The Decay of Lying

for string quartet

Op. 1

Lance Mok

Hong Kong: August 2018
Hong Kong: November 2014

ca. 7 mins

© 2014 Lance Mok

'Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of Art.'
—Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying* (1891)

The Decay of Lying is a commentary on Oscar Wilde's dialogue of the same name. In his work, Wilde argues in favour of the *fin-de-siècle* movement of Aestheticism. 'The highest art,' he argues, 'rejects the burden of the human spirit.' The composer believes otherwise: art, as a human experience, either draws its essence from life and presents it with integrity, however flawed it is, or lapses into empty gestures.

The work is a fugue on a twelve-tone subject, initially set against a tonal context it attempts to cope with. Along its arduous journey of metamorphosis, which cycles through all twelve tonal centres structured according to the subject, the beautiful façade of tonality falls off piece by piece and cumulates into a climactic breakdown before the subject, or the 'true self', finally has to pick itself up, goes through permutations structured, again, on itself and travels on his way of solitude. Although battered by reality, the only redemption it finds is through self-recognition by embracing life's imperfections. All motivic materials, including the three countersubjects and the episodes, are derived from the subject and, thus, are metaphorical projections of oneself.

The work was first performed on 1st December 2014 in the Lee Hysan Concert Hall at The Chinese University of Hong Kong by Ambrose Fu, Edwin Cheng, Jacky Yung, and Yan-ho Cheng in its first version. It was revised in August 2018.

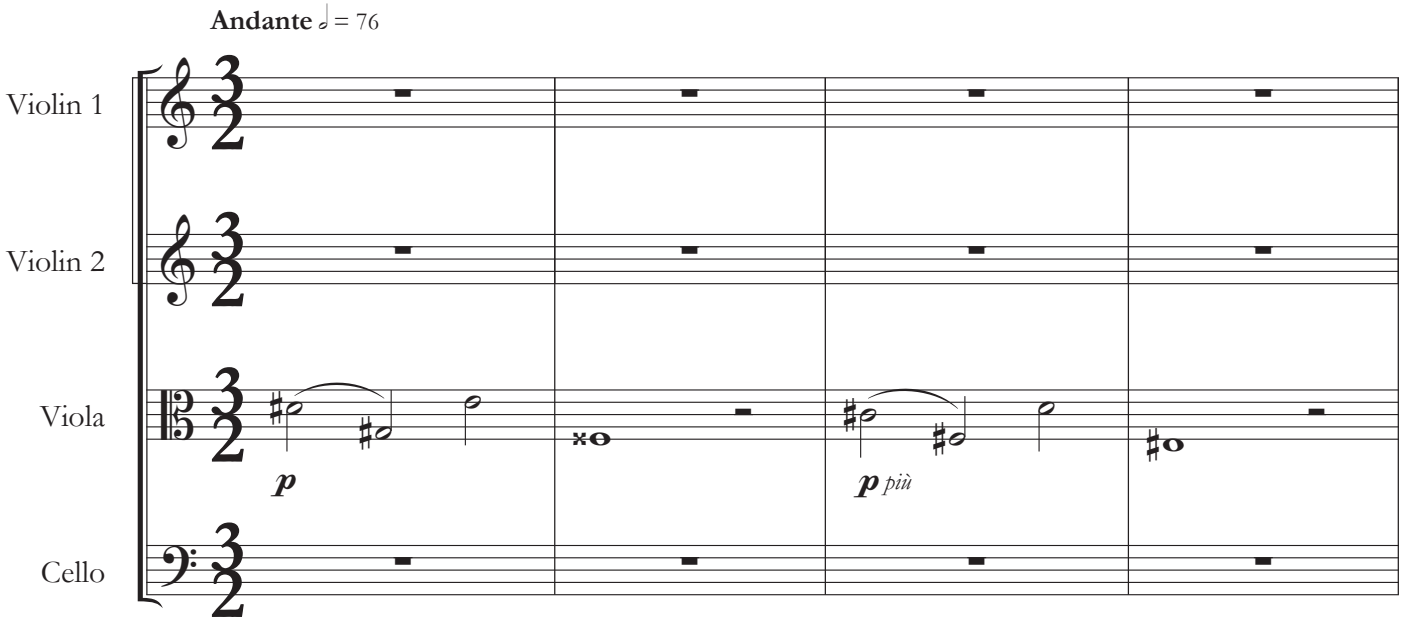
Instrumentation: 2 violins, 1 viola, and 1 cello

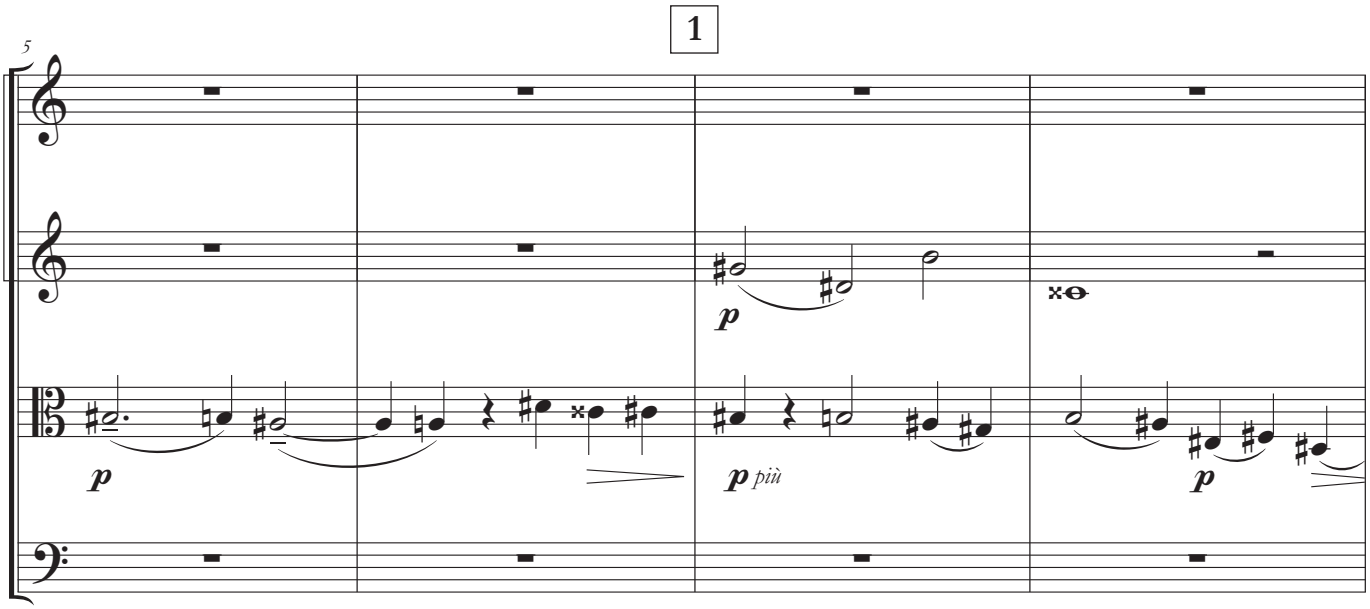
Score

The Decay of Lying

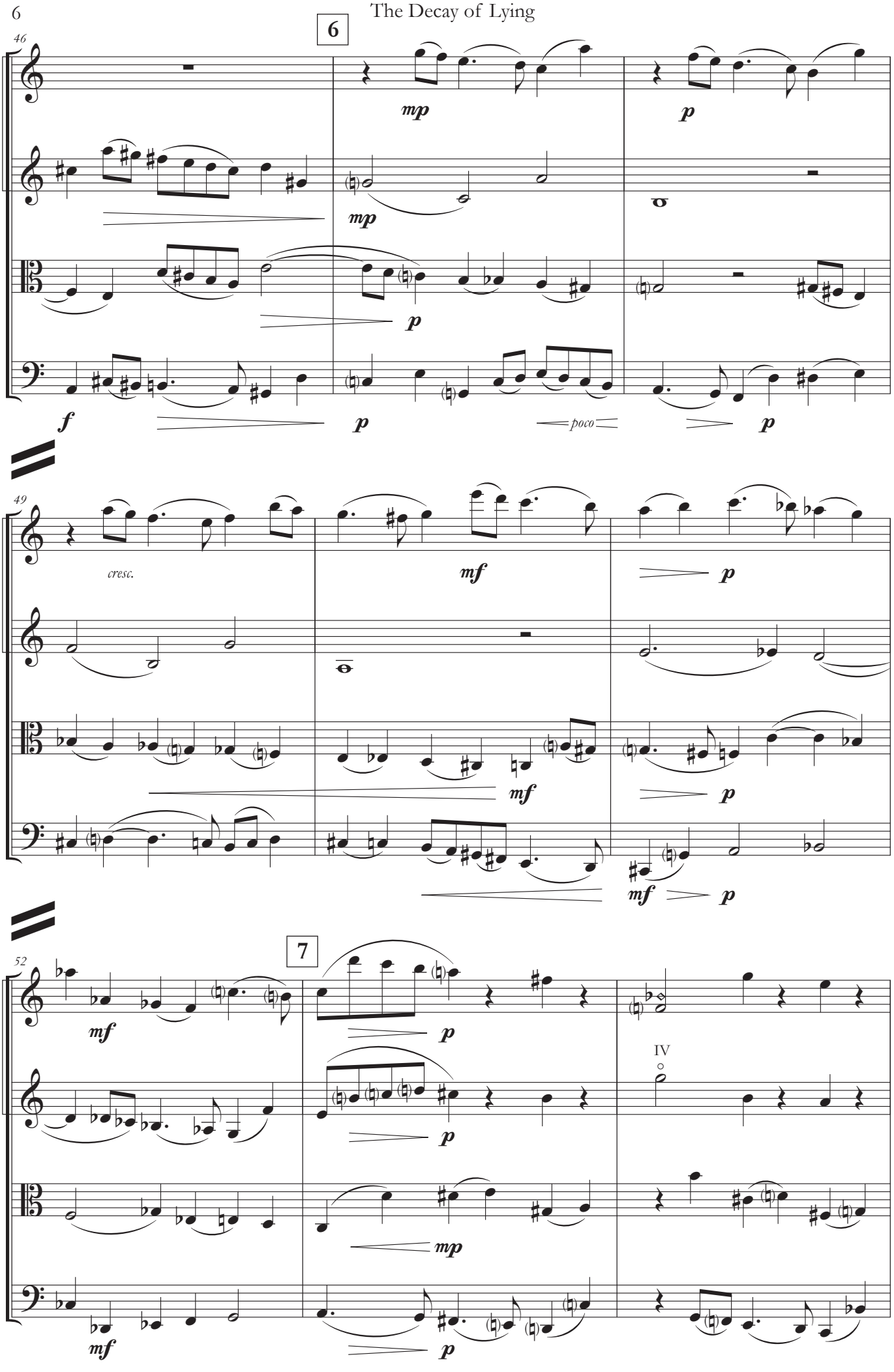
Op. 1

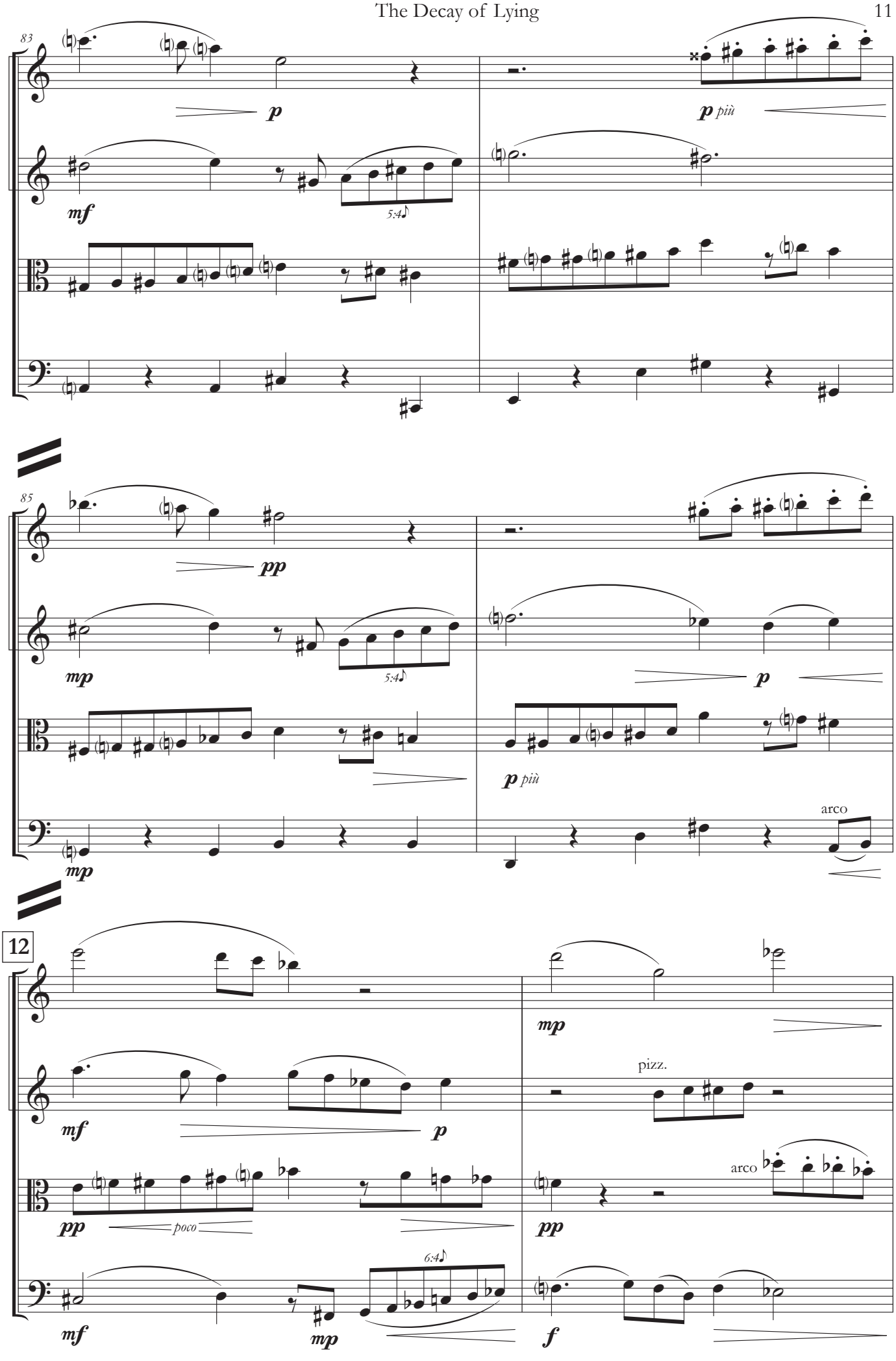
Lance Mok

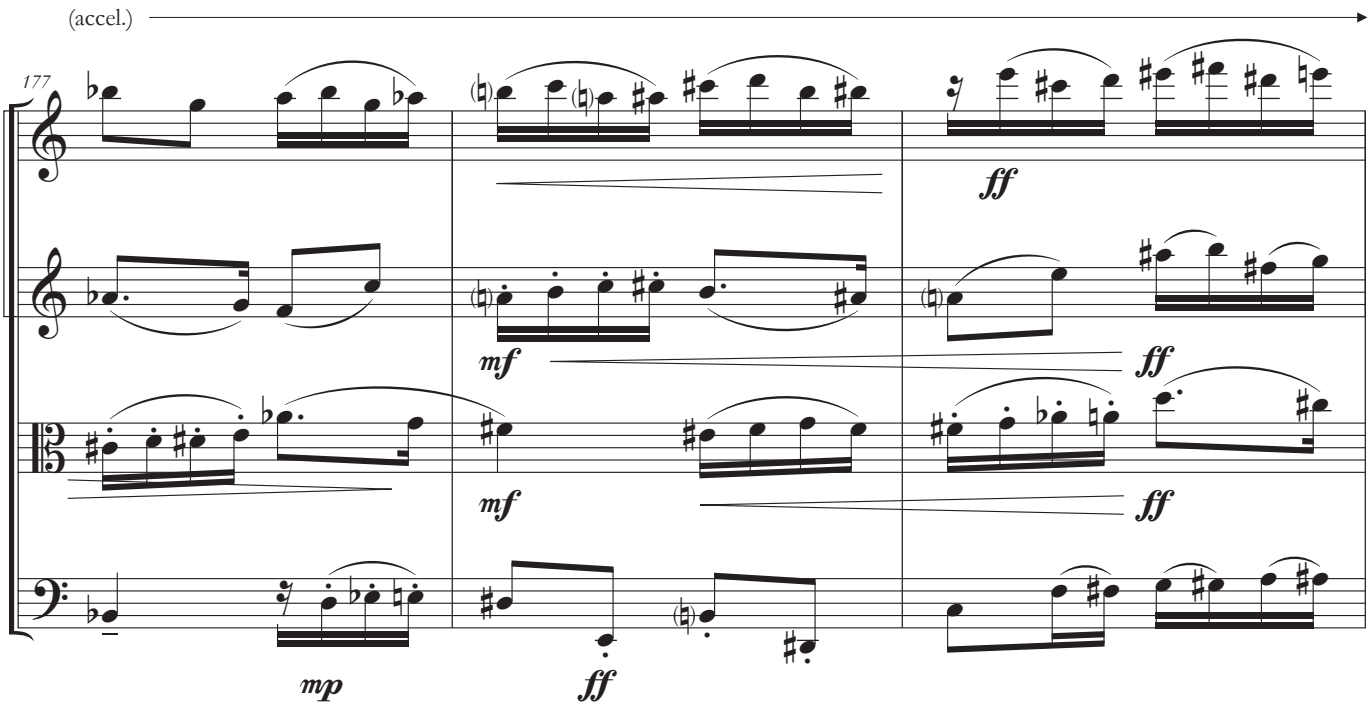


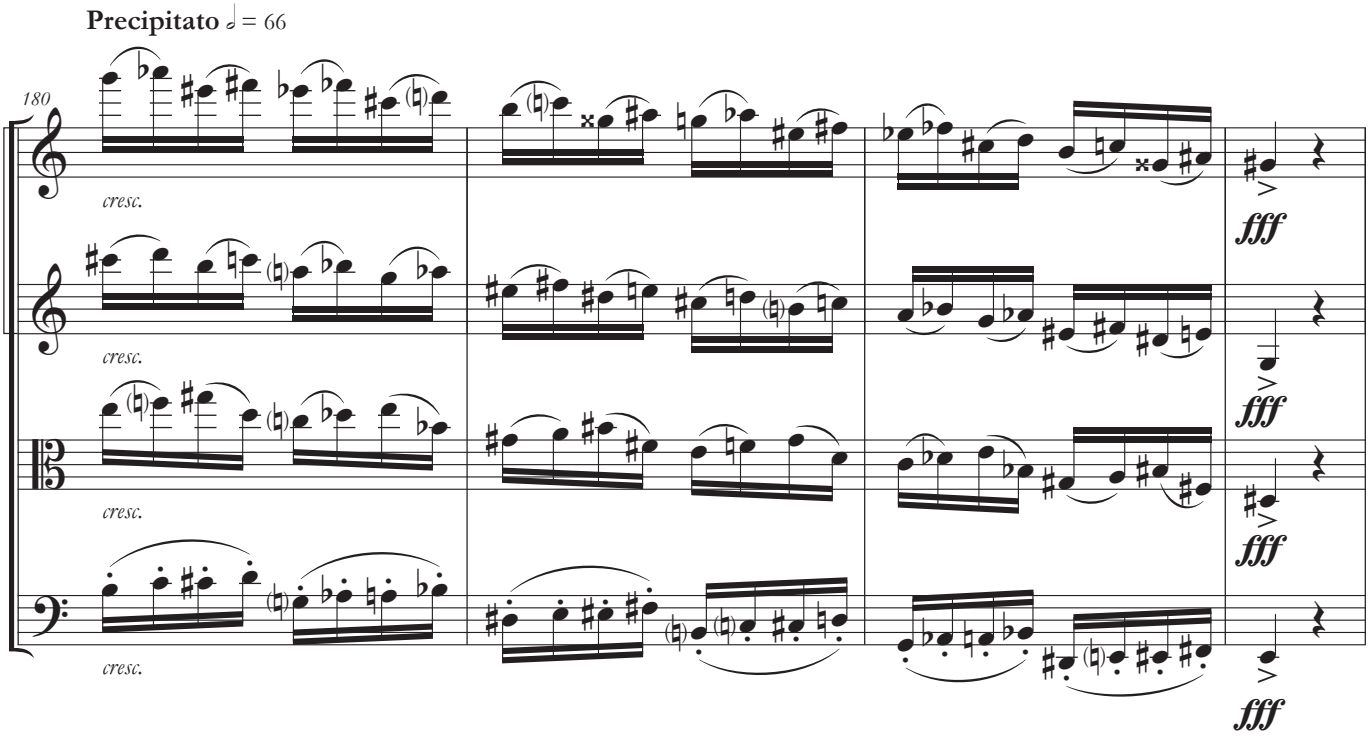


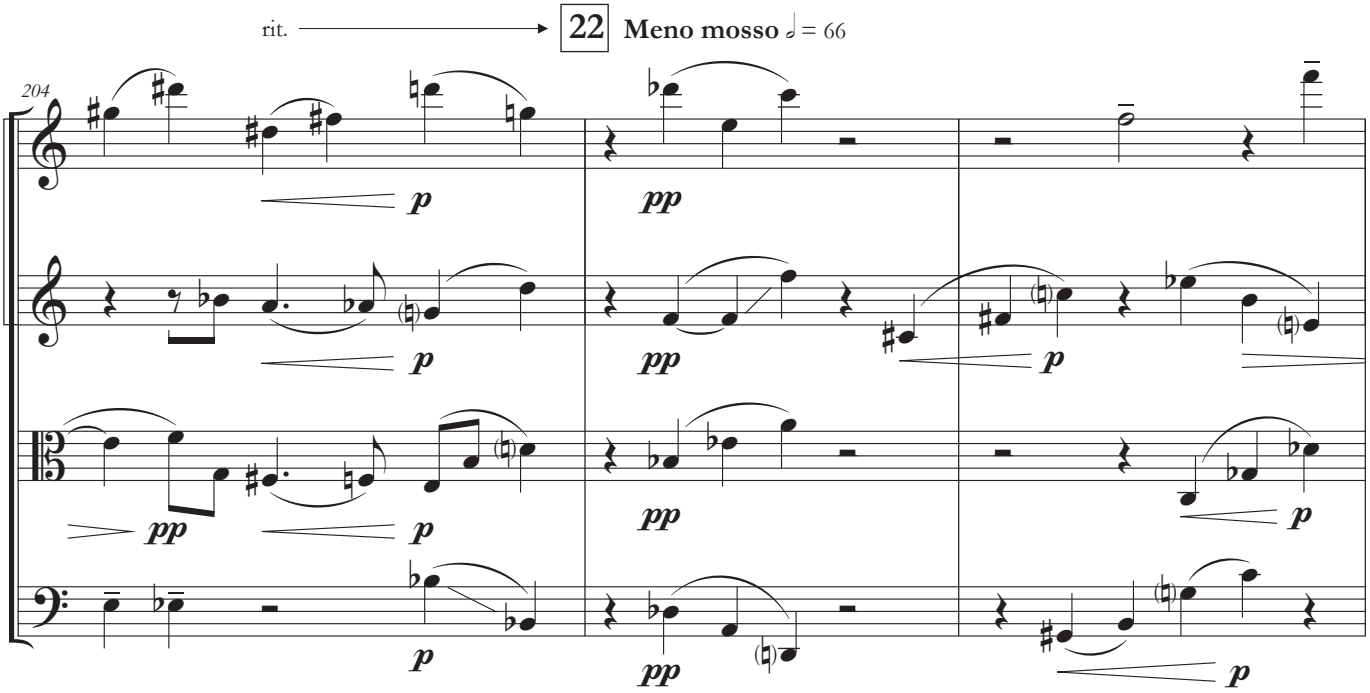
© 2014 Lance Mok

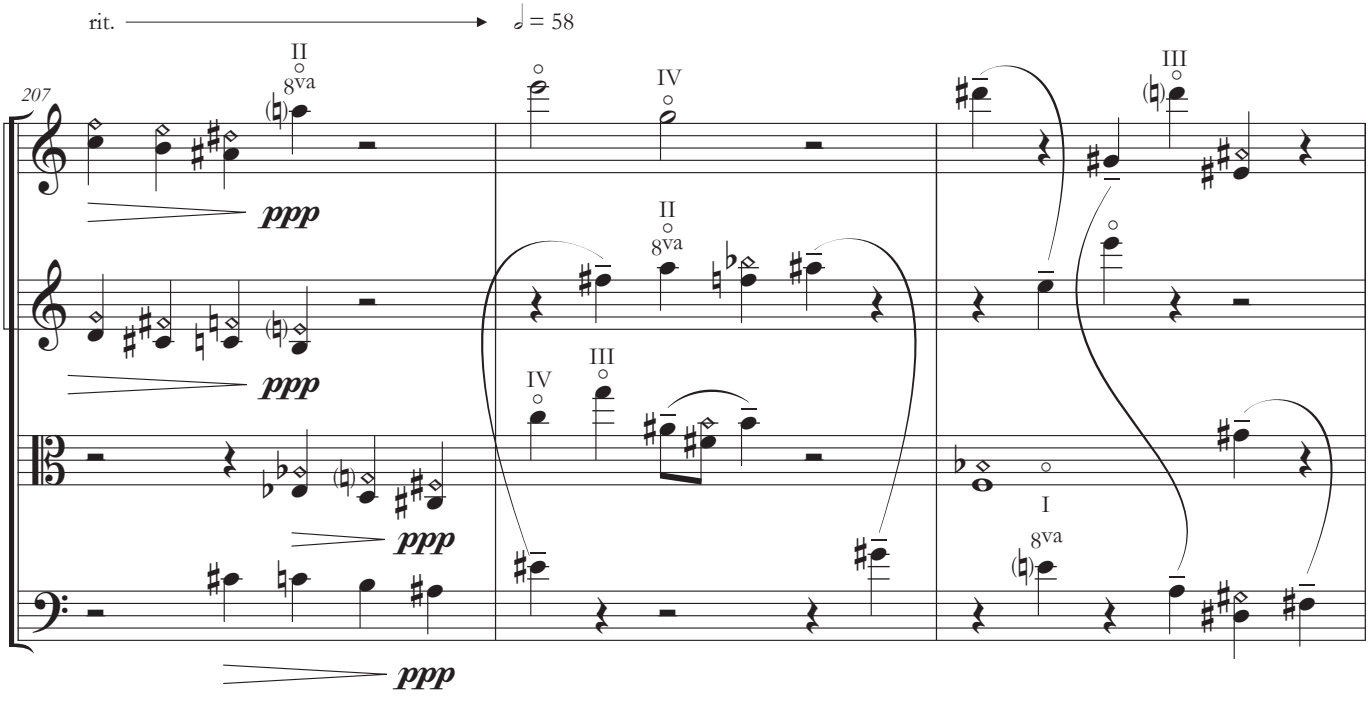

6
46
mp
mp
p
p
f
p
poco
p
49
cresc.
mf
p
mf
p
mf
p
7
52
mf
p
IV
p
mp
mf
p


83
p
mf
5:4
p più
85
pp
mp
5:4
p
p più
arco
mp
12
mf
p
mp
pizz.
pp
poco
arco
pp
6:4
mf
mp
f


(accel.)
177
mp
ff
mf
mf
ff
ff
ff


Precipitato ♩ = 66
180
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
fff
fff
fff
fff


rit.
22
Meno mosso
= 66
204
p
pp


rit.
= 58
207
II
8va
IV
III
I
ppp