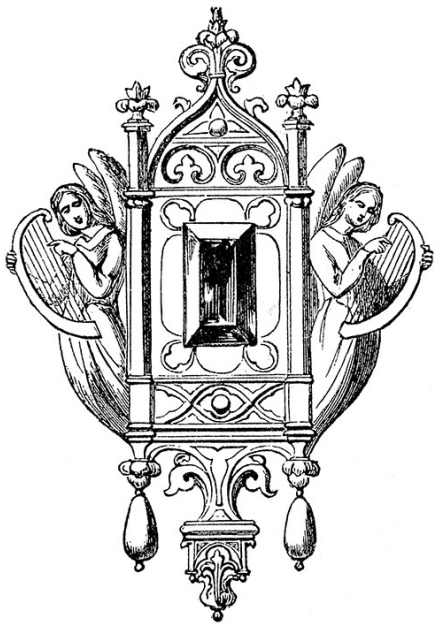
The Door Standing Open

four songs of spiritual torment
for low voice and piano



Joelle Wallach

The Door Standing Open

four songs of spiritual torment for low voice and piano

Music by Joelle Wallach **based on poems by Robert Mezey**

In accord with the poet's usage, pronouns referring to God are not capitalized in these songs.

I page 1
On the Equator

II page 6
Like a Girl

III page 8
Vetus Flamma

IV page 11
With My God the Smith

I
On the Equator

How rarely your mercy visits me,
My king, my father;
... most of my days, I am your wandering son
Who has cast his lot like a prophet
In the desert of his days.

And your deliverance that comes to me then,
My father, my king,
Is like a well that the wanderer came on at last,
When he had almost prayed for death from thirst
And the heat that shrivels the body.

... at times it is so sweet,
... like a miraculous dream that you give
To the blind man in his agony, at night.
He dreams that his eyes are open and that he sees
The face of his wife and the dark gold of her hair.

But at times you make sport of me,
My father, my king, and I draw back
... grow small with loneliness, like the blind man awakened
from his dream.
I gaze at my coming days, and I descend
Into the black abyss....

from Uri Zvi Greenberg

II
Like a Girl

Like a girl who knows that her body drives me to begging,
God taunts me, Flee if you can! But I can't flee,
For when I turn away from him, angry and heartsick,
With a vowel on my lips like a burning coal:
I will not see him again —

I can't do it.
And I turn back
... knock on his door,
Tortured with longing

As though he had sent me a love-letter.

from Uri Zvi Greenberg

III
Vetus Flamma

That love which once was nearest to my heart
... pressed against my arm and forehead too,
Is gone and you went with it. We are two.
You have your legends, I, an empty heart;
And in the quieted pounding of that heart;
I hear what future I awaken to.
Night falls each dawn and stays a week or two,
And all there is to eat is my own heart.

I nurse a broken love, your broken word,
And cannot even recollect your name,
But keep the smallest remnant of your word
To ornament my door with what I lost.
Unaging ghost, you never said your name —
You only came to wrestle, and I lost.

IV
With My God the Smith

Like chapters of prophesy my days burn, in ... revelations,
... my body between them's a block of metal...,
... over me stands my God the Smith, who hits hard:
The wounds that Time has opened in me, open their mouths
to him
... release in a shower of sparks the intrinsic fire.

This is my just lot — until dusk on the road.
... when I return to throw my beaten block on a bed,
My mouth is an open wound
And naked I speak with God:
You worked hard.
Now it is night, come, let us both rest.

from Uri Zvi Greenberg

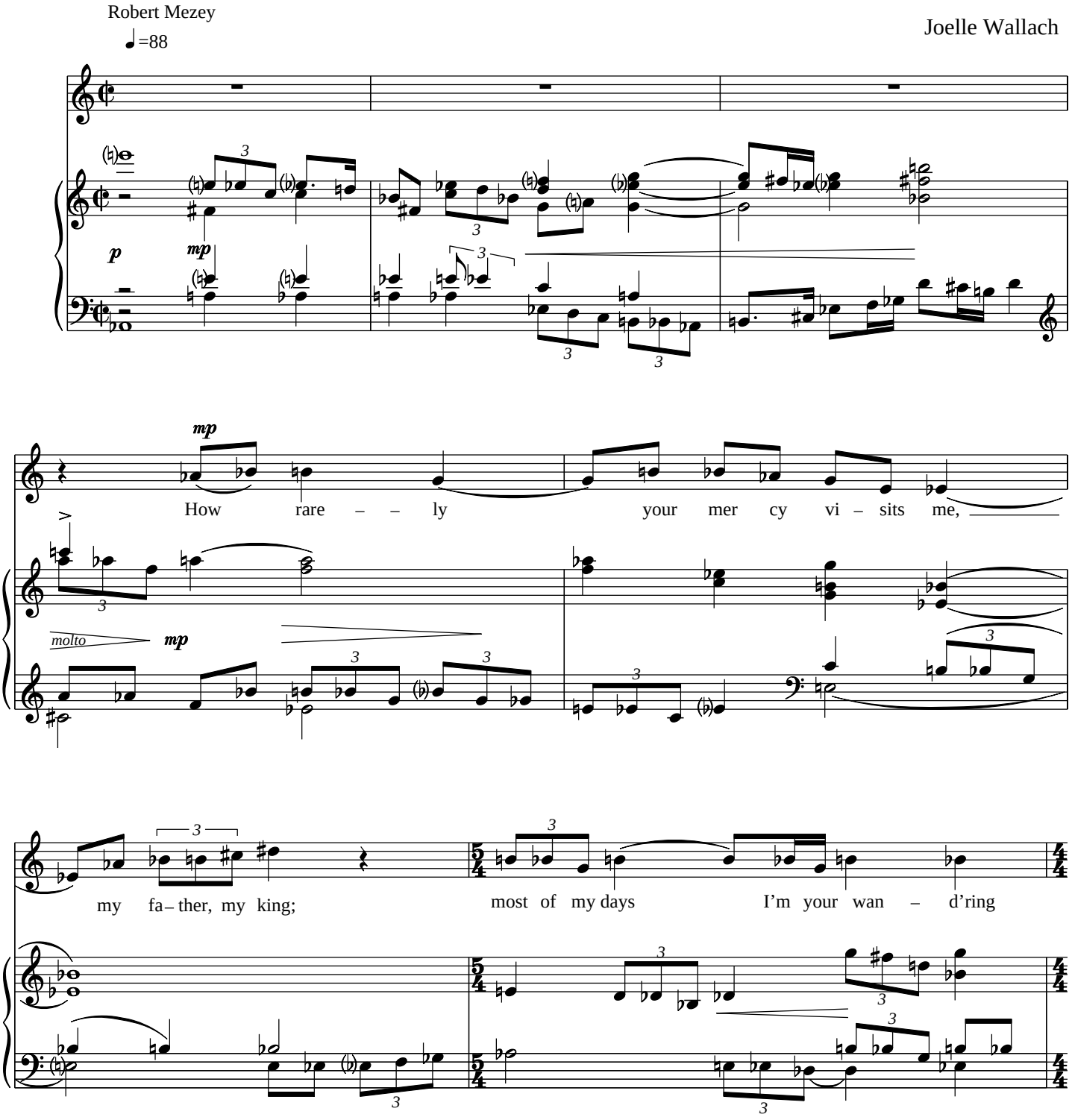
The Door Standing Open

I

On the Equator

Robert Mezey

Joelle Wallach



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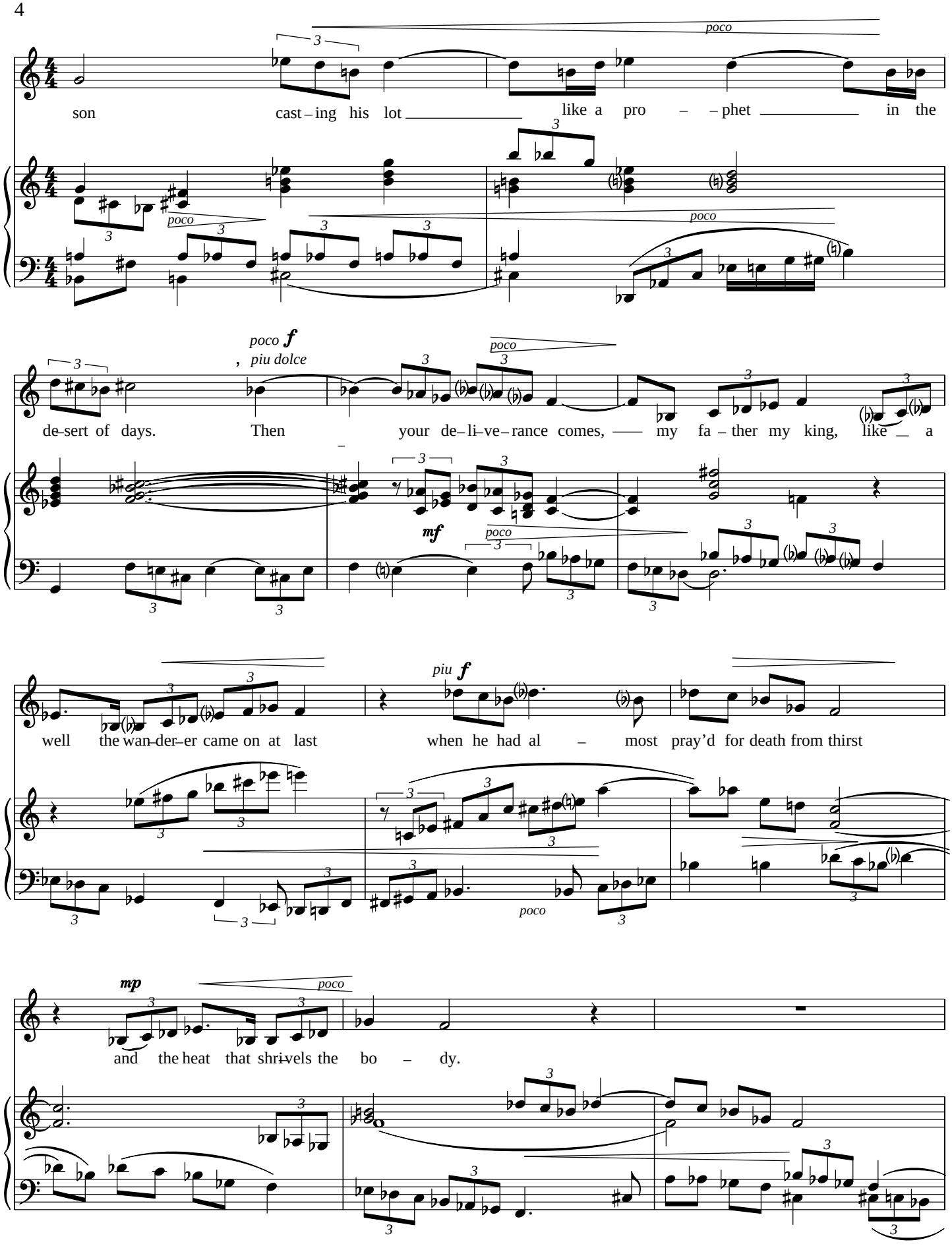
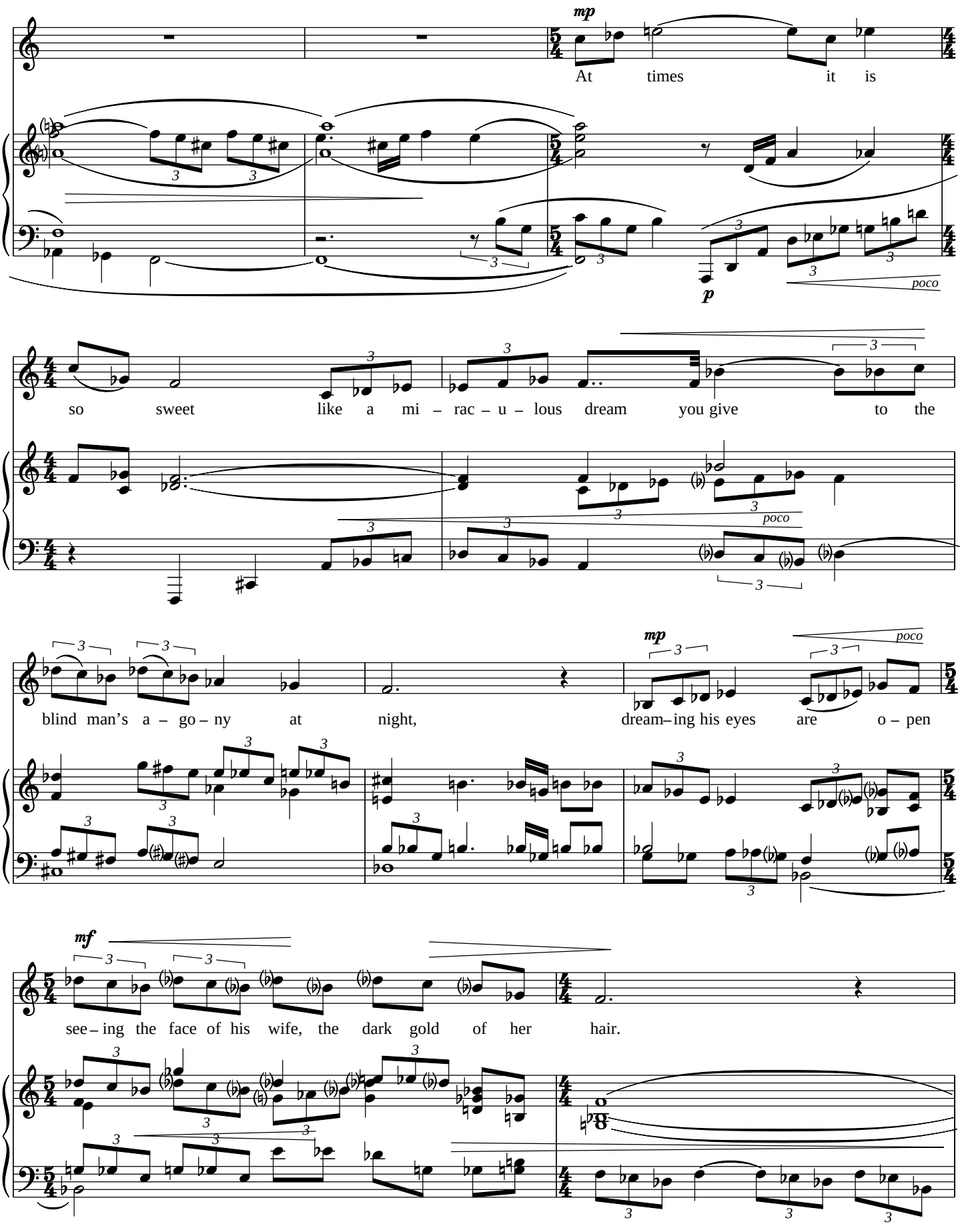
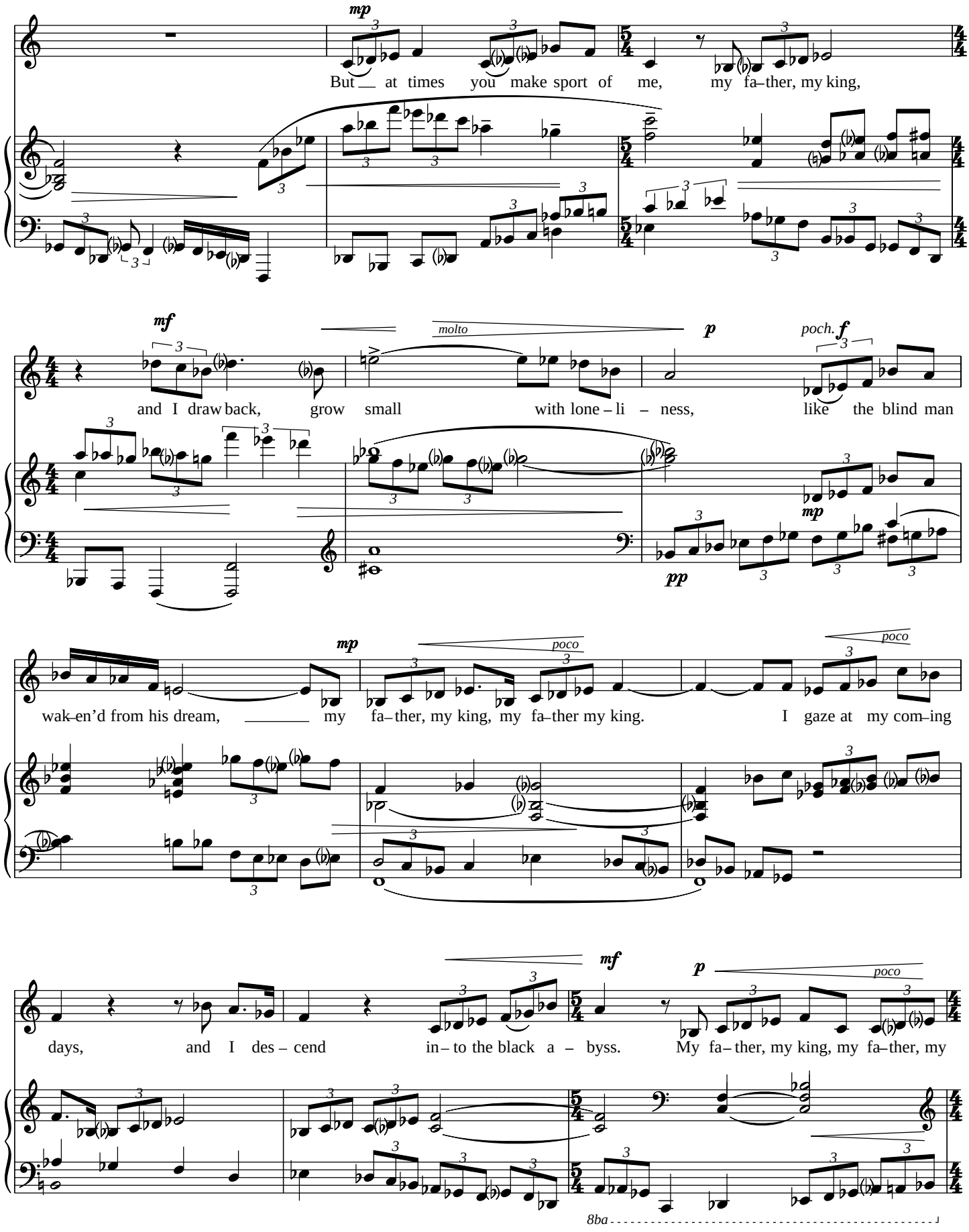
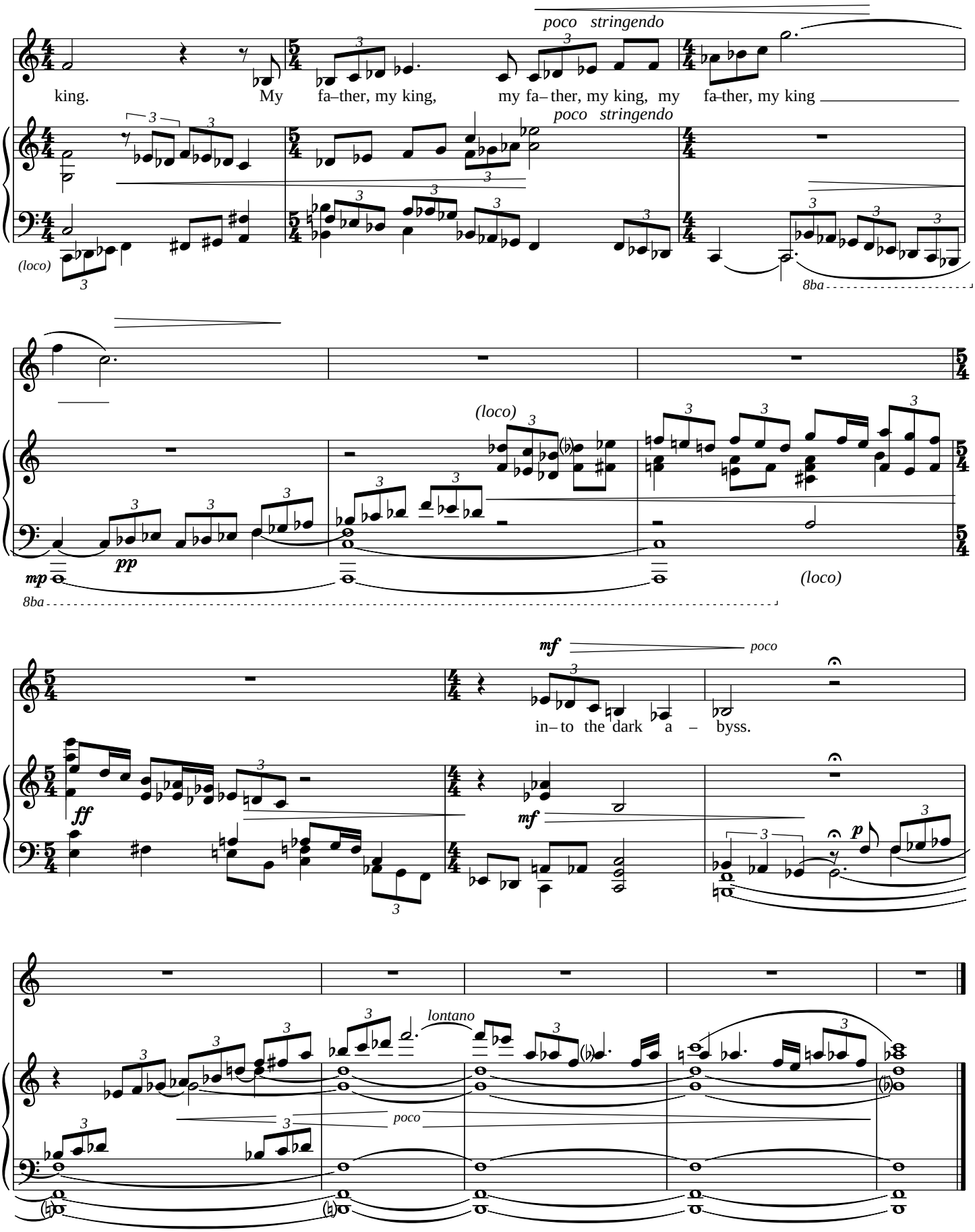

poco
son cast – ing his lot like a pro – – phet in the
poco f
, piu dolce
poco
de–sert of days. Then your de– li–ve– rance comes, my fa – ther my king, like a
mf
poco
piu f
well the wan–der–er came on at last when he had al – most pray'd for death from thirst
poco
mp
poco
and the heat that shri–vels the bo – dy.


mp
At times it is
p
poco
so sweet like a mi – rac – u – lous dream you give to the
poco
mp
poco
blind man's a – go – ny at night, dream–ing his eyes are o – pen
mf
see – ing the face of his wife, the dark gold of her hair.


mp
But at times you make sport of me, my fa–ther, my king,
mf
molto
p
poch. f
and I draw back, grow small with lone – li – ness, like the blind man
pp
mp
poco
wak–en'd from his dream, my fa – ther, my king, my fa–ther my king. I gaze at my com–ing
mf
p
poco
days, and I des – cend in – to the black a – byss. My fa – ther, my king, my fa–ther, my
8ba

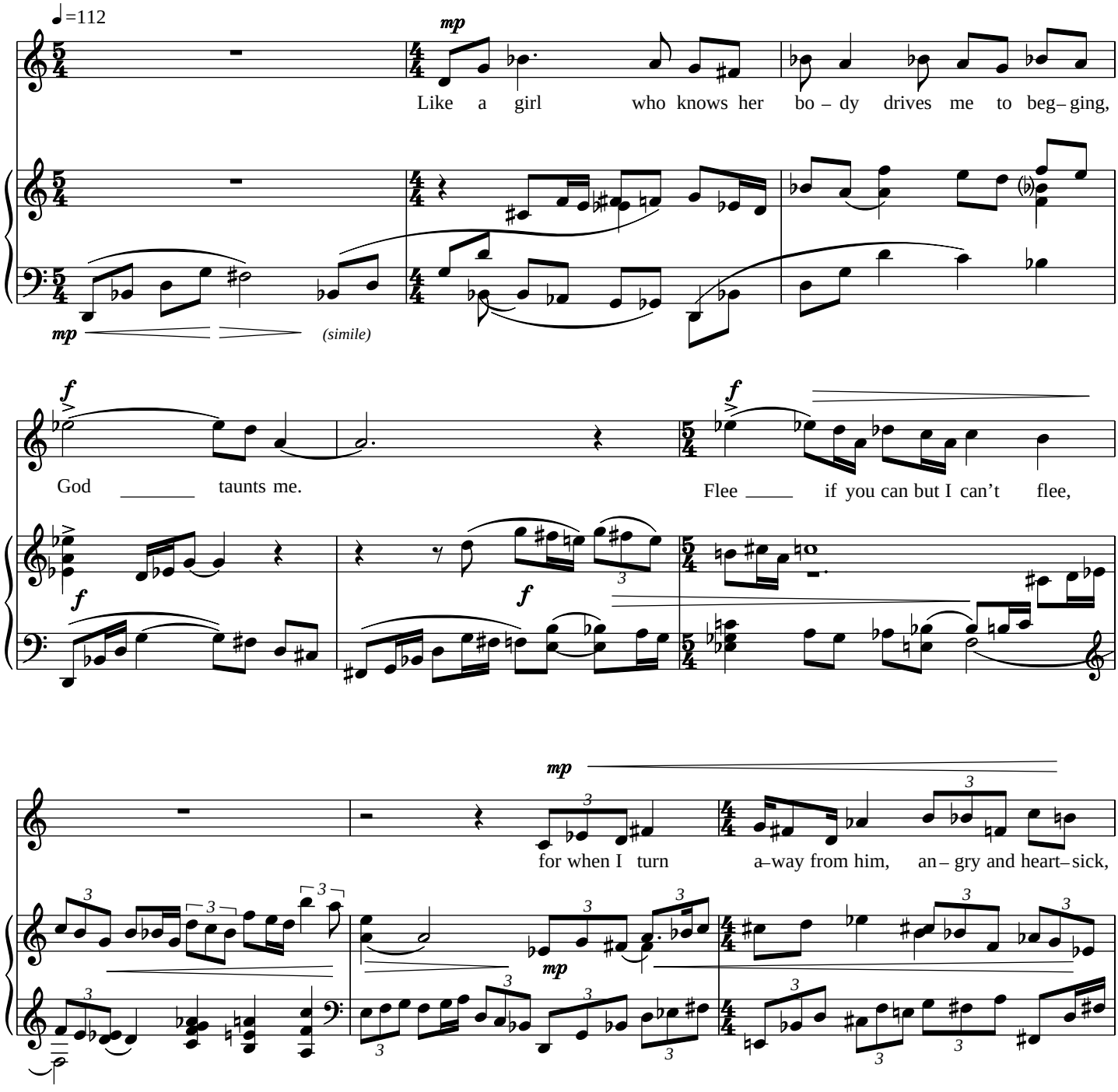

poco stringendo
king. My fa–ther, my king, my fa– ther, my king, my fa–ther, my king
poco stringendo
(loco)
8ba
(loco)
mp
pp
8ba
(loco)
mf
poco
in– to the dark a – byss.
ff
mf
p
lontano
poco

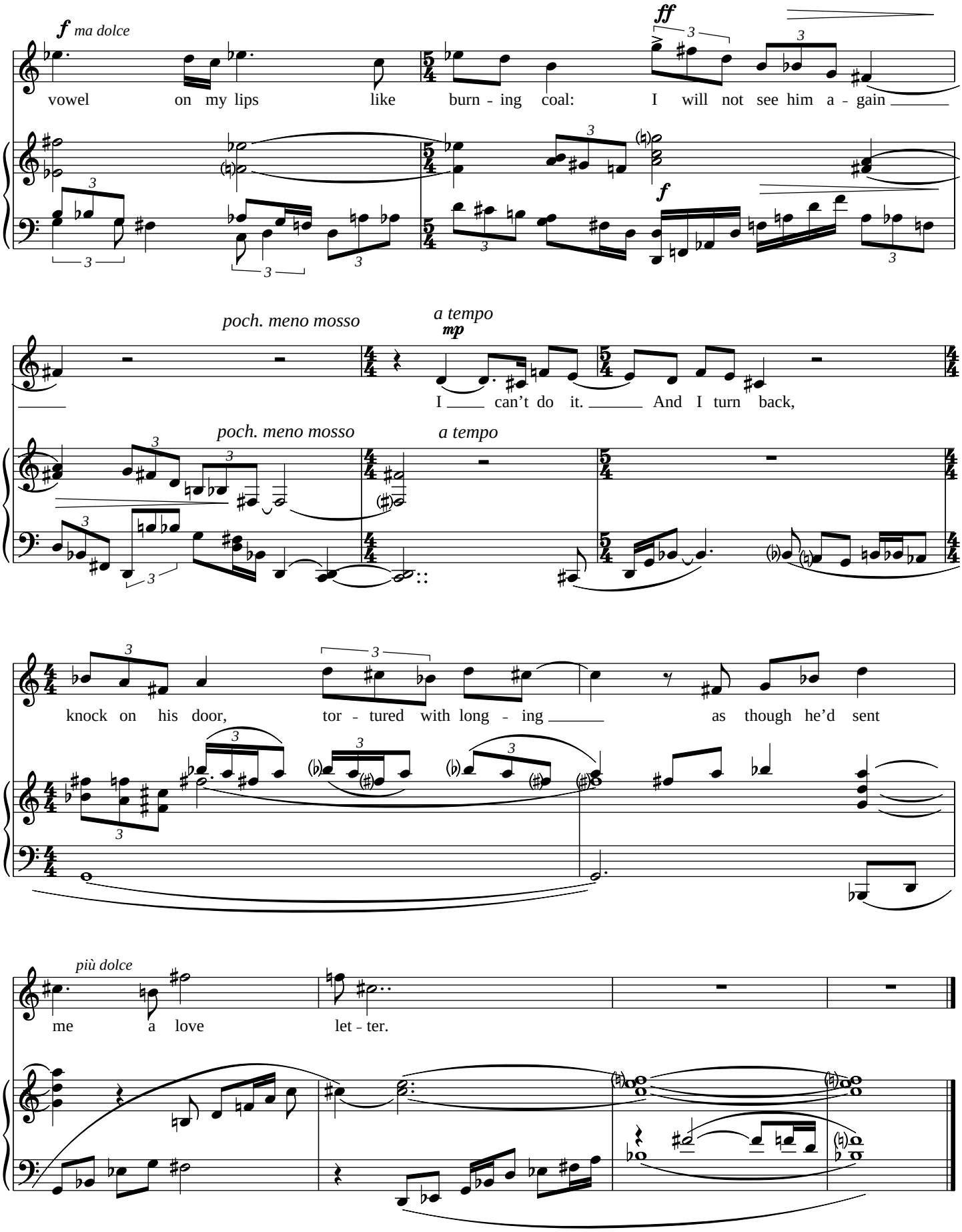
In accord with the poet's usage, pronouns referring to God are not capitalized in this song.

II
Like a Girl

Robert Mezey

Joelle Wallach




f ma dolce
ff
vowel on my lips like burn - ing coal: I will not see him a - gain
poch. meno mosso
a tempo
mp
I can't do it. And I turn back,
poch. meno mosso
a tempo
knock on his door, tor - tured with long - ing as though he'd sent
più dolce
me a love let - ter.

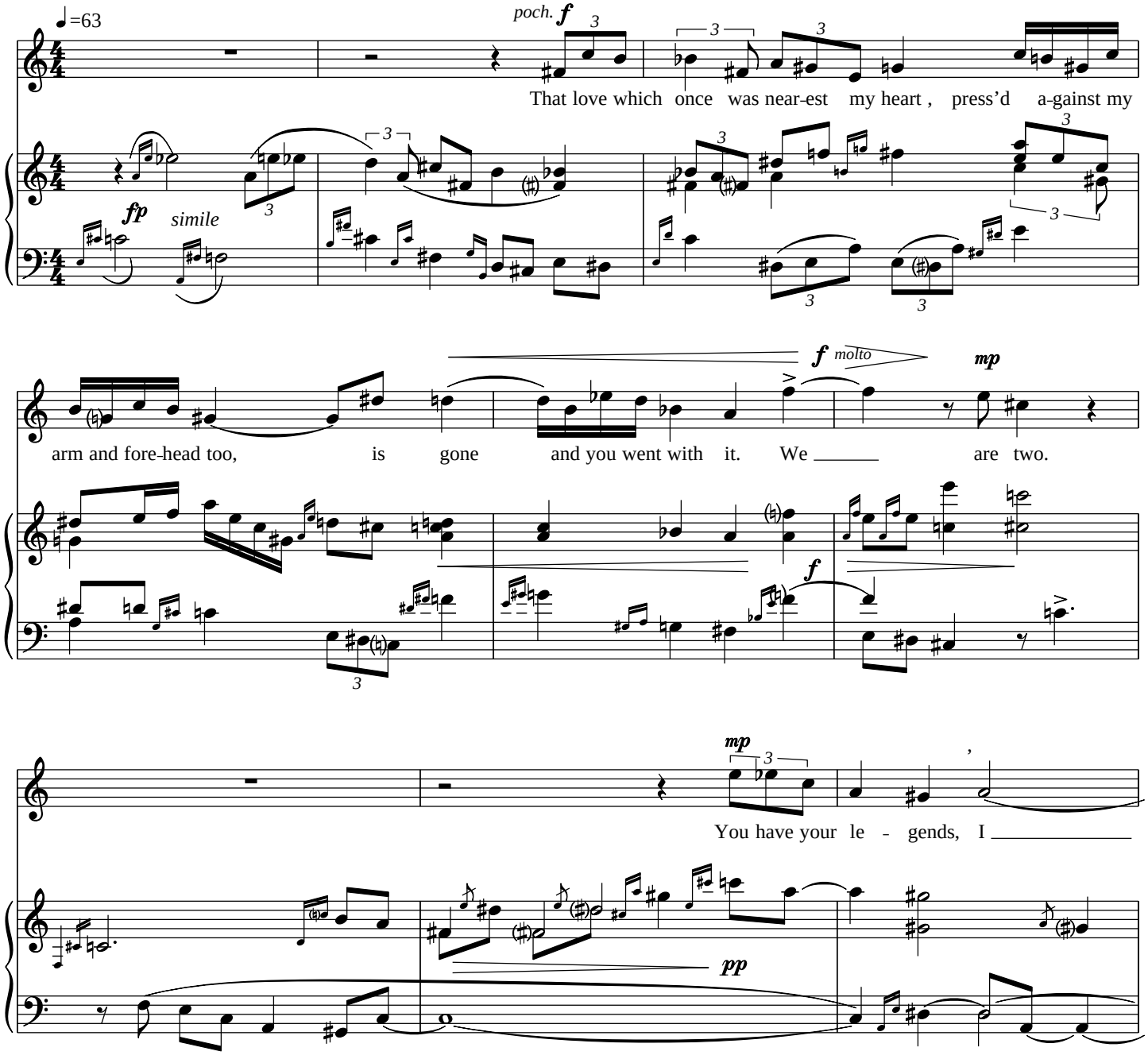
In accord with the poet's usage, pronouns referring to God are not capitalized in this song.

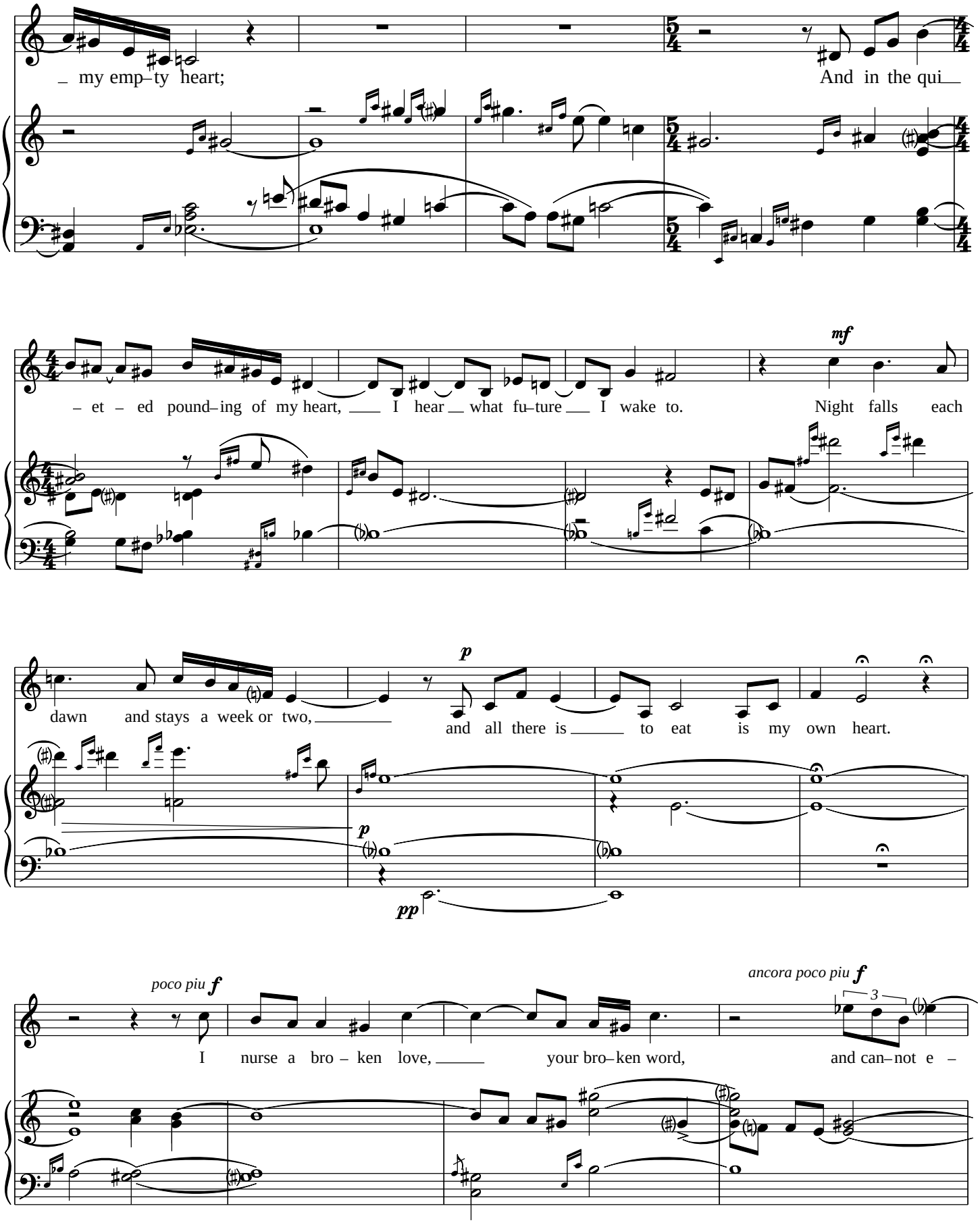
III

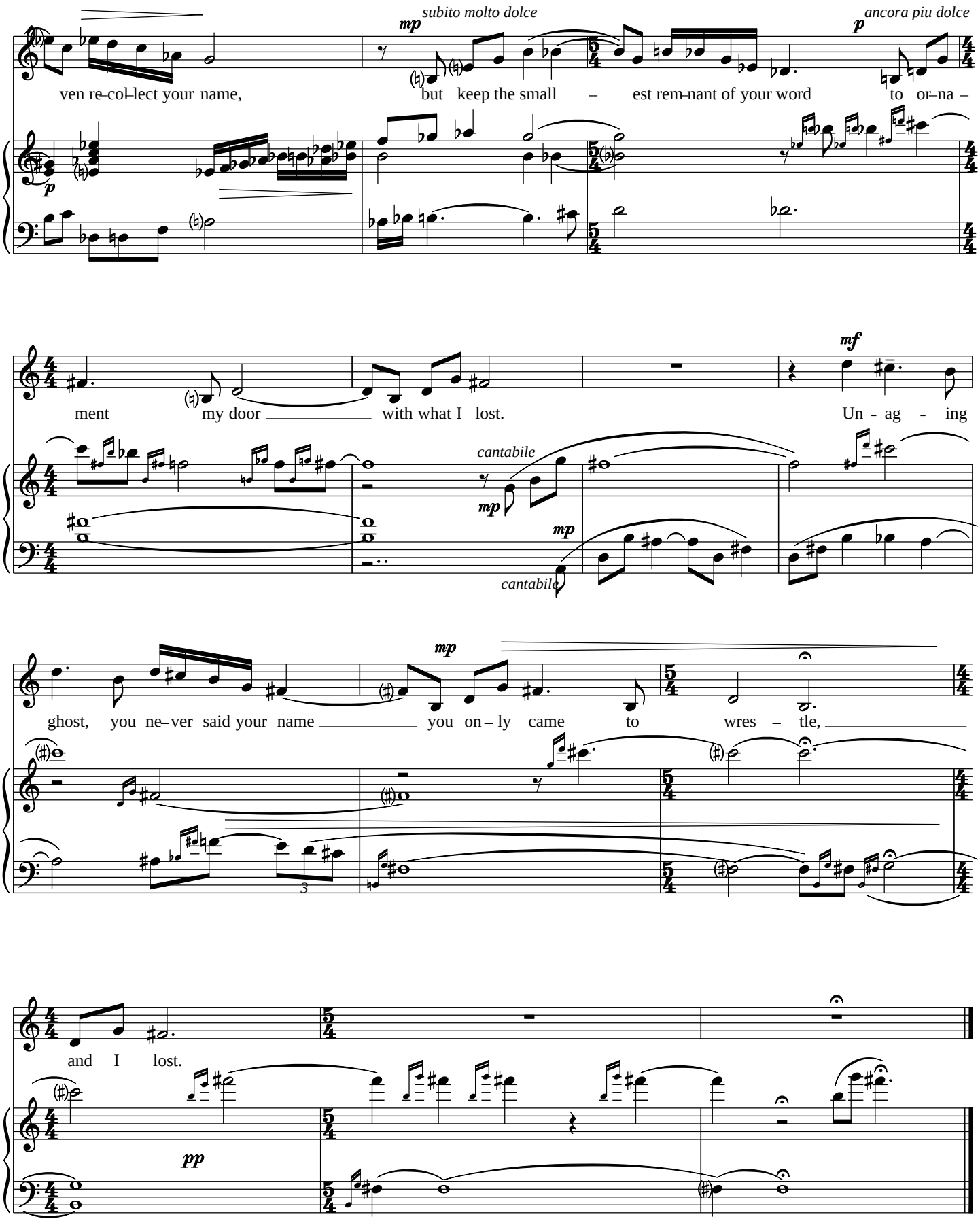
Vetus Flamma

Robert Mezey

Joelle Wallach




my emp–ty heart;
And in the qui–
– et – ed pound–ing of my heart, I hear what fu–ture I wake to.
Night falls each
dawn and stays a week or two,
and all there is to eat is my own heart.
I nurse a bro – ken love, your bro–ken word,
and can–not e –
mf
p
pp
poco piu f
ancora poco piu f
3

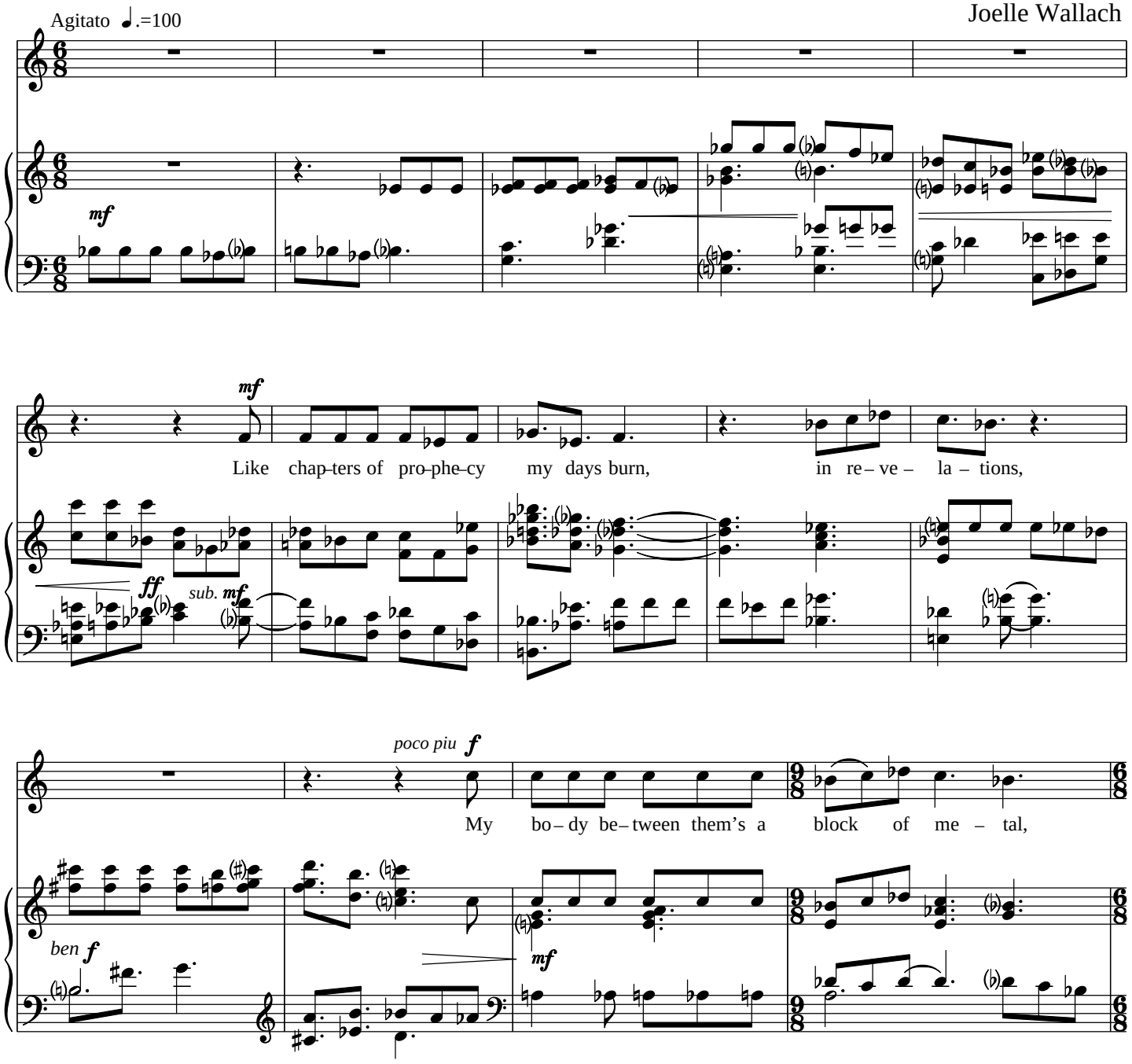

subito molto dolce
ancora piu dolce
ven re–col–lect your name, but keep the small – est rem–nant of your word to or–na –
ment my door with what I lost. Un - ag - ing
cantabile
cantabile
ghost, you ne–ver said your name you on – ly came to wres – tle,
and I lost.

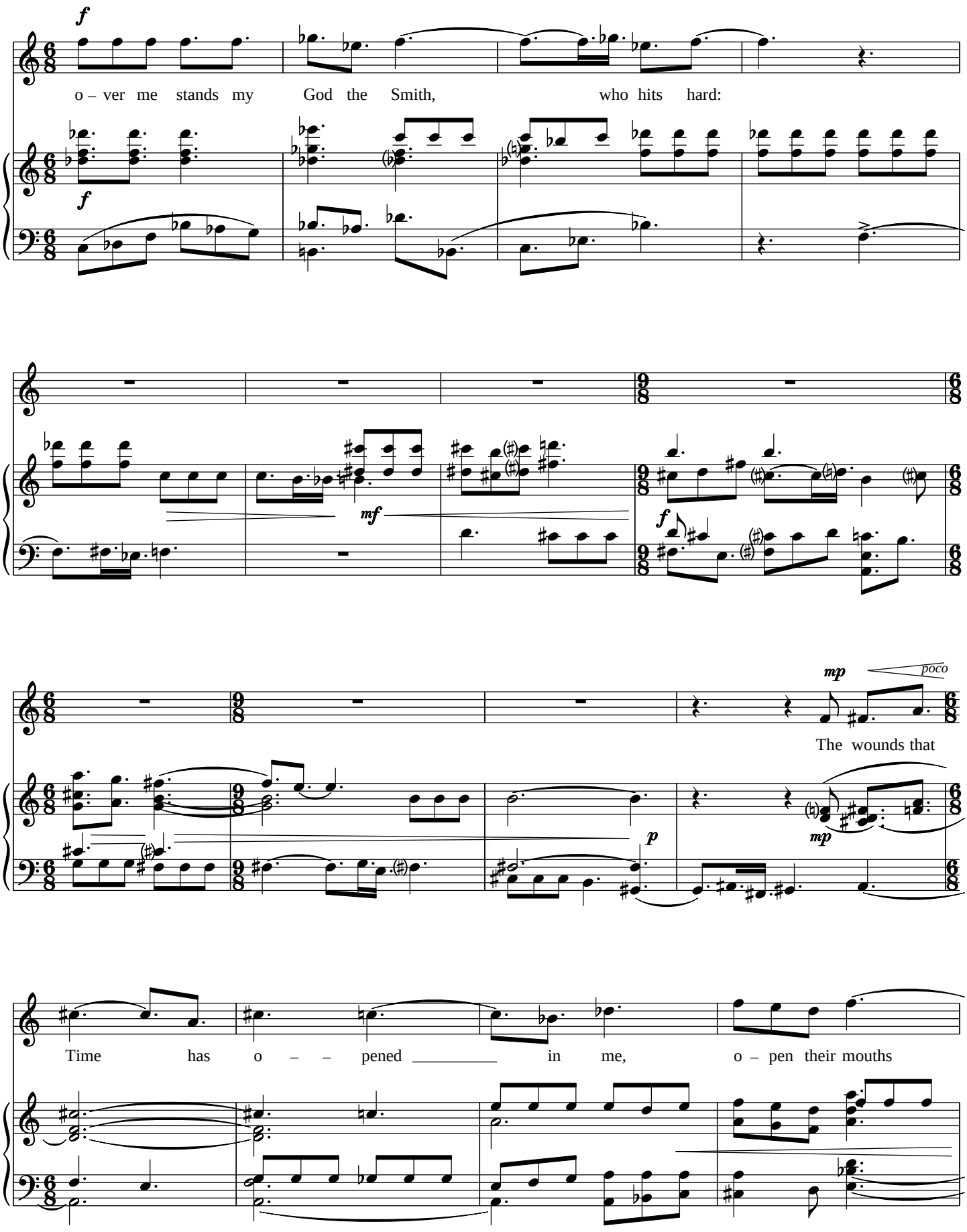
IV

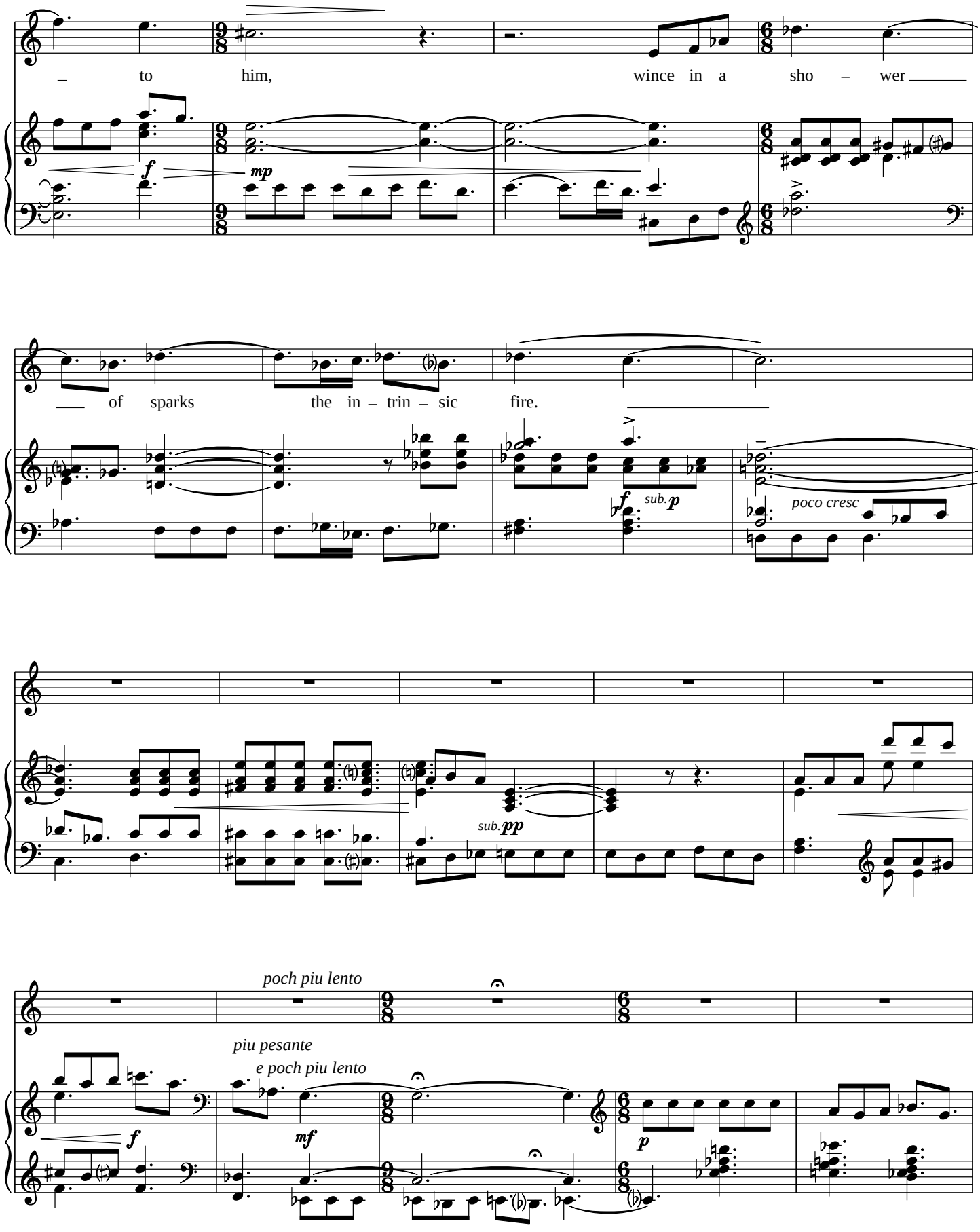
With My God The Smith

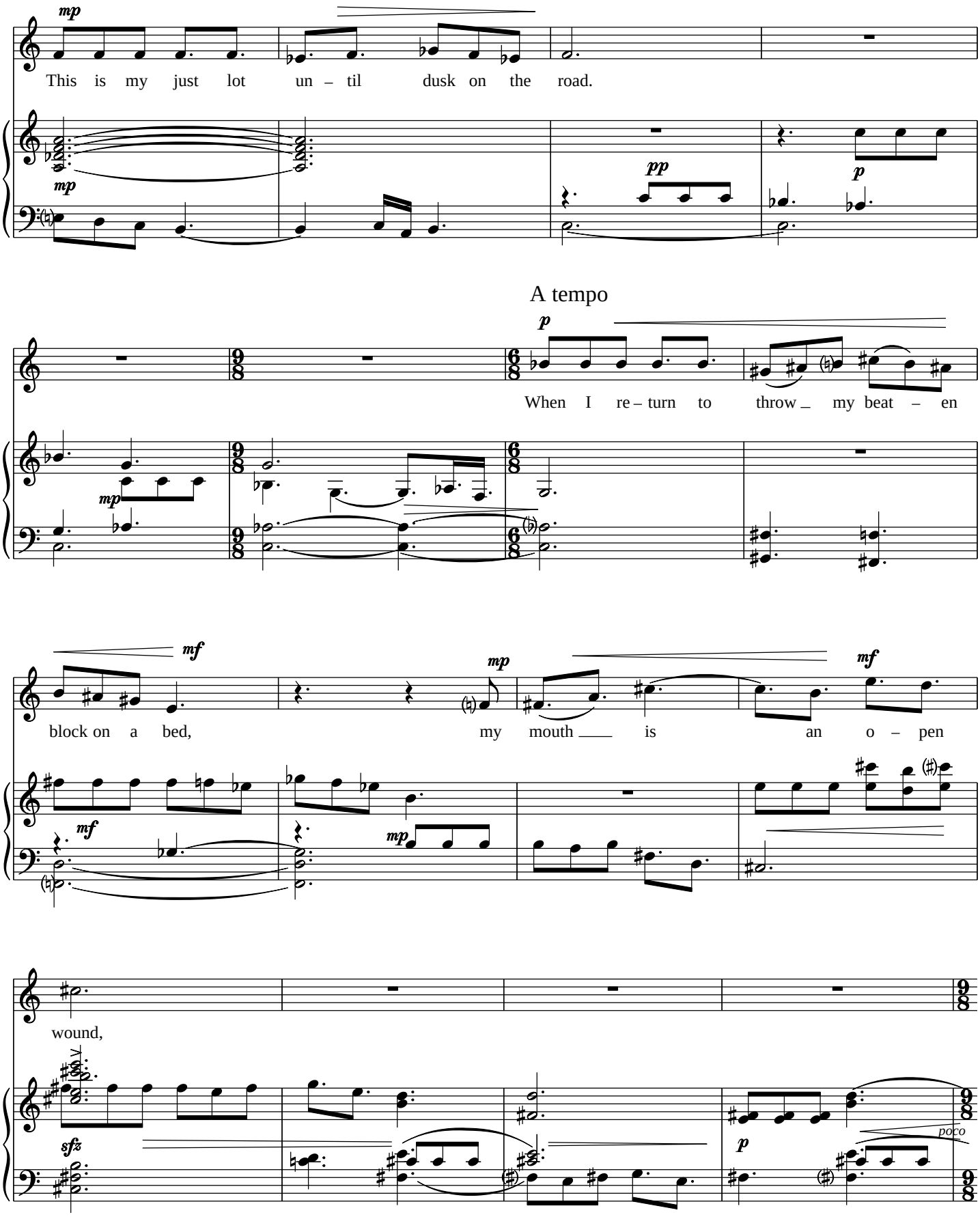
Robert Mezey

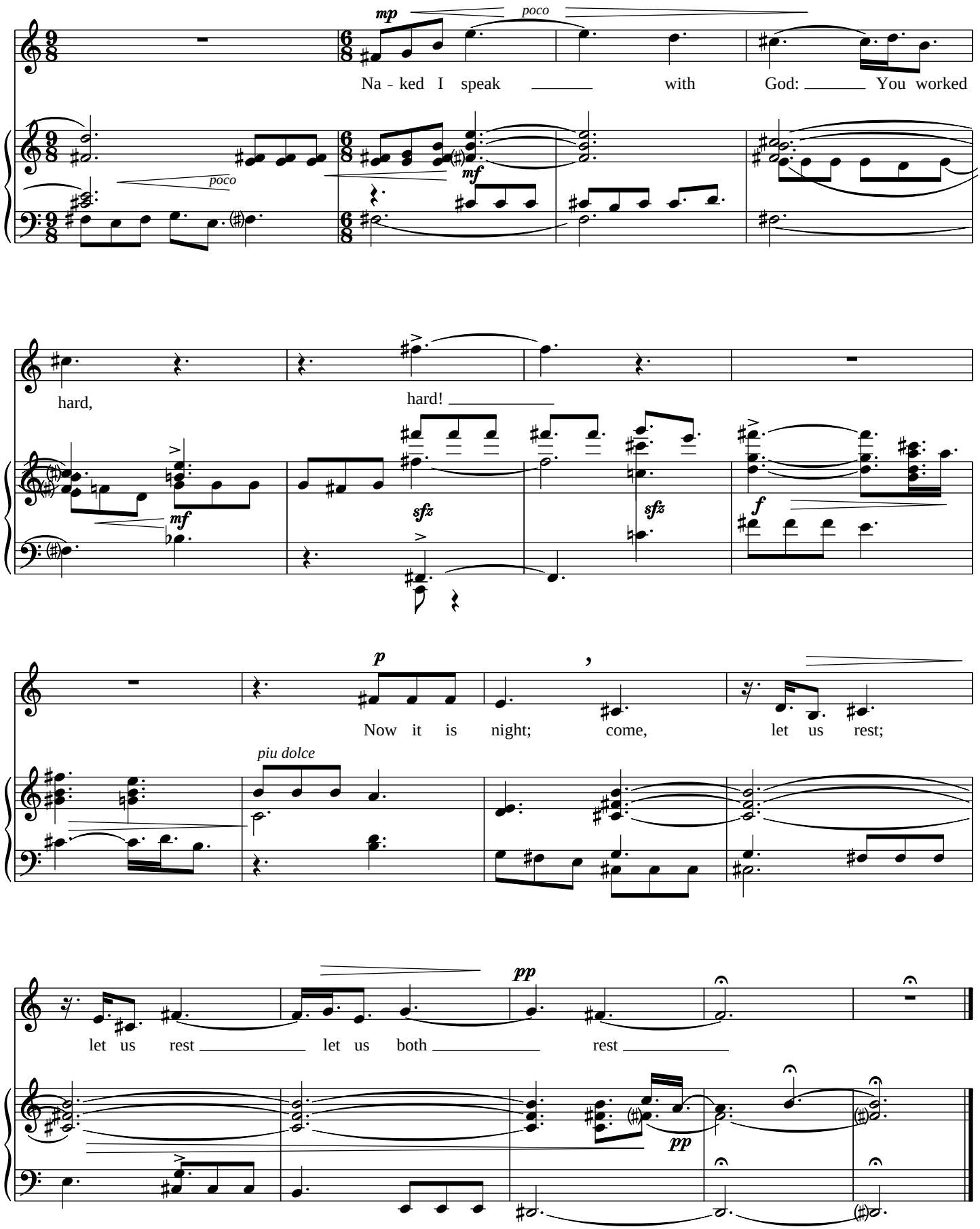
Joelle Wallach




f
o – ver me stands my God the Smith, who hits hard:
f
mf
f
mp
poco
The wounds that
p
mp
Time has o – – pened in me, o – pen their mouths


– to him, wince in a sho – wer
f
mp
___ of sparks the in – trin – sic fire.
f
sub. p
poco cresc
sub. pp
poch piu lento
piu pesante
e poch piu lento
f
mf
p


mp
This is my just lot un – til dusk on the road.
pp
p
A tempo
When I re – turn to throw my beat – en
block on a bed, my mouth is an o – pen
wound,
sfz
poco


mp
poco
Na - ked I speak with God: You worked
poco
mf
hard,
hard!
mf
sfz
sfz
f
p
Now it is night; come, let us rest;
piu dolce
let us rest let us both rest
pp
pp