THE BLIND SEER OF AMBON

for soprano and piano

W.S Merwin
Jonathan Berger

The Blind Seer of Ambon

I always knew that I came from
another language

and now even when I can no longer see
I continue to arrive at words

but the leaves
and the shells were already here
and my fingers finding them echo
the untold light and depth

I was betrayed into my true calling
and denied in my advancement
I may have seemed somewhat strange
caring in my own time for living things
with no value that we know
languages wash over them one wave at a
time

when the houses fell
in the earthquake
I lost my wife
and my daughter
it all roared and stood still
falling
where they were in daylight

I named for my wife a flower
as though I could name a flower
my wife dark and luminous

and not there
I lost the drawings of the flowers
in fire

I lost the studies
of the flowers
my first six books in the sea

then I saw that the flowers themselves
were gone
they were indeed gone
I saw
that my wife was gone
then I saw that my daughter was gone
afterwards my eyes themselves were gone

one day I was looking
at infinite small creatures
on the bright sand
and the next day is this
hearing after music
so this is the way I see now

I take a shell in my hand
new to itself and to me
I feel the thinness the warmth and the cold
I listen to the water
which is the story welling up
I remember the colors and their lives
everything takes me by surprise
it is all awake in the darkness

W.S. Merwin
Travels (1997)

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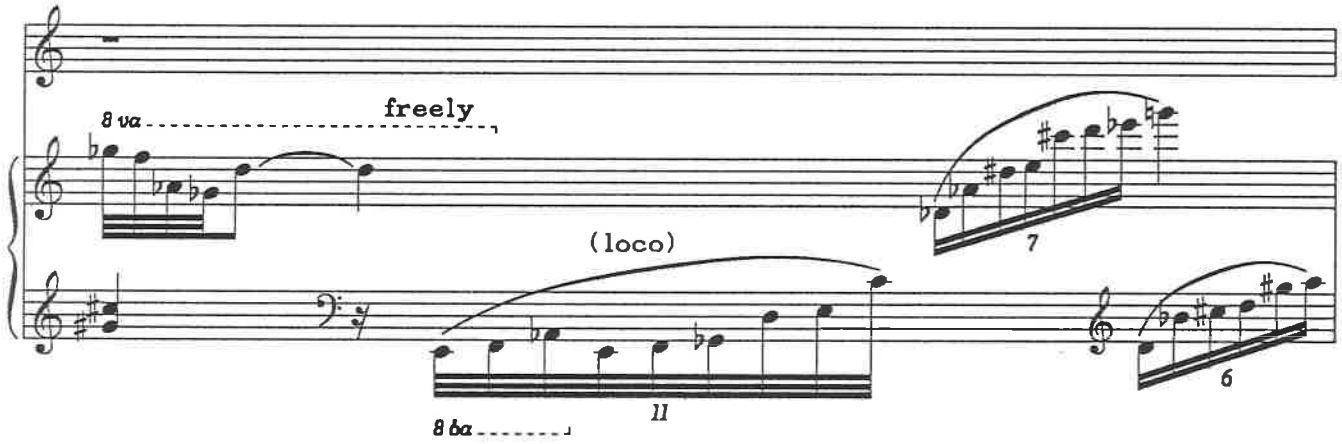
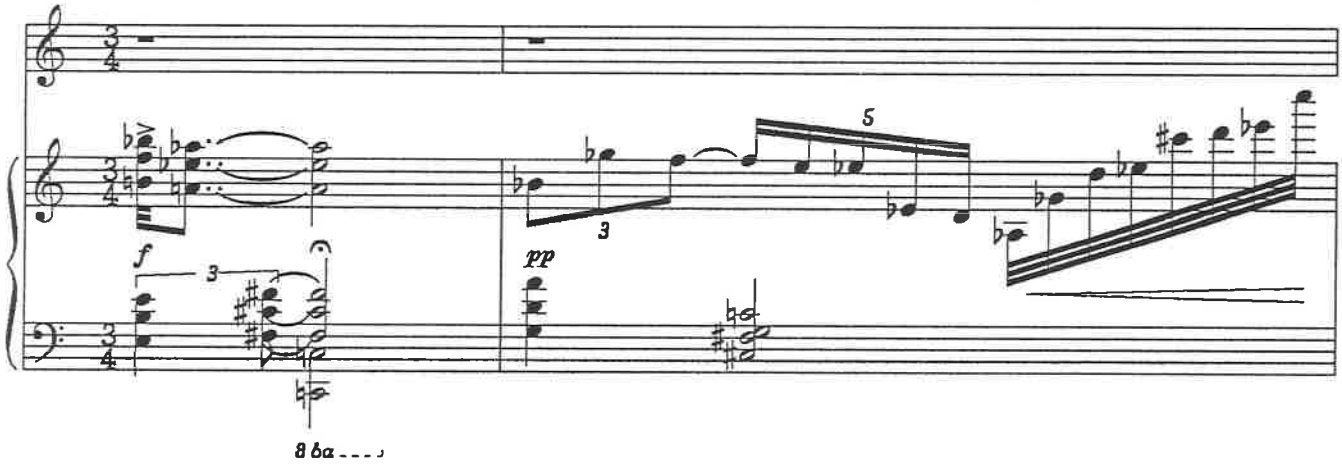
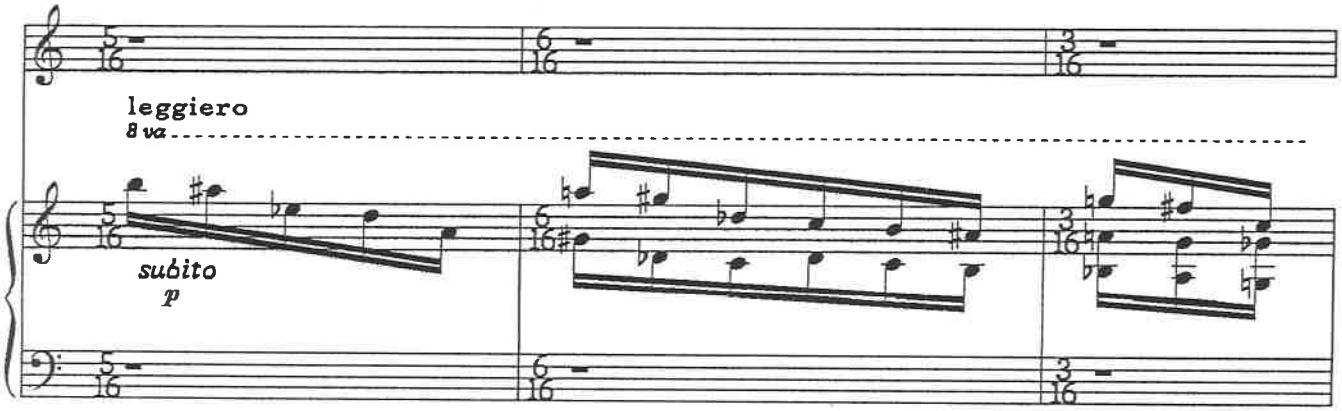
I.

and now
8va
tr
pp
8ba
e ven when I can no lon ger see I con
p
tr
tin ue to ar rive at words
f
8ba


8 va
freely
(loco)
11
8 ba
7
6


f
3
8 ba
pp
3
5


leggiero
8 va
subito
p

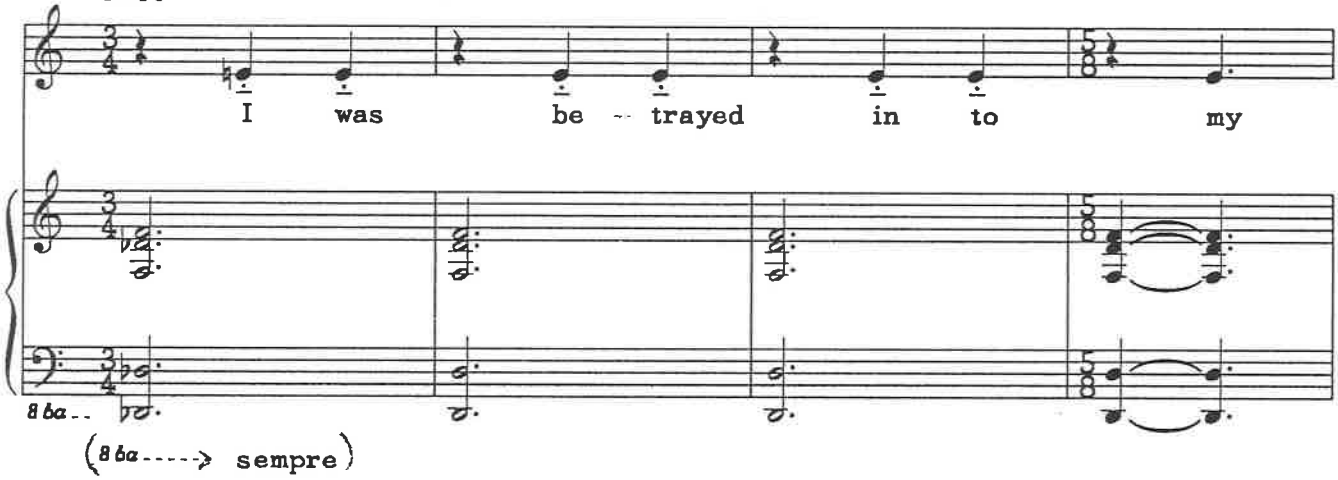
8 va
10
But the leaves
tr
sfz
10
11
and the shells
were
al rea dy here
14

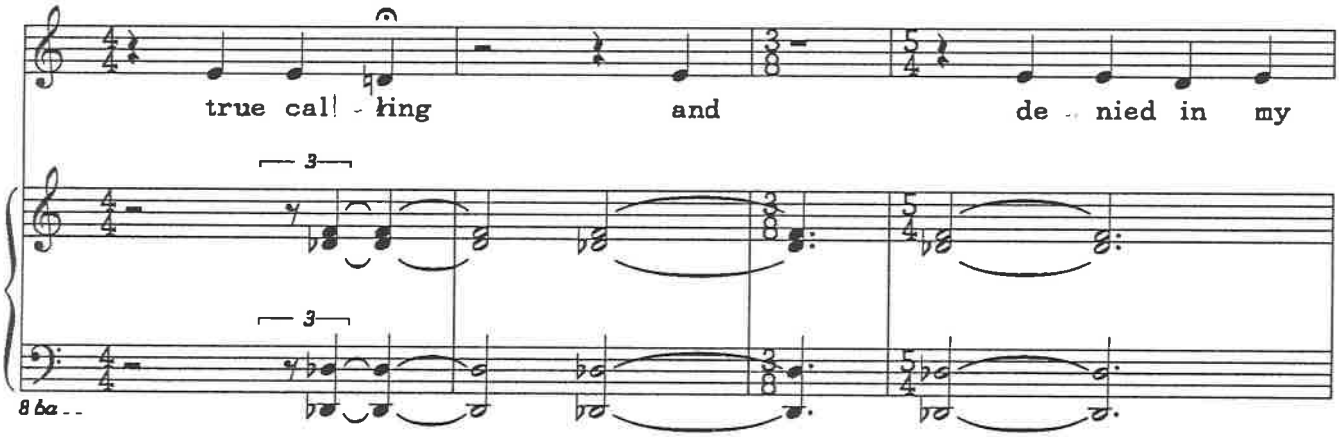
3
and my fin gers
tr
8va
9
tr
tr
3
3
5
sfz
fin - ding them ech - o the un - told light and depth
tr
ff pp
8ba
molto rit.
tr
p
p
(')
pp

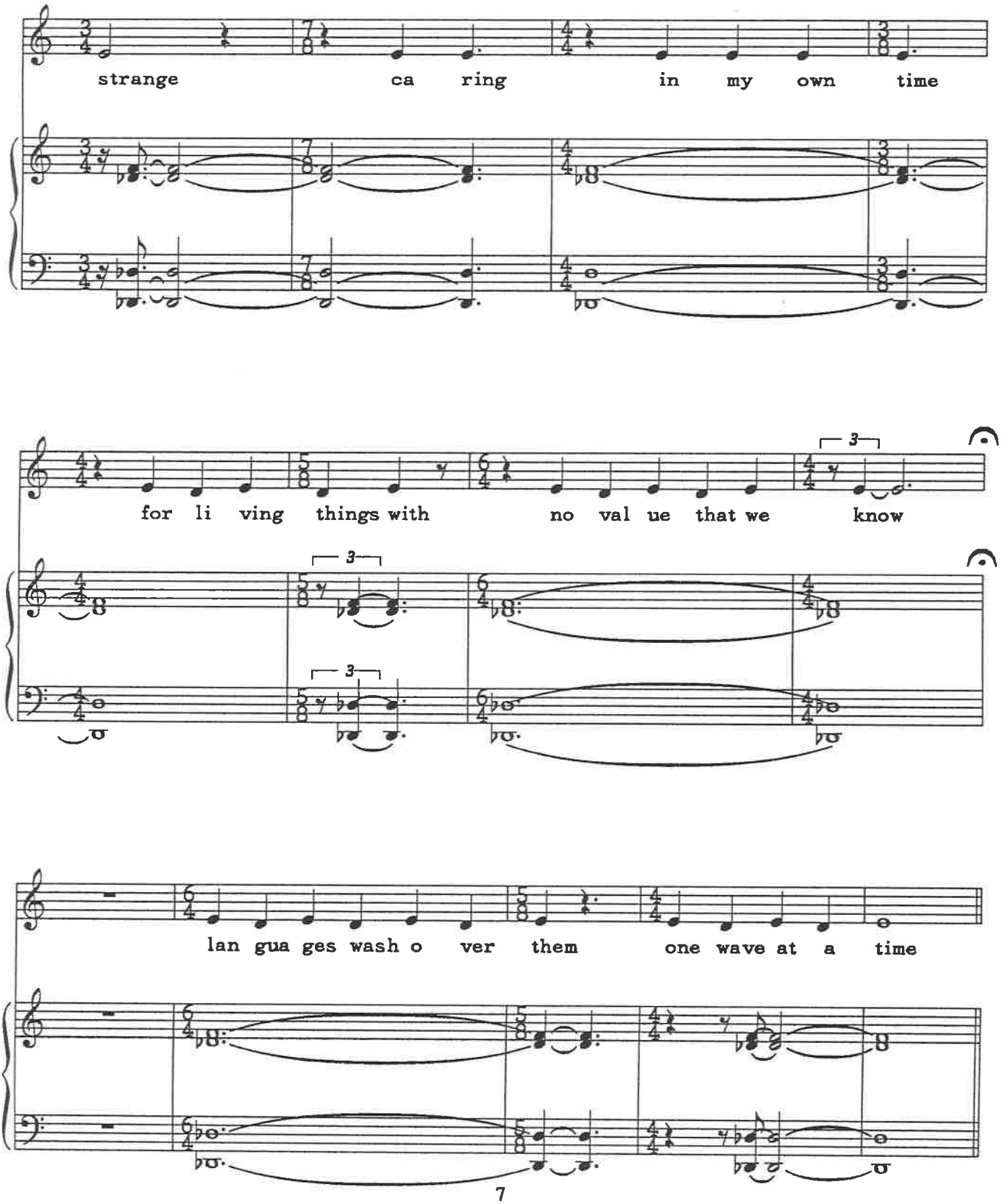
II.

as if in a trance

♩=40





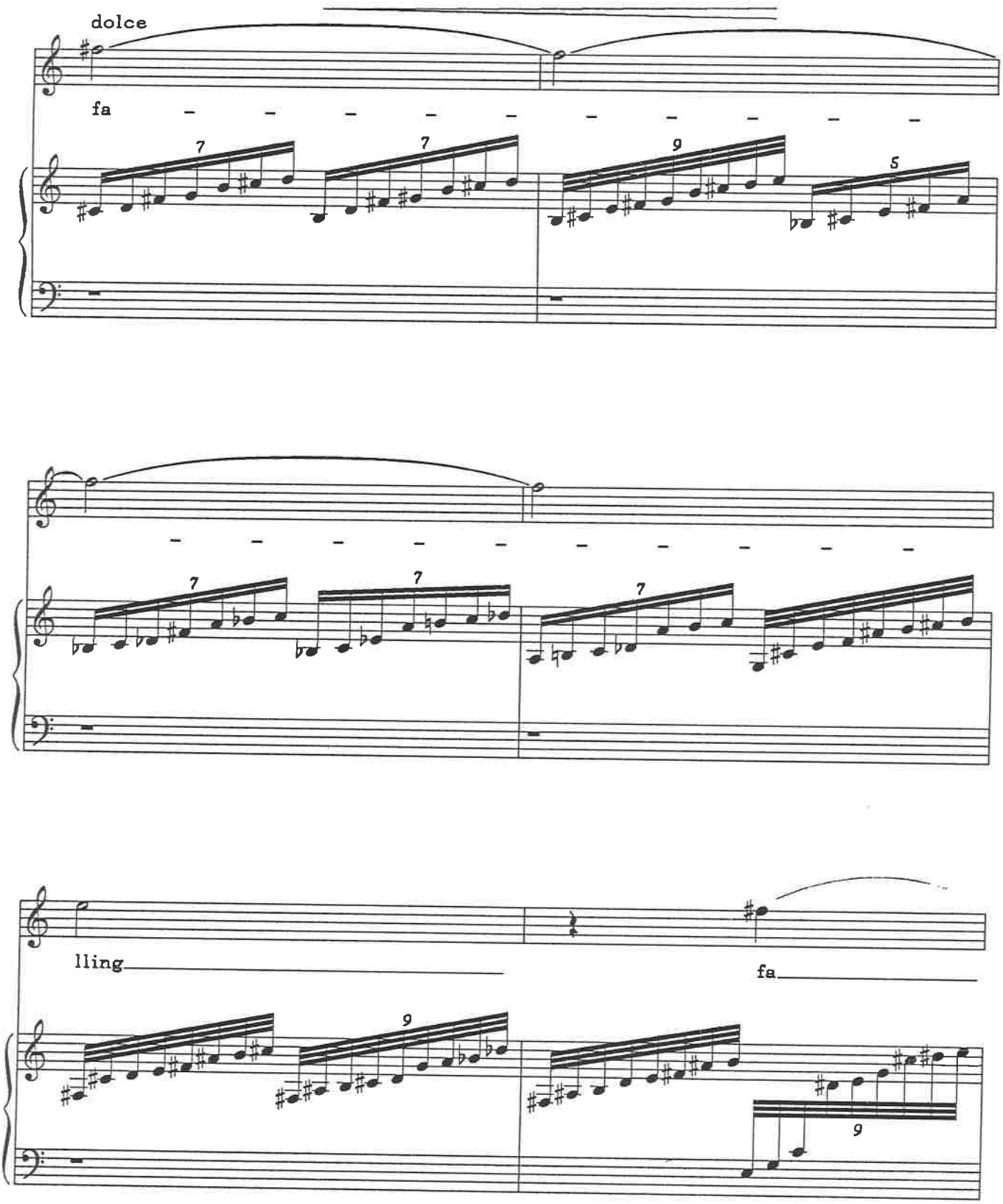

strange ca ring in my own time
for li ving things with no val ue that we know
lan gua ges wash o ver them one wave at a time

III.

♩=60
When the house fell in the
earth quake I lost my wife and my daugh ter
it all roared and stood
subito piu dolce

still
f
tr
13
presto e mysterioso
8 va
6
7
5
6
6
pp
8 va
7
10
7
7
6

8 va
8 va
(loco)
2/4
2/4


dolce
fa
lling
fa

lling
10
7
piu lento e dolce
fal – – ling
where they were in the day light
f
mp
p
subito f
6
fa
lling
f
p
tr

IV.

semplice

p

I named for my wife a flo - wer as

8va

p

though I could name a flo wer my wife dark and

8va

p

lu - - - - - - - - -

8va

ll

ll

(u)
5
lu
3
6
lu
lu
8va

piu lento
mi - - - - - nous
and not
there
I lost the draw ings of the flo wers in
8va
fire
I lost the studies of the
tr
f
pp
f

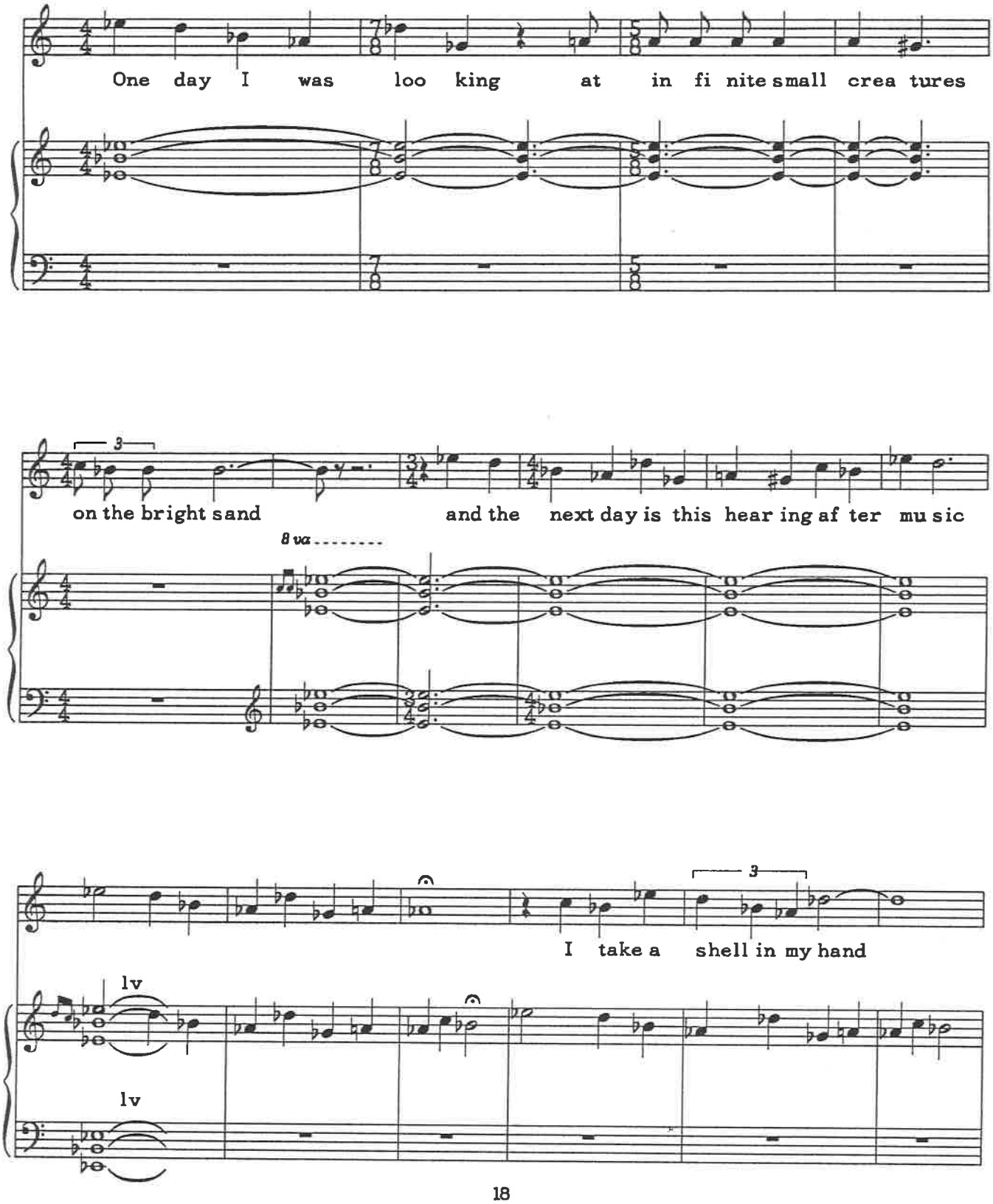
flo wers my first six books in the sea
f
ff
3
then I saw that the
tr
f
pp
flo - - - - - - - - -
tr
12
10

wers were gone
3
I
tr
10
f
tr
saw that my wife was gone
Then I saw that my
tr
3
piu lento e resoluto
rit.
dau ghter was gone
then my eyes
them selves were gone;
subito
pp
tr

V.

♩=76

distant, almost without emotion



new to it self and to me I feel the
thin ness the warmth and the cold
which is the sto ry well ing up I re mem ber the

3
co lors and their lives
Eve ry thing takes me by sur prise
3
it is all ah a wake in;
the dark ness a wake
p