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The Miraculous Staircase

Alan Stringer

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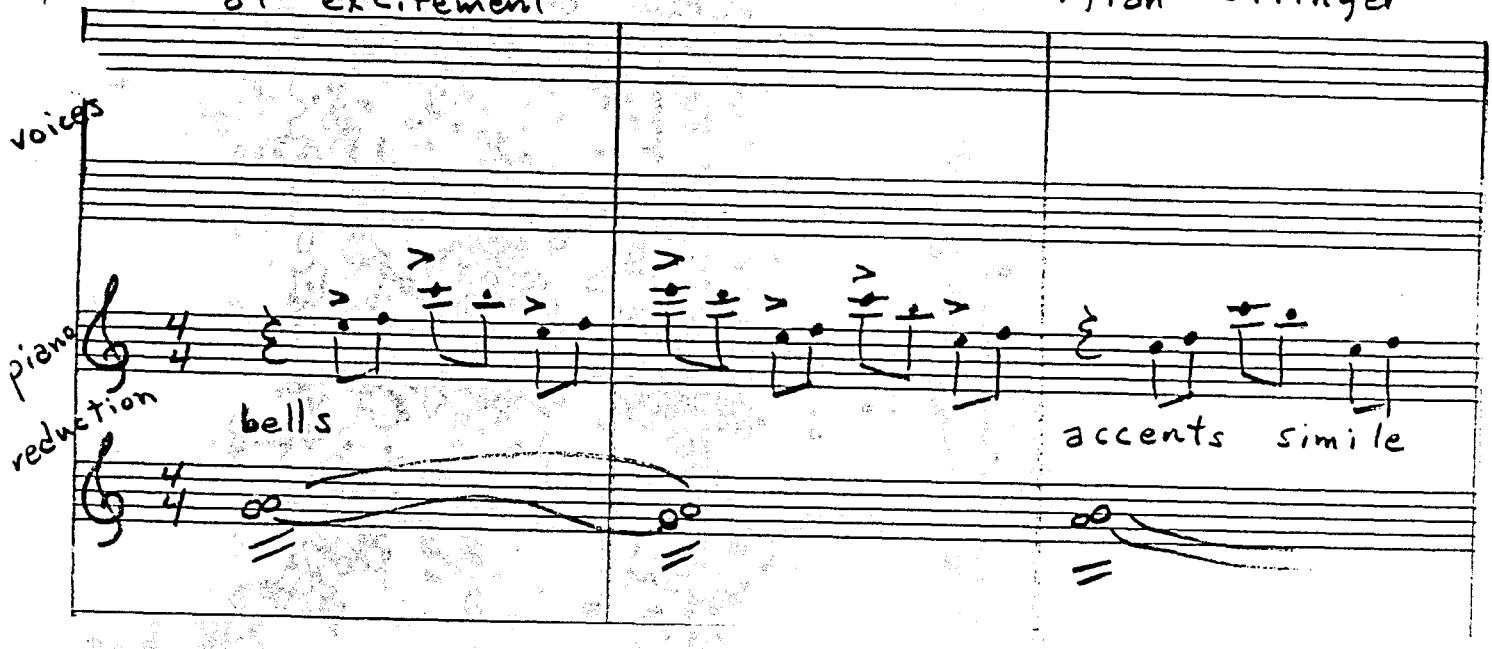
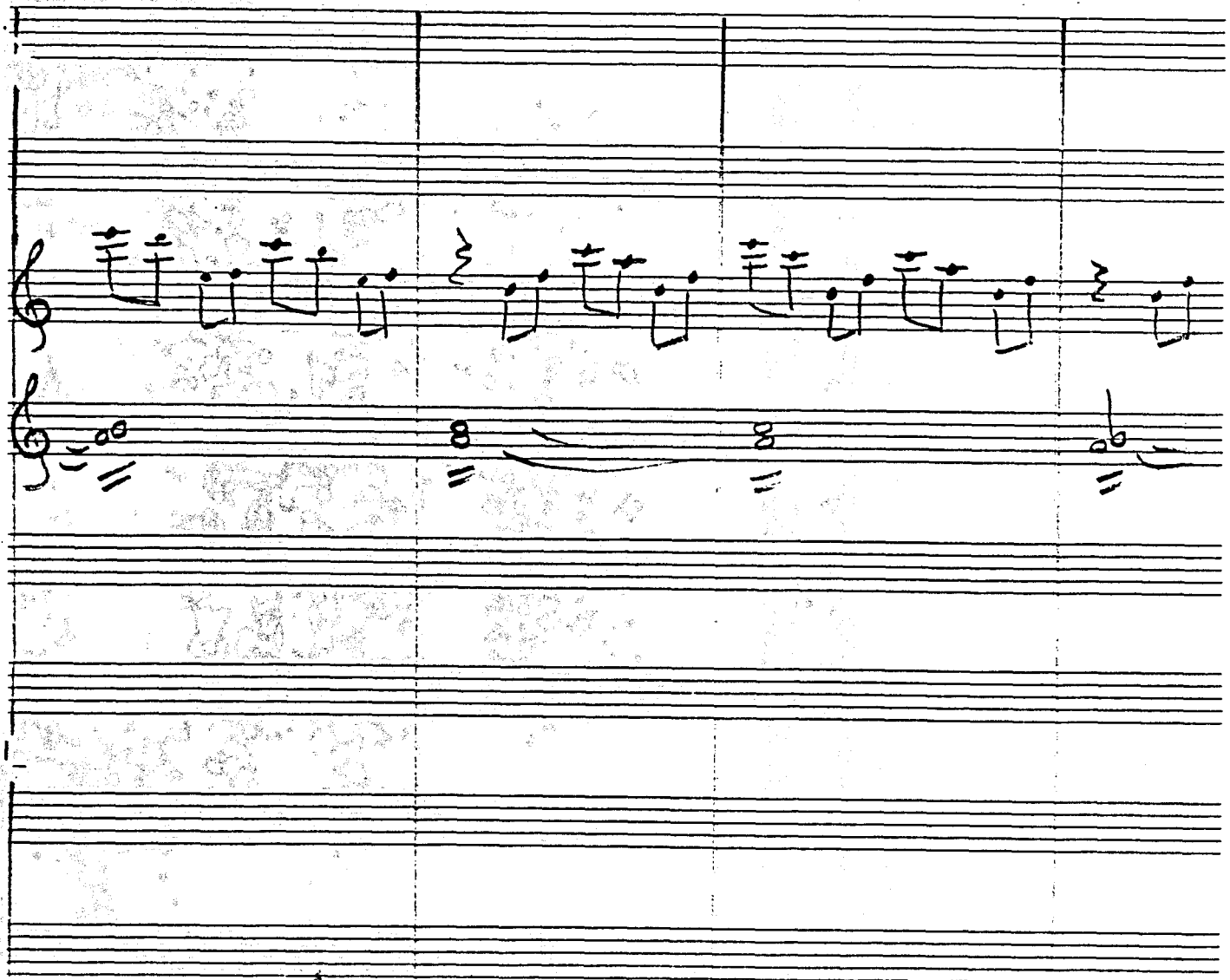
The Miraculous Staircase

With a sense of excitement

Alan Stringer





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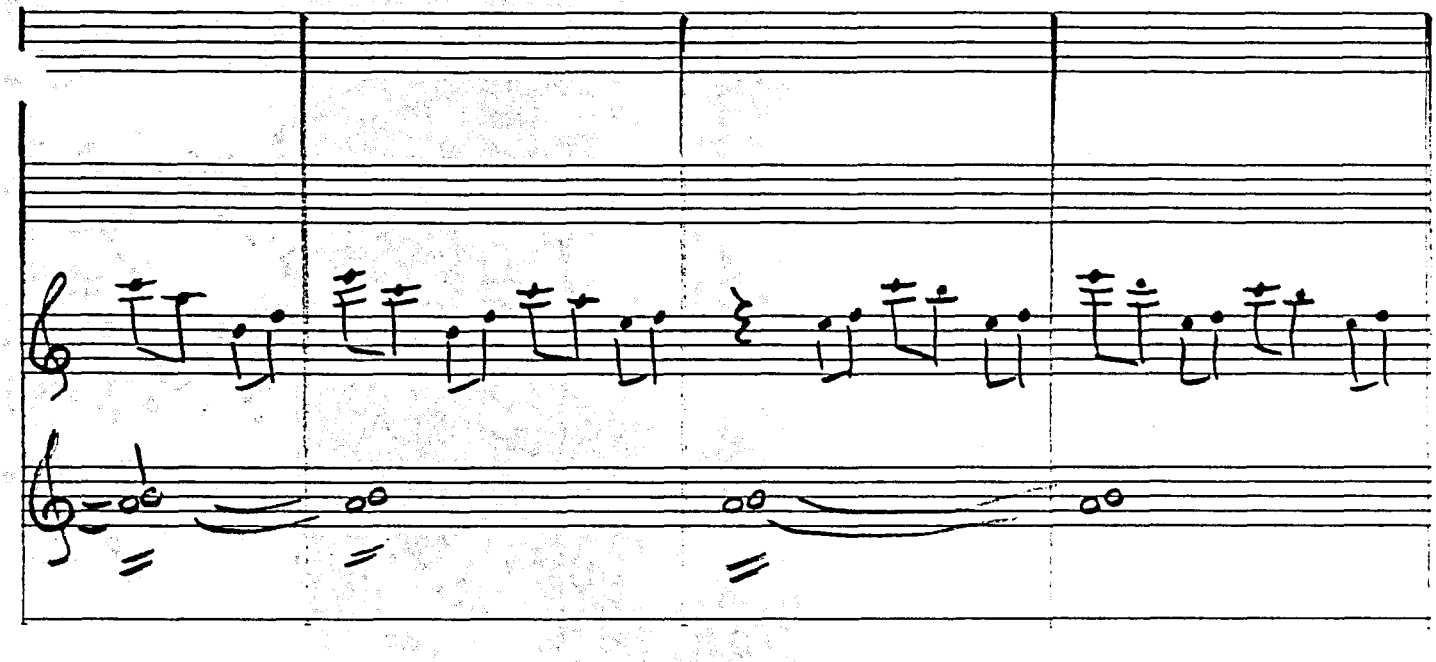

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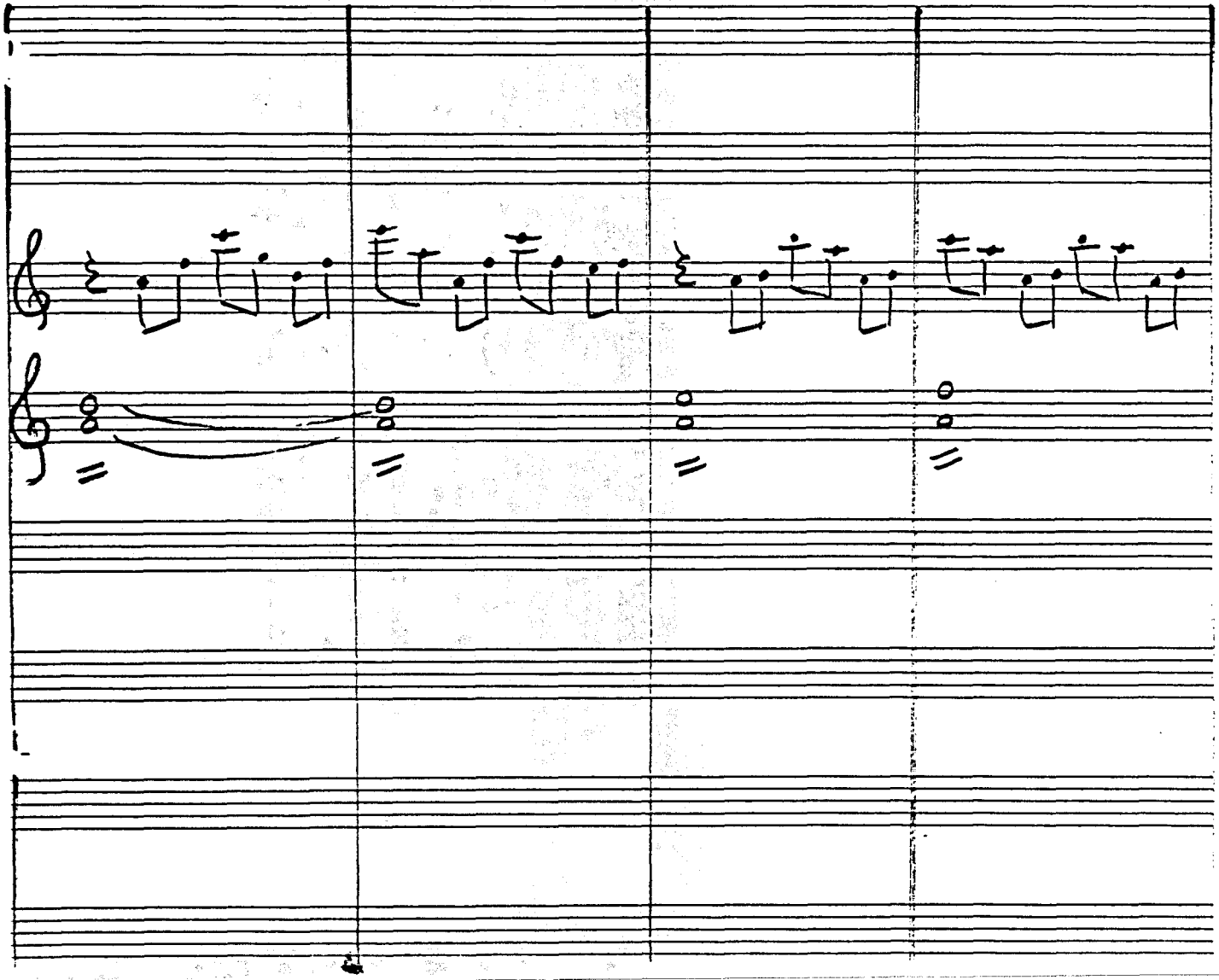
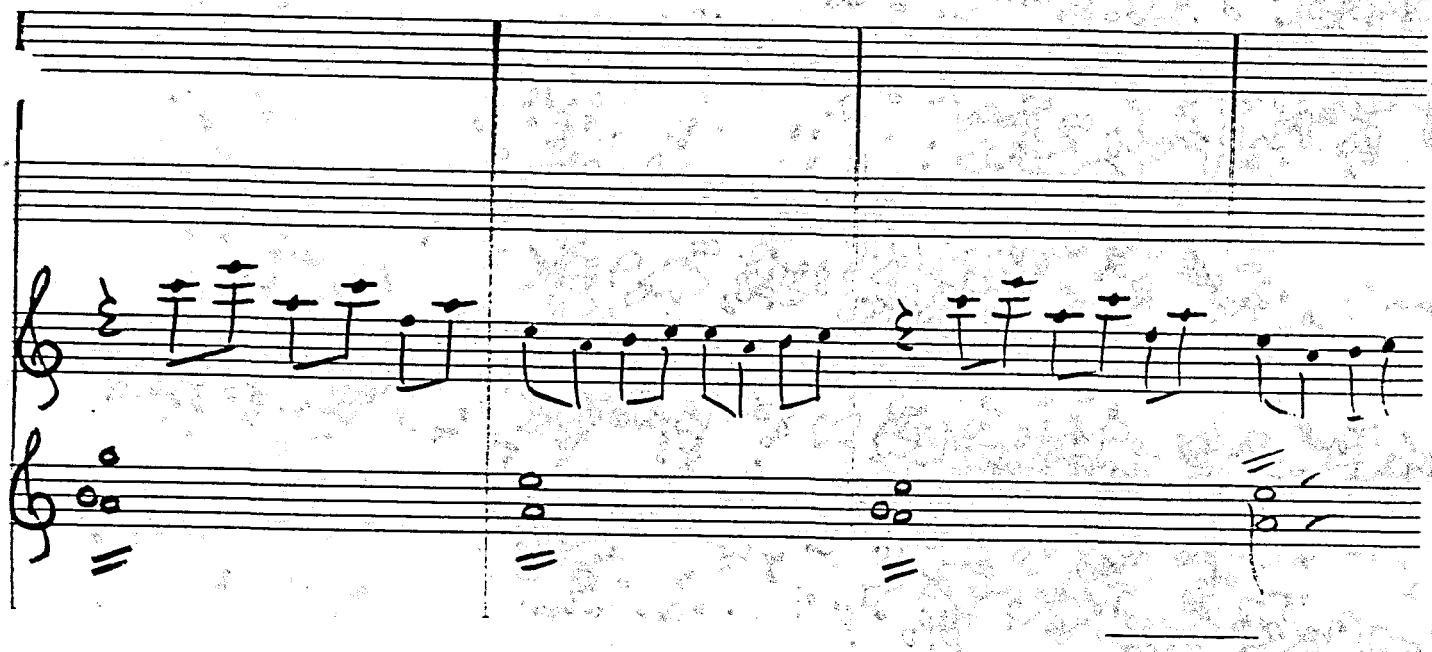
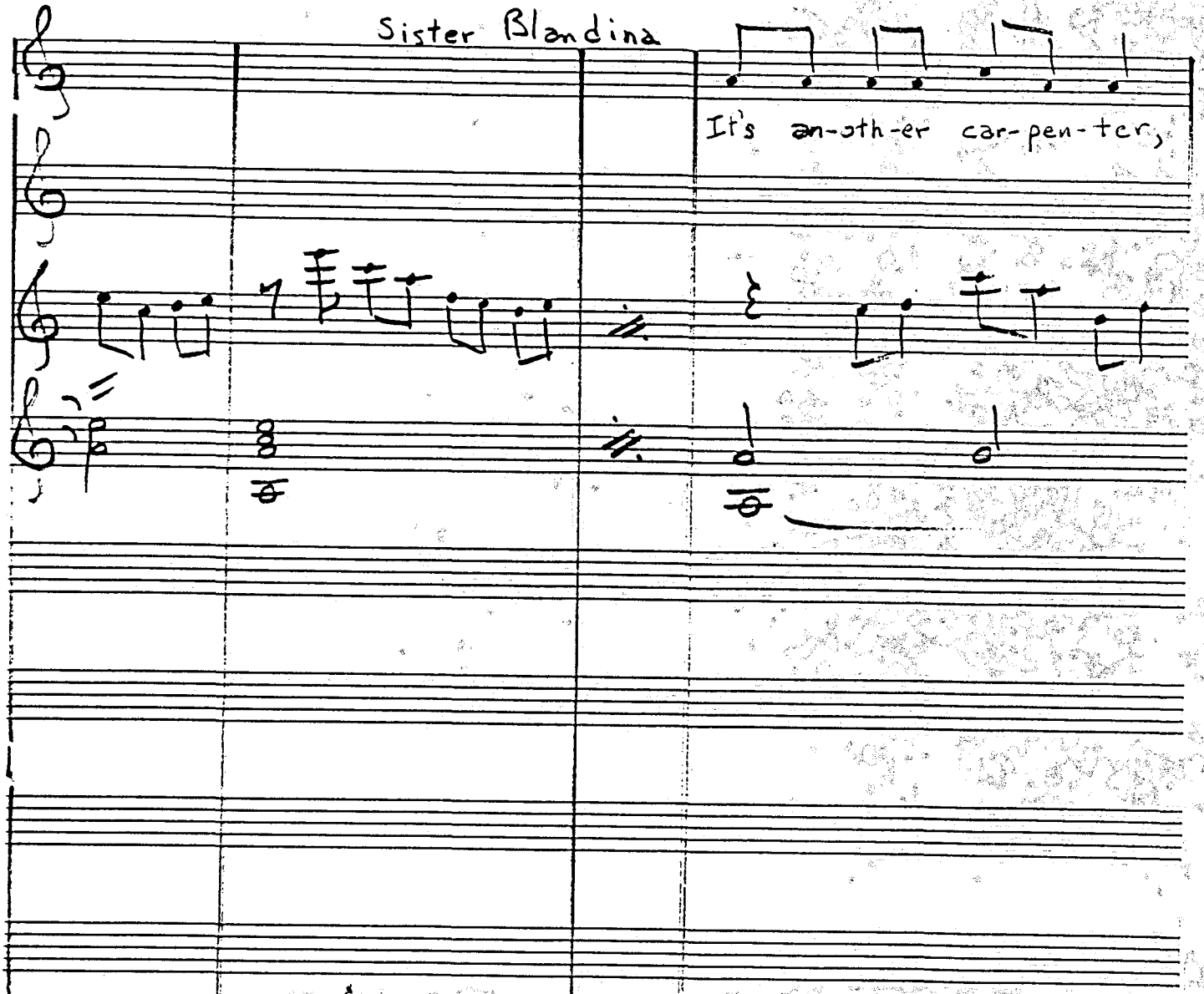
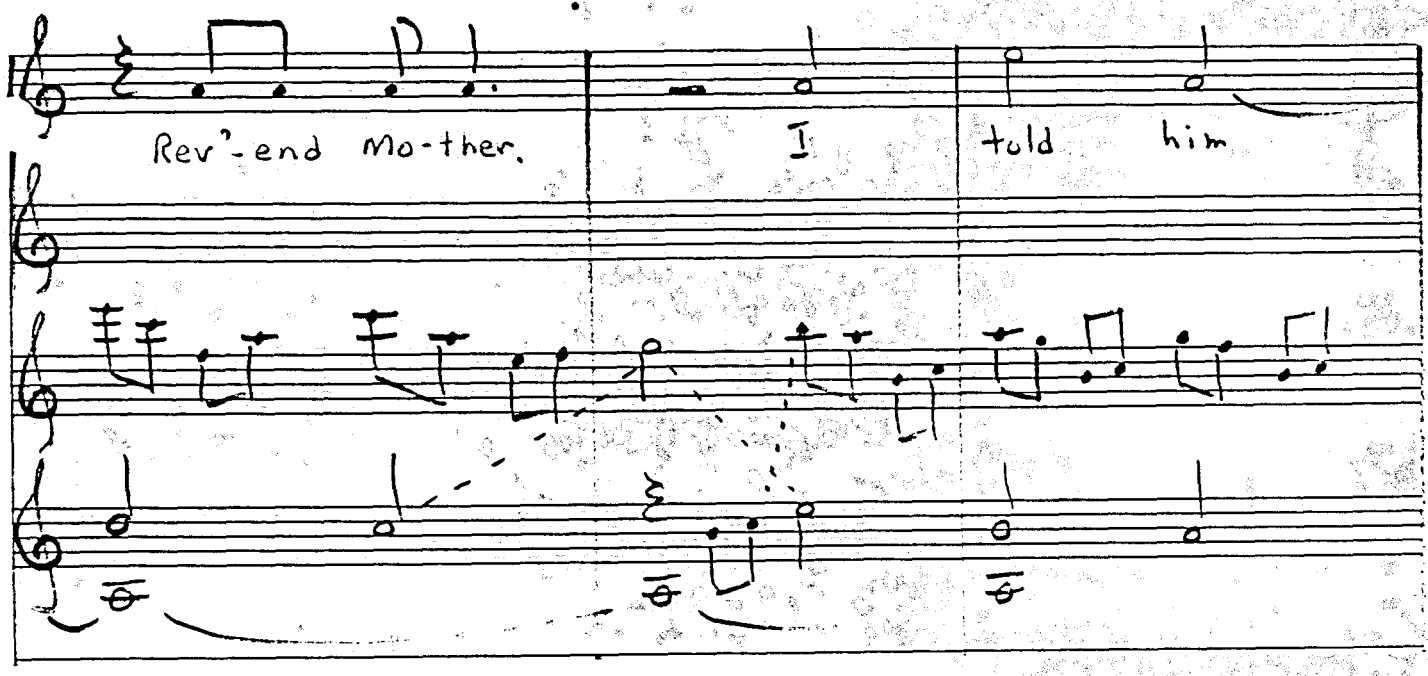
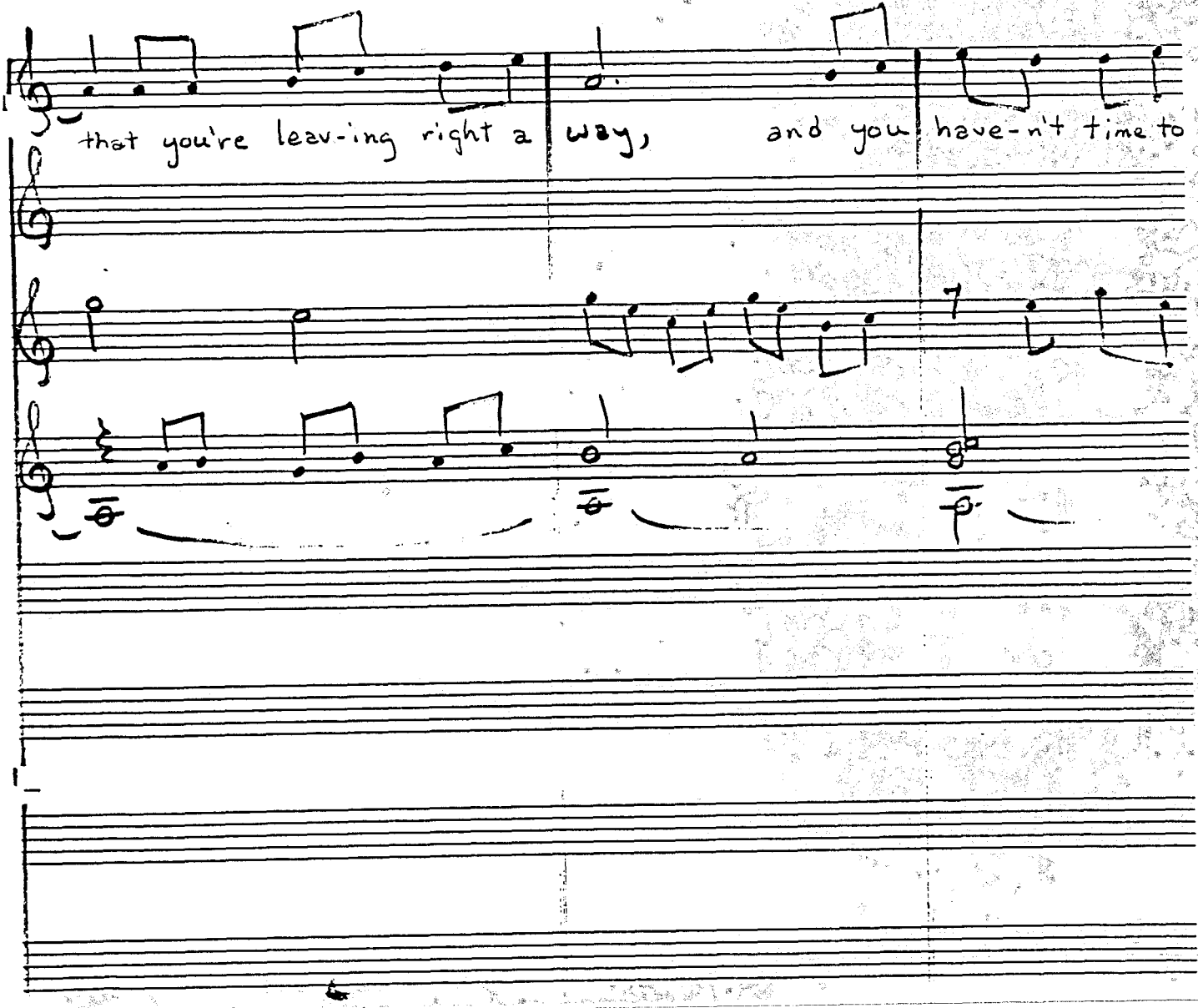


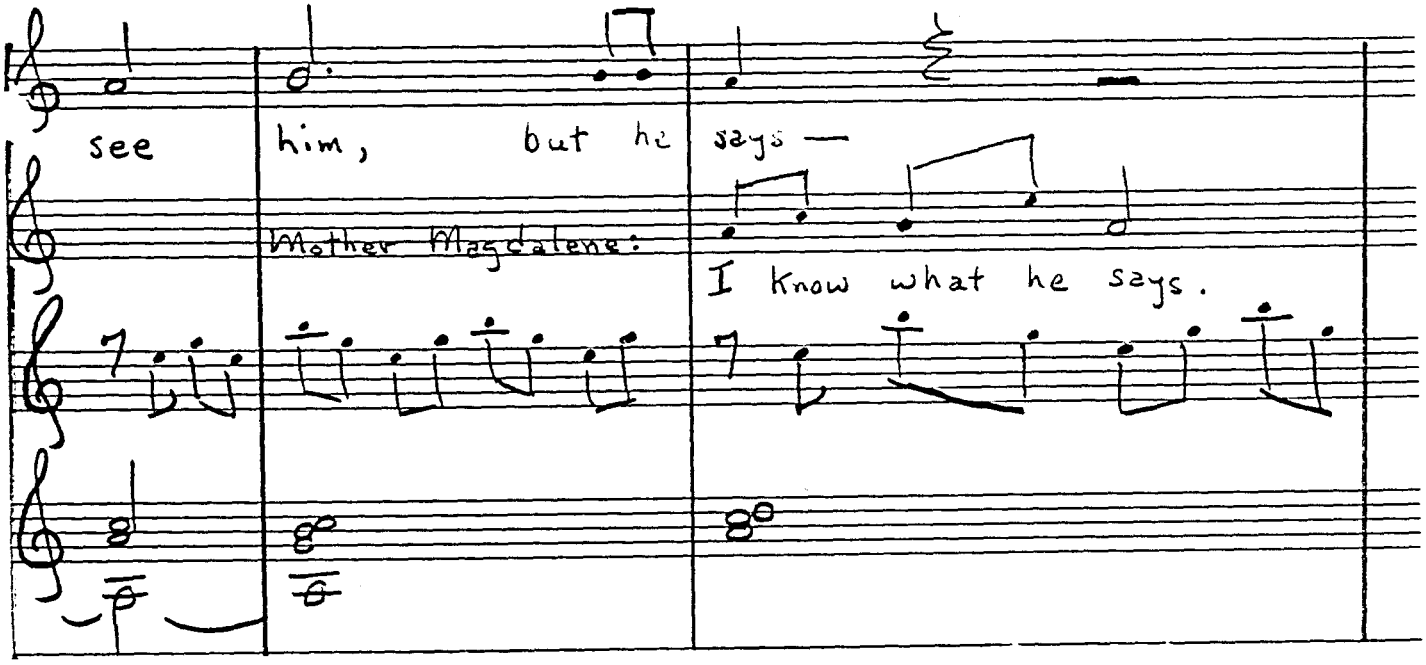


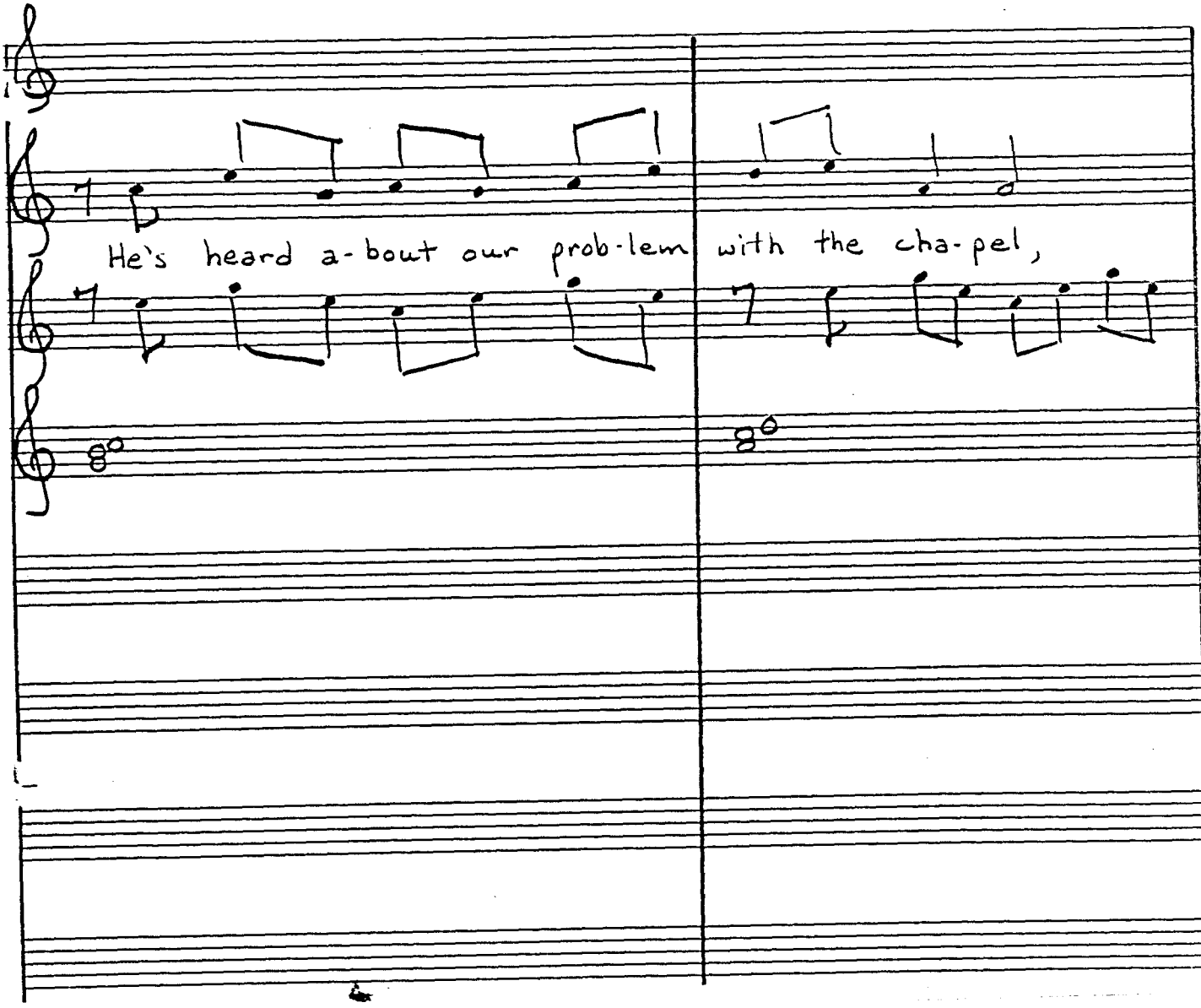
Sister Blandina

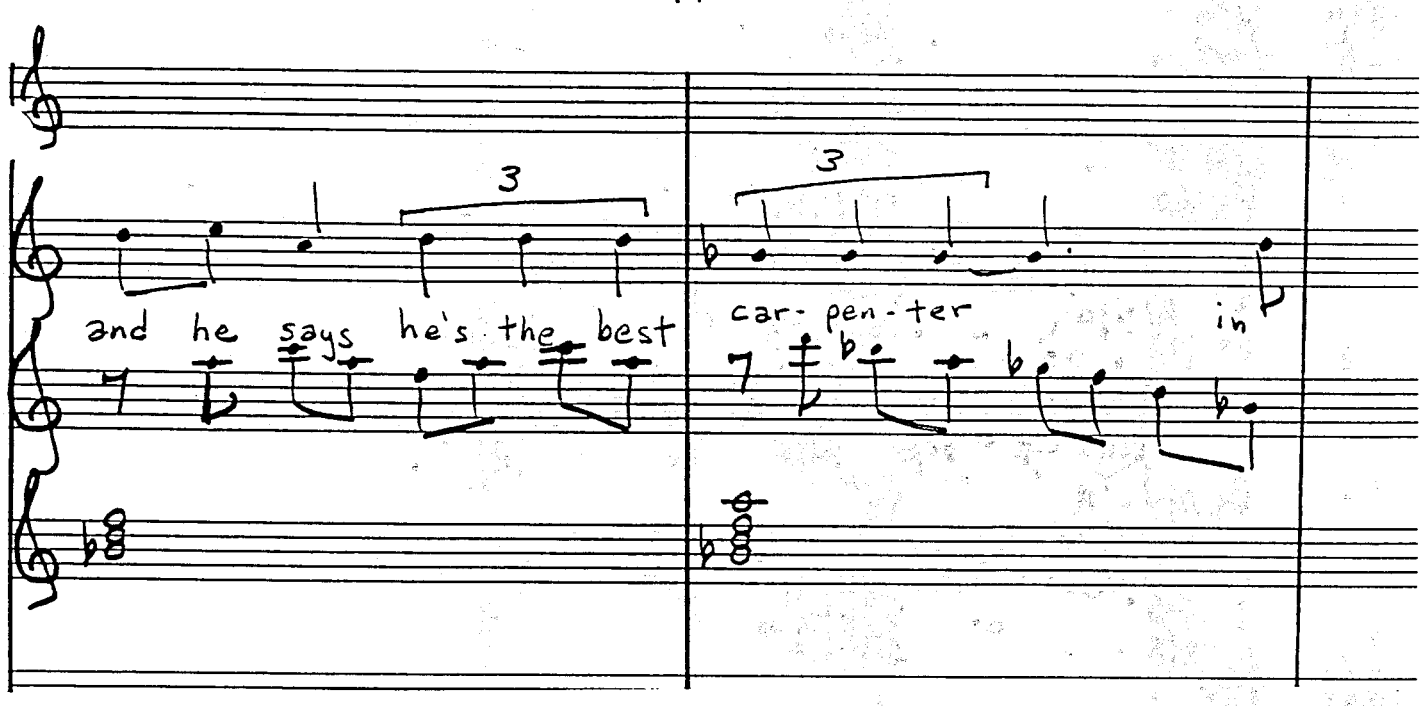


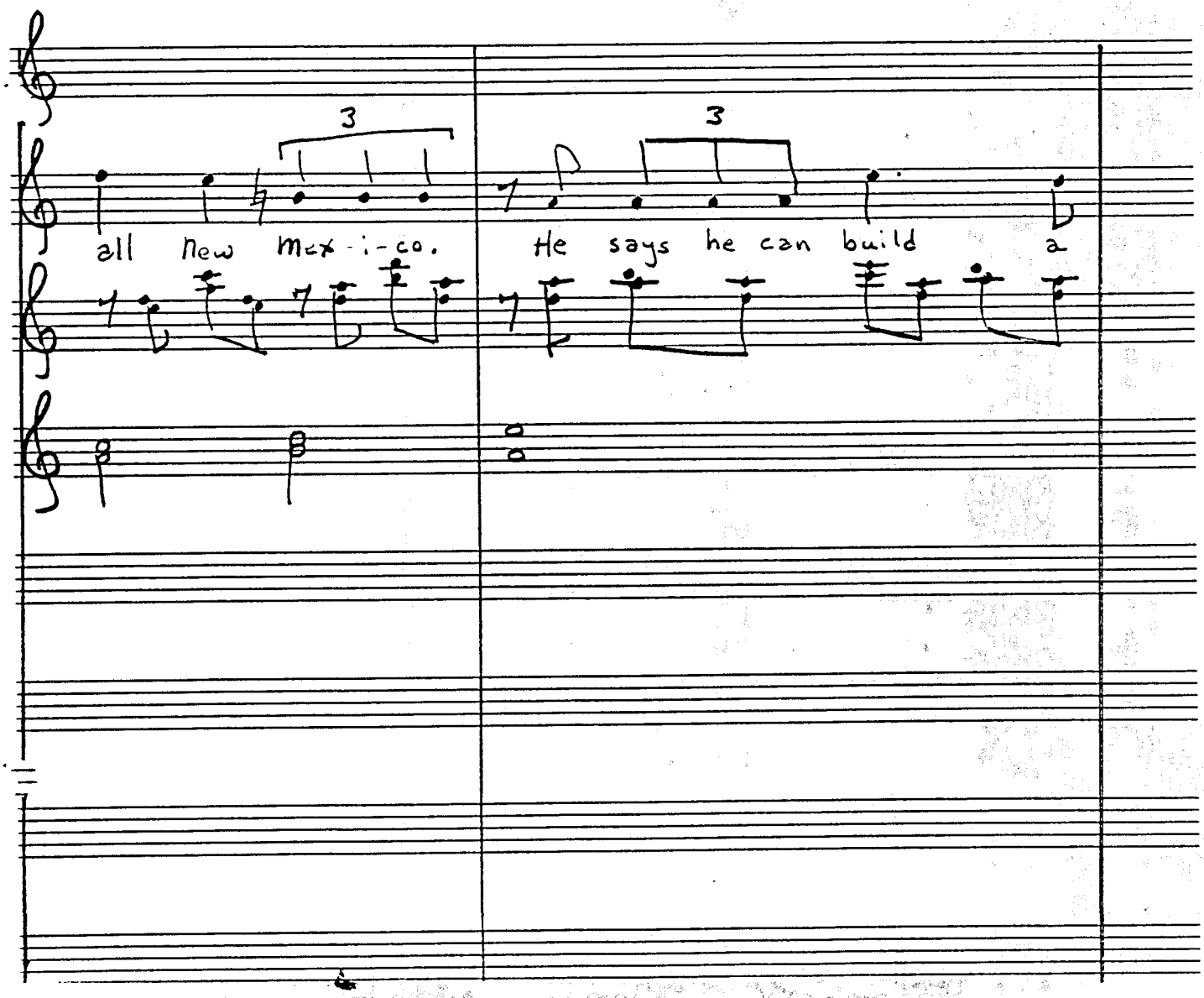

Rev'-end Mo-ther, I told him

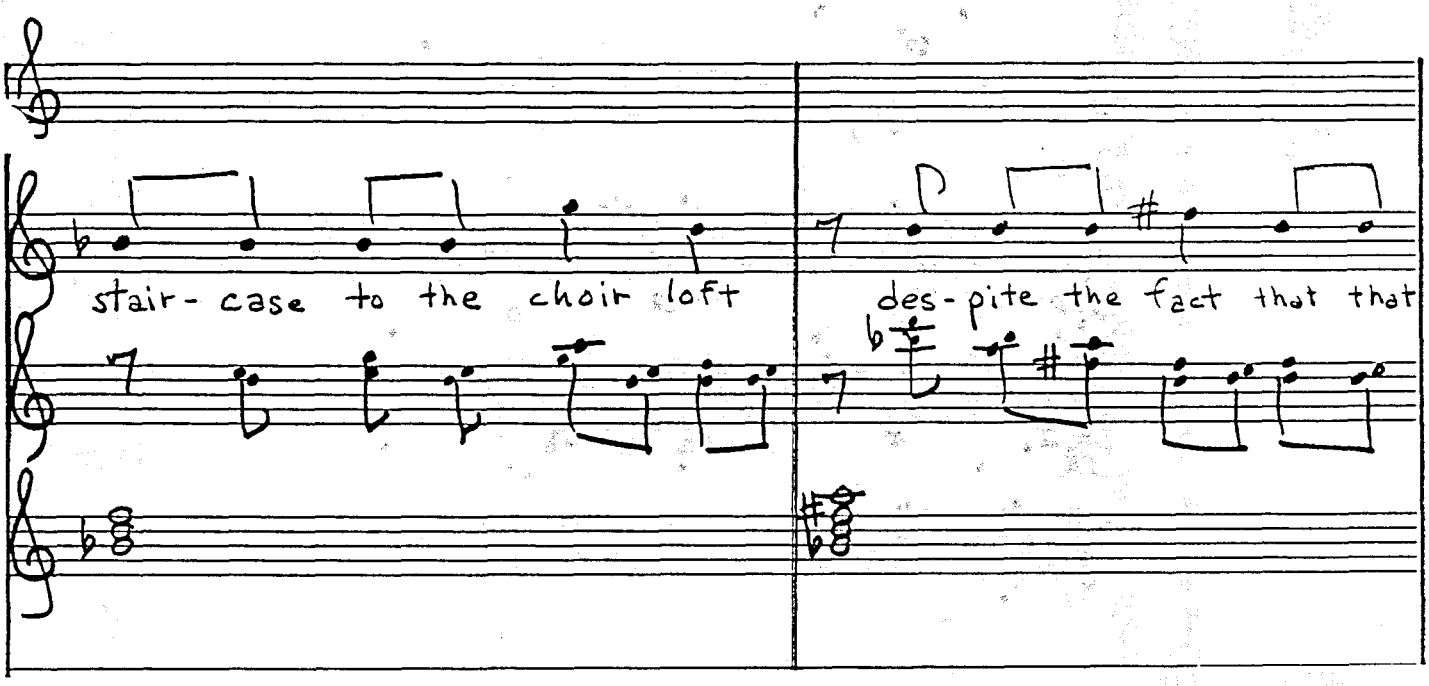

that you're leav-ing right a way, and you have-n't time to

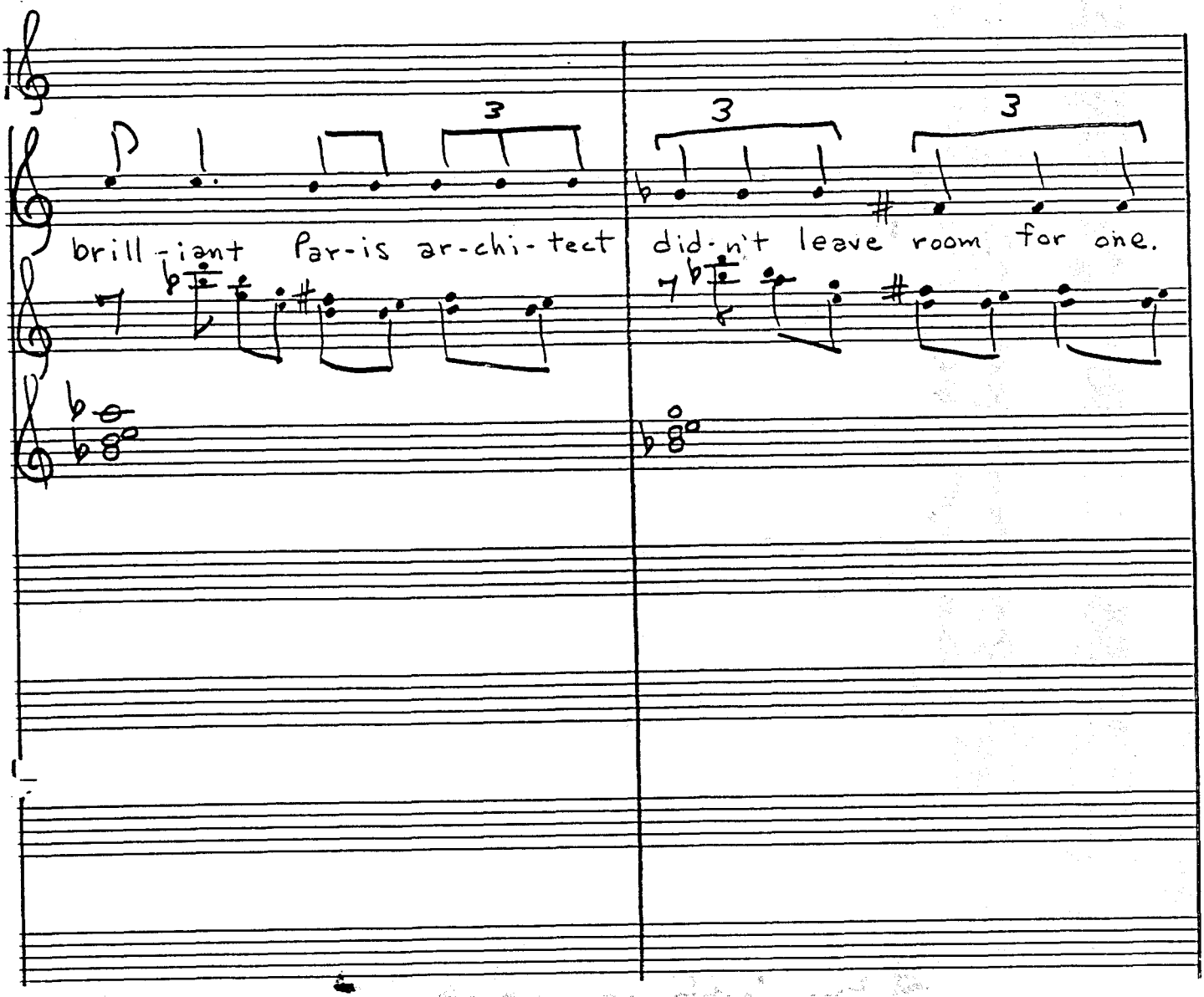

see
him,
but he
says —
Mother Magdalene:
I know what he says.


He's heard a-bout our prob-lem with the cha-pel,

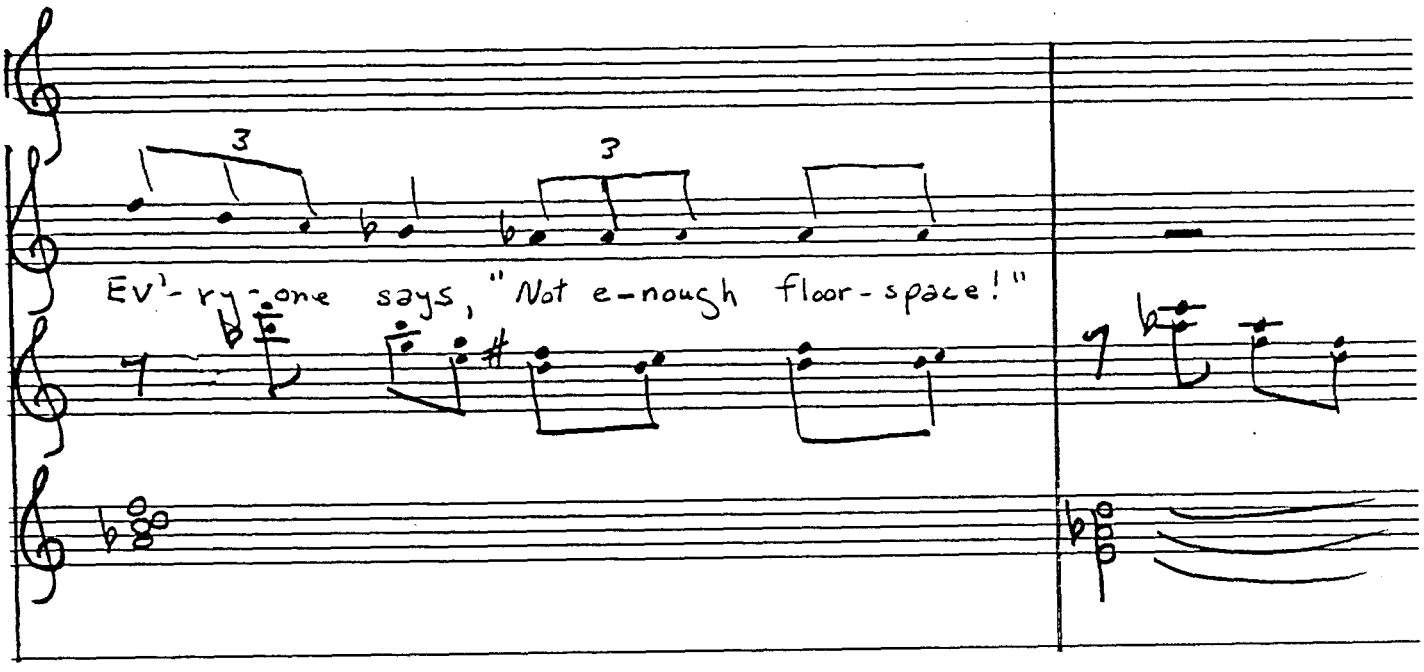

3
3
and he says he's the best
car- pen- ter
in


3
3
all New Mex- i- co.
He says he can build
a

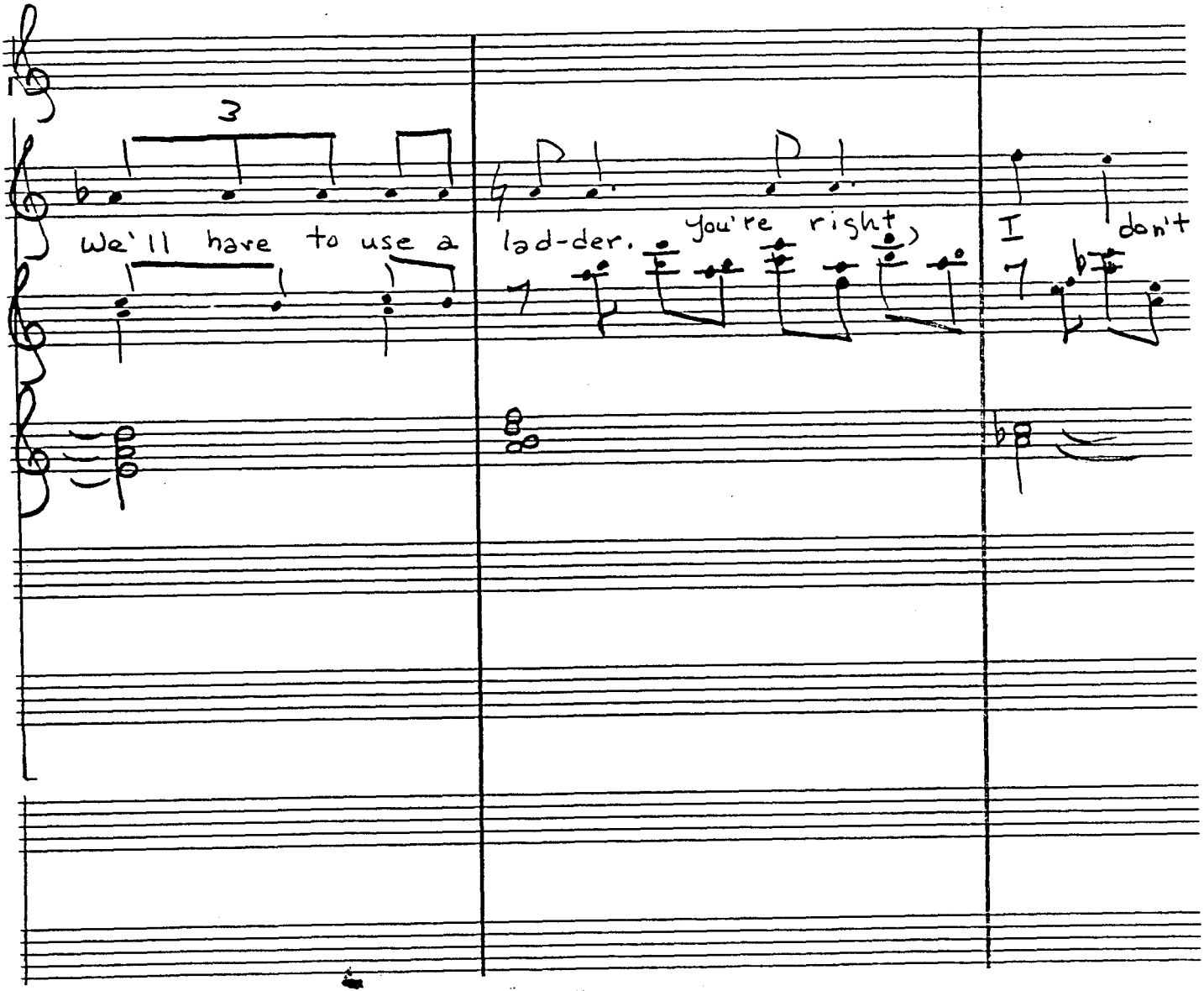

stair- case to the choir loft
des- pite the fact that that


3
3
3
brill- iant Par- is ar- chi- tect
did- n't leave room for one.

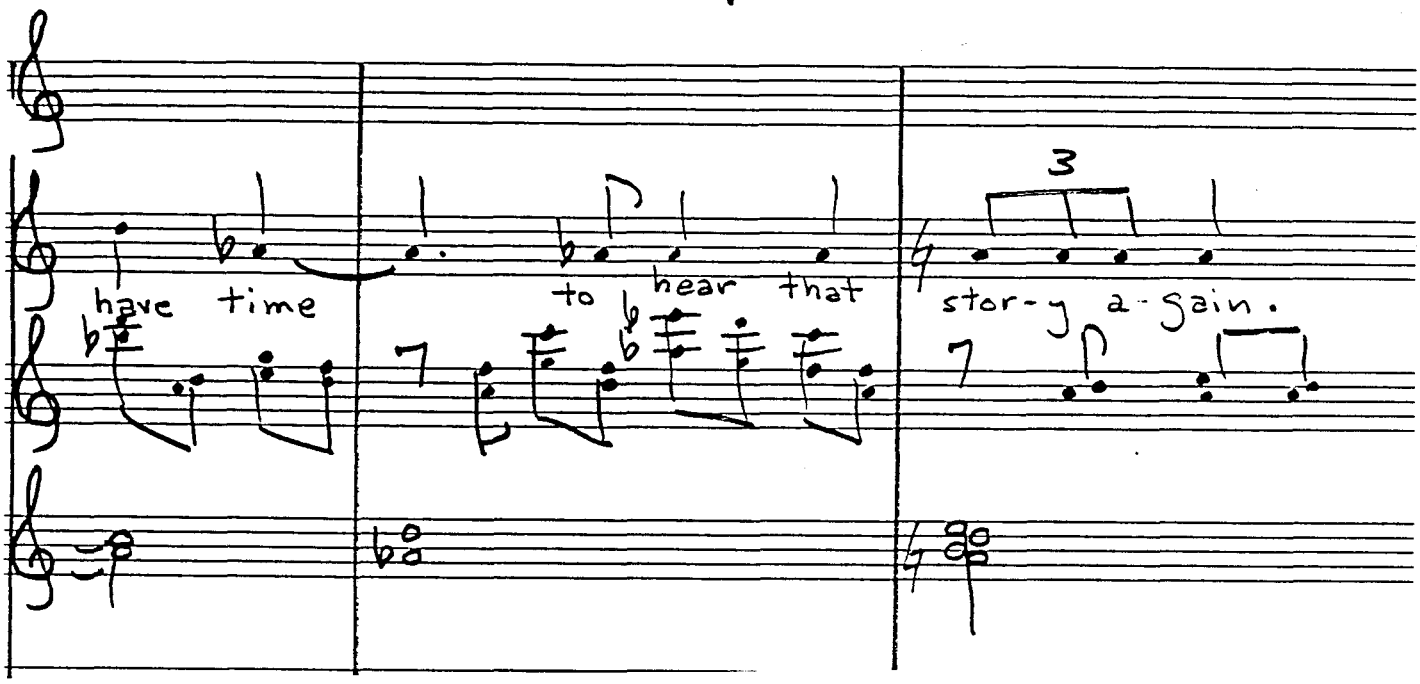
15


3
3
Ev'-ry-one says, "Not e-nough floor-space!"

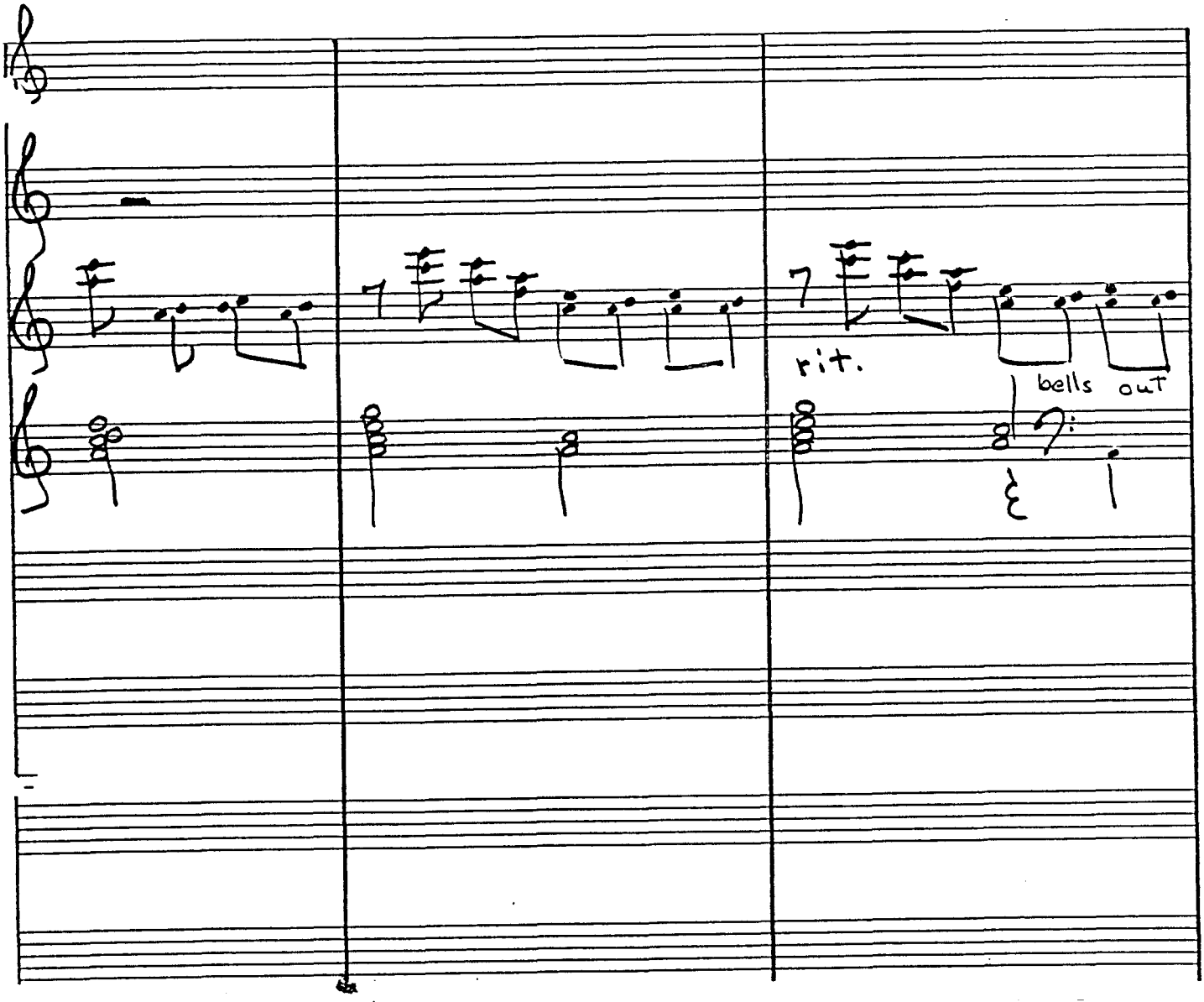
16

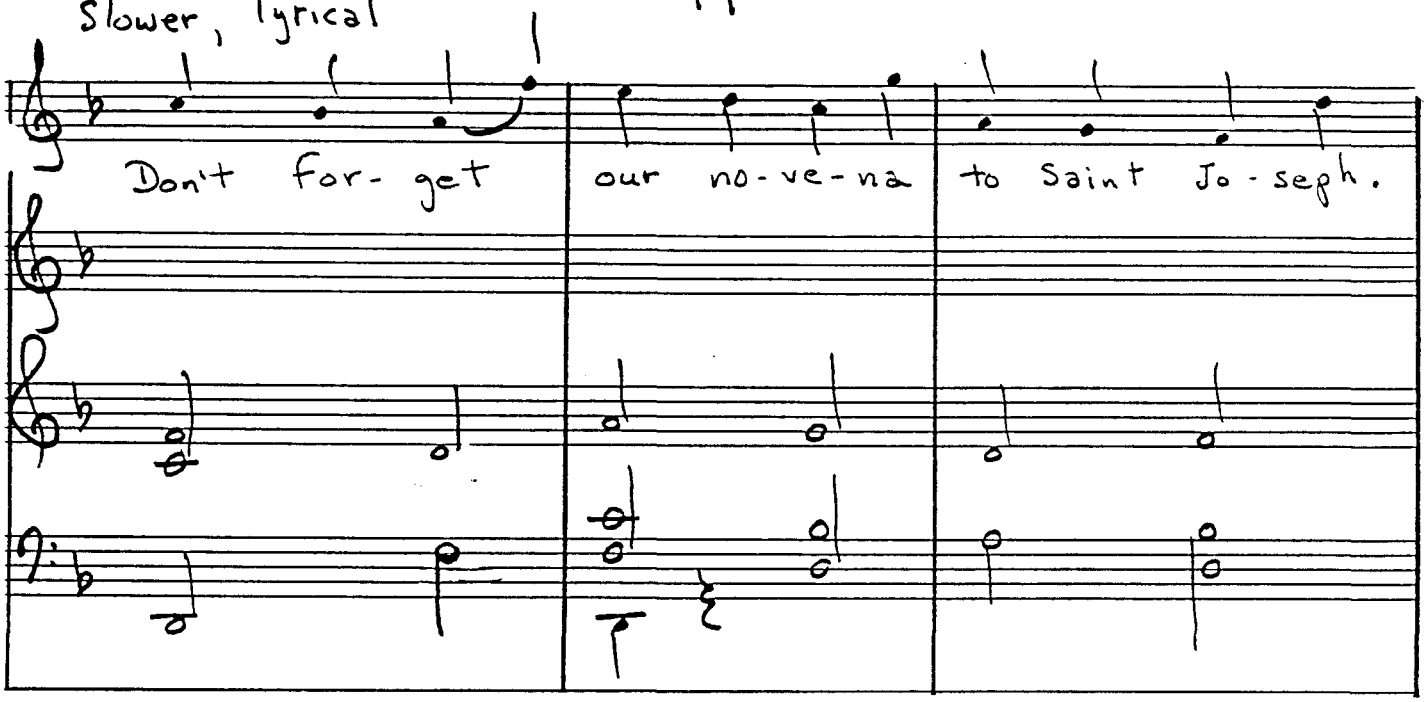

3
We'll have to use a lad-der.
(you're right)
I don't

17

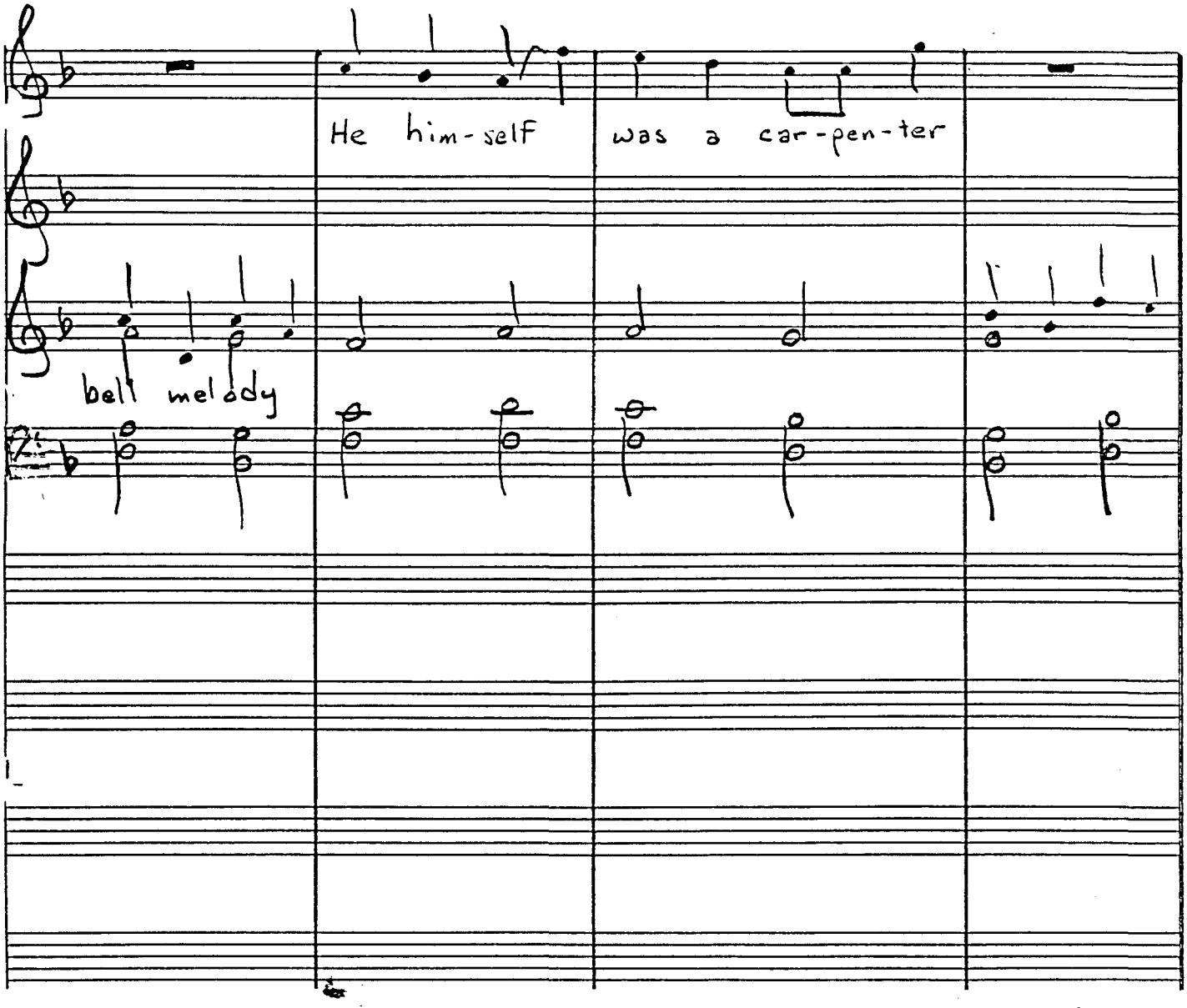


18

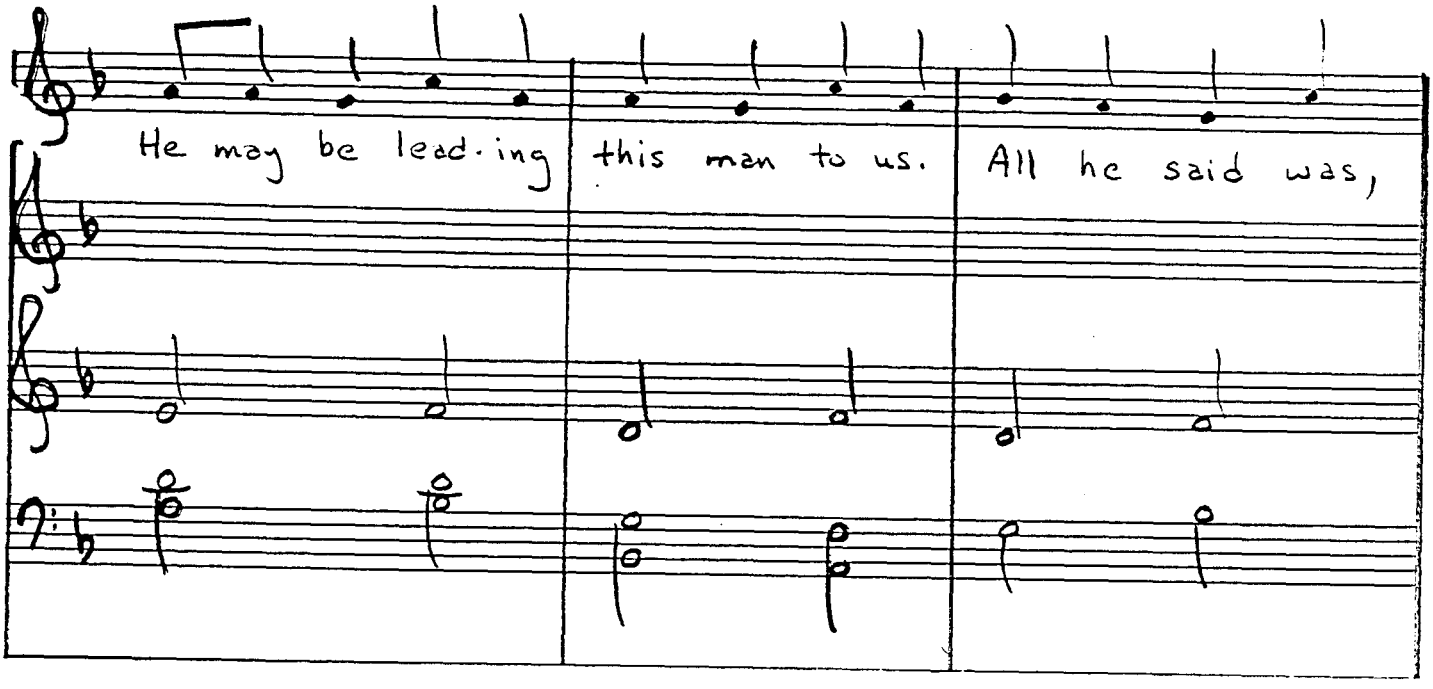



Slower, lyrical
Don't for-get
our no-ve-na
to Saint Jo-seph.

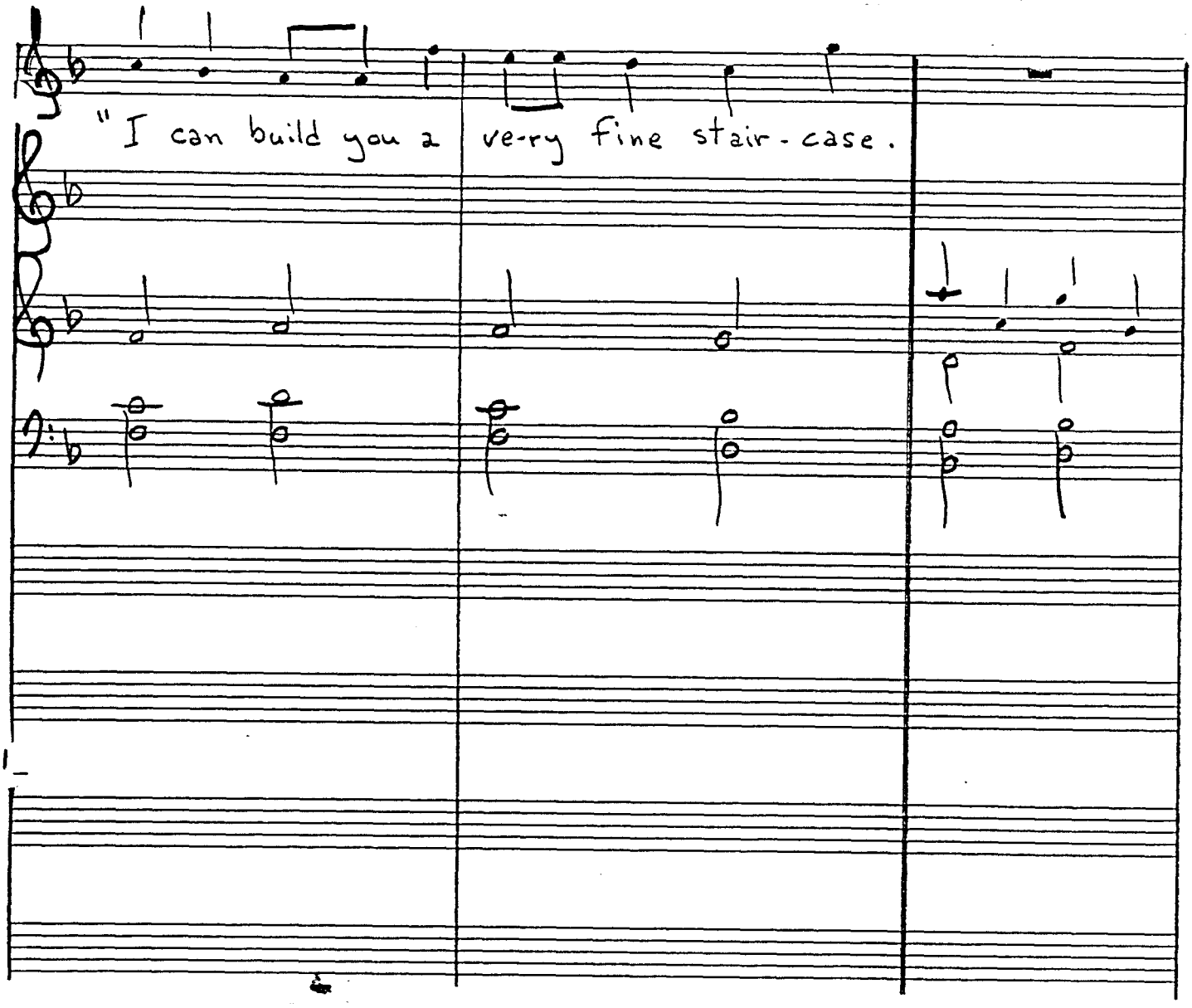
20

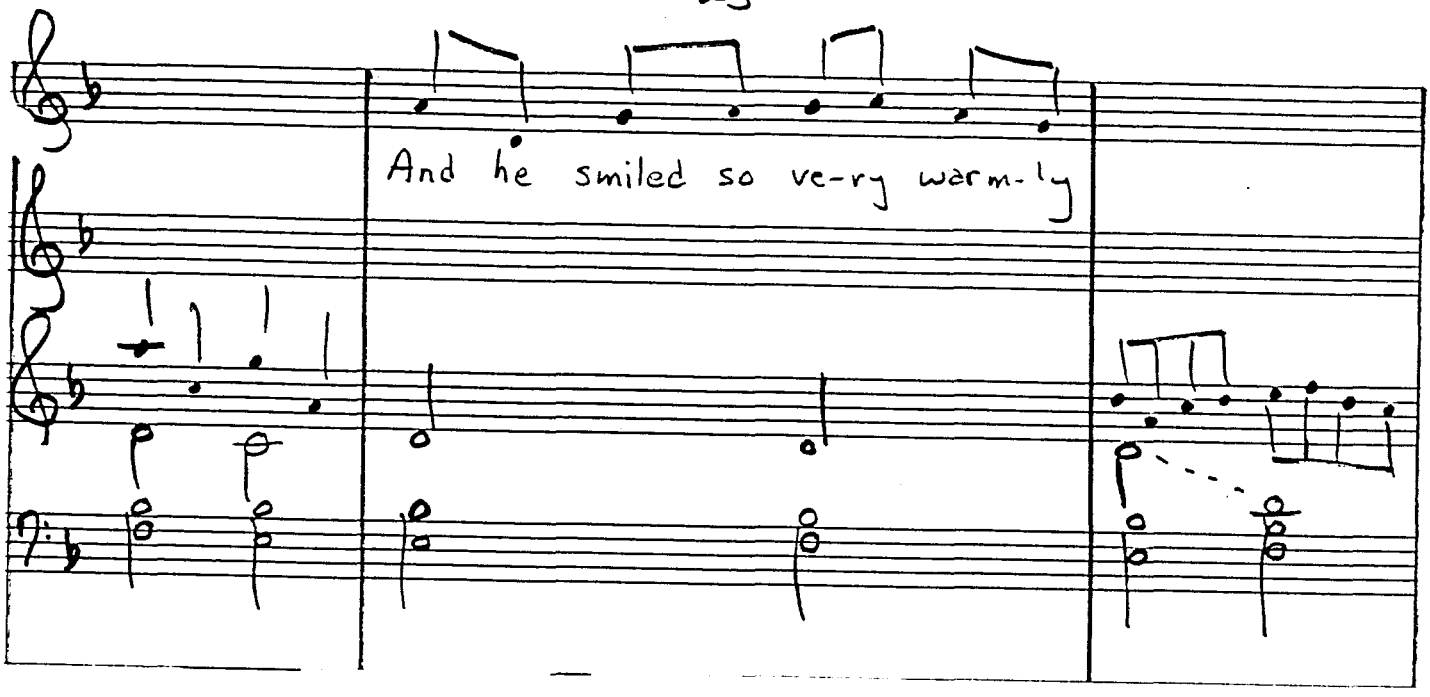

He him-self
was a car-pen-ter
bell melody

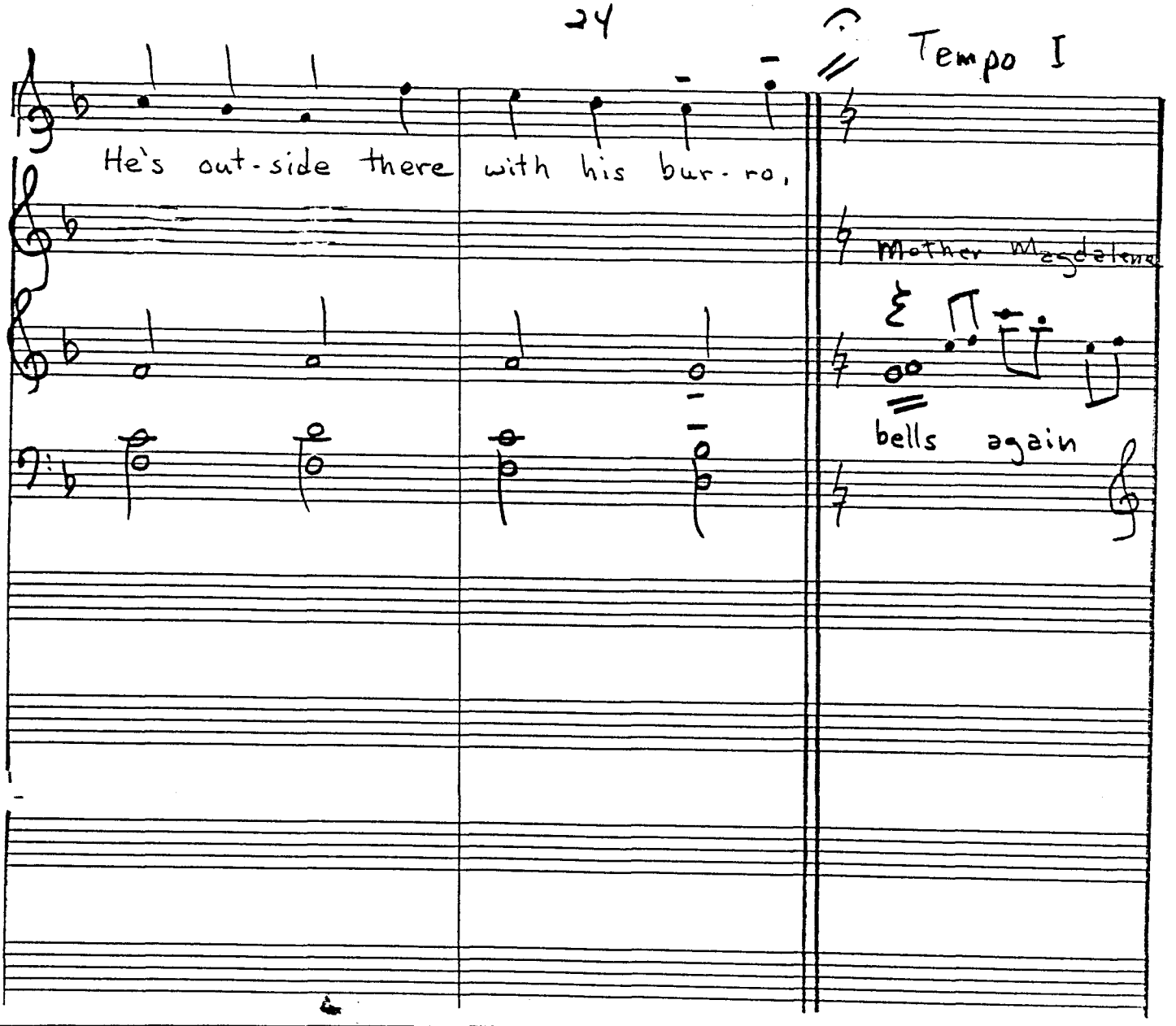
21

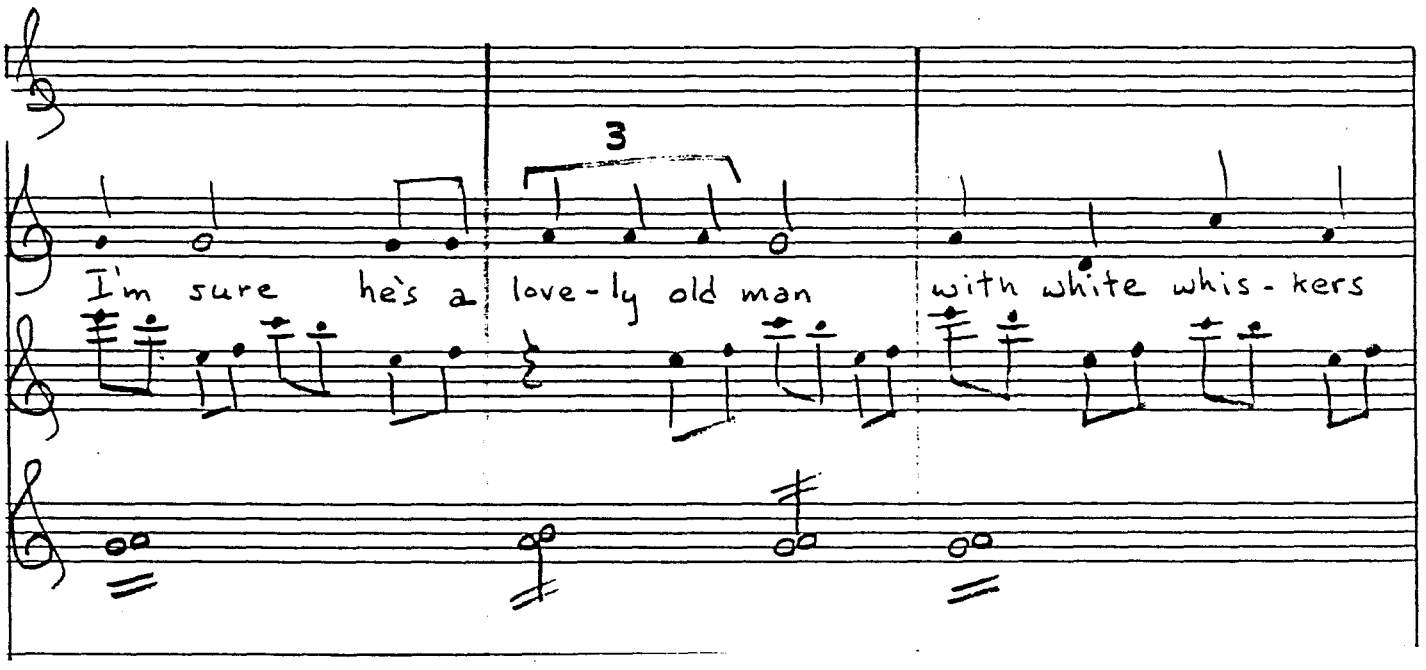

He may be lead-ing this man to us. All he said was,

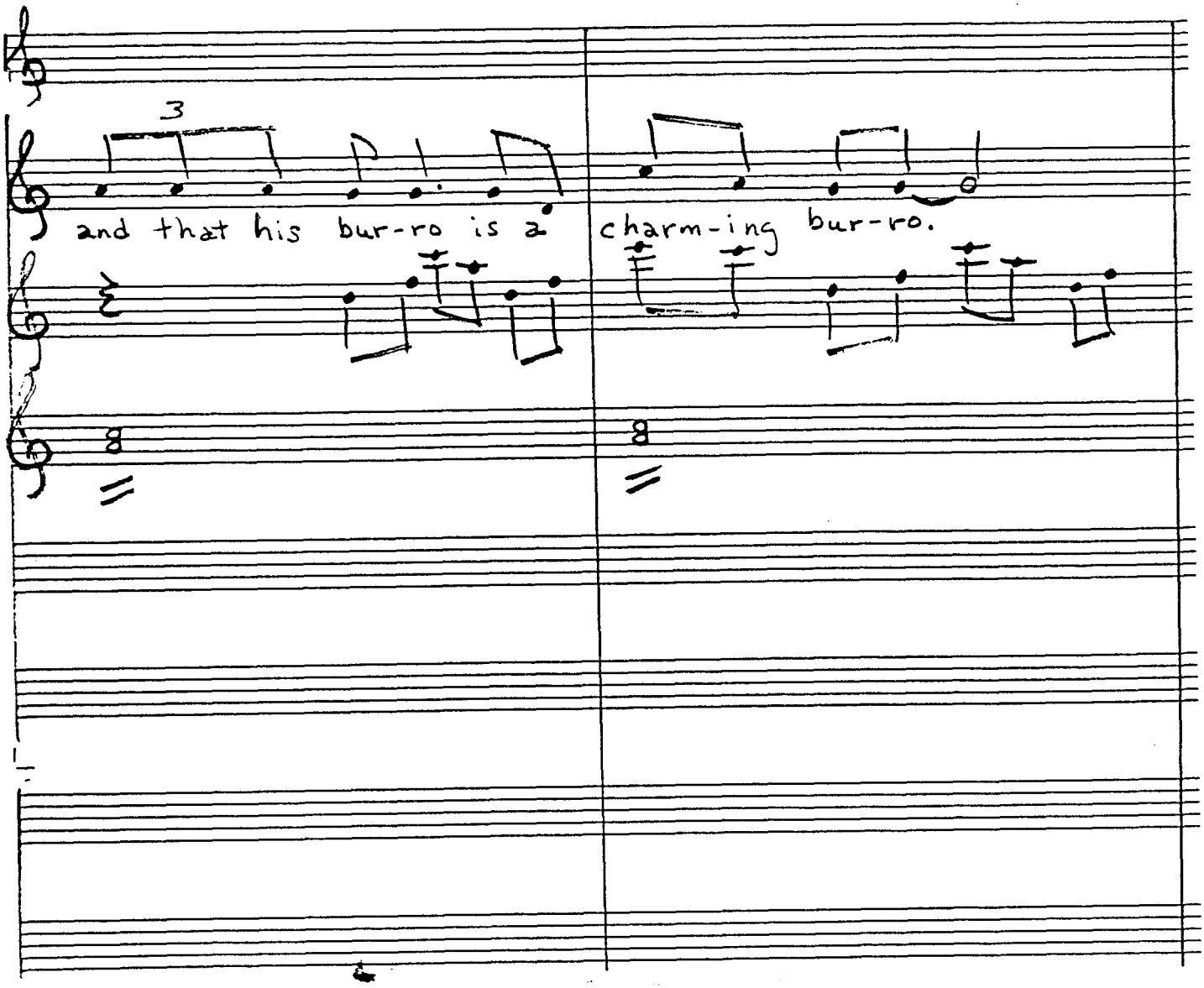
22

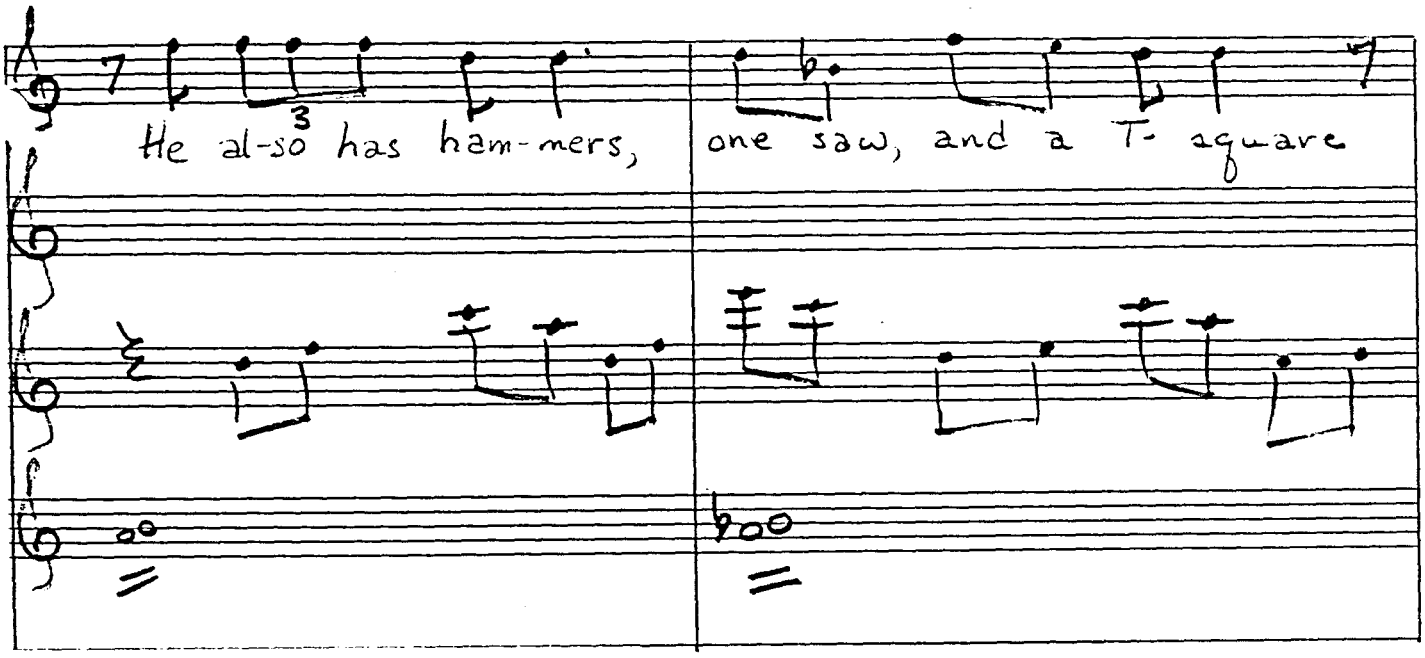

"I can build you a ve-ry fine stair-case.

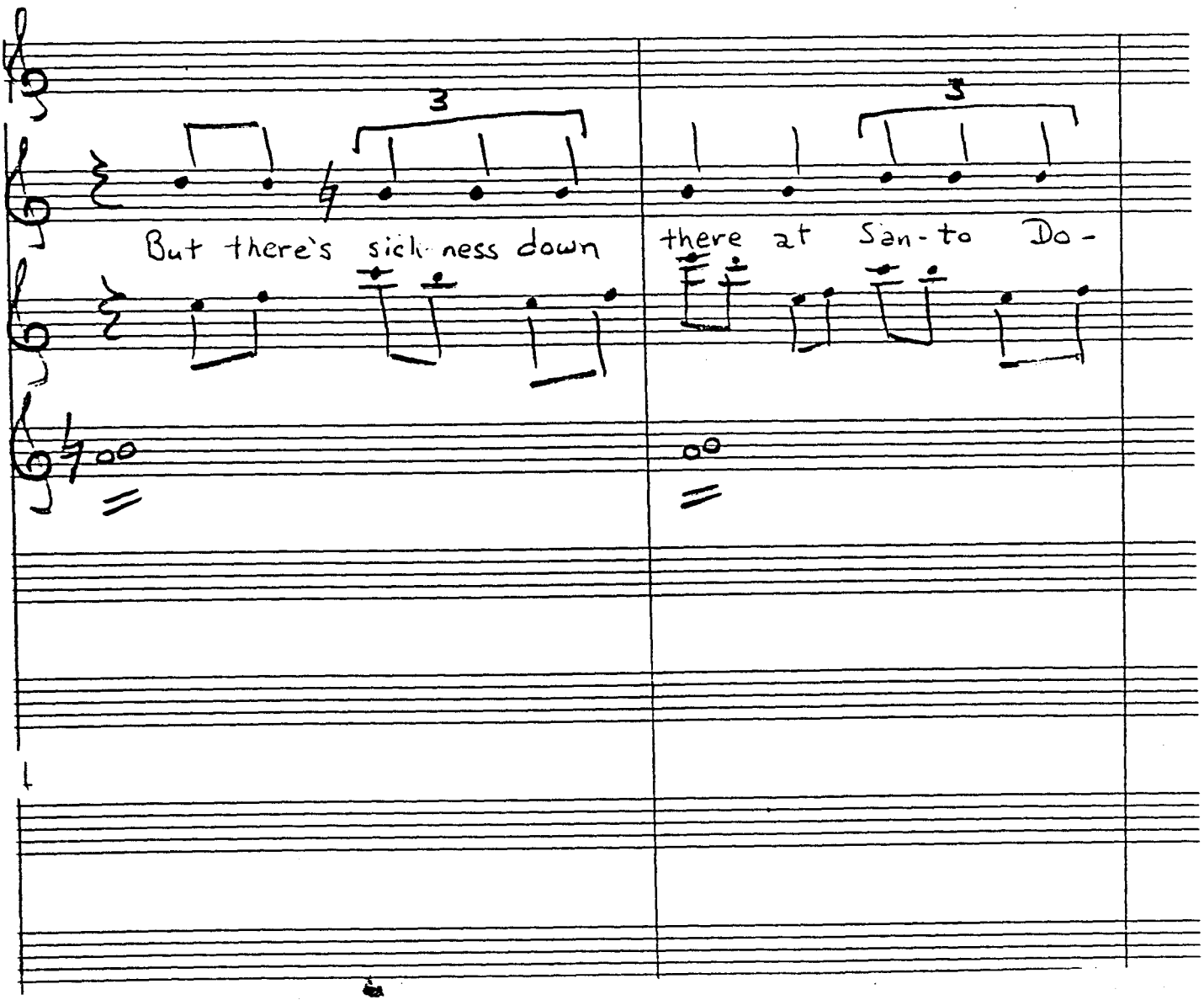

And he smiled so ve-ry warm-ly

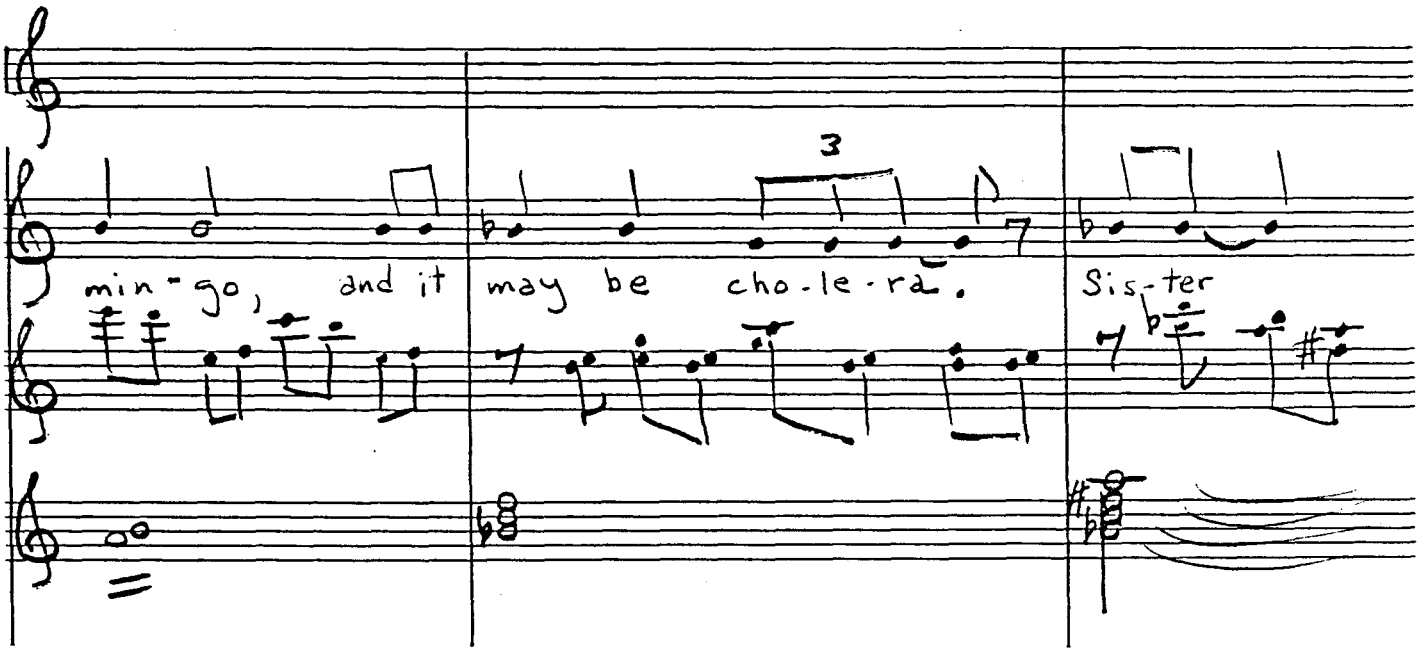

Tempo I
He's out-side there with his bur-ro,
Mother Magdalena
bells again


3
I'm sure he's a love-ly old man with white whis-kers

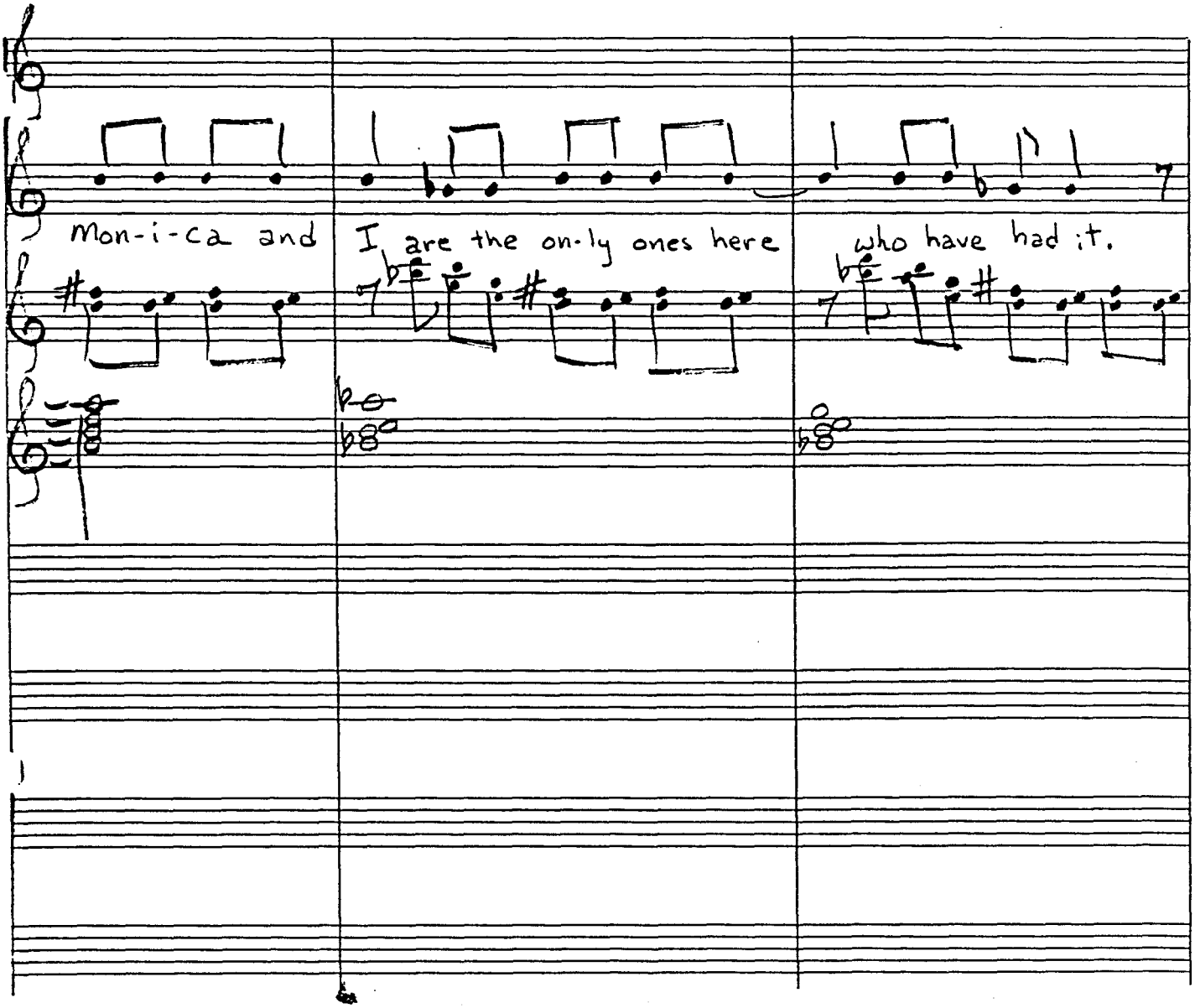

3
and that his bur-ro is a charm-ing bur-ro.

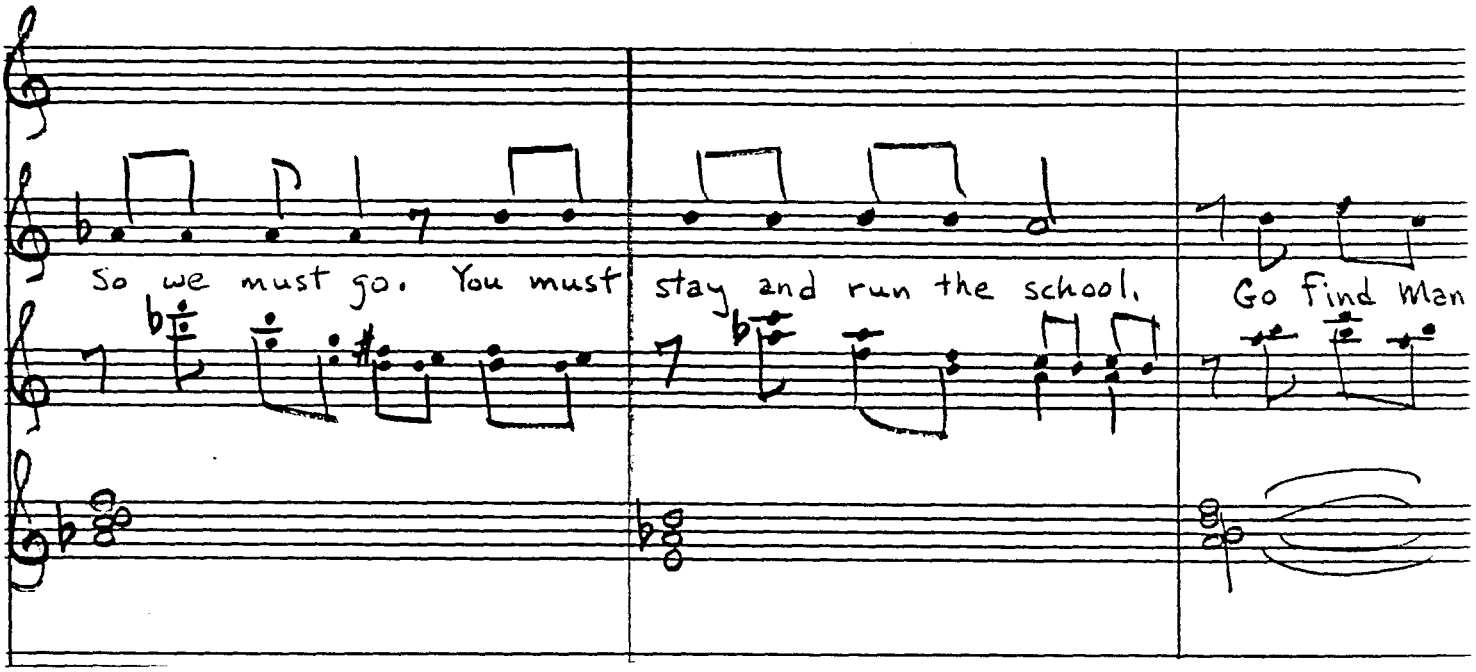

He al-so has ham-mers,
one saw, and a T- square

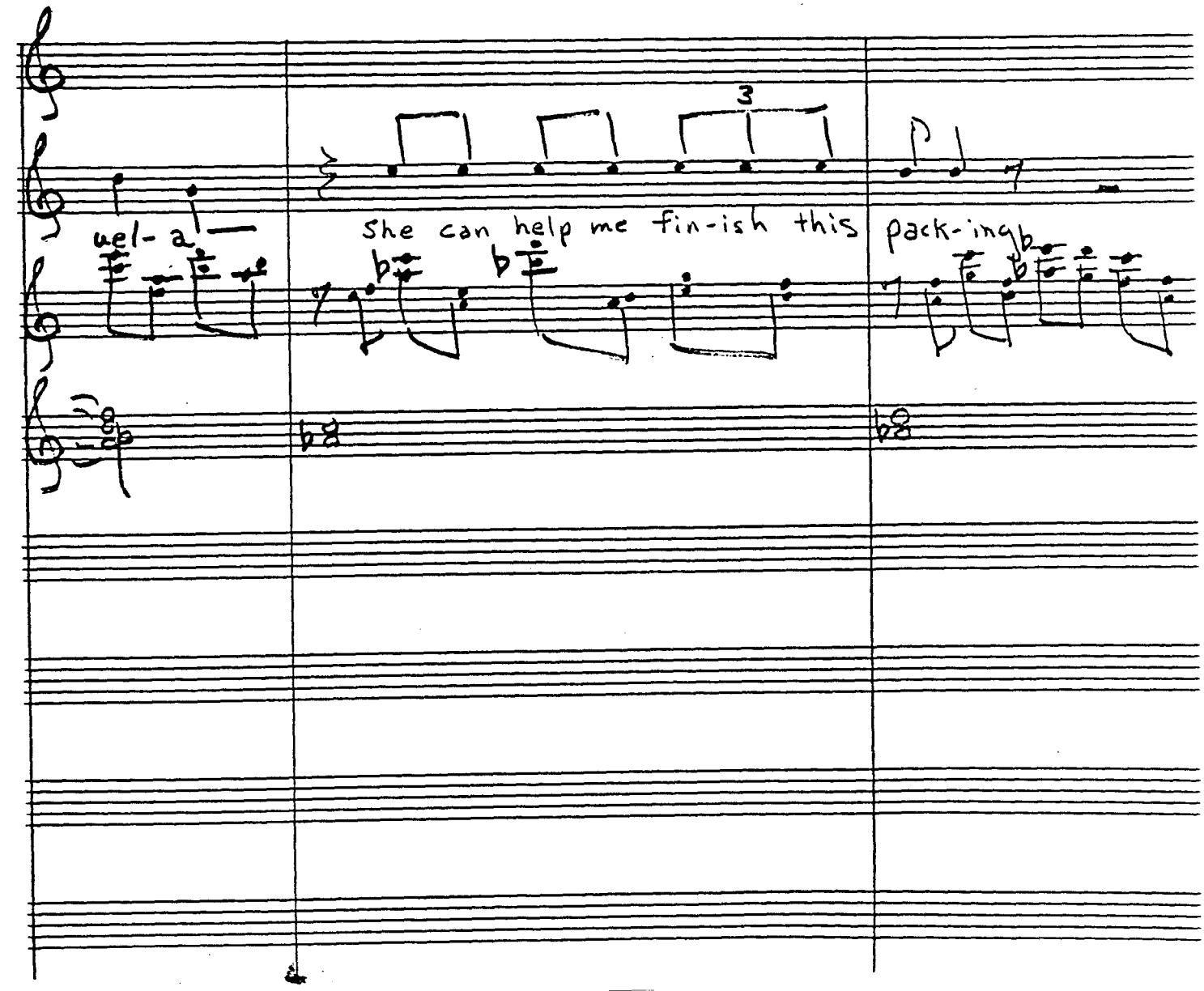

But there's sick-ness down
there at San-to Do-

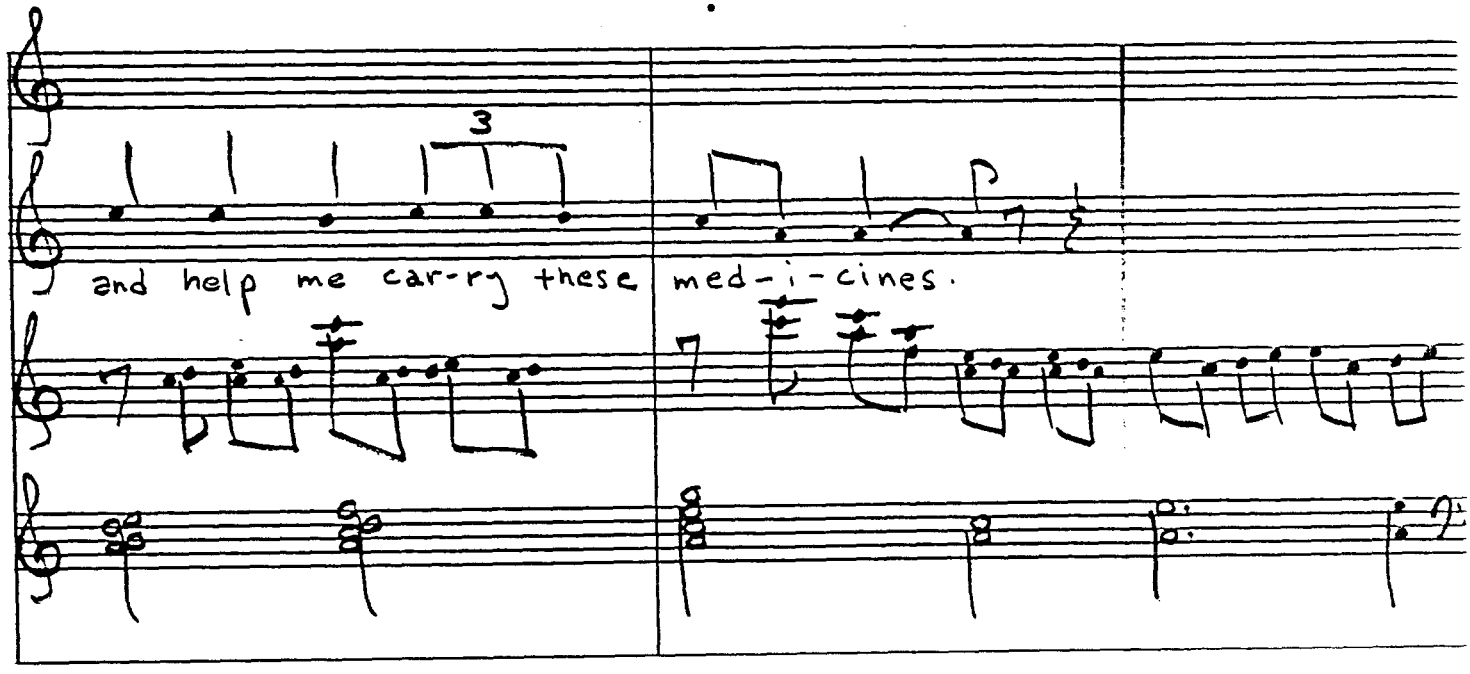

3
min-go, and it may be cho-le-ra. Sis-ter

30


Mon-i-ca and I are the on-ly ones here who have had it.

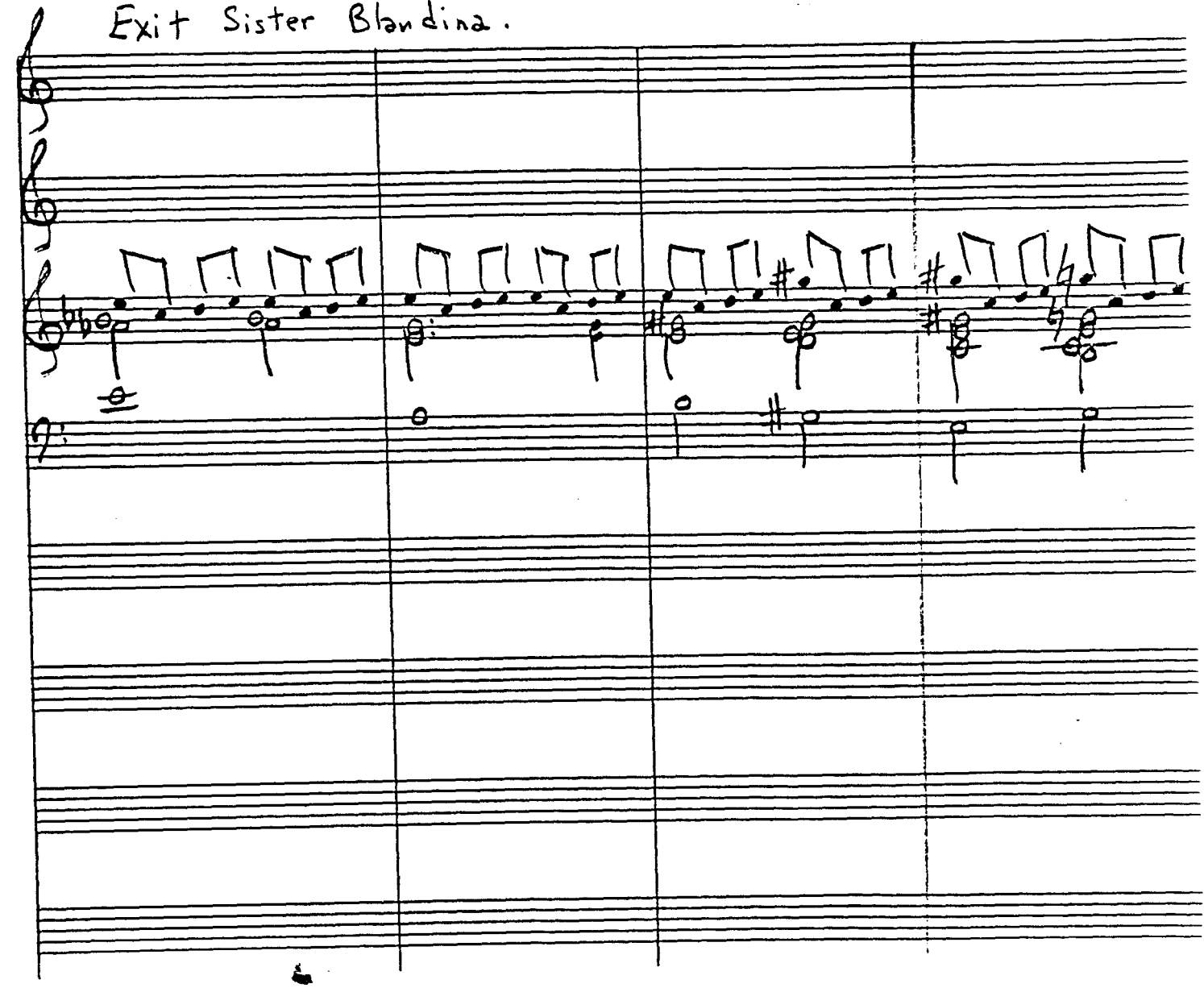

So we must go. You must stay and run the school. Go find Man

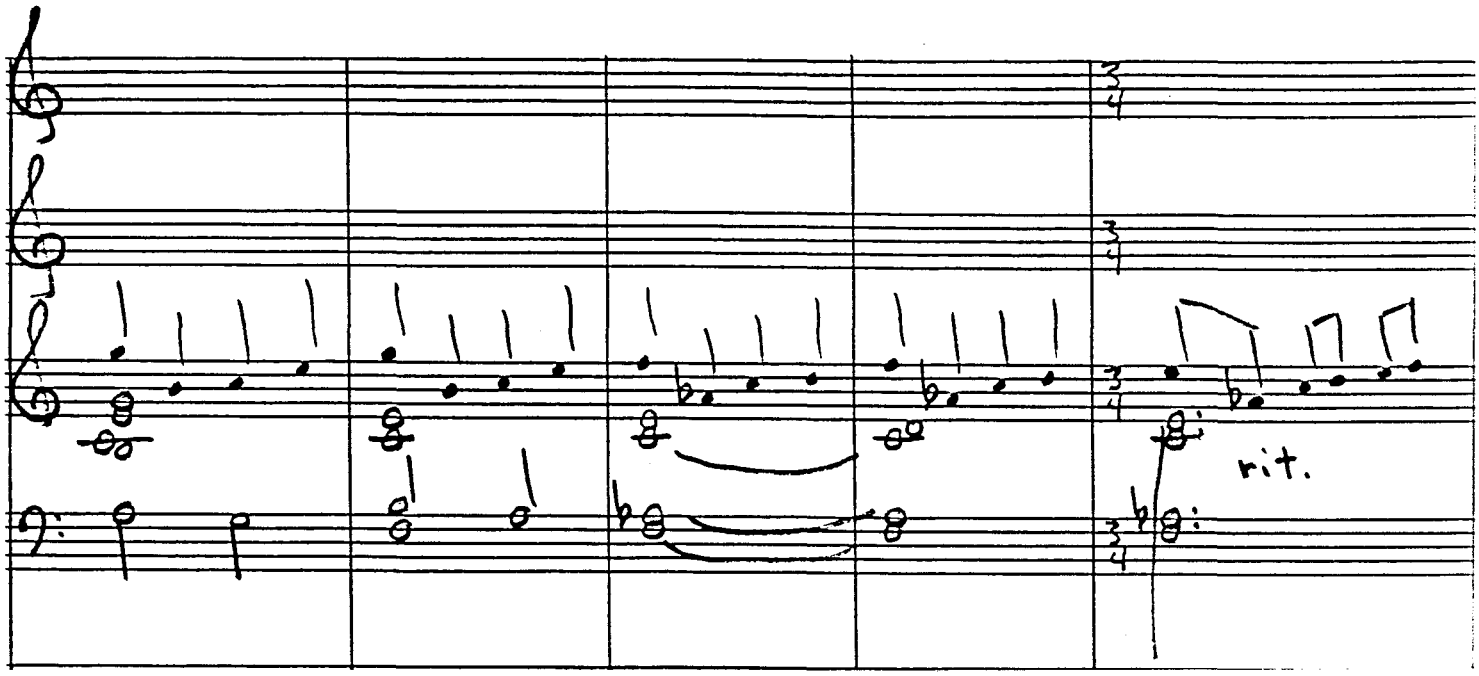

uel- a
She can help me fin-ish this pack-ing



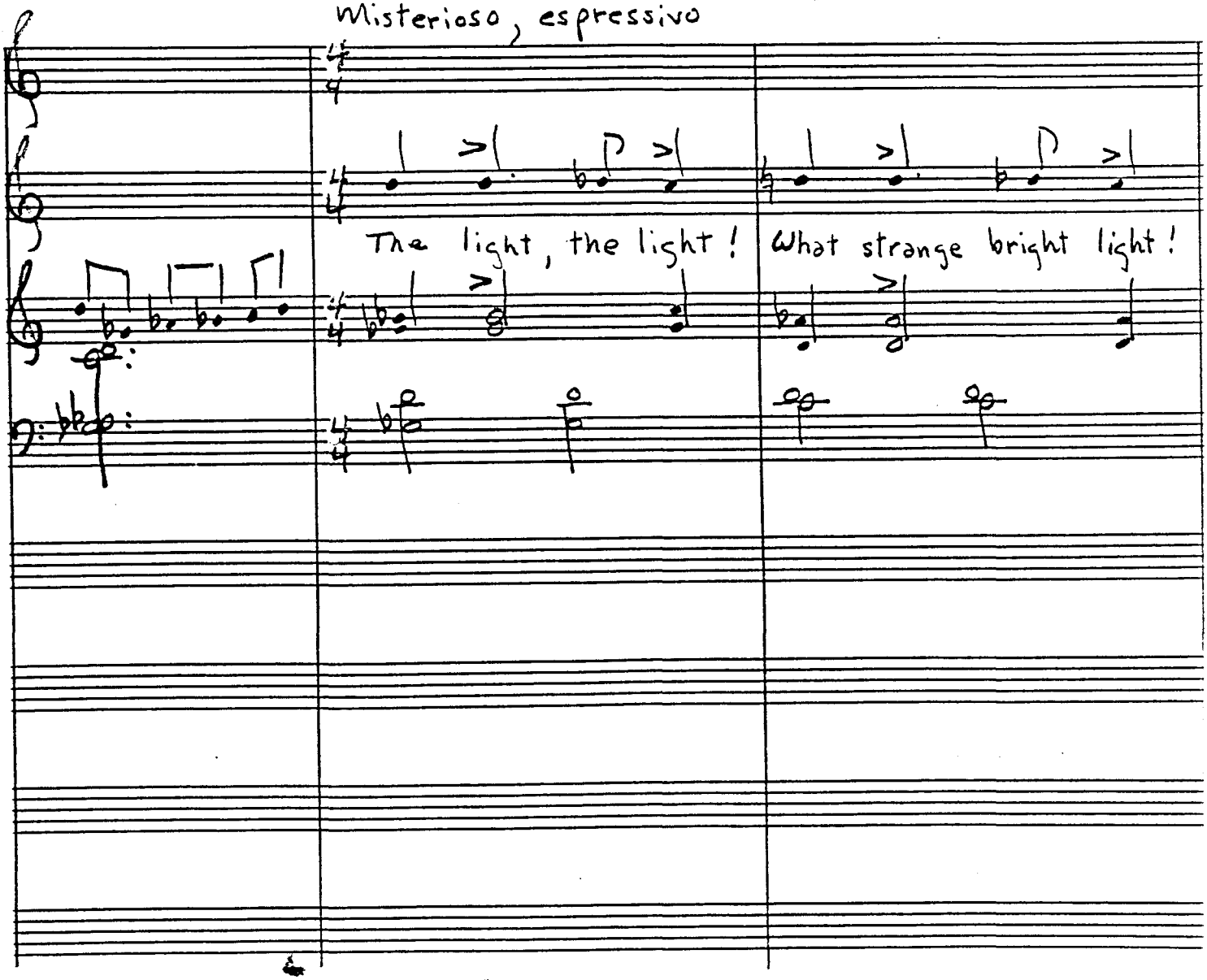
34

Exit Sister Blandina.



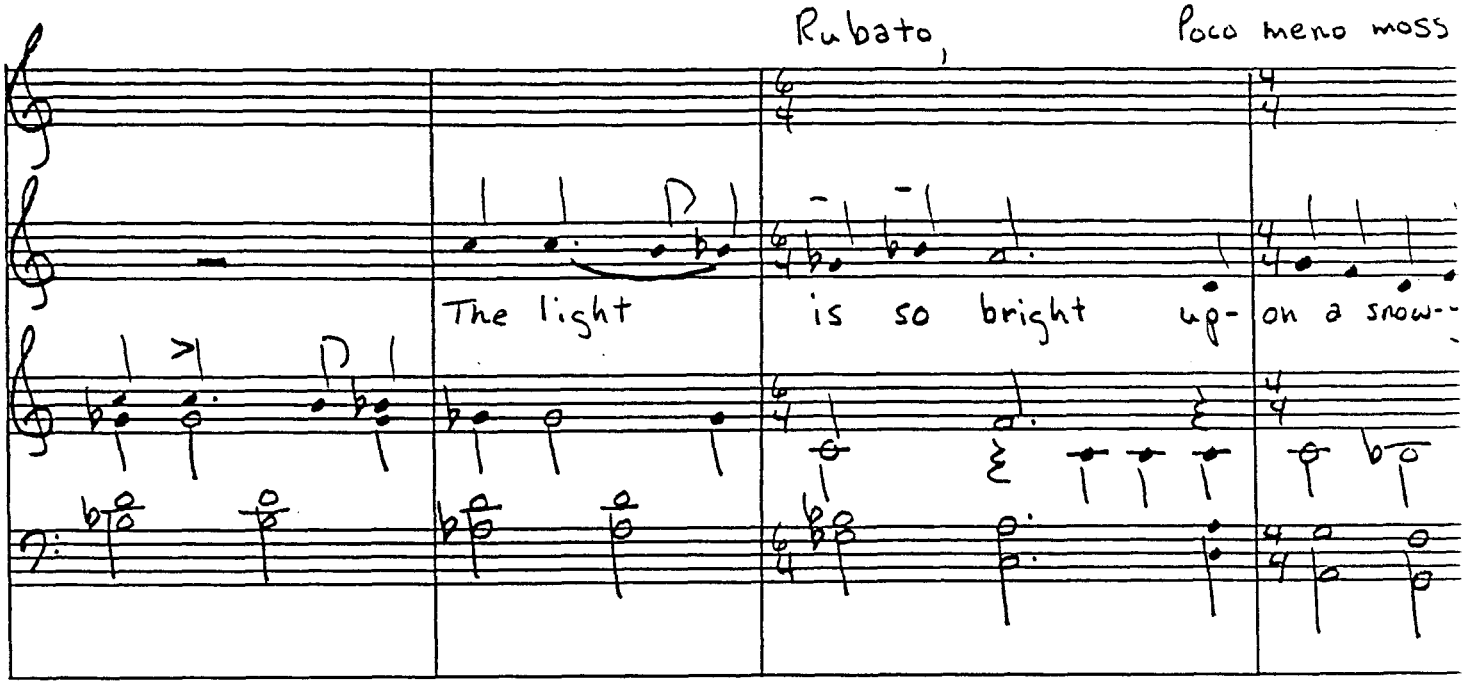

rit.

36


Misterioso, espressivo
The light, the light!
What strange bright light!

37

Rubato, Poco meno moss



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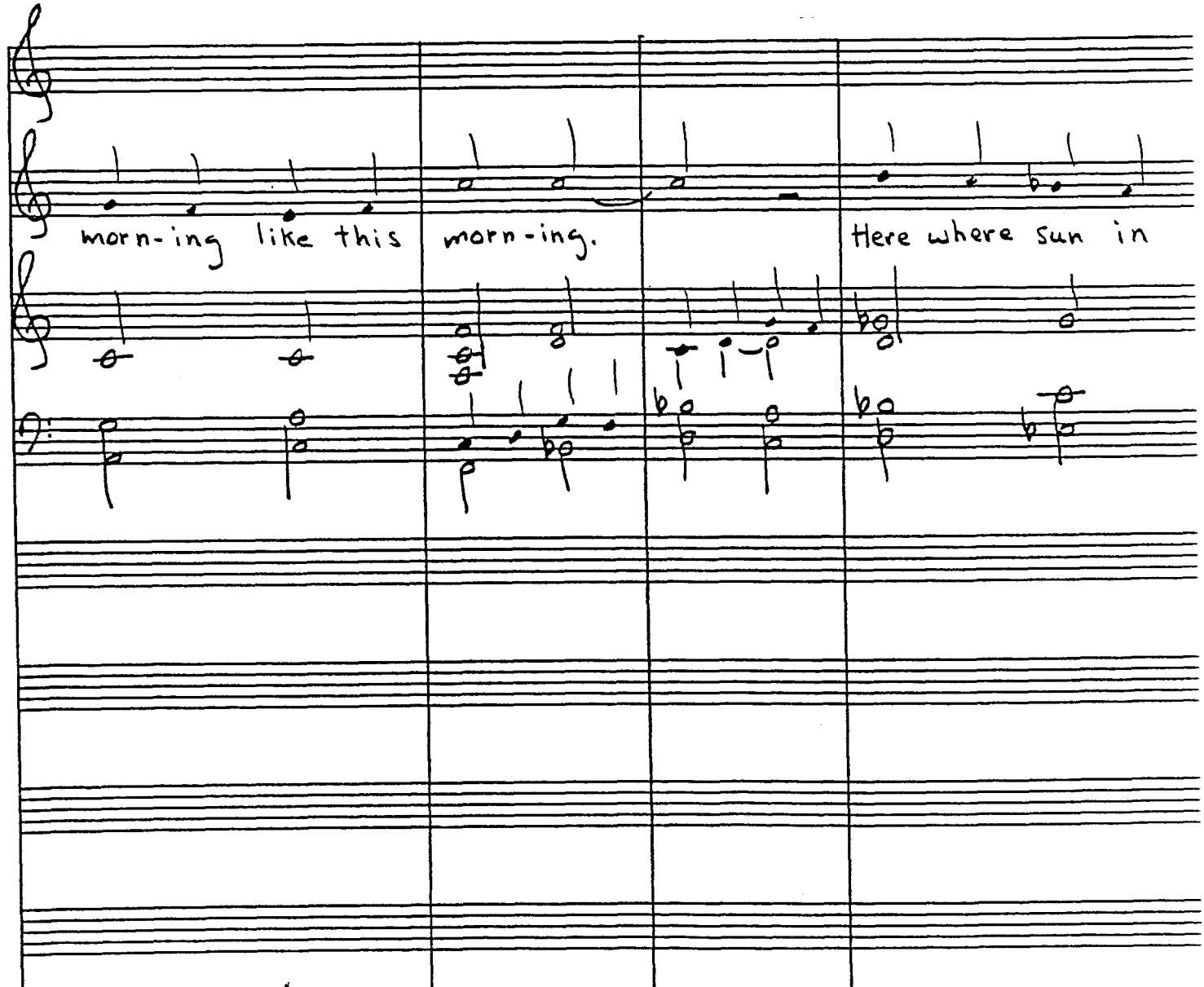
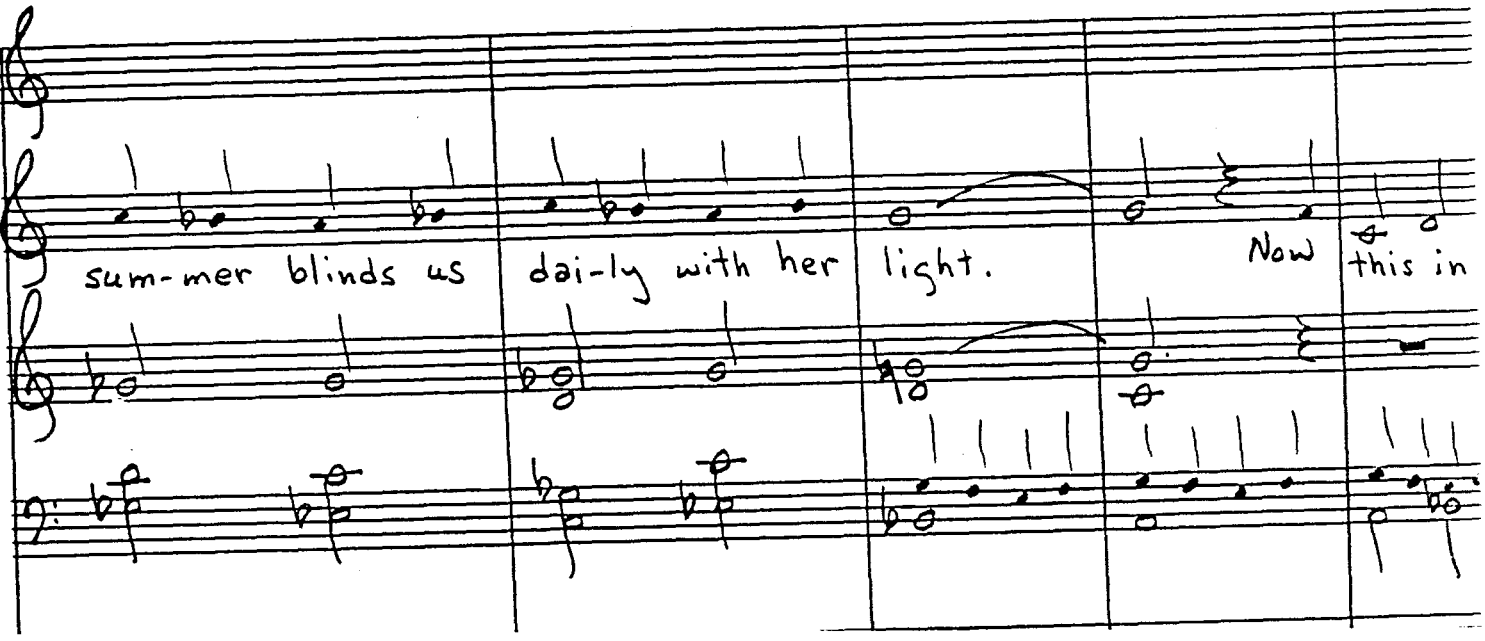
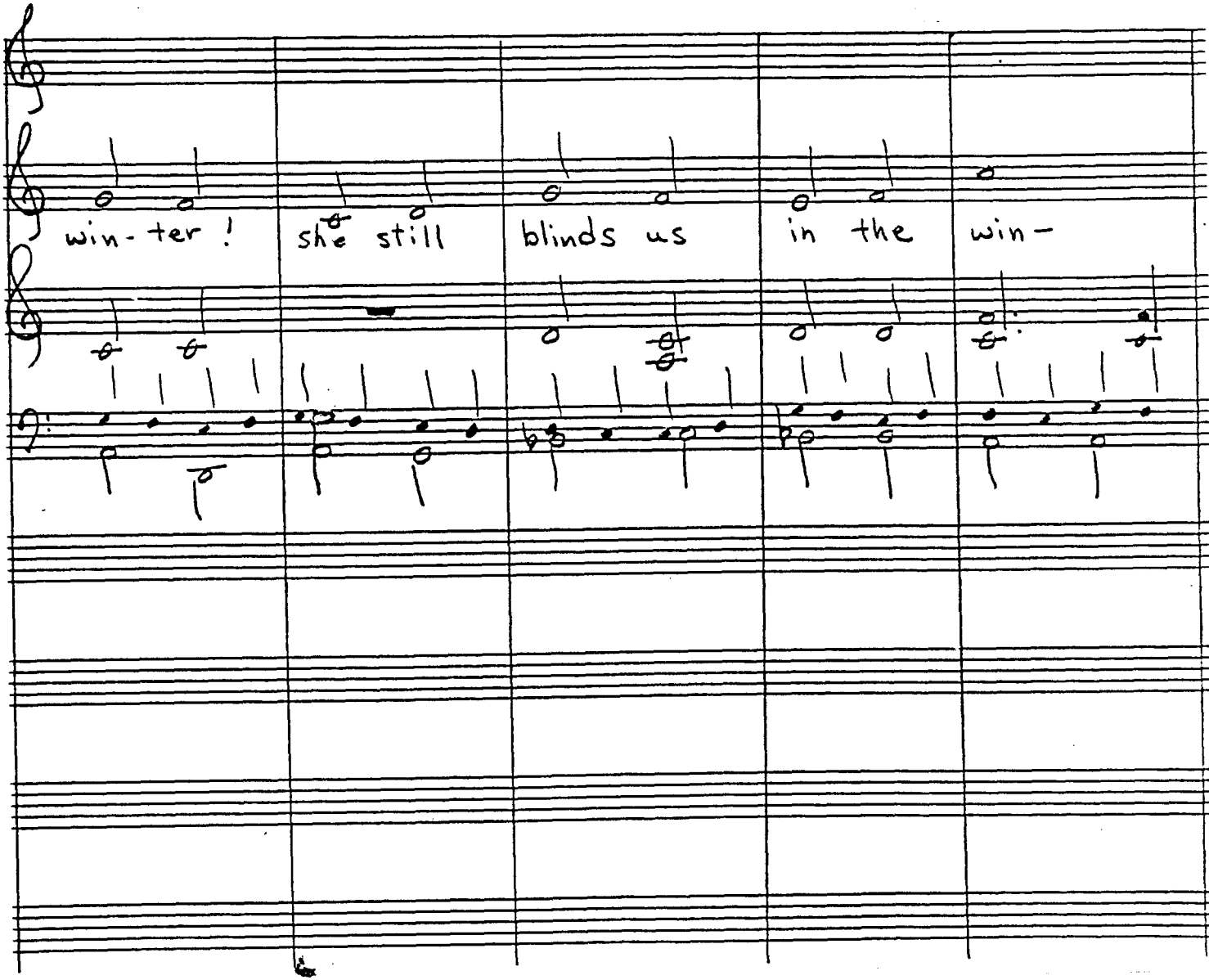
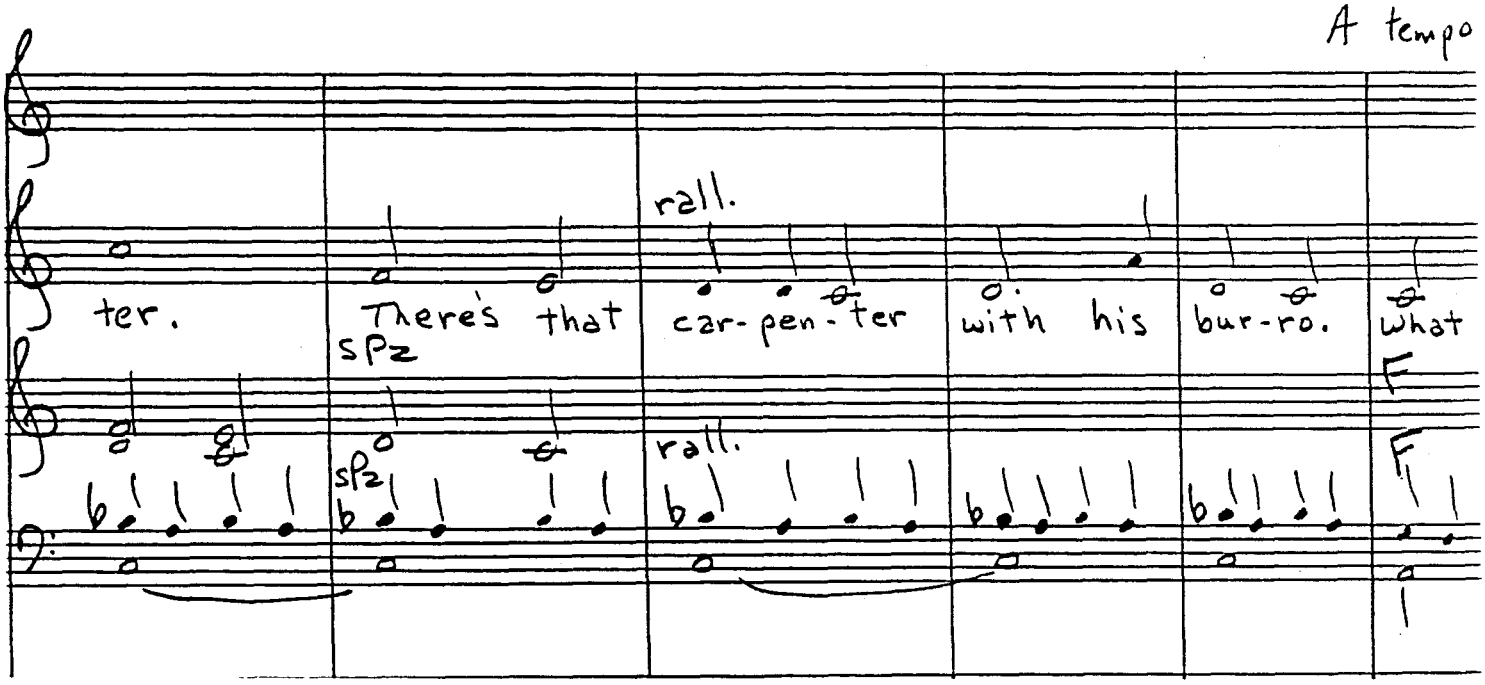



sum-mer blinds us dai-ly with her light. Now this in

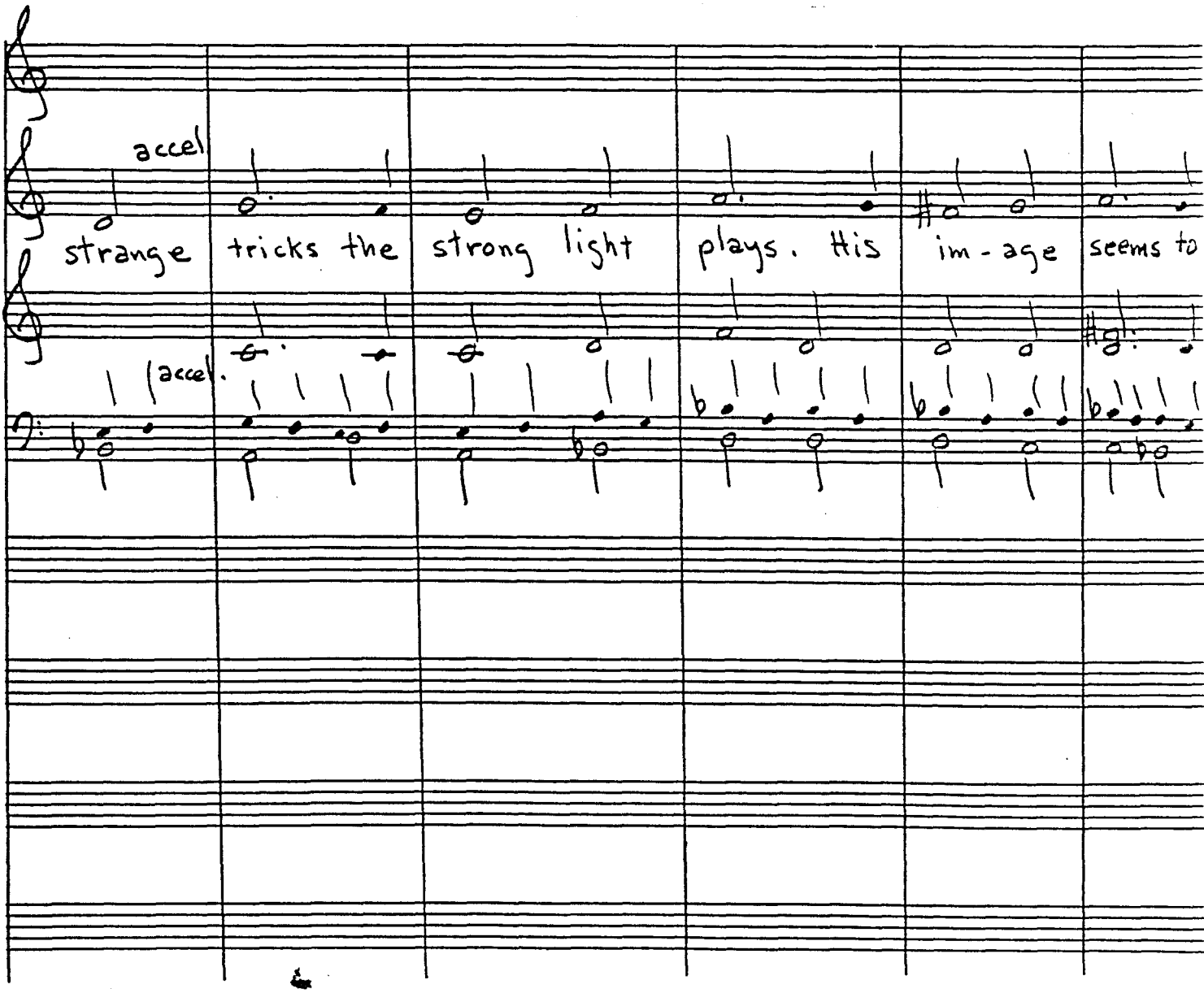

win-ter! she still blinds us in the win-

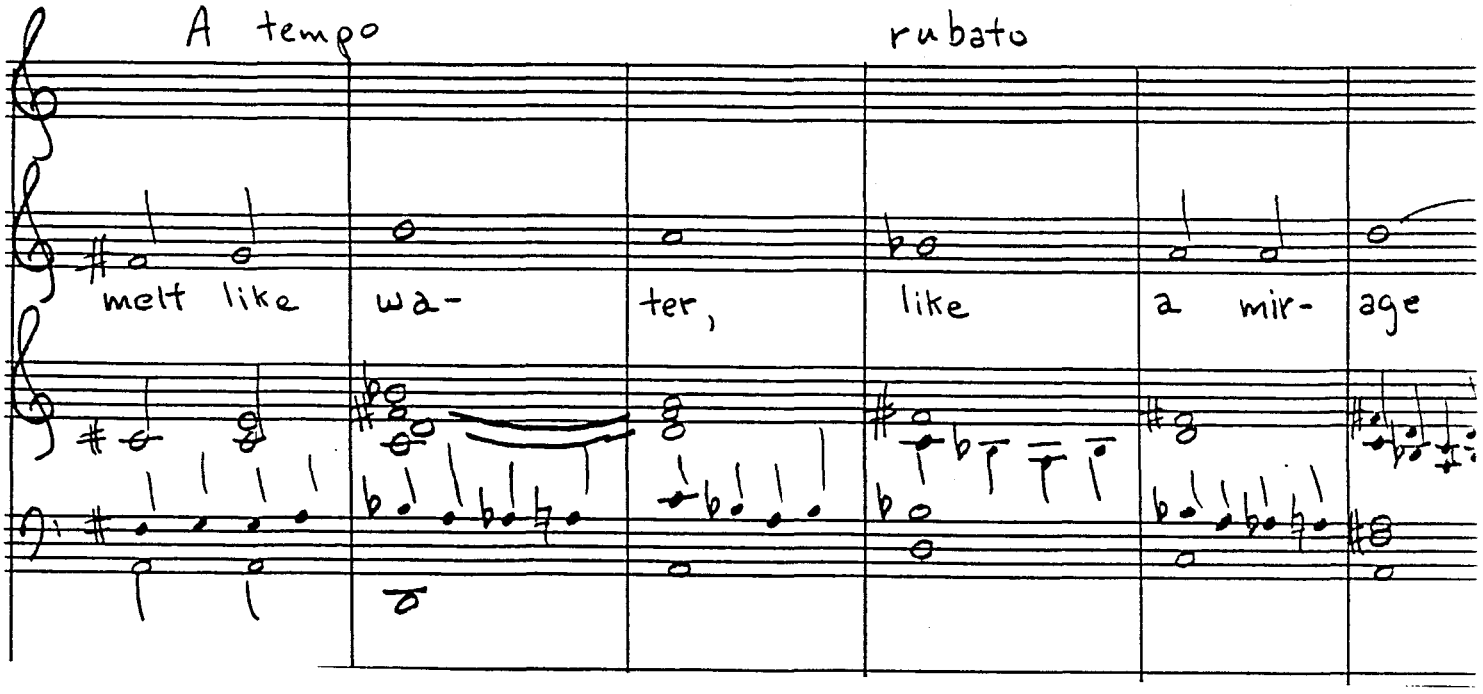
41

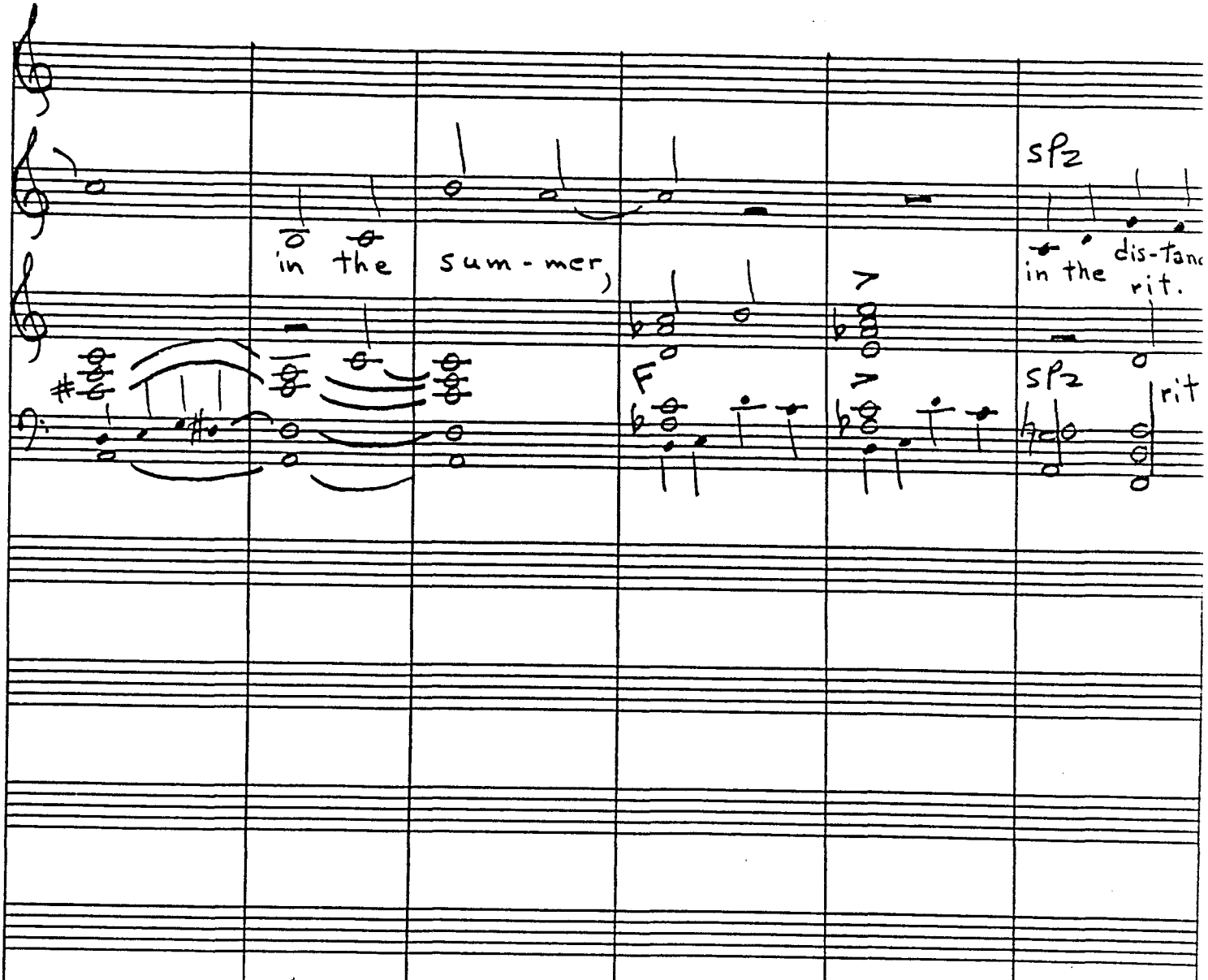
A tempo

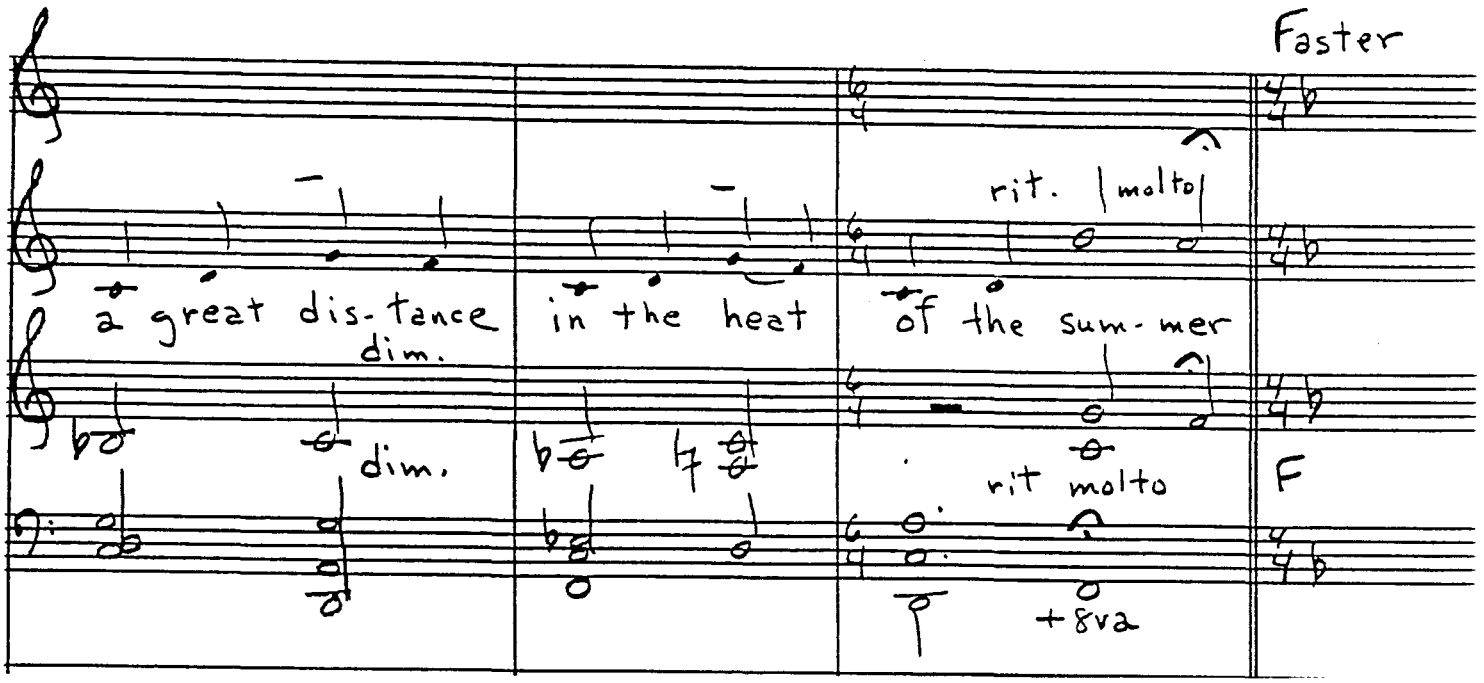

rall.
ter.
There's that car-pen-ter with his bur-ro. what
sfz
sfz
rall.
F
F

42

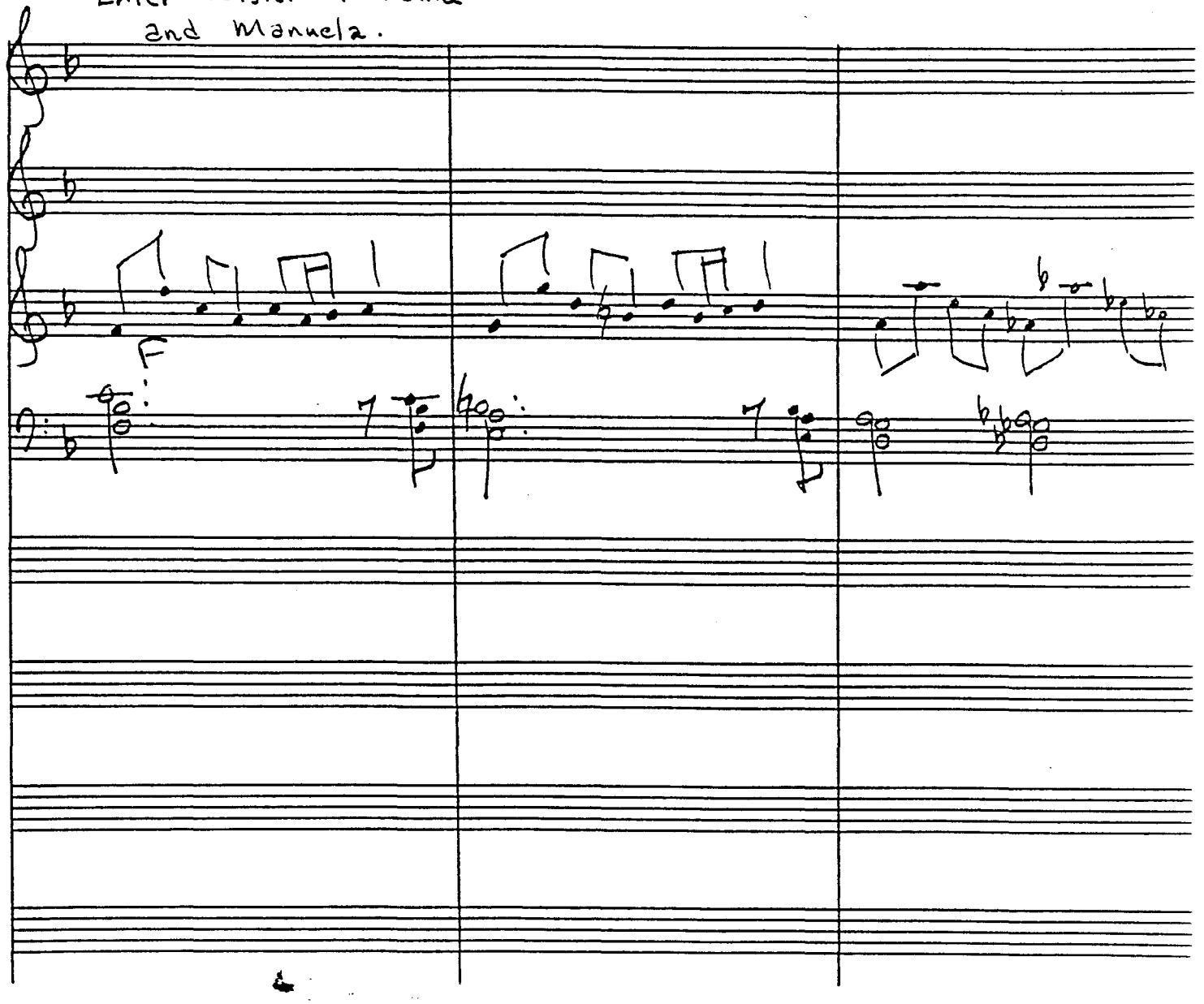

accel
strange tricks the strong light plays. his im-age seems to
(accel.


A tempo
rubato
melt like wa- ter, like a mir- age


in the sum-mer,
F
sp z
in the dis-tan
rit.
sp z
rit



Enter Sister Blandina and Manuela. 46



47

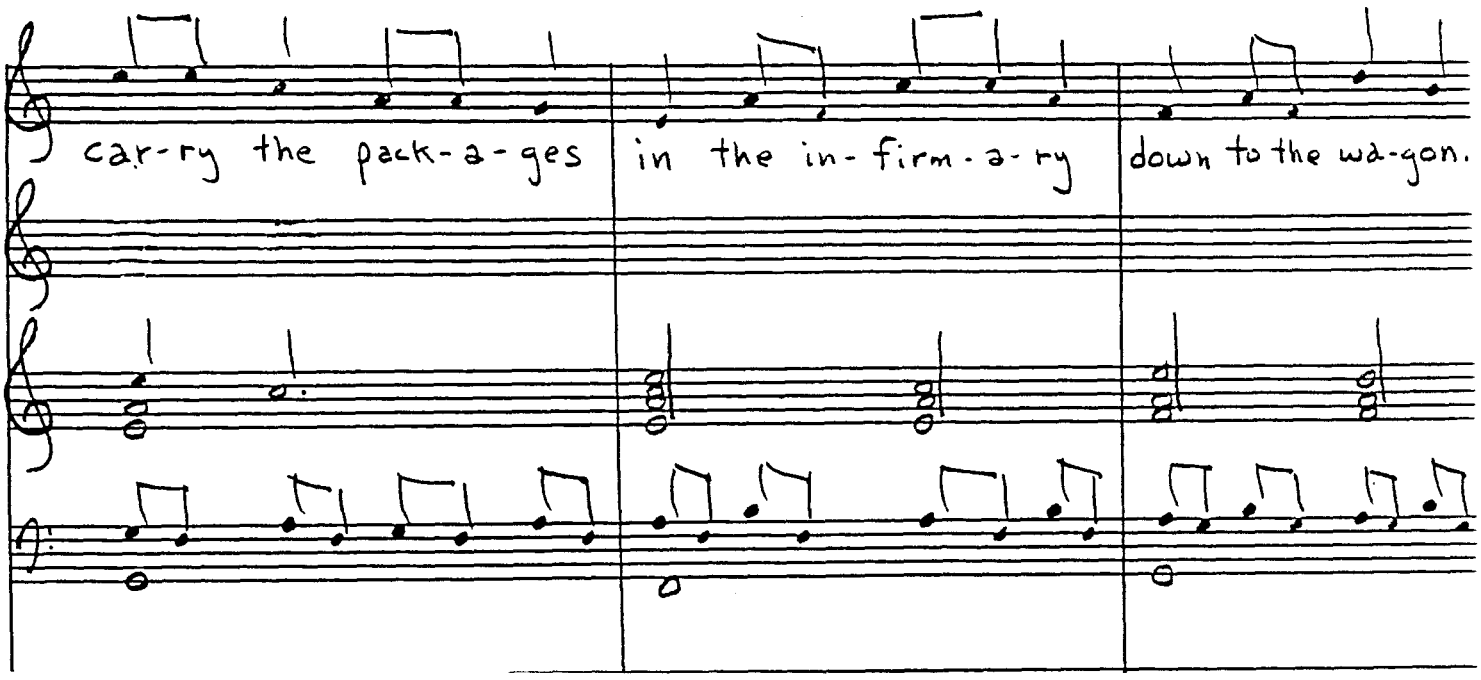
Sister Blandina:

3

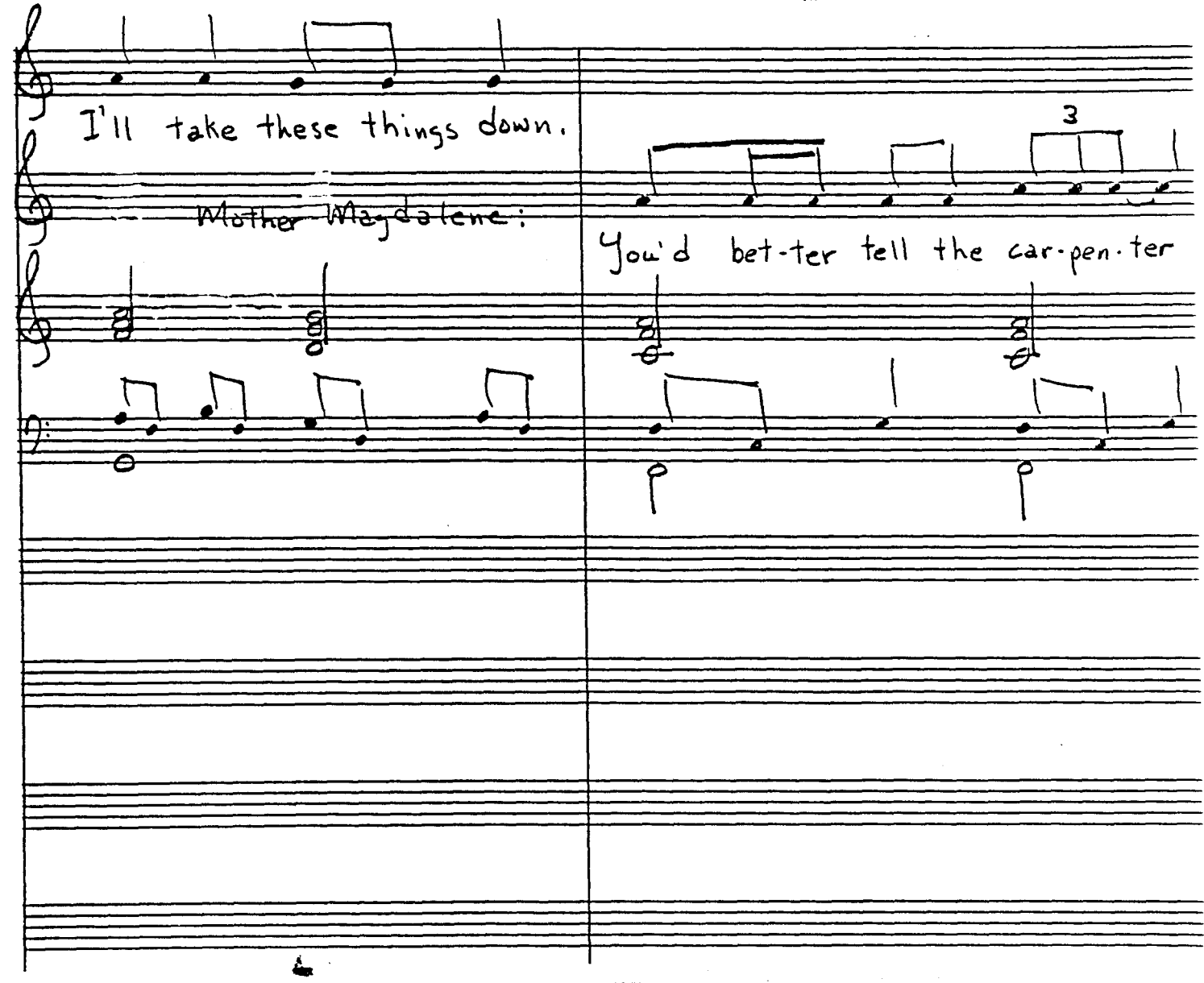
Help Mo-ther Mag-da-lene

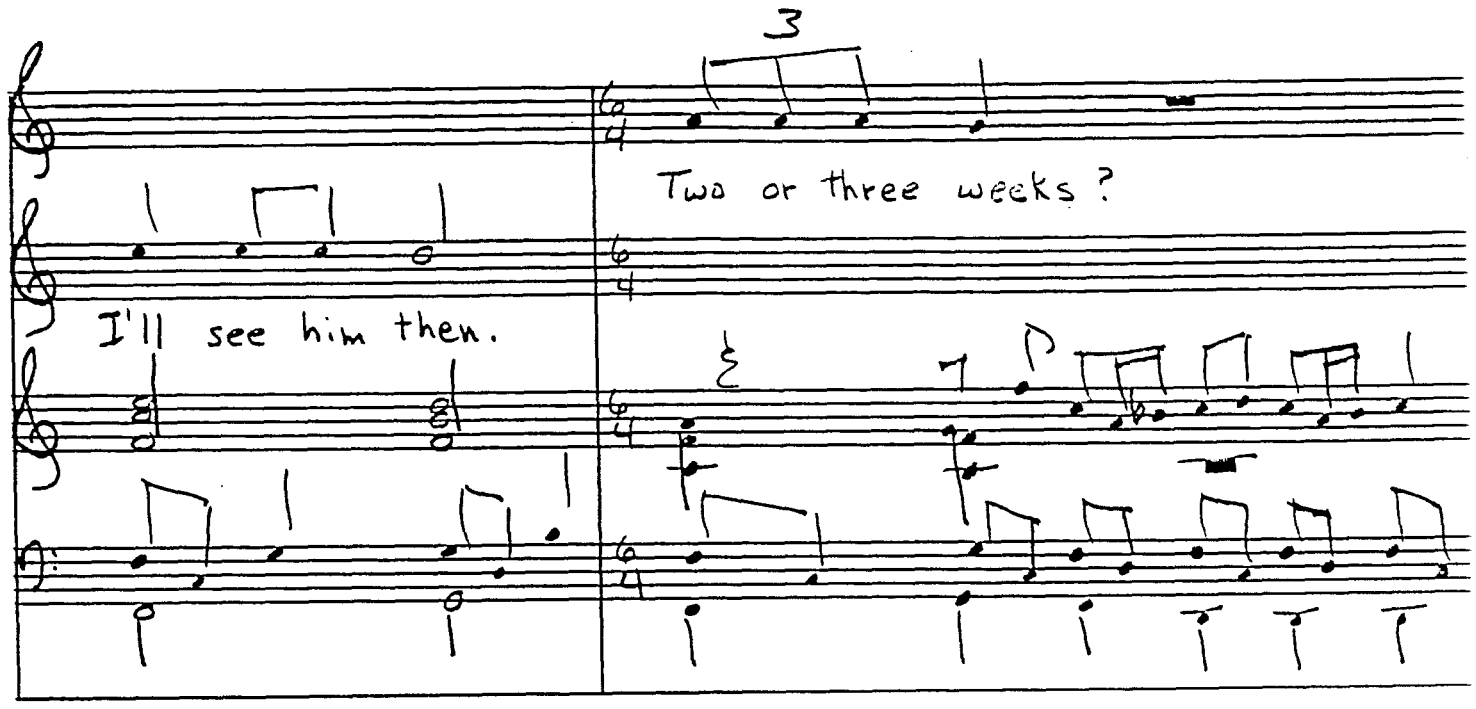
48

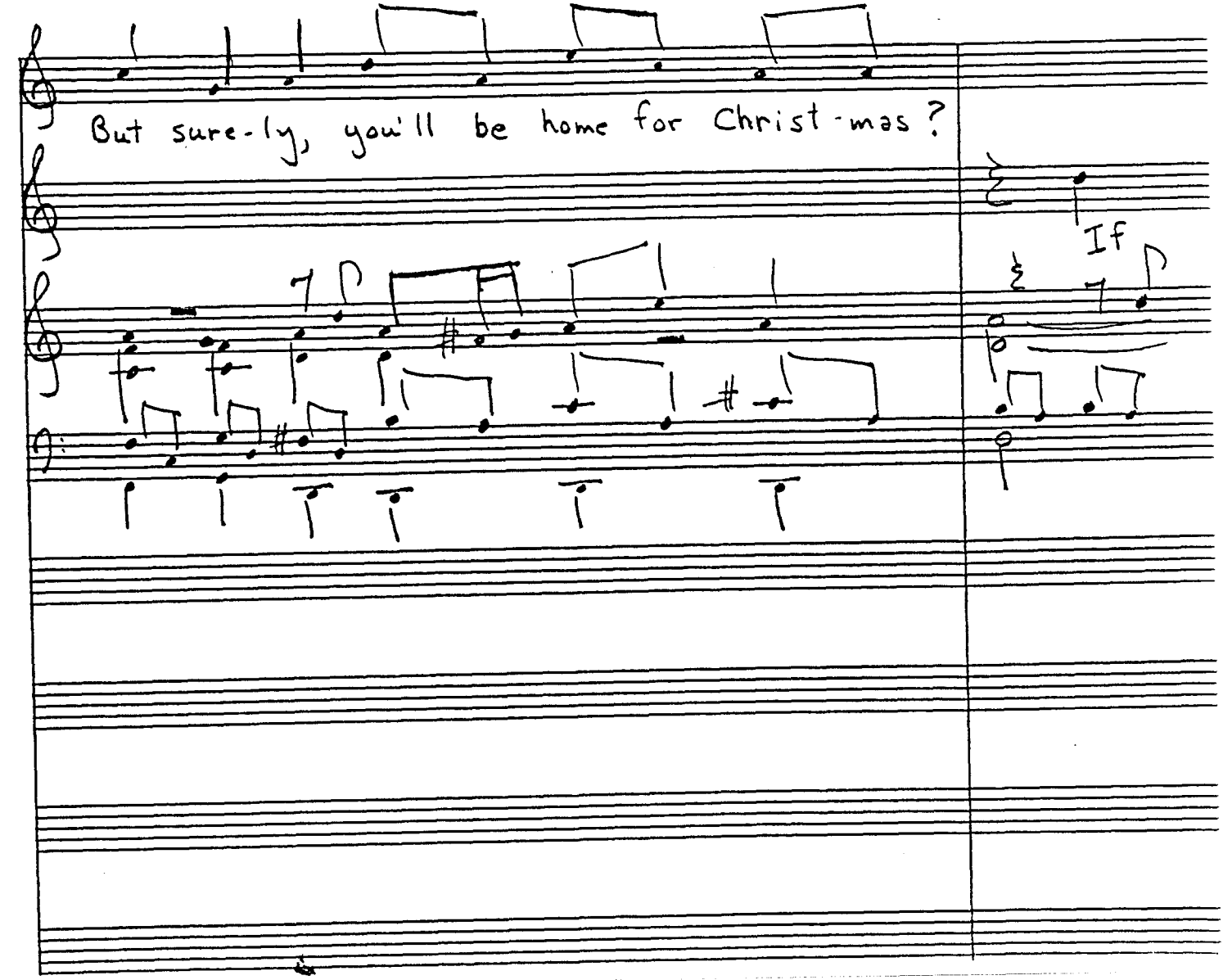
with these last few things. Then

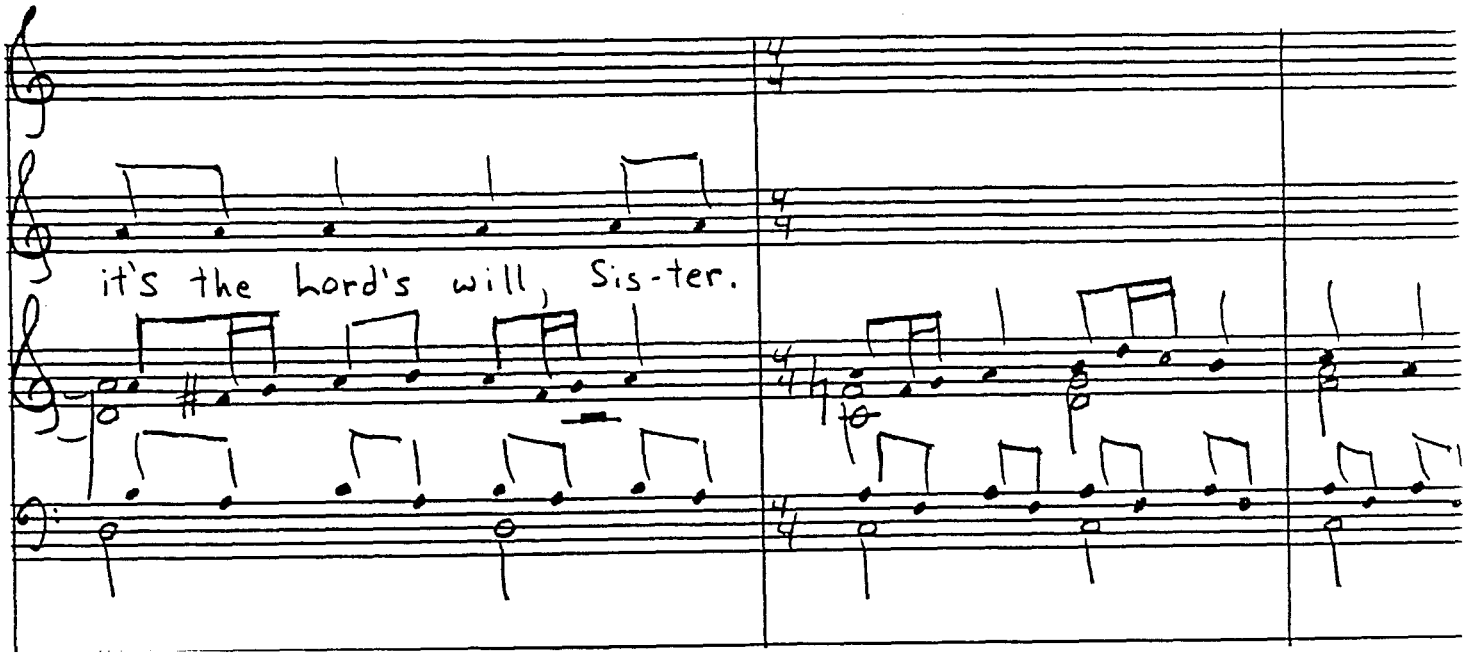

car-ry the pack-a-ges
in the in-firm-a-ry
down to the wa-gon.

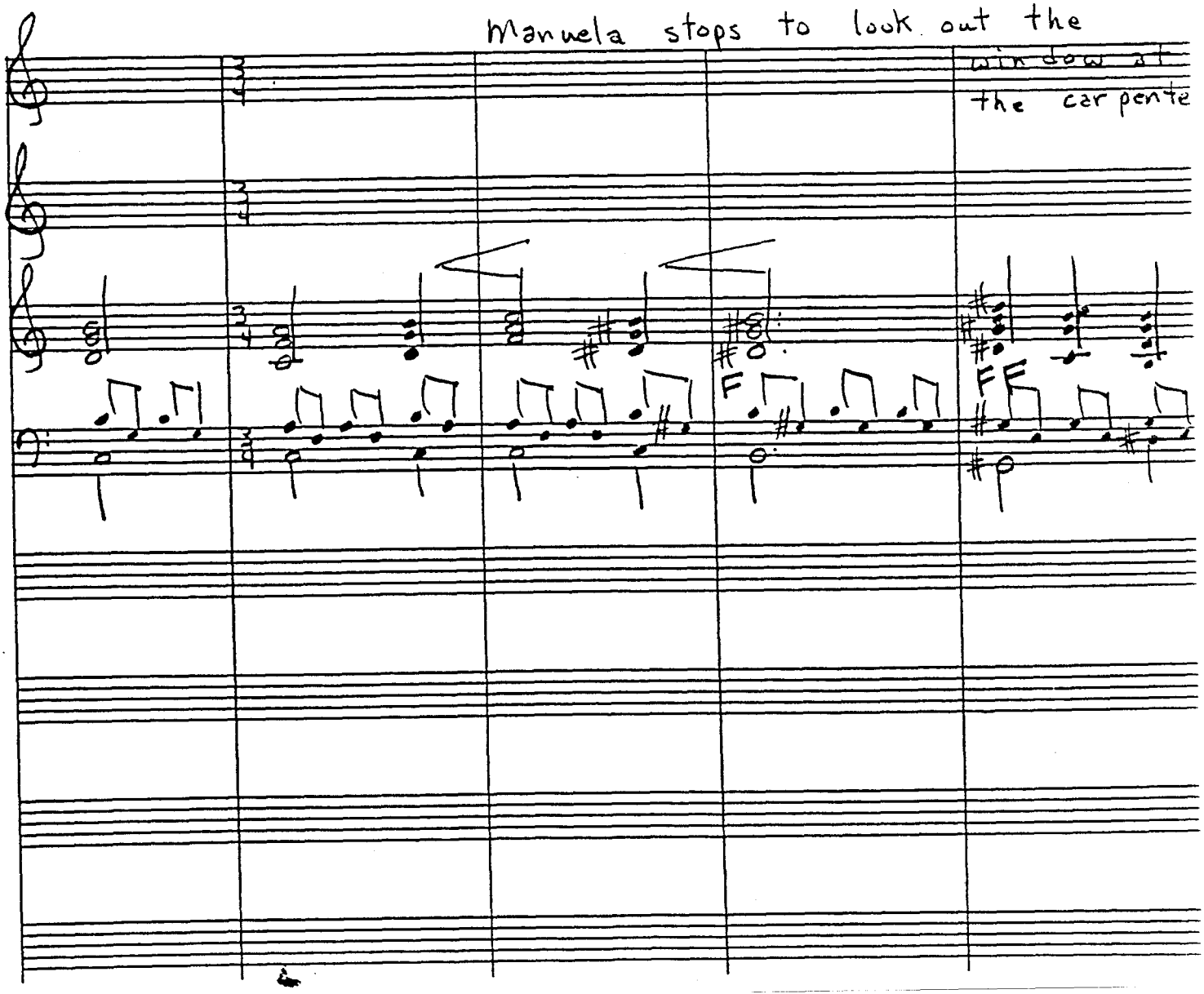
50


I'll take these things down.
Mother Magdalene:
3
You'd bet-ter tell the car-pen-ter

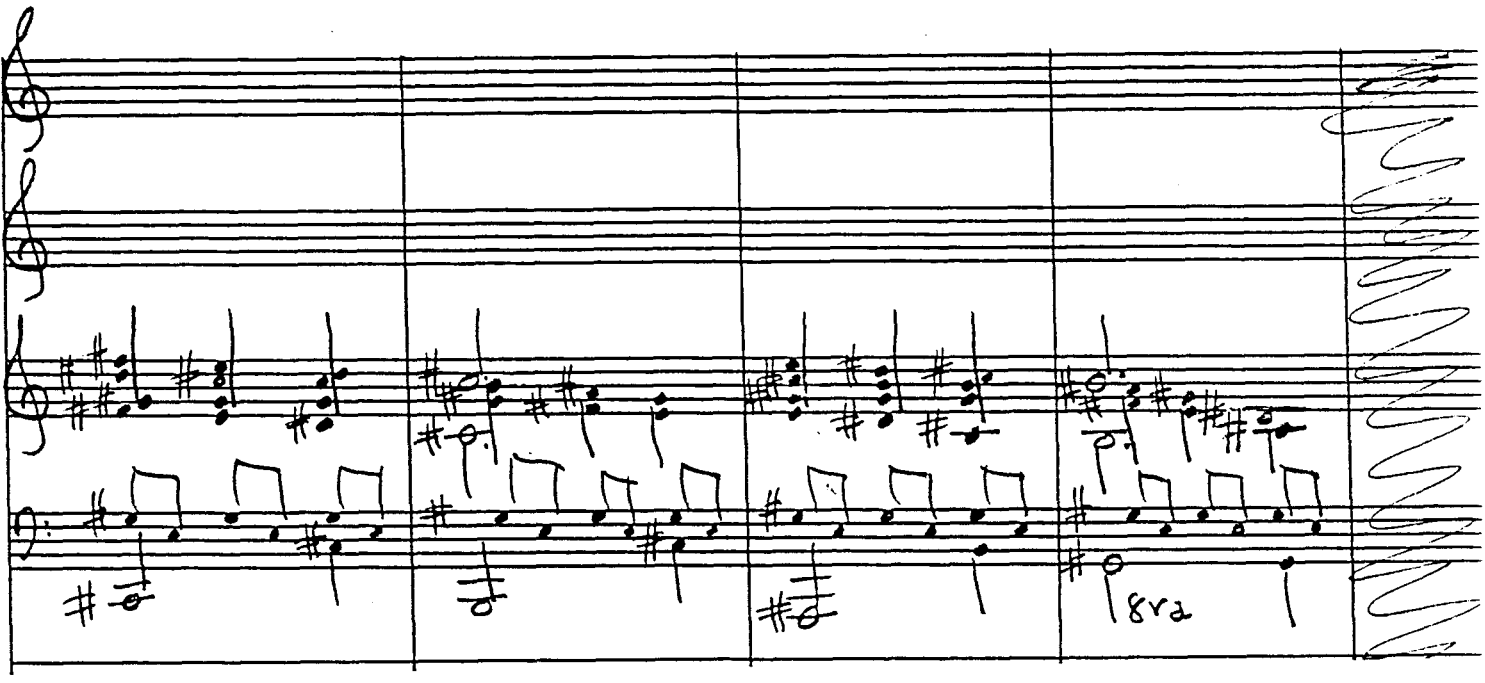

3
Two or three weeks?
I'll see him then.


But sure-ly, you'll be home for Christ-mas?
If

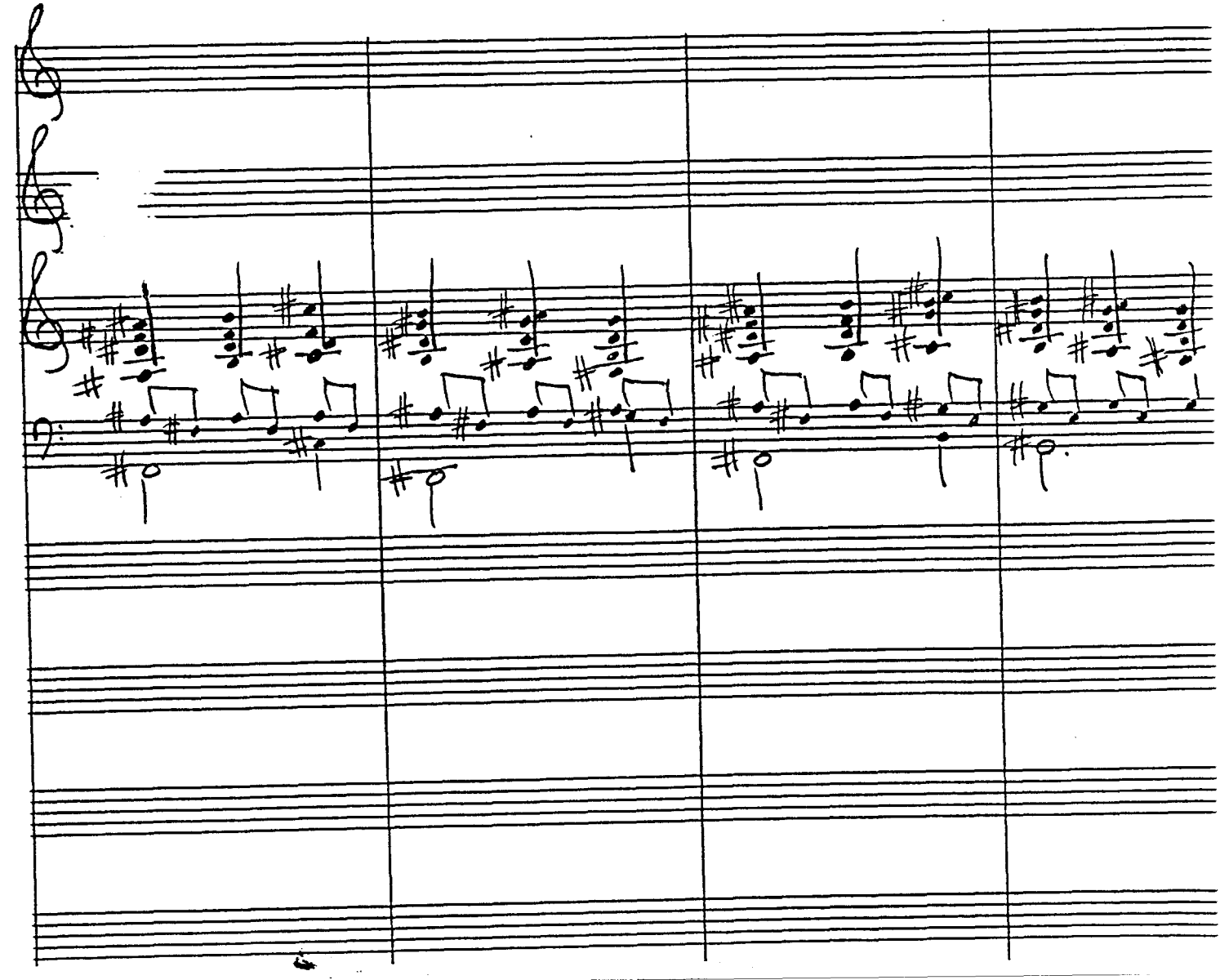

it's the Lord's will, Sis-ter.

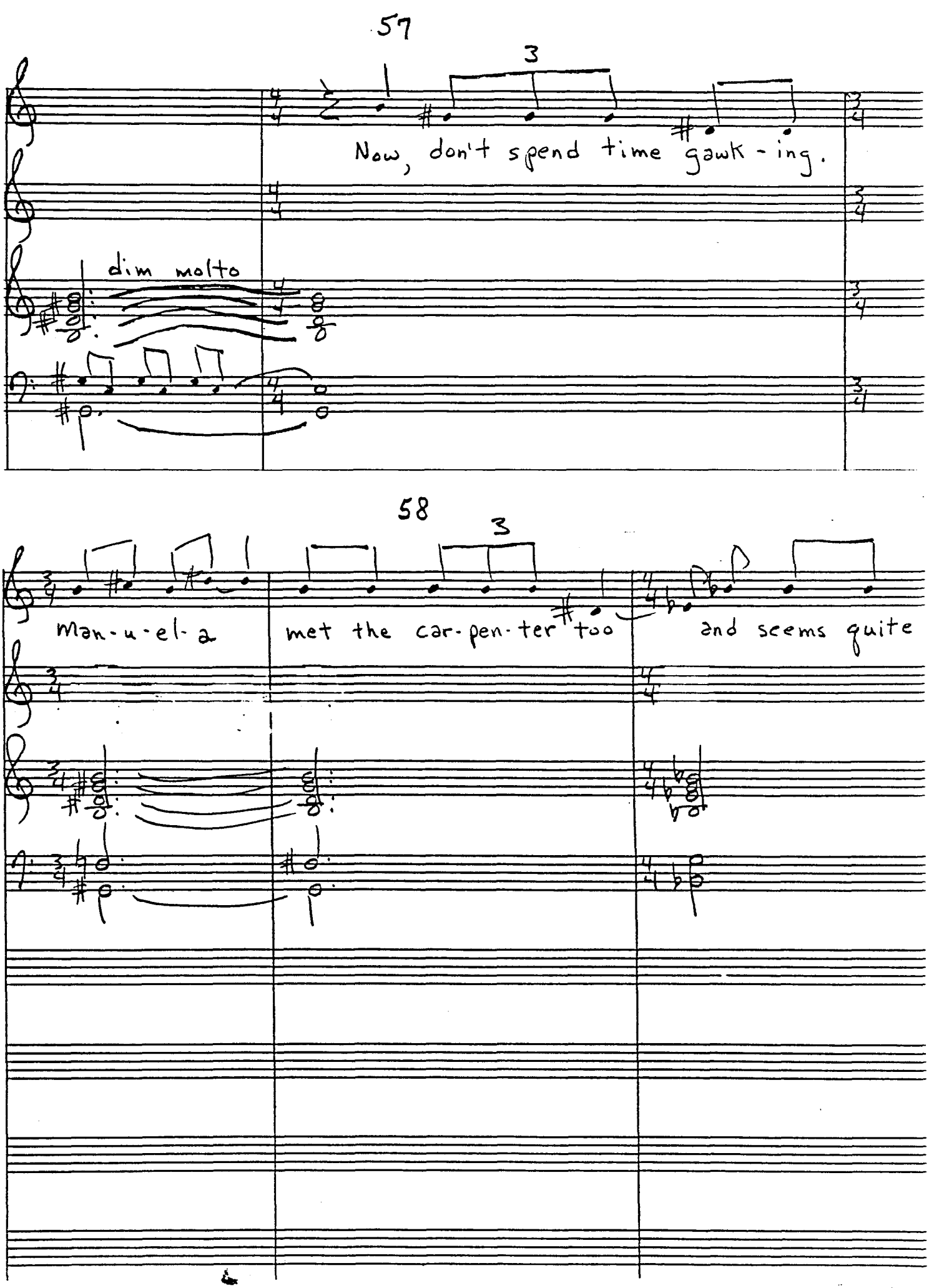

Manuela stops to look out the
window at
the carpente
F
FF

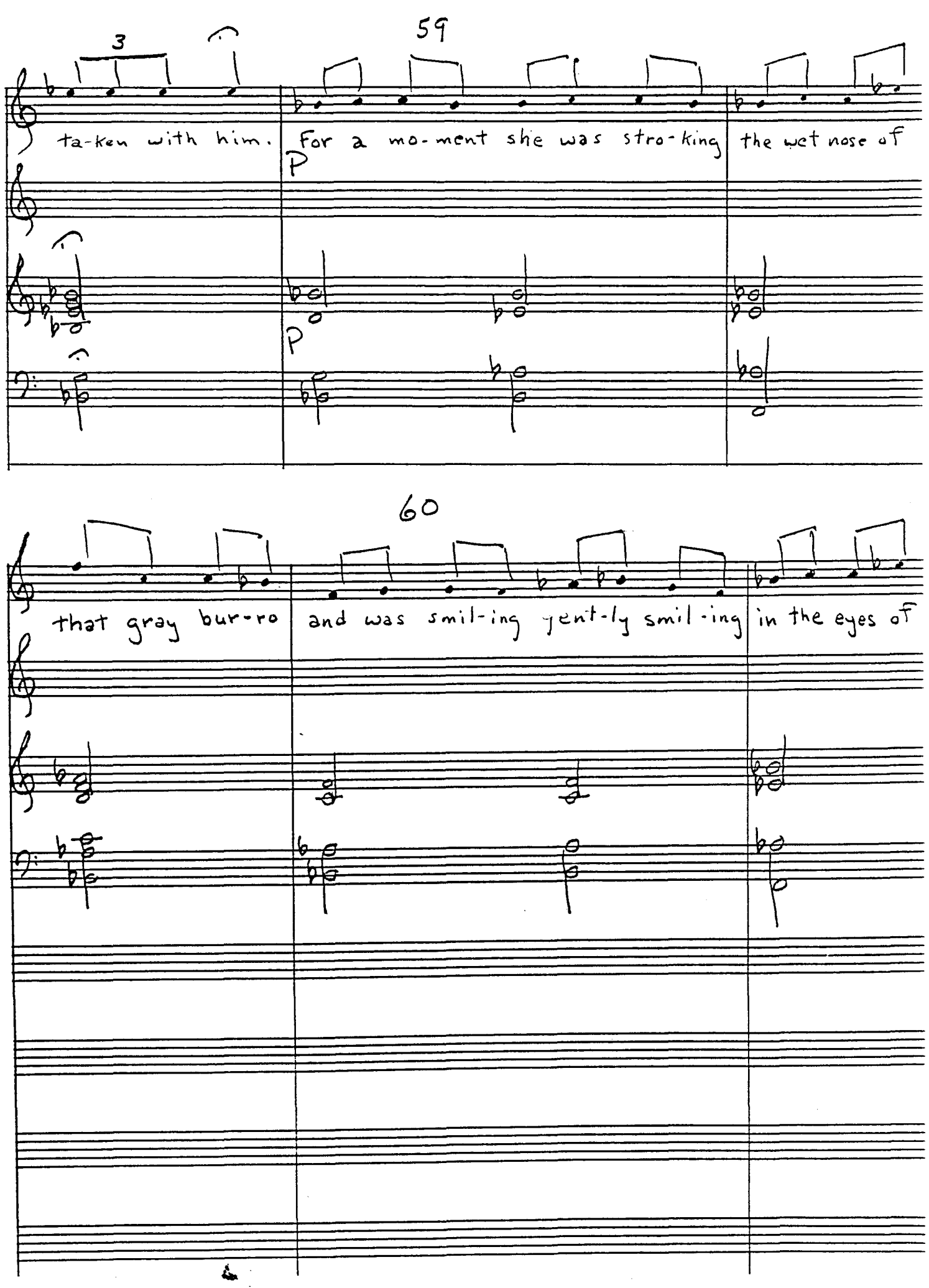
55



56




57
3
Now, don't spend time gawk-ing.
dim molto
58
3
Man-u-el-a
met the car-pen-ter too
and seems quite


59
3
ta-ken with him.
For a mo-ment she was stro-king
the wet nose of
P
P
60
that gray bur-ro
and was smil-ing gent-ly smil-ing
in the eyes of

its mild own-er.
rit.

3

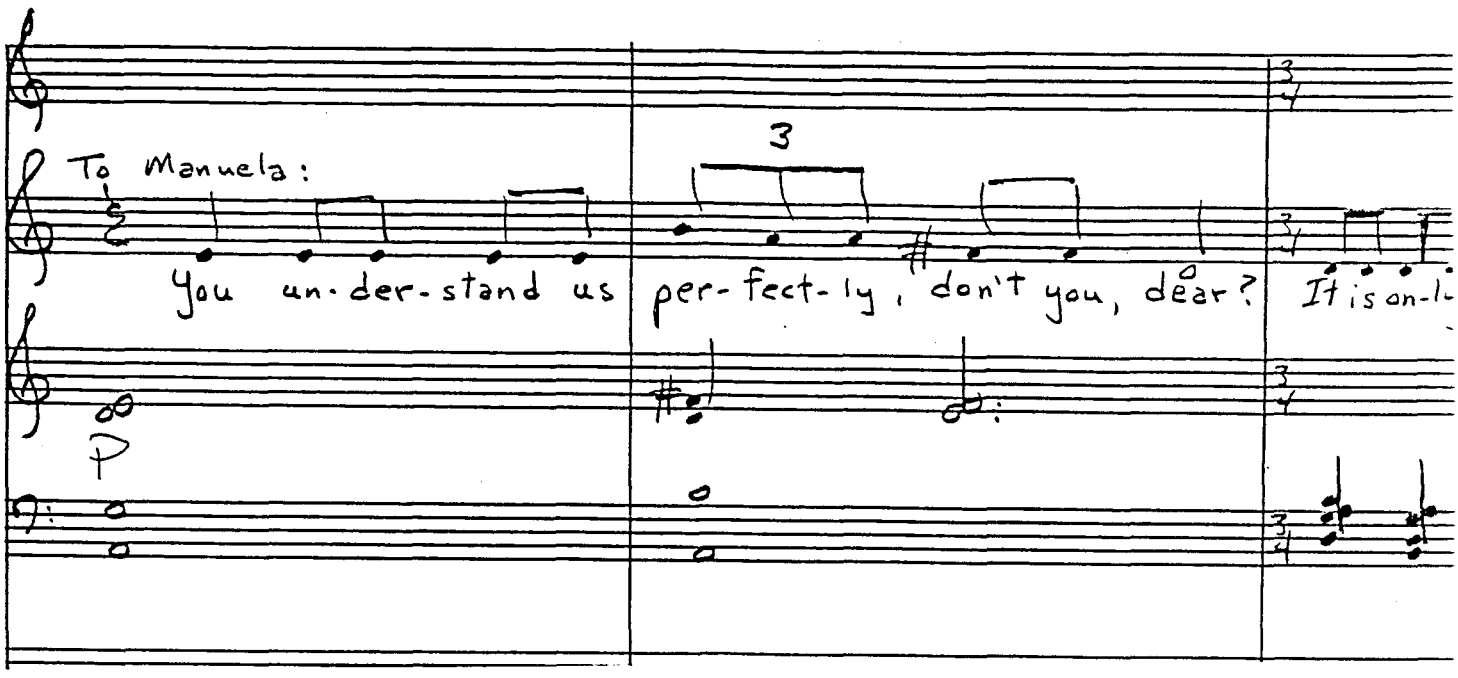
How ma-ny times have I told you,

rit.

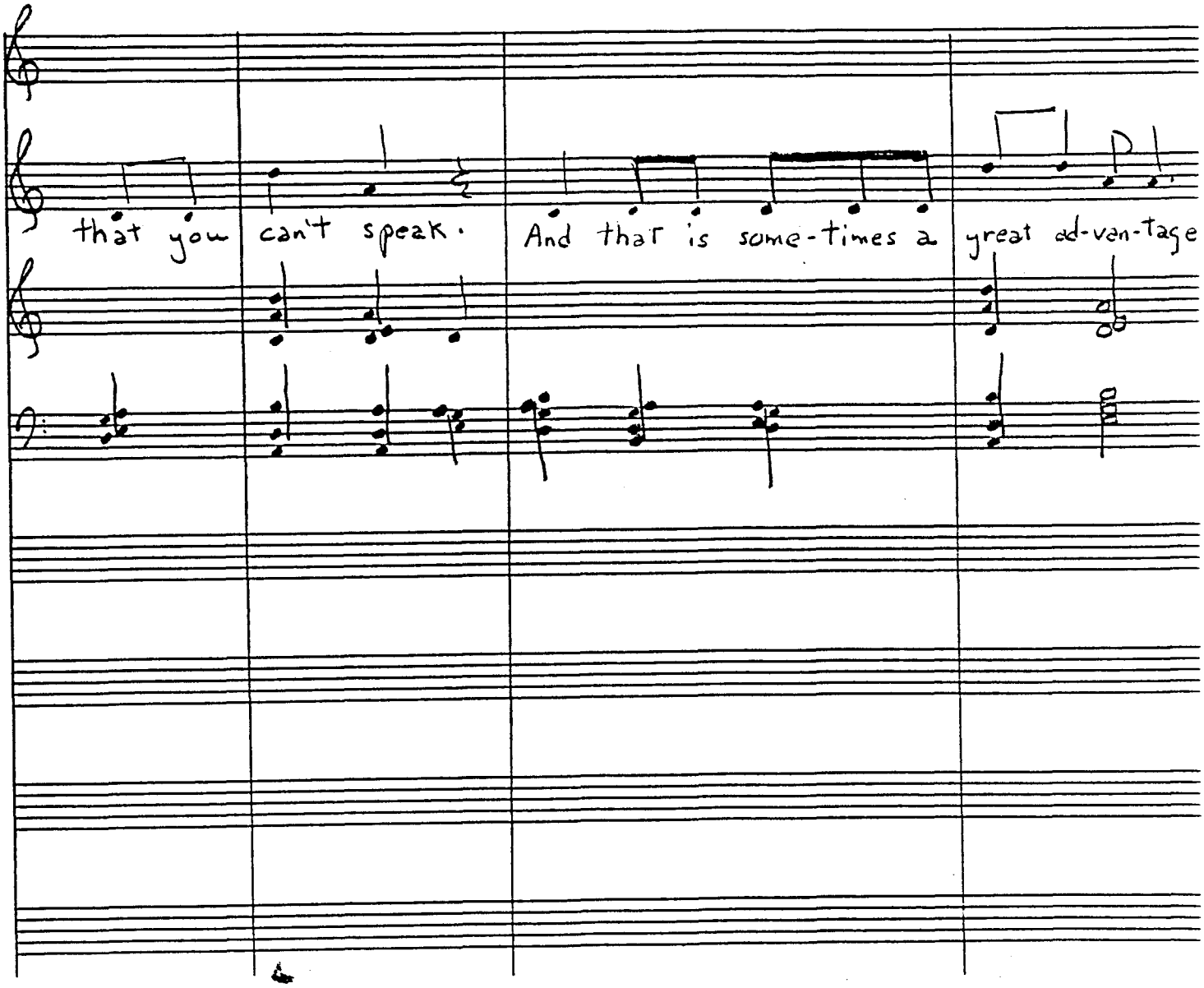
3

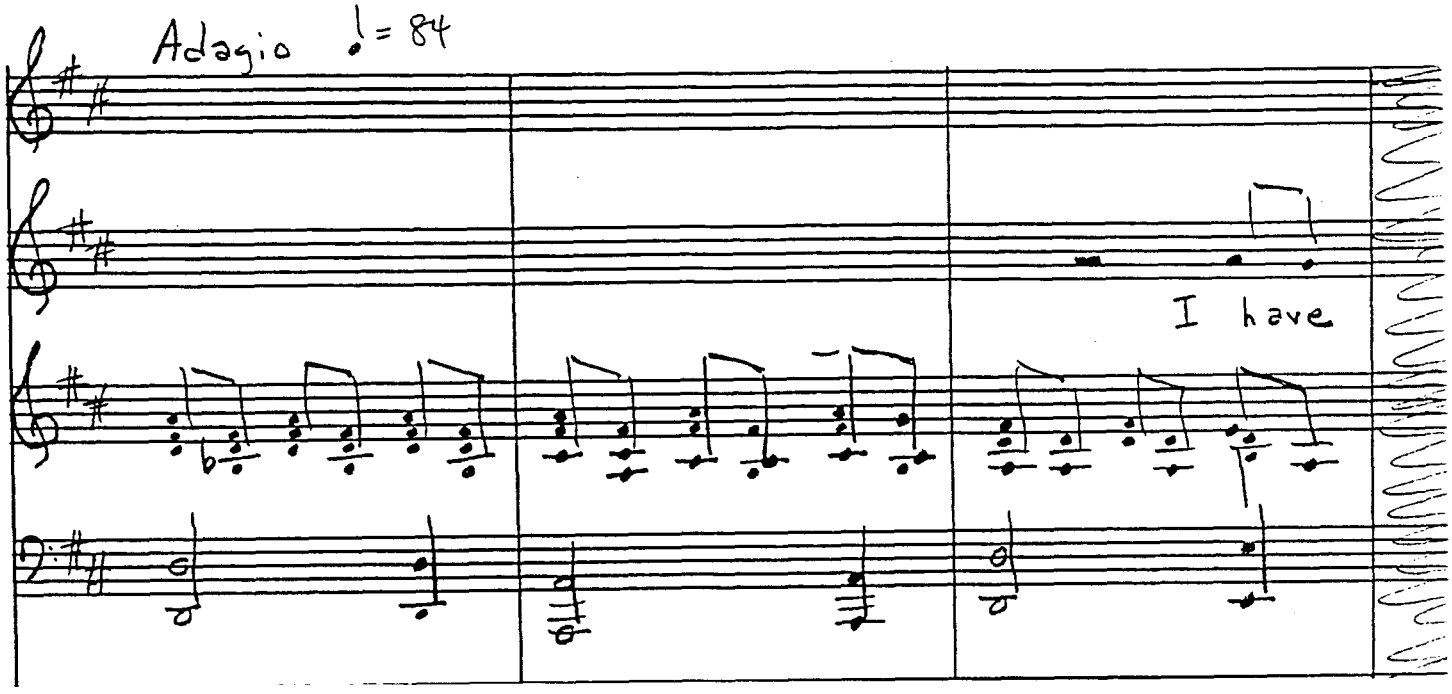
Do not speak of Man-u-el-a as if she were not pre-sent.

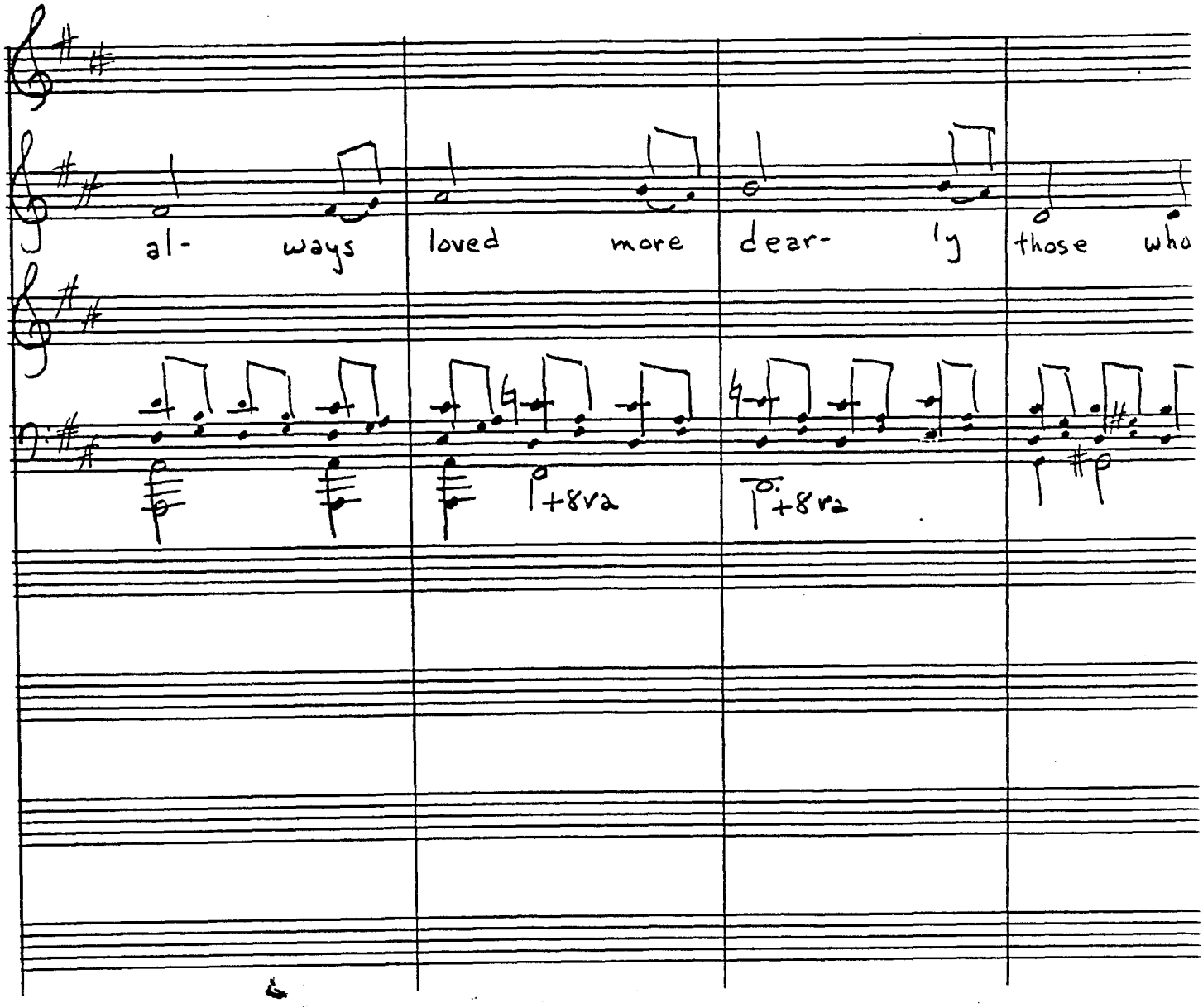
63

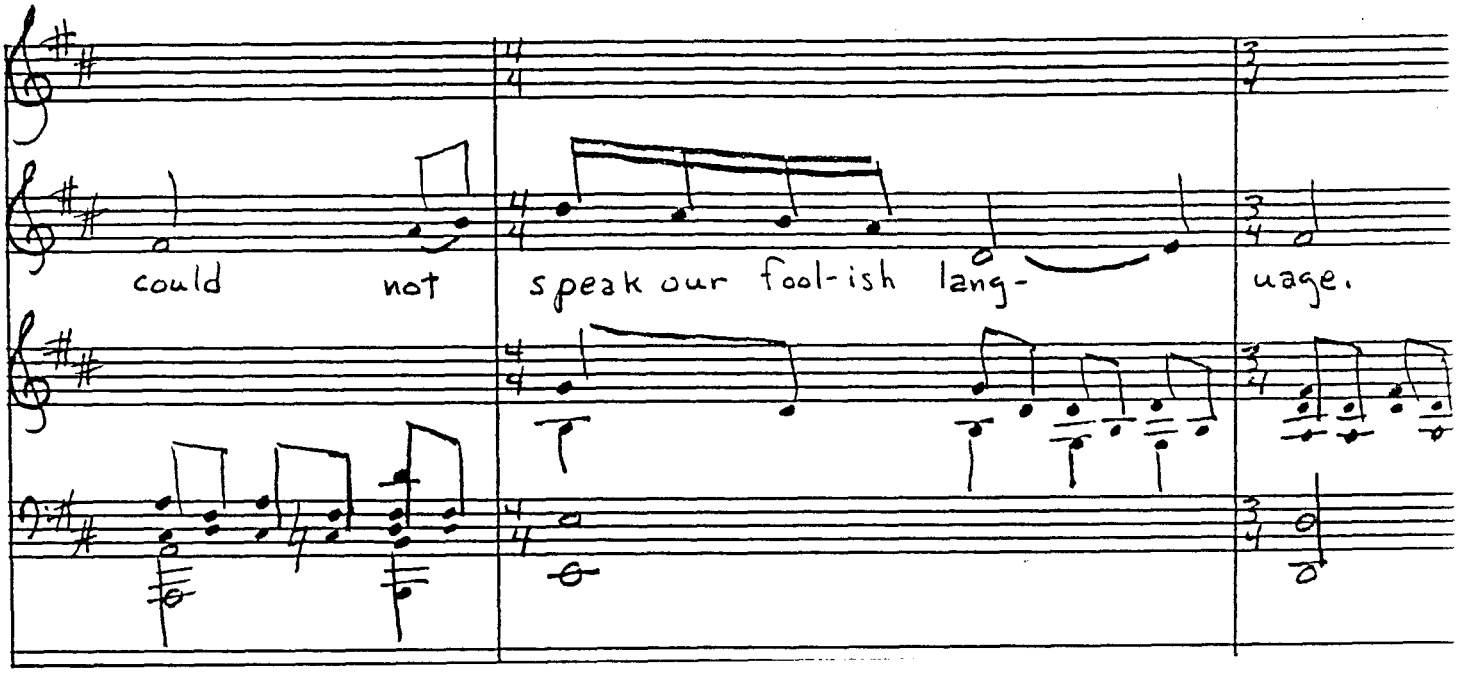

To Manuela:
3
You un-der-stand us per-fect-ly, don't you, dear? It is on-l-
P

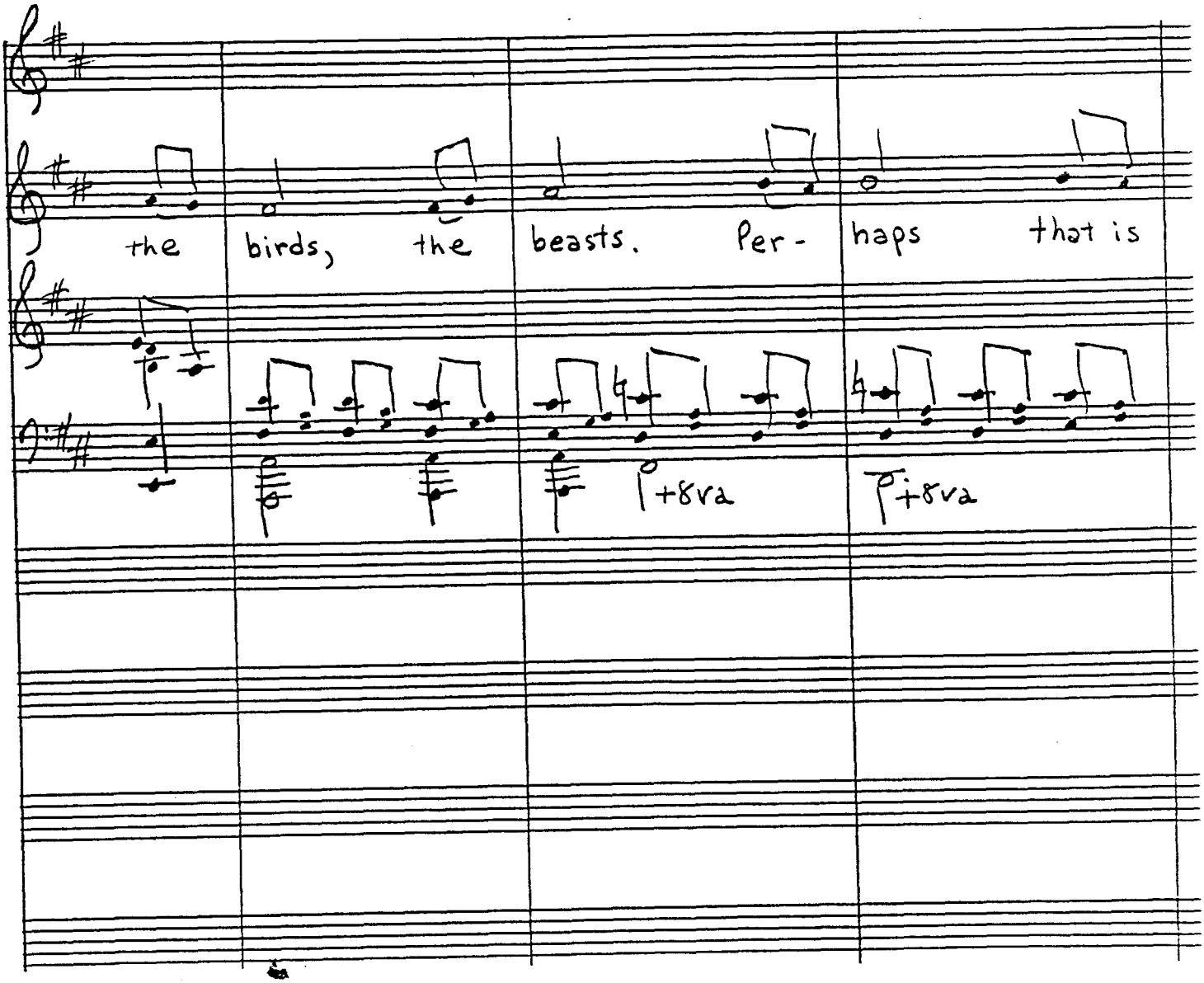
64

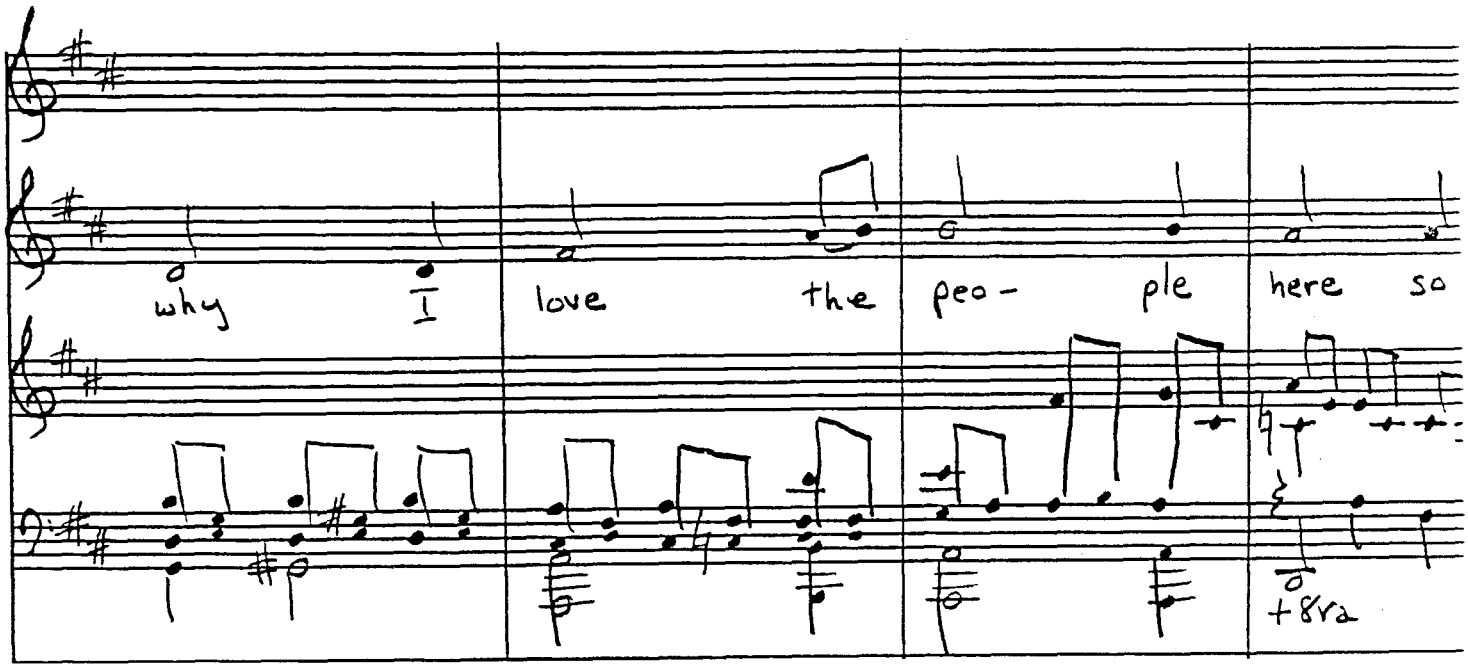

that you can't speak. And that is some-times a great ad-van-tage


Adagio ♩. = 84
I have

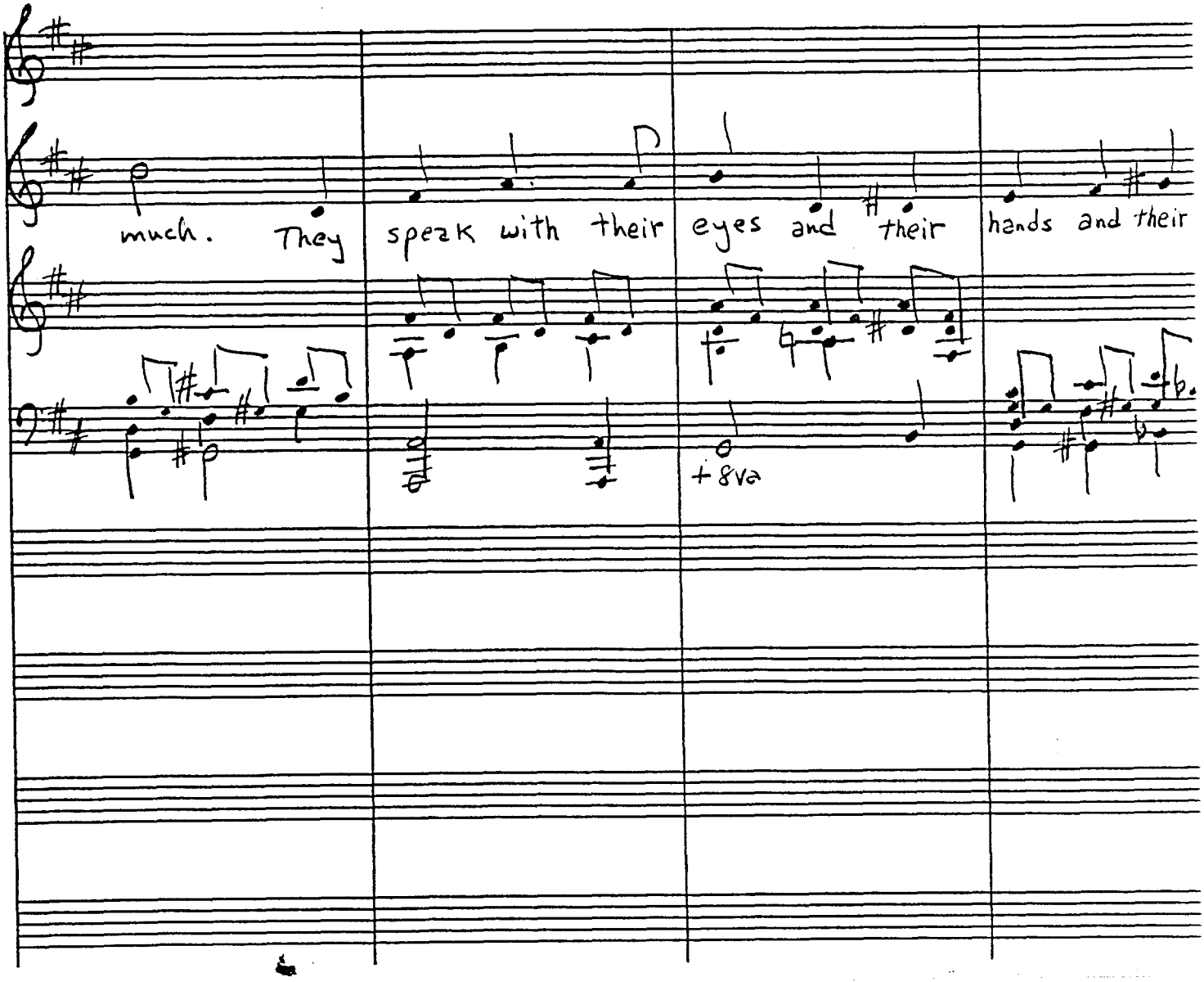

al- ways loved more dear- ly those who
8va
8va

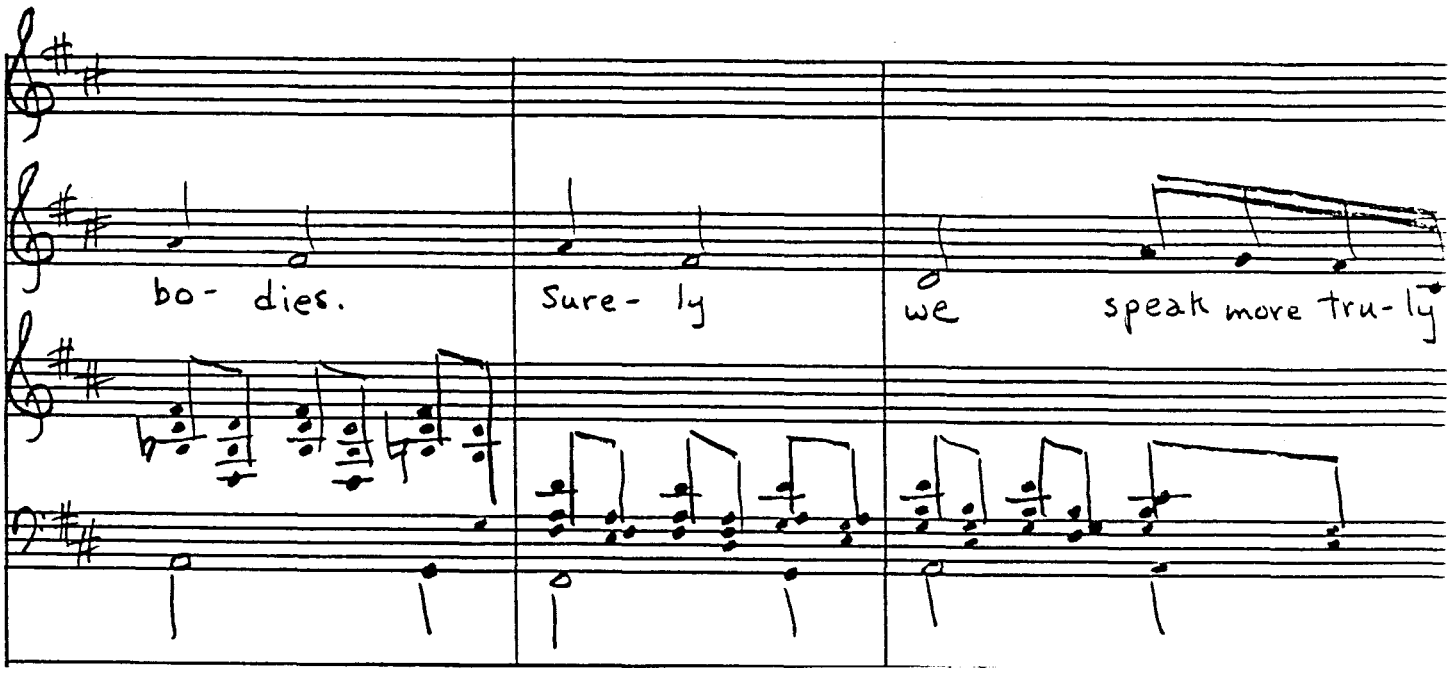

could not speak our fool-ish lang- uage.

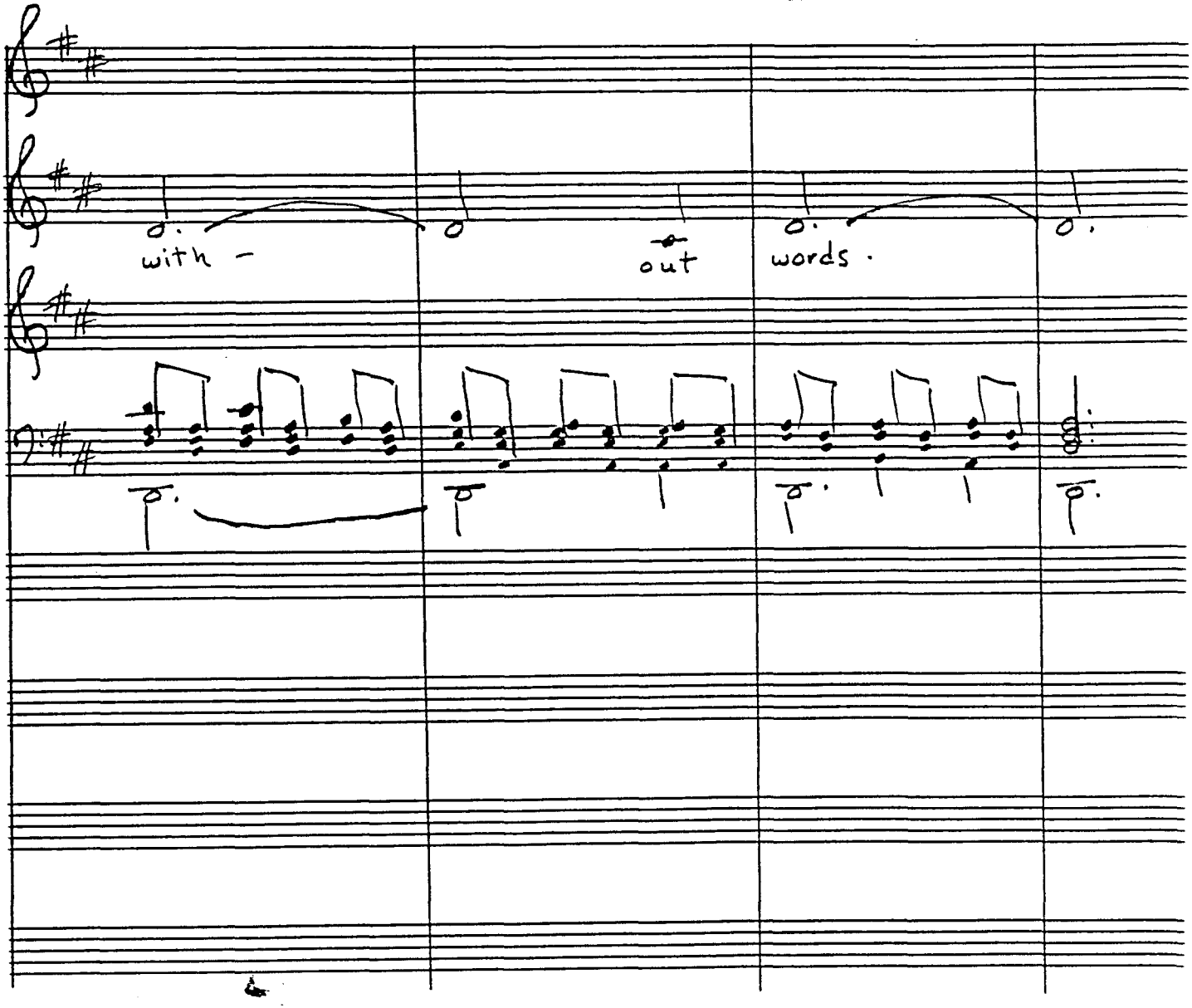

the birds, the beasts. Per- haps that is
+8va
+8va

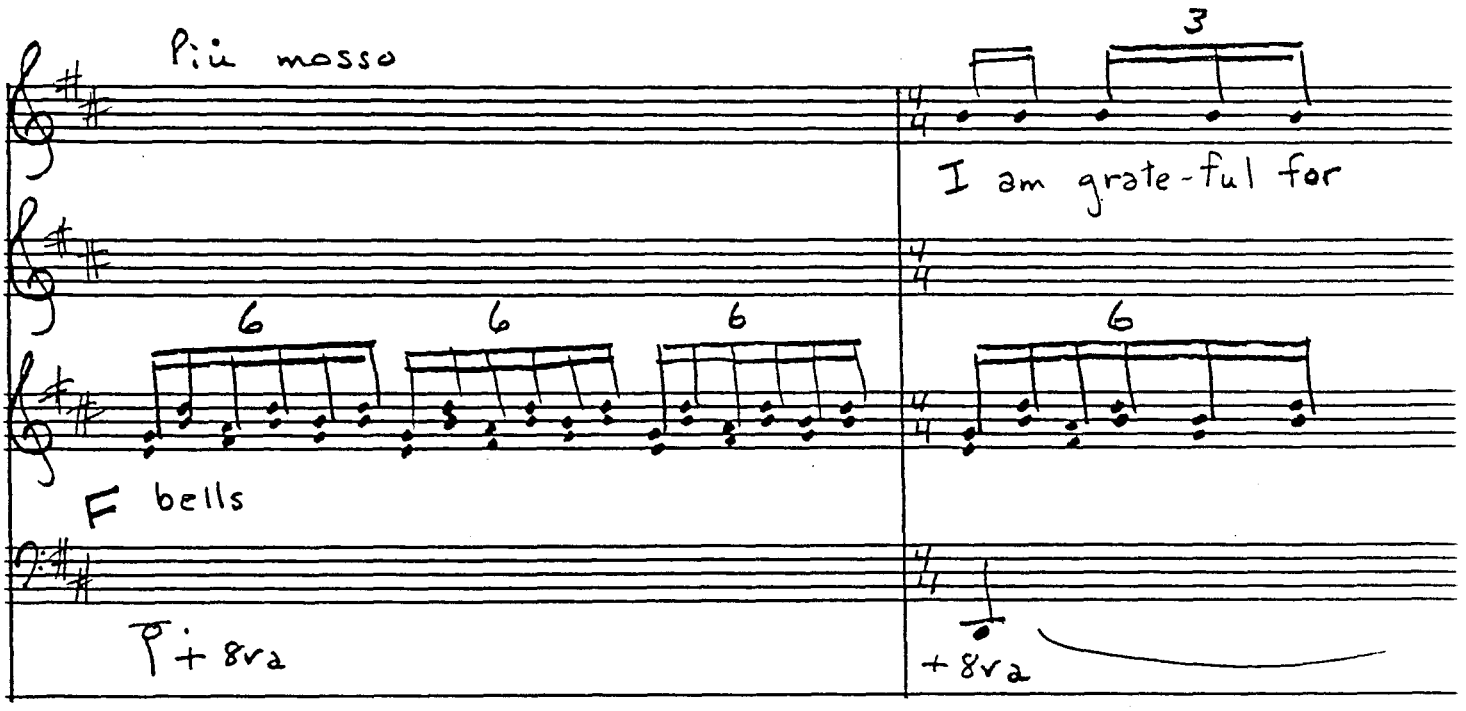

why I love the peo- ple here so
+8va

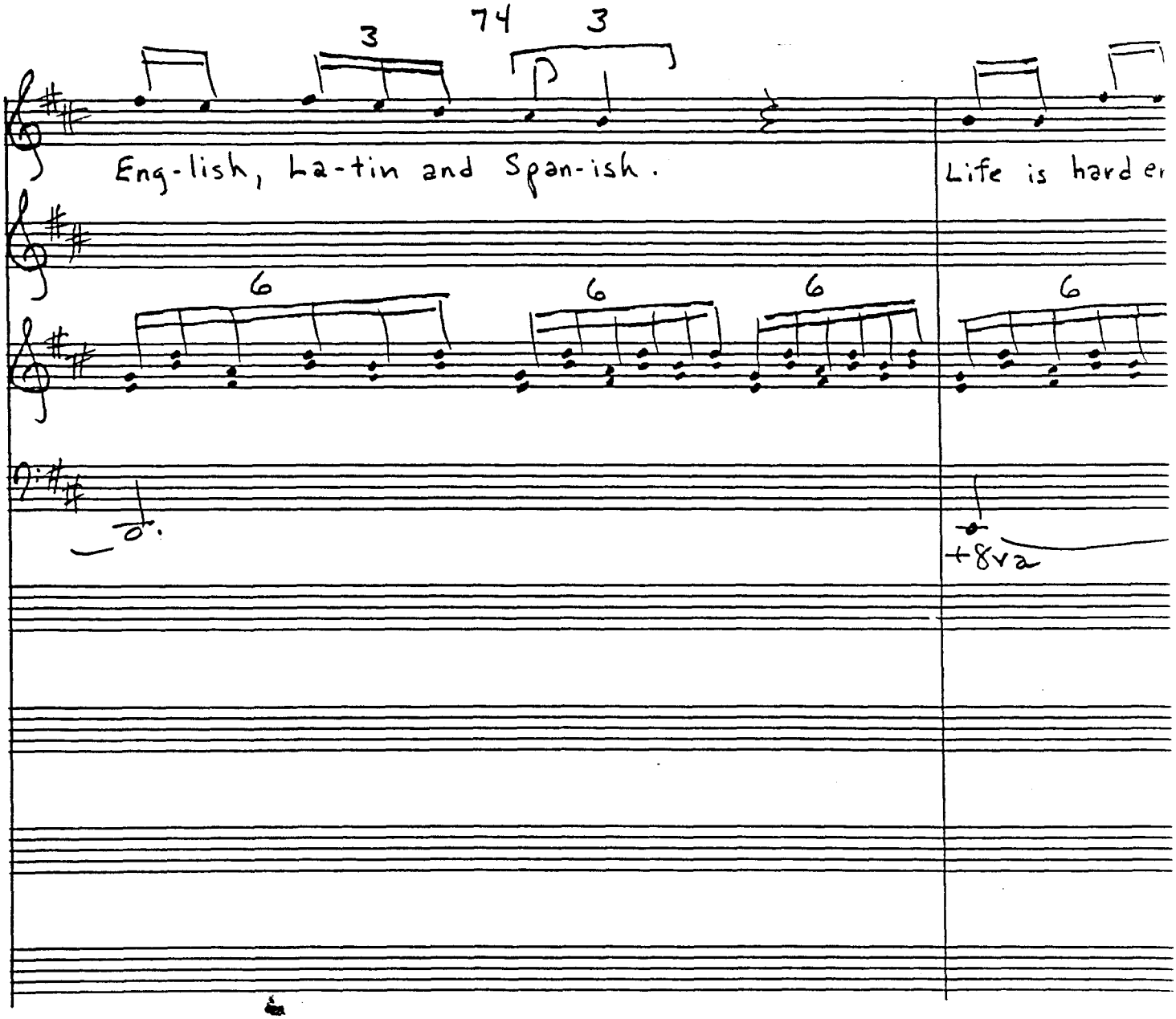
70

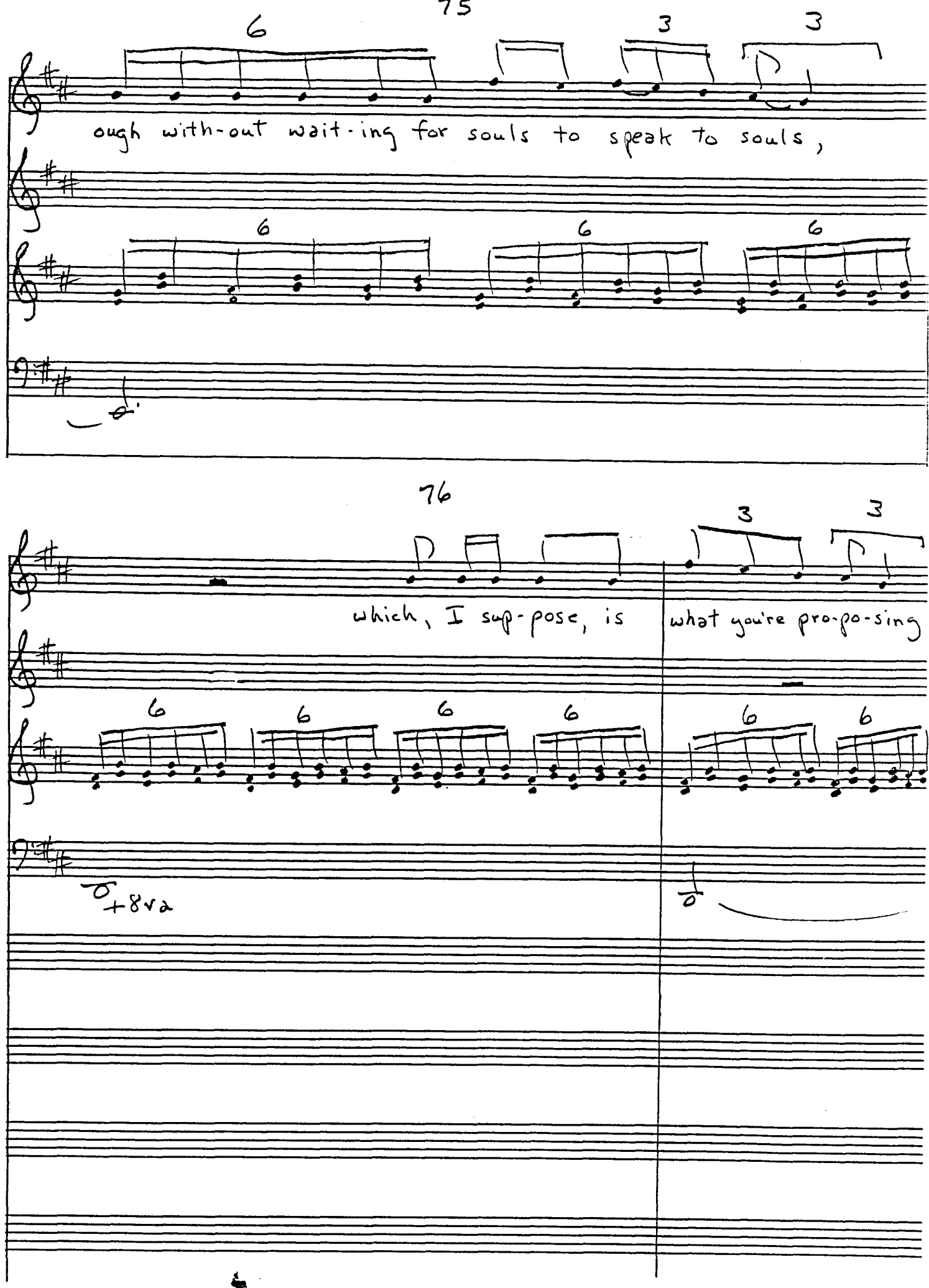

much. They speak with their eyes and their hands and their
+8va

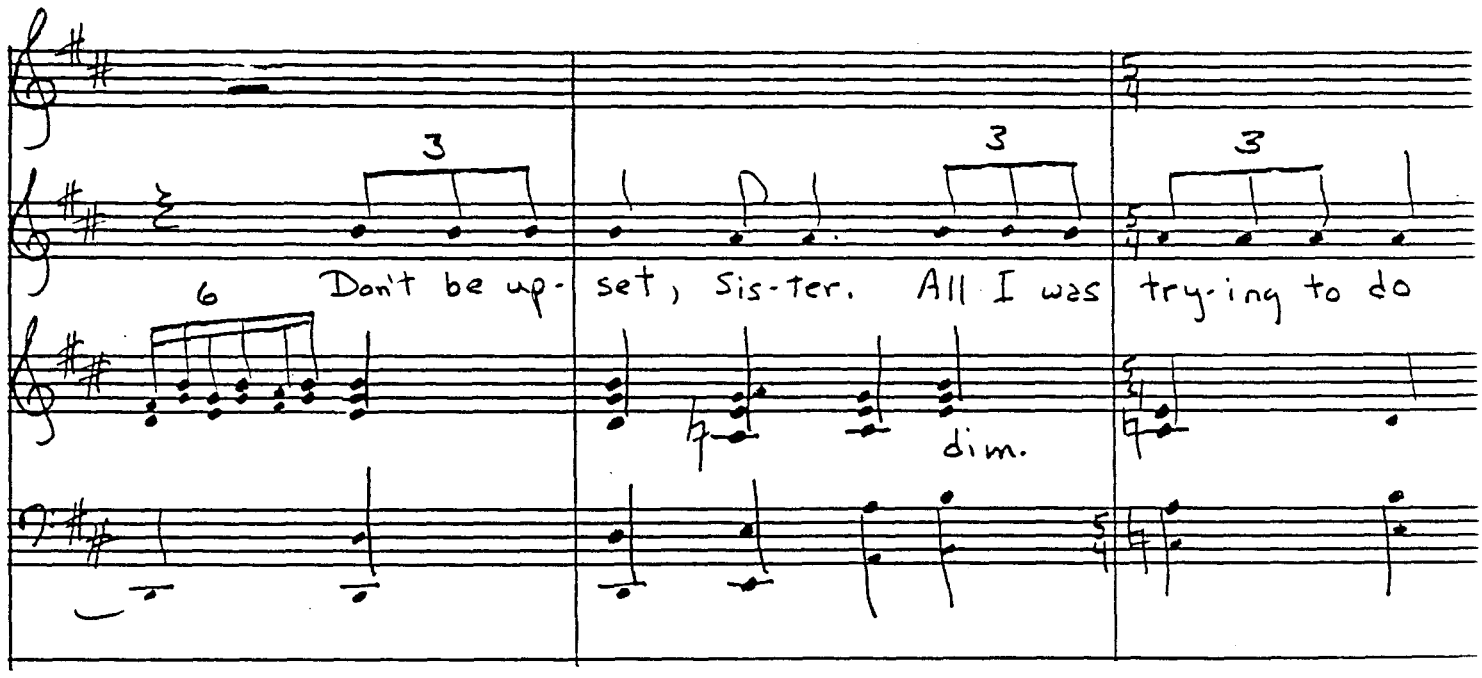

bo- dies.
Sure- ly
we
speak more tru- ly

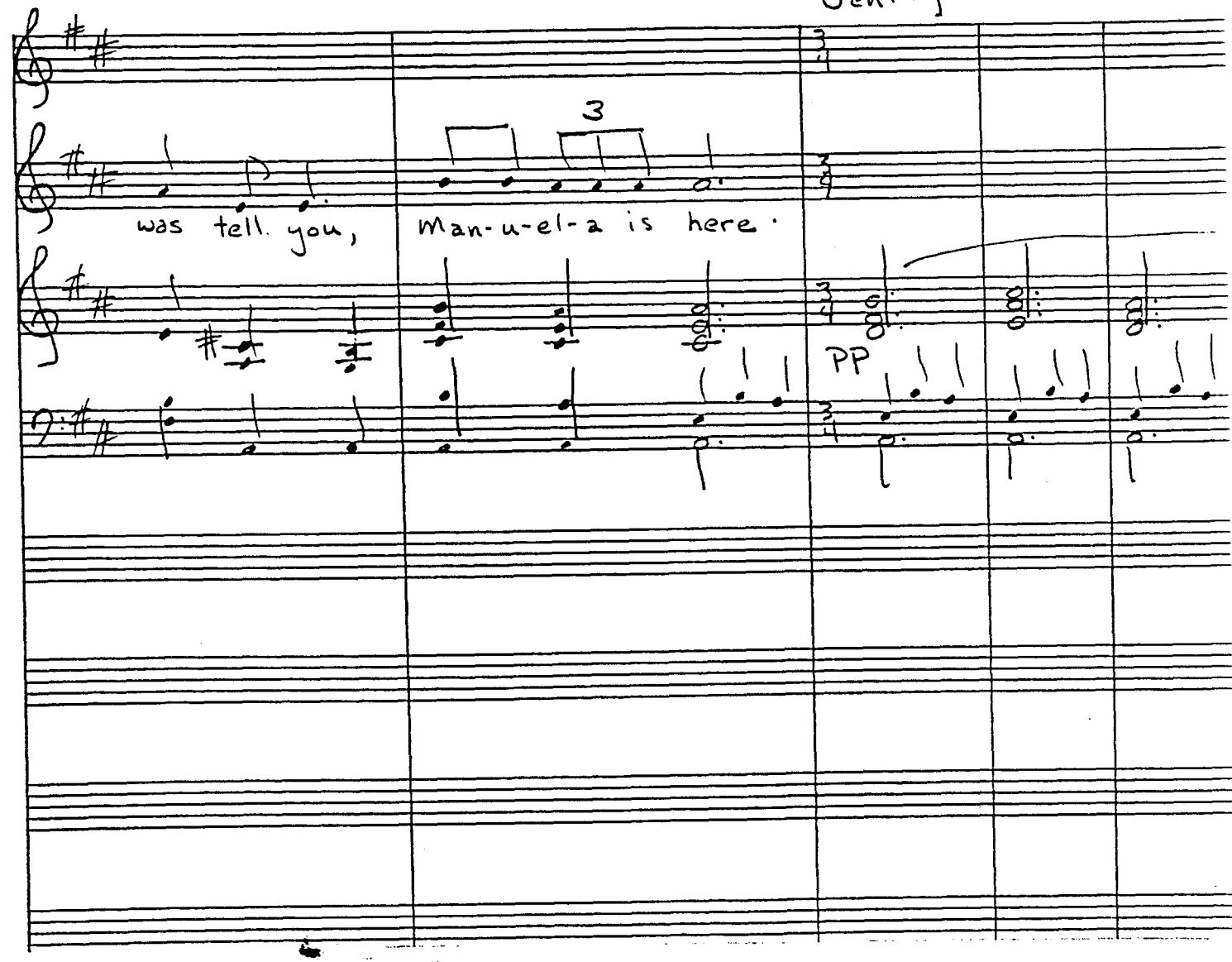

with -
out
words.

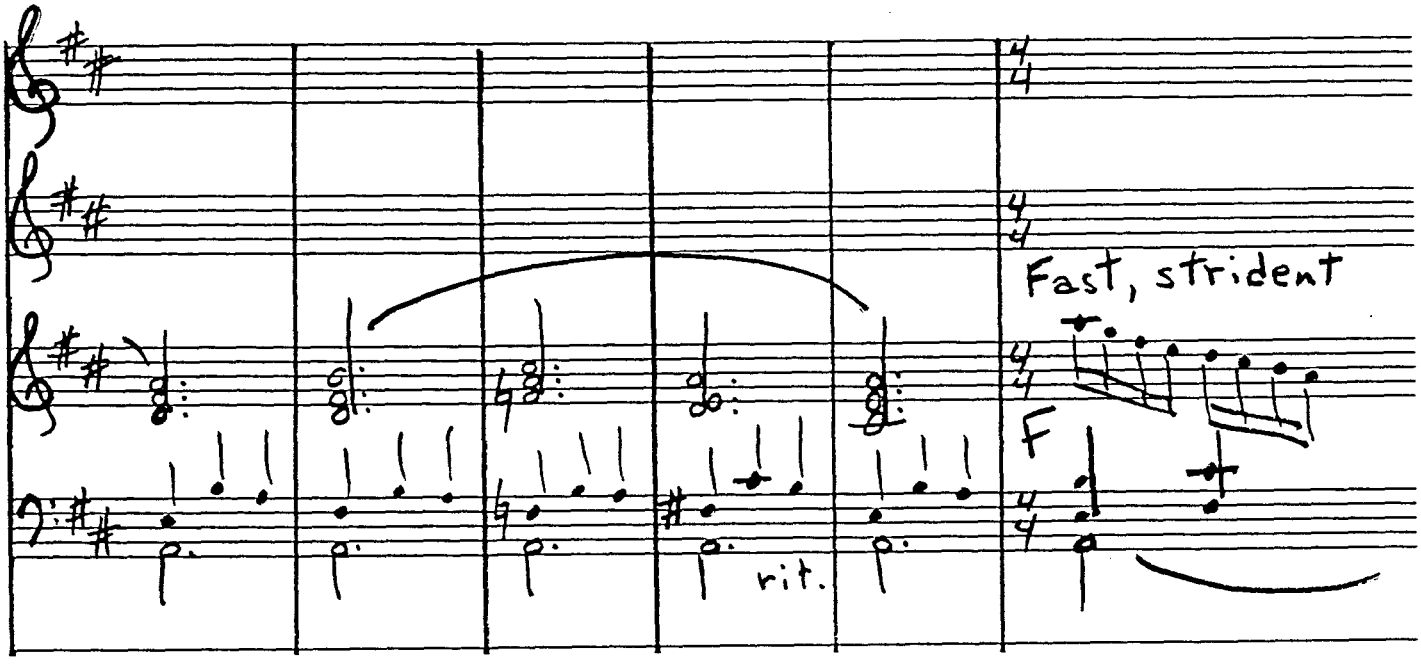

Più mosso
3
I am grate-ful for
6
6
6
6
F bells
P + 8va
+ 8va

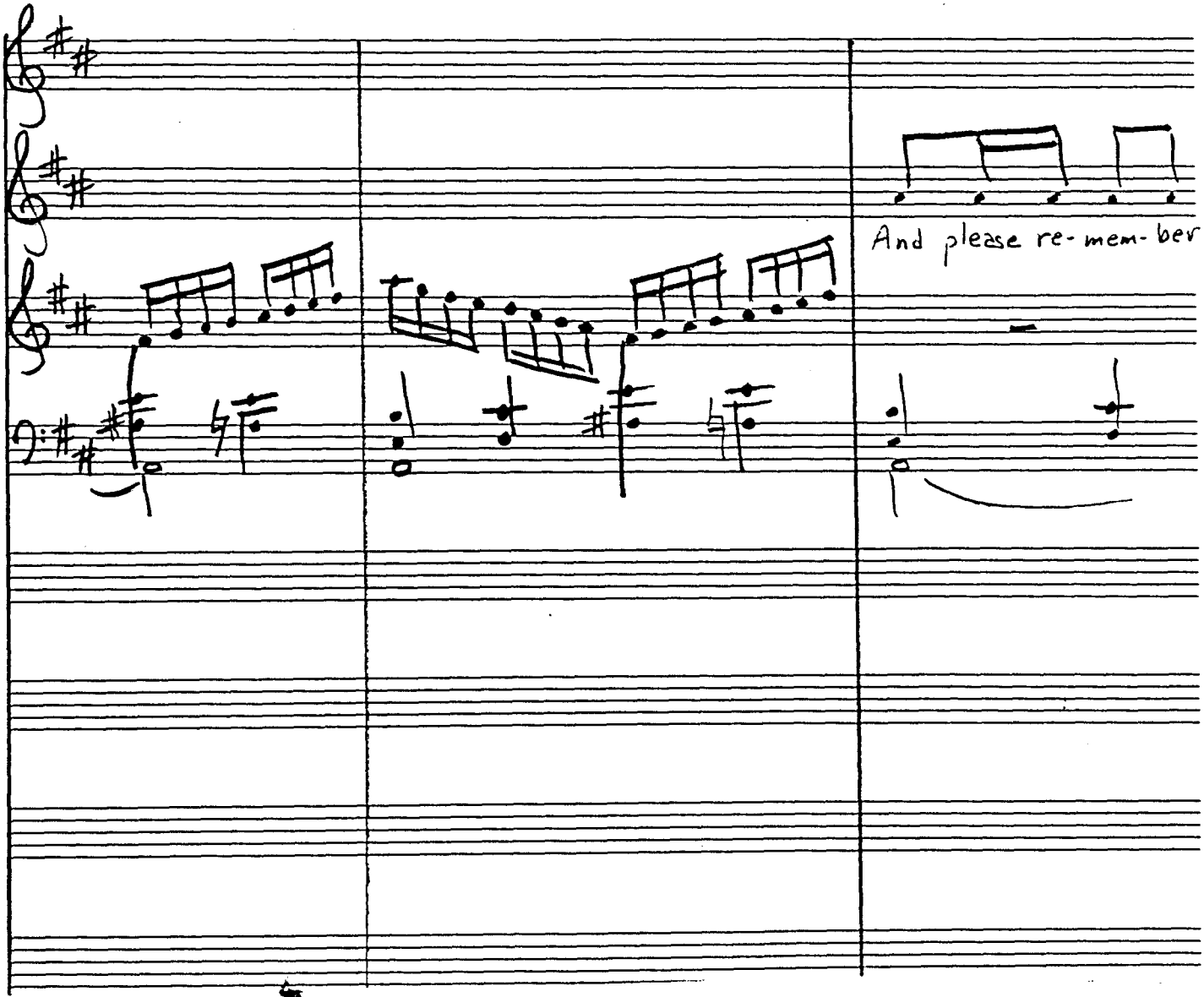

74
3
3
Eng-lish, La-tin and Span-ish.
Life is harder
6
6
6
6
+ 8va

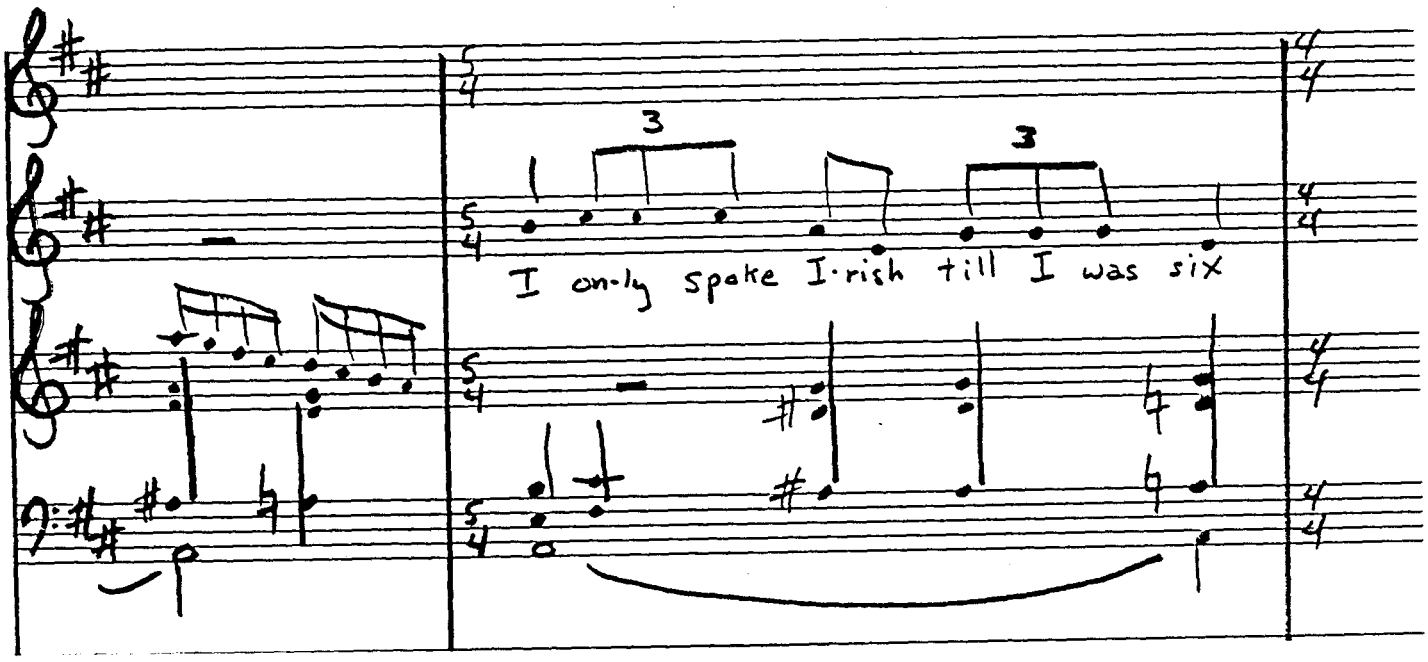

75
6
3
3
ough with-out wait-ing for souls to speak to souls,
6
6
6
76
3
3
which, I sup-pose, is
what you're pro-po-sing
6
6
6
6
6
6
8va

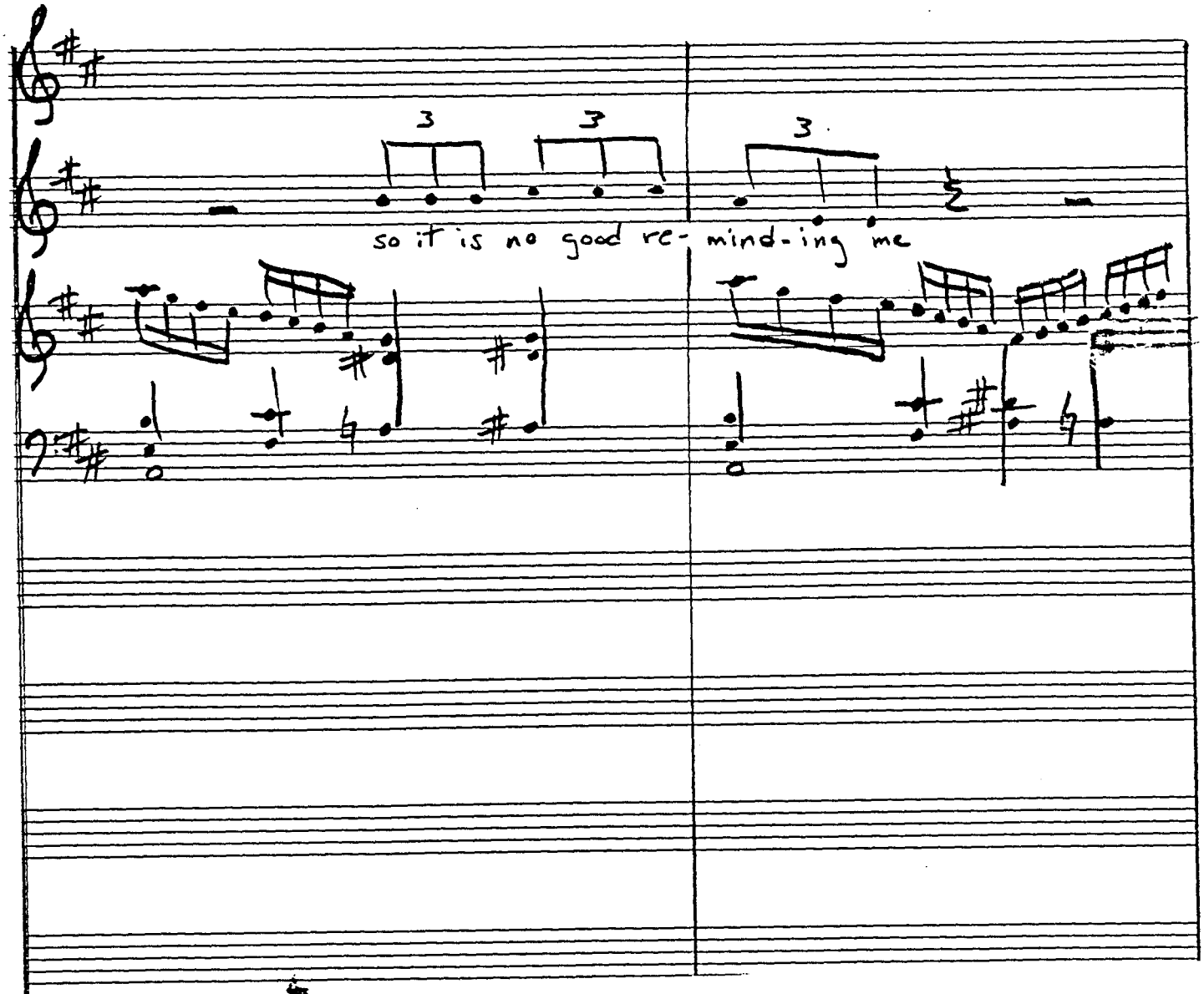

3
3
3
6
Don't be up- set, Sis-ter. All I was try-ing to do
dim.

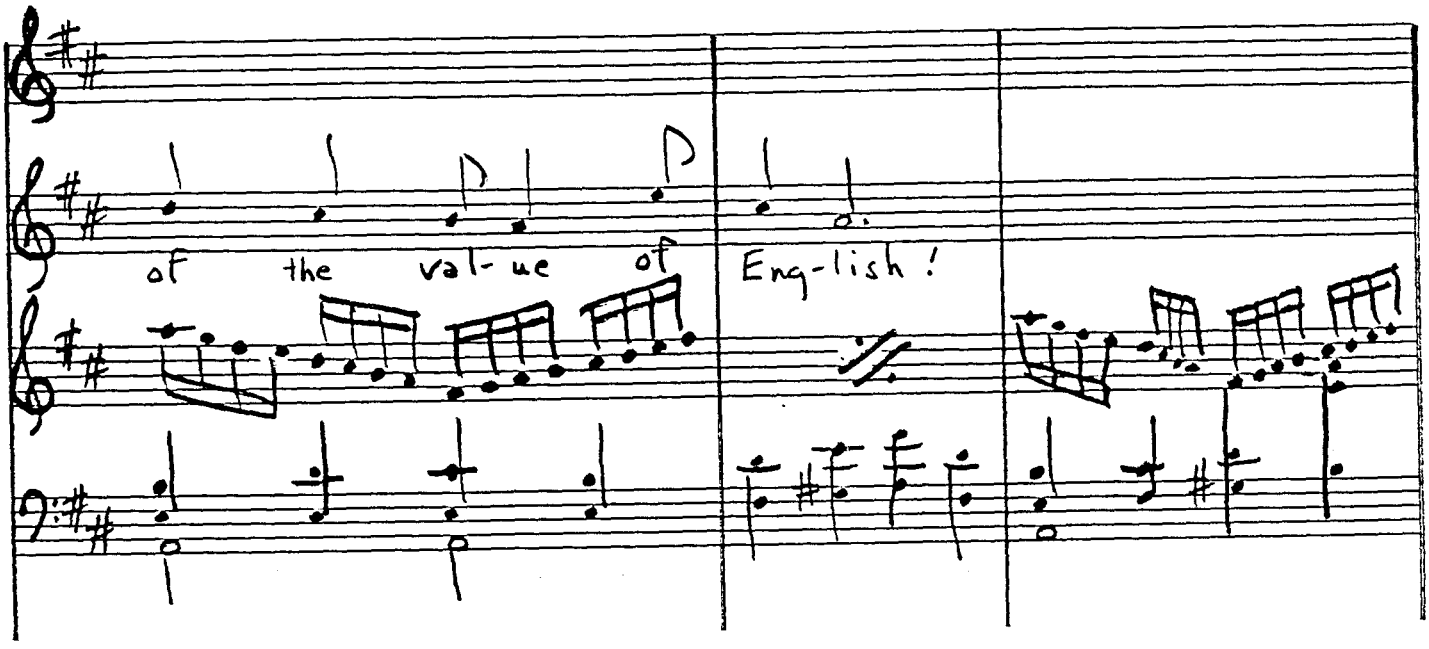

Gently
3
was tell you, Man-u-el-a is here.
PP


Fast, strident
F
rit.


And please re-mem-ber


3
3
I on-ly spoke I-rish till I was six

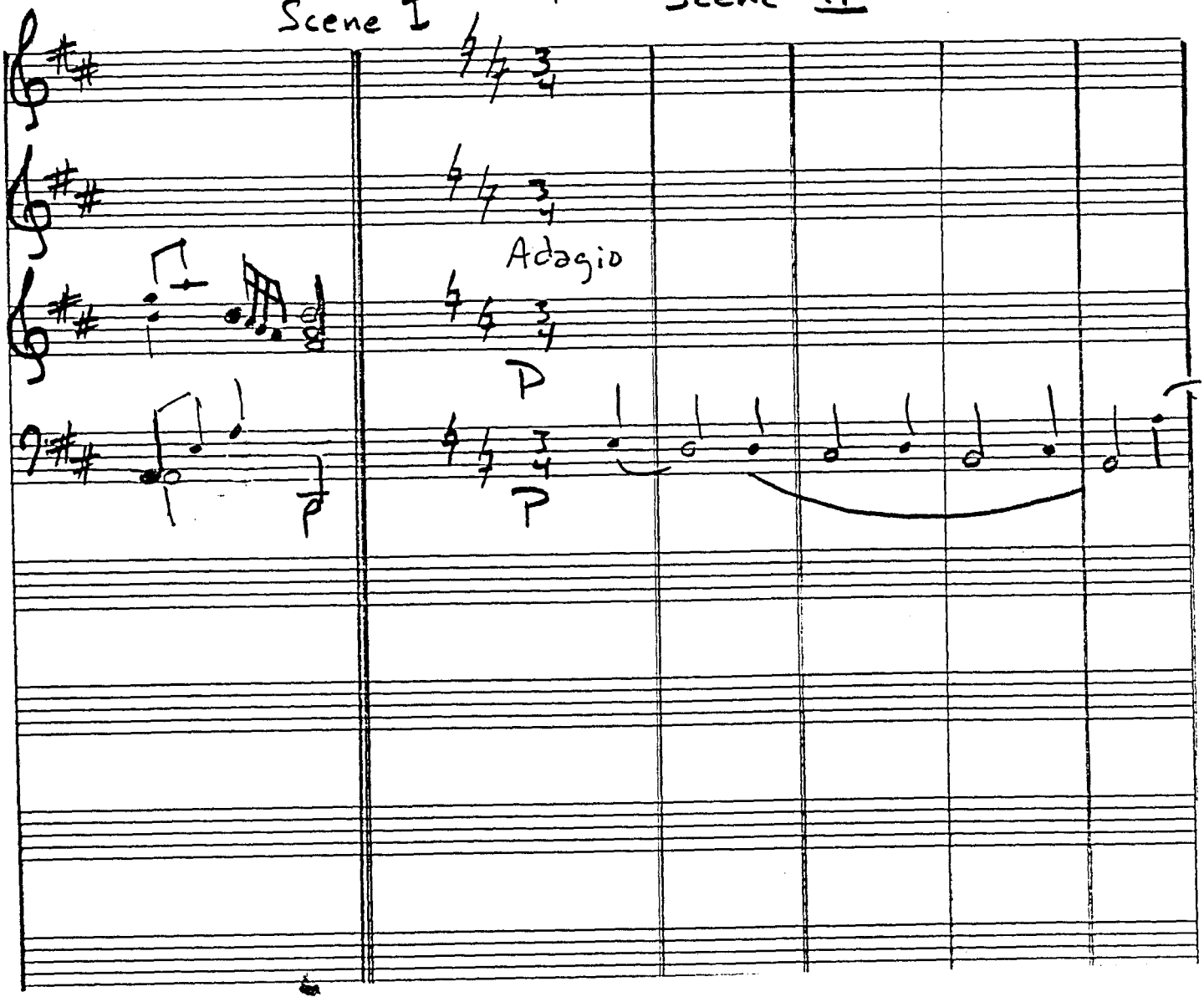

3
3
3
so it is no good re- mind-ing me



End of Scene I

84

Scene II



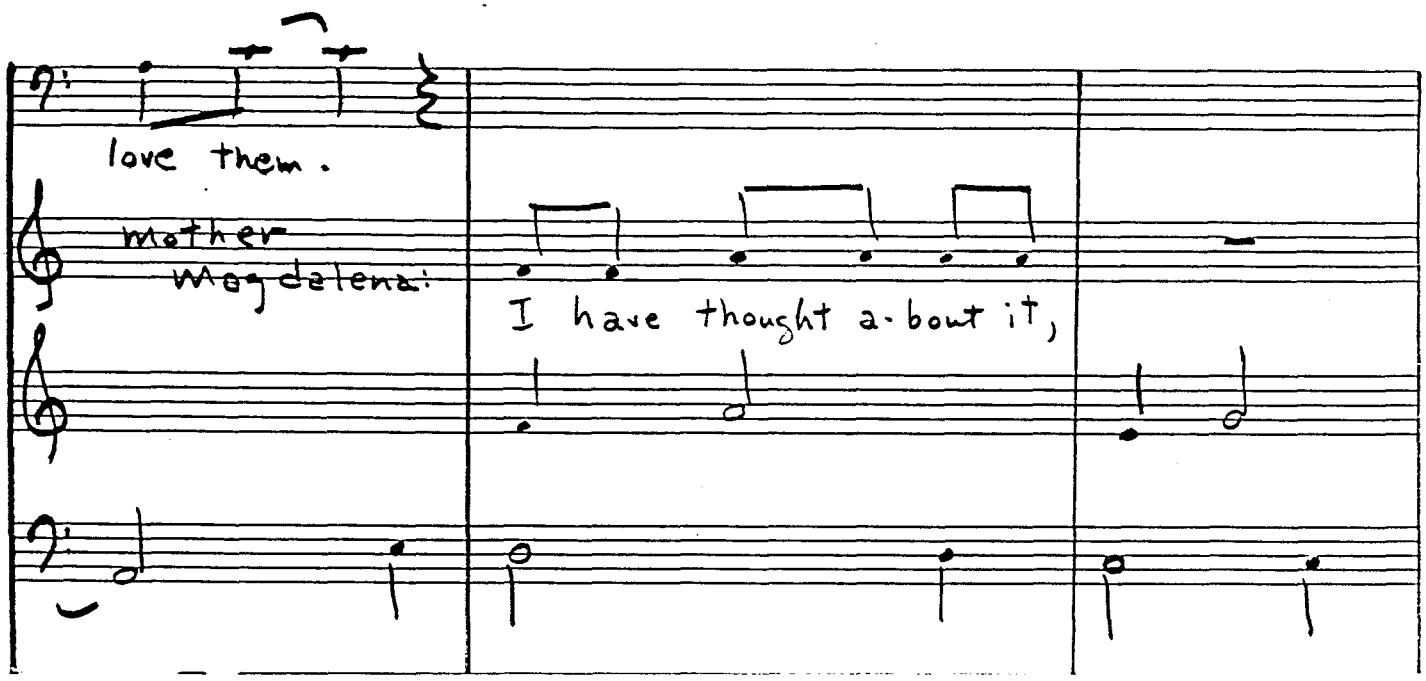
Father Sebastian:

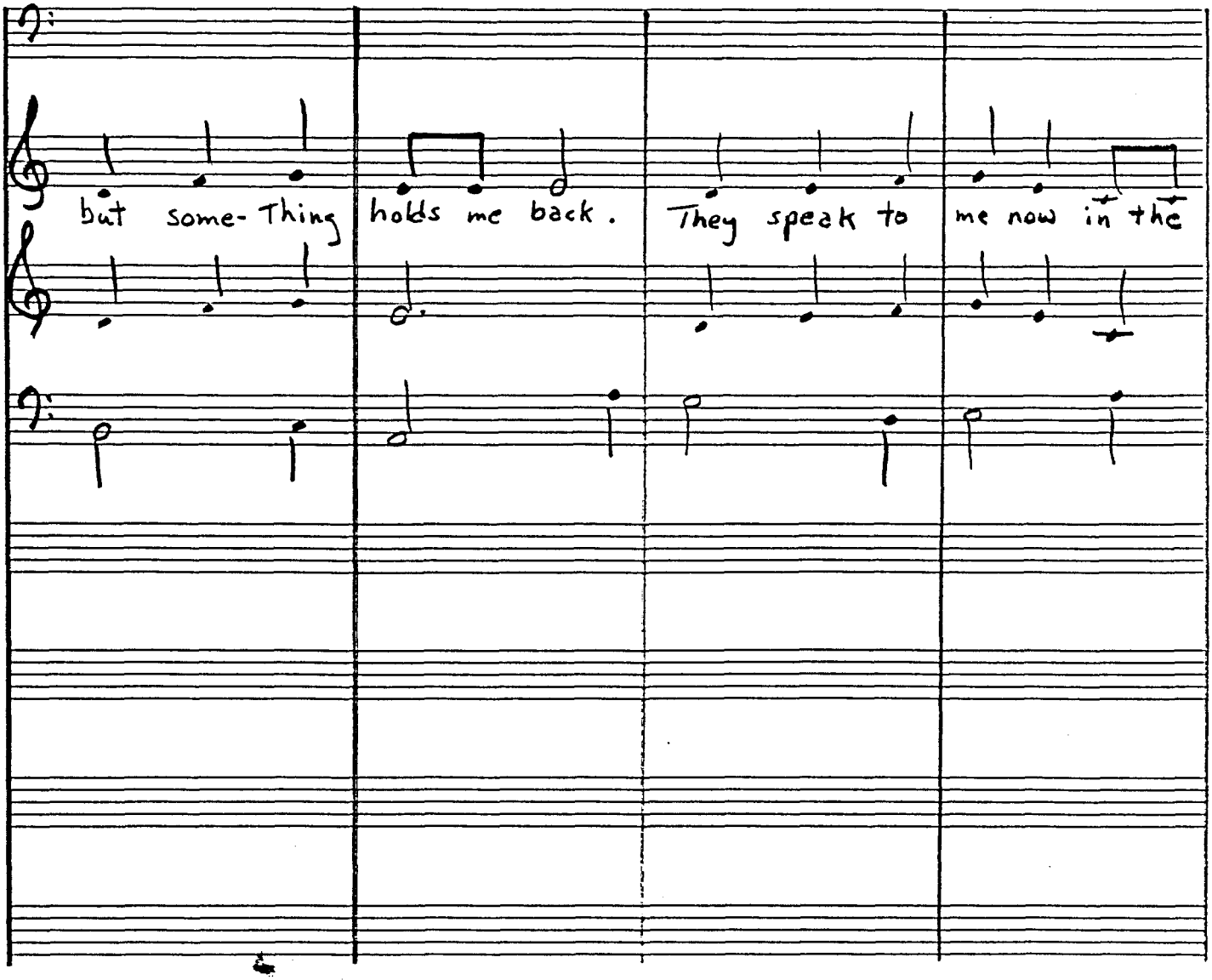
Freely 3

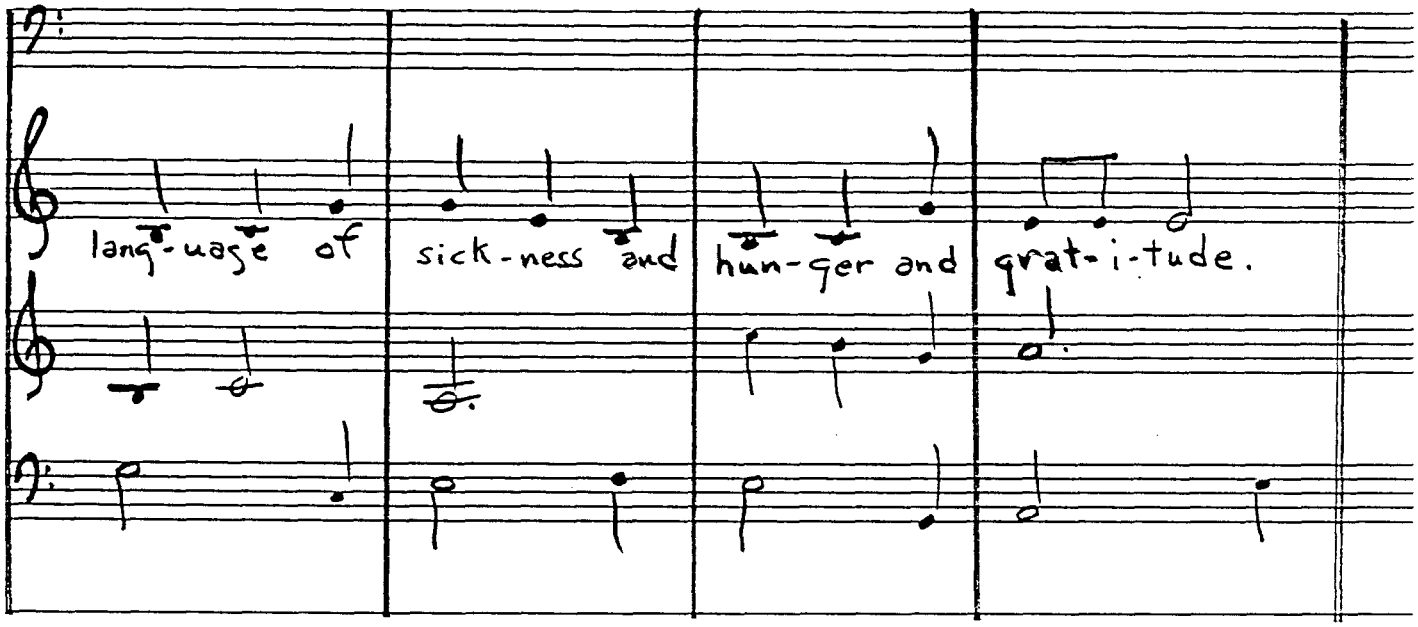
Why don't you learn the

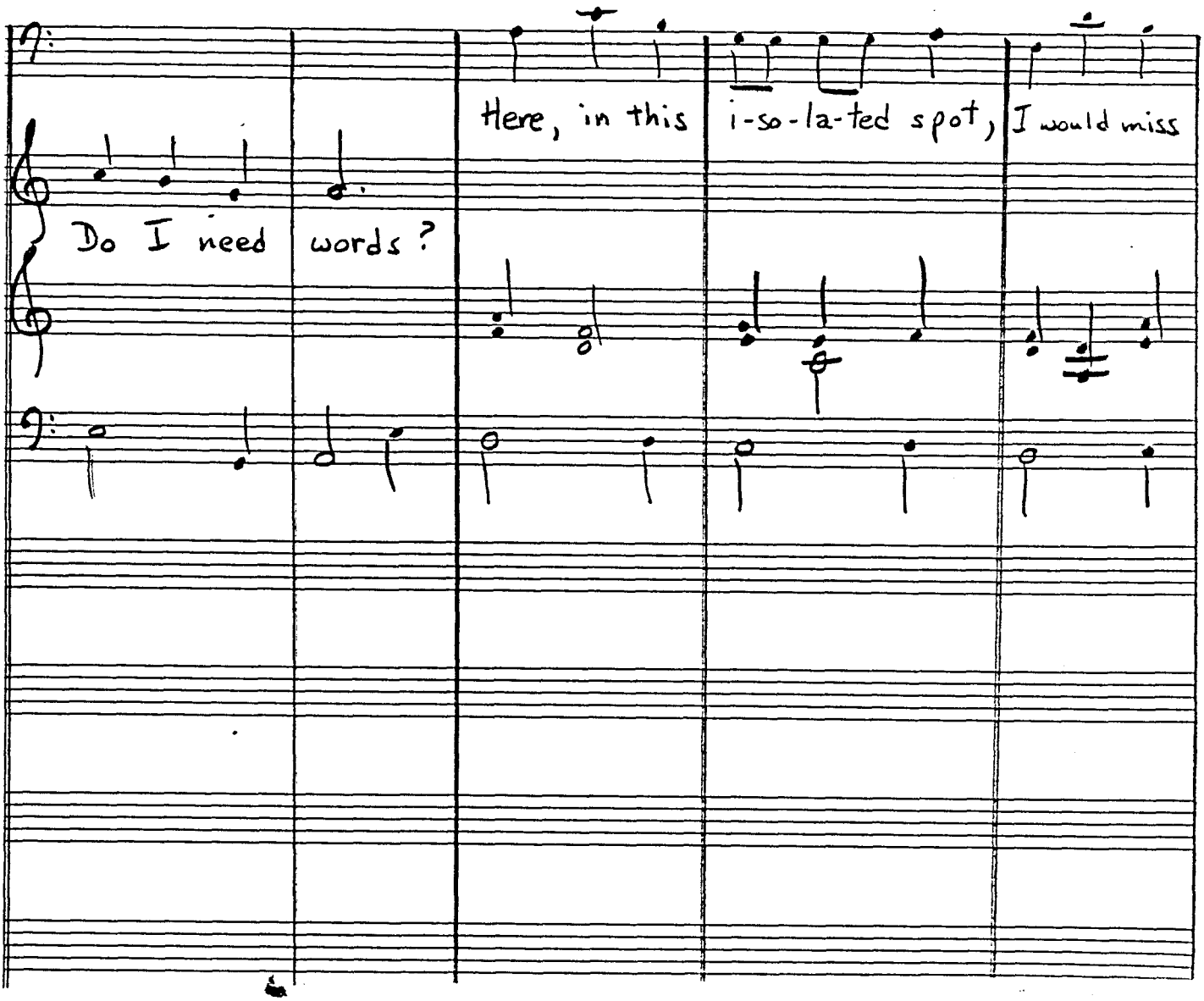
86

lang-uage of the In-dians here? It's ob-vi-ous you

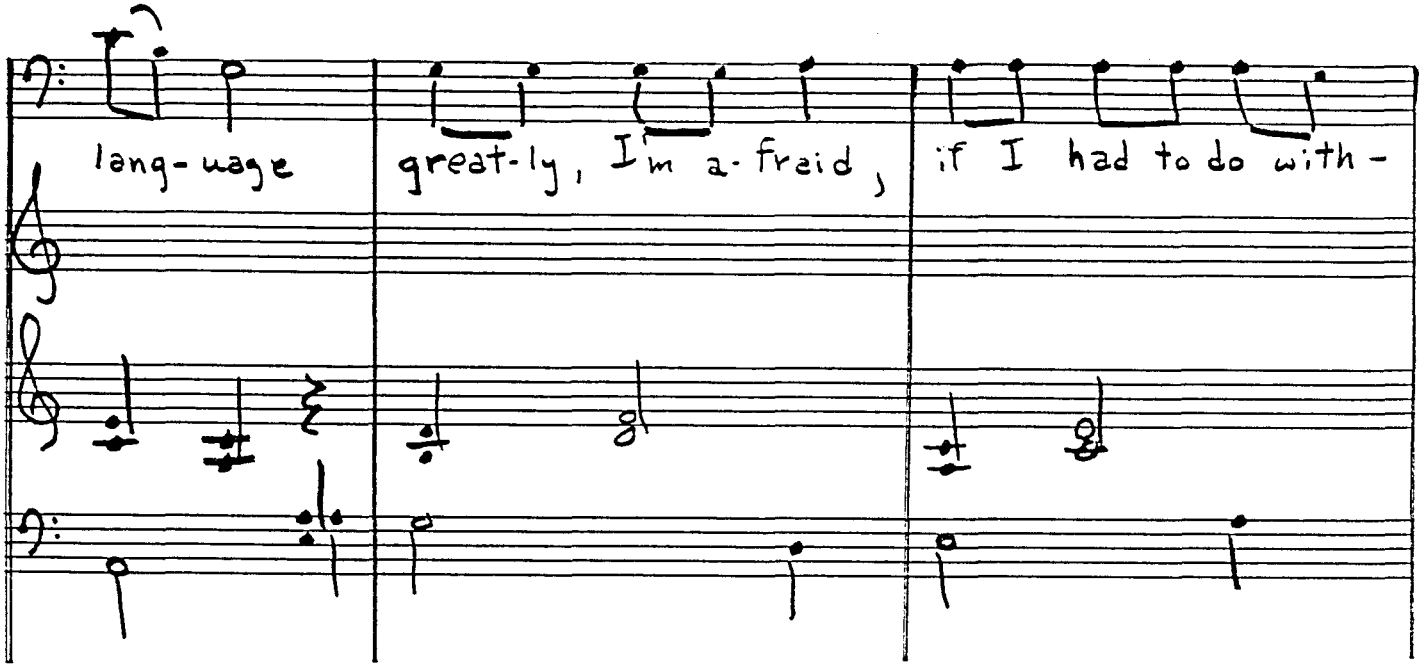

love them.
Mother Magdelena:
I have thought a-bout it,


but some-Thing holds me back. They speak to me now in the

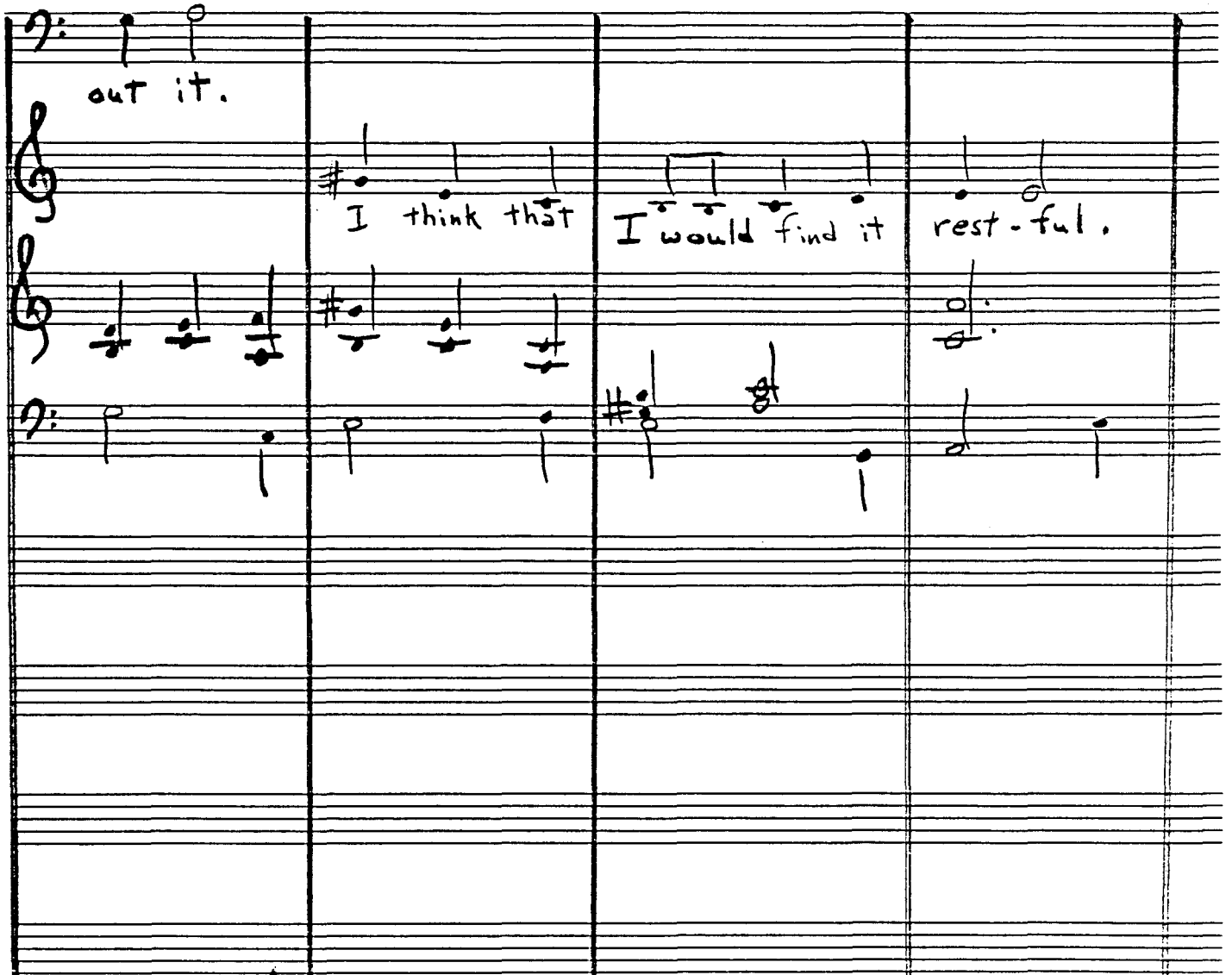

lang-uage of
sick-ness and
hun-ger and
grat-i-tude.

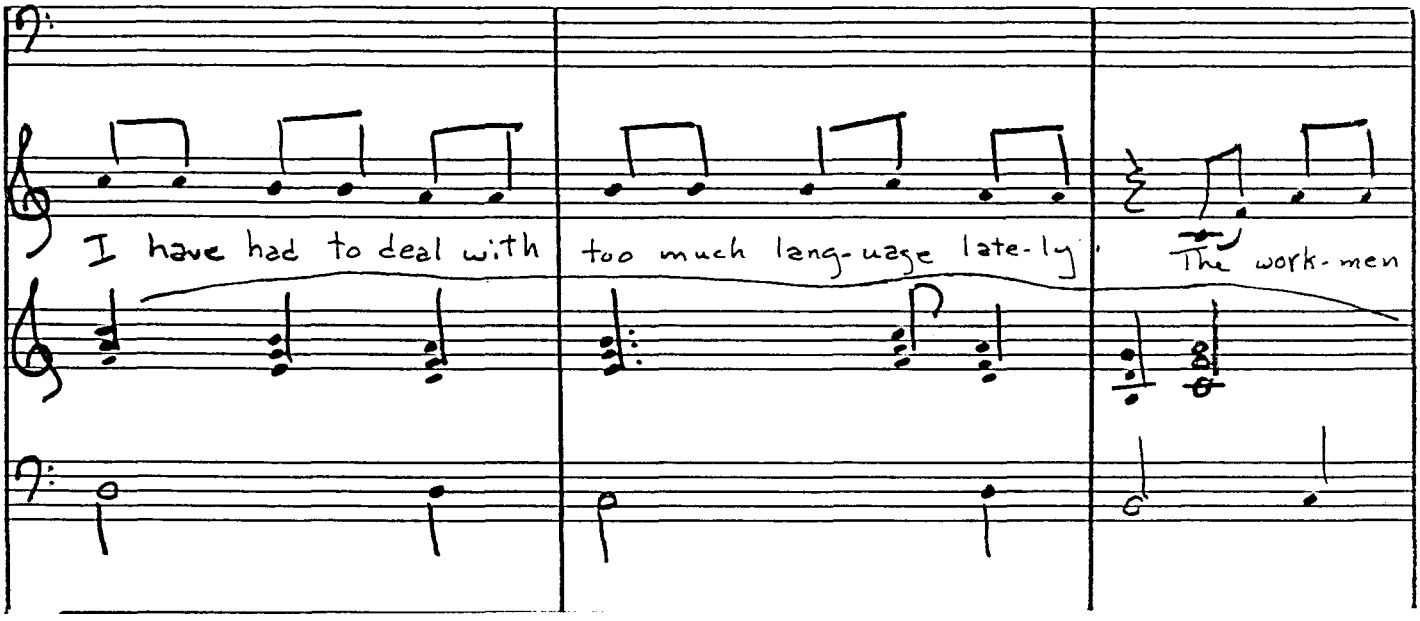

Do I need words?
Here, in this
i-so-la-ted spot,
I would miss

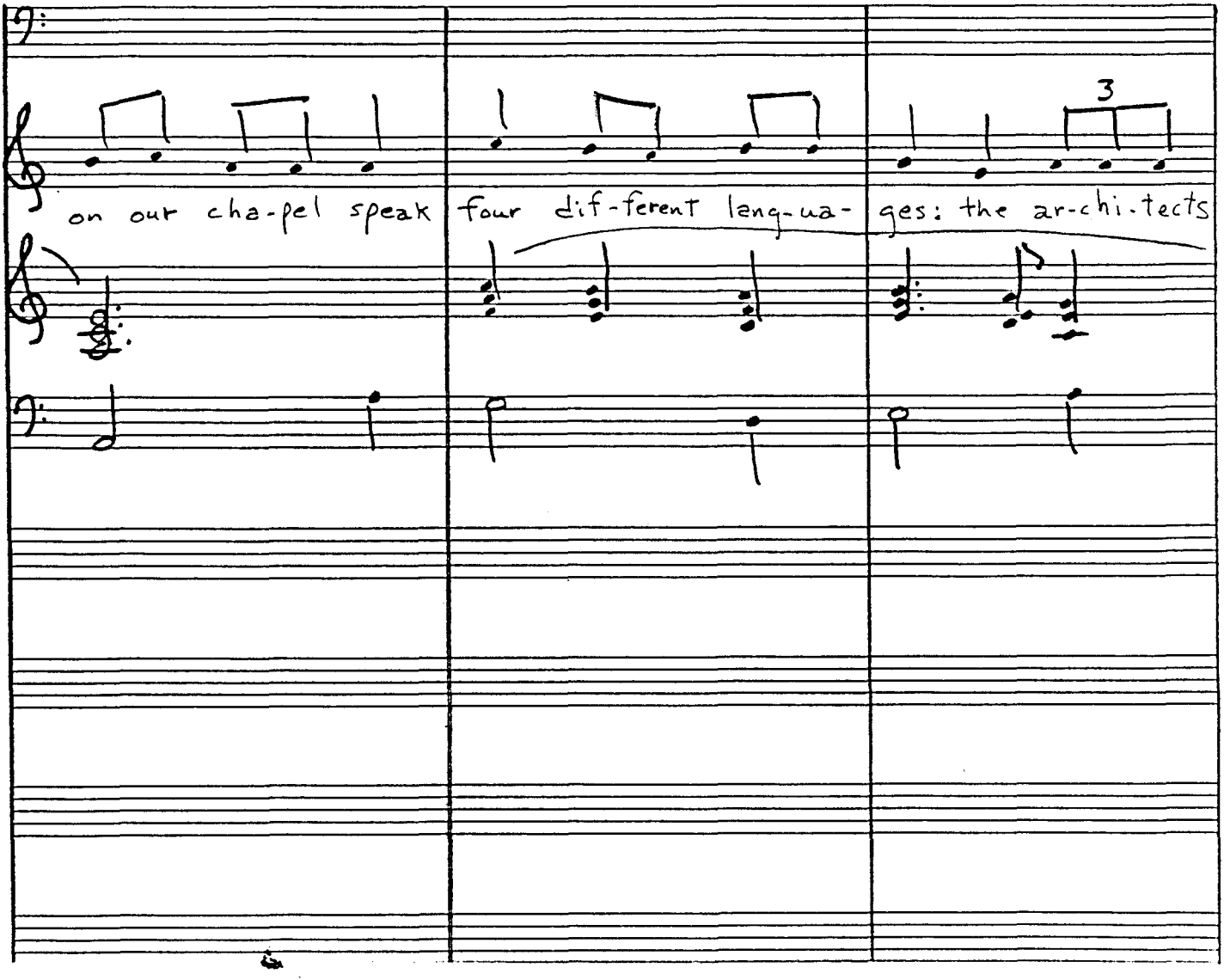
91

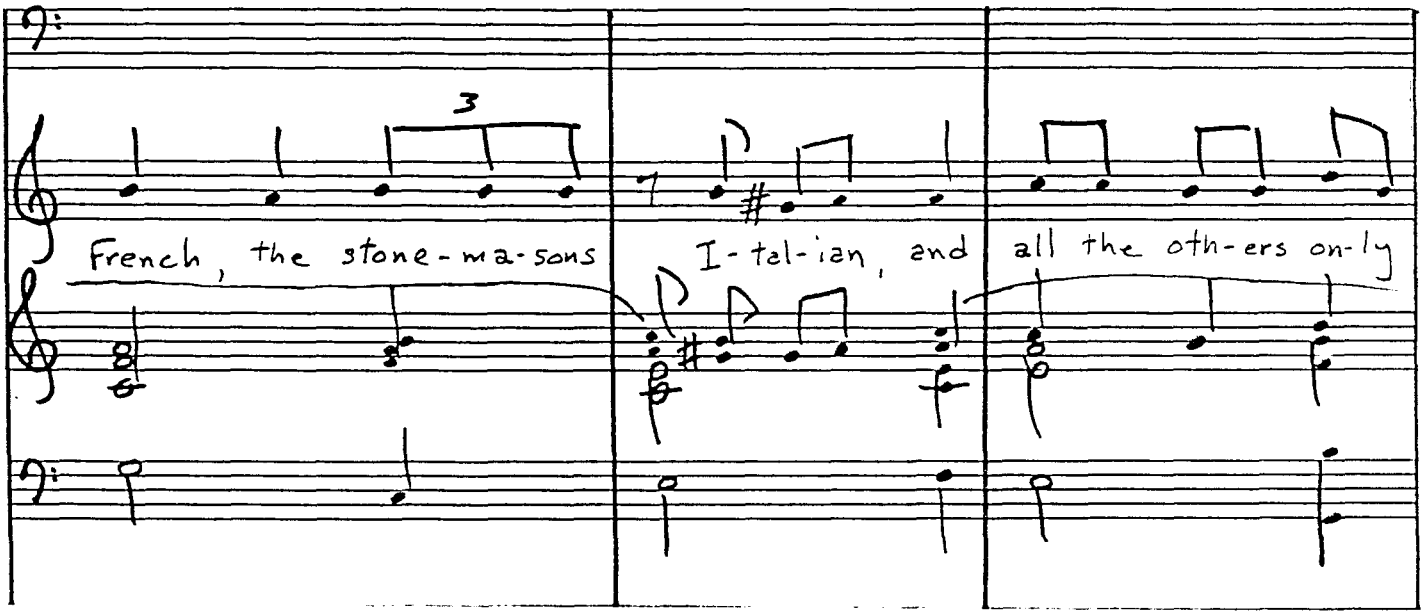

lang-uage
great-ly, I'm a-freid,
if I had to do with-

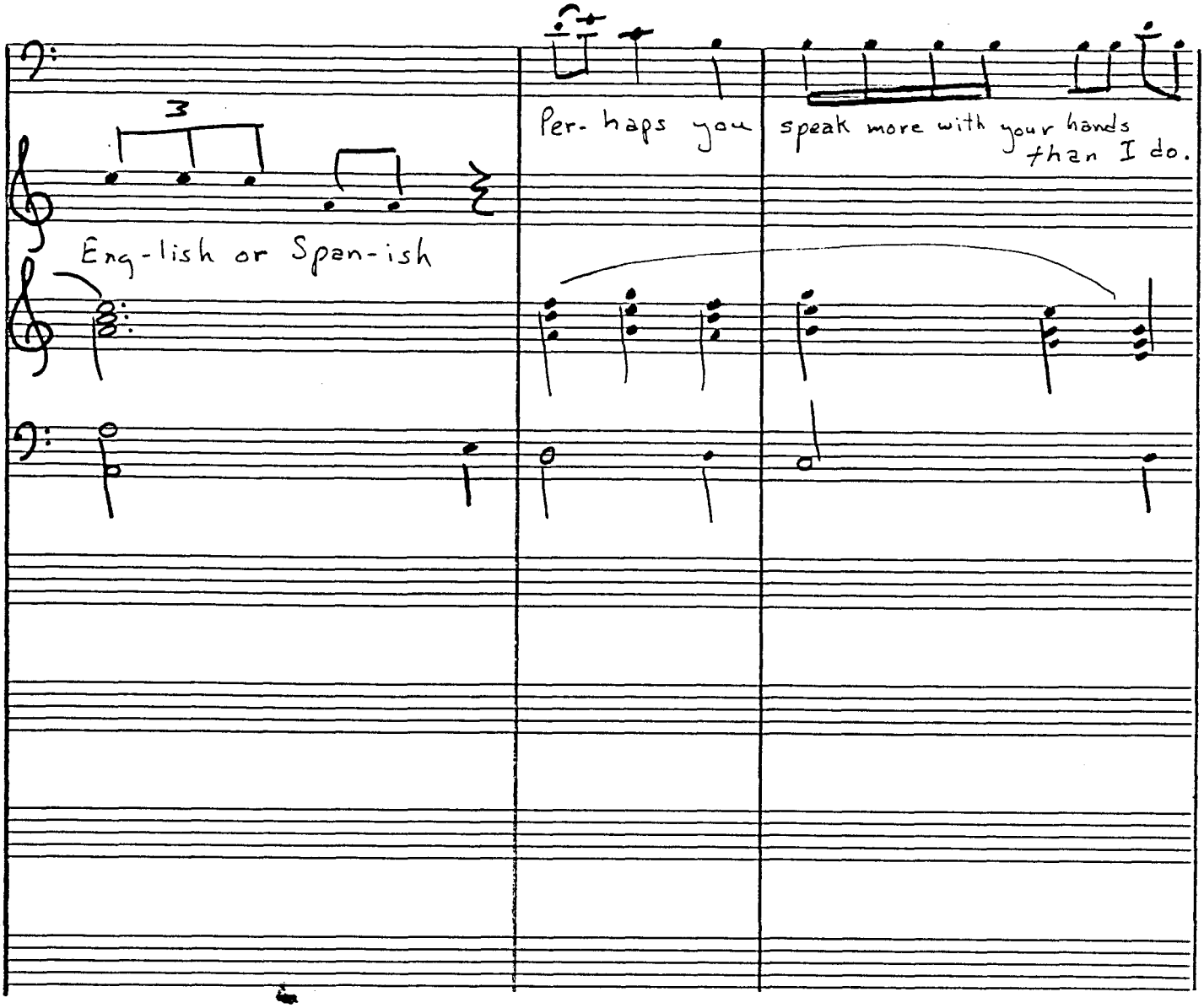
92


out it.
I think that
I would find it
rest-ful.

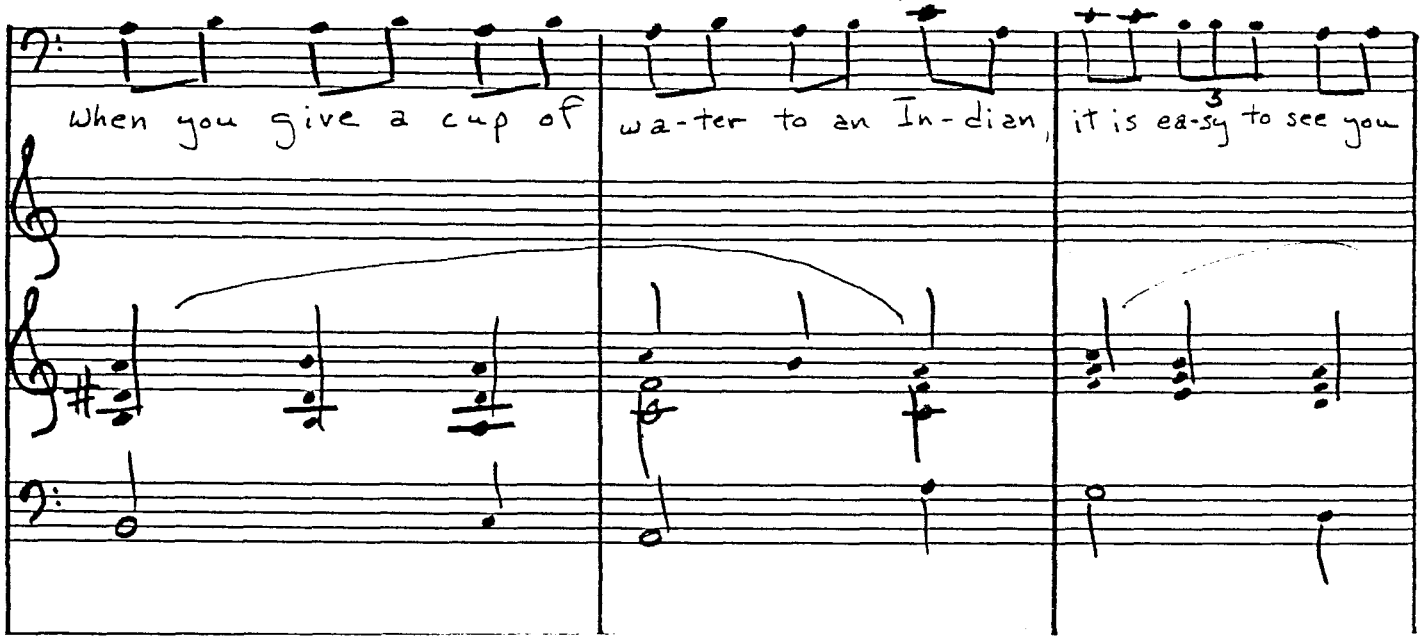

I have had to deal with
too much lang-uage late-ly
The work-men


3
on our cha-pel speak
four dif-ferent lang-ua-
ges: the ar-chi-tects

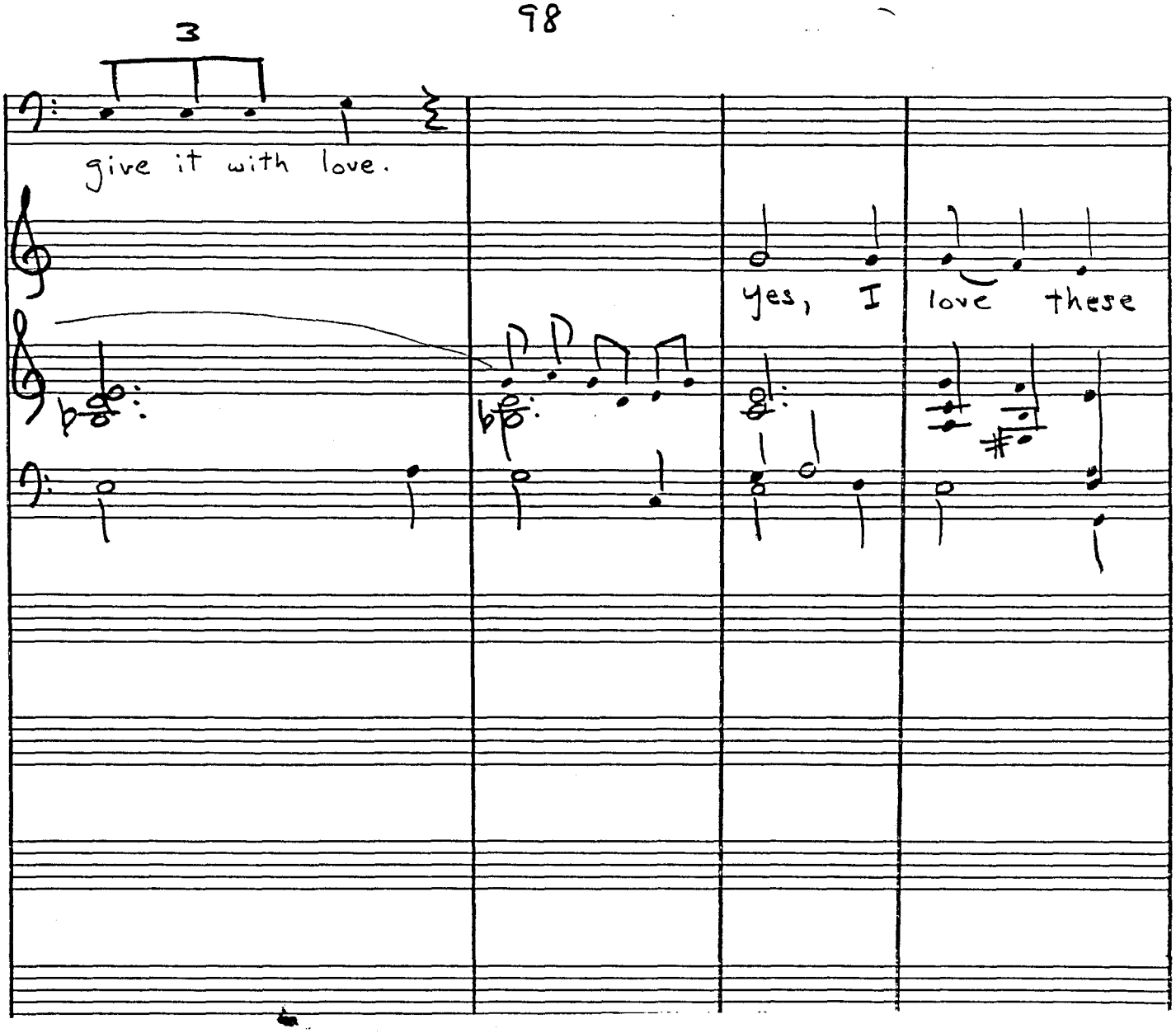

3
French, the stone-ma-sons
I-tal-ian, and
all the oth-ers on-ly

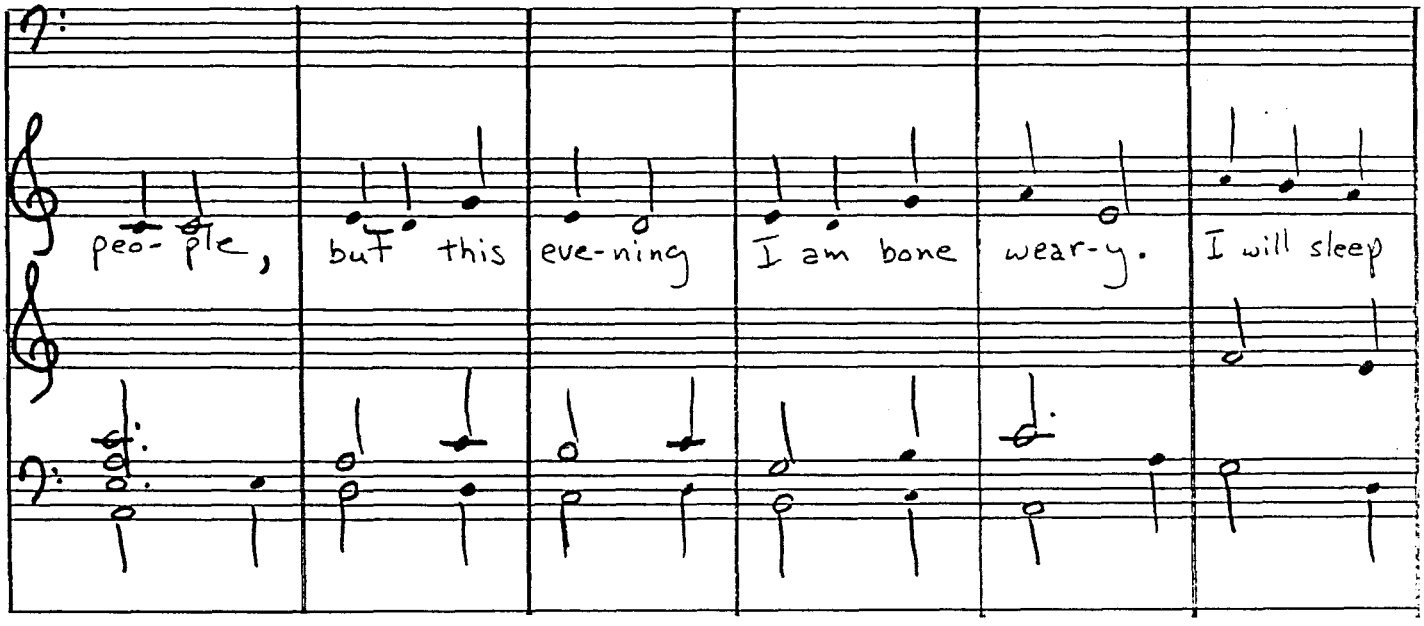

3
Eng-lish or Span-ish
Per-haps you
speak more with your hands
than I do.

97

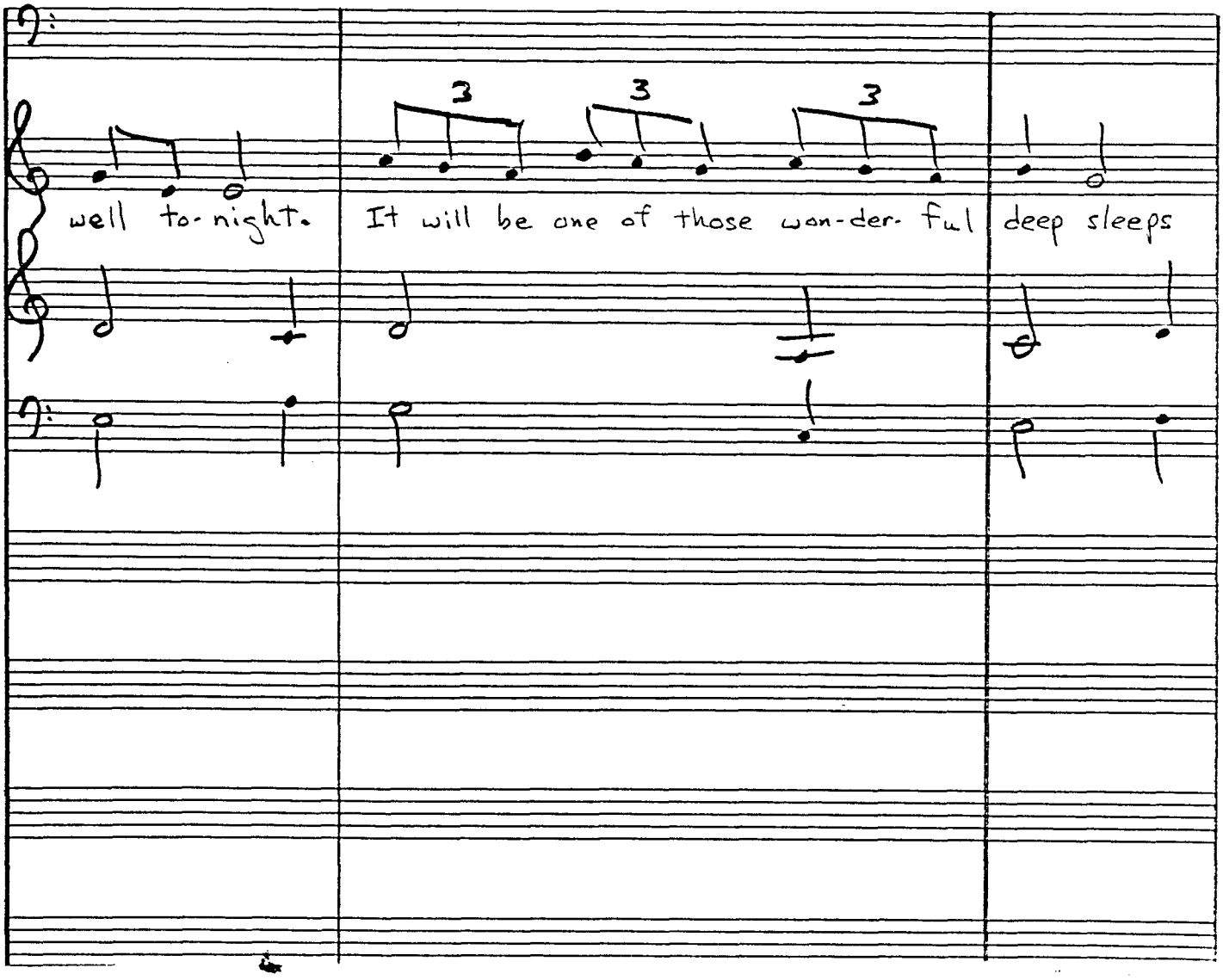

When you give a cup of
wa-ter to an In-dian,
3
it is ea-sy to see you

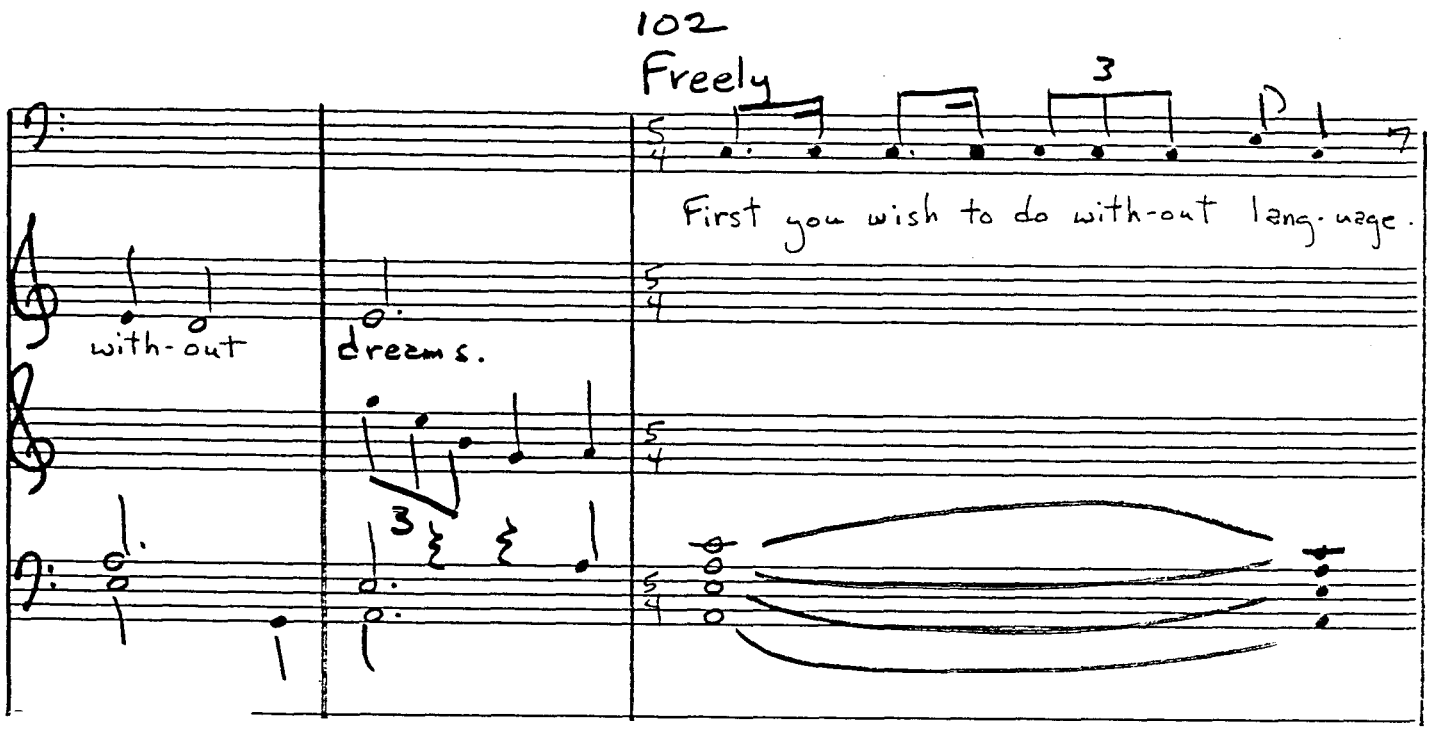
98

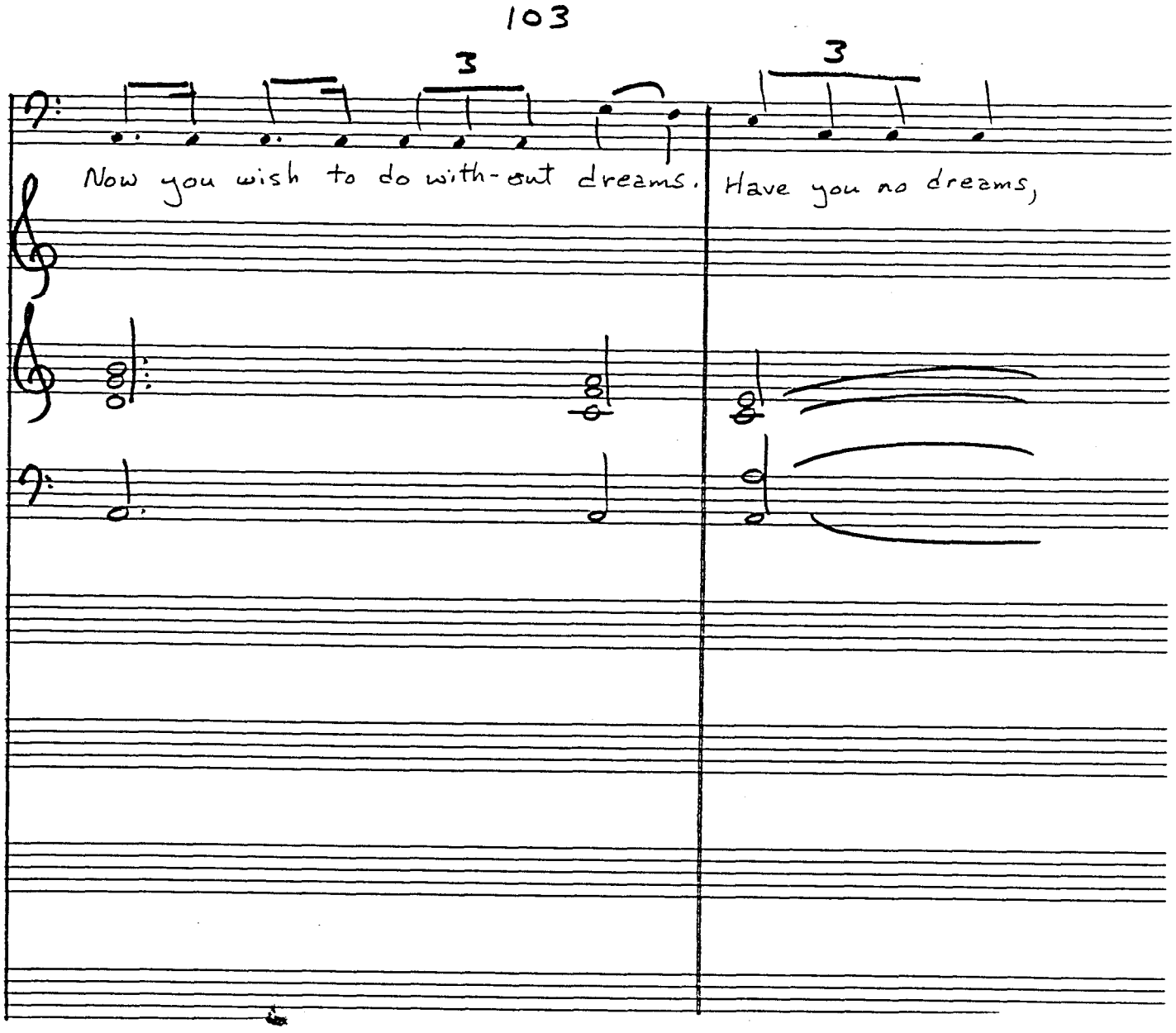

3
give it with love.
yes, I
love these


peo- ple, but this eve-ning I am bone wear-y. I will sleep

101

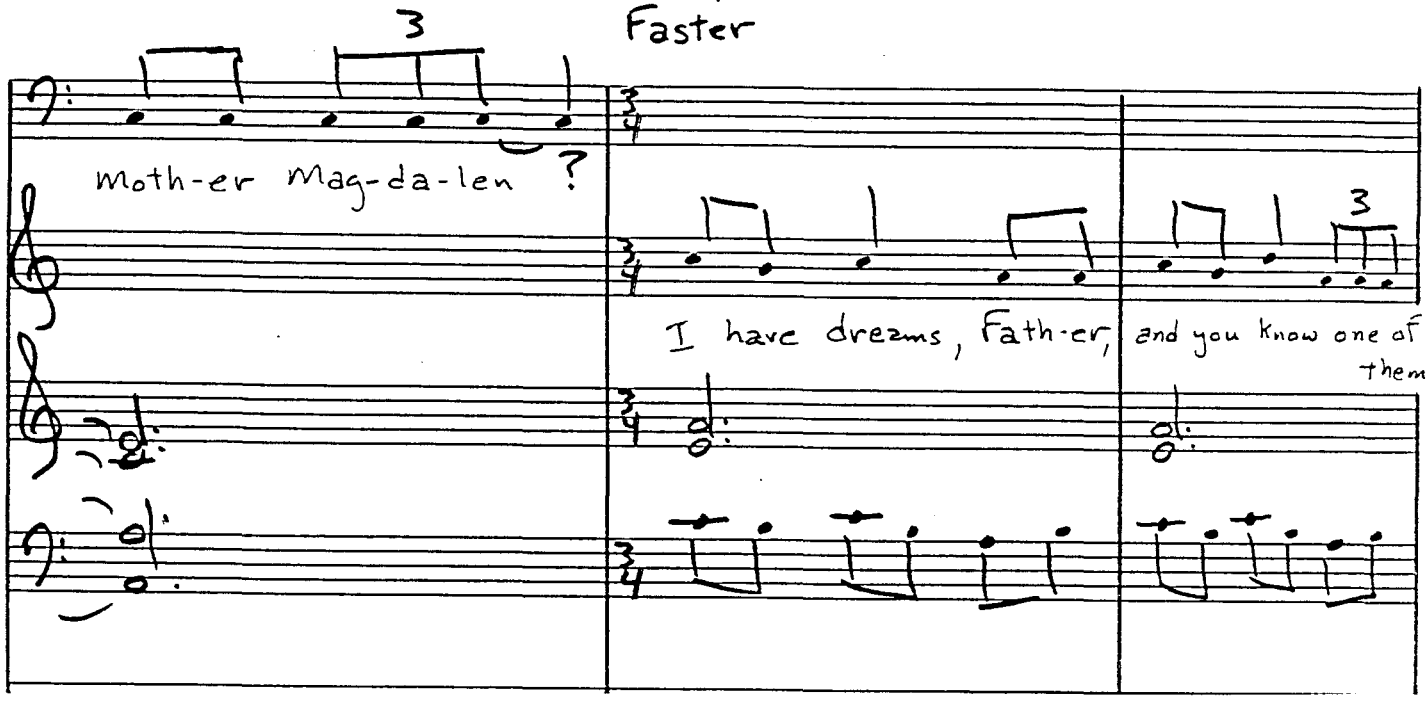

3
3
3
well to-night. It will be one of those won-der- ful deep sleeps


102
Freely
3
First you wish to do with-out lang-uage.
with-out
dreams.
3

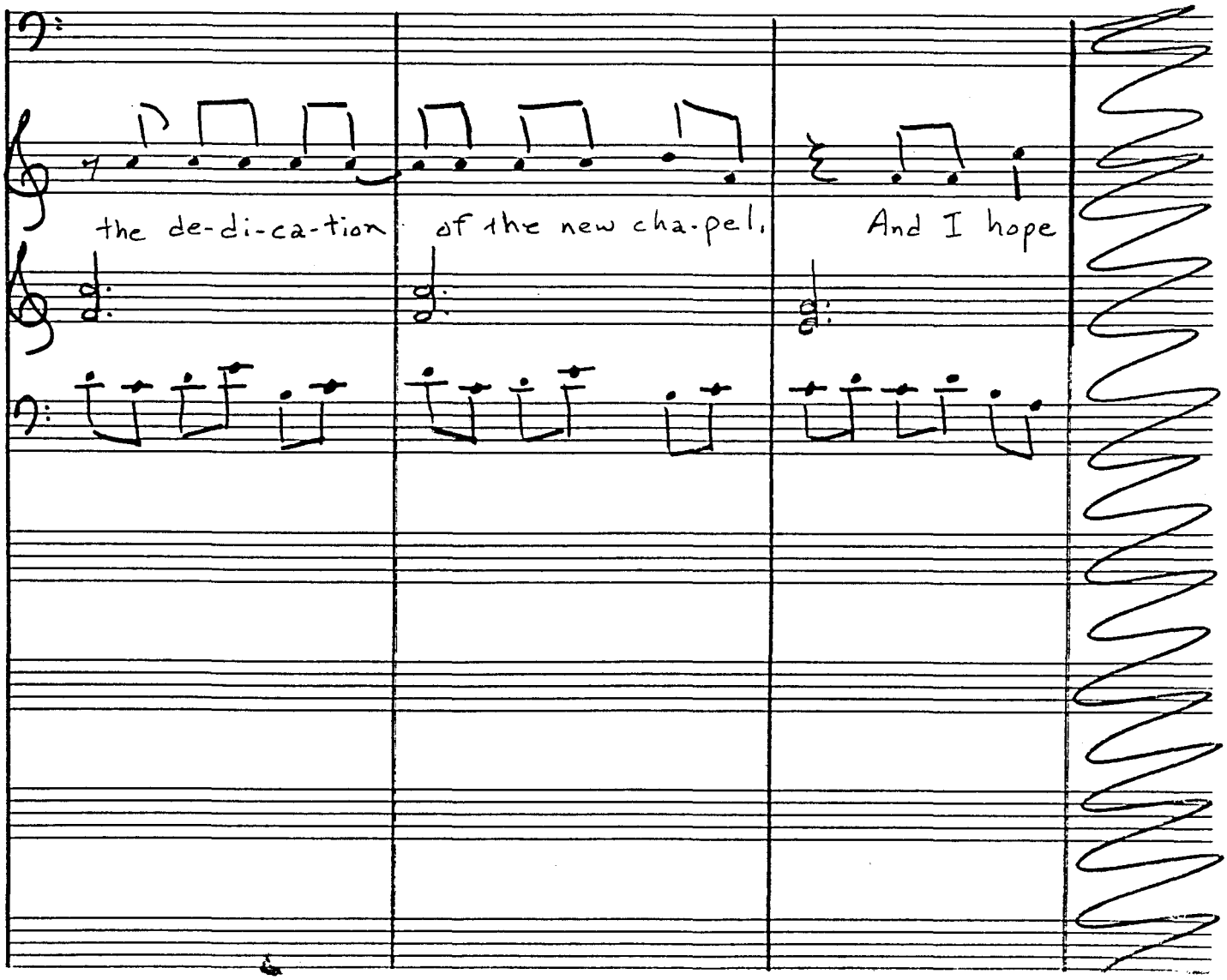

103
3
3
Now you wish to do with-out dreams.
Have you no dreams,

104

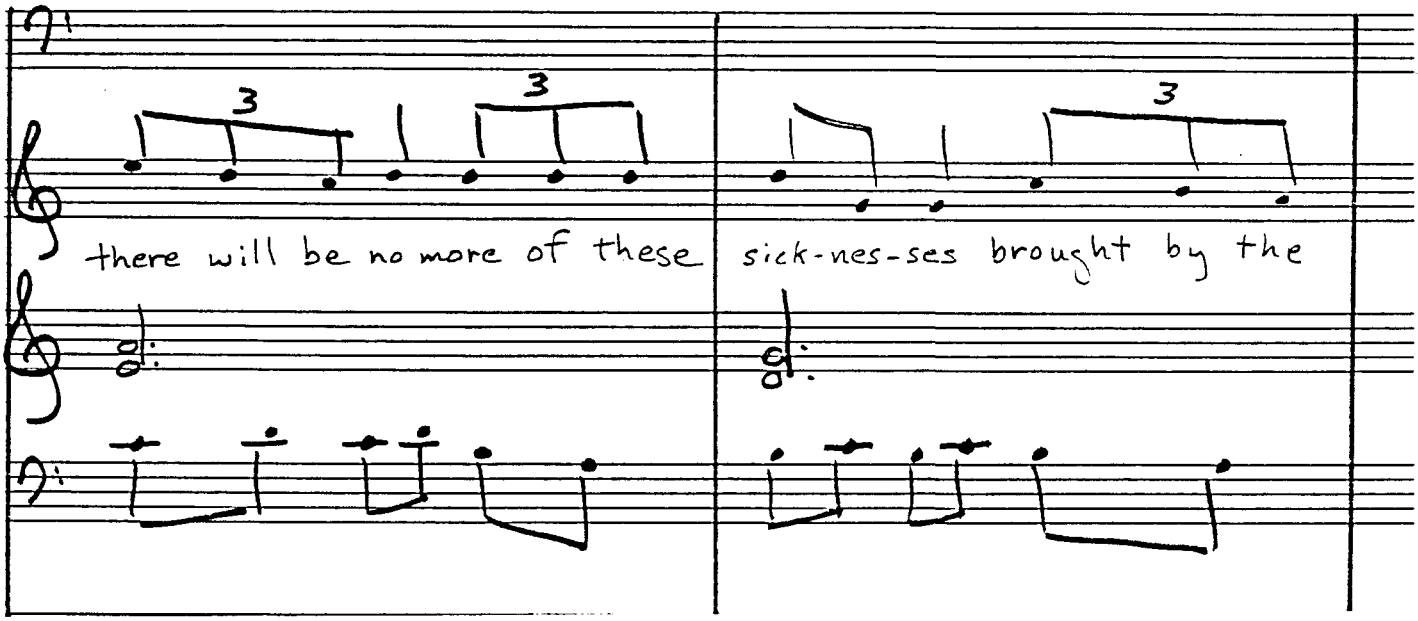
Faster



105

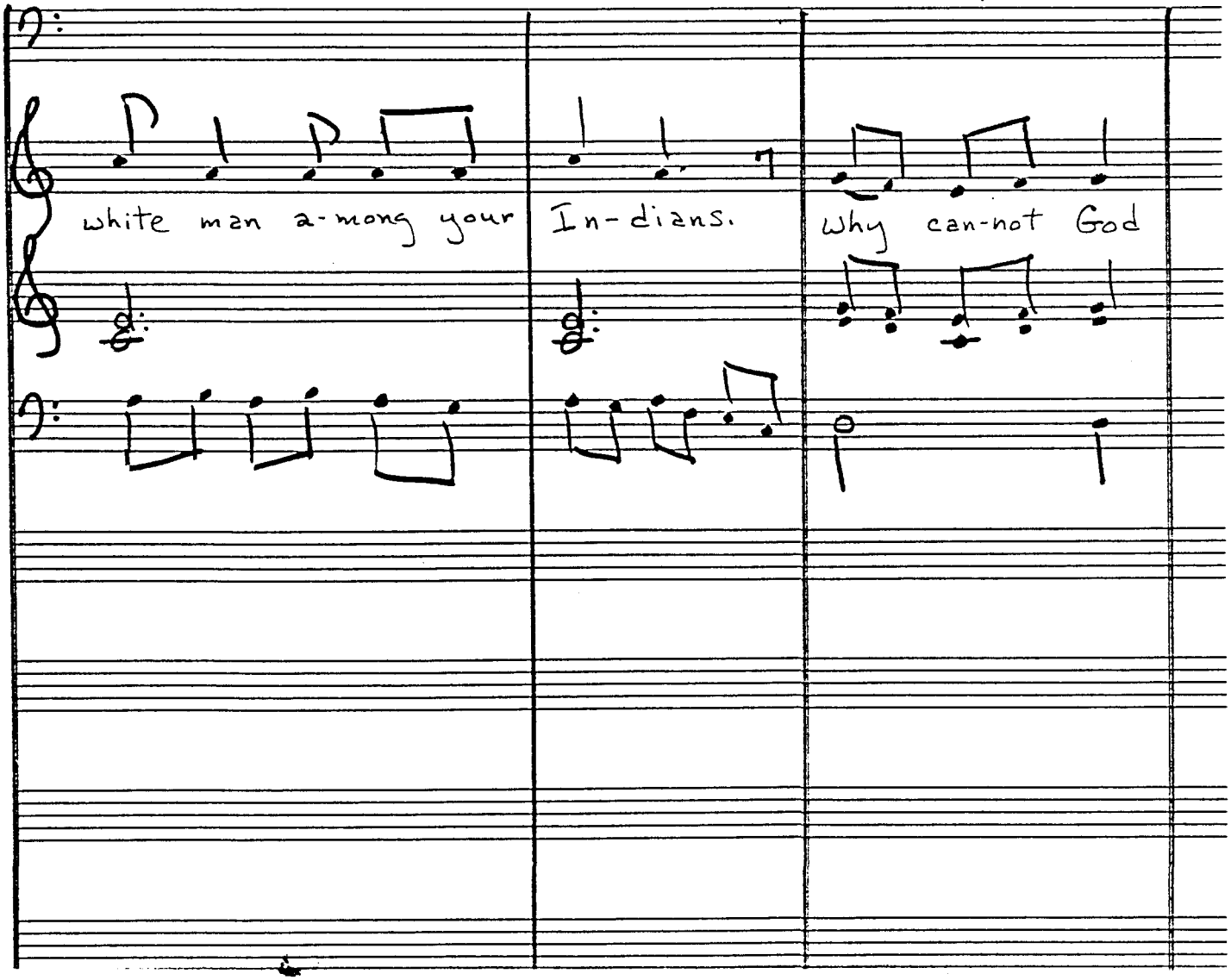


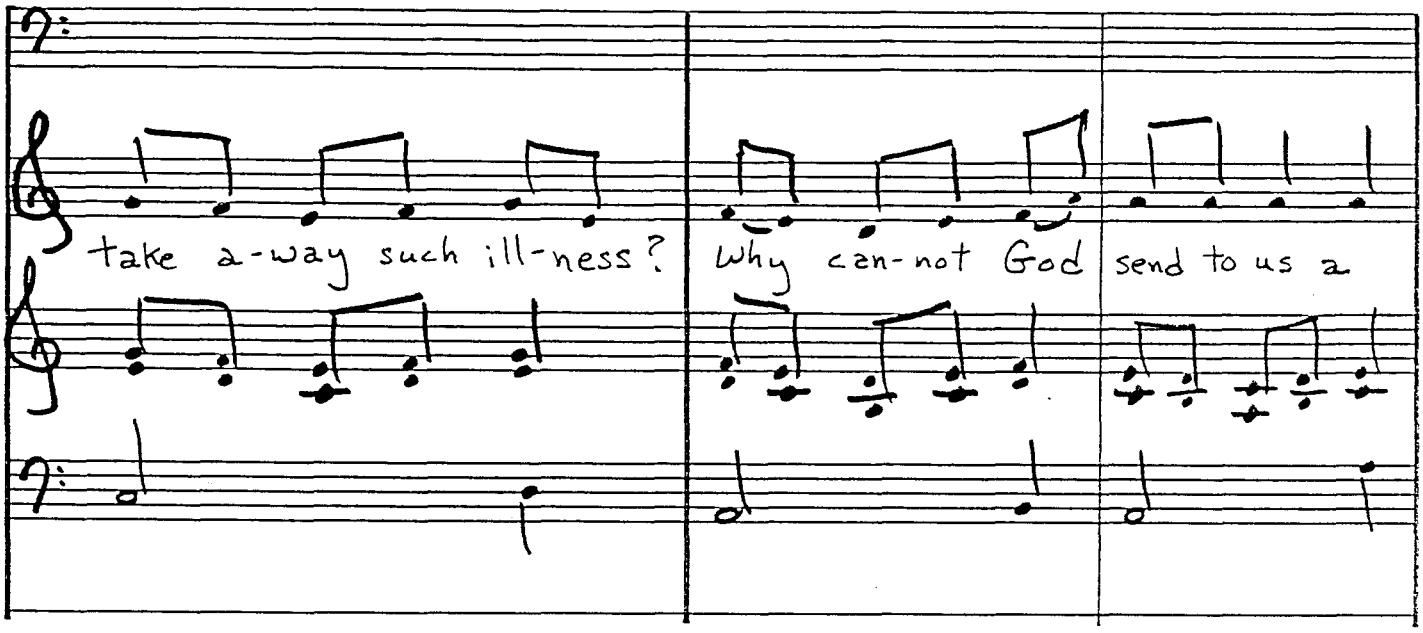
106

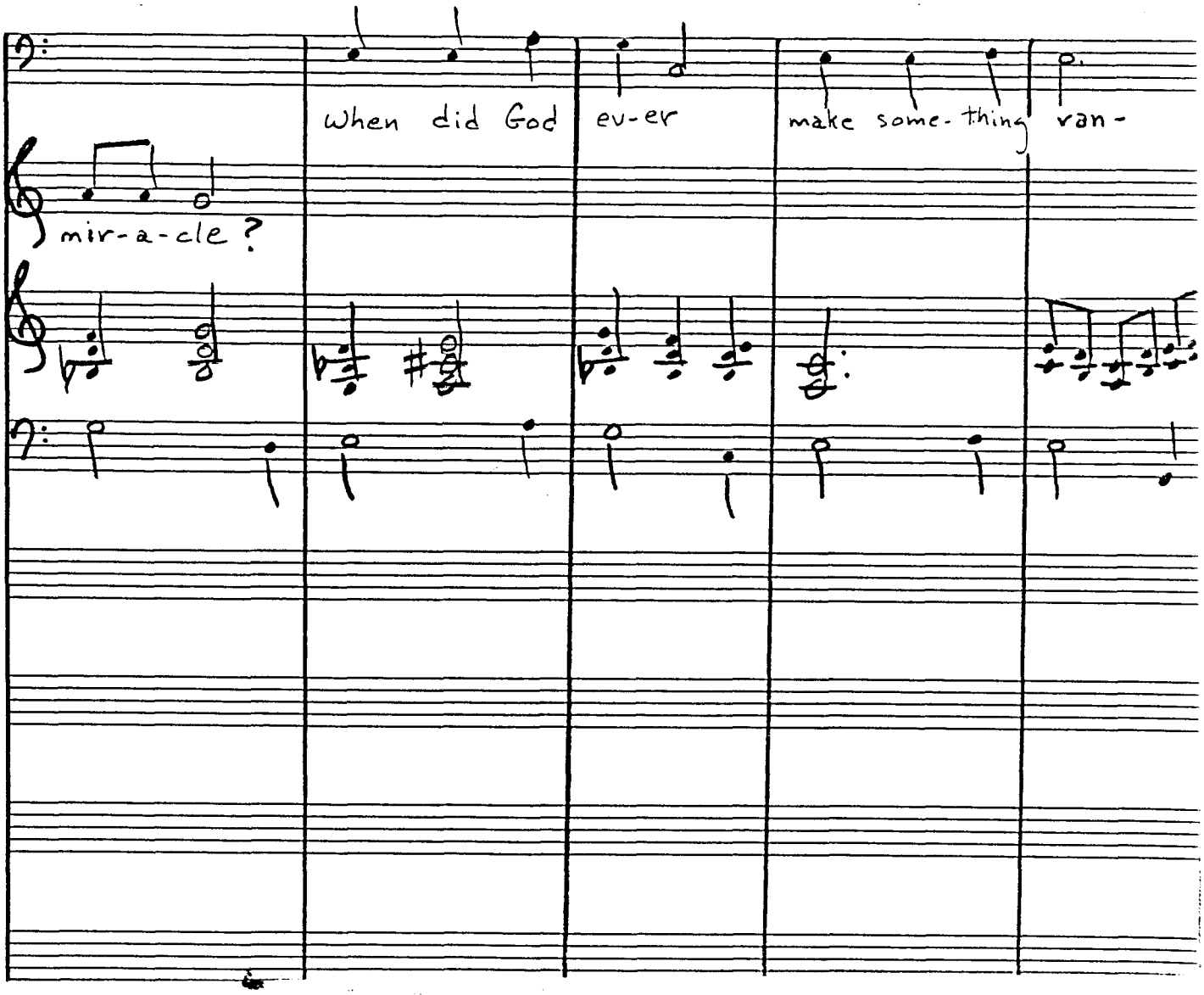


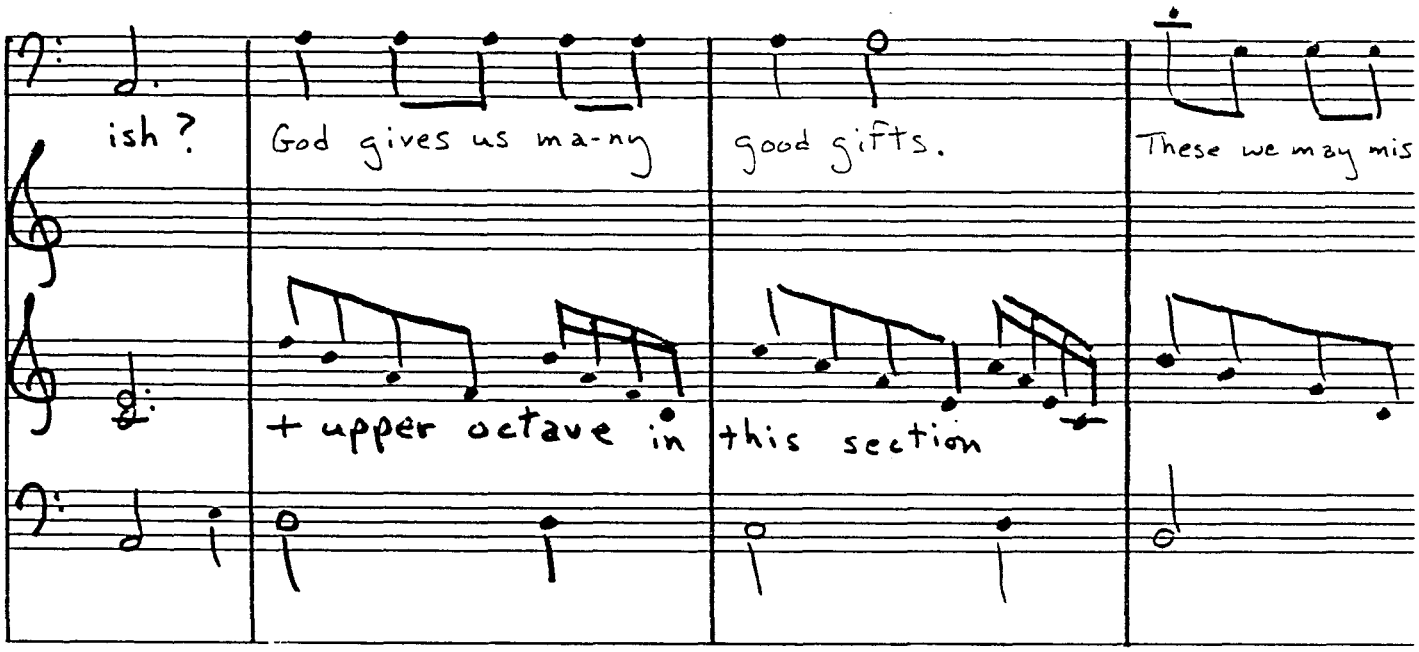
107

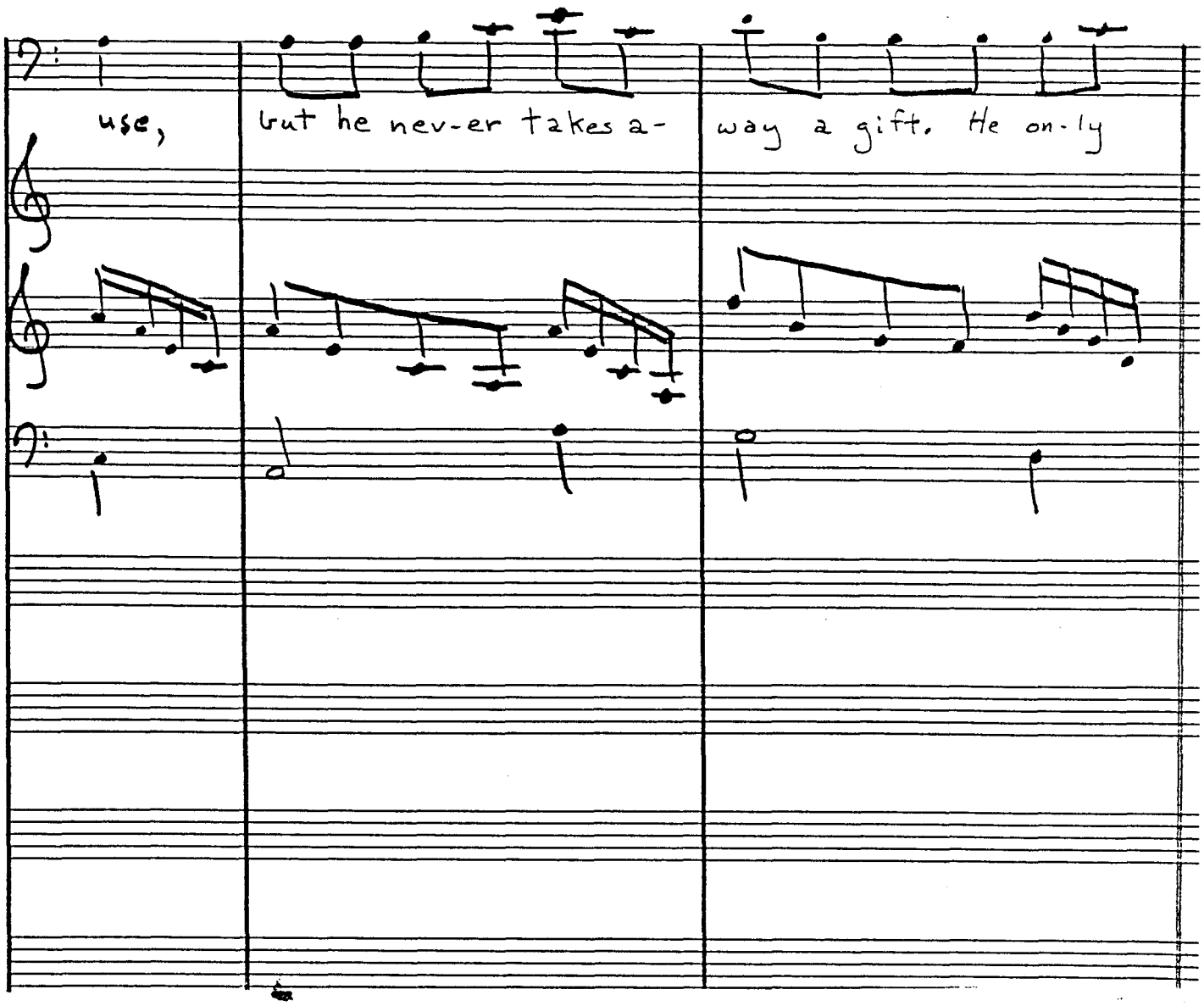
A tempo



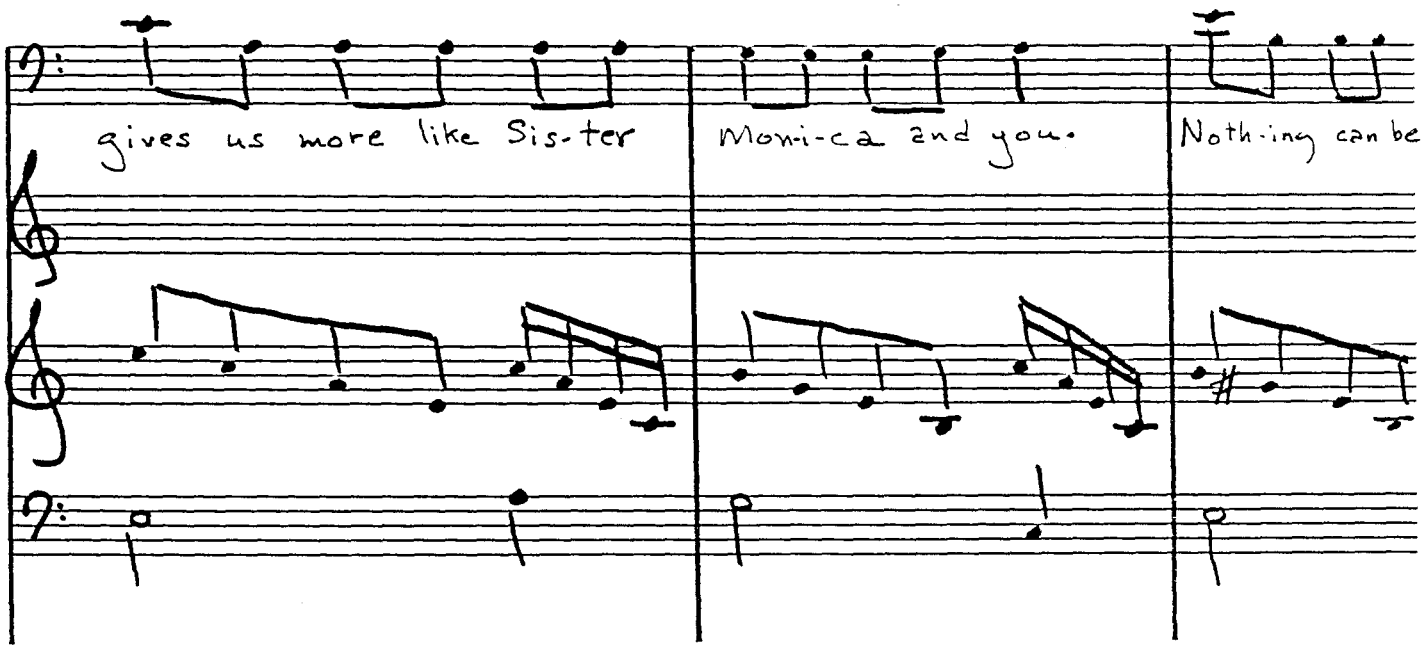

take a-way such ill-ness?
Why can-not God
send to us a


mir-a-cle?
When did God
ev-er
make some-thing
van-

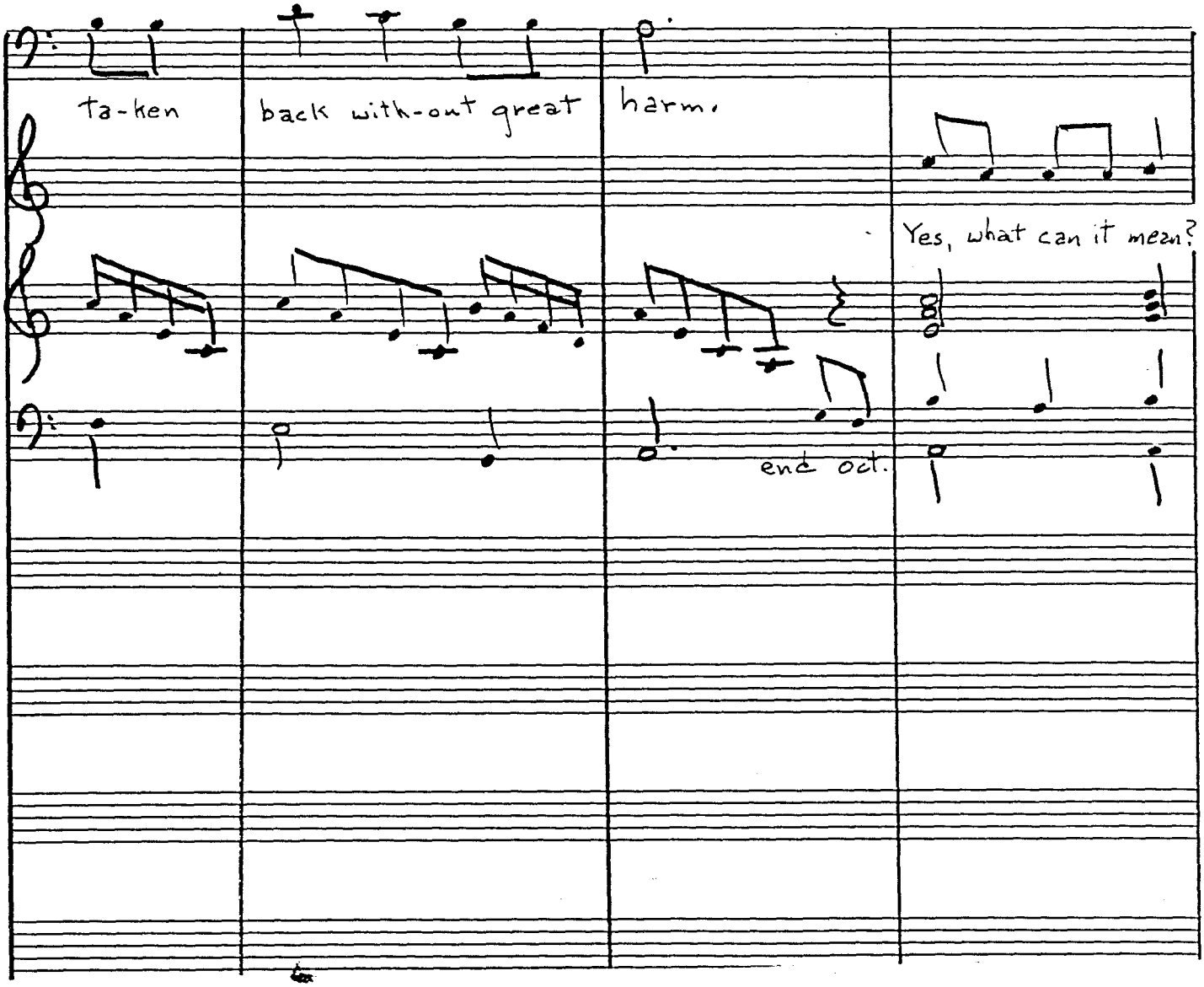

ish?
God gives us ma-ny
good gifts.
These we may mis-
+ upper octave in this section

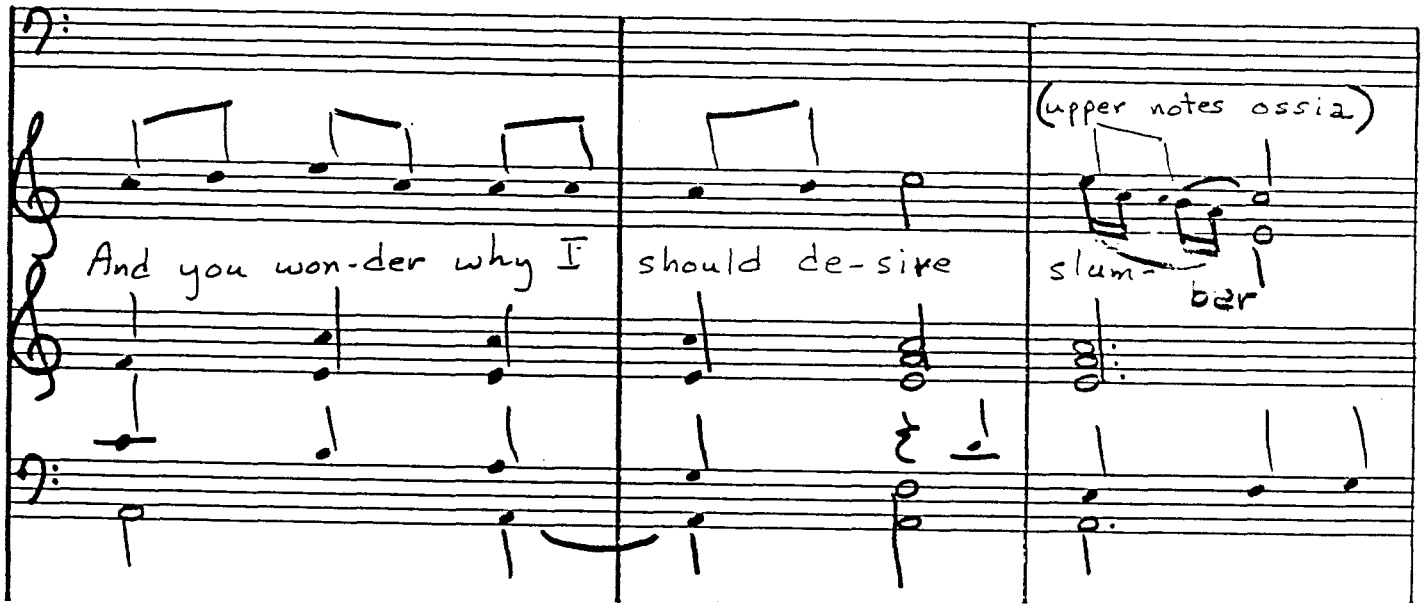

use,
but he nev-er takes a-
way a gift. He on-ly

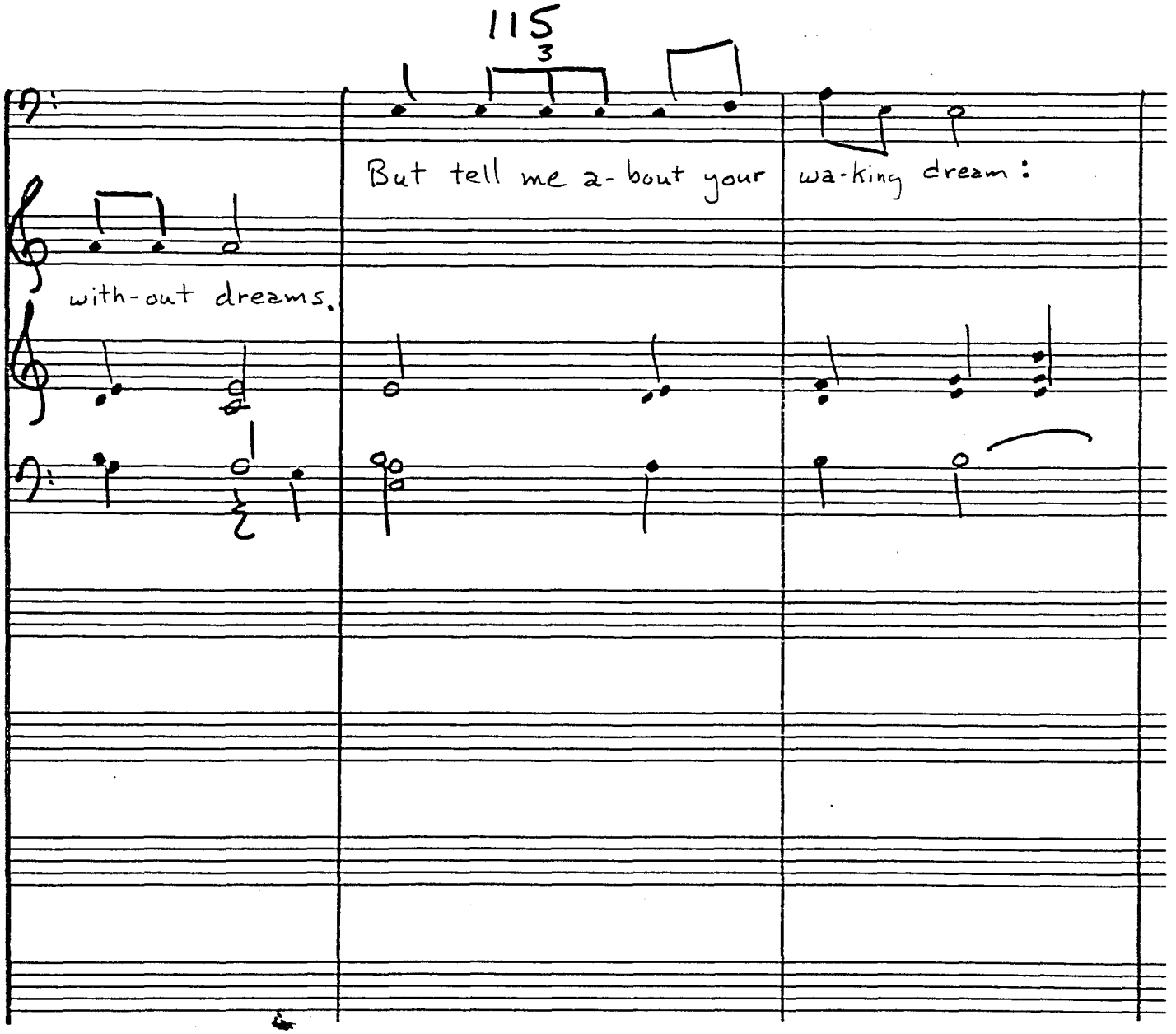
112

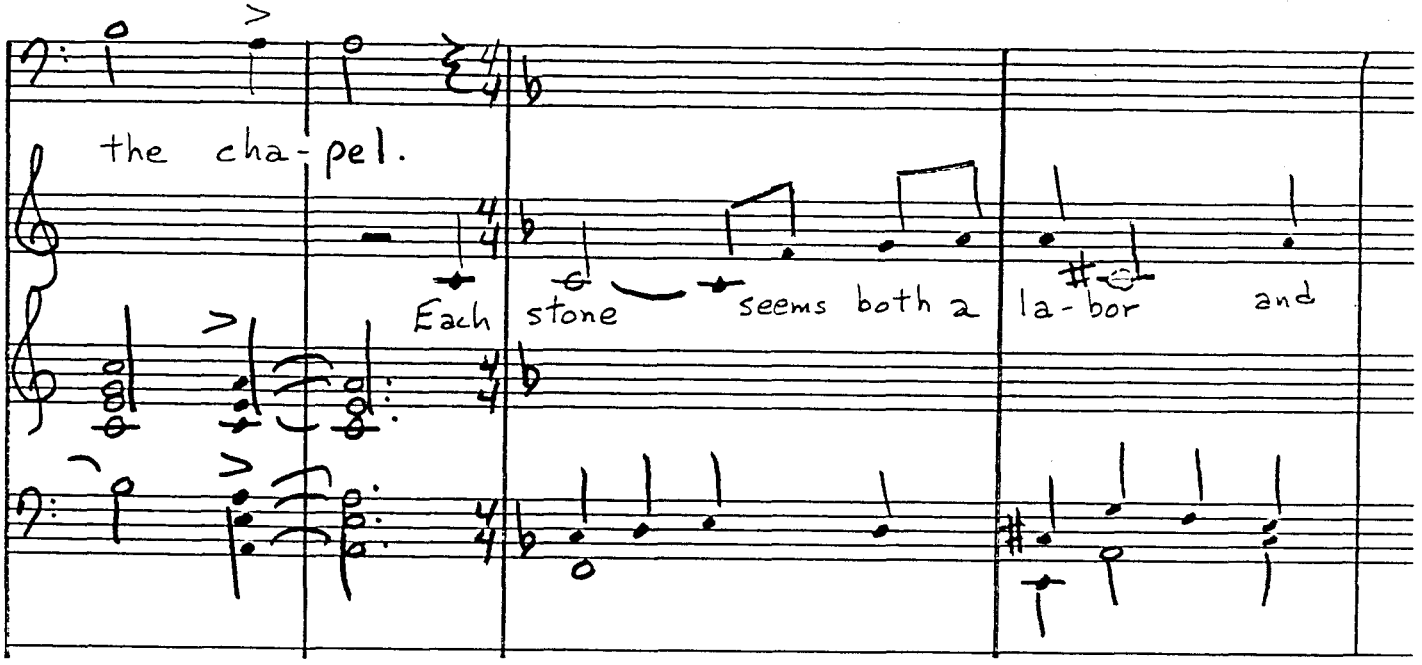

gives us more like Sis-ter
Moni-ca and you.
Noth-ing can be

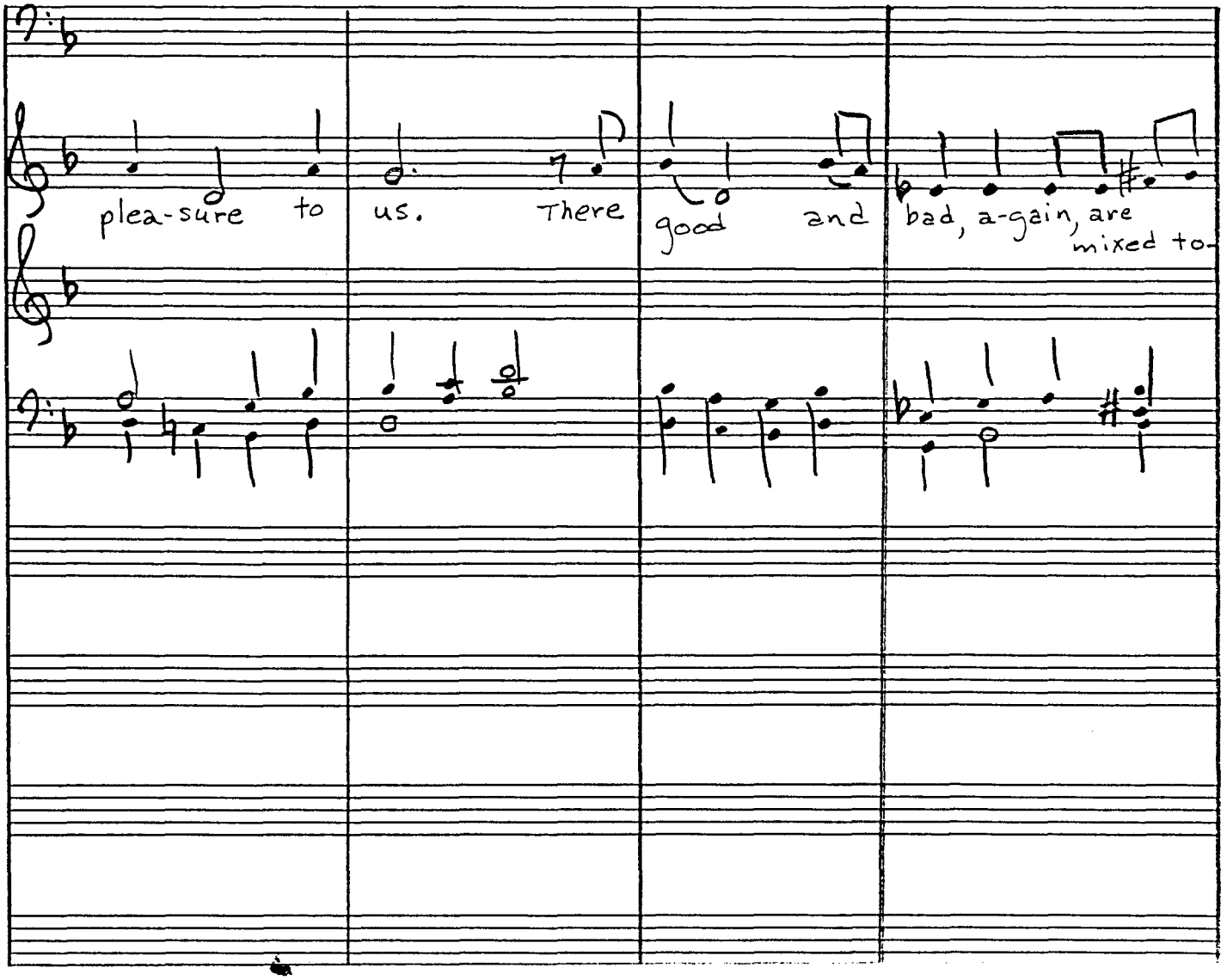
113

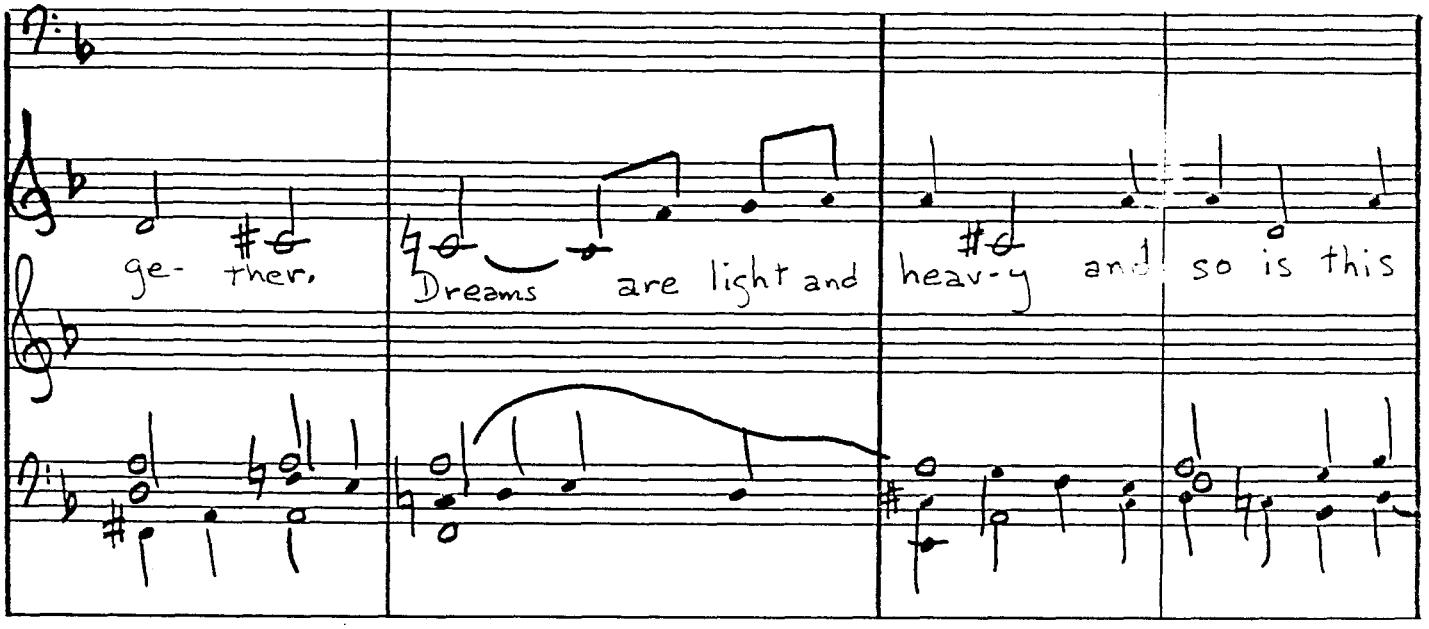

ta-ken
back with-out great
harm.
Yes, what can it mean?
end oct.

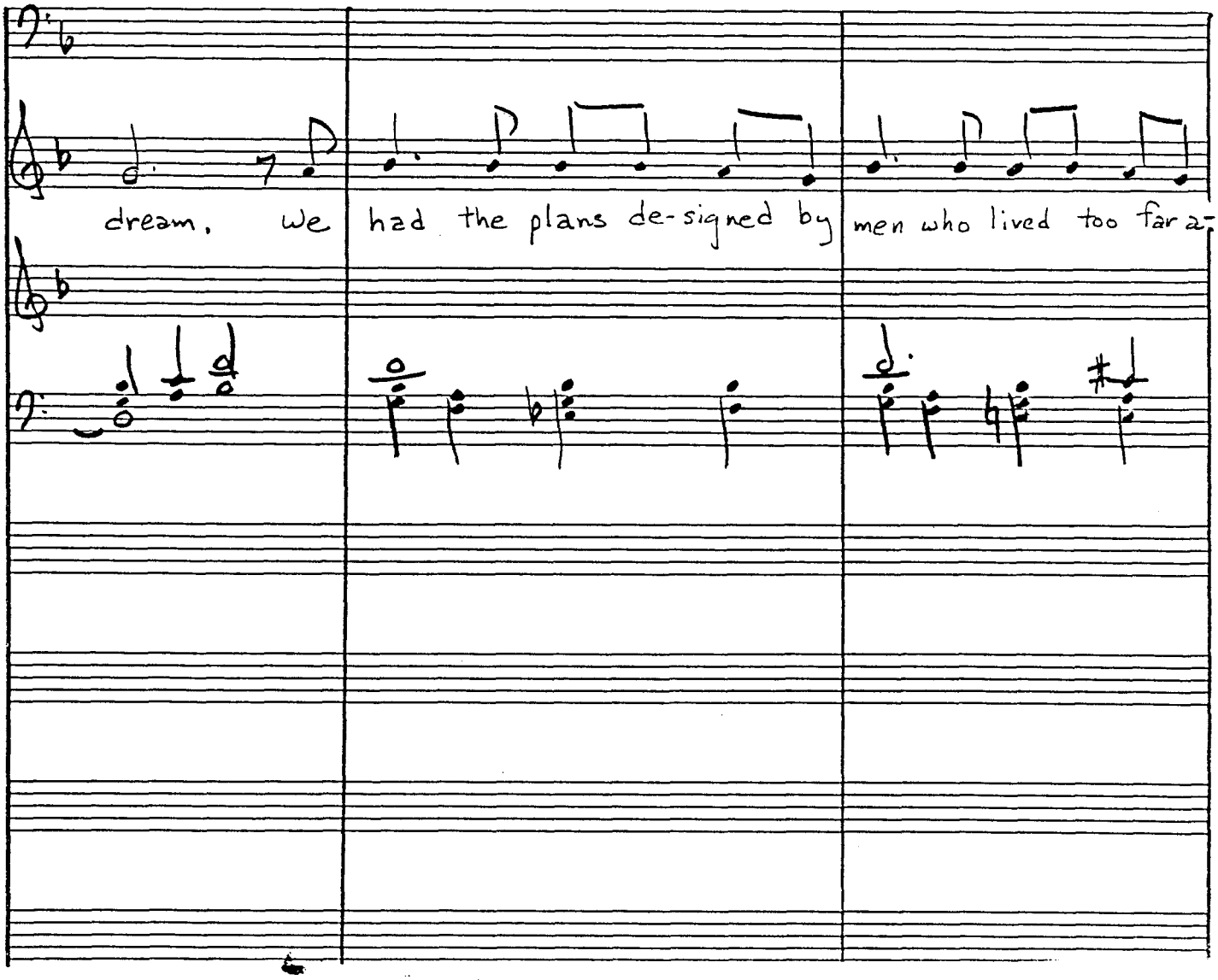

(upper notes ossia)
And you won-der why I
should de-sire
slum-
ber

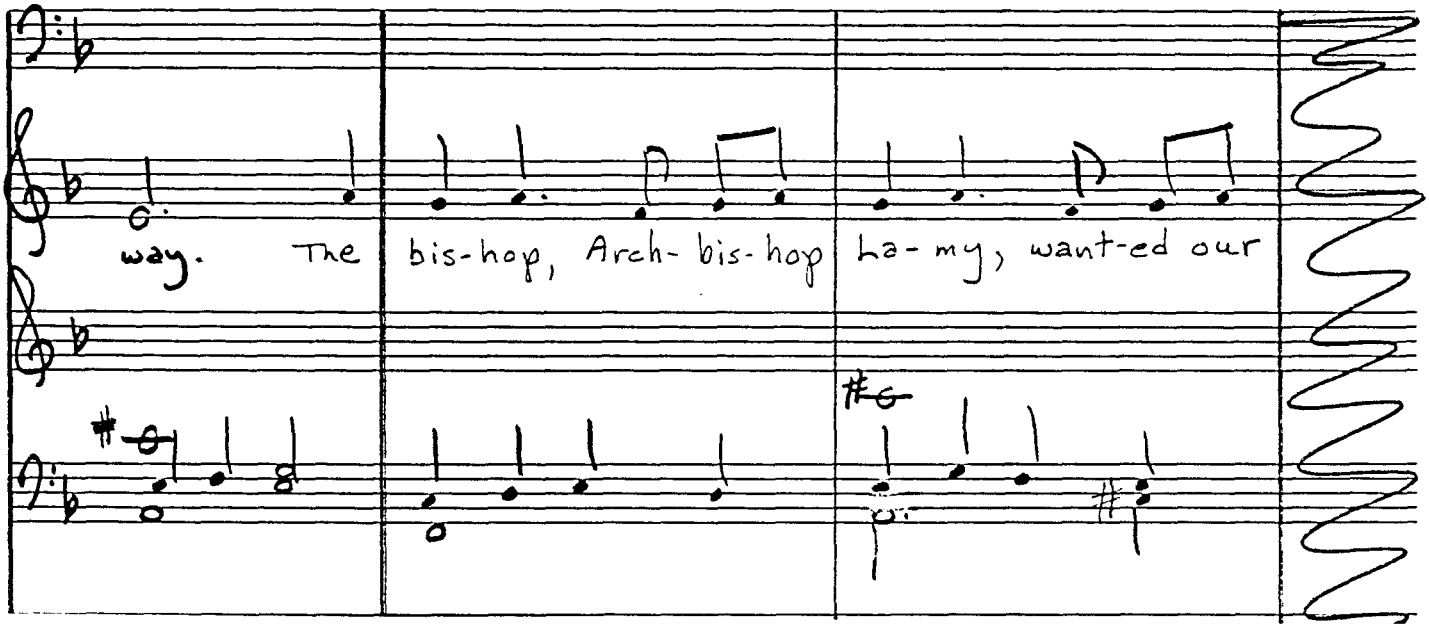

3
But tell me a-bout your
wa-king dream:
with-out dreams.

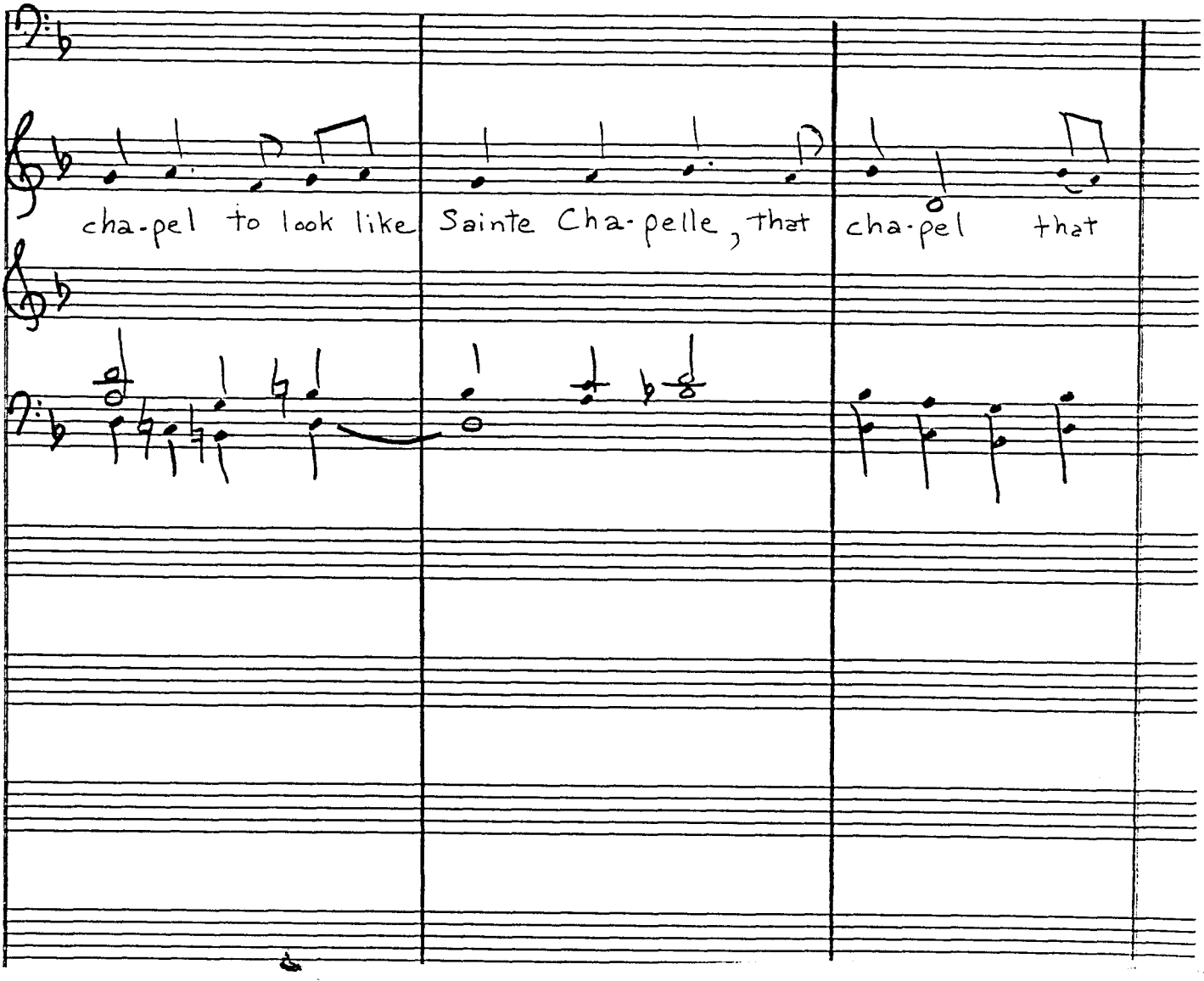

the cha-pel.
Each stone seems both a la-bor and

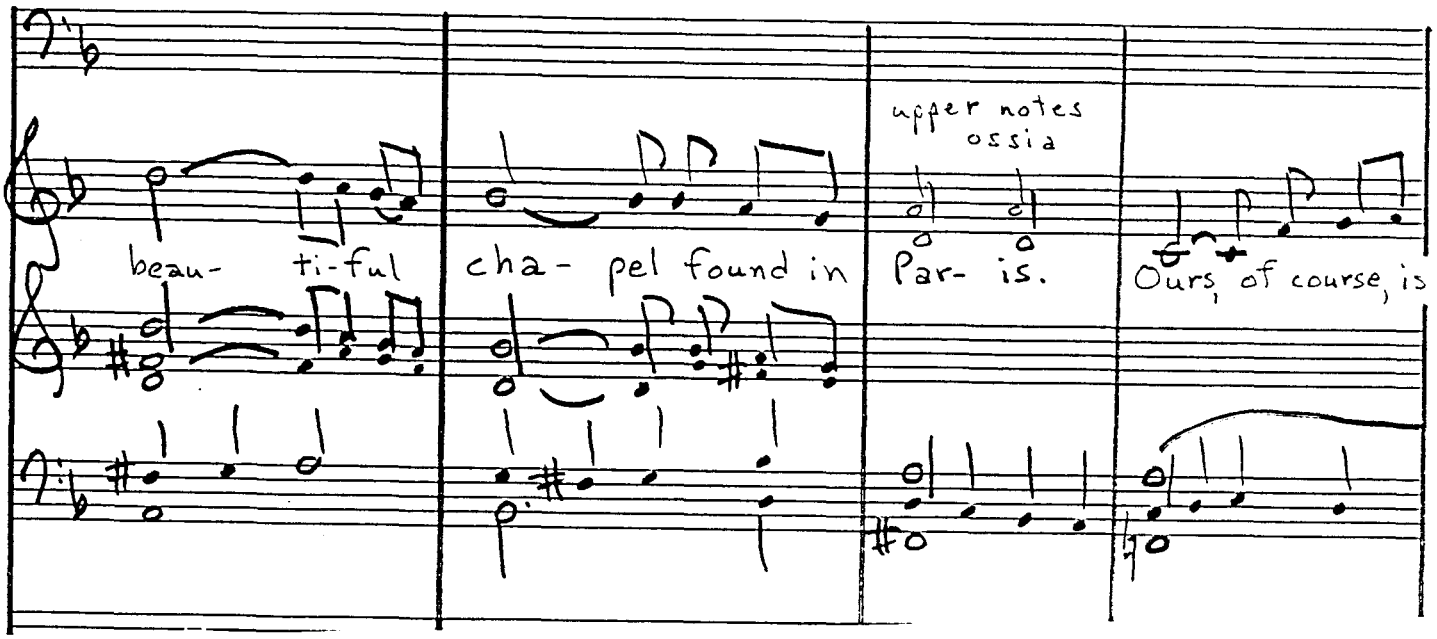

plea-sure to us. There
good and
bad, a-gain, are
mixed to-

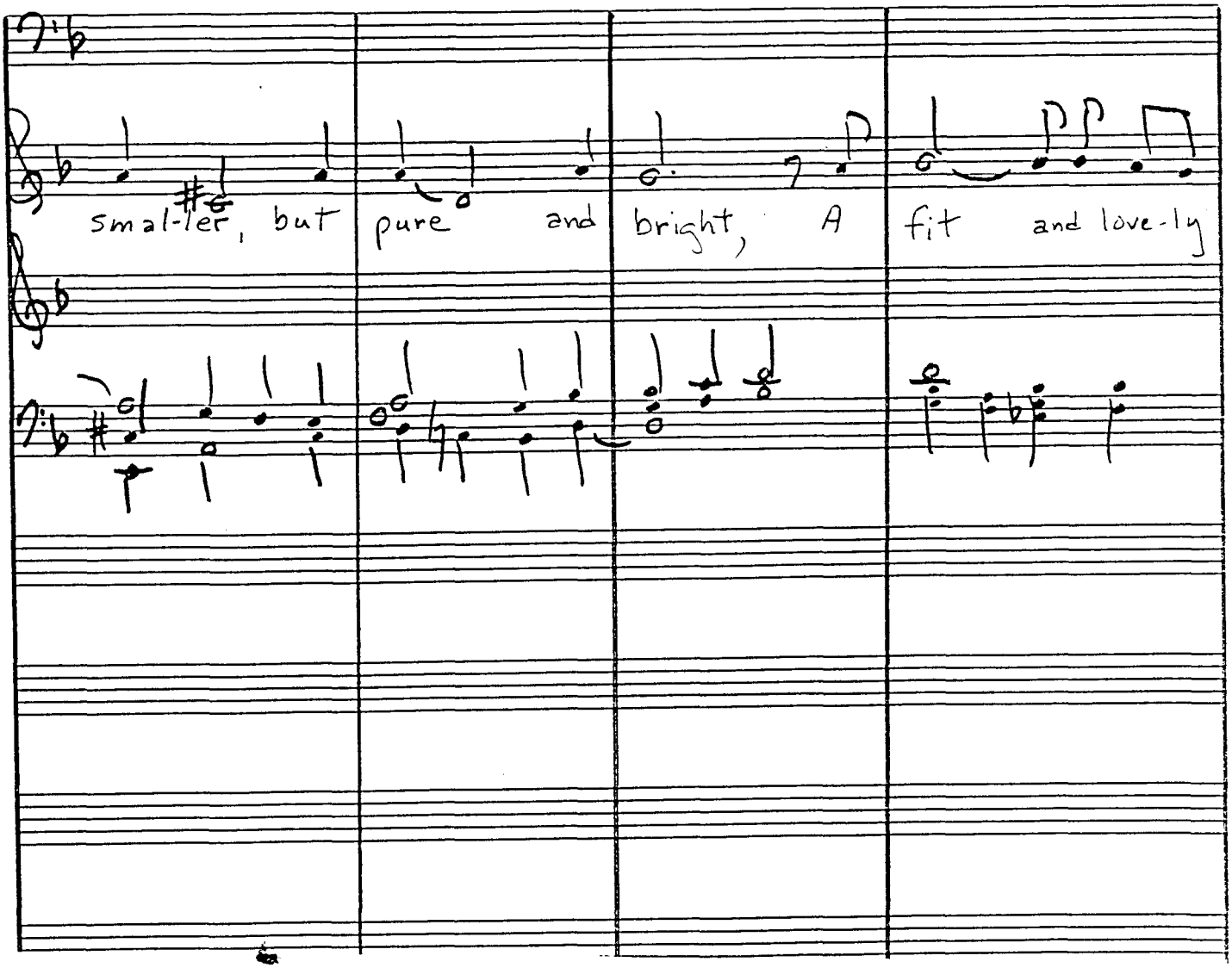

ge- ther.
Dreams are light and
heav-y and so is this


dream. we had the plans de-signed by men who lived too far a-

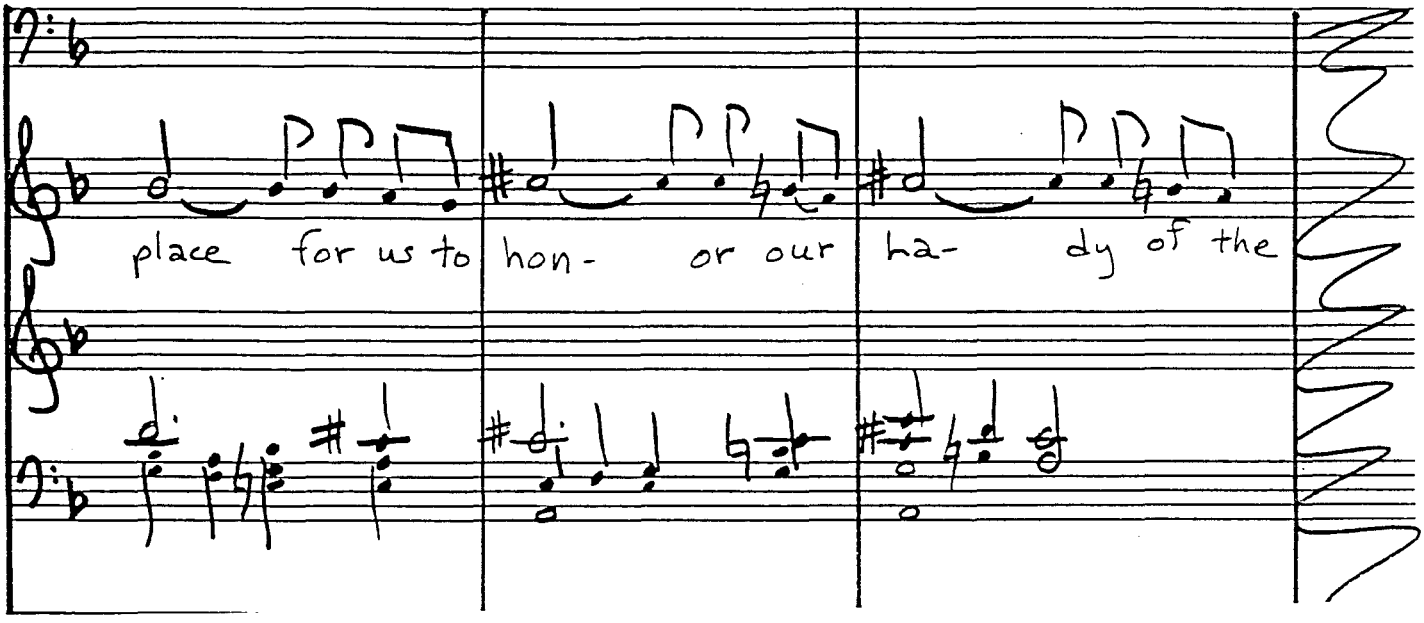

way. The bis-hop, Arch- bis-hop La- my, want-ed our


cha-pel to look like Sainte Cha-pelle, that cha-pel that

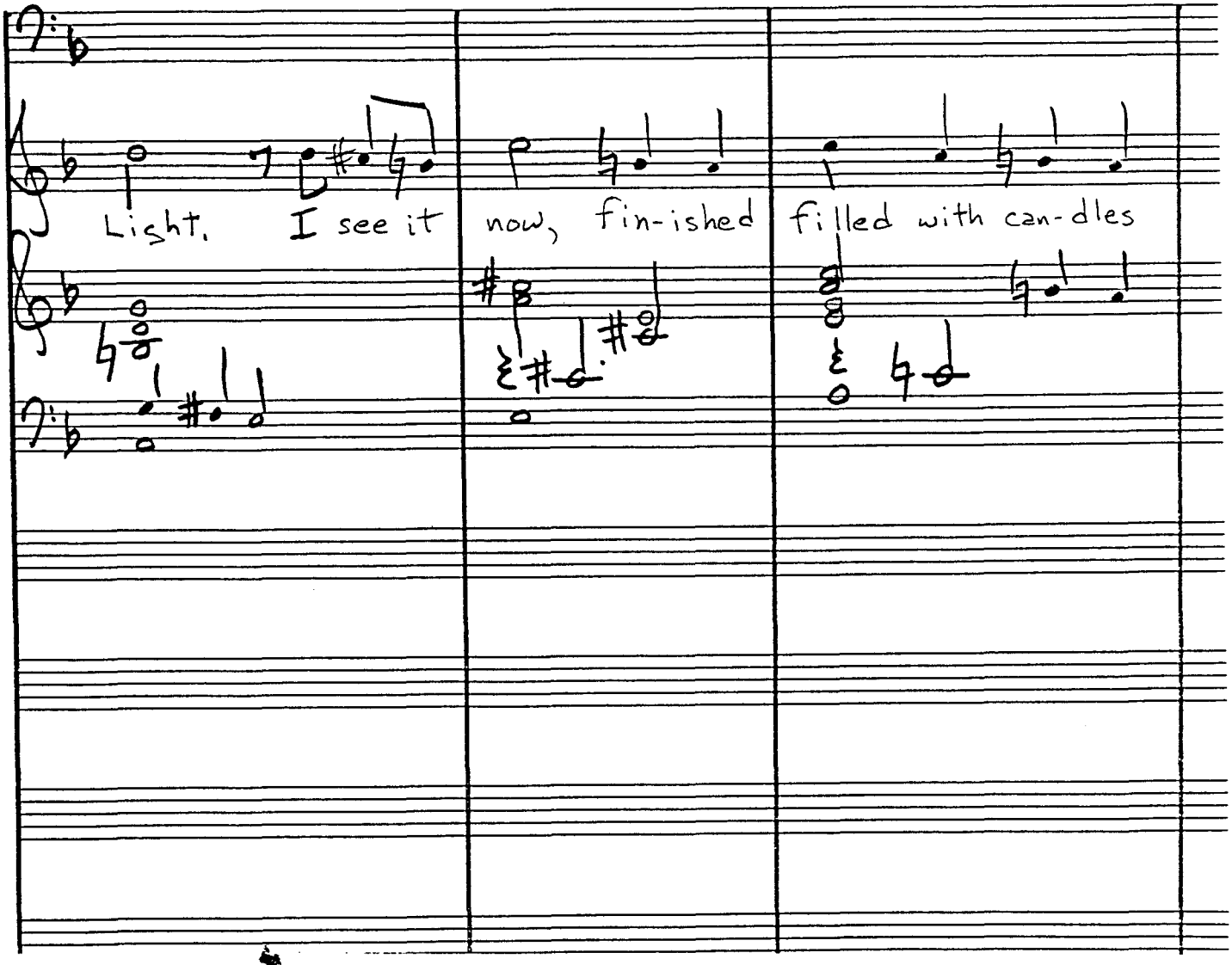

upper notes
ossia
beau- ti-ful cha- pel found in Par- is. Ours, of course, is


smal-ler, but pure and bright, A fit and love-ly

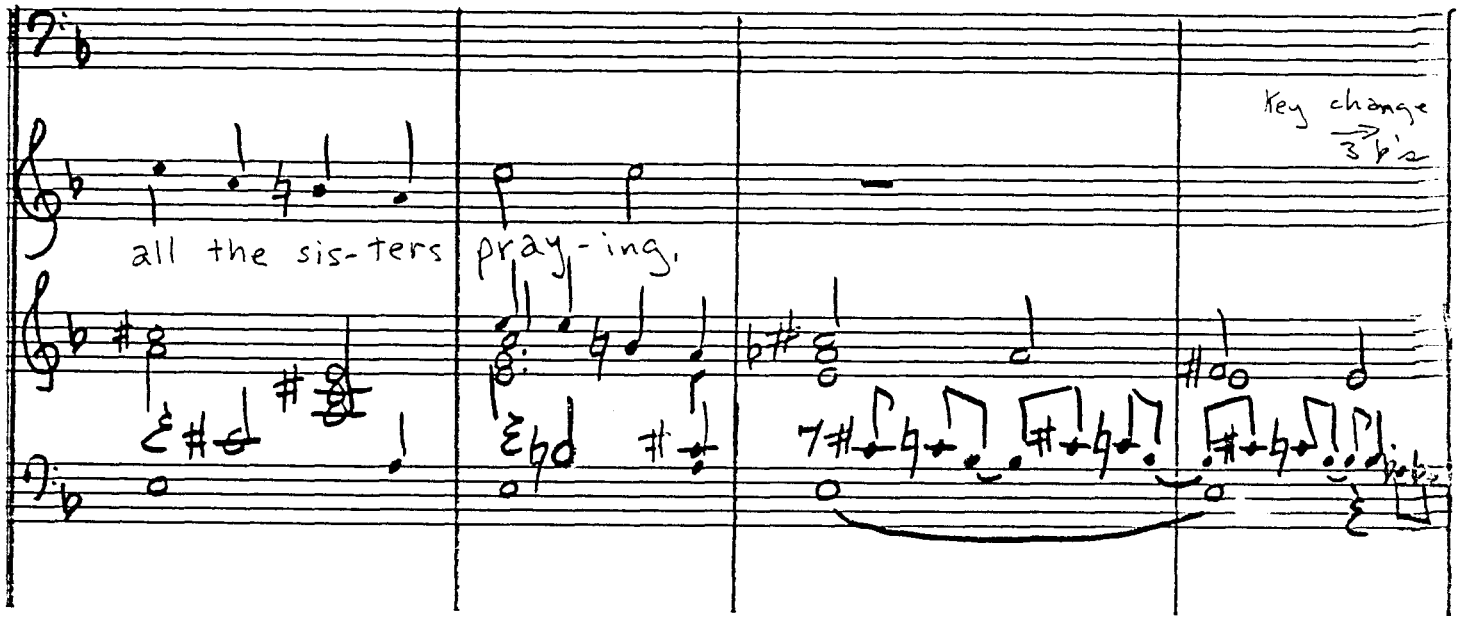
124


place for us to hon- or our la- dy of the

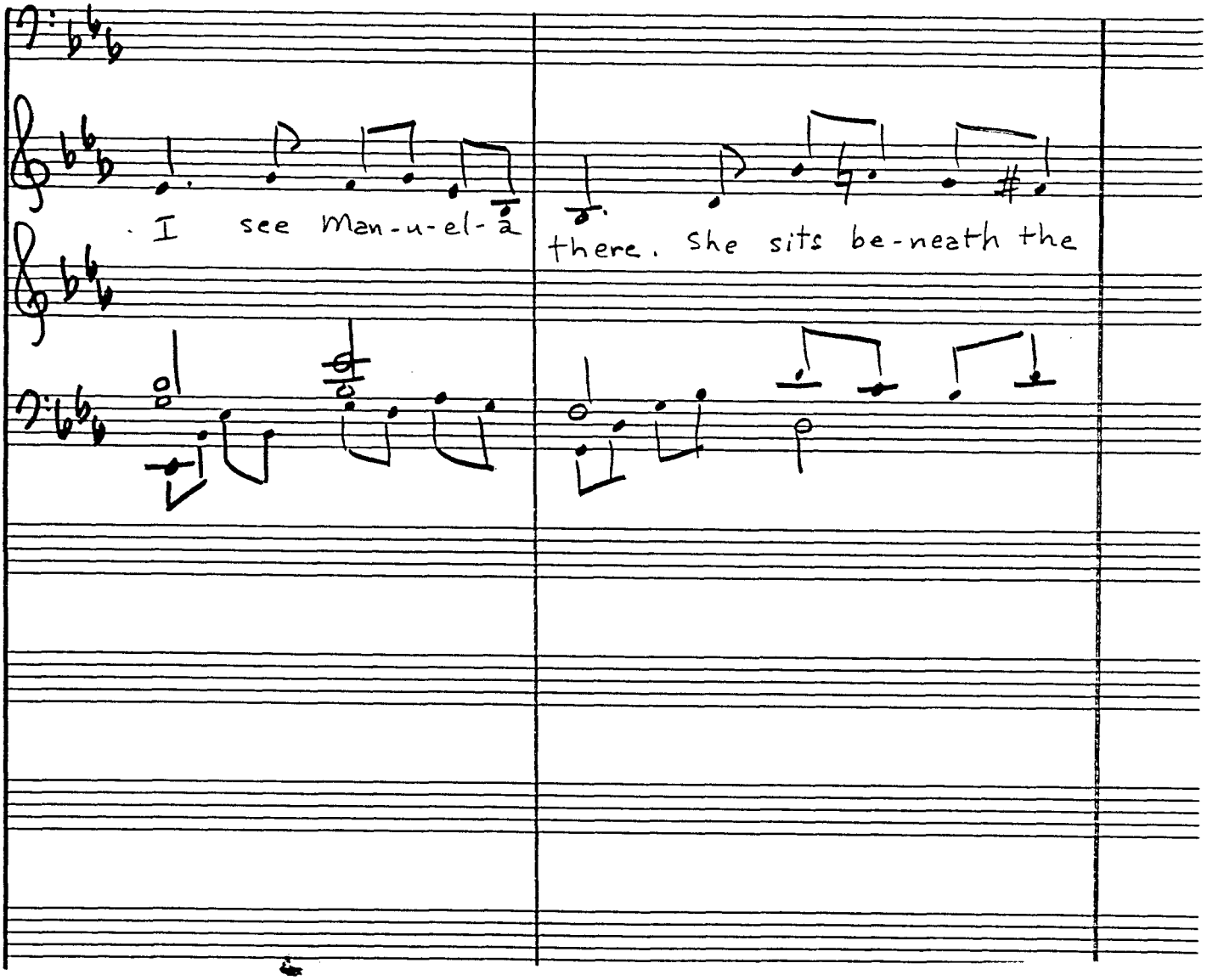
125


Light. I see it now, fin-ished filled with can-dles

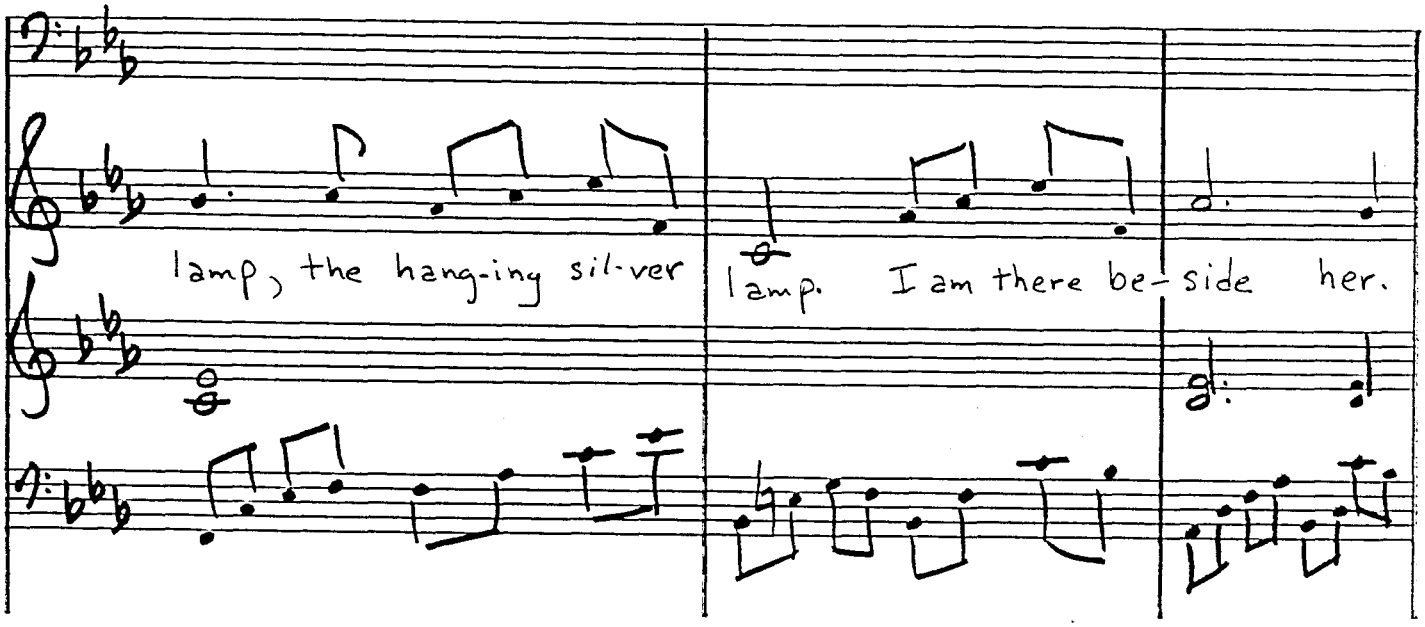
126


all the sis-ters pray-ing.
Key change
→ 3 b's

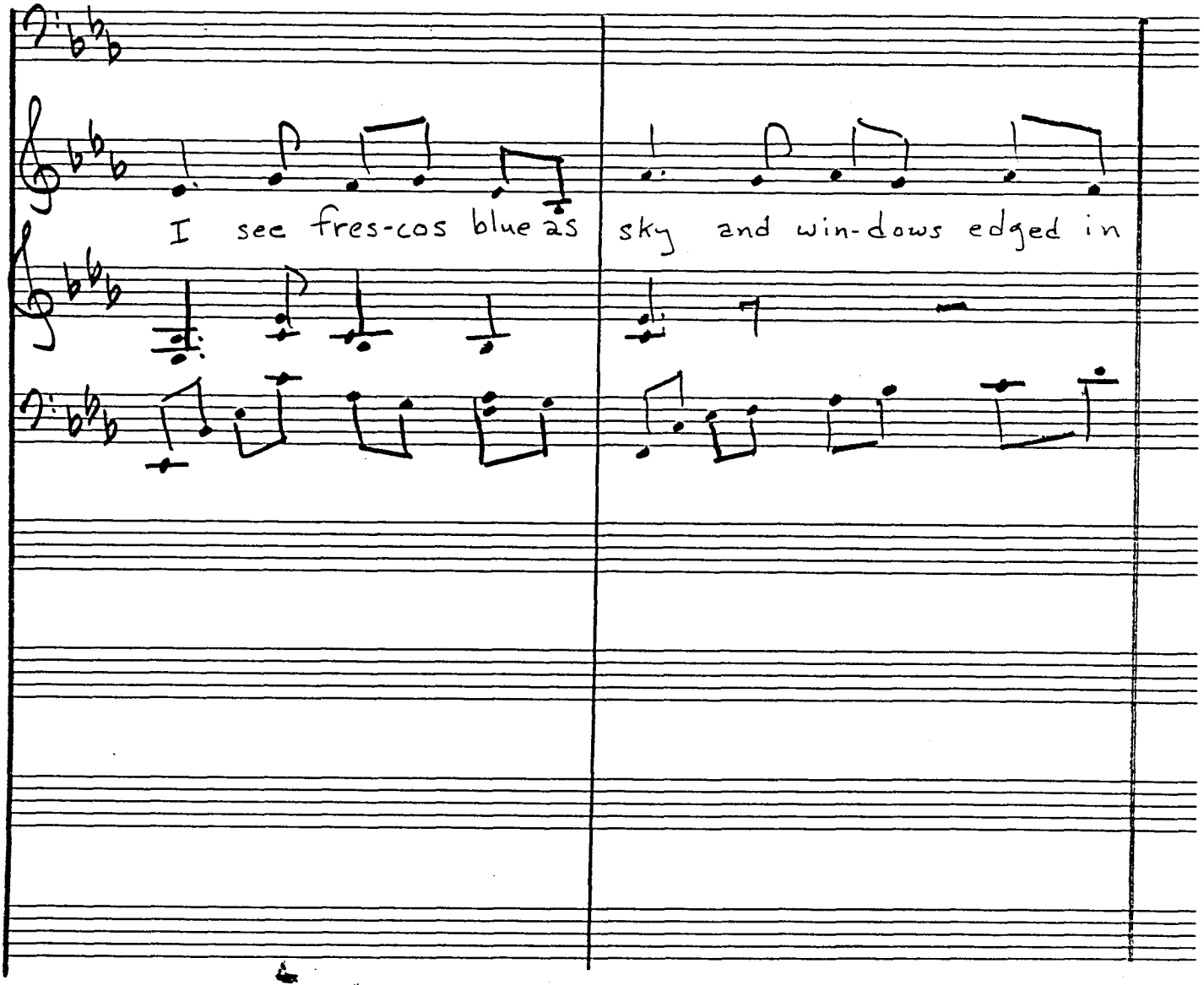
127

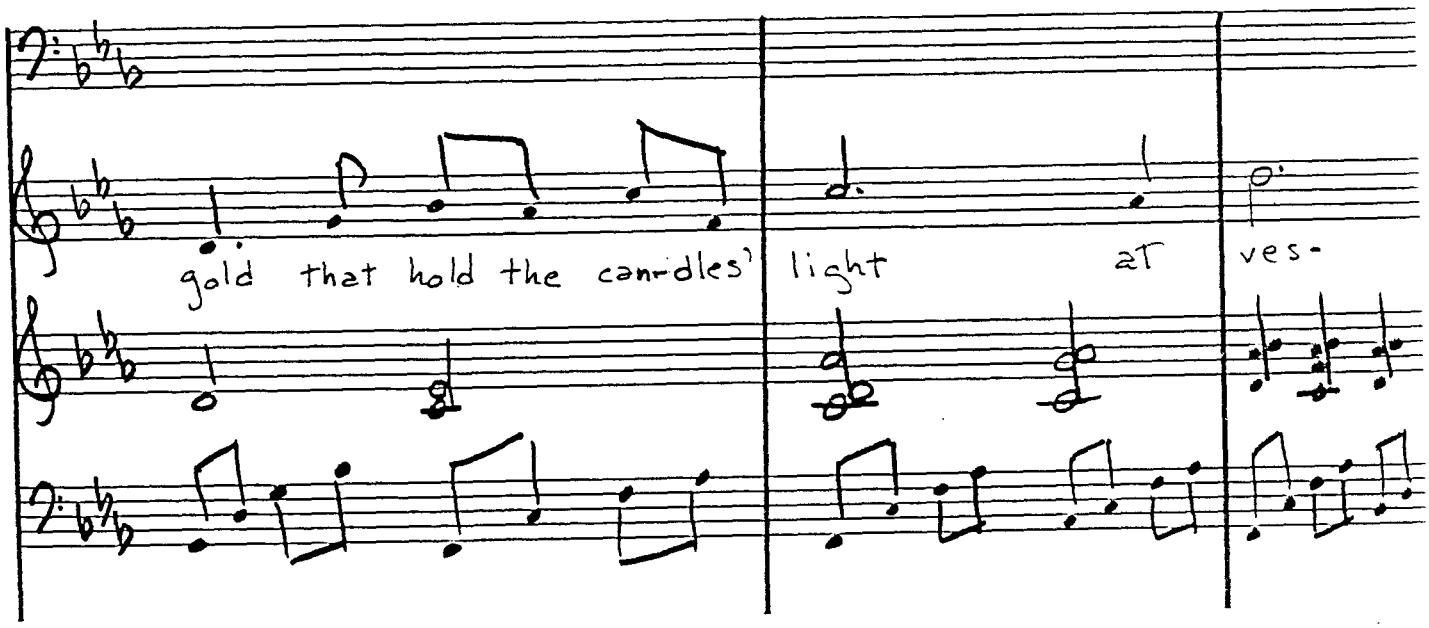

I see Man-u-el-a there. She sits be-neath the

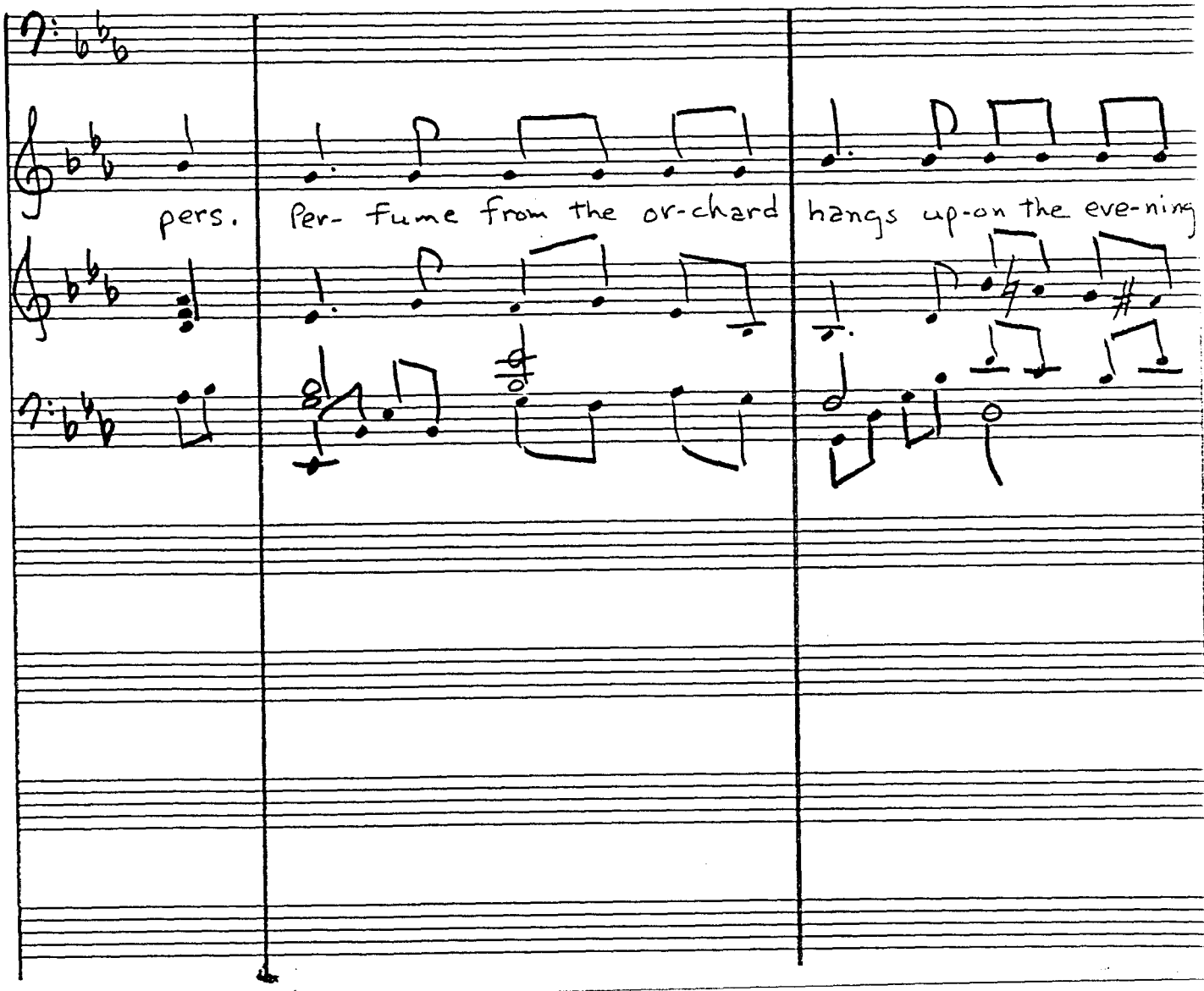
128


lamp, the hang-ing sil-ver
lamp. I am there be-side her.

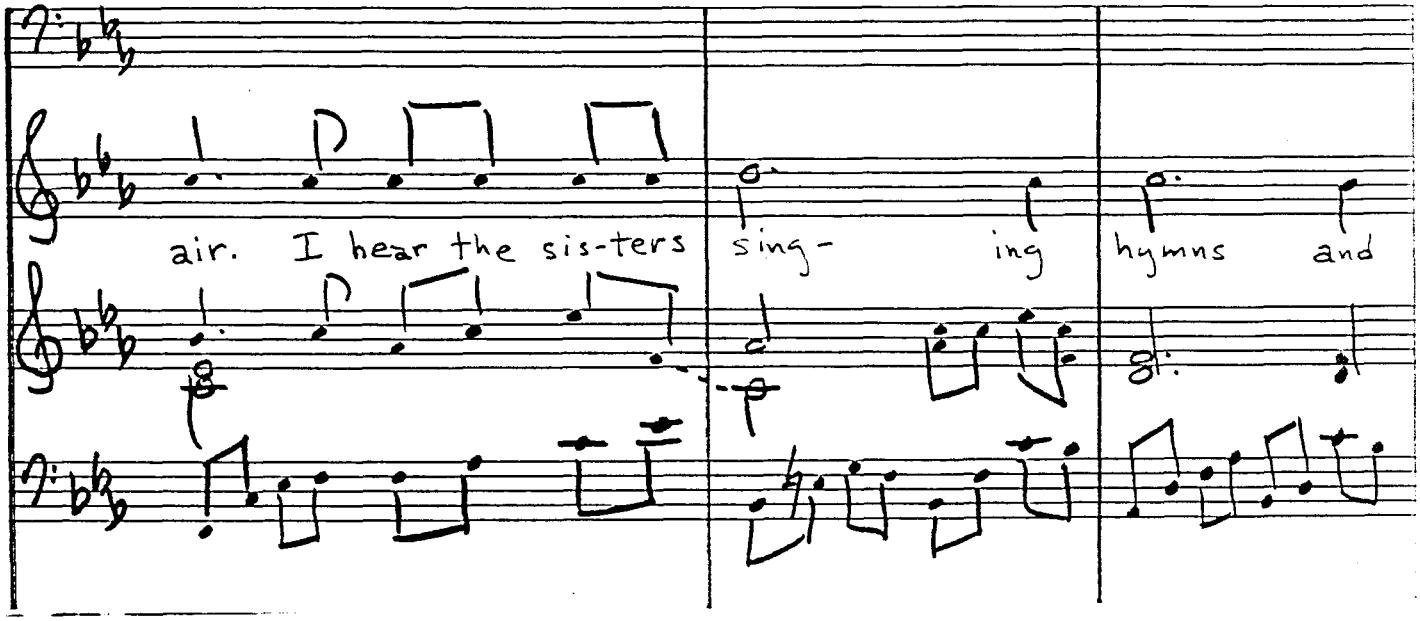
129


I see fres-cos blue as
sky and win-dows edged in

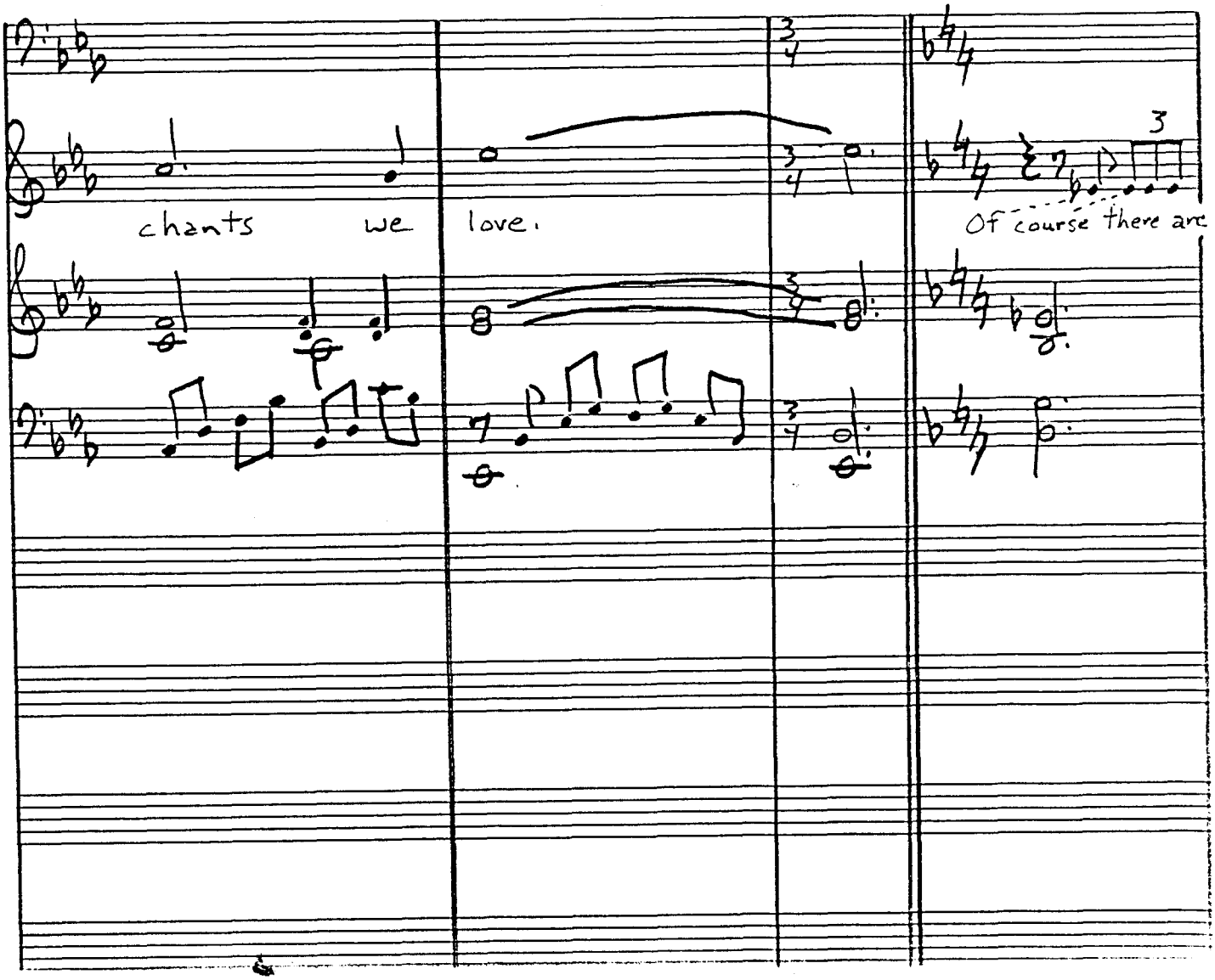

gold that hold the can-dles' light at ves-


pers. Per- fume from the or-chard hangs up-on the eve-ning

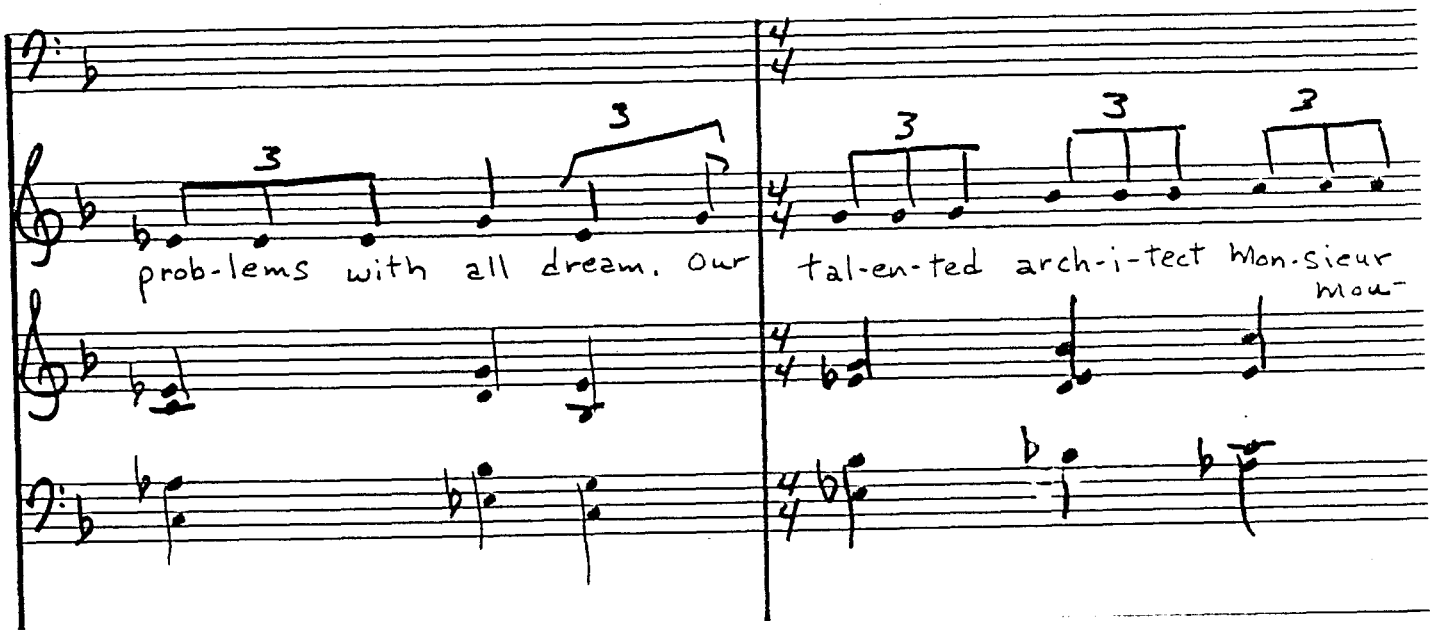
132


air. I hear the sis-ters sing- ing hymns and

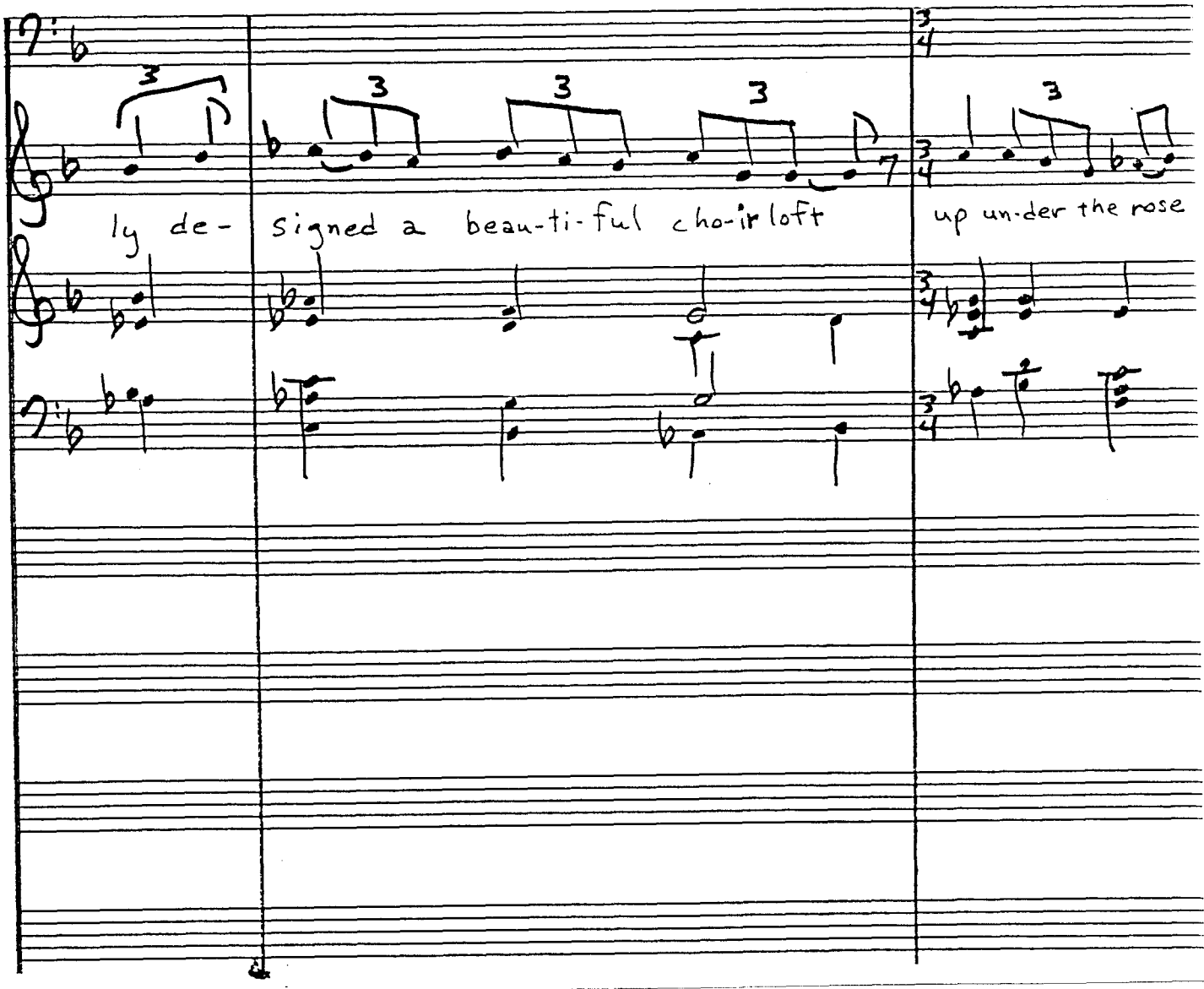
133


chants we love.
3
Of course there are

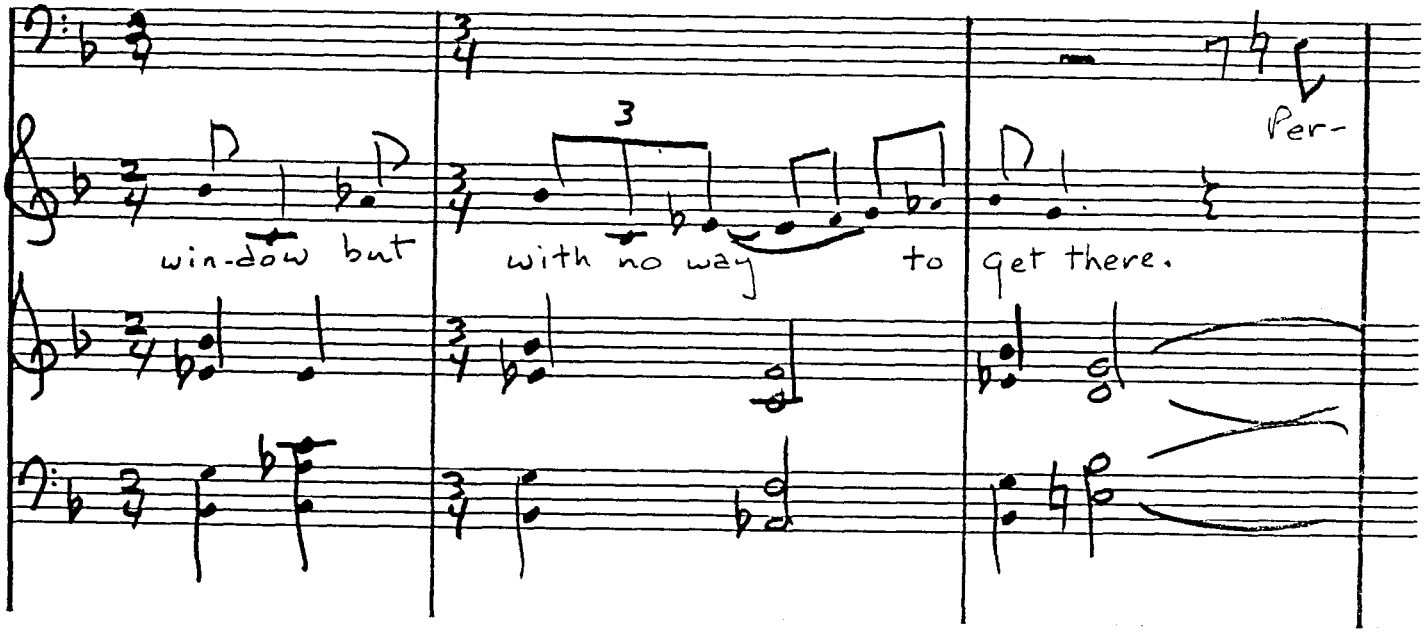
134


prob-lems with all dream. Our
tal-en-ted arch-i-tect Mon-sieur
mou-

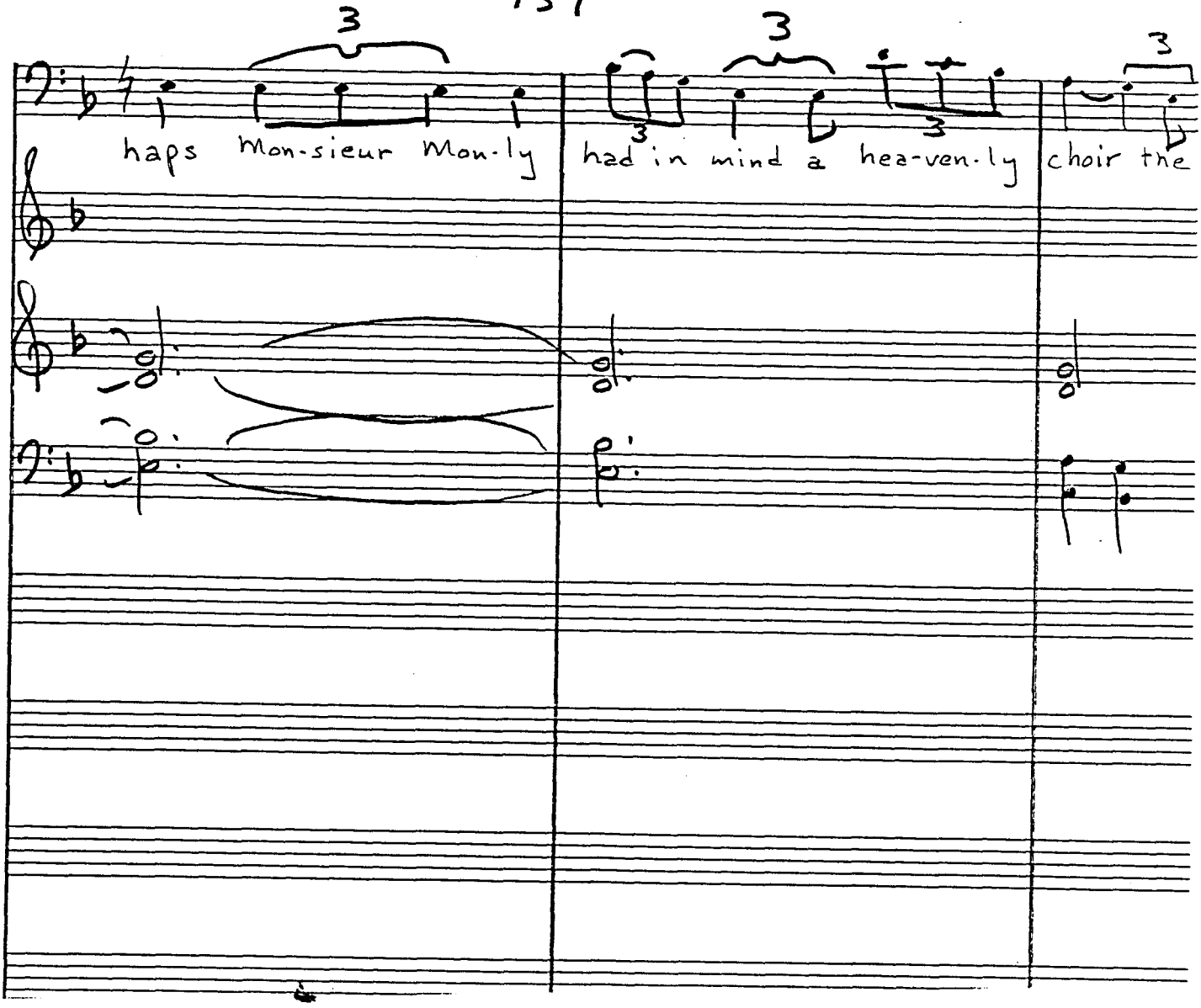
135


ly de-
signed a beau-ti-ful cho-ir loft
up un-der the rose

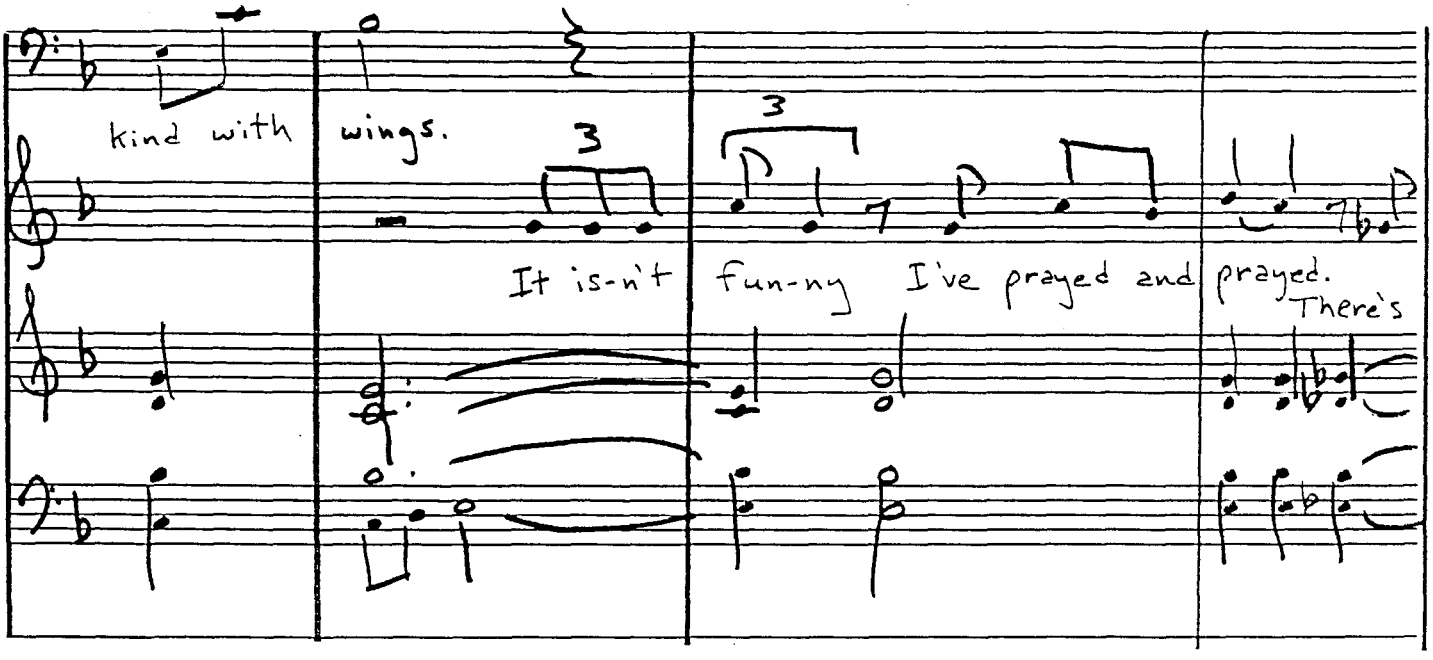
136


win-dow but
with no way
to get there.
Per-

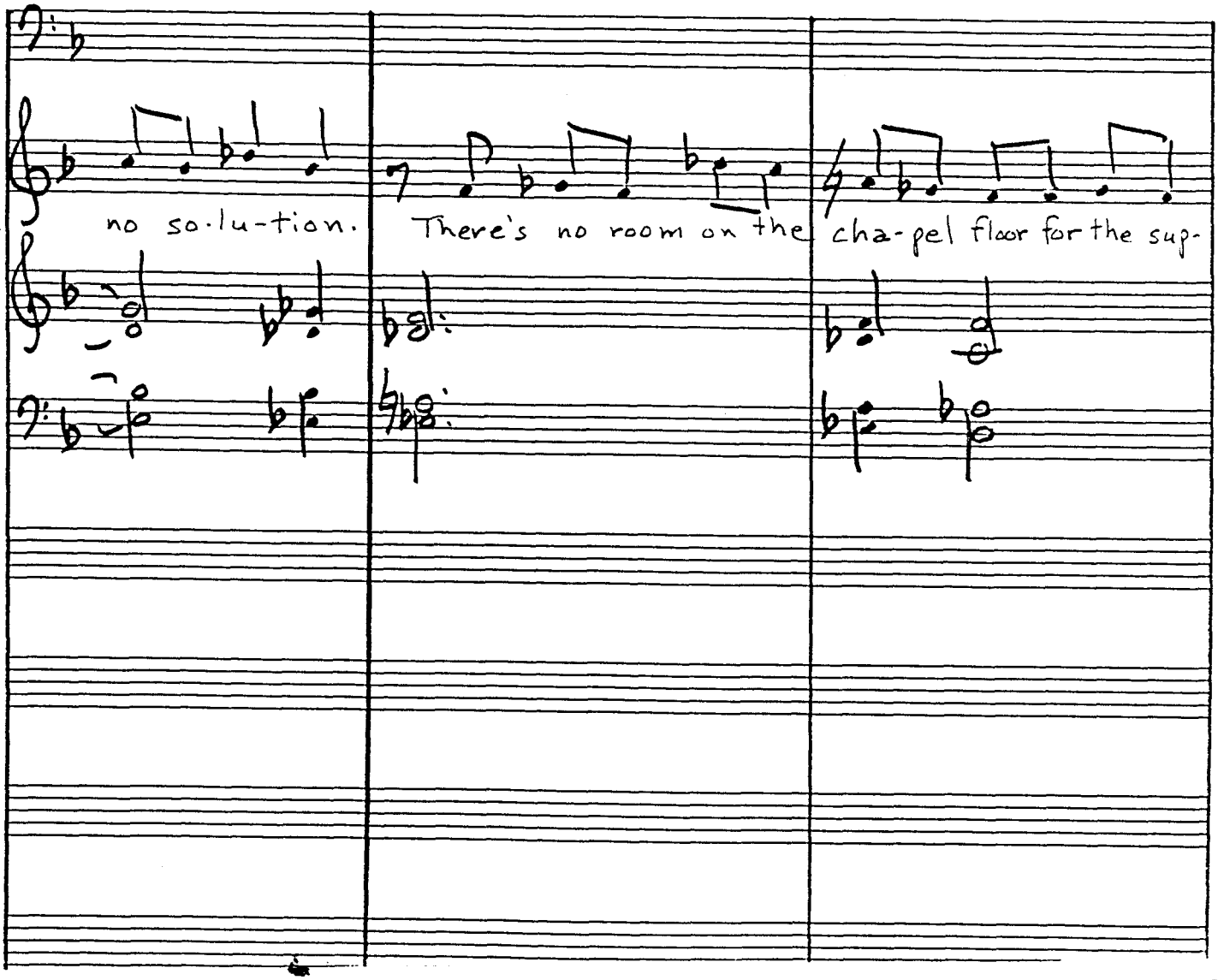
137


haps Mon-sieur Mon-ly
had in mind a hea-ven-ly
choir the

138

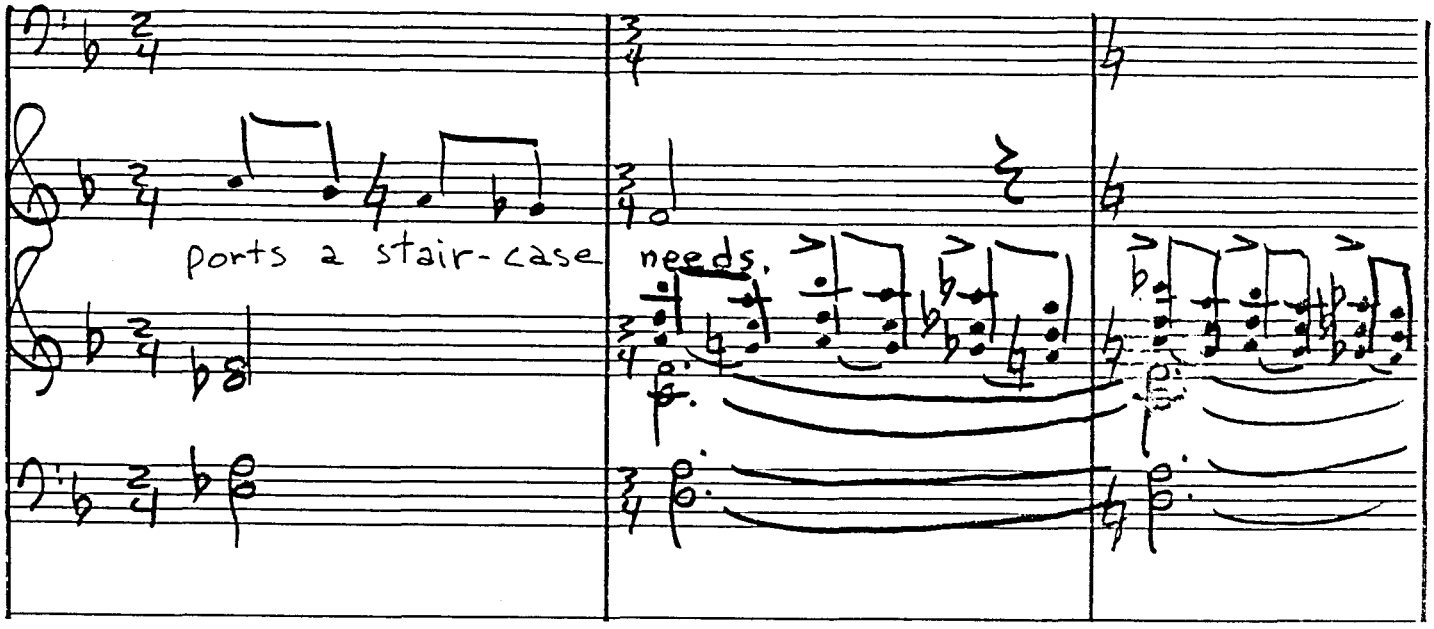

kind with
wings.
3
It is-n't
3
fun-ny
I've prayed and prayed.
There's

139

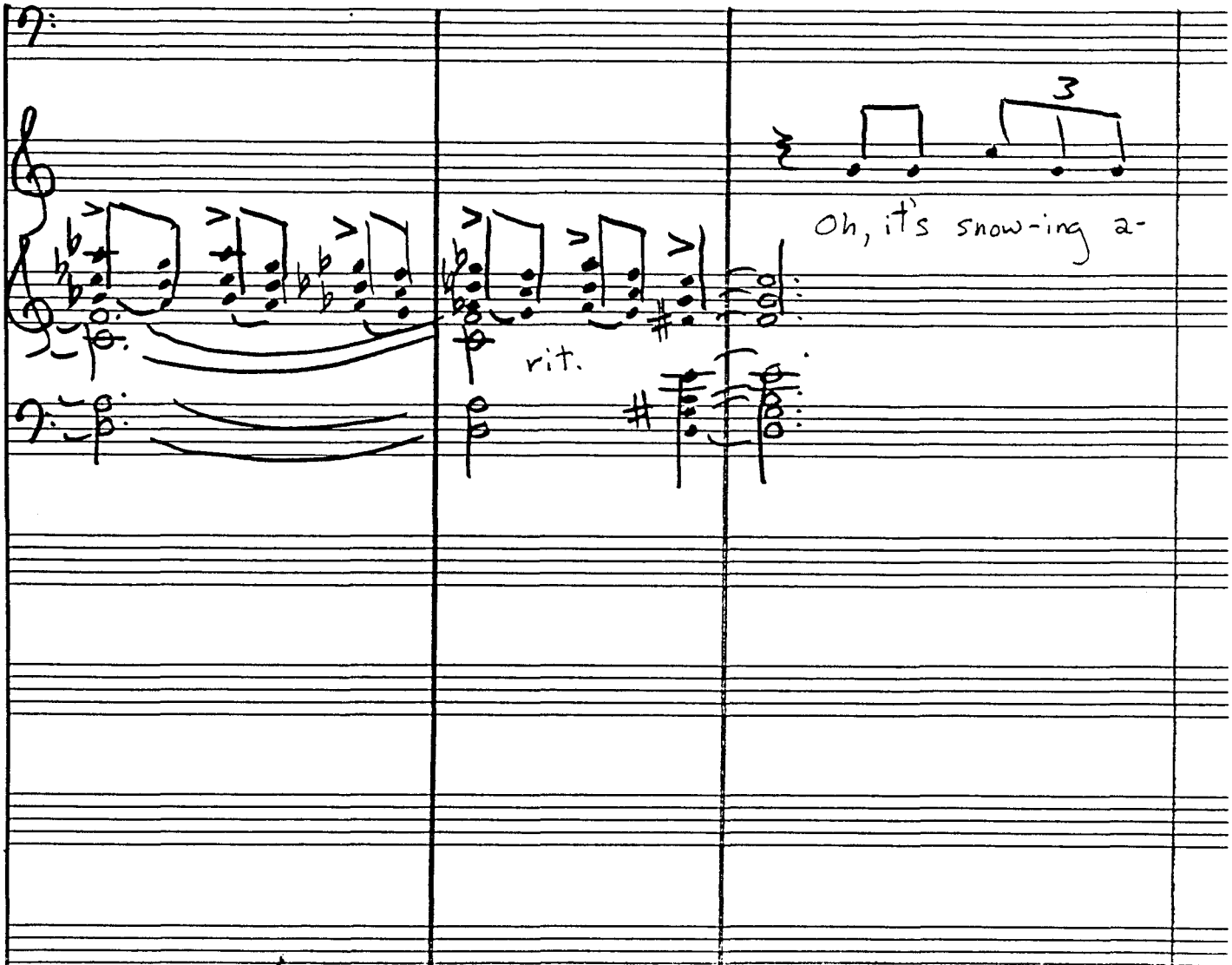

no so-lu-tion.
There's no room on the
cha-pel floor for the sup-

140

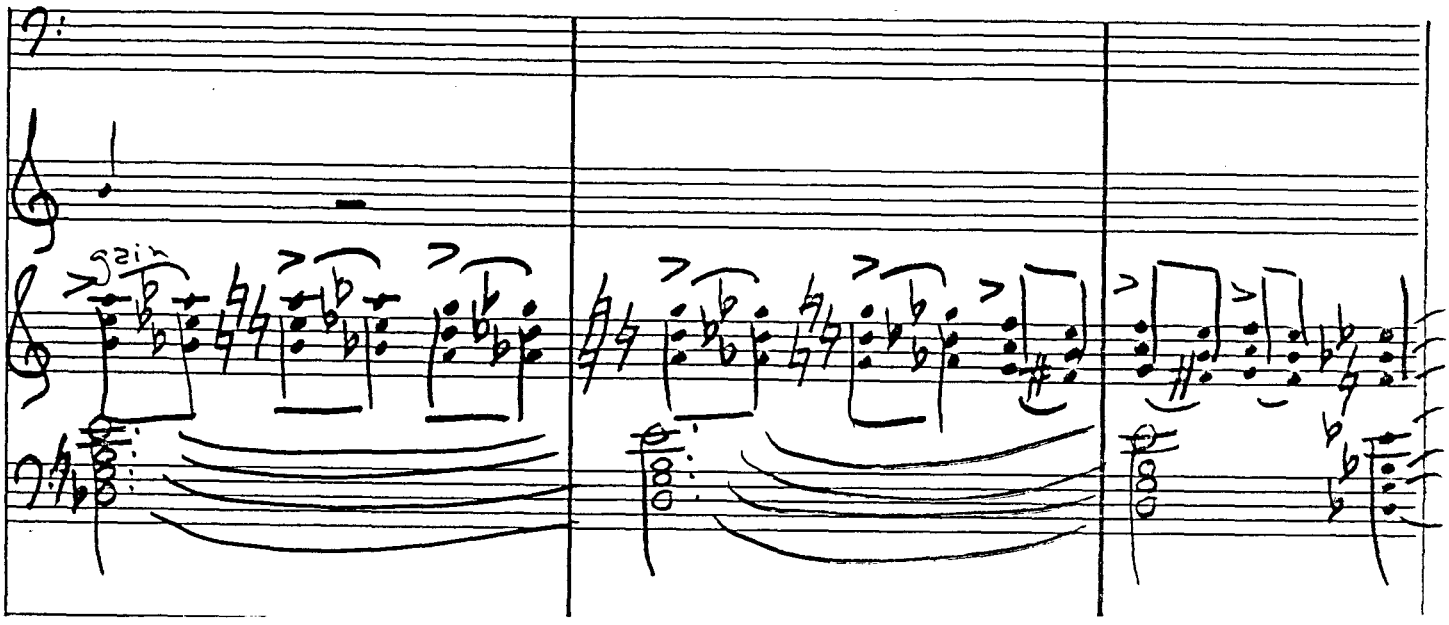
Faster



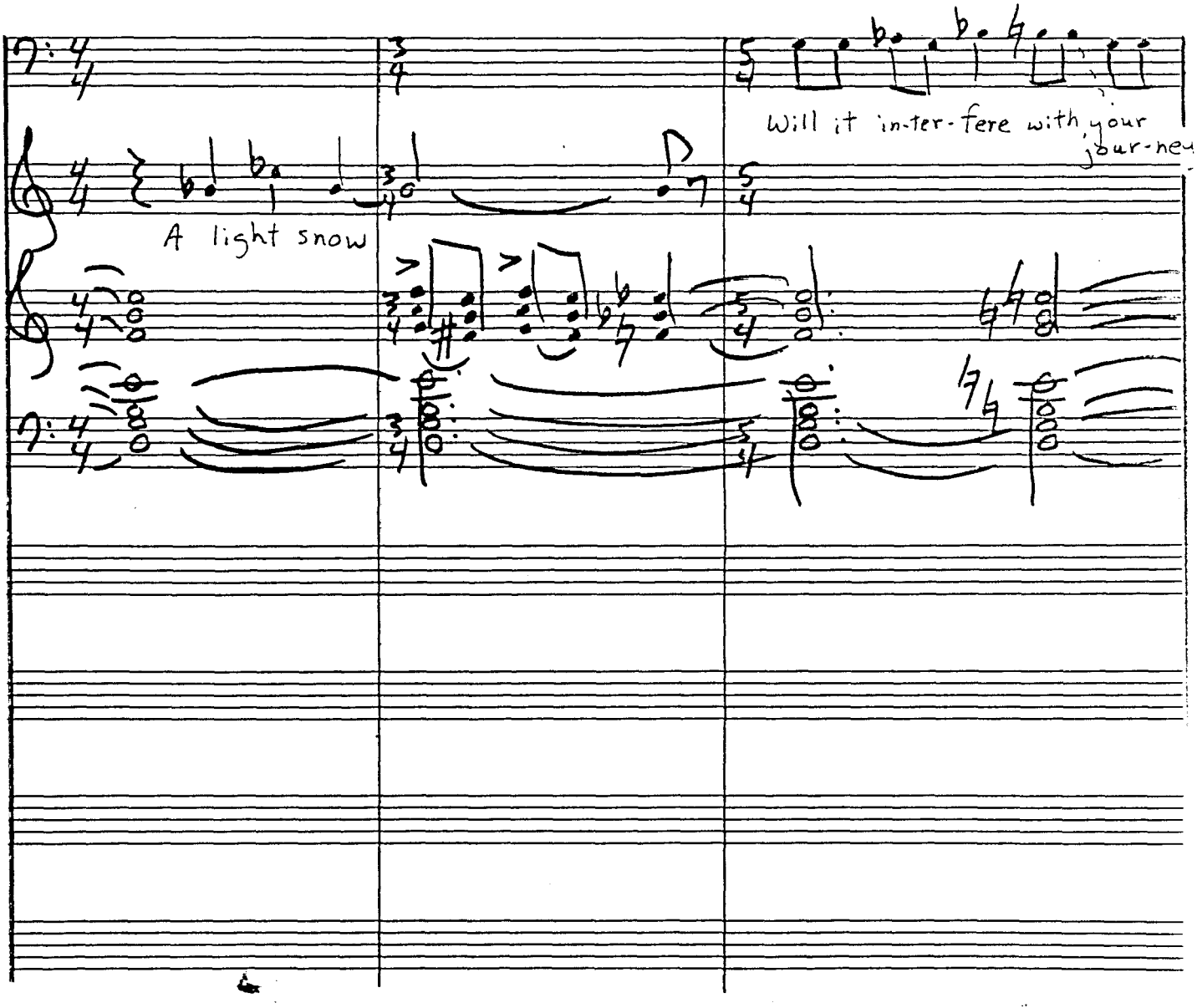
141



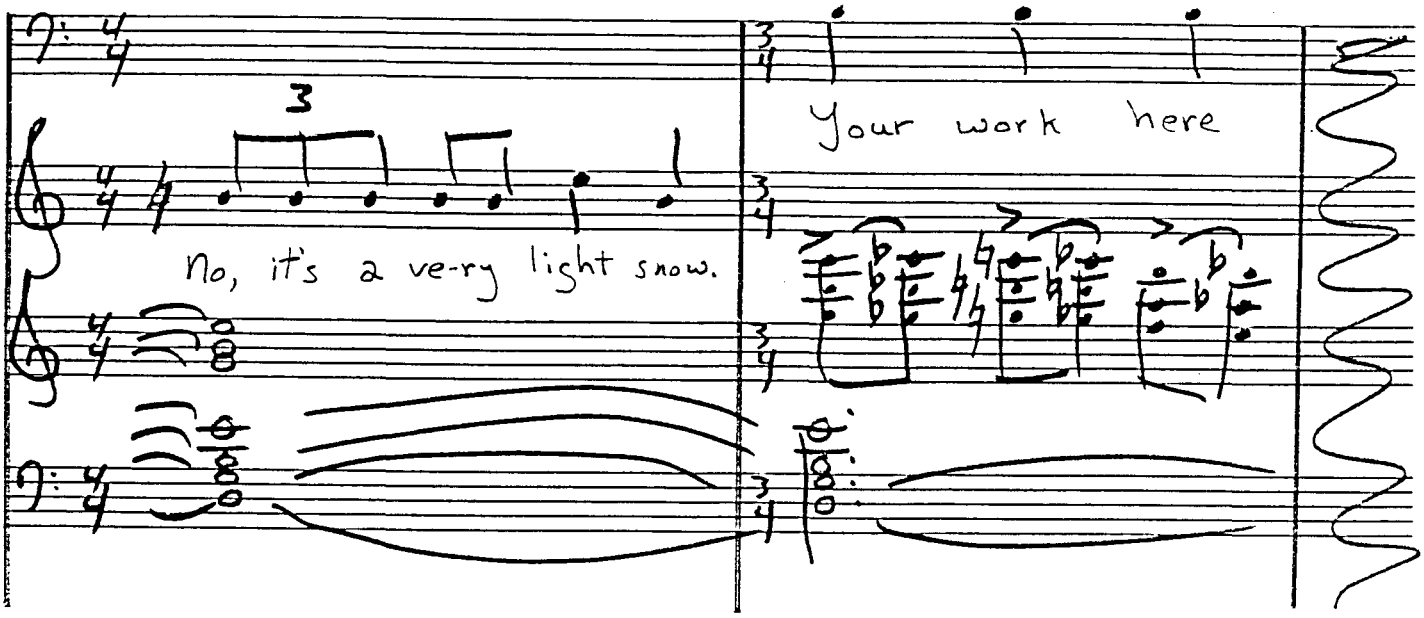
142



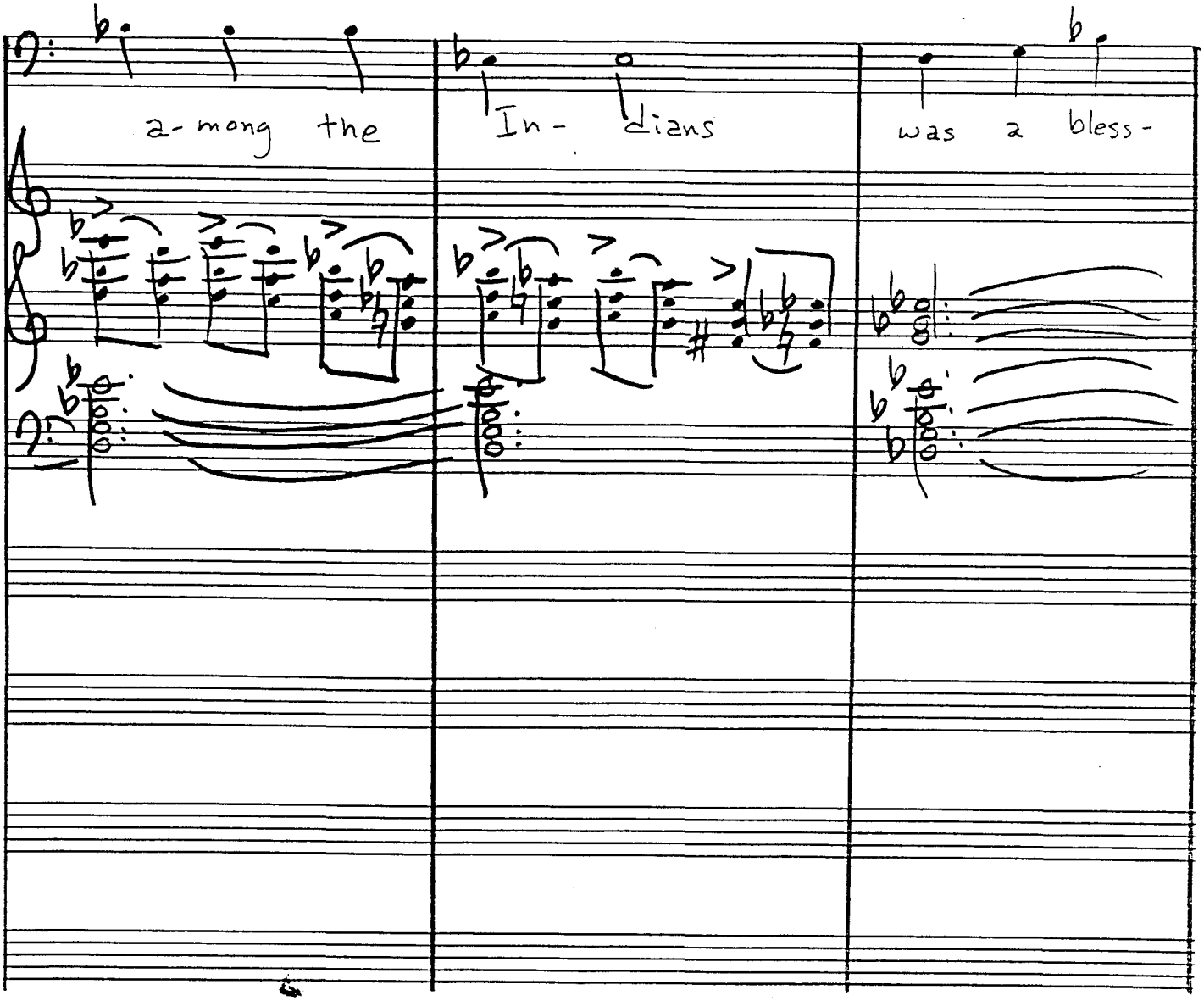
143



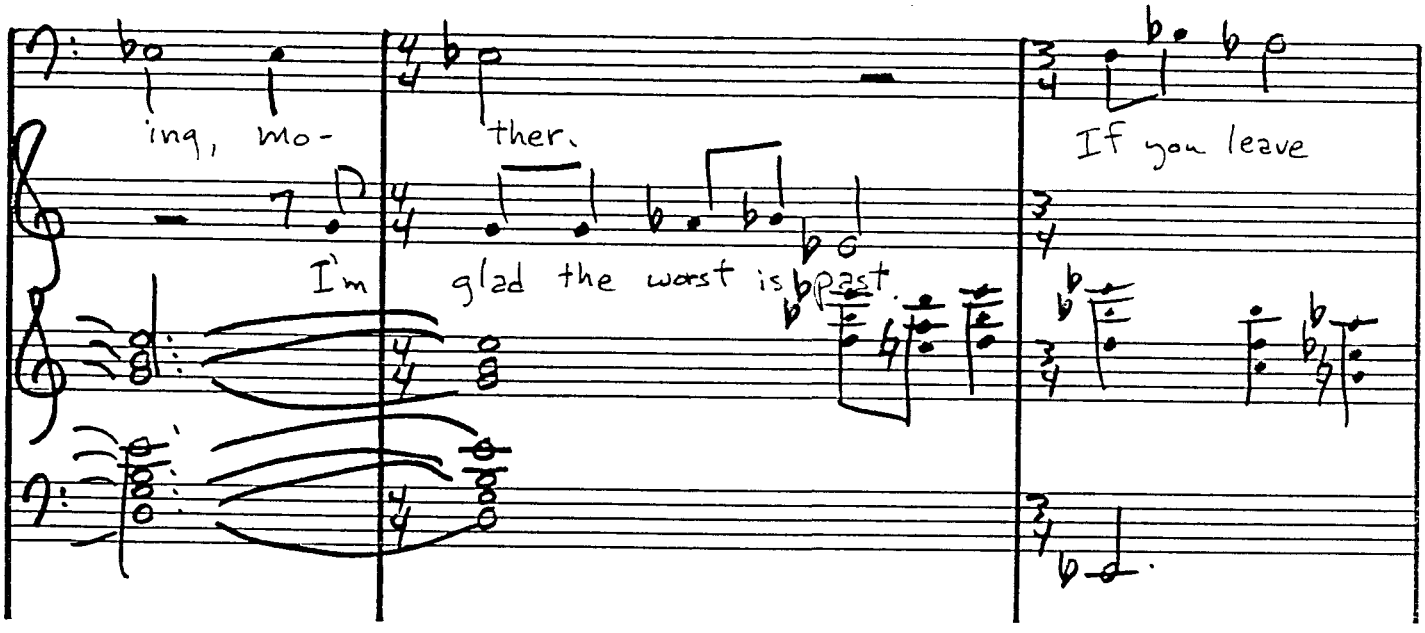
144


3
No, it's a ve-ry light snow.
Your work here

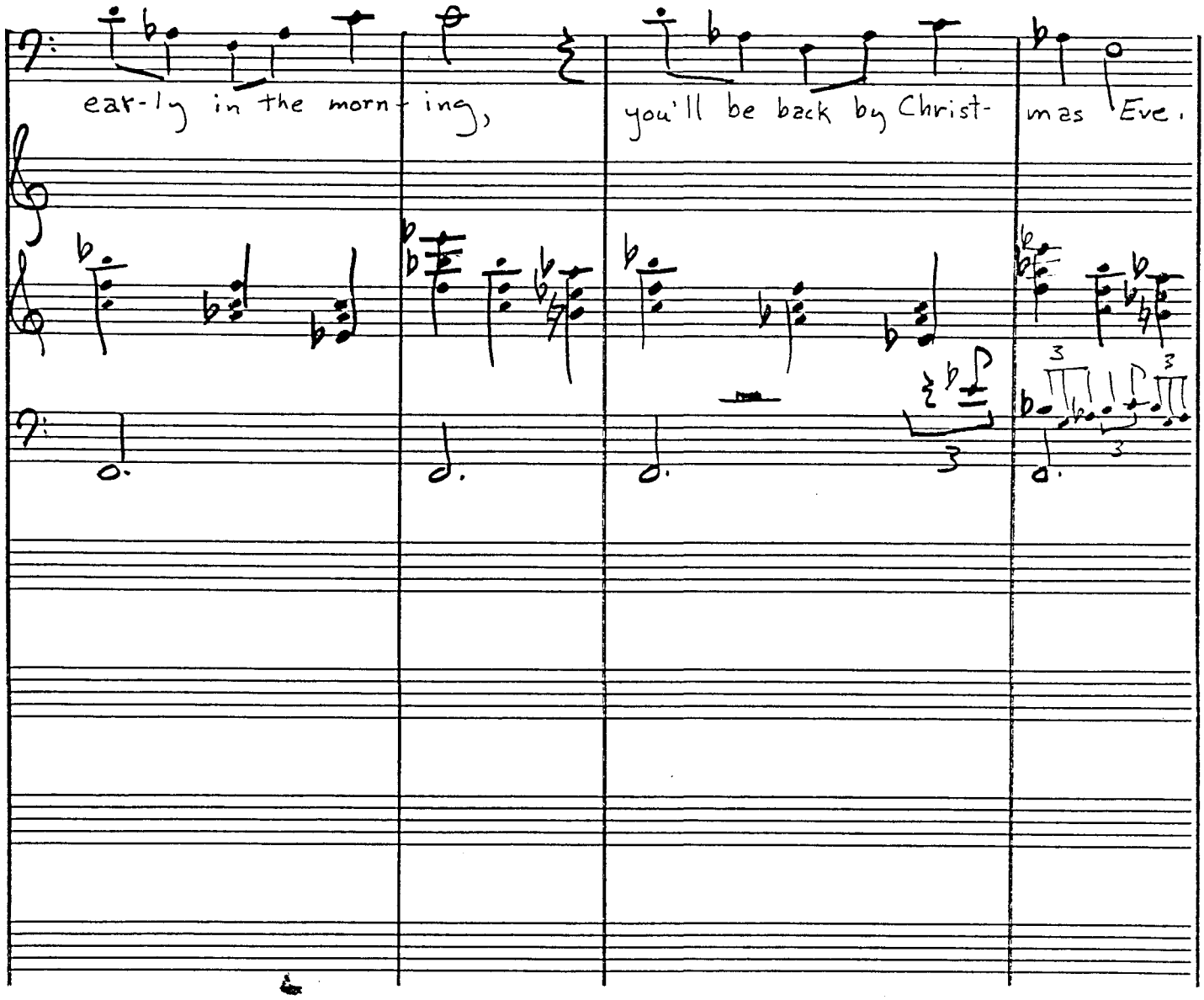
145


a-mong the
In- dians
was a bless-

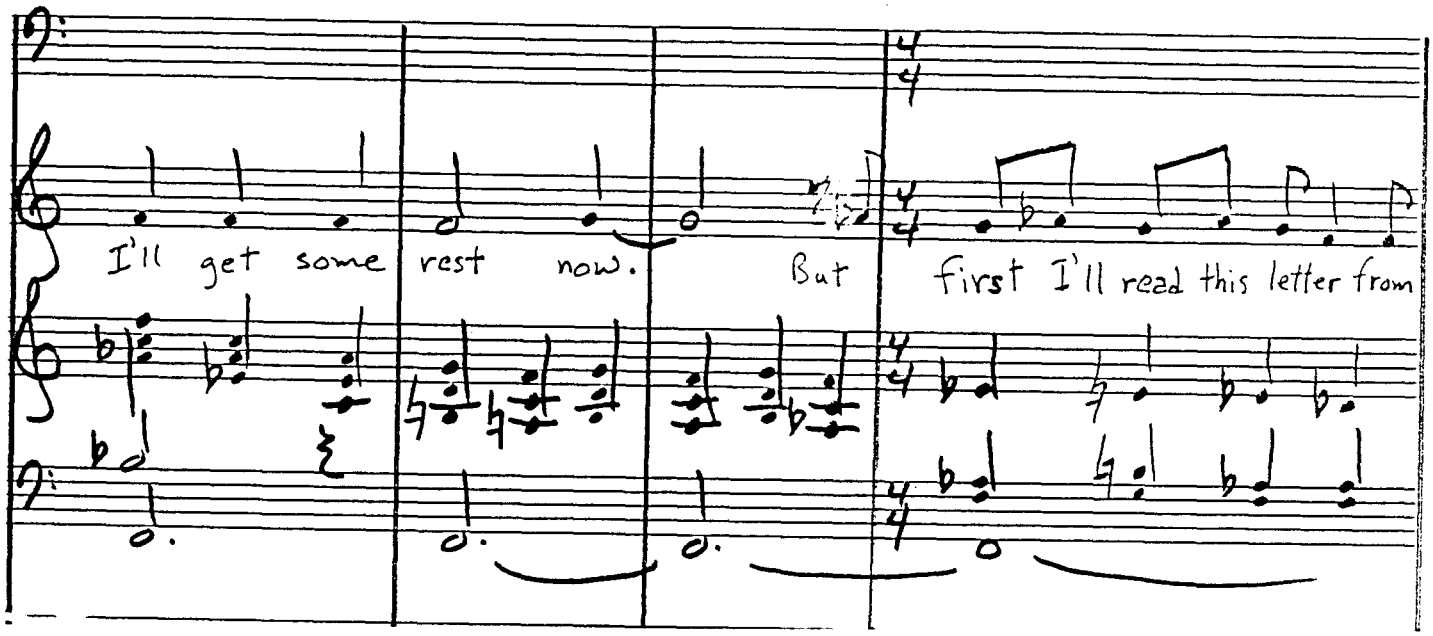
146


ing, mo-
ther.
If you leave
I'm
glad the worst is past.

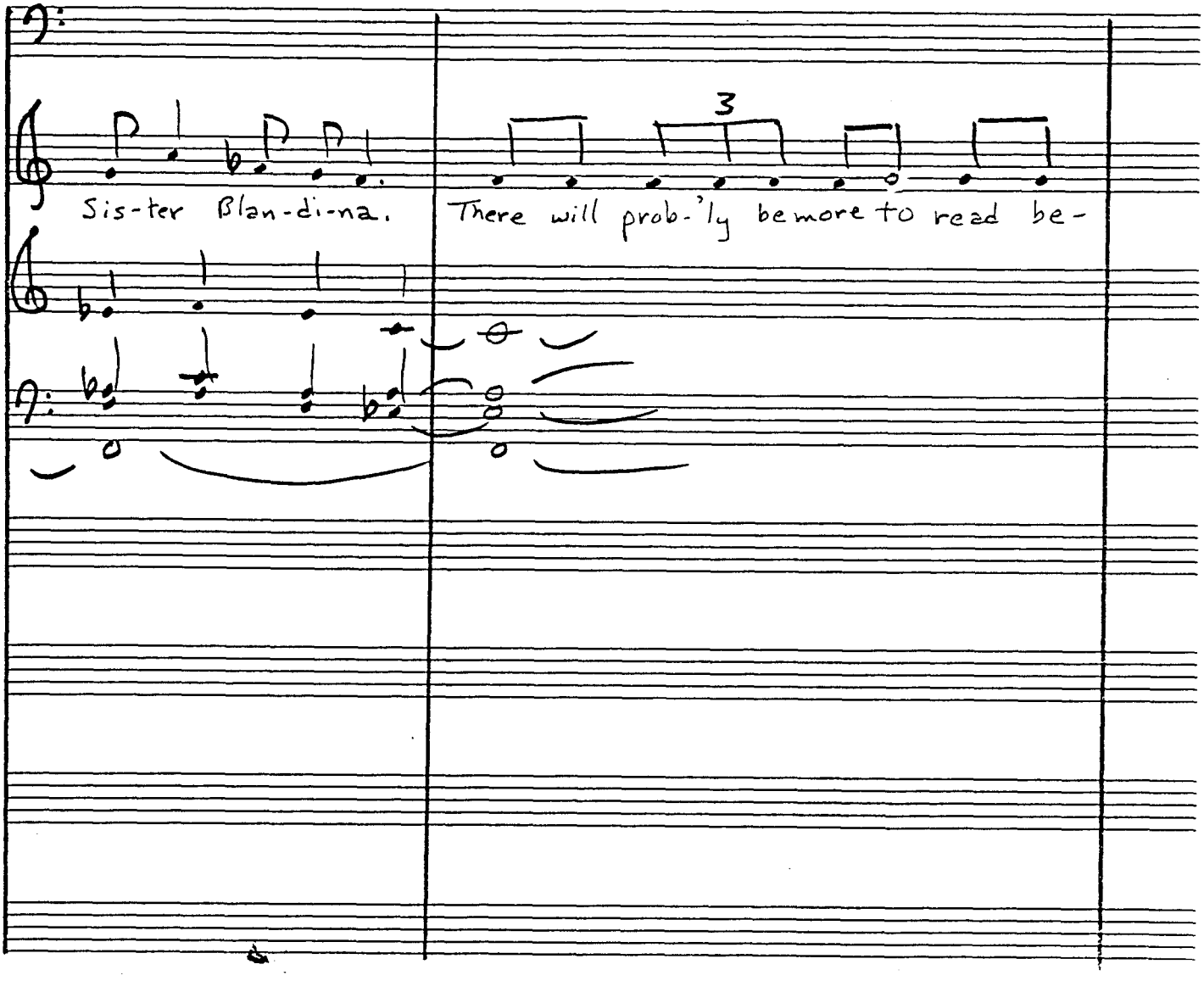
147


ear-ly in the morn-ing,
you'll be back by Christ-
mas Eve.

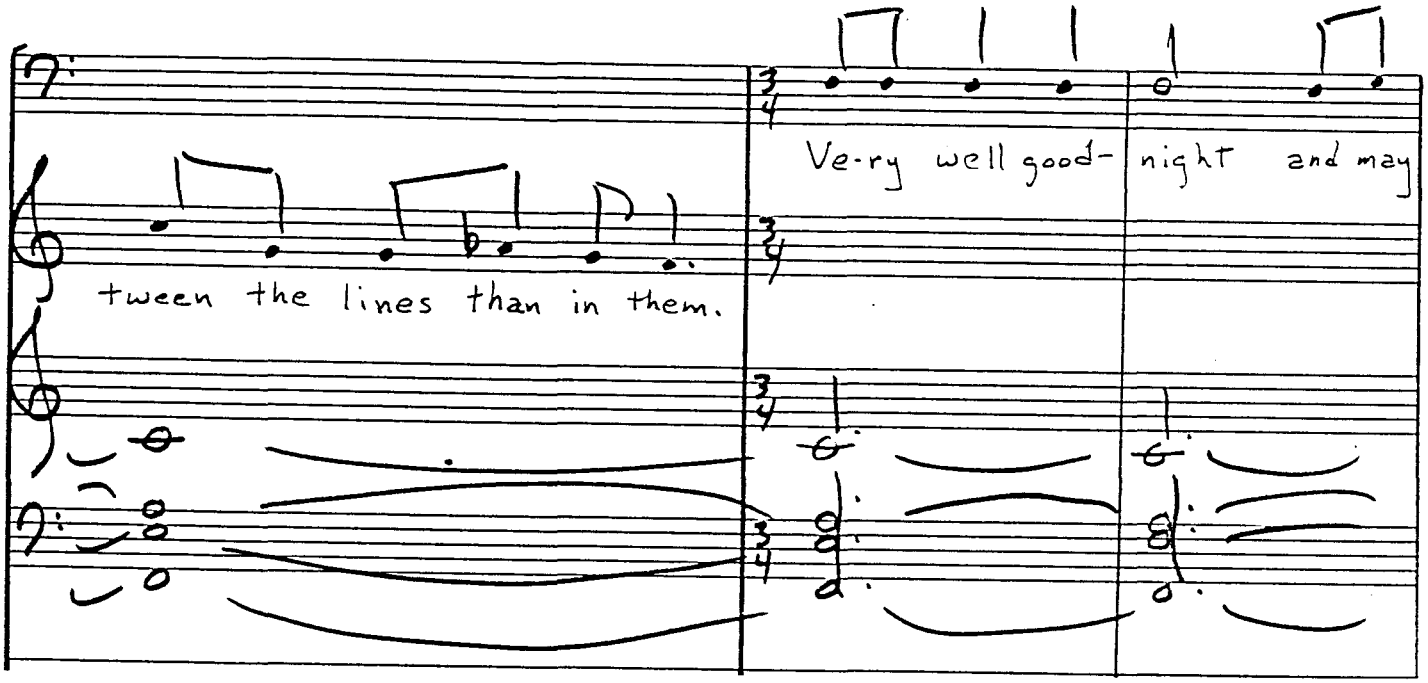
148


I'll get some rest now. But first I'll read this letter from

149

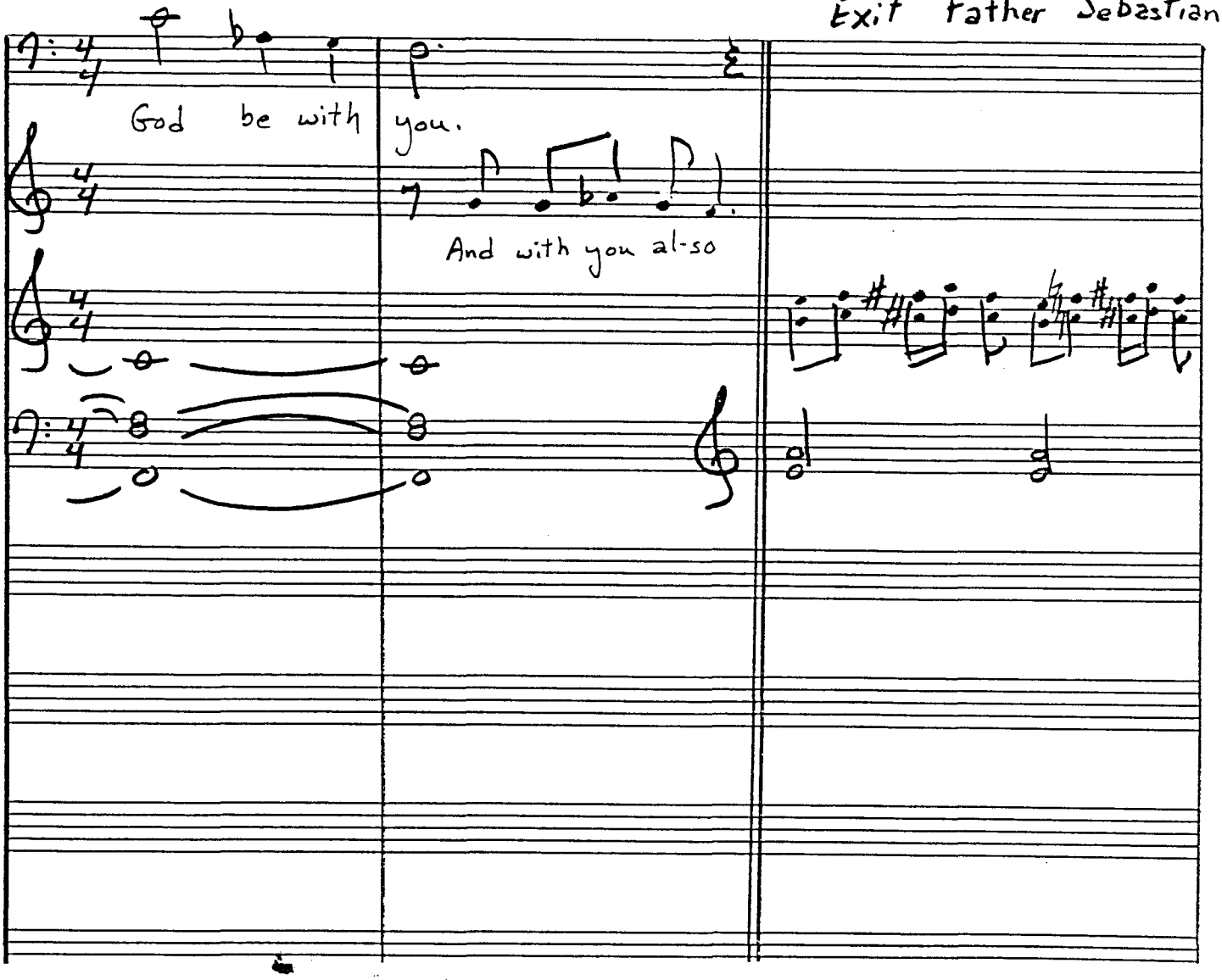

Sis-ter Blan-di-na.
3
There will prob-'ly be more to read be-

150

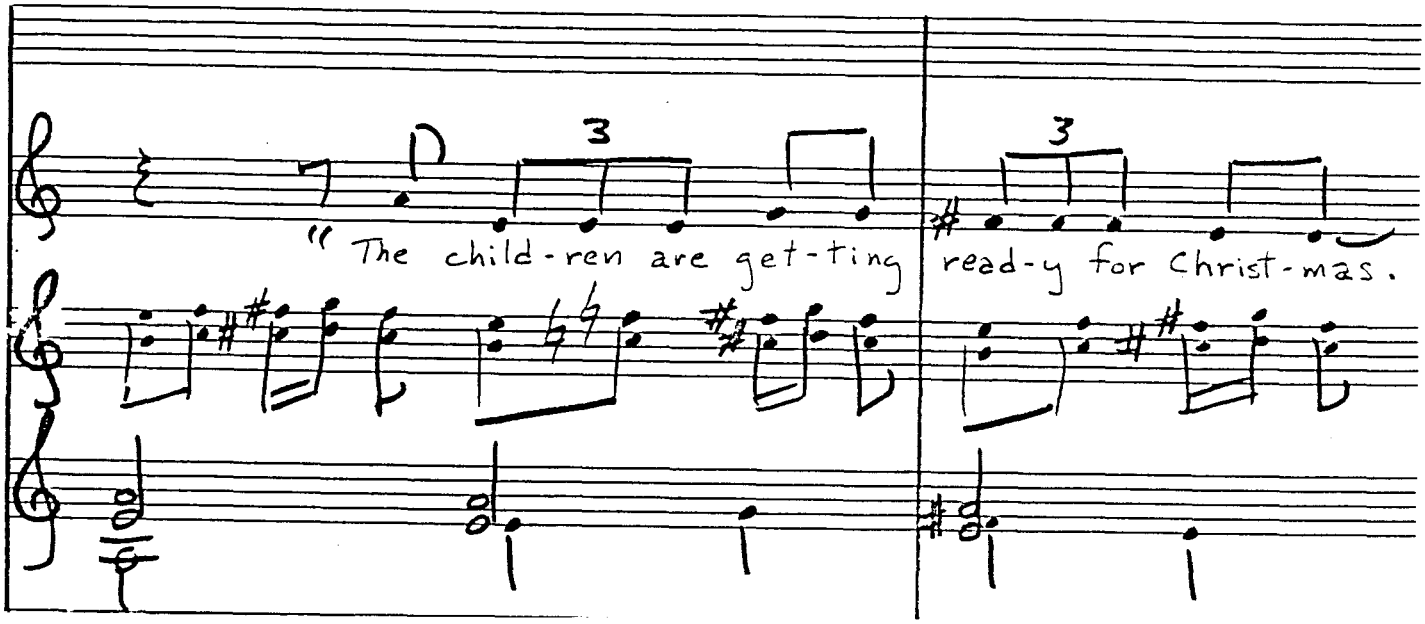


151

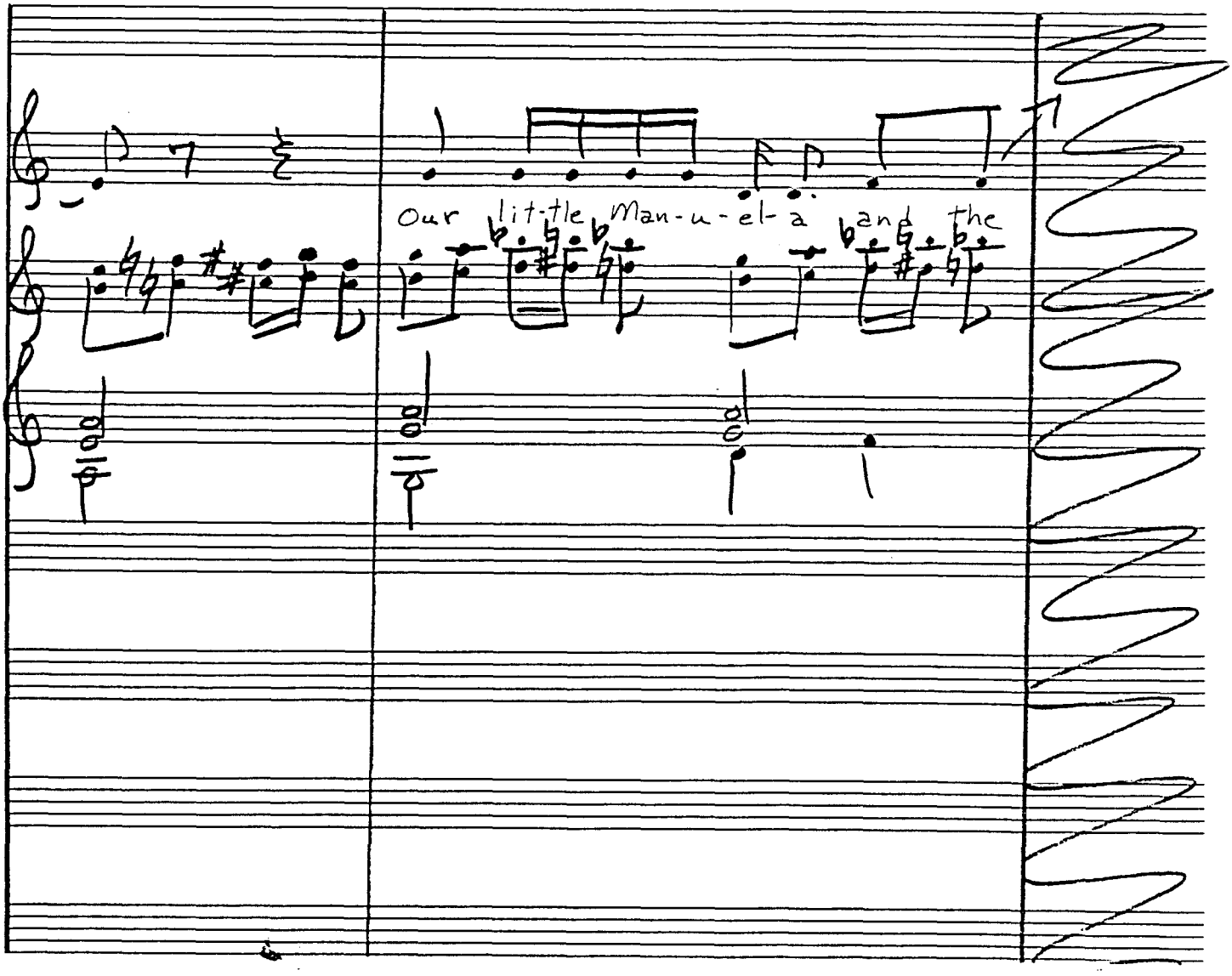
Exit Father Sebastian.



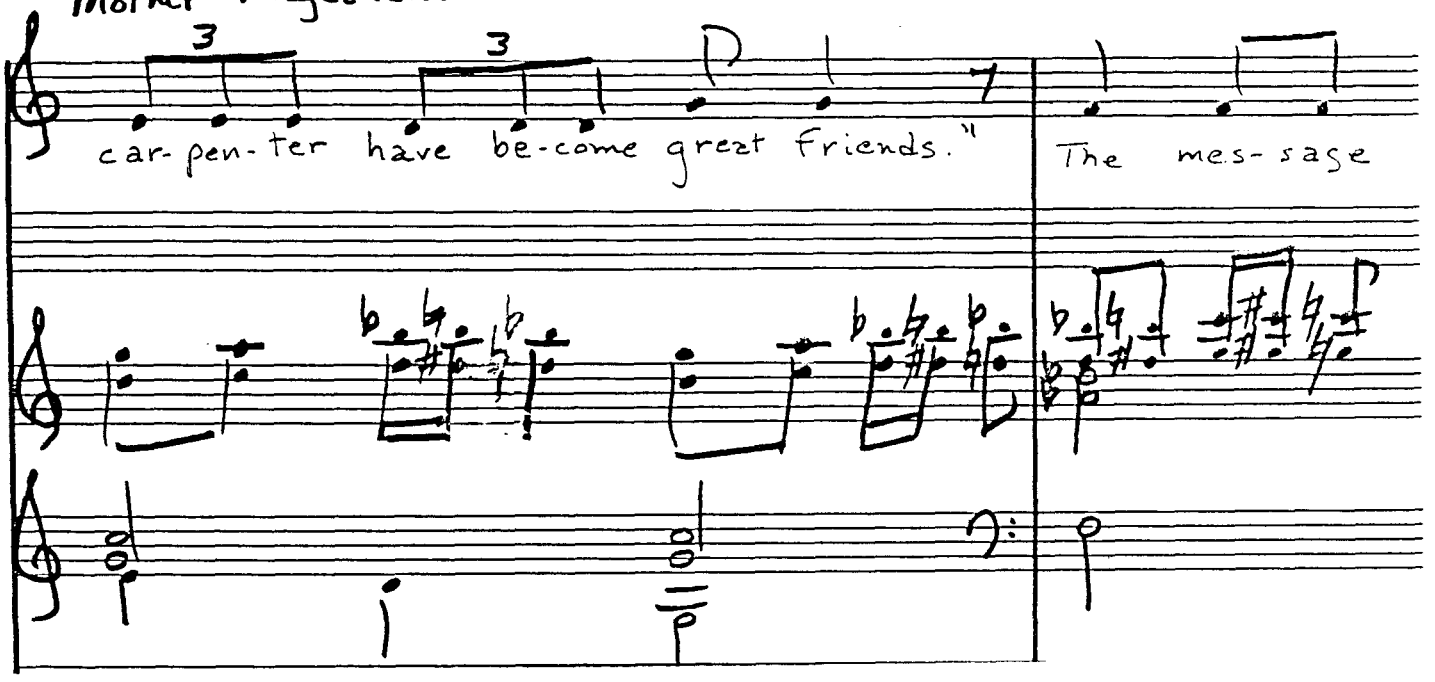
152

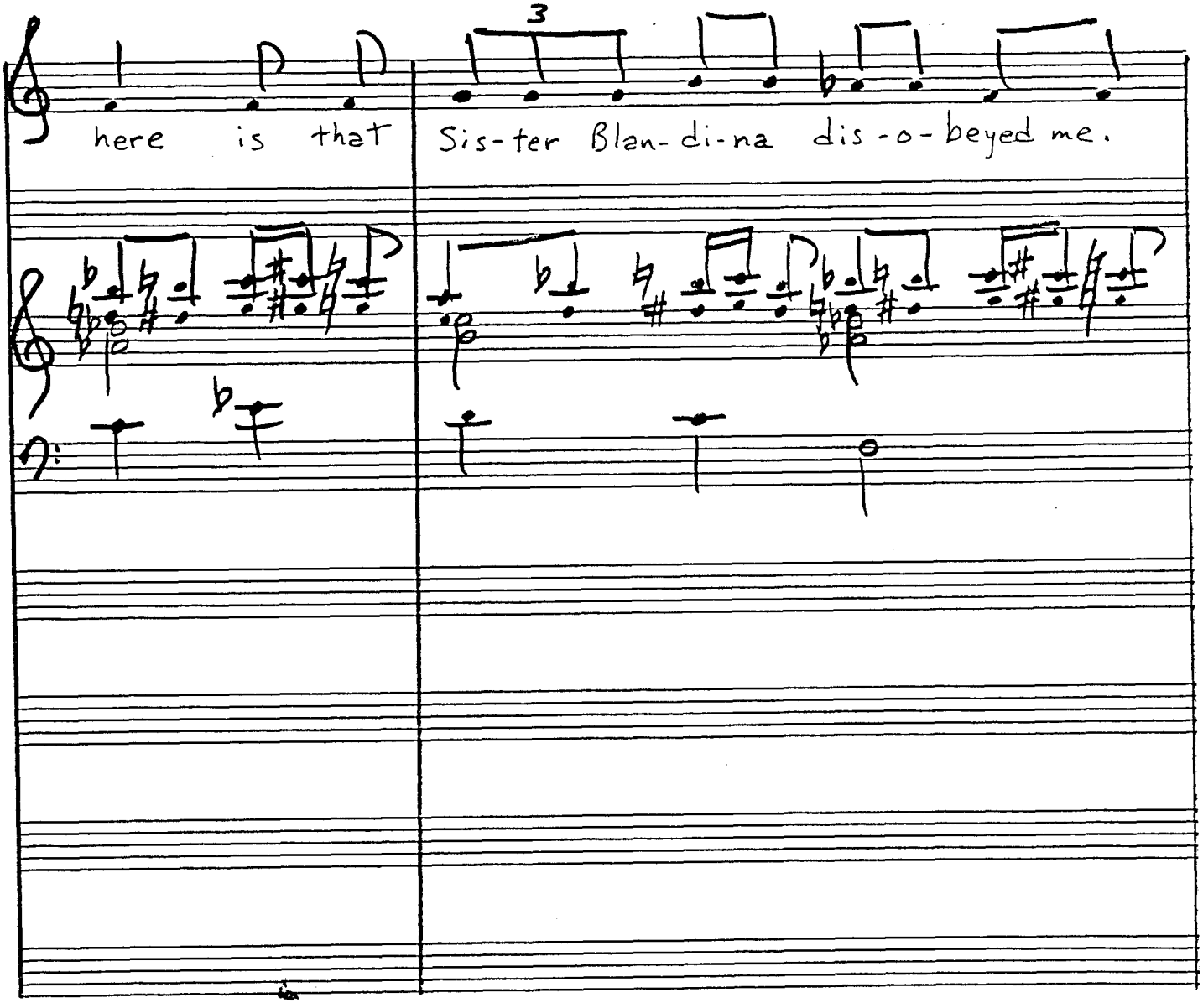

3
3
" The child-ren are get-ting
read-y for Christ-mas.

153


Our lit-tle Man-u-el-a and the

Mother Magdalena:





156

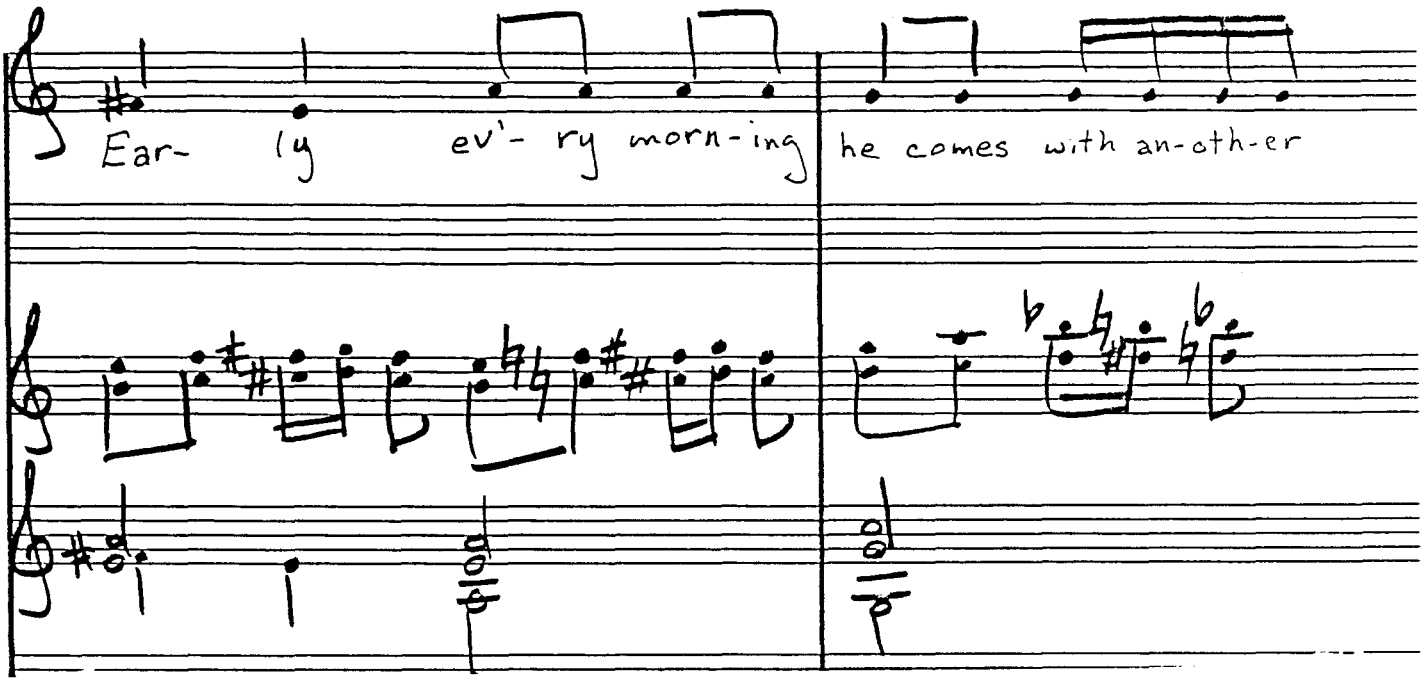
Reading again:

" It's a- maz- ing

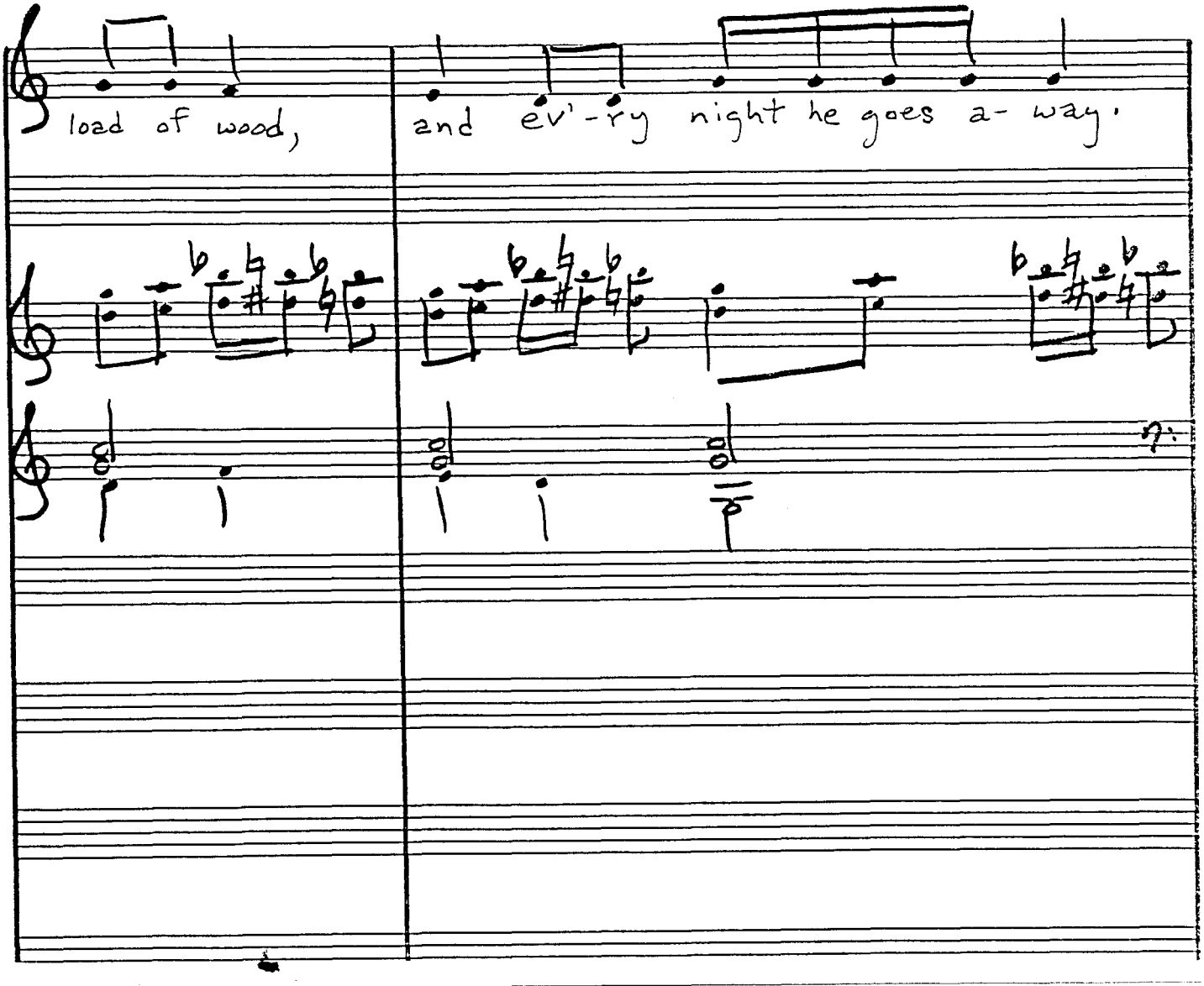
157

how much he seems to know a-bout us all.

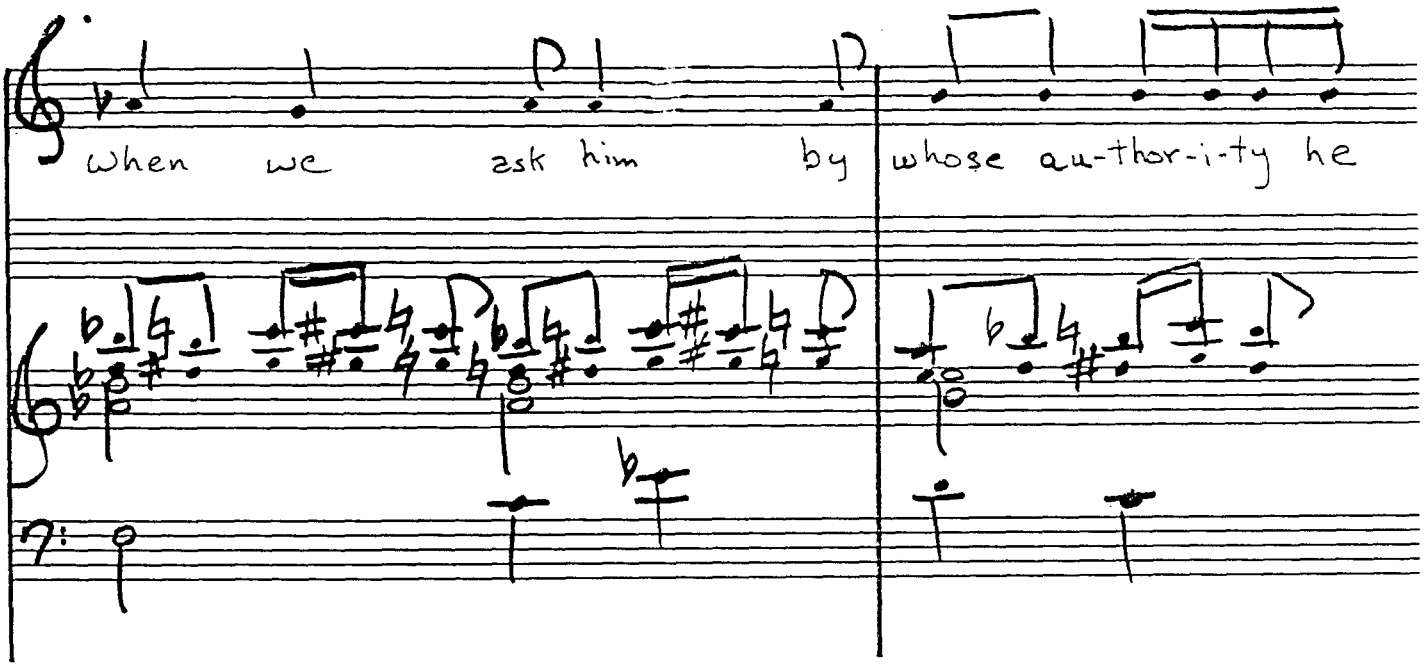
158


Ear- ly ev'- ry morn-ing he comes with an-oth-er

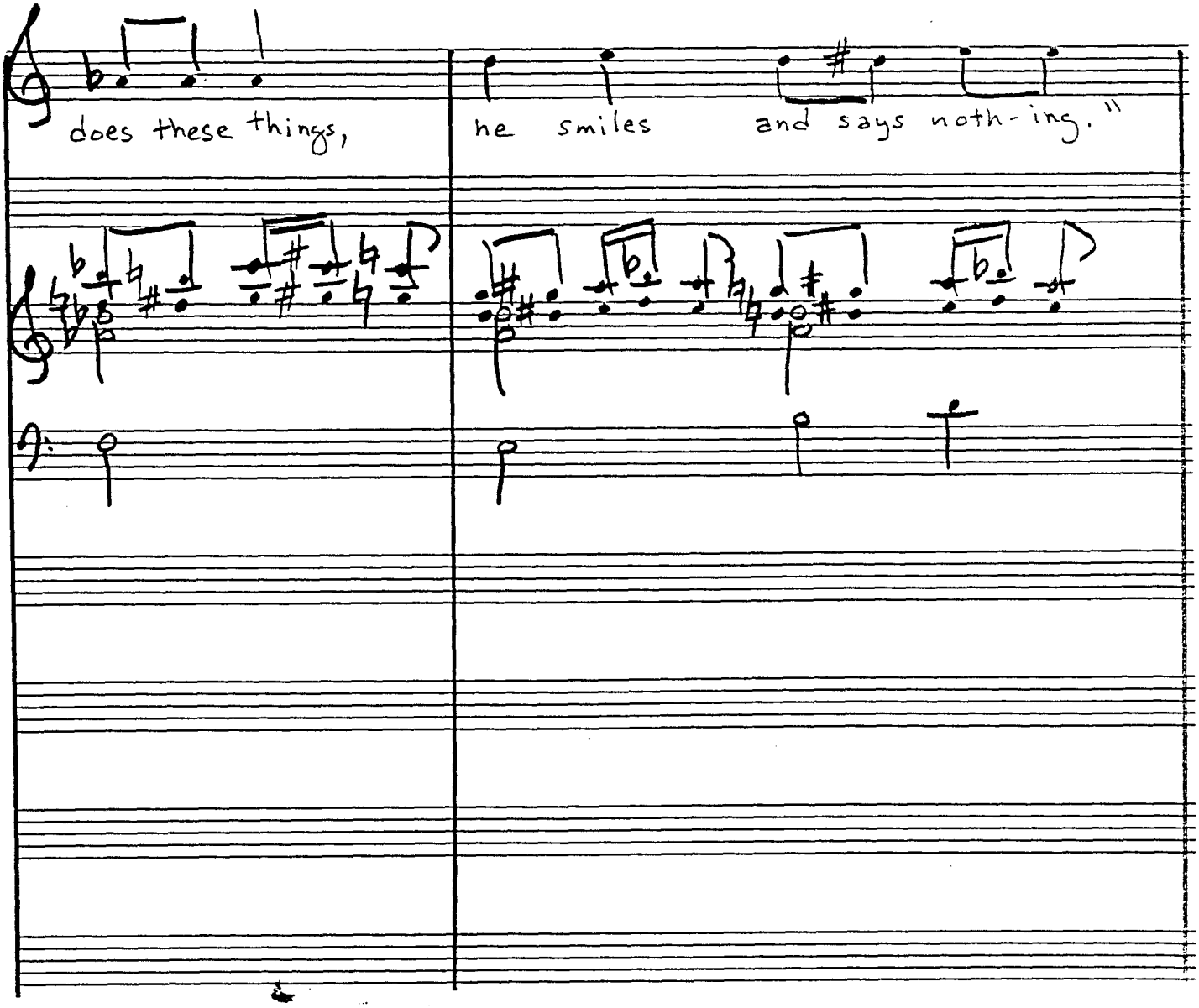
159

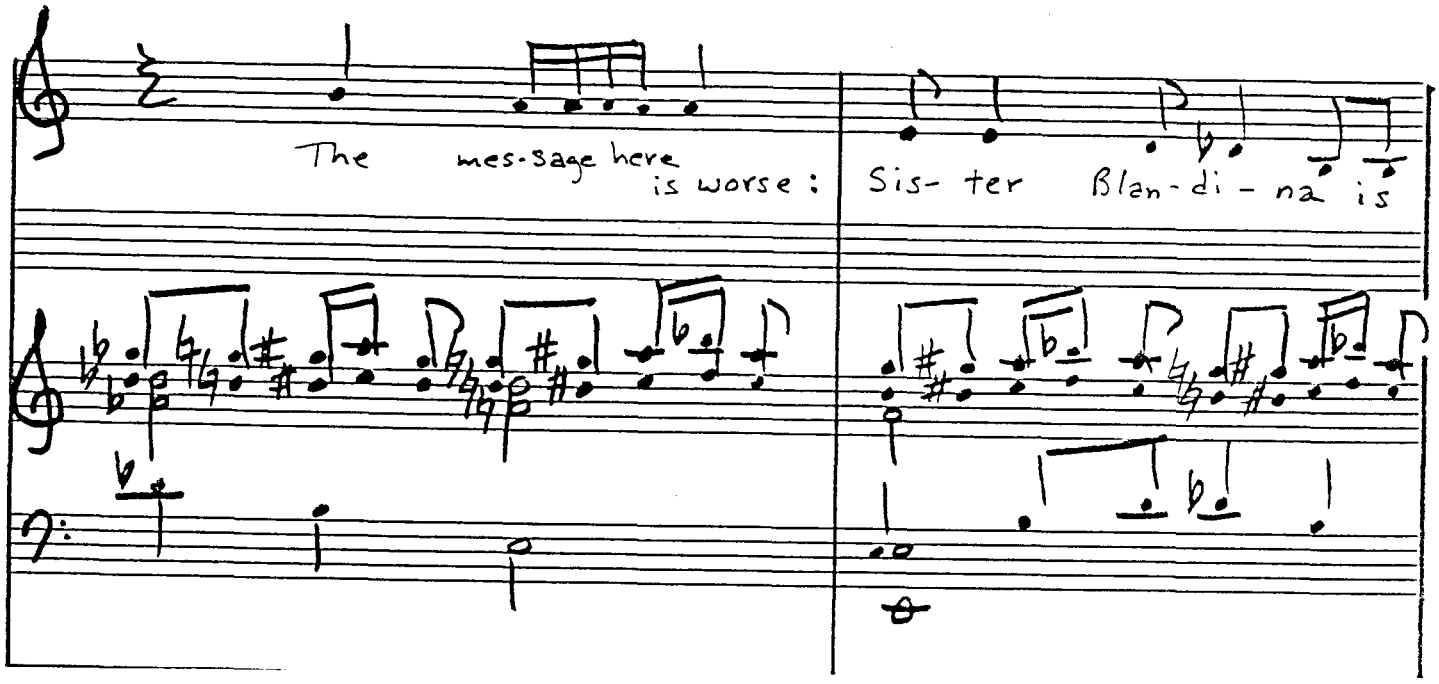

load of wood, and ev'-ry night he goes a- way.

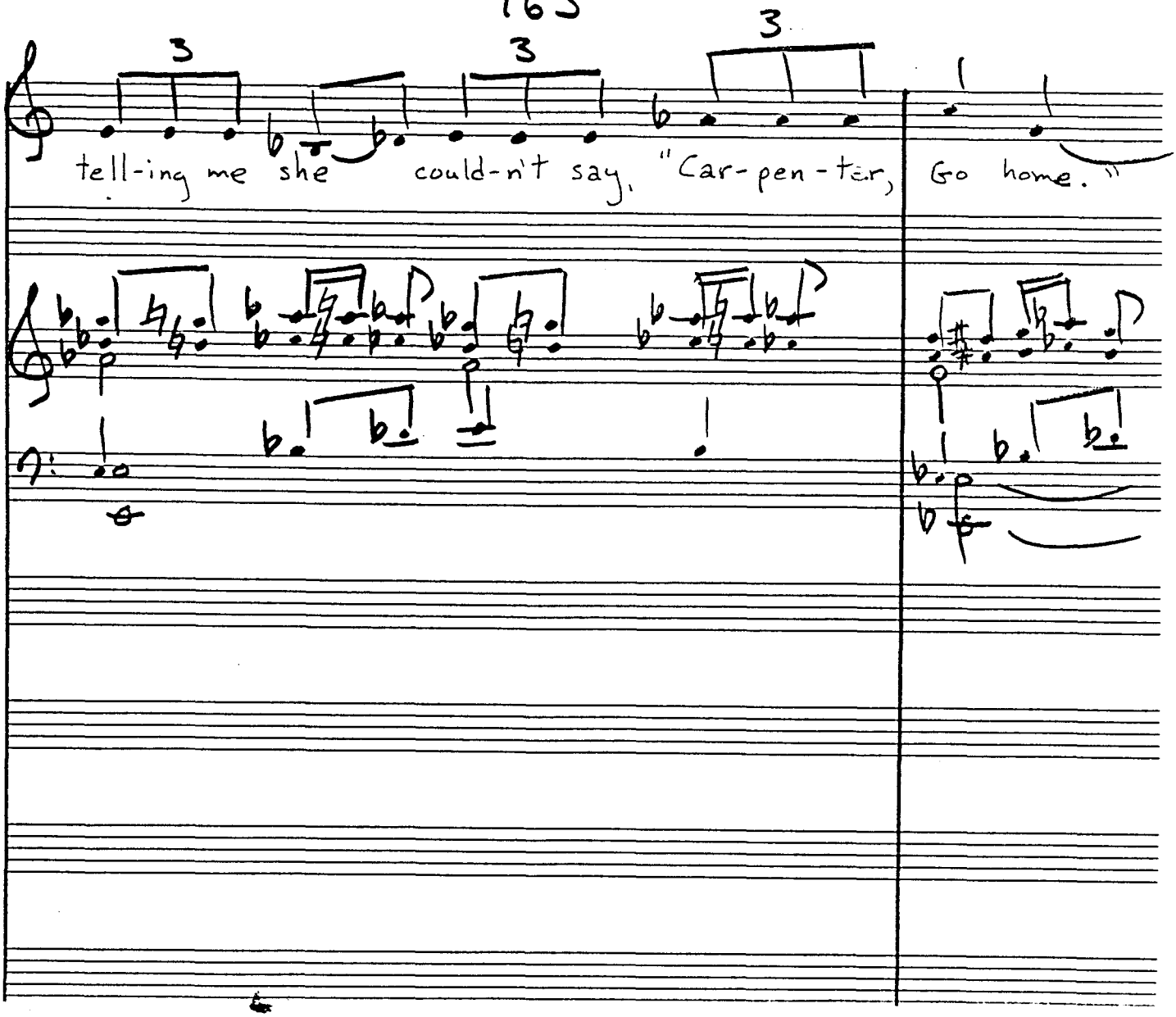
160

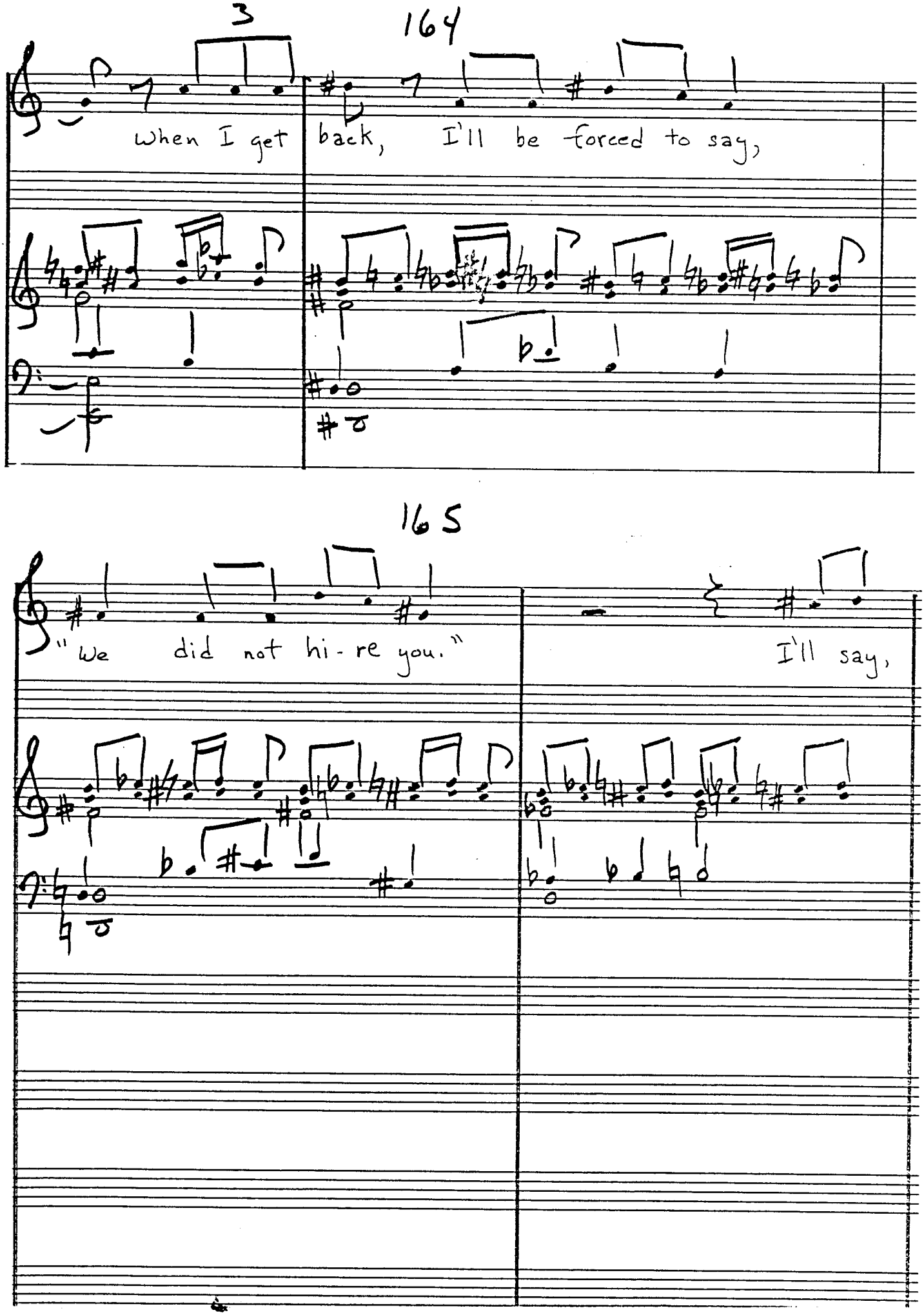

when we ask him by
whose au-thor-i-ty he

161

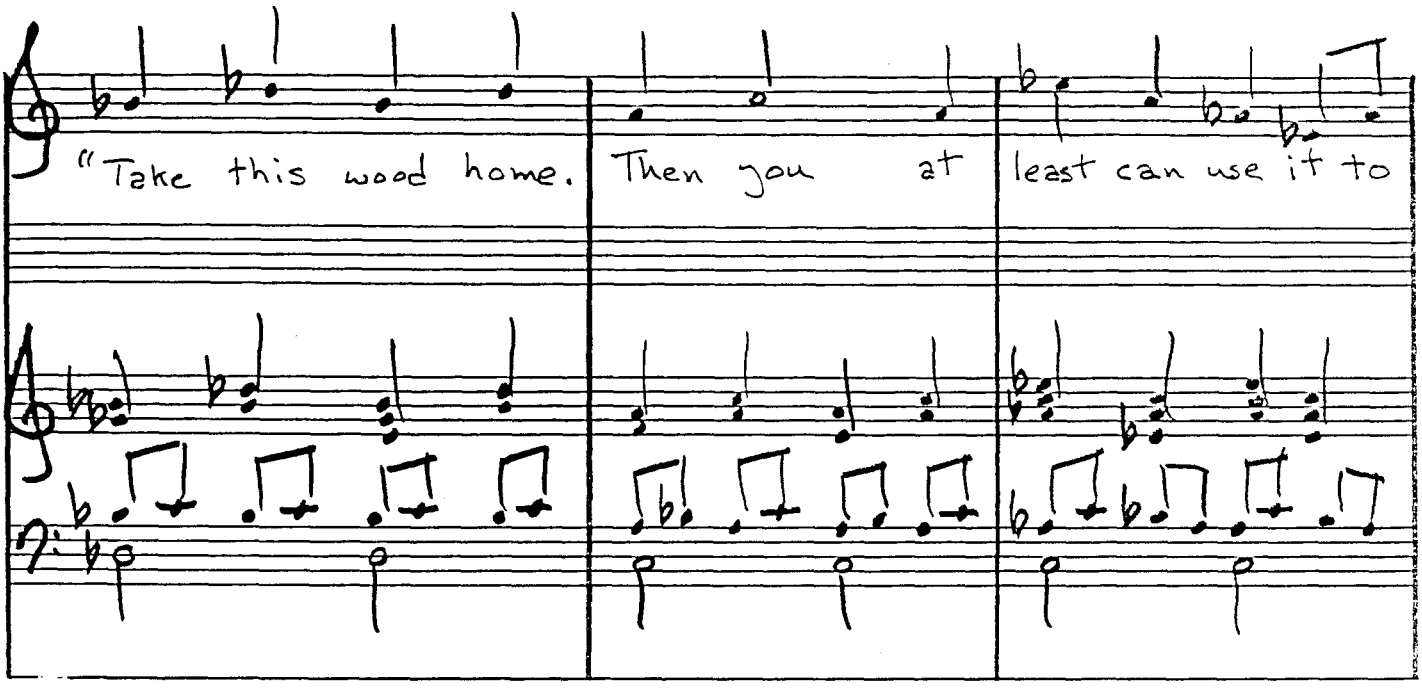

does these things,
he smiles and says noth-ing."


The mes-sage here is worse:
Sis- ter Blan-di- na is

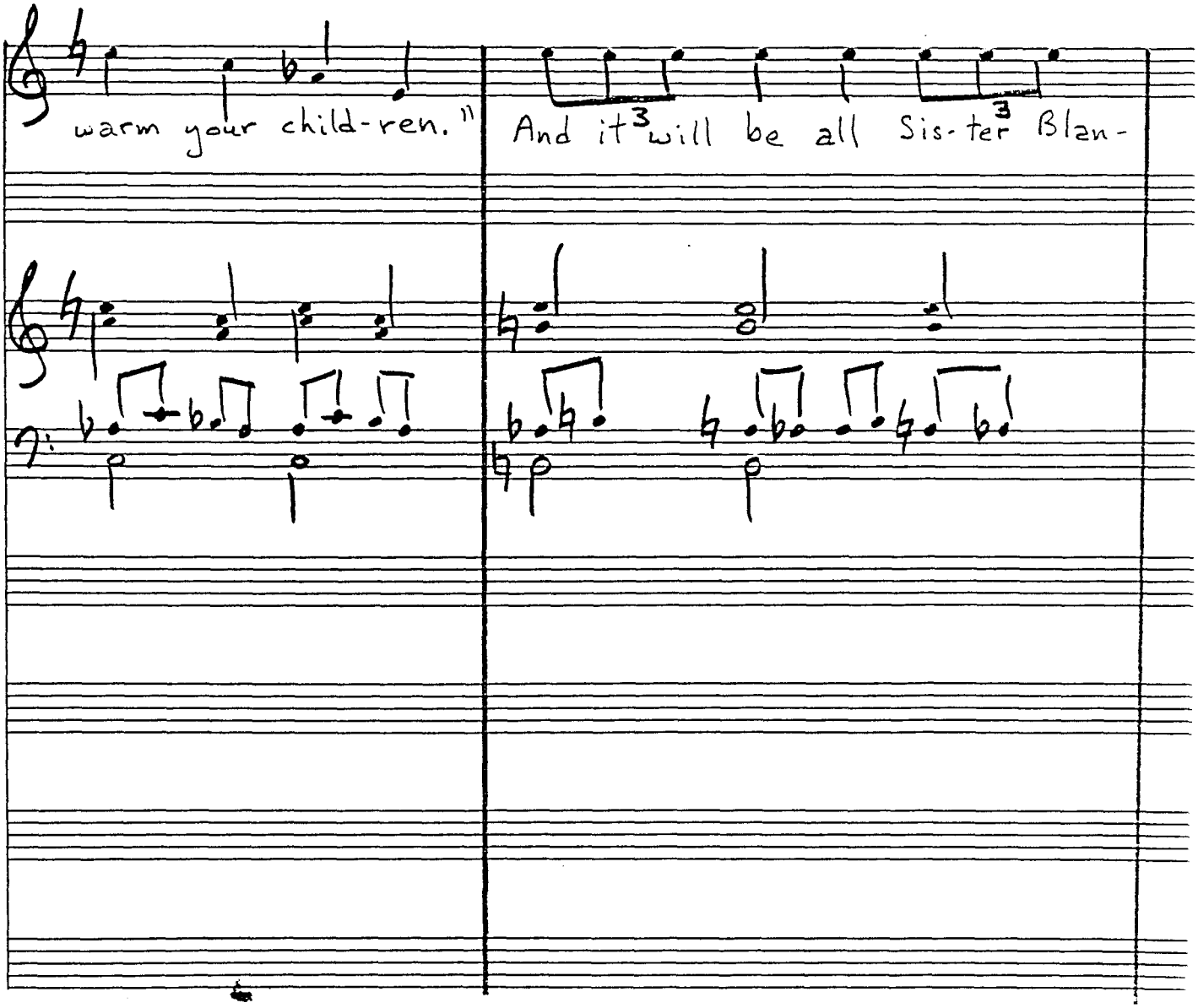

3
3
3
tell-ing me she could-n't say, "Car-pen-ter, Go home."

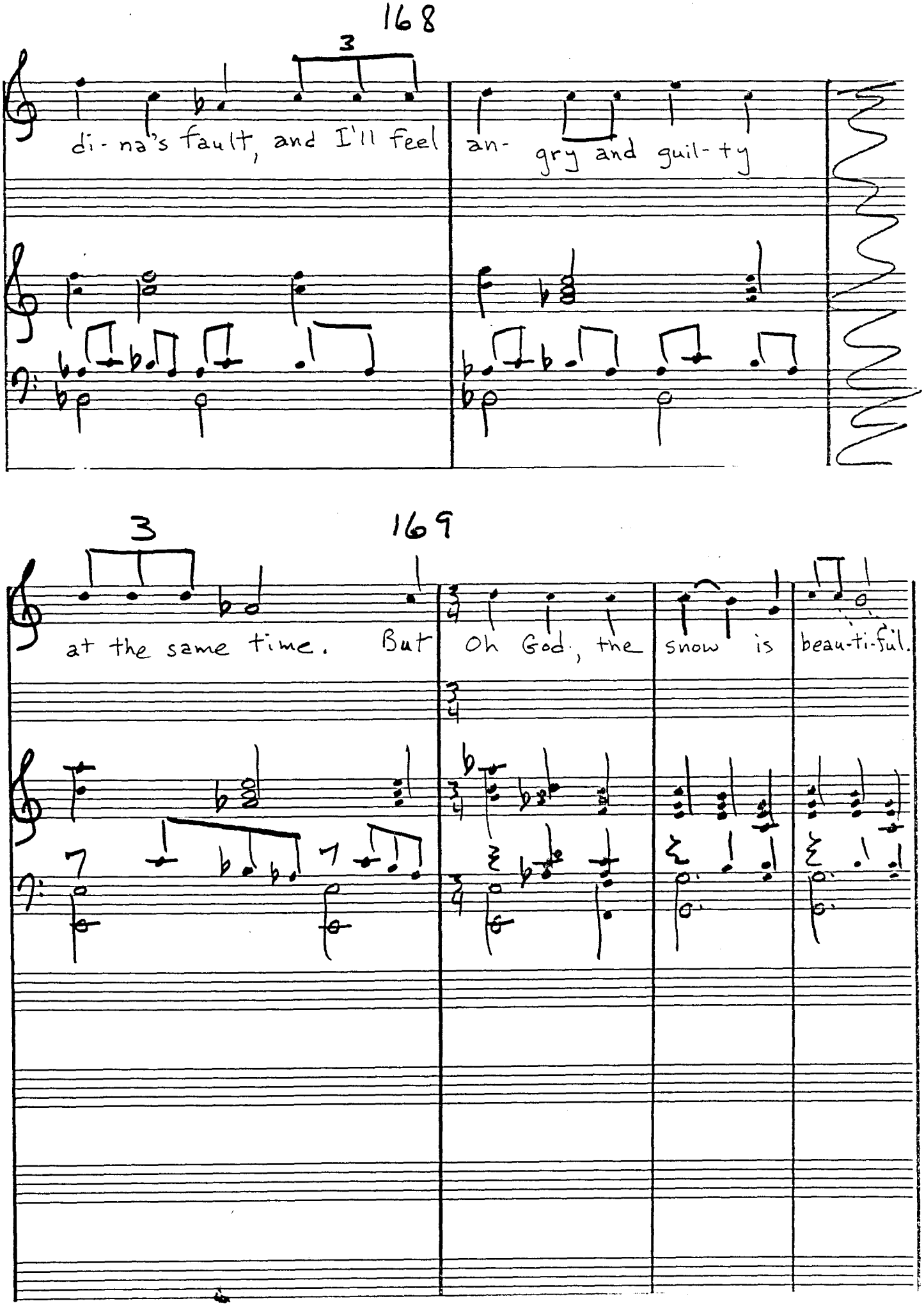

3
164
When I get back, I'll be forced to say,
165
"We did not hi-re you."
I'll say,

166

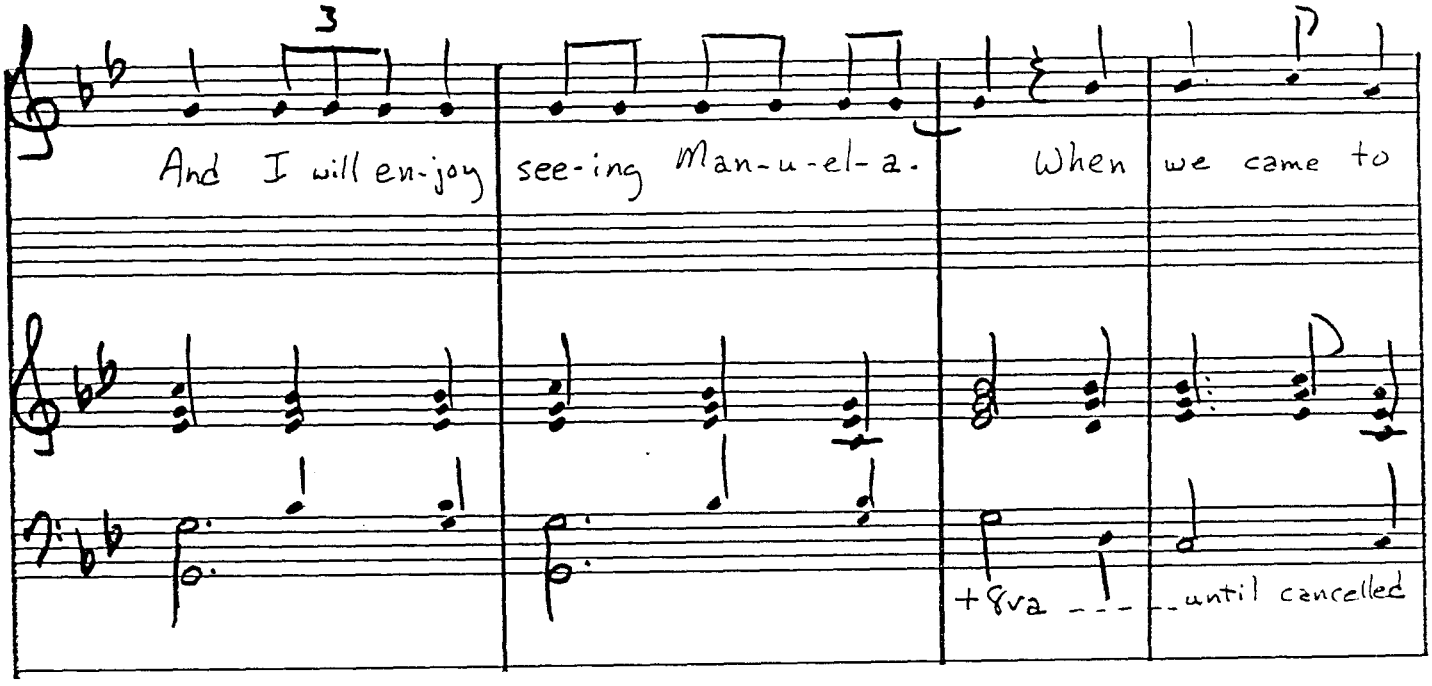

"Take this wood home. Then you at least can use it to

167

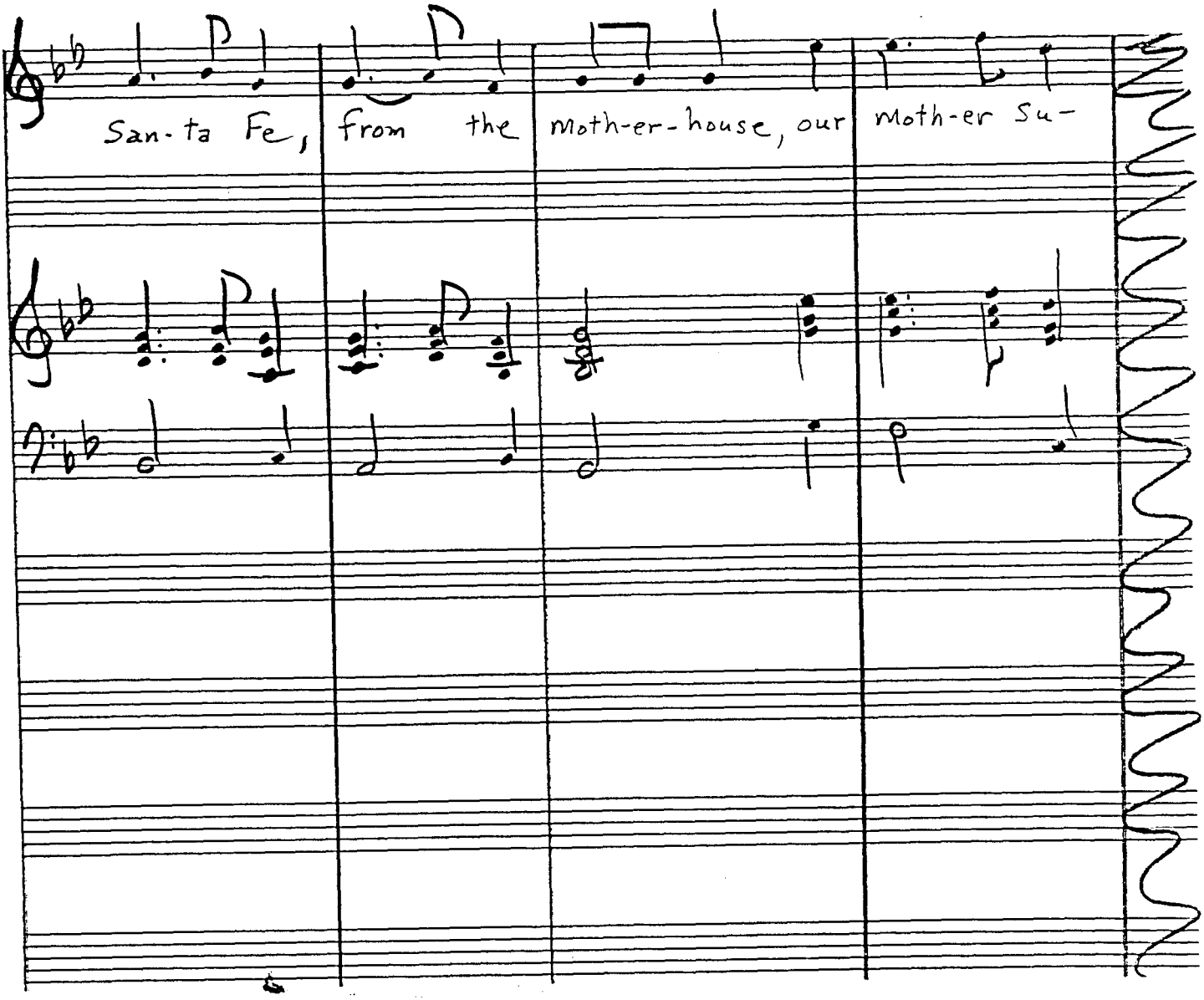

warm your child-ren." And it will be all Sis-ter Blan-


168
3
di- na's fault, and I'll feel
an- gry and guil- ty
169
3
at the same time. But
Oh God, the
snow
is
beau-ti-ful.

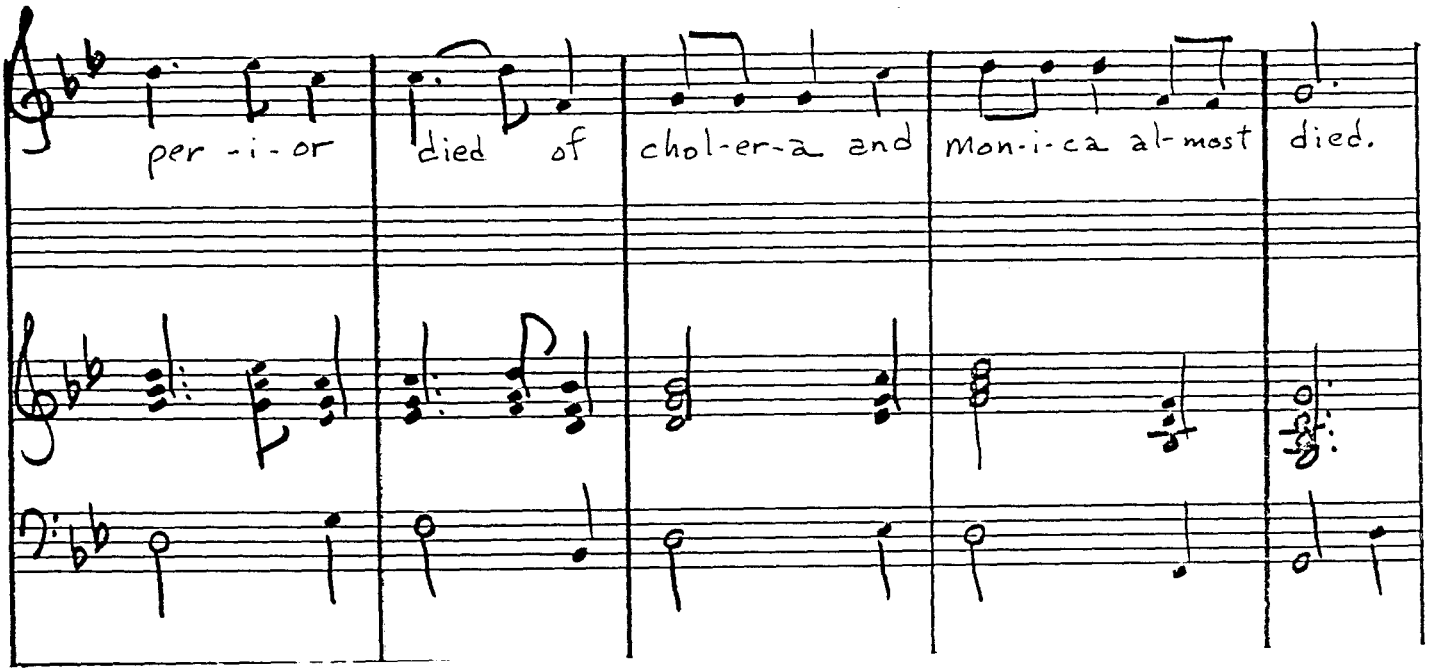
170


3
And I will en-joy see-ing Man-u-el-a. When we came to
+8va
until cancelled

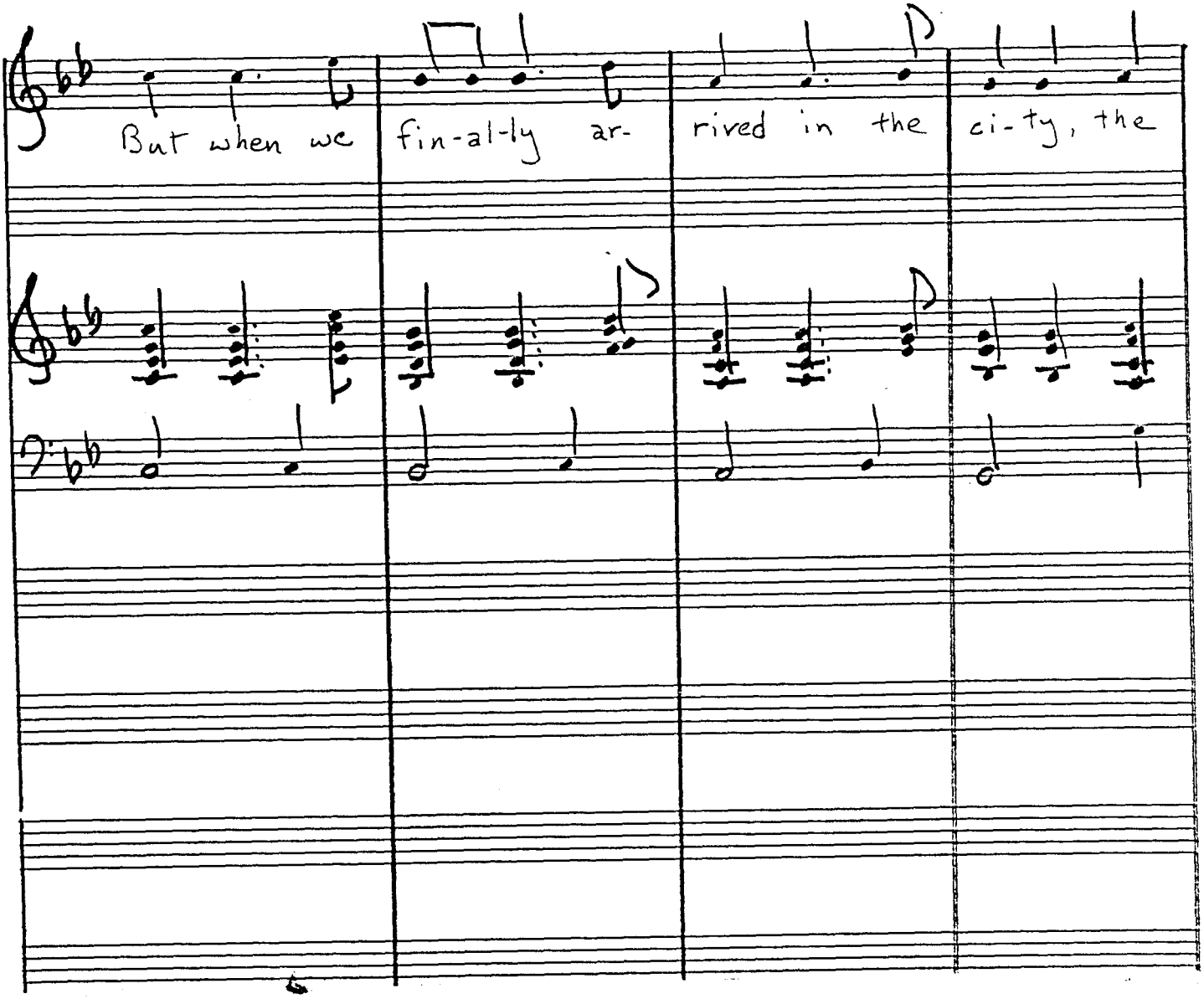
171


San-ta Fe, from the moth-er-house, our moth-er Su-

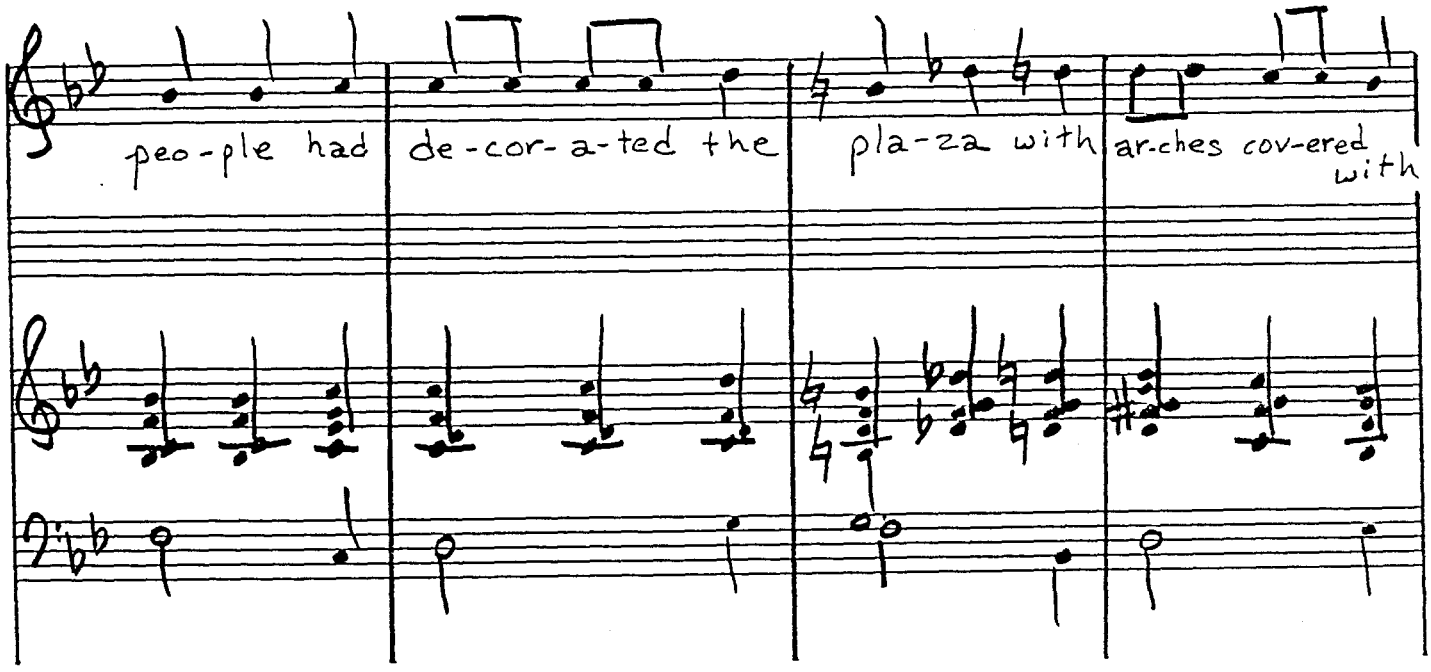
172


per - i - or
died of
chol-er-a and
Mon-i-ca al-most
died.

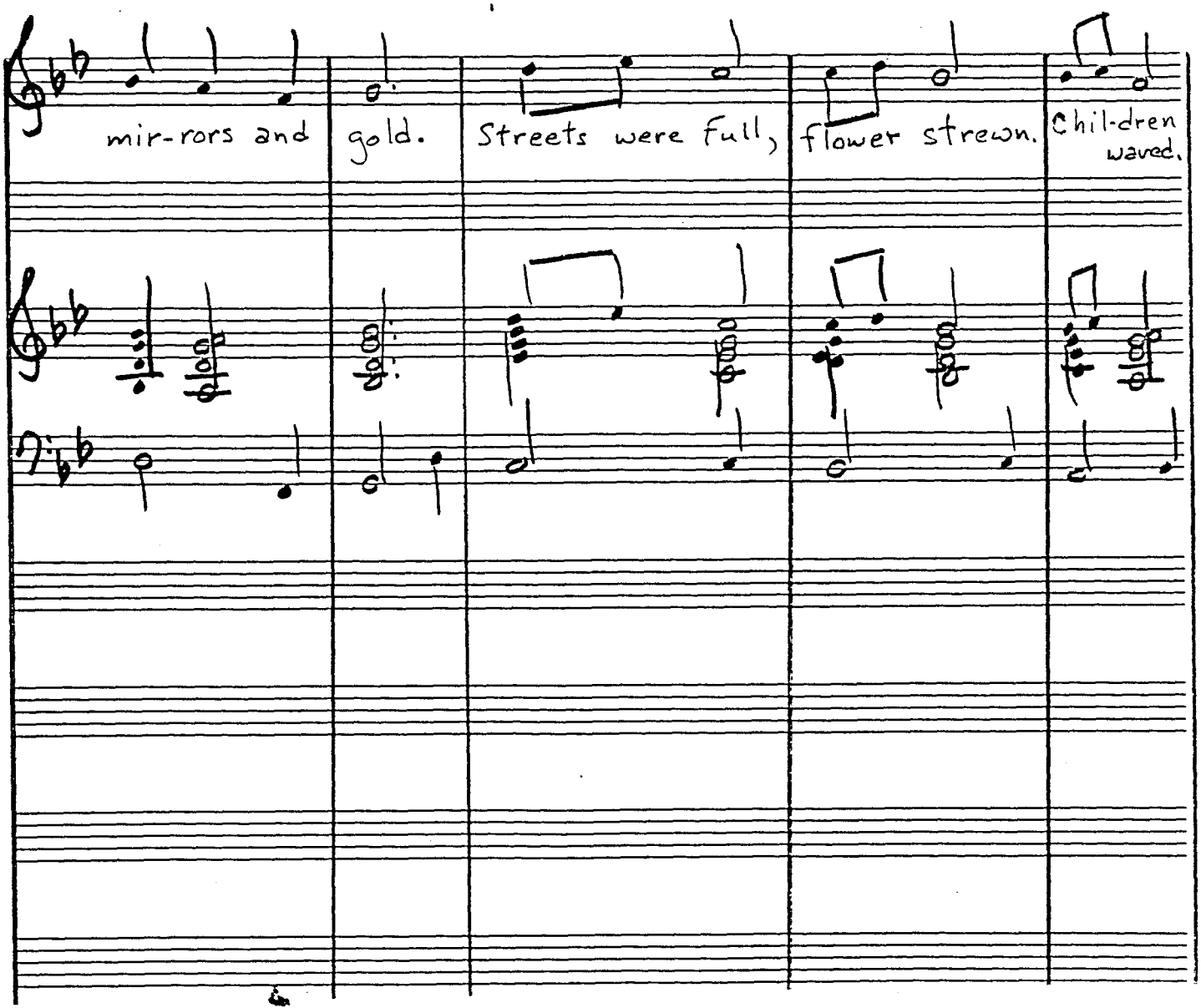
173


But when we
fin-al-ly ar-
rived in the
ci-ty, the

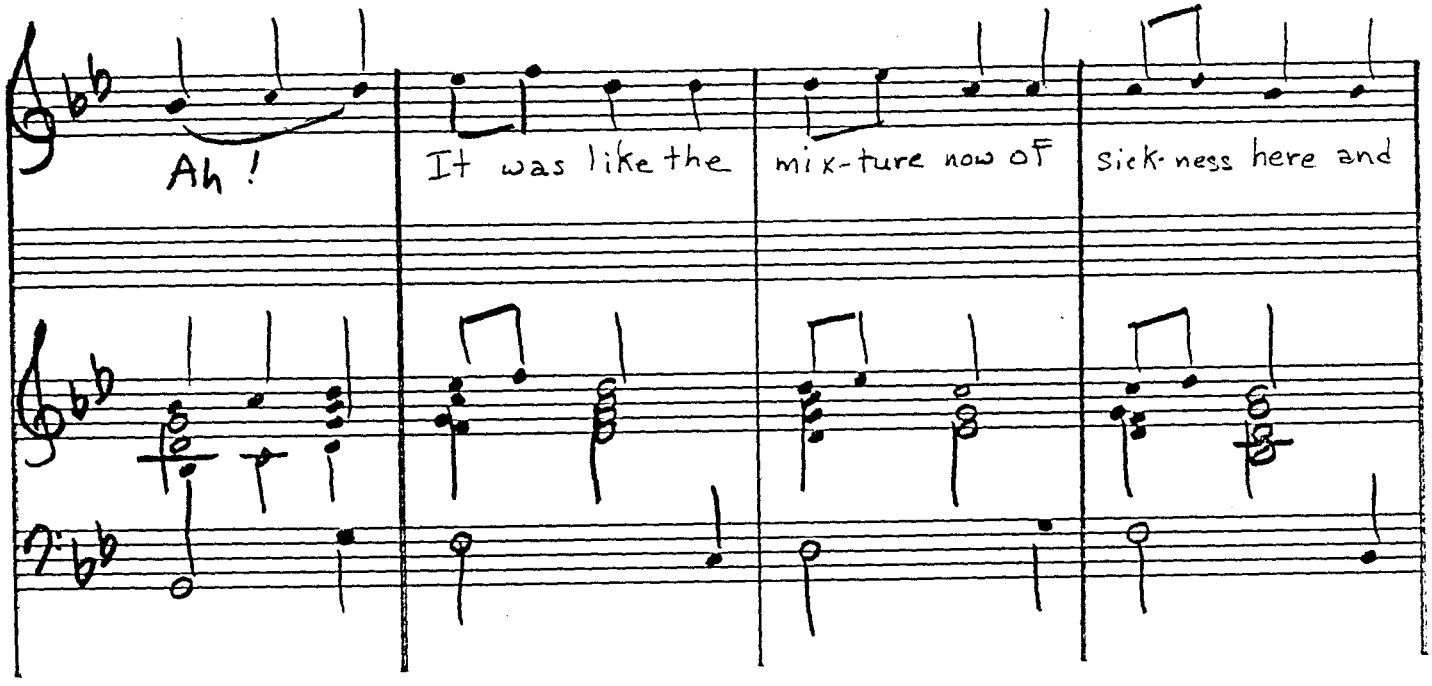
174


peo-ple had
de-cor-a-ted the
pla-za with
ar-ches cov-ered with

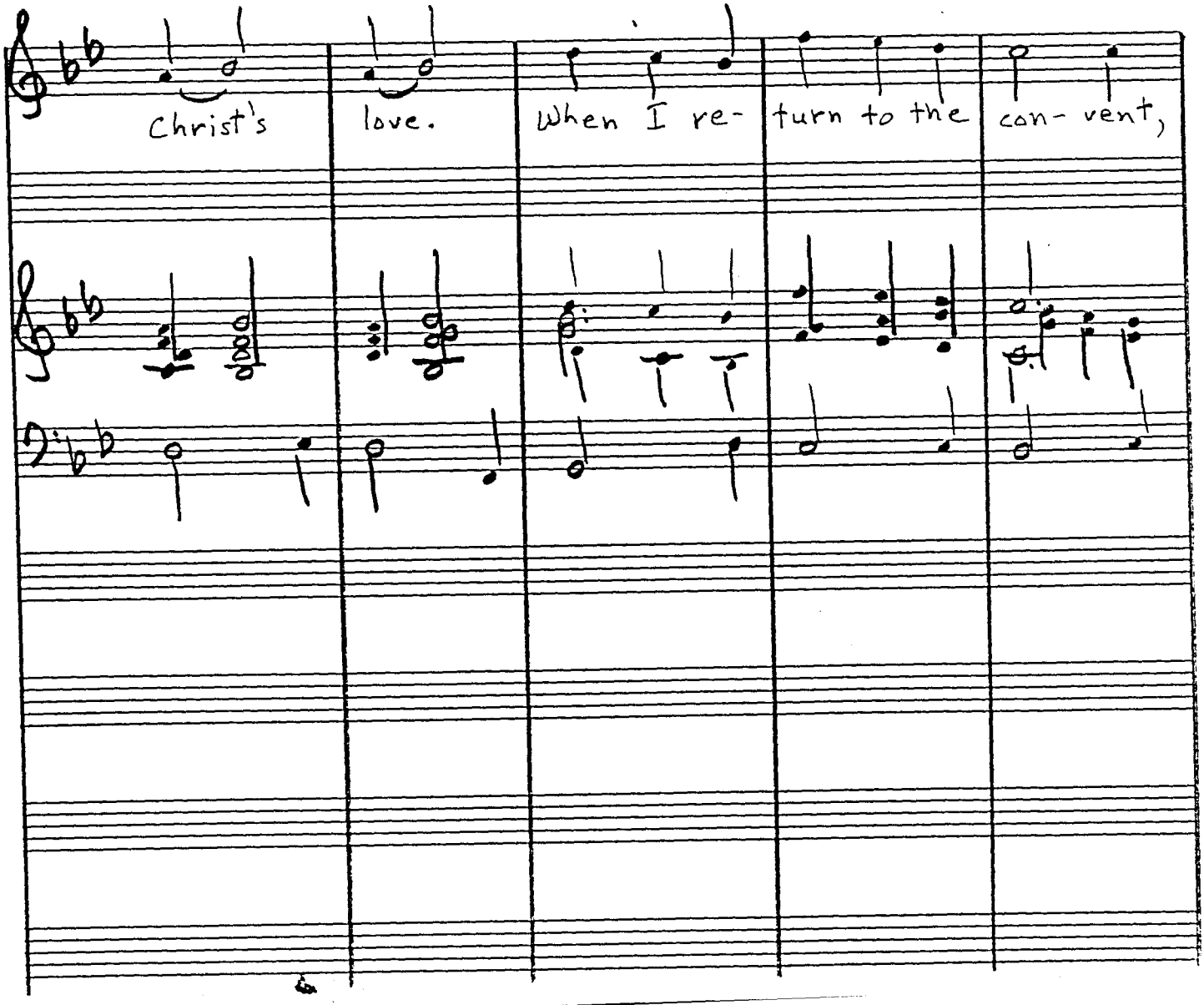
175


mir-rors and
gold.
Streets were full,
flower strewn.
Chil-dren waved.

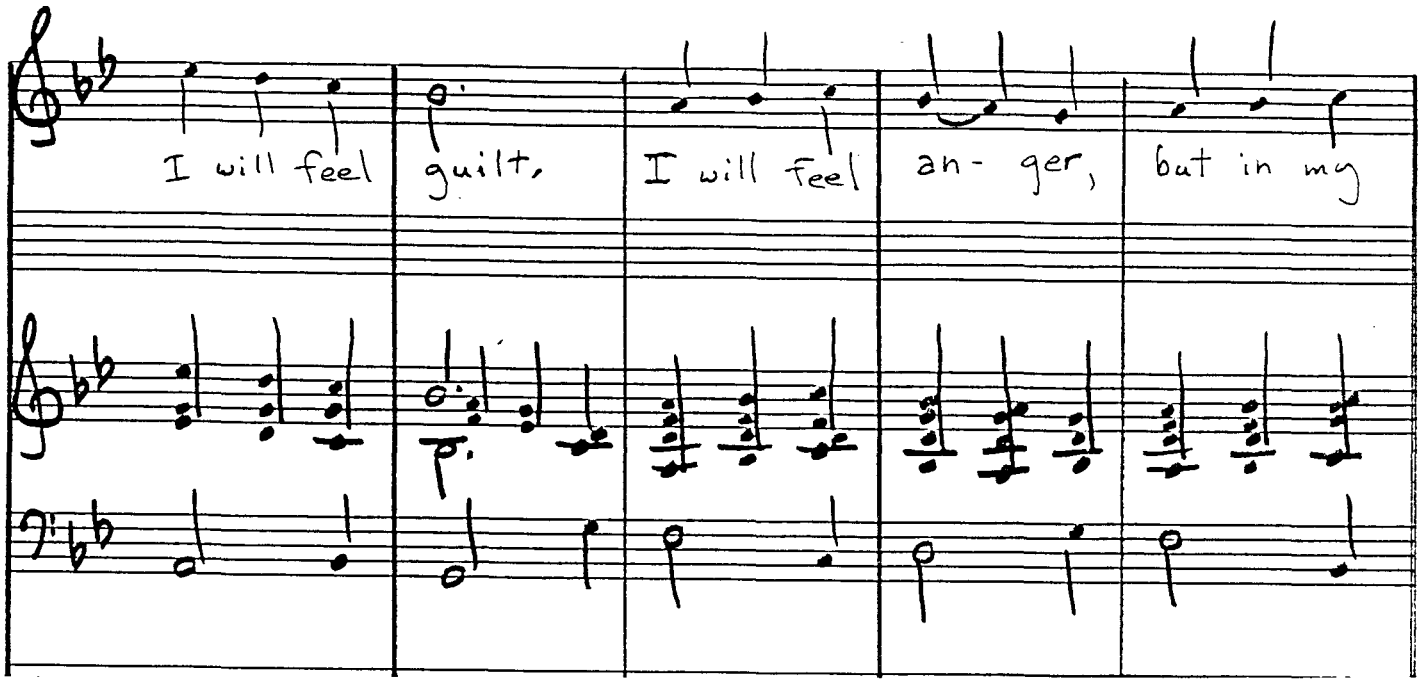
176


Ah!
It was like the
mix-ture now of
sick-ness here and

177

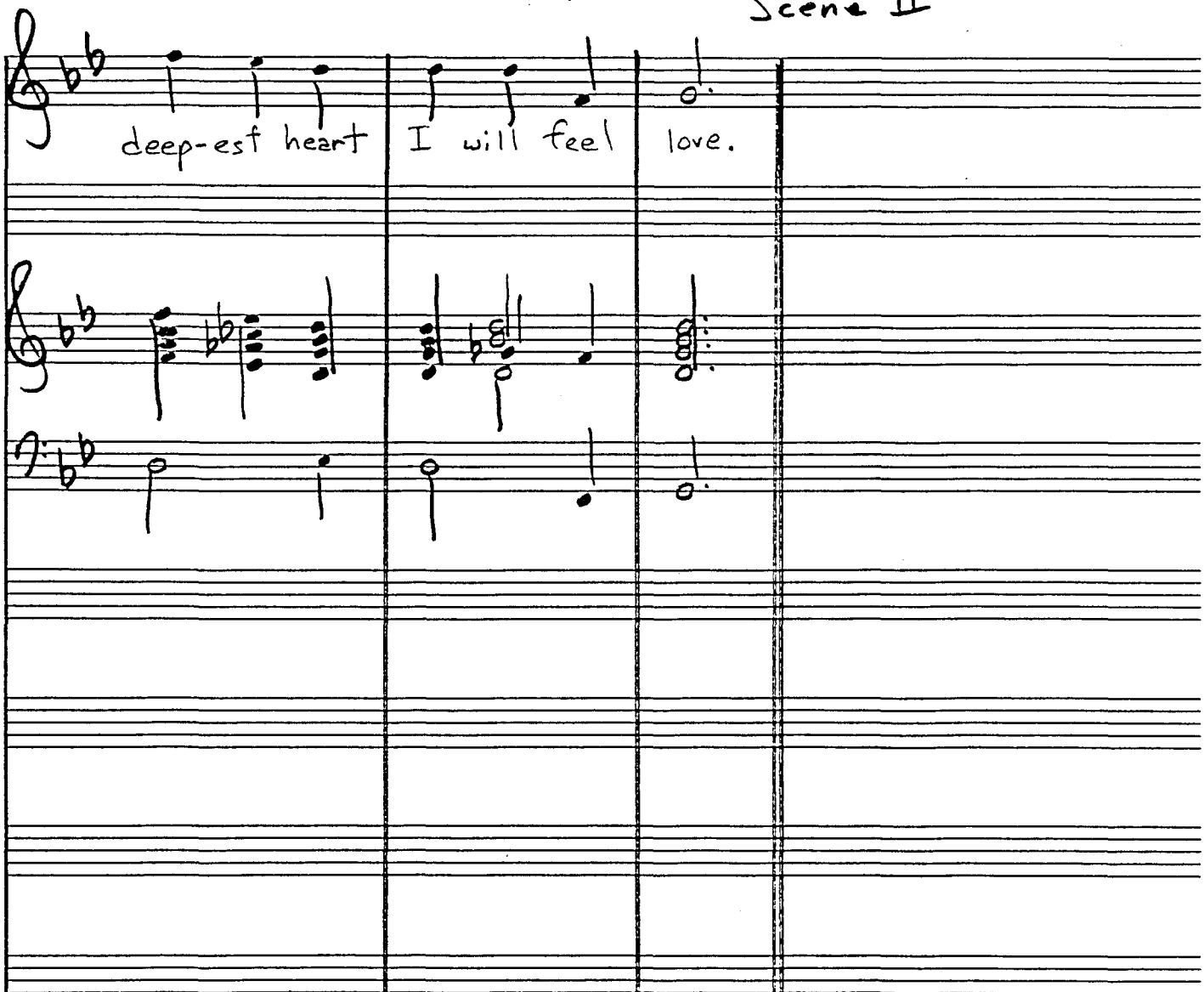

Christ's
love.
When I re-
turn to the
con-vent,

178

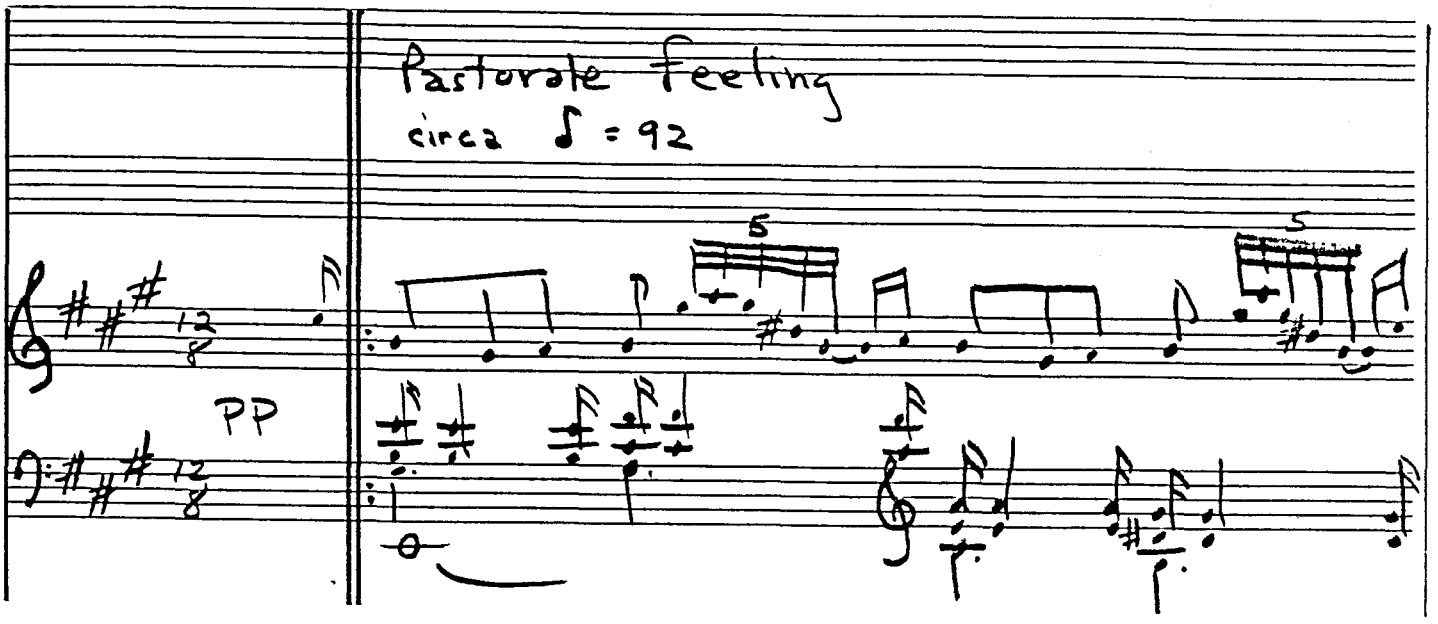


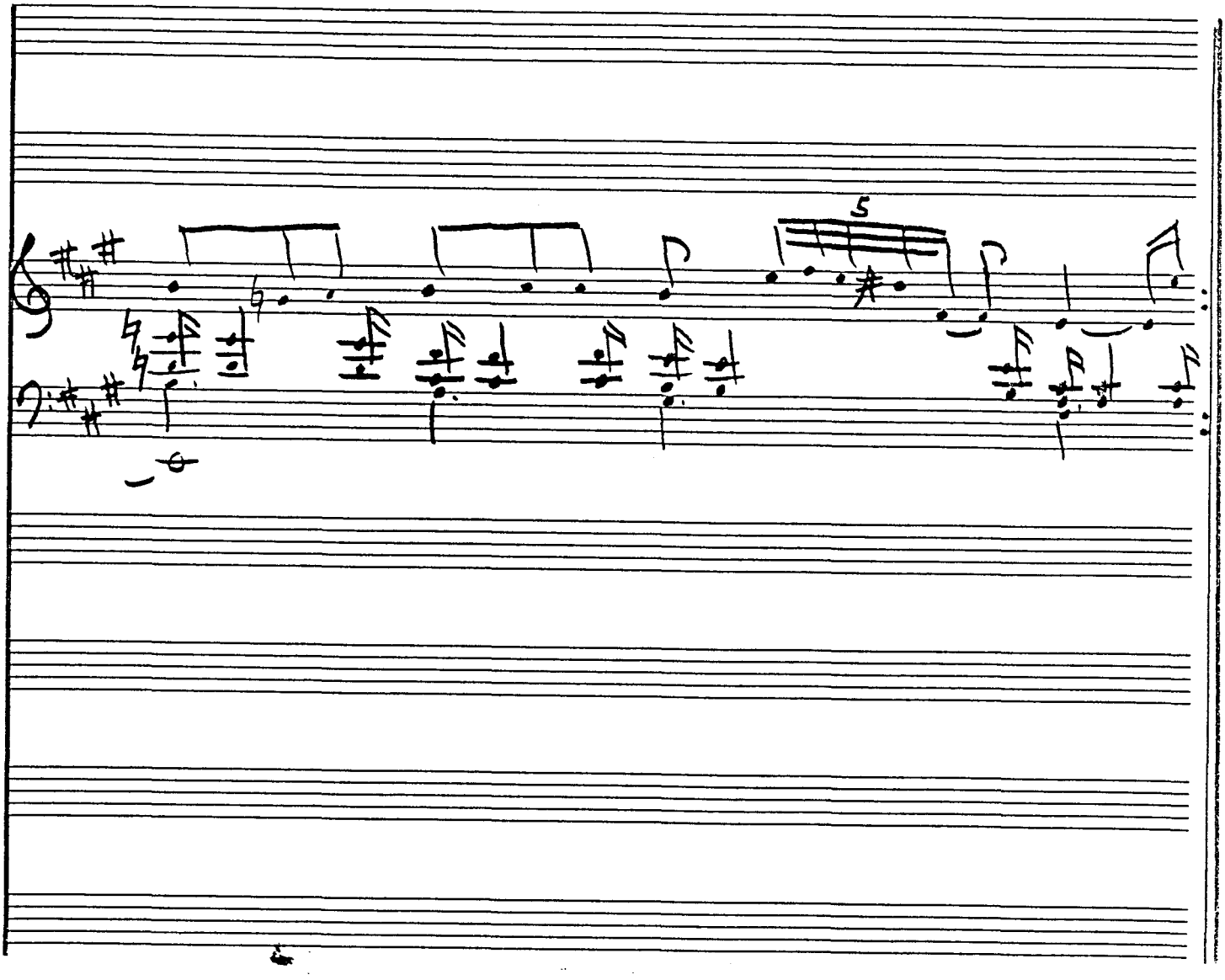
179

End of Scene II

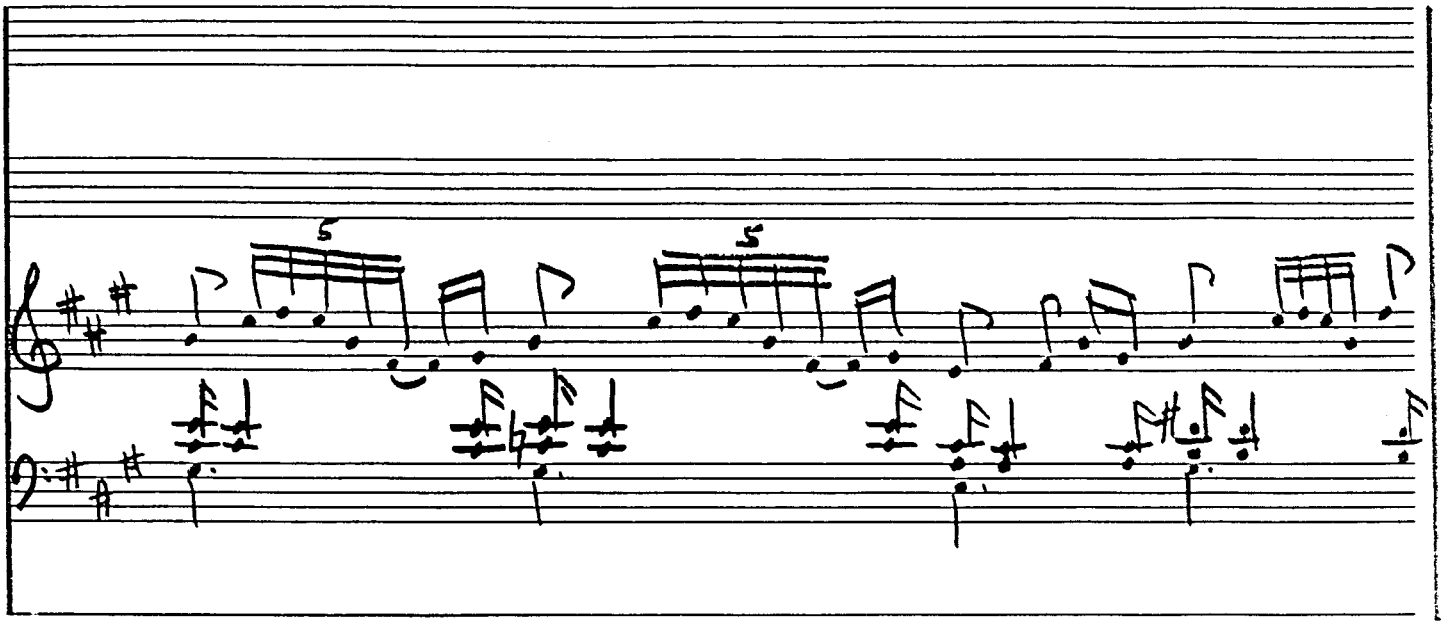


Scene III

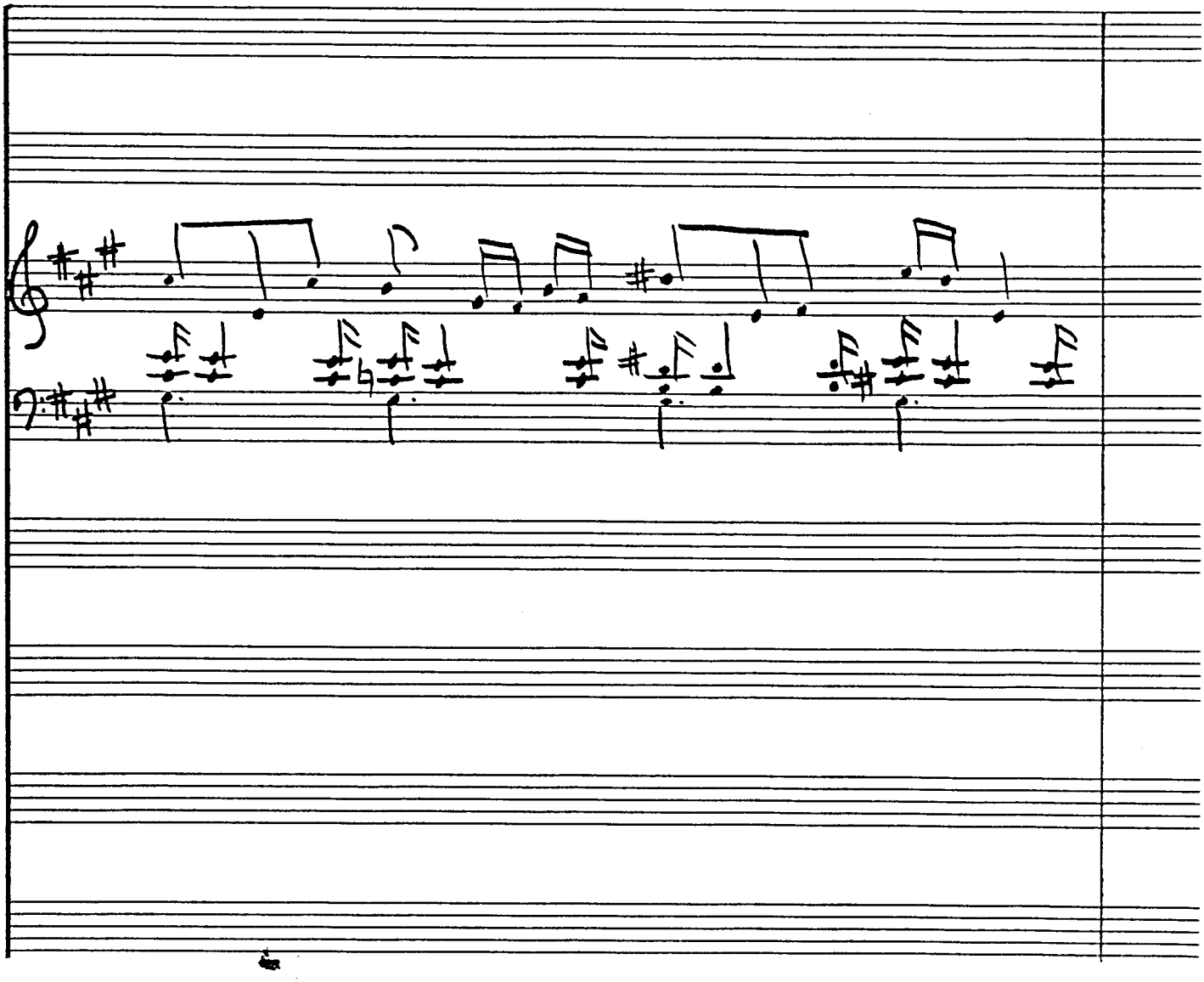




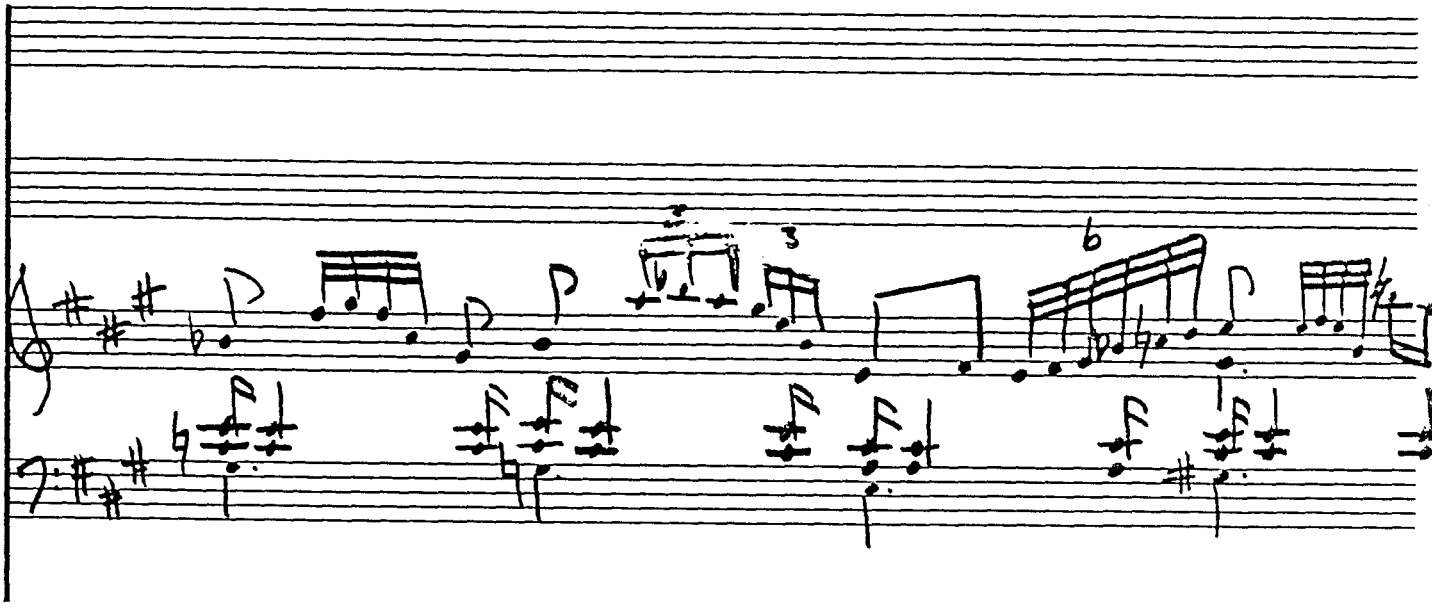
182



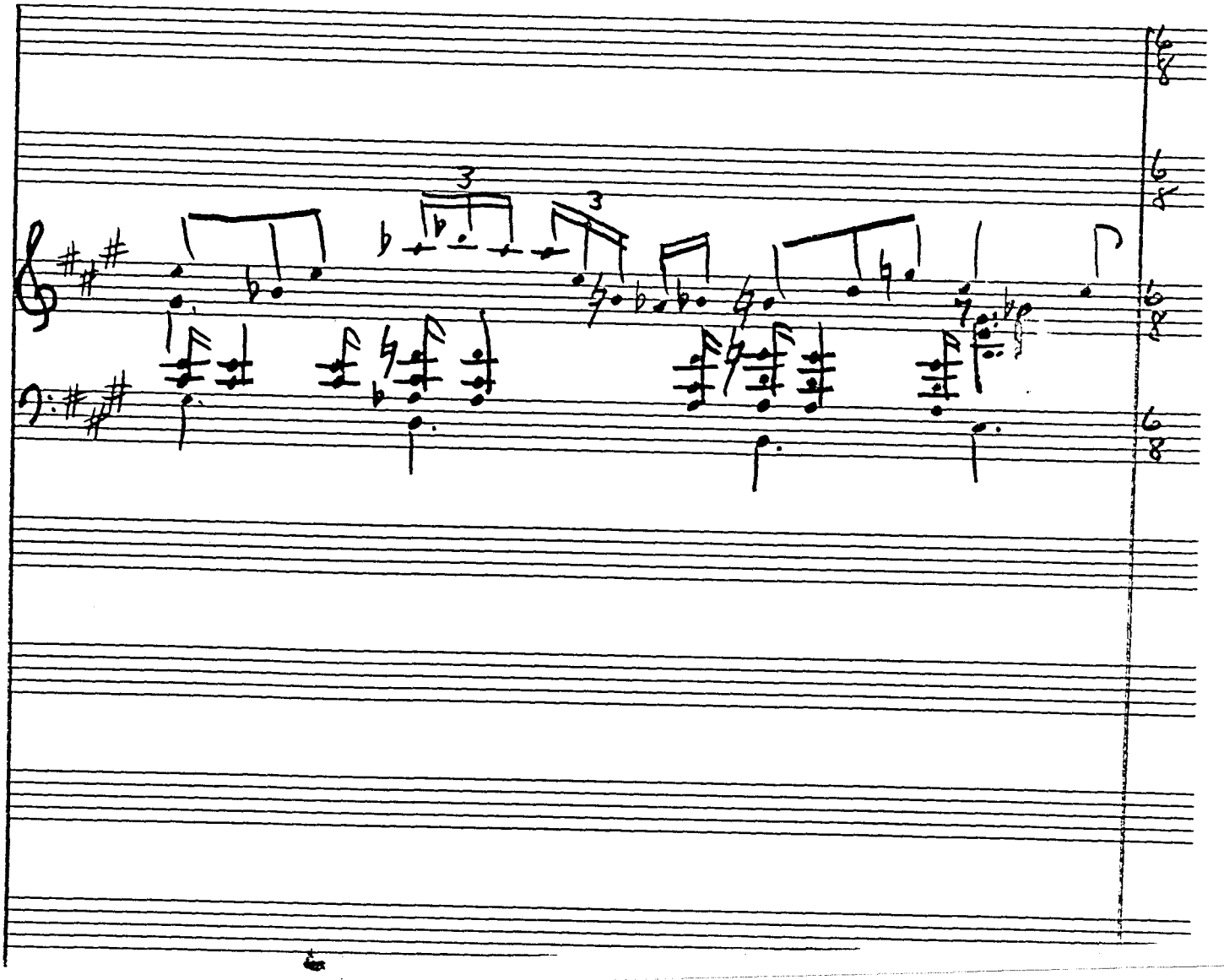
183



184

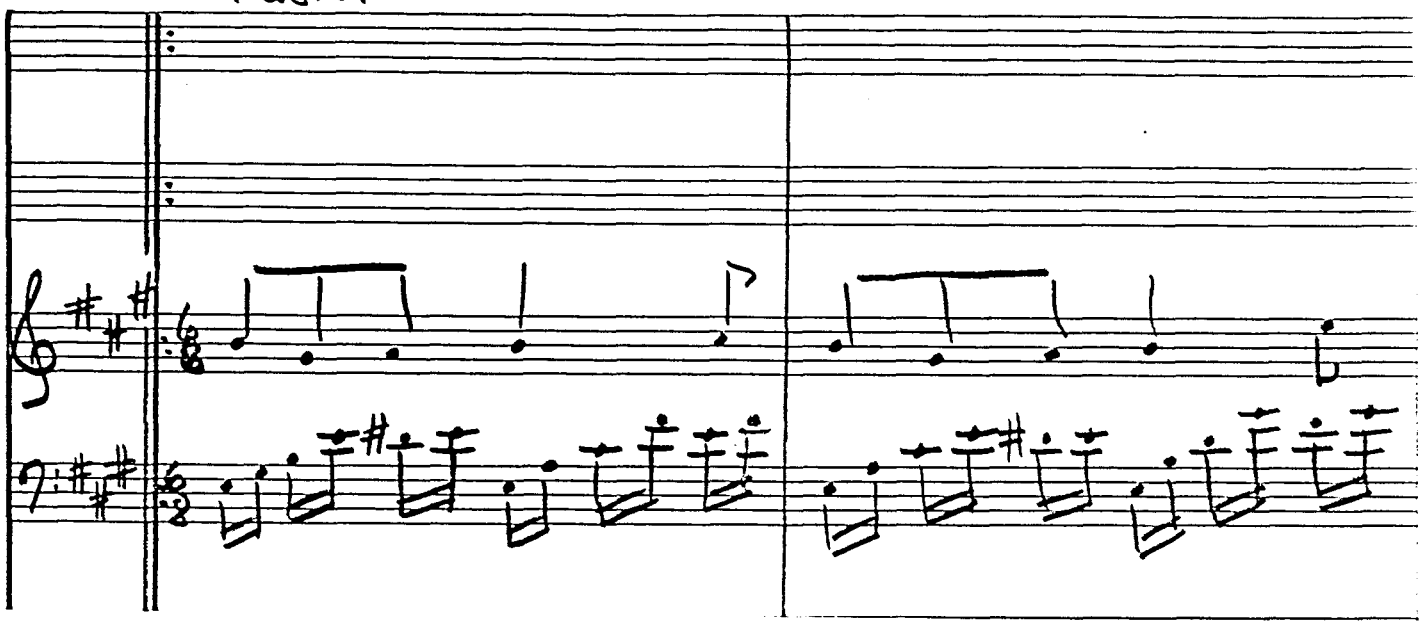


185

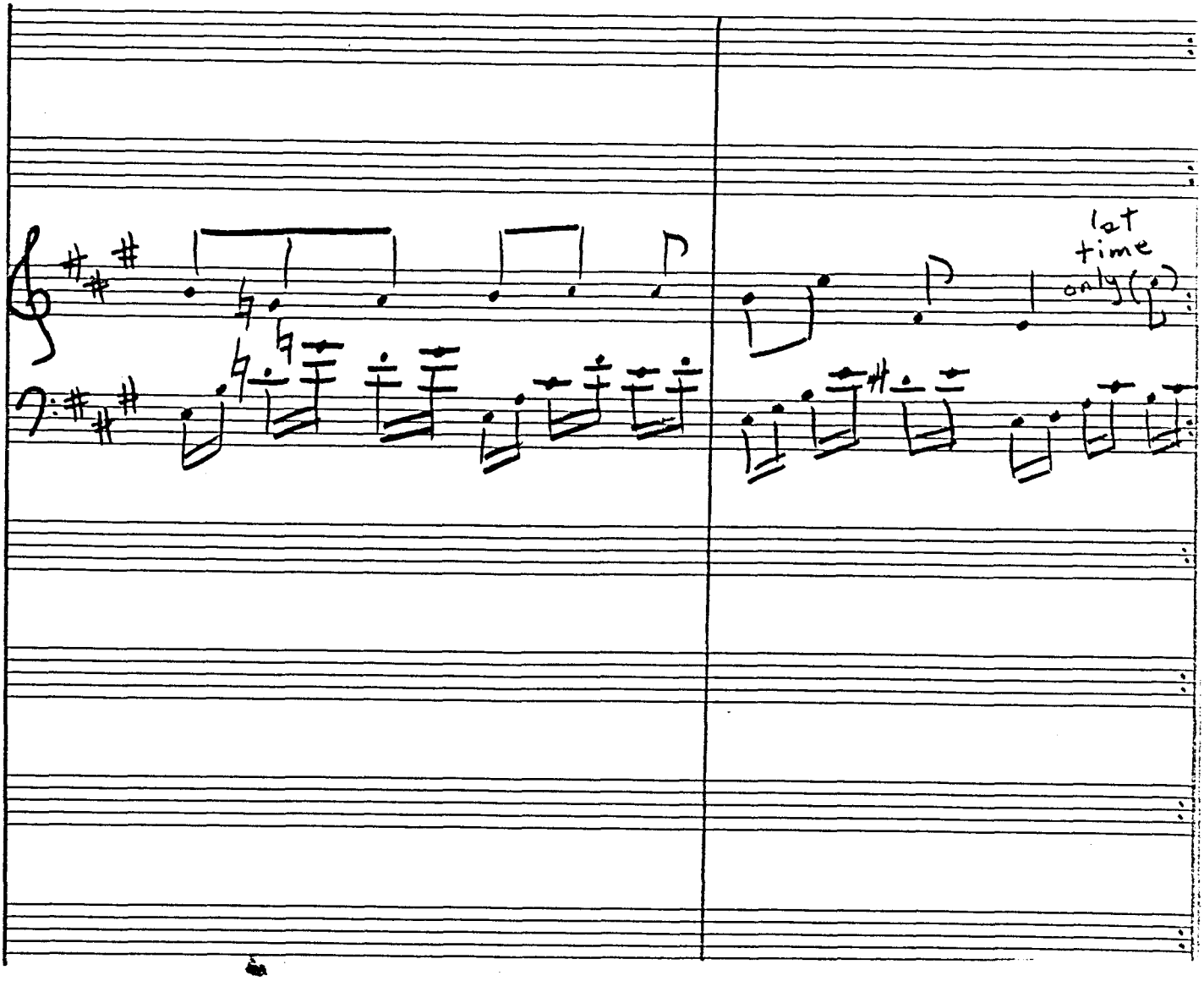


186

Faster



187



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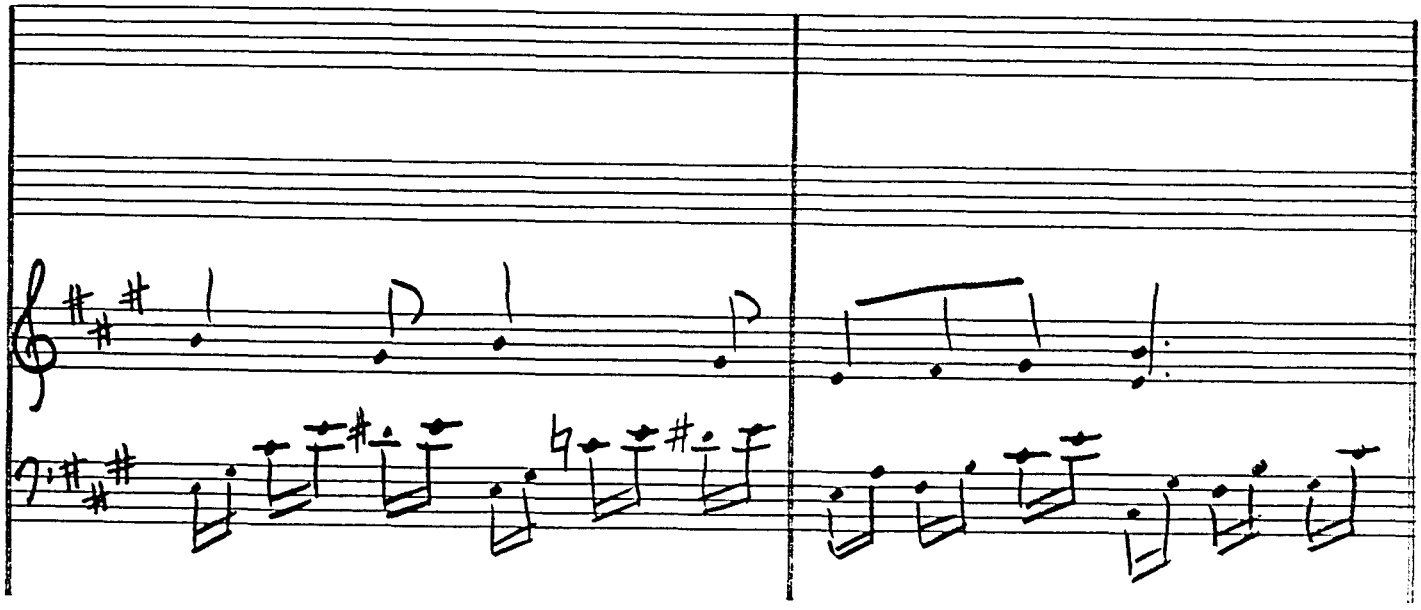

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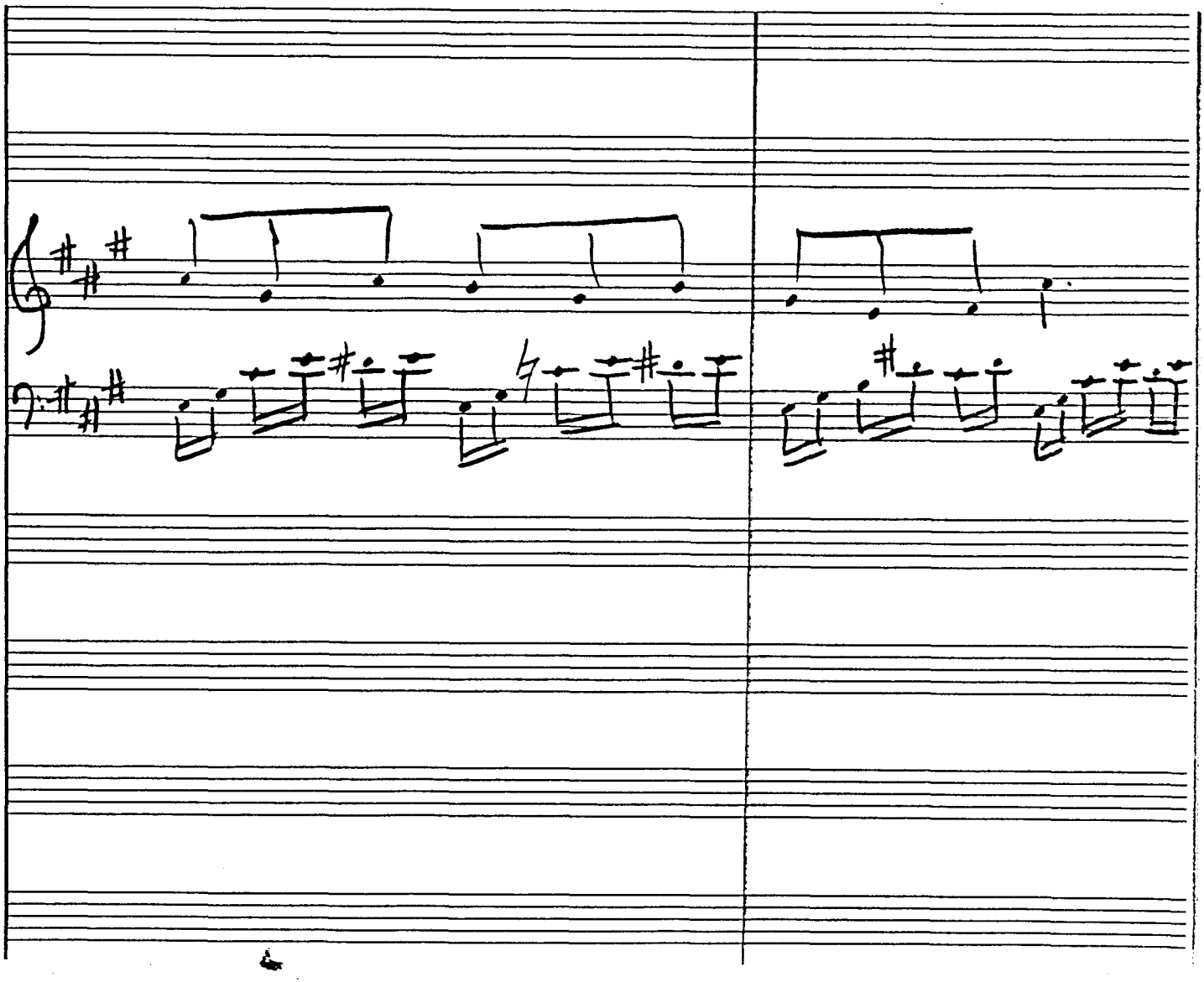
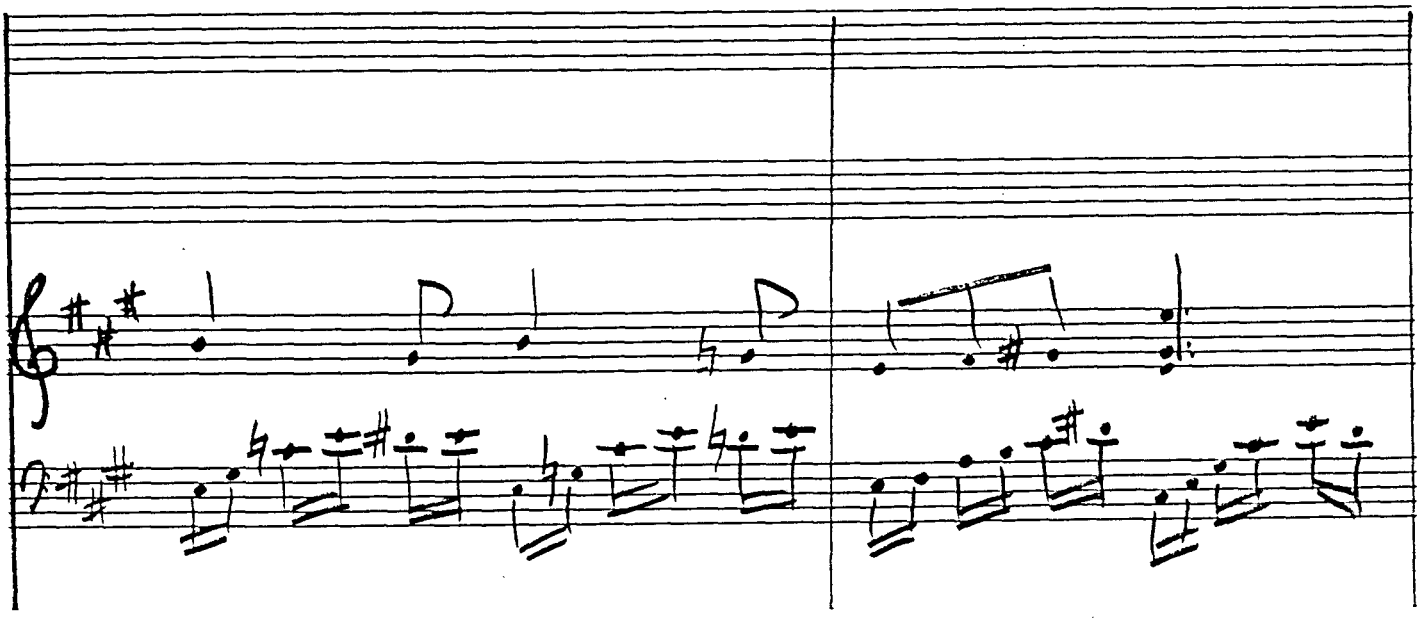
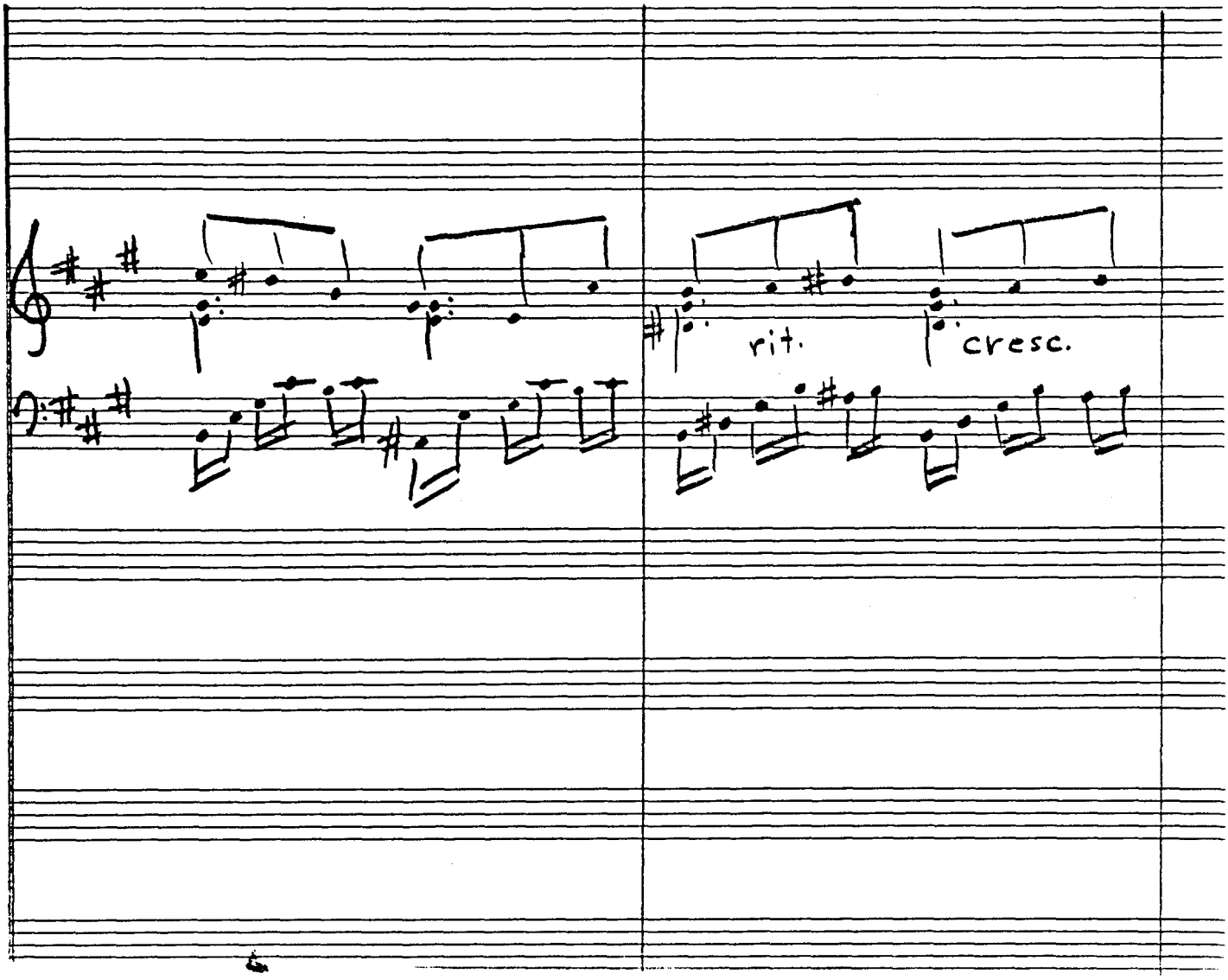


190

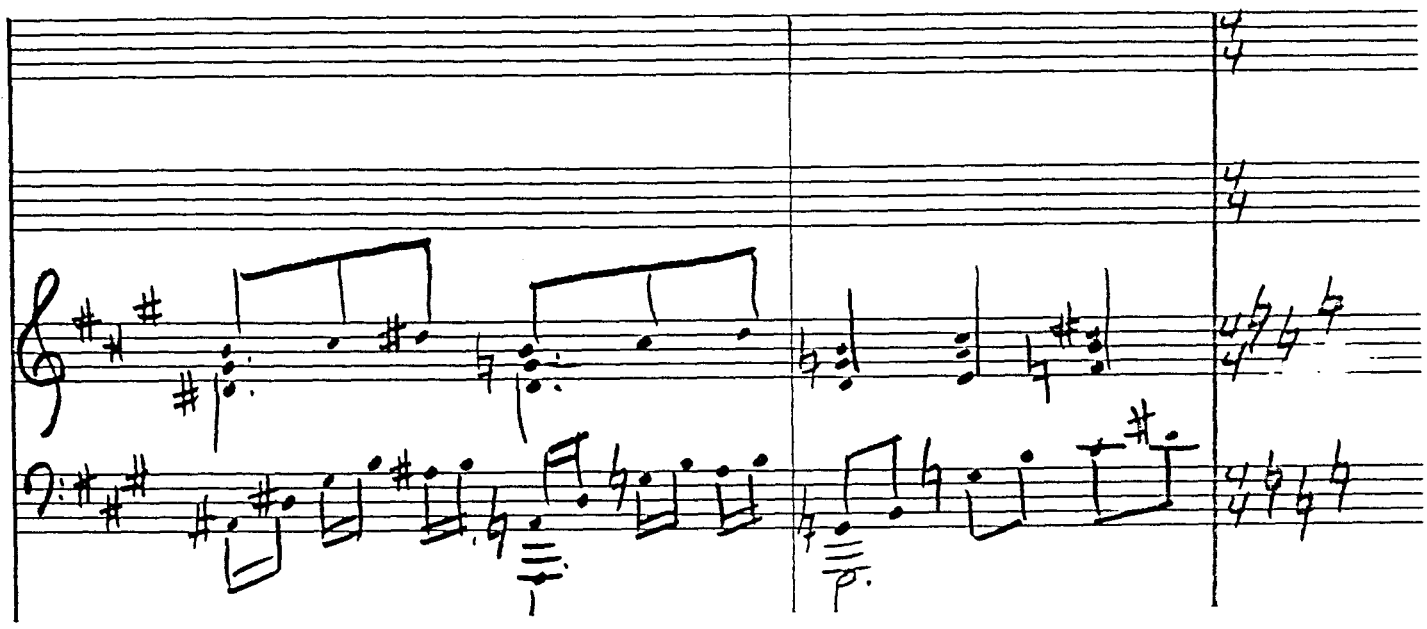


191



192

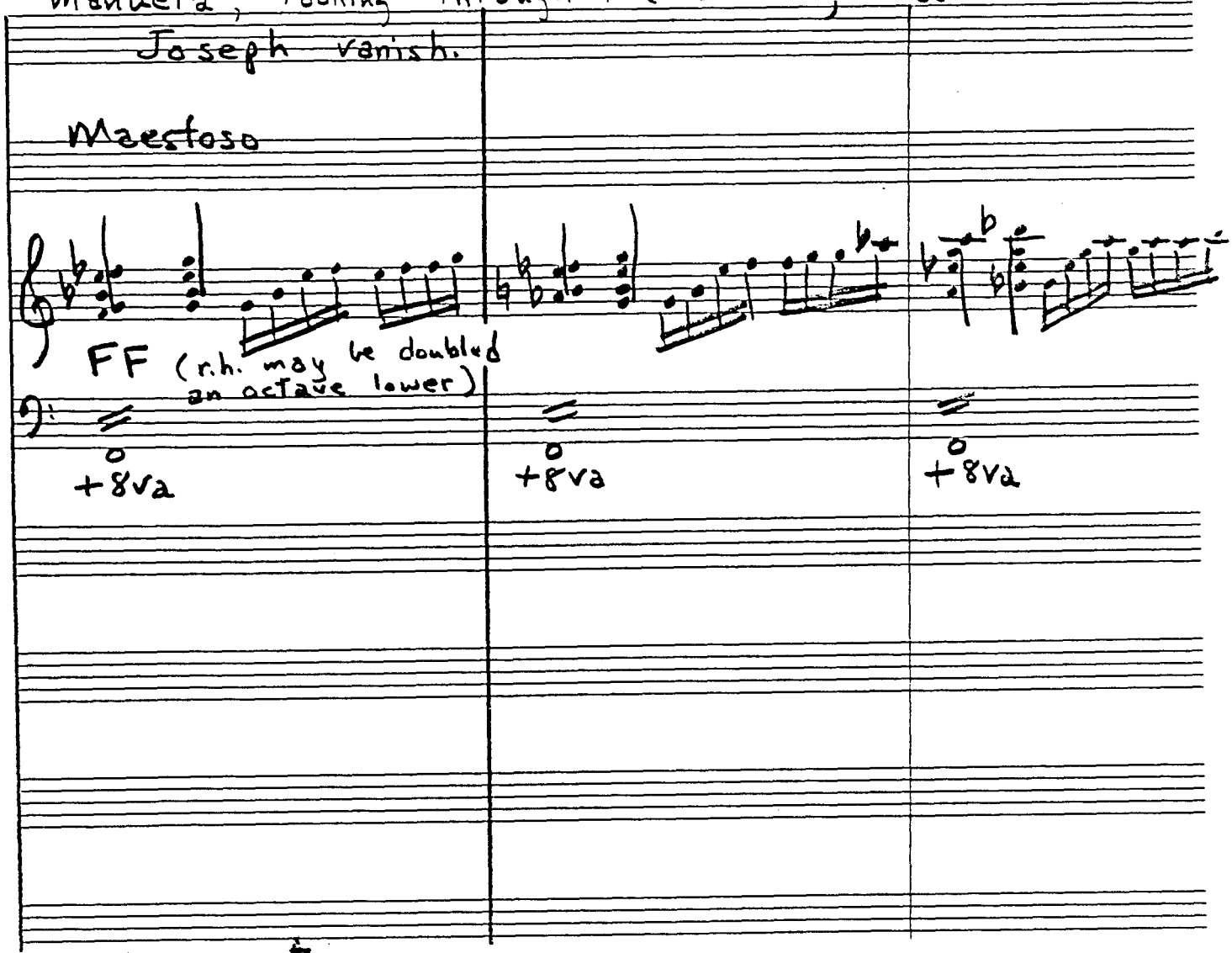
Maestoso



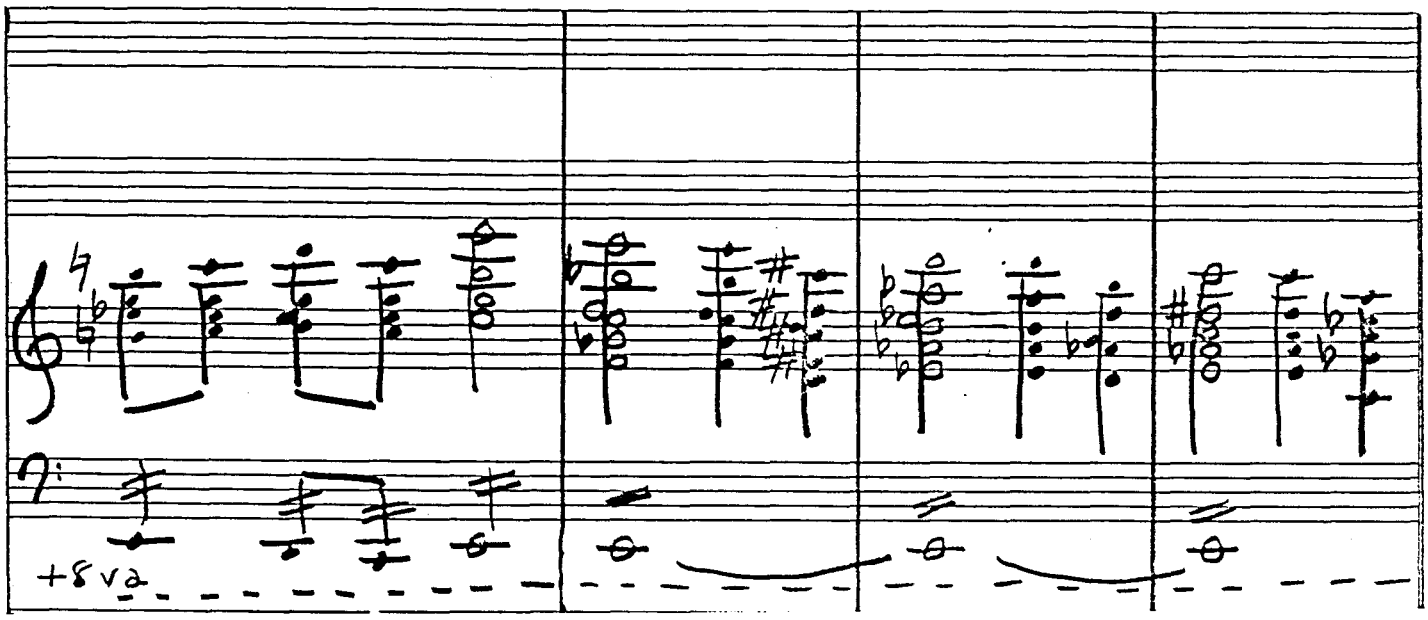
193

Manuela, looking through the window, sees Joseph vanish.

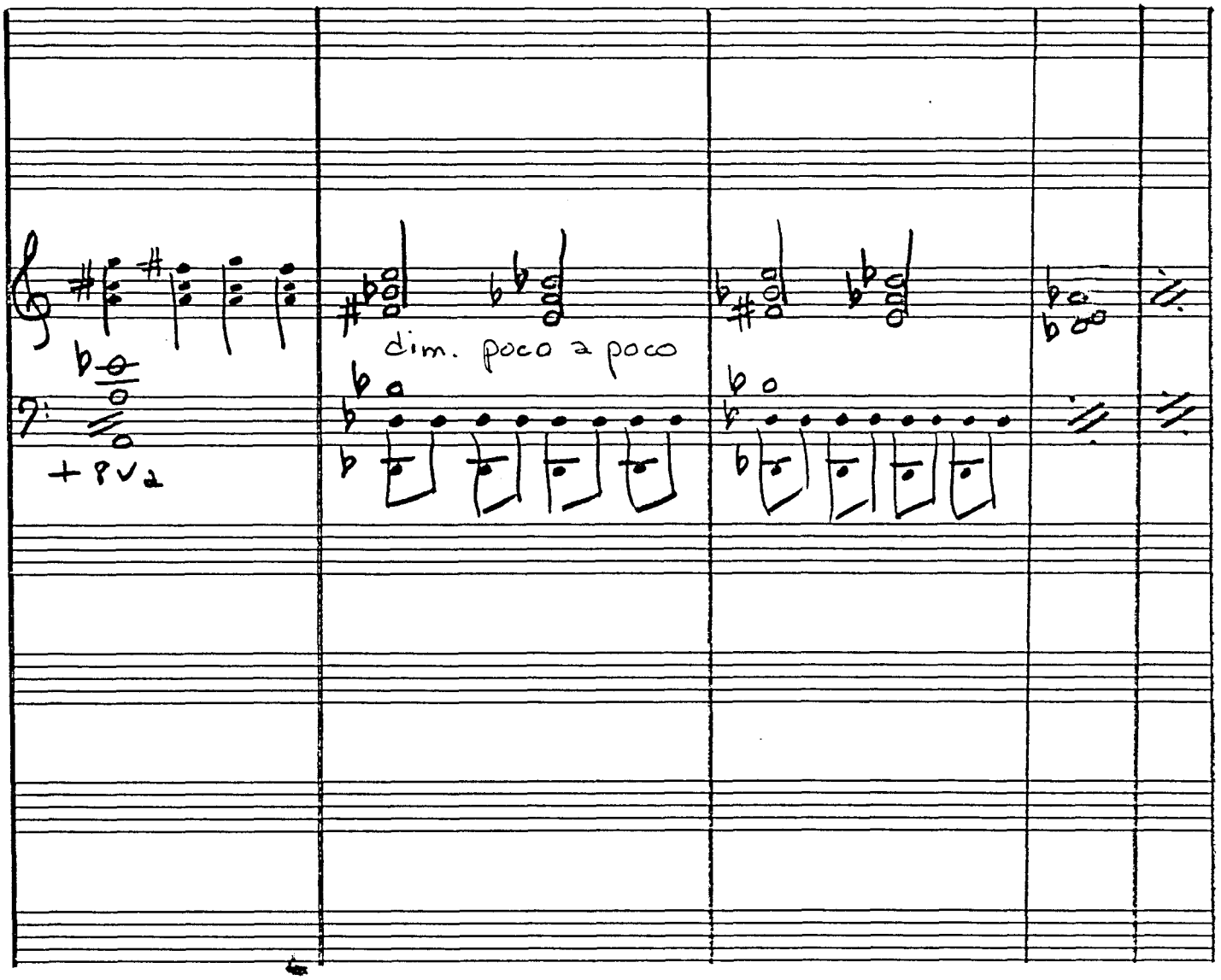
Maestoso



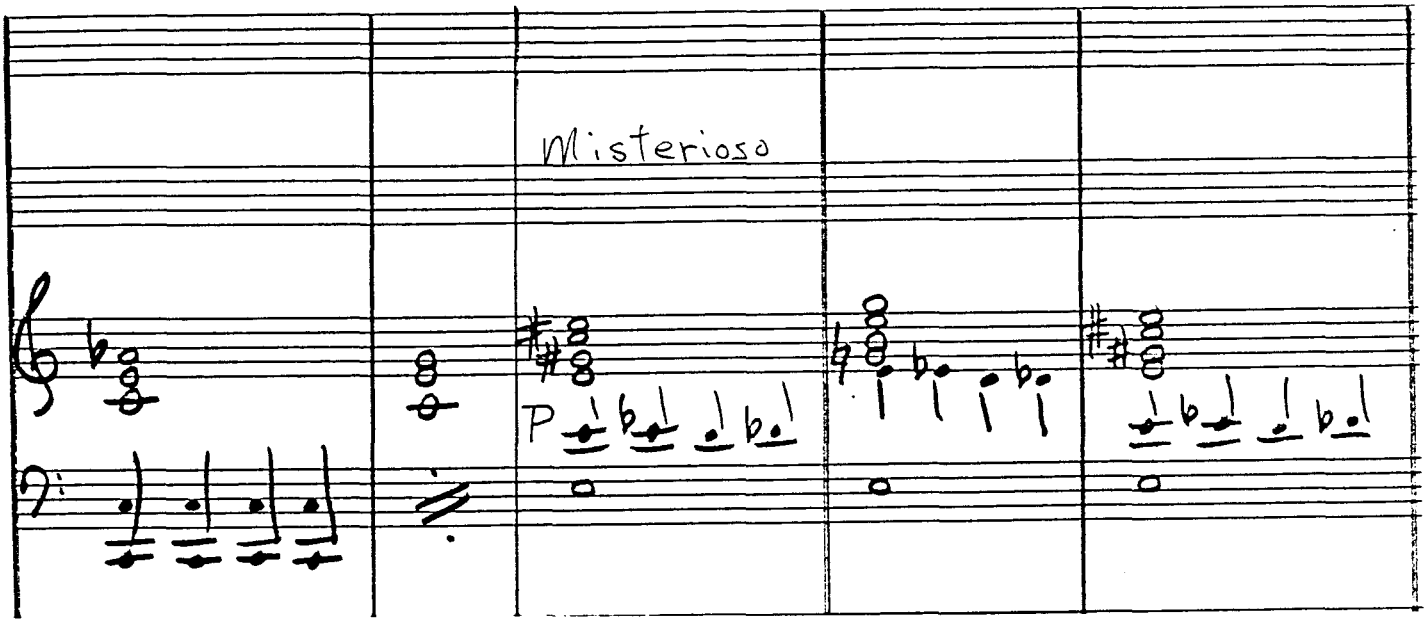
194



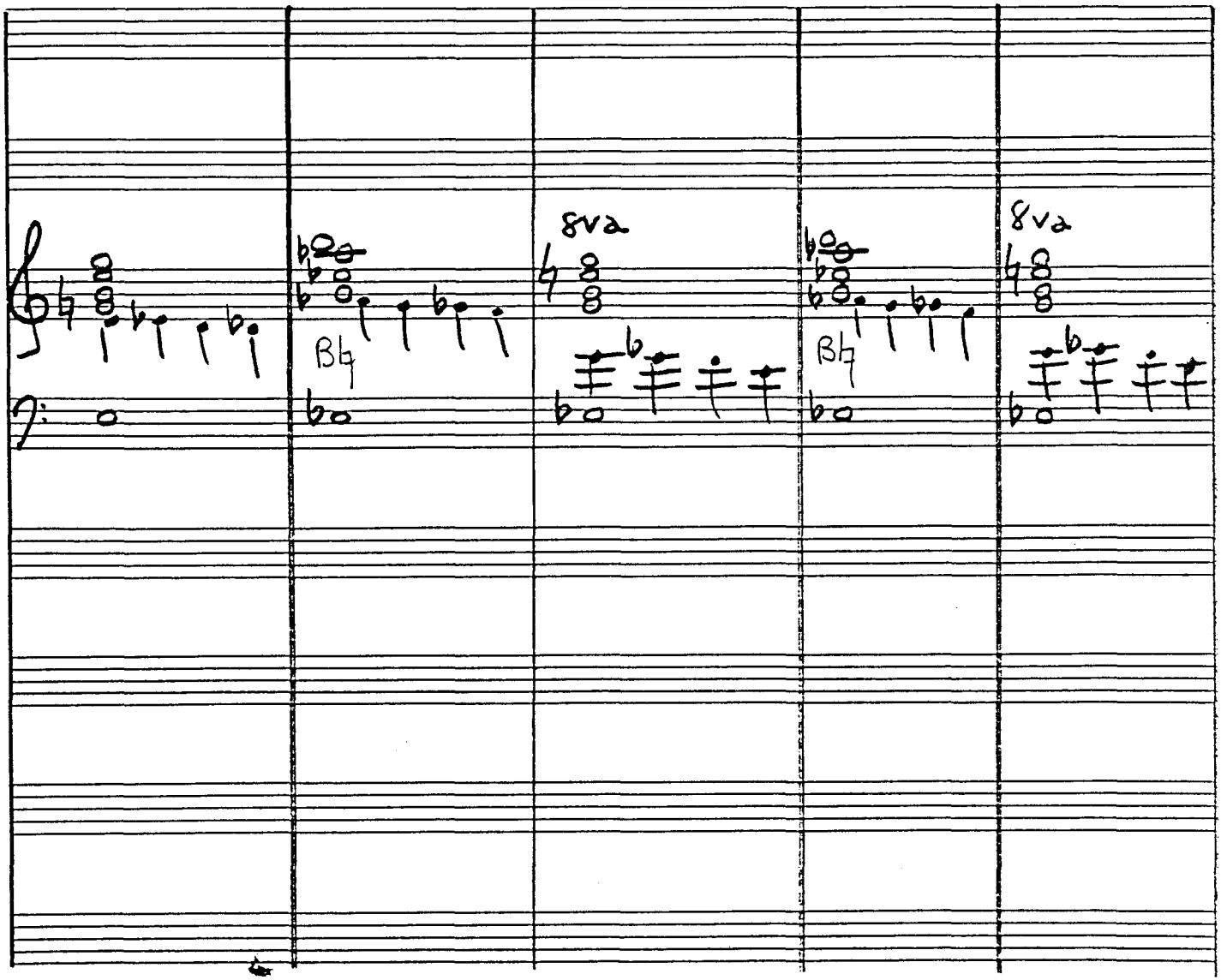
195



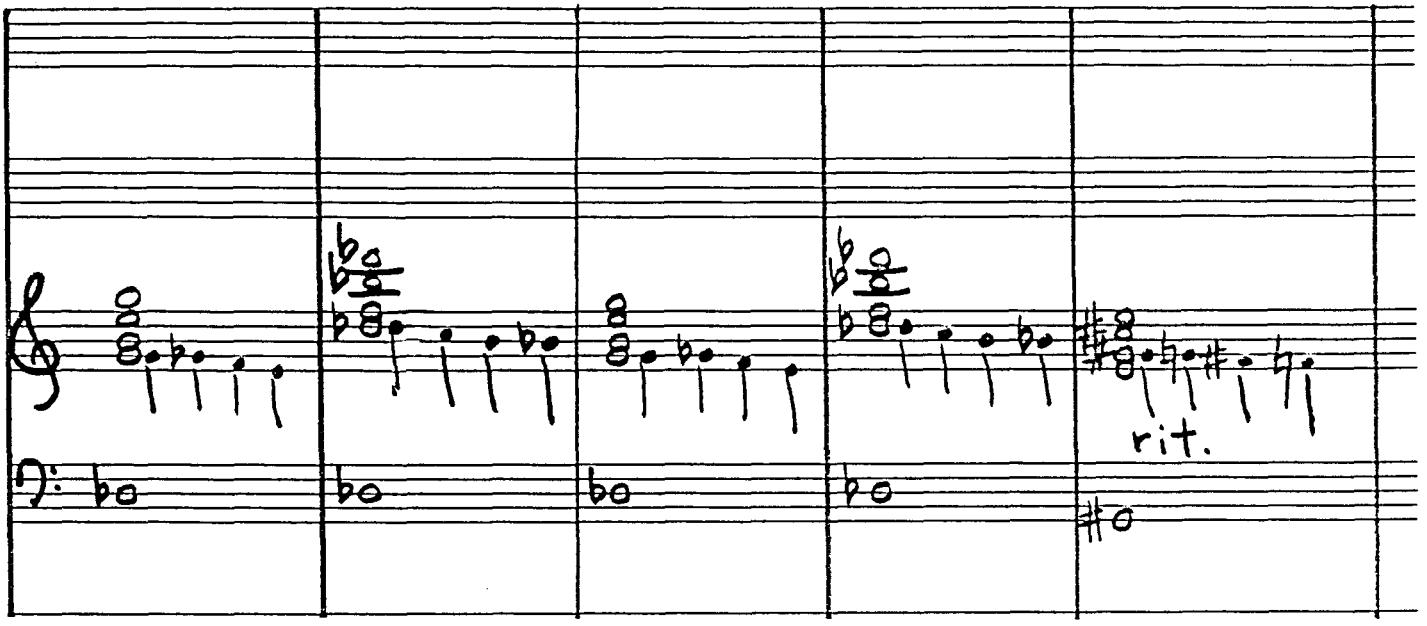
196



197

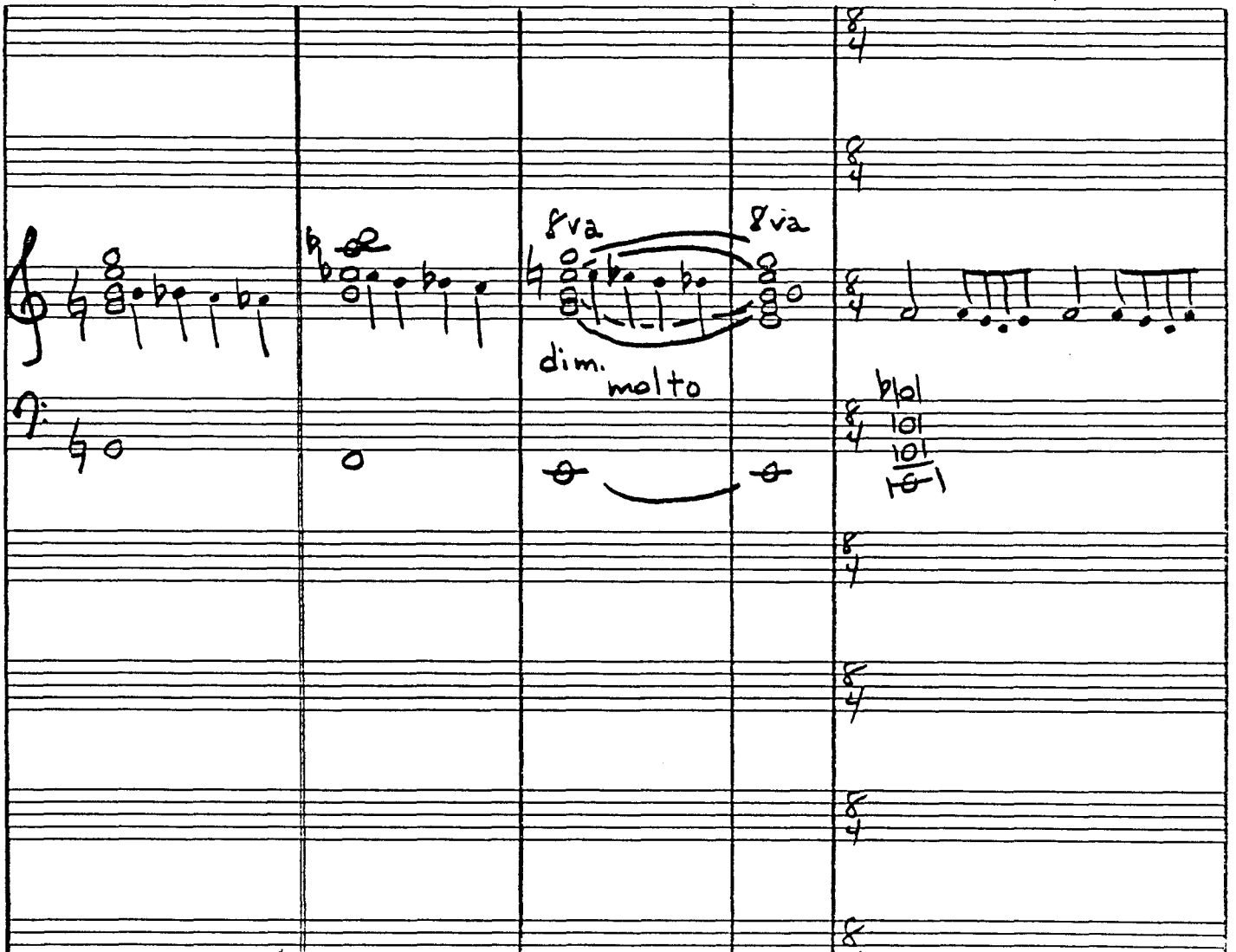


198



199

A tempo



200

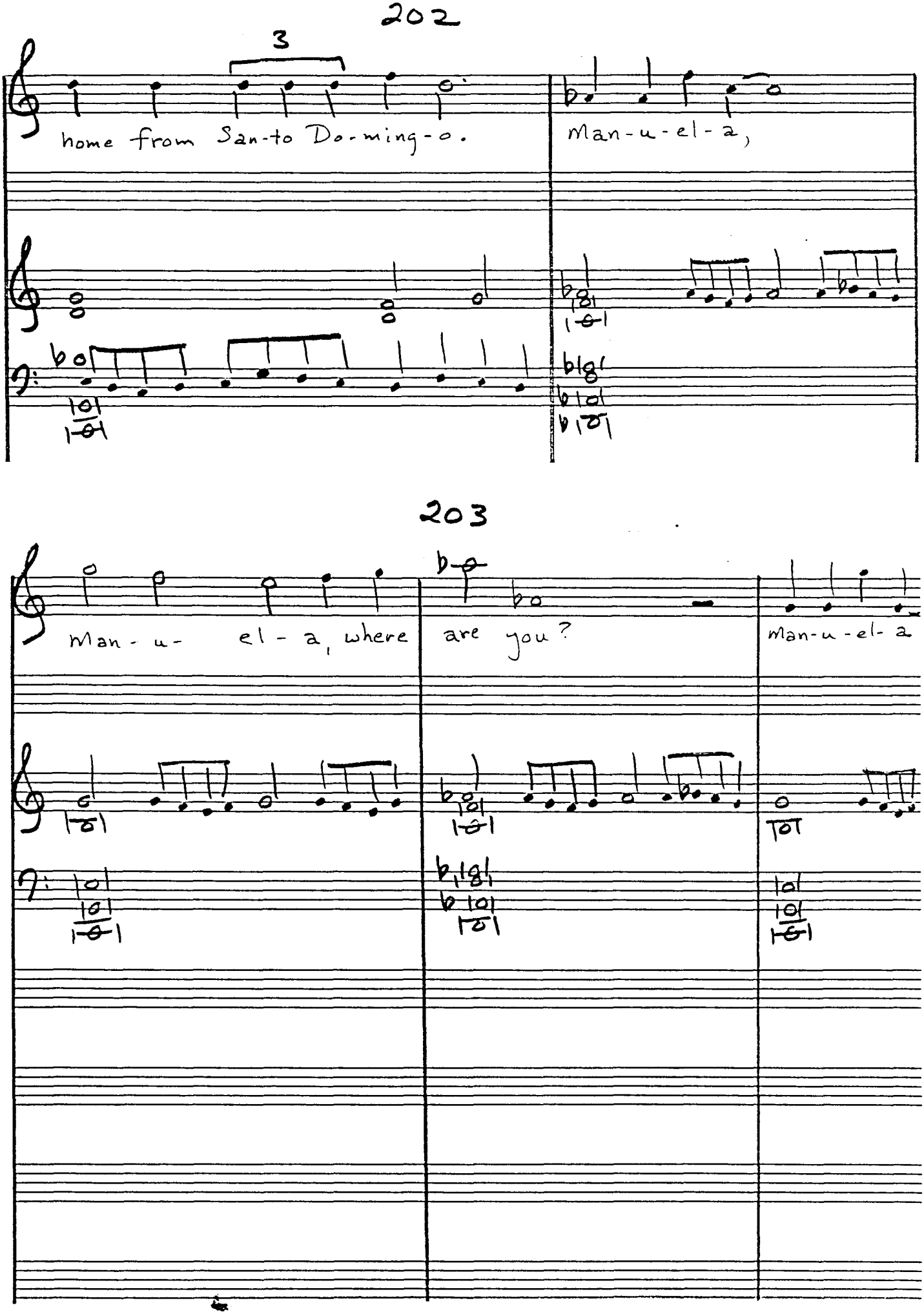
Sister Blandina:
(off stage)

Man- u- el- a,

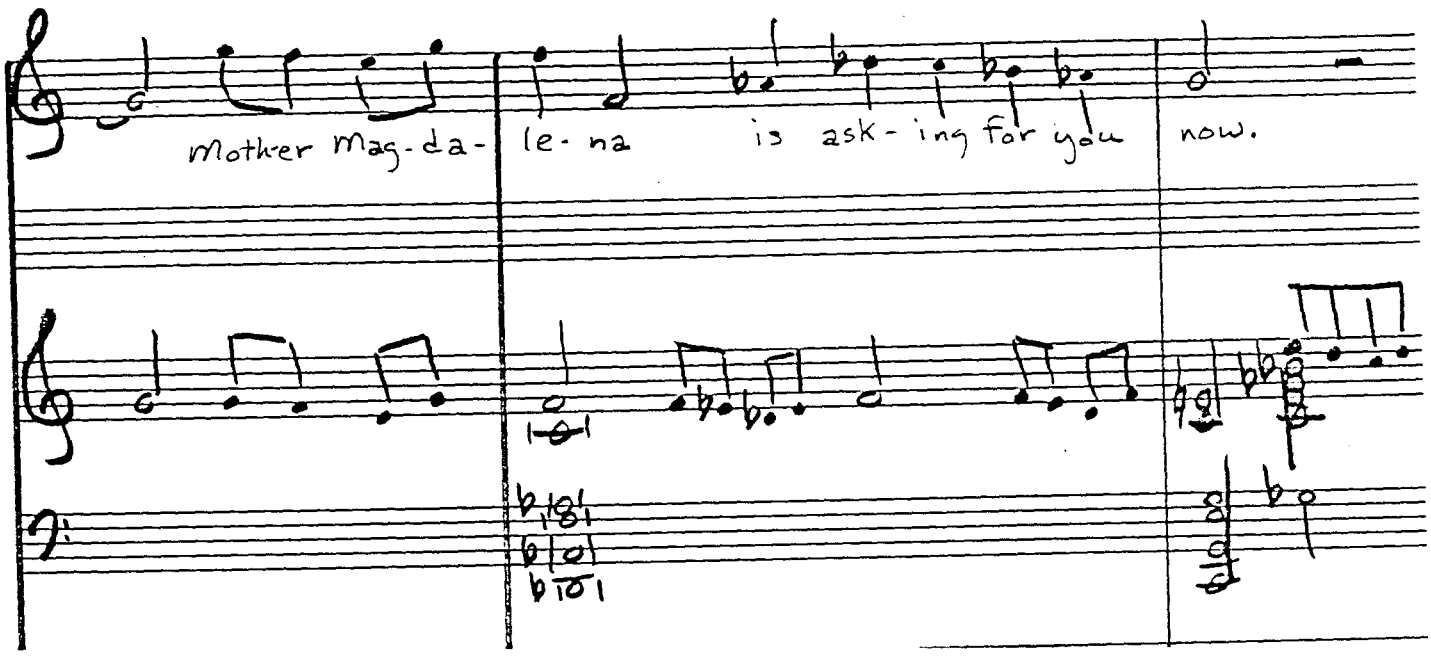
201

Man- u- el- a,

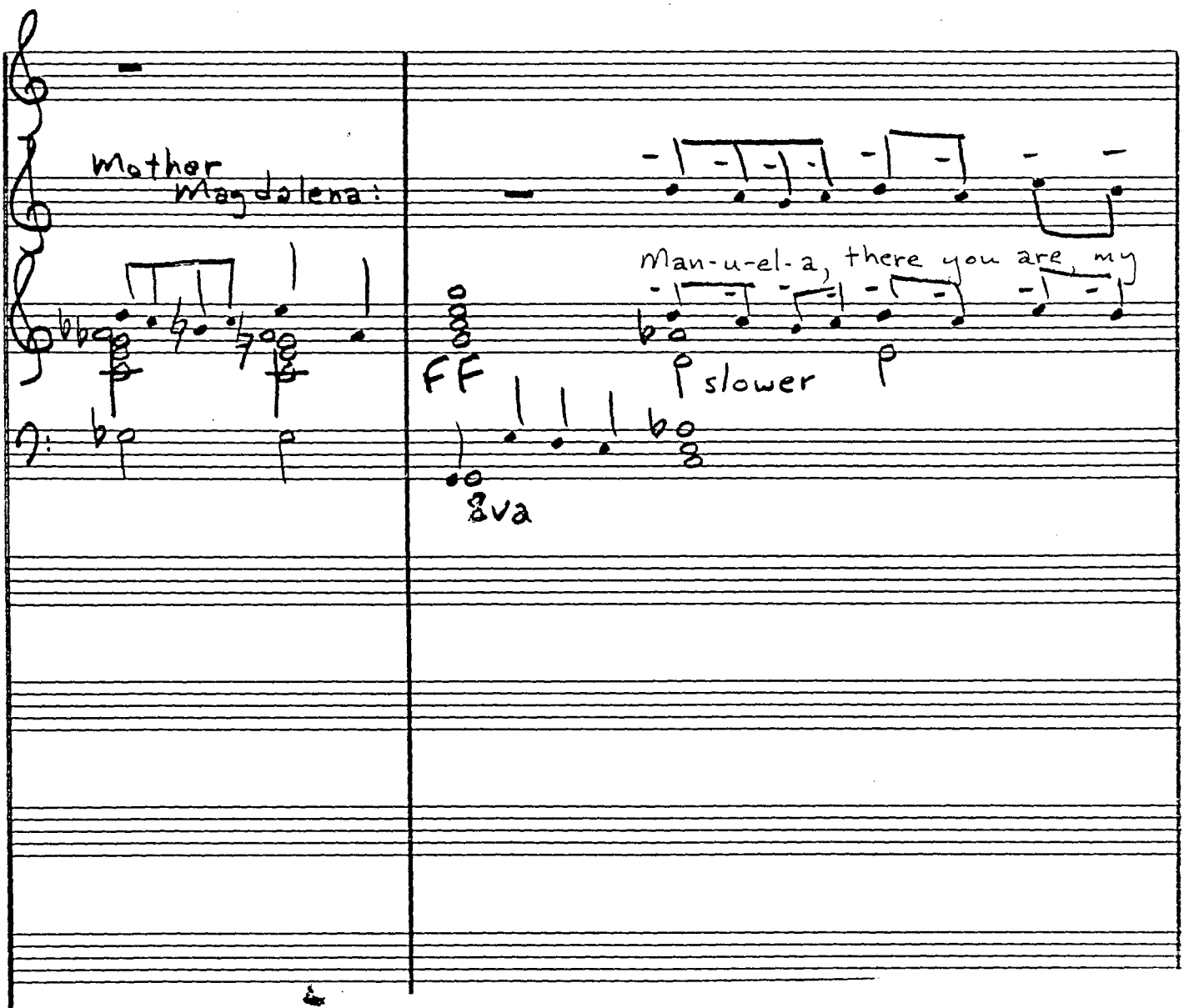
Moth-er Mag-da-le-na is


202
3
home from San-to Do-ming-o.
Man-u-el-a,
203
Man- u- el- a, where
are you?
man-u-el- a

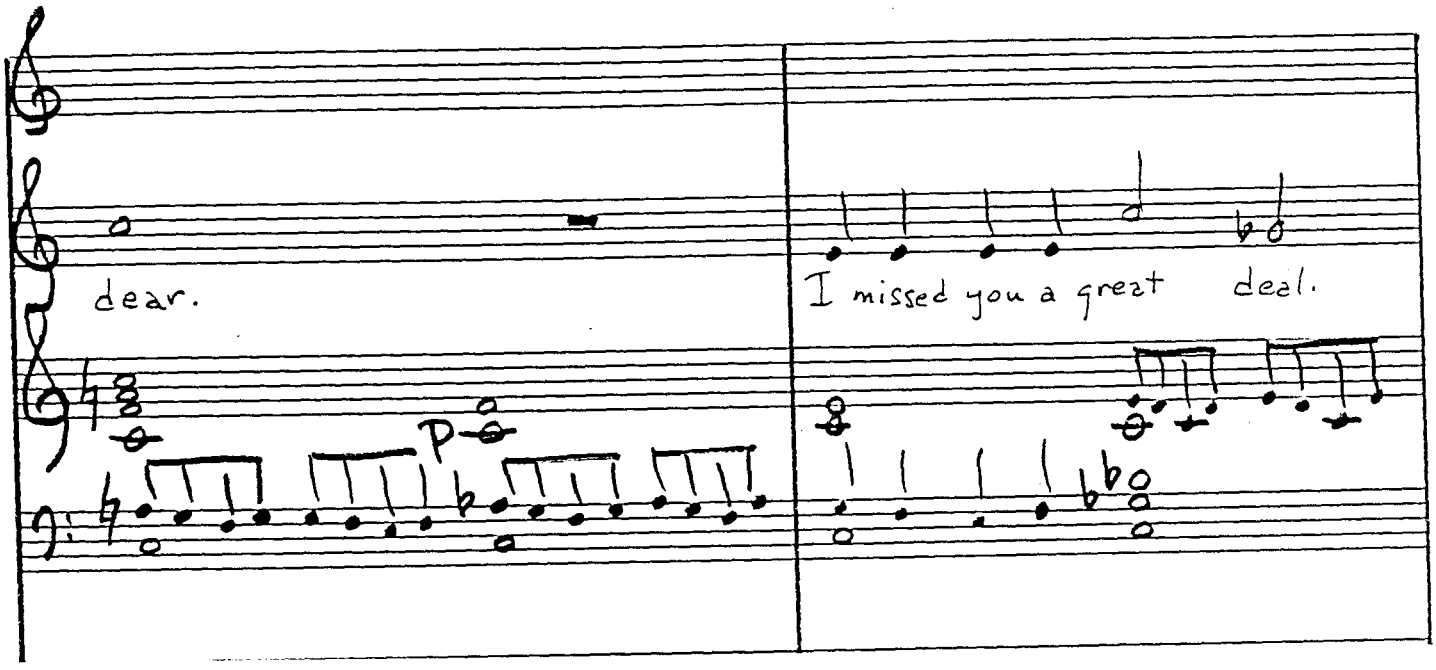
204


Mother Mag-da-
le-na
is ask-ing for you
now.

205

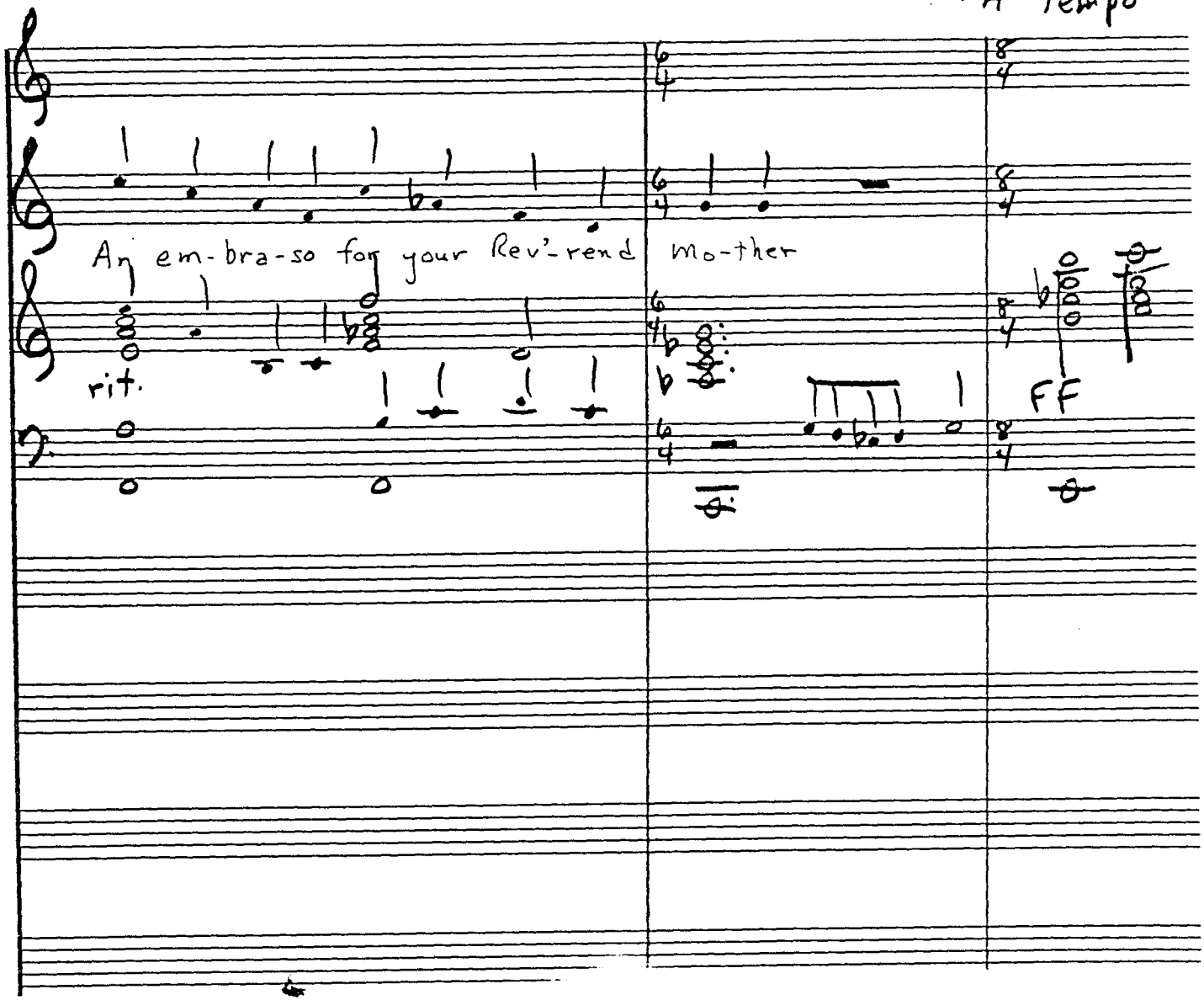

Mother
Magdalena:
Man-u-el-a, there you are, my
FF
slower
8va

206

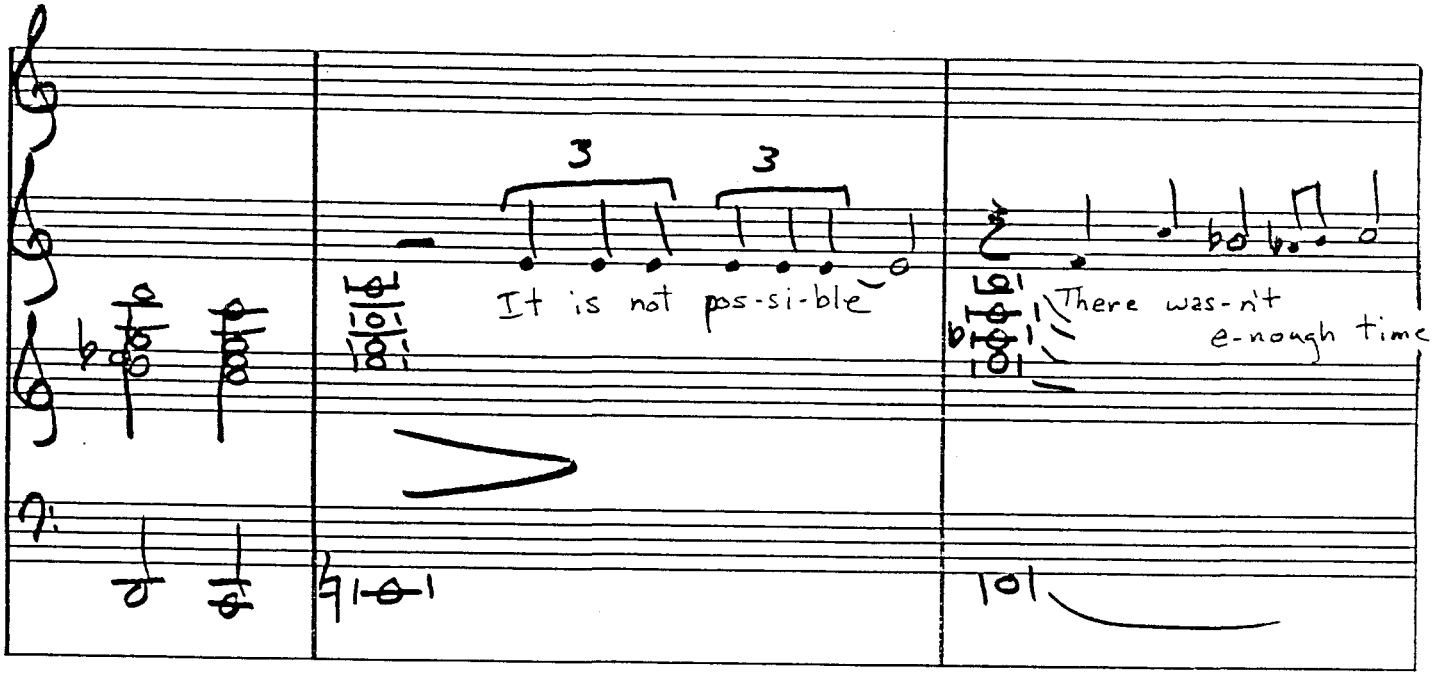


207

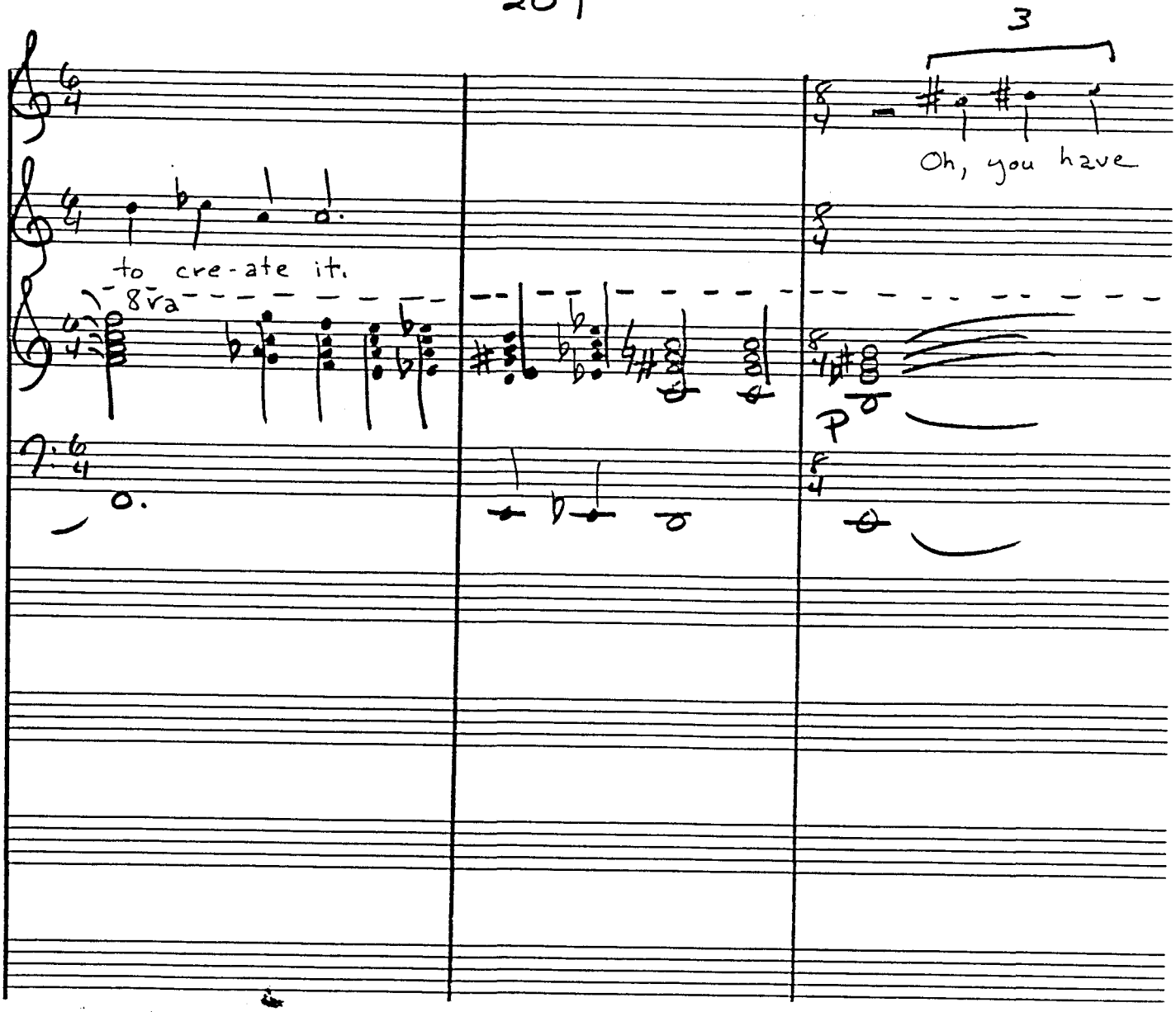
A tempo



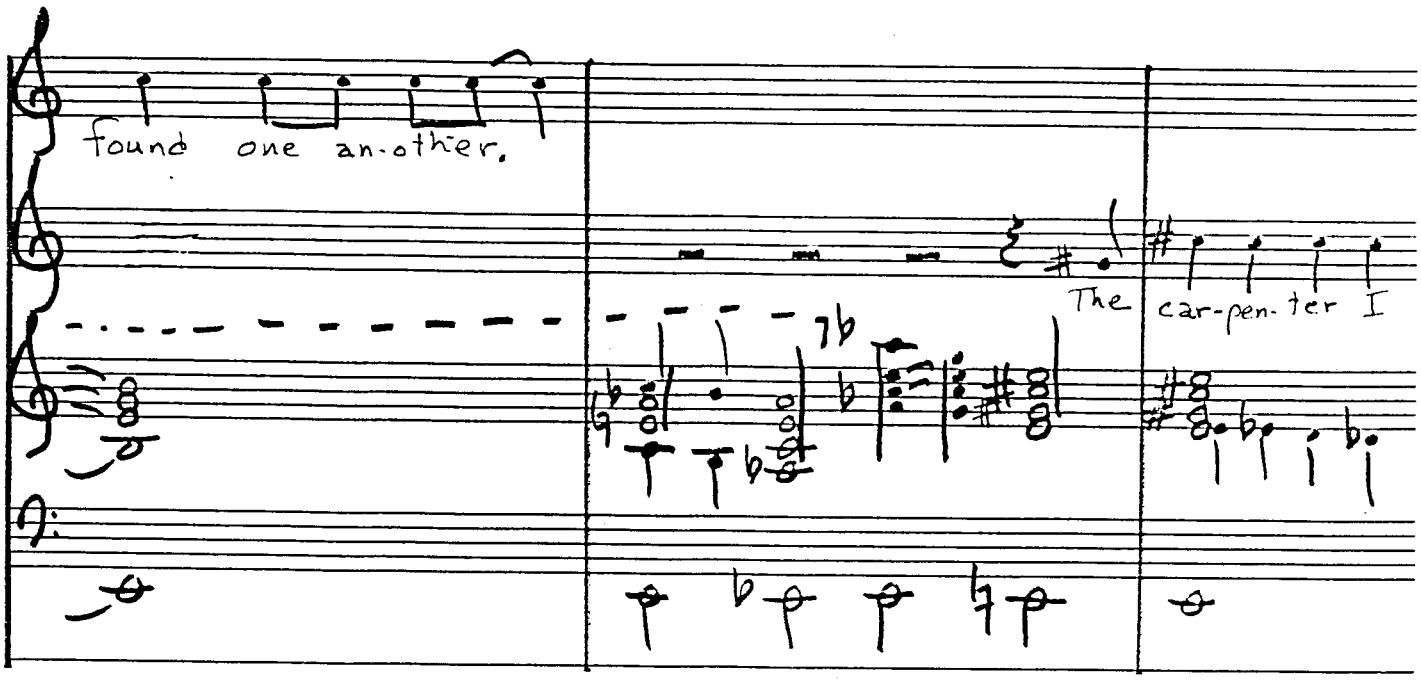
208


3
3
It is not pos-si-ble
There was-n't
e-nough time

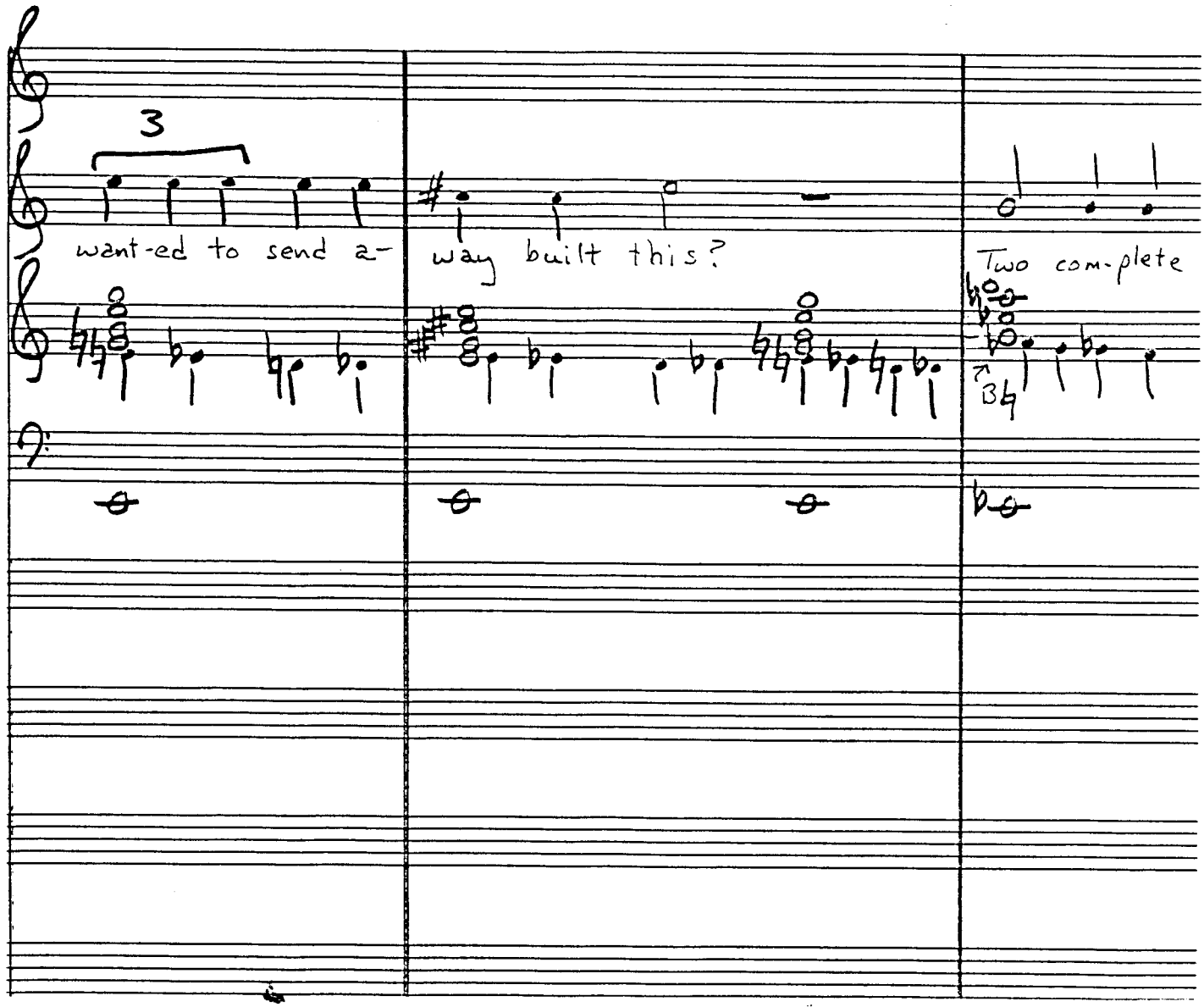
209


3
Oh, you have
to cre-ate it.
8va
p

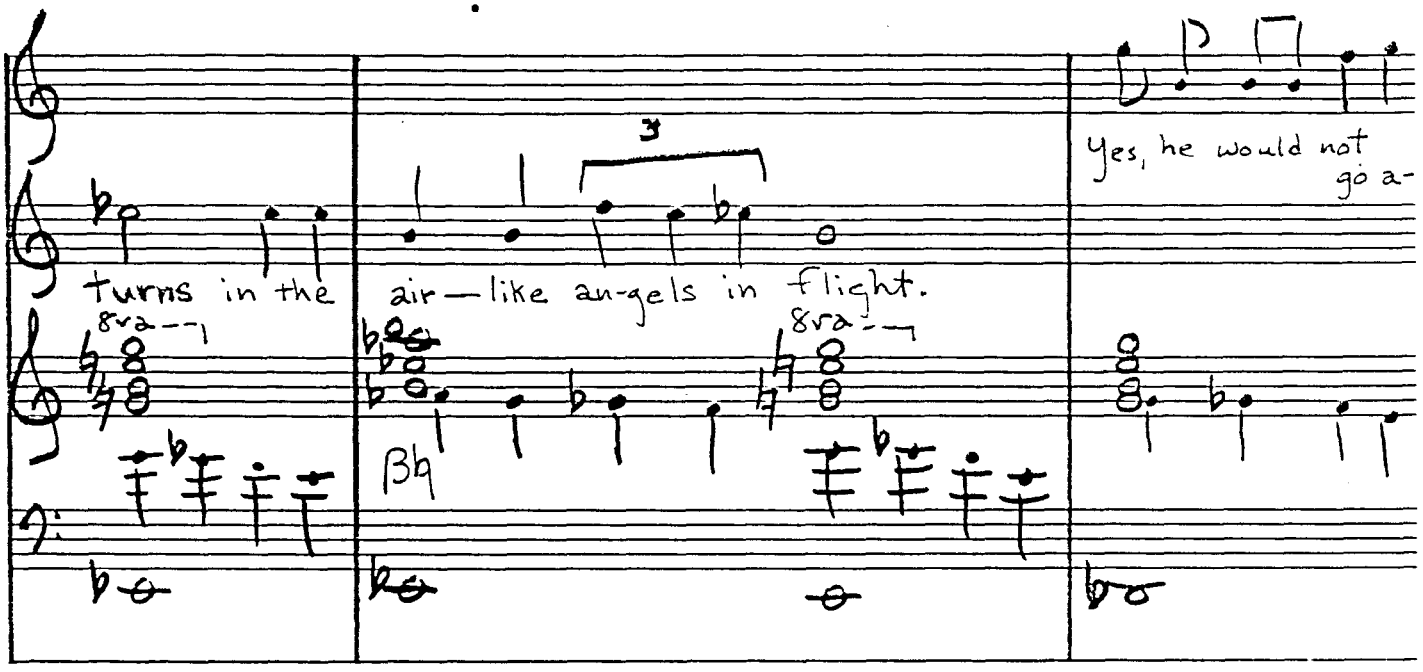
210


found one an-other.
The car-pen-ter I

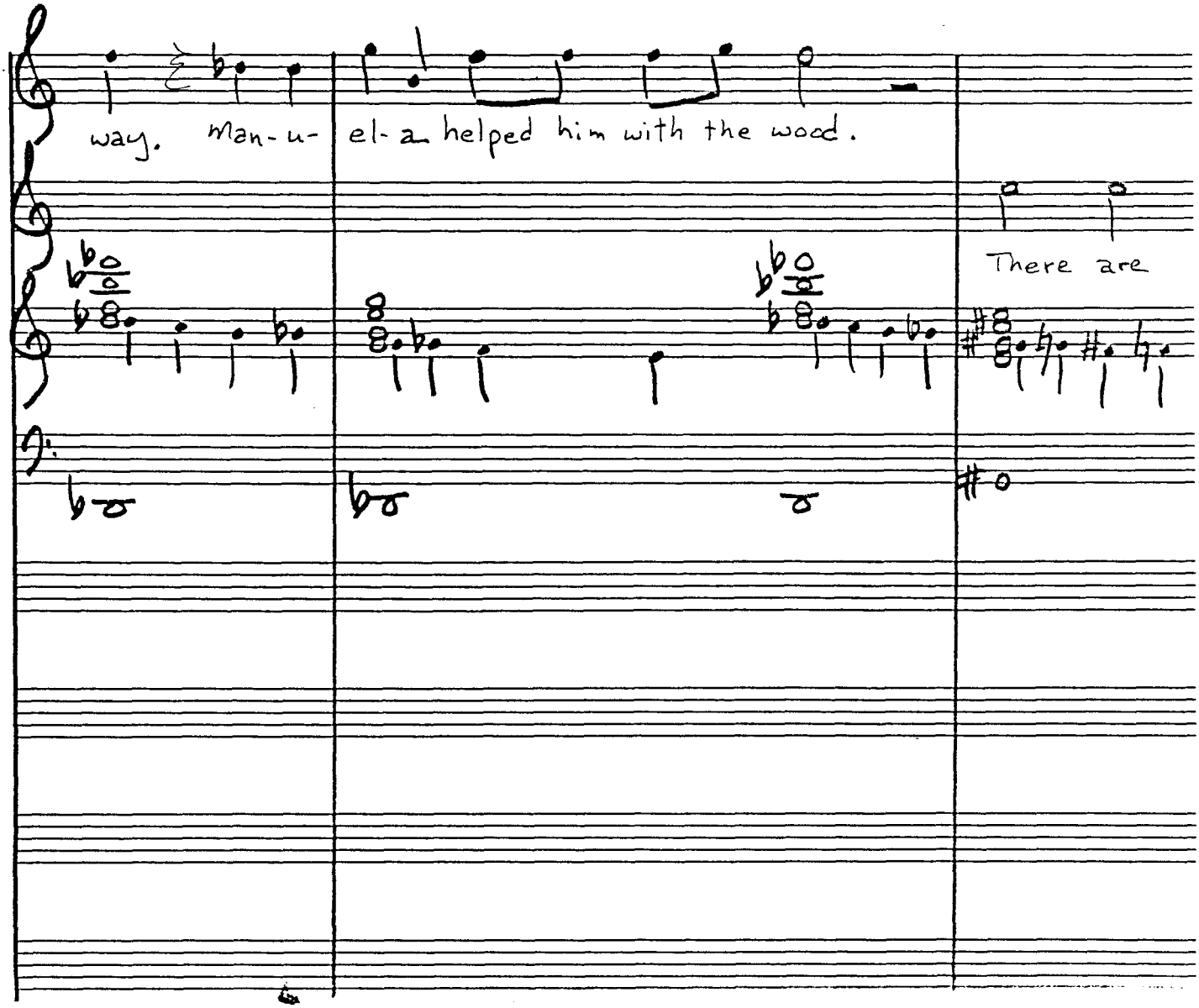
211


3
want-ed to send a-
way built this?
Two com-plete

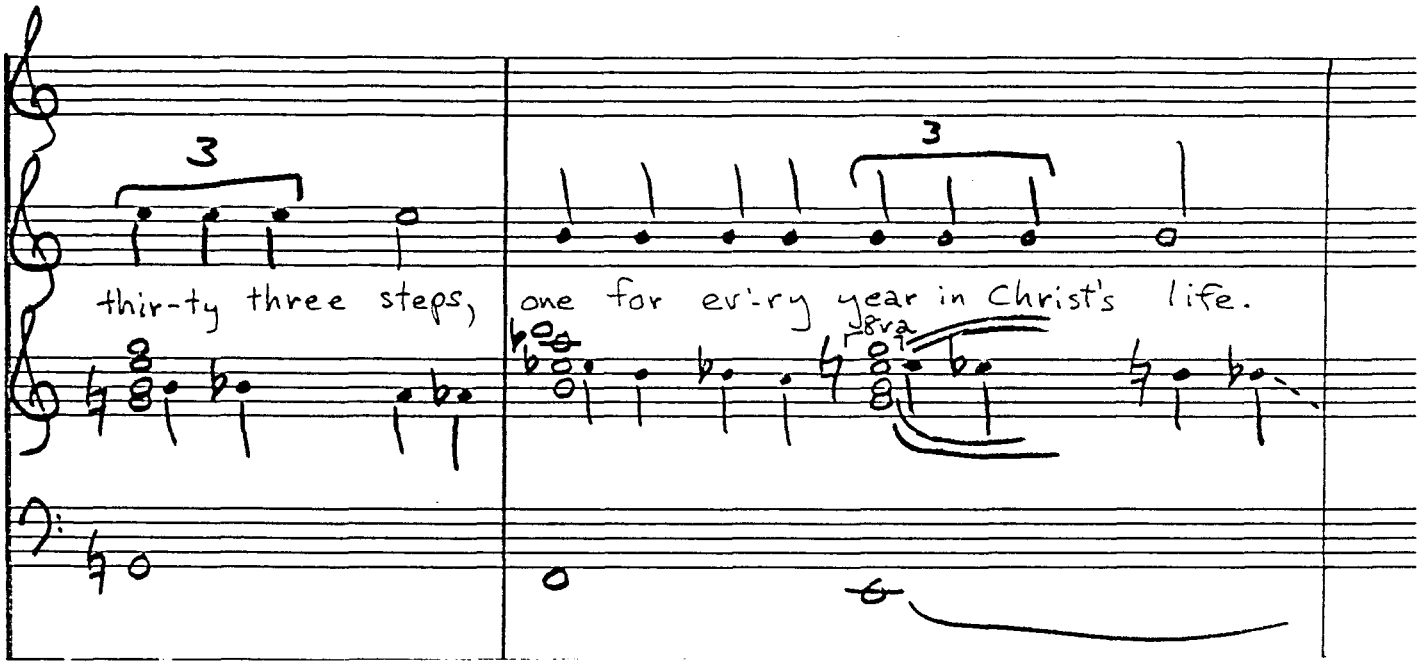
212


turns in the
8va
air — like an-gels in flight.
8va
Yes, he would not
go a-

213

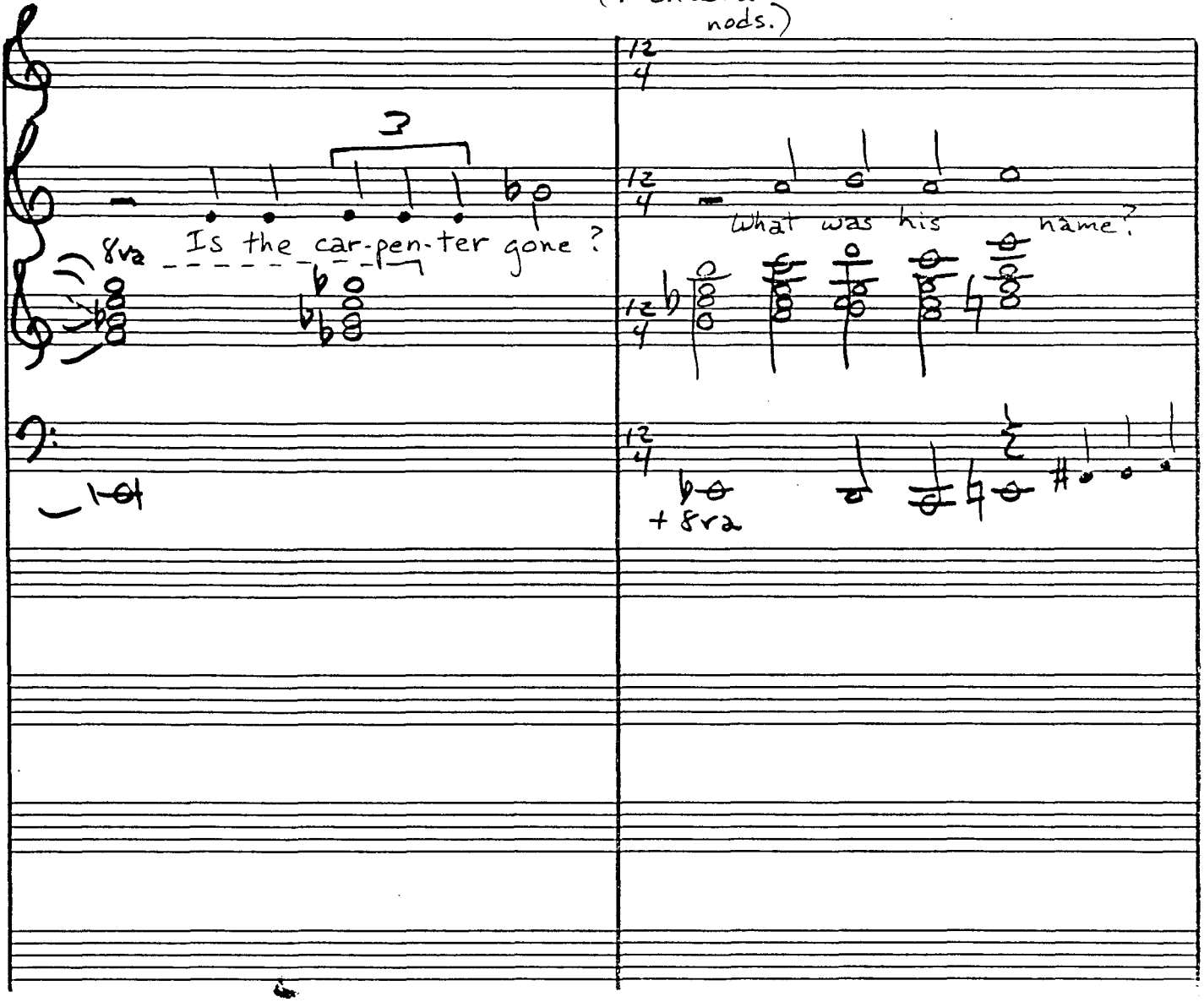

way. Man-u-
el-a helped him with the wood.
There are

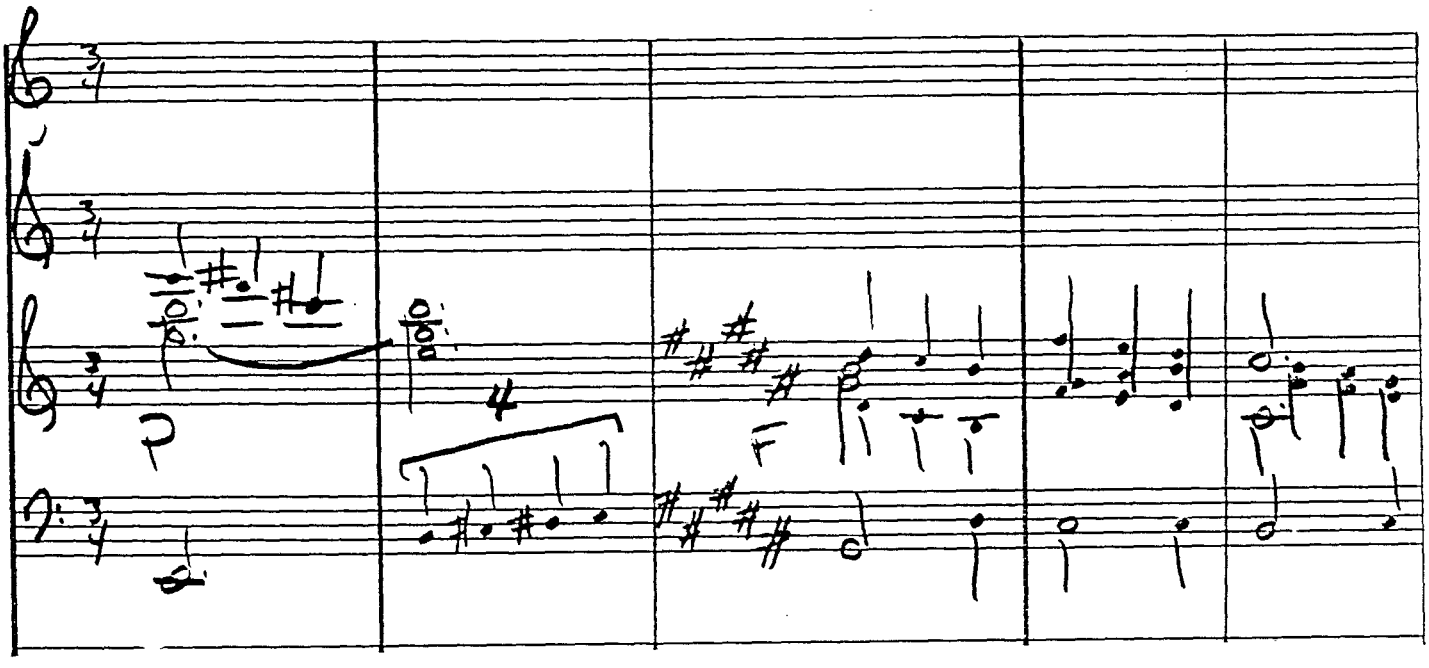
214



215

(Manuela nods.)

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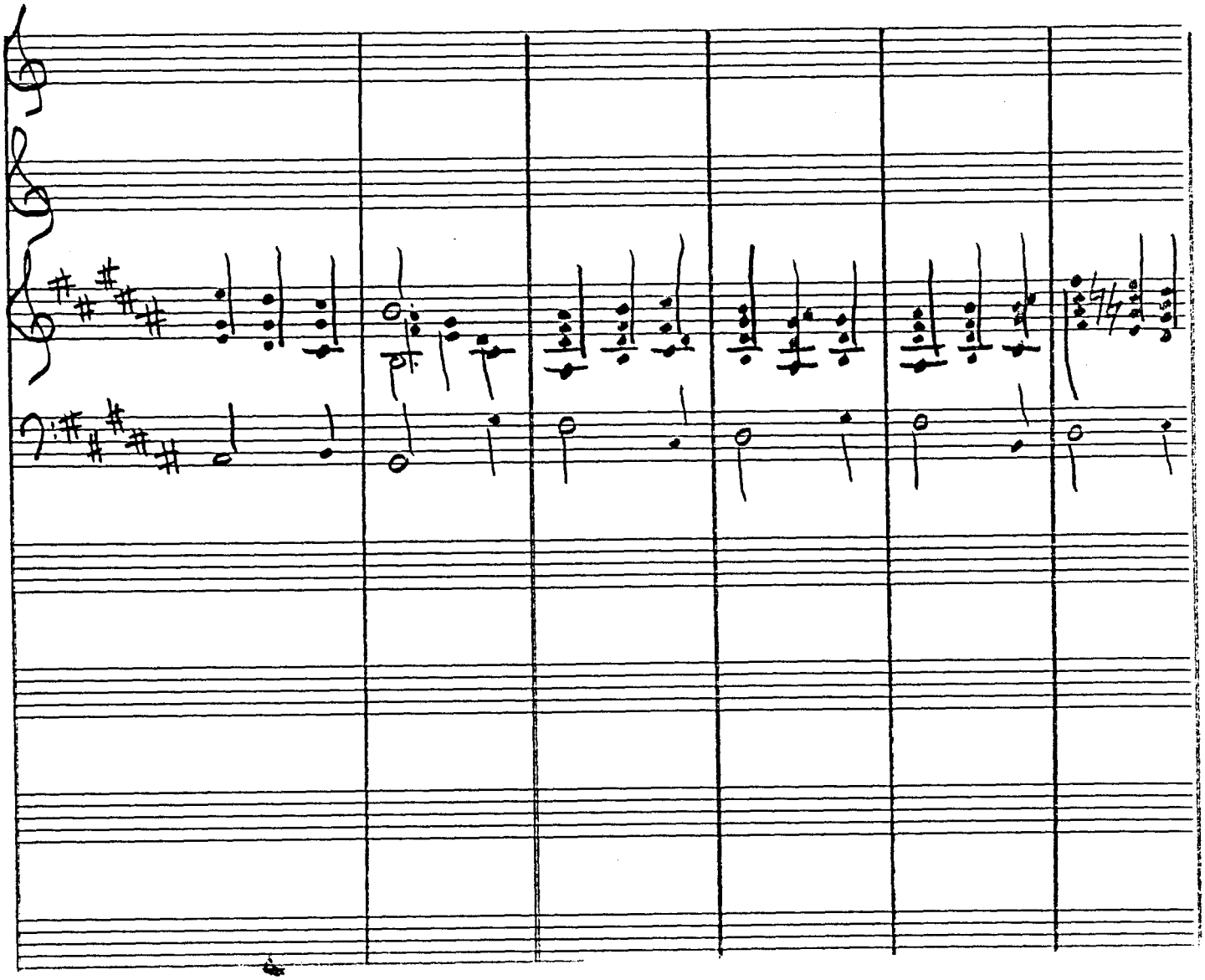


Manuela : (spoken hesitently)

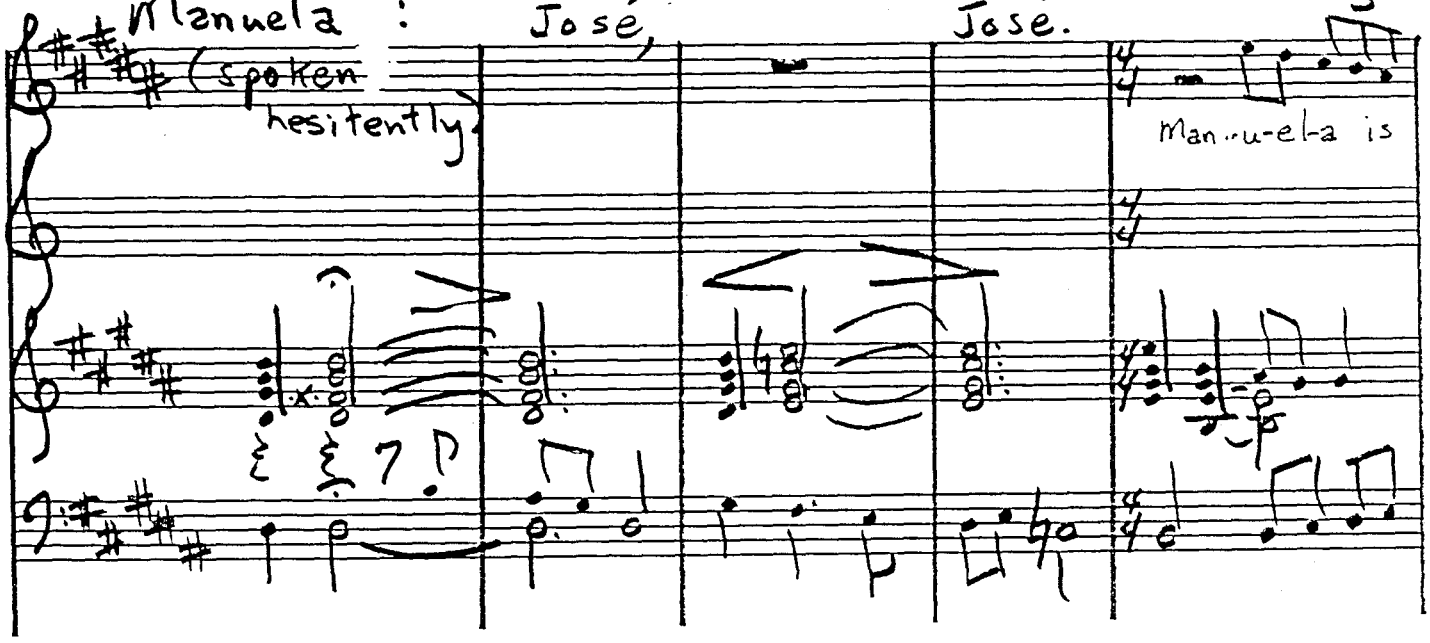
José,

José.

Sister Blandina :

3

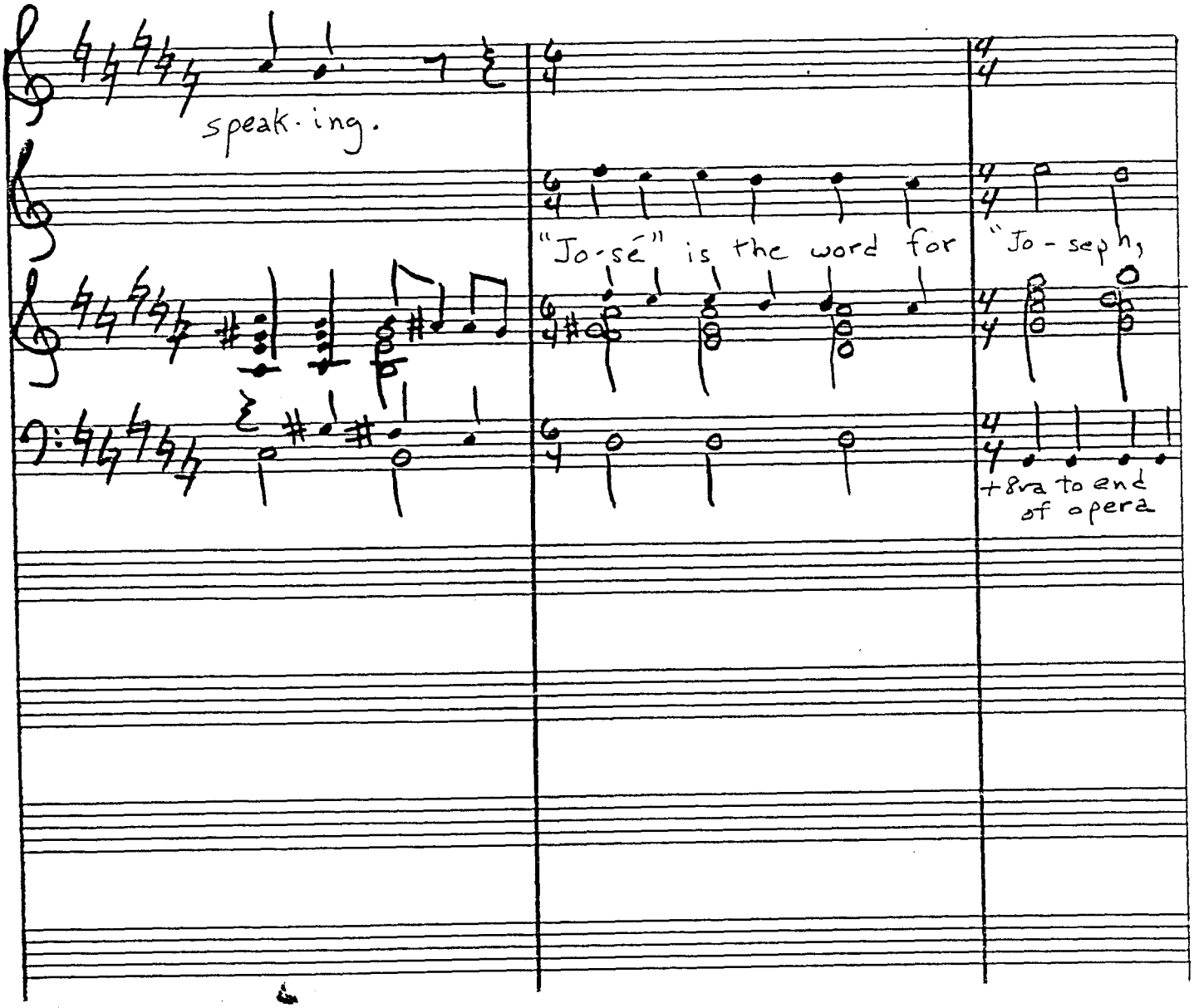
Man-u-el-a is



speak-ing.

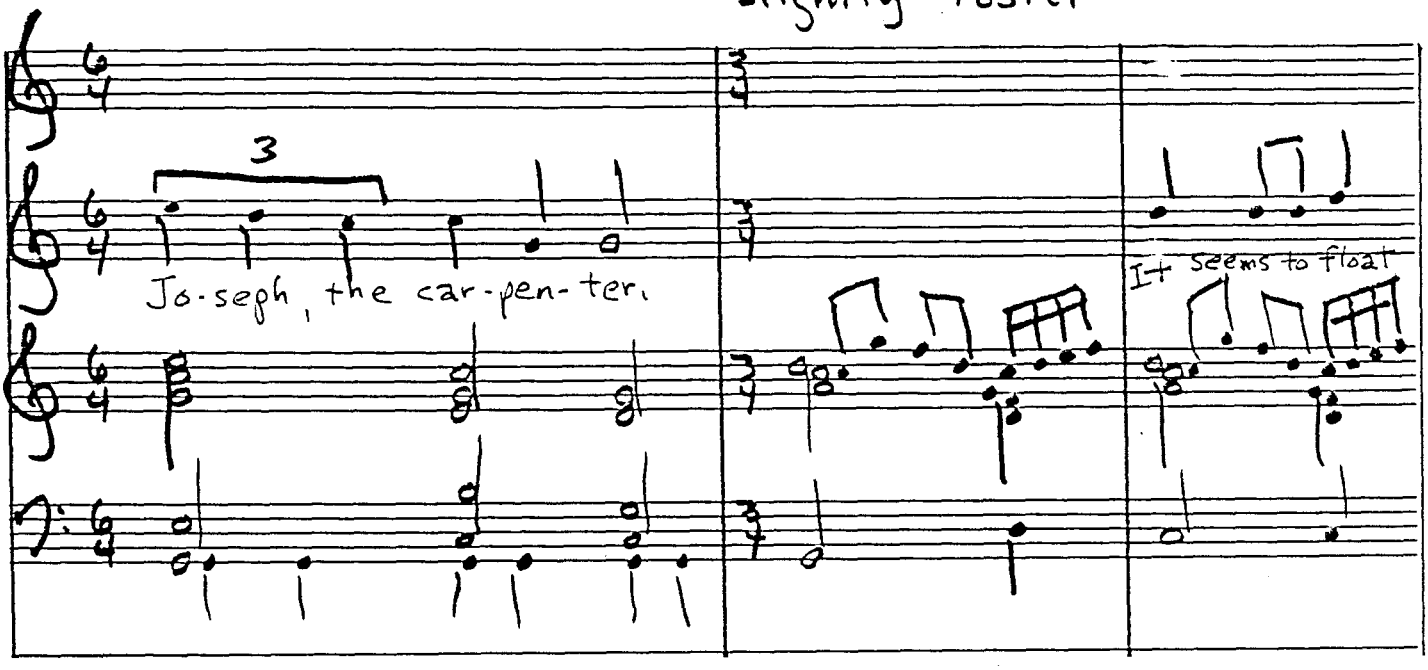
"Jo-sé" is the word for "Jo-seph,

+8va to end of opera



220

slightly faster



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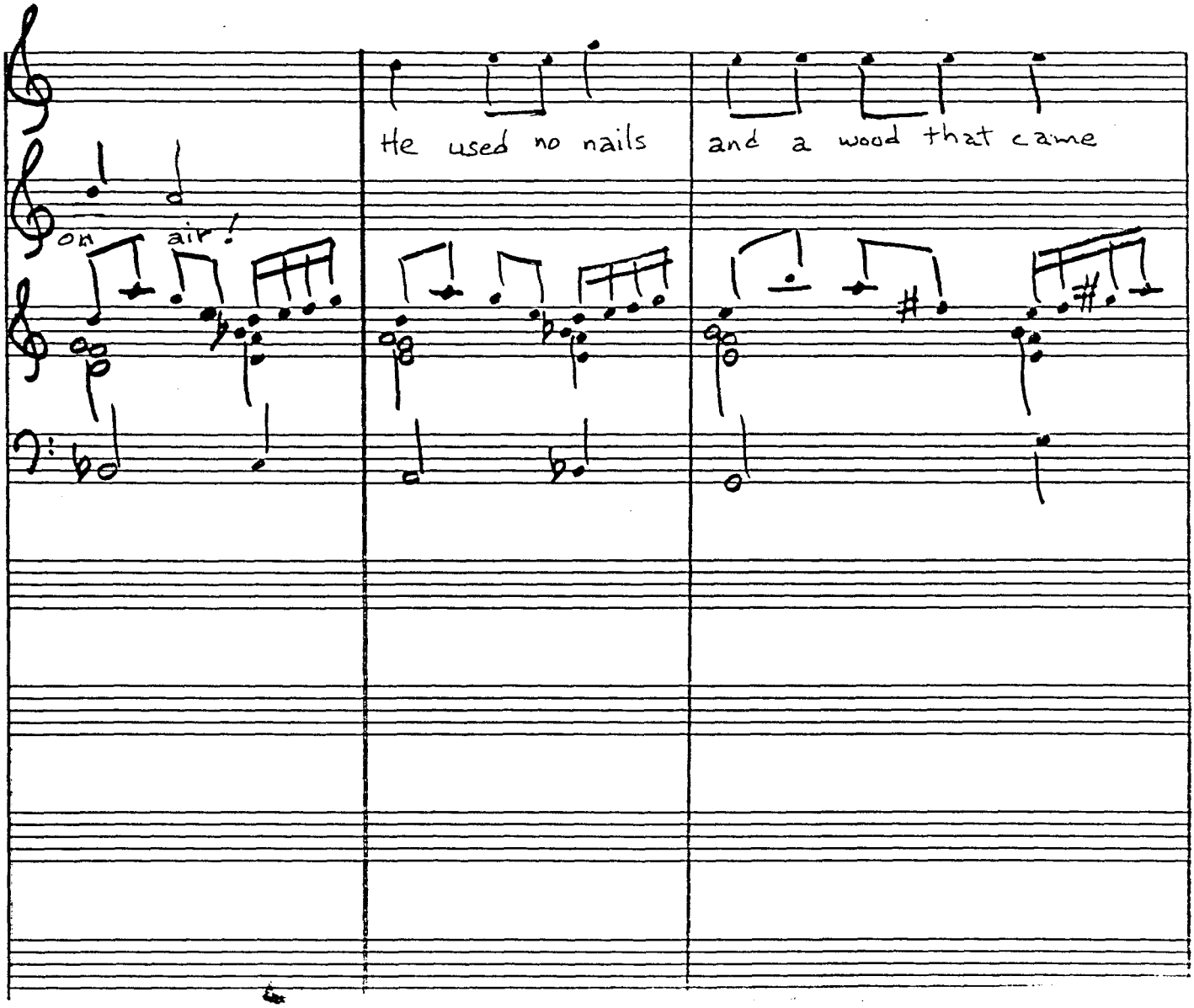
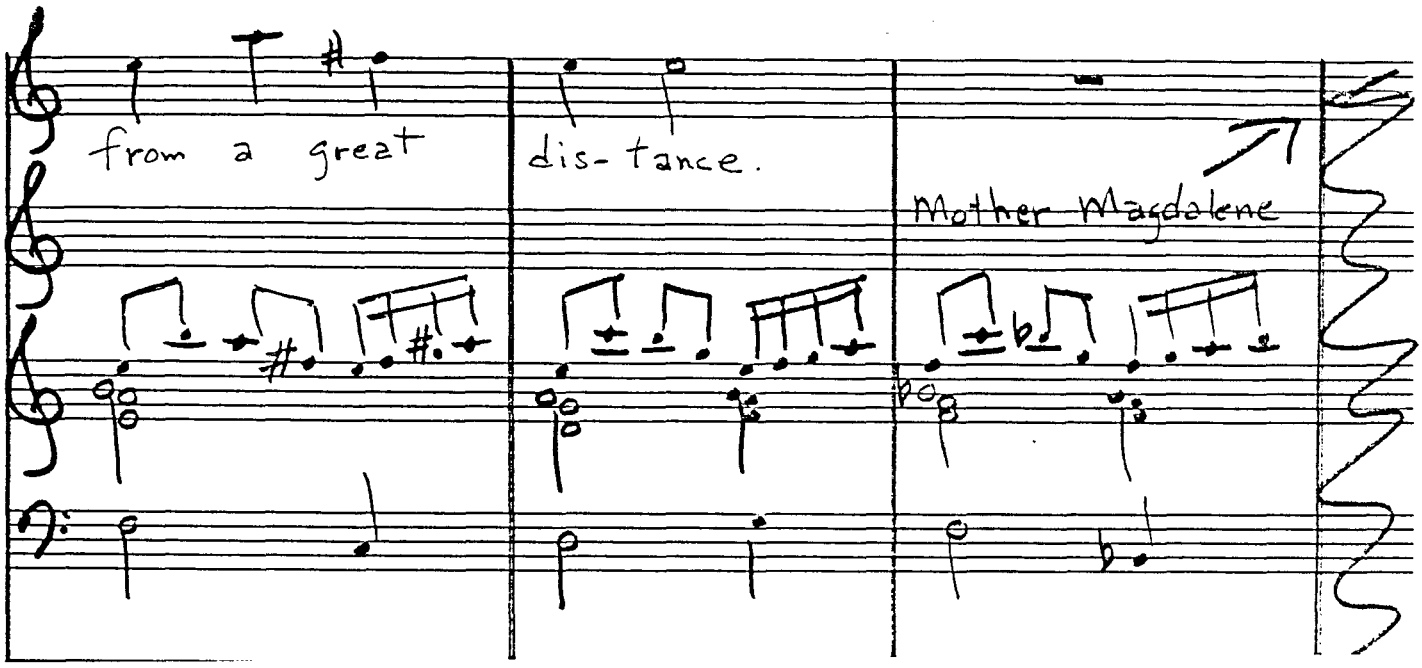
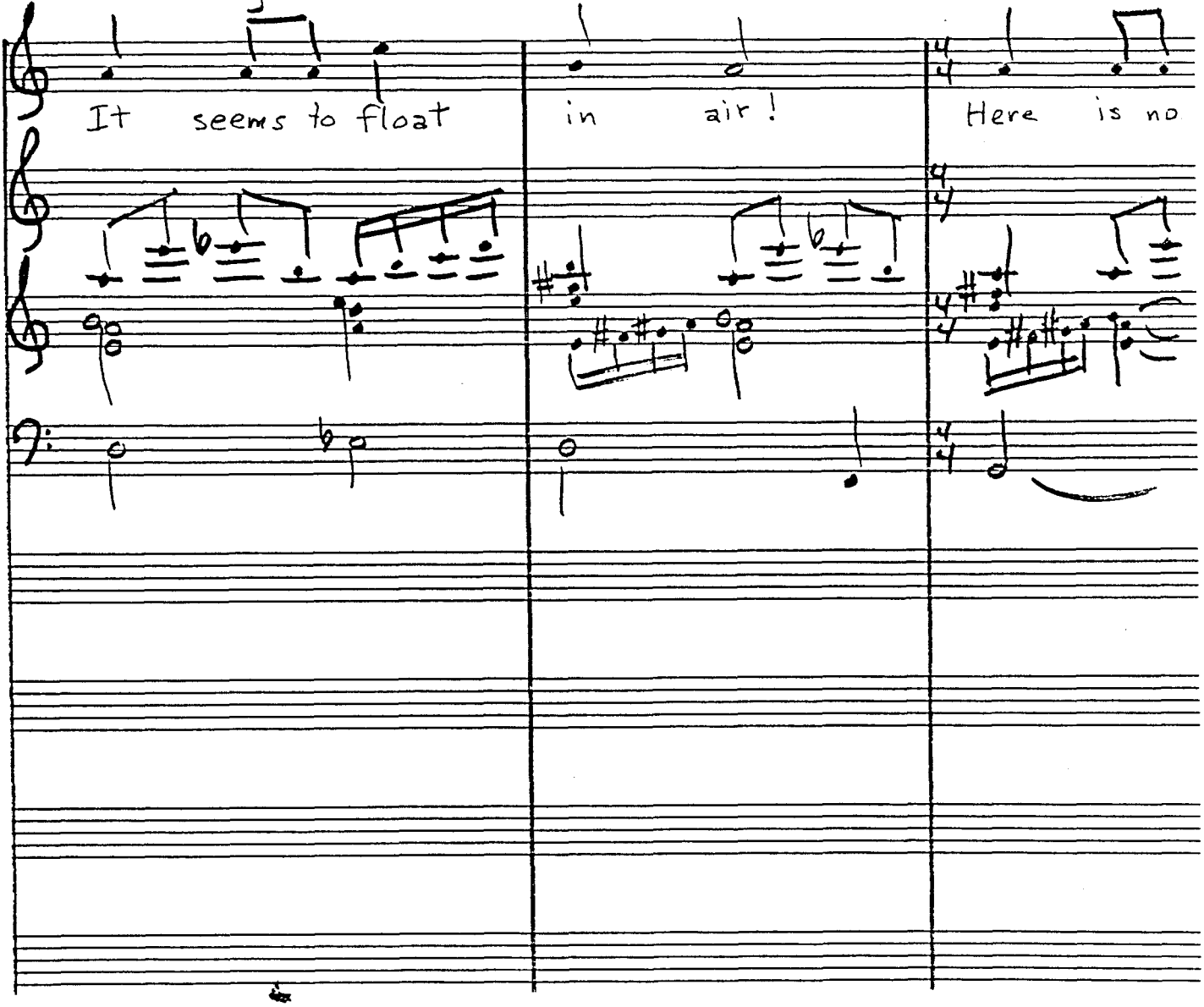




Mother Magdalene:



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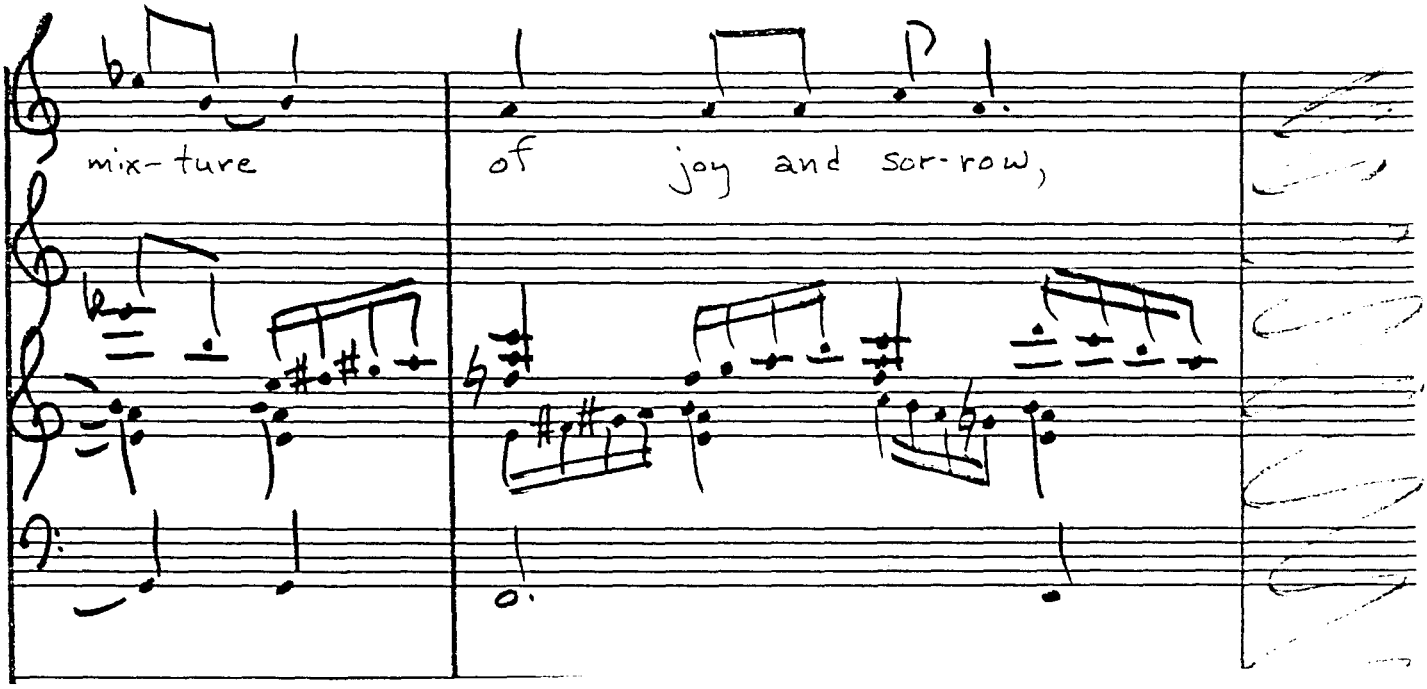

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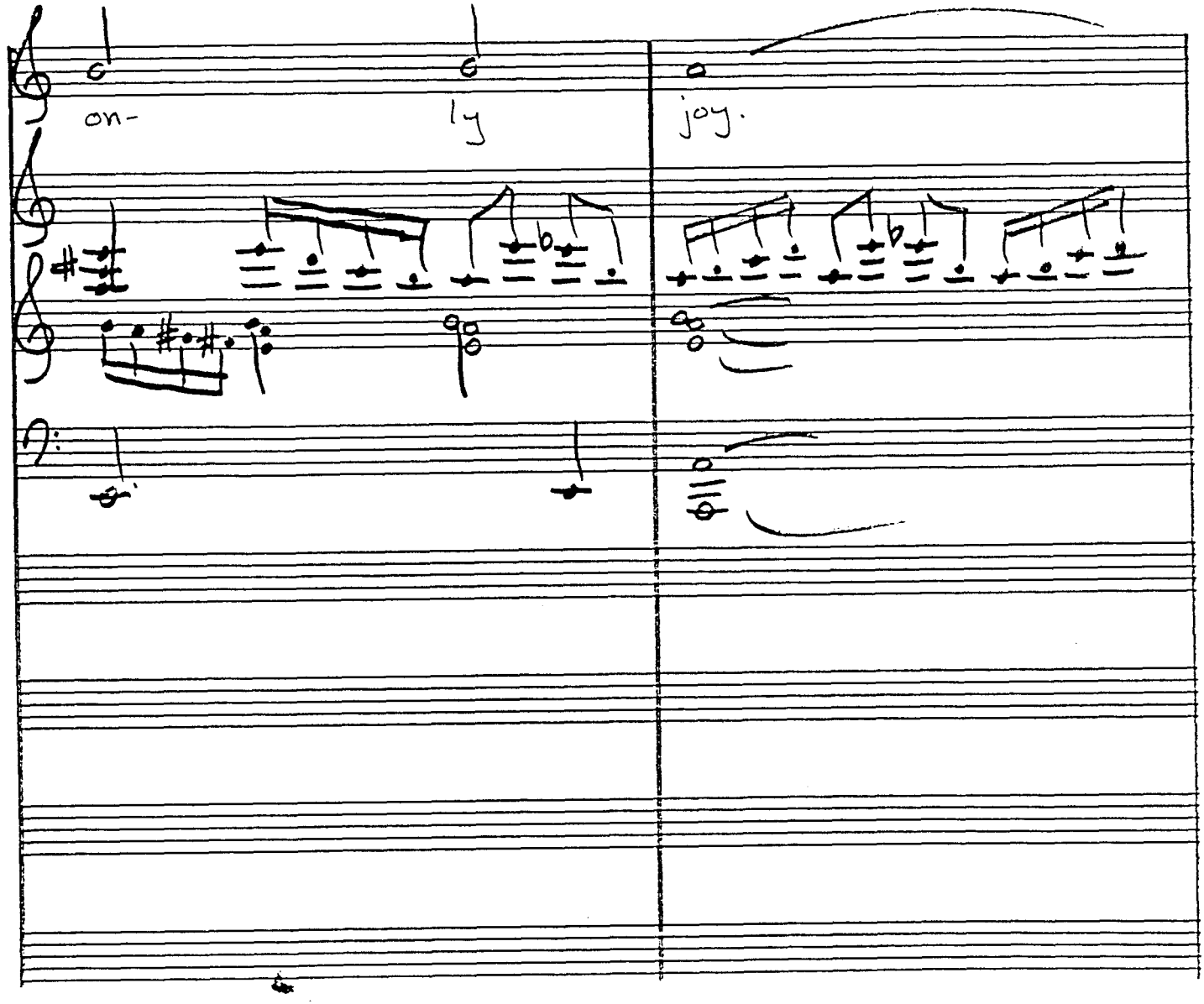

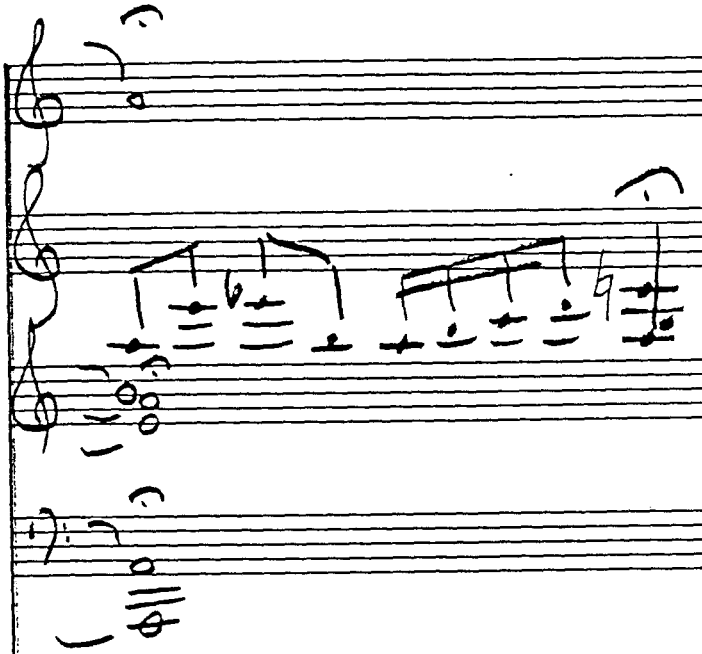

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12 staves - 96 sides

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