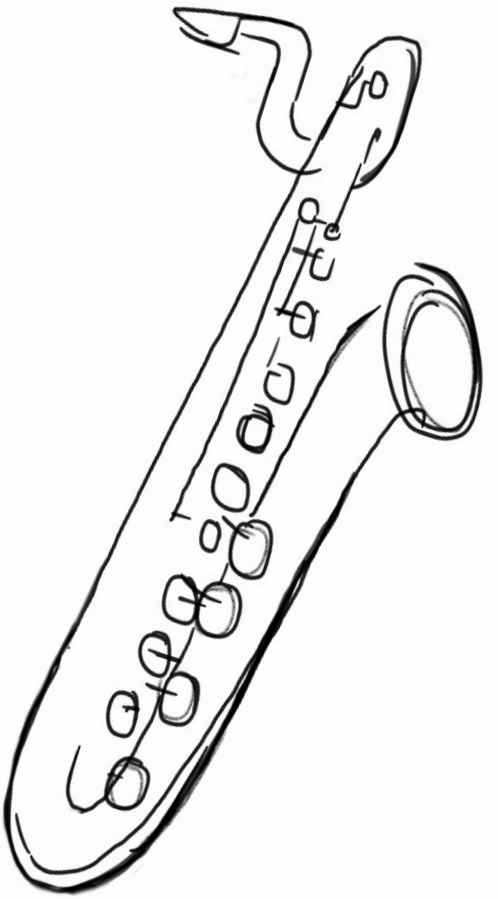
Sonata

For the Baritone Saxophonist



Jeremy Howell

This piece was created with the specific intention of providing a truly expressive piece of music for baritone saxophonists to call their own. It is not a transcription of a work for another instrument; nor is it an etude without consideration for the audience's perspective. It is a reflection of the unique qualities of the instrument. The movements are sequential in difficulty, ranging roughly from the level of an advanced high school student to a professional level player. They can be performed as standalone pieces, or as a complete set. From a growth perspective, each movement has very clear goals and inspirations which I have outlined below. This may be valuable for planning your (or your students) goals.

I. Inner Odyssey: Comfort and Musicianship
This serves as the first foray into concert repertoire on bari sax. The first movement of Paul Creston's Sonata often exemplifies this exact purpose on Alto. As a rarity in saxophone repertoire, the first movement is in sonata form. This movement introduces, to saxophonists, how a piece can serve as a commentary on itself.

II. Dances of Distinct Hues: Articulation and Cleanliness
Once one is comfortable on bari, the common frustration is often creating clean and clear energy through articulation. Starting and stopping sound on a bigger instrument is inherently more challenging. Producing clean leaps is also a challenge presented in this movement. I was inspired by the clarity of Henri Tomasi's Saxophone Concerto, which demonstrates these challenges on Alto.

III. The Moat of Memories: Altissimo and Intonation
Developing the altissimo register on bari is often neglected until it's called for in quartet repertoire. Because this skill is often underdeveloped compared to our alto altissimo, it can feel and sound unnatural. This movement is intended to challenge this notion. Allow the altissimo register to sing organically! I was thinking of the second movement of Lars-Erik Larsson's Saxophone Concerto when writing this more vulnerable movement.

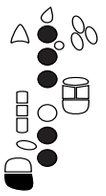
IV. Untamed, Unkept, Unhinged: Complete Mastery
How far can we push the capabilities of virtuosity on our instrument? Can it be as facile and agile as the higher-pitched saxophones? Can we make the audience's jaw drop by showcasing our instrument in a way that seems antithetical to its low nature? I think so! To my knowledge, at the time of writing this there were no other pieces for bari built upon demanding virtuosic fundamentals as this movement is. The absurdity of the last movement of William Albright's Sonata for Alto Saxophone set the bar for the intensely chaotic energy of this movement.

Performance Notes: if all movements are performed in a single setting, it is desirable to have all of the movements in order. There are ideas in each movement that serve as reflections, reactions, or responses to the other movements. There is one idea that serves as an arc for the first three movements, whereas the last movement reflects the completion of this arc. However, if the piece is not performed in its entirety, you should establish an order that works best for your program.

Performance Notes cont.

Mvmt II
Accidentals in the cadenza ONLY apply to the note they are notated on.

Mvmt IV
Suggested multiphonic fingering



Program Notes:

I. Something is almost entirely missing in saxophone repertoire, and especially for bari, that often surprises other instrumentalists: the usage of sonata form. This well-loved structure affords the composer a vastly intriguing opportunity to have the music create a dialogue within itself. The form creates a period of upheaval, change, and transformation before reestablishing the motifs from the beginning with a different perspective. I utilized the relationships created in this form to highlight a sense of inner conflict or cognitive dissonance. I also leaned on the specific weightiness of the instrument's character in selecting the harmonic and melodic language that is vastly different from the pieces of sonata form of old.

II. Low-pitched instruments are often associated with energy created by the powerful character of their sound alone. However, in this movement the idea of a low instrument creating a wide variety of energy through motion and articulation is explored. To accept all events in life vividly is what creates the adventure of our own lives. Joy, longing, nostalgia, bliss, frustration, contemplation, dread, and elation. All of these feelings are motions through life articulated by experiences. Their meaning is intertwined with the others' meaning.

III. Our own minds can create barriers in an effort to keep us safe. In order to break down these barriers, we often have to traverse uncomfortable states of mind towards acceptance. In the context in front of you, the repetition of a central idea is akin to an inescapable memory from which confusion, anger, and failed attempts at acceptance arise. The performer must traverse higher and higher into their upper range. In this register that can feel unnatural and foreign, they are pushed to create ever-increasing dark and dramatic expressions; a hard feat that is rewarded by a rush of calmness and peace.

IV. Since this piece was created as a pedagogical set, each previous movement has very specific technical goals for the saxophonist and limitations in artistic scope. But this movement is different. There are no limitations; only a creative desire to release a feeling I'd been holding onto for this four-year journey. My ideas exploded into a musical language that was ravenous, wild, and ridiculous. Much of the material was derived through my own improvisations and driven towards finding the limits of what is possible with unapologetic virtuosity.

Sonata

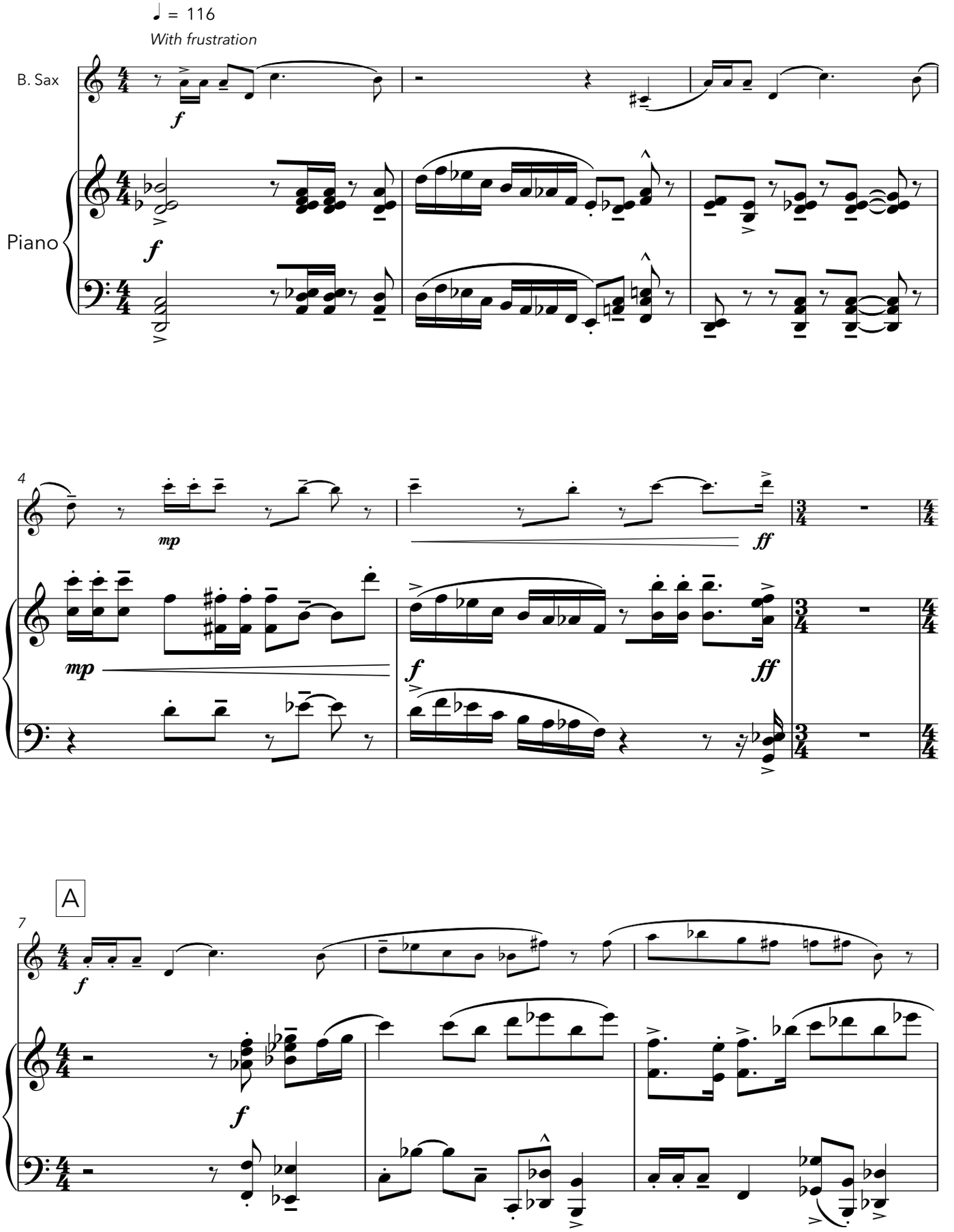
for the baritone saxophonist

Transposed Score

I

Inner Odyssey

Jeremy Howell (2023)



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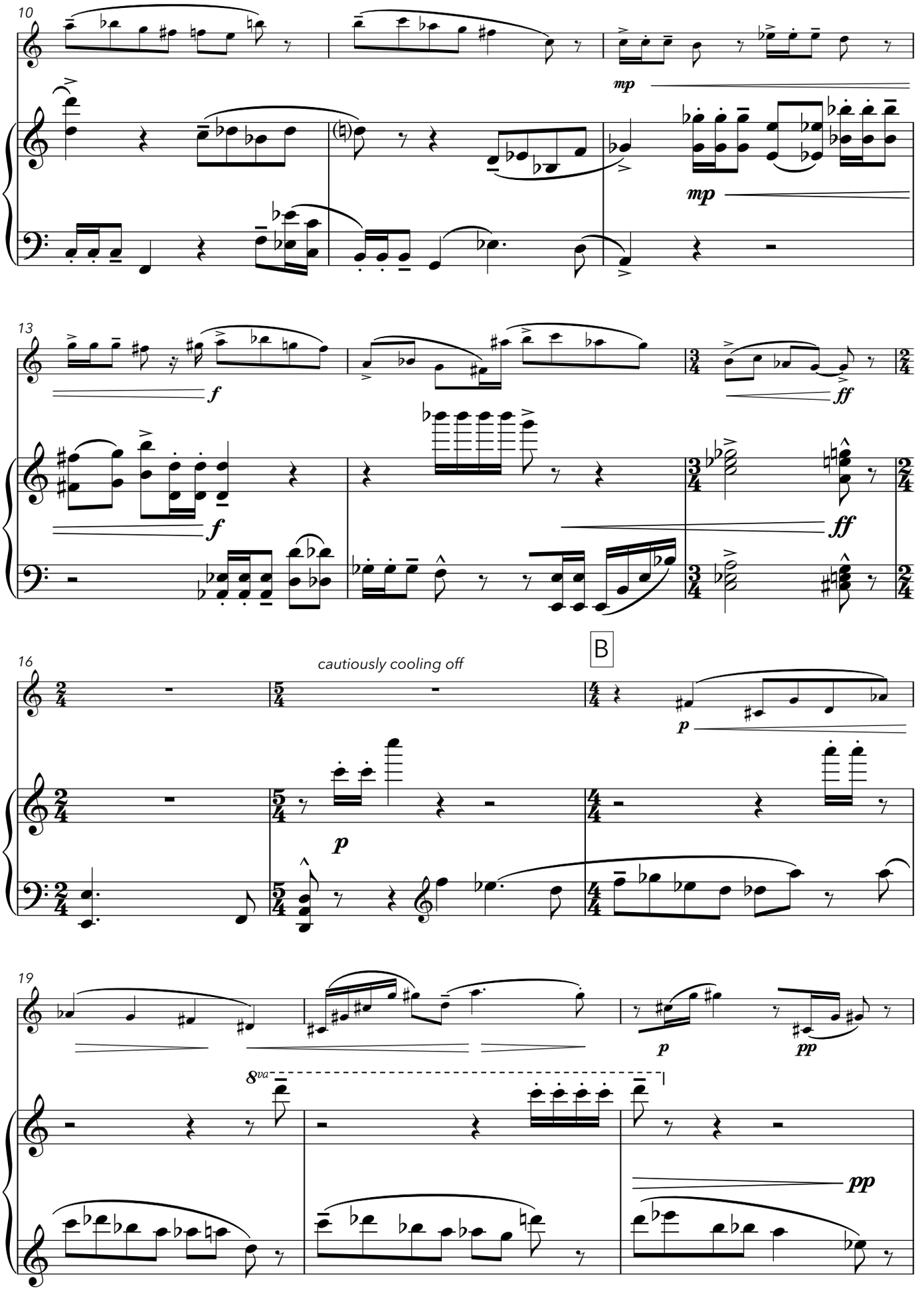
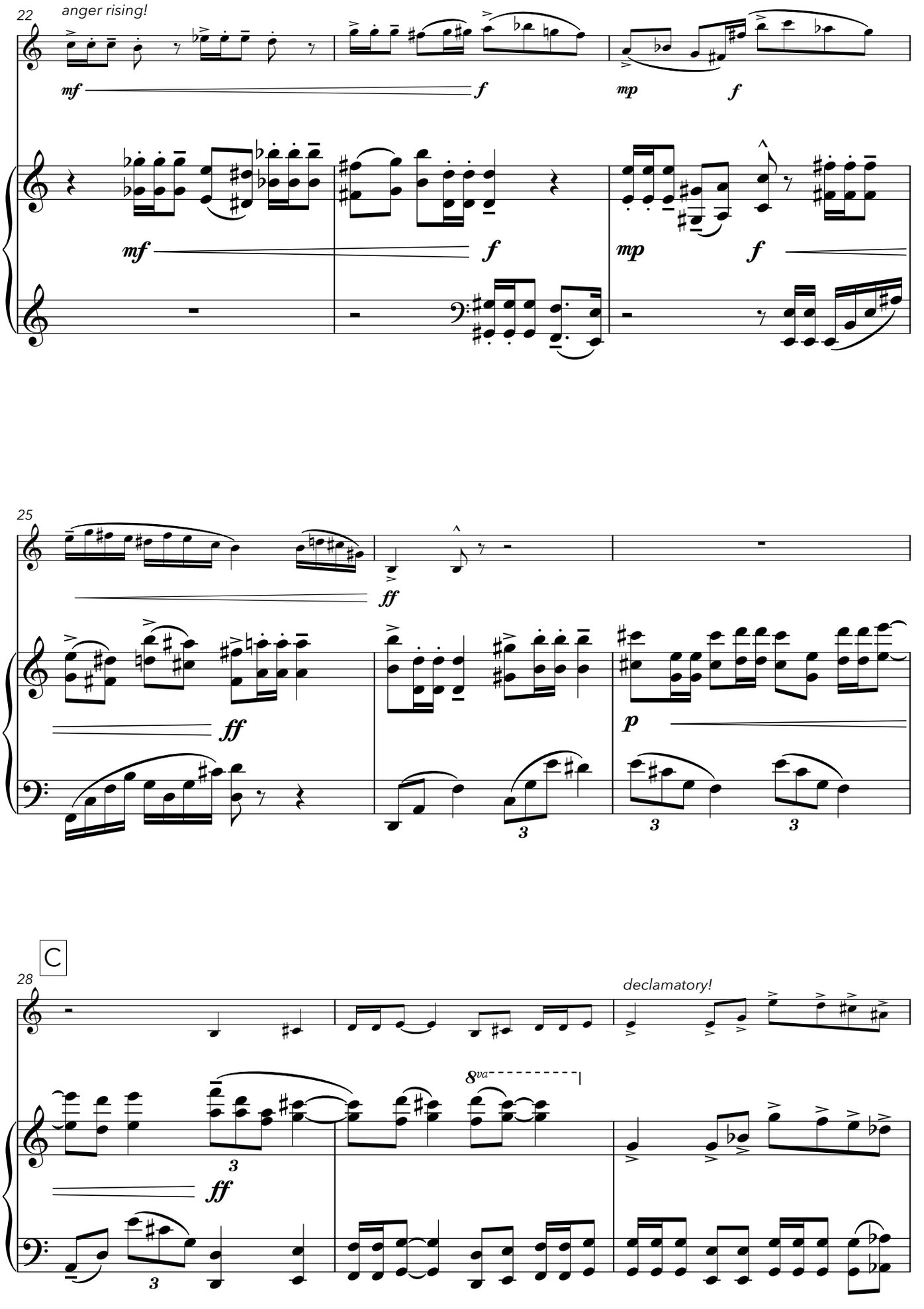
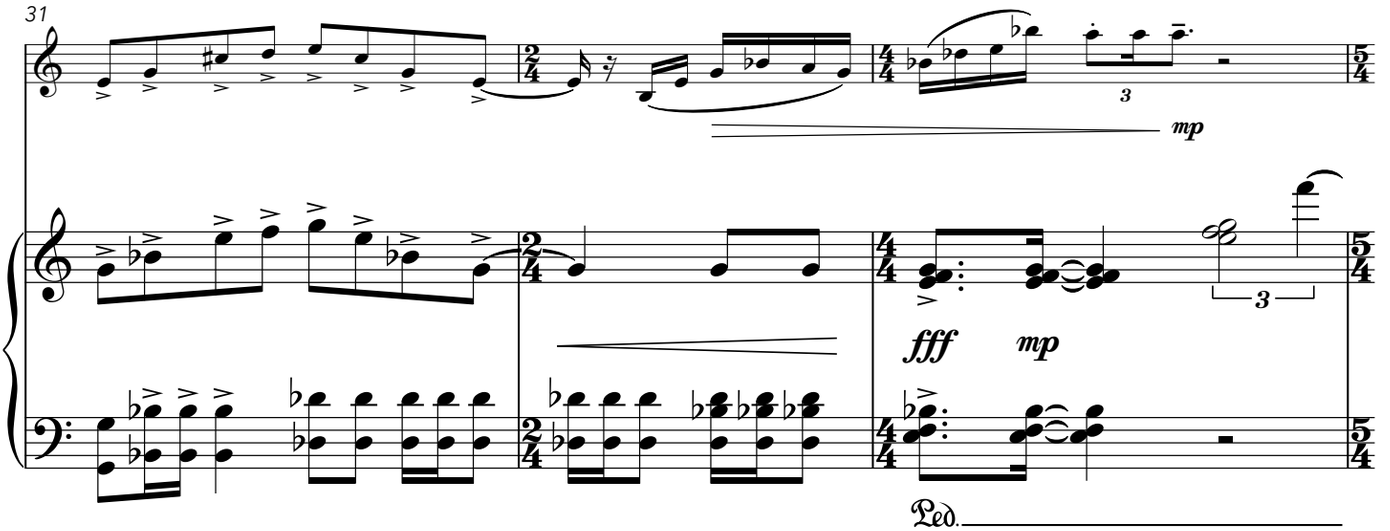
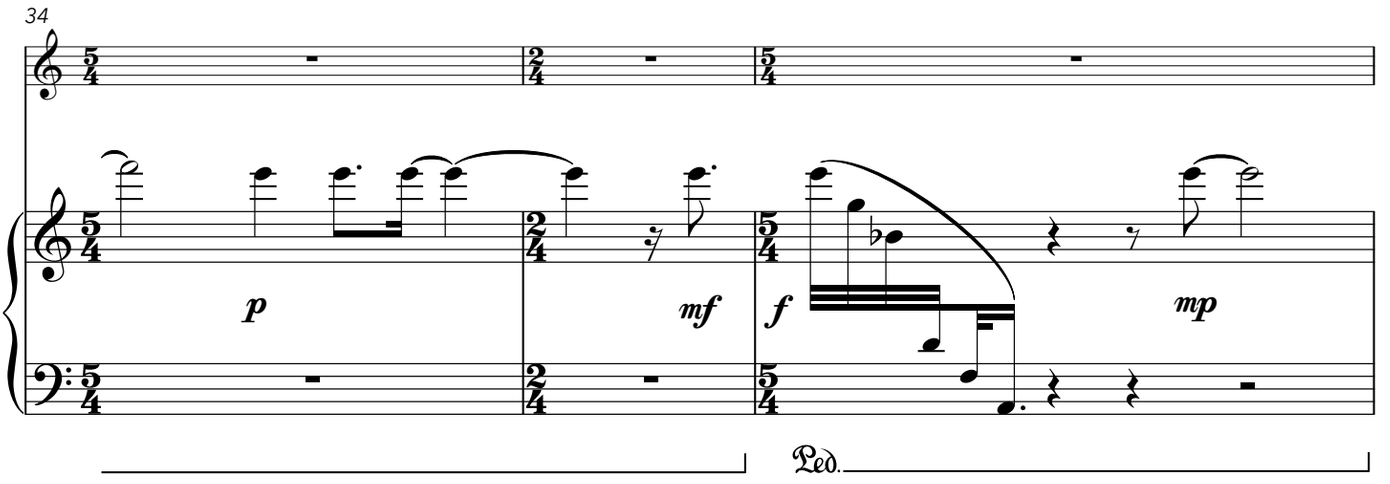
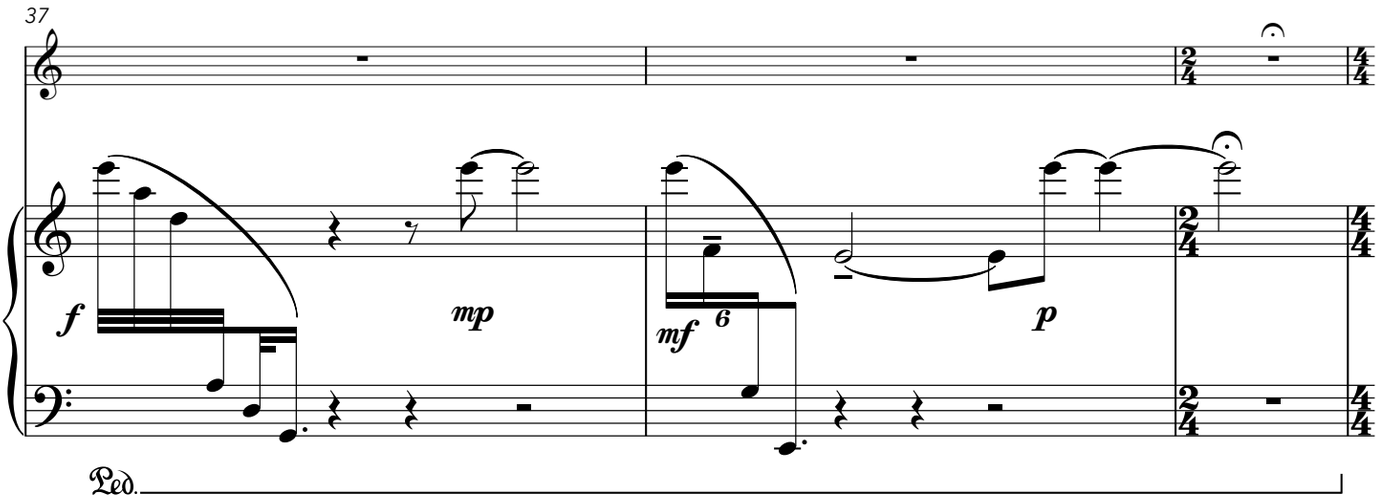
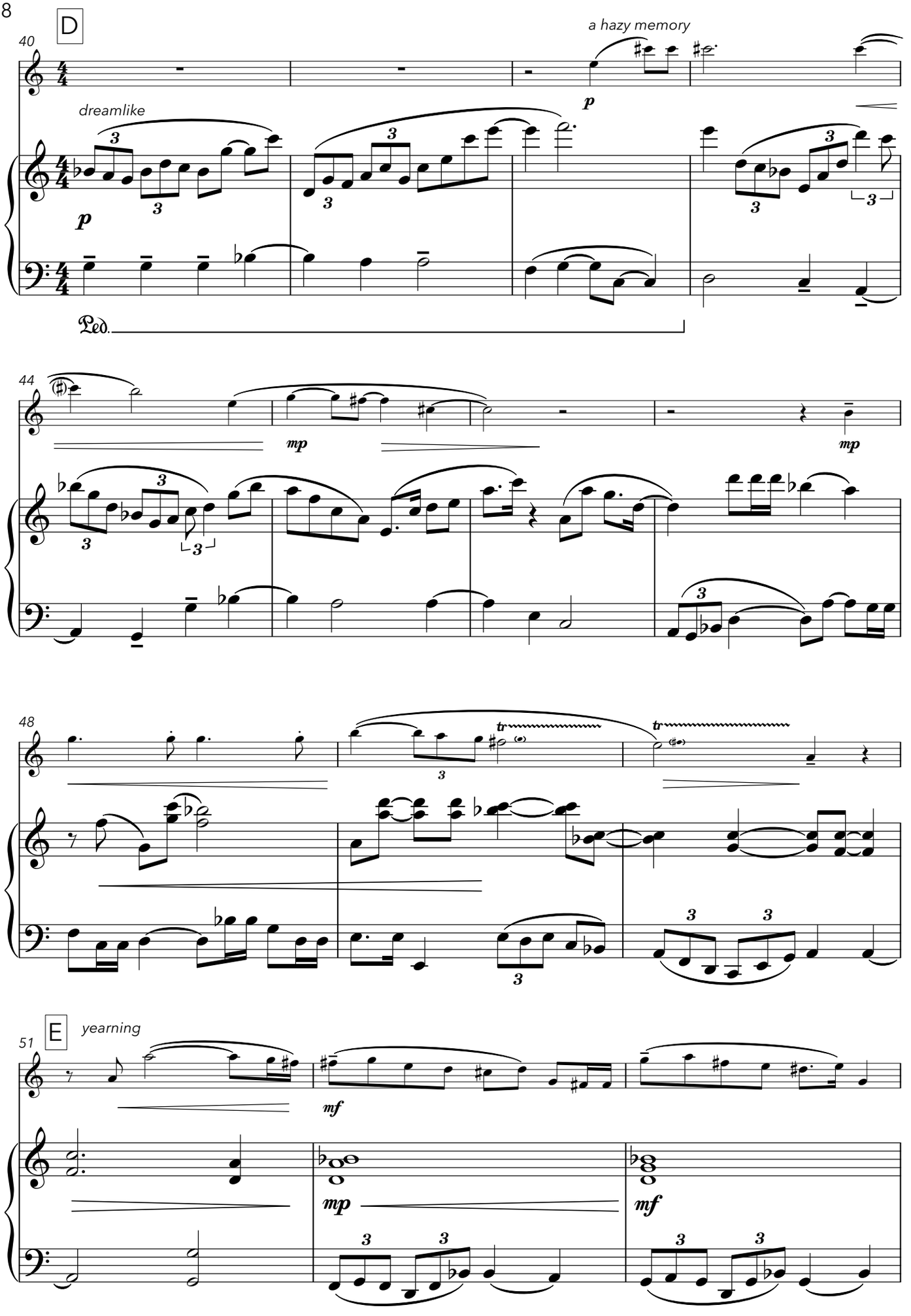

10
mp
mp
13
f
f
ff
ff
16
cautiously cooling off
B
p
p
19
p
pp
8va
pp

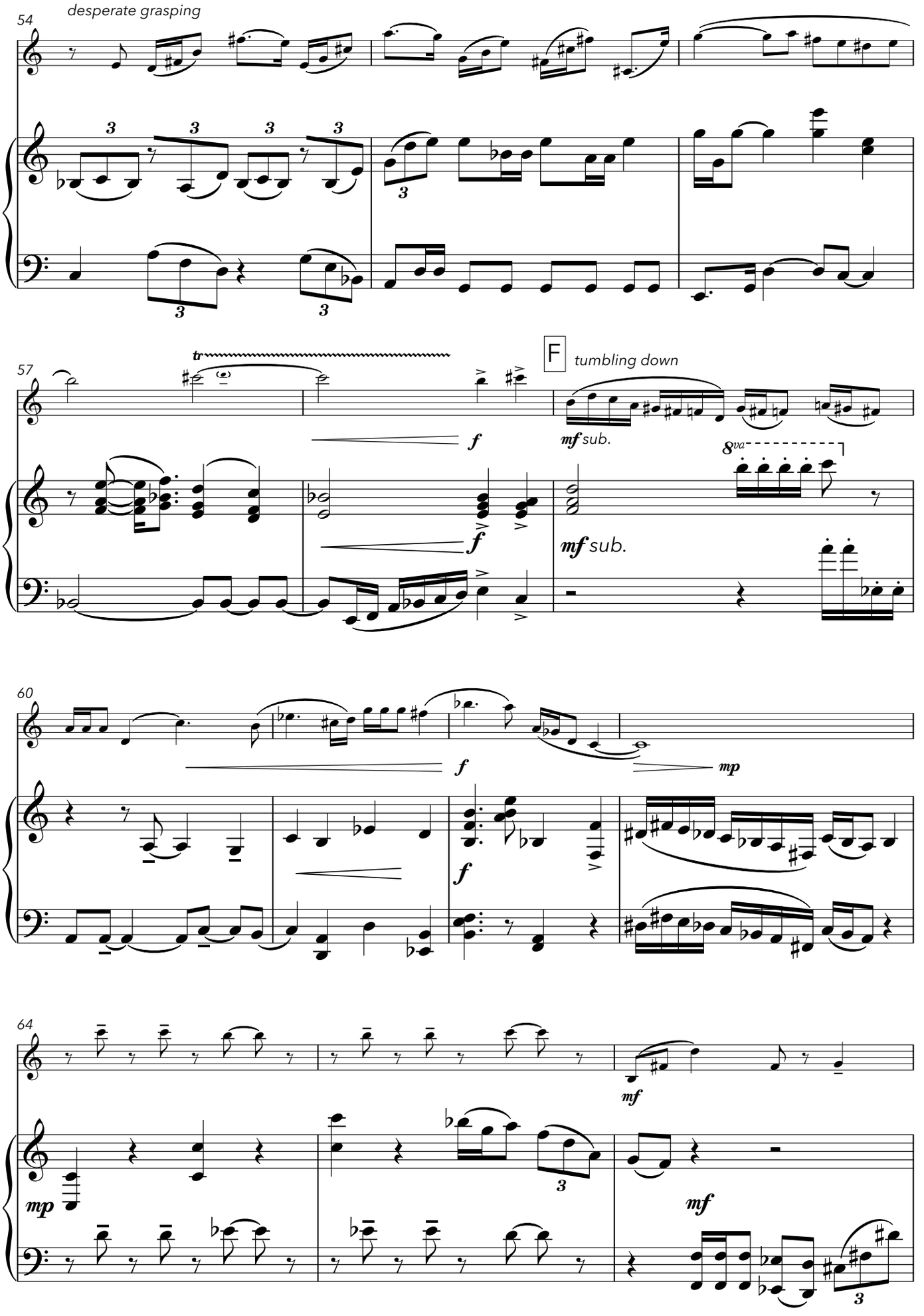

22
anger rising!
mf
f
mp
f
mf
f
mp
f
25
ff
ff
p
C
28
declamatory!
8va
ff

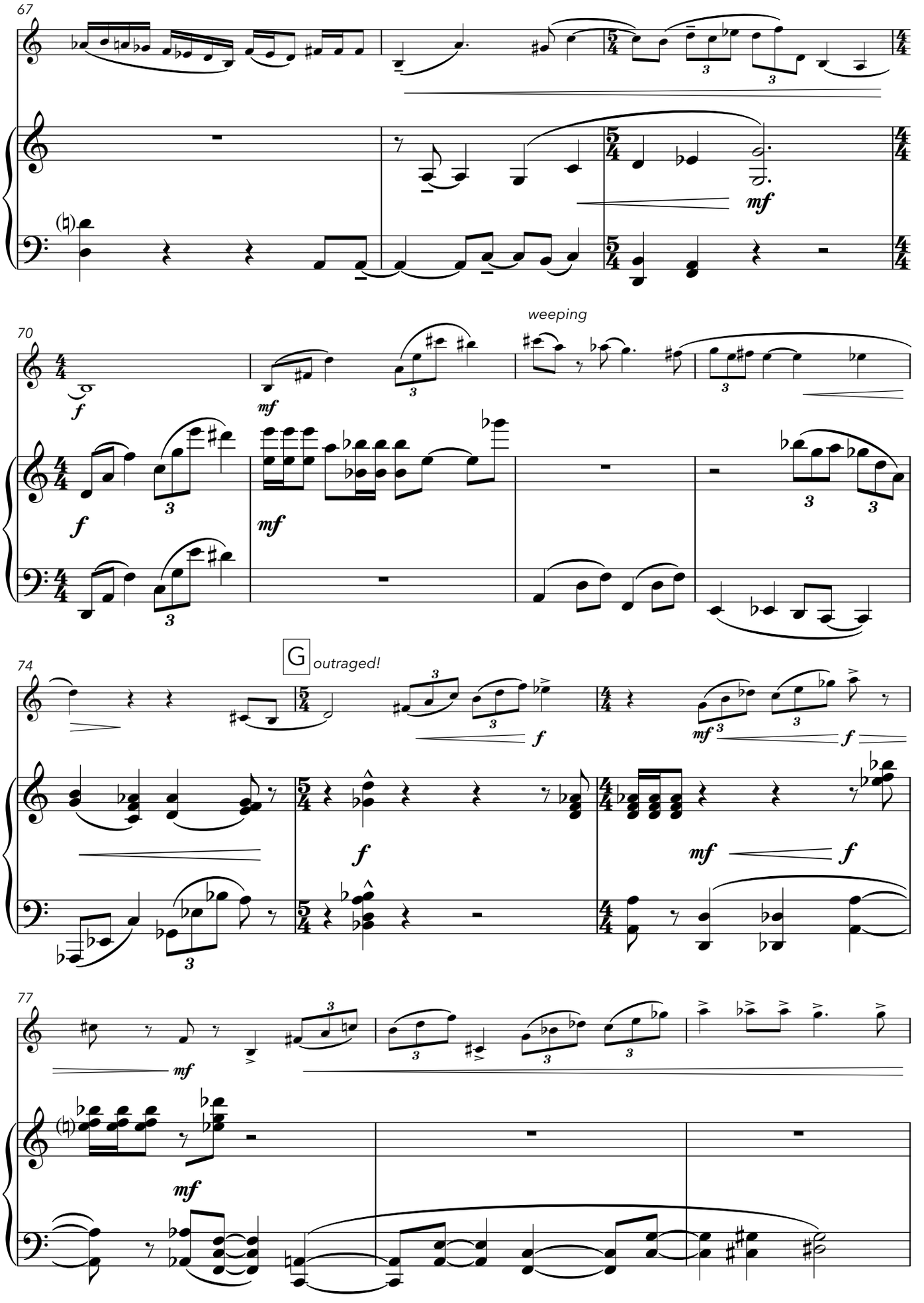

31
mp
fff
mp
Ped.

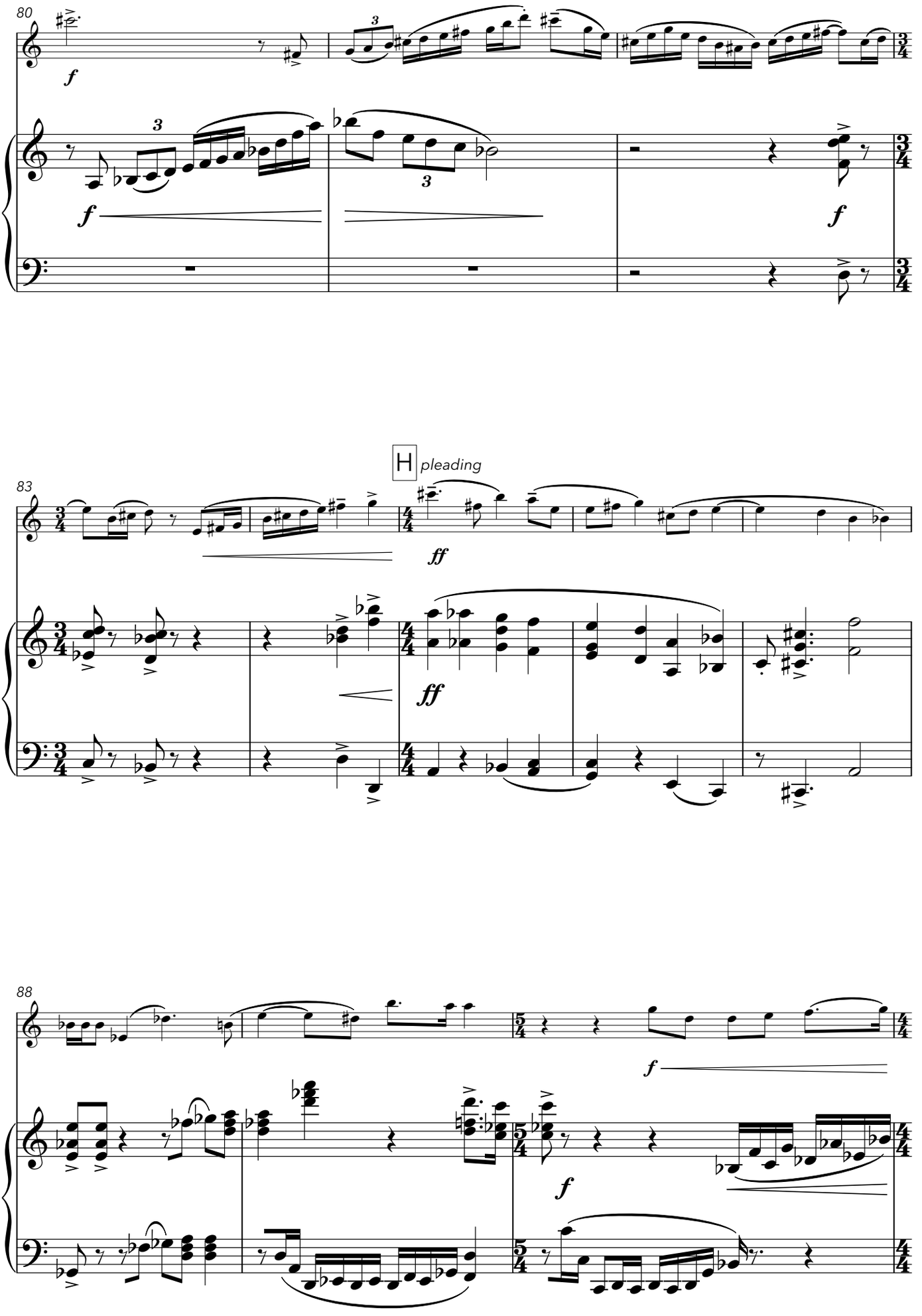

34
p
mf
f
mp
Ped.

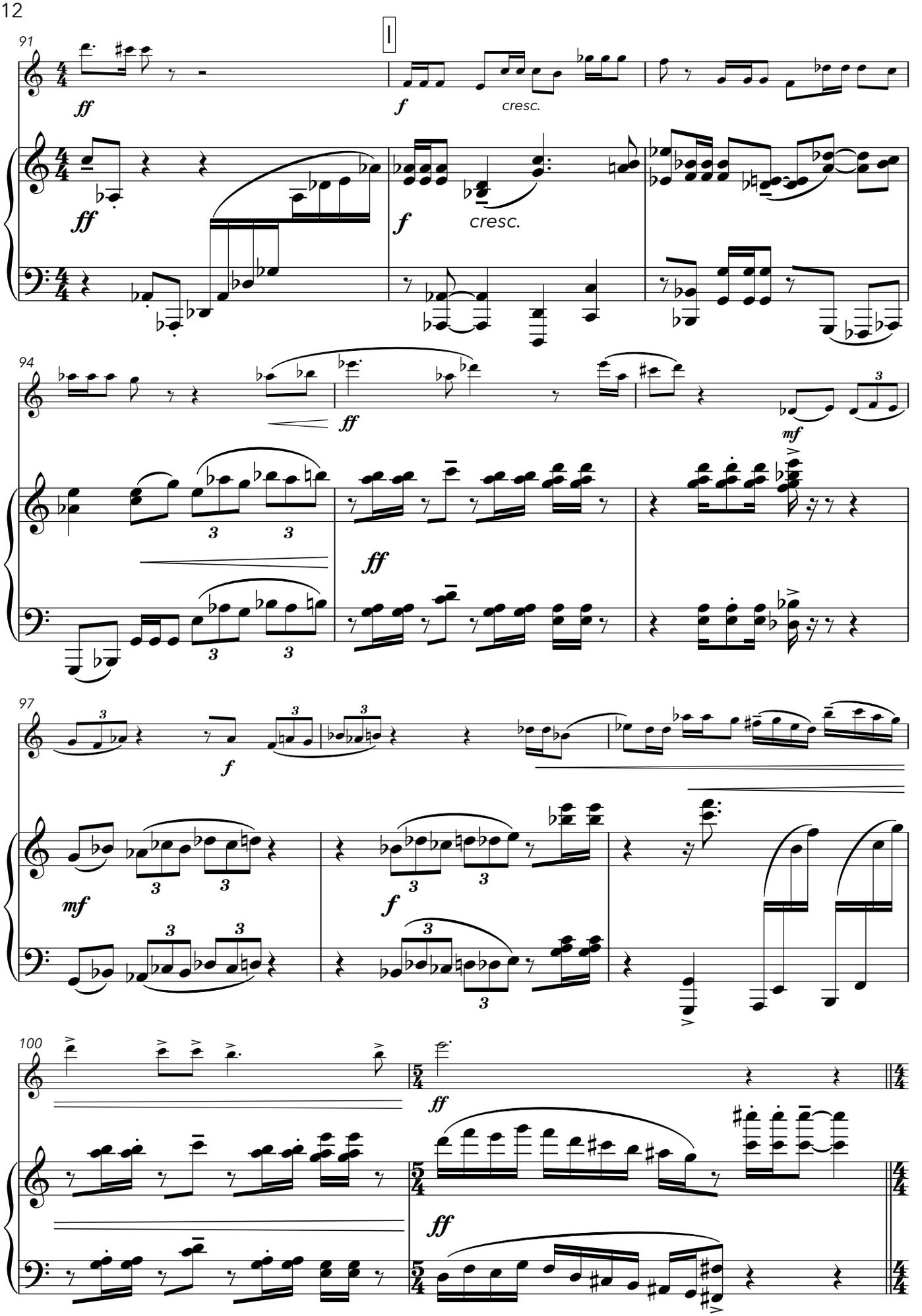

37
f
mp
mf
6
p
Ped.

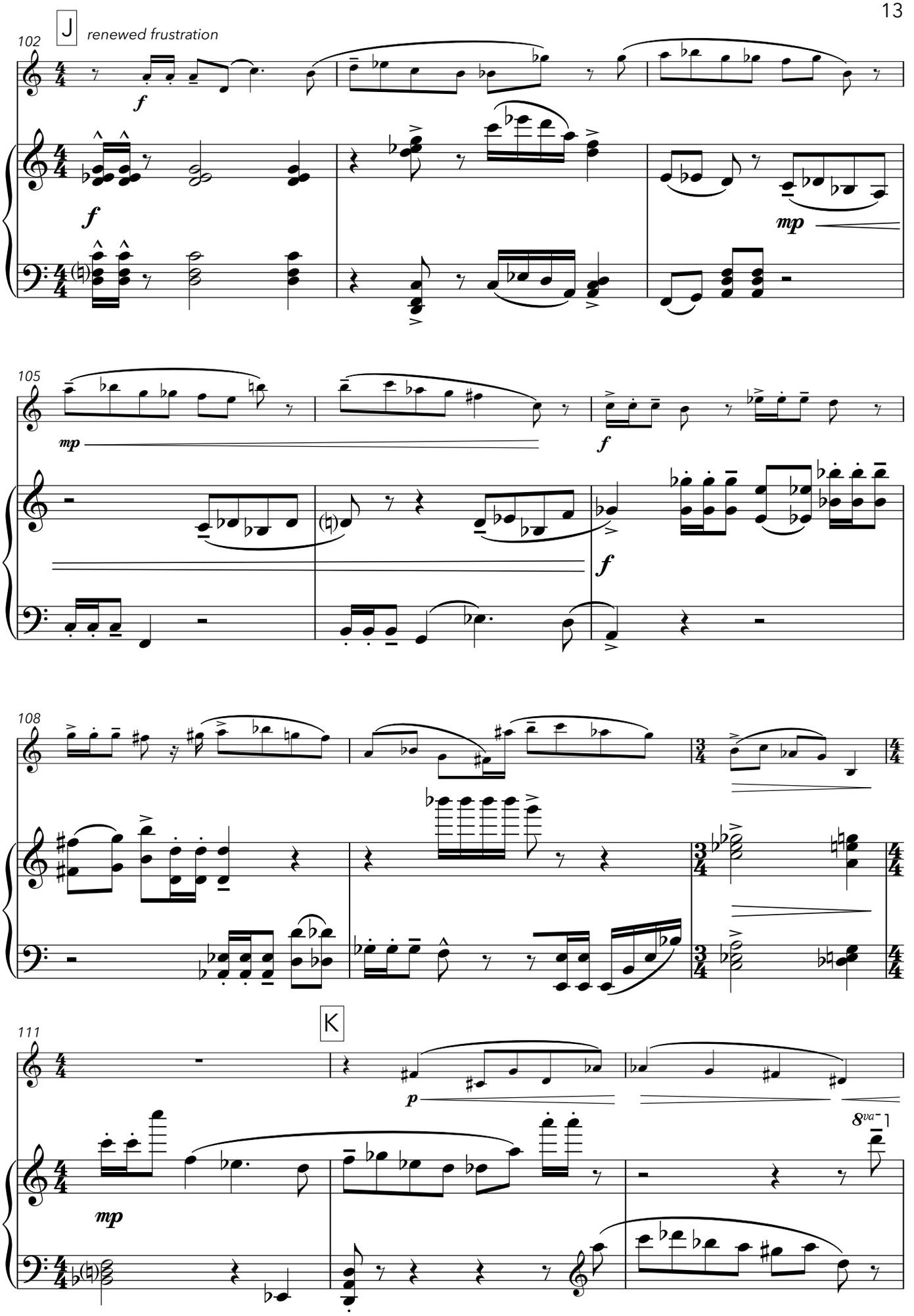

D
40
a hazy memory
dreamlike
p
Ped.
44
mp
48
tr
E
51
yearning
mf

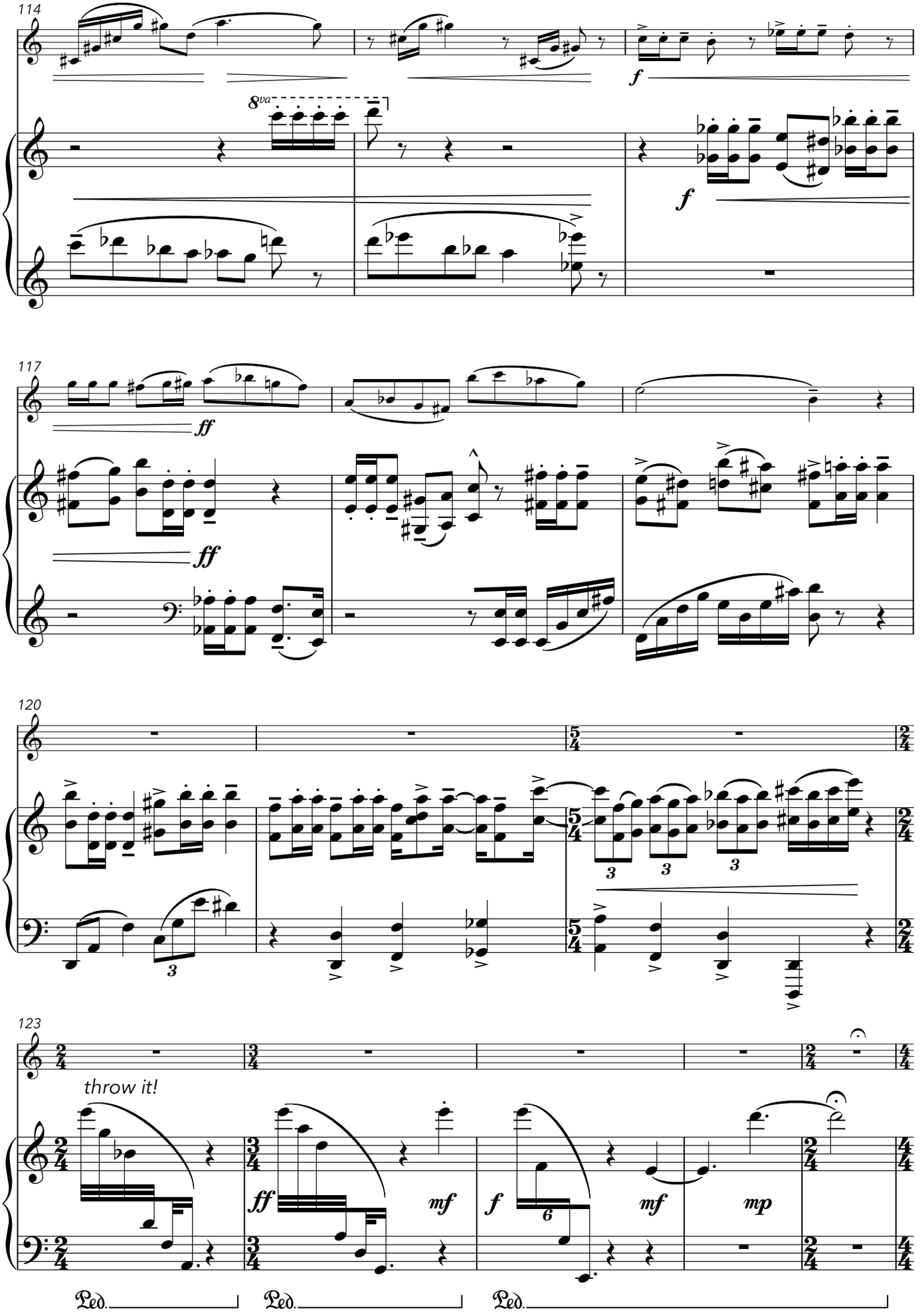

54
desperate grasping
57
tr
f
F
tumbling down
mf sub.
8va
mf sub.
60
f
mp
64
mp
mf
mf


67
mf
70
weeping
f
mf
f
mf
74
G
outraged!
f
mf
f
f
mf
77
mf
mf


80
f
3
f
f
83
H pleading
ff
ff
88
f
f


I
91
ff
f
cresc.
94
mf
97
100


J
renewed frustration
102
105
108
K
111
8va


114
8va
f
f
117
ff
ff
120
3
3
3
3
123
throw it!
ff
mf
f
6
mf
mp
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

L *a dream more memorable*

128

mp

mp

Ped.

132

mf

mp

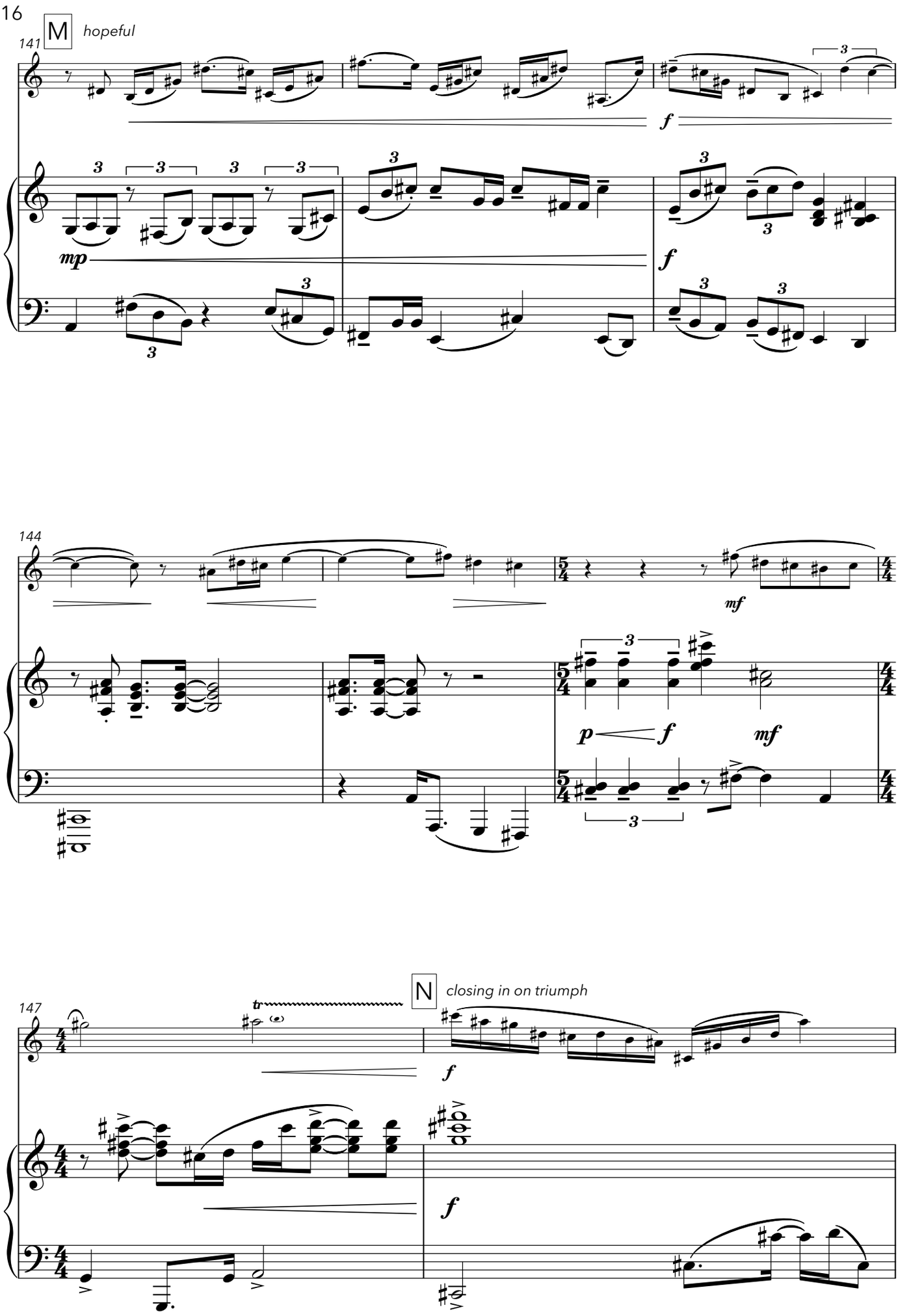
136

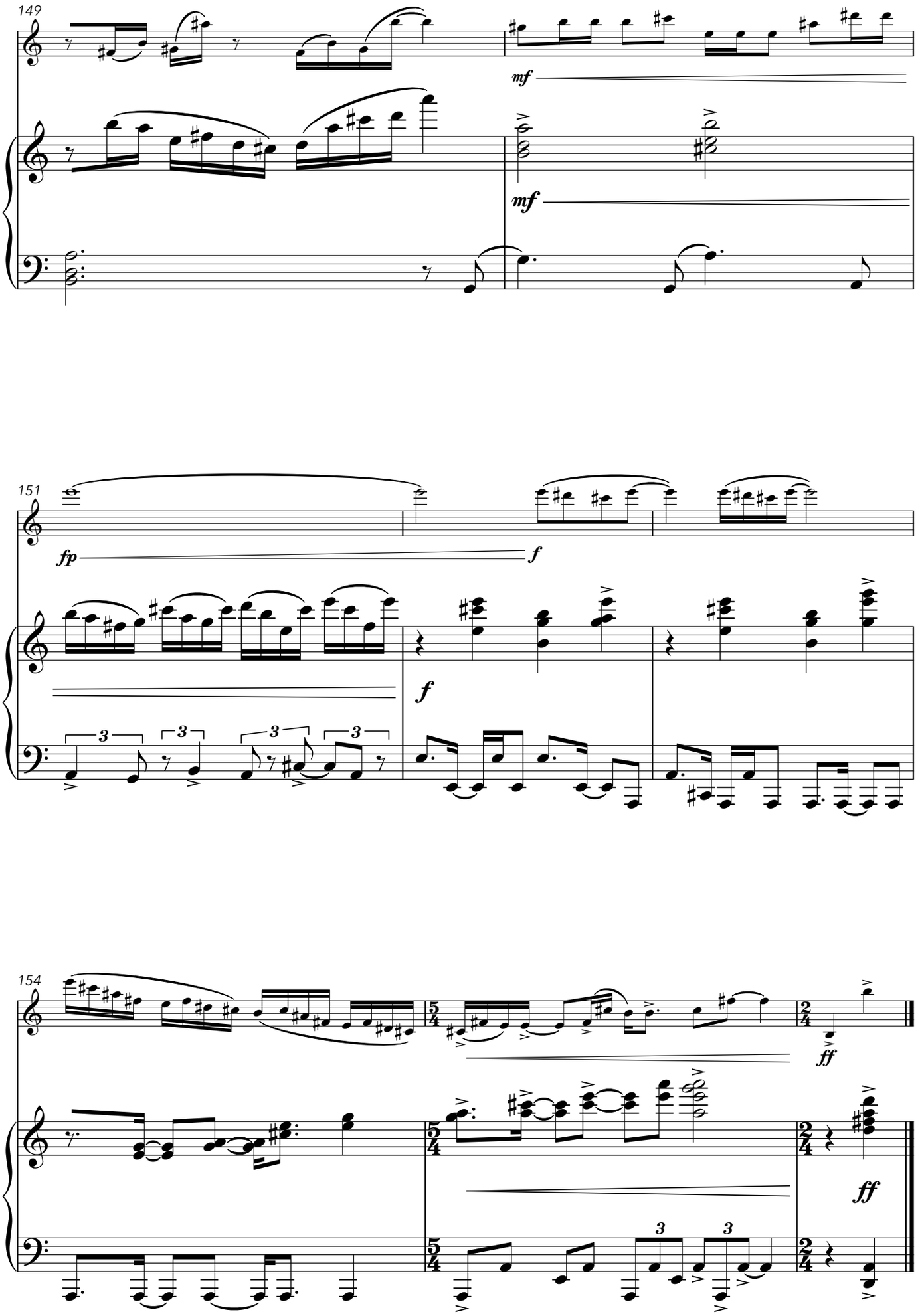
tr

mf

mf

138


141
M
hopeful
144
147
N
closing in on triumph


149
mf
mf
151
fp
f
f
3
3
3
3
154
ff
ff
3
3

B. Sax

Sonata

for the baritone saxophonist

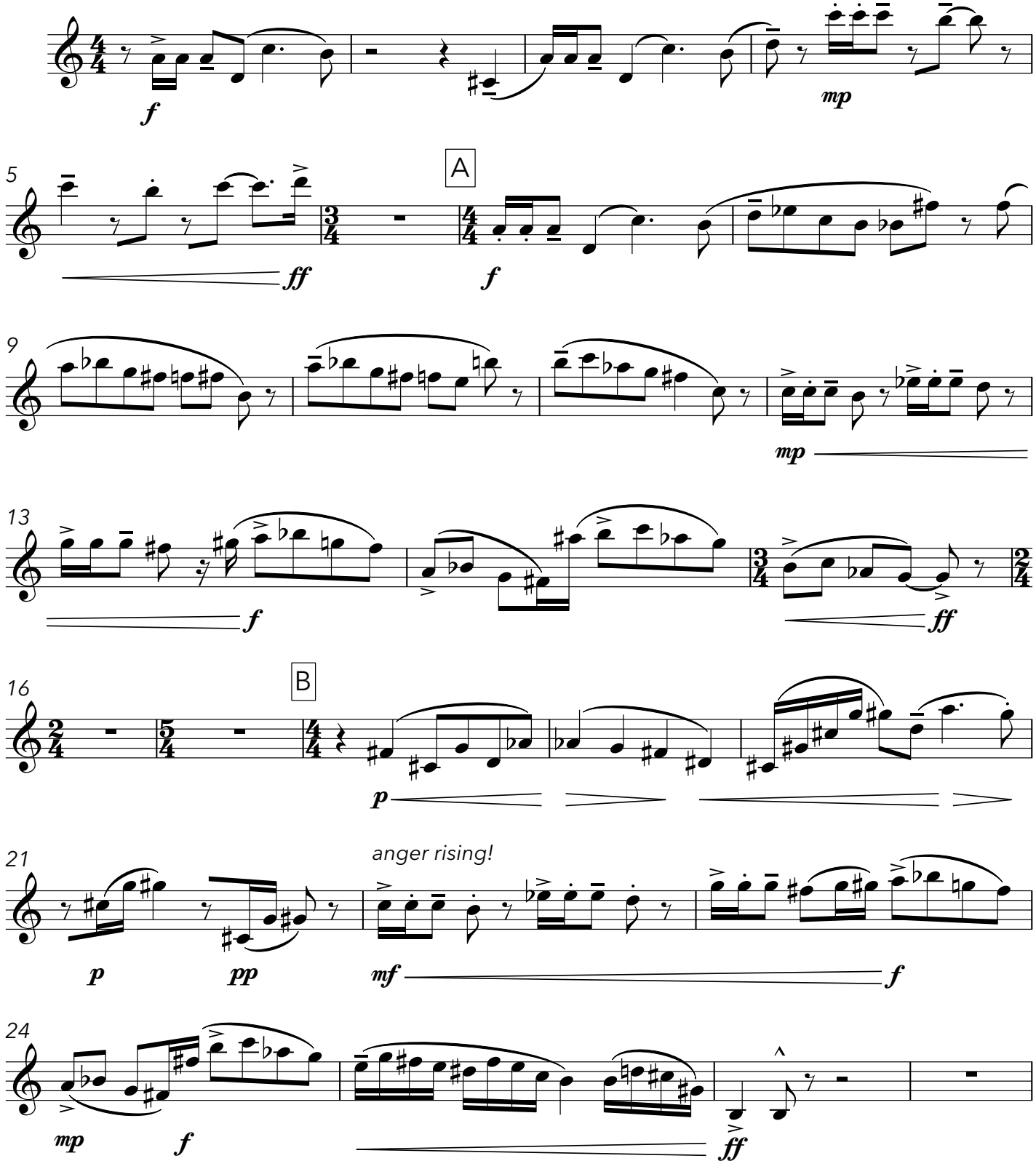
Jeremy Howell (2023)

I

Inner Odyssey

♩ = 116

With frustration



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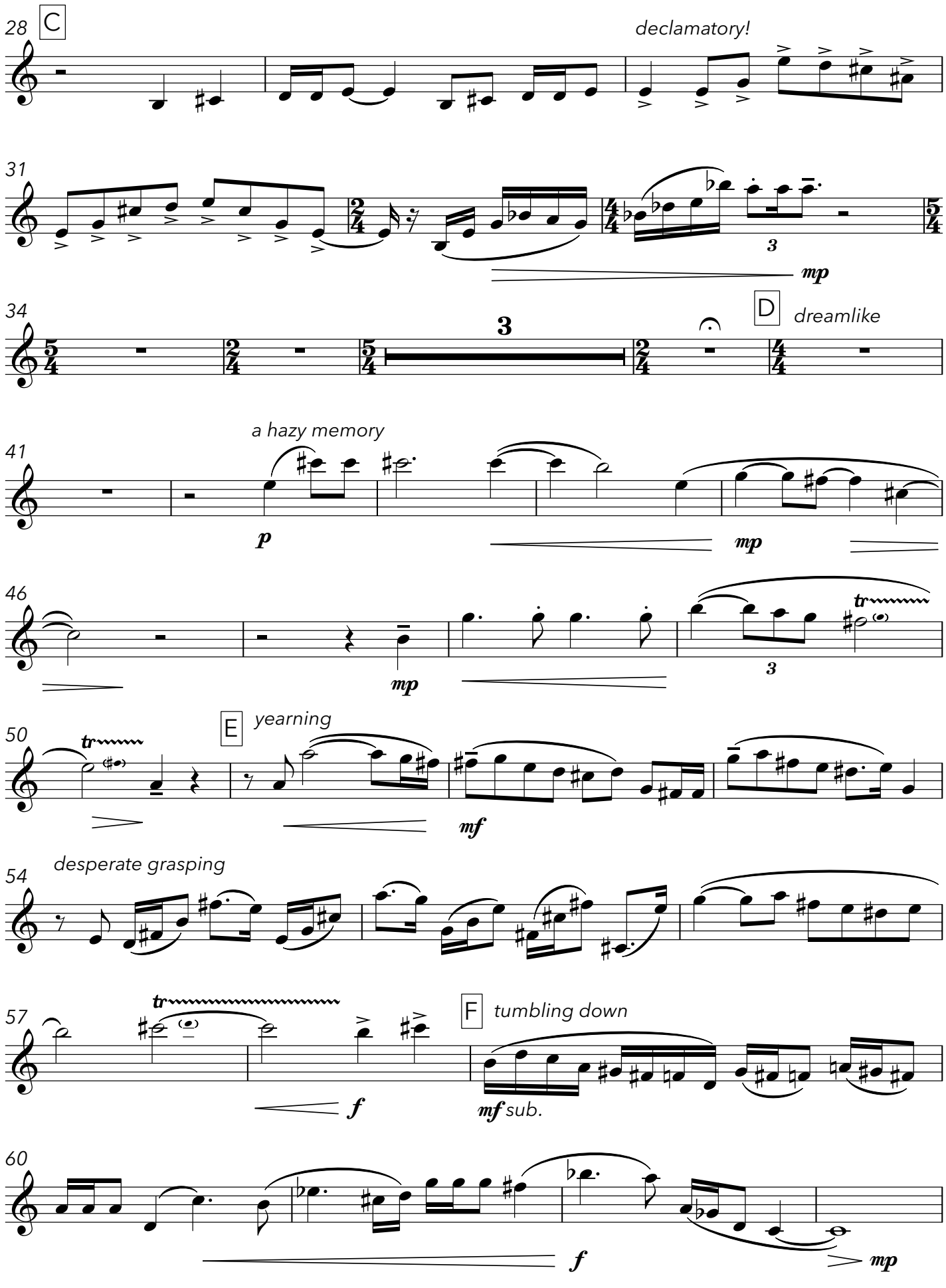
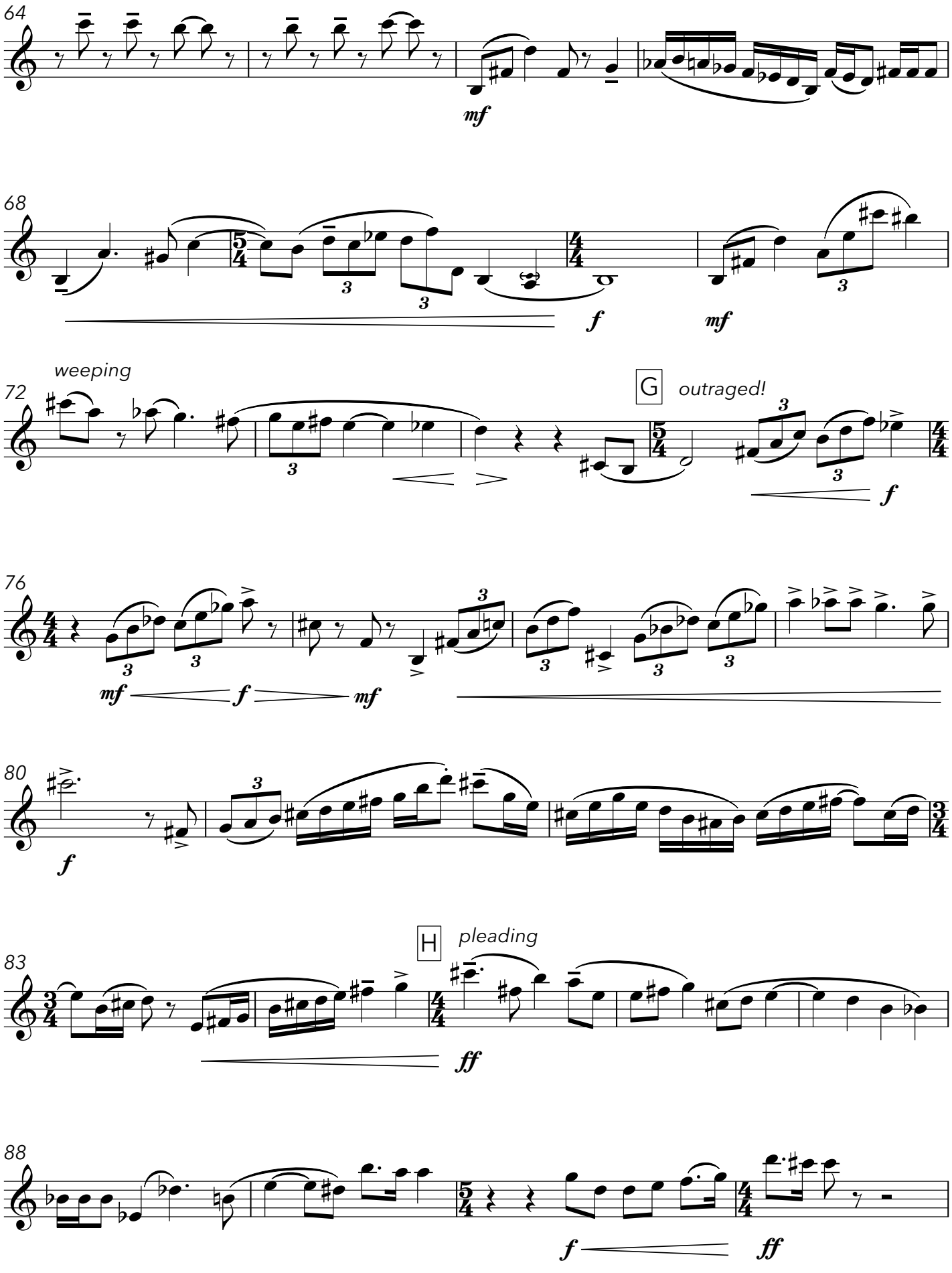
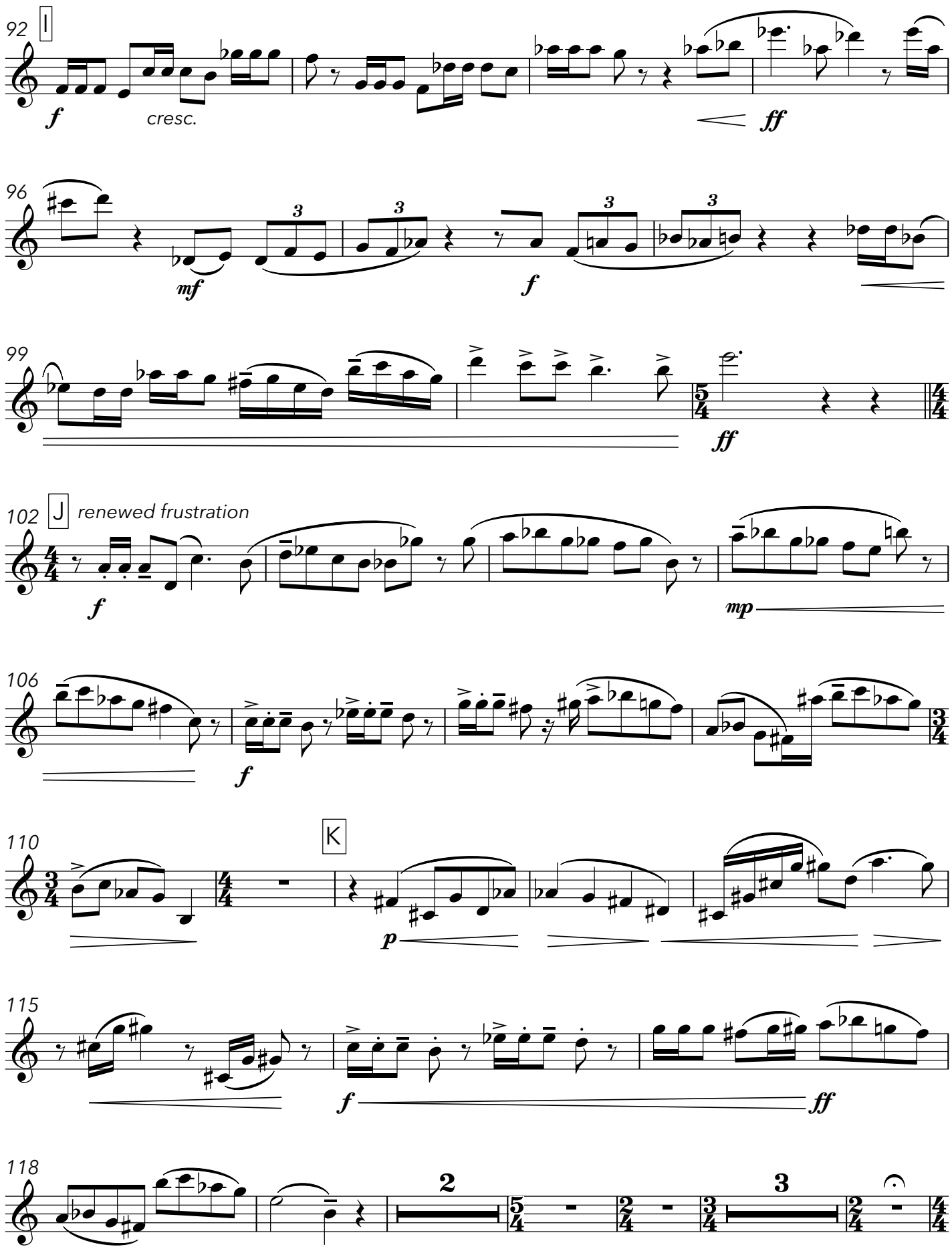
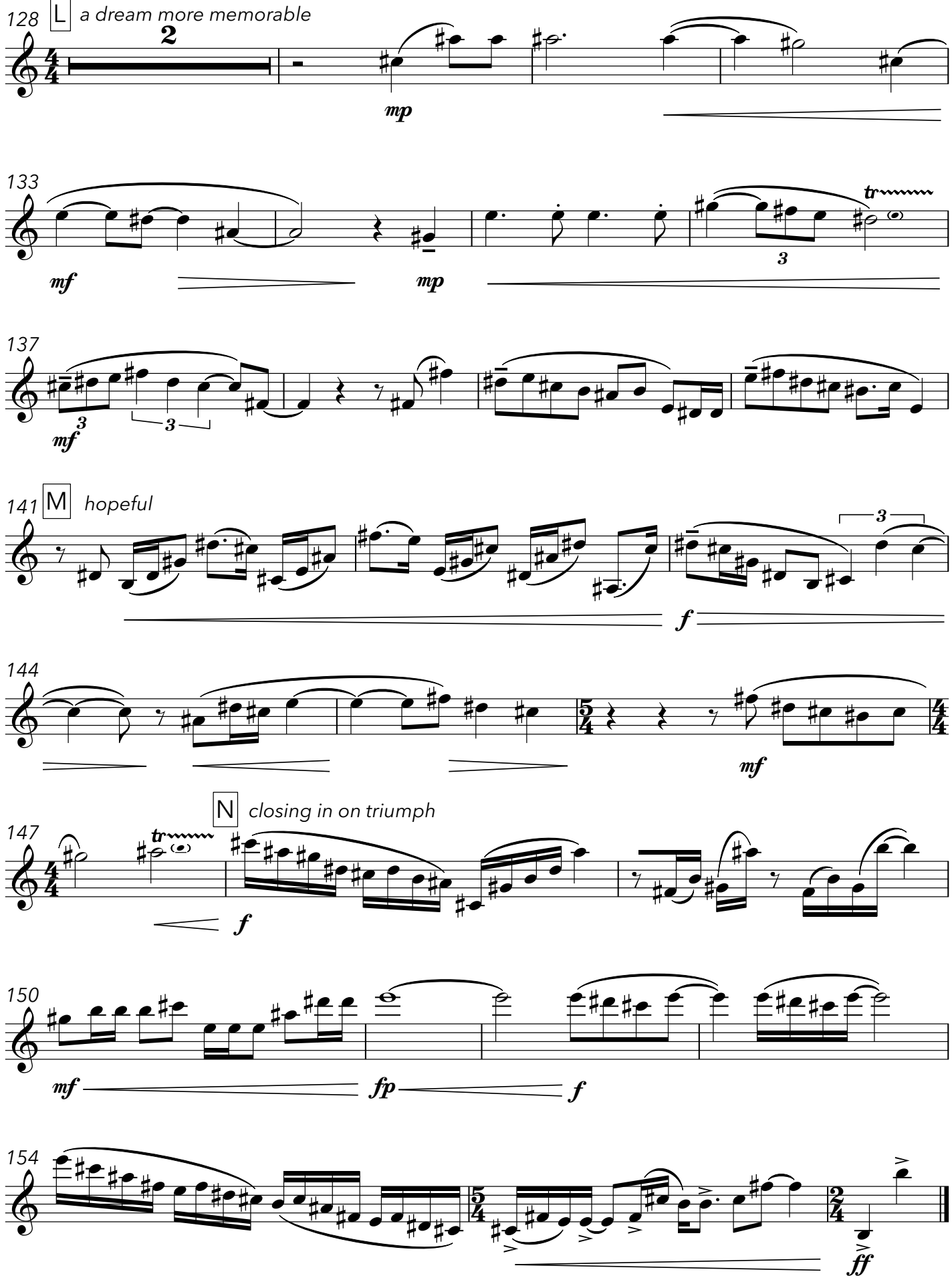

28
C
declamatory!
31
3
mp
34
3
D
dreamlike
41
a hazy memory
p
mp
46
tr
3
mp
50
tr
E
yearning
mf
54
desperate grasping
57
tr
f
F
tumbling down
mf sub.
60
f
mp


64
mf
68
f
mf
weeping
72
G
outraged!
f
76
mf
f
mf
80
f
H
pleading
83
ff
88
f
ff


92
I
f
cresc.
ff
96
mf
3
f
99
ff
102
J
renewed frustration
f
mp
106
f
110
K
p
115
f
ff
118
2
3


128
L
a dream more memorable
2
mp
133
mf
mp
3
tr
137
mf
3
3
141
M
hopeful
3
f
144
mf
N
closing in on triumph
147
tr
f
150
mf
fp
f
154
ff