SONG OF MYSELF

Intoned Poems of Walt Whitman

by

Cris Forster

SONG OF MYSELF

Intoned Poems of Walt Whitman

for

Voice

Chrysalis I

Harmonic/Melodic Canon

by

Cristiano Forster

© 1980-2025

First Edition, 1980

Edited and corrected Second Edition, 2000

Edited, corrected, and enlarged Scanned Edition, 2025

The Scanned Edition includes three new pages: Chrysalis I Tuning Sequence, Harmonic/Melodic Canon Tuning Sequence, and a page with two photographs. I attached these pages to three blank pages at the beginning of the First and the Second Edition. Also, the Scanned Edition contains several numerical and musical corrections, which I pasted over the original text of the first two editions. Finally, for all editions, “Chrysalis" should read "Chrysalis I" and "Harmonic/Melodic Canon I" should read "Harmonic/Melodic Canon."

To Heidi Forster

INTRODUCTION

Song of Myself: Intoned Poems of Walt Whitman represents a departure from the usual practice of combining instrumental music with the language of poetry. At the heart of this composition and its performance is the oral tradition of the storyteller who, since the beginning of poetry and music, has relied on a limited stage set and a small number of props in the fulfillment of his art. He lives today as then to inspire and ignite the imagination of his audience. He rejoices in the conviction of his performance because it is founded on clarity of speech, so that anyone may understand and sense the meaning of the few precious words of the poet as they are combined with the sounds of the instruments.

Standard musical terms (plainsong, chant, inflected speech, etc.) left me discontent in describing or directing the motivating forces of this musical setting of Whitman's poems. I finally chose the verb to intone because I sense within it a quality of restraint: musicians approaching a set of great poems should always be restrained; the poetry won't get any better with their music. Intoning means having and developing a sensitivity for pitch. The inflections of the human voice are an indication of emotions, reflections, and ideas, not only on stage but everywhere. Intimately connected to and inseparable from pitch is the rhythm, the speed, timing, and accentuation of the poetic line. Only after many months of reflecting and having thoroughly memorized all the poems did I approach the question of sound and music because I wanted to preserve as best I could Whitman's internal voice.

In this context, the two musical instruments and their mathematical tunings are of secondary importance. I built them in order to explore in a scientific and esthetic manner new musical resources. The poems come first, words, thoughts, ideas, emotions intact. As my friend, Dr. Robert Dreher, upon hearing a performance at Dominican College so generously suggested: "The performance was a careful musical rendering of passionately held ideas."

Cris Forster

THE POEMS

"Song of Myself" is the title given by Walt Whitman to the third book of his Leaves of Grass. This book contains fifty-two poems of which I have chosen eleven for this composition. The number and first line of each poem appear below. After the last poem I have chosen to repeat the first stanza of the first poem. A compelling feeling for Whitman's eternal themes and personal reflections has prompted me to make this interpretive gesture. Otherwise, all poems are presented in their entirety.

SONG OF MYSELF

1. I celebrate myself, and sing myself p. 1

6. A child said What is the grass? fetching it to me with full hands p. 6

7. Has any one supposed it lucky to be born? p. 18

18. With music strong I come, with my cornets and my drums p. 24

19. This is the meal equally set, this the meat for natural hunger p. 29

21. I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul p. 37

34. Now I tell what I knew in Texas in my early youth p. 46

38. Enough! enough! enough! p. 48

50. There is that in me——I do not know what it is——but I know it is in me p. 55

51. The past and present wilt——I have fill'd them, emptied them p. 61

52. The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and my loitering p. 66

1. I celebrate myself, and sing myself p. 72

THE INSTRUMENTS

The two stringed instruments for this composition, Chrysalis and Harmonic/Melodic Canon I, were conceived and built by me in San Francisco and in San Diego. The Chrysalis consists of a spruce wheel mounted vertically on a wave-like stand; it has 82 strings on each side, and the wheel may be freely spun in either direction. The Harmonic/Melodic Canon I has 48 strings all one meter long for easy mathematical manipulation. Color photographs and detailed descriptions of these two instruments may be found in my book entitled Musical Mathematics: On the Art and Science of Acoustic Instruments.
This work was written over a ten year period between
1991-2000.

The tuning of Song of Myself is in just intonation. Prime factorization of the integers of the frequency ratios in the following tuning charts reveals utilization of all prime numbers from 2 through 13. Four additional ratios go beyond 13: 28/17, 32/17, and 20/19 on the H/M Canon I, and 19/13 on the Chrysalis. The tuning charts are organized to demonstrate the concept of melodic modulation by showing multiple musical interpretations of any given ratio when heard or calculated from two or more different tonal centers (1/1's). A definition of what constitutes a "tonality" or "key" is here intentionally avoided. Within a given musical context, three sequential tones can be enough to define a tonal center.

Open Strings 1 and 34 on the H/M Canon I are tuned to C_3 at 130.8 cps, or to an "octave" below middle C_4 at 261.6 cps. "Double-octaves" at 523.3 cps may be found on the Chrysalis, Strings 29-31 right side, and Strings 18-21 left side. With the exception of "octaves," ratio 2/1, "double-octaves," ratio 4/1, etc., above C_3, I simplified all other "octave" equivalents to ratios larger than 1/1 and smaller than 2/1. For example, Strings 15-6 on the left sides of the bridges of the H/M Canon I are 200.0 mm long. Consequently, they produce modern length ratio 200.0 mm/1000.0 mm = 1/5, or frequency ratio 5/1, which sounds the interval of "two octaves and a major third" above the fundamental, ratio 1/1. This simplifies to frequency ratio 5/4, or the interval of a "major third."

For the H/M Canon I, I used steel music wire gage #10, .024", for all strings except String 34 (gage #14, .033") and String 48 (gage #17, .039"). For the Chrysalis, I used gage #9, .022", right side, and gage #6, .016", left side.

CHRYSALIS I

Left Side Tuning

Strings	Ratios				
1-3:	1/1	(13/9)	377.9 cps	←	"There is that in me....." Poem 50
4-6:	9/8				
7-9:	6/5				
10-13:	16/13.....16/9				
14-17:	20/11				
18-21:	4/1	(4/1)	C_5 at 523.3 cps	←	"I wish I could translate....." Poem 6
22-25:	10/9				
26-29:	14/11.....56/33				
30-33:	3/2	1/1	(3/2) 785.0 cps	←	"I also say....." Poem 18
34-36:	28/27				
37-39:	6/5.....54/35				
40-43:	5/4	45/28			
44-48:	6/5	54/35			
49-51:	7/5				
52-54:	13/11				
55-58:	35/33				
59-61:	1/1	(7/6)	610.5 cps	→	Poem 38 "I troop forth....."
62-64:	20/13				
65-67:	32/21				
68-70:	11/9				
71-74:	7/6				
75-78:	12/11				
79-82:	21/20				
1-3:	1/1	(13/9)	377.9 cps	→	Poem 6 "It may be you transpire....."

CHRYSALIS I

Right Side Tuning

Strings	Ratios				
1-3:	1/1	(15/8)	245.3 cps	←	"Something it swings on....." Poem 50
4-6:	7/5				
7-8:	10/7				
9-10:	19/13				
11-13:	3/2				
14-16:	20/13				
17-18:	11/7				
19-20:	5/3				
21-22:	26/15				
23-24:	16/9				
25-26:	25/13				
27-28:	2/1	(15/8)	490.5 cps		
29-31:	16/15.....1/1	(4/1)	C_5 at 523.3 cps	←	"I beat and pound....." Poem 18
32-36:	8/5		3/2		
37-41:	5/3		25/16		
42-45:	10/7.....3/2			←	"A child said....." Poem 6
46-49:	260/189		13/9		
50-53:	320/273		16/13		
54-57:	7/6				
58-62:	1/1	(40/21)	498.3 cps		
63-65:	32/21				
66-68:	3/2				
69-71:	27/20				
72-73:	7/5				
74-76:	40/27				
77-79:	5/4				
80-82:	6/5				
Poem 38 "Enough....."				→	1-3: 1/1 (15/8) 245.3 cps

HARMONIC/MELODIC

Strings:	1	2-6	7	8	9-10	11-2	13-4	15-6	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Right Side* m.m.	500 2/1 C_4	open 9/8 D_3	500 2/1 C_4	250 4/1 C_5	333.3 3/2	475 20/19	600 5/3	800 5/4	333.3 3/2	437.5 8/7	392.9 14/11	468.7 16/15	500 2/1 C_4	62.5 16/1 C_7	625 8/5
Left Side m.m.	500 2/1 C_4		500 2/1 C_4	750 4/3	666.7 3/2	525 40/21	400 5/4	200** 5/4	666.7 3/2	562.5 16/9	607.1 28/17	531.3 32/17	500 2/1 C_4	937.5 16/15	375 4/3

Poem 7:

3/2 9/8 21/11 8/5 3/2

Poem 19:

2/1 C_4 4/3 20/19 5/3 3/2 ← "This is the meal....."
40/21

5/3 5/4 3/2 2/1 C_4

9/8 4/1 C_5 3/2 20/19 ← "Do you guess....."

Poem 21:

"I am the poet....." → 24/17 6/5

9/8 21/11 8/5 3/2
24/17

Poem 51:

320/171 40/27 4/3 112/99 16/9 64/45

3/2 2/1 C_4

1/1 16/9 16/9 4/3 320/171 40/27 10/9 ← "Will you speak....."

1/1 16/9 32/27 4/3 320/189 10/9 10/9
D_3

Poem 52:

8/5

15/14 105/88 2/1 $C\#_4$ 15/8 1/1 $C\#_3$ 3/2

*Underlined frequency ratios occur on the right sides of the bridges.

**Strings shorter than 200 mm sound sharp of the indicated frequency ratios.

CANON TUNING

24-5	26-8	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37-9***	40-2	43-5	46	47	48
500	750	937.5	888.9	833.3	777.8	750	open	475	500	641	600	500	259.3	111.1	open
2/1	4/3	16/15	9/8	6/5	9/7	4/3	1/1	20/19	2/1	3/2	5/3	2/1	27/14	9/8	3/2
C_4							C_3		C_4	unison to 9-10 L.		C_4			octave below 9-10 L.
261.6 cps							130.8 cps								
500	250	62.5	111.1	166.7	222.2	250		525	500	359	400	500	740.7	888.9	
2/1	4/1	16/1	9/8	3/2	9/8	4/1		40/21	2/1	27/20	5/4	2/1	27/20	9/8	
C_4	C_5	C_7				C_5			C_4	octave above 46 L.		C_4			

8/5 27/16 9/5 27/14 2/1 3/2 ← "Has any one supposed....."
F_3

(2/1) ← "Every kind for itself....."
F_3

4/3 9/8 1/1 40/21 ← "The kept-woman, sponger....."
C_3

3/2 (2/1) 15/8
F_3

3/2 2/1 ← "Smile, O voluptuous....."
F_3

32/27 1/1 16/15 ← "The past and present wilt....."
D_3

4/3 9/8 1/1 40/21 ← "Do I contradict myself....."
C_3

2/1 4/1 16/1 9/8 3/2 9/8 4/1 1/1 40/21 2/1 ← "The spotted hawk....."
C_4 C_5 C_7 C_5 C_3 C_4

15/8 5/4 ← "I bequeath myself....."

"You will hardly know....." "But I shall be....." → 9/5 5/3 4/3 9/5 3/2 (1/1)
G_2

"And filter and fiber your blood....." → 2/1 10/9 4/3 1/1
G_3 G_2

***Non-canonical bridge locations and frequency ratios. 641 mm produce f.r. 3/2. 359 mm produce f.r. 27/20.

NOTATIONS FOR THE INSTRUMENTS

Chrysalis

In the score, each system has three staffs: the top staff is always reserved for the voice. For the Chrysalis, the middle staff is played by the left hand, the bottom staff by the right hand.

Harmonic/Melodic Canon I

Here the organization of the staffs is more complex: the middle staff carries the melodies and chords that predominate the musical materials in the bottom staff. For this reason, the right and left hands play on both staffs and on both sides of the moveable bridges. Awkward hand crossings are avoided whenever possible; where some ambiguity arises, L for left hand and R for right hand appear in the score.

L / R

String Numbers

The strings on both instruments are numbered: 1-82 twice for both the left and right sides of the Chrysalis; 1-48 for the strings of the H/M Canon I. The tuning charts show that the Chrysalis is tuned in groups of two or more strings, and that the H/M Canon I is tuned not only in groups but has individually tuned strings as well.

String Groups: 37

A single string number in the score indicates play <u>all</u> the strings tuned to the same pitch in that group. For example, on the Chrysalis right side, 37 means play strings 37-41; on the H/M Canon I it means play strings 37-39.

37↗

An arrow pointing upward to a string means play that string only.

In a chord, suspension, or melody this arrow also acts as an accent.

•37

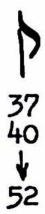
On the Harmonic/Melodic Canon I, a dot to the left of a string number indicates play the given string on the left side of the bridge. No dot means play the string on the right side of the bridge.

•37

On the Chrysalis, sometimes identical string numbers are played by the left and right hands simultaneously. A dot to the left of a string number in the top staff signifies that the voice intone the pitch of the string on the left side of the instrument. No dot means intone the pitch of the string played by the right hand.

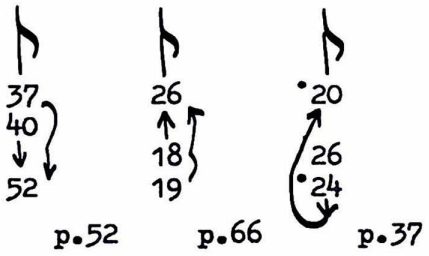
p. 29

On the Harmonic/Melodic Canon I, a bracket connecting two string numbers indicates play two individual strings simultaneously.



p. 52

An arrow pointing down between a set of string numbers signifies play all the string groups between the string numbers shown. On the Chrysalis left side the example means: play strings 37-54, as 52-54 constitute a string group in the tuning chart.



p.52 p.66 p.37

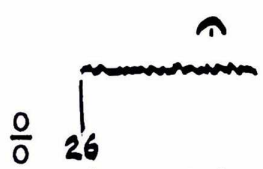
A wavy or straight arrow drawn vertically on either side of a set of string numbers is an interchangeable "arpeggio"/"glissando" sign, for the tuning may be either chordal or chromatic/diatonic. The last note (to which the arrow is pointing) should fall on the up or down beat. Since two or more successive sounds cannot occupy the same moment in time, a certain rhythmic flexibility is here essential. See: Borrowed Time.

p. 9

This notation is essentially the same as the above. However, it states precisely when the first and last strings are to be played. The unfinished 32nd note pattern is not an accurate rhythmic division. It simply states, "Get from string 42 to 82 in the time left in that measure."

p. 12

The meter 0/0 indicates an absence of strict time, while the three arched lines imply 32nd note values and a brisk pace; the word ROTATE means turn the Chrysalis wheel. However, in poem 38, page 54, and in poem 50, pages 56 and 57, a single rotation and three continuous rotations (indicated by three successive semi-circular arrows) are drawn through a set of bar lines, thereby indicating that these rotations are to be performed in time.



p. 41

The jagged line refers to a popular string bending technique known the world over, slightly modified here to mean a continuous tremor. On the H/M Canon, after a given string has been plucked by the right hand on the right side of the bridge, the left hand (on the left side of the bridge) pushes down on the string while continuously "fluttering" the sound in the vicinity of the second ratio ——13/12.

NOTATIONS FOR THE VOICE

INTONE — in rhythm and on a given pitch.

RECITE — in rhythm; on any desired pitch natural to a speaking voice.

SPEAK — on a given pitch; in any desired rhythm natural to a speaking voice.

8 ve (2/1) ranges — The voice part is written for either male or female performers. Therefore, the performers' ranges could vary a great deal. For this reason, the octave (2/1) notation has been avoided. Given the instrumental tunings, the performer should chose a comfortable range.

Borrowed Time — Borrowed Time should not be confused with rubato. It is, instead, the breath of life. The technical term closest to describing its meaning is an "agogic accent". Here it is the taking of actual physical and musical breath, thereby underlining and separating a series of thoughts, images, or emotions which would otherwise have to be deliberately accented. In some places these moments for the voice are marked by conventional breath marks.

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Accents in the score are a difficult subject—they are not to be taken literally or as signposts leading to a dramatic declamatory style. Instead, they are the subtle underlining of a word or syllable; they are further extensions of the concept of Borrowed Time.

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Double bar lines, not signifying the actual end of a poem, mark either the transition of one section within a poem to another, or a deliberate change in mood based on the interpretation of this score. These double bar lines should not interfere with the rhythmic flow of a poem.

8/5 32/35
a way - - - - ay p. 23

The voice may on occasion glide between two pitches on a given vowel or syllable.

PERFORMANCE NOTES FOR THE POETRY, VOICE, INSTRUMENTS, AND TUNING

Conventional music notes carry a double meaning: they indicate both the pitch and rhythm of a sound. The notes in the score of Song of Myself represent rhythmic values only. The pitches of these notes are identified either by string numbers found in the tuning charts, or by ratios written into the score.

Polyrhythms

"A child said...", etc.: Here the rhythmic notation of the voice is contrasted against that of the instrumental part (2/4—3/8 time), thereby counteracting the "natural" tendencies that could lead to a singing style. Again, the text and the music should always be fresh, alive, without being "soopy".

Melody

"The kept-woman, sponger, thief...", etc.: At times the musician, mortal that he is, cannot help himself and sings a melody; the words must stay intact.

Rotations

Rotations of the Chrysalis wheel are visual extensions of the mood of a poem. The rotations are also a suggestion of how music flows in time....

String Bending

On the H/M Canon I, on three separate occasions, three different strings are bent by the left hand to sound higher pitches than their original tunings. A knowledge of intervals and ratios is essential. The bending of a string should be done with full conviction in either the asking of a critical question, or in dramatic presentation of human vulnerability: we all tremble from time to time.

Repetitive Patterns

During repetitive patterns (p. 11, system 2), it is possible that string numbers do not appear for two or more measures at a time; the same is true for string numbers in the top staff. In either case, follow the preceding string numbers in former measures until they actually change.

Song of Myself: Intoned Poems of Walt Whitman

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Chrysalis I Tuning Sequence for Electronic Tuner

Right Side			**Left Side**		
1–3:	B_3 –12 ¢	[1088 ¢]	1–3:	$F\sharp_4$ +37 ¢	[637 ¢]
4–6:	F_4 –29 ¢	[471 ¢]	4–6:	$G\sharp_4$ +41	[841 ¢]
7–8:	F_4 +6	[506 ¢]	7–9:	A_4 +52	[952 ¢]
9–10:	F_4 +45	[545 ¢]	10–13:	$A\sharp_4$ –4	[996 ¢]
11–13:	$F\sharp_4$ –10	[590 ¢]	14–17:	$A\sharp_4$ +35	[1035 ¢]
14–16:	$F\sharp_4$ +34	[634 ¢]	18–21:	**C_5: 523.3 cps**	[0 ¢]
17–18:	G_4 –29	[671 ¢]	22–25:	D_5 –18	[182 ¢]
19–20:	$G\sharp_4$ –27	[773 ¢]	26–29:	E_5 +18	[418 ¢]
21–22:	$G\sharp_4$ +41	[841 ¢]	30–33:	G_5 +2	[702 ¢]
23–24:	A_4 –16	[884 ¢]	34–36:	$G\sharp_5$ –35	[765 ¢]
25–26:	$A\sharp_4$ +20	[1020 ¢]	37–39:	$A\sharp_5$*** +18	[1018 ¢]
27–28:	B_4 –12	[1088 ¢]	40–43:	B_5 –12	[1088 ¢]
29–31:	**C_5: 523.3 cps**	[0 ¢]	44–48:	$A\sharp_5$*** +18	[1018 ¢]
32–36:	G_5 +2	[702 ¢]	49–51:	$G\sharp_5$ +49	[849 ¢]
37–41:	$G\sharp_5$ –27	[773 ¢]	52–54:	F_5 +56	[556 ¢]
42–45:	$F\sharp_5$ +17	[617 ¢]	55–58:	E_5 –31	[369 ¢]
46–49:	F_5 +52	[552 ¢]	59–61:	$D\sharp_5$ –33	[267 ¢]
50–53:	$D\sharp_5$ –25	[275 ¢]	62–64:	D_5 –18	[182 ¢]
54–57:	D_5 –18	[182 ¢]	65–67:	D_5 –34	[166 ¢]
58–62:	B_4 +16 ¢	[1116 ¢]	68–70:	$A\sharp_4$ –16 ¢	[984 ¢]
63–65:	$F\sharp_4$ +45	[645 ¢]	71–74:	A_4 +3	[903 ¢]
66–68:	$F\sharp_4$ +17	[617 ¢]	75–78:	$G\sharp_4$ –13	[787 ¢]
69–71:	E_4 +8	[408 ¢]	79–82:	G_4 +21	[721 ¢]
72–73:	F_4 –29	[471 ¢]			
74–76:	$F\sharp_4$ –31	[569 ¢]			
77–79:	$D\sharp_4$ –25	[275 ¢]			
80–82:	D_4 +4	[204 ¢]			

Song of Myself: Intoned Poems of Walt Whitman

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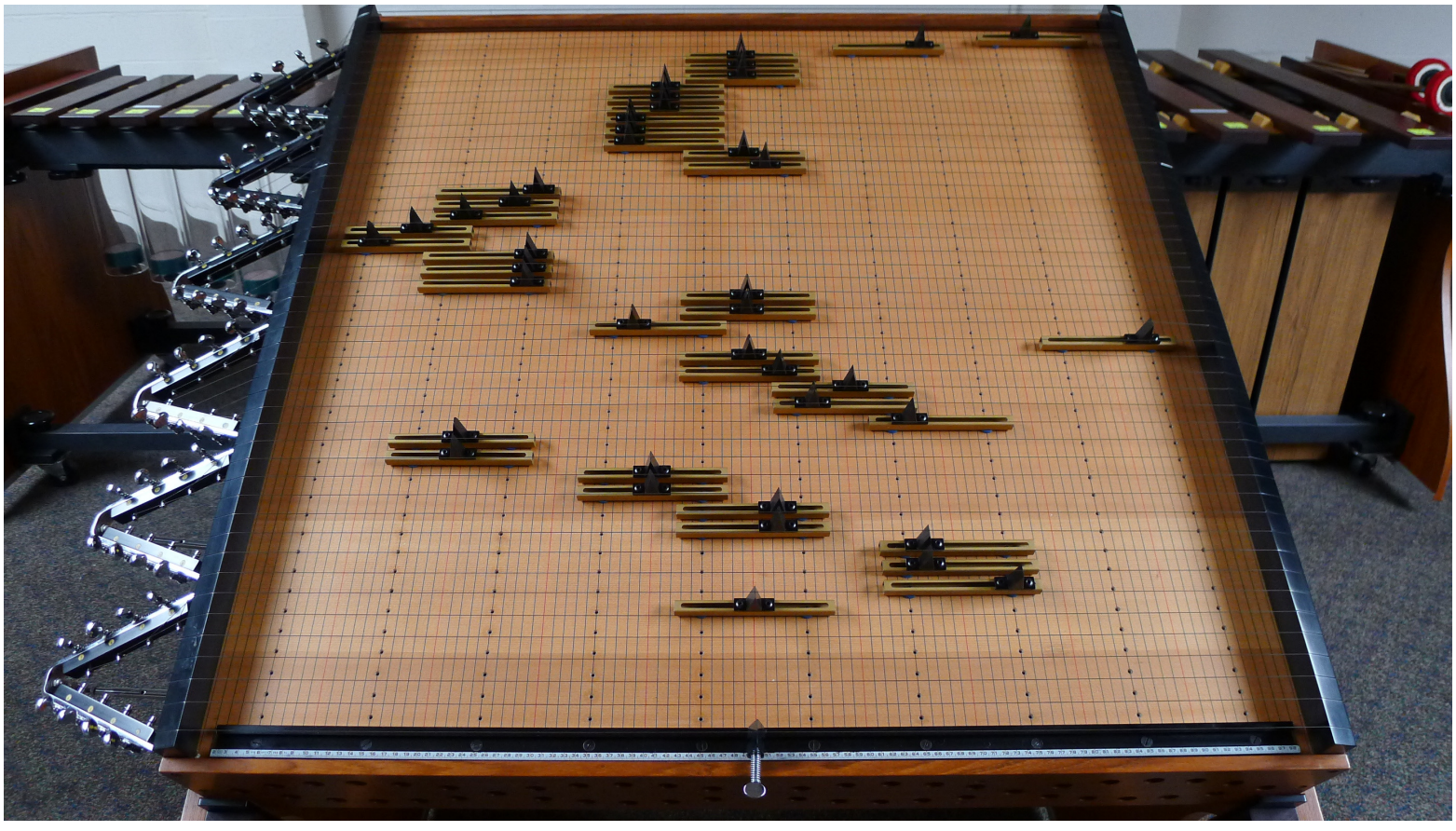
Harmonic/Melodic Canon Tuning Sequence for Electronic Tuner

Except #20, for bridged strings with long and short lengths, tuning sequence is for the long lengths.

34	[1000 mm, open string]	1/1	**C_3: 130.8 cps**	**[0 ¢]**
1, 7, 21, 24–25, 36, 43–45	[500 mm]	2/1	**C_4: 261.6 cps**	**[1200 ¢]**
22, 29	[937.5 mm]	16/15	$C\sharp_3$ +12	**[112 ¢]**
20	[468.7 mm, *short length*]	16/15	$C\sharp_4$ +12	**[112 ¢]**
2–6	[1000 mm, open strings timbre]	9/8	D_3 +4	**[204 ¢]**
30, 47	[888.9 mm]	9/8	D_3 +4	**[204 ¢]**
31	[833.3 mm]	6/5	$D\sharp_3$ +16	**[316 ¢]**
15–16	[800 mm]	5/4	E_3 −14	**[386 ¢]**
32	[777.8 mm]	9/7	E_3 +35	**[435 ¢]**
8, 26–28, 33	[750 mm]	4/3	F_3 −2	**[498 ¢]**
46	[740.7 mm]	27/20	F_3 +20	**[520 ¢]**
9–10, 17	[666.7 mm]	3/2	G_3 +2	**[702 ¢]**
37–39*	[641 mm]	3/2	G_3 +2	**[702 ¢]**
48	[1000 mm, open string timbre]	3/2	G_2 +2	**[702 ¢]**
23	[625 mm]	8/5	$G\sharp_3$ +14	**[814 ¢]**
19	[607.1 mm]	28/17	A_3 −36	**[864 ¢]**
13–14, 40–42	[600 mm]	5/3	A_3 −16	**[884 ¢]**
18	[562.5 mm]	16/9	$A\sharp_3$ −4	**[996 ¢]**
11–12, 35	[525 mm]	40/21	B_3 +16	**[1116 ¢]**

*Non-canonical bridge locations and frequency ratios. Long string lengths of 641 mm produce a "unison fifth" to #9–10 Left, or frequency ratio 3/2. Short string lengths of 359 mm produce an "octave" above #46 Left, or frequency ratio 27/10.

Cris Forster, 1977
Chrysalis I and Harmonic/Melodic Canon
Canon with dovetail tracks soundboard.



Harmonic/Melodic Canon, 1987
Song of Myself: Intoned Poems of Walt Whitman
Bridge carriage and bridge locations.

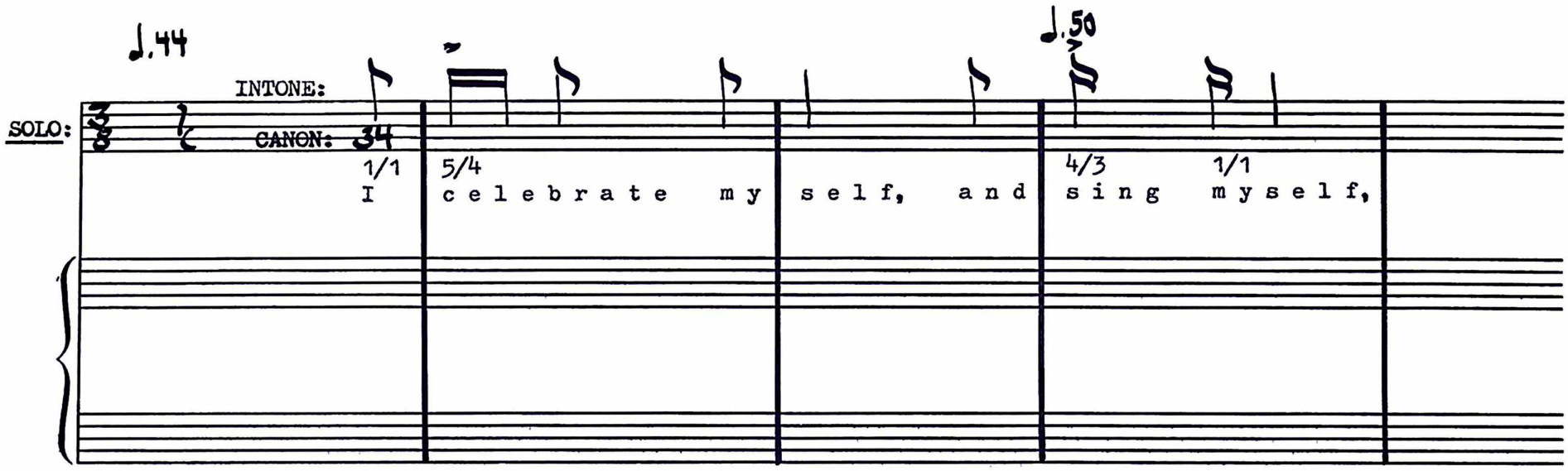
The world roars like the wind behind me;

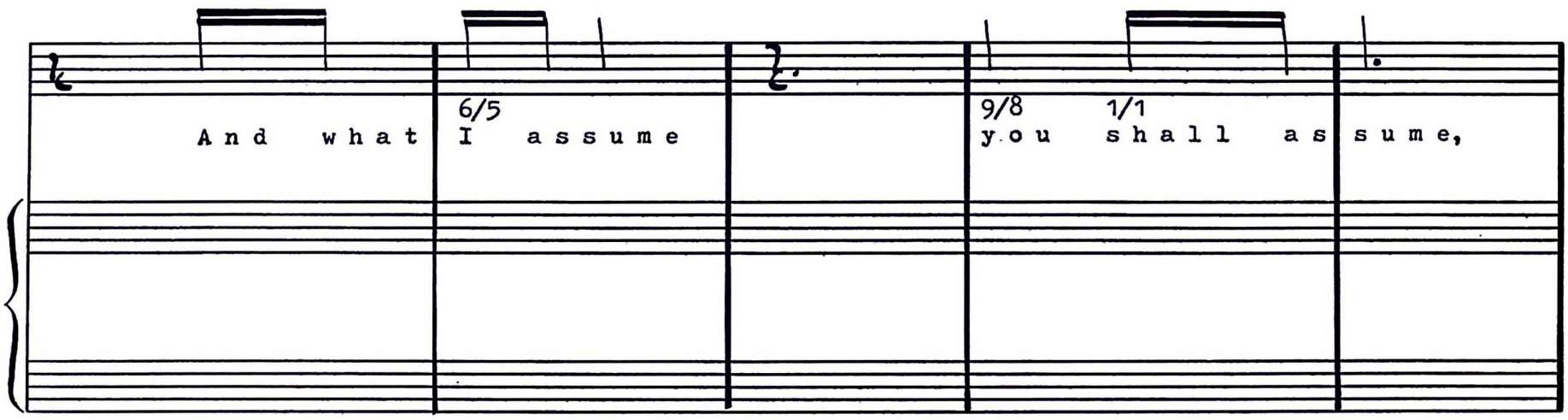
I am the outline of the distant blue mountains.

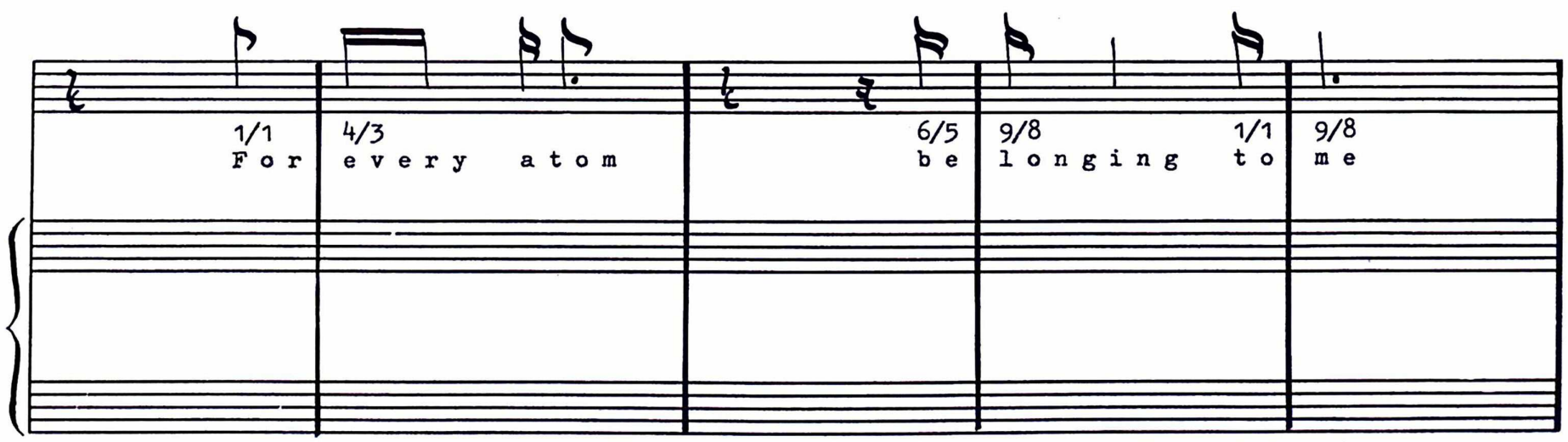
Cuyamaca Peak

5 March 1979

1


♩.44
INTONE:
SOLO:
CANON: 34
1/1
I
5/4
c e l e b r a t e m y
s e l f, a n d
♩.50
4/3
s i n g
1/1
m y s e l f,


A n d w h a t
6/5
I a s s u m e
9/8
y o u
1/1
s h a l l a s s u m e,


1/1
F o r
4/3
e v e r y a t o m
6/5
b e
9/8
l o n g i n g
1/1
t o
9/8
m e

6/5 as 9/8 good 1/1 be ↓15/8-5/3 longs 5/3 to you. 1/1 I

♩.44

loaf and invite my soul, 16/15 I lean and loaf at my

↓40/21 ease ob 16/15 serving a spear of summer grass. 9/8 My

10/9 tongue, every 9/8 atom of my blood,

10/9-9/8
form'd from this soil, this air,

6/5
Born here of parents

32/27-6/5
born here from parents the same, and

5/4 6/5
their parents the same,

5/4 6/5
I, now

9/8
thirty-seven years

old in perfect health be gin,

16/15
Hoping to

d. constant

d. constant

1/1
cease not till death.

♩.40

1/1 40/21 16/9 16/9
Creeds and schools in abeyance, Re-

tiring back a while suf ficed at what they are, but

8/5 16/9 32/27
never forgotten, I harbor for

♩. 44

16/15
good or bad,

7/5
I per mit to speak at

14/11
every hazard,

9/8
Nature without check

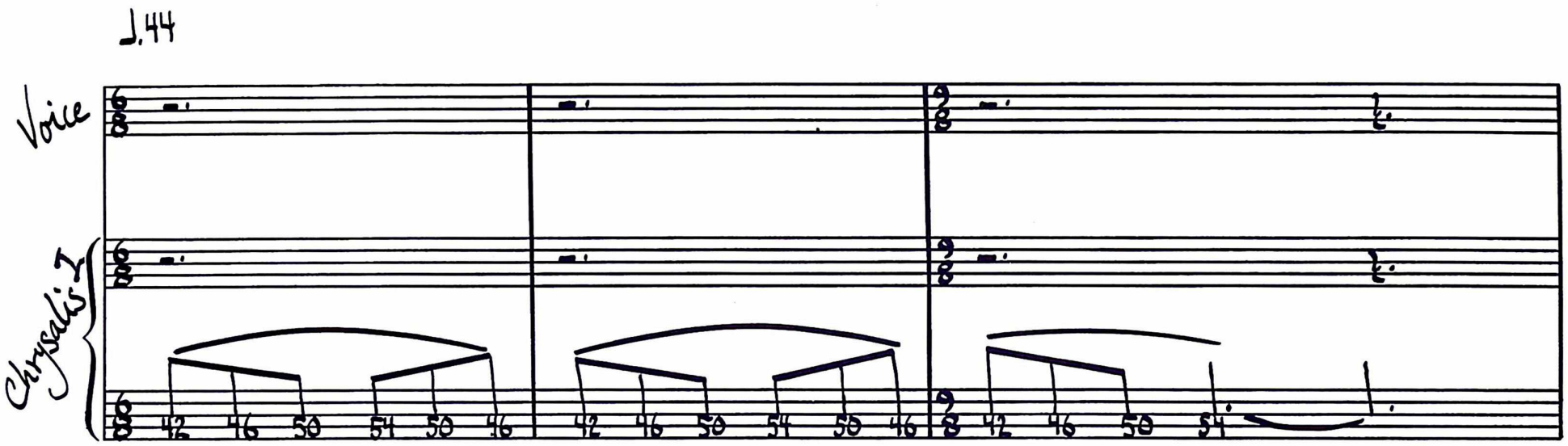
6/5
with

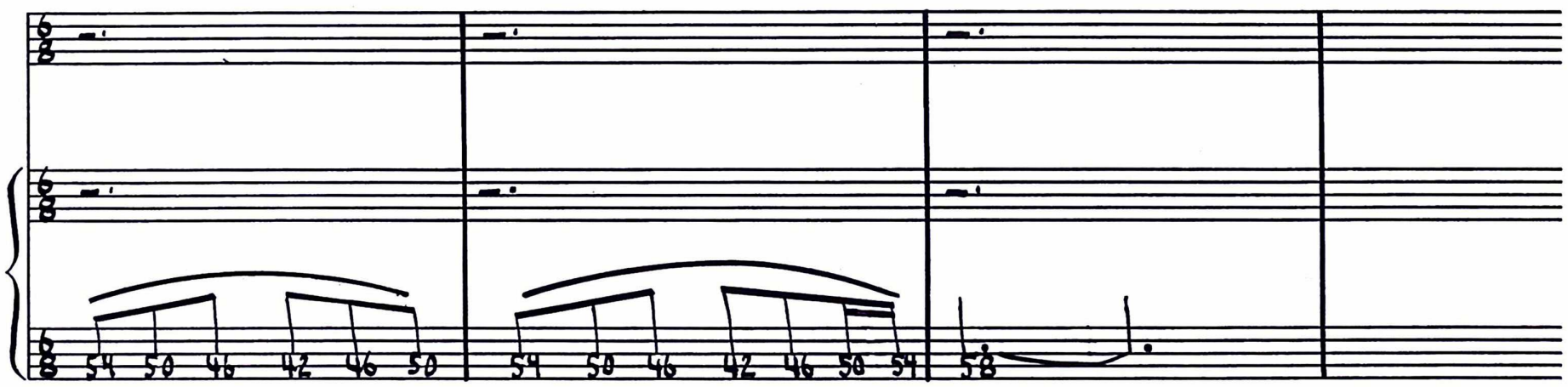
32/27-
o

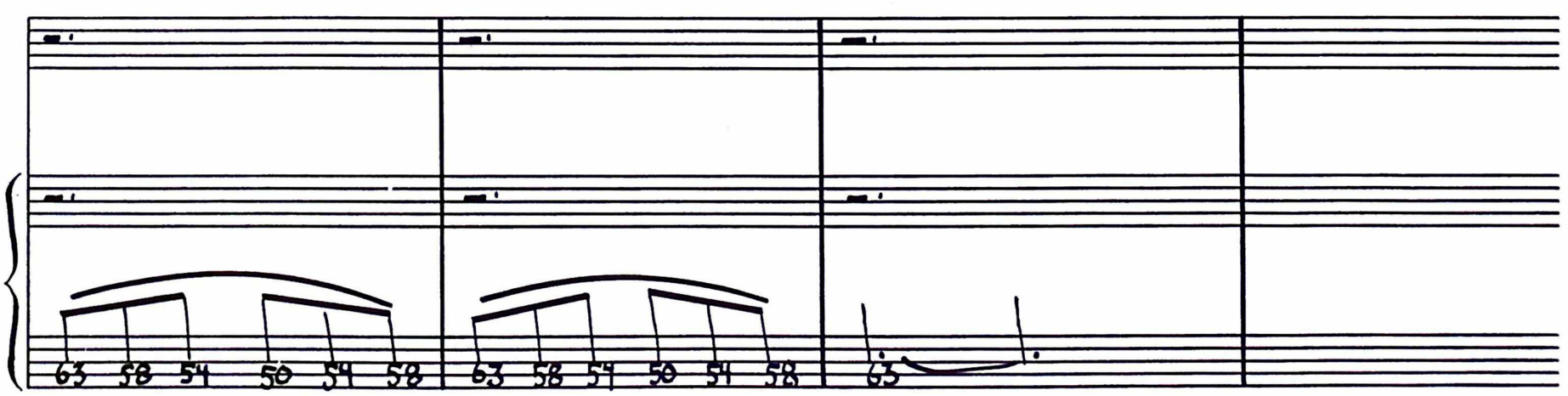
6/5
riginal

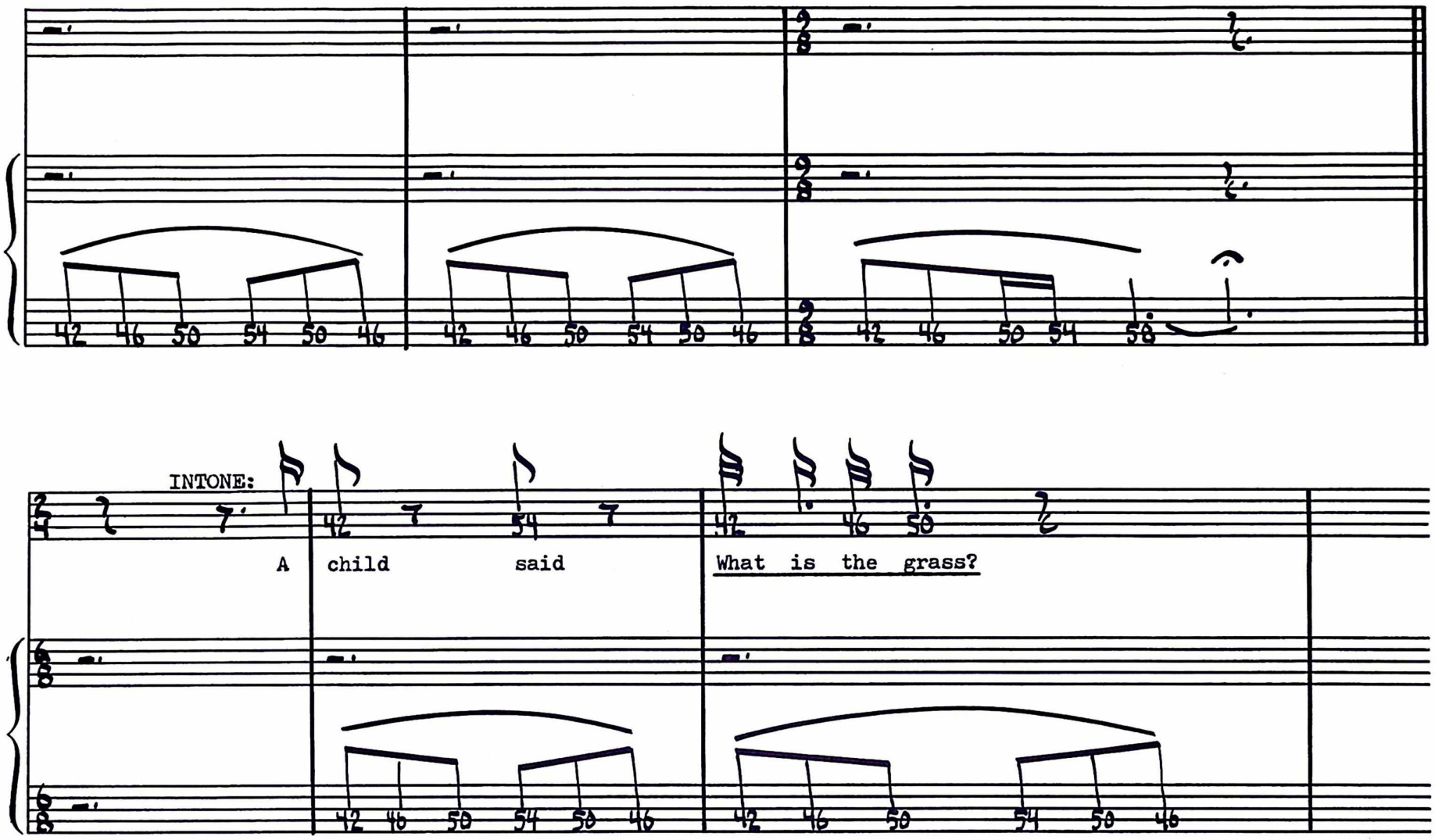
32/27- 6/5
energy.

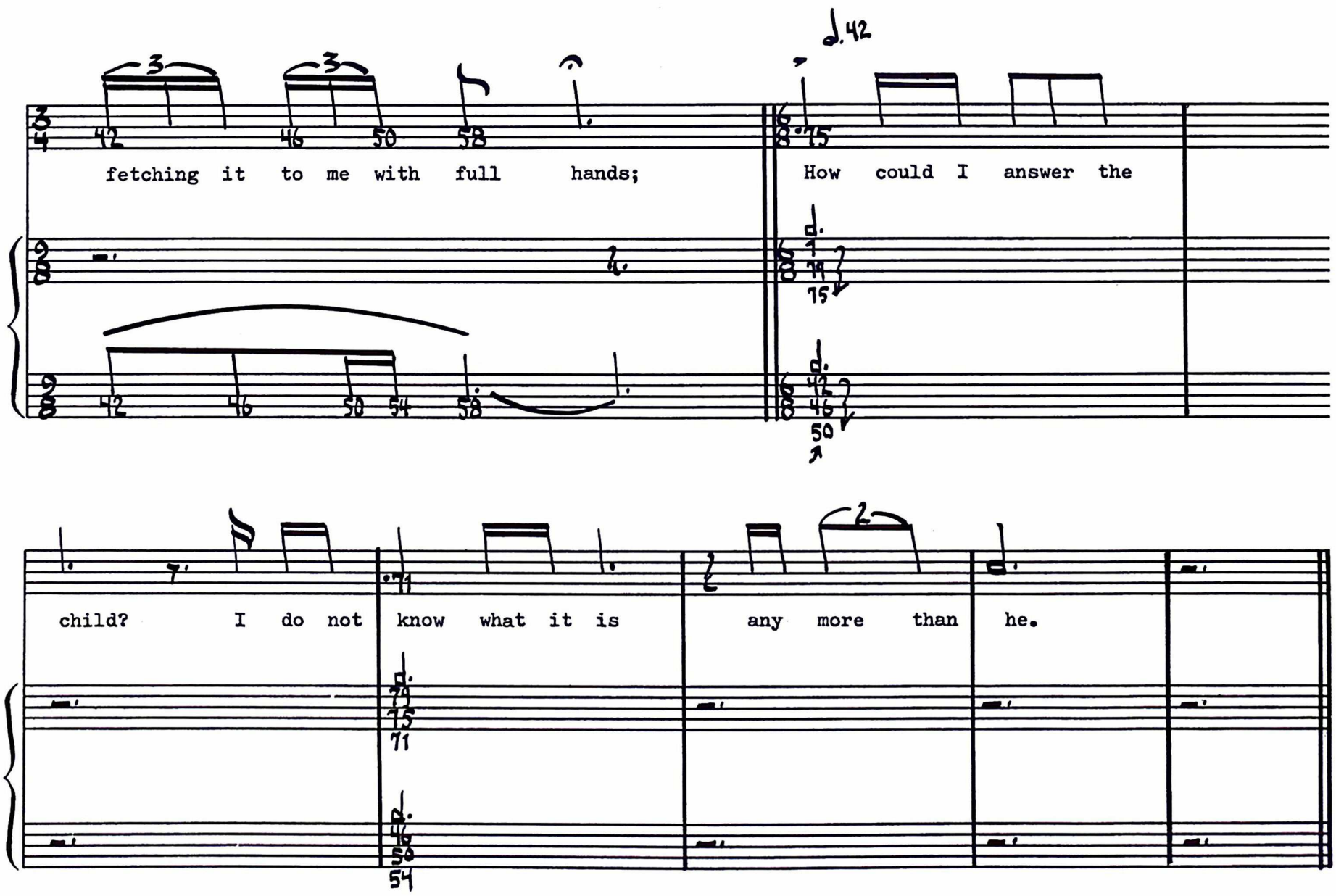
6


♩.44
Voice
Chrysalis I
42 46 50 54 50 46
42 46 50 54 50 46
42 46 50 54


54 50 46 42 46 50
54 50 46 42 46 50 54
58


63 58 54 50 54 58
63 58 54 50 54 58
63


INTONE:
A child said What is the grass?


fetching it to me with full hands;
How could I answer the
child? I do not know what it is any more than he.

SPEAK:

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord, A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,

RECITE:

Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark, and say Whose?

INTONE:

Or I guess the grass is itself a child,

♩80

the produced babe of the vege tation.

accel.

Or I guess it is a uniform

h i e r o glyphic,

♩.50

And it means,

Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,

Growing among black folks as among white, I give them the same, I re-

ceive them the same. And

now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of

rit.

graves. Tenderly will I use you curling grass, It may

be you transpire from the breasts of young men, It may be if I had known them

I would have loved them, It may be you are from old people, or from

offspring taken soon out of their mothers' laps, And here you are

the mothers' laps.

♩52

♩52 5 ♩52

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,

7

Darker than the colorless beards of old men,

7

Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

♩.52

O I per ceive after all so many

ROTATE:

uttering tongues, And I per ceive they do not come from the roofs of

RECITE:

mouths for nothing.

♩=120

INTONE:

I wish I could translate

the hints about the dead young men and women, And the

hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken

soon out of their laps.

♩ 58 ♪ 80

♩ 58 ♪ 80 ♪. ♩

What do you

think

has become of the

young and old men?

And

what do you

think

has become of the

women and children?

They are a live and well

somewhere, The smallest sprout shows there is really no death, And if ever there

was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to ar rest it, And

ceas'd the moment life ap pear'd. All goes onward and

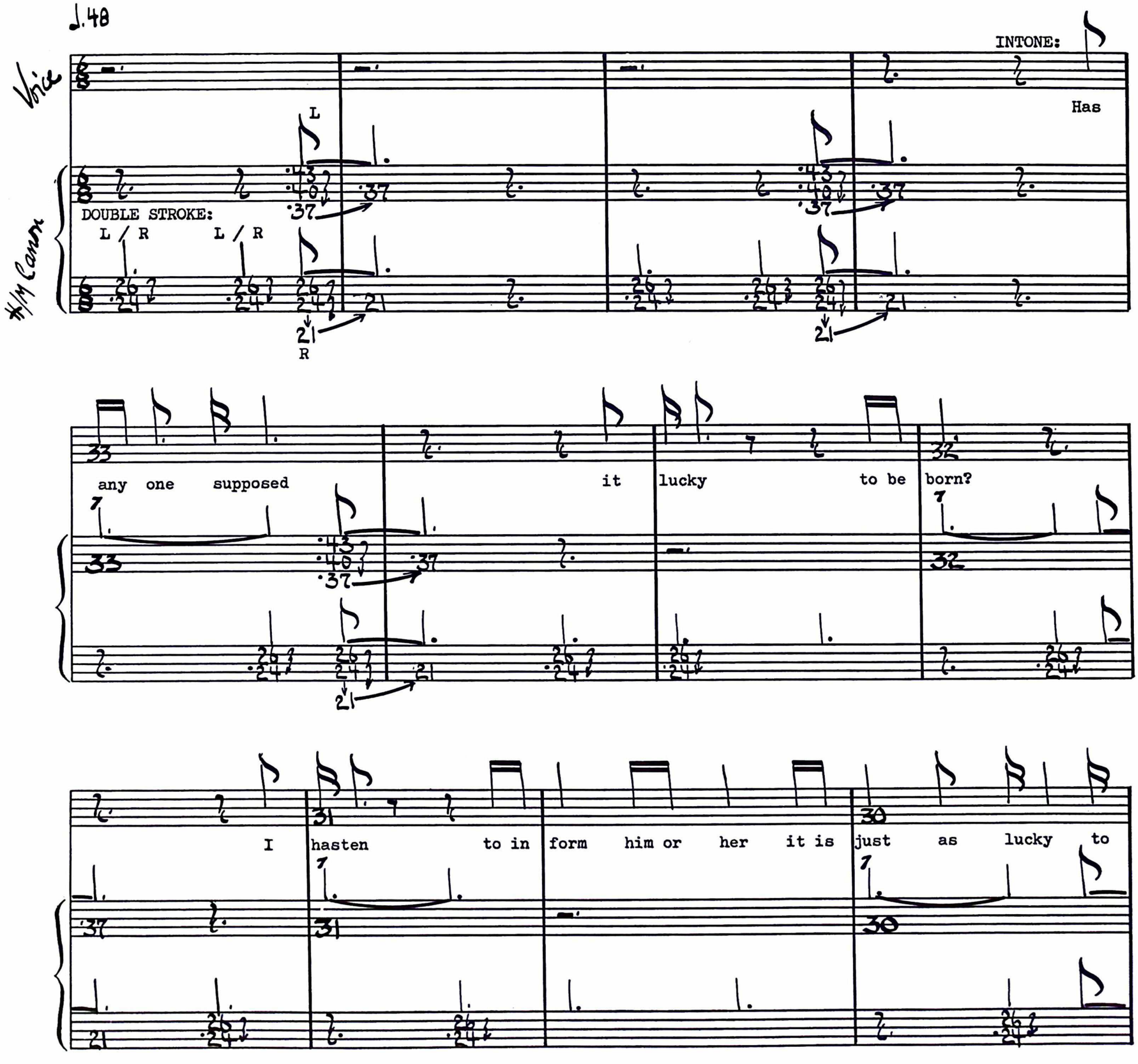
DAMP

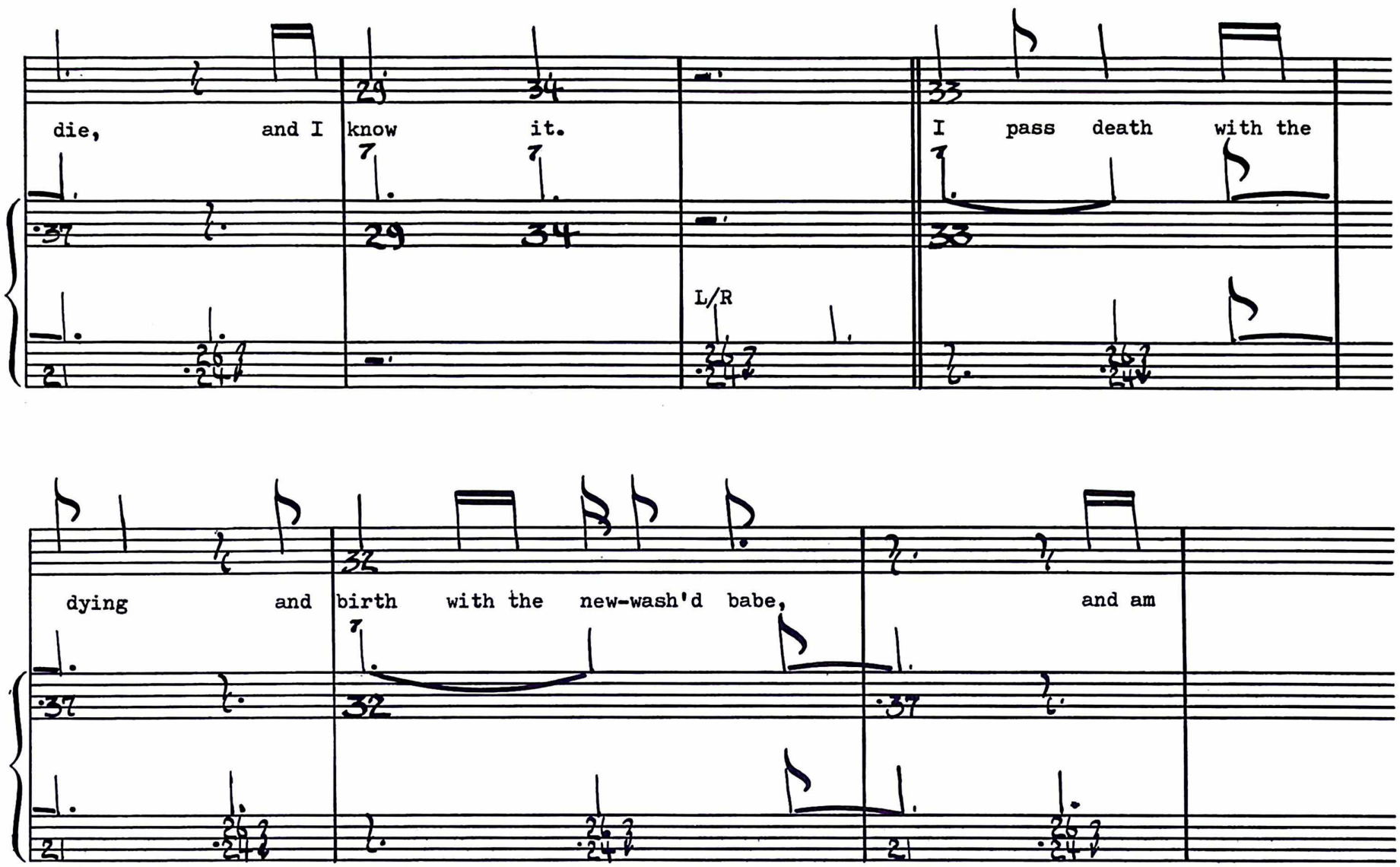
outward, nothing collapses, And to die is

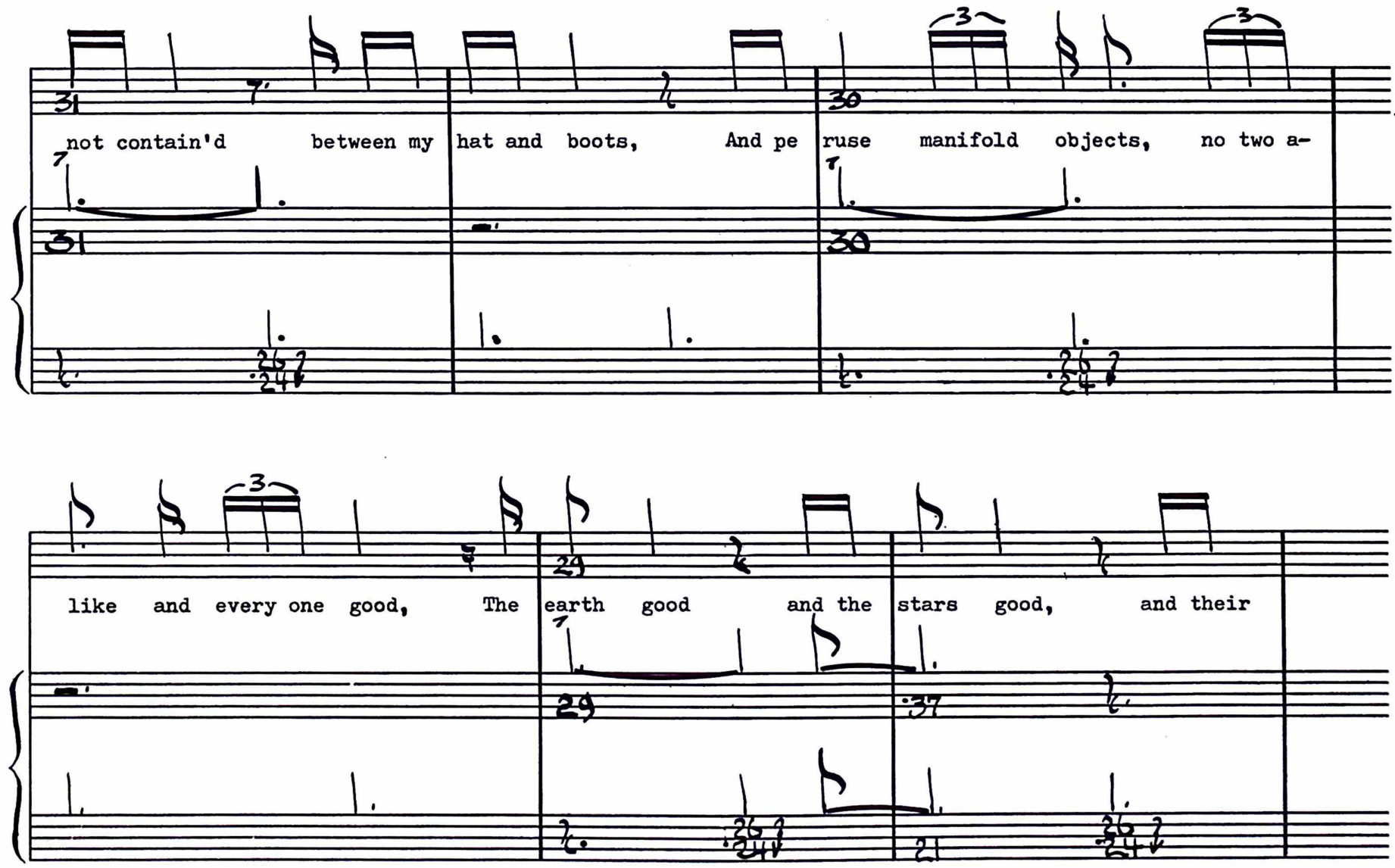
different from what any one supposed, and

luckier.

7


♩.48
Voice
#/M Canon
INTONE:
Has
L
DOUBLE STROKE:
L / R
L / R
R
any one supposed
it
lucky
to be
born?
I
hasten
to in
form
him or
her
it is
just
as
lucky
to


die, and I know it. I pass death with the
L/R
dying and birth with the new-wash'd babe, and am


not contain'd between my hat and boots, And pe ruse manifold objects, no two a-
like and every one good, The earth good and the stars good, and their

3/2-11/8 adjuncts 11/9 all 11/9-1/1(4/3) g o o d.

↑13/11 I am not an earth nor an 16/13 adjunct of an earth, I

L / R

4/3 am the mate and com panion of people, all 5/4 just as immortal and fathomless as myself, (They

6/5 do not know how im 8/5 mortal, 3/2 but I 3/2-11/8 k n o w- - - - - - - - - 11/9-1/1 (F_2) voice o- - - - -w.)

Every kind for itself and its own, for

me mine male and female, For me those that have been boys and that love

women, For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings to be slighted,

For me the sweet-heart and the old maid, for me mothers and the mothers of

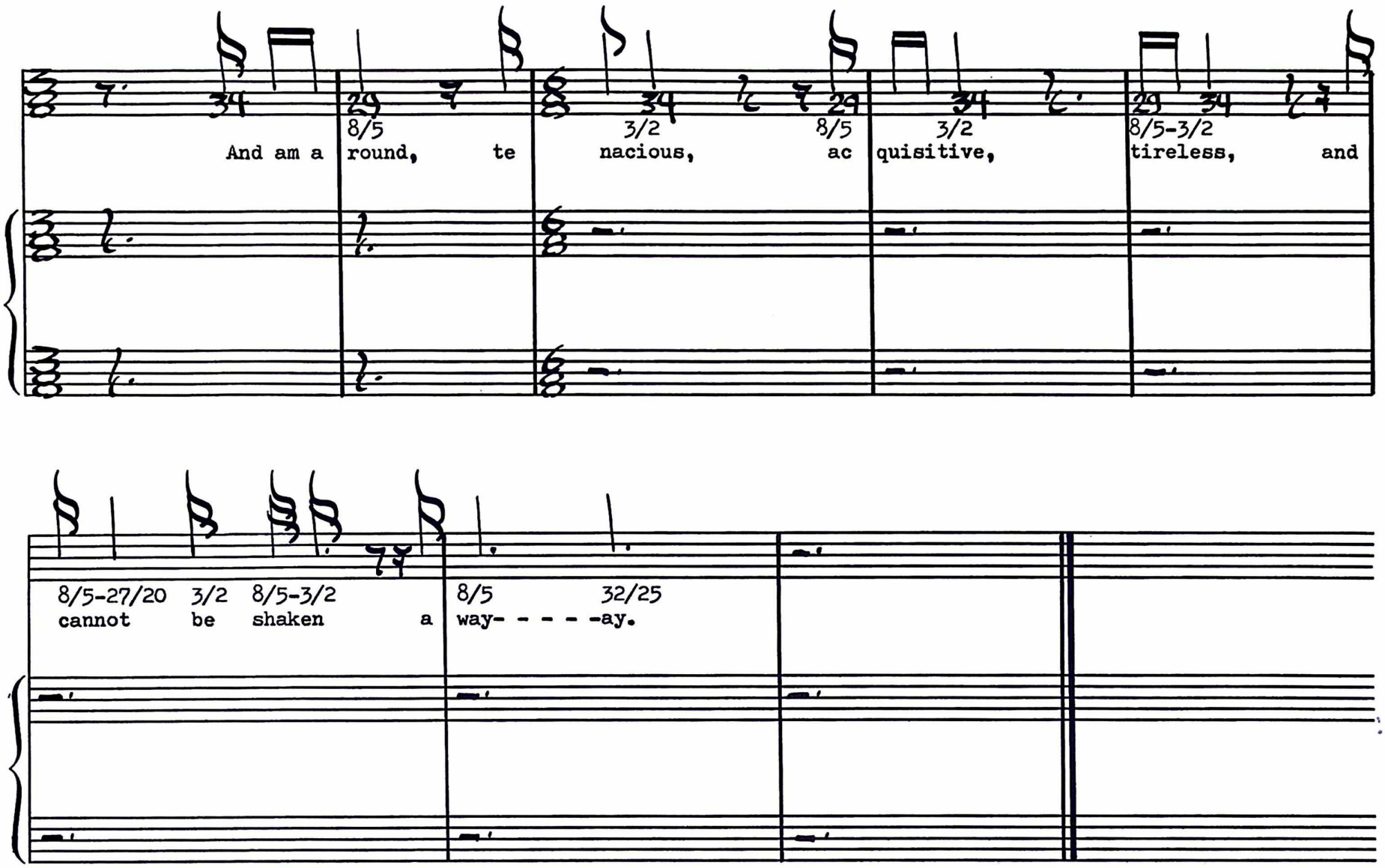
mothers, For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears, For me

children and the begetters of children.

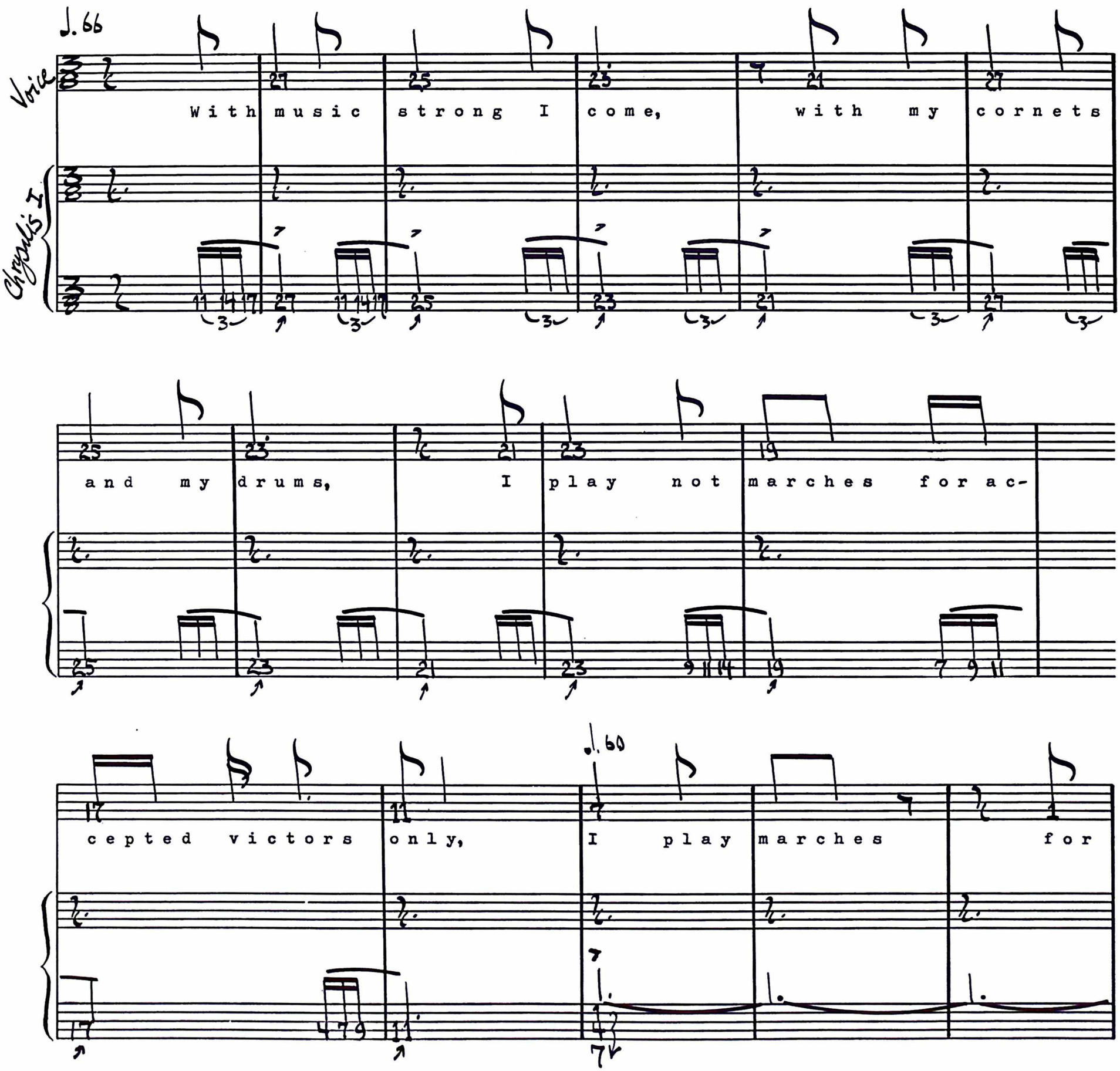
SOLO:

Un drape! you are not guilty to me, nor stale nor disgarded,

I see through the broadcloth and gingham whether or no,


And am a round, te nacious, ac quisitive, tireless, and
8/5
3/2
8/5
3/2
8/5-3/2
8/5-27/20 3/2 8/5-3/2 a
cannot be shaken
8/5 32/25
way- - - - -ay.

18

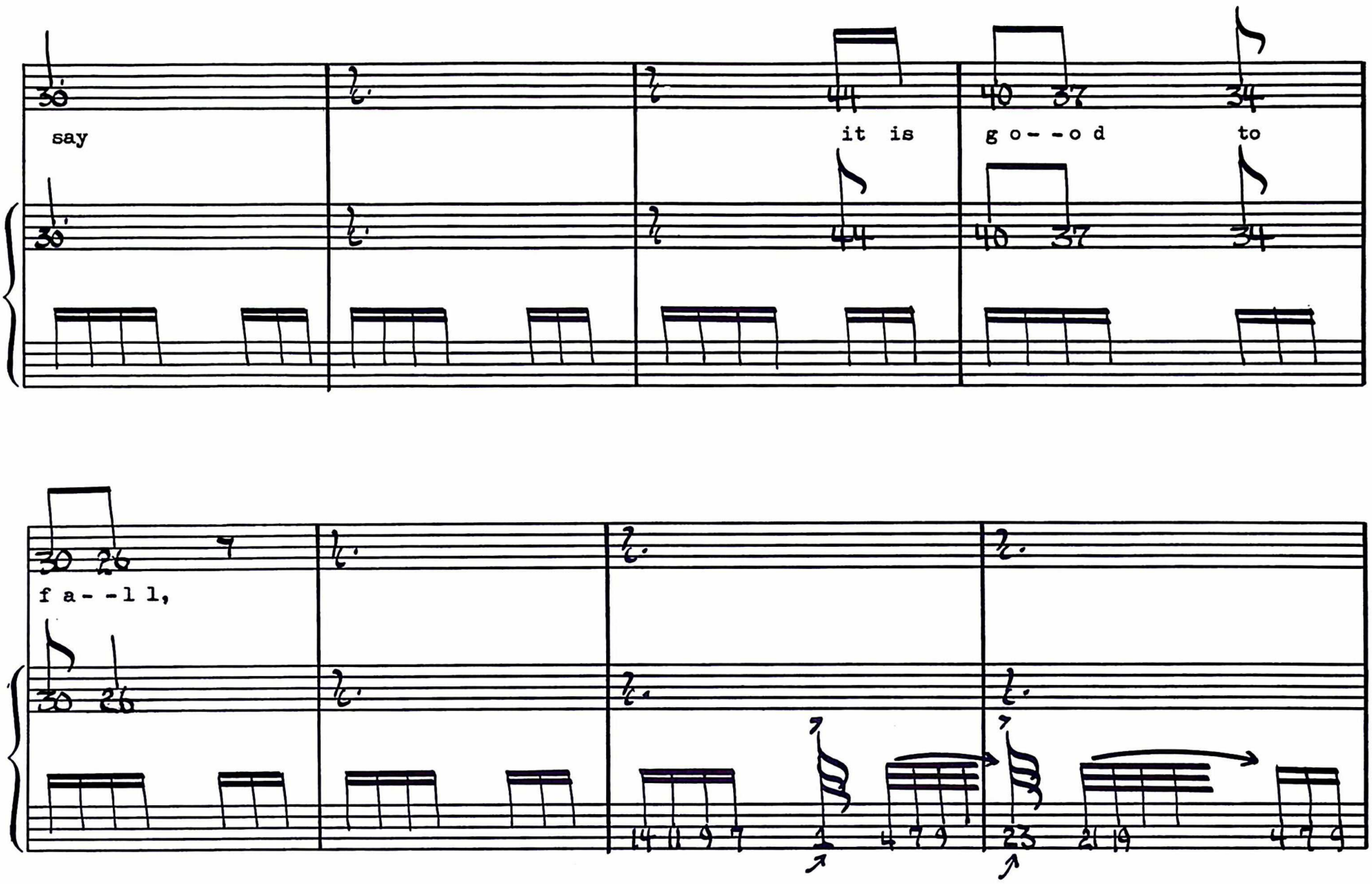

♩. 66
Voice
With music strong I come, with my cornets
Chrysalis I
and my drums, I play not marches for ac-
cepted victors only, I play marches for
♩. 60

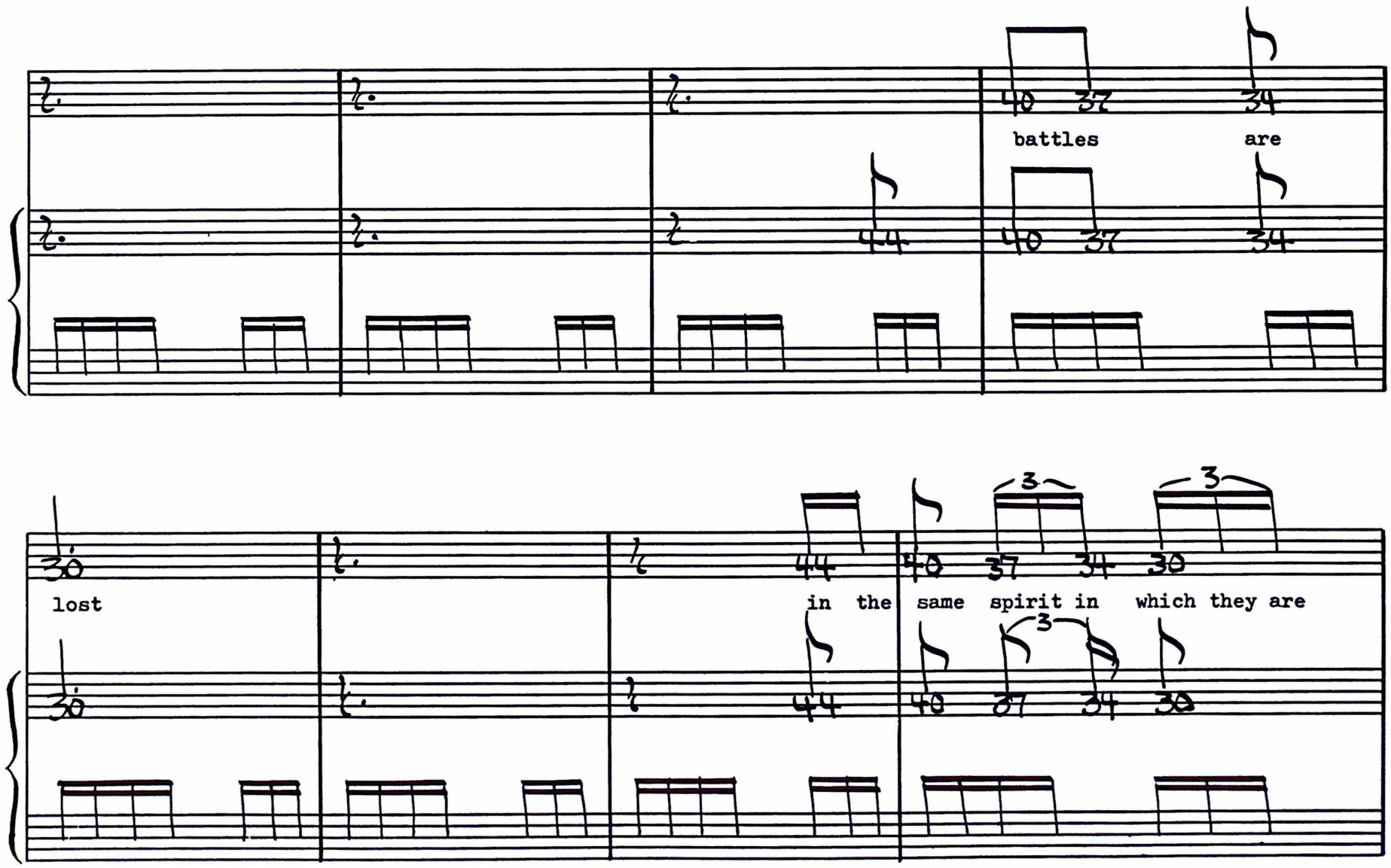
conquer'd and slain persons.

Have you heard that it was good to

gain the day?

I al - - - - - so


say
it is
g o- -o d
to
f a- -l l,


battles
are
lost
in the
same
spirit in
which they are

won.

SPEAK:

I beat and pound for the dead, I blow through my embouchures my loudest and gayest for them.

INTONE:

Vivas to those who have fail'd! And to those whose war-vessels

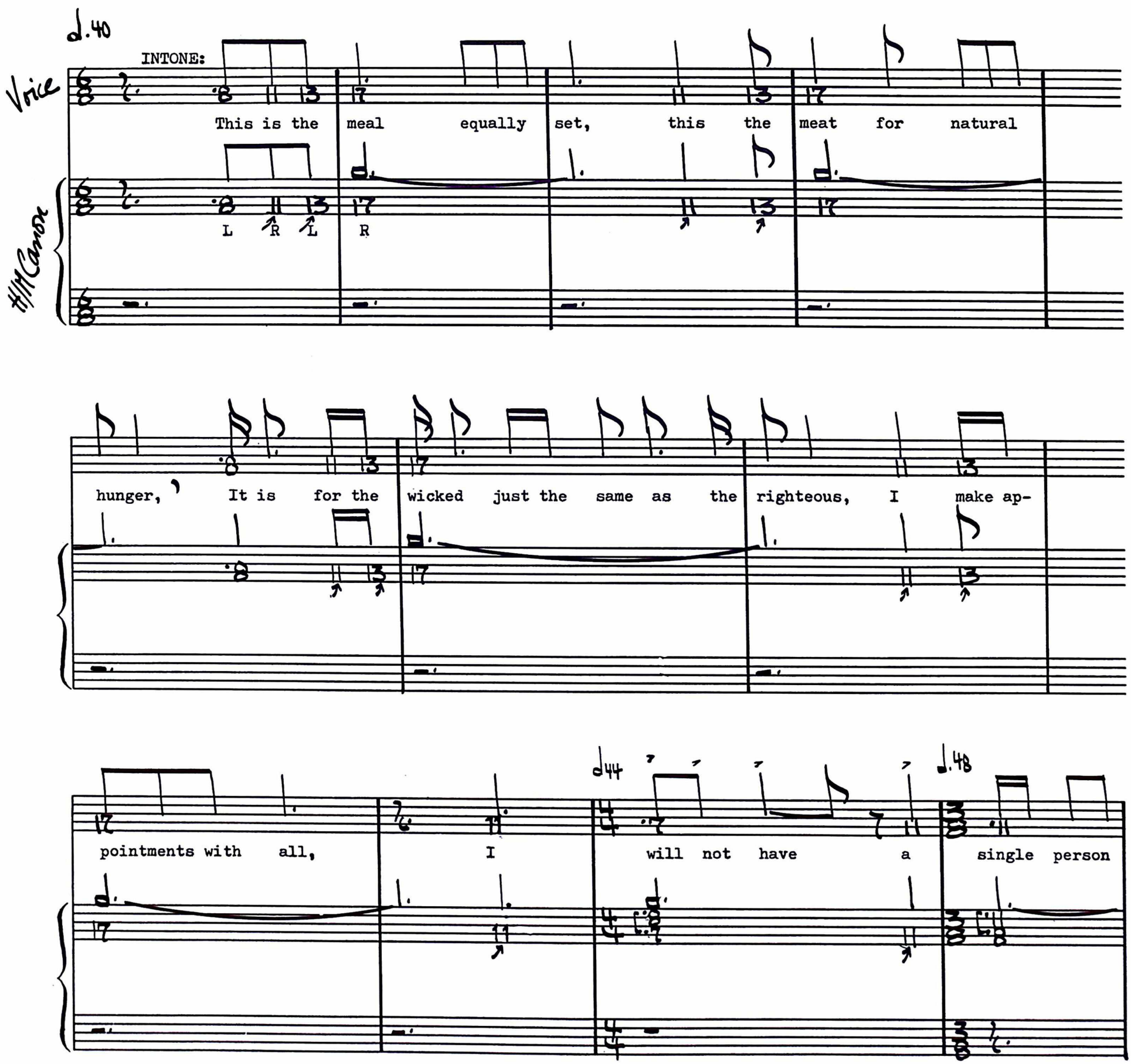
sank in the sea! And to those themselves who sank in the sea! And to

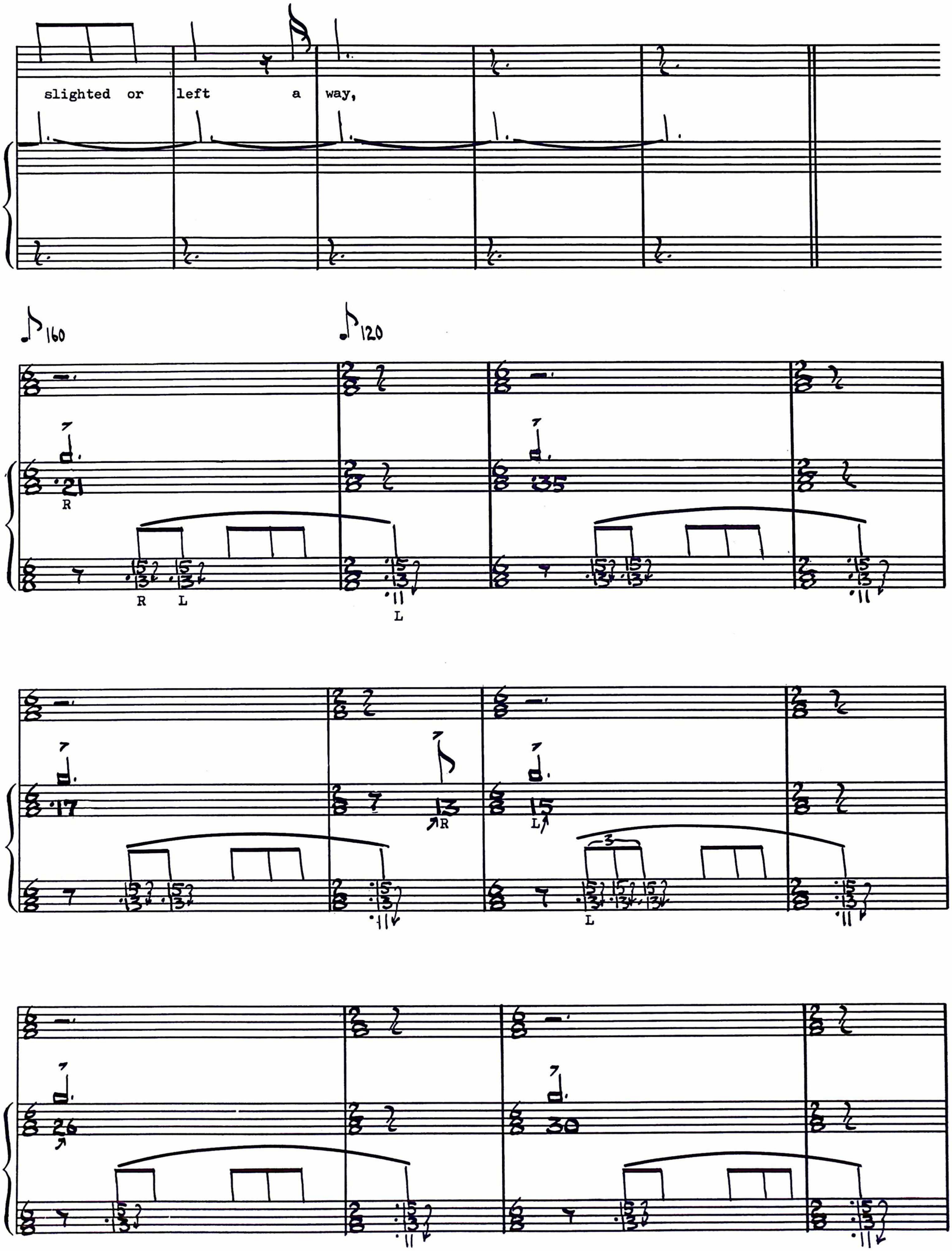
all generals that lost engagements, and all overcome heroes! And the

numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest heroes

known!

19


d.=40
INTONE:
Voice
This is the meal equally set, this the meat for natural
L R L R
hunger, It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous, I make ap-
d=44
d.=48
pointments with all, I will not have a single person


slighted or left a way,
160
120
R
R L
L
R
L
L

L R L L R

The kept-woman,

sponger, thief, are hereby in-

vited, The heavy-lipp'd slave is in vited,

the venerea lee is in vited; There shall be no difference between

them and the rest.

This is the press of a bashful hand, this the float and

odor of hair, This the touch of my lips to yours,

R L

this the murmur of yearning, This the far-off depth and height re-

flecting my own face, This the thoughtful merge of my self, and the

outlet a gain.

SPEAK:

Do you guess I have some intricate purpose?

Well I have, for the Fourth-month showers have, and the mica on the side of a rock has.

Do you take it I would astonish?

♩.66

INTONE:

Does the daylight a stonish?

does the early redstart

R

R

♩.54

twittering through the woods?

Do I a stonish more than they?

R

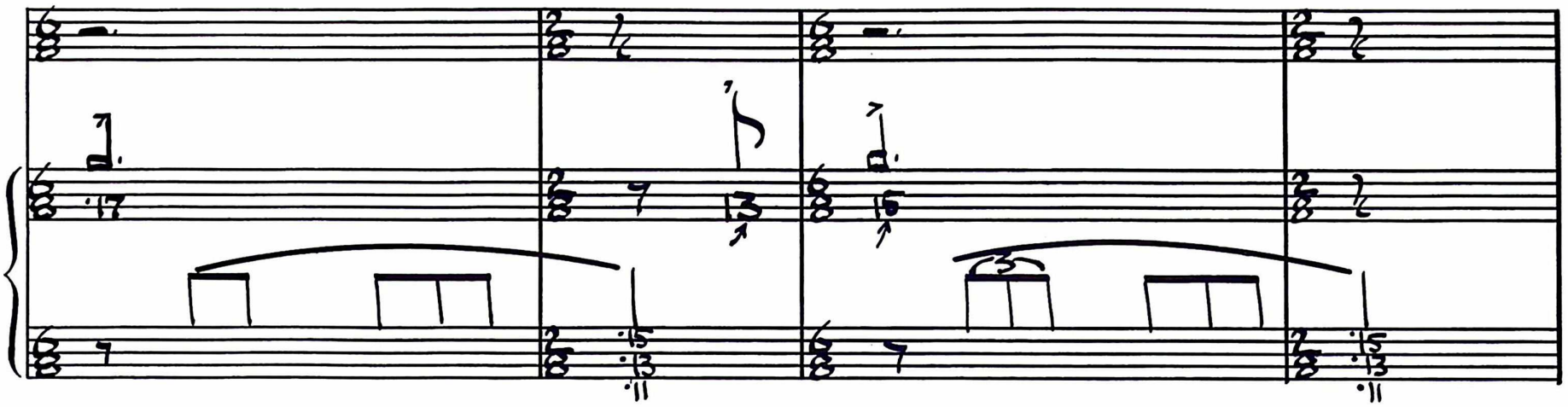
♩.48

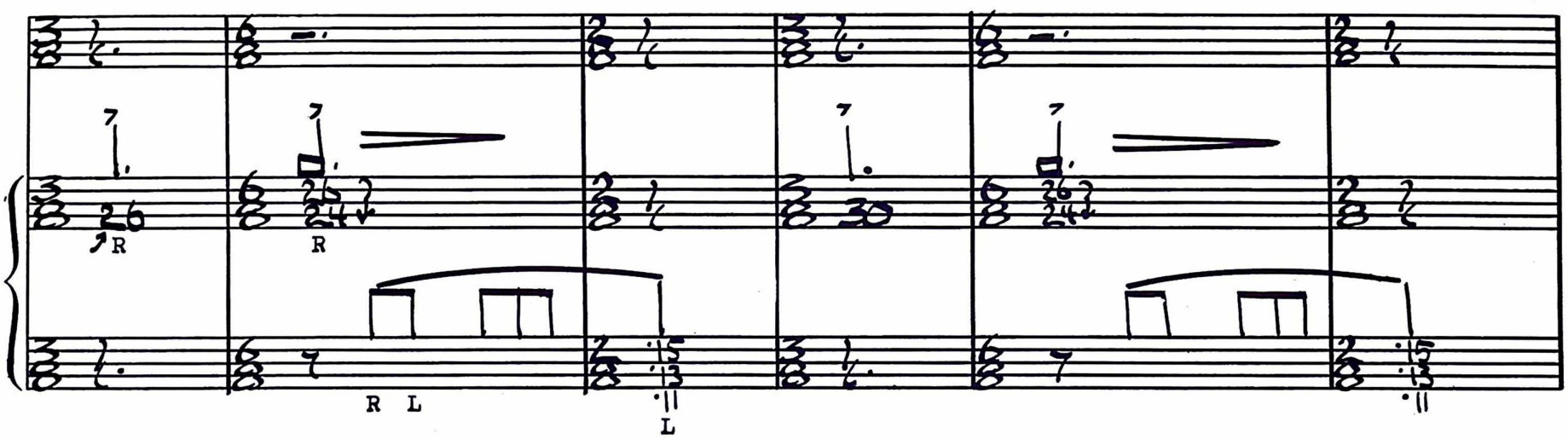
This hour I tell things in

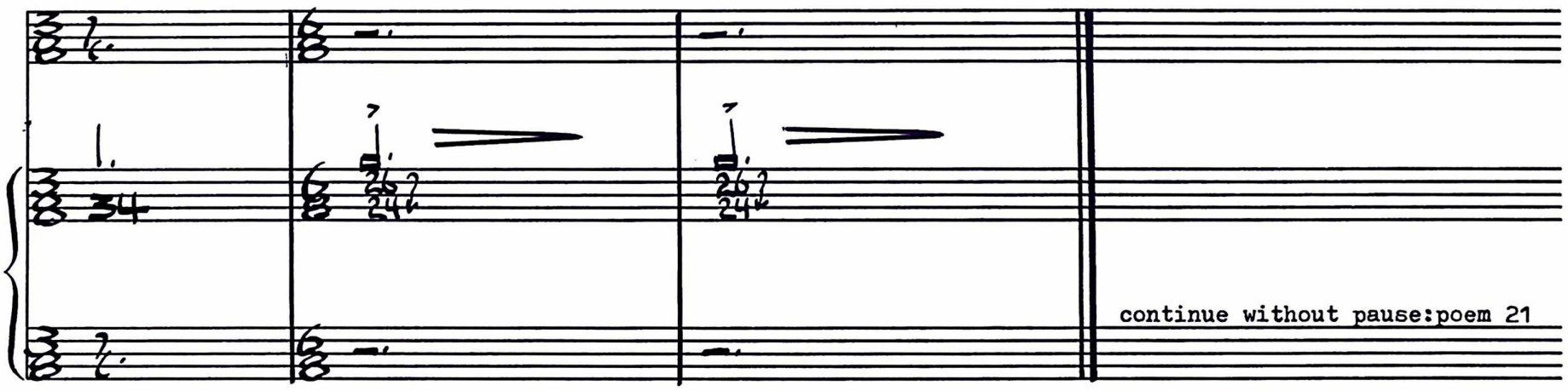
confidence, I might not tell everybody,

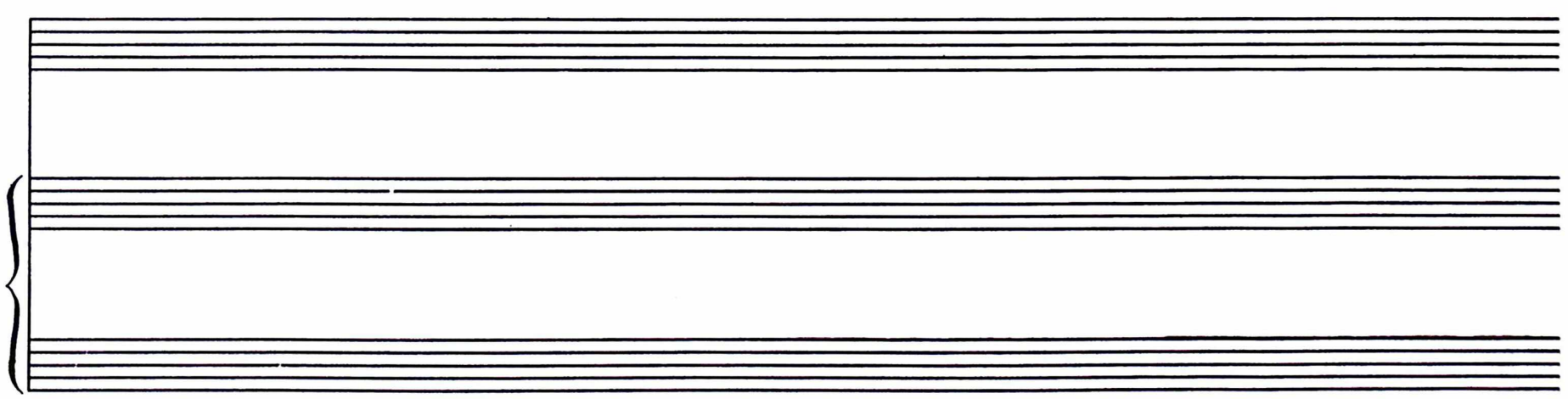
but I will tell you.

♩.40




R
R
R L
L


continue without pause:poem 21



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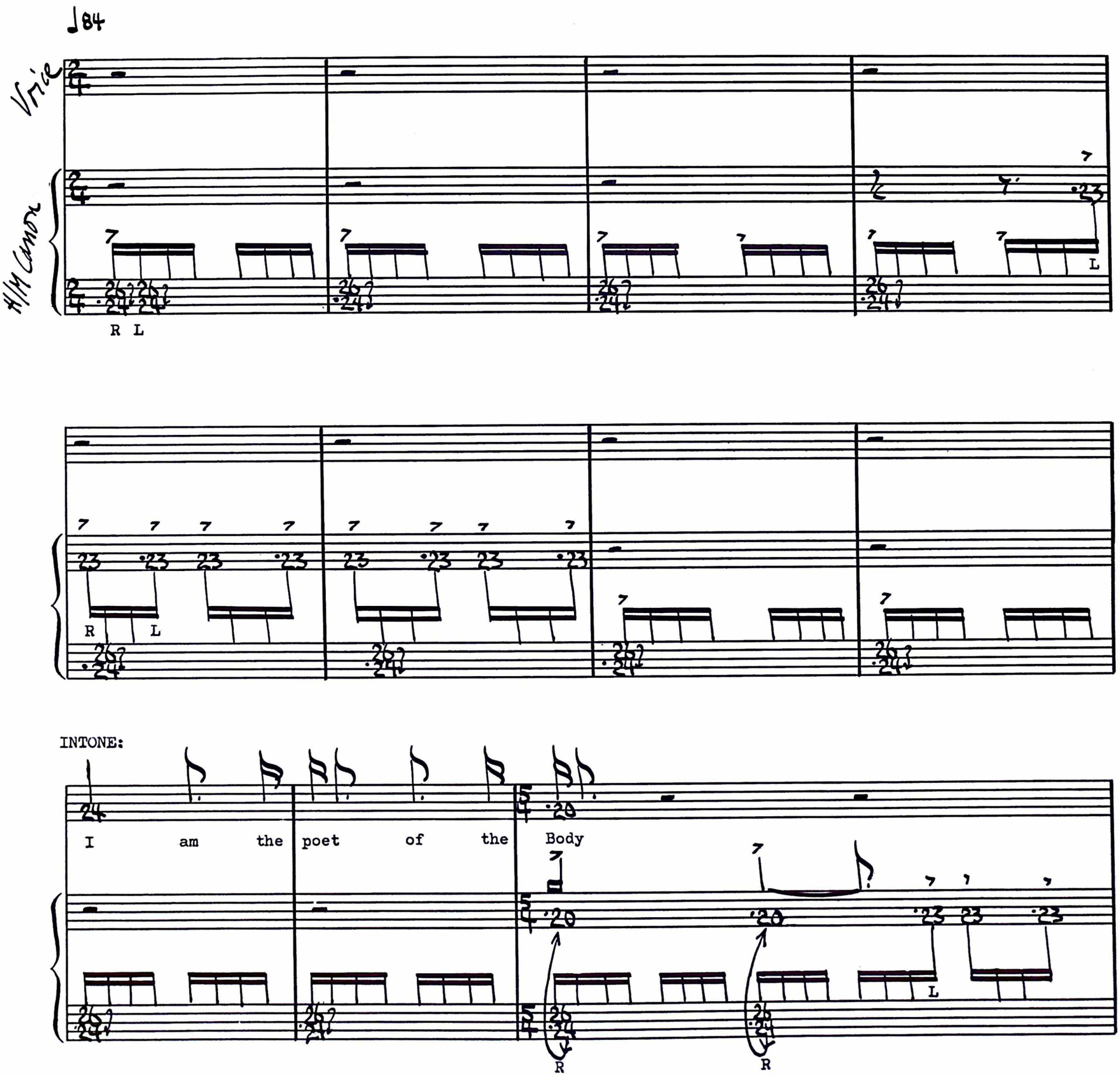


and I am the poet of the Soul, The

pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of

hell are with me, The first I graft and in-

crease upon myself, the latter I translate into a new tongue.

I am the poet of the

woman the same as the man, And I say it is as

great to be a woman as to be a man,

And I say there is nothing greater than the

mother of men.

SPEAK:

I chant the chant of dilation or pride,

R

♩.58

RECITE:

We have had ducking and deprecating about enough,

I show that size

is only de velopment.

SPEAK:

1/1——13/12
Have you outstript the rest?

13/12——9/8
are you the President?

1/1——13/12
R

1/1——13/12

13/12——9/8

13/12——9/8

It is a trifle, they will more than arrive there every one, and still pass on.

♩84

INTONE:

I am he that

walks with the tender and growing night,

I call to the earth and sea half— held by the

night. Press close bare-bosom'd night—

♩. 84

press close mag netic nourishing night!

RECITE:

Night of south winds— night of the large few stars!

♩ 63

Still nodding night—— mad naked summer night.

♩.63

INTONE:

Smile O vo luptuous cool-breath'd earth! Earth of the

♩.46

slumbering and liquid trees! Earth of departed sunset—'

earth of the mountains misty-topt! Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just

tinged with blue!

Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!

Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and clearer for my sake!

Far-swooping elbow'd earth—— rich apple-blossom'd earth!

Smile,

for your lover comes.

Prodigal,

you have given me love—— therefore I to

you give love! O un speakable passionate

R

love.

34*

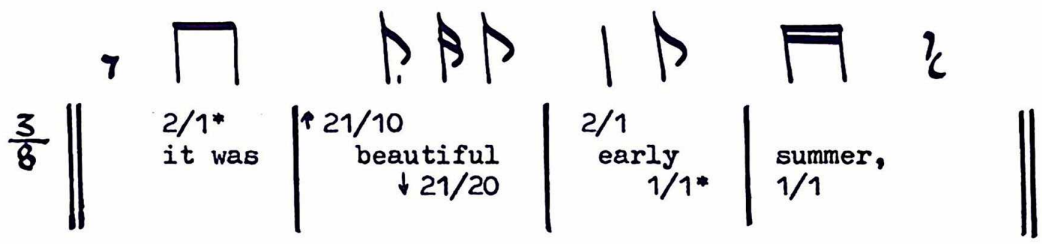
Now I tell what I knew in Texas in my early youth,
(I tell not the fall of Alamo,
Not one escaped to tell the fall of Alamo,
The hundred and fifty are dumb yet at Alamo,)
'Tis the tale of the murder in cold blood of four hundred and
twelve young men.

Retreating they had form'd in a hollow square with their baggage
for breastworks,
Nine hundred lives out of the surrounding enemy's, nine times
their number, was the price they took in advance,
Their colonel was wounded and their ammunition gone,
They treated for an honorable capitulation, receiv'd writing and
seal, gave up their arms, and march'd back prisoners of war.

They were the glory of the race of rangers,
Matchless with horse, rifle, song, supper, courtship,
Large, turbulent, generous, handsome, proud, and affectionate,
Bearded, sunburnt, drest in the free costume of hunters,
Not a single one over thirty years of age.

*Simple presentation, without instruments; intone only one line on following page.

The second First-day morning they were brought out in squads
and massacred,

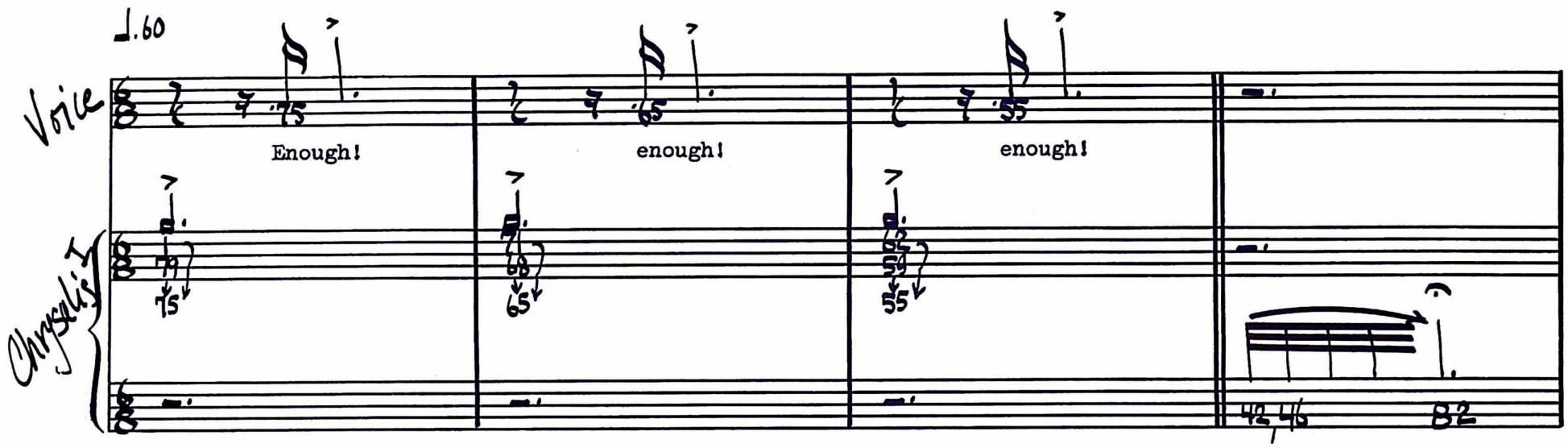


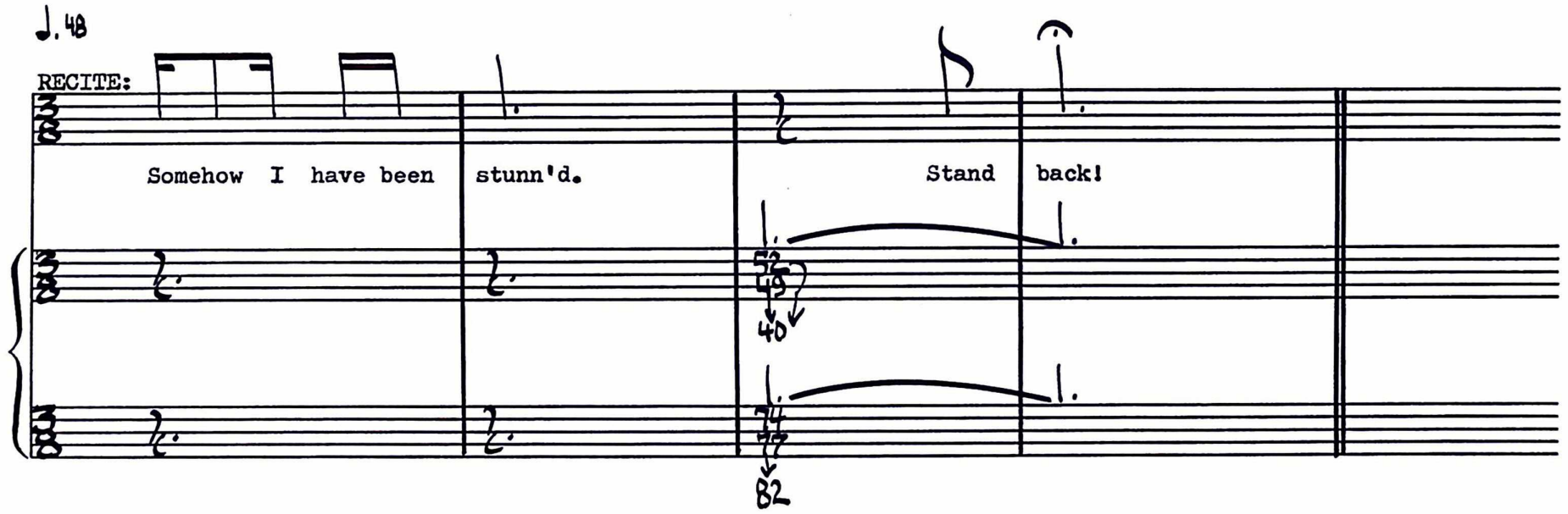
The work commenced about five o'clock and was over by eight.
None obey'd the command to kneel,
Some made a mad and helpless rush, some stood stark and
straight,
A few fell at once, shot in the temple or heart, the living and dead
lay together,
The maim'd and mangled dug in the dirt, the new-comers saw
them there,
Some half-kill'd attempted to crawl away,
These were despatch'd with bayonets or batter'd with the blunts
of muskets,
A youth not seventeen years old seiz'd his assassin till two more
came to release him,
The three were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood.

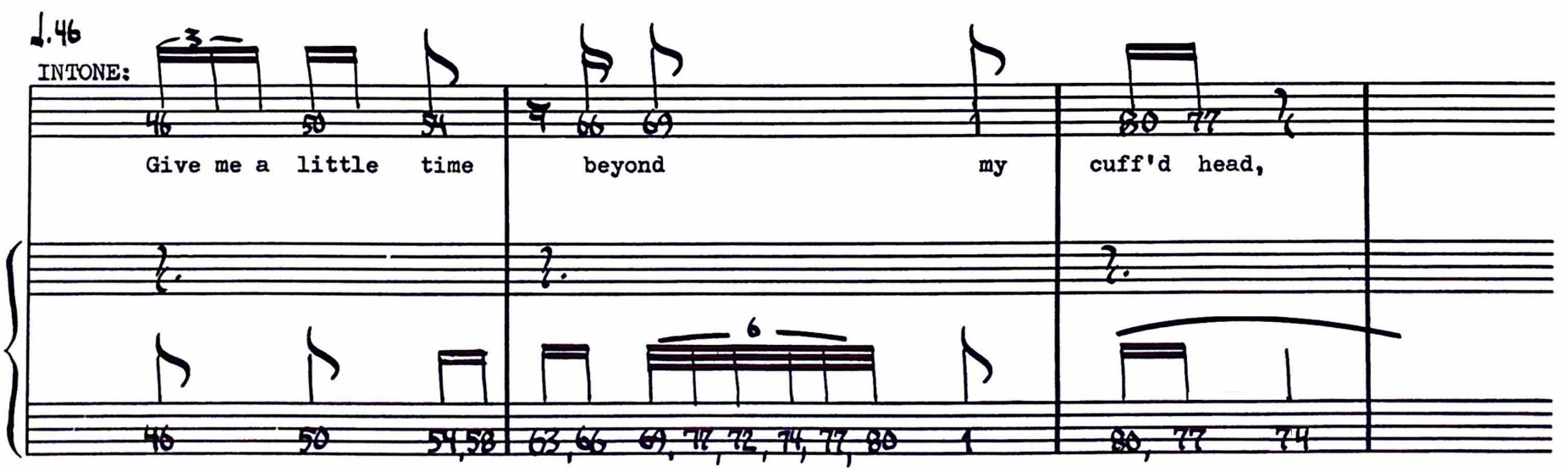
At eleven o'clock began the burning of the bodies;
That is the tale of the murder of the four hundred and twelve
young men.

*Any 2/1—1/1 range may be intoned here.

38


♩.60
Voice
Chrysalis I
Enough!
enough!
enough!
42, 46
B2


♩.48
RECITE:
Somehow I have been stunn'd.
Stand back!


♩.46
INTONE:
Give me a little time
beyond
my
cuff'd head,

♩.44

slumbers, dreams, gaping,

I dis cover myself on the verge of a

♩50 ♩88

RECITE:

usual mis take. That

accel.

♩.44

I could for get the mockers and insults! That

I could forget the trickling tears and the blows of the

bludgeons and hammers! That I could look with a

separate look on my own crucifixion and bloody crowning.

♩. 44

42 46 50 54 50 46 | 42 46 50 54 50 46 | 42 46 50 54

54 50 46 42 46 50 | 54 50 46 42 46 50 54 | 58

♩. 42

INTONE:

42 46 50 | I remember now, | 42 46 50 54 | I resume the overstaid fraction, The

42 46 50 54 50 46 | 42 46 50 54 50 46

42 46 | grave of rock multiplies | 58 | what has been con fided to it, | or to

42 46 50 54 | 58

any graves,

Corpses rise,

gashes heal,

fastenings role from me.

INTONE:

I troop forth replenish'd with supreme power,

one of an average unending procession,

GLAZE

Inland and sea-coast we go,

and pass all boundary lines,

ACCENTUATE

RECITE:

Our swift ordinances on their way over the whole earth,

SEMI-ROTATION:

63 42 37 27 19 4

SPEAK:

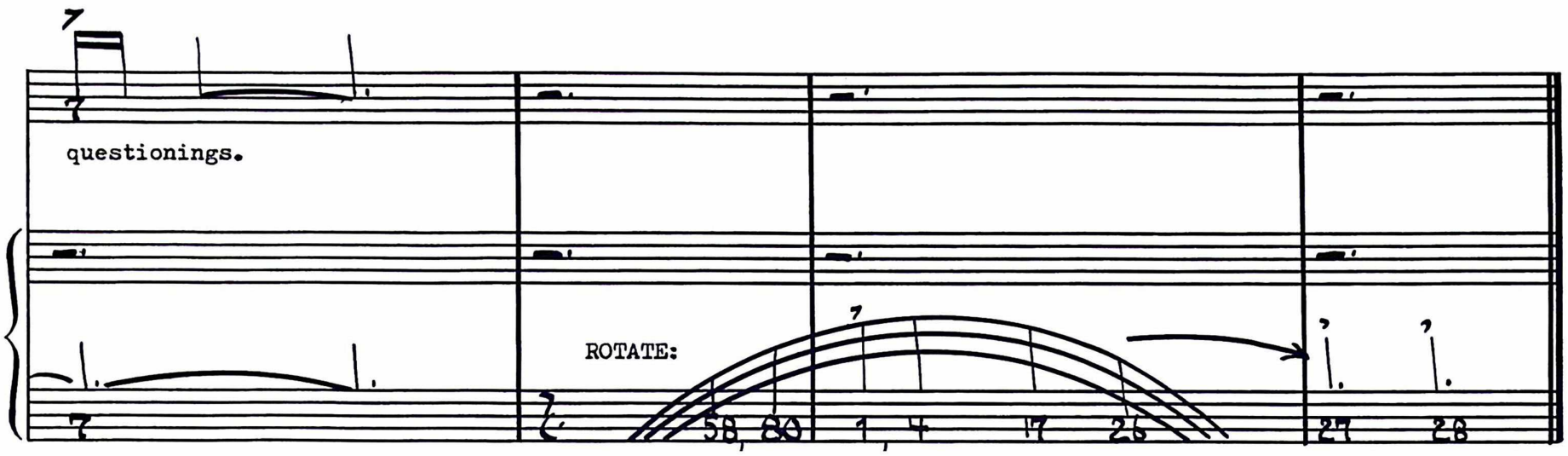
The blossoms we wear in our hats the growth of thousands of years.

♩.69

INTONE:

E leves, I salute you! come

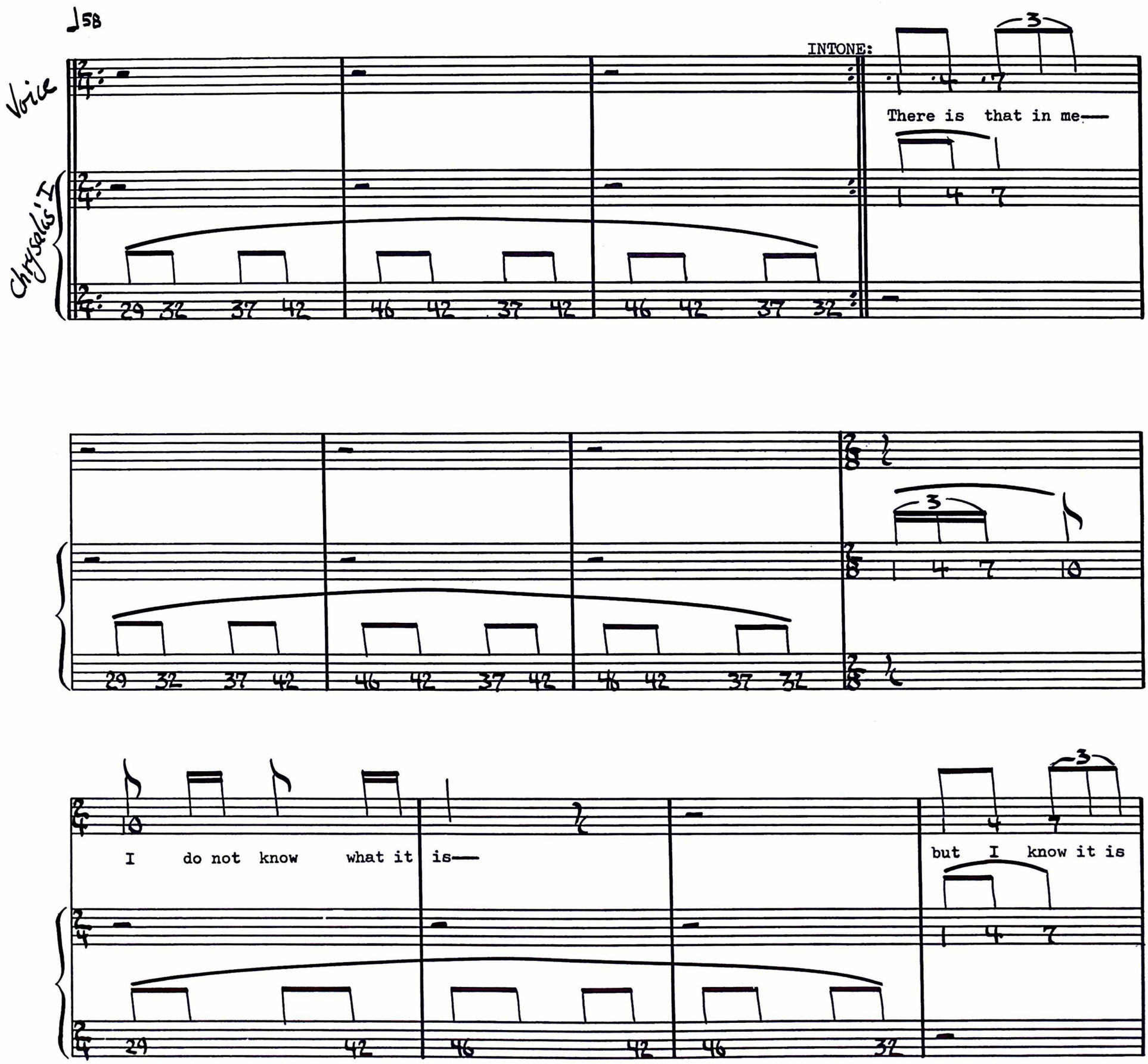
forward! Con tinue your annotations, con tinue your

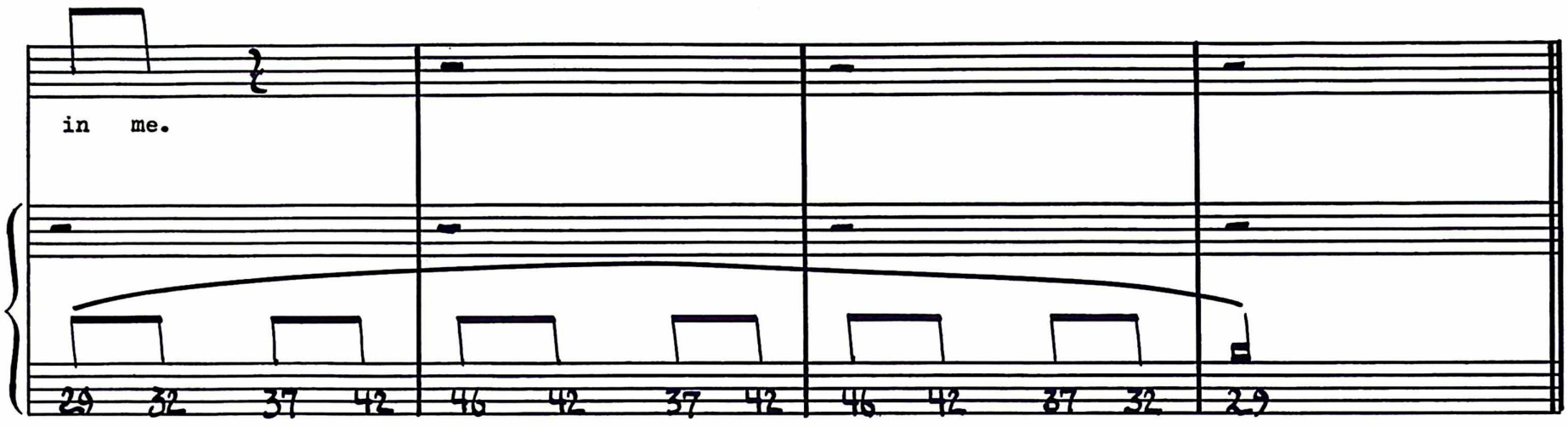


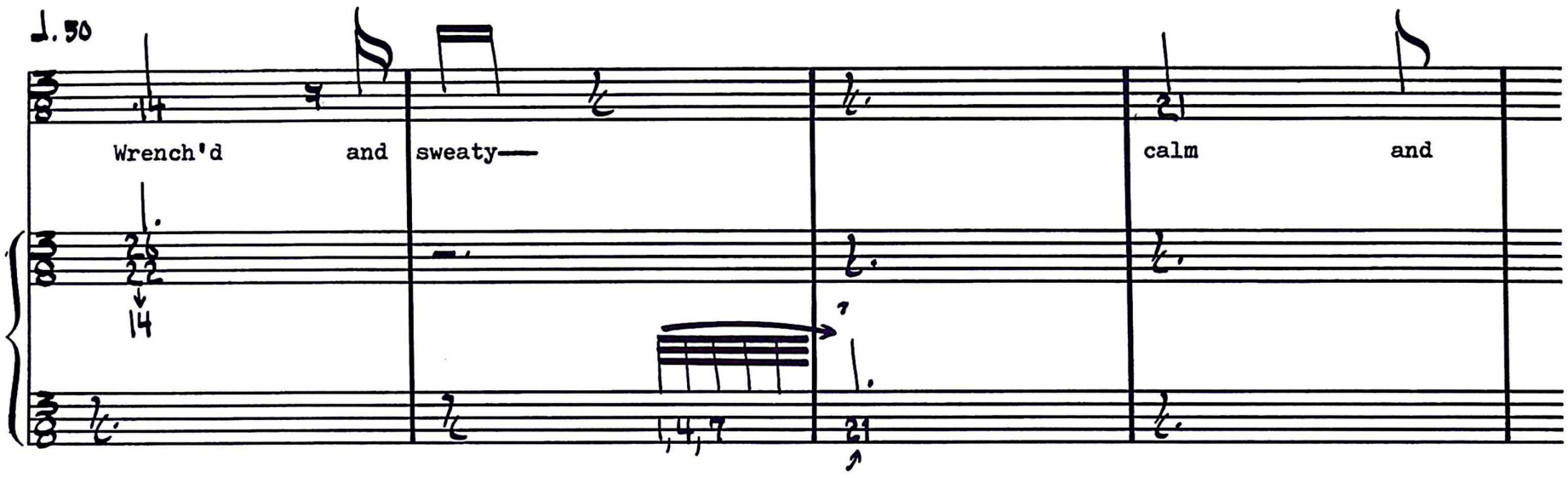
continue without pause:

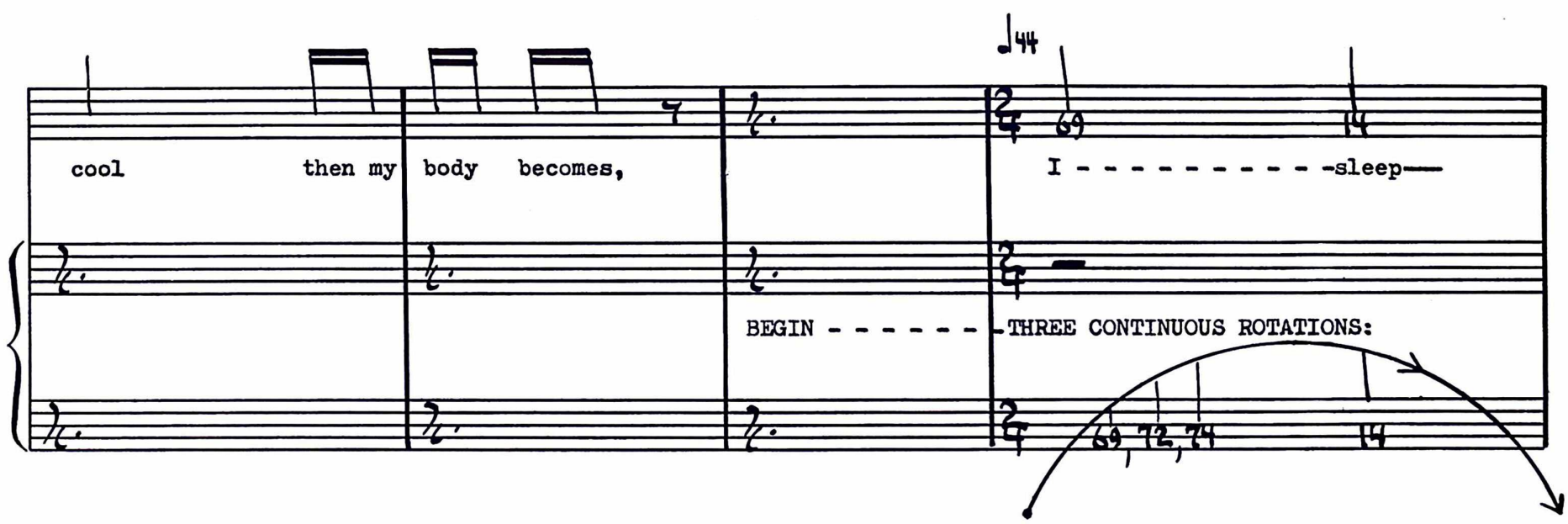
poem 50

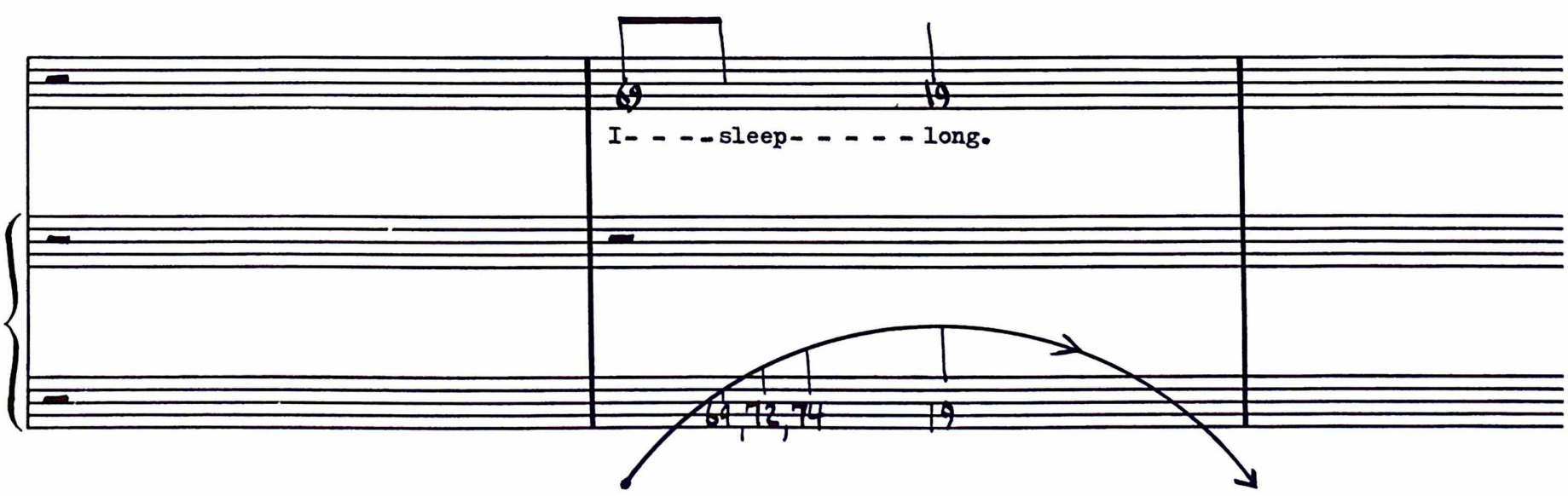
50

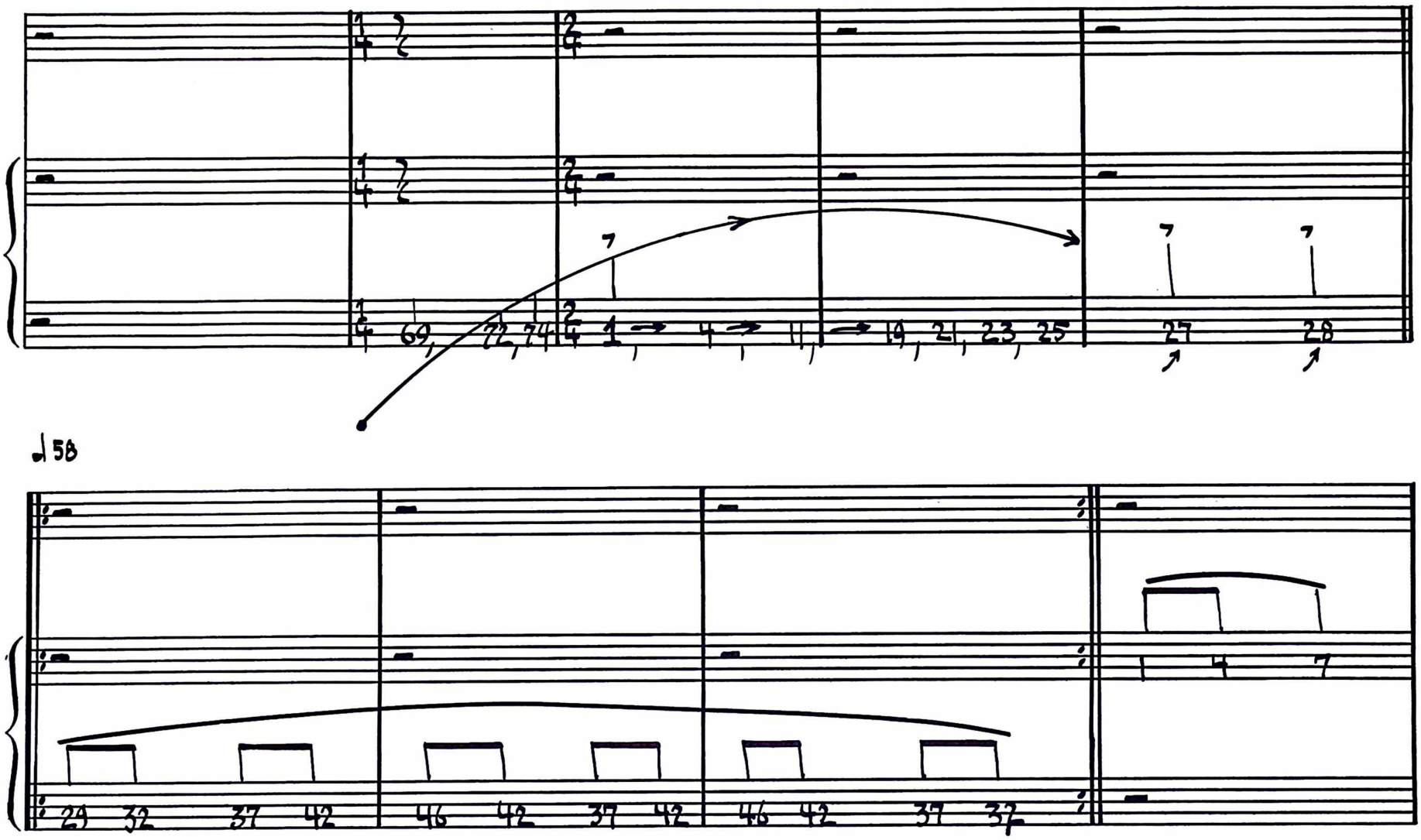

♩58
Voice
Chrysalis I
INTONE:
There is that in me—
I do not know what it is—
but I know it is

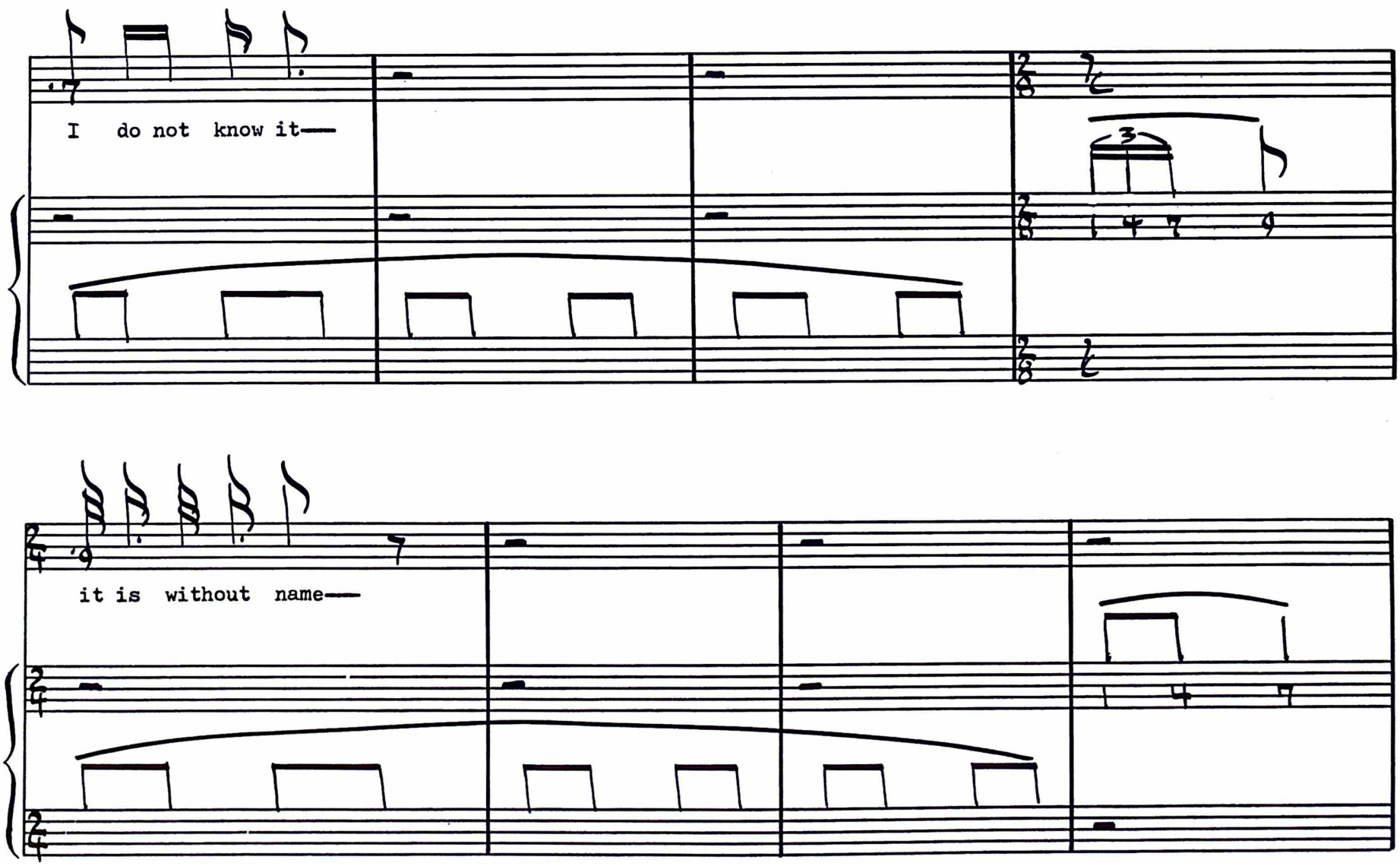

in me.
29 32 37 42 46 42 37 42 46 42 37 32 29


Wrench'd and sweaty— calm and
26 22 14
1,4,7
21


cool then my body becomes,
I - - - - - - - - - - -sleep—
BEGIN - - - - - - -THREE CONTINUOUS ROTATIONS:
69 14
69,72,74 14


I- - - -sleep- - - - - long.
69 19
69,72,74 19


69, 72, 74
1, 4, 11, 19, 21, 23, 25
27
28
♩ 58
29 32 37 42
46 42 37 42
46 42 37 37


I do not know it——
it is without name——

RECITE:

it is a word unsaid, It is not in any dictionary, utterance,

symbol.

accel.

RECITE:

Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on, To

it the creation is the friend whose em bracing awakes me. Per-

haps I might tell more. Outlines! I

plead for my brothers and sisters.

INTONE:

Do you see O my

brothers and sisters? It is not chaos or death—

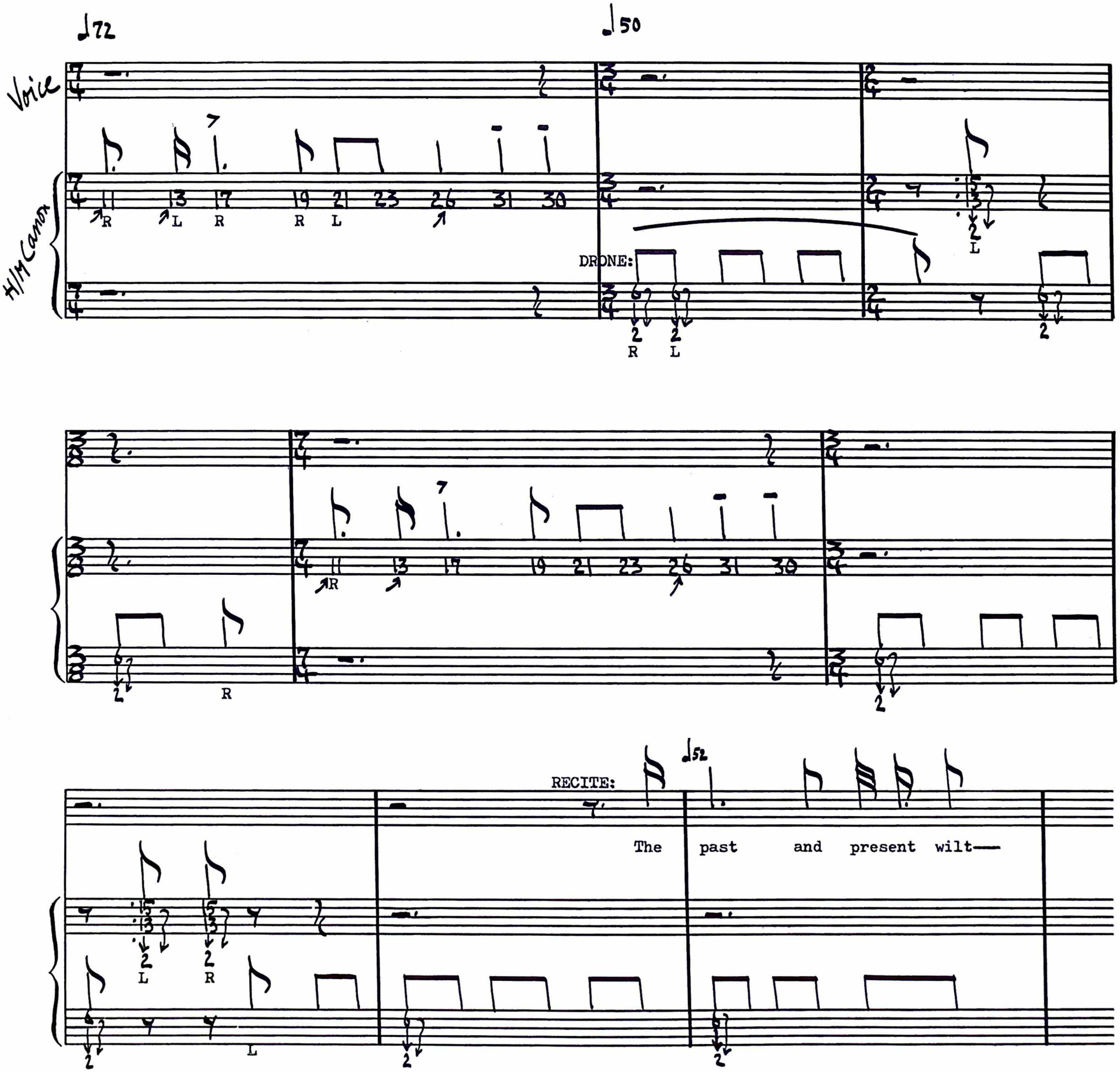
it is form, union, plan—

it is eternal life—

it is

Happiness.

51


♩72
♩50
Voice
H/M Canon
DRONE:
RECITE:
♩52
The past and present wilt—

I have fill'd them, emptied them, And pro-

ceed to fill my next fold of the future. Listener up there! what have

you to confide to me? Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening, (Talk

honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a

minute longer.)

INTONE:

Do I

R

R L

L

contradict

my-

-self?

L

L R

Very well then I contra dict myself, (I am

L

R

large, I contain multitudes.)

I concentrate toward

R

R

them that are nigh, I wait on the door-slab.

Who has done his day's work? who will soonest be through with his

supper? Who wishes to walk with me?

RECITE:

Will you speak before I am gone?

♩50

will you prove already too late?

accel.

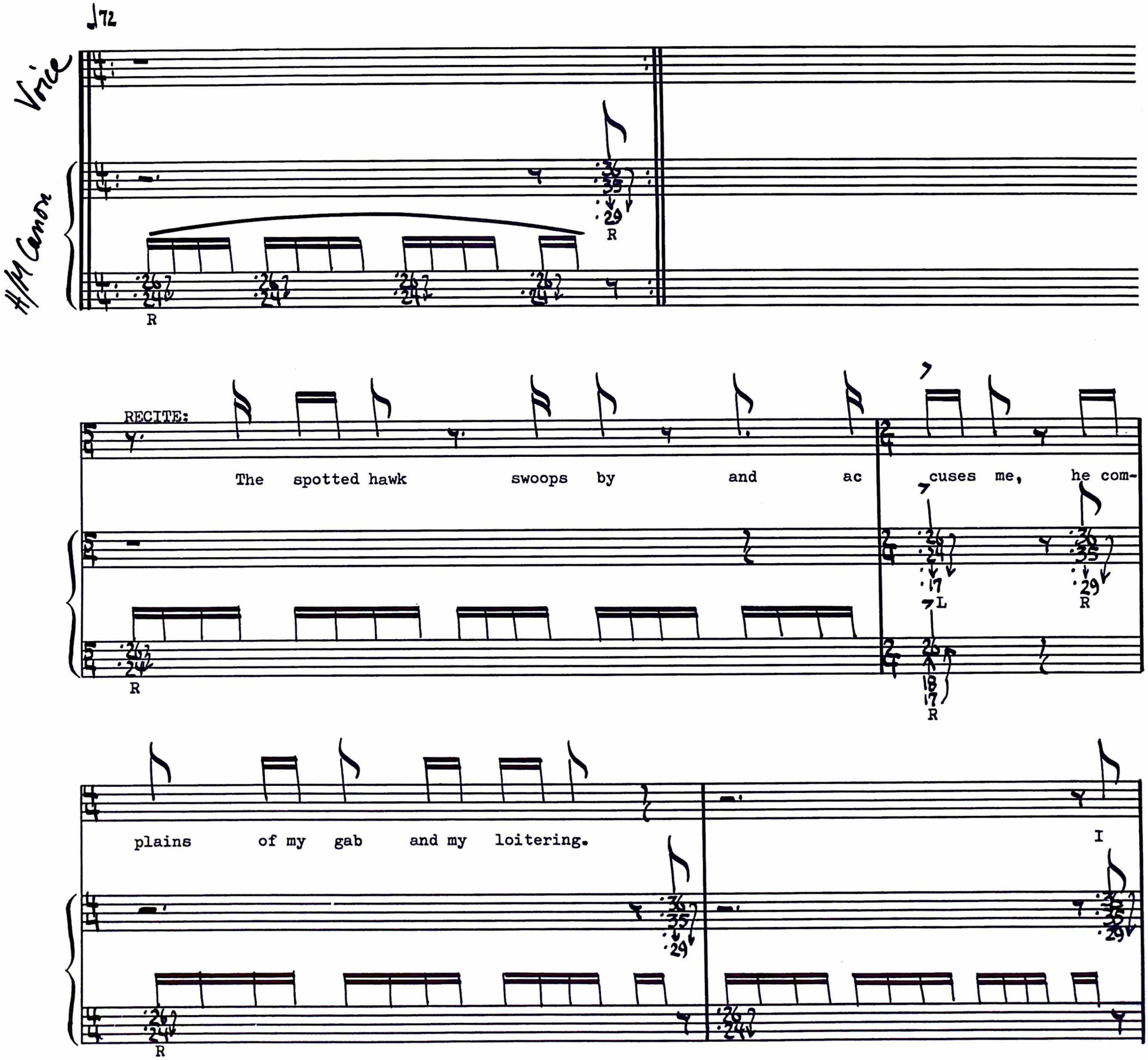
♩52 ♩58 ♩63

♩72

pick up:

continue without pause:poem 52

52


♩72
Voice
H/M Canon
RECITE:
The spotted hawk swoops by and ac cuses me, he com-
plains of my gab and my loitering.
I

too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable, I

sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

8/5——40/21 R

40/21——2/1 R

♩72

The last scud of day holds back for me, It

flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the shadow'd wilds, It

coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air, I

shake my white locks at the runaway sun, I ef fuse my flesh in eddies, and

drift it in lacy jags.

rit.

♩40

INTONE:

2/1 I be

16/15 queath myself

to the

2/1——32/15(16/15)

16/15 R

R R R

2/1——16/15

R

dirt

2/1 to

16/15 grow from the grass

I love,

16/15 If you want me a

2/1——16/15

gain

16/15 look for me

under your

16/15 boot- soles.

2/1——16/15

♩96

You will hardly know who I

am or what I mean,

But I shall be good health to you neverthe less, And

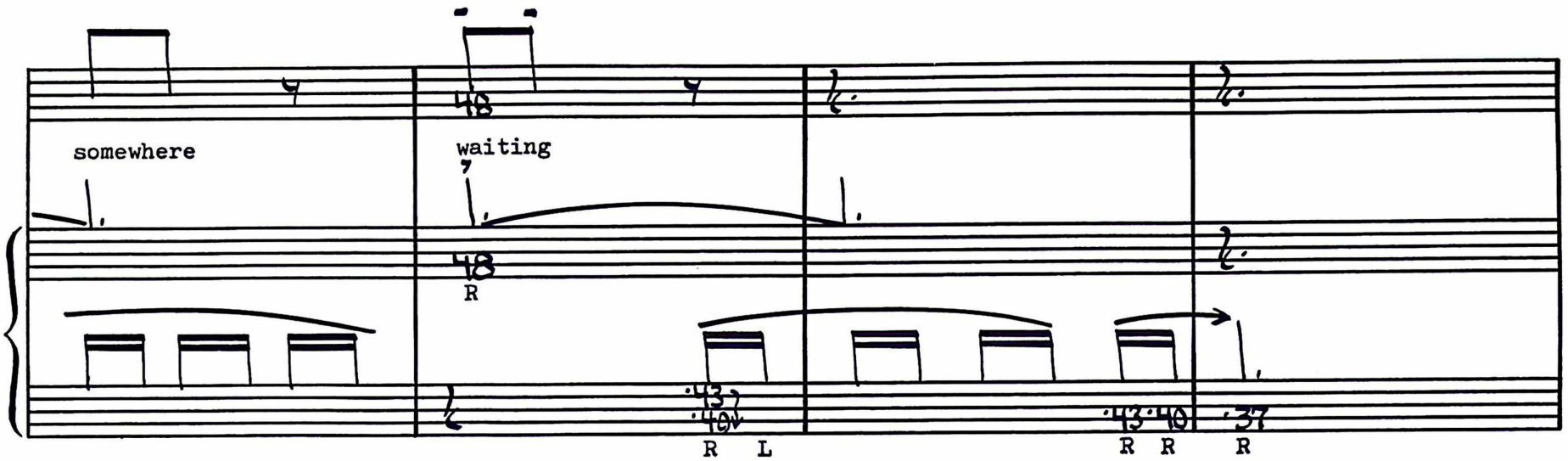
filter and fiber your blood.

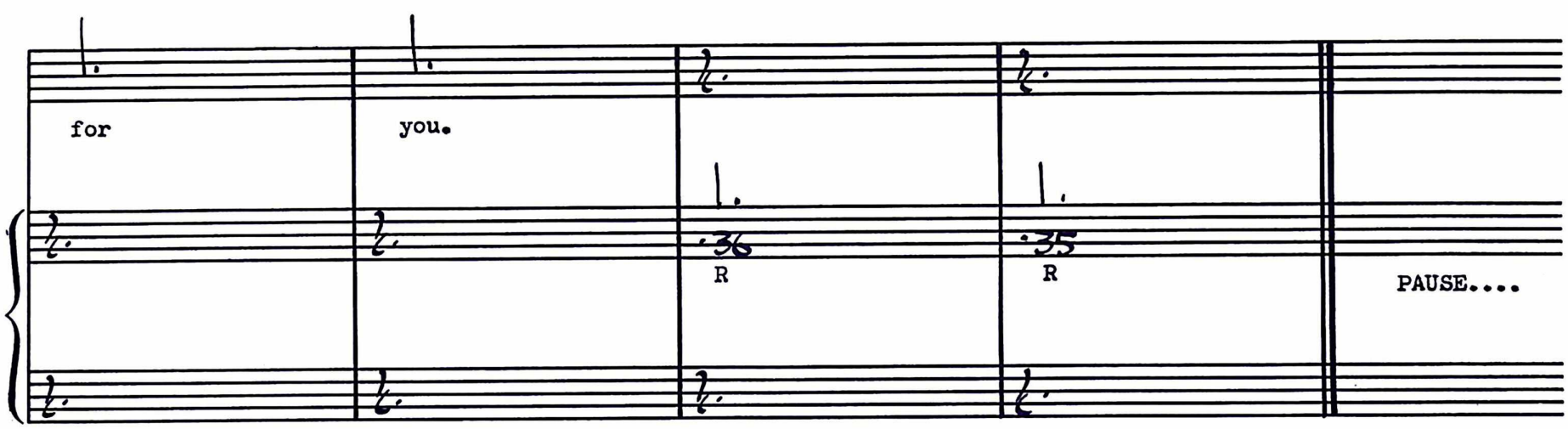
Failing to fetch me at first keep en-

couraged,

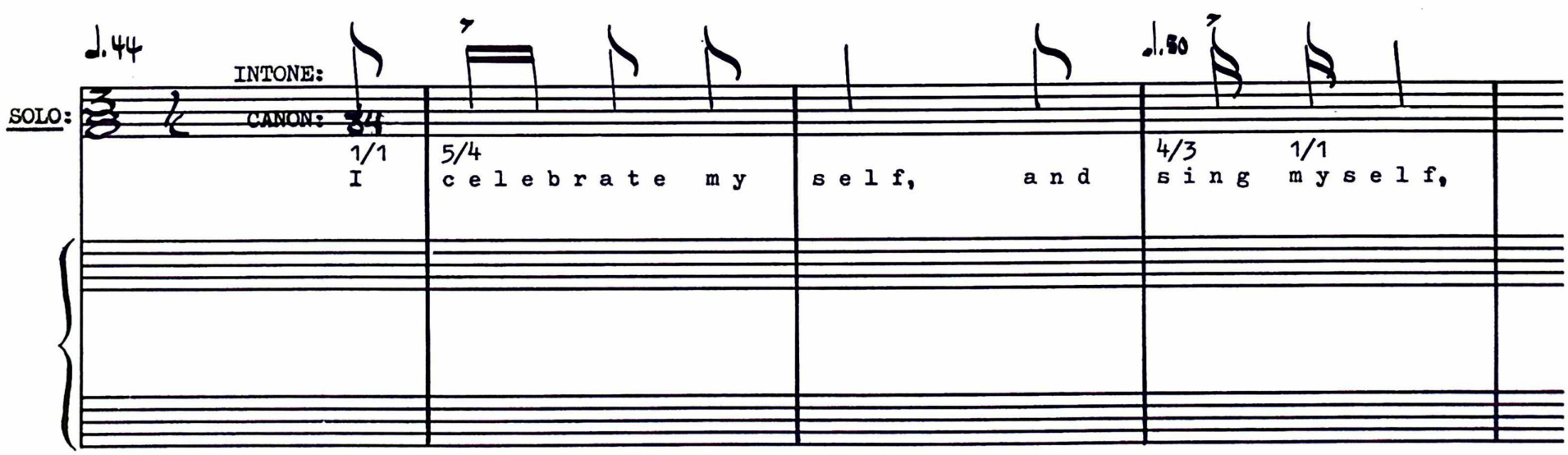
Missing me one place search a nother,

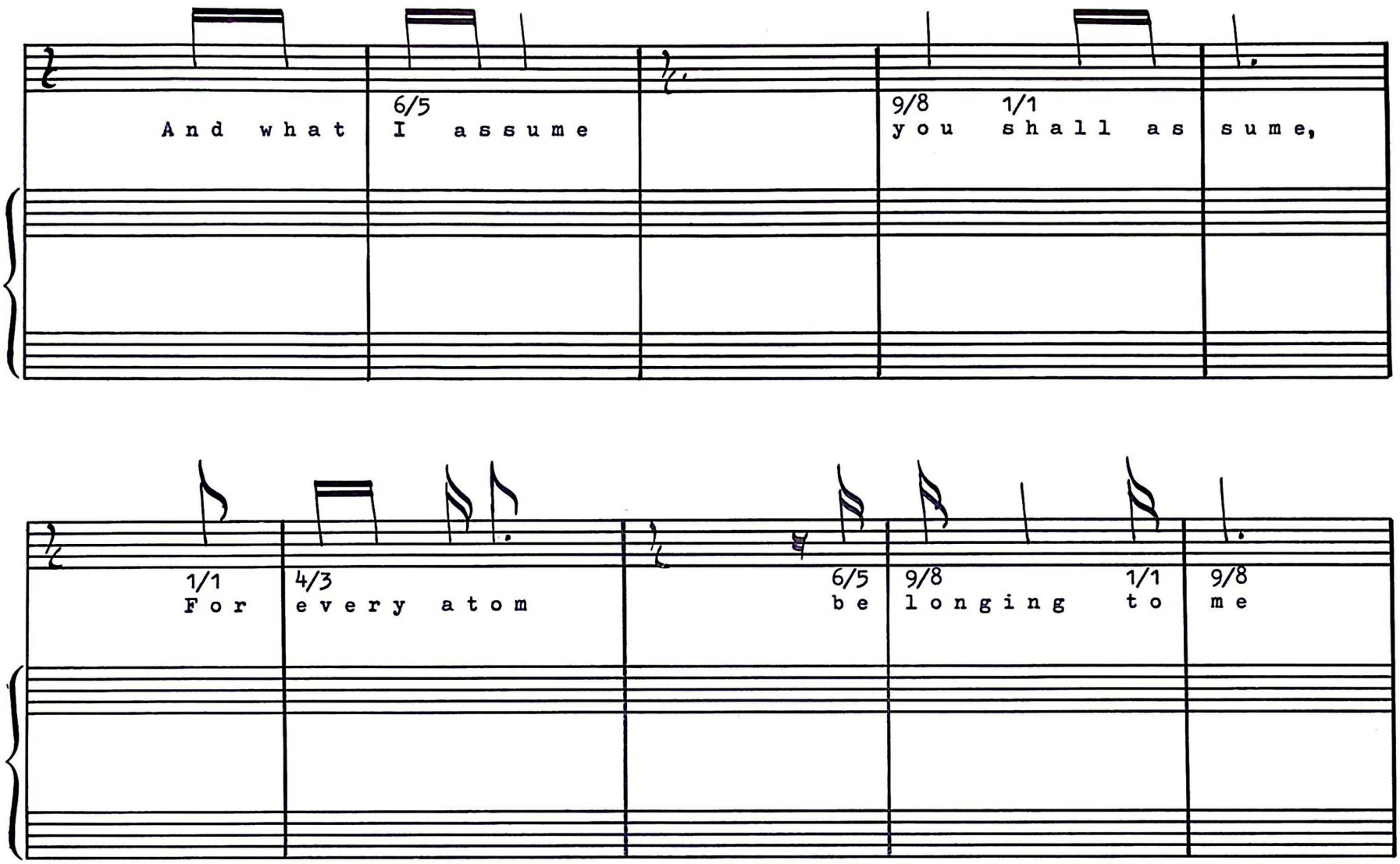
I stop

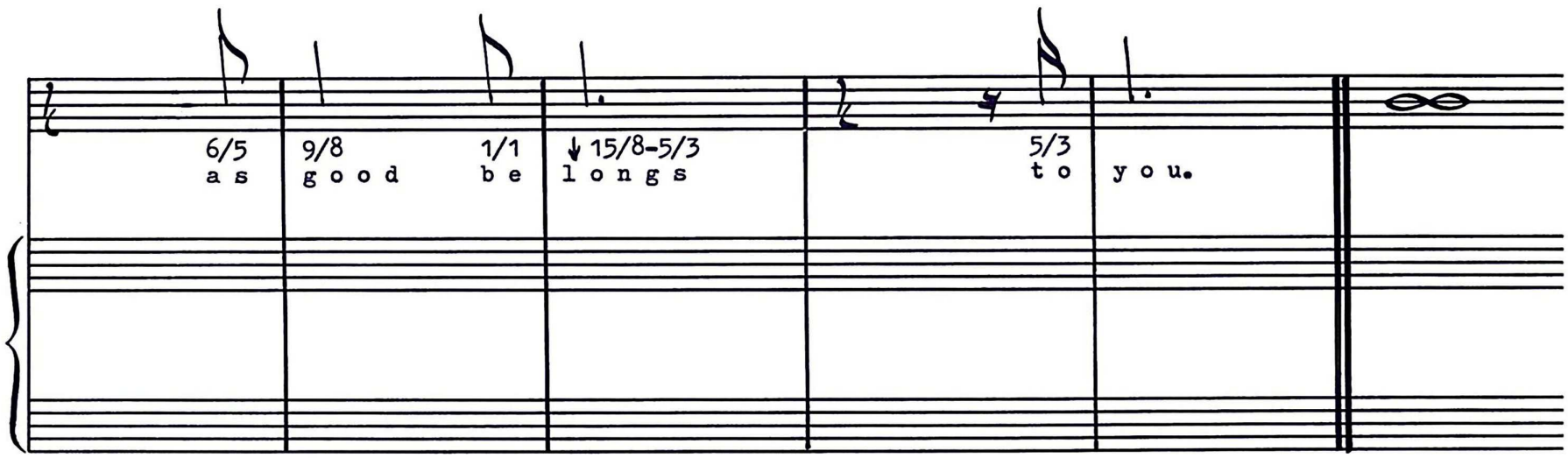

somewhere
waiting
48
R
43
40
R L
43 40
37
R R R


for
you.
36
R
35
R
PAUSE....

1


♩.44
INTONE:
SOLO:
CANON:
84
1/1
I
5/4
c e l e b r a t e m y
s e l f, a n d
♩.80
4/3
s i n g
1/1
m y s e l f,





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