I lost a world

a setting of texts by

Emily Dickinson
Robert Frost
Sara Teasdale

based on the paintings of

Reid Richardson

Kurt M. Mehlenbacher

Instrumentation

Soprano Voice
Flute
Viola
Harp

Program Notes

In my new-found desire to tell stories through music, I really wanted to try my hand at another set of songs. Per usual, I approached my poet friend, Leah Soderberg, to inquire about getting another set of poems from her for this purpose, but this ultimately proved to be poor timing due to events within her own life. It was now my task to come up with text that told a story that could be amplified through music—an hugely horrifying prospect for me.

While searching for the story, I was exposed to the paintings of Reid Richardson (www.reidrichardson.com), an artist residing in Arizona. His catalogue consists heavily of images of clouds and trees—often combined—in subtle variations. Given the expansiveness of the catalogue, my assumption was that I could find a story of images or at least a progression that could be twisted into a story. Luckily, my assumption proved to be true, and I was able to create a progression through the following paintings from Reid's gallery:

Growing Towards the Stars
Heart of Life
Both Sides of Life
Windtalkers
Flowering Shadows
Blue Enchantment

So then I had my "story" of sorts, but still no text. The next step was digging through anthologies of poetry, aimlessly searching for some textual context between the story I derived from Reid's paintings. Given the vast amount of poetry in the world, it was pure coincidence that not only did I find six poems that supported the interpretation of the paintings, but also that they were all public domain. Four of the poems came from the same anthology of Emily Dickinson works, and the last two came from collections of early works by Robert Frost and Sara Teasdale. The benefit to this arrangement is that the Dickinson provides a strong, present link across the songs, while the Frost and Teasdale offer a point of contrast and alternate color due to their use of language.

After all of this, I still have no clue what the actual story is that I wanted to tell, but I do feel like the combination of all of these elements fused together a compelling progression of life and death, loss and rebirth, and eternal wonderment of the subtleties in our world.

Kurt M. Mehlenbacher

Text

***Lost* by Emily Dickinson**

I lost a world the other day.
Has anybody found?
You'll know it by the row of stars
Around its forehead bound.
A rich man might not notice it;
Yet to my frugal eye
Of more esteem than ducats.
Oh, find it, sir, for me!

***Contrast* by Emily Dickinson**

A door just opened on a street—
I, lost, was passing by—
An instant's width of warmth disclosed,
And wealth, and company.
The door as sudden shut, and I,
I, lost, was passing by,—
Lost doubly, but by contrast most,
Enlightening misery.

***The Wind* by Sara Teasdale**

A wind is blowing over my soul,
I hear it cry the whole night through,
Is there no peace for me on earth
Except with you?

Alas, the wind has made me wise,
Over my naked soul it blew,
There is no peace for me on earth
Even with you.

***Choice* by Emily Dickinson**

I have no life but this,
To lead it here;
Nor any death, but lest
Dispelled from there;
Nor tie to earths to come,
Nor action new,
Except through this extent,
The realm of you.

***The Sound of the Trees* by Robert Frost**

I wonder about the trees.
Why do we wish to bear
Forever the noise of these
More than another noise
So close to our dwelling place?
We suffer them by the day
Till we lose all measure of pace,
And fixity in our joys,
And acquire a listening air.
They are that that talks of going
But never gets away;
And that talks no less for knowing,
As it grows wiser and older,
That now it means to stay.
My feet tug at the floor
And my head sways to my shoulder
Sometimes when I watch trees sway,
From the window or the door.
I shall set forth for somewhere,
I shall make the reckless choice
Some day when they are in voice
And tossing so as to scare
The white clouds over them on.
I shall have less to say,
But I shall be gone.

***Untitled* by Emily Dickinson**

I died for beauty, but was scarce
Adjusted in the tomb,
When one who died for truth was lain
In an adjoining room.
He questioned softly why I failed?
"For beauty," I replied.
"And I for truth,—the two are one;
We brethren are," he said.
And so, as kinsmen met a night,
We talked between the rooms,
Until the moss had reached out lips,
And covered up our names.

All text set in this piece is in the public domain.

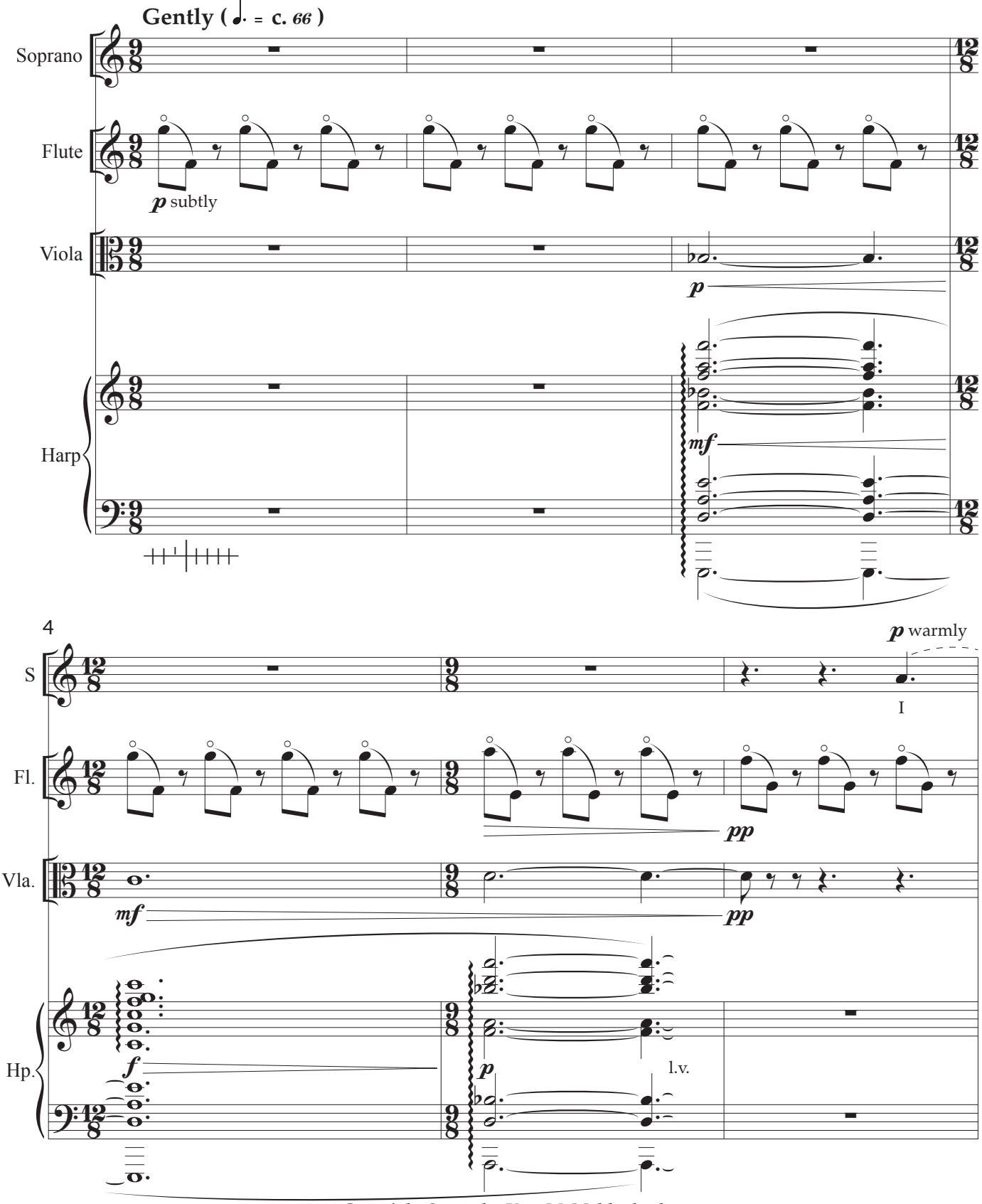
Score

I lost a world

Kurt M. Mehlenbacher

I. Growing Towards the Stars

after Emily Dickinson



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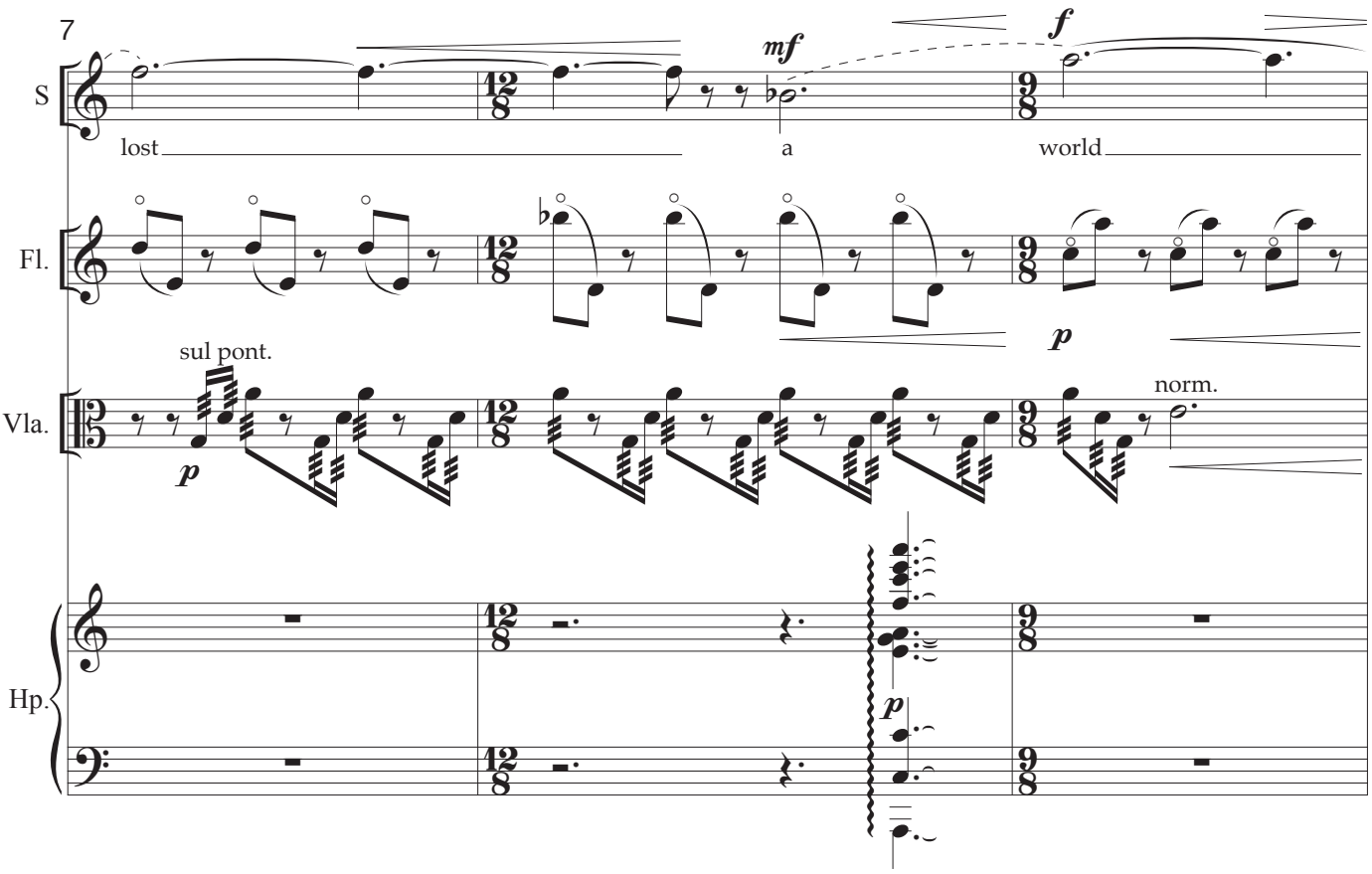
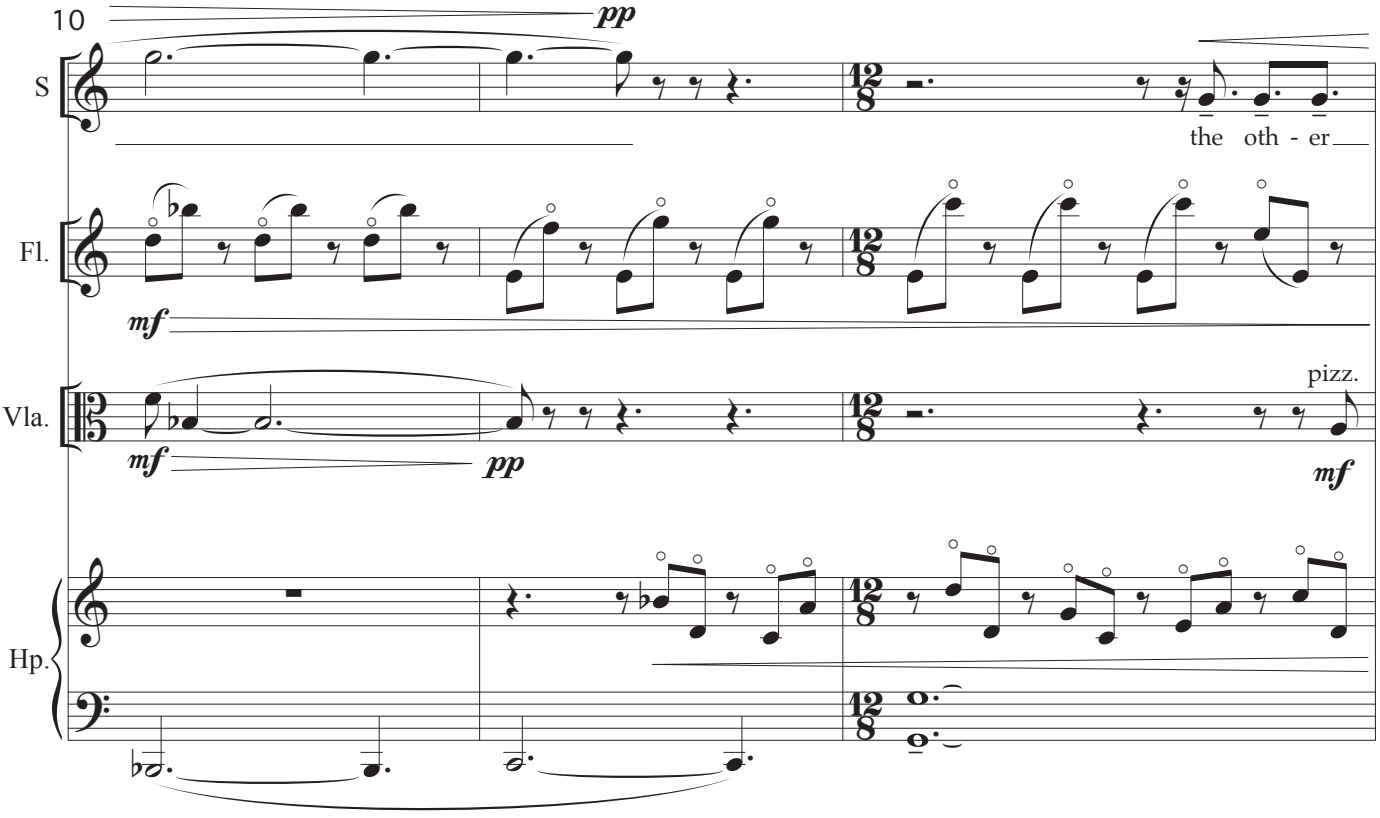
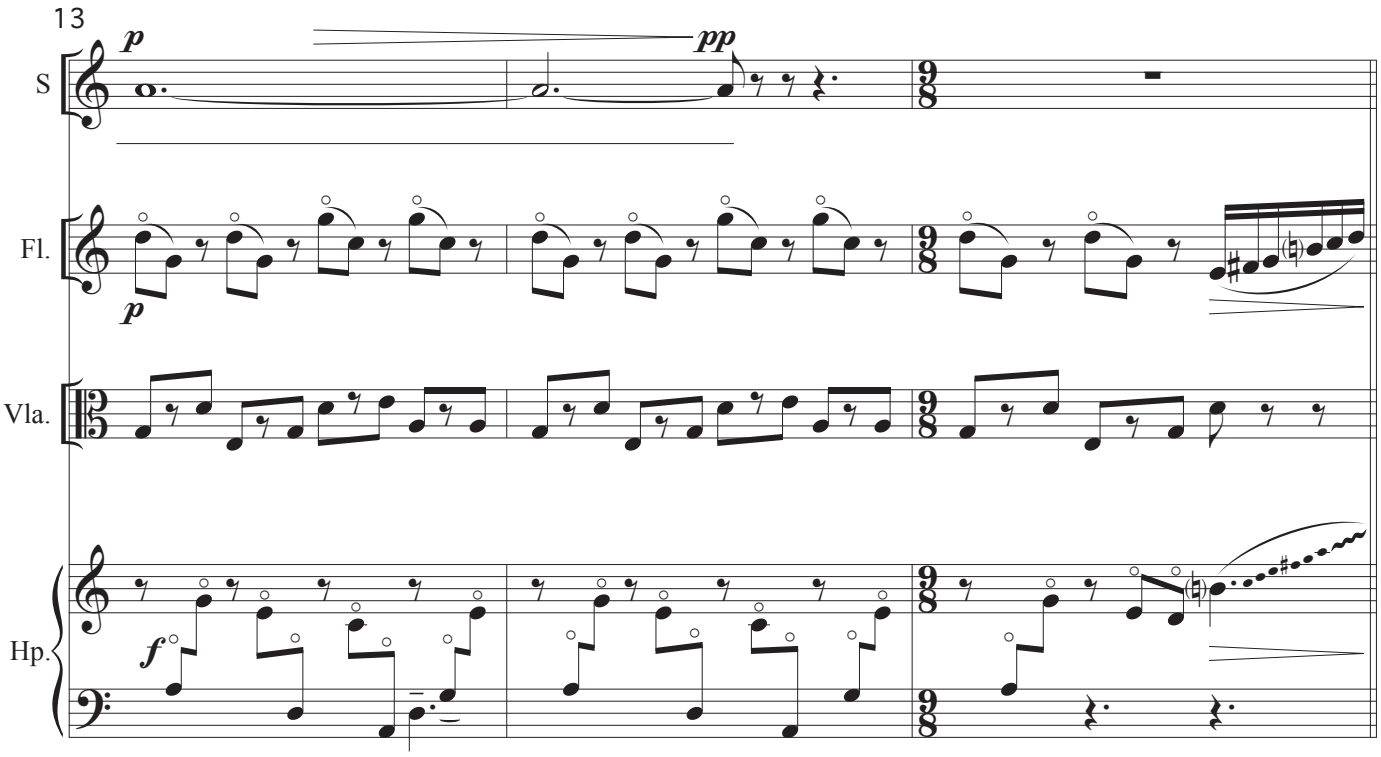
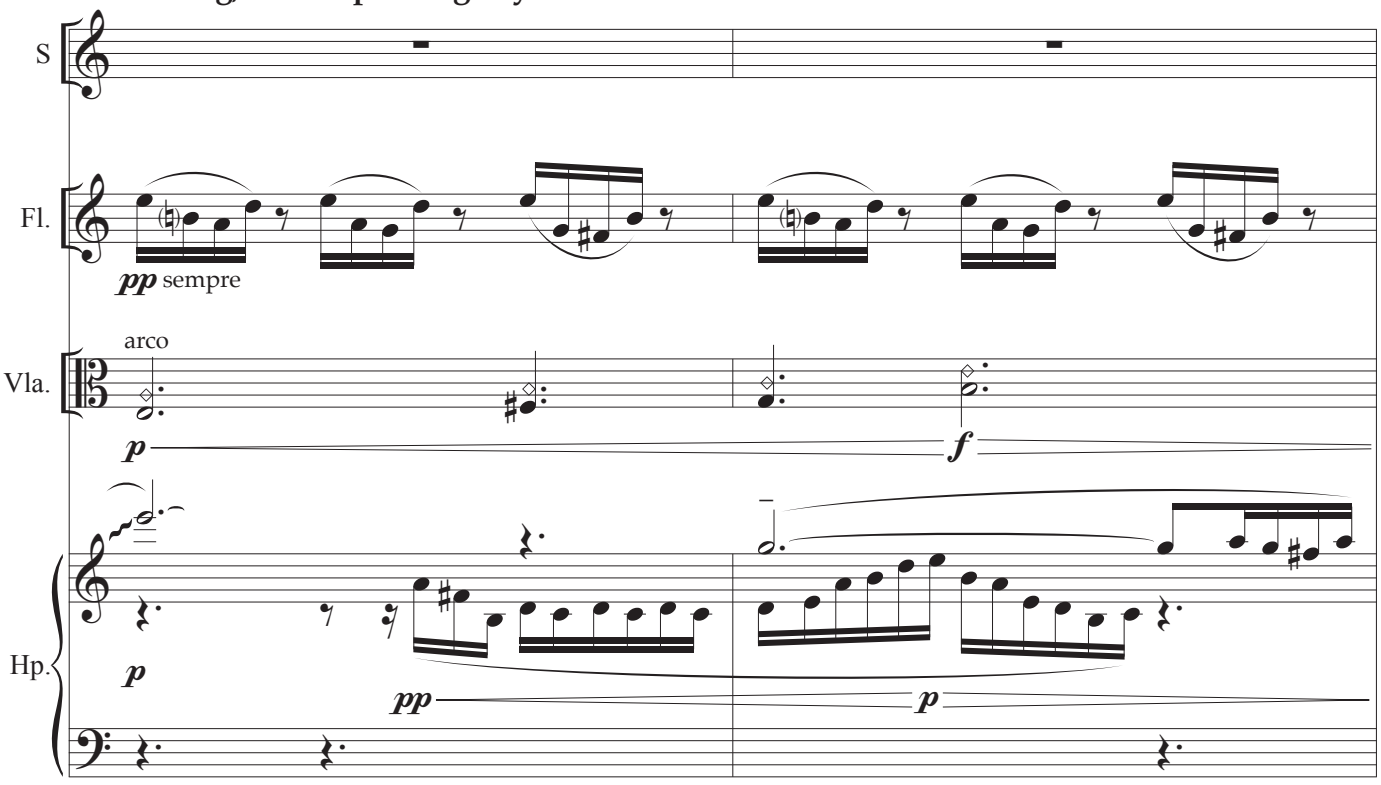
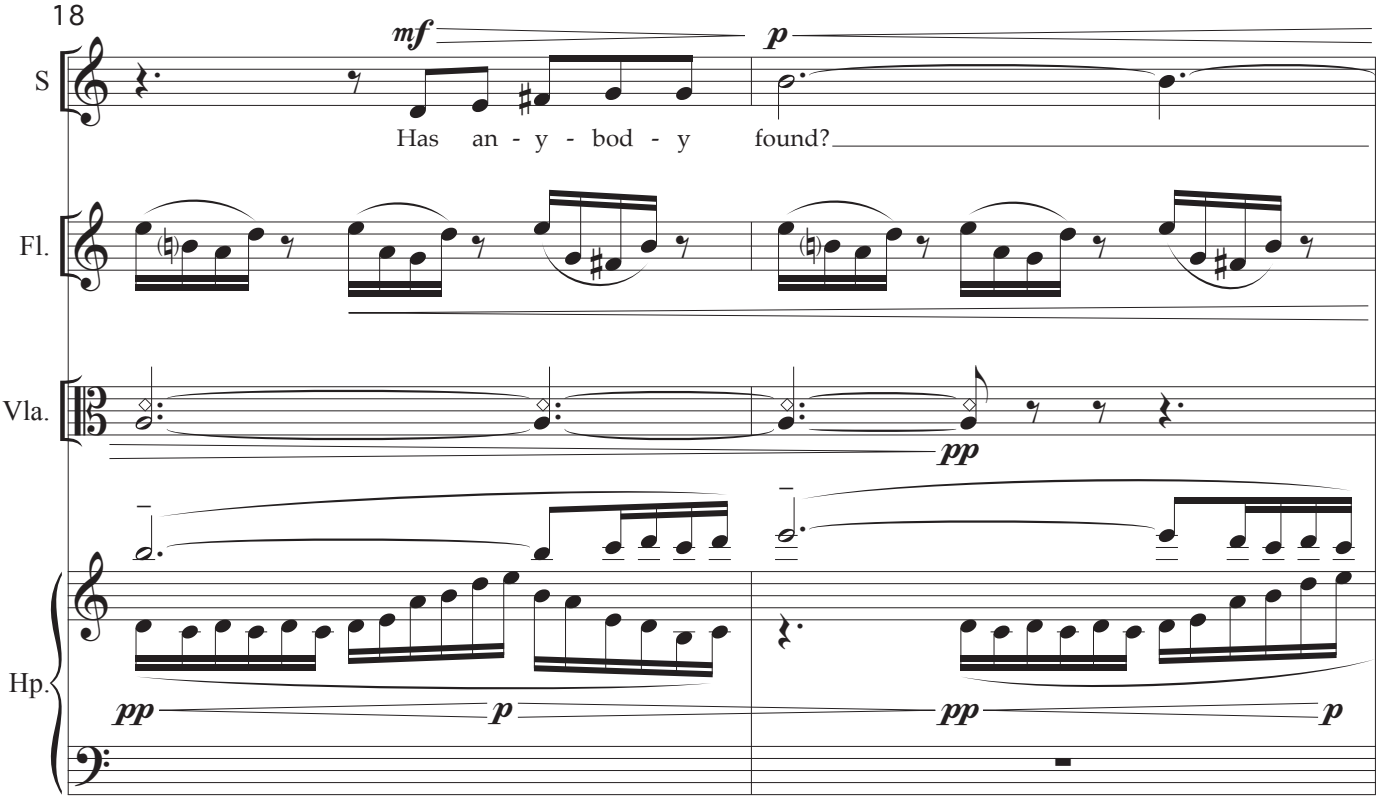
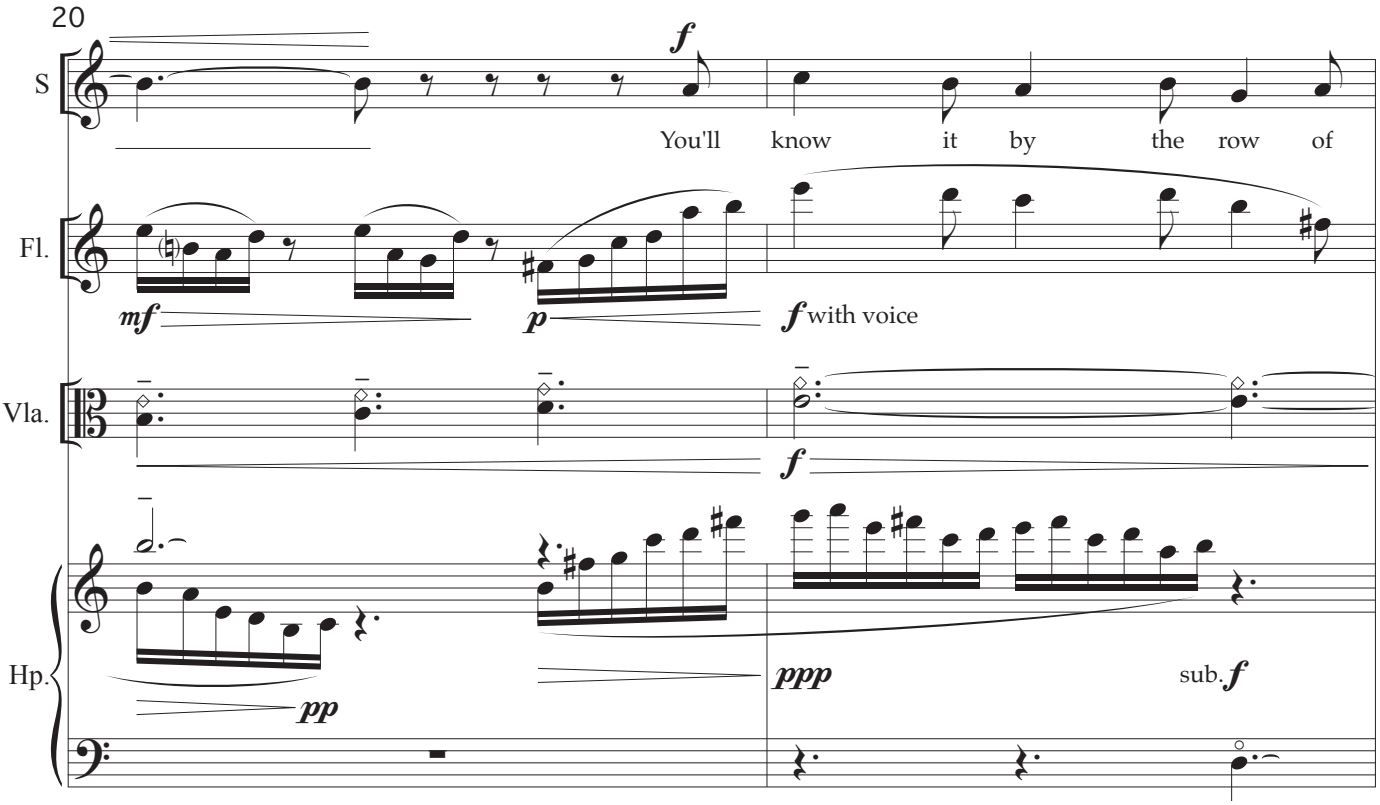

7
S
lost
mf
a
f
world
Fl.
p
Vla.
sul pont.
p
norm.
Hp.
p

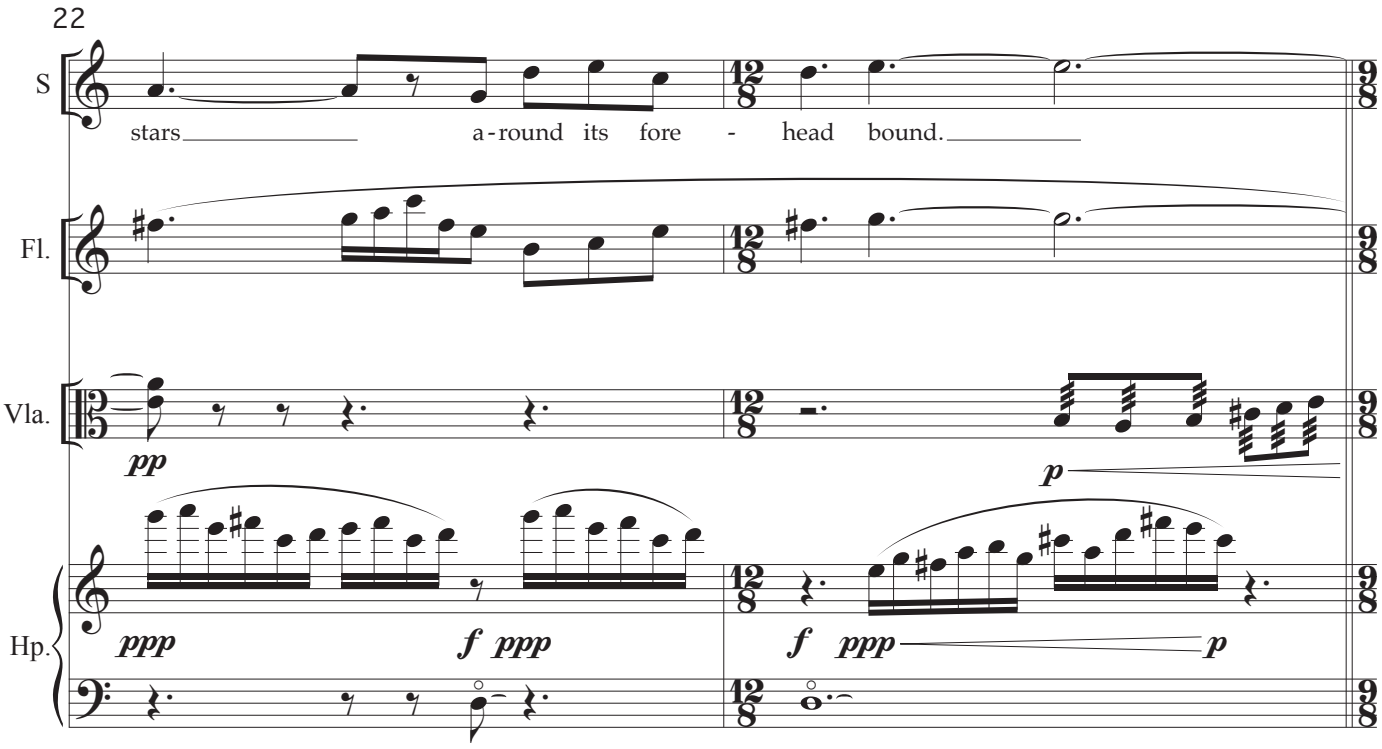

10
pp
S
the oth - er
Fl.
mf
Vla.
mf
pp
pizz.
mf
Hp.

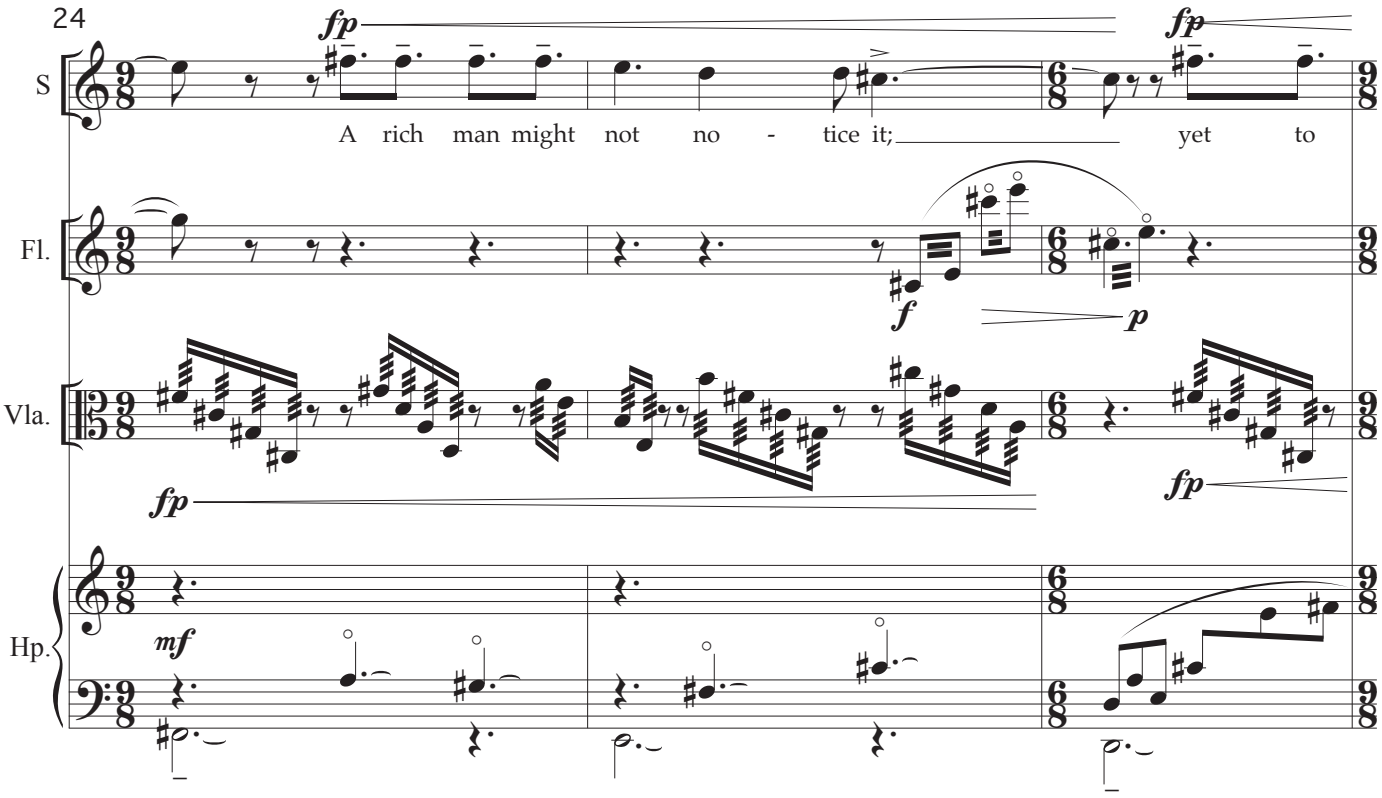

13
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
p
pp
p
f

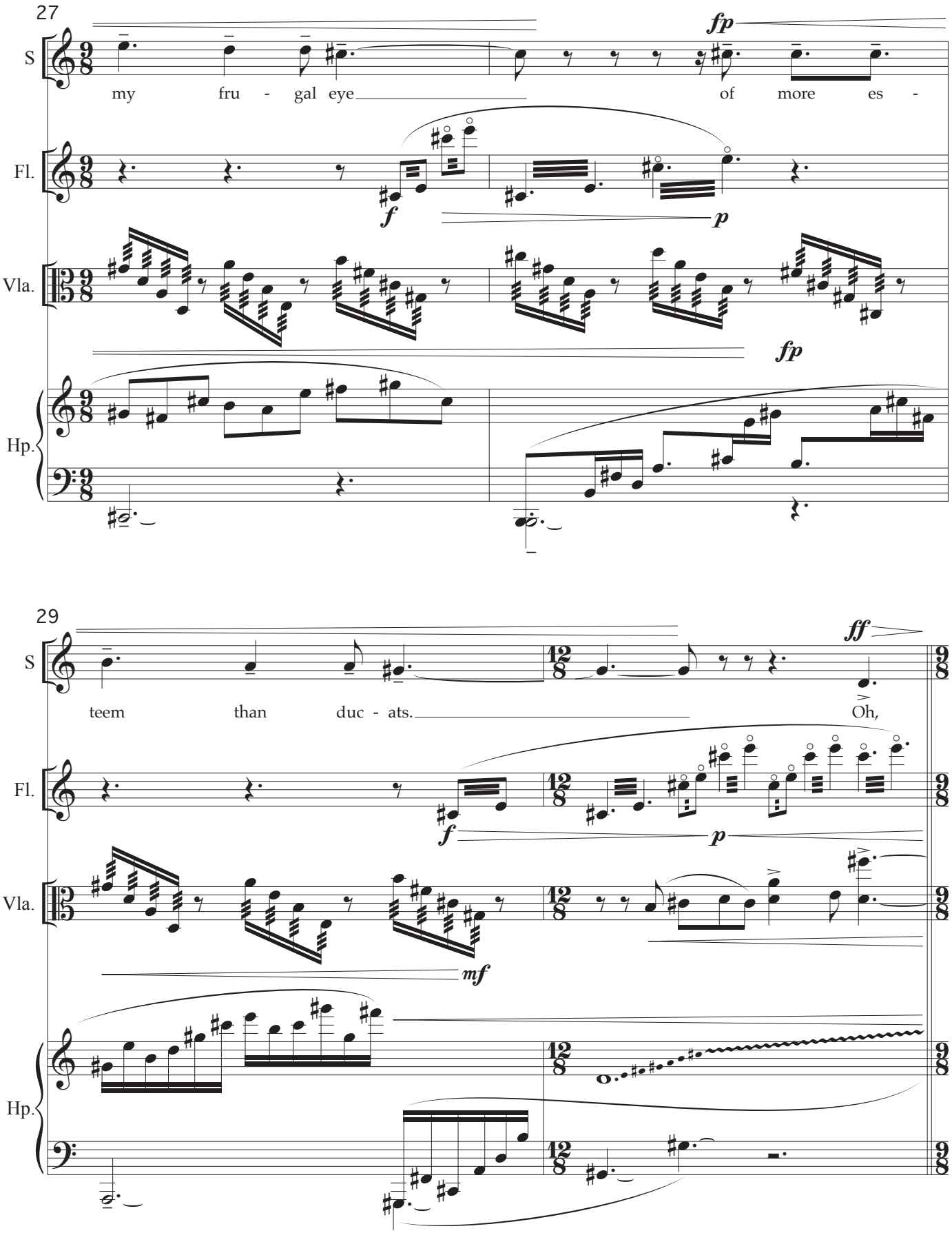

16 Rustling; like a spinning sky
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
pp sempre
arco
p
f
p
pp
p

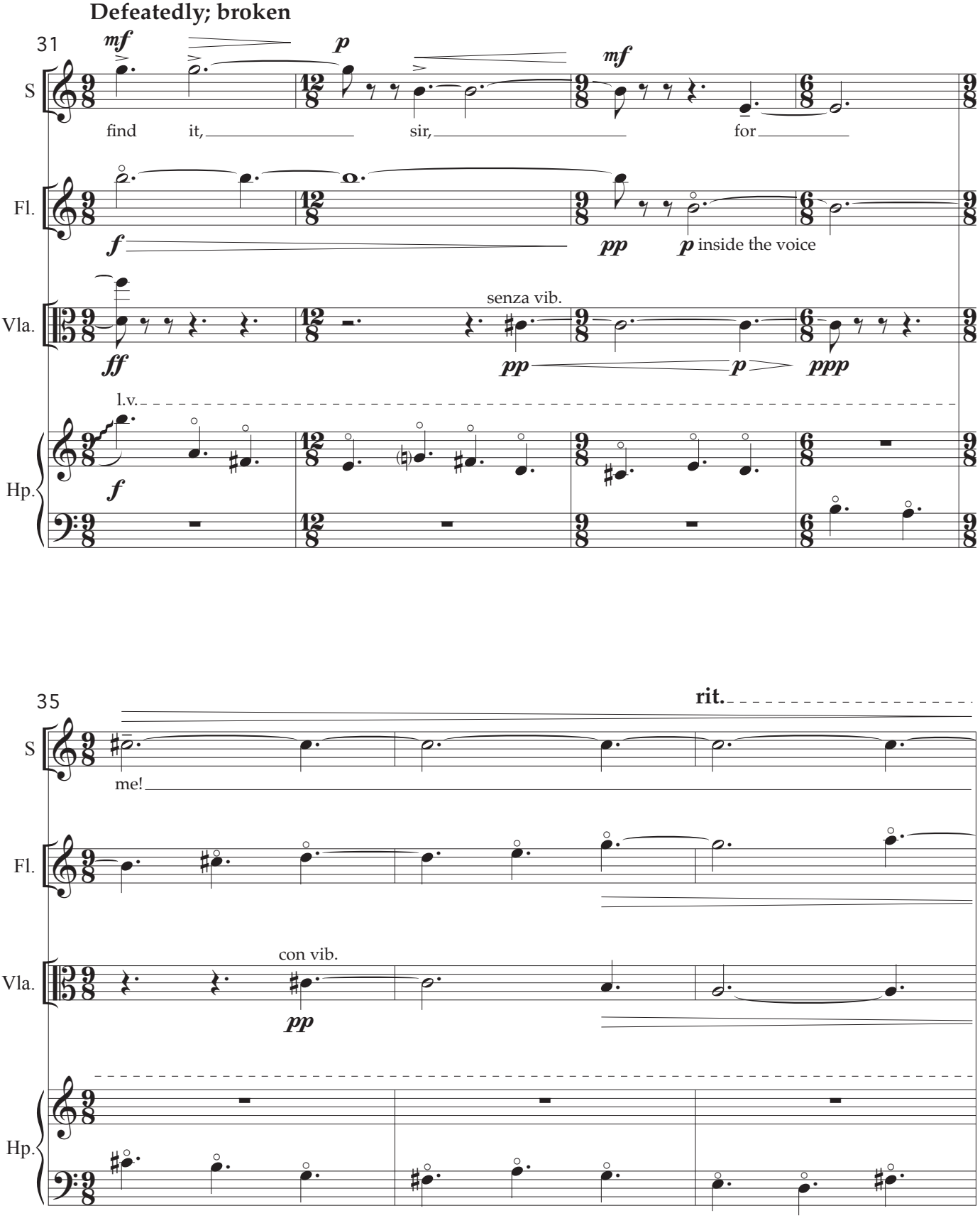

18
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
mf
p
Has an - y - bod - y found?
pp
pp
p
pp
p

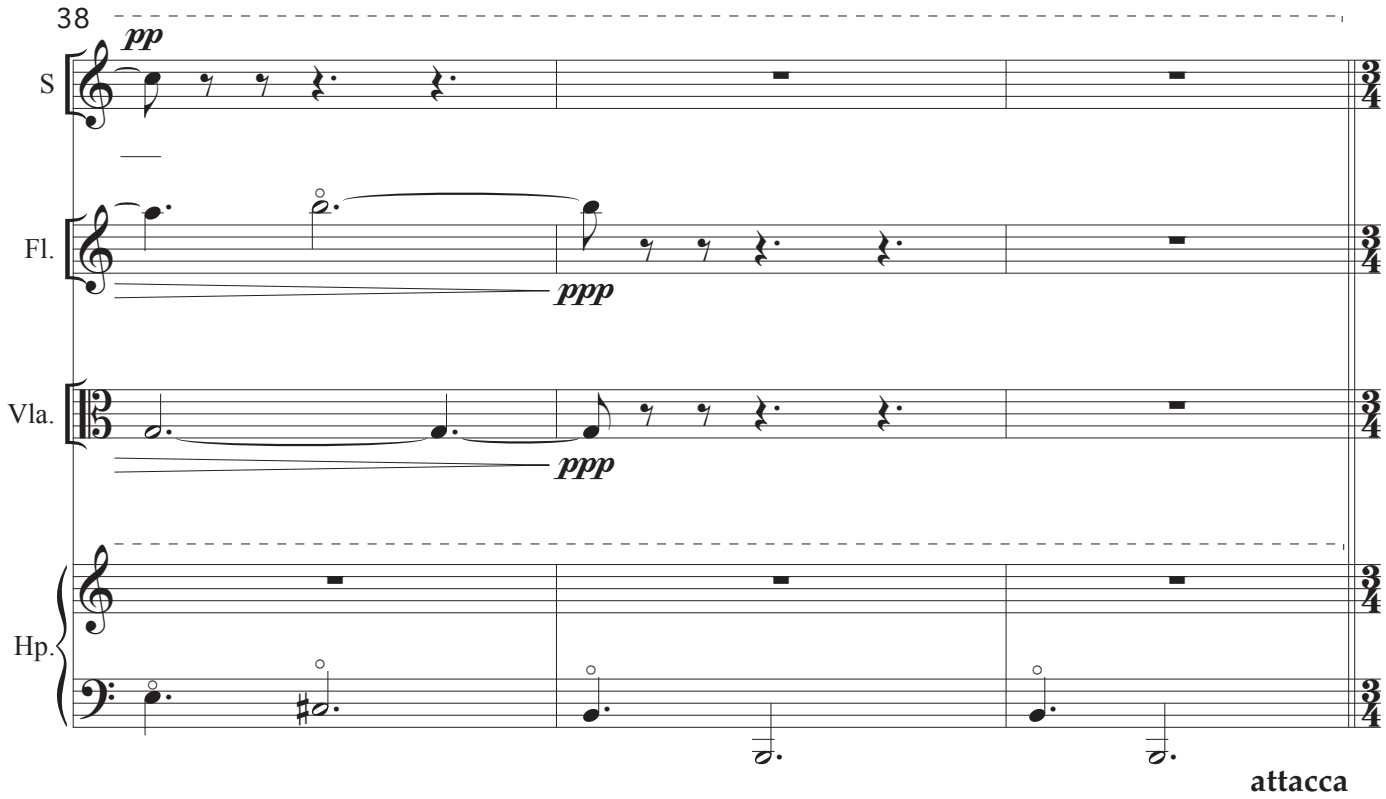

20
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
f
You'll know it by the row of
mf
p
f with voice
f
pp
ppp
sub. f


22
S
stars a-round its fore - head bound.
Fl.
Vla.
pp
p
Hp.
ppp
f ppp
f ppp
p


24
fp
fp
S
A rich man might not no - tice it; yet to
Fl.
f
p
Vla.
fp
fp
Hp.
mf


27
S
my fru - gal eye
of more es -
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
fp
f
p
fp
29
S
teem than duc - ats.
Oh,
ff
Fl.
f
p
Vla.
mf
Hp.

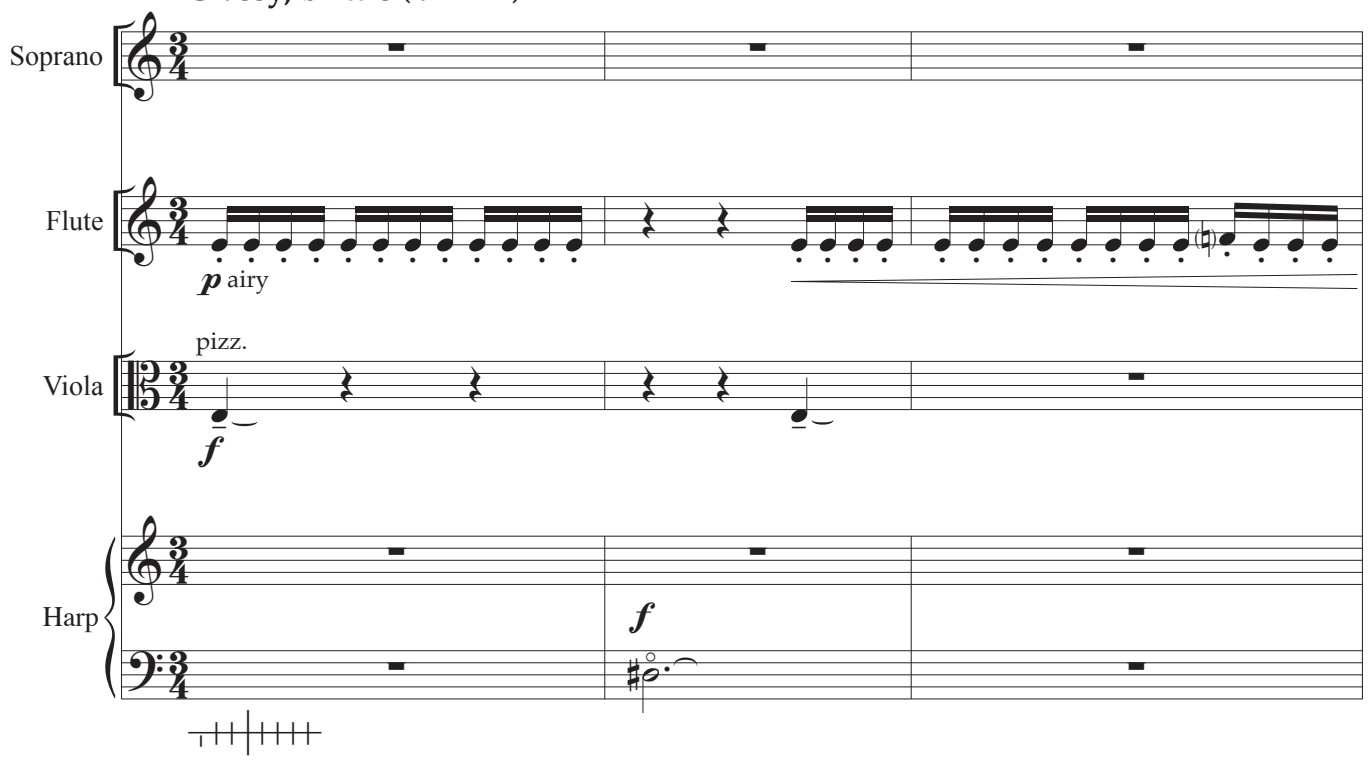

Defeatedly; broken
31
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
mf
p
mf
find it, sir, for
f
pp
p inside the voice
ff
senza vib.
pp
p
ppp
l.v.
f
35
rit.
me!
con vib.
pp

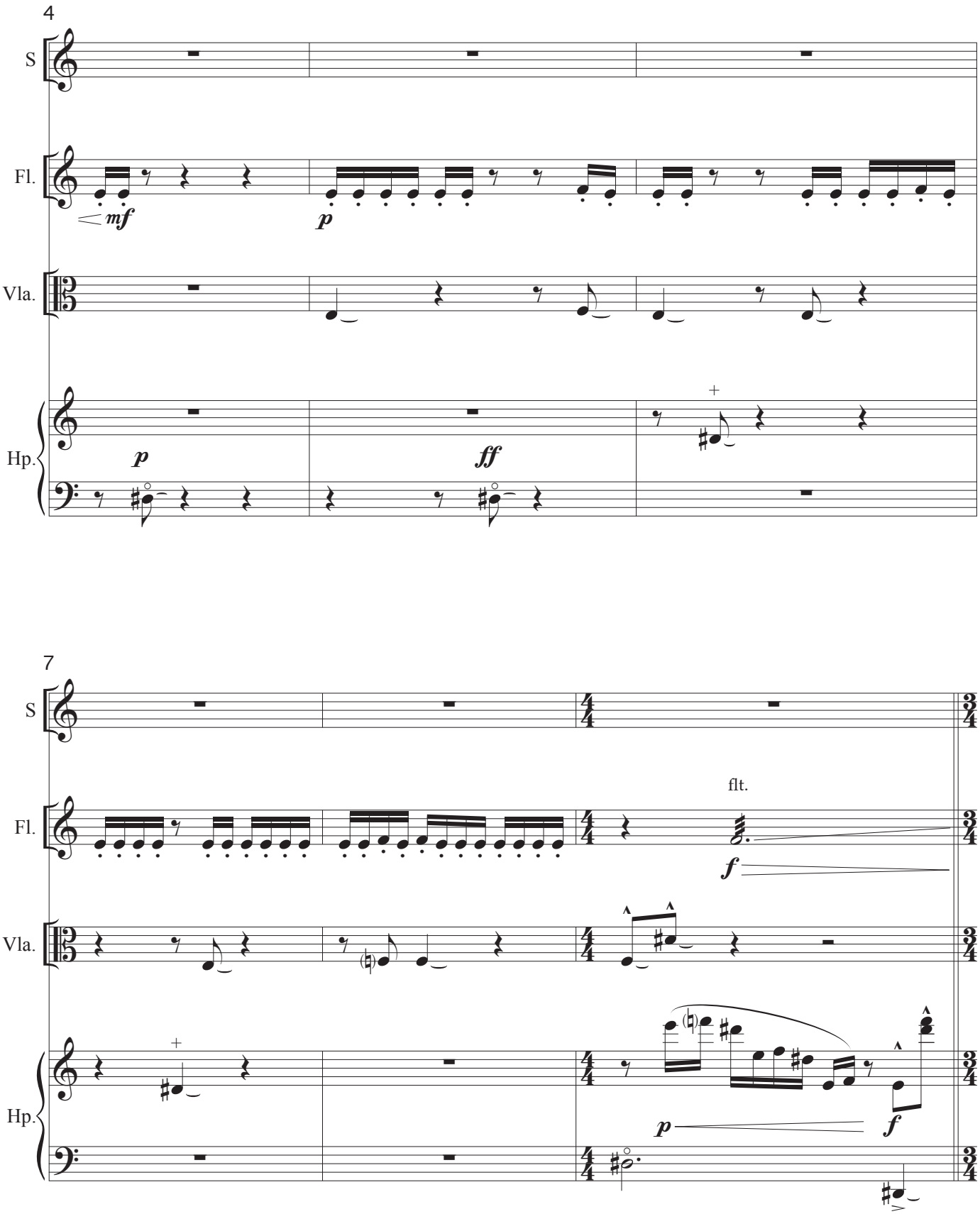


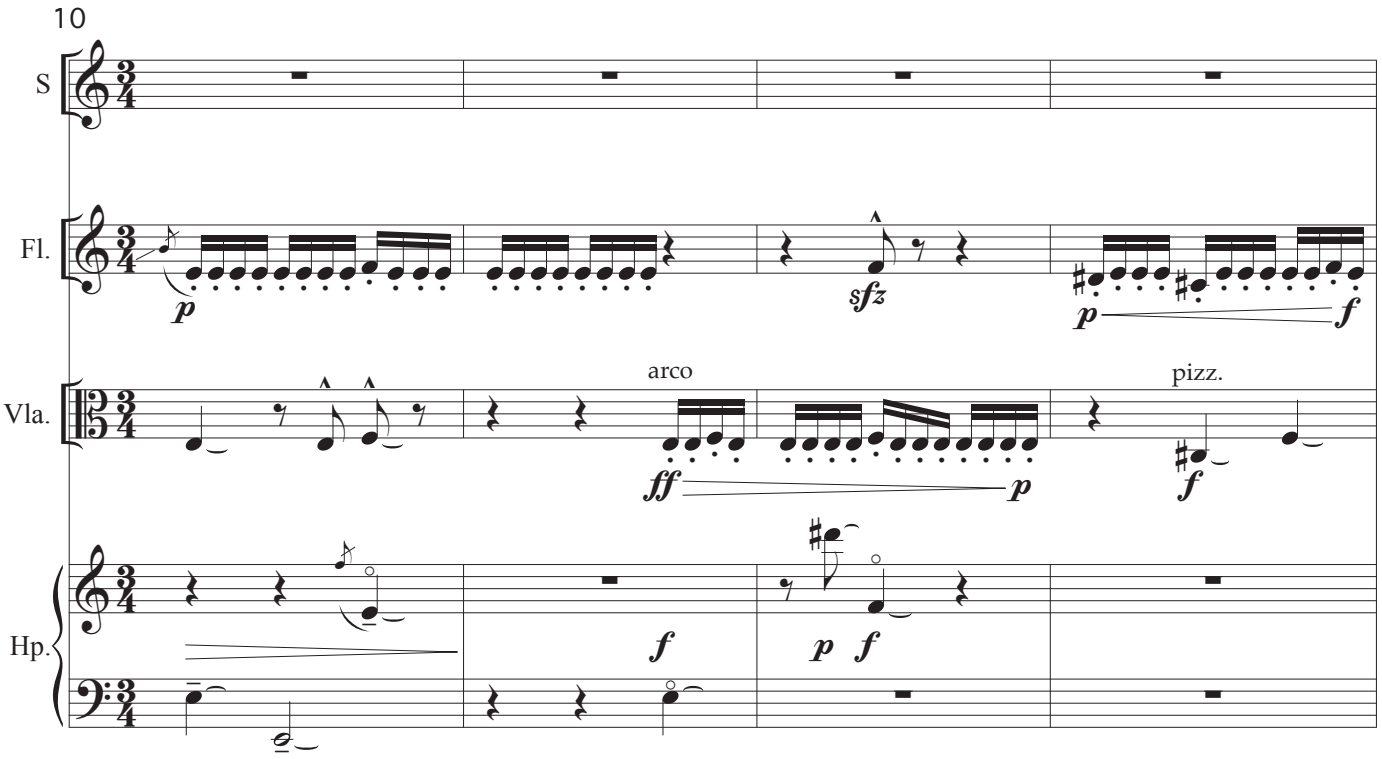
II. Heart of Life

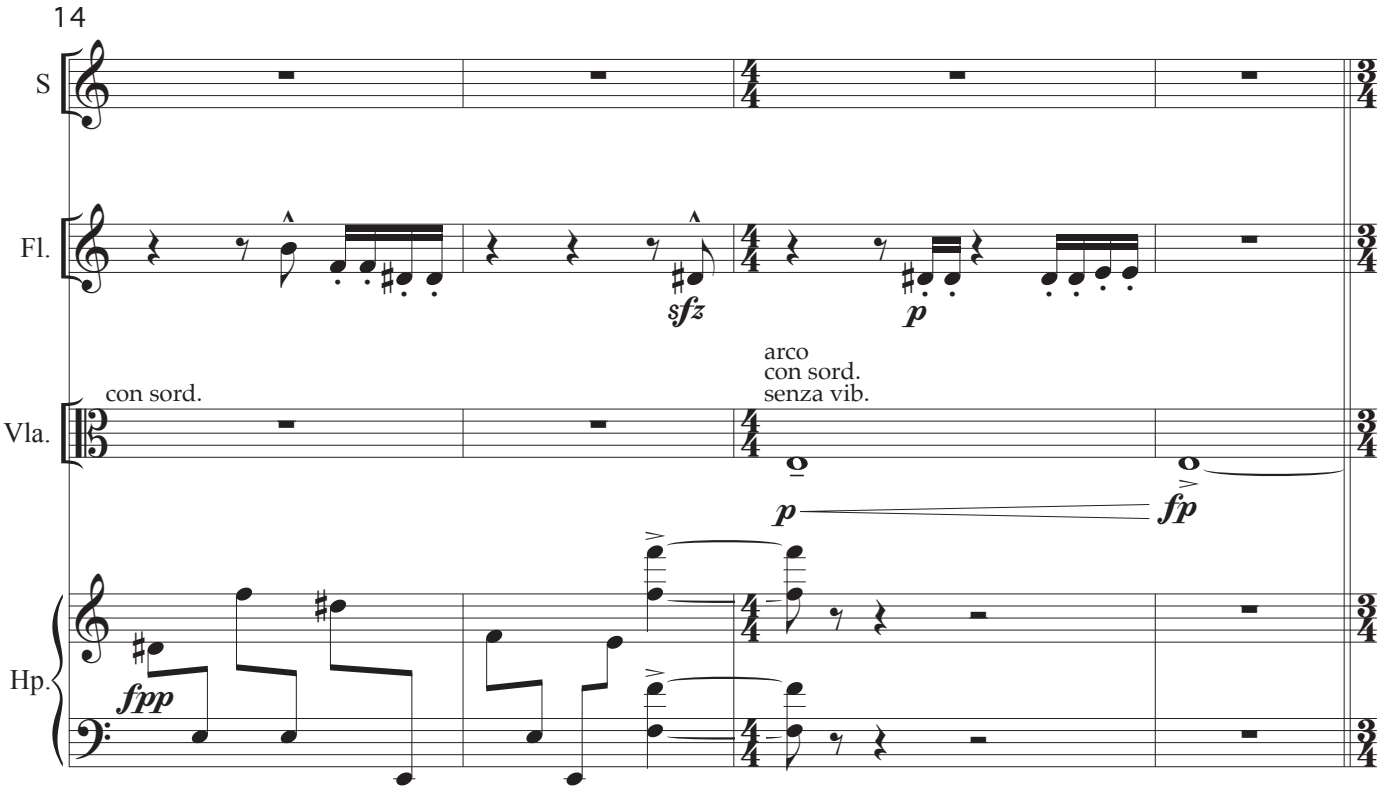
after Robert Frost

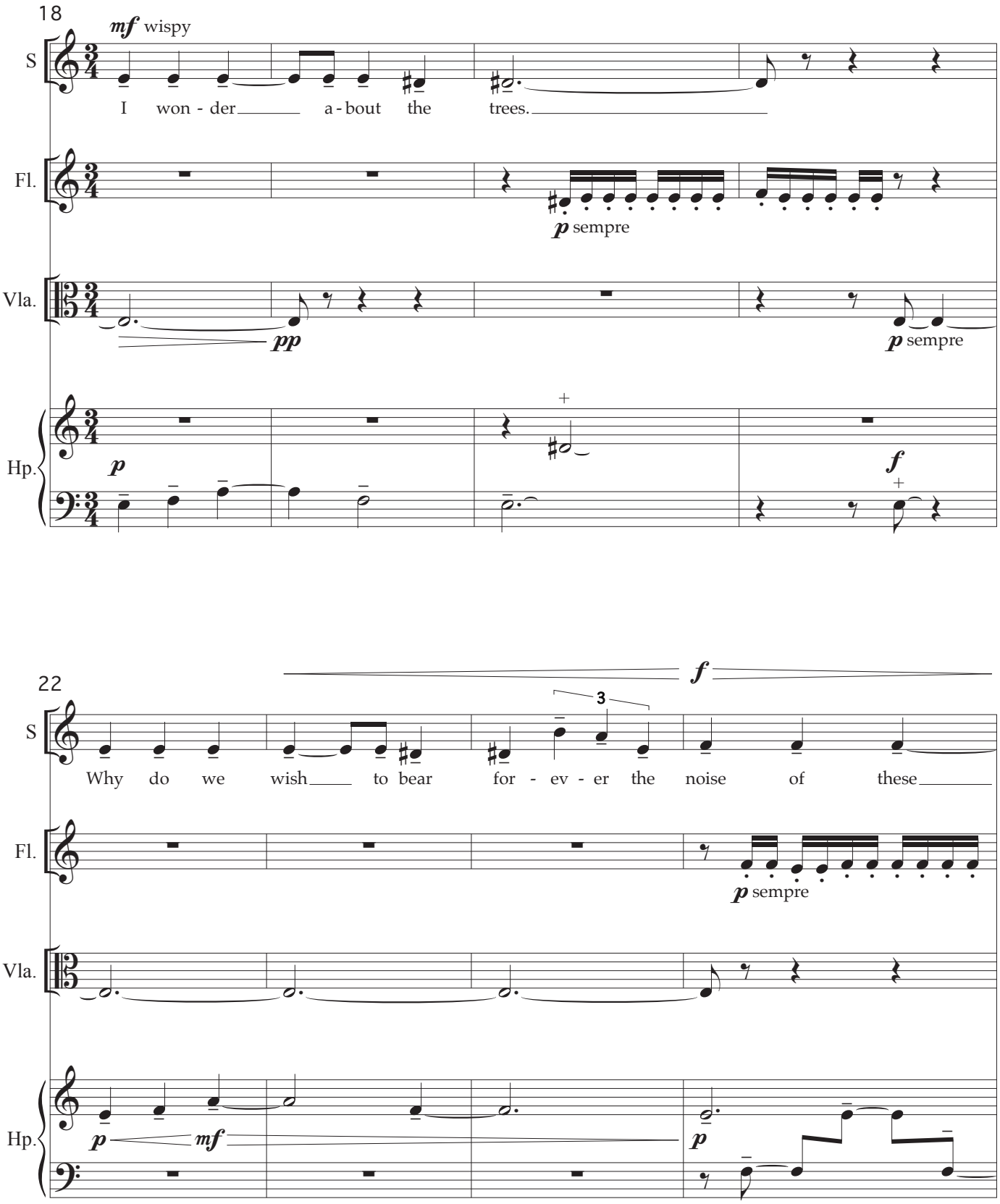
Glassy; brittle (♩ = 126)

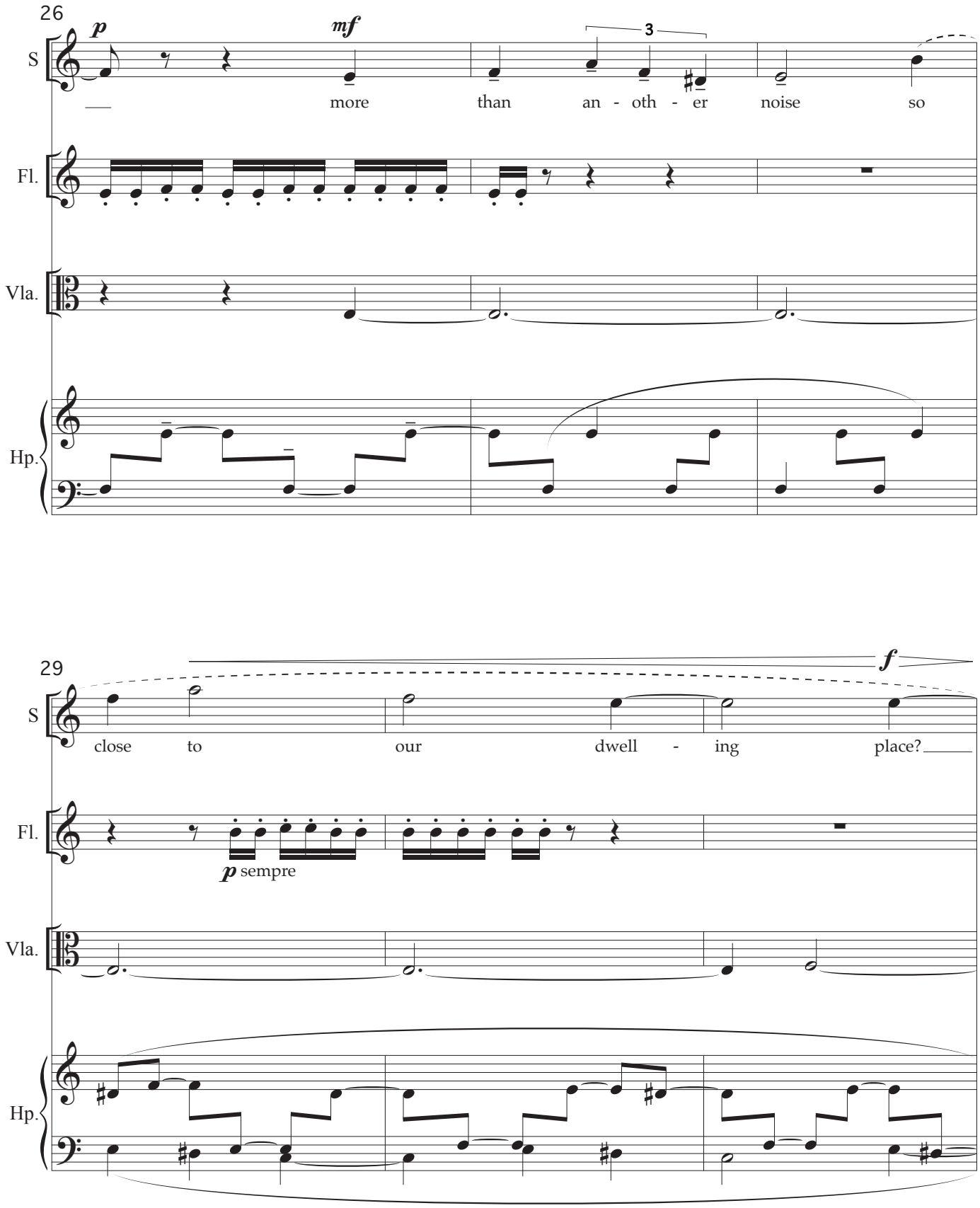


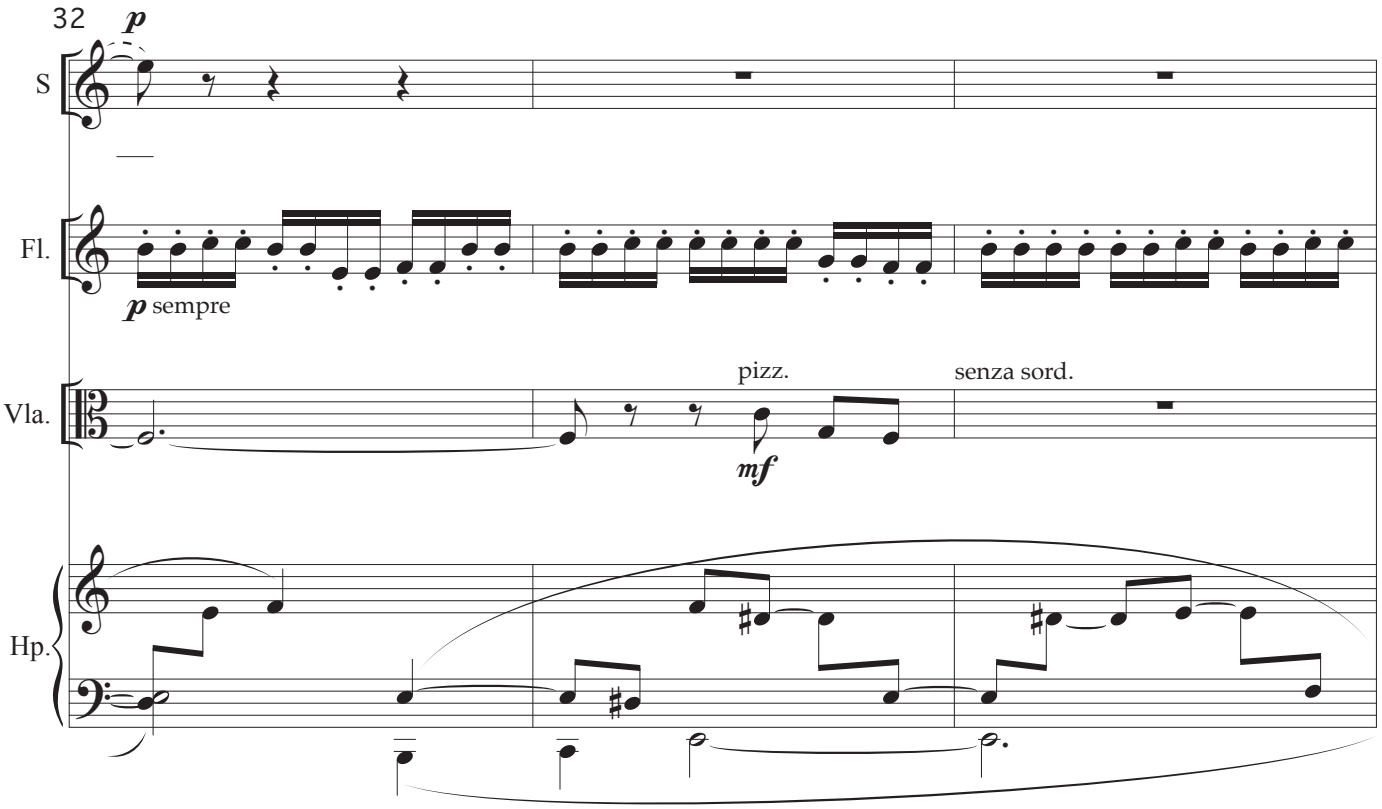

4
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
mf
p
p
ff
7
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
flt.
f
p
f

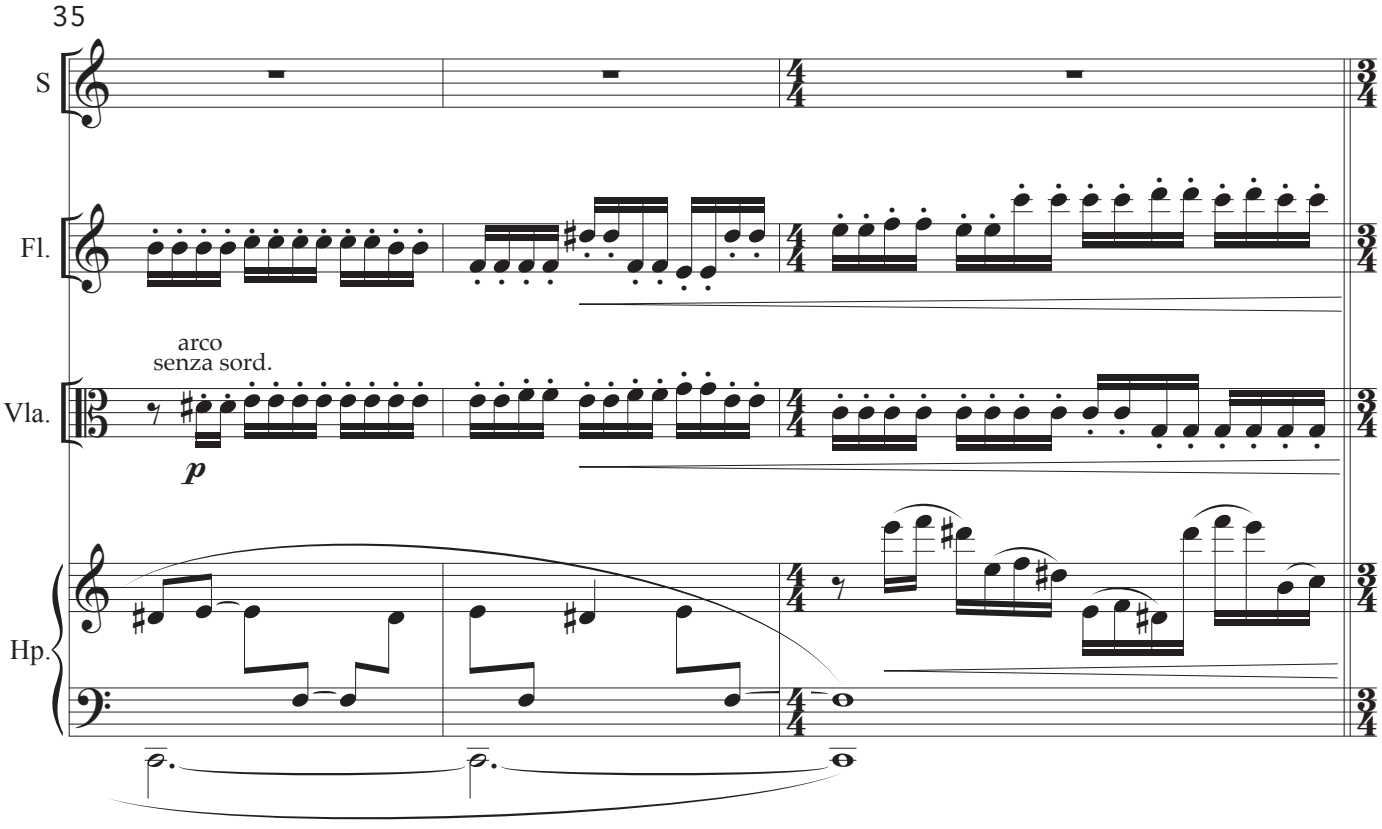

10
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
arco
pizz.

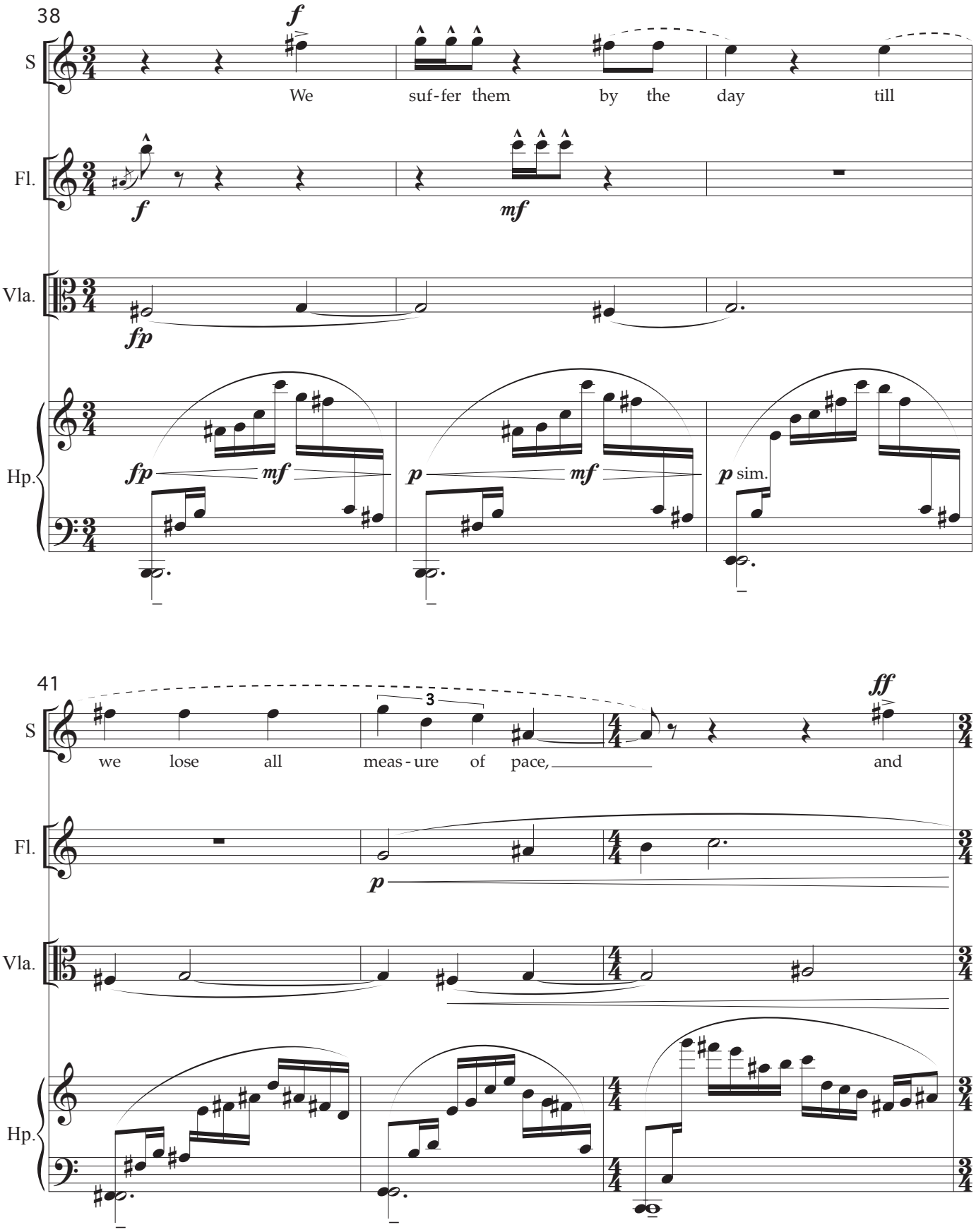

14
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
con sord.
arco
con sord.
senza vib.

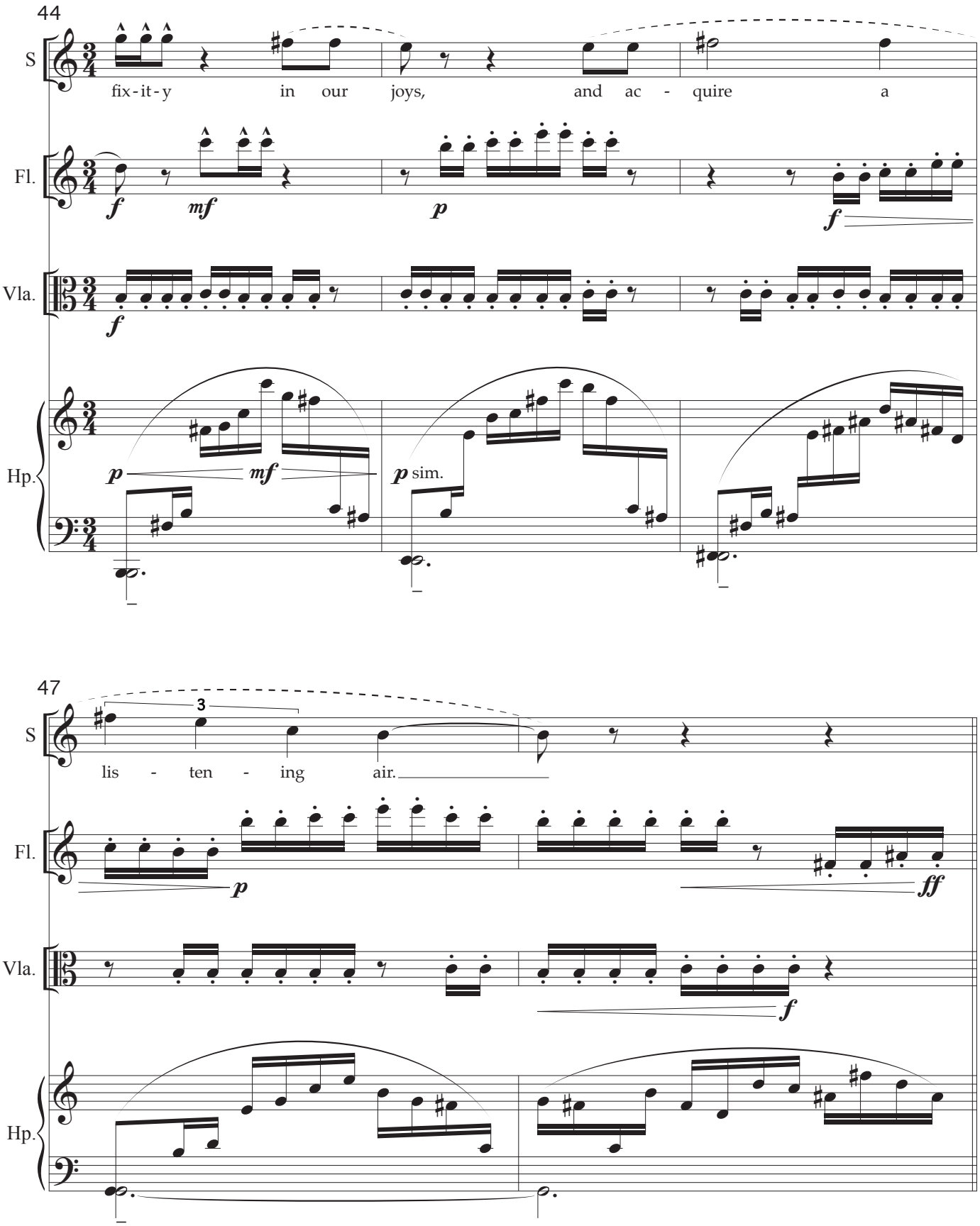

18
mf wispy
S
I won - der a - bout the trees.
Fl.
p sempre
Vla.
pp
p sempre
Hp.
p
f
22
f
S
Why do we wish to bear for - ev - er the noise of these
3
Fl.
p sempre
Vla.
Hp.
p
mf
p

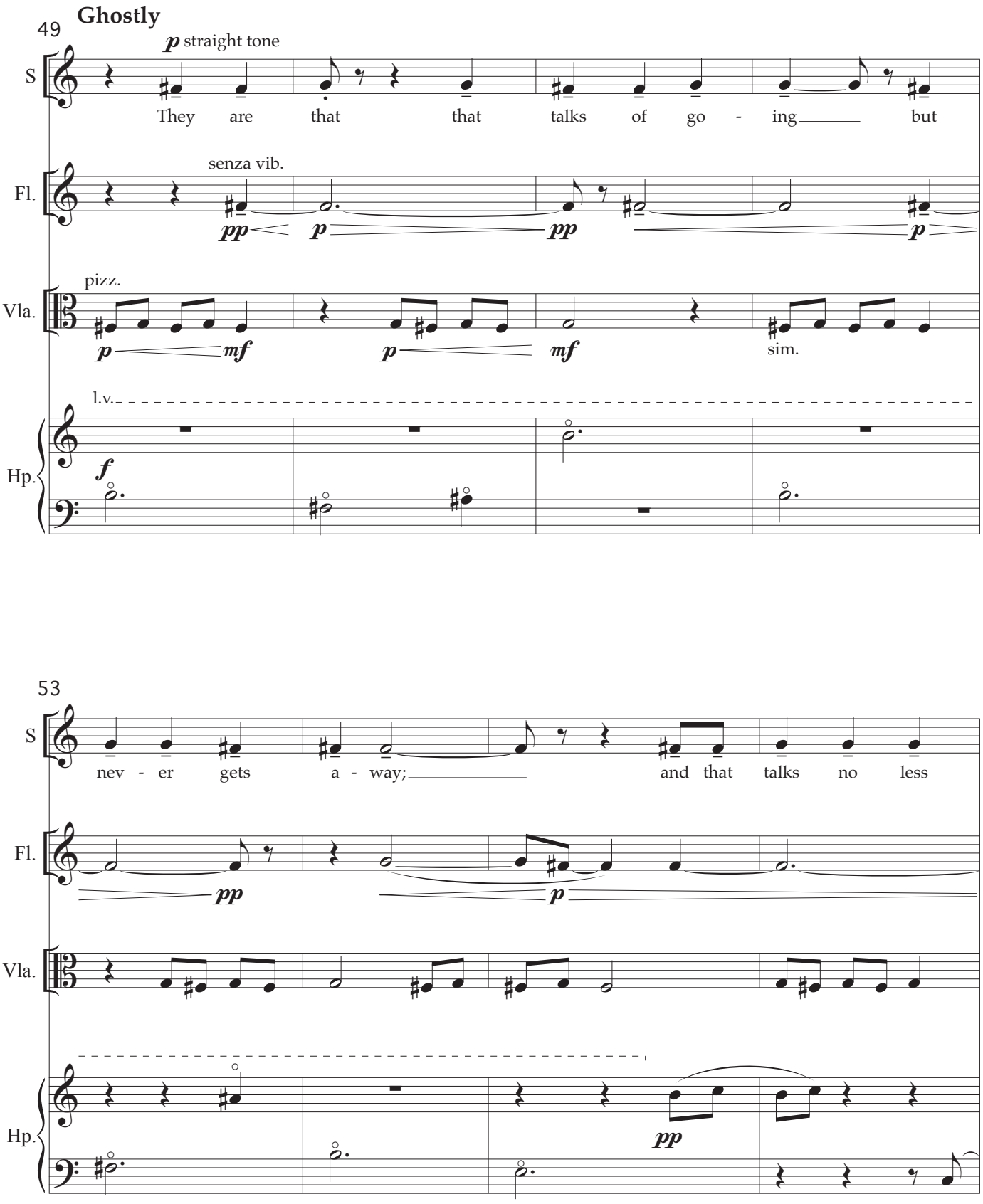

26
p
mf
3
S
more than an - oth - er noise so
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
29
f
S
close to our dwell - ing place?
Fl.
p sempre
Vla.
Hp.

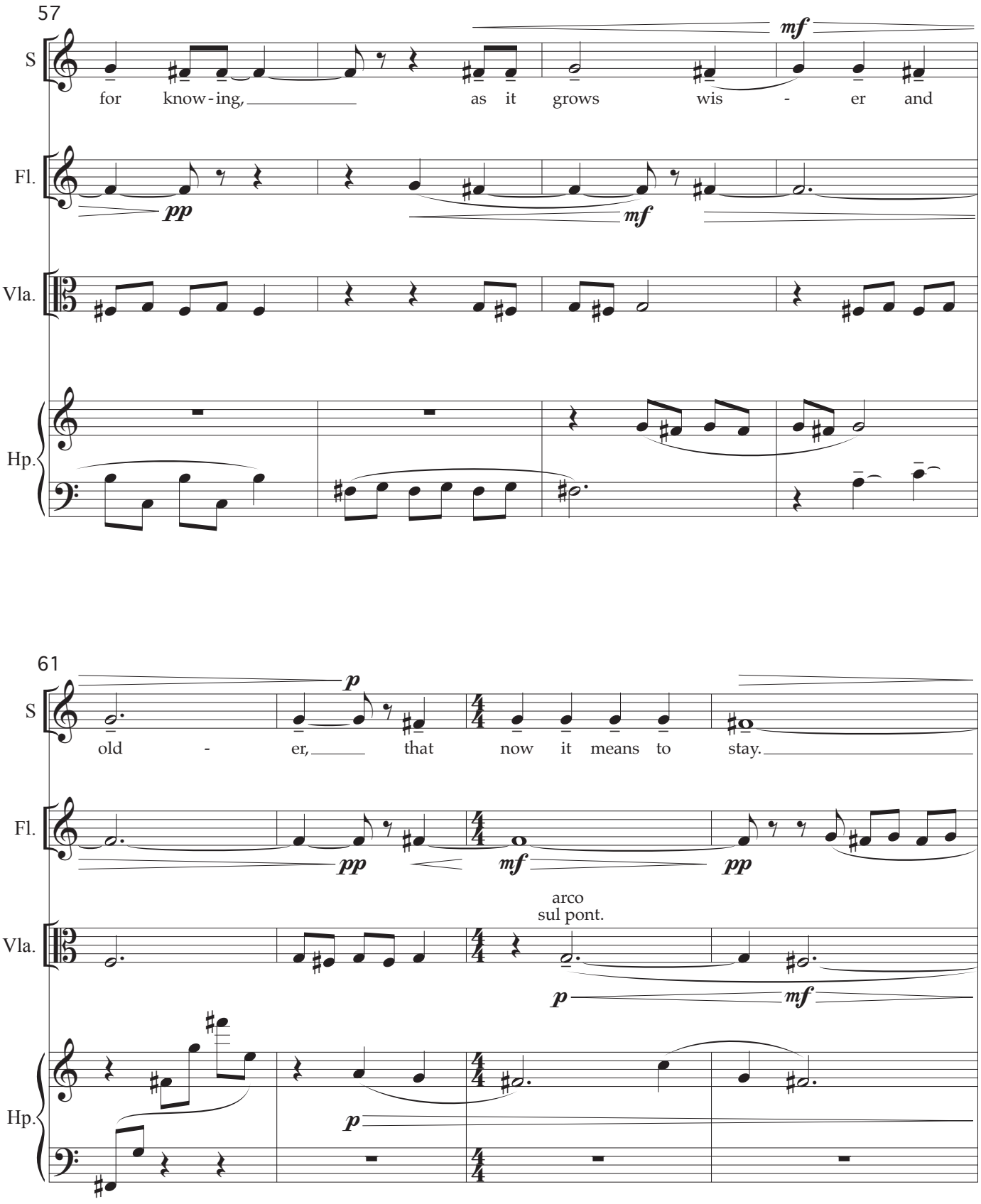

32
p
S
Fl.
p sempre
Vla.
pizz.
mf
senza sord.
Hp.

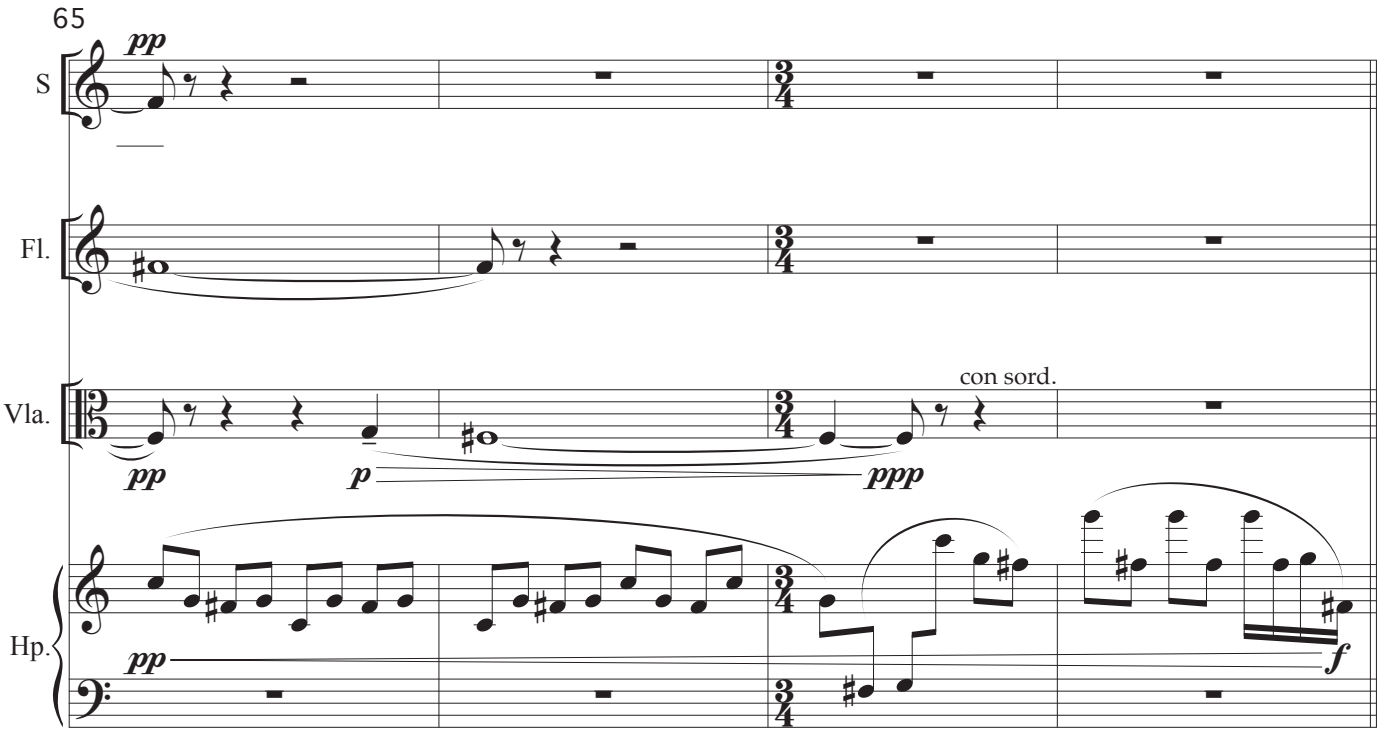

35
S
Fl.
arco
senza sord.
p
Vla.
Hp.


38
S
We suf-fer them by the day till
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
41
we lose all meas-ure of pace, and
3

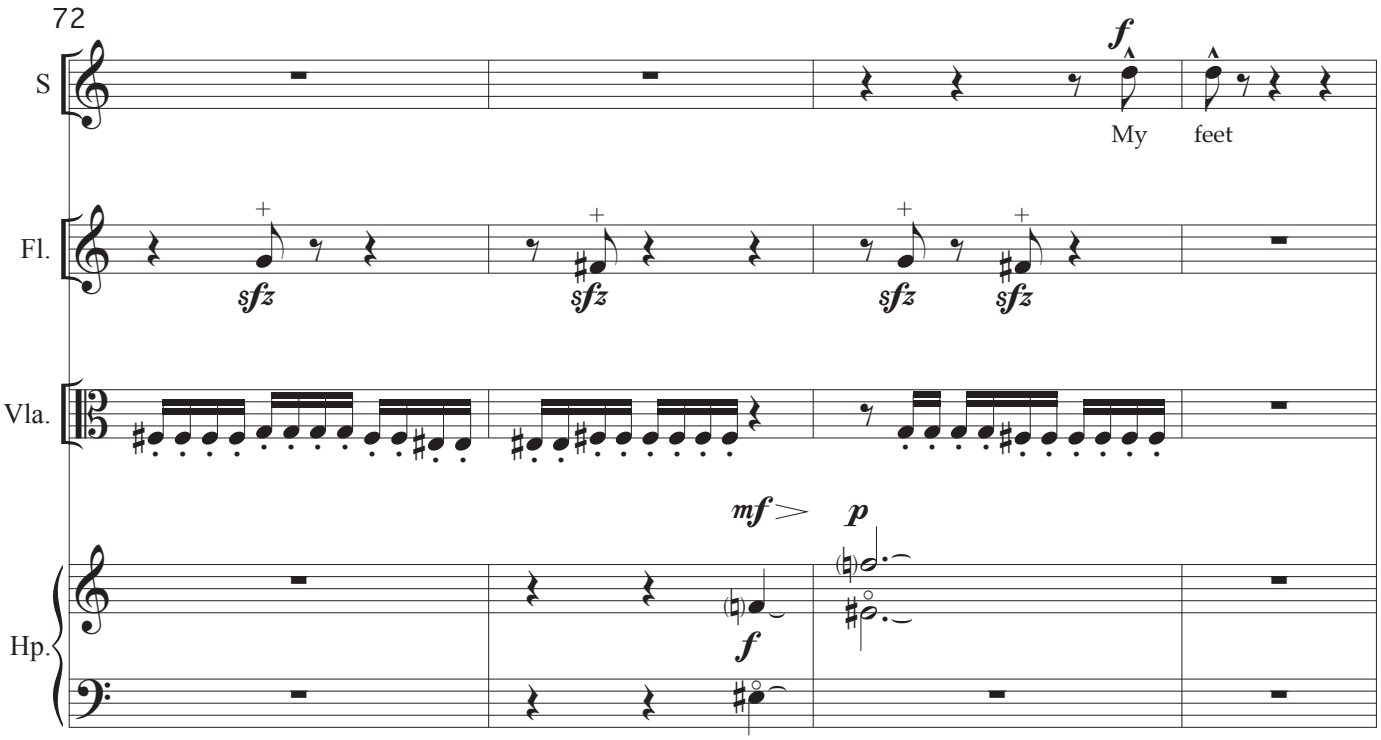

44
S
fix-it-y in our joys, and ac - quire a
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
sim.
47
S
lis - ten - ing air.
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.

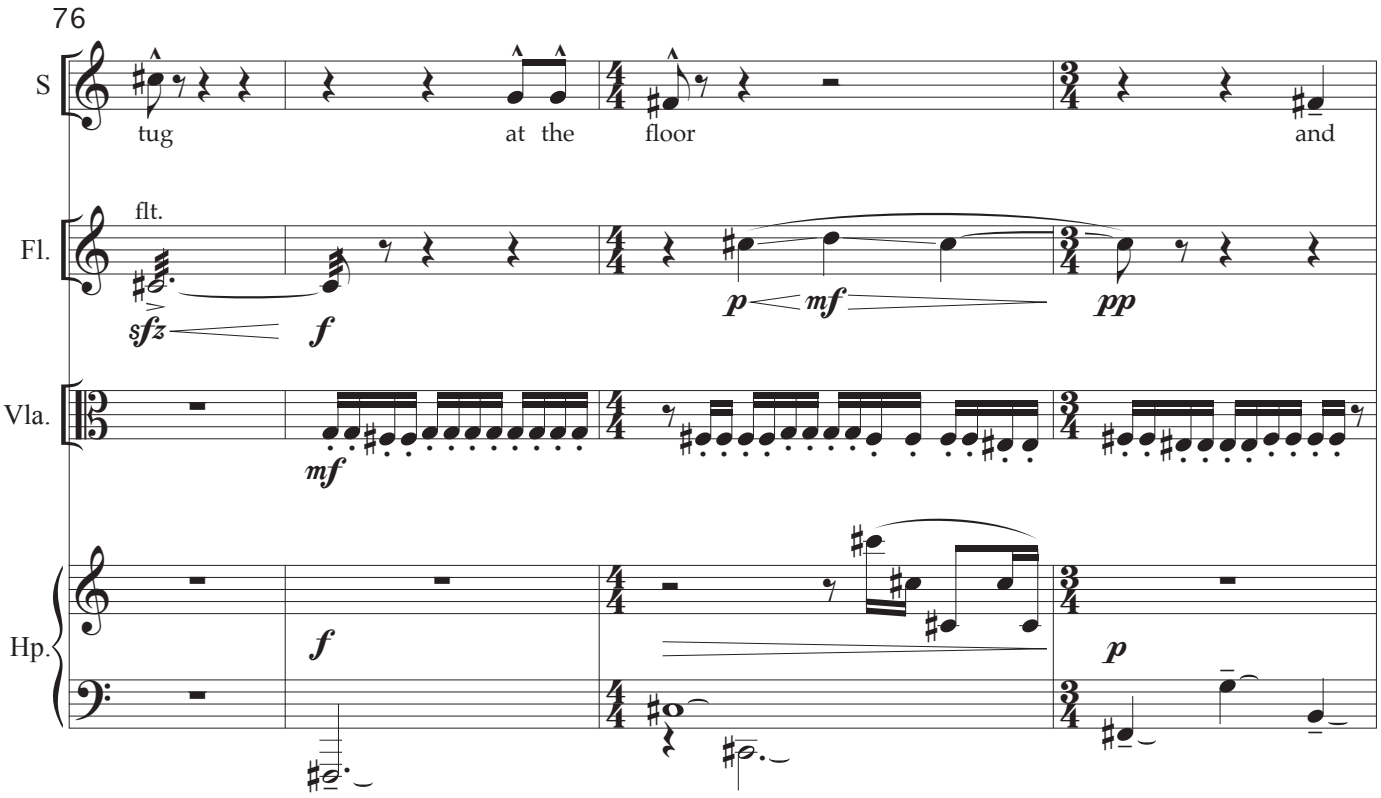

Ghostly
49
p straight tone
S
They are that that talks of go - ing but
senza vib.
Fl.
pp p pp p
pizz.
Vla.
p mf p mf sim.
l.v.
Hp.
f
53
S
nev - er gets a - way; and that talks no less
Fl.
pp p
Vla.
Hp.
pp

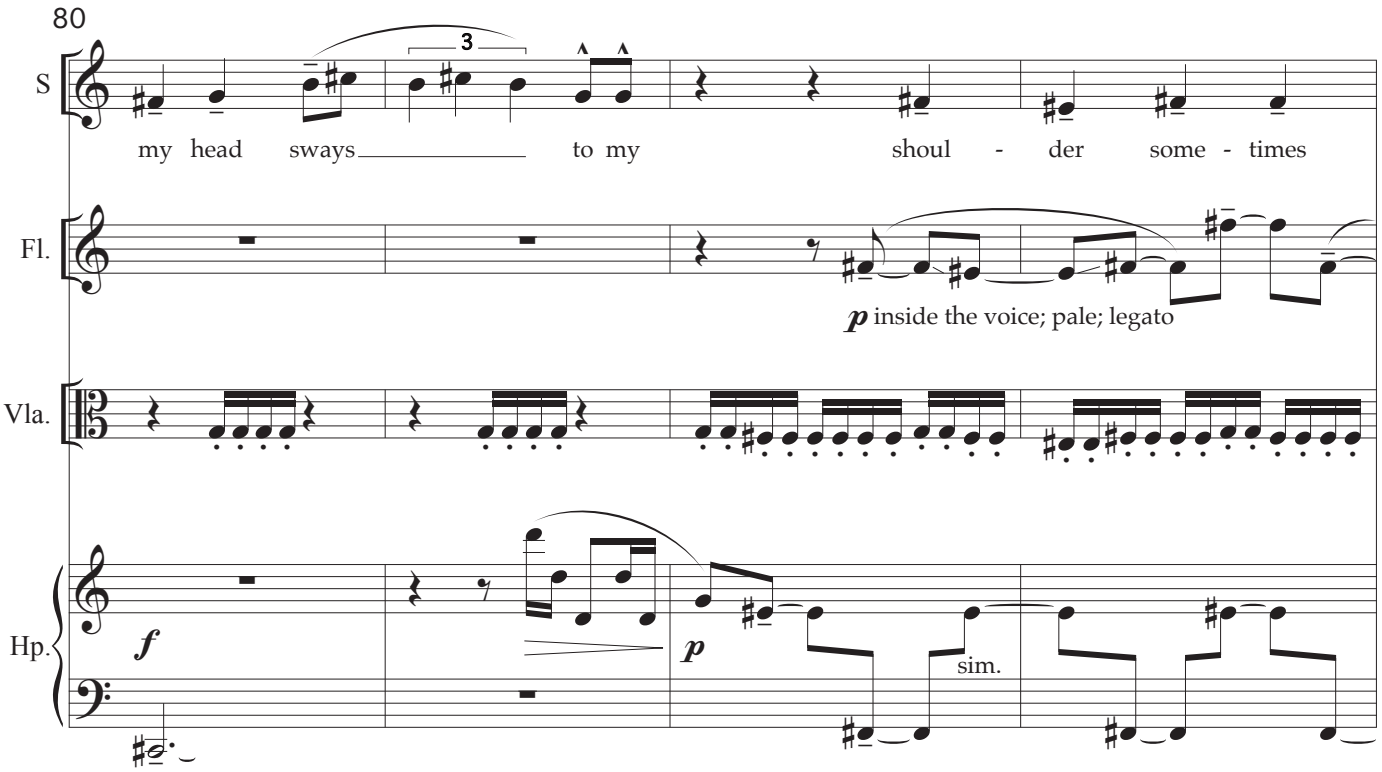

57
S
for know - ing, as it grows wis - er and
mf
Fl.
pp
mf
Vla.
Hp.
61
S
old - er, that now it means to stay.
p
Fl.
pp
mf
pp
arco
sul pont.
Vla.
p
mf
Hp.
p

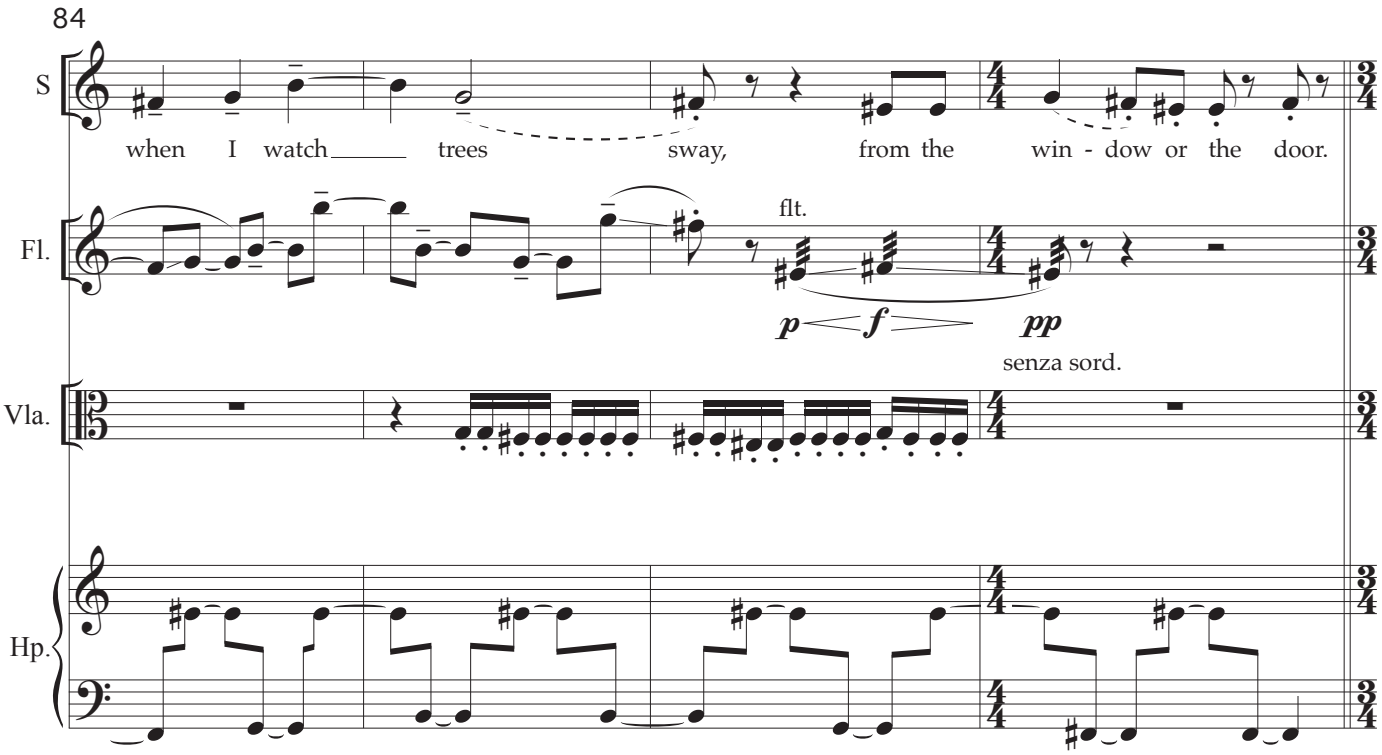

65
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
pp
pp
p
ppp
con sord.
pp
f

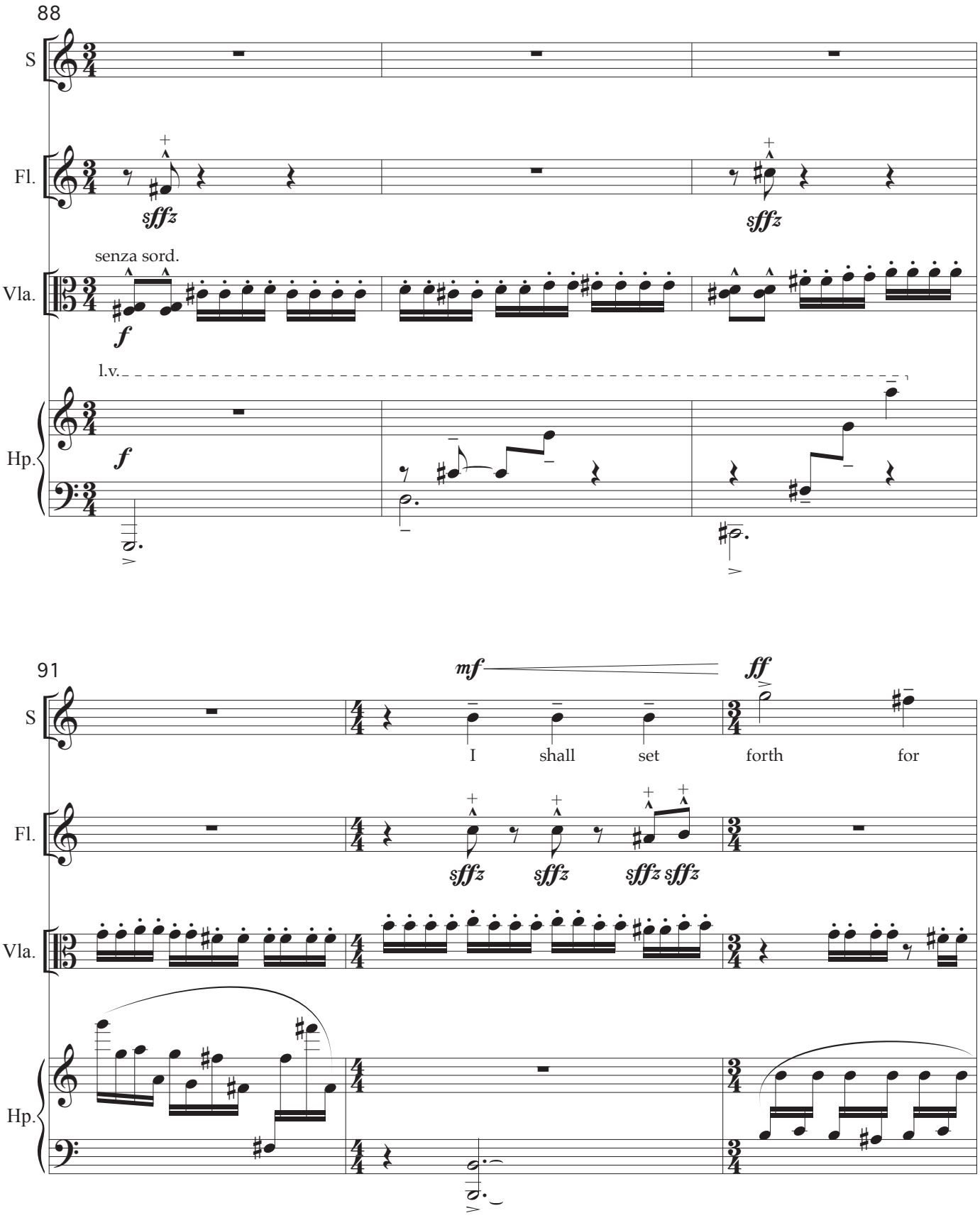
69 More direction; tense
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
sfz
sfz
sfz
arco
con sord.
f
p f
p f

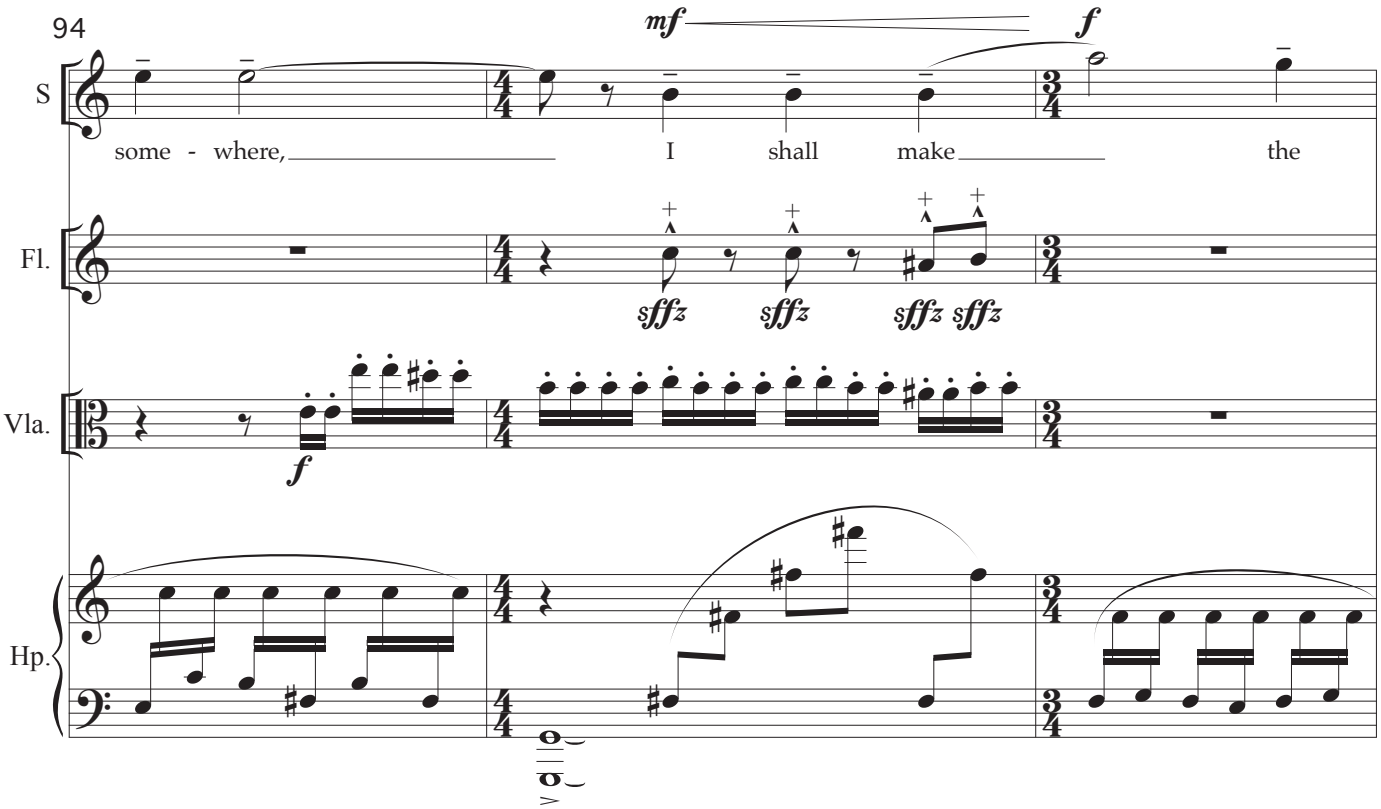

72
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
My feet

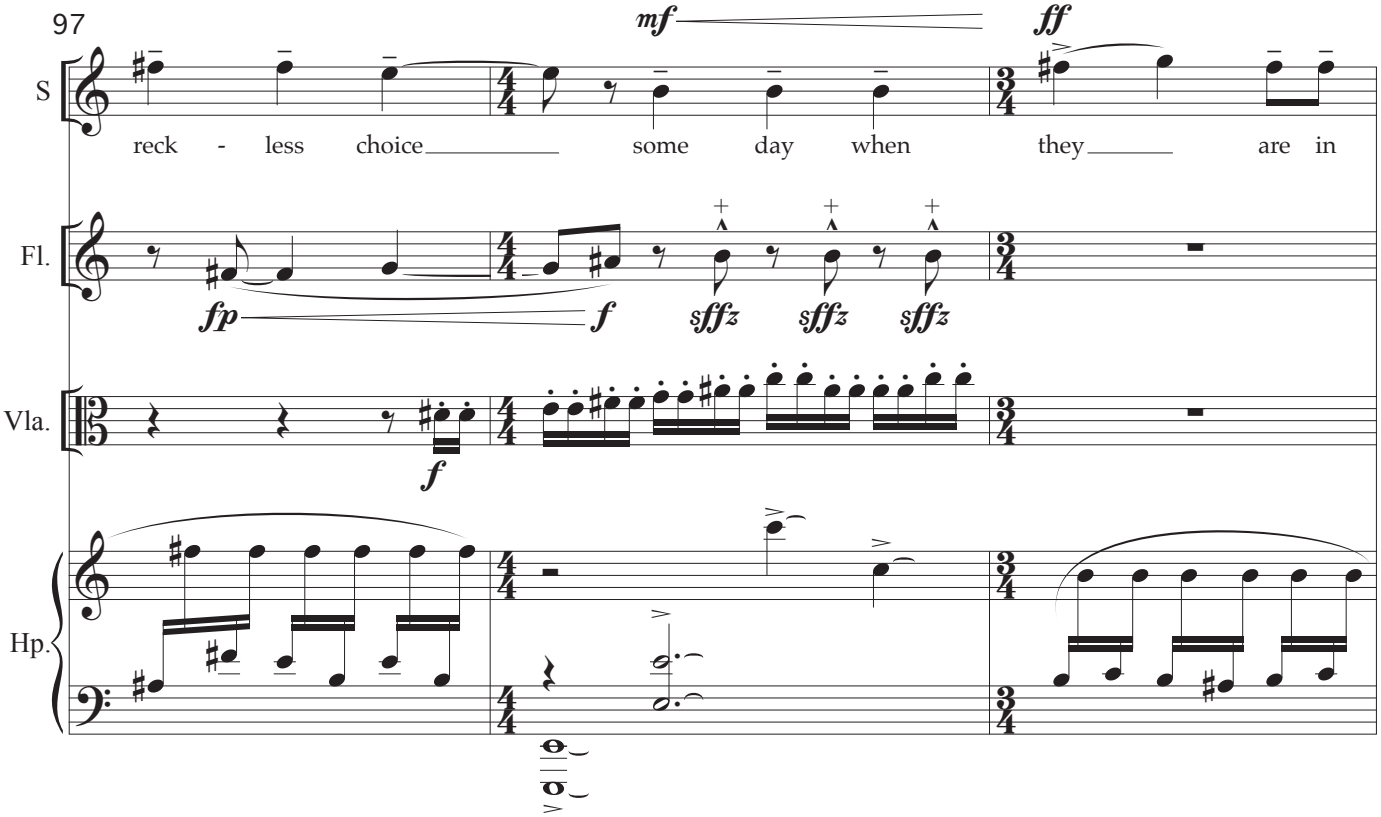

76
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
tug at the floor and
flt.

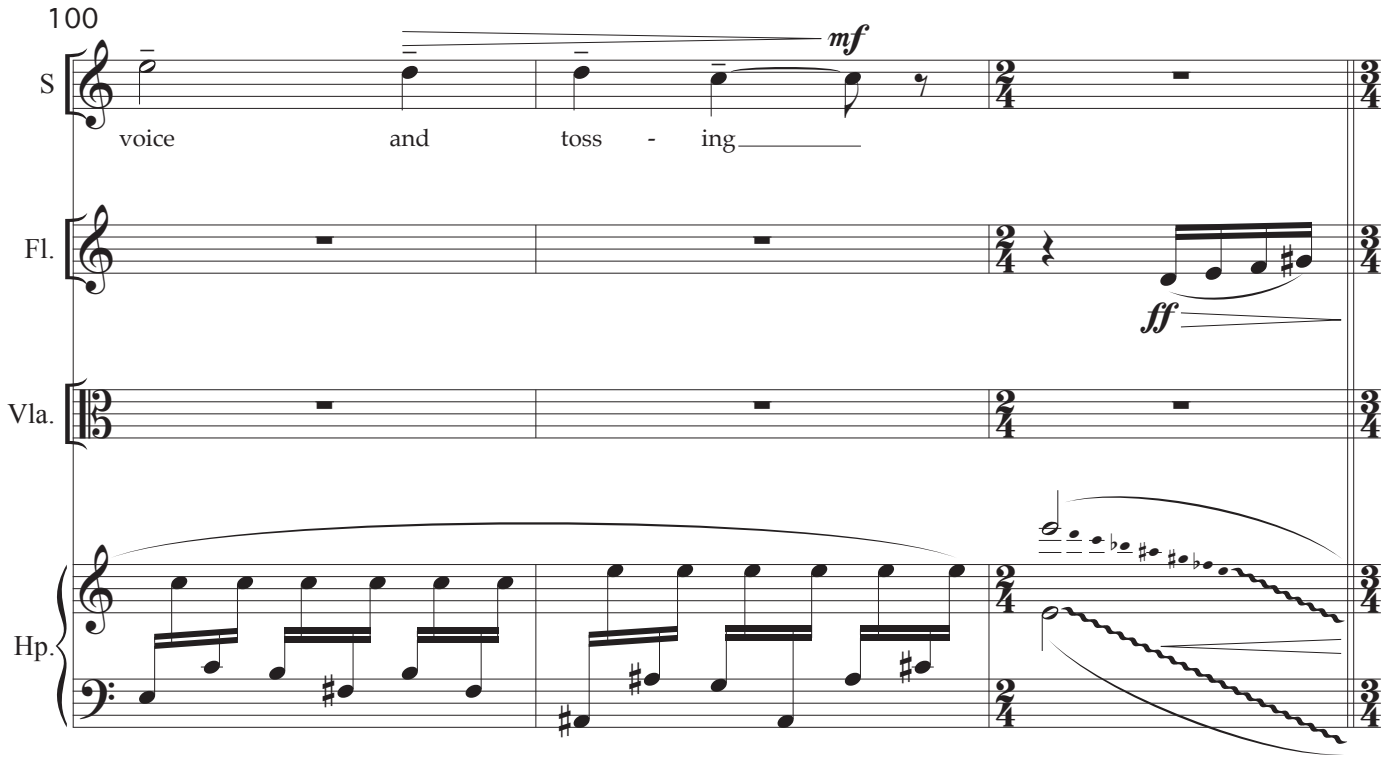

80
S
my head sways to my shoul - der some - times
3
Fl.
p inside the voice; pale; legato
Vla.
Hp.
f
p
sim.

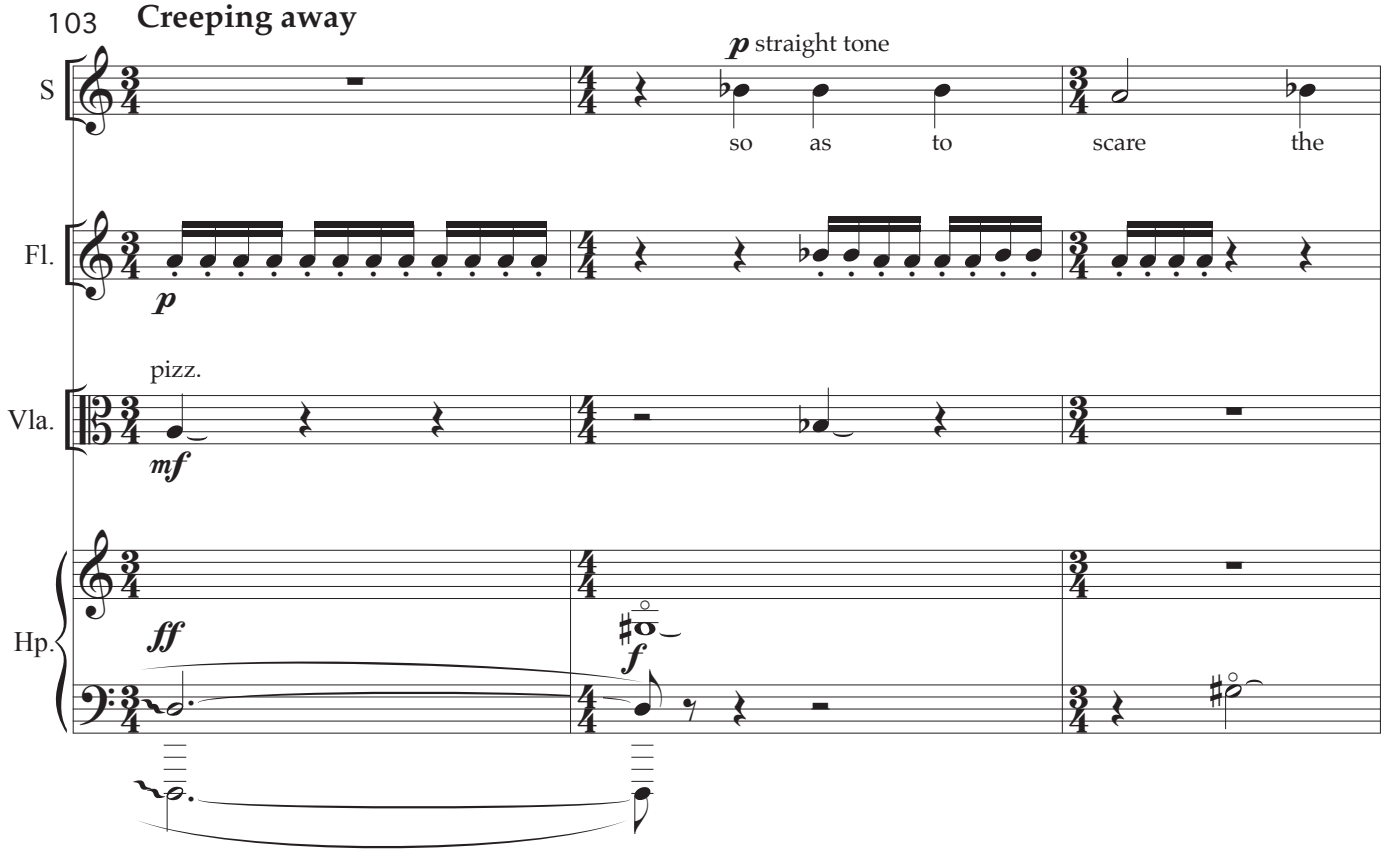

84
S
when I watch trees sway, from the win - dow or the door.
Fl.
flt.
p
f
pp
senza sord.
Vla.
Hp.

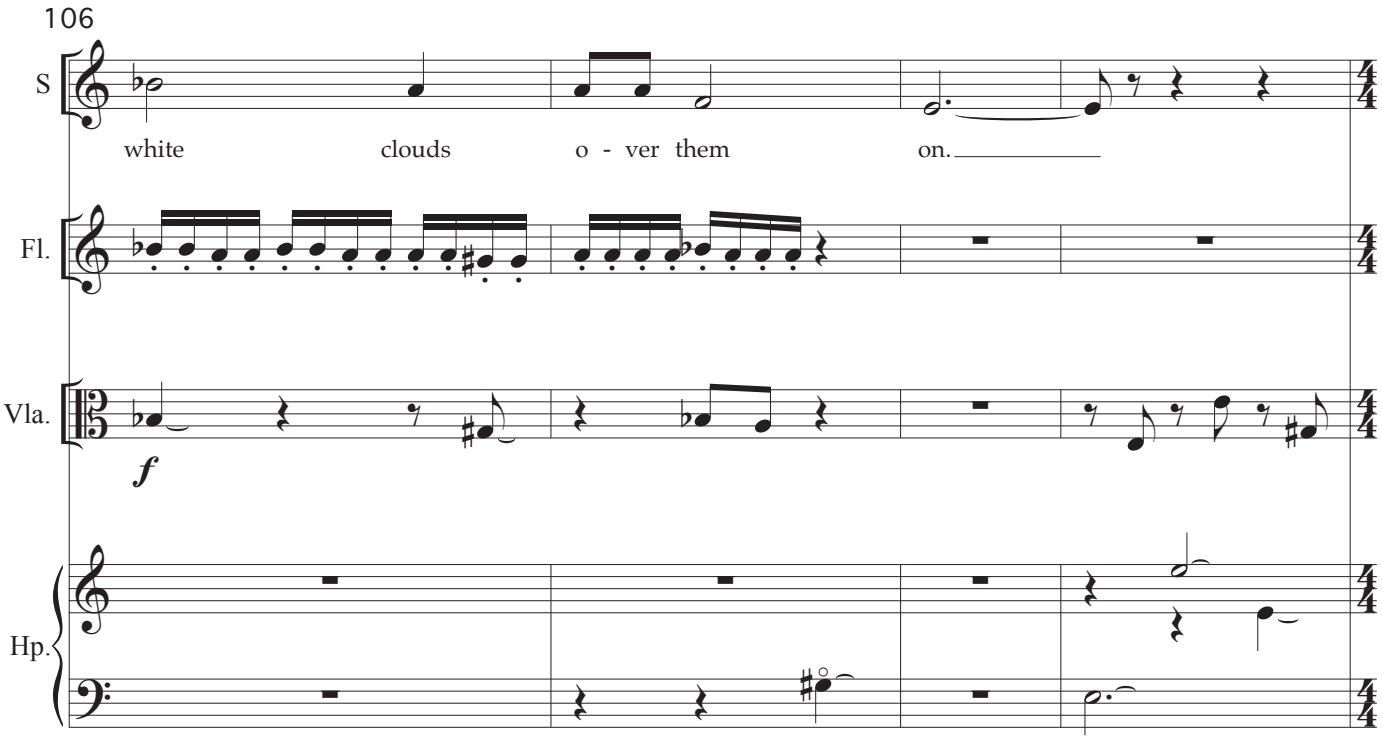

88
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
sffz
senza sord.
f
l.v.
91
mf
ff
I shall set forth for

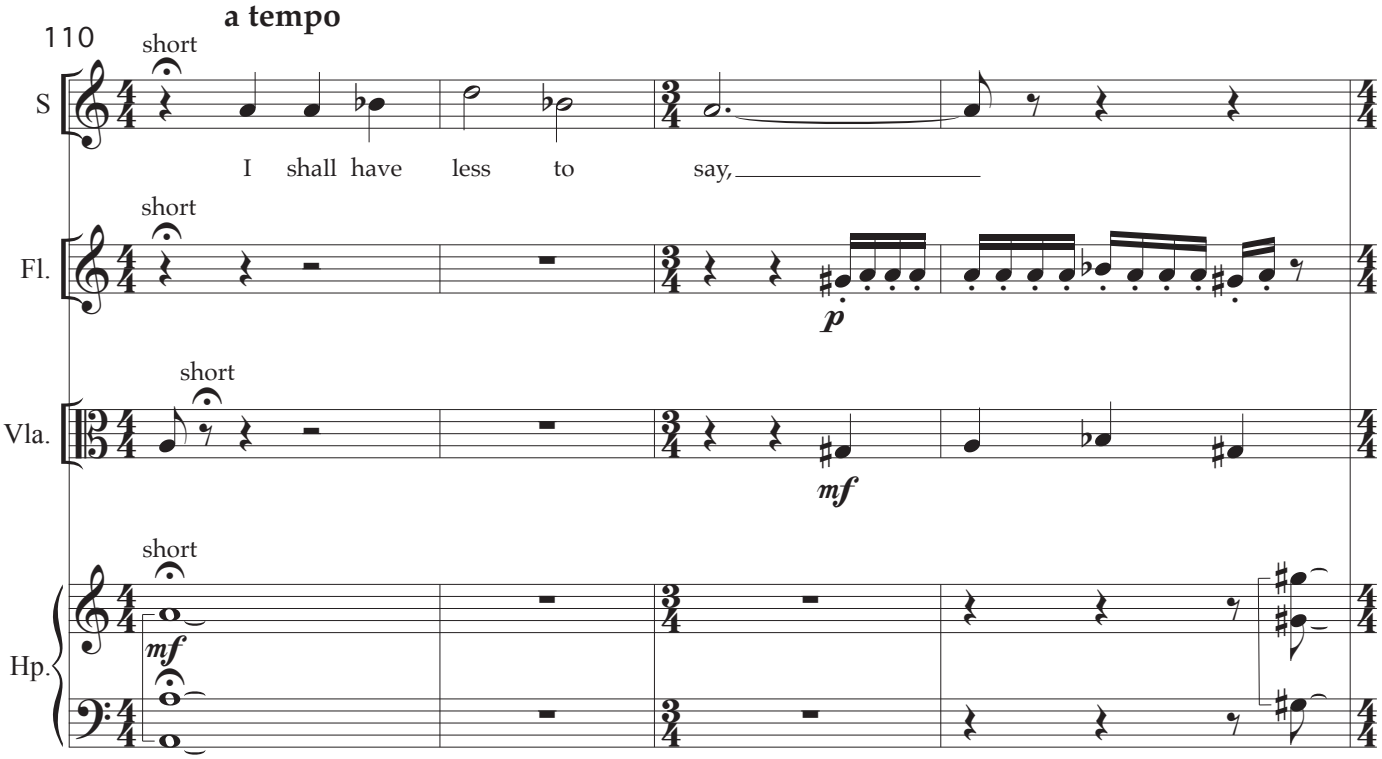

94
mf
f
S
some - where, I shall make the
Fl.
sfffz sfffz sfffz sfffz
Vla.
f
Hp.

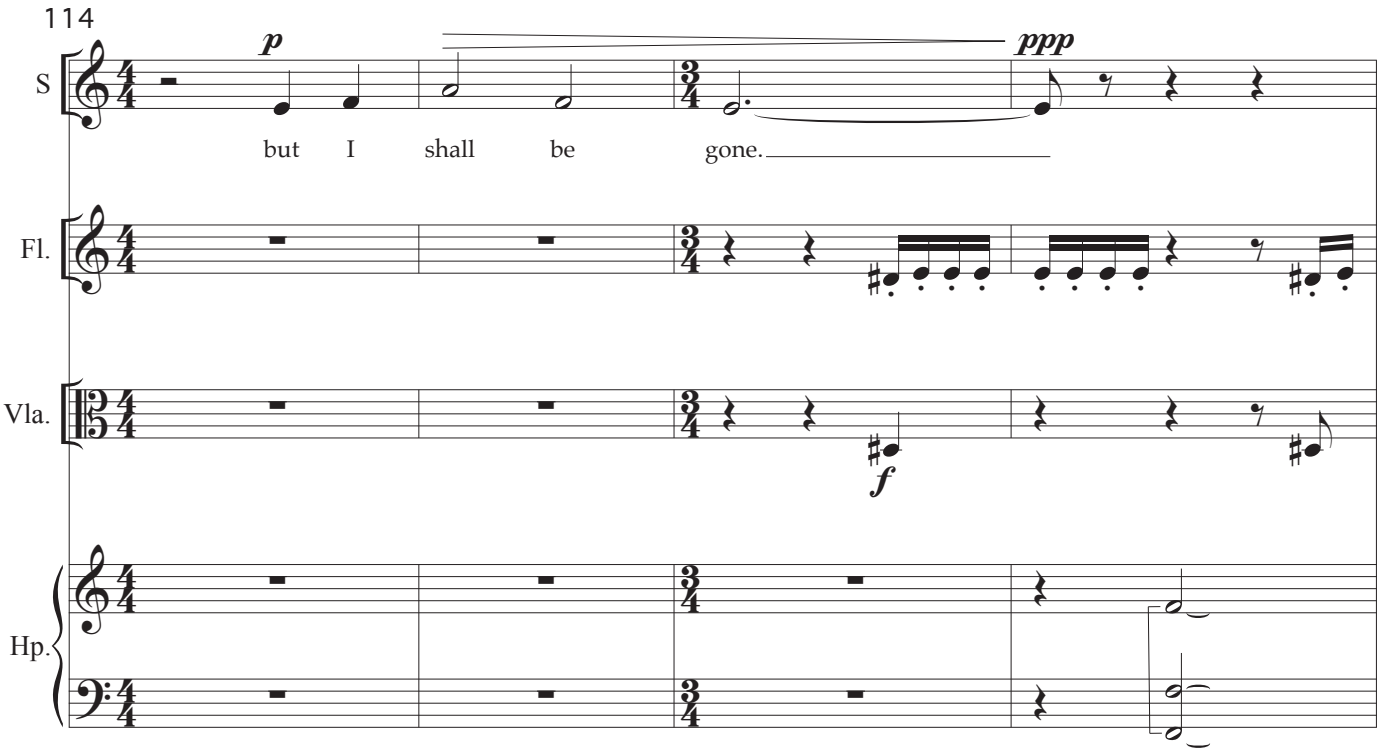

97
mf
ff
S
reck - less choice some day when they are in
Fl.
fp
f
sfffz sfffz sfffz
Vla.
f
Hp.

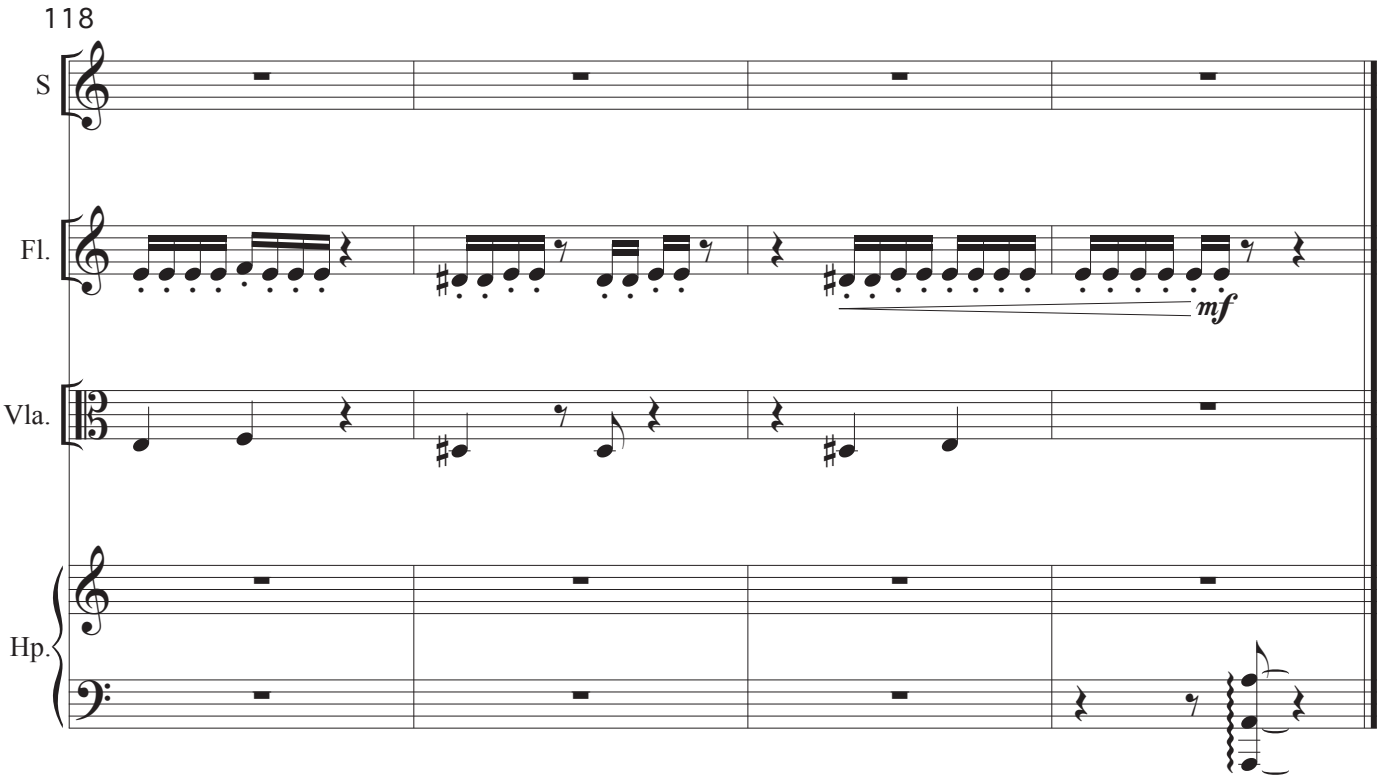

100
S
mf
voice and toss - ing
Fl.
ff
Vla.
Hp.


103
Creeping away
S
p straight tone
so as to scare the
Fl.
p
pizz.
Vla.
mf
Hp.
ff
f


106
S
white clouds o - ver them on.
Fl.
Vla.
f
Hp.


a tempo
110
short
S
I shall have less to say,
short
Fl.
p
short
Vla.
mf
short
Hp.
mf


114
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
p
ppp
but I shall be gone.
f


118
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
mf

III. Two Sides of Life

after Emily Dickinson

A song; molto rubato (♩ = c. *72*)

Soprano

Flute

Viola

Harp

p espress. e legato

mf

5

poco rit. **a tempo**

S

p elegant; airy

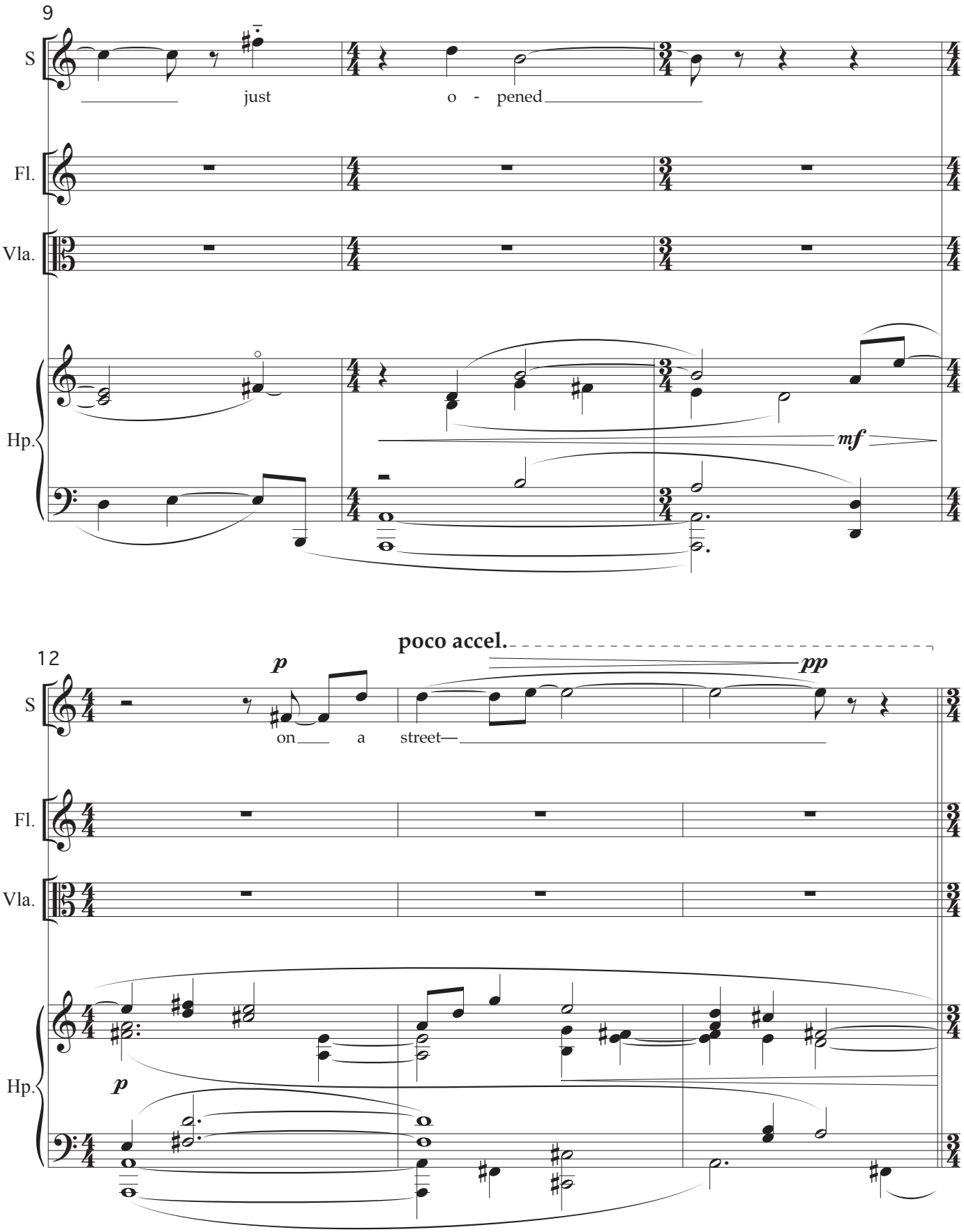
A door

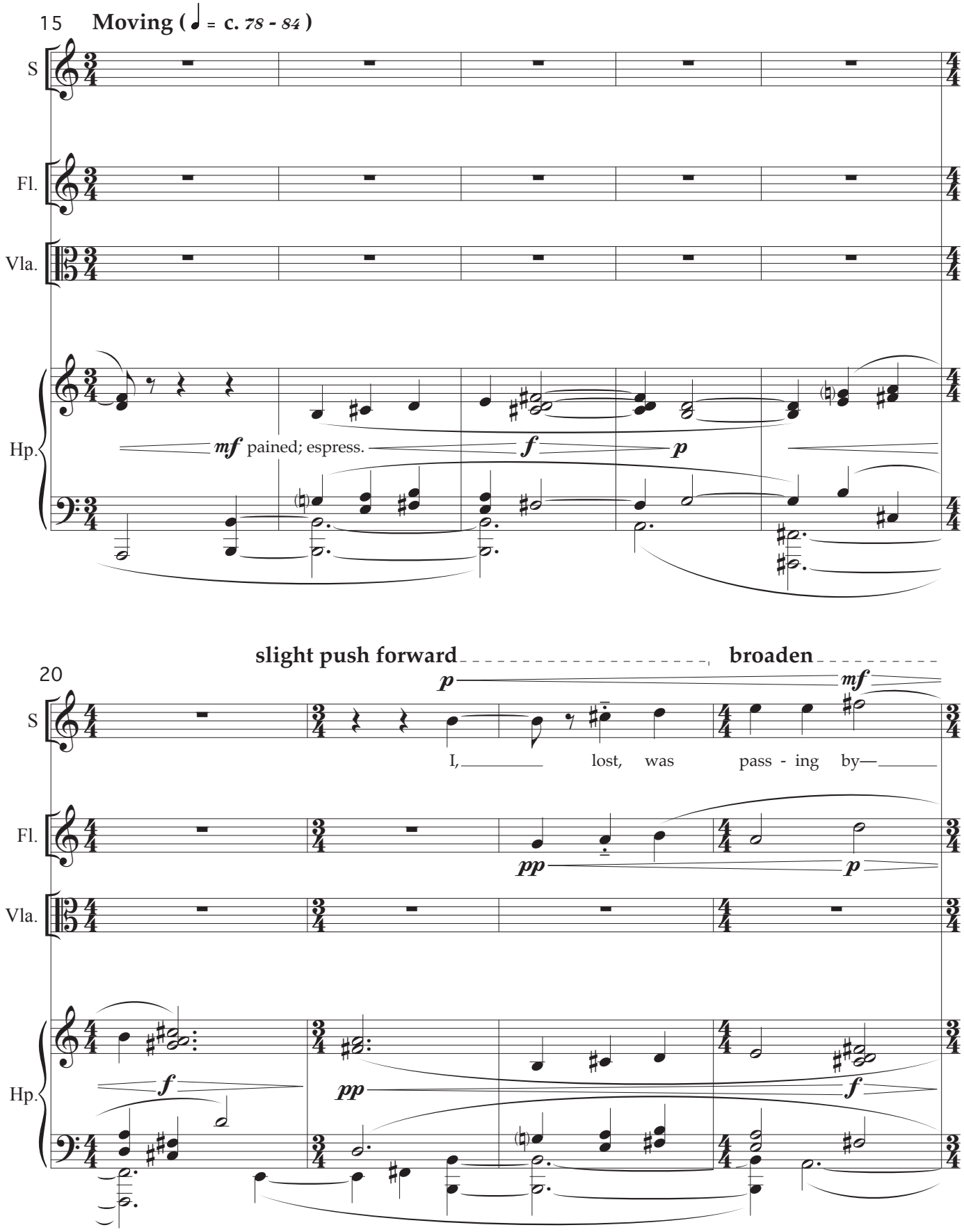
Fl.

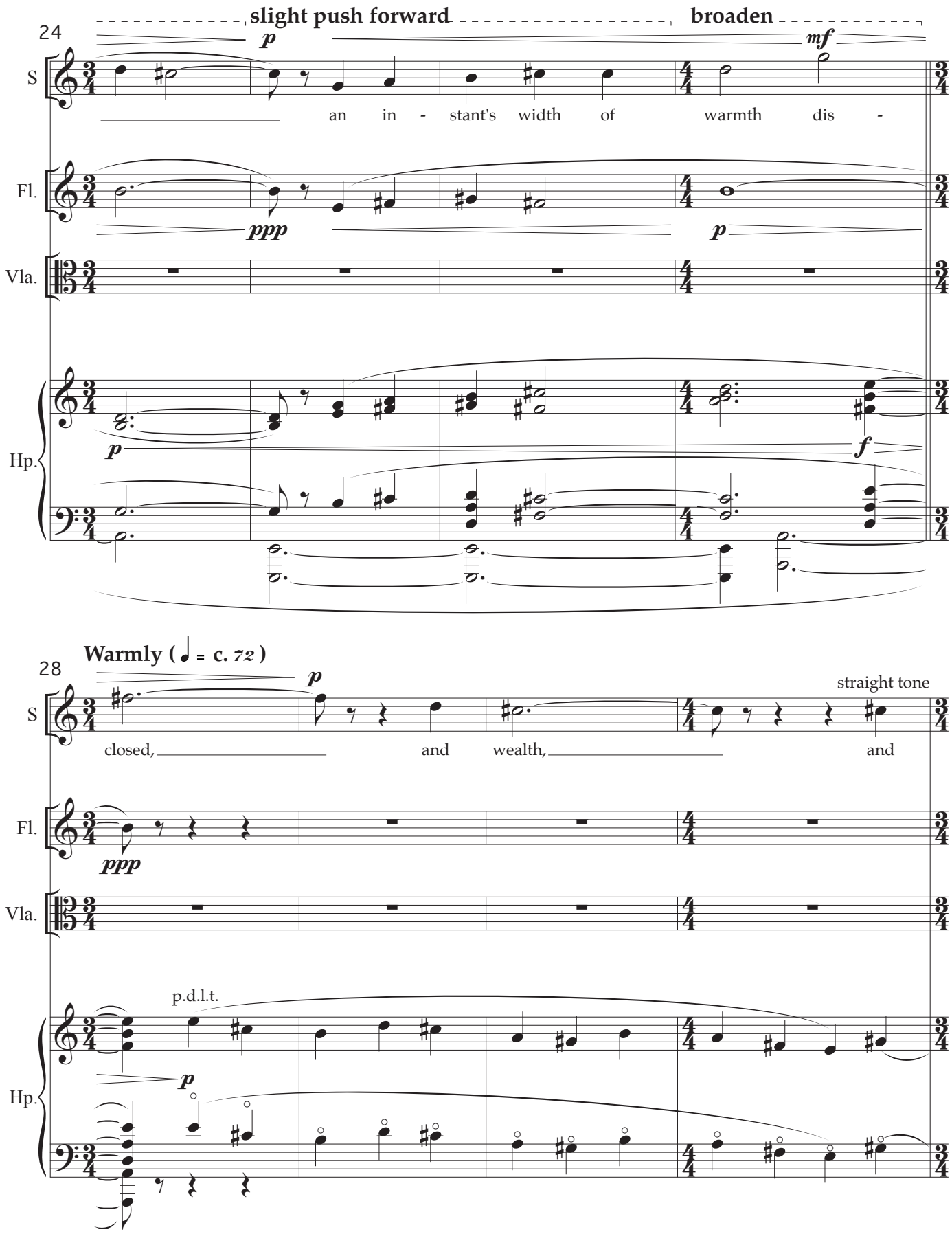
Vla.

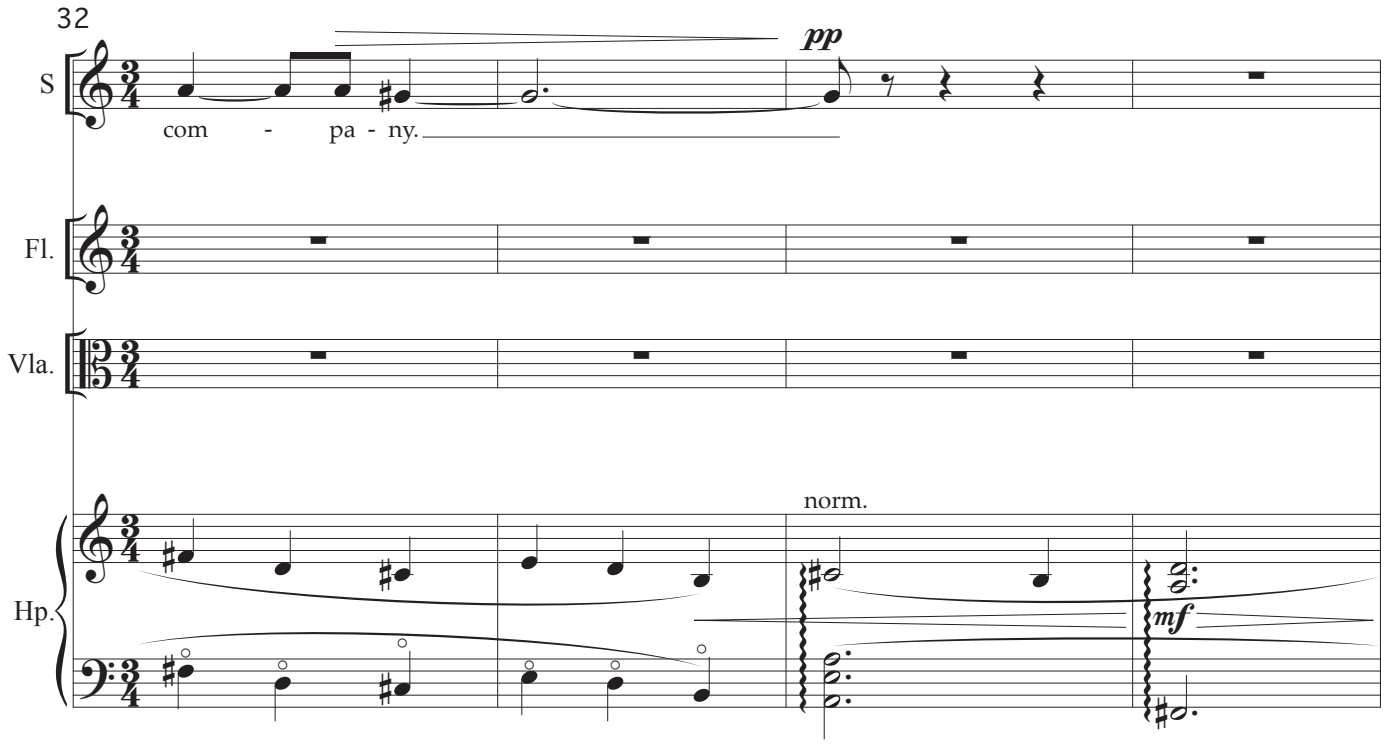
Hp.

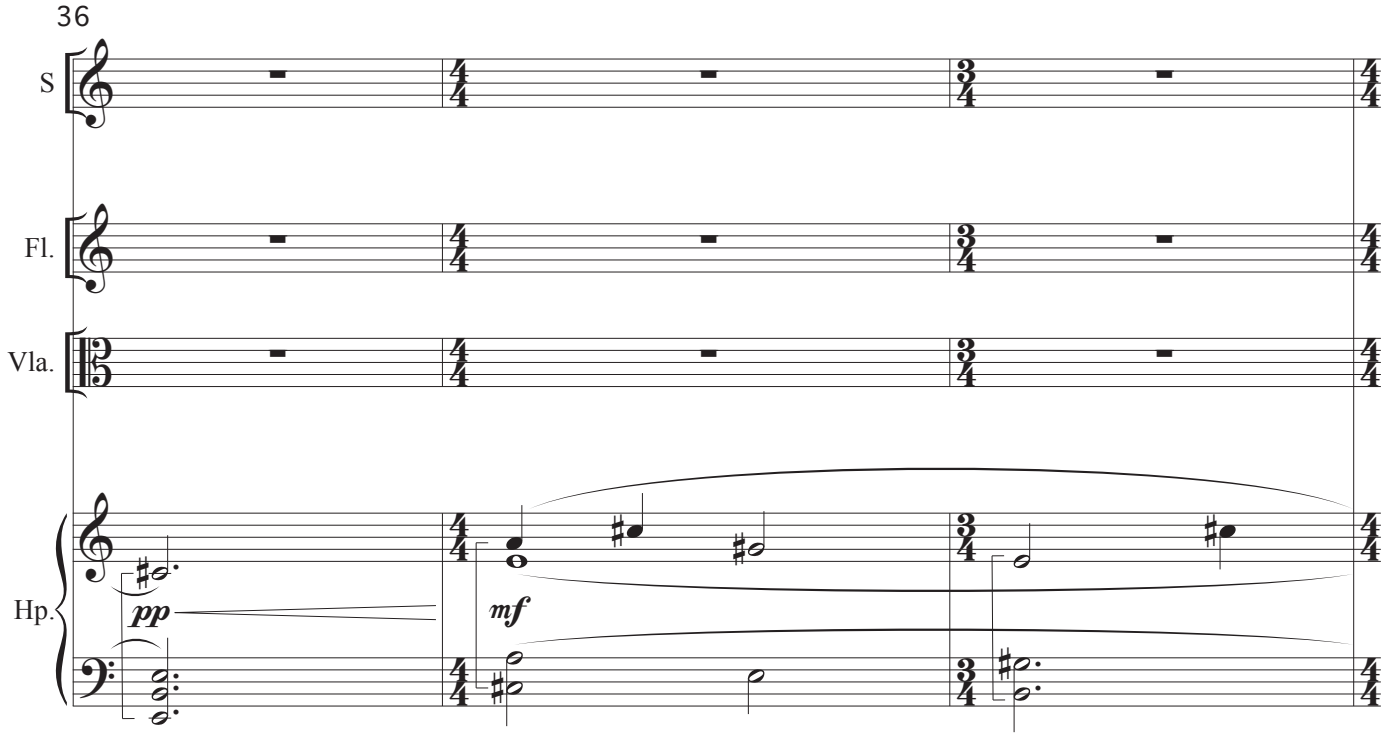
p

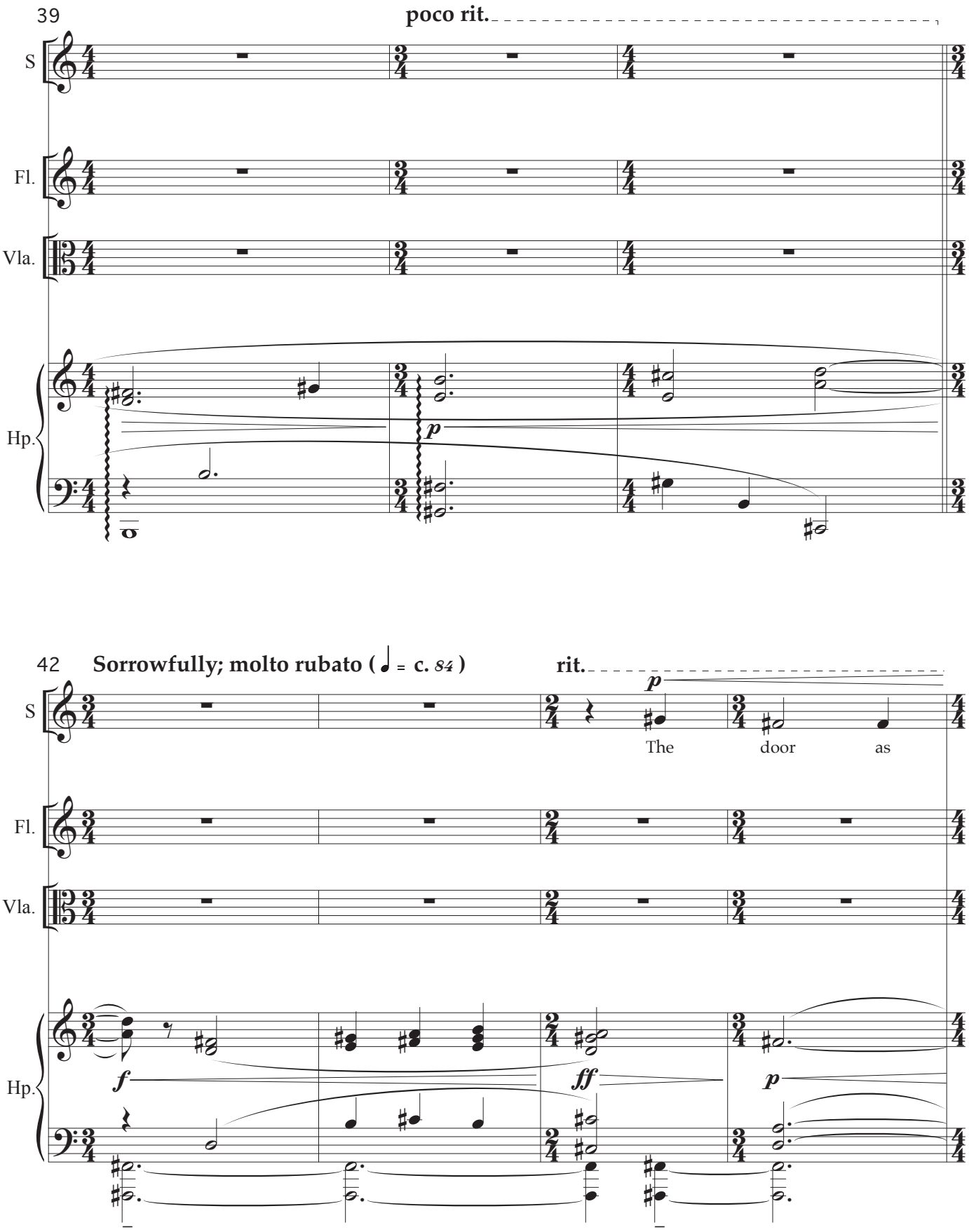

9
S
just
o - pened
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
mf
poco accel.
12
p
pp
on a street—
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
p

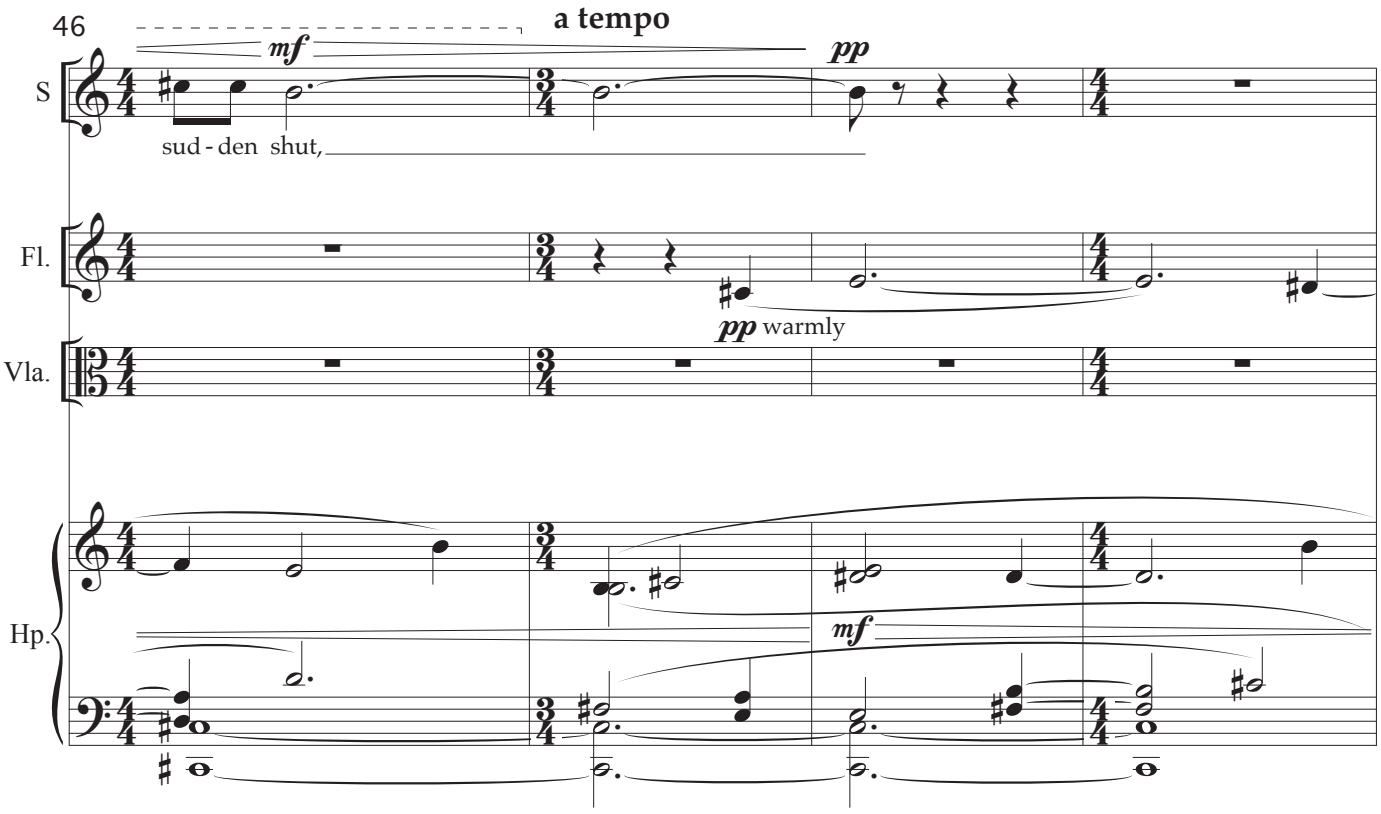

15
Moving (= c. 78 - 84)
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
mf pained; espress.
f
p
slight push forward
broaden
20
S
p
mf
I, lost, was pass - ing by—
Fl.
pp
p
Vla.
Hp.
f
pp
f

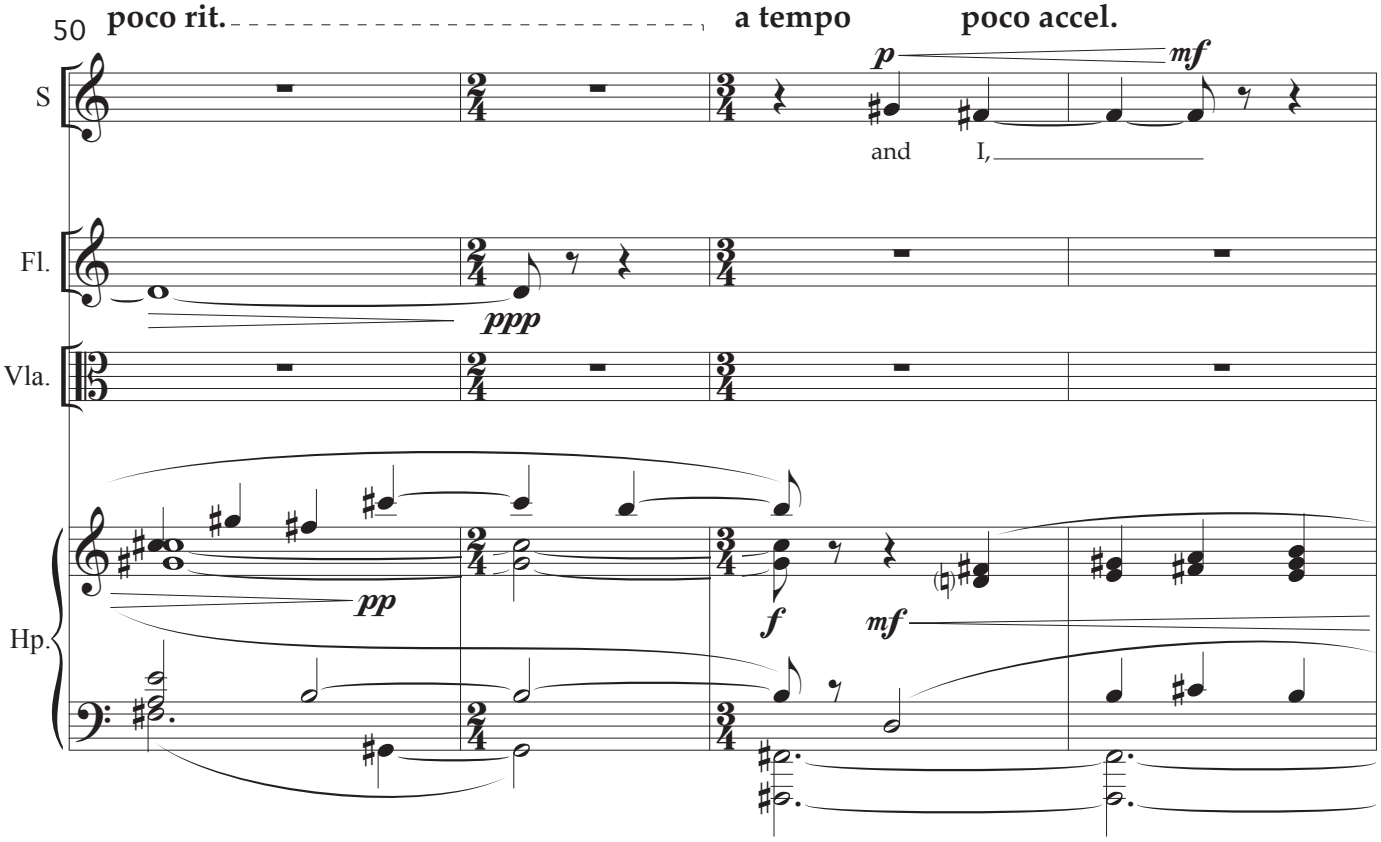

24
slight push forward
broaden
p
mf
S
an in - stant's width of warmth dis -
Fl.
ppp
p
Vla.
Hp.
p
f
28
Warmly (♩ = c. 72)
p
straight tone
S
closed, and wealth, and
Fl.
ppp
Vla.
p.d.l.t.
Hp.
p

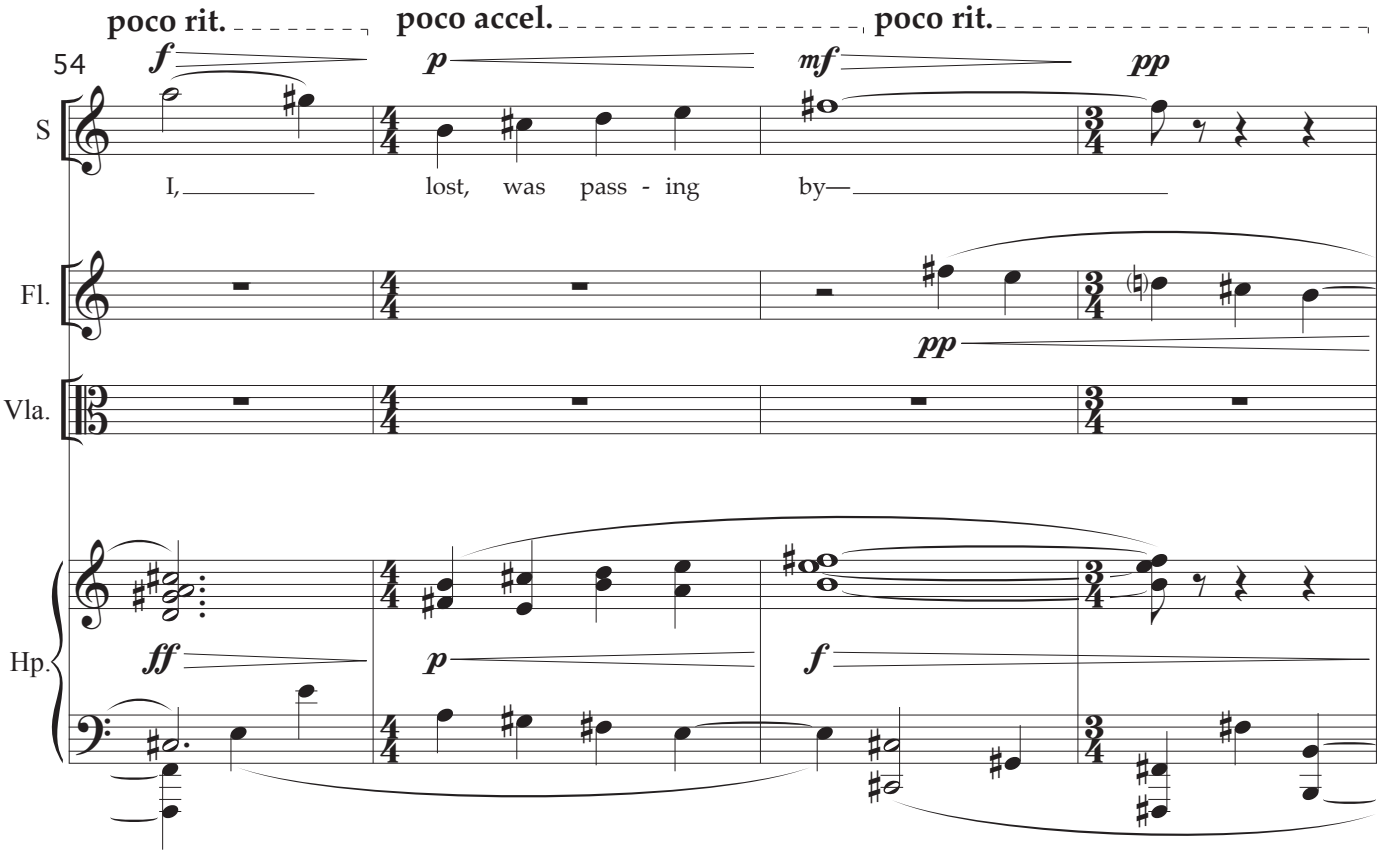

32
S
com - pa - ny.
pp
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
norm.
mf

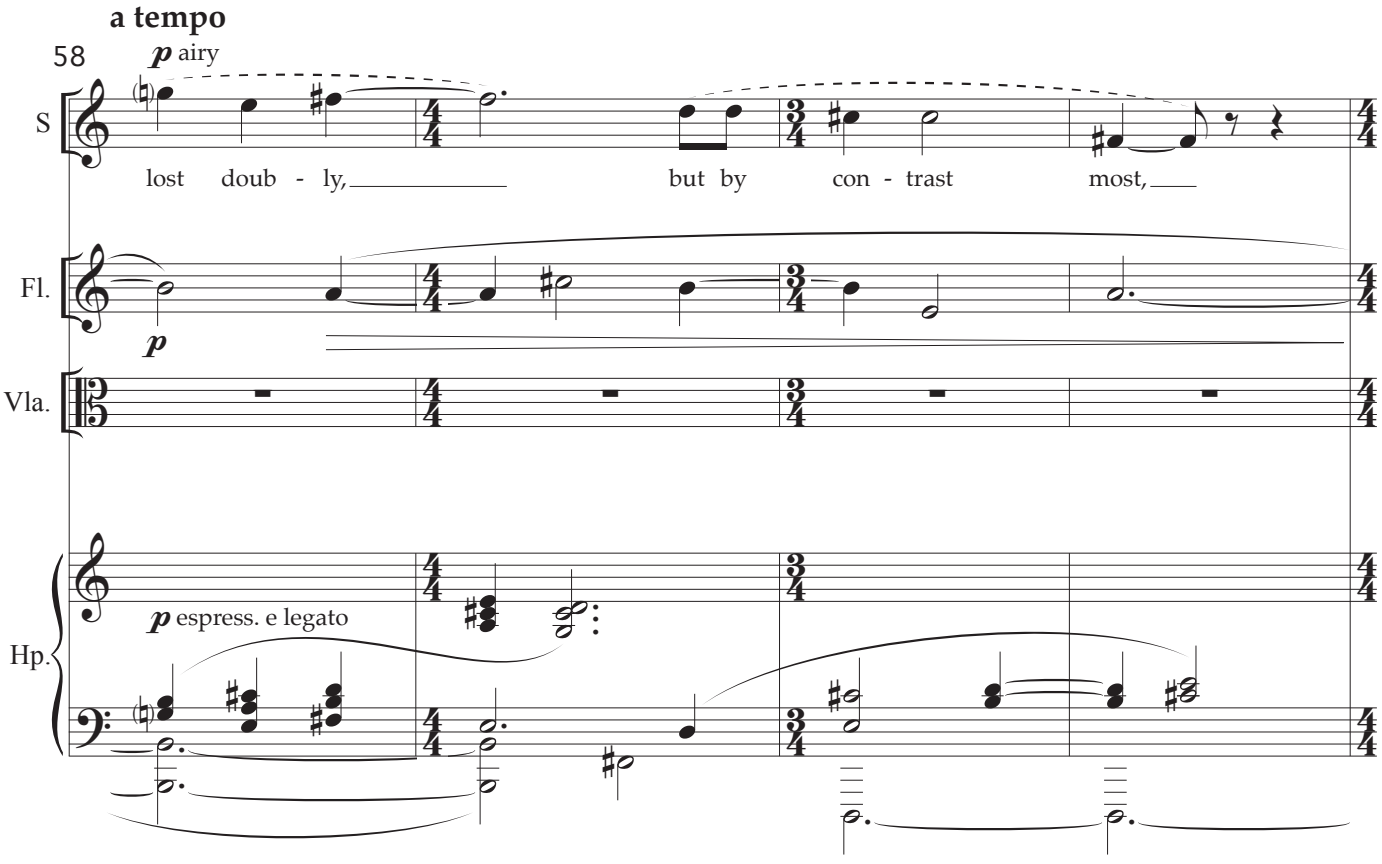

36
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
pp
mf

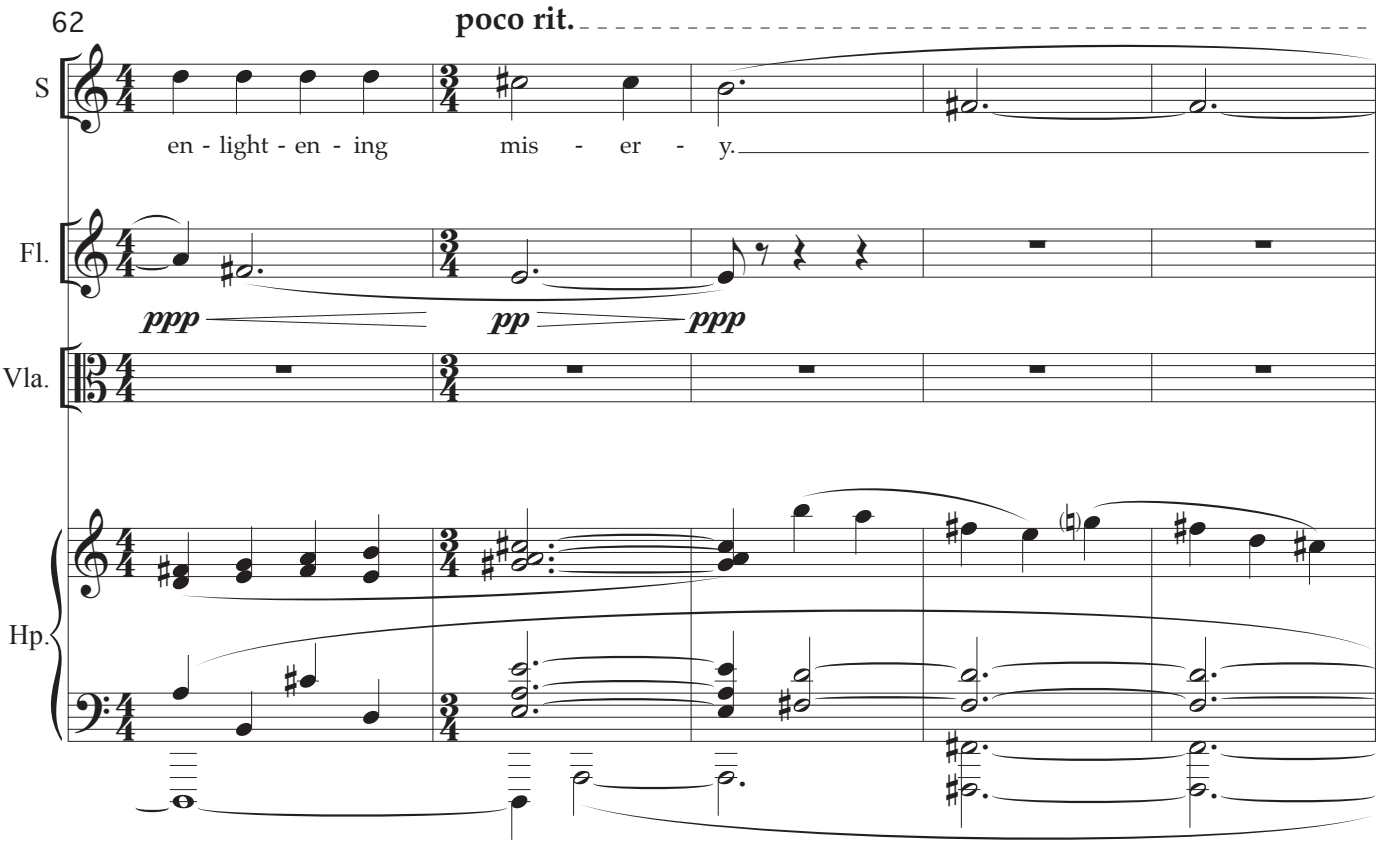

39
poco rit.
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
p
42
Sorrowfully; molto rubato (♩ = c. 84)
rit.
p
The
door
as
f
ff
p

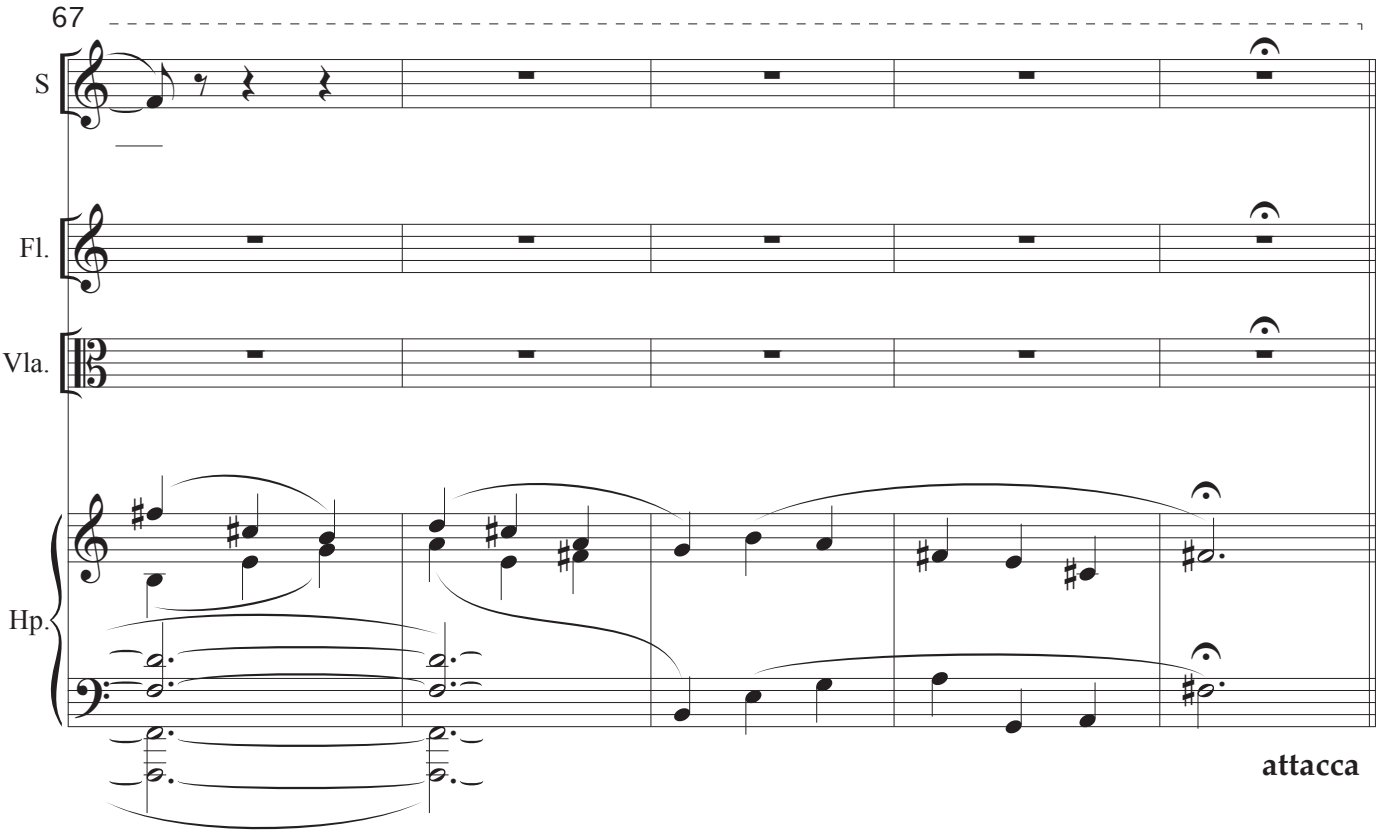

46
a tempo
mf
pp
S
sud - den shut,
Fl.
pp warmly
Vla.
Hp.
mf


50
poco rit.
a tempo
poco accel.
p
mf
S
and I,
Fl.
ppp
Vla.
pp
f
mf
Hp.


poco rit.
poco accel.
poco rit.
54
S
I, lost, was pass - ing by—
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.


a tempo
58
p airy
S
lost doub - ly, but by con - trast most,
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
p espress. e legato

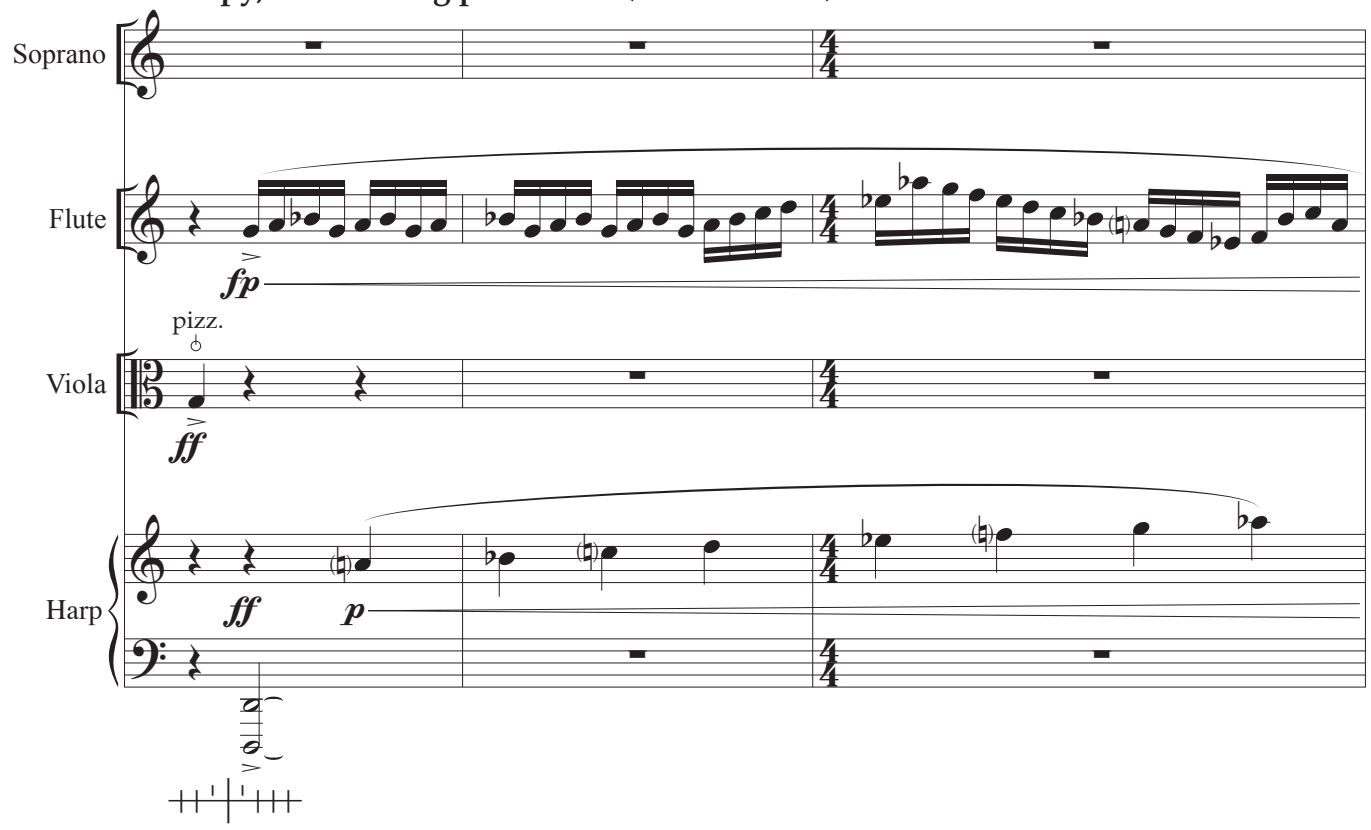

62
poco rit.
S
en - light - en - ing mis - er - y.
Fl.
ppp
pp
ppp
Vla.
Hp.

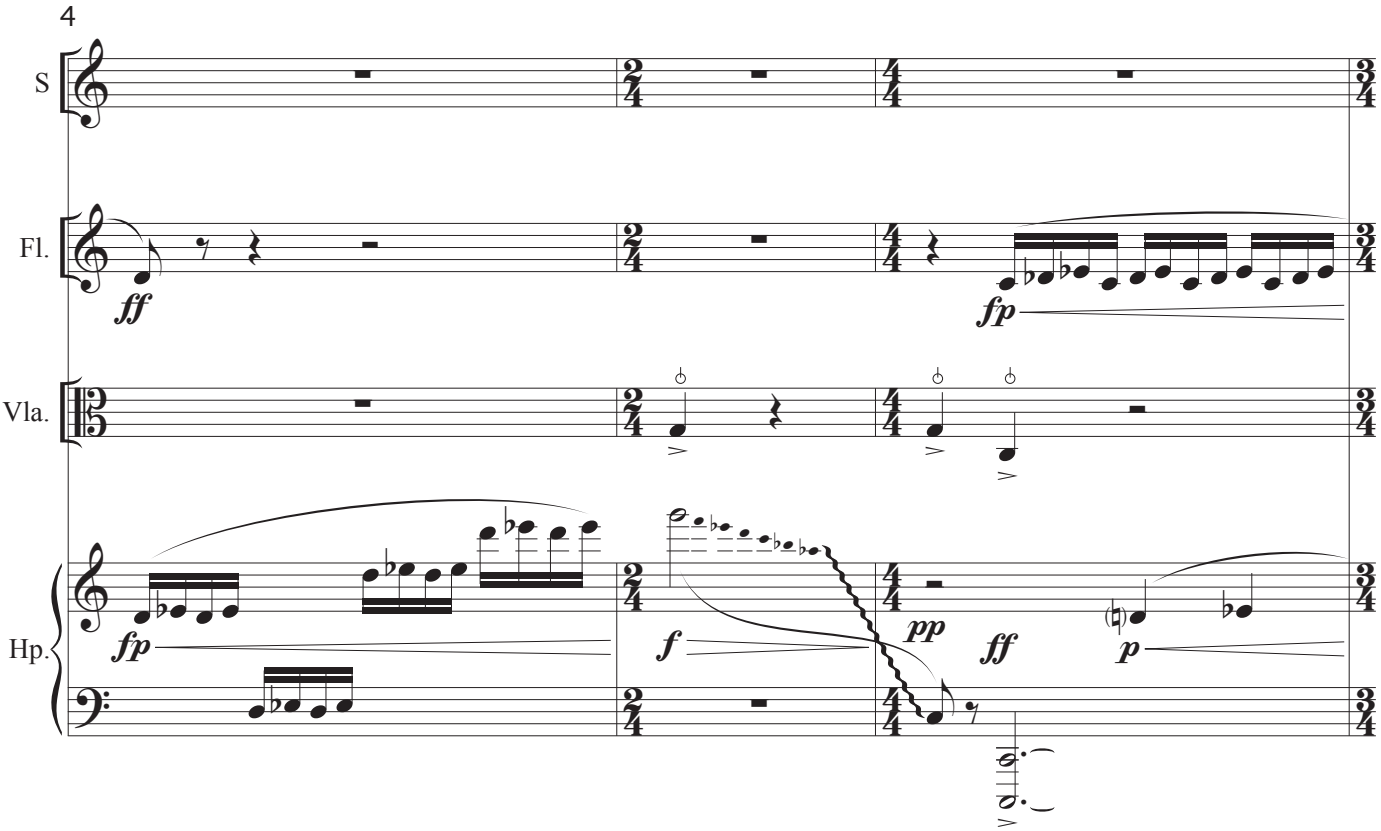

67
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
attacca

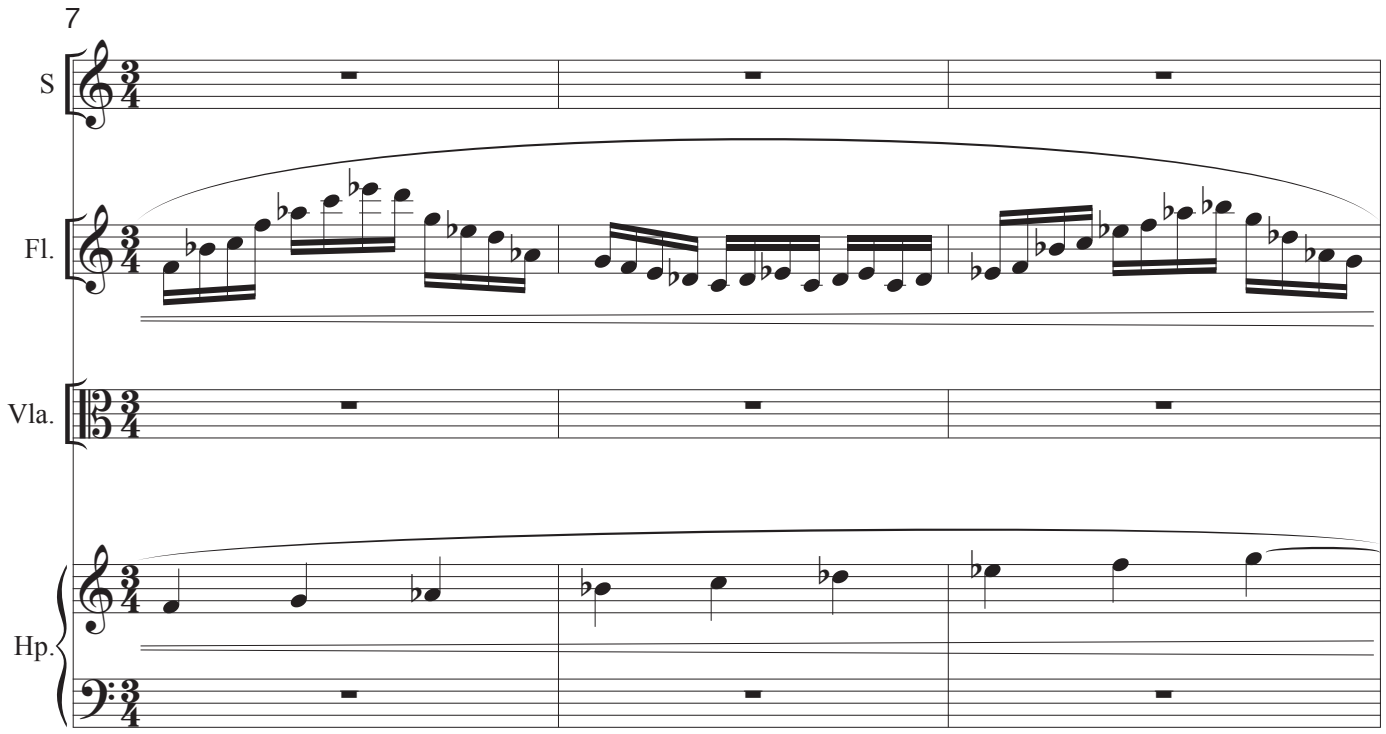
IV. Windtalkers

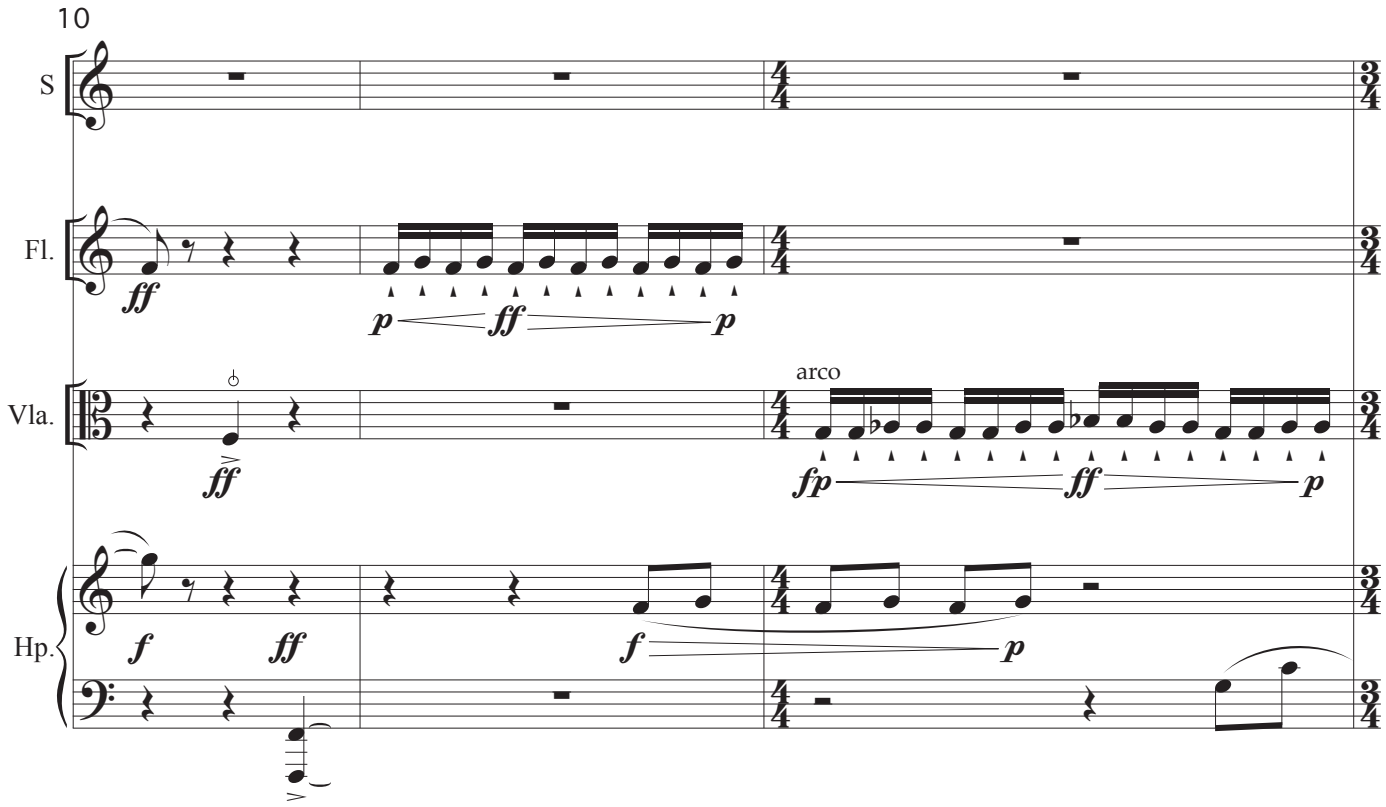
after Sarah Teasdale

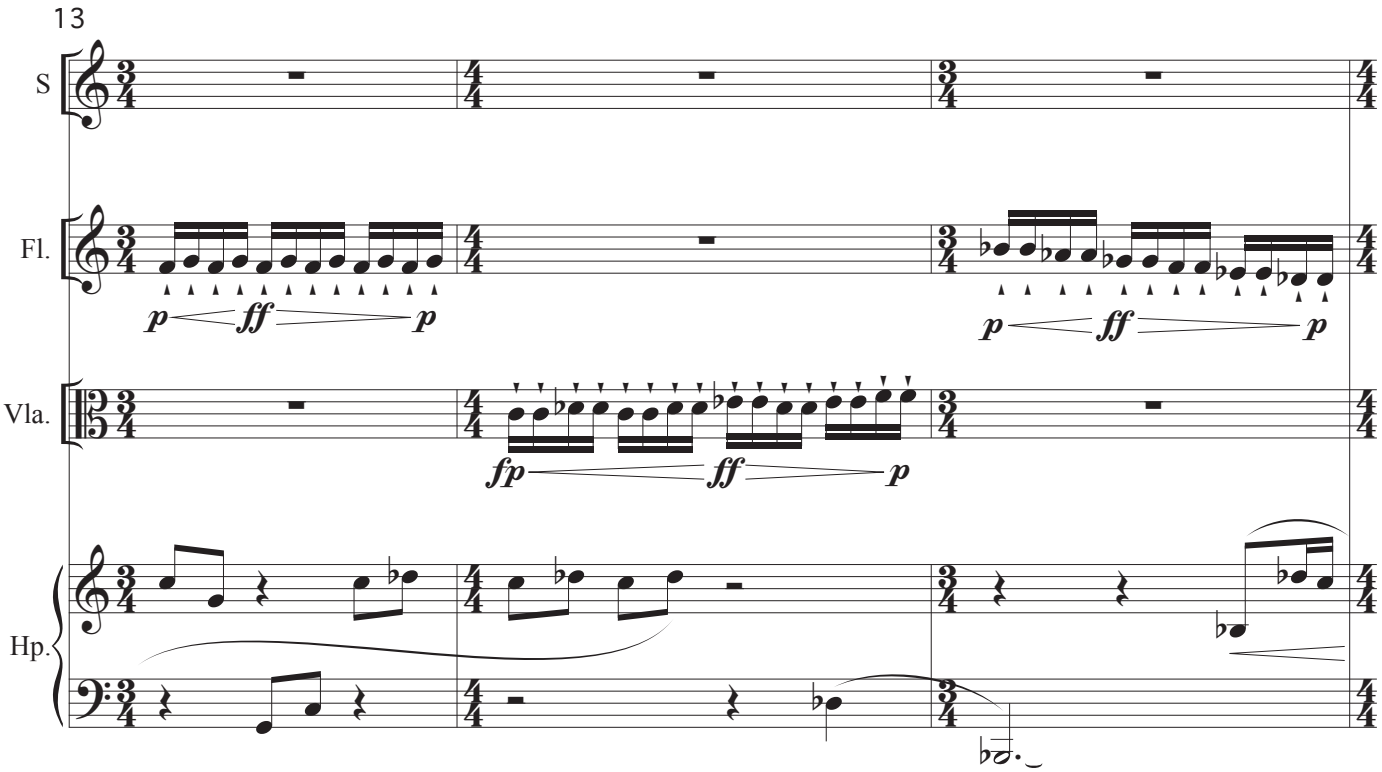
Wispy; fast-moving particulate (♩ = c. *154 - 168*)

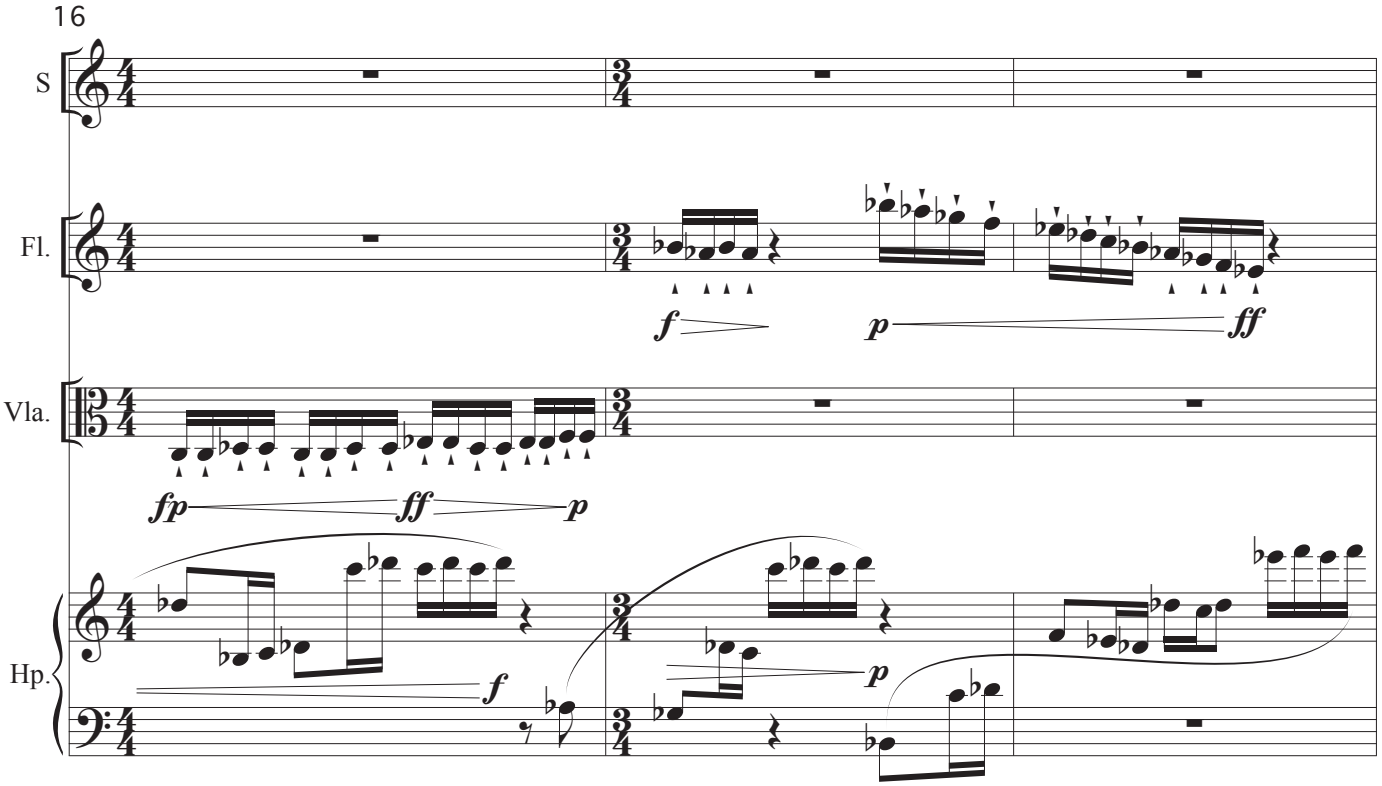


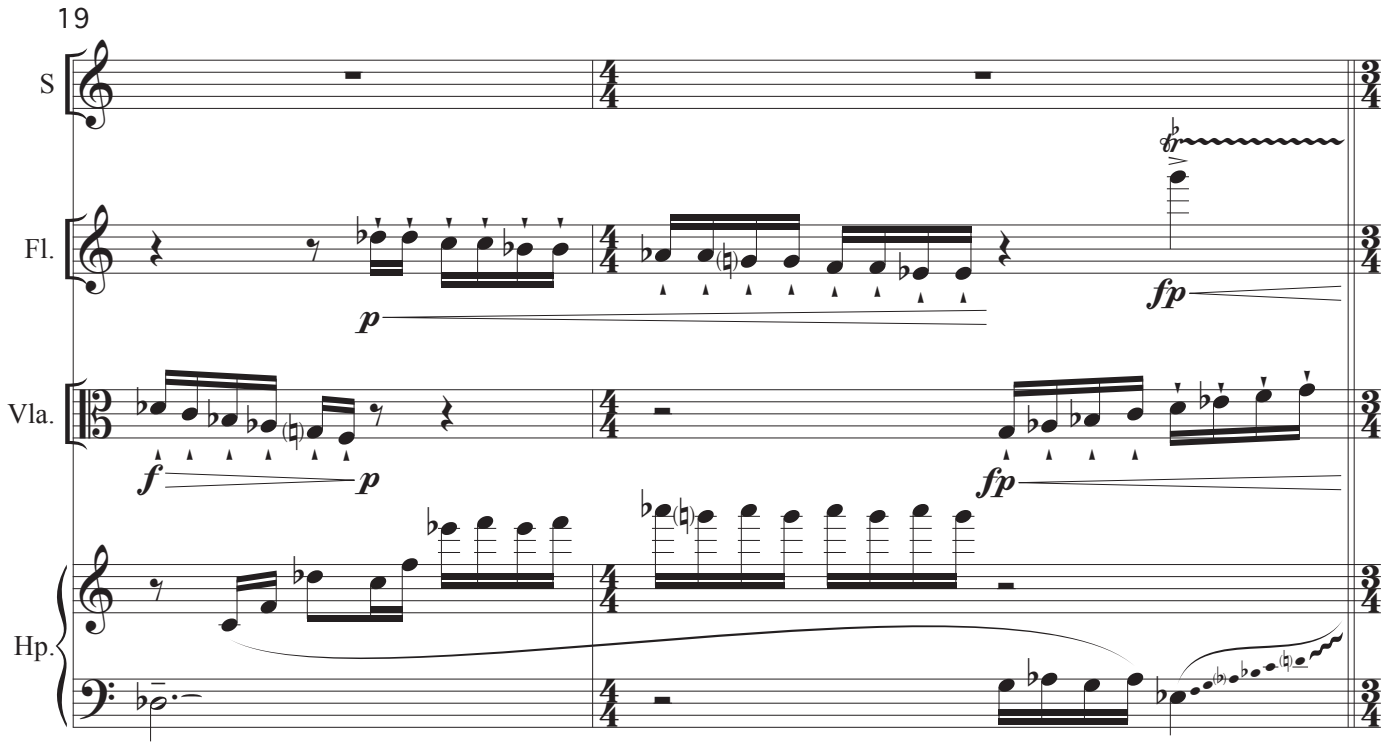


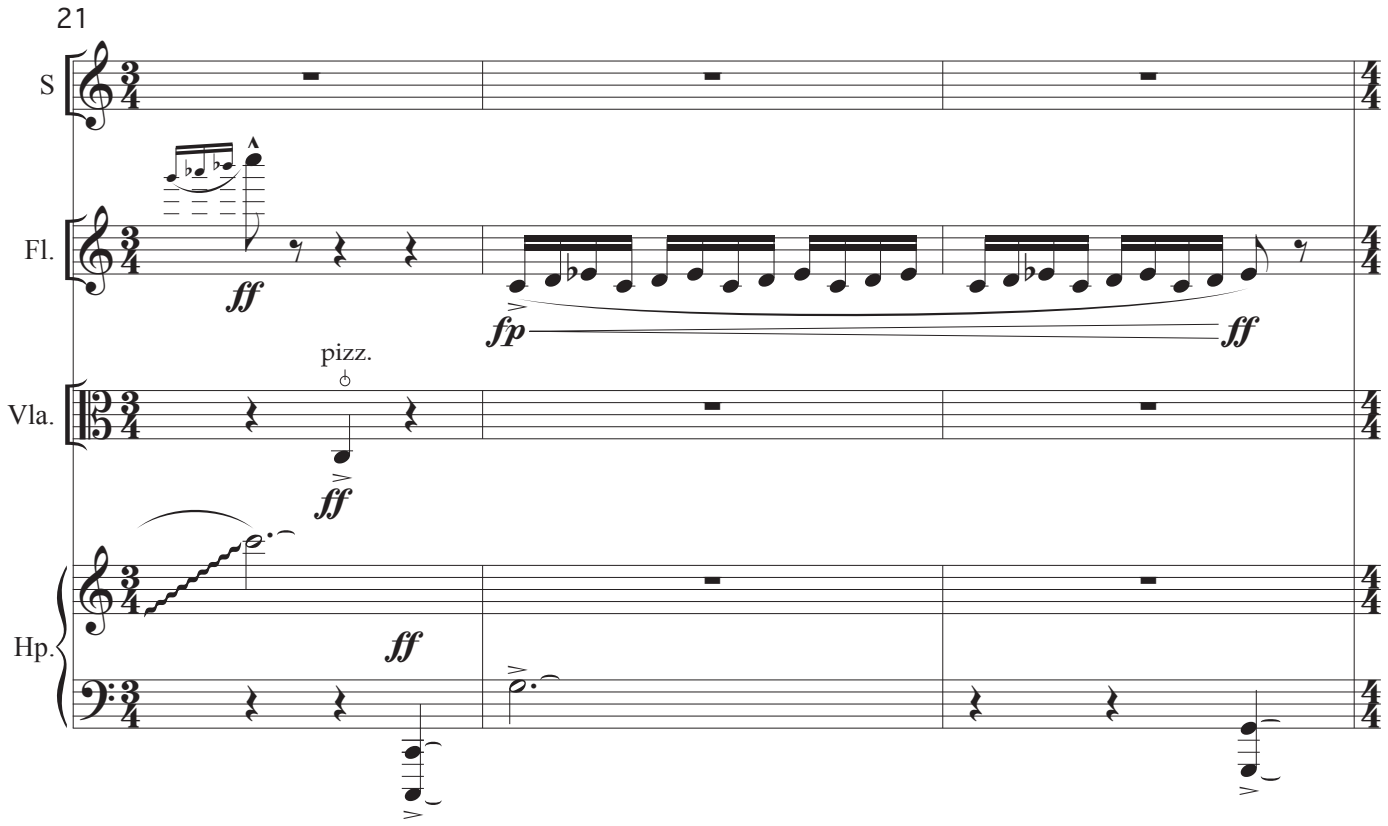

7
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.

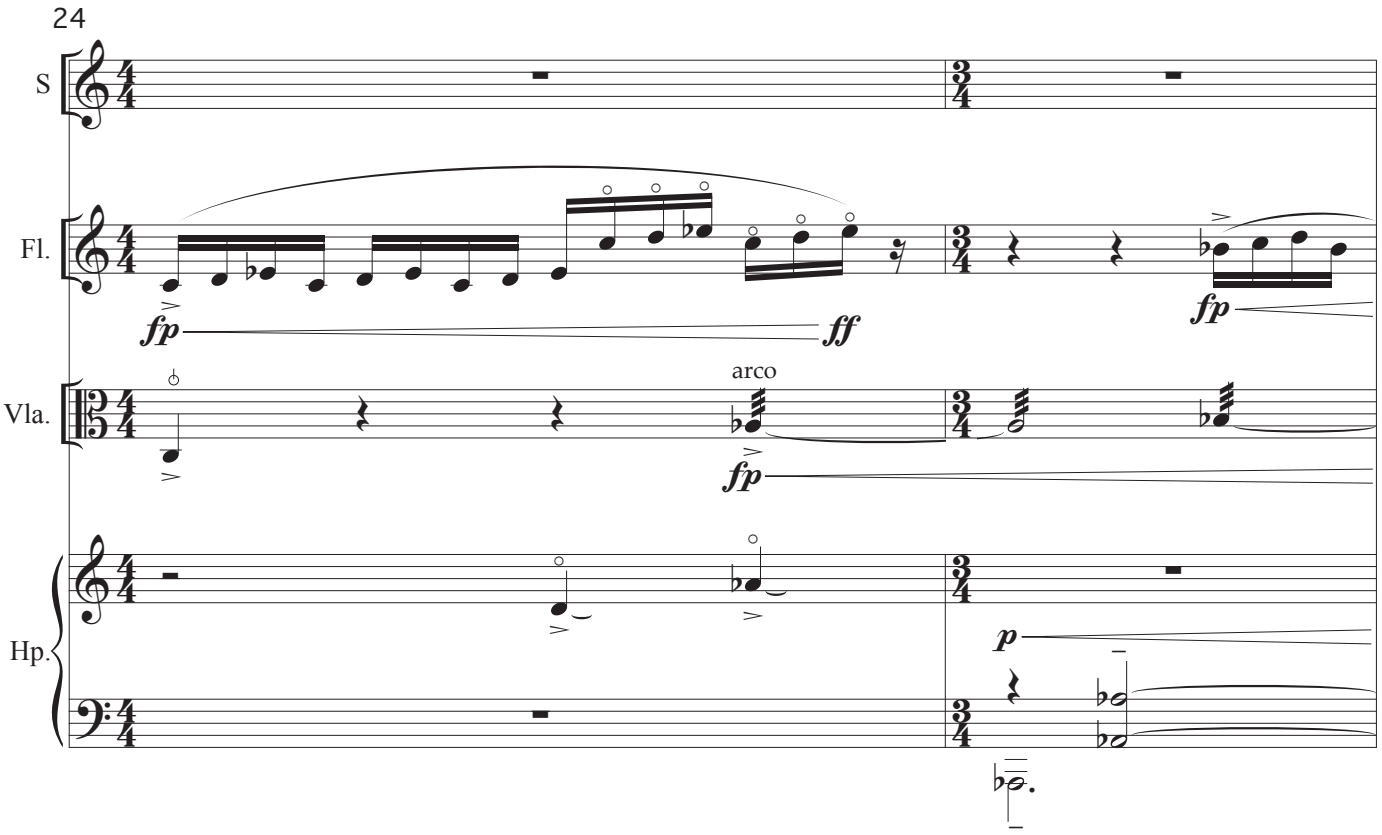

10
S
Fl.
ff
p
ff
p
Vla.
ff
arco
fp
ff
p
Hp.
f
ff
f
p

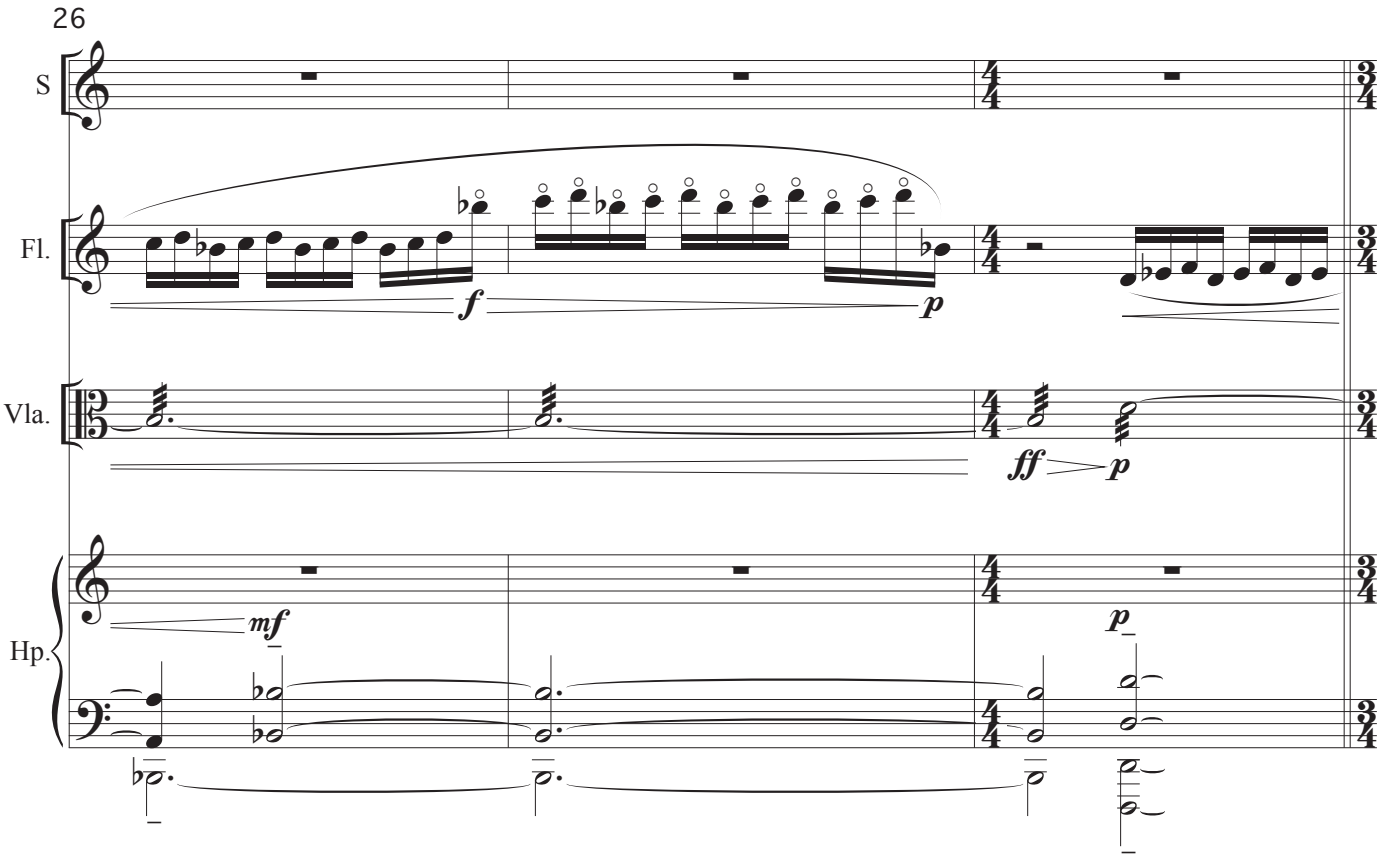

13
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
p ff p
p ff p
fp ff p

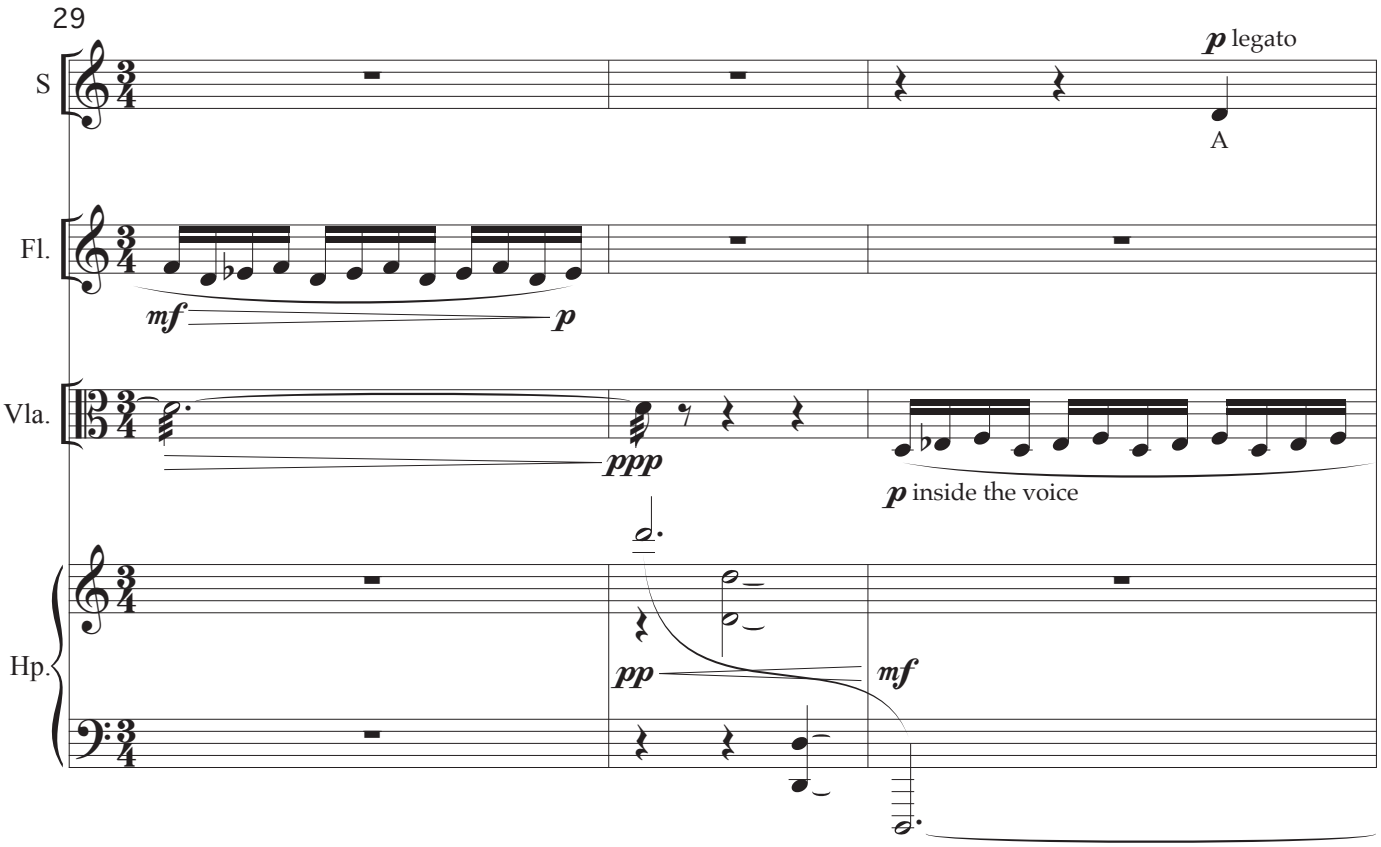

16
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
f
p ff
fp ff p
f
p

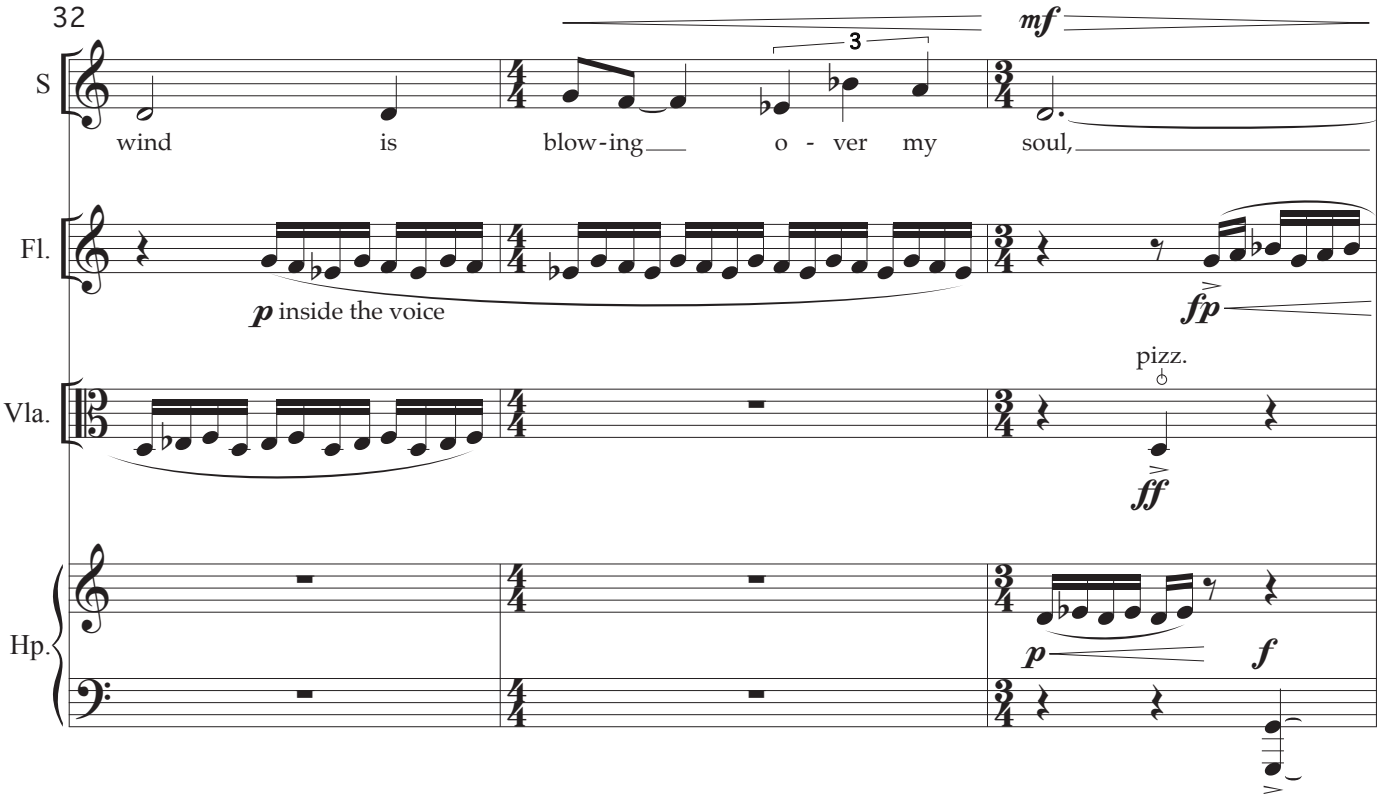

19
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
p
fp
f
p
fp

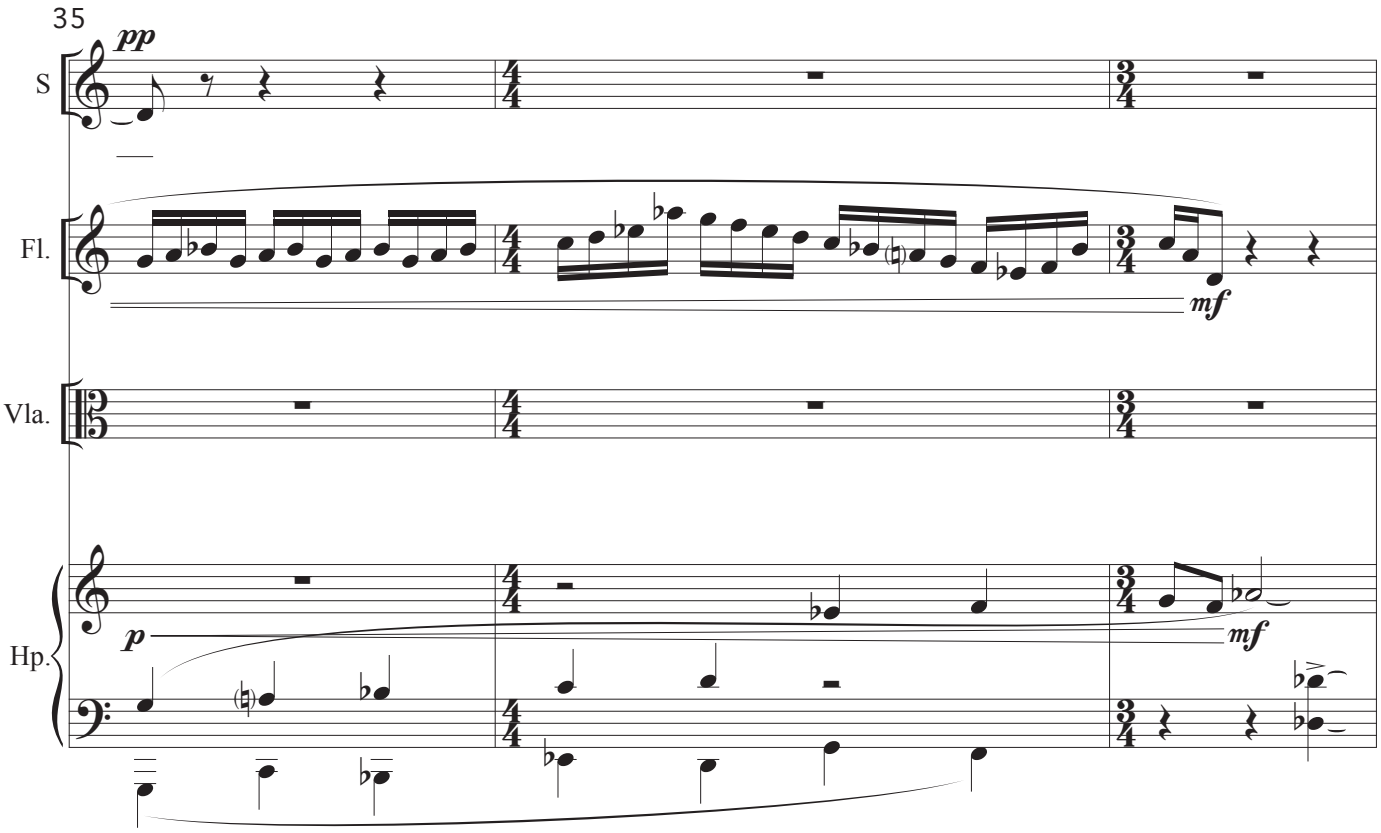

21
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
ff
fp
ff
pizz.
ff
ff

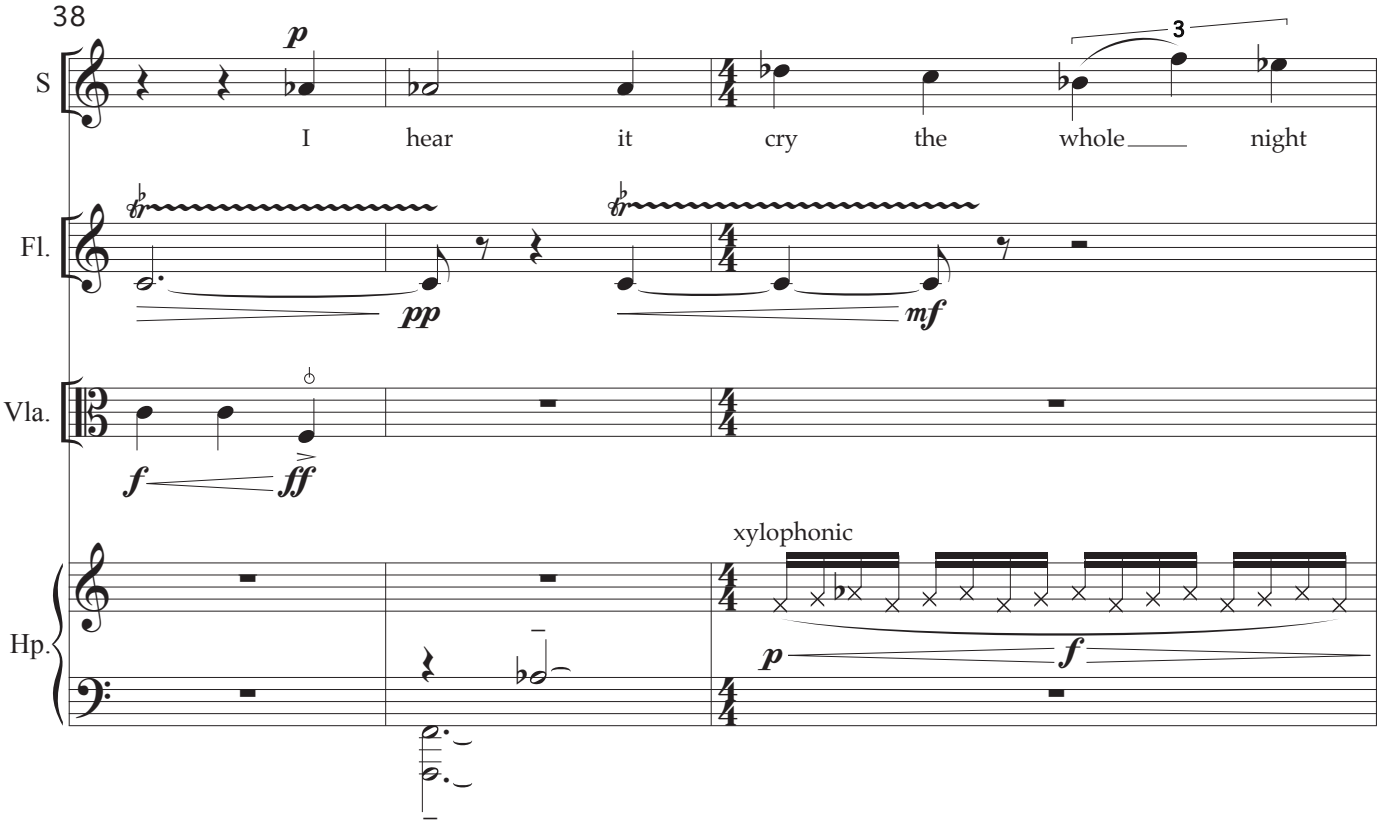

24
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
arco
fp
ff
fp
fp
p

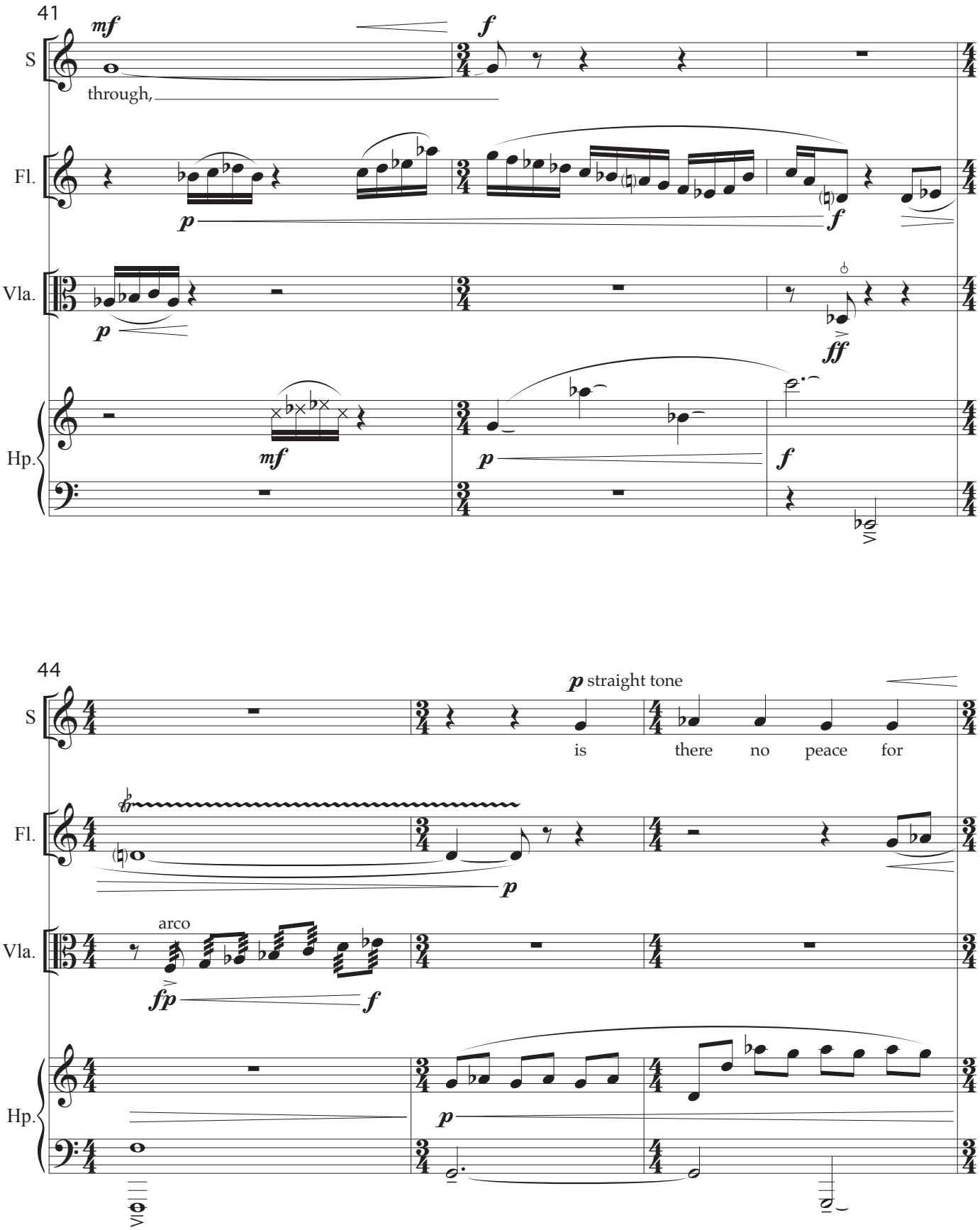

26
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
f
p
ff
p
mf
p

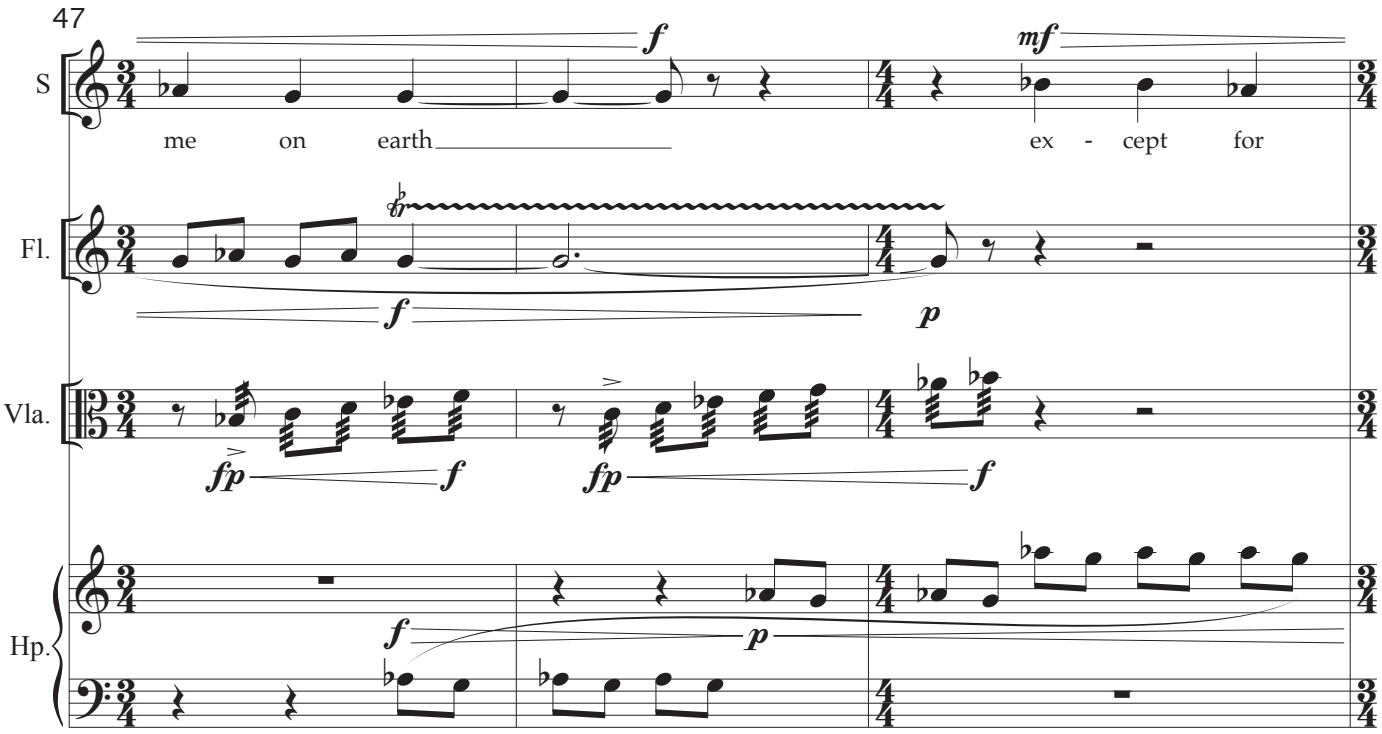

29
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
p legato
A
mf
p
ppp
p inside the voice
pp
mf

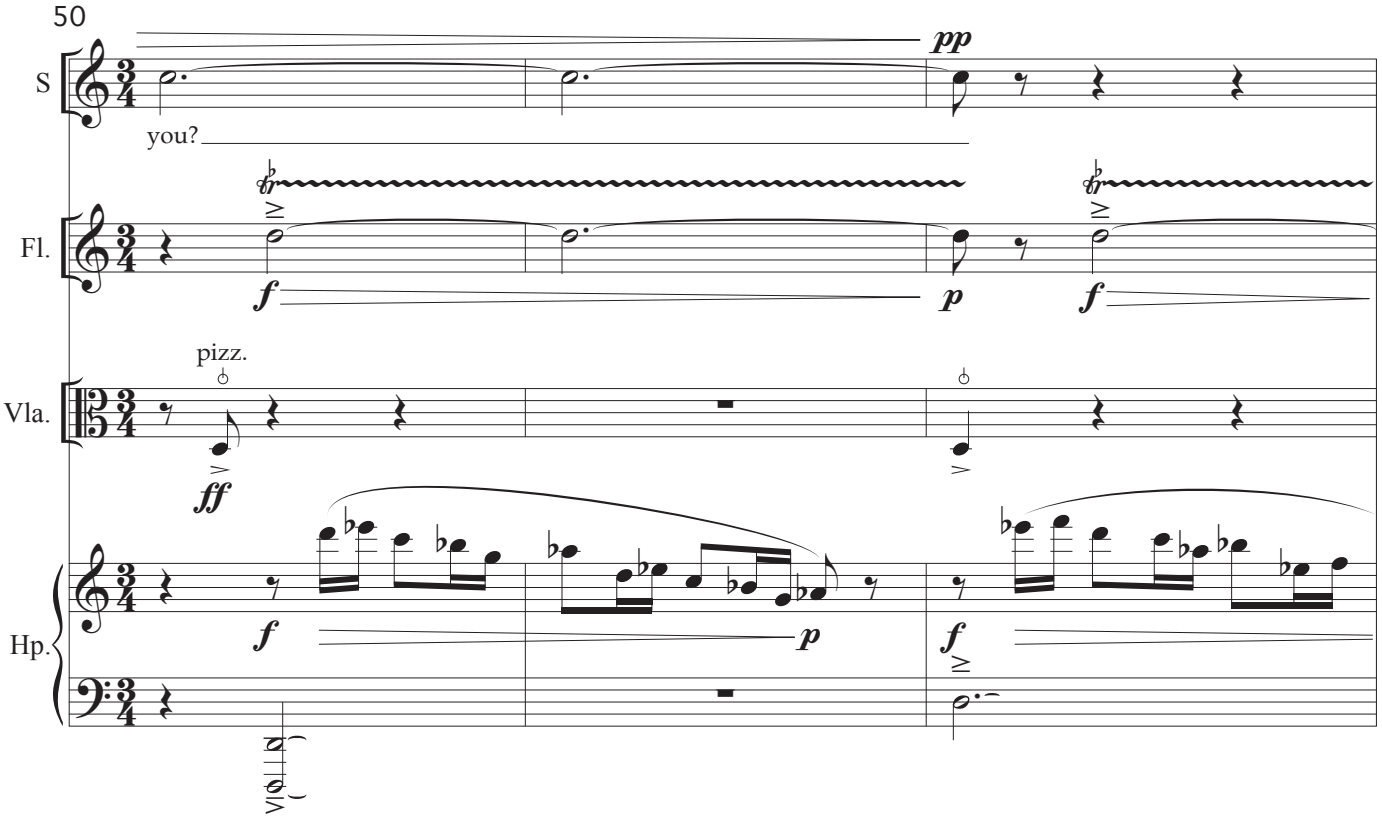

32
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
mf
3
wind is blow-ing o - ver my soul,
p inside the voice
fp
pizz.
ff
p
f

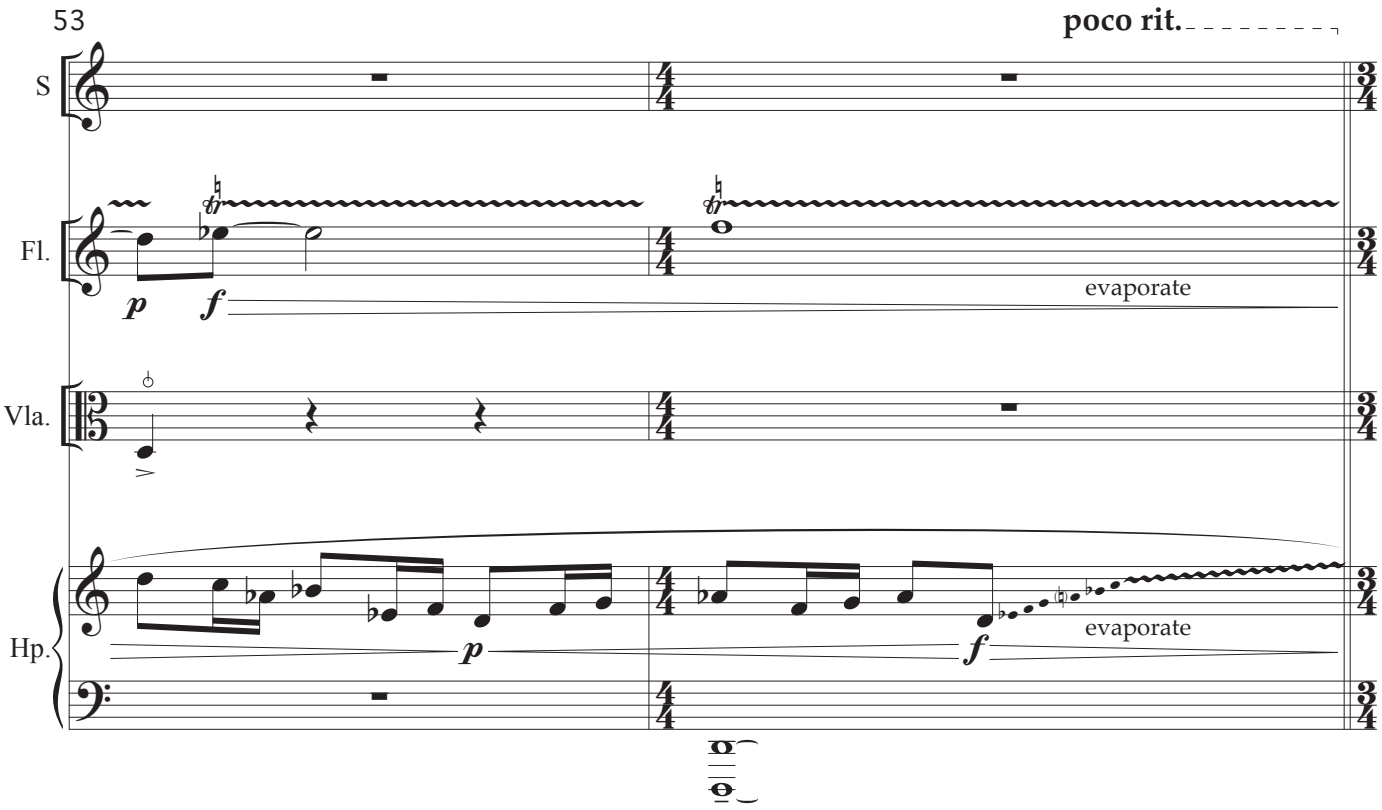

35
pp
S
Fl.
mf
Vla.
Hp.
p
mf

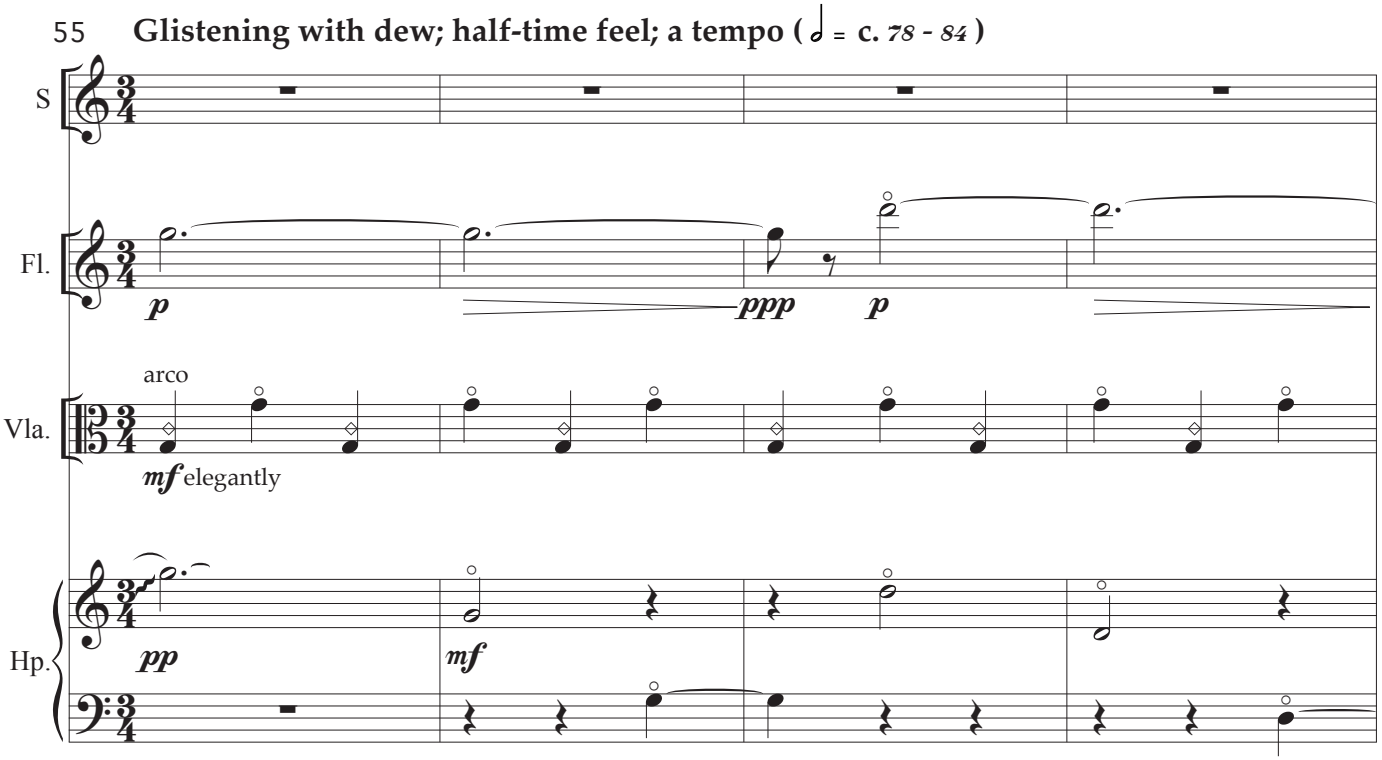

38
p
S
3
I hear it cry the whole night
Fl.
pp
mf
Vla.
f
ff
xylophonic
Hp.
p
f

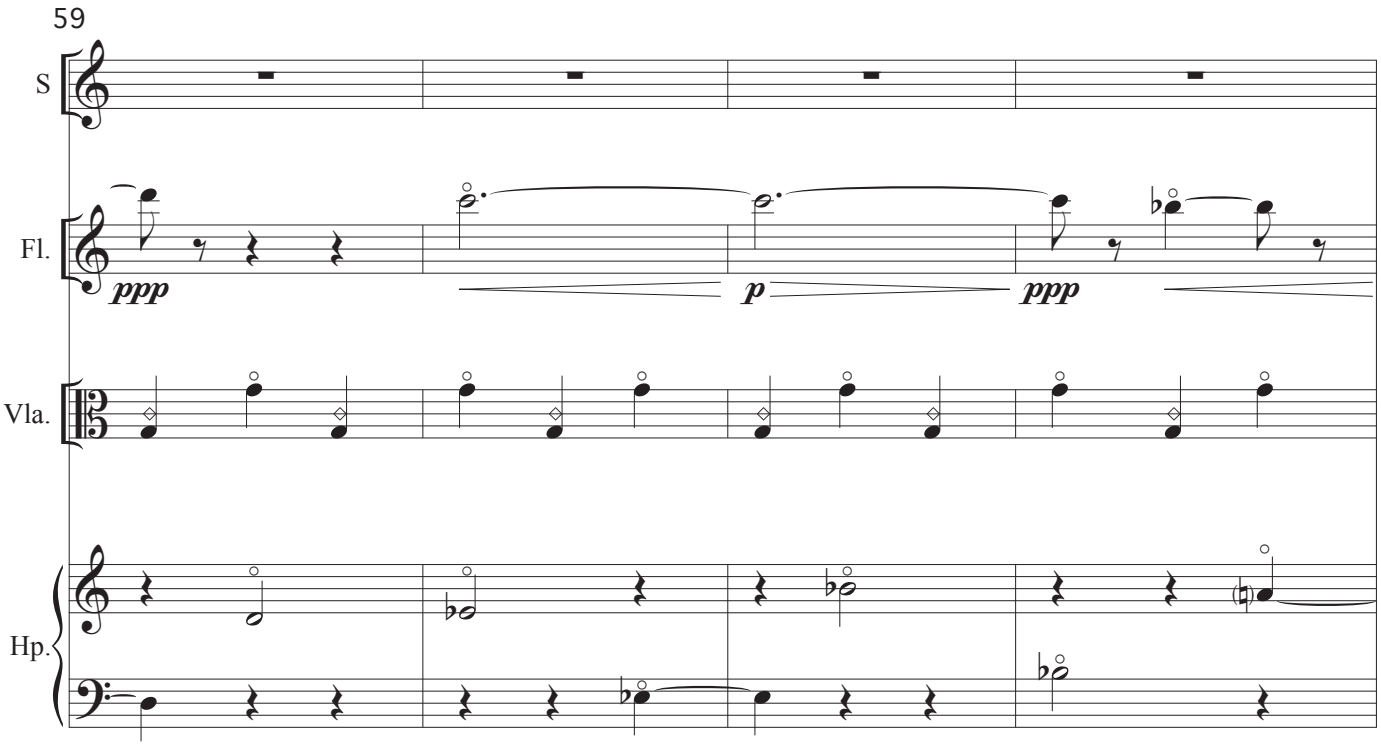

41
S
mf
f
through,
Fl.
p
f
Vla.
p
ff
Hp.
mf
p
f
44
S
p straight tone
is there no peace for
Fl.
p
Vla.
arco
fp
f
Hp.
p

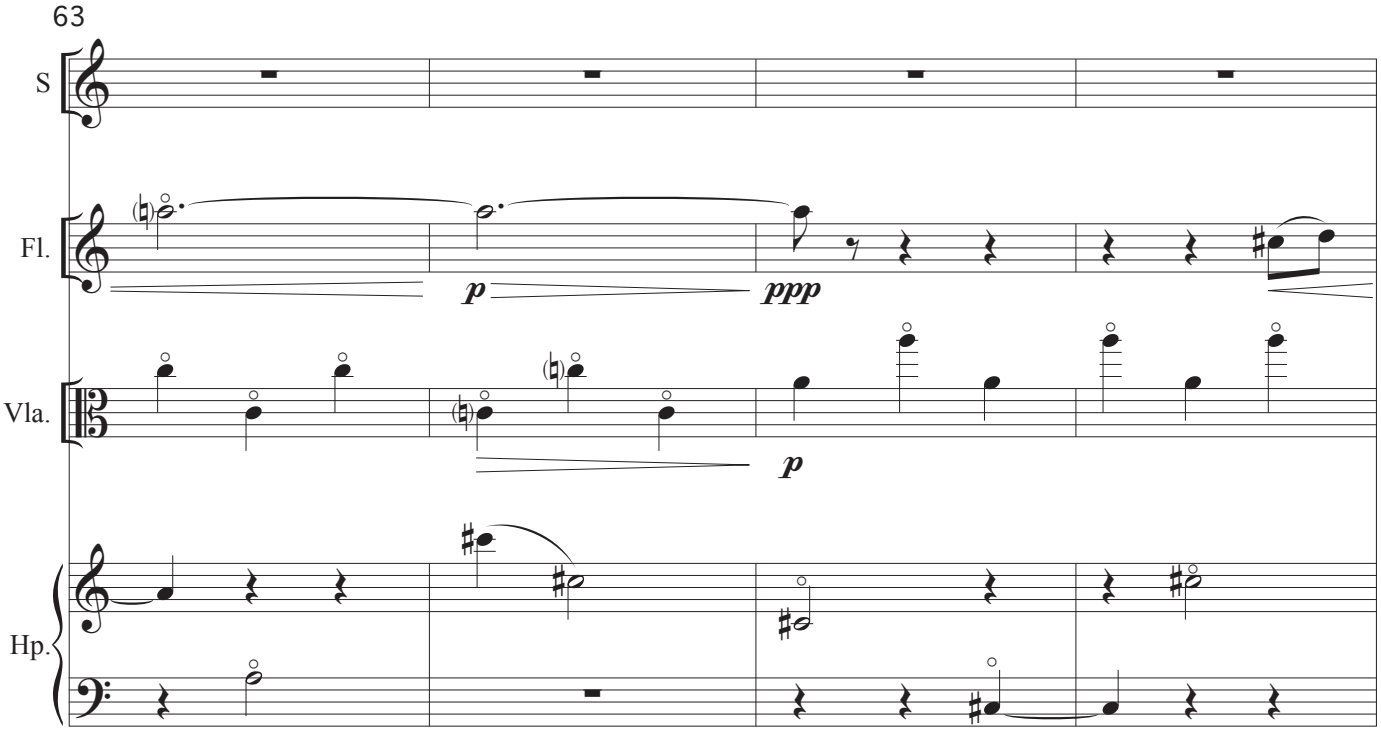

47
S
me on earth
ex - cept for
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.

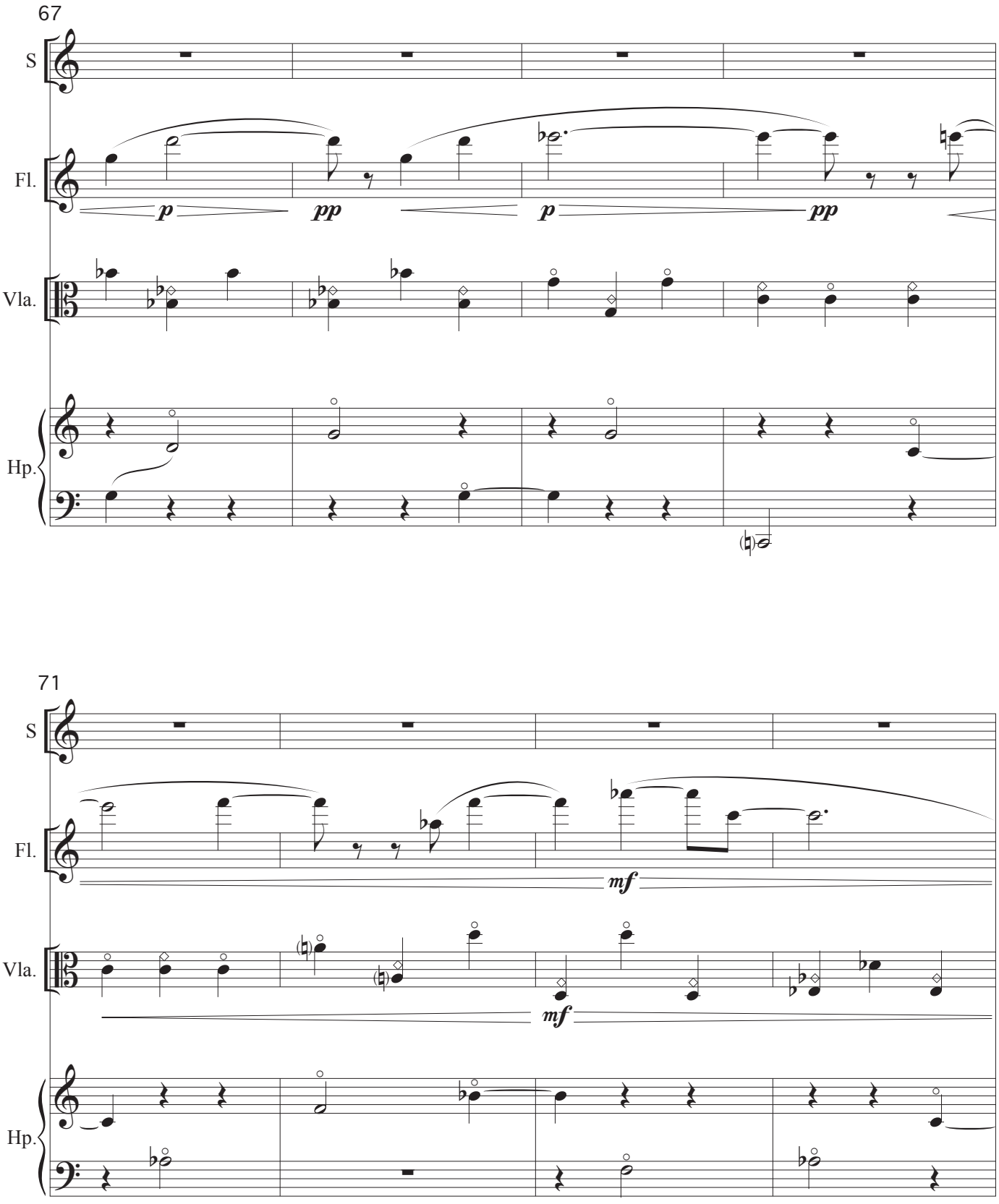

50
S
you?
Fl.
Vla.
pizz.
Hp.

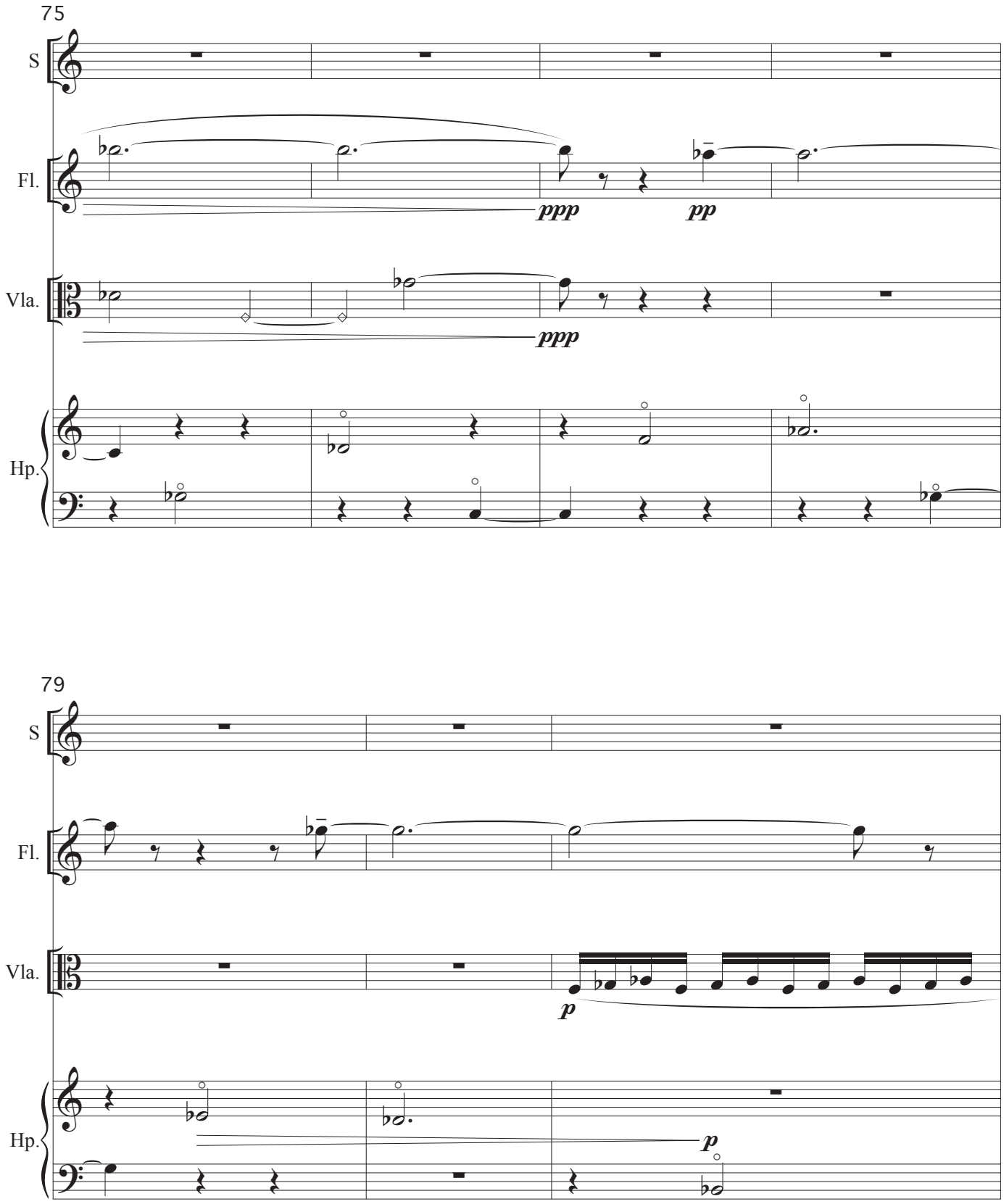

53
poco rit.
S
Fl.
p
f
evaporate
Vla.
Hp.
p
f
evaporate

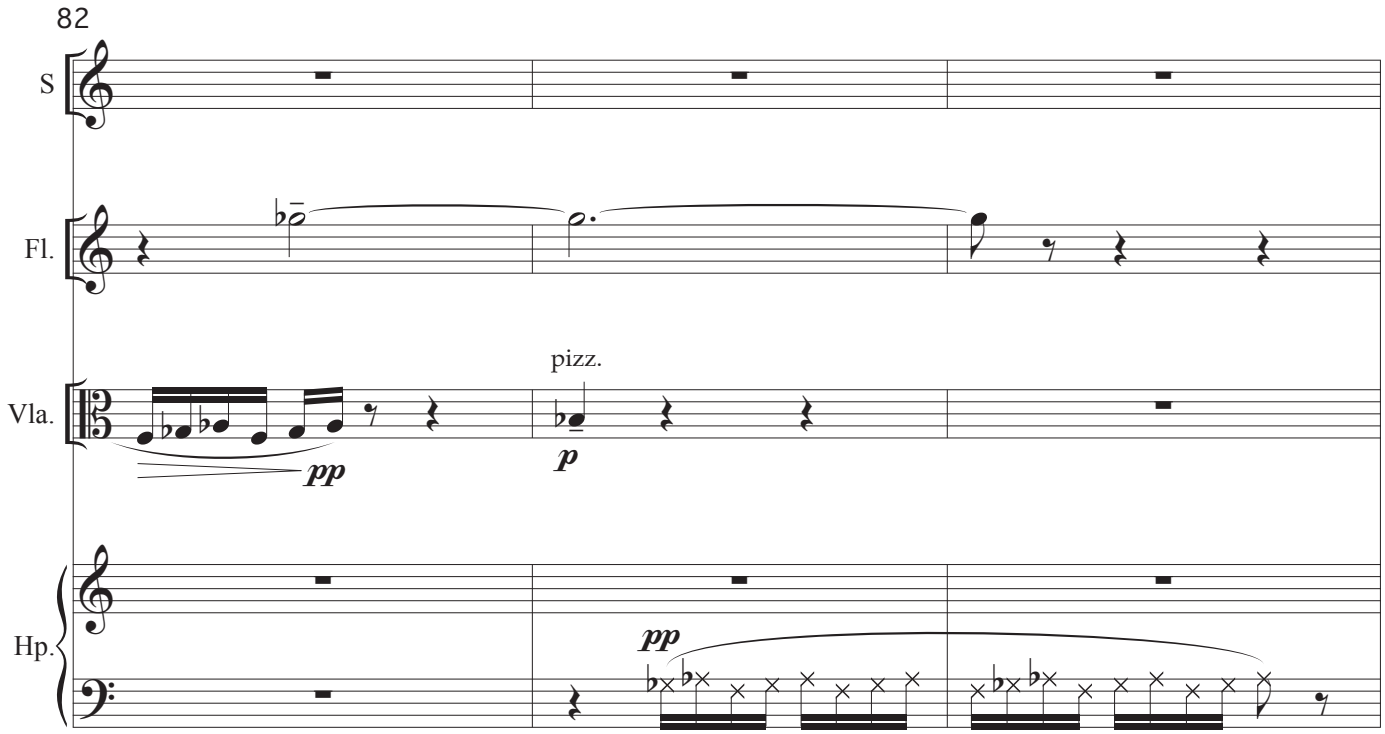

55 Glistening with dew; half-time feel; a tempo (= c. 78 - 84)
S
Fl.
p
ppp
p
arco
Vla.
mf elegantly
Hp.
pp
mf

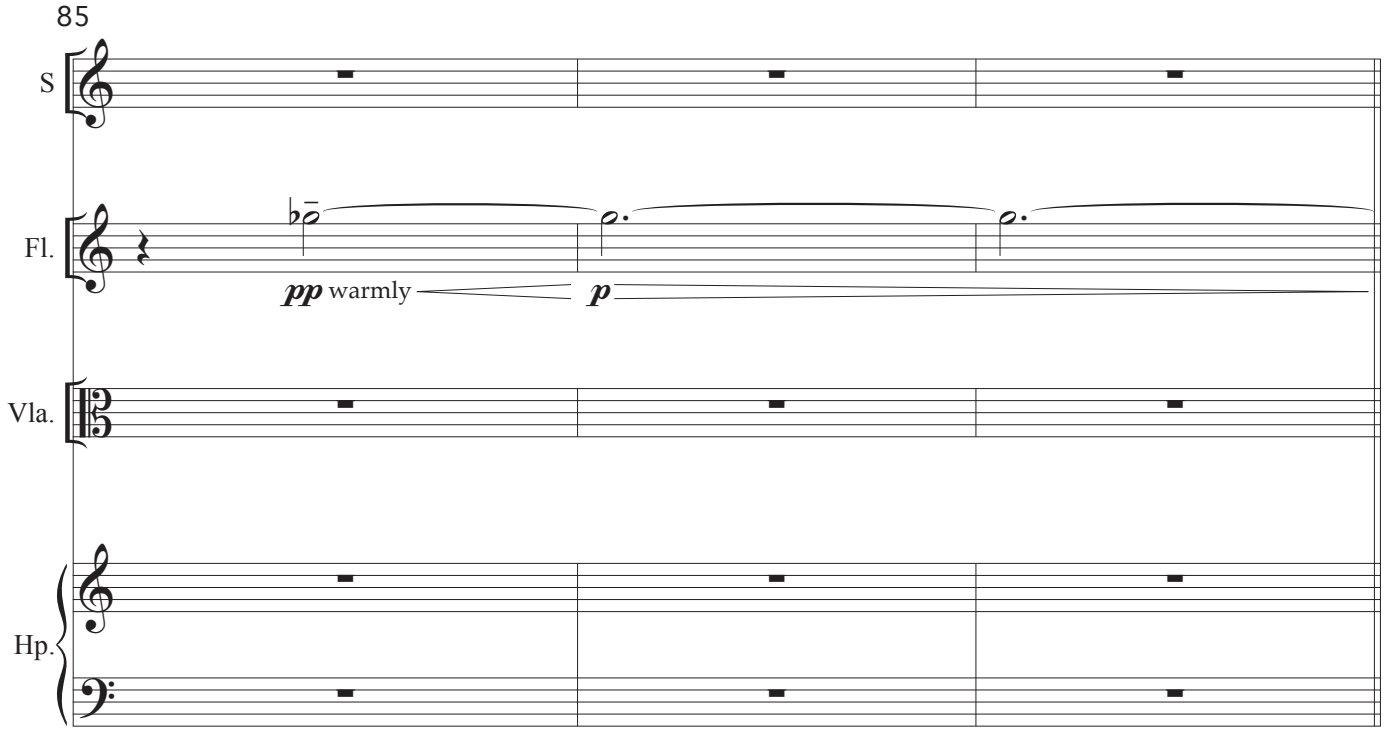

59
S
Fl.
ppp
p
ppp
Vla.
Hp.

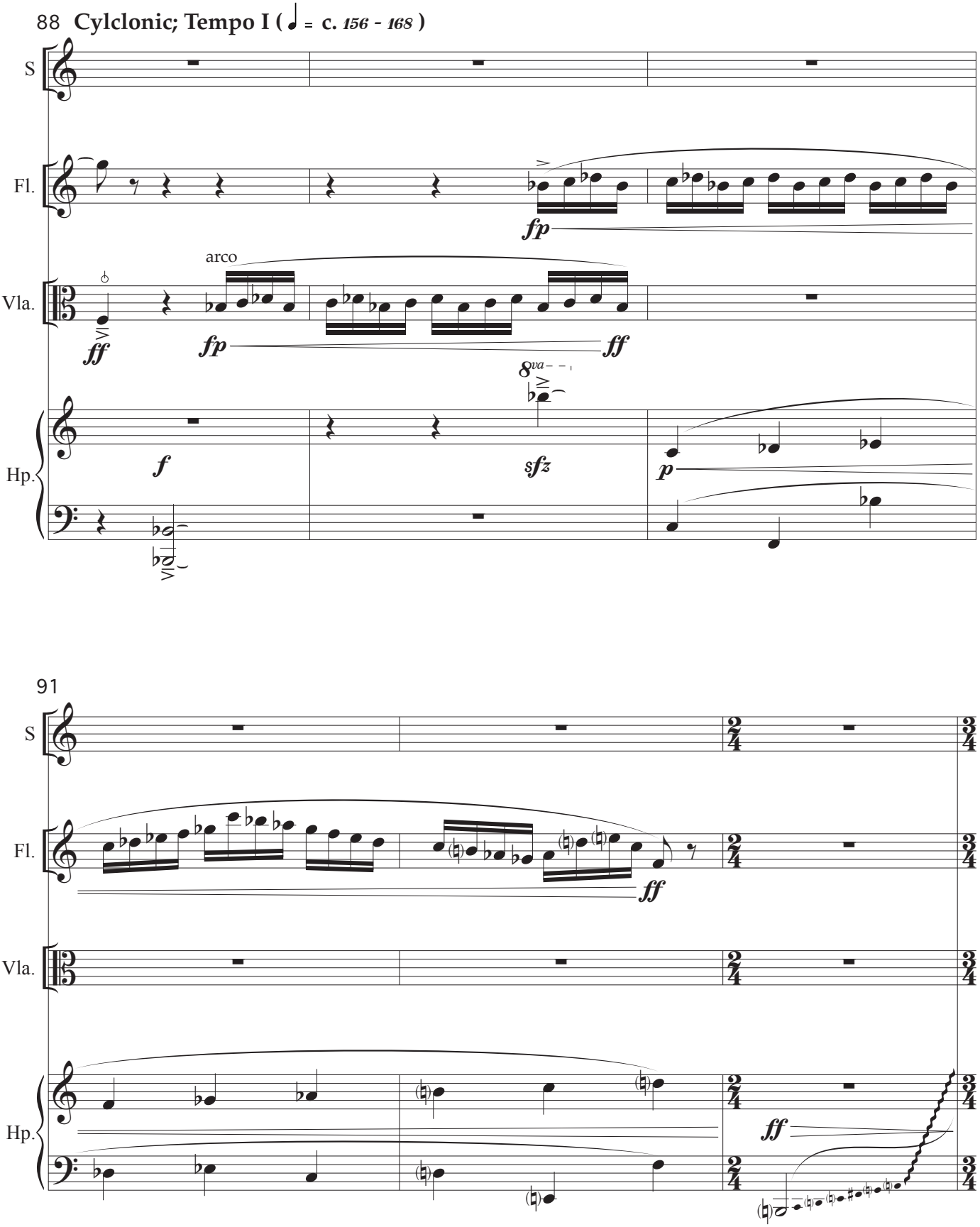

63
S
Fl.
p
ppp
Vla.
p
Hp.

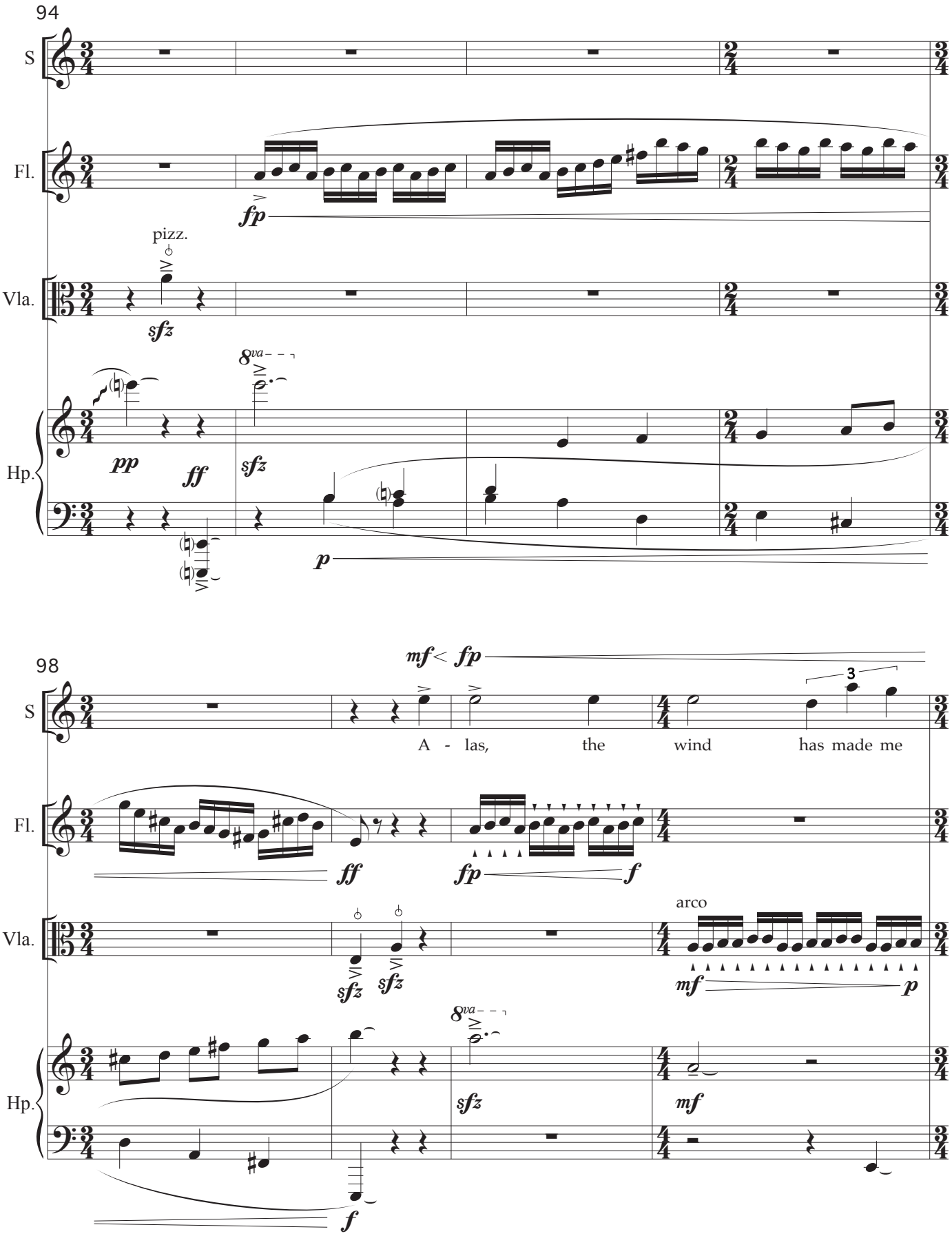

67
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
p
pp
p
pp
71
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
mf
mf

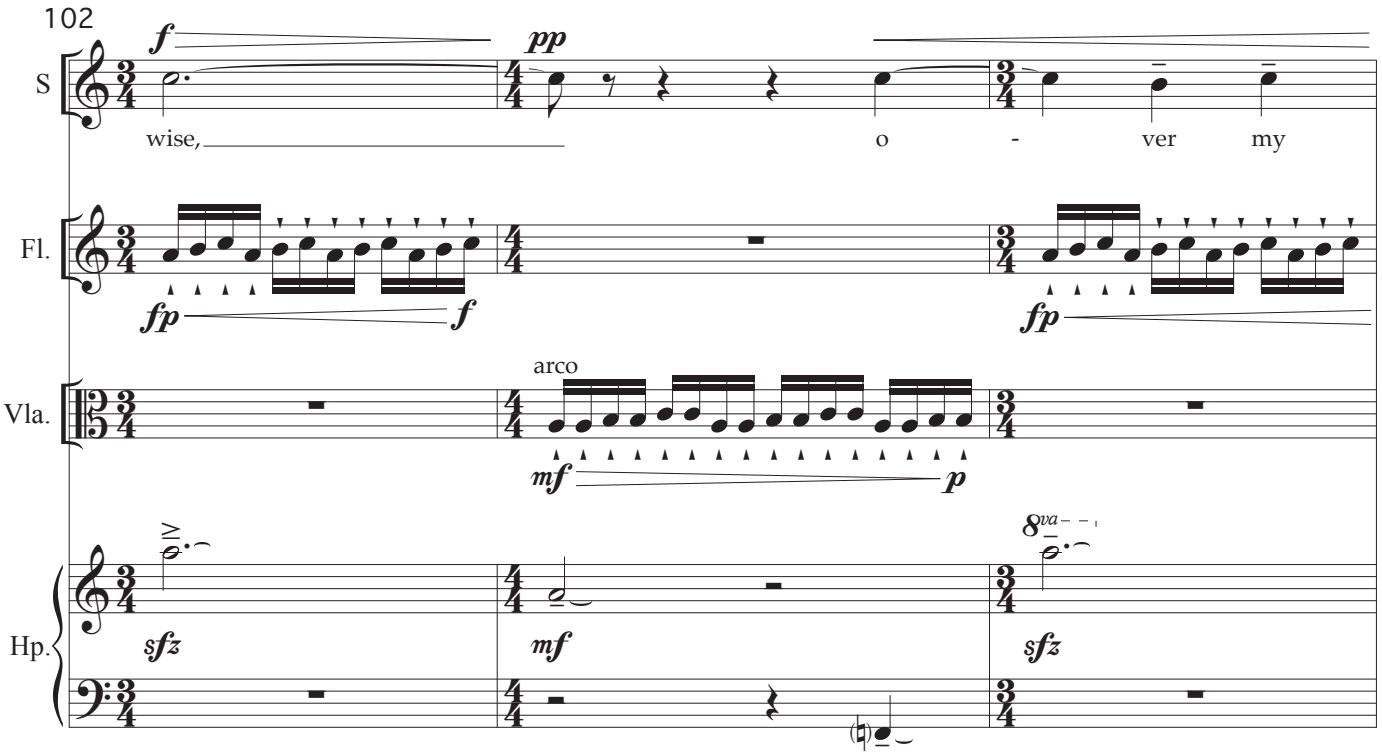

75
S
Fl.
ppp
pp
Vla.
ppp
Hp.
79
S
Fl.
Vla.
p
Hp.
p

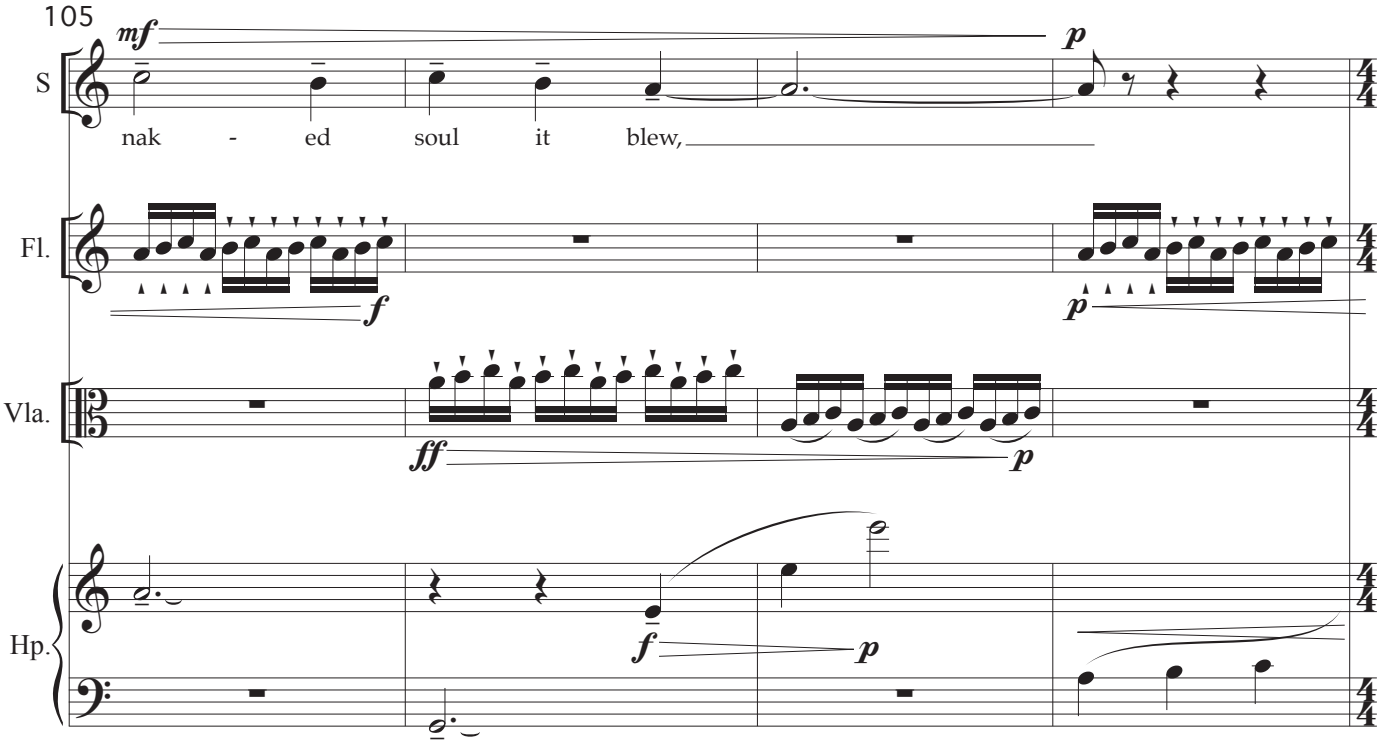

82
S
Fl.
Vla.
pizz.
pp
p
Hp.
pp

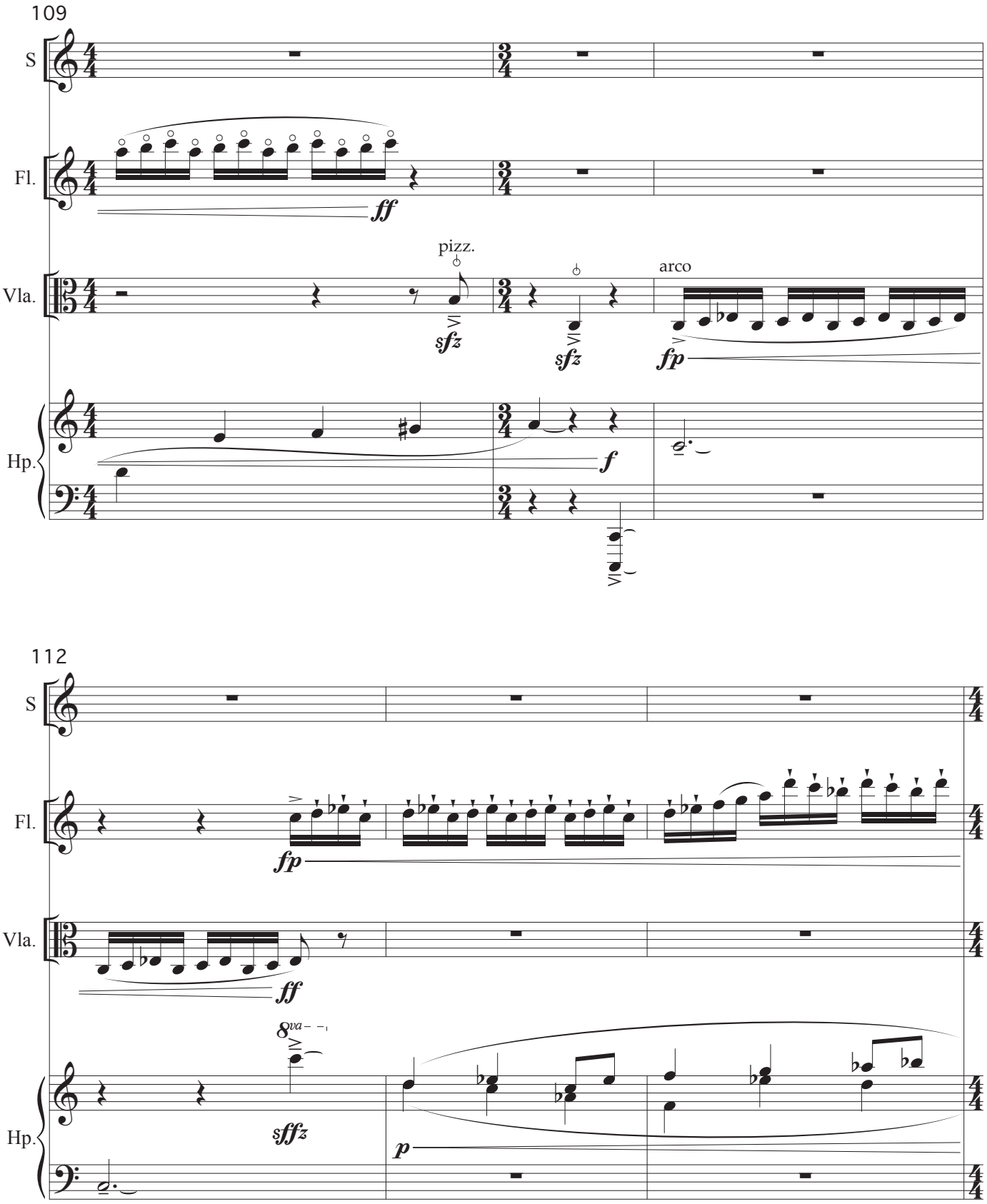

85
S
Fl.
pp warmly
p
Vla.
Hp.

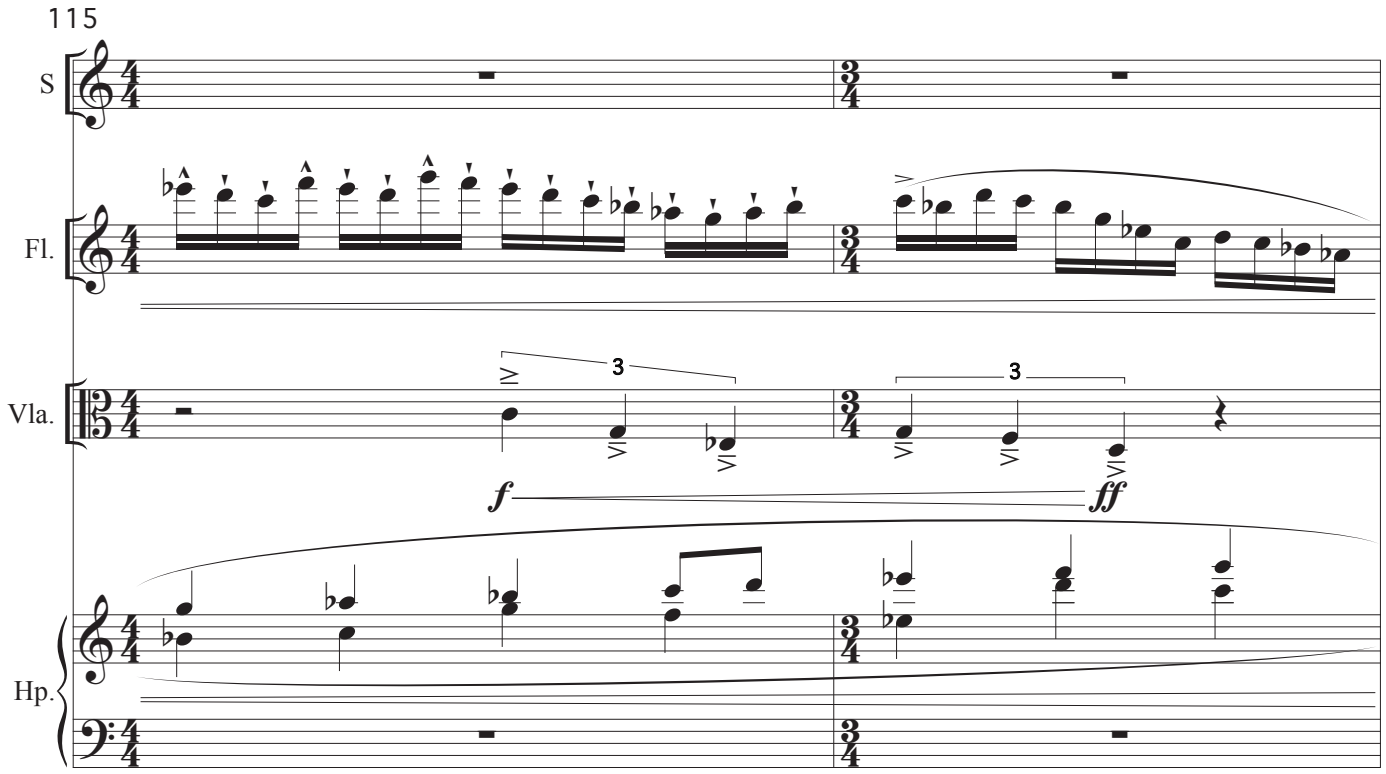

88 Cylclonic; Tempo I (= c. 156 - 168)
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
arco
fp
ff
fp
ff
8va
f
sfz
p
91
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
ff
ff

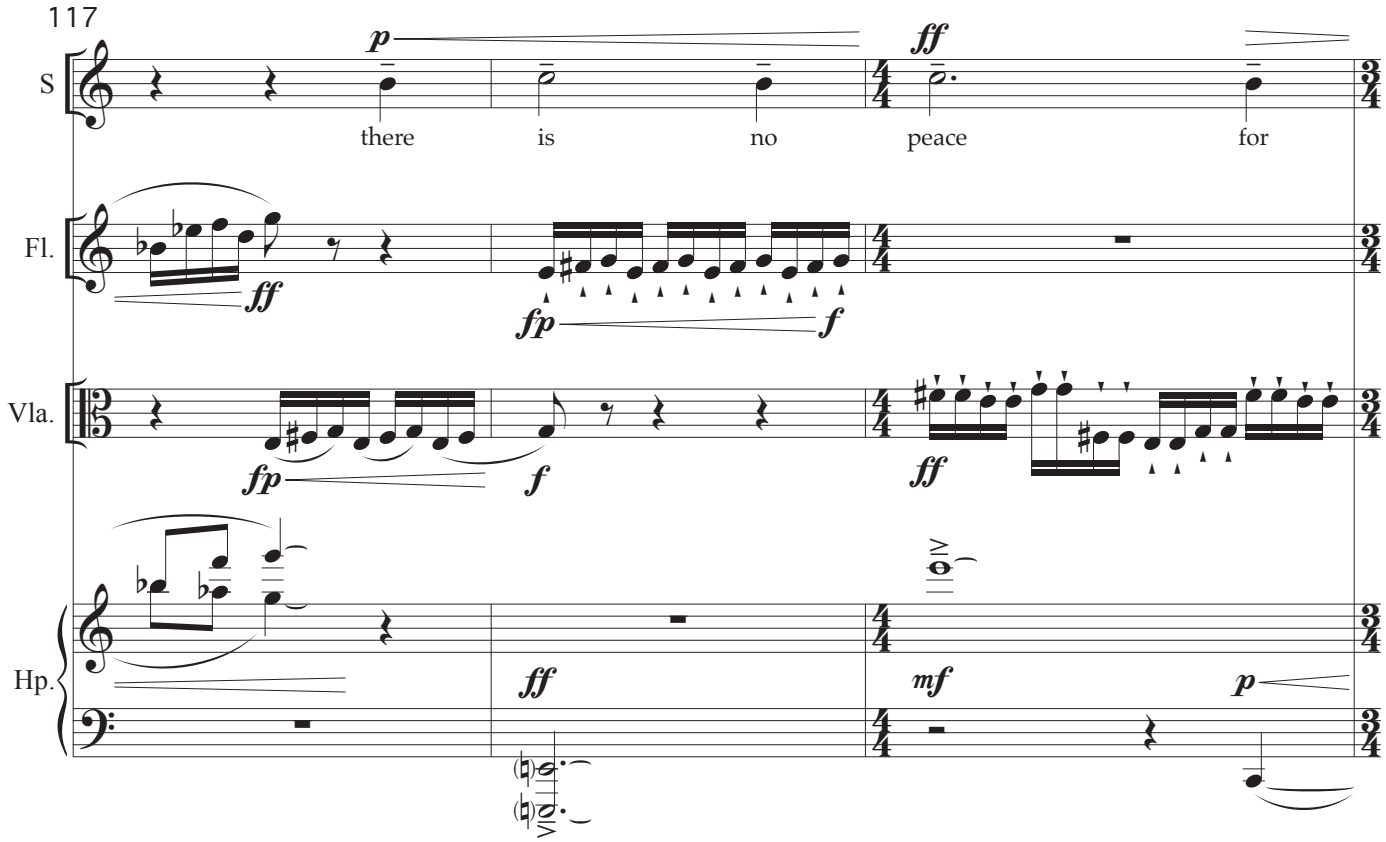

94
S
Fl.
fp
pizz.
Vla.
sfz
8va
Hp.
pp
ff
sfz
p
98
mf < fp
S
A - las, the wind has made me
3
Fl.
ff
fp
f
Vla.
sfz
sfz
arco
mf
p
8va
Hp.
sfz
mf
f

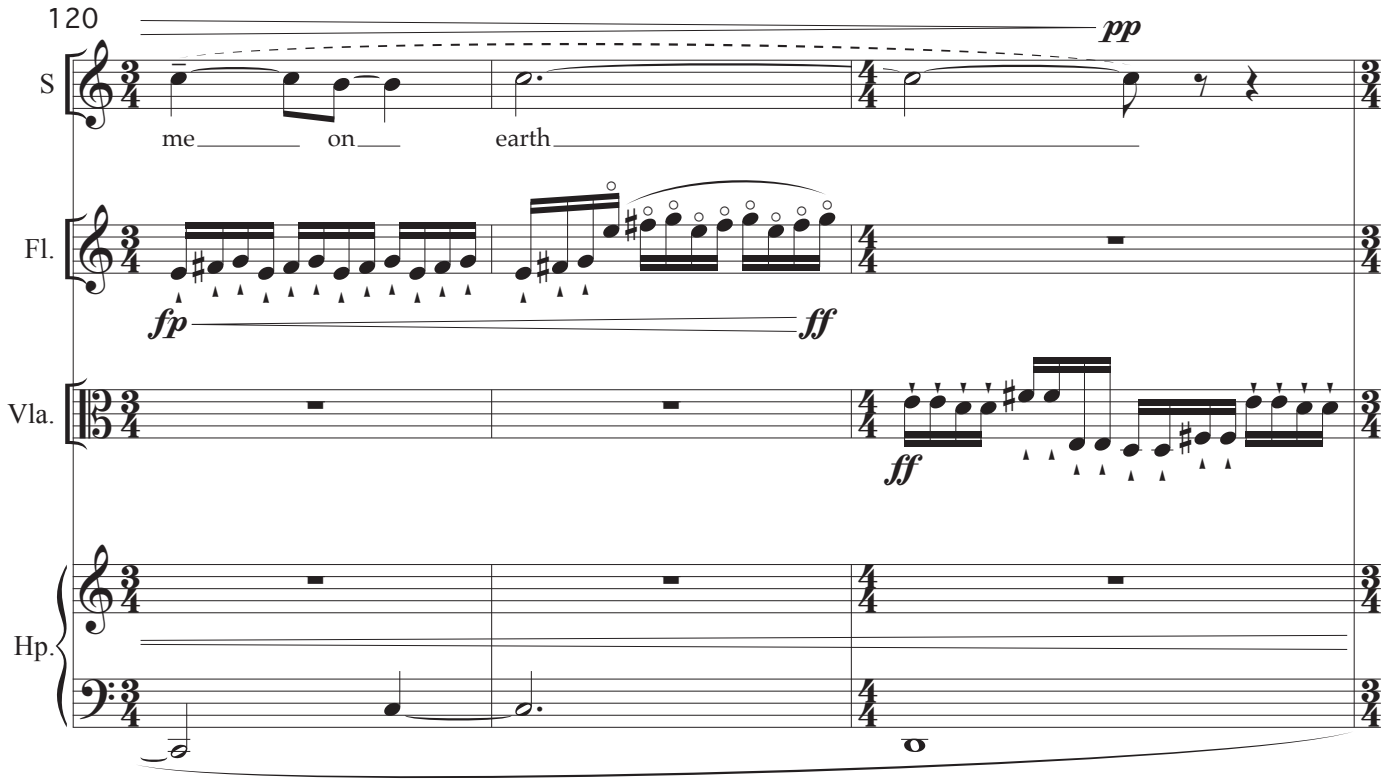

102
S
wise,
o - ver my
Fl.
Vla.
arco
Hp.
8va

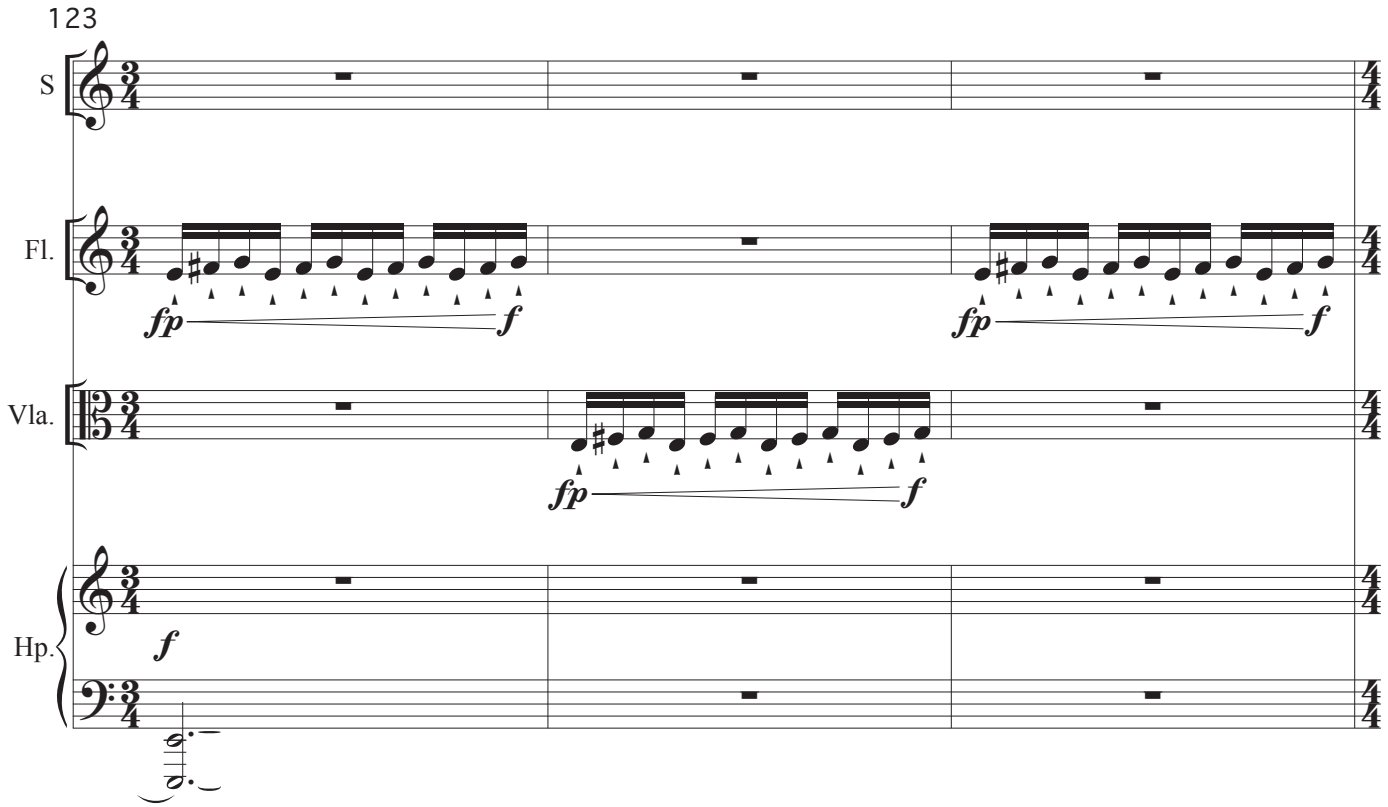

105
S
nak - ed soul it blew,
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.

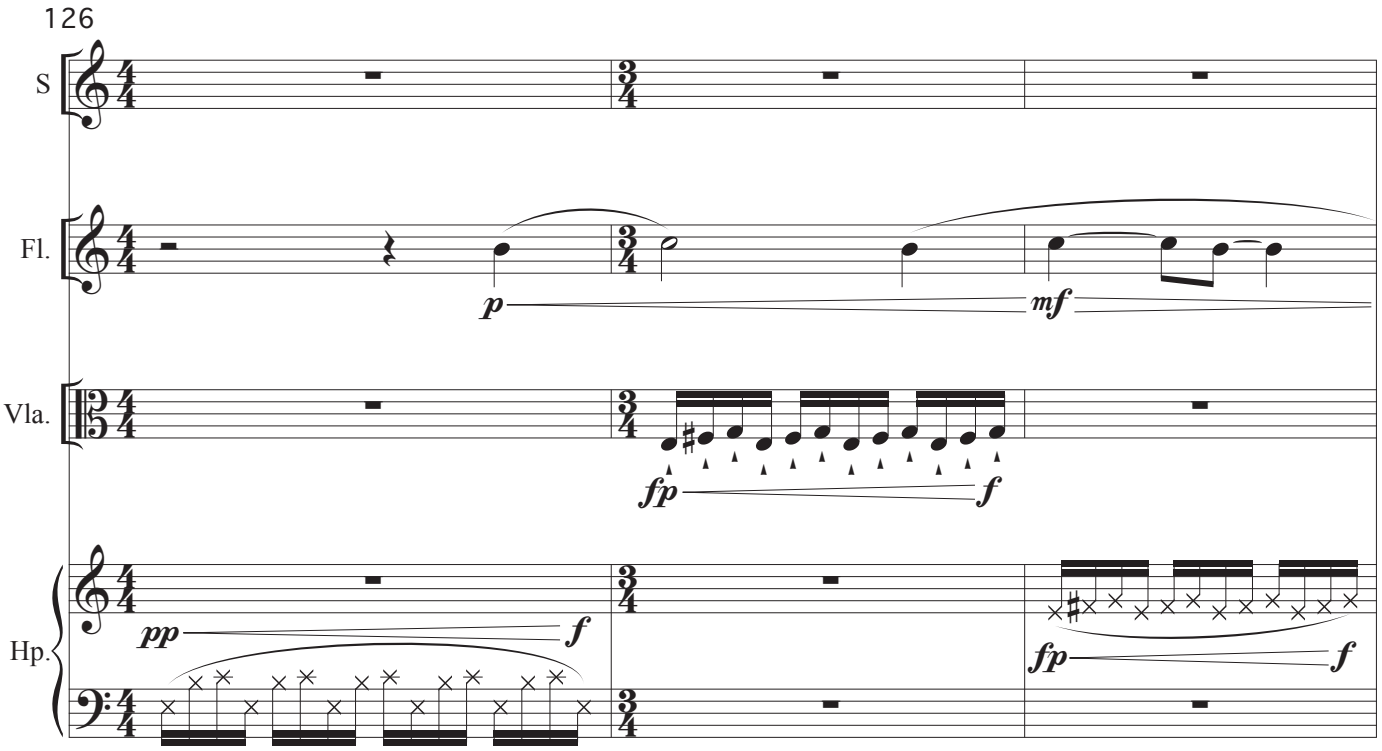

109
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
ff
pizz.
sfz
sfz
arco
fp
f
112
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
fp
ff
8va
sfffz
p

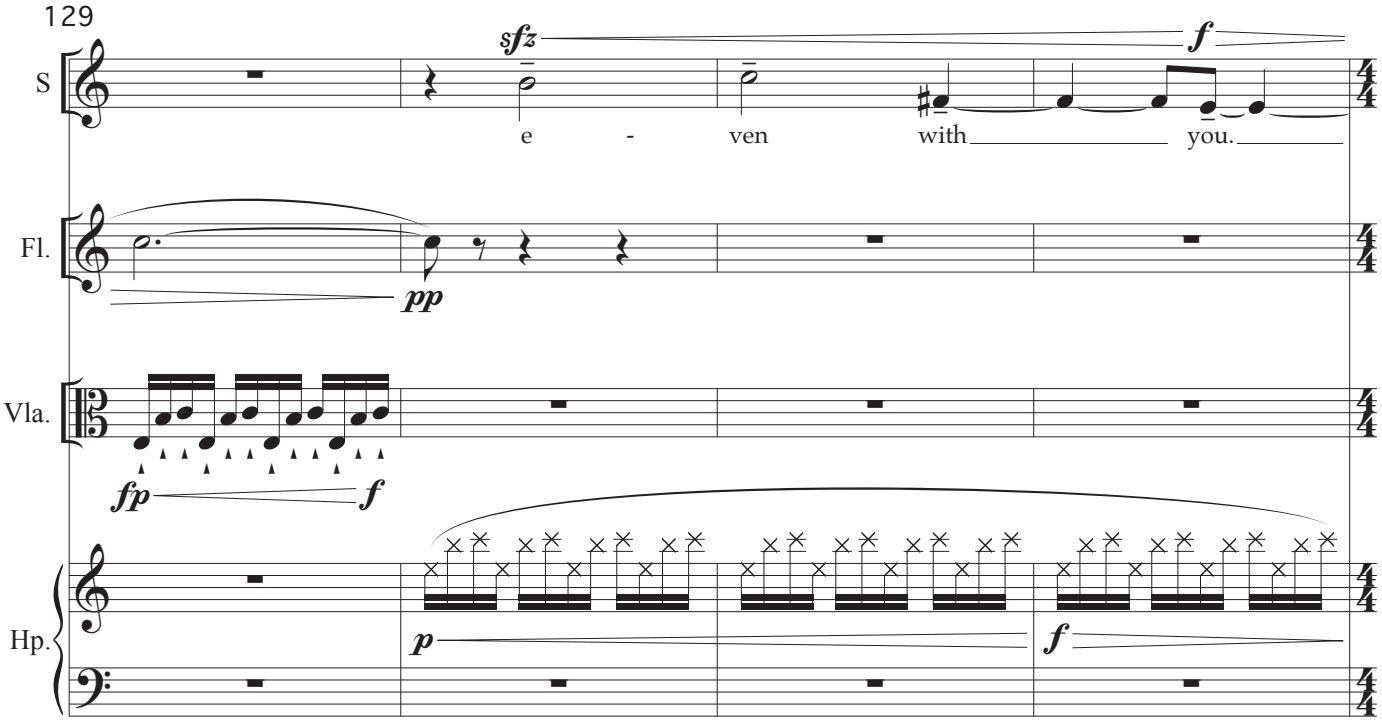

115
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
3
3
f
ff

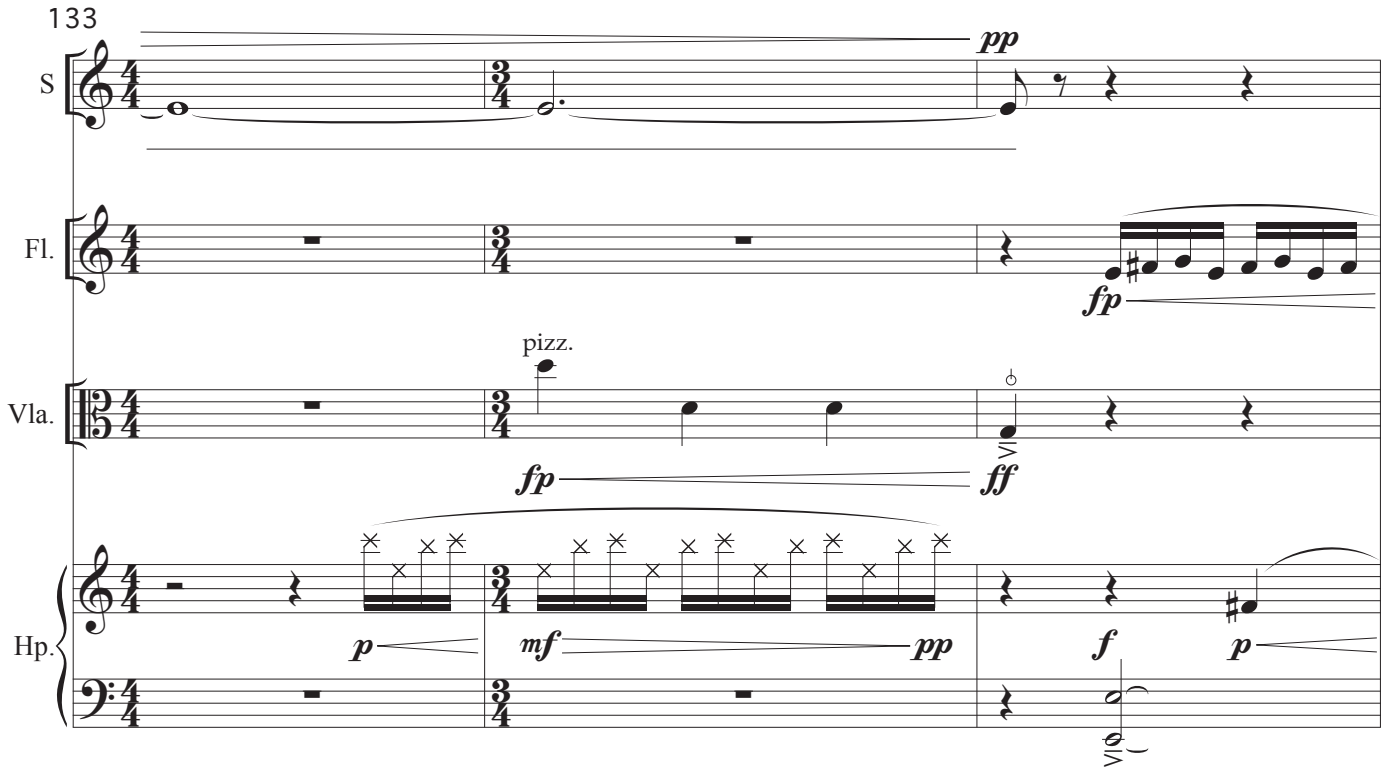

117
S
p
there
is
no
ff
peace
for
Fl.
ff
fp
f
Vla.
fp
f
ff
Hp.
ff
mf
p

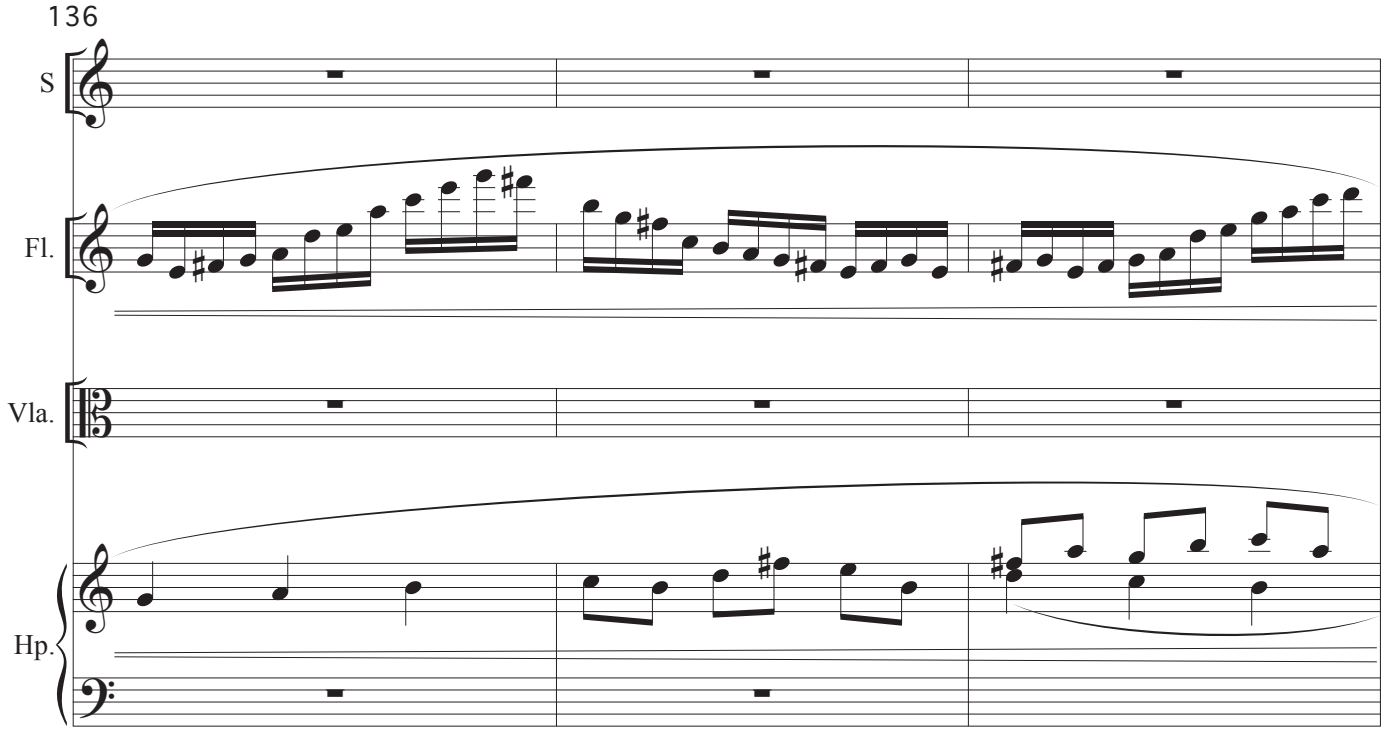

120
pp
S
me on earth
Fl.
fp
ff
Vla.
ff
Hp.

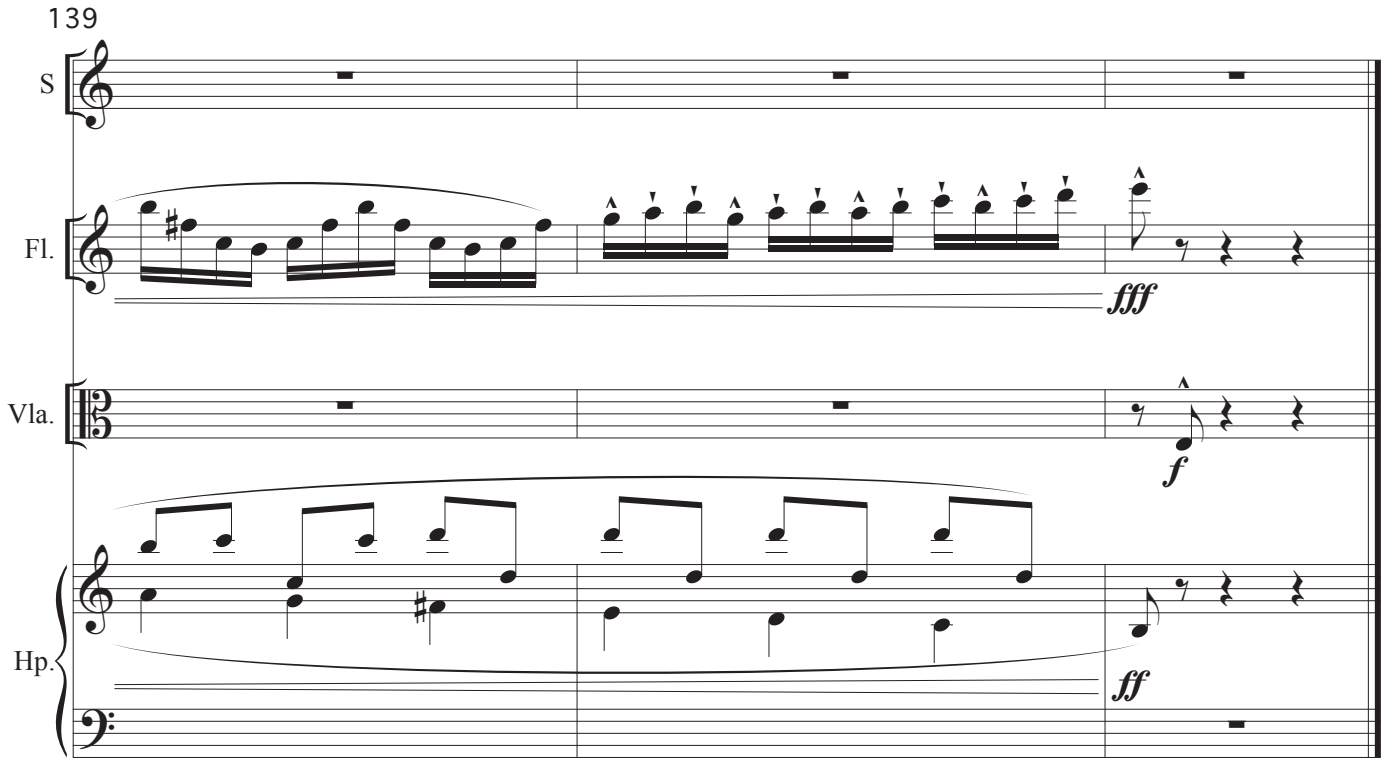

123
S
Fl.
fp
f
fp
f
Vla.
fp
f
Hp.
f


126
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
p
mf
fp
f
pp
f
fp
f


129
S
sfz
f
e - ven with you.
Fl.
pp
Vla.
fp
f
Hp.
p
f

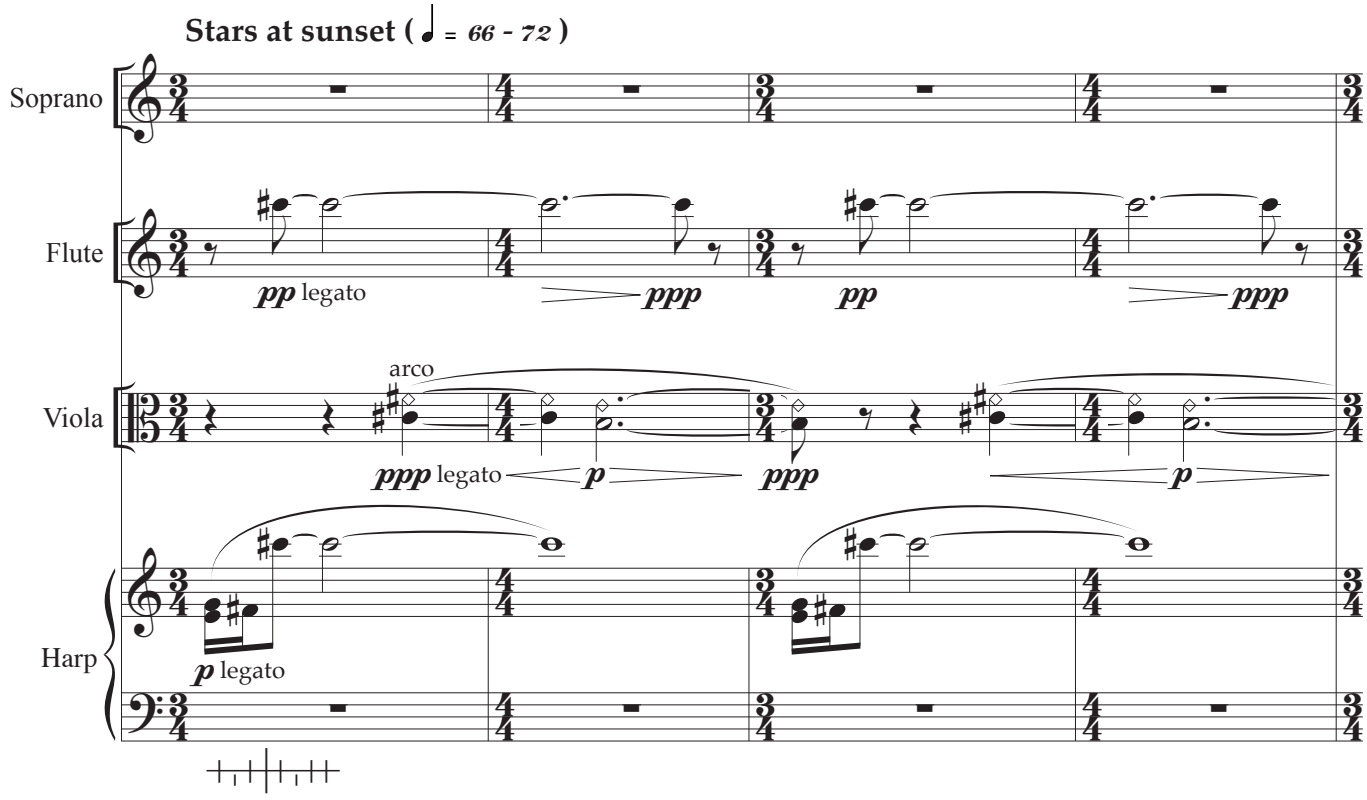

133
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
pp
fp
pizz.
fp
ff
p
mf
pp
f
p

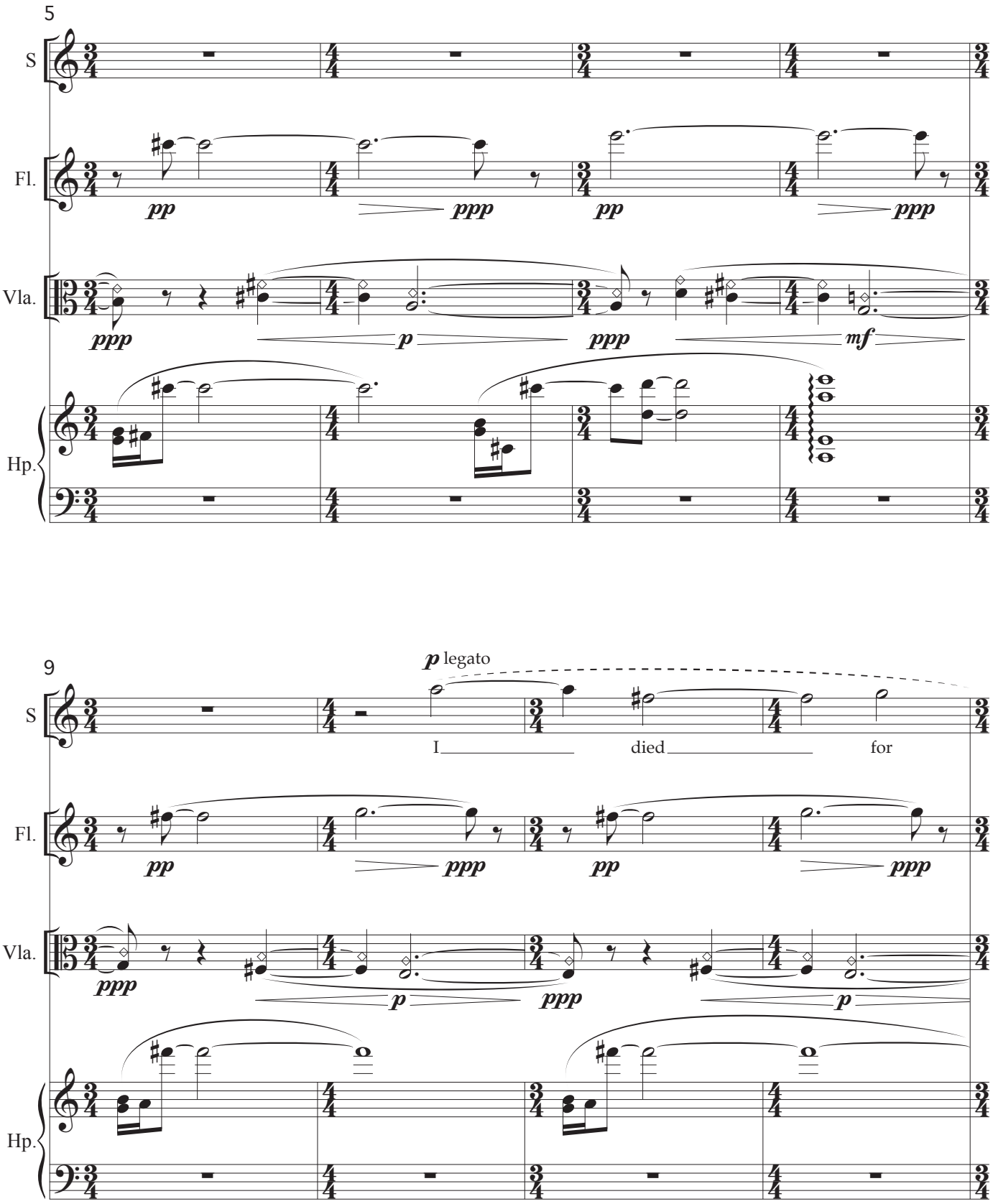

136
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.

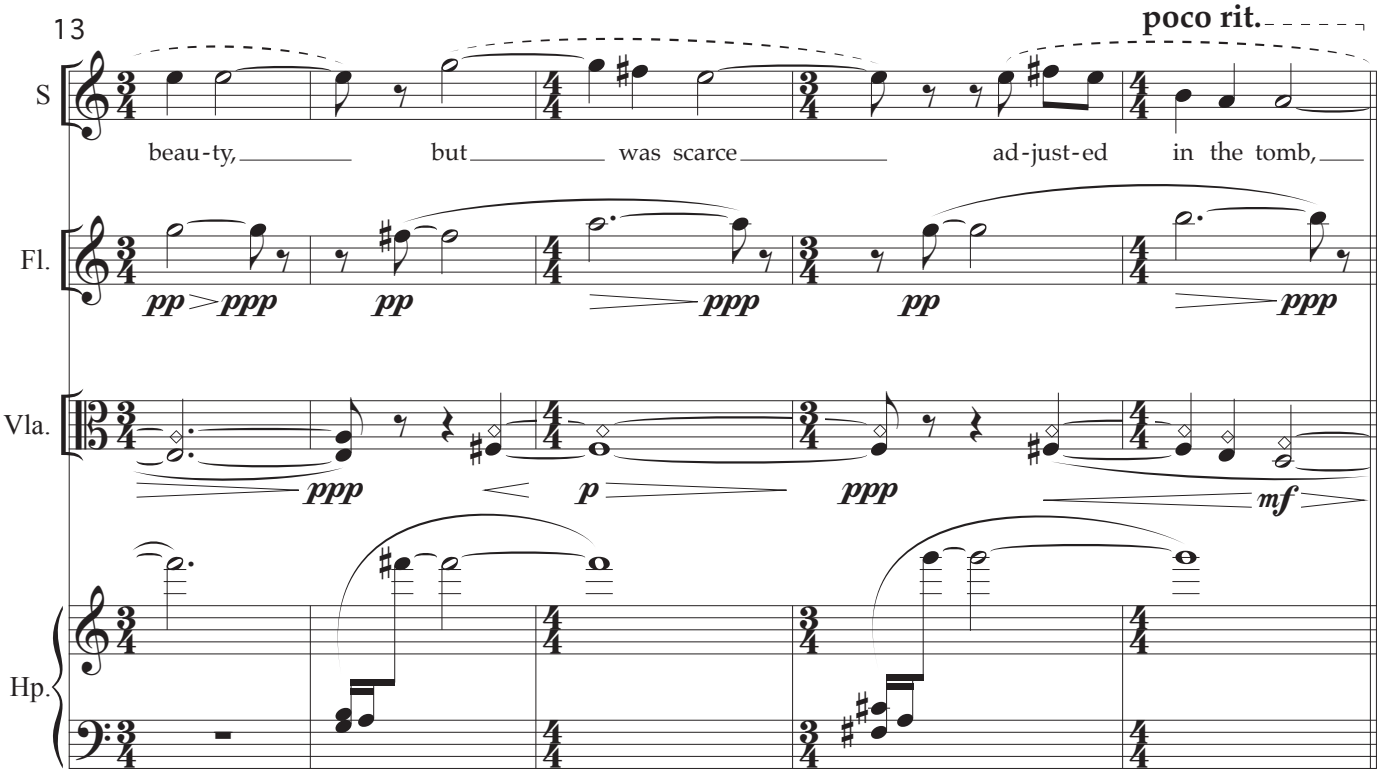


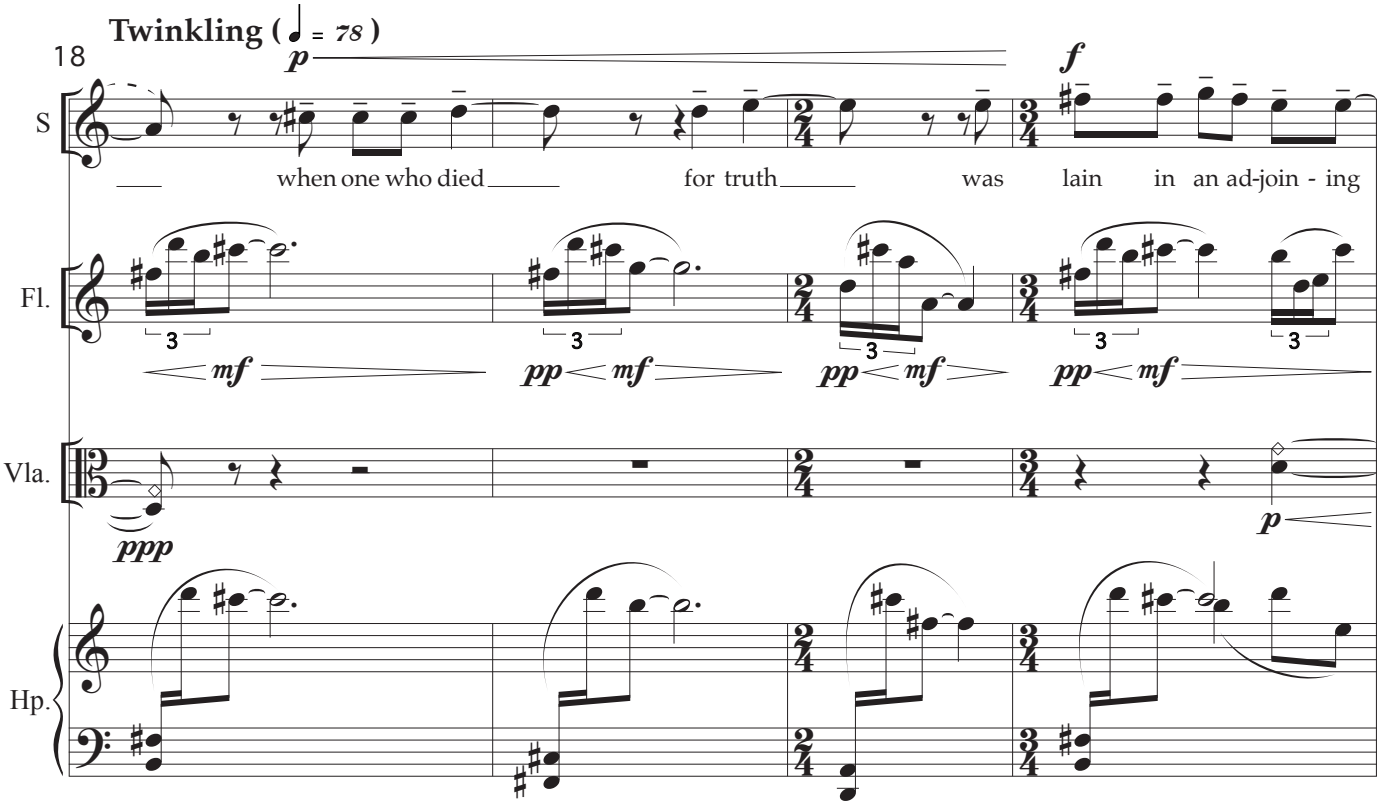
V. Flowering Shadows

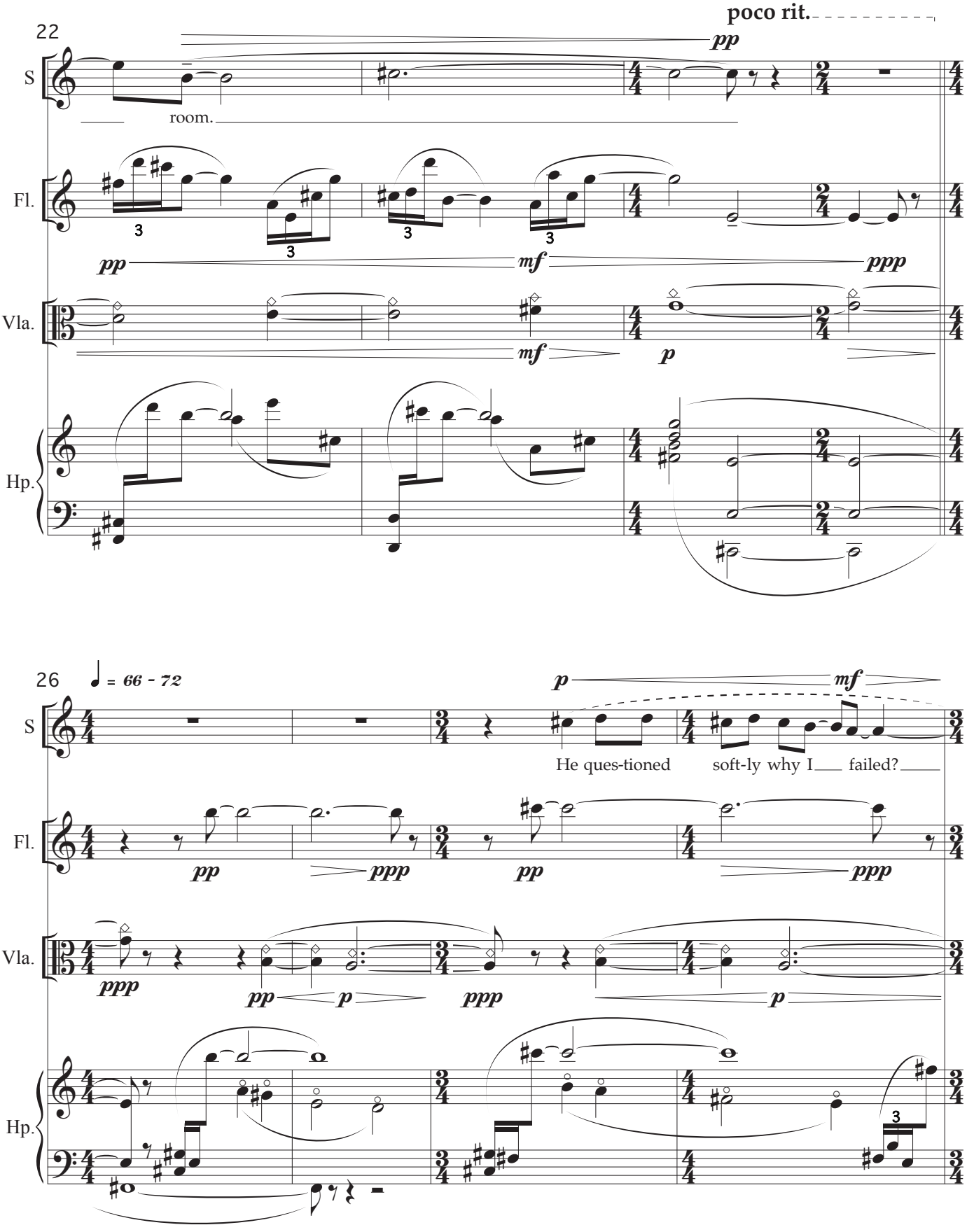
after Emily Dickinson

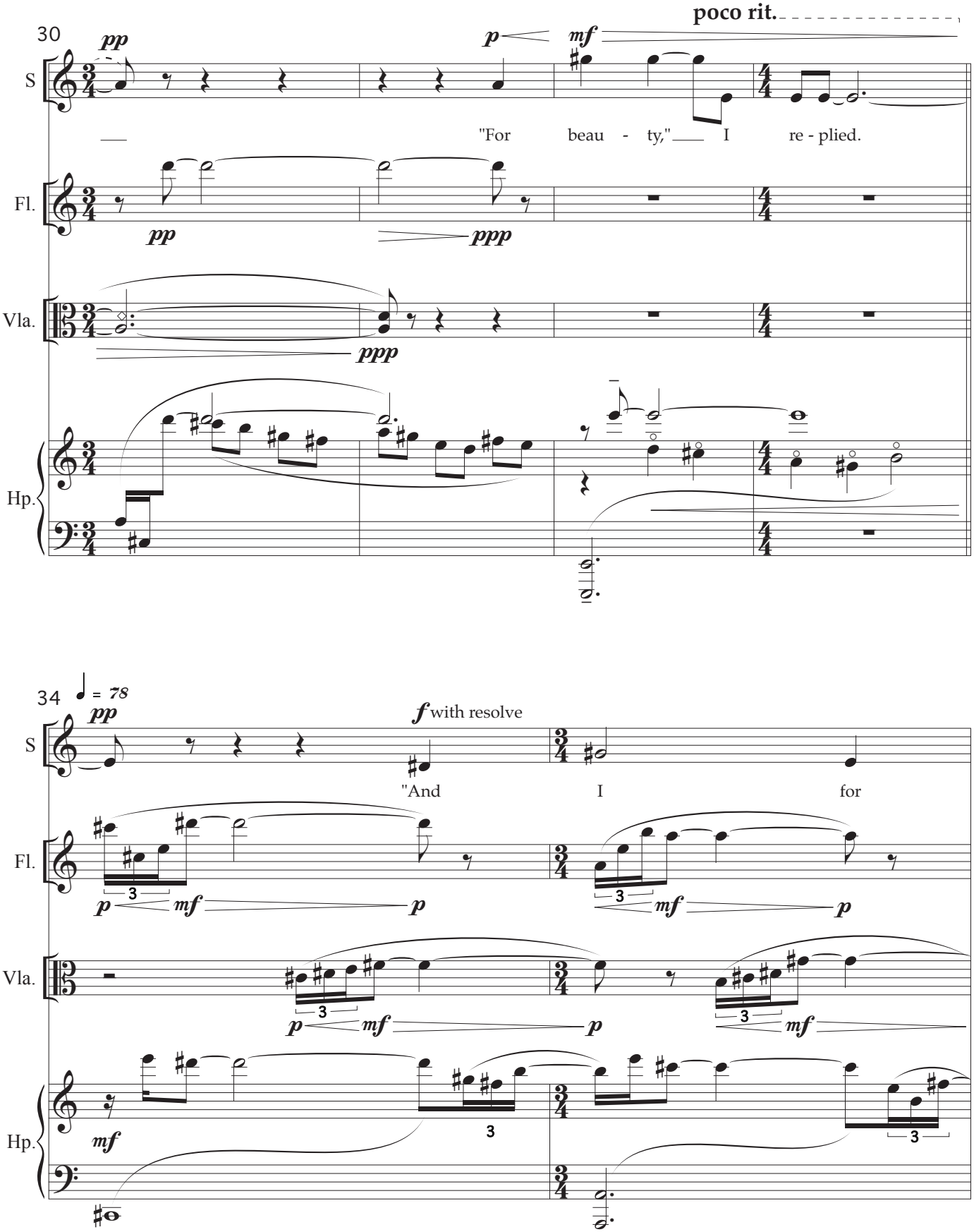


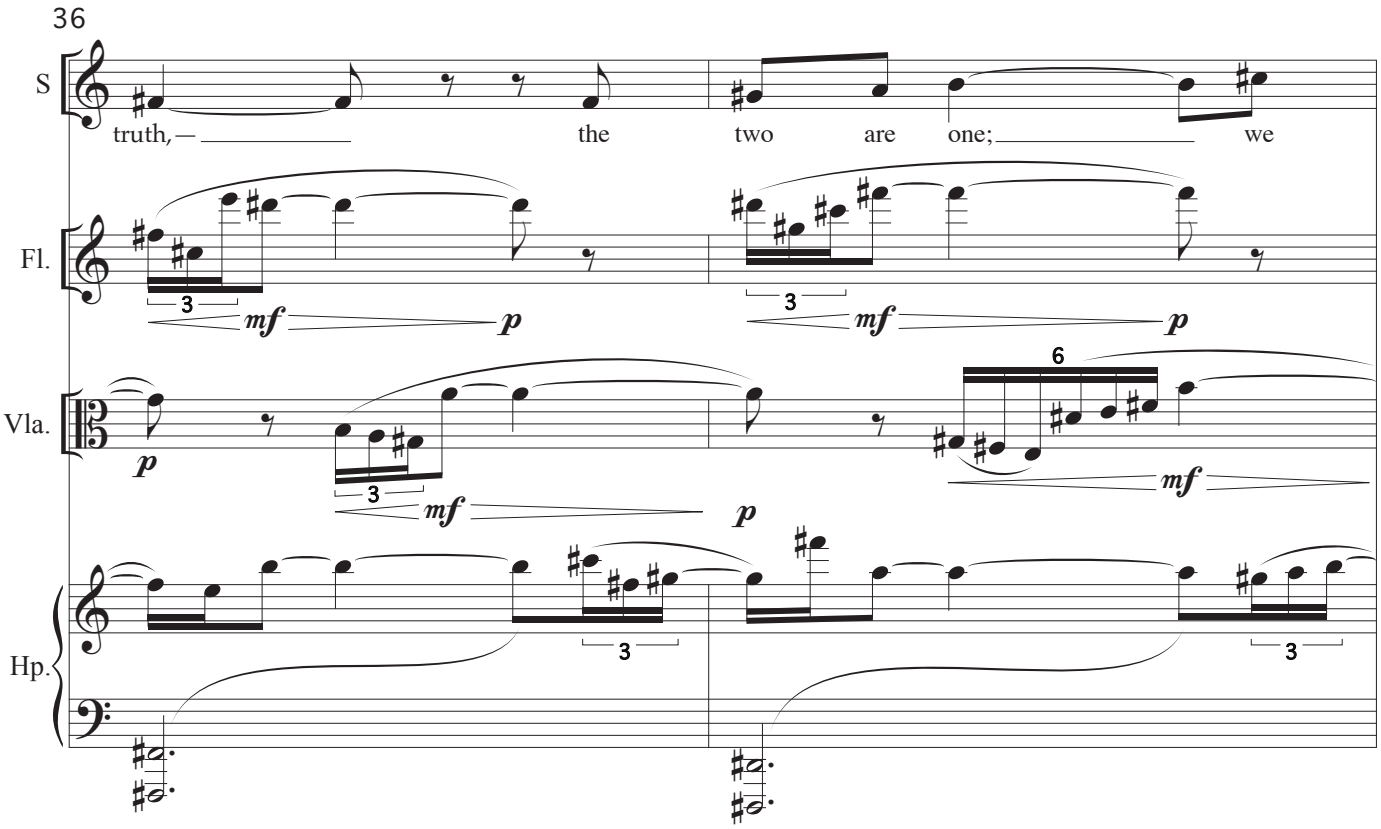

5
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
pp
ppp
pp
ppp
ppp
p
ppp
mf
9
p legato
I
died
for
pp
ppp
pp
ppp
ppp
p
ppp
p

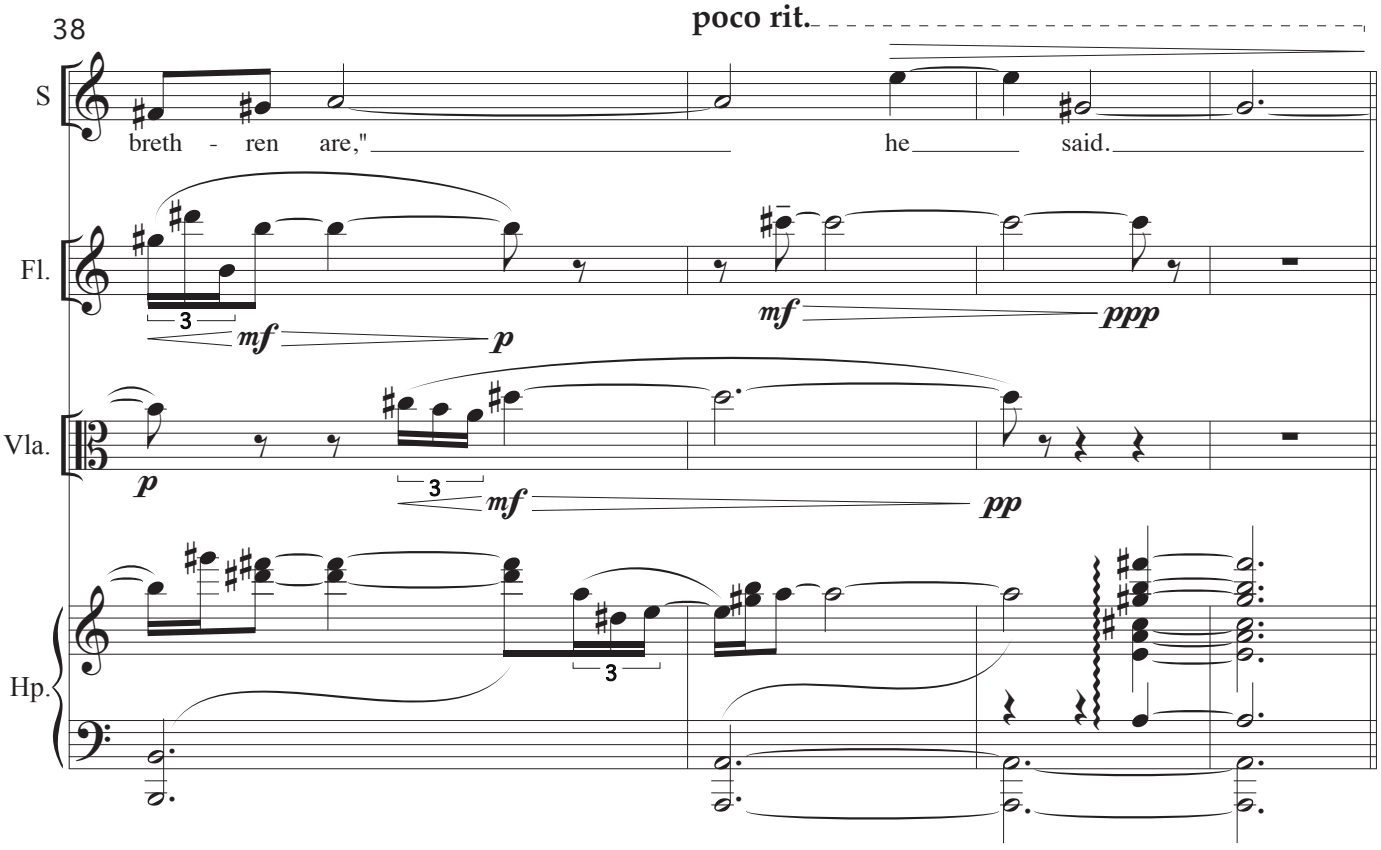

13
poco rit.
S
beau-ty, but was scarce ad-just-ed in the tomb,
Fl.
pp > ppp pp ppp pp ppp
Vla.
ppp p ppp mf
Hp.

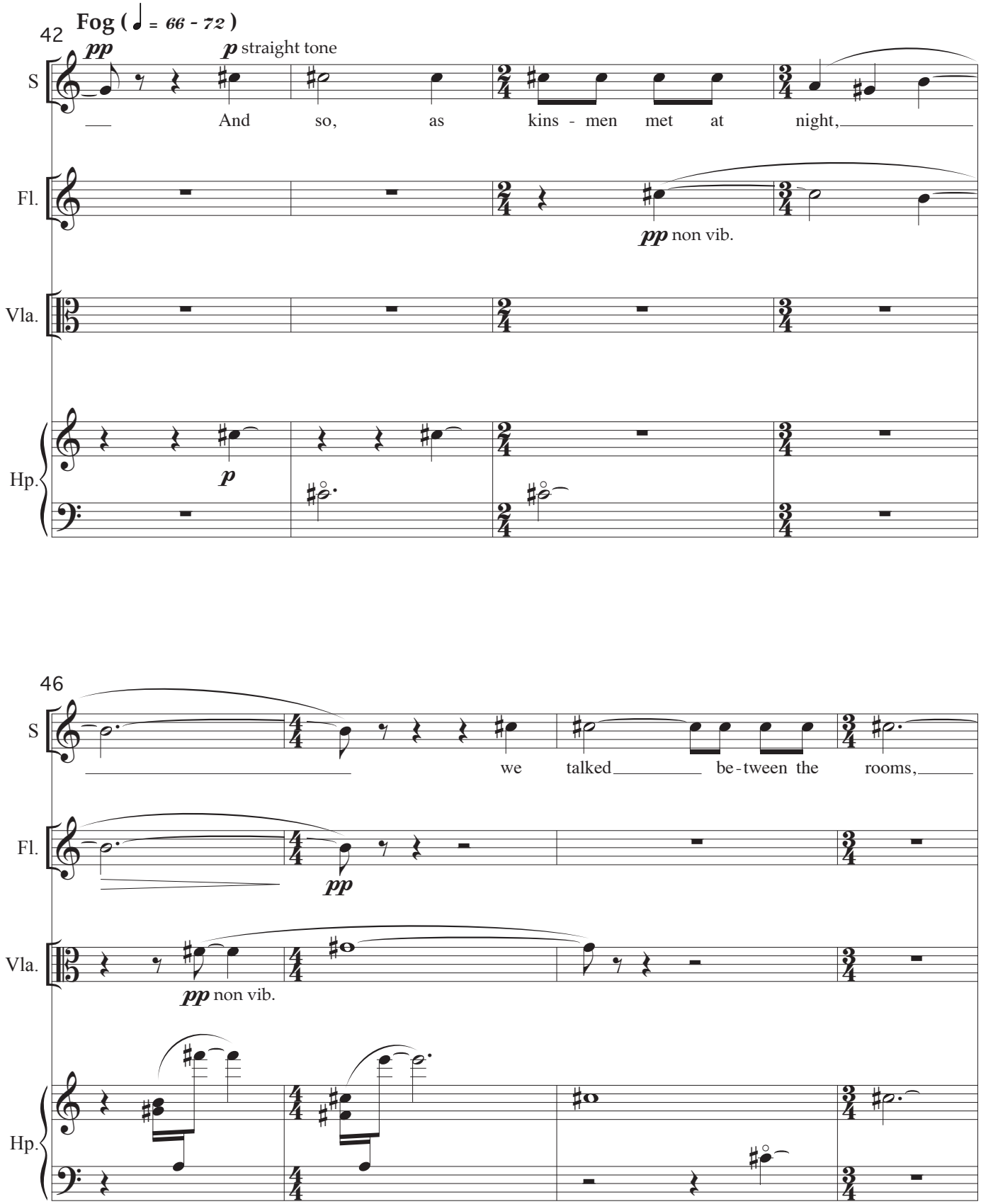

Twinkling (= 78)
18
p
f
S
when one who died for truth was lain in an ad-join - ing
Fl.
3
mf pp mf pp mf pp mf
Vla.
ppp
p
Hp.

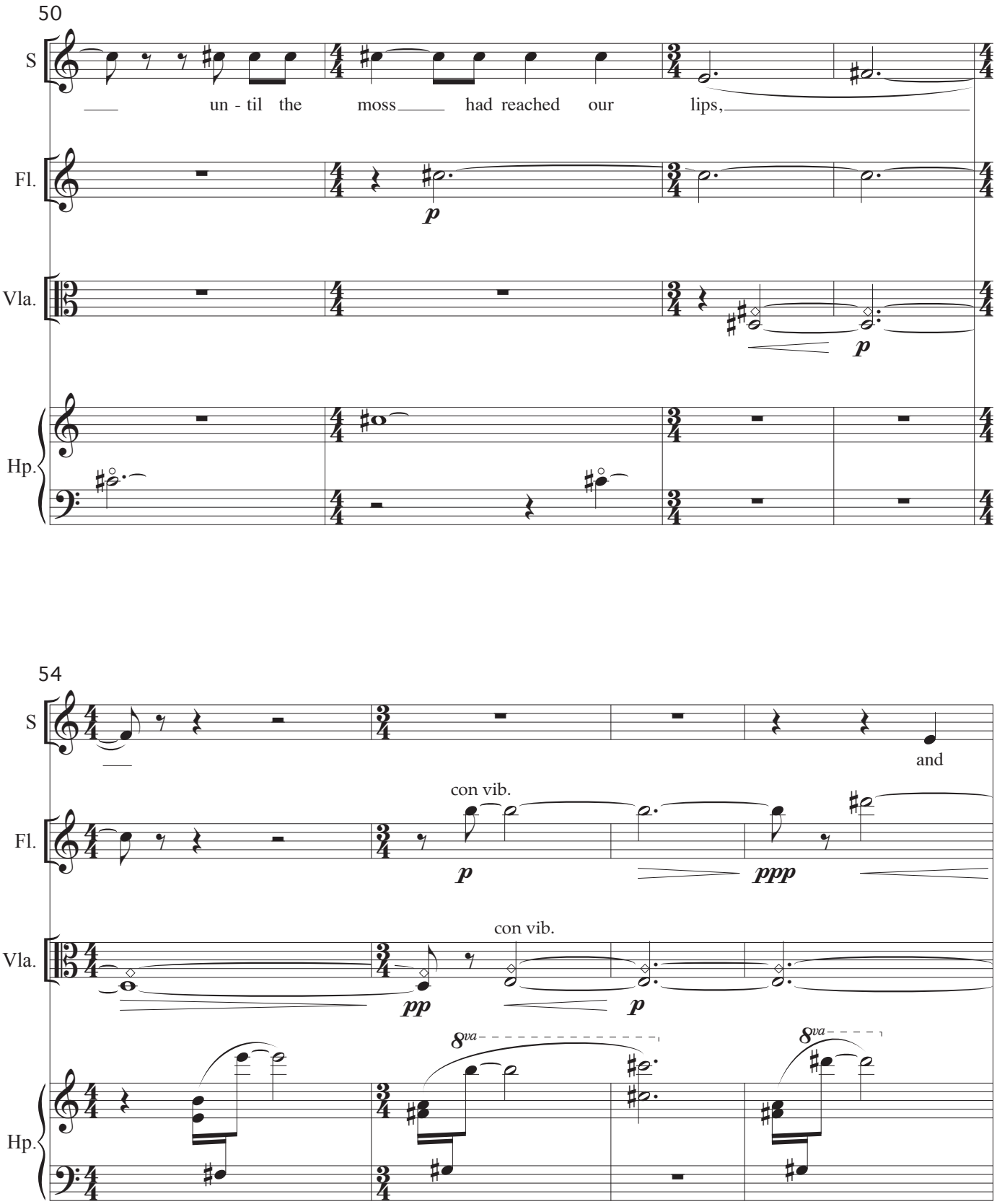

poco rit.
22
S
room.
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
26
= 66 - 72
He ques-tioned
soft-ly why I
failed?

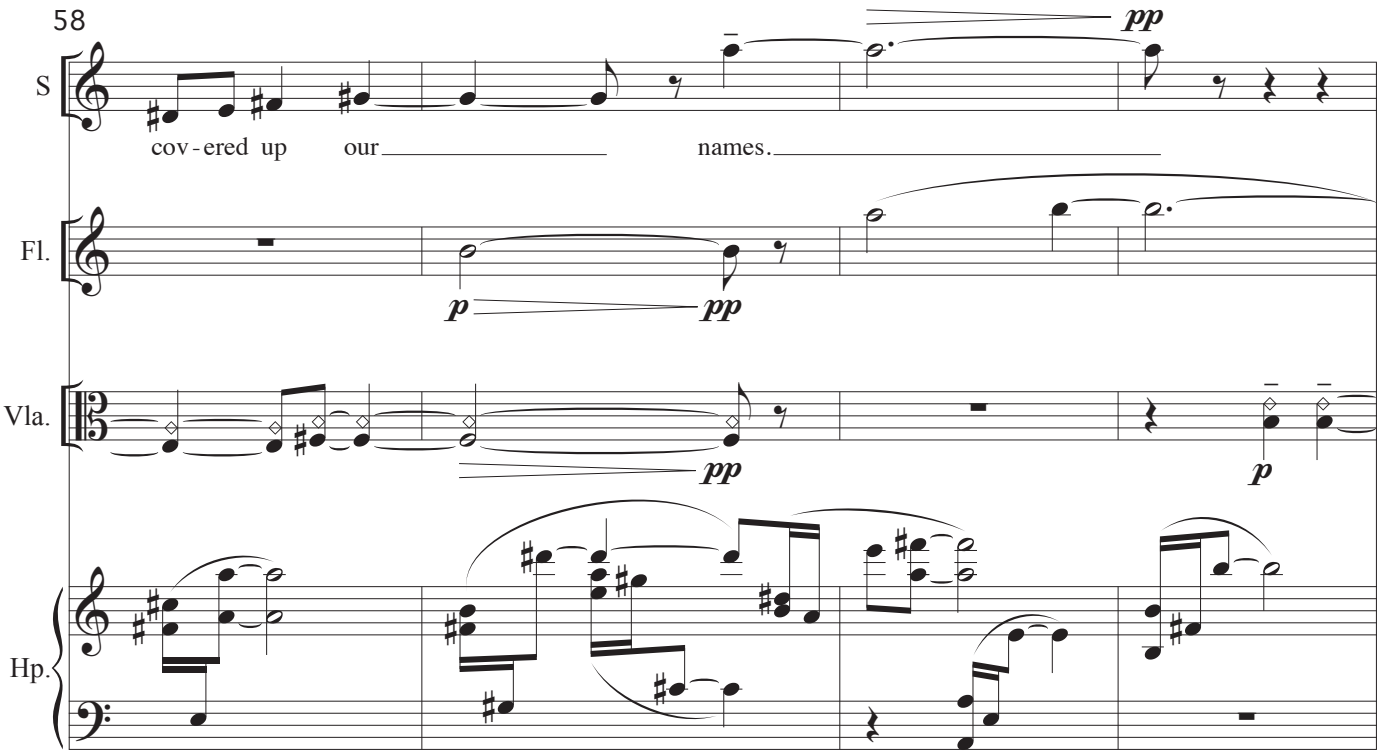

poco rit.
30
pp
p
mf
S
"For beau - ty," I re - plied.
Fl.
pp
ppp
Vla.
ppp
Hp.
34
♩ = 78
pp
f with resolve
S
"And I for
Fl.
p mf p
mf p
Vla.
p mf p
mf
Hp.
mf
3
3
3

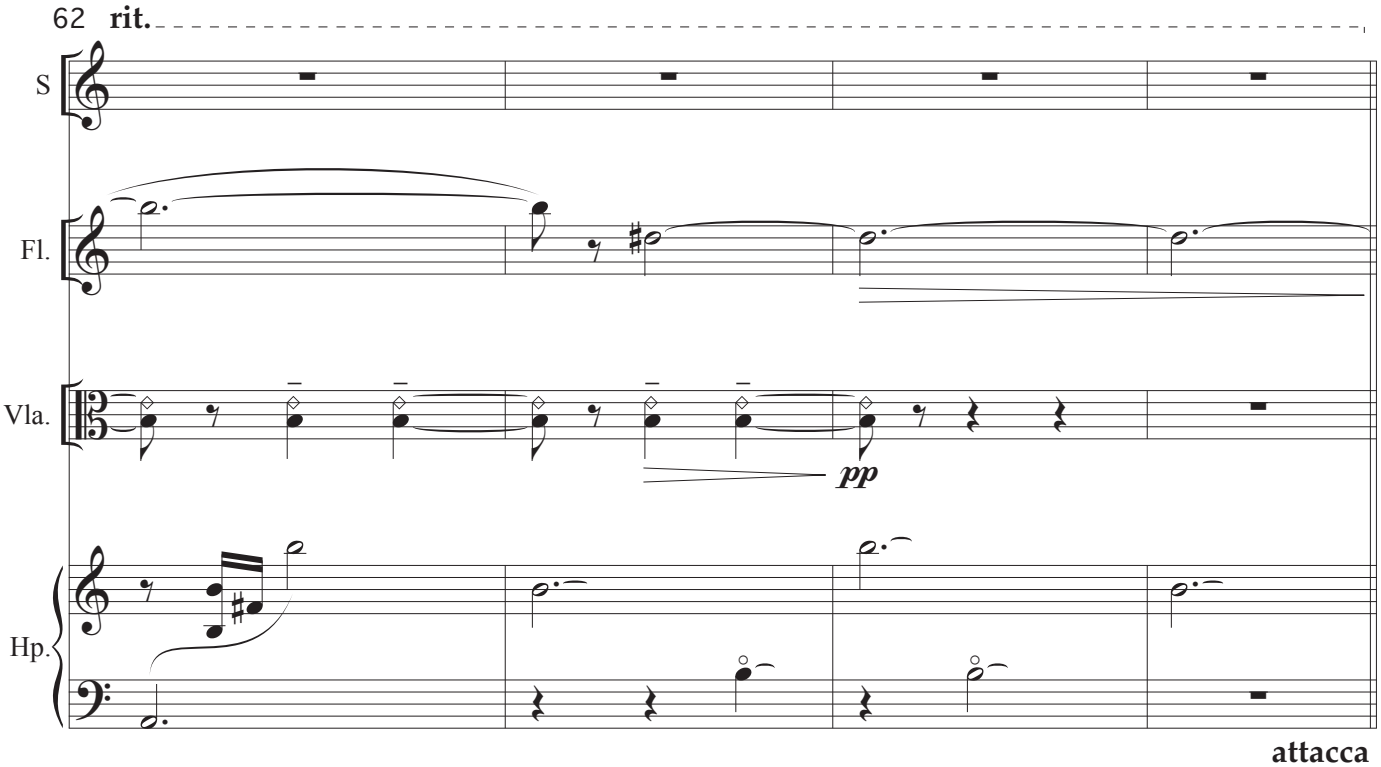

36
S
truth, — the two are one; we
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
mf
p
3
6


38
poco rit.
S
breth - ren are," he said.
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
mf
p
ppp
pp
3


Fog (♩ = 66 - 72)
42
pp
p straight tone
S
And so, as kins - men met at night,
Fl.
pp non vib.
Vla.
Hp.
p
46
S
we talked be-tween the rooms,
Fl.
pp
Vla.
pp non vib.
Hp.


50
S
un - til the moss had reached our lips,
Fl.
p
Vla.
p
Hp.
54
S
and
Fl.
con vib.
p
ppp
Vla.
con vib.
pp
p
Hp.
8va
8va

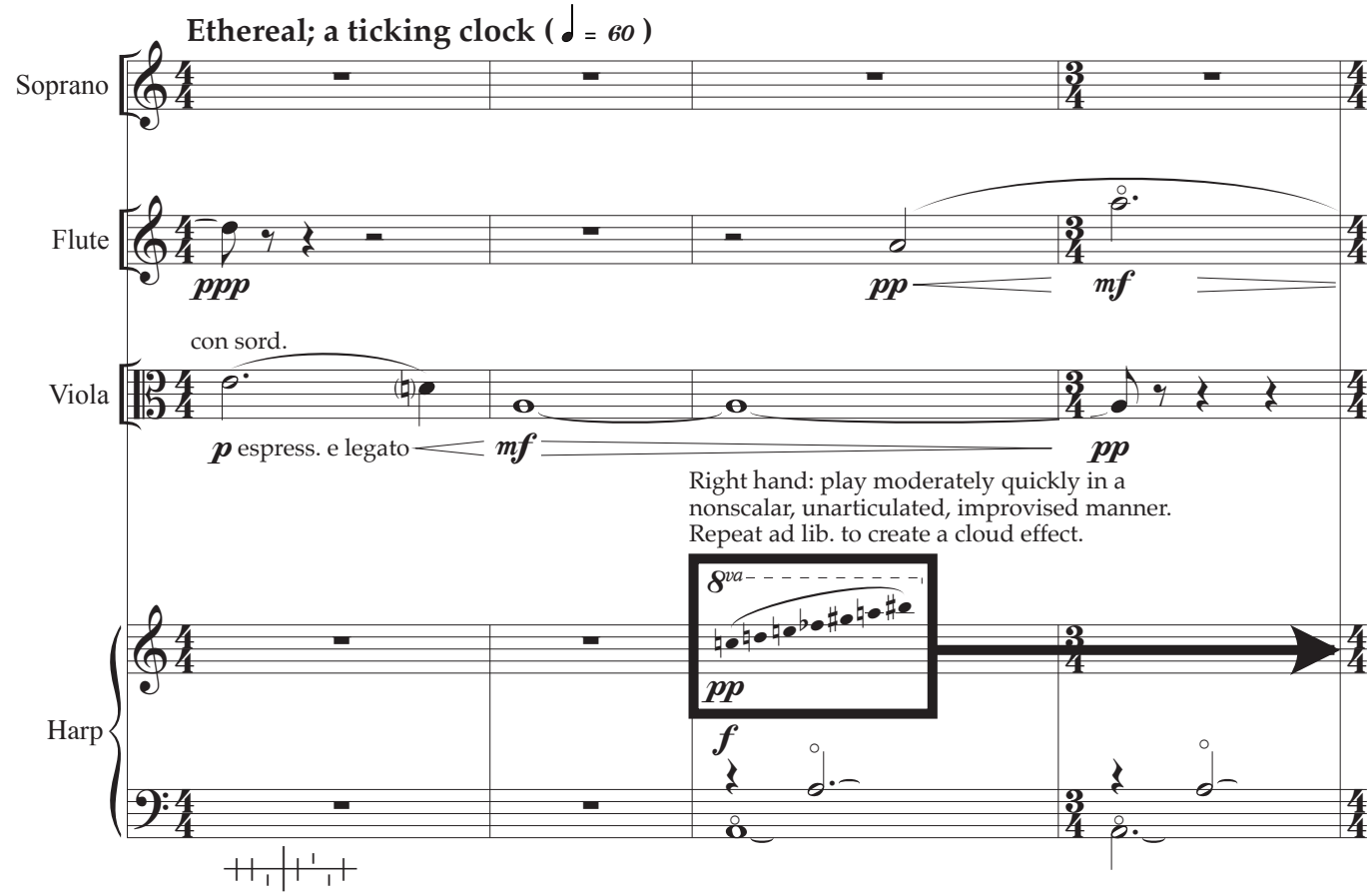

58
S
cov - ered up our names.
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
pp
p
pp
pp
p

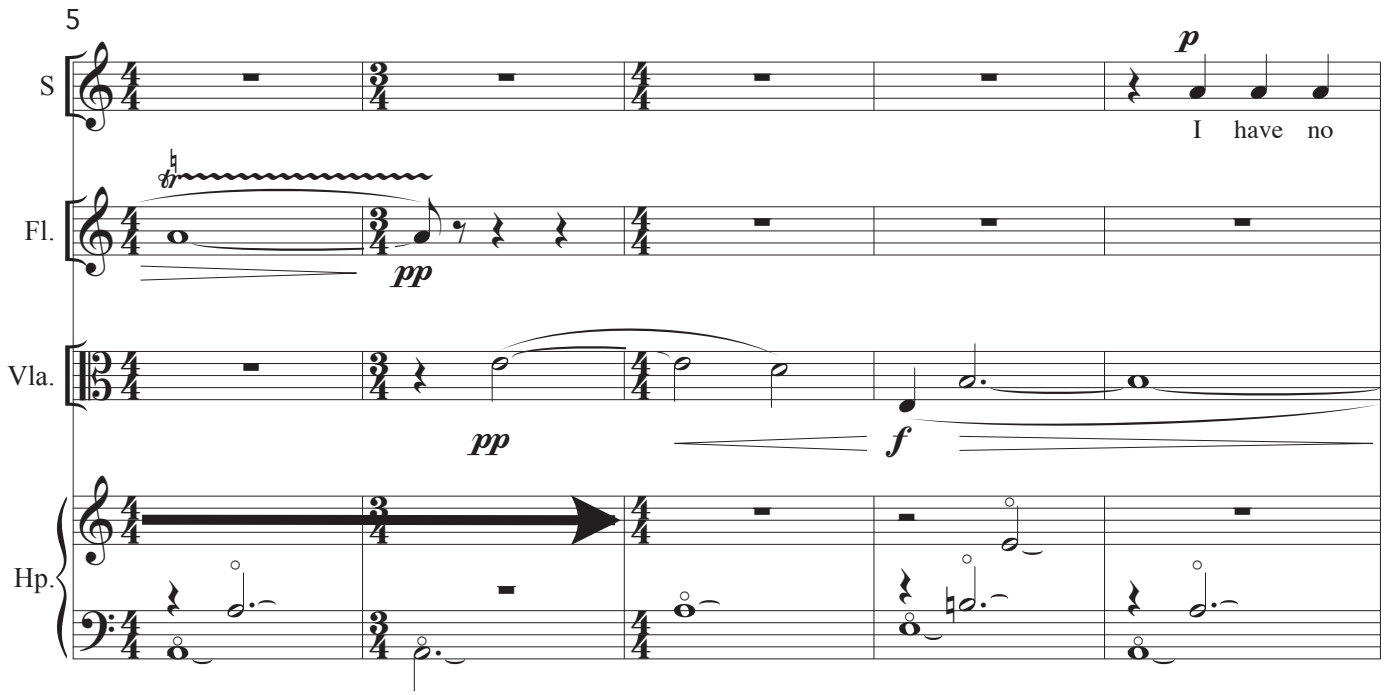

62 rit.
S
Fl.
Vla.
Hp.
pp

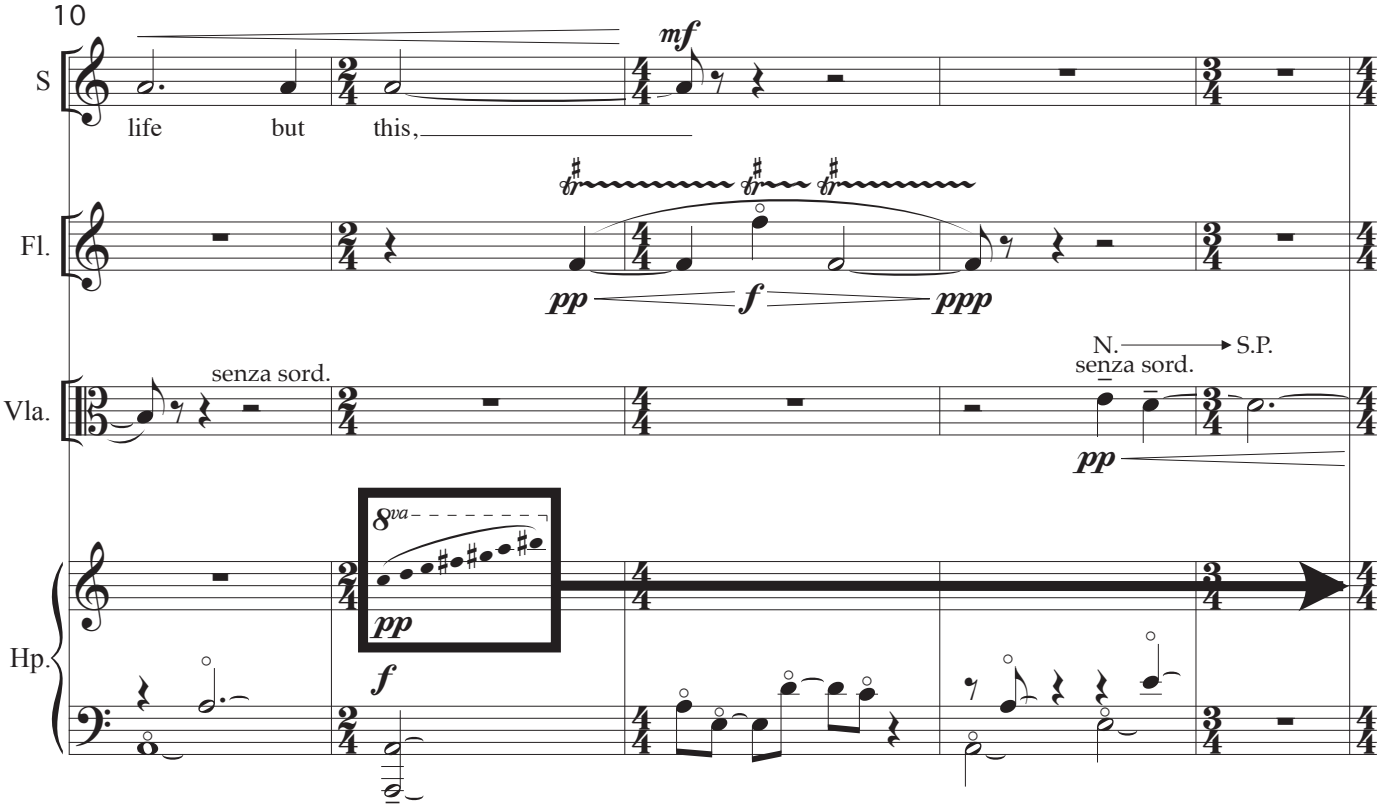
attacca

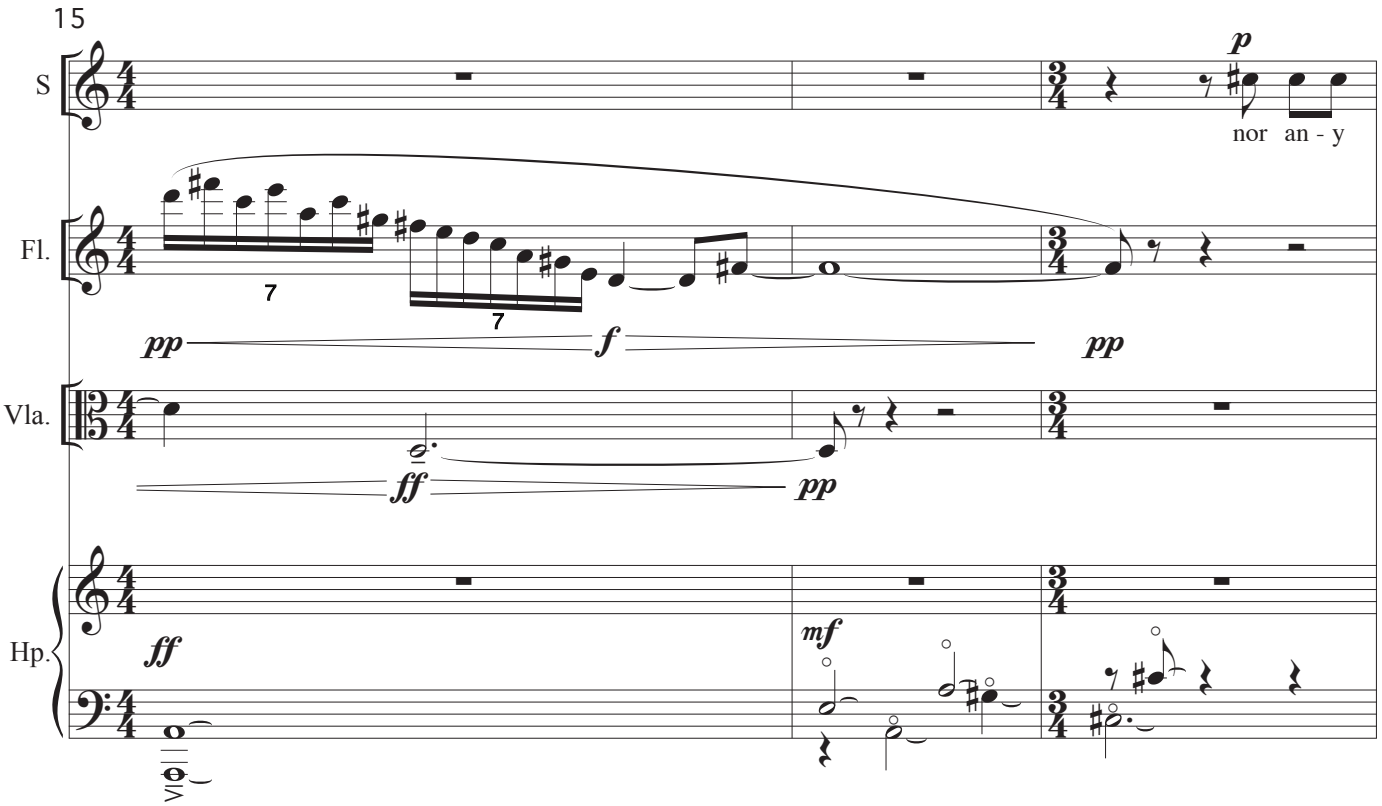
VI. Blue Enchanted

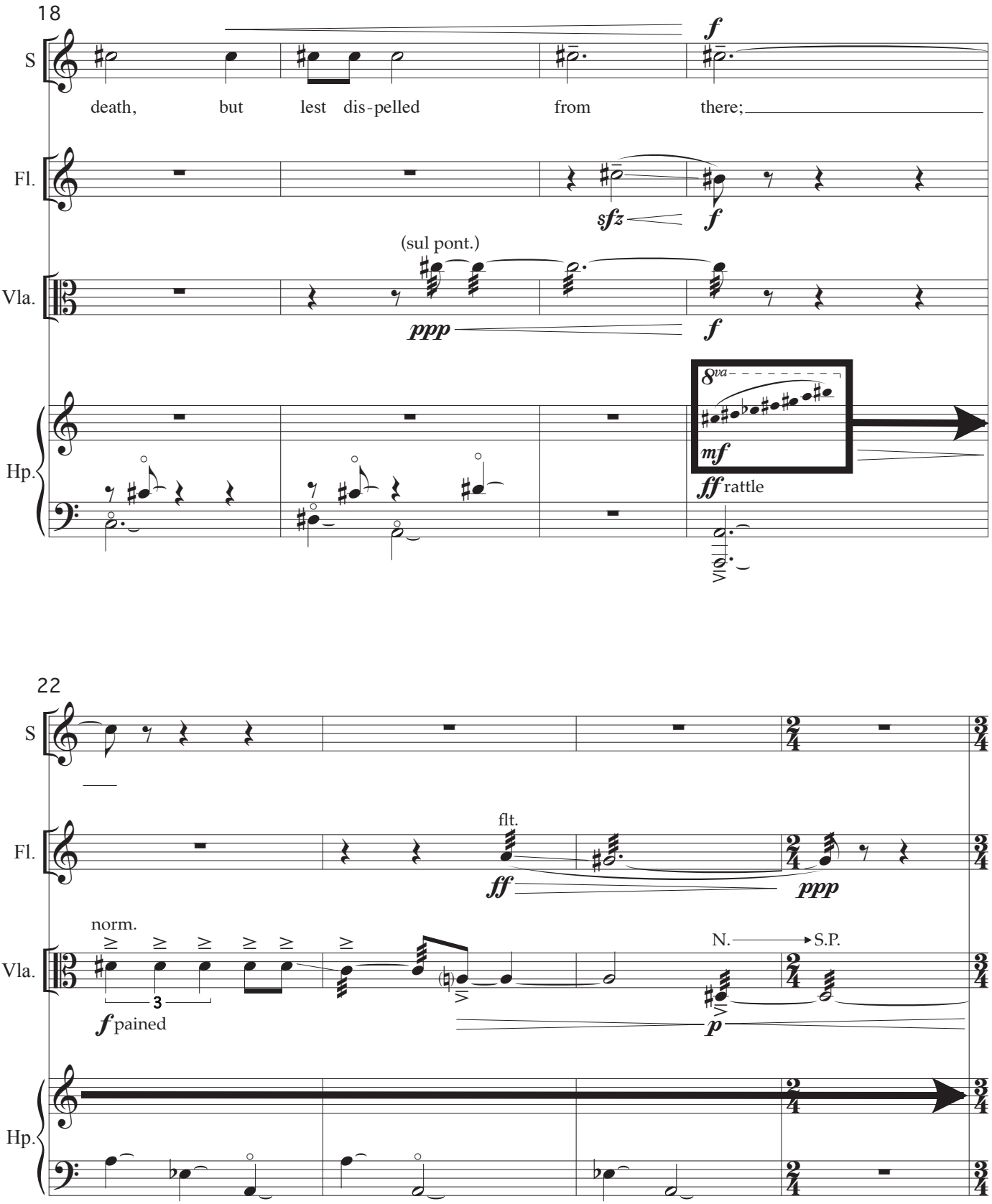
after Emily Dickinson

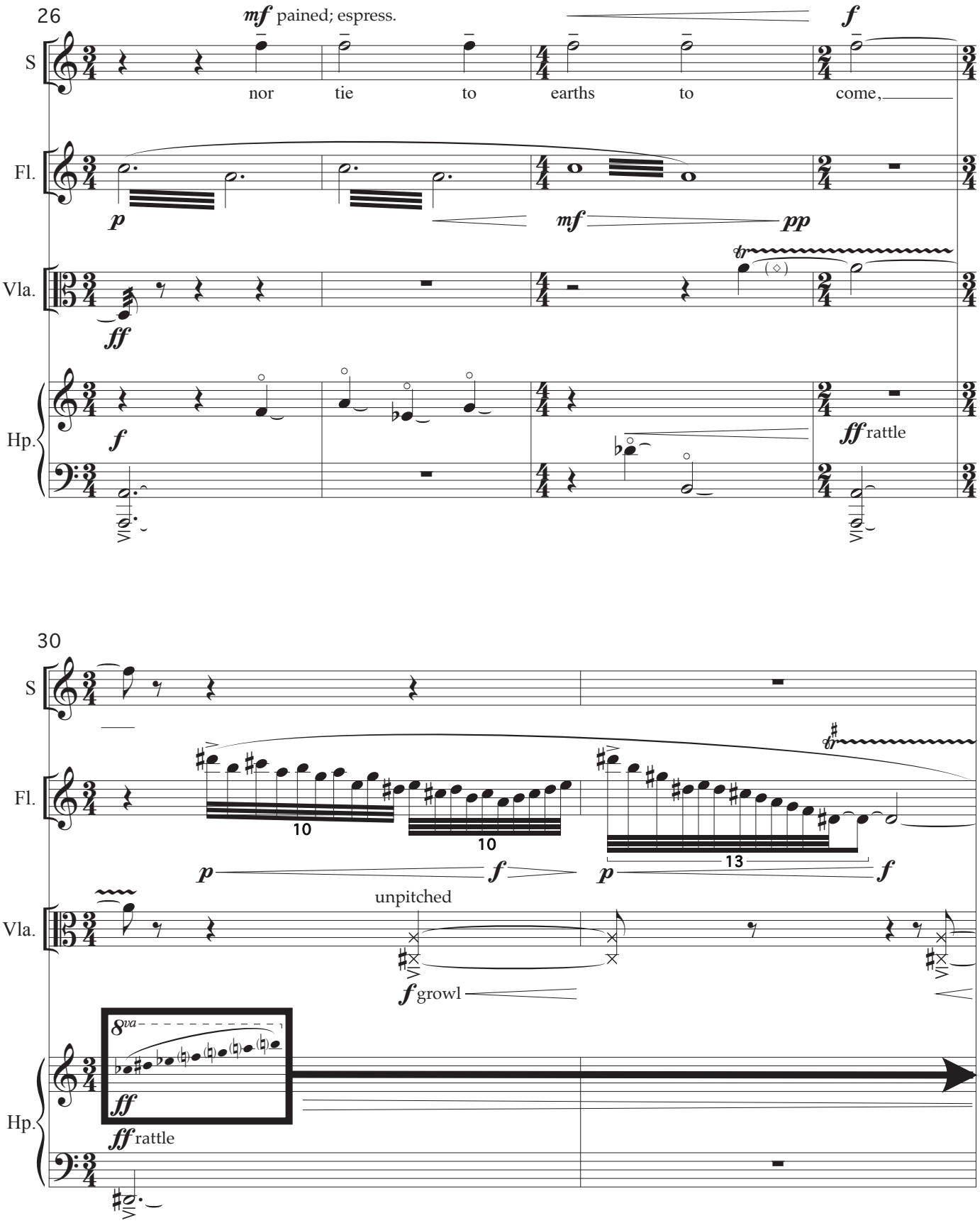


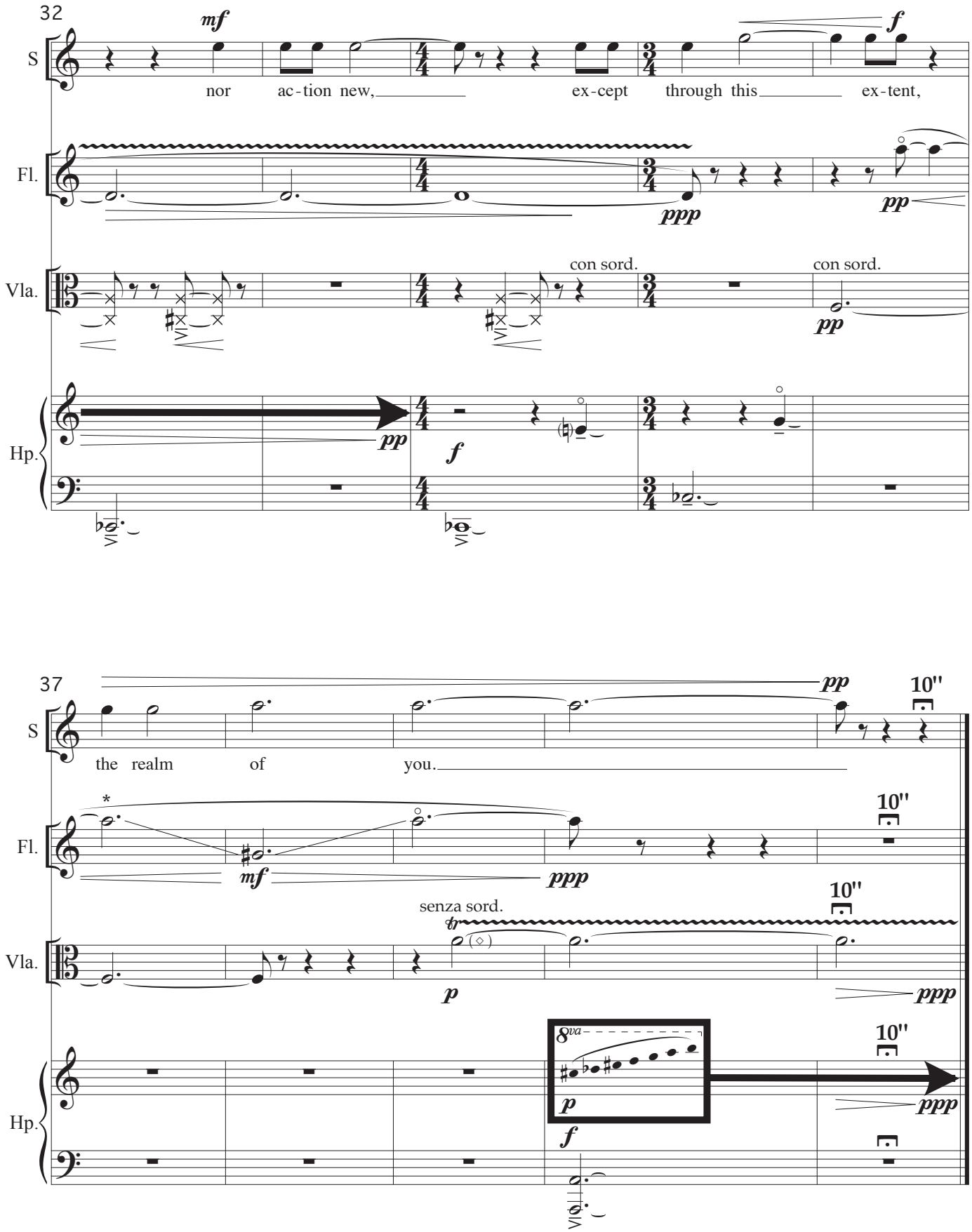



10
S
life but this,
mf
Fl.
pp
f
ppp
Vla.
senza sord.
N.
S.P.
senza sord.
pp
Hp.
8va
pp
f


15
S
p
nor an - y
Fl.
7
7
pp
f
pp
Vla.
ff
pp
Hp.
ff
mf


18
S
death, but lest dis-pelled from there;
f
Fl.
sfz
f
(sul pont.)
Vla.
ppp
f
Hp.
8va
mf
ff rattle
22
S
Fl.
flt.
ff
ppp
norm.
Vla.
3
f pained
N.
S.P.
p
Hp.


26
mf pained; espress.
f
S
nor tie to earths to come,
Fl.
p
mf
pp
Vla.
ff
Hp.
f
ff rattle
30
10
10
13
p
f
unpitched
f growl
8va
ff
ff rattle



* bend only a ½-step, but move slowly from a harmonic A to fundamental G♯ and then back to the harmonic A.