Paul Burnell

From Blake's 'Milton'

Voices and small ensemble

1995

William Blake

From Blake's 'Milton'

Paul Burnell

Composed 1995 (minor revisions March 2011 and September 2022)
This edition produced 2022

Duration 3:00

Instrumentation:

Mixed voices
Piano - two players (player 1 upper stave, player 2 lower stave)
Sustaining instrument (such as violin or clarinet etc.)
Cymbal

From the preface to 'Milton: A Poem in Two Books'

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

William Blake (1757 - 1827)

Programme note:

'From Blake's 'Milton" was written in response to a Contemporary Music for All (CoMA) newsletter article which suggested that members may wish to write vocal pieces for the various CoMA ensembles throughout the United Kingdom.

The London CoMA Ensemble first performed it in May 1996 at the Brighton Festival Fringe.

In this setting of William Blake's words (from the preface to his book 'Milton' ca. 1804-08) the composer imagines the performers in a time before Britain was an Empire - in a landscape, which although it may be green, is also mountainous, overcast and cold enough for the air to become visible when breathing out.

The poem is best known as the anthem 'Jerusalem', with music written by Sir Hubert Parry in 1916.

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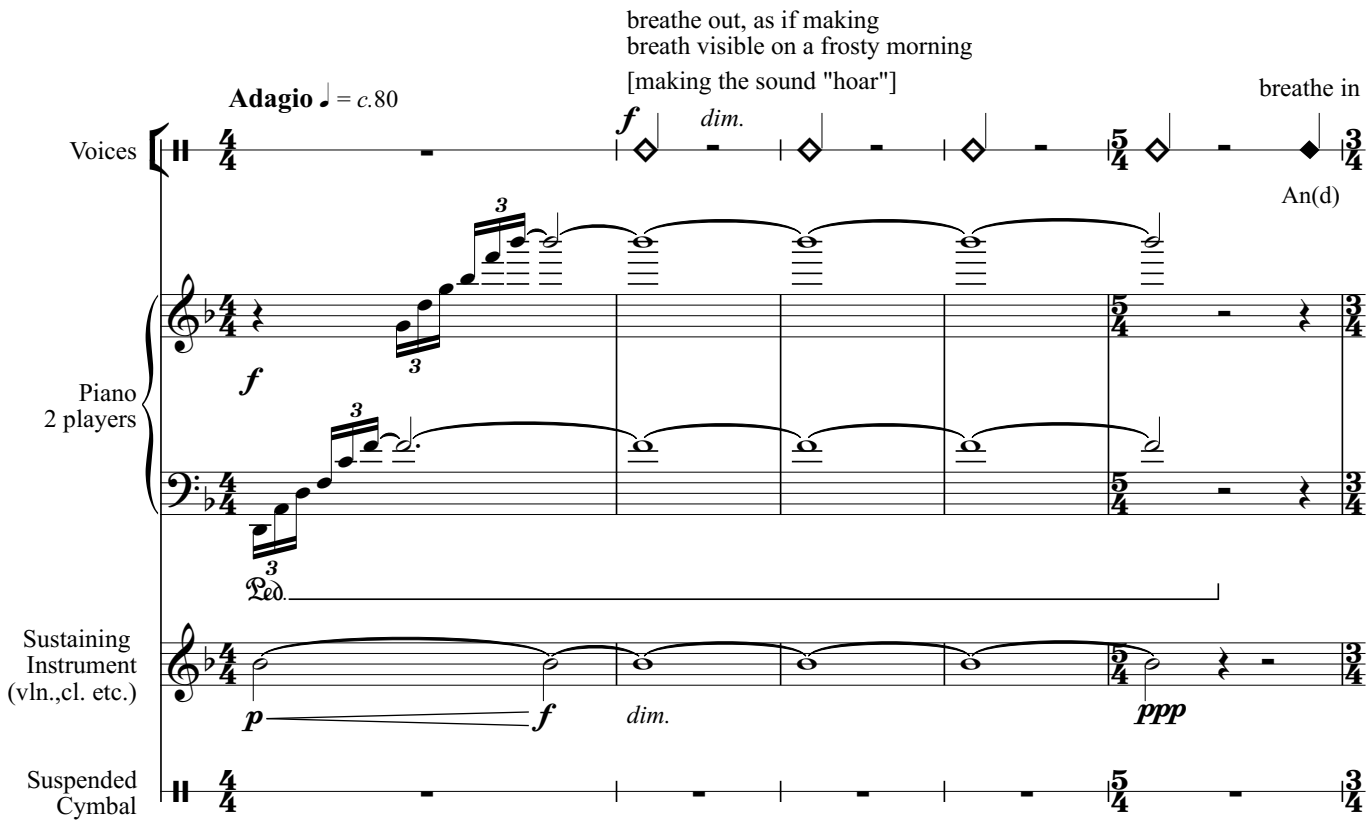
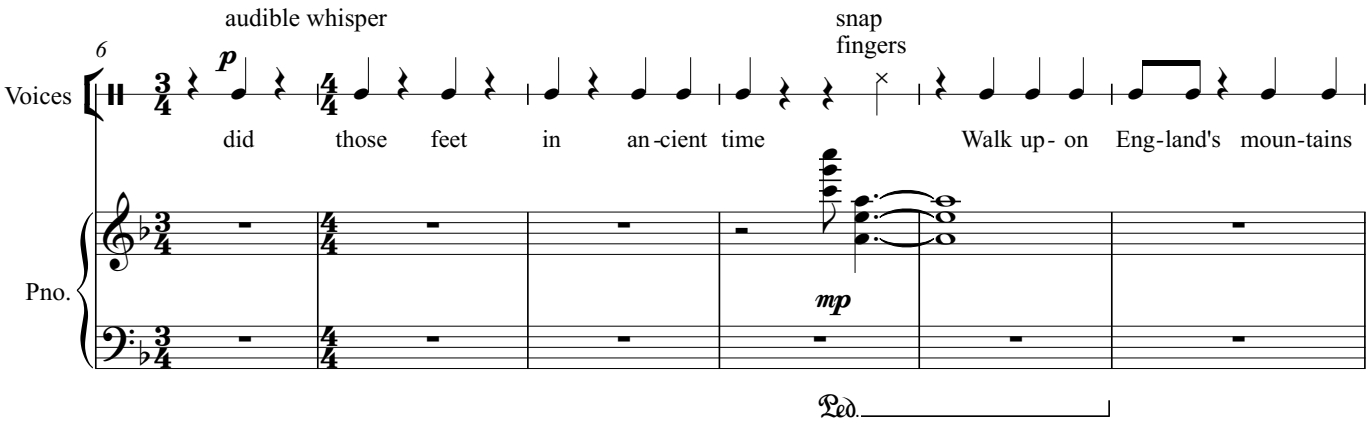
(minor revisions September 2022)





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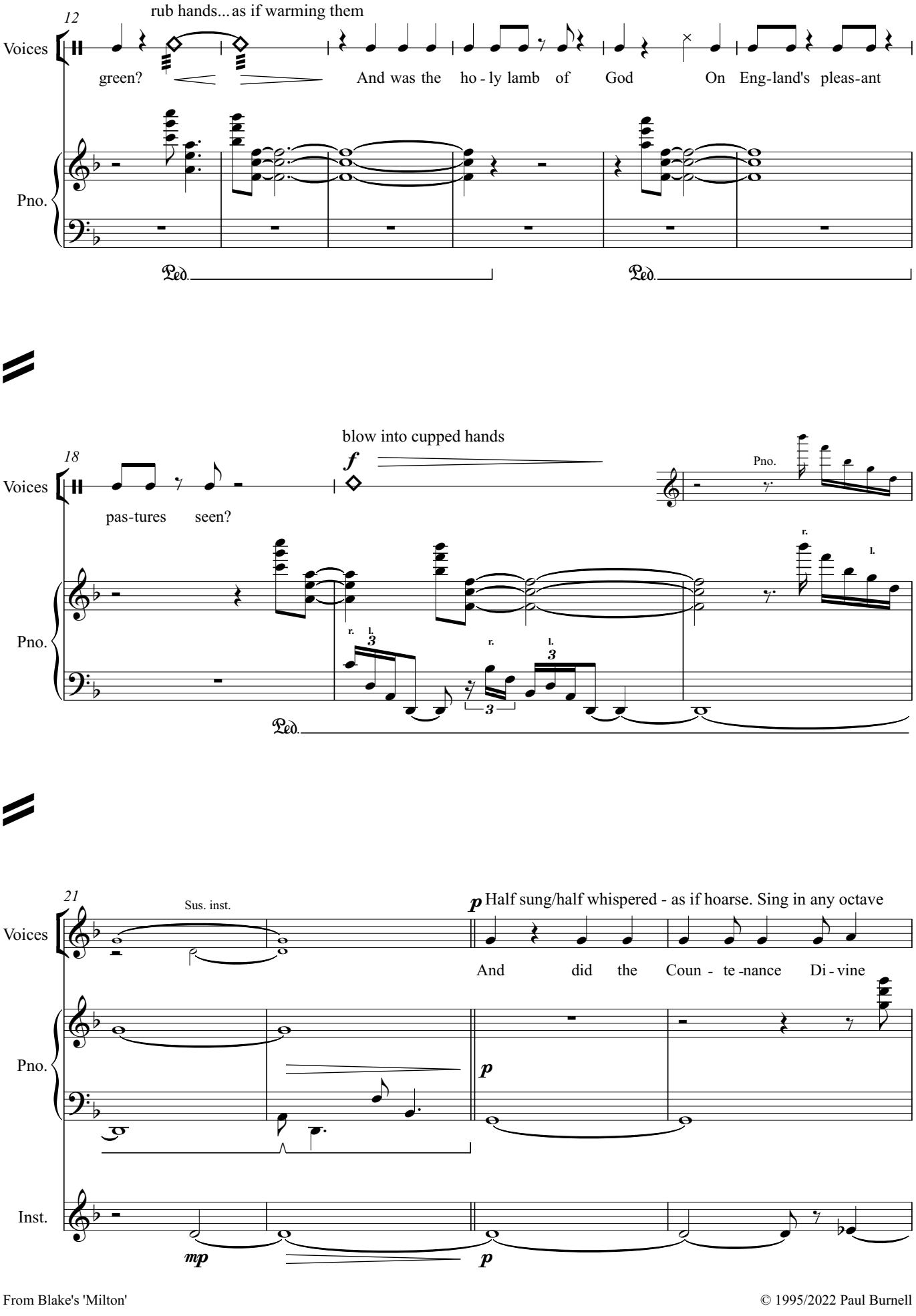

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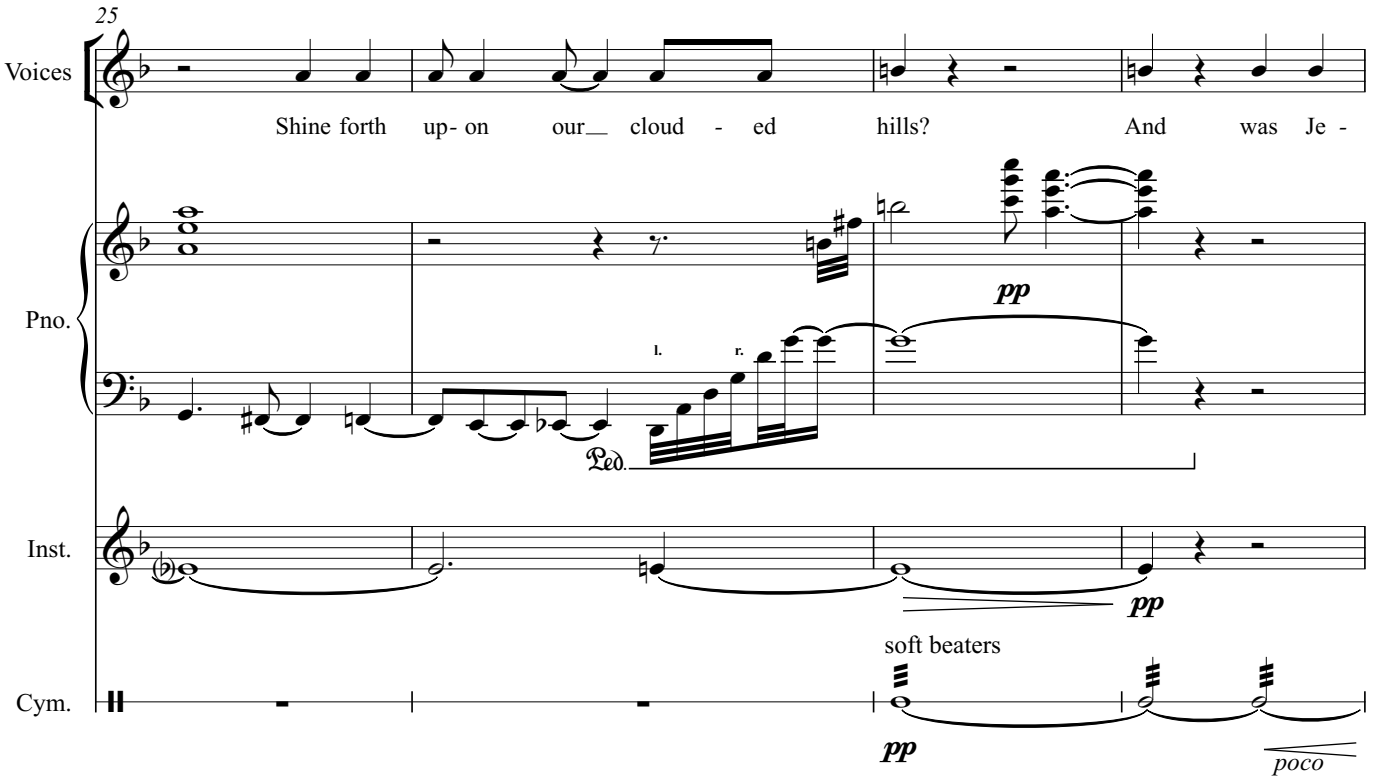

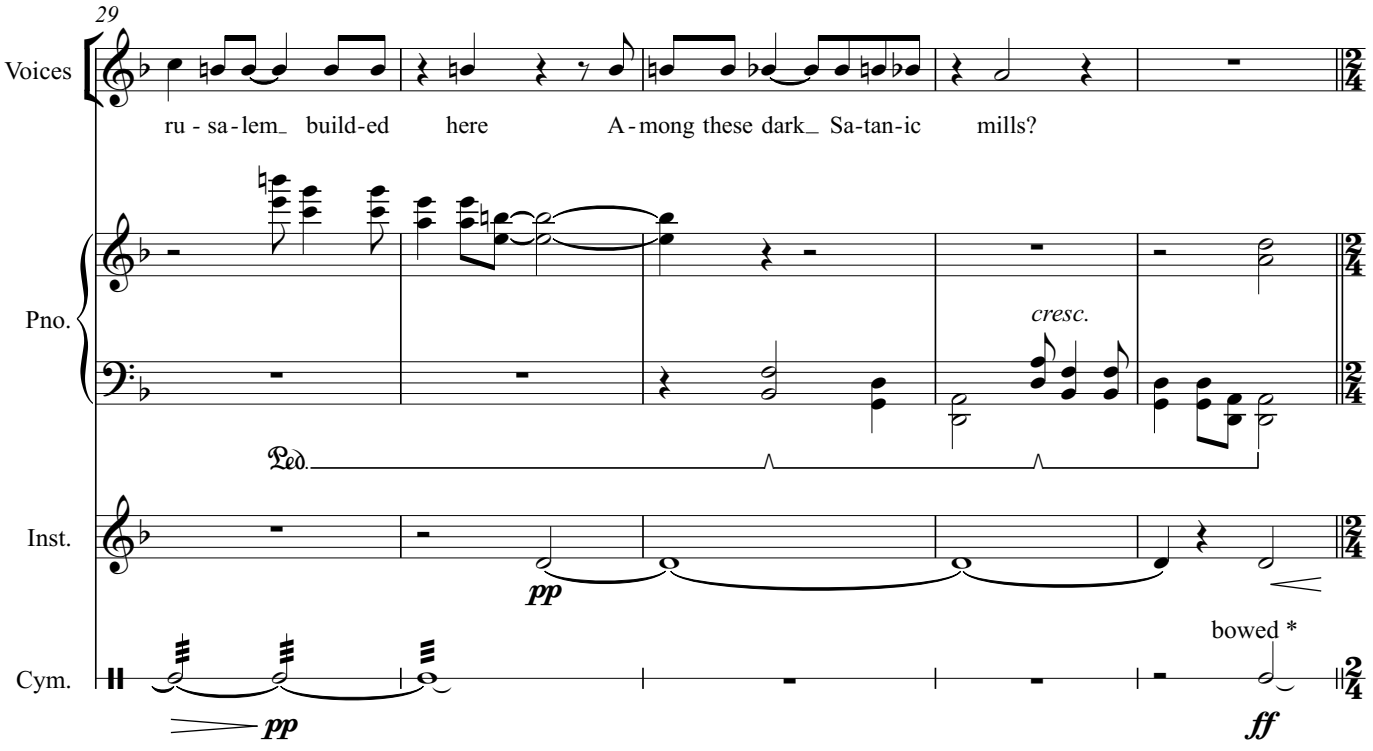

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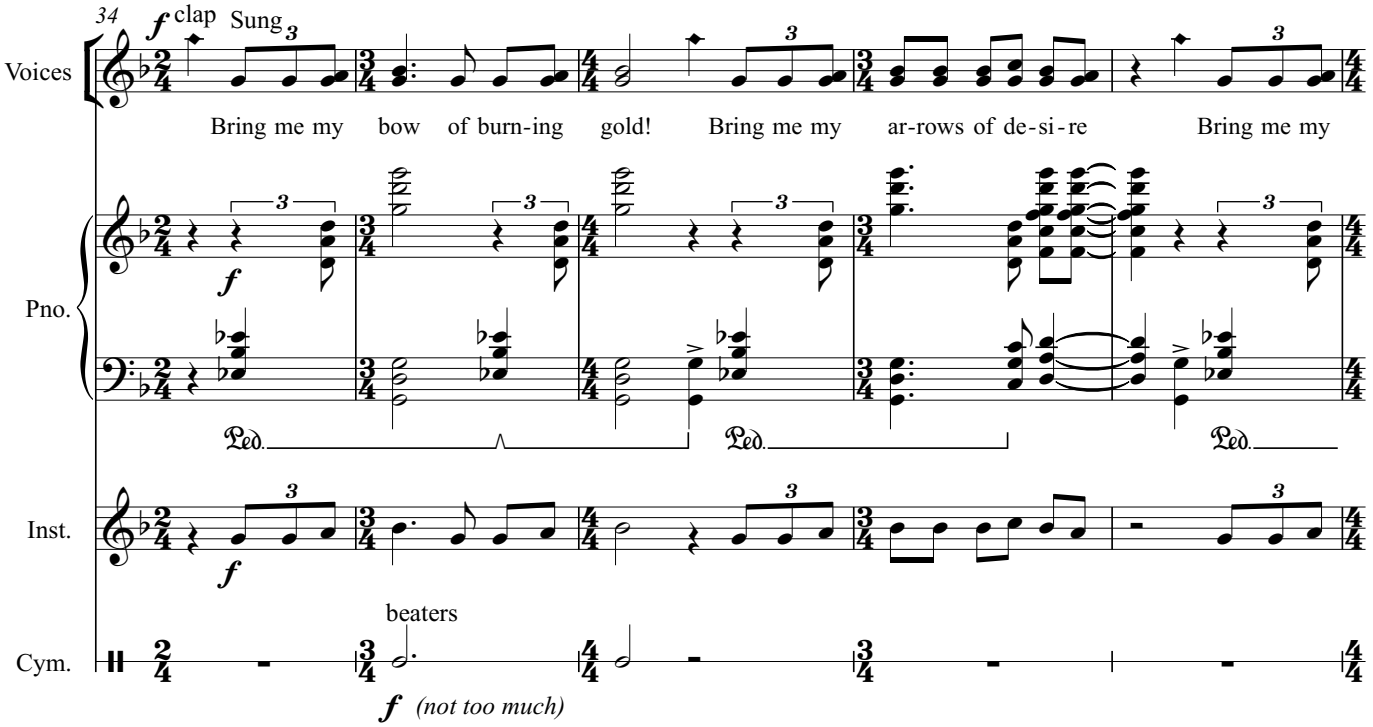

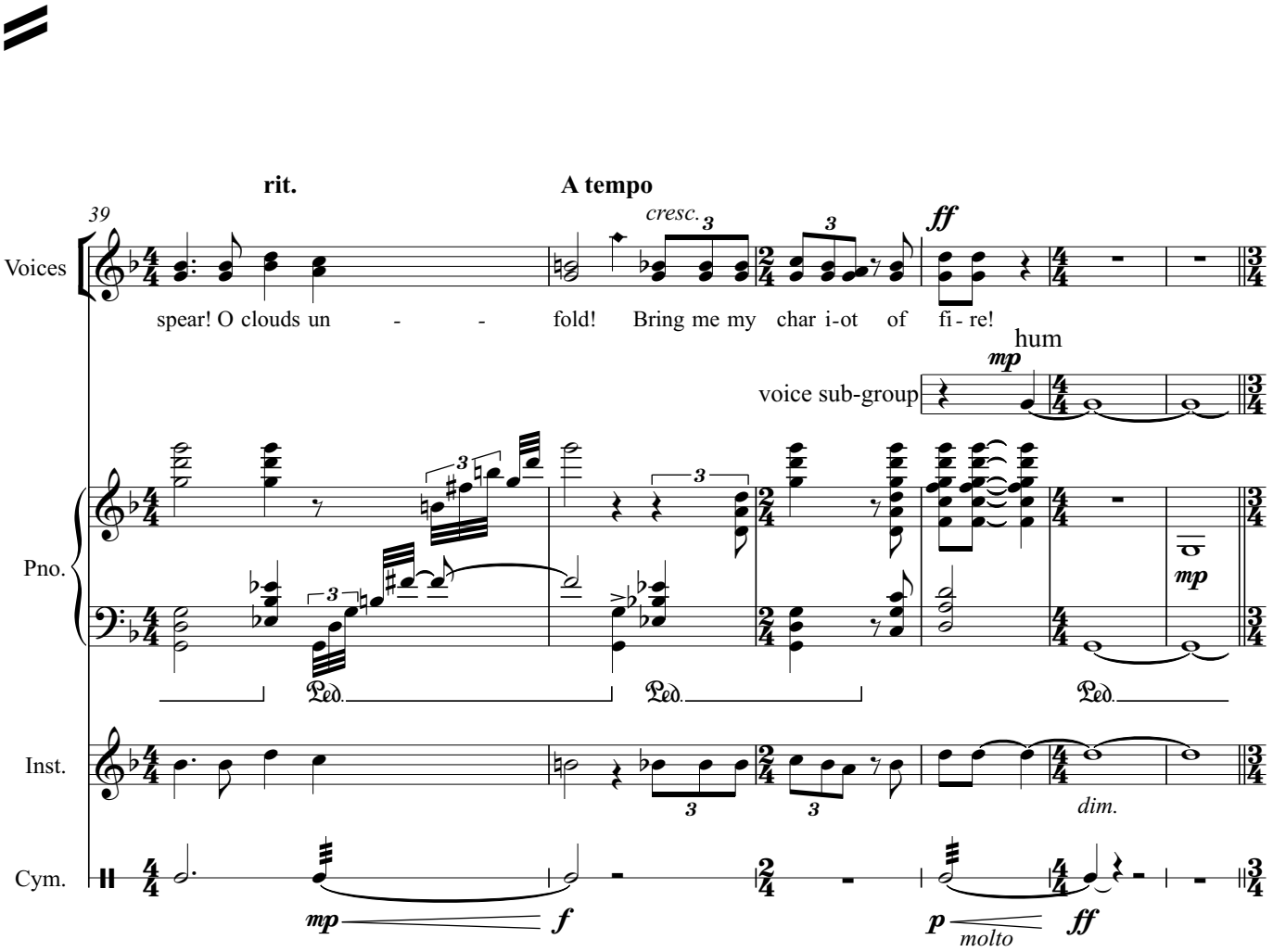

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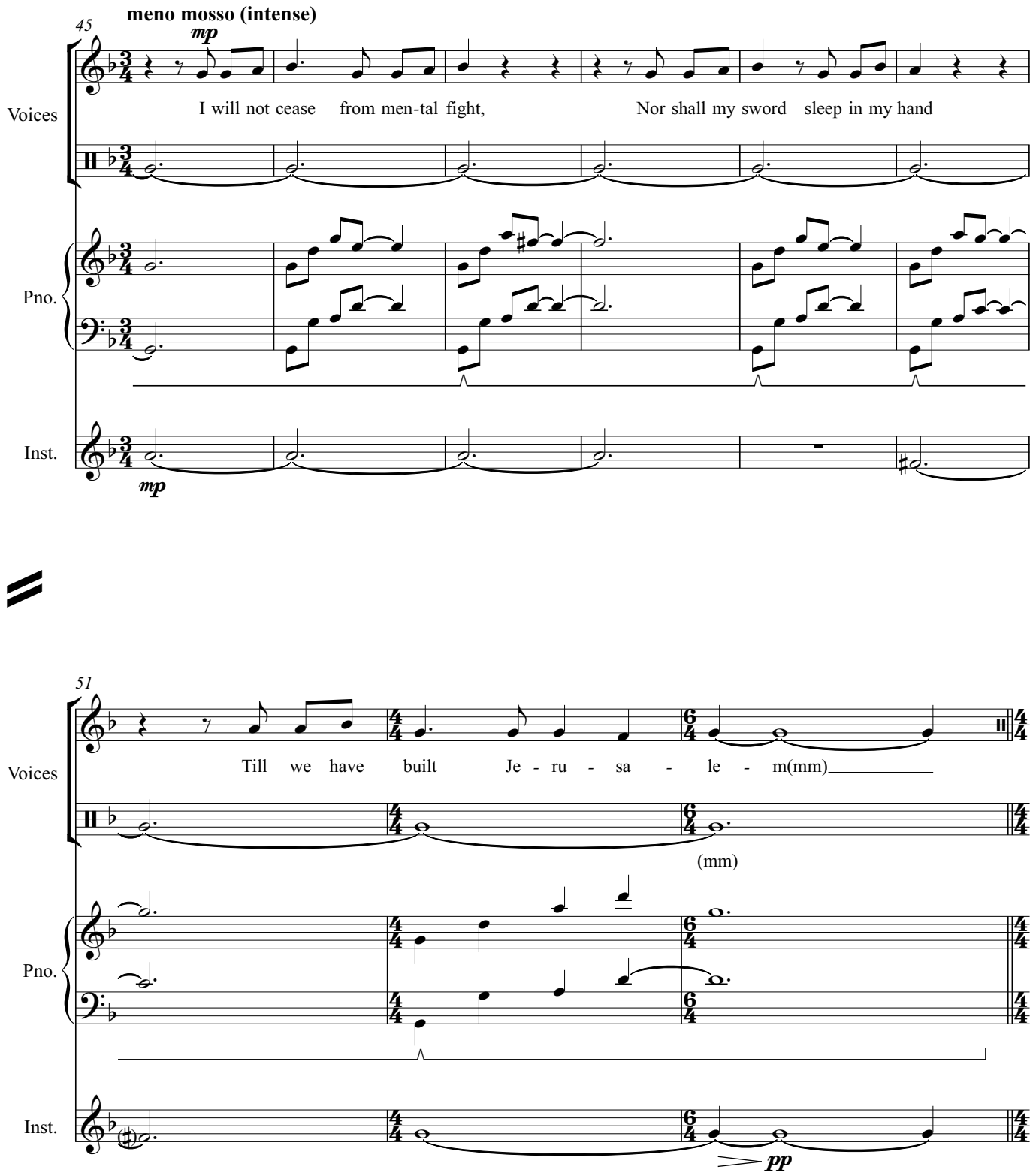

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Voices

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William Blake

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(minor revisions September 2022)

breathe out, as if making
breath visible on a frosty morning
[making the sound "hoar"]

Adagio ♩ = *c.*80

f *dim.*

breathe in

audible whisper

p

snap fingers

An(d) did those feet in an-cient time

10

rub hands... as if warming them

Walk up- on Eng- land's moun-tains green? And was the ho - ly lamb of

16

blow into cupped hands

f

Pno.

Sus. inst.

God On Eng-land's pleas- ant pas-tures seen?

23

p Half sung/half whispered - as if hoarse. Sing in any octave

And did the Coun- te - nance Di-vine Shine forth up- on our cloud-ed hills?

28

And was Je - ru - sa - lem build-ed here A - mong these dark Sa-tan-ic mills?

33

f clap

Sung

3

Bring me my bow of burn - ing gold! Bring me my

37

rit.

A tempo

cresc.

ar-rows of de - si - re Bring me my spear! O clouds un - fold! Bring me my

41

ff

meno mosso (intense)

mp

char i - ot of fi - re! I will not cease from men-tal fight,

voice sub-group

mp hum

48

Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand Till we have built Je - ru - sa -

53

snap

Audible whisper

blow into cupped hands

p

le - m(mm)

In Eng-land's green and pleas-ant land.

(mm)

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Piano 2 players

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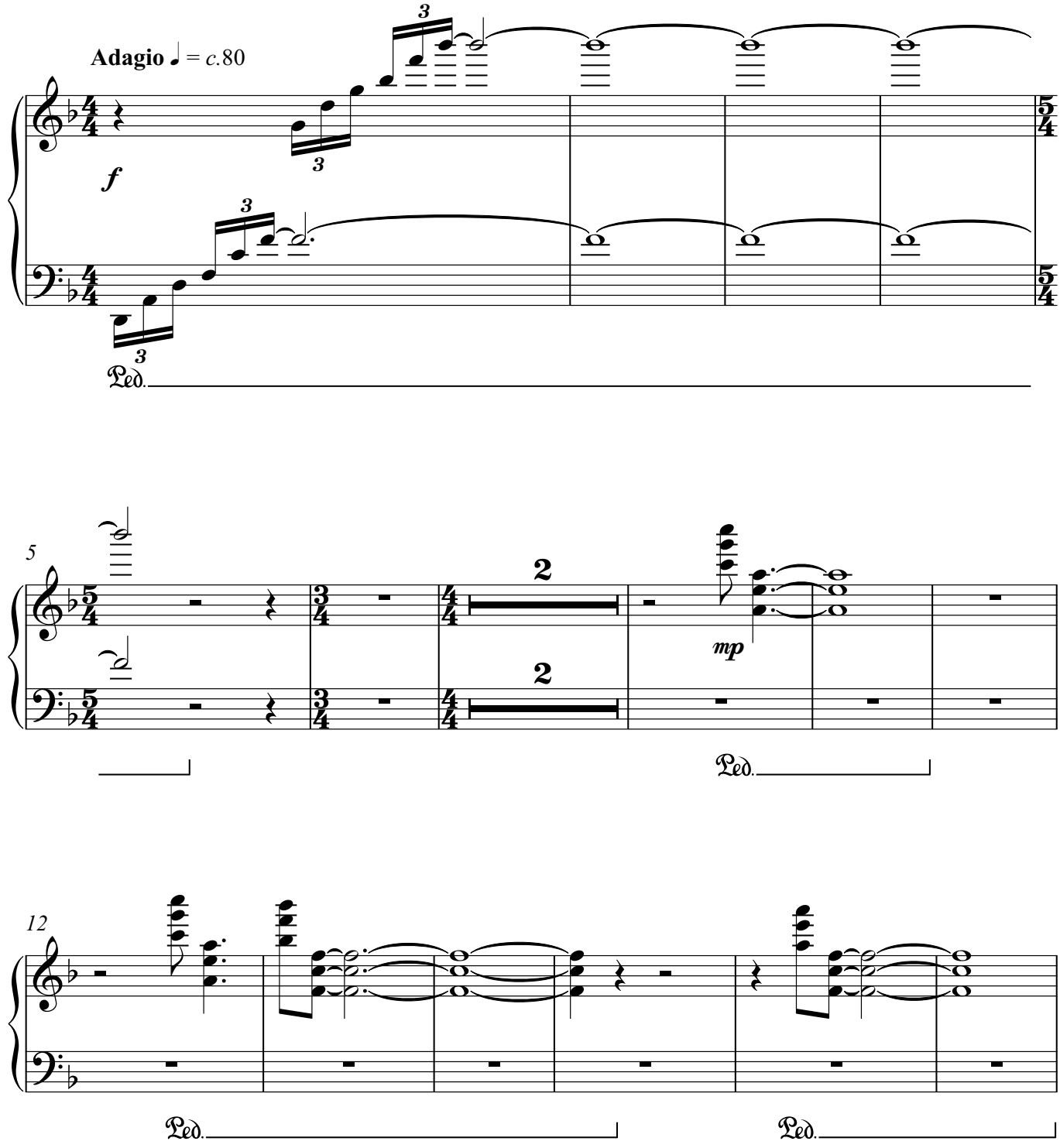

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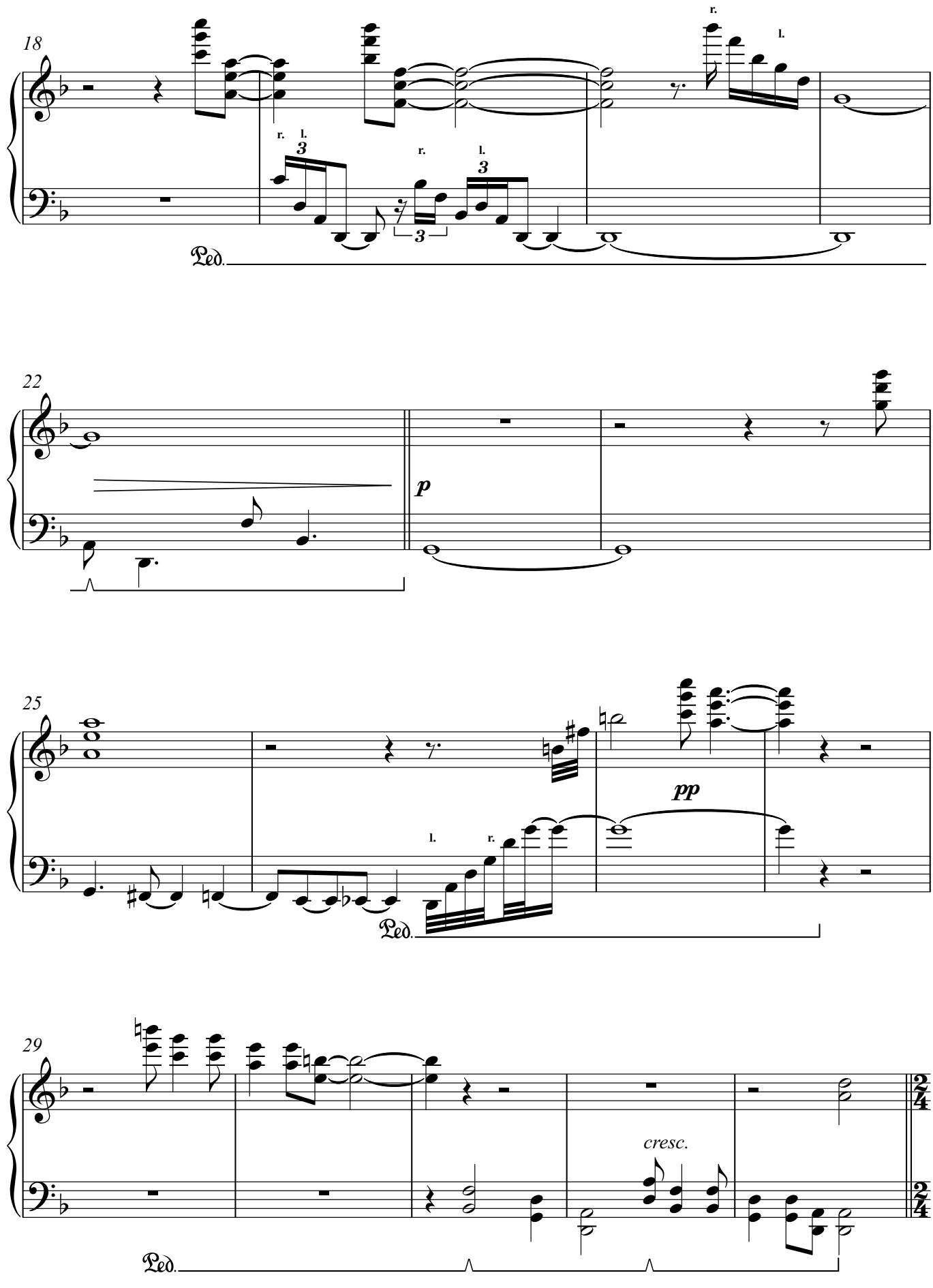

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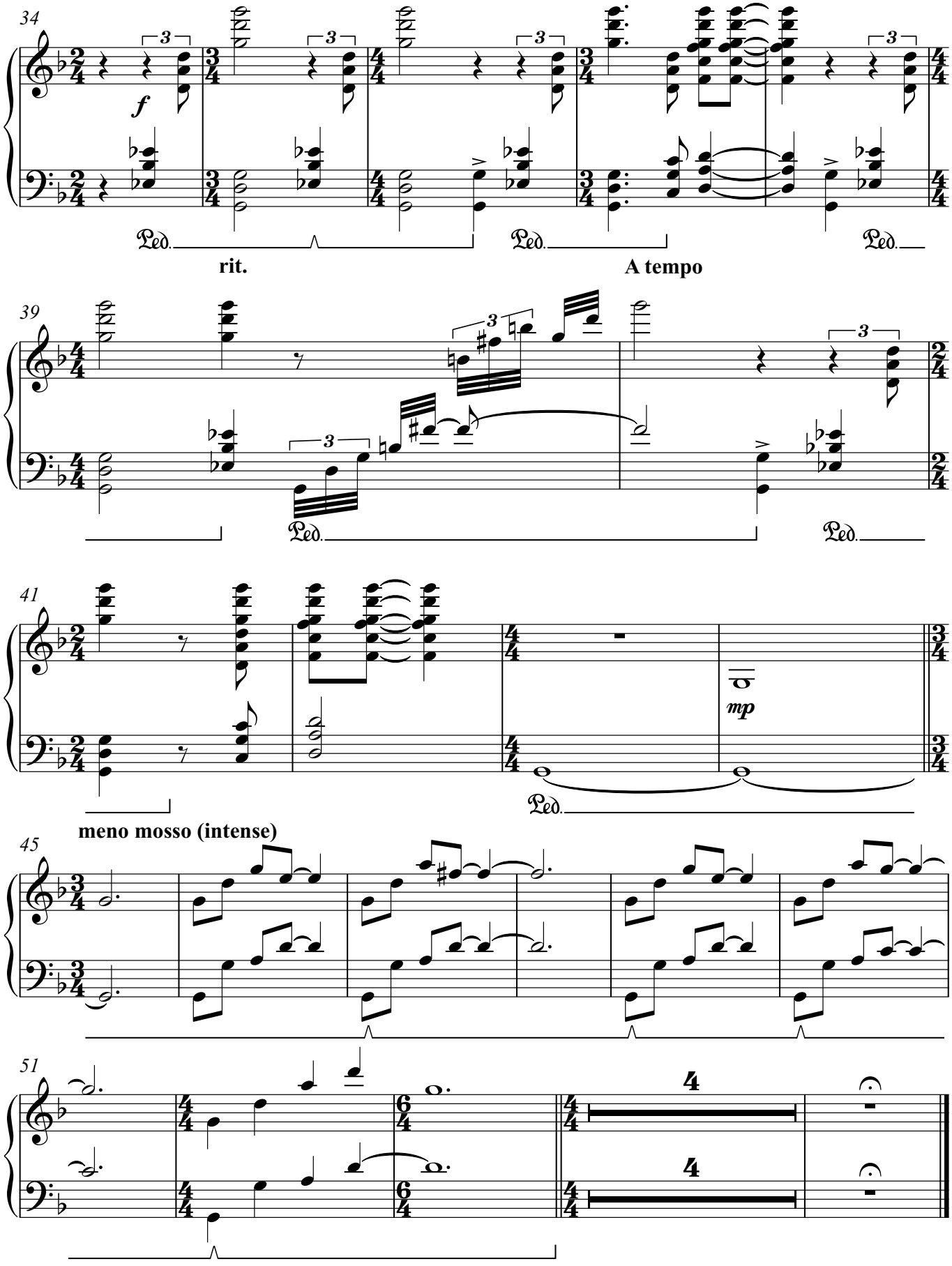

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Sustaining instrument in B♭

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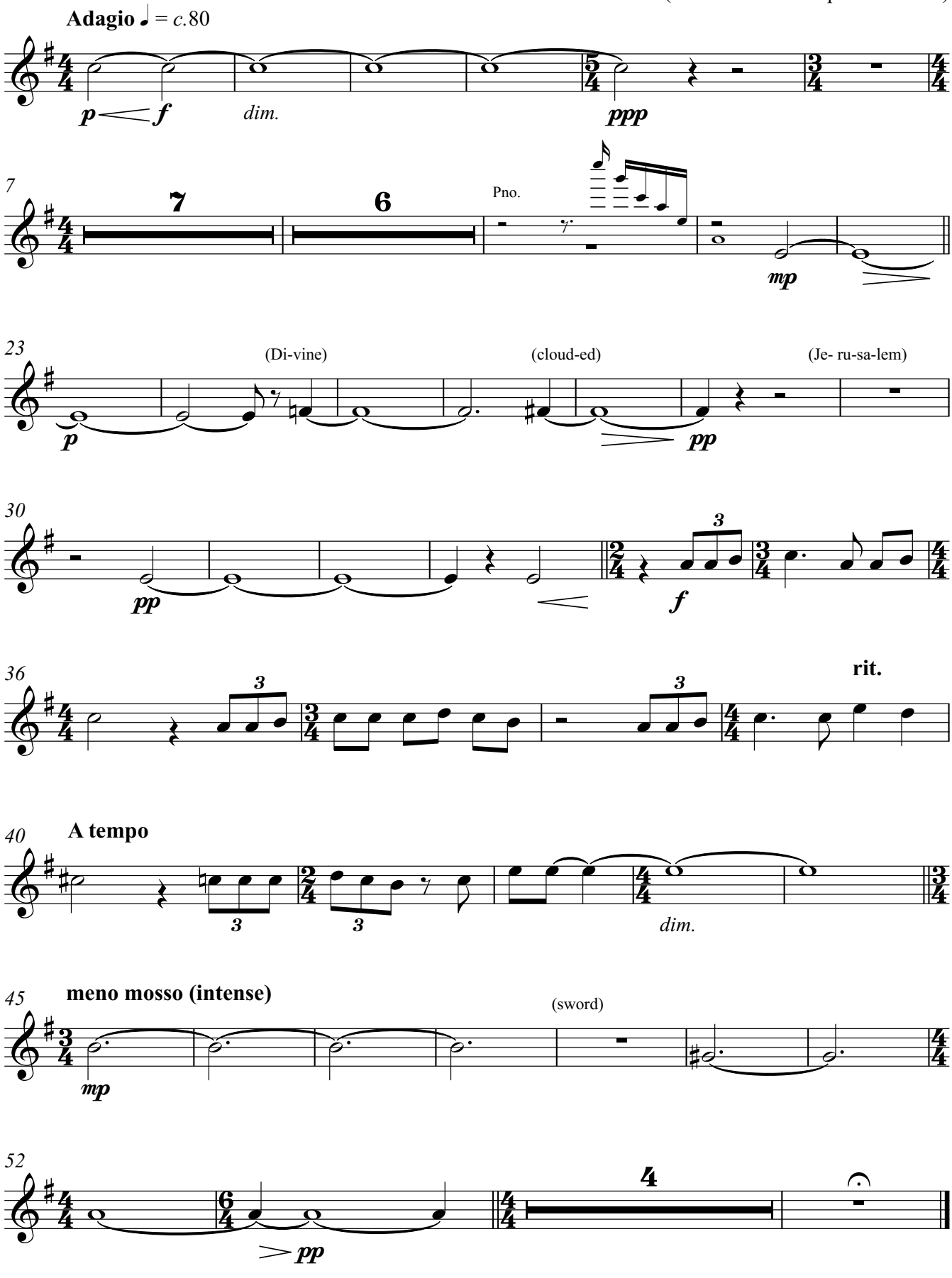

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Sustaining instrument in C

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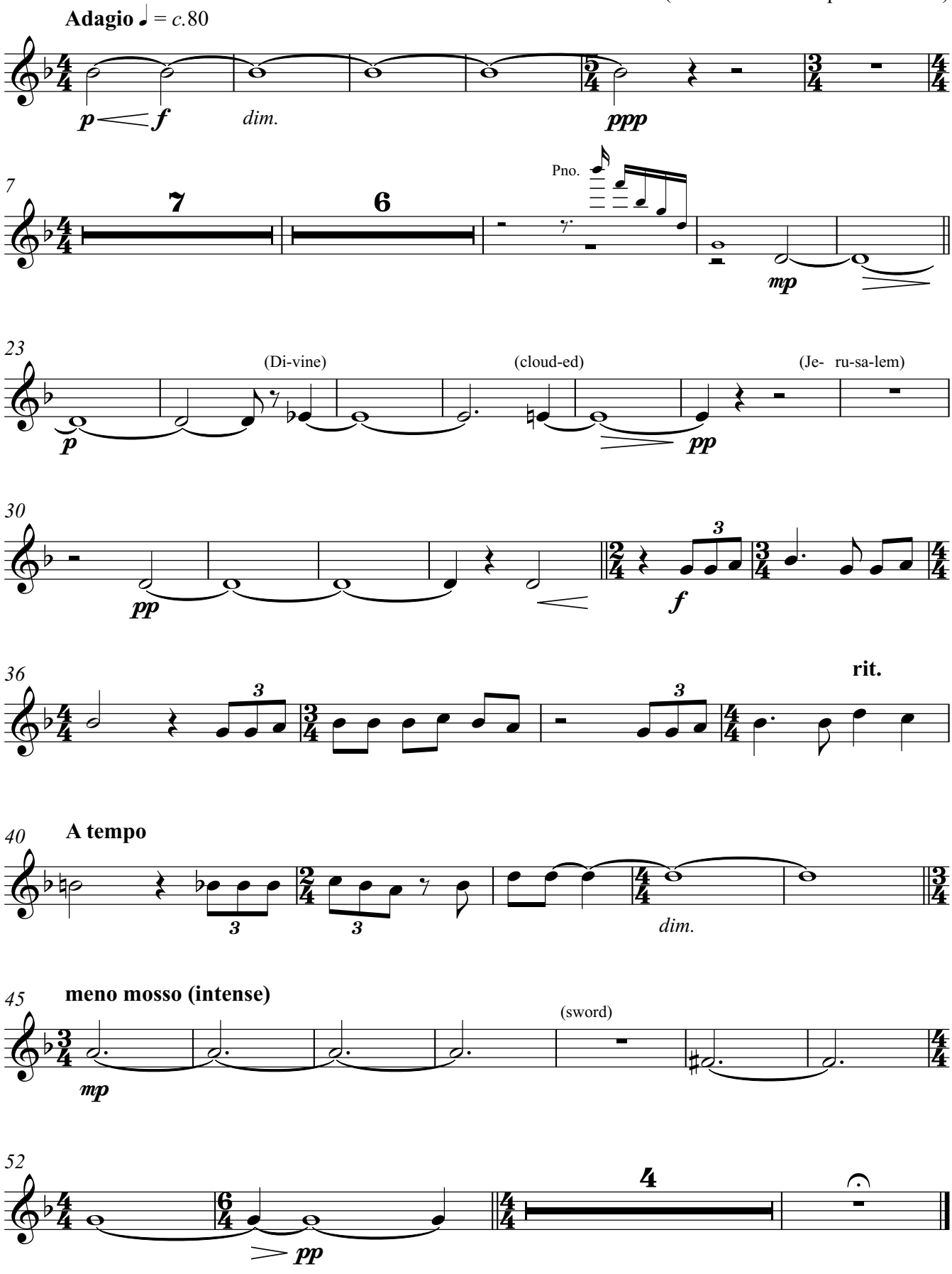

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Suspended Cymbal

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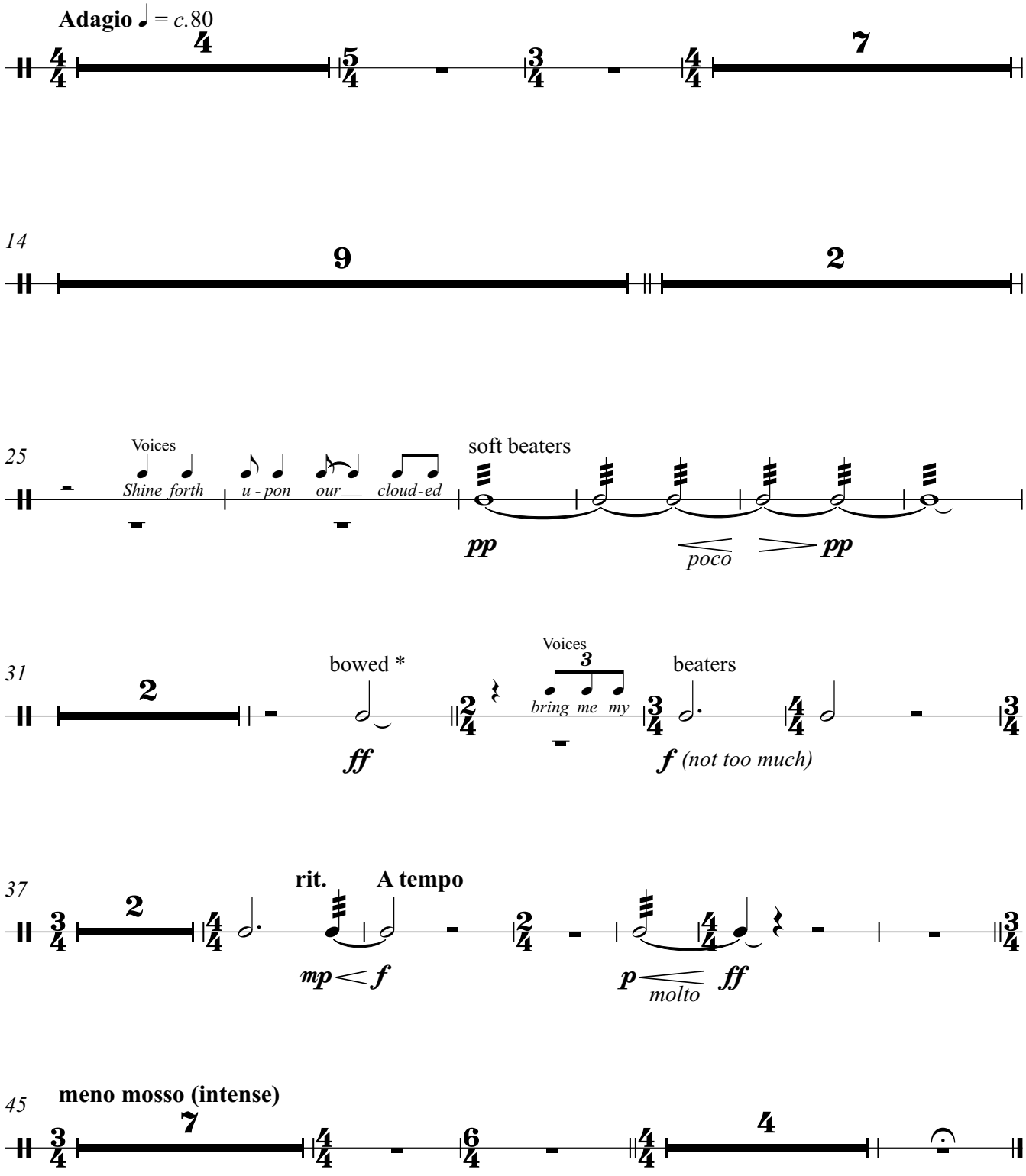

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