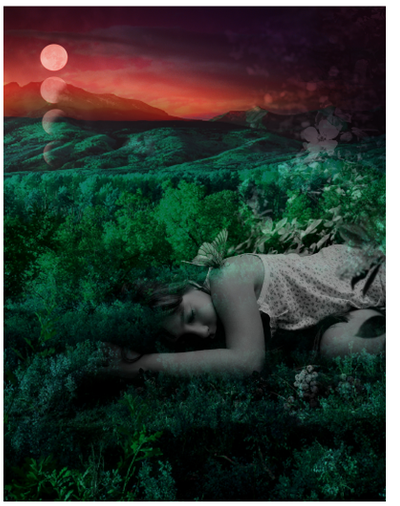
William Grosvenor Neil

At the Edge of the Body's Night

(2008)

for piano and digital acoustics



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At the Edge of the Body's Night is a setting of *Seven Poems* by the poet and writer, Mark Strand. These poems intrigued me with their potent brevity and mysterious symbolism. I found in their riddle-like form a concise emotional message, ideal for creating short melodic themes and inspiring fantastic piano music. When I recorded Mark's voice reading the poems, I knew that his recitation would be part of the compositional resources for the piece. His resonant voice, enhanced by the audio editing process, provided a powerful context for the musical interpretation of his words. The addition of a soprano voice (Ashley Parker) in the digital landscape alludes to the traditional art song setting of poems. and her siren-call voice recalls the female muse that I imagined inspired the poet in writing his words. The piano music guides the listener throughout this fantastic journey of sound and music reflecting on the meaning and character of the poems and driving the dream-like narrative forward.

Performance of the digital acoustic:

Each of the six movements (I & II are combined) for piano are accompanied by a digital audio l andscape as part of the performance. At the beginning of each section, a cue is notated in the score to start the audio wave file. It is recommended that a high fidelity audio play back system be employed in the recital hall or performance space. The sound system could be interfaced with a laptop computer or iPad operated by the pianist using a foot pedal similarly used with iPads supporting a digital part or it could be executed during the performance by a technician.

Duration: ca. 24 mins.

by Mark Strand

1
At the edge
of the body's night
ten moons are rising.

2
A scar remembers the wound.
The wound remembers the pain.
Once more you are crying.

3
When we walk in the sun
our shadows are like barges of silence.

4
My body lies down
And I hear my own
Voice lying next to me.

5
The rock is pleasure
and it opens
and we enter it
as we enter ourselves
each night.

6
When I talk to the window
I say everything
is everything.

7
I have a key
so I open the door and walk in.
It is dark and I walk in.
It is darker and I walk in.

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Seven Poems I

Mark Strand

William Grosvenor Neil

DA: Cue 1

♩ = 60

Pre-recorded Soprano

Digital Acoustics

At the edge of the body's night, ten moons are rising

Piano

pp f p pp p

8vb

3

Sop.

DA

Pno.

at the edge of the bo-dy's night

7

ten moons are ri - sing

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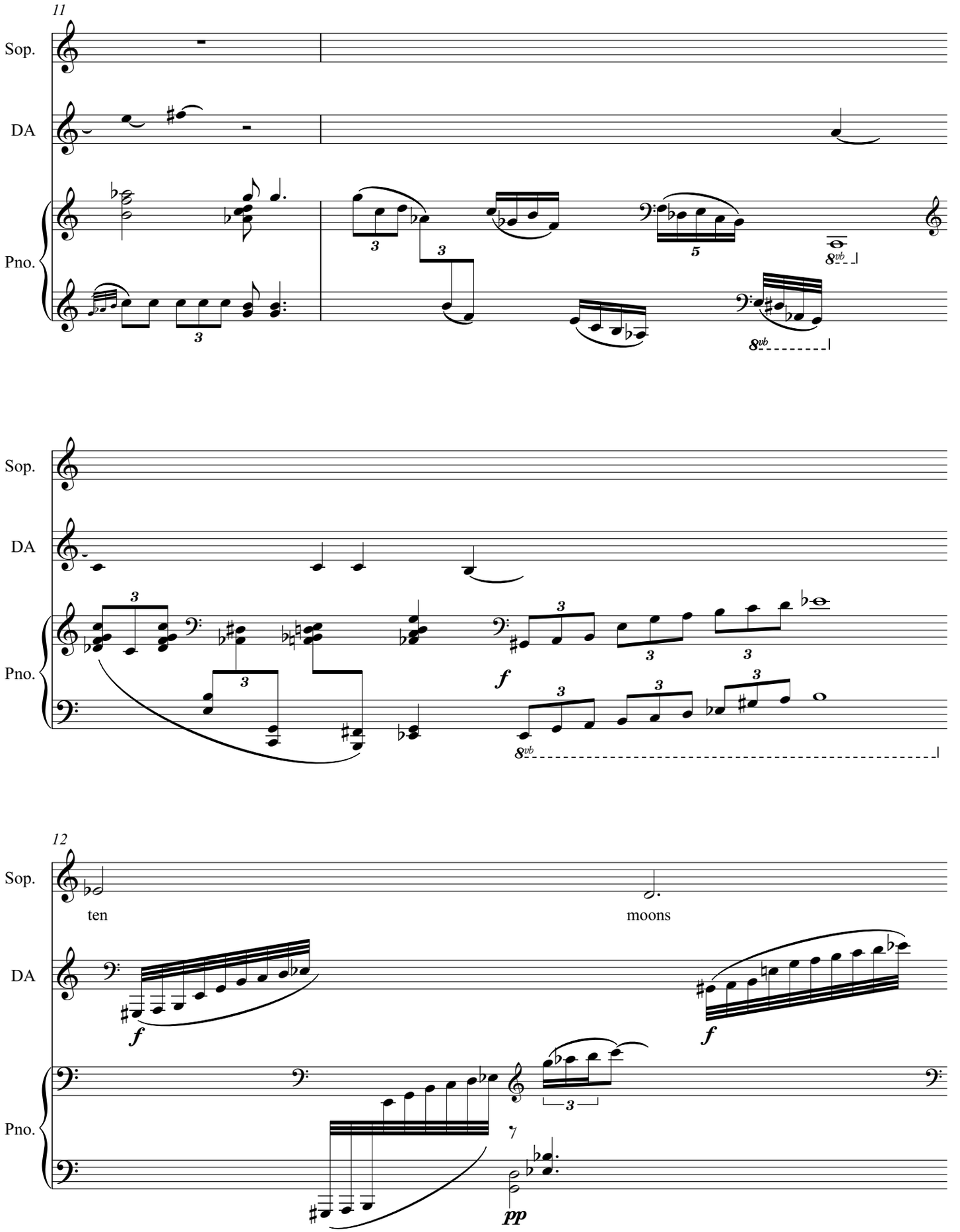
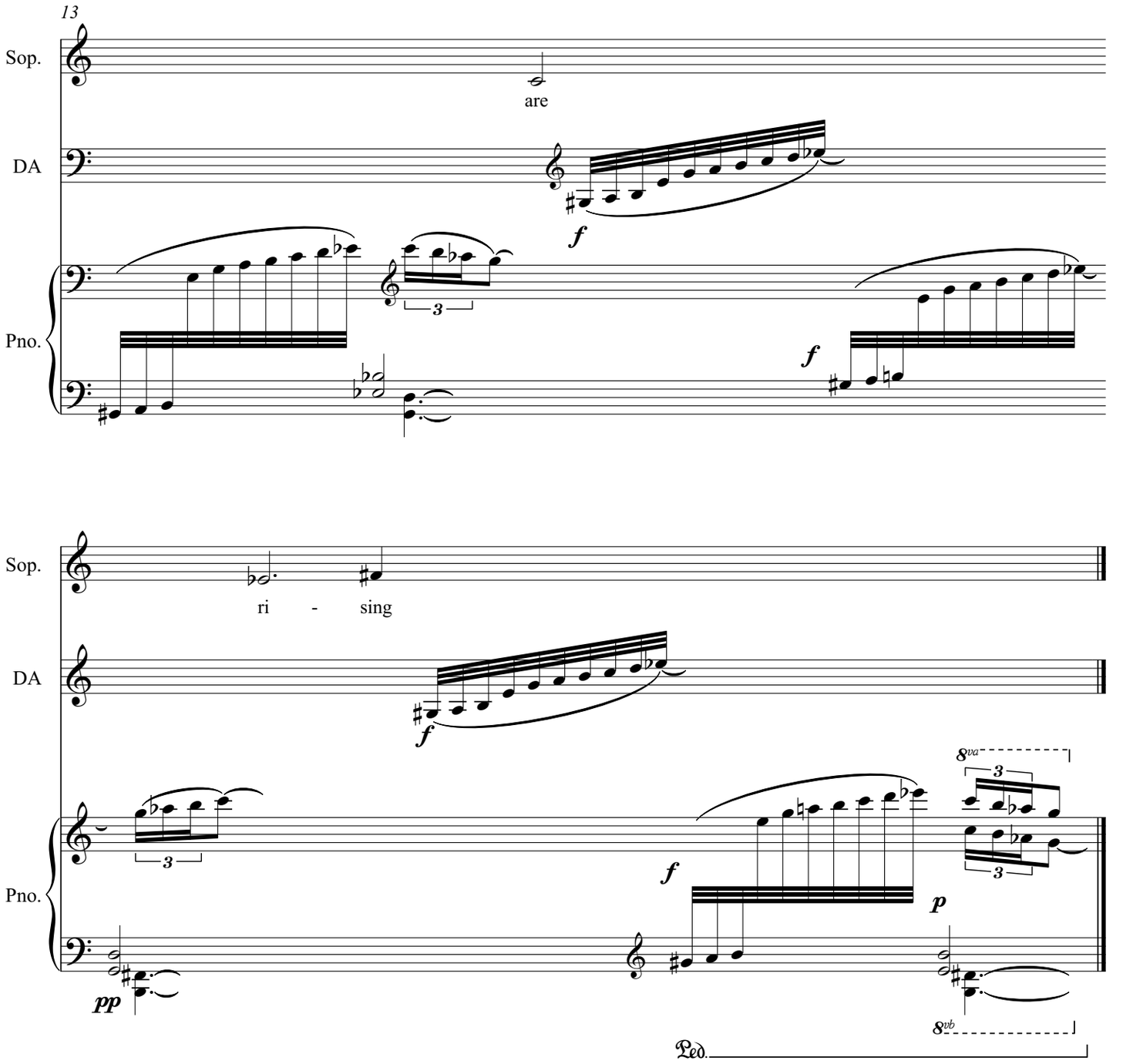

11
Sop.
DA
Pno.
8vb
8vb
Sop.
DA
Pno.
f
8vb
12
Sop.
ten
moons
DA
f
f
Pno.
pp

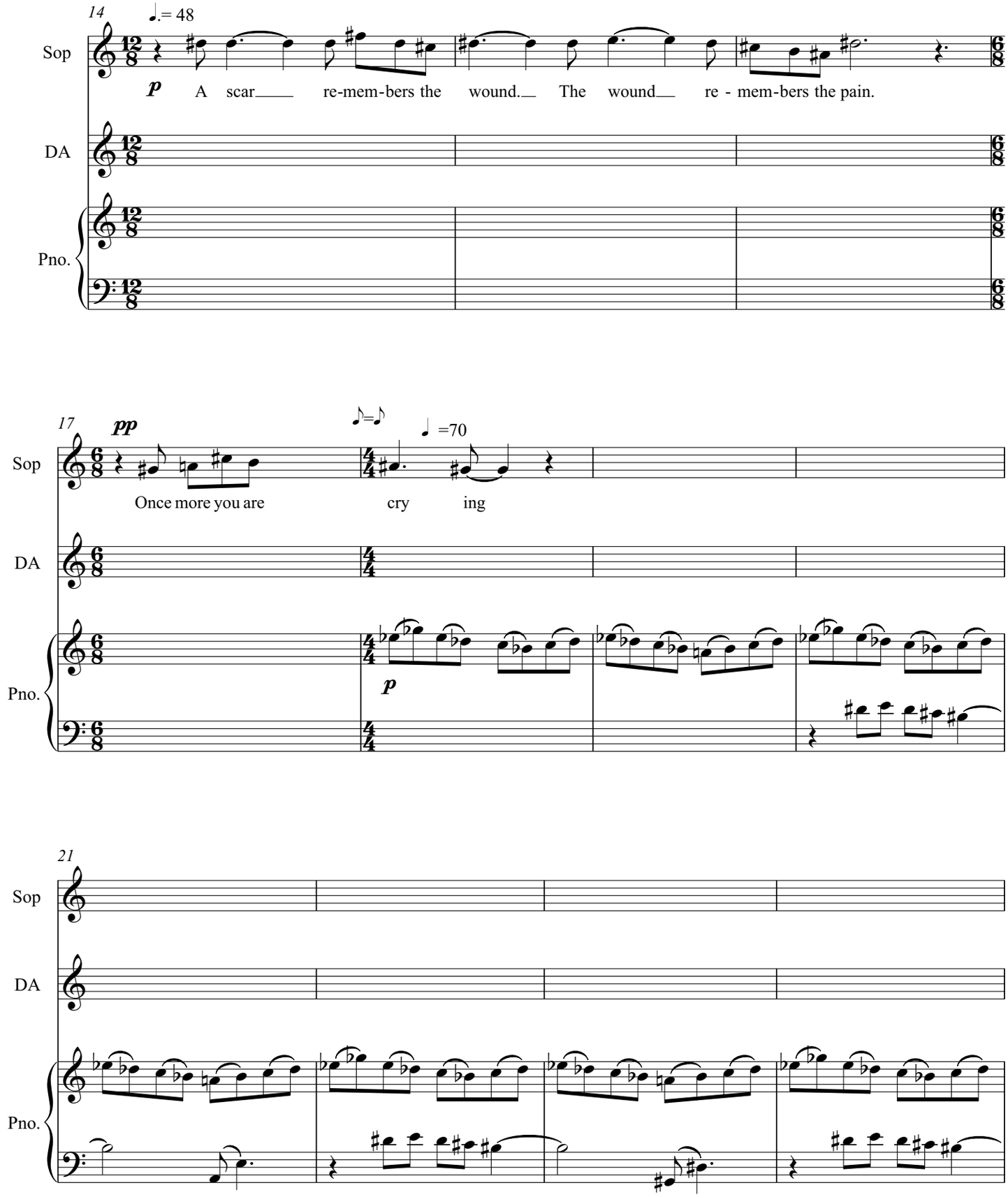

13
Sop.
are
DA
Pno.
Sop.
ri - sing
DA
Pno.
Ped.

DA: Cue 2

Seven Poems II & III

William Grosvenor Neil

Mark Strand



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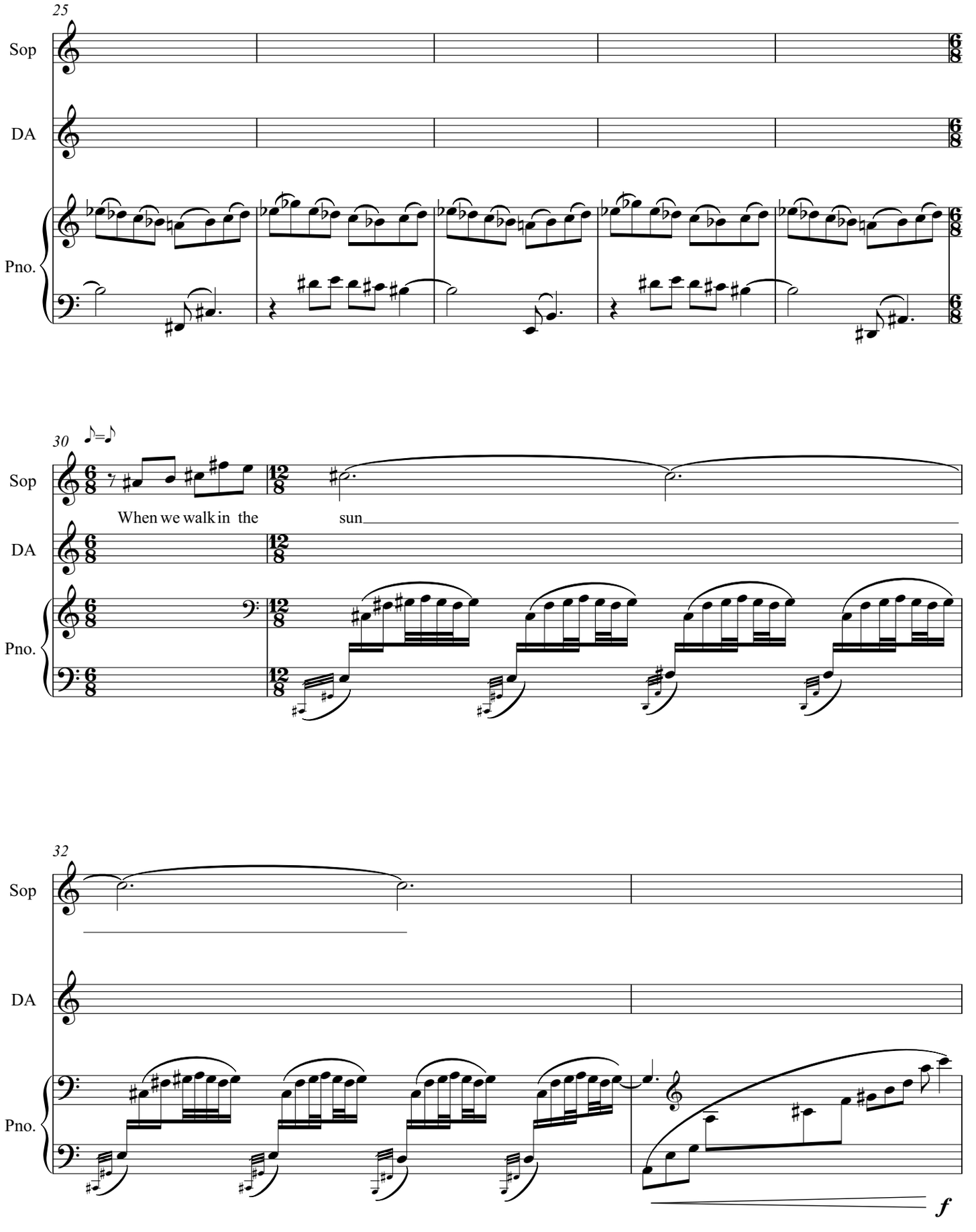
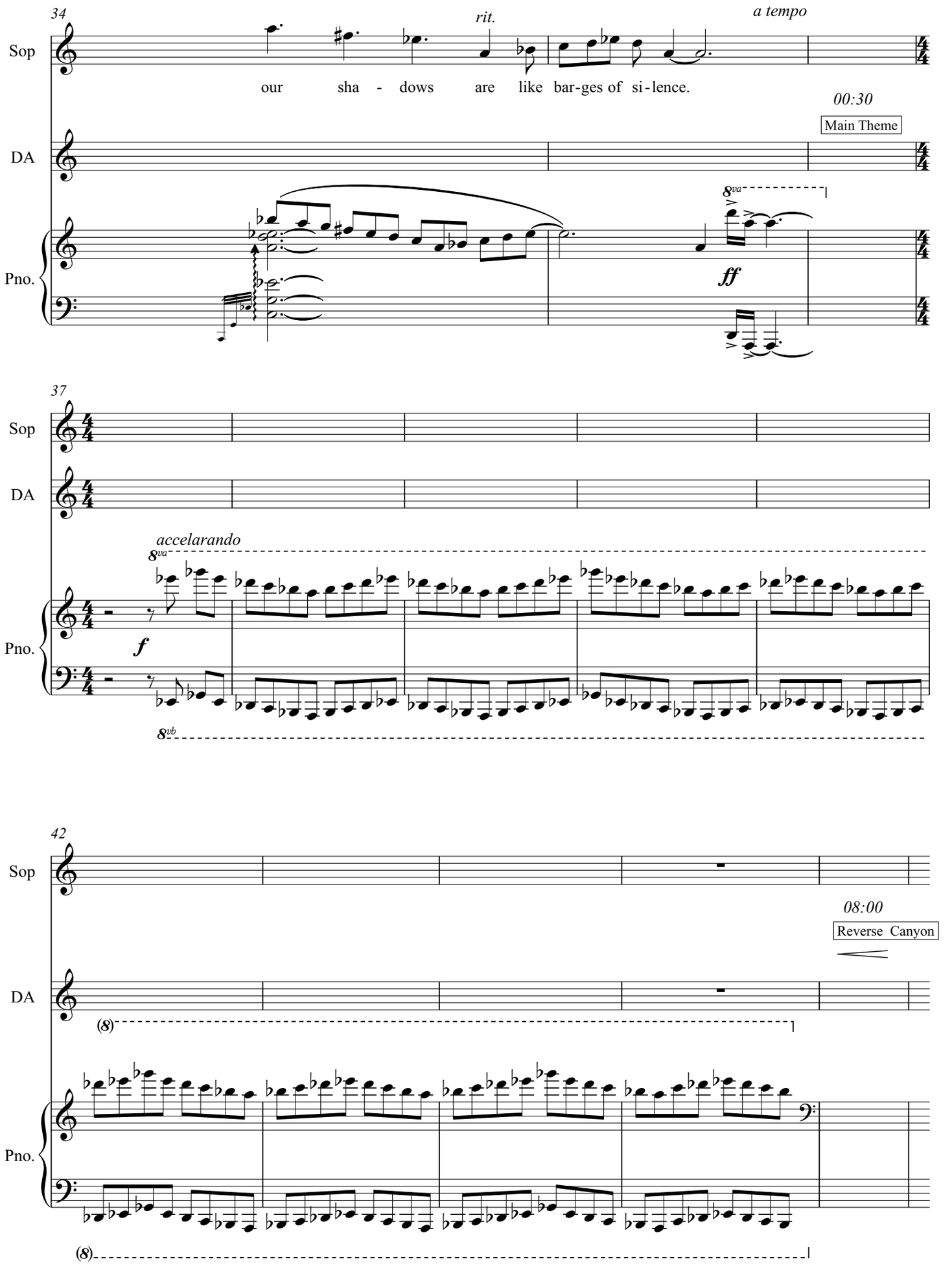
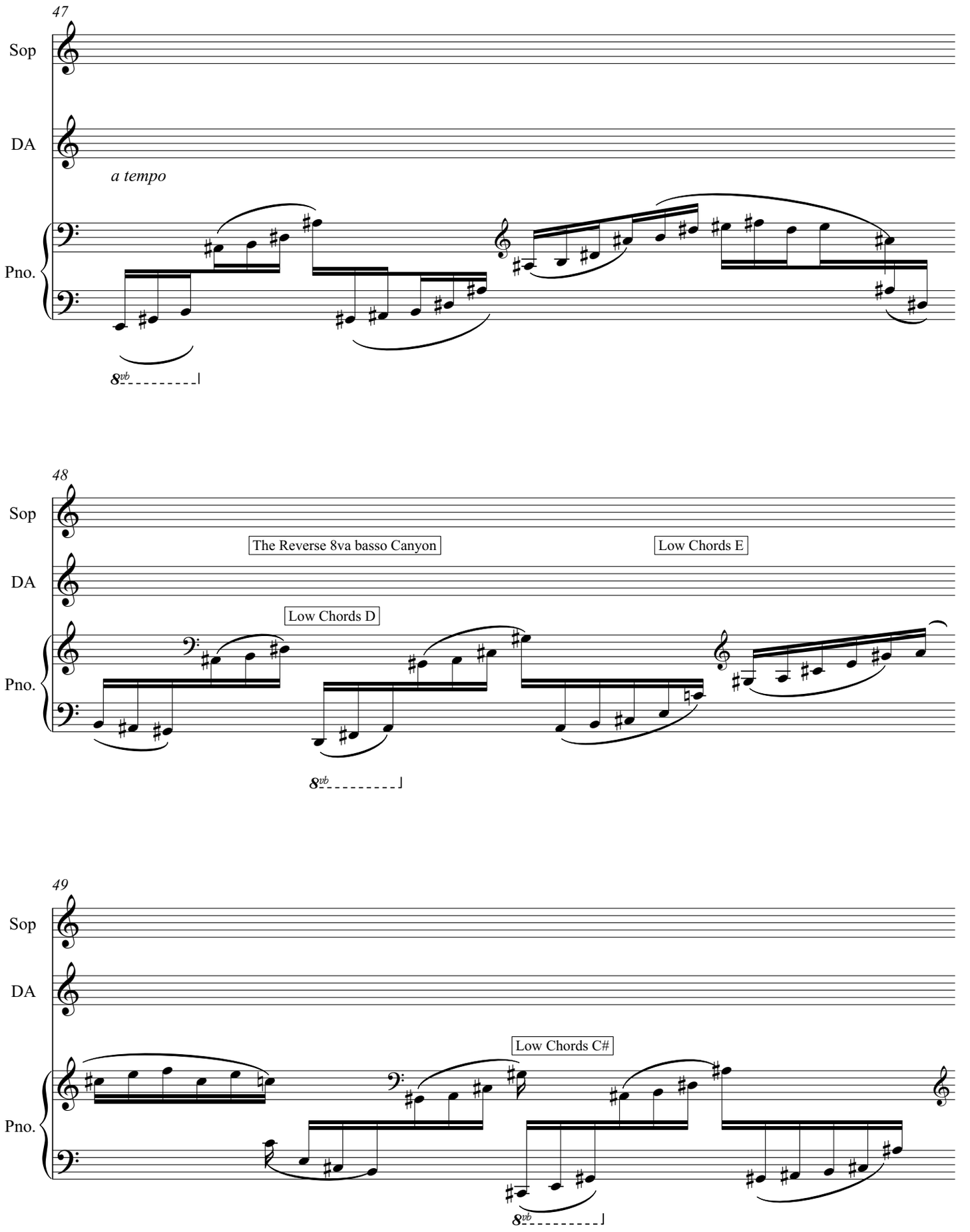
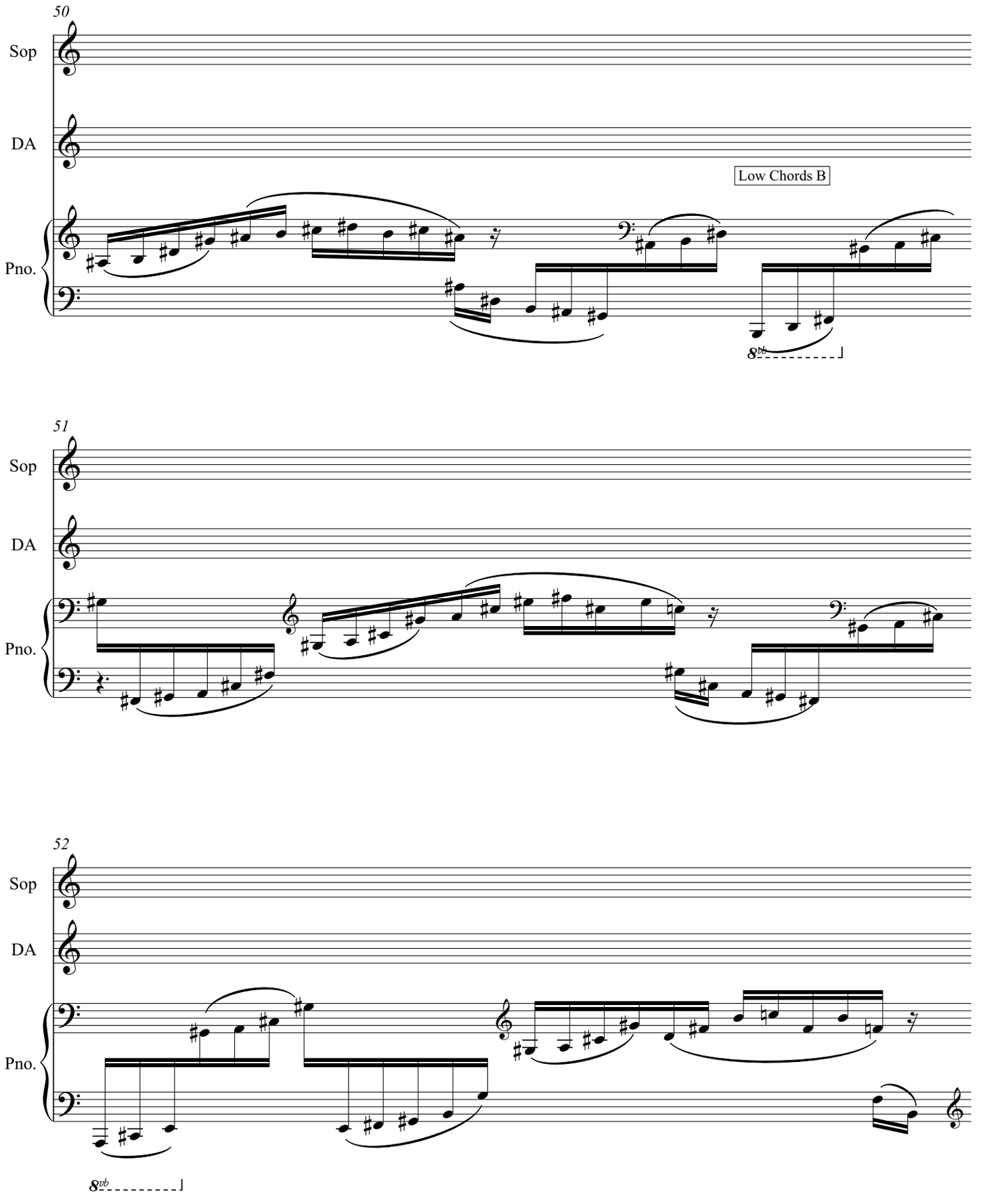
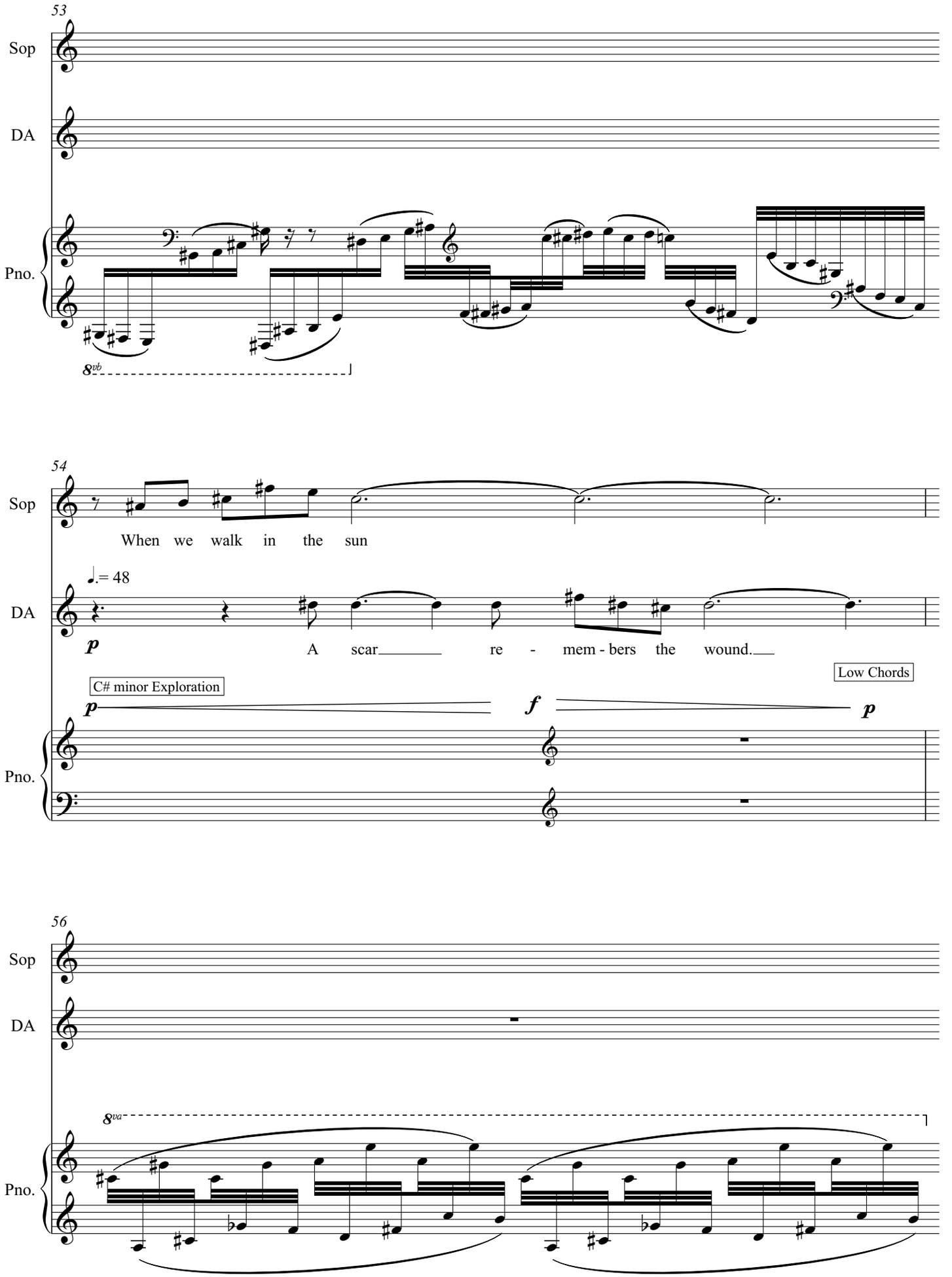
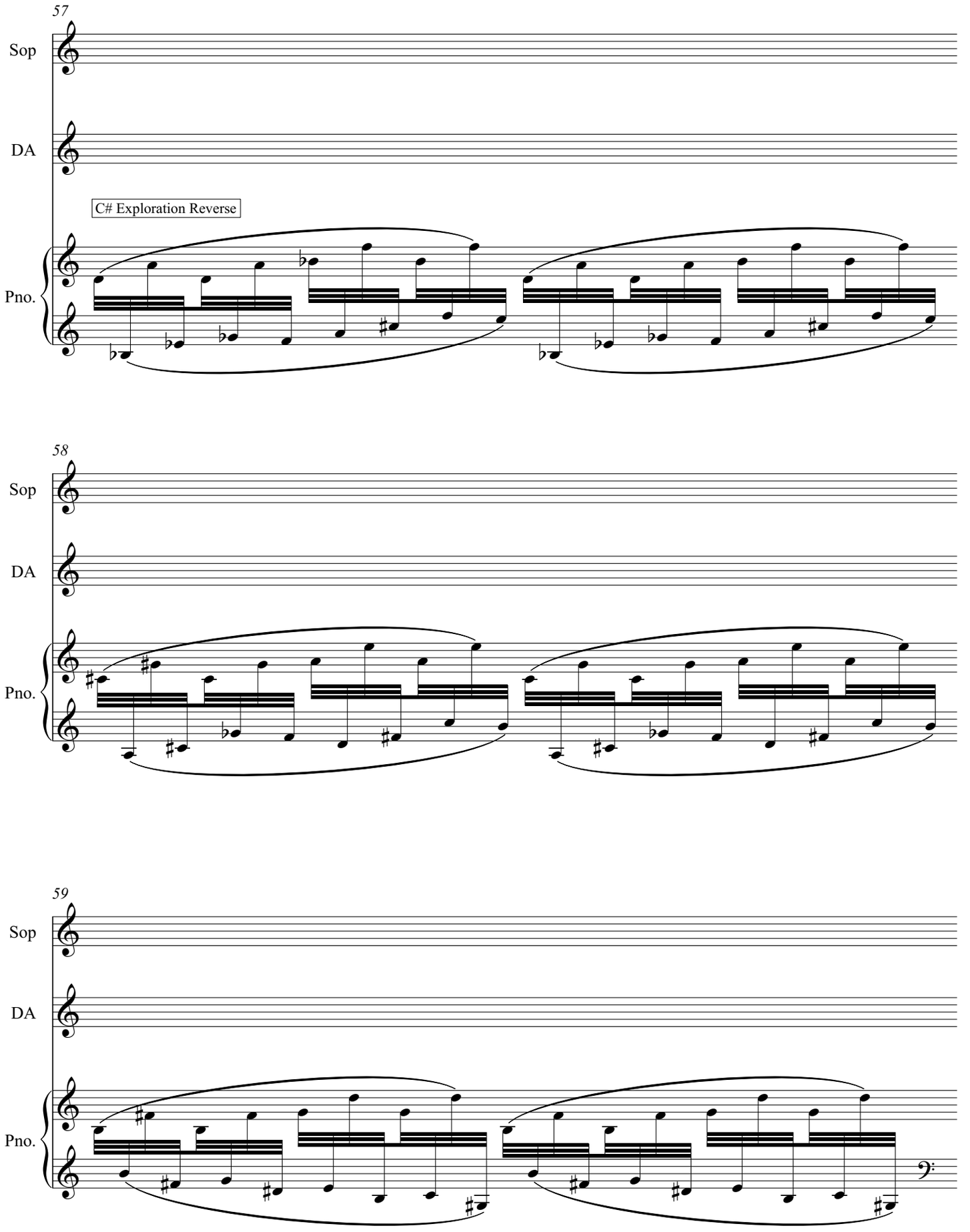

25
Sop
DA
Pno.
30
♪=♪
When we walk in the sun
32
f

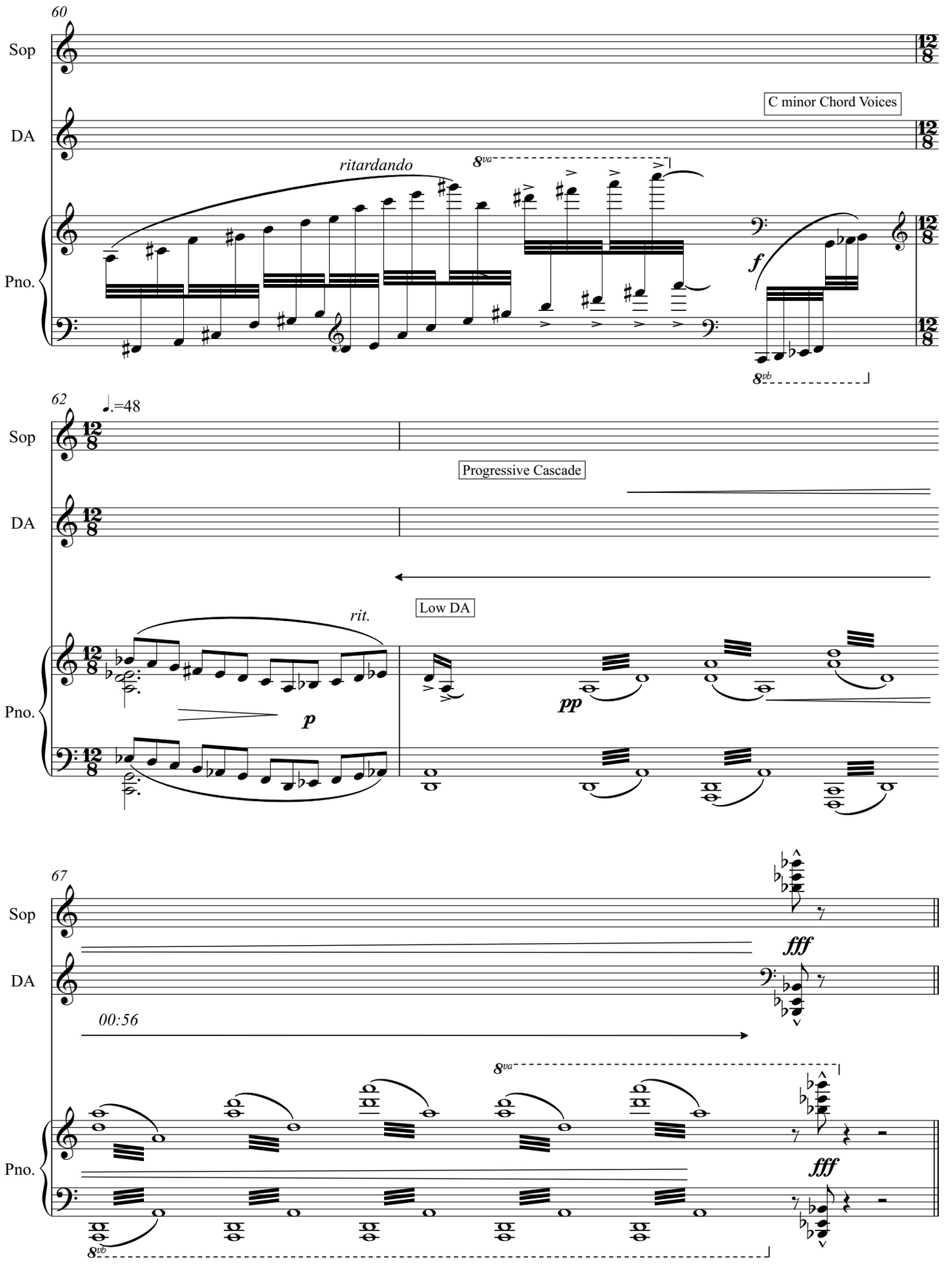

34
rit.
a tempo
Sop
our sha - dows are like bar-ges of si-lence.
00:30
Main Theme
DA
Pno.
8va
ff
37
Sop
DA
accelarando
8va
f
Pno.
8vb
42
Sop
08:00
Reverse Canyon
DA
(8)
Pno.
(8)


47
Sop
DA
a tempo
Pno.
8vb
48
Sop
The Reverse 8va basso Canyon
Low Chords E
DA
Low Chords D
Pno.
8vb
49
Sop
DA
Low Chords C#
Pno.
8vb


50
Sop
DA
Pno.
Low Chords B
8vb
51
Sop
DA
Pno.
52
Sop
DA
Pno.
8vb


53
Sop
DA
Pno.
8vb
54
Sop
When we walk in the sun
DA
♩.= 48
p
A scar re - mem - bers the wound.
C# minor Exploration
Low Chords
p
f
p
Pno.
56
Sop
DA
8va
Pno.


57
Sop
DA
C# Exploration Reverse
Pno.
58
Sop
DA
Pno.
59
Sop
DA
Pno.

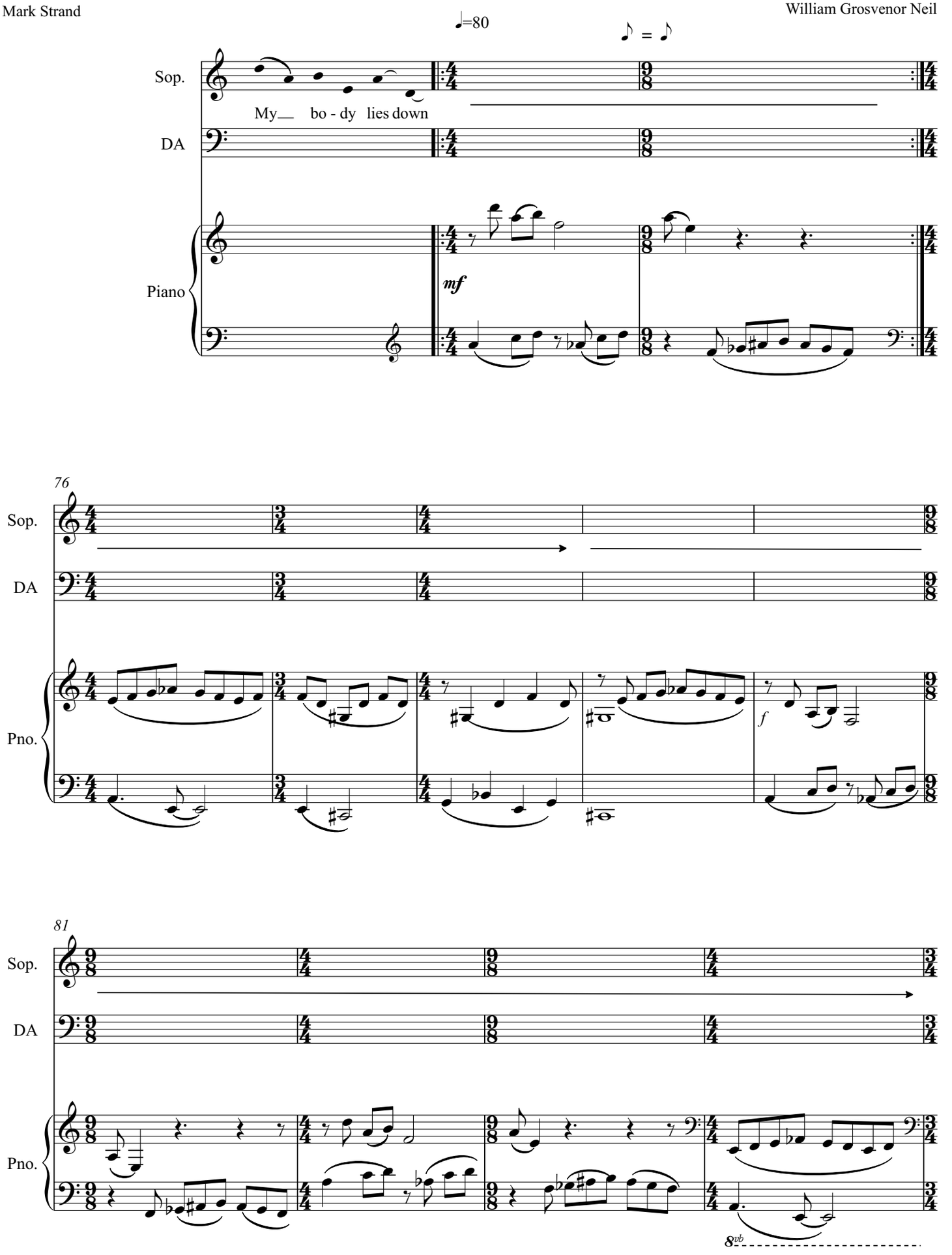

60
Sop
DA
Pno.
C minor Chord Voices
ritardando
8va
f
8vb
62
♩.=48
Progressive Cascade
rit.
Low DA
p
pp
67
fff
00:56
fff

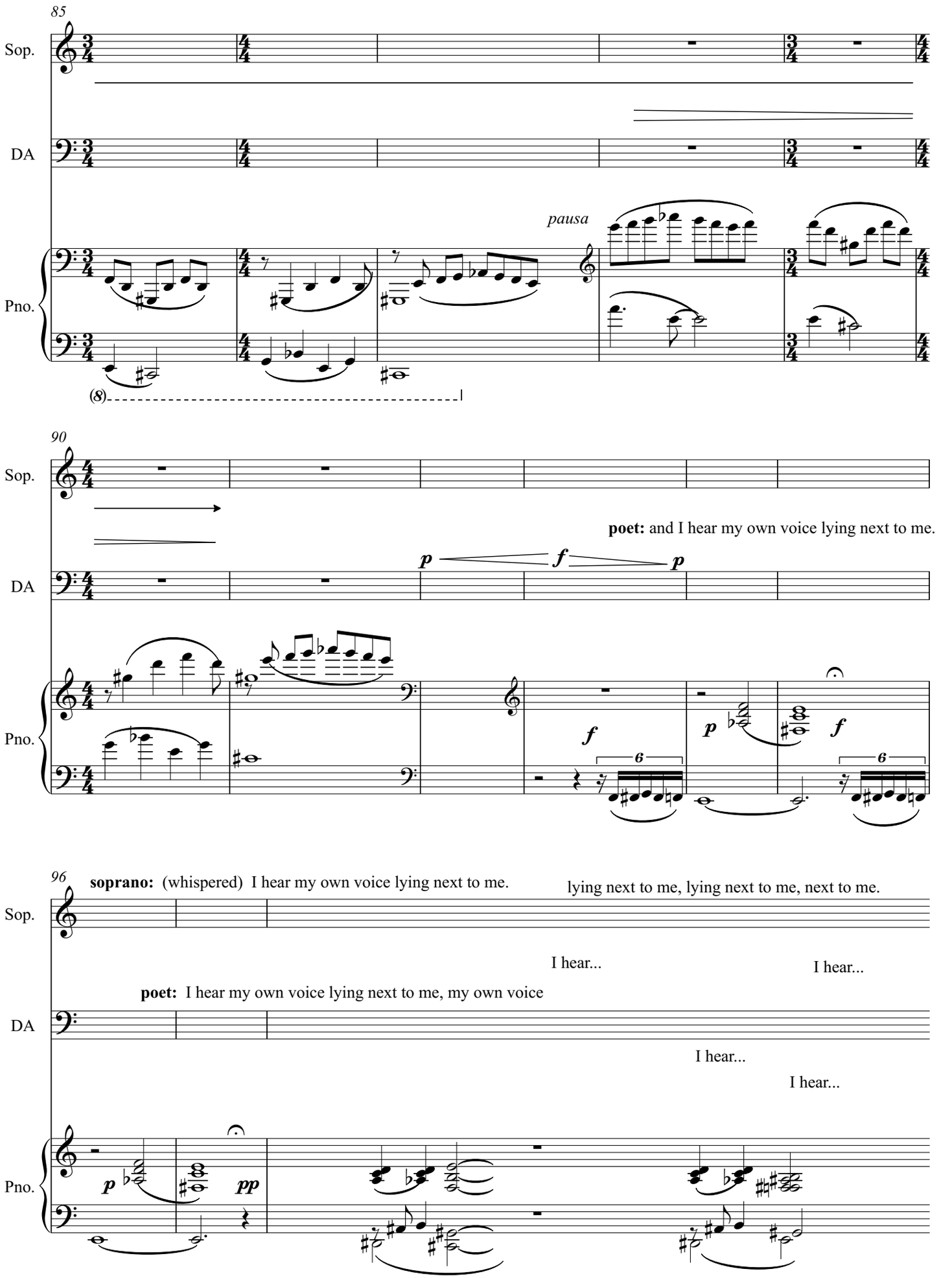
DA: Cue 3

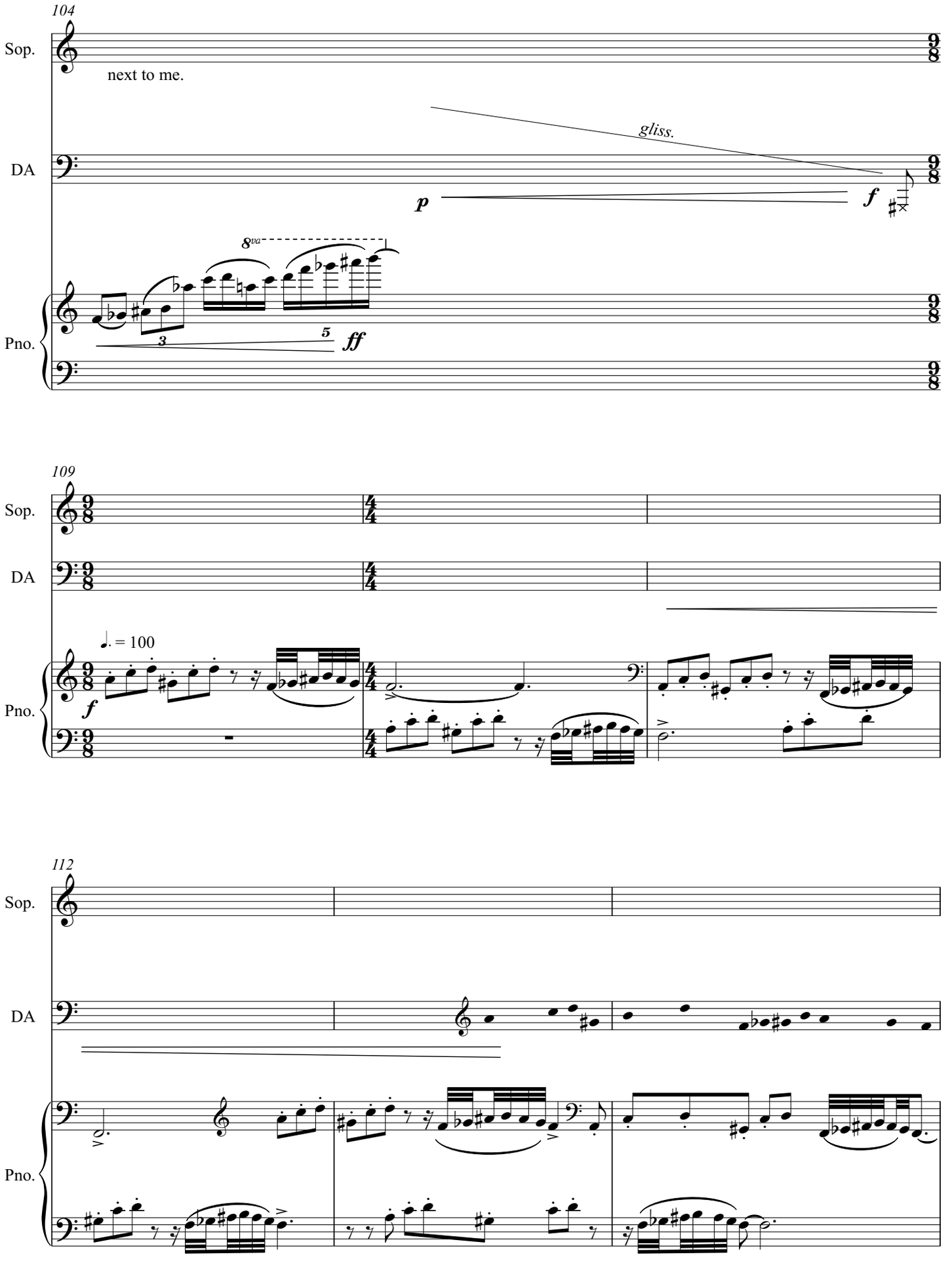
Seven Poems IV

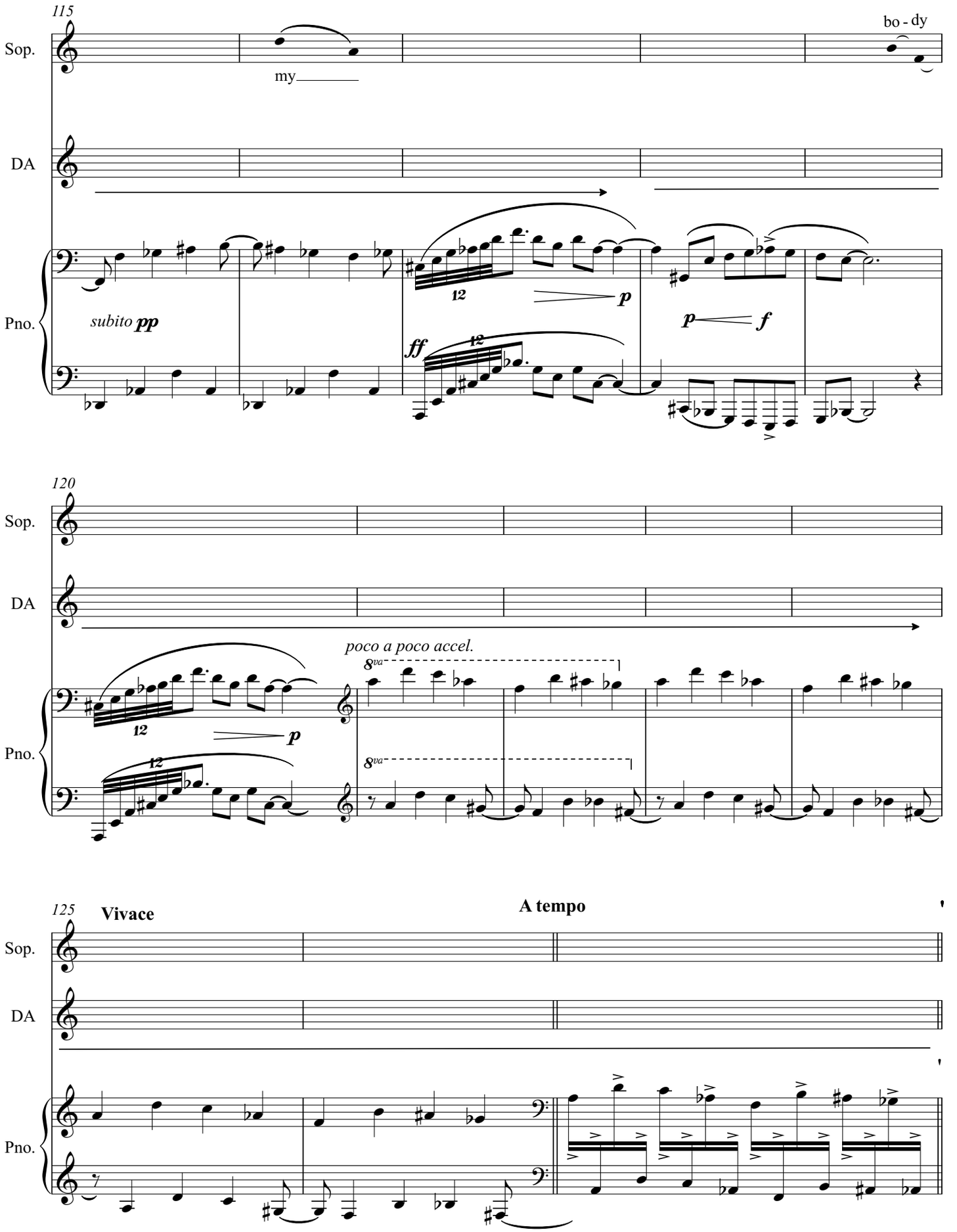
Mark Strand

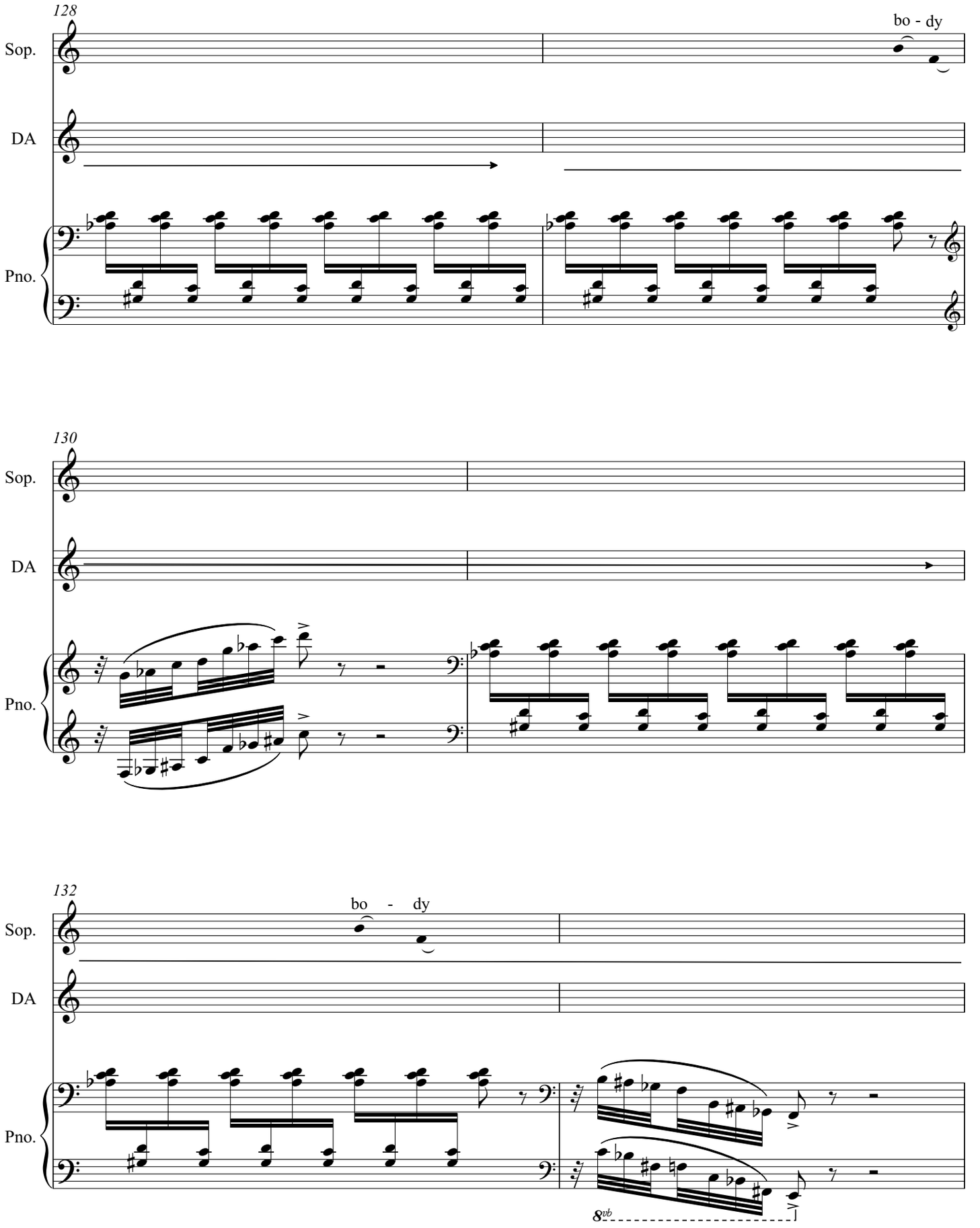
William Grosvenor Neil

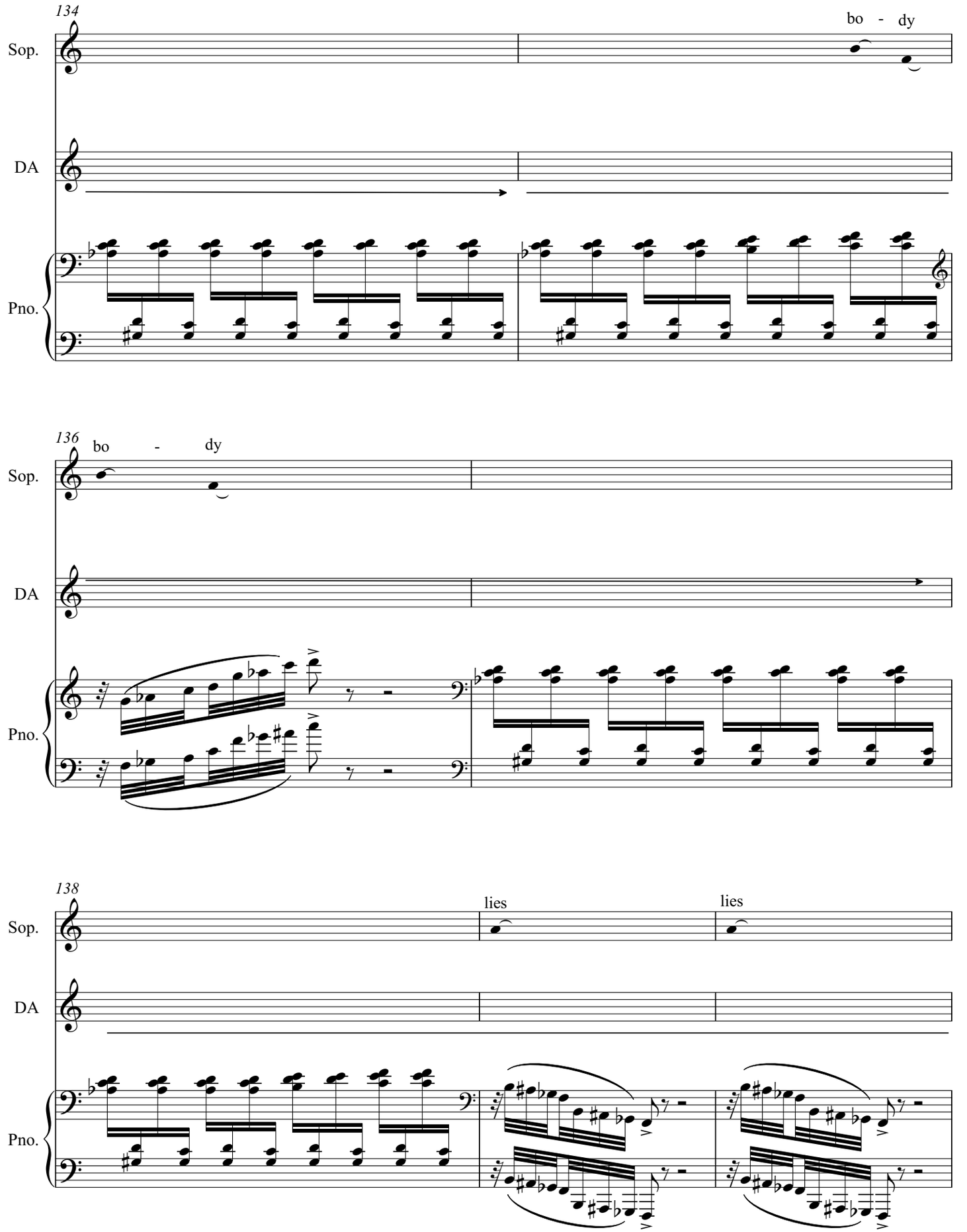


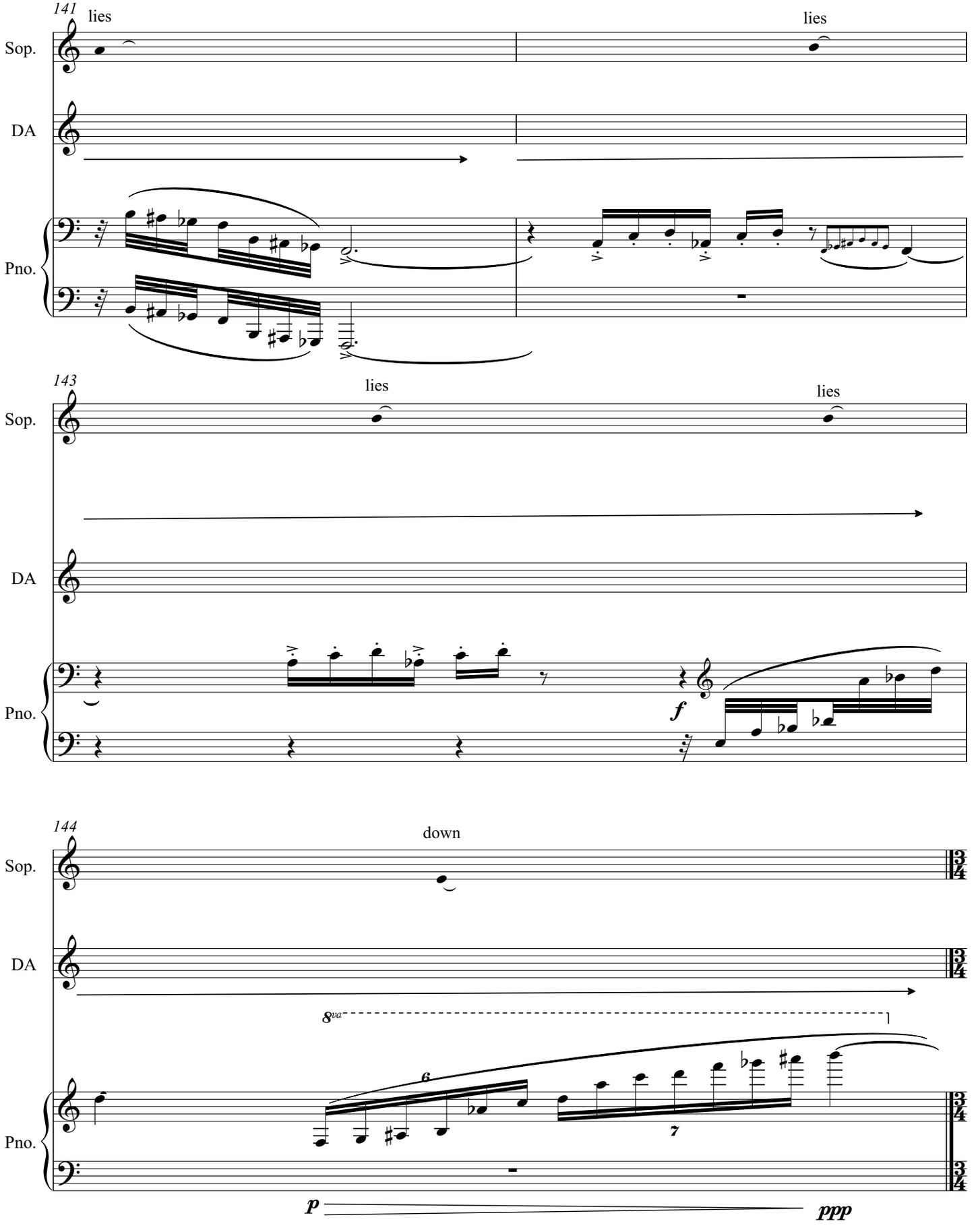

85
Sop.
DA
Pno.
pausa
(8)
90
Sop.
DA
Pno.
poet: and I hear my own voice lying next to me.
p
f
p
f
p
f
6
6
96
soprano: (whispered) I hear my own voice lying next to me.
lying next to me, lying next to me, next to me.
Sop.
I hear...
I hear...
poet: I hear my own voice lying next to me, my own voice
DA
I hear...
I hear...
Pno.
p
pp


104
Sop.
next to me.
DA
gliss.
p
f
8va
Pno.
3
5
ff
109
Sop.
DA
♩. = 100
f
Pno.
112
Sop.
DA
Pno.


115
Sop.
my
bo - dy
DA
Pno.
subito pp
12
p
p
f
ff
12
120
Sop.
DA
poco a poco accel.
8va
12
p
Pno.
8va
12
125
Vivace
A tempo
Sop.
DA
Pno.

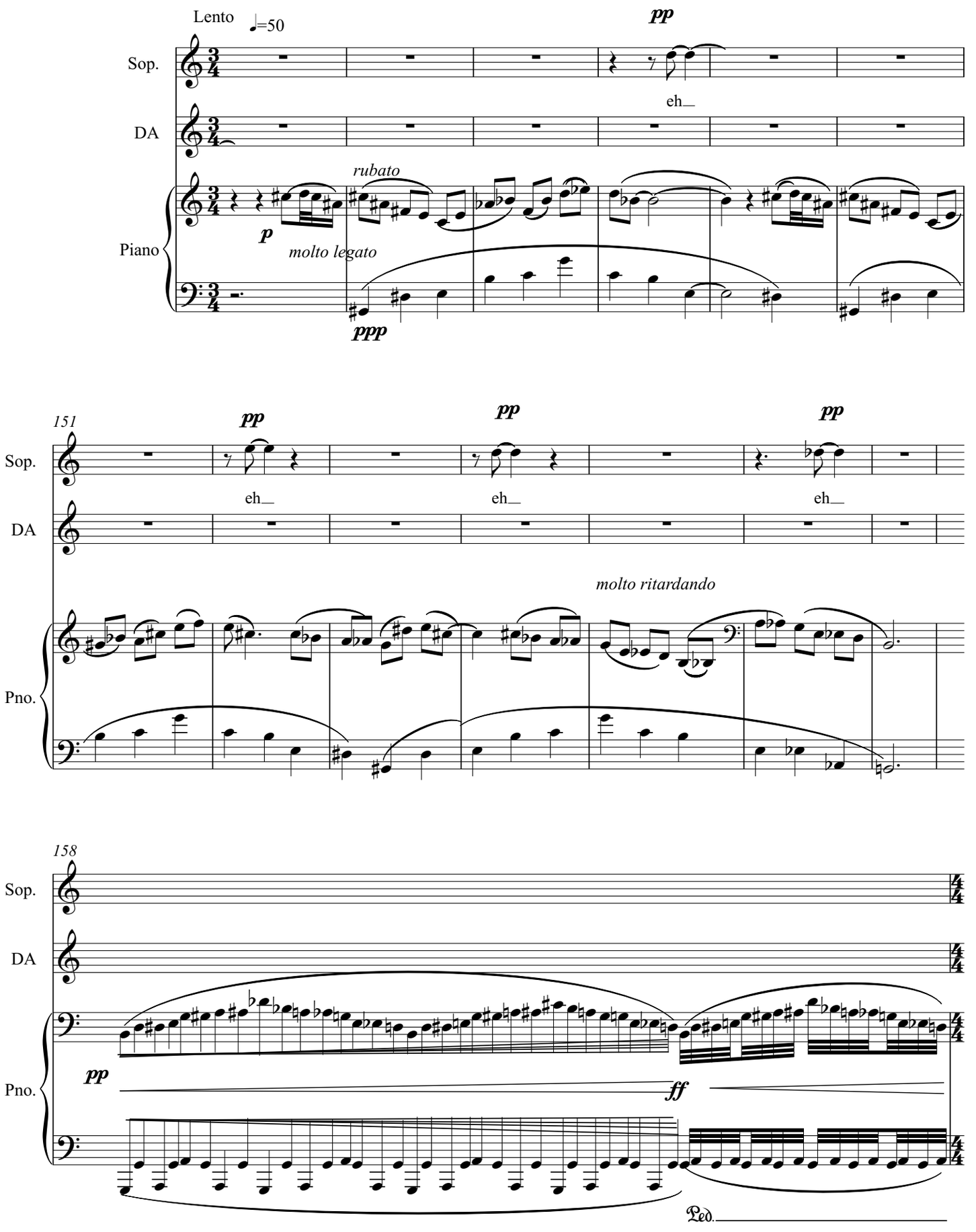

128
Sop.
bo - dy
DA
Pno.
130
Sop.
DA
Pno.
132
bo - dy
Sop.
DA
Pno.
8vb

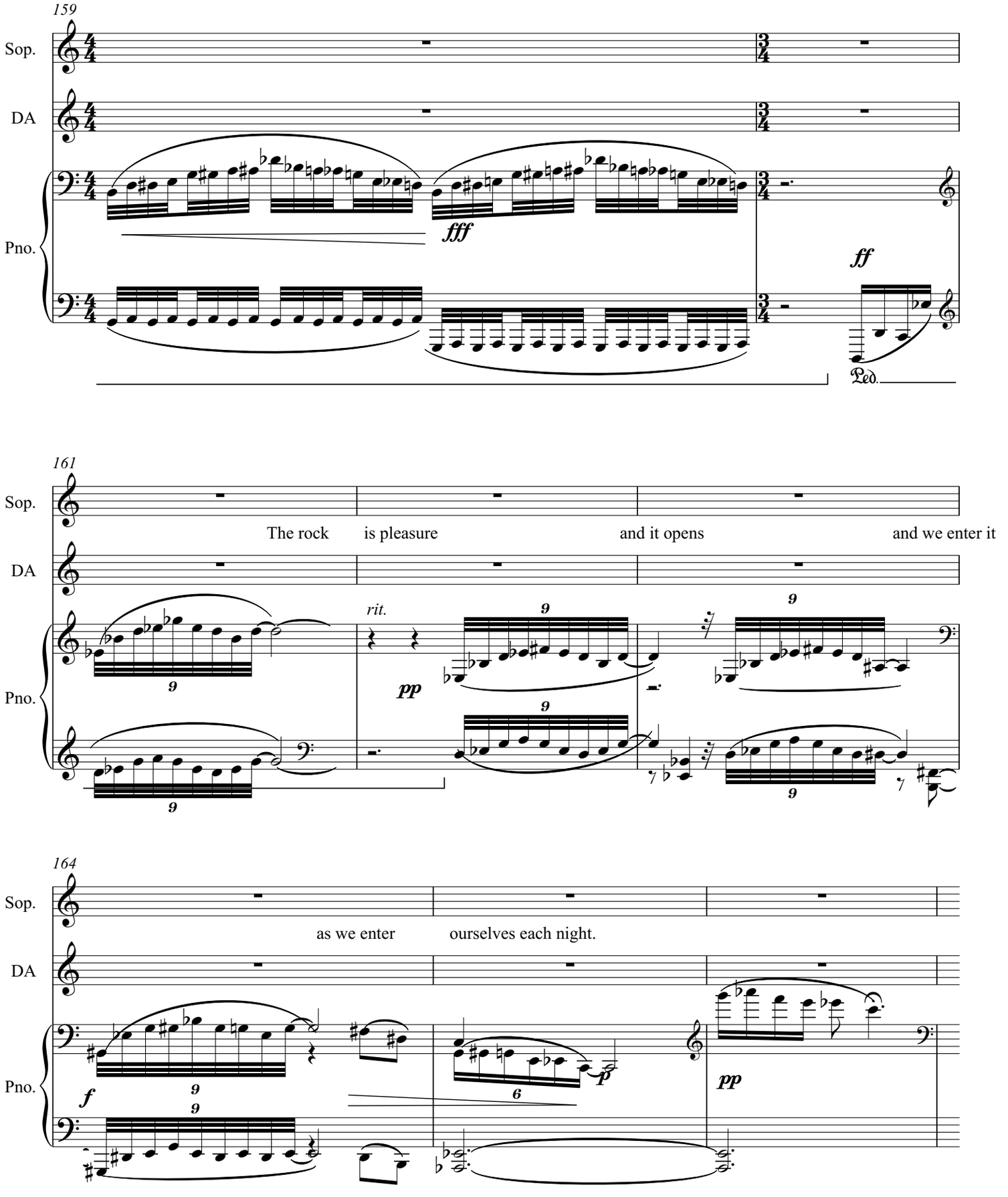

134
Sop.
bo - dy
DA
Pno.
136
bo - dy
Sop.
DA
Pno.
138
lies
lies
Sop.
DA
Pno.

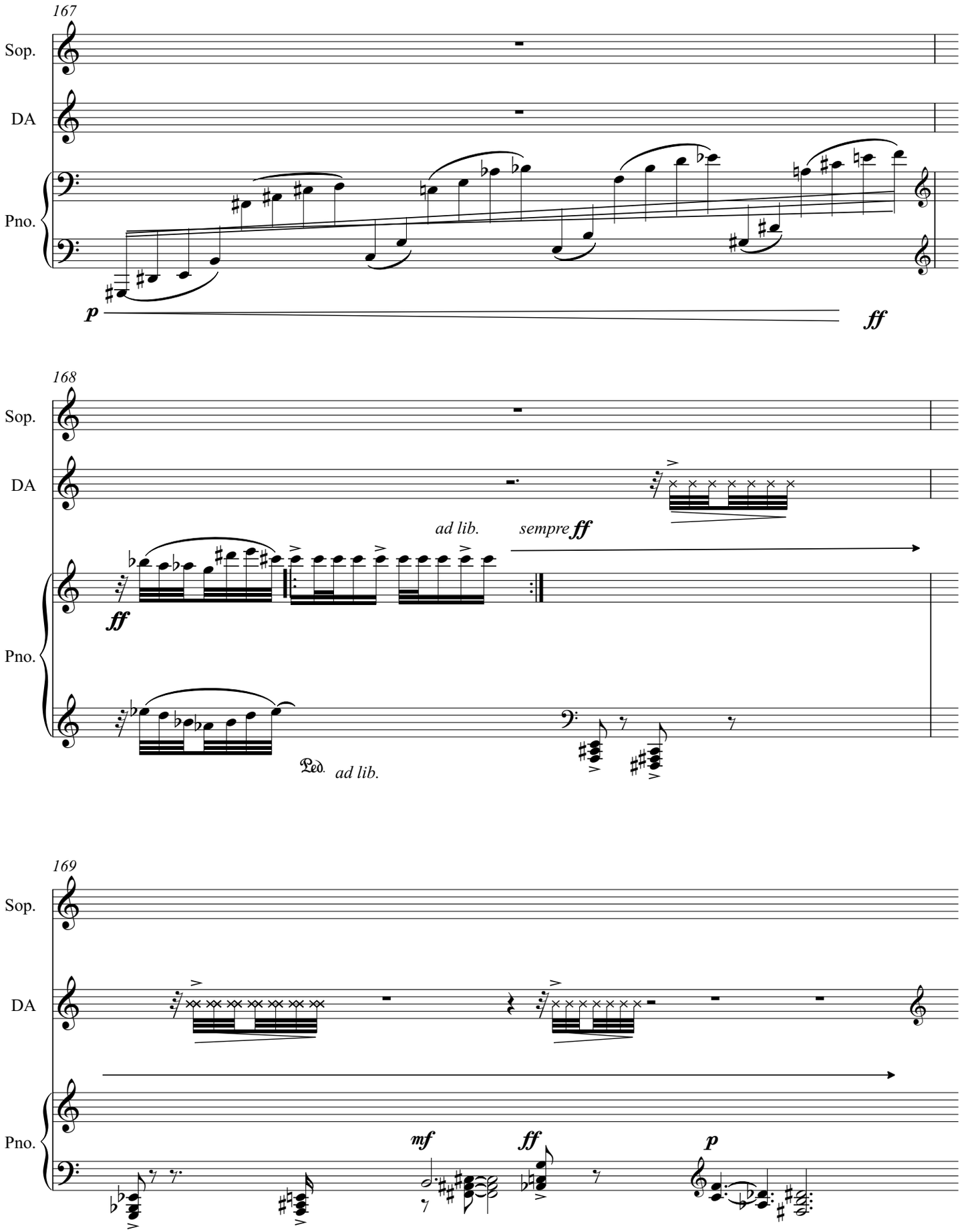

141
lies
lies
Sop.
DA
Pno.
143
lies
lies
Sop.
DA
Pno.
f
144
down
Sop.
DA
8va
6
7
Pno.
p
ppp

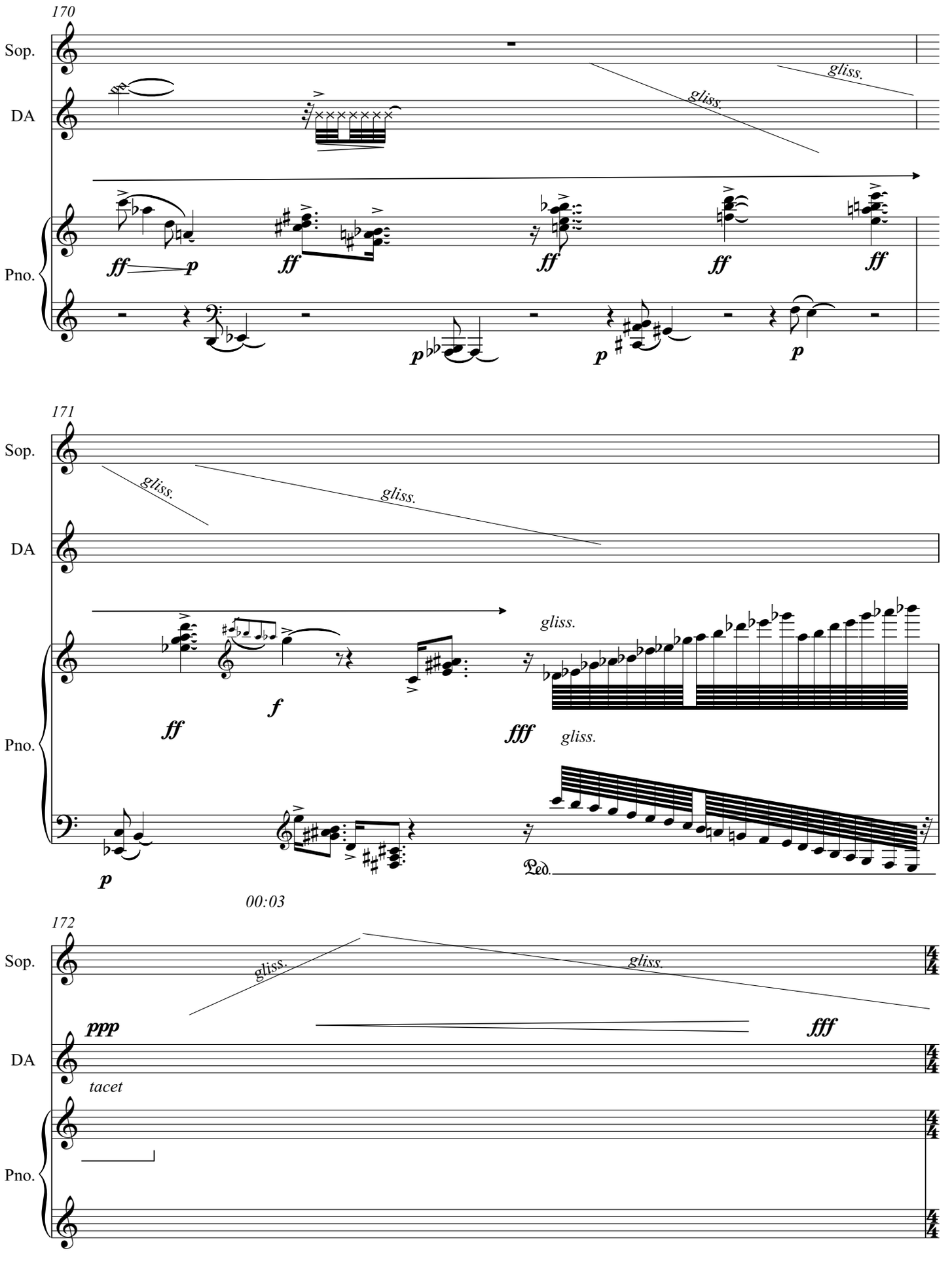
DA: Cue 4

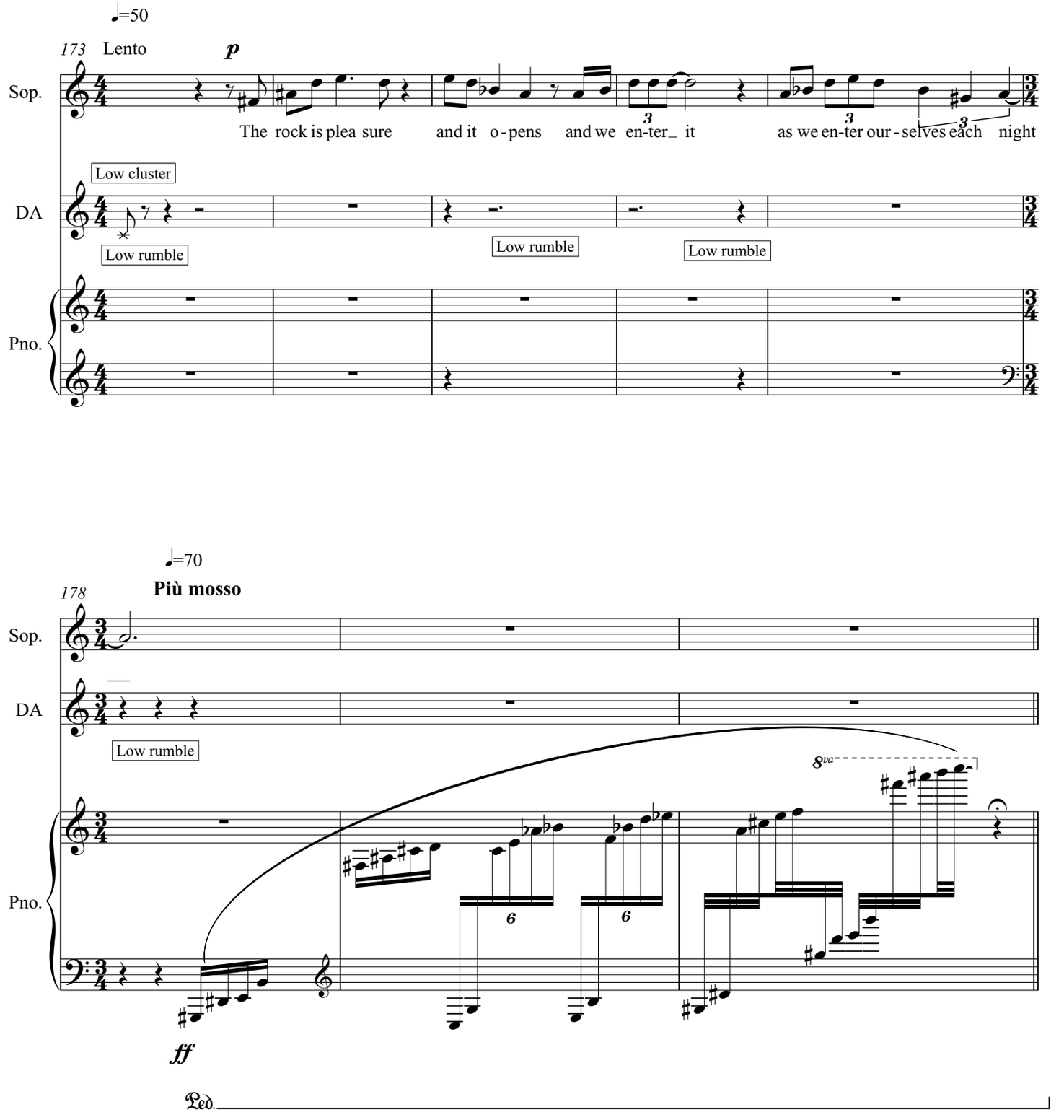
Seven Poems V




159
Sop.
DA
Pno.
fff
ff
Ped.
161
Sop.
The rock
is pleasure
and it opens
and we enter it
DA
Pno.
rit.
pp
164
Sop.
as we enter
ourselves each night.
DA
Pno.
f
p
pp


167
Sop.
DA
Pno.
p
ff
168
Sop.
DA
Pno.
ad lib.
sempre ff
ff
Ped.
ad lib.
169
Sop.
DA
Pno.
mf
ff
p


170
Sop.
DA
Pno.
gliss.
gliss.
ff
p
ff
ff
ff
ff
p
p
p
171
Sop.
DA
Pno.
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
ff
f
fff
gliss.
p
Ped.
00:03
172
Sop.
DA
Pno.
gliss.
gliss.
ppp
fff
tacet


♩=50
173 Lento
p
Sop.
The rock is plea sure and it o-pens and we en-ter_ it as we en-ter our-selves each night
DA
Low cluster
Low rumble
Low rumble
Low rumble
Pno.
♩=70
Più mosso
178
Sop.
DA
Low rumble
Pno.
8va
ff
Ped.

Seven Poems VI

DA: Cue 5

181

♩ = 200

Sop.

Poet: When I talk to the window,
I say everything is everything.

DA

Pno.

mf

184

Sop.

DA

Pno.

p

f

186

Sop.

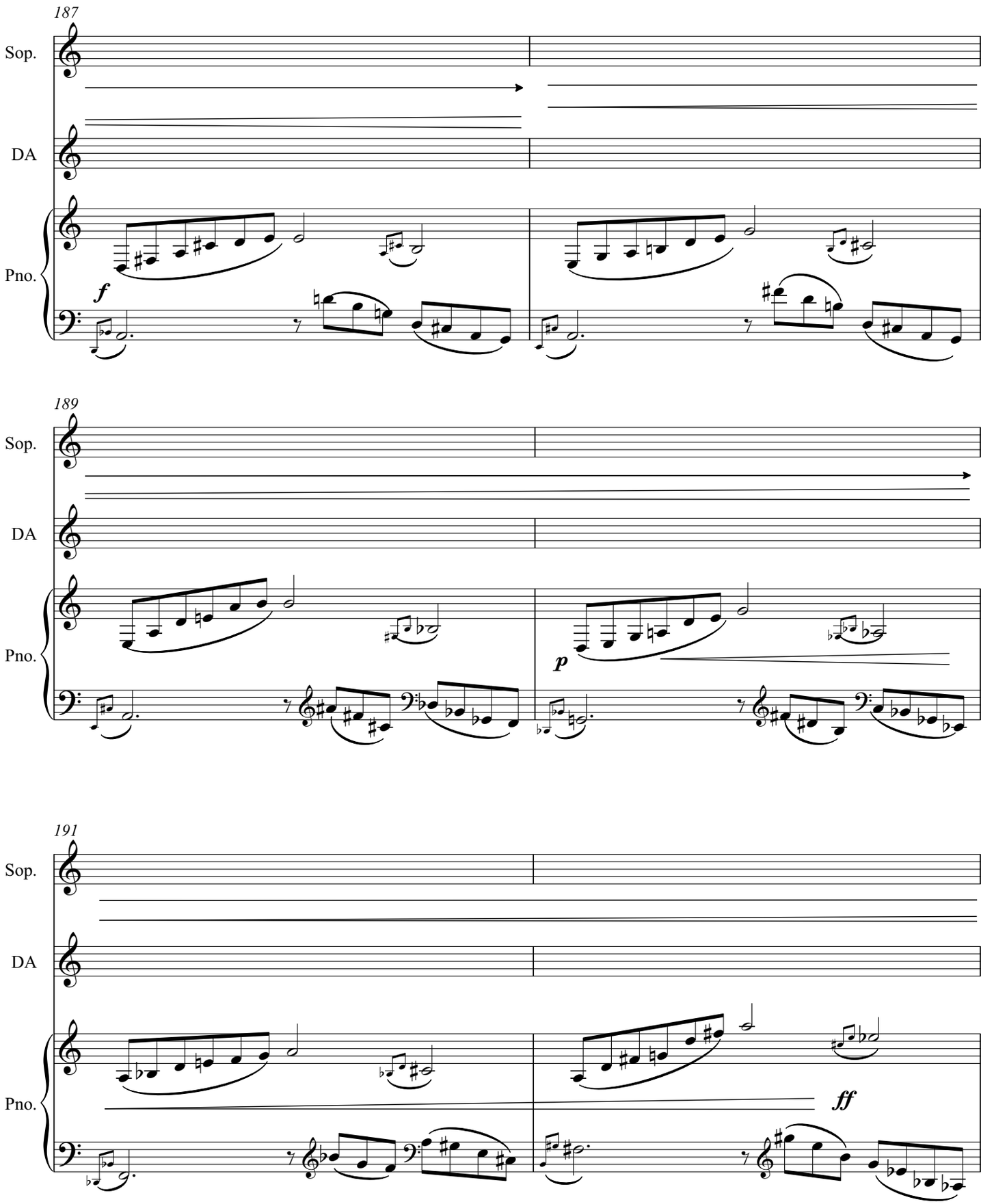
: ev'rything is ev'rything :

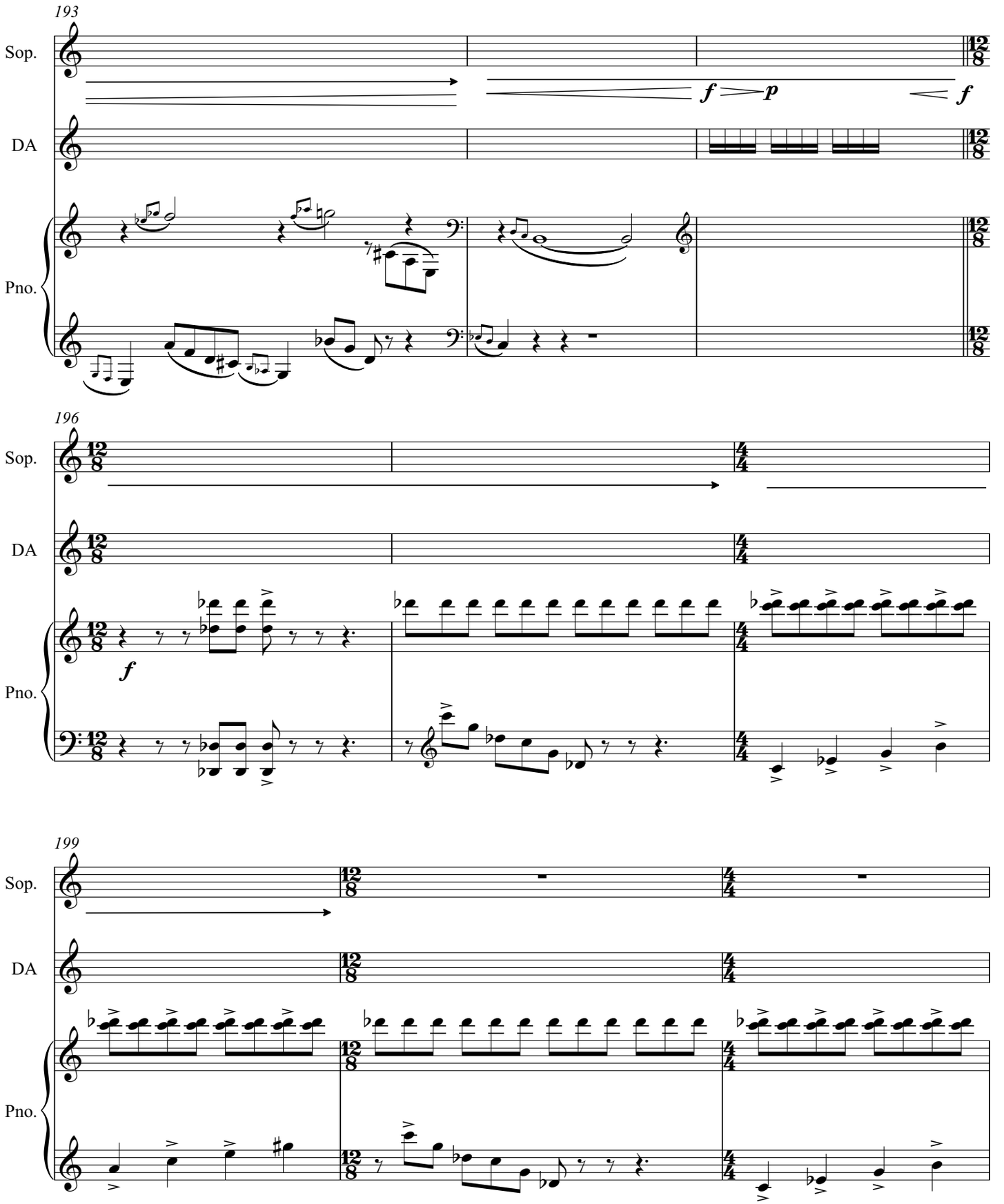
p

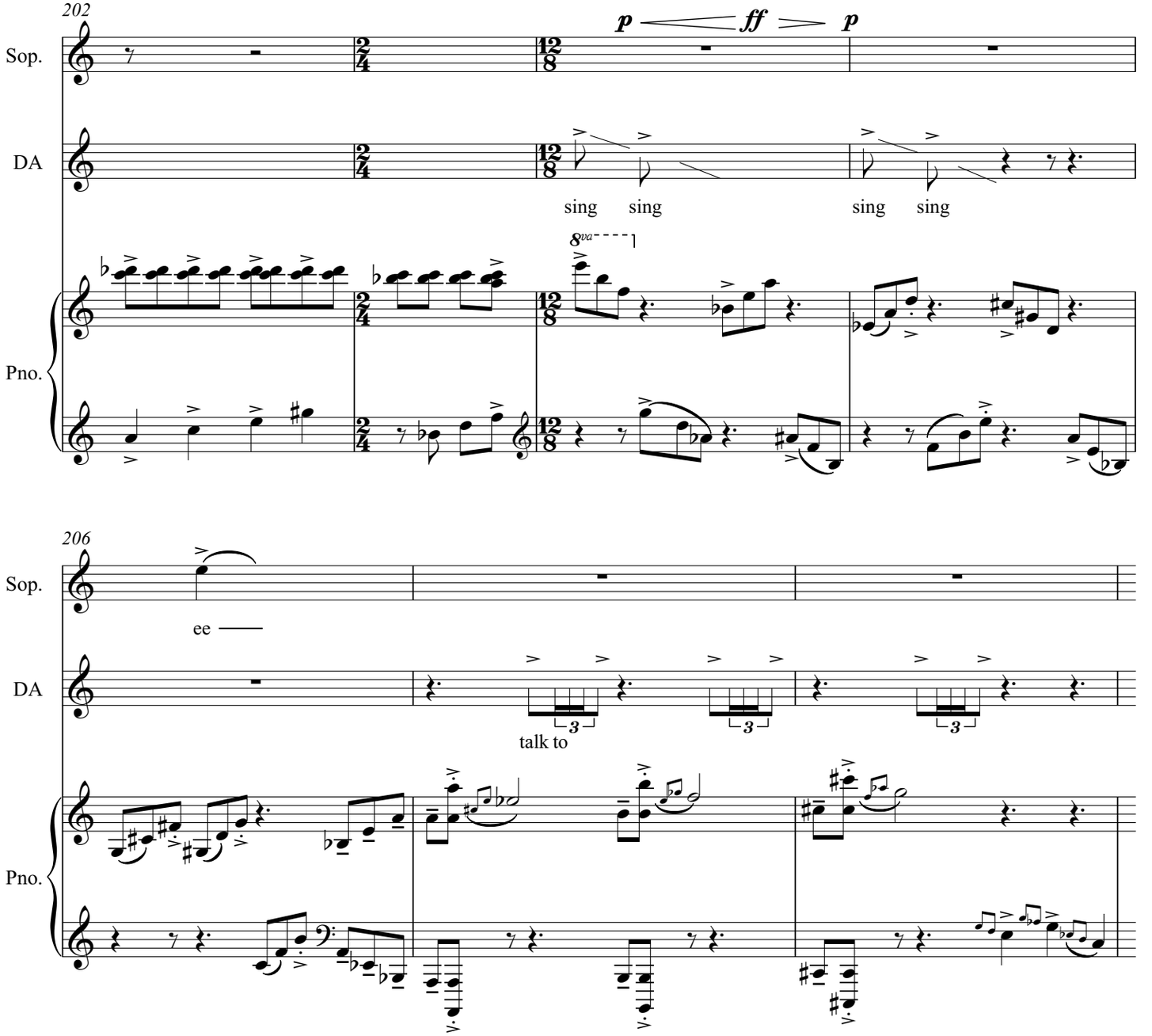
DA

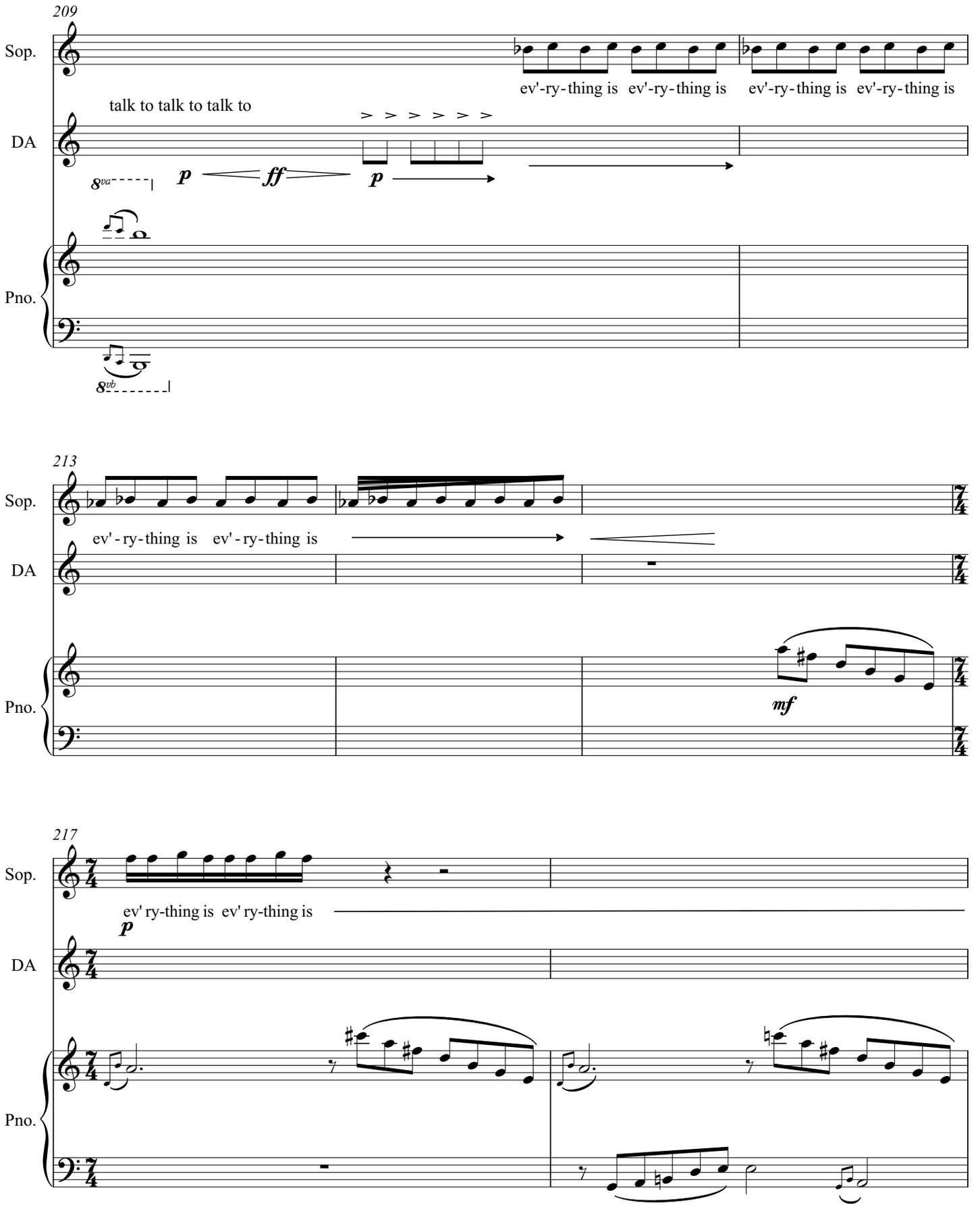
Pno.

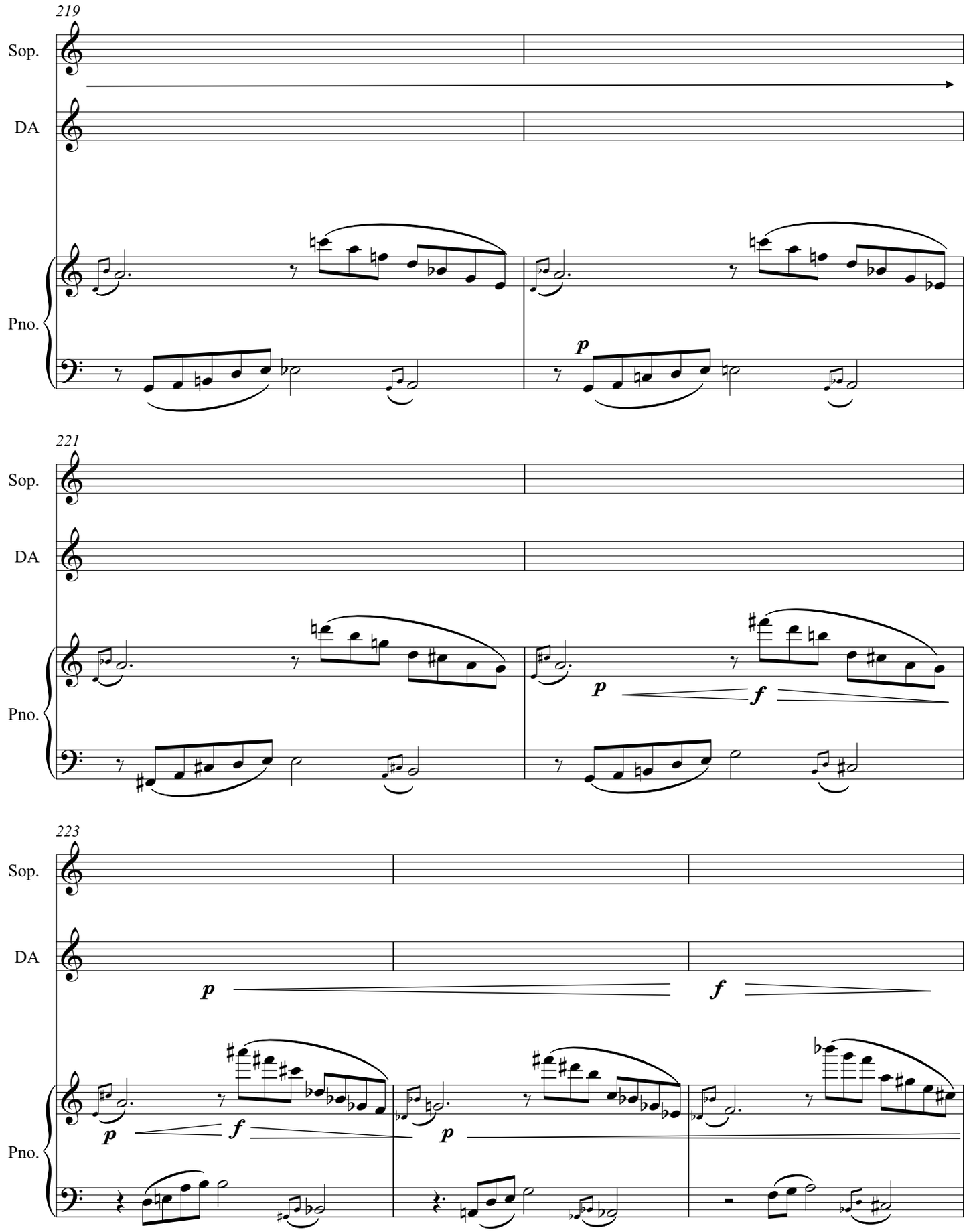
p

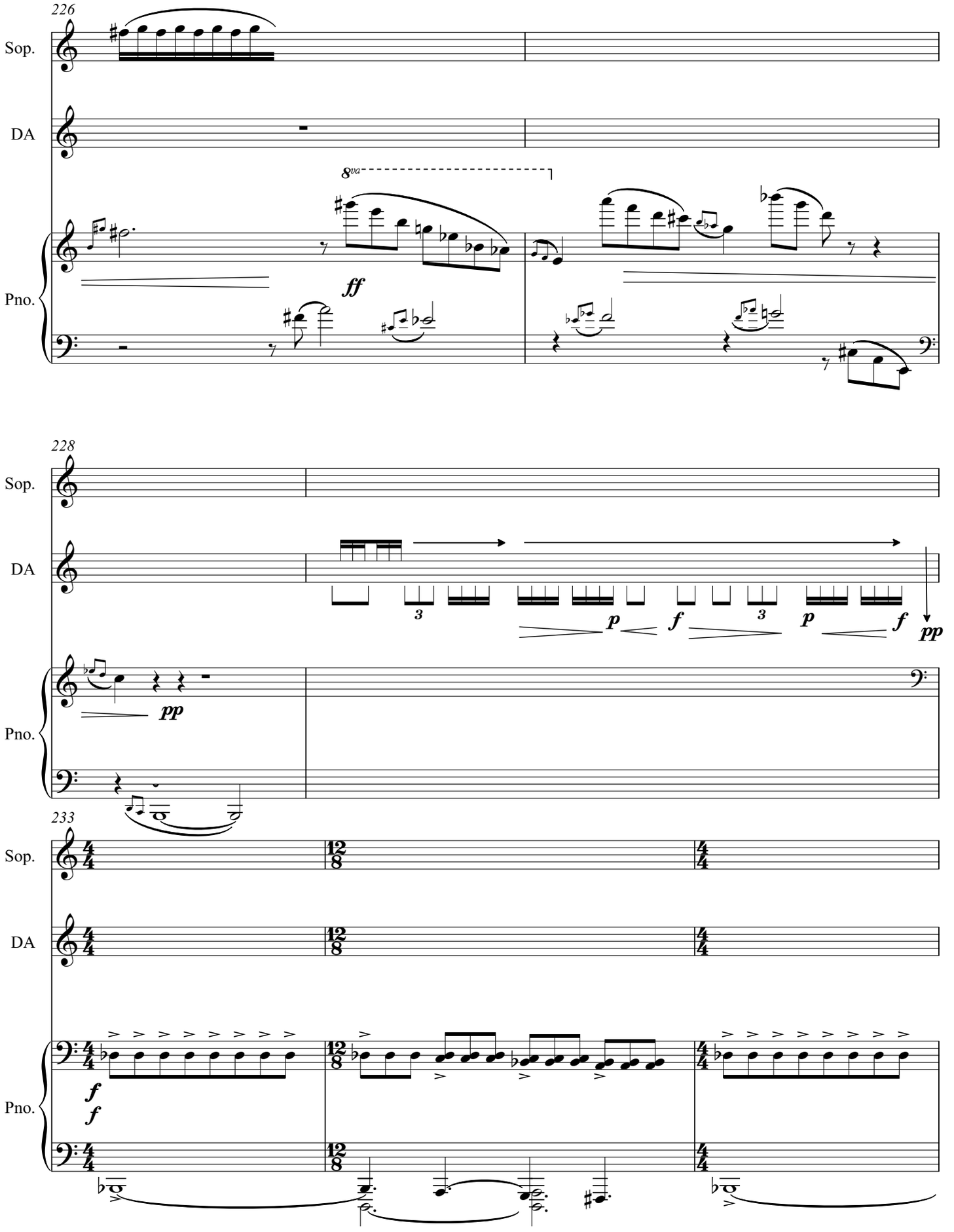

187
Sop.
DA
Pno.
f
189
Sop.
DA
Pno.
p
191
Sop.
DA
Pno.
ff

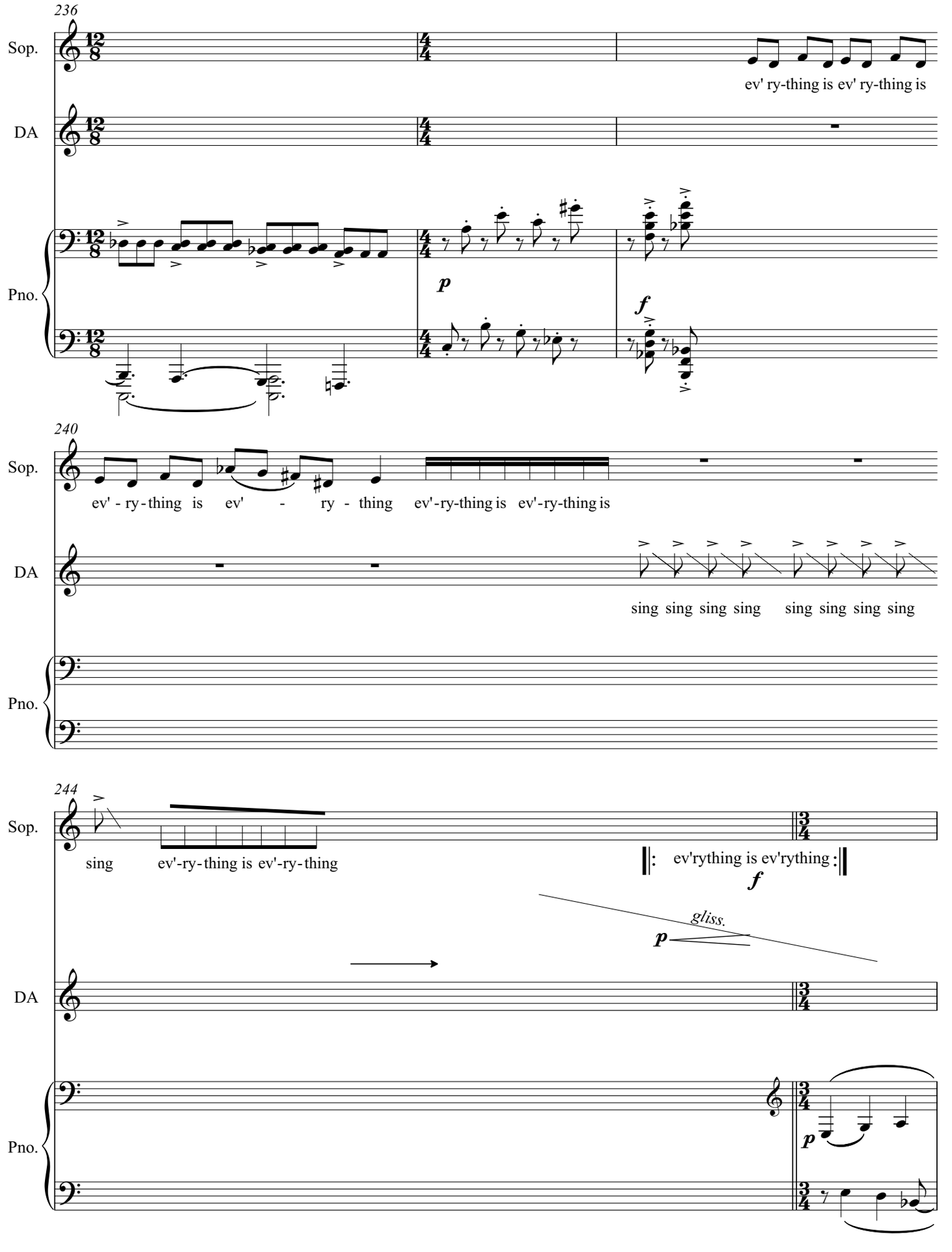

193
Sop.
DA
Pno.
f
p
f
196
Sop.
DA
Pno.
f
199
Sop.
DA
Pno.

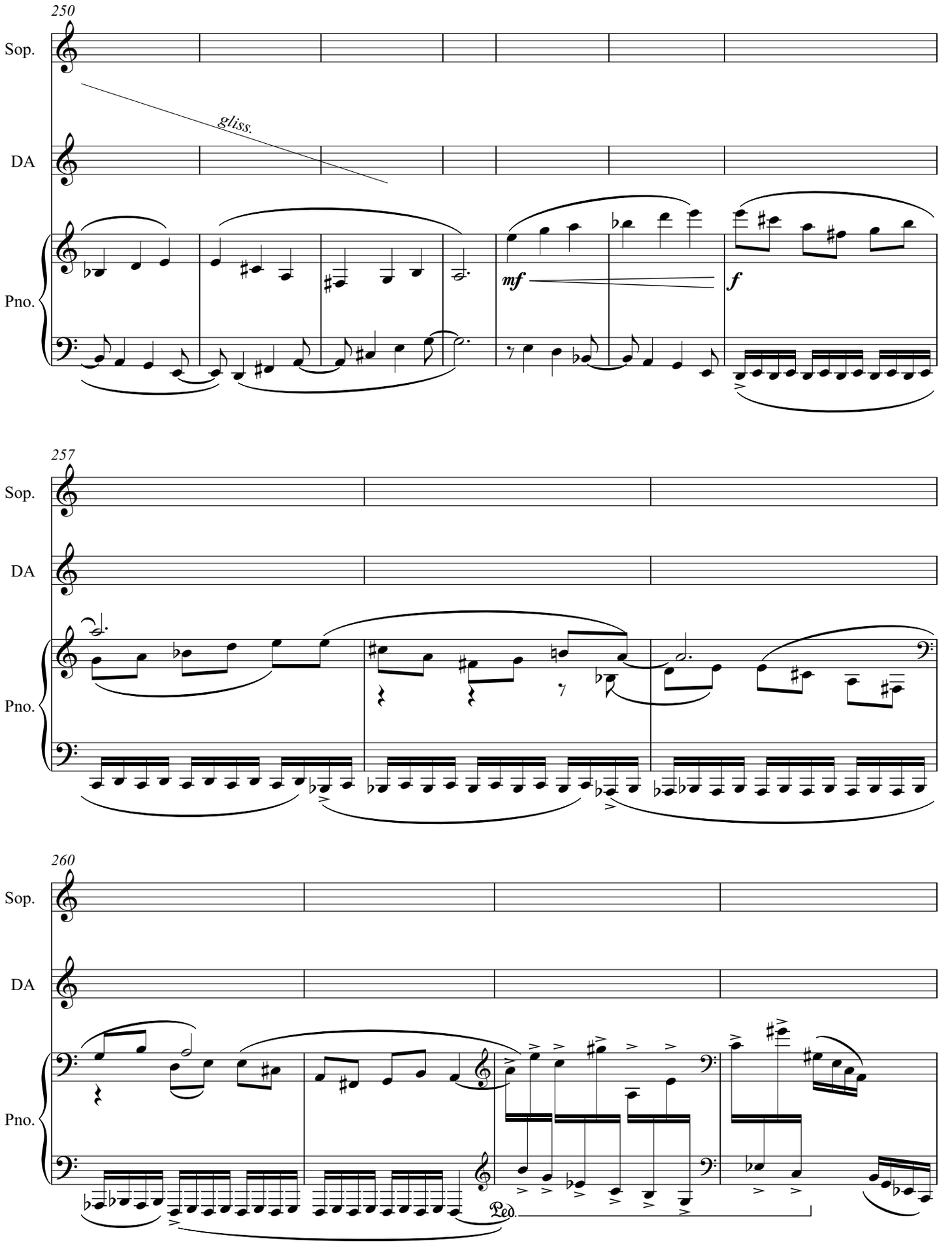

202
Sop.
DA
Pno.
p
ff
p
sing sing
sing sing
8va
206
Sop.
ee
DA
talk to
Pno.

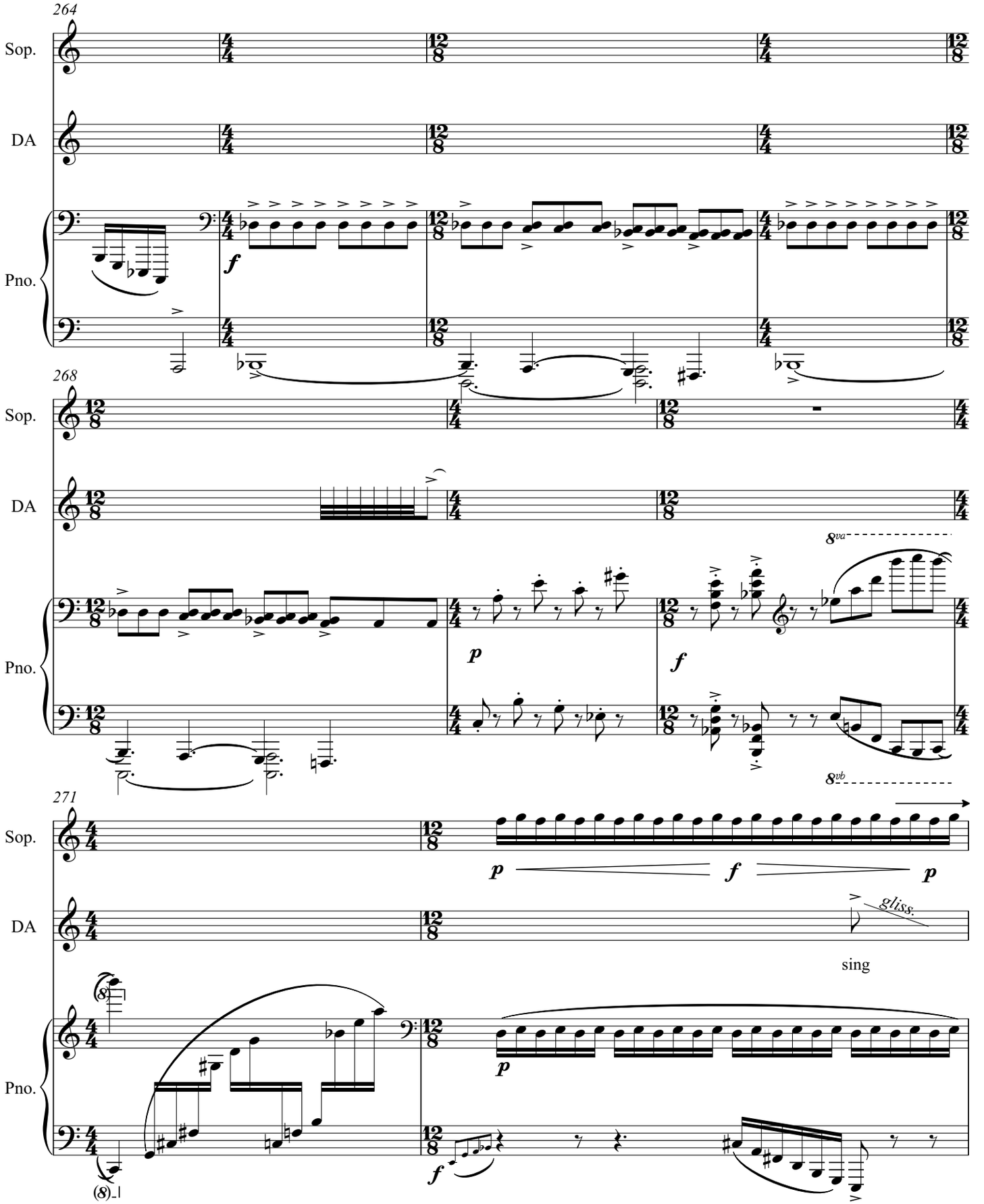

209
Sop.
ev'-ry-thing is ev'-ry-thing is ev'-ry-thing is ev'-ry-thing is
DA
talk to talk to talk to
8va
p
ff
p
Pno.
8vb
213
Sop.
ev'-ry-thing is ev'-ry-thing is
DA
mf
Pno.
217
Sop.
ev' ry-thing is ev' ry-thing is
p
DA
Pno.

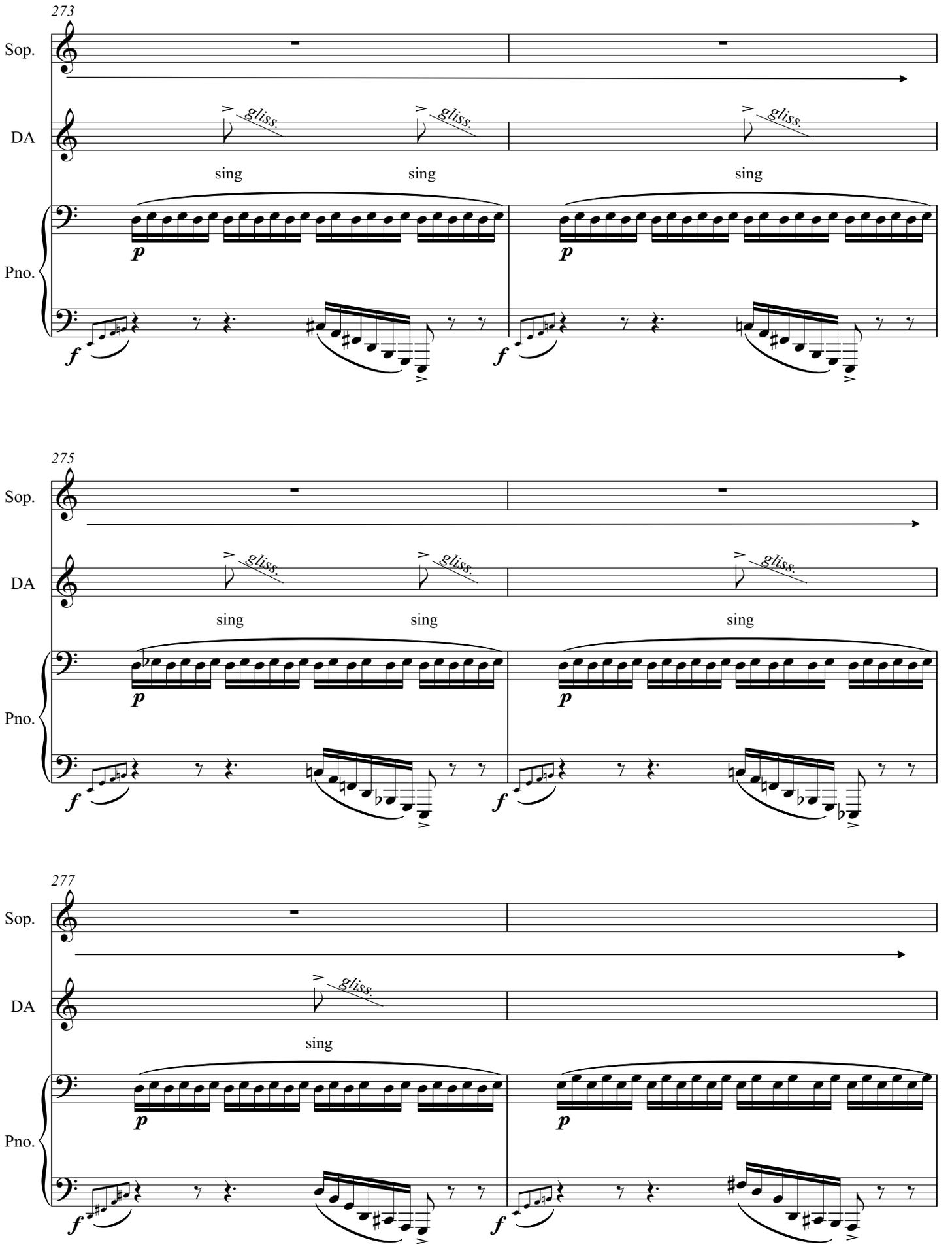

219
Sop.
DA
Pno.
p
221
Sop.
DA
Pno.
p
f
223
Sop.
DA
Pno.
p
f
p
f
p

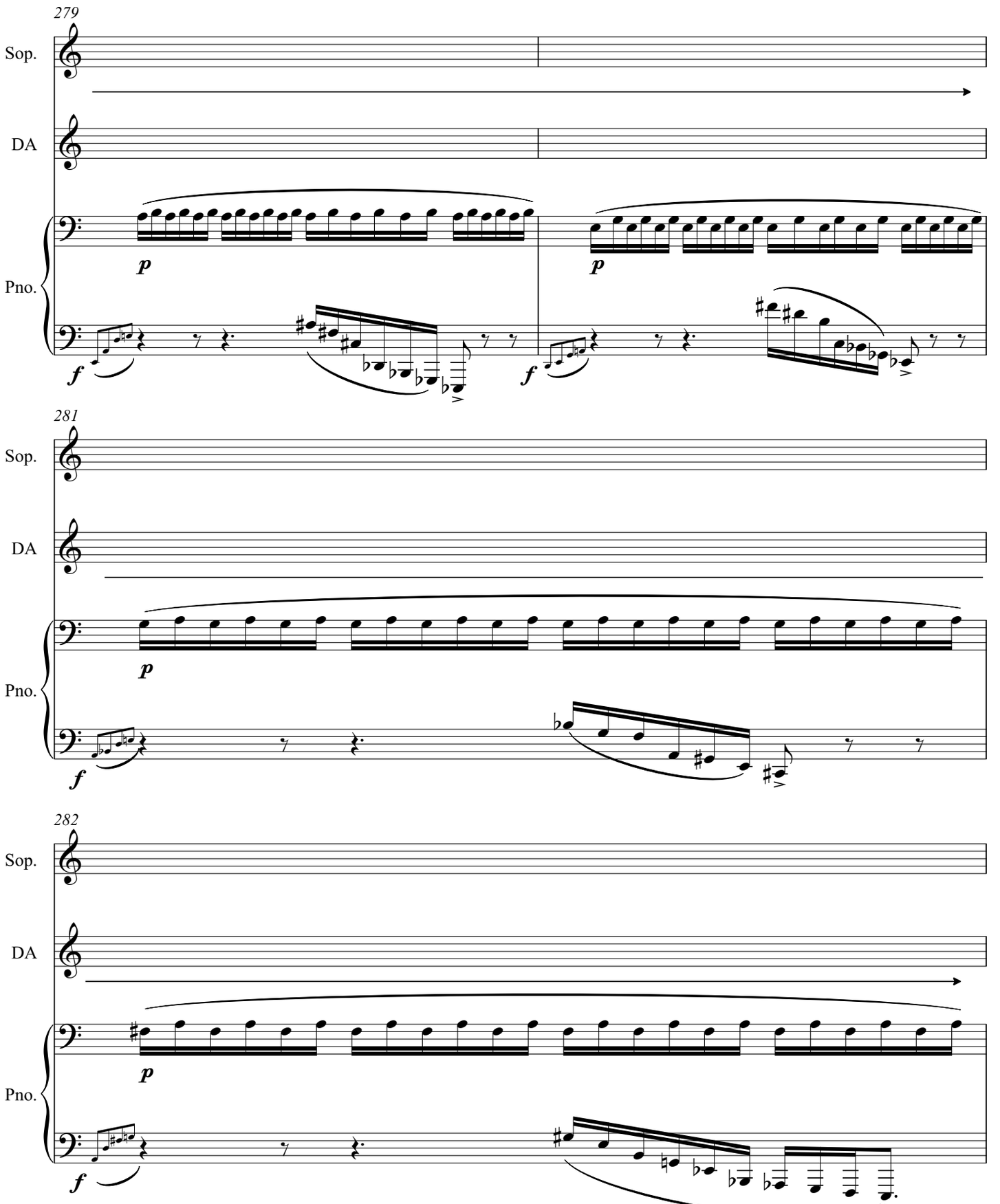

226
Sop.
DA
Pno.
8va
ff
228
Sop.
DA
Pno.
pp
p
f
3
p
f
pp
233
Sop.
DA
Pno.
f
f

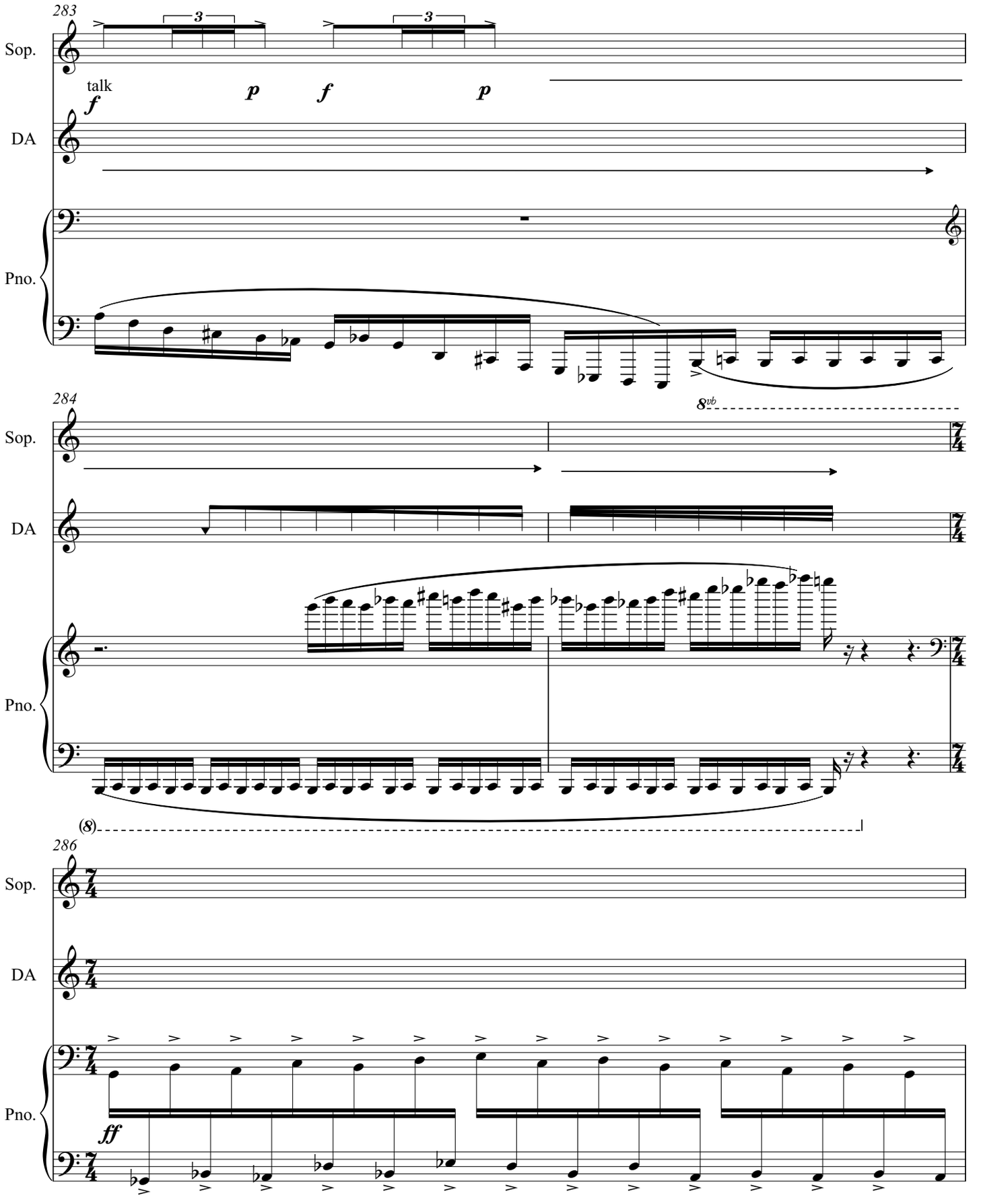

236
Sop.
DA
Pno.
ev' ry-thing is ev' ry-thing is
p
f
240
Sop.
DA
Pno.
ev' - ry - thing is ev' - ry - thing ev'-ry-thing is ev'-ry-thing is
sing sing sing sing sing sing sing sing
244
Sop.
DA
Pno.
sing ev'-ry-thing is ev'-ry-thing
ev'rything is ev'rything
f
gliss.
p

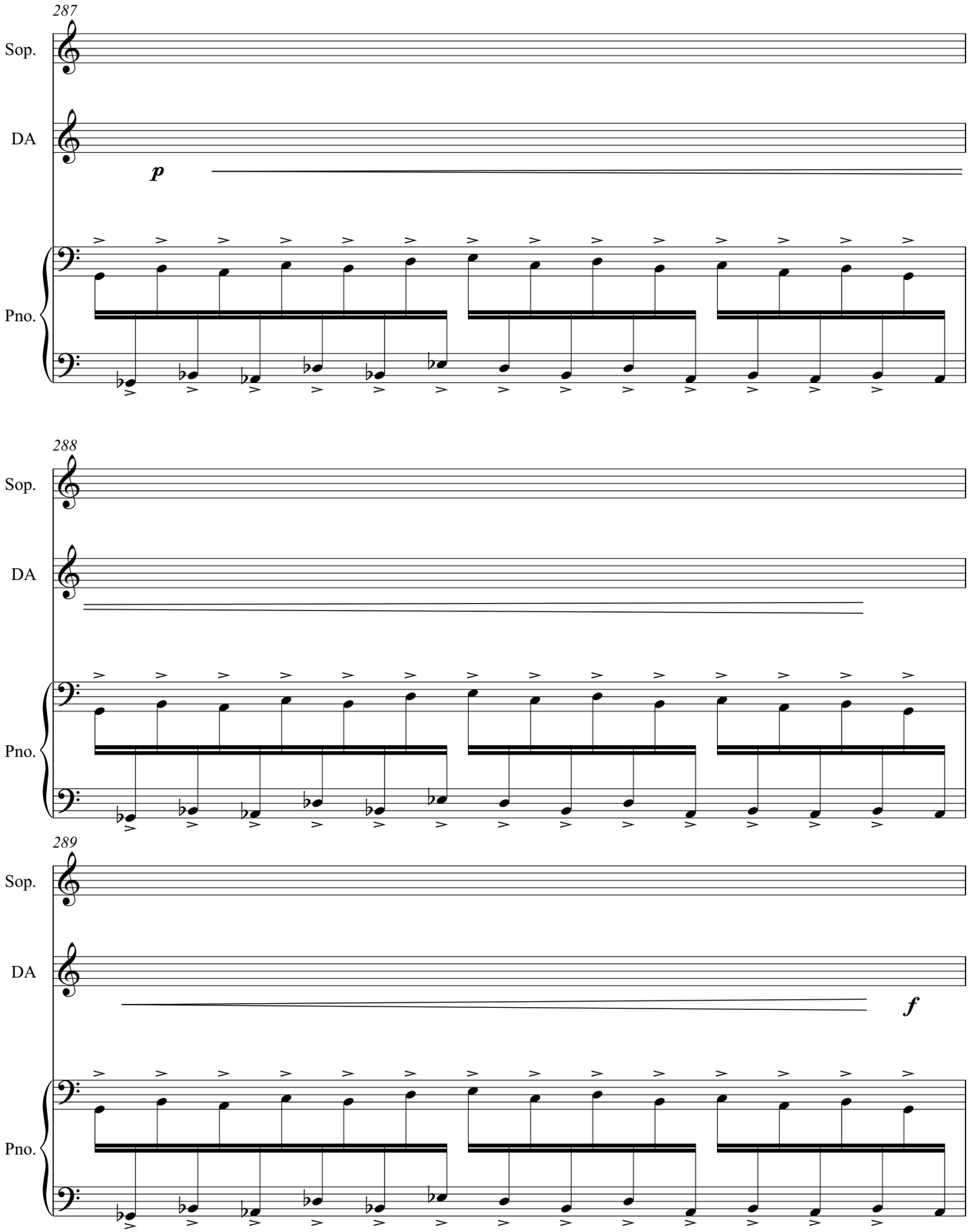

250
Sop.
DA
Pno.
gliss.
mf
f
257
Sop.
DA
Pno.
260
Sop.
DA
Pno.
Ped.

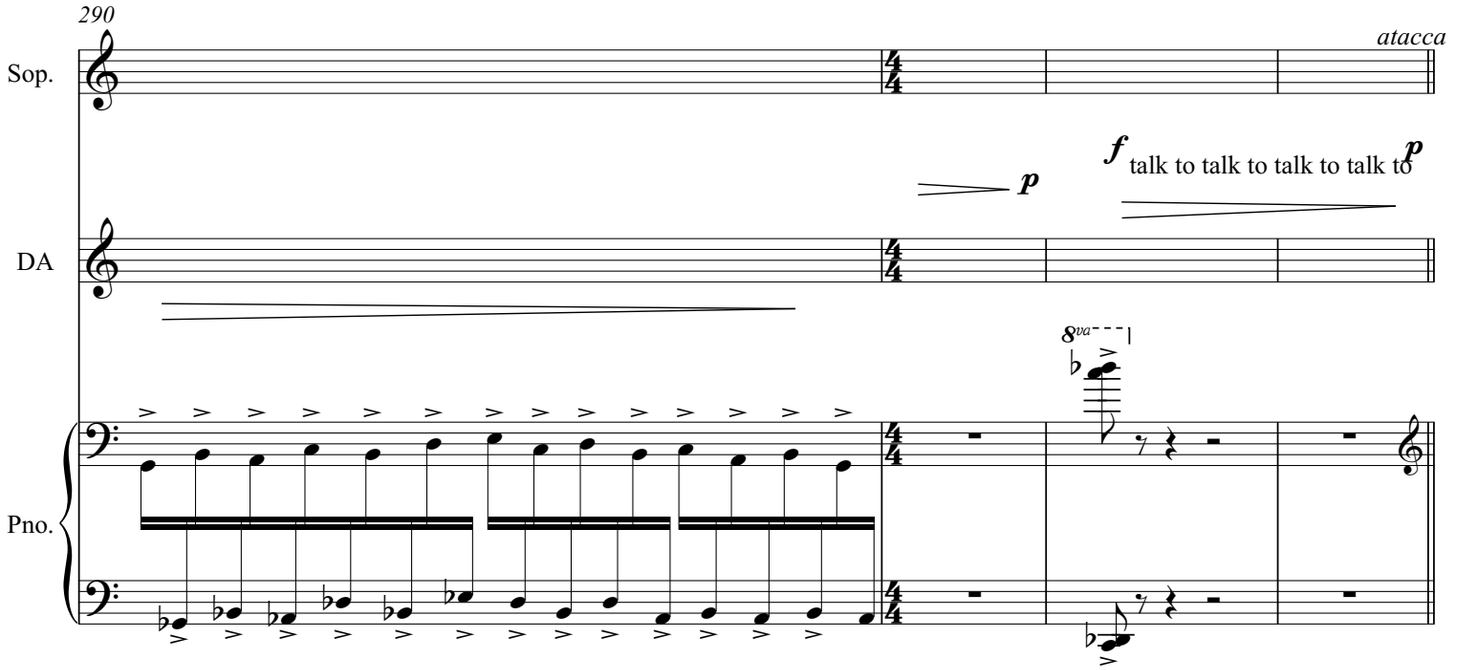

264
Sop.
DA
Pno.
f
268
Sop.
DA
Pno.
p
f
8va
8vb
271
Sop.
DA
Pno.
p
f
p
gliss.
sing
8
(8)


273
Sop.
DA
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
sing
sing
sing
Pno.
p
p
f
f
275
Sop.
DA
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
sing
sing
sing
Pno.
p
p
f
f
277
Sop.
DA
gliss.
sing
Pno.
p
p
f
f


279
Sop.
DA
Pno.
p
f
281
Sop.
DA
Pno.
p
f
282
Sop.
DA
Pno.
p
f

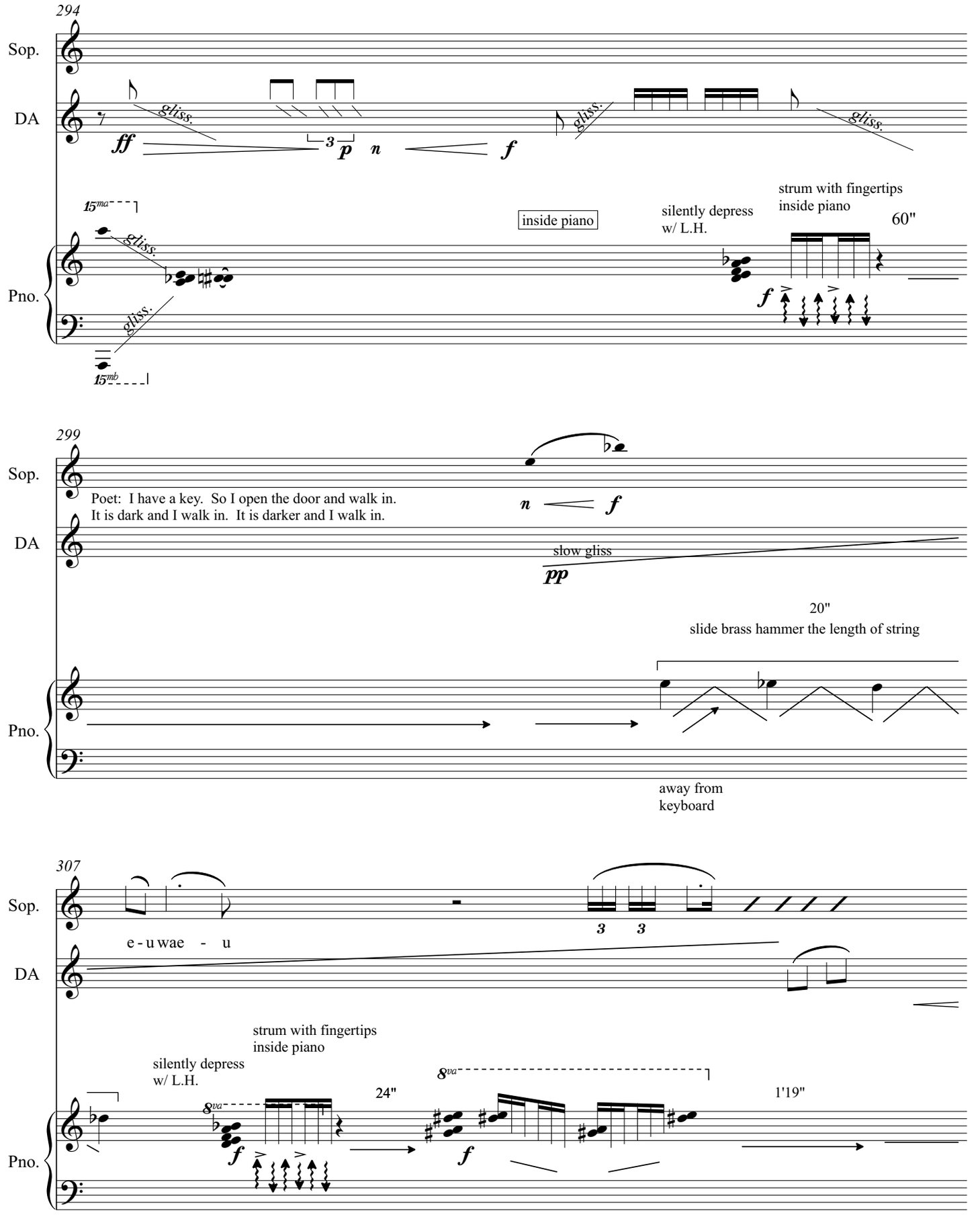

283
Sop.
talk
f
p
f
p
DA
Pno.
284
8vb
Sop.
DA
Pno.
(8)
286
Sop.
DA
Pno.
ff

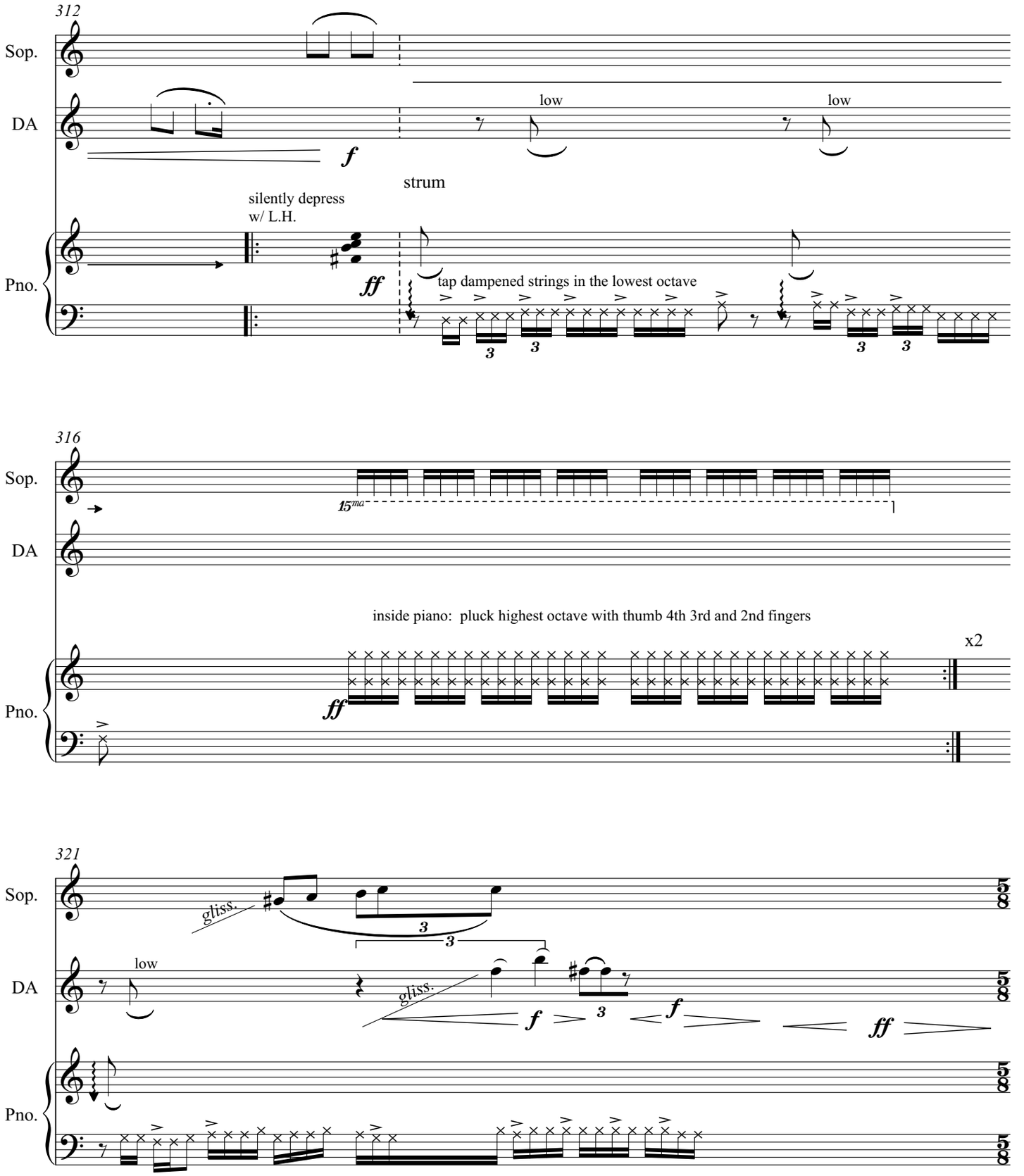

287
Sop.
DA
p
Pno.
288
Sop.
DA
Pno.
289
Sop.
DA
f
Pno.

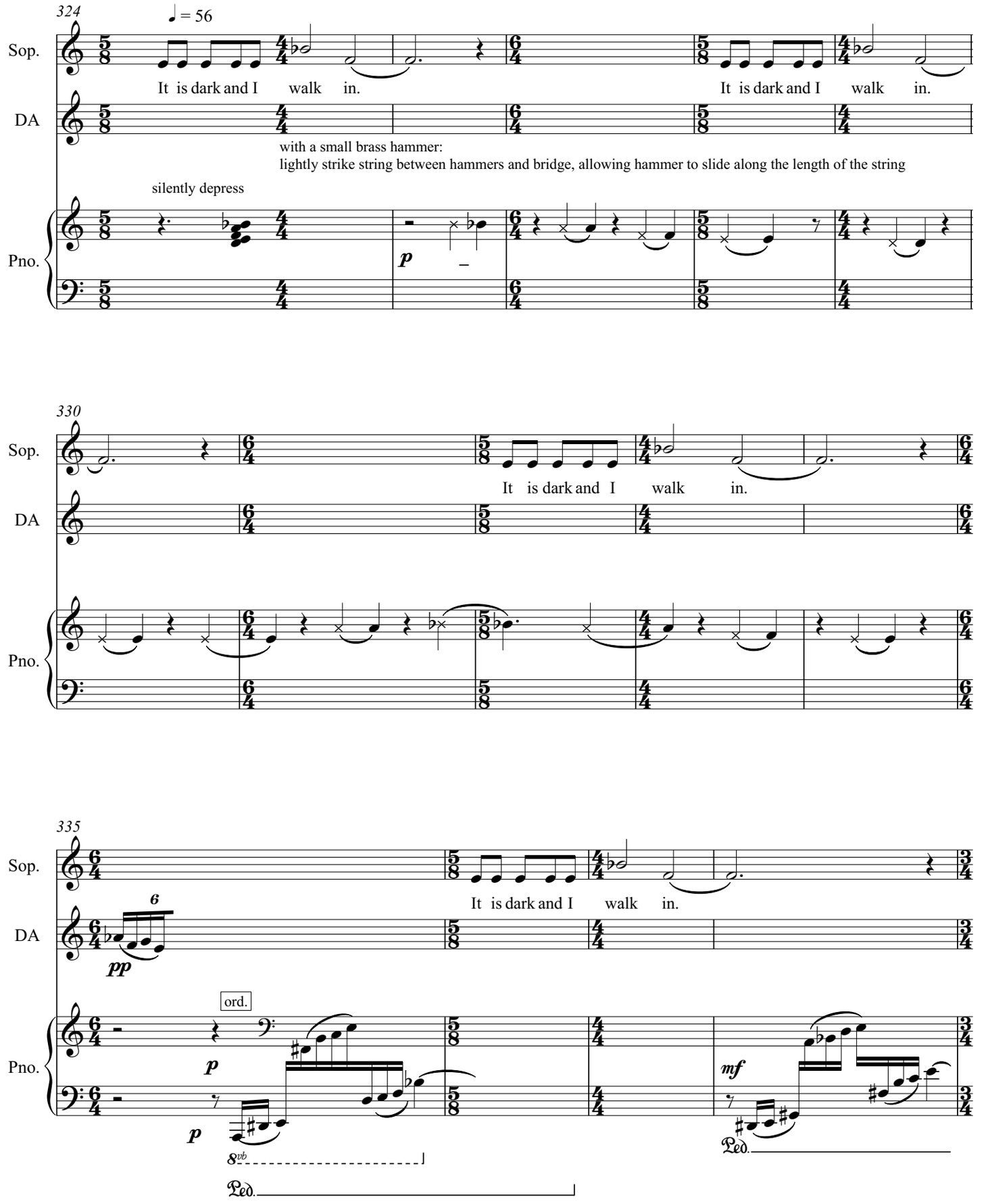

290
atacca
Sop.
DA
Pno.
p
f talk to talk to talk to talk to
p
8va

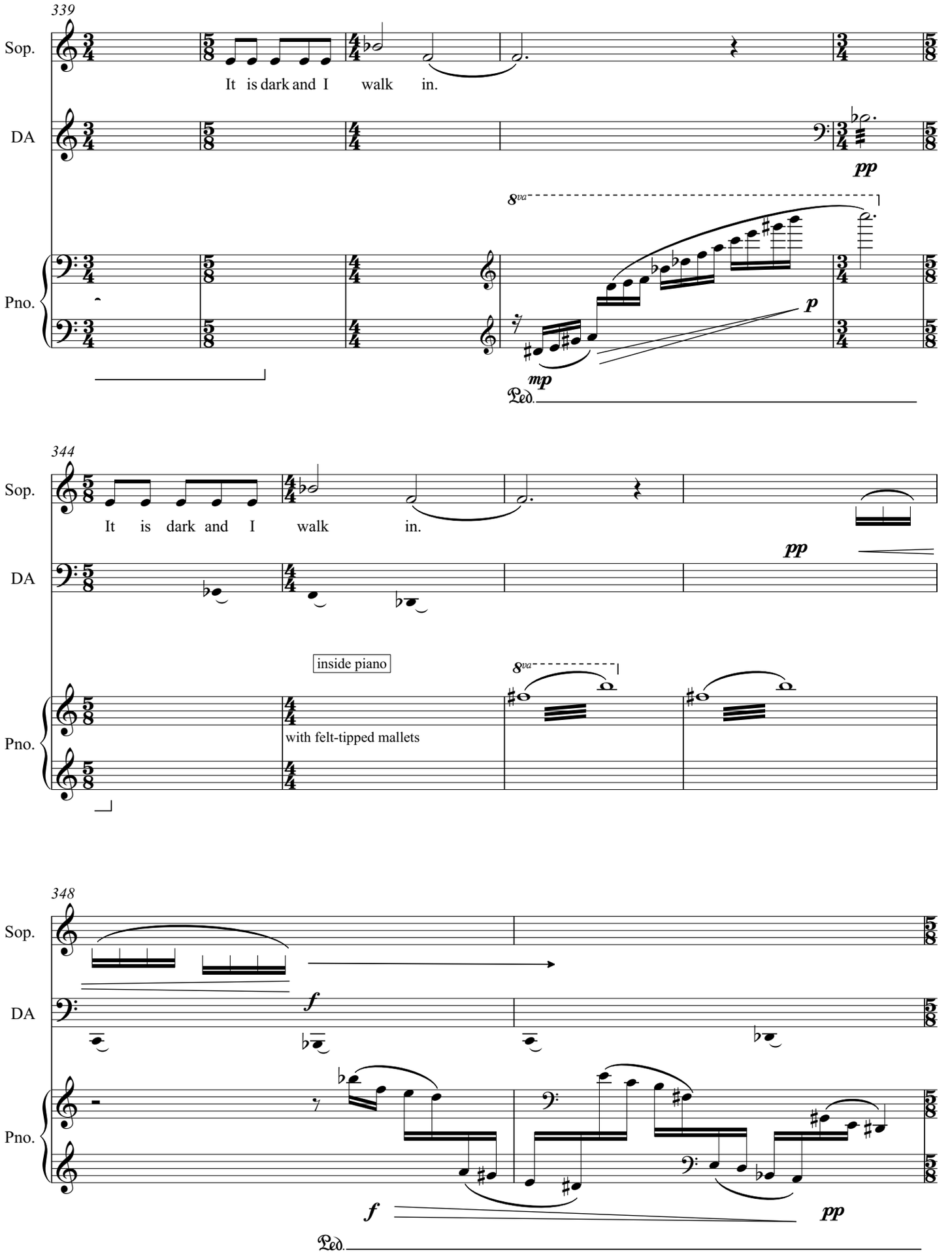
DA: Cue 6

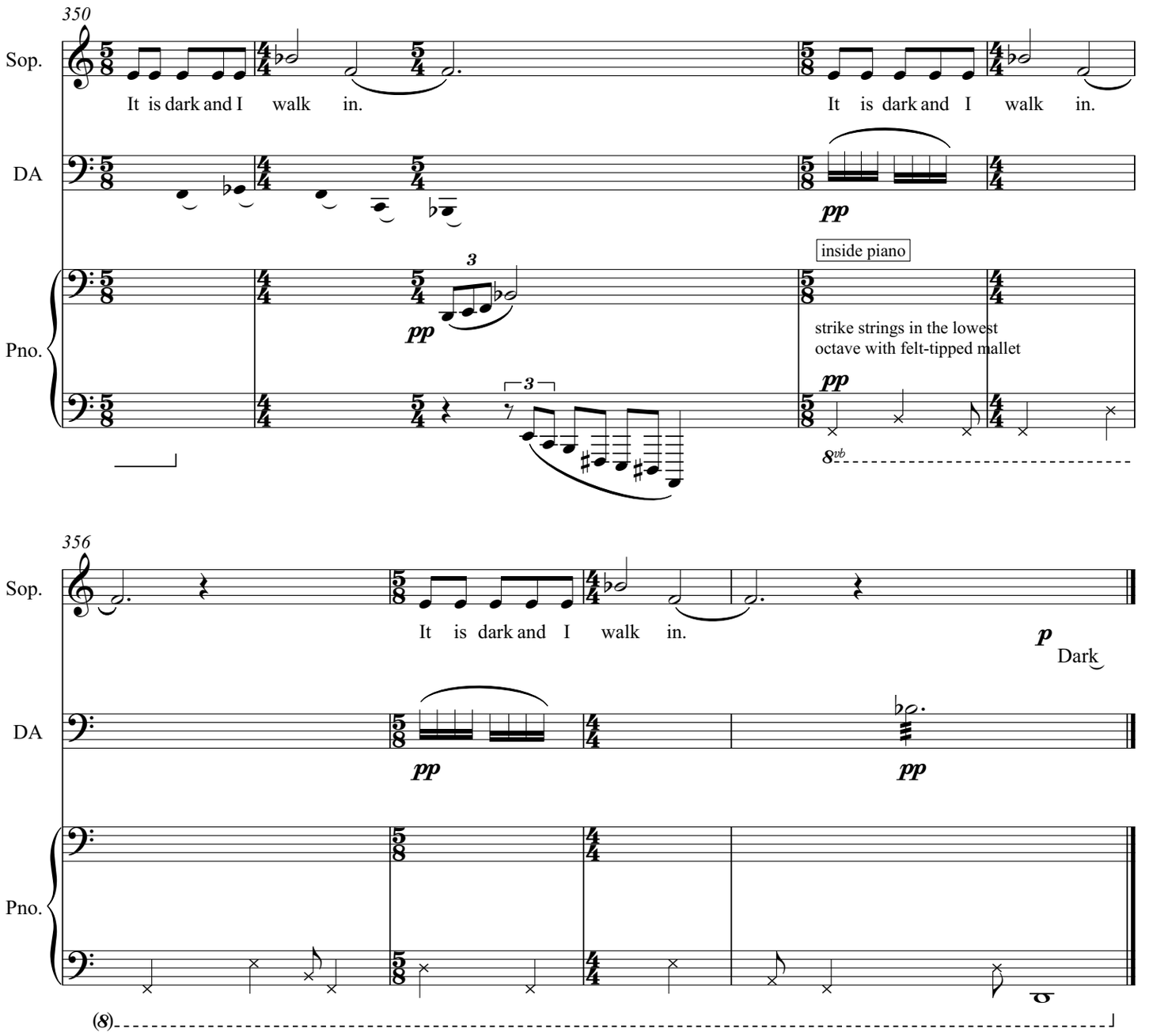
Seven Poems VII




312
Sop.
DA
Pno.
low
low
f
strum
silently depress
w/ L.H.
ff
tap dampened strings in the lowest octave
316
Sop.
DA
Pno.
15ma
inside piano: pluck highest octave with thumb 4th 3rd and 2nd fingers
x2
ff
321
Sop.
DA
Pno.
gliss.
low
gliss.
f
f
f
ff


324
♩ = 56
Sop.
It is dark and I walk in.
It is dark and I walk in.
DA
with a small brass hammer:
lightly strike string between hammers and bridge, allowing hammer to slide along the length of the string
silently depress
Pno.
p
330
Sop.
It is dark and I walk in.
DA
Pno.
335
Sop.
It is dark and I walk in.
DA
6
pp
ord.
Pno.
p
p
mf
8vb
Ped.
Ped.


339
Sop.
It is dark and I walk in.
DA
pp
8va
Pno.
p
mp
Ped.
344
Sop.
It is dark and I walk in.
pp
DA
inside piano
8va
Pno.
with felt-tipped mallets
348
Sop.
f
DA
Pno.
f
pp
Ped.


350
Sop.
It is dark and I walk in.
It is dark and I walk in.
DA
pp
Pno.
3
pp
inside piano
strike strings in the lowest
octave with felt-tipped mallet
pp
8vb
356
Sop.
It is dark and I walk in.
p
Dark
DA
pp
pp
Pno.
(8)