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Front Porch Poems

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for mezzo-soprano, viola, and piano

Jonathan Santore

Program Note

I've lived in the small town of Plymouth, NH for almost 13 years now. One of the most important events in the artistic life of Plymouth during that time has been the arrival of Eva Nagorka and Rodger Ellsworth -- both successful musicians living and working in Washington, D.C. when Rodger's great aunt, Rachel Keniston, passed away in 1996.

The Keniston family homestead stands on a hill overlooking the town of Plymouth. Rachel was born there, and lived her entire life there with her sister, Miriam, who died in 1982. Miriam left behind many poems describing the passing of the seasons in northern New England, and the inspiring views from the homestead's graceful front porch.

Upon Rachel's death, the Keniston homestead passed to Rodger Ellsworth. Rather than let it leave the family's hands, he and Eva decided to leave the nation's capital and make their home in New Hampshire. Their work here as performers and teachers continues to have a significant impact on the cultural life of the region.

Upon receiving the 2006 Composer of the Year commission from the New Hampshire Music Teachers Association, I immediately thought of writing a piece for Rodger and Eva to perform together, and asked them to suggest texts for me to set. They responded with the Miriam Keniston poems set in the first two movements of this work. The third poem, my contribution to the set, is my response to Rodger and Eva's request for a tango that they could perform together. I hope that the entire work stands as a tribute to Rodger, Eva, their lives together in the Keniston homestead, and the many ways their neighbors are enriched by their presence among us.

-- JS

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"Fairies on My Hilltop" and "A Winter Night" are used here by permission of the Estate of Miriam Keniston.

Commissioned by the Music Teachers National Association
and the New Hampshire Music Teachers Association

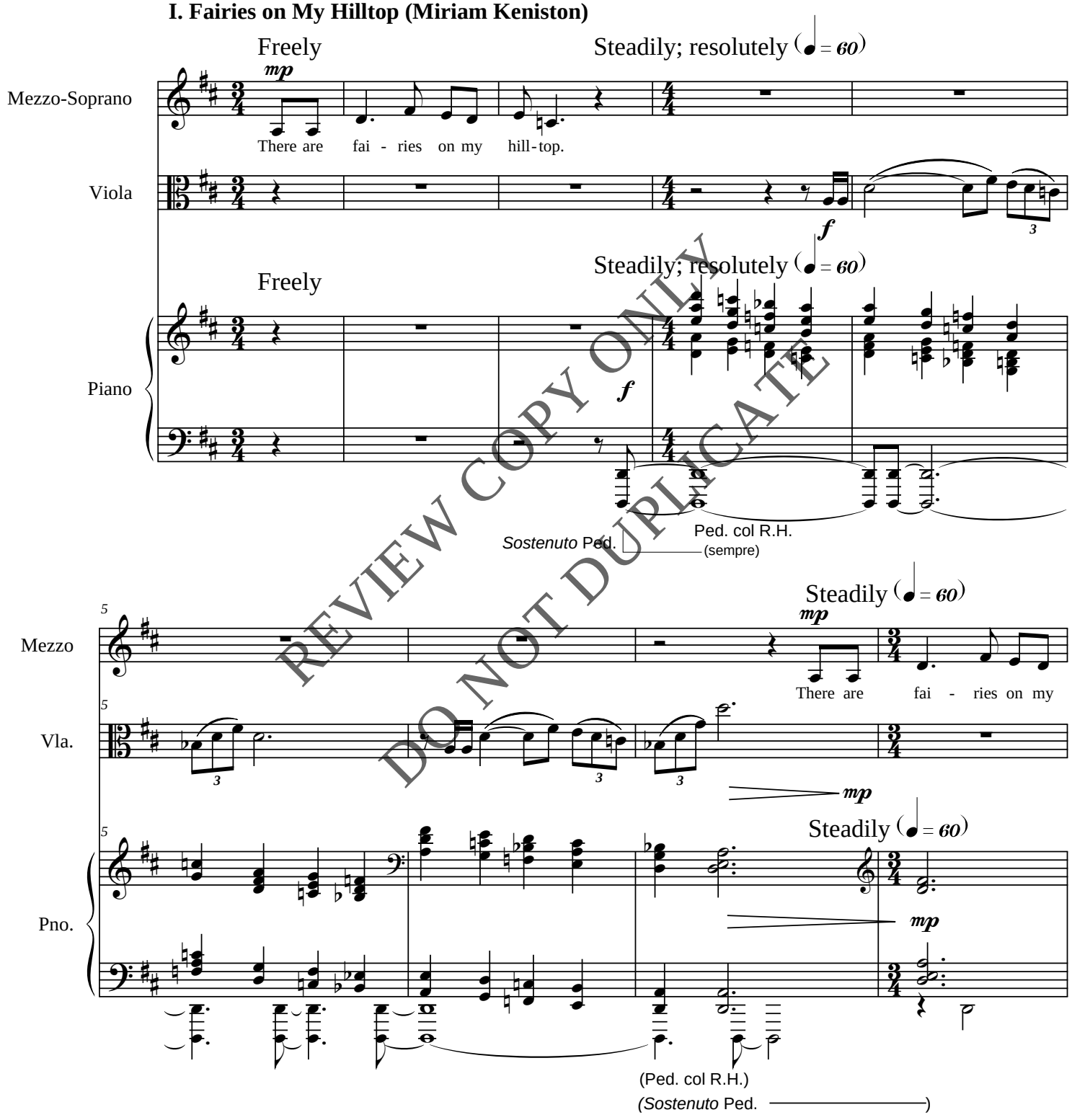
Written for Eva Nagorka and Rodger Ellsworth

Front Porch Poems

(Tales from the Keniston Woods)

Jonathan Santore

I. Fairies on My Hilltop (Miriam Keniston)



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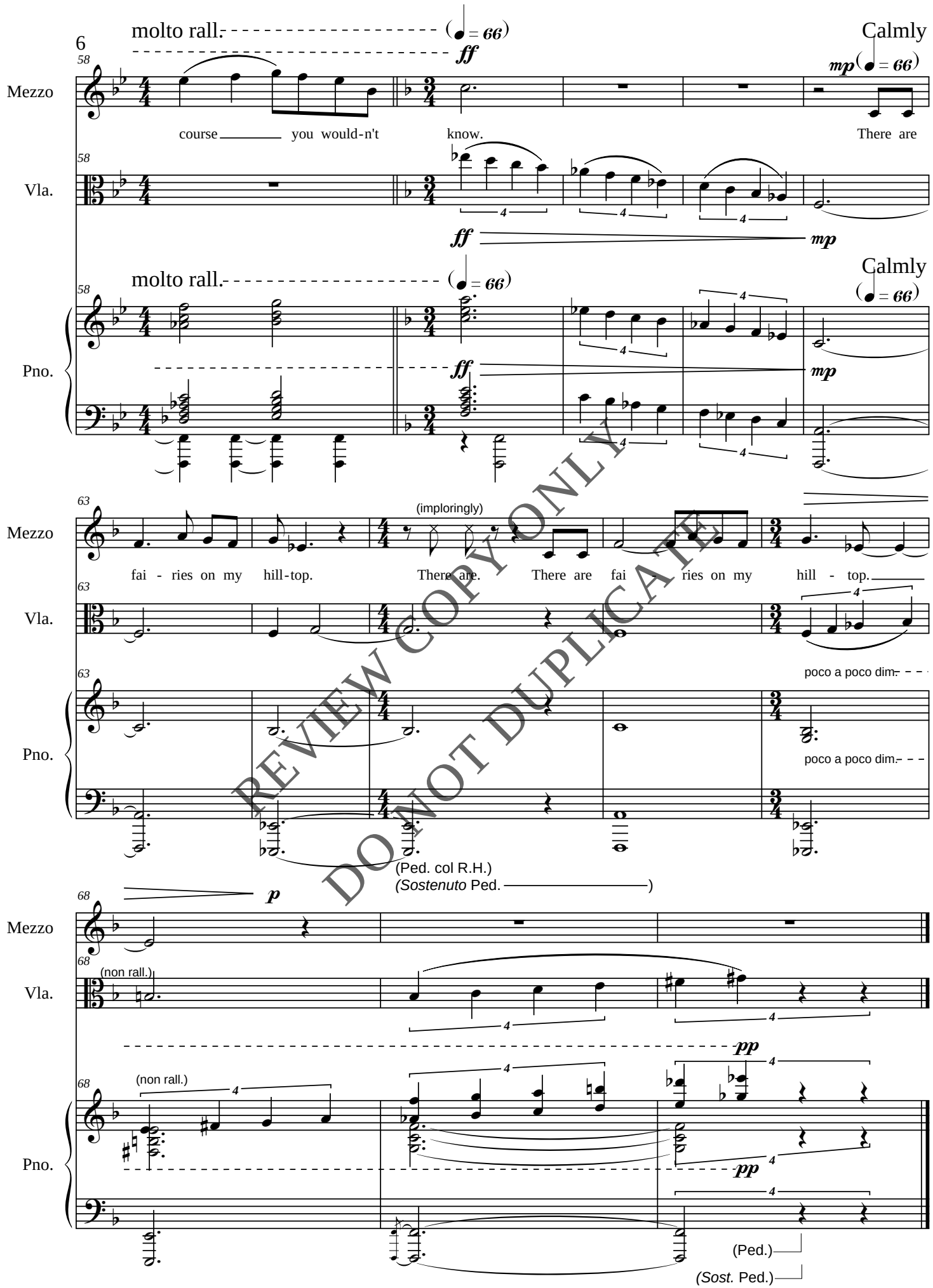

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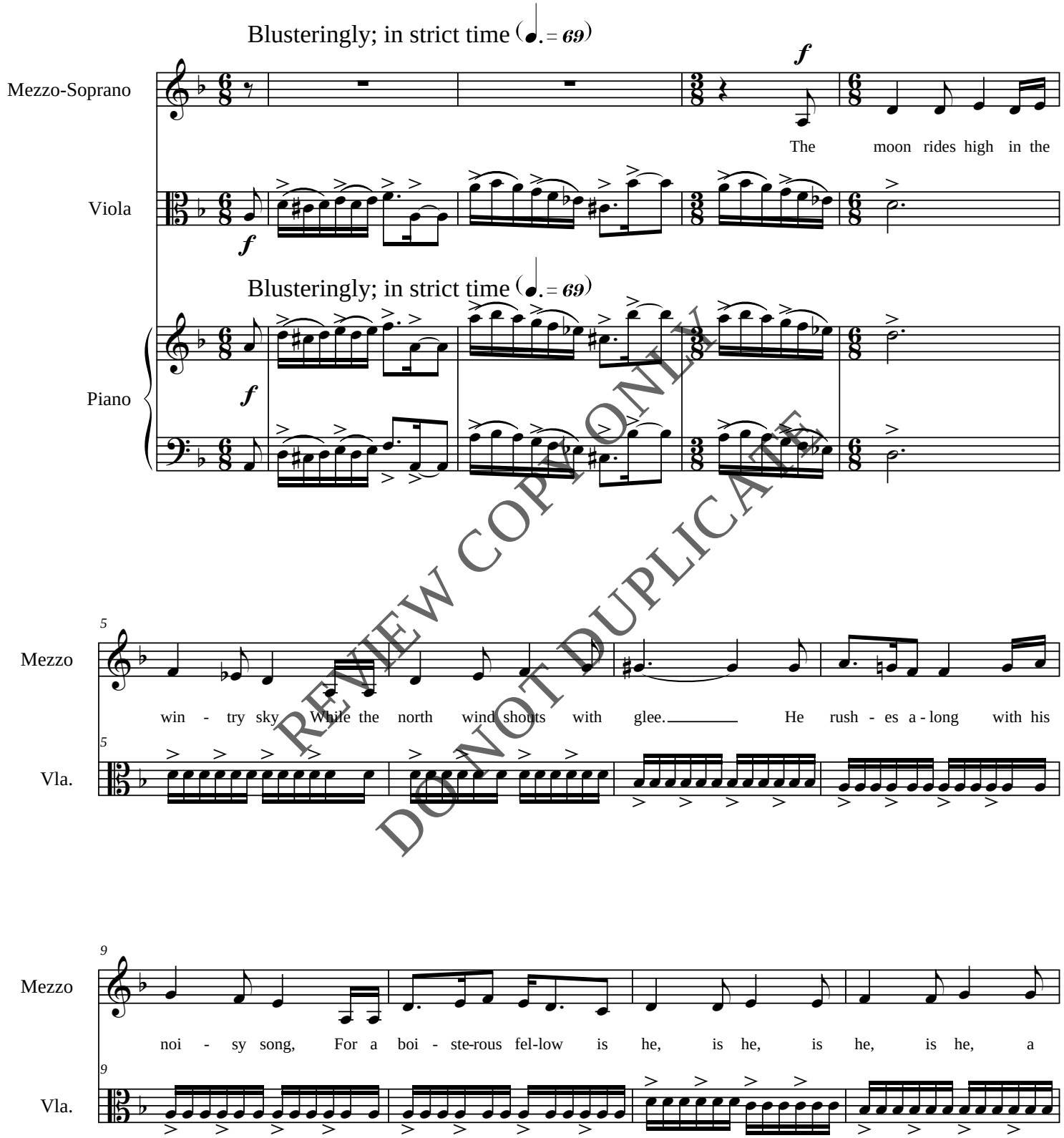
II. A Winter Night (Miriam Keniston)



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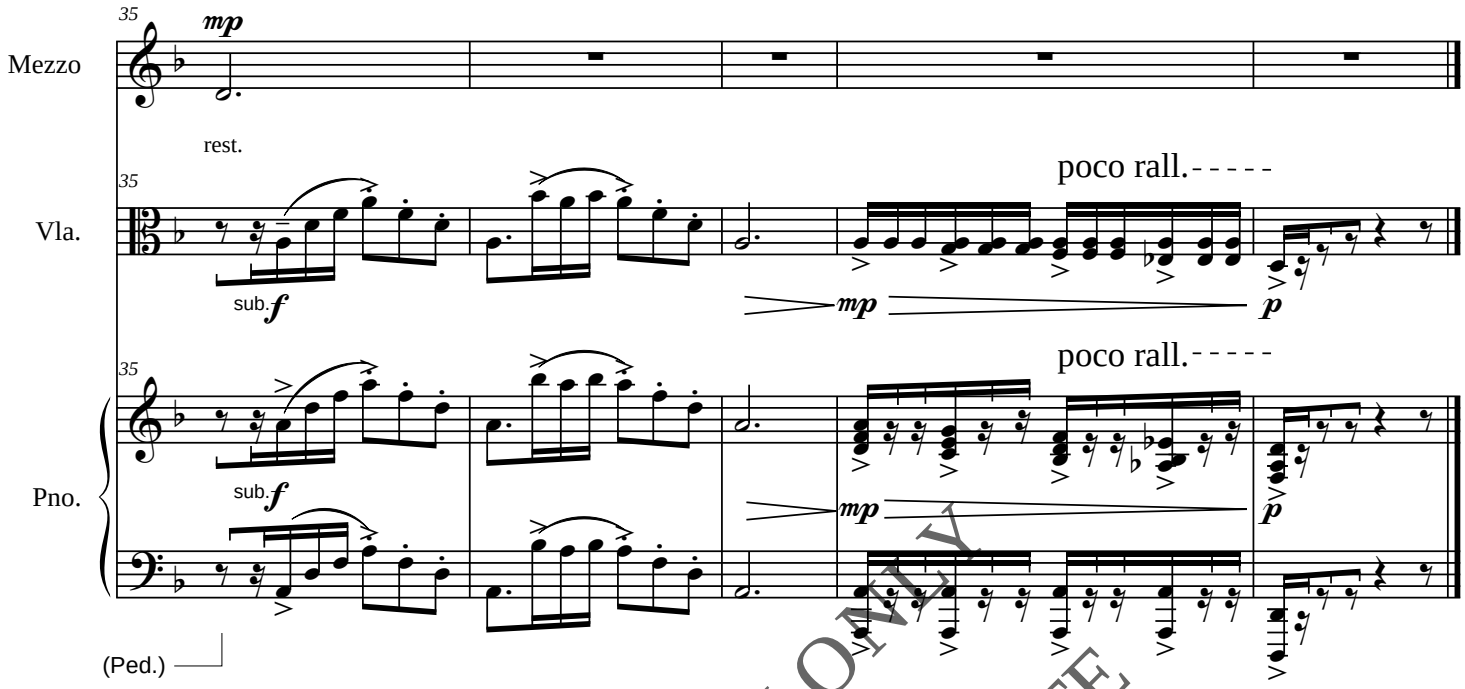

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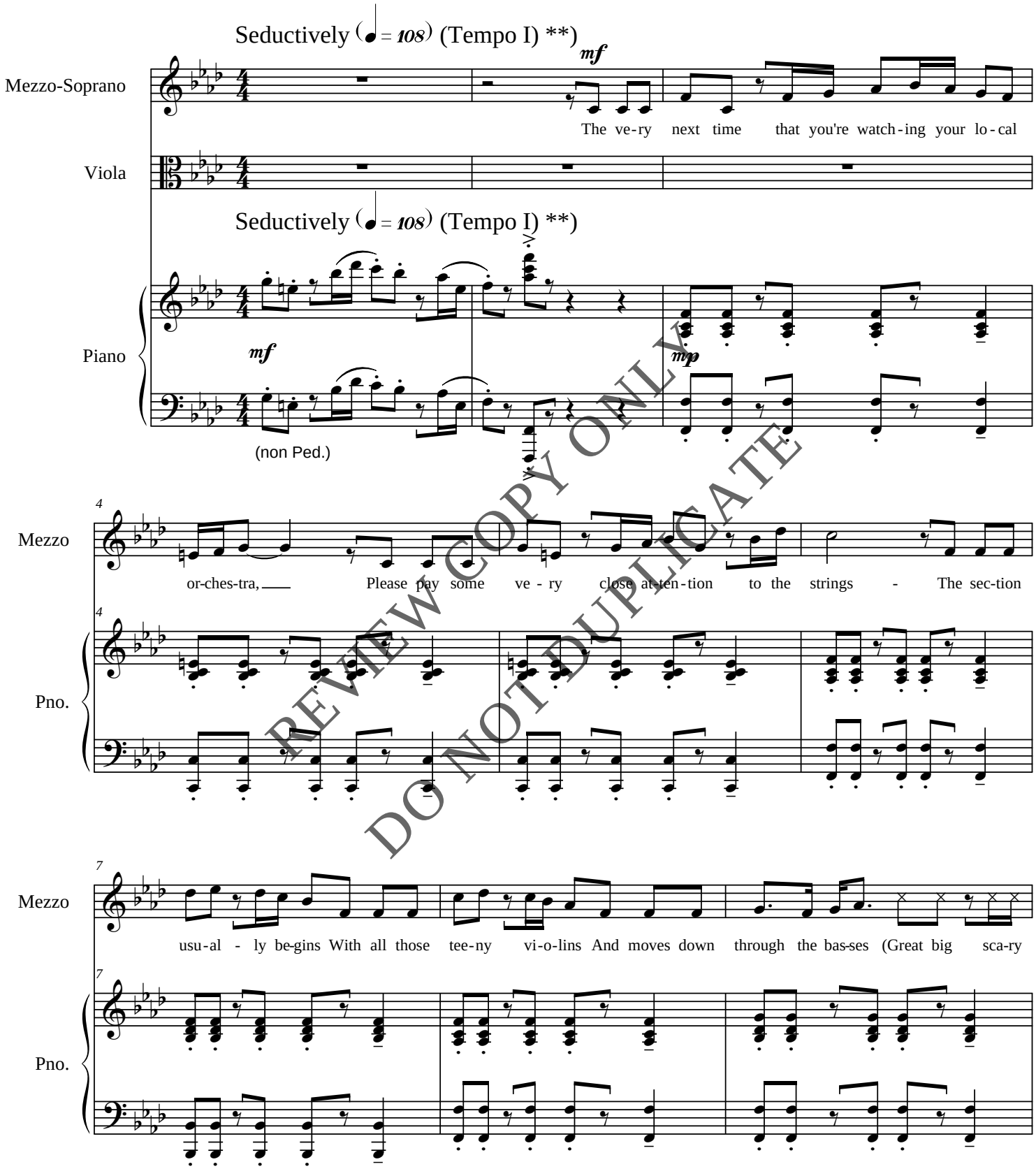
III. Tango Violistico (JS) *)



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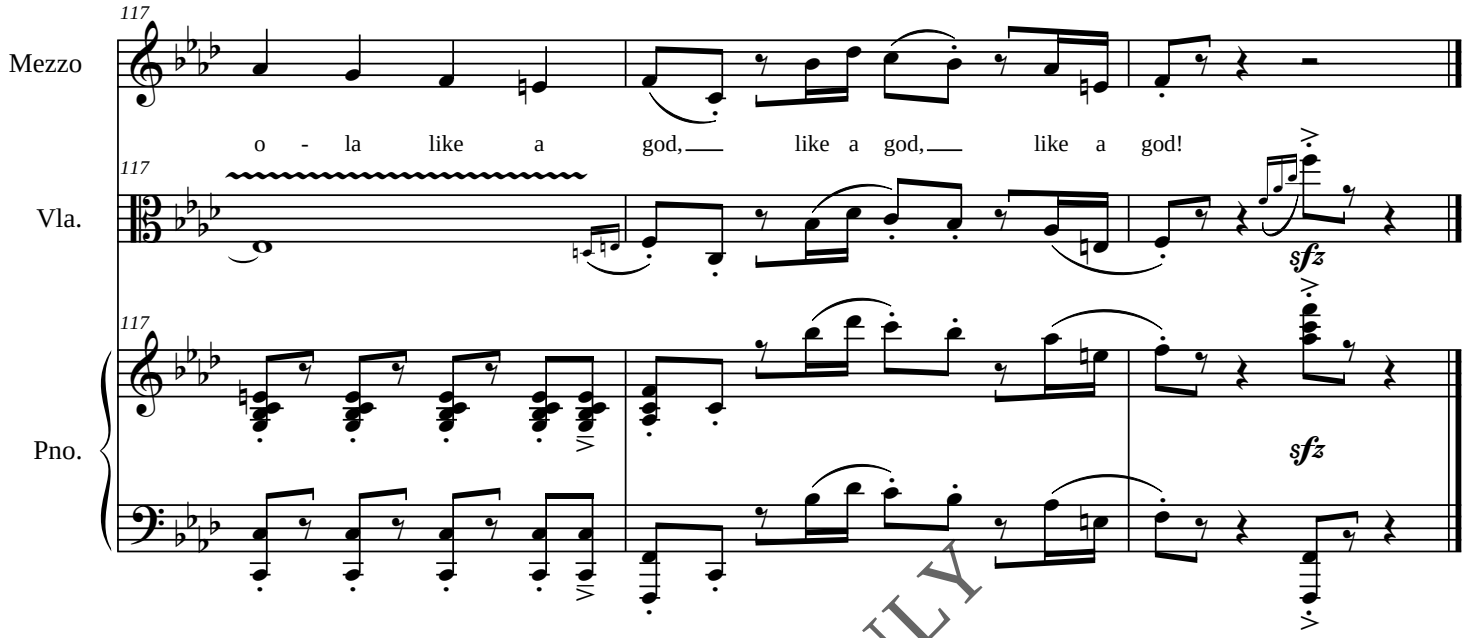
*) This work was originally written for a male violist; if it is to be performed by a female violist, substitute the phrase *The wo-man plays vi-o-la* for *The man can play vi-o-la* in the text, and change all masculine pronouns to feminine ones.

**) The pianist should play in strict time in all Tempo I sections; however, the other performers may take rhythmic liberties *ad lib.* within that framework.



10/8/06
Plymouth. NH

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