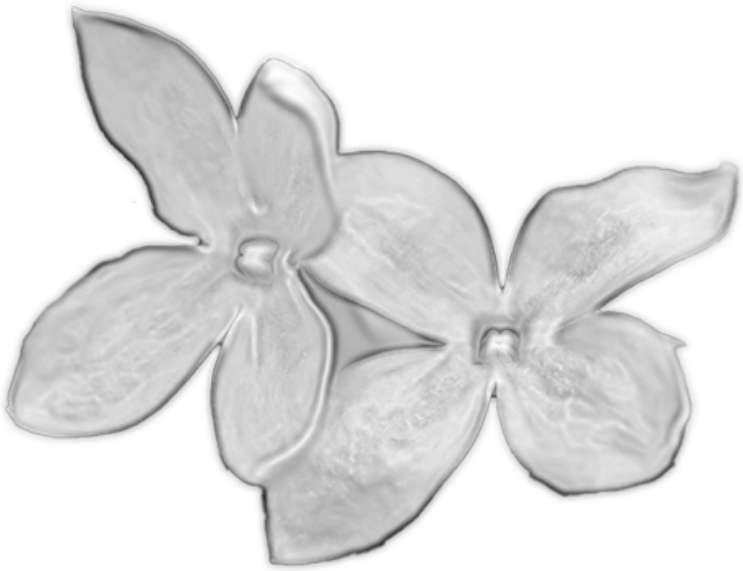
When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd

For low voice
with piano accompaniment



by
Vanessa McClintock

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When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d

(Abridged and adapted)

Four Lincoln

Text: Walt Whitman

Part III

Music: Vanessa McClintock

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom’d,
And the great star early droop’d in the western sky in the night,
I mourn’d and yet shall mourn with each returning spring.

Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.

O powerful western fallen star!
Night surrounds me, tears flow,
Cruel hands hold me powerless,
The black murk hides the star.

In the dooryard stands a lilac bush,
With heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
Delicate blossoms rise, with the perfume strong I love,
A sprig with its flower I break.

In secluded corners of the swamp, a shy bird sings.
The thrush, solitary and withdrawn,
Song of the bleeding throat, Death’s outlet song of life,
Without this song, it would surely die.

Amid cities, old woods, and endless grass,
Passing the yellow-spear’d wheat,
Passing through lanes, streets, and orchards,
Night and day journeys a coffin.

Through day and night the coffin journeys through lanes and streets,
With the tolling tolling bells’ perpetual clang,
Mournful dirges surround it,
Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I offer my sprig of lilac.

Passing the visions, passing the night
Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,
I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning with spring.
I cease from my song for thee,

For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and this for his dear sake,
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

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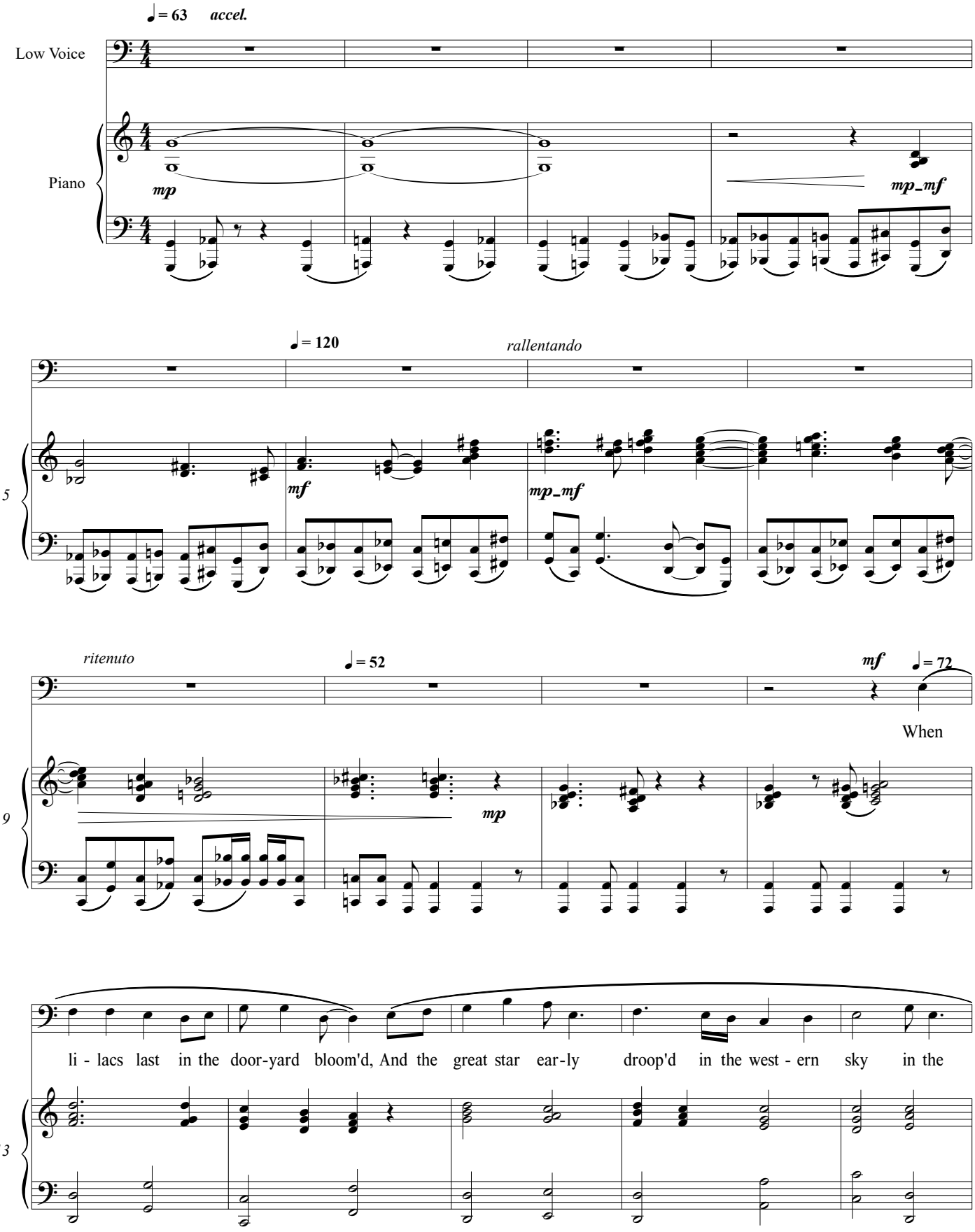

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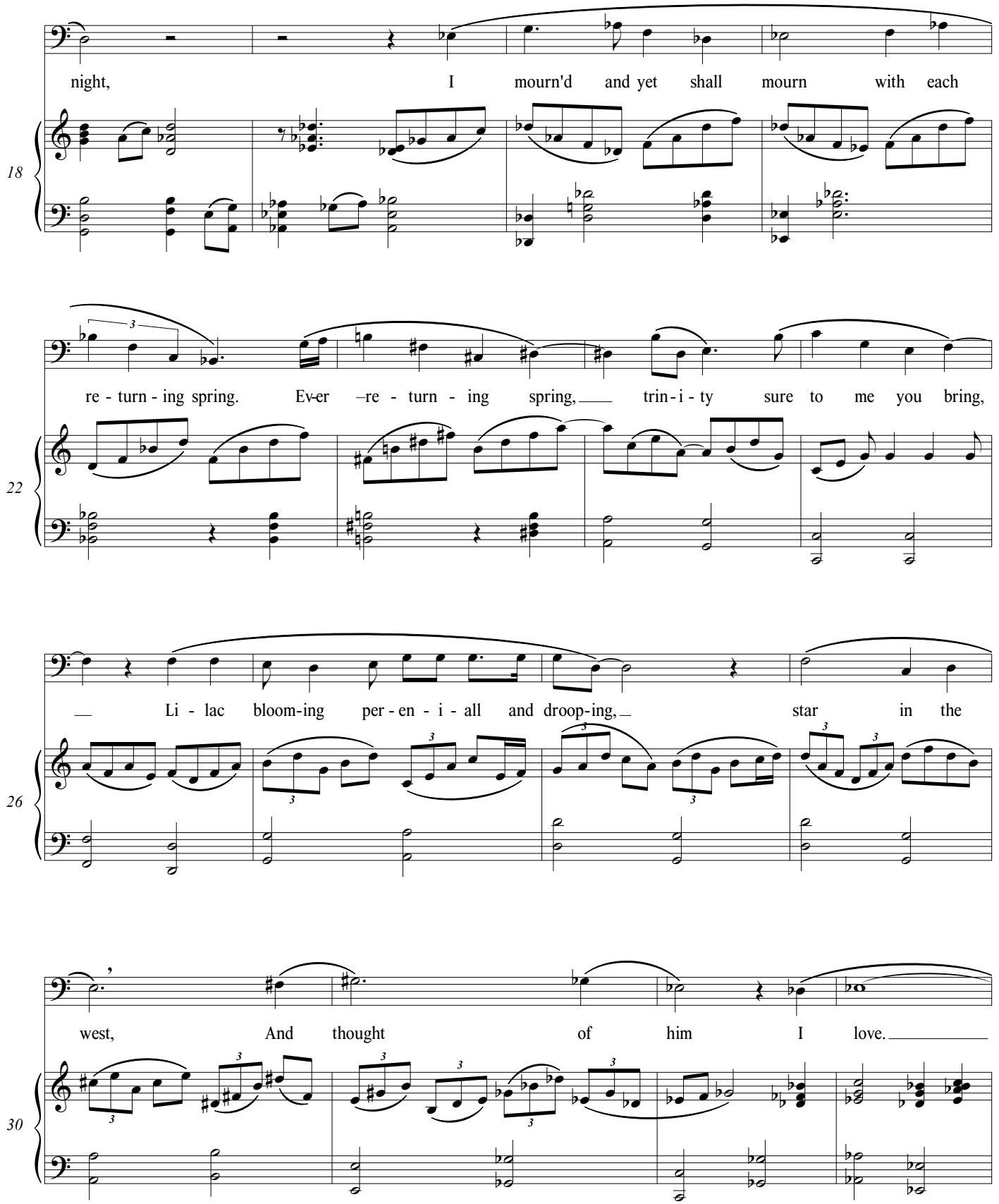

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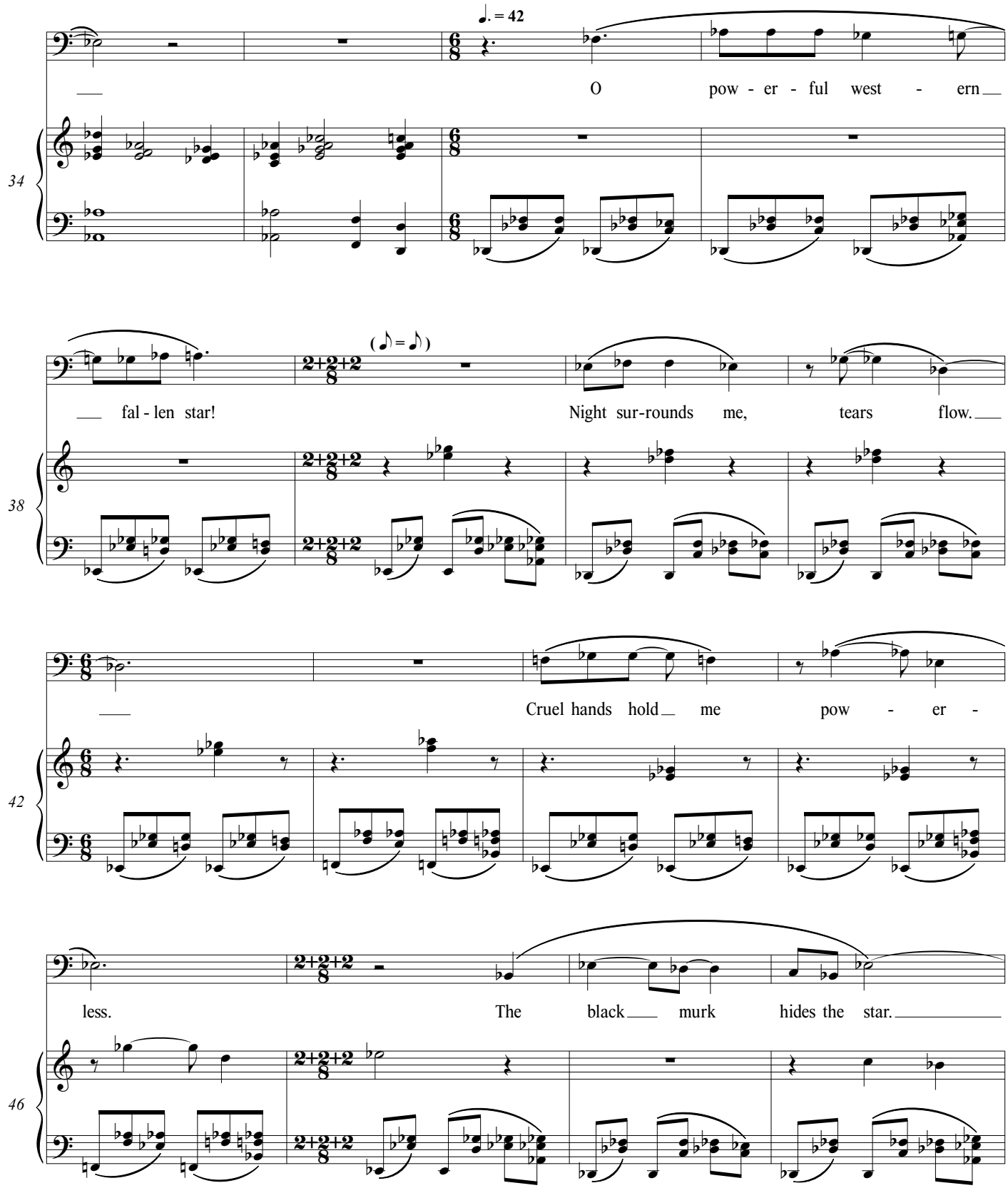

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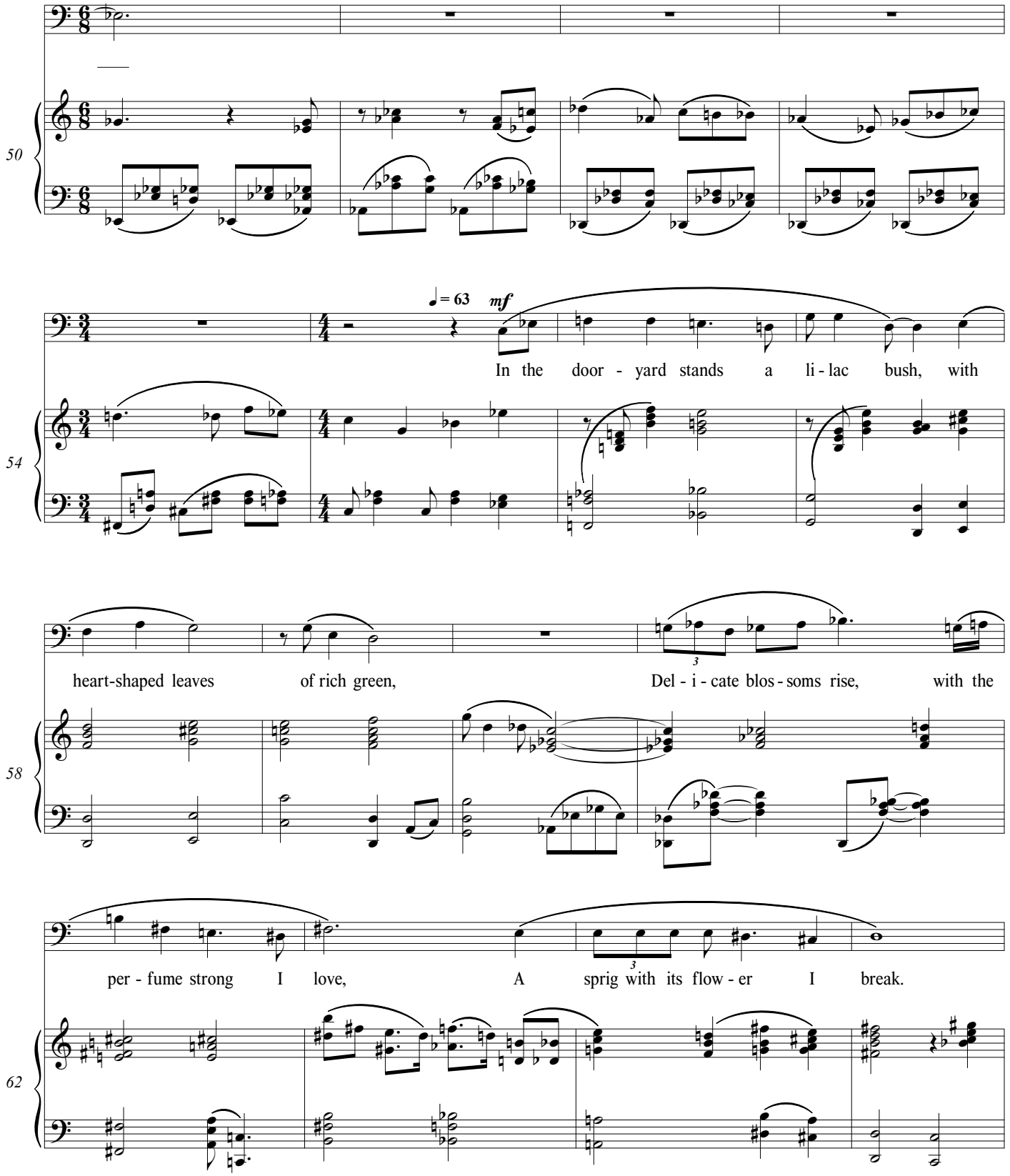

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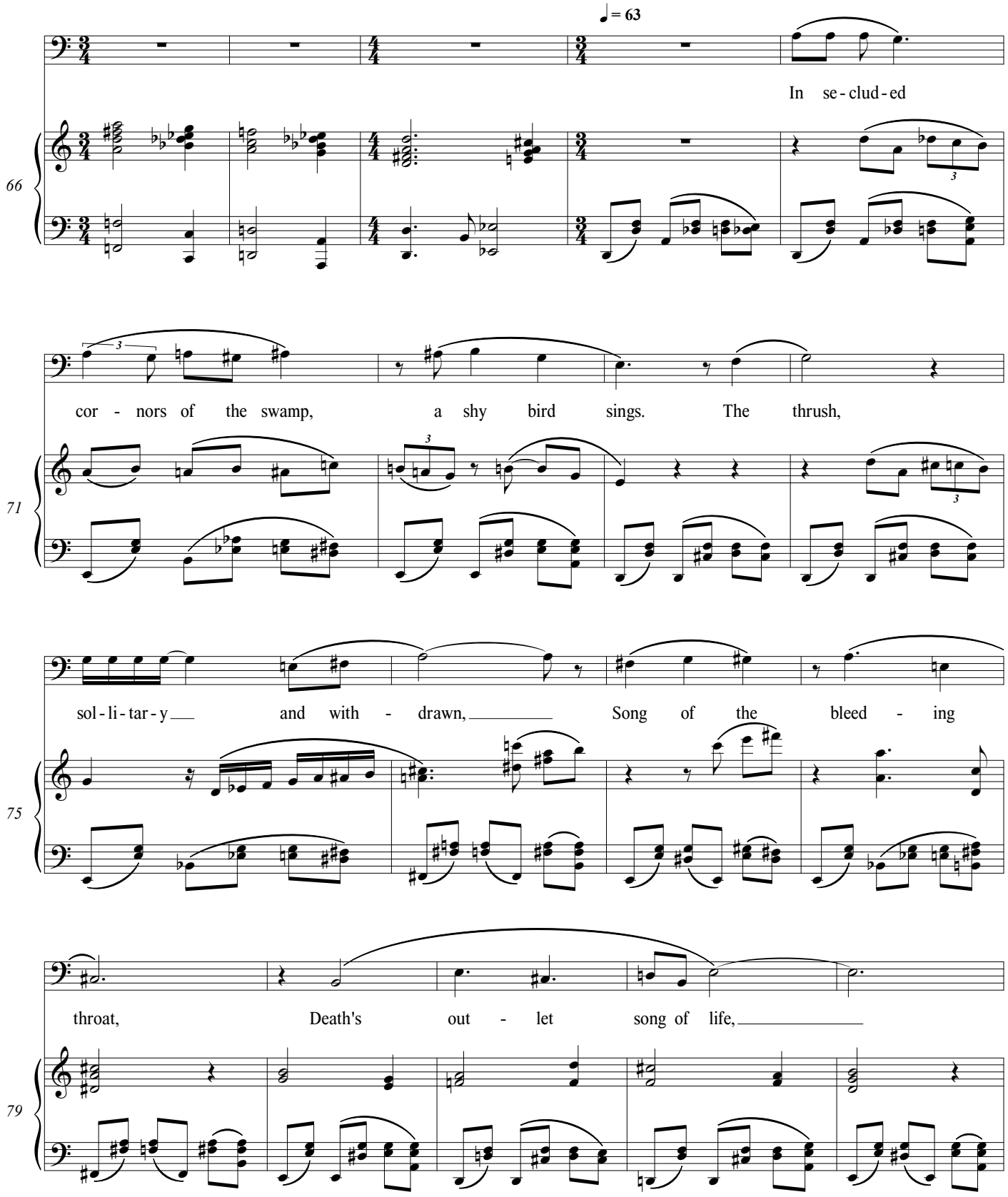

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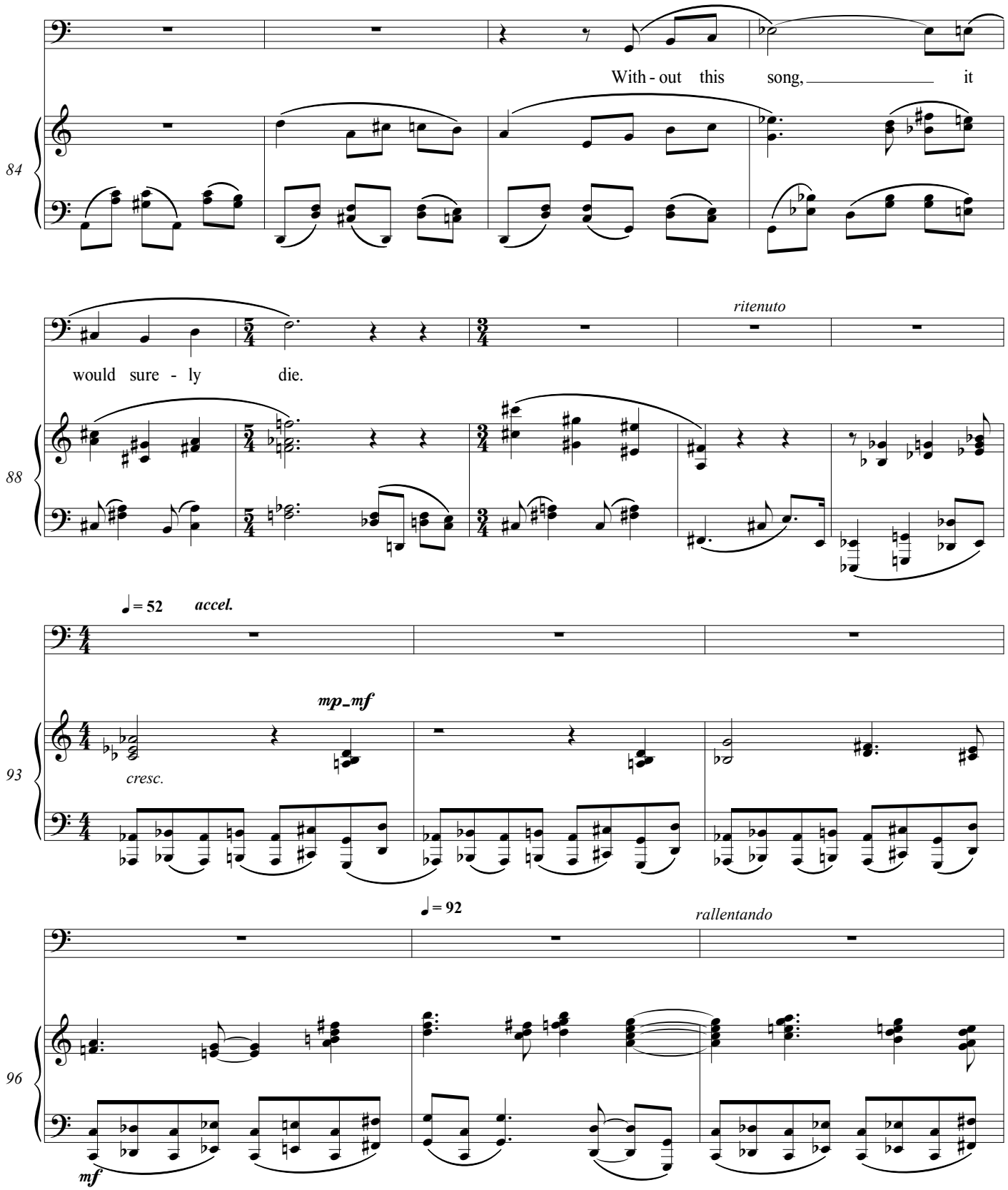

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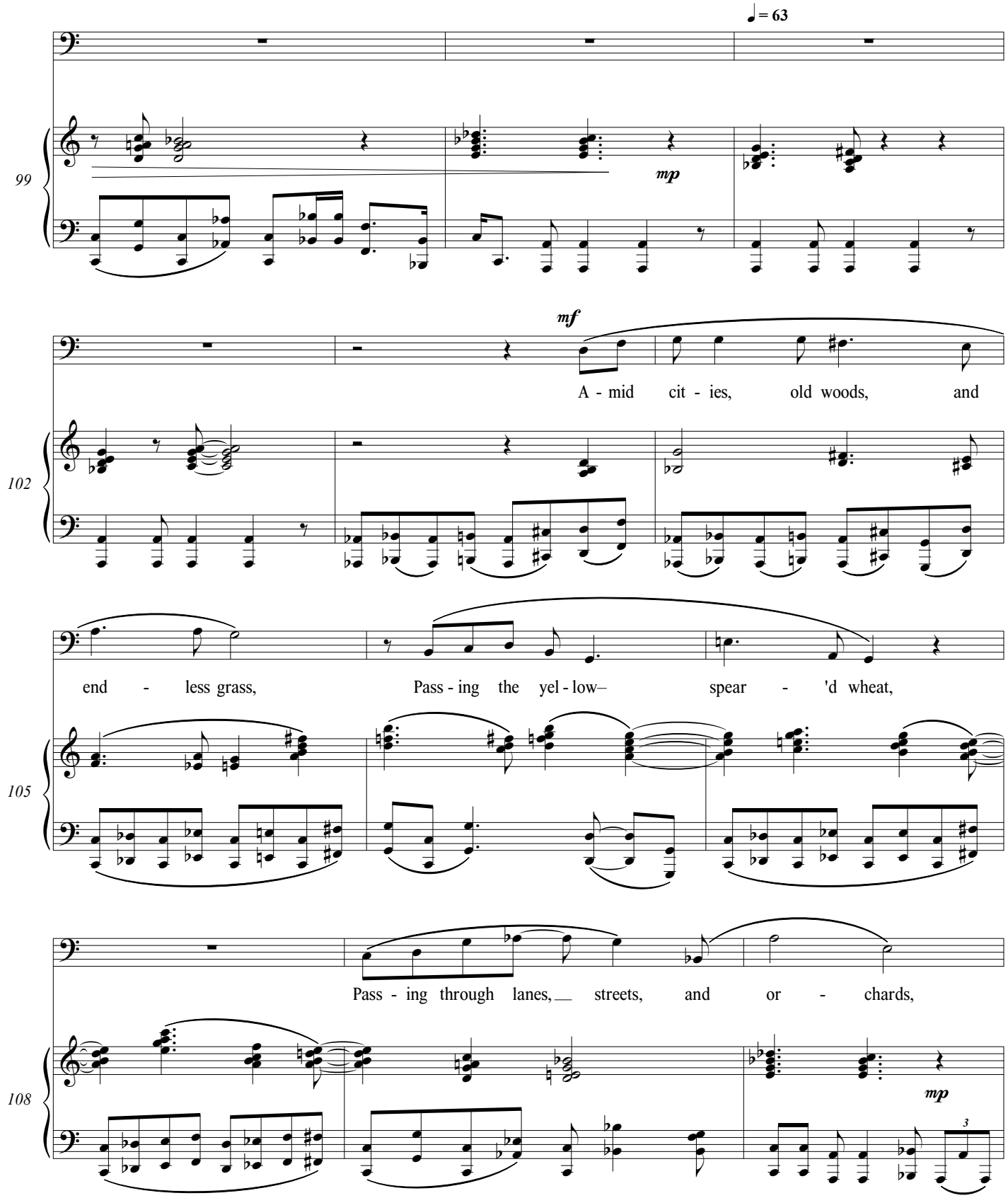

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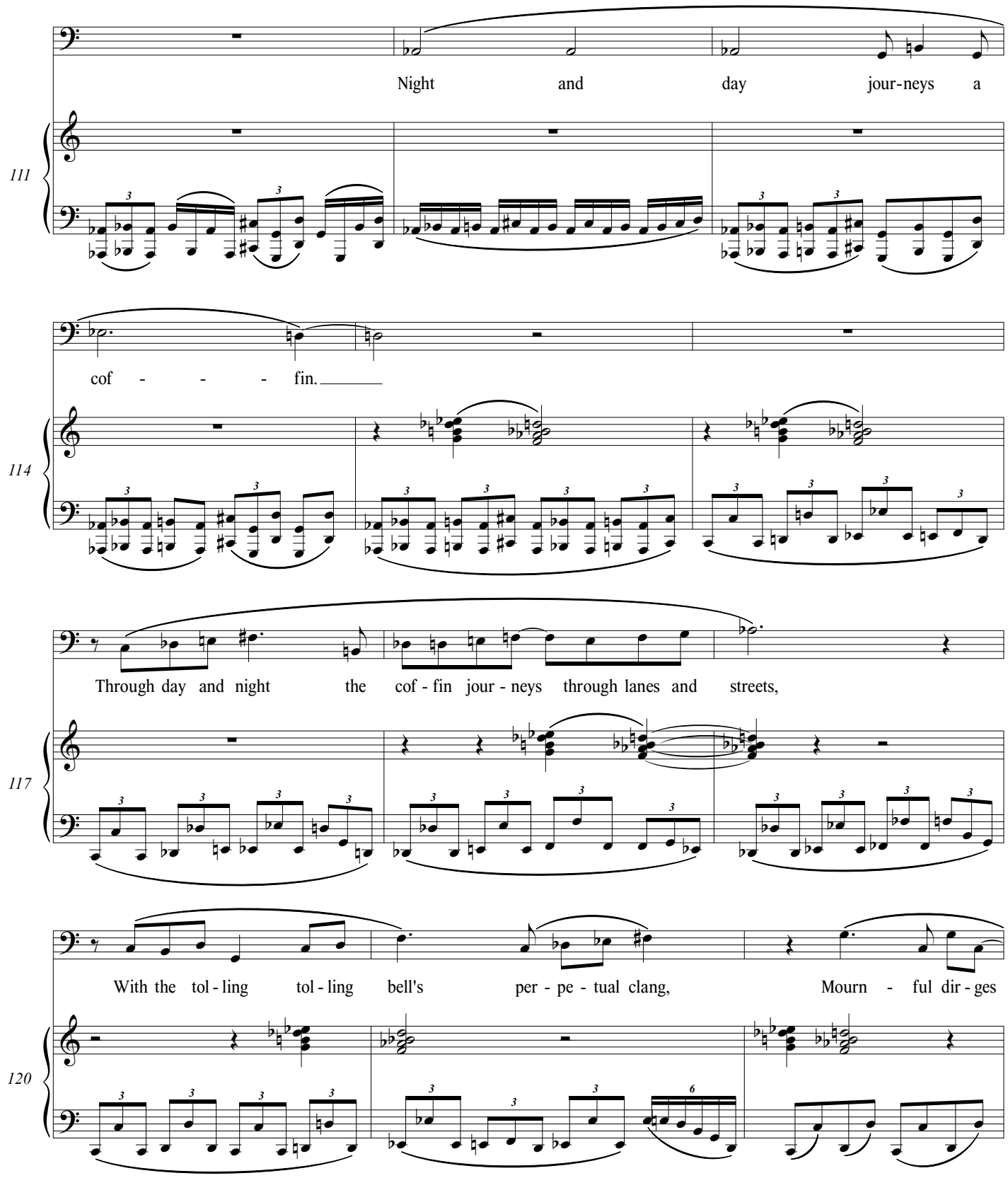

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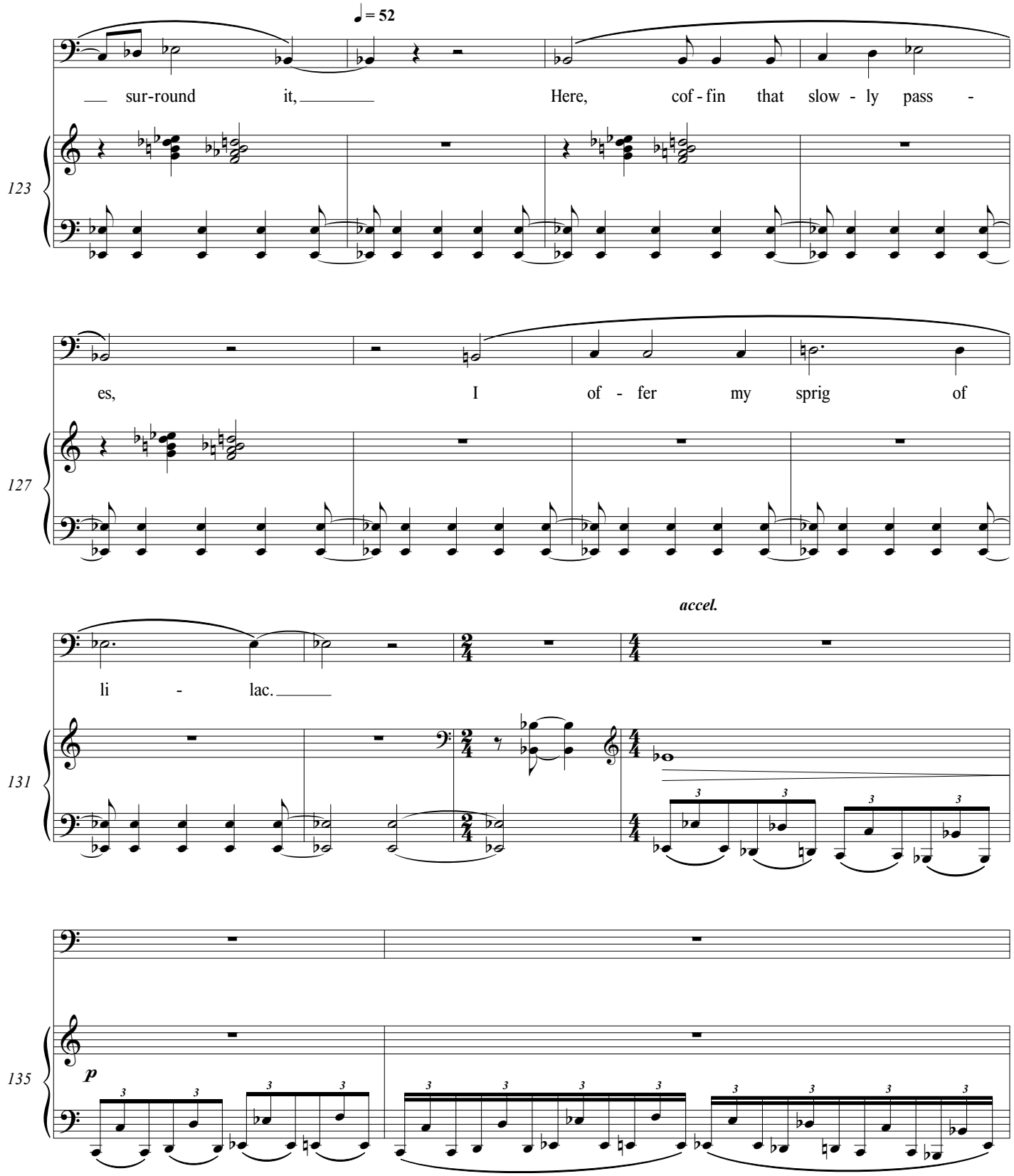

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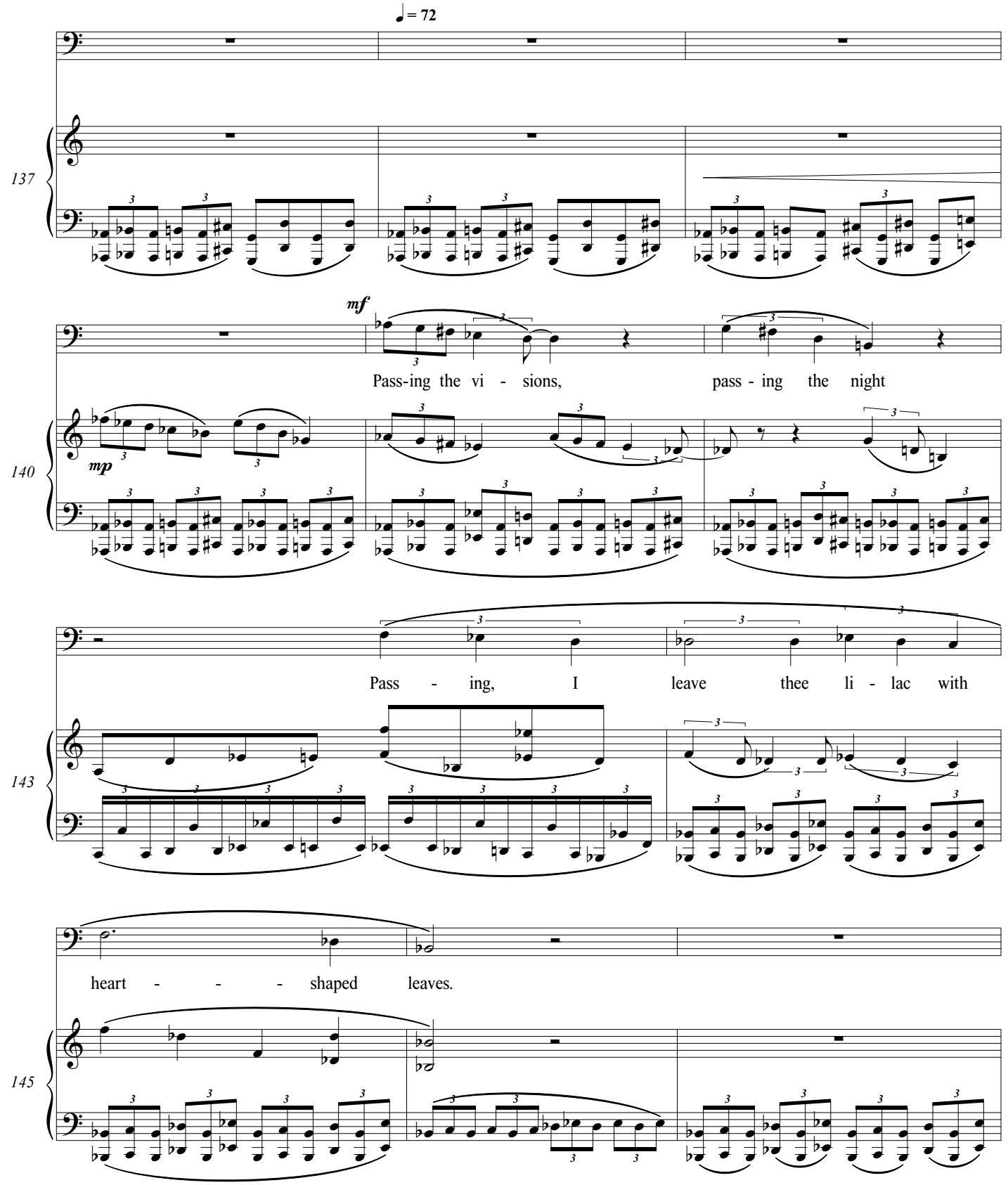

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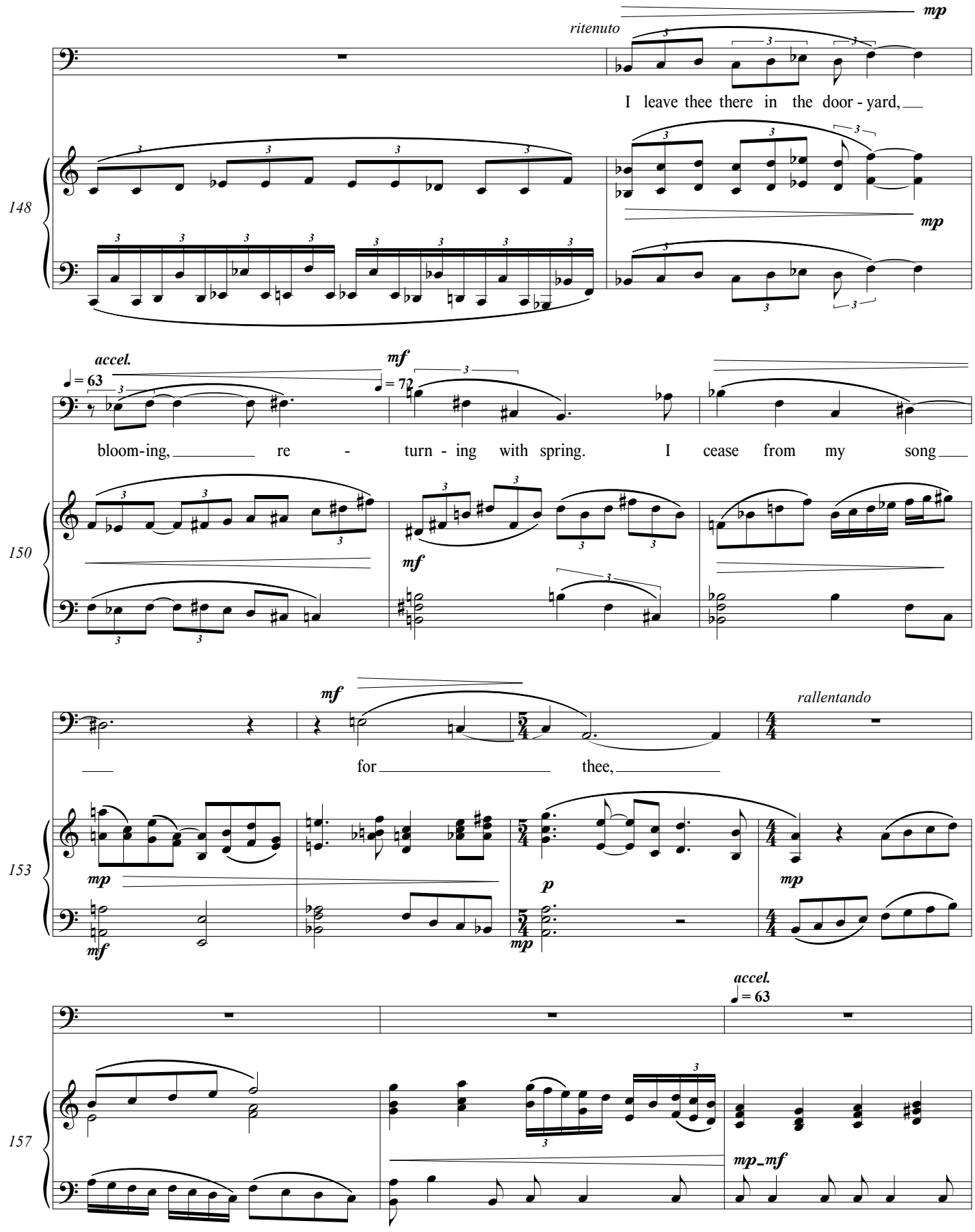

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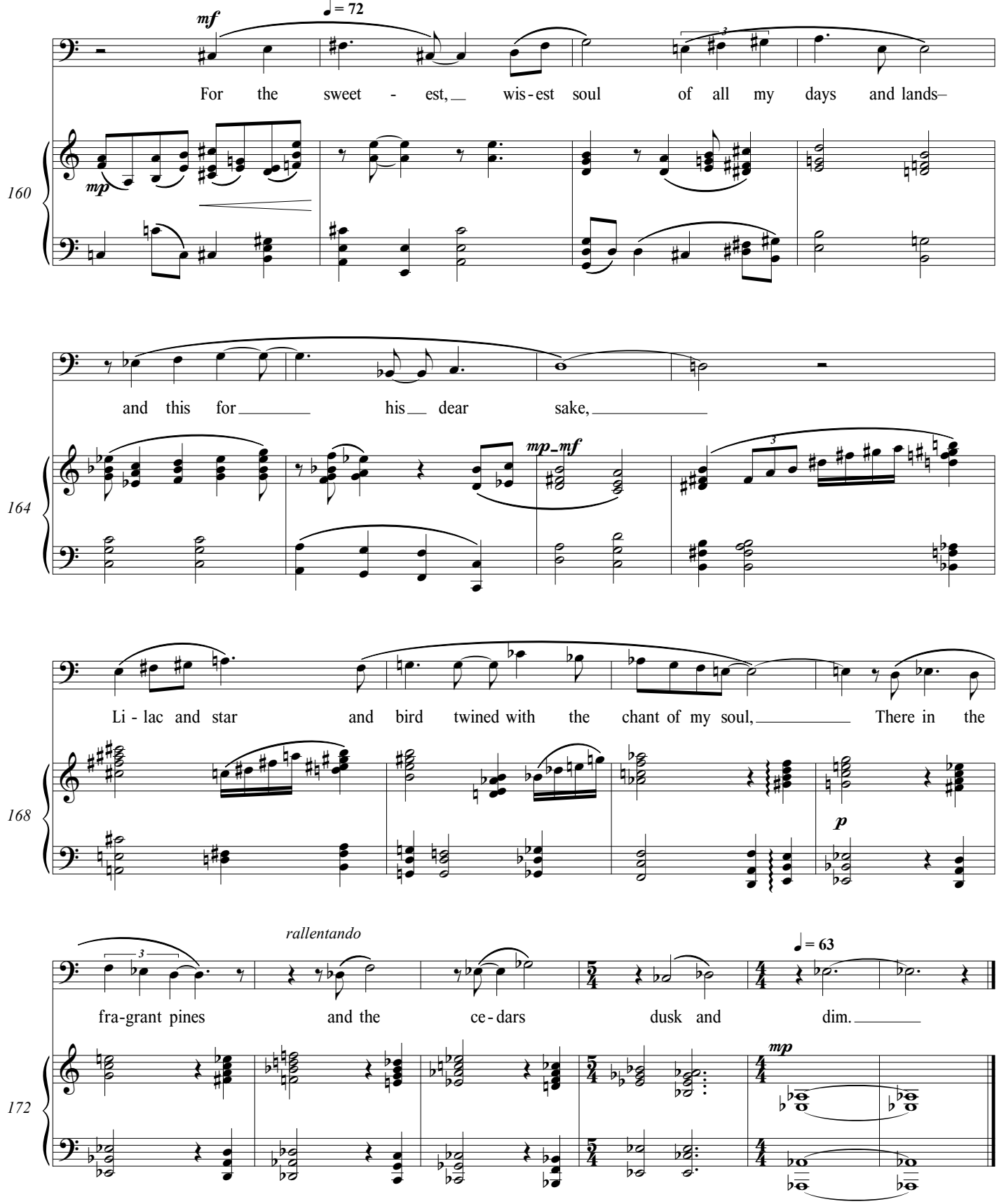

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