Dark Across A Darkening Sky

for countertenor & baritone soloists
with mixed ensemble

PERUSAL ONLY

Joshua Ballance

2016

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The Text

Evening across the sky –
The sun descending in the west.
The evening star does shine.
How weak and little is the light,
All the universe of sight.
The birds are silent in their nest,
And I must seek for mine.

Now night.
The buses hum.
Sleep dreamlessly.
I have come to the borders of sleep,
The unfathomable deep
Forest where all must lose
Their way.
How still it is.
I hear no more the busy beat of time;
Outside, the wind's incomplete unrest
Builds and disperses clouds around the sky.
The moon like a flower,
In heaven's high bower;
Lovers entrain'd who in the name of love
Were promised the steeples and fanlights of a dream.
The small hours join us,
Face to face;
Here love ends,
Despair, ambition ends,
Here ends in sleep.
I must enter, and leave, alone.
I know not how.

I went to sleep; and now I am
Out of the wood of thoughts that grows by night,
Waking at four to soundless dark, I stare.
The stars won't last,
The moon will die.
In time the curtain-edges will grow light.
I wait once more for faceless day
To blind the peaceless night away.

Various authors, ed. Joshua Ballance

A Note on the Text

Dark Across A Darkening Sky takes as its subject the human experience of the night. Such a universal topic, which has often been explored artistically, has many traditional tropes and connotations. Nonetheless, the variety of experiences and perspectives that different people have of the night is practically infinite, and so whilst there are some basic similarities, interpretations of these have varied hugely. To this end, rather than tracing any single narrative, the text for *Dark Across A Darkening Sky* is drawn from a multitude of poetic sources, in order to attempt to capture a plethora of perspectives on these universal features. Whilst a few phrases may be familiar and easily identifiable, the aim is not to try and establish a complex semantic web of connections, but rather to try and achieve a broad perspective on a universal topic. These phrases are thus less quotation, taken out of, but still referring to, an original poetic context, than fragments that have some degree of autonomy (insofar as this is possible), to be considered as primarily relevant in the context of this newly-formed, independent, text. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that this text was conceived solely as being a part of this piece, and so is not intended to stand alone as a piece of poetry, much as the musical setting could not operate without the text.

Performing Notes

Where fermatas are used, the length is left up to the performer. However, their relative length is: short; medium; long.

 designates one quarter-sharp.

Instrumentation

Flute (+ Alto Flute in G)
Oboe (+ Cor Anglais in F)
Clarinet in Bb (+ Bass Clarinet in Bb)
Bassoon
French Horn (in F)
Percussion I
    Glockenspiel
    Bass Drum
Percussion II
    Suspended Cymbal
    Tenor Drum
Countertenor Soloist
Baritone Soloist
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello

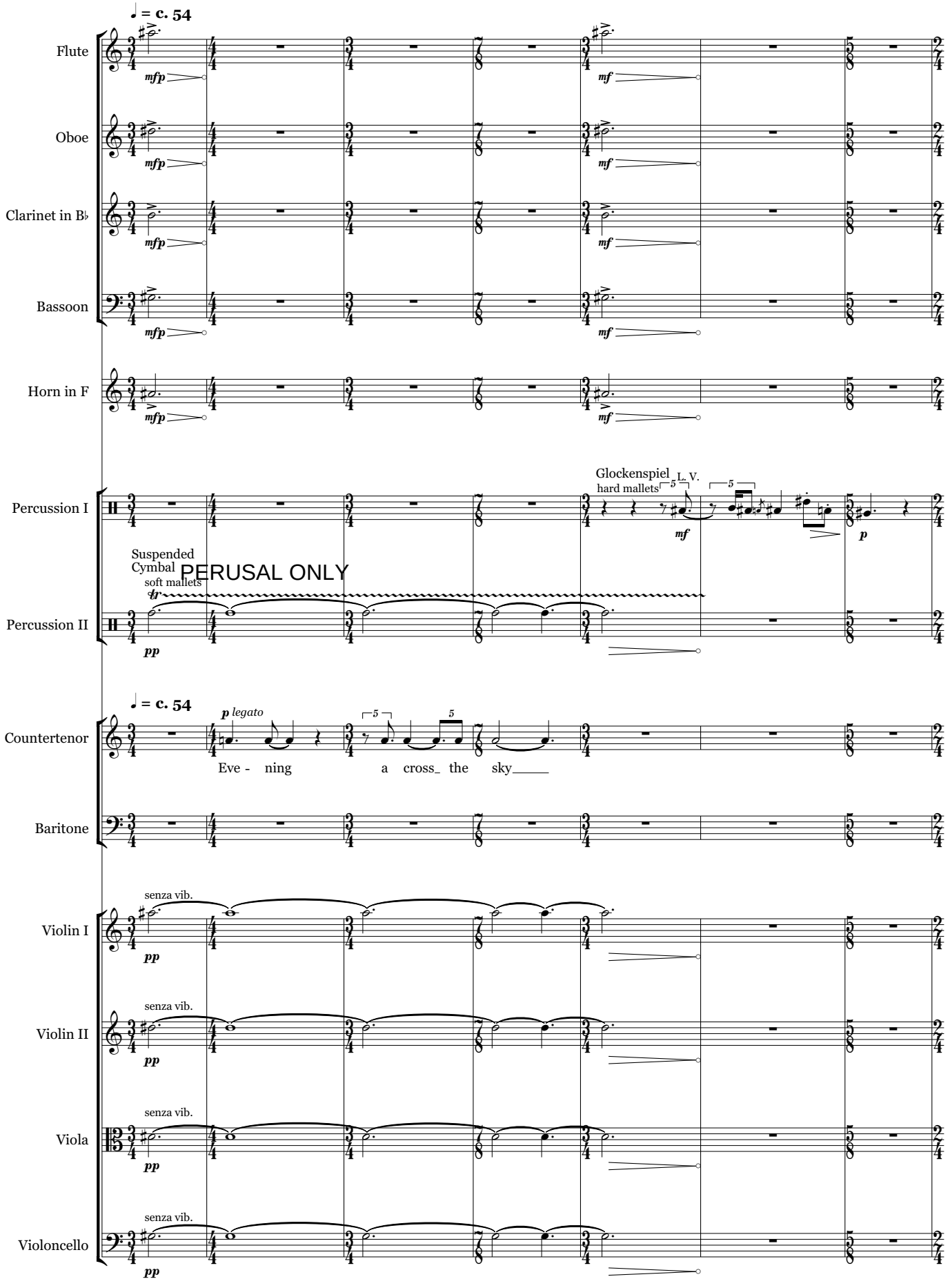
Duration: c. 10'

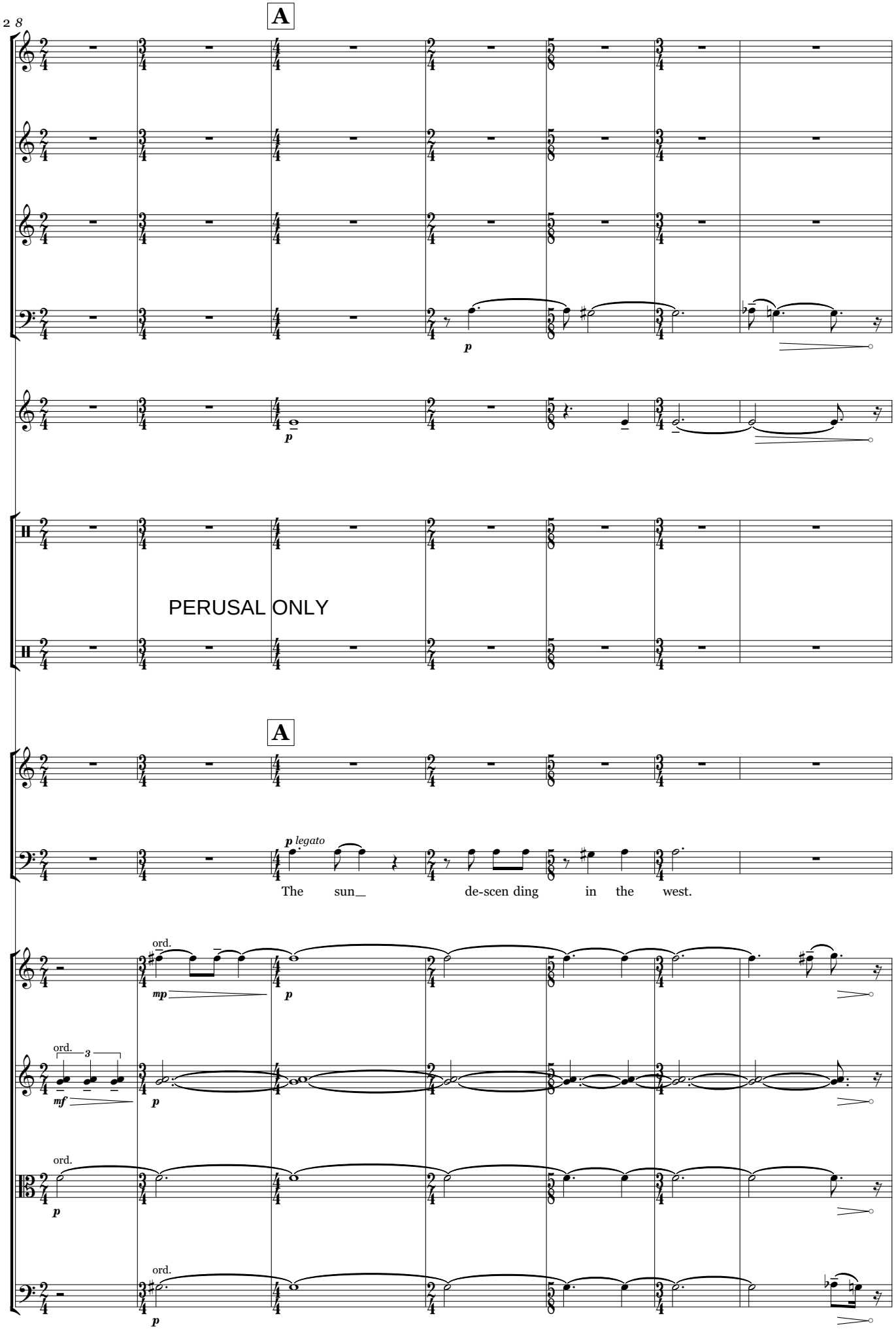
This is a transposing score.

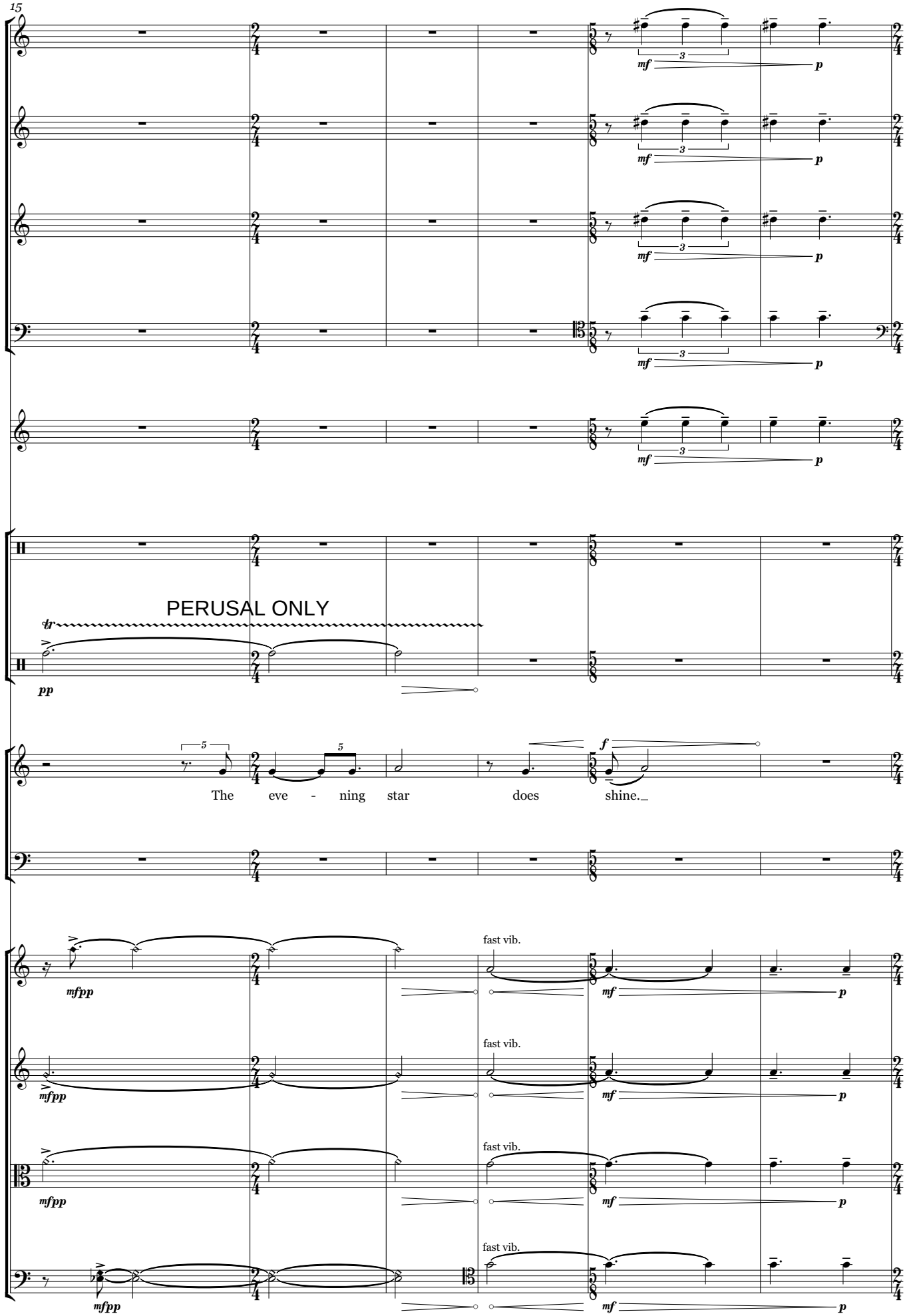
First performed on Sunday the 9th of October 2016, in the chapel of King's College, Cambridge, by Rupert Scarratt, James Jenkins, and the KCMS Contemporary Music Ensemble, conducted by the composer.

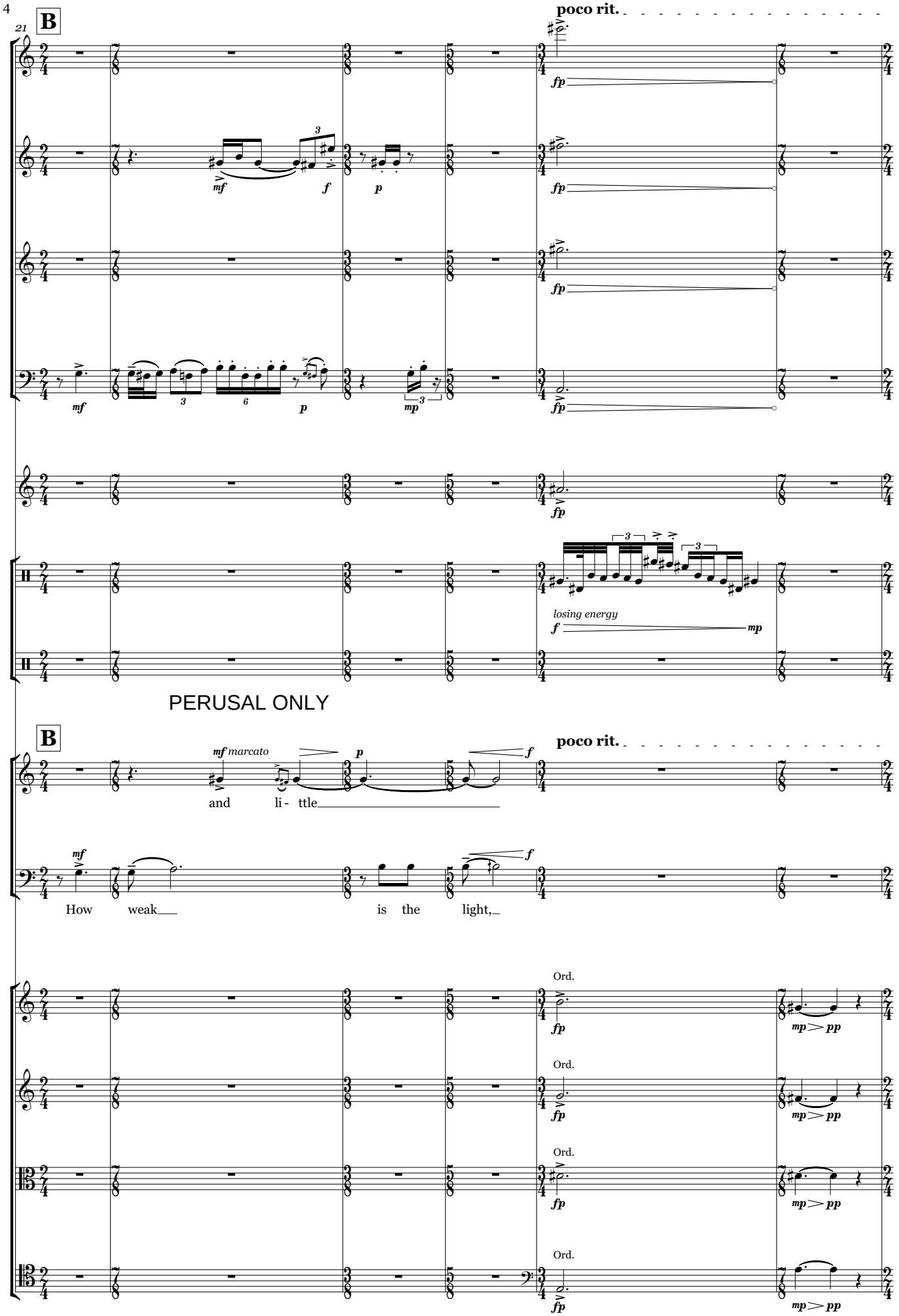
Dark Across A Darkening Sky

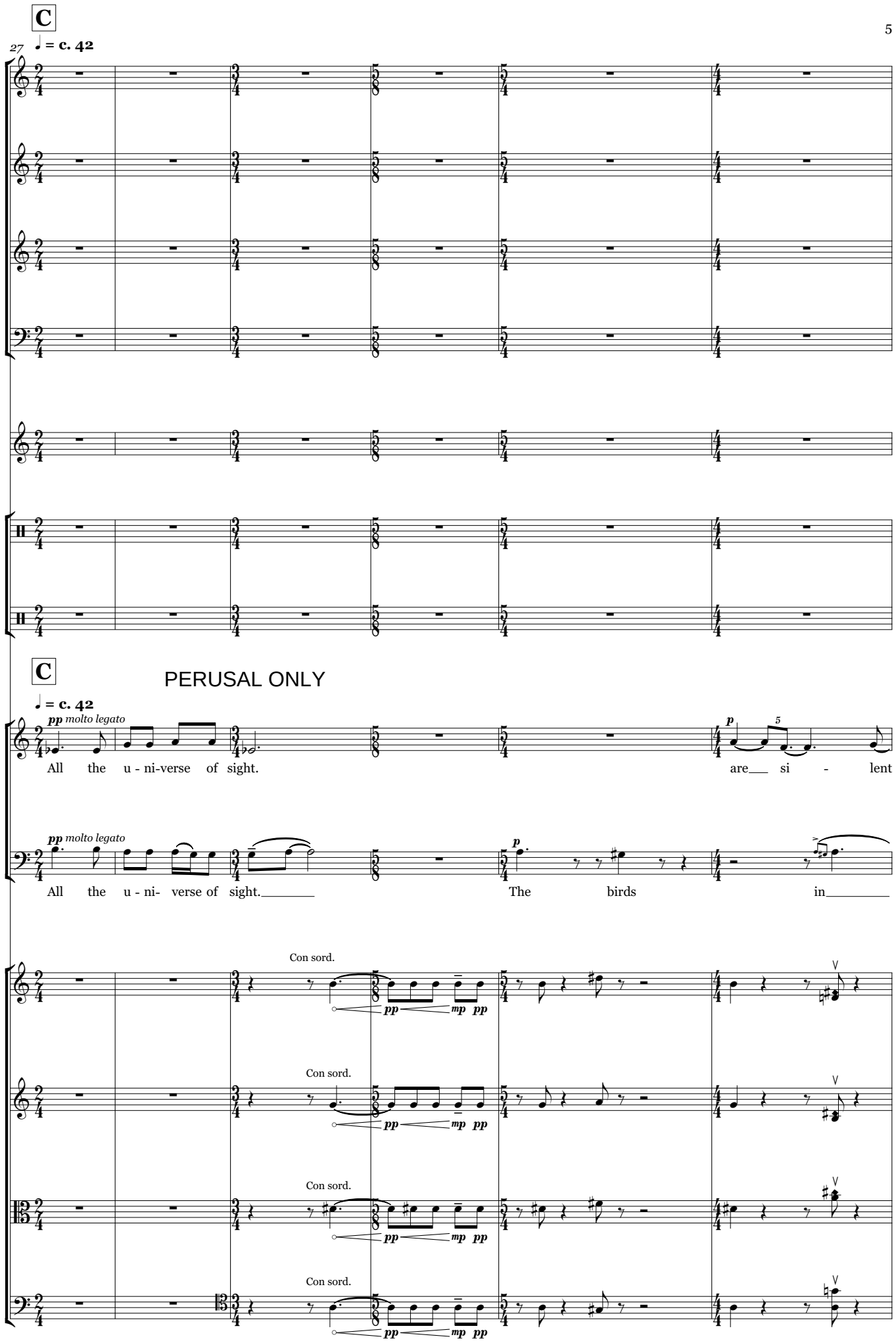
Joshua Ballance

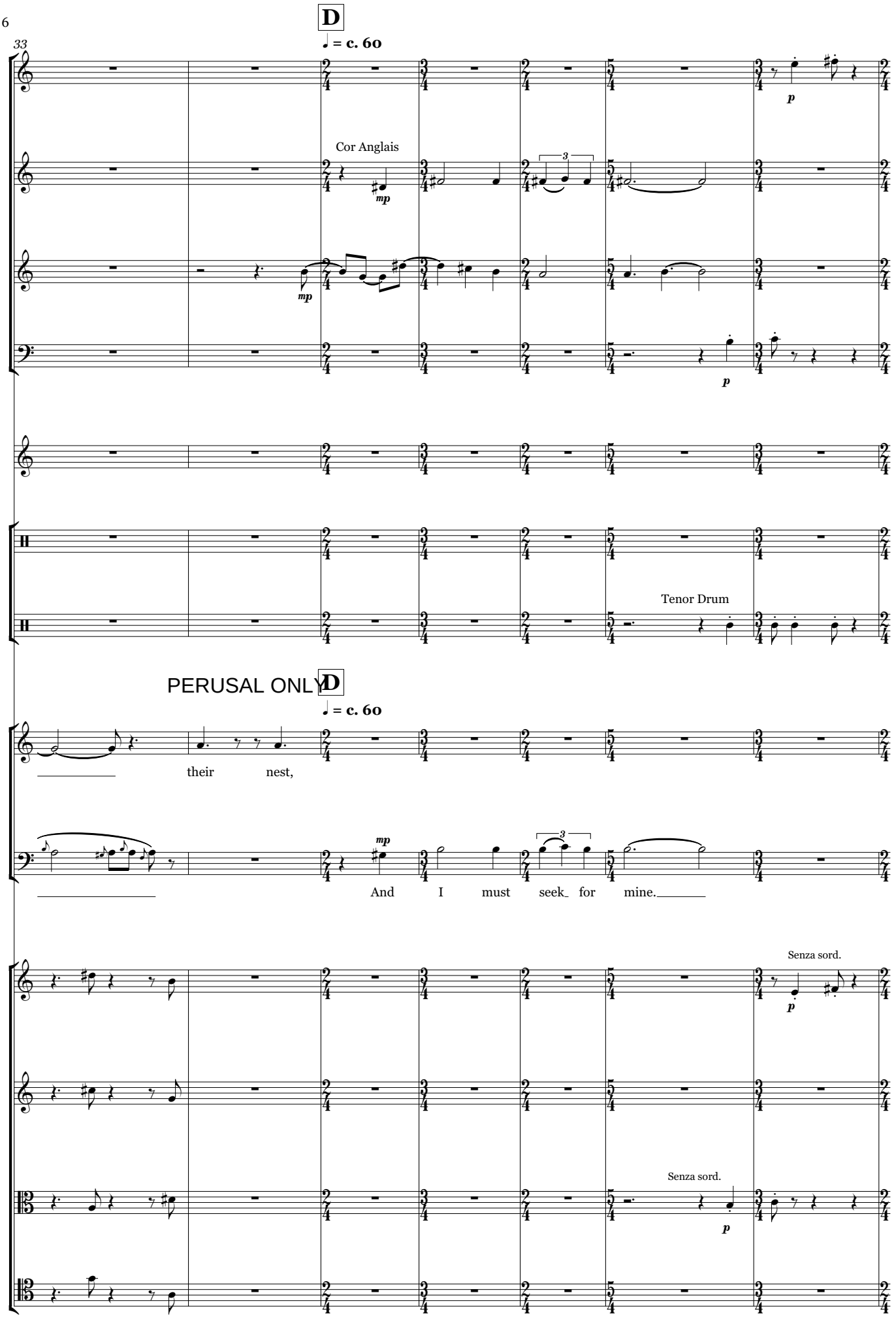



A
p
p
PERUSAL ONLY
A
p legato
The sun_ de-scen ding in the west.
ord.
mp
p
ord.
3
mf
p
ord.
p
ord.
p


15
mf
p
3
PERUSAL ONLY
tr
pp
5
f
The eve - ning star does shine._
mfpp
fast vib.


21
B
poco rit.
losing energy
PERUSAL ONLY
B
poco rit.
mf marcato
and li - ttle
How weak is the light,
Ord.
Ord.
Ord.
Ord.


C
27
♩ = c. 42
C
PERUSAL ONLY
♩ = c. 42
pp molto legato
All the u - ni-verse of sight.
p
5
are si - lent
pp molto legato
All the u - ni- verse of sight.
p
The birds in
Con sord.
pp mp pp
Con sord.
pp mp pp
Con sord.
pp mp pp
Con sord.
pp mp pp



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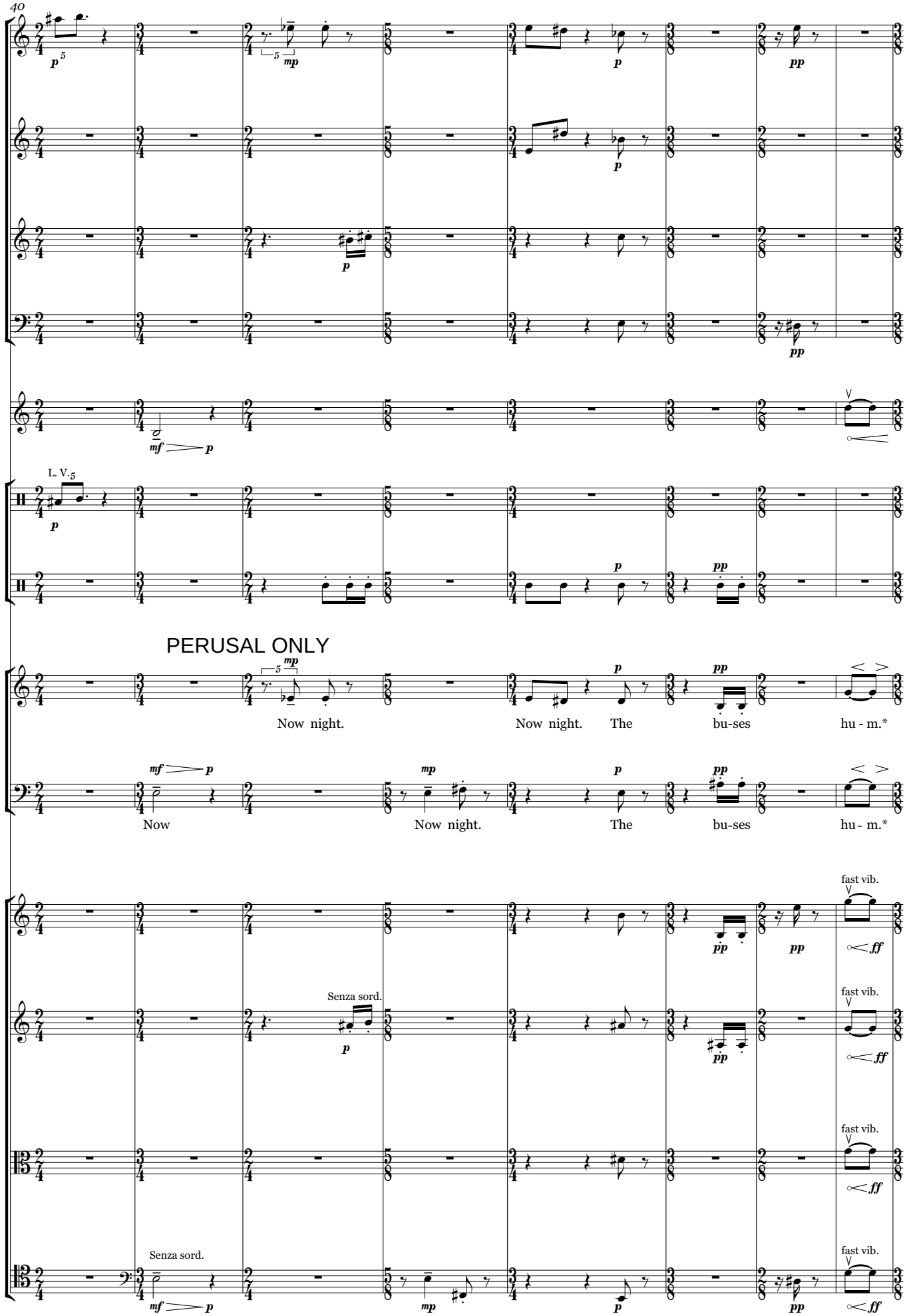
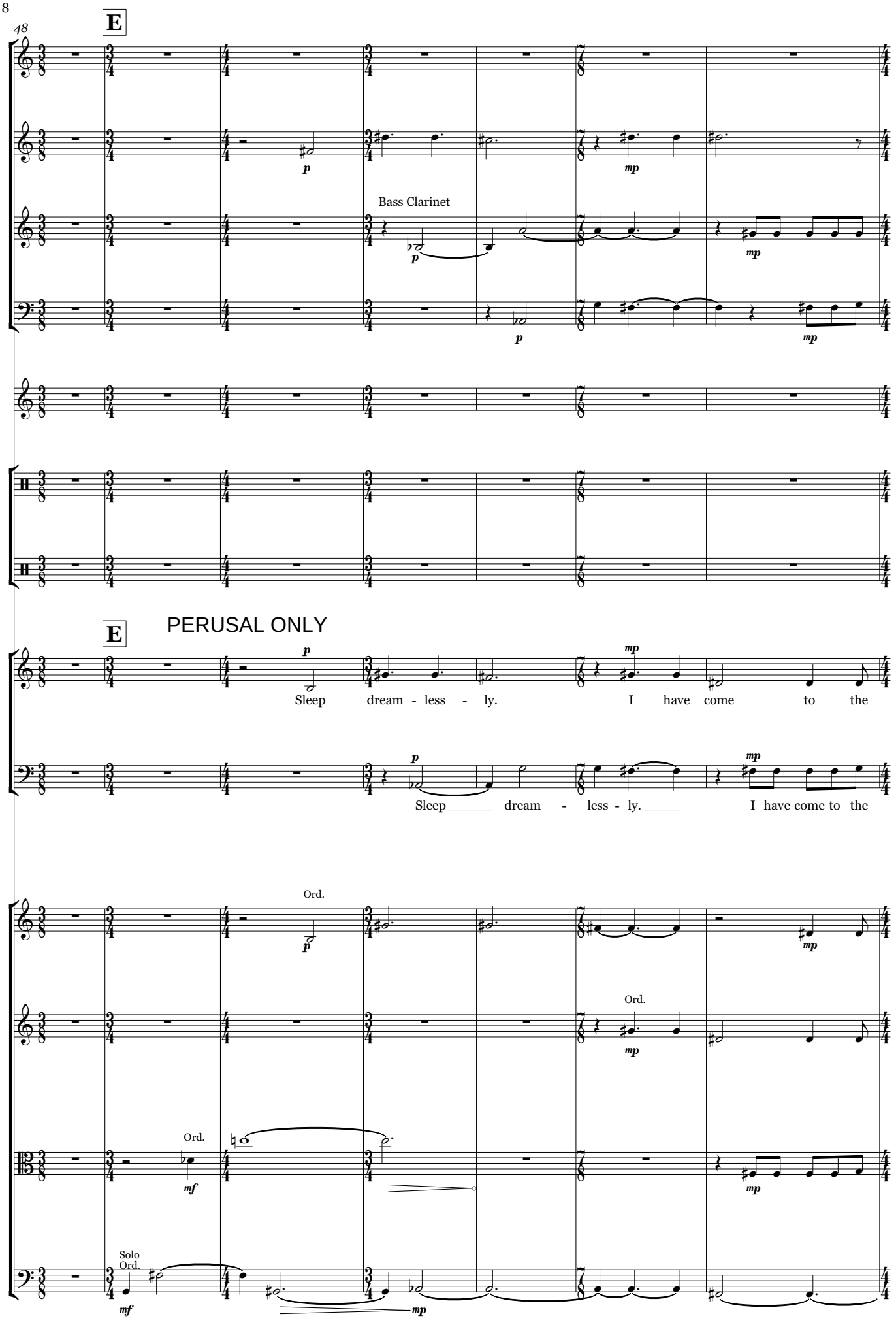
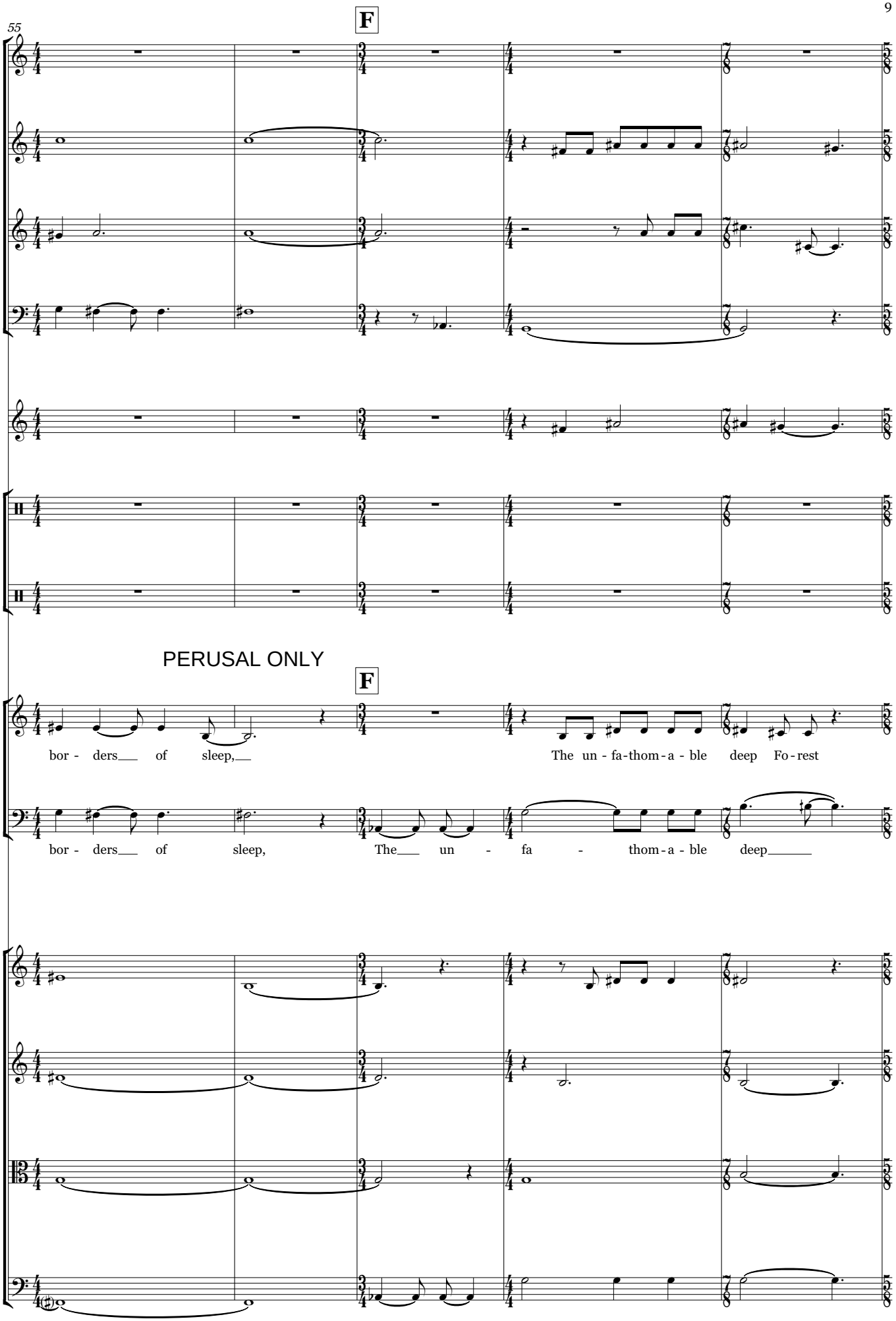
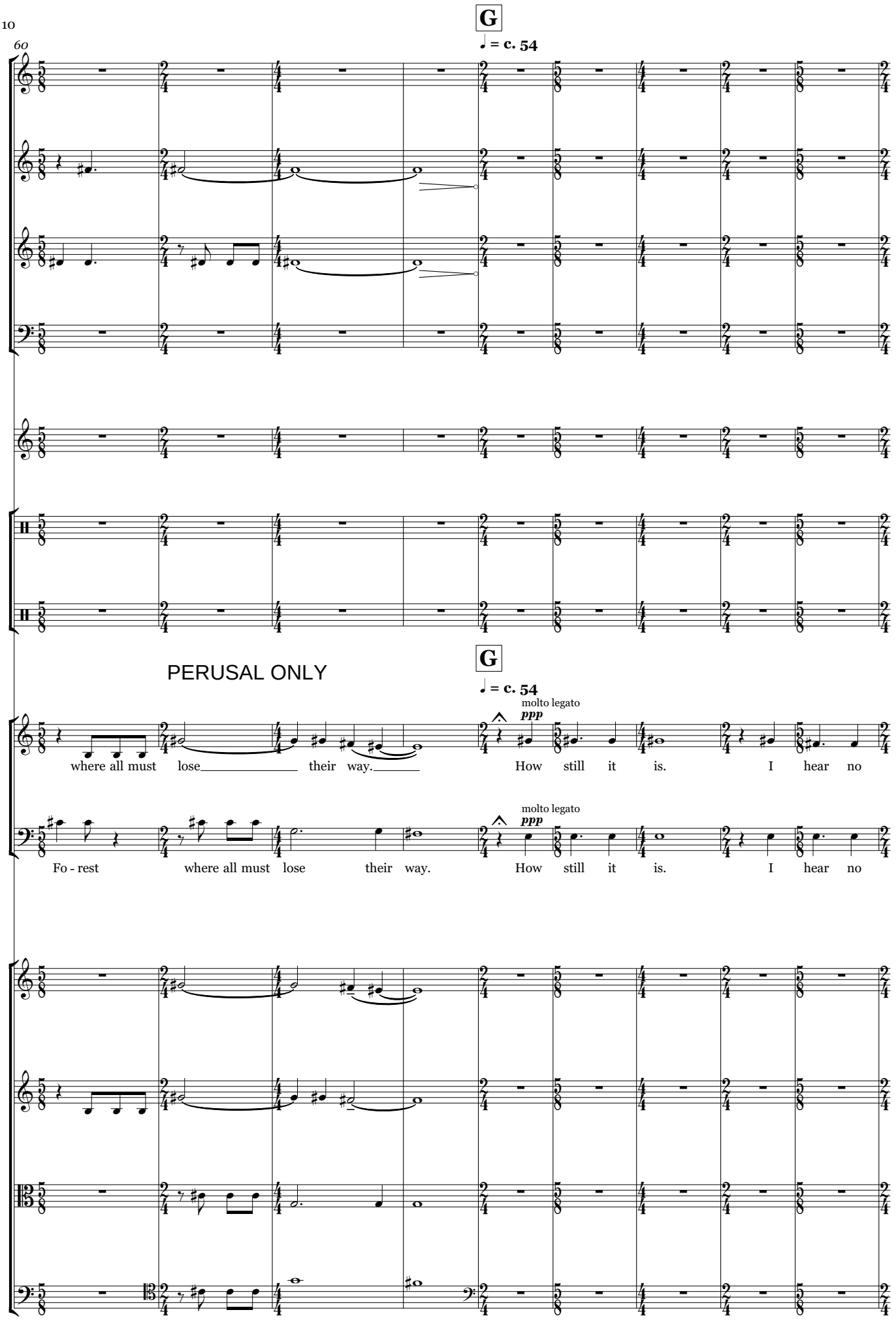


*Closed lips: pitch sustained on a hum


48
E
Bass Clarinet
E
PERUSAL ONLY
Sleep dream - less - ly. I have come to the
Sleep dream - less - ly. I have come to the
Ord.
Ord.
Ord.
Solo
Ord.


55
F
PERUSAL ONLY
F
bor - ders___ of sleep,___
The un - fa-thom-a - ble deep Fo-rest
bor - ders___ of sleep,
The___ un - fa - thom-a - ble deep_____


60
G
♩ = c. 54
PERUSAL ONLY
G
♩ = c. 54
molto legato
ppp
where all must lose their way.
How still it is. I hear no
molto legato
ppp
Fo - rest where all must lose their way.
How still it is. I hear no

69

H

poco rit.

p

p

PERUSAL ONLY

H

poco rit.

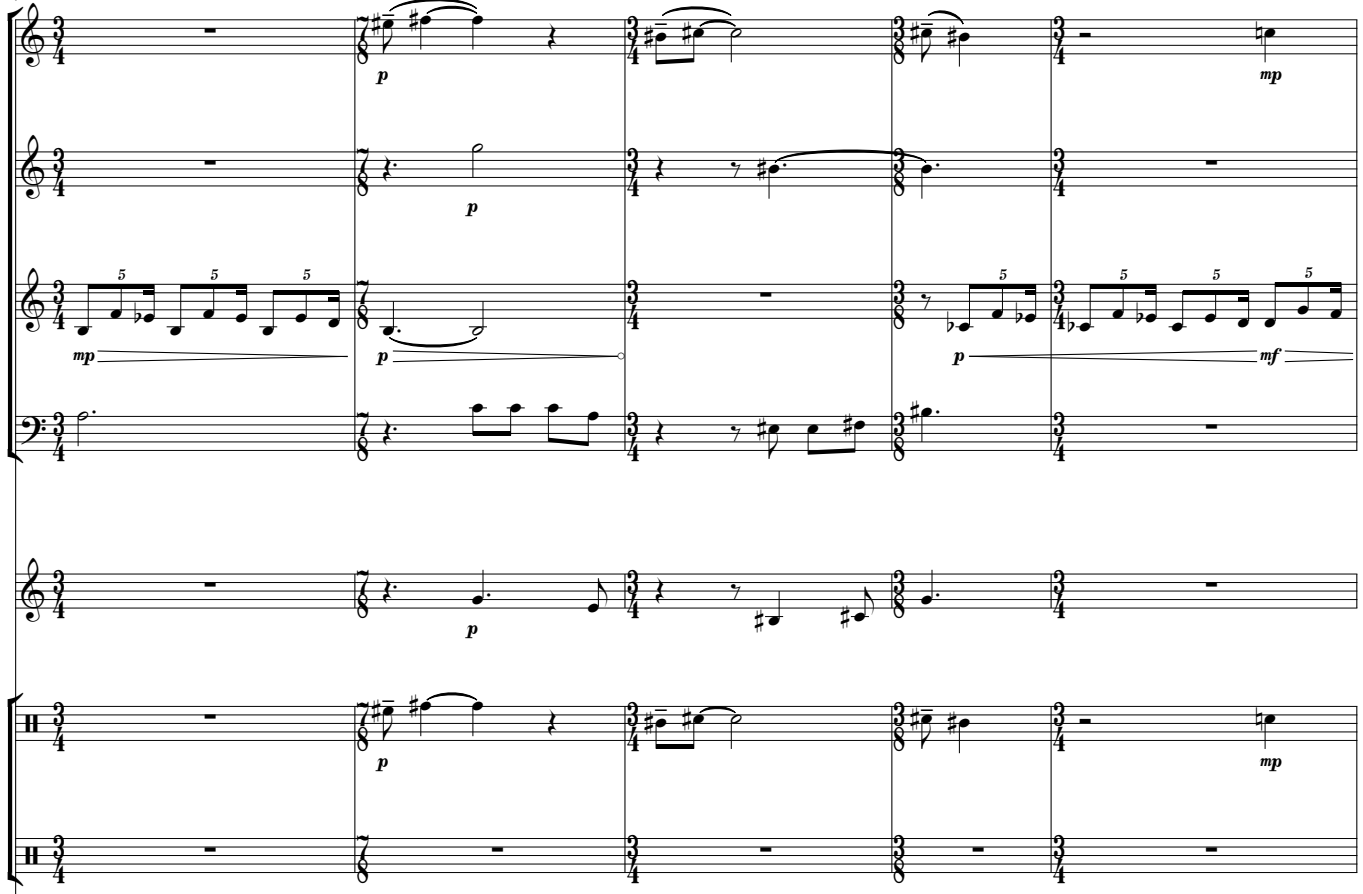
more the bu - sy beat of time;

more the bu - sy beat of time; Out - side the wind's in - com-plete un -

p

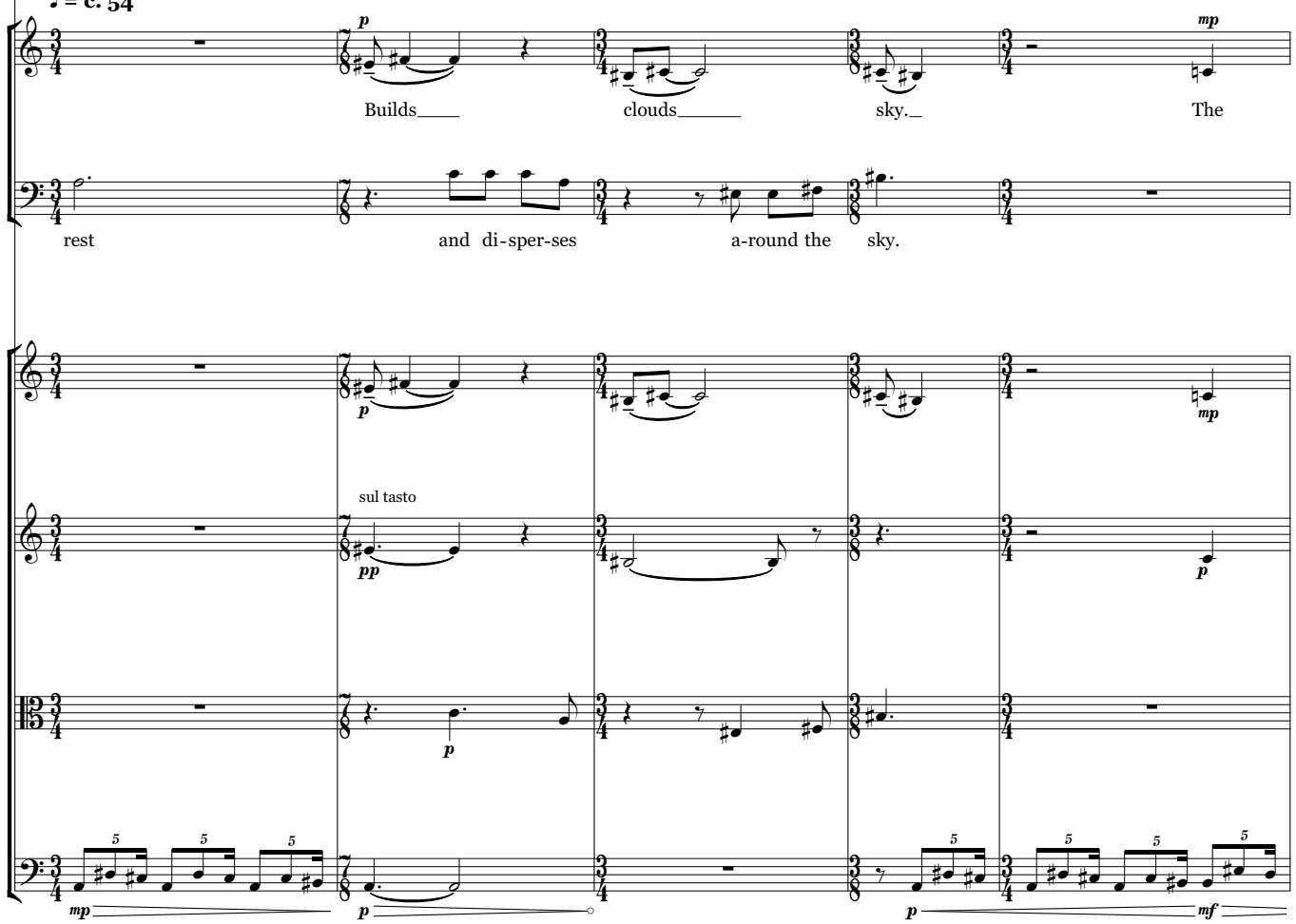
p

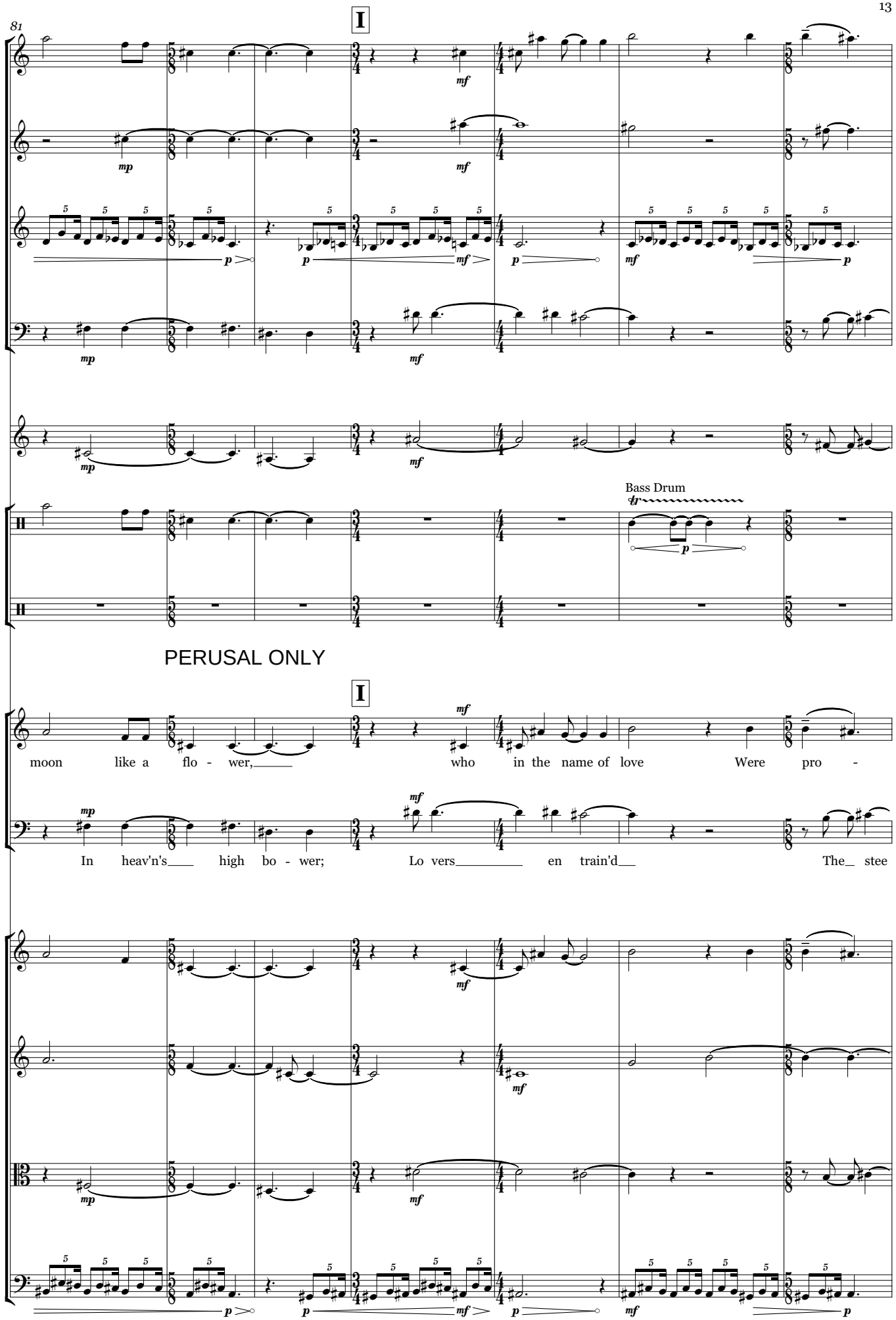
76 ♩ = c. 54



PERUSAL ONLY

♩ = c. 54




81
I
Bass Drum
PERUSAL ONLY
I
moon like a flo - wer, who in the name of love Were pro -
In heav'n's high bo - wer; Lo vers en train'd The stee

88

J

poco accel.

pp mf

tr

mf pp

PERUSAL ONLY

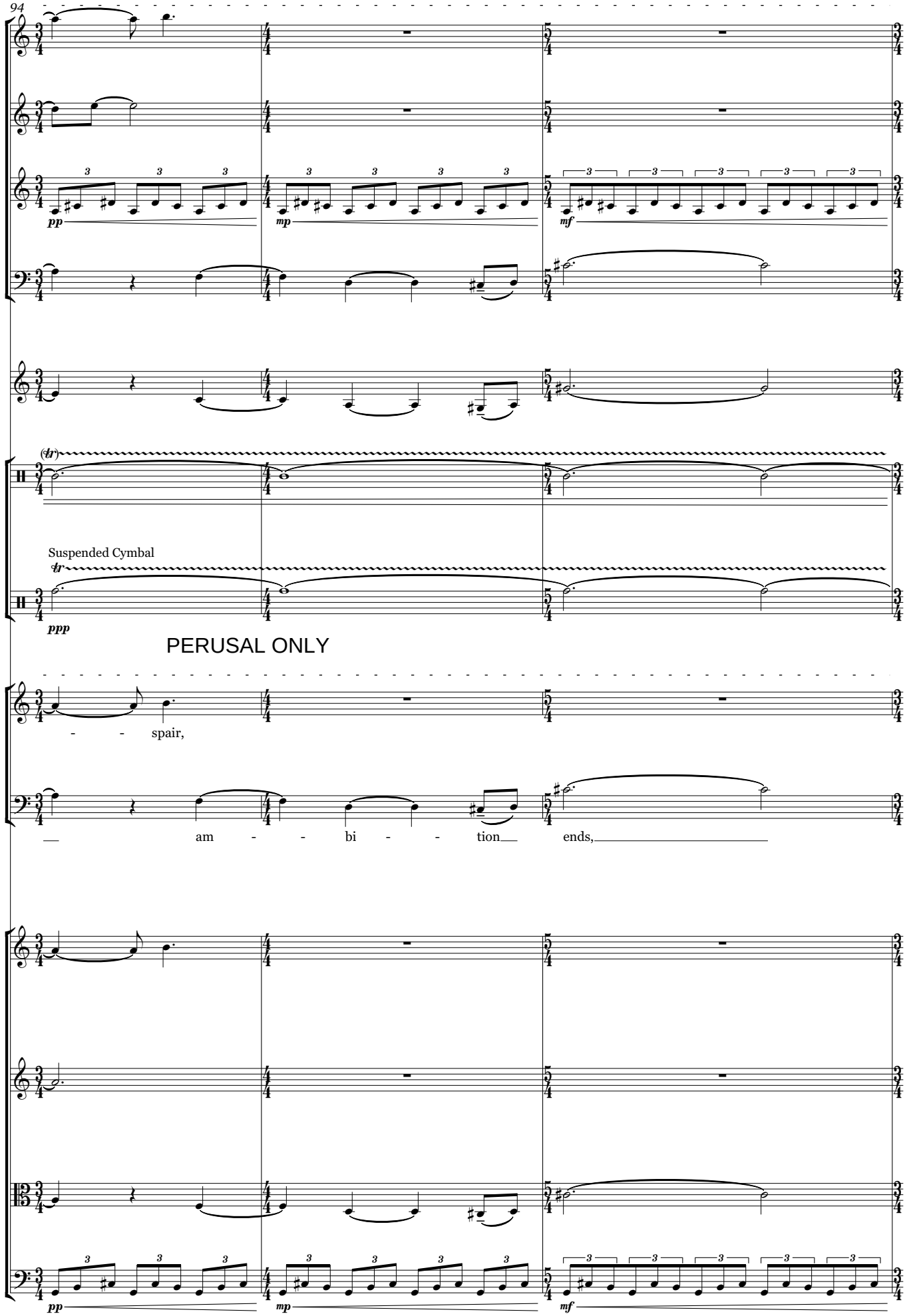
J

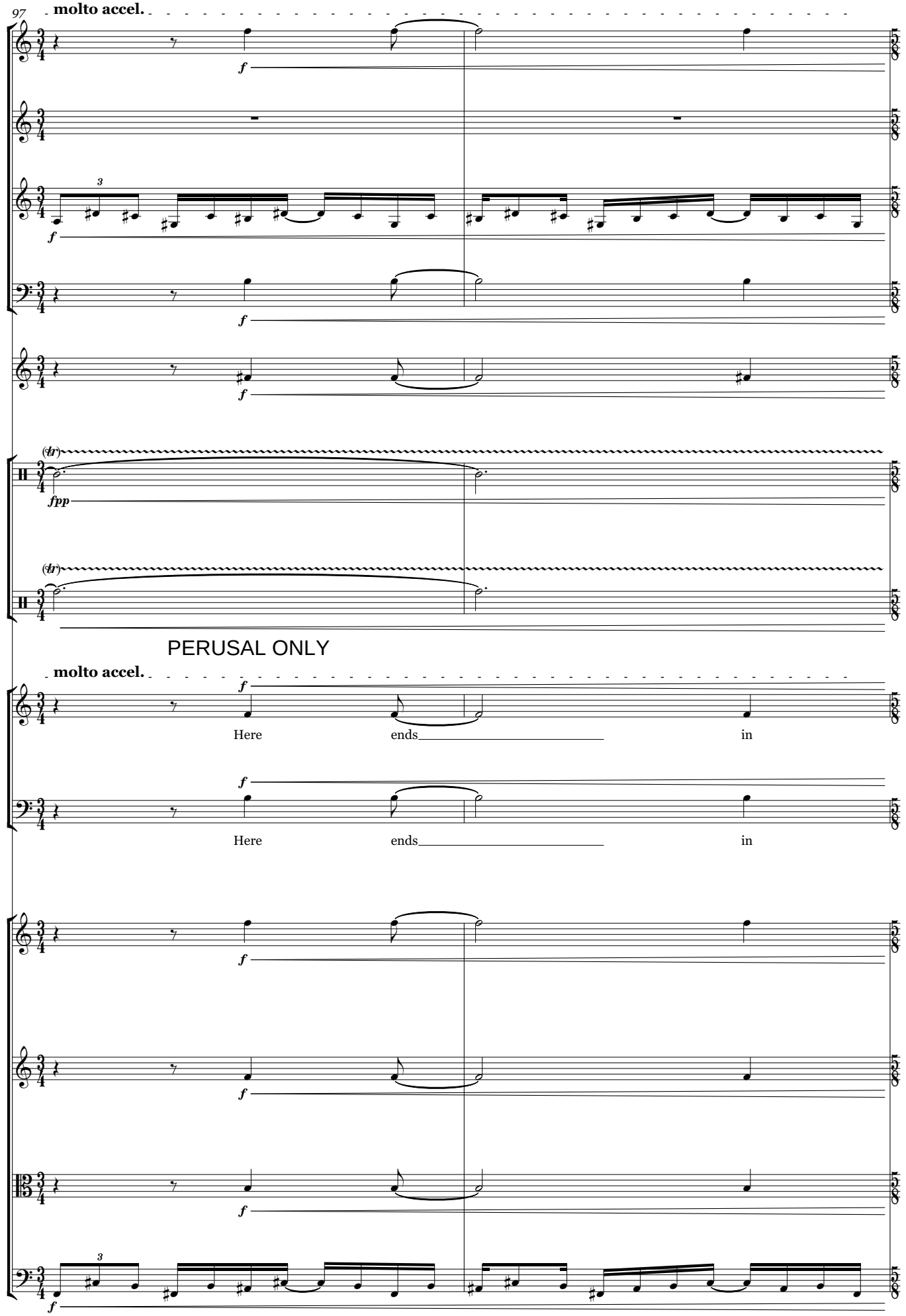
poco accel.

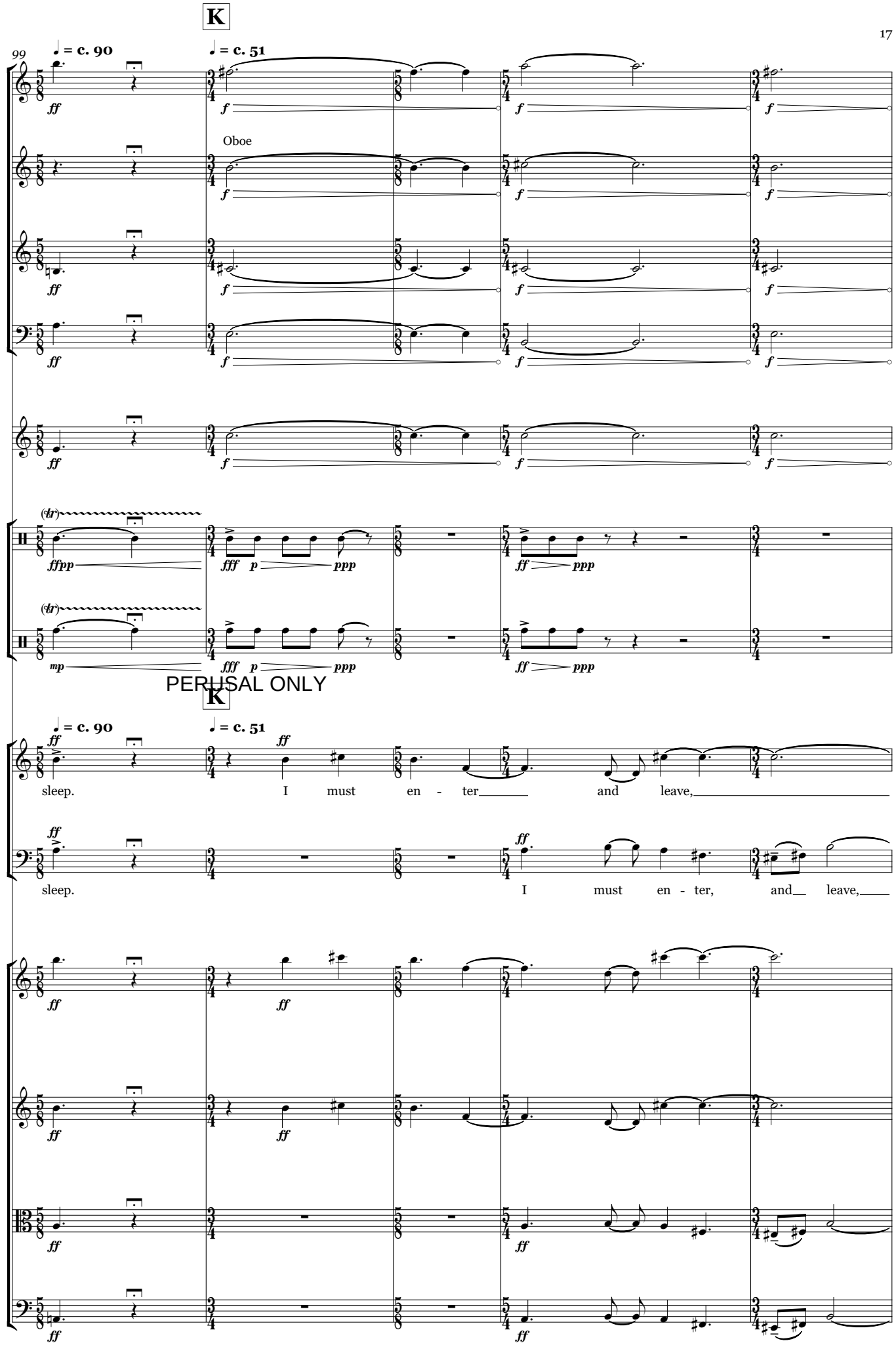
- mis'd The small hours join us, De -

- ples and fan - lights of a dream. Face to face; Here love ends,

pp mf


94
pp
mp
mf
(tr)
Suspended Cymbal
tr
ppp
PERUSAL ONLY
- - spair,
__ am - - bi - - tion__ ends,
pp
mp
mf


97
molto accel.
f
3
f
f
(tr)
fpp
(tr)
PERUSAL ONLY
molto accel.
f
Here
ends
in
f
Here
ends
in
f
f
3
f



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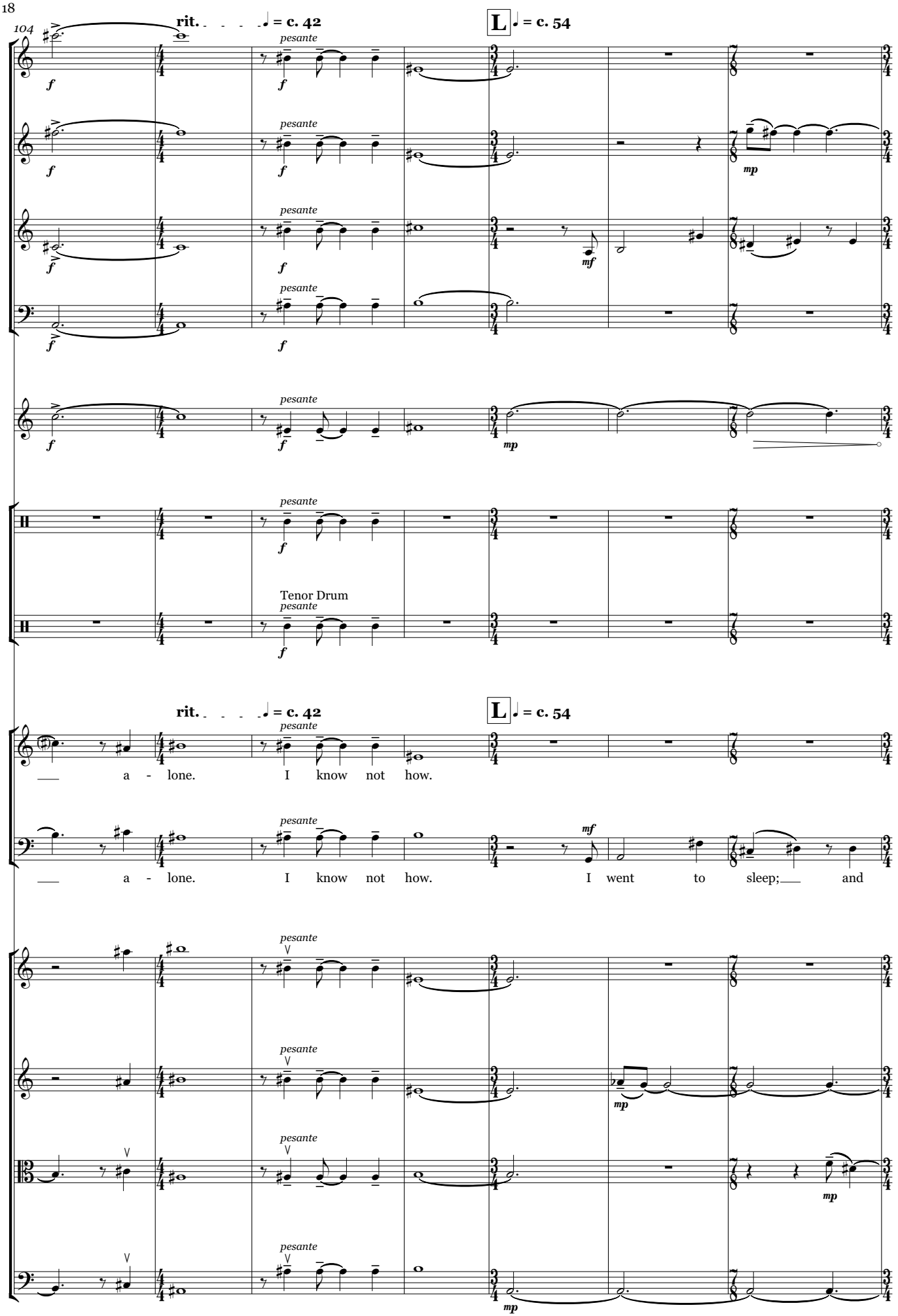
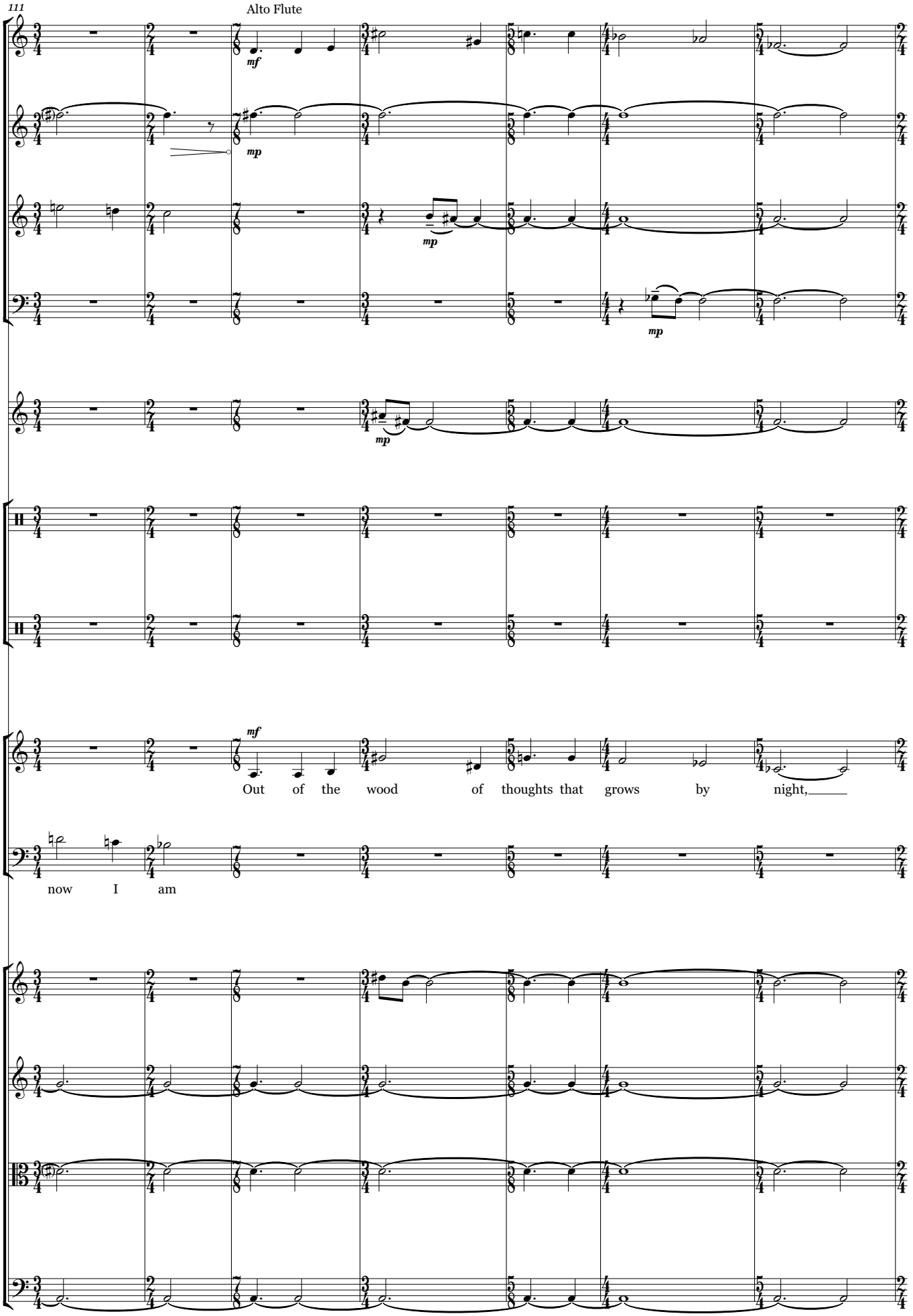
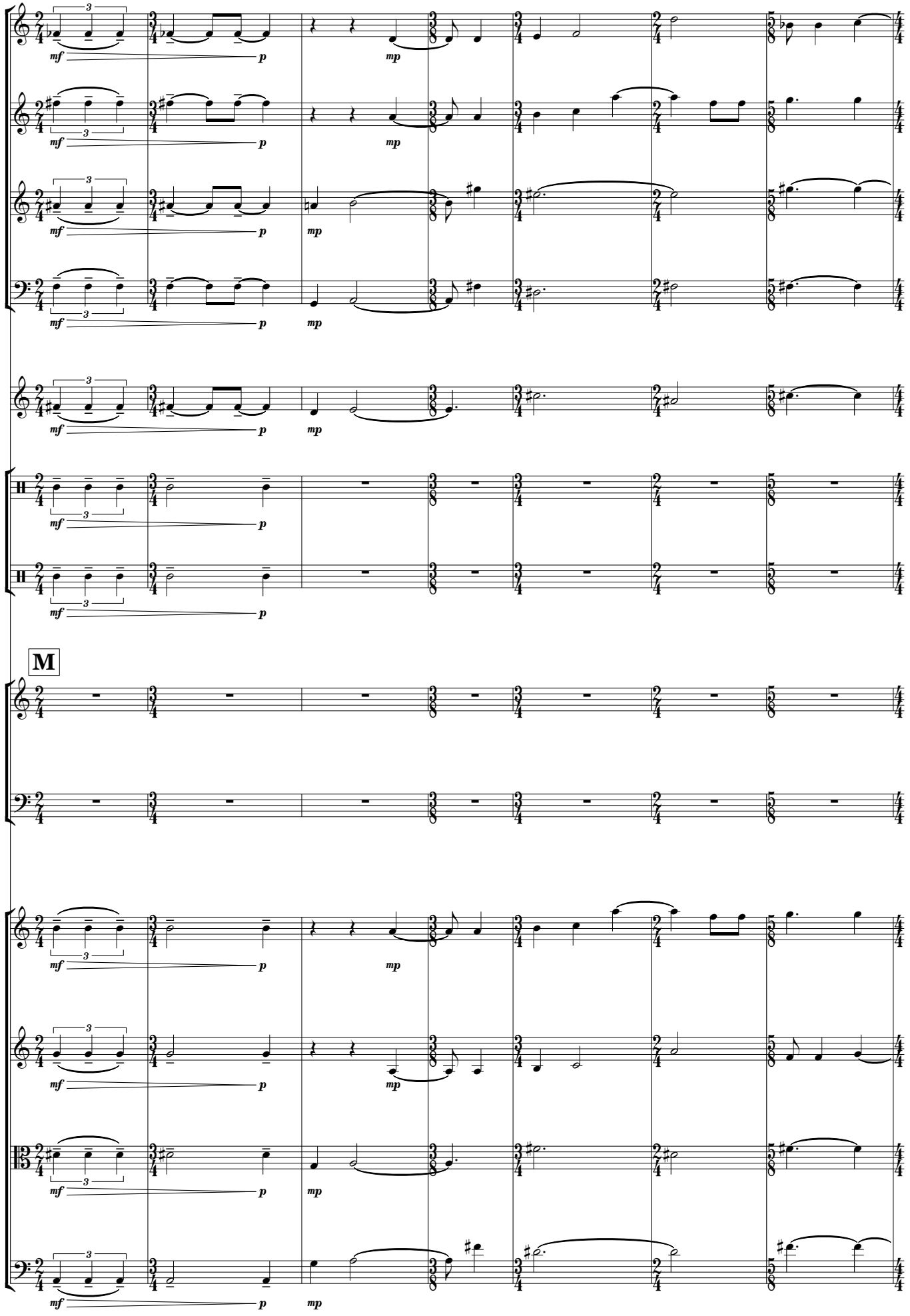

104
rit.
= c. 42
L
= c. 54
pesante
Tenor Drum
a - lone. I know not how.
a - lone. I know not how. I went to sleep; and

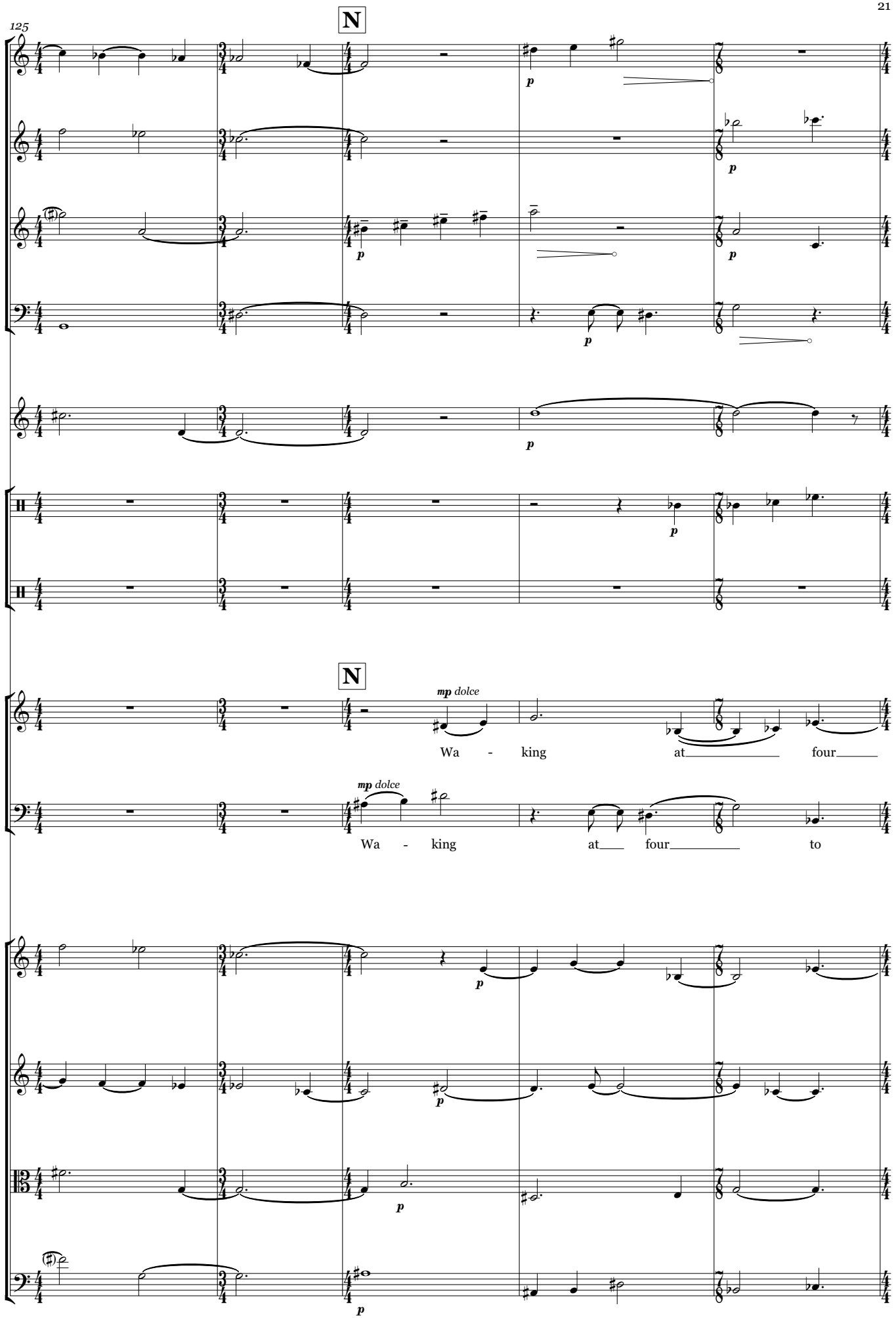

111
Alto Flute
mf
mp
mp
mp
mp
mf
Out of the wood of thoughts that grows by night,
now I am

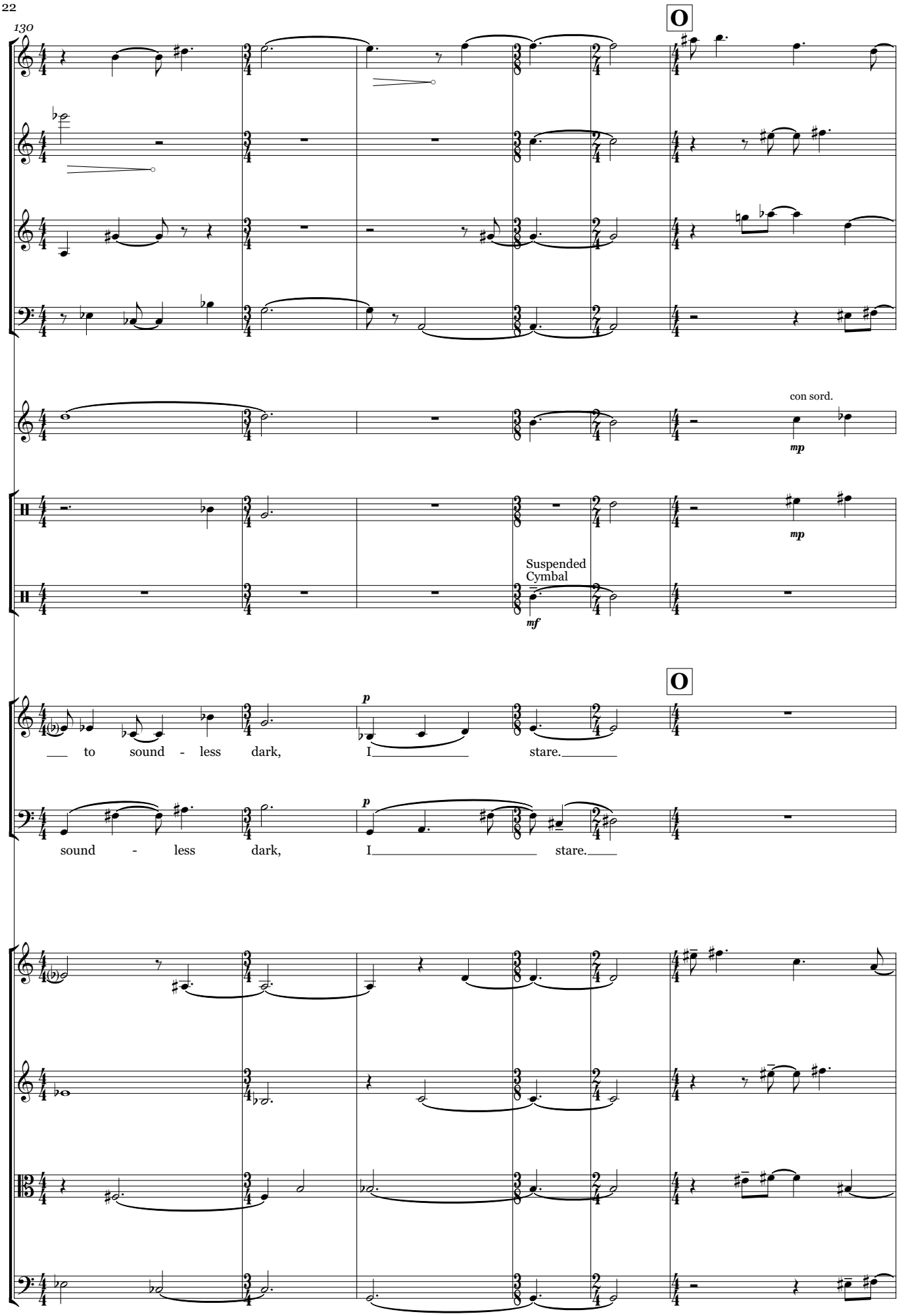
M

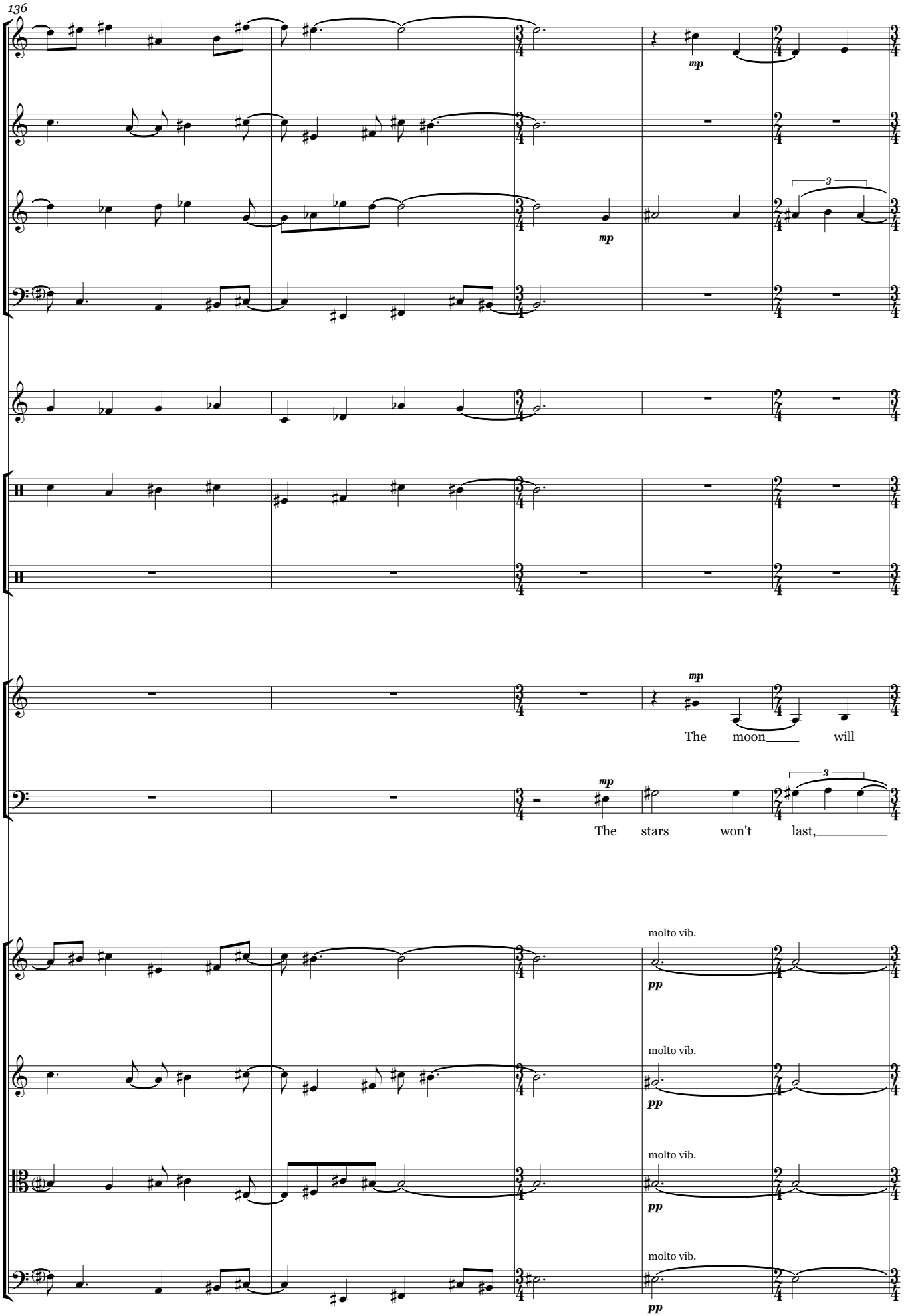
118



M


125
N
p
p
p
p
p
N
mp dolce
Wa - king at four
mp dolce
Wa - king at four to
p
p
p
p


130
O
con sord.
mp
mp
Suspended Cymbal
mf
O
p
to sound - less dark, I stare.
p
sound - less dark, I stare.


136
mp
mp
3
mp
The moon will
mp
3
The stars won't last,
molto vib.
pp
molto vib.
pp
molto vib.
pp
molto vib.
pp

141

P

p

p

(sord.)

P

die.

ord.

p

ord.

p

148

Q

♩ = c. 51

tr

ppp

Q

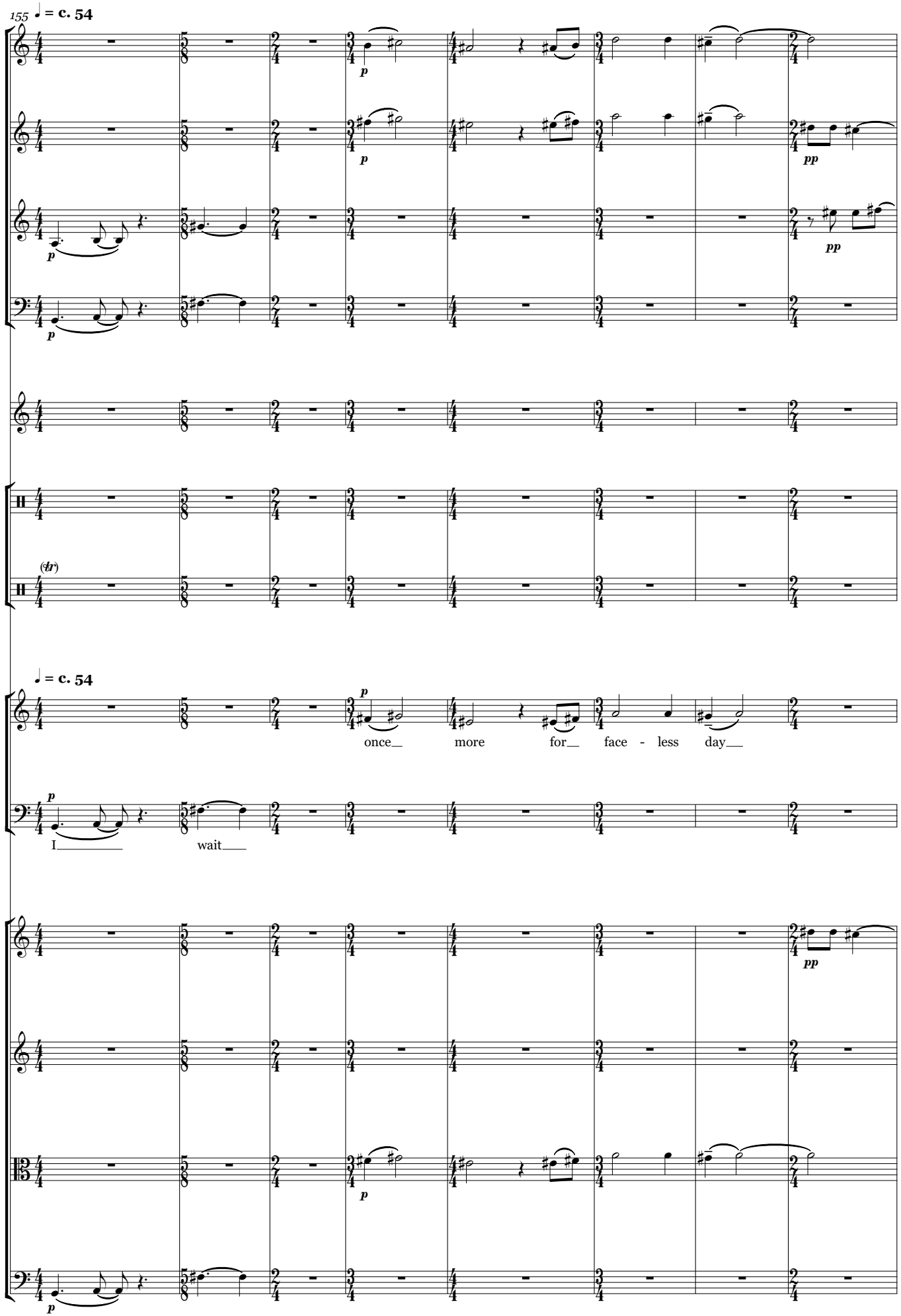
♩ = c. 51

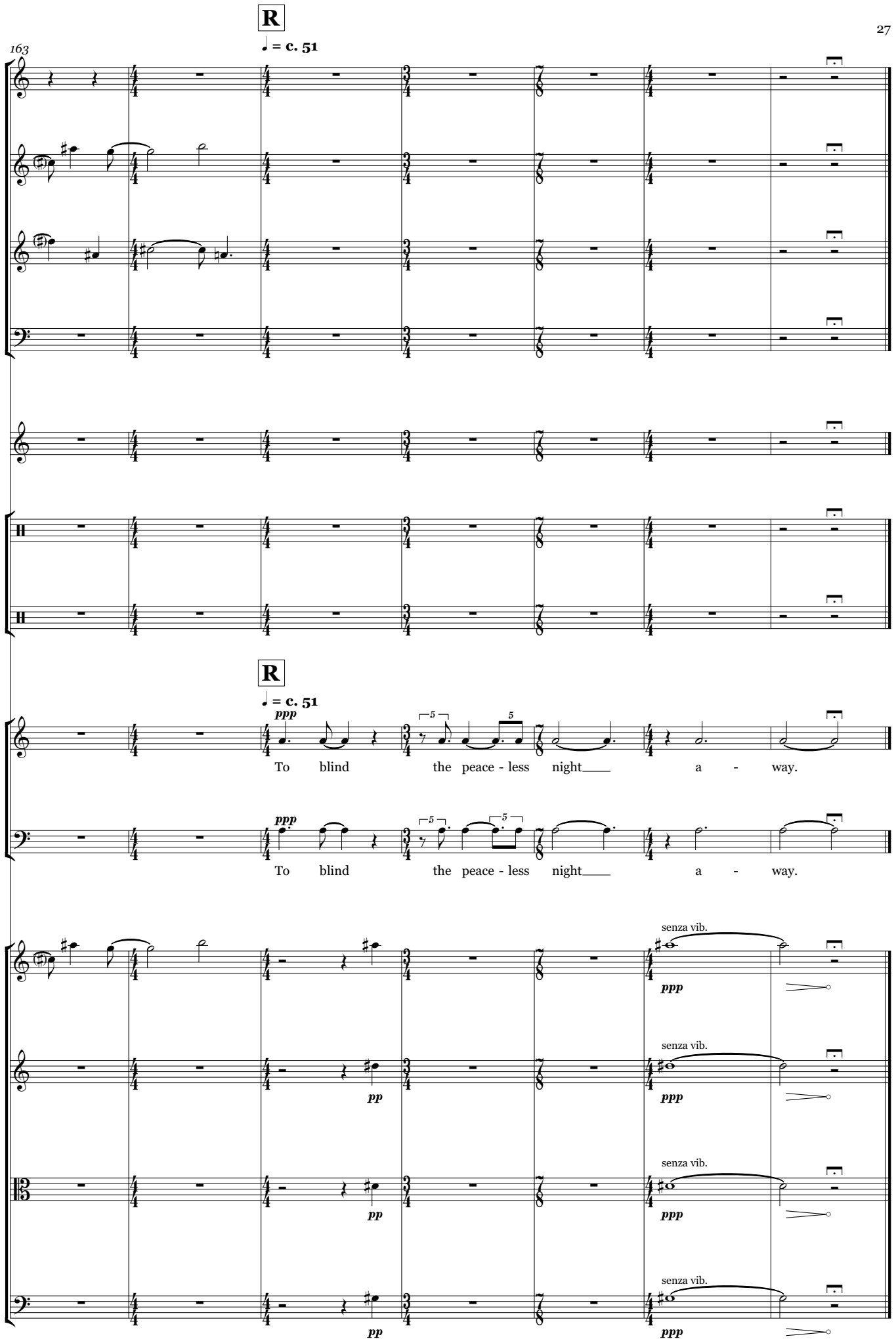
pp

In time the cur - tain ed - ges will grow light.

pp

In time the cur - tain ed - ges will grow light.


155
♩ = c. 54
p
pp
(tr)
♩ = c. 54
once_ more for_ face - less day_
I_____ wait___



October 2016, Cambridge