Frederic Rzewski

DE PROFUNDIS

FOR SPEAKING PIANIST

For Tony de Mare and Larry Brose
In Memory of Luke Theodore
(1992)

Text adapted from Oscar Wilde

Commande du Centre Européenne pour la Recherche Musicale

Duration: 24'

(Note: The pianist should wear a lapel microphone for both speech and other vocal sounds. In addition, a microphone should be set up to the right of the keyboard to pick up sounds made on the body of the instrument.)

DE PROFUNDIS

Frederic Rzewski

Voice [Breathing: in] [in] [out]

♩=96~104

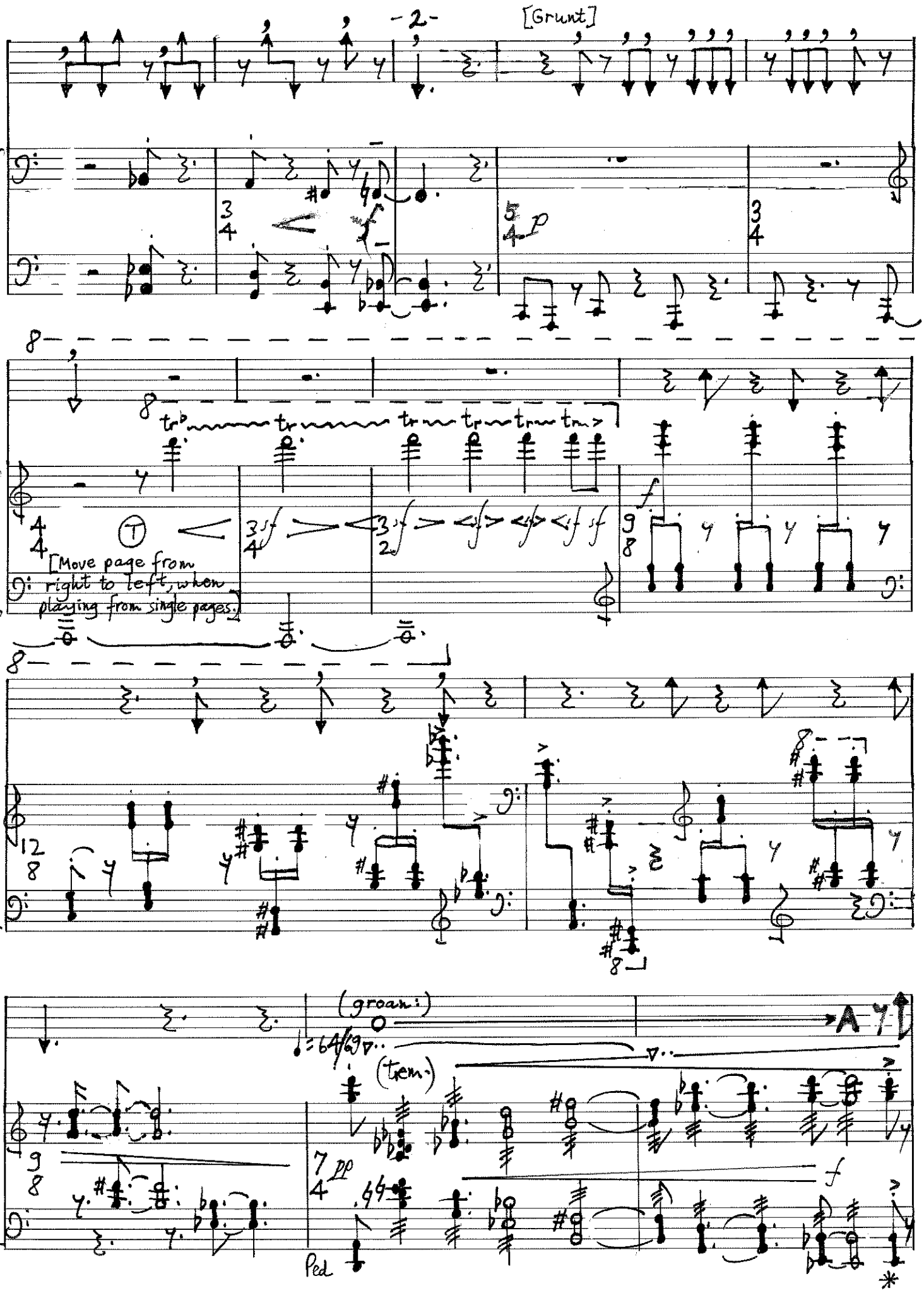
KEYBOARD:

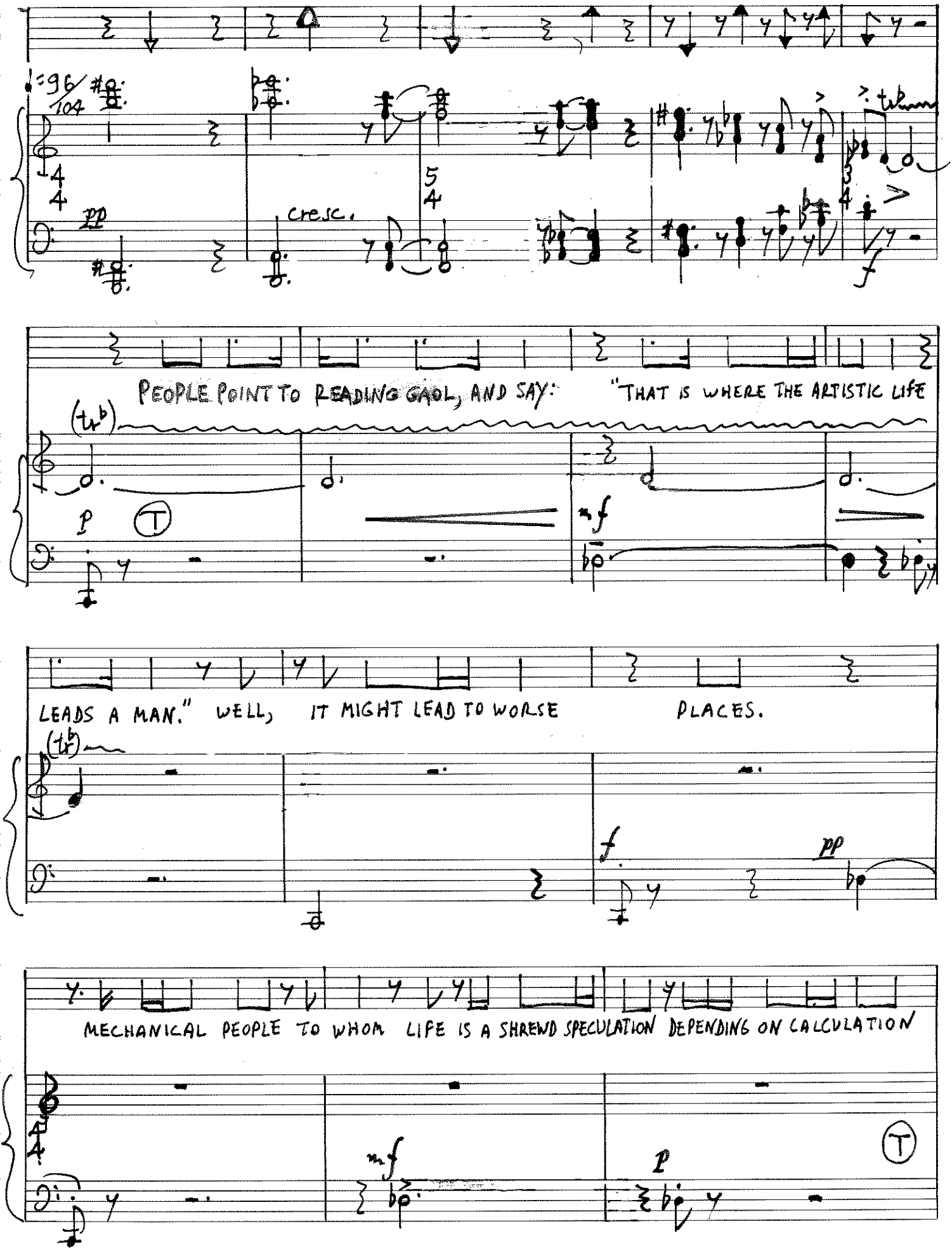
(VOICE)

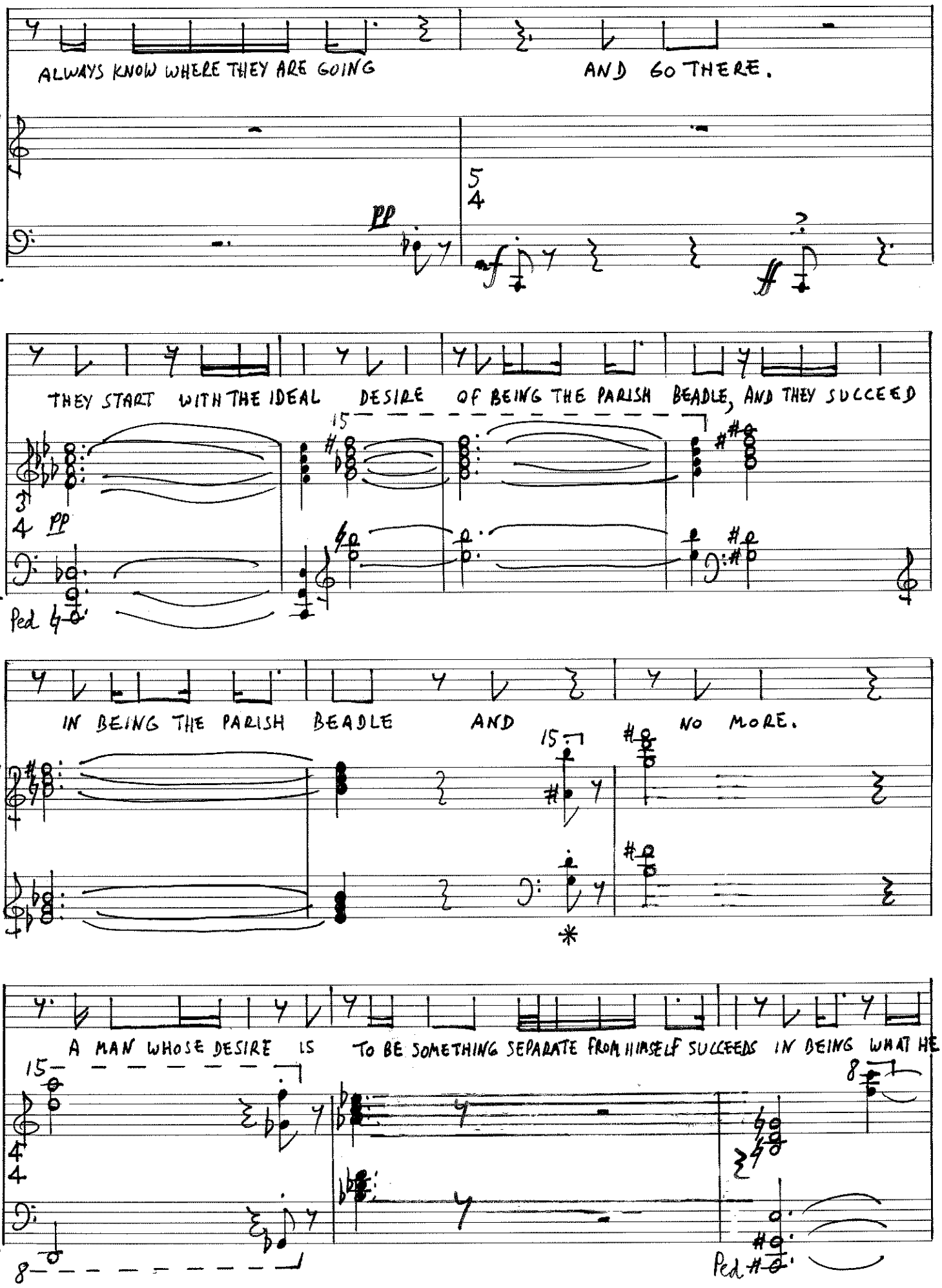
N.B.

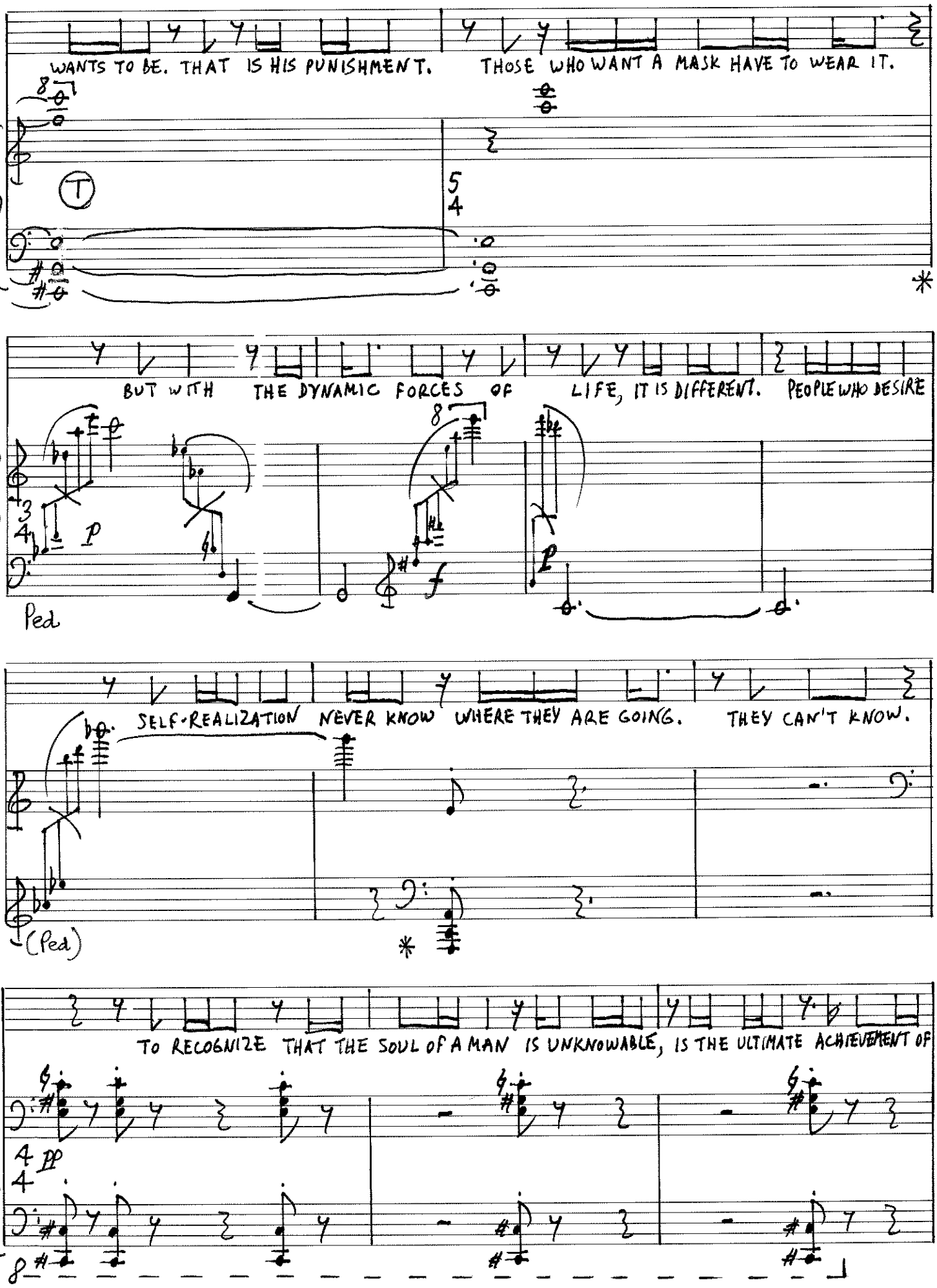
(KEYB.:)

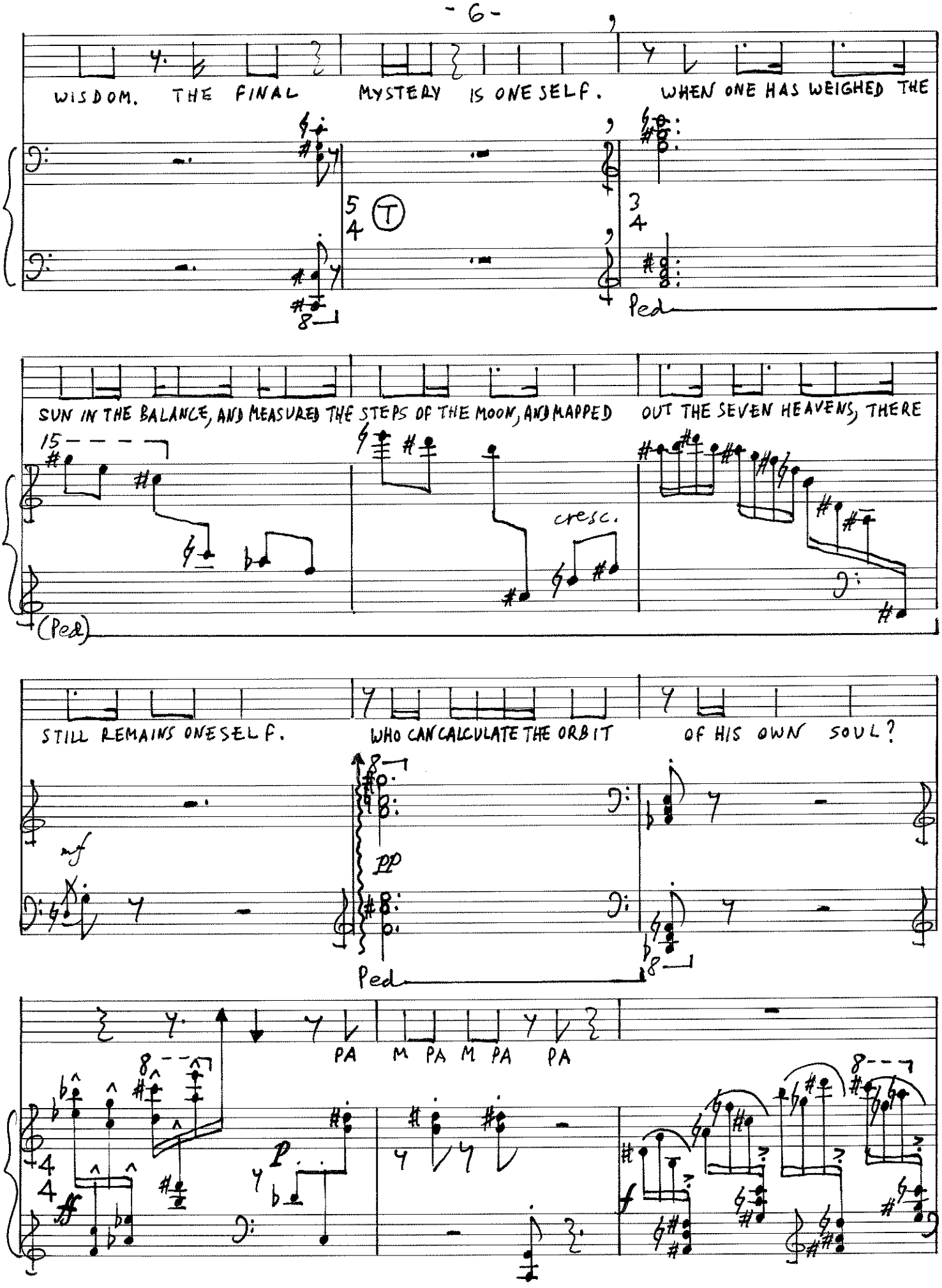
[N.B. — All breathing sounds are aspirated (as in Greek "ε"), unless marked "ψ" (as in Greek).]

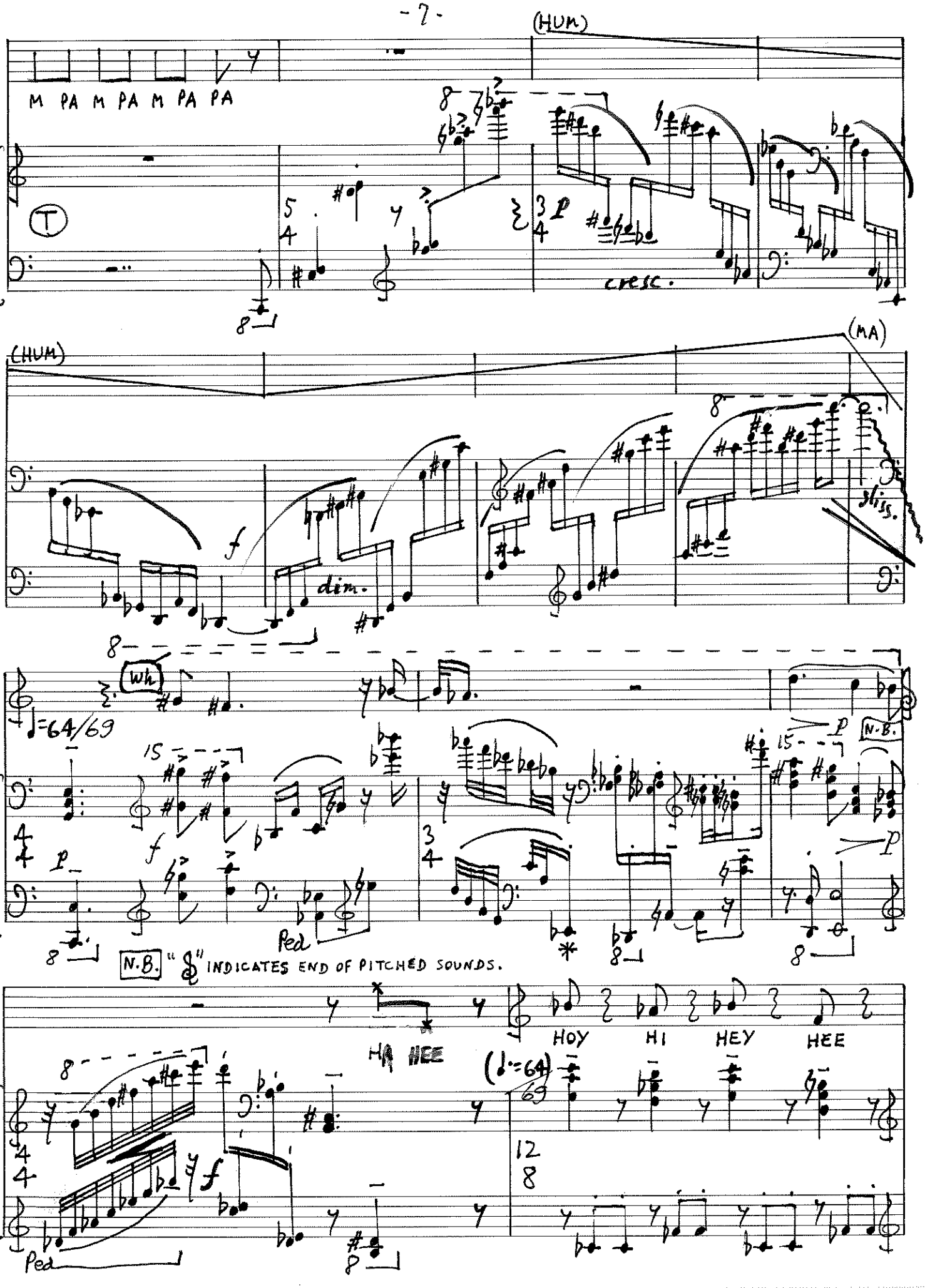

[Grunt]
[Move page from right to left, when playing from single pages.]
(groan:)
(tacet)
Ped

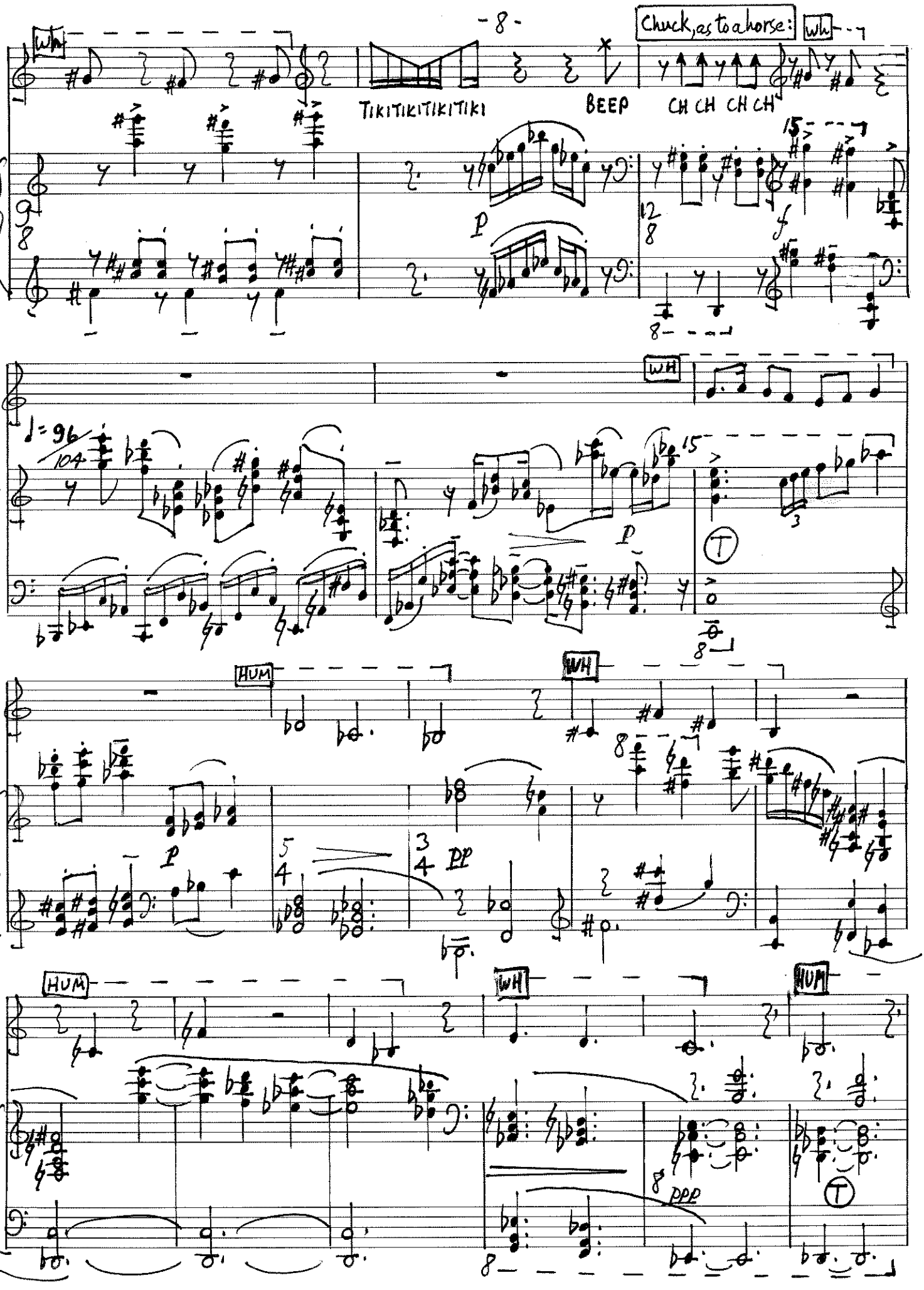

♩=96/104
cresc.
PEOPLE POINT TO READING GAOL, AND SAY: "THAT IS WHERE THE ARTISTIC LIFE
LEADS A MAN." WELL, IT MIGHT LEAD TO WORSE PLACES.
MECHANICAL PEOPLE TO WHOM LIFE IS A SHREWD SPECULATION DEPENDING ON CALCULATION

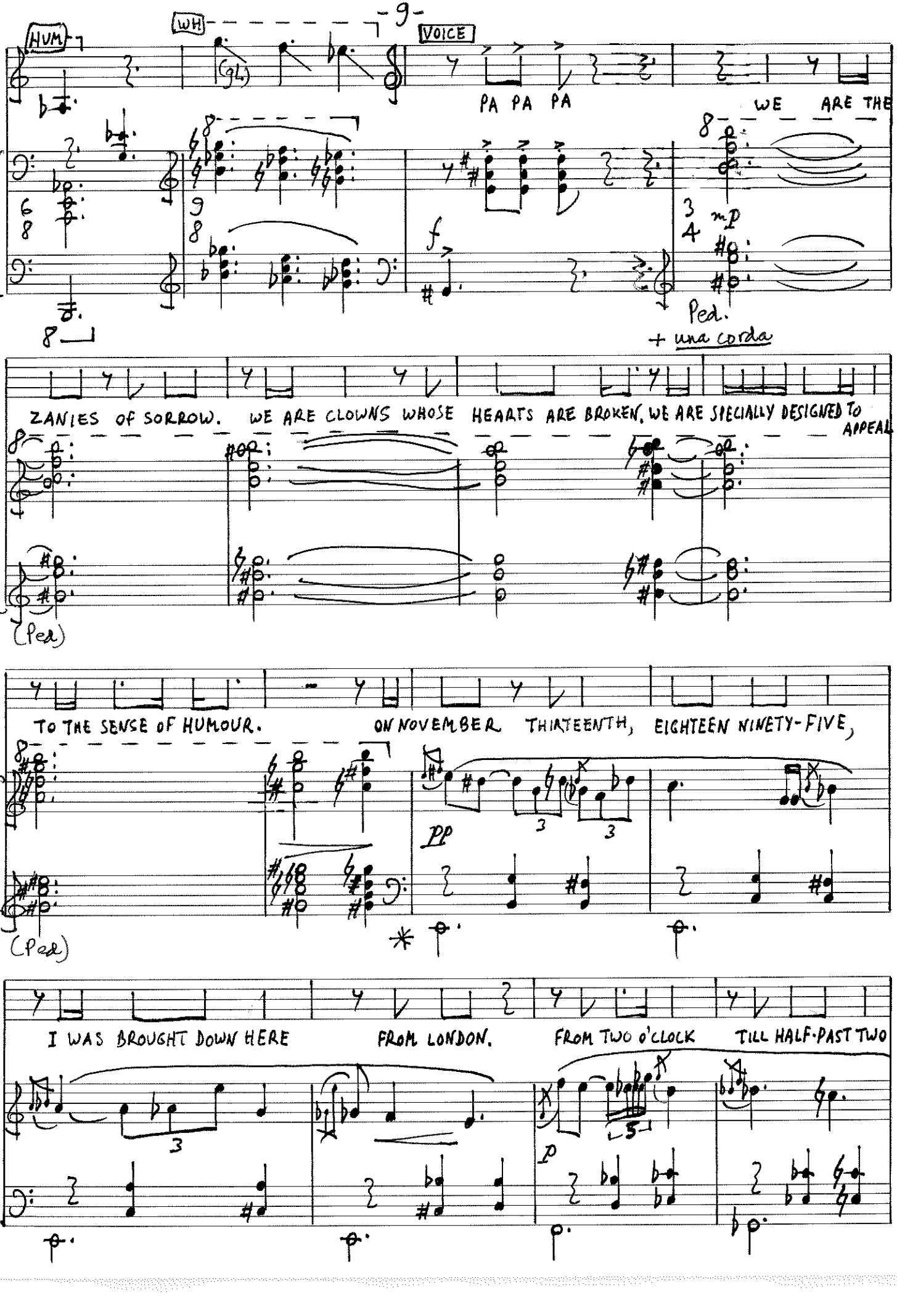

ALWAYS KNOW WHERE THEY ARE GOING
AND GO THERE.
pp
THEY START WITH THE IDEAL DESIRE OF BEING THE PARISH BEADLE, AND THEY SUCCEED
IN BEING THE PARISH BEADLE AND NO MORE.
A MAN WHOSE DESIRE IS TO BE SOMETHING SEPARATE FROM HIMSELF SUCCEEDS IN BEING WHAT HE

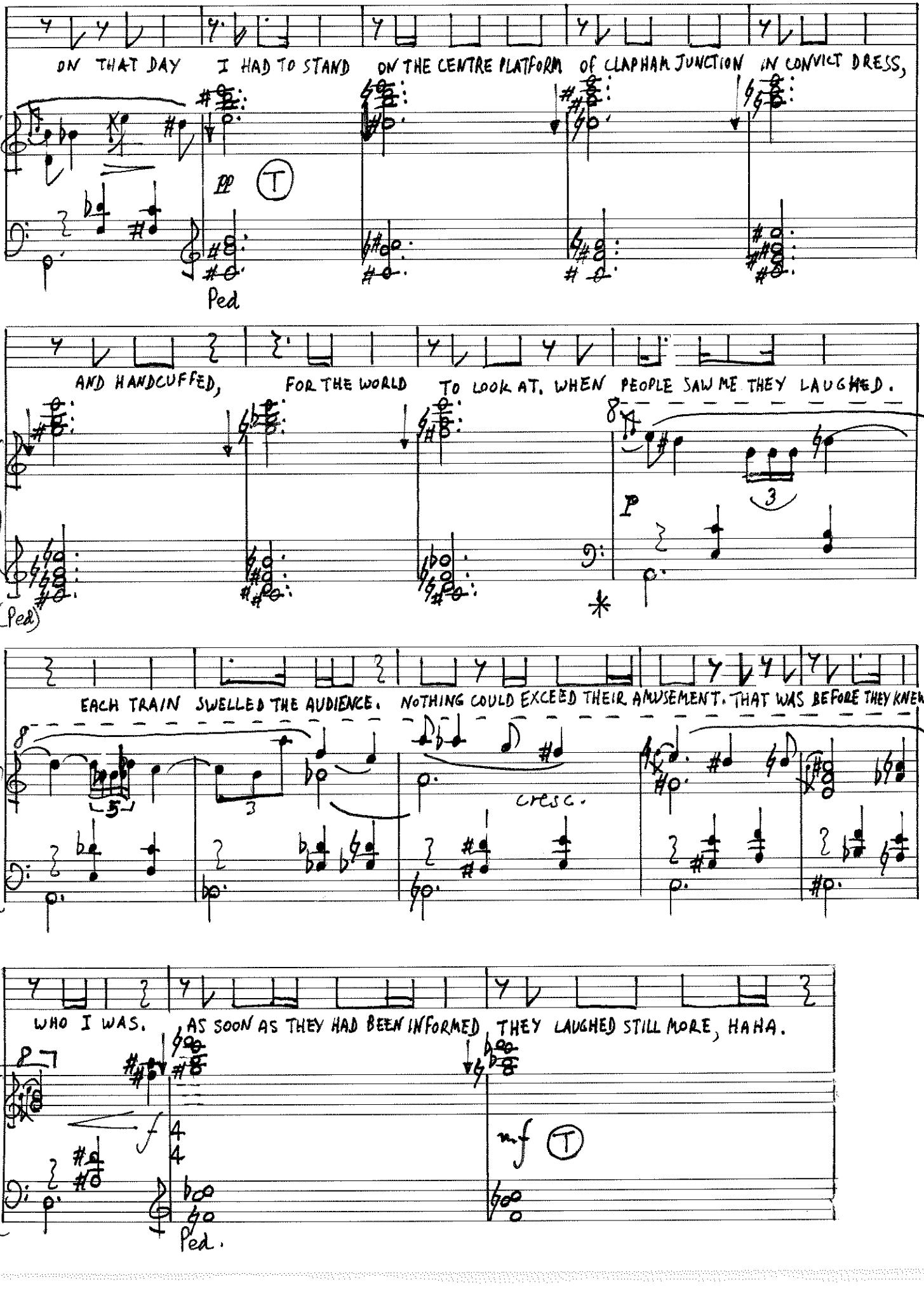

WANTS TO BE. THAT IS HIS PUNISHMENT.
THOSE WHO WANT A MASK HAVE TO WEAR IT.
T
BUT WITH THE DYNAMIC FORCES OF LIFE, IT IS DIFFERENT.
PEOPLE WHO DESIRE
p
f
Ped.
SELF-REALIZATION NEVER KNOW WHERE THEY ARE GOING.
THEY CAN'T KNOW.
(Ped.)
TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE SOUL OF A MAN IS UNKNOWABLE, IS THE ULTIMATE ACHIEVEMENT OF
pp

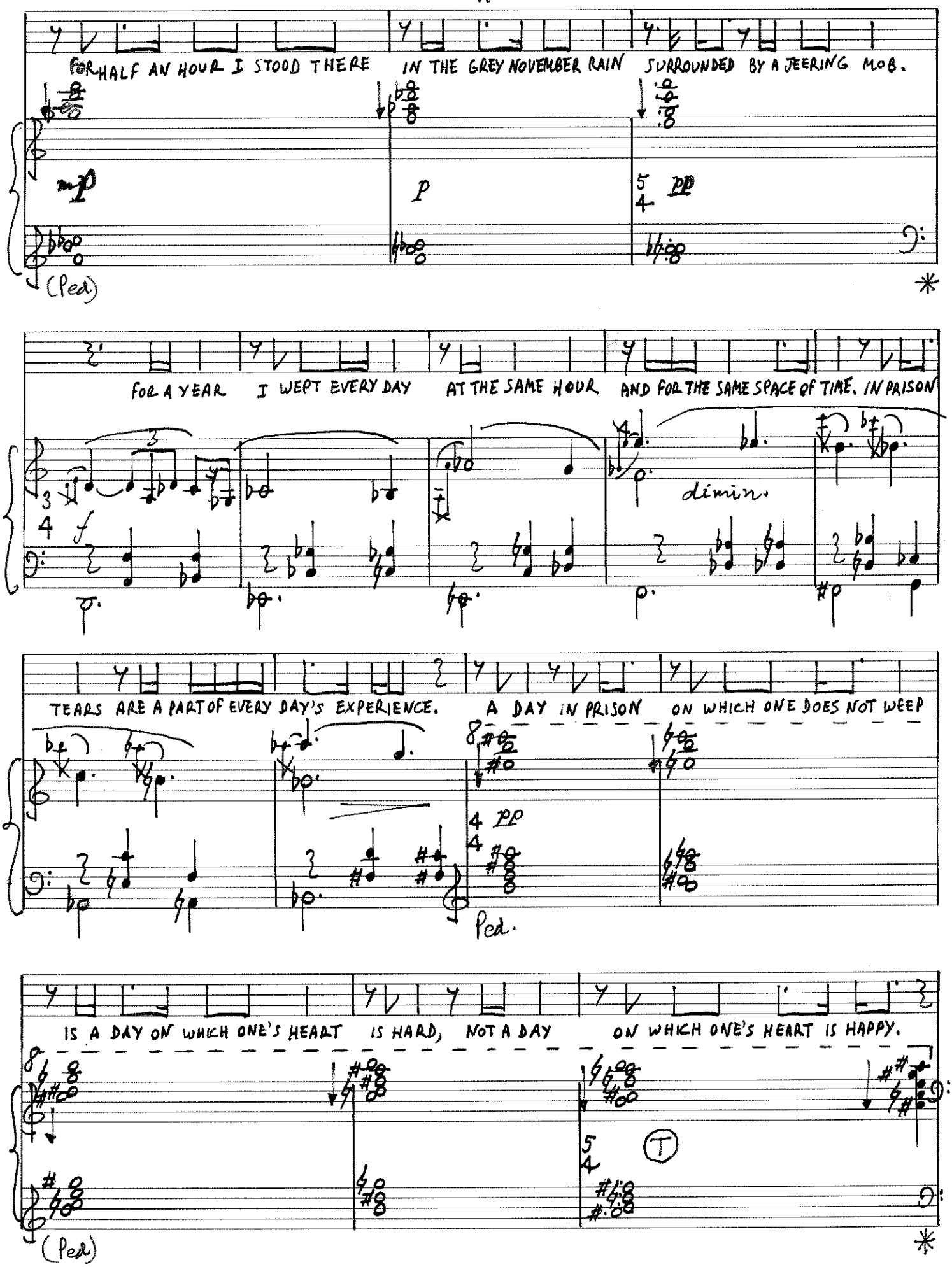

WISDOM. THE FINAL MYSTERY IS ONESELF. WHEN ONE HAS WEIGHED THE
T
Ped
SUN IN THE BALANCE, AND MEASURED THE STEPS OF THE MOON, AND MAPPED OUT THE SEVEN HEAVENS, THERE
15
cresc.
(Ped)
STILL REMAINS ONESELF. WHO CAN CALCULATE THE ORBIT OF HIS OWN SOUL?
mf
pp
Ped
PA M PA M PA PA
ff
p
f


(HUM)
M PA M PA M PA PA
T
cresc.
(HUM)
(MA)
f
dim.
sliss.
Wh
♩=64/69
N.B.
Ped
N.B. "𝄋" INDICATES END OF PITCHED SOUNDS.
HA HEE
HOY HI HEY HEE
(♩=64/69)
Ped


Chuck, as to a horse:
WH
TIKITIKITIKITIKI
BEEP
CH CH CH CH
HUM
PP
PPP


HUM
WH
VOICE
PA PA PA
WE ARE THE
mp
Ped.
+ una corda
ZANIES OF SORROW. WE ARE CLOWNS WHOSE HEARTS ARE BROKEN. WE ARE SPECIALLY DESIGNED TO APPEAL
(Ped)
TO THE SENSE OF HUMOUR. ON NOVEMBER THIRTEENTH, EIGHTEEN NINETY-FIVE,
pp
(Ped)
I WAS BROUGHT DOWN HERE FROM LONDON. FROM TWO O'CLOCK TILL HALF-PAST TWO
p


ON THAT DAY I HAD TO STAND ON THE CENTRE PLATFORM OF CLAPHAM JUNCTION IN CONVICT DRESS,
pp
T
Ped
AND HANDCUFFED, FOR THE WORLD TO LOOK AT. WHEN PEOPLE SAW ME THEY LAUGHED.
(Ped)
p
3
EACH TRAIN SWELLED THE AUDIENCE. NOTHING COULD EXCEED THEIR AMUSEMENT. THAT WAS BEFORE THEY KNEW
5
3
cresc.
WHO I WAS. AS SOON AS THEY HAD BEEN INFORMED, THEY LAUGHED STILL MORE, HAHA.
f
4
4
mf
T
Ped.


FOR HALF AN HOUR I STOOD THERE IN THE GREY NOVEMBER RAIN SURROUNDED BY A JEERING MOB.
mp
p
5/4 pp
(Ped)
*
FOR A YEAR I WEPT EVERY DAY AT THE SAME HOUR AND FOR THE SAME SPACE OF TIME. IN PRISON
3
4 f
dimin.
TEARS ARE A PART OF EVERY DAY'S EXPERIENCE. A DAY IN PRISON ON WHICH ONE DOES NOT WEEP
4 pp
4
Ped.
IS A DAY ON WHICH ONE'S HEART IS HARD, NOT A DAY ON WHICH ONE'S HEART IS HAPPY.
5/4
T
(Ped)
*

[sing, half-sobbing:]

HM HM HM HM HM HM HM HM

pp tre corde

cresc.

HM HM HM HM HA

p cresc. mf

HO HO HO HO HA HA

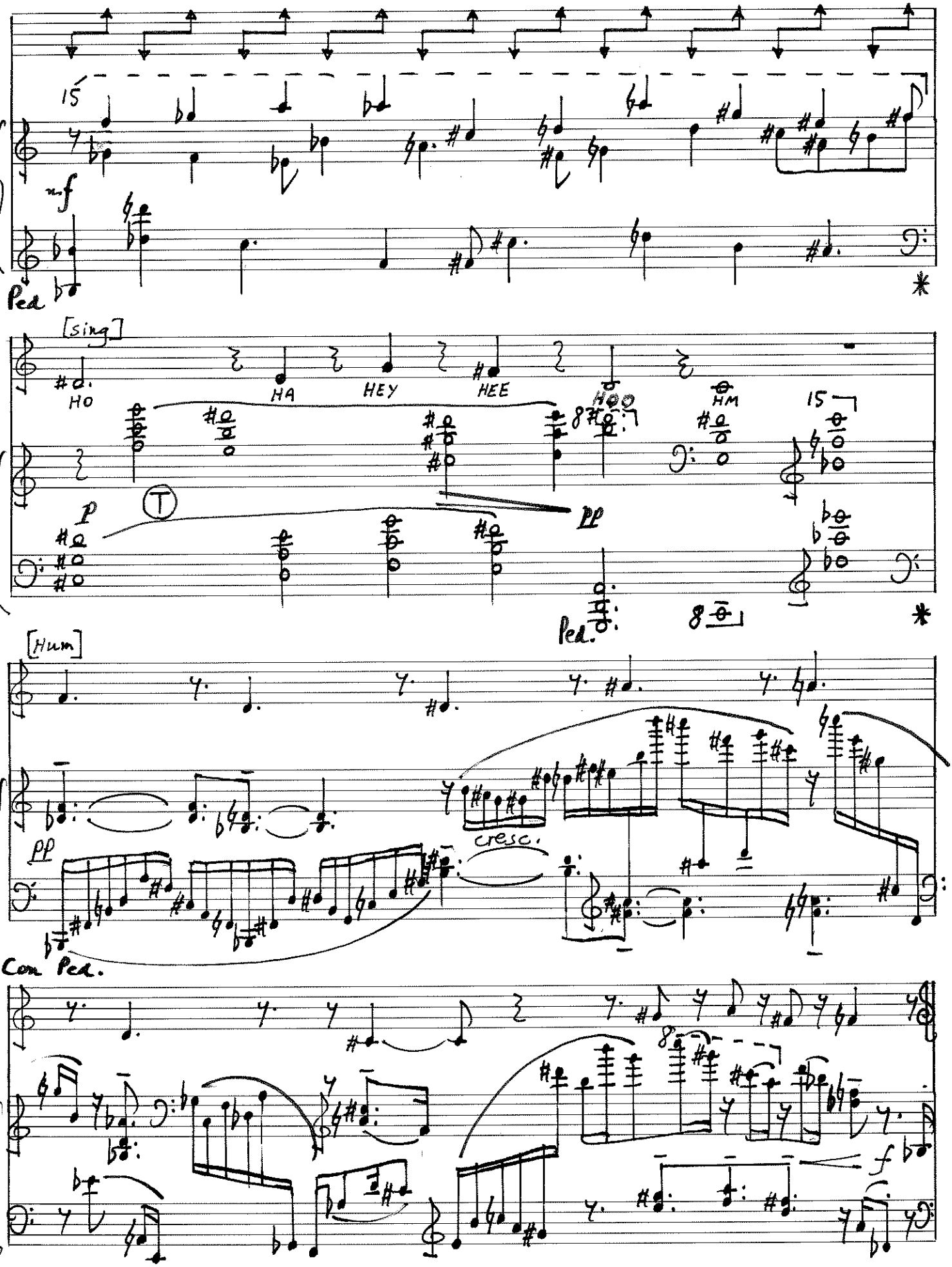
p cresc.

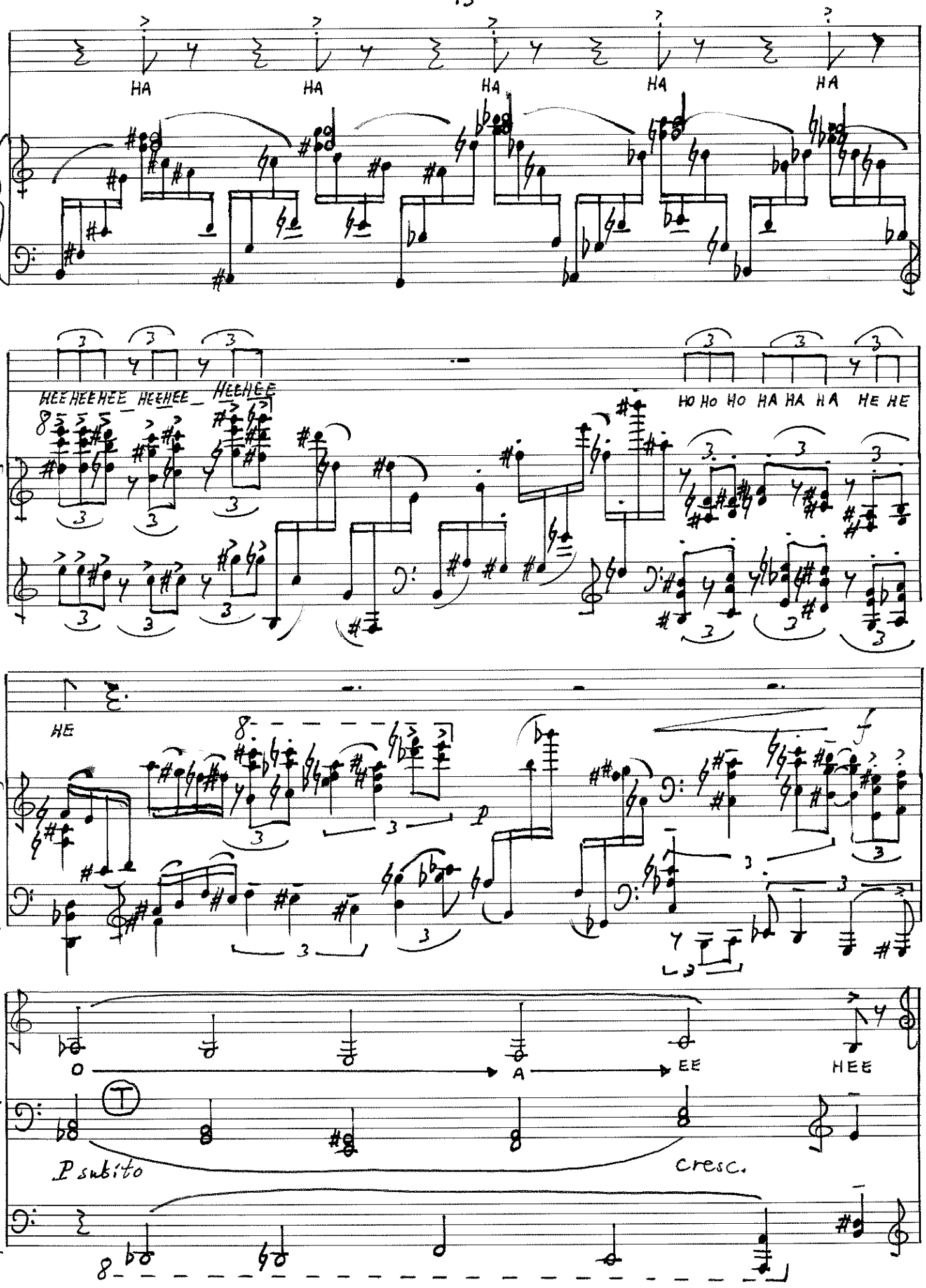
HM HM HM HM HM HM

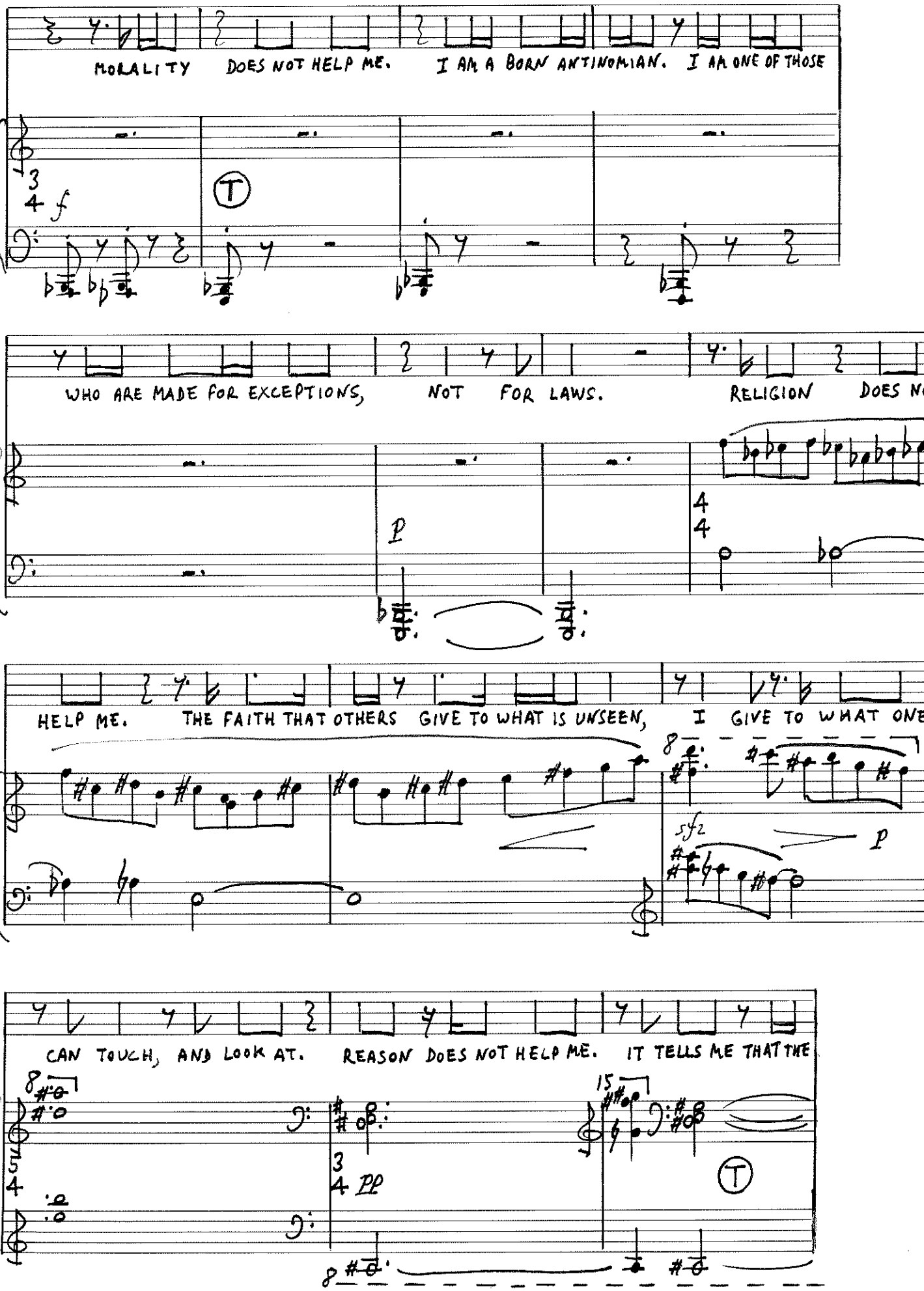
legato

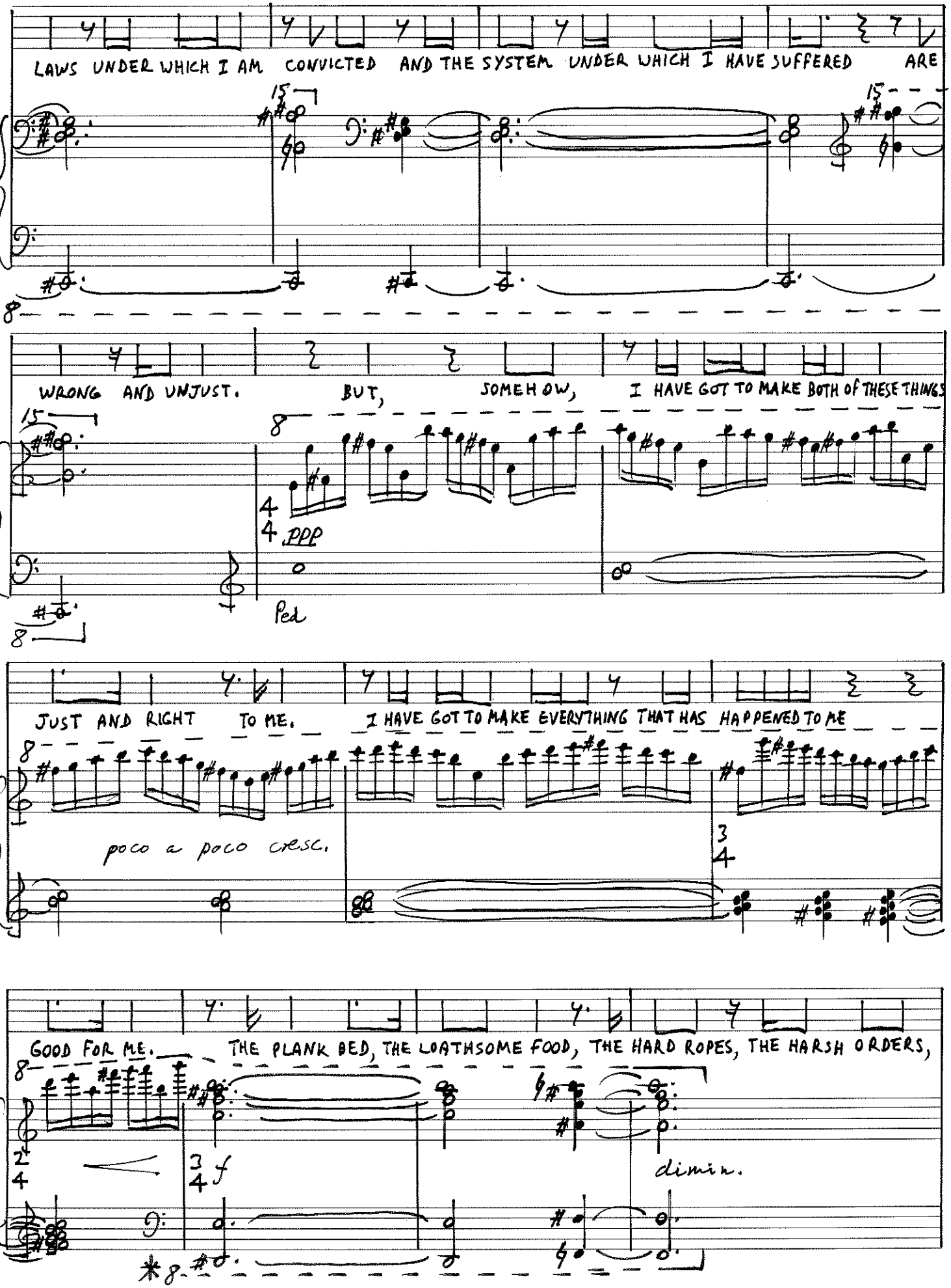
f

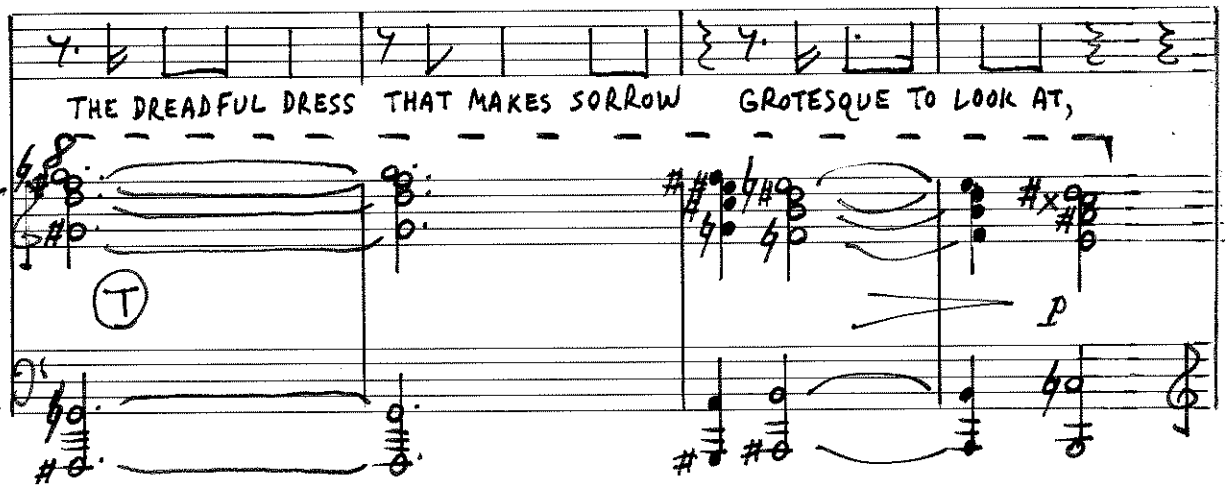
con Ped.

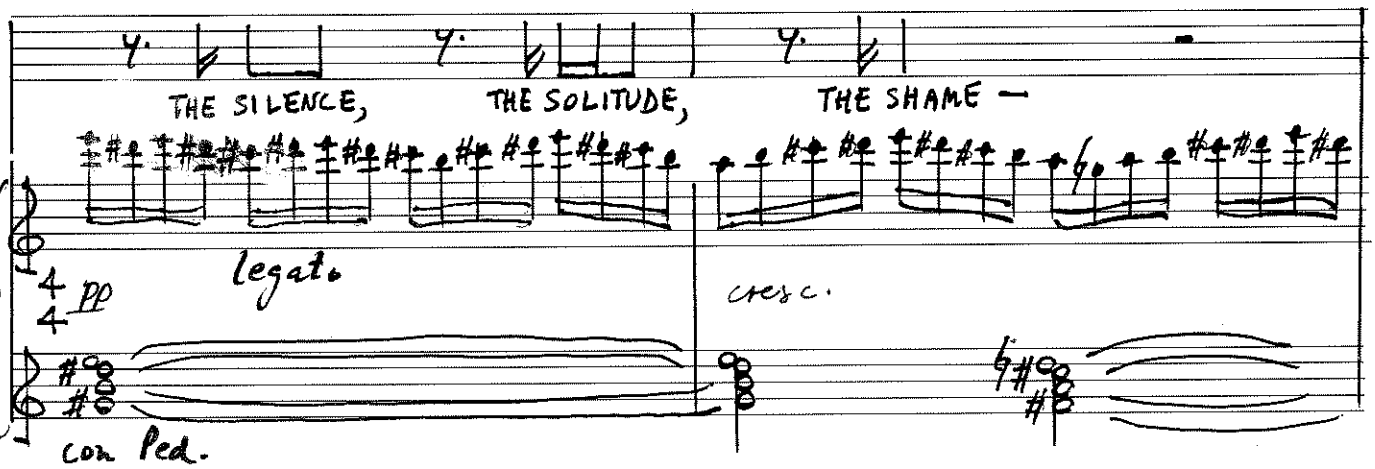

15
mf
Ped
[sing]
HO
HA
HEY
HEE
HM
15
P
T
PP
Ped.
8
[Hum]
PP
cresc.
Con Ped.
8
f

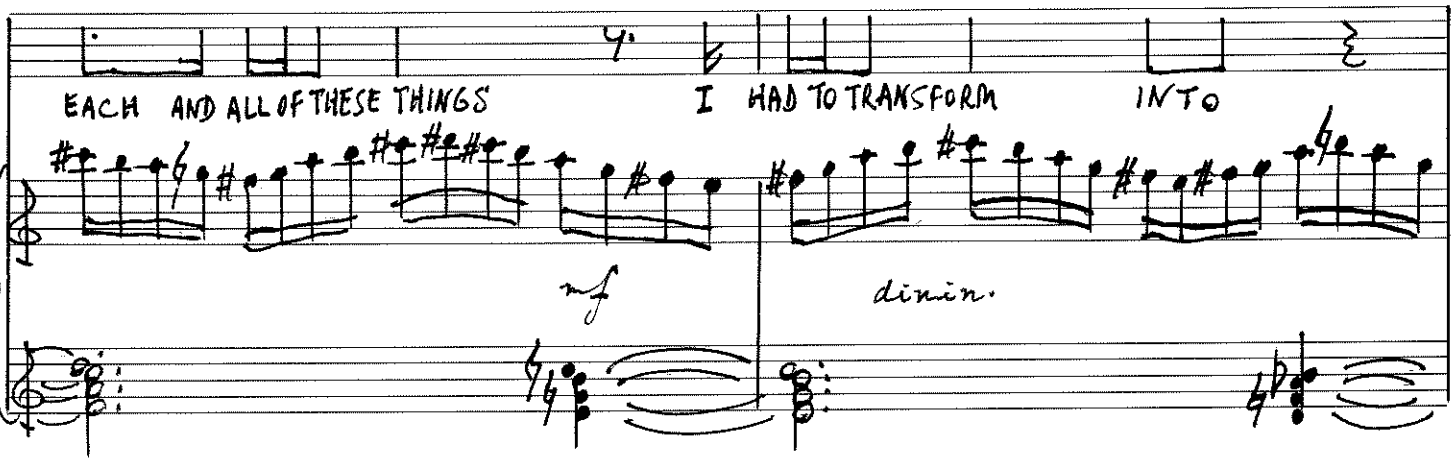

HA HA HA HA HA
HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE
HO HO HO HA HA HA HE HE
HE
p
f
O
A
EE
HEE
T
P subito
cresc.

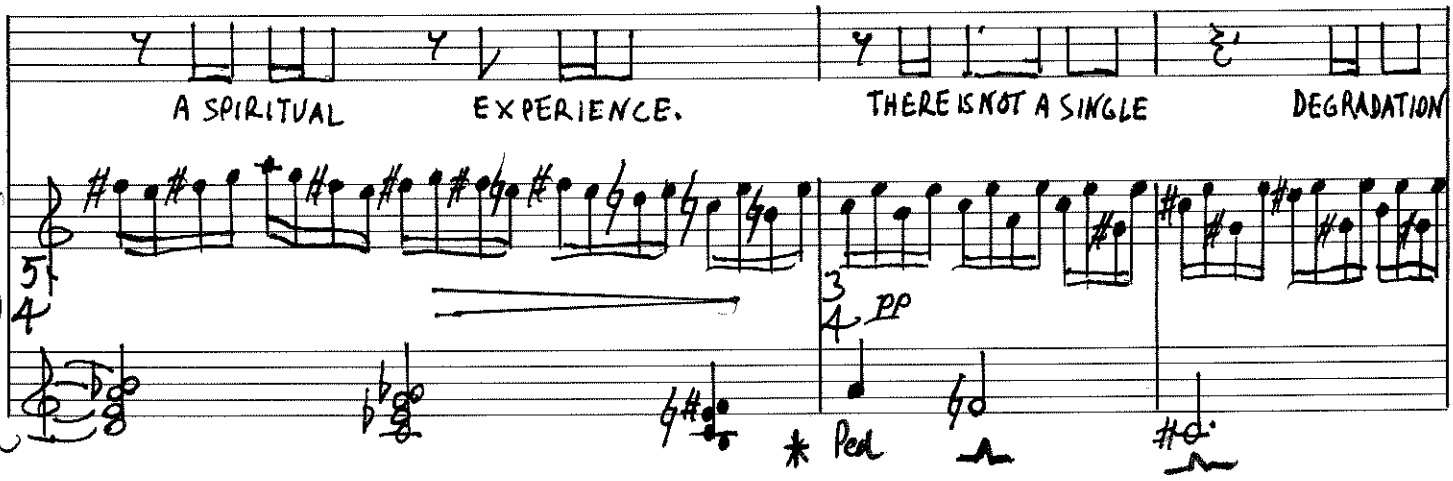

MORALITY DOES NOT HELP ME. I AM A BORN ANTINOMIAN. I AM ONE OF THOSE
WHO ARE MADE FOR EXCEPTIONS, NOT FOR LAWS. RELIGION DOES NOT
HELP ME. THE FAITH THAT OTHERS GIVE TO WHAT IS UNSEEN, I GIVE TO WHAT ONE
CAN TOUCH, AND LOOK AT. REASON DOES NOT HELP ME. IT TELLS ME THAT THE


LAWS UNDER WHICH I AM CONVICTED AND THE SYSTEM UNDER WHICH I HAVE SUFFERED ARE
WRONG AND UNJUST. BUT, SOMEHOW, I HAVE GOT TO MAKE BOTH OF THESE THINGS
ppp
Ped
JUST AND RIGHT TO ME. I HAVE GOT TO MAKE EVERYTHING THAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME
poco a poco cresc.
GOOD FOR ME. THE PLANK BED, THE LOATHSOME FOOD, THE HARD ROPES, THE HARSH ORDERS,
f
dimin.


THE DREADFUL DRESS THAT MAKES SORROW GROTESQUE TO LOOK AT,
T
p


THE SILENCE, THE SOLITUDE, THE SHAME —
pp
legato
cresc.
con Ped.


EACH AND ALL OF THESE THINGS I HAD TO TRANSFORM INTO
mf
dimin.


A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE. THERE IS NOT A SINGLE DEGRADATION
pp
* Ped

rit. - - - -

OF THE BODY WHICH I MUST NOT TRY AND MAKE INTO A SPIRITUALISING

cresc. mp dimin.

(rit.) - - - - - - -

OF THE SOUL.

[VOICE: IN THIS SECTION THE PIANIST MAY UTTER AN OCCASIONAL GRUNT, PUFF, OR WHEEZE TO GIVE EMPHASIS TO A PARTICULAR NOTE, AS CLASSICAL PERFORMERS FREQUENTLY DO, APPARENTLY WITHOUT BEING AWARE OF IT.]

♩=112, 120 marcato but with constant changes of tempo

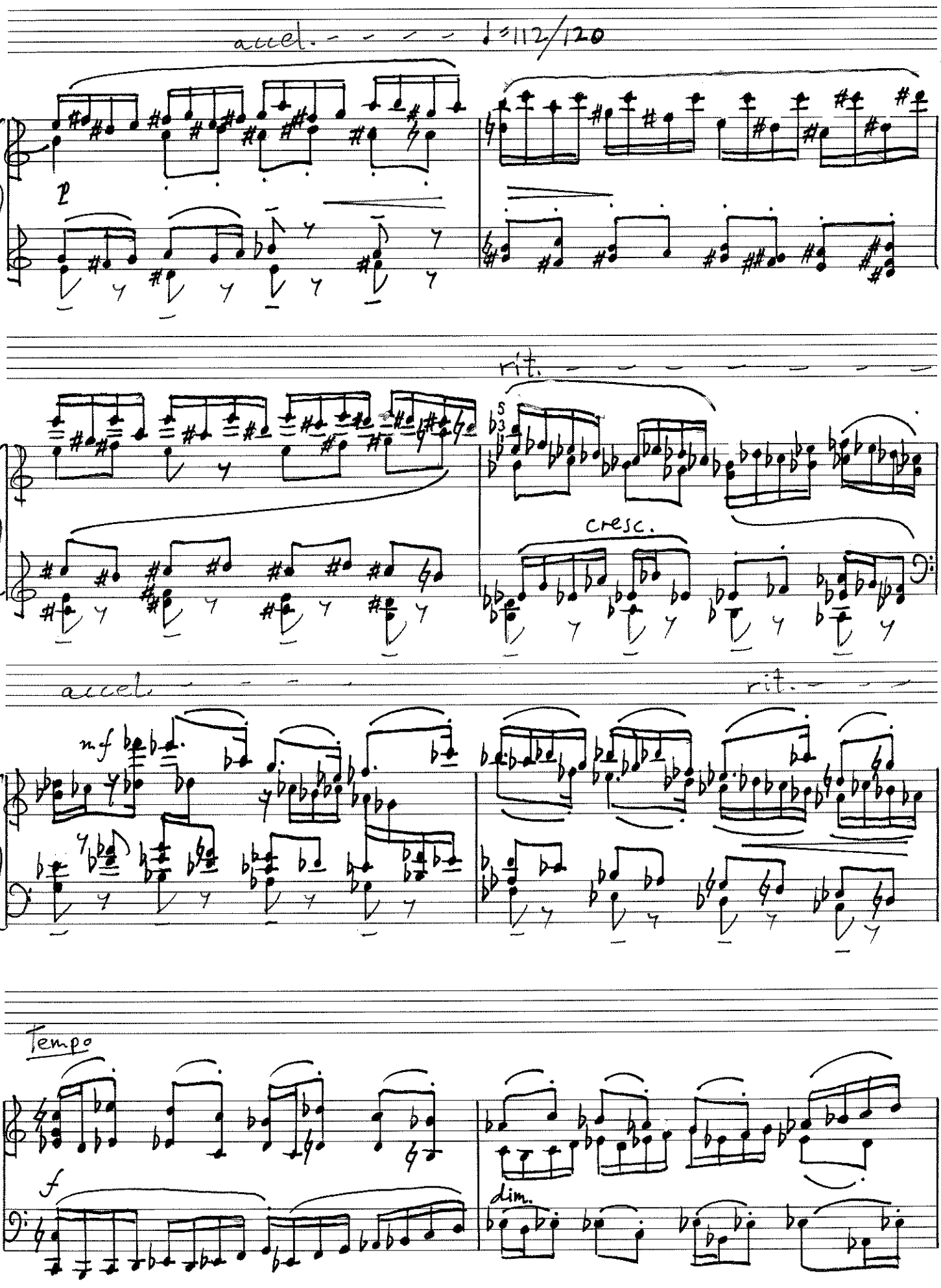
pp T 4 4 mf

* (little or no pedal)

p

rit. - - - -

mf T


accel. ♩=112/120
p
rit.
S
cresc.
accel.
rit.
mf
Tempo
f
dim.

rit.

mp

cresc.

meno mosso

accel.

f

dim.

Tempo

① rit.

mf

f

tempo

p sub.

5 4 5 4 3 5

rit.

cresc.

meno mosso, pesante

f

mp

rit. rit.

tempo

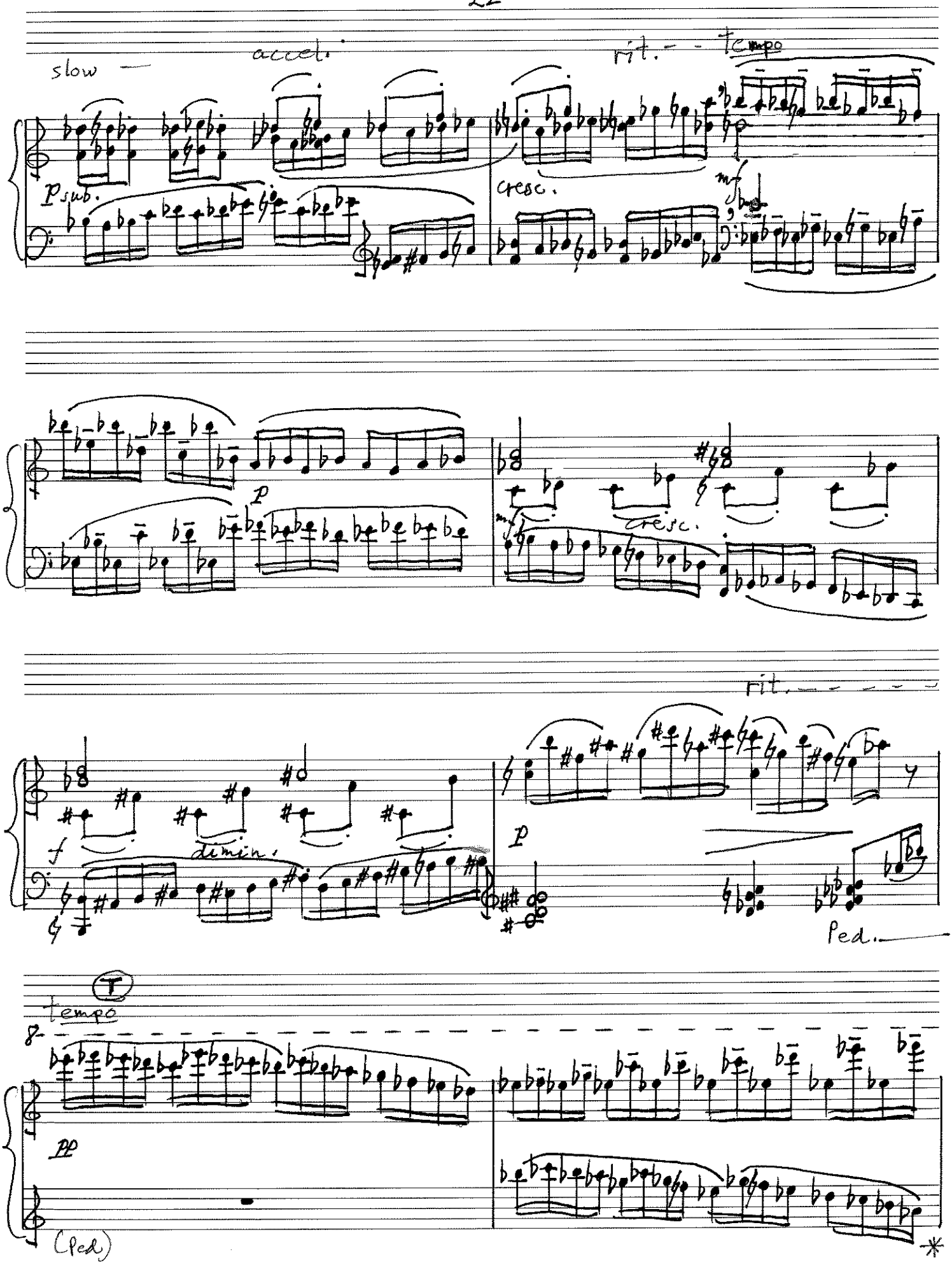
mf

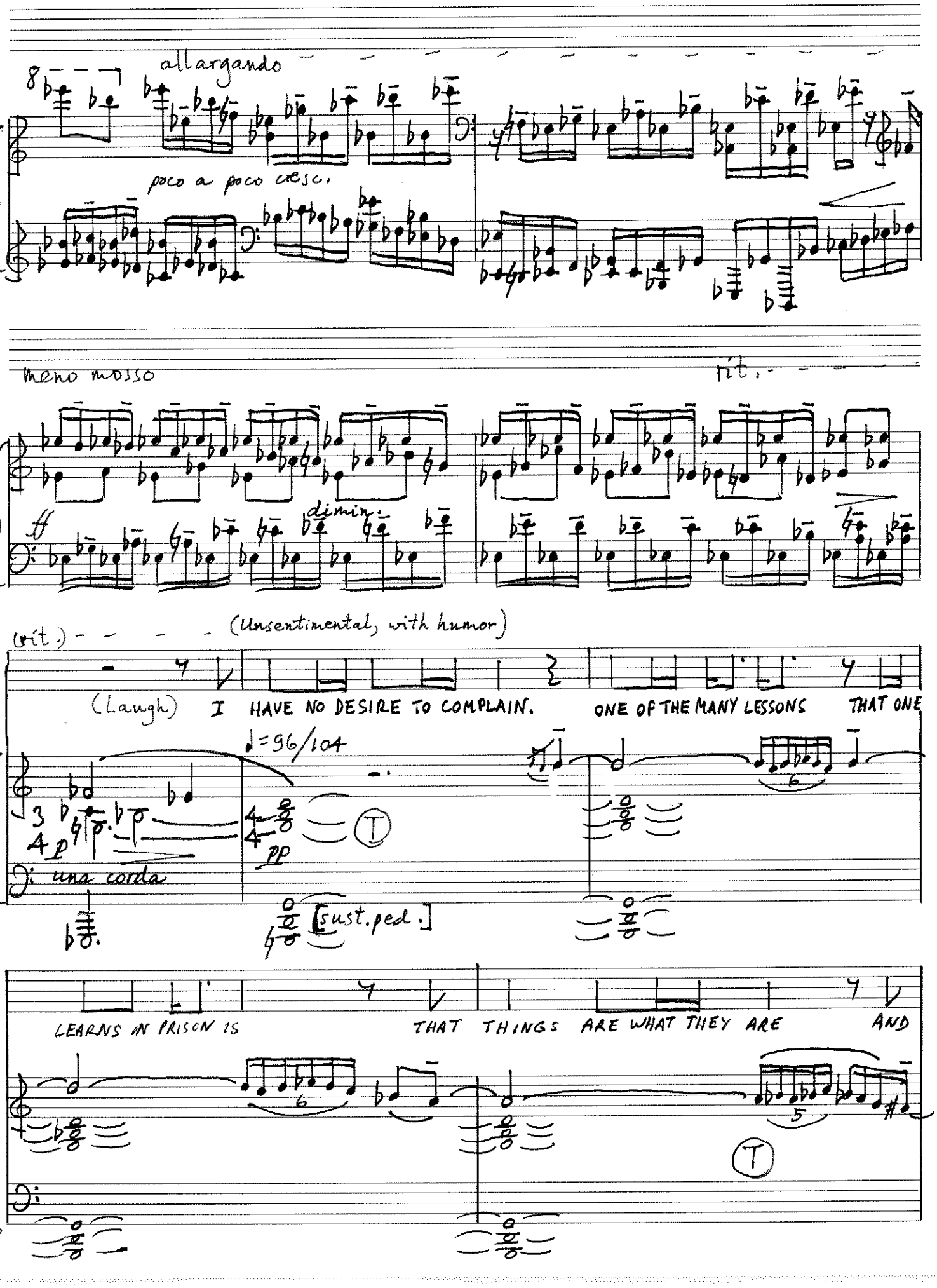
p cresc.

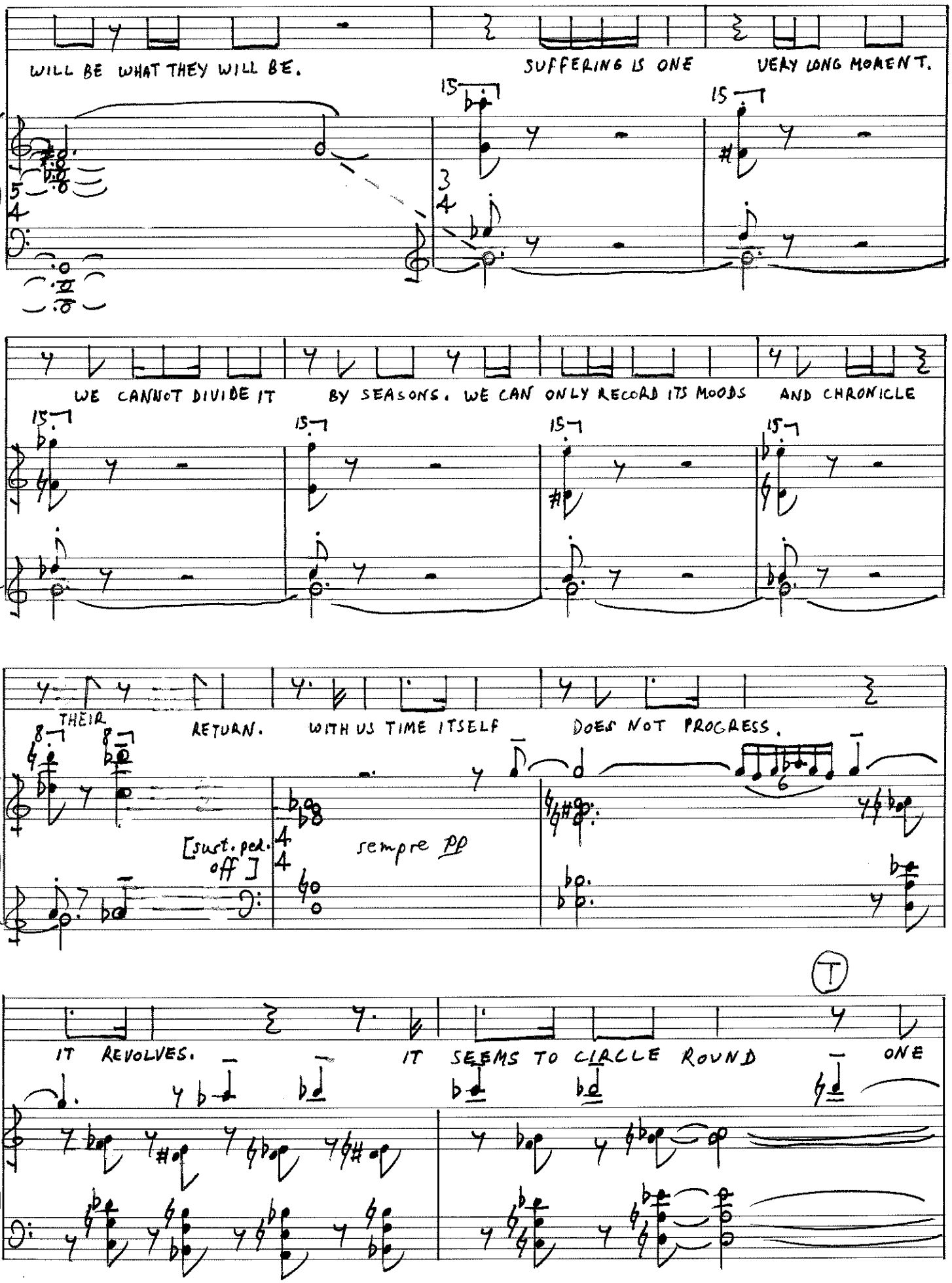
slow accel. tempo

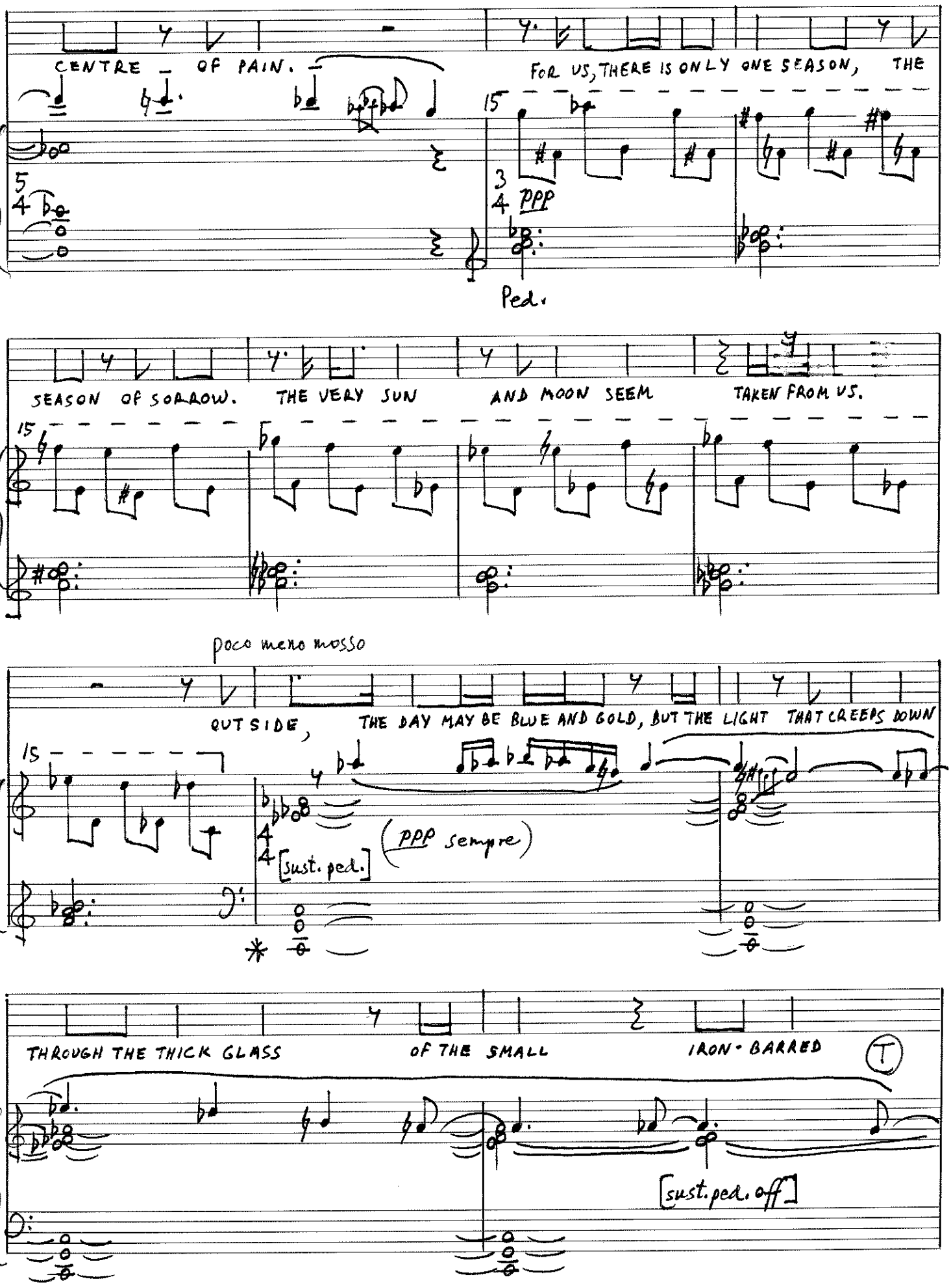
f p cresc.

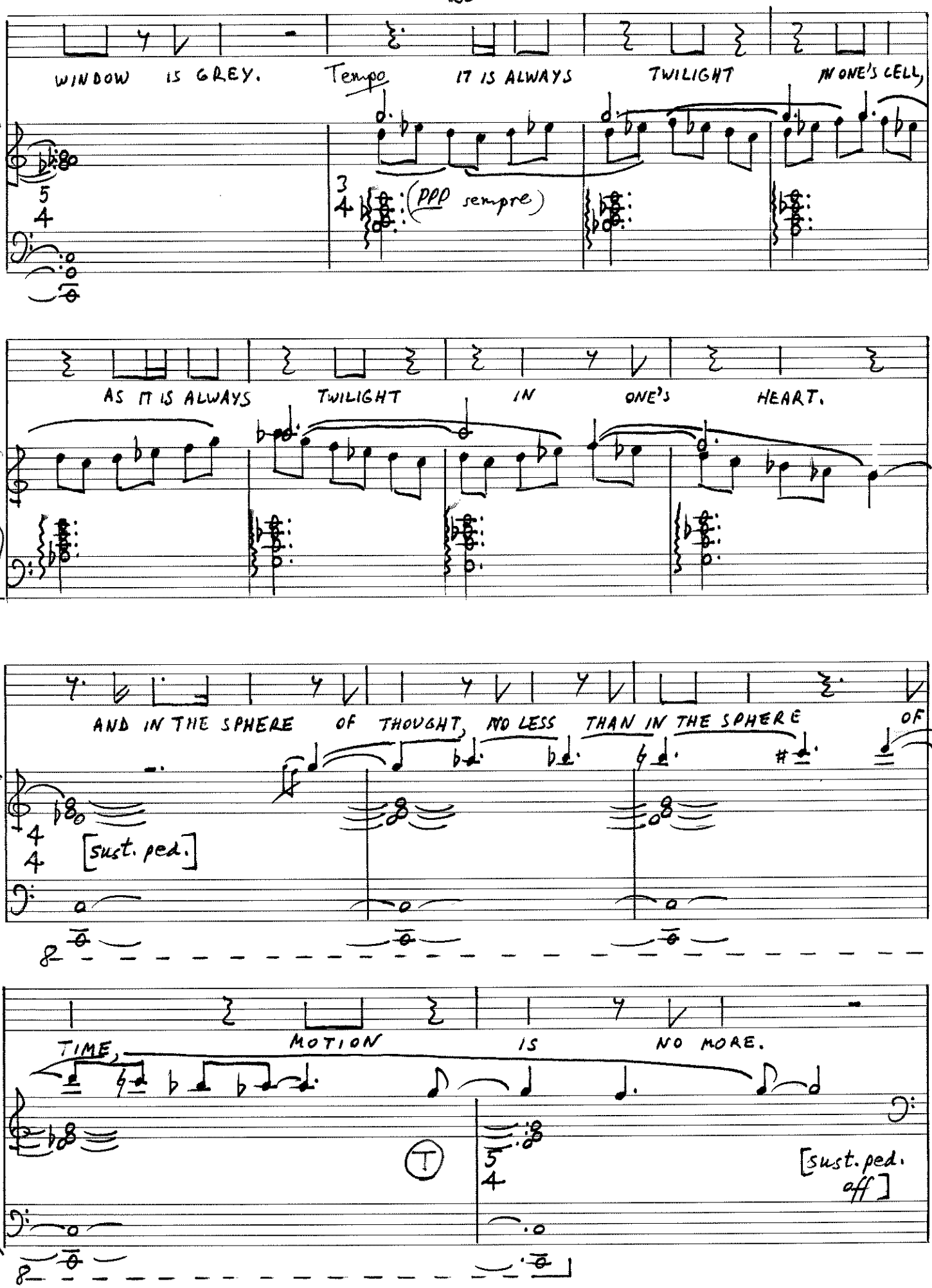
f


slow
accel.
rit.
tempo
p sub.
cresc.
mf
p
cresc.
rit.
f
dimin.
p
Ped.
T
tempo
pp
(Ped)

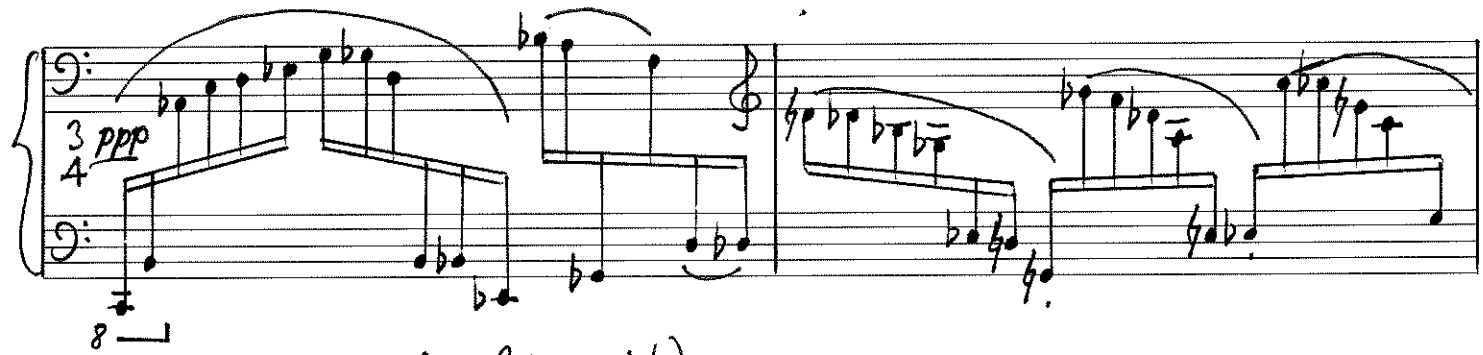

allargando
poco a poco cresc.
meno mosso
rit.
ff
dimin.
(rit.)
(Unsentimental, with humor)
(Laugh) I HAVE NO DESIRE TO COMPLAIN. ONE OF THE MANY LESSONS THAT ONE
♩=96/104
4 p
una corda
pp
[sust. ped.]
LEARNS IN PRISON IS THAT THINGS ARE WHAT THEY ARE AND


WILL BE WHAT THEY WILL BE.
SUFFERING IS ONE VERY LONG MOMENT.
WE CANNOT DIVIDE IT BY SEASONS. WE CAN ONLY RECORD ITS MOODS AND CHRONICLE
THEIR RETURN. WITH US TIME ITSELF DOES NOT PROGRESS.
[surt. ped. off]
sempre pp
IT REVOLVES. IT SEEMS TO CIRCLE ROUND ONE

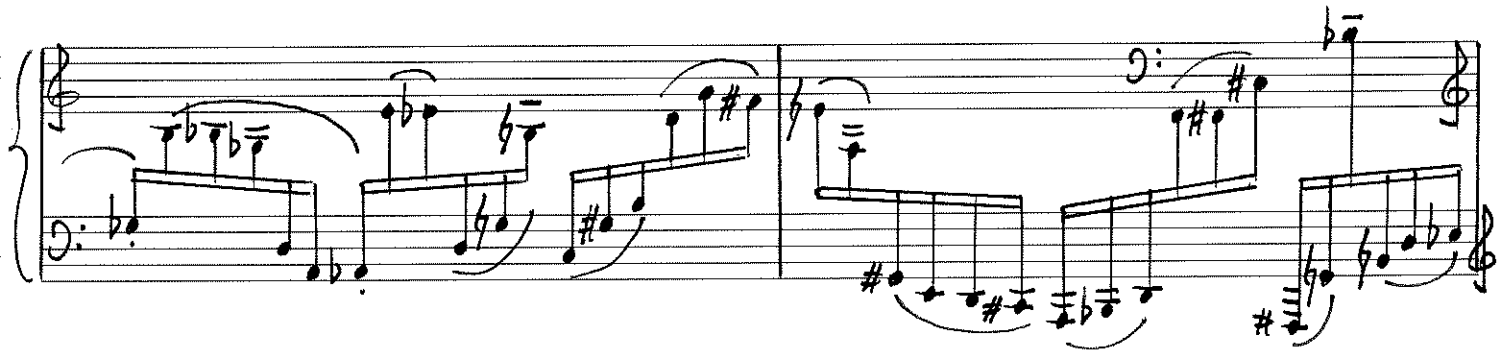

CENTRE - OF PAIN. -
FOR US, THERE IS ONLY ONE SEASON, THE
15
3/4 ppp
Ped.
SEASON OF SORROW. THE VERY SUN AND MOON SEEM TAKEN FROM US.
15
poco meno mosso
OUTSIDE, THE DAY MAY BE BLUE AND GOLD, BUT THE LIGHT THAT CREEPS DOWN
15
4/4 [sust. ped.]
(ppp sempre)
*
THROUGH THE THICK GLASS OF THE SMALL IRON-BARRED
T
[sust. ped. off]


WINDOW IS GREY.
Tempo
IT IS ALWAYS TWILIGHT IN ONE'S CELL,
(ppp sempre)
AS IT IS ALWAYS TWILIGHT IN ONE'S HEART.
AND IN THE SPHERE OF THOUGHT, NO LESS THAN IN THE SPHERE OF
[sust. ped.]
TIME, MOTION IS NO MORE.
T
[sust. ped. off]

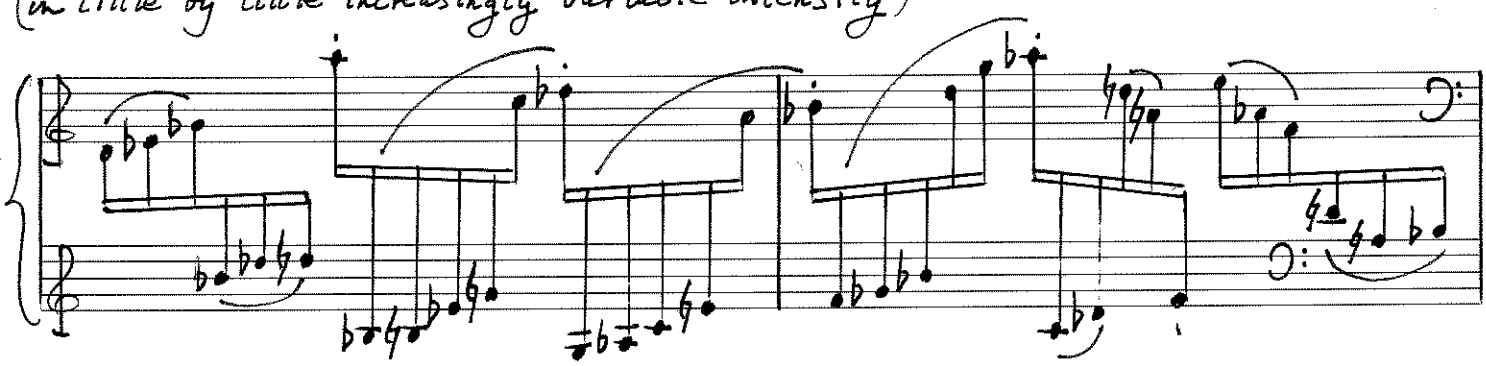
VOICE: IN THIS SECTION THE PIANIST MAY ACCOMPANY HIM/HERSELF AD LIB., SINGING ALONG WITH THE MUSIC EVERY SO OFTEN, AS IF ONE WERE PRACTICING AT HOME ALONE; USE THE SYLLABLES "DIDLDIDLDIDL..."]

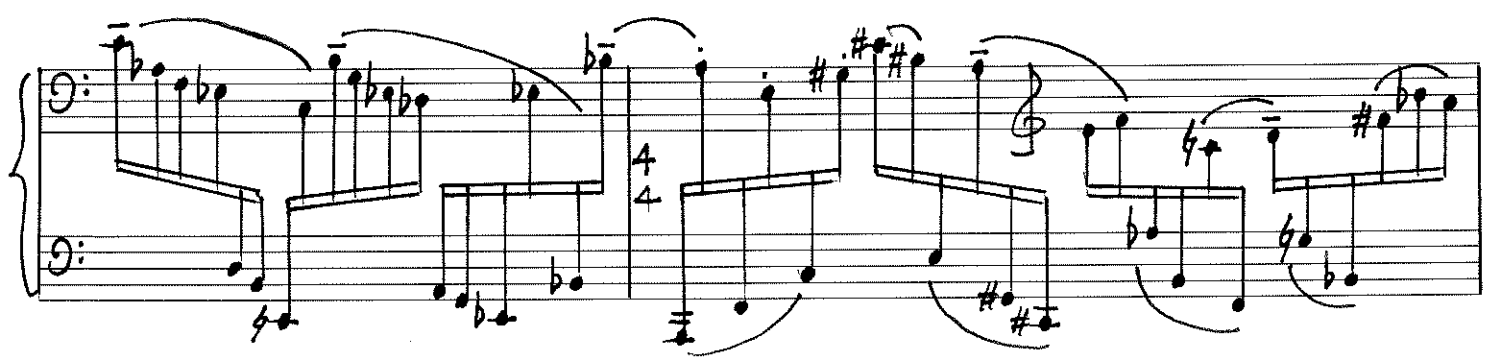


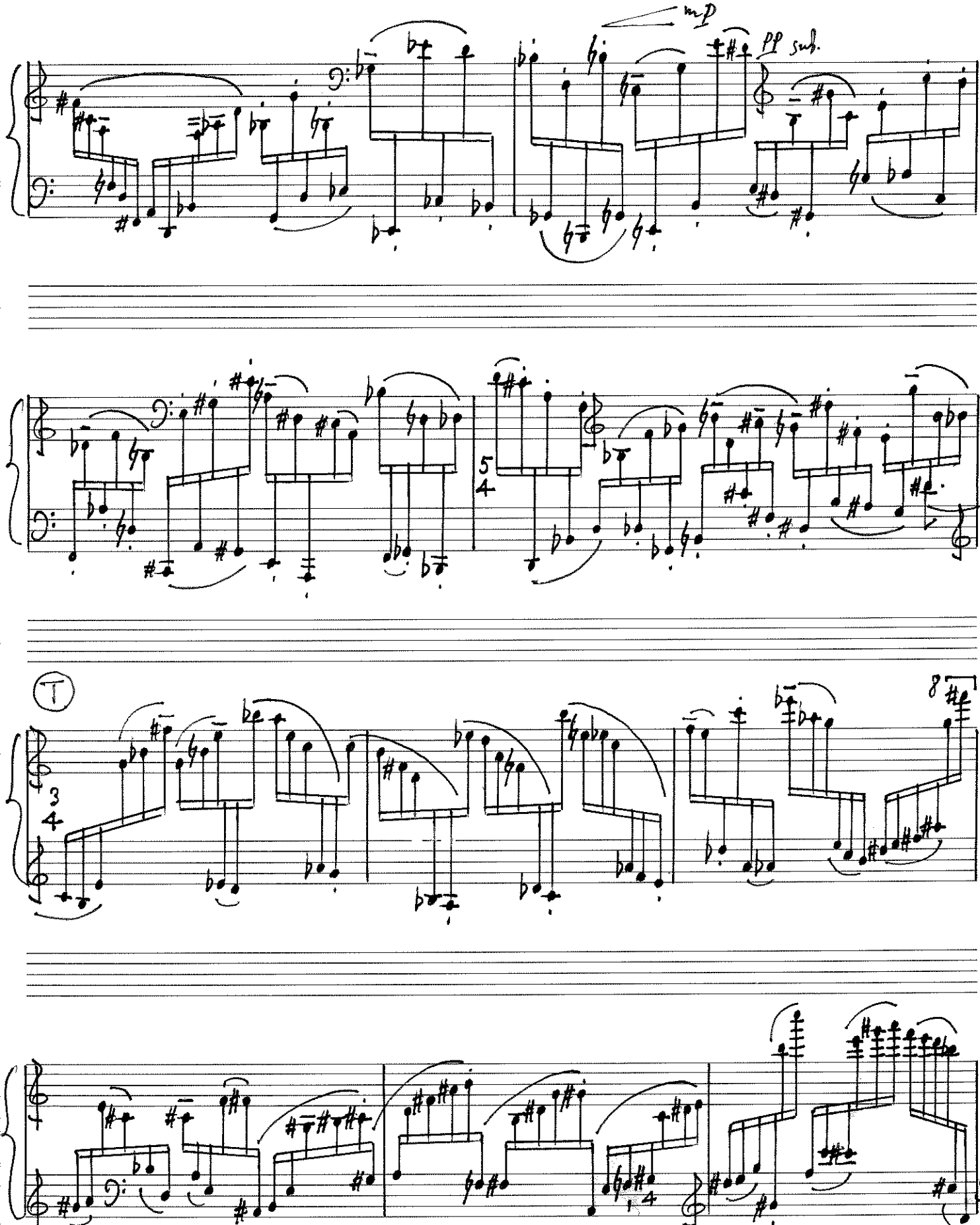
(sempre una corda, Ped. ad lib)

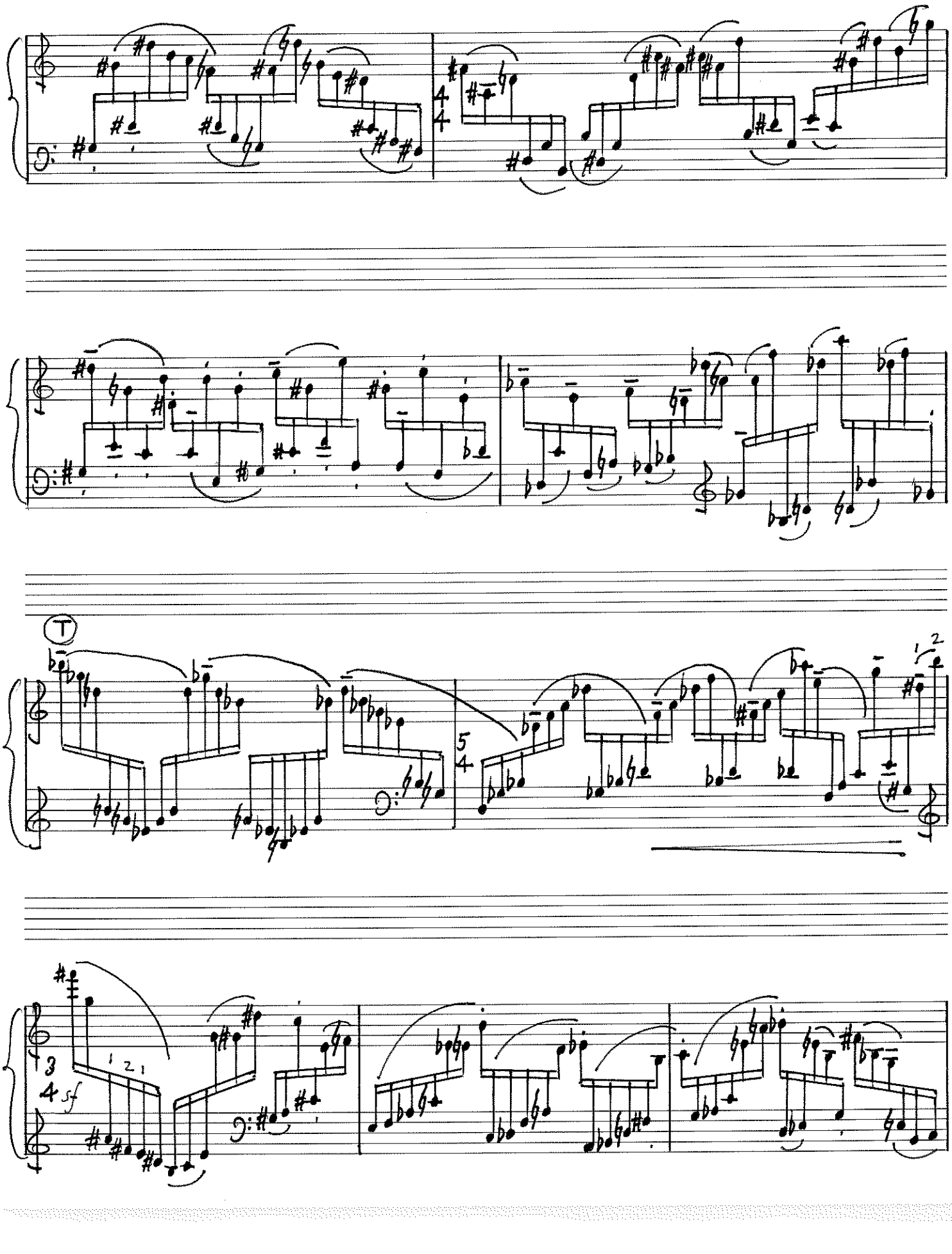


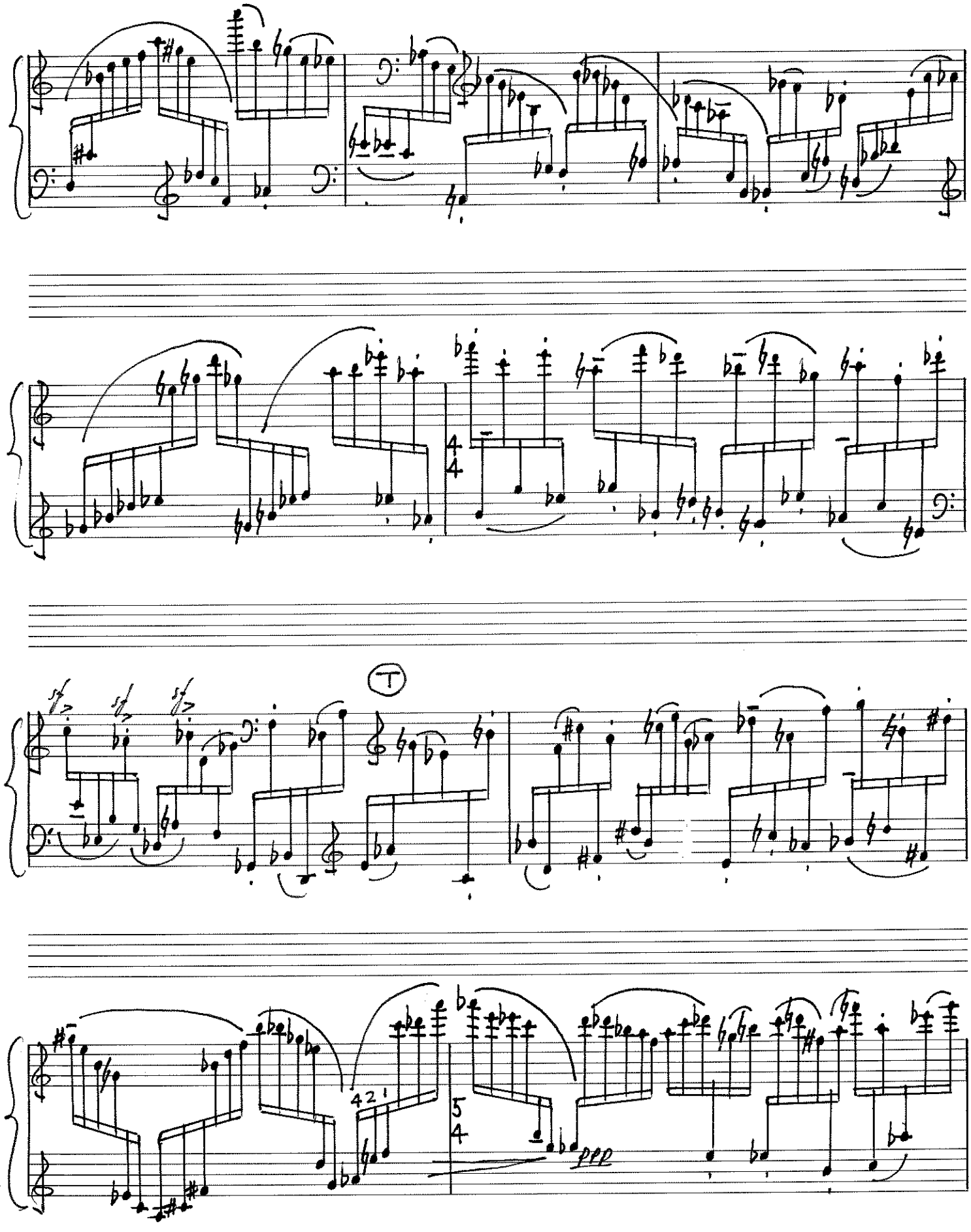
(in little by little increasingly variable intensity)

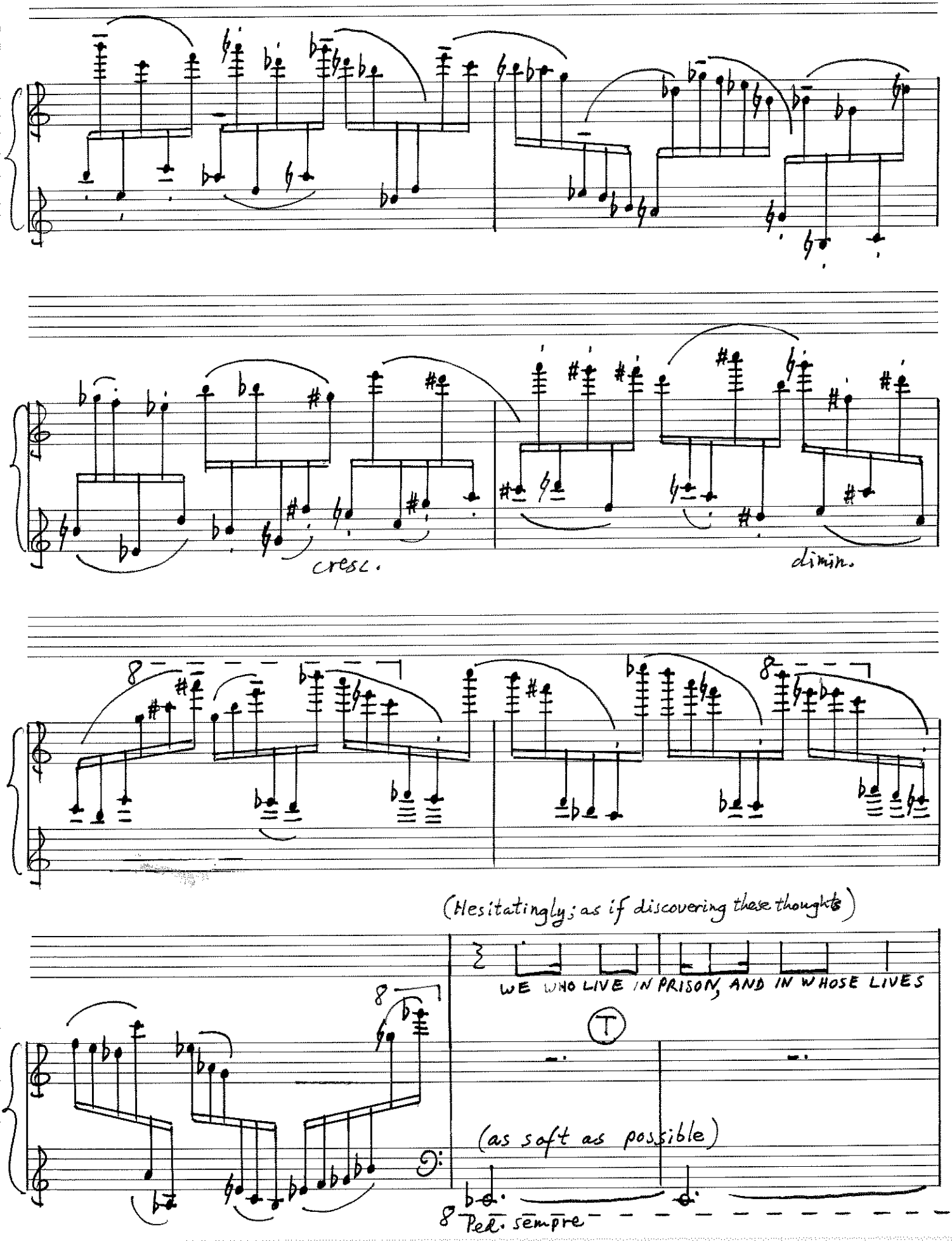


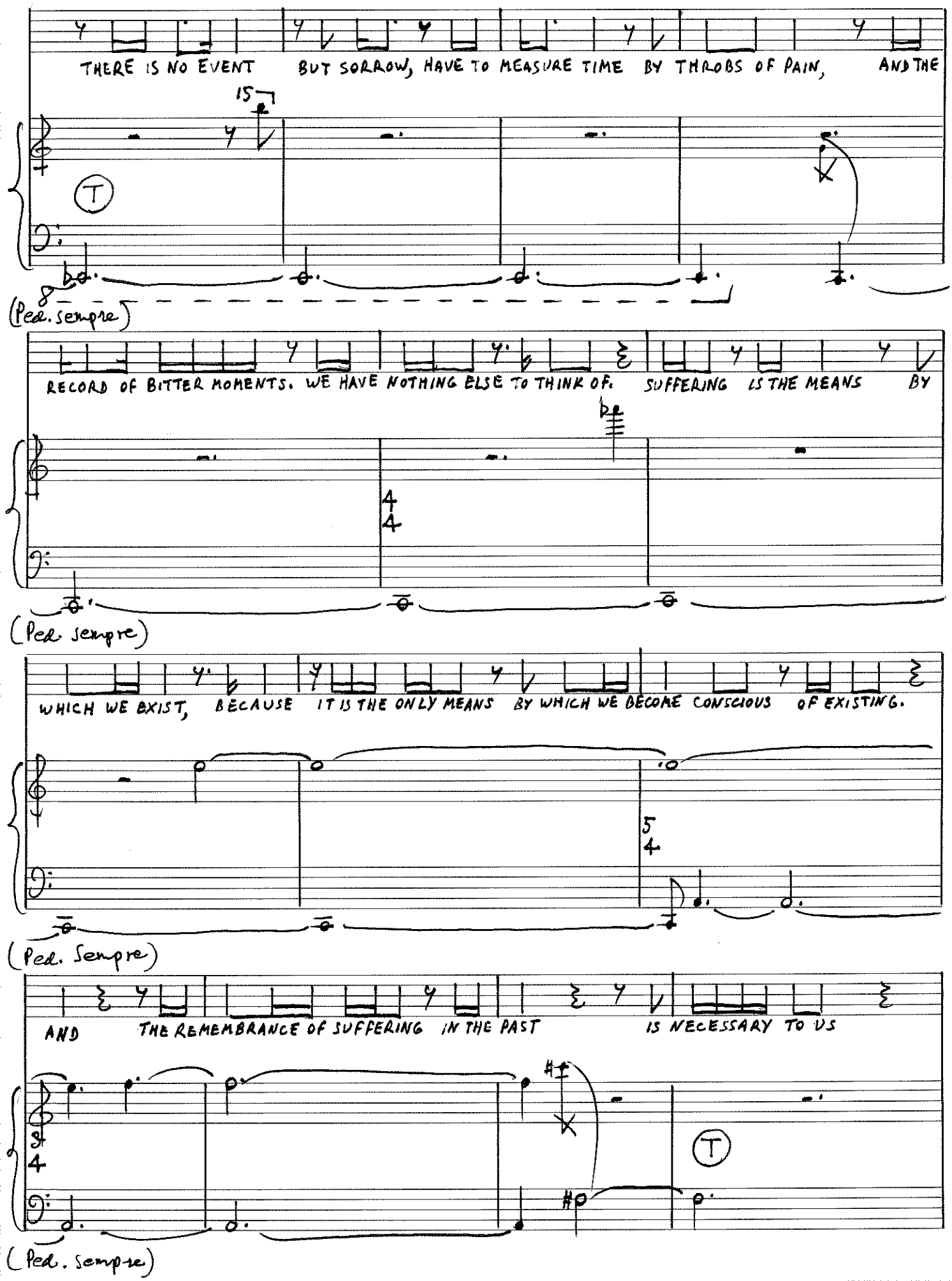


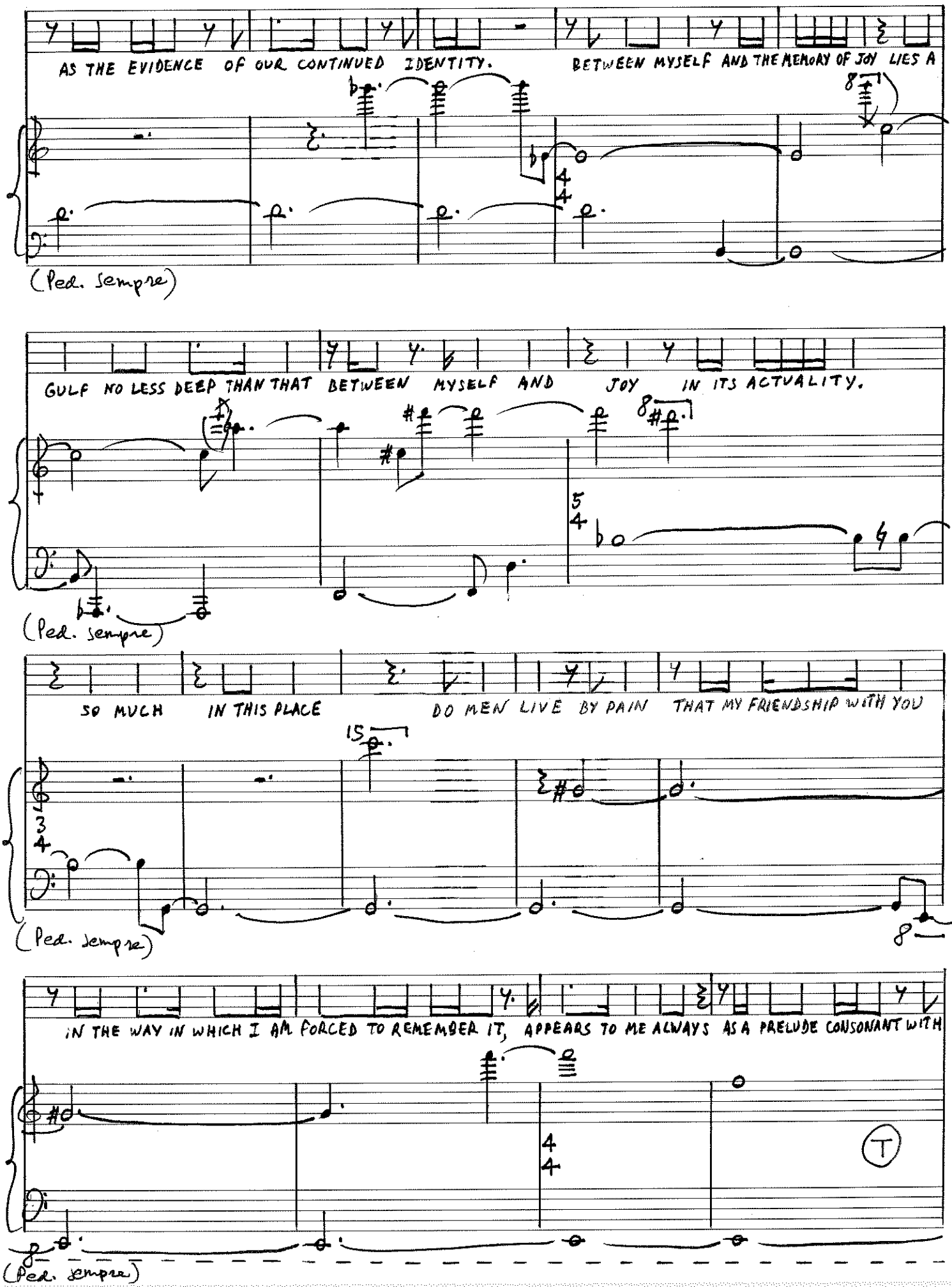

mp
pp subito
5
4
T
3
4
8

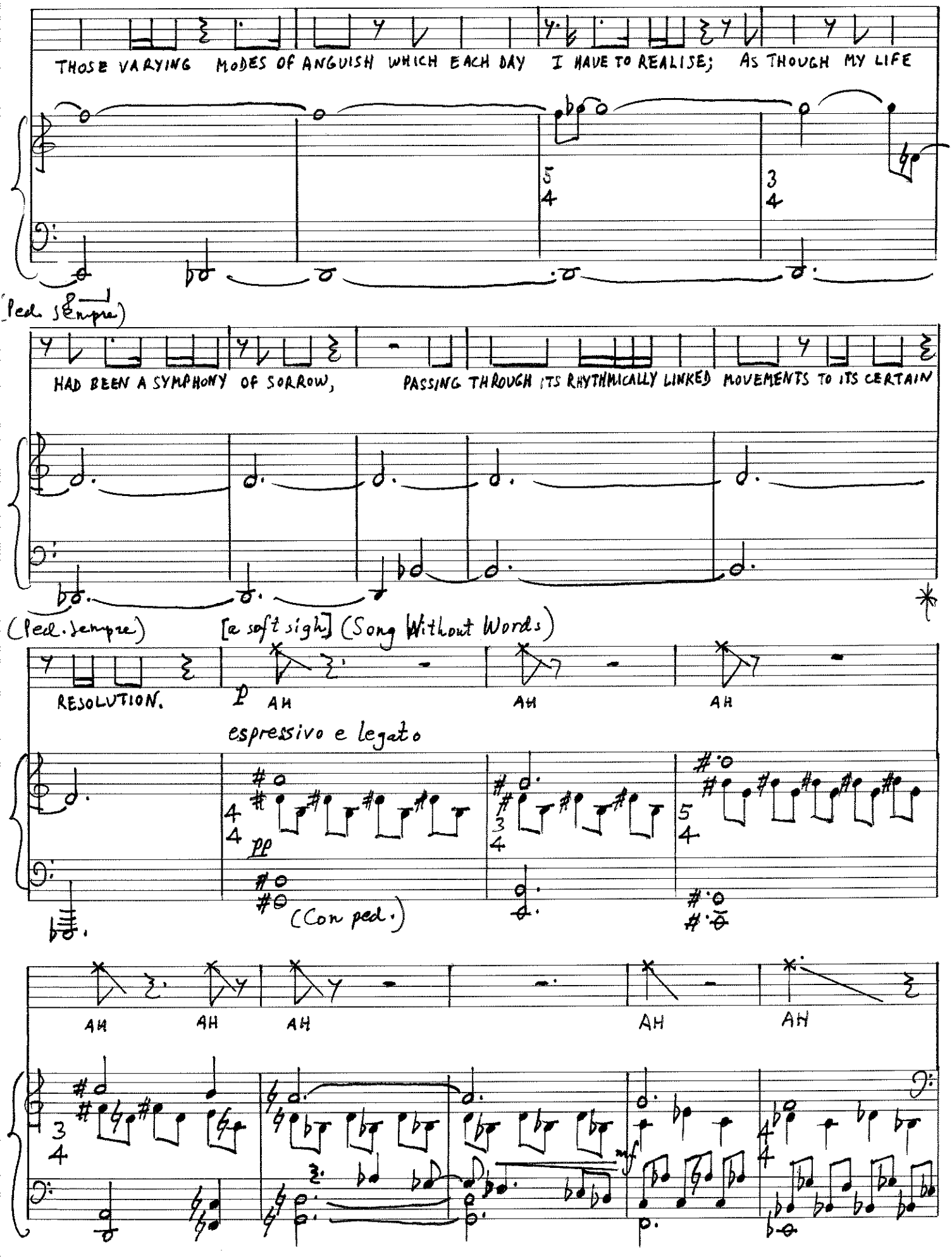

4/4
T
5/4
1 2
3/4
sf
1 2 1

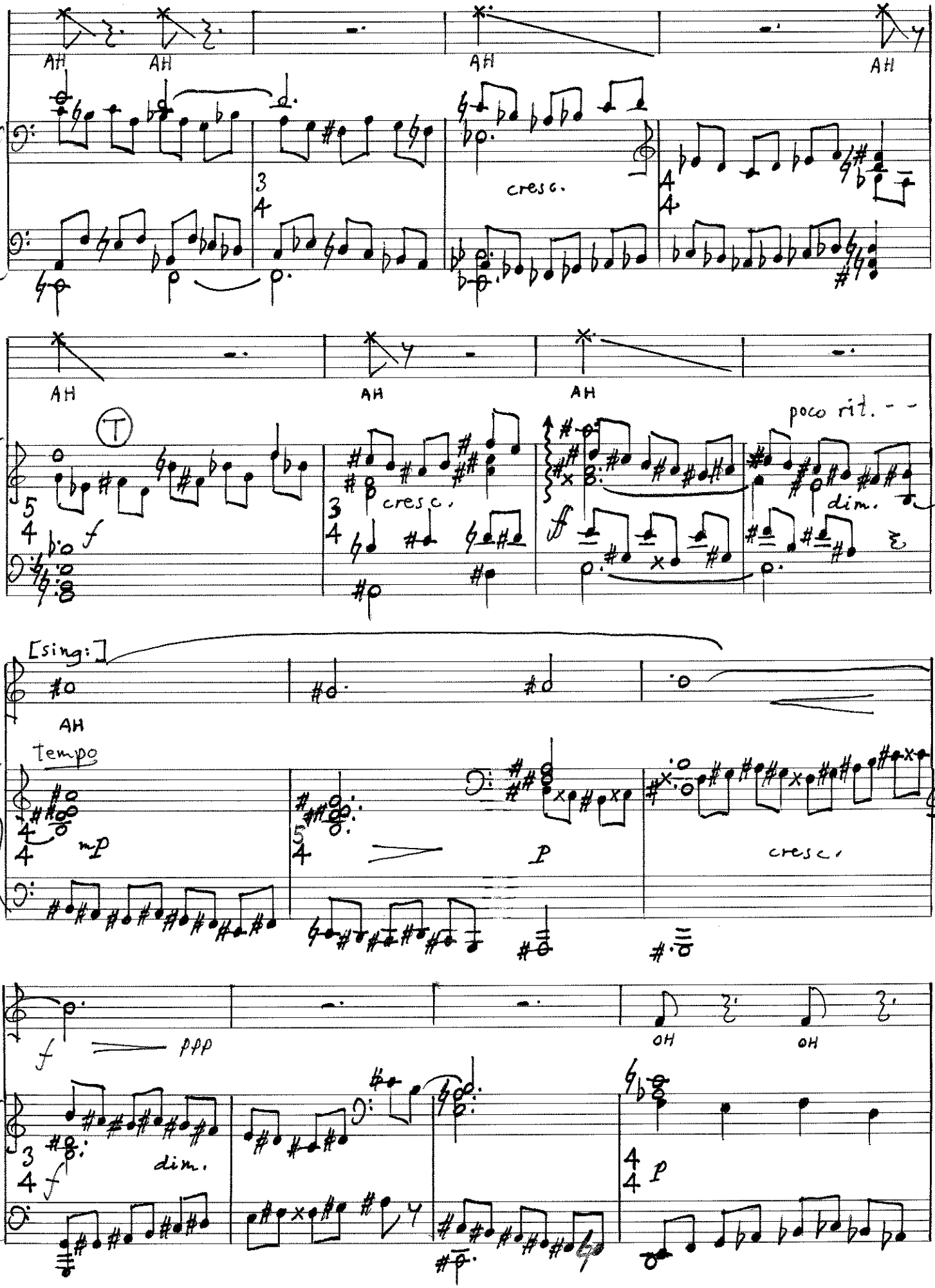

4
4
T
42
1
5
4
pp

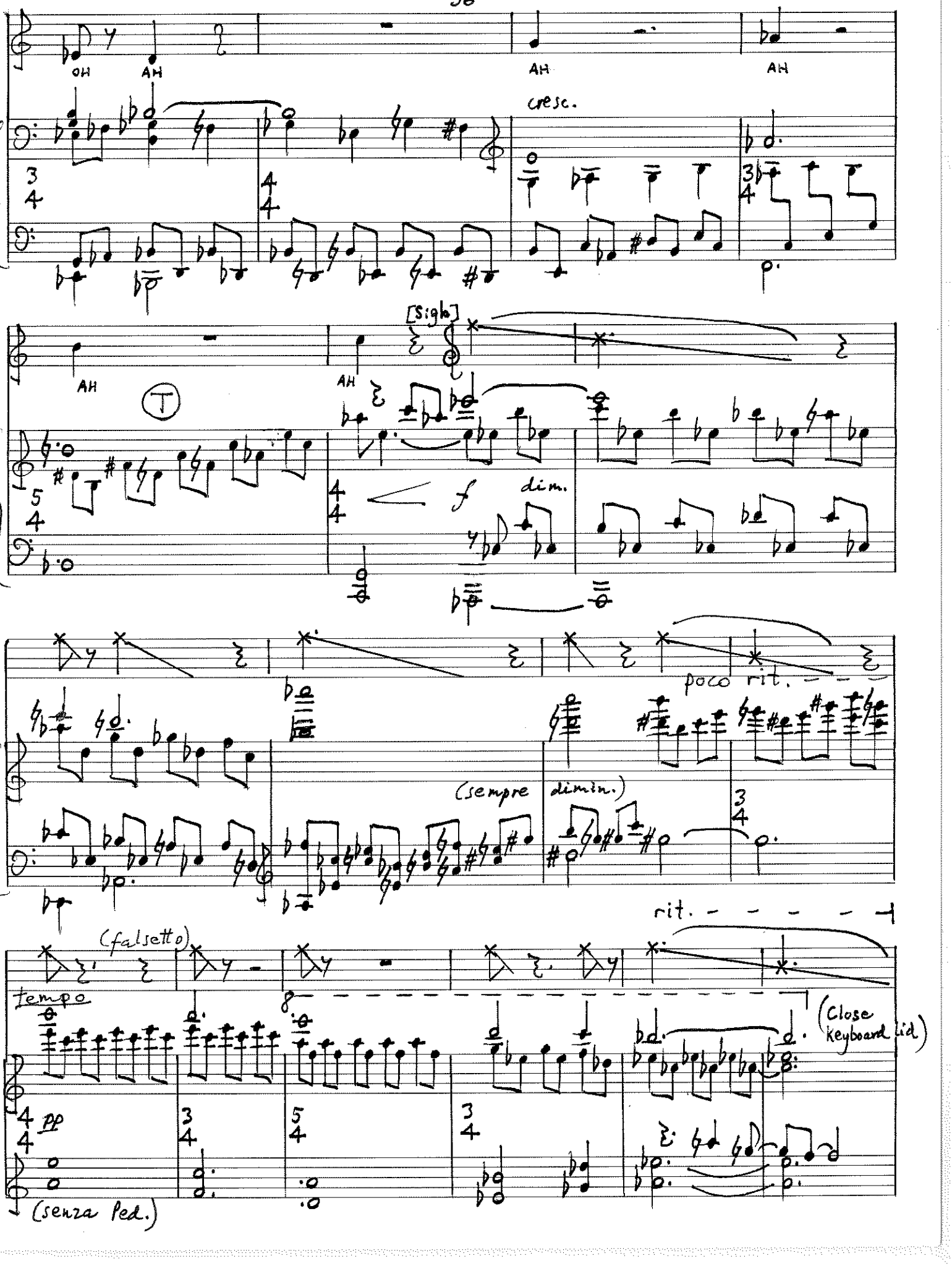

cresc.
dimin.
(Hesitatingly; as if discovering these thoughts)
WE WHO LIVE IN PRISON, AND IN WHOSE LIVES
T
(as soft as possible)
8 Ped. sempre

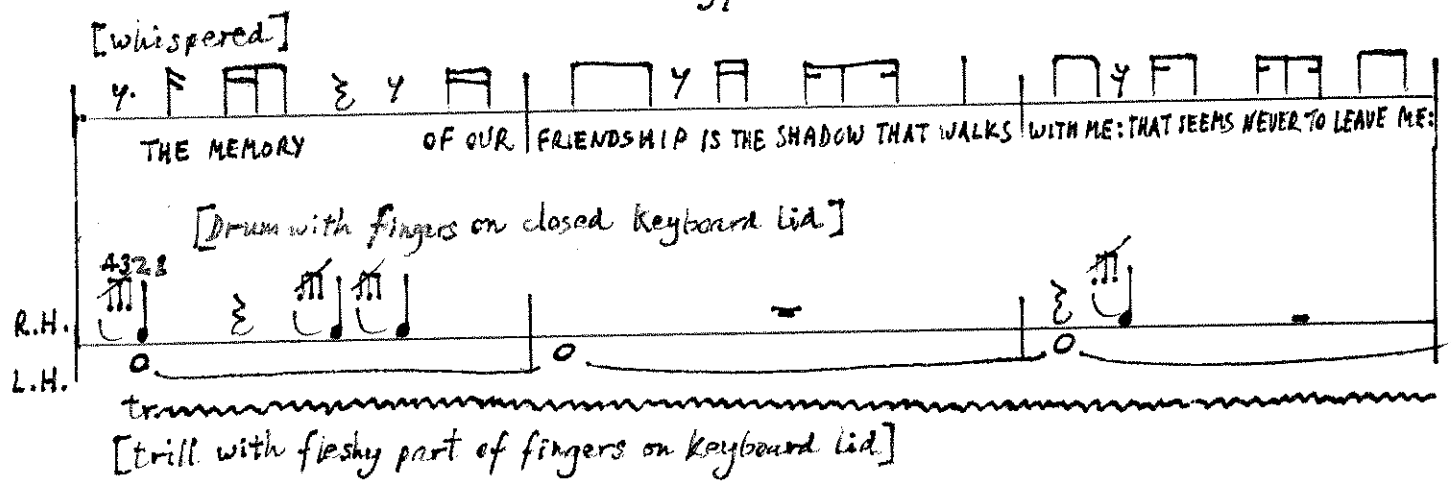

THERE IS NO EVENT BUT SORROW, HAVE TO MEASURE TIME BY THROBS OF PAIN, AND THE
15
T
(Ped. sempre)
RECORD OF BITTER MOMENTS. WE HAVE NOTHING ELSE TO THINK OF. SUFFERING IS THE MEANS BY
(Ped. sempre)
WHICH WE EXIST, BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY MEANS BY WHICH WE BECOME CONSCIOUS OF EXISTING.
(Ped. sempre)
AND THE REMEMBRANCE OF SUFFERING IN THE PAST IS NECESSARY TO US
T
(Ped. sempre)

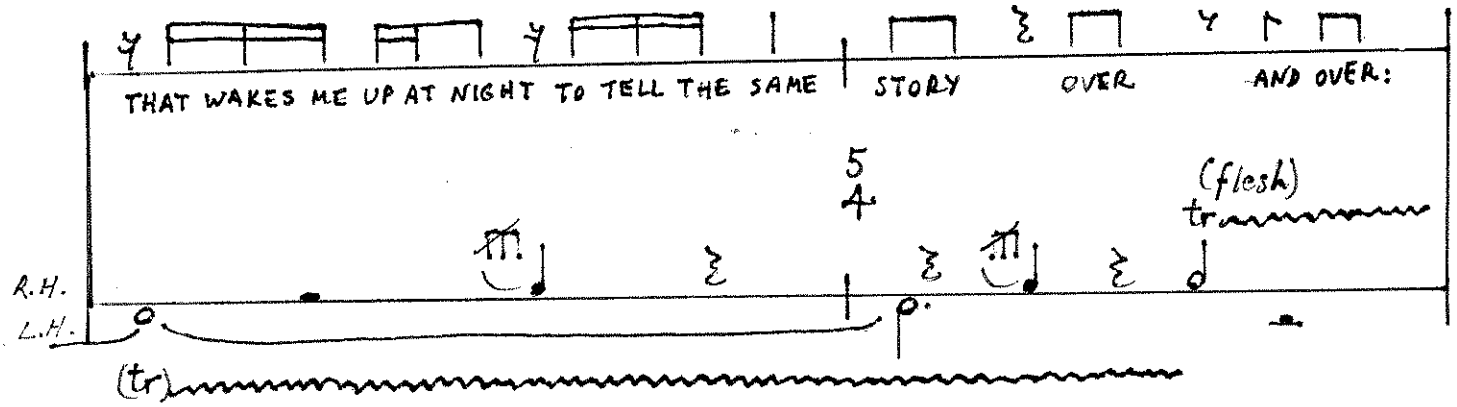

AS THE EVIDENCE OF OUR CONTINUED IDENTITY.
BETWEEN MYSELF AND THE MEMORY OF JOY LIES A
(Ped. sempre)
GULF NO LESS DEEP THAN THAT BETWEEN MYSELF AND JOY IN ITS ACTUALITY.
(Ped. sempre)
SO MUCH IN THIS PLACE DO MEN LIVE BY PAIN THAT MY FRIENDSHIP WITH YOU
(Ped. sempre)
IN THE WAY IN WHICH I AM FORCED TO REMEMBER IT, APPEARS TO ME ALWAYS AS A PRELUDE CONSONANT WITH
T
(Ped. sempre)

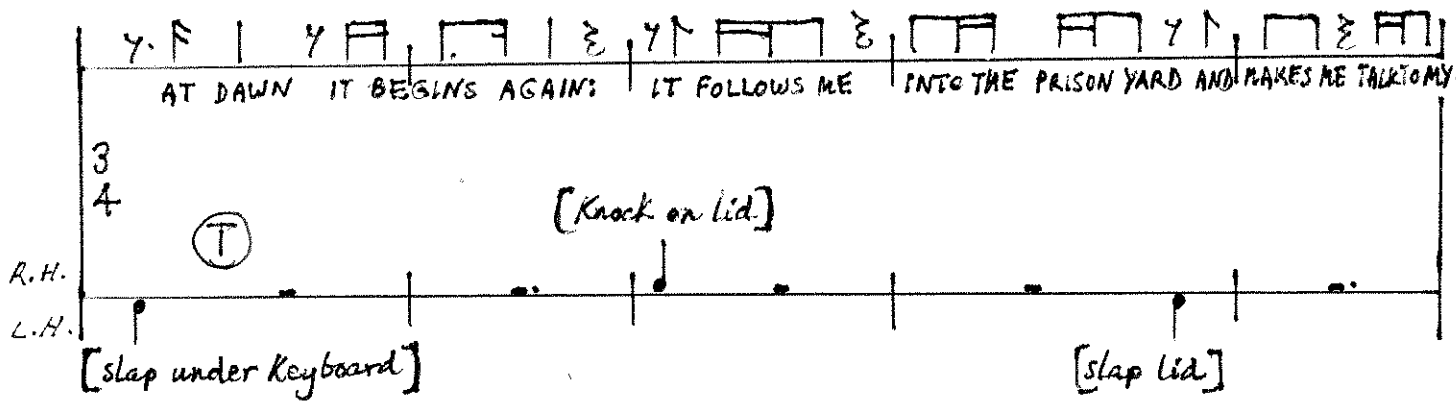

THOSE VARYING MODES OF ANGUISH WHICH EACH DAY I HAVE TO REALISE; AS THOUGH MY LIFE
(Ped. sempre)
HAD BEEN A SYMPHONY OF SORROW, PASSING THROUGH ITS RHYTHMICALLY LINKED MOVEMENTS TO ITS CERTAIN
(Ped. sempre)
[a soft sigh] (Song Without Words)
RESOLUTION.
p AH AH AH
espressivo e legato
pp
(Con ped.)
AH AH AH AH AH
mf
p

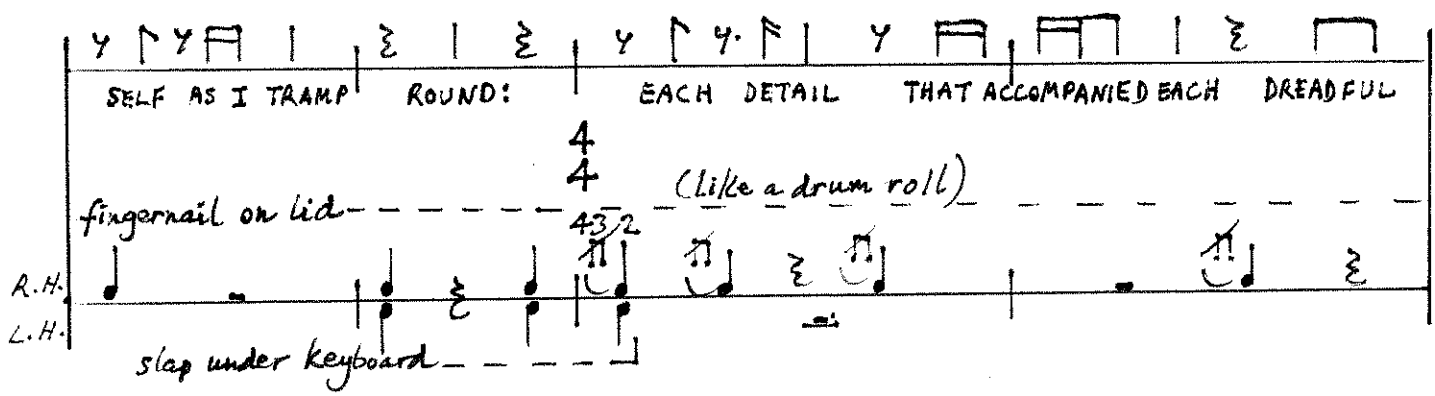

AH
AH
AH
AH
cresc.
AH
AH
AH
T
poco rit.
cresc.
dim.
[sing:]
AH
Tempo
mp
p
cresc.
f
ppp
OH
OH
dim.
f
p

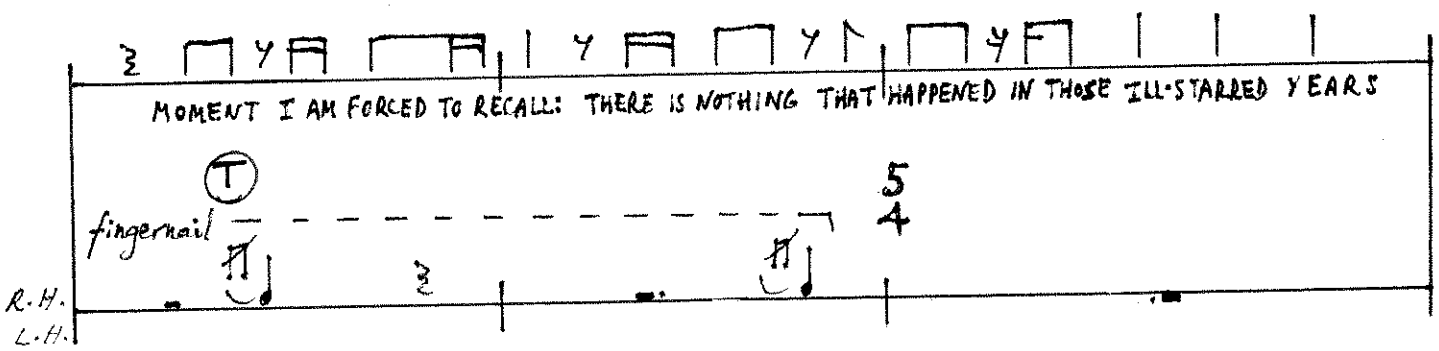

OH
AH
AH
AH
cresc.
[Sigh]
AH
AH
T
f
dim.
poco rit.
(sempre dimin.)
rit.
(falsetto)
tempo
pp
(Close keyboard lid)
(senza Ped.)

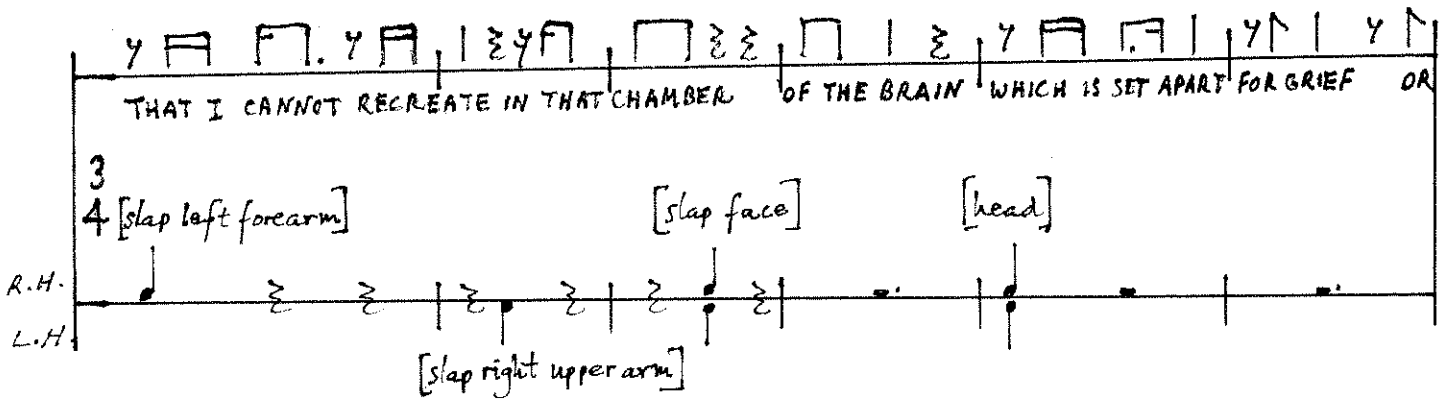

[whispered]
THE MEMORY OF OUR FRIENDSHIP IS THE SHADOW THAT WALKS WITH ME: THAT SEEMS NEVER TO LEAVE ME:
[Drum with fingers on closed keyboard lid]
4321
R.H.
L.H.
tr
[trill with fleshy part of fingers on keyboard lid]

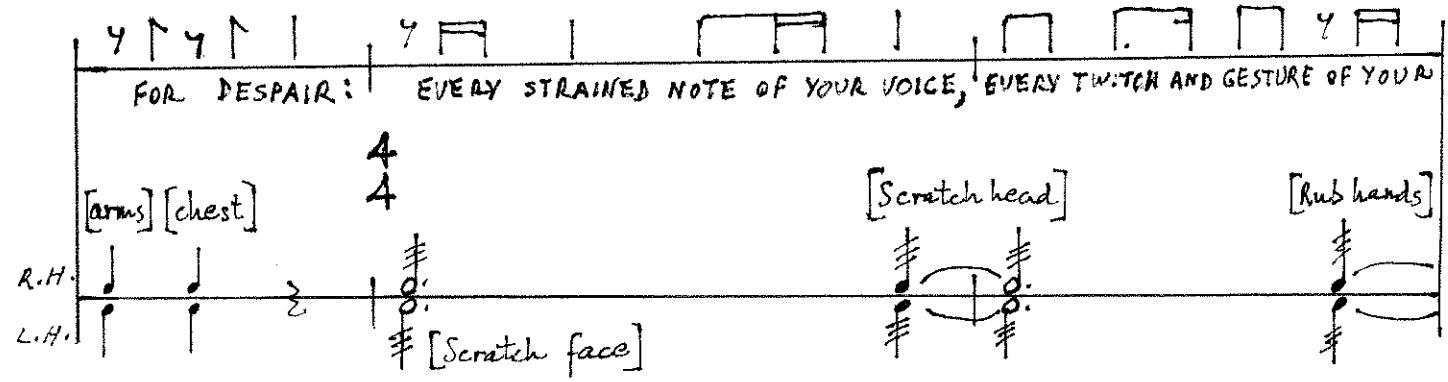

THAT WAKES ME UP AT NIGHT TO TELL THE SAME STORY OVER AND OVER:
5
4
(flesh)
tr
R.H.
L.H.
(tr)

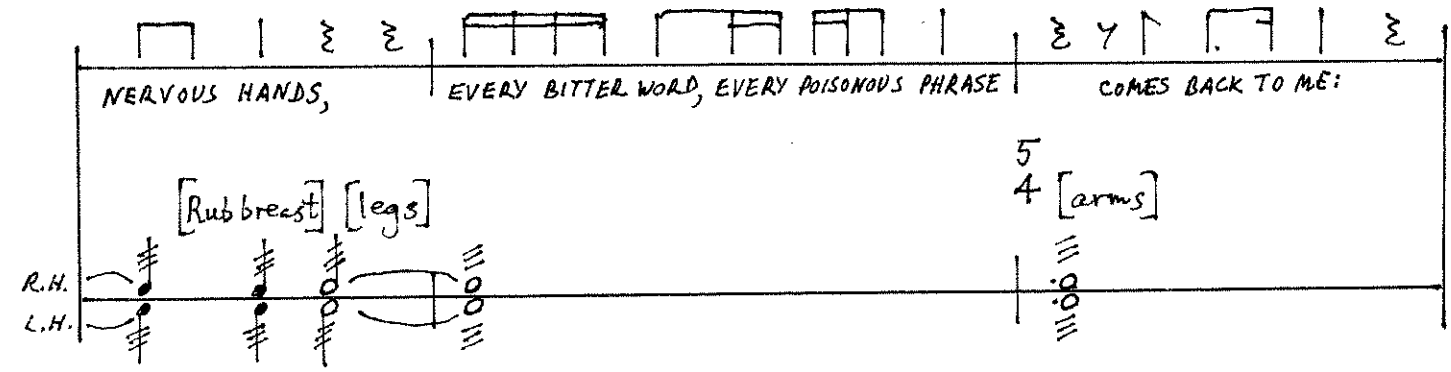

AT DAWN IT BEGINS AGAIN: IT FOLLOWS ME INTO THE PRISON YARD AND MAKES ME TALK TO MY-
3
4
T
[Knock on lid]
R.H.
L.H.
[slap under keyboard]
[slap lid]

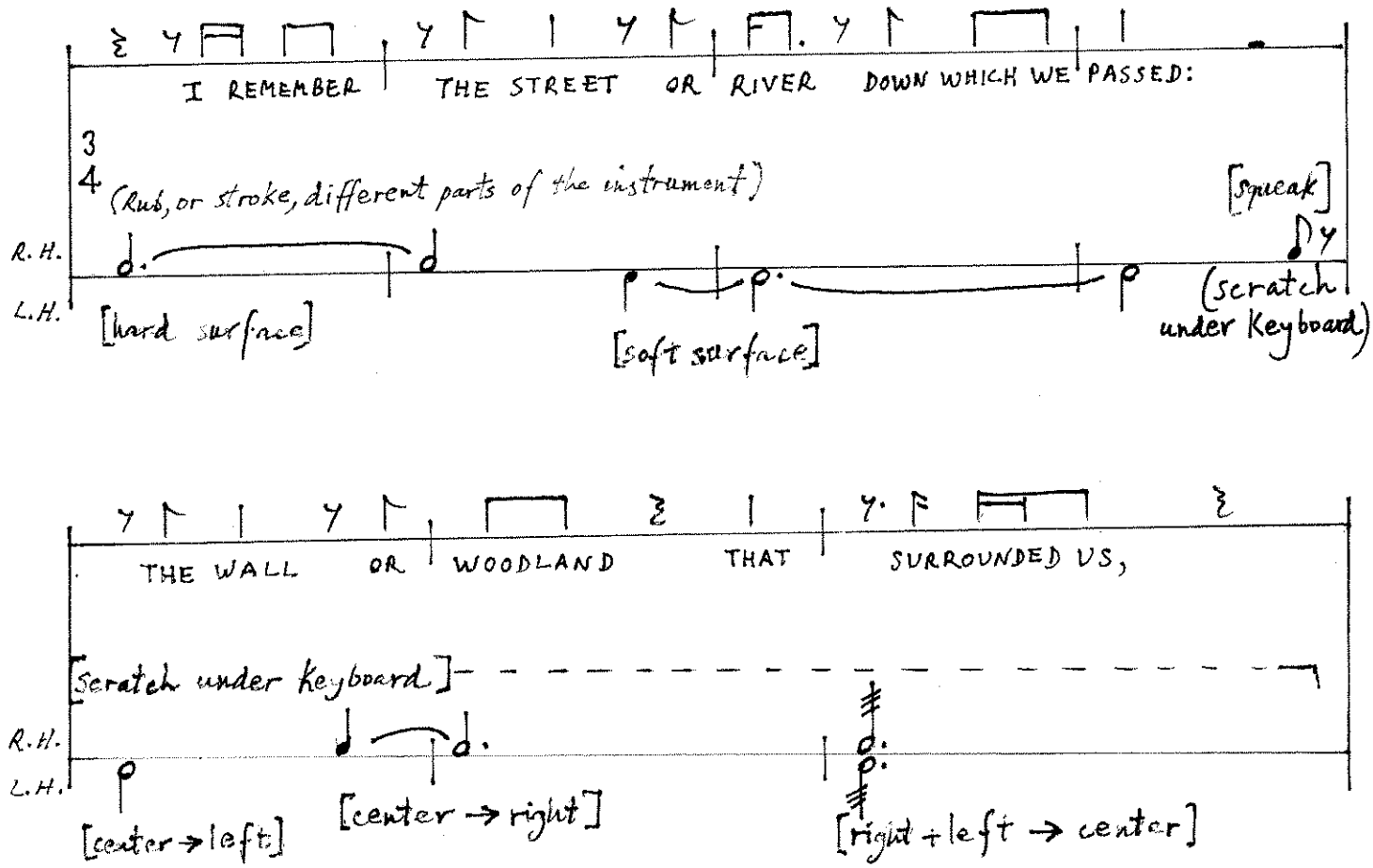

SELF AS I TRAMP ROUND: EACH DETAIL THAT ACCOMPANIED EACH DREADFUL
4
4
(like a drum roll)
fingernail on lid
4321
R.H.
L.H.
slap under keyboard


MOMENT I AM FORCED TO RECALL: THERE IS NOTHING THAT HAPPENED IN THOSE ILL-STARRED YEARS
T
fingernail
5/4
R.H.
L.H.

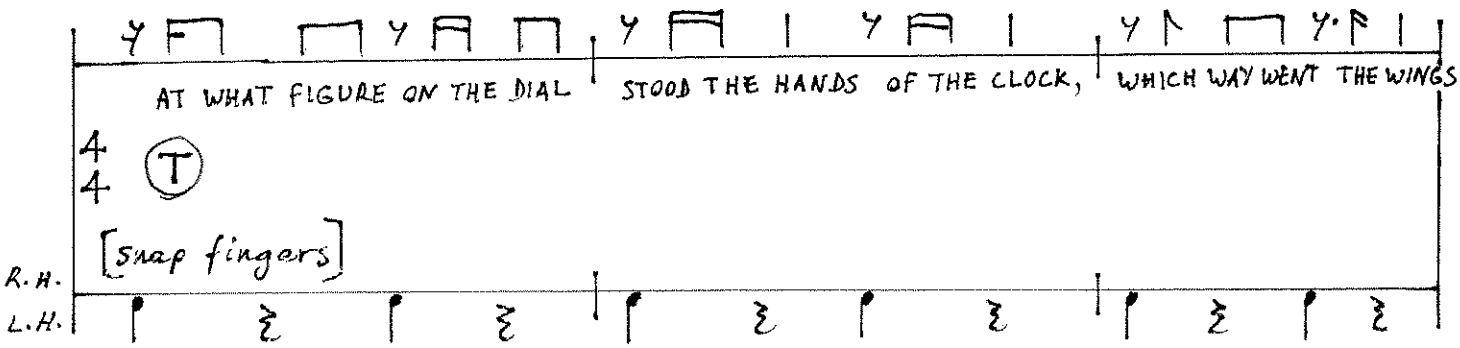

THAT I CANNOT RECREATE IN THAT CHAMBER OF THE BRAIN WHICH IS SET APART FOR GRIEF OR
3/4
[slap left forearm]
[slap face]
[head]
[slap right upper arm]
R.H.
L.H.

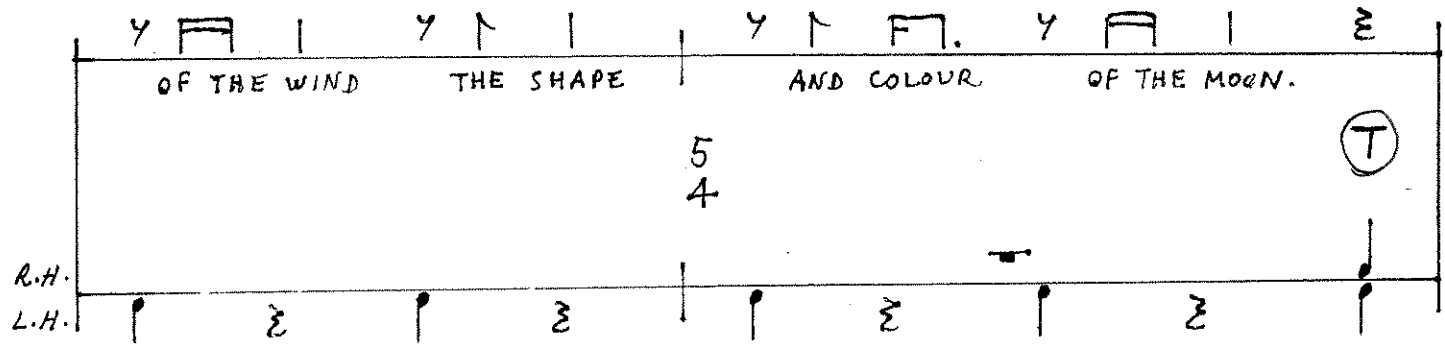

FOR DESPAIR: EVERY STRAINED NOTE OF YOUR VOICE, EVERY TWITCH AND GESTURE OF YOUR
4/4
[arms] [chest]
[Scratch head]
[Rub hands]
[Scratch face]
R.H.
L.H.

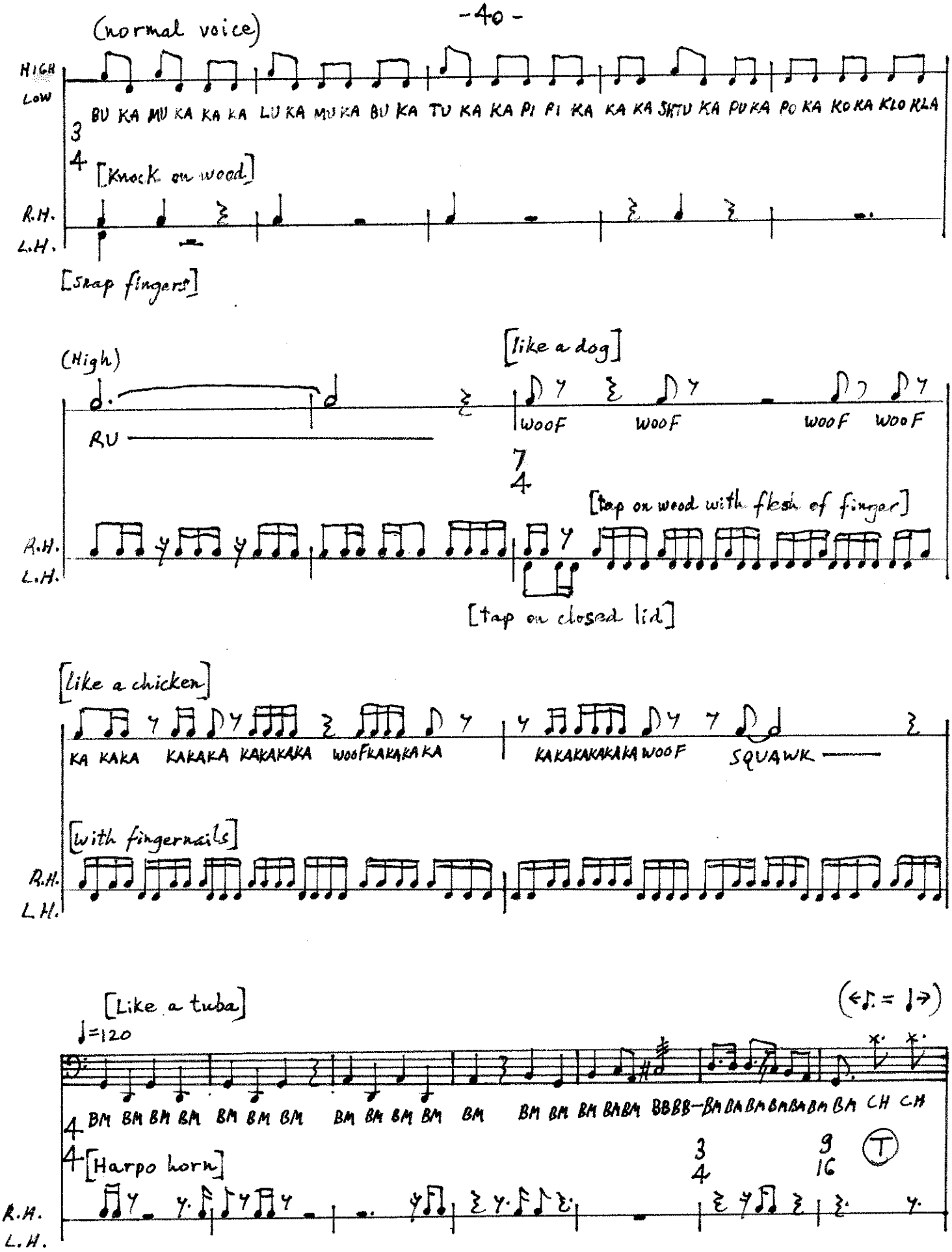

NERVOUS HANDS, EVERY BITTER WORD, EVERY POISONOUS PHRASE COMES BACK TO ME:
[Rub breast] [legs]
5/4 [arms]
R.H.
L.H.

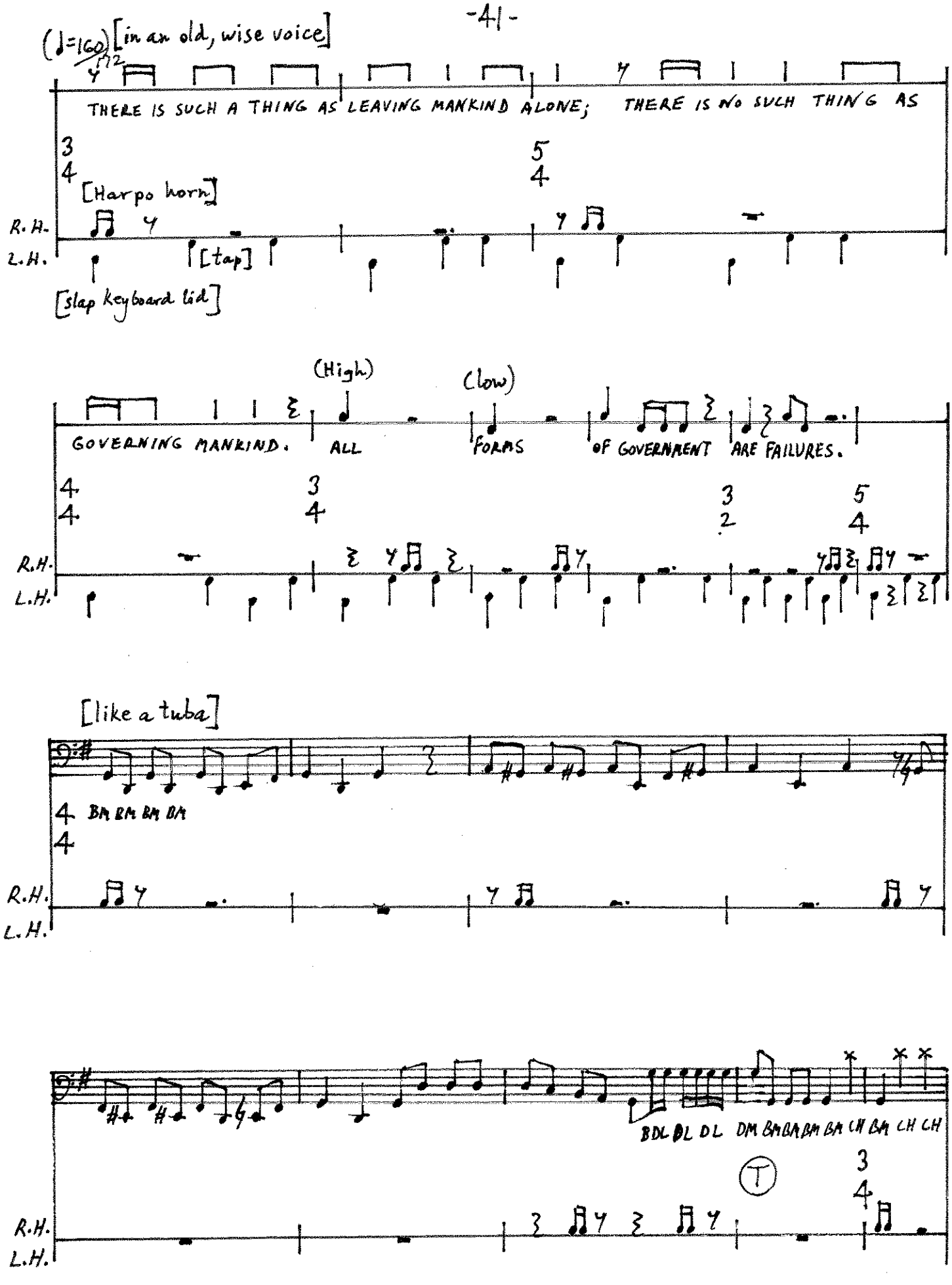

I REMEMBER THE STREET OR RIVER DOWN WHICH WE PASSED:
3/4
(Rub, or stroke, different parts of the instrument)
[Squeak]
(scratch under Keyboard)
R.H.
L.H.
[hard surface]
[soft surface]

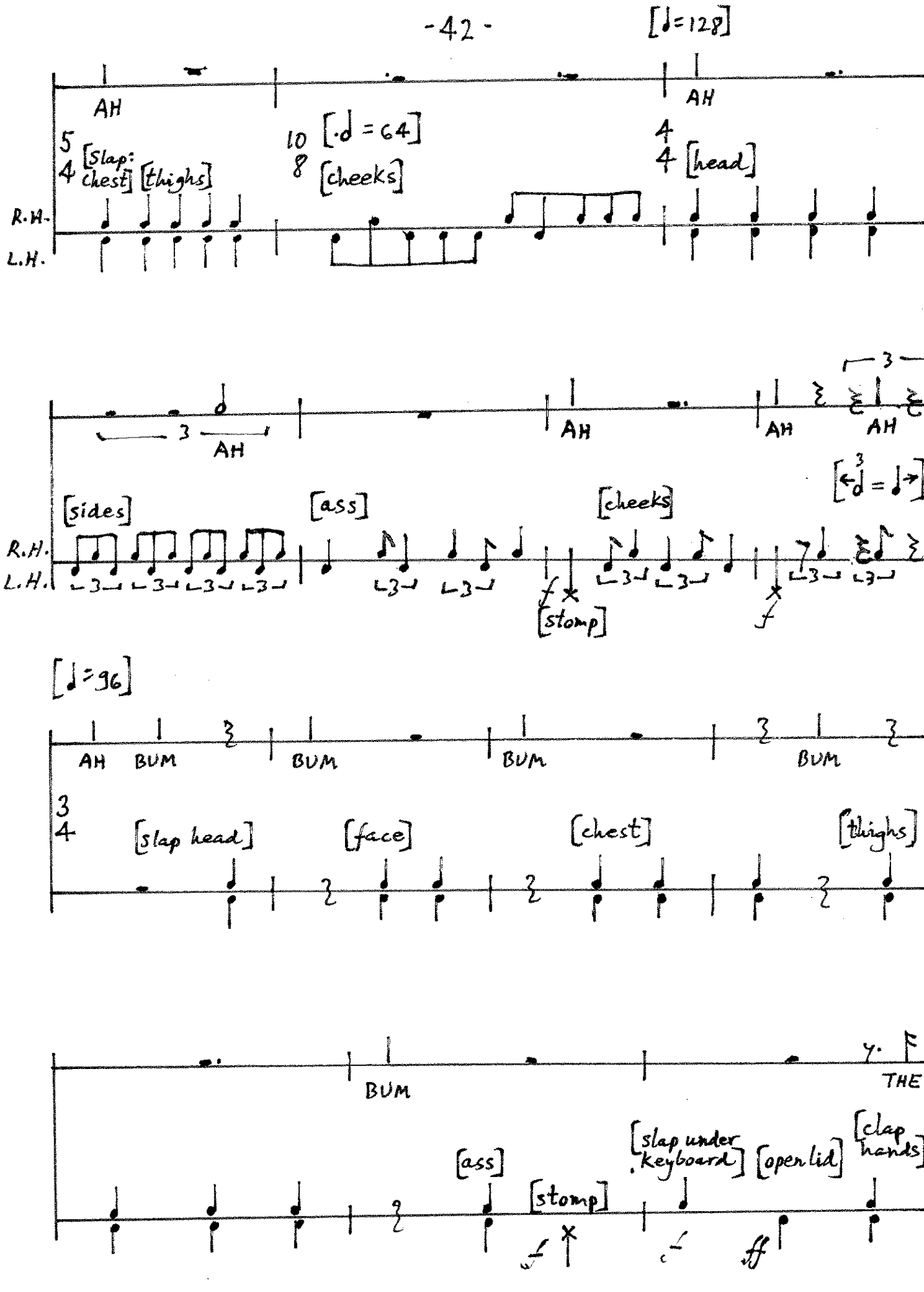
THE WALL OR WOODLAND THAT SURROUNDED US,
[Scratch under keyboard]
R.H.
L.H.
[center → left]
[center → right]
[right + left → center]


AT WHAT FIGURE ON THE DIAL STOOD THE HANDS OF THE CLOCK, WHICH WAY WENT THE WINGS
4/4
T
[snap fingers]
R.H.
L.H.

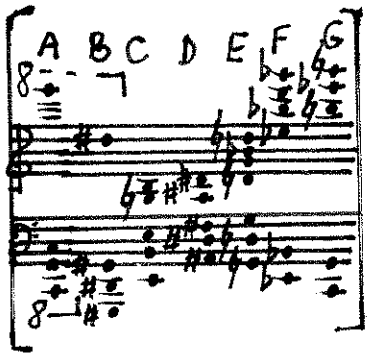

OF THE WIND THE SHAPE AND COLOUR OF THE MOON.
5/4
T
R.H.
L.H.


(normal voice)
HIGH
LOW
BU KA MU KA KA KA LU KA MU KA BU KA TU KA KA PI PI KA KA KA SHTU KA PU KA PO KA KO KA KLO KLA
[Knock on wood]
R.H.
L.H.
[snap fingers]
(High)
[like a dog]
RU
WOOF WOOF WOOF WOOF
[tap on wood with flesh of finger]
[tap on closed lid]
[like a chicken]
KA KAKA KAKAKA KAKAKAKA WOOFKAKAKAKA
KAKAKAKAKAKA WOOF SQUAWK
[with fingernails]
[Like a tuba]
♩=120
BM BM BM BM BM BM BM BM BM BM BM BM BM BM BM BM BM BBBB—BM BM BM BM BM BM BM CH CH
[Harpo horn]
T


(♩=160) [in an old, wise voice]
THERE IS SUCH A THING AS LEAVING MANKIND ALONE; THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS
[Harpo horn]
R.H.
L.H.
[tap]
[slap keyboard lid]
(High)
(low)
GOVERNING MANKIND.
ALL
FORMS
OF GOVERNMENT
ARE FAILURES.
[like a tuba]
BA BA BA BA
BDL BL DL DM BA BA BA BA CH BA CH CH
T


[♩=128]
AH
AH
5/4
[slap: chest]
[thighs]
10/8
[♩. = 64]
[cheeks]
4/4
[head]
R.H.
L.H.
3
AH
AH
AH
[sides]
[ass]
[cheeks]
[♩ = ♩]
[stomp]
[♩=96]
AH
BUM
BUM
BUM
BUM
3/4
[slap head]
[face]
[chest]
[thighs]
BUM
THE
[ass]
[stomp]
[slap under keyboard]
[open lid]
[clap hands]

[Piano chords for pp. 43-45:]



(Laugh about it)

GODS ARE STRANGE. IT IS NOT OUR VICES ONLY

A A B A B

pp

una corda sempre

THEY MAKE INSTRUMENTS TO SCOURGE US. THEY BRING US TO RUN THROUGH WHAT IN US IS

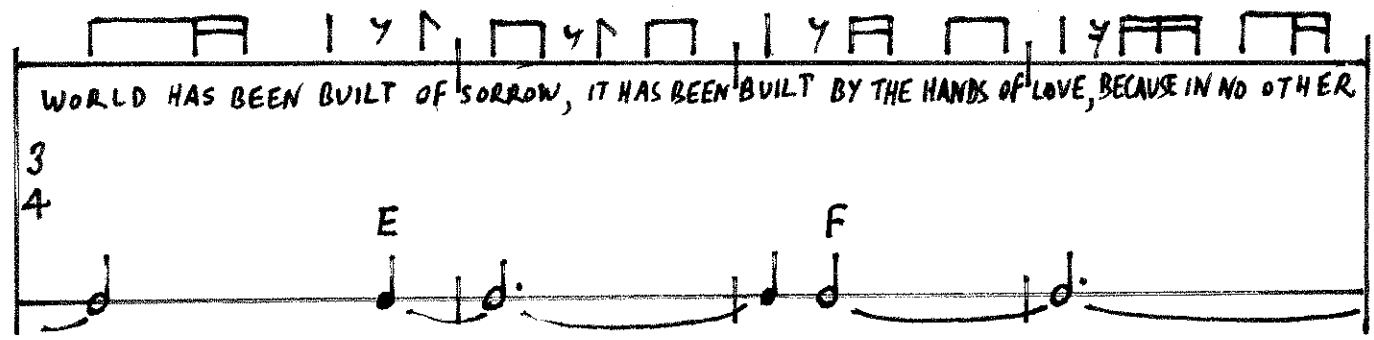
C A B C

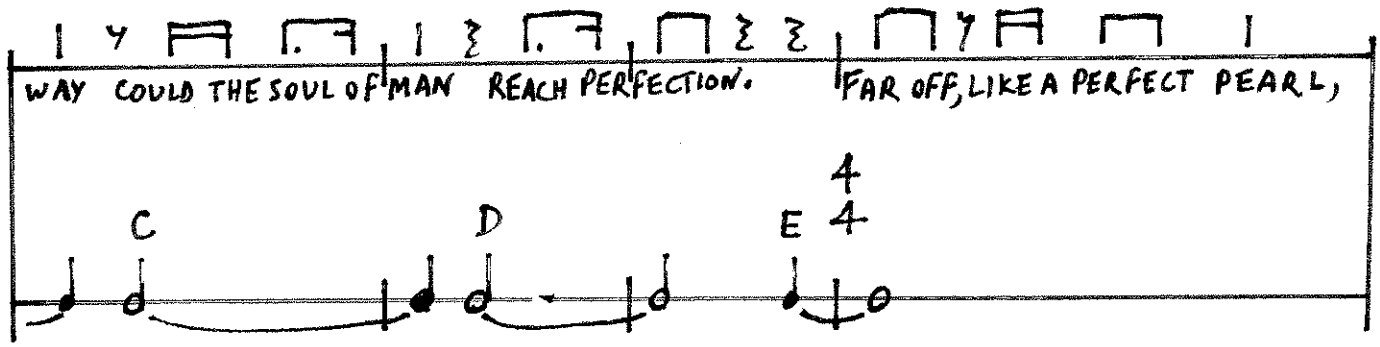
GOOD, GENTLE, HUMANE, LOVING. LOVE of SOME KIND IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE EXPLA-

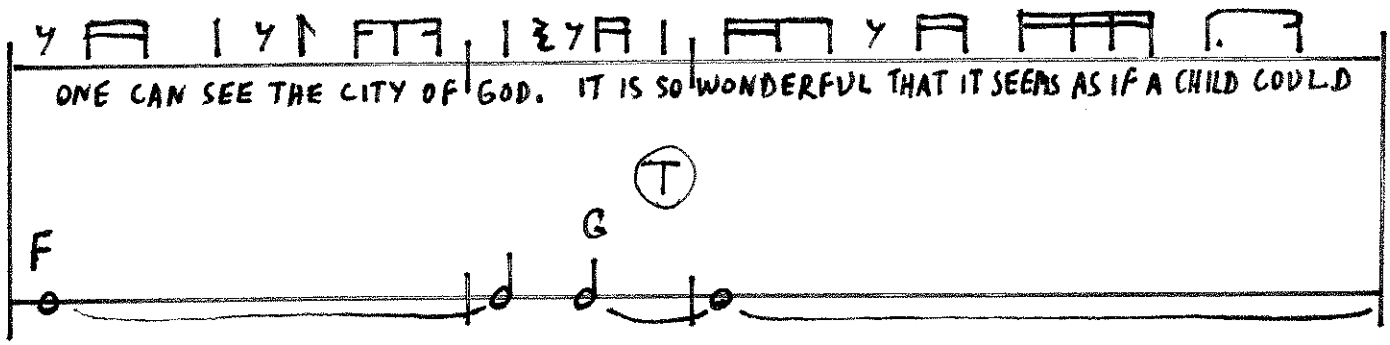
D A B C D

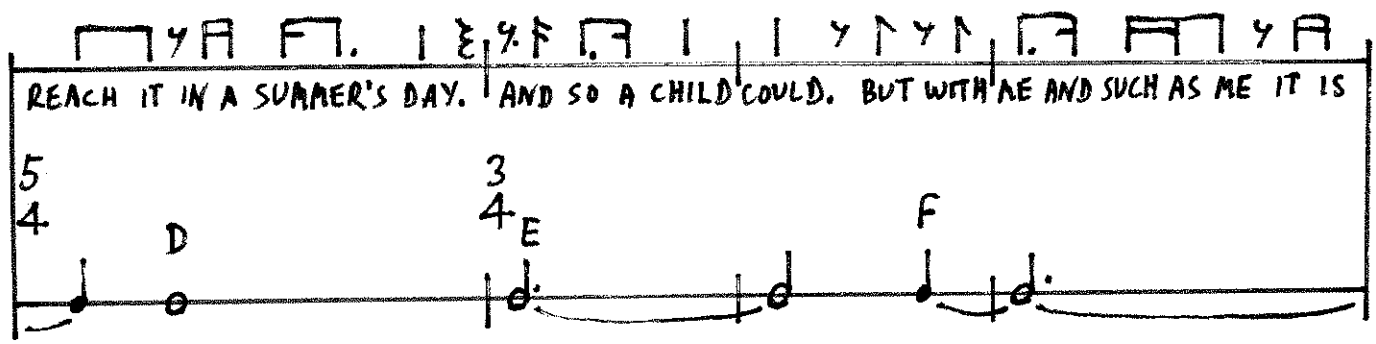
NATION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY AMOUNT OF SUFFERING THAT THERE IS IN THE WORLD. IF THE

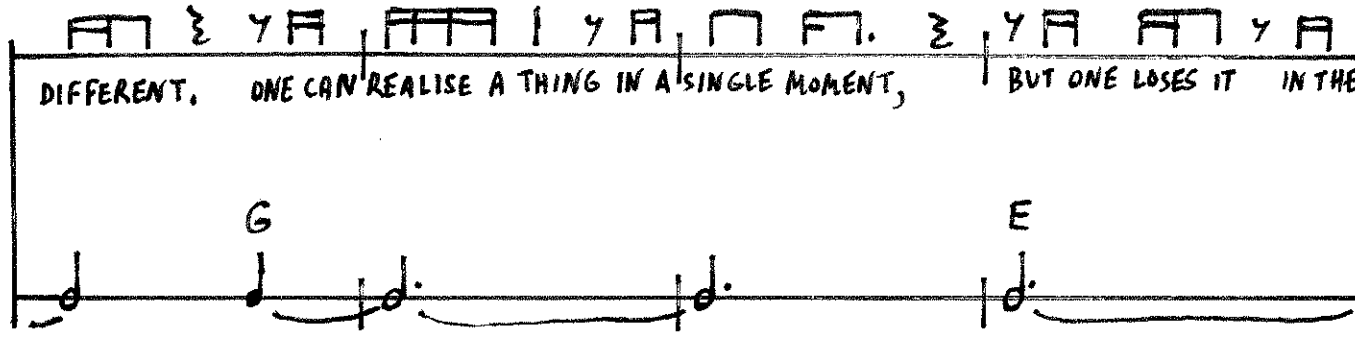
E (T) B C D

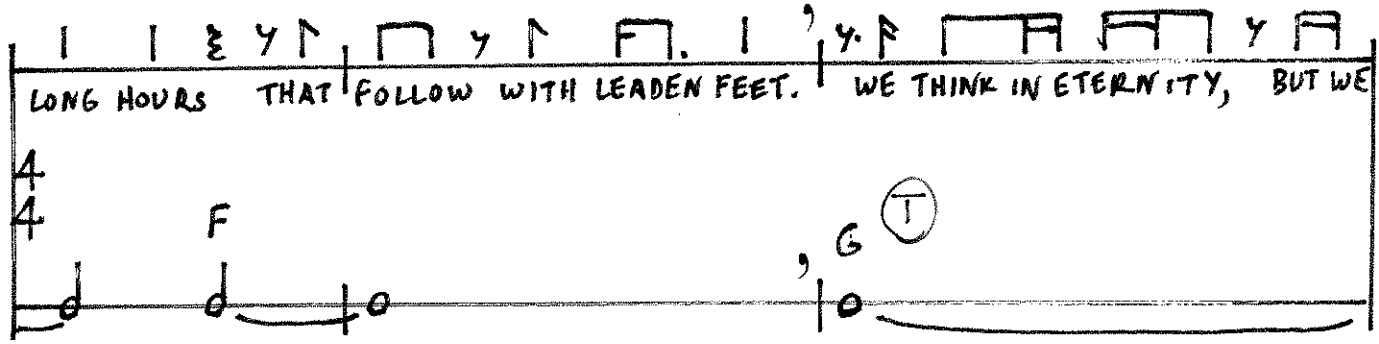

WORLD HAS BEEN BUILT OF SORROW, IT HAS BEEN BUILT BY THE HANDS OF LOVE, BECAUSE IN NO OTHER
3
4
E
F

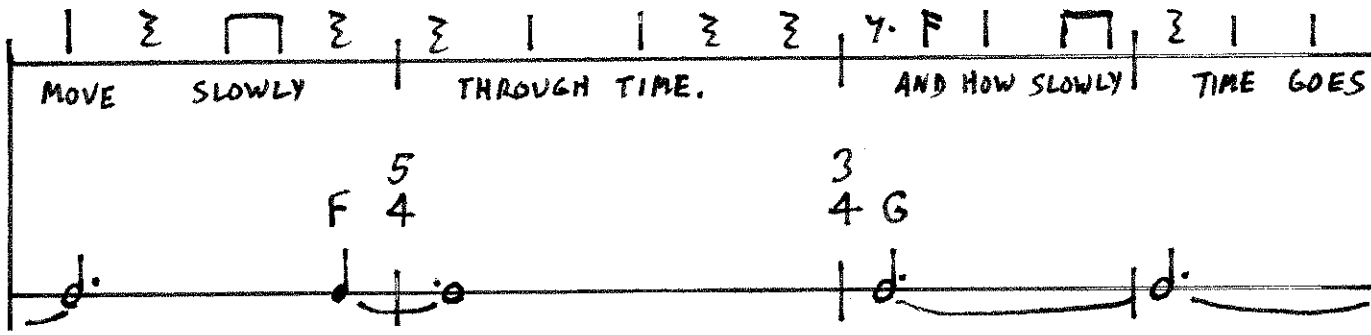

WAY COULD THE SOUL OF MAN REACH PERFECTION. FAR OFF, LIKE A PERFECT PEARL,
C
D
E
4
4

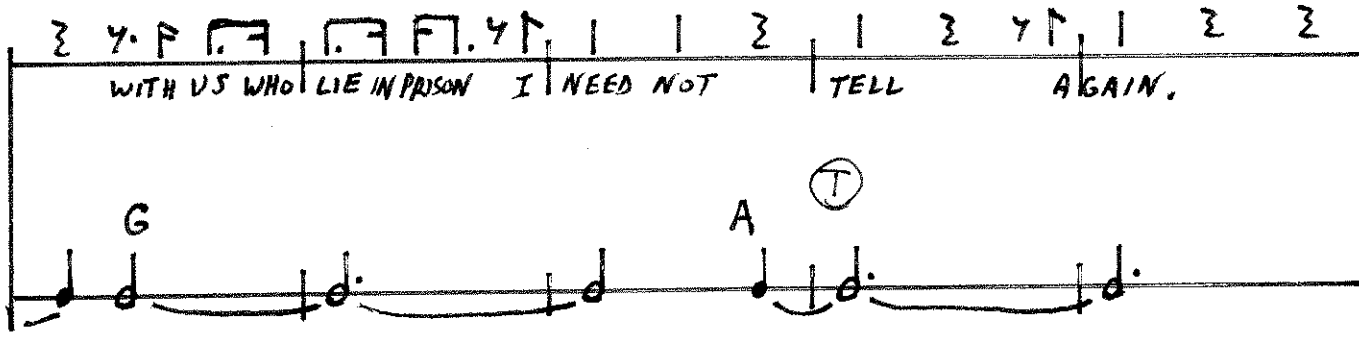

ONE CAN SEE THE CITY OF GOD. IT IS SO WONDERFUL THAT IT SEEMS AS IF A CHILD COULD
T
F
G

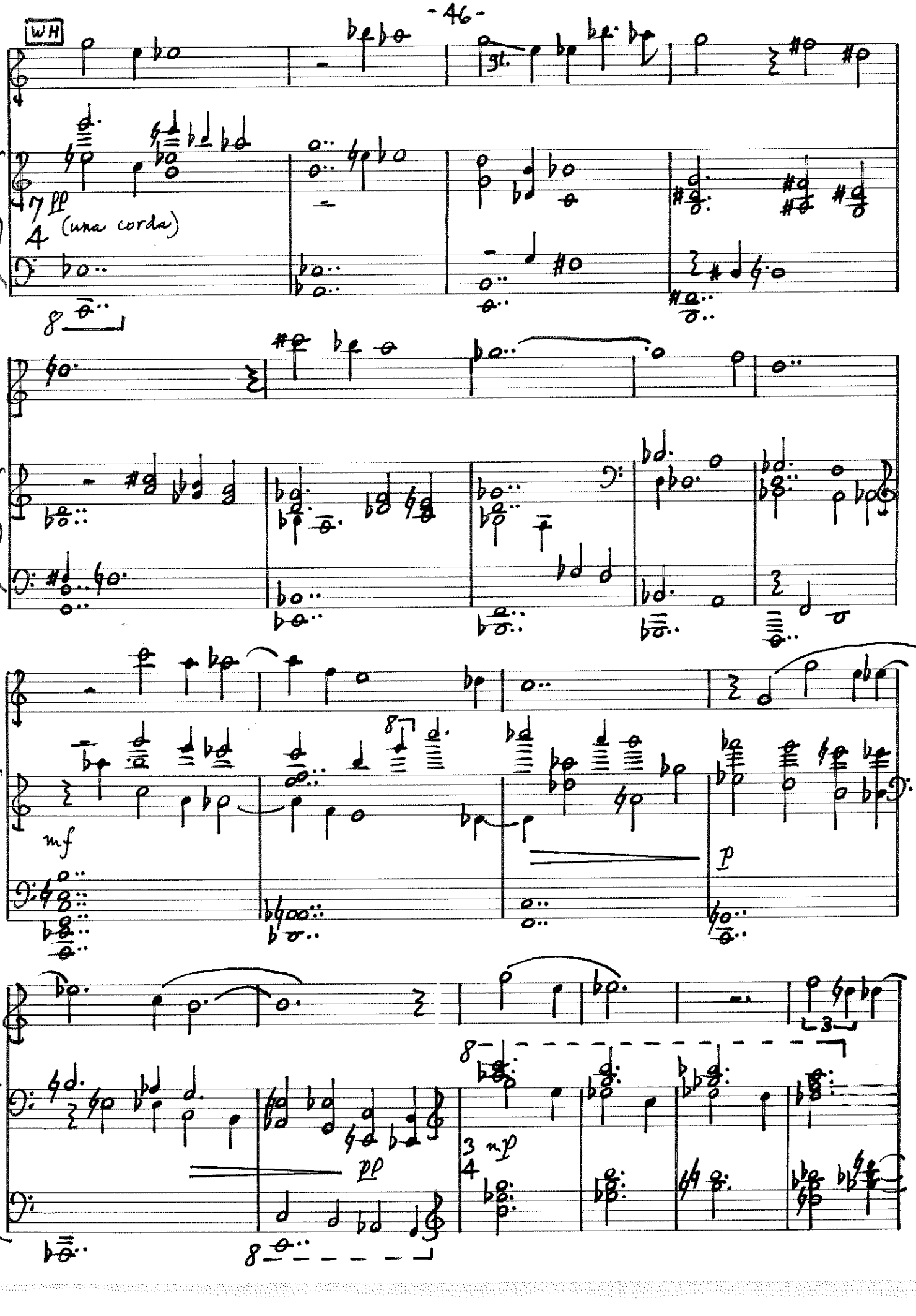

REACH IT IN A SUMMER'S DAY. AND SO A CHILD COULD. BUT WITH ME AND SUCH AS ME IT IS
5
4
D
3
4
E
F

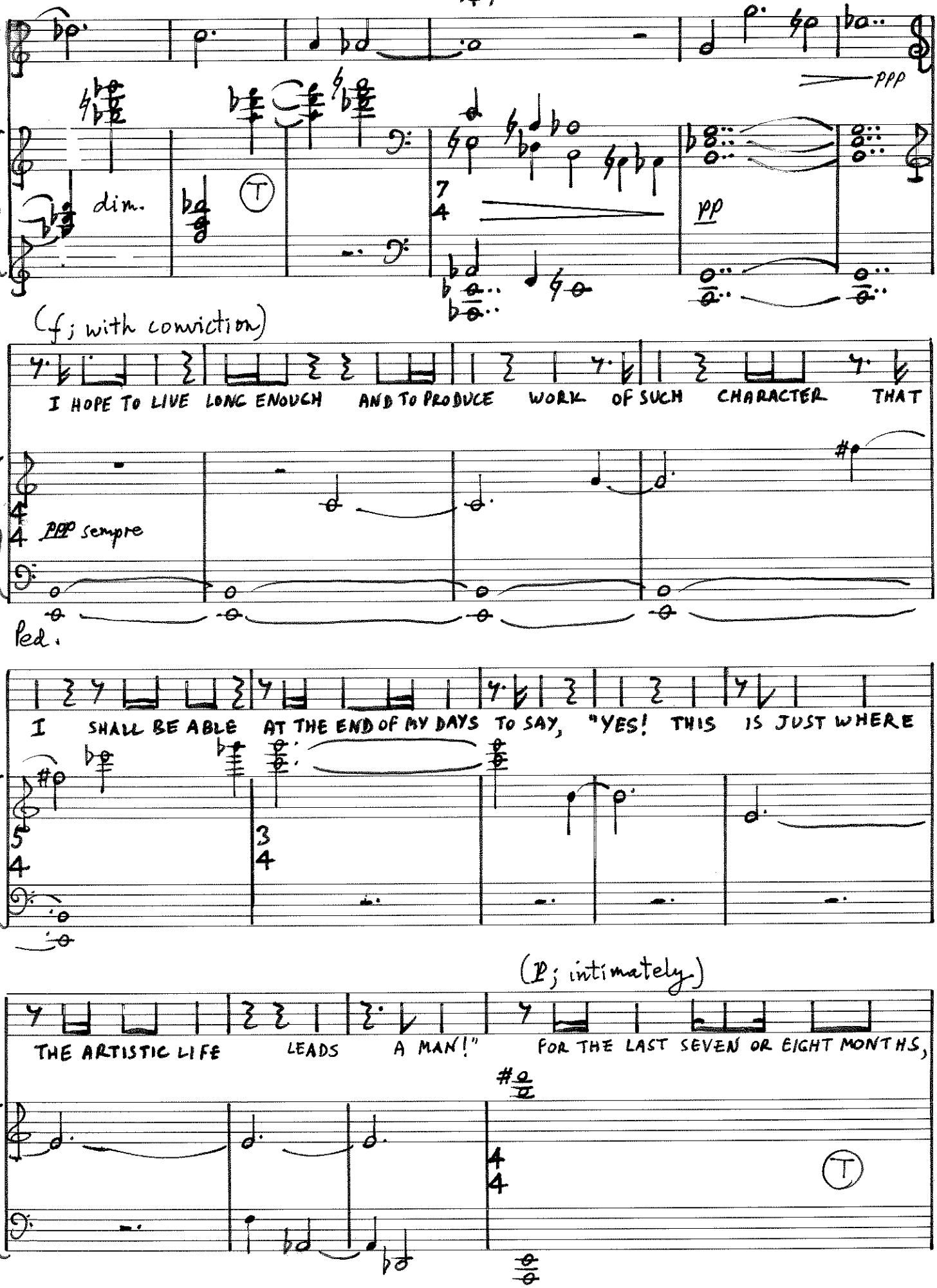

DIFFERENT. ONE CAN REALISE A THING IN A SINGLE MOMENT, BUT ONE LOSES IT IN THE
G
E

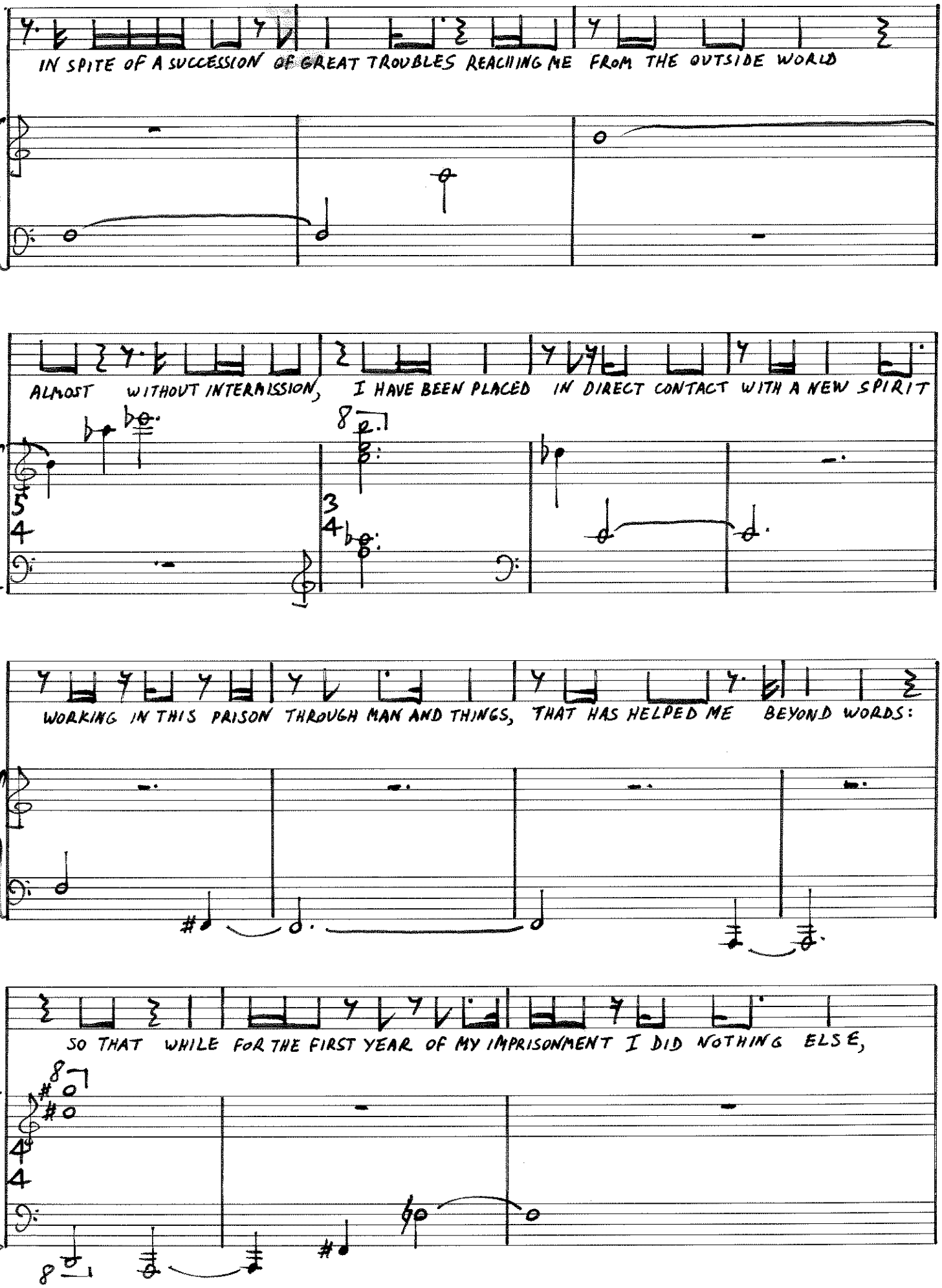

LONG HOURS THAT FOLLOW WITH LEADEN FEET. WE THINK IN ETERNITY, BUT WE
4
4
F
G
T

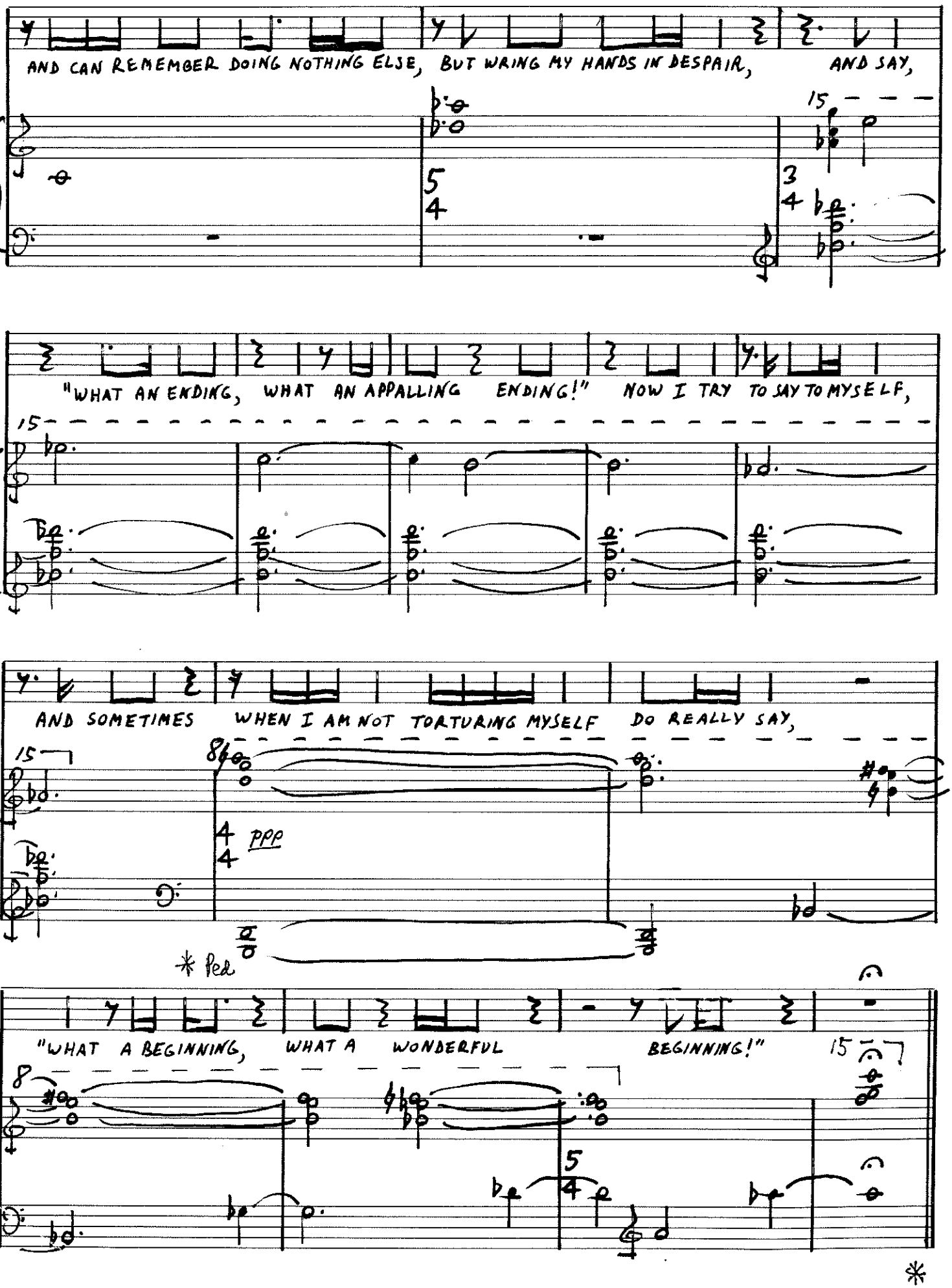

MOVE SLOWLY THROUGH TIME. AND HOW SLOWLY TIME GOES
5
F 4
3
4 G


WITH US WHO LIE IN PRISON I NEED NOT TELL AGAIN.
G
A
T


WH
pp
(una corda)
mf
p
pp
mp


ppp
dim.
T
pp
(f; with conviction)
I HOPE TO LIVE LONG ENOUGH AND TO PRODUCE WORK OF SUCH CHARACTER THAT
ppp sempre
Ped.
I SHALL BE ABLE AT THE END OF MY DAYS TO SAY, "YES! THIS IS JUST WHERE
(p; intimately)
THE ARTISTIC LIFE LEADS A MAN!"
FOR THE LAST SEVEN OR EIGHT MONTHS,
T


IN SPITE OF A SUCCESSION OF GREAT TROUBLES REACHING ME FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD
ALMOST WITHOUT INTERMISSION, I HAVE BEEN PLACED IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH A NEW SPIRIT
WORKING IN THIS PRISON THROUGH MAN AND THINGS, THAT HAS HELPED ME BEYOND WORDS:
SO THAT WHILE FOR THE FIRST YEAR OF MY IMPRISONMENT I DID NOTHING ELSE,


AND CAN REMEMBER DOING NOTHING ELSE, BUT WRING MY HANDS IN DESPAIR, AND SAY,
"WHAT AN ENDING, WHAT AN APPALLING ENDING!" NOW I TRY TO SAY TO MYSELF,
AND SOMETIMES WHEN I AM NOT TORTURING MYSELF DO REALLY SAY,
ppp
* Ped
"WHAT A BEGINNING, WHAT A WONDERFUL BEGINNING!"
*