Sleepyhead

for tenor saxophone and piano

Robbie McCarthy

2011

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In the winter of 2010, I spent several weeks traveling the United States. The three main movements of "Sleepyhead" were composed in the three places I traveled that holiday season: Los Angeles, New York, and Phoenix.

Visiting my family in Los Angeles for holiday break, I began banging out a few pop songs on a practice room piano while I was waiting for my brother to finish rehearsal. Driving to dinner together, we casually talked about instrumental music's influence on the indie-rock scene. More and more mainstream acts are featuring skillful instrumentalists to add a new layer of complexity to otherwise simple arrangements. I thought a lot about the music I listen to for fun, and wondered what place it would have in the concert hall. For the next few days, I planned out what would eventually become this piece:

What would happen if the simplicity of popular music infiltrated the concert hall instead of the instrumentalists sneaking onto the main stage?

Upon arriving in New York City, I immediately fell asleep on the couch of our hotel room. It was at this moment that my omnipresent brother quoted pop-musician Jason Mraz. "Wake up! How can you sleep at a time like this, unless the dreamer is the real you?!" (I notice that about myself. I sleep way too much. What was I doing snoring on a stinky fifty year-old pink couch when I could have been exploring the greatest city on the planet? I really did enjoy my dreams though. Maybe too much now that I look back on it.) The trip ended with the break-up show of "As Tall As Lions", one of my most recently discovered favorite bands. To date, that show was one of my favorite musical moments in my life. I bought their last album, and failed at first to notice the title of the last track: "Sleepyhead".

Back to school in Phoenix, Arizona, I started compiling the material I wrote during my travels. Distinct themes were nowhere to be found, but what I did have were tonal and harmonic moods of the places I went. I then turned to my favorite pop artists and tried to emulate the feel and lyric nature of their melodies. My explanation of the movements are as follows:

I. Wake Up Everyone (Los Angeles, CA) - my ideal 'wake-up' soundtrack, bringing back the happy memories of my childhood home. Contains imitative elements of As Tall As Lions, The Fray, Freddy and Francine, and Snow Patrol.

II. How Can You Sleep at a Time Like This? (New York, NY) - a jazz-influenced song inspired by how at-home I feel amongst the hustle-and-bustle in the Big Apple. Contains imitative elements of Alicia Keys, The Fray, Freddy and Francine, and Sufjan Stevens.

III. Unless the Dreamer is the Real You (Phoenix, AZ) - the soundtrack to my dreams, a pseudo-impressionist canvas to paint a singer's lyrics, (or in this case the soloist's melody.) Contains imitative elements of Freddy and Francine, and John Coltrane.

During performance I prefer that the movement titles are read aloud by the soloist during the fermata rests (after the double-bar-lines) in the solo part. The pianist should feel free to pedal liberally throughout.

- Robbie McCarthy, 2/2011

Score

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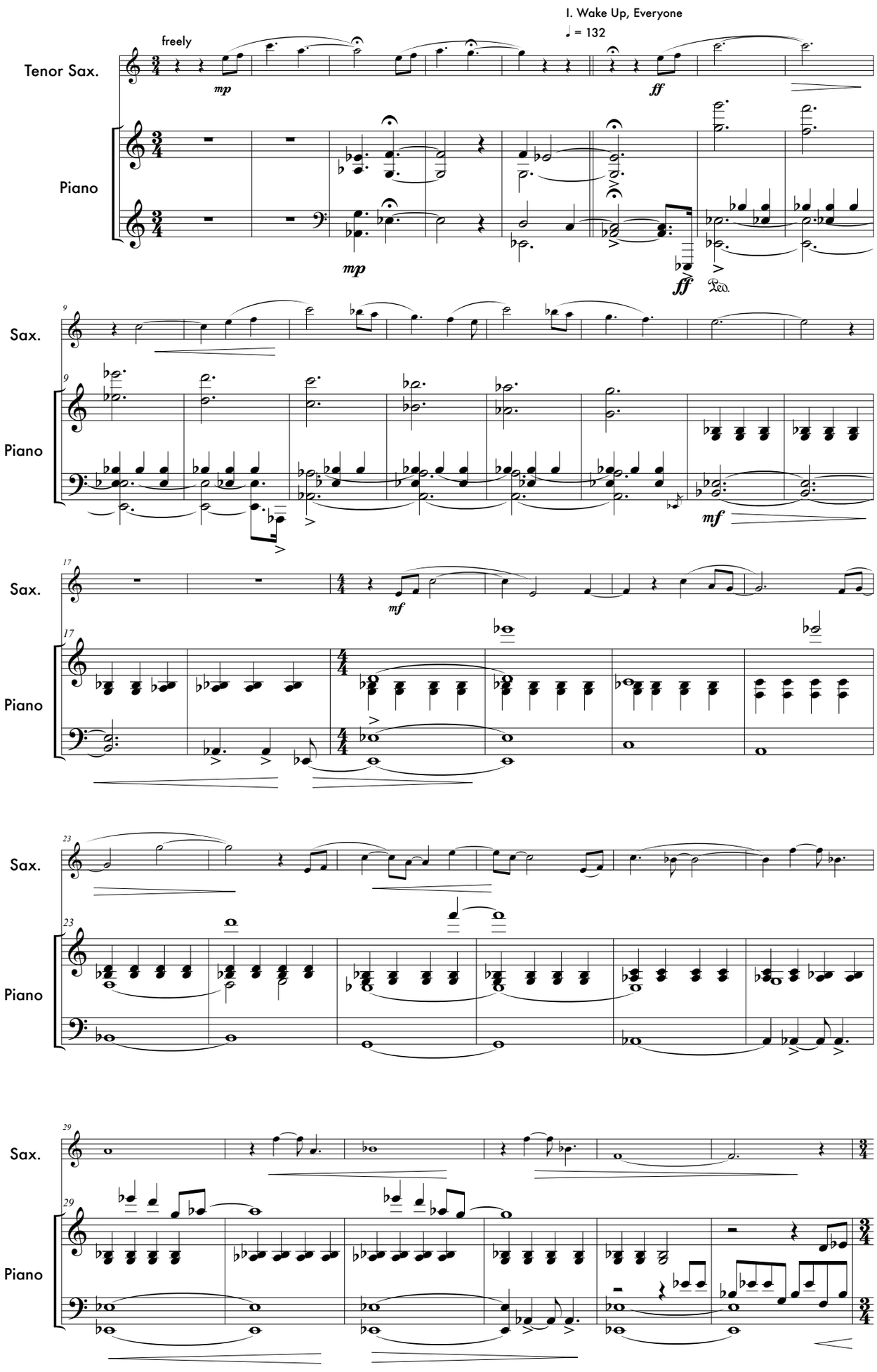

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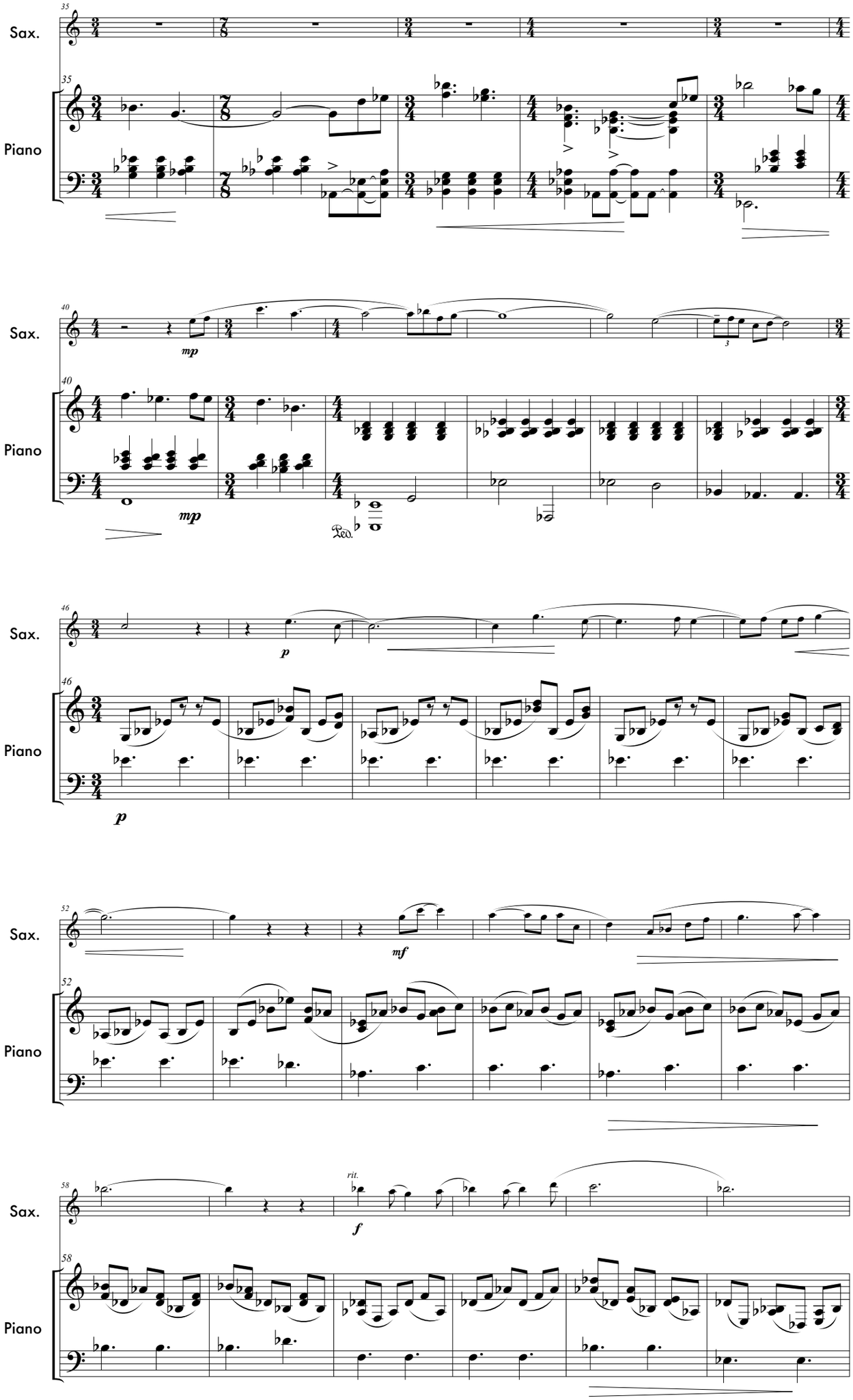
Sleepyhead


35
Sax.
35
Piano
40
Sax.
mp
40
Piano
mp
Ped.
46
Sax.
p
46
Piano
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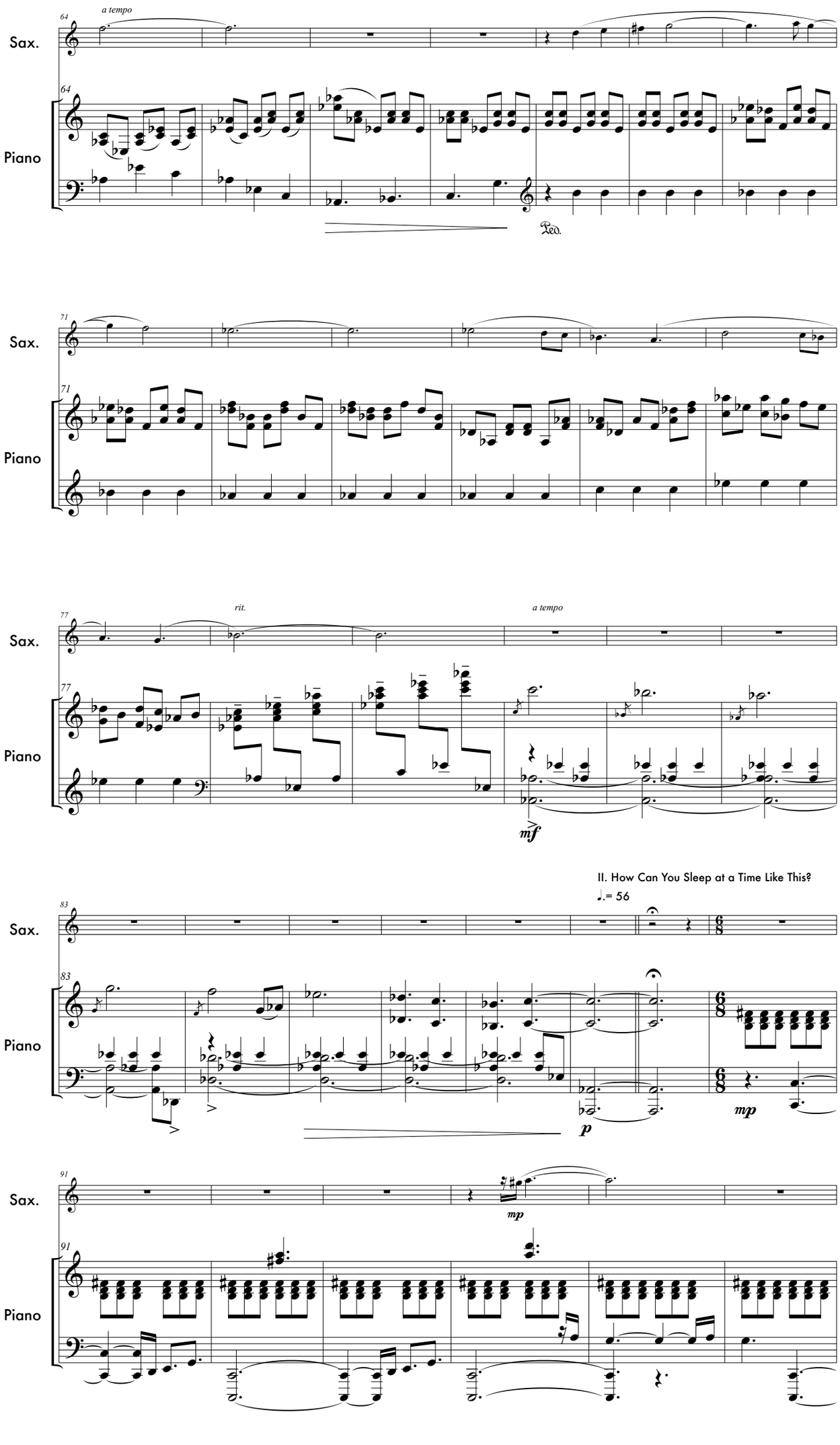
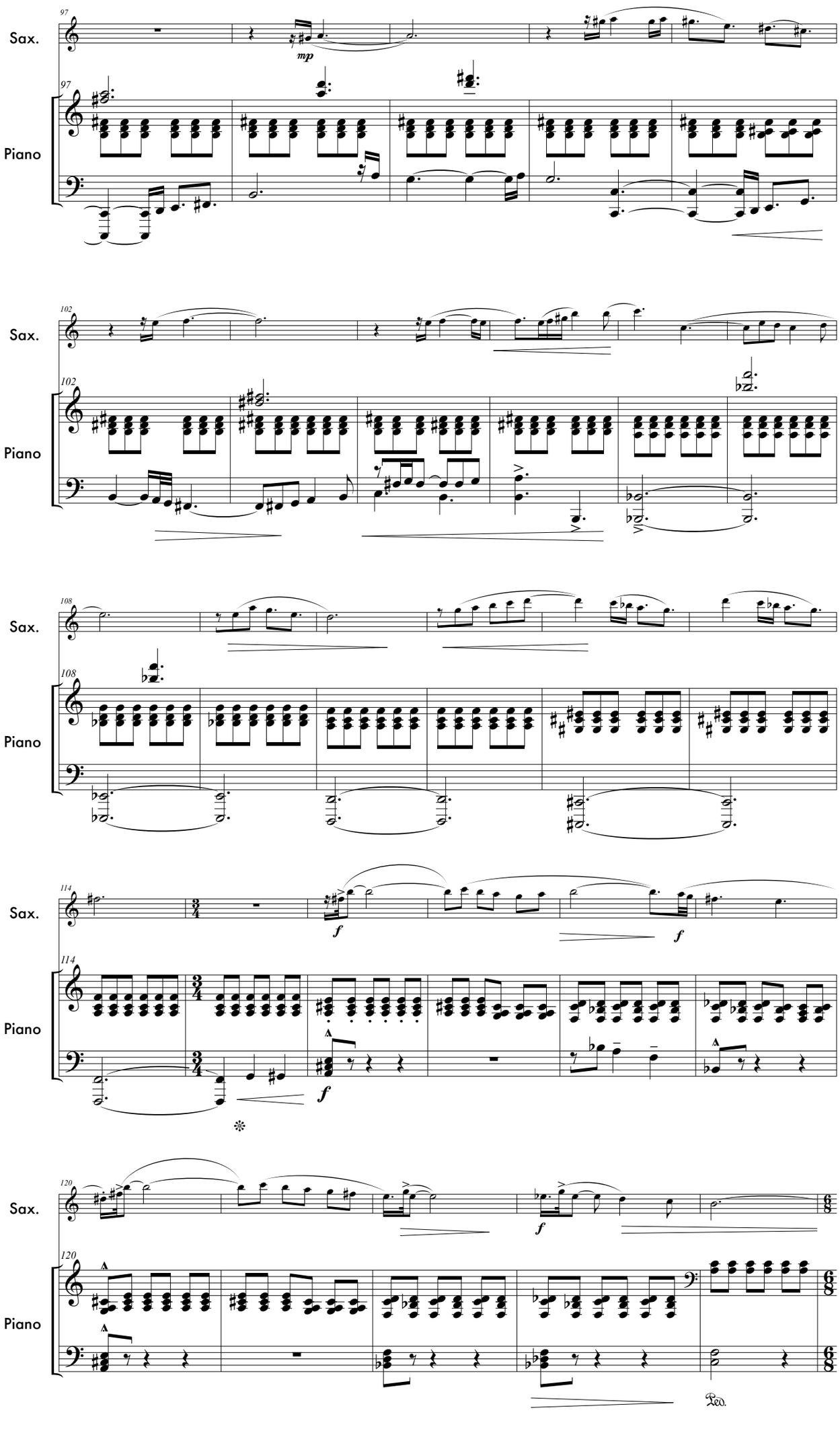
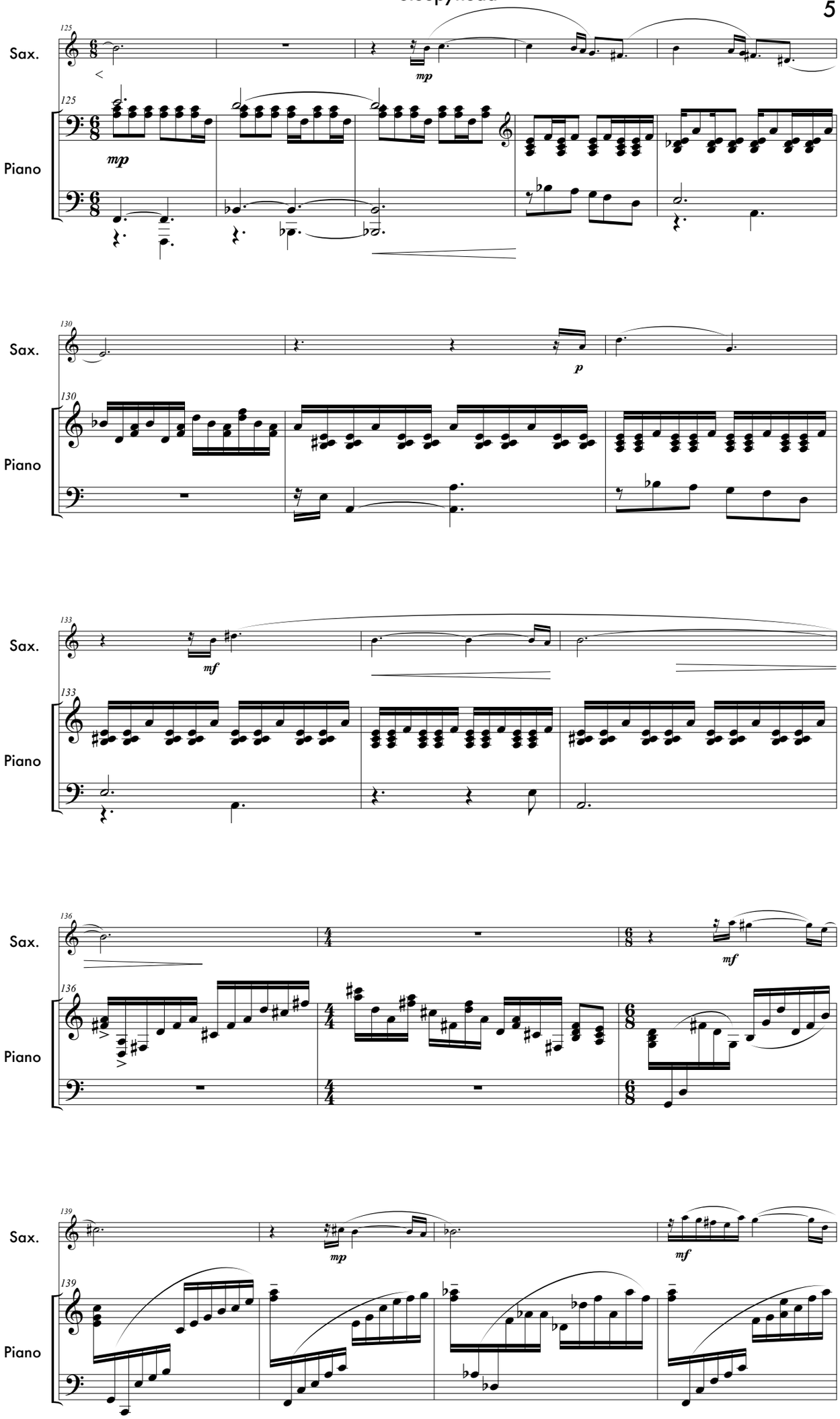
Sax.
mf
52
Piano
58
Sax.
rit.
f
58
Piano


64
a tempo
Sax.
Piano
Ped.
71
Sax.
Piano
77
rit.
a tempo
Sax.
Piano
mf
II. How Can You Sleep at a Time Like This?
♩.= 56
83
Sax.
Piano
p
mp
91
Sax.
Piano
mp

Sleepyhead

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Sax.
mp
125
Piano
mp
130
Sax.
p
130
Piano
133
Sax.
mf
133
Piano
136
Sax.
mf
136
Piano
139
Sax.
mp
mf
139
Piano

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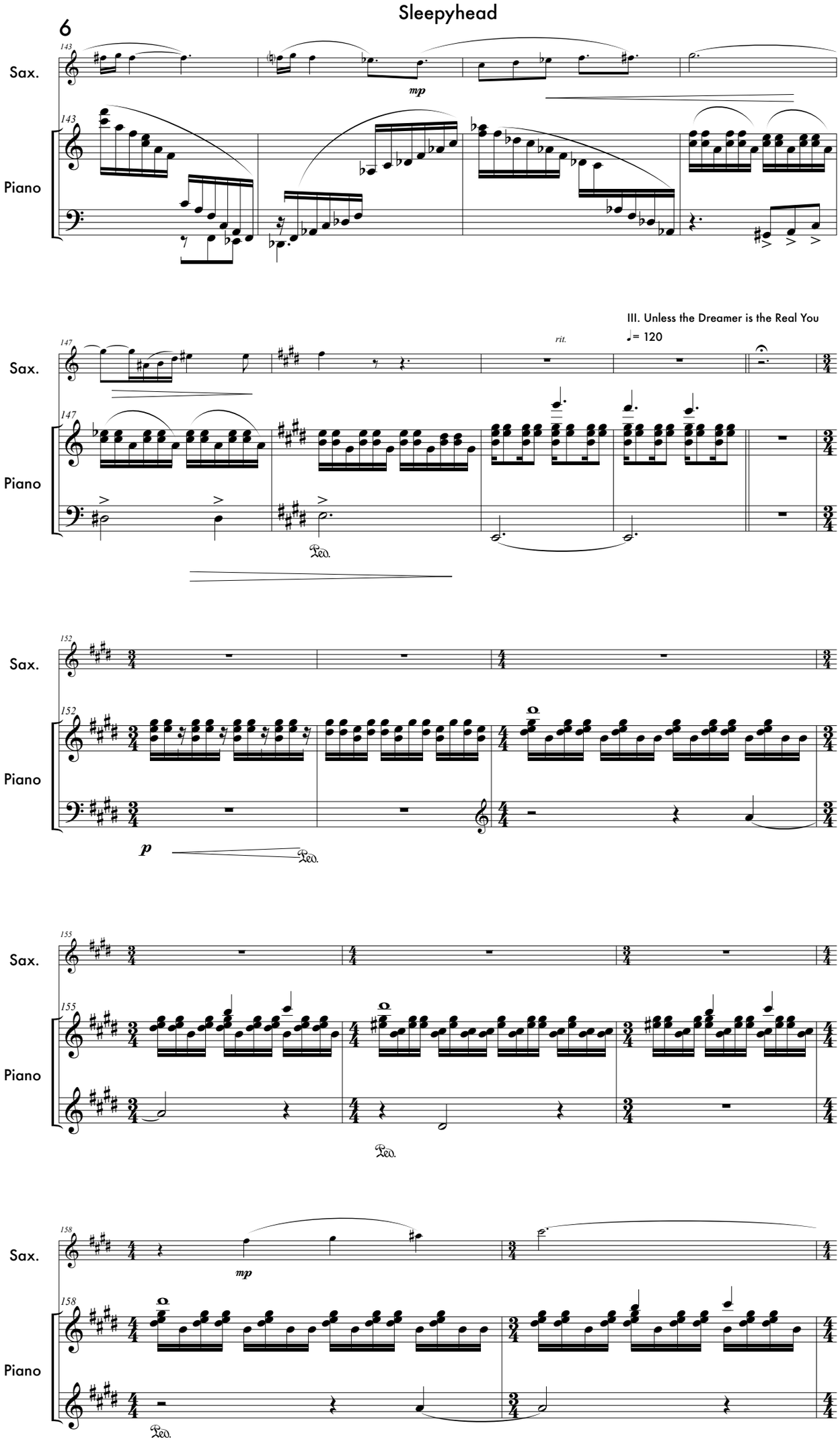
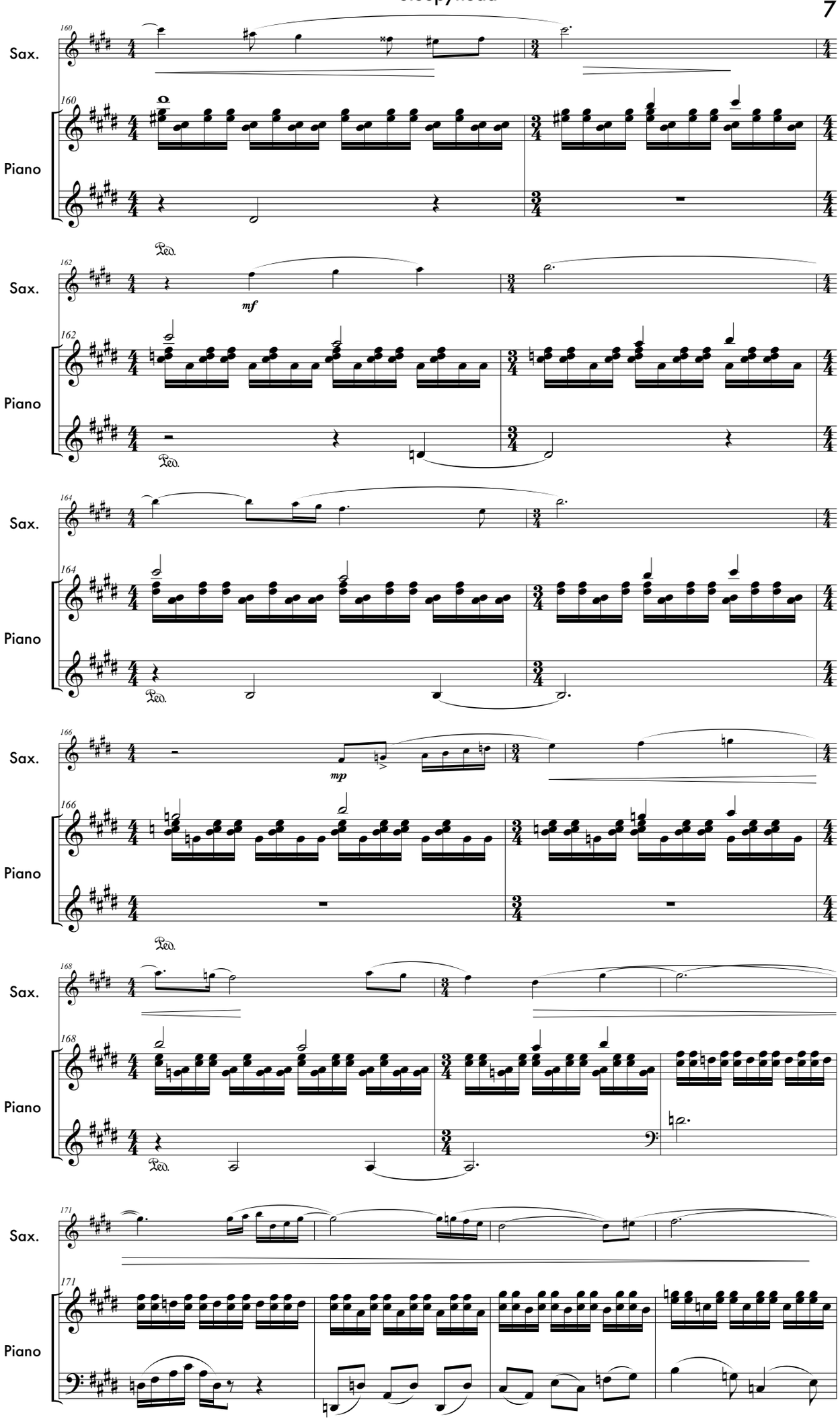

Sax.
Piano
143
mp
III. Unless the Dreamer is the Real You
♩= 120
147
rit.
Ped.
152
p
155
158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Piano
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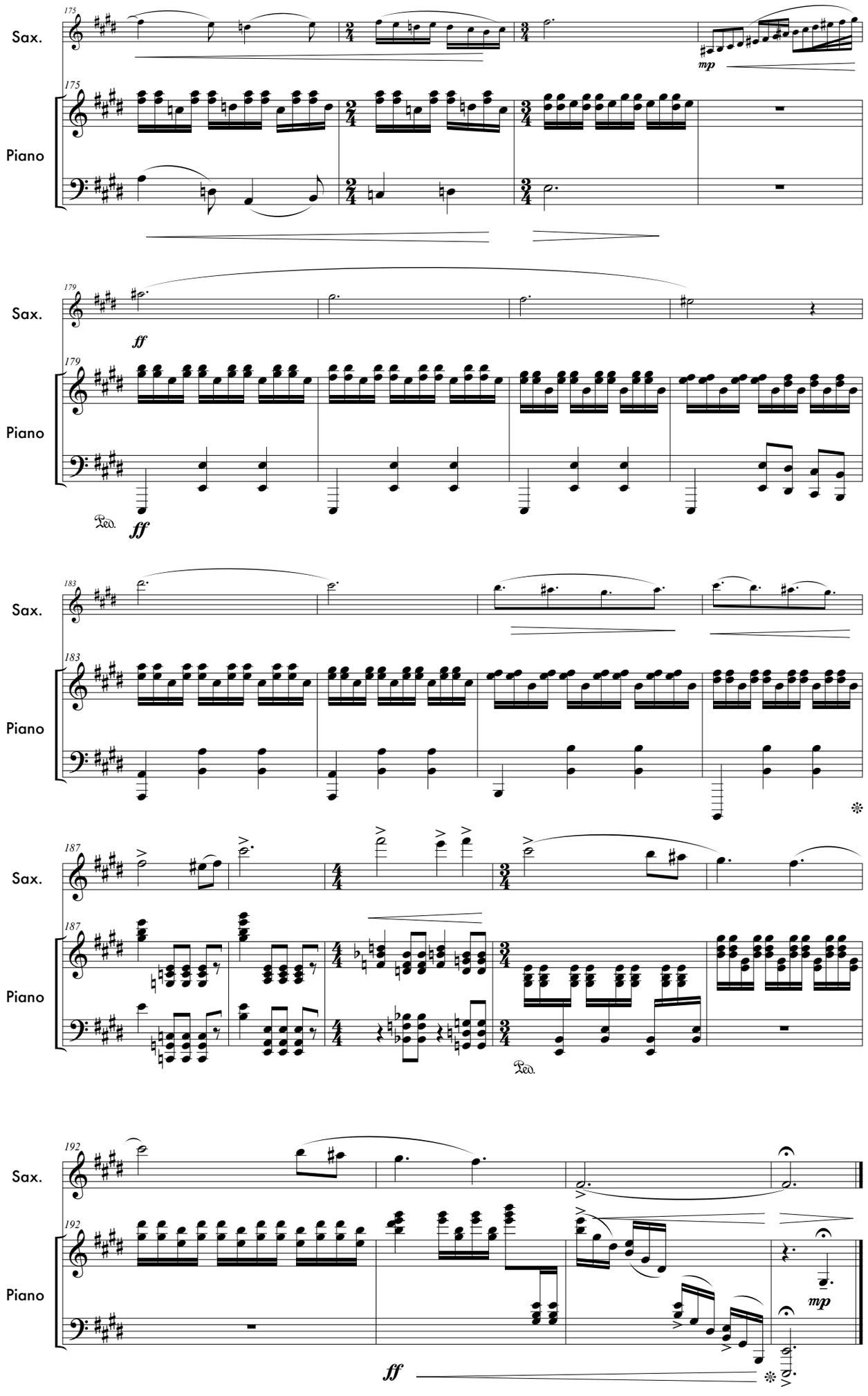
Ped.
mf
164
166
mp
168
171

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