The Brocken

for voice and piano

2025–26

Rylan Gleave
(b.1997)

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The Brocken was commissioned by **Lea Shaw** in 2025 for *And when the light returned, I, transfigured, awoke*, with funding from **Creative Scotland**.

Instrumentation

Voice (B♭3 – A♭5)
Piano

Duration

c. 5'30"

Programme Note

Brocken spectres are magnified, enormous shadows cast in mid air on clouds opposite strong lights, the basis of ghost stories and legends. The Brocken mountain in Germany, where these spectres are common phenomenon, is the highest peak in the Harz mountain range. Subalpine, but with a microclimate resembling mountains far higher, it has long been connected with folklore, Faust, and witchcraft.

Our *Brocken* draws on suspicion and conviction, a seeing of your rational spectre but gut-knowing something is amiss. Written for and with Lea Shaw, *The Brocken* follows the protagonist up a mountain, tracking an elusive shadow always a step ahead.

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for Lea

The Brocken

Lyrics by Rylan Gleave

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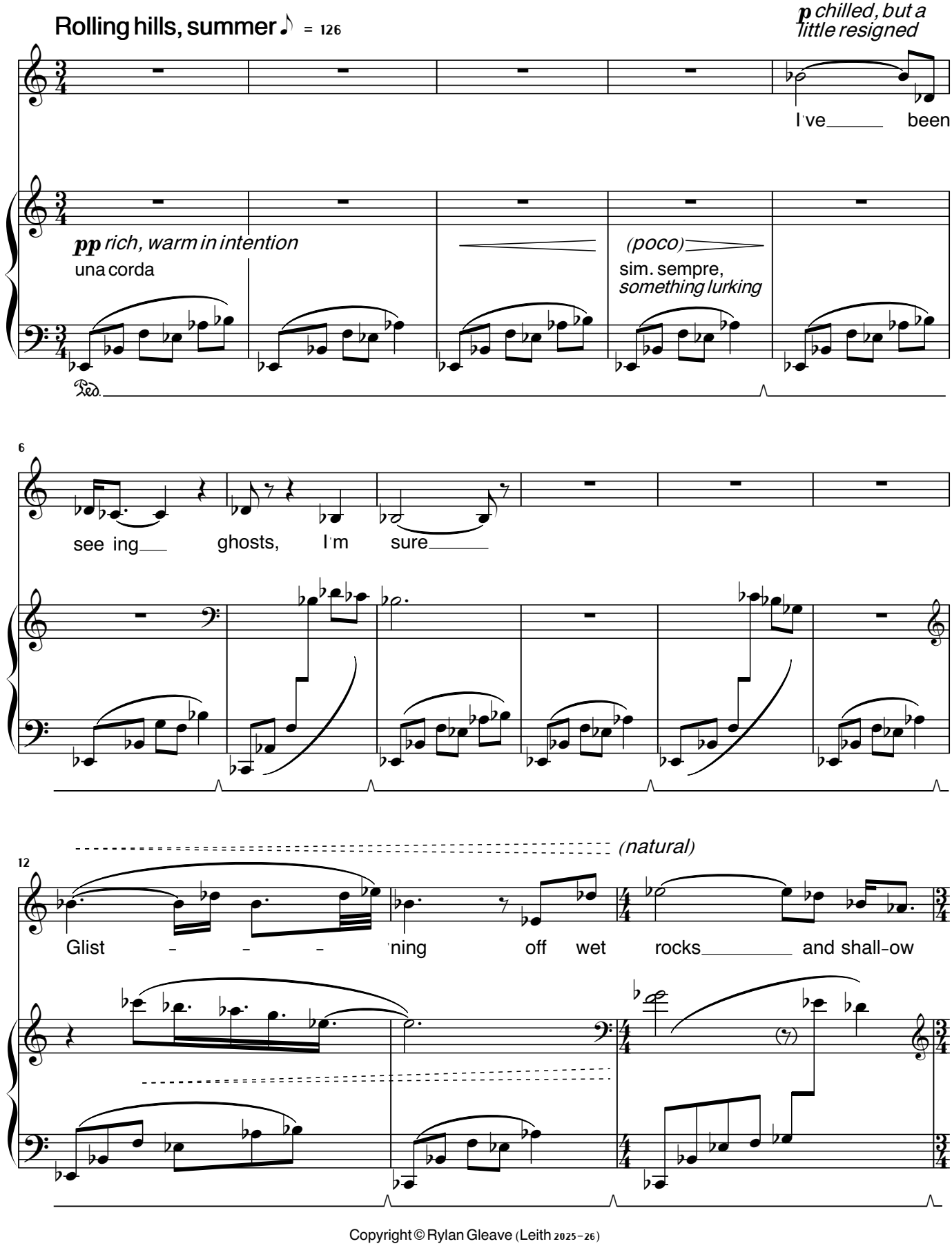

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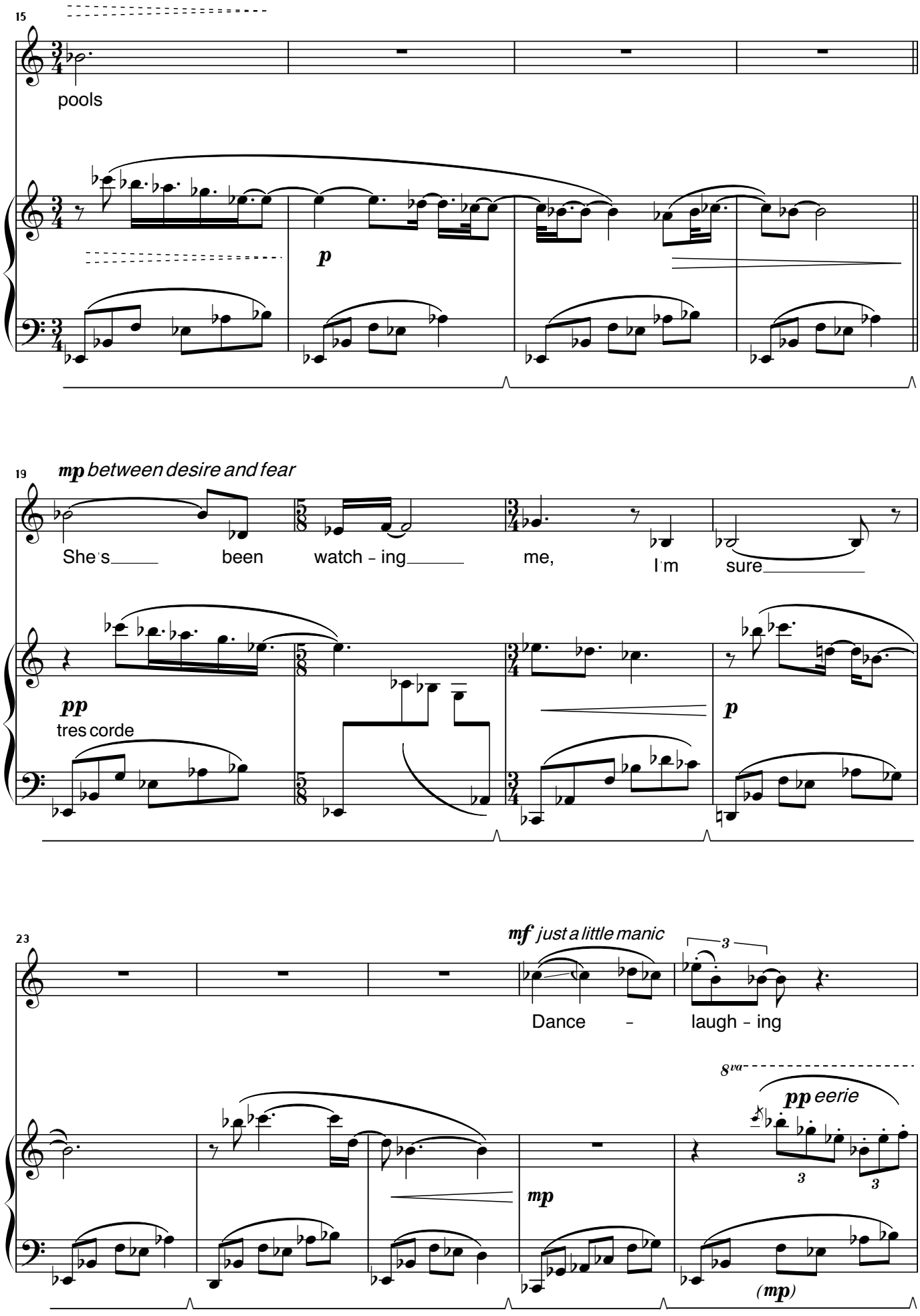
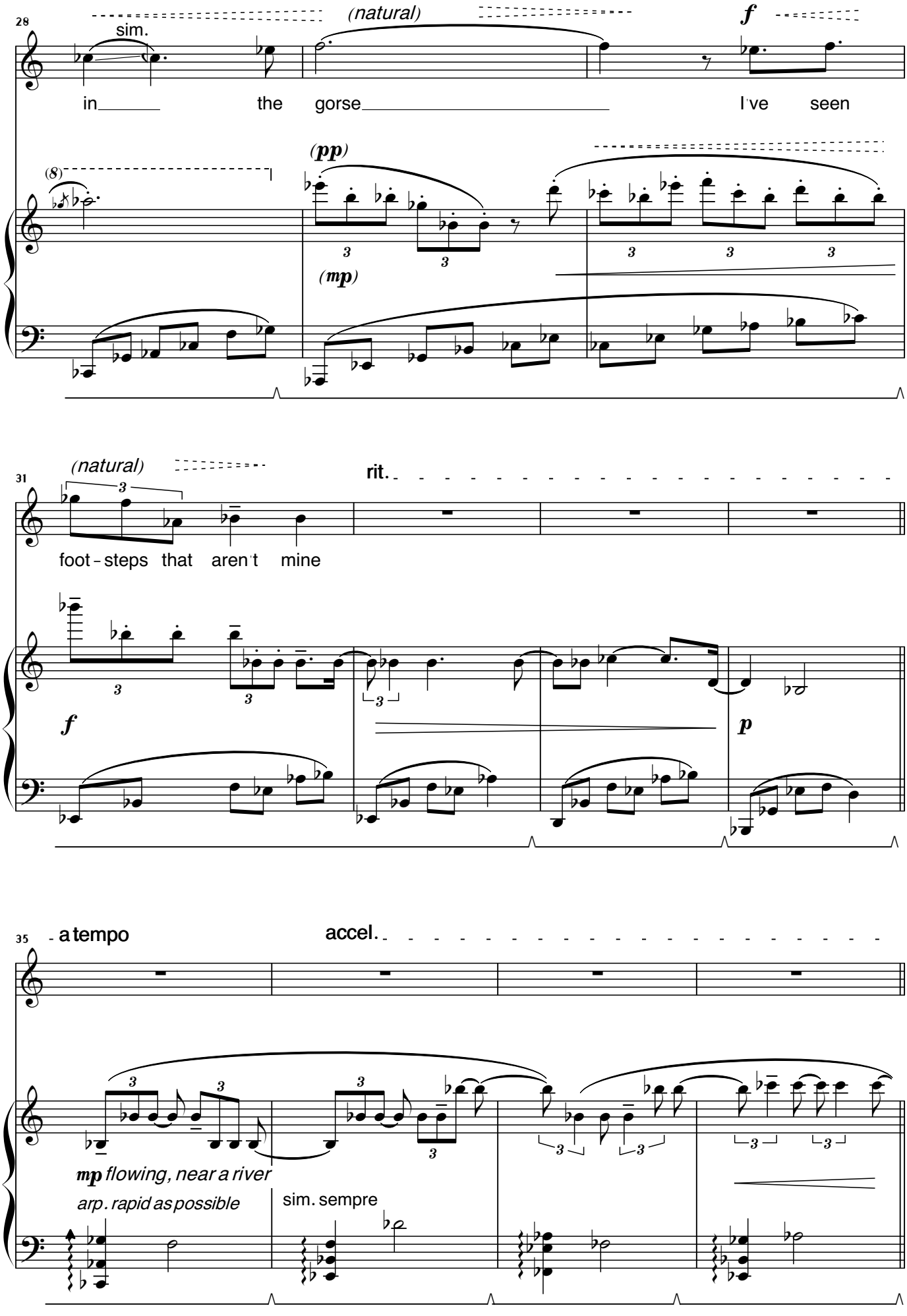

15
pools
p
19
mp between desire and fear
She's been watch - ing me, I'm sure
pp
tres corde
p
23
mf just a little manic
Dance - laugh - ing
8va
pp eerie
mp
(mp)


28
sim.
(natural)
f
in the gorse I've seen
(pp)
(8)
(mp)
31
(natural)
rit.
foot-steps that aren't mine
f
p
35
a tempo
accel.
mp flowing, near a river
arp. rapid as possible
sim. sempre

Limbs aching, climbing upwards ♪ = 144

39

mf nearing desperate

I caught a glimpse of her hair

mf

42

intoning, naturally microtonal inflection

a lick of jealousy

strand - ed like sheep's wool in branch - es But the wind was more smit-ten___ with

45

accel. - - - - - - - -

f resolved

___ her And quick, snatched it out of my fin - gers So I've

Volatile, eyes wide ♪ = 152

48

wrapped my arms_ in brack-en___ give-n___ my-self wings I've

f

poco rall.

52

fol-lowed_ ev-ry peal-ing smirk that ech-oes_ off the cliffs

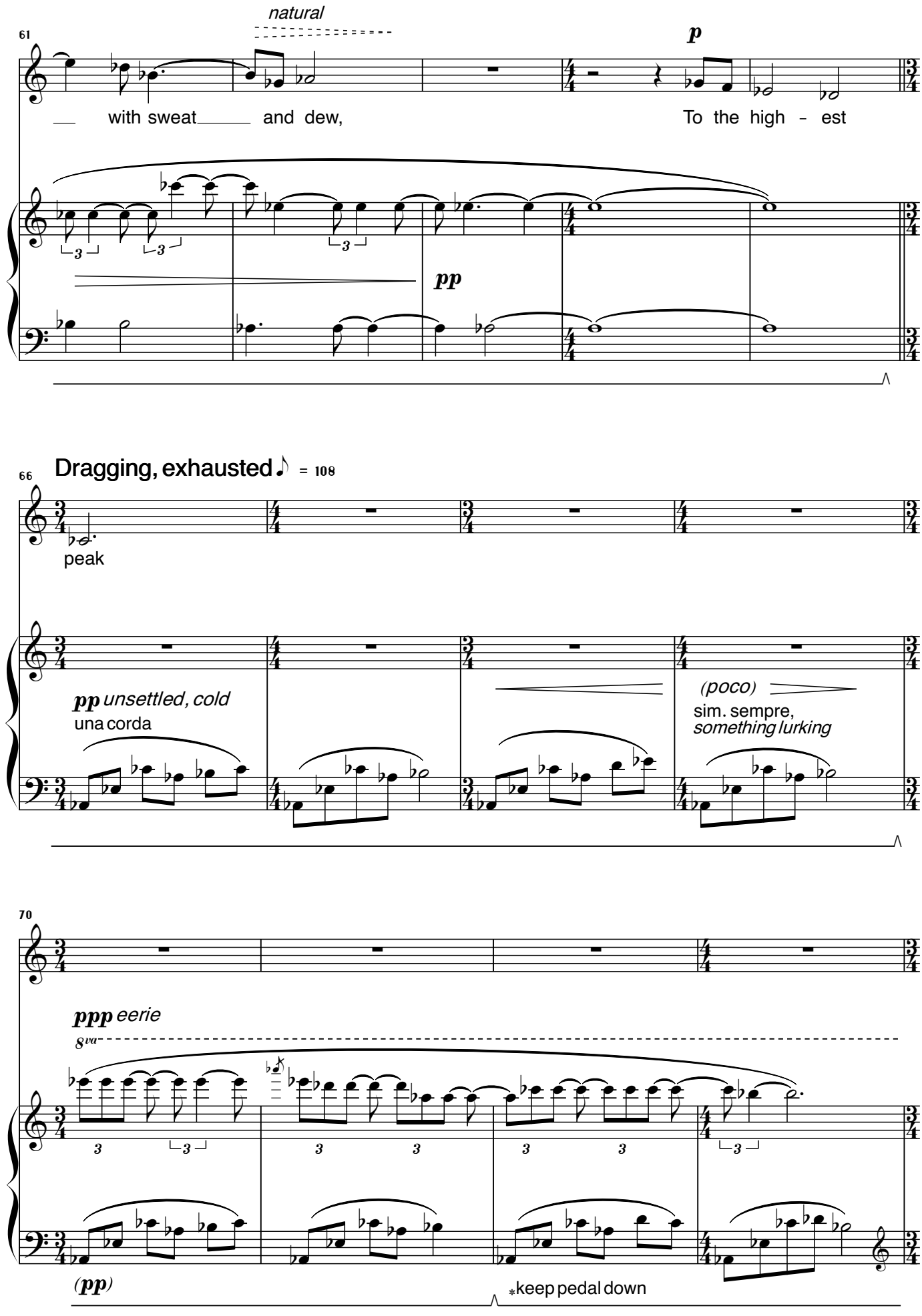
Limbs aching, climbing upwards ♪ = 144

56

fff *ff*

Stumb - - ling___ up, Thick___

ff *p* *f*


61
natural
p
with sweat and dew,
To the high - est
pp
66
Dragging, exhausted ♪ = 108
peak
pp unsettled, cold
una corda
(poco)
sim. sempre,
something lurking
70
ppp eerie
8va
(pp)
*keep pedal down

poco rit. - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Even less… ♪ = 100

74

p looking over the cliff edge

Do you think I could float down?

78

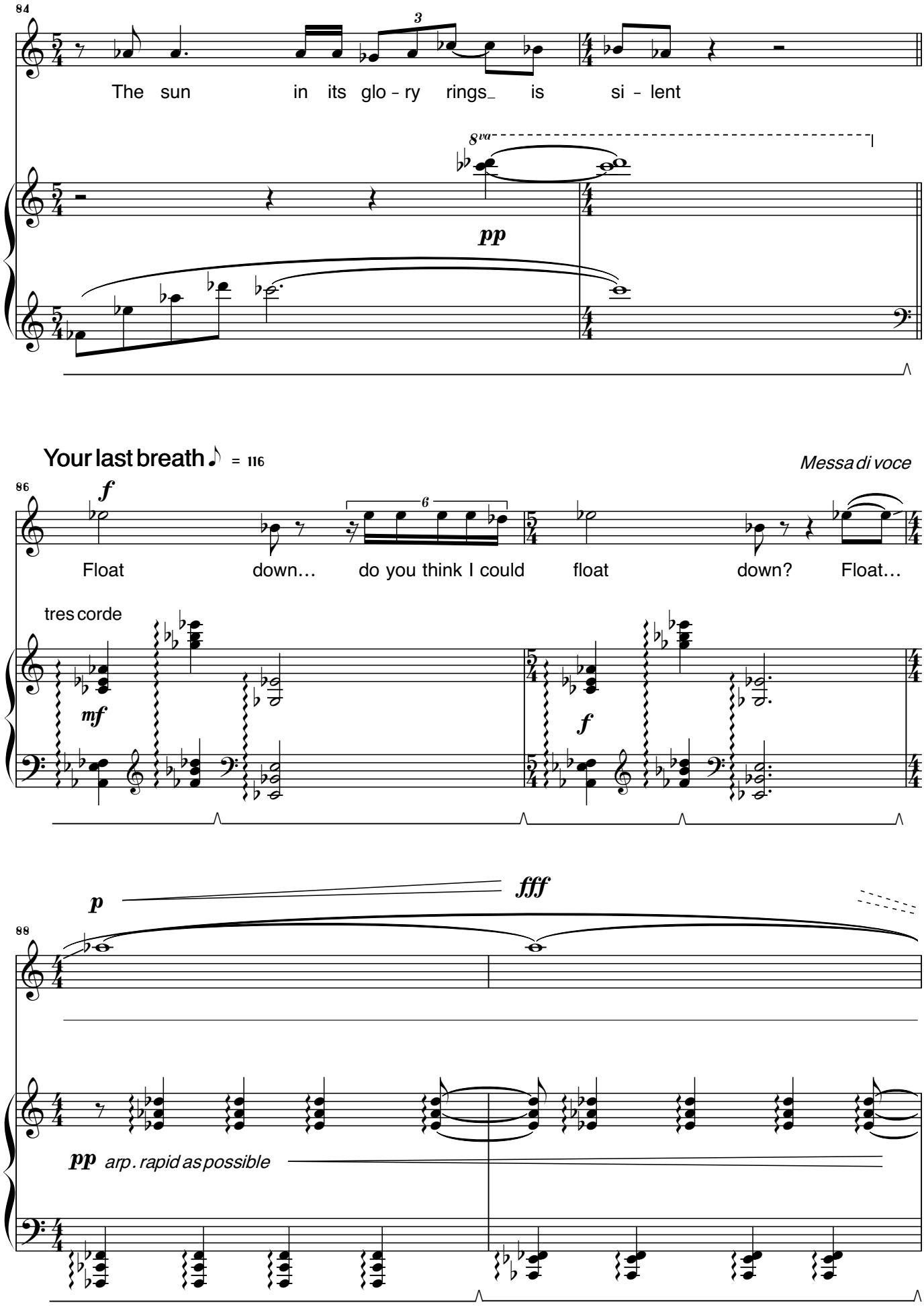
I've searched ev-ry clod of earth, ev-ry car - cass

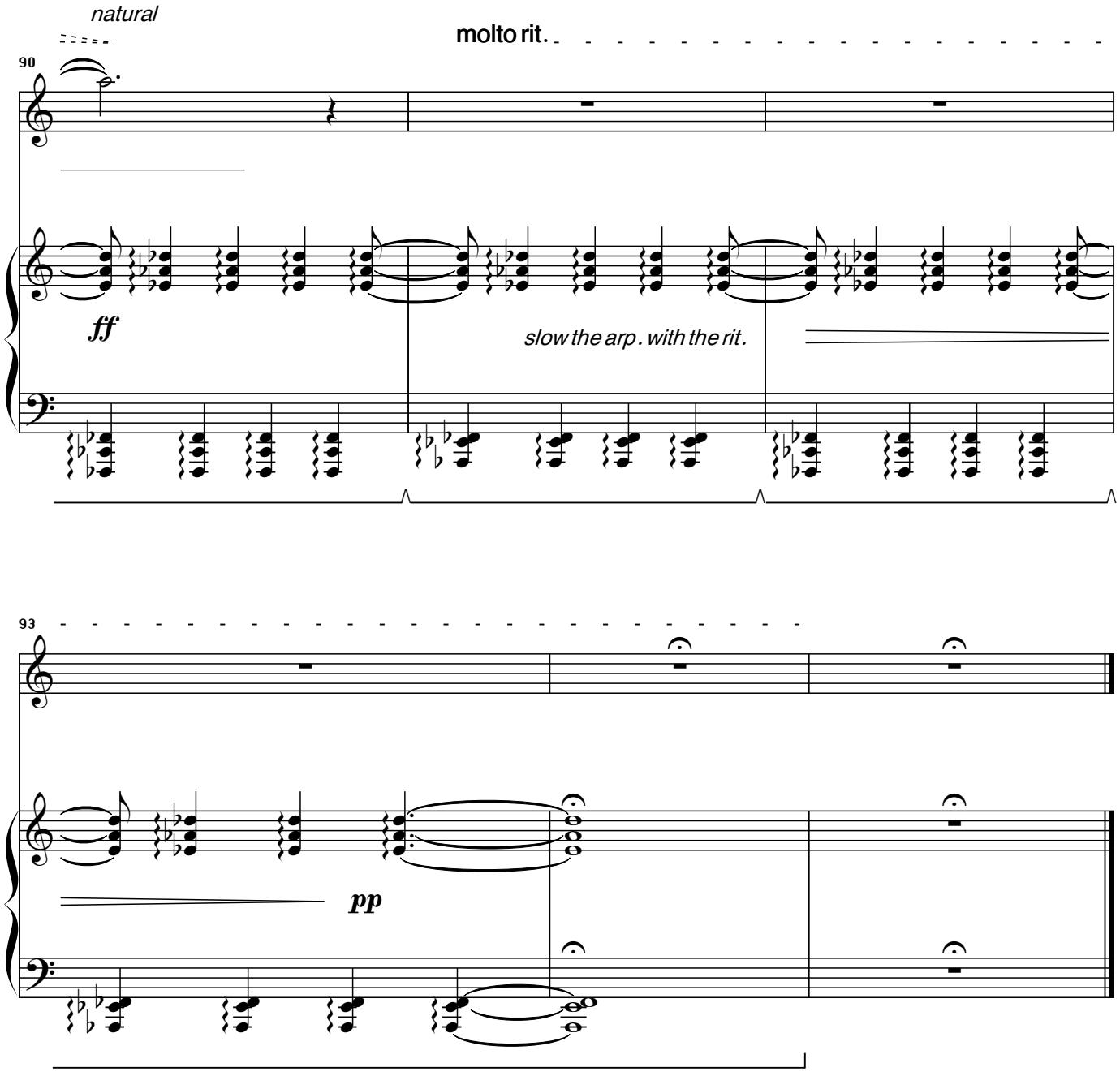
81

mp deep sadness

The clouds have-n't part-ed

p


84
The sun in its glo - ry rings_ is si - lent
8va
pp
Your last breath ♪ = 116
Messa di voce
86
f
Float down… do you think I could float down? Float…
tres corde
mf
f
p
fff
88
pp arp. rapid as possible


natural
molto rit.
90
ff
slow the arp. with the rit.
93
pp