N° 1110

Eve Beglarian

Robin Redbreast

for voice, piccolo, and electronics

EVBVD MUSIC
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Notes to the Performers:

The low E drone has a resonant filter that mirrors the vowels of the text. If you listen for that, it will help you line up with the CD. (The first part of the piece is the hardest in this respect.) I have also supplied a copy of the CD with a half note click so you can work with a metronome until you are comfortable.

The jay squawk is a seven bar loop that starts at the downbeat of m. 57 and again at m. 64, which will help the piccolo enter correctly. The other electronic sounds (transformations of the jay squawks) are working with a sixteenth note pulse and many of the accents in the CD part line up with piccolo accents in this part of the piece. (The piccolo music here warps a robin song.)

By the time you get to "whistle", the vowel filters on the drone are really audible. The singer can play with his alignment with the CD. Don't worry about being absolutely strict: communicating the text is always more important than rhythmic precision or conventional vocal beauty (i.e. the low register stuff should be as close to spoken as feels comfortable, and the high register stuff should be clear and naked.) Similarly, the piccolo hits at the end of the piece should be violent, even to the point of obliterating the text.

The piccolo notation at the end of the piece follows Artaud's **Present Day Flutes**.

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Program Note:

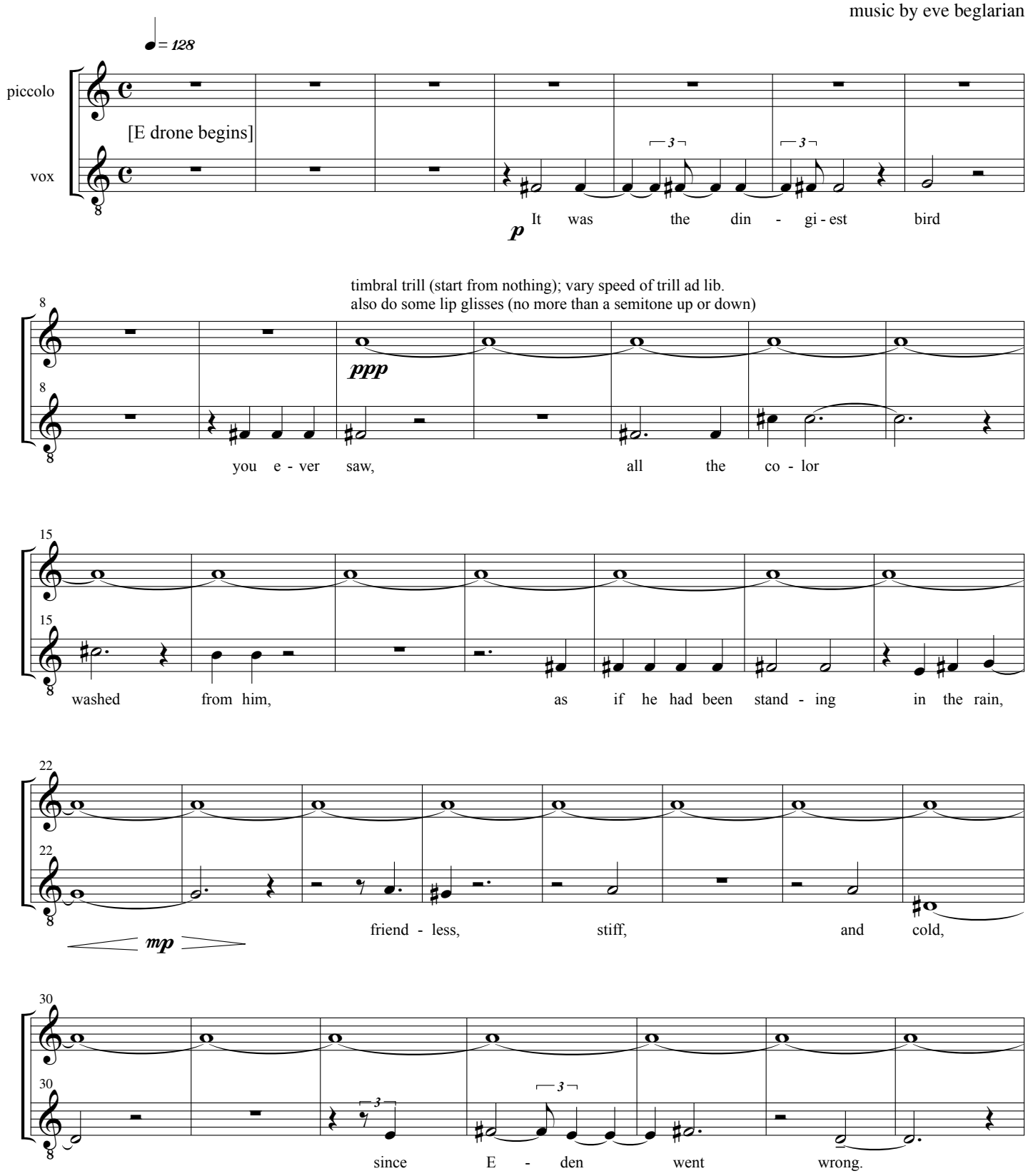
Robin Redbreast was commissioned by the Guggenheim Museum for an evening of songs celebrating the poetry of Stanley Kunitz. Thanks to flutist Margaret Lancaster for her ideas, suggestions, and support while I was writing the piece. Thanks to the Holby family (especially Grethe, Barrett, Robin and Will) for the use of their house in Vermont, where I wrote it. **Robin Redbreast** is dedicated to my mother, Joyce, who taught me how to tell the birds.

Robin Redbreast

It was the dingiest bird
you ever saw, all the color
washed from him, as if
he had been standing in the rain,
friendless and stiff and cold,
since Eden went wrong.
In the house marked For Sale,
where nobody made a sound
in the room where I lived
with an empty page, I had heard
the squawking of the jays
under the wild persimmons
tormenting him.
So I scooped him up
after they knocked him down,
in league with that ounce of heart
pounding in my palm
that dumb beak gaping.
Poor thing! Poor foolish life!
without sense enough to stop
running in desperate circles,
needing my lucky help
to toss him back into his element.
But when I held him high,
fear clutched my hand,
for through the hole in his head,
cut whistle-clean . . .
through the old dried wound
between his eyes
where the hunter's brand
had tunneled out his wit . . .
I caught the cold flash of the blue
unappeasable sky.

robin redbreast

words by stanley kunitz
music by eve beglarian



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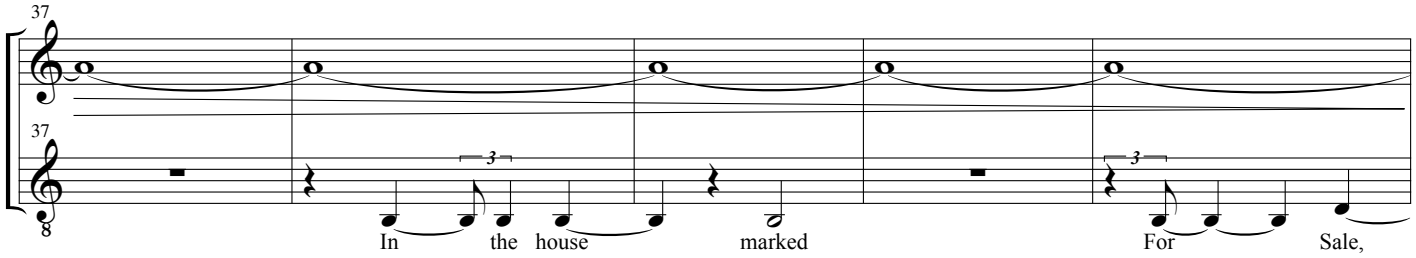
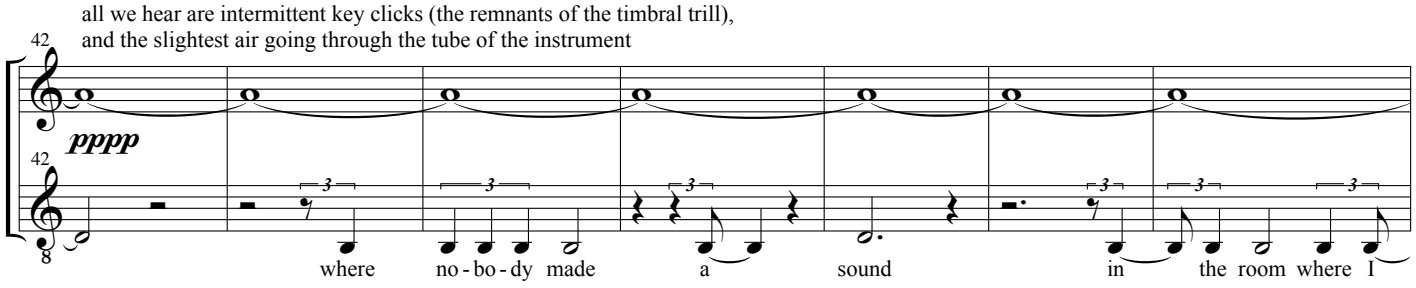
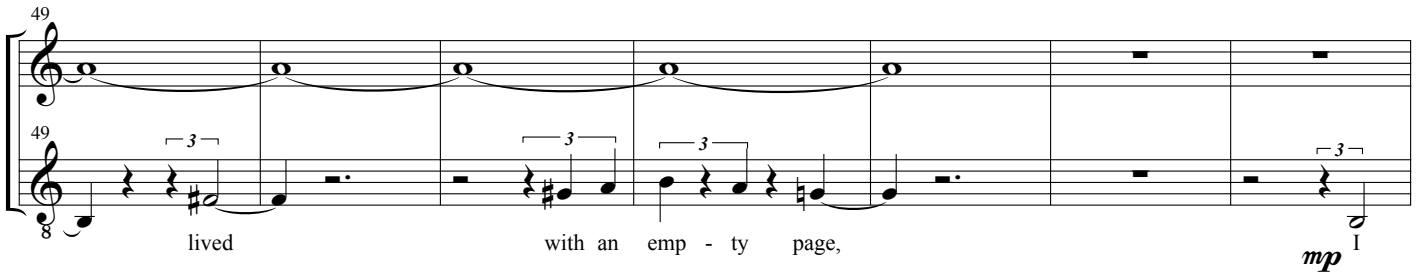
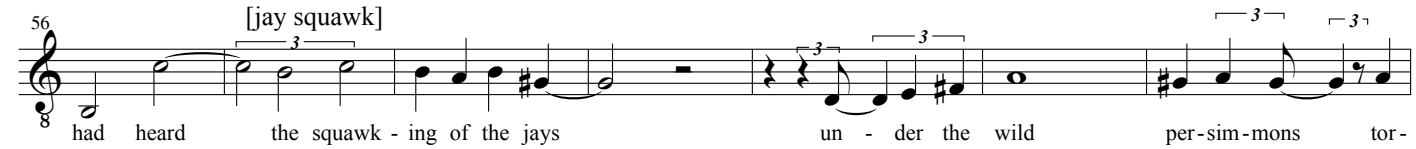
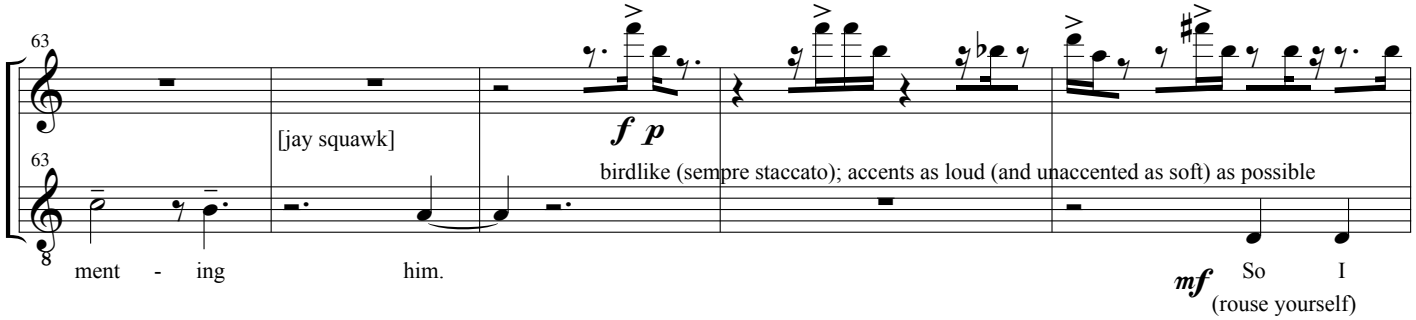
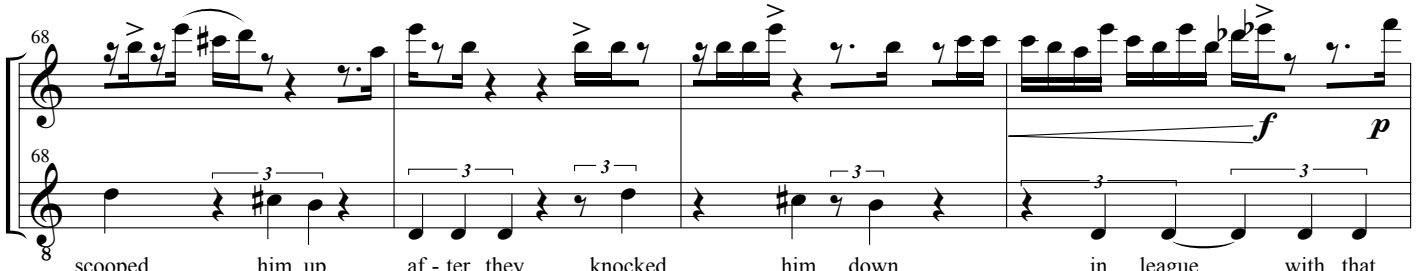

37
In the house marked For Sale,

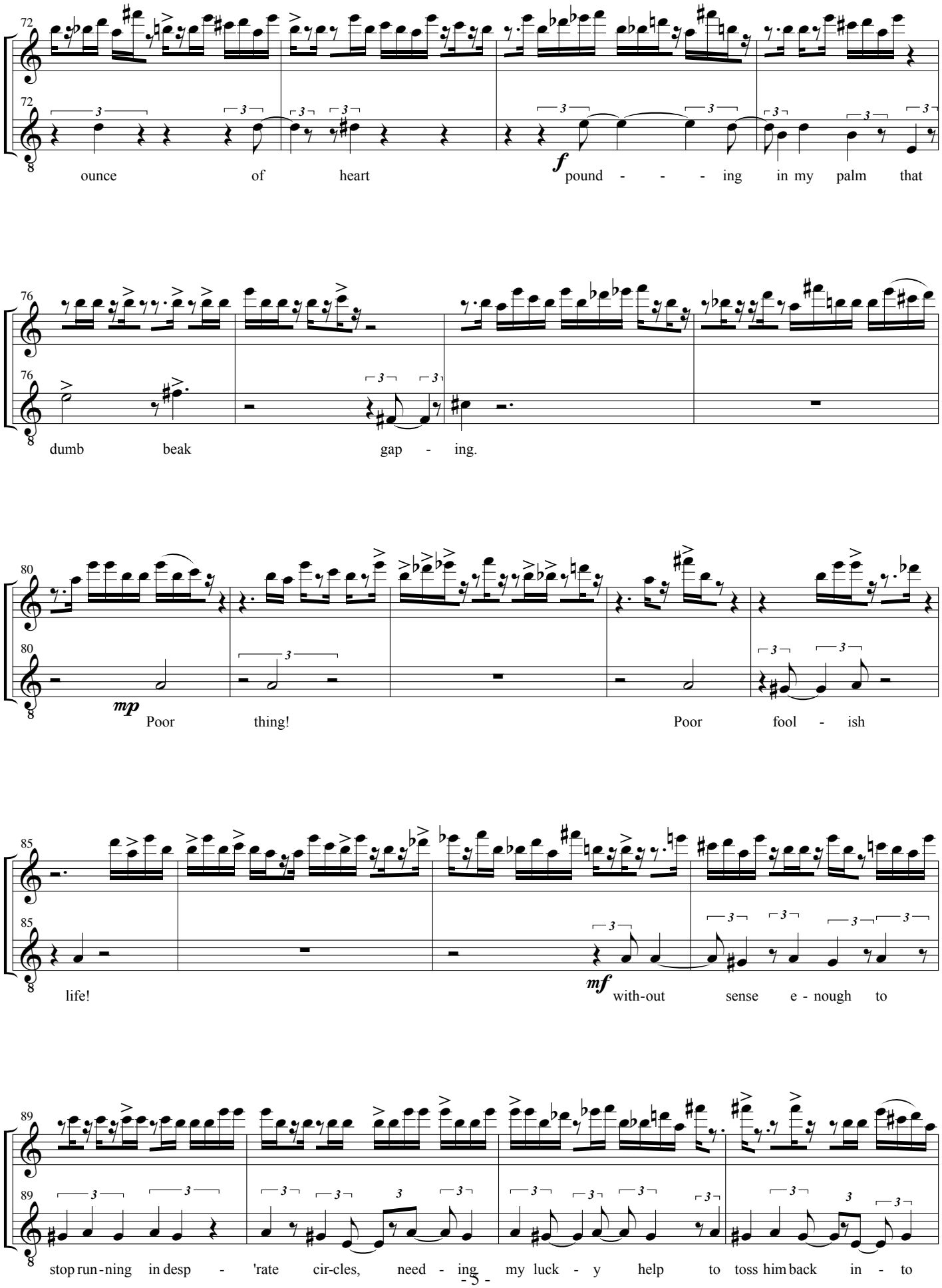

all we hear are intermittent key clicks (the remnants of the timbral trill),
and the slightest air going through the tube of the instrument
42
pppp
where no-bo-dy made a sound in the room where I

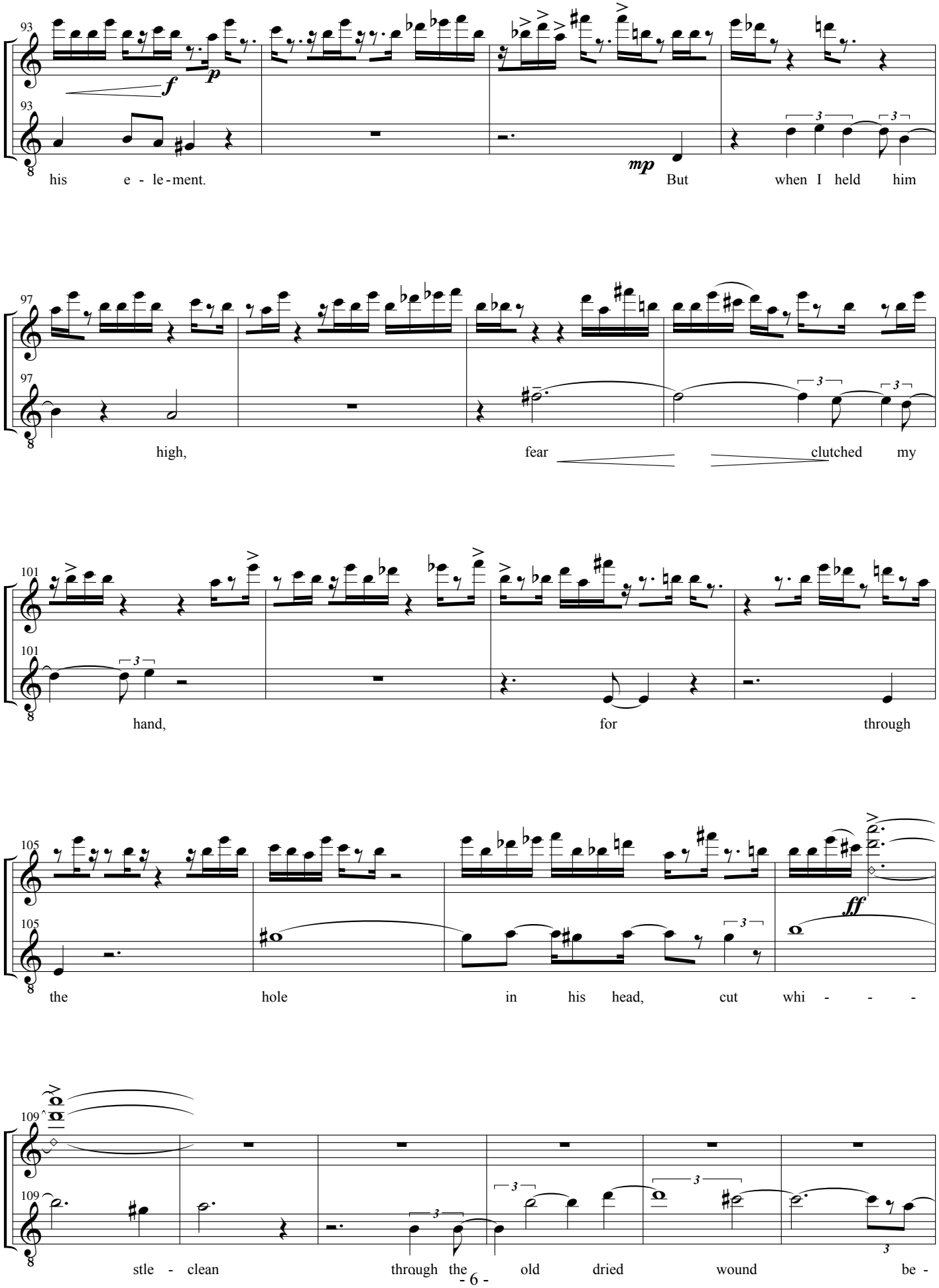

49
lived with an emp - ty page,
mp
I

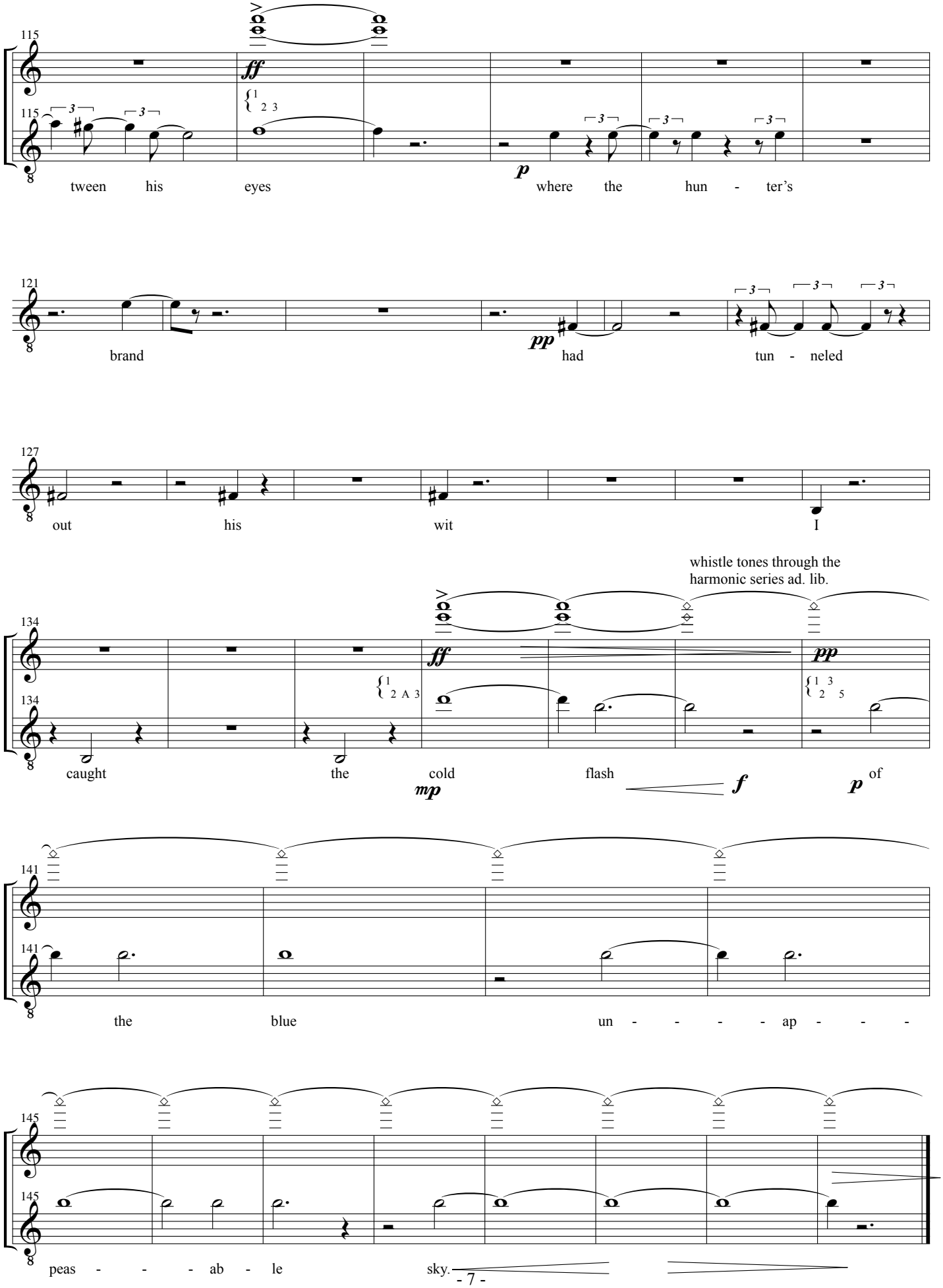

56
[jay squawk]
had heard the squawk - ing of the jays un - der the wild per-sim-mons tor-


63
[jay squawk]
f p
birdlike (sempre staccato); accents as loud (and unaccented as soft) as possible
ment - ing him.
mf
So I
(rouse yourself)


68
f
p
scooped him up af - ter they knocked him down, in league with that


72
ounce of heart
f
pound - - - ing in my palm that
76
dumb beak gap - ing.
80
mp
Poor thing!
Poor fool - ish
85
life!
mf
with-out sense e - nough to
89
stop run - ning in desp - 'rate cir-cles, need - ing my luck - y help to toss him back in - to


93
f
p
mp
his e - le - ment.
But when I held him
97
high,
fear
clutched my
101
hand,
for
through
105
ff
the hole in his head, cut whi - - -
109
stle - clean through the old dried wound be -


115
ff
p
tween his eyes where the hun - ter's
121
pp
brand had tun - neled
127
out his wit I
134
whistle tones through the harmonic series ad. lib.
ff
pp
caught the cold flash
mp
f
p
of
141
the blue un - - - - ap - - -
145
peas - - - ab - le sky.