Between the Rosewood and the Underbrush

for mezzo-soprano and guitar

(guitar can be supplemented with piano and/or percussion)

by

Justin Henry Rubin

HARVEY MUSIC EDITIONS

This is a cantata for solo voice and guitar in which the performers should draw upon their entire spectrum of timbral shades in order to achieve a dramatic arc within the course of the piece. The piece may be performed also with piano and/or percussion (ad lib. marimba, vibraphone, glockenspiel, etc.)

The original text (by the composer, below) concerns a season in which an individual finds a unique expressive force from seemingly nowhere. This novel idea changes the society only briefly as it disappears with the same suddenness with which it arose; the individual as well as the society in which he lives is left with a vacancy only now apparent because of its loss.

Between the Rosewood and the Underbrush (2002)

Not too long ago by the railroad yard there lived in the underbrush a young cricket. Basil, unlike the other cricket lads, owned a guitar instead of a violin with which to serenade the night, illuminated by the pale blue halo of the soaring moon. It was on one uneventful summer day that Basil continued to play his guitar after everyone else ceased their music–making, from the deep azure of night into the dawn of the next bright sunlit morning. The others looked wearily at their friend as his solo venture continued, but said nothing at all.

Over the following few weeks, Basil seemed less and less inclined to pick at the six gentle strings after nightfall and began to play for himself further into the day until dusk when he'd put his instrument away. Everyone watched as his guitar began to take on the sun-bleached sheen of a silver–brown quality. As well, they noticed his music began to mirror the appearance of his guitar, glowing with assurance, and a disposition inspired by the radiance of the sun. Lyrical vibrations rose from his strings with a weightlessness never felt before by the little society of crickets by the railroad yard.

Quite unexpectedly, on a Monday, he slept all through the morning and into the afternoon, rising only as twilight began to descend onto the warm thicket. He took out his guitar and rejoined his friends, caressing the night with songs of such melancholy character that even the most obstinate of hearts would have been affected. The beautiful airs and songs that he had been playing for the sun as it rose and fell had vanished.

The days past in silence, and the evenings returned to be as they once were. It was as dawn began to break late in the summer, when Basil was placing his guitar back in its case, that a friend noticed the lustrous color the guitar had once projected had begun to drain back into the grains of the ever-darkening brown wood. He stopped and looked deeply into the despondent cricket's eyes, recalling the sounds once so new and now nearly forgotten. Together they waited to see the sun peek over the hills past the distant shadow of the railroad yard.

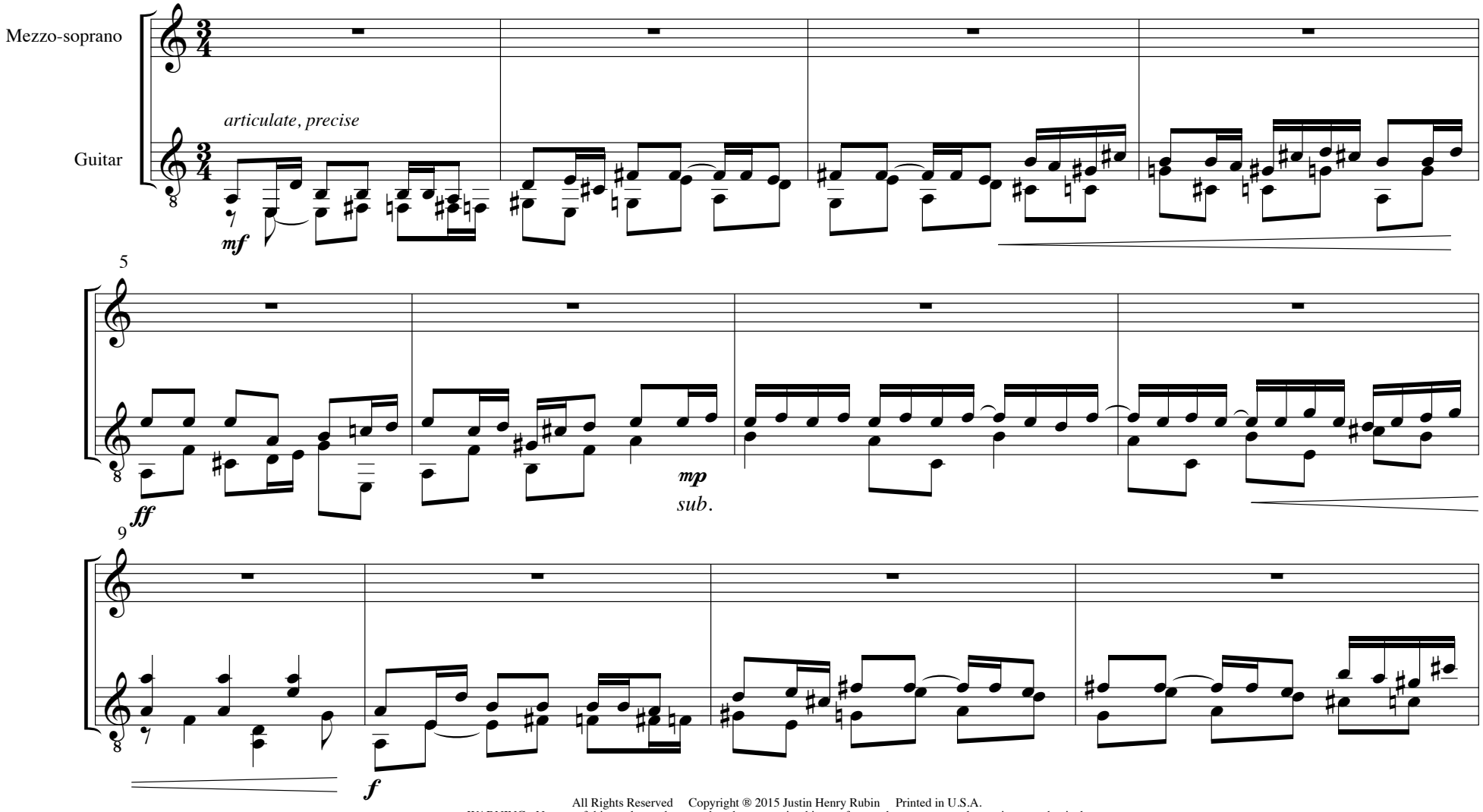
Between the Rosewood and the Underbrush

Commissioned by The Dream Songs Project: Alyssa Anderson, mezzo-soprano and Joseph Spoelstra, guitar
This commission was made possible by the voters of Minnesota through
grants from the Minnesota State Arts Board and the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council,
thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

♩ = 72

1. Singer speaks, "Part one: The Overture", and then begin.

Music and text by Justin Henry Rubin (2015)



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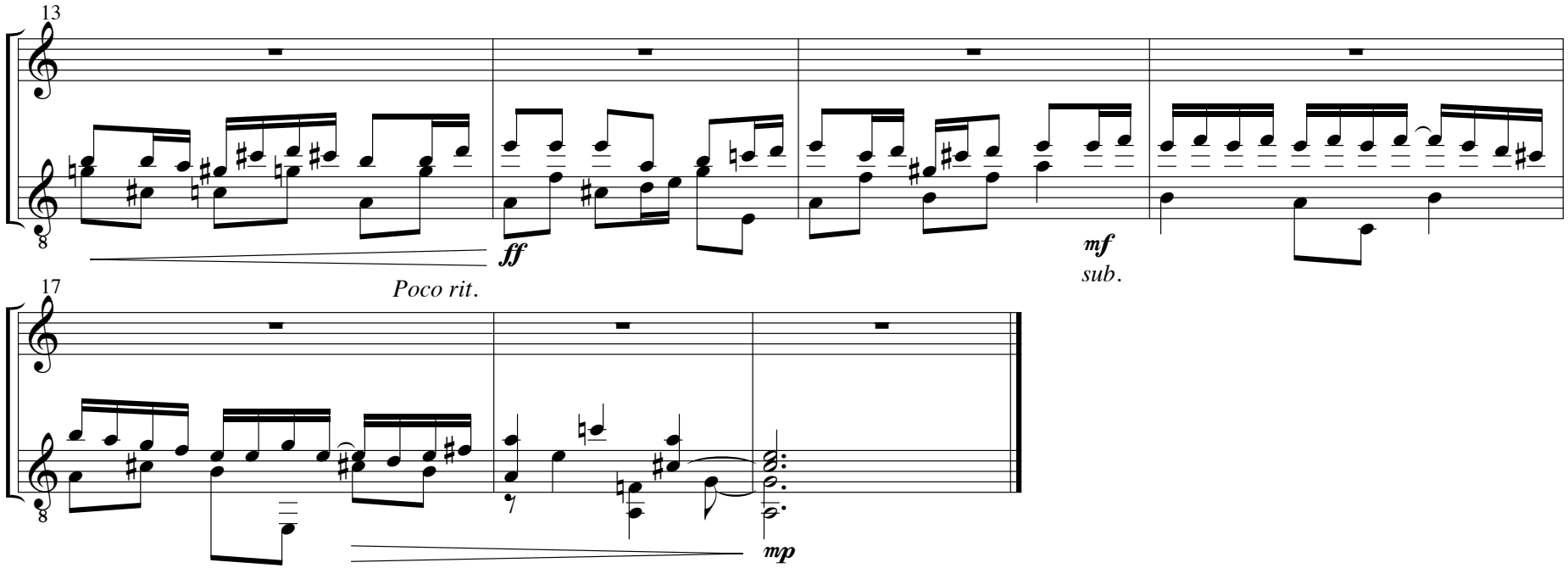
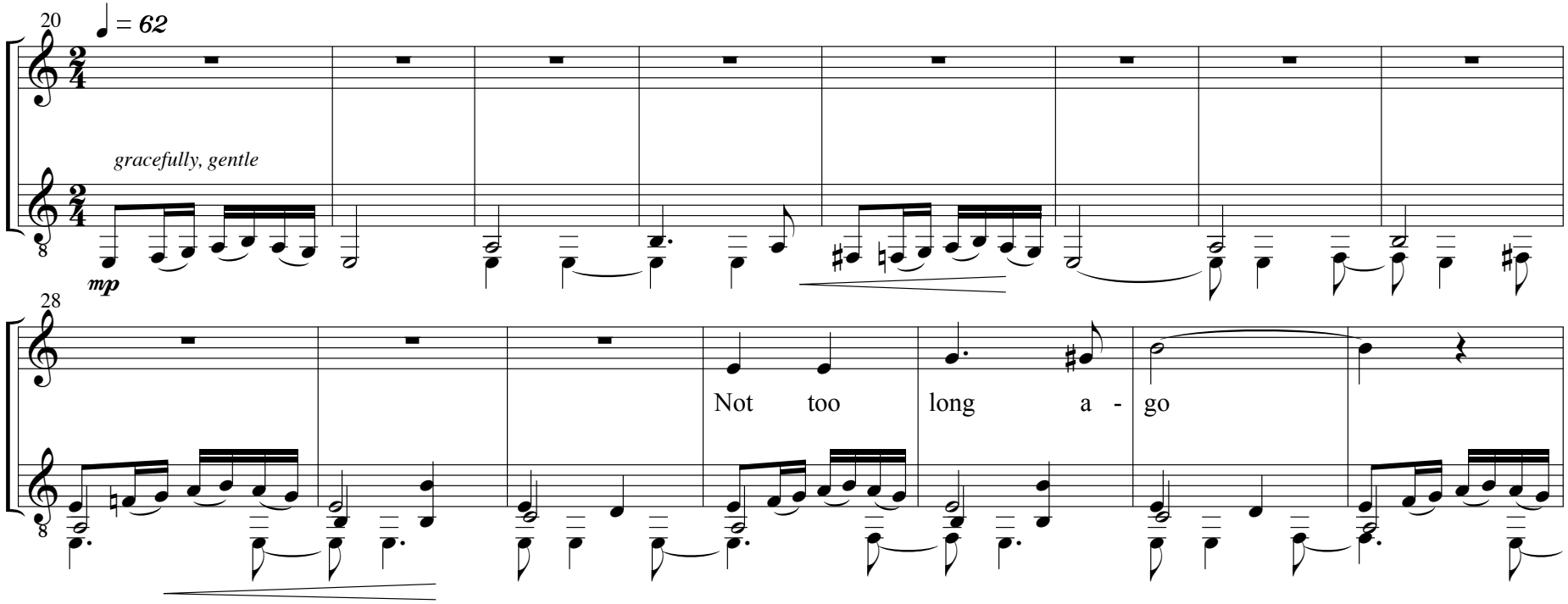
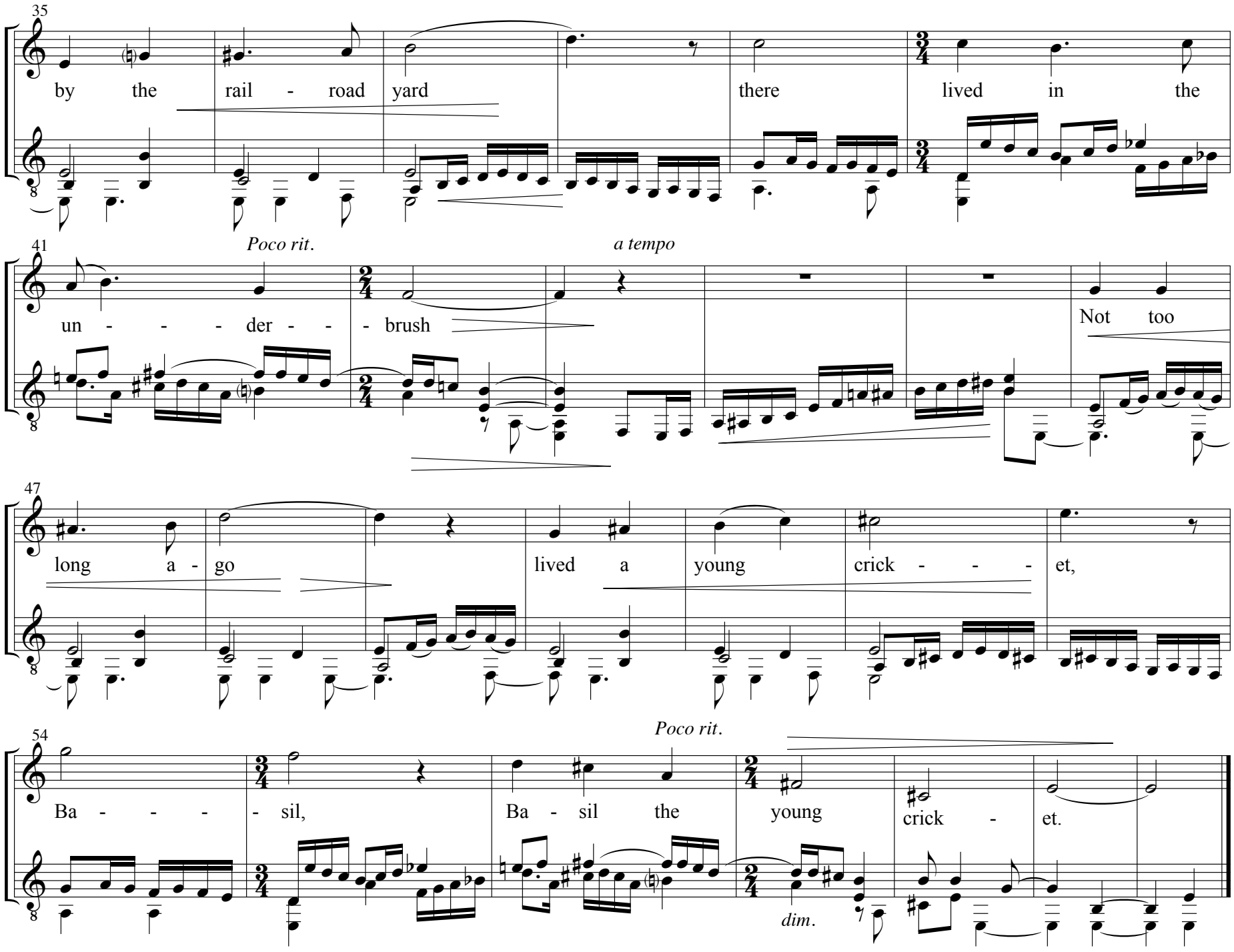
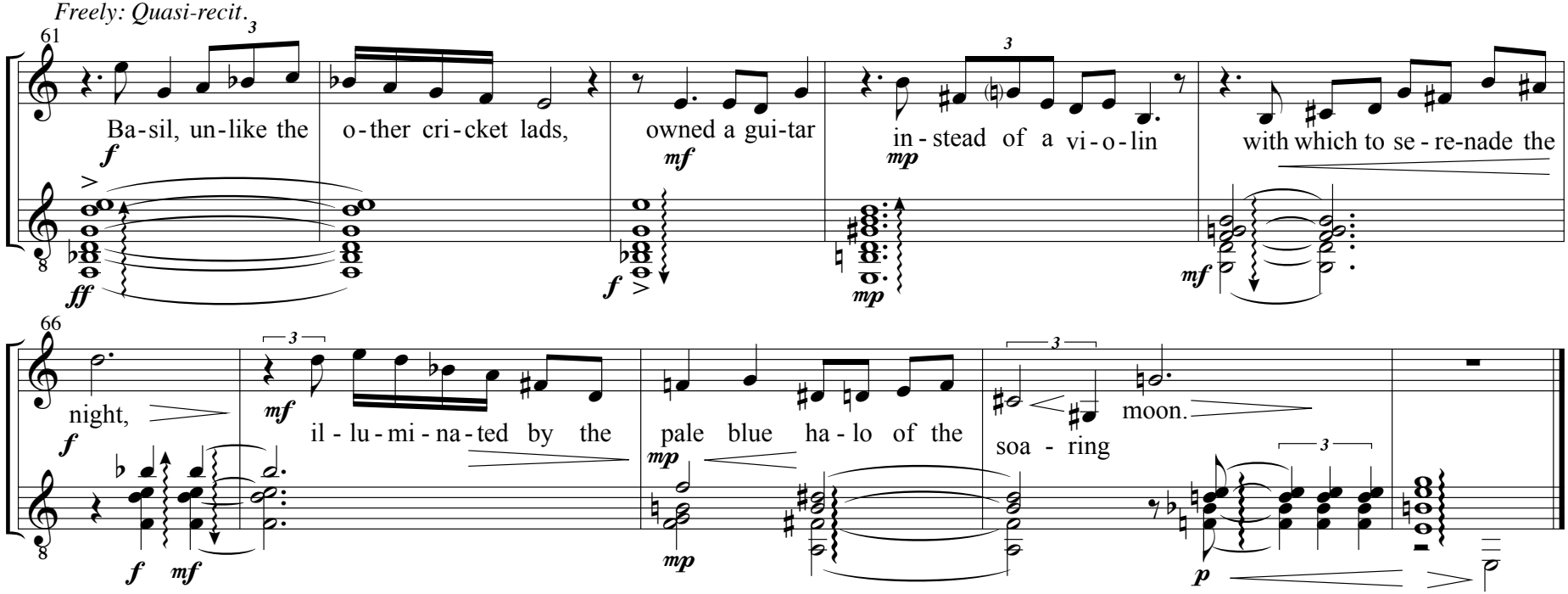


2. Singer speaks, "Part two: Arietta - Introduction to Basil.", and then begin.

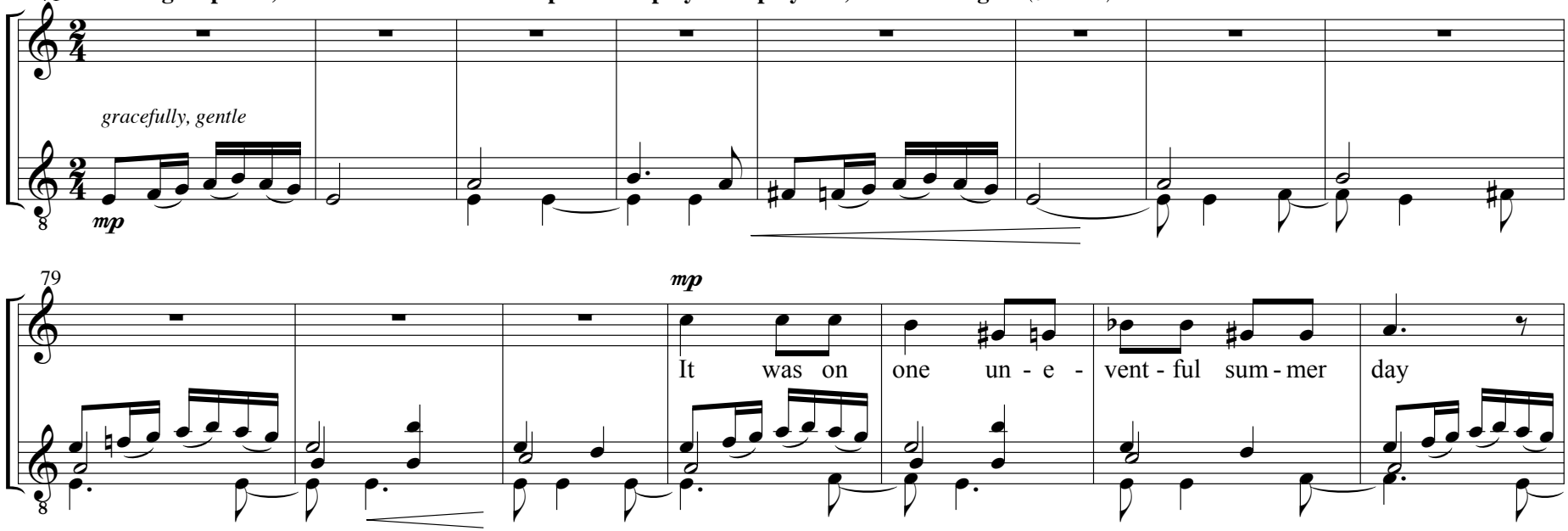


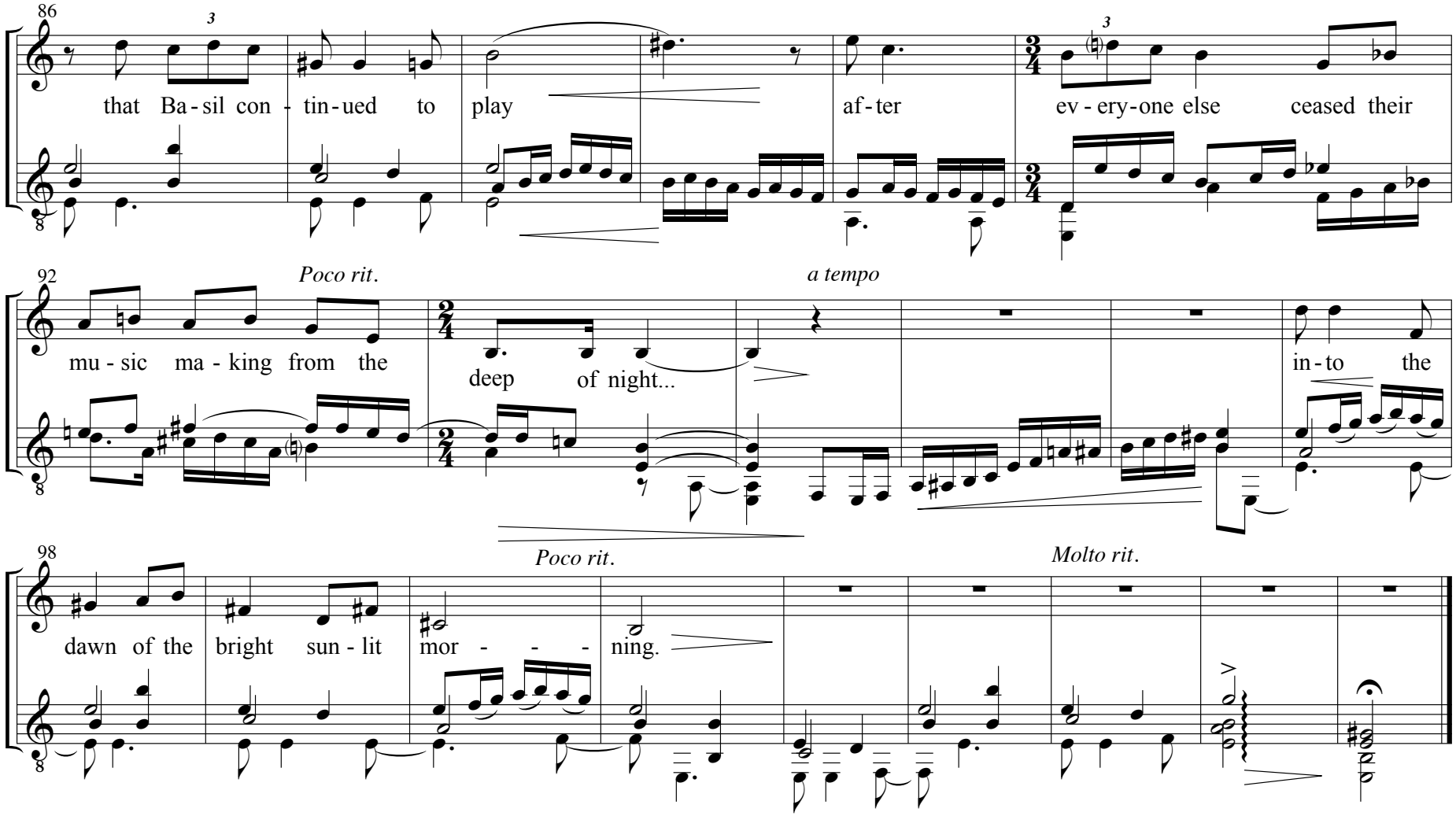

35
by the rail - road yard there lived in the
41
Poco rit.
a tempo
un - - - der - - brush
Not too
47
long a - go lived a young crick - - - et,
54
Poco rit.
Ba - - - - sil, Ba - sil the young crick - et.
dim.

3. Guitarist speaks, "Part three: Recitative - Basil is a guitarist!", and then begin.

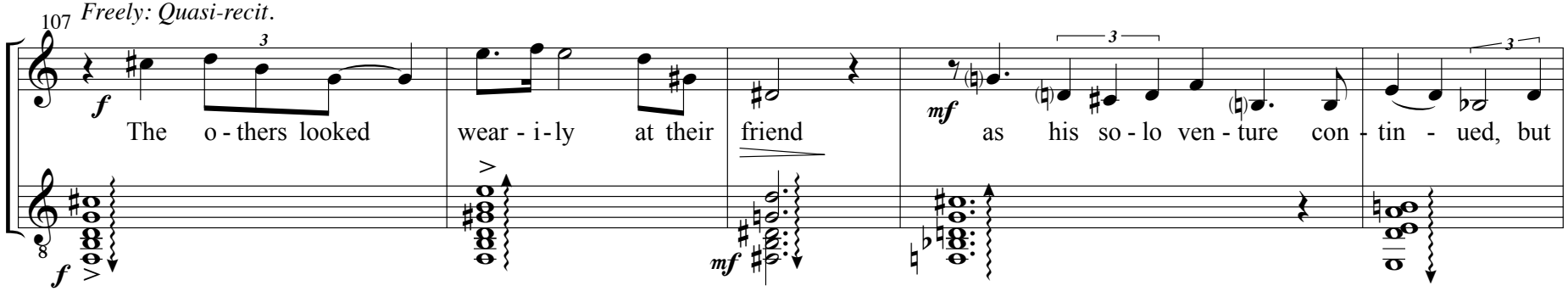


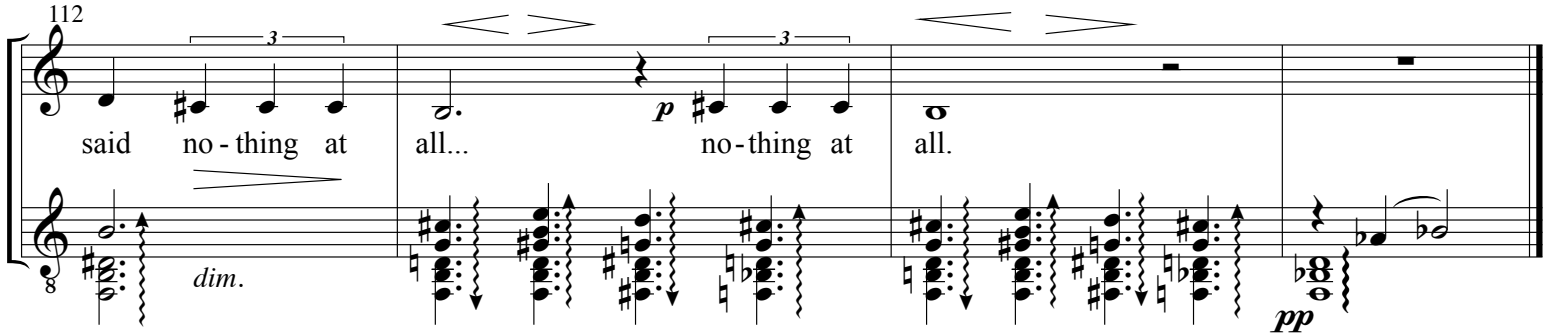
4. Singer speaks, "Part four: Arietta da Capo - Basil plays and plays...", and then begin. (♩ = 62)



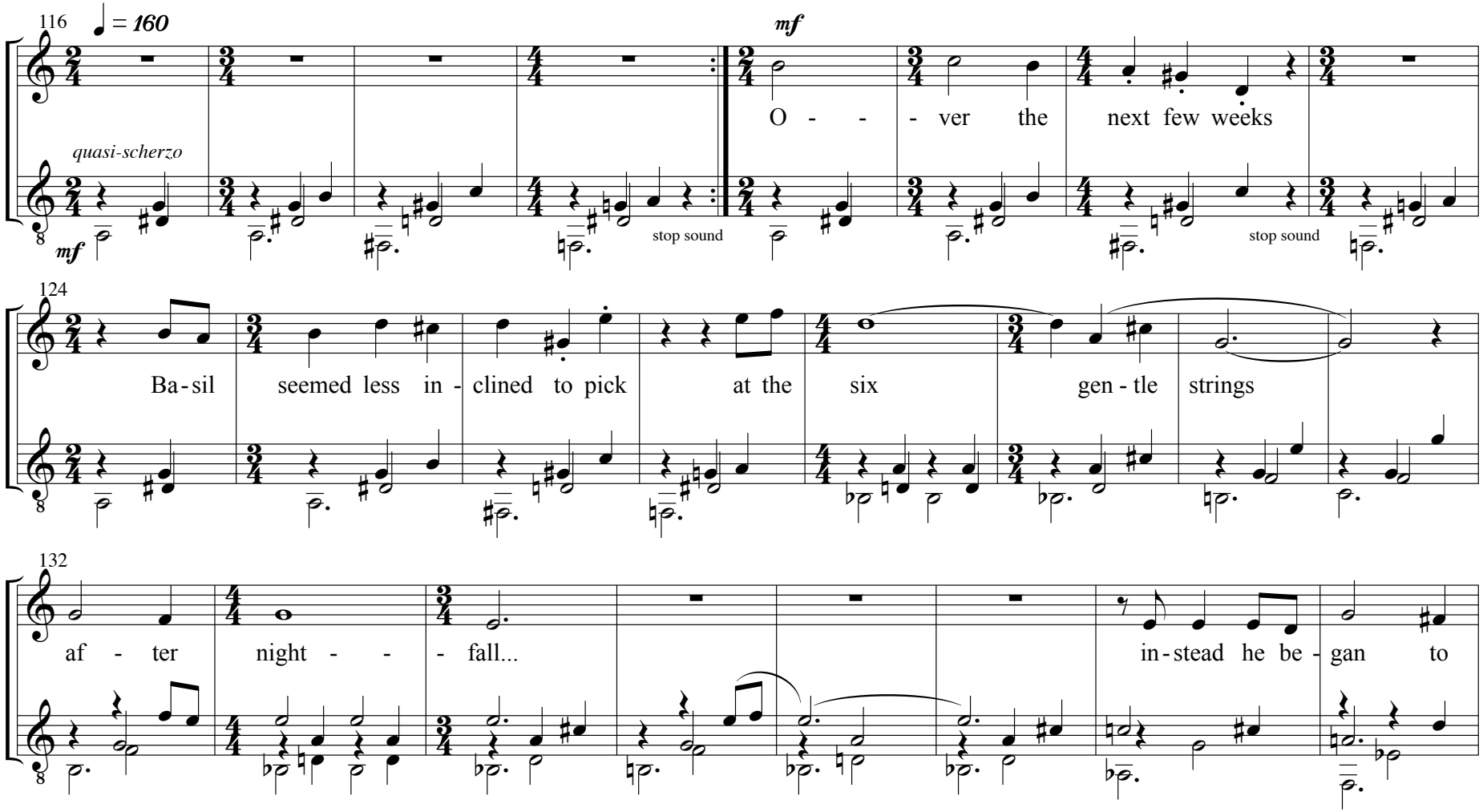


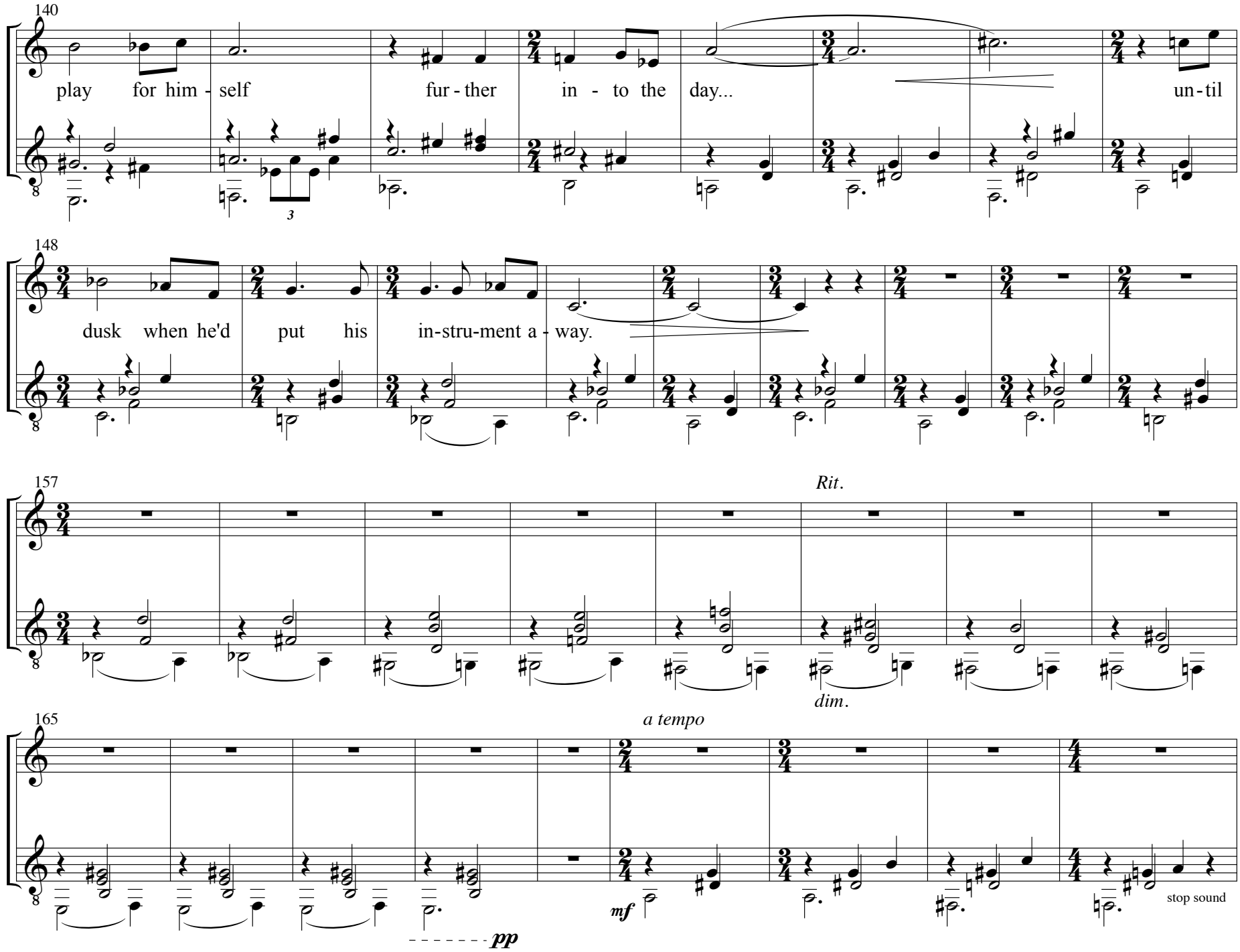
5. Guitarist speaks, "Part five: Recitative - What did the other crickets do?", and then begin.

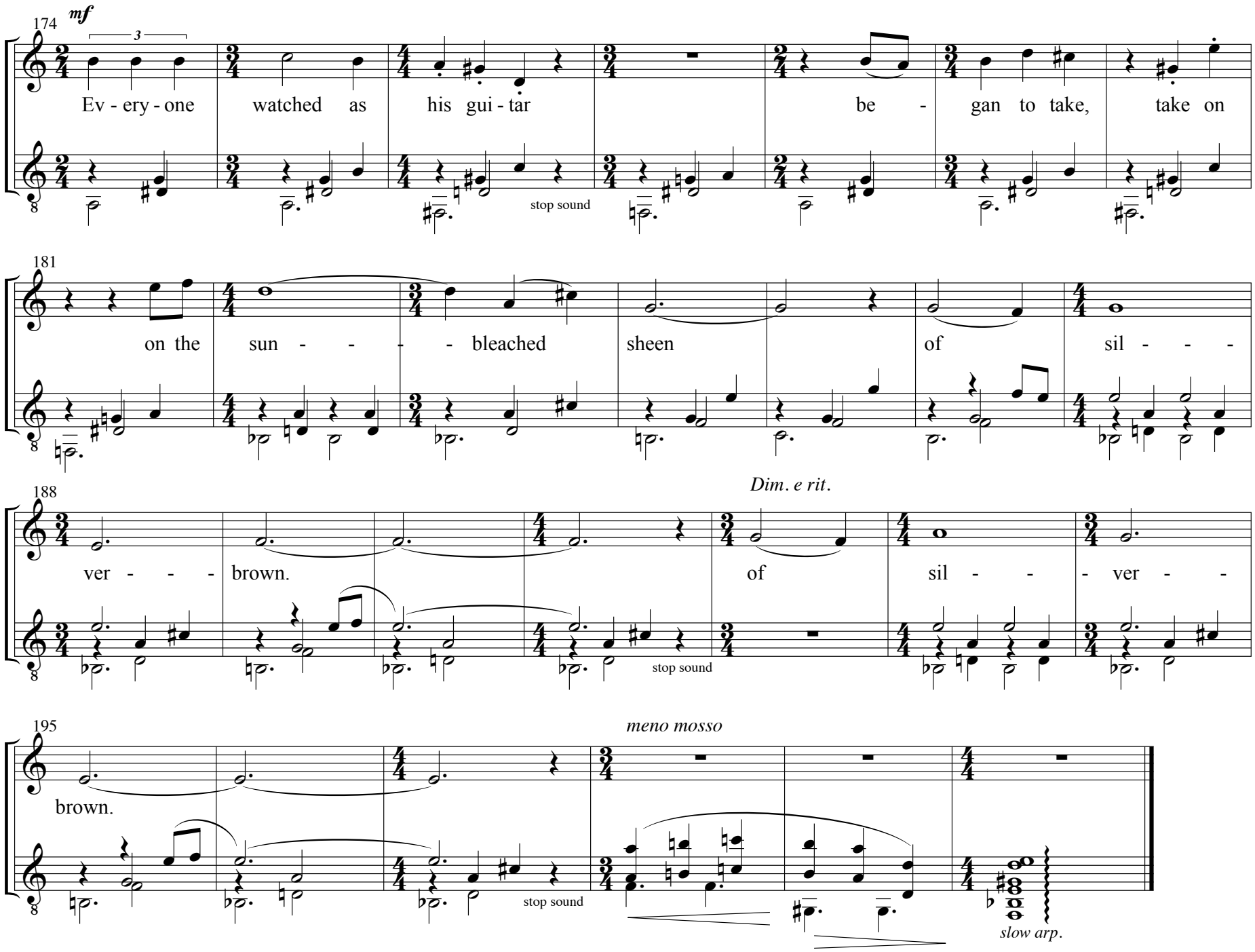




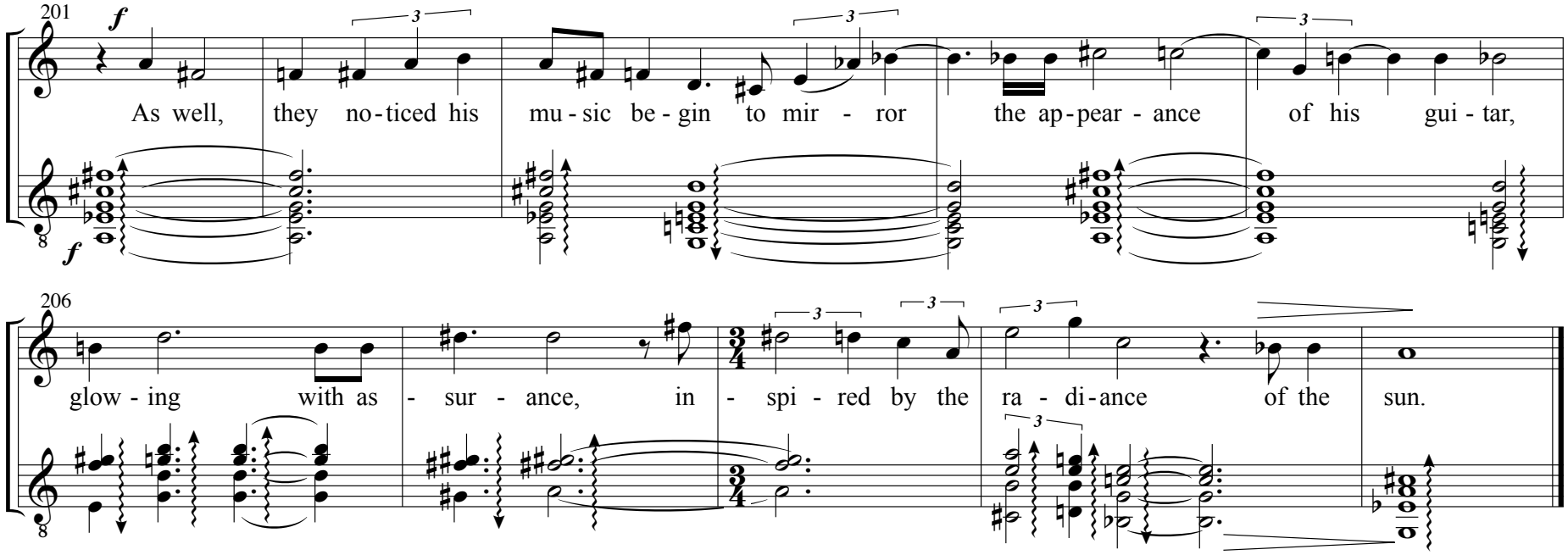
6. Singer speaks, "Part six: Arietta - From night to day.", and then begin.



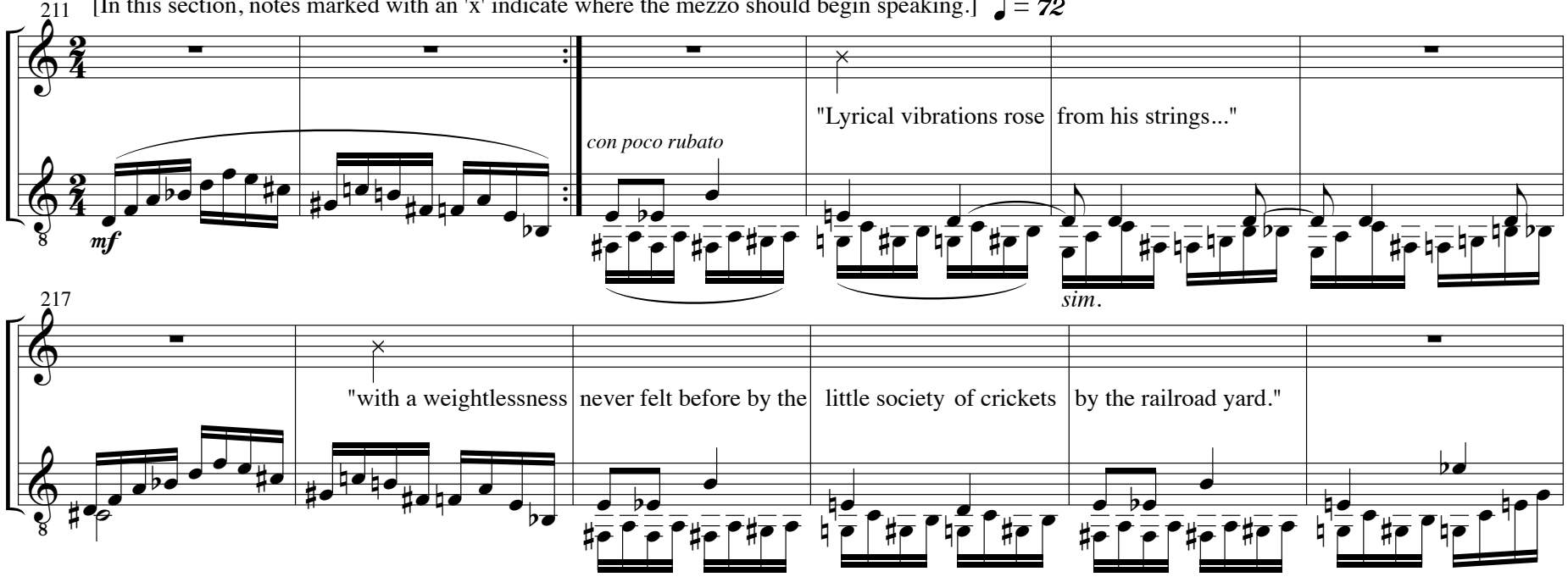

140
play for him - self fur - ther in - to the day... un - til
148
dusk when he'd put his in-stru-ment a - way.
157
Rit.
dim.
165
a tempo
mf
pp
stop sound

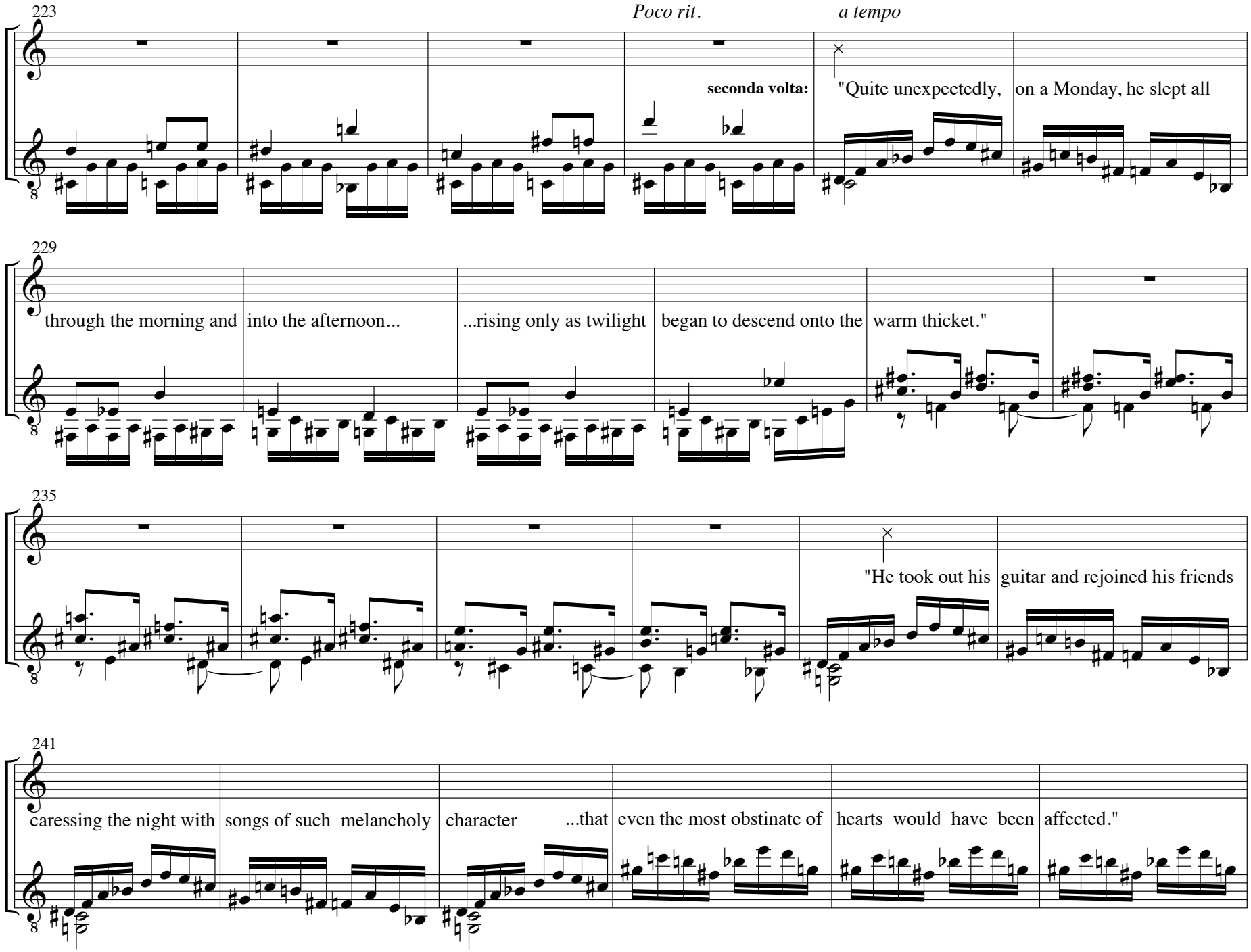

174
mf
3
Ev - ery - one watched as his gui - tar be - gan to take, take on
stop sound
181
on the sun - - - - bleached sheen of sil - - -
188
Dim. e rit.
ver - - - brown. of sil - - - ver - -
stop sound
195
meno mosso
brown.
stop sound
slow arp.

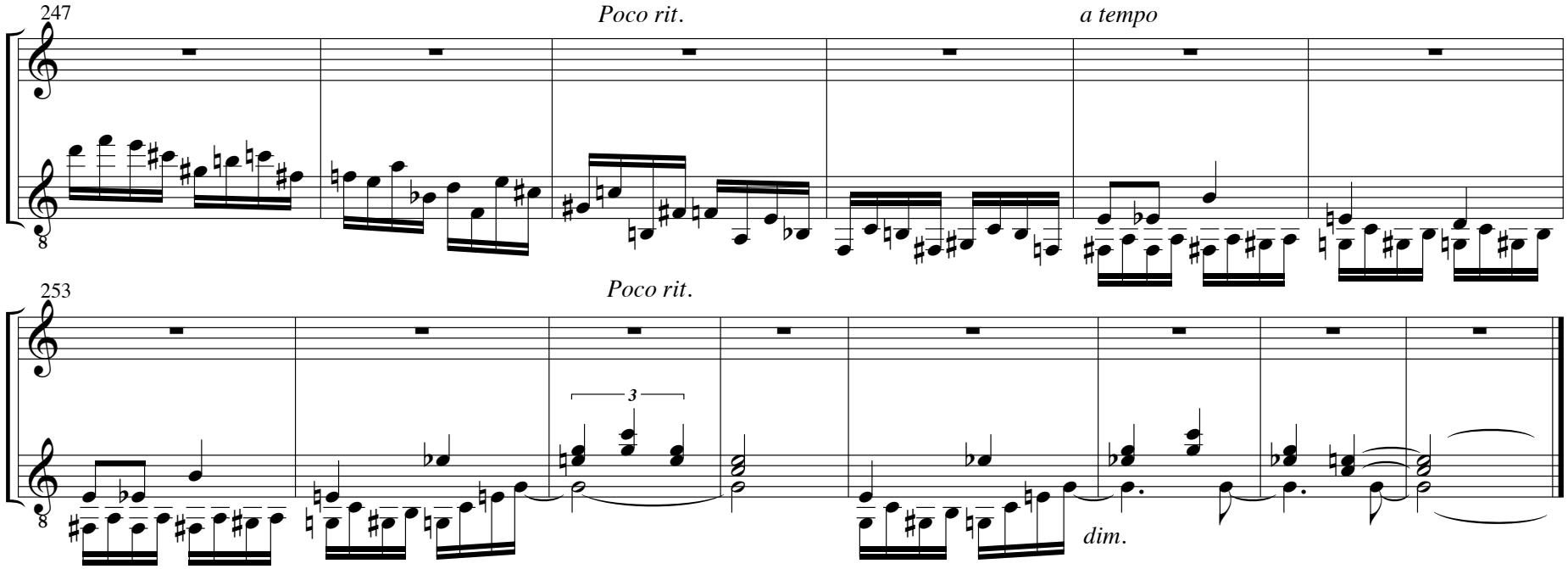
7. Guitarist speaks, "Part seven: Recitative - Music as a mirror.", and then begin.



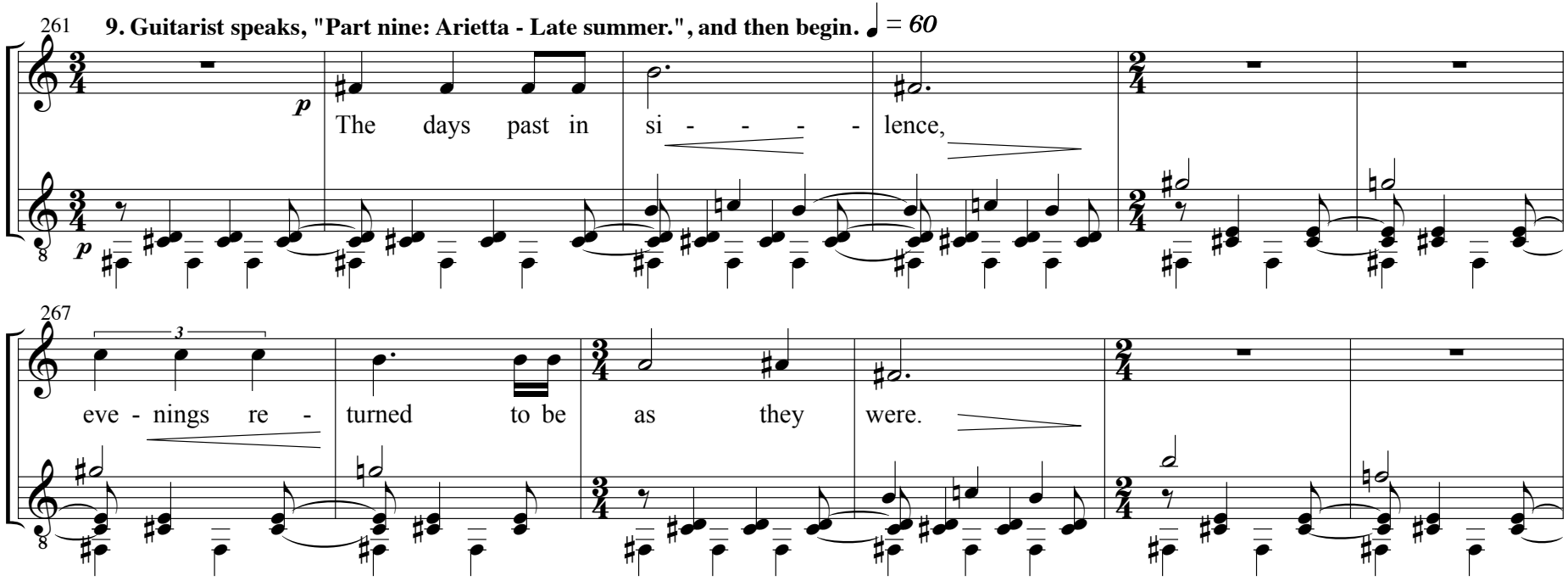
8. Guitarist speaks, "Part eight: Changes in disposition.", and then begin.

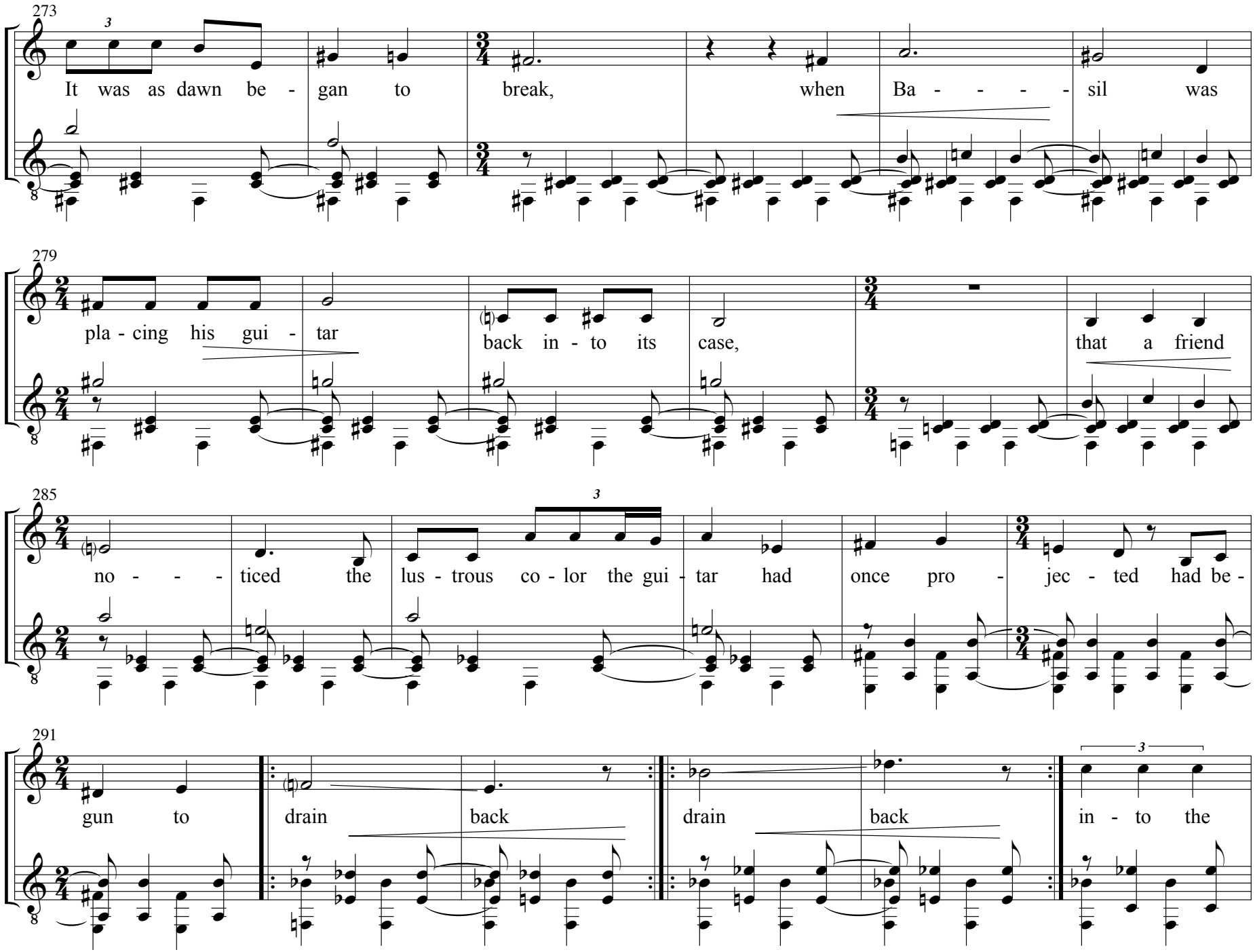


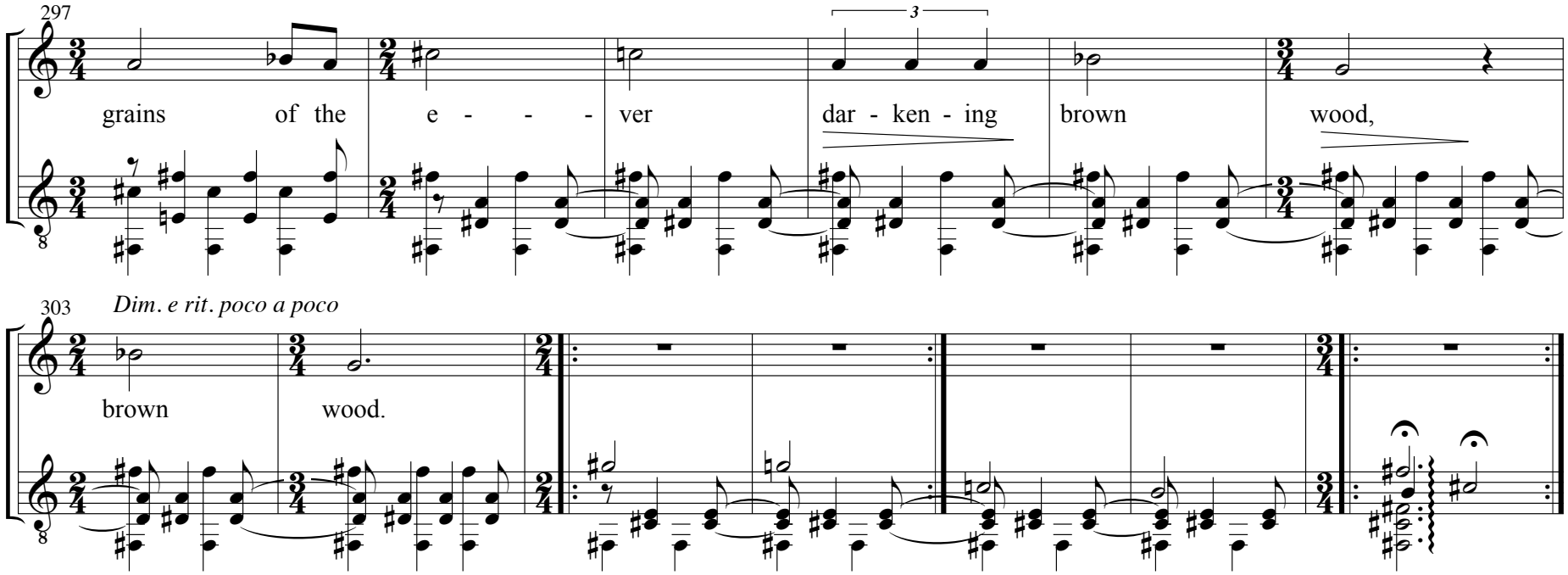

223
Poco rit.
a tempo
seconda volta:
"Quite unexpectedly, on a Monday, he slept all
229
through the morning and into the afternoon...
...rising only as twilight began to descend onto the warm thicket."
235
"He took out his guitar and rejoined his friends
241
caressing the night with songs of such melancholy character ...that even the most obstinate of hearts would have been affected."



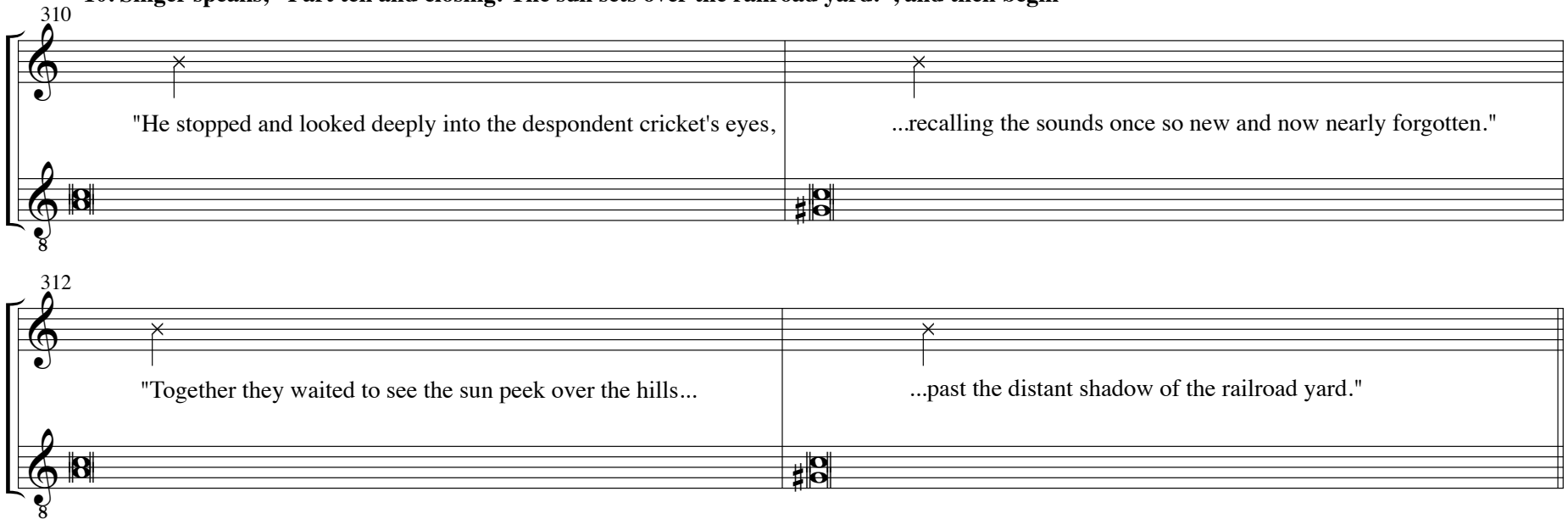
Mezzo concludes: "The beautiful airs and songs that he had been playing for the sun as it rose and fell had vanished..."

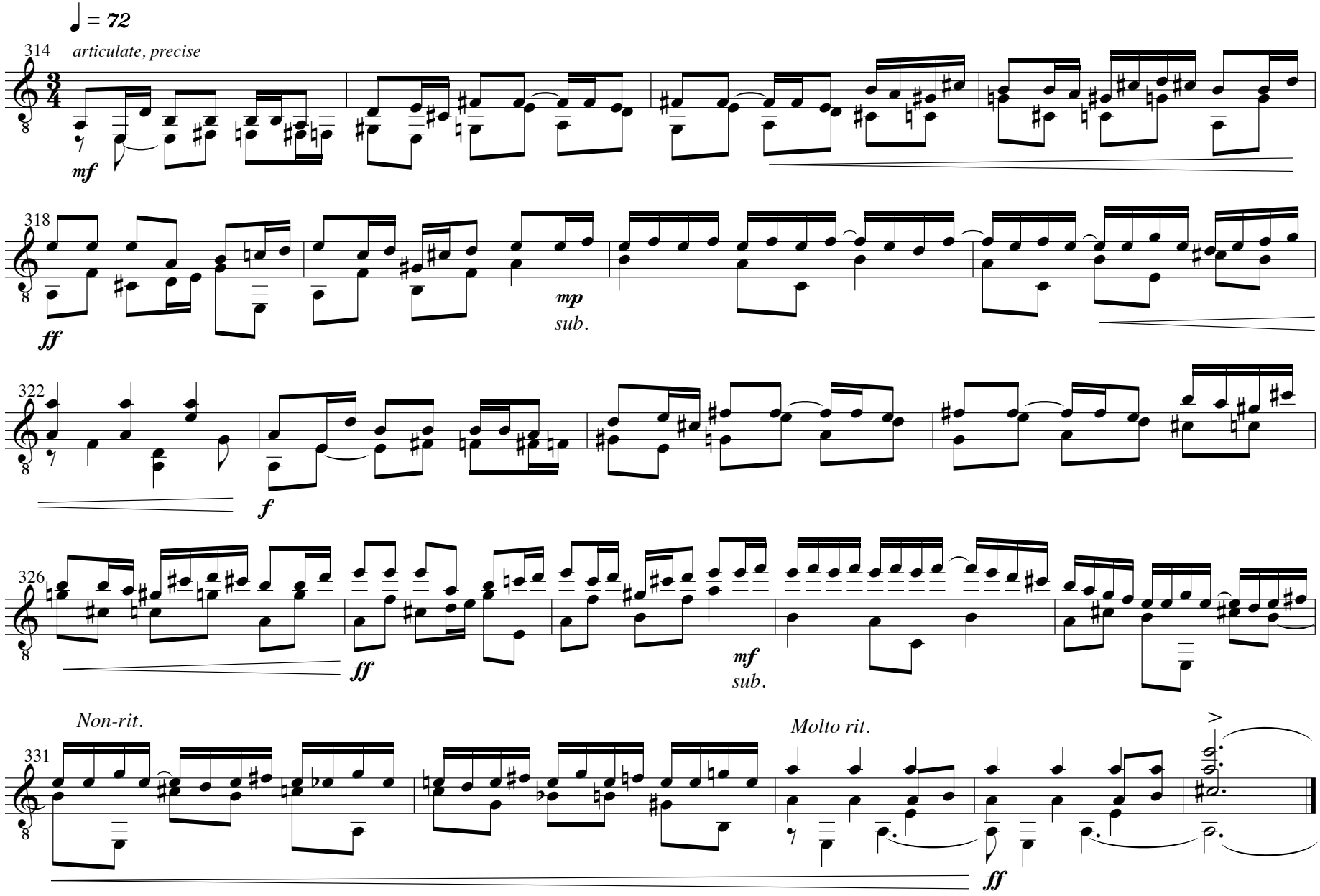



273
It was as dawn be - gan to break, when Ba - - - - sil was
279
pla - cing his gui - tar back in - to its case, that a friend
285
no - - - ticed the lus - trous co - lor the gui - tar had once pro - jec - ted had be -
291
gun to drain back drain back in - to the



10. Singer speaks, "Part ten and closing: The sun sets over the railroad yard.", and then begin




♩ = 72
314
articulate, precise
mf
318
ff
mp
sub.
322
f
326
ff
mf
sub.
Non-rit.
331
Molto rit.
ff