

# Tomorrow's Work Undone

Voice & Piano

LUKE CARLSON MUSIC

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(2015)

Duration: 8 minutes

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# Program Notes

Finding a text to set is usually both exciting and frustrating at the same time. Issues with length and subject matter can often eliminate an otherwise suitable text from consideration. But in this case, Tomorrow's Work Undone was a deeply rewarding collaboration between myself and the author Paul Duggan. The text is deep, has excellent imagery, and is full of drama. The poem is in two sections but the two parts form a single, continuous arc, as does the music.

The first poem follows Anna, the main character, through a dream sequence. The imagery is intense and personal, but for me, indicative of a deeper, spiritual meaning. The music is intended to create a somewhat melancholic atmosphere that is ever so slightly tinged with hope. The emotionally charged dream sequence is brought to life with sharp syncopations and aggressive ostinato figures. The dream passes and the slower, more somber music returns. But like the text, the music ends with a rising, questioning hope.

The second poem, "On a Day after Tomorrow" left me with an image of serenity—as if the frenetic dream is a distant memory. The music is melodic, sweet, and optimistic, but then emboldened by the confidence of the narrator: "Stand again…Lift up again…Sprout again…Rise again." The piano blossoms and bursts forth with triumphant support for the voice and the resounding text, but eventually fades away in a cloud of serenely repeating chords, in complete peace, "risen again."

# Texts

*Text by Paul Duggan*

**I. Tomorrow's Work Undone**

Over Appalachian hills of cambrian coal
    Spread glowing beams of dusklight,
A fading glow on the half-harvested valley,
    Westward light lingers.
Her fingers ache; her hands leave work
    incomplete
She returns home for the night.

Anna drifts in dreams to the sheep:
    rams, ewes, lambs long grown
past shearing days and rooing times;
Dreams to a young son's spring sadness
The town boys taking, cutting short
his lamb's life, rocks mocking
Stones of wanton wreckage.
    It was slain down by the old foundation
Behind the new school.

Awoken, alone, Anna rises in darkness,
    halts past her sleeping child's room
And passes to the porch and outside under
    A black sky aglow with stars
    Spread as bright seed in firm earth.

How long,
    How long this night?
Fast fallen now,
or are these deeper middle hours,
    or will an unseen horizon
Promise dawn?

**II. On a Day after Tomorrow**

We walk together through
Fruits strewn on the orchard floor,
Autumn flesh split open
    Revealing the seed reserved
    For days yet to come
But I see the tree with one
    Left aloft and pick it for Anna
    since it is for the present time.

Stand again
    Axe-felled trees
Lift up again,
    age-worn mountains laid low,
Sprout again,
    fruitful grains of frost-burned wheat
Rise again,
    you who lie in the dust of the death.
Rise, for your maker is risen again.

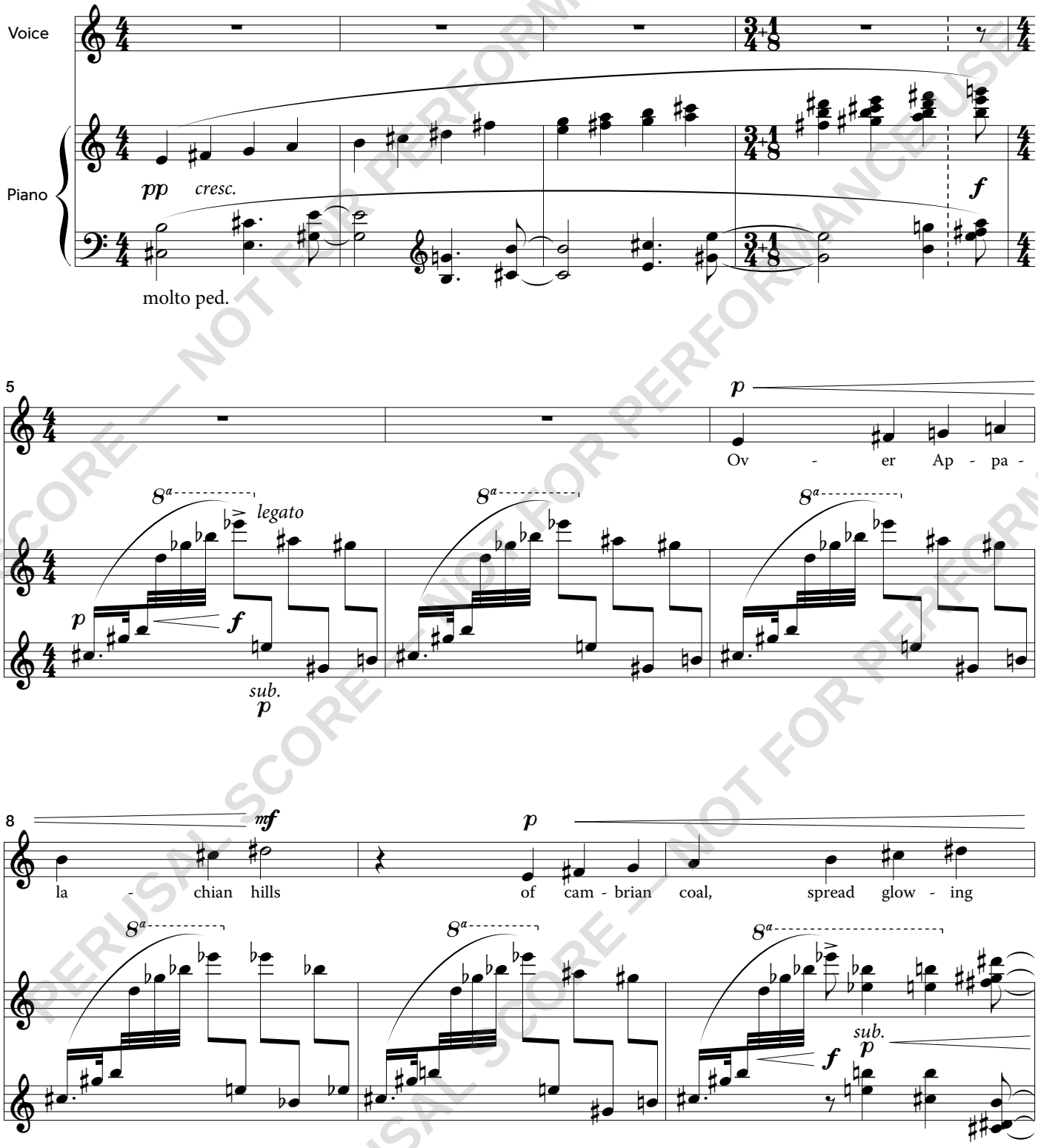
# I. TOMORROW'S WORK UNDONE

*for soprano and piano*

Text by Paul Duggan

Luke Carlson

**Steady, not too fast** ♩ = 69

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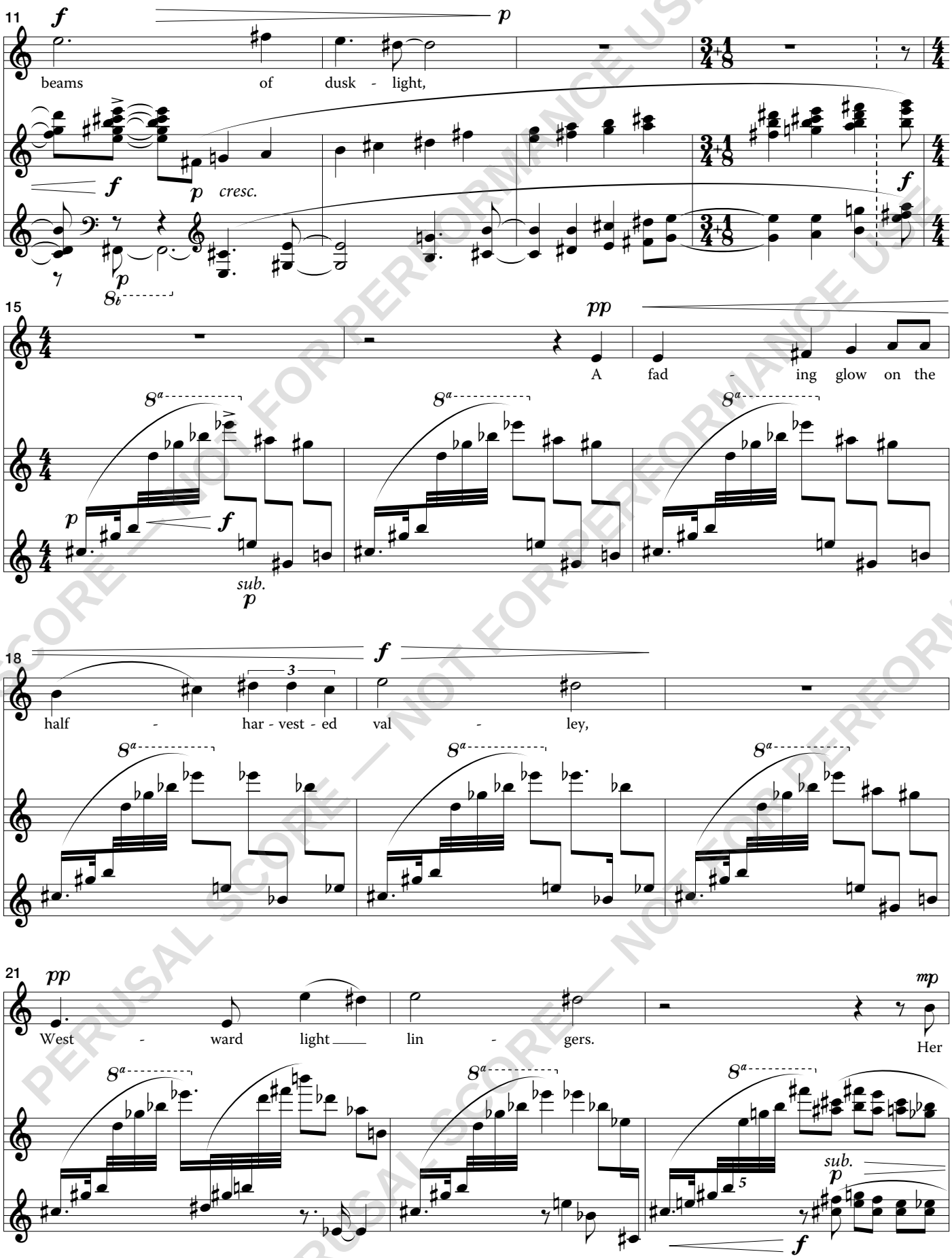


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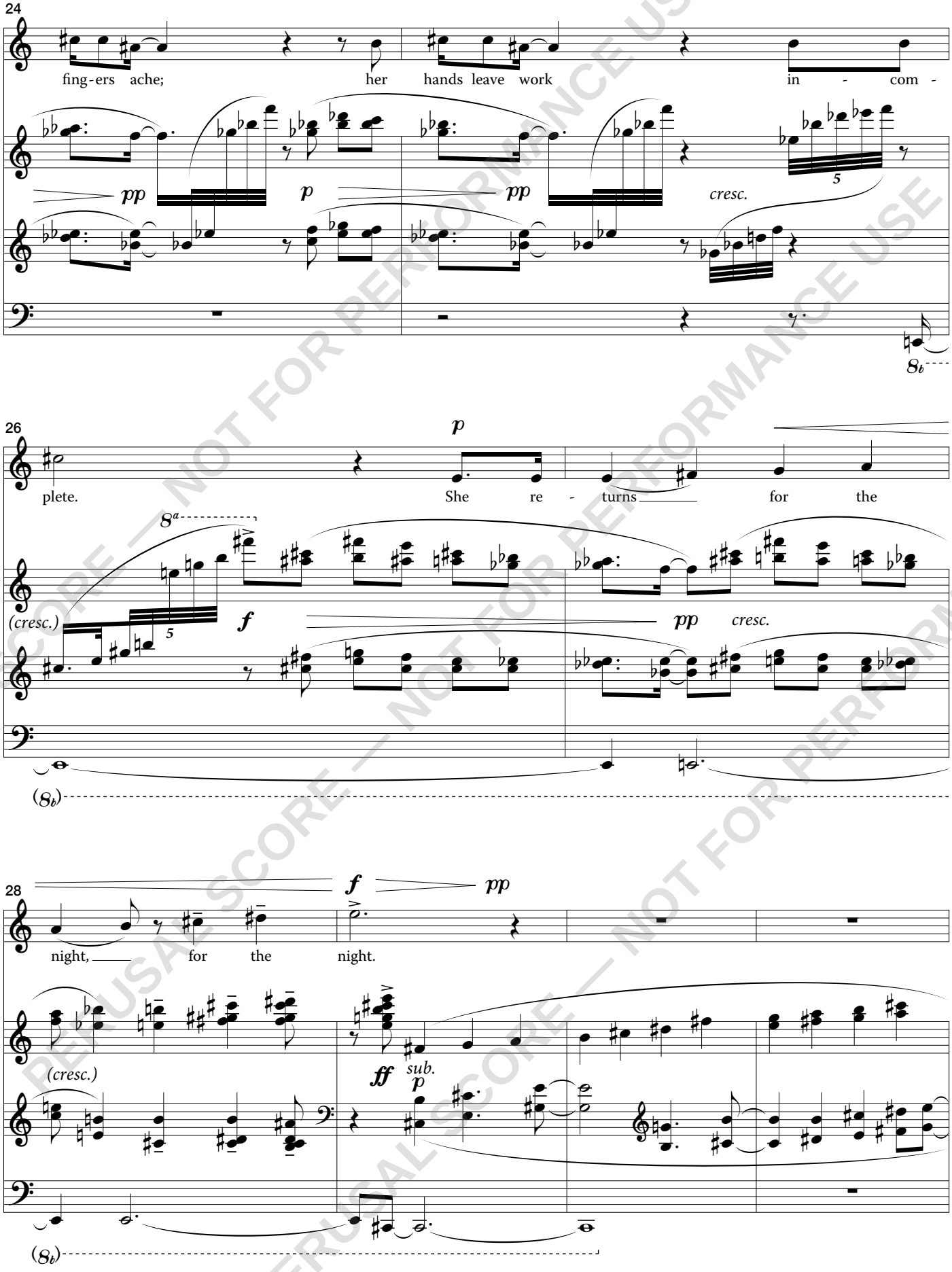


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rit.

Slower, distant ♩ = 48

32

*pp*

An - na,

An - na,

*pp*

*8b*

*8b*

poco rit.

Faster, with energy ♩ = 92

35

*8a*

An - na

drifts,

*p*

*8b*

*8b*

38

41

*mf*

*sub.*

*p*

*cresc.*

poco ped.

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