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O Poet, Your Song Reveals the Heavens:
New Settings of Andalusian Poetry for Life Cycle and Communal Ritual Moments

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Senior Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Cantorial Ordination and Master of Sacred Music Degree

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To my teachers and family, in the words of Moses Ibn Ezra, your loyalty is “a mantle of honor that will never become outworn.”

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Abstract

This senior project is a collection of new musical settings of medieval Andalusian Hebrew poetry for use in communal ritual moments. In addition to the scores for the five compositions that comprise the set, the project includes the following written components: an introduction; an overview of the history of Andalusian Hebrew poetry; brief biographies of the poets represented in this collection as well as discussions of each poet's contributions to the field of Hebrew poetry; and a conclusion that discusses the impact of the Andalusian poetic tradition while identifying directions for future study. Each poet biography contains the following subsections on each of the selected poems: 1) the reprinted poems in the original Hebrew and in translation; 2) poetic analyses including discussion of key biblical allusions; 3) discussion of the musical interpretation of each selected poem; and 4) a usage guide suggesting fitting contexts in which to incorporate these compositions. While there is a wealth of musical settings for the era's liturgical verse, settings for the non-liturgical poetry are much more limited. This project provides new music that highlights the significance of the source material and brings these poems into new worship and life cycle contexts. Specifically, I selected these poems for use in the following ritual moments: dedication of sacred space; periods of mourning, recovery and healing; LGBTQIA weddings; blessings for children; and dedications for clergy and teachers. The project references articles and books about the history of Andalusian Hebrew poetry. In addition to the scores, I provided my own exegesis on the selected poems. Through this collection of songs, I hope to highlight three key features of the Golden Age's poetry: the expansion of the Hebrew language and biblical references to settings outside of synagogue worship, the personalization of public prayer, and the balance of the poets' Jewish communal loyalties and their sense of connection with all of humanity.

Introduction

"My language,
I'd ask of you
In my life
To lift up a sound of lament
For my brother and father,
Who was father to all who were broken in judgment,
And the widows deceived;
Who was generous and opened his doors to the street,
When others were locked,
Who'd herd as one the heifer and bear,
While none devour, and none become prey."[1]

When I first encountered this elegy by Shmuel HaNagid for his brother Isaac in Peter Cole's anthology of medieval Hebrew poetry *The Dream of the Poem: Hebrew Poetry from Muslim and Christian Spain, 950-1492,* I was stunned by the intimacy of this 11th century text. I taught the poem in a summer course on Jewish poetry and song, and a congregant told me that she had recently lost her brother and that she saw herself in this text. I wondered how many poems like this one I might find. And with such a lyrical translation, how did it sound recited in the original Hebrew? Had it ever been set to music?

As a descendent of Jews from Morocco who once sought refuge from Spain, I felt particular motivation to study and, someday, teach this poetic tradition. I wanted to learn to draw on these verses on the bima, in the classroom, under the chuppah, at the bedside, and at the graveside. Having been steeped in Ashkenazi Conservative and Reform musical traditions, I currently lack the formal training to render Moroccan music authentically, yet the Spanish poetic tradition felt and feels more within my grasp; I feel that I can share this literature without fear of appropriation at worst or poor imitation at best.

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[1] Peter Cole, *The Dream of the Poem: Hebrew Poetry from Muslim and Christian Spain, 950-1492* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 53-58.

In recent years, various cantorial students have begun to address the deficiency of understanding of non-Ashkenazi Jewish cultures in contemporary progressive Jewish communities: Suzanne C Hamstra (2022), Jennifer Benrey (2022), Jacob Niemi (2018), Inbal Sharett-Singer (2015), Donna Mashadi Azu (2010), Galit Dadoun Cohen (2010), and Miriam Miller (2002), to name a few. In a certain sense, my work contributes to this urgent, growing body of work by highlighting and increasing access to the vast body of Sephardi Hebrew poetry.

However, I do not view this project as ethnomusicological, per se. While I began researching this repertoire out of a desire to deepen my connection to my family heritage, what compelled me to incorporate this material into my cantorate is its ability to speak to the spiritual needs of contemporary audiences, both in terms of its content and its context. I intend to contribute to this scholarship as a composer: to set these verses to music for use in public and private ritual moments to add another potential avenue for engagement with this expansive literary tradition.

HaNagid wrote the above elegy for his brother, one in a series of eighteen, in 1041, when he was 48 years old. He is widely considered the first truly great Spanish Jewish poet of the "Golden Age" of Muslim Spain (c.950-1140), a period of staggering intellectual and creative output enabled by unusually favorable conditions for the Iberian Jewish community. HaNagid's elegy encapsulates much of what makes the poetry of the Spanish Golden Age both remarkable and relatable. For the first time in the history of the Hebrew language, poets were using the sacred tongue to compose individualistic verse not intended for worship. The new poetry could express the full range of human experience—from HaNagid's grief to the pleasures of wine and romantic pursuits. Further, as the poets of the age taught Hebrew to sing about non-liturgical themes, they brought biblical quotations into new, unexpected contexts. These same innovations

would impact the language, style, and content of synagogue poetry. T. Carmi observes that secular Hebrew poetry "triumphed" when it "infiltrated the *piyyut* and thus reached the masses in the synagogue." He continues: "For the first time in Jewish history, the paytan was not only a 'deputy' or 'delegate' of the congregation (*shli'ach tsibur*), but a professional poet who was bound by the same conventions and judged by the same aesthetic criteria as the secular poet… from the time of Ibn Gabirol (b. 1021/22) onwards, the greatest paytanim were also the greatest secular poets."[2] Just as the language of the bible would permeate the walls of the synagogue, the self-expression of the worldly or 'secular' poetry would enter the realm of public prayer. As Raymond Scheindlin puts it, "there is…a blurring of the distinction between public and private prayer…A liturgical poem sometimes seems so individualistic that we have trouble imagining that it was actively used in public worship."[3]

The elegy's context reveals a third borderline that underlies the poetry of the age: while HaNagid and his contemporaries as well as their artistic descendents were fully immersed in their Jewish community, they enjoyed a level of access to and prosperity within the broader Muslim Andalusian culture. As we shall see, this interaction with people and ideas beyond the confines of the Jewish community led to a shift in consciousness in all areas of Jewish life and thought. Through this collection of songs, I hope to highlight these three features of the Golden Age's poetry: the expansion of the Hebrew language and biblical references to settings outside of synagogue worship, the personalization of public prayer, and the balance of the poets' Jewish communal loyalties and their sense of connection with all of humanity. Through this music, I hope these selected poems may elevate worship services, life cycle observances, and other significant moments.

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[2] T. Carmi, *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (London: Penguin, 2006), 26.

[3] Raymond P. Scheindlin, *The Gazelle: Medieval Hebrew Poems on God, Israel, and the Soul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 24.

The authors discussed above offer their views on the particular relevance of this literature for contemporary readers. Carmi emphasizes that the awareness of and engagement with the unbroken tradition of Hebrew poetry brings the reader more immediately in touch with their Jewish identity.[4] For Cole, the relevance is multifaceted, with ethnic, political, and artistic dimensions. He writes that the Jewish poetry and culture of medieval Spain

> "confronts the twenty-first-century reader with a worldview and aesthetic that in many respects defy modern oppositional notions of self and other, East and West, Arab and Christian and Jew, as it flies in the face of our received sense of what Hebrew has done and can do, and even what Jewishness means. At the same time, its densely woven brocade…can speak with startling directness to us today, when identities are increasingly compounded and borders easily crossed."

For cantors, the permeable membrane between public and private, sacred and secular adds a deeper level of interest and urgency. Scheindlin articulates that, "these poems show how even a medieval community could make room for the individual spirit within the framework of the community's ritual life. They also show how a new, more sophisticated, and more complex intellectual life could be harmonized with forms that had arisen in an older and simpler intellectual climate."[5] While Scheindlin's argument deals specifically with the new brand of intimate meditations designed for communal worship, I apply this lens to the full field of Spanish medieval Hebrew poetry. This repertoire provides a model for how the incorporation of personal poetic expressions can bring added depth to contemporary worship and ritual settings.

Challenges in Translation and Transmission

Various authors discuss the tensions inherent in translating this particular body of poetry and transmitting it to new readers. These same issues guide my process as I seek to convey these

[4] Carmi, *Hebrew Verse,* 60.
[5] Scheindlin, *The Gazelle,* 24-25.

texts through music. Some of the most commonly considerations are: 1) fidelity to the literal text versus the intangible 'feel' of the verse; 2) preservation of meter and rhyme; 3) achieving a language that captures the sound of the original while communicating effectively with contemporary audiences; and 4) transmission of key biblical references.

Peter Cole critiques three common translational approaches before championing a fourth. In the first two, translators find analogues in the target language and render the original poetry in an affected, imitated style. Cole remarks that "the result of this approach is, almost, always, lifeless period pieces in verse: a wax museum-like school of translation."[6] He also rejects a third approach: separating "form from content" and choosing "to translate in plain prose." He concludes that, in "reducing the work to a single dimension—either out of an honorable fear of misrepresentation or a cowardly abdication of interest and ambition—the gloss it offers is numb to the sense of the poem as a thing that is made."[7]

Instead, Cole seeks to capture each poem's "vitality, with cues taken, on the one hand, from related arts or strong versions of related literatures and on the other, from a contemporary sense of linguistic force."[8] This approach, he continues, "is the identification and re-creation of a compelling, authoritative presence, one that might draw the translator and then the reader…into the culture in question."[9] In applying theory into practice, he explains: "I have sought to convey the essence of what I've heard—with an emphasis on that aural dimension—I have hewn to the phrase-by-phrase meaning of the poem."[10]

I use Cole's translational approach as an analogue for my compositional process. As my goal is to present these poems to a broad listenership, I am assuming little about the individual

[6] Cole, *The Dream of the Poem,* 17.
[7] Ibid., 18.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 19.

listener's musical knowledge. Like Cole, I wish to convey "what I have heard" in each poem and convey this meaning in a musical language that is personally authentic. Additionally, along with my scores, I note key biblical and midrashic connections for cantors and rabbis to reference in *d'rashot* and educational settings.

Toward a historically informed compositional approach

The current project takes note of key trends in the development of medieval Hebrew poetry, making them the basis for further compositional and functional decisions. One of the challenges that I have encountered in rendering these texts musically is how to treat exceedingly lengthy poems. Several of these works, such as HaNagid's elegy excerpted above, contain verses of great beauty and contemporary relevance, though are far too long to be read, let alone set to music, in a modern liturgical or other performance setting. T. Carmi notes a similar concern in his decision to excerpt or omit poems from his collection: "As witnesses for the defense, I could summon some of the poets themselves. In the Spanish school, it was not uncommon for poets to move sections or verses from one poem to another, in keeping with the conventions of the particular genre…Where the poems consist of independent, loosely linked sections, the presentation of judicious extracts can, I think, be defended."[11] Following Carmi, for the sake of the artistic and functional integrity of these compositions, I intend to highlight the most salient excerpts of a given work. I will then provide the entirety of the text at the end of the musical notation.

While the contemporary cantor-composer needs little justification to set new music in order to augment the experience of a worship experience or life-cycle observance, it is worth noting that the present project positions the cantor as the bearer of the *paytan*'s legacy. Carmi

[11] Carmi, *Hebrew Verse,* 10.

notes that, as early as the fifth century, "local cantors began to edit and abridge classical compositions, creating their own collages which catered to popular taste."[12] The current project, which involves repurposing both sacred and secular poetry for new liturgical contexts, follows cues from the innovations of the medieval Spanish *paytanim*. Scheindlin observes that these poets' works "were designed for parts of the service that had never before attracted poetic embellishment…The new poems may thus be considered the most distinctive liturgical innovation of the Golden Age."[13] While the Spanish poets sought to embellish new areas of the statutory worship service, later *paytanim* composed works to celebrate both private and public events like weddings, circumcisions, and synagogue inaugurations.[14] In the same vein, it is my goal to incorporate these poems into moments in need of aesthetic enhancement or new liturgies altogether. I have selected poems for use in the following ritual moments: dedication of sacred space, periods of mourning, recovery and healing, LGBTQIA weddings, blessings for children, and dedications for clergy and teachers.

[12] Ibid., 20.
[13] Scheindlin, *The Gazelle,* 144.
[14] Carmi, *Hebrew Verse,* 37.

The Rise of Andalusian Hebrew Poetry

The rise of the Andalusian school of Jewish poetry begins with a shift in the Iberian Jewish community's political fortune. When the Islamic Umayyad dynasty conquered the Iberian Peninsula from the Visigoths in the early eighth century, the Jewish population largely favored the invading armies. The Muslim conquerors brought relative relief from more than a century of oppression and persecution under Christian Visigoth regimes. Scheindlin explains that "Islam had not, like Christianity come into being in direct competition with Judaism and had little historical reason for animus against it." As "people of the book [*Ahl al-kitāb*]," Jews and Christians were granted *dhimmi,* or protected, status. Under the rules of the Pact of Umar, *dhimmis* were promised protection of their lives and property as well as toleration of their religion, in exchange for special taxes and a range of restrictive conditions subordinating them to the Muslim population. Even so, the extent to which these stipulations were enforced varied based on the health of Islamic civilization. Scheindlin notes: "In general, whenever Islam was in a state of strength, Jews living within its territories would be able to live with dignity, interacting easily with Muslims."[15] Amid this newfound security, the Jews of Iberia gradually adopted the spreading Arabic cultural conventions. Scheindlin continues: "They resembled their neighbors in their names, dress, and language as well as in most other features of their culture, except of course, in their religion, their sense of their own distinctness, their view of history, and the institutional affiliations that flowed from these differences."[16]

By the tenth century, the city of Cordoba would become the Umayyad dynasty's seat of power. Over the course of three generations of rule by the al-Rahmaan family, Cordoba emerged

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[15] Raymond P. Scheindlin, "Merchants and Intellectuals, Rabbis and Poets: Judeo-Arabic Culture in the Golden Age of Islam," in *Cultures of the Jews: Diversities of Diaspora*, ed. David Biale (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), pp. 11-86, 16.

[16] Ibid., 15.

as the cultural center for the entire caliphate.[17] Under al-Rahmaan rule, Cordoba was a significant site of learning—both from the translation of classical Greek texts into Arabic as well as new advances in the arts, sciences, philosophy, history, and philology.[18] Success in the caliphate's courtly society was dependent on facility in this broad curriculum, with the greatest prestige assigned to mastery of the Arabic language.[19] Study of the Arabic arts and sciences provided Jews with a path to status and power, though, as Jane Gerber notes, these studies "were not sufficient to assure the ambitious young courtiers a respected position in the Jewish community or, for that matter, in Jewish history."[20] Indeed, Andalusian Jews sought to educate their sons in Bible, rabbinic literature, and Hebrew language study. Jewish courtiers prided themselves on their ability to synthesize both their Arabic cosmopolitan and Jewish learning.[21] These conditions would set the stage for the poetic revolution of the Spanish Golden Age, first set in motion by the 10th-century courtier Hasdai ibn Shaprut (c. 910-75), the Iraqi rabbi and Ga'on Saadia ben Yosef (882-942), and his student Dunash ben Labrat (c. 920-985).

Hasdai was the first Spanish Jew whose name is mentioned in the Arab records of the time. He rose to fame for his talents in medicine and earned a position as a court physician to Abd al-Rahmaan III. Alongside Hebrew and Aramaic, he spoke Arabic, Latin, and Romance, and would earn the caliph's trust as a diplomat and advisor. At the height of his career, he was appointed *nasi*, or governor, of all Andalusian Jewry.[22] He established his own court based on the Arab model, where he would employ scholars, musicians, and poets of his own, many of whom migrated from all over the Muslim world to make a name for themselves in Córdoba.[23]

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[17] Cole, *Dream of the Poem,* 4.
[18] Jane Gerber, *The Jews of Spain* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 45.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Gerber, *The Jews of Spain,* 44.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Cole, *Dream of the Poem,* 5-6.
[23] Gerber, *The Jews of Spain,* 52.

The Moroccan poet Dunash was one such newcomer. He arrived in Córdoba in his twenties after studying with Saadia in Baghdad. Even as the head of the Sura Yeshivah, Saadia was immersed in Arab culture. His deep knowledge of and appreciation for the Arabic language inspired a newfound interest in Hebrew language study. Scheindlin explains that, "for the Islamic learned classes, the study of language was considered the cornerstone of all scholarship…This attitude is summed up in the doctrine that Muslim scholars called *'arabiyya,* the principle that classical Arabic is the most perfect of languages and the model for all writing of importance and prestige."[24] Gerber would add that, to Muslims, "the exceptional virtuosity of the language was proof of divine favor; to be specific, they believed (then and now) that the excellence of the Arabic in the Koran was proof of the perfection of Islam itself."[25] Saadia, his contemporaries, and his students would apply the principles of *'arabiyya* to the Hebrew language and to the Hebrew Bible. Scheindlin explains that, while learned Jews had always studied Hebrew as a means of mastering Scripture and rabbinic literature, "no one before Saadiah had ever made an issue of the study of the language itself, demanding that, for the sake of the Torah, Jews master Hebrew, study its grammar, and even learn to speak in it."[26] Just as poetry was the most prized expression of Arabic, liturgical poetry was, in Saadia's view, key to the elevation of the Hebrew language, and he developed his own poetic principles as a means of instructing future composers. Dunash would bring his teacher's ideas and writing, together with his own poetry, into Hasdai's court.

Before Dunash's innovations, Arabic influence gradually seeped into the field of Hebrew poetry. Still, the artform remained fairly static since the days of the early *paytanim*, or liturgical poets, of the sixth and seventh centuries. Such poetry lacked meter and rhyme and was

[24] Scheindlin, "Merchants and Intellectuals," 31.
[25] Gerber, *The Jews of Spain,* 45.
[26] Scheindlin, "Merchants and Intellectuals," 31.

characterized by complicated language and often obscure references to rabbinic literature.[27] Dunash devised his own means of applying Arabic poetic techniques to Hebrew. Arabic verse of the day featured quantitative meters in which the flow of a line depended on the varying lengths of vowels.[28] Dunash brought this metrical system into Hebrew poetry, which "allowed the Arabized-accent of their Hebrew to sound like the flowing Arabic poetry that the Jewish poets admired so."[29] The new Hebrew poetry also borrowed classical and contemporary Arabic forms. Still, the technical developments that Dunash set in motion are only part of his cultural impact. What allowed Dunash's innovations to take hold despite substantial resistance from his critics had just as much to do with content and stylistic features that his techniques unlocked. As Cole puts it: "Metrics aside, Dunash's prosodic revolution brought with it into Hebrew the entire history of the verse that prosody served; that is, it set before the next generations of Hebrew poets…a fresh and vastly broadened notion of both the possible and the beautiful in poetry."[30] More specifically, Halkin describes Arabic quantitative meter as the "price of buying into…the poetry's worldly themes of love; friendship, manly valor; the pleasures of the senses; the enticements of drink and sex; the beauties of nature; the cruelties of time; loss, separation, wandering, and travel; and its many metaphorical and associative strategies for weaving such motives together."[31]

The new poets did far more than copy their Arabic poetic models into Hebrew; they applied the gloss of their Jewish worldview, thus creating an alloyed artform that synthesized their cosmopolitan sensibilities with their uniquely Jewish foundations. The new poetry, as we

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Cole, *Dream of the Poem,* 10.
[29] Ibid., 10.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Shmuel HaNagid and Hillel Halkin, *Grand Things to Write a Poem on: A Verse Autobiography of Shmuel Hanagid* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2000), 5.

have seen, is filled with biblical references. Scheindlin explains that "Hebrew poets could count on their readers' ability to recognize any allusion to [the Bible]. They developed the artful use of biblical quotations as part of their craft, often creating interesting effects by distorting the meaning, expecting their learned audience to respond to the constant manipulations of the quotations."[32] In the generations following Dunash, poets would learn to wield the new style as a means of self-expression, giving voice to "their own visions of their lives, careers, and religious ideas."[33] Shlomo Ibn Gabirol would express this sentiment in a poem of praise sent to Shmuel HaNagid, his elder contemporary.

> Shmuel! Ben Labrat
> The poet is gone.
> Much was he missed
> Until you came along.
> Still alive, he would be
> Your bondservant in song.[34]

For his part, Ibn Gabirol would become the first to bring this self-expression from the court into the synagogue with his own meditations on theology and philosophy. "Far from being rare," Gerber notes, "this remarkable facility for moving between the secular and religious was typical of the Golden Age poets."[35]

This collection of songs focuses on the work of these two poets who dominated and changed the world of both worldly and liturgical Hebrew poetry in the 11th century. The final song of the set will jump from al-Andalus to Kurdistan in the late 16th century, in order to demonstrate the far-reaching implications of the Golden Age's burst of creativity.

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[32] Scheindlin, "Merchants and Intellectuals," 68-9.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Halkin, *Shmuel Hanagid,* 4.
[35] Gerber, *The Jews of Spain,* 70.

Shlomo Ibn Gabirol

"Next to Ibn Gabirol, the previous poets were only wind and emptiness."

— Yehudah al-Harizi (13th century)[36]

The first poet whose verse is featured in this musical set is Shlomo Ibn Gabirol, the first of the great Golden Age Poets to make major contributions in both secular and liturgical poetry.[37] Ibn Gabirol's oeuvre—both his liturgical and secular output—is distinctive for its complex personal expression. Jochanan Wijnhoven describes the poet-philosopher as "perhaps the most puzzling figure in the intellectual history of medieval Judaism…It becomes clear from his writings, in particular his poetry, that his was an extremely sensitive and susceptible soul. Gabirol's impressionable nature was burdened with painful difficulties."

Little is known about his life. He was born in either 1021 or 1022 in Malaga and raised in the Islamic and Jewish learning center of Saragossa. Peter Cole describes him as a poetic prodigy: "writing accomplished poems by age sixteen, important ones by nineteen."[38] From a young age he contracted a life-long disease characterized by painful boils. Following the death of his first patron, he left Saragossa for Granada, seeking the patronage of Shmuel HaNagid. Though he would achieve some success with HaNagid, Ibn Gabirol's historical record vanishes with the poet still in his mid-twenties. He is believed to have died in 1058 at age 36, though some place his death as late as 1070.[39]

Much of what is known about the poet-philosopher comes from his autobiographical secular verse. Scheindlin writes that Ibn Gabirol "presents a complex image of himself: as sickly,

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[36] Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Peter Cole, *Selected Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 8-9.

[37] Scheindlin, "Merchants and Intellectuals," 70.

[38] Cole, *Ibn Gabirol*, 3.

[39] Isaac Husik, *A History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1941), 60.

orphaned lonely, and destitute; as a philosopher so obsessed with death and with his philosophical speculations that he neglects worldly concerns, caring nothing for the false honors that this world can bestow; and as a bitter failure who sees that his philosophical attainments have not gained him recognition from his fellow men."[40] Ibn Gabirol's self-presentation as a misanthropic philosopher was indeed corroborated by the leading poet Moshe Ibn Ezra, who was just one generation removed from Ibn Gabirol and was well aware of his predecessor's reputation and output: "He is known…for his philosophical temperament, and for his 'angry spirit which held sway over reason, and his demon within which he could not control.'"[41]

Still, his secular poetry reveals a tenderness and a desire for human connection. He composed stirring elegies,[42] letters conveying love for his students,[43] and many poems of pining for fickle lovers. While, as we have noted, it can be difficult to distinguish between stylistic tropes and true self-expression, certain compositions stand out for their sincerity. One such poem "All My Desire" voices the poet's longing for his friend's company while enduring the pain of his illness.[44] I chose this poem as the second piece in this musical set.

Ibn Gabirol's non-liturgical output fell into obscurity until the 19th century, as scholars began piecing together selections of the poet's work from scattered manuscripts and scraps from the Cairo Geniza.[45] Yet his writing for the synagogue—remarkable for its sense of humility, intimacy, and awe—becomes all the more remarkable when informed by the context of the poet's personal struggles. As Jochanan Wijnhoven puts it, Ibn Gabirol's "disturbed relationship with society…deepened his personality and became for him a source of original and even defiant

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[40] Scheindlin, "Merchants and Intellectuals," 71.
[41] Cole, *Ibn Gabirol*, 4.
[42] Scheindlin, "Merchants and Intellectuals," 70-71.
[43] Cole, *Ibn Gabirol*, 108, 261.
[44] Ibid., 52, 206.
[45] Ibid., 9.

productivity. The inner and outer disharmony of his life was sustained by his deep religiousness, and his empirical knowledge of the depths of human existence was transformed into a spiritual discovery of an intimate relationship with God."[46]

Through his prose, he was instrumental in developing the theological and philosophical trends of his time. And through his verse, he was able to bring Jewish prayer into harmony with the prevailing, surprisingly universal Andalusian worldview. Ibn Gabirol's philosophical masterwork, *The Fountain of Life*—once believed to have been written by a Muslim or Christian author—focuses on the purpose of the human soul and the nature of creation. Ibn Gabirol's *Fountain* takes the form of a conversation between Master and Student. The Master teaches that "the purpose for which all that exists exists is the knowledge of the world of the divine." To attain this knowledge is to achieve "release from death and adherence to the fountain and source of life."[47] The student must undertake a journey of knowledge beginning with the self and ending with the Last Cause—God's Divine Will, "by which and for which everything exists."[48] While one can logically comprehend the Divine Will, this logic falls short of grasping God's actual self. At this point, God must be experienced, not merely thought of. Peter Cole explains that "his is a religion of knowing, a gnosticism. It involves a vital mythic configuration, alive with sound, movement, and spirit at every turn."[49]

Cole goes on to note that "the very elements that appealed to…Neoplatonist Christians may have doomed it within the Jewish community, where interests and methods grew less 'universal' as social circumstances changed in Spain and the Christian reconquest gathered strength…With the exception of its title, which is drawn from Psalms 36:10…the book contains

[46] Jochanan Wijnhoven, "The Mysticism of Solomon Ibn Gabirol," *The Journal of Religion* 45, no. 2 (April 1965): pp. 137-152, 139.
[47] Cole, *Ibn Gabirol, 16.*
[48] Wijnhoven, "Ibn Gabirol," 142.
[49] Cole, *Ibn Gabirol,* 32.

not a single reference to Hebrew scripture or tradition, and Plato is the only philosopher mentioned there by name."[50]

As we shall see, Ibn Gabirol would express the ideas put forth in *The Fountain of Life* in his liturgical poetry. In doing so, he brings the Neoplatonist philosophical system into Jewish practice and transcends the logical limits of his philosophy. While there had been a Hebrew poetic tradition of composing "lyrical preludes, or *reshuyot"* to statutory public prayers, Ibn Gabirol composed new poetry "designed for parts of the service that had never before attracted poetic embellishment. The poets sought a new context because their philosophical interests, especially their concern with the fate of the individual soul, led them to explore the borderline between public liturgy and private meditation."[51] The first poem in this musical set is one such *reshut,* called a *Nishmat* (The Soul) because it introduces the fixed liturgy, "May the soul of every living thing praise Your name." Scheindlin notes that the universality of this prayer made it an attractive target for Neoplatonist poetic commentary.[52]

In the present day, Progressive Jewish prayer leaders and worshippers seek to harmonize contemporary universalist values with liturgical texts that explicitly separate the Jewish community from the rest of humanity. Ibn Gabirol's poetry artfully and prayerfully addresses this tension. Additionally, these poems invite the worshiper to seek an intimate relationship with divinity that cannot be attained through rationality alone. Through these compositions, I hope to introduce unfamiliar yet relevant texts into progressive worship spaces where piyyutim—and non-biblical as well as non-modern Hebrew poetry more broadly—have fallen out of use. Further, this musical set juxtaposes Ibn Gabirol's sacred and secular verse to show that spiritual experience, even for Gabirol, does not exist removed from worldly context; one should be

[50] Ibid., 14-15.
[51] Scheindlin, "Merchants and Intellectuals," 51-52.
[52] Ibid.

encouraged to bring their personal struggles into their relationship with divinity, just as this personal spiritual relationship can sustain one through "the inner and outer disharmony of life."[53]

[53] Wijnhoven, "Ibn Gabirol," 139.

I. And So I Will Give Thanks

שְׁחַרְתִּיךְ בְּכָל שַׁחֲרִי וְנַשְׁפִּי, וּפָרַשְׂתִּי לְךָ כַּפַּי וְאַפִּי
לְךָ אֱהֶמֶה בְּלֵב צָמֵא, וְאֶדְמֶה, לְדַל שׁוֹאֵל עֲלֵי פִּתְחִי וְסִפִּי
מְרוֹמוֹת לֹא יְכִילוּךְ לְשִׁבְתָּךְ, וְאוּלָם יֵשׁ מְקוֹמְךָ תּוֹךְ סְעִפִּי
הֲלֹא אֶצְפֹּן בְּלִבִּי שֵׁם כְּבוֹדְךָ, וְגָבַר חִשְׁקְךָ עַד יַעֲבָר-פִּי
אֲנִי עַל כֵּן אֲהוֹדֶה שֵׁם אֲדֹנָי בְּעוֹד נִשְׁמַת אֱלֹהִים חַי בְּאַפִּי[54]

Translation and English lyrics by Isaac Sonett-Assor
I seek You every evening and dawn,
My face turned up, my palms open to You;
With a thirsty spirit, I yearn for You,
As though a beggar at my door
And though the heavens cannot contain You,
I've made You a palace in my mind
And in my heart, have I hidden Your name,
Your love runs over through the song of my lips[55]
And so, I will give thanks to the Holy Name
so long as I breathe the Spirit of the Living God

This collection of songs begins with a liturgical poem by Ibn Gabirol. The text is a *Nishmat*—a *reishut,* or introductory poetic commentary to *Nishmat Kol Chai,* the extended conclusion to the verses of Psalms recited on Shabbat morning. As discussed above, the poem is a meditation on the relationship between God and the individual soul. In his commentary on another poem, "The Palace Garden," Cole observes that many of Ibn Gabirol's poems draw from "scriptural passages associated with King Solomon, the poet's namesake."[56] Given this context, and as the poem's content will reveal, the poet's decision to compose this text as an acrostic of *Shlomo* carries greater significance.

[54] Raymond P. Scheindlin, *The Gazelle: Medieval Hebrew Poems on God, Israel, and the Soul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 182.
[55] Boldface text denotes English text sung in composition.
[56] Cole, *Ibn Gabirol,* 214.

Scheindlin and Cole have both noted that the poem's central thrust lies in a pun in the third line on the homonym *v'ulam,* which can mean both "and yet" and "palace." Scheindlin highlights this wordplay in his translation: "The heavens do not have room for You to dwell/And yet You have a palace in my mind."[57] Indeed, this line is a paraphrase of Solomon's declaration in 1 Kings 8:27, as he dedicates the newly-completed Temple: "Even the highest heavens cannot contain you; how much less so this house that I have built." Further, *ulam* is used throughout 1 Kings to describe Solomon's Temple (e.g., 7:6-8), giving this allusion greater resonance. It is also noteworthy that Ibn Gabirol begins his poem, "And I spread out my palms to you," as does Solomon before his lengthy dedication to God (8:22). Taken together, Ibn Gabirol draws direct inspiration from Solomon in his attempt to identify God's presence. However, while Solomon maintains that the Temple is essential for communication with God—even if it is insufficient for God to dwell within it—Ibn Gabirol separates the concept of God's presence from the realm of physical space. One can build a palace simply by meditating on God—whether in Jerusalem or, for Ibn Gabirol, in Granada.

Yet for the poet, this internal palace is not just an intellectual exercise. Scheindlin writes that Ibn Gabirol's theology "was not merely a philosophical system but also entailed an ideal of spiritual fulfillment in the form of ecstasy or illumination achieved by means of intense and prolonged intellectual speculation."[58] That is, the act of dedicating an *ulam* within the poet's thought is an overwhelming experience. The heart cannot contain the poet's passion: it overcomes all efforts to contain it, until it comes out as prayer. Scheindlin observes a similar sensation in Jeremiah 20:9, in which God's word is likened to *eish bo'eret,* a consuming fire that also cannot be contained. However, Jeremiah's fire describes the anguish of trying to withhold

[57] Scheindlin, *The Gazelle,* 183.
[58] Scheindlin, "Merchants and Intellectuals," 54.

prophecy; Ibn Gabirol's experience is one of ecstasy, likened to the waters of a flood.[59] Cole adds that this metaphor recalls that of the divine fountain in *The Fountain of Life.*[60] This progression leads to the declaration that the poet—now overcome by God's presence—has no choice but to let his words of praise pour forth.

This image brings us back to Solomon's Temple. When the priests bring the Ark of the Covenant of God into the Holy of Holies, the presence of God fills the Temple completely, preventing the priests from remaining inside to fulfill their service (1 Kings 8:6-11). It is as though the word and the glory of God become one and the same, just as in Ibn Gabirol's poem. As Scheindlin explains, "prayer, like prophecy, is seen as the very substance of God." While the poem is an expression of Ibn Gabirol's Neoplatonic speculation on the nature of the soul, "it is tempting to see in it also an extension of one of the unspoken assumptions of the Jewish liturgy. This is the tendency of Jewish prayer in all ages to stay close to the words of Scripture, as if man can come close to God by returning His words to Him [sic]."[61]

This piece is my response to Ibn Gabirol's paradox of God's inconceivable vastness that can live within the human mind and heart. The opening recitative (mm. 1-17) is meant to evoke the image of Solomon with palms outstretched and face turned up, dedicating the completed Temple. This melody is then repeated for lines 3 and 4, now in a steady 6/8 tempo. While the melody leaps on *m'romot* [heavens], the line quickly descends, unable to contain God's presence (mm. 17-21). In contrast, the melody ascends higher on *v'ulam yeish m'kom'cha,* representing the palace within the poet's mind. This idea is further developed in the English verse (mm. 51-67). The text "heavens cannot contain you" is marked by a diminuendo as all the voices descend into the bottom of their respective ranges (mm. 51-54). Further, the voicing from

[59] Scheindlin, *The Gazelle,* 187.
[60] Cole, *Ibn Gabirol,* 283.
[61] Scheindlin, *The Gazelle,* 187.

soprano to bass is especially narrow, spanning an octave and a third. Compare this with the subsequent phrase, mm. 55-59: "Palace in my mind" is marked by a rising line, as the distance between soprano and bass gradually increases to an octave and a 6th. The climax of the section follows after. Measures 59 to 67 juxtapose the poet's internal experience of God's nearness with the overflowing, uncontainable song. "And in my heart have I hidden Your name" is rendered as a *subito piano* alto solo line, after which, the texture, dynamic, and range expand through "Your love runs over through the song of my lips." The intensity of this moment is heightened through the ensemble's voicing, which reaches its widest range in the entire piece (two full octaves from soprano to bass). This effect is coupled with the use of modal mixture (the introduction of Ab and Bb), which takes on particular significance at key moments throughout the composition.

This piece only employs modal mixture in three phrases: mm. 46-48, 66-67 (as discussed above), and 80-84. Each of these instances deals with the experience of the divine presence pouring forth from the poet through words of praise. This first utterance is understated, appearing only in a solo soprano line with the phrase resolving in the lower register. It is as though the poet is aware of *nishmat Elohim Chai,* the soul of the Living God, though only on an intellectual level; experience only comes later. The setting returns to the paradox of God's vastness, this time recited in English. As the love of God *must* be expressed through song, the modal mixture returns, this time in the upper register, supported by a full choral texture. This climax (mm. 66-67)—with its ascending alto and descending cello lines as well as its full ensemble crescendo—propels the piece into a final restatement of the poem's closing line. This time, as the ensemble sings "*b'od nishmat Elohim Chai,"* the phrase (mm. 79-88)—and the enjoyment of the experience of God's presence—is prolonged. The text is repeated and the held notes are joyfully

extended. The piece ends with a peaceful, grateful sigh (mm. 89-93), completing the transition from intellectual meditation to lived experience of the Divine.

While this poem is originally linked to the Shabbat morning liturgy, I envision it as a choral anthem for the dedication of a sanctuary or other holy space. The text conveys the idea that the space itself does not contain God's presence but rather serves as a designated space for worshipers to seek connection with God through meditation, engagement with sacred text, and communal prayer. Further, the worshiper can carry the sanctity of the holy space within their own heart and mind, wherever they may be. It is also noteworthy that the poet's allusion to the dedication of Solomon's Temple underscores the universality of Ibn Gabirol's text and its appropriateness as an anthem of inclusive Jewish communal space. Indeed, Solomon petitions that the Temple may serve as a symbol of the Divine Name for "all the peoples of the earth" and that God may "hear in Your heavenly abode" the prayer of all foreigners (1 Kings 8:41-43).

These same themes make this piece an appropriate anthem for the parashiyot dealing with the construction of the Mishkan, T'rumah through P'kudei. Further, the corresponding haftarot, which chronicle the completion of Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 5:26-8:21), deepen the connection between these parashiyot and the poem. The imagery of the Mishkan as well as the possibility of finding God's presence anywhere makes Sukkot another natural connection for the text (not to mention the selection of 1 Kings 8:2-21 as the haftarah for the second day of the festival). When offered in each of these contexts, Ibn Gabirol's poem explores the often ambiguous relationship between God and physical space in Jewish thought. While biblical sources attest to God's ability to dwell on earth, Ibn Gabirol views the relationship as paradoxical and delights in this mystery.

II. Clear as Glass

בְּךָ סִבְרִי וְאַתָּה תַּאֲוָתִי
וְאֵלֶיךָ תְּשׁוּקַת כָּל עֶדְתִּי
וְעָלֶיךָ קְרָבַי יֶהֱמָיוּן
וְאִדַּדָּה בְּזִכְרָךָ כָּל שְׁנָתִי,
כְּאִלּוּ אֵין בְּךָ מַרְפֵּא לְנַפְשִׁי
יְדִידִי, לוּ תְבַקֵּר מַחֲלָתִי.
וְלוּ עָלָה עָלַי לִבִּי בְּגֹד בָּךְ
בְּאַפִּי תַּעֲלֶה עָלָיו חֲמָתִי
וּמִי יִתֵּן יְהִי לִבִּי זְכוּכִית
עֲדֵי תִרְאֶה בְעִינְךָ אַהֲבָתִי[62]

Translation by Peter Cole[63]
All my desire and hope is with you:
I long just for your company.
My stomach churns and I moan for you,
who drives my sleep away from me,
as though you alone could cure me,
if, in my illness, you'd visit;
if ever my heart thought to betray you
my anger would rise up against it.
If only my heart-in-its-chest were glass-
you'd see my love within it.

English lyrics by Isaac Sonett-Assor
May this heart be clear as glass
So I can show you all of me

The set continues with a second text by Ibn Gabirol, a poem dedicated "to a man who was late in coming to see him because he [Ibn Gabirol] was ill."[64] While we have no other evidence about the poem's subject, the verse is filled with phrases that would suggest a homoerotic interest between poet and subject. This, in its own right, is hardly unusual. As Jewish poets adapted Arabic poetic techniques for Hebrew verse, they brought along with them the themes of both homo- and heteroerotic love so commonly found in the poetry of the day. Scholars have debated to what extent this content accurately reflects the poets' relationships and sexual activity. Scheindlin notes that "the stylized kind of poetry produced in this period is a notoriously unreliable source of documentation for historical and social facts." In response, he continues: "However, we do, when it suits us, accept Hebrew poetry as having documentary

[62] Solomon Ibn Gabirol, *Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol: Shirei Chol*, ed. Chayim Nachman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1927).
[63] Cole, *Ibn Gabirol*, 52.
[64] Cole, *Ibn Gabirol,* 206.

value, and if we accept it as evidence that Jews held wine-drinking parties, then what logic permits us to reject its evidence of the practice of homosexuality? Finally…the incontrovertible fact that they fantasized about it is a sufficiently blatant break with tradition."[65]

What does make this particular poem remarkable is its directness and relative lack of stylization. In the classical Arabic forms as well as in newer forms invented in Muslim Andalusia, the conventions of love poetry remained static. The circumstances of the lovers and the descriptive imagery was fixed. The poet's talent was determined by his ability to demonstrate his creativity within these conventions.[66] In this love poem, there is no garden, no wine, no fawn or gazelle: simply a sick man longing for his beloved.

As the poet awaits his beloved's visit, he calls to mind the visit of Job's companions. He references the phrase *kol-adati* [all my company], which, in its original context, is used to chastise God for destroying Job's entire community (16:7). Ibn Gabirol's usage serves as a *tikkun,* or a correction, of the original; while Job's companions can do nothing to comfort their bereaved friend, the presence of the poet's beloved will surely soothe him. In this same line, the poet adds another dimension to this longing: through the word *t'shukah* [passion], he brings to mind Eve's desire for her husband (Genesis 3:16) as well as the desire expressed in the Song of Songs (7:11). Then, in lines 3 and 4, the poet positions references from Jeremiah and Isaiah in conversation with one another. He declares, "*v'alecha k'ravai yehemayun* [my insides murmur for you]," just as God's insides yearn for the exiled people of Ephraim (Jeremiah 31:20. In contrast, the poet's sleep flees (*idadeh kol sh'nati),* just as Hezekiah awaits God's healing (Isaiah 38:15). The pairing of these two texts is striking on several levels. In evoking God's emotions, Ibn Gabirol magnifies his own experience of yearning. Further, by depicting mutual longing

[65] Scheindlin, "Merchants and Intellectuals," 65.
[66] Ibid., 66.

between God and God's people, he expresses his hope in the reciprocity of his own relationship. Additionally, in referencing Hezekiah's poem of gratitude for God's healing (38:9-20), the poet reveals his hope that he may still be healed by his beloved's visit.

Even with the efficacy of these biblical references in their reimagined contexts, the poet saves the most unusual and affecting imagery for the concluding couplet. This image of a heart made of glass is Ibn Gabirol's own creation, not borrowed from any specific source, biblical or Arabic.[67] This couplet in particular stood out to me as an appropriate and vital text to incorporate into a wedding ceremony. Through this setting, I hope to depict this metaphor of a glass heart—transparent yet fragile—through music.

The opening oscillating piano figure (mm. 1-8) is intended to have a shimmering quality, with the high sustained violin line imitating light refracting through the glass. This glass motif continues through the vocal entrance. At m. 24, a new accompanimental pattern begins, characterized by a strong downbeat in the left hand with repeated chords in the right. This figure, underscoring the text *"k'ilu ein b'cha marpi l'nafshi y'didi* [as though there is nothing to heal my soul except for you, my beloved" is meant to evoke the feeling of the poet's anticipatory, rushing heartbeat. As this passage reaches an open cadence at m. 31—just as the poet sings "*lu t'vakeir machalati* [were you to visit me in my illness]"—the tempo slows and the rhythmic heartbeat subsides, leading into the song's refrain at m. 33.

This refrain highlights the poem's closing couplet. The heartbeat accompaniment resumes, now at a calmer tempo, as the poet is soothed by the thought of his beloved's presence. The melody features the use of appoggiatura (an accented upper neighboring tone), emphasizing the poet's desire to express his true feelings. For instance, at m. 35, "*y'hi* [may it be]" is sung on an extended A against a G minor chord, before resolving down to G on beat 4. This same figure

[67] Cole, *Ibn Gabirol,* 206.

is repeated at m. 39 on the text "*tir'eh* [that you may see]." The poet's wish is repeated in English (mm. 42-48). In an effort to underscore Ibn Gabirol's desire for complete honesty, the violin moves in unison with the vocal line, as though the poet and his beloved are completely synchronized.

The A section is then restated and embellished in an instrumental duet between violin and piano, as if to portray the lovers' reunion. Within the context of a wedding ceremony, this instrumental break allows for a moment of silent reflection. The message of the poem is repeated at m. 66: no matter the illness, the partners' unwavering presence is the most important source of healing. The refrain returns, this time with a broader tempo and fuller texture. The violin imitates the vocal line between mm. 79-81, voicing the lovers' mutual vows. The piece concludes with the opening glass motif, reflecting the lovers' commitment to openness with one another.

The poem's message of loyalty and honesty makes this a fitting anthem for a wedding. Specifically, given the imagery, the piece can serve as a *reishut* before breaking the glass. It is worth noting that this setting omits one couplet from the source text: "if ever my heart thought to betray you/my anger would rise up against it."[68] While these lines emphasize the poet's commitment to his beloved, I felt that the mention of betrayal should not be included in a wedding composition. Alternatively, with its theme of fully revealing one's heart to a partner, the piece could also serve as a *kavannah* for the ritual of *bedecken.*

Additionally, it is worth noting that this piece could, of course, be sung in its initial context: as a song of devotion in time of illness. Accordingly, the score contains a simplified harmonization for accompaniment on guitar in the home or hospital. The setting could also be used effectively in the synagogue as a special piece for the Shabbatot of Consolation following Tisha b'Av. Parashat Eikev provides a particularly stirring context with Moses' exhortation:

[68] Ibid., 52.

"*umaltem eit orlat l'vav'chem* [circumcise the foreskin of your hearts]" (Deuteronomy 10:16). Given the conversational nature of the poem discussed above, the text can be used to express and renew the commitment between God and the people of Israel, even in a time of suffering. Indeed, this reading is consistent with Ibn Gabirol's technique of adapting conventions of secular love poetry to describe the Jewish community's relationship with God.

On the whole, it is significant that this poem describes this relationship between same-sex partners—or any loving partners for that matter—with unusual emotional depth. Much of the stylized homoerotic poetry of the day depicts unrequited feelings, love affairs colored by shame for transgressing God's commandments, or secret trysts emphasizing physical attraction. In contrast, this poem is a rare example of an ancient text that can be readily incorporated into a LGBTQIA wedding without the need for adaptation.

Shmuel HaNagid

"In the days of Hasdai the Chief, the poets began to chirp; and in the days of Samuel the Nagid, they lifted their voices in song." — Abraham Ibn Daud (12th century)[69]

For the third and fourth songs in the collection, I set texts by Shmuel HaNagid, widely regarded as the first great poet of the Spanish Golden Age. Hillel Halkin describes HaNagid as "one of the great figures of a post-biblical Hebrew literature that he set on a new course, among the most amazingly multifaceted public figures ever produced by the Jewish people."[70] He is credited with lifting Andalusian Hebrew poetry from its adolescent stage, as poets were first grappling with how to incorporate fashionable Arabic meters and conventions into Hebrew verse. As Halkin puts it: "the few poems by Dunash that have survived, while admired in their day, are jingly, trotting to their Arabic meters as though before a whip. HaNagid took control of what Dunash was controlled by."[71]

While HaNagid's relative mastery of Arabic meters may be difficult to discern for contemporary audiences lacking familiarity with the Arabic models, one can immediately appreciate his innovations in content and style. For the first time, HaNagid brings a specific autobiographical voice into his verse, expressing the challenges and opportunities of operating in a society beyond the confines of the Jewish community. HaNagid also expressed, as Cole puts it, a "synthesis of secular and religious longing" that can speak to contemporary readers "as powerfully as it had spoken to the aristocratic audience of medieval Andalusia." Further, he linked his verse to the preceding Jewish poetic tradition by basing his verse in biblical sources, thus giving the emerging synthetic, Arabic-influenced Andalusian style a quintessentially Jewish

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[69] Abraham ibn Daud, *A Critical Edition with a Translation and Notes of the Book of Tradition (Sefer Ha-Qabbalah)*, ed. Gerson D. Cohen (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1967), 102.

[70] Halkin, *Shmuel Hanagid,* 2.

[71] Ibid., 4.

character. Cole further underscores the impact of HaNagid's use of biblical sources. He argues that his references give the poetry a timeless quality, "collaps[ing] the present of his poetry into an eternal and messianically allusive past, while projecting out of that pastness and into its echo as present and present-to-come."[72]

Shmuel ben Yosef HaLevi was born in 993 into a wealthy Jewish family in Cordoba. He self-consciously traced his lineage back to the ancient poets of Israel—the Levites of the Temple and David himself. As was common for children of well-to-do Jewish families, the young talmudic prodigy received a cosmopolitan, classical education in Arabic and Greek subjects, including sciences and Arab poetics, alongside his Jewish studies.[73] In 1013, as Cordoba was sieged and destroyed by a Berber force, Shmuel's family fled south to Malaga.[74] Within a few years, he was appointed as the tax collector of Granada and soon after, he became the vizier's assistant. Gerber notes that Shmuel's "discovery…bears the fanciful hallmarks of Islamic legend." According to the story, "Samuel's remarkable epistolary and calligraphic skills reportedly attracted the attention of a minister to King Habbus, the town's Berber ruler." Far more likely, Gerber argues, is that Shmuel "attracted the king's notice by saving him from conspirators plotting a coup d'état. By age 34, HaLevi would become the governor (or HaNagid, as he would be known) of the entire Spanish Jewish community. Within ten years, by supporting King Habbus's son Badis in his contention for the throne, he would be promoted to Chief Vizier of Granada and commander of its Muslim army.[75] He would lead Badis's military until he died in 1056, "reportedly of exhaustion after returning from yet another military campaign."[76]

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[72] Shmuel Hanagid and Peter Cole, *Selected Poems of Shmuel Hanagid* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), xv.

[73] Gerber, *The Jews of Spain,* 53.

[74] Cole, *Shmuel Hanagid,* xvii.

[75] Gerber, *The Jews of Spain,* 54.

[76] Cole, *Shmuel Hanagid,* xvii.

Gerber comments that HaNagid's "lofty position in the Muslim state was inherently dangerous, for it conflicted with both the letter and spirit of traditional Islam."[77] HaNagid and his family's tenuous status was largely dependent on the caliphate's political winds. The poet, governor, and commander freely flaunted his success, living "ostentatiously on a hilltop commanding a view of the River Vega, hosting banquets and salons, winefests and witty encounters between Jewish and Muslim court favorites." His excesses sewed resentment among the masses. In 1066, his son and successor Yehosef would be slaughtered in an uprising that would end Jewish prominence in the caliphate, signaling the beginning of the end of the Golden Age of Jewish culture in Muslim Andalusia.[78]

HaNagid's poetry was a reflection of his comfort with the mainstream Arabic culture in which he was steeped. Halkin observes that HaNagid's adoption of Arabic poetic techniques was hardly his most lasting innovation. He describes the "subordination" of Hebrew verse to "the strict rigors of Arabic poetics" as the price for introducing "the other half of Arabic poetry into Hebrew as well—namely its subject matter." As we have seen, whereas post-biblical Hebrew poetry had been, until this point, "exclusively religious and liturgical," HaNagid allowed it to express "the full range of human experience that had been lost to it."[79] Indeed, by bringing Hebrew poetry out of the confines of the synagogue, HaNagid would often use the sacred language to express wholly profane themes commonly found in his Arabic poetic models. Yet, as Cole has noted, in much of his oeuvre, secular and religious desires are interwoven. His battlefield reflections, elegies, poetic letters, and verses of wisdom all contain meditations on his relationship with God. In some cases, his poems contain personal prayers clearly intended for moments outside of formal, communal worship. I have selected two such examples for this

[77] Gerber, *The Jews of Spain,* 54.
[78] Ibid., 56-57.
[79] Halkin, *Shmuel Hanagid,* 5-6.

musical set: excerpts from a series of elegies composed for his brother Isaac and from a poetic ethical will composed on the battlefield for his son Yehosef.

As we shall see, these poems are emblematic of HaNagid's specificity of personal expression. As they were not intended for communal liturgical recitation, they allow the poet to detail the circumstances and range of emotions that yielded each composition. In effect, HaNagid's poems become more relatable and evocative in his own time and in ours. Further, as would be the case with his patron Ibn Gabirol, HaNagid's personal, impromptu prayers serve as invitations and gateways for the reader's own connection with the divine wherever they may hear or read his words.

While HaNagid and those he would influence removed the barriers between public and individual prayer by teaching Hebrew poetry to capture human experience outside of the synagogue, this musical set brings this literature back into communal ritual settings. Contemporary siddurim and machzorim like *Kol HaNeshamah, Mishkan T'fillah, Mishkan HaNefesh, Leiv Shaleim,* and *T'fillat HaAdam* supplement the standard liturgy with non-liturgical, often secular poetry. The editors of these prayer books understand that these diverse personal reflections provide new avenues for individuals to engage with and even deepen their experience with Jewish prayer. While definitions of synagogue poetry were far more fixed in HaNagid's day, his secular verse can easily fit communal worship settings in ours.

The poems I selected for this project can be used to supplement life cycle observances. So often, families look outside of the Jewish tradition for personal readings and music to "customize" their ritual—to express what the liturgical text fails to capture. HaNagid's elegy communicates the difficulty of finding the right words with which to honor the dead. He proceeds to eulogize his brother and seek God's protection on his behalf. As I will discuss in

more detail in my poetic and musical analysis, this elegy voices the complexity of loss, balancing the funeral liturgy's emphasis on comfort and steadfast faith. Similarly, his letter to his son can be used for a brit milah, simchat bat, B'nei Mitzvah, or any other moment when parents wish to express their hopes for their child. The text speaks less about what God will provide for the child and more about how to navigate the world in the parents' absence. In effect, these poems can serve as *reshuyot* to the life cycle liturgy—meditations that personalize and deepen each individual's ritual experience.

III. Letter to Yehosef

Translation by Hillel Halkin[81]

Yehosef: All that I have been through,
And all the peril I have taken on myself,
Have been for you—
And were it not for you, I long ago
Would have become a wanderer in this world
As have become so many in your time.
I write you the plain truth
(Who is there to write it but a father?)
And as I write death japes at us,
Its long mouth wide agape, and I know not
Whether in the morn, when the foe rises,
The battle will go for us or against us.
But if it happens to be fated, son, that never
Will I see you or you see me again,
Then when thou sittest and when thou risest
Mark my words.
May they be first to rouse you from your slumber,
And on the day there is no one to teach you,
Let them be your teachers and your guides,

In all your ways—
With all your soul—
With all your means—
Fear your Maker and Creator.
Study to be wise and sensible,
For wisdom is the only praise you need,
And sensibleness the sole pedestal.
Obey your mother;
Speak gently to your uncle and your kin;
Respect your friends;
Be loving to all creatures;
See, before all goods, to your good name.

Yehosef: Give to each man what he asks of you,
And if you have it not, have a soft answer.

יְהוֹסֵף, כָּל אֲשֶׁר אָשָׂא וְאֶסְבֹּל
וְכֹל אָבוֹא בְּצָרָה–בַּעֲבוּרְךָ!
וְלוּלֵי אַתָּ—כְּבָר שַׁטְתִּי בְּתֵבֵל
וְחָיִיתִי כְּמוֹ רַבִּים בְּדוֹרְךָ.
כְּתָבִי זֶה—כְּתָב יֹשֶׁר אֲמָרָיו,
וּמִי יוֹרֶה לְךָ יֹשֶׁר כְּהוֹרָךְ?
כְּתַבְתִּיהוּ—וְהַמָּוֶת מְצַחֵק
לָנֶגְדֵּנוּ בְּפֶה רָחַב וְאָרֹךְ,
וְלֹא אֵדַע, בְּקוּם הַצַּר לָמָחָר,
הַלָּנוּ, אִם לְצָרֵינוּ יִעֹרְךָ.
וְאִם נִגְזַר, בְּנִי, כִּי לֹא לְעוֹלָם
תִּשּׁוּרֵנִי, וְלֹא לָעַד אֲשׁוּרְךָ
תְּנָה לִבָּךְ, בְּשִׁבְתָּךְ, אֶל כְּתָבִי,
וְקִימָתְךָ, וְאִם תִּישַׁן—יְעִירֶךָ,
וְיוֹם לֹא יִדְרְשׁוּ רַבִּים וּמוֹרִים
לְהוֹעִילֶךָ—יְהִי רַבָּךְ וּמוֹרֶךָ!

בְּכָל נַפְשֶׁךָ וְכָל הוֹנֶךָ וְעַל כָּל
דְּרָכֶיךָ יְרָא יוֹצְרְךָ וְצוּרֶךָ,
קְנֵה בִינָה וְשֵׂכֶל, כִּי תְבוּנָה
תְּהִלָּתְךָ, וְהַשָּׂכֶל—הַדָּרֶךָ.
יְרָא אִמְּךָ, וְדַבֵּר טוֹב לְדוֹדֶךָ
וְלִשְׁאֵרֶךָ, וְכַבֵּד אֶת חֲבֵרֶךָ,
וְהִתְאַהֵב לְכָל נִבְרָא, וְטֶרֶם
קְנוֹתָךְ הוֹן—קְנֵה שֵׁם טוֹב
בְּעֵירֶךָ.

יְהוֹסֵף, תֵּן לְכָל שׁוֹאֵל כִּלְבּוֹ,
וְאִם אַיִן - עֲנֵהוּ מַעֲנֶה רָךְ,
וְתֵן חֵלֶק לְכָל חָסֵר בְּהוֹנָךְ,

[81] Halkin, *Shmuel Hanagid,* 84-85.

Share in what there is with those who need it,
Although in sharing, think of your need too.
Make something of yourself! Do not make do
With what I've done, for doing's all.
Excel, exceed your elders—and yet be not
Unaccepting of those younger than you.
Ah, how much more I still could say regarding virtue
That you may have to find out for yourself.
If God brings me home, I'll tell you of it—
O may He save you from all harm!

וְעֵת מַתָּן—זְכֹר אֶת מַחֲסוֹרֶךָ!
עֲשֵׂה חַיִל, וְאַל תִּבְטַח עָלַי מָה
עָשִׂיתִיו, כִּי עֲשֵׂה חַיִל יְקָרֶךָ,
וְהִתְגַּדֵּל וְרוּמָה עַל גְּדֻלַּת
אֲבוֹתֶיךָ, וְאַל תִּבְזֶה צְעִירֶךָ.
וְלַמּוּסָר טָעֲמִים לֹא זְכַרְתִּים,
דְּרֹשׁ אוֹתָם וְדַבֵּר בָּם—תְּבֹרָךְ
וְאִם יָשׁוֹב יְשִׁיבֵנִי אֱלֹהִים
אֲנִי אוֹרֶךָ, וְאֵל מֵרַע יְסִירֶךָ![80]

Lyrics by Isaac Sonett-Assor
Keep learning and growing
Chase what matters and let go of all the rest.

Honor your family, respect your friends
Love all creatures,
build your name before your wealth.

Do what you can for all who ask
And when you can't, may your "no" always be gentle
Share what you have with those who lack
And when you give, save a little for yourself

Go much further than those who came before you
Yet don't ignore those who soon will follow after
Oh what I wish for you

What I wish I could teach you, if I only had the words
You must go out and learn for yourself
You will be a blessing
May you be a blessing

[80] Ibid.

For the third song in the set, we turn to a poetic letter that Shmuel HaNagid wrote to his young son Yehosef on the eve of battle. The poet often wrote to his son during his campaigns, though the ensuing conflict filled him with particular dread. In his commentary on his father's poetry, Yehosef tells us that he wrote this letter in the summer of 1042. At the time, HaNagid had already been promoted to commander of Granada's Muslim army. He was tasked with defending the allied city of Lorca against the forces of the rival kingdom Almería. HaNagid's forces were outnumbered, fighting over one hundred miles from home. He composed an ethical will based on the words of the *Sh'ma:* "Take to heart this letter, when you lie down and when you rise up." A few lines later he continues: "with all your soul, with all your means, and in all your ways, revere your Creator and your Rock." Hillel Halkin notes that these verses are both "a Jew's daily declaration of faith and part of his deathbed confession. Hence, HaNagid's allusion to them has a solemn resonance."[82] Further, in turning to the *Sh'ma* in what are potentially HaNagid's final words to his son, he brings to mind a midrashic telling of Jacob's deathbed blessings for his own children:

> "And Jacob called his sons and said, Gather around and I will tell you what will occur to you in the end of days" (Genesis 49:1). Jacob wanted to reveal to his sons when the complete redemption would arrive at the end of days, but the Divine Presence abandoned him, rendering him unable to prophesy. He said: Perhaps the Divine Presence has abandoned me because, Heaven forfend, one of my descendants is unfit…His sons said to him: Hear Israel, our father, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. They said: Just as there is only one God in your heart, so too, there is only one in our hearts. At that moment Jacob our father said in praise: Blessed be the name of God's glorious kingdom for ever and ever, as all his children were righteous" (Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim 56a, translated by Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz).

Yet for the poet, the *Sh'ma* serves as a point of departure for his own advice. After all, it is specifically *k'tavi zeh* [my letter] that Yehosef should take to heart at all times, not the words of

[82] Halkin, *Shmuel Hanagid,* 133-134.

Scripture. Through this letter, HaNagid offers a poignant commentary on its source text. One must not simply repeat the words of Torah to their children; they must pass down their own teaching as well. Each generation has the opportunity to hand down the tradition of Jewish wisdom with an additional layer of commentary. This way, each student learns not only the wisdom of the source text but the gloss of their teacher's—parent or otherwise—lived experience and insight.

It is this message that makes this a poignant text to elevate communal moments of blessing children. HaNagid's advice carries different weight for children at various life stages. While these words can be used to express parents' hopes at a naming ceremony, they can actually be understood by a child who is ready to begin school. Certain lines, like the poet's charge to honor family and respect friends, become especially significant at the age of *b'nei mitzvah.* Yet the most weighty verse is the recognition that children must determine for themselves what constitutes a virtuous life—a blessing that becomes most meaningful when children prepare to leave the home or get married.

In composing this setting with these usage scenarios in mind, I chose to omit the explicit mentions of the battlefield and impending death. I felt that certain lines like "And on the day there is no one to teach you" and "you may have to find out for yourself" convey the preciousness and fragility of life that makes the poem effective while maintaining the text's appropriateness for life cycle usage. Even though the battlefield references are not included in this musical setting, the poem's original circumstances lend it greater import; indeed, this story should be taught where appropriate. This poem—as with many of HaNagid's battlefield prayers—can be used effectively to commemorate Veterans and Memorial Day. Indeed, Gerber argues that HaNagid's unusual military career makes his works on his experience in warfare

"perhaps the most novel of all medieval Jewish poems."[83] This poem is especially stirring in such contexts because it brings a soldier's hopes for his loved one's future to the forefront of the congregation's holiday observance.

In establishing the piece's form, I sought to highlight the way in which HaNagid acknowledges the limits of the guidance he can offer his child. For this reason, I chose this couplet four lines from the poem's end as a refrain: *v'la musar t'amim lo z'chartim/d'rosh otam v'dabeir bam, t'vorach* [How much more I still could say regarding virtue/that you may have to find out for yourself].[84] As the first sixteen lines are a preamble to the poet's specific advice, I chose to set the selected lines as a recitative. The piece begins with the Hebrew text in order to demonstrate the poem's meter and internal rhyme. When the contents of the ethical will begin, the text switches to an English poetic translation, so it can be easily understood by the child receiving the blessing as well as the present congregation.

As the text is meant to comfort and guide the child in his parent's absence, I sought to evoke the sound of a lullaby. When the chorus enters following the opening recitative (m. 32), the accompaniment features a gentle syncopation that conveys the feeling of rocking a child to sleep. The piece is a duet between voice and flute, with the flute representing the parent's advice. The flute enters in m.9 with the phrase *k'tavi zeh* [my letter] with a sustained line, reflecting the text "*k'tav yosher amarav/umi yoreh l'cha yosher k'horach* [with these words, I write the honest truth/and who can teach you as honestly as your parent?]." Then, as the poet advises his child to take these words to heart at all times (mm. 16-22) the flute line takes on a soothing "sighing" gesture. In mm. 24-25, as the poet thinks of a day when he will no longer be present to guide his child, the underlying tonality shifts, and the sighing gesture takes on greater emotional depth.

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[83] Gerber, *The Jews of Spain,* 71.
[84] Halkin, *Shmuel Hanagid,* 85.

When the specific advice begins at m. 39, the flute line symbolizes different parts of HaNagid's message. For instance, as mm. 43-45 concern relationships with family, friends, and all creatures, the flute line emphasizes the importance of companionship and loving kindness through homophonic motion in parallel thirds. This effect is repeated in mm. 53-57, as HaNagid charges his child to build upon the deeds of his ancestors while guiding the following generation; here, the parallel motion shows that not only is Yehosef connected to those in his own time, but also to his ancestors and descendants. Elsewhere, as the text in mm. 47-53 deals with generosity and selflessness, the countermelody embodies these noble aspirations through sustained notes gradually ascending into the flute's upper register.

When the refrain returns, this time in an English poetic translation, the flute tapers off, leaving the vocal line by itself as Yehosef must "go out and learn for [him]self." The assurance that he will be blessed (*t'vorach)* prompts the return of the flute, this time in the highest register. This register is sustained as the refrain repeats, suggesting that HaNagid's guidance is always with Yehosef, even in his physical absence. The piece then concludes with the flute in the lowest register, the accompaniment representing the child's quiet internalization of his father's presence.

When we consider Yehosef's premature, violent death, the poem becomes bittersweet; he never did achieve all that his father hoped for him. Still, in his short life, Yehosef did direct his father's yeshivah, where he would train significant students. The most famous was the rabbi and *paytan* Isaac ibn Ghiyyat, who, in turn, would train other poetic giants like Moses Ibn Ezra.[85] Yehosef would also copy, edit, and circulate his father's collection, providing valuable commentary that would illuminate the biographical details surrounding HaNagid's work. While he may not have exceeded his elders, he played an important role in preserving the developing Andalusian poetic innovations and transmitting them to future generations.

[85] Cole, *Dream of the Poem,* 111.

IV. Elegy for his brother Isaac

V. *And when he wrapped his brother in his shrouds and brought him to his grave and buried him, he thought:*[86]

Translation by Peter Cole[87]

My language,
I'd ask of you
in my life
to lift up a sound
of lament
for my brother and father,
who was father to all who were broken
in judgment,
and the widows deceived;
who was generous and opened his doors
to the street,
when others were locked,
who'd herd as one the heifer and bear,
and none devour,
and none make prey.

I bathed him and dressed him
and placed him in bed,
and into my
mouth came the voice of labor,

and I brought him to his grave,
my clothing torn,
my family gathered,
and I rose and went down

and helped him
toward the world below.

לְשׁוֹנִי, אֶשְׁאֲלָה מִמֵּךְ שְׁאֵלָה:
בְּחַיַּי, הַעֲלִי נָא קוֹל יְלָלָה
עֲלֵי אָחִי וְאָבִי וַאֲבִי כָּל
רְצוּץ מִשְׁפָּט וְאַלְמָנָה גְּזוּלָה,
וְעַל נָדִיב אֲשֶׁר פָּתַח דְּלָתָיו
לְכָל עוֹבֵר — וְכָל דֶּלֶת נְעוּלָה,
אֲשֶׁר הִרְעָה כְּאֶחָד דֹּב וּפָרָה
וְאֵין טוֹרֵף וְאֵין עוֹשָׁה נְבָלָה.[88]

רַחַצְתִּיהוּ וְהִלְבַּשְׁתִּיו וְשַׂמְתִּיו
בְּמִטָּה וַעֲלֵי פִּי קוֹל כְּחוֹלָה,
וְהוֹלַכְתִּיו אֱלֵי קִבְרוֹ, וּמַדַּי
קְרוּעִים, וַעֲטִיפָתִי שְׂמֹאלָה,
וְיָשְׁבוּ אוֹהֲבַי סָבִיב, וְקַמְתִּי
וַיָּרַדְתִּי וְהוֹרַדְתִּיו שְׁאוֹלָה.
וְאָמְרוּ: עוֹד יְיֻטִּיב הַזְּמַן לָךְ
וְתָנוּחַ! הֲשִׁיבוֹתִים בְּחִילָה:
עֲלֵי טוּב הַזְּמַן הַזֶּה וְעַל כָּל
מְנוּחָה אַחֲרֵי אָחִי— קְלָלָה!
אֲיָלוּתִי, קְחָה נַפְשִׁי, לְמַעַן
נְשֹׂא יָגוֹן כְּמוֹ זֶה לֹא יְכוֹלָה![89]

[86] Halkin, *Shmuel Hanagid,* 68.
[87] Cole, *Dream of the Poem,* 55-56.
[88] Boldface denotes text in composition.
[89] Ibid.

They said:
“He has taken him up.”

And I thought:
"Let Him take me instead."

And they said: "Time will
heal your hurt and you'll rest."

And I answered in pain:
"On your balm of time
and all rest beyond
my brother—a curse!

Take, My Strength, my soul—
for grief such as this it can't carry.”

XVIII. *And when at last his grief had passed and, consoled, he mourned no more, he thought:*[90]

Translation by Peter Cole[91]

תְּהִלָּה יֵשׁ לְשׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה,
בְּפִי, לָעַד, וְלוֹ נָאוָה תְּהִלָּה,
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה צְדָקָה עִם בְּנֵי אִישׁ,
כְּמוֹ שֶׁמֶשׁ לְכָל רוֹאֶה מְגֻלָּה,
לְמַעַן כָּל אֲשֶׁר הוּא רַב וְקָשֶׁה—
בָּרָאוֹ רַךְ וְצָעִיר בַּתְּחִלָּה,
כְּמוֹ דֶשֶׁא, כְּמוֹ כָל הַמְּלָאכוֹת,
כְּכָל נוֹלָד, כְּמוֹ אַלּוֹן וְאֵלָה,
אֲבָל תּוּגָה בְּרָאָהּ אֵל חֲזָקָה
בְּהִוָּלְדָהּ וְהוֹלֶכֶת וְדַלָּה,
וְאֵלּוּ נִשְׁאֲרָה תּוּגָה בְּלֵב אִישׁ
כְּרֵאשִׁיתָהּ – לְלֵב הָיְתָה מְכַלָּה.
חֲסָדִים מֵאֱלֹהִים לַאֲנָשִׁים
אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִסְפְּרֵם לָשׁוֹן וּמִלָּה!

Translation by Peter Cole[91]
A psalm to the hearer
of prayer in my spirit forever.
To praise Him is proper
who metes out justice
to the children of men,
like the sun for all revealed in its sky.
All who govern hard in their power,
first He created youthful and soft,
like grass and like labor,
like everything born,
and the poplar and oak.

But grief He created strong in its birth,
and weak in its growth,
and wherever it festers.
in a thinking heart—
heart is lost.

[90] Halkin, *Shmuel Hanagid*, 82.
[91] Cole, *Dream of the Poem,* 57-58.

From God-without-name to people is grace
neither language nor speech can measure.

I'd said in my mourning despair
would quickly wear through my heart
which, with worry,
like an alley had narrowed,
but now with solace is wide—
and my sorrow sheds
like the flesh of my brother.
If my heart is stirred and at times I weep,
and the sadness still rises within me like
hosts—
more often than not I'm calm like a man
whose heart is empty,
his burden light.

So the Rock wounds
and then heals the stricken.
May He who blankets the sky with night,
and wraps my mother's eldest with dust,
forgive my brother his errors—
and in His grace remember his goodness—
and with our fathers
who were pure and His treasure,
count him as treasure.

אֲנִי שַׂחְתִּי בְּאֶבְלִי כִּי מְגִנַּת
לִבָּבִי אֶת לְבָבִי חִישׁ מְבַלָּה,
וְהָיָה מִדְּאָגָה צַר כְּמִשְׁעוֹל—
וְהַיּוֹם בּוֹ לְהִתְנַחֵם מְסִלָּה,
וְזָבָה דַּאֲגָתִי כַּאֲשֶׁר זָב
בְּשַׂר אָחִי וְרָקַב תּוֹךְ מְחִלָּה,
וְעִתִּים יִכְמְרוּ רַחֲמַי וְאֶשֹּׁם
וְאֶשְׁאֶה בַעֲדוֹ כִּשְׁאוֹן הֲמֻלָּה,
וְאֶתְאַפַּק בְּרֹב עִתִּים כְּמוֹ אִישׁ
לִבָּבוֹ רַק וְהַוָּתוֹ נְקַלָּה,
וְכָכָה יַחֲלֶה הַצּוּר וְיִמְחַץ,
וְיִרְפָּא אֵת אֲשֶׁר מָחַץ וְחִלָּה.
אֲשֶׁר שָׁת אֶת חֲתֻלָּתוֹ עֲרֶפֶל
וְשָׁת עָפָר לְבֶן־אִמִּי חֲתֻלָּה
יְכַפֵּר אֶת פְּעָלָיו הַנְּסוֹגִים
וְיִזְכֹּר בְּחַסְדּוֹ טוּב פְּעֻלָּה,
וְעִם אָבוֹת אֲשֶׁר זַכּוּ וְהָיוּ
סְגֻלָּתוֹ יְשַׁוֶּה לוֹ סְגֻלָּה![92]

The fourth piece in the collection is a setting of excerpts from HaNagid's elegies for his older brother Isaac. From inscriptions added by Yehosef, we learn that Isaac died of sudden illness in 1041. Following Isaac's death, HaNagid composed eighteen elegies (or nineteen, including a poem written during his brother's illness), which chronicle his year of mourning. The poems address the stages of the Jewish mourning process: preparing for the funeral, the funeral itself, *shiva,* the first month and first year after death, and the end of the first year as the

[92] Ibid.

tombstone is unveiled. Hillel Halkin notes: "Emotionally, of course, there are many more phases of mourning than four [those prescribed by Jewish practice] and one of the remarkable things about the Isaac cycle is how every one of these, from initial shock to final acceptance, is subtly dealt with in it. I know of no other work of pre-modern literature that takes the reader, step by step, through all the stations of grief and the long, slow recovery from it in so full a manner."[93] Peter Cole also comments that he was first drawn to HaNagid when began reading "his remarkable chain of elegies."[94] Indeed, as I noted in my introduction, these poems' exceptional detail and candor provided the initial inspiration for this project.

There were several challenges in approaching these texts musically, the most obvious of which is their length. While it would be a worthy endeavor to set all eighteen poems to music, the goal of this particular project is to create music for liturgical use. Therefore, the text had to be selected carefully. I considered which excerpts of the cycle would be most fitting for public recitation. The power of these poems lies in their uncensored honesty. In many of the poems, HaNagid makes no attempt to disguise his pain. Consider the third poem, as he reflects on the ritual of *k'ri'ah,* the rending of garments: "Why should I force what custom requires/when my heart feels like a moth-eaten shirt?/And why mourn in the dirt beside him/when all my thoughts are slime-filled pits?/Grief has broken my body's bearing/why should I shatter pitchers and cups?"[95] While these words may bring a mourner a degree of catharsis when read in private meditation, they would not be fitting to hear read—let alone sung—at a funeral. Instead, I chose to highlight verses that voice HaNagid's devotion to his late brother. I excerpted lines from the fifth poem as he buries and eulogizes him. Here, HaNagid sings of his brother's righteousness, generosity, and gentleness. For the second half of the piece, I turn to the final poem in the cycle,

[93] Halkin, *Shmuel Hanagid,* 132.
[94] Cole, *Shmuel Hanagid,* xxiv.
[95] Cole, *Dream of the Poem,* 54.

as HaNagid prays to God to forgive and remember his brother. In the poem's stirring conclusion, HaNagid asks that God regard his brother as treasure, with merit equal to that of his ancestors.

In this setting, I sought to highlight four themes in the excerpted verses: Isaac's characterization as a shepherd for the vulnerable, God as the One who hears prayer, God's ability to care equally for the entire world and for each individual, and HaNagid's prayer that Isaac be regarded as God's treasure. In the fifth elegy, the poet describes his brother as "father to all who were broken in judgment, and the widows deceived/who was generous and opened his doors to the street when others were locked/who'd herd as one the heifer and bear, while none devour, and none become prey."[96] The image of the heifer and bear grazing in peace together references Isaiah 11:7, in which the prophet envisions the age of the Messiah. This bold connection both elevates Isaac's deeds and deepens the weight of his loss. This reference is especially interesting given the context of HaNagid's life: even though, as a devout Jew, the poet was still writing in exile from the Holy Land, he enjoyed the greatest possible personal prosperity. With his brother's righteousness resembling that of the Messiah, we might infer that HaNagid saw no need to wait for the savior who would lead the exiles back to Jerusalem.

In the final poem, HaNagid invokes God as *Shomei'a T'filah,* the One who hears prayer, a reference both to Psalm 65:3 and to the conclusion of the petitionary prayers of the weekday *Amidah*. Yehosef's preceding inscription reads: "And when at last his grief had passed and, consoled, he mourned no more, he thought:"[97] Marc Zvi Brettler observes that the daily petition begins with the command: *Sh'ma Koleinu* [hear our voice] and ends with *Shomei'a T'filah* [the One who hears prayer]. In his interpretation, "our prayer may open with anxious hope that God is

[96] Ibid., 55.
[97] Halkin, *Shmuel HaNagid,* 82.

listening, but it closes with certainty that God will do so."[98] Similarly, we see a shift from the centrality of HaNagid's own pain to his petitions on his brother's behalf. For the poet, prayer is once again beautiful and God shows righteousness to all of humanity, just as the sun's rays illuminate all of creation. He takes heart that he did not die of grief as he once thought he would. He is learning to return to daily life, even as the pain of grief occasionally and unexpectedly overcomes him.

Having found a degree of comfort, the poet is able to pray for his brother and invoke his memory. HaNagid is now able to compose arguably his most affecting prayer. He references the famous passage from Job 38: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?" He calls on God, who swaddled his brother in dust, just as God swaddled the earth in *arafel* [heavy clouds] (Job 38:9). The image of *chatullot* [swaddling bands] conveys both his brother's vulnerability and God's intimate care, just as a parent swaddles an infant. At the same time, the heavy clouds denote God's presence, bringing to mind the cloud that engulfs Mount Sinai and the cloud that fills Solomon's Temple (Deuteronomy 4:11; I Kings 8:12). Therefore, HaNagid prays that, just as God's presence surrounds the earth like a swaddling cloth, so may God protect and accompany his brother's body in his resting place. Further, the poet prays that, while his brother's body is buried in earth, his memory—and perhaps his soul—live on like his ancestors as God's *s'gullah* [treasure].

Through this musical setting, I aimed to capture and balance the range of emotions expressed in these excerpts. I chose the cello as an accompanying instrument in the hopes of representing Isaac's enduring spiritual presence and memory. The piece begins with an unaccompanied cello theme that will return during the multiple passages in which the poet

[98] Marc Z. Brettler and Lawrence A. Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries, The Amidah*, vol. 2 (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1998), 263.

eulogizes his brother. This musical eulogy is interrupted by a chromatic diversion at mm. 7-8, as the poet struggles to gather his thoughts. From mm. 8-15, the poet searches for the words to raise up his voice in lament. He sings a halting version of the opening theme with the voice rising to a sustained Bb on *sh'eilah* [request] at mm. 11-12, and then a third higher to D on *y'lala* [lament] at m. 15. The eulogy gains momentum, taking on a 3/4 meter as the poet begins describing his brother's righteousness and generosity. Although the melody is not yet fully formed, as we shall see, the vocal line is accompanied by the harmony of the final eulogy theme beginning at m. 75. Mm. 32-39 takes on a gentle "pastorale" quality with its steady quarter note pulse and simple arpeggiated melodic line. The passage gains momentum between mm. 36-38 with rising chords and increasing dynamic before faltering at m. 39, suggesting that the poet is overcome by emotion and cannot continue speaking.

At this point, a new main theme begins, characterized by a repeated, arpeggiated piano texture. The steady accompaniment is meant to signify the poet's attempt to shift his focus from his own pain to his prayers for his brother's wellbeing. The harmony of this section is weighed down by the gravity of grief; when the bass line rises, it can only do so by a chromatic half step (e.g., mm. 42-43, 50-51). However, between mm. 52-53, as the poet sings that God's righteousness graces all of humanity like the sun's rays, the chromatic Db in the bass rises to D natural. At the same time, this sunrise is accompanied by rising cello line climbing step by step until the leading tone A is quietly sounded as the voice and piano cease (mm. 57-58). At m. 59, the "prayer" theme begins again, now with the voice, cello, and piano all in the upper register, as the poet prays to the One who swaddles the earth with clouds. By the same token, the voice and piano descend as the poet imagines his brother swaddled in earth. His hope that his brother will be pardoned for his faults is characterized by rising cello and piano lines (mm. 66-70). This

steady crescendo culminates in a moment of sudden chromaticism and fullness of texture in mm. 71-74, as the poet emphasizes God's lovingkindness and the goodness of his brother's deeds.

This outpouring of emotion inspires a shift back to the "eulogy" theme first stated in the cello prelude (mm. 75 to end). At least, the poet has found the perfect words to honor his brother: the greatest blessing he can bestow upon his beloved brother is that he become God's treasure, matching his ancestors in merit. Now, whenever the poet prays to the God of his ancestors, he will bring his brother to mind along with his other forebears. As he sings these climactic words, the cello joins him in harmony, suggesting that his brother's memory continues to bless him. In the final three bars, the cello climbs to its highest register, as his brother's soul transcends the worldly realm.

I chose to set this piece to supplement the traditional mourning liturgy. The specificity to the various stages of the periods of mourning allows it to be incorporated into funeral and unveiling rituals as well as communal yizkor services. The text captures aspects of grief—such as the poet's speechlessness, doubt, anger, and refusal to be comforted—in a way that is often absent from the customary Psalms. Perhaps more importantly, it focuses on the deceased, rather than the comfort of faith. The words may be especially poignant in honoring the loss of a brother. More generally, though, my hope is that this piece offers a welcome alternative to mourners who are uncomfortable with the traditional liturgy's emphasis on God. HaNagid's poem provides the sober truth that grief must progress in its own way and healing will come in its own time. Arguably, HaNagid's most important teaching is that his grief did not and will not kill him, much as he thought he would. There will come a day when the mourner will notice the sun's rays once again.

Asenath Barzani

"My lady, my mother, my *Rabbanit,* after bowing, prostrating myself, kneeling, and falling to the ground…We are always ready to revere you and serve you truly and faithfully, but please do not forget us in your prayers, for surely your prayer is more accepted and is equal to peace offerings, ascending to high heaven and binding the upper worlds."

— Rabbi Pinchas Hariri, 16th century[99]

While Dunash ben Labrat is widely regarded as "the founder of the new Andalusian Hebrew poetry,"[100] it was his wife—whose name remains unknown—who composed "the first fully realized personal poem in the new Andalusian style."[101] In two brief stanzas, the speaker bids farewell to her husband after his forced departure from Spain, leaving her and their son behind. Cole indicates that this early work is the only poem by a woman in the medieval Hebrew canon.[102] Shirley Kaufman, Galit Hasan-Rokem, and Tamar S. Hess, in their collection *Hebrew Feminist Poems from Antiquity to the Present,* identify one other known surviving poem, attributed to a poet named Merecina of Gerona in 15th-century northern Christian Spain. Merecina voices her enduring faith in God, pleading for deliverance from her enemies.[103] The authors attribute the lack of extant compositions by women to "the pervasive silencing of female voices in standard poetic practice at the time."[104]

While the subject matter of these poems makes them difficult to incorporate into a worship or life cycle setting, I have selected a later poem composed by a female author in the style of the Andalusian school to close the musical set: a poetic letter composed in Kurdistan by

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[99] Yona Sabar, *The Folk Literature of the Kurdistani Jews: An Anthology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 108.

[100] Cole, *Dream of the Poem,* 23.

[101] Ibid., 27.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Shirley Kaufman and Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Hebrew Feminist Poems from Antiquity to the Present: A Bilingual Anthology* (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1999), 64-65.

[104] Ibid.

the late 16th-century rabbi and poet Asenath Barzani. In his anthology of the folk literature of the Kurdistani Jews, Yona Sabar describes the famous Barzani family, which rose to fame in the early sixteenth century, "establish[ing] many yeshivot…throughout Kurdistan and attract[ing] students even from as far away as Egypt and the Land of Israel."[105] In her letter, Asenath states that, because her father Rabbi Samuel had only daughters, he taught her "only to study and teach Torah."[106] She continues, "when he gave her in marriage to Rabbi Jacob [his nephew and best-known disciple], he adjured him not to make her do any housework."[107] Jacob established a yeshivah in Mosul, though it was Asenath who taught the students while her husband studied. In addition to teaching rabbinic students, Asenath would preach and instruct her congregation in the laws of *niddah,* Shabbat, and prayer.[108]

In a series of letters acquired by the Hebrew Union College Library and edited by Jacob Mann in the early twentieth century, we learn of the yeshivah's financial difficulties and Rabbi Jacob's appeals for external support. The letters depict Mosul and the surrounding regions as impoverished and dangerous. Many of the rabbi's representatives would embezzle the donations they collected, and the yeshivah's supporters refused to make further contributions.[109] After her husband's death, Asenath assumed leadership of the school and continued to seek financial support. In her appeal to the Jewish community of Imadiya, she explains that she has no grown-up son whom she can send to collect donations, nor can she afford to hire a representative.[110] In her effort to win the support of would-be benefactors, she composed a lengthy letter containing both prose and verse that revealed her "profound erudition in the

[105] Sabar, *Kurdistani Jews*, xix.
[106] Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, vol. 1 (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1931), 483.
[107] Mann, *Jewish History and Literature,* 483, 511.
[108] Ibid., 511.
[109] Ibid., 481-482.
[110] Ibid., 483.

Hebrew language and in rabbinic literature."[111] Further, Kaufman, Hasan-Rokem, and Hess observe that "Asenath wrote her poem in the traditional monorhymed metrical form, in the Arabic tradition, with considerable skill and an excellent command of the Hebrew language. It is written as a letter of supplication, a convention often used by the Hebrew poets of Spain."[112] A subsequent letter written several years later by Asenath's son Samuel indicates that his mother's appeal was met with limited response.

Still, as evidenced by letters addressed to the Rosh Yeshivah herself as well as recorded folk legends, Asenath was revered by her contemporaries and regarded as a source of pride for future generations of Kurdistani Jews. Sabar notes that she was given the title *tanna'it* [talmudic scholar]. In one particularly effusive letter, Rabbi Pinchas Hariri addresses her as: "My lady, my mother, my *Rabbanit,"* before continuing: "After bowing, prostrating myself, kneeling, and falling to the ground…We are always ready to revere you and serve you truly and faithfully, but please do not forget us in your prayers, for surely your prayer is more accepted and is equal to peace offerings, ascending to high heaven and binding the upper worlds."[113] Asenath is also depicted as a Kabbalist and miracle worker. In one legend, she successfully prays to God to cease bearing children after one son and one daughter so that she can devote herself to Torah study.[114] In another, when the synagogue in Imadiya is set on fire during Rosh Chodesh celebrations, she invokes the divine name to summon angels to put out the flames.[115] Asenath's story, from her

[111] Sabar, *Kurdistani Jews,* 108.
[112] Kaufman et al., *Hebrew Feminist Poems,* 7-8.
[113] Sabar, *Kurdistani Jews,* 108.
[114] Ibid., 123.
[115] Howard Schwartz and Monique Passicot, "A Flock of Angels: A Rosh Hodesh Tale," in *The Day the Rabbi Disappeared: Jewish Holiday Tales of Magic* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), pp. 9-14.

biography to her legends, are even depicted in a children's book *Osnat and Her Dove* by Sigal Samuel, with illustrations by Vali Mintzi.[116]

That Asenath would write her appeal in the Andalusian style is a testament to the significance of the new poetic tradition. Kaufman, Hasan-Rokem, and Hess note that Mosul and Imadiya continued the Babylonian Jewish tradition while "also reshaping literary conventions in response to the influence of Arabic and Spanish Hebrew poetry."[117] As a show of her legitimacy, Asenath chose to demonstrate both her familiarity with Tanakh and rabbinic literature as well as her facility with the new Hebrew poetry. Renee Levine Melamed notes that the widespread admiration for Asenath, combined with the lack of any evidence of resistance to her position, has been cited as justification for Orthodox female rabbinic ordination.[118] Her case also underscores the importance of poetic literacy as central to Jewish scholarship in her day, tantamount to mastery of Tanakh and rabbinic literature. Following Asenath's example, we might argue that this proficiency should be no less encouraged or valued in today's clergy.

I selected Asenath's petition to close the set because of its message, its stirring tone, and the remarkable context in which it was created. Her poem is, at its core, a teacher's impassioned statement of dedication to her students and to the preservation of Torah. This work would make for a fitting anthem for ordination ceremonies, Shavuot celebrations, or any setting honoring teachers and female leaders.

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[116] Sigal Samuel and Vali Mintzi, *Osnat and Her Dove: The True Story of the World's First Female Rabbi* (Montclair: Levine Querido, 2021).

[117] Kaufman et al., *Hebrew Feminist Poems,* 7.

[118] Renée Levine Melammed, "Asnat Barazani," Jewish Women's Archive, accessed November 10, 2022, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/barazani-asnat-bat-samuel.

V. Asenath's Petition

שִׁמְעוּ הַחֲכָמִים מִלָּי וּבִינוּנִים יַאֲזִינוּ אֵלָי
צִירֵי מַחֲלָתִי אַשְׁמִיעַ אוּלַי יָשׁוּב כֹּחִי, חֵילִי
עַל תּוֹרָה אֶזְעַק אֲנָאָקָה כִּי נָעֲדָרָה מִכָּל גְּבוּלִי
נִתְכַּסָּה נִיצוֹץ מֵאִיר, תּוֹךְ עֲנַן מָעוֹן מִקְהָלִי
אָפְסוּ מוֹשְׁכֵי עִיוּן, אִישֵׁי חָכְמָה, מֵעִמְקֵי מֻושָׁכָּלִי
נִסְגְּרוּ שַׁעֲרֵי הַבִּינָה, לֹא נוֹדְעוּ אָרְחִי וּשְׁבִילִי
הַדּוֹר אָפֵל, אֵין מוֹכִיחַ אֶבְכֶּה לִזְמַנִּי גַּם חֶדְלִי
אֲנִי עָמַדְתִּי בְּמַצַּב צָרוֹת הִקִּיפוּנִי אֶת יָדַי, רַגְלִי
תִּכַּנְתִּי עַמּוּדֵי אָרֶץ אָז אַצִּיב דַּיָּנִים בְּפָלִילִי
גַּם סָגַרְתִּי הַנִּפְרָצוֹת, מִדְרָשׁ וּתְפִלָּה בְּגִלִּילִי
הִטָּרִידוּ שִׂכְלִי, בְּמְבוּכַת הַרְבּוֹת עוֹנֶשׁ שֶׁלִּי עָלָי
הִצִּיגוּנִי רִיק, הִפְשִׁיטוּ אֶת שִׂמְלַת אֶדֶר וּמְעִילִי
קָרָאתִי: חָנּוּנִי, רֵעַי, כִּי צַר! אַלְלַי, אַלְלַי לִי
וּלְמִי מִקְדּוֹשִׁים אֶפְנֶה, לִנְדִיבִים רוֹפְאֵי מַחֲלִי
אַתֶּם חֲסִידִים, חִמְלוּ-נָא אֵל תּוֹרַת אֵלִי, צוּרִי פּוֹעֲלִי
לֹא אֵל הוֹדִי אוֹ תּוֹעַלְתִּי, הֵיא בְכְיָתִי אוֹ תּוֹלָלִי
גַּם לֹא אֵל צוֹרֶךְ בֵּיתִי, אוֹ אֵל מַלְבּוּשַׁי וּמַאֲכָלִי
אַךְ אֵל קִיּוּם הַמִּדְרָשׁוֹת, שֶׁלֹּא יָפוּץ מֶנִּי חֵילִי
חֲיָילִים אֲגַבֵּיר אֵל תּוֹרָה, עַל־זֹאת, מָתְנַי מָלְאוּ חַלְחָלִי
אָקִים סֵכָּה הַנּוֹפֶלֶת, אָסִירָה אֶת כָּל מַבְדִּילִי
עַל־זֹאת, יֻחֲרַד כָּל אִישׁ מַשְׂכִּיל,גַּם נָבוֹן יֻחֲרַד לְמִלּוּלִי
אִם עָשִׁיר אִם עָנִי, יִשְׁלַח צָרֵי אֵל לִבִּי וּלְכִסְלִי
אָפַס עוֹזֵר, סוֹמֵךְ אָיִן, גַּם אָח קָרוֹב מְגוֹאֲלִי
אַךְ לִנְדִיבֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֵל הָרֵי עֶזְרָתָם אֶשָּׂא קוֹלִי
הַרְבֵּה מֻוטִים אֶל הַהֶרֶג הִצַּלְתֶּם, הַתִּירוּ שַׁלְשְׁלִי
שֶׁלֹּא תִכְבֶּה גַּחֶלֶת הָהָר נִיצוֹץ דּוֹלֵק בְּזוֹךְ שִׁיכְלִי
וּלְהָרִים קֶרֶן מִדְבָּר שָׁמֵם וְחָיְתָה נַפְשִׁי בְגִלָּלִי
אֶל דִּמְעָתִי אַל תֶּחֱשׁוּ יָשִׁישׁוּ נָא כָּל חֲלִילִי

אֶעֱשֶׂה חַיִל, אַרְבֶּה, כִּי בָּאתִי בִכְתָב מִשְׁאָלִי
וּזְכוּתְכֶם נָאְדֶּרֶת עַד רוּם שַׁחַק, אֶל רֹאשׁ מִגְדָּלִי
שִׁמְכֶם יוּחַק בִּמְרוֹם שַׁחַק, קֶרֶן הוֹדְכֶם לִגְדוֹלִי
אִם יָפוּצוּ תַלְמִידַי אֶל תֵּבֵל, מַה הֵם יוֹמִי, לֵילִי
לָכֵן שִׁמְעוּ הַחֲסִידִים אַנְשֵׁי צֶדֶק הַאֲזִינוּ אֵלָי[119]

Translation by Peter Cole[120]
Listen, sages, to my words
and wise ones hear me out,
I'll tell you of my misfortunes
and perhaps my strength will return;
I'll speak for the Learning and moan
for its vanishing from my land,
for the brilliant spark in a cloud of heaven
has been hidden from my people;
the seekers of my husband's word have vanished,
and wisdom from the valleys of my scholars,
the gates of understanding have been closed,
my byways and paths are unknown;
this bleak generation knows no guide
and I weep for my days in the world.
The situation was grim,
and troubles overwhelmed me,
but the pillars of earth I kept firm
and with my judgment I established laws;
and I passed on the prophet's vision—
study and prayer in my region—
though they taunted me with confusion,
to my punishment adding pain;
they left me with nothing and stripped me
of my cloak and my mantle and robes;
I called out, "Have mercy my friends,
for my misery is certainly great..."
To whom could I turn among the holy,
if not to my healers, the nobles;
You who are righteous have mercy—
for the word of the Lord, my Rock, my Master,

[119] Kaufman et al., *Hebrew Feminist Poems,* 66-69.
[120] Ibid.

not for my own well-being or glory
is my wailing and weeping before you;
not even for the needs of my household,
not for my clothing and food—
but for the house of study's survival,
that my strength not fail me there.
For the Law I would gather my forces
for this the fire within me burns,
I'd raise up the fallen building,
and remove all that obstructs me.
Before this let every scholar tremble,
let the wise man shudder before what I say—
it makes no difference whether rich man or poor
send the balm to my heart and soul;
I have no one to protect me,
no brother or next of kin to save me.
To the nobles of Israel I lift my voice,
to the hills of their help I call:
Many facing death you have rescued—
release me now from my chains.
Let not the mountain's ember go out—
that spark in my purest of thoughts—
so his name will be raised in a desolate place
and my soul in my body live on;
Hold not your peace in the face of my tears,
and my frame will rejoice in delight;
I will work with all of my might—
for this I write of my wishes—
and your merit's strength will reach the skies,
up to the heights of my towers;
your names will be engraved on high,
the measure of your glory will ascend to the mighty.
If my students are forced to disperse,
what would my nights and days mean?
Therefore, O pious ones, listen,
and you righteous men hear me out...

Lyrics by Isaac Sonett-Assor

O you righteous ones, have mercy—
Not for my glory or status
Am I moved to tears
Not for my needs
Not for my clothing or my food—
But that this school, and these words,
and their students ever may endure
May my strength not leave me now

אֶעֱשֶׂה חַיִל, אַרְבֶּה, כִּי
בָּאתִי בִּכְתָב מִשְׁאָלִי
E-eseh chayil arbeh ki
Bati bich'tav mish'ali
I will work with all my might
For this, I write of my wishes

What would I give to defend this teaching
To preserve this ember
To raise this fallen sukkah
And clear all this debris
This flame was kindled on the mountain
Entrusted in my hands
It purifies my heart, brings life to my soul
To raise the Holy in the wilderness

אִם יָפוּצוּ תַלְמִידַי אֶל תֵּבֵל,
מַה הֵם יוֹמִי, לֵילִי
Im yafutzu talmidai el teiveil
Mah hem yomi, leili?
If my students are scattered from this place
What worth would have my nights and my days?

So hear me now O you faithful ones
O You righteous ones, listen to me

Asenath's letter references both the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:1-43) and the Song of Deborah (Judges 5). She begins with a parallelism reminiscent of the Song's opening verse: "Listen [*shim'u*], O wise ones, to my words/and may those with understanding give ear [*ya'azinu*] to me." These two verbs, *"ha'azinu"* and *"tish'ma,"* are found in the two halves of Deuteronomy 32:1. Further, both poems' opening verses share the same progression from the imperative form to the imperfect, as each speaker expresses hope that their initial command will be successfully executed. This same parallelism is found in the Song of Deborah, as she calls "kings and rulers" to witness (5:3). Elsewhere, she requests that her strength will return and not fail, just as Deborah declares: "March on, my soul, with courage" (5:21).

Asenath's links to Moses and Deborah contain multiple layers of significance. In citing Moses' final address to the children of Israel, Asenath emphasizes the dire urgency of her petition. Throughout the poem, laments the decline of learning in her land. She positions herself and her yeshivah as protectors of Torah in her region, without whom the "ember" kindled on Mount Sinai will go out altogether. Through the poem's symbolism—the cloud of God's dwelling [*anan ma'on*], the fallen *sukkah,* and to a horn sounded in the wilderness [*l'harim keren midbar*]—the poet connects her struggle to that of Moses. When we consider that Asenath would die with her appeal unfulfilled, her invocation of Moses's parting words becomes all the more salient. At the same time, in citing Deborah's example, she bolsters her legitimacy as a female rabbinic authority. She argues that, like Deborah, served as a judge of Israel in a time of great distress: "I stood firm with troubles surrounding my hands and feet/I kept firm the pillars of the land and handed down judgments/I secured the breaches, teaching midrash and prayer." While the Song of Moses foresees the downfall of the people of Israel, the Song of Deborah celebrates

their renewal. By connecting these two songs through her letter, Asenath conveys both warning and hope.

I sought to convey both of these messages in this musical setting. I excerpted the verses that voice conviction and exhortation, rather than those that lament her precarious circumstances. In order to highlight the universality of her message, I omitted her references to her husband's teaching and her lack of a male next of kin to support or redeem her. I focused, instead, on the evocative imagery mentioned above. As a refrain, I selected her declaration towards the end of the letter: "I will work with all of my might/for in this letter, I write my wishes." With these words at its center, the piece reinforces Asenath's commitment to her students and to her mission. Though, as her model Moses famously learns from his father in law: "the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone" (Exodus 18:18). The other centerpiece of the composition is her admission of her personal stakes in the success or failure of her endeavor: "if my students are forced to disperse/what would my nights and days mean?" It is especially striking that, after focusing on the widespread impact of her struggle—namely, the preservation of Torah in her entire region—she ends with such an intimate appeal about the threat to her life's value. We saw above how revered Asenath was by her contemporaries. Given this context, this personal confession becomes the poem's most affecting and impactful verse.

I chose to arrange this piece for choir to show that Asenath's individual struggle can serve as a unifying struggle for all leaders and teachers. I considered whether to score the piece for soprano and alto choir to emphasize Asenath's unique circumstances as a pre-modern woman rabbi. Ultimately, I decided that the poem can serve as an anthem for leaders of all gender identities. Given the poem's emphasis on the wilderness, I chose the flute to represent the poem's sense of desolation and howling winds as well as Asenath's association with the symbol of the

dove. The piece begins with a solo soprano singing a declamatory recitative, as the poet feels she is alone in her struggle. A solo alto joins in harmony in m. 6. As the two voices sing "may my strength not leave me now" (mm. 9-10), the dynamic diminishes as the refrain is introduced. The entire soprano and alto sections sing quietly, with hesitation: "I will work with all of my might/for in this letter, I write my wishes" (mm. 11-19). The Hebrew text—*"e-eSEH CHAyil ar-BEH ki VAti bich'TAV mish'aLI*"—naturally lends itself to a resolute march-like rhythm in a 4/4 meter. This meter, derived from the Hebrew, pervades the entire composition, even as much of the text is sung in translation. The second refrain (mm. 30-37) is delivered with more conviction as soprano, alto, tenor, and bass sing in four part harmony.

In m. 37, Asenath's personal concluding appeal begins. The Hebrew text "*im yafutzu talmidai el teiveil, ma heim yomi, leili* [if my students are forced to disperse/what would my nights and days mean?]" is repeated three times in different configurations. By the third (mm. 45-51), all four voices sing the text with staggered entrances and varied rhythms, suggesting that all teachers share Asenath's struggle; all teachers need their students as much as their students need them. Despite the four parts' varied recitation of this text, they conclude the phrase in homophony (mm. 50-51), suggesting that, while the challenges facing each teacher are unique, they are united in their dedication.

M. 51 begins an extended crescendo, which will ultimately conclude the composition. The low voices introduce a chant-like recitation of the preceding text, now in translation. In order to emphasize the severity and the humility of the poet's appeal, the voices are accompanied only by stark low octaves, contrasting sharply with the fullness of the piece's earlier texture. Gradually, the momentum of the accompaniment builds as the upper voices re-enter with the *"e'eseh chayil"* theme. At once, the piece voices the dire stakes of Asenath's petition alongside

her unfailing commitment to her cause. These layered affirmations rise in dynamic, overflowing into a wordless melody at m. 68. At the piece's climax, all three of these melodies overlap before coming together for one final moment of solidarity, with the voices declaring in unison: "So hear me now, O you faithful ones." At the final moment, the poet pleads in a whisper: "O you righteous ones, listen to me." These final words—of this composition and of the entire collection—crescendo and evaporate, in the hopes that Asenath's message will reverberate like a shofar throughout the wilderness.

Conclusion

That Asenath Barzani would employ Spanish poetic techniques to demonstrate her rabbinic legitimacy reveals the extent to which the Andalusian revolution transformed the world of Hebrew poetry. T. Carmi notes that "the speed with which the Andalusian school imposed itself upon the centres [sic] of Hebrew poetry throughout the world is one of the most striking phenomena in the annals of Hebrew poetry. By the beginning of the eleventh century, poets in Babylonia, Egypt, North Africa, and Palestine were already writing in the Spanish style."[121] By the middle of the twelfth century, just as Yehudah HaLevi left Spain in search of the Holy Land, the Spanish school had taken over Italy, Greece, Turkey, and Yemen. Carmi observes that "the conventions of the Spanish school became so pervasive that one is often hard put to identify the geographical provenance of a poem in the Andalusian style."[122]

The conditions that gave rise to the flourishing of Andalusian poetry would shift toward the late 11th century. The same political instability that enabled Jewish courtiers like Shmuel HaNagid to rise to prominence encouraged the Christian kingdoms to mount campaigns to retake Spain.[123] Ultimately, the intensifying threat to Muslim rule enabled increasingly oppressive regimes to seize power: first the Almoravid dynasty of Morocco in the late 11th century, followed by the Almohad Caliphate in 1147. Almoravid rule saw the end of secular Arabic culture in favor of a stricter enforcement of Islamic law. In comparison, the 1147 Almohad conquest brought anti-Jewish destruction that led the remaining Jewish communities to migrate north to Christian Spain, where new centers of Jewish learning and culture emerged in cities like Toledo, Saragossa, Barcelona, and Navarre.[124]

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[121] Carmi, *Hebrew Verse,* 30.
[122] Ibid., 31.
[123] Gerber, *The Jews of Spain,* 53.
[124] Carmi, *Hebrew Verse,* 31.

The Jewish poets of Christian Spain continued to follow the conventions of the predecessors while introducing themes and forms learned from Spanish and Troubadour poetry.[125] Despite their new influences, poets of the day continued to turn to Arabic models like the *maqama,* a narrative form "in rhymed prose, interspersed with metrical poems."[126] The era of Hebrew poetry in Christian Spain began to come to a close in the 15th century, culminating in the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and from Portugal in 1497. As Jews resettled throughout the Mediterranean, Hebrew poetry would flourish in North Africa, Turkey, Palestine, Yemen, Holland, and Italy.[127]

This project is an initial foray into bringing the staggeringly vast and multifaceted body of medieval Hebrew poetry into contemporary ritual settings. The oeuvre of each region and time period comes with its distinct characteristics, based on the surrounding music and poetry that influenced its creators. Further the varied contexts in which this poetry flourished provide lessons for contemporary Jews trying to navigate a complex—and all too often hostile—mainstream society.

In 2007, Peter Cole argued that the Jewish poetry and culture of medieval Spain "confronts the twenty-first-century reader with a worldview and aesthetic that in many respects defy modern oppositional notions of self and other, East and West, Arab and Christian and Jew, as it flies in the face of our received sense of what Hebrew has done and can do, and even what Jewishness means."[128] I would add that, in 2023, this relevance has only increased. In an article in the Forward reflecting on the first anniversary of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, a Muslim Ukrainian soldier sharing a foxhole with a Jewish soldier is quoted as saying, "consider

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[125] Ibid., 32.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid., 33.
[128] Cole, *Dream of the Poem*, 1.

how much the Russians pissed us off that Muslims and Jews fight together."[129] It is a tragedy of our time that hatred between Muslims and Jews can be taken as a global assumption. All but forgotten from public consciousness are the generations of peaceful and even friendly cohabitation between Jews and Muslims throughout the Muslim world—before the settling and founding of the modern state of Israel complicated such relations. Further, the way in which support for and criticism of the state of Israel has become an intractable partisan issue in the contentious state of American politics continues to drive a wedge between Jews and Muslims. At the same time, American Jews and Muslims face a rise in both antisemitic and anti-Muslim attitudes and violence. Against such a backdrop, study of the history of the cosmopolitan "Golden Age" of Muslim Spain—in which Muslims, Christians, and Jews existed and exchanged ideas in relative peace for more than two centuries—has never been more important. While the lessons of this era have long been known to students of Jewish history, such history is more obscure to the mainstream public. It is my hope that these and future compositions can provide an accessible entryway into this distant yet vibrant past. I am eager to continue composing new settings for this inexhaustible literature, and I urge other composers to join me.

Another key point in the story of Andalusian poetry for contemporary Jews is the development of attitudes towards Hebrew and the Bible as unifiers of the entire Jewish community. Jane Gerber observes that, while Jews conducted their lives and their business in the languages of the national groups with which they came in contact, "Hebrew was understood in educated Jewish circles the world over, giving them a kind of *lingua franca* not only for trade but also for religious and intellectual discourse."[130] It was in this context that the Hebrew philology

[129] Nora Berman, "I Worried Antisemitism Would Engulf Ukraine after Russia Invaded. I Was Wrong," The Forward, February 21, 2023, https://forward.com/opinion/536547/antisemitism-ukraine-russia-invasion-unified/?utm_source=Iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ForwardingtheNews_6224957.

[130] Gerber, *The Jews of Spain,* 36.

of Saadia and his students took hold and enabled the revolution of the new Andalusian poetry. The Spanish poets and their descendents imparted wisdom that every Jewish educator hopes to communicate: Hebrew is not just a tool for reading the Bible or participating in a prayer service but rather, the living language that connects Jews to their global community—past, present, and future. Additionally, as we have seen, the poets of the age demonstrated that the language of the Bible could express the full range of human emotion. They teach us to explore every verse of our sacred texts for unexpected insight and beauty. This poetry is at once a celebration of the limitless gifts of the Jewish textual tradition and an exploration of how these words respond to the realities of multicultural contemporary life.

I. *Ani Al Kein Ahodeh* (And so I will give thanks)

Shlomo Ibn Gabirol
English lyrics by Isaac Sonett-Assor

Isaac Sonett-Assor

A

I seek You every evening and dawn,

Baritone solo

Rubato ♩.=48

mp

Bass

Sh'- char - ti - cha_ b' - chol shach-ri__ v'-nish - pi,_____

Violoncello

mp

A

Rubato ♩.=48

C F/C C

Piano

mp

My face turned up, my palms open to You;

With a thirsty spirit, I yearn for You,

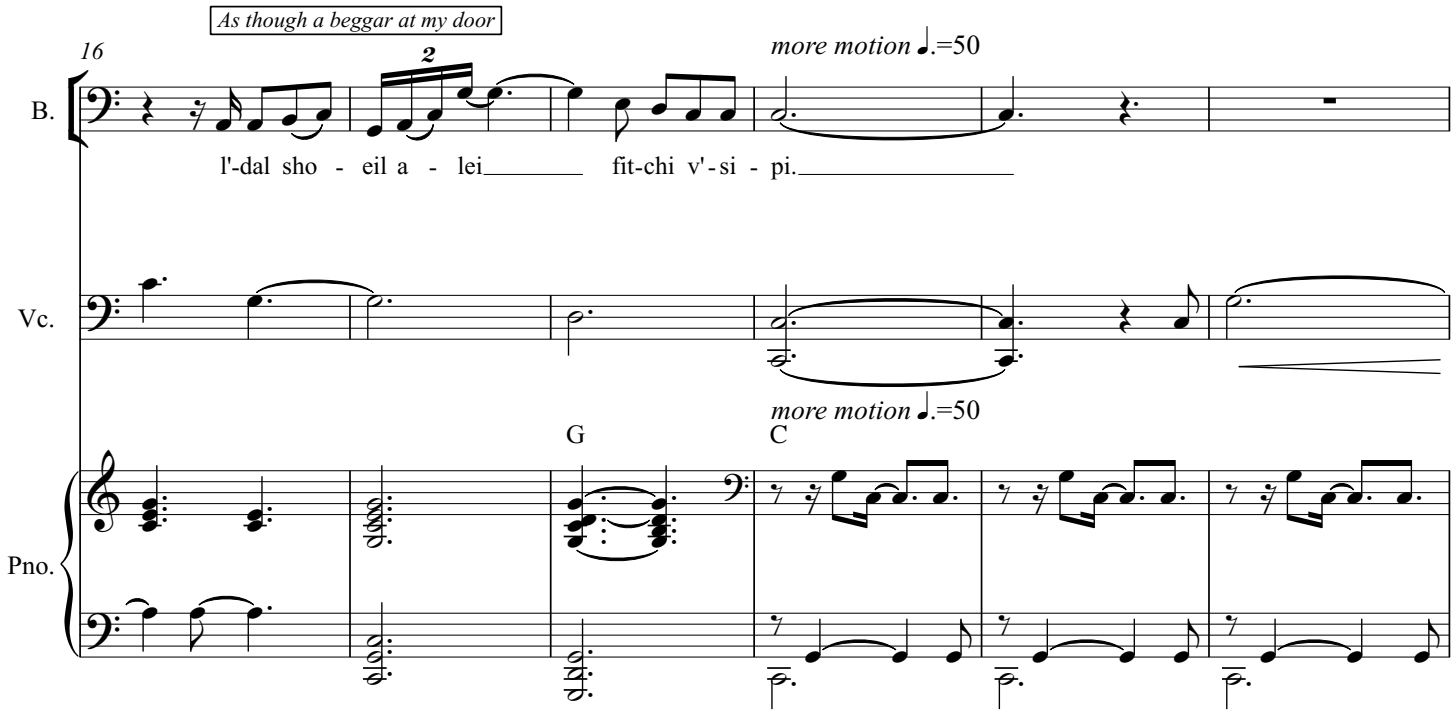
B.

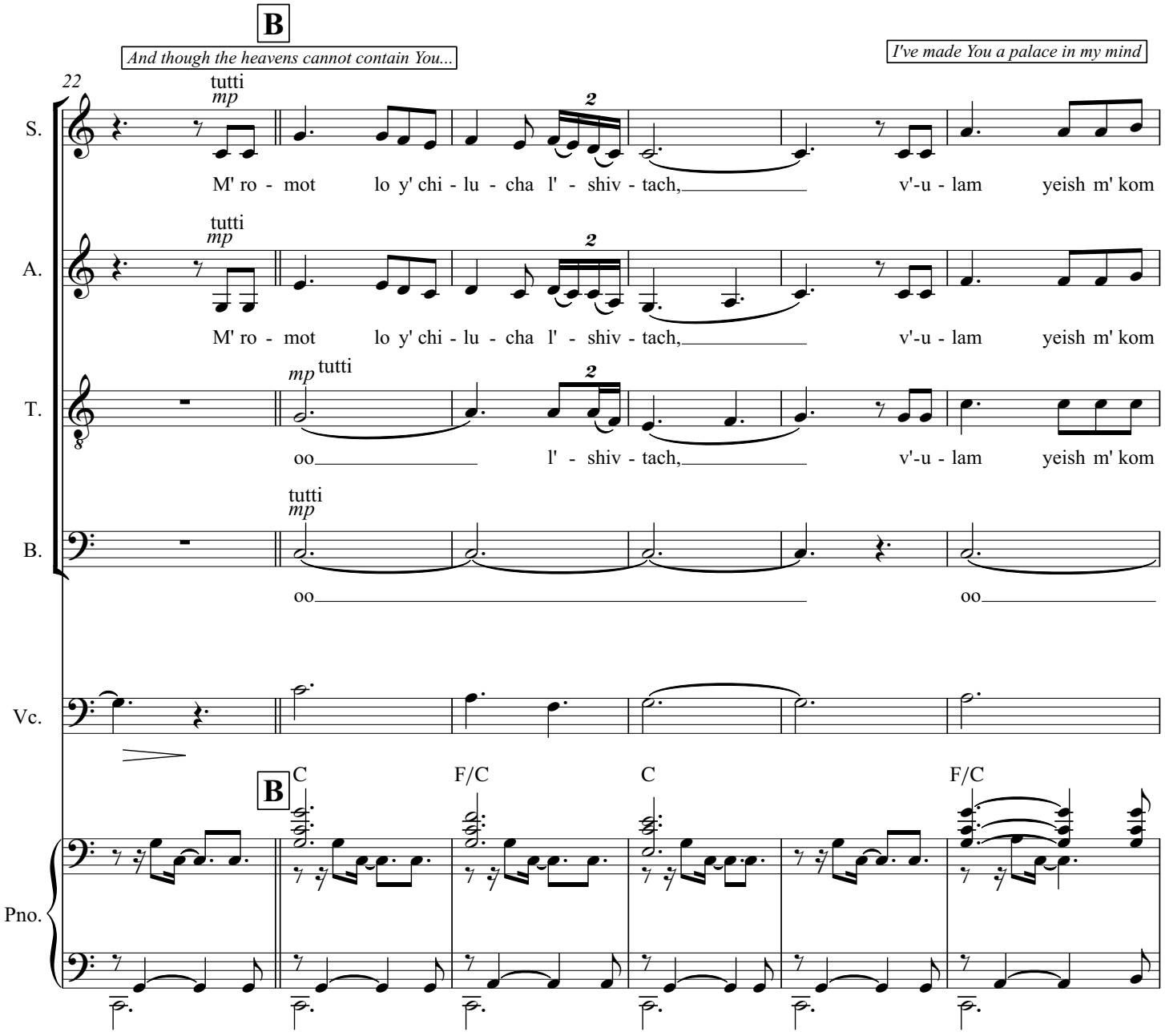
__ U-fa - ras - ti__ l' - cha ca-pai v'-a - pi. L'-cha_ eh-meh b'-leiv tza - mei v'-ed - meh,

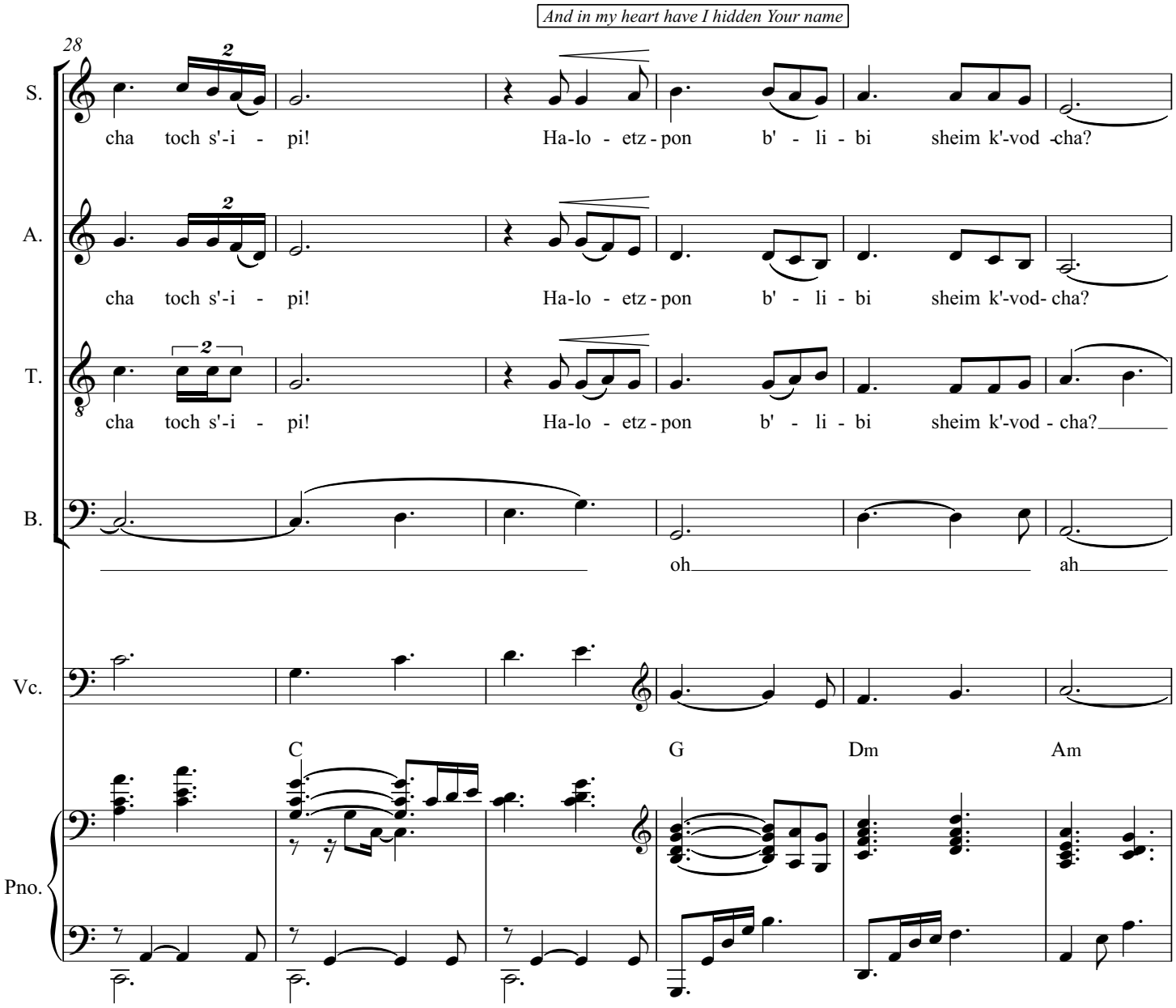
Vc.

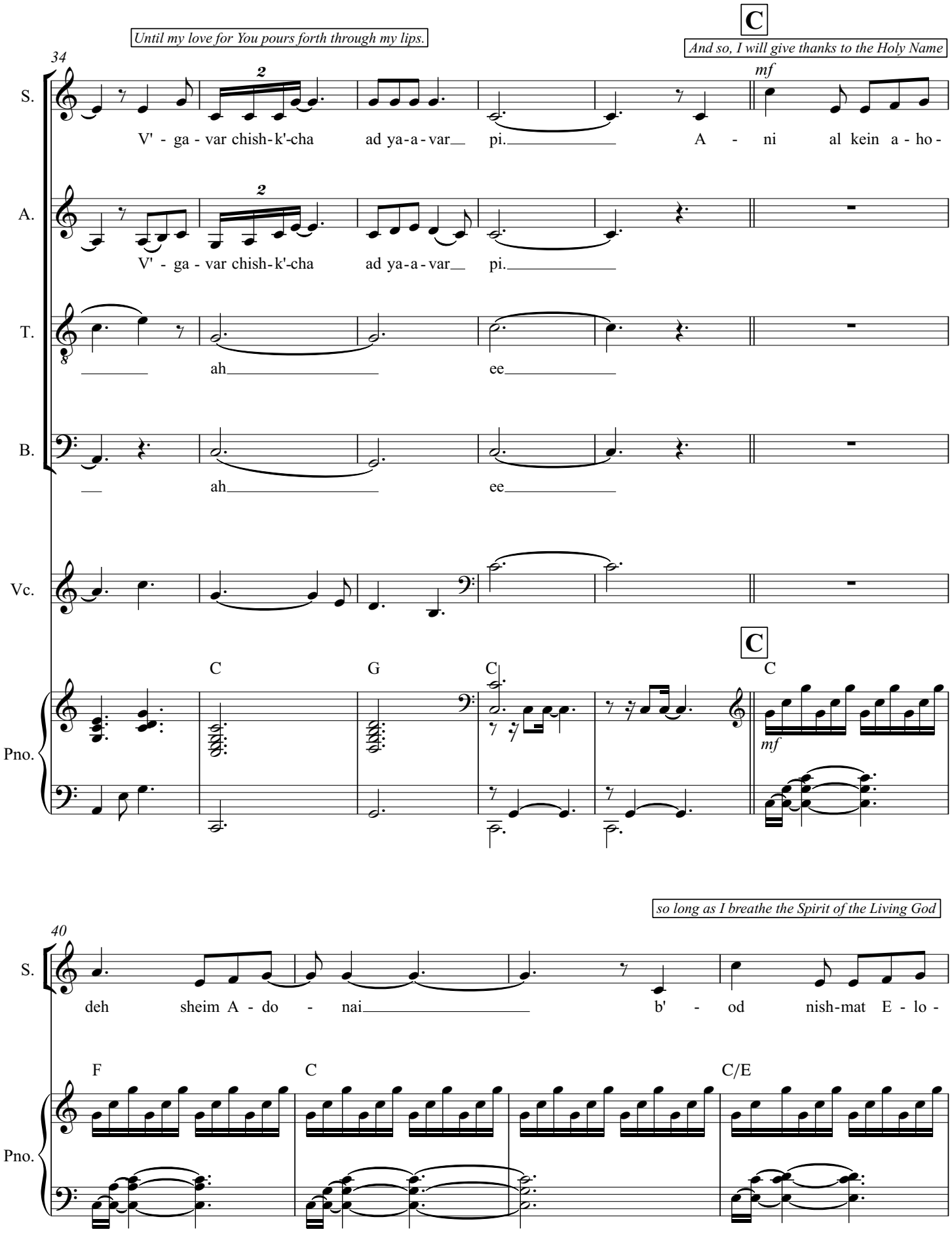
F/C C G Dm Am

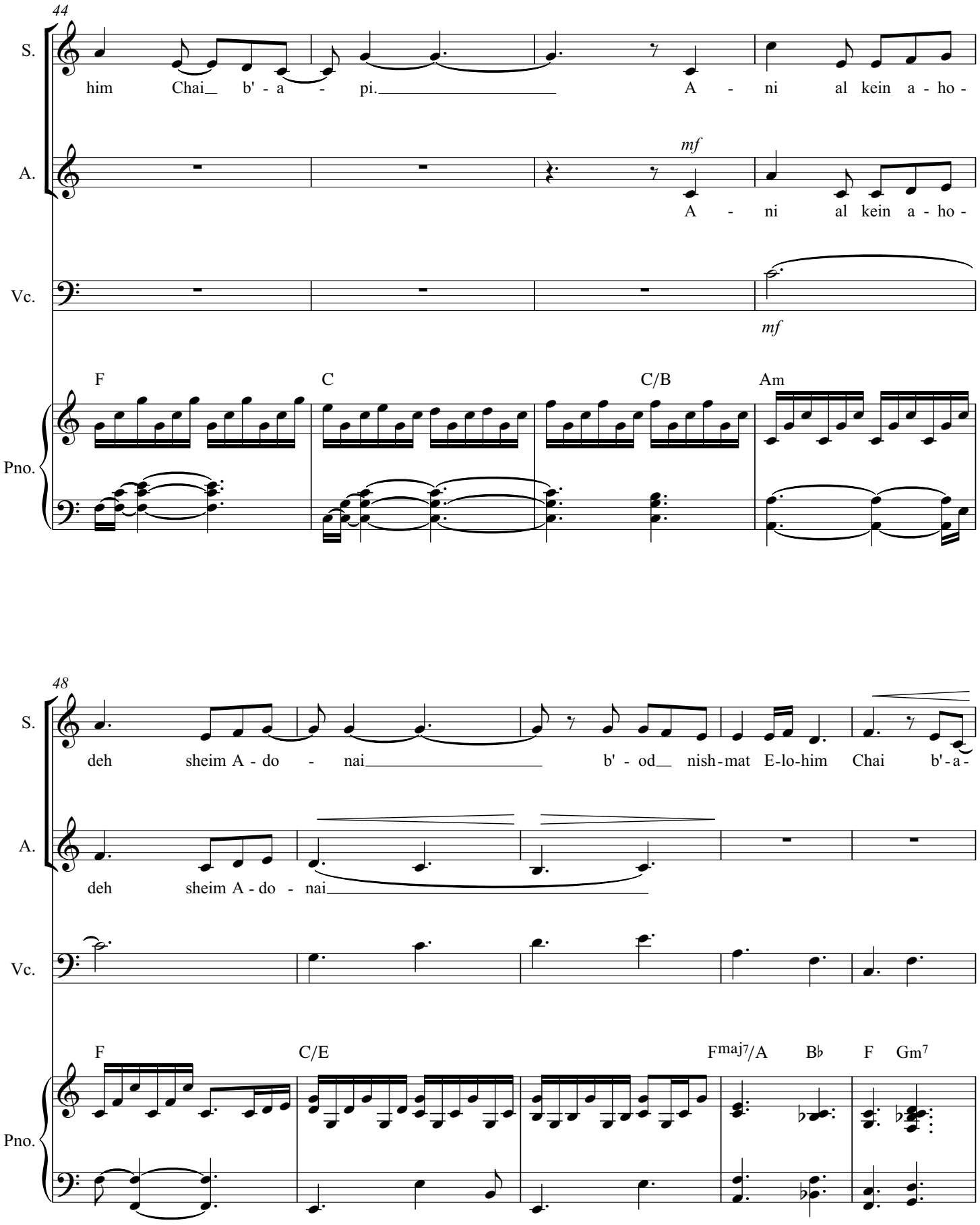
Pno.

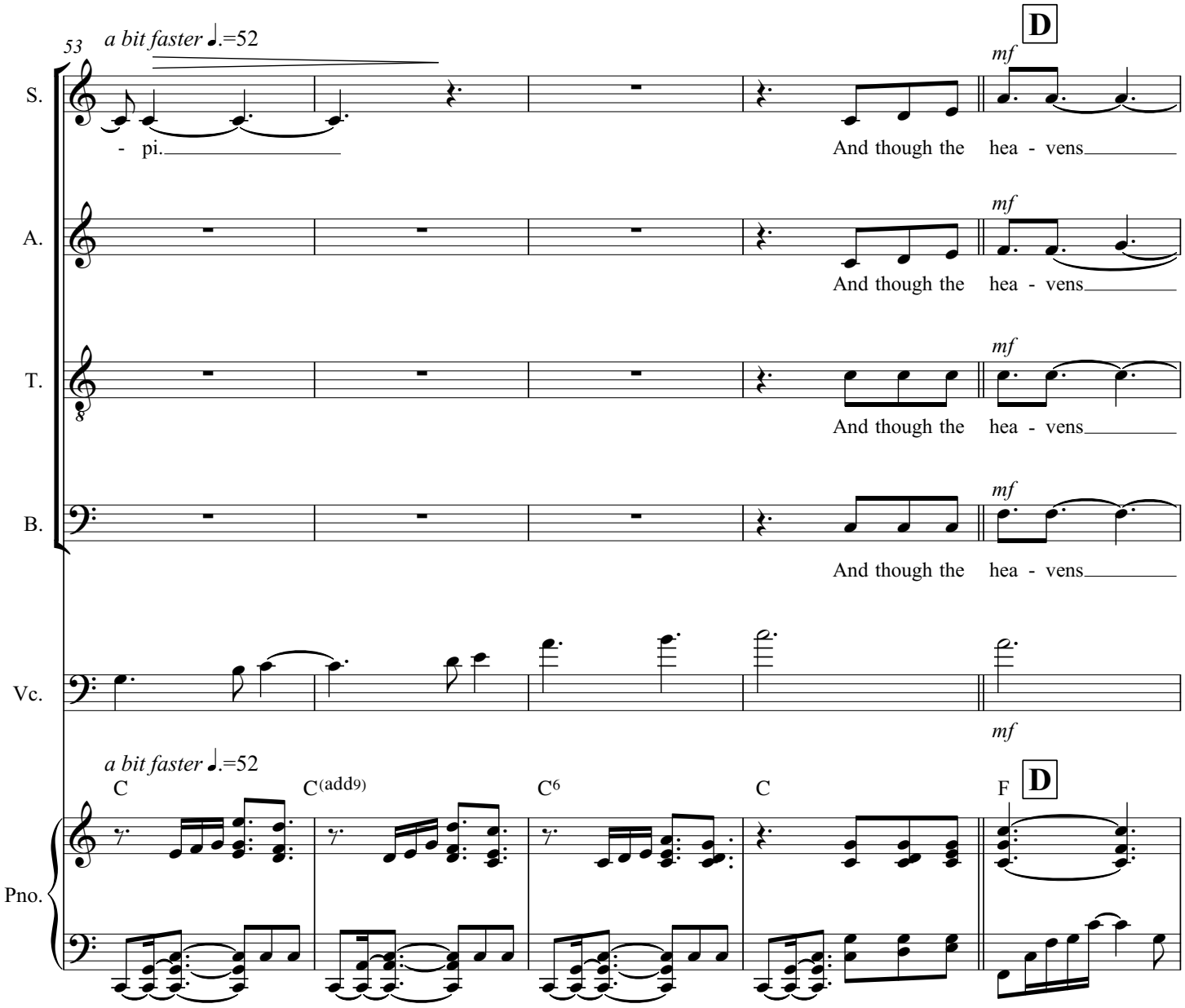

As though a beggar at my door
16
2
more motion ♩.=50
B.
l'-dal sho - eil a - lei fit-chi v'-si - pi.
Vc.
more motion ♩.=50
G
C
Pno.

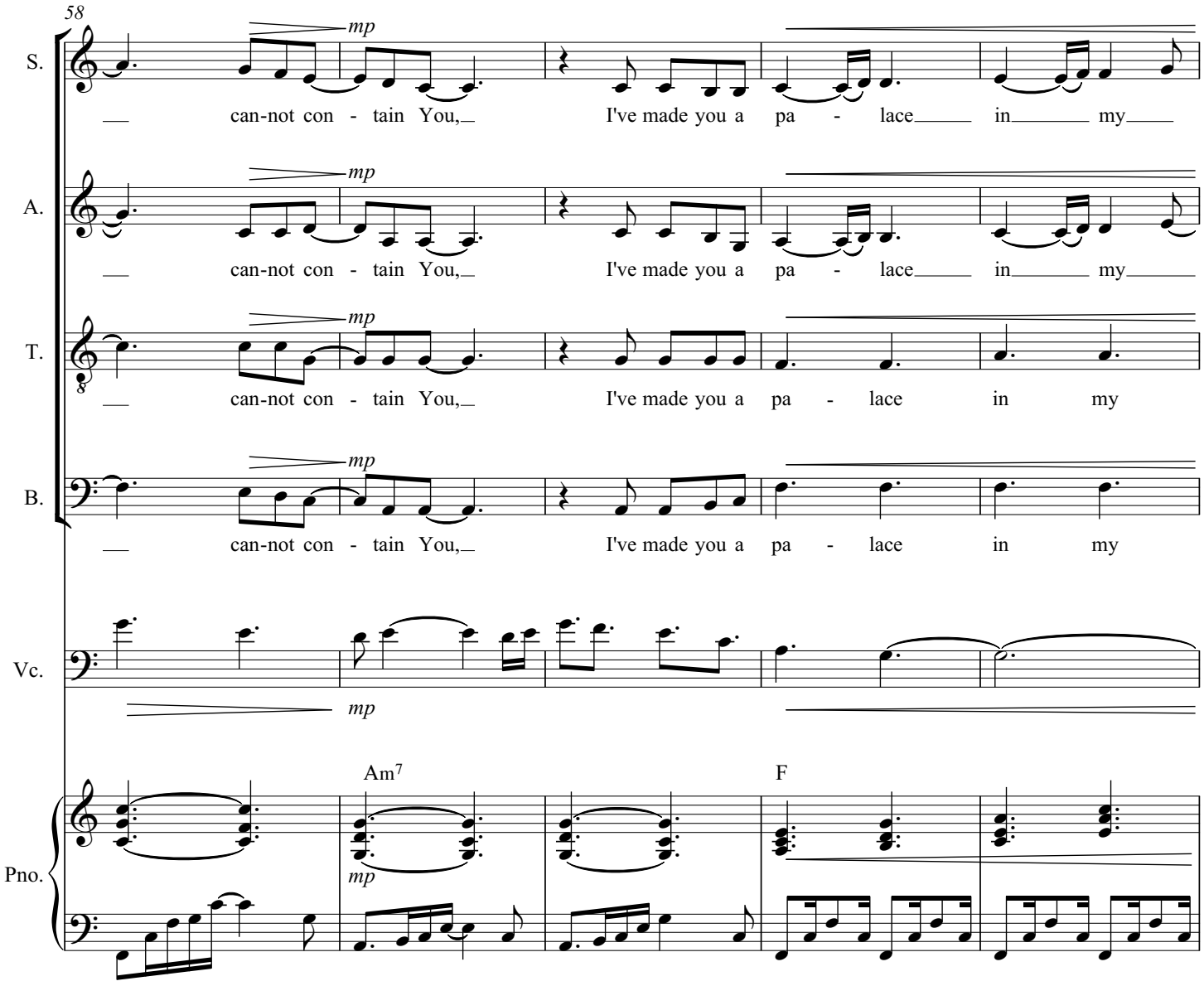

B
And though the heavens cannot contain You...
I've made You a palace in my mind
22
S.
A.
T.
B.
Vc.
Pno.
tutti
mp
M' ro - mot lo y' chi - lu - cha l' - shiv - tach, v'-u - lam yeish m' kom
oo l' - shiv - tach, v'-u - lam yeish m' kom
oo oo
C
F/C
C
F/C

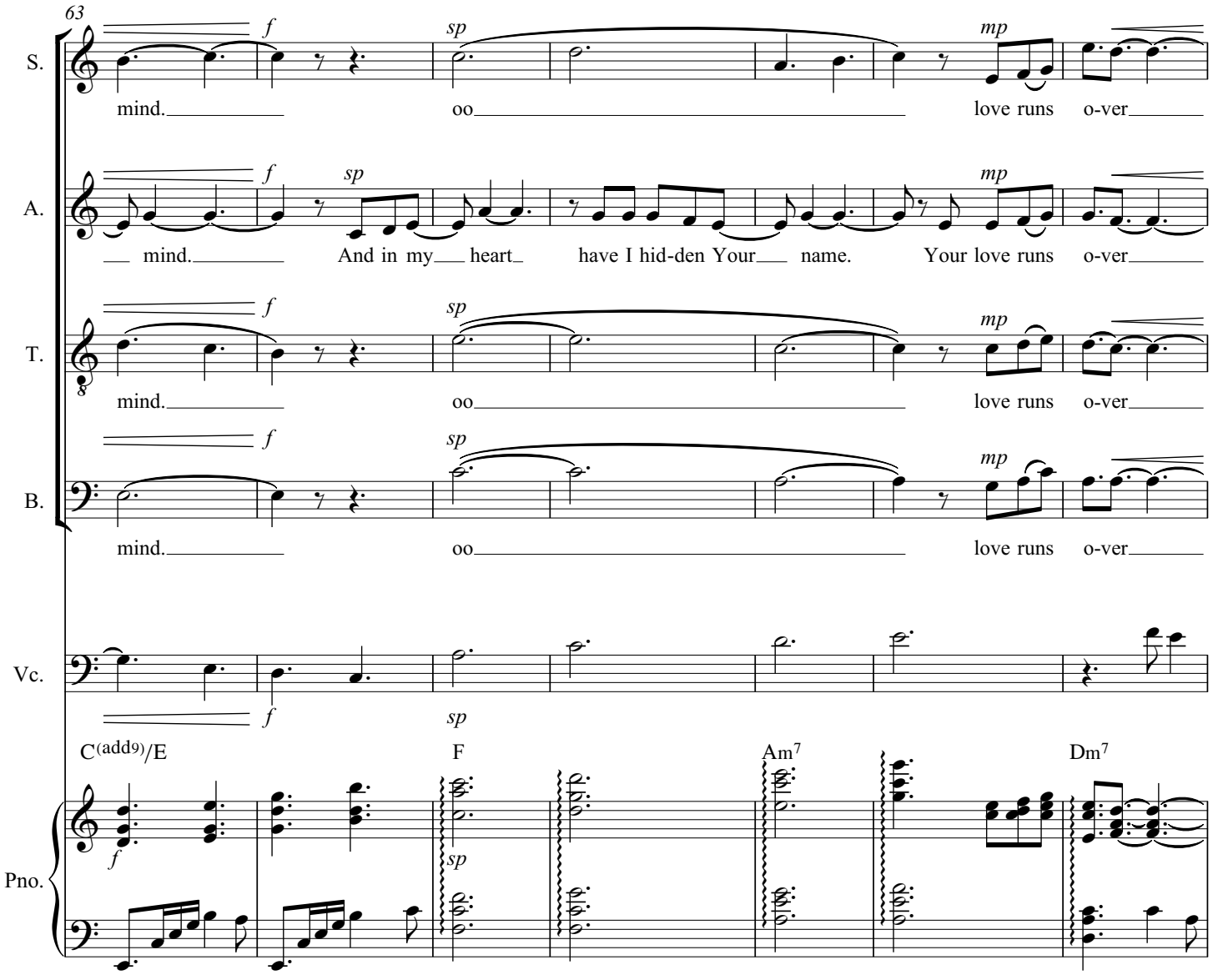

And in my heart have I hidden Your name
28
S.
A.
T.
B.
Vc.
Pno.
cha toch s'-i - pi!
Ha-lo - etz - pon b' - li - bi sheim k'-vod -cha?
cha toch s'-i - pi!
Ha-lo - etz - pon b' - li - bi sheim k'-vod- cha?
cha toch s'-i - pi!
Ha-lo - etz - pon b' - li - bi sheim k'-vod - cha?
oh
ah
C
G
Dm
Am

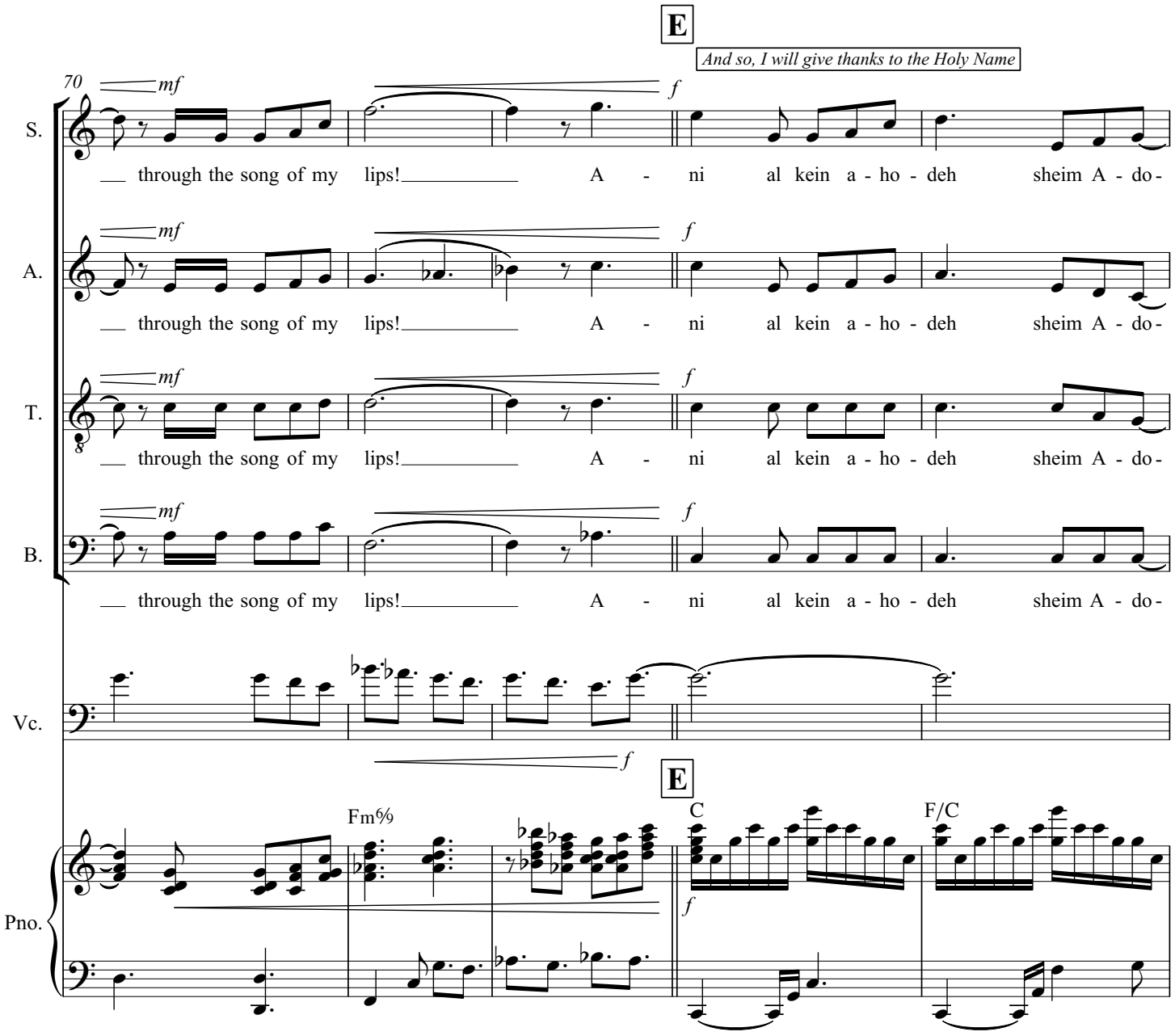

Until my love for You pours forth through my lips.
C
And so, I will give thanks to the Holy Name
34
S.
A.
T.
B.
Vc.
Pno.
V' - ga - var chish-k'-cha ad ya-a-var pi. A - ni al kein a - ho -
V' - ga - var chish-k'-cha ad ya-a-var pi.
ah ee
ah ee
mf
C G C C
mf
so long as I breathe the Spirit of the Living God
40
deh sheim A - do - nai b' - od nish-mat E - lo -
F C C/E

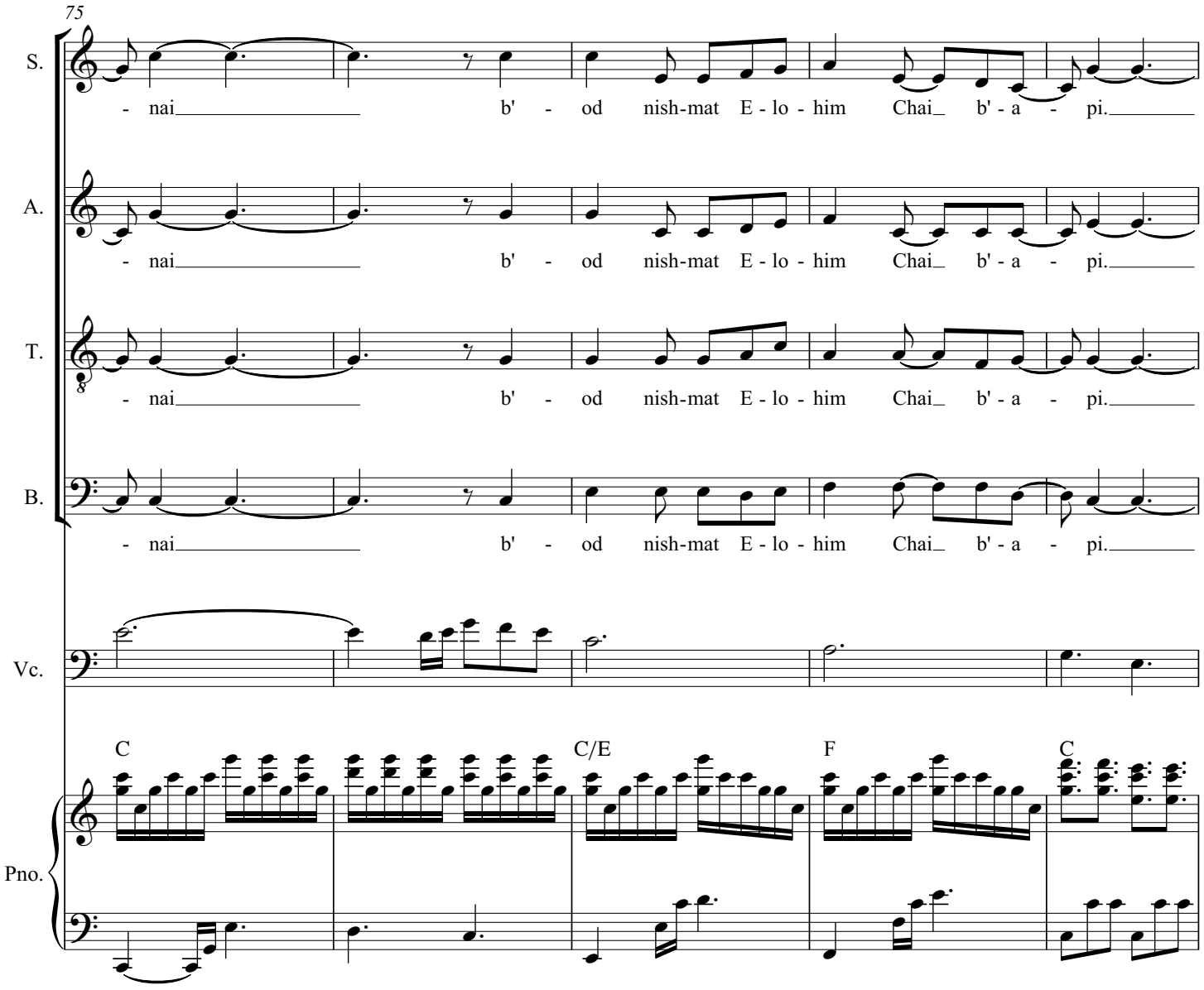

44
S.
him Chai b' - a - pi. A - ni al kein a - ho -
A.
mf
A - ni al kein a - ho -
Vc.
mf
Pno.
F C C/B Am
48
S.
deh sheim A - do - nai b' - od nish-mat E-lo-him Chai b'-a-
A.
deh sheim A - do - nai
Vc.
Pno.
F C/E Fmaj7/A B♭ F Gm7

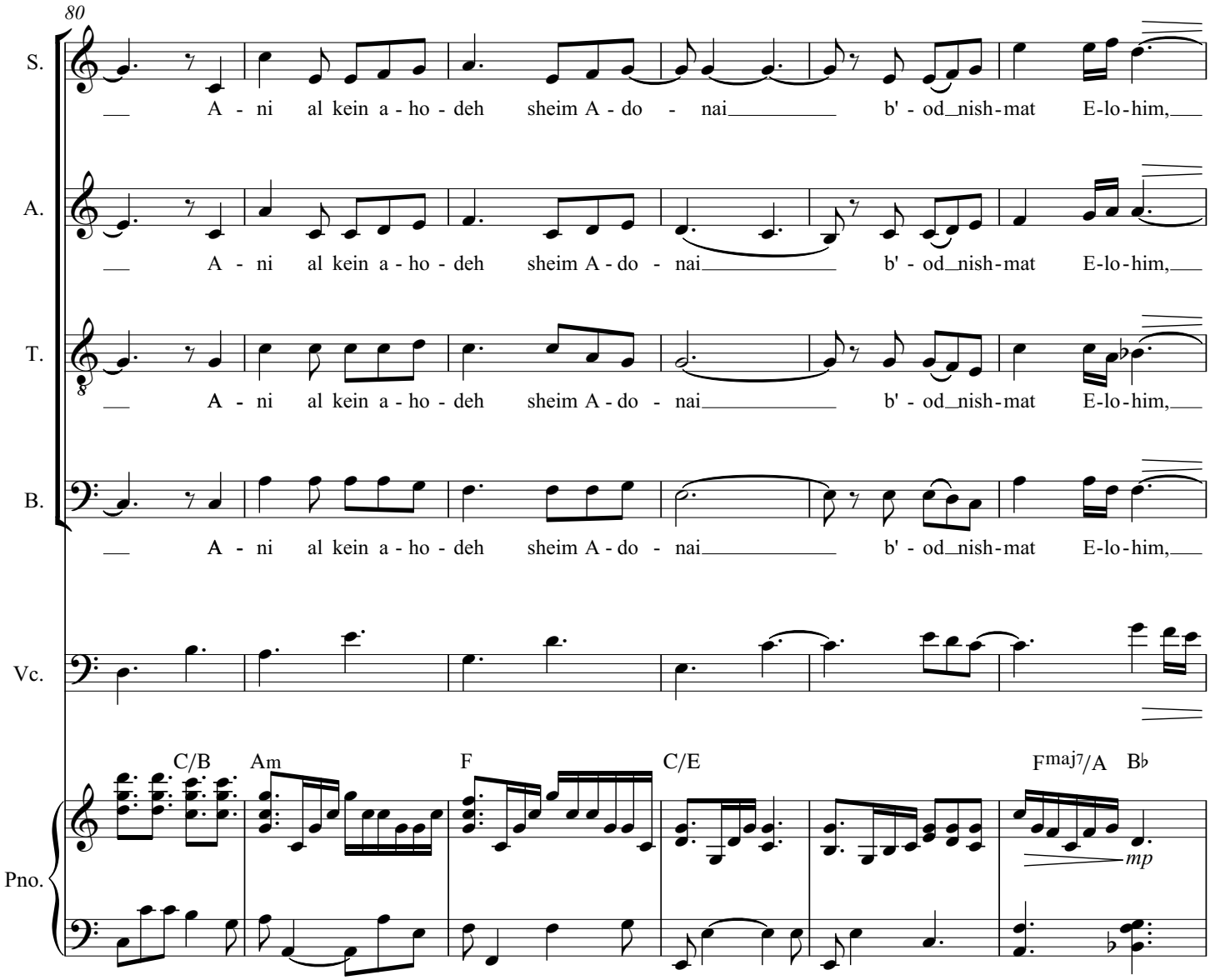

53
a bit faster ♩.=52
D
S.
- pi.
And though the hea - vens
A.
And though the hea - vens
T.
And though the hea - vens
B.
And though the hea - vens
Vc.
mf
a bit faster ♩.=52
C
C(add9)
C6
C
F
D
Pno.

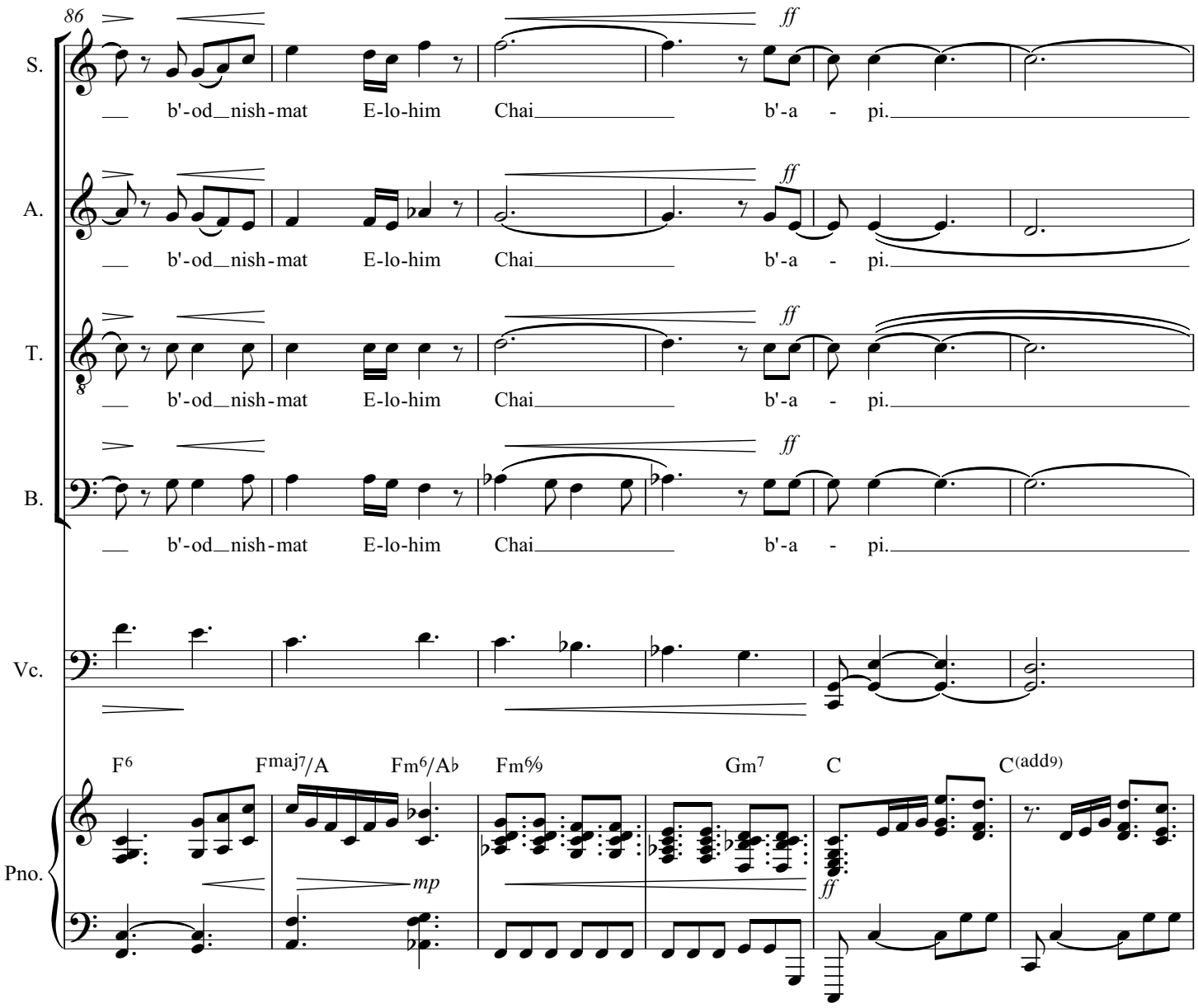

58
S.
A.
T.
B.
Vc.
Pno.
mp
can-not con - tain You,
I've made you a pa - lace in my
Am7
F

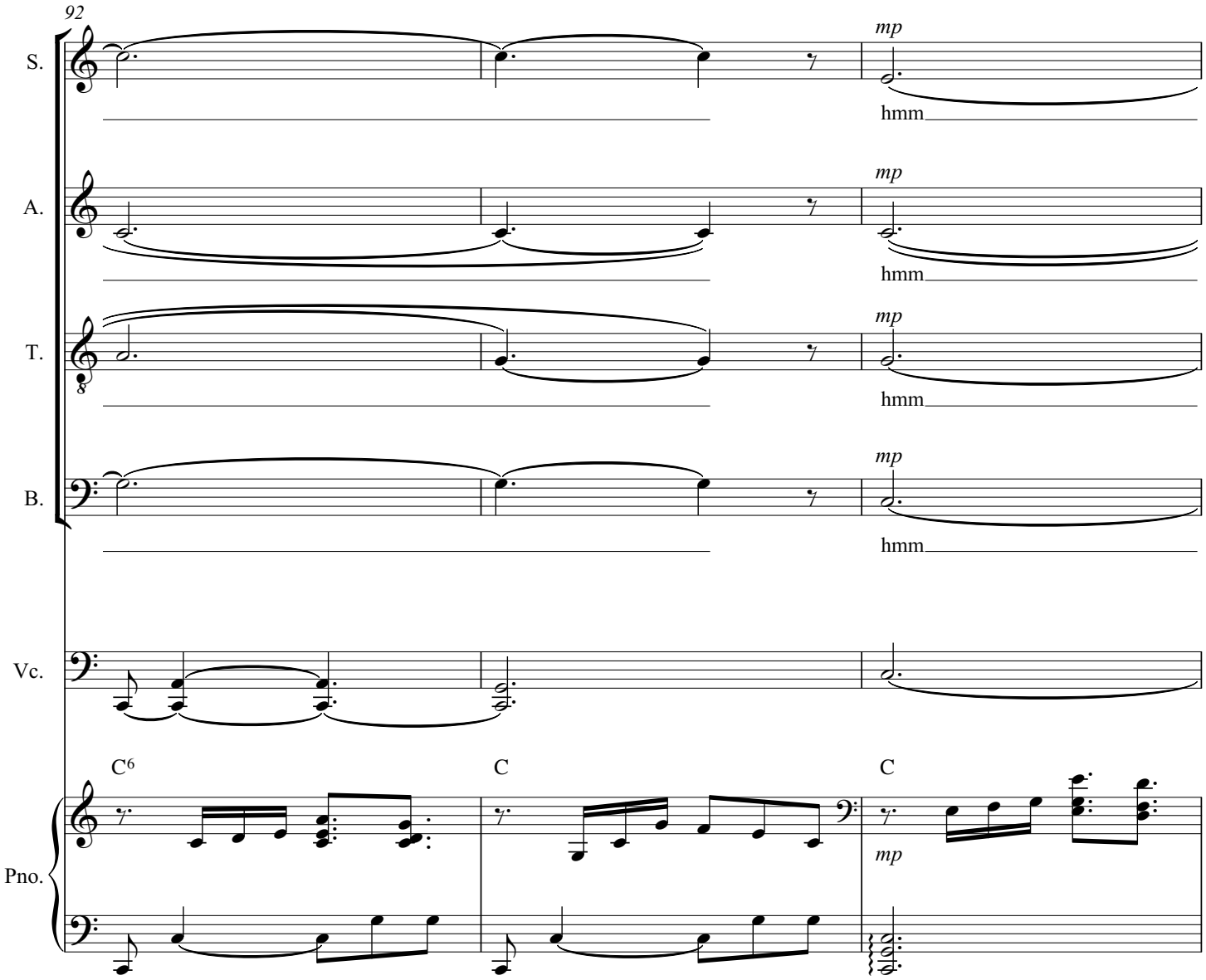

63
S.
A.
T.
B.
Vc.
Pno.
f
sp
mp
mind.
oo
love runs o-ver
And in my heart have I hid-den Your name. Your love runs o-ver
C(add9)/E
F
Am7
Dm7

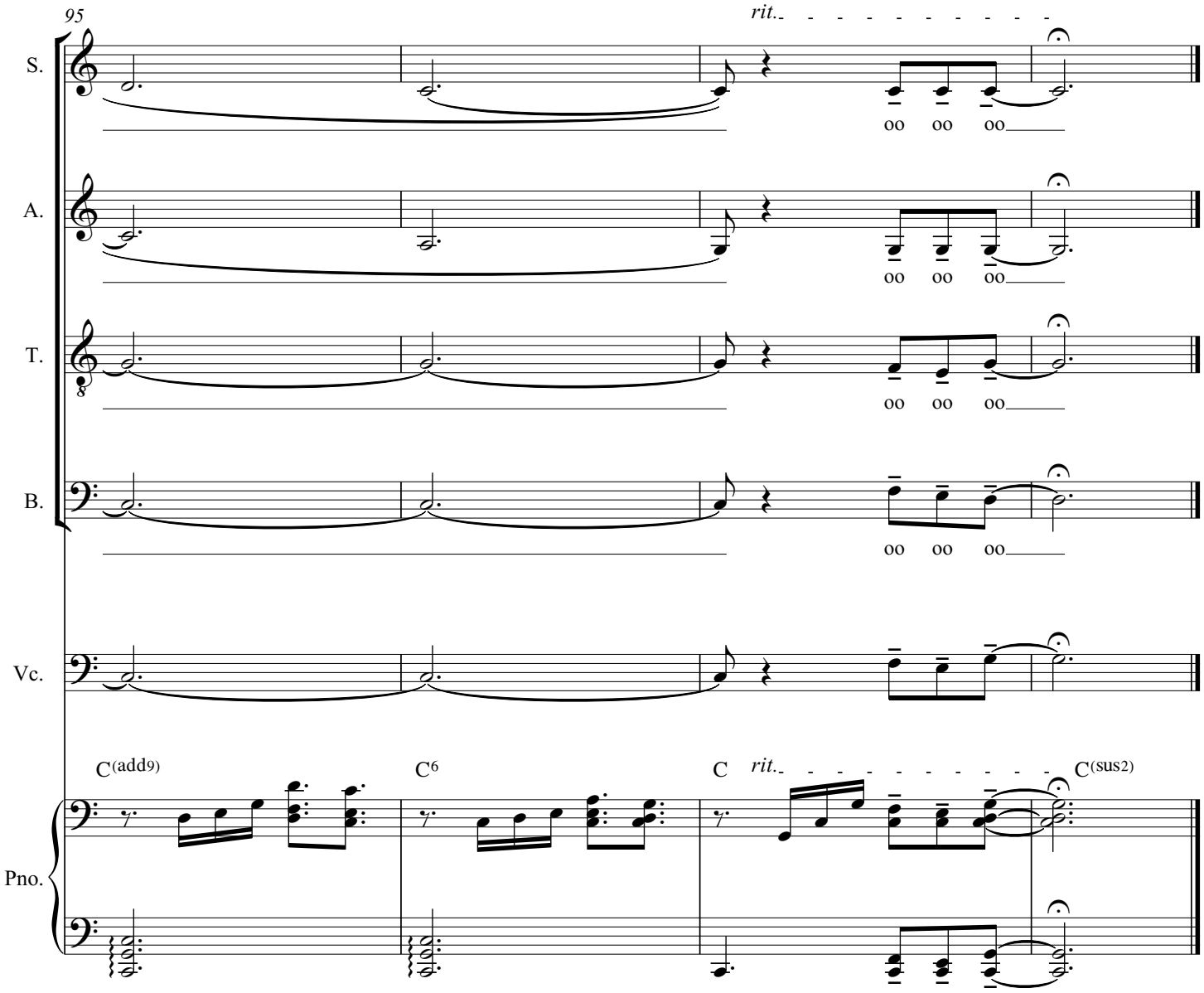

E
And so, I will give thanks to the Holy Name
70
mf
f
S.
A.
T.
B.
through the song of my lips!
A - ni al kein a - ho - deh sheim A - do-
Vc.
Fm%
C
F/C
Pno.


75
S.
- nai b' - od nish-mat E - lo - him Chai b' - a - pi.
A.
- nai b' - od nish-mat E - lo - him Chai b' - a - pi.
T.
- nai b' - od nish-mat E - lo - him Chai b' - a - pi.
B.
- nai b' - od nish-mat E - lo - him Chai b' - a - pi.
Vc.
Pno.
C
C/E
F
C


80
S.
A - ni al kein a - ho - deh sheim A - do - nai b' - od_nish - mat E-lo - him,
A.
A - ni al kein a - ho - deh sheim A - do - nai b' - od_nish - mat E-lo - him,
T.
A - ni al kein a - ho - deh sheim A - do - nai b' - od_nish - mat E-lo - him,
B.
A - ni al kein a - ho - deh sheim A - do - nai b' - od_nish - mat E-lo - him,
Vc.
C/B
Am
F
C/E
Fmaj7/A
B♭
mp
Pno.


86
S.
A.
T.
B.
Vc.
Pno.
ff
b'-od nish-mat E-lo-him Chai b'-a - pi.
F6
Fmaj7/A
Fm6/Ab
Fm6/9
Gm7
C
C(add9)
mp
ff

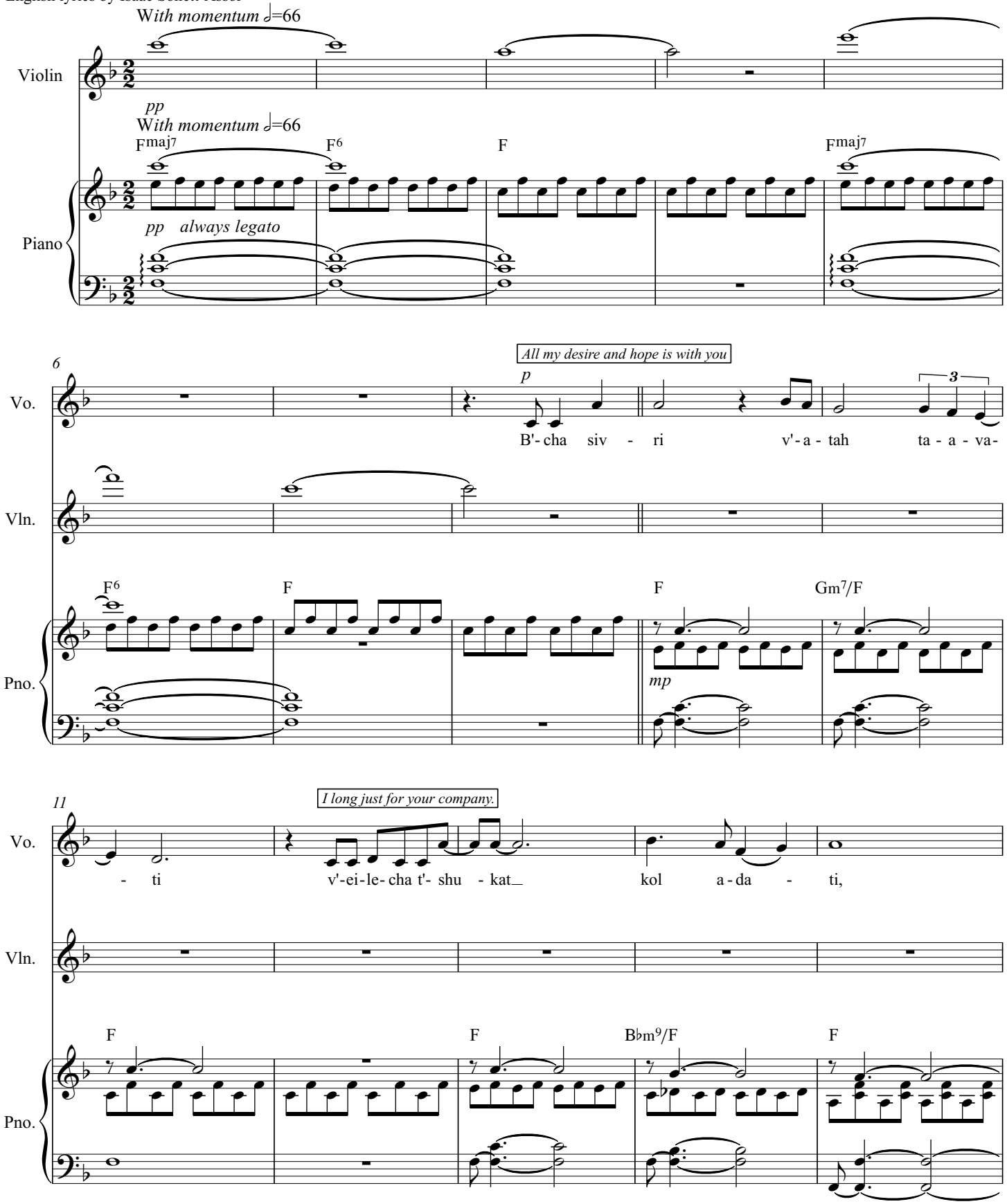

92
S.
A.
T.
B.
Vc.
Pno.
mp
hmm
C6
C
C

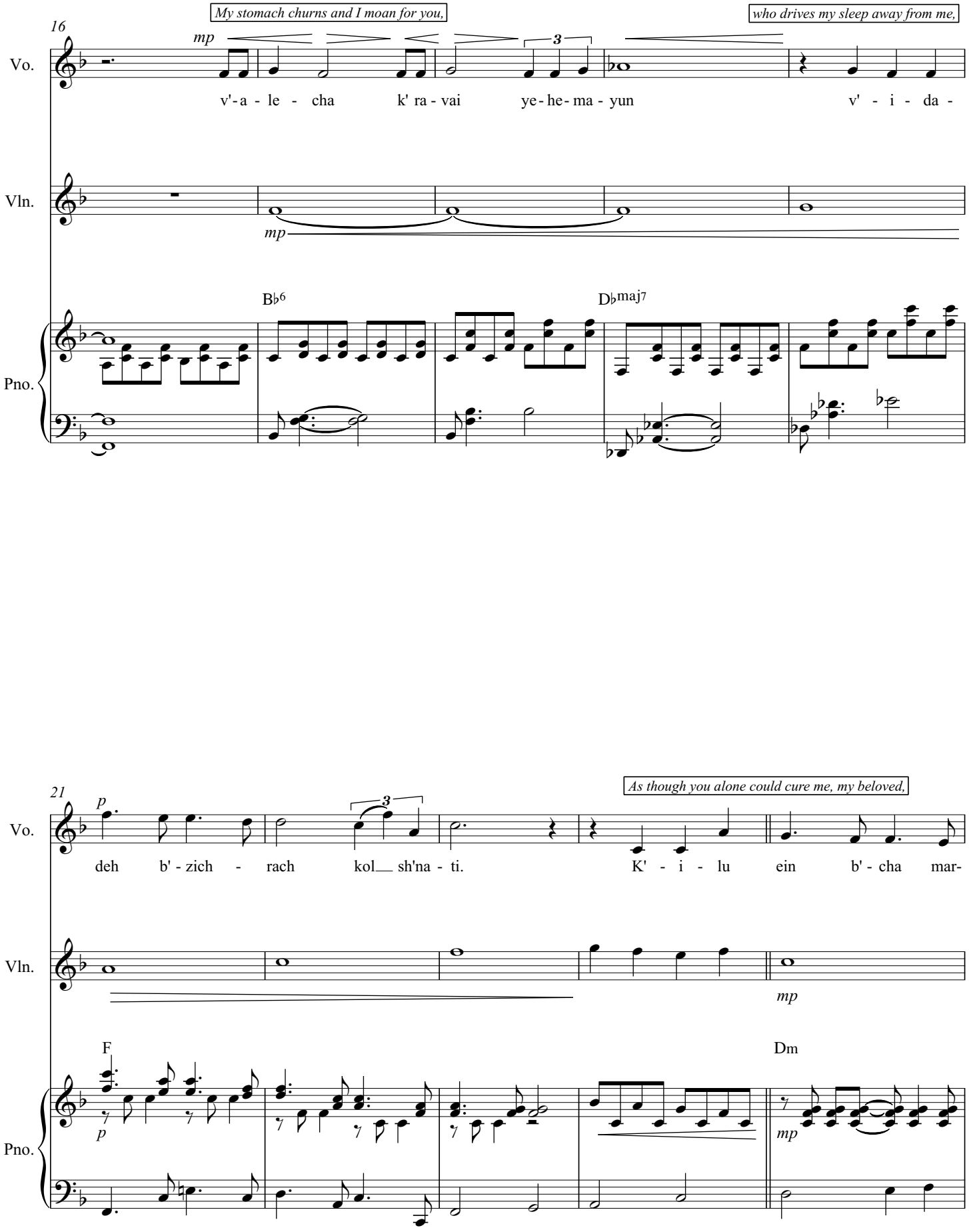

95
rit.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Vc.
Pno.
oo oo oo
C(add9)
C6
C
rit.
C(sus2)

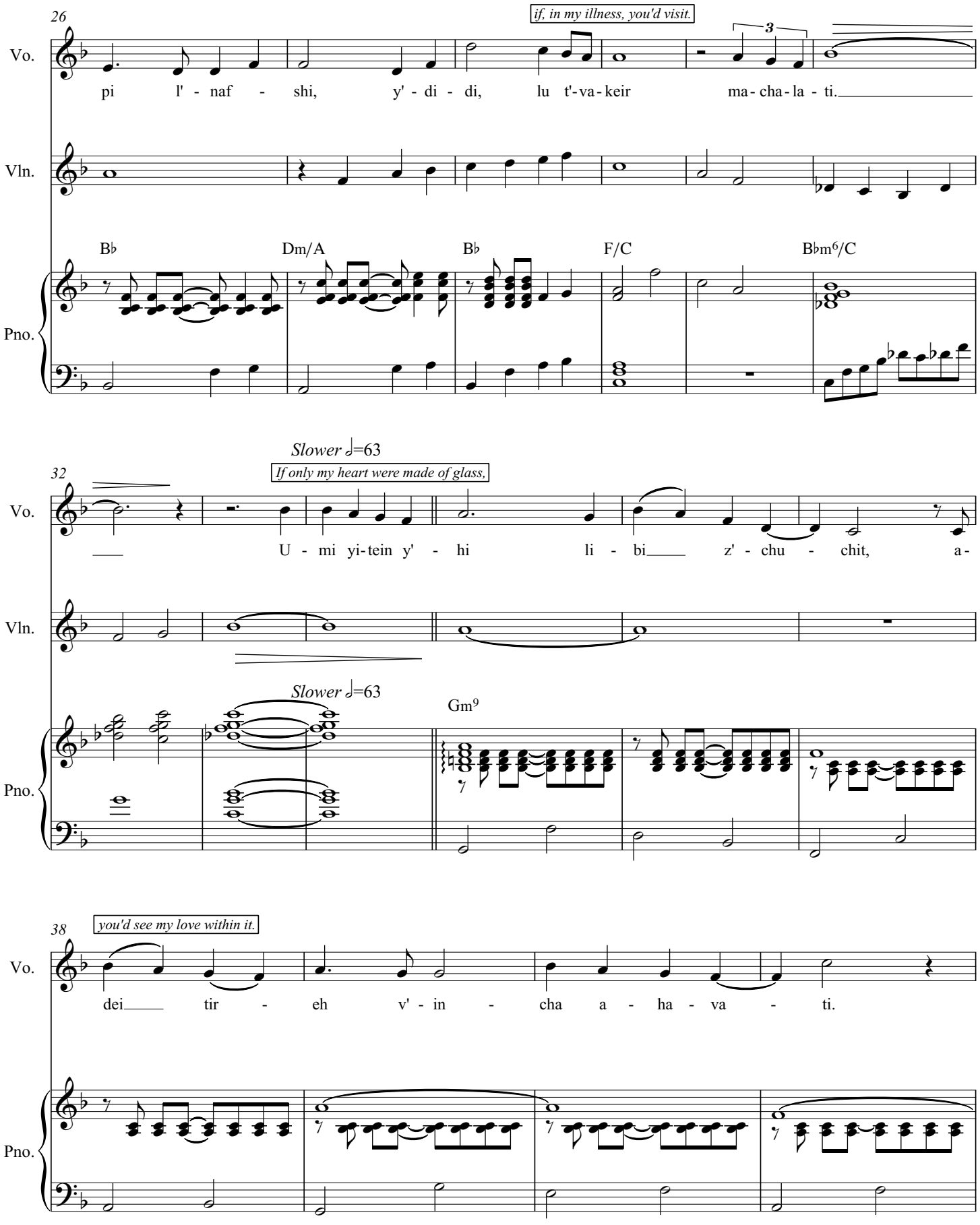
II. *Libi Z'chuchit* (Clear as Glass)

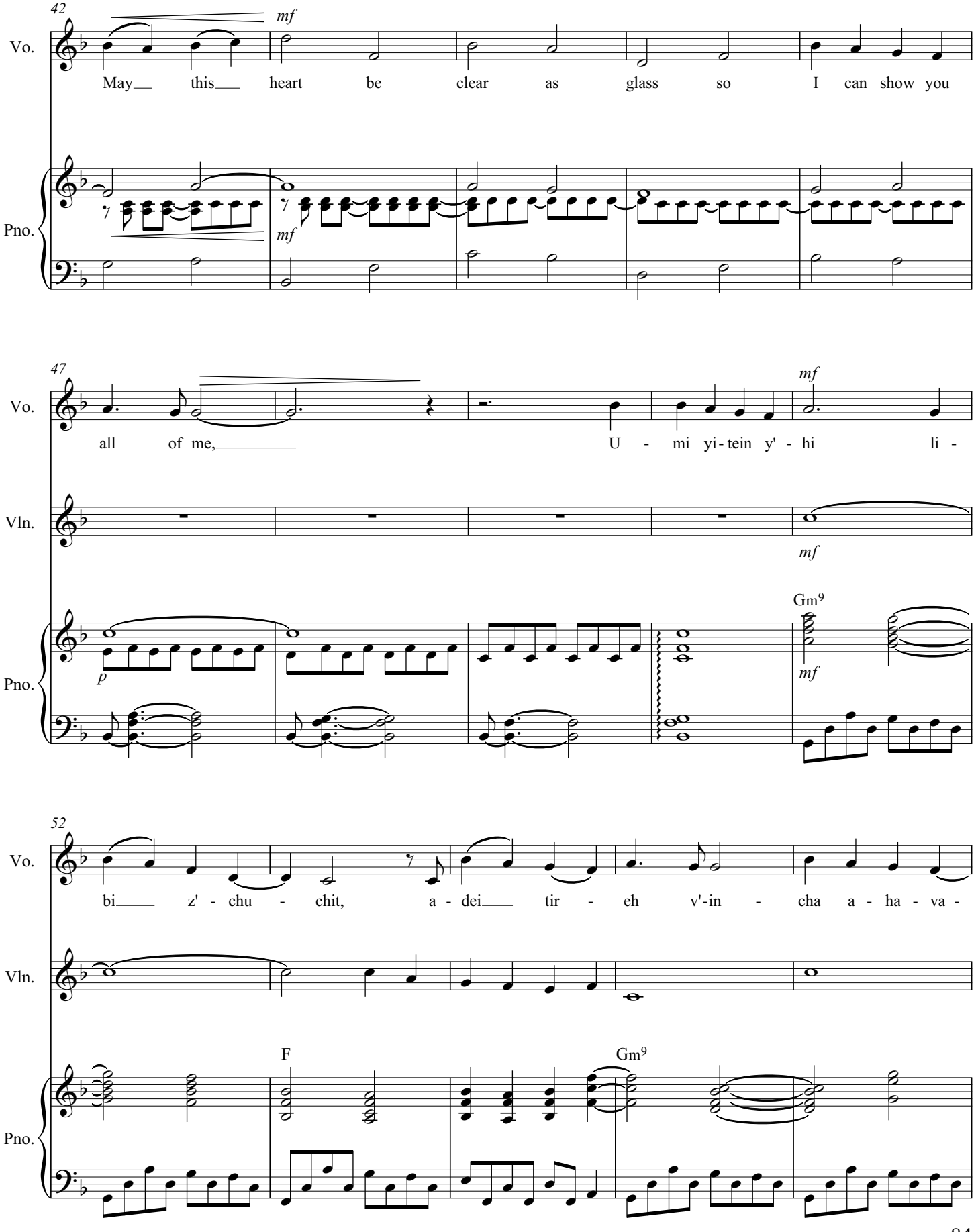
Shlomo Ibn Gabirol
English lyrics by Isaac Sonett-Assor

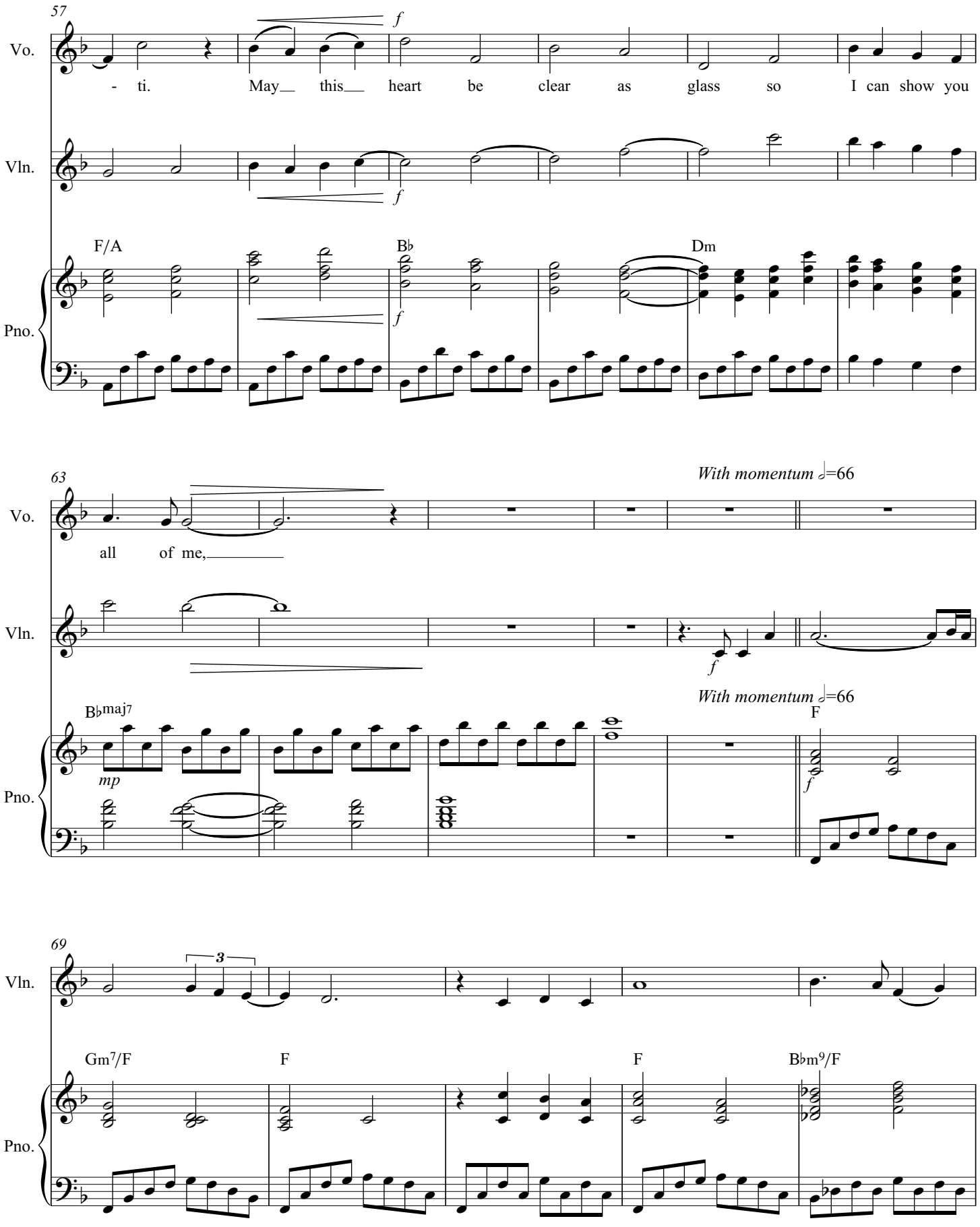
Isaac Sonett-Assor

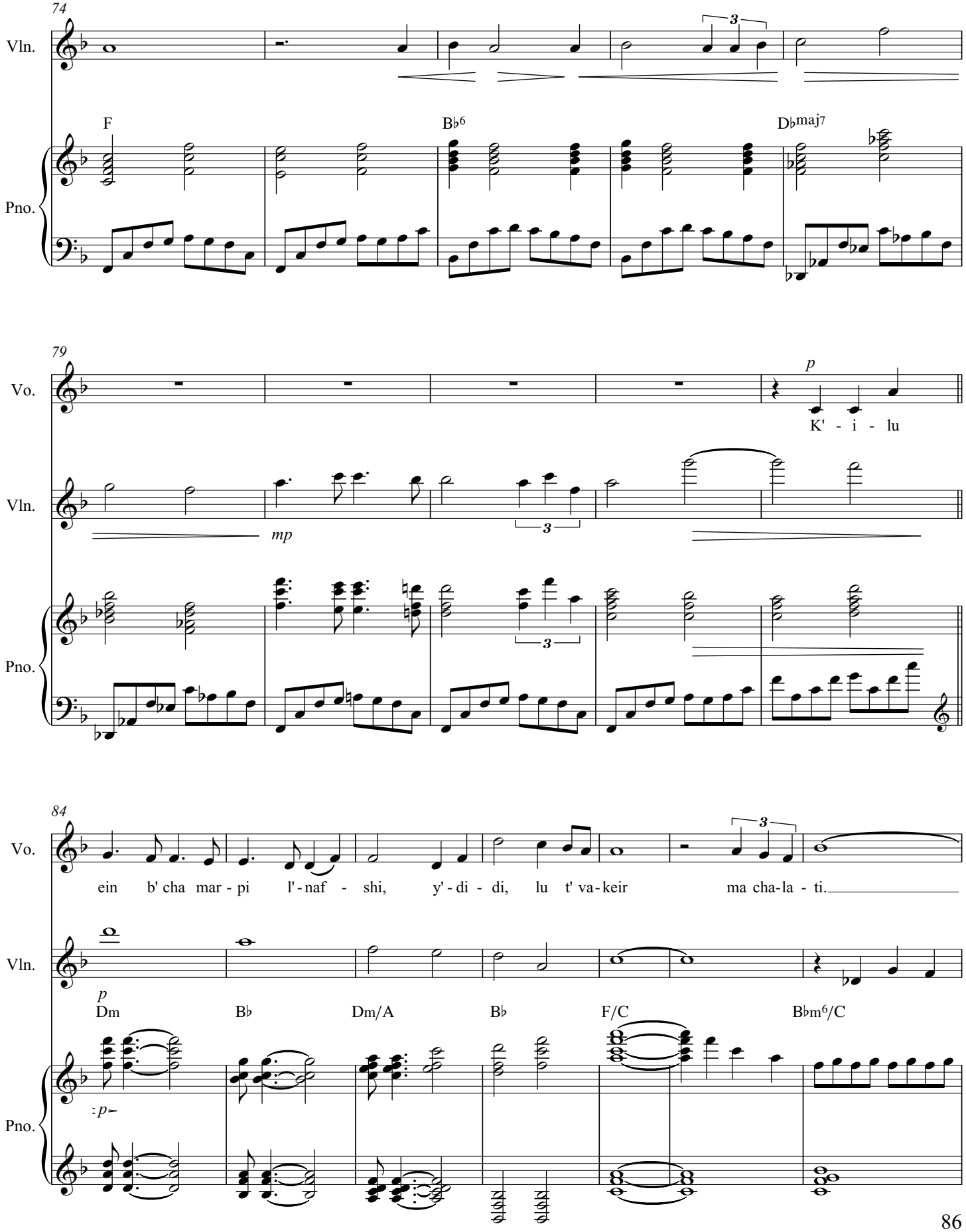


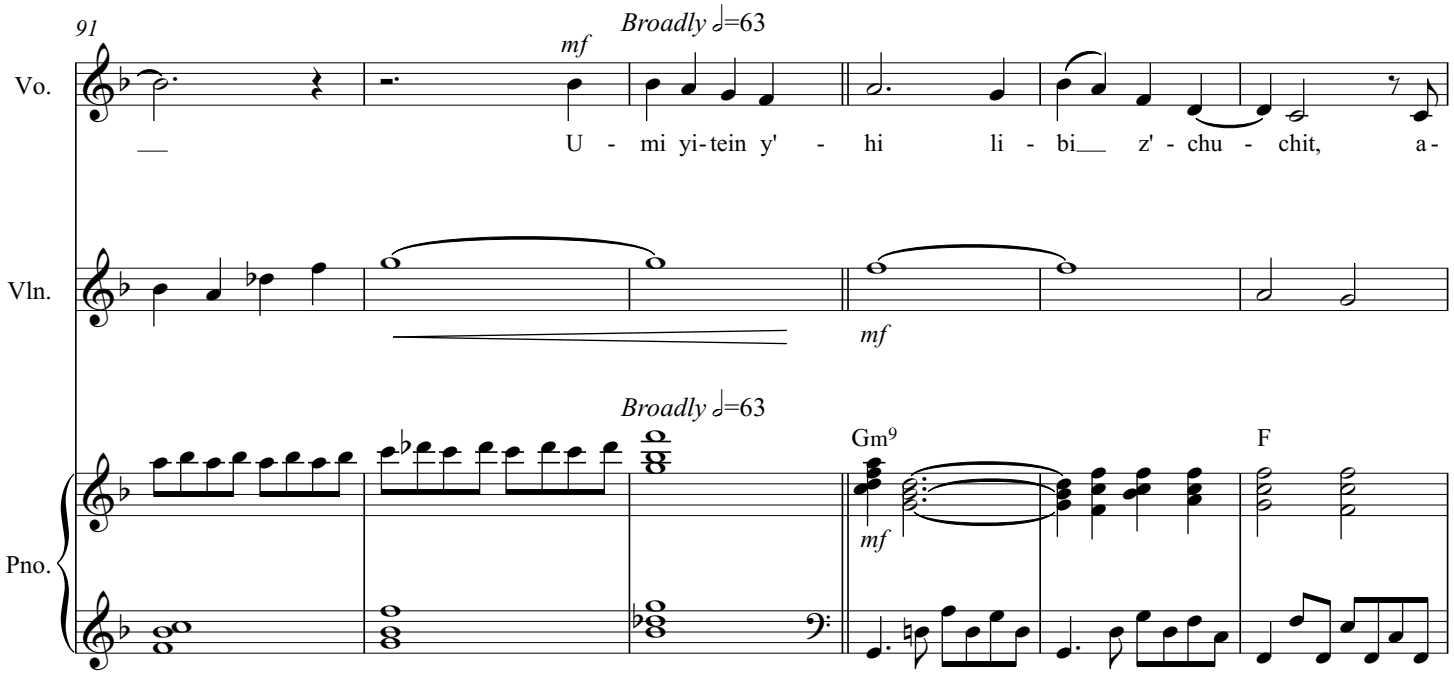

My stomach churns and I moan for you,
who drives my sleep away from me,
16
mp
Vo.
v'-a - le - cha k' ra - vai ye-he-ma - yun v' - i - da -
Vln.
mp
B♭6
D♭maj7
Pno.
As though you alone could cure me, my beloved,
21
p
deh b' - zich - rach kol sh'na - ti. K' - i - lu ein b' - cha mar-
mp
F
Dm
p
mp

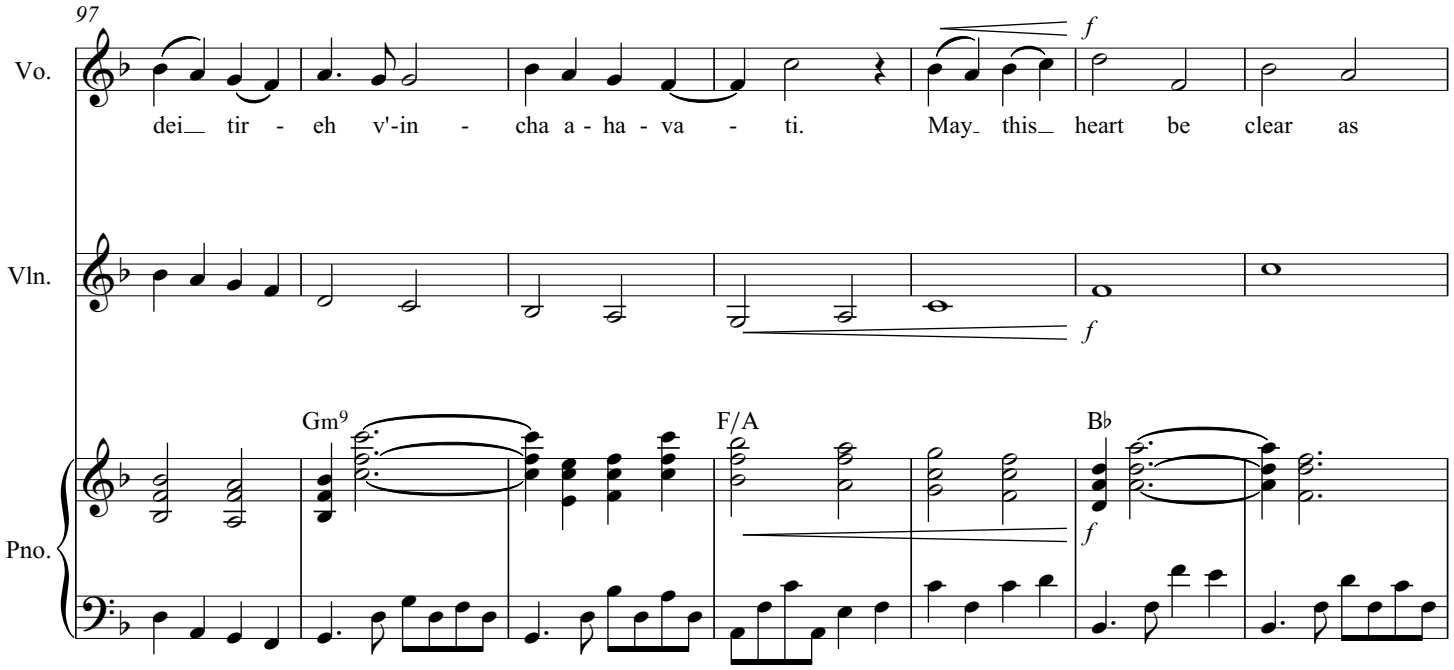

26
if, in my illness, you'd visit.
Vo.
pi l' - naf - shi, y' - di - di, lu t'-va-keir ma-cha-la - ti.
Vln.
Pno.
B♭
Dm/A
B♭
F/C
B♭m6/C
32
Slower ♩=63
If only my heart were made of glass,
Vo.
U - mi yi-tein y' - hi li - bi z' - chu - chit, a-
Vln.
Slower ♩=63
Gm9
Pno.
38
you'd see my love within it.
Vo.
dei tir - eh v' - in - cha a - ha - va - ti.
Pno.

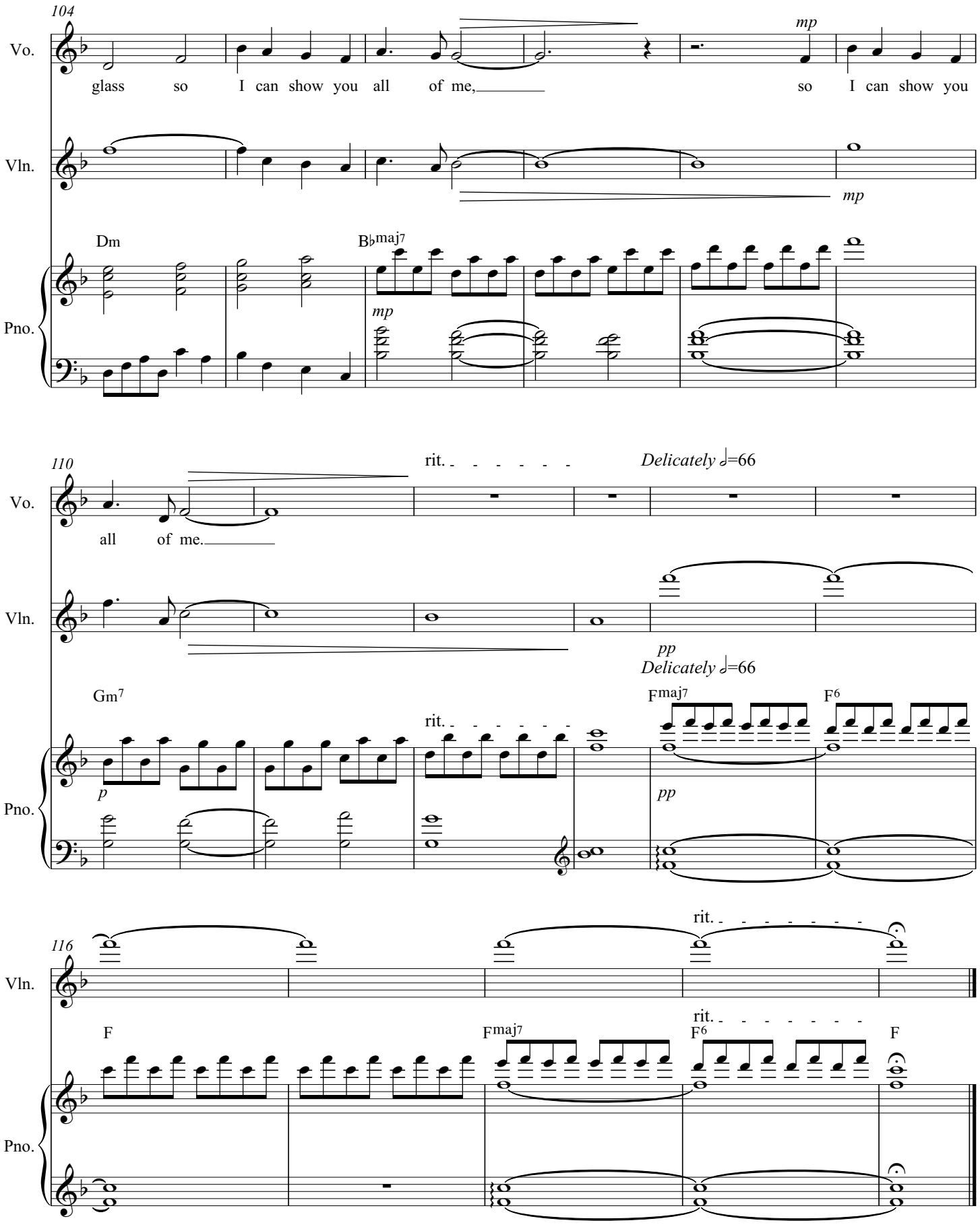

42
Vo.
mf
May this heart be clear as glass so I can show you
Pno.
mf
47
Vo.
all of me,
U - mi yi-tein y' - hi li -
mf
Vln.
mf
Pno.
p
Gm9
mf
52
Vo.
bi z' - chu - chit, a - dei tir - eh v'-in - cha a - ha - va -
Vln.
Pno.
F
Gm9


57
Vo.
- ti. May this heart be clear as glass so I can show you
Vln.
Pno.
F/A
B♭
Dm
63
With momentum ♩=66
all of me,
B♭maj7
mp
F
69
Gm7/F
F
F
B♭m9/F


74
Vln.
Pno.
F
B♭6
D♭maj7
79
Vo.
Vln.
Pno.
p
K' - i - lu
mp
84
Vo.
Vln.
Pno.
ein b' cha mar - pi l' - naf - shi, y' - di - di, lu t' va - keir ma cha - la - ti.
p
Dm
B♭
Dm/A
B♭
F/C
B♭m6/C


91
Broadly ♩=63
mf
Vo.
U - mi yi-tein y' - hi li - bi z' - chu - chit, a-
Vln.
mf
Broadly ♩=63
Gm9
F
mf
Pno.


97
f
Vo.
dei tir - eh v'-in - cha a - ha - va - ti. May this heart be clear as
Vln.
f
Gm9
F/A
B♭
f
Pno.


104
Vo.
glass so I can show you all of me, so I can show you
mp
Vln.
mp
Dm
B♭maj7
Pno.
mp
110
Vo.
all of me.
rit.
Delicately ♩=66
Vln.
pp
Delicately ♩=66
Gm7
Fmaj7
F6
rit.
Pno.
p
pp
116
rit.
Vln.
F
Fmaj7
F6
rit.
F
Pno.

For Leo Judah

III. Letter to Yehosef

Shmuel HaNagid
English lyrics by Isaac Sonett-Assor

Isaac Sonett-Assor

Recitative, calmly ♩=76

Were it not for you, long ago I would have become a wanderer in this world,

as so many in your time.

Voice: V'-lu-lei___ at, k'-var_ shah-t'-ti___ b'-tei-veil___ v'-cha-yi-ti k'-mo___ ra-bim

Recitative, calmly ♩=76

Piano: A♭ Cm7 D♭maj7

7

With this letter, I write you the plain truth,

who is there to write it

Vo.: b'-do-rach. K'ta-vi___ zeh, k'-tav yo-sher a-ma-rav, u-mi yo-reh_ l'-cha___ yo-sher

Fl.

Pno.: A♭ A♭ E♭(sus4) D♭maj7/F

14

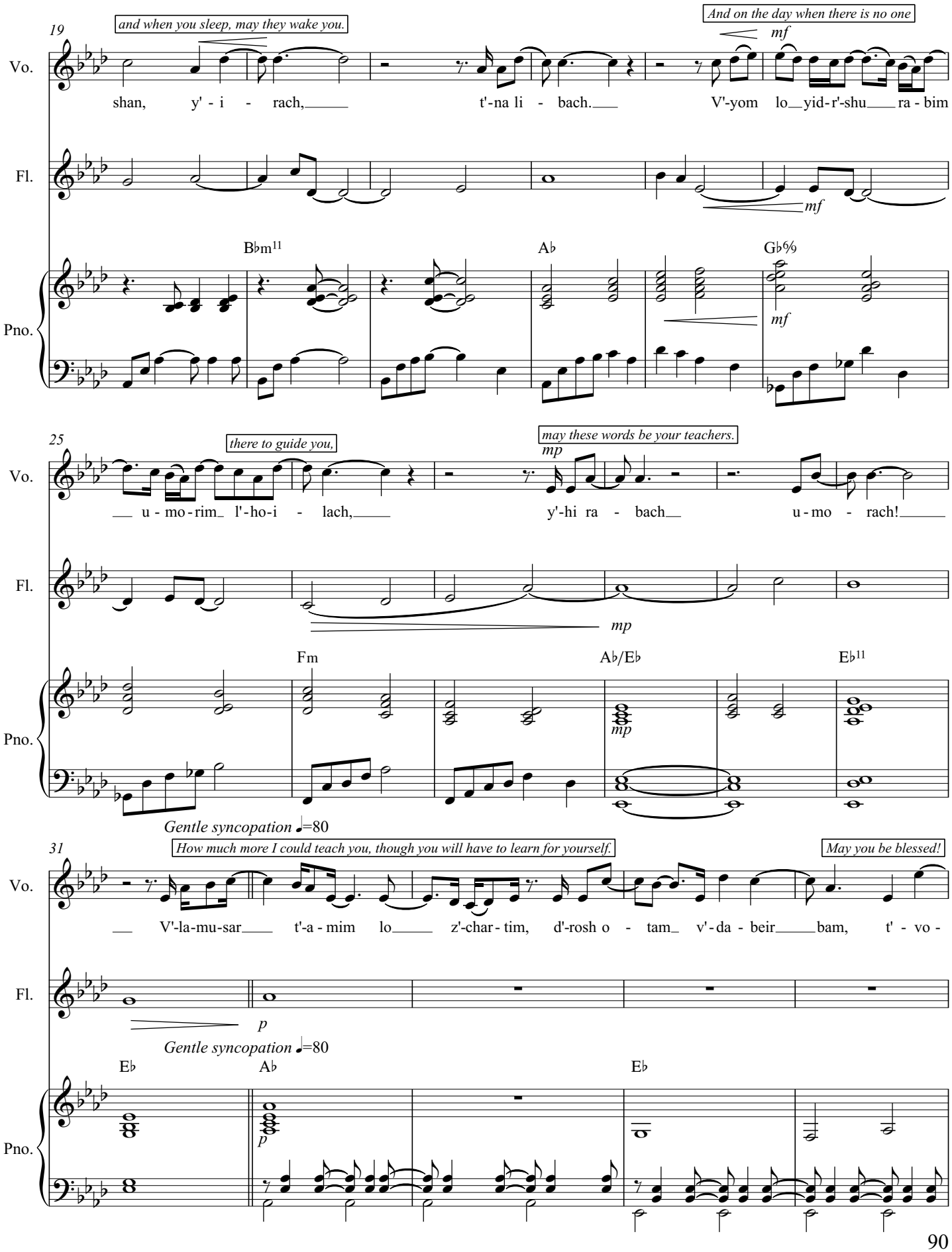
but a parent?

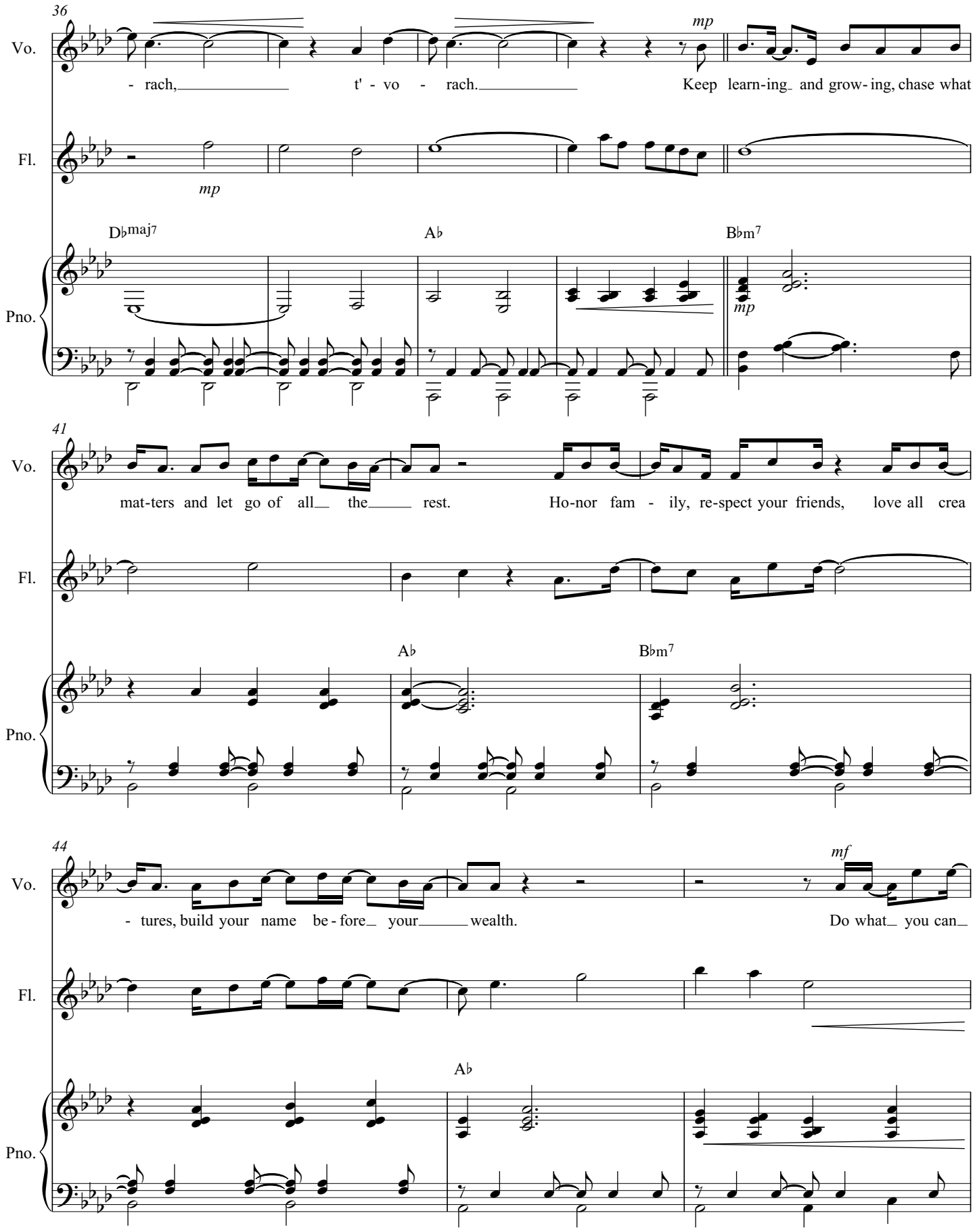
Take these words to heart, when you lie down and when you rise up,

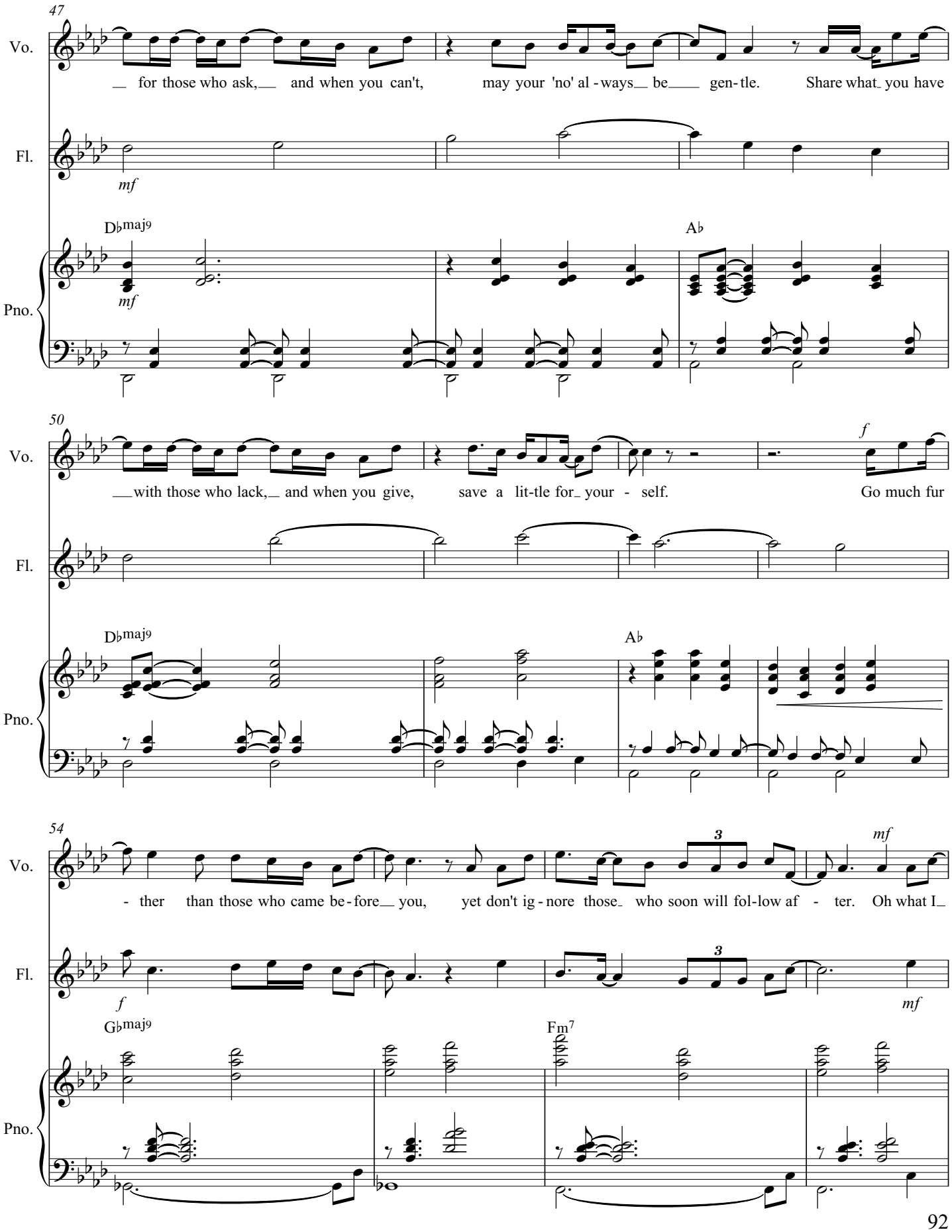
Vo.: k'-ho-rach? T'-na li-bach, b'-shiv-tach,___ el k'ta-vi,_ v'-ki-ma-tach, v'-im ti-

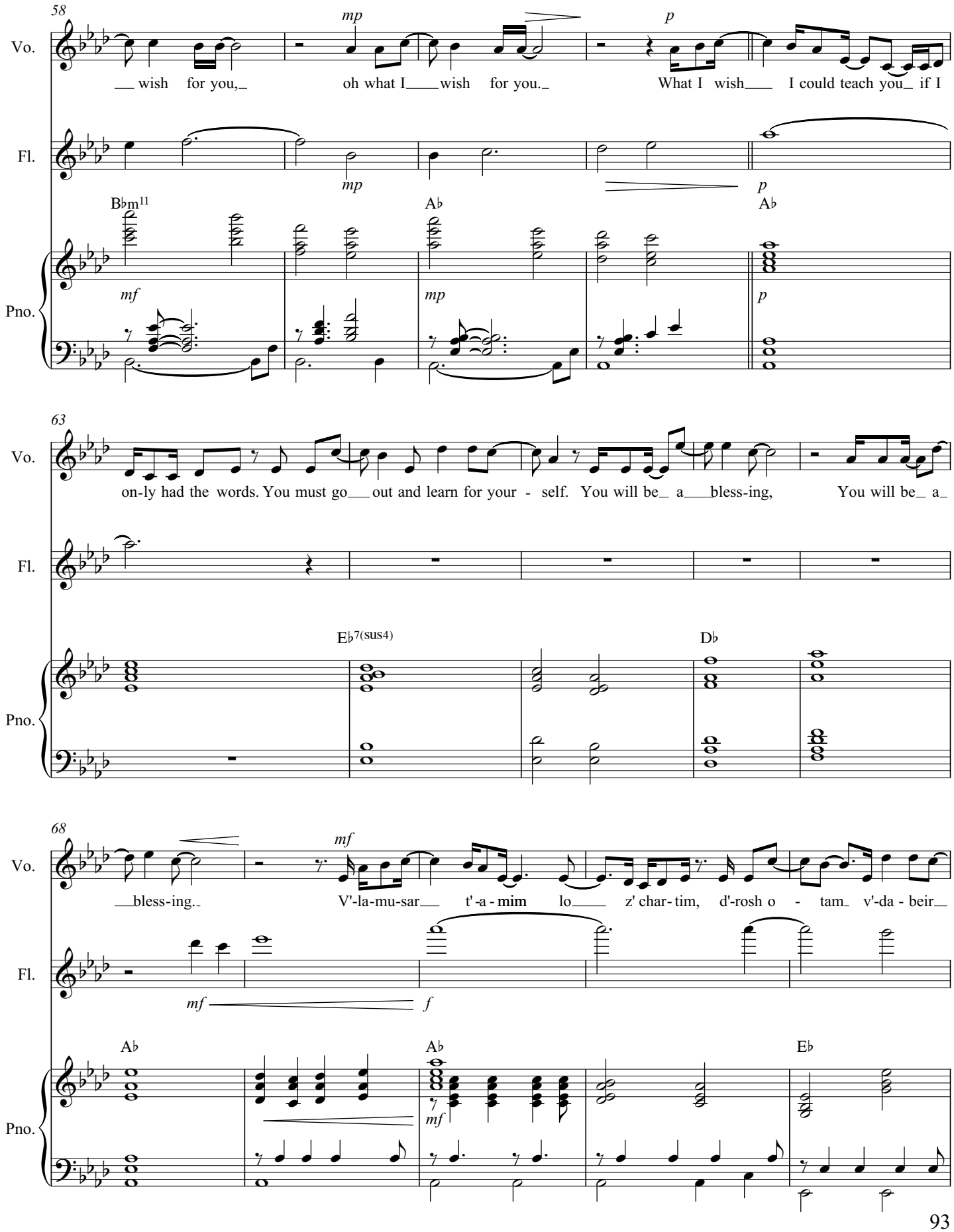
Fl.

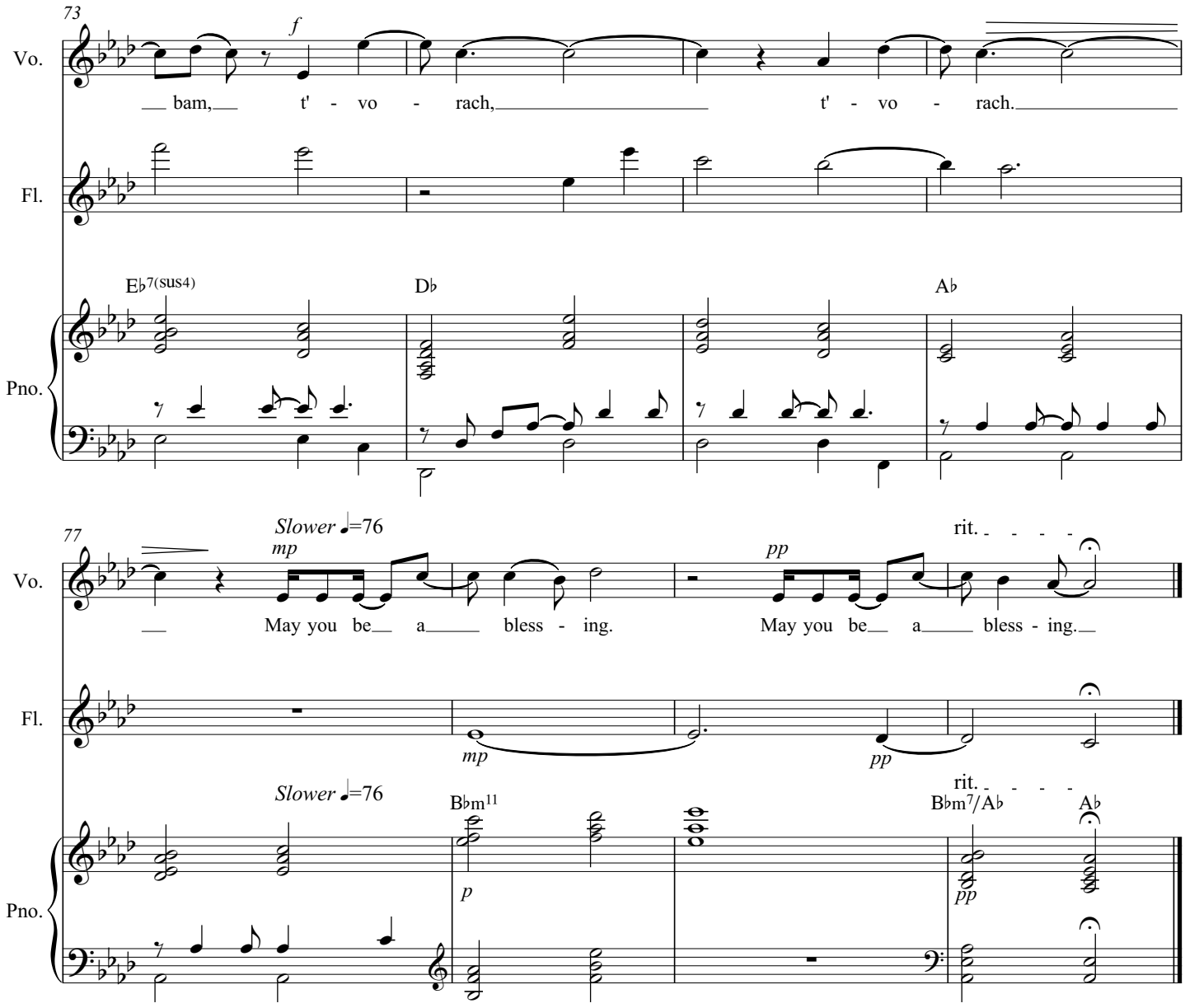
Pno.: A♭ B♭m11 A♭


19
and when you sleep, may they wake you.
And on the day when there is no one
mf
Vo.
shan, y' - i - rach, t'-na li - bach. V'-yom lo yid-r'-shu ra - bim
Fl.
mf
Pno.
B♭m11
A♭
G♭6/9
mf
25
there to guide you,
may these words be your teachers.
mp
Vo.
u - mo - rim l'-ho-i - lach, y'-hi ra - bach u - mo - rach!
Fl.
mp
Pno.
Fm
A♭/E♭
E♭11
mp
Gentle syncopation ♩=80
31
How much more I could teach you, though you will have to learn for yourself.
May you be blessed!
Vo.
V'-la-mu-sar t'-a - mim lo z'-char - tim, d'-rosh o - tam v'-da - beir bam, t' - vo -
Fl.
p
Gentle syncopation ♩=80
Pno.
E♭
A♭
E♭
p


36
Vo.
- rach, t' - vo - rach.
mp
Keep learn-ing and grow- ing, chase what
Fl.
mp
Pno.
D♭maj7
A♭
B♭m7
mp
41
Vo.
mat-ters and let go of all the rest.
Ho-nor fam - ily, re-spect your friends, love all crea
Fl.
Pno.
A♭
B♭m7
44
Vo.
- tures, build your name be - fore your wealth.
mf
Do what you can
Fl.
Pno.
A♭


47
Vo.
for those who ask, and when you can't, may your 'no' al - ways be gen - tle. Share what you have
Fl.
mf
Dbmaj9
Ab
Pno.
mf
50
Vo.
with those who lack, and when you give, save a lit-tle for your - self. Go much fur
f
Fl.
Dbmaj9
Ab
Pno.
54
Vo.
- ther than those who came be - fore you, yet don't ig - nore those who soon will fol-low af - ter. Oh what I
3
mf
Fl.
f
3
mf
Gbmaj9
Fm7
Pno.

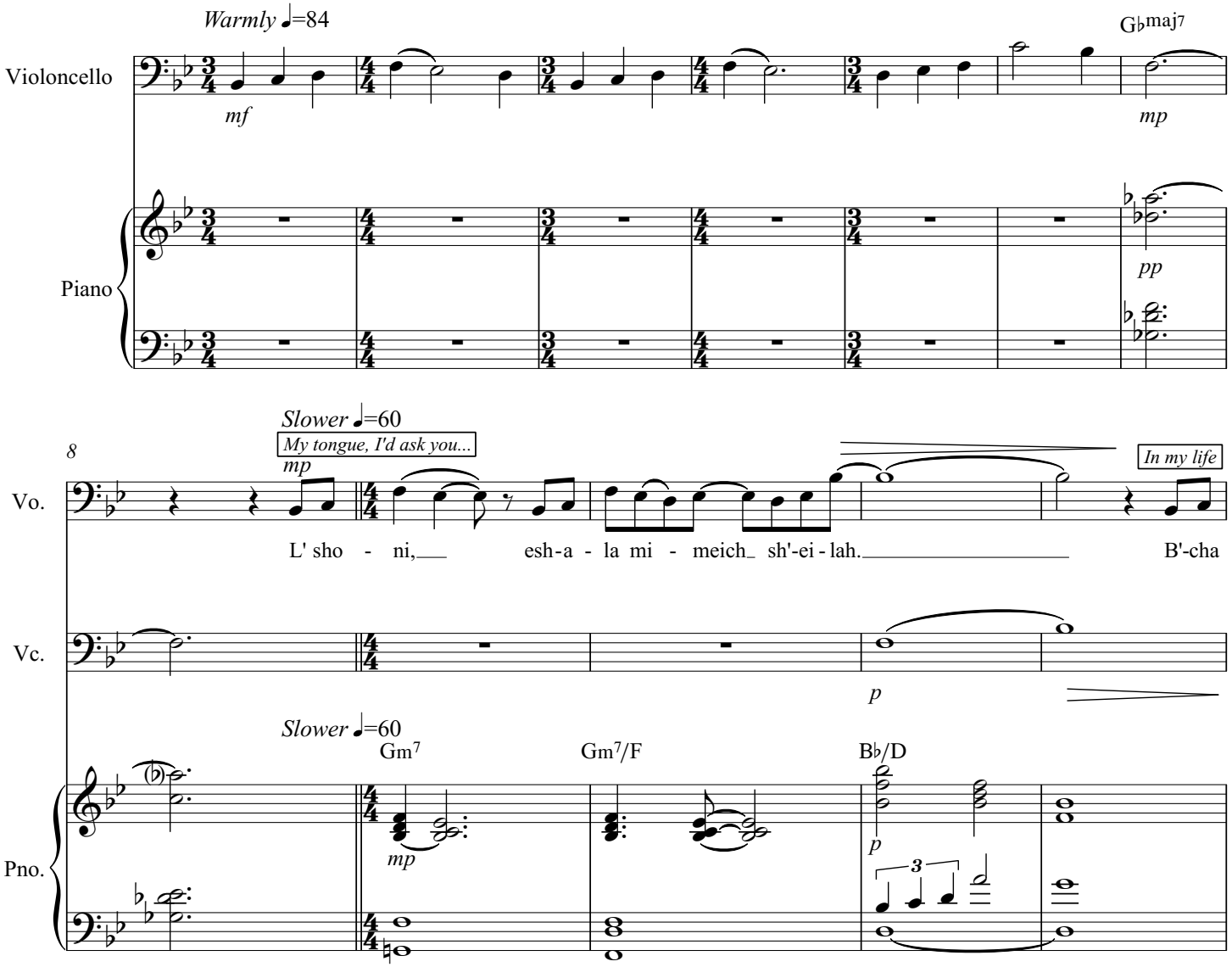

58
Vo.
mp
p
__ wish for you,_ oh what I____wish for you._ What I wish____ I could teach you_ if I
Fl.
mp
p
B♭m11
A♭
A♭
Pno.
mf
mp
p
63
Vo.
on-ly had the words. You must go___out and learn for your - self. You will be_ a___bless-ing, You will be_ a_
Fl.
E♭7(sus4)
D♭
Pno.
68
Vo.
mf
___bless-ing._ V'-la-mu-sar___ t'-a-mim lo____ z' char-tim, d'-rosh o - tam_ v'-da-beir__
Fl.
mf
f
A♭
A♭
E♭
Pno.
mf

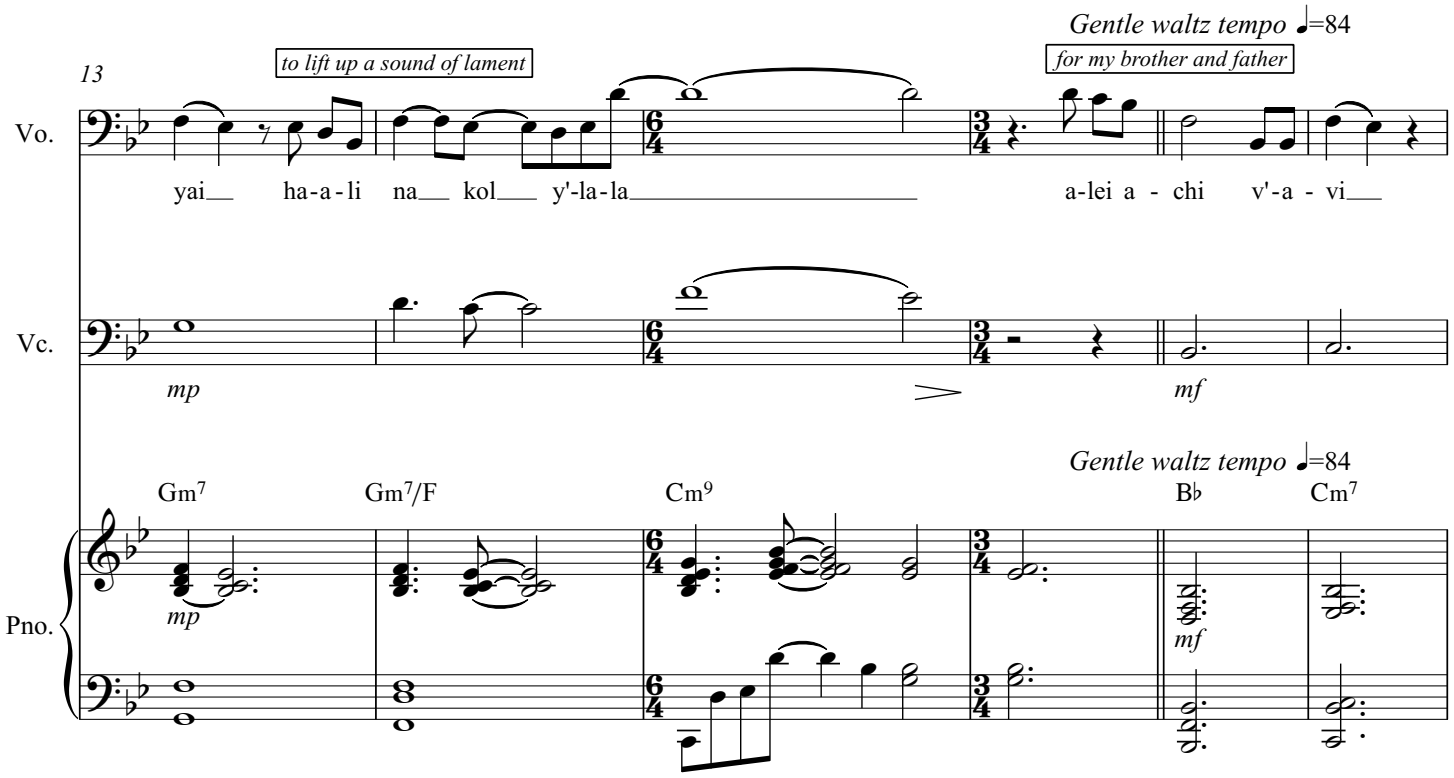

73
Vo.
f
bam, t' - vo - rach, t' - vo - rach.
Fl.
Pno.
E♭7(sus4)
D♭
A♭
77
Slower ♩=76
mp
May you be a bless - ing.
pp
May you be a bless - ing.
rit.
Fl.
mp
pp
Slower ♩=76
B♭m11
p
B♭m7/A♭
pp
A♭
rit.
Pno.

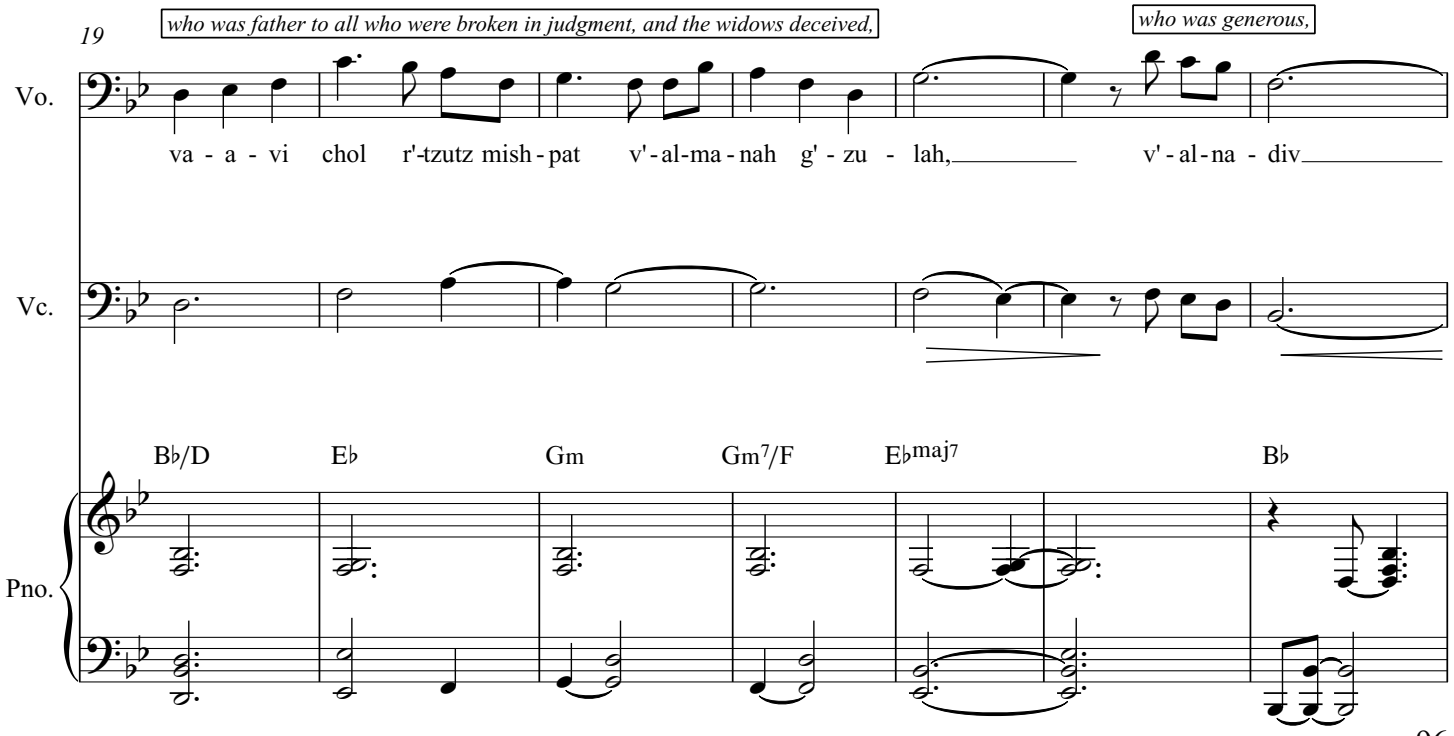
IV. Elegy for his brother Isaac

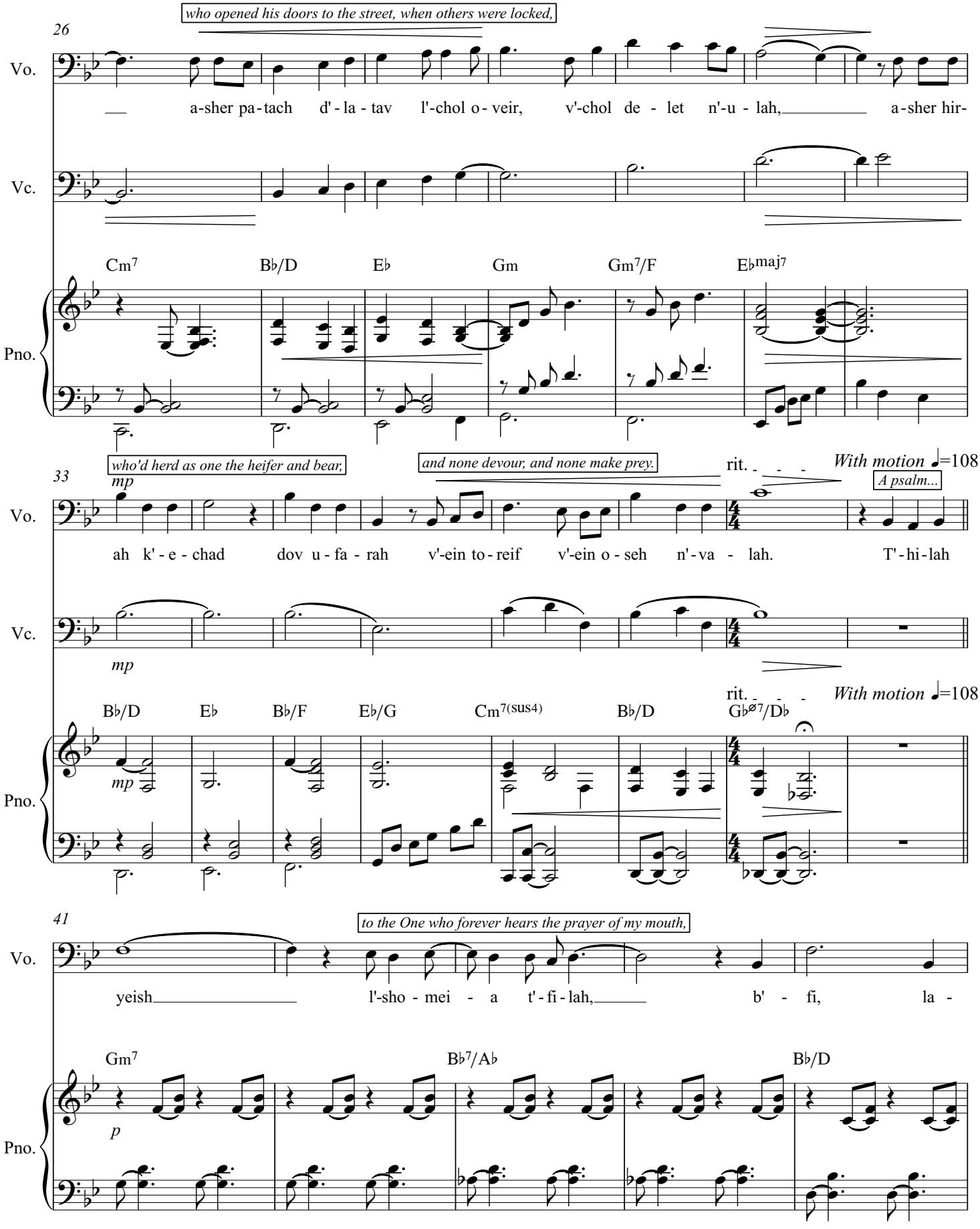
Shmuel HaNagid

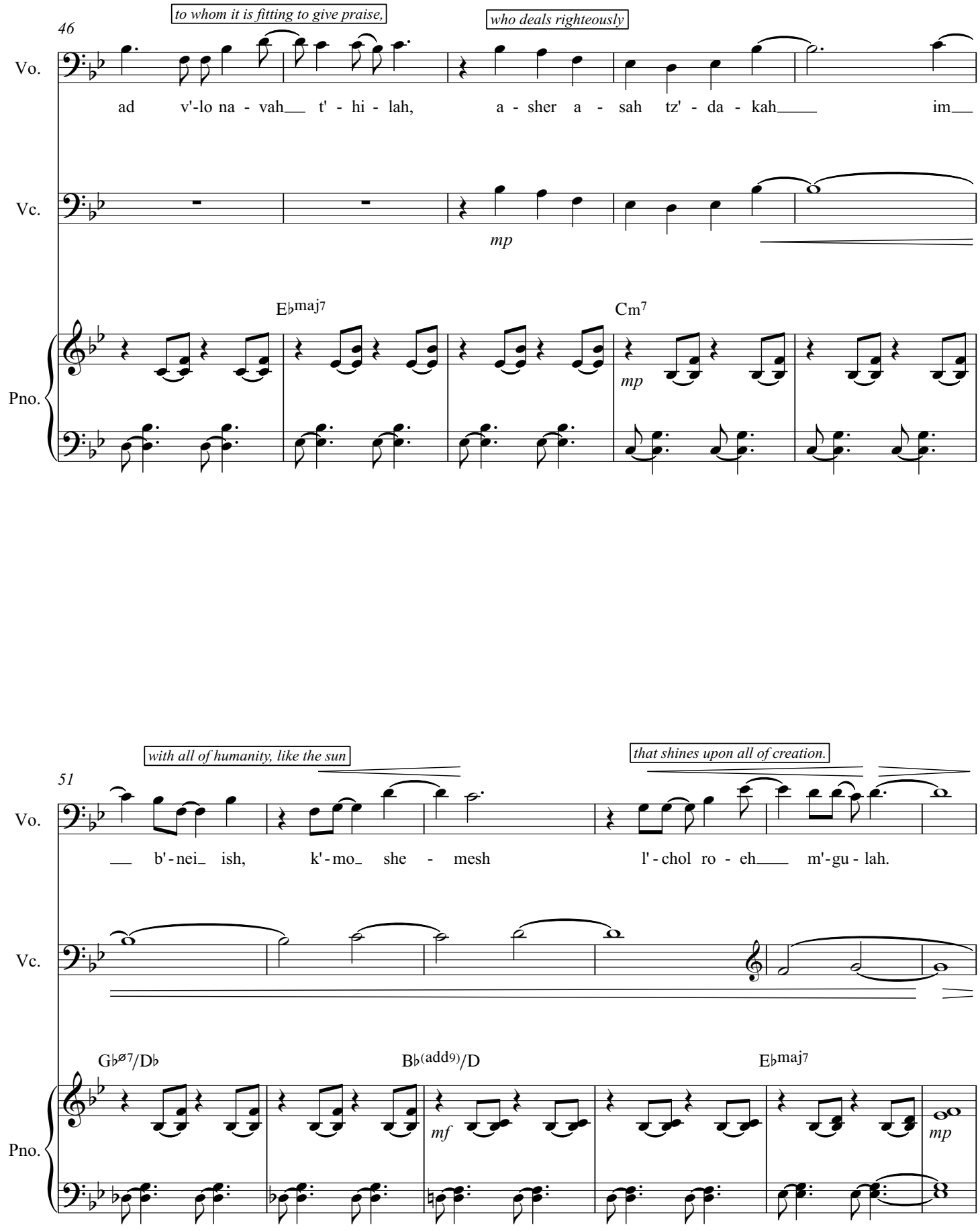
Isaac Sonett-Assor

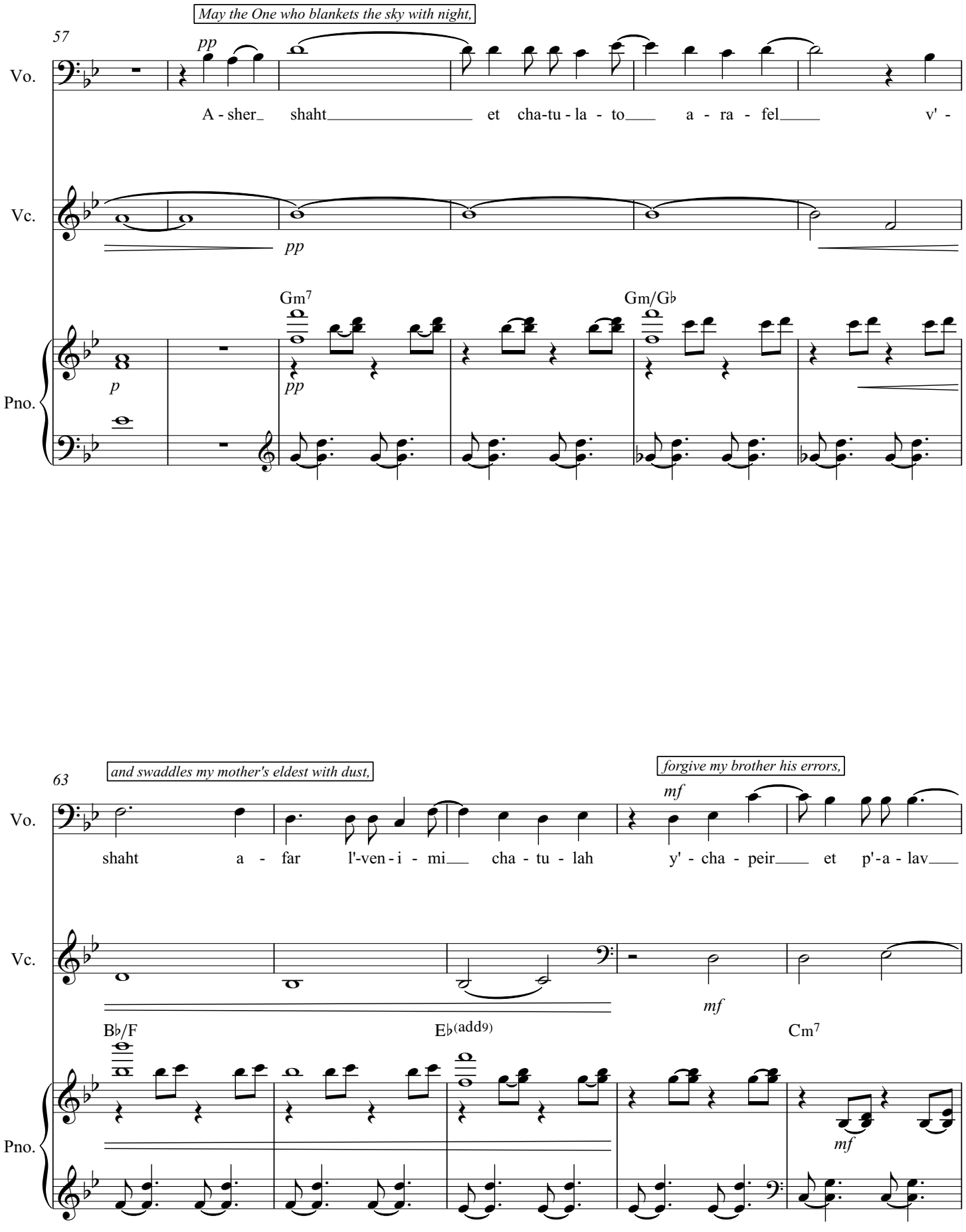


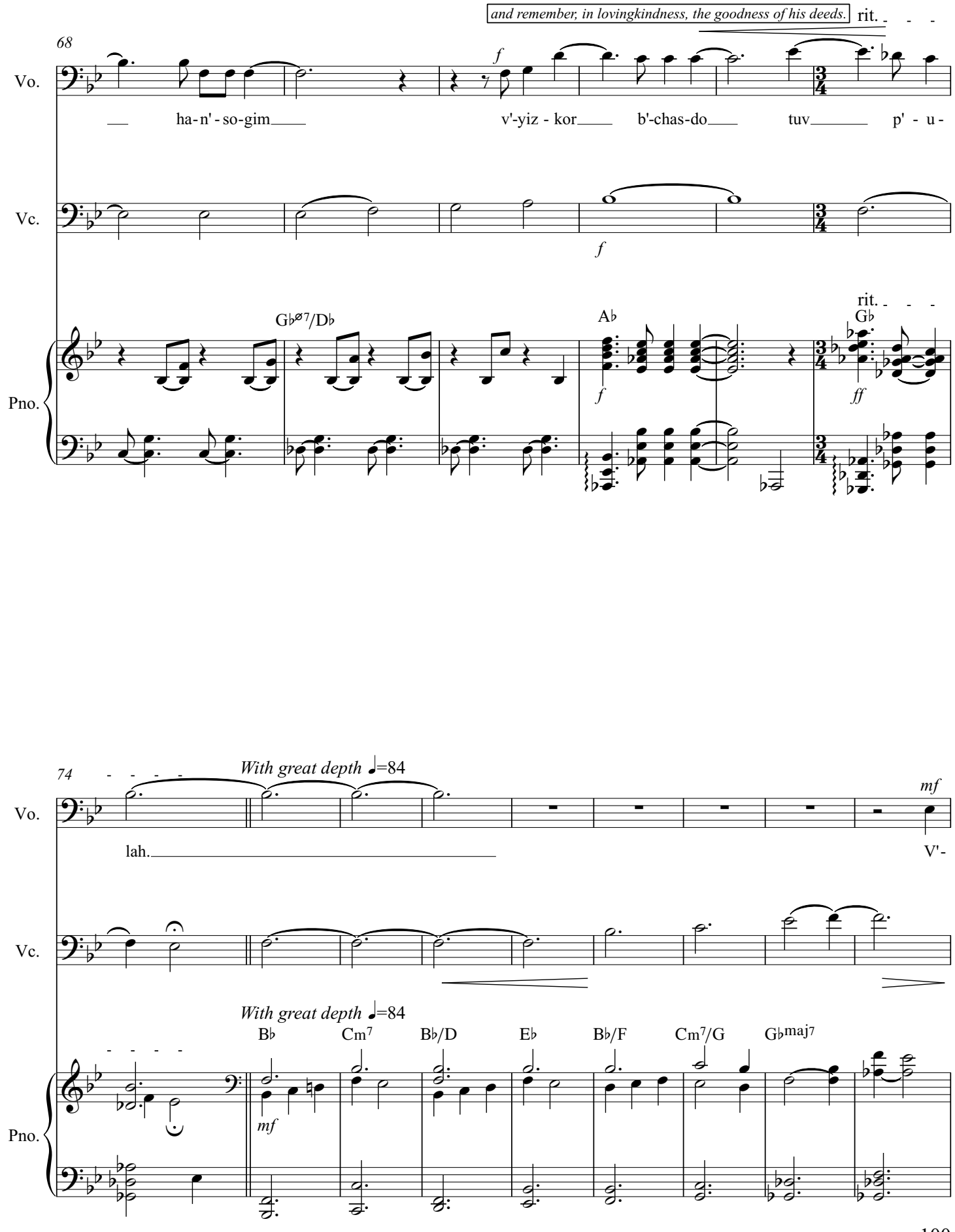

Gentle waltz tempo ♩=84
13
to lift up a sound of lament
for my brother and father
Vo.
yai ha-a-li na kol y'-la-la a-lei a - chi v'-a - vi
Vc.
mp
mf
Gentle waltz tempo ♩=84
Gm7
Gm7/F
Cm9
B♭
Cm7
Pno.
mp
mf

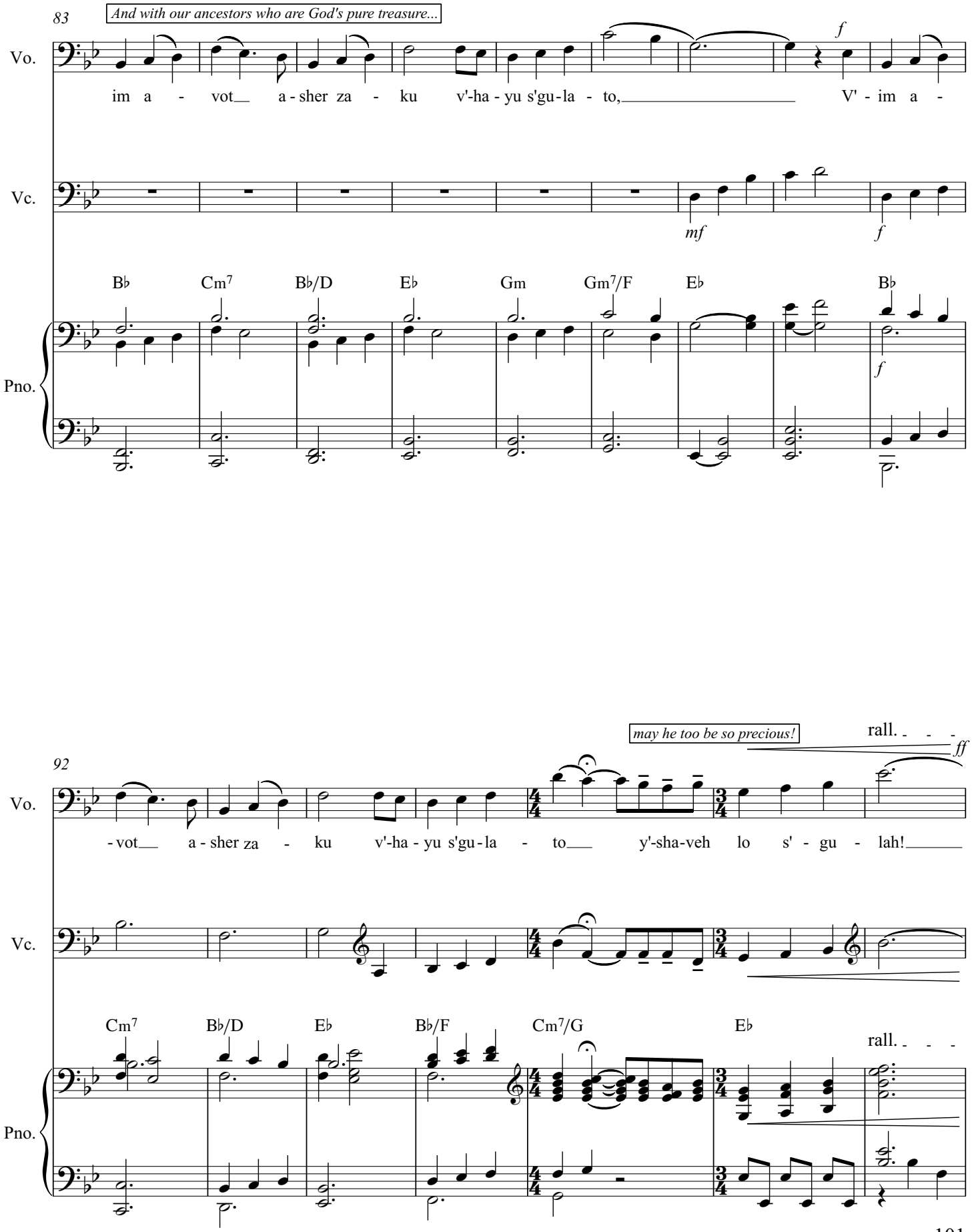

19
who was father to all who were broken in judgment, and the widows deceived,
who was generous,
Vo.
va - a - vi chol r'-tzutz mish - pat v'-al-ma - nah g' - zu - lah, v'-al-na - div
Vc.
B♭/D
E♭
Gm
Gm7/F
E♭maj7
B♭
Pno.

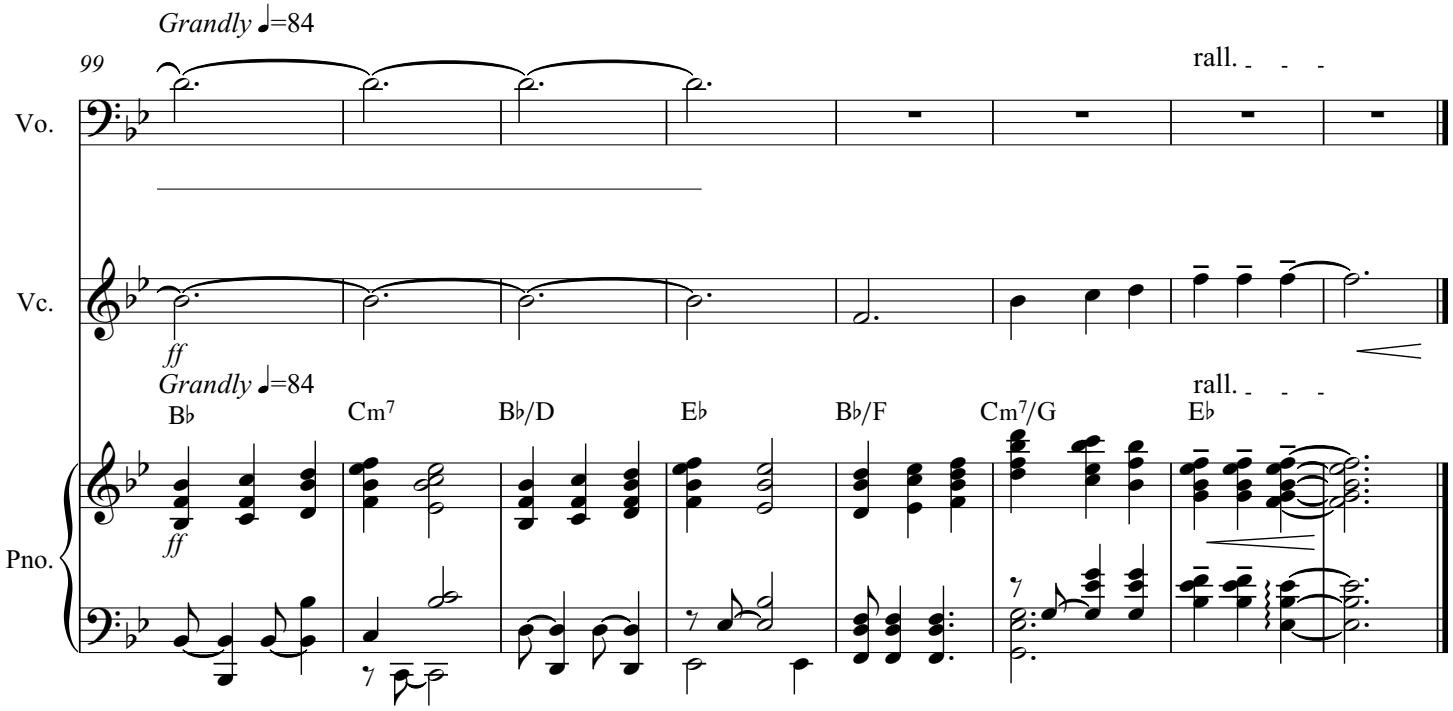

who opened his doors to the street, when others were locked,
26
Vo.
a-sher pa-tach d'-la-tav l'-chol o-veir, v'-chol de-let n'-u-lah, a-sher hir-
Vc.
Cm7 B♭/D E♭ Gm Gm7/F E♭maj7
Pno.
who'd herd as one the heifer and bear,
and none devour, and none make prey.
rit.
With motion ♩=108
33
mp
A psalm...
Vo.
ah k'-e-chad dov u-fa-rah v'-ein to-reif v'-ein o-seh n'-va-lah. T'-hi-lah
Vc.
mp
rit.
With motion ♩=108
B♭/D E♭ B♭/F E♭/G Cm7(sus4) B♭/D G♭ø7/D♭
Pno.
mp
to the One who forever hears the prayer of my mouth,
41
Vo.
yeish l'-sho-mei-a t'-fi-lah, b'-fi, la-
Gm7 B♭7/A♭ B♭/D
Pno.
p


46
to whom it is fitting to give praise,
who deals righteously
Vo.
ad v'-lo na - vah t' - hi - lah, a - sher a - sah tz' - da - kah im
Vc.
mp
Pno.
E♭maj7
Cm7
mp
51
with all of humanity, like the sun
that shines upon all of creation.
Vo.
b'-nei ish, k'-mo she - mesh l'-chol ro - eh m'-gu - lah.
Vc.
Pno.
G♭ø7/D♭
B♭(add9)/D
E♭maj7
mf
mp


May the One who blankets the sky with night,
57
Vo.
pp
A - sher_ shaht_____ et cha-tu - la - to___ a - ra - fel____ v' -
Vc.
pp
Gm7
Gm/G♭
Pno.
p
pp
and swaddles my mother's eldest with dust,
63
forgive my brother his errors,
Vo.
mf
shaht a - far l'-ven - i - mi___ cha - tu - lah y' - cha - peir____ et p'-a - lav___
Vc.
mf
B♭/F
E♭(add9)
Cm7
Pno.
mf


and remember, in lovingkindness, the goodness of his deeds.
rit.
68
Vo.
ha-n'-so-gim
v'-yiz-kor
b'-chas-do
tuv
p'-u-
Vc.
Pno.
G♭ø7/D♭
A♭
rit.
G♭
74
With great depth ♩=84
mf
lah.
V'-
With great depth ♩=84
B♭
Cm7
B♭/D
E♭
B♭/F
Cm7/G
G♭maj7

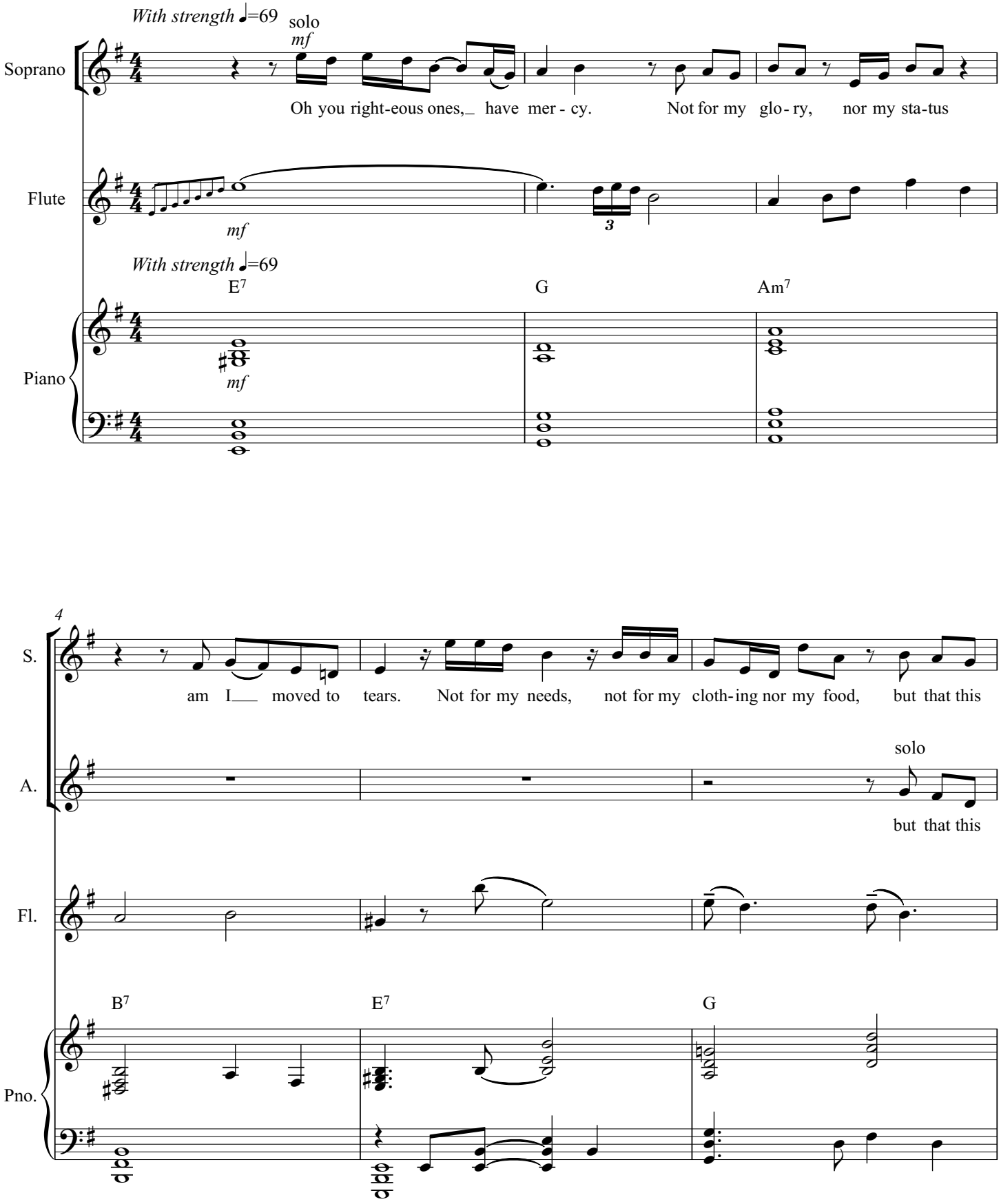

83
And with our ancestors who are God's pure treasure...
Vo.
im a - vot a - sher za - ku v'-ha - yu s'gu-la - to, V' - im a -
Vc.
mf
f
B♭ Cm7 B♭/D E♭ Gm Gm7/F E♭ B♭
Pno.
f
92
may he too be so precious!
rall.
ff
Vo.
-vot a - sher za - ku v'-ha - yu s'gu-la - to y'-sha-veh lo s' - gu - lah!
Vc.
Cm7 B♭/D E♭ B♭/F Cm7/G E♭
rall.
Pno.

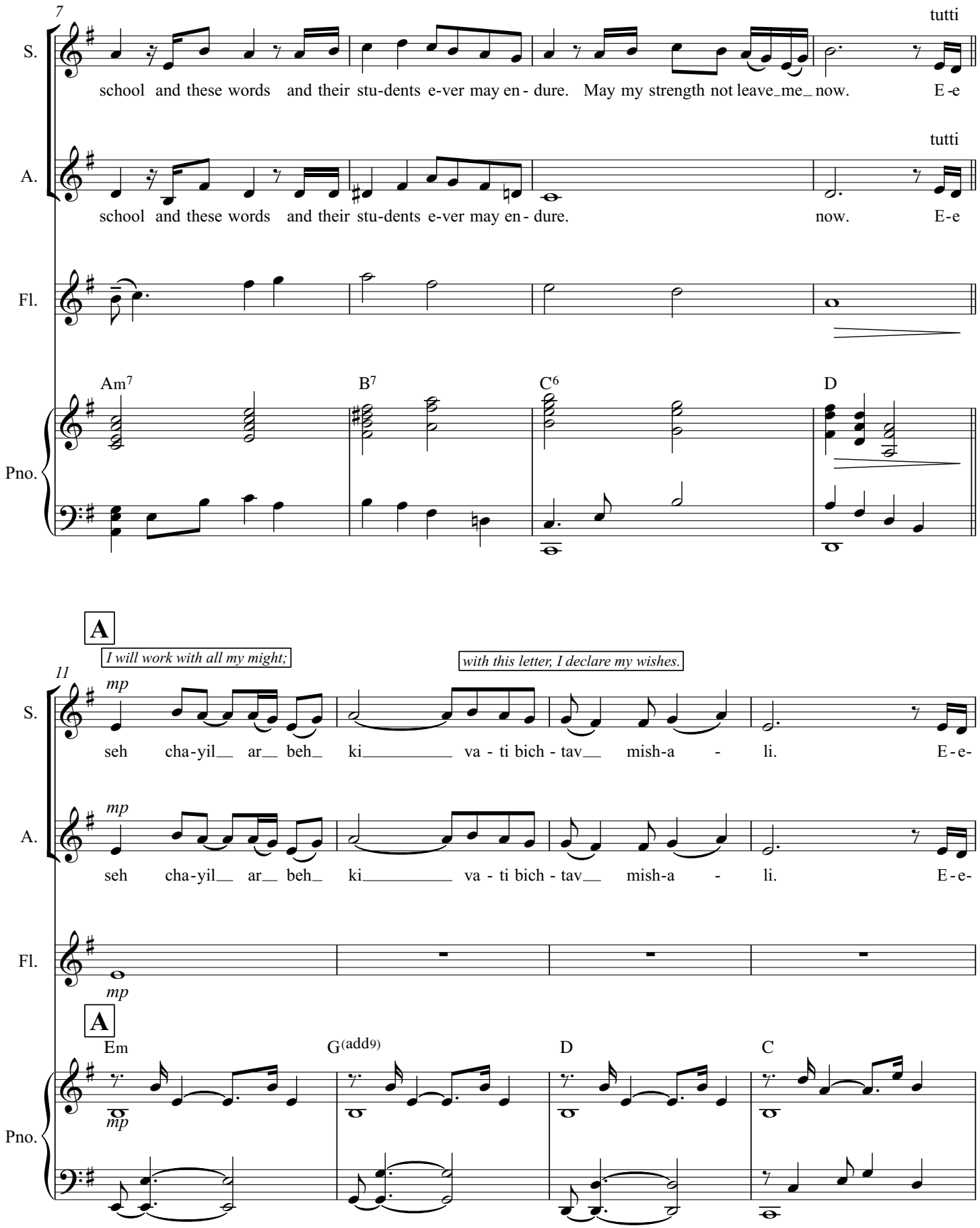

Grandly ♩=84
99
rall.
Vo.
Vc.
ff
Grandly ♩=84
rall.
B♭
Cm7
B♭/D
E♭
B♭/F
Cm7/G
E♭
Pno.
ff

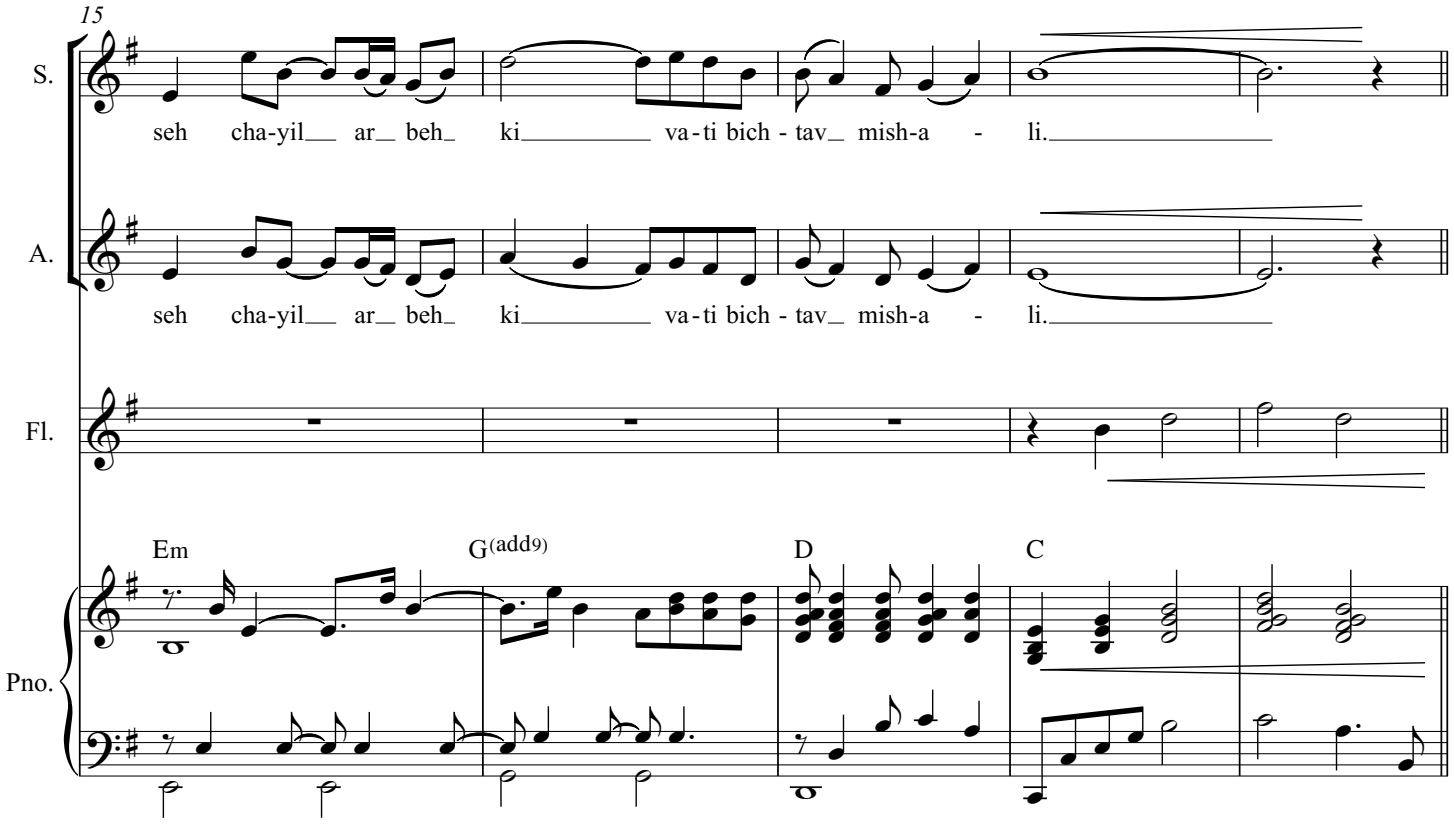
V. Asenath's Petition

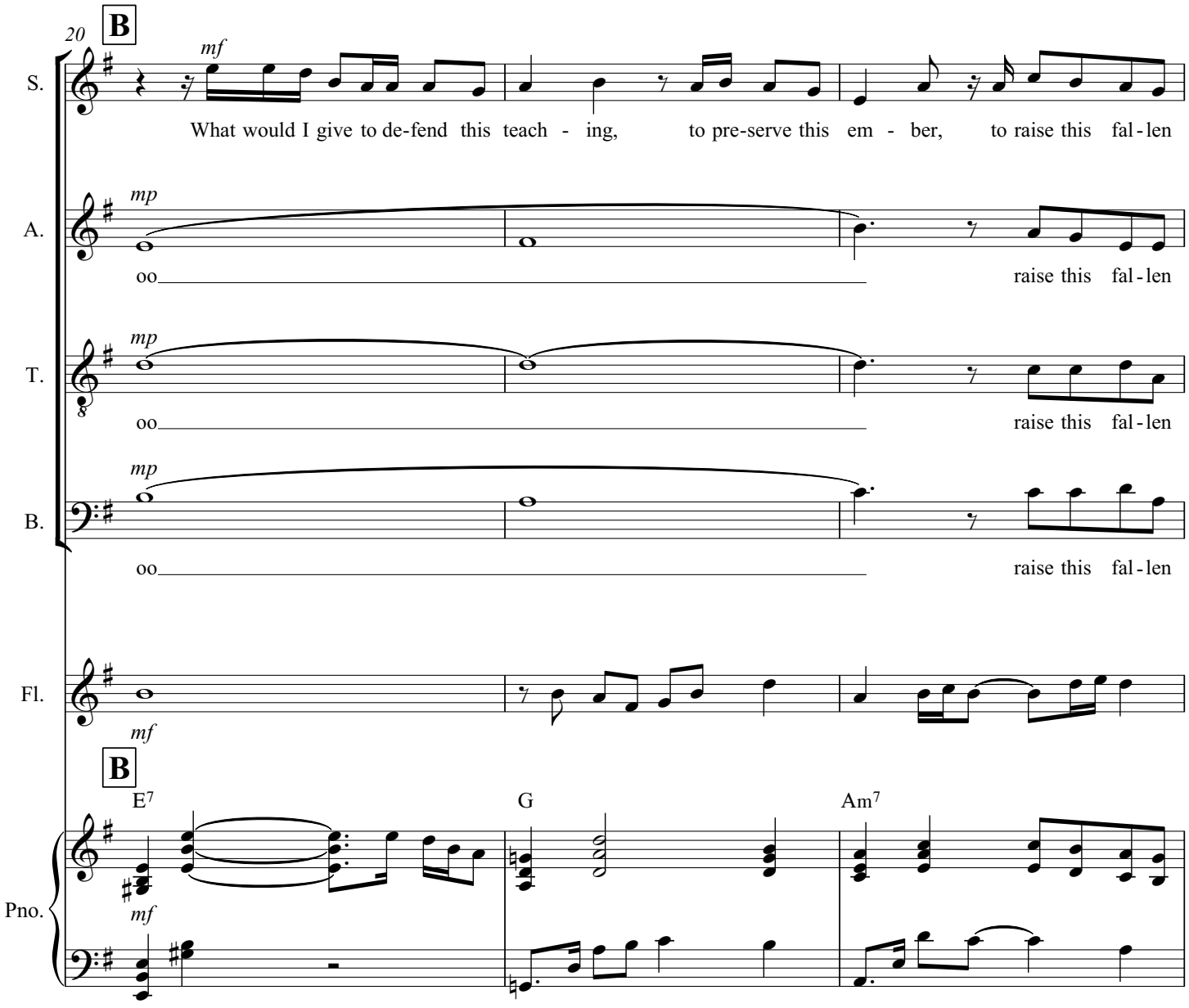
Asenath Barzani
English lyrics by Isaac Sonett-Assor

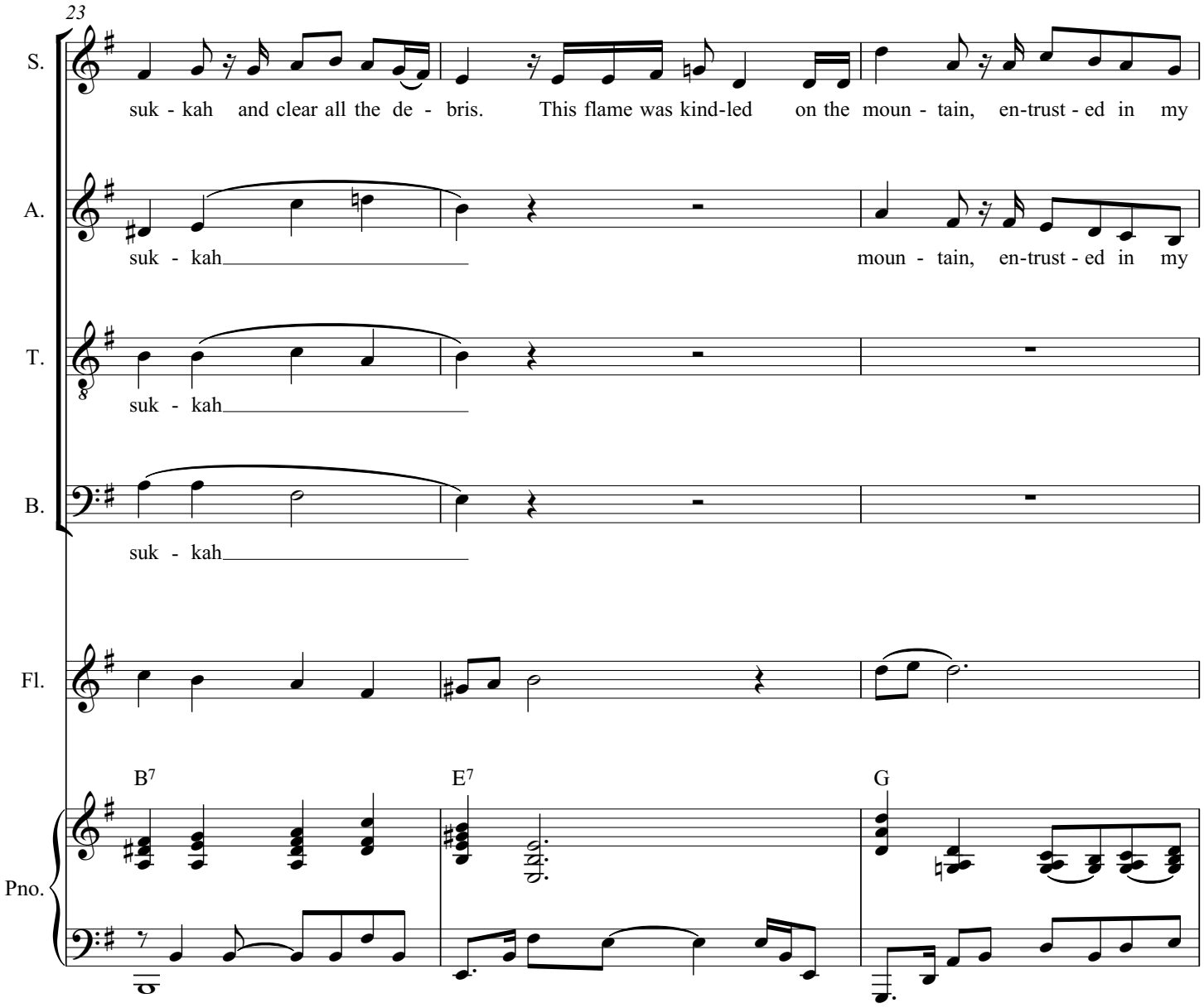
Isaac Sonett-Assor

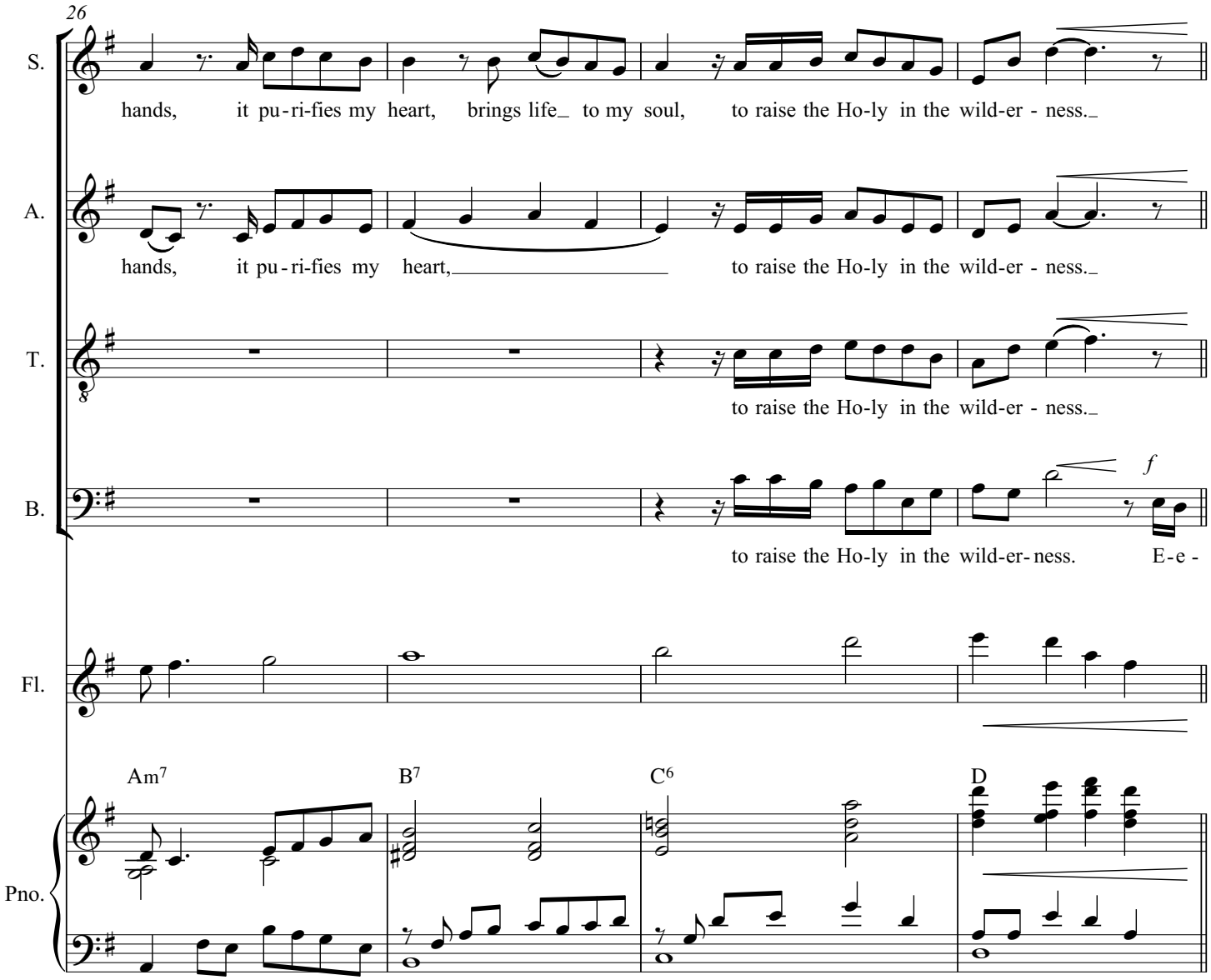


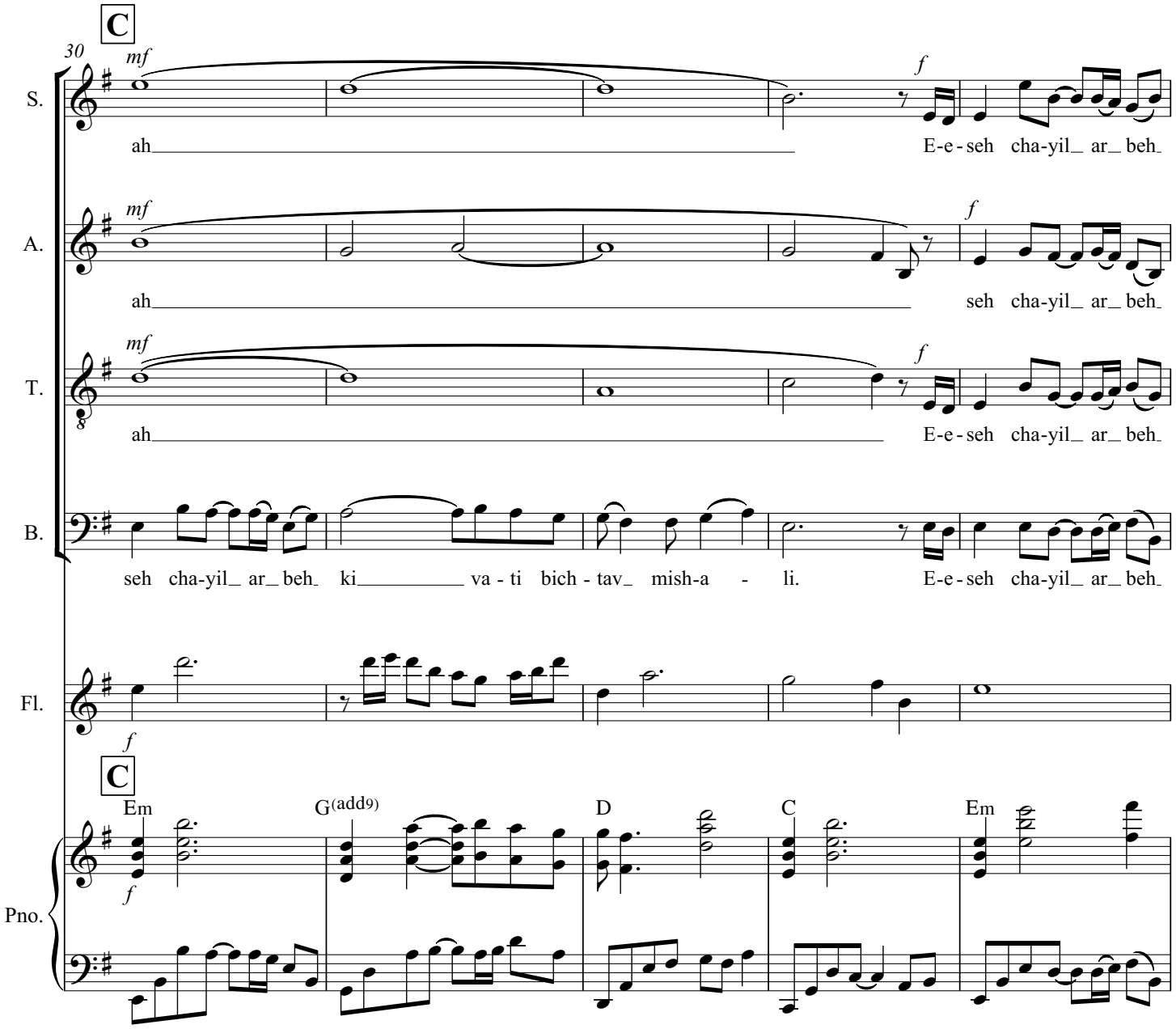

7
tutti
S.
school and these words and their stu-dents e-ver may en - dure. May my strength not leave_me_ now. E-e
tutti
A.
school and these words and their stu-dents e-ver may en - dure. now. E-e
Fl.
Am7
B7
C6
D
Pno.
A
I will work with all my might;
with this letter, I declare my wishes.
11
mp
S.
seh cha-yil_ ar_ beh_ ki_____ va - ti bich - tav_ mish-a - li. E-e-
mp
A.
seh cha-yil_ ar_ beh_ ki_____ va - ti bich - tav_ mish-a - li. E-e-
Fl.
mp
A
Em
G(add9)
D
C
mp
Pno.

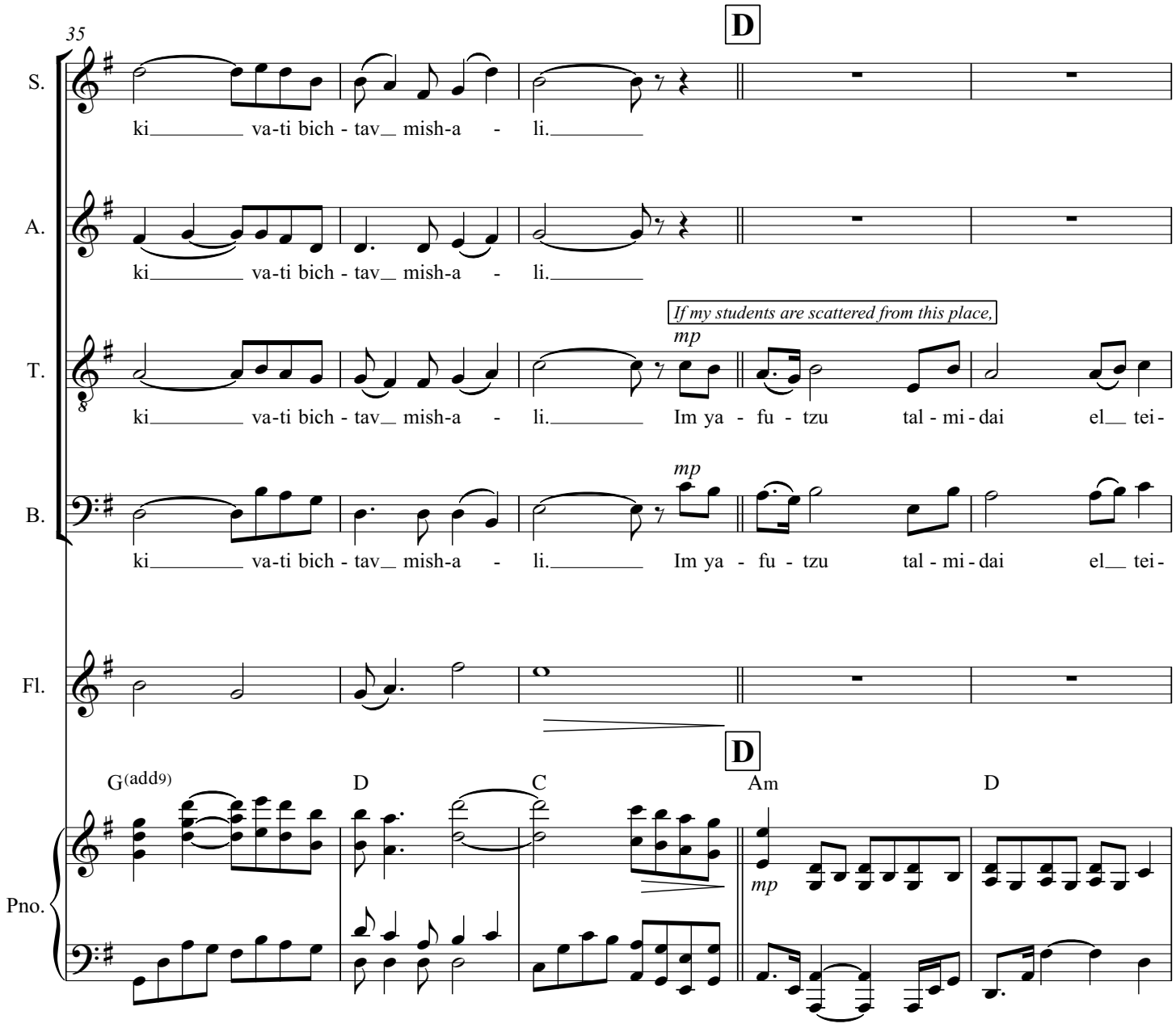

15
S.
seh cha-yil ar beh ki va-ti bich - tav mish-a - li.
A.
seh cha-yil ar beh ki va-ti bich - tav mish-a - li.
Fl.
Pno.
Em
G(add9)
D
C

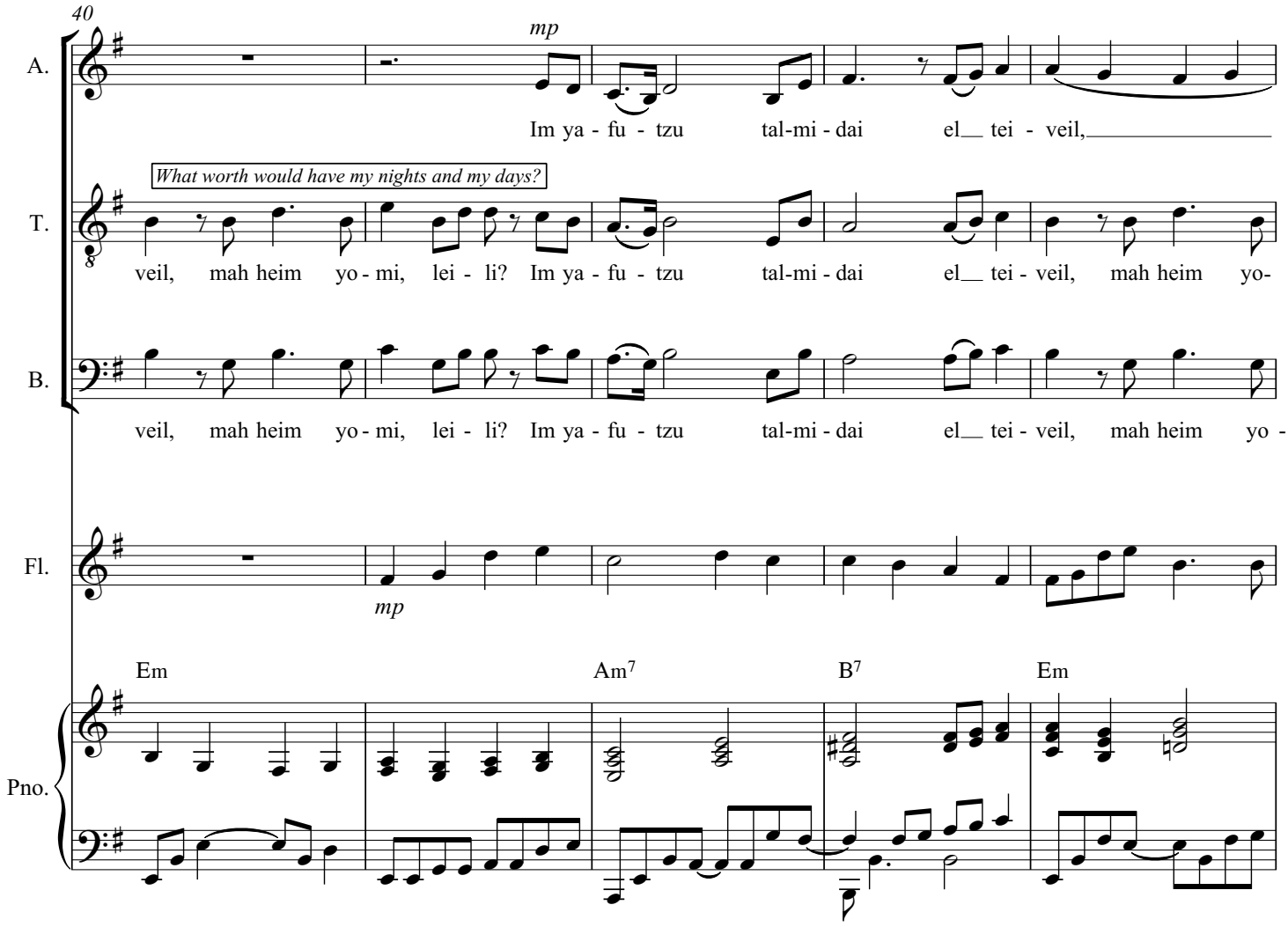

20
B
S.
mf
What would I give to de-fend this teach - ing, to pre-serve this em - ber, to raise this fal-len
A.
mp
oo
raise this fal-len
T.
mp
oo
raise this fal-len
B.
mp
oo
raise this fal-len
Fl.
mf
B
E7
G
Am7
Pno.
mf

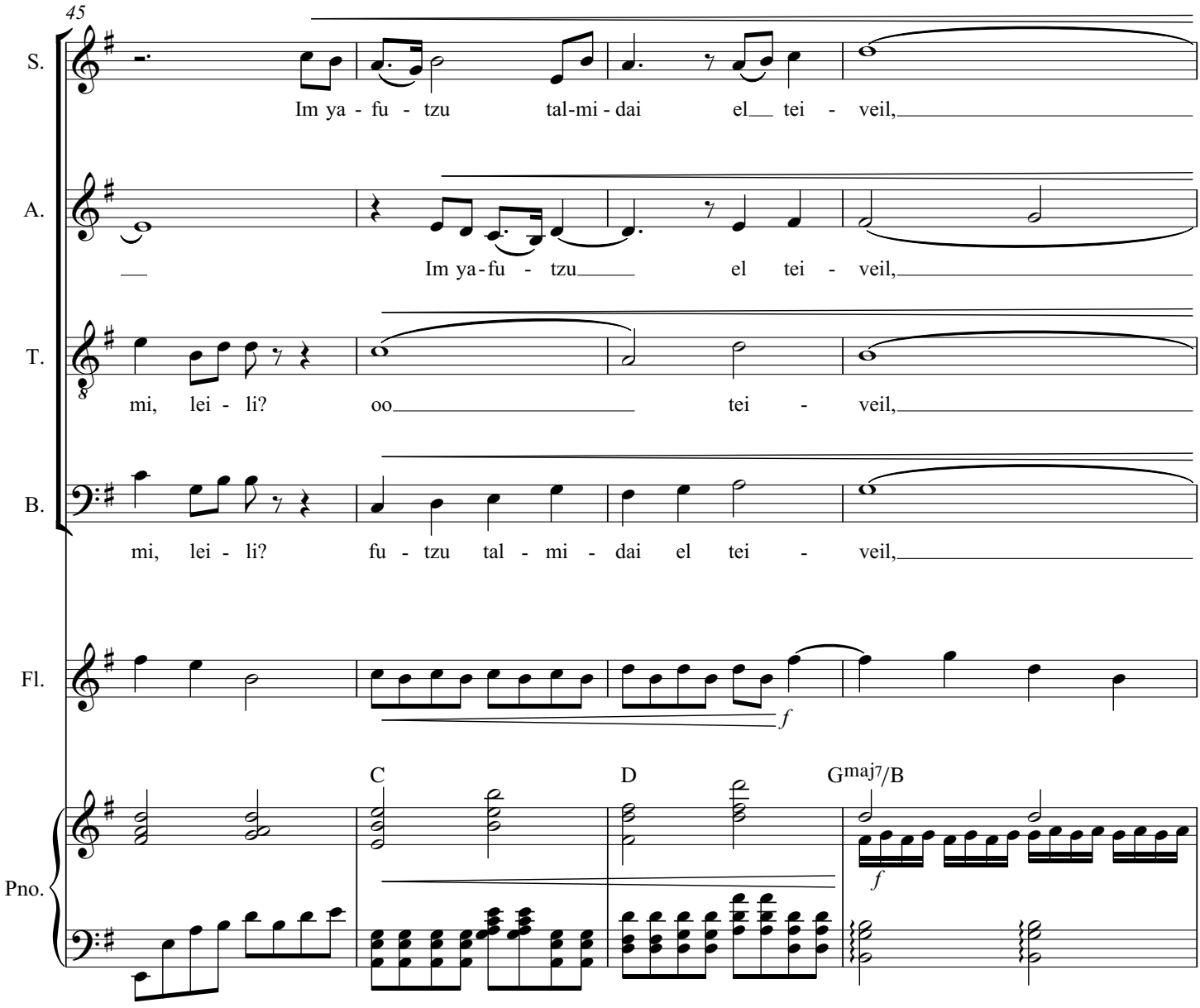

23
S.
suk - kah and clear all the de - bris. This flame was kind-led on the moun - tain, en-trust - ed in my
A.
suk - kah
moun - tain, en-trust - ed in my
T.
suk - kah
B.
suk - kah
Fl.
B7
E7
G
Pno.

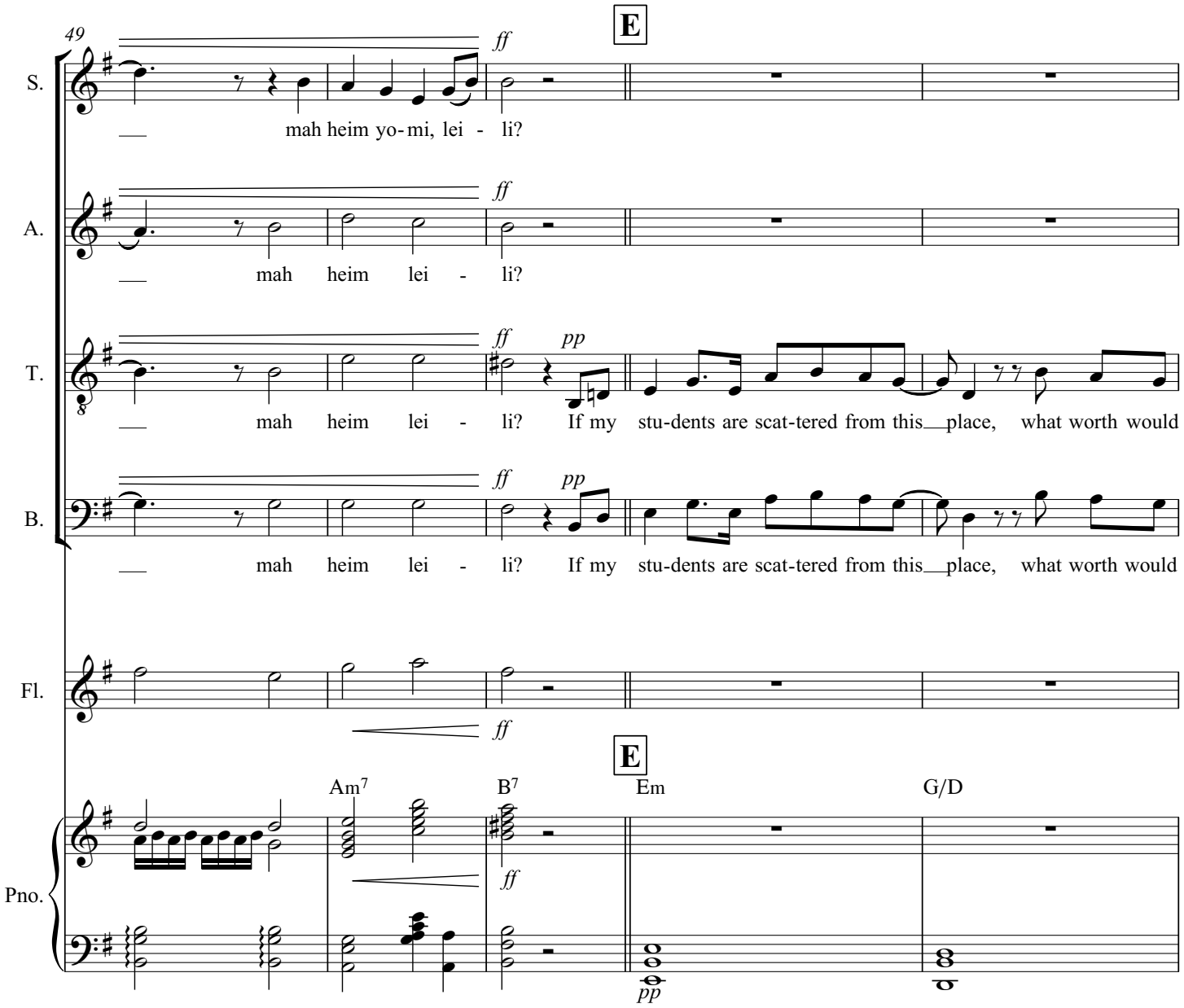

26
S.
hands, it pu-ri-fies my heart, brings life_ to my soul, to raise the Ho-ly in the wild-er - ness._
A.
hands, it pu-ri-fies my heart,_____ to raise the Ho-ly in the wild-er - ness._
T.
to raise the Ho-ly in the wild-er - ness._
B.
f
to raise the Ho-ly in the wild-er-ness. E-e -
Fl.
Am7
B7
C6
D
Pno.

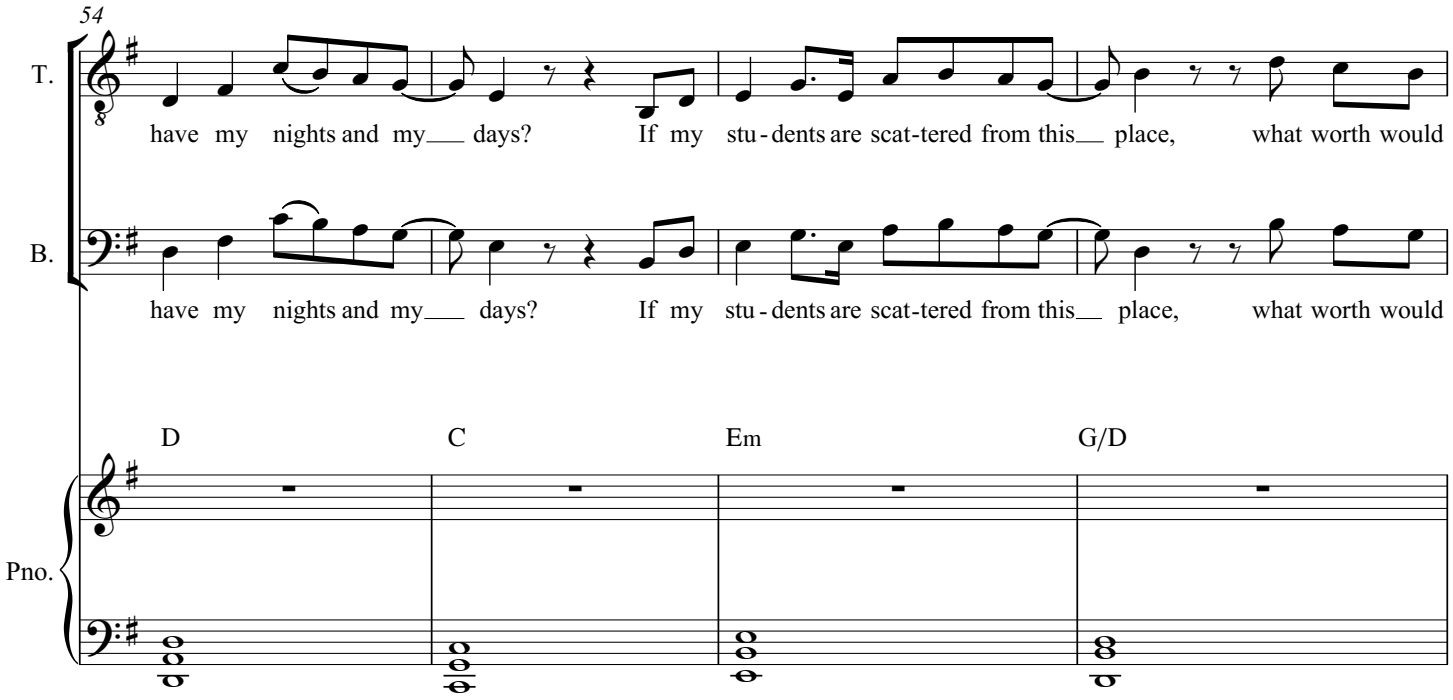

C
30
mf
S.
ah
f
E-e-seh cha-yil_ ar_ beh_
A.
ah
seh cha-yil_ ar_ beh_
T.
ah
E-e-seh cha-yil_ ar_ beh_
B.
seh cha-yil_ ar_ beh_ ki va - ti bich - tav_ mish-a - li.
E-e-seh cha-yil_ ar_ beh_
Fl.
C
Em
G(add9)
D
C
Em
Pno.

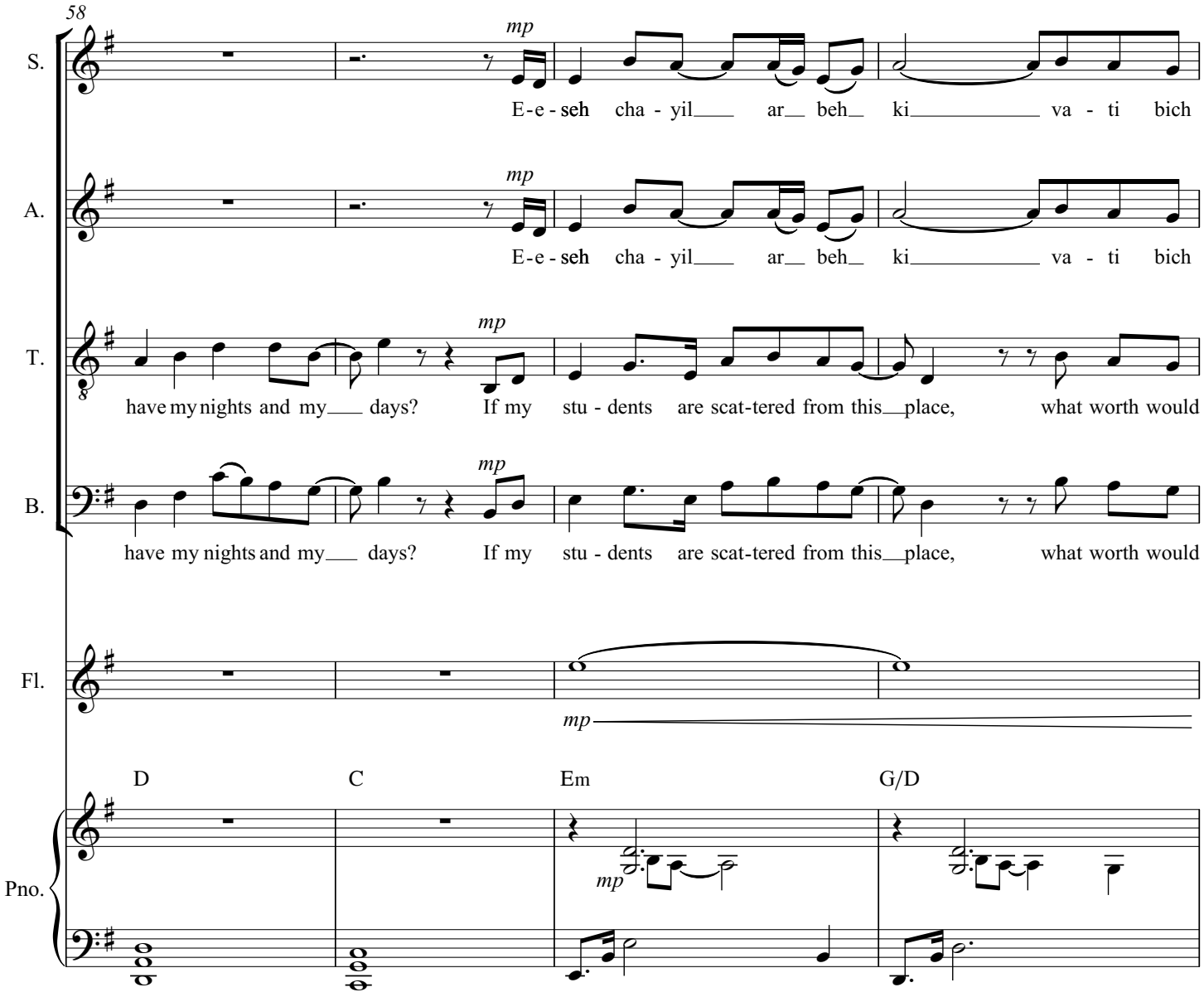

35
D
S.
ki va-ti bich - tav mish-a - li.
A.
ki va-ti bich - tav mish-a - li.
If my students are scattered from this place,
mp
T.
ki va-ti bich - tav mish-a - li. Im ya - fu - tzu tal - mi - dai el tei -
mp
B.
ki va-ti bich - tav mish-a - li. Im ya - fu - tzu tal - mi - dai el tei -
Fl.
D
G(add9)
D
C
Am
D
mp
Pno.

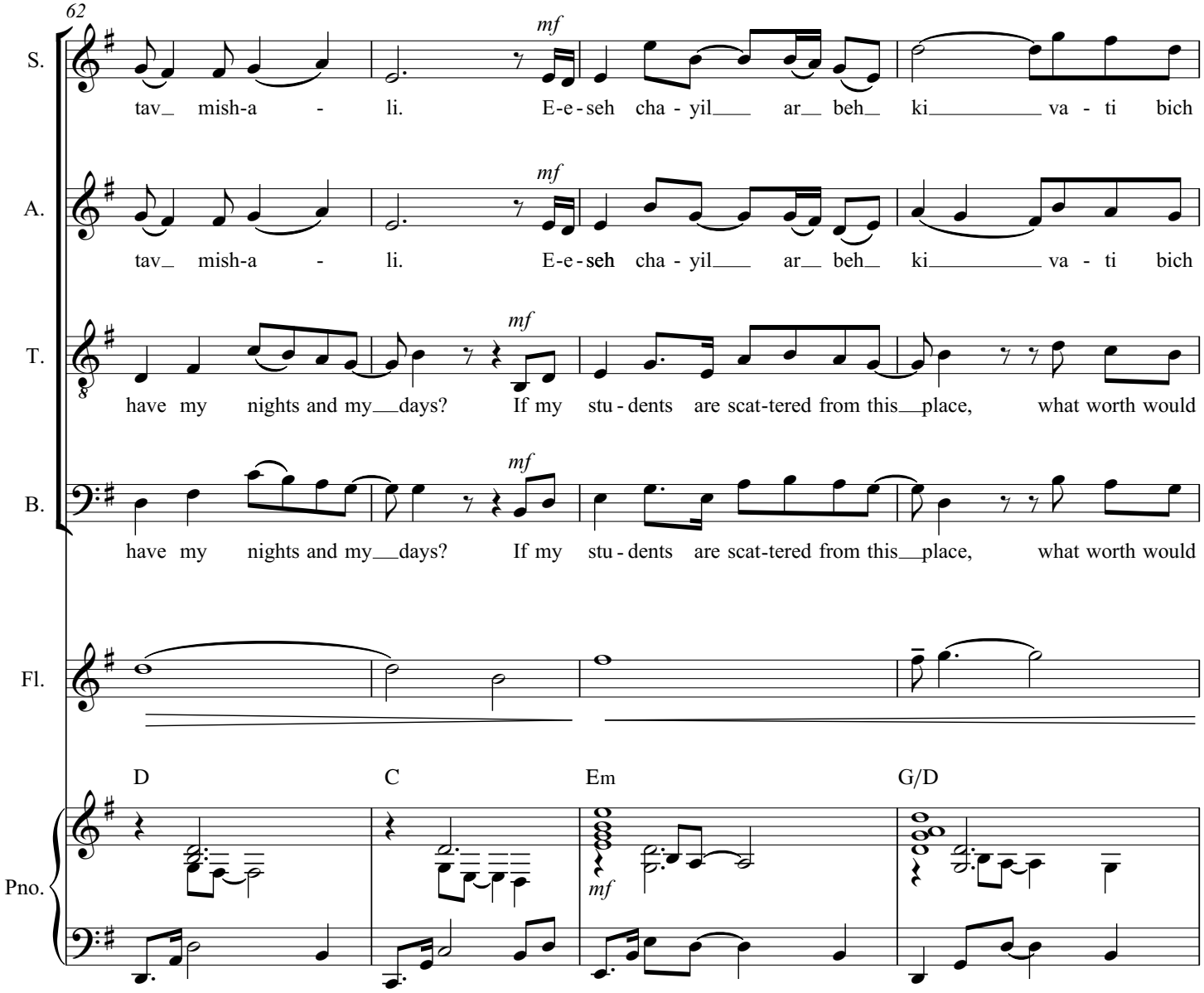

40
A.
mp
Im ya - fu - tzu tal-mi - dai el tei - veil,
What worth would have my nights and my days?
T.
veil, mah heim yo - mi, lei - li? Im ya - fu - tzu tal-mi - dai el tei - veil, mah heim yo-
B.
veil, mah heim yo - mi, lei - li? Im ya - fu - tzu tal-mi - dai el tei - veil, mah heim yo -
Fl.
mp
Em
Am7
B7
Em
Pno.

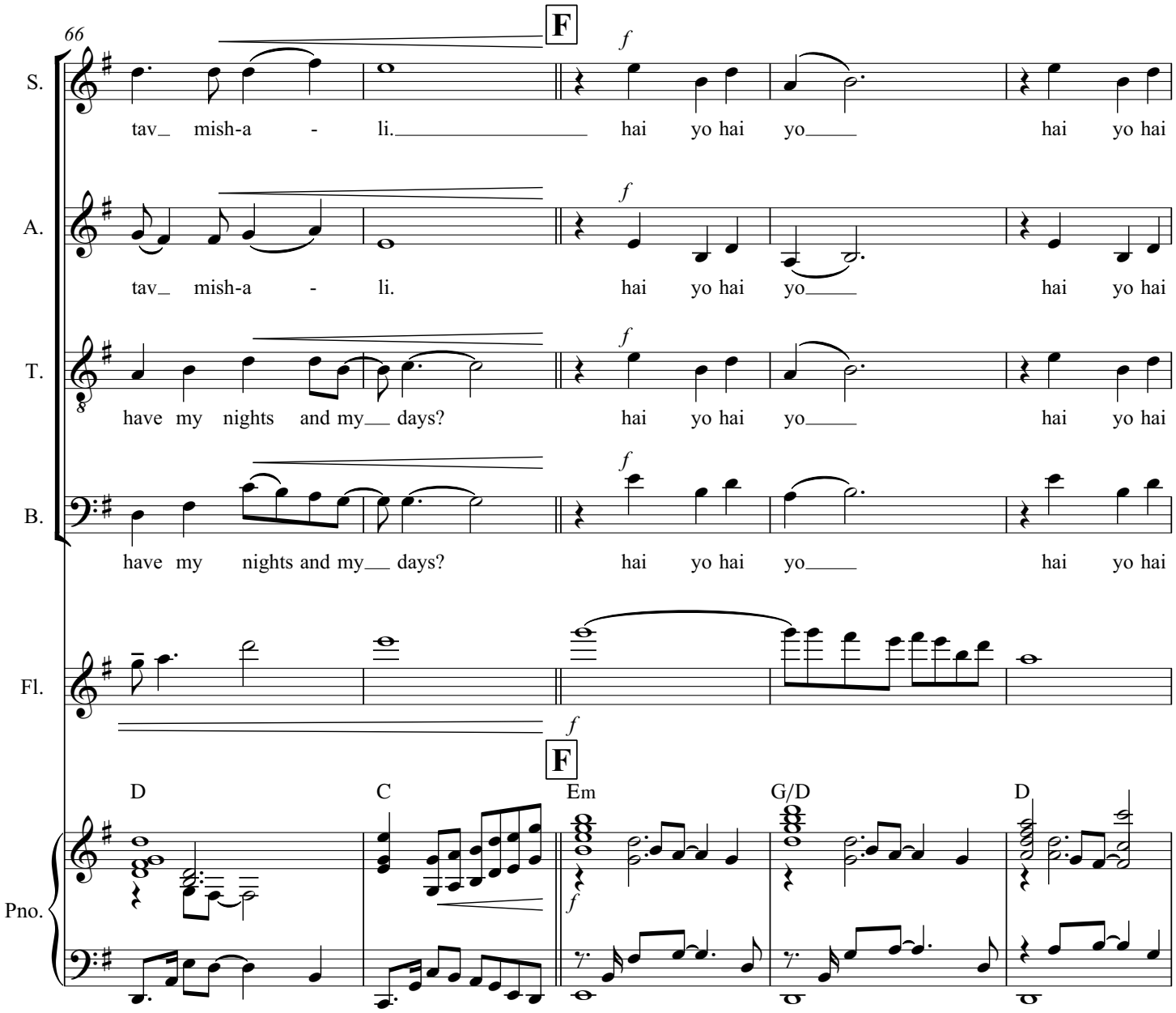

45
S.
Im ya - fu - tzu tal-mi - dai el tei - veil,
A.
Im ya-fu - tzu el tei - veil,
T.
mi, lei - li? oo tei - veil,
B.
mi, lei - li? fu - tzu tal - mi - dai el tei - veil,
Fl.
f
C
D
Gmaj7/B
Pno.
f

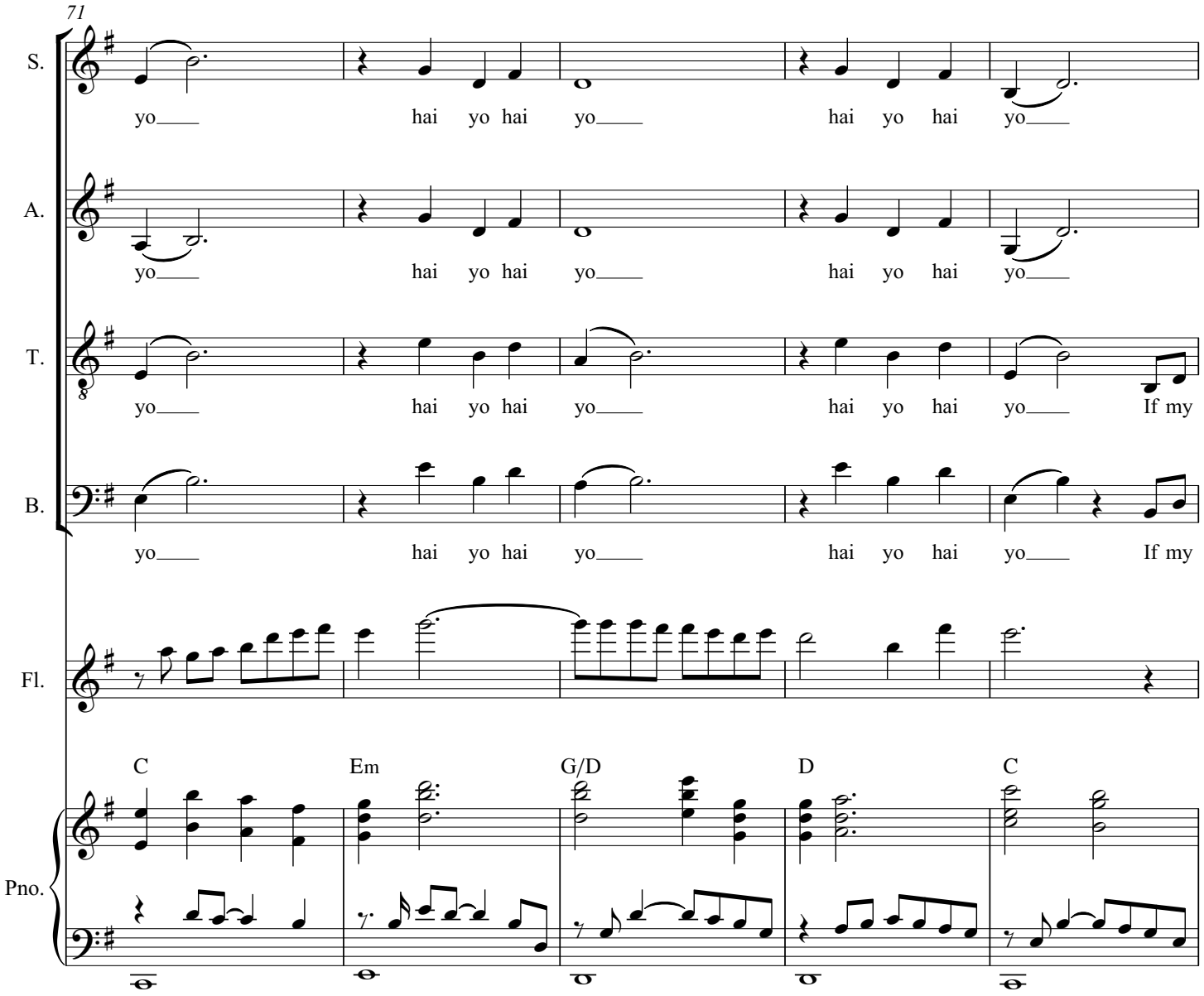

49
E
S.
A.
T.
B.
Fl.
Pno.
ff
pp
mah heim yo-mi, lei - li?
mah heim lei - li?
mah heim lei - li? If my stu-dents are scat-tered from this place, what worth would
Am7
B7
Em
G/D

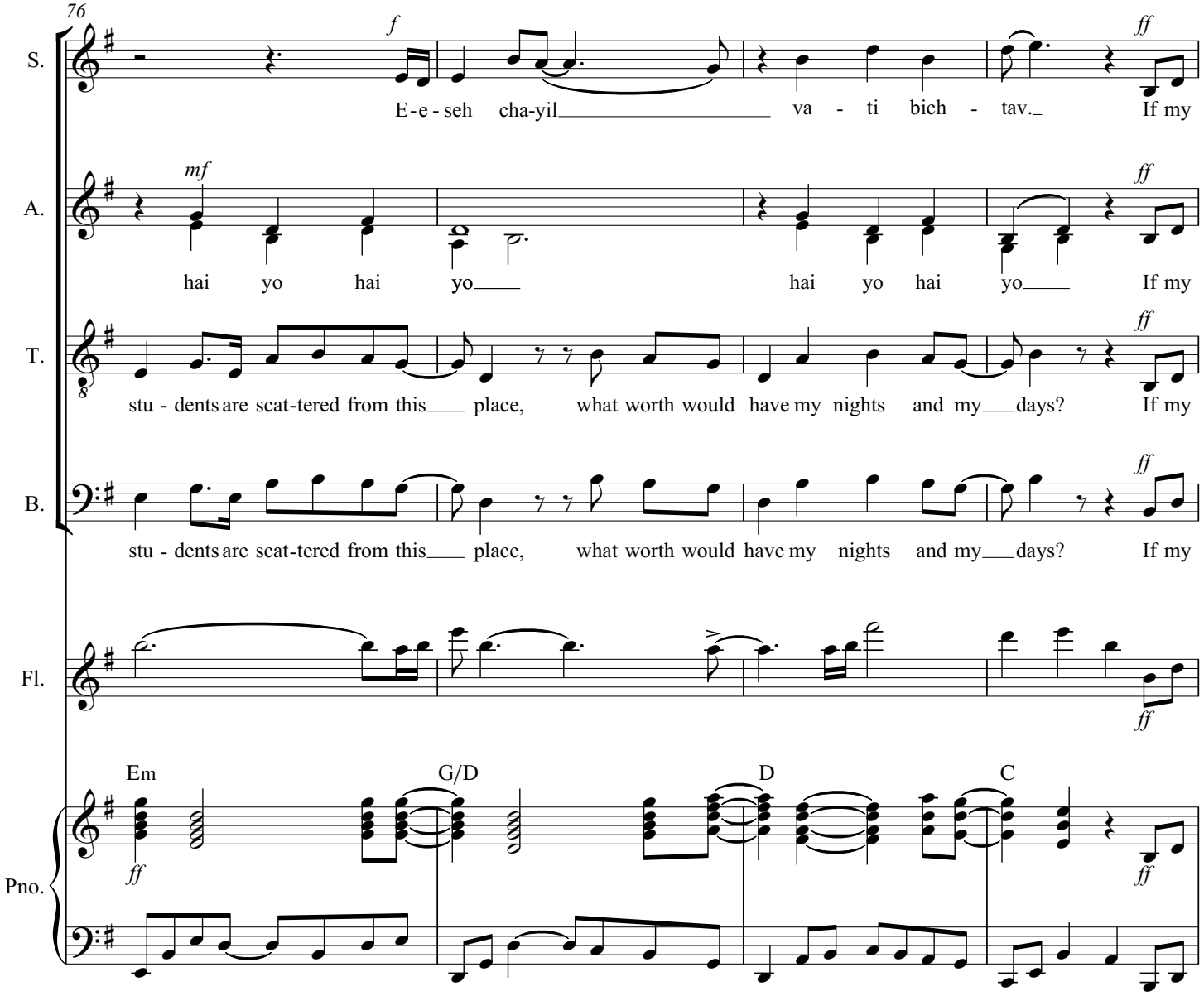

54
T.
have my nights and my days? If my stu - dents are scat-tered from this place, what worth would
B.
have my nights and my days? If my stu - dents are scat-tered from this place, what worth would
D
C
Em
G/D
Pno.

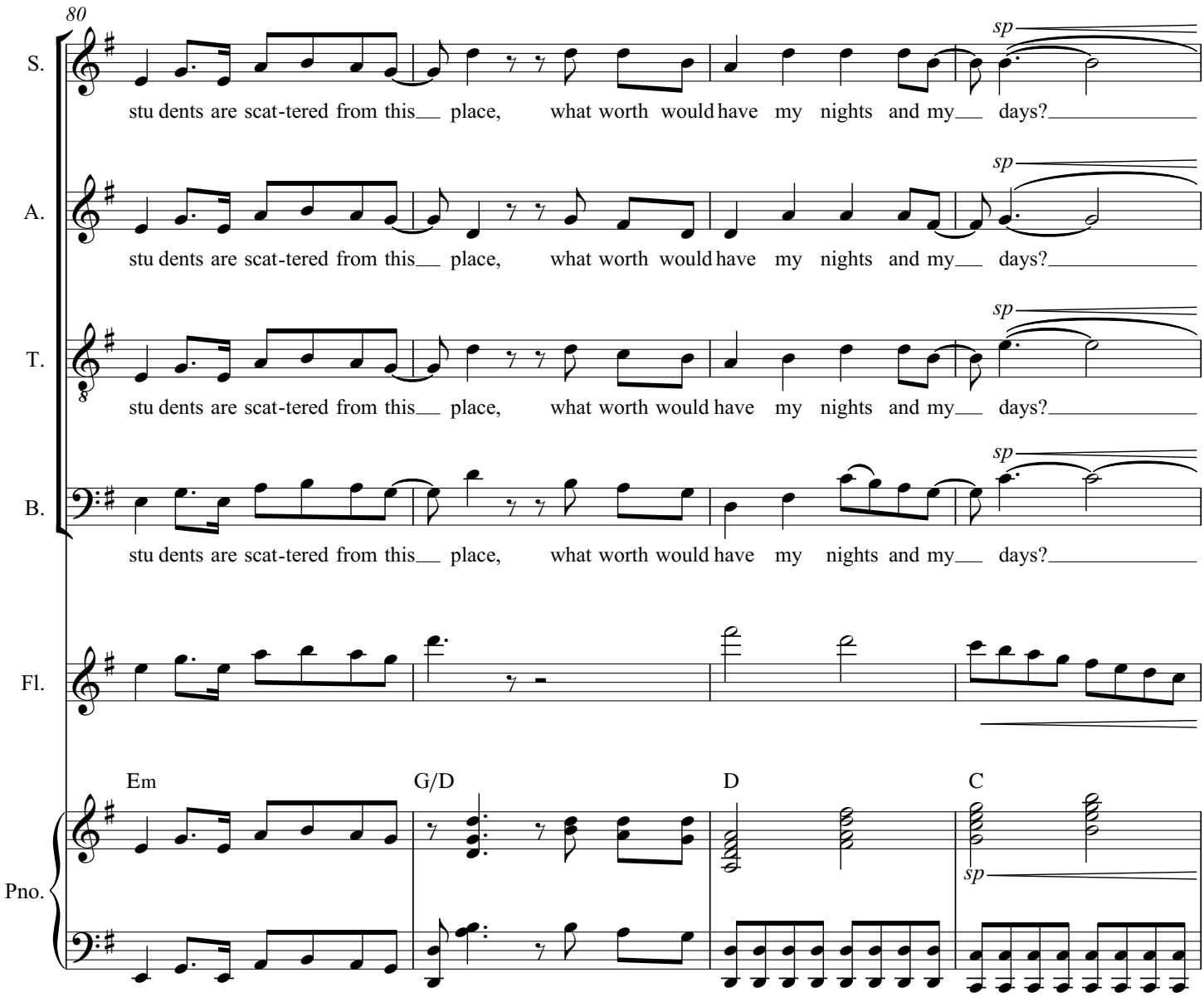

58
S.
A.
T.
B.
Fl.
Pno.
mp
E-e-seh cha-yil ar beh ki va-ti bich
have my nights and my days? If my stu-dents are scat-tered from this place, what worth would
D
C
Em
G/D

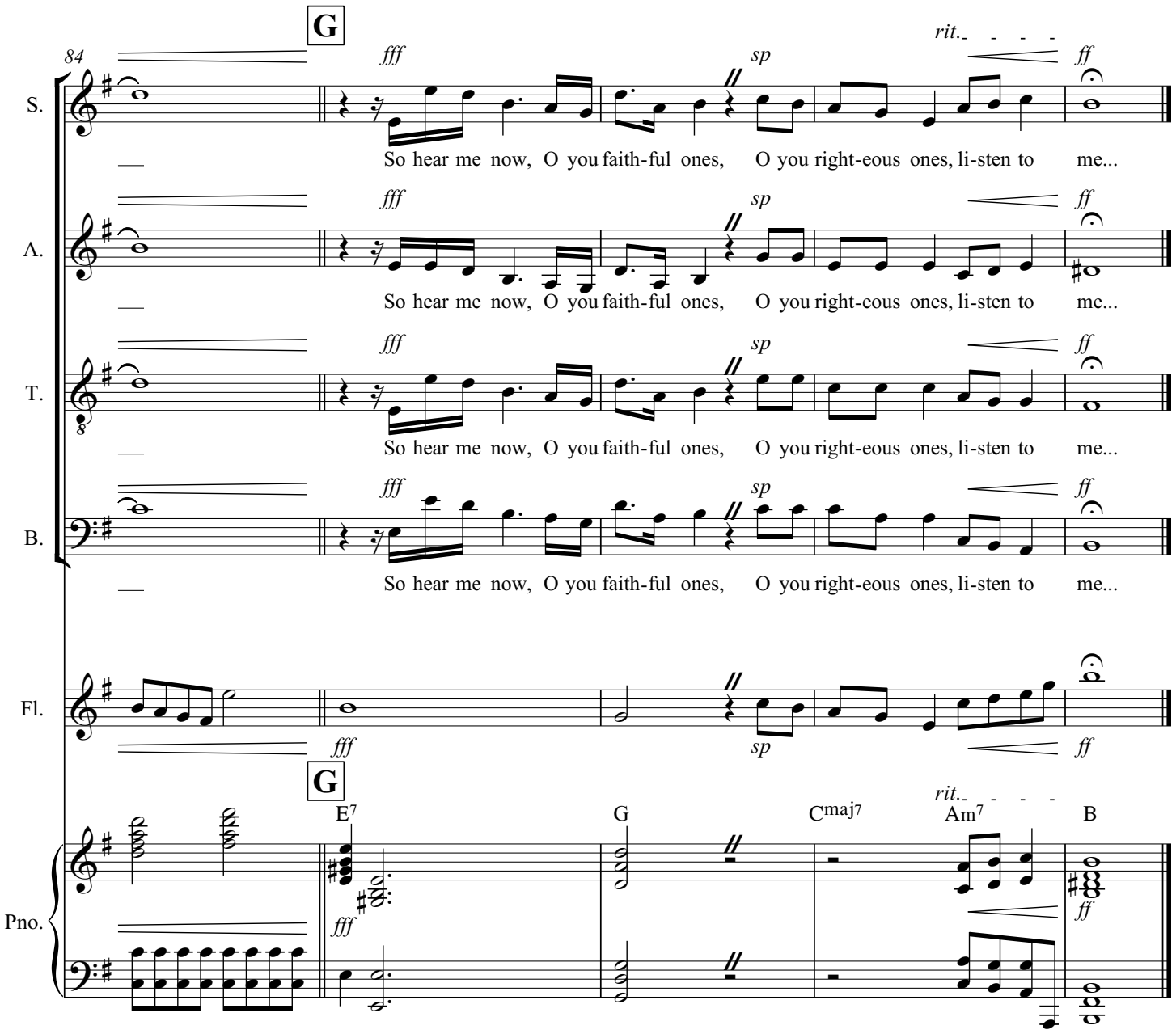

62
S.
A.
T.
B.
Fl.
Pno.
mf
tav_ mish-a - li. E-e-seh cha - yil___ ar__ beh_ ki_____ va - ti bich
tav_ mish-a - li. E-e-seh cha - yil___ ar__ beh_ ki_____ va - ti bich
have my nights and my__days? If my stu - dents are scat-tered from this__place, what worth would
have my nights and my__days? If my stu - dents are scat-tered from this__place, what worth would
D
C
Em
G/D


66
F
f
S.
tav_ mish-a - li. hai yo hai yo hai yo hai
A.
tav_ mish-a - li. hai yo hai yo hai yo hai
T.
have my nights and my days? hai yo hai yo hai yo hai
B.
have my nights and my days? hai yo hai yo hai yo hai
Fl.
F
D C Em G/D D
Pno.


71
S.
A.
T.
B.
Fl.
Pno.
yo hai yo hai yo hai yo hai yo
If my
C
Em
G/D
D
C


76
S.
A.
T.
B.
Fl.
Pno.
f
ff
mf
E-e-seh cha-yil va-ti bich-tav. If my
hai yo hai yo hai yo hai yo If my
stu-dents are scat-tered from this place, what worth would have my nights and my days? If my
Em
G/D
D
C


80
S.
A.
T.
B.
Fl.
Pno.
sp
stu dents are scat-tered from this place, what worth would have my nights and my days?
Em
G/D
D
C


84
G
fff
sp
rit.
ff
S.
So hear me now, O you faith-ful ones, O you right-eous ones, li-sten to me...
A.
So hear me now, O you faith-ful ones, O you right-eous ones, li-sten to me...
T.
So hear me now, O you faith-ful ones, O you right-eous ones, li-sten to me...
B.
So hear me now, O you faith-ful ones, O you right-eous ones, li-sten to me...
Fl.
Pno.
E7
G
Cmaj7
Am7
B

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