THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

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Committee:

Marilyn Shrude, Committee Chair

Christopher Dietz

This content is unable to be made fully accessible due to the music notation in the score. Conformance to the minimum accessibility standards could not be achieved due to the non-availability of technology that fully conforms to the standards.

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ABSTRACT

Marilyn Shrude, Committee Chair

The Sacrifice of Isaac is a micro-opera in one act scored for soprano, mezzo-soprano, baritone, and piano. The story is based on the events of the Biblical story found in Genesis 22, in which Abraham (baritone), the ancestor of the people of Israel, is commanded by God to sacrifice his son, Isaac (mezzo-soprano), as a burnt offering. Just as Abraham is about to cut Isaac's throat, an Angel (soprano) appears and stops the sacrifice. The libretto is largely adapted from the Biblical text and includes an original poem by Skyler Cash for Abraham's aria. *The Sacrifice of Isaac* aims to capture the unspoken emotions of this highly dramatic and controversial story while retaining theological accuracy, highlighting the faith-filled obedience of Abraham and the eternal faithfulness of God.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not be possible without the support and effort of many people. First of all, I would like to thank my wife, Jacy, who has been my most steadfast friend and supporter. Without her, I would not be doing what I love. I want to thank Skyler Cash for collaborating with me on the libretto and for providing a beautiful text for Abraham's aria; Dr. Marilyn Shrude for guiding and mentoring me throughout the process; Carolyn Anderson for her strong leadership and commitment to bringing the BGSU MicroOperas to fruition; Dr. Ryan Ebright and Dr. Kevin Bylsma for sharing their guidance and expertise; Kirsten Kidd for directing; Kyle Wendling for his conducting; Christina Worcester, Sydney Shook, Zach Sanford, and Abigail Petersen for making the music and drama come to life; and finally the LORD Jesus Christ, who saved me and through whom all things are possible.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

CHARACTERS

Abraham: baritone, B2 – G4
Isaac: mezzo-soprano, B3 – E5
Angel: soprano, C4 – A5

LIBRETTO

Poetry used with permission from Skyler Cash

SET AND PROPS

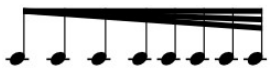
The scene is set at the summit of a mountain. There are no set requirements. Abraham carries a knife and a stone resembling flint. Isaac enters with a bundle of firewood, bound with rope, on his shoulders.

SYNOPSIS

Abraham and Isaac arrive at the summit of a mountain in Moriah to make sacrifices to God. Abraham has received a command from God to offer Isaac, his son, as a sacrifice. Isaac wonders about the absence of a lamb for the sacrifice, but Abraham assures him that God will provide the lamb Himself. While Isaac lays the wood for the fire, Abraham prays and struggles with what he is about to do. When Abraham is about to slaughter Isaac, an angel from God intervenes, affirms his faith, and recounts God's promises to make him the father of a great nation by which all people will be blessed. The angel points out a lamb caught in a thicket, God's own provision, before leaving Abraham in wonder. As Isaac calls out, Abraham unbinds him and attempts to comfort him.

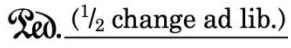
NOTATION

no meter — freely, within context of given metronome marking

 gradually shorten rhythmic values from beginning to end of beam

let vibrate

unmetered note — to be played approximately at that point in the vocal line

 half pedal retake ad libitum to limit density

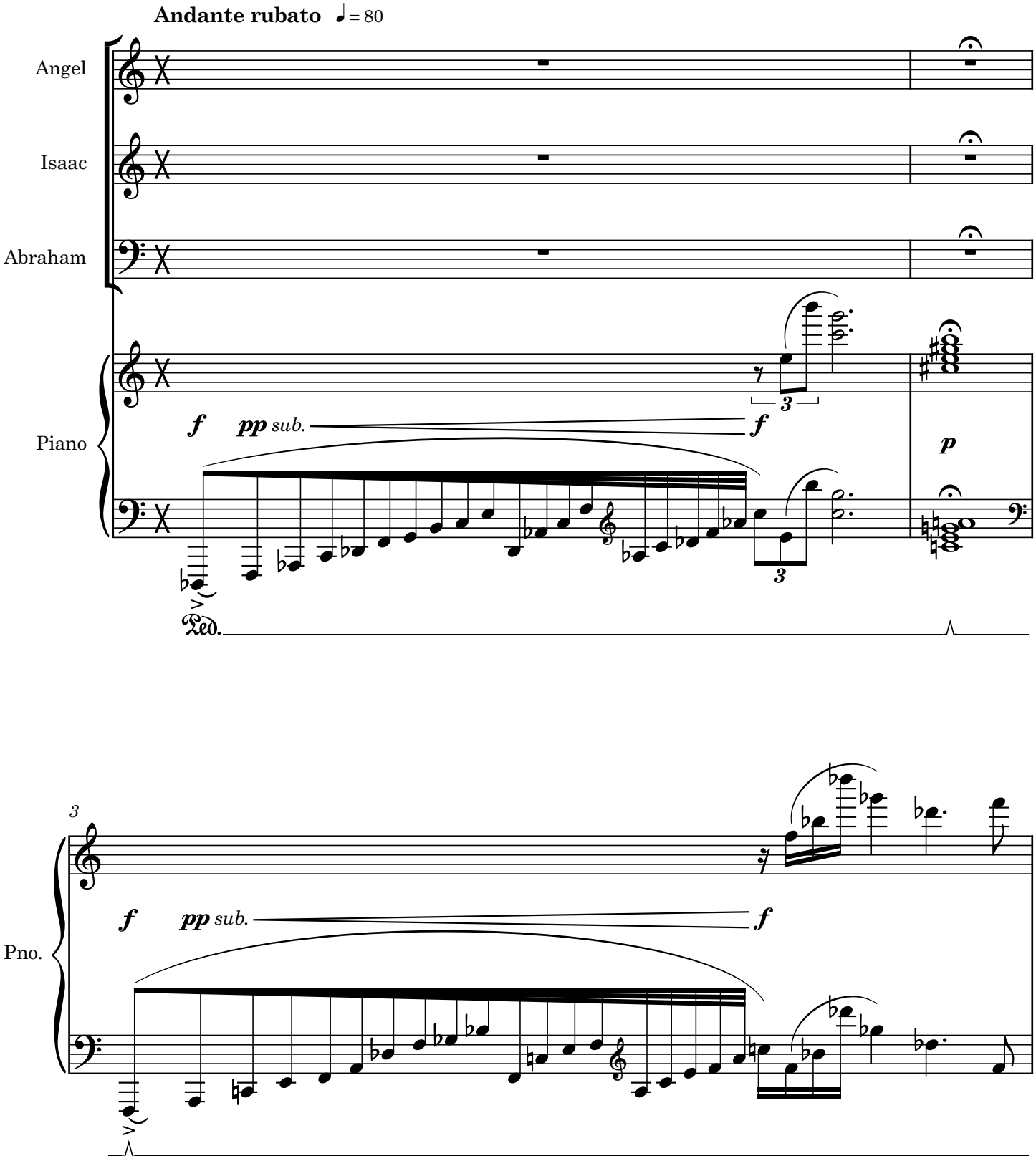
DURATION: 14'

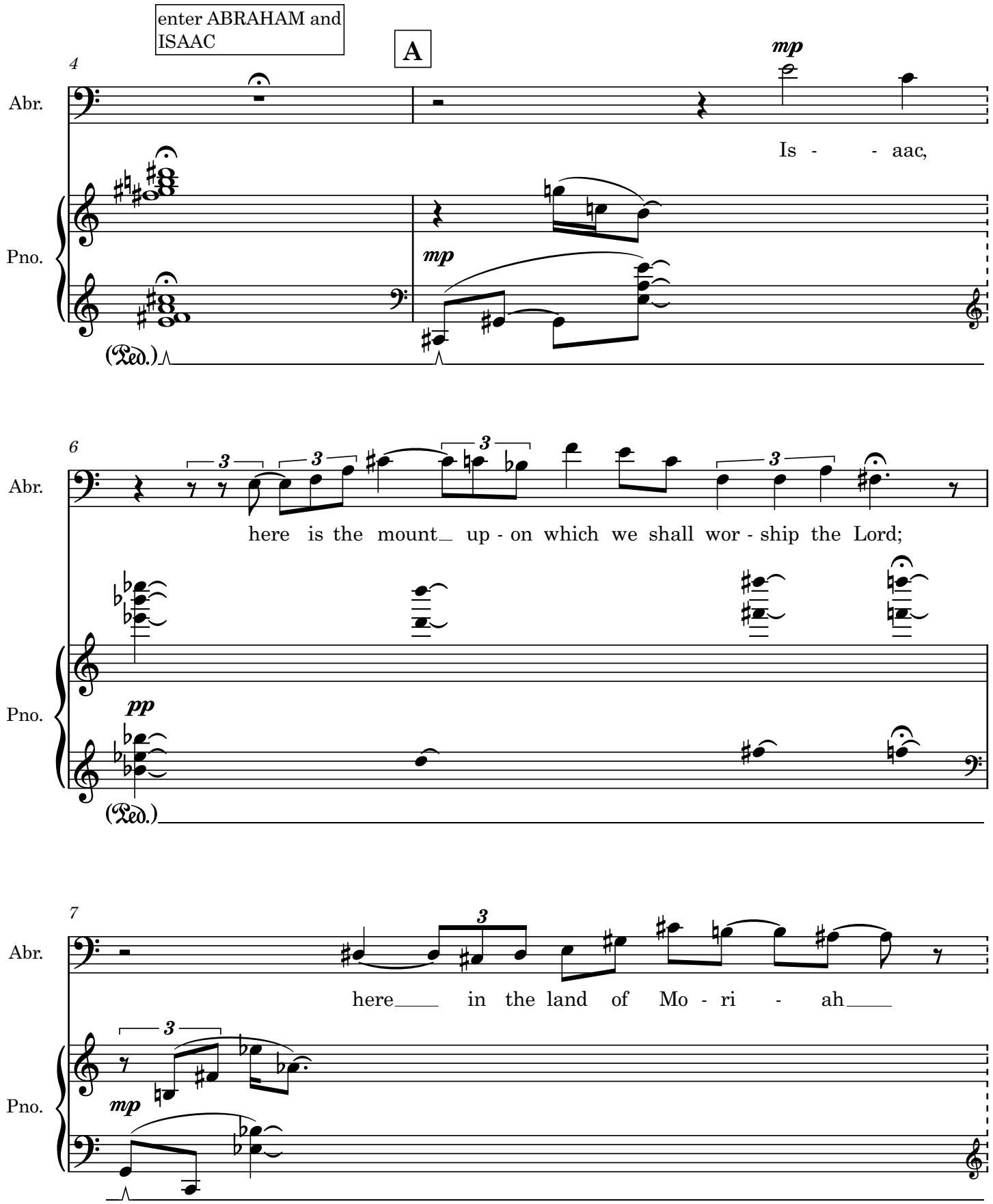
The Sacrifice of Isaac

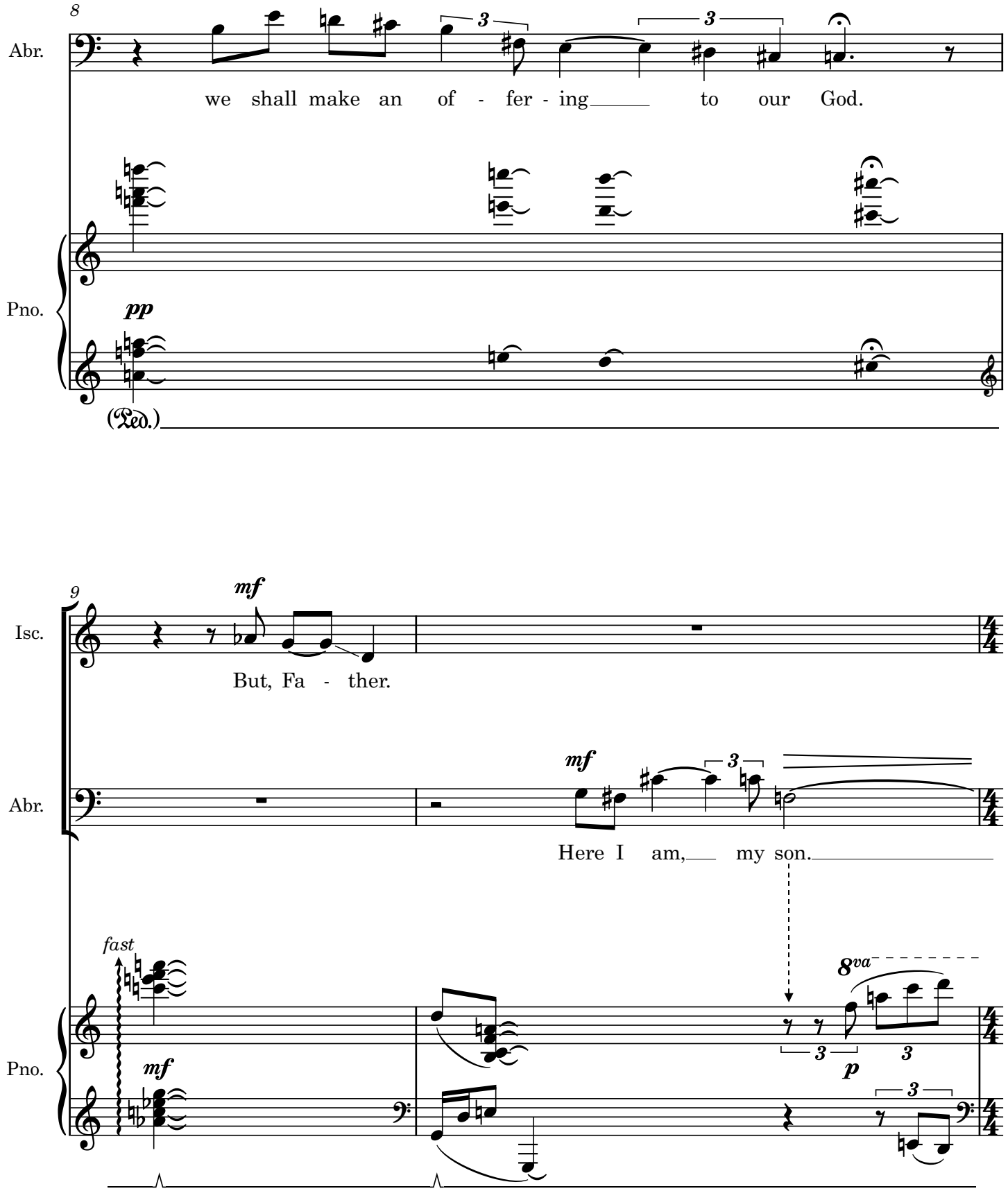
a micro-opera

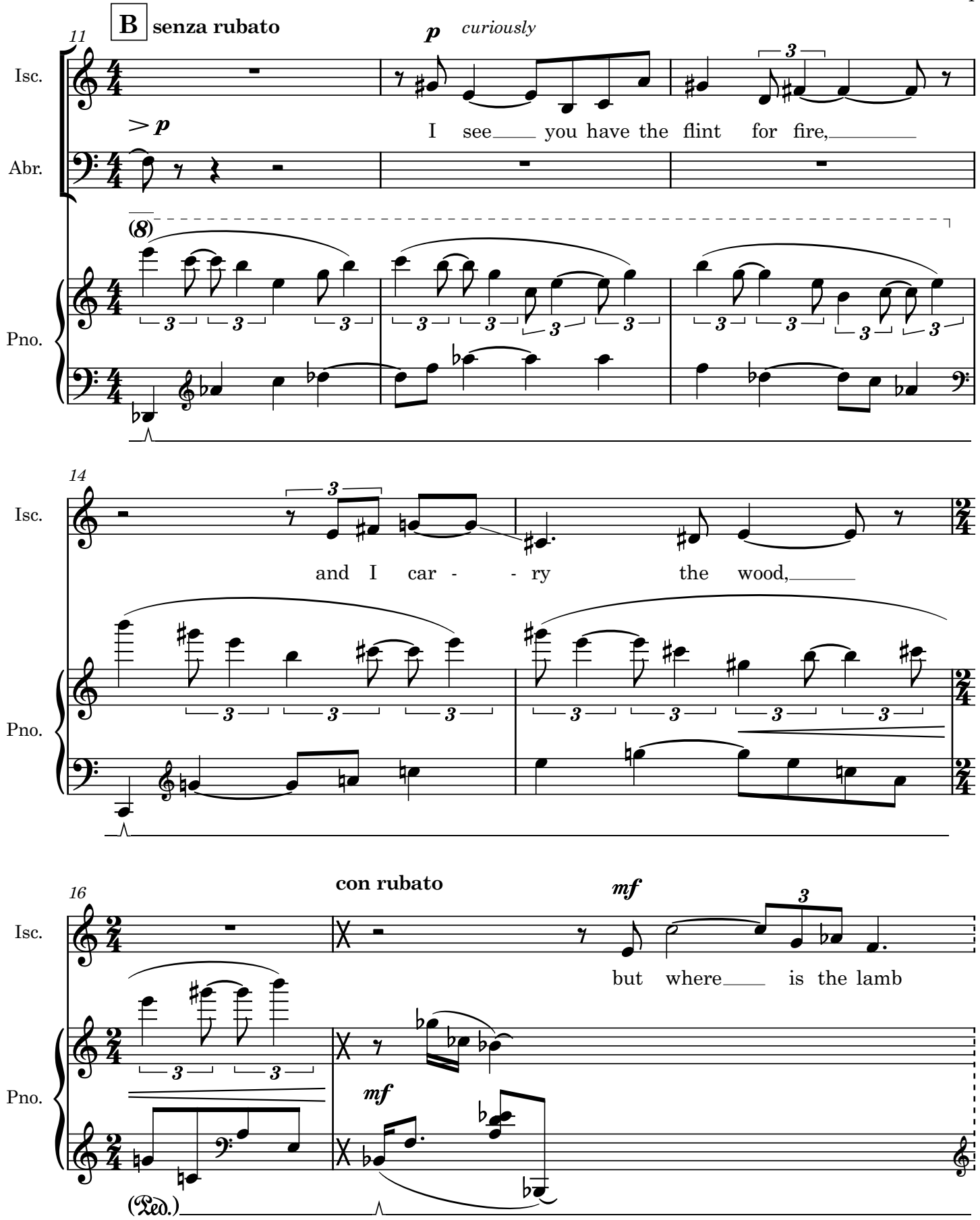
Libretto by Skyler Cash and L.K. Cina

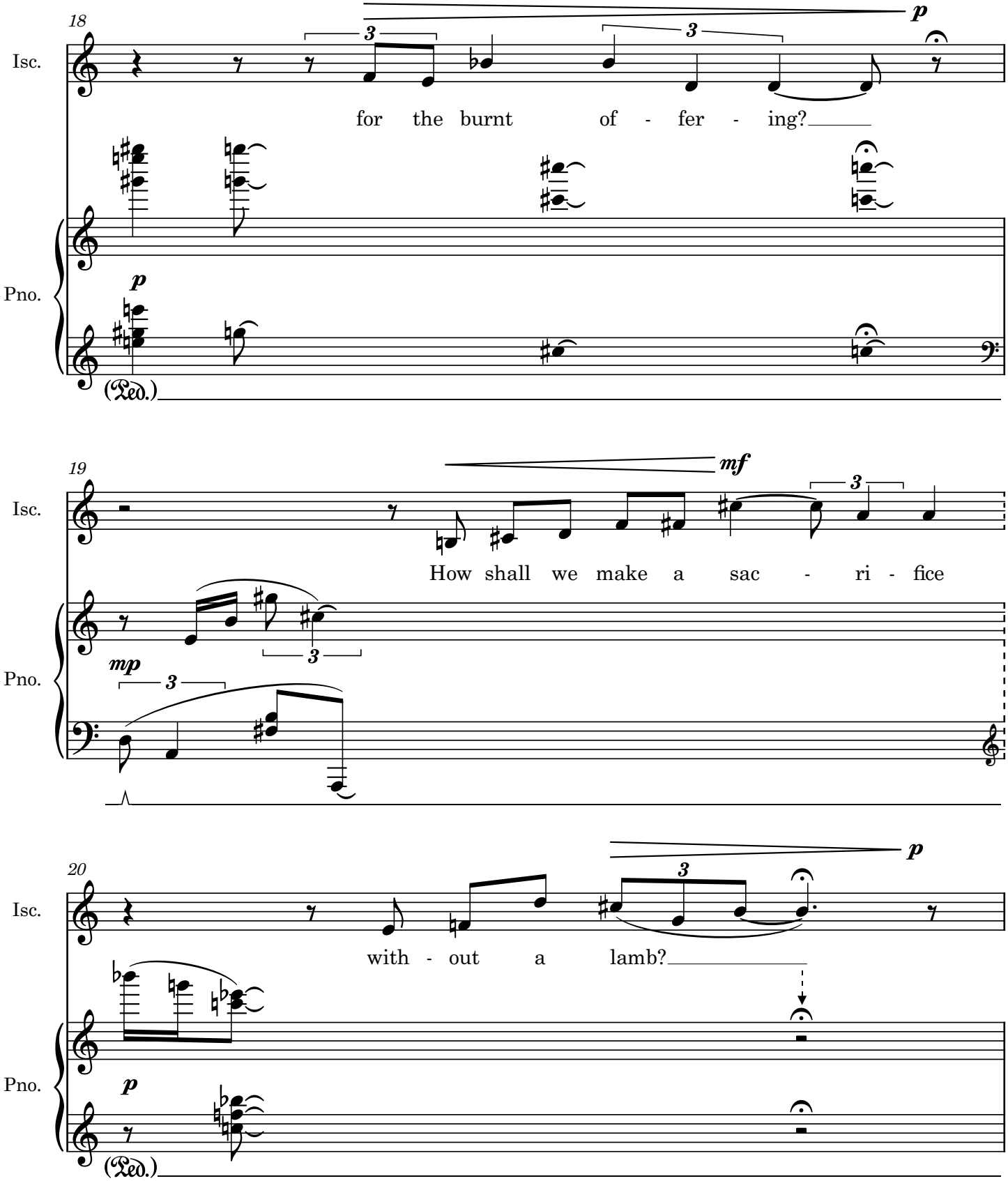
L.K. Cina

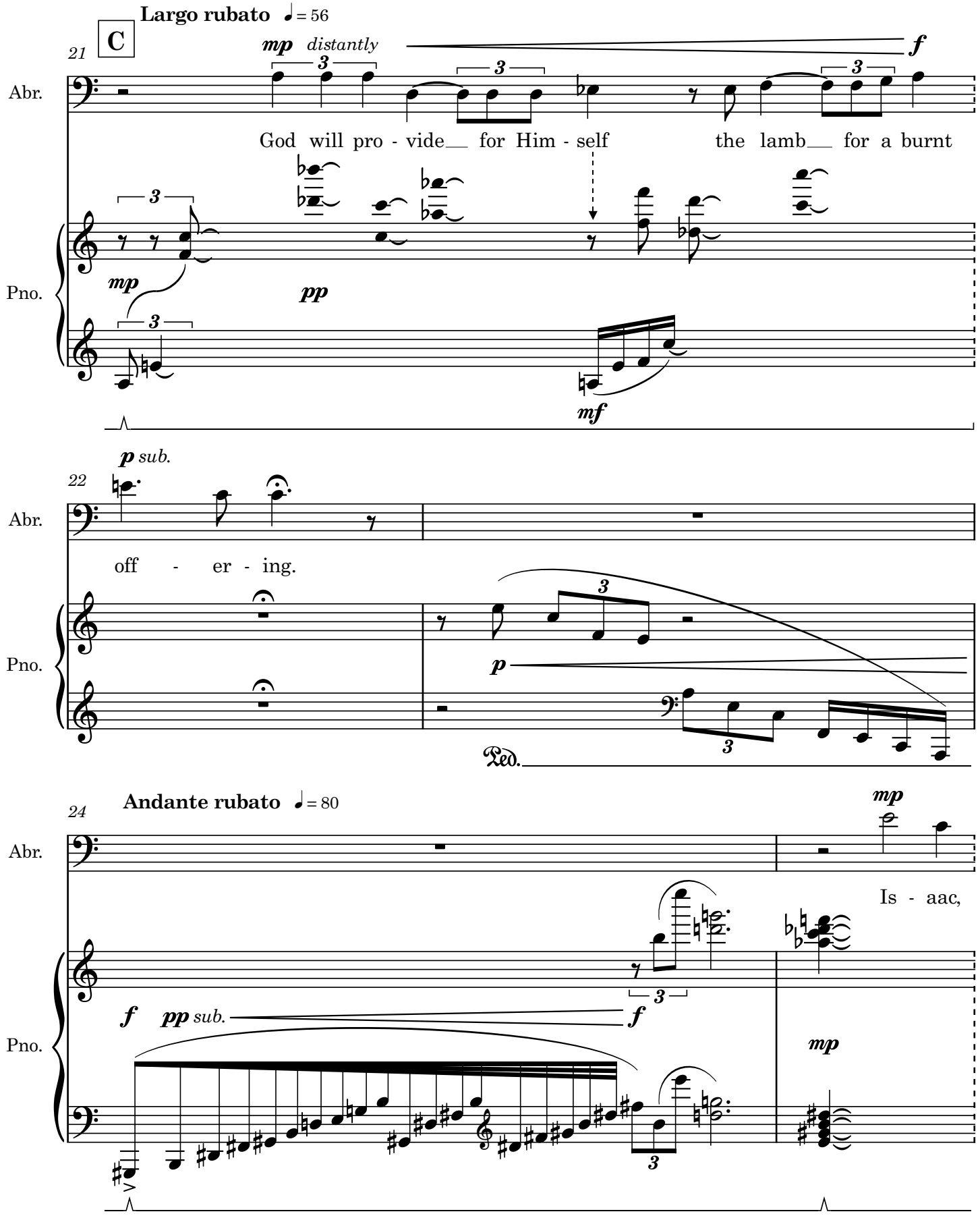


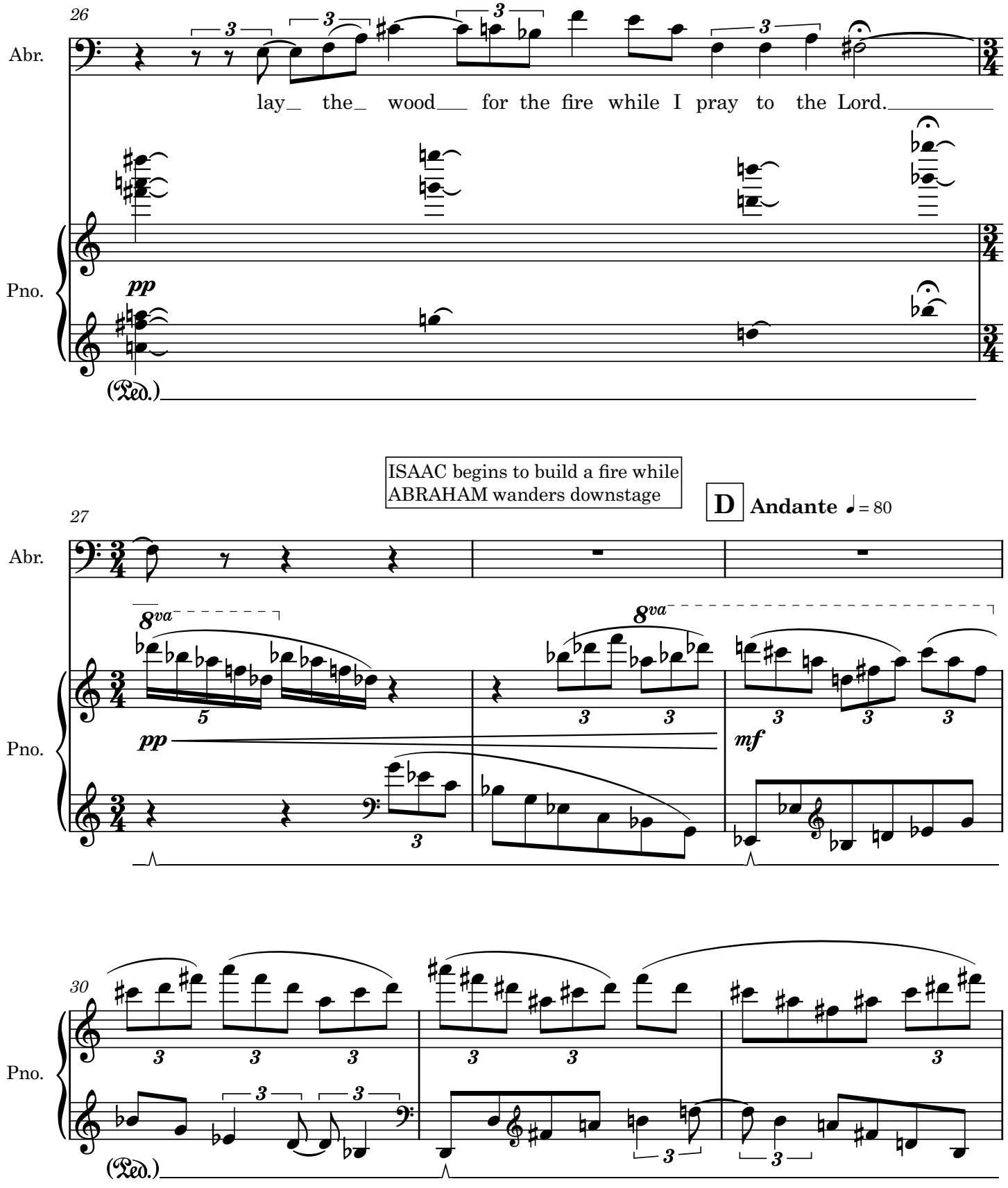

enter ABRAHAM and ISAAC
A
4
Abr.
Pno.
mp
Is - - aac,
(Ped.)
6
here is the mount_ up - on which we shall wor - ship the Lord;
pp
7
here___ in the land of Mo - ri - ah___

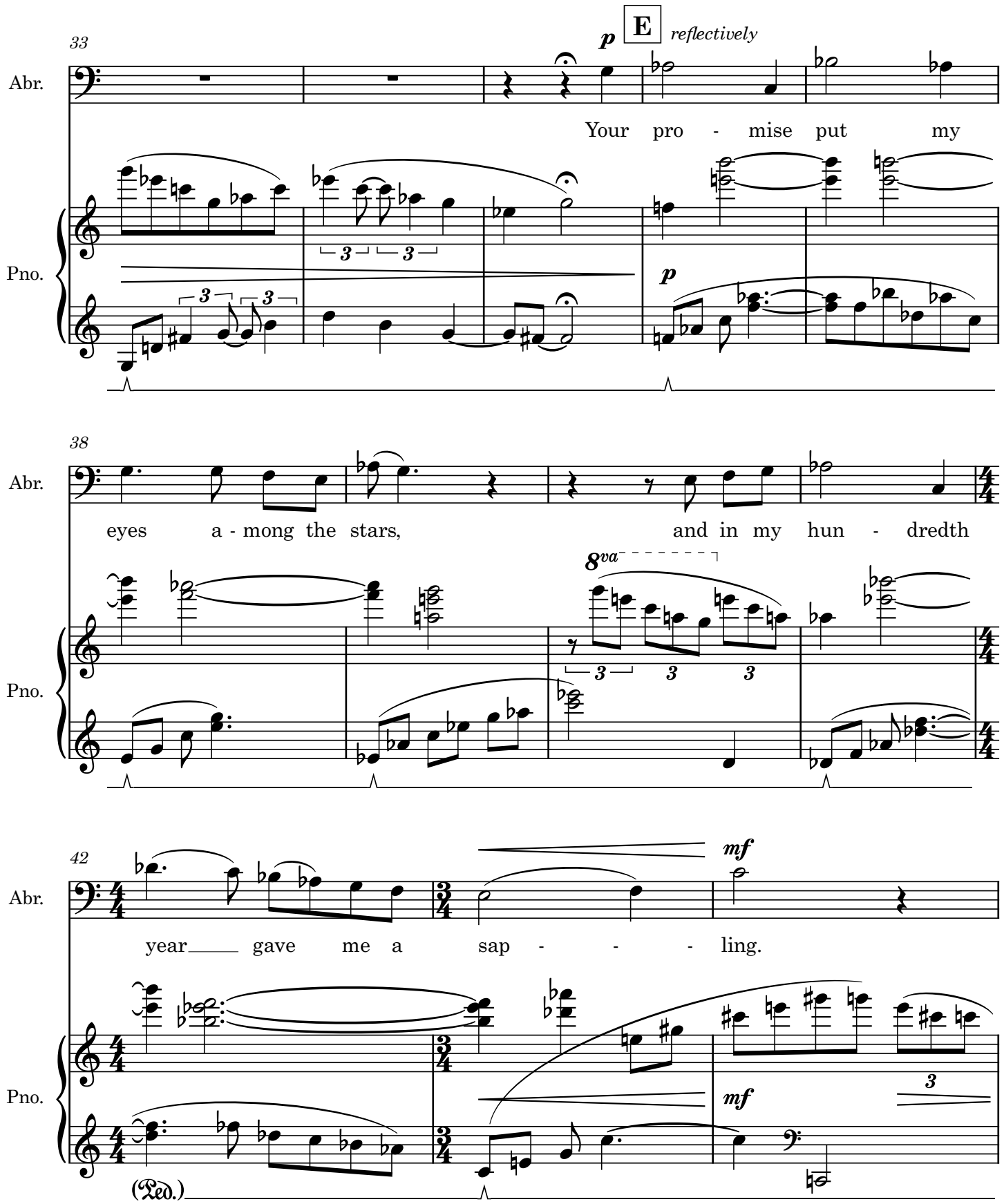

8
Abr.
we shall make an of - fer - ing to our God.
Pno.
pp
(Ped.)
9
Isc.
mf
But, Fa - ther.
Abr.
mf
Here I am, my son.
fast
Pno.
mf
8va
p

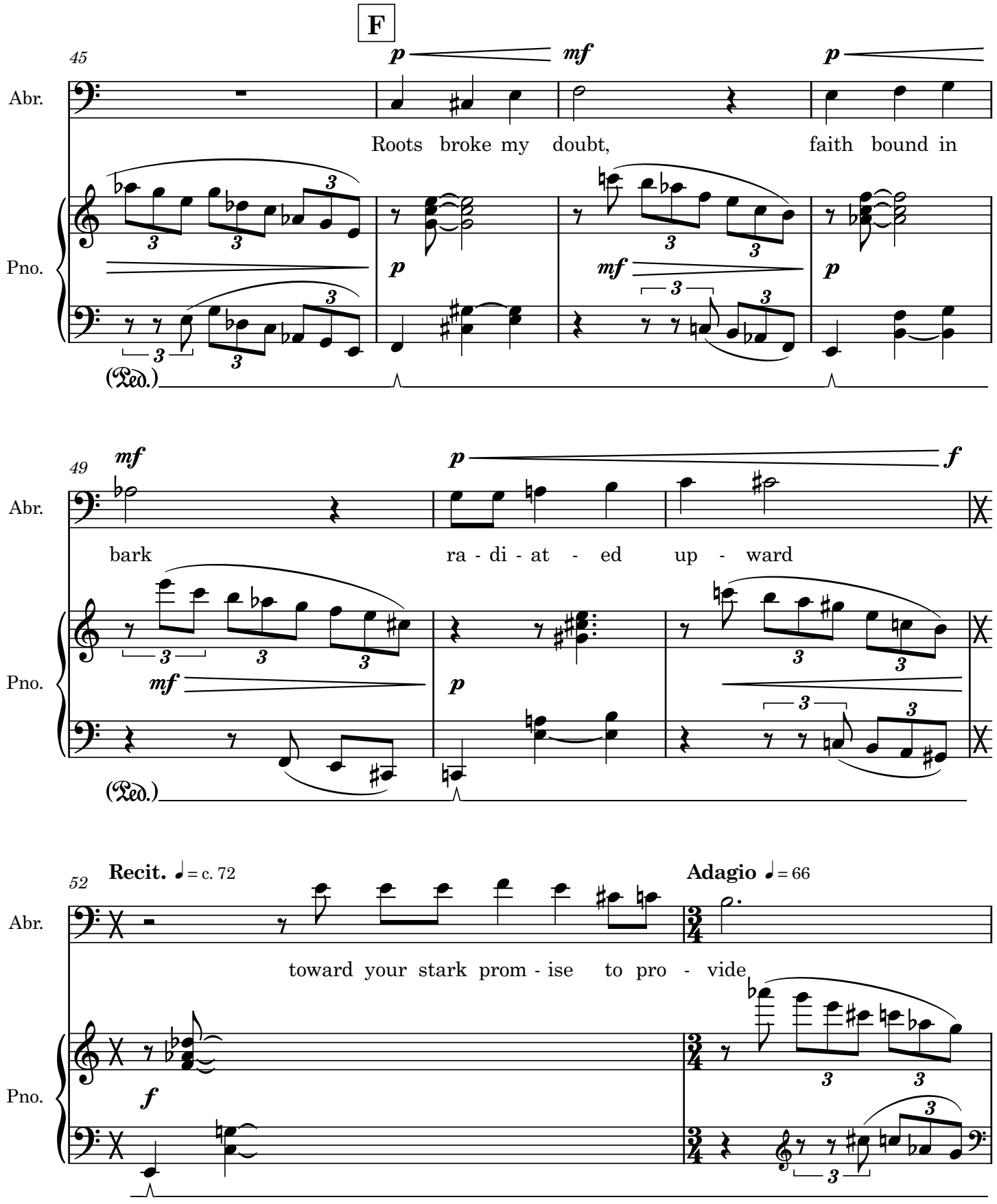

B
senza rubato
11
p
curiously
Isc.
Abr.
Pno.
I see you have the flint for fire,
14
and I car - - ry the wood,
16
con rubato
mf
but where is the lamb
(Ped.)

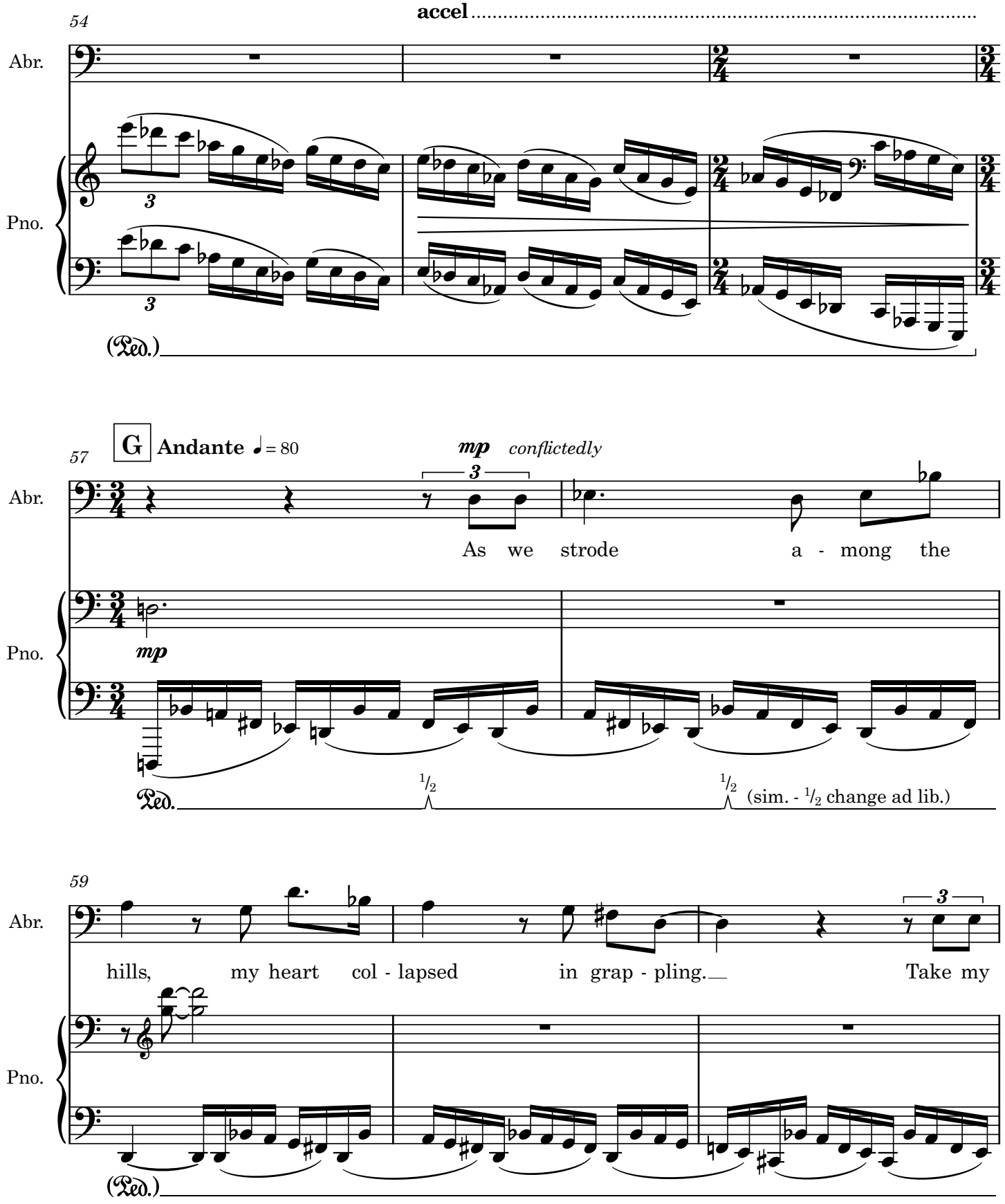

18
Isc.
p
for the burnt of - fer - ing?
Pno.
p
(Ped.)
19
Isc.
mf
How shall we make a sac - ri - fice
Pno.
mp
20
Isc.
p
with - out a lamb?
Pno.
p
(Ped.)

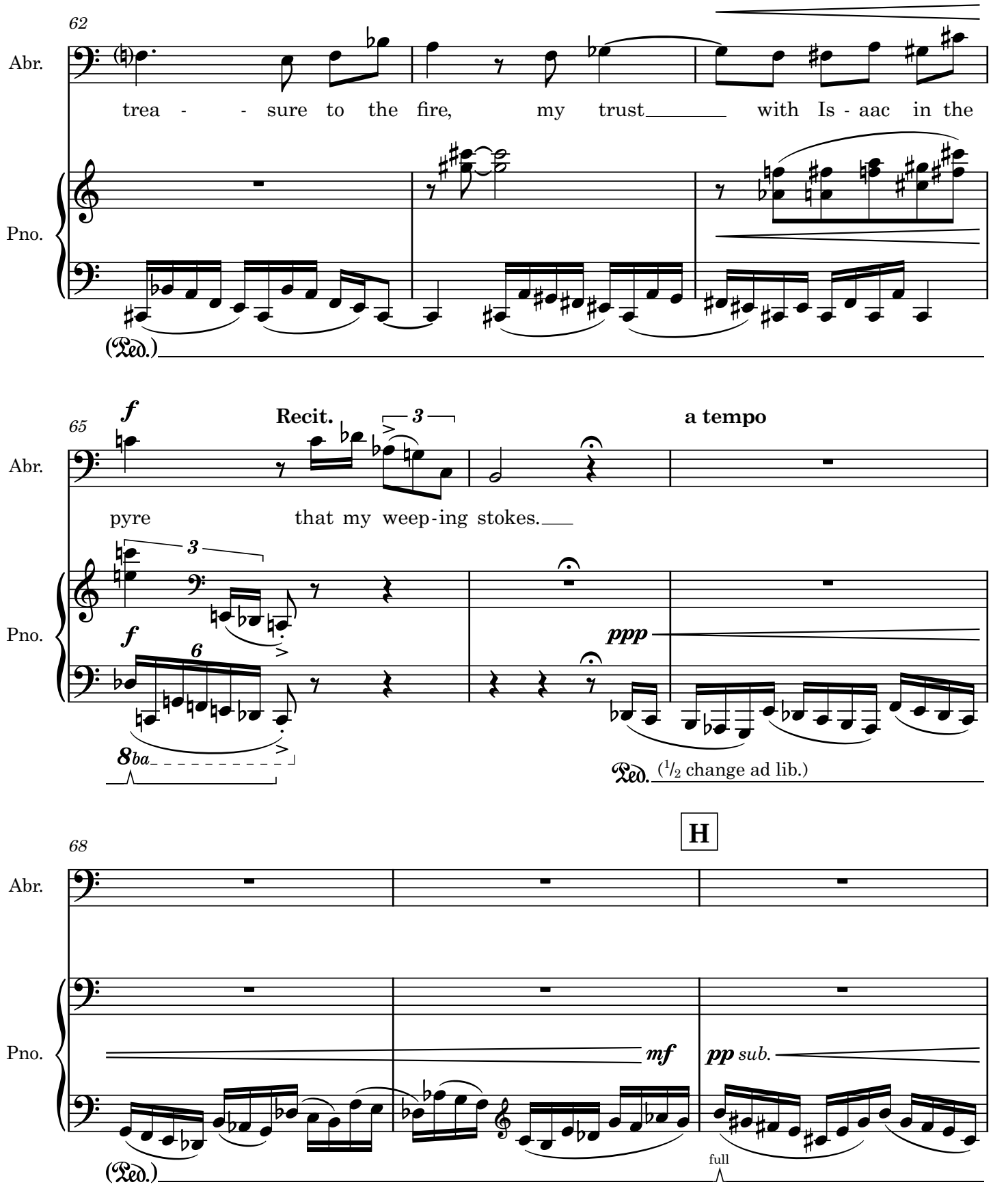

Largo rubato ♩= 56
C
21
mp distantly
f
Abr.
God will pro - vide for Him - self the lamb for a burnt
Pno.
mp
pp
mf
p sub.
22
off - er - ing.
p
Ped.
Andante rubato ♩= 80
24
mp
Is - aac,
f
pp sub.
f
mp

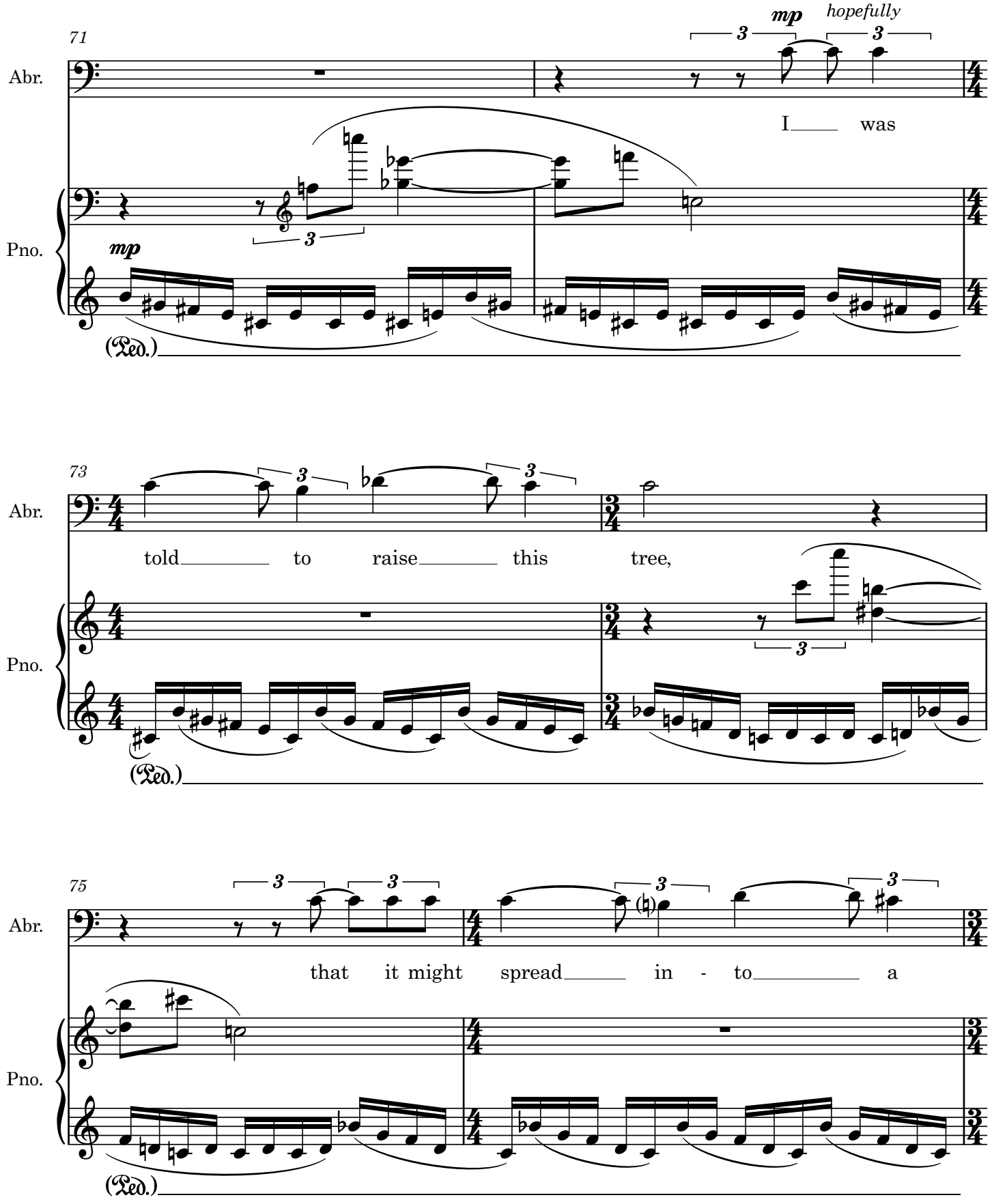

26
Abr.
lay the wood for the fire while I pray to the Lord.
Pno.
pp
(Ped.)
ISAAC begins to build a fire while
ABRAHAM wanders downstage
D
Andante ♩= 80
27
Abr.
8va
8va
Pno.
pp
mf
30
Pno.
(Ped.)

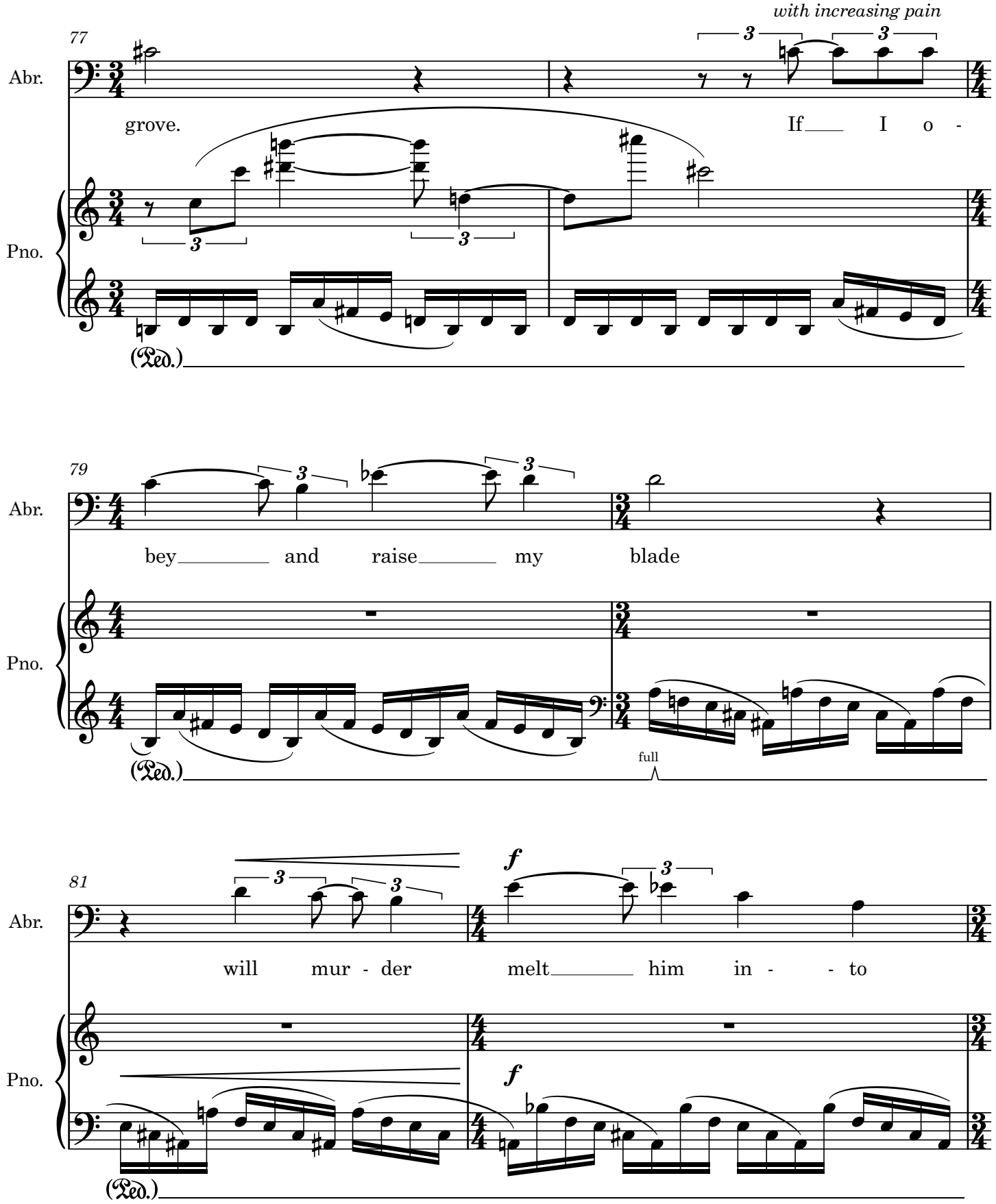

33
E
reflectively
p
Abr.
Your pro - mise put my
Pno.
p
38
Abr.
eyes a - mong the stars, and in my hun - dredth
8va
Pno.
42
Abr.
mf
year gave me a sap - - - ling.
Pno.
mf
(Ped.)

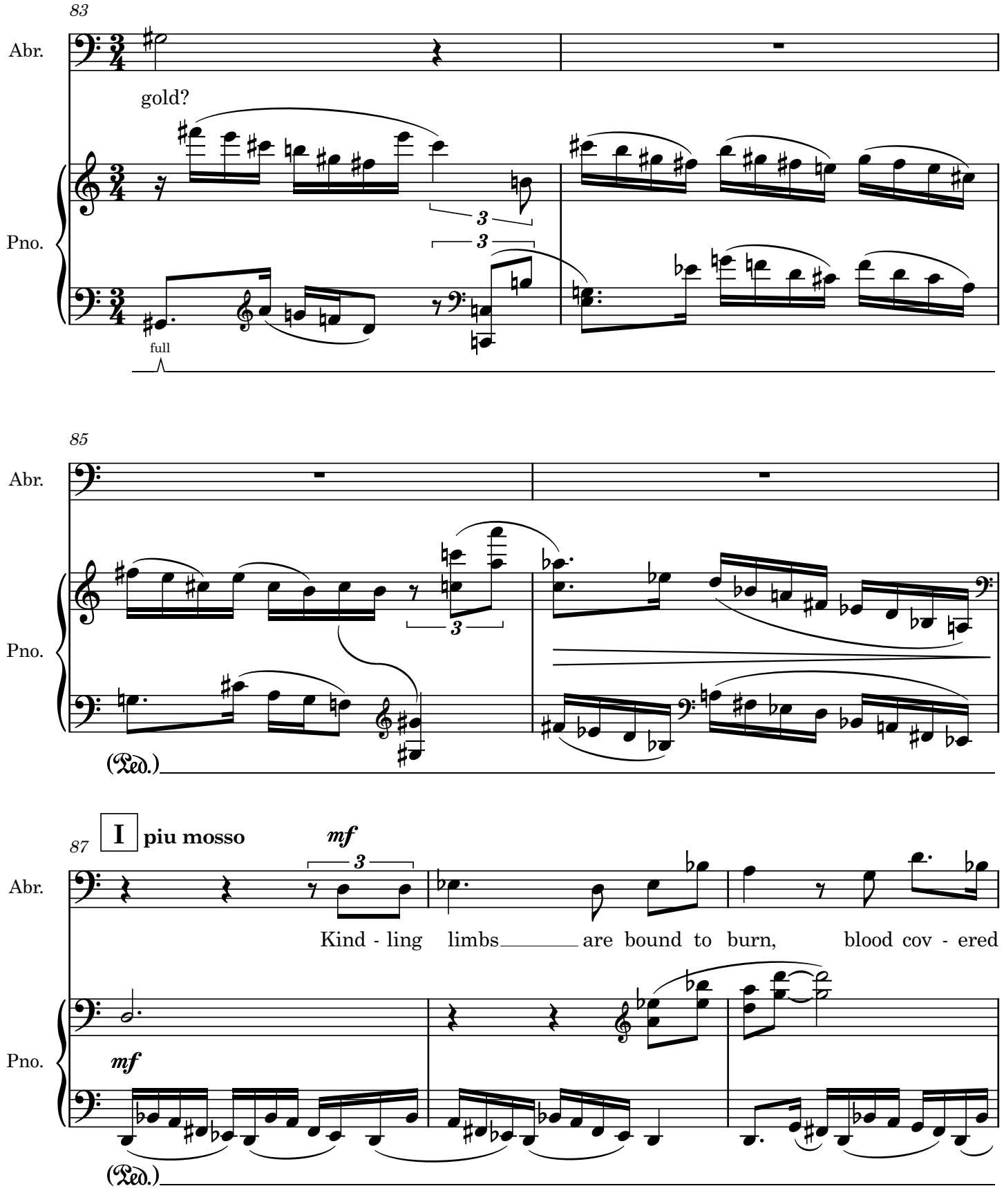

F
45
Abr.
Pno.
p
mf
p
Roots broke my doubt, faith bound in
(Ped.)
49
mf
p
f
bark ra - di - at - ed up - ward
52
Recit. ♩ = c. 72
Adagio ♩ = 66
toward your stark prom - ise to pro - vide

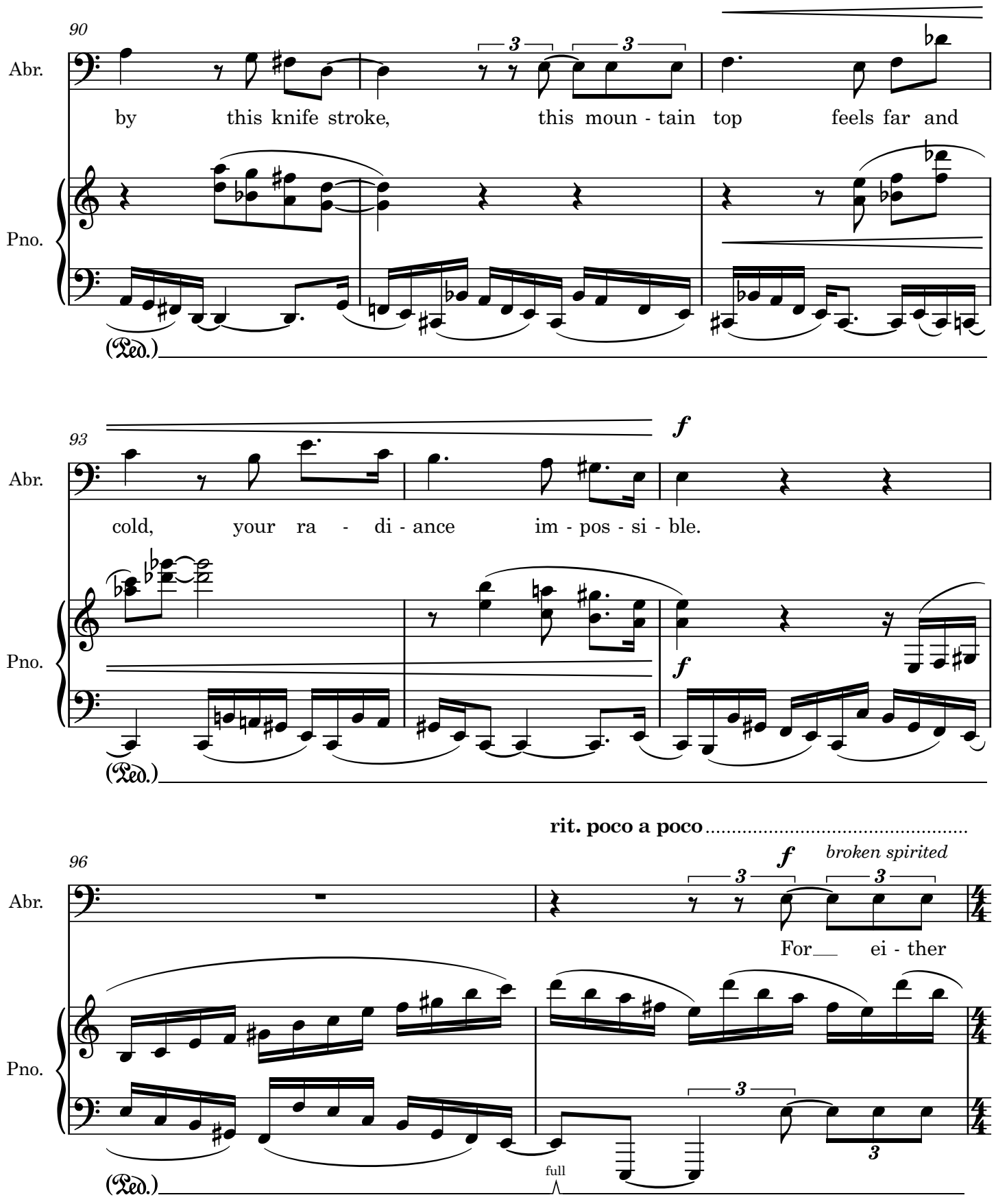

54
accel
Abr.
Pno.
(Ped.)
57
G
Andante ♩= 80
mp
conflictedly
Abr.
As we strode a - mong the
Pno.
mp
Ped.
1/2
1/2
(sim. - 1/2 change ad lib.)
59
Abr.
hills, my heart col - lapsed in grap - pling. Take my
Pno.
(Ped.)

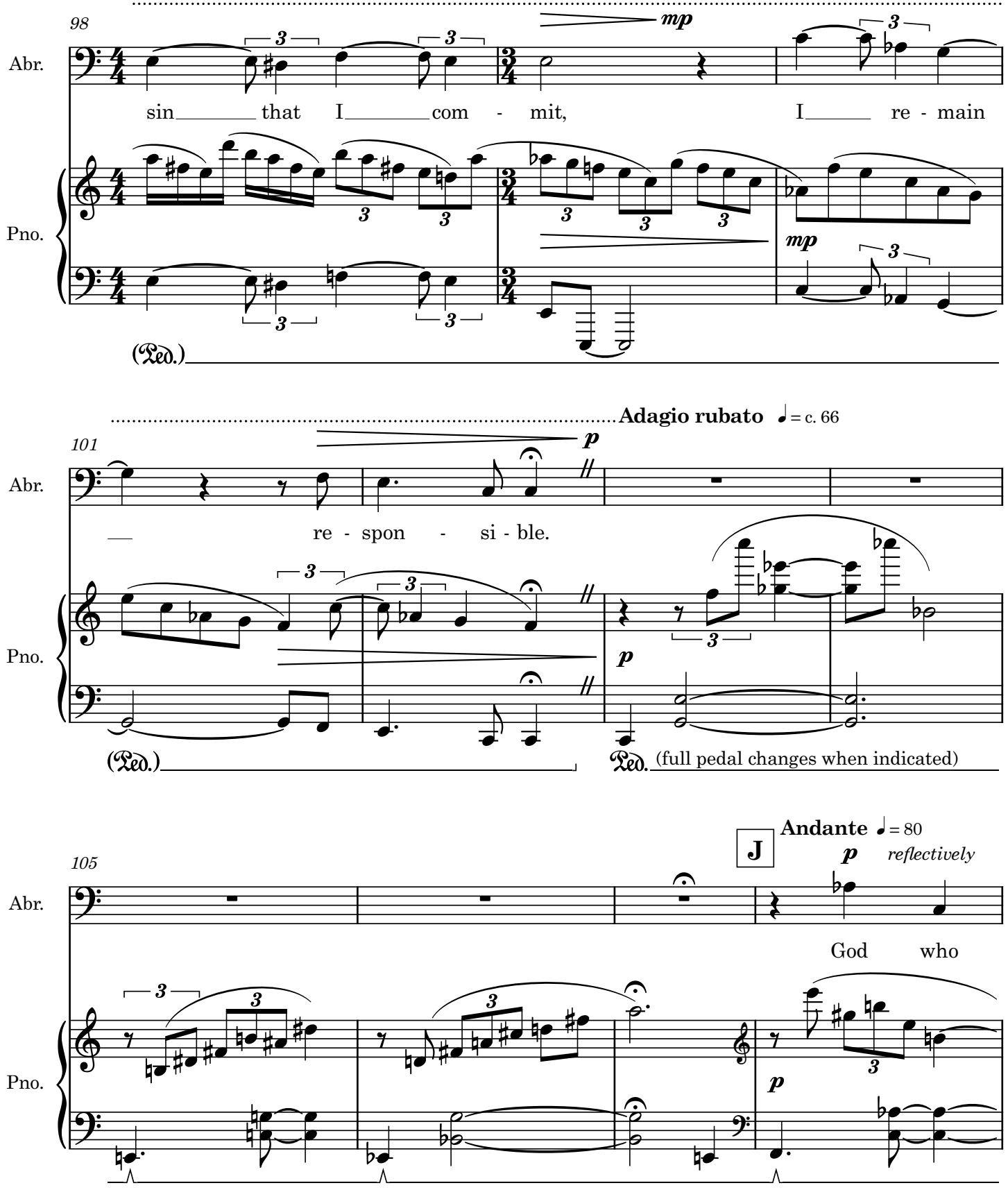

62
Abr.
trea - - sure to the fire, my trust with Is - aac in the
Pno.
(Ped.)
65
f
Recit.
3
a tempo
Abr.
pyre that my weep-ing stokes.
3
Pno.
f
6
8ba
ppp
Ped.
(1/2 change ad lib.)
H
68
Abr.
Pno.
mf
pp sub.
(Ped.)
full

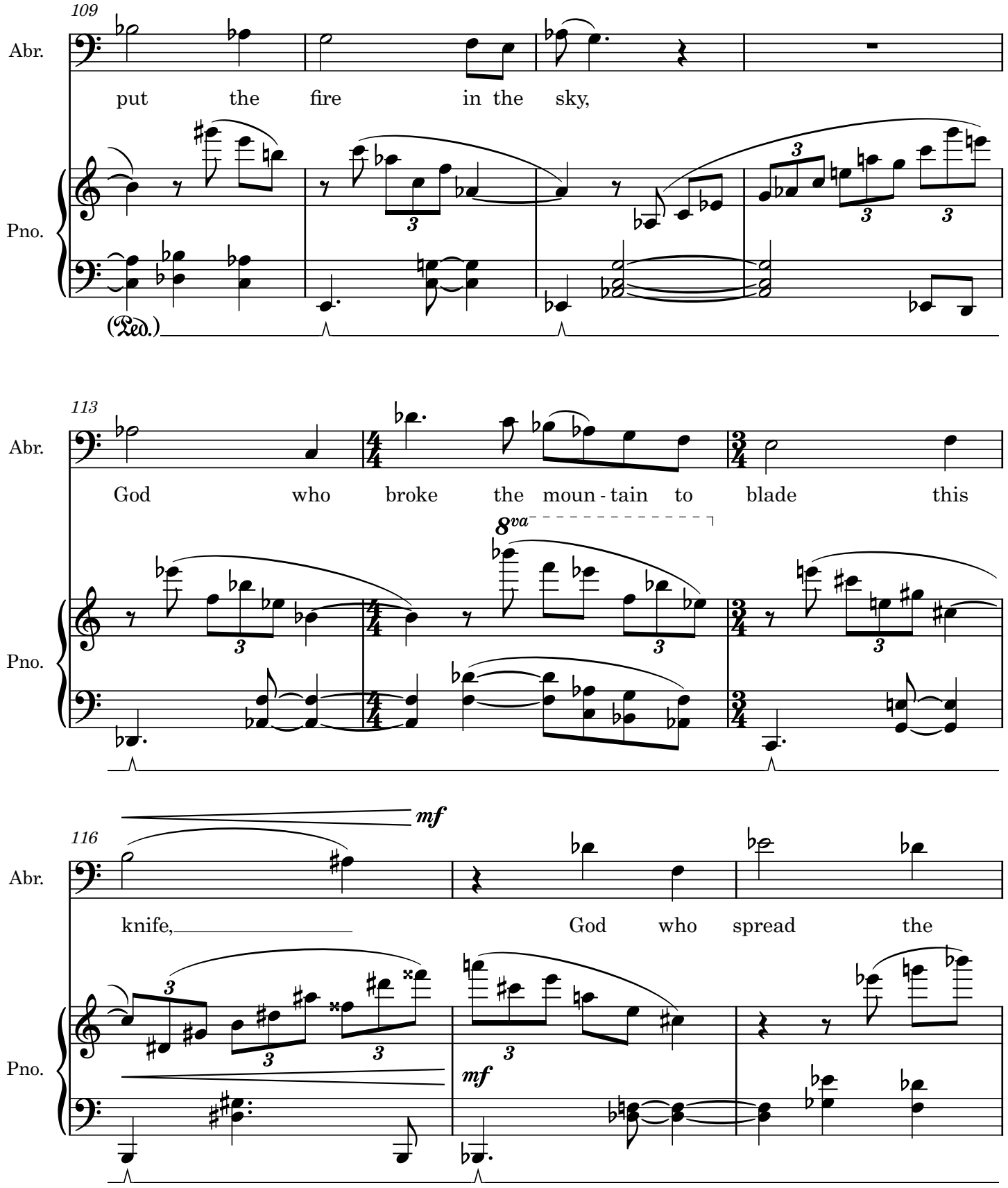

71
Abr.
mp
hopefully
I was
Pno.
mp
(Ped.)
73
Abr.
told to raise this tree,
Pno.
(Ped.)
75
Abr.
that it might spread in - to a
Pno.
(Ped.)

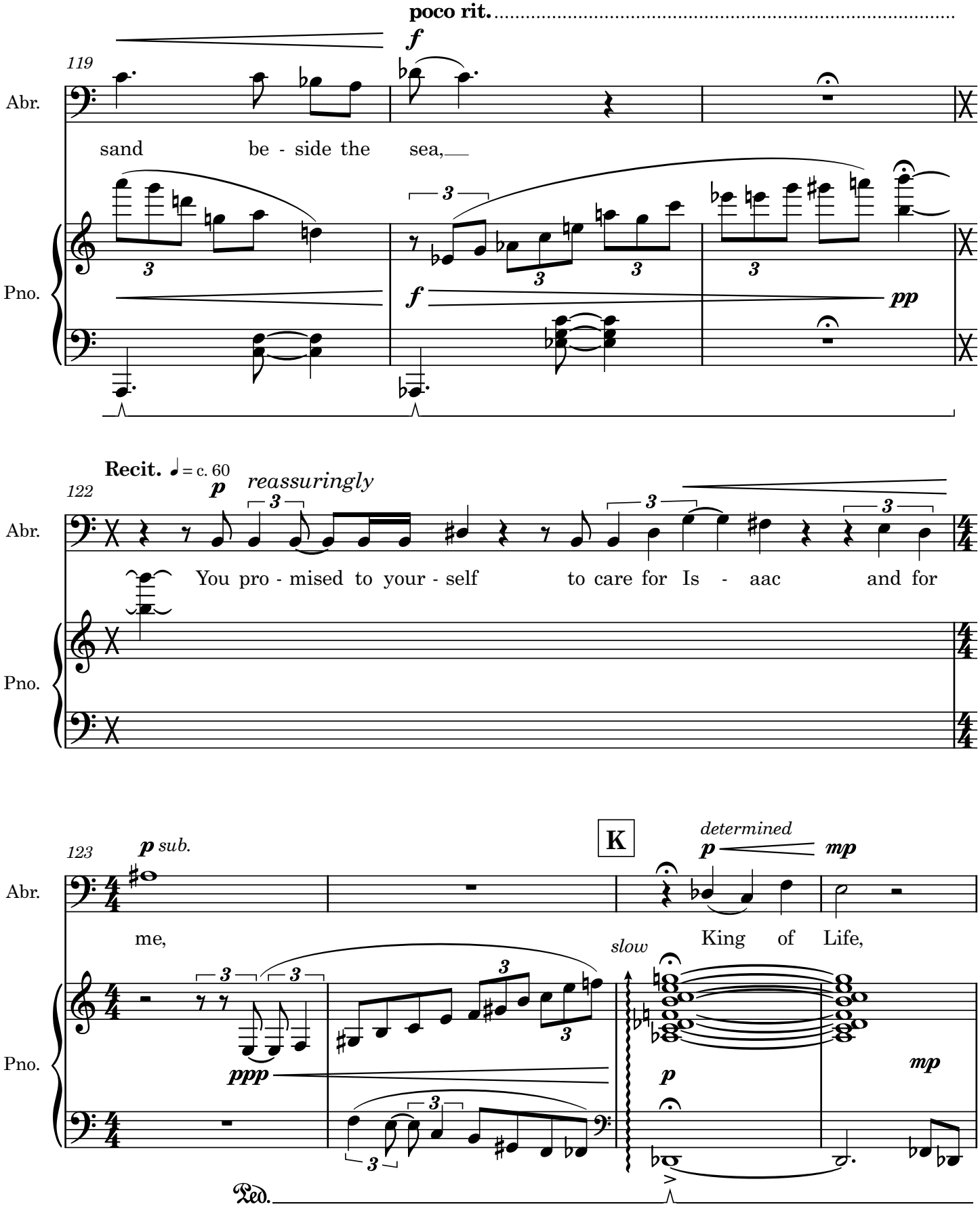

77
with increasing pain
Abr.
grove.
If I o -
Pno.
(Ped.)
79
Abr.
bey and raise my blade
Pno.
full
(Ped.)
81
Abr.
will mur - der melt him in - - to
Pno.
f
f
(Ped.)

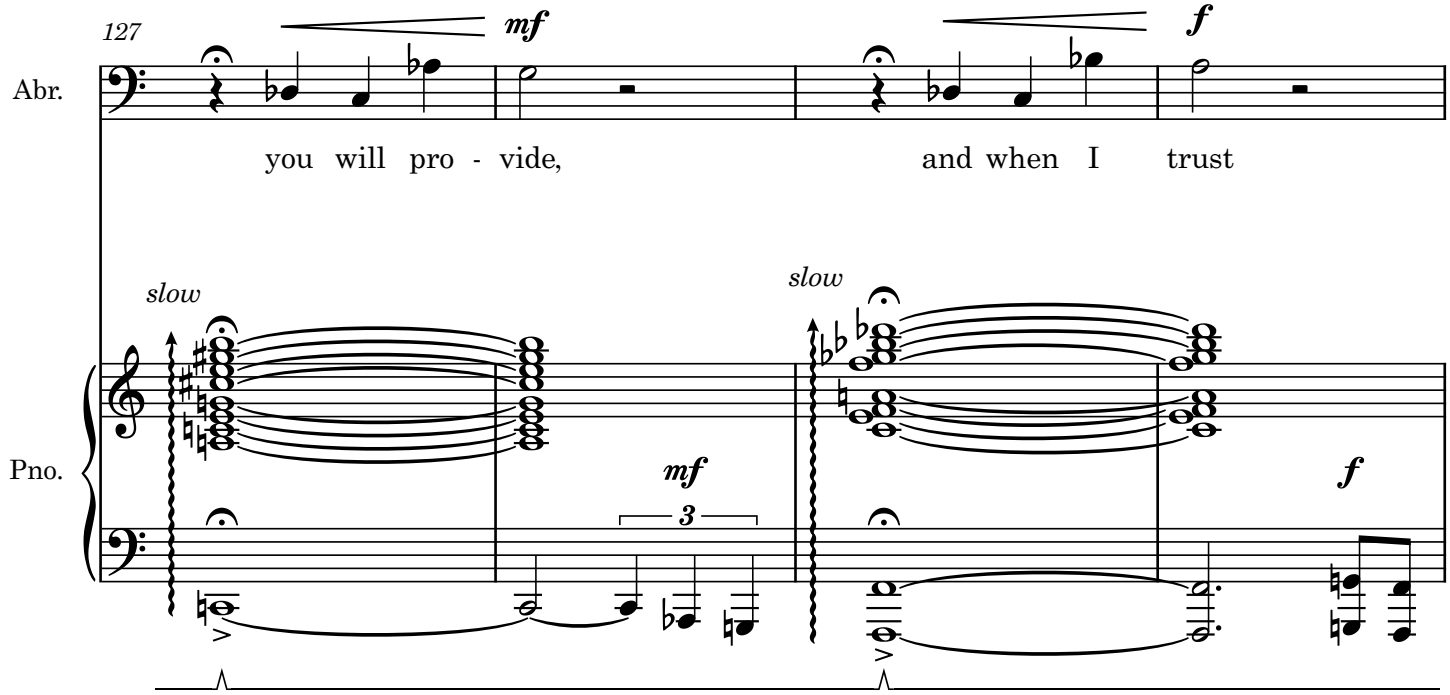

83
Abr.
gold?
Pno.
full
85
Abr.
Pno.
(Ped.)
87
I
piu mosso
mf
Abr.
Kind - ling limbs are bound to burn, blood cov - ered
Pno.
mf
(Ped.)

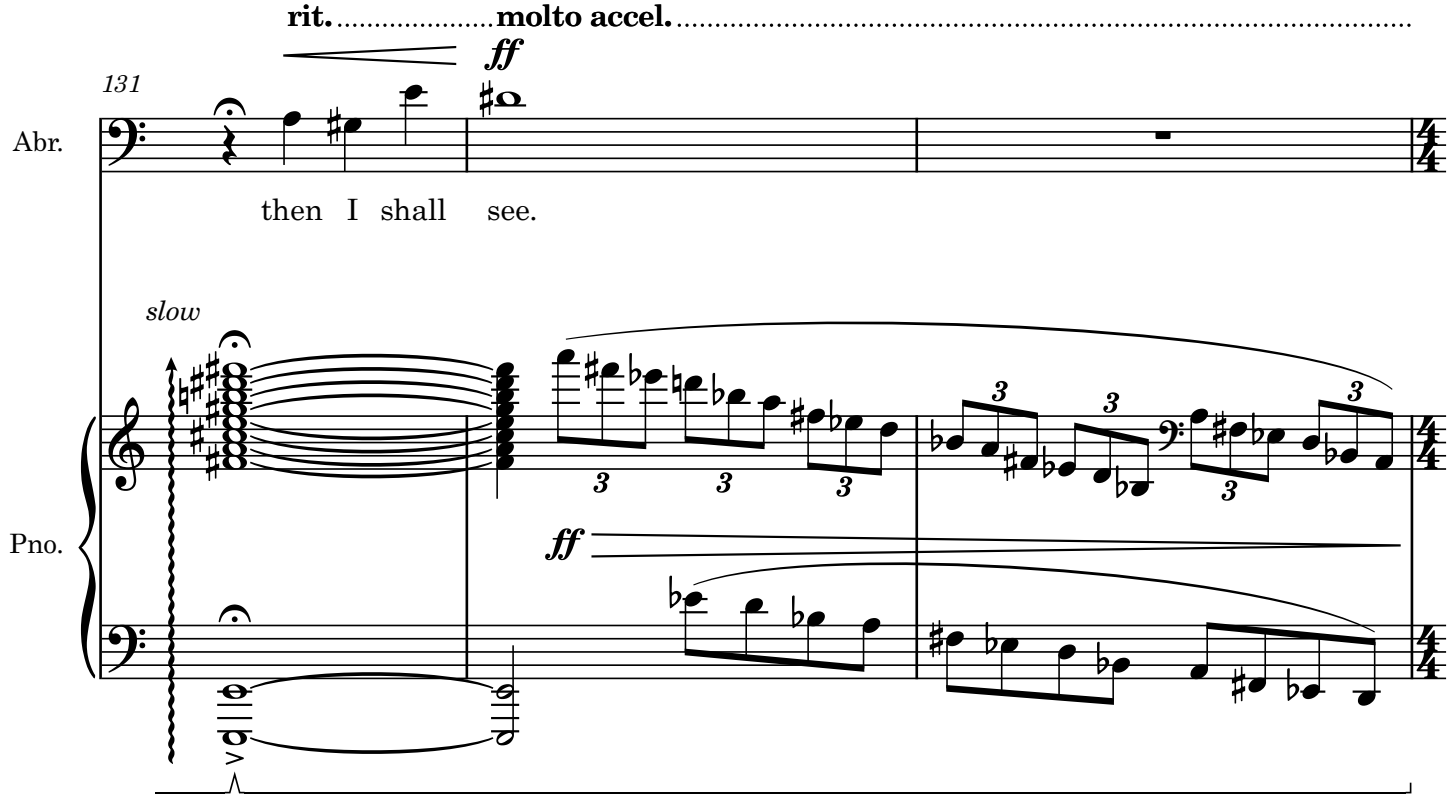

90
Abr.
by this knife stroke, this moun - tain top feels far and
Pno.
(Ped.)
93
Abr.
f
cold, your ra - di - ance im - pos - si - ble.
Pno.
f
(Ped.)
rit. poco a poco
96
Abr.
f
broken spirited
For ei - ther
Pno.
full
(Ped.)

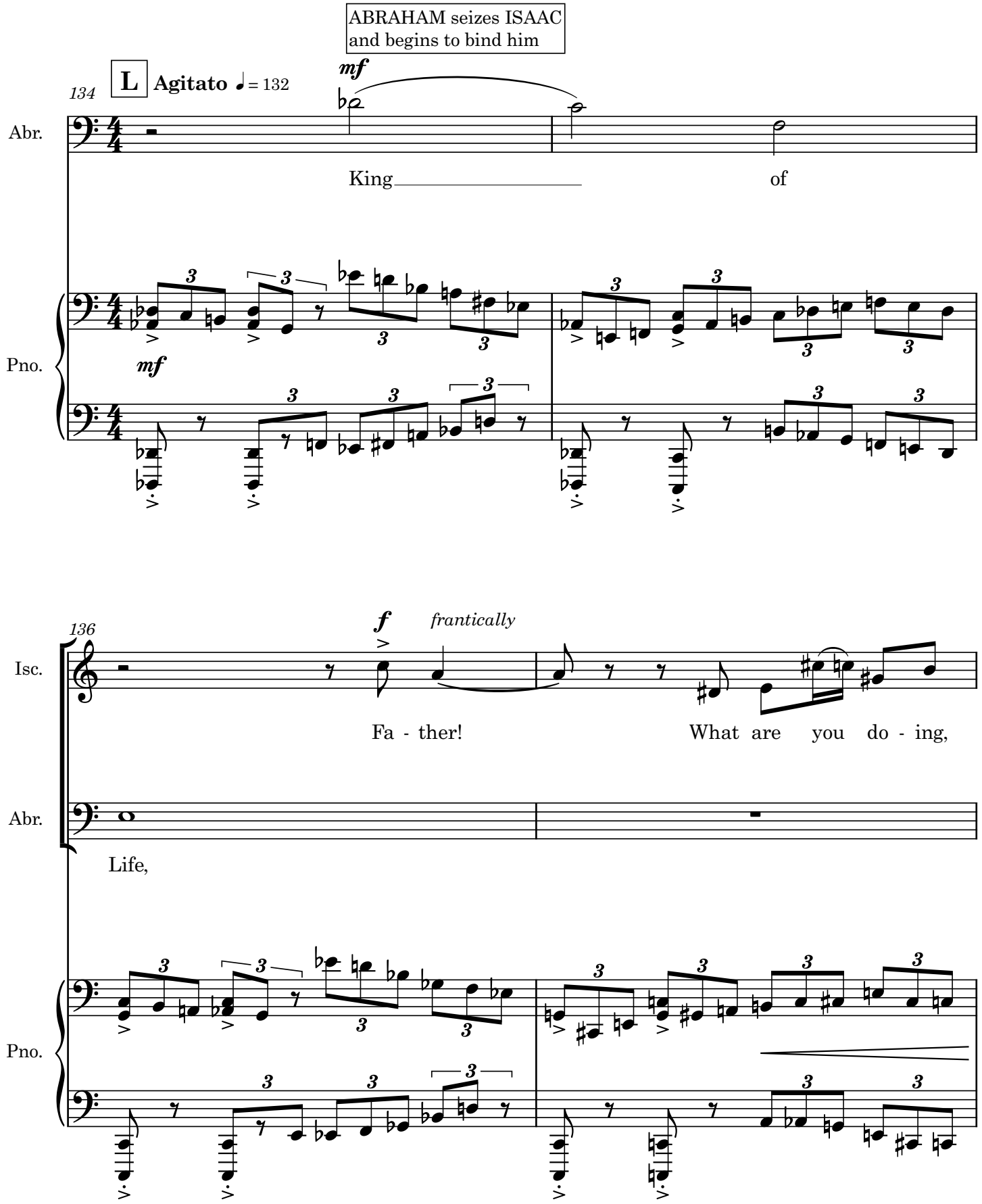

98
Abr.
Pno.
mp
sin that I com - mit, I re - main
(Ped.)
Adagio rubato ♩= c. 66
101
p
re - spon - si - ble.
(full pedal changes when indicated)
Andante ♩= 80
J
105
reflectively
God who

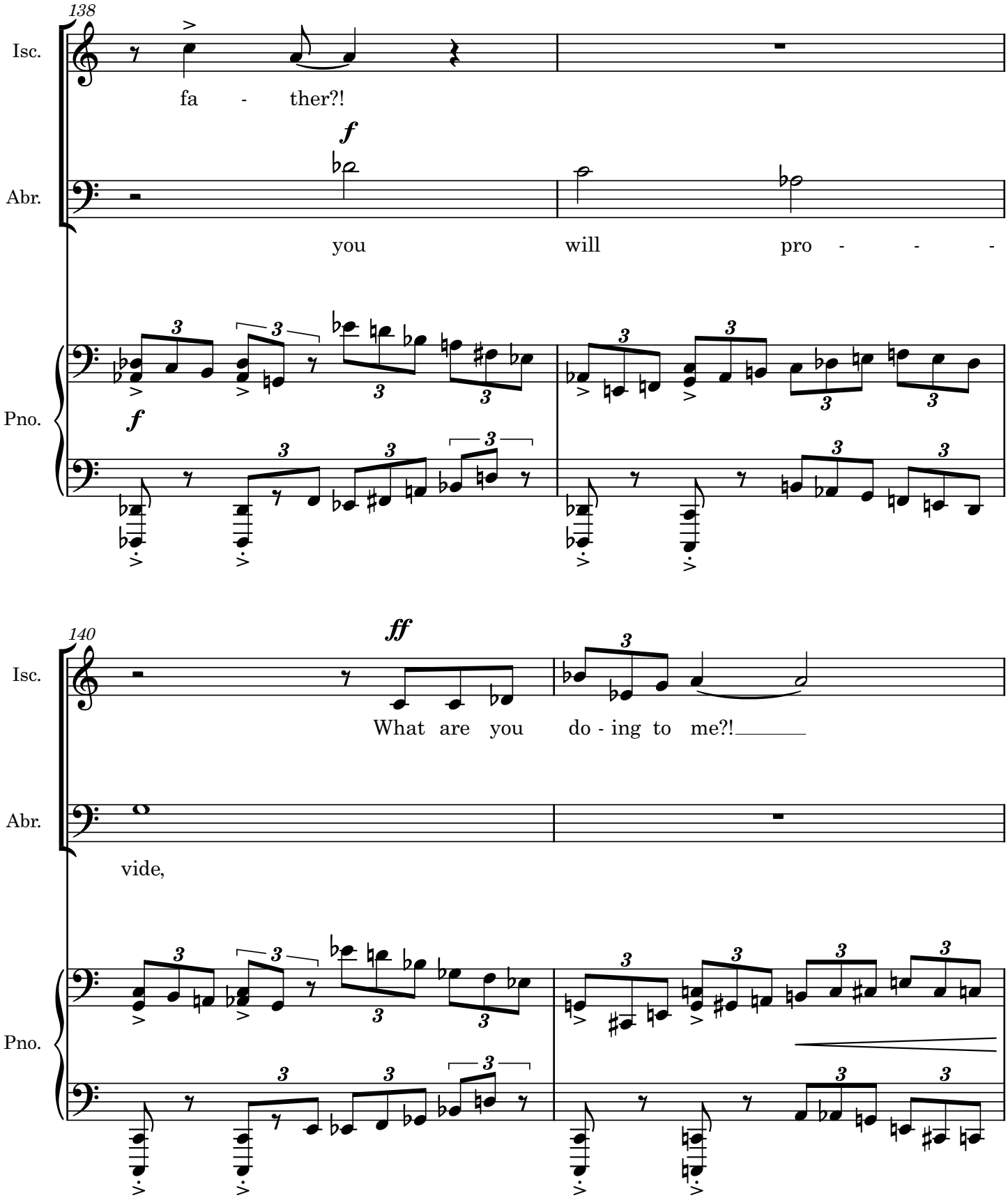

109
Abr.
put the fire in the sky,
Pno.
(Ped.)
113
Abr.
God who broke the moun - tain to blade this
8va
Pno.
116
mf
Abr.
knife, God who spread the
Pno.
mf

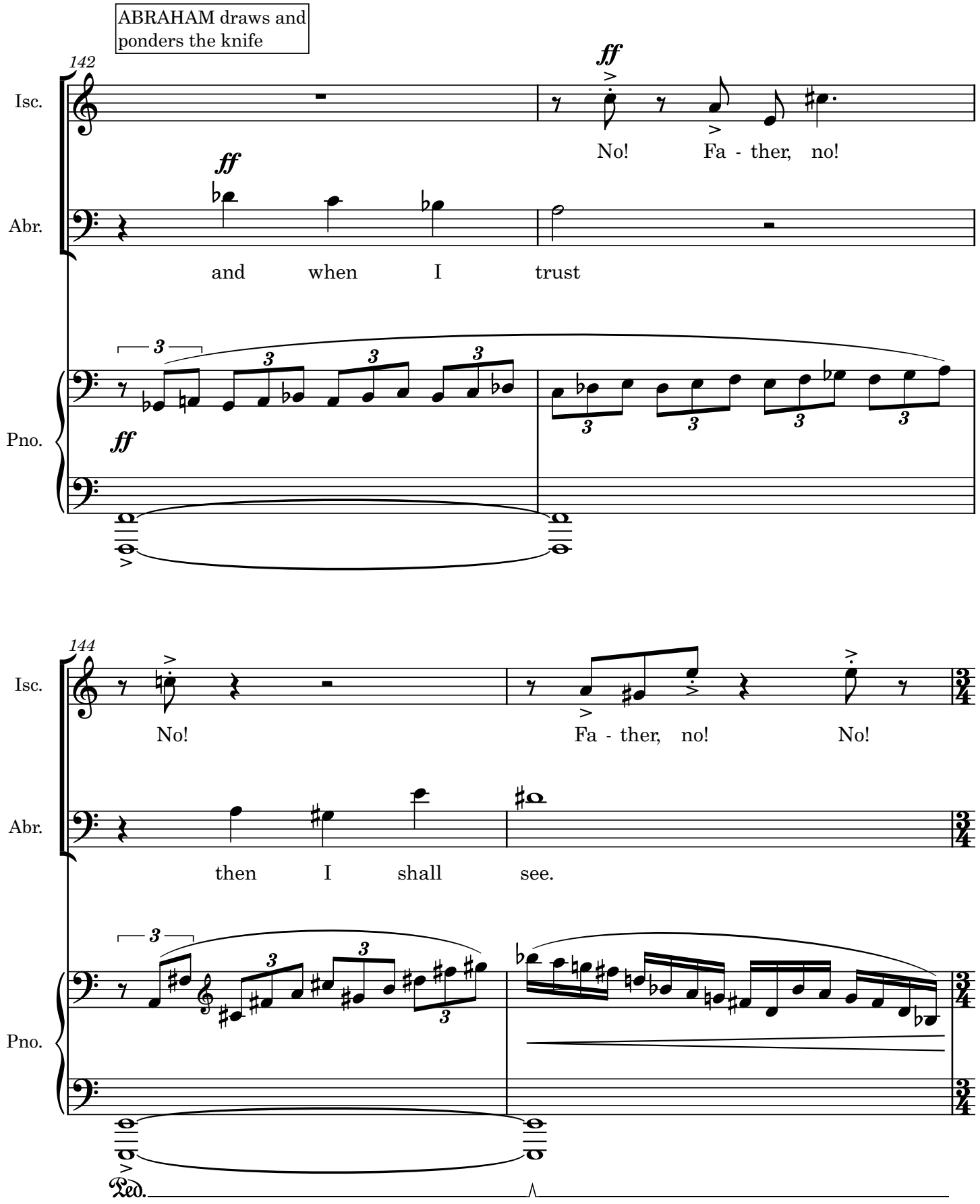

poco rit.
119
Abr.
sand be - side the sea,
Pno.
f
pp
Recit. ♩ = c. 60
122
p
reassuringly
You pro - mised to your - self to care for Is - aac and for
123
p sub.
me,
K
determined
mp
King of Life,
slow
ppp
Ped.

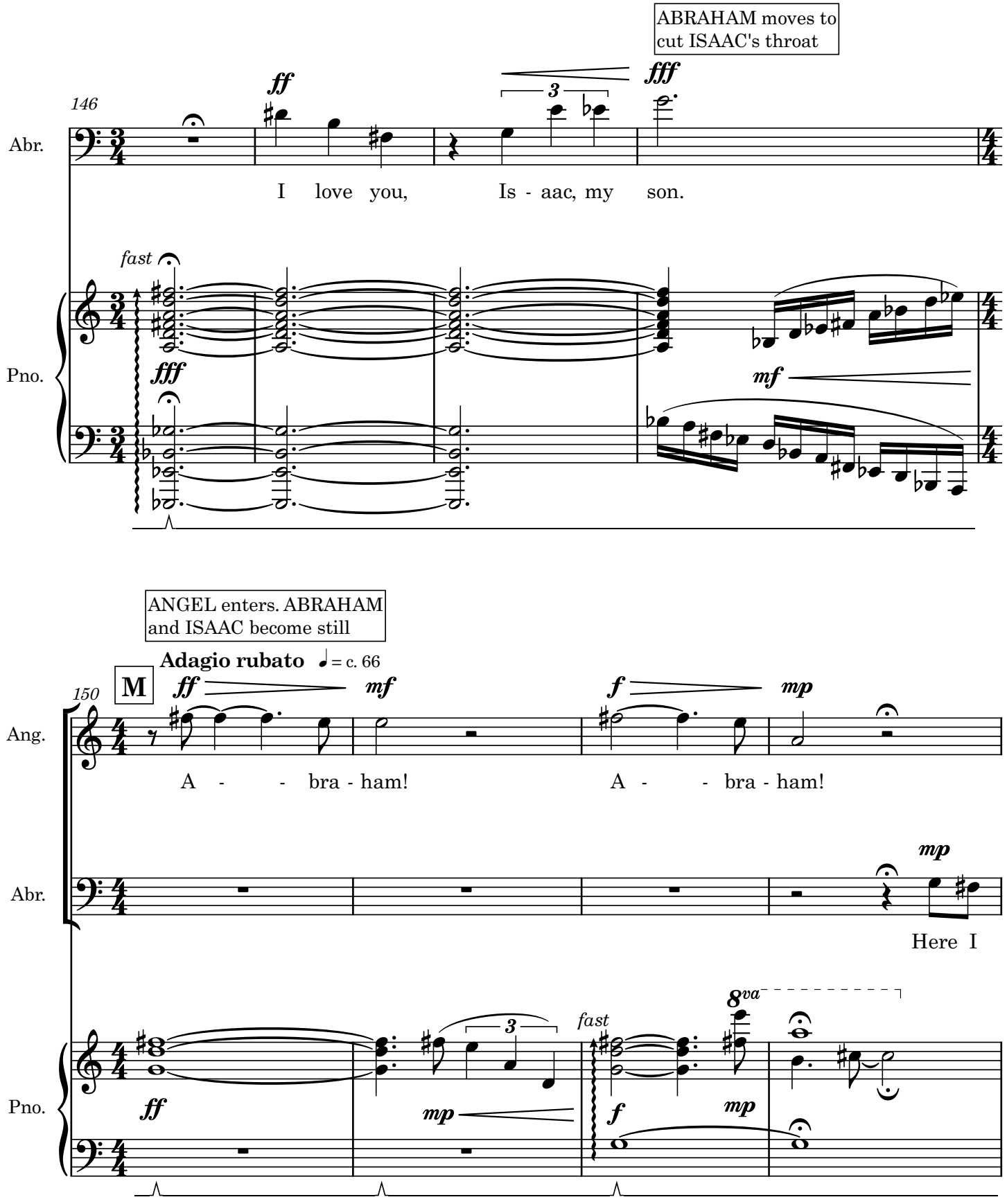

127
mf
f
Abr.
you will pro - vide,
and when I trust
slow
slow
Pno.
mf
3
f

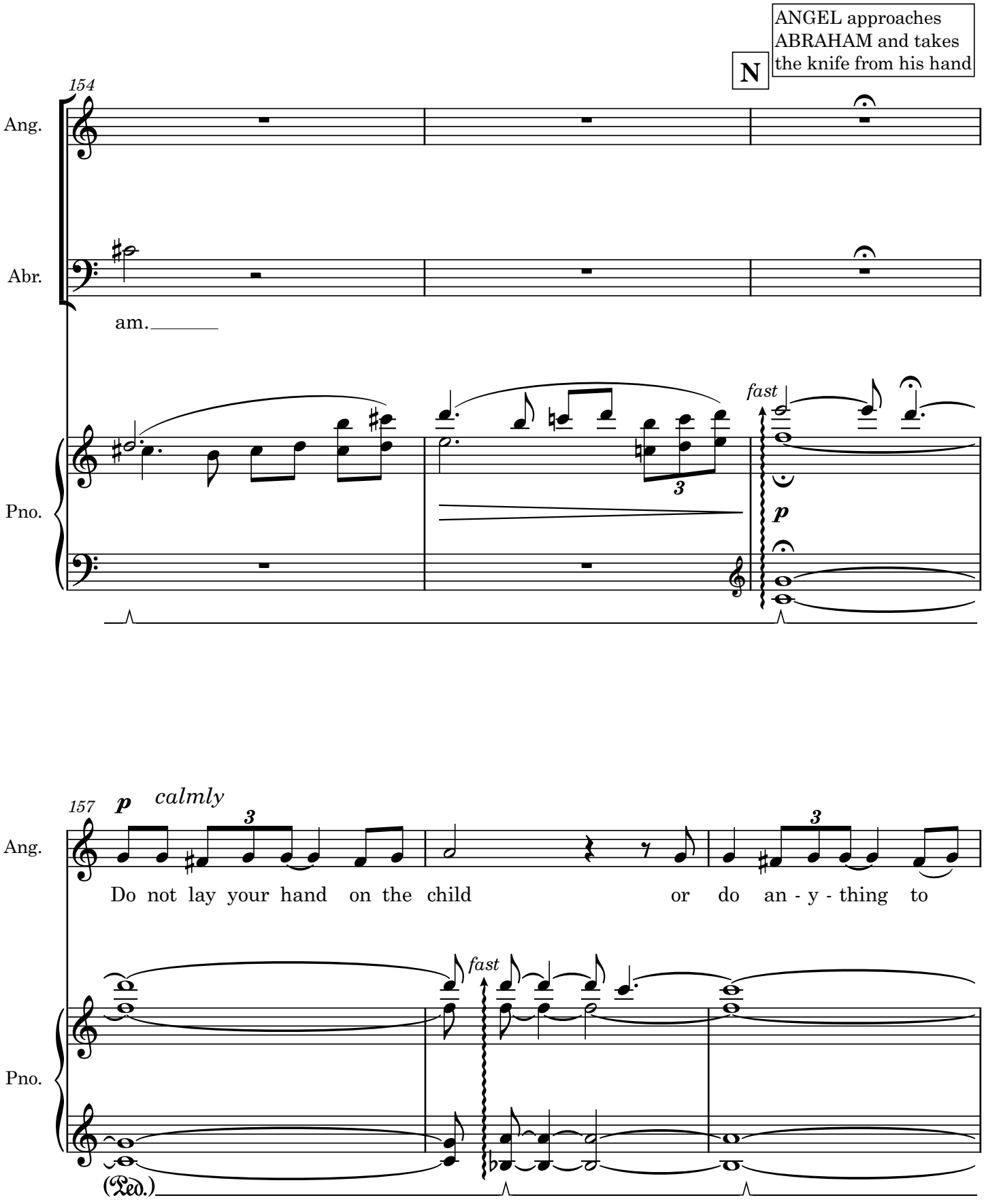

rit.
molto accel.
ff
131
Abr.
then I shall see.
slow
Pno.
ff
3
3
3
3
3
3
4/4

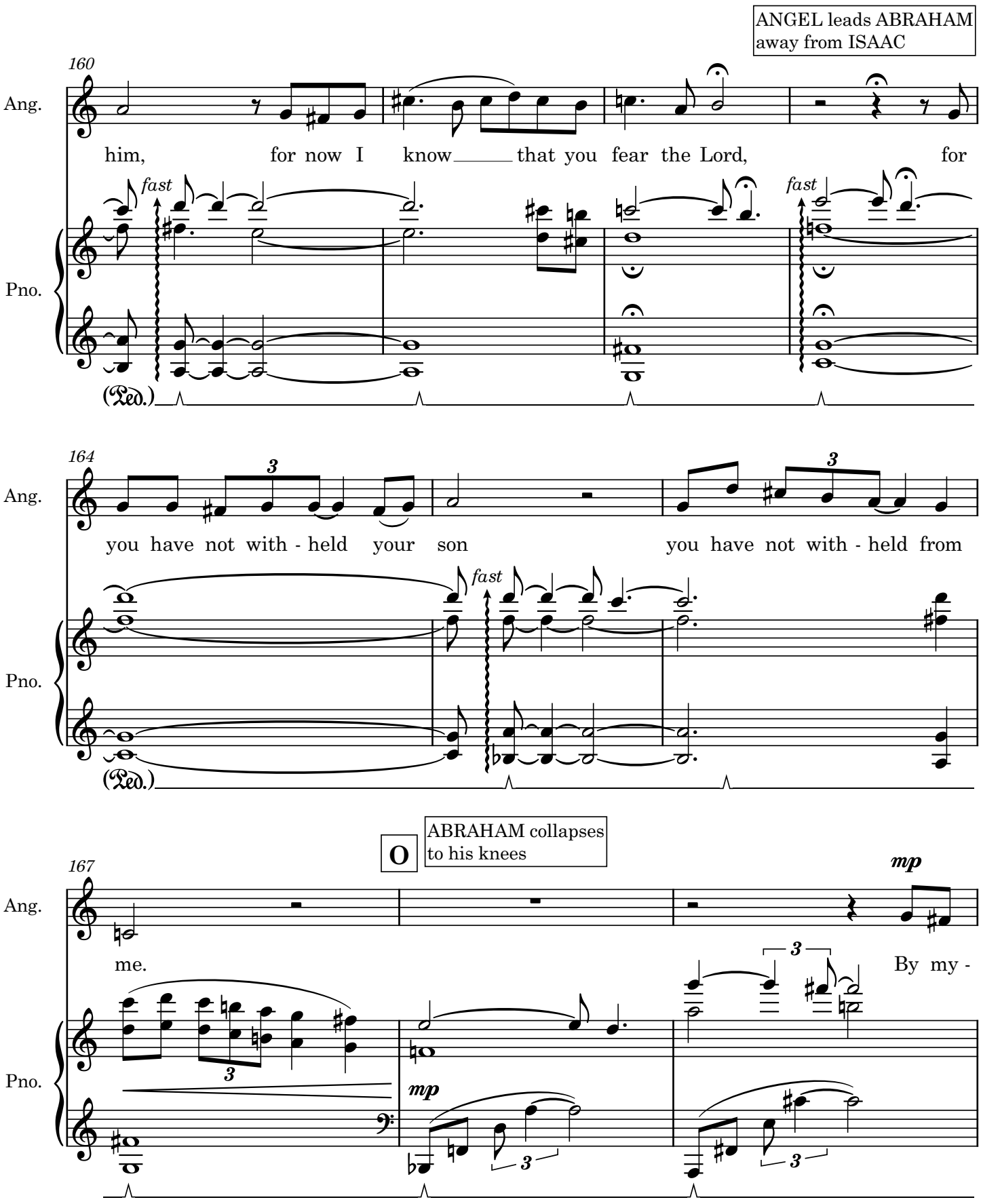

ABRAHAM seizes ISAAC
and begins to bind him
134
L
Agitato ♩= 132
mf
Abr.
King
of
Pno.
mf
136
f
frantically
Isc.
Fa - ther!
What are you do - ing,
Abr.
Life,
Pno.

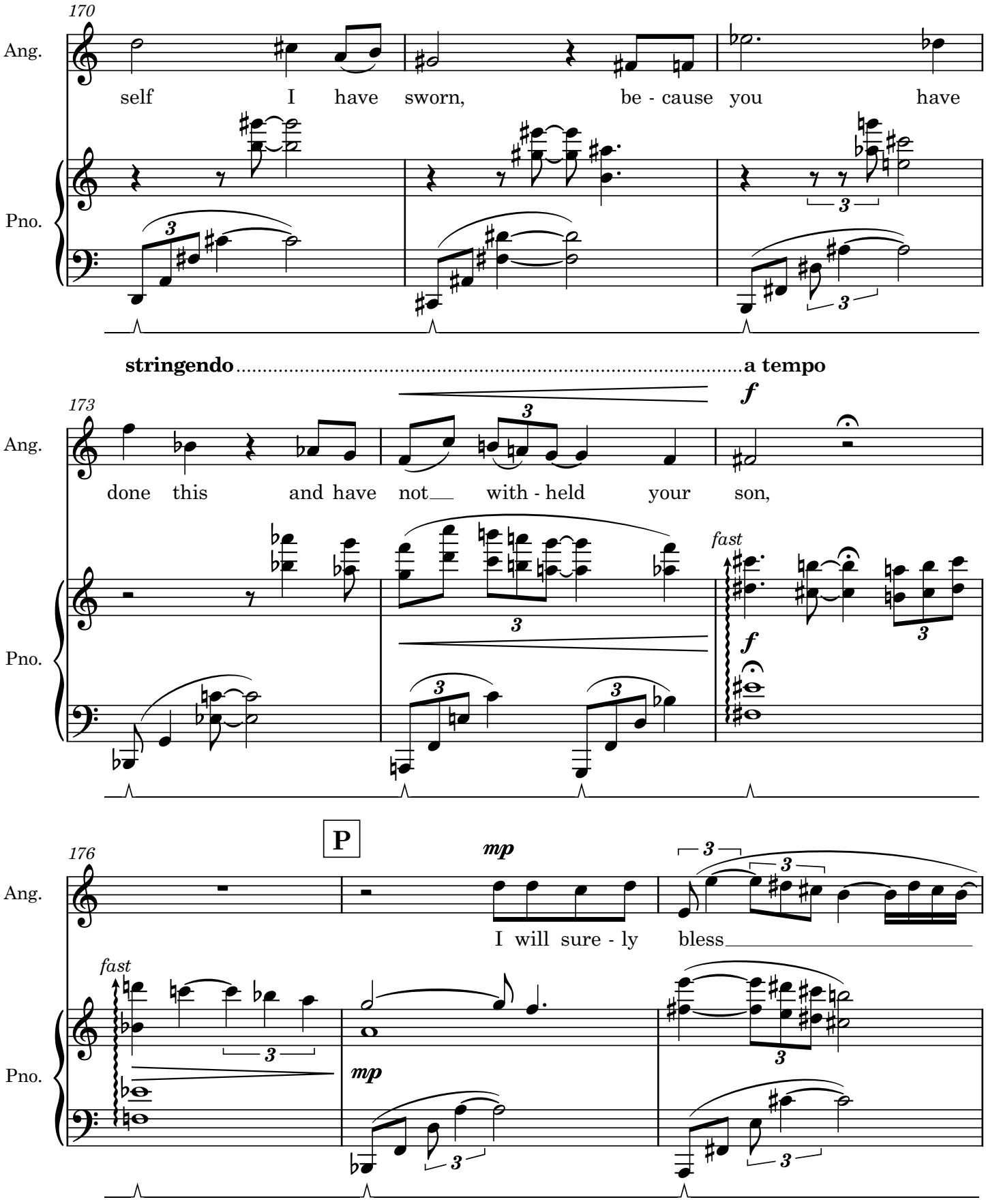

138
Isc.
fa - ther?!
f
Abr.
you will pro - - -
Pno.
f
140
Isc.
ff
What are you do - ing to me?!
Abr.
vide,
Pno.

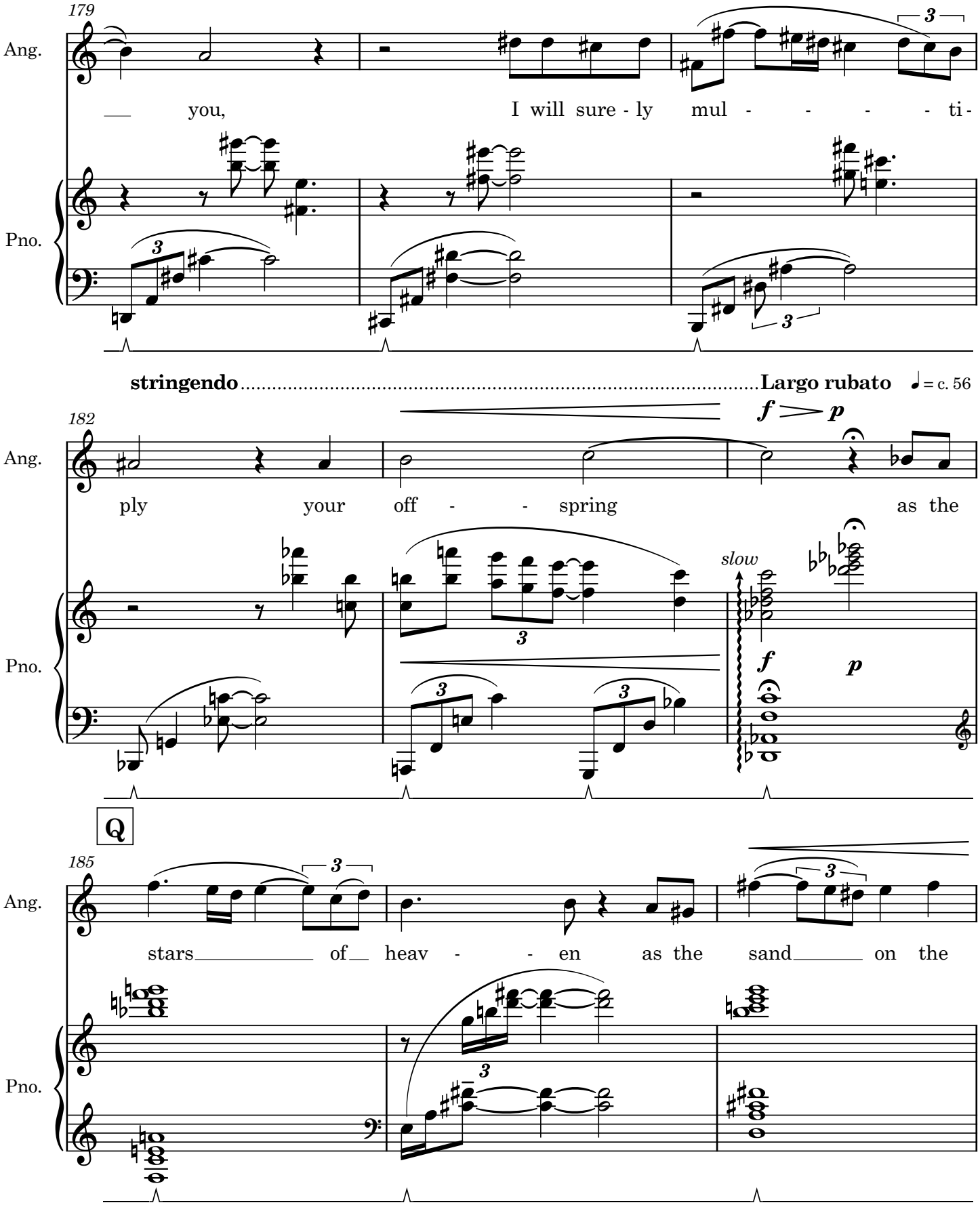

ABRAHAM draws and ponders the knife
142
Isc.
Abr.
Pno.
ff
No! Fa - ther, no!
and when I trust
144
No! Fa - ther, no! No!
then I shall see.
Ped.

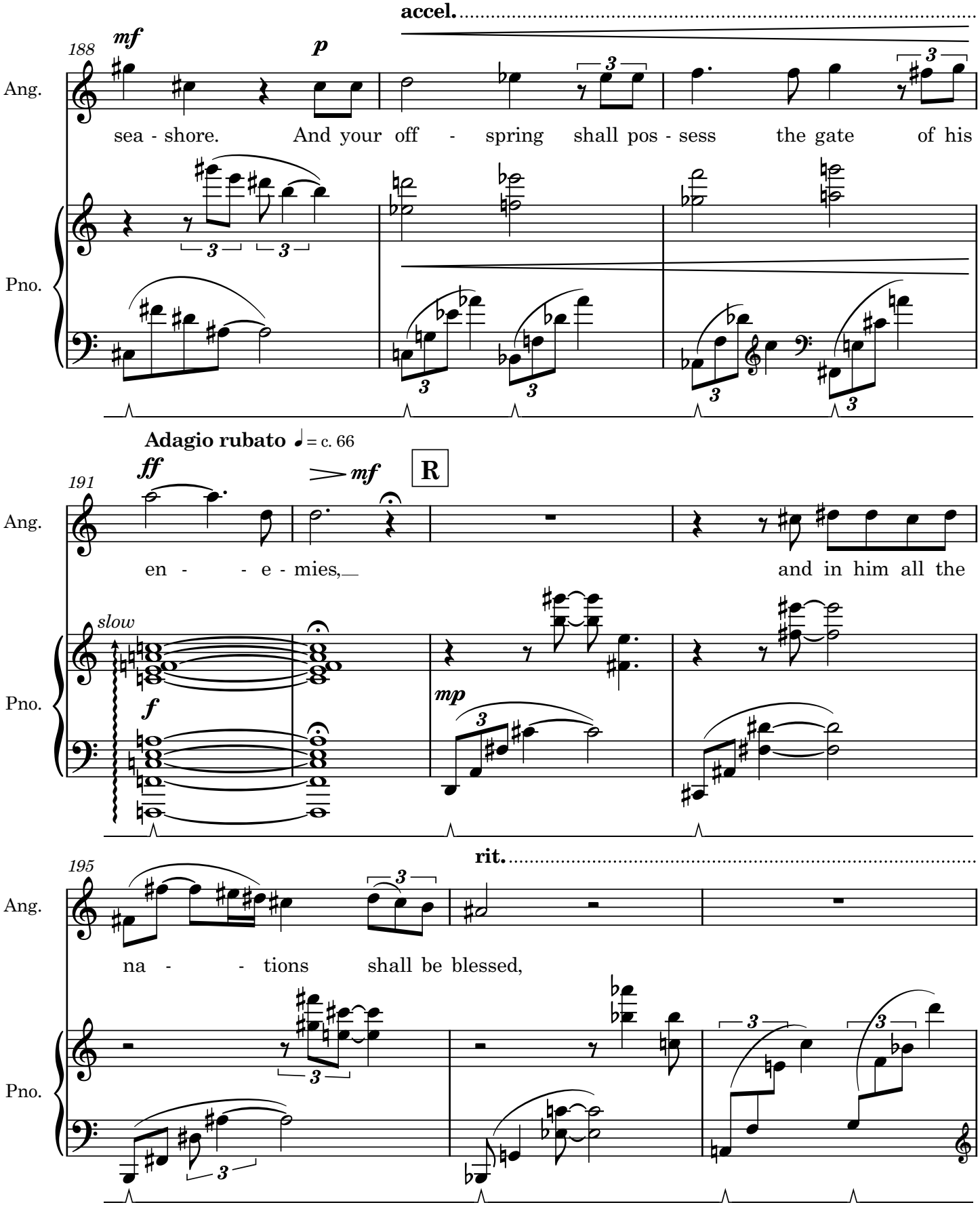

ABRAHAM moves to cut ISAAC's throat
146
Abr.
ff
fff
3
I love you, Is - aac, my son.
fast
Pno.
fff
mf
ANGEL enters. ABRAHAM and ISAAC become still
Adagio rubato
= c. 66
M
150
Ang.
ff
mf
f
mp
A - - bra - ham!
A - - bra - ham!
Abr.
mp
Here I
Pno.
ff
mp
fast
f
8va
mp

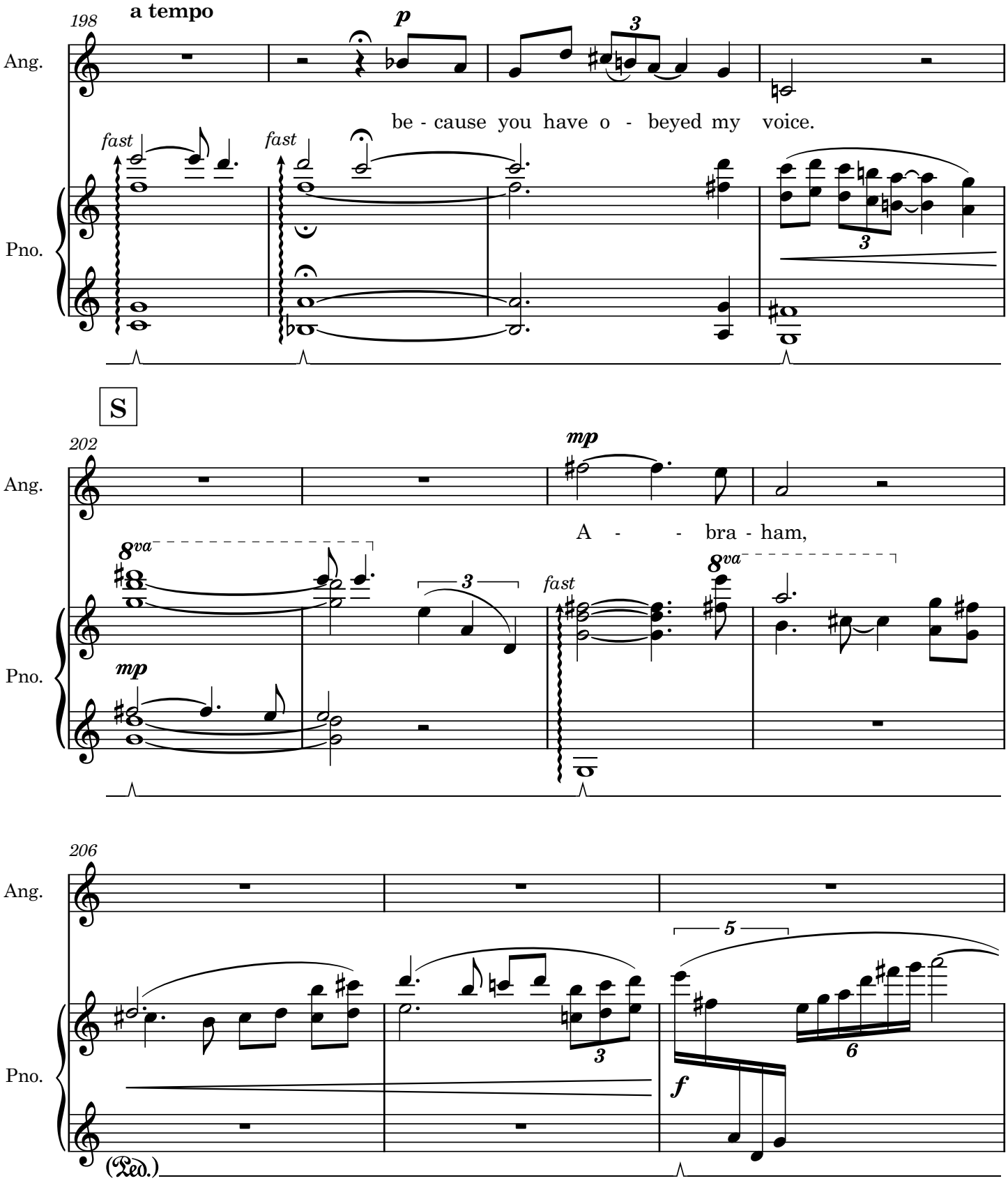

N
ANGEL approaches ABRAHAM and takes the knife from his hand
154
Ang.
Abr.
am.
Pno.
fast
p
157
p
calmly
Ang.
Do not lay your hand on the child or do an - y - thing to
Pno.
fast
(Ped.)

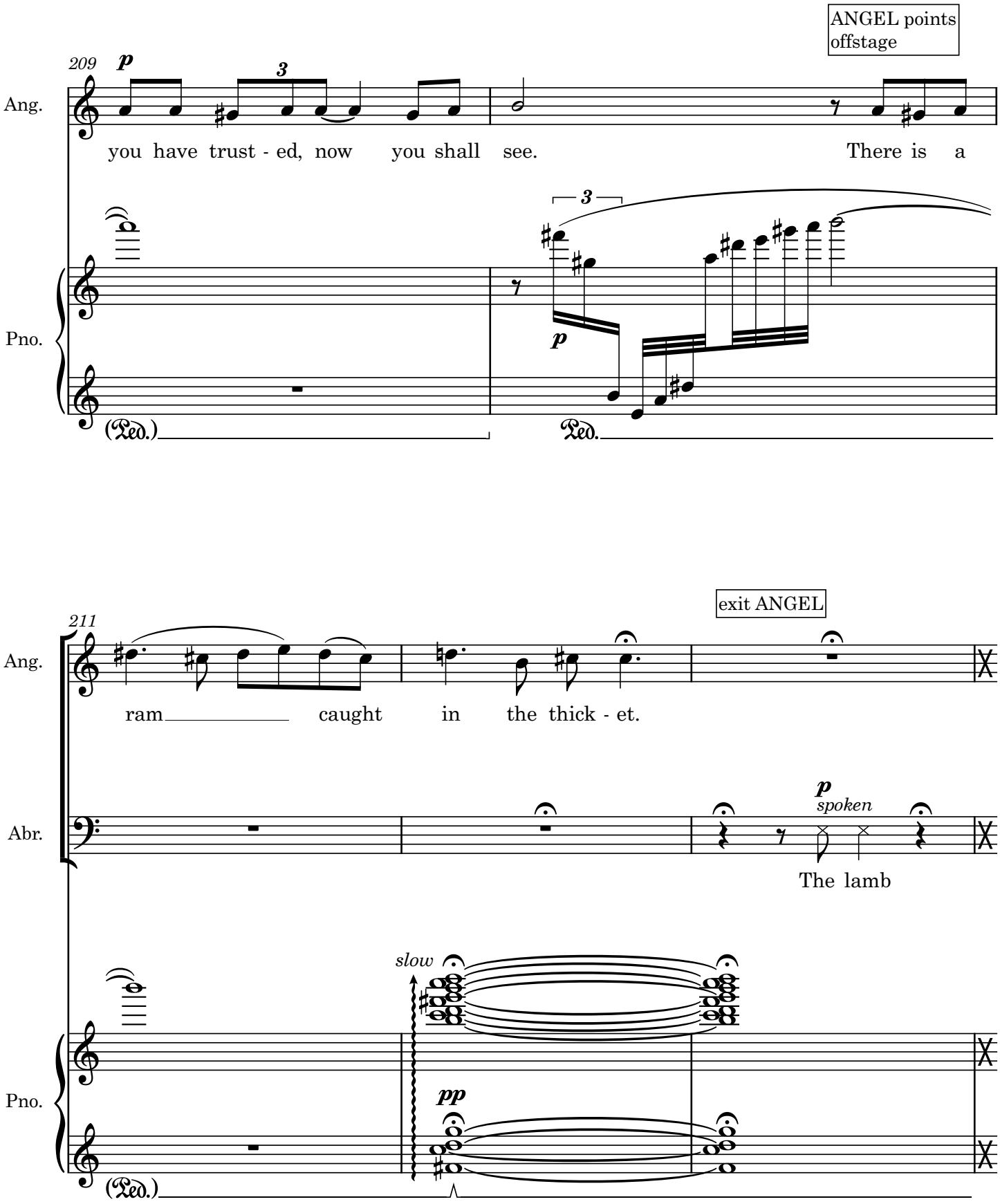

ANGEL leads ABRAHAM away from ISAAC
160
Ang.
him, for now I know that you fear the Lord, for
fast
fast
Pno.
(Ped.)
164
Ang.
you have not with - held your son you have not with - held from
3
3
fast
Pno.
(Ped.)
O
ABRAHAM collapses to his knees
167
Ang.
me.
By my -
mp
3
3
Pno.
mp
3
3

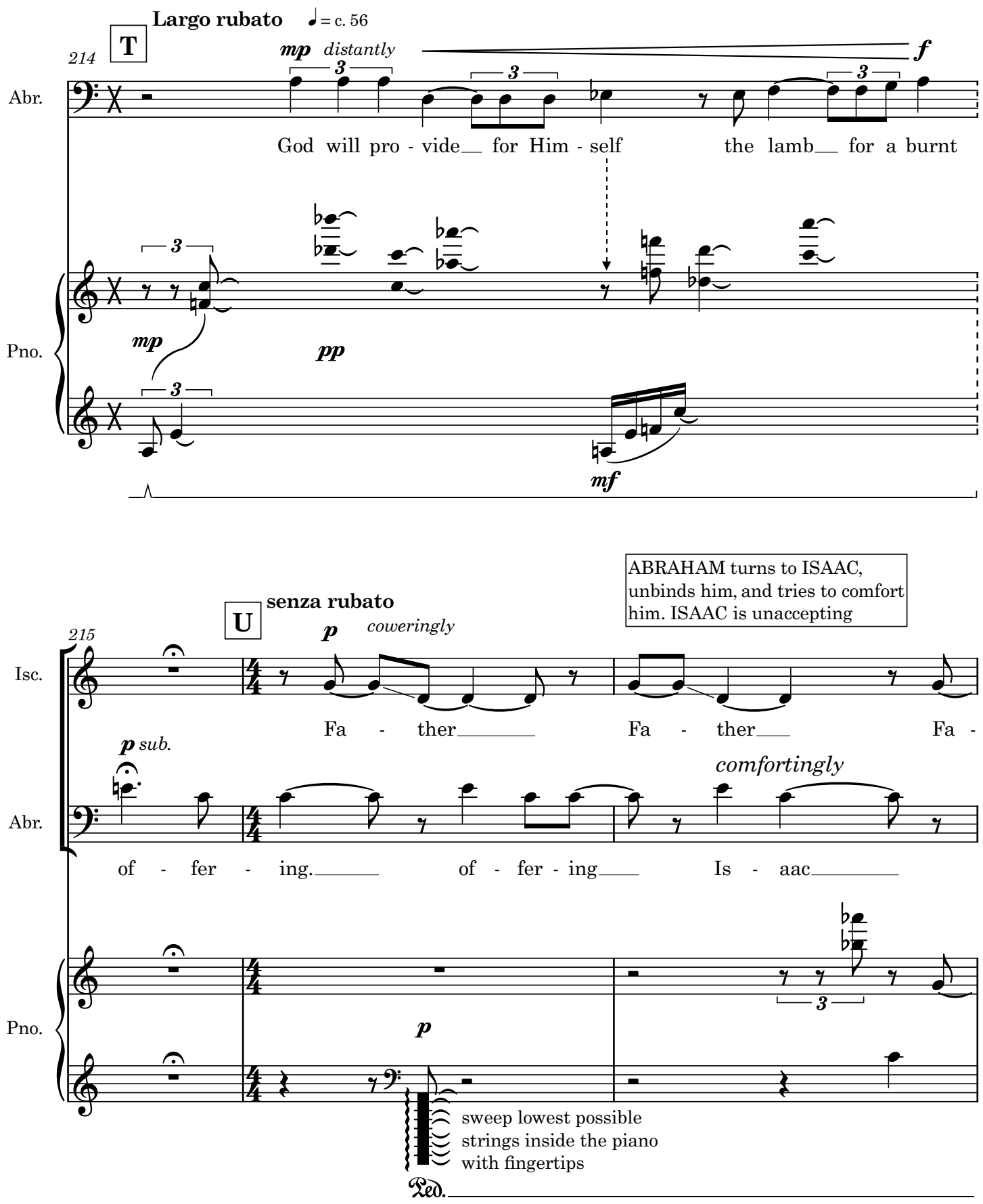

170
Ang.
self I have sworn, be - cause you have
Pno.
stringendo
a tempo
173
Ang.
done this and have not with - held your son,
Pno.
fast
P
176
Ang.
mp
I will sure - ly bless
fast
Pno.
mp

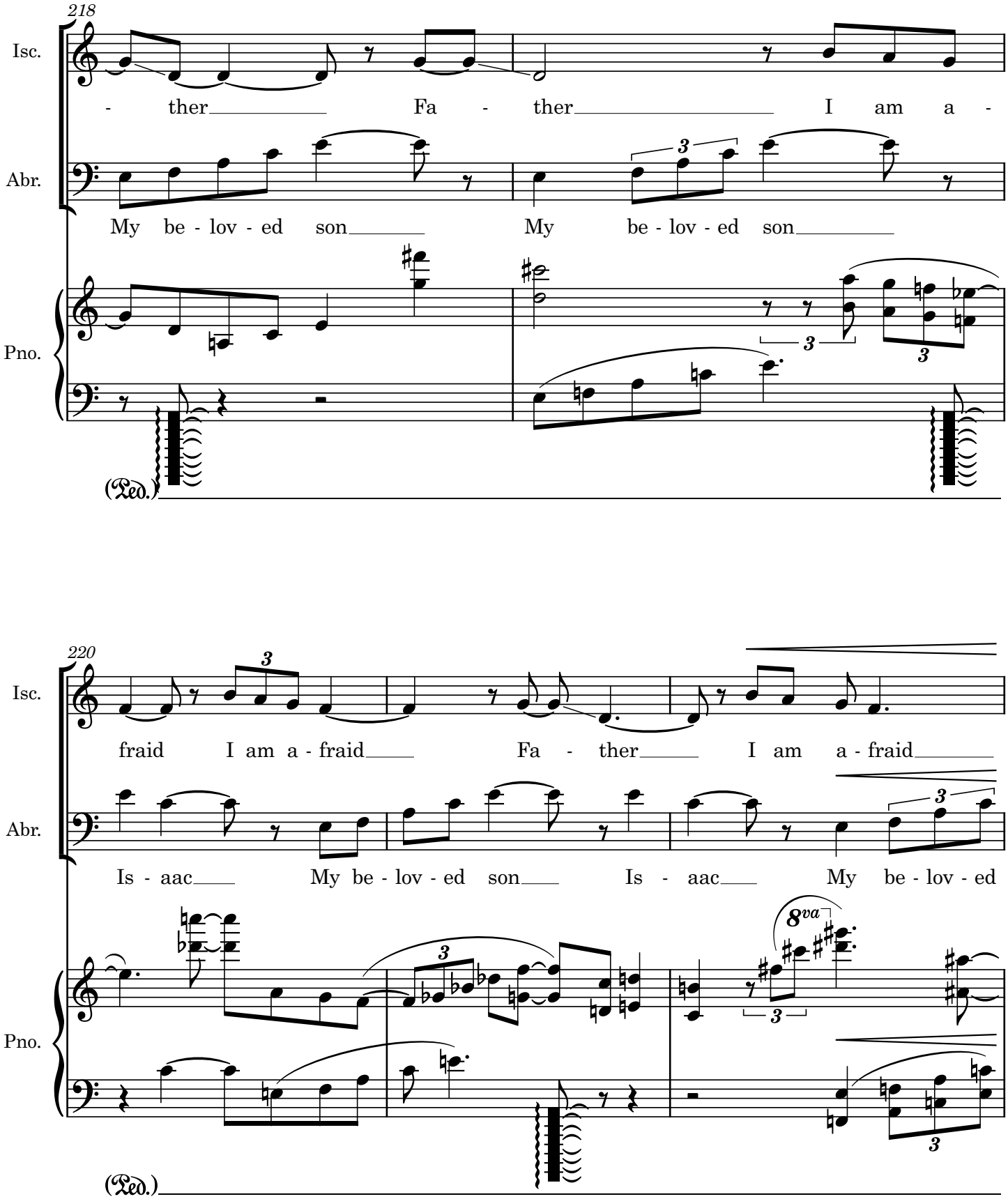

179
Ang.
you, I will sure - ly mul - - - - - ti -
Pno.
stringendo
Largo rubato
♩ = c. 56
182
Ang.
ply your off - - spring as the
slow
Pno.
Q
185
Ang.
stars of heav - - en as the sand on the
Pno.

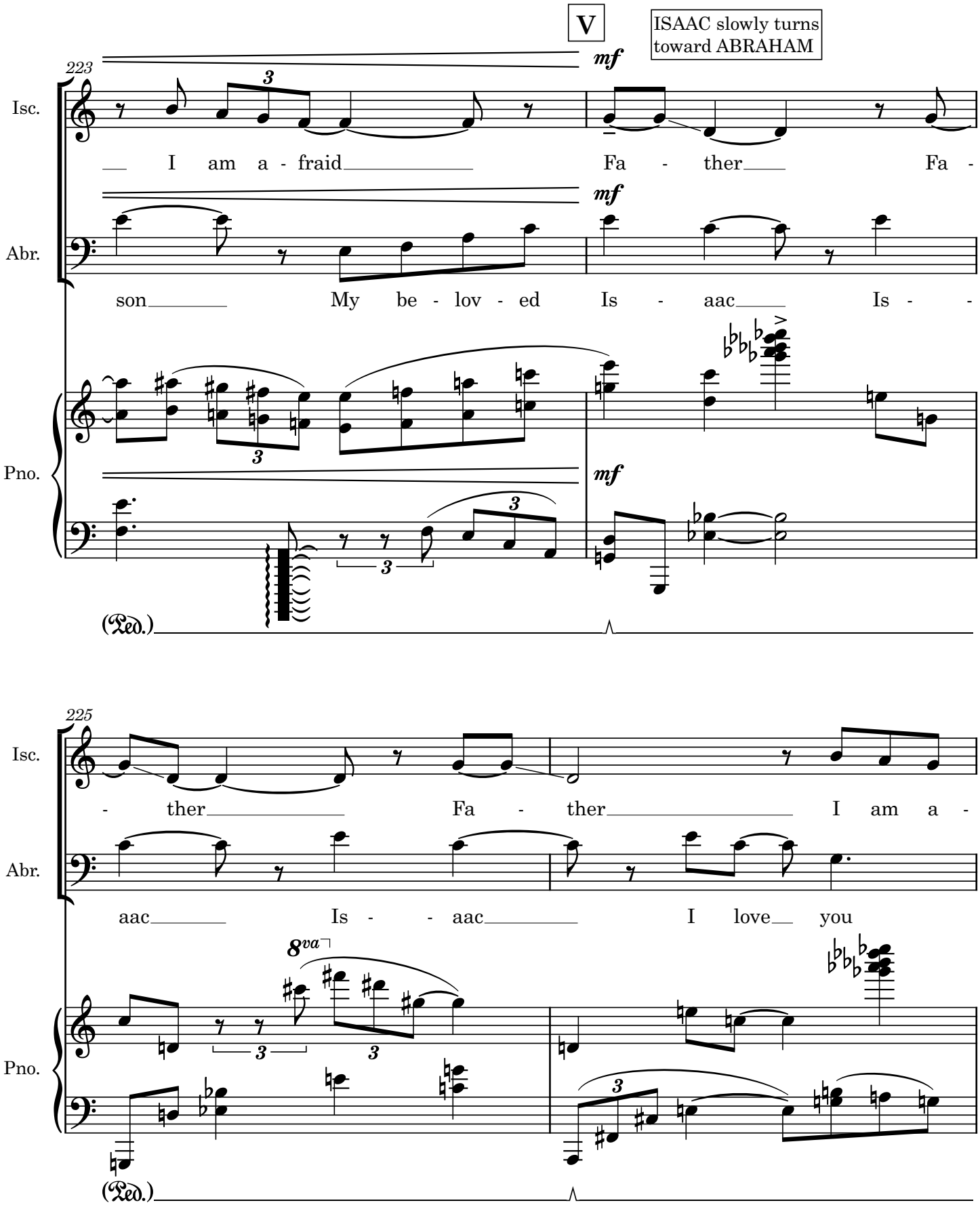

accel.
188
mf
p
Ang.
sea - shore. And your off - spring shall pos - sess the gate of his
Pno.
Adagio rubato ♩ = c. 66
191
ff
mf
R
Ang.
en - - e - mies, and in him all the
slow
f
Pno.
mp
rit.
195
Ang.
na - - tions shall be blessed,
Pno.

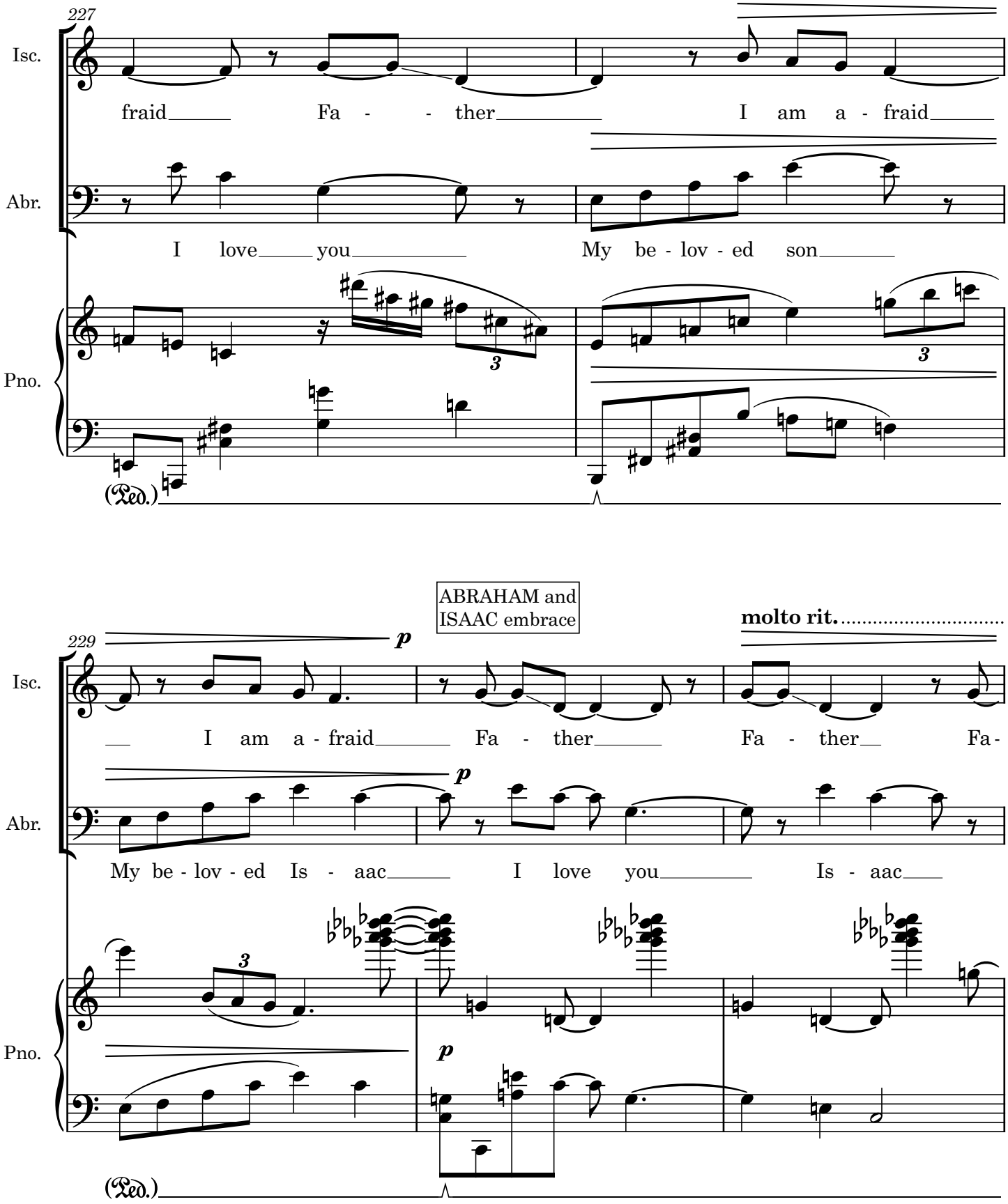

198
a tempo
p
Ang.
be - cause you have o - beyed my voice.
fast
fast
Pno.
S
202
mp
Ang.
A - - bra - ham,
8va
8va
fast
mp
Pno.
206
Ang.
5
f
Pno.
(Ped.)

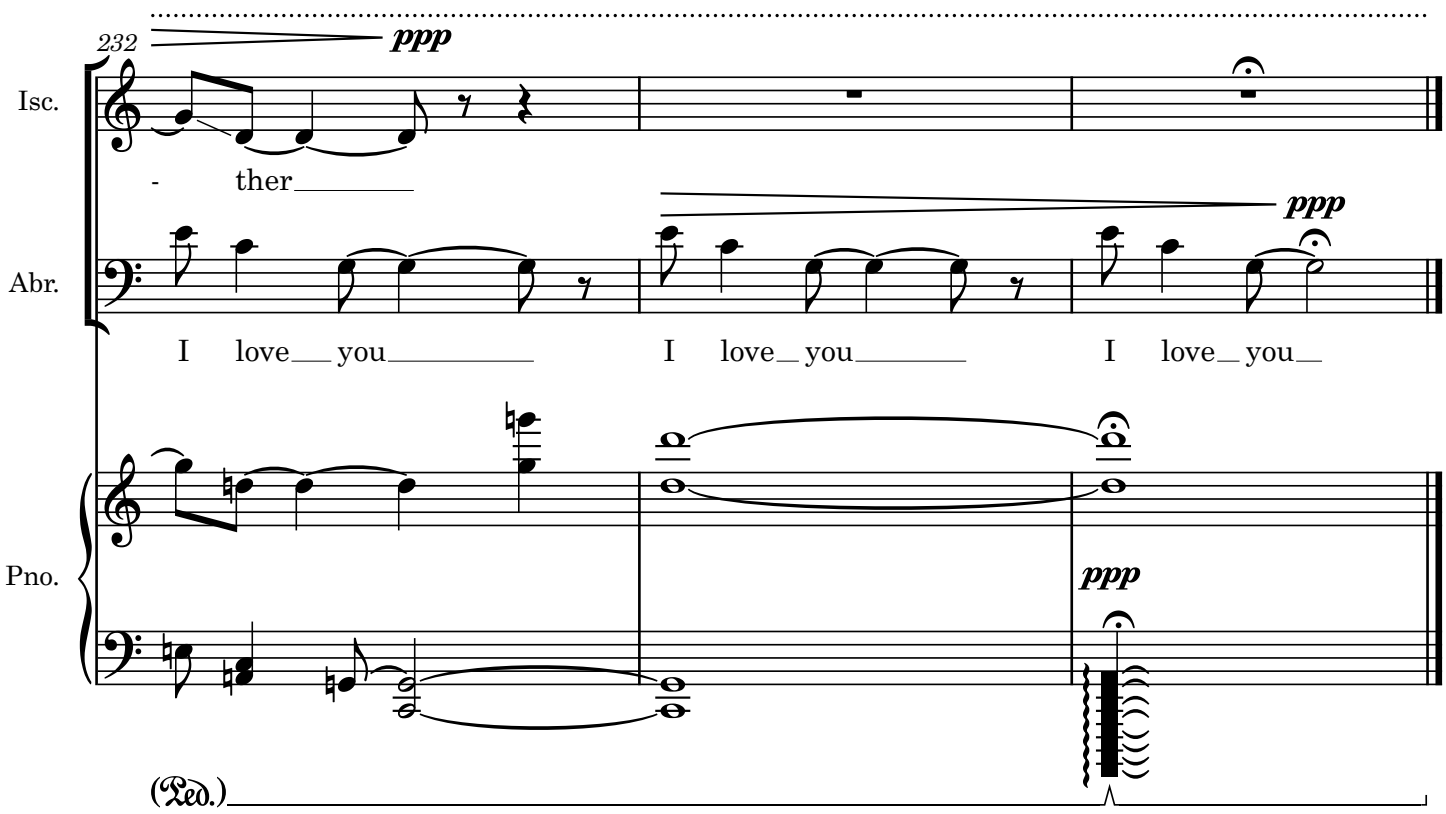

ANGEL points offstage
209
p
3
Ang.
you have trust - ed, now you shall see. There is a
Pno.
3
p
(Ped.)
Ped.
exit ANGEL
211
Ang.
ram caught in the thick - et.
Abr.
p
spoken
The lamb
slow
Pno.
pp
(Ped.)


Largo rubato
♩ = c. 56
T
214
mp distantly
f
Abr.
God will pro - vide for Him - self the lamb for a burnt
Pno.
mp
pp
mf
ABRAHAM turns to ISAAC, unbinds him, and tries to comfort him. ISAAC is unaccepting
U
senza rubato
215
p coweringly
Isc.
Fa - ther Fa - ther Fa -
p sub.
comfortingly
Abr.
of - fer - ing. of - fer - ing Is - aac
Pno.
p
sweep lowest possible strings inside the piano with fingertips
Ped.


218
Isc.
- ther Fa - ther I am a -
Abr.
My be - lov - ed son My be - lov - ed son
Pno.
(Ped.)
220
Isc.
fraid I am a - fraid Fa - ther I am a - fraid
Abr.
Is - aac My be - lov - ed son Is - aac My be - lov - ed
8va
Pno.
(Ped.)


V
ISAAC slowly turns toward ABRAHAM
223
Isc.
Abr.
Pno.
mf
I am a - fraid Fa - ther Fa -
son My be - lov - ed Is - aac Is -
(Ped.)
225
- ther Fa - ther I am a -
aac Is - - aac I love you
8va
(Ped.)


227
Isc.
fraid Fa - - ther I am a - fraid
Abr.
I love you My be - lov - ed son
Pno.
(Ped.)
ABRAHAM and ISAAC embrace
molto rit.
229
Isc.
p
I am a - fraid Fa - ther Fa - ther Fa -
Abr.
p
My be - lov - ed Is - aac I love you Is - aac
Pno.
p
(Ped.)


232
ppp
Isc.
- ther
Abr.
ppp
I love you
I love you
I love you
Pno.
ppp
(Ped.)