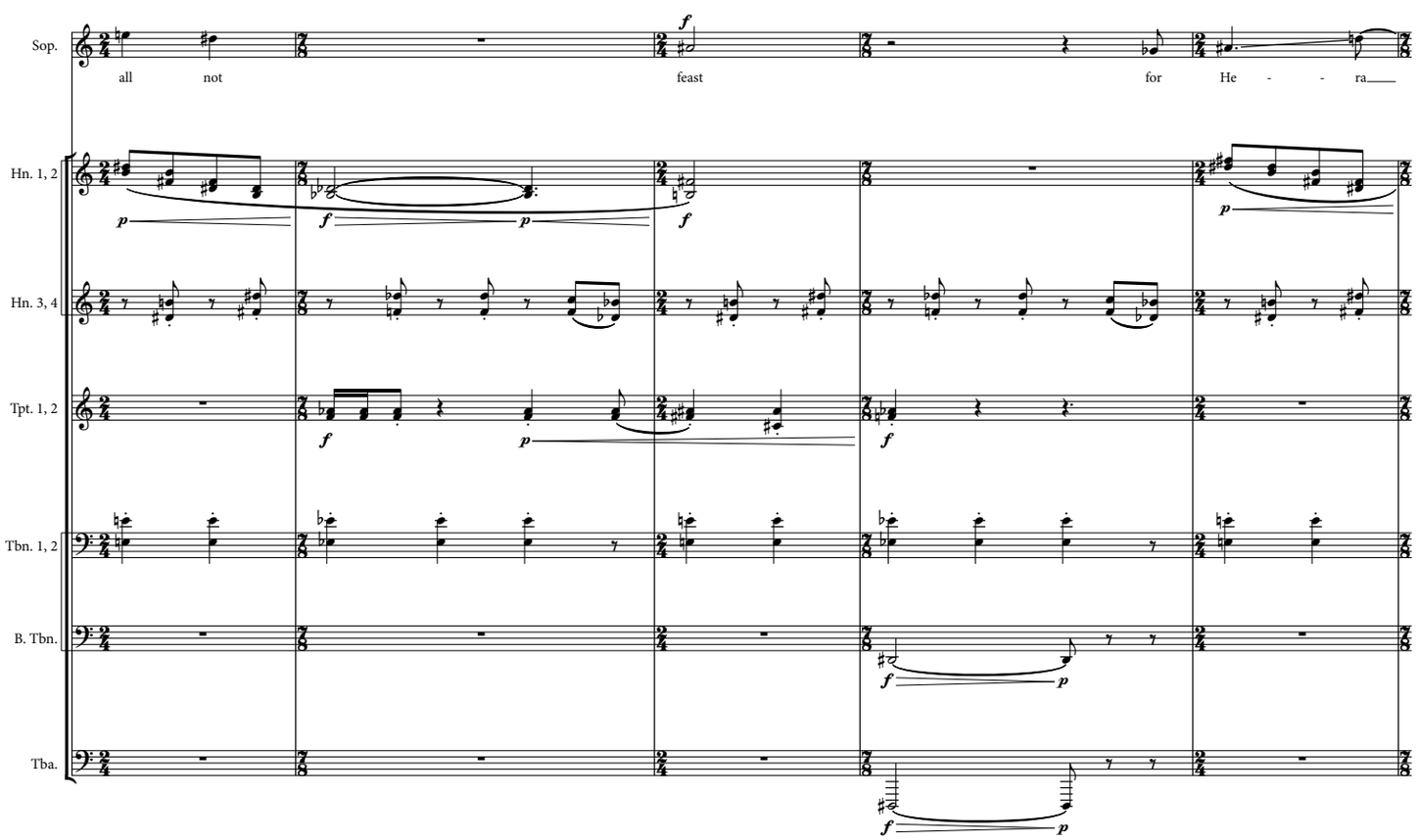
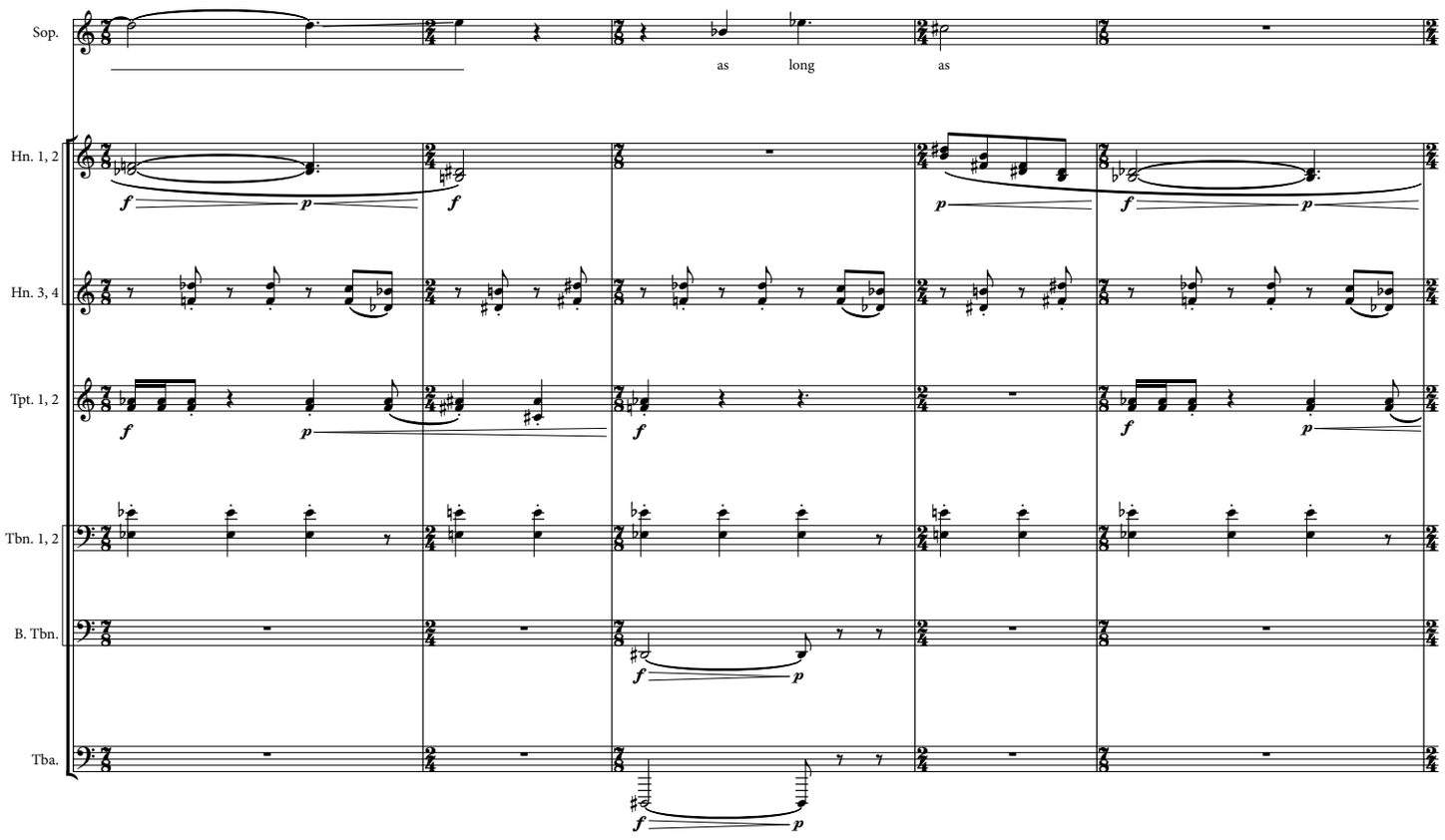
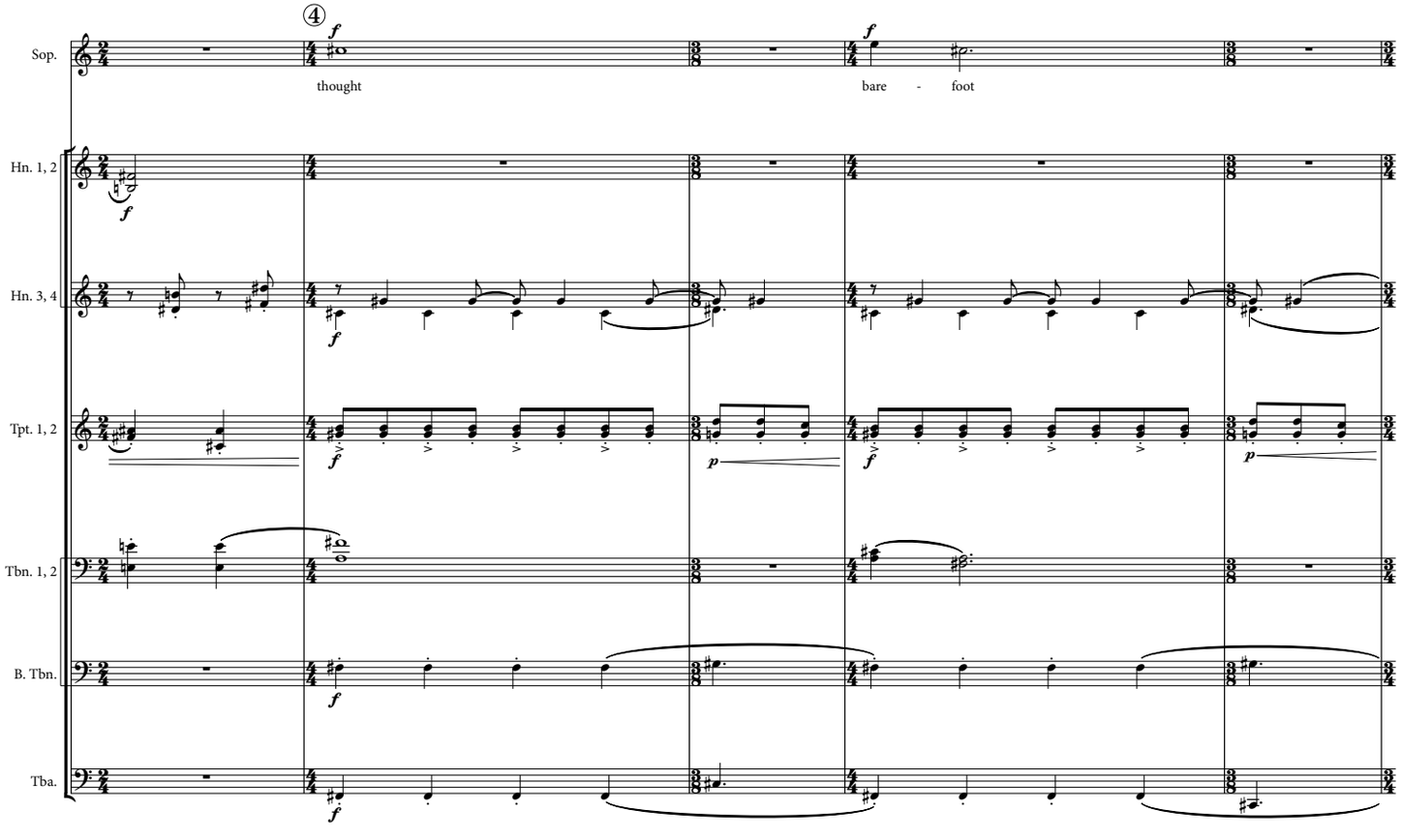
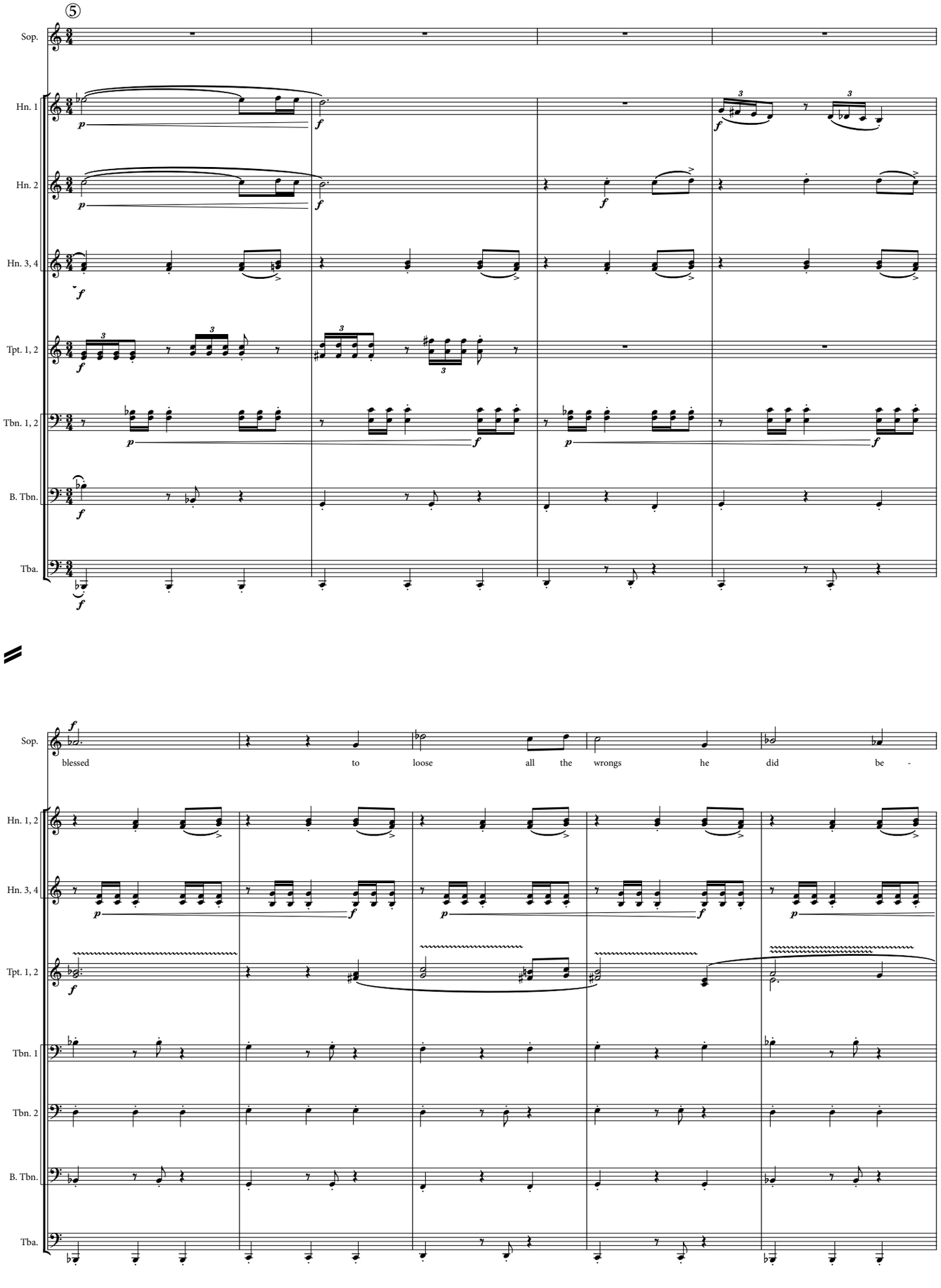

Sop.
face ha - - ving been stained
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
②
so Go so we may see la - dy of gold arms
2.

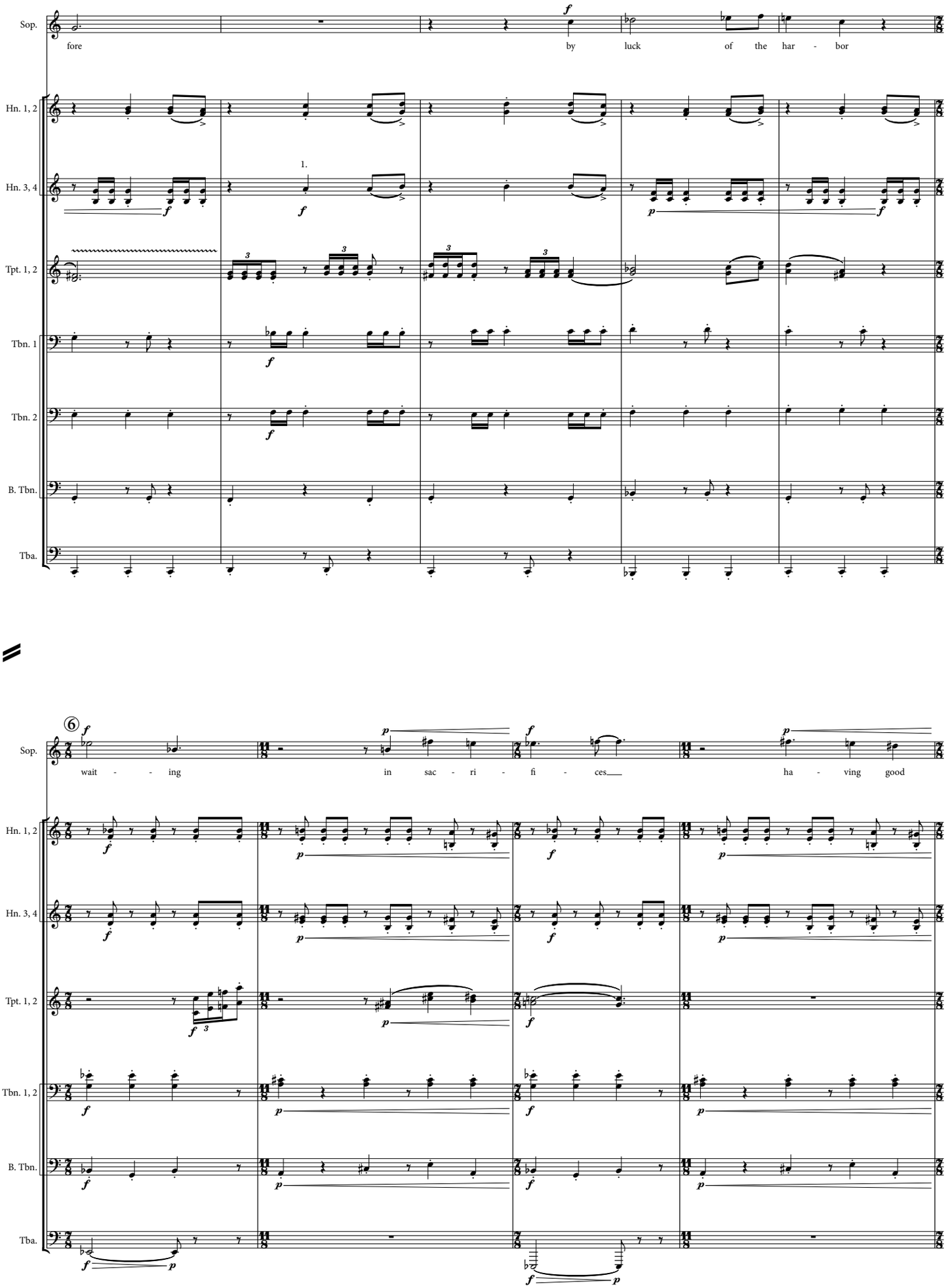

3
Sop.
doom
in - vites
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

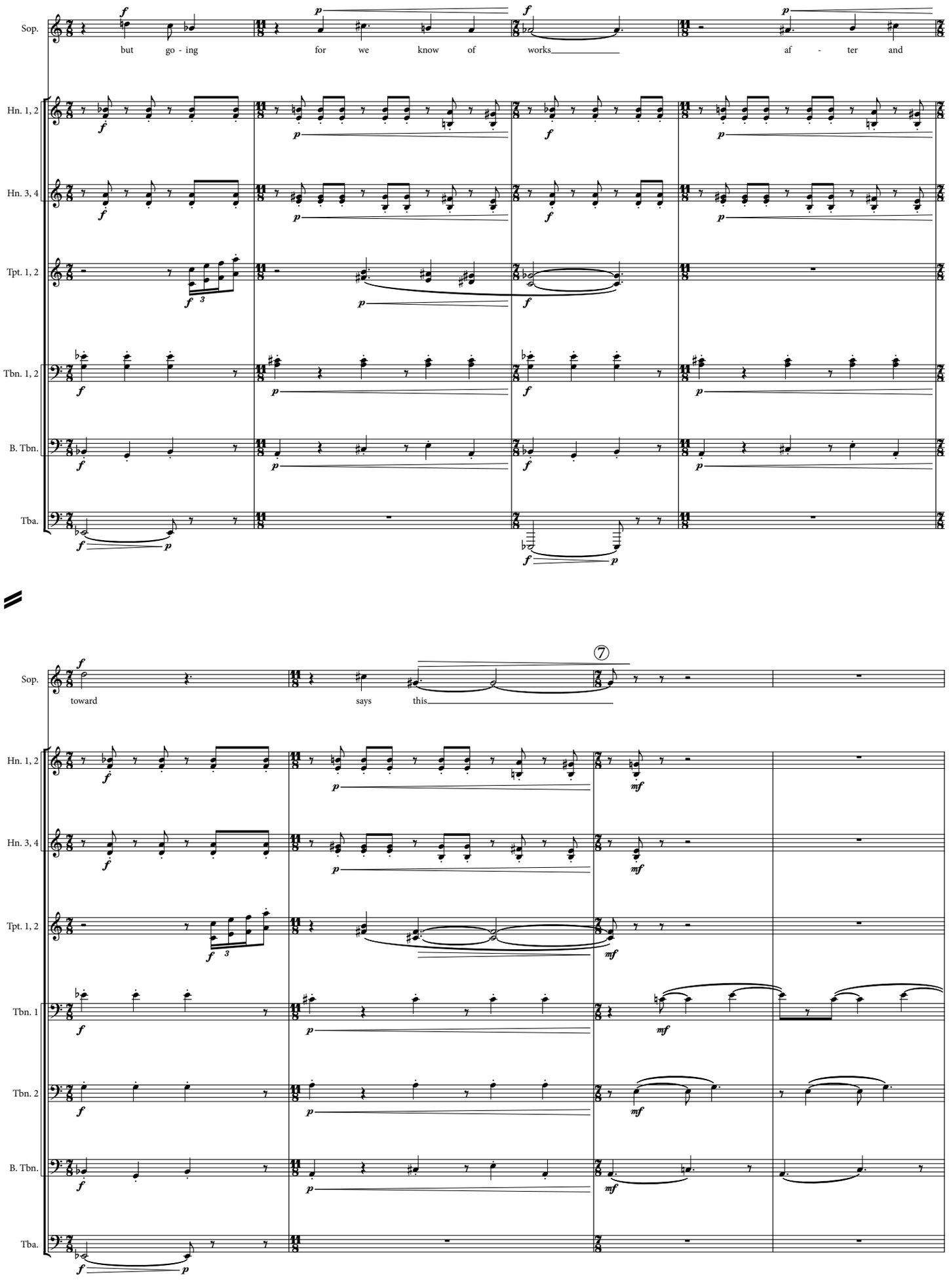

Sop.
all not
feast
for He - - ra
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

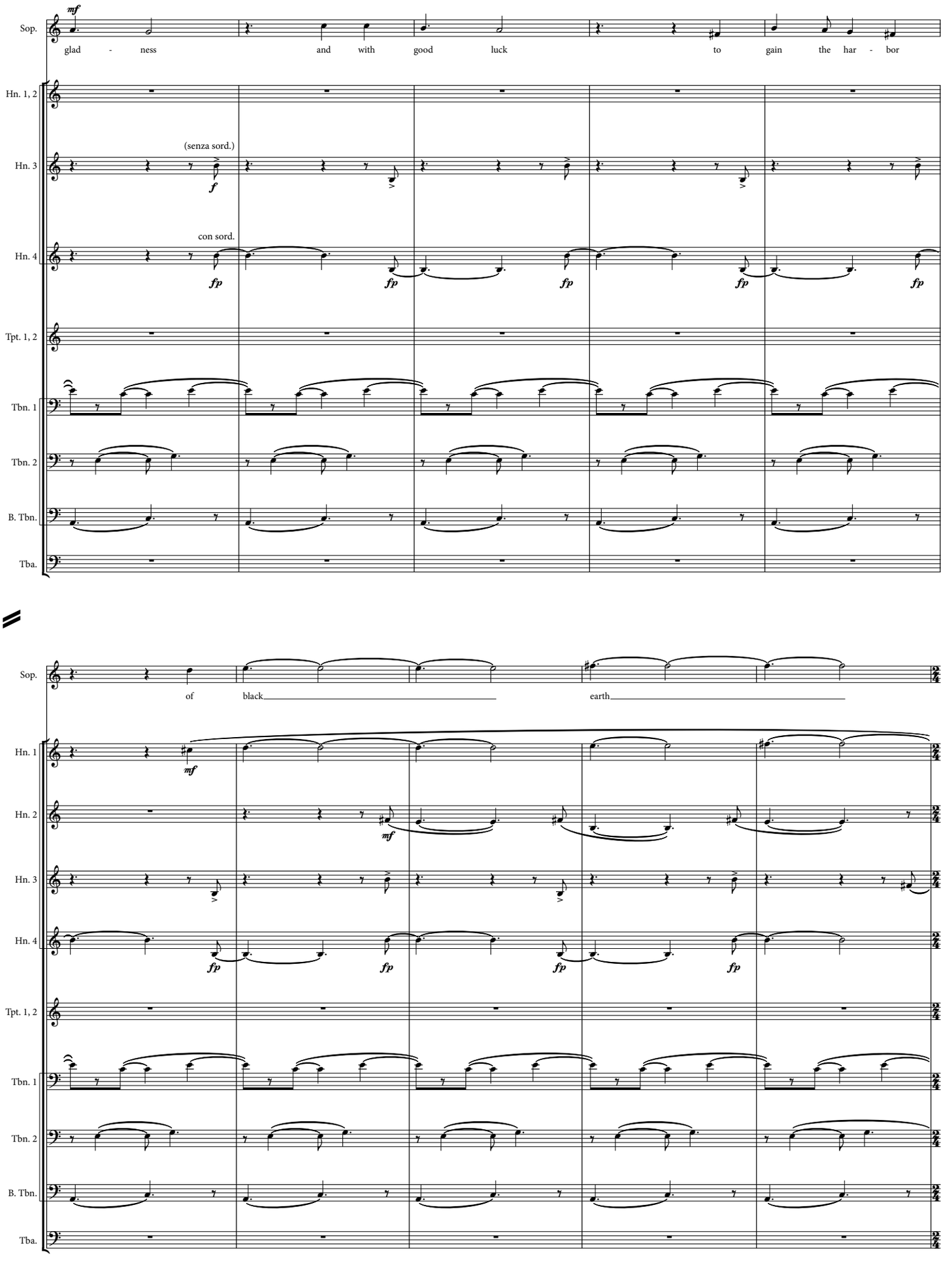

Sop.
as long as
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

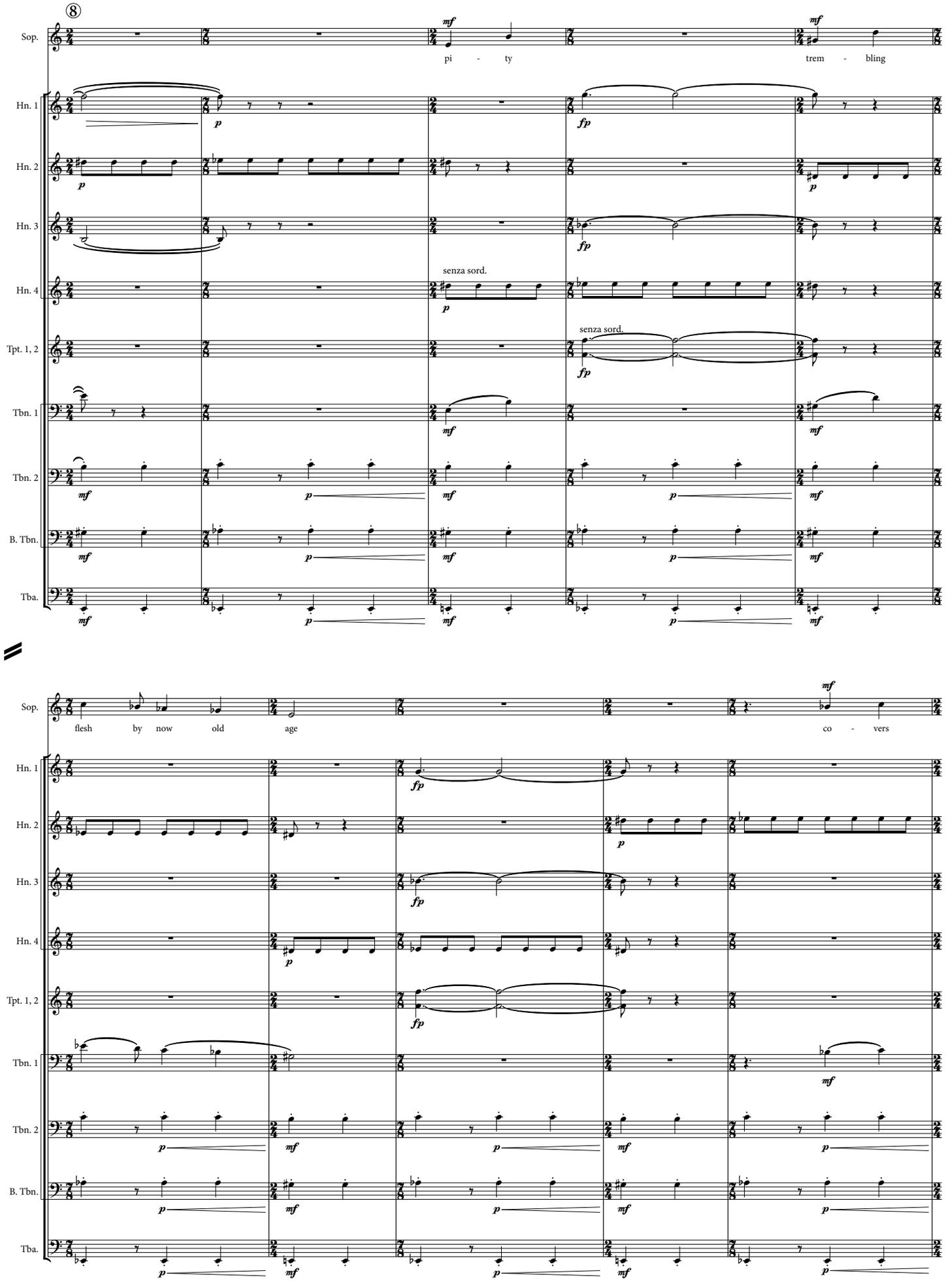

④
Sop.
thought
bare - foot
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

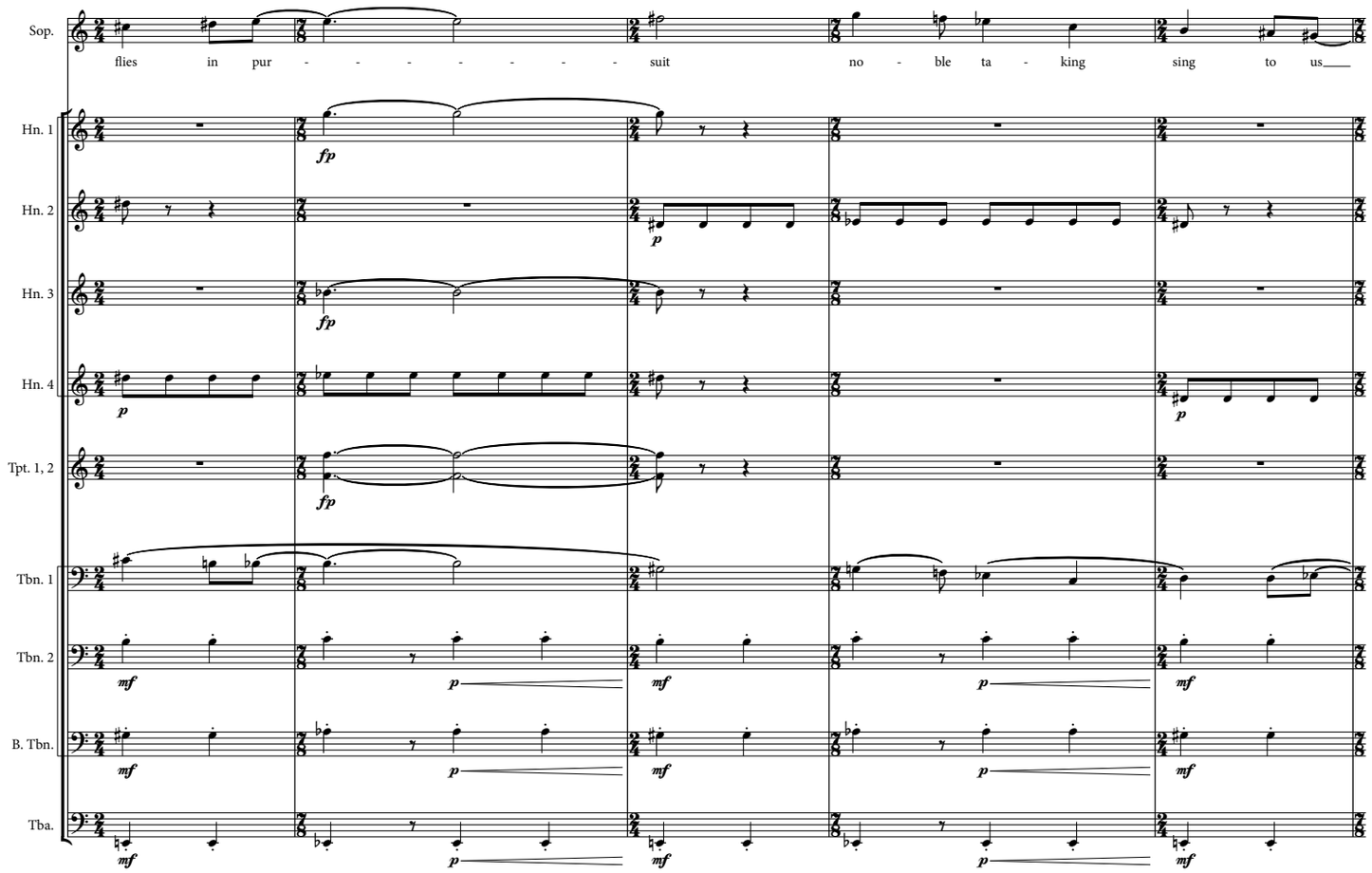

⑤
Sop.
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
blessed to loose all the wrongs he did be -
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

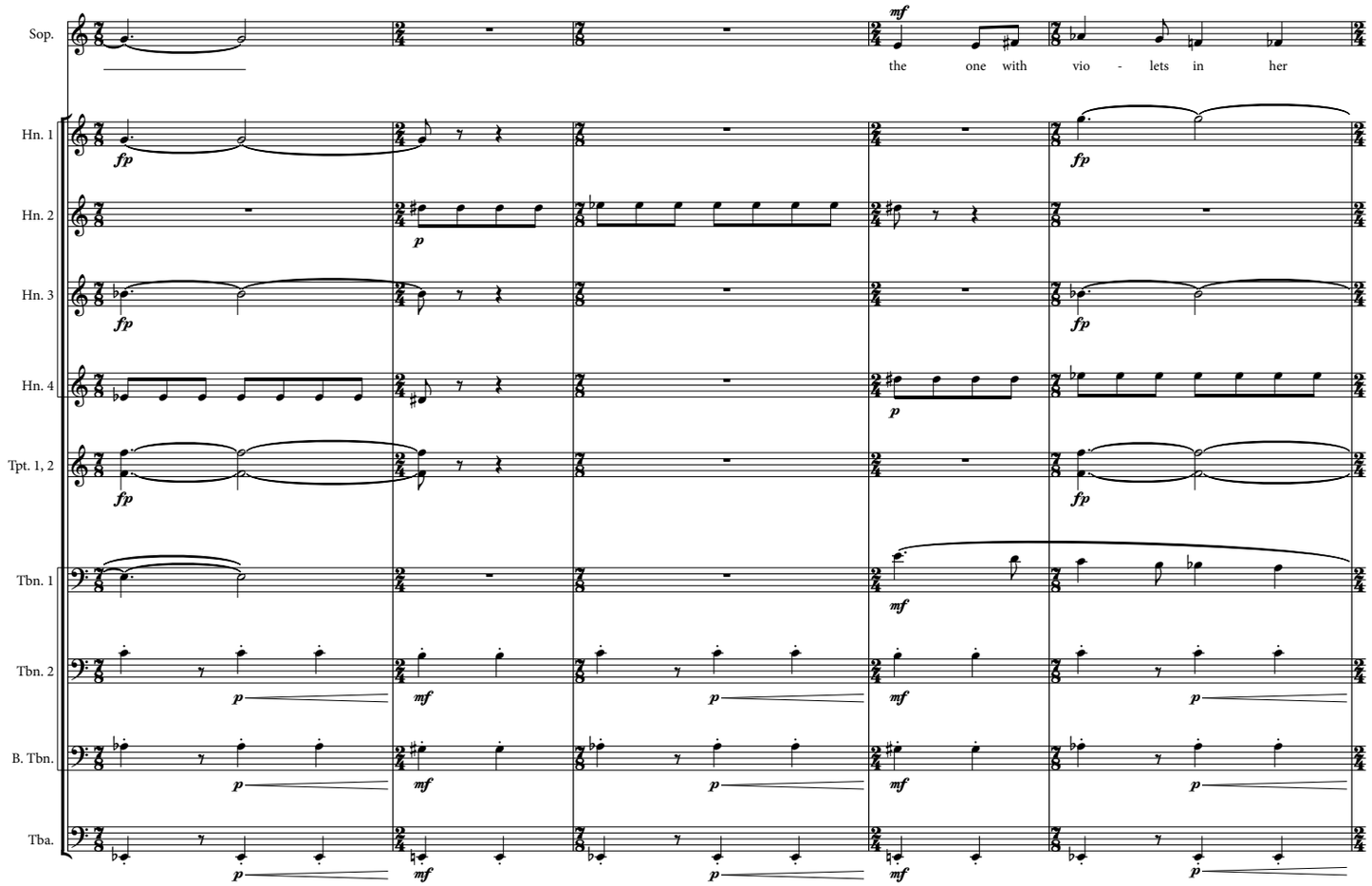

Sop.
fore
by luck of the har - bor
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
1.
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
⑥
wait - - ing
in sac - ri - fi - ces
ha - ving good
Tbn. 1, 2

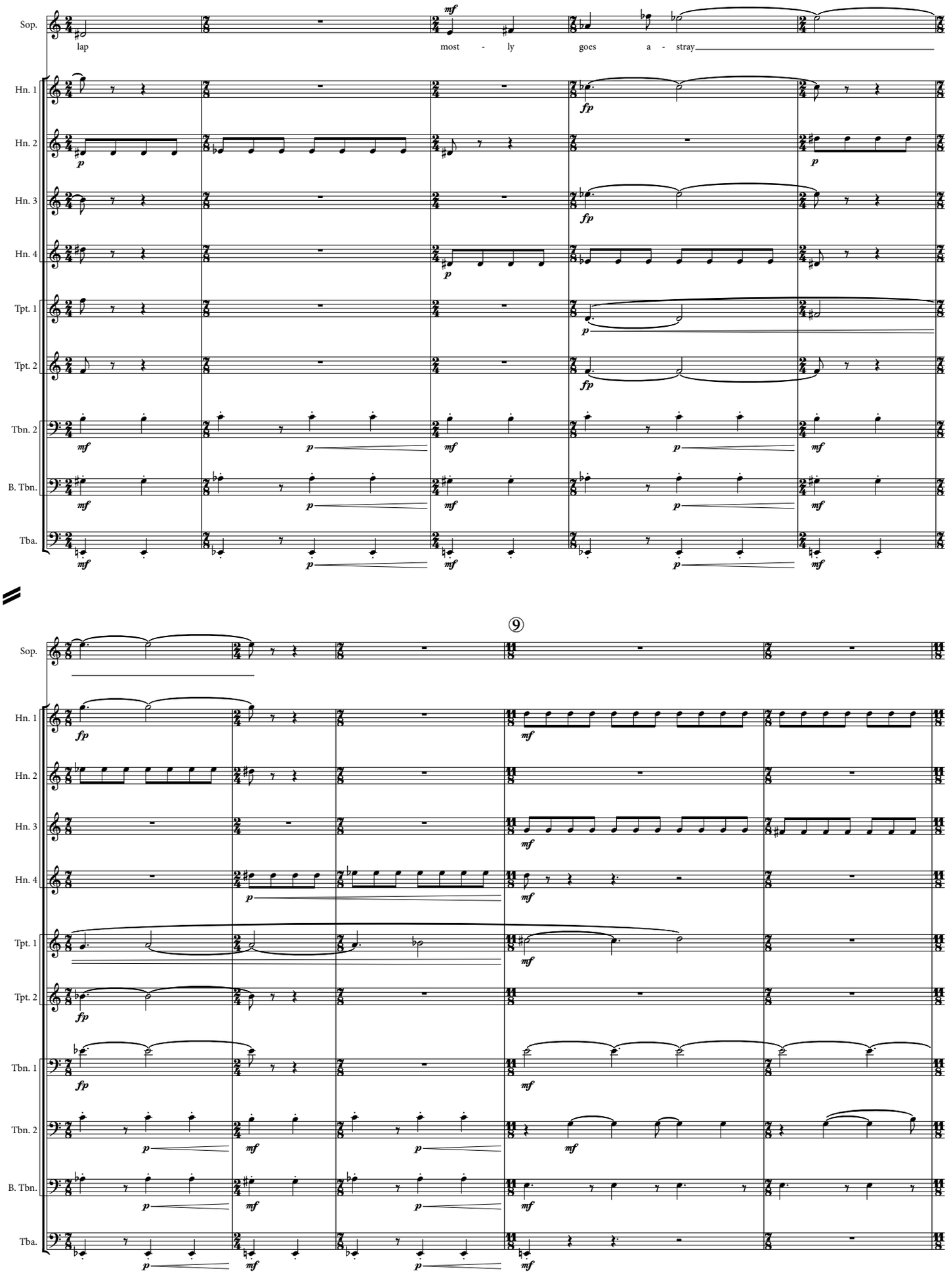

Sop.
but go - ing for we know of works af - ter and
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Sop.
toward says this
⑦
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

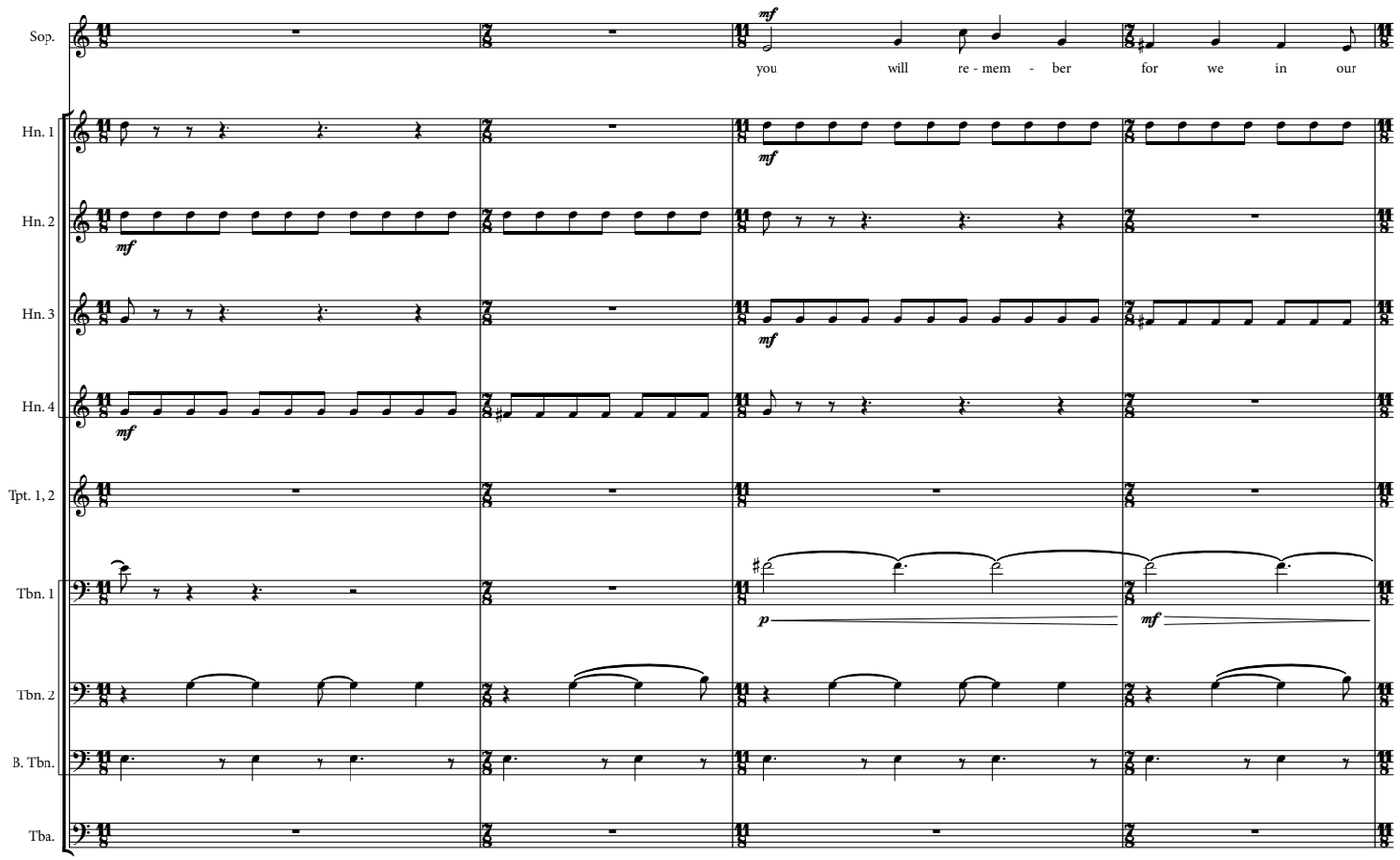

Sop.
glad - ness and with good luck to gain the har - bor
Hn. 1, 2
(senza sord.)
Hn. 3
con sord.
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
of black earth
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

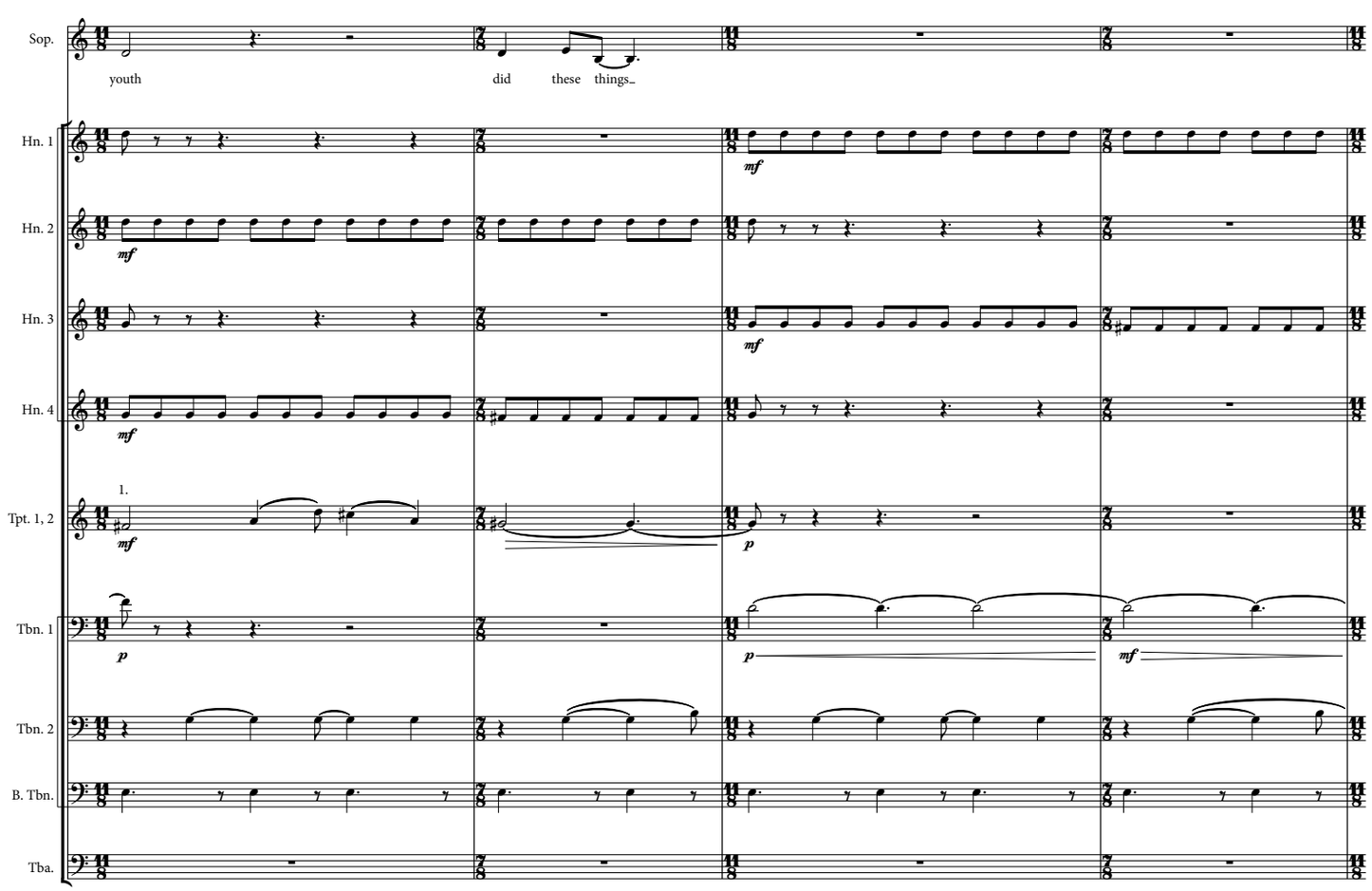

⑧
Sop.
pi - ty
trem - bling
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
senza sord.
Tpt. 1, 2
senza sord.
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
flesh by now old age
co - vers

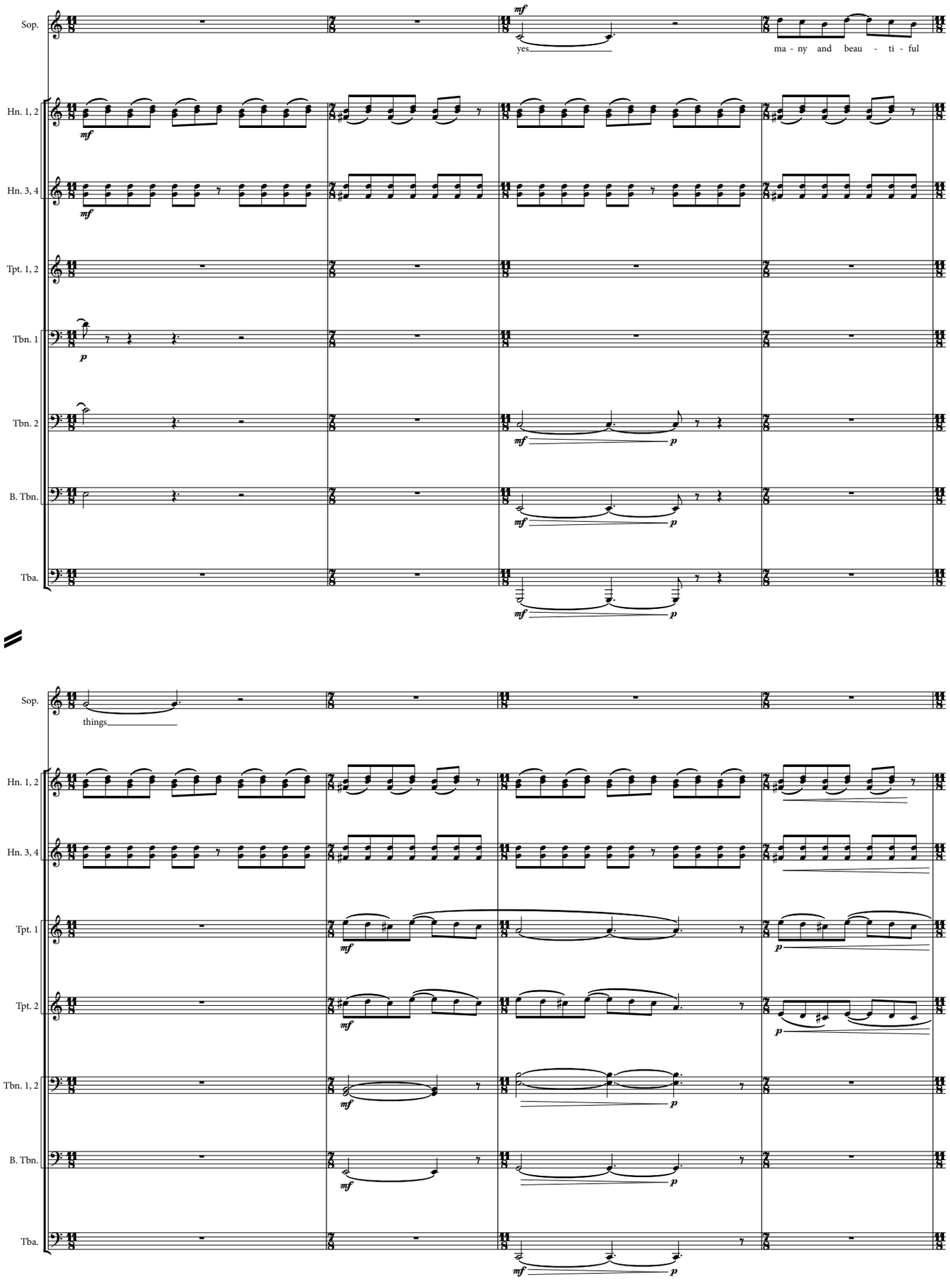

Sop.
flies in pur - - - - - - - - suit no - ble ta - king sing to us
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
fp
p
mf

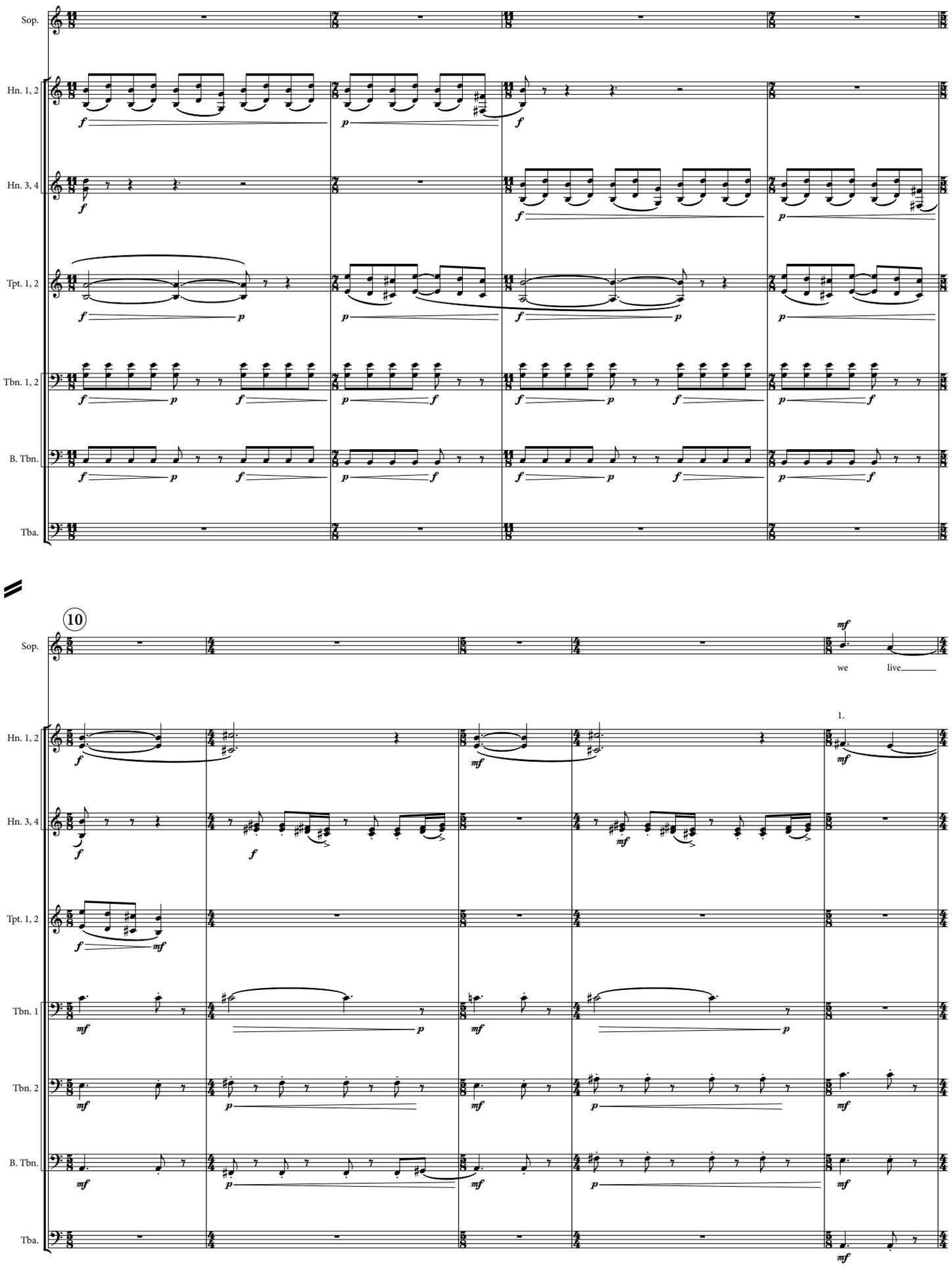

Sop.
the one with vio - lets in her
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
fp
p
mf

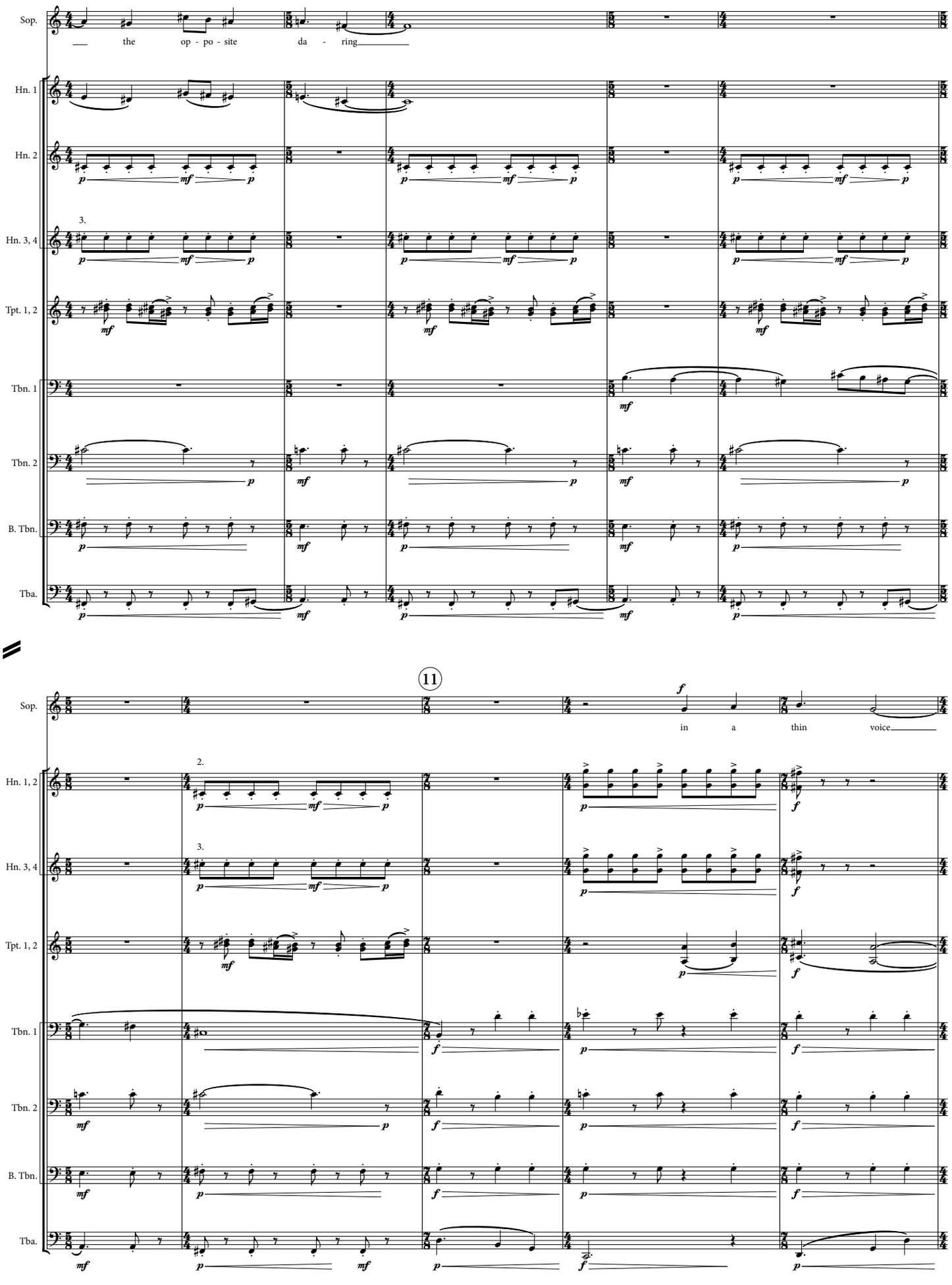

Sop.
lap
most - ly goes a - stray
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
9
Tbn. 1

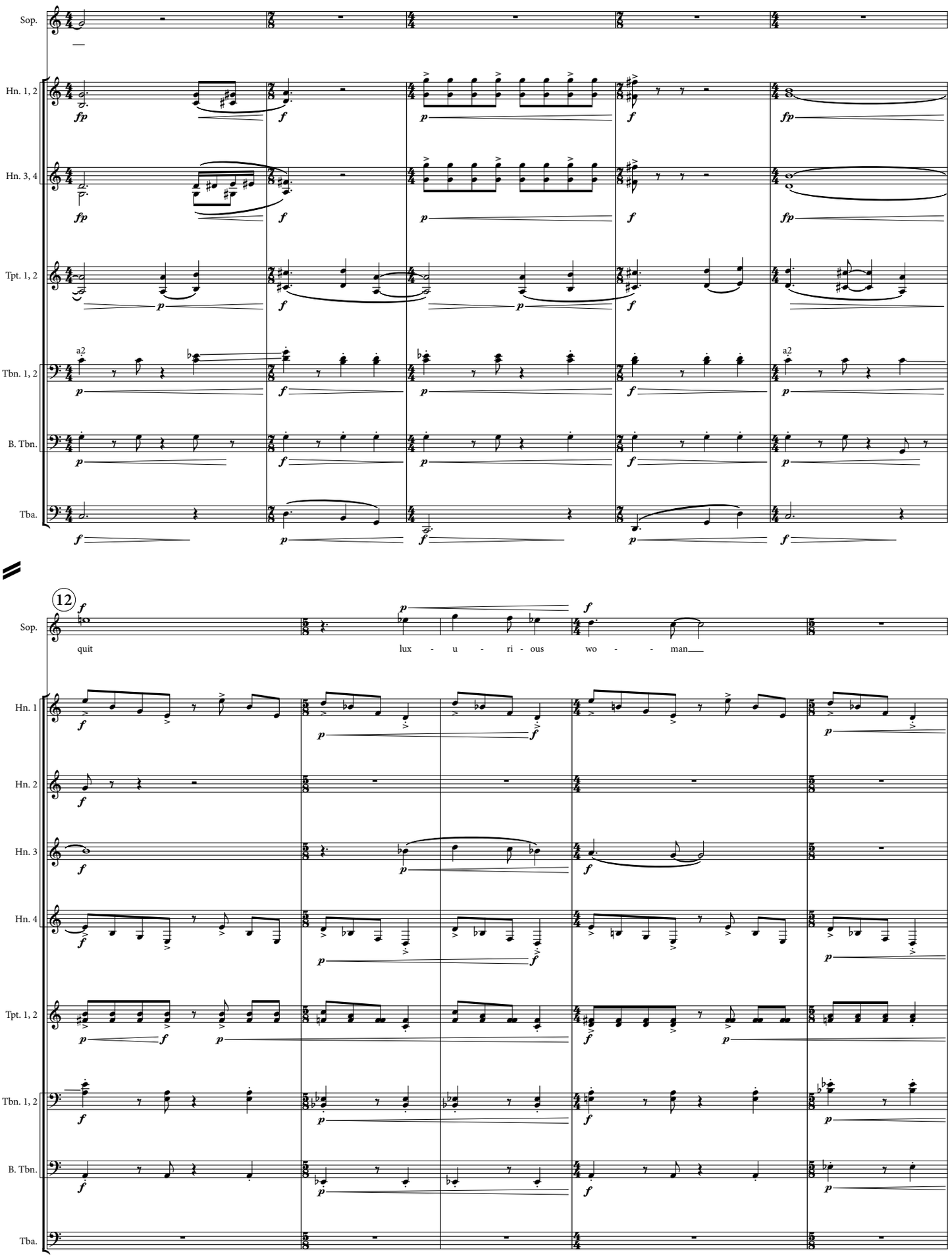

Sop.
mf
you will re - mem - ber for we in our
Hn. 1
mf
Hn. 2
mf
Hn. 3
mf
Hn. 4
mf
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
p
mf
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

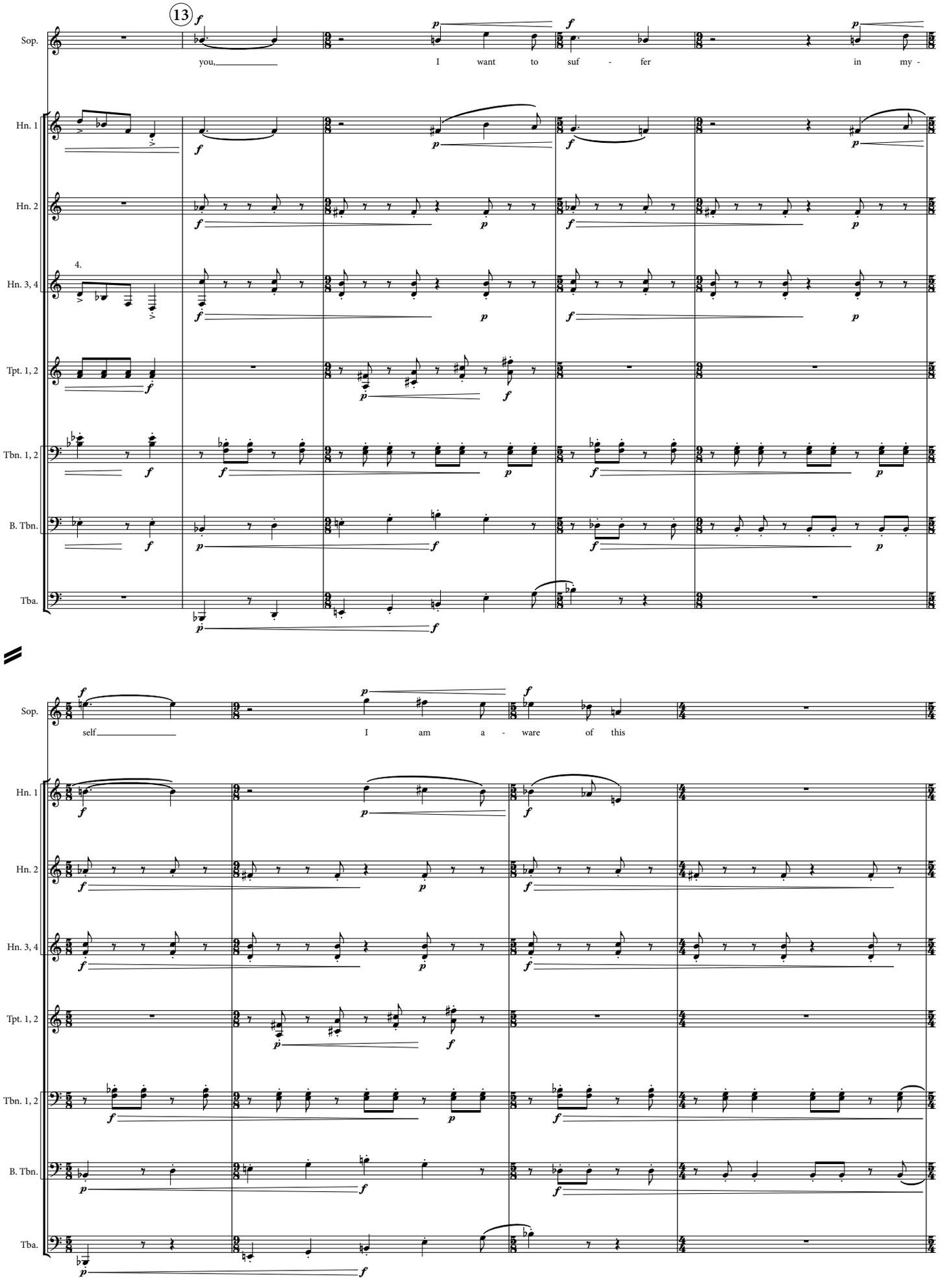

Sop.
youth did these things_
Hn. 1
mf
Hn. 2
mf
Hn. 3
mf
Hn. 4
mf
1.
Tpt. 1, 2
mf
p
Tbn. 1
p
p
mf
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

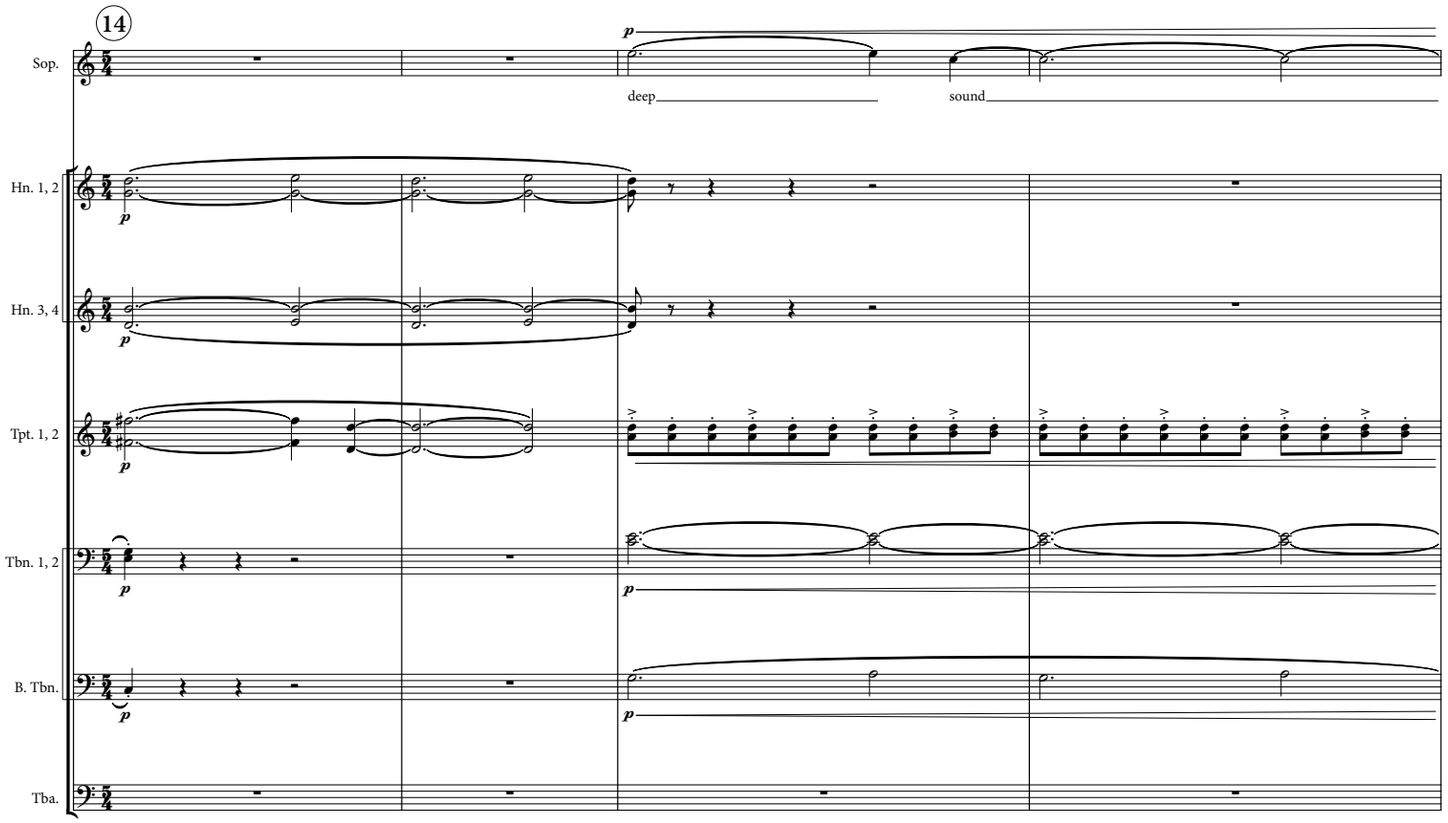

Sop.
yes
ma - ny and beau - ti - ful
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Sop.
things
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

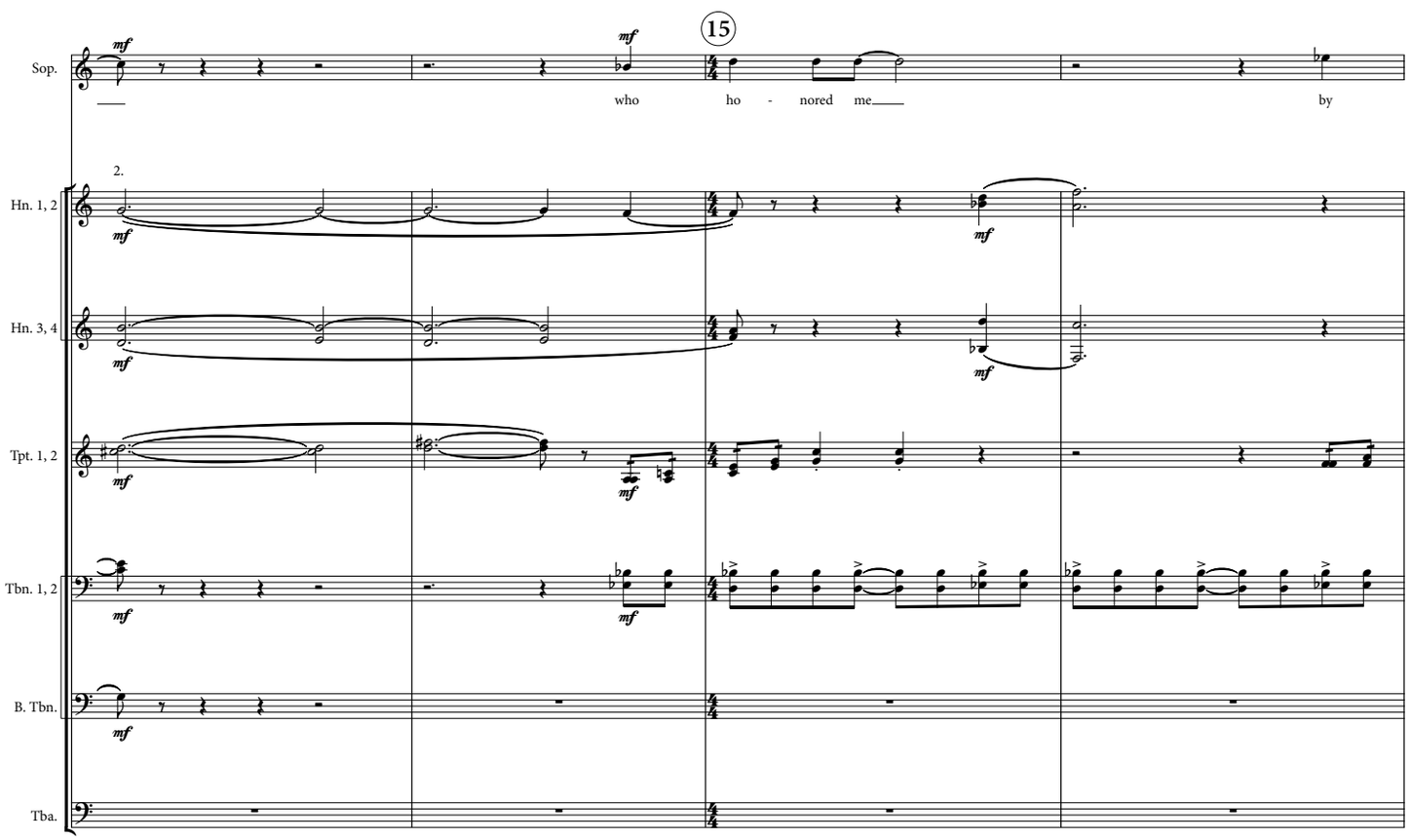

Sop.
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
10
we live
1.
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2

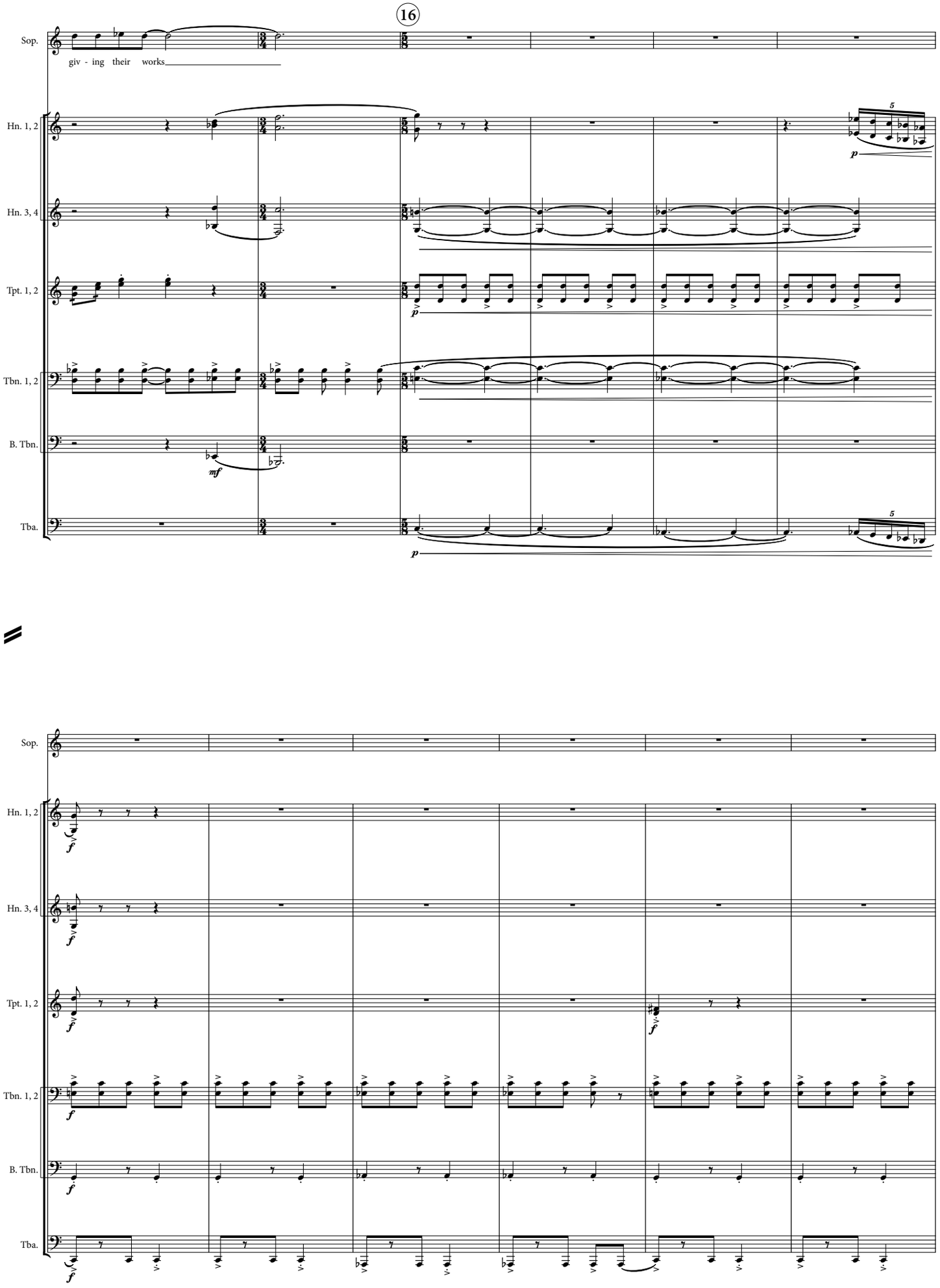

Sop.
the op - po - site da - ring
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
11
in a thin voice

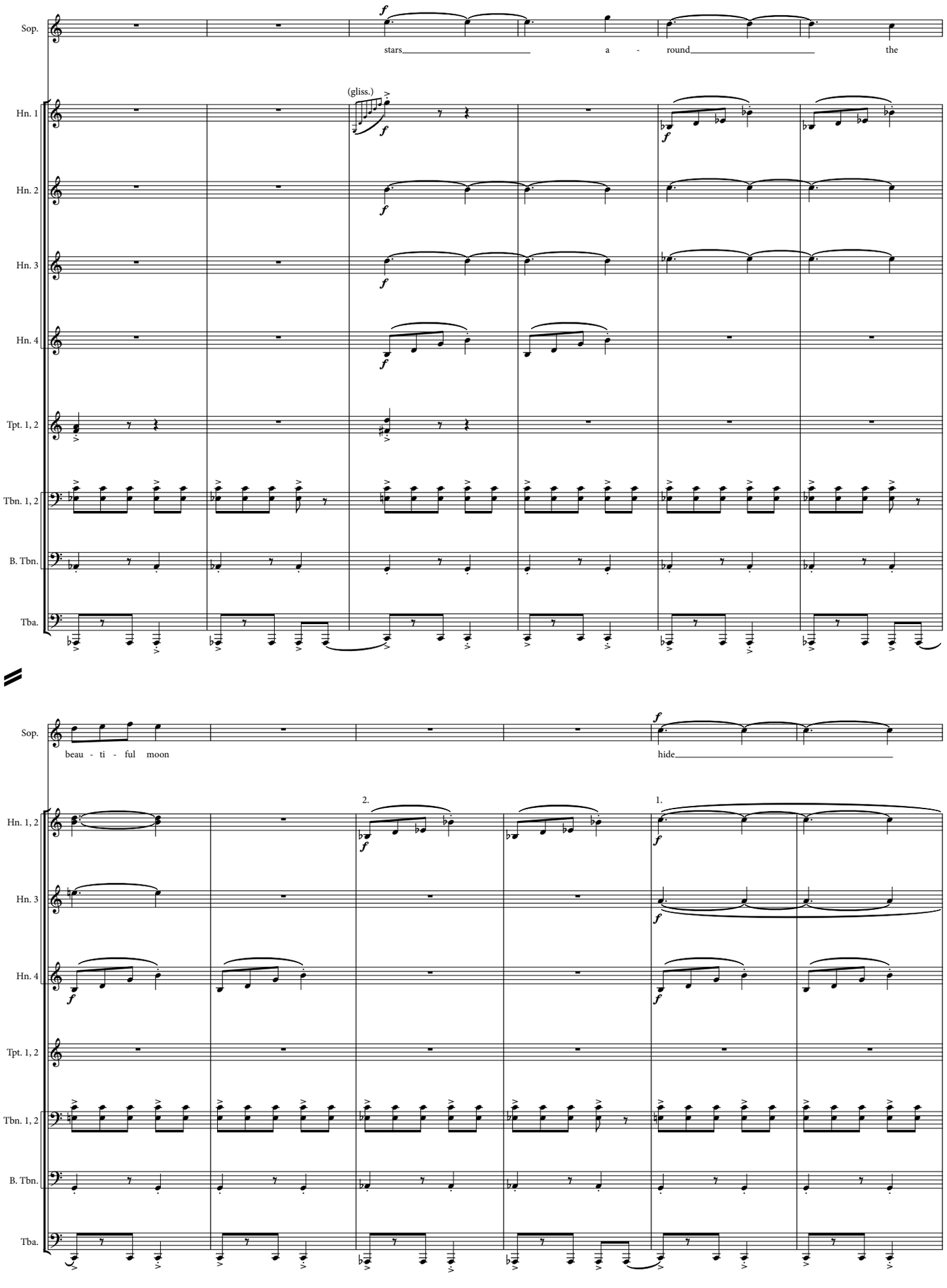

Sop.
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
a2
12
quit
lux - u - ri - ous wo - - man
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4

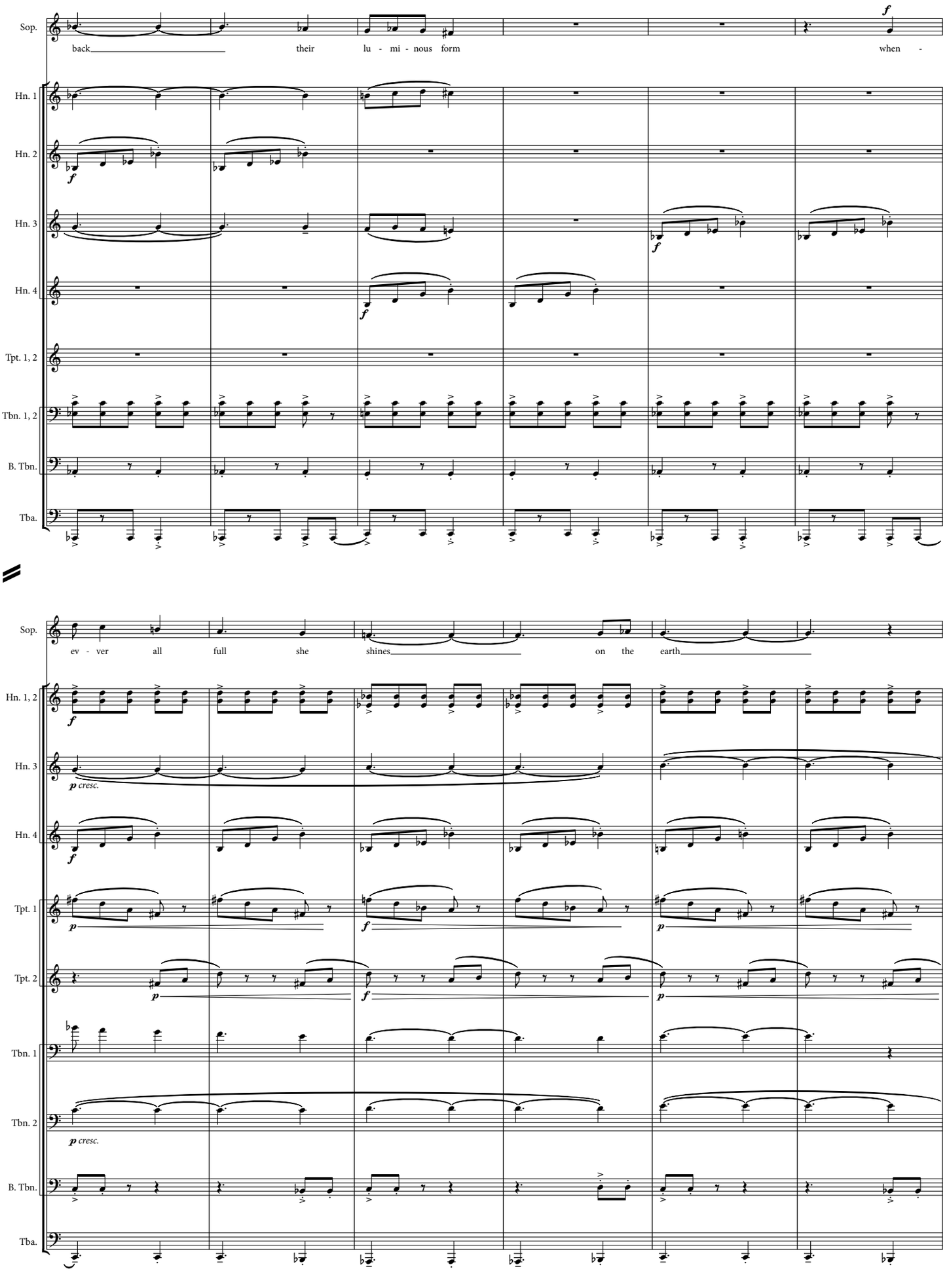

13
Sop.
you,
I want to suf - fer in my -
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
4.
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Sop.
self
I am a - ware of this
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

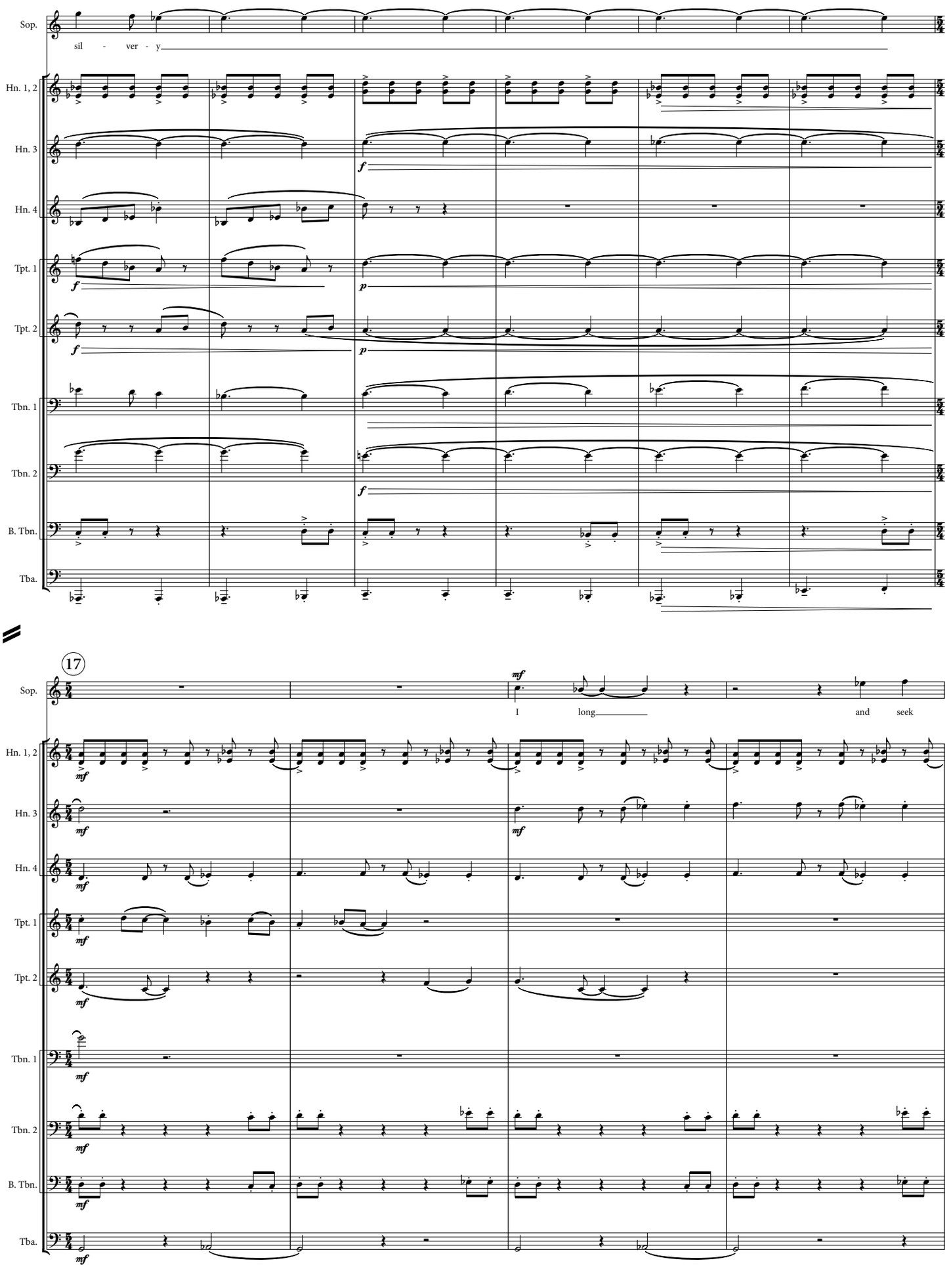

14
Sop.
p
deep
sound
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

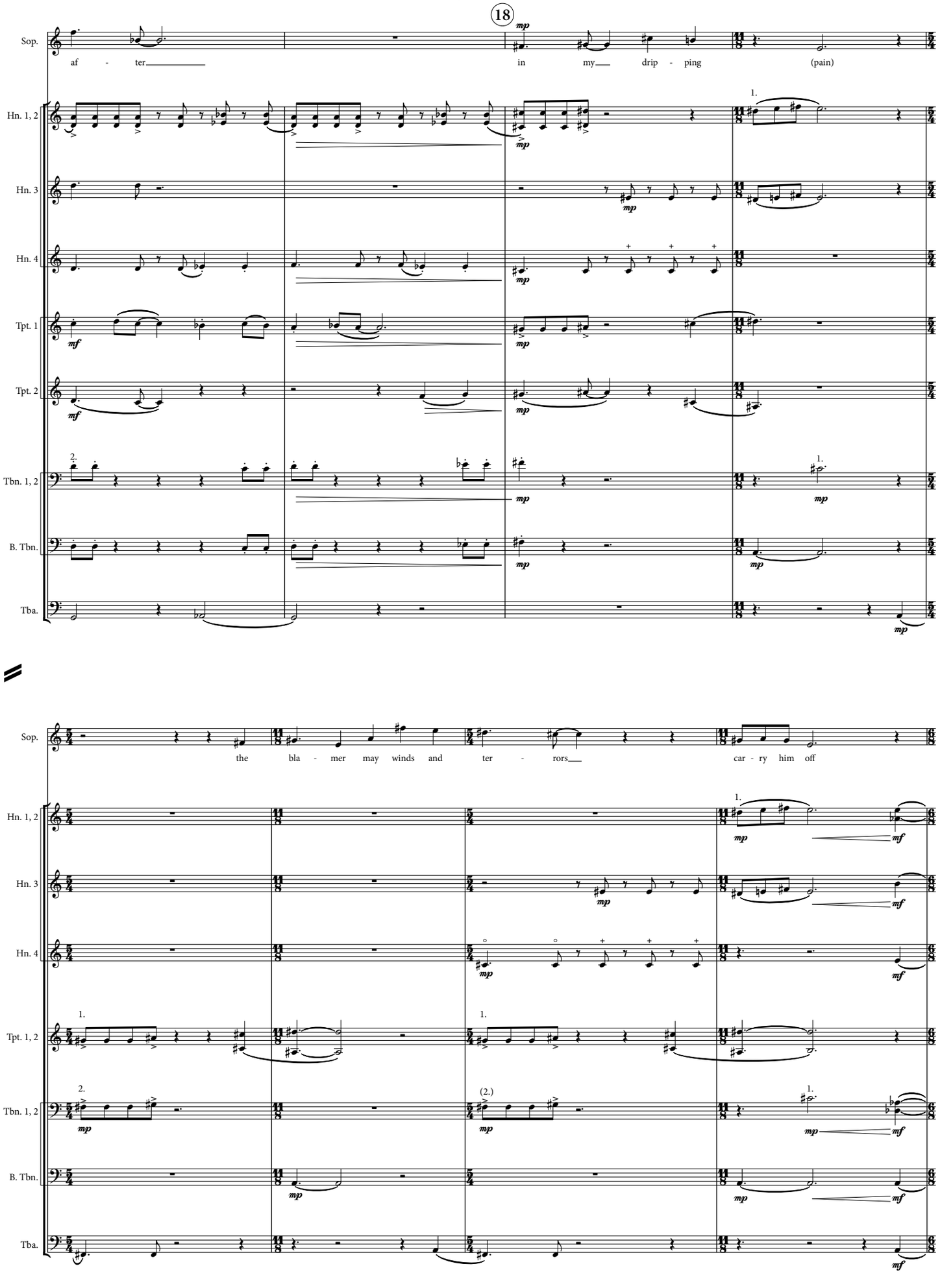

15
Sop.
mf
who
ho - nored me
by
2.
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

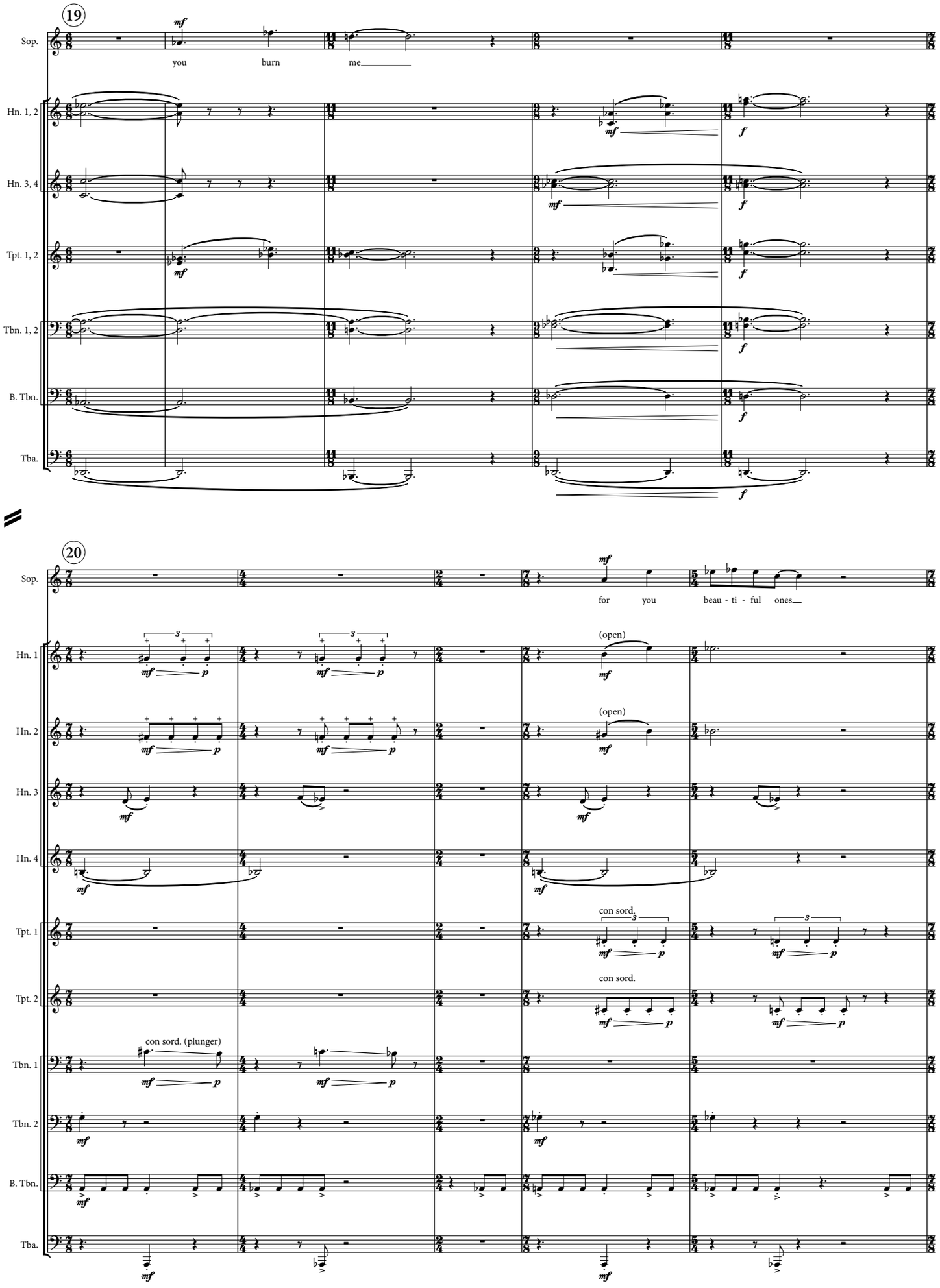

16
Sop.
giv - ing their works
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
p
mf
5

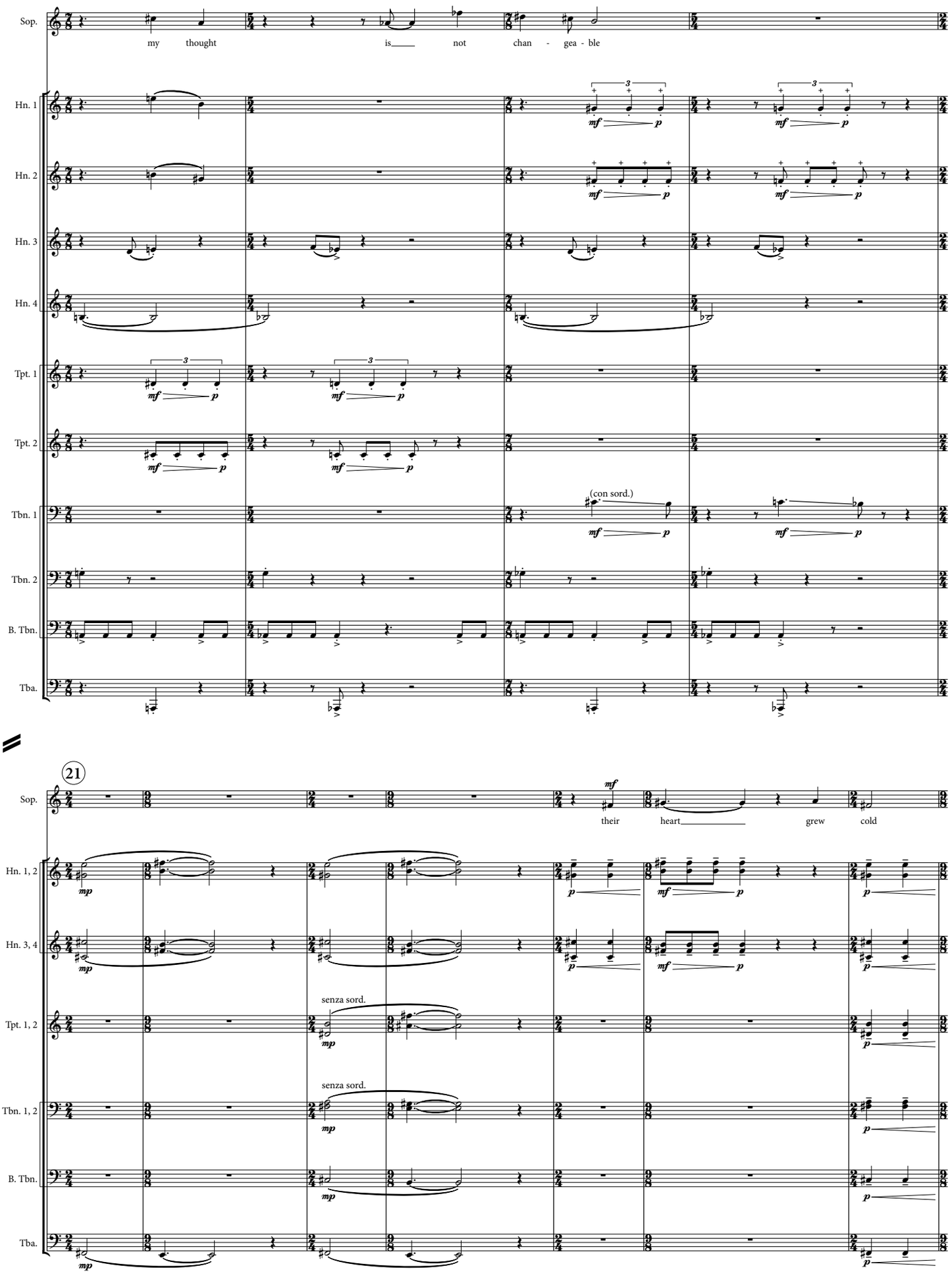

Sop.
stars a - round the
(gliss.)
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Sop.
beau - ti - ful moon
hide
2.
1.
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

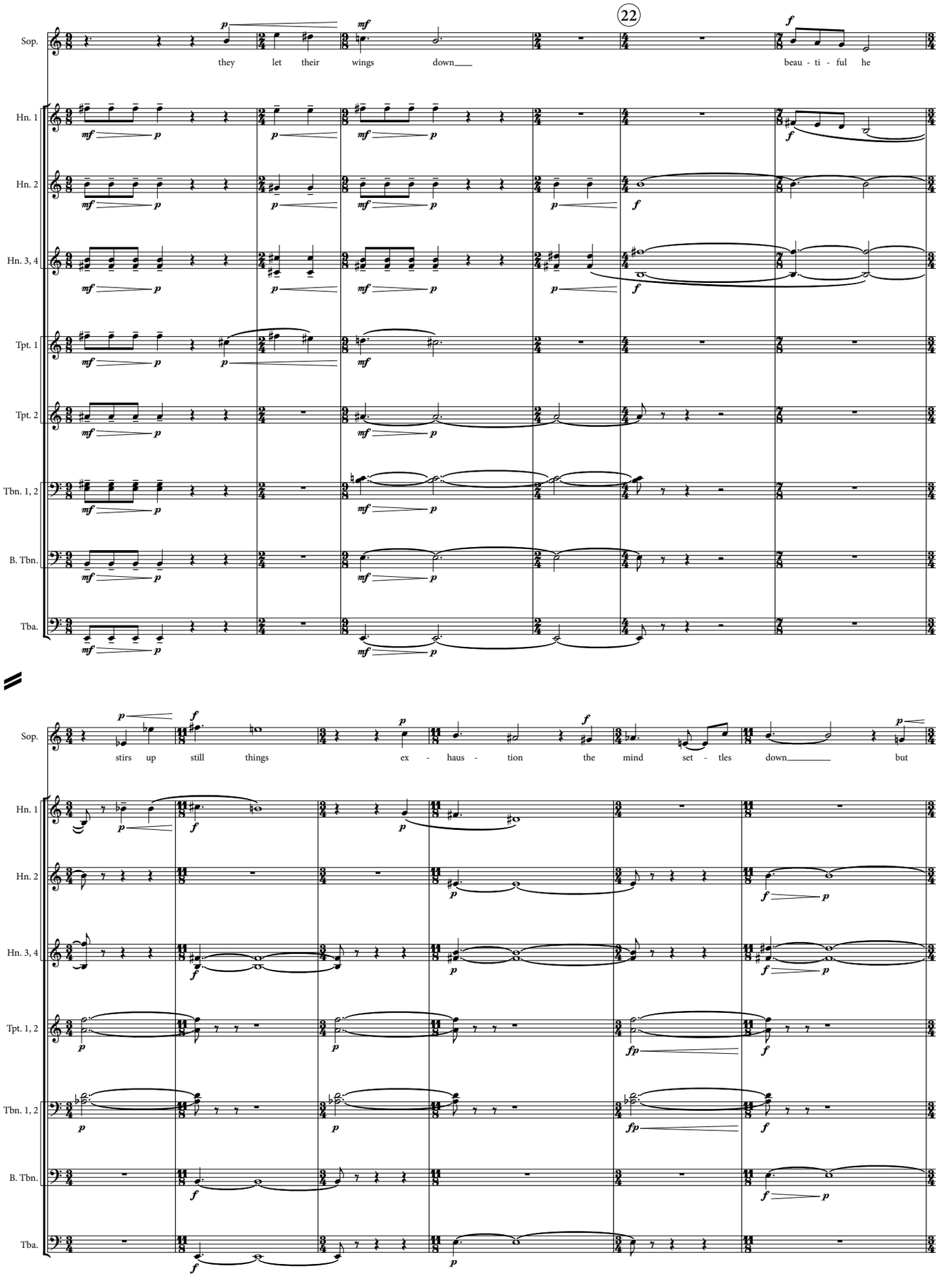

Sop.
back their lu - mi - nous form when -
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Sop.
ev - ver all full she shines on the earth
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

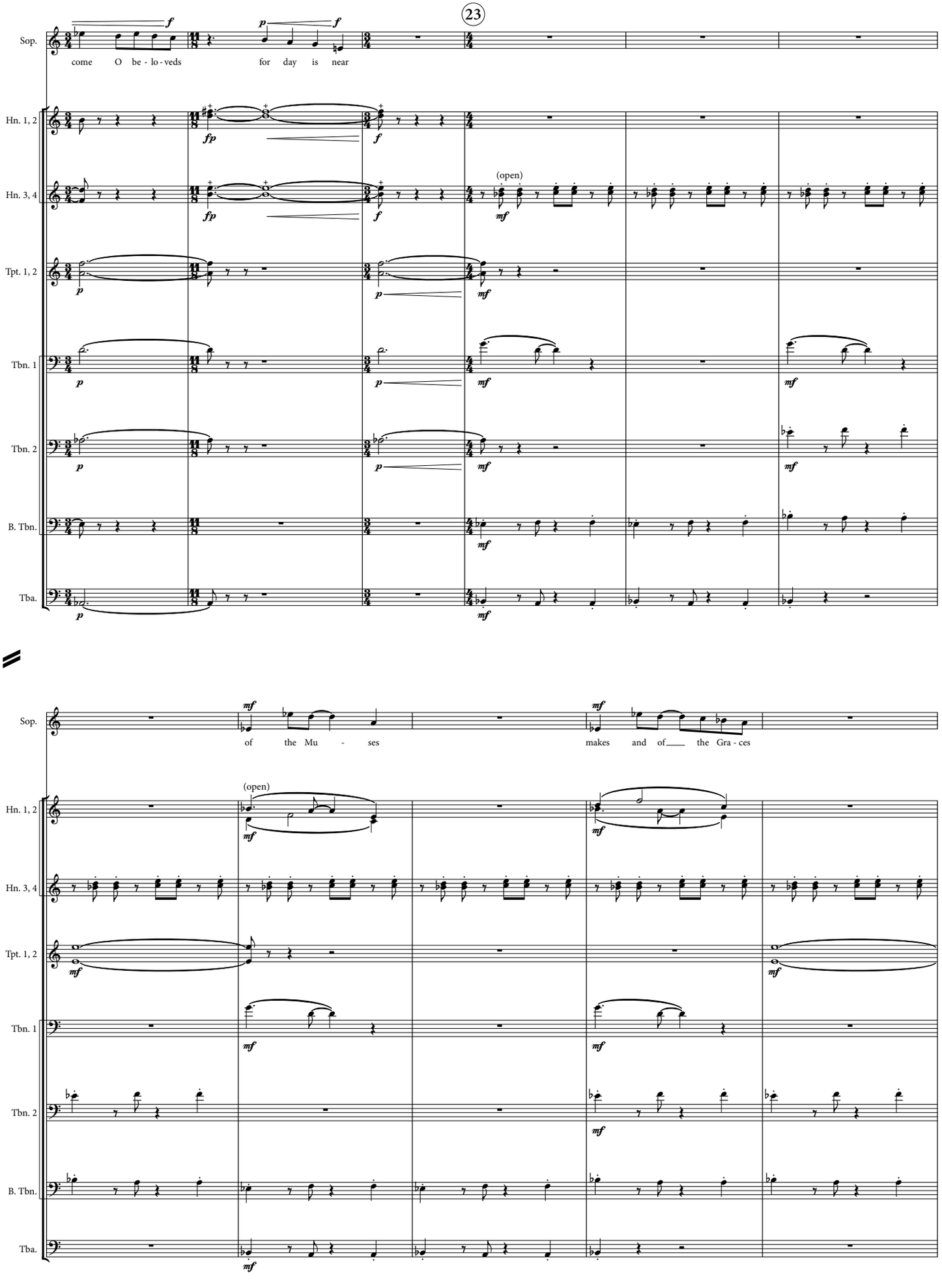

Sop.
sil - ver - y
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
f
p
17
mf
I long and seek

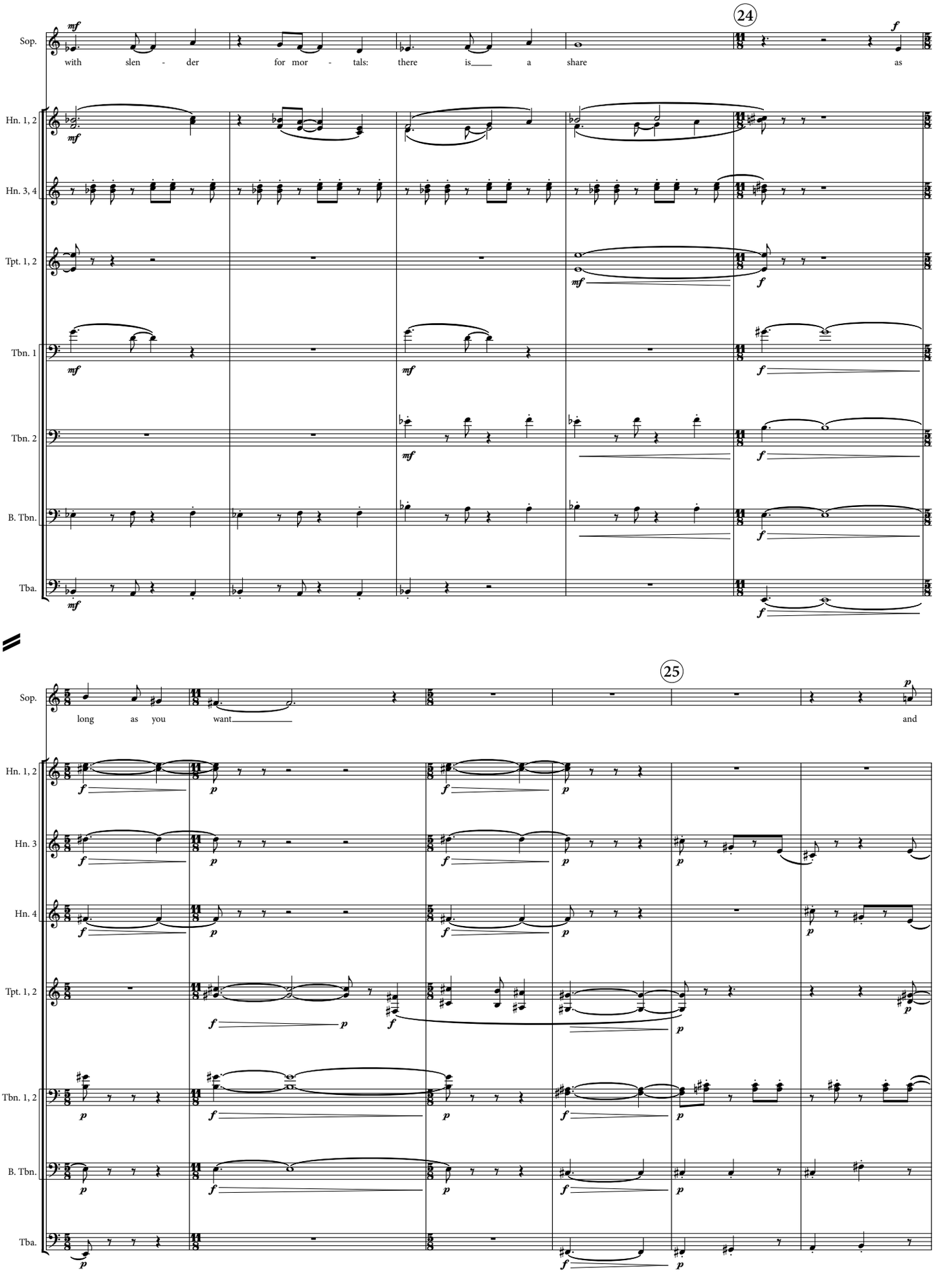

18
Sop.
af - ter
in my drip - ping (pain)
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
mp
mf
1.
2.
the bla - mer may winds and ter - rors
car - ry him off
Tpt. 1, 2
(2.)

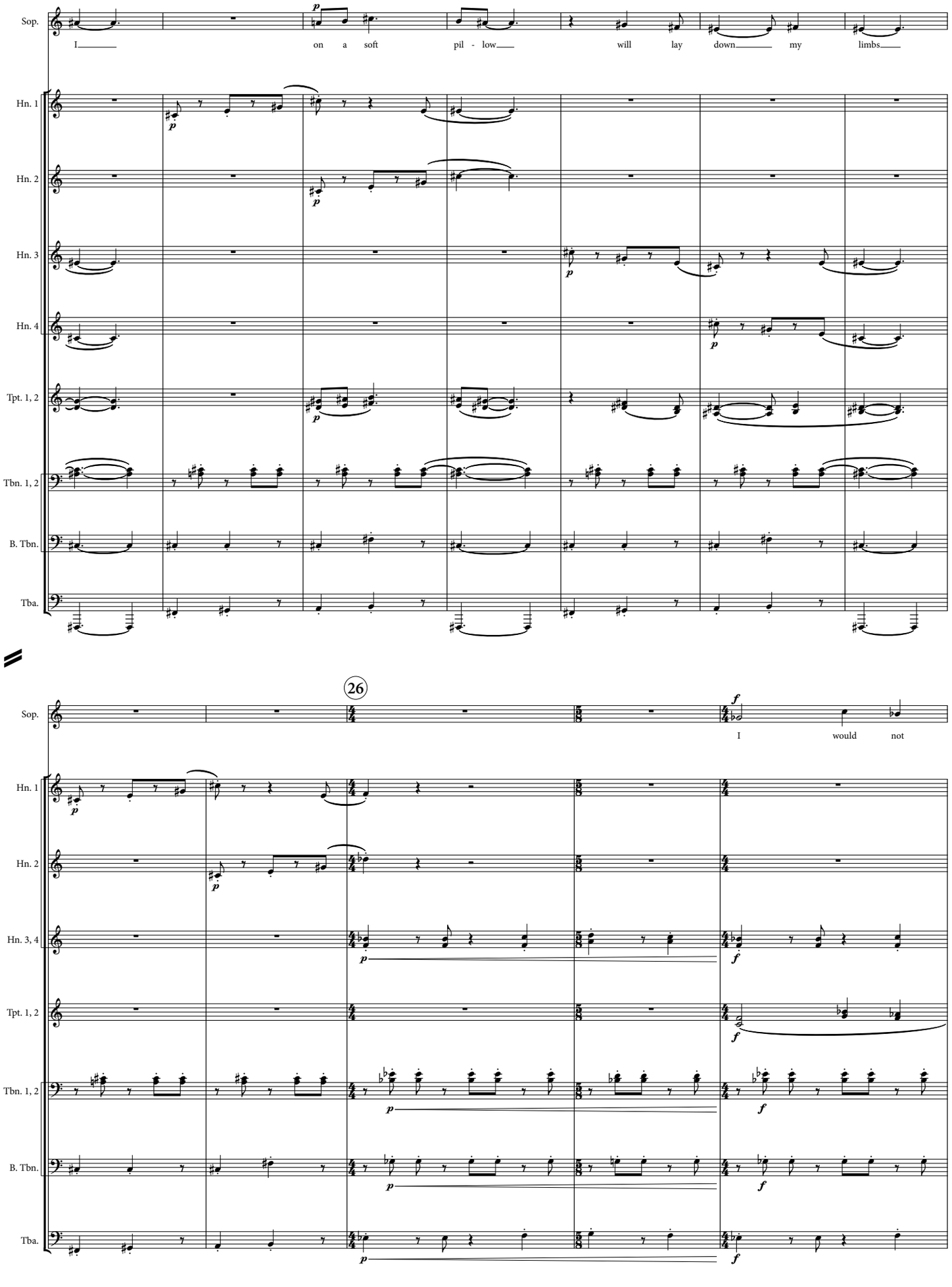

19
Sop.
you burn me
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
20
Sop.
for you beau - ti - ful ones
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
(open)
con sord.
con sord. (plunger)

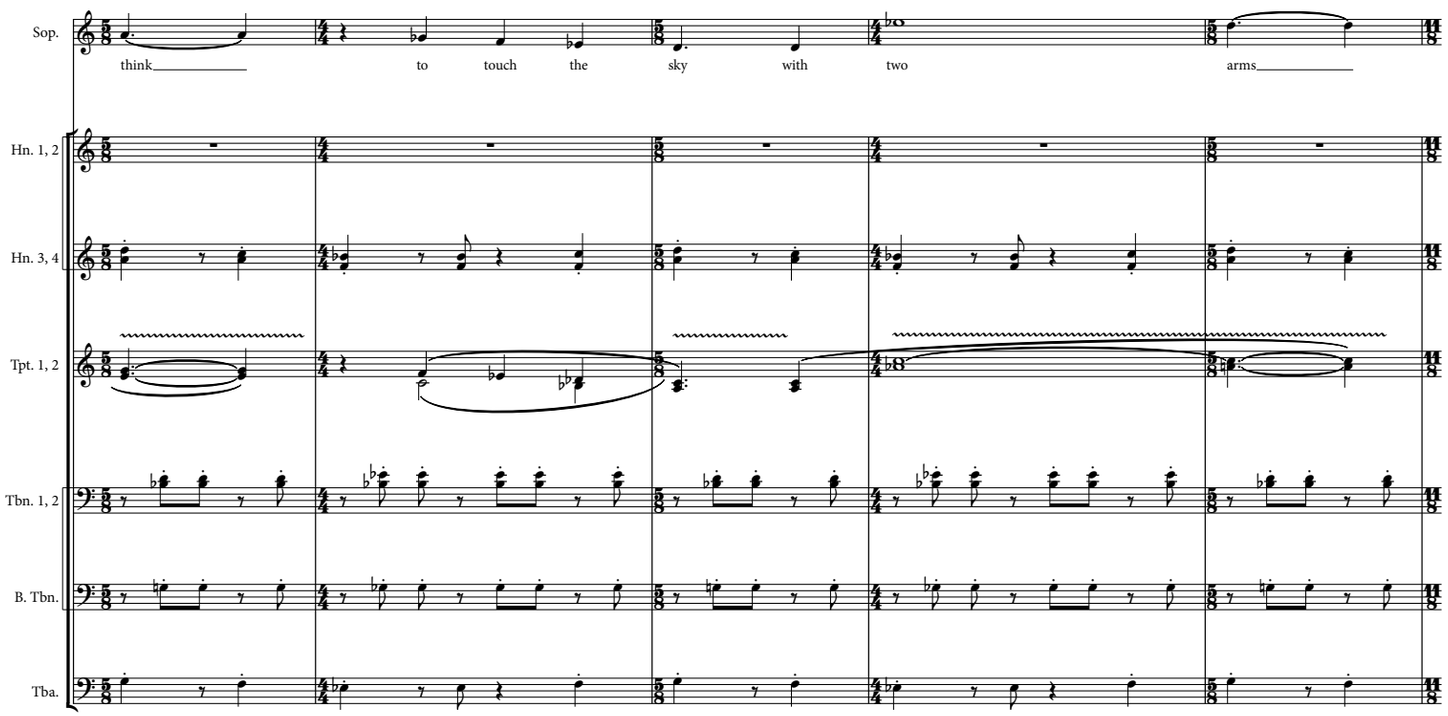

Sop.
my thought is not chan - gea - ble
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Tbn. 1
(con sord.)
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
21
their heart grew cold
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
senza sord.
Tbn. 1, 2
senza sord.
B. Tbn.
Tba.

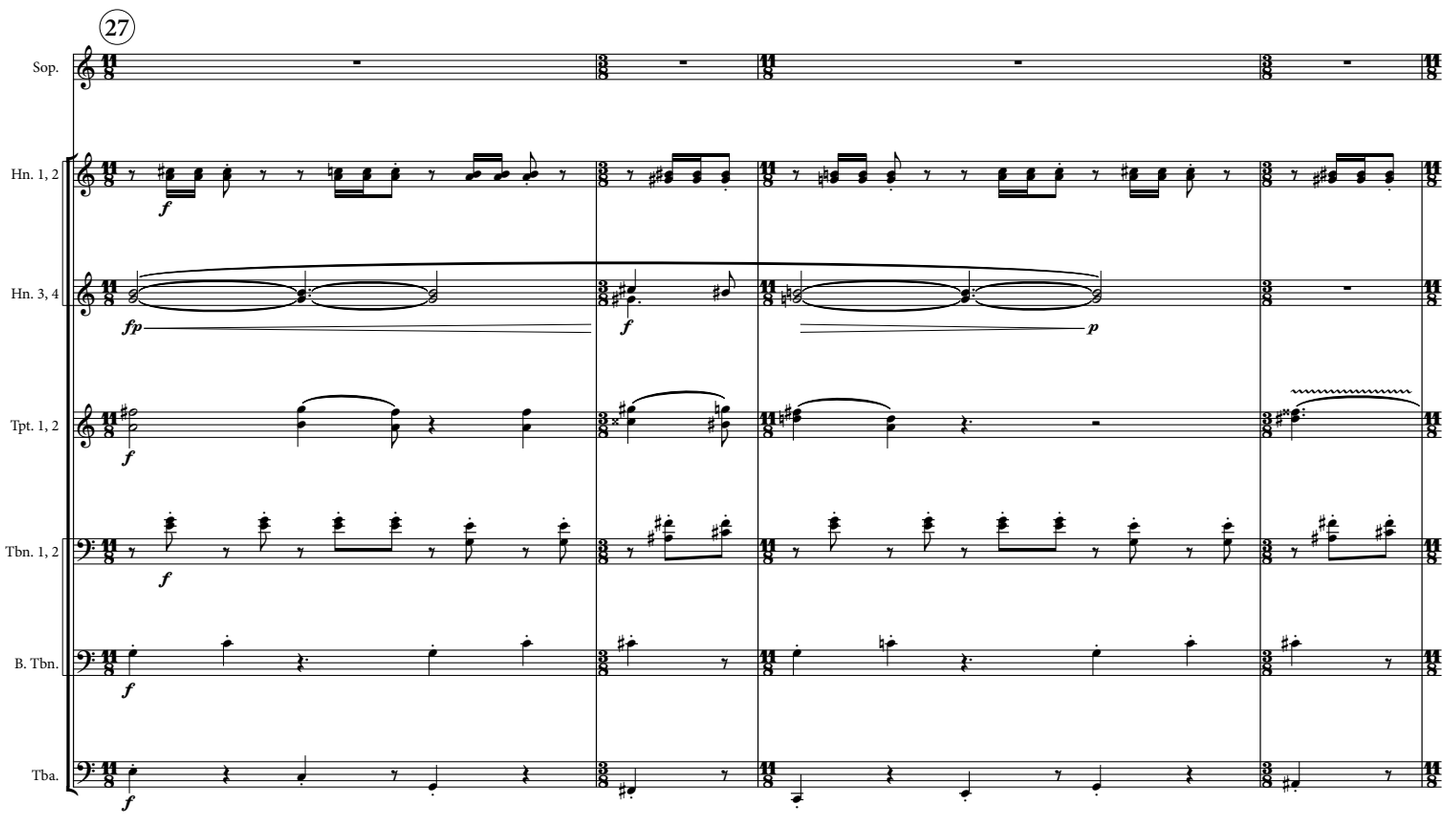

22
Sop.
they let their wings down
beau - ti - ful he
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Sop.
stirs up still things ex - haus - tion the mind set - tles down but
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

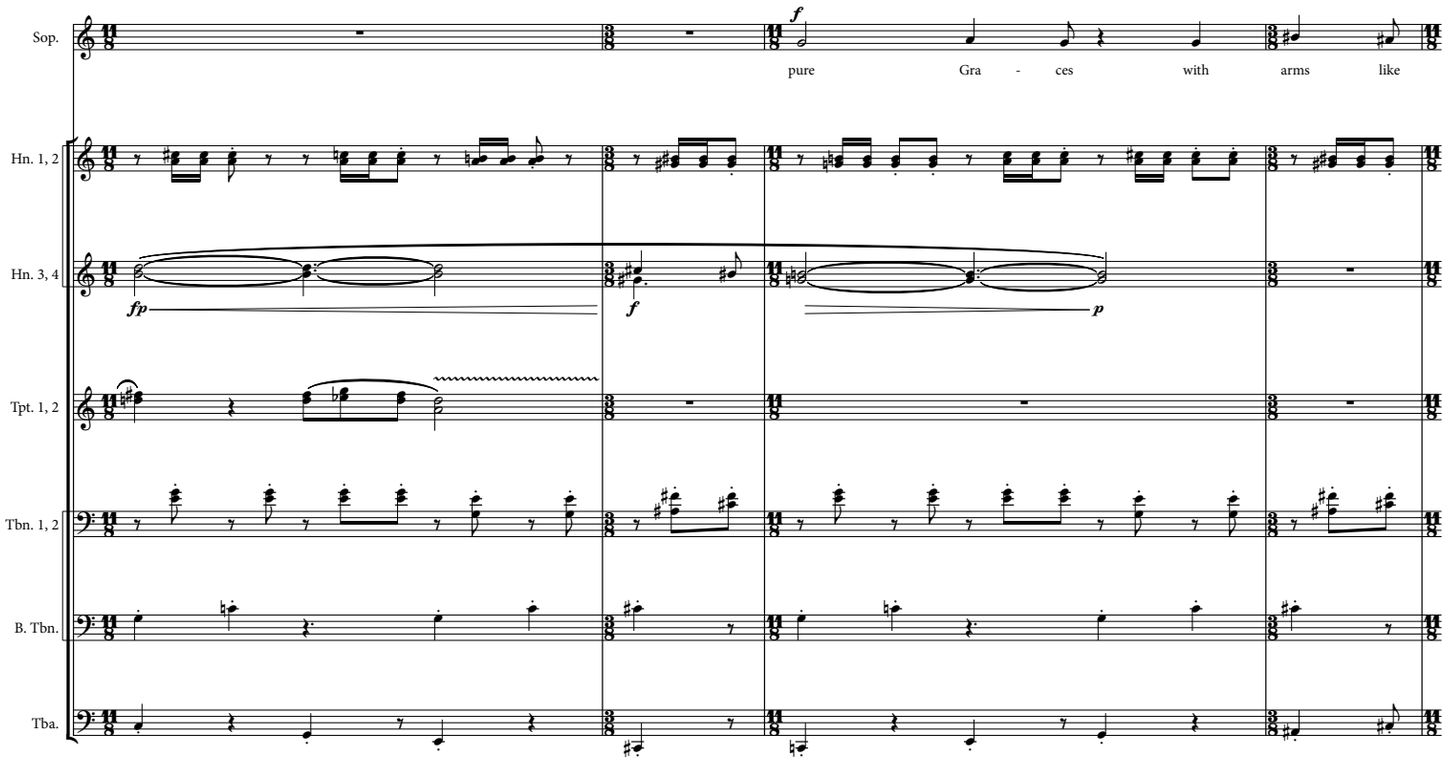

23
Sop.
come O be - lo - veds for day is near
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
(open)
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Sop.
of the Mu - ses makes and of the Gra - ces
(open)
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

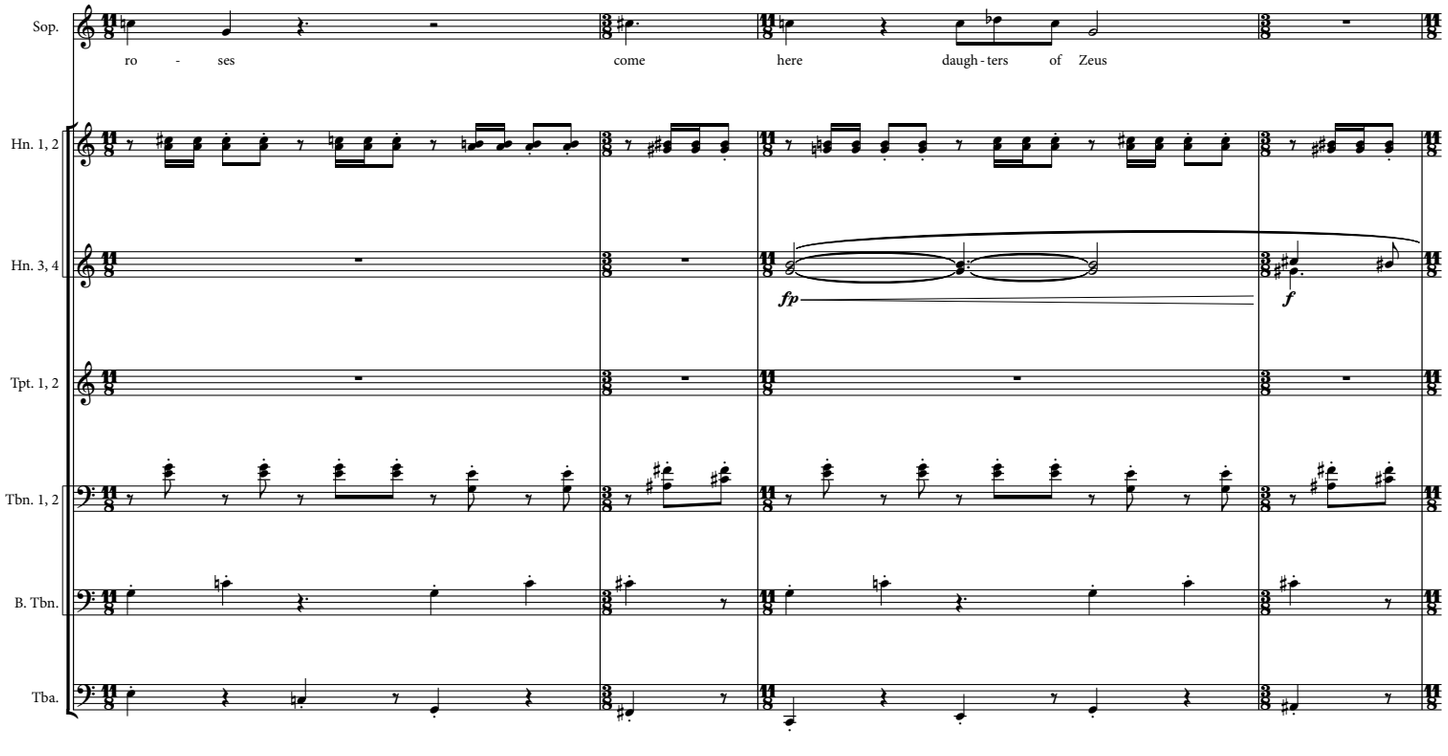

24
Sop.
mf
with slen - der for mor - tals: there is a share
f
as
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
25
long as you want
p
and

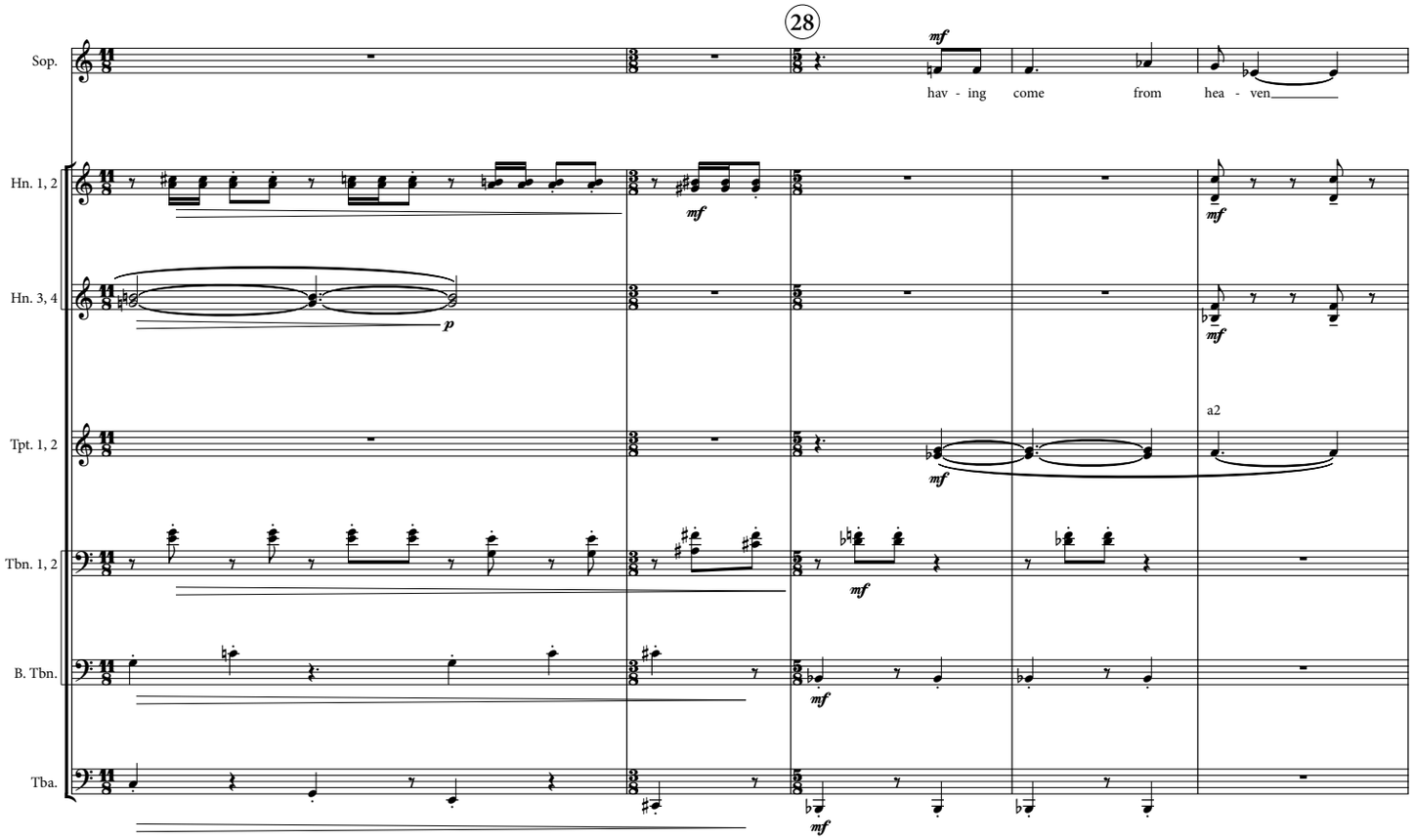

Sop.
I on a soft pil - low will lay down my limbs
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
26
I would not
Hn. 3, 4

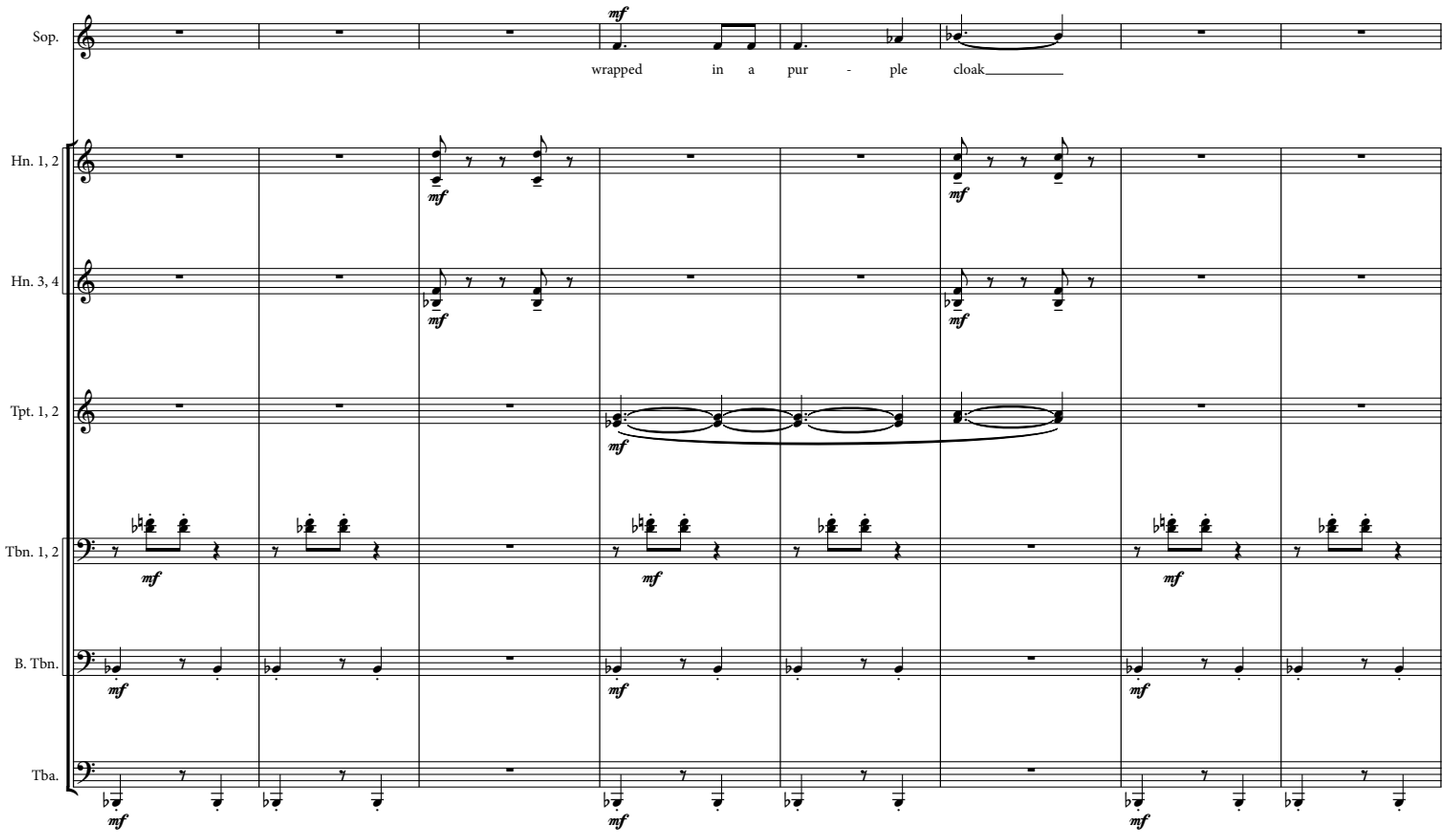

Sop.
think to touch the sky with two arms
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

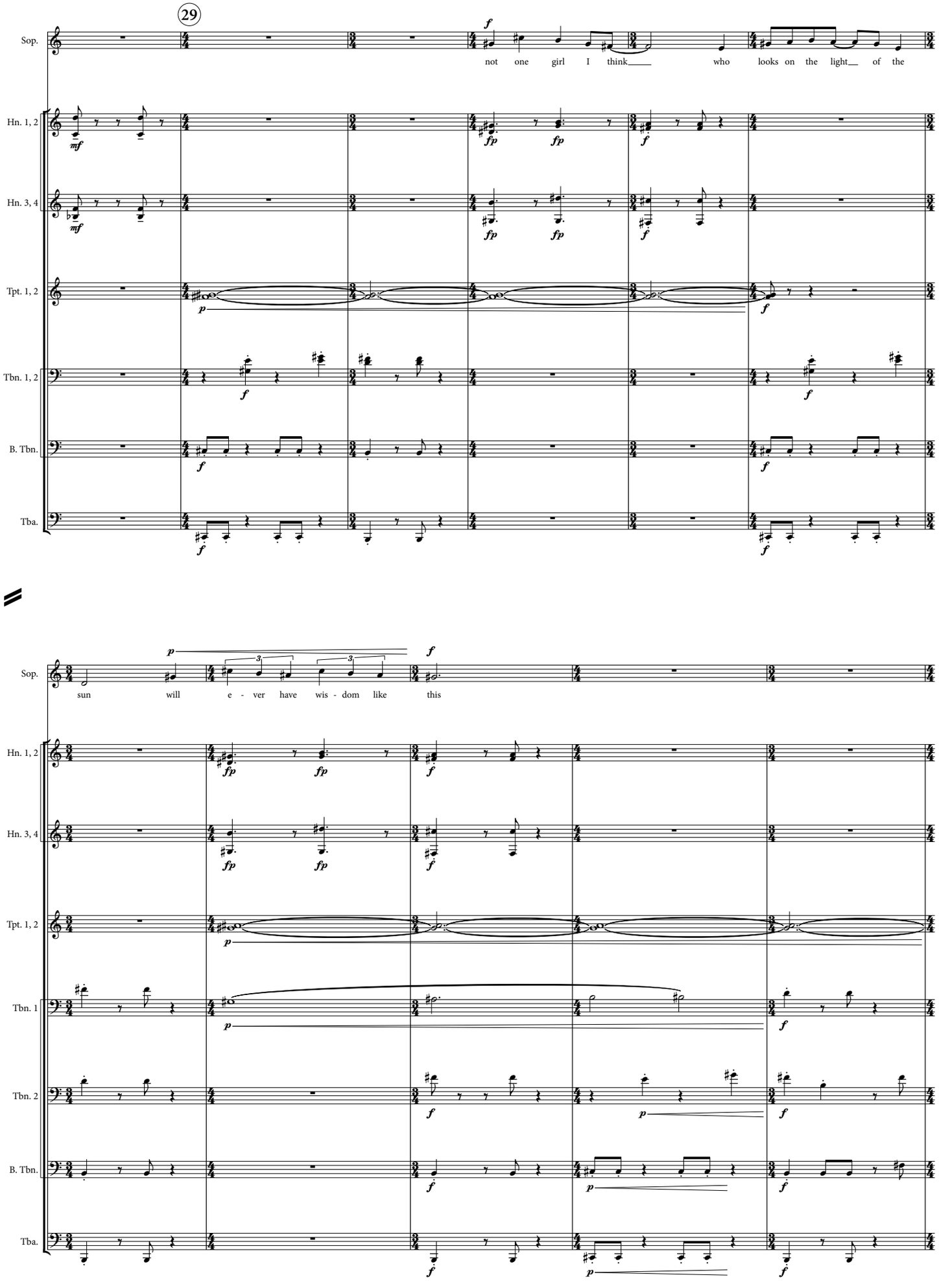

27
Sop.
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
f
fp
p

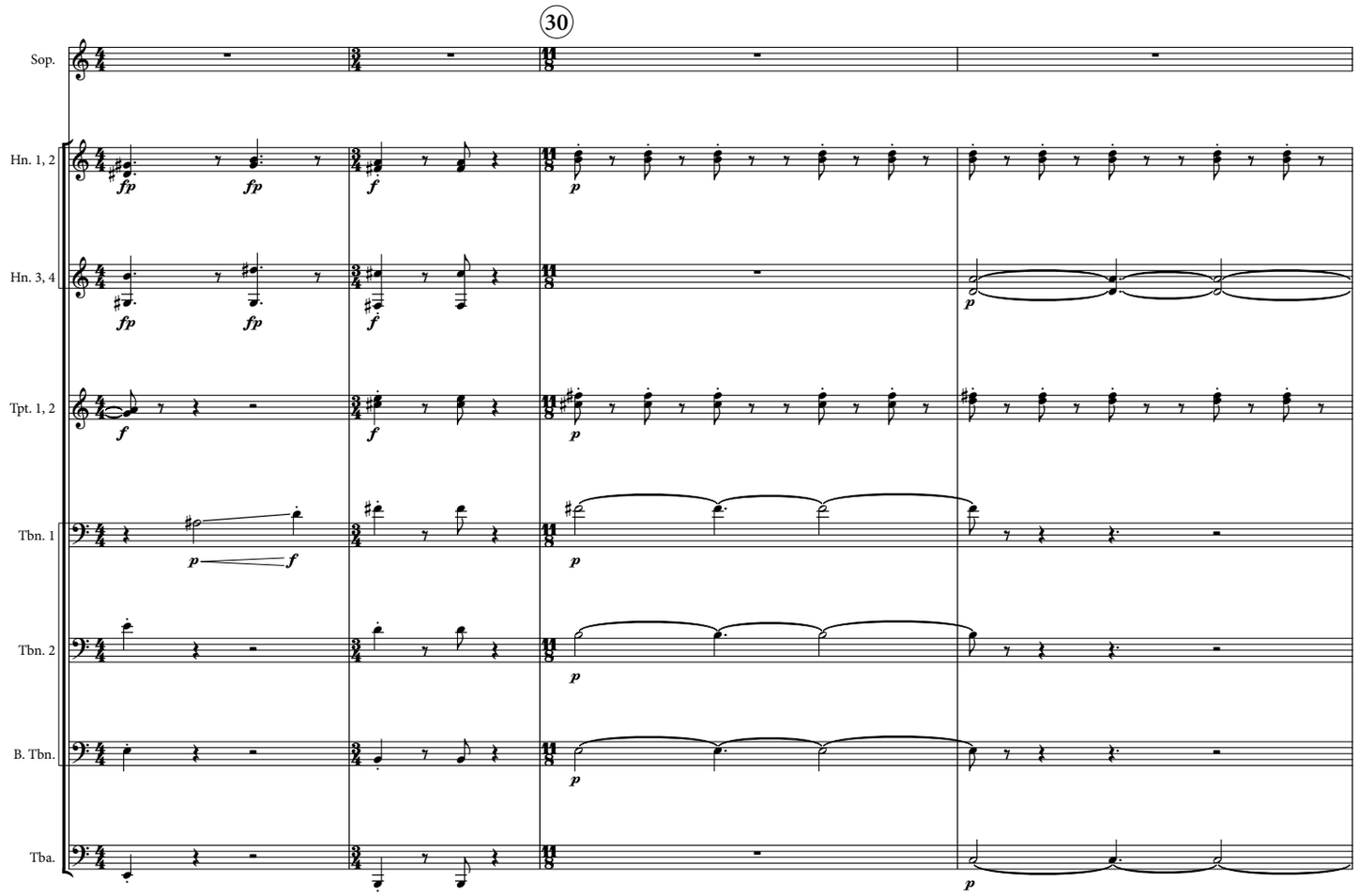

Sop.
pure Gra - ces with arms like
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

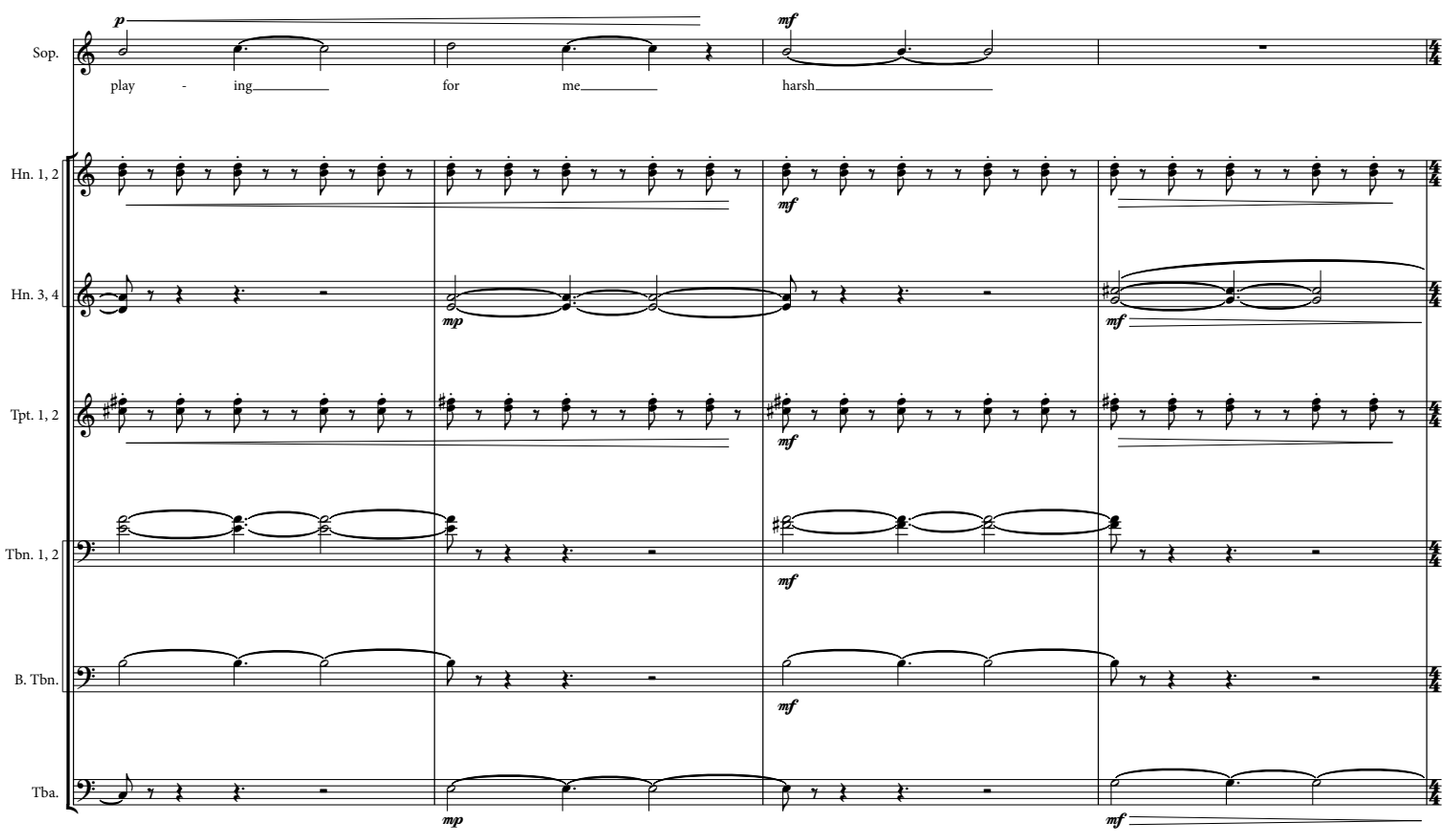

Sop.
ro - ses come here daugh - ters of Zeus
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

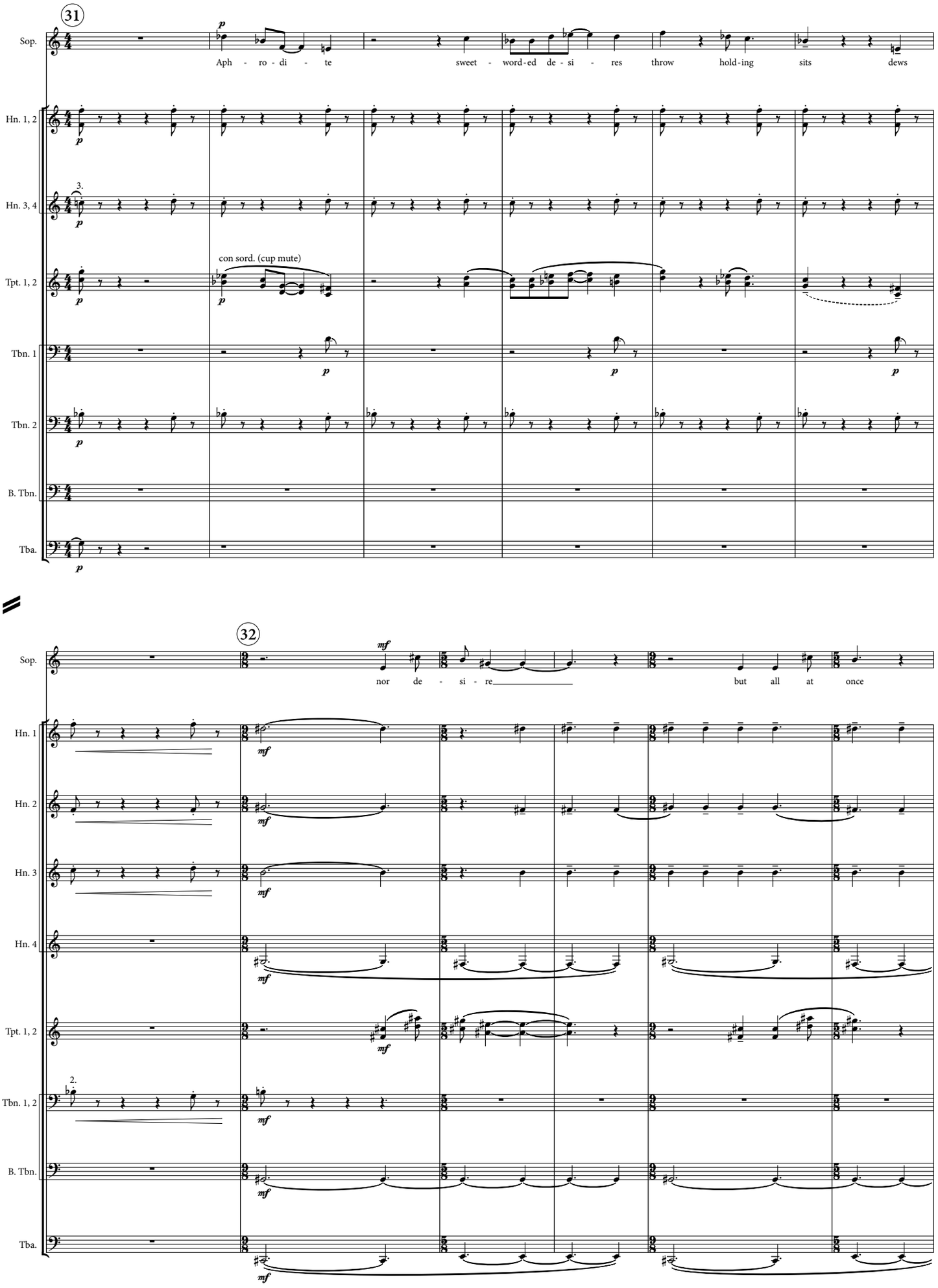

28
Sop.
mf
hav - ing come from hea - ven
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
p
Tpt. 1, 2
a2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

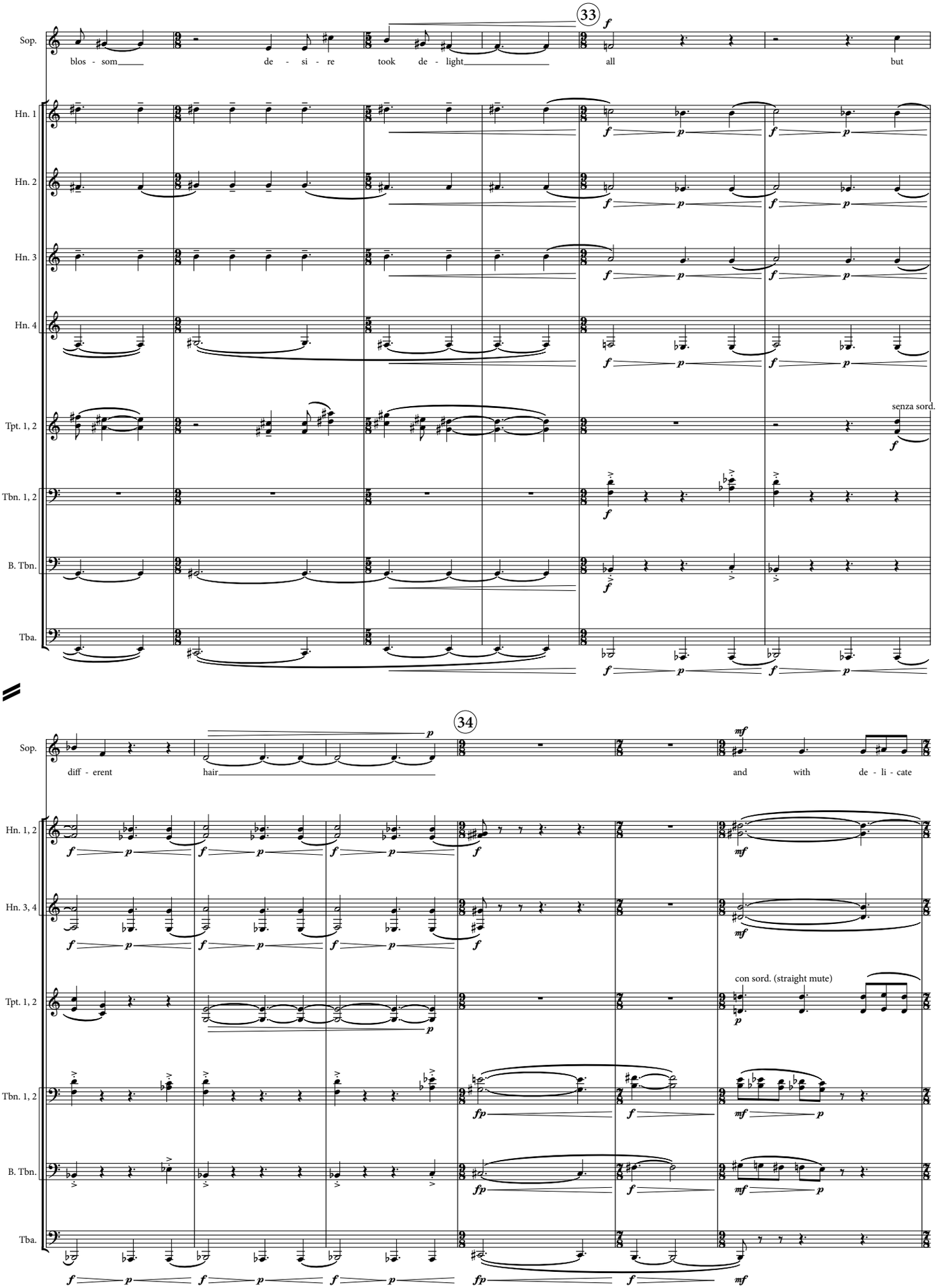

Sop.
mf
wrapped in a pur - ple cloak
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

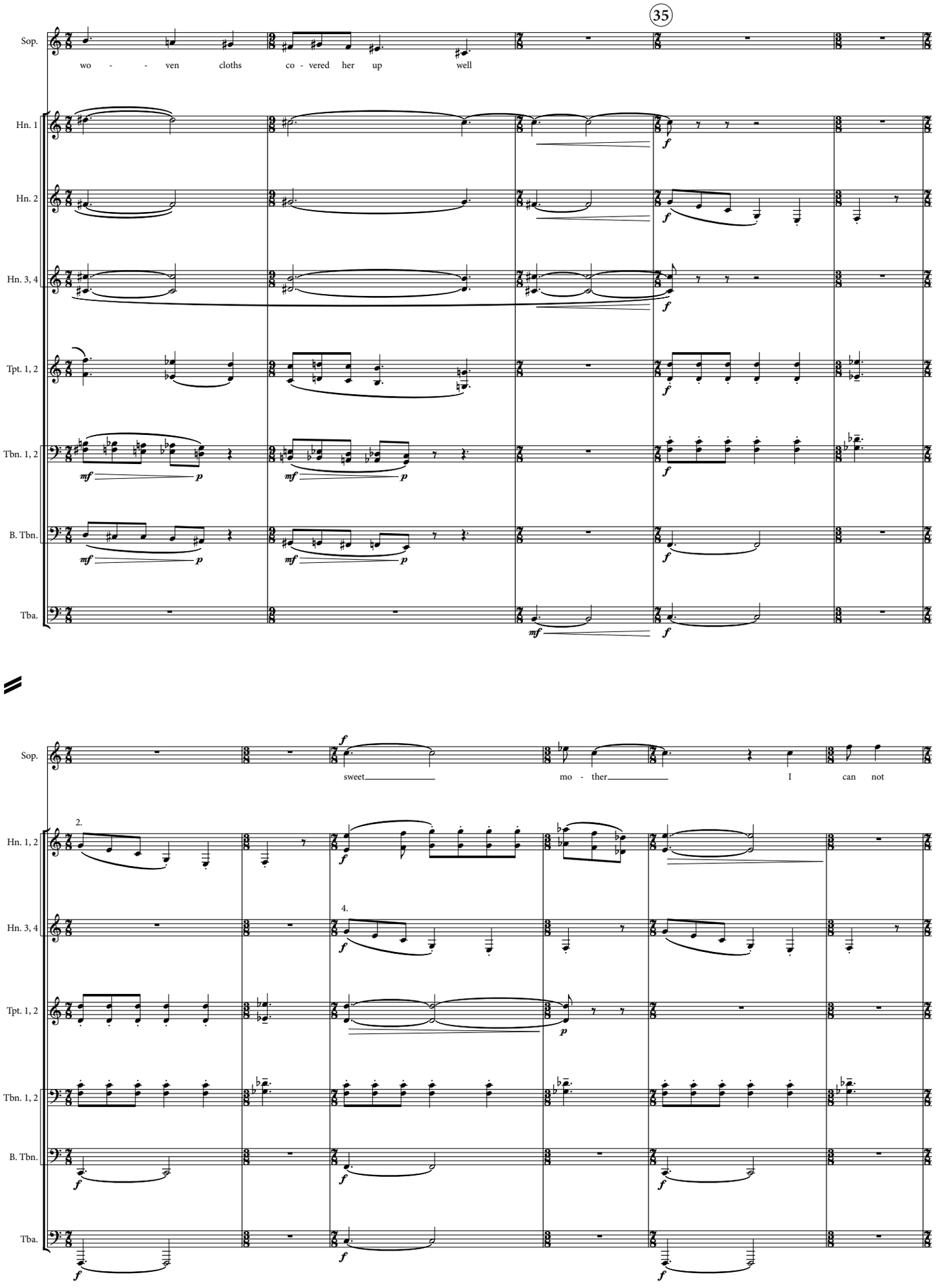

29
Sop.
not one girl I think who looks on the light of the
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
sun will e - ver have wis - dom like this
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2

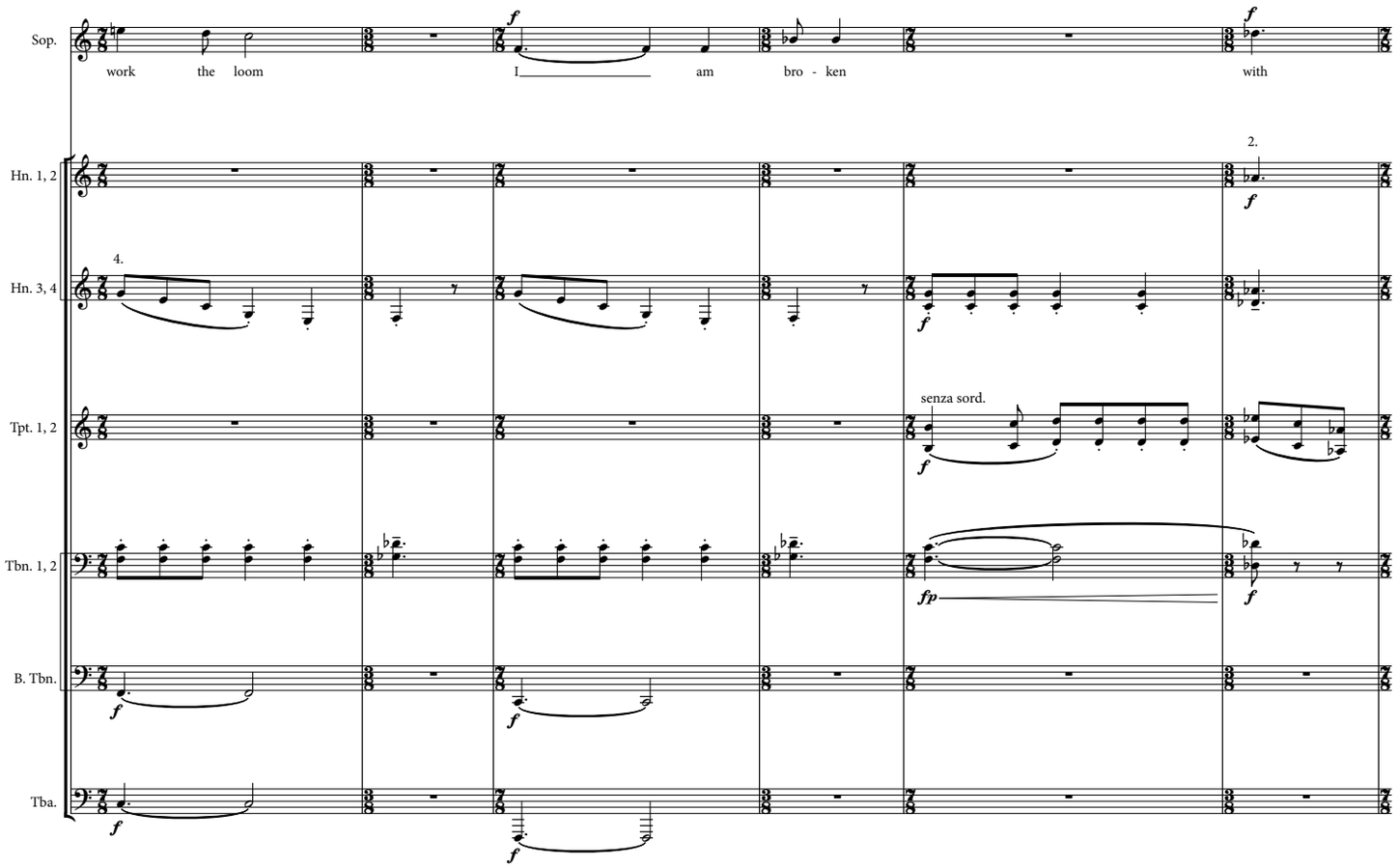

30
Sop.
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

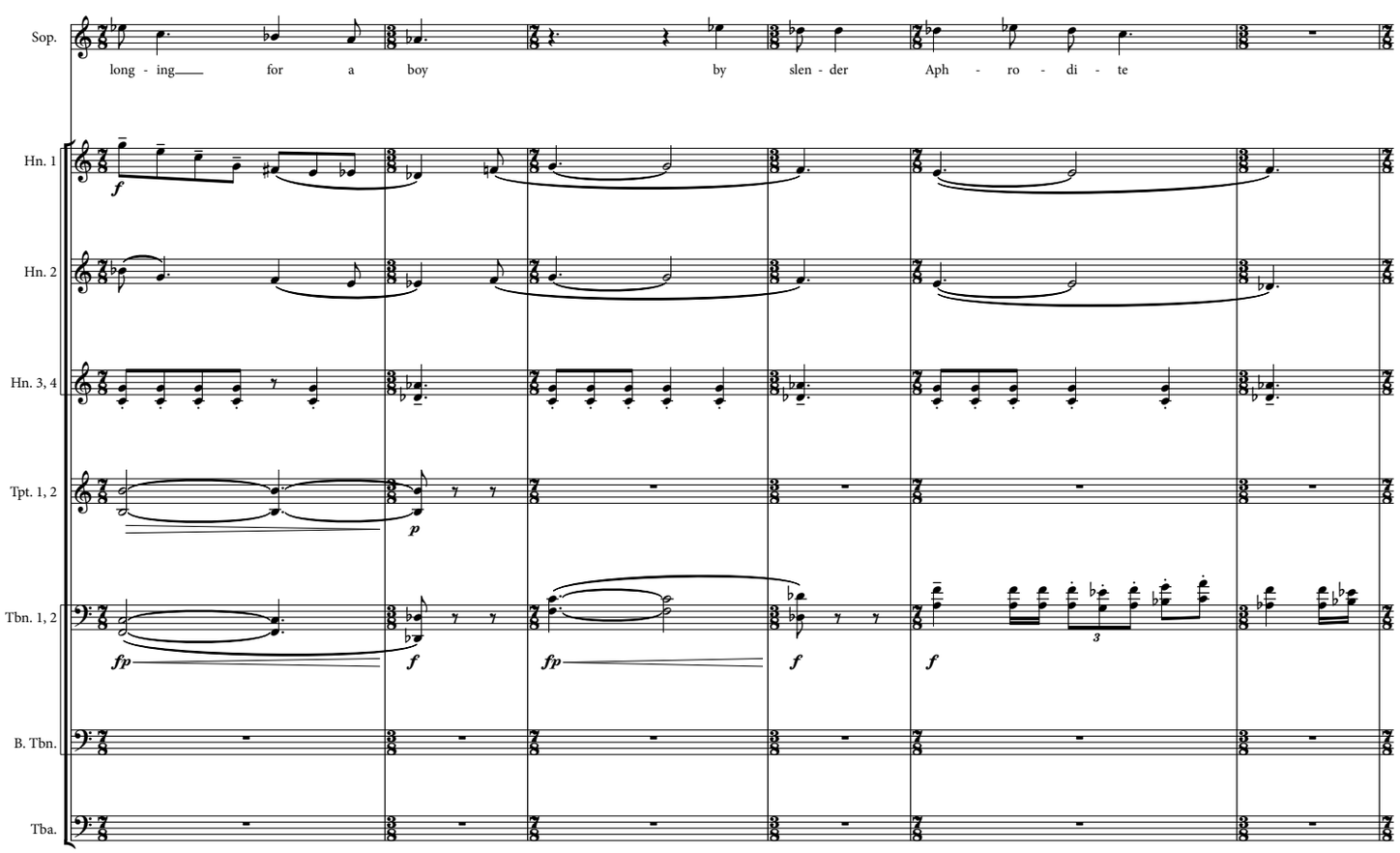

Sop.
play - ing for me harsh
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

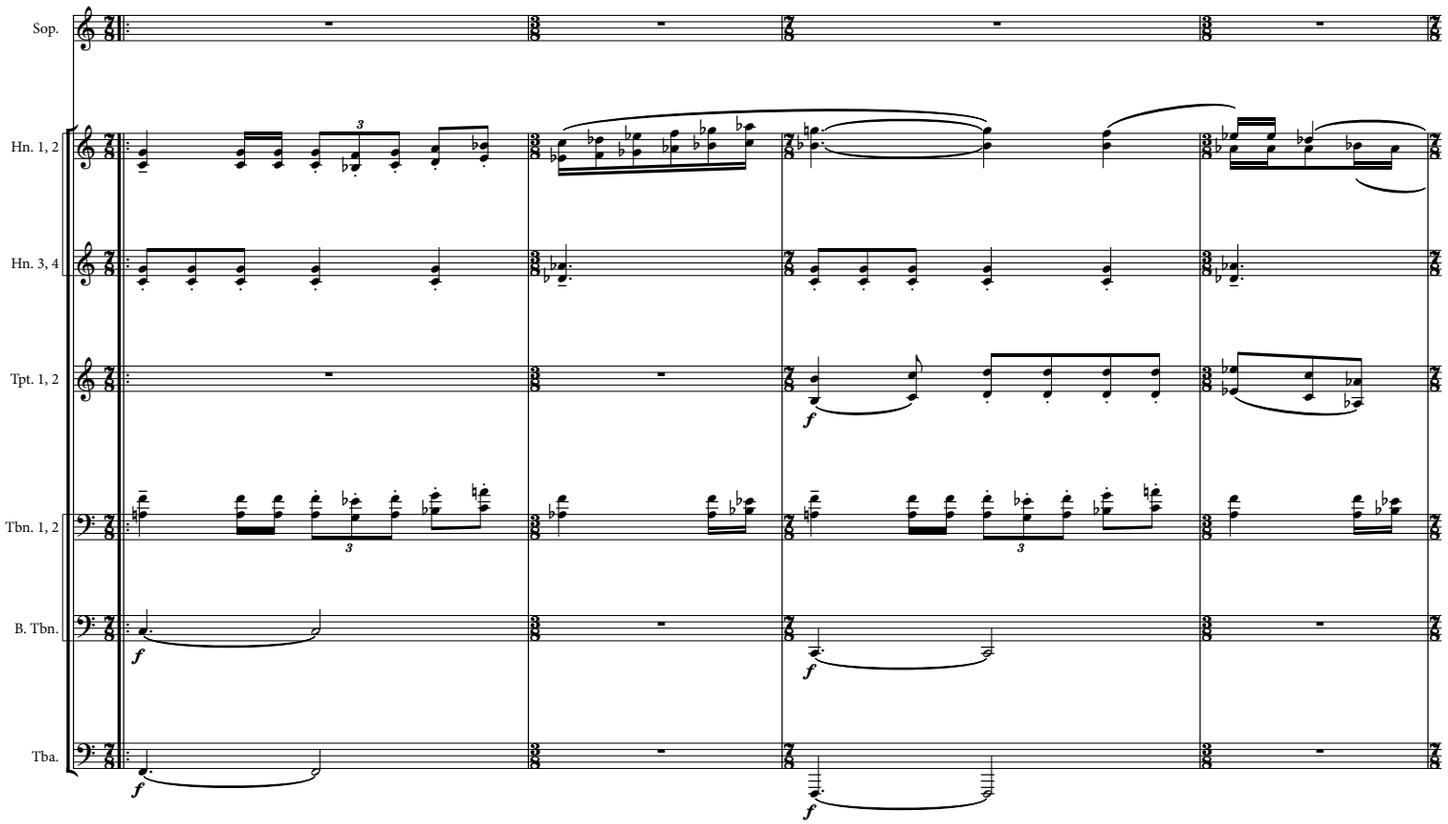

31
Sop.
p
Aph - ro - di - te sweet - word-ed de - si - res throw hold-ing sits dews
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
3.
con sord. (cup mute)
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
32
mf
nor de - si - re but all at once
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1, 2
2.
Tbn. 1, 2

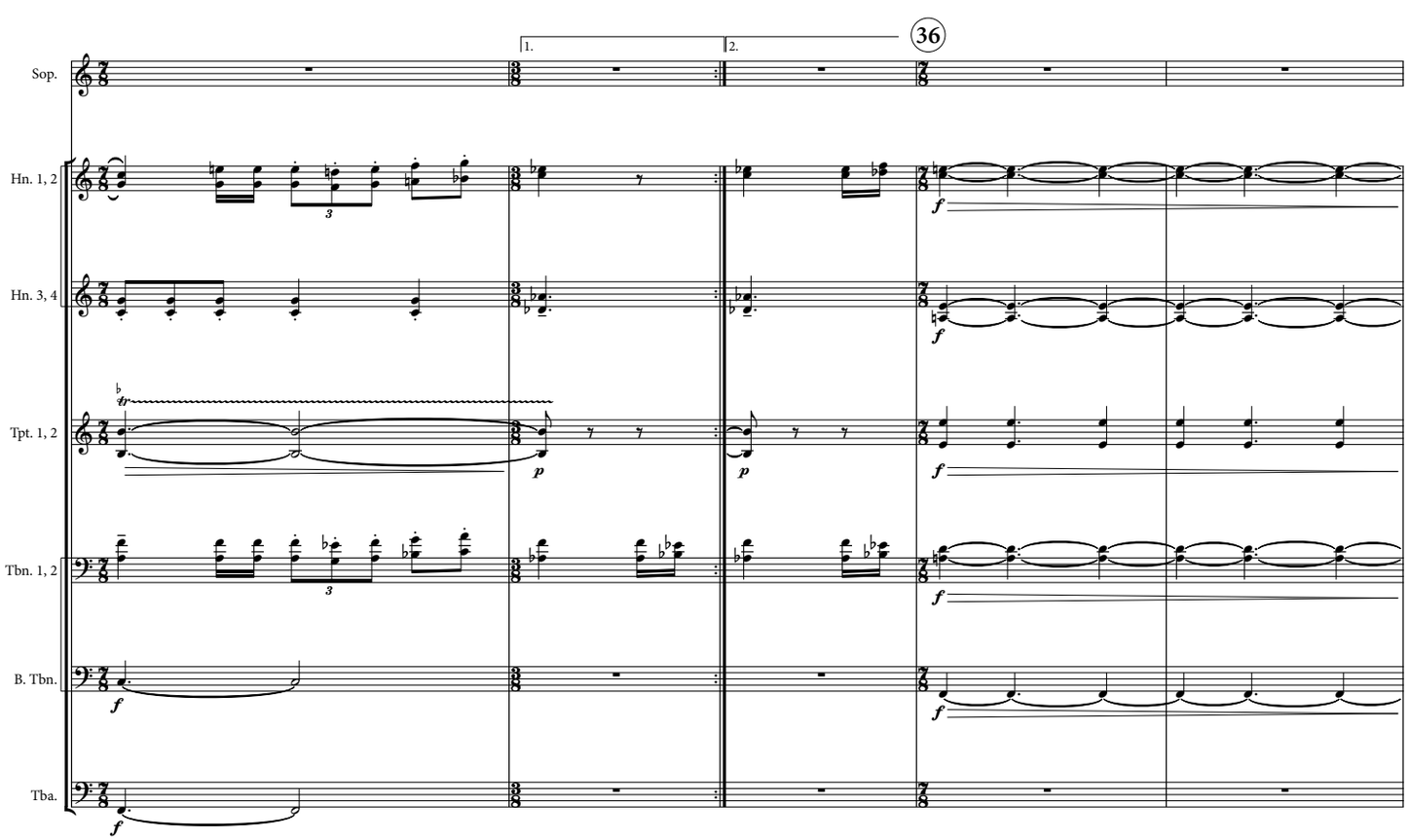

33
Sop.
blos - som de - si - re took de - light all but
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1, 2
senza sord.
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
34
diff - erent hair and with de - li - cate
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
con sord. (straight mute)

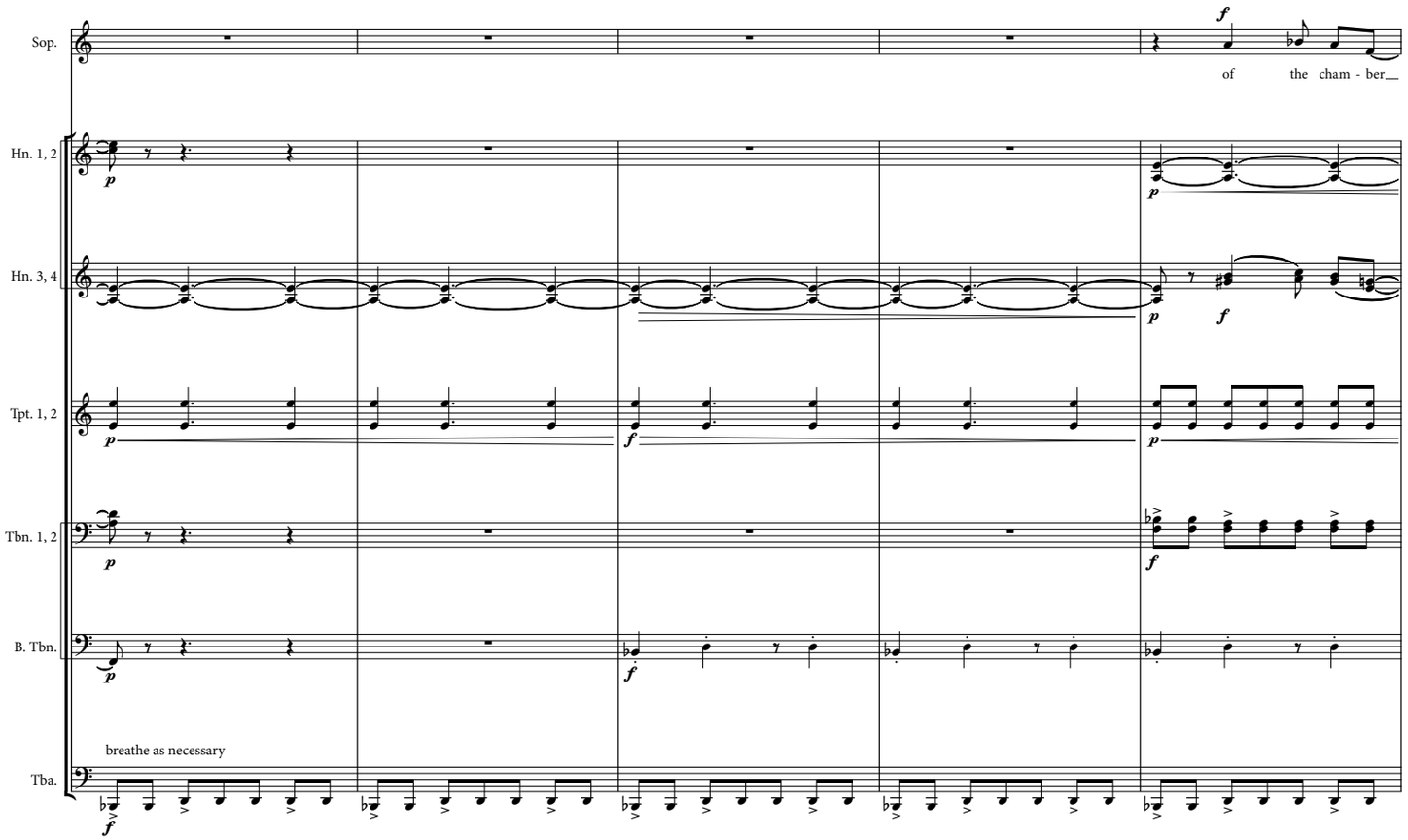

35
Sop.
wo - - ven cloths co - vered her up well
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
sweet mo - ther I can not
2.
4.

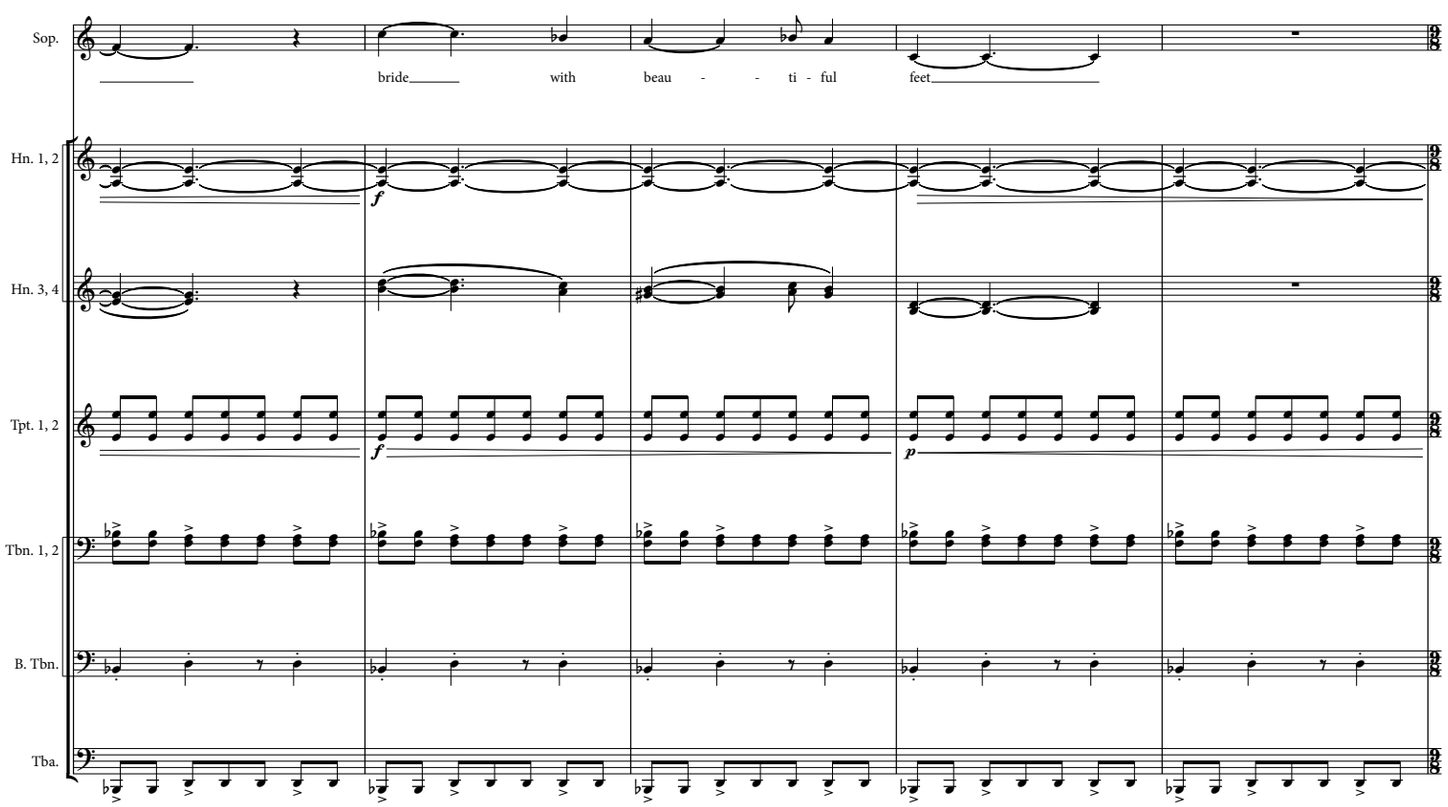

Sop.
work the loom I am bro - ken with
Hn. 1, 2
2.
4.
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
senza sord.
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

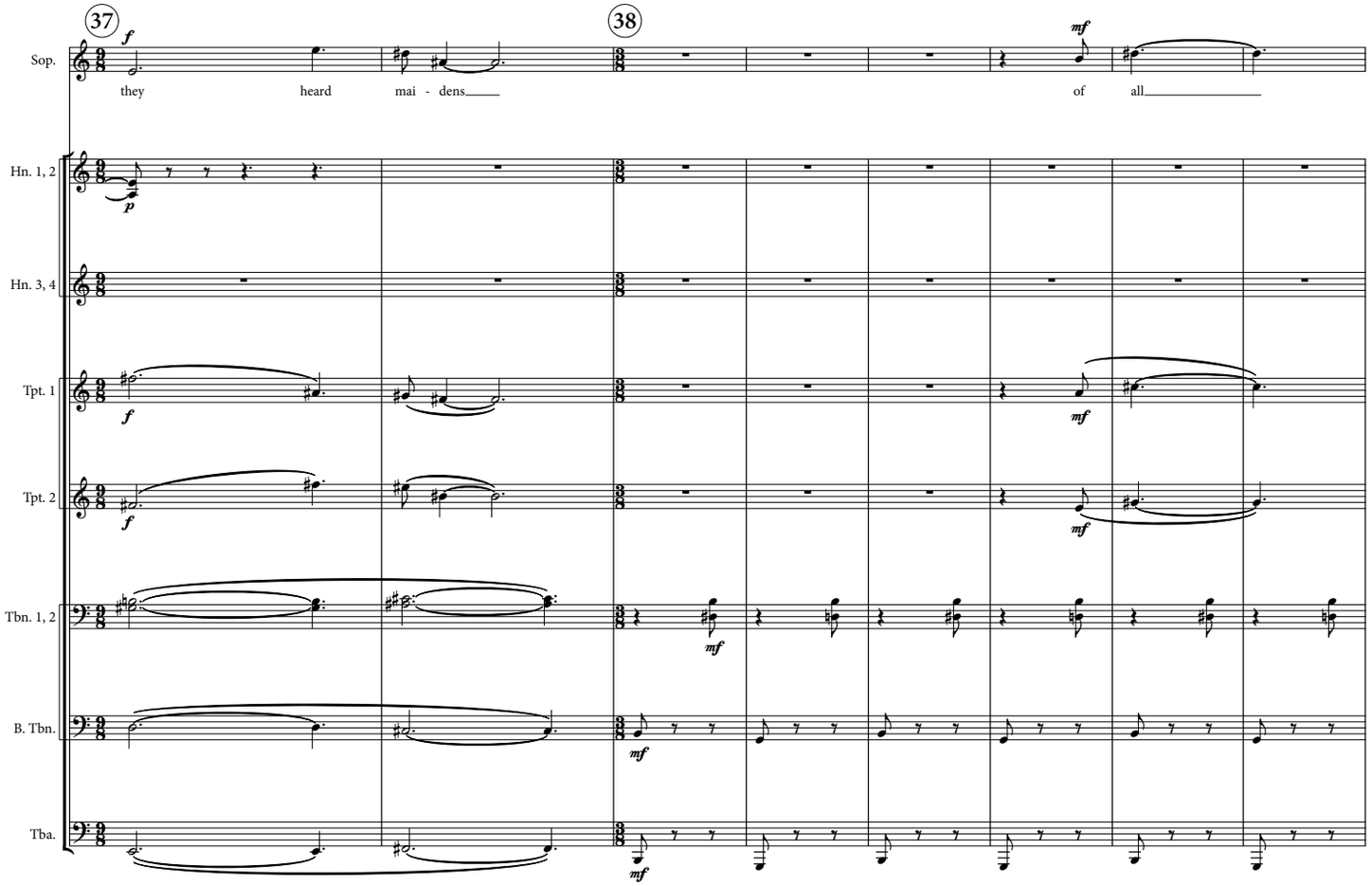

Sop.
long - ing for a boy by slen - der Aph - ro - di - te
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

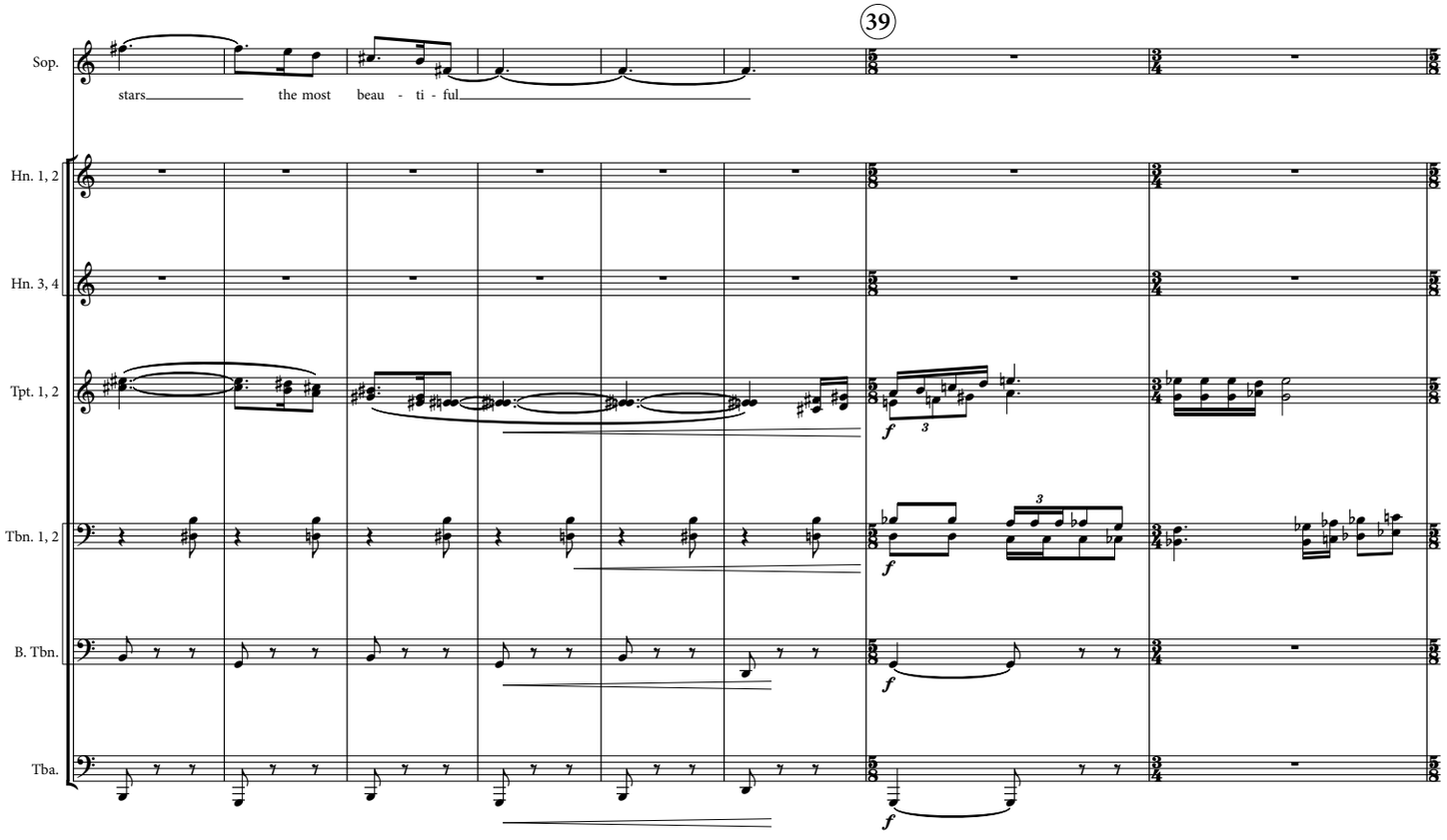

Sop.
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

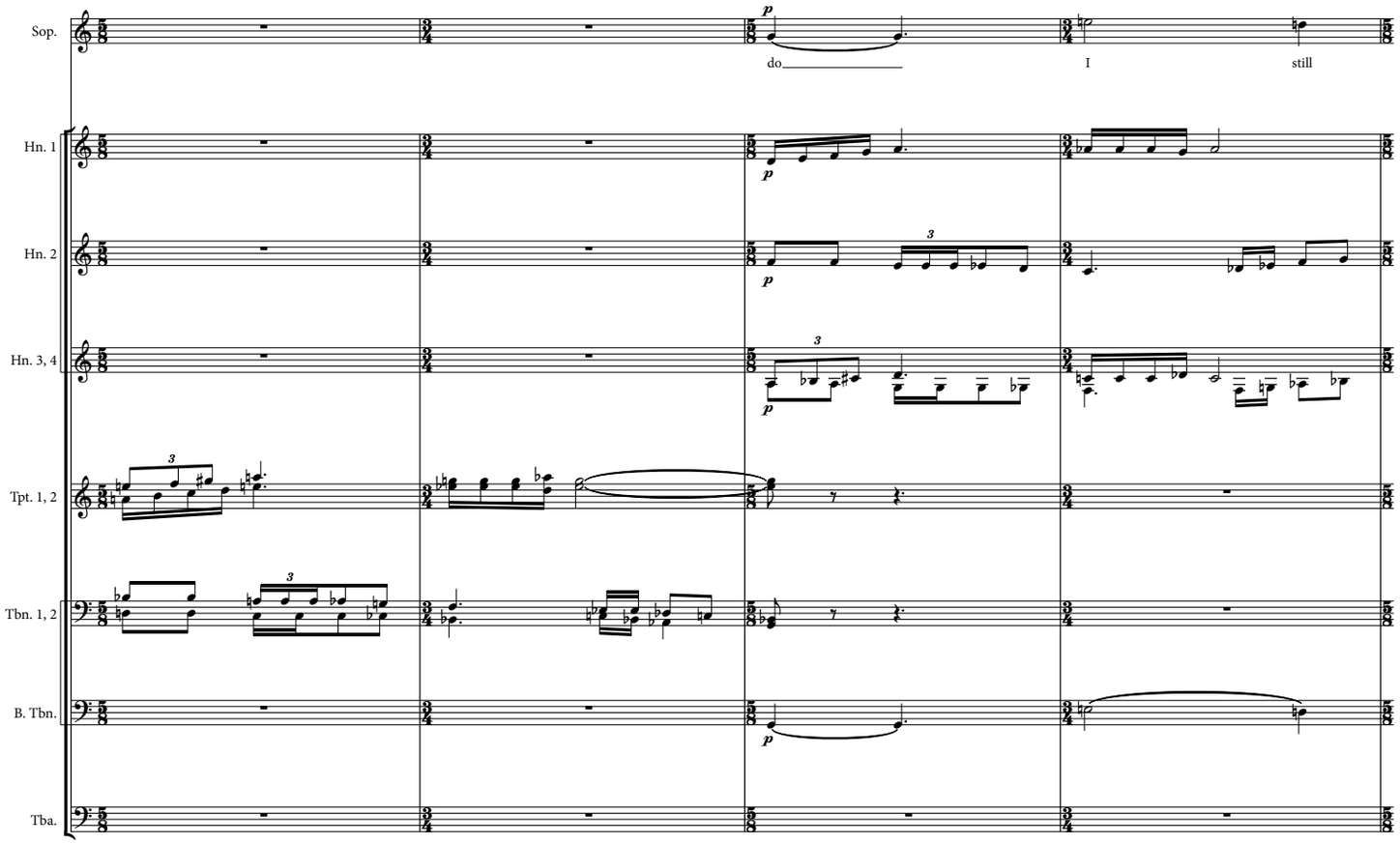

1.
2.
36
Sop.
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

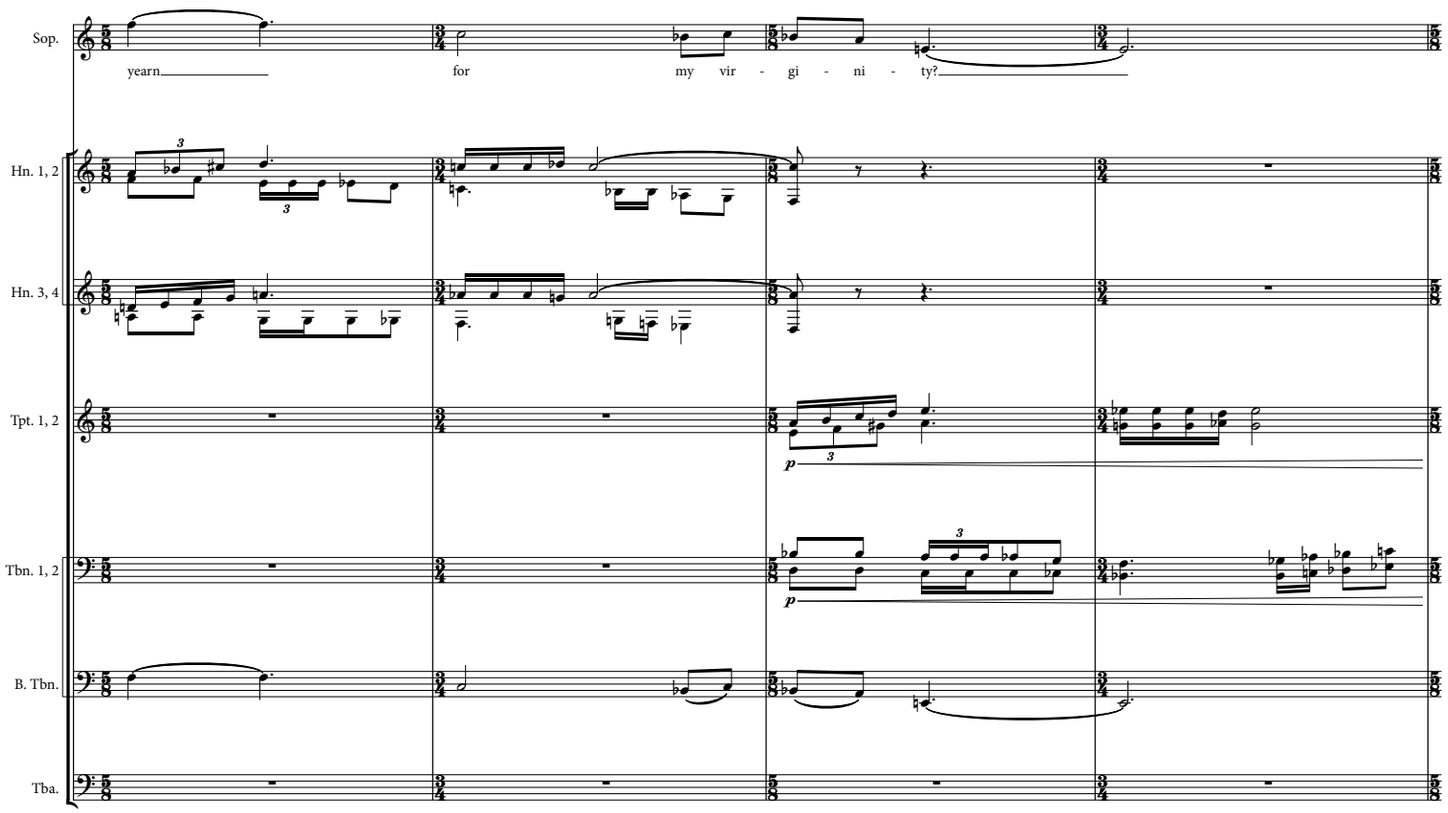

Sop.
of the cham - ber
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
breathe as necessary
Tba.

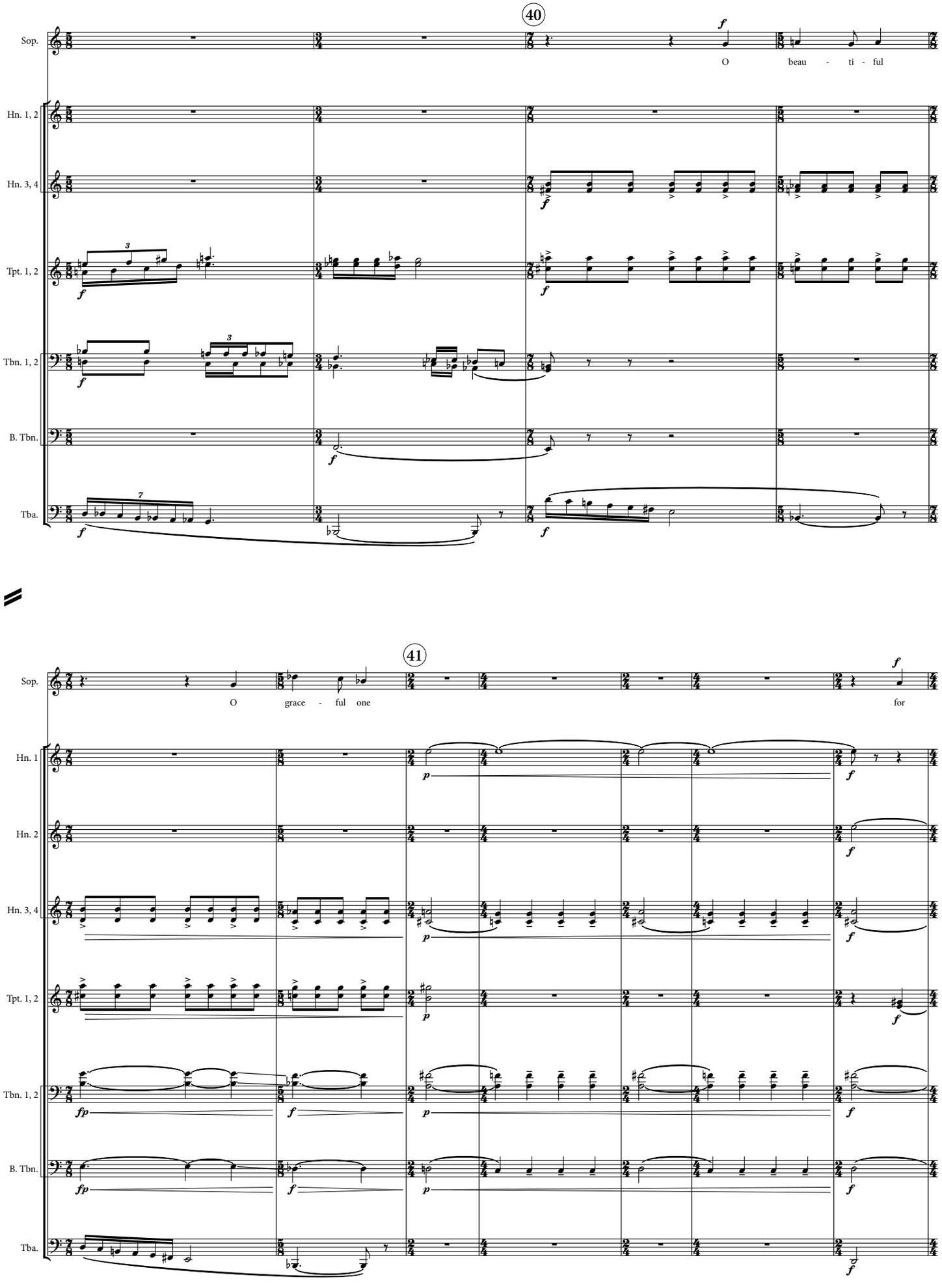

Sop.
bride with beau - ti - ful feet
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

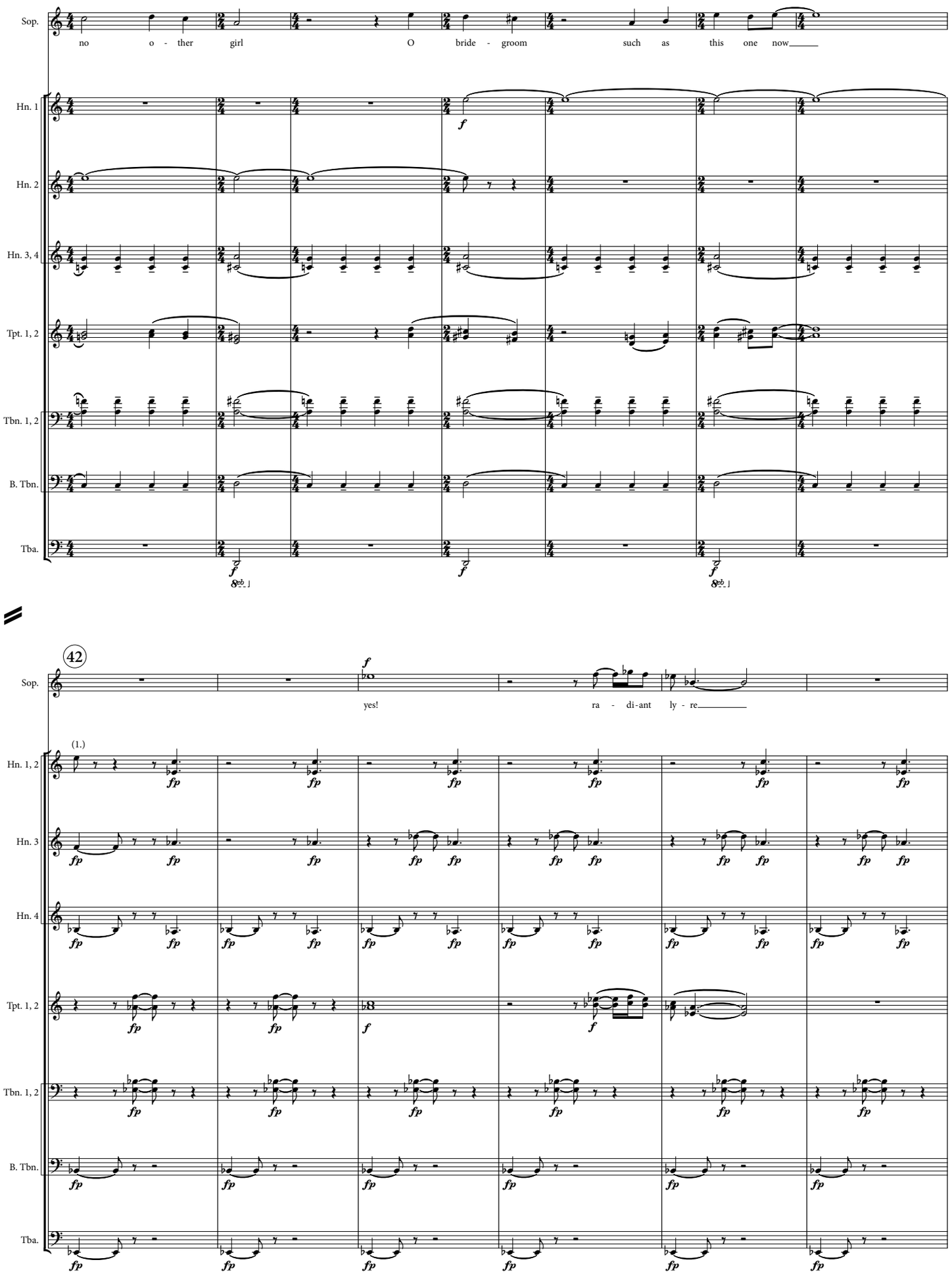

37
38
Sop.
they heard mai - dens
of all
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

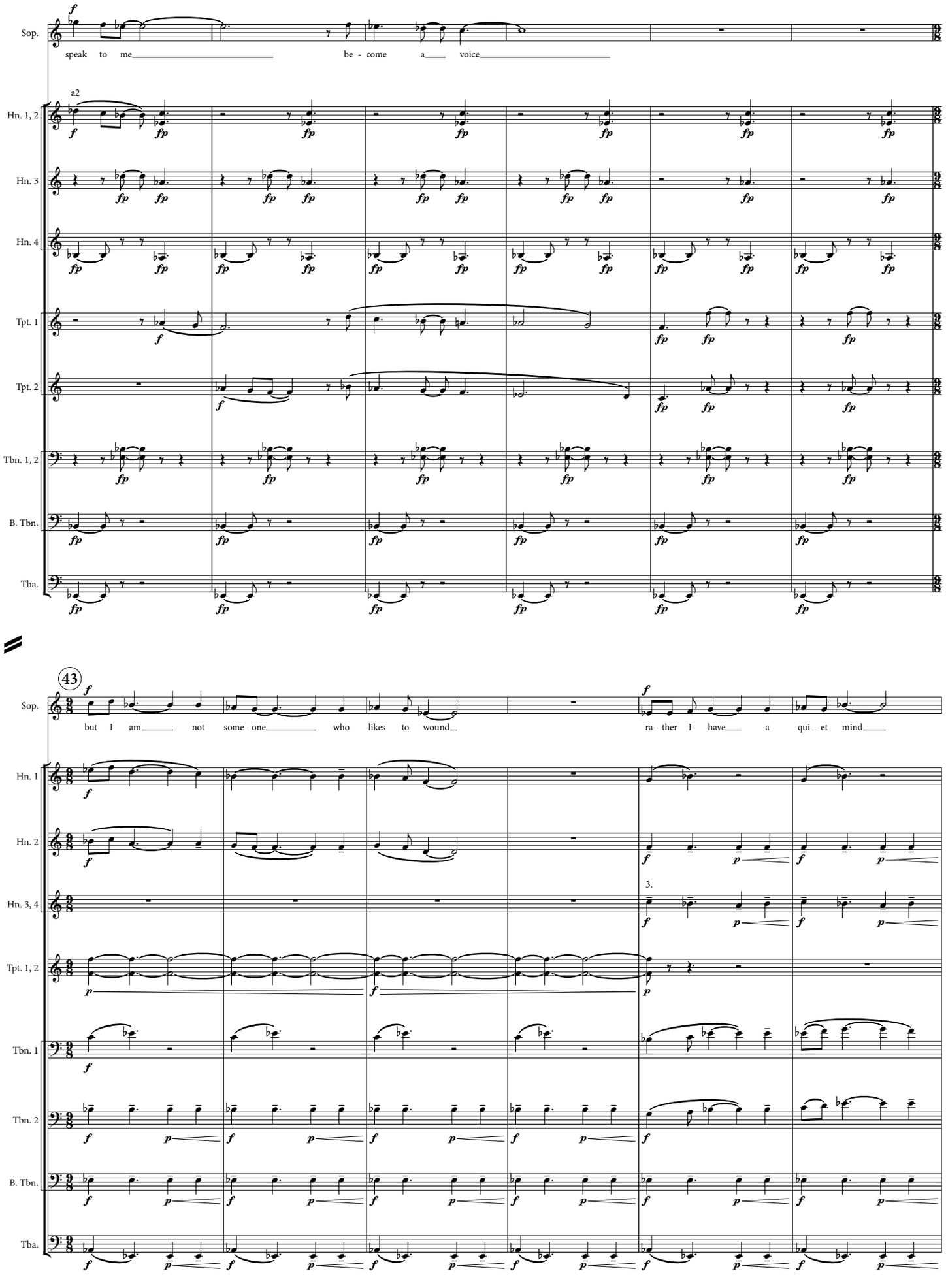

39
Sop.
stars the most beau - ti - ful
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

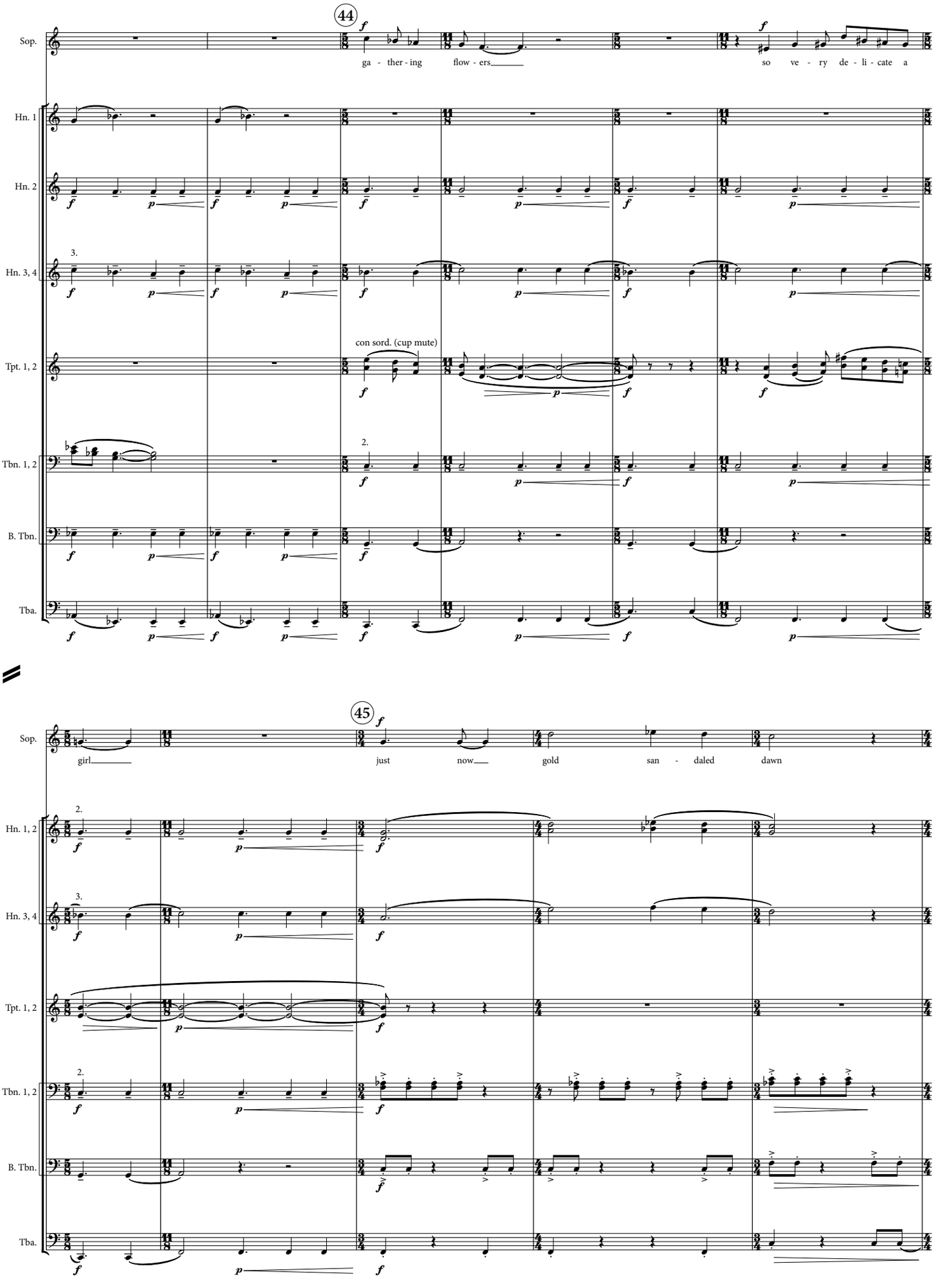

Sop.
do
I
still
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

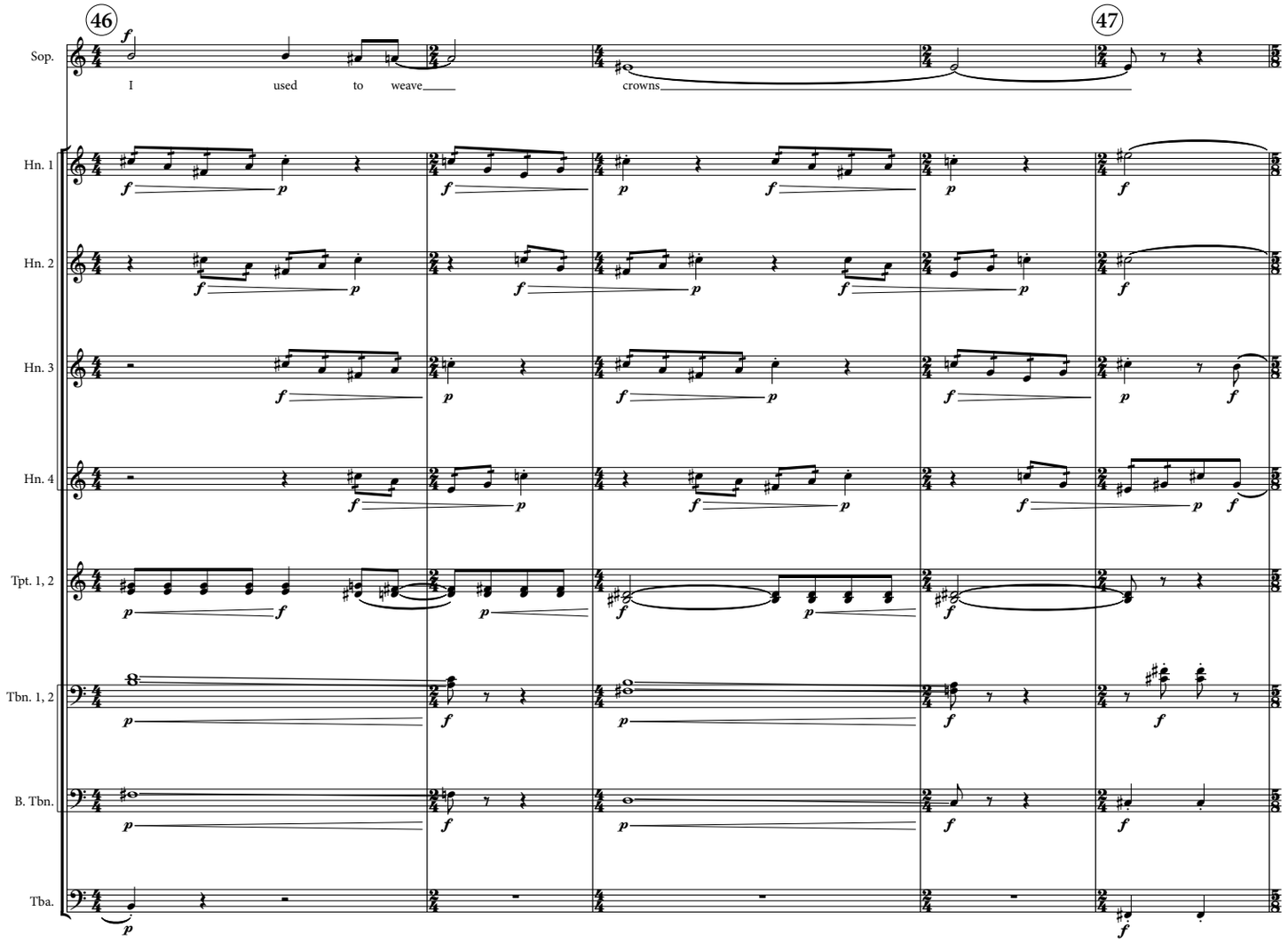

Sop.
yearn
for
my vir - gi - ni - ty?
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

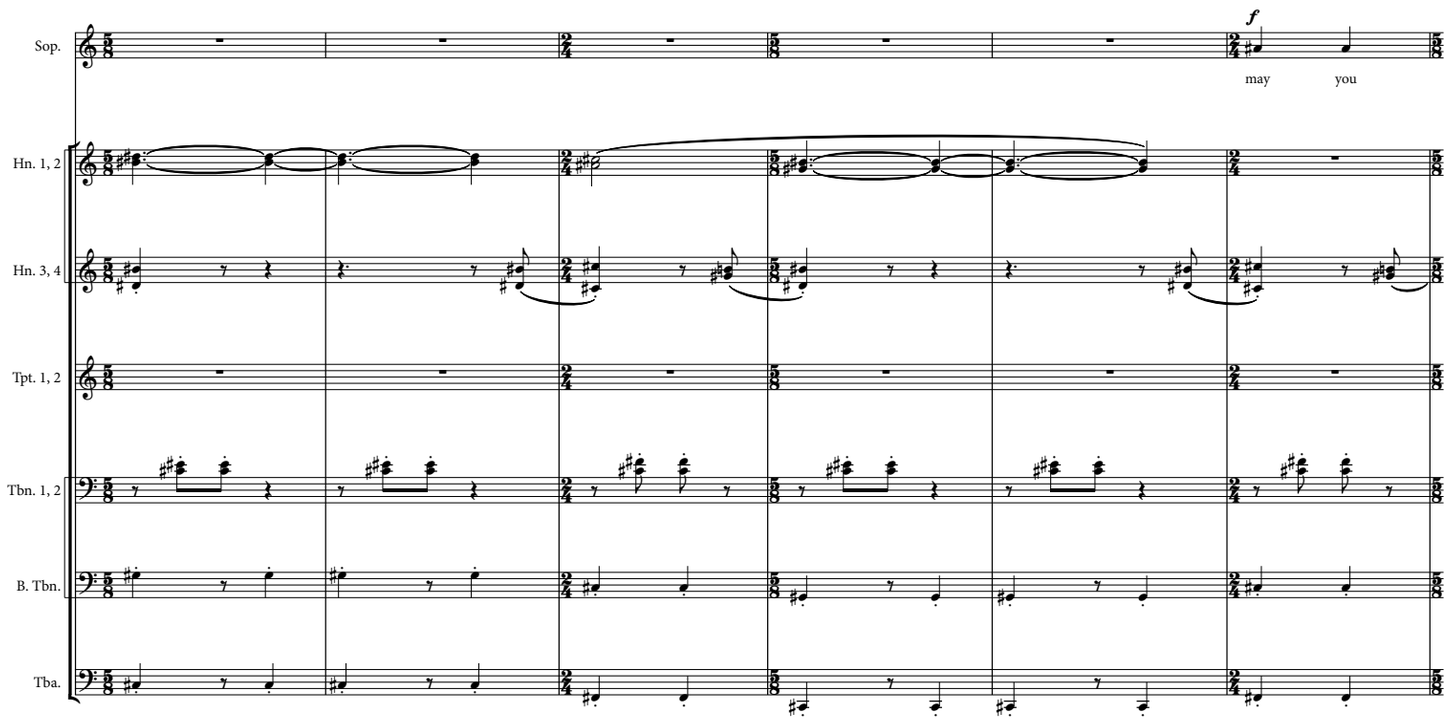

40
Sop.
O beau - ti - ful
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
41
Sop.
O grace - ful one
for
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

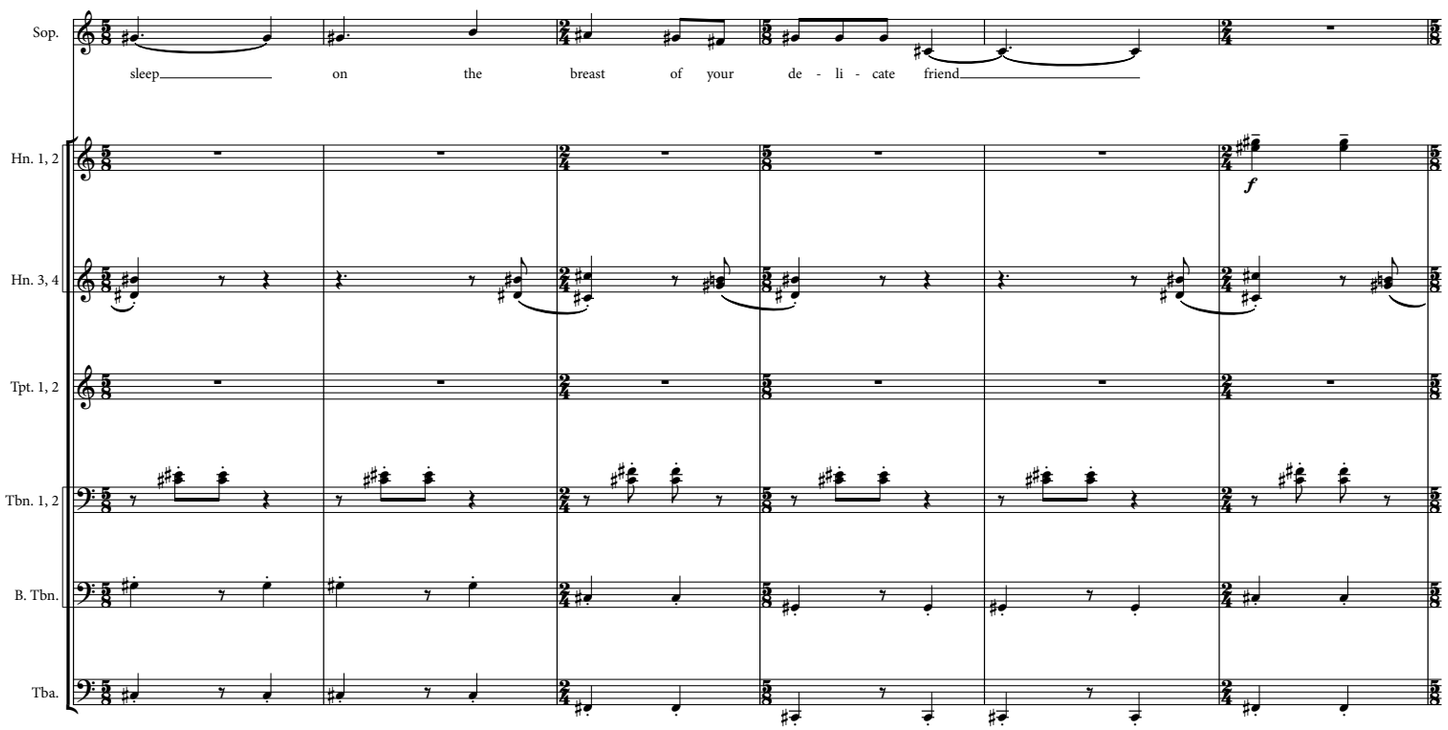

Sop.
no o - ther girl O bride - groom such as this one now
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
42
yes! ra - di-ant ly - re
(1.)

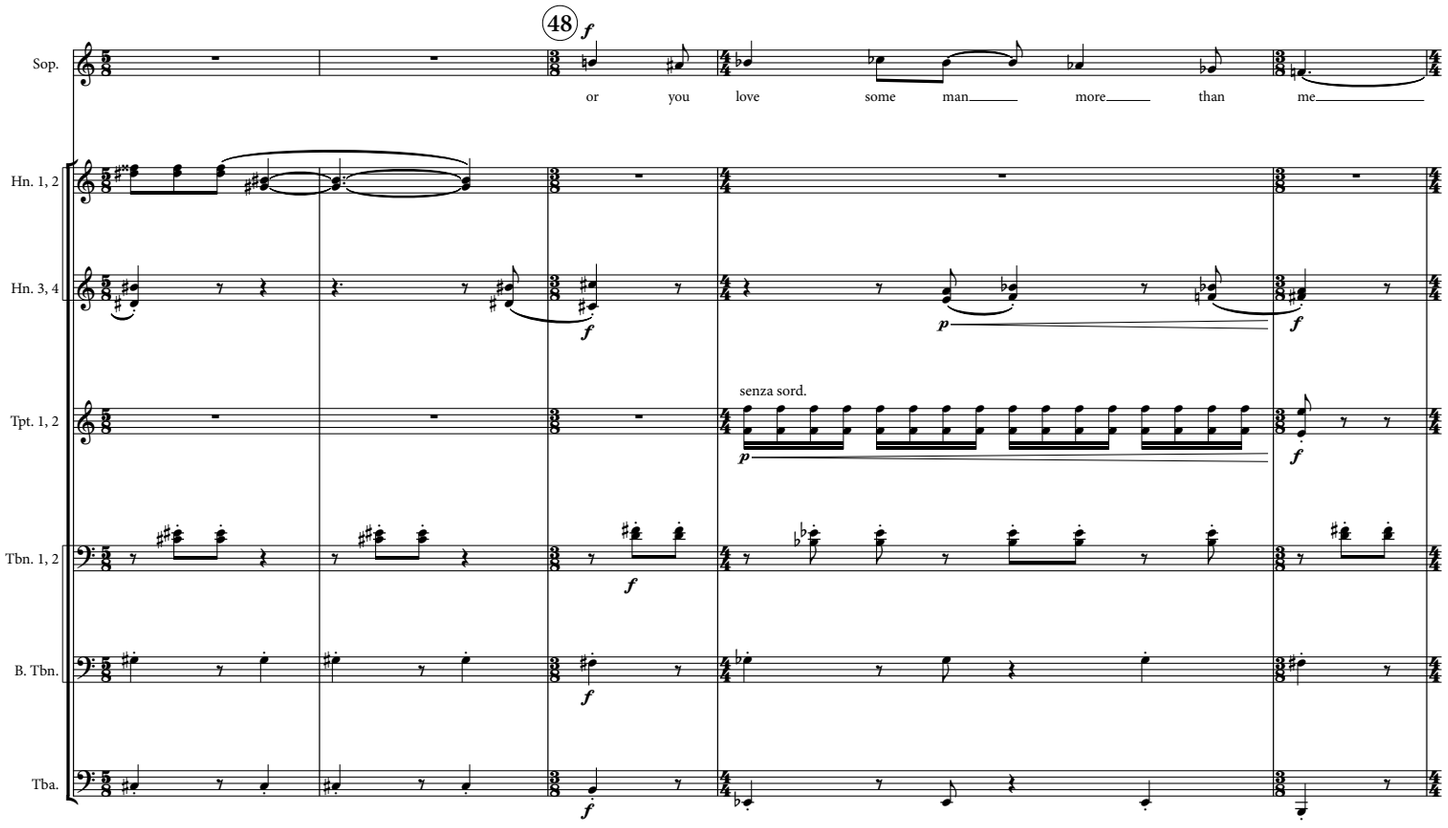

Sop.
speak to me be - come a voice
a2
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
43
but I am not some - one who likes to wound ra - ther I have a qui - et mind
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3, 4
3.
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

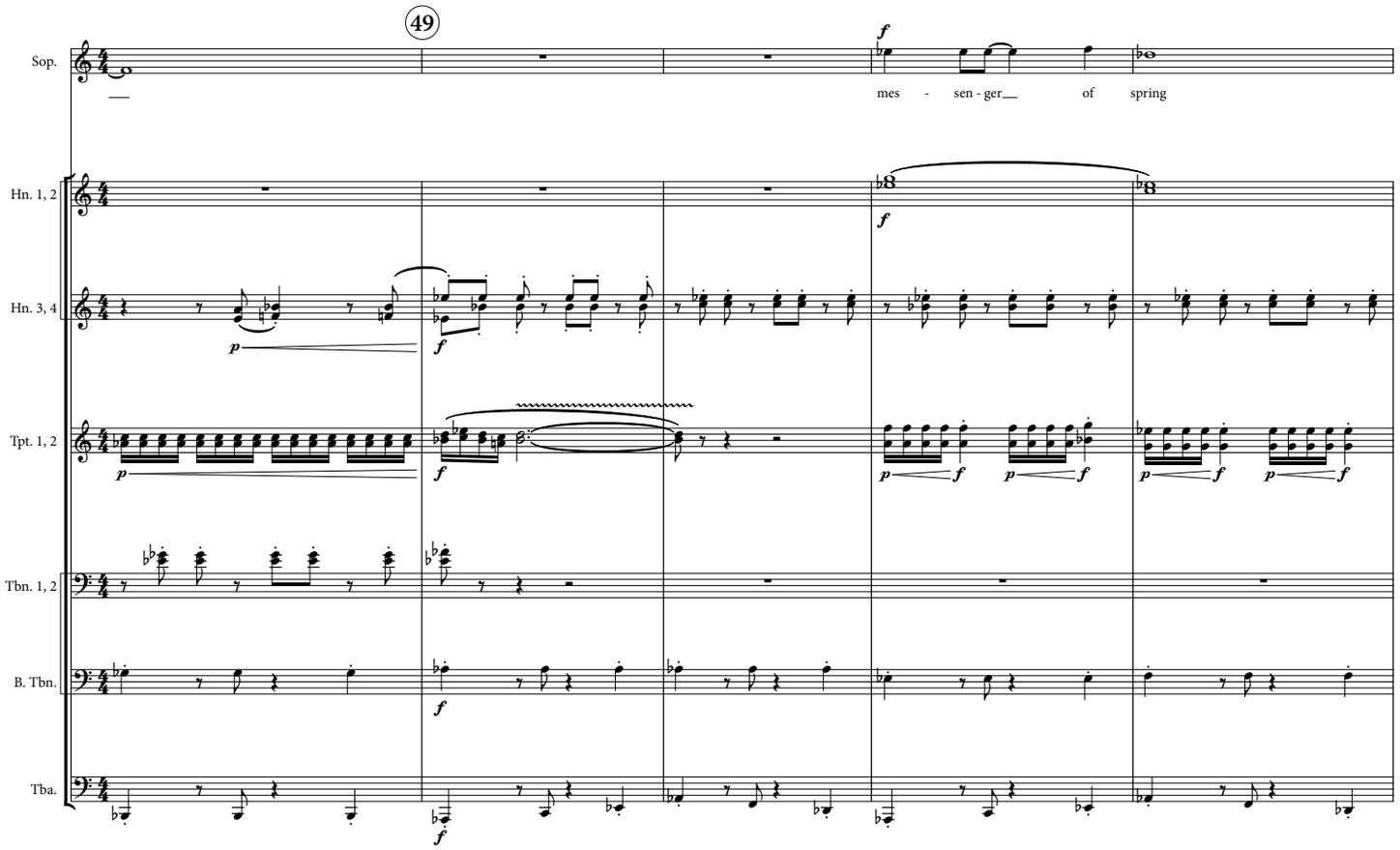

44
Sop.
ga - ther - ing flow - ers
so ve - ry de - li - cate a
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
con sord. (cup mute)
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
45
girl
just now
gold san - daled dawn

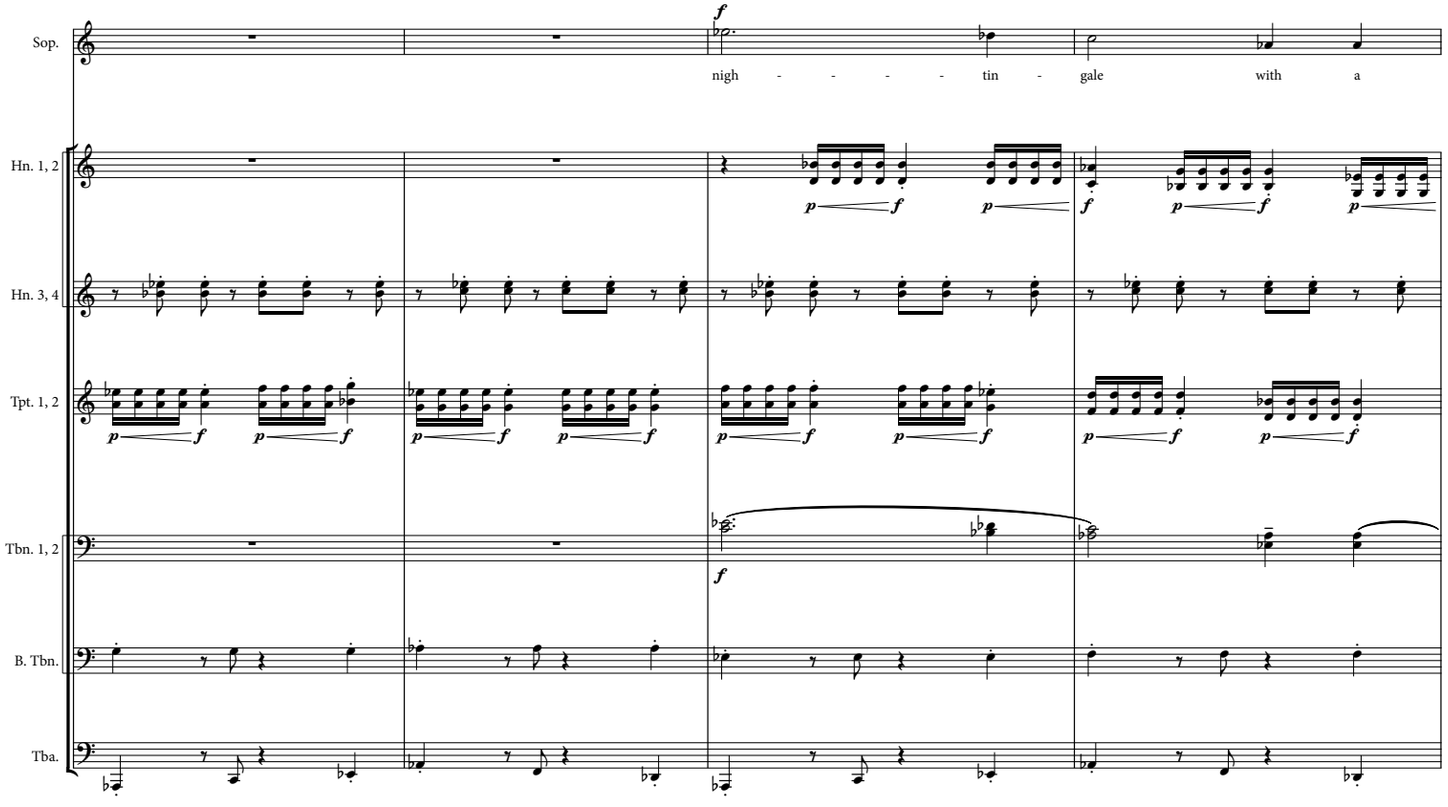

46
47
Sop.
I used to weave
crowns
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

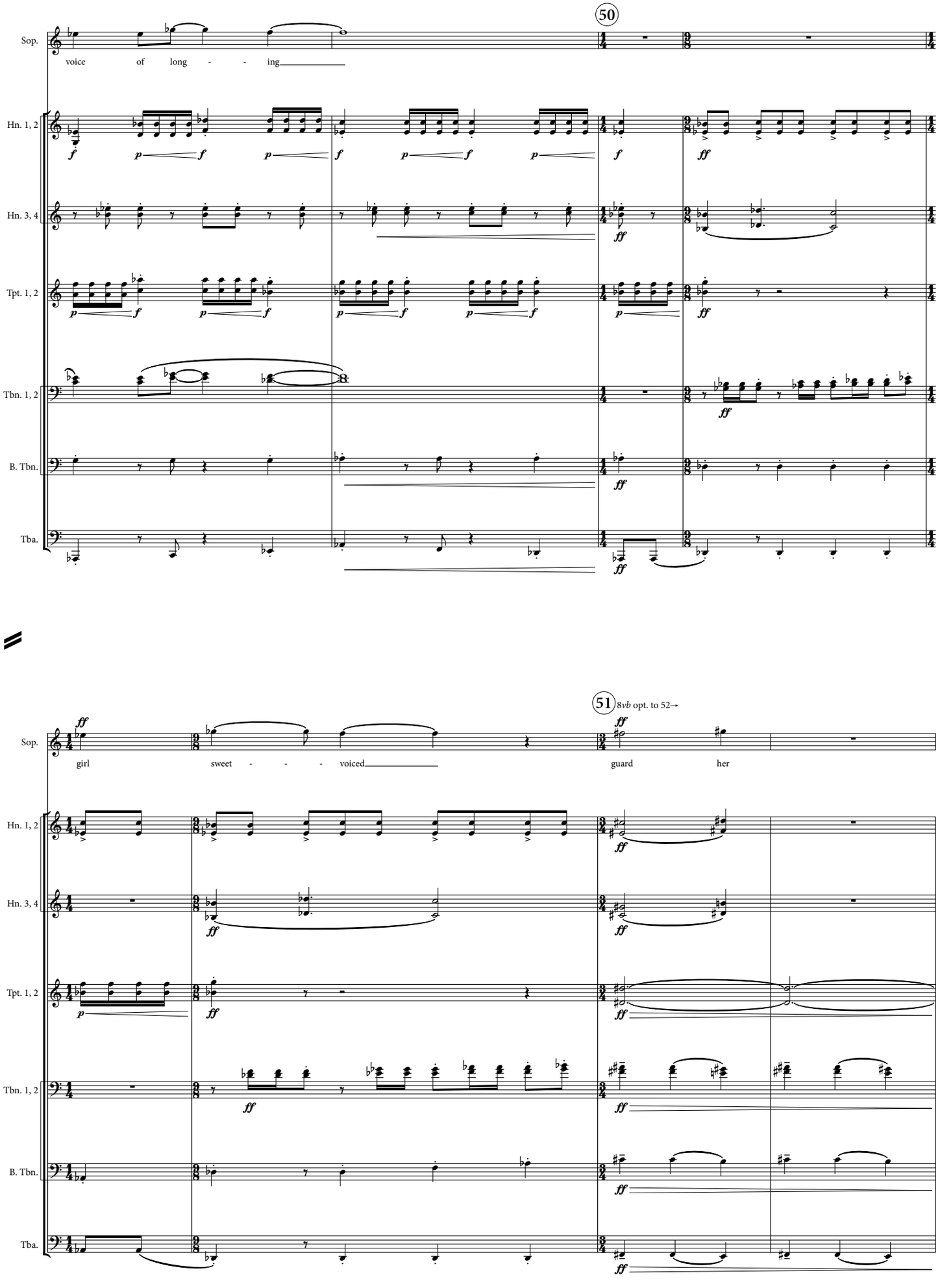

Sop.
may you
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

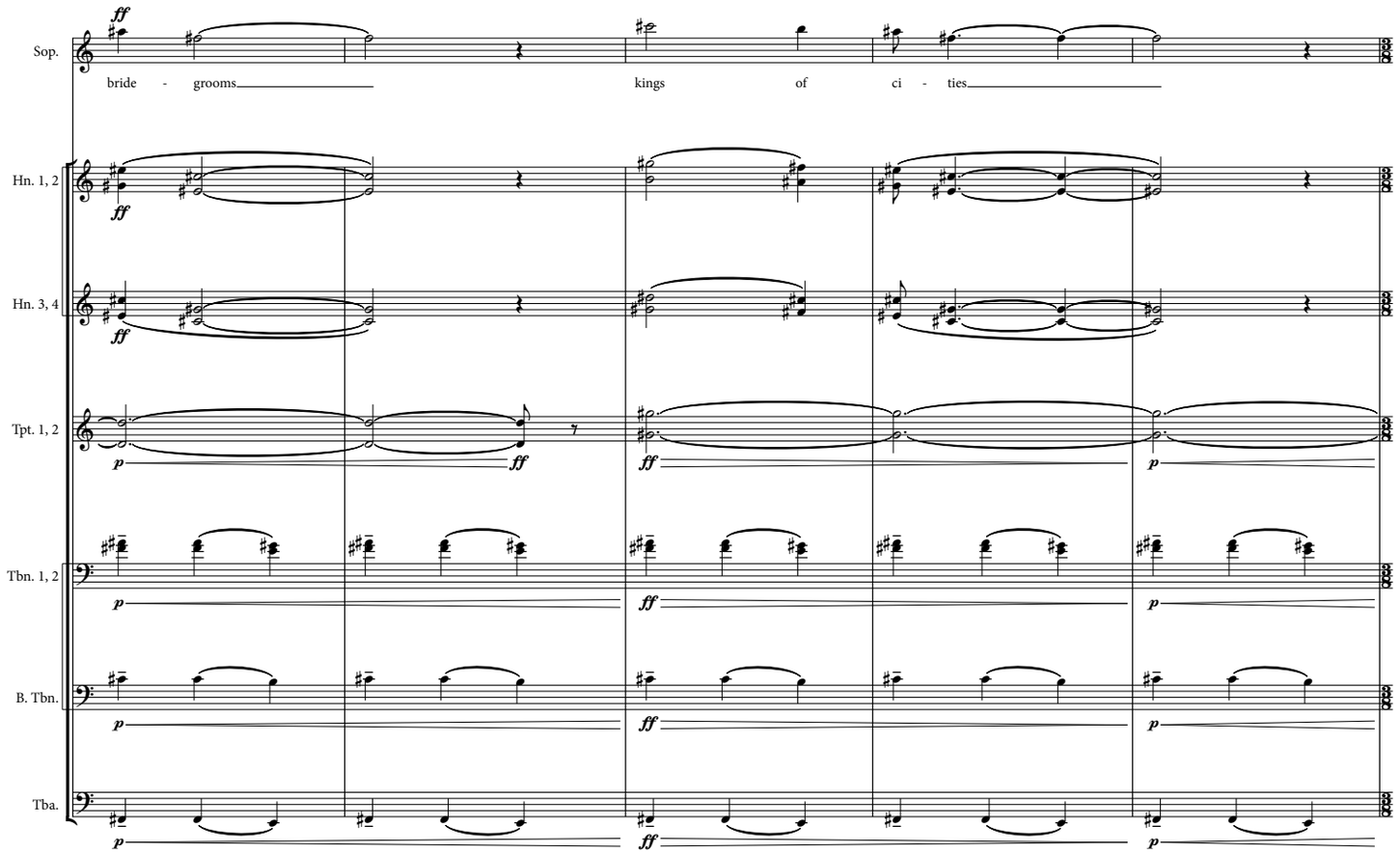

Sop.
sleep on the breast of your de - li - cate friend
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

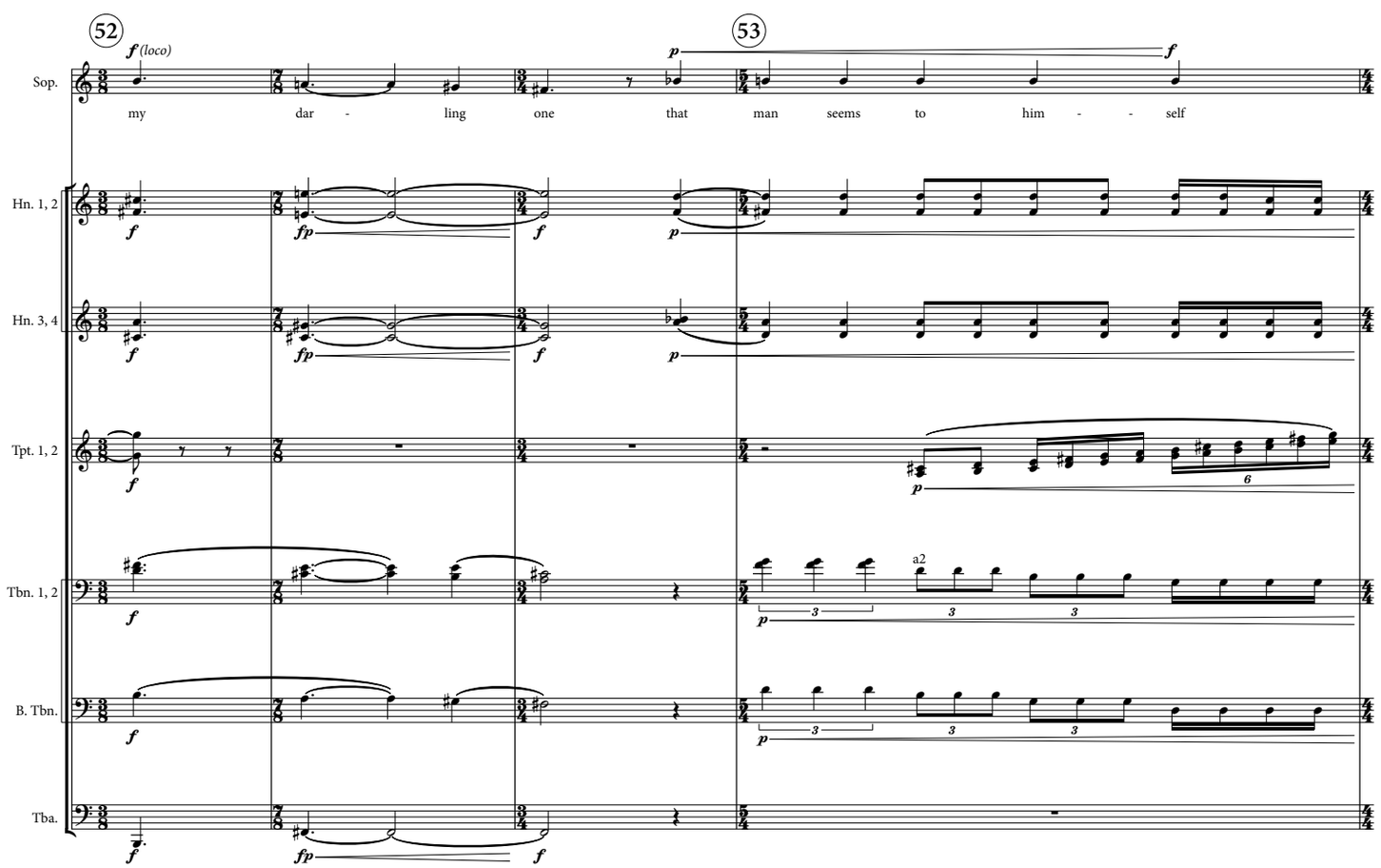

48
Sop.
or you love some man more than me
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
senza sord.
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

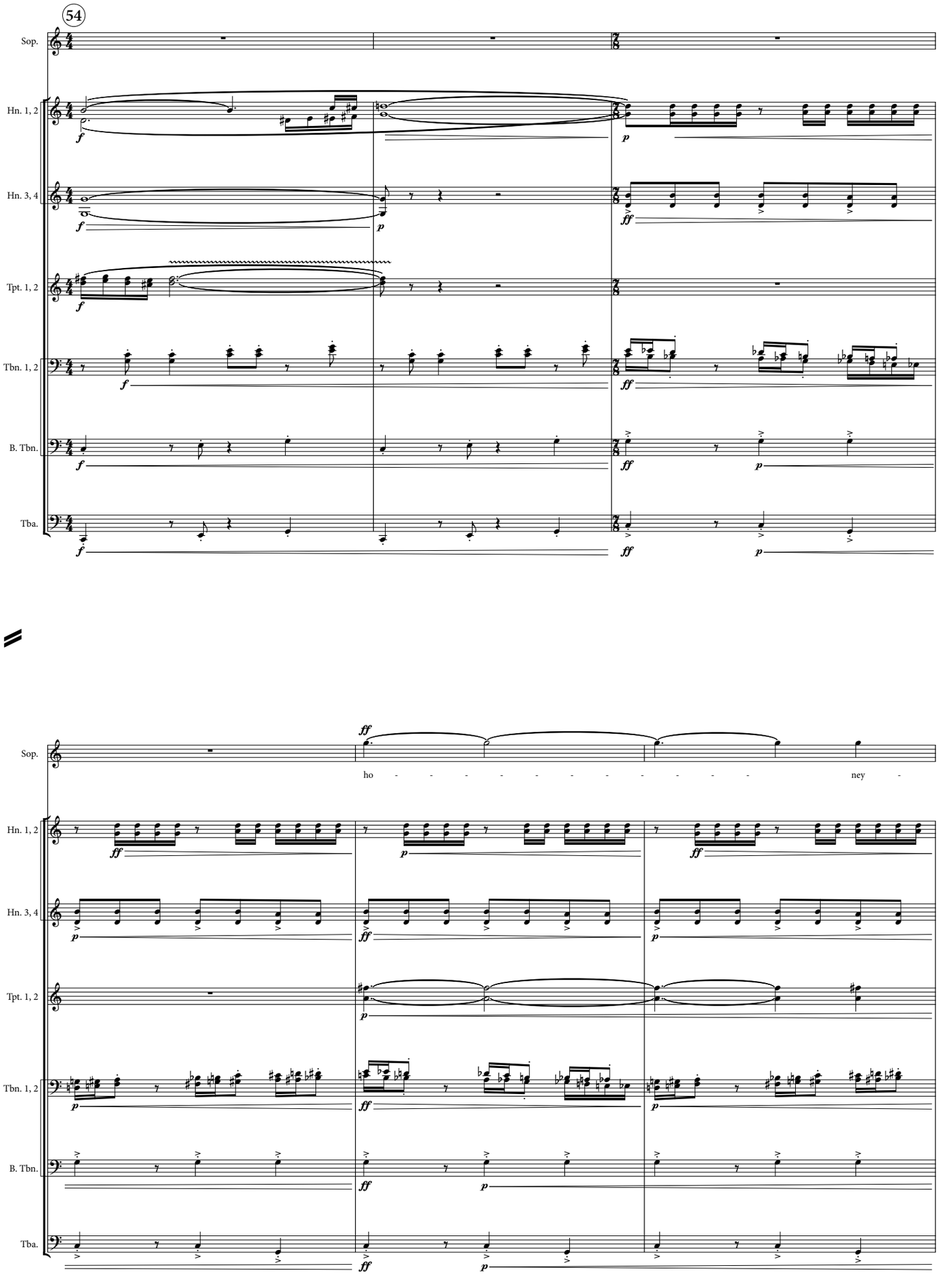

49
Sop.
mes - sen - ger of spring
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.

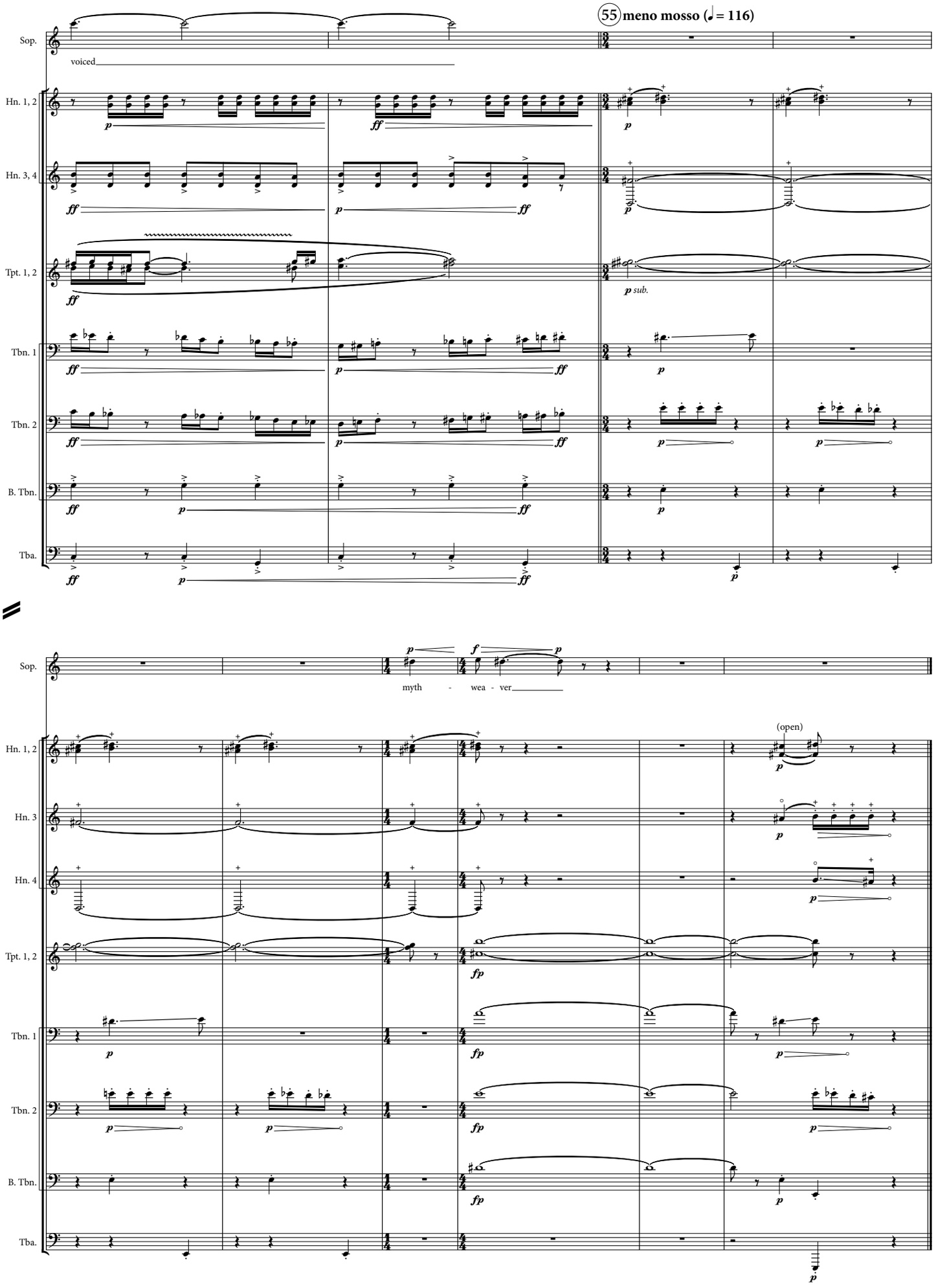

Sop.
nigh - - - - tin - gale with a
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.


50
Sop.
voice of long - - ing
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
51
8vb opt. to 52
girl sweet - - - voiced
guard her


Sop.
bride - grooms kings of ci - ties
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.


52
53
Sop.
my dar - ling one that man seems to him - self
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
a2
B. Tbn.
Tba.


54
Sop.
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
Tbn. 1, 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
ho - - - - - - - - - - - - ney -


55 meno mosso (♩ = 116)
Sop.
voiced
Hn. 1, 2
Hn. 3, 4
Tpt. 1, 2
p sub.
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tba.
myth - wea - ver
(open)
Hn. 3
Hn. 4