On The Things

Tenor
Live Electronics
Prerecorded Microtonal Piano

Stephen Lucas (2013)

Program Notes

This piece uses a revised translation of the text De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things) by Lucretius (ca. 99 BC - ca. 55 BC). The original text was poetry used to persuade the Romans to embrace the modern developments of science without having to renounce their traditional religions. The new interpretation regards these issues in similar ways, but is adapted to a modern audience.

The text selections have been adapted as a song cycle with the microtonal piano emulating the music of Schubert. The overlaps of quotations require a breach of the tonal tradition which the microtonal piano seeks to resolve.

Furthermore, the translated text evokes the ancient poetic style, which imposes its own structures on the text setting. Although the instrumentation is not standard, the essence of the original text is maintained.

Performance Notes

The notation here is intended to be interpreted in a manner similar to Schubert's Winterreise and Die schöne Müllerin.
The first problem is to conform to the tempo of the prerecorded piano tracks (à la karaoke) which has been carefully constructed. This significantly reduces the technical logistics of the performance, but puts a burden on the vocalist to find expression within the predefined timing.

The second problem is that the vocalist should only sing in an equal temperment, despite the upsetting tuning of the microtonal piano. This should be accommodated by the built in "vocal synth track" in the software, which can be used for reference. However, where temporal expression may be impossible, the performer should seek to find their own nuance in the relationship to the piano microtonality.

The execution of the electronic part is detailed in the software, but will typically require a technician to monitor levels and cues. The score notation is not specific but should be relatively clear after rehearsal.

The text is from the poem *De Rerum Natura*
by Roman poet Titus Lucretius Carus (ca. 99 BC – ca. 55 BC).

The translation is done by Stephen Lucas with reference help from
translations by W. H. D. Rouse, Martin Ferguson Smith,
A. E. Stallings, and William Ellery Leonard.
The translation focuses on reinforcing rhetorical figures and
integrating the text into the musical quotations from Schubert.

1. Mother of Rome

Mother of Rome joy of gods and men,
Dearest Venus that beneath the slipping stars,
Where sails the many voyaged seas
Where grows the fruitful living lands

through you all are conceived
having the vision of the great sun
Goddess winds fly free, clouds fly,
For you the damned earth bears scented flowers,

Waters of wide stretches smile and laugh
Glowing they fill the lighted sky.

2. Hence Nature

Hence Nature into their primal bodies dissolves all,
and nothing perishes ever to death.
For, were aught mortal in every part,
Before our eyes it might be snatched,
Since no force were needed to tear its bonds.

But of truth, because all things exist,
With seed boundless nature allows
Destruction nor collapse of all,
until some outward force may break,
Or inward to its hollow cells,
Dissolve it down.

3. For Wind

For wind tenuous with subtle body,
Drives and pushes a mighty ship of mighty bulk,
One hand directs it, whatever its momentum,
Whatever its direction one helm steers it,

Great and many are moved and hoisted
By moving wheels and engines,
With little effort.

4. Of the Pierides

Through pathless fields of the Pierides,
I wander where no other has.

I love to come to drain their untouched springs,
and pluck their untouched flowers
To seek for my head a signal crown,
from where the Muses have never touched a head:

First, since I teach of mighty things,
and free the mind from knots of rite,
Next, since I compose of things so dark,
a song touched by the Muses' grace.

5. Sudden Need

Sudden need and shortage persuaded to many things;
for they would lay their kindred on pyres made by others,
with loud cries and thrust the torch
so much blood and fighting rather than losing their bodies.

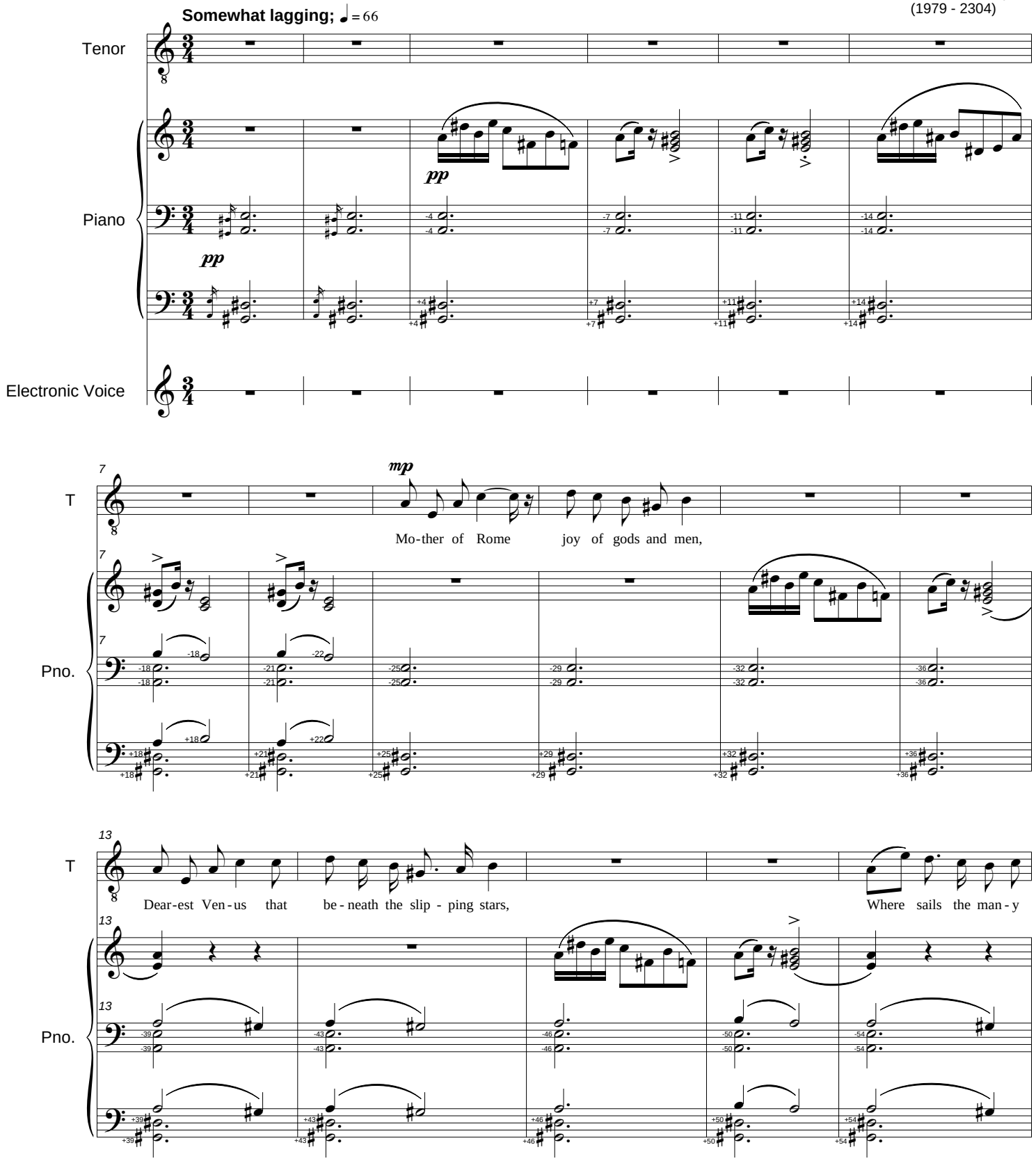
And now good listener, if I must speak,
I pray you bring to true philosophy,
and mind detached from cares.

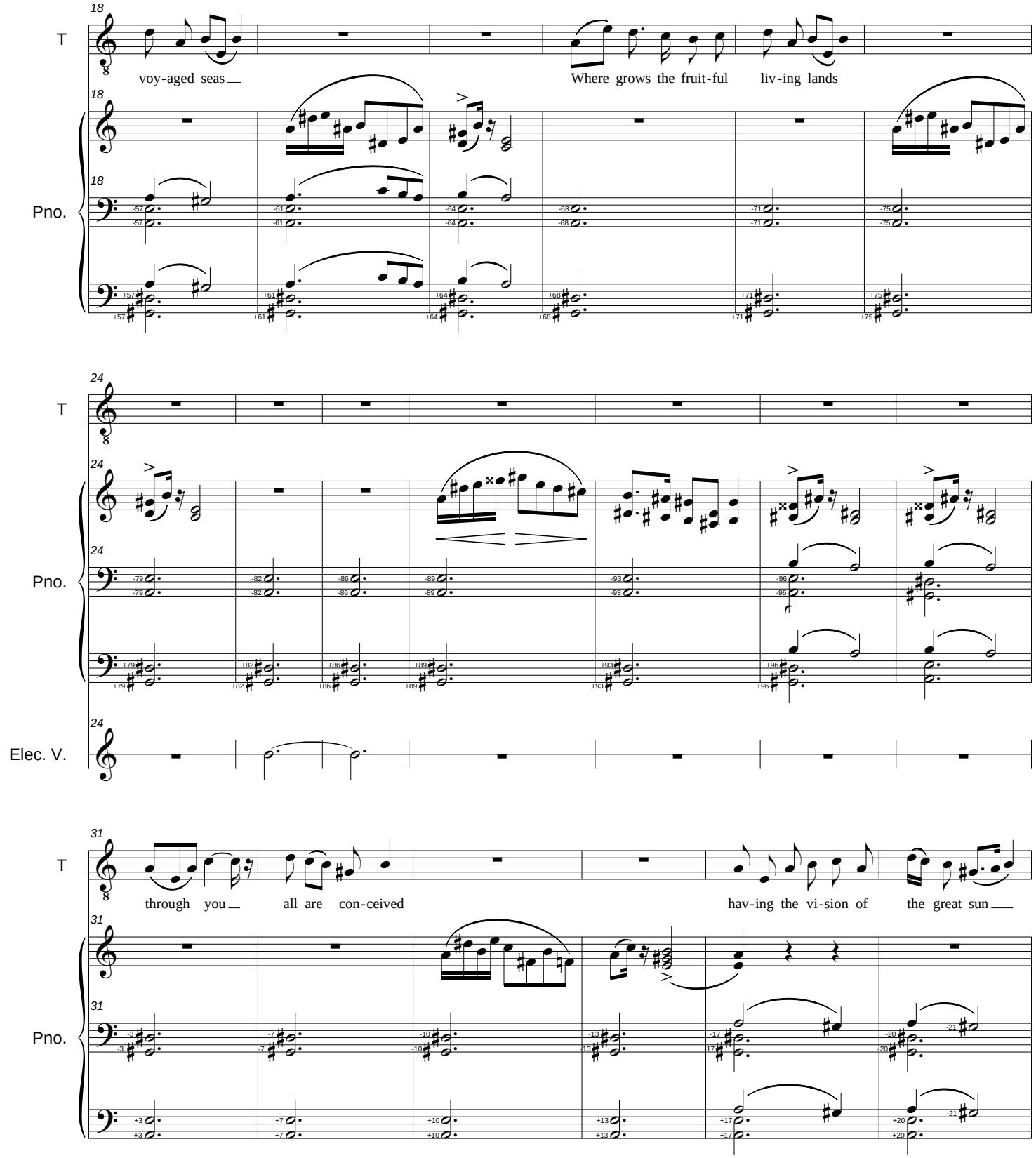
Stephen Lucas (1979-2304)

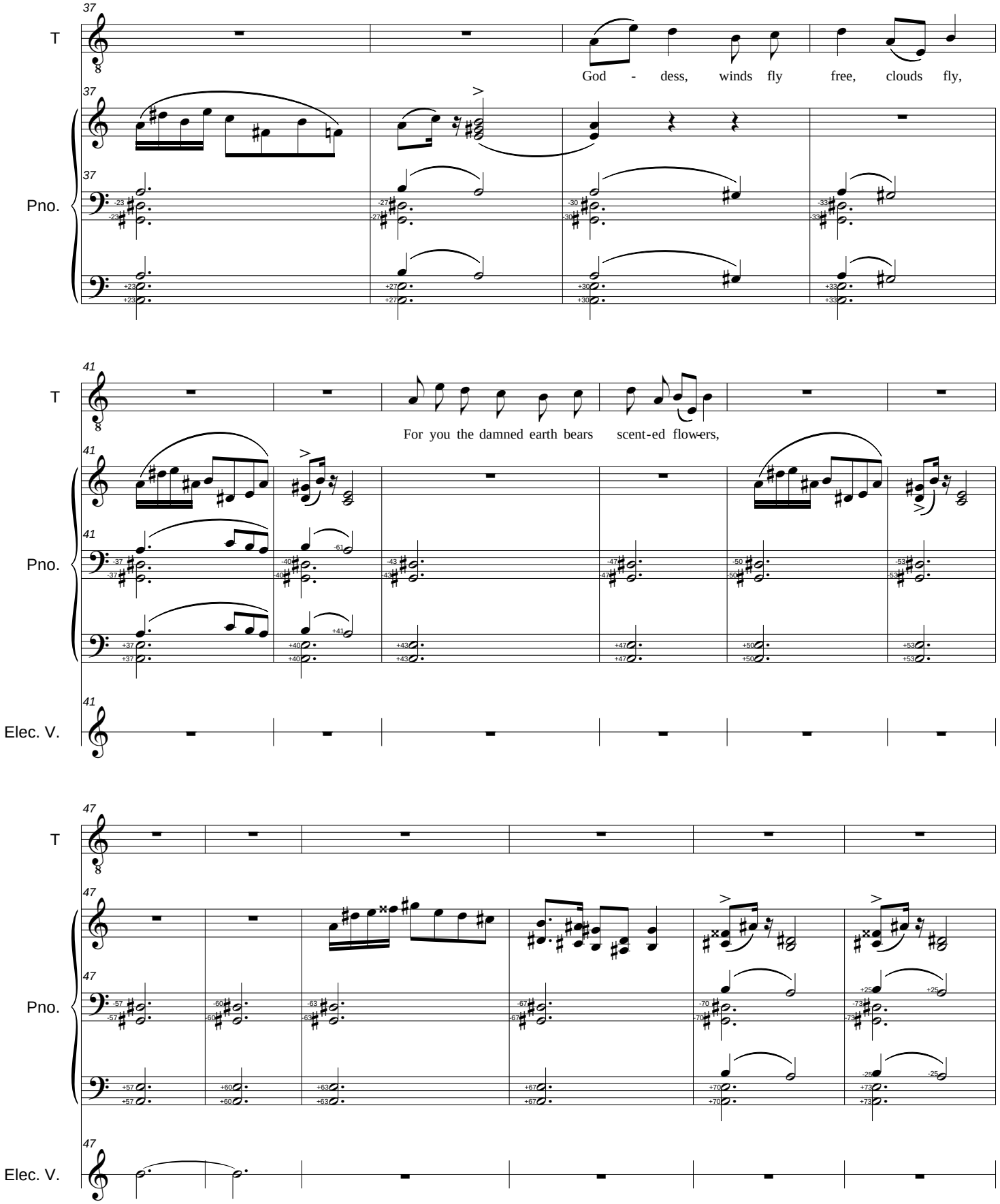
On the Things

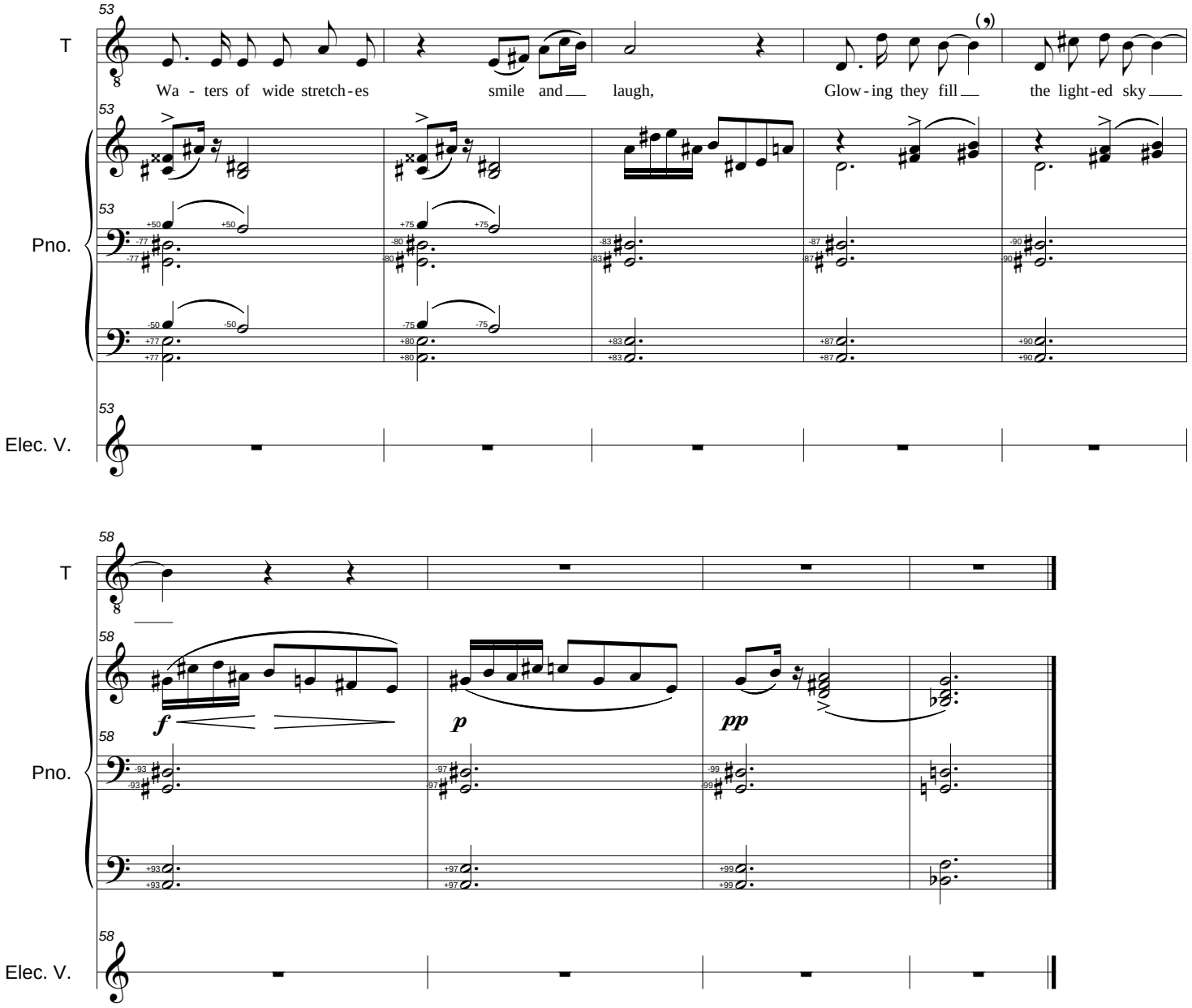
1. Mother of Rome

STEPHEN LUCAS, Op. 153
(1979 - 2304)

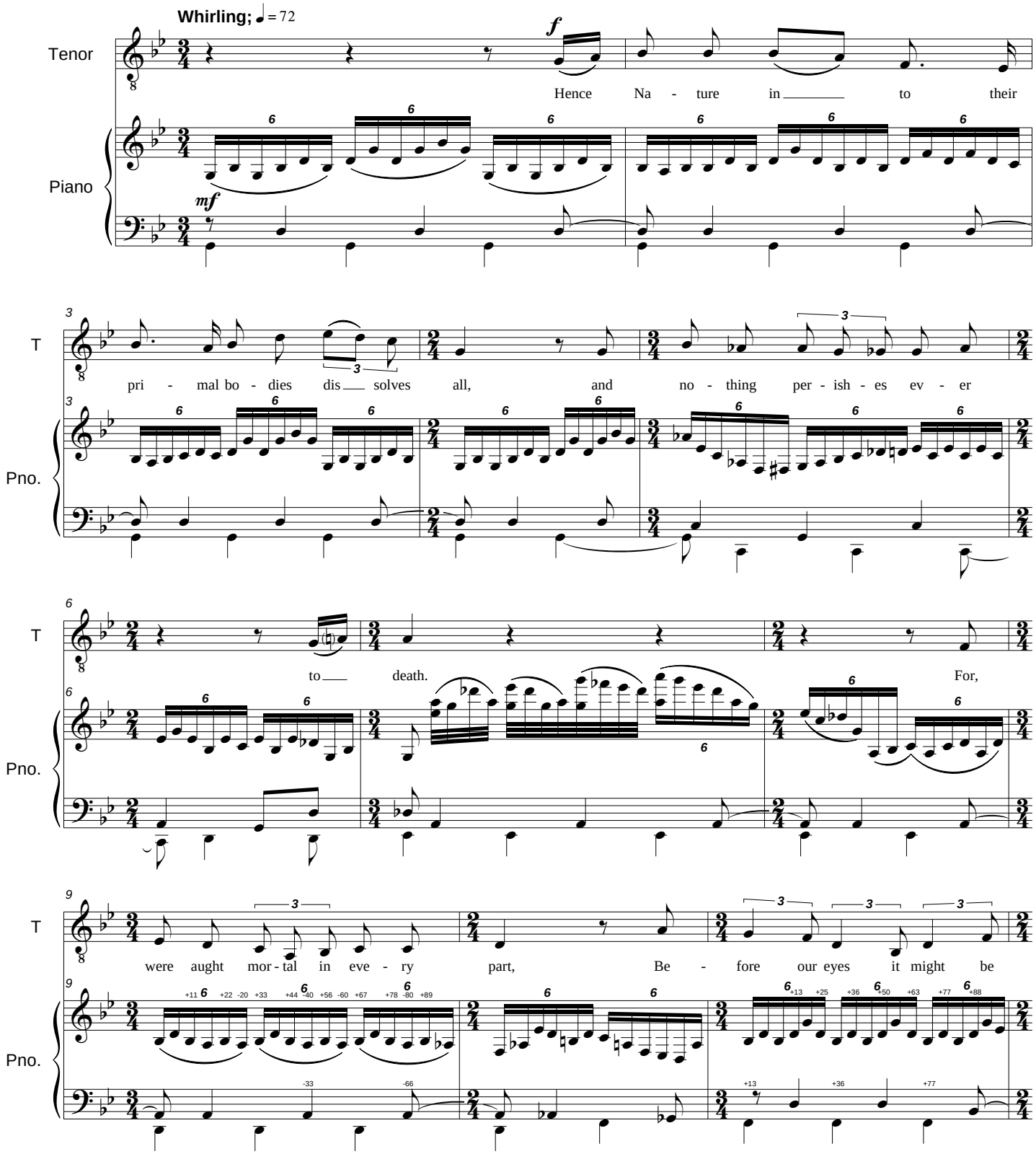


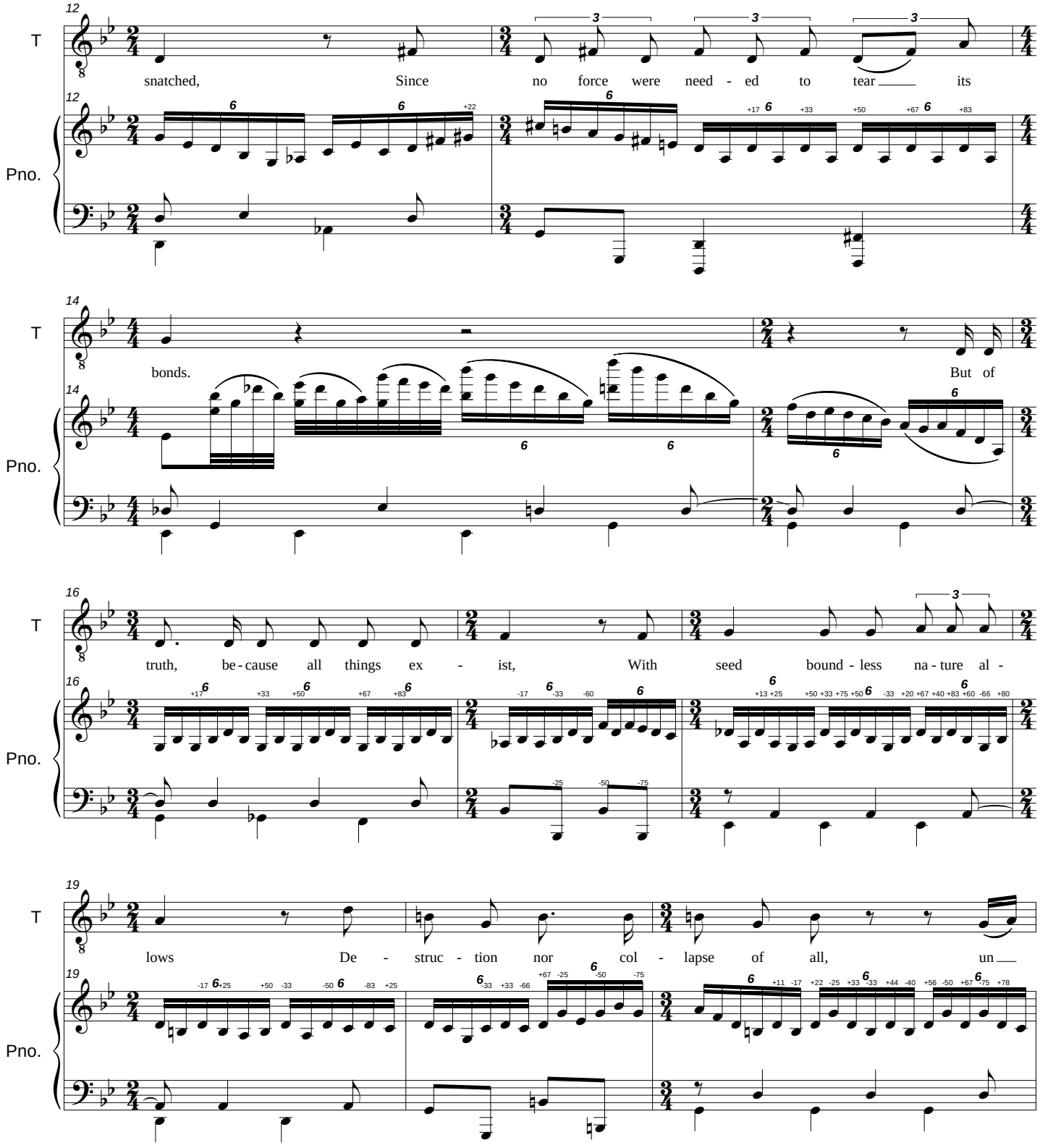

18
T
voy-aged seas
Where grows the fruit-ful liv-ing lands
Pno.
24
T
Pno.
Elec. V.
31
T
through you
all are con-ceived
hav-ing the vi-sion of
the great sun
Pno.

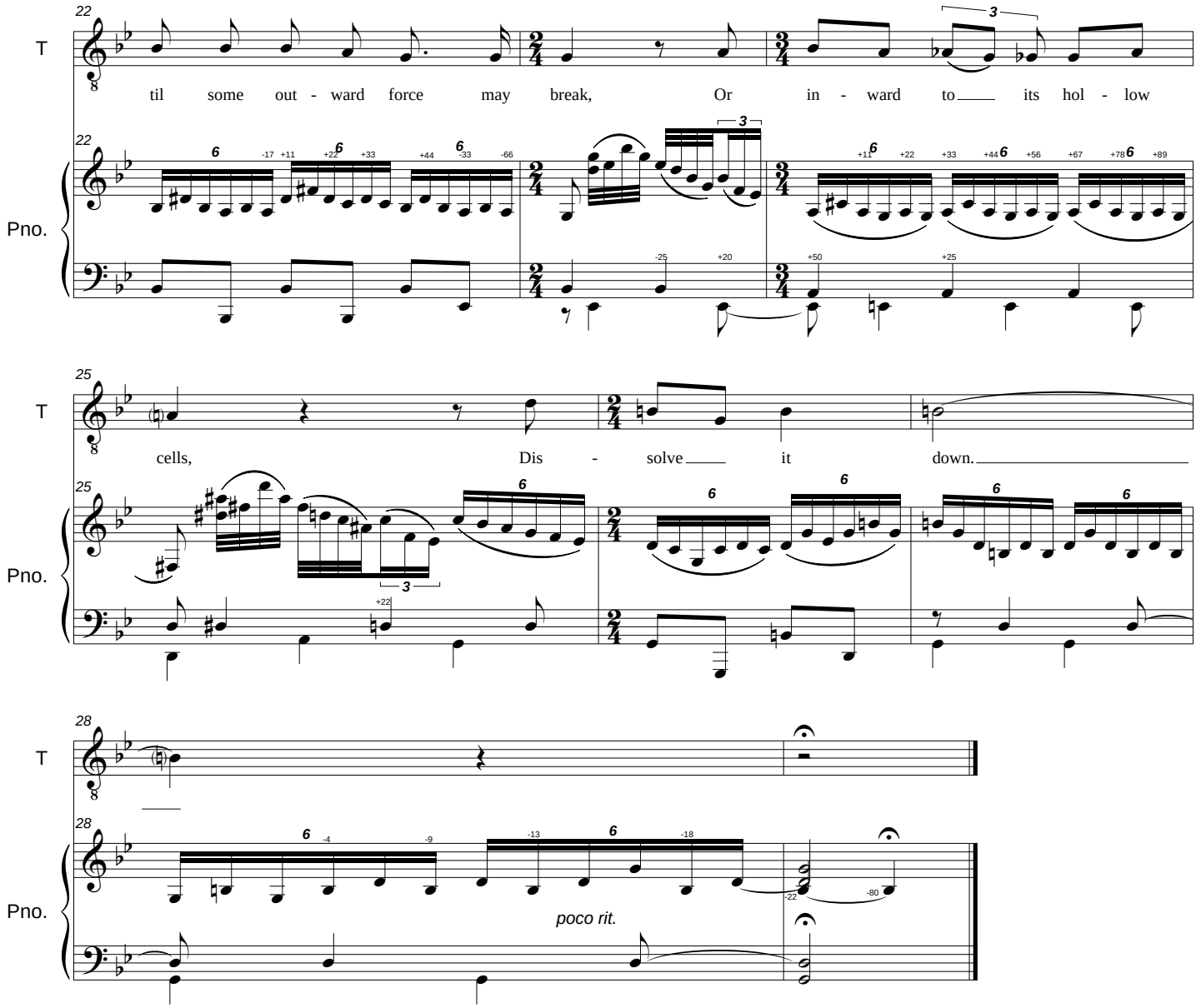

37
T
God - dess, winds fly free, clouds fly,
Pno.
41
For you the damned earth bears scent-ed flow-ers,
Elec. V.
47


53
T
Wa - ters of wide stretch - es smile and laugh, Glow - ing they fill the light - ed sky
Pno.
Elec. V.
58
f
p
pp

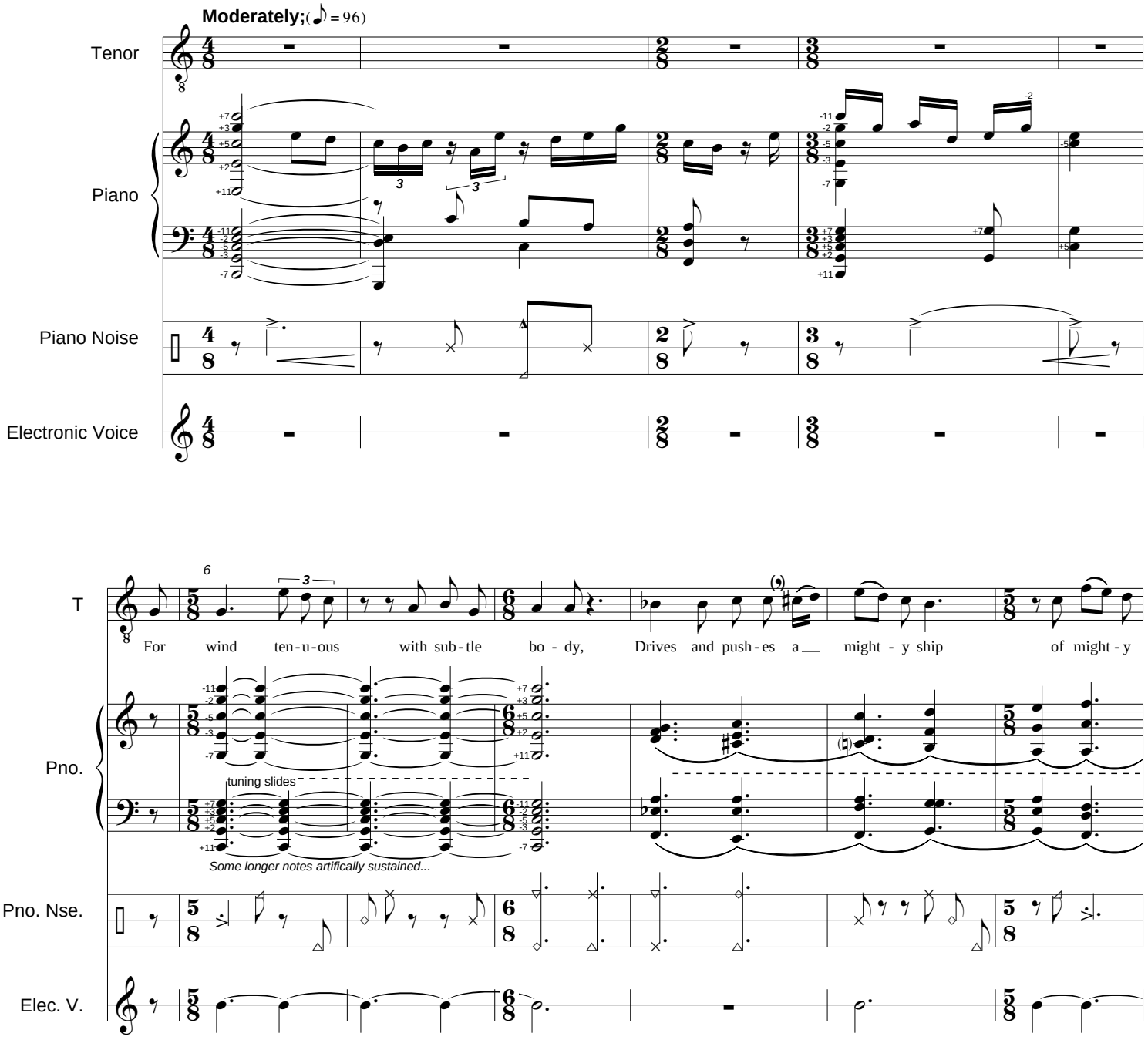
2. Hence Nature

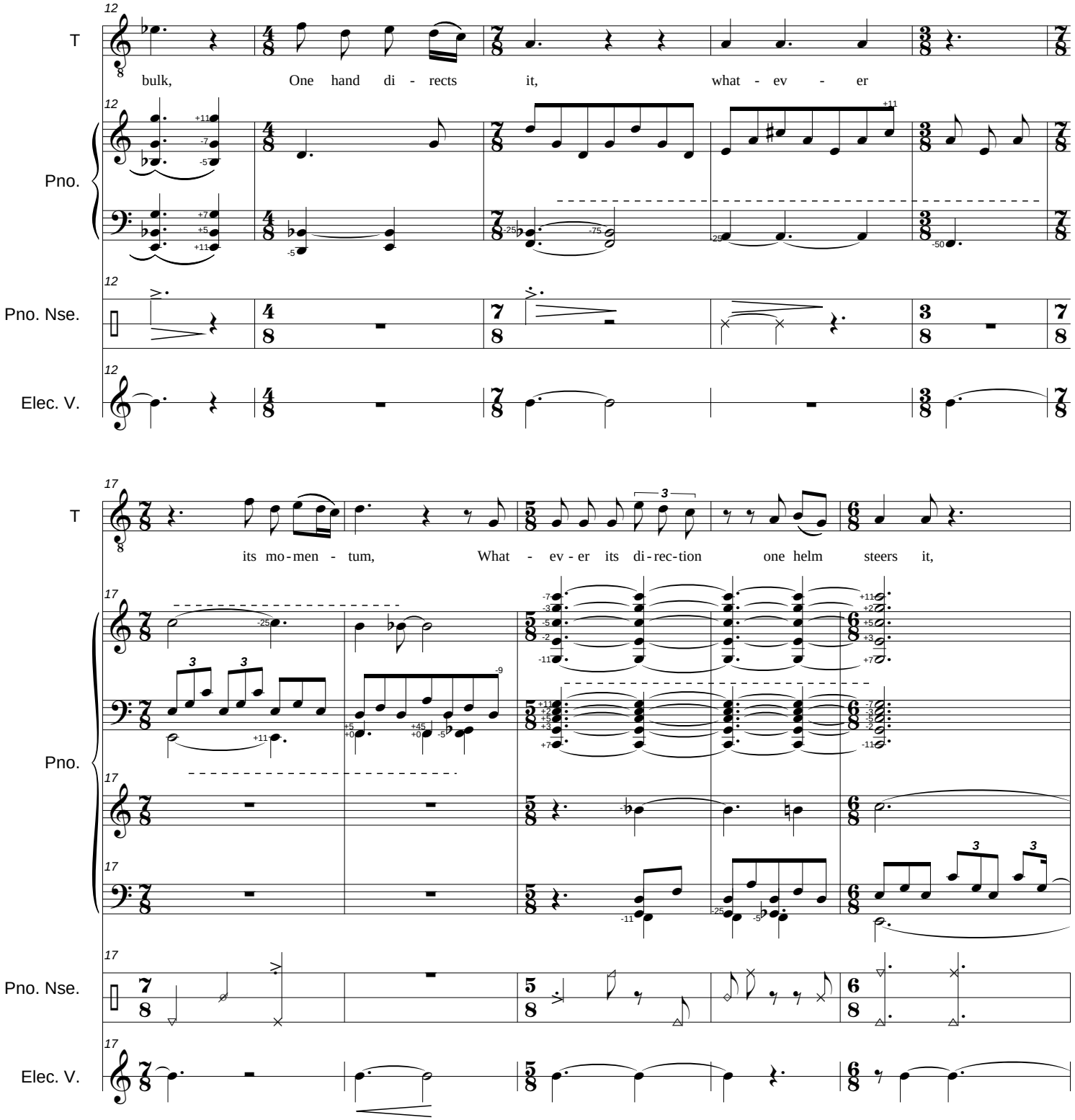


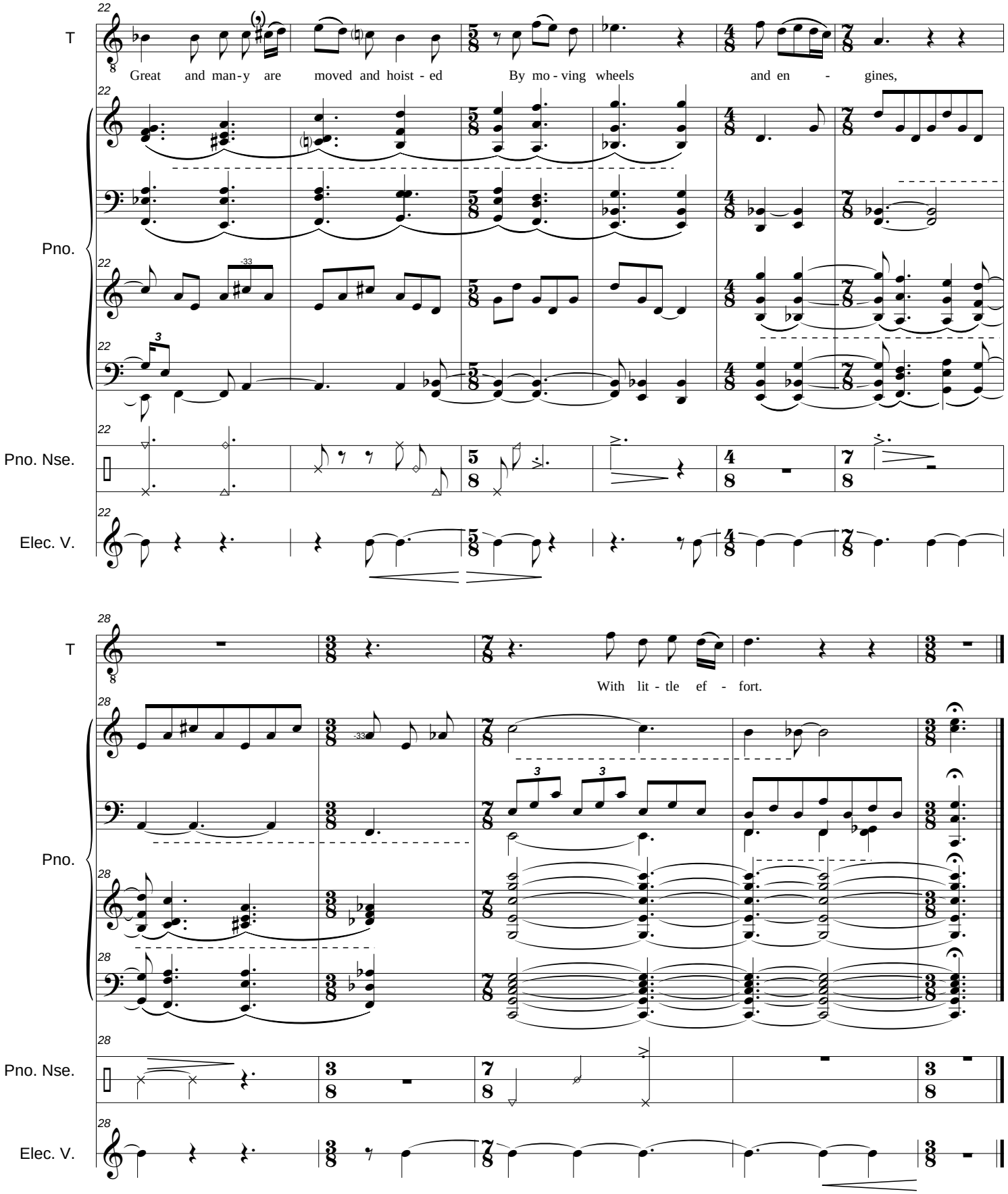

12
T
snatched, Since no force were need - ed to tear its
12
Pno.
14
T
bonds. But of
14
Pno.
16
T
truth, be - cause all things ex - ist, With seed bound - less na - ture al -
16
Pno.
19
T
lows De - struc - tion nor col - lapse of all, un
19
Pno.


22
T
til some out - ward force may break, Or in - ward to its hol - low
Pno.
25
cells, Dis - solve it down.
poco rit.

3. For Wind

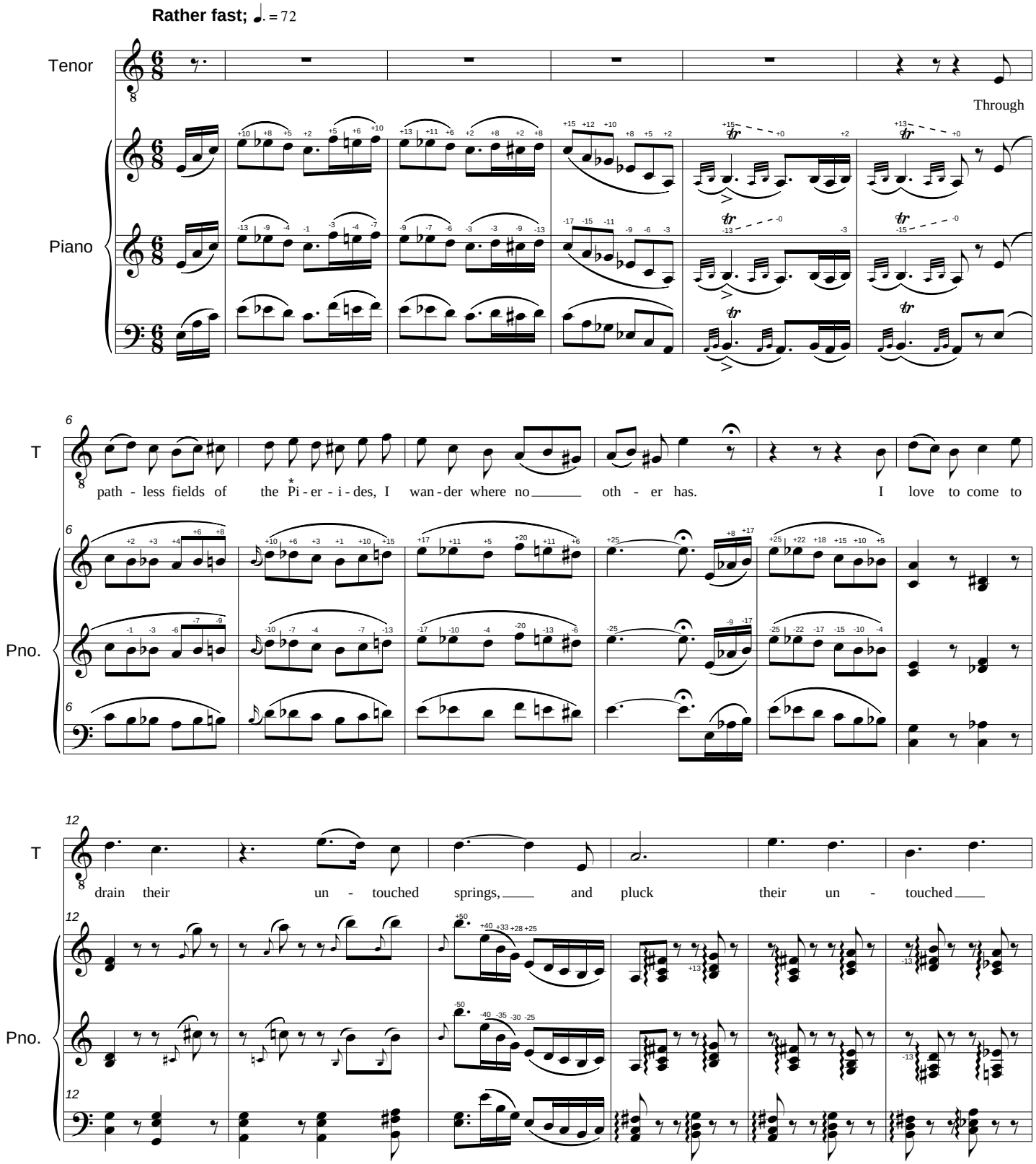

Moderately;(♪ = 96)
Tenor
Piano
Piano Noise
Electronic Voice
T
For wind ten-u-ous with sub-tle bo - dy, Drives and push-es a__ might - y ship of might - y
Pno.
tuning slides
Some longer notes artifically sustained...
Pno. Nse.
Elec. V.


12
T
bulk, One hand di - rects it, what - ev - er
Pno.
Pno. Nse.
Elec. V.
17
its mo-men - tum, What - ev-er its di-rec-tion one helm steers it,

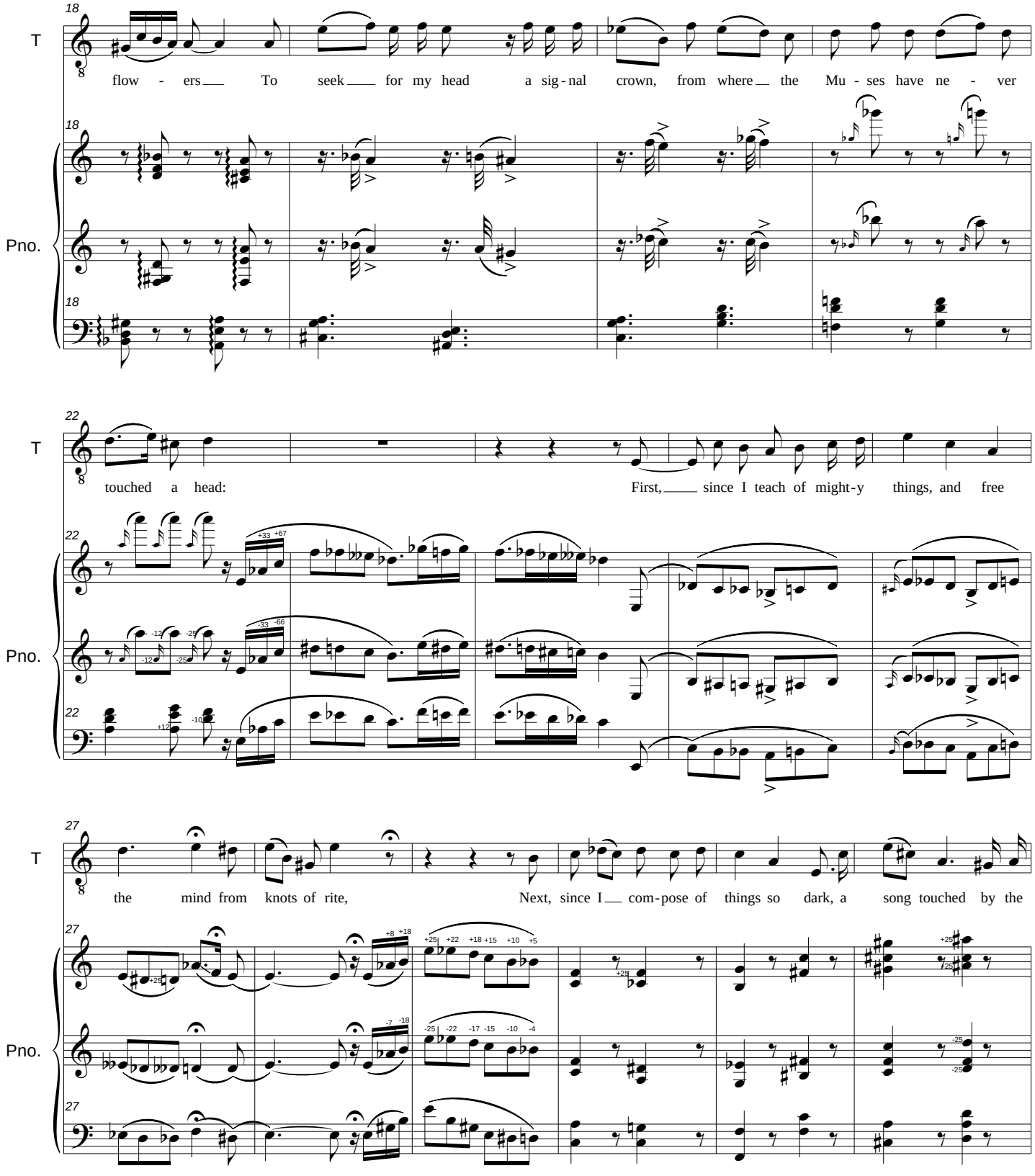

22
T
Great and man-y are moved and hoist - ed By mo - ving wheels and en - gines,
Pno.
Pno. Nse.
Elec. V.
28
With lit - tle ef - fort.

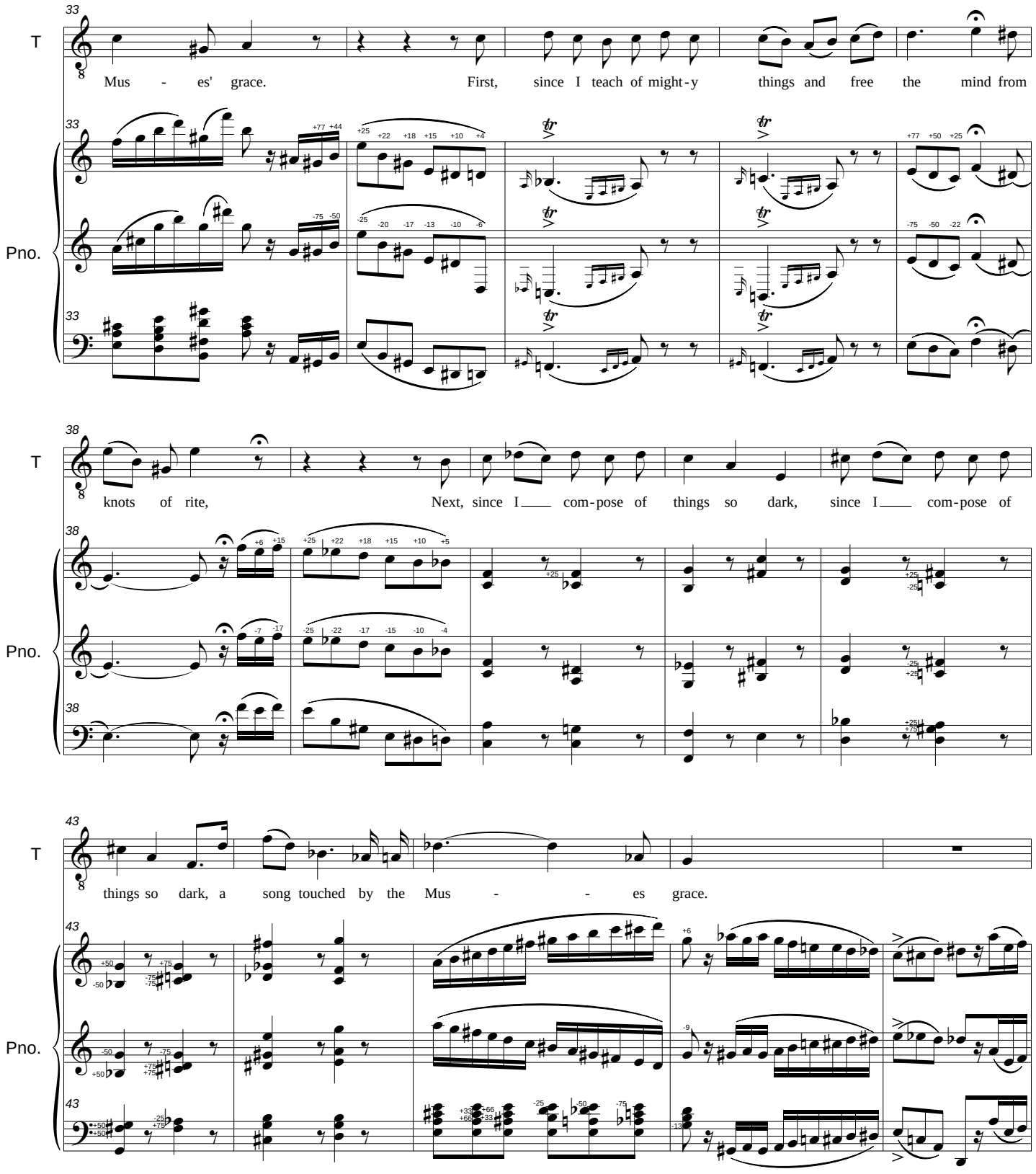
4. Of the Pierides

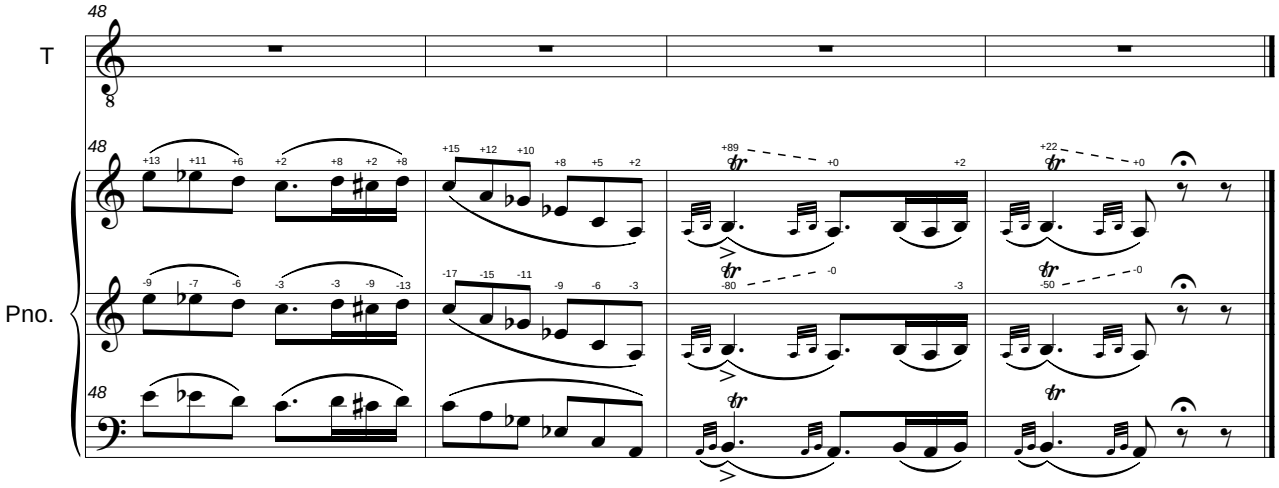
SL



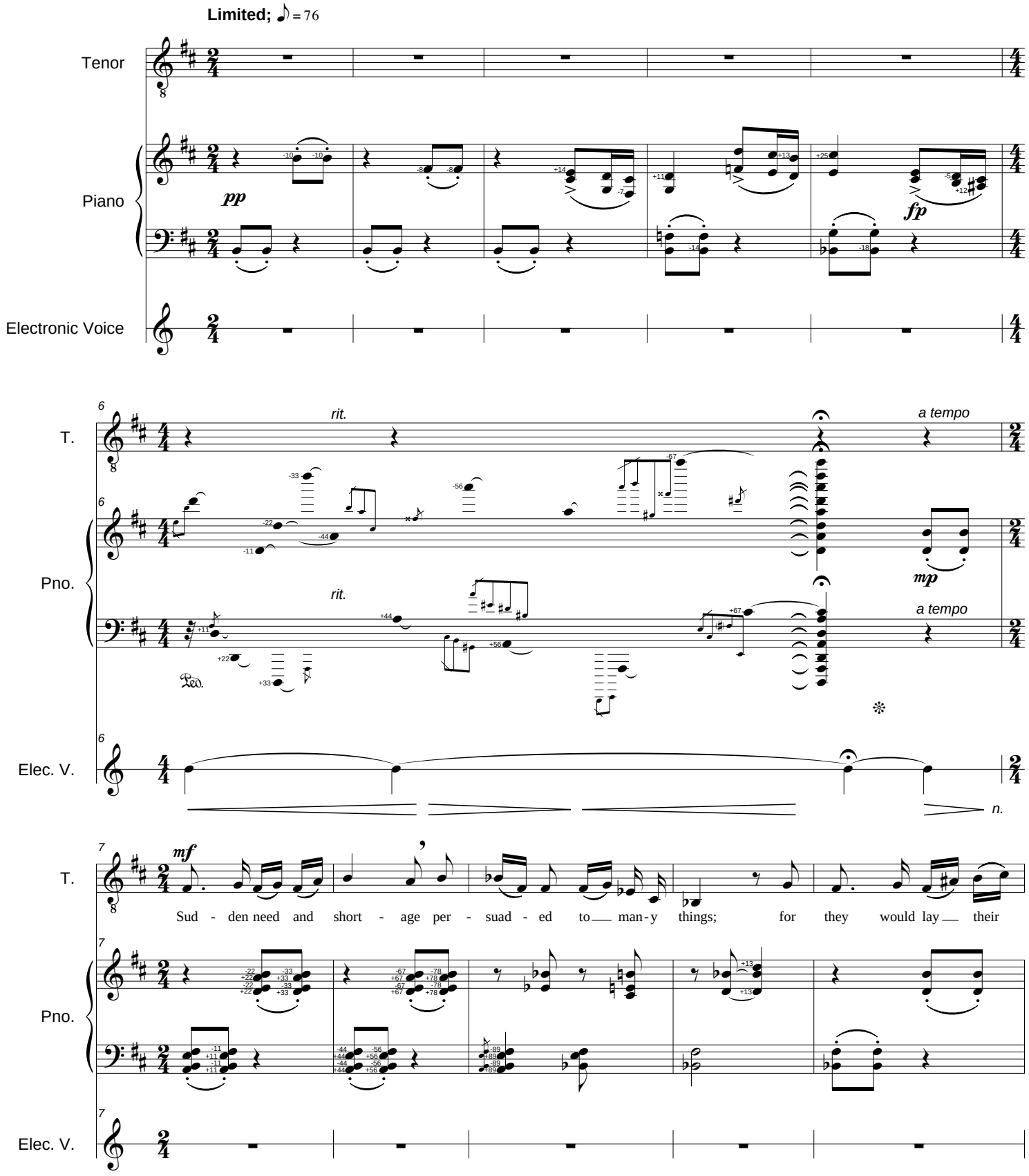
*: (paɪ-er-ee-dayz)

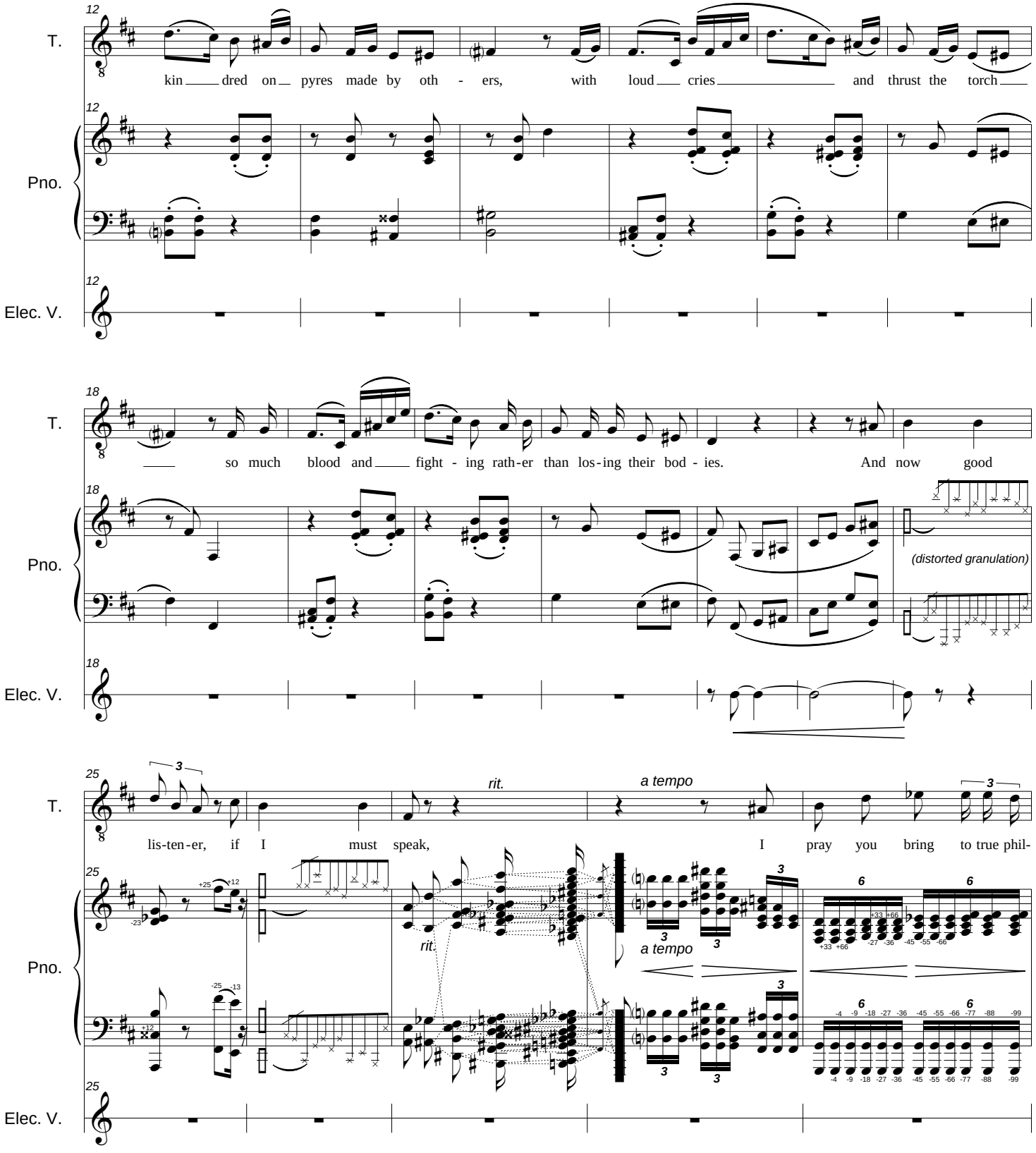

18
T
flow - ers To seek for my head a sig - nal crown, from where the Mu - ses have ne - ver
Pno.
22
touched a head: First, since I teach of might - y things, and free
27
the mind from knots of rite, Next, since I com - pose of things so dark, a song touched by the

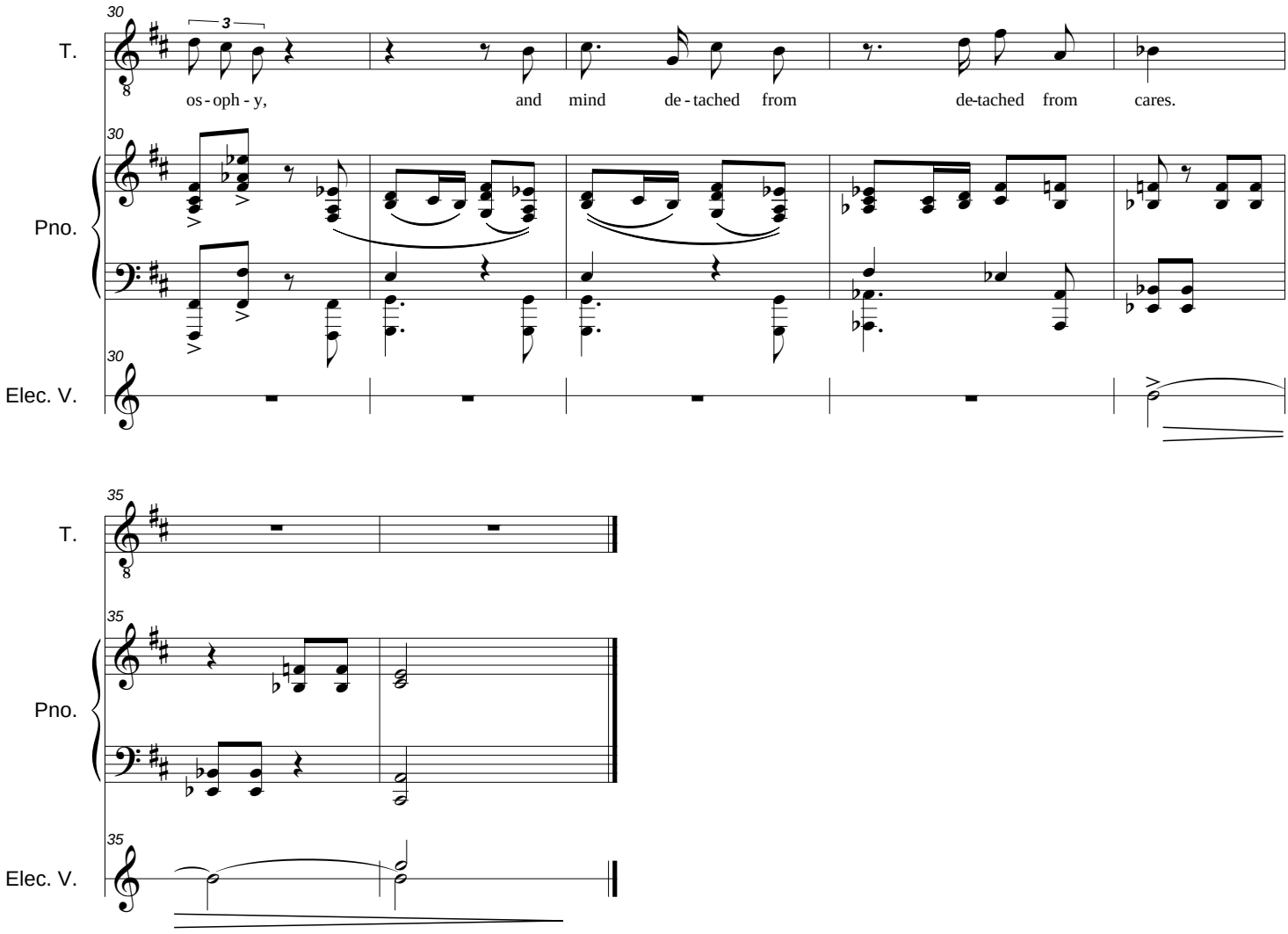

33
T
Mus - es' grace. First, since I teach of might-y things and free the mind from
Pno.
38
knots of rite, Next, since I com-pose of things so dark, since I com-pose of
43
things so dark, a song touched by the Mus - - es grace.


48
T
48
+13 +11 +6 +2 +8 +2 +8
+15 +12 +10 +8 +5 +2
+89 +0 +2
+22 +0
Pno.
-9 -7 -6 -3 -3 -9 -13
-17 -15 -11 -9 -6 -3
-80 -0 -3
-50 -0
48

5. Sudden need




12
T.
kin dred on pyres made by oth - ers, with loud cries and thrust the torch
12
Pno.
12
Elec. V.
18
T.
so much blood and fight - ing rath-er than los-ing their bod - ies. And now good
18
Pno.
(distorted granulation)
18
Elec. V.
25
T.
lis-ten-er, if I must speak, I pray you bring to true phil-
rit.
a tempo
25
Pno.
rit.
a tempo
25
Elec. V.


30
T.
os - oph - y,
and
mind
de - tached
from
de-tached
from
cares.
Pno.
Elec. V.

35
T.
Pno.
Elec. V.