Antjie in Berlin

for piano, loudspeakers and electronics

for Jill Richards & Shaughn Macrae

Rudiger Meyer

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Antjie in Berlin takes the audience on an aural journey based on a number of letters written by Antjie Krog while on a residency in Berlin and included in her recent book *Begging to be Black*. Part sound installation, part concert performance, the composition builds on the music concealed within the spoken word, creating a space for reflection within a landscape of loudspeakers that take on a nearly sculptural aspects. The layout of the city provides a template for the seating arrangement and organization of the performance space.

Recordings of Antjie Krog reading aloud the letters originally written to her mother, form the main point of departure for the piece. The letters themselves cover topics from simple descriptions of daily life in a foreign town to deeper reflections on global issues and moral questions. It is however the particular quality of Antjie Krog's specifically South African voice that plays a crucial role in the composition.How much atmosphere does a voice carry with it and what kind of melodies does it contain? What kind of music could it lead to?

The speech melodies and rhythms of Antjie's distinctive readings are transformed into piano music, unfolded and commented on within a sound environment based on field recordings made in Berlin. Vocal fragments migrate from one end of the space to the other, bringing her voice close to the listeners and providing a counterpart to the piano performance – an exploration of the sense of both presence and distance that can characterize communication over long distances, of the movement between inner and outer worlds.

The piece consists of three layers:
1. Voice recordings of Antjie Krog reading aloud letters from her book *Begging to be Black*.
2. A solo piano part based around the vocal readings.
3. An ambient sound 'environment' of field recordings made in Berlin and electronic sounds.

The piano (with lid removed) and desk for the sound technician are placed in the centre of the performance space.

The seating for the audience (for the premiere around 130 chairs) is loosely arranged around the piano using a map of Berlin as a template. (This map may also be projected from above or marked on the floor in some way.) This inclusive, somewhat looser arrangement of the seating contributes to a highly individualized listening experience in which there is no 'ideal spot'.

For the sound distribution of the recorded letters 12 loudspeakers are placed amongst the audience (loosely arranged according to the end-points of the Berlin underground). These loudspeakers should be of a size and quality such as to make the voice recordings clearly and comfortably audible and placed at 'ear level' with the seated audience. It is intended that the loudspeakers are present as objects in their own right - almost as if they too were members of the audience.

In each corner of the performance space a stack of larger loudspeakers is placed for distribution of the 'ambient' sounds. Since these sounds include many low frequencies at the bottom of the audible range it is important that there are sub-woofers capable of handling this.

Seven letters from Antjie Krog's *Begging to be Black* form the basis for the seven sections of the piece - each section exactly six minutes long. These sections are preceded by an 'overture' of ambient sound which is already playing as the audience enters the performance space.

The overall form of the piece moves through two large scale arcs, the first covering the first four letters and the second the final three, in which one can discern a general shift in attention from the direct presence of external environment to internal landscapes remote in both time and space.
These shifts in the content of the letters are reflected in the sound distribution of the vocal fragments - with each letter the number loudspeakers used is decreased such that when one reaches the quiet center of the piece in the fourth letter only those loudspeakers closest to the piano are active and the environmental sounds of the city have almost completely disappeared. Activity is once again extensive and outwardly directed in the review of modern life that takes place in the fifth letter - *Die Zeit* - only to move inwards once again towards the reflective questioning found in the final letter.

The piece, through these movements from outer to inner, also hopefully opens up a space for reflection for the audience.

Composed with support from: **THE DANISH ARTS FOUNDATION**

Piano

Antjie in Berlin - Disbelief

Rudiger Meyer
Text: Antjie Krog

20 seconds of the electronic soundtrack before the piano part begins

Piano

1

♩ = 41

Liewe Ma

Disbelief!

Total disbelief about where I am.

(d)

mp *

**

Pedal throughout

♩ = 41

Up until now, every visit to Europe has simply confirmed alienation,

7

Pno.

♩ = 35

an irrefutable Africanness and,

10

Pno.

♩ = 46

♩ = 33

♩ = 20

above all else, my Third World-ness.

2

Until now.

13

Pno.

♩ = 40

Poring for long hours over small scaffoldings of words

17

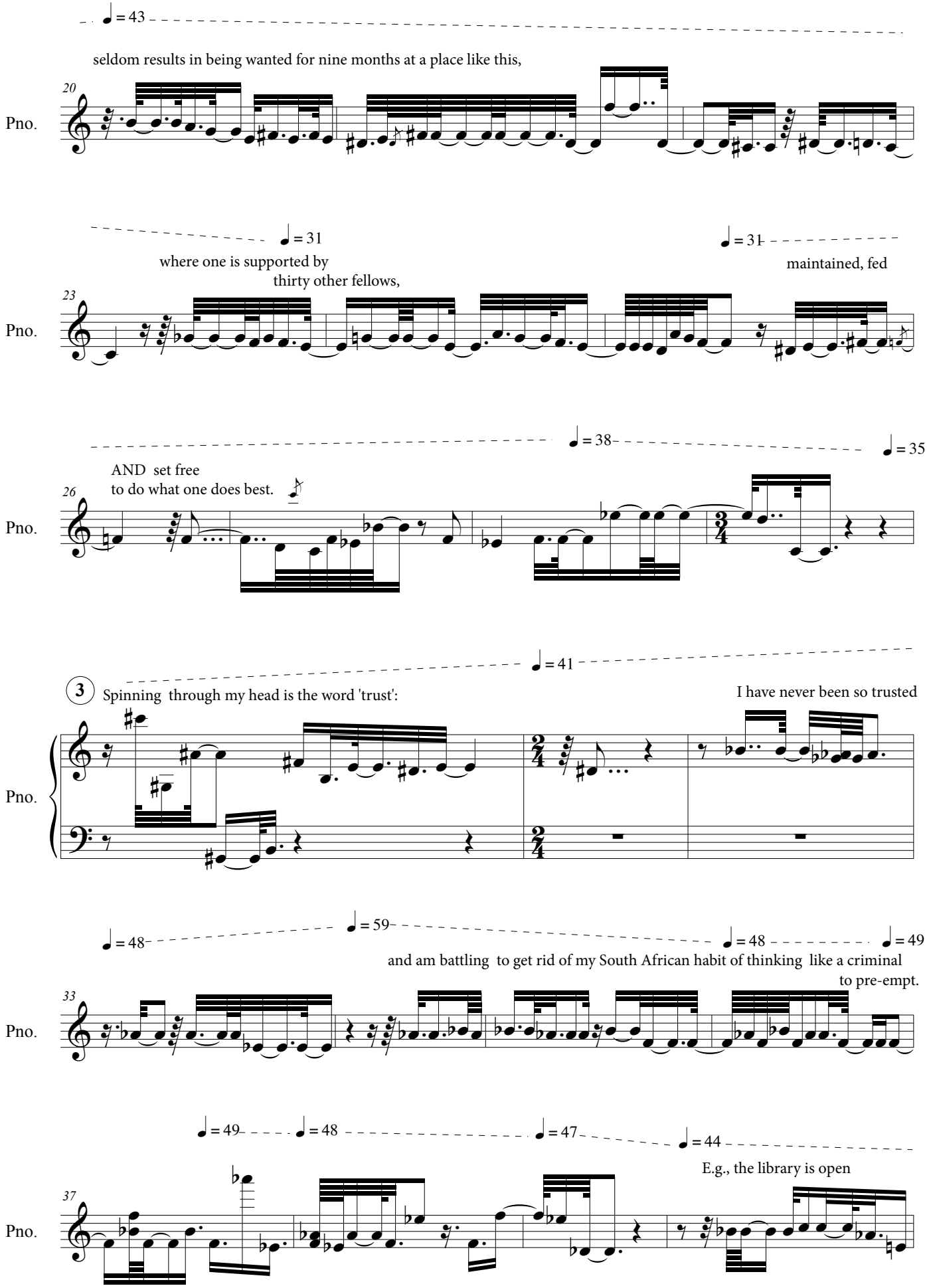
Pno.

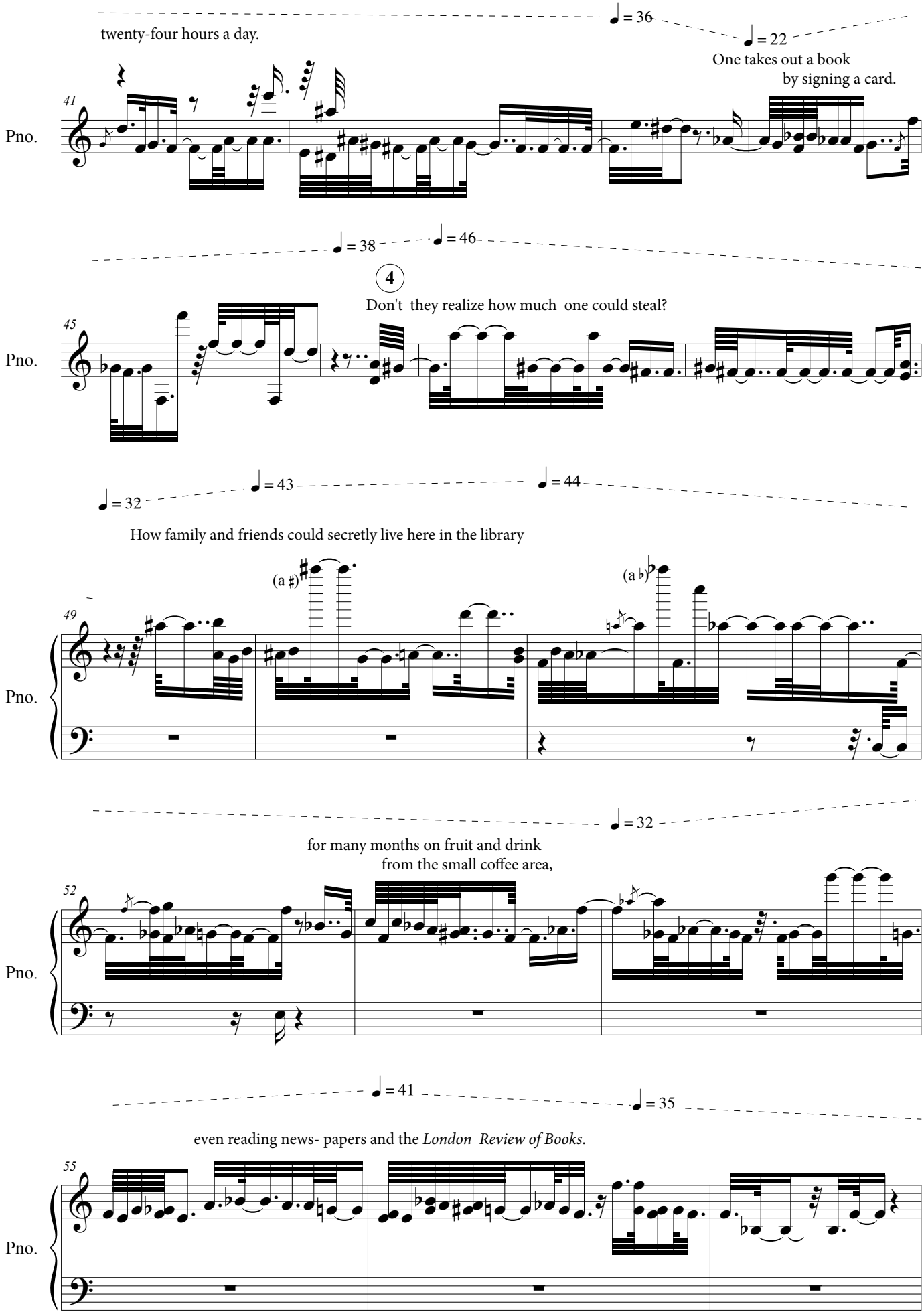
* Speech-like volume and phrasing of the dynamics using the recorded speech as an example

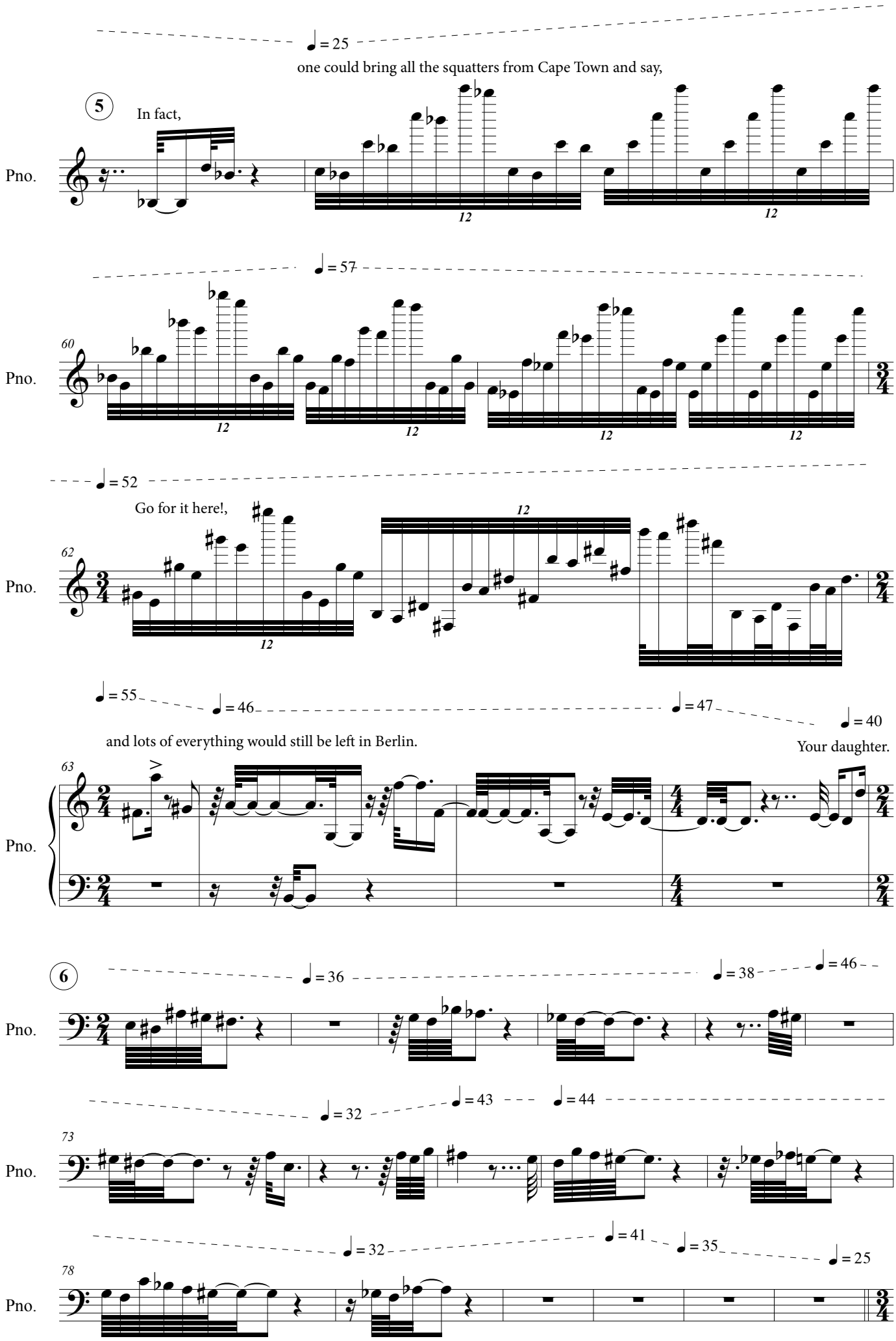
**A wash of sustained sound is intended throughout all sections of the entire piece.
This may however discretely be (partly) cleared at points corresponding to the beginning of a phrase, if necessary.

© Music: Rudiger Meyer 2012, Text : Antjie Krog

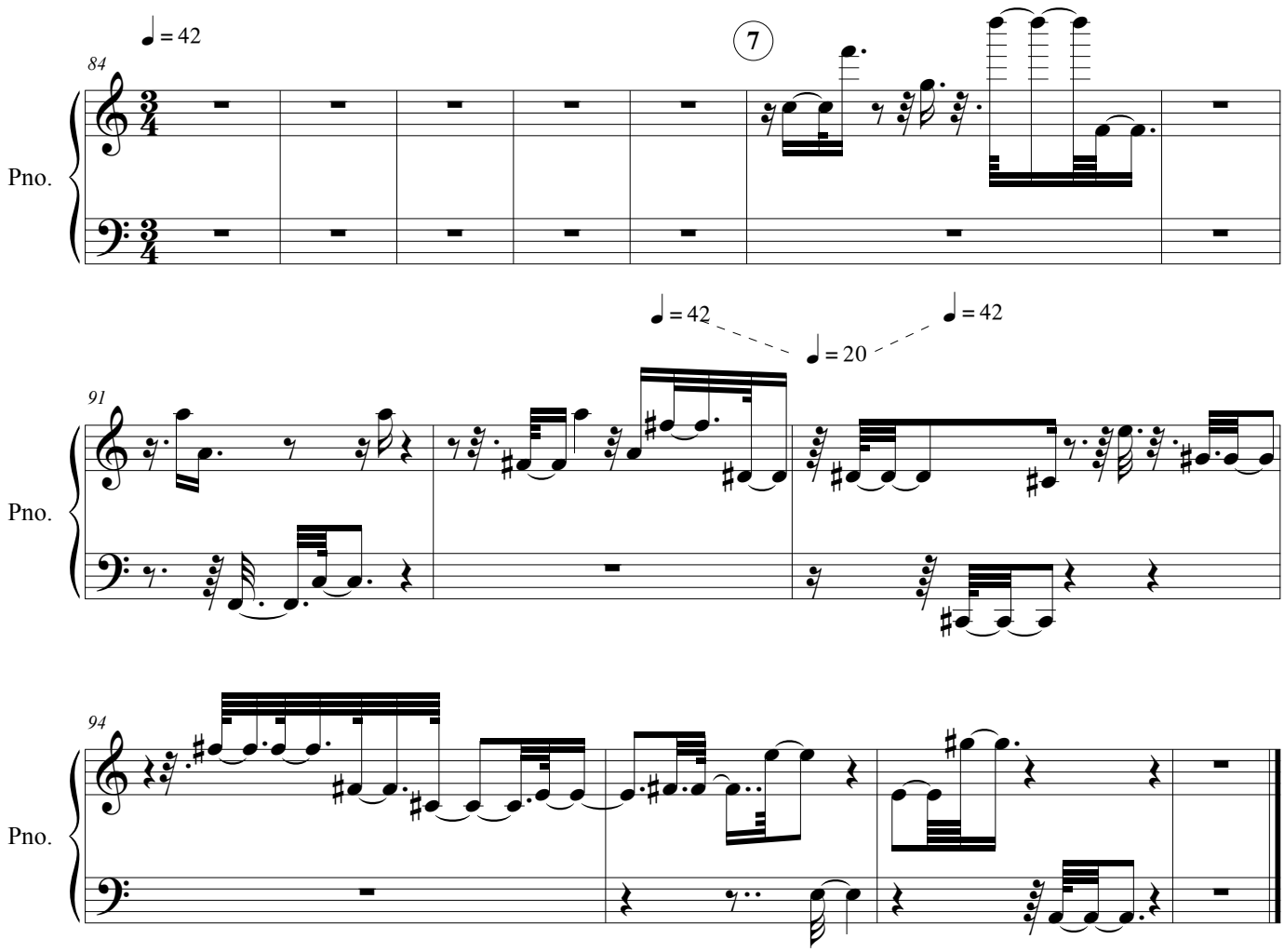
v. 1.1.1 - 18.05.12/03.09.12


♩ = 43
seldom results in being wanted for nine months at a place like this,
20
Pno.
♩ = 31
where one is supported by
thirty other fellows,
♩ = 31
maintained, fed
23
Pno.
♩ = 38
♩ = 35
AND set free
to do what one does best.
26
Pno.
♩ = 41
3
Spinning through my head is the word 'trust':
I have never been so trusted
Pno.
♩ = 48
♩ = 59
♩ = 48
♩ = 49
and am battling to get rid of my South African habit of thinking like a criminal
to pre-empt.
33
Pno.
♩ = 49
♩ = 48
♩ = 47
♩ = 44
E.g., the library is open
37
Pno.


♩ = 36
twenty-four hours a day.
♩ = 22
One takes out a book
by signing a card.
41
Pno.
♩ = 38
♩ = 46
4
Don't they realize how much one could steal?
45
Pno.
♩ = 32
♩ = 43
♩ = 44
How family and friends could secretly live here in the library
(a ♯)
(a ♭)
49
Pno.
♩ = 32
for many months on fruit and drink
from the small coffee area,
52
Pno.
♩ = 41
♩ = 35
even reading news- papers and the *London Review of Books.*
55
Pno.

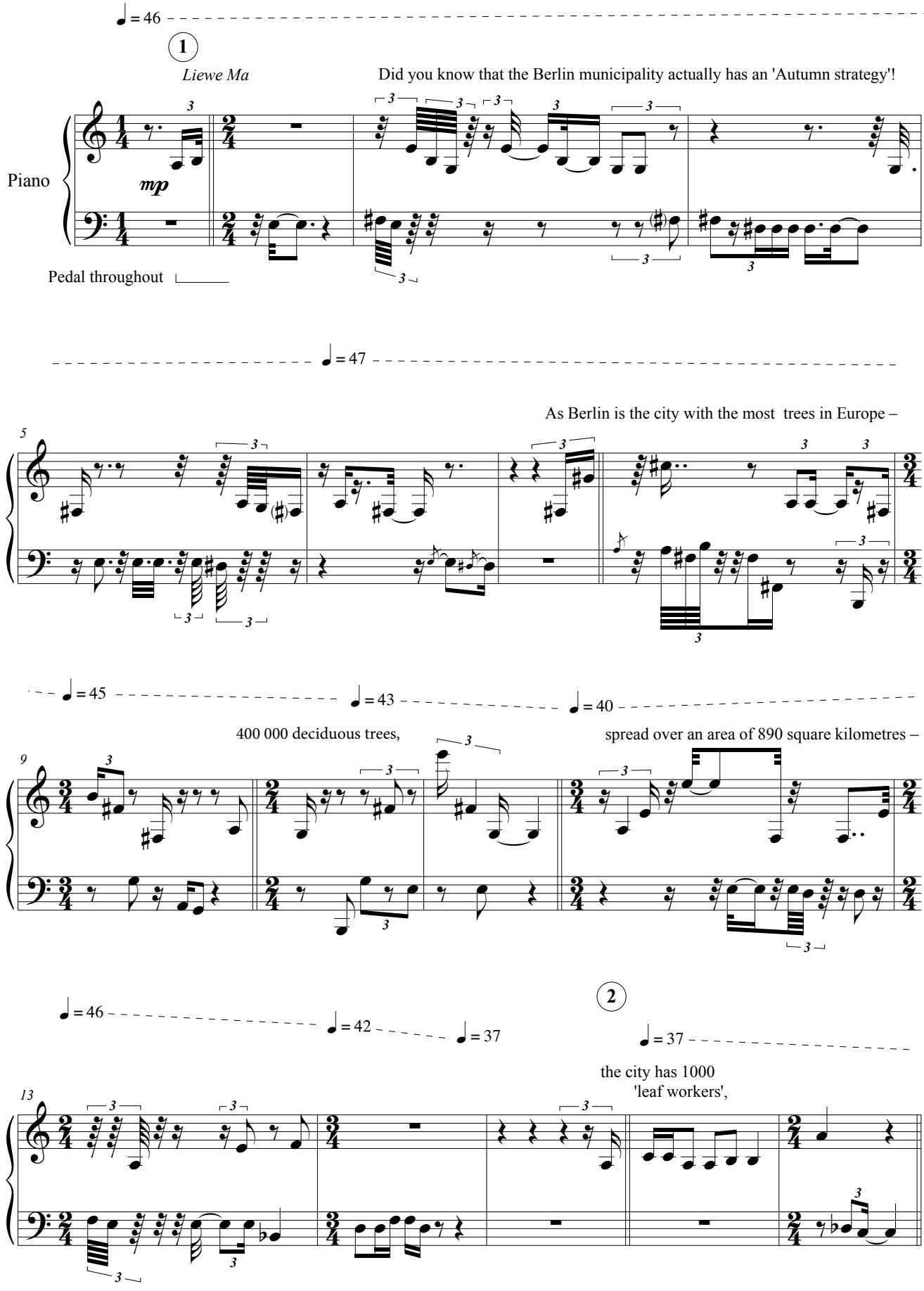


v. 1.1.1 - 18.05.12/03.09.12


♩ = 42
84
7
Pno.
♩ = 42
♩ = 20
♩ = 42
91
Pno.
94
Pno.

2. Antjie In Berlin - Autumn Strategy

Rudiger Meyer
Text: Antjie Krog



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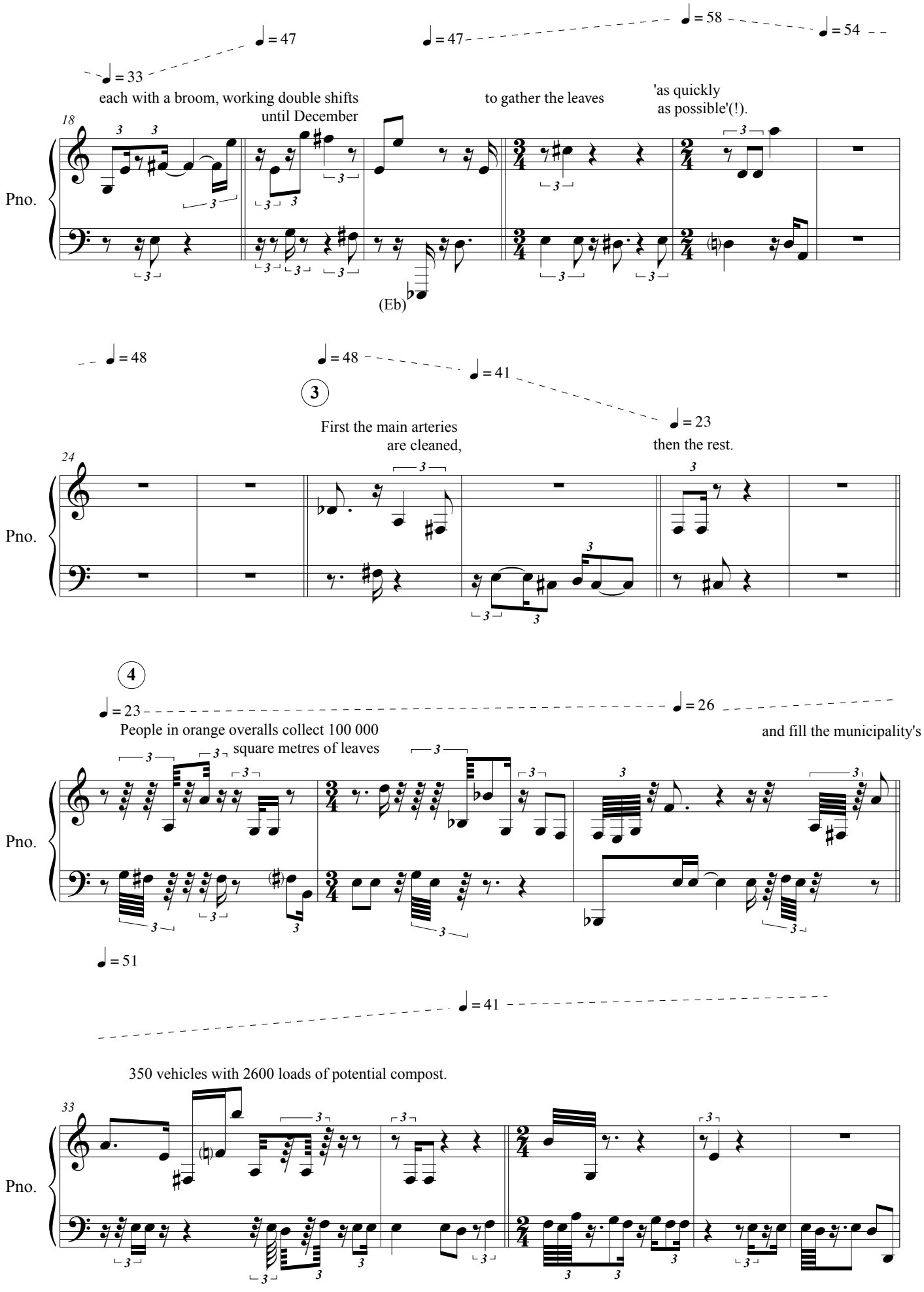
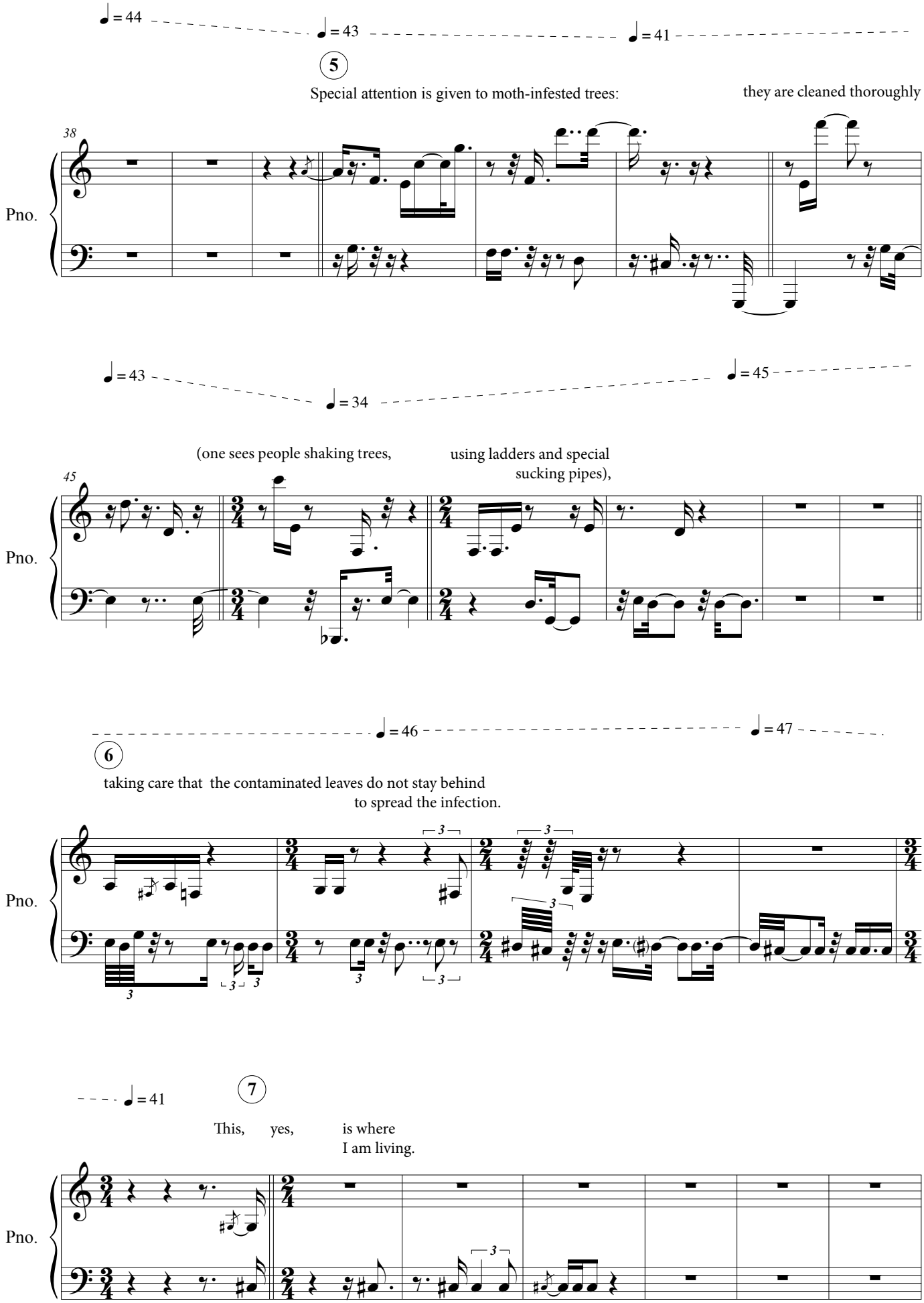
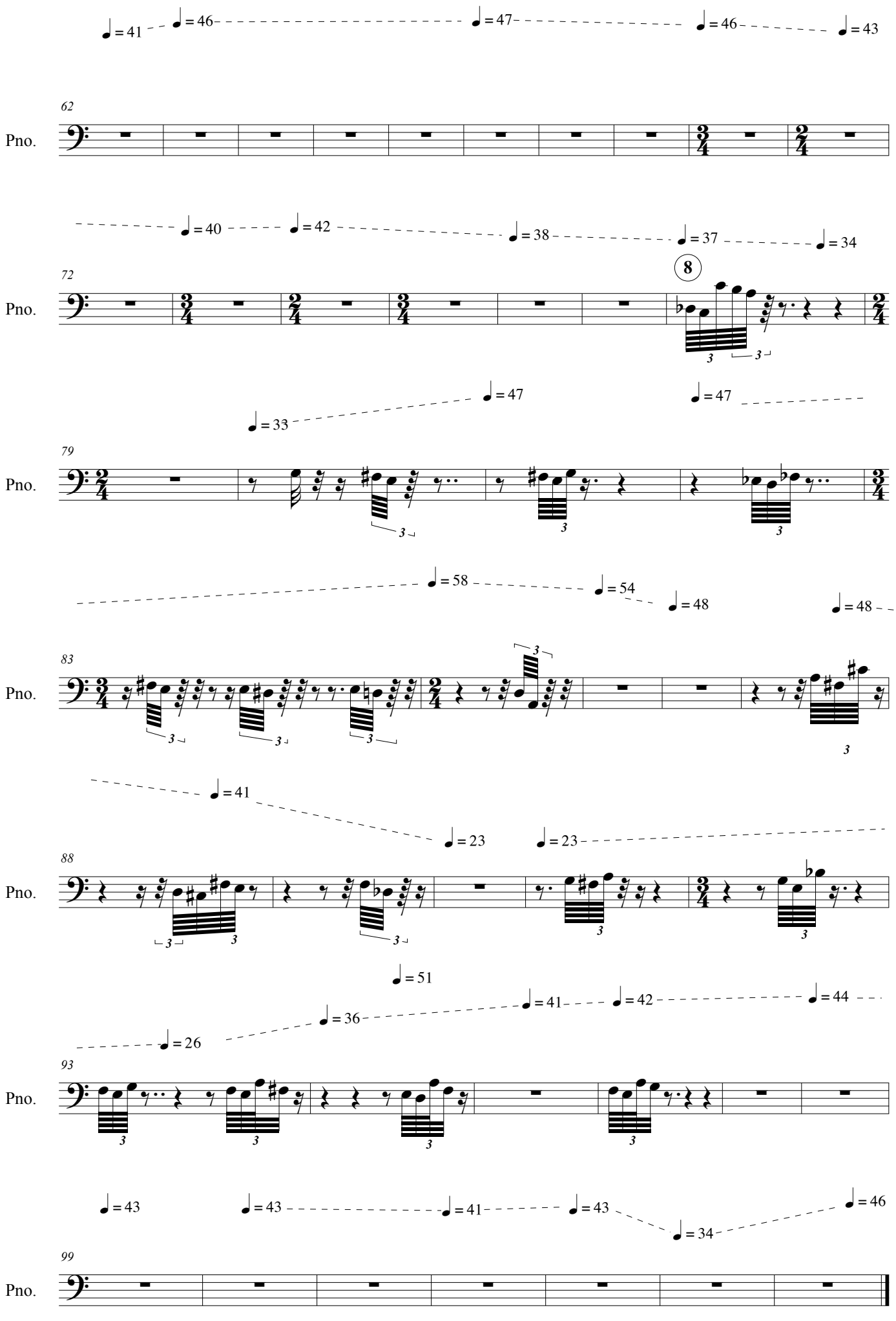
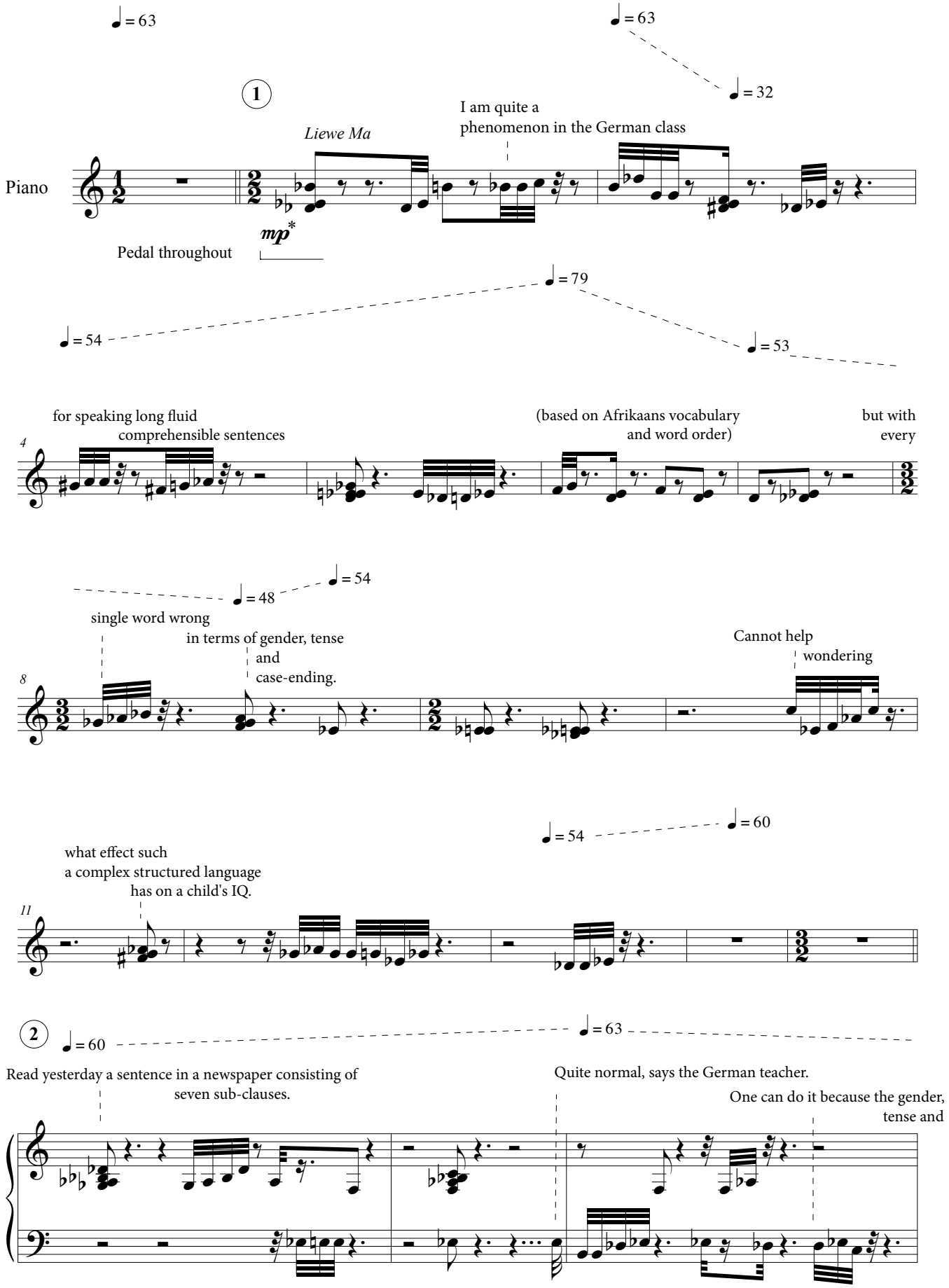

♩ = 33
♩ = 47
each with a broom, working double shifts
until December
♩ = 47
♩ = 58
to gather the leaves
♩ = 54
'as quickly
as possible'(!).
18
Pno.
(Eb)
♩ = 48
♩ = 48
3
First the main arteries
are cleaned,
♩ = 41
♩ = 23
then the rest.
24
Pno.
4
♩ = 23
People in orange overalls collect 100 000
square metres of leaves
♩ = 26
and fill the municipality's
Pno.
♩ = 51
♩ = 41
350 vehicles with 2600 loads of potential compost.
33
Pno.


♩ = 44
♩ = 43
♩ = 41
5
Special attention is given to moth-infested trees:
they are cleaned thoroughly
38
Pno.
♩ = 43
♩ = 34
♩ = 45
(one sees people shaking trees,
using ladders and special
sucking pipes),
45
Pno.
♩ = 46
♩ = 47
6
taking care that the contaminated leaves do not stay behind
to spread the infection.
Pno.
♩ = 41
7
This, yes, is where
I am living.
Pno.


♩ = 41
♩ = 46
♩ = 47
♩ = 46
♩ = 43
62
Pno.
♩ = 40
♩ = 42
♩ = 38
♩ = 37
♩ = 34
72
8
Pno.
♩ = 33
♩ = 47
♩ = 47
79
Pno.
♩ = 58
♩ = 54
♩ = 48
♩ = 48
83
Pno.
♩ = 41
♩ = 23
♩ = 23
88
Pno.
♩ = 51
♩ = 26
♩ = 36
♩ = 41
♩ = 42
♩ = 44
93
Pno.
♩ = 43
♩ = 43
♩ = 41
♩ = 43
♩ = 34
♩ = 46
99
Pno.

3. Antjie in Berlin - Rilke

Rudiger Meyer
Text: Antjie Krog



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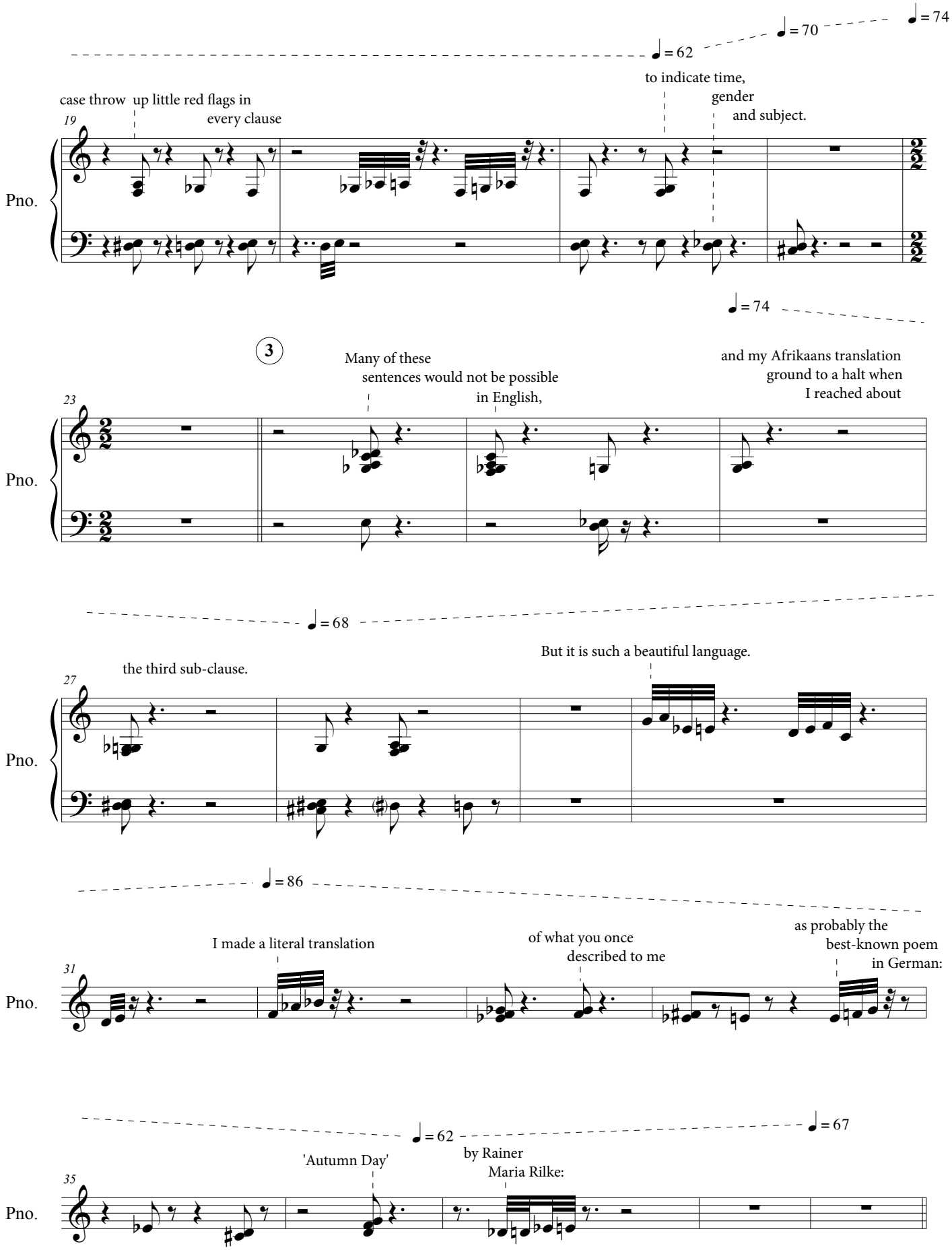
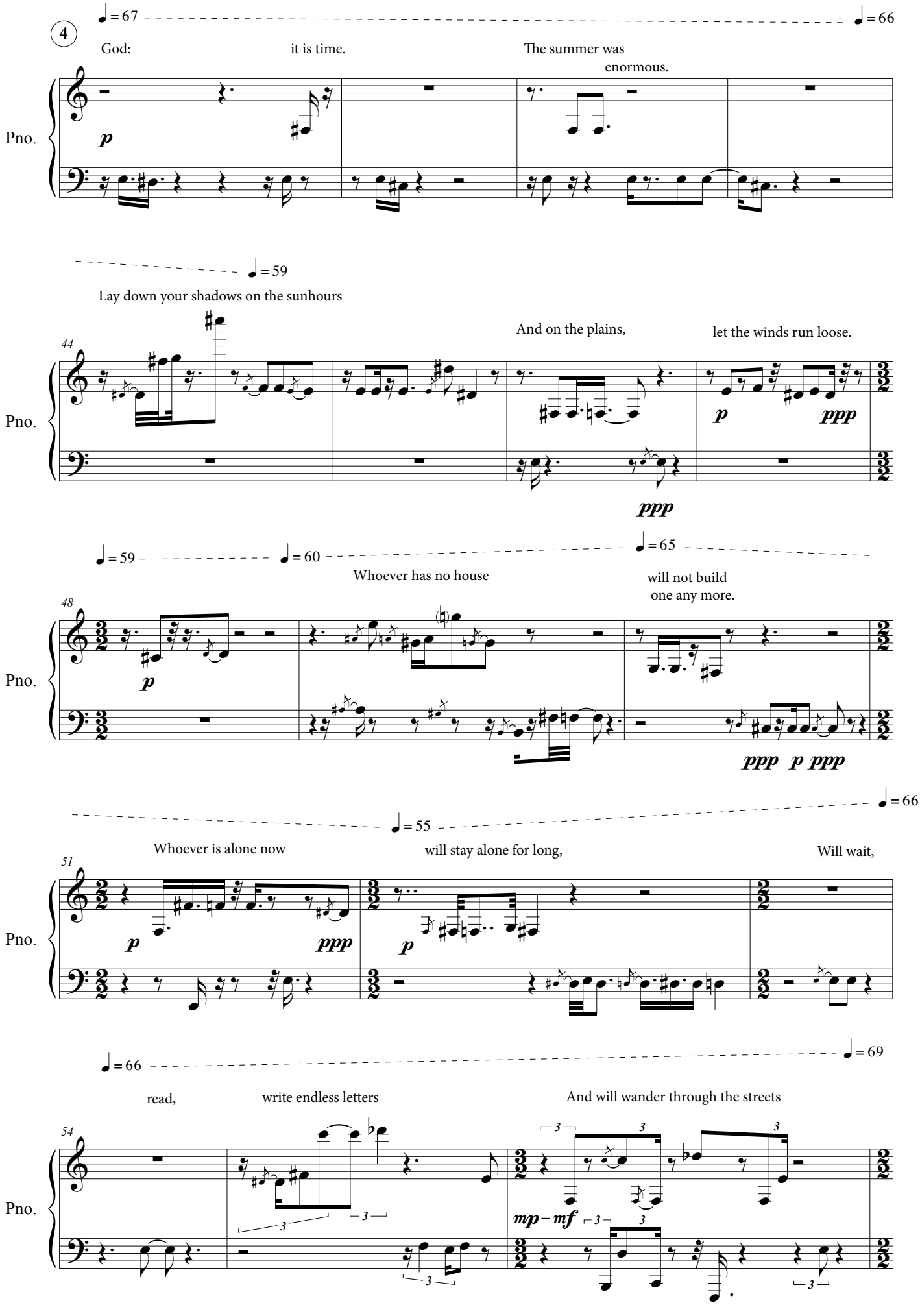
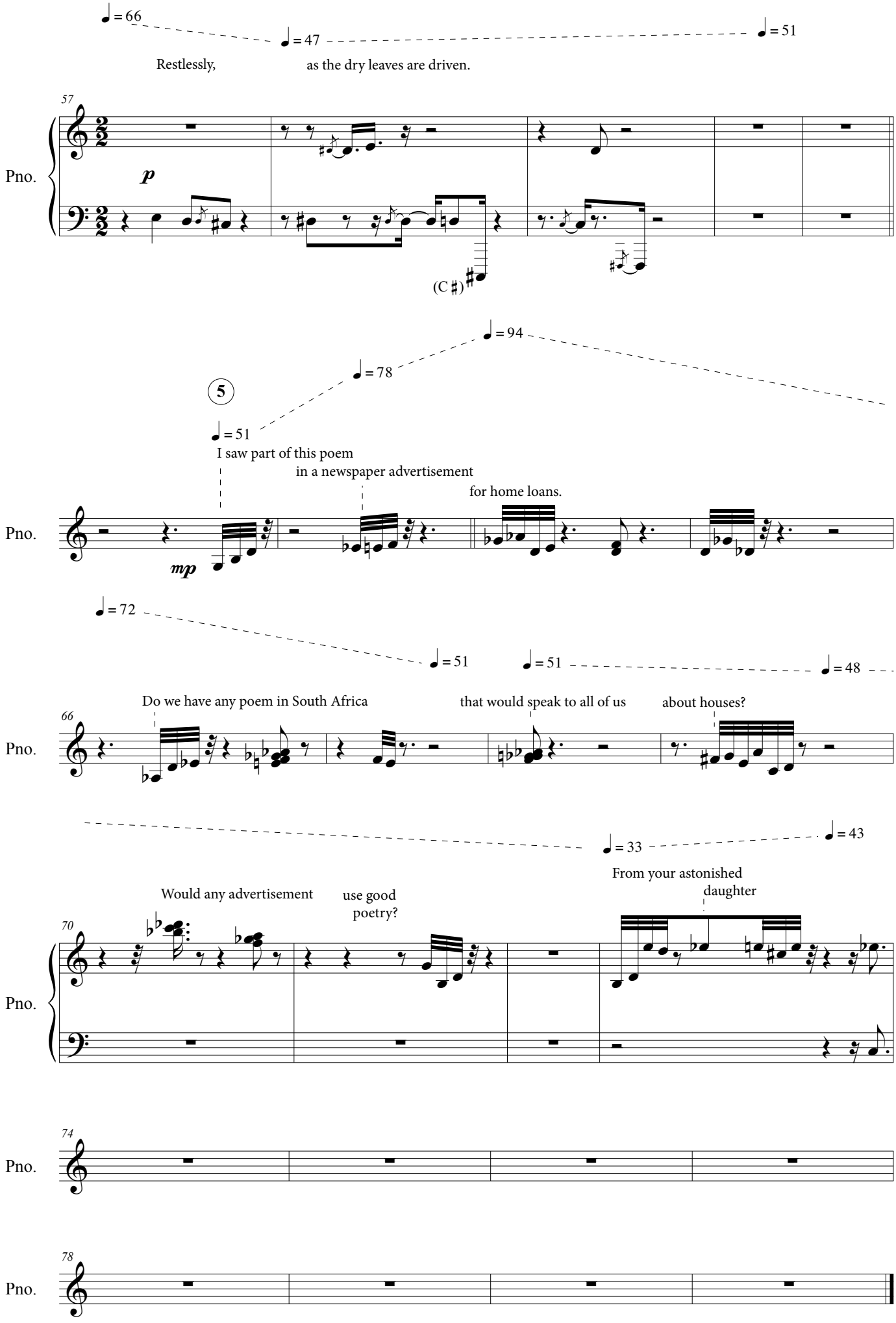
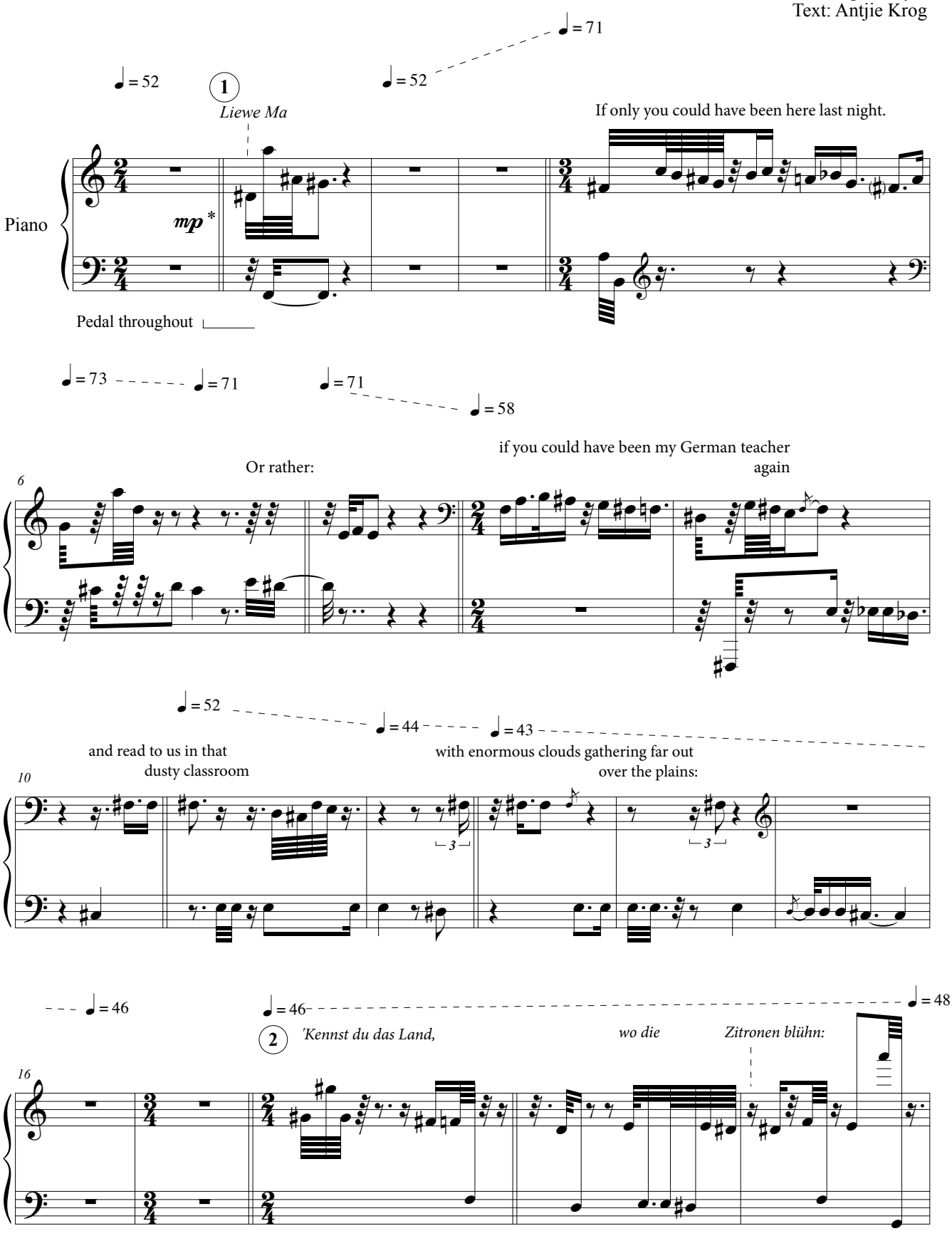

♩= 74
♩= 70
♩= 62
case throw up little red flags in every clause
to indicate time, gender and subject.
19
Pno.
♩= 74
3
Many of these sentences would not be possible in English,
and my Afrikaans translation ground to a halt when I reached about
23
Pno.
♩= 68
the third sub-clause.
But it is such a beautiful language.
27
Pno.
♩= 86
I made a literal translation
of what you once described to me
as probably the best-known poem in German:
31
Pno.
♩= 62
♩= 67
'Autumn Day'
by Rainer Maria Rilke:
35
Pno.

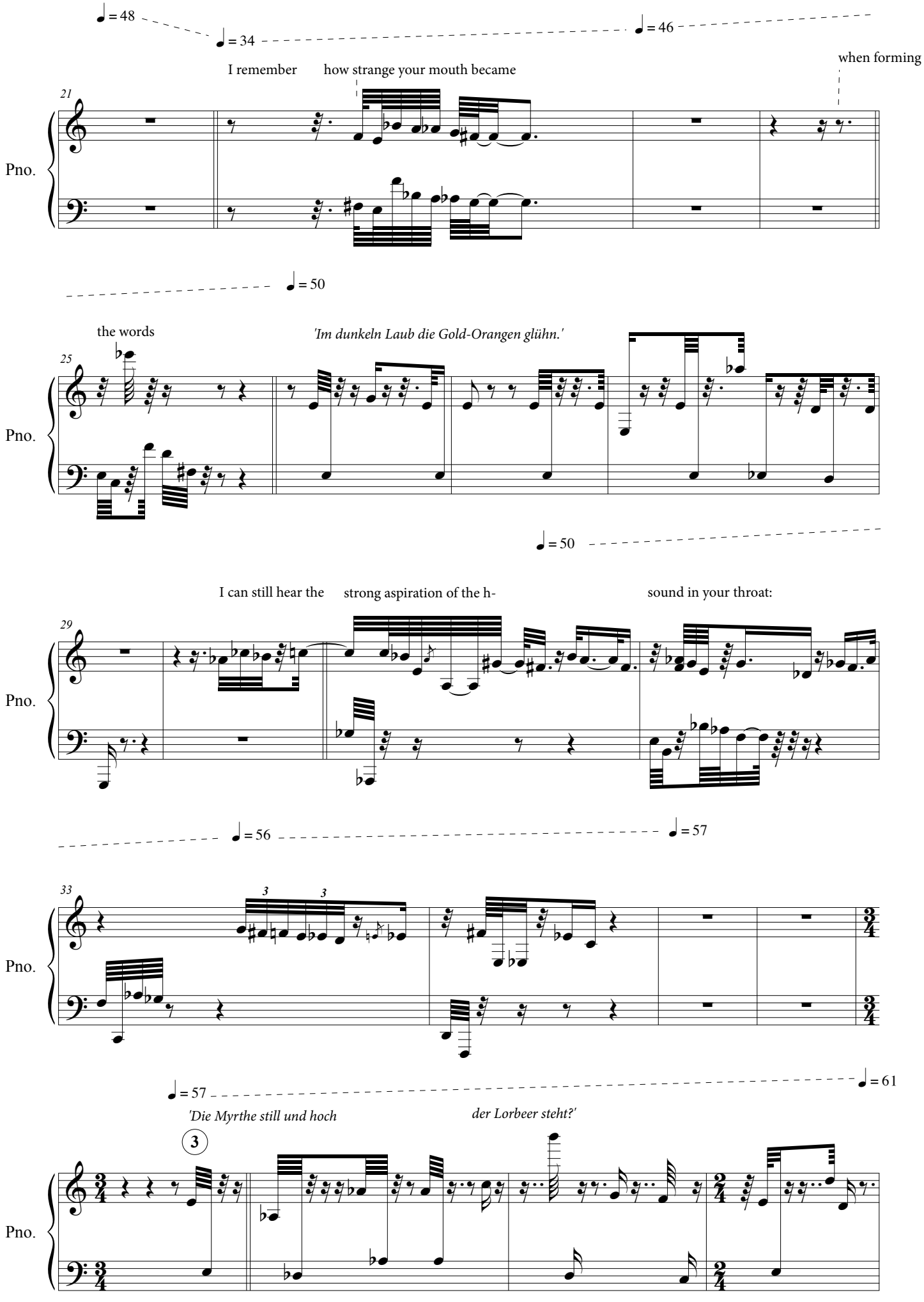

♩ = 67
♩ = 66
4
God:
it is time.
The summer was
enormous.
Pno.
p
♩ = 59
Lay down your shadows on the sunhours
44
And on the plains,
let the winds run loose.
Pno.
p
ppp
ppp
♩ = 59
♩ = 60
♩ = 65
Whoever has no house
will not build
one any more.
48
Pno.
p
ppp p ppp
♩ = 66
♩ = 55
Whoever is alone now
will stay alone for long,
Will wait,
51
Pno.
p
ppp
p
♩ = 66
♩ = 69
read,
write endless letters
And will wander through the streets
54
Pno.
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
mp – mf
3
3
3

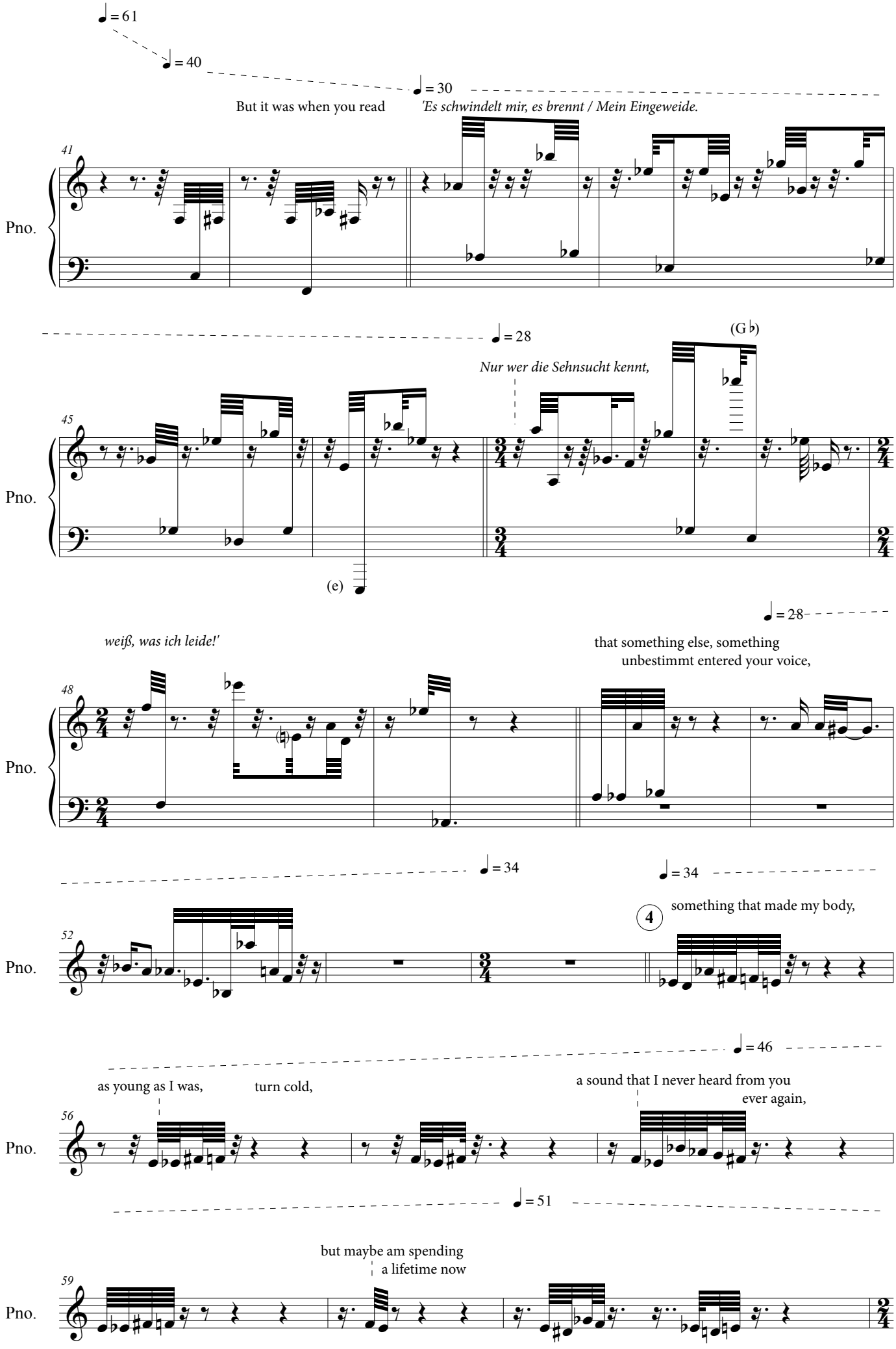

♩= 66
♩= 47
♩= 51
Restlessly,
as the dry leaves are driven.
57
Pno.
p
(C ♯)
♩= 94
♩= 78
5
♩= 51
I saw part of this poem
in a newspaper advertisement
for home loans.
Pno.
mp
♩= 72
♩= 51
♩= 51
♩= 48
Do we have any poem in South Africa
that would speak to all of us
about houses?
66
Pno.
♩= 33
♩= 43
From your astonished
daughter
Would any advertisement
use good
poetry?
70
Pno.
74
Pno.
78
Pno.

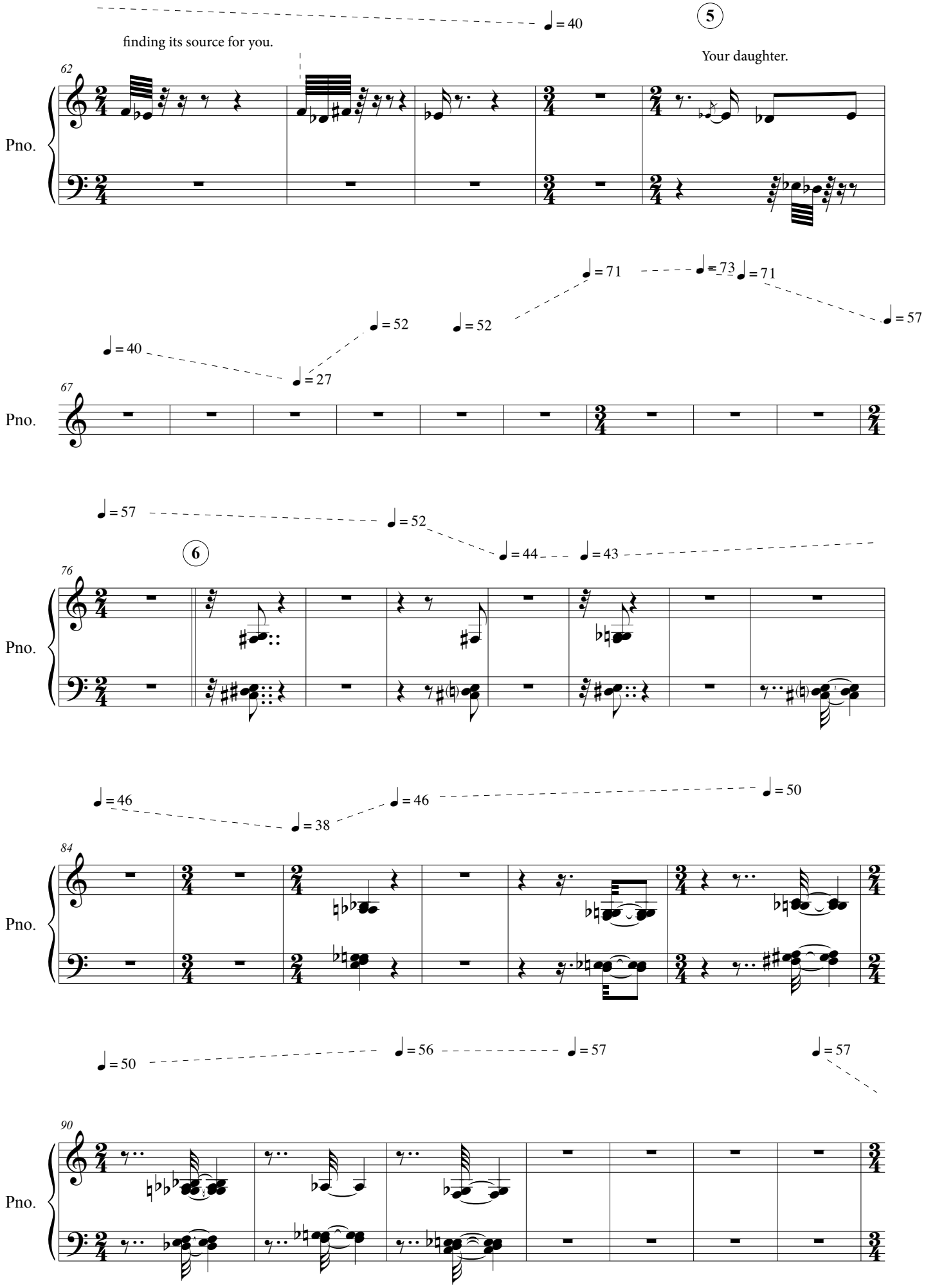
4. Antjie in Berlin - Kennst du das Land

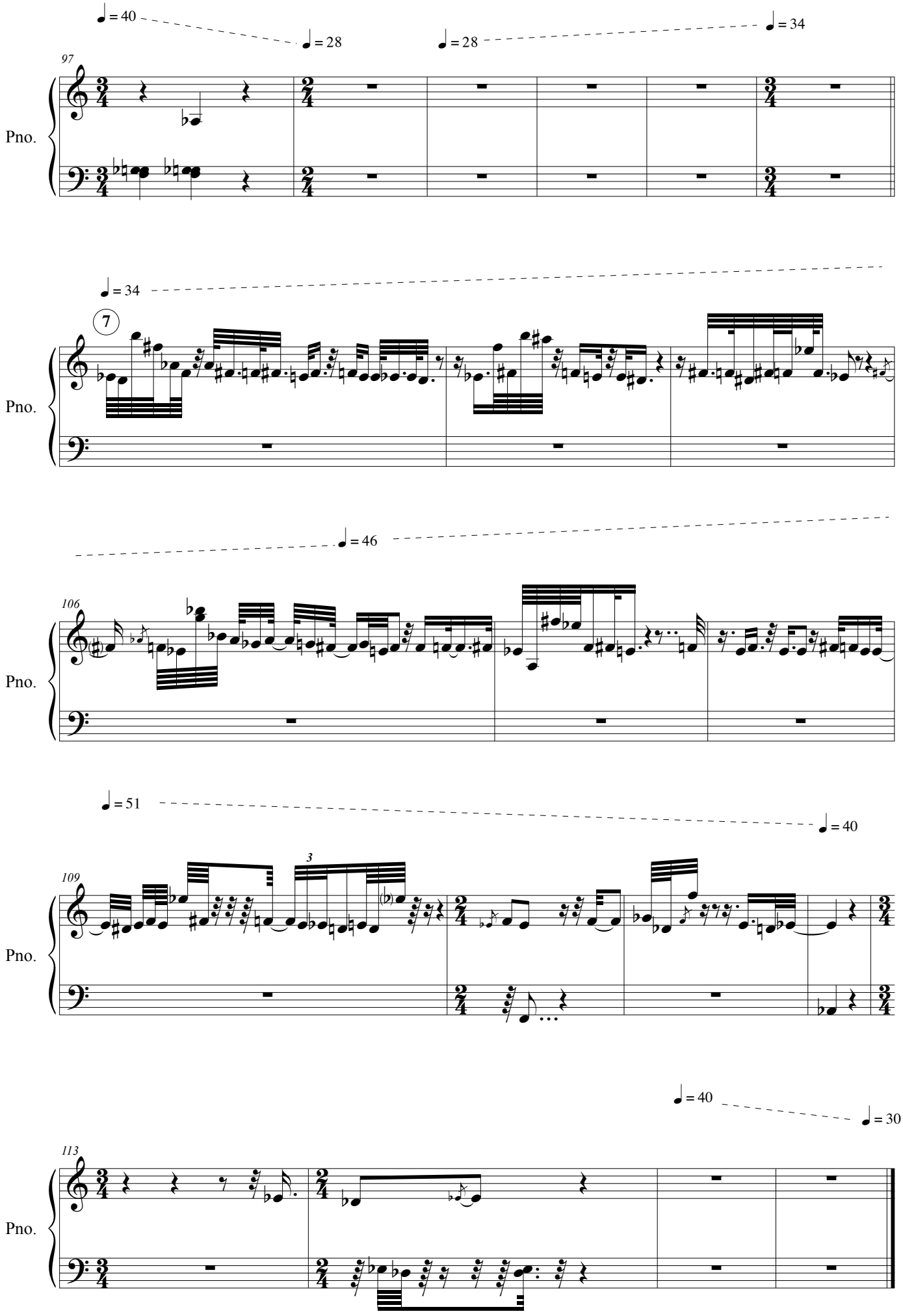
Rudiger Meyer
Text: Antjie Krog




♩ = 48
♩ = 34
♩ = 46
I remember
how strange your mouth became
when forming
21
Pno.
♩ = 50
the words
'Im dunkeln Laub die Gold-Orangen glühn.'
25
Pno.
♩ = 50
I can still hear the
strong aspiration of the h-
sound in your throat:
29
Pno.
♩ = 56
♩ = 57
33
3
3
Pno.
♩ = 57
♩ = 61
'Die Myrthe still und hoch
der Lorbeer steht?'
3
Pno.

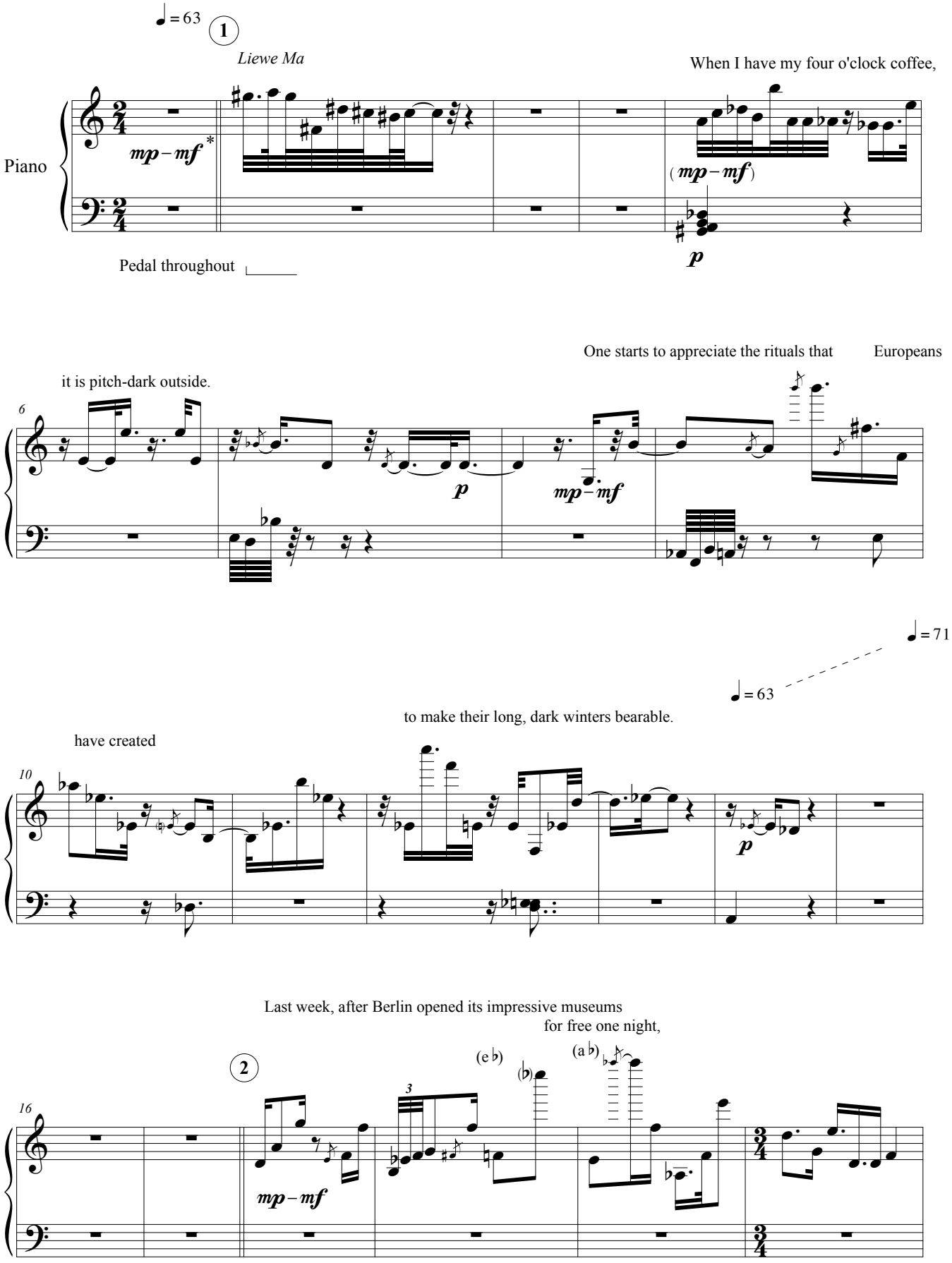

♩ = 61
♩ = 40
♩ = 30
But it was when you read
'Es schwindelt mir, es brennt / Mein Eingeweide.
41
Pno.
♩ = 28
(G ♭)
Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt,
45
Pno.
(e)
♩ = 28
weiß, was ich leide!'
that something else, something
unbestimmt entered your voice,
48
Pno.
♩ = 34
♩ = 34
4
something that made my body,
52
Pno.
♩ = 46
as young as I was,
turn cold,
a sound that I never heard from you
ever again,
56
Pno.
♩ = 51
but maybe am spending
a lifetime now
59
Pno.


finding its source for you.
Your daughter.
5
6
Pno.
62
67
76
84
90


♩ = 40
♩ = 28
♩ = 28
♩ = 34
97
Pno.
♩ = 34
7
Pno.
♩ = 46
106
Pno.
♩ = 51
♩ = 40
3
109
Pno.
♩ = 40
♩ = 30
113
Pno.

5. Antjie in Berlin - Die Zeit

Rudiger Meyer
Text: Antjie Krog



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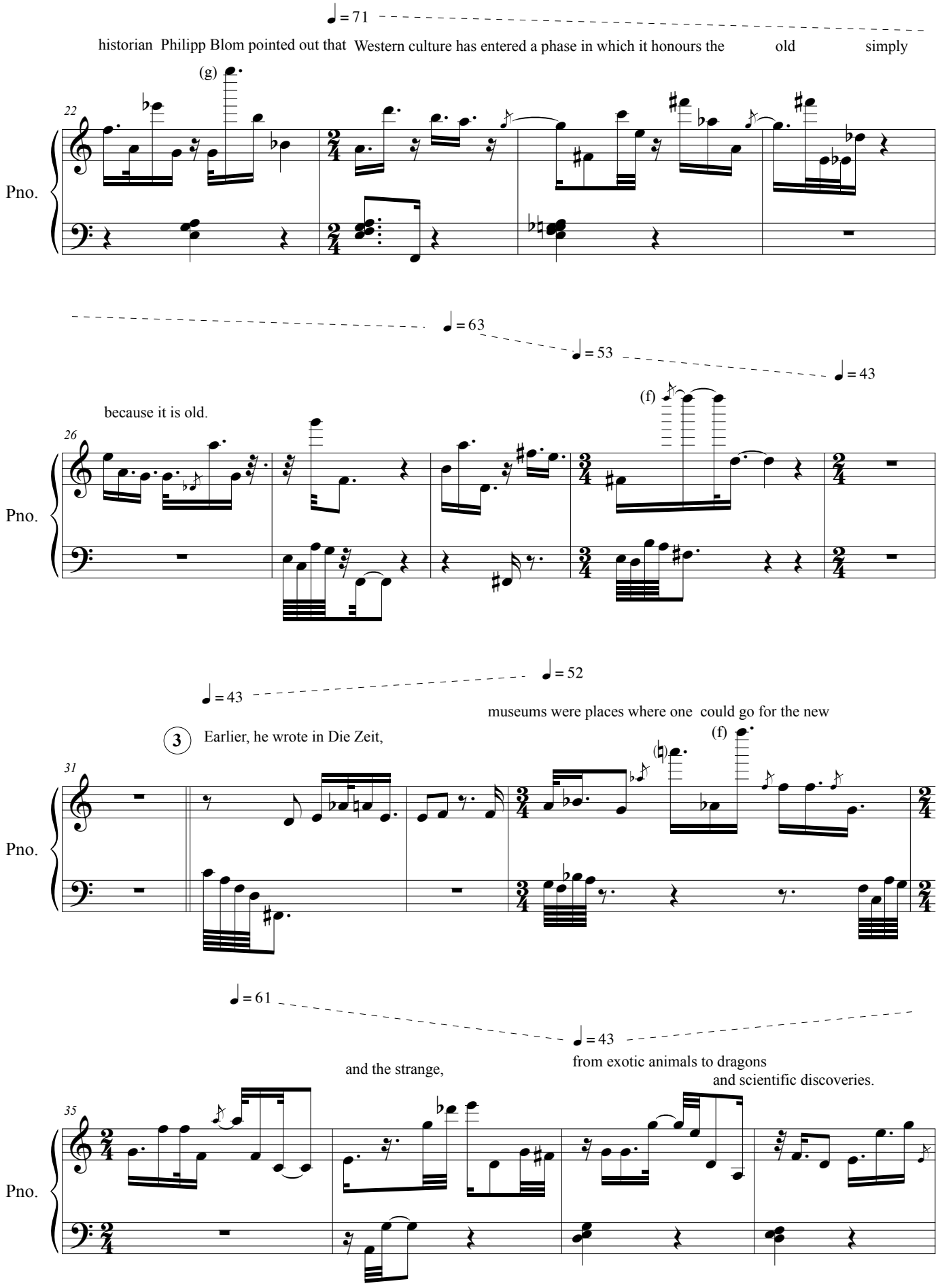
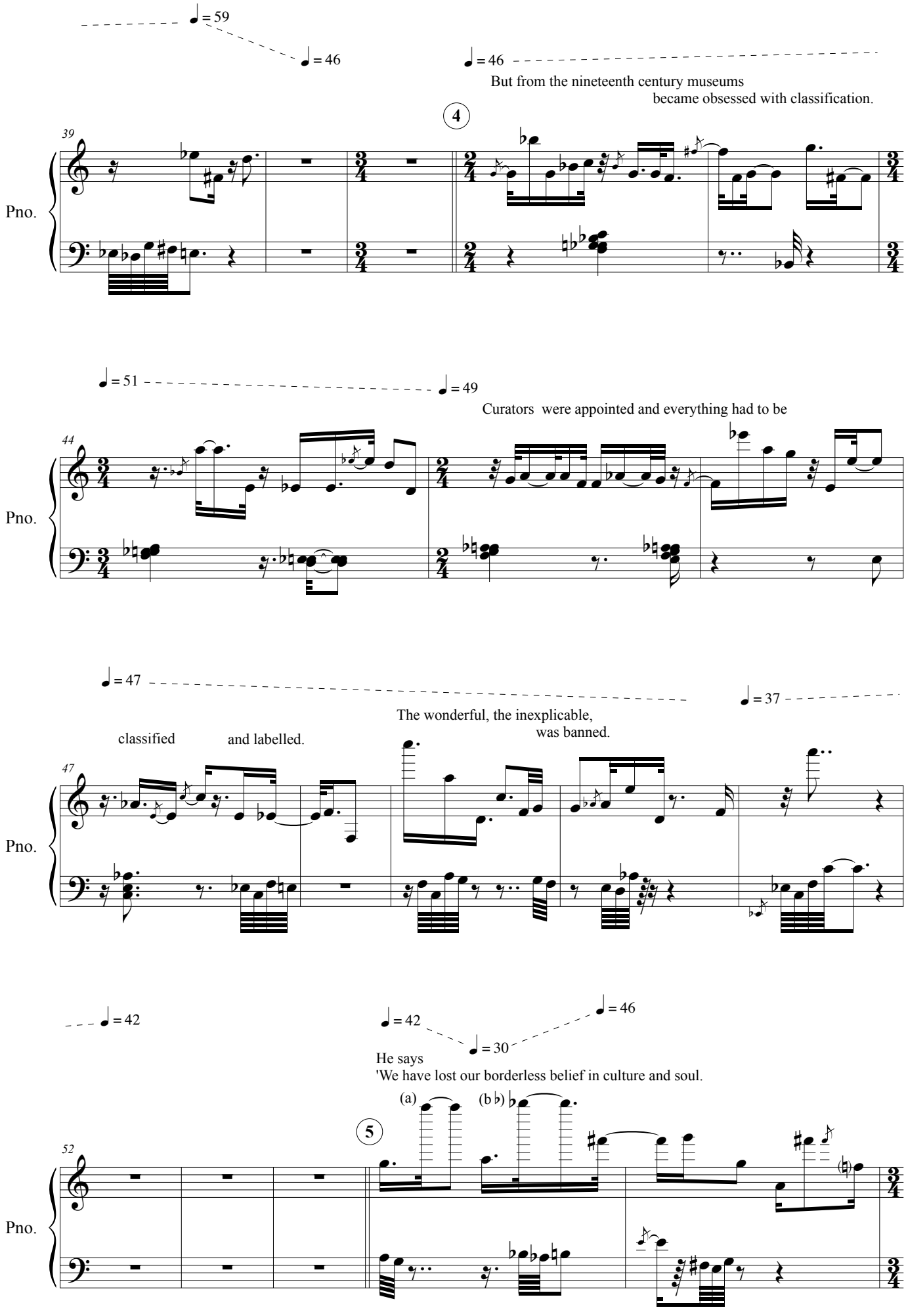
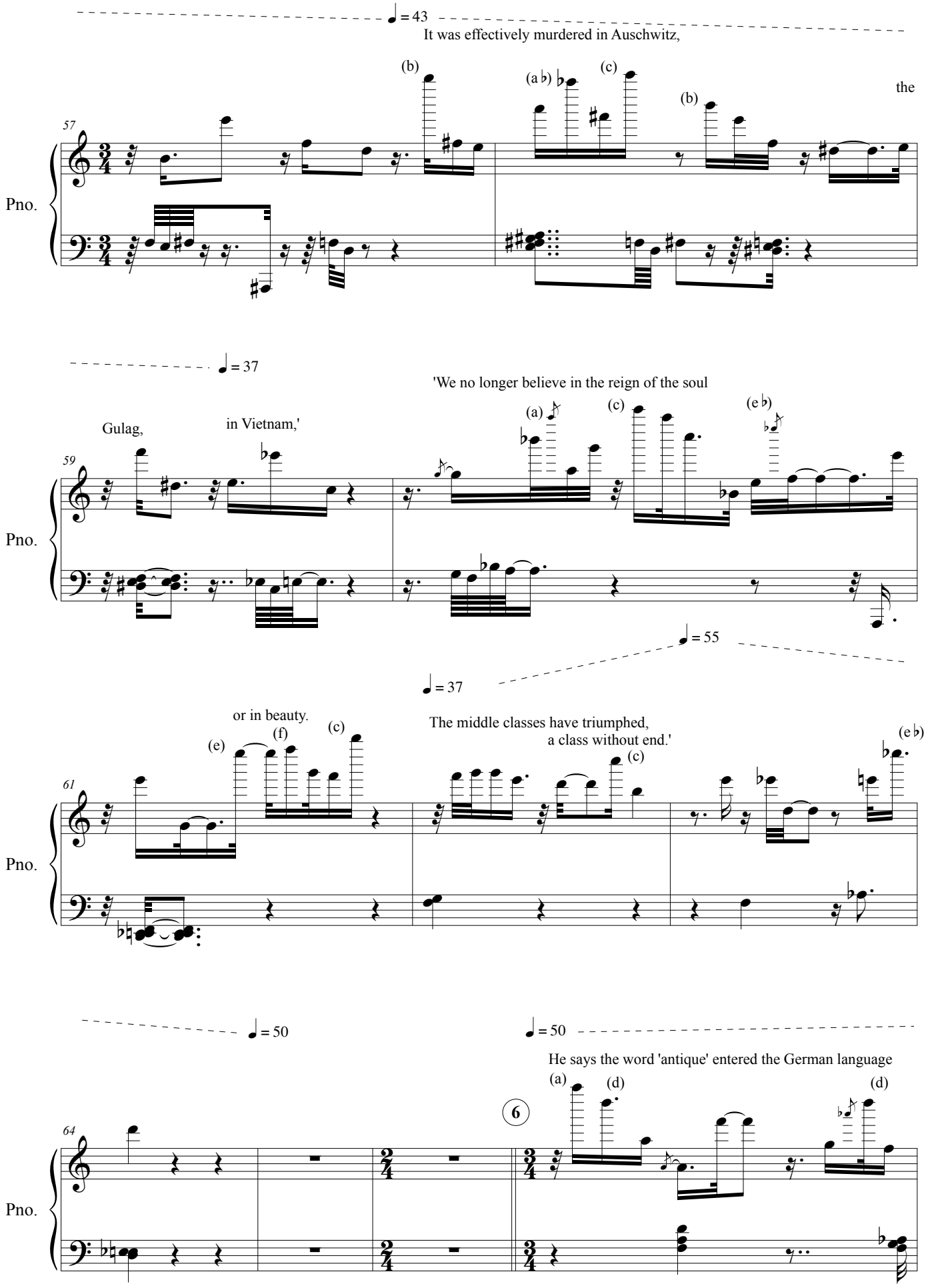
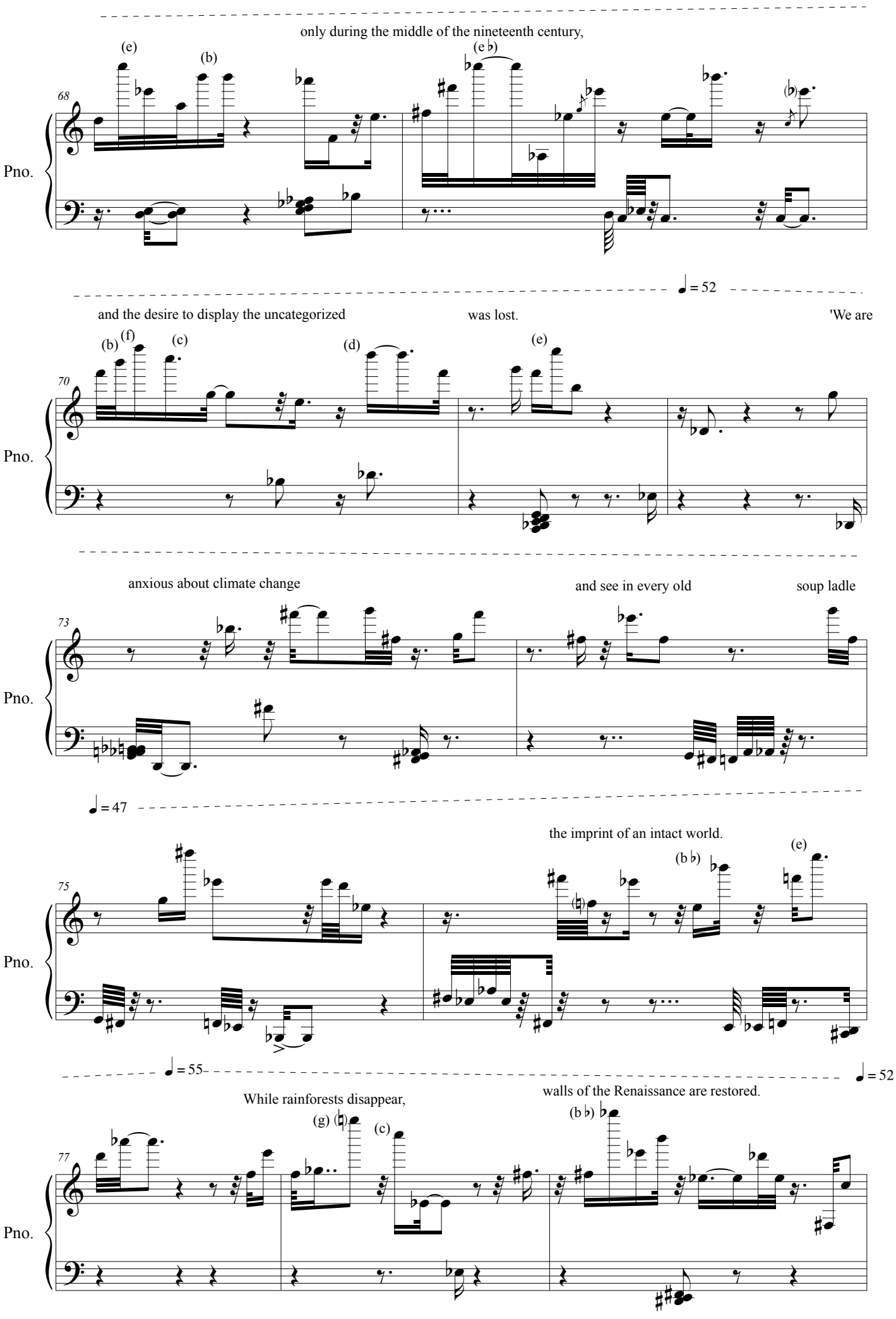
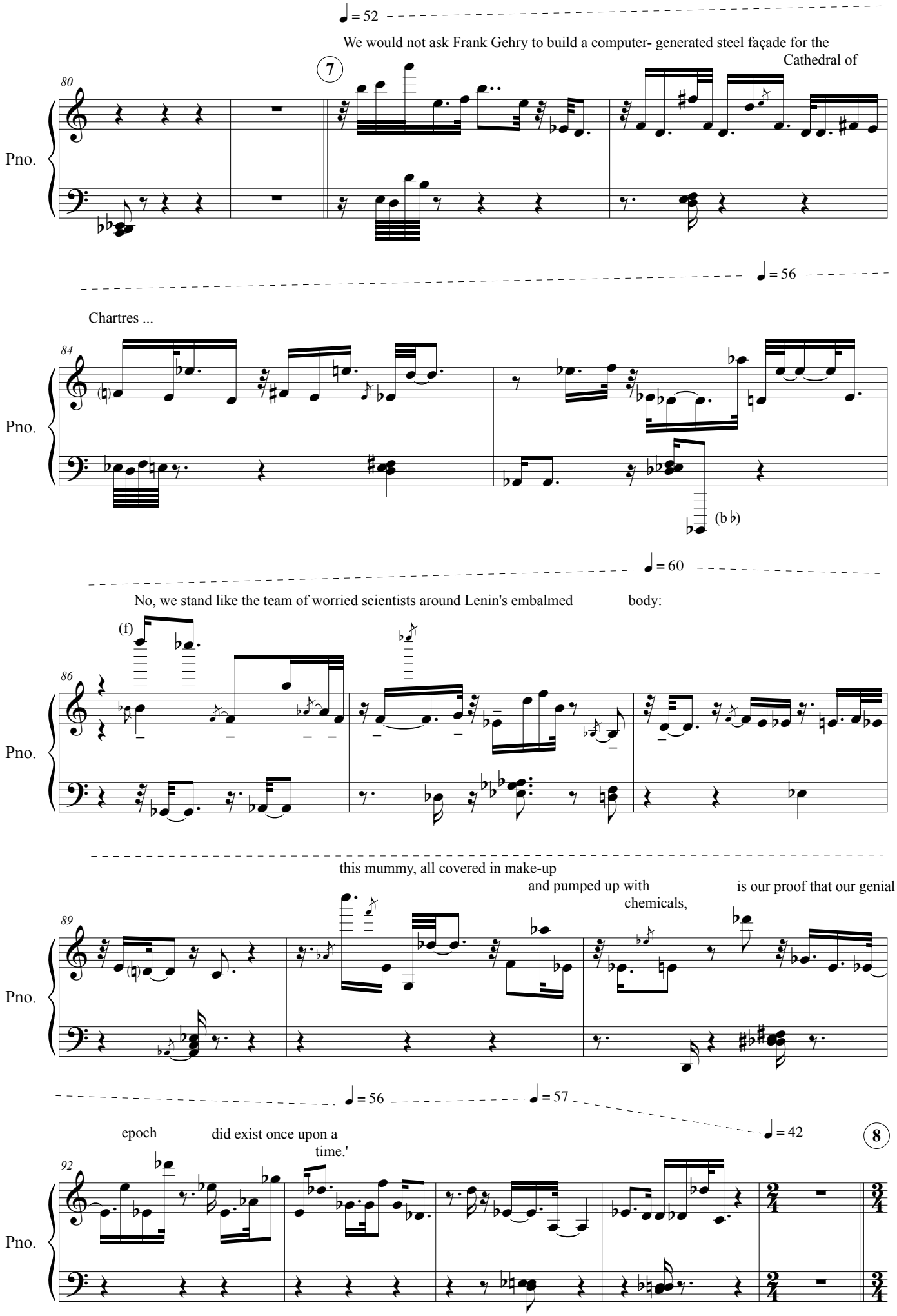
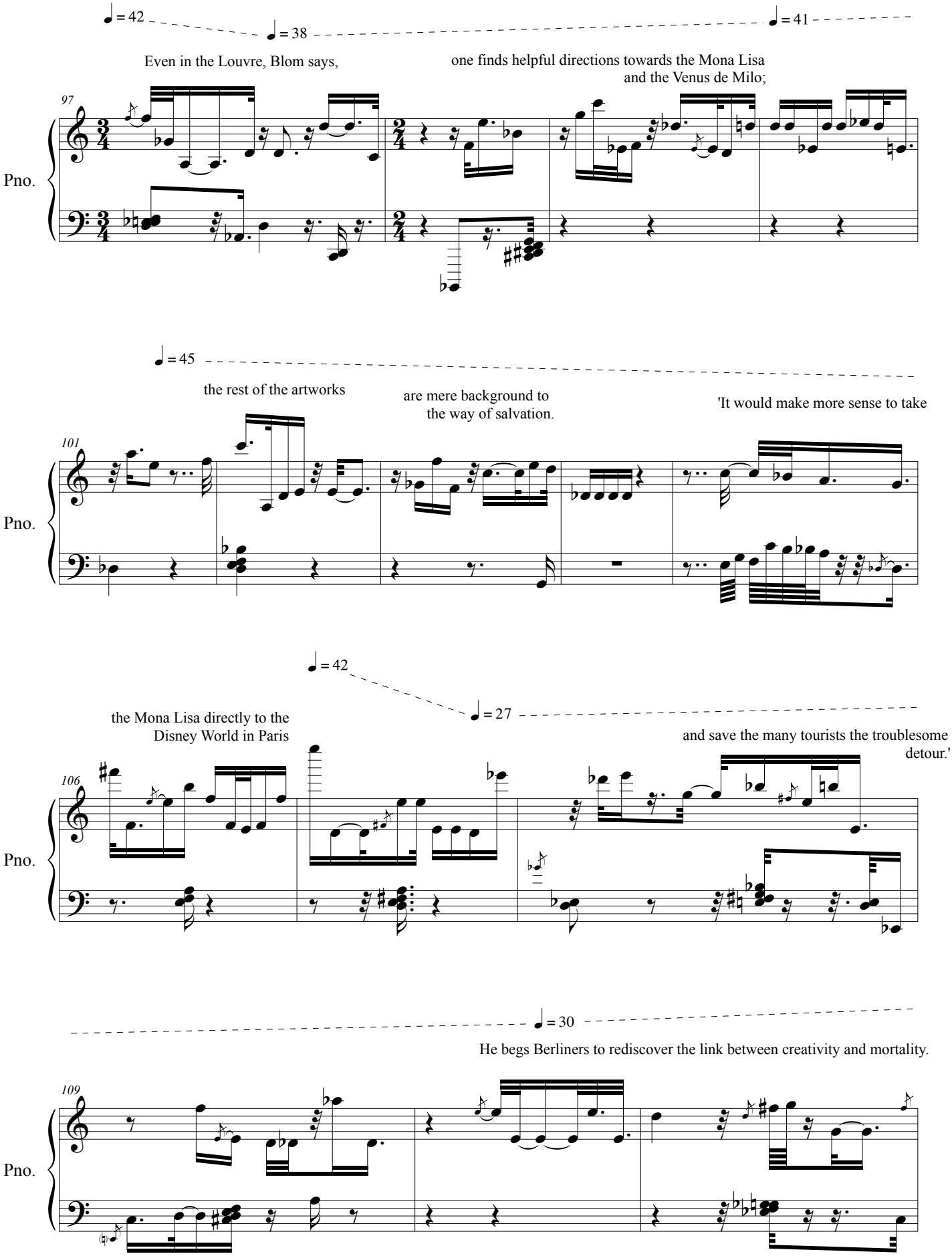

♩ = 71
historian Philipp Blom pointed out that Western culture has entered a phase in which it honours the old simply
(g)
22
Pno.
♩ = 63
♩ = 53
♩ = 43
because it is old.
(f)
26
Pno.
♩ = 43
♩ = 52
museums were places where one could go for the new
3
Earlier, he wrote in Die Zeit,
(f)
31
Pno.
♩ = 61
♩ = 43
and the strange,
from exotic animals to dragons
and scientific discoveries.
35
Pno.

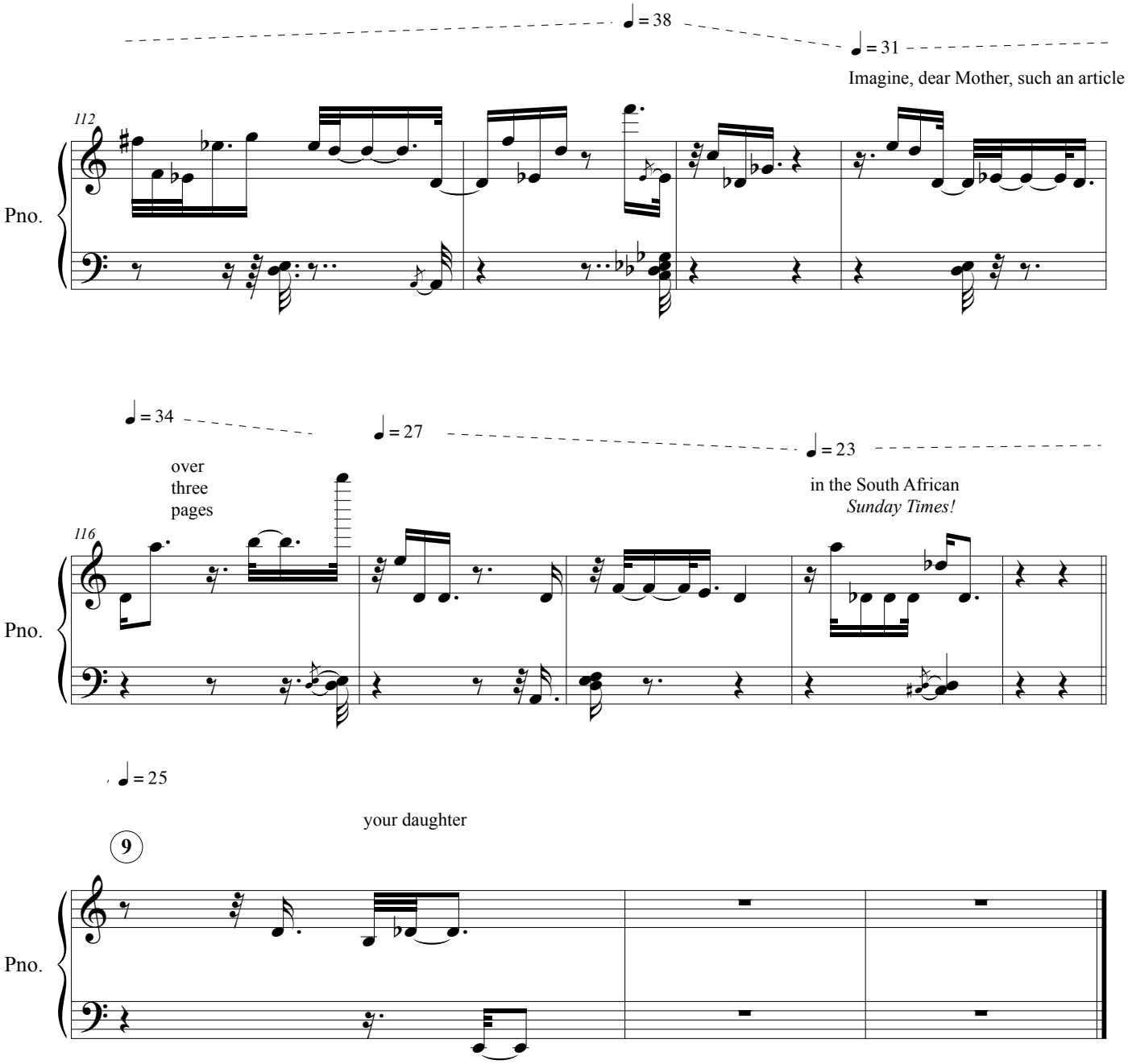

♩ = 59
♩ = 46
♩ = 46
But from the nineteenth century museums
became obsessed with classification.
4
39
Pno.
♩ = 51
♩ = 49
Curators were appointed and everything had to be
44
Pno.
♩ = 47
♩ = 37
The wonderful, the inexplicable,
was banned.
classified
and labelled.
47
Pno.
♩ = 42
♩ = 42
♩ = 30
♩ = 46
He says
'We have lost our borderless belief in culture and soul.
(a)
(b ♭)
5
52
Pno.


♩ = 43
It was effectively murdered in Auschwitz,
(b)
(a♭)
(c)
(b)
the
57
Pno.
♩ = 37
'We no longer believe in the reign of the soul
Gulag,
in Vietnam,'
(a)
(c)
(e♭)
59
Pno.
♩ = 55
♩ = 37
or in beauty.
(e)
(f)
(c)
The middle classes have triumphed,
a class without end.'
(c)
(e♭)
61
Pno.
♩ = 50
♩ = 50
He says the word 'antique' entered the German language
(a)
(d)
(d)
6
64
Pno.


only during the middle of the nineteenth century,
68
Pno.
(e)
(b)
(e♭)
(♭)
♩= 52
and the desire to display the uncategorized
was lost.
'We are
70
Pno.
(b)
(f)
(c)
(d)
(e)
anxious about climate change
and see in every old
soup ladle
73
Pno.
♩= 47
the imprint of an intact world.
75
Pno.
(b♭)
(e)
♩= 55
♩= 52
While rainforests disappear,
walls of the Renaissance are restored.
77
Pno.
(g)
(c)
(b♭)

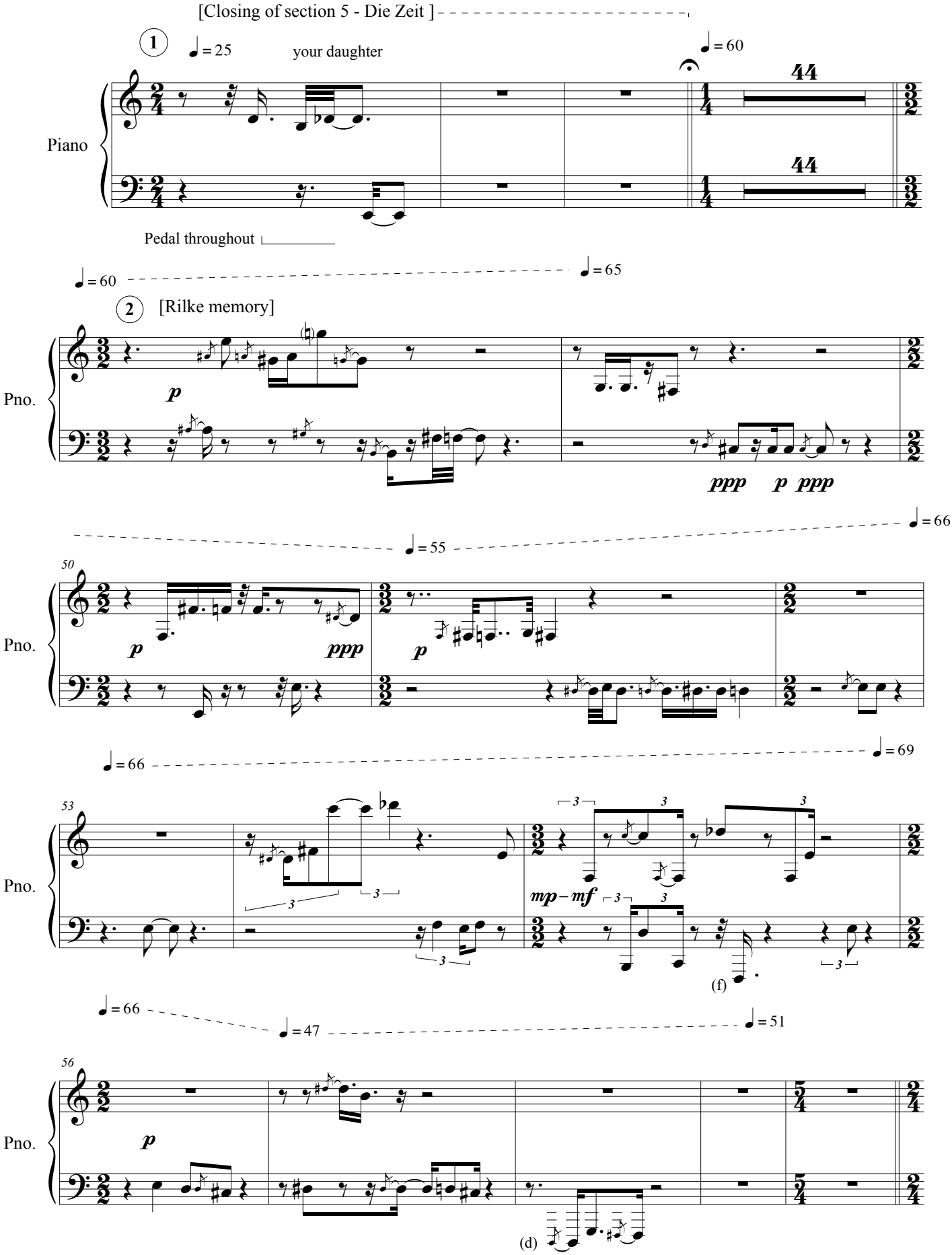

♩ = 52
We would not ask Frank Gehry to build a computer- generated steel façade for the
Cathedral of
7
80
Pno.
♩ = 56
Chartres ...
84
Pno.
(b ♭)
♩ = 60
No, we stand like the team of worried scientists around Lenin's embalmed body:
(f)
86
Pno.
this mummy, all covered in make-up
and pumped up with chemicals,
is our proof that our genial
89
Pno.
♩ = 56
♩ = 57
♩ = 42
8
epoch
did exist once upon a time.'
92
Pno.


♩ = 42
♩ = 38
♩ = 41
Even in the Louvre, Blom says,
one finds helpful directions towards the Mona Lisa
and the Venus de Milo;
97
Pno.
♩ = 45
the rest of the artworks
are mere background to
the way of salvation.
'It would make more sense to take
101
Pno.
♩ = 42
♩ = 27
the Mona Lisa directly to the
Disney World in Paris
and save the many tourists the troublesome
detour.'
106
Pno.
♩ = 30
He begs Berliners to rediscover the link between creativity and mortality.
109
Pno.

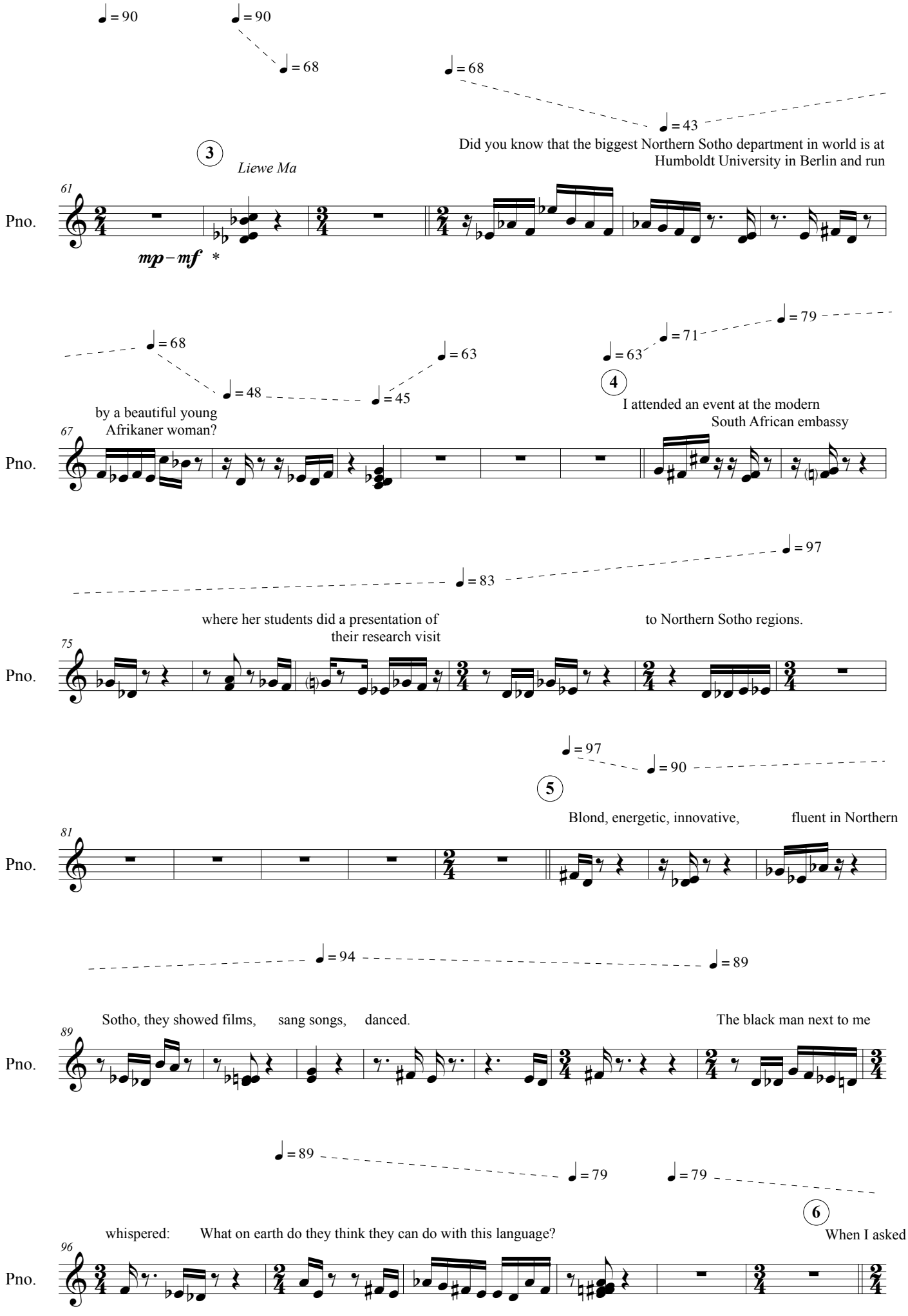

♩ = 38
♩ = 31
Imagine, dear Mother, such an article
112
Pno.
♩ = 34
♩ = 27
♩ = 23
over
three
pages
in the South African
Sunday Times!
116
Pno.
♩ = 25
your daughter
9
Pno.

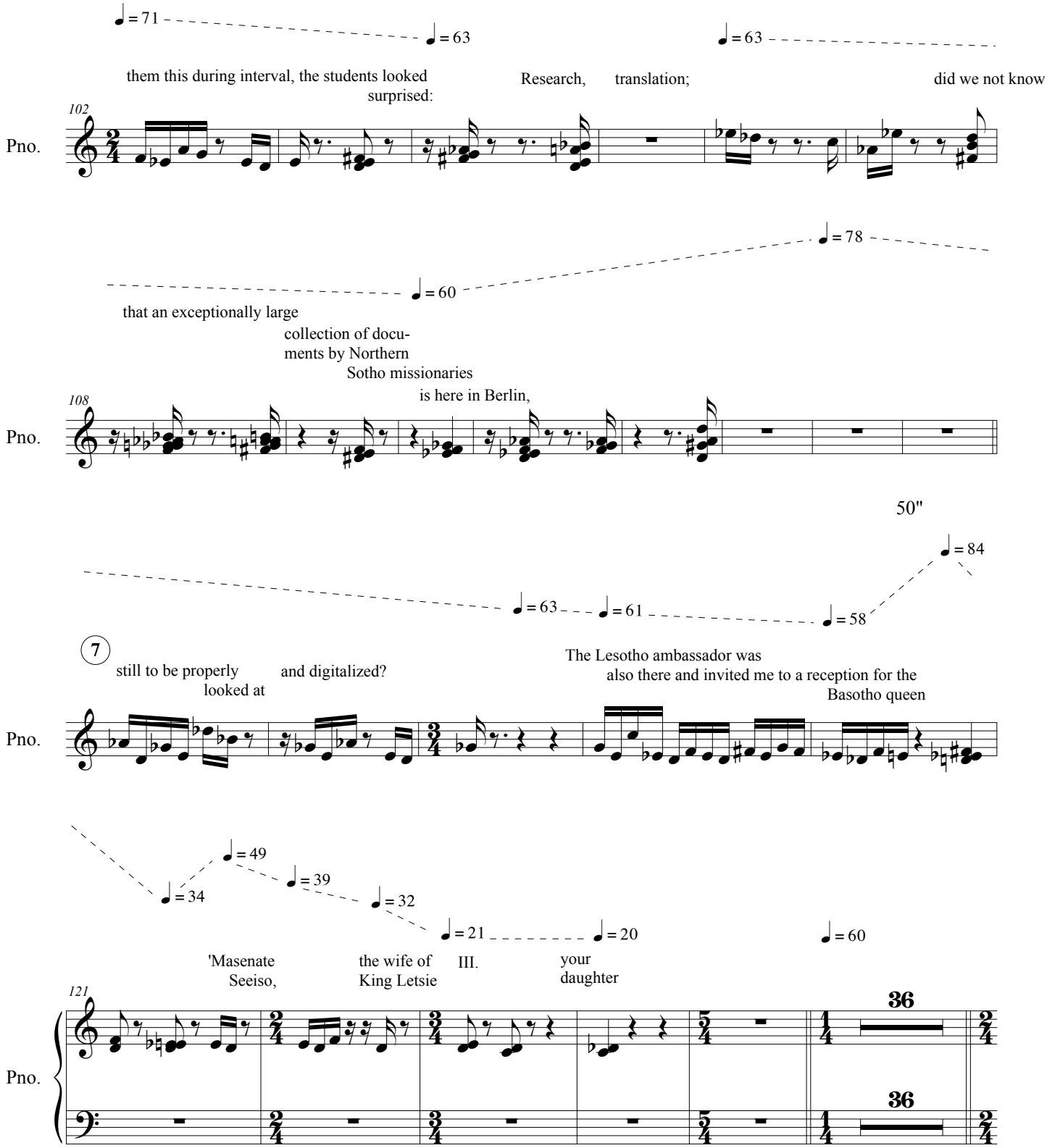
6. Antjie in Berlin - Northern Sotho

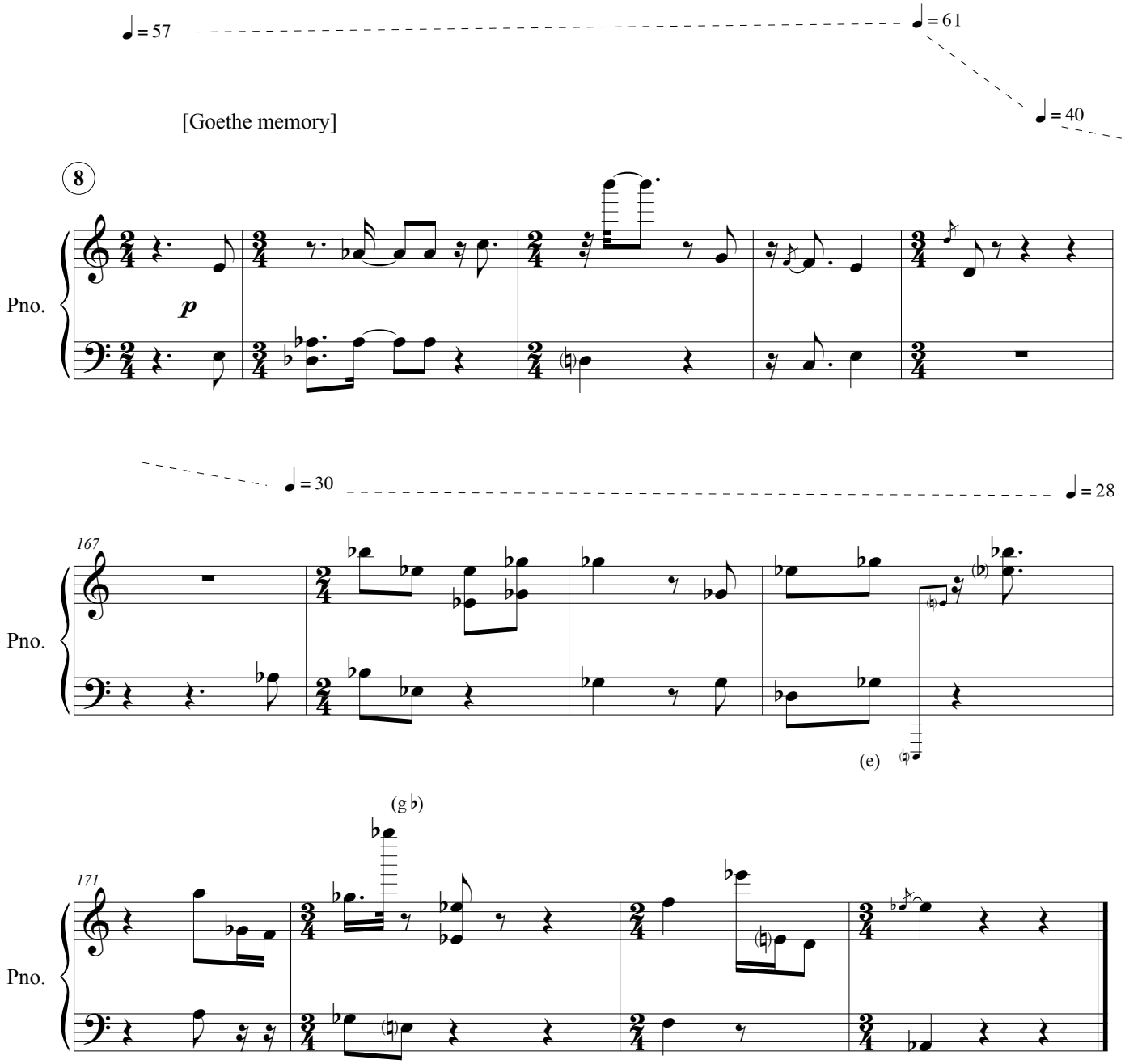
Rudiger Meyer
Text: Antjie Krog



v. 1.2.1 - 21.06.12/03.09.12


♩ = 90
♩ = 90
♩ = 68
♩ = 68
♩ = 43
Did you know that the biggest Northern Sotho department in world is at Humboldt University in Berlin and run
3
Liewe Ma
61
Pno.
mp – mf *
♩ = 68
♩ = 48
♩ = 45
♩ = 63
♩ = 63
♩ = 71
♩ = 79
4
by a beautiful young Afrikaner woman?
I attended an event at the modern South African embassy
67
Pno.
♩ = 83
♩ = 97
where her students did a presentation of their research visit
to Northern Sotho regions.
75
Pno.
♩ = 97
♩ = 90
5
Blond, energetic, innovative, fluent in Northern
81
Pno.
♩ = 94
♩ = 89
Sotho, they showed films, sang songs, danced.
The black man next to me
89
Pno.
♩ = 89
♩ = 79
♩ = 79
6
whispered: What on earth do they think they can do with this language?
When I asked
96
Pno.


♩ = 71
♩ = 63
♩ = 63
them this during interval, the students looked surprised:
Research, translation;
did we not know
102
Pno.
♩ = 78
♩ = 60
that an exceptionally large collection of documents by Northern Sotho missionaries is here in Berlin,
108
Pno.
50"
♩ = 84
♩ = 63
♩ = 61
♩ = 58
7
still to be properly looked at
and digitalized?
The Lesotho ambassador was also there and invited me to a reception for the Basotho queen
Pno.
♩ = 49
♩ = 34
♩ = 39
♩ = 32
♩ = 21
♩ = 20
♩ = 60
'Masenate Seeiso,
the wife of King Letsie III.
your daughter
121
36
36
Pno.


♩ = 57
♩ = 61
♩ = 40
[Goethe memory]
8
Pno.
p
♩ = 30
♩ = 28
167
Pno.
(e)
(g♭)
171
Pno.

Piano

7. Antjie in Berlin - German Painter

Rudiger Meyer
Text: Antjie Krog

♩ = 44 ♩ = 44 ♩ = 42 ♩ = 66 ♩ = 46

1 *Liewe Ma*

I suddenly remember the majestic thin-nosed face on the painting

Piano

mp U.C.

Pedal throughout

♩ = 68 ♩ = 55 ♩ = 39

against your wall.

You told me that it was a self-portrait

5

Pno.

♩ = 38 ♩ = 44

made by a German painter

while he was interned

during the Second World War.

9

Pno.

It would have been his task after the war to make important- looking paintings

of the new Afrikaner leaders

freed from British

13

Pno.

♩ = 44 ♩ = 55 ♩ = 63

rule by a victorious Germany.

16

Pno.

♩ = 54 ♩ = 54 ♩ = 49

2 For a time he hid down

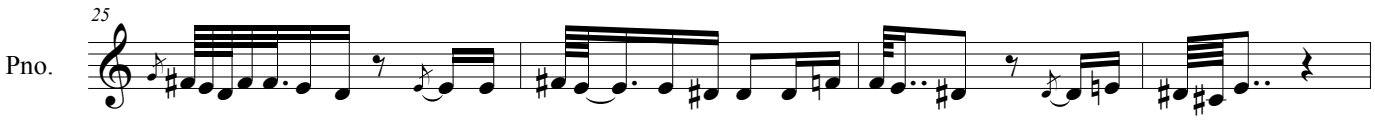
at the river on your farm.

19

Pno.

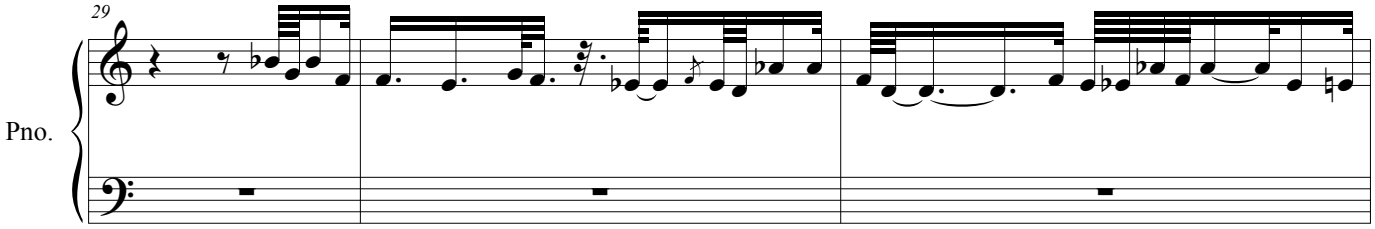
♩ = 49 ♩ = 55

Every second day,
you were sent on your horse to take him food and paint.



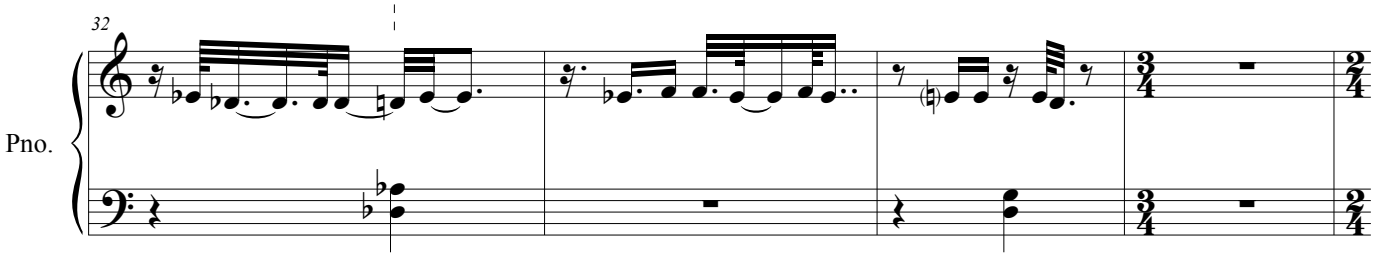
♩ = 55

When he was later caught and interned, he sent you this self-portrait,



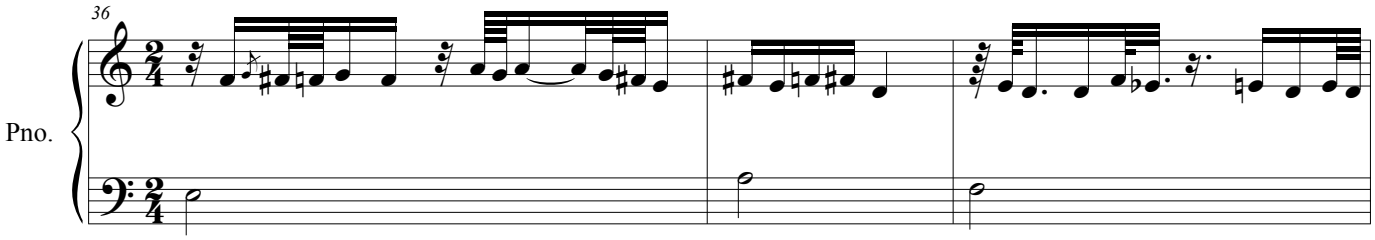
♩ = 52 ♩ = 53

with one eye blue and one green,



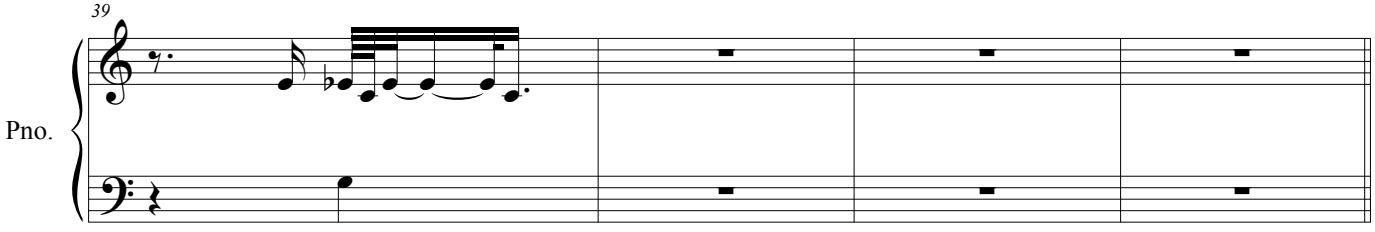
♩ = 53

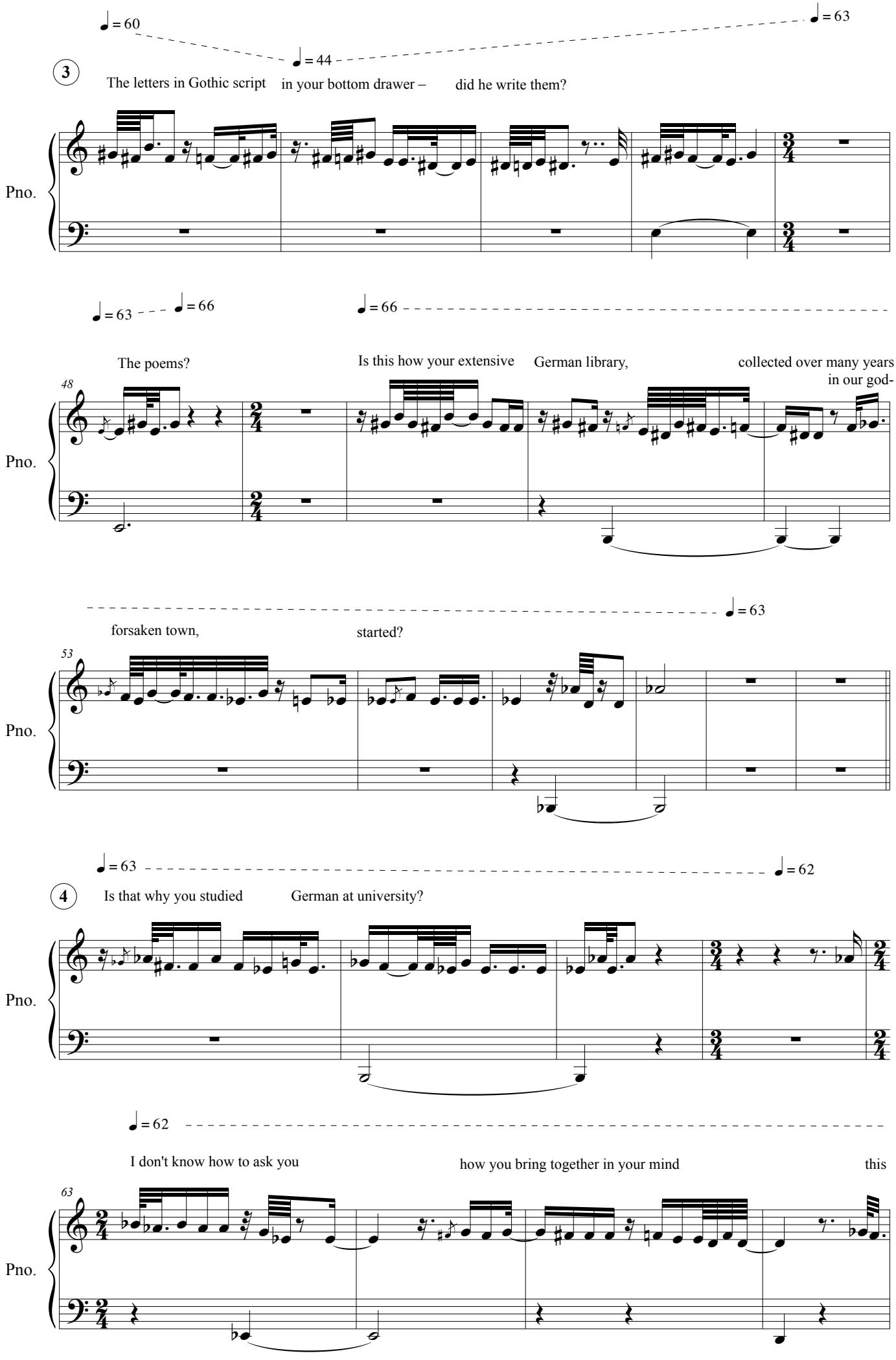
as well as a small painting of the river that now hangs in my house in

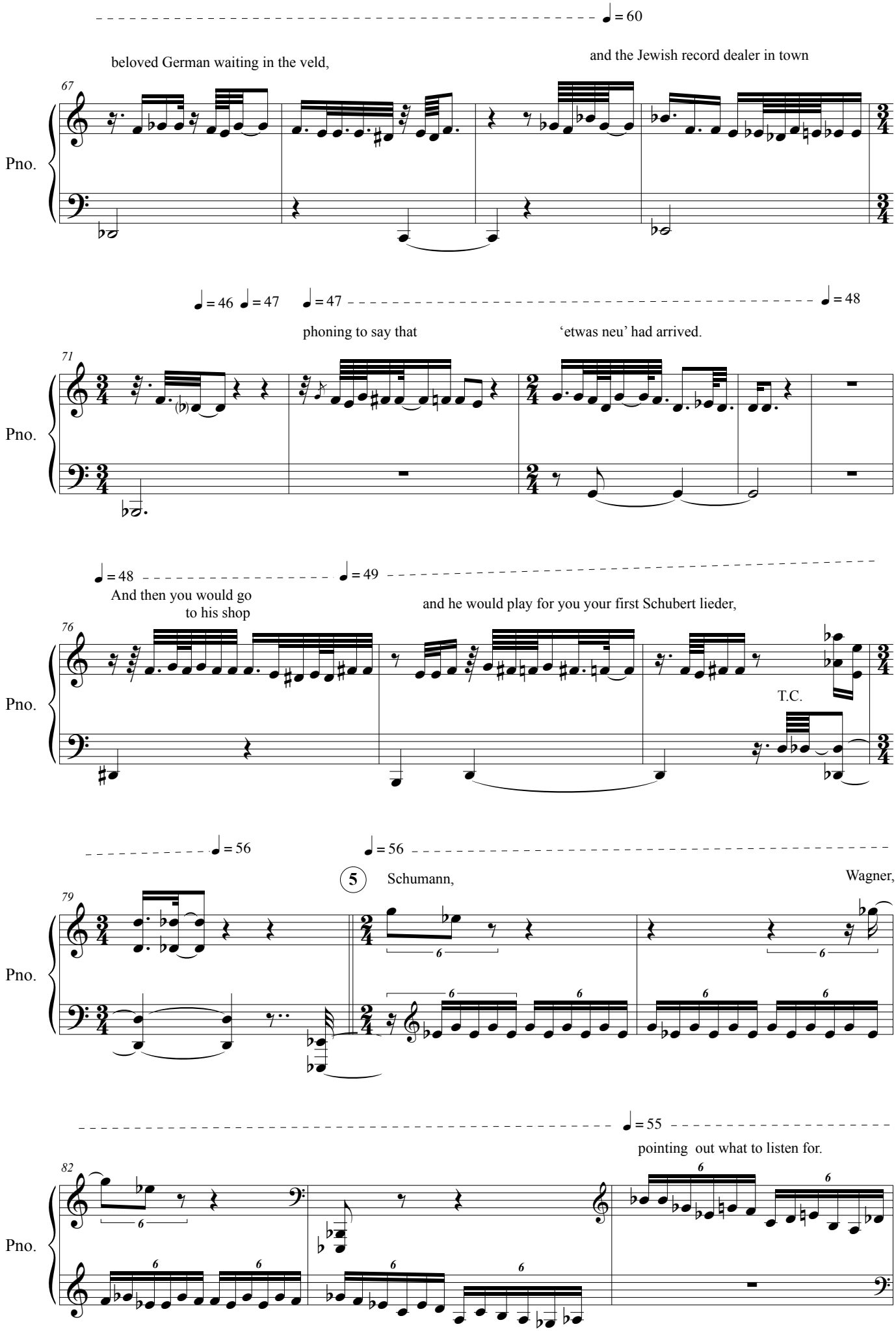


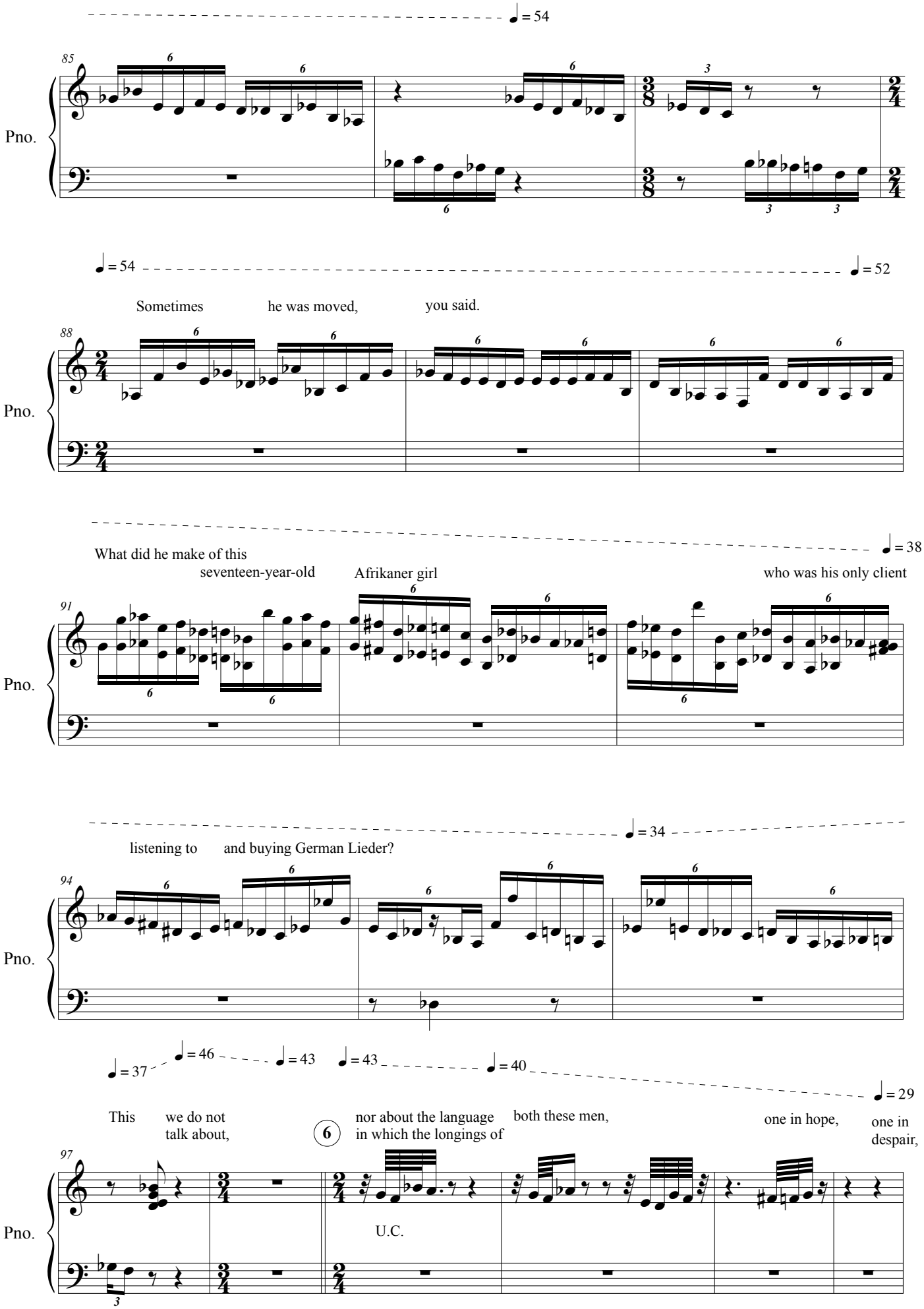
♩ = 56 ♩ = 60

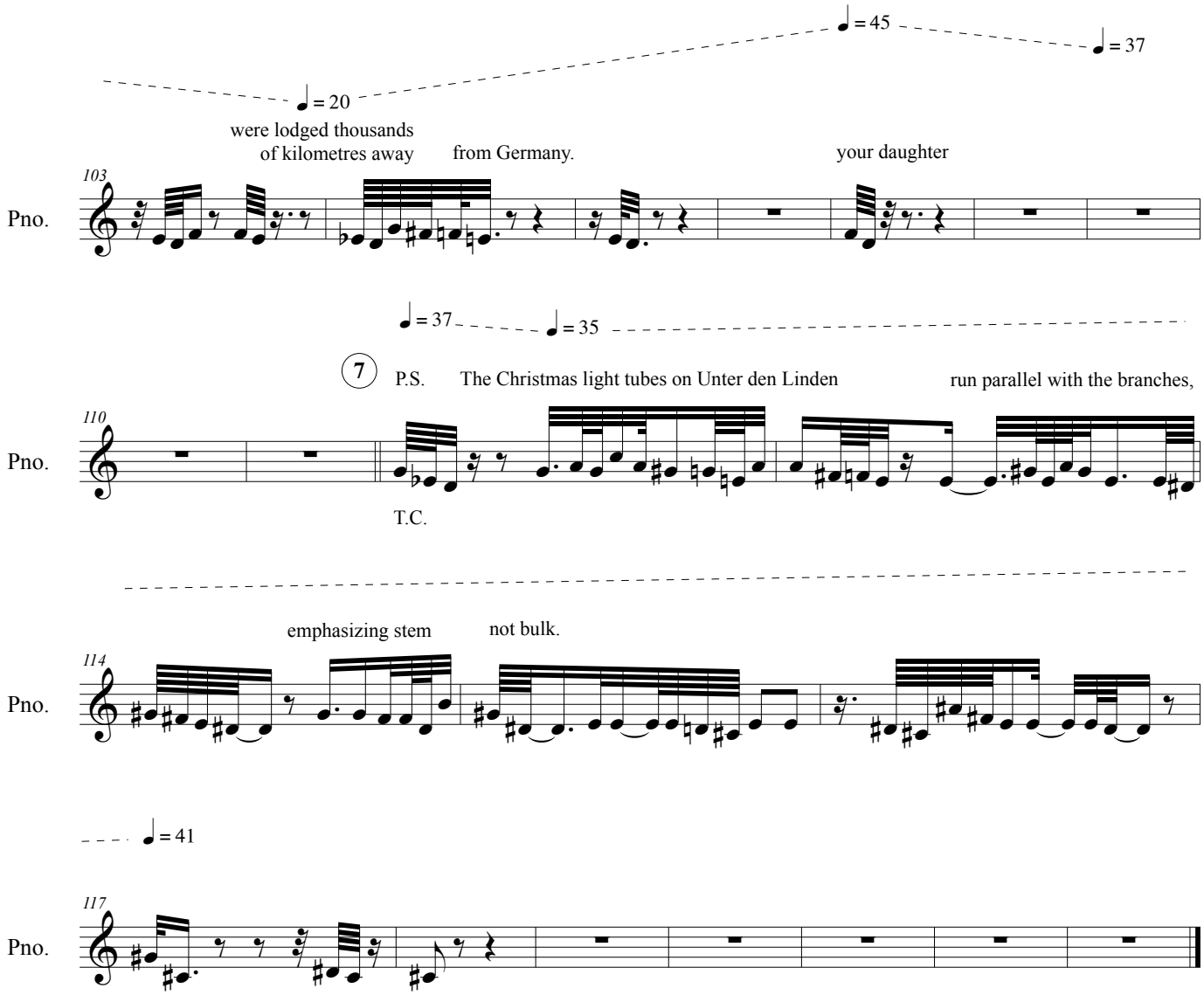
Cape Town.




♩ = 60
♩ = 44
♩ = 63
3
The letters in Gothic script
in your bottom drawer –
did he write them?
Pno.
♩ = 63
♩ = 66
♩ = 66
The poems?
Is this how your extensive
German library,
collected over many years
in our god-
48
Pno.
♩ = 63
forsaken town,
started?
53
Pno.
♩ = 63
♩ = 62
4
Is that why you studied
German at university?
Pno.
♩ = 62
I don't know how to ask you
how you bring together in your mind
this
63
Pno.


♩= 60
beloved German waiting in the veld,
and the Jewish record dealer in town
67
Pno.
♩= 46 ♩= 47
♩= 47
♩= 48
phoning to say that
'etwas neu' had arrived.
71
Pno.
♩= 48
♩= 49
And then you would go
to his shop
and he would play for you your first Schubert lieder,
76
Pno.
T.C.
♩= 56
♩= 56
5
Schumann,
Wagner,
79
Pno.
♩= 55
pointing out what to listen for.
82
Pno.


♩ = 54
85
Pno.
♩ = 54
♩ = 52
Sometimes
he was moved,
you said.
88
Pno.
♩ = 38
What did he make of this
seventeen-year-old
Afrikaner girl
who was his only client
91
Pno.
♩ = 34
listening to
and buying German Lieder?
94
Pno.
♩ = 37
♩ = 46
♩ = 43
♩ = 43
♩ = 40
♩ = 29
This
we do not
talk about,
6
nor about the language
in which the longings of
both these men,
one in hope,
one in
despair,
97
Pno.
U.C.


♩ = 45
♩ = 37
♩ = 20
were lodged thousands
of kilometres away
from Germany.
your daughter
103
Pno.
♩ = 37
♩ = 35
7
P.S.
The Christmas light tubes on Unter den Linden
run parallel with the branches,
110
Pno.
T.C.
emphasizing stem
not bulk.
114
Pno.
♩ = 41
117
Pno.