Donald Cobb

Cold Mountain Songs

Songs on Poetry of Han Shan
translated by Gary Snyder

for voice, violin and piano

Donald Cobb was born in 1936 in Oakland, California. His music-making began in the family home, and at age 15 in a hotel summer band. He studied with composers Richard Donovan, Leon Kirchner and Darius Milhaud. He has taught and led musical ensembles in many schools and colleges, including Mills College, the Athenian School, Wildshaw School in San Francisco and Friendsville Academy in Tennessee. Community and traditional song has been an abiding study. In the 1970's, he was musical director of the Oakland Museum Spring Concerts, highlighting music of American and California composers.

The composer's path of finding musical expression through poetic language and the contours of our spoken language led first to the Irish poet, W. B. Yeats, and his *Crazy Jane Poems*, and followed over years to the possibilities for song in the work of admired American poets, including Walt Whitman, Vachel Lindsay, Robinson Jeffers, whose poems are the basis for *Boats in a Fog,* for voice and piano, and Gary Snyder, whose translation of Han Shan is the basis for the current volume, *Cold Mountain Songs*. Scored for high voice, violin and piano, it was first performed in 1973 by John Duykers, tenor, Nathan Rubin, violin and Donald Cobb, piano.

BY DONALD COBB:

Crazy Jane Songs *
Six songs on poems of W. B. Yeats
for voice and piano

Confucian Odes
Translations by Ezra Pound
Three SATB choruses, unaccompanied

Cold Mountain Songs *
Poems by Han Shan, translation by Gary Snyder
for voice, violin and piano

The Town of American Visions
The Springfield of the Far Future
Poetry of Vachel Lindsay
for SATB chorus, with piano

Come, Said the Muse *
Three songs on poetry of Walt Whitman
for voice and piano

Five Orchestral Songs
for orchestra

Children's Songs *
On poetry of Vachel Lindsay, James Stephens, Christina Rossetti,
James Hogg, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Whitcomb Riley
for voice and piano

Paths
A four movement work for orchestra

Remnants
9 pieces, for violin, clarinet, double bass and piano

Boats in a Fog *
Songs on the poetry of Robinson Jeffers
for voice and piano

Seven Songs *
Billy Boy, The Curtains of Night, The Old Ship of Zion,
Colorado Trail, A Life on the Ocean Wave, Brave Wolfe, Polly Wolly Doodle
Arranged for voice and piano

In Countryside
A set of seven pieces – for clarinet, trumpet, trombone and piano

Fiddler Jones, Pastoral and other songs
On poetry of Thoreau, Melville, Masters, cummings,
Frost, Sandburg and Williams
for voice and piano

* Engraved song publications available from the composer.

Children's Songs with illustrations by Josy Cobb,
Crazy Jane Songs with illustrations by Diane Cobb
Come, Said the Muse with illustrations by Diane Cobb
Seven Songs with illustrations by Thomas Eakins
Boats in a Fog
Cold Mountain Songs

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Songs on Poetry of Han Shan
translated by Gary Snyder

for voice, violin and piano

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"In a tangle of cliffs, I chose a place –"
"If I hide out at Cold Mountain"
"I can't stand these bird songs"
"Clambering up the Cold Mountain path,"
"I've lived at Cold Mountain - how many autumns."
are poems 2, 17, 13, 8 and 21 from
The Cold Mountain Poems
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In a Tangle of Cliffs *5*
If I Hide out at Cold Mountain *10*
I Can't Stand These Bird-Songs *14*
Clambering up the Cold Mountain Path *16*
I've Lived at Cold Mountain *22*
Texts of Lyrics *3*

From Gary Snyder's introduction to *Cold Mountain Poems:*

COLD MOUNTAIN
Kanzan, or Han Shan

"Cold Mountain" takes his name from where he lived. He is a mountain madman in an old Chinese line of ragged hermits. When he talks about Cold Mountain he means himself, his home, his state of mind. He lived in the T'ang dynasty - traditionally A.D. 627-650, although Hu Shih dates him 700-780. This makes him roughly contemporary with Tu Fu, Li Po, Wang Wei, and Po Chü-i. His poems, of which 300 survive, are written in T'ang colloquial: rough and fresh. The ideas are Taoist, Buddhist, Zen. He and his sidekick Shih-te (Jittoku in Japanese) became great favorites with Zen painters of later days - the scroll, the broom, the wild hair and laughter. They became Immortals and you sometimes run on to them today in the skidrows, orchards, hobo jungles, and logging camps of America.

In a tangle of cliffs, I chose a place –
Bird paths, but no trails for men.
What's beyond the yard?
White clouds clinging to vague rocks.
Now I've lived here – how many years –
Again and again, spring and winter pass.
Go tell families with silverware and cars
"What's the use of all that noise and money?"

If I hide out at Cold Mountain
Living off mountain plants and berries –
All my lifetime, why worry?
One follows his karma through.
Days and months slip by like water,
Time is like sparks knocked off flint.
Go ahead and let the world change –
I'm happy to sit among these cliffs.

I can't stand these bird songs
Now I'll go rest in my straw shack.
The cherry flowers out scarlet
The willow shoots up feathery.
Morning sun drives over blue peaks
Bright clouds wash green ponds.
Who knows that I'm out of the dusty world
Climbing the southern slope of Cold Mountain?

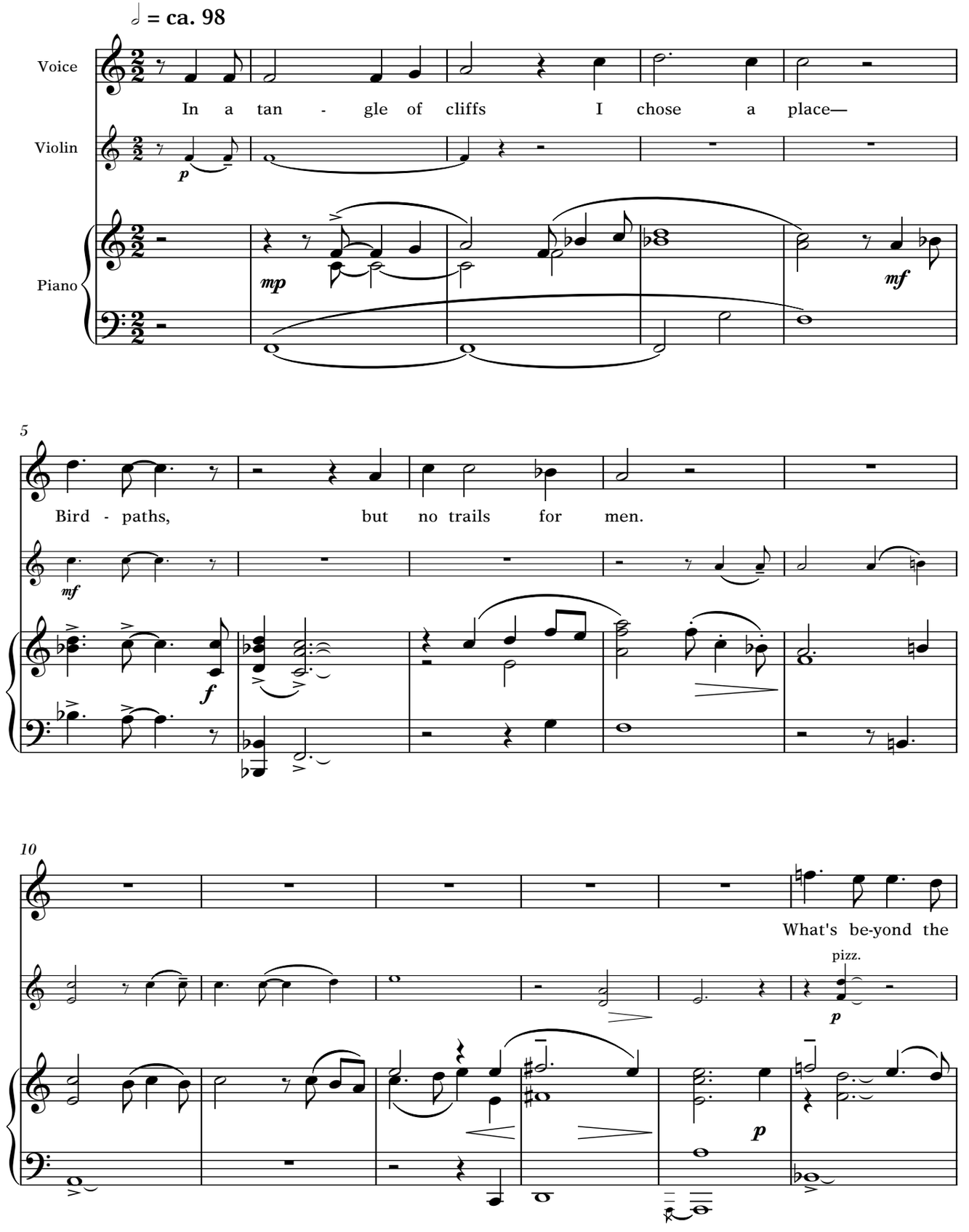
Clambering up the Cold Mountain path,
The Cold Mountain trail goes on and on:
The long gorge choked with scree and boulders,
The wide creek, the mist-blurred grass.
The moss is slippery, though there's been no rain
The pine sings, but there's no wind.
Who can leap the world's ties
And sit with me among the white clouds?

I've lived at Cold Mountain – how many autumns.
Alone, I hum a song – utterly without regret.
Hungry, I eat one grain of Immortal-medicine
Mind solid and sharp; leaning on a stone.

In a Tangle of Cliffs

Han Shan
translation by Gary Snyder

Donald Cobb



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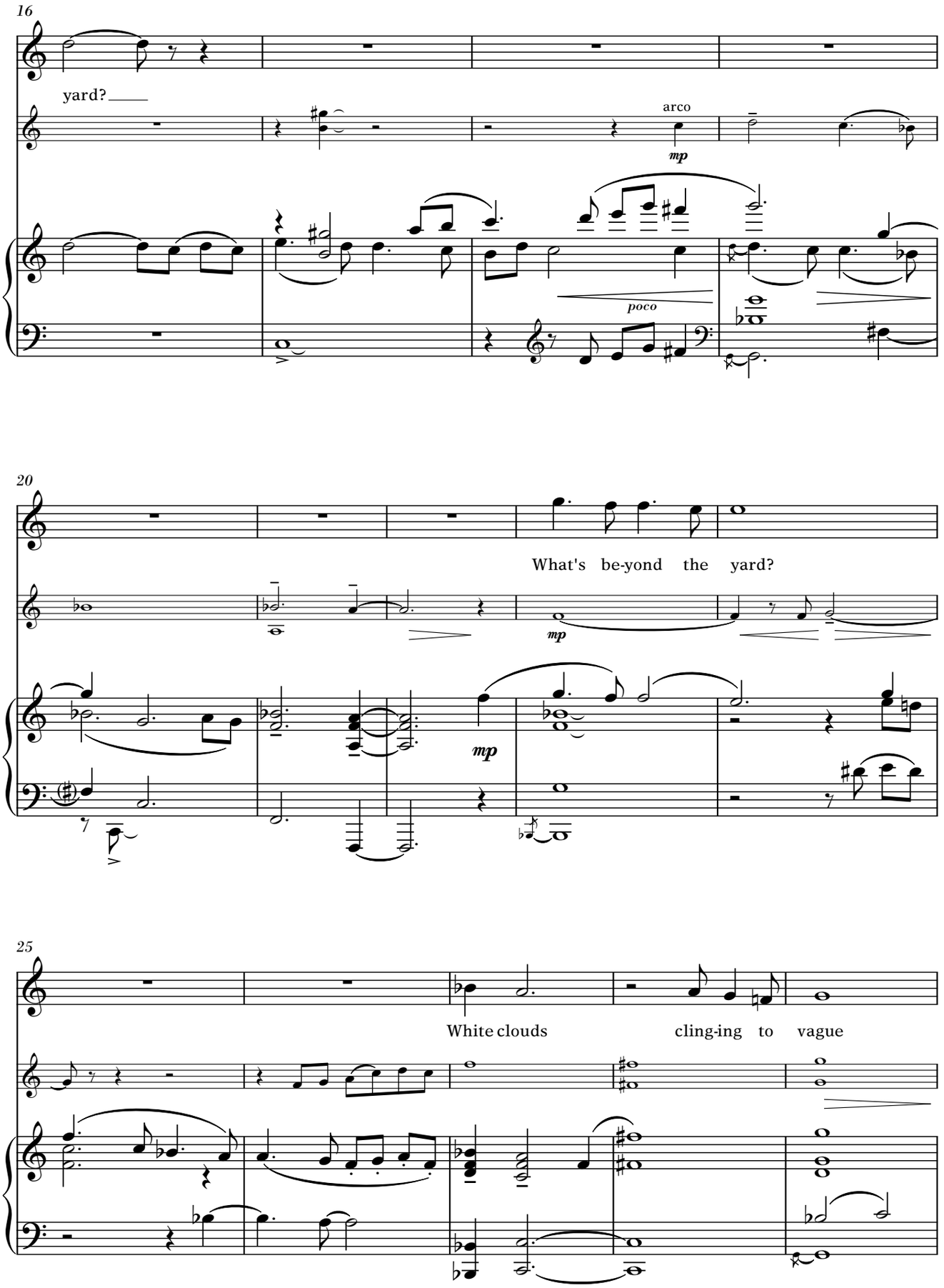
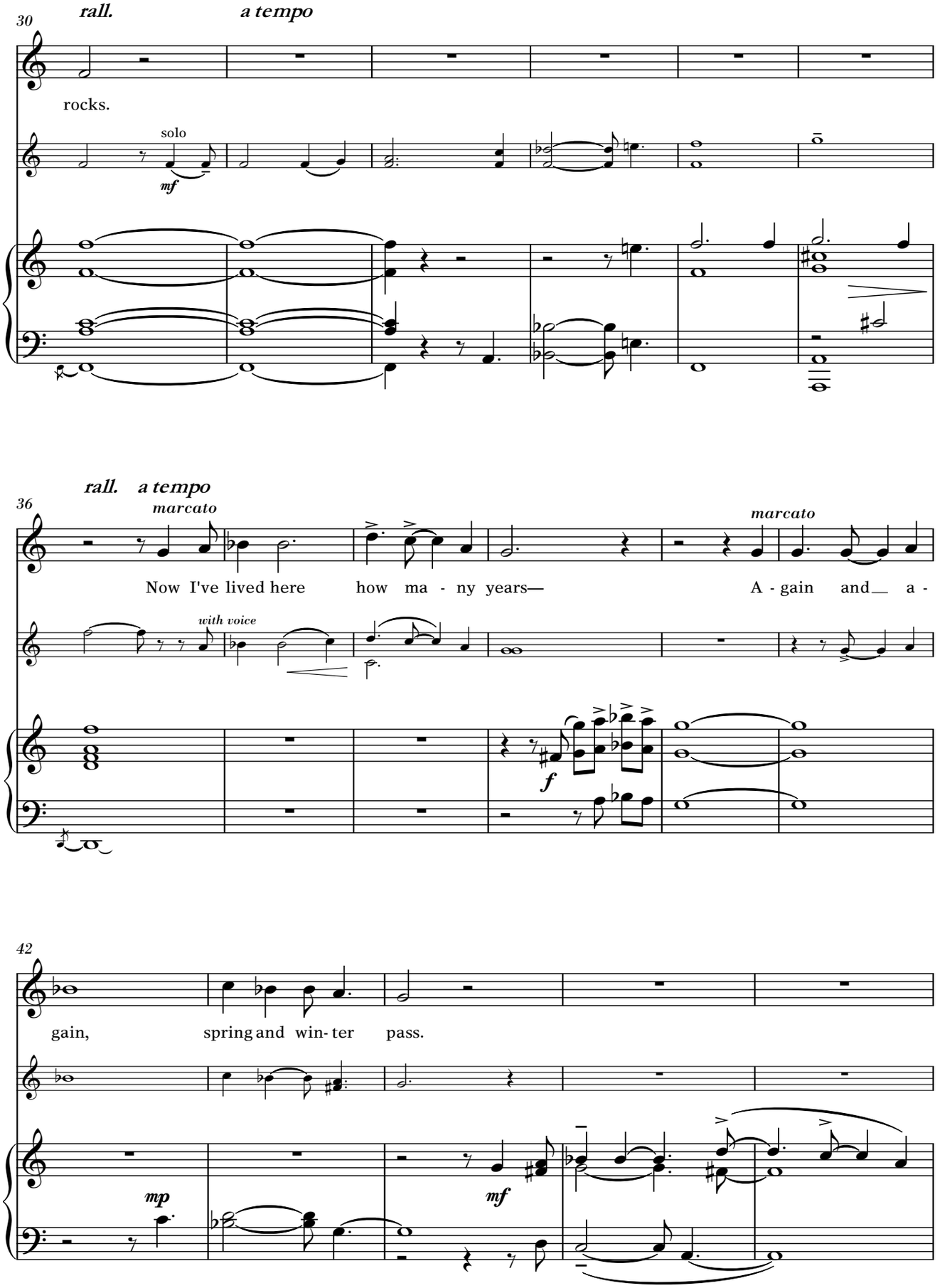
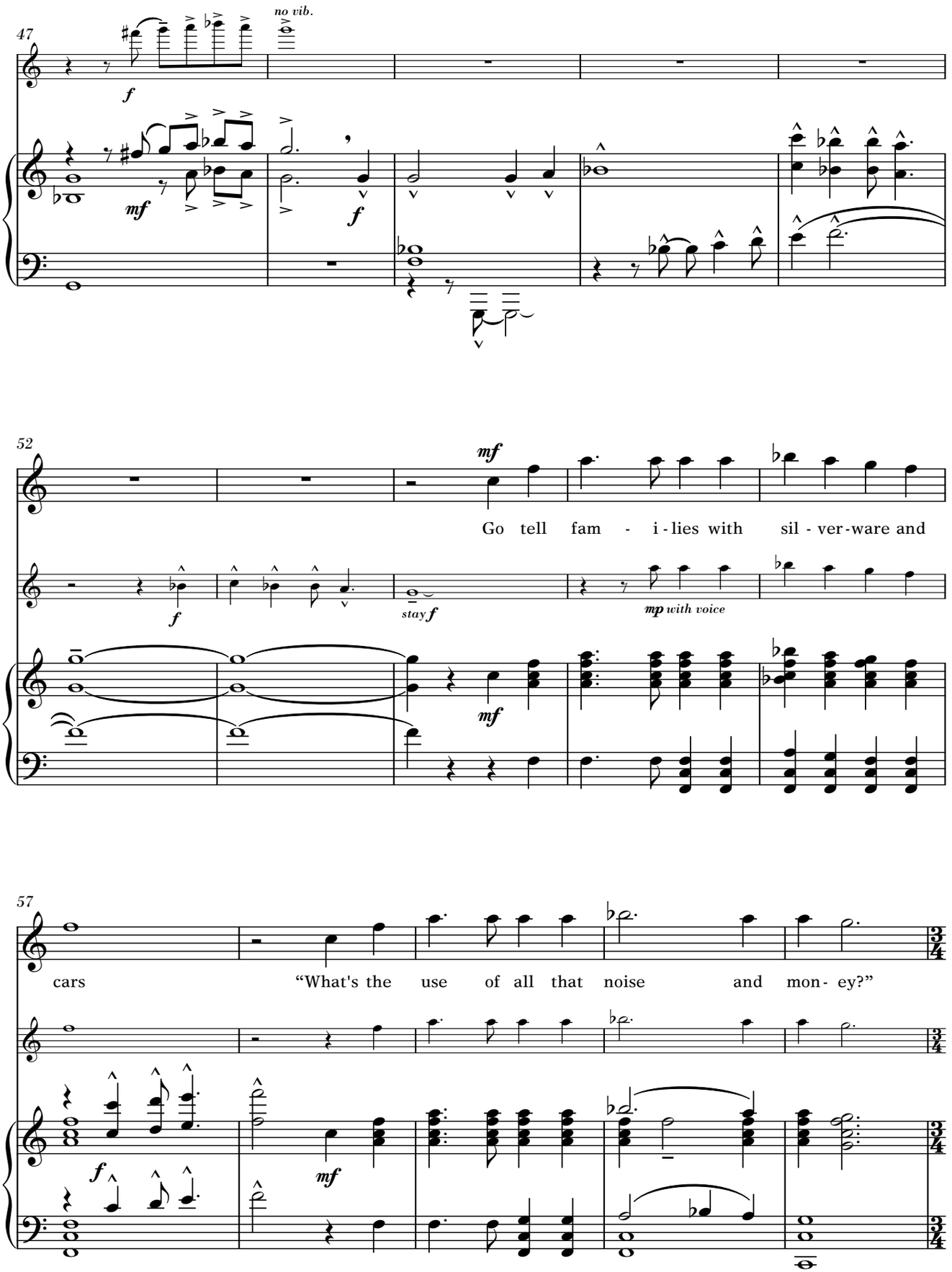
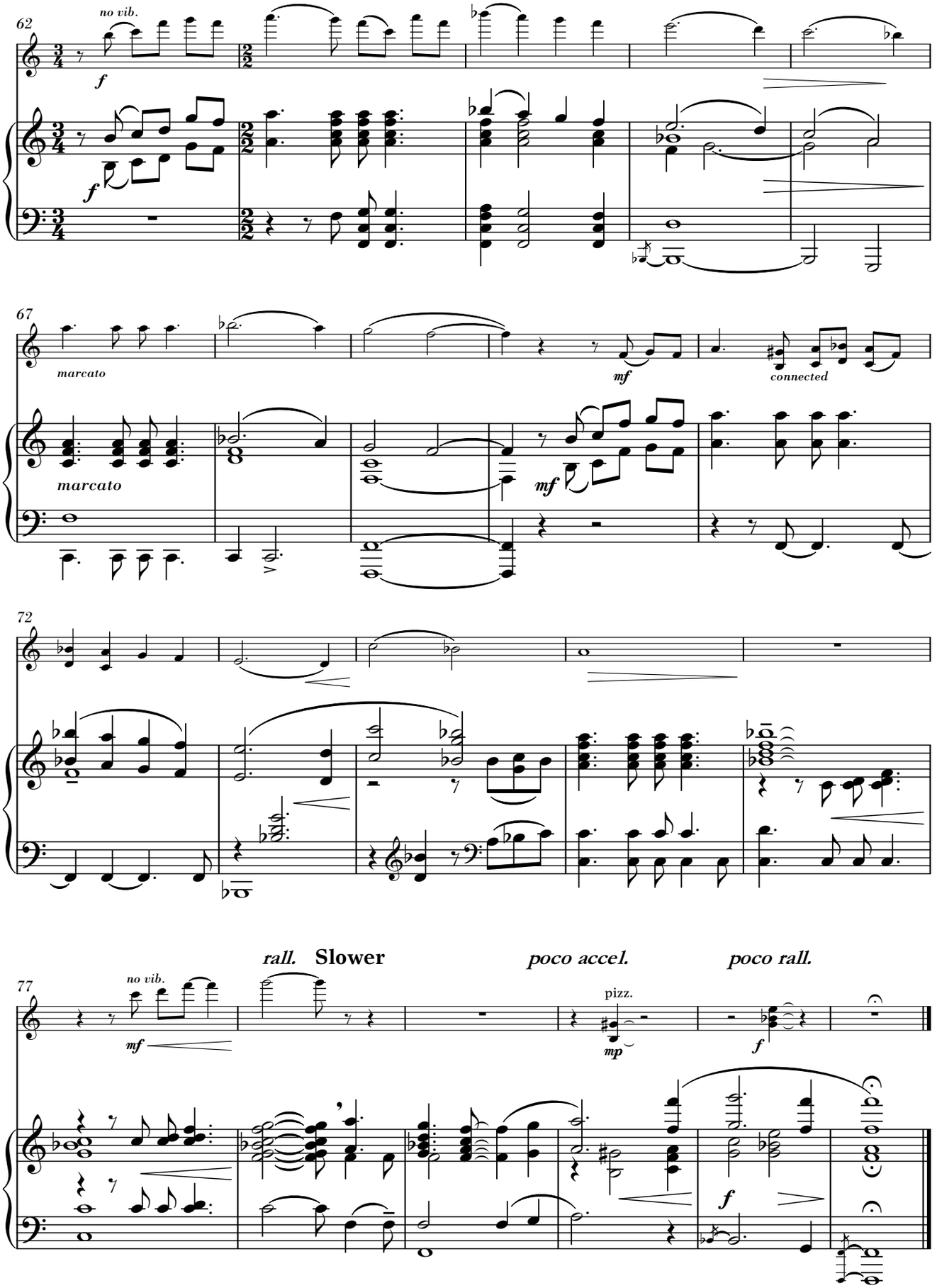
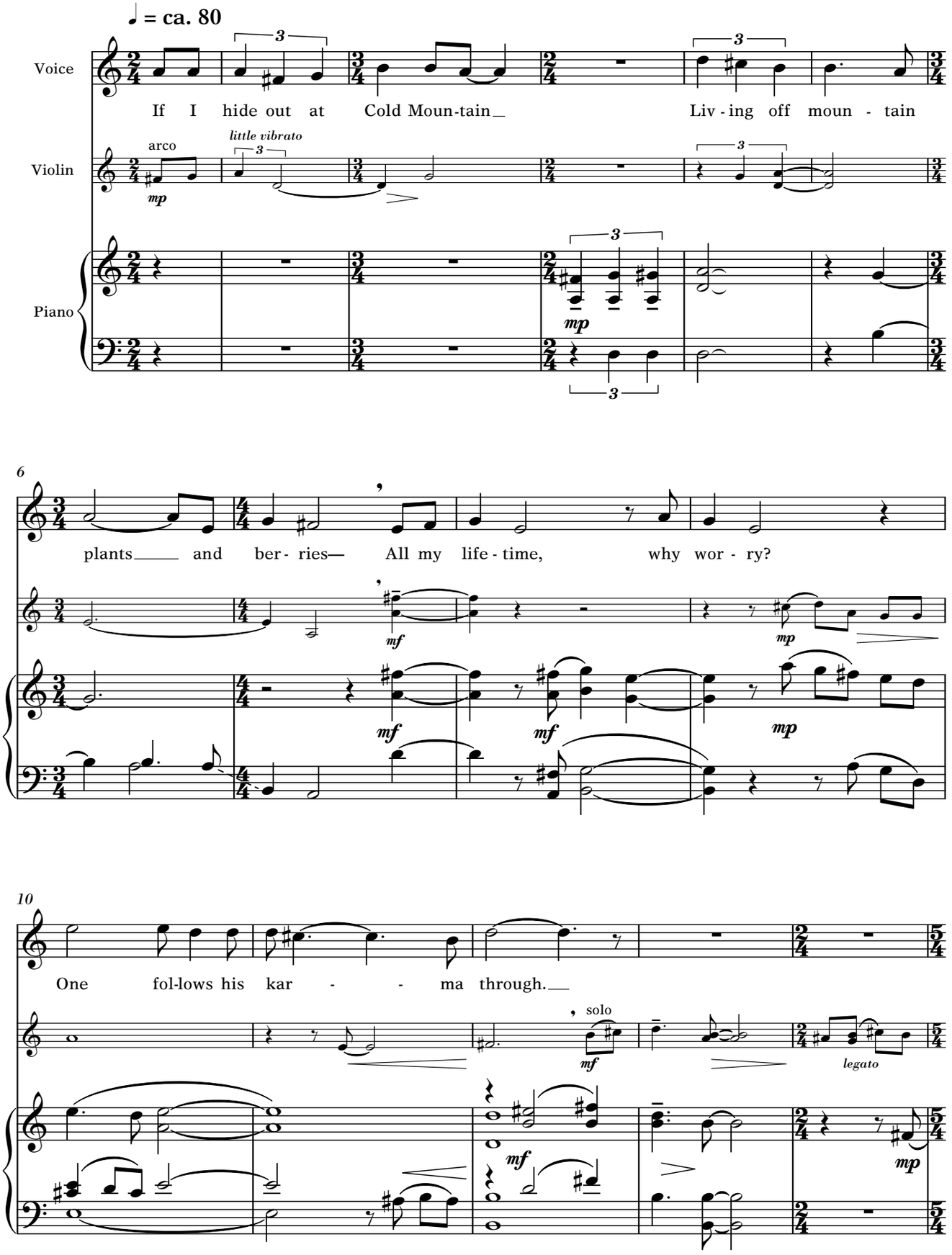

16
yard?
arco
mp
poco
20
What's be-yond the yard?
mp
mp
25
White clouds cling-ing to vague

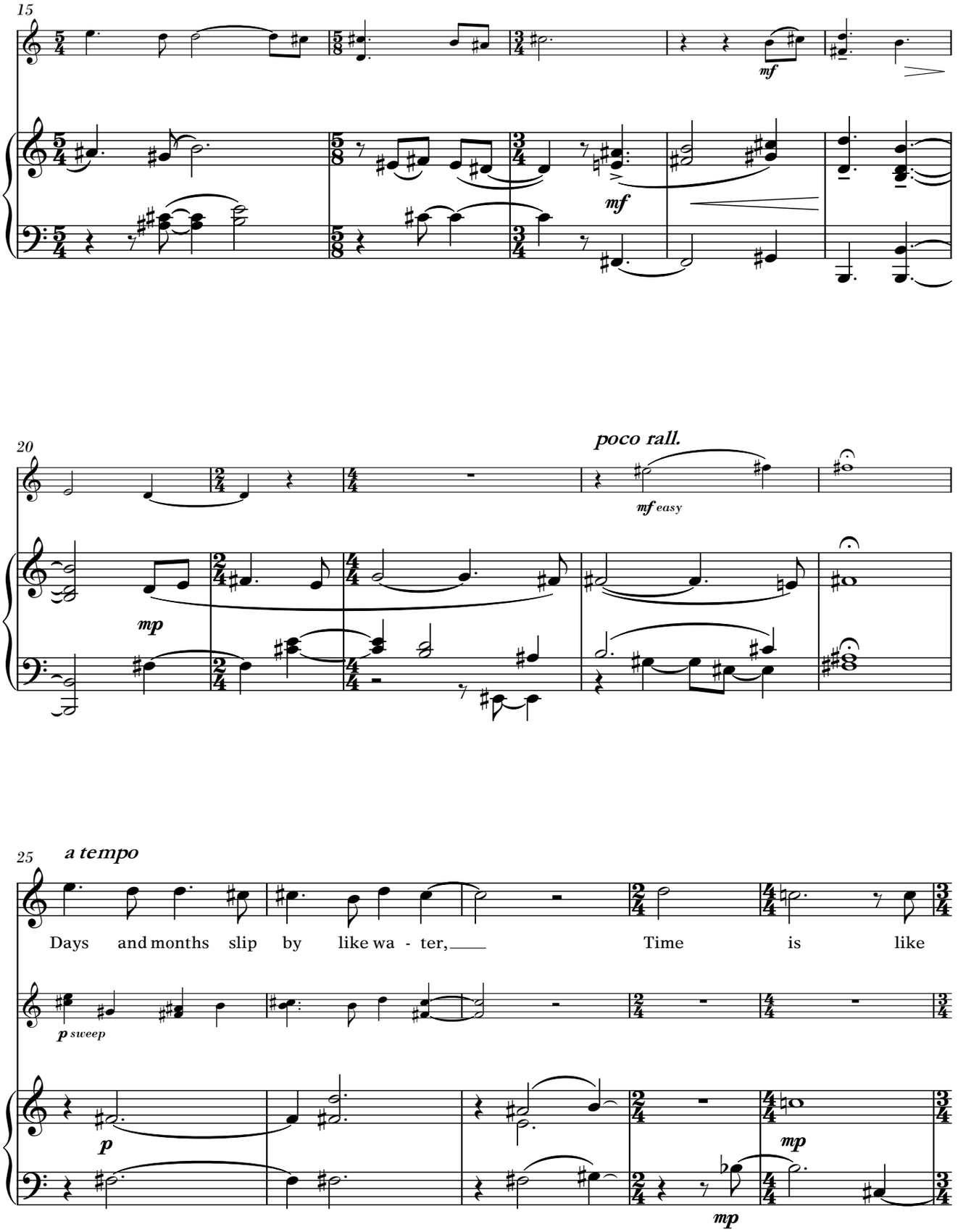

30
rall.
a tempo
rocks.
solo
mf
36
rall.
a tempo
marcato
Now I've lived here
how ma - ny years—
marcato
A - gain
and
a -
with voice
f
42
gain,
spring and win- ter
pass.
mp
mf

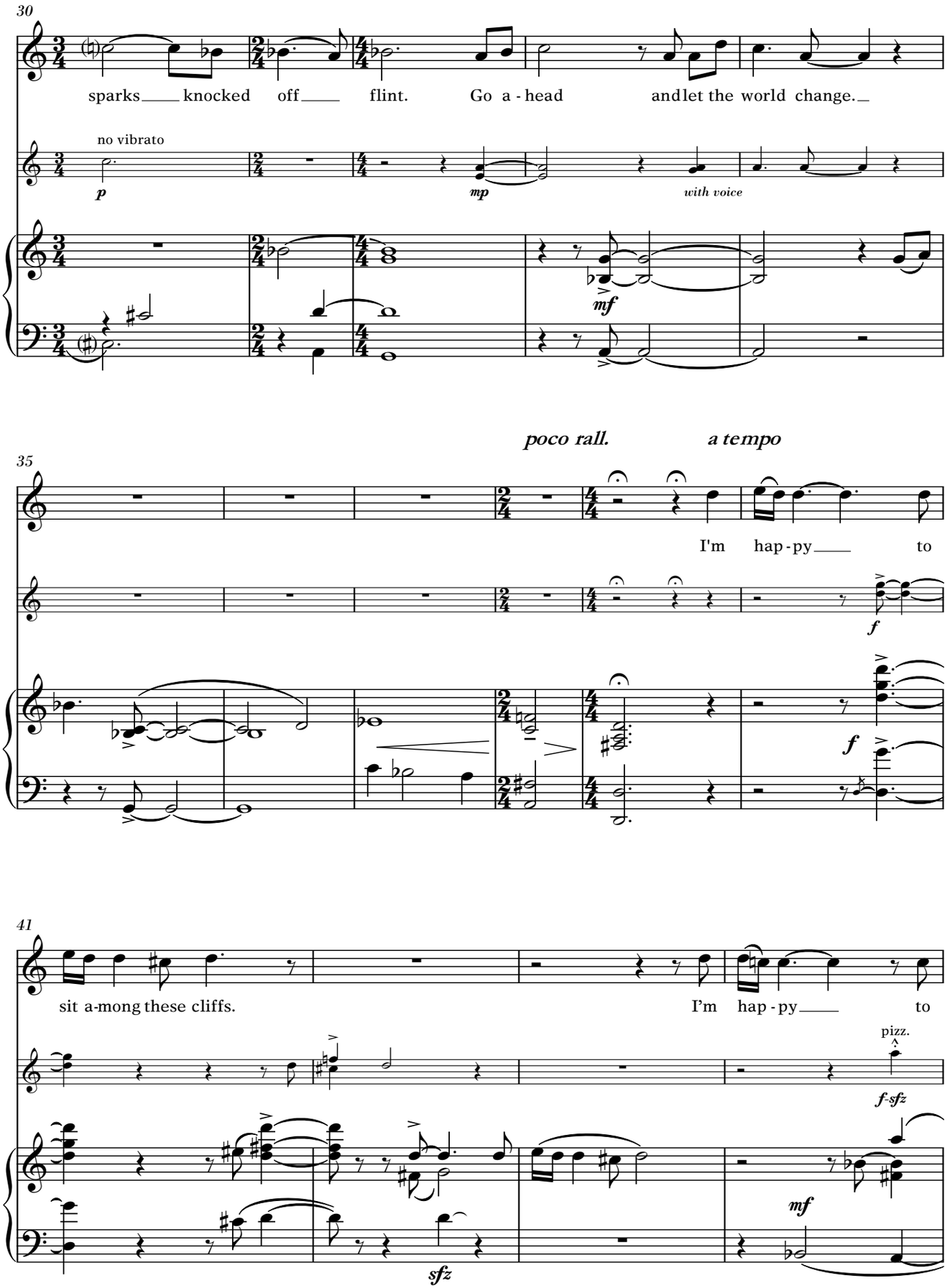

47
no vib.
52
Go tell fam - i - lies with sil - ver-ware and
stay
mp with voice
57
cars "What's the use of all that noise and mon- ey?"

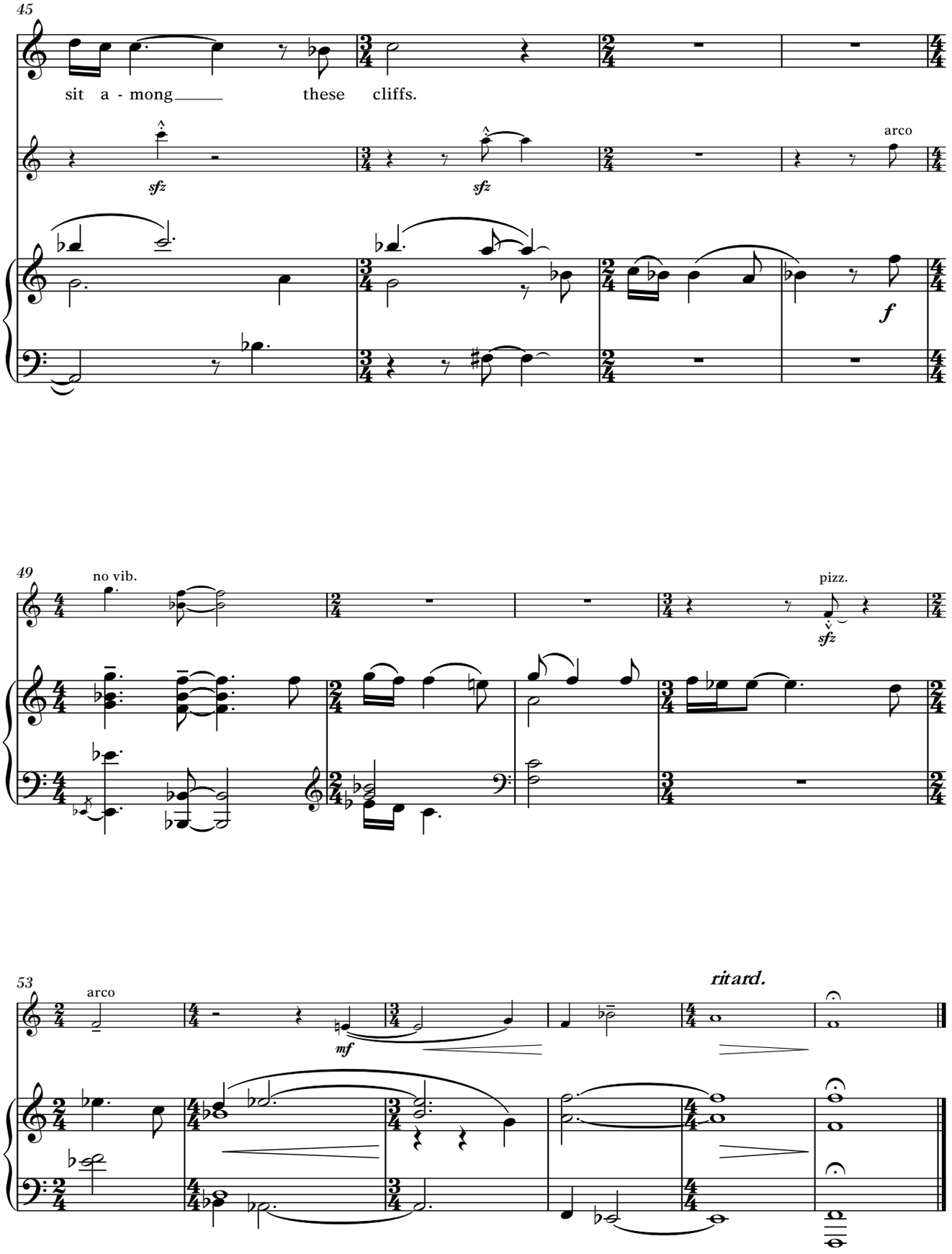

62
no vib.
f
f
67
marcato
marcato
mf
mf
connected
72
rall. Slower
poco accel.
poco rall.
77
no vib.
mf
pizz.
mp
f
f

If I Hide out at Cold Mountain

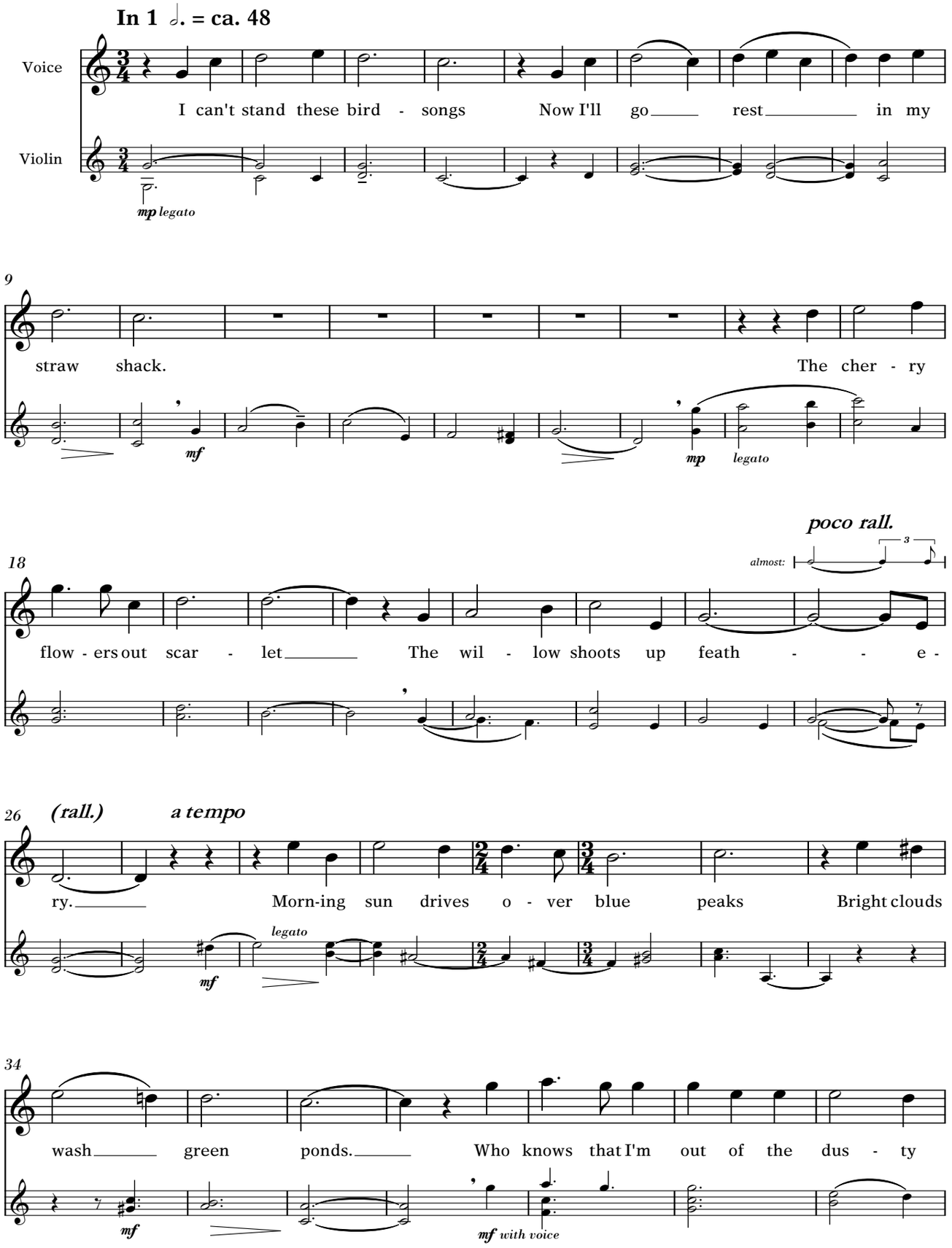


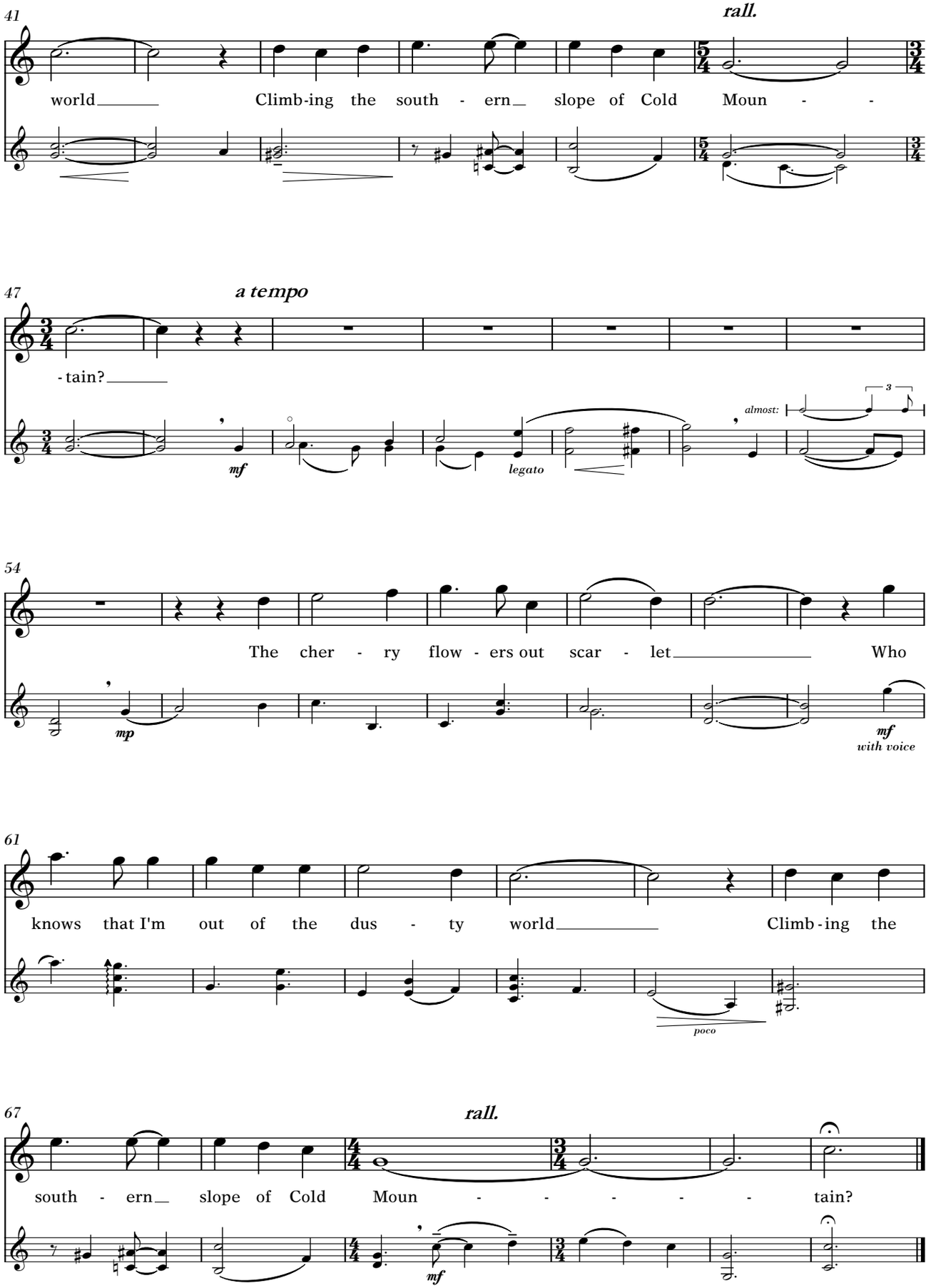

15
mf
mf
20
poco rall.
mf easy
mp
25
a tempo
Days and months slip by like wa - ter, Time is like
p sweep
p
mp
mp


30
sparks knocked off flint. Go a - head and let the world change.
no vibrato
p
mp
with voice
mf
poco rall.
a tempo
35
I'm hap - py to
f
f
41
sit a-mong these cliffs.
I'm hap - py to
pizz.
f-sfz
mf
sfz

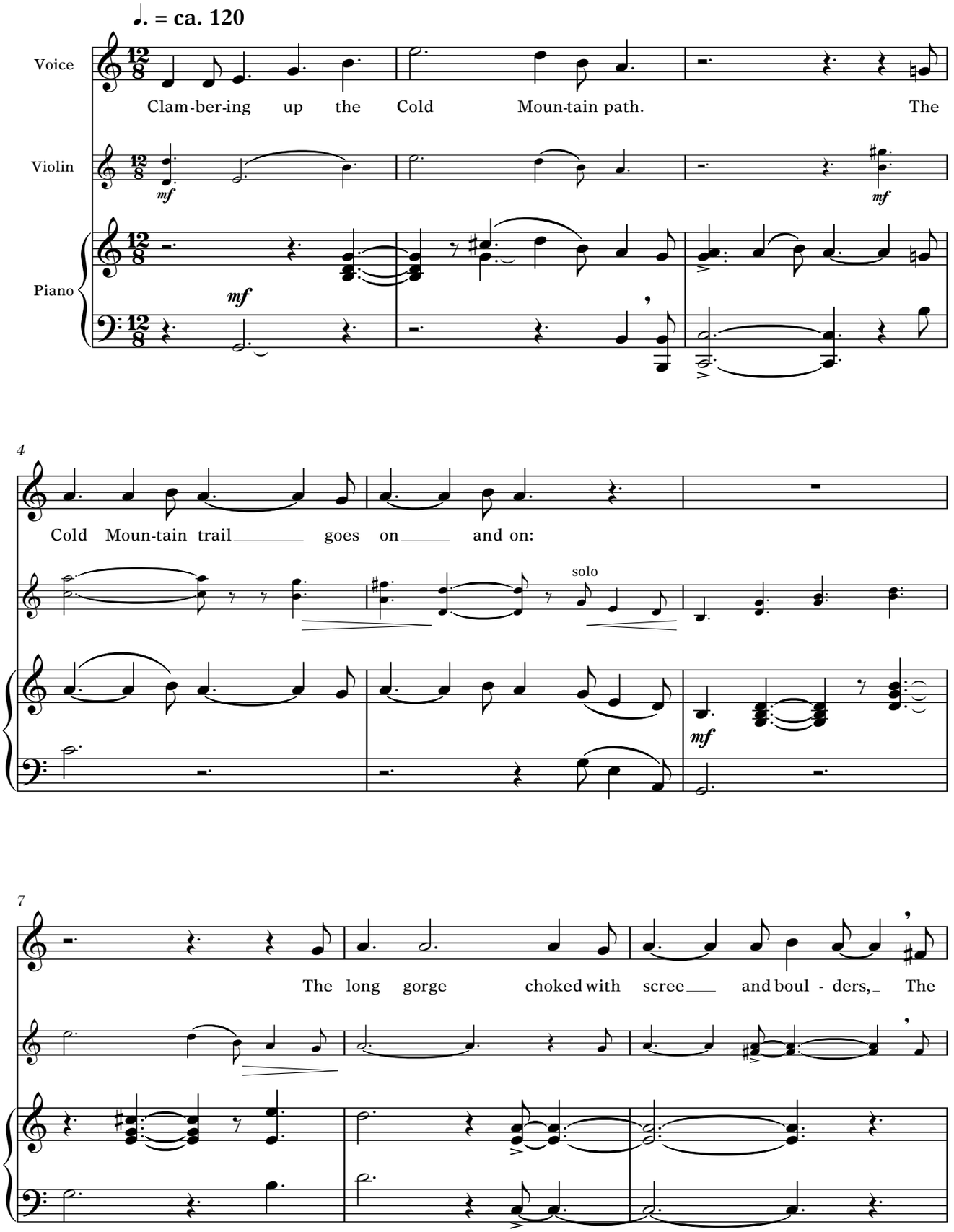

45
sit a - mong these cliffs.
sfz
sfz
arco
f
49
no vib.
pizz.
sfz
53
arco
mf
ritard.

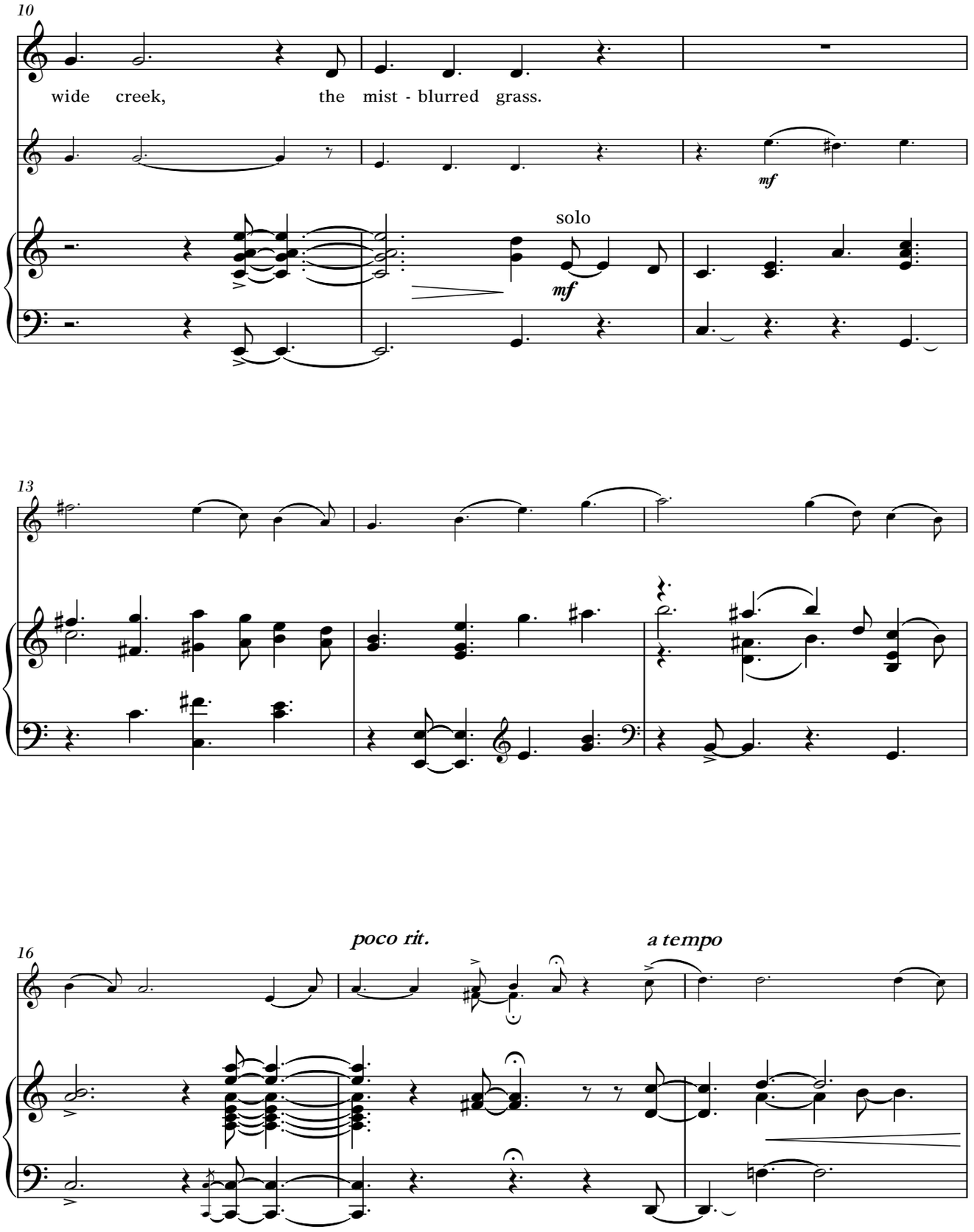
I Can't Stand These Bird-Songs

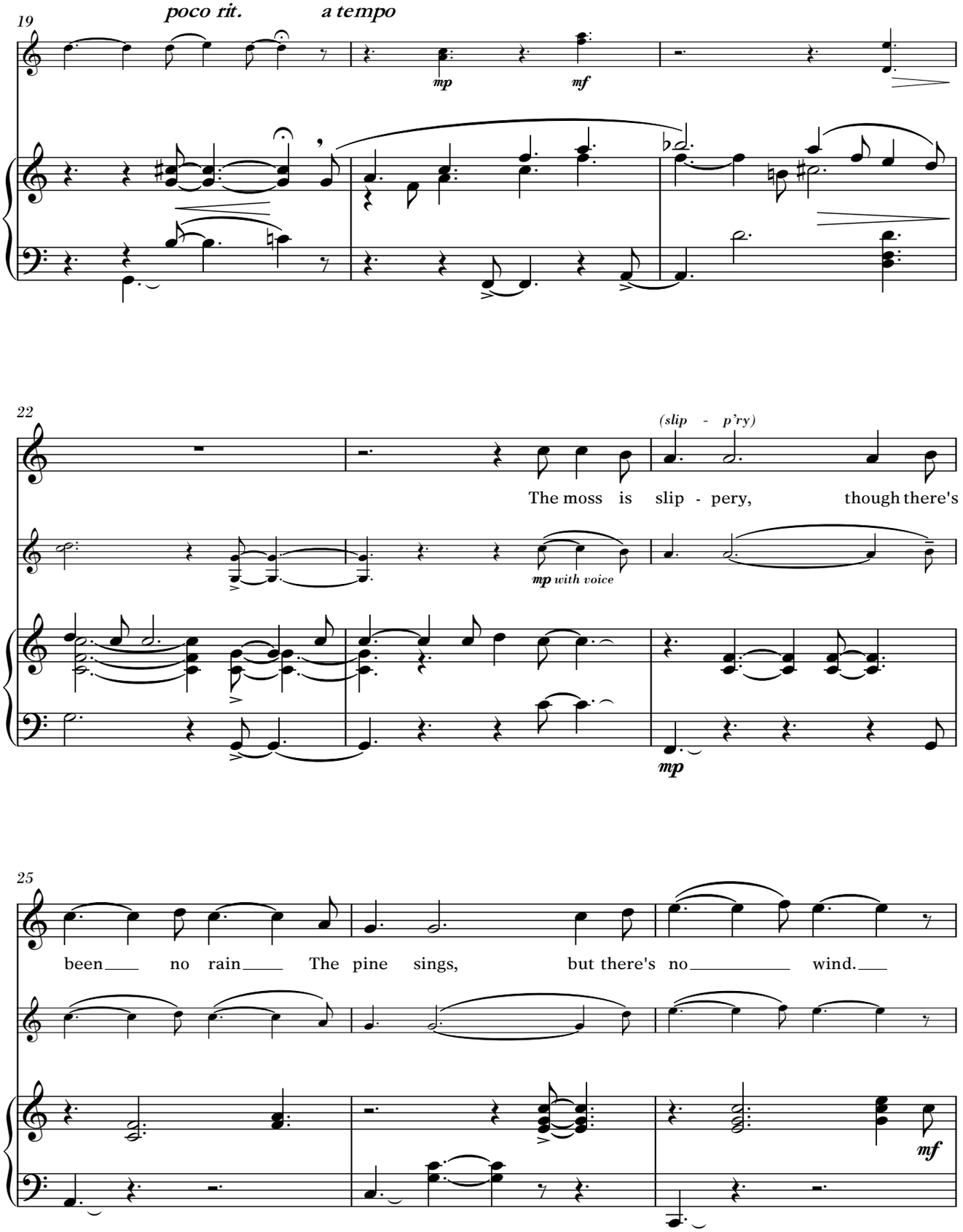


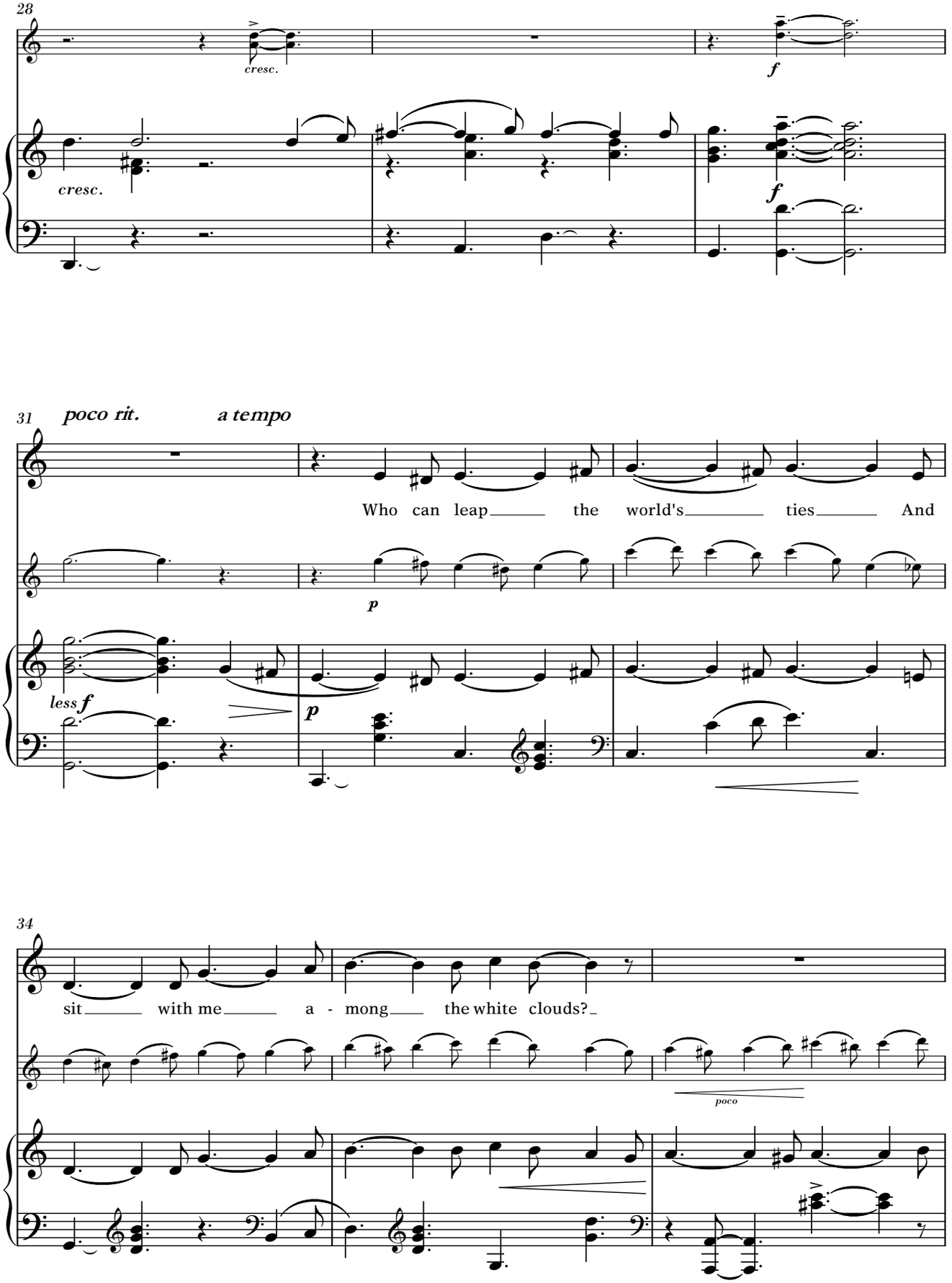

41
rall.
world Climb-ing the south - ern slope of Cold Moun - -
47
a tempo
- tain?
mf
legato
almost:
3
54
The cher - ry flow - ers out scar - let Who
mp
mf
with voice
61
knows that I'm out of the dus - ty world Climb - ing the
poco
67
rall.
south - ern slope of Cold Moun - - - - - tain?
mf

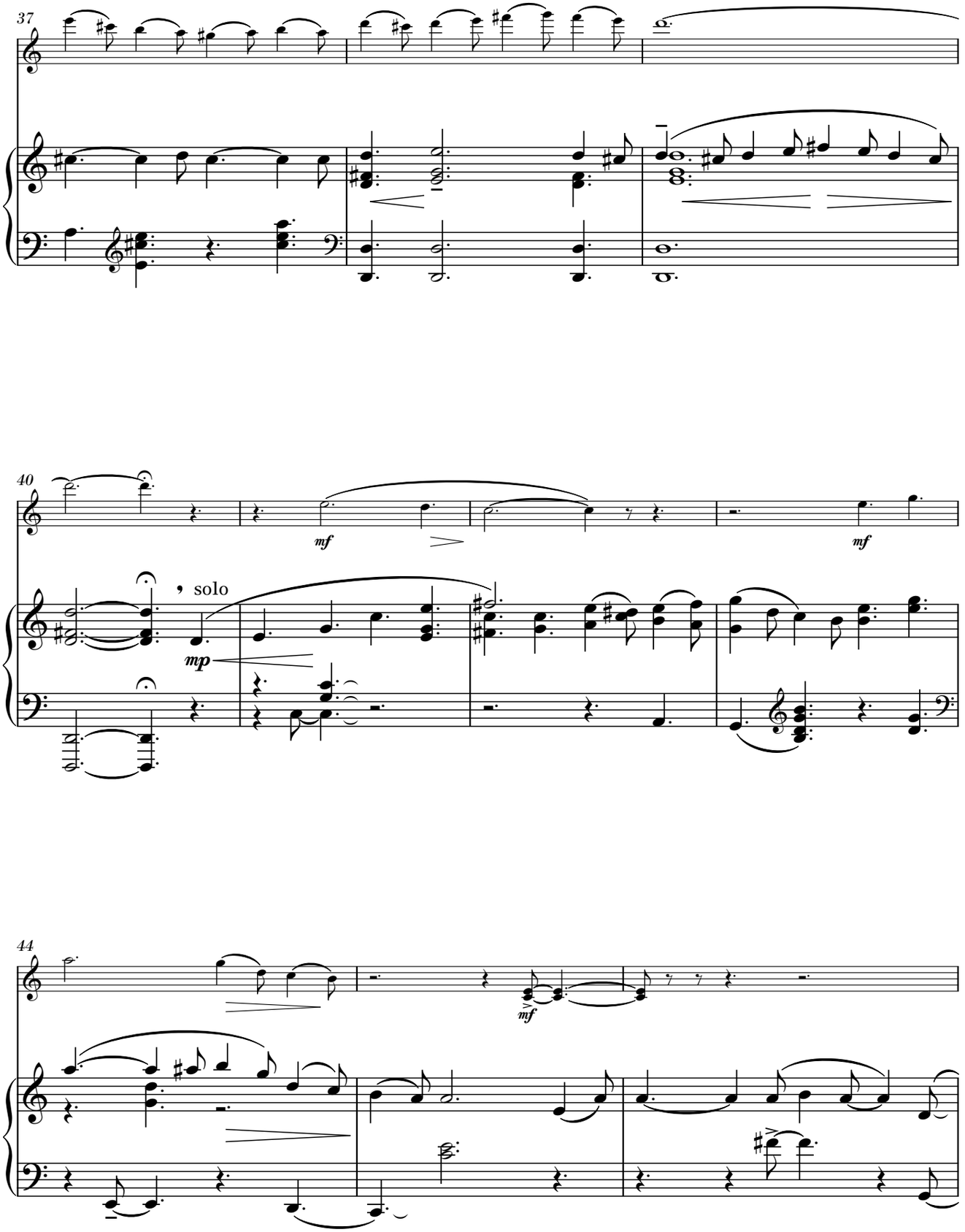
Clambering up the Cold Mountain Path

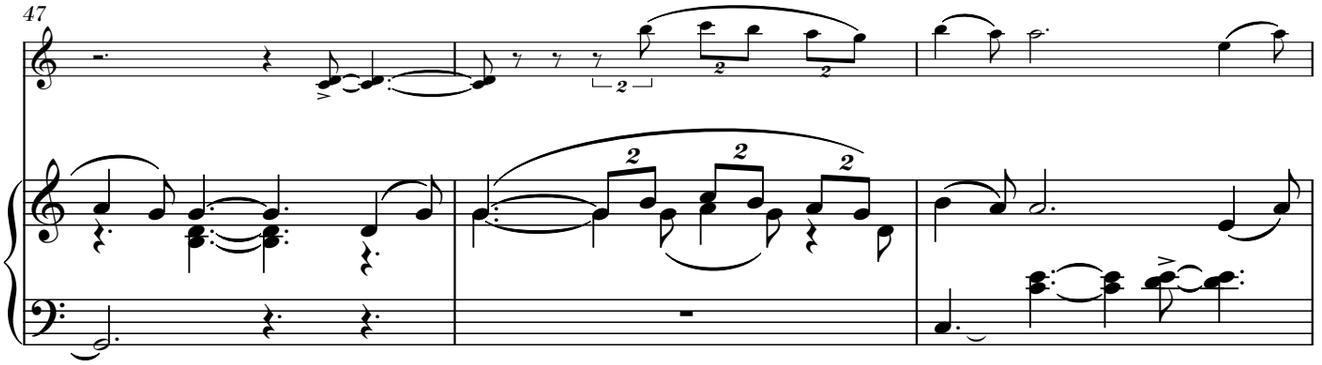


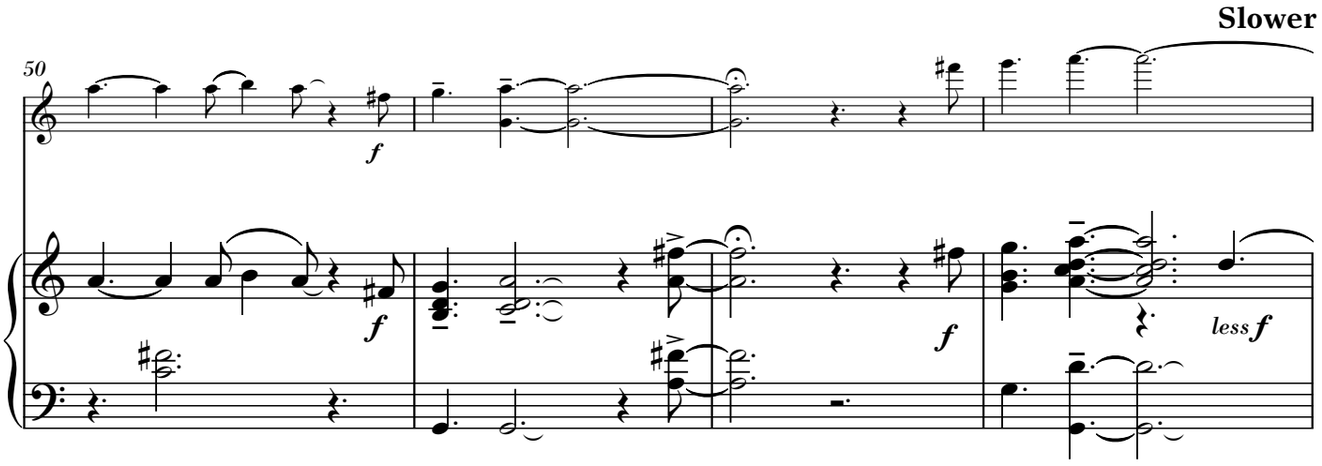

10
wide creek, the mist - blurred grass.
mf
solo
mf
13
16
poco rit.
a tempo

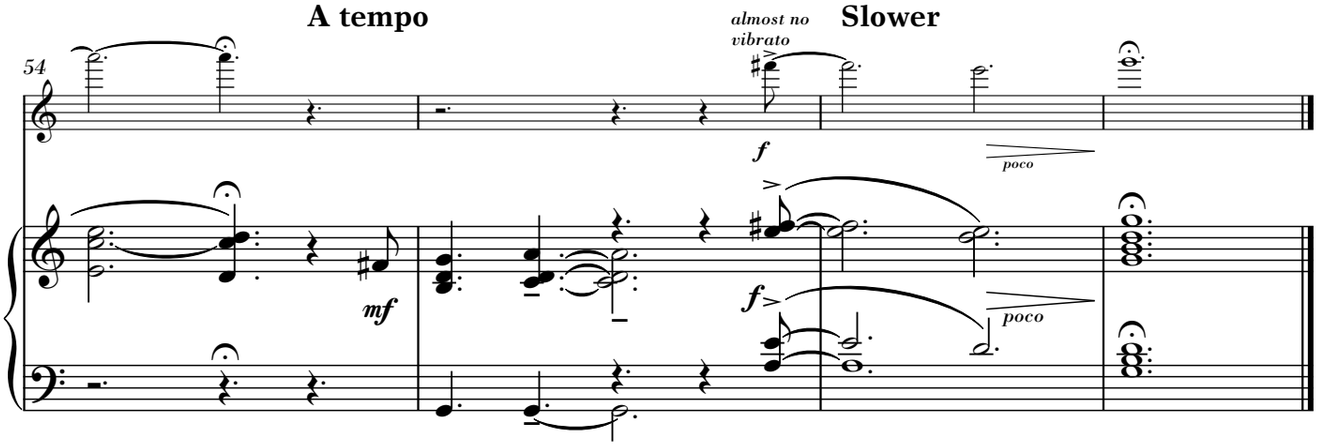

19
poco rit.
a tempo
mp
mf
22
(slip - p'ry)
The moss is slip - pery, though there's
mp with voice
mp
25
been no rain The pine sings, but there's no wind.
mf


28
cresc.
cresc.
f
f
31
poco rit.
a tempo
Who can leap the world's ties And
p
less f
p
34
sit with me a - mong the white clouds?
poco

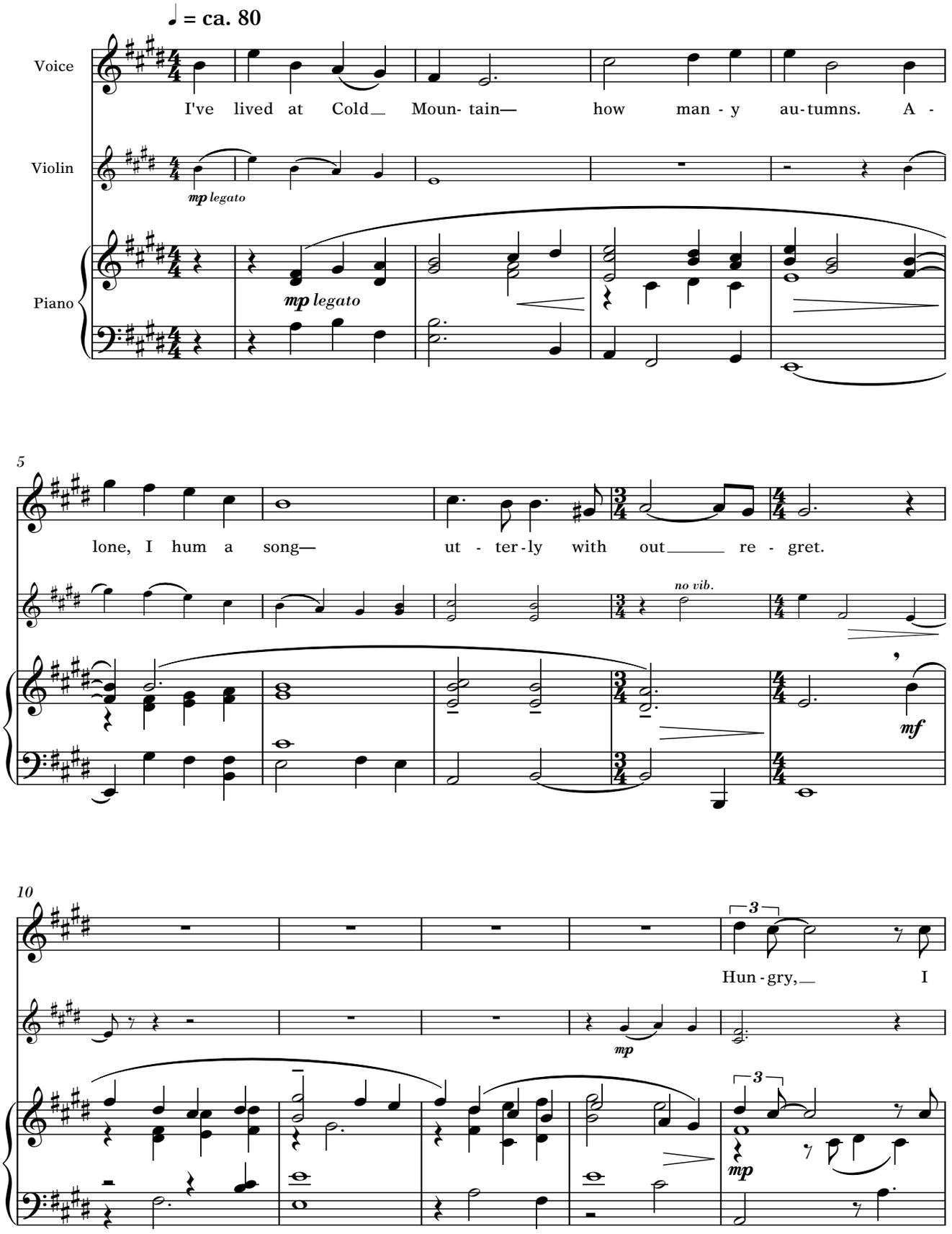

37
40
mf
mf
solo
mp
44
mf

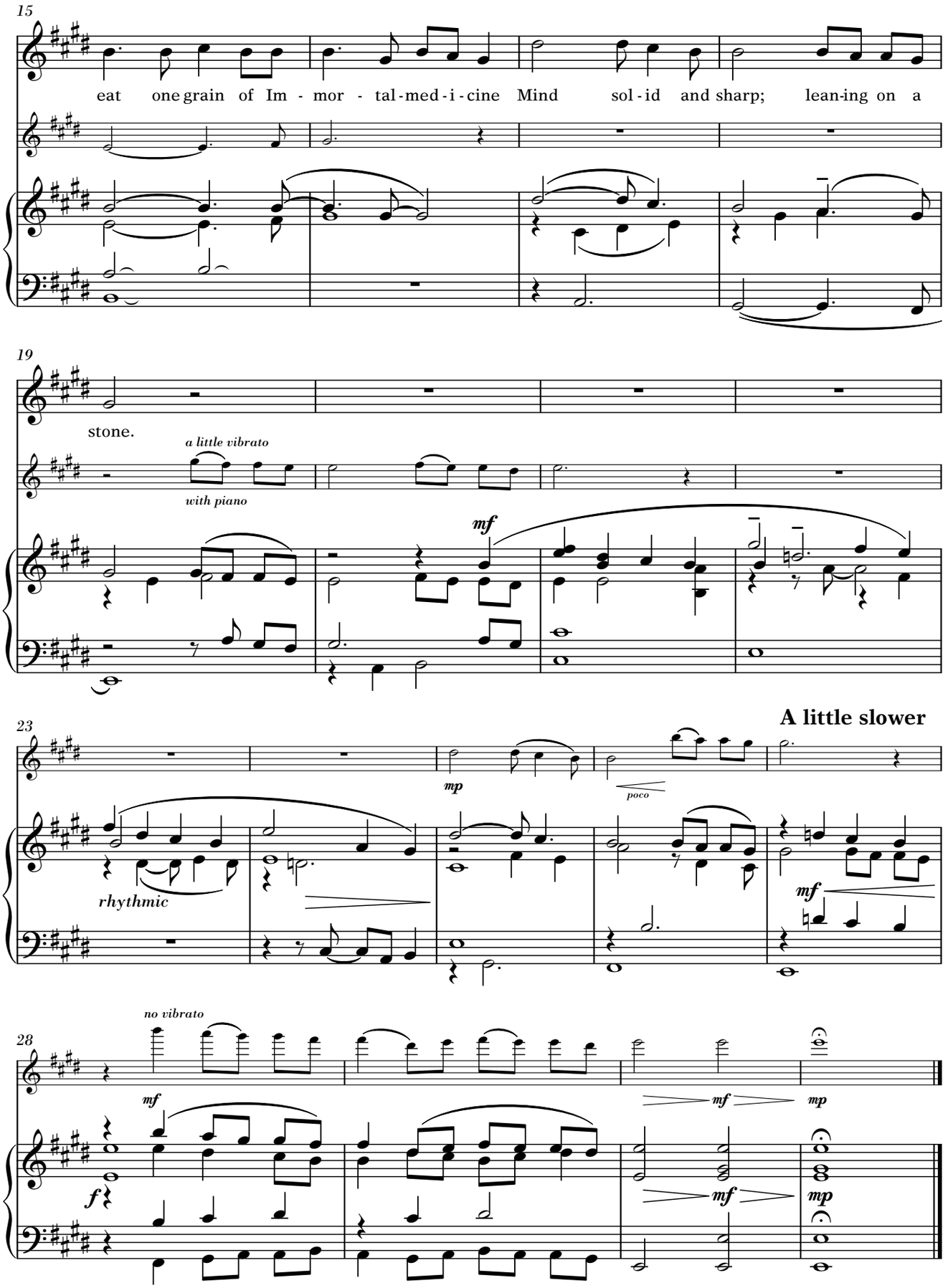

47


Slower
50
f
f
f
less f


A tempo
almost no vibrato
Slower
54
mf
f
poco
f
poco

I've Lived at Cold Mountain




15
eat one grain of Im - mor - tal-med-i-cine Mind sol-id and sharp; lean-ing on a
19
stone.
a little vibrato
with piano
mf
23
A little slower
mp
poco
rhythmic
mf
28
no vibrato
mf
f
mf
mf
mp
mf
mp

In a tangle of cliffs, I chose a place –
Bird paths, but no trails for men.
What's beyond the yard?
White clouds clinging to vague rocks.
Now I've lived here – how many years –
Again and again, spring and winter pass.
Go tell families with silverware and cars
"What's the use of all that noise and money?"

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