"I AM THE ROSE OF SHARON"
BIBLICAL LOVE POETRY IN 20th CENTURY ART SONG

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Introduction

"He who reads the Bible in its delightful beauty and melody, of him it is said 'honey and milk are under thy tongue.'"[1]

An exploration of modern musical settings of *Shir HaShirim* begins with an investigation into the interrelationship of text and music in song. The development of Jewish music in particular, and secular music in general, reflects a heightened attention to the primacy of text and the capacity of music to enhance a text's message. In modern compositions of both secular art song and Jewish art song we see the primacy of text and sense the composers' identification with the text's images and themes. Modern Jews continue to identify with the biblical love poetry of *Shir HaShirim* and therefore continue to explore the expression of this text through music. For 20th century Jewish composers, the medium of choice is art song.

Historically, the ancient Masorites who codified our current system of cantillation pursued the musical expression of biblical text in a fashion similar to that of modern Jewish composers. We know from commentary in the Midrash, as quoted above, that the rabbis honored the musical expression of the Bible for both revealing and transmitting the message of the text. Additionally, the way in which the melodies express the text provides interpretation. Although biblical chant is not as structured as more modern vocal music, according to Amnon Shiloah, the melody adds depth to the textual message.

> ...Its form and flow are subordinated to the text and it is clearly adapted to the syntax and punctuation, the natural rhythm and melodic nature of the text being sung. Thus in this type of presentation, the word has absolute priority. Nevertheless...there is an obvious musical component in cantillation that makes its own contribution and thereby reinforces the message of the text.[2]

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[1] Commentary on Song of Songs Rabba, 4:11, as reprinted in Amnon Shiloah, *Jewish Musical Traditions* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 101.

The Masorites, therefore, were the first to explore the potential of music to interpret text. Today, modern Jewish composers continue to pursue the musical expression of ancient texts. However, the role of the music has changed. Where once the cantillation melodies required the text to "acquire significance,"[3] today the music makes an independent statement. The evolution of the musical line as a separate force developed in 19th century Germany and greatly influenced the art song composers of today.

The German art song composers of the 19th century attempted to make the text and the melody independent while, at the same time, to join the two in order to enhance the message of the text. Inspired by research into the origin and nature of language, these Romantic composers strove to fuse words and music so that music would become its own language to express ideas and emotions.[4] Art song developed as a musical genre most clearly at this time in history, and Schumann is an important composer to approach the relationship of text and music in this way. He successfully interwove the piano accompaniment and the vocal line so that the voice is not the only expression of the text. The melody line travels between the voice and the piano, allowing the music to express the text on its own, without the words.[5]

The Romantic art song composers also used the musical line to express elements of a text that the words alone could not sufficiently express. Attracted to the poetry of such Romantic poets as Goethe, composers tried to capture the external forces, such as

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[2] Ibid., 87.
[3] Ibid., 90.
[4] Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 34.
[5] Ibid.

thunder or danger, affecting the emotions of those portrayed in the poetry.[6] The music created the stormy or tense atmosphere to support the vocal line of the text.

The poetry of Goethe and other German poets appealed to the art song composers in this period because they saw their own feelings and sensibilities as educated Germans reflected in these poems.[7] The text itself inspired musical ideas within these composers, allowing them to express the meaning of the text with a personal passion for its message. The sum of the text and the music together is greater when the composer connects personally with the text. It has been suggested that Schubert, one of the greatest art song composers in history, chose to set texts that reflected the events and feelings in his own life.[8] An exploration of the life of a composer may indeed reveal why certain texts caught his musical imagination.

Why does *Shir HaShirim* capture the imagination of the modern Jewish composer? Though the text is obviously about love, through the centuries there has been little agreement over the context of that love. Translators and commentators, from the rabbis to the mystics, have read into the poetry what they wanted it to represent. The rabbis thought the Song described the love of God for his people Israel, while the mystics thought the Song described the human yearning for communion with God.

For today's Jews, *Shir HaShirim* describes love with a distinctively modern voice. In the 20th century, societal norms have changed, and people of all backgrounds discuss love and sex more openly in their literature, films, and music. The images used in the Song express sexual longing and the beauty of the human form in vivid detail without the

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[6] *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Lied c1740-c1800."
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

embarrassment and modesty associated with sex at other points in history. Additionally, the main protagonist in the text is a woman, a feature more in line with today's progressive ideas about the equality of women and men rather than the patriarchal structure of biblical times.

Furthermore, modern Jews have reconnected with the Hebrew language. Hebrew is both the everyday language of the State of Israel and the language of biblical texts that unite the people of Israel in a common heritage. The unique Hebrew language represents both Jewish history and the Jewish future. *Shir HaShirim* is an attractive text for modern composers because it portrays the love experience explicitly, as a modern text would, in the unique language of the Jews.

Shir HaShirim is also an attractive text because the text lends itself to art song. The imagery of the poetry is vivid, allowing the composers ample opportunity to explore the musical representation of that imagery. For example, Chapter 2 of the Song describes the coming of spring and the end of the rain, the blooming of the flowers, and the sound of the turtledove. The Song also contains passages with tension (Chapter 1) and passion (Chapter 8) and dialogue (Chapter 2). Just as the art song composers of the 19th century used the musical line to create atmosphere that the words alone could not sufficiently convey, Jewish composers in the 20th century explored the use of the musical line as its own descriptive voice.

The composers studied in this thesis, Jacob Weinberg (1879-1956), Marc Lavry (1903-1967), and Max Helfman (1901-1963), each identified with *Shir HaShirim* in his own way and explored the potential of the music to convey his interpretation of the text. Weinberg interpreted the Song as a Zionist text and musically illustrated the struggle of

Jews to make the decision to leave Eastern Europe and immigrate to Palestine. Lavry, in his continuing exploration of Jewish texts, identified passages in the Song that he considered challenging to illustrate musically. He successfully expressed the rich sensory imagery as well as the interplay of the Song's characters in these passages. Helfman saw in *Shir HaShirim* an opportunity to ignite in young people a love for Jewish texts. In order to explain his own connection to these texts, he used instrumental texture to show the many layers of meaning in the language of the Song. Inspired to explore the relationship of music and text, modern Jewish composers express their personal identification with *Shir HaShirim* by using the musical line as an additional voice to support and add depth to the interpretation of the text.

This thesis is organized in the following way: Chapter I traces the development of Jewish art song in the 20th century in Palestine and in the United States, focusing on the popularity of biblical texts and themes among modern composers. Chapter II explores the text of *Shir HaShirim* as a whole, its recurring imagery and themes as well as its historical function, to establish the attraction of this text for modern Jews. Chapters III-V focus on the three composers mentioned above, their biographical histories, the specific texts they chose to set, and their music. Each chapter integrates an analysis of the text used as well as an analysis of the musical composition in order to comment on how the two are used together to express the composer's interpretation of the text. These examples make clear that modern Jewish composers and contemporary biblical scholars approach the text in much the same way. By focusing on the rich imagery and themes in *Shir HaShirim*, they uncover the layers of meaning in the language in order to find the text's depiction of the human spirit.

The love poetry of *Shir HaShirim* has inspired creative minds for centuries. Following is an exploration of the creative contribution of modern Jewish composers, inheritors of biblical cantillation, Romantic art song, and our tradition's devotion to text.

I. Trends in the Development of Jewish Music in 20th Century Palestine and the United States

The landscape of Jewish music changed in both Palestine and the United States as Jewish composers trained in the Western European musical tradition immigrated to both countries in the early part of the 20th century. These composers sought to express their spiritual identification with Judaism through classical music structure and forms. They found a spiritual connection to the texts of Jewish tradition and set those texts according to classical music models.

The development of art song in Germany in the 19th century greatly influenced 20th century composers. The 19th century art song composers, such as Schubert and Schumann, defined a new approach to the relationship between music and text in song in which text was primary. Not only did their musical compositions bring out the words of the text, the music served as a voice in its own right, creating atmosphere and interpreting the message of the text in a way in which words were limited.[9] Therefore, for 20th century composers, art song was more than a musical expression of text. The medium of art song allowed the composers to explore the expressive possibilities of music itself.

Jewish composers changed Jewish music as they began to apply the model of German art song to their own compositions. These composers introduced classical art song to a tradition of Jewish music comprised of folk songs and prayer modes. The texts they chose to set reflected the Jewish spirit as it was developing in the 20th century in

[9] Ibid.

Palestine and in the United States. Composers found an expression of that spirit in biblical texts.

The rich variety of biblical texts allowed composers to explore a wide expanse of ideas. Jewish composers in Palestine found their own Zionist ideology reflected in biblical texts. In particular, the imagery of *Shir HaShirim* mirrored the imagery of both the folk song composers and the pioneer poets. As the classical music tradition developed in Palestine, *Shir HaShirim* became a popular text for art song composers, for it reflects the national sentiment of the pioneers. This chapter will trace the development of both literature and classical music in Palestine in order to establish the attraction of biblical texts in general and *Shir HaShirim* in particular.

In the melting pot of the United States in the 20th century, Jewish musicians searched for the sounds and the texts that made them and their religious heritage unique. Whether in the Yiddish theater or in the concert hall, composers continually turned to biblical texts and themes to express a common Jewish experience and their own personal spiritual identification with Judaism. Often, the work of these composers inspired the Jewish audience to look at Jewish texts and Jewish identity differently. This chapter will also explore how influential composers, while establishing a classical music tradition within Jewish music, also established the precedent of using biblical texts. Later composers followed these examples and explored other biblical texts, such as *Shir HaShirim*, in their work.

Palestine

In Palestine in the early 20th century, both the ideological and artistic movements set out to champion the Zionist cause. According to Jehoash Hirschberg,

> The New Yishuv...was in urgent need of a set of unifying cultural symbols, and the local composers were expected to form them. The vision of the return to and resettlement of the Land of Israel required that they be oriented to the past, whereas the drive to build a new, better society called for future-oriented symbols. Consequently, both folk and art music were heavily loaded with ideological expectations. Folksongs and dances were designated to extol the spirit of the pioneer settlers, whether rural or urban; to depict the romanticized scenery of the land; to enhance the revival of Hebrew through settings of both biblical texts and modern lyrics; and to unify the people through communal singing.[10]

The earliest songs popular among the *chalutzim* in Palestine were Eastern European folk songs. The *chalutzim* believed that the singing of folk songs would spread the Hebrew language and provide inspiration to the pioneers. Therefore, they took folk songs from the "old country," translated them into Hebrew if they were not originally written in Hebrew, and disseminated them as widely as possible.

The folk songs the *chalutzim* chose to bring to Palestine were often "nature songs," folk songs that extolled the natural environment.[11] Such songs perfectly expressed Zionist ideology by elevating the importance of "the land." The Zionists believed they were returning the Jewish people to its holy ancestral homeland by working the land and creating a Jewish society there. The longing for the land of the Bible and for a land belonging to the Jews is found in much of Zionist literature.

> Nostalgic descriptions of the ancient homeland, where 'the roses bloom in the vale of Sharon and Mt. Carmel exudes the loveliest scents,' where the lambs frolic over the gentle hillsides and the graves of the fathers wait for the return of the exiles, filled the poetry both of the anonymous poets and the literary men.[12]

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[10] Jehoash Hirschberg, *Music in the Jewish Community of Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 146.
[11] Aron Marko Rothmuller, *The Music of the Jews* (NY:A.S. Barnes and Co., Inc., 1975), 174.
[12] Ruth Rubin, *Voices of a People*, 2nd ed. (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1973), 374.

For example, when the Zionists convened in Basel in 1897, they sang the following song, originally written in German, by Isaac Feld.

> There, where the tall cedars kiss the clouds,
> There, where the waves of the Jordan swiftly flow,
> There, where the ashes of my fathers rest,
> There, where the blood of the Maccabees was spilled,
> That lovely land beside the strand so blue,
> There is my beloved fatherland![13]

Once in Palestine, the chalutzim adapted Yiddish folk songs to Hebrew to further their cause. Mark Warshawsky, one of the most prominent Yiddish folk song composers, wrote "*Dos lid fun dem broyt*" (The Song of the Bread), dedicating it to the "Jewish colonists to sing in the field after their work."[14] The song became a popular folk song in Palestine. Following is an excerpt highlighting the use of the sun as an image central to the communal identity of the *chalutzim*.

> Let the sun burn and scorch us,
> It has shone upon our joy:
> See, the bread that we are reaping.
> Children, we will never go back!

The image of the sun and other depictions of nature became popular among writers in the growing literary tradition of early 20th century Palestine. Zionists no longer needed to adapt Yiddish poetry from the "old country" to further their ideological cause; they now had indigenous Hebrew poetry that expressed the Zionist love for the land as a natural wonder and as the setting for the Bible. According to Hirschberg, "The semiotics of all arts, music, and letters in Palestine during the 1920s and early 1930s was grounded in the representation of the Yishuv's collective spirit. Topics ranged from the romanticized countryside to pioneer heroic deeds."[15]

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[13] Ibid., 371.
[14] Ibid., 375.
[15] Hirschberg, 256.

The poets of the 1920s and 1930s in Palestine were influenced by the writings of A.D. Gordon, a leader of the 2nd Aliyah to Palestine in 1905. Gordon believed that physical work was a religion in its own right, and only those who love the land and work the land could call Palestine their country.[16] The poetry of this period in Palestine utilized rich description of the land and mentioned specific biblical characters (Moses, Abraham, Isaac) and places (Massada, Negev, Jerusalem) in order to reflect Zionist ideology. For example, Saul Tchernichovsky, a prominent Israeli poet of the early 20th century, wrote a poem entitled "They Say There is a Country," which incorporates imagery of the sun and the hills as well as the characters of Rabbi Akiba and the Maccabees.

> They say there is a country/A land that flows with sunlight./Where is that country?/Where is that sunlight?
> They say there is a country/Where seven pillars are./There bloom on every hilltop/Seven wandering stars.
> A land where is fulfilled/All a man can hope,/Everyone who enters--/Akiba does approach
> "Shalom to you, Akiba/Peace be with you, Rabbi./Where are they, the Holy,/Where are the Maccabee?"
> Answers him Akiba,/Says to him the Rabbi:/ "All Israel is holy,/You are the Maccabee!"[17]

Another example of the primacy of nature in the poetry of the *chalutzim* in Palestine is the poetry of Rahel Bluwstein and Amir Gilboa. In Bluwstein's "Aftergrowth" she describes the pioneer's dependence on the land and the uncertainty that the land will always provide. She also uses the images of sun and rain.

> Yes, I did not plow, I did not sow,/I did not pray for the rain./
> Suddenly, see now, my fields have sprouted,/In place of thorn, sun-blessed grain.[18]

The rain is of primary importance to the pioneer, because the presence or absence of rain means the difference between failure and success. In his poem "Birth," Gilboa begins by

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[16] Ruth Finer Mintz, ed., *Modern Hebrew Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), xxxvi.
[17] Ibid., 70.
[18] Ibid., 112.

remarking on the end of the rain, "*HaGeshem Chalaf.*" This Hebrew phrase is a direct quote from *Shir HaShirim* 2:11.

> The rain has passed.
> And yet from the roofs and trees/It sings in my ears/And covers my head/With a bluish bridal-veil.[19]

Gilboa's reference to *Shir HaShirim* is not accidental. Just as the poetry of the early 20th century in Palestine focuses on the beauty of the natural landscape and the dependence of that landscape on the sun and the rain, so too does the biblical text of *Shir HaShirim.* Obviously, 20th century writers in Palestine noticed the parallels, and as I will show in later chapters, 20th century composers in Palestine capitalized on these common themes.

While the creation of folk songs in Palestine continued well into the 20th century,[20] with the immigration of Western European, classically trained composers, the art song became a popular medium of expression of Zionist sentiment. "Art music was required to create a new system of communicative musical symbols connoting national ideology, to endow the cultural life of the Yishuv with international prestige, and to infuse the musical scene with a spirit of creativity."[21]

Even those composers well steeped in the tradition of Yiddish and Hassidic folk song began to explore the same themes prevalent in folk song through modern poetry and classical form. For example, Daniel Sambursky (1909-1975) was born in Eastern Prussia, though his parents were immigrants from Russia and raised him on Yiddish and Hassidic songs. His father was a Zionist and spoke Hebrew at home. Though he was a classically trained musician, having studied at the Leipzig Conservatory and then in Berlin, after he

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[19] Ibid., 252.
[20] By 1949, a total of 4,073 folk songs by 189 different composers appeared in a variety of compilations (Hirschberg, 148).
[21] Ibid., 146.

immigrated to Palestine in 1933, he composed 75 folk songs.[22] One of the texts Sambursky set to music was the pioneer poet Natan Alterman's "*Ba'a M'nucha*" (Evening Comes).

> Night hushes the *emek* as dew covers the soil./Sleep restfully, oh lovely valley,/ glorious land which we are preserving.[23]

This poem, so evocative of the natural landscape and the Zionist cause, is a prime example of the literary tradition of the early 20th century in Palestine. Sambursky, though predominantly a folk song composer, explored the realm of modern poetry because he found in this poem the same themes he found in Yiddish and Hassidic folk song. However, modern poetry created new musical challenges. As composers began to draw on their classical training to set new texts, art song developed.

The immigration of Western European composers furthered the development of art song in Palestine. Inspired by the perceived mandate of composers in Palestine to create a national folk music, as quoted from Hirschberg above, a number of musicians stepped forward to further this cause. Early on, musicians began to discuss the resonance of biblical texts for the pioneers working the land of the Bible. Fordhaus Ben-Tzisi believed that biblical oratorio would help create a national folk music.[24] He founded the Bible Chorus in Palestine in 1926 in order to bring biblical music into the homes of everyday immigrants in Palestine.

At the same time, Mark Golinkin, a conductor born in Russia, presented his vision that opera would be the means by which Palestine would both create a national folk

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[22] Ibid., 149.
[23] Irene Heskes, *Passport to Jewish Music* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), 238.
[24] Hirschberg, 94.

music and disseminate the Hebrew language throughout the land.[25] In the words of Palestine's great literary father, Chaim Nachman Bialik, who shared Golinkin's view, "We must continue to cultivate our Zionist *niggun* in the Land of Israel, and its cornerstone would be the opera."[26]

Jacob Weinberg, an immigrant from Odessa, within weeks of arriving in Palestine in 1923, composed the first full-length Hebrew opera, *HeChalutz* (The Pioneer), the culmination of Golinkin's vision for the Palestine Opera and for music in Palestine. The title of the opera suggests its Zionist themes, and indeed, the story of *HeChalutz* is the very story of the immigration of Eastern European Zionists to the land of Israel to work and build the land. Weinberg includes in his opera a setting of Chapter 2 of *Shir HaShirim*, which I will discuss in Chapter III.

Yet another opera company formed in Palestine, with the goal of performing music of a more "popular" nature. In 1946, the Palestine Folk Opera staged the first full-length production of a Hebrew opera, *Dan HaShomer* (Dan the Guard), by Marc Lavry. Lavry, though born in Riga, Lithuania, was trained in Germany. His first composition in Palestine was *Shir HaEmek* (The Song of the Valley) in 1937, which celebrates the work and spirit of the pioneers. This piece was developed into a symphonic piece and became the first locally composed piece to be performed by the Palestine Orchestra. Between *Shir HaEmek* and *Dan HaShomer*, Lavry composed his *Shir HaShirim* oratorio around 1940. In this work, Lavry displays a strong connection to the land of Israel by exploring the text's illustration of the natural world. In both his folk and art song, Lavry chose texts and

[25] Ibid., 68.
[26] Ibid.

themes rich in natural imagery to express the pioneer love for the land. I will discuss two arias from his *Shir HaShirim* oratorio in Chapter IV.

The music of Palestine, therefore, relies heavily on texts that express Zionist sympathies, especially as composers create original melodies rather then use the folk melodies of the past. From the outset, composers of both popular music and art song in Palestine in the 1920s-1940s used rich natural images as well as biblical images to express and promote a connection to the land.

The United States

The Jewish folk song tradition also made its way to the United States through Eastern European immigration. The Yiddish music of the *badchanim* and *klezmorim*, as well as the liturgical mastery of the cantorial artists, brought the sound of Eastern Europe to the streets of New York City. American Jewish composers learned to incorporate the sounds of Eastern European folk song and prayer modes into classical art song and larger-scale works in order to represent their heritage. However, as Jewish music grew as a classical art form, composers searched for texts to express their identification with Judaism. Biblical texts and themes symbolized the unique Jewish experience. Composers both in the world of Yiddish theater and the classical music hall continually chose to set biblical texts to music.

In Eastern Europe, Yiddish folk song expressed the longings, desires, and struggles of Jews living in an often poor, often hostile environment. Folk songs addressed topics such as poverty, immigration, and the centrality of family life. In the United States, Yiddish song composers looked for different unifying themes for the American Yiddish

theater. Yiddish theater in America was a mix of styles, including *purim spiel*, *badchan*, *klezmer* and *chazzanut*. Abraham Goldfaden, a giant of the Yiddish theater, successfully combined all of these styles and wrote more than 26 operettas for the theater stage. He used holiday songs, folk songs, Slavic melodies, and opera arias to create works with "something for everyone." In order to tie such a mix of styles together, Goldfaden created a "light drama" narrative, often employing historical or biblical themes.[27] Even on the Yiddish theater stage, the Bible served to unite a diverse group of people attracted to different musical styles with a common story that meant something to all.

Another force in the Yiddish theater world was Joseph Rumshinsky. He was born in Vilna and studied piano and music theory there. When he arrived in America in 1903, he wrote simplified piano arrangements for theater songs and started composing his own show tunes. He, too, chose a biblical text to form the basis for an operetta, *Shir HaShirim*.

Jewish composers in the United States were not only active in the theater. Ernst Bloch, Darius Milhaud, and other modern composers accepted commissions to write synagogue music as a way of exploring their Jewish identity. They also incorporated Jewish musical motifs and themes into their art music. Such large-scale works were not confined to the synagogue. Often these works were performed in the concert hall as well. The premiere of Bloch's *Sacred Service* in 1933 at Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco greatly influenced the future of Jewish music. After experiencing the performance first-hand, A.W. Binder wrote that Bloch had "inspired him and his colleagues to write concert music based upon liturgical motifs."[28]

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[27] Heskes, 195.
[28] Ibid., 217.

Bloch was born in Geneva in 1880, and from a young age he was familiar with the Jewish liturgical tradition, especially *nusach*, as well as the Bible. His first composition was a symphony based on Jewish melodies that his father hummed to him. He studied music in Frankfurt, Munich, and Paris and returned to Geneva to teach at the Geneva Conservatoire. Bloch went to the United States in 1916 and taught in New York, Cleveland, and San Francisco. He composed a variety of compositions incorporating Jewish texts and themes. For example, he set Psalms 114, 137, and 22 for voice and orchestra. He composed a piece for violincello and orchestra entitled *Schlomo*, inspired by a text from Ecclesiastes. He also composed the *Ba'al Shem Suite*, in which he incorporated a Yiddish folk song melody and entitled the movements "*Vidui*," "*Niggun*," and "*Simchas Torah*."

However, Bloch was not interested in merely setting Jewish folk tunes.[29] He said,

> It is the Jewish soul that interests me, the complex, glowing, agitated, soul, that I feel vibrating throughout the Bible...the freshness and naivete of the Patriarchs; the violence of the Prophetic Books; the Jew's savage love of justice; the despair of Ecclesiastes; the sorrow and the immensity of the Book of Job; the sensuality of the Song of Songs. All this is in us, all this is in me, and it is the better part of me. It is all this that I endeavor to hear within myself, and to transcribe in my music: the time honoured emotional urge of the race that slumbers deep down in my soul.[30]

Through his personal musical style Bloch focused on traditional texts to express the Jewish soul he felt within himself. He was able to infuse his original works with a Jewish spirit. Many composers after him created their own expression of the Jewish spirit both through the musical representation of Jewish themes and the use of Jewish texts.

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895-1968), an immigrant from Italy, first explored Jewish music through biblical themes, rather than biblical texts. In 1931 he received a

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[29] Rothmuller, 215.
[30] Ibid., 216.

commission from violinist Jascha Heifetz to composer a violin concerto. Castelnuovo-Tedesco's piece, *Il Profiti* (The Prophets), is in his own words his "most important, at least in proportion, and I believe the most significant, among my works of Jewish inspiration."[31]

> It was...the time when the anti-Semitic movements started and became harder in Middle Europe, and by reaction I felt proud of belonging to a race so unjustly persecuted; I wanted to express this pride in some large work, glorifying the 'the splendor of the past days' and the burning inspiration which inflamed the 'envoys of God,' the prophets.[32]

This concerto allowed Castelnuovo-Tedesco to explore the strictly musical expression of the "burning inspiration" of the prophets. Later in his career, in the 1940s, Castelnuovo-Tedesco explored the relationship of text and music by composing a biblical oratorio entitled "Naomi and Ruth." In this period in his career he also composed wedding songs using *Shir HaShirim* texts in his "Songs and Processionals for a Jewish Wedding."

Other composers looked to Jewish text as an expression of their Jewish spirit. Leonard Bernstein used the text of Lamentations in his *Jeremiah Symphony* (1942). Herbert Fromm won the Ernst Bloch Prize in 1945 for the best composition on a biblical theme for his "Song of Miriam," a work for contralto, women's choir, and piano.[33] Lukas Foss wrote a song cycle for voice and orchestra entitled *The Song of Songs* in 1946.[34]

In setting *Shir HaShirim* texts in particular, contemporary composers draw on both ancient cantillation and modern biblical scholarship. Cantor William Sharlin, in his composition "*Shir HaShirim*," harmonizes for choir the cantillation used to chant *Shir*

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[31] Gdal Saleski, *Famous Musicians of Jewish Origin* (NY: Bloch Publishing Co., 1949), 33.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Rothmuller, 246.
[34] Saleski, 57.

HaShirim in the Lithuanian tradition. According to Sharlin, "When I hear the chant, I hear colors."

> It's the simplicity of the chant for *Shir HaShirim*. There are no fascinating motives, it's rather simple and pure. It allows for all sorts of potential colorations. When I first set out to work with this chant, I played with it and decided to set it in different styles, and in the end I got caught up in the impressionistic style.[35]

The simplicity of the melodies of cantillation allows the text to remain primary. Sharlin takes the ancient Masorite's musical approach to text, harmonizes it according to Western classical music conventions, and creates contemporary Jewish art song.

Gerald Cohen found the inspiration to set different *Shir HaShirim* texts in modern biblical scholarship, particularly in the work of Marcia Falk. Her translation and commentary made a "big impression" on Cohen. "For the first time, even though I had loved the text before, I saw that this is ultimately, despite the allegory and other layers of interpretation encrusted on the text, a collection of erotic love songs."[36] This modern view of the nature of *Shir HaShirim* contributes a new voice to the interpretive tradition of this text. Modern Jews are the recipients of centuries of interpretation, which determines how we approach the text today.

> Because you have all the liturgical uses of *Shir HaShirim* and both the allegorical interpretation and all the different references to it in different discussions in Talmud and Midrash, you have the wonderful effect, as in a lot of biblical language, that every word is so rich because of its personal and interpretive associations. *Shir HaShirim* is both a simple love song and a love song to God and so many other things. For those who have these associations, the text is incredibly rich in a way most love songs aren't.[37]

For Cohen, his musical associations with the text evoke the sound of the pastoral landscape and the "shepherd's song," which he sets in an exchange of melody between

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[35] Cantor William Sharlin, telephone interview with author, January 7, 2003.
[36] Gerald Cohen, telephone interview with the author, January 6, 2003.
[37] Ibid.

wind instruments. The medium of art song allowed Cohen to explore the musical representation of his emotional associations with this text.

Jewish composers in Palestine and the United States in the 20th century were trained in the same Western European classical music tradition. In each country, they changed the face of Jewish music by developing the classical music tradition and promoting art song as an expression of Jewish identity. However, due to the difference of culture in each country, different forces motivated composers to integrate biblical texts, and *Shir HaShirim* in particular, into art song. In Palestine, the composers' motivations were ideological. Musicians were integral to the developing national cultural identity in Palestine, and their music served to carry the banner of Zionism. In the United States, where religious identity could not be taken for granted, musicians explored their unique Jewish identity through their art music. Some composers chose to create orchestral settings to convey their emotional and cultural connection to Judaism. Others chose to explore the relationship of music and biblical text and the capacity of each, separately and together, to illustrate the Jewish spirit.

As mentioned in this chapter, *Shir HaShirim* became a common choice of text for Jewish composers in the 20th century. *Shir HaShirim* allowed composers to express their individual connection to Jewish text while exploring creative musical approaches to representing the landscape, the atmosphere, and the characters of the Song. Chapter II will discuss the characteristics that make *Shir HaShirim* a resonant Jewish text and a natural choice for art song.

II. An Introduction to *Shir HaShirim*

Biblical scholarship as it has developed over the centuries presents a variety of approaches to the interpretation of *Shir HaShirim*. Today we read literal and impressionistic translations of the text. We read both the Rabbis' allegorical interpretation of the Song as divine love poetry describing God's love for his people Israel and the contention of modern scholars that the Song is a collection of human love poetry describing everyday human emotions. While each approach is valid, the work of modern biblical scholarship, with its focus on the human element in the Song, offers the most insightful clues as to the attraction of this text for modern Jews. The perspective of modern scholarship helps us see ourselves in *Shir HaShirim*.

By approaching this text as love poetry written by humans about human love, modern commentaries help us see our own love experience reflected in the Song's vivid sensual imagery. We identify with the description of the coming of springtime and its effect on the world around us. We also sympathize with the characters in the Song and their struggle to be together despite the odds. Modern biblical scholarship not only allows us to place ourselves in the text, but our ancestors as well. Bible scholars and historians have offered theories as to how the Song was used in antiquity and how the text resonated as a true expression of love both then as now. Many generations of our people have identified with the experiences and emotions in the Song.

An examination of the structure of *Shir HaShirim*, as well as its themes, motifs, and symbols as presented in modern biblical scholarship will help show the appeal of this love story for art song composers. Furthermore, a consideration of the ancient function of

this love poetry and the history of interpretation of this text will help explain the eternal connection of the Jews to *Shir HaShirim.*

The text of *Shir HaShirim* does not follow a clear narrative. The structure of the Song is a point of disagreement among translators and commentators. Some evidence leads scholars to believe that the Song may have been a number of separate poems compiled and redacted by an editor. For example, in the course of the text, the woman is addressed by the man in nine different ways, and the man is addressed by the woman in three different ways, suggesting that a number of authors wrote the poems, each using his own particular language. The repetition of certain phrases word for word in various parts of the text may further suggest that a redactor attempted to unify the texts by repeating certain phrases.[38]

Chana Bloch argues that the Song is "a sequence of lyric poems, episodic in its structure." However, Bloch does find unity in the text as a whole. Different characters appear regularly in the course of the text: a young woman, her male lover, her mother and brothers, and a group of women called the "daughters of Jerusalem." She says that the evolving relationships of the characters in the Song may seem to create a plot "like the narrative thread in a Schubert song cycle."[39] Furthermore, the symmetry of themes and characters at the beginning of the Song and at its end supports the conception of the Song as a unified whole, though Bloch does not specify if this symmetry is organic or placed upon the text by a redactor. She points to the presence of Solomon in 1:5[40] and again in 8:11-12; the vineyard in 1:6 and again in 8:11-12; the brothers in 1:6 and again in 8:8;

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[38] Marvin Pope, *The Anchor Bible: Song of Songs* (NY: Doubleday and Co., 1977), 48.
[39] Ariel Bloch and Chana Bloch, *The Song of Songs* (NY: Random House, Inc., 1995), 18.
[40] Citations from *Jewish Publication Society Hebrew-English Tanakh* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999).

and the daughters of Jerusalem in 1:3-4 and again in 8:13. Additionally, whereas at the beginning of the text (1:6) the woman addresses her brothers in a self-conscious way, by the end of the text (8:10), her sense of self has clearly grown.[41]

Marcia Falk disagrees with Bloch and considers the Song a "collection," not a "unity."[42] She breaks the Song down into 31 smaller poems, which she believes are suggested by shifts in setting, argument, tone of voice, and the relationship between the speaker and the audience. Falk calls the poems in the Song "love lyrics," and her conception of the structure of the song and its different types of love lyrics is a creative way of exploring the presentation of love in the Song.

Falk sees six different types of love lyrics in *Shir HaShirim*: a love monologue, a love dialogue, a monologue spoken directly to a third party, a monologue by an unidentified speaker to an unidentified audience, a dialogue between one love and a group about sexual subjects, and a composite poem or a love monologue with other monologues and dialogues in it.[43] Depending on the tone and mood of the poem, the lyric is set in a different context.[44] Love monologues are set in the "cultivated or habitable countryside," such as the valley in 2:1 and the forest in 2:3. When the lyric expresses a feeling of anxiety or the dangerous aspects of love, the lyric is set in the "wild or remote natural landscape," such as the desert in 8:5. When lovemaking is involved, the lyric is set in "interior environments," such as the banqueting house in 2:4. When there is conflict and the lovers are in public, the lyric is set in the "city streets," such as in 3:2. The setting of the poem, therefore, is integral to the interpretation of a passage. Art song encourages

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Marcia Falk, *The Song of Songs* (NY: Harper Collins, 1990), 103.
[43] Ibid., 115.
[44] Ibid., 139.

the musical illustration of the poem's setting, adding depth to the composer's textual interpretation.

Falk also identifies a number of recurring themes in the Song: calling the beloved (1:4), throwing out the beloved (2:17), searching for the beloved (1:7-8), self in a hostile world (1:6), praise of love (7:7).[45] Falk identifies recurring motifs and symbols as well. "Flora and fauna," including animals (dove, gazelle, deer, nightingale) and other wildlife, describe the landscape (2:17); evoke the senses by describing the sensuality of different plants and fruits (flowers, herbs, nuts, spices)(4:6); and provide metaphors for the description of the human body (5:11-15). The "vine and vineyard" (2:6) symbolize the woman's developed sexuality and her sexual awakening. The "garden" (4:12) also symbolizes the woman's sexuality as well as a meeting place for the lovers. "Eating and drinking" (6:2-3) represent the hunger of desire. "Wealth" (1:4 and 8:11-12) symbolizes both virtue and emptiness. All of these motifs and symbols continually evoke "sensuality and the senses" (2:8-13) in the Song.

Nature is primary in the Song as the setting for love. The images found in nature express happiness and sadness, fear and ecstasy. According to Falk, "Nature in the Song is neither idealized as good nor subjugated—or demonized—because wild. Instead, it is depicted in the richness of its many manifestations, and always with respect for its power."[46] The prominence of natural images in the Song, coupled with the themes of spiritual and physical love and loss, make this text very appealing to art song composers. The text provides the composer with an already rich canvas on which to add another layer

[45] Ibid., 143.
[46] Ibid., 135.

of expression. The musical layer serves to further evoke the passion and wonder within the text.

The structure of some of the verses in the Song resembles Egyptian love poetry, leading some scholars to draw parallels between the functions of *Shir HaShirim* and of Egyptian and Mesopotamian love poetry. Particular *Shir HaShirim* passages most closely resemble the Egyptain "Praise Song," of which there are three types: the admiration song spoken by one character to another; the admiration dialogue spoken by both characters to each other; and the description song, or *wasf*, where one character describes the other's body in order from top to bottom or bottom to top. The imagery used to describe the body is taken from nature and the outdoors (7:2-10).[47] Parts of the body are compared to flowers as well as towers.

Ancient Egyptians used their love poetry primarily as entertainment when people gathered at banquets during festivals to sing.[48] *Wasfs* were also sung at Syrian weddings, as well as other gatherings in which songs and dances were popular. According to Michael Fox, the Song of Songs must have been used in the same way. Parts of *Shir HaShirim* may have been sung at banquets during festival periods when people had time to gather in celebration.[49] The depiction of everyday life and emotions in the Song made these poems popular at these celebratory, rather than liturgical, gatherings. In fact, Aage Bentzen (1953) argues that the popularity of the Song at festival gatherings, especially in

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[47] Ibid., 132.
[48] Michael V.Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 247.
[49] Ibid., 227.

the spring, may have insured its canonization, because an association between the Song and the festivals developed over time.[50]

Fox presents biblical evidence that secular love songs were a familiar part of the culture of the ancient Israelites. First, he cites Ezekiel 33:31-32, where God warns Ezekiel that the Israelites will at first only consider him a "singer of erotic songs."[51] Second, he cites Isaiah 5:1-7, where, as a rhetorical device, Isaiah models his "Song of the Vineyard" after the style of *Shir HaShirim*. The audience is interested to hear this song from Isaiah, because they enjoy hearing such songs at their banquets, and once Isaiah has their attention, he delivers a very different type of song.[52]

Shir HaShirim also resembles the poetry of the Sacred Marriage Rite of Mesopotamia. In this Near Eastern fertility rite, the king and a priestess, who represent the gods Tammuz and Ishtar, participate in a "marriage rite" to pray for rebirth in nature.[53] Some of the motifs used in the poetry of this rite are present in the Song of Songs as well: expressions of love and desire (7:11-14), an invitation to the garden (4:16), descriptions of nature scenes (2:11-13), praise of the beloved's sweetness (4:11), and a brother-sister dialogue (8:8).[54] These parallels imply the widespread use of such love poetry at celebratory events in ancient Middle Eastern cultures, emphasizing the universal appeal of such poetry in everyday life. The text's appeal is as universal today.

Though scholars have found structural and thematic parallels between *Shir HaShirim* and Egyptian and Mesopotamian poetry, within the Bible much of the language

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[50] Ibid., 251.
[51] Ibid., 248.
[52] Ibid., 249.
[53] Bloch and Bloch, 34.
[54] Fox, 242.

used in the Song is entirely unique. The language is so unique, in fact, that there are a large number of *hapax legomena*, words that are used only once in the Bible and are in some cases difficult to translate, such as *talpiyyot*(4:4), *taltallim*(5:11), and *haruzim*(1:10). In addition, the Song uses words that are rarely found in the Bible or mean different things in the Song than they do in other places. The Song also introduces the use of "*she*" at the beginning of a word to mean "that."[55] Translators and commentators have looked to these and other interesting linguistic characteristics to determine a date of composition for the Song.

Though the Song is attributed in the first line of the text to King Solomon, commentators believe the text was composed many years after Solomon's time. According to Bloch, the Song contains many examples of words and phrases that resemble Aramaic patterns and forms, which would point to a later composition date. "Historically, the language of the Song represents a transitional stage between classical Biblical Hebrew and the Hebrew of the Mishnah, a collection of oral law edited around 200 CE, which likewise shows the imprint of Aramaic."[56] Aramaic began to replace Hebrew after the Babylonian exile as the everyday language of communication, and the Song uses a spoken rather than a formal Hebrew in its poetry. The similarity of the Hebrew in the Song to the spoken language of the Babylonian exile is further proof of its post-exilic composition date.[57]

Additionally, according to Bloch the Song also contains examples of foreign words, borrowed from Persian and Greek, such as *pardes* "orchard" (4:13) and *appiryon*

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[55] *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6, s.v. "The Song of Songs."
[56] Bloch and Bloch, 23.
[57] Ibid.

"pavilion" (3:9). Some of the passages in the Song resemble Greek pastoral poetry, with its celebration of passion. These linguistic and thematic similarities further narrow the window of a composition date, to the post-exilic, Hellenistically influenced 3rd century BCE.[58]

Though modern scholars have found much evidence that *Shir HaShirim* was not originally a religious text, rather a collection of songs for celebratory events, once the book was canonized the Rabbis interpreted the meaning of the text allegorically. For 20 centuries, Jews understood the text as an expression of the love between God and God's people Israel. The rabbis wanted to "spritualize" the Song in order to avoid dealing with and understanding the sexual imagery in the text.[59] Later, the Kabbalistic mystics took the sexual overtones of the text into consideration and decided that the Song expressed the human desire for union with God and that the imagery evoking a wedding scene supported their view.[60] Modern commentators have emphasized the sexual imagery even more and contend that the Song is an expression of human love between a man and a woman.

Modern commentators and scholars focus on the structure and imagery of the Song's poetry and emphasize its portrayal of a deep and sensual love. The images of nature, the themes of lost and found love, and the symbols of sexuality appeal to modern Jews just as those elements must have appealed to the ancient Jews who sang these songs at their festival banquets. Though certainly an ancient text, *Shir HaShirim* depicts the eternal truth of love.

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[58] Ibid., 25.
[59] Ibid., 30.
[60] Ibid., 32.

With vivid imagery and poetic verse, the Song lends itself well to art song. As I will describe in the Chapters III, IV, and V to follow, 20th century Jewish composers have explored the text in order to create a musical line that brings out their personal interpretation of this timeless journey through love.

III. Jacob Weinberg

As discussed in Chapter I, the period of the 1920s-1940s was pivotal in the development of art music in Palestine, as Western European-trained musicians made *aliyah* in force and began to compose in Palestine. One of the earliest examples in this period of the use of a text from *Shir HaShirim* to express the Zionism of these immigrants is in the first full-length opera composed in Palestine.

Jacob Weinberg (1879-1956), a native of Odessa and a member of the Moscow section of the Society for Jewish Folk Music, immigrated to Palestine in 1923, and within a few weeks completed the composition of the first original Hebrew Opera, *HeChalutz* (The Pioneer). His immediate involvement with the Palestinian opera scene implies his agreement with Mark Golinkin, as discussed in Chapter I, that opera would be the force by which the Jews would create an indigenous national music. Due to his association with the Society for Jewish Folk Music, Weinberg was no stranger to the efforts of Jewish musicians to reclaim and reframe Jewish music to make a nationalist statement. The Society was established in Russia in 1908 with the mission to collect Jewish folk tunes and promote compositions based on those tunes by printing music and papers, offering prizes, and supporting an orchestra and choir to perform the music, among other activities. By the time Weinberg joined the Moscow group of the Society around 1912, after returning from studying piano and composition in Vienna, the group had shifted its

focus from collection of folk tunes to original compositions based on folk tunes in order to recapture the "essence" of Jewish music.[61]

In his opera, Weinberg explores the essential characteristics of Jewish music both through his harmonic and textual choices. He creates a Zionist opera, acknowledging both the world the pioneers left behind and the world they were to create. In a letter to Abraham Zvi Idelsohn dated December 20, 1931, Weinberg wrote that he "took special care to emphasize the contrast between the elements of Palestine and those of the Diaspora."[62] He represents Eastern Europe melodically through Eastern European cantillation and the *chalutzim* of Palestine by a "romantic" version of the Dorian mode.[63] Furthermore, Weinberg chooses folk tunes for his opera based on what he heard in Palestine among the many varied communities that had immigrated there. Specifically, Weinberg incorporates a tune he heard in Silwan, a neighborhood in Jerusalem, in the opera's "Yemenite Song".

The opera is the story of the triumph of Zionism over the Diaspora. The opera begins in a small Jewish community in Poland, where a group of young men, led by Zev, the son of a shoemaker, champion the Zionist cause and plan to immigrate to Palestine and form a Kibbutz. Zev tries to convince Leah, the daughter of wealthy parents, to join them, but she is overwhelmed by her parents' pressure for her to marry a rich man, and Zev leaves without her. We next see the group of young men on the Kibbutz where they live as pioneering farmers. Leah eventually joins them in Palestine, as do both her parents and Zev's parents, and in the final scene, Zev and Leah marry on the Kibbutz with both

[61] Albert Weisser, *The Modern Renaissance of Jewish Music* (NY: Bloch Publishing Co., 1954), 50.
[62] Hirschberg, 257.
[63] Ibid.

sets of parents attending and symbolizing the end to class barriers and the beginning of a new future for the Jewish people.

In one of the major arias in the opera, Weinberg chooses to set Chapter 2 of *Shir HaShirim* to express Leah's conflicting desires to stay in Eastern Europe and to leave and join Zev in Palestine. For Weinberg, this text expresses the Zionist ideals of the Jews in the Diaspora by highlighting the eternal longing of the Jews for their homeland in Israel. The rich and loving pastoral description of the land in Chapter 2 of *Shir HaShirim* echoes the Zionist call to embrace the land of Jewish history. However, in his approach to setting this text, Weinberg also illustrates the inherent struggle to heed the Zionist call. The aria (Example 1) begins in D Ahavah Rabbah and progresses to A major, while along the way alternating phrases of major and Ahavah Rabbah. Through his use of major and Ahavah Rabbah, Weinberg illustrates the tension for the *chalutzim* between two competing forces, as seen in Leah's struggle with her decision about her personal future. For the *chalutzim*, the struggle is between the pull of the old world and the pull of the new world. For Leah, the struggle is between the pull of her family's history and the pull of her future. Through Weinberg's music, *Shir HaShirim* transcends the realm of biblical literature and effectively expresses the modern Zionist ideological struggle, as will be clear in the following analysis of the text and its musical treatment.

The beginning of Chapter 2 of *Shir HaShirim* is situated in the natural world and evocative of nature's stimulation of the senses. In the first five verses of Chapter 2, the text mentions a rose (*chavatzelet*) in 2:1, a lily (*shoshanah*) in 2:1, wine (*yayin*) in 2:4, apples (*tapuchim*) in 2:5, and raisin cakes (*ashishot*) in 2:5.[64] The lovers create a scene of

[64] Text citations from *JPS Tanakh*.

sensuality within the natural world by comparing each other to these things so evocative of smell and taste.

Chavatzelet is conventionally translated as "rose," though according to the Brown, Driver and Briggs Dictionary,[65] it can be translated as "meadow-saffron," or "crocus." *Shoshanah* is considered to be "lily," though there is no universal agreement on its translation either.[66] The translation of these words is important to Weinberg's aria, as Leah's opening statement is "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys."[67] According to Ariel Bloch, the woman is associating herself and her emerging beauty with specific flowers that resonate in the Bible as symbolic of Israel's own blossoming.[68] For example, in Isaiah 35:1-2, it reads, "The arid desert shall be glad/The wilderness shall rejoice/And shall blossom like a rose (*chavatzelet*)./It shall blossom abundantly,/It shall also exult and shout./It shall receive the glory of Lebanon,/The splendor of Carmel and Sharon." In this passage, the *chavatzelet* is associated with the blossoming of Israel when all are rejoicing in God's redemption, and it specifically associates this blossoming with *Sharon*, which is reminiscent of *Shir HaShirim* 2:1: "I am the rose of Sharon." This similarity implies a connection between this prophetic text and *Shir HaShirim*, imbuing the woman's statement in 2:1 with the weight of prophetic precedent.

Shoshanah is mentioned in a prophetic text as well. In Hosea 14:6 it reads, "I will be to Israel like dew;/He shall blossom like the lily (*shoshanah*),/He shall strike root like a Lebanon tree." Again, this particular flower is associated with blossoming.

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[65] Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford:Clarendon Press, 1951).
[66] Bloch and Bloch, 148.
[67] Text citations from the aria from Jacob Weinberg, *The Pioneer* (NY: J. Fischer & Bro., 1932).
[68] Bloch and Bloch, 148.

In the opening statement of the aria, measures 10-15, Leah describes herself as "the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys..." Leah's words seem to say that she sees herself as a part of the natural world of Palestine. With the introduction of Theme 1 in measures 10-15, Weinberg establishes the harmonic connection in this piece between Ahavah Rabbah and the land of Israel. Leah's first statement, musing about how she would feel in Palestine, in set in D Ahavah Rabbah, and throughout the rest of the piece, Palestine is represented by melody in Ahavah Rabbah.

However, Leah is still in Eastern Europe, and according to Weinberg's dynamics, she is singing softly. With his choice of dynamics, Weinberg allows us insight into Leah's mental state at this time. She is hesitant. She is not sure she is "the rose of Sharon," but she wants to see what it would be like to identify with the *chalutzim* in Palestine, so she is trying it out. We sense the "blossoming" of Leah's Zionism and sense her future redemption in the land of Israel, just as the *chavatzelet* and the *shoshanah* mark the blossoming of Israel's redemption in the prophetic texts. Weinberg's Zionist interpretation of this text is clear.

As discussed in Chapter II, a number of different characters speak in the course of *Shir HaShirim*. In 2:2, directly after the woman's assertion of her emerging beauty, her lover speaks to affirm the woman's description of herself. "Like a lily among thorns, so is my darling among the maidens." He uses *shoshanah* again to echo his lover's own words. Weinberg chooses to leave out this verse of text, thereby establishing the precedent of picking and choosing verses from Chapter 2 to fit the mood and tone of the aria. Since the aria is Leah's declaration of her personal struggle, Weinberg chooses to leave out the man's contribution to the conversation and create a monologue for Leah alone.

The sexual implications of much of the poetry of *Shir HaShirim* are clear in the next verse Weinberg chooses to include in the aria. Leah says, taken from 2:3-4, "I sat down under his shadow and his fruit was sweet (*matok*) to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house (*beit hayayin*), and his banner over me was love." By mentioning the sweetness (*matok*) of the fruit, this verse changes the prevailing sense in the imagery from smell (rose, lily, apple tree) to taste (fruit, wine). The banqueting house (*beit hayayin*) is most likely a metaphor for a place of lovemaking,[69] and the woman expresses her hunger for that love in the next verse by mentioning her wish to be surrounded by apples and raisin cakes.

Weinberg focuses on Leah's hunger for love by interweaving phrases in major and in Ahavah Rabbah. When Leah reminisces about her love with Zev in the past, the melody is in major. For example, the phrase "I sat down under his shadow and his fruit was sweet to my taste," in measures 17-21, is sharply contrasted to the phrases before and after it because it is in major. Here again, we learn about Leah's thoughts. She longs for her love and she begins to consider the idea of leaving the past behind. The past, or the old world, is represented here and through the rest of the piece in major.

However, throughout Section A, Weinberg weaves an Ahavah Rabbah flourish into the accompaniment even when the preceding phrases have been in major, as if to illustrate that the land of Israel is never far from Leah's thoughts, as in measure 22. At the end of Section A, once Leah has declared in measures 29-32 "I languish with love," (literally *cholat*, or sick, with love) as she is full of thoughts for her beloved who is in the land of Israel, Weinberg inserts an interlude, measures 32-33, in A Ahavah Rabbah. This

[69] Ibid., 150.

interlude serves as a hint of what is to come in the final section of the piece, which combines the use of major and Ahavah Rabbah, as Leah finally embraces her desire for love and decides to leave for Palestine. By measure 34 and the beginning of section A1 in measure 35, Weinberg returns to D Ahavah Rabbah to repeat a motive from the very first statement of the piece, Theme 1.

The structure of these verses in Hebrew (corresponding to measures 26-32) accentuates the "ee" sound of the *chiriq* vowel, transliterated with a letter "i," by using it to create symmetry in the verse. 2:5-6 reads, "*Samchuni ba'ashishot/rapduni batapuchim/ki cholat ahavah ani:/Smolo tachat l'roshi/vimino t'chabkeini.*" The first two phrases have the "ee" vowel at the end of the first word of the phrase, and the last two phrases have the "ee" vowel at the end of the last word of the phrase. The middle phrase has the "ee" vowel at both the end of the first word and at the end of the last word, serving as a bridge to both patterns and creating symmetry in the Hebrew. The poetry of *Shir HaShirim* is playful with the sounds of the words, as if to emphasize the sense of hearing just as the imagery evokes other senses, reinforcing the theory that the poem was originally composed and/or transferred orally.

Though Weinberg sets only half of this passage, he does play with the "ee" sound musically. In measures 25-31, he emphasizes the repetition of the "ee" vowel by repeating the same melody for "*samchuni*" and "*rapduni*" and then accenting "*ani*" at the end of the phrase.

Weinberg makes even more explicit use of the structure of the Hebrew text in Section A1. Again, the sense of hearing is evoked by the text in 2:8, "*Kol Dodi, Hinei zeh bah.*" As Leah says in measures 35-37, "For behold, the voice of my beloved, he

cometh..." This text is rich with potential musical interpretation, as the composer illustrates the sound of her lover approaching. Weinberg capitalizes on this rich potential by including verses 2:9 and 2:10, which feature 3 phrase couplings which repeat the same image in 2 different ways, one right after the other: "*Leaping over mountains,/Bounding over hills./*My beloved is *like a gazelle/Or like a young stag./*There he stands behind our wall,*/Gazing through the window,/Peering through the lattice.*"(Emphasis added) Weinberg makes use of the repetition by creating a sequence of repeating melody.

In section A1, Weinberg uses the motive from Theme 1 and develops it in a sequence in order to progress from D Ahavah Rabbah to A major (the key illustrating Leah's final decision) and to show Leah's development in her decision-making process. When Leah describes her beloved, the melody is in Ahavah Rabbah. For example, in measures 35-38, when she says "For behold, the voice of my beloved, he cometh leaping on the mountains and skipping on the hills," Weinberg sets this phrase in Ahavah Rabbah. As the section continues, the harmony progresses from Eb major to Bb minor to F# major to A major. Weinberg develops this sequence, based on Theme 1, through the repetitive structure of the text. However, through this sequential development, Leah's sense of self begins to emerge as the melody becomes more assured and less tentative. She blossoms, as implied in her opening statement, in measure 53, in which A major is firmly established, as a woman with purpose.

Weinberg takes advantage of the change in voice in the text at this point in the aria. The man says to his love in 2:10, "Arise, my darling; My fair one, come away!" and proceeds to give a rich description of springtime in the natural world of Palestine. In this passage (2:11-13), four of the five senses are evoked by the description of nature. We see

the blossoms blooming, hear the turtledove, taste the figs, and smell the fragrance of the vine blossoms. All of this is happening in springtime "*b'artzeinu* (in our land)" (2:12). According to Bloch, "our land" is the countryside the lovers are familiar with, the land in which their love is played out.[70] For Weinberg and the other Zionists, "our land" is the land in which their love for the Jewish people and its future is played out.

Weinberg's transition to A major begins in measures 48-56 as Leah says, "He spake and said, my beloved spake and said: Rise up, Rise up my love my fair one." Weinberg incorporates the motive from Theme 1, in Ahavah Rabbah, in measure 55 to represent Zev speaking to Leah from Palestine. Weinberg establishes the tone of the rest of the piece as Leah begins to heed the call of her lover and of Zionism and the piece moves more firmly toward A major.

Section B, the final section of the piece, is in A major. The texture of the accompaniment emerges in arpeggios as if to express the emerging layers of Leah's sense of self as well as the rich imagery of the description of Palestine in the springtime. Leah's statement in major in measures 61-64 which introduces Theme 2, "Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away, and come away," may be as much Leah addressing herself as Zev addressing her from Palestine. For at this point she is a commanding voice, accepting of herself so much so that she is her own "love", and she may be alluding to her decision to leave Eastern Europe. Ultimately, she is able to incorporate both her past and her future into herself, as the melody begins to seamlessly incorporate both major and Ahavah Rabbah even within the same phrase. The pastoral text is set in just such a way, implying Leah's ability now to identify with the land of Palestine in a way she was not

[70] Ibid., 155.

sure she could when she pronounced herself "the rose of Sharon" in the beginning statement of the piece. In measures 61-78 the text reads "Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away, and come away: for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, on earth appear the flowers, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." Although this phrase starts in major, when describing the land, Weinberg diverges into Ahavah Rabbah and then back to major by the end of this piece of text in measure 78. These moments of Ahavah Rabbah highlight the beauty of the landscape in Israel, the setting of her future, as Leah imagines it will be. In measure 80, Weinberg capitalizes on the repetition in the text of "Rise up my love..." in order to reaffirm Leah's transformation.

Again, Weinberg brings out the poetic symmetry of sounds found in the Song. In 2:14, the Hebrew reads, "*Harini et marayich/hashmi'ini et koleich/ki koleich arev/u'marayich naveh*:" (Emphasis added) This passage is an example of a *chiasmus*, or an AB/BA structure, where *marayich* is A and *koleich* is B. Weinberg sets this text, in measures 84-87, as a sequence, bridging the previous statement of affirmation and the climax of the piece in which Leah makes clear her decision. Weinberg effectively highlights the repetition of sound by building a sequence based on that repetition.

The climax of the piece is Leah's statement in measures 90-96 that she belongs with her beloved, taken from 2:16, "My beloved is mine/and I am his/who browses among the lilies." The speaker is now the woman again, rather than her lover calling to her from elsewhere. The image of the one "who browsed among the lilies" can have a sexual implication or, in this case, also an implication of setting. Leah's love is somewhere where he can walk among lilies, which is obviously the land of Israel. In

speaking these words, Leah is saying that she belongs with her love in that land. In Falk's translation, she interprets "*Dodi li va'ani lo*" as more of an action, rather than a description of possession, and translates the phrase as "I to my love, and my love to me."[71] Taken in this way, Leah is also declaring that she intends to "turn" to Zev and join him in Palestine.

The musical setting of this text incorporates both major and Ahavah Rabbah in order to symbolize the resolution of the conflict in Leah's mind between the old world and the new world. The first part of her statement in measures 90-96, "My beloved is mine," is in major, while the second part, "he feedeth among the lilies," is in Ahavah Rabbah. Leah's assertion of self is in major, her description of the land in her future home is in Ahavah Rabbah. The two have joined in one *chalutzah.*

This aria is a journey of self-exploration with the use of the text of *Shir HaShirim.* The juxtaposition of major and Ahavah Rabbah in the course of the piece represents the two conflicting forces within Leah. We know Leah is at peace with both forces when, in her final statement of the piece, she incorporates both major and Ahavah Rabbah in one phrase. Weinberg's opinion about Zionism's future is obvious in the narrative text of his opera, its harmonic development, and its use of modes.

Weinberg considered this chapter from *Shir HaShirim* appropriate for a major aria in his opera for many reasons. The vivid and passionate expression of love and the particularly sensual imagery in this passage is perfect for a love aria. This passage also projects a strong feminine voice, as does much of the poetry of *Shir HaShirim*, which allows it to serve well as the voice of an important feminine character in the opera.

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[71] Falk, 178.

This text is also appropriate for a Zionist opera for a number of reasons. First, the text mentions specific flowers and fruits found in the land of Israel, as well as a rich description of the natural landscape in Palestine at springtime. Second, the command of the man to his love, "Rise up, my love my fair one and come away!" is the Zionist's call to the Jews in the Diaspora. Third, the final statement of the piece, "My beloved is mine and I am his" encapsulates the fervor of the *chalutzim* for the land of Israel and for the Zionist cause.

Finally, by choosing a biblical text to illustrate the connection of the *chalutzim* to the land of Israel, Weinberg has left no doubt as to his impression of the Zionist movement. The *chalutzim* wish to reconnect with the land in a way not experienced since biblical times, and there is no better way to express this desire than to use a biblical text that glorifies the land.

IV. Marc Lavry

While *Shir HaShirim* was an obvious choice of text for composers of Zionist art song such as Jacob Weinberg, for less ideologically driven composers in Palestine, setting texts from the Song simply allowed for musical exploration of a Jewish text. Marc Lavry arrived in Palestine in 1935 and began exploring Jewish texts and sounds for the first time. His *Shir HaShirim* oratorio, the first Hebrew oratorio written in Palestine, is a musical interpretation of this text, illustrating nature and love rather than pursuing an ideological message.

Marc Lavry (1903-1967) immigrated to Palestine to escape persecution, not due to a particularly Zionist sentiment. He had not written music based on Jewish themes or texts before he arrived in Palestine, though he had been exposed to Jewish music as a child. He was born in Riga, Lithuania to a musical family. His mother exposed him to classical music, his father to Chassidic songs, and his uncle to cantillation and the Jewish prayer modes.[72] He was educated musically in Western Europe, studying composition at the Leipzig Conservatory.

Lavry was an experienced conductor of both orchestras and opera companies, which no doubt developed his feel for composing both instrumental and vocal music. He was the opera conductor in Saar-Brucken for 2 years, the musical director and conductor for Rudolf von Laban's dance theater in Berlin, and the conductor of other groups in Munich and Stockholm before returning to Riga in 1933. Shortly after he returned, a Fascist coup was attempted, and Lavry decided to leave. He considered immigrating to

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[72] Macy Nulman, ed., *Concise Encyclopedia of Jewish Music* (NY:McGraw-Hill, 1975), 147.

Russia, the United States and Palestine, for he was not a Zionist per se.[73] Despite his less than ideological decision to immigrate to Palestine, Lavry became a force in the emerging movement to create a national music in Palestine.

Once in Palestine, Lavry became a prolific composer of orchestral and oratorio works in addition to art songs. He began exploring the Jewish folk music tradition in his compositions as well as Zionist texts and themes. His *Shir HaEmek* (Song of the Valley), as discussed in Chapter II, celebrated the pioneer spirit in folk-song style, and he later developed the piece into a symphonic poem, *Emek.*[74] This piece was the first performed by the Palestine Orchestra.

By 1944, having lived and composed in Palestine for almost ten years, Lavry wrote his opera *Dan HaShomer* (Dan the Guard), a distinctively Zionist work. The story takes place on a Kibbutz, and although a story of love and friendship, the message of the opera is full of Zionist sympathy for the pioneers' struggle to build a country. The themes of his opera show Lavry's developed sense of love for Palestine and the Jewish struggle for a national homeland. His ten years in Palestine exploring Jewish musical and ideological themes had influenced him greatly.

Lavry wrote his *Shir HaShirim* oratorio around 1940, between his composition of *Shir HaEmek* and *Dan HaShomer.* Therefore, at the time of this composition, Lavry's musical and ideological development stood somewhere between Jewish traditional folk song and Zionist opera. The introduction to the Israel Music Institute's 1962 edition of the oratorio focuses on the pastoral and festive aspects of the libretto, adapted by Max Brod. The introduction says, "The composer has remained faithful to the patterns of the

[73] Hirschberg, 160.
[74] Ibid., 232.

biblical text but the work has no religious associations whatsoever: it is simply a tender and poetic love story."[75] Why did Lavry choose to set a biblical text in order to portray a love story? The timing of this composition in Lavry's career reflects his growing love for Palestine and the Jewish people. He surely felt a connection to *Shir HaShirim*, which so warmly describes the country with which Lavry was becoming more and more attached.

The following text and music analysis will show Lavry's focus on the pastoral scenes and rich natural and sensual imagery of the Song, as seen in two settings from his 1940 *Shir HaShirim* oratorio. He sets each text in order to illustrate his interpretation of these passages. His effort to interpret *Shir HaShirim* is part of his expanding connection to Jewish texts in general.

"Shchorah Ani"

Lavry interprets *Shir HaShirim* 1:5 and 1:6 as a woman's admission of less than discreet behavior. This passage is complex, because on one hand the woman seems to be affirming her appearance and her sense of self and on the other agreeing with her brothers that her behavior has not been chaste. Lavry illustrates his interpretation with a number of musical devices, such as the use of a motive, a change in accompaniment to convey the difference between a monologue and a dialogue, and the use of a theme to express the emphasis and intended focus of the text.

This setting (Example 2) begins with the text "*Shchorah Ani V'navah* (I am dark but comely)"[76] Already, this verse can be interpreted in two ways. The conjunction "ו" can mean either "but" or "and," and either use changes the intention of the verse. If the

[75] Marc Lavry, *Shir HaShirim*, Tel Aviv: Israel Music Institute, 1962.
[76] Text citations from *JPS Tanakh.*

meaning is "I am dark *but* comely," the woman is declaring her beauty despite her darkness, implying that she is ashamed of her darkness. If the meaning is "I am dark *and* comely," her darkness contributes to her beauty and she is proud of it. According to Bloch, the woman may be ashamed of her darkness because she has been exposed to the sun and not stayed inside doing the work she is supposed to do. Alternatively, she is proud of her exotic beauty.[77] Falk translates *navah* as "radiant," in order to evoke the image of the role of the sun in darkening the woman's skin. According to Falk, the woman is declaring her beauty, for she is "dark and radiant."[78]

Lavry's interpretation focuses more on *navah* (comely), than on *shchorah* (dark), by creating a motive for the first mention of *navah*. This motive first appears in the Introduction in measure 1 and then again in measure 4 in a varied and elongated form. The melody of the motive is legato and rapturous, resembling improvisation. When we hear the motive again in measure 7, it is on the word *navah*, and then in its varied form again in measure 9 in a repeat of the word *navah*. Clearly, *navah* is emphasized more than *shchorah*, and in fact, *shchorah* seems to be deemphasized in favor of *navah*. The woman in Lavry's aria would rather concentrate on her beauty than her darkness. She is apologetic about the sun touching her skin.

The motive appears again in a further varied form in measure 11 as the woman is addressing "*b'not yerushalayim* (the daughters of Jerusalem)". The woman in the Song addresses other characters often in the course of the text. She addresses the daughters of Jerusalem specifically in 2:7, 3:5, 3:11, 8:4, and other places. Sometimes the daughters of

[77] Bloch and Bloch, 140.
[78] Falk, 168.

Jerusalem are addressed directly and sometimes as a rhetorical audience.[79] In this aria, Lavry's choice of accompaniment style makes clear that the woman is preparing to address the daughters of Jerusalem directly. In Sections A and B, measures 6-17, the arpeggios in the piano accompaniment support the harmonization of the motive discussed earlier. When the accompaniment supports the melody, the woman is speaking a monologue to no one in particular. When she addresses another in direct conversation, the accompaniment does not support but rather echoes the voice to reflect the conversation. In Section C and the coda, measures 18-23 and 28-32, Lavry makes the accompaniment less of a support to the melody line and more of a direct response to the vocal line to represent a dialogue.

When the woman says, in measures 18-21, "*Al tiruni, sheani shecharchoret, sheshezafatni hashamesh* (Do not stare at me because I am swarthy, because the sun has gazed upon me)," (1:6) she is speaking directly to the daughters of Jerusalem telling them not to worry about her darkness, for she is beautiful despite it. The imagery of the Hebrew is quite rich in this passage, with multiple layers of meaning. First, "*shecharchoret*" does not mean, according to Falk, a diminution of the woman's blackness, but rather an intensification of her darkness.[80] Falk sees in this word not just the root for "dark", but also the root for "dawn." The woman is therefore, "radiant in her blackness, glowing as the source of light that has burned her."[81] Furthermore, as Bloch points out, the woman wants to stress that she may be dark, but she is more than that. Bloch points out that the Hebrew structure of 1:6 is parallel to Proverbs 23:31, "Do not

[79] Bloch and Bloch, 140.
[80] Falk, 169.
[81] Ibid.

see wine that it sparkles red."[82] The structure of both of these verses implies that there is more to the object described than how it looks on the surface. The woman knows the daughters of Jerusalem are looking at her and judging her, and she pleads with them directly to look beyond her darkness.

The phrase from 1:6 "*sheshezafatni hashamesh*" is an interesting example of language in the Song that is rare in the Bible. The root "*shzf*" is found in only one other book in the Bible, in Job 20:9 and 28:3. In Job, the meaning is "to look down upon," with the eye doing the looking. In *Shir HaShirim*, *hashamesh* (the sun) is doing the looking and the burning.

Lavry emphasizes certain ideas in the text to express his interpretation of the *Shir HaShirim* passage as a whole by introducing a theme. The theme first appears in measures 13-17, and then again in measures 24-27 and is the predominant characteristic of the B sections. The theme is in C minor, a departure from G minor, the key of the other portions of the piece. This change of key contributes to the emphasis of these sections.

The first time the theme appears, in measures 13-17, it accompanies the following text: "*K'oholei Kedar, Kiriot Shlomo, Shchorah ani v'nava.*" Both the "*oholei Kedar*" (tents of Kedar) and the "*yiriot Shlomo*" (curtains of Solomon) are found only in *Shir HaShirim* 1:5, and it is unclear exactly what they are referring to. Falk suggests that the "tents" and "tapestries" are veils that the woman hopes the daughters of Jerusalem will lift up to see the woman's true self.[83] Bloch points out that the root "*kdr*" means "to be dark or black." The tents of Kedar could be the Bedouin tents near Kedar that are made of black goats' wool. The curtains of Solomon could be associated with Kedar, because

[82] Bloch and Bloch, 140.
[83] Falk, 168.

yiriot are mentioned in Jeremiah 49:28-29 as taken from Kedar as booty.[84] In any case, the woman in the Song is comparing herself to something black. In this use of the theme, Lavry emphasizes the woman's shame at her own appearance.

In the second use of the theme, Lavry again emphasizes the woman's shame, this time at her own behavior. She says in measures 24-27, "*Samuni noteirah et hak'ramim, karmi sheli lo natarti* (They made me guard the vineyards, my own vineyard I did not guard)." (1:6) Recalling that the image of the vineyard in the Song could symbolize the woman's sexuality, she seems to be saying that she is embarrassed to admit that she somehow did not guard her own sexuality and was possibly too promiscuous or was violated in some way. Lavry connects this admission to her description of her blackness by using the same theme in measures 24-27 as in measures 13-17, and his interpretation of this passage becomes clear: her blackness is a stain due to her failure to guard her own sexuality.

In the Coda, measures 29-33, Lavry creates a final dialogue between the voice and the piano, but the only word the voice utters is "Ah." In this dialogue, she is reinforcing her embarrassment by reflecting on it wordlessly.

Lavry's interprets this piece in a more nuanced way than to suggest it is simply "a tender and poetic love story." He has focused on a passage in the Song that has puzzled translators and commentators in its complexity and confusing imagery as if to show his interest in uncovering the many layers of meaning in this biblical text. As a point along his journey of Jewish and Zionist discovery, this aria displays a developed interest in the texts of Jewish tradition and their meaning to modern Jews.

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[84] Bloch and Bloch, 140.

"Tsror Hamor"

In another aria from his *Shir HaShirim* oratorio, "*Tsror Hamor*", Lavry creates a musical illustration of the senses and the animals, both of which are a part of the nature imagery used in the Song. In this aria, Lavry joins together texts which are not consecutive in the Song itself: "*Yishakeini minshikot pihu ki tovim dodeicha miyayin* (Oh, give me the kisses of your mouth, for your love is more delightful than wine)" (1:2); "*Tsror hamor dodi li bein shaddai yalin* (My beloved to me is a bag of myrrh lodged between my breasts)" (1:13); and "*Brach dodi ud'mei l'cha litvi o l'ofer ha'ayalim al harei v'samim (*Hurry my beloved, swift as a gazelle or a young stag, to the hills of spices)" (8:14). As I will show, he successfully connects the phrases by creating two themes and repeating them, in order to suggest the continuation of one musical thought, though the three different texts express different things. Lavry chooses to set the first verse of the body of the Song after the superscription and the last verse of the Song within this one aria, again offering his interpretation as to the message of the Song as a whole.

In the Introduction (Example 3), Lavry establishes the importance of the accompaniment as texture in this piece. Throughout the piece, he will use the accompaniment to bring out the tastes and smells and the action of the animals in the text. In measure 1, the harp outlines an A11 chord in a run of 32nd notes down and up the keyboard. The violins are featured in measure 3 making large-interval jumps far up the scale. Neither of these phrases helps to establish the key of the piece or the melody, they simply illustrate the rush of fragrance (in the harp) and the leaps of a gazelle (in the violins). The texture of instrumentation is integral to the character of this aria.

Section A1, measures 5-13, is comprised of two statements of Theme 1 in the vocal line and two repetitions of that line in the instrumental line. Just as in his aria "*Shchorah Ani*", Lavry creates a dialogue between the voice and the instruments, however, in this aria, there is no suggestion of a direct dialogue between characters in the text. In this case, Lavry creates a "rhetorical audience,"[85] leaving the nature of the dialogue up to the imagination. Is the woman speaking to her lover? Is she speaking to herself? Is she speaking to and hearing from the elements of nature described in the text? Without answers to these questions, the aria takes on the aura of fantasy.

In Section A1, the text's imagery focuses on evoking the senses. From 1:13, "*Tsror hamor*" is a "bag of myrrh." Myrrh is taken from the branches of a plant in Arabia, Abyssinia, and Somalia and was used to perfume clothing. The use of this image appeals to the sense of smell and the sweet pleasure the woman takes from her lover. "*Bein shadai yalin* (Lodged between my breasts)" appeals to the sense of touch, as the woman can literally feel her lover against her. Bloch mentions that "*yalin*" literally means "to spend the night."[86] Taken in this way, the woman's wishes are clear and vividly expressed due to the sensual imagery.

Lavry varies his musical evocation of the senses in Section B1. In measure 14, he uses a triple meter (as opposed to the duple meter of Section A1) and introduces Theme 2. The instrumental line is still in conversation with the vocal line, however rather than simply repeating each other, the two lines take turns leading and following.

The text in measure 14 again richly describes the senses: "*Yishakeini minshikot pihu ki tovim dodecha miyayin* (Oh, give me the kisses of your mouth, for your love is

[85] Ibid., 140.
[86] Ibid., 137.

more delightful than wine)." According to Falk, "*yishakeini*", which is in the future tense in the Hebrew, can imply a command, "Kiss me!," which she says "expresses the mode of wishing found often in love monologues spoken by women in the Song."[87]

The senses of touch and taste are evoked with a number of the images in this verse: "*minshikot pihu*" (the kisses of his mouth), "*tovim*" ("sweet" in Arabic), and "*yayin*" (wine). The sensual pleasure of these images is made even more explicit, because "*dodecha*", the thing that is sweeter than wine, literally means "lovemaking."[88] When, in measure 18 of Section B1, the instrumental line takes the melody and the vocal line has a more sustained legato line on "Ah," we can hear the rapture of lovemaking and the drunken effect of wine.

The puzzling grammatical structure in this Hebrew verse (1:2) is the change in person, because the woman literally says "Kiss me with the kisses of *his* mouth, because *your* love is better than wine." (Emphasis added.) According to Bloch, this shift in person is typical in the Bible when someone is speaking directly to someone with higher social standing (see Genesis 44:7). Bloch says the woman is in a fantasy world where her lover is her "king," so she changes her speech accordingly.[89] Interpreting the verse in this way allows the fantasy world of Section A1 to continue into Section B1.

In Sections A2 and B2, the texture of the accompaniment mirrors the Introduction, illustrating the rush of the senses and the leaping of the gazelle. The effect also retains some of the fantastical, or dream-like, character of the other sections of the piece. The section starts in measure 22 with a G9 chord, just as Section A1 did, but this

[87] Falk, 167.
[88] Bloch and Bloch, 137.
[89] Ibid.

time the chord is voiced in a higher register and does not have the third in it, which creates a more open, dreamy sound. The instrumental line repeats a variation of Theme 1 in measures 22-24 and then begins a series of 32nd runs in measures 25-26 that mirror the 32nd runs in the Introduction. The violins come in at measure 27 jumping into a high register with large intervals between notes, just as in the Introduction. We sense in the music the rush of the scent of cinnamon filling the air as the lover hurries off like a gazelle to the mountains of spices, for the text in measures 23-21 is from 8:14: "*Brach dodi u'dimei l'cha litzvi oh l'ofer ha'ayalim, al harei v'samim* (Hurry, my beloved, swift as a gazelle or a young stag, to the hills of spices)."

This verse, the last verse of the Song, ends without a conclusion. Although the woman orders her lover to hurry away, probably so that they will not be found together, there is no sense that their relationship is over. In fact, according to Falk, the Song ends on a "note of anticipation,"[90] implying that the lovers will indeed meet again in the future. To reflect the assurance that the lovers will meet again, Lavry brings together all of the musical devices he used to portray their love in the first two sections. He uses both the duple (measure 22) and triple (measure 28) meters; he uses elements of Theme 1 (measures 22-24) and Theme 2 (measures 30-31); and the vocal and instrumental lines are brought together in unison (measures 24 and 31).

Lavry sets verse 8:14, the last verse of the Song, directly after the first verse of the body of the Song, verse 1:2. He then repeats verse 1:2 after verse 8:14, but after a musical interlude, measures 32-35, which is reminiscent of the Introduction. Furthermore, the piece ends in D, after having rested predominantly in G in the previous sections. Lavry is

[90] Falk, 196.

setting off the final statement of text from the rest of the piece. This decision can serve two different interpretations of the meaning of the piece and of the Song as a whole. Given the confidence that the lovers will meet again in the future, as seen in Sections A2 and B2, the interlude can be seen as the time that the lovers spent apart, and the repetition of verse 1:2 in Section A3, which begins in measure 36 with Theme 1, as the lovers' eventual reunion. Alternatively, the piece has an inconclusive ending. The repetition of verse 1:2 after the interlude is a capella. For the first time in the piece, the vocal line and instrumental line are not in dialogue. The woman may wish to see her lover again, but there is no proof in the end of when and if they will meet.

By setting the first and last verses of *Shir HaShirim* together in one aria, Lavry comments on the sensuality and emotion the Song evokes. The texture of the accompaniment in the aria reflects the smell of spices and the taste of wine, representative of the sensuality of the Song as a whole. The juxtaposition of these specific verses allows the hearer to take a journey all the way through the Song, from the opening rapture of love to the closing confusion about whether the lovers will meet again. Lavry emphasizes its openness in order to express that risk is a part of every love story: maybe it will work, and maybe it will not.

In this aria, Lavry focuses on the musical illustration of love and the senses that love awakens. Rather than highlight Zionist ideology in *Shir HaShirim*, as Weinberg does, Lavry explores Judaism's depiction of a basic human emotion. Lavry's interest in studying this text reflects his developing identification with Judaism and the land of Israel. At this point in his development, he discovers the Jewish voice in matters of love.

V. Max Helfman

In *Shir HaShirim*, Max Helfman found a text that expressed both his Jewish and his emotional spirit. The Song is a collection of love poetry, but for Jews like Helfman who have inherited the centuries of discussion about this text, it is love poetry rich with symbolic significance. For Jews, it is love poetry without equal. Helfman sees himself in *Shir HaShirim*, and he wishes to show a new generation of Jews that this ancient text reflects their very modern lives as well.

In two of his settings of passages from *Shir HaShirim*, Helfman explores different aspects of the intensity of human love as portrayed in the Song. The medium of art song offered Helfman a freedom of expression,[91] which is evident in these pieces. Through song, Helfman could capture the unique sounds of love as passed down to us in this ancient biblical text.

Max Helfman (1901-1963) was born in Radzin, Poland and came to the United States when he was eight years old. His father was a cantor and mohel, and Helfman began singing in his father's choir and continued singing in Maram Charry's choir in lower Manhattan. He studied piano, composition, and conducting at Mannes College of Music in New York and at Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia from 1929-1931.

Helfman began to explore synagogue music more extensively when, in 1928, he became the choir director and organist at Temple Israel in Washington Heights, NY at the request of the temple's cantor, David Putterman. Helfman's appointment at Temple Israel

[91] Philip Moddel, *Max Helfman: A Biographical Sketch* (Berkeley, CA: Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum, 1974), 60.

began a long and close working relationship between Helfman and Putterman.[92] Helfman composed a number of liturgical works for Putterman and became Putterman's collaborator on a project to commission liturgical compositions from American composers.

Helfman explored Yiddish music as well as the director and conductor of the *Freiheit Gezang Farein*, a combined chorus made up of local choirs dedicated to Yiddish repertoire. Lazar Weiner was the first director of the group. Helfman composed and arranged songs for the chorus. At the time, he was balancing his concert schedule with his synagogue responsibilities as the choir director of Temple Emanuel in Paterson, NJ, which he joined in 1929, working comfortably within both milieus.

Helfman's interest in work both in and out of the synagogue continued for many years. In March, 1942, the Long Island Zionist Region sponsored the premiere of Helfman's *Shabbat Kodesh*, a Friday evening liturgical service, at Carnegie Hall. In 1945, Helfman became the artistic director of the Jewish Arts Committee, sponsored by the *Histadrut Ivrit* and the American Zionist Youth Commission to promote the American connection to the land of Israel through the arts.[93] In his role as artistic director, Helfman organized the dance group, the theater group, and the choir and directed concerts of both liturgical and secular compositions. While Helfman had continued his work with the *Freiheit Gezang Farein*, according to Philip Moddel, his work with the Arts Committee "had a decisive influence on Max Helfman's musical

[92] Ibid., 23.
[93] Ibid., 31.

thinking, for it marked the shift from the Yiddish idiom to that of the Hebrew national cultural expression."[94]

Inspired by his experience with the Jewish Arts Committee, Helfman began full-time work as the music director of the Brandeis Camp in Los Angeles in 1951, continuing his association with the camp since its establishment in 1947. With his interest in the new State of Israel and the musical expression of that land, Helfman turned to educating and encouraging a connection to that land in the younger generation. Although Helfman "found a rich and evocative store of thematic material in the ancient prayer modes, biblical cantillation, and *hazzanic* lore which stirred his imagination,"[95] he felt restricted by synagogue music and the volunteer choir and welcomed the chance to explore a different type of musical expression.[96]

At the Brandeis Camp, Helfman continued to work as before within the different milieus of Jewish music and the arts in general. He composed liturgical music and led services and also created the Brandeis Art Insitute to welcome young artists of music, dance, and literature to study with well-known Jewish figures in their fields, concentrating on Jewish values and artistic expression.[97] In his work with young people, Helfman saw the impact of Israeli music, and made it his mission to promote the musical connection between American Jews and the land of Israel and "invigorate" the Jewish spirit.

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[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., 60.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., 38.

> The haunting melodies of beautiful hills and valleys, of settlers returning to an ancient homeland, of dreams become reality, the pulse of work and the rhythm of dance; and the eager young voices, stirred by the emotion of these songs. All this reoriented Helfman's attitude. He now sought the music of Israel, studied the songs of that land and arranged many of them in a masterful manner.[98]

During this period, Helfman composed three settings of *Shir HaShirim* texts: "Set Me as a Seal Upon Thy Heart" (1947); "The Voice of My Beloved" (1954); and "*Ana Dodi*" (1955). In these texts he surely found the connection to the land of Israel that he was trying to promote. He must also have found a vivid expression of Jewish spirit in these texts, since he composed these settings at a time was he was focused on "invigorating" the Judaism of the young people surrounding him.

Though influenced by the traditional synagogue and Yiddish folk song, Helfman's music in this period marked a new stage in his compositional development. Helfman must have found a freedom at a camp on the west coast a long way from the structure of the synagogue and the limitations of the volunteer choir to compose with unrestrained passion and emotion. All of these aspects of his work during this period, the spirit, the connection with the land, and the passion, are evident in the two settings I will analyze.

"Set Me as a Seal Upon Thy Heart"

The most powerful statement about love in all of *Shir HaShirim* is 8:6: "Let me be a seal upon your heart, like the seal upon your hand. For love is fierce as death."[99] Helfman seizes the passion in this passage and maximizes it with his use of this text for

[98] Ibid., 33-34.
[99] *JPS Tanakh.*

"Set Me as a Seal Upon Thy Heart" (Example 4). His music is as fiery as the imagery, and in it one can sense the attempt to ignite emotion within the audience.

Helfman set this text in English, and his interpretation of the meaning of this text is inherent in his translation. The translation is dramatic, pasting together pieces of text from *Shir HaShirim* 8:6-7 and 8:14 to highlight the drama. The text of Section A, measures 1-12, reads, "Set me as a seal upon thy heart, set me as a seal upon thine arm, for love, for love, for love is strong as death."[100] Historically in the Bible, a symbol around the neck or on the arm such as an amulet, a ring, or a bracelet, implied ownership and served as a stern reminder of someone or thing (see Proverbs 3:3, Deuteronomy 6:8, Jeremiah 22:24).[101] In the context of a love relationship, the image of a seal on the arm evokes a possessive passion, one that requires a physical reminder of the relationship and will not rely on the promises of the heart. In her translation, Falk chooses even more intense words to describe the symbol on the heart and arm: "Stamp me in your heart,/Upon your limbs,/Sear my emblem deep/Into your skin."[102] Her translation draws on the image of fire used later in the passage in order to make the physical symbol of love more severe and more permanent.

Helfman matches and enhances the severe passion of the music by creating a driving, steady yet syncopated rhythmic pattern in the bass. The bass line descends in a step-wise pattern that creates further tension in some places and alleviates tension in other places. In measures 2-7 in Section A, the descending bass creates tension, and then in measures 8-10, though still in a step-wise descent, the bass line provides a release from

[100] Max Helfman, "Set Me As A Seal Upon They Heart," 1947.
[101] Bloch and Bloch, 212.
[102] Falk, Poem 28.

that tension on the repetition of the word "love." In measure 11, as if to highlight the passion of the climactic phrase "as strong as death," the tension returns. In measure 12, right before a new section begins, there is another release of tension in order to set up the new idea.

Helfman also establishes a motive of 32nd notes in Section A that he uses throughout the piece to express agitation. This motive is found in measures 4 and 7, on the words "heart" and "arm."

In Section B, measures 13-20, Helfman translates the end of 8:6 and the beginning of 8:7 to read: "The fire of love is a burning flame, the fire of love is a burning flame, and all the waters cannot quench it, and all the floods cannot drown it." In Hebrew, the end of 8:6 is "*Rishafeiha rishpei eish shalhevetyah.*" According to Bloch, the meaning of the root "*rshf*" is not clear. In Job 5:7 the same root refers to sparks from a fire. In this verse, the root is used in two consecutive words in order to convey the intensification of the fire, as if from sparks to a great fire, to show that "love is so powerful that even its tiny sparks burn like great fires."[103]

In his translation, Helfman clearly creates repetition (fire, fire, water, floods) in the text, and he uses the repetition to create descriptive musical patterns. The melody in measures 13-16 in Section B is a sequence of a two-measure ascent of 32nd notes, as if to portray the growing flame. The melody in measures 17-20 is a sequence of a two-measure descent of 32nd notes, as if to illustrate the onslaught of a flood and the inevitable drowning. The use of 32nd notes is reminiscent of the motive in Section A and a further expression of agitation. In this section, the driving bass line rhythm continues,

[103] Bloch and Bloch, 213.

with the melody line doubled in the bass (rather than descending according to its own pattern), until measure 19, where the word "floods" is suddenly exposed, without accompaniment. In the descending line on "floods" the melody goes into E Ahavah Rabbah, incorporating an identifiable Jewish prayer mode for the first time. The E then becomes the anchor for the next section beginning in measure 21.

Interestingly, Helfman leaves out of his translation any consideration of the Hebrew word "*shalhevetyah*" in 8:6, as Falk translates it, "a holy blaze." This word is important because commentators have argued that the only "hint" of a reference to God in all of *Shir HaShirim* may be in this word, since it ends in "*yah.*"[104] Falk crafted her translation in order to bring out that reference. Helfman does not directly translate this word, however, when he composes the music to diverge into Ahavah Rabbah, a Jewish prayer mode, at the end of this section, he may be musically making reference to God's name.

Helfman borrows text from 8:14 for Section C, measures 21-26: "Make haste, beloved." The Hebrew, "*Brach dodi*," is the final command of the Song, where the woman tells her lover to flee, not permanently, but until they can meet again. This open ending to the Song implies no resolution to the lovers' struggle to be together, only the hope that their love will continue. As a transition back to the same text as Section A, Helfman inserts this text to offer his interpretation that there is no end to the passionate love he is describing, only the suggestion that it lives on forever. His message is reinforced when he adds text to that effect in the final section.

[104] Falk, 193.

The pattern of step-wise descent returns in Section A1 in measure 27, as Helfman repeats the text of Section A, with additional text: "Set me as a seal upon thy heart, set me as a seal upon thine arm, for strong as death, strong as death, as strong and mighty is everlasting love, everlasting love." The pattern of a three-measure step-wise descending bass line in measures 27-33 is broken at measure 34, where the bass note drops suddenly in order to shock the audience and highlight the climax of the piece. The passionate tension between the bass line and melody line under the text "strong as death, as strong and mighty" is released suddenly on measure 39, "everlasting." Here again, Helfman delivers his message that this passion will not end. Measure 39-45, the Coda, features a long, calm, legato line which is a distinction from the agitated 32nd notes of the motive used in Section A and again in Section A1. The bass line is descending without tension, in harmony with the melodic movement of the phrase. In measure 45, Helfman uses the motive one last time in order to signal a sense of repose and also a sense of circular motion right back to the beginning, as if the song could continue forever.

The human experience suggests that people would be drawn into any text that depicts the power of love with such passion. Helfman, obviously familiar with *Shir HaShirim*, molded the text in order to bring out as much passion and drama as possible, as if to emphasize to his audience that all this and more can be found in a Jewish text. The many creative musical devices Helfman uses to convey the emotion of this passage are evidence of the freedom he felt in composing art song. Helfman musically depicts the growing flames of a fire and the rushing water of a flood and uses the presence and release of tension between the melody and bass line to intensify the passion of the text.

This piece is a stirring expression of one aspect of the human, and the Jewish, spirit. Helfman found this spirit in himself and hoped to ignite it in others.

"Ana Dodi"

In his setting of *Shir HaShirim* 2:10, 11, and 12, which he entitled *"Ana Dodi,"*[105] Helfman explores musical textures and sounds to express the difference between the voice of the woman and the voice of the man in the Song. As discussed in previous chapters, much of the Song is a dialogue between characters, whether direct or indirect communication. Helfman brings the characters in the text and their individual personalities to life in this composition.

Again in this piece, although Helfman does set the text in Hebrew, he chooses to place together only pieces of consecutive verses in order to mold the text according to his interpretation. The full text of the composition (Example 5) is: *"Ana dodi v'amar li, Kumi lach rayati, yafati ulchi lach. Ki hinei hastav avar, et hazamir, hazamir higia* (My beloved spoke thus to me, Arise my darling, my fair one, come away! For now the winter is past, the time of the turtledove, the turtledove has arrived)."[106] The entire text of the song is set in Section A, measures 1-17, which represents the woman reflecting on her lover's call to her. In Section B, measures 18-30, the texture of the piece changes drastically, representing the man actually calling out to the woman, *"Kumi lach rayati, yafati ulchi..."* In Section A1, measures 31-38, the woman returns to her personal reflection, *"Ana dodi v'amar li."*

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[105] Max Helfman, *"Ana Dodi"* (1955), NY: Transcontinental Music Publications, 1969.
[106] Translation an adaptation of the *JPS Tanakh.*

The Hebrew phrase *Ana...v'amar...* is a conventional biblical way of introducing someone's spoken words (see Job 4:1).[107] We know the woman speaks these words in 2:10, because the gender of her words and the words that follow, "*kumi lach*," shows that the man is making a request of the woman. Helfman creates a musical expression of the man actually calling out these words to the woman, rather than the woman simply reporting that he called out to her, in Section B. When the man says "*kumi lach*," the tone is informal, according to both Bloch and Falk, and means something like "Come on, let's go!"[108] The energy and emotion in this call is clear in Section B where Helfman imagines what the actual exclamation sounds like.

Helfman's choice of texts does set the scene, as the Hebrew in 2:11 tells us that the winter is over and the time of the turtledove has arrived. However, the pastoral scene painted in the full version of these verses is not emphasized in this setting. Rather, the different sound of the voice of the woman and of the man is the focus.

In Section A, the instrumental line states the theme first, and the vocal line repeats the same melody a fifth up. The first statement starts on A, and the repetition starts on E in measure 3, and the interplay of these notes contributes to the open sound of the opening section in which the key is not decisive. The theme, however, is written in the Yishtabach mode, a Jewish mode that is a minor scale with a lowered second. This mode is not as immediately identifiably Jewish as, for example, the Ahavah Rabbah mode with its augmented second, but it does have a modal sound important to the texture of this section. When the theme is repeated in the vocal line, the accompaniment further contributes to the open sound by sustaining chords in quartal harmony in measures 4-6.

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[107] Bloch and Bloch, 154.
[108] Ibid.; Falk, Poem 9.

After the vocal line says "*Ana dodi*," the middle part of the theme, measures 4-6, is sung on an "ah," as if the woman is lovingly remembering the sound of her lover's voice. The texture changes in measure 8 as the text changes to recall the exact words her lover spoke. The accompaniment is now a succession of rolling triadic chords, and the richness of the texture paints the pastoral scene the text refers to. The rolling chords contribute to the woman's dream-like revelry, as when she interrupted the text to sing on "ah."

The lack of harmonic progression and the regularity of the rolling chords allows the rhyme in the Hebrew to come out clearly and provide a natural structure to the phrase. In the Hebrew, the "ee" sound of the *chiriq* vowel, transliterated with a letter "i," is emphasized in this text, with the words *kumi*, *rayati*, *yafati*, *ulchi*, *ki*, *hineh*, *hazamir*, and *higia*. The "ee" sound propels the phrase forward, and the section comes to a half cadence in measure 17 on the "gi" of *higia*, propelling the phrase into Section B.

In Section B the character of the piece changes drastically. The texture is not dream-like, and the sound is not open. The strong downbeat in each measure of the accompaniment drives the melody, and the piece is clearly in A major from the downbeat of measure 18. This section is full of emotional energy. The change in character illustrates the actual sound of the man's call to his lover, as remembered by the woman as she sighs on "ah" in Section A.

The vocal line in this section is more attentive to the sound of the consonants than the sound vowels. The strength of the downbeat of each measure allows the "k" of *kumi* to explode, as in measures 18, 19, and 20. The sound of the entire section therefore is more harsh, which is Helfman's depiction of a man's call to his lover.

To end Section B, Helfman creates a three-note motive and repeats it three times, beginning in measure 28. However, the text does not finish its full phrase with "*ulchi lach.*" The section ends on a half cadence on "*ulchi*" and immediately returns to the text and melodic theme of Section A in measure 31. The sudden end of Section B and beginning of Section A1 seems to imply that the woman's memory of her beloved's call is interrupted, as she snaps back into the present. Again in Section A1 she revels in the memory, singing on "ah" in measures 33-35, but we do not hear the man calling out to her again. The openness of the sound returns in A1, but this time the vocal line is in A Yishtabach rather than E Yishtabach as in measures 4-6 in Section A. Section A1 clearly resolves on A in measure 38 to signal the end of the episode.

Helfman's setting of "*Ana Dodi*" is a study of the musical expression of character. In interpreting this passage, Helfman offers his interpretation of the Song itself as a narrative story featuring two distinct characters. To do this, Helfman again approaches the musical line with creative freedom. He changes the texture of the musical accompaniment from open sustained chords and long legato lines to a driving rhythm to illustrate the different voices of the man and the woman. He plays with the Hebrew sounds in the text by accenting the gentle "ee" vowel sound and the harsh "k" consonant to further symbolize the nature of each character. His composition emphasizes the interaction of the characters in *Shir HaShirim* in order to engage the audience in the story.

In Chapter I, Gerald Cohen described how every word in a biblical text is overflowing with meaning because of the long Jewish tradition of study and commentary. Modern composers have the unique challenge to express the many layers of meaning ascribed even to just one word in the text. Helfman relishes the challenge and in both of

these compositions successfully creates an engaging musical line in order to display his rich interpretation of the text. Uncovering the layers of meaning in the text shows modern Jews how they can connect to these ancient words. With an independent musical line, art song allows the composer to reveal the complexity of a text. Through his compositions, Helfman shows exactly why *Shir HaShirim* is a love story like no other.

VI. Conclusion

Composers in Palestine and the United States in the 1920s-1950s employed their classical music training to express their individual identification with and interpretations of *Shir HaShirim*. By focusing close attention on the words and imagery and exploiting the capacity of the musical line to act as an additional illustrative element, the three composers considered in the preceding chapters created sophisticated musical interpretations of the text. In their compositions, all three composers successfully followed the example of the German art song composers of the 19th century in the following ways: the music supports the composer's interpretation of the text; the music provides additional interpretation inspired by the text; and the music helps create texture and atmosphere by illustrating the text.

In each piece, the composer's interpretation of the text is clear because the music supports the interpretation and enhances the message of the text. In Weinberg's aria, Chapter 2 of *Shir HaShirim* becomes a Zionist declaration. However, Leah's decision to immigrate to Palestine does not come easily. Within the text, Weinberg sees the promise of the future as well as remembrance of the past. He illustrates this duality by assigning both the future and the past a different mode. As the text moves between the future and the past the mode changes as well and Weinberg illustrates Leah's internal dialogue. In each of Lavry's settings, the music highlights portions of text central to his interpretation. In "*Shchorah Ani*," Lavry creates a theme to highlight certain sections of text. When the theme repeats at the end of the piece, Lavry emphasizes the text describing the woman's embarrassment at her own behavior in order to offer his interpretation of the woman's

words. In "*Tsror Hamor*," Lavry focuses on the sections of the text that depict the land of Israel in order to express his growing identification with the land. Both in the Introduction and later in the piece, the swell of the harp illustrates the intense waft of the spices and the ascent of the violins illustrates the leaping of the gazelles. In Helfman's "Set Me as a Seal Upon Thy Heart," the musical accompaniment is as intense as the words, increasing the passion of Helfman's interpretation of this passage from Chapter 8 of the Song. In "*Ana Dodi*," the juxtaposition of the long legato lines of the first section against the staccato driving rhythm of the second section illustrates the difference between the speech of a woman and a man. Helfman expressed the dialogue between characters in the piece by changing the style of the music supporting each character's words.

The music also provides interpretation inspired by the text in these selections. In Weinberg's aria, we know that Leah has resolved her internal struggle only when the two modes used to illustrate the future and the past join in harmony within the same phrase toward the end of the piece. Without that musical clue, Leah's struggle might seem to continue. In both of Lavry's pieces, the music serves as an additional voice, creating dialogue without adding additional text. The direct or indirect dialogue created is integral in each piece to understanding Lavry's interpretation of the text. In "*Shchorah Ani*," the woman's direct appeal to the daughters of Jerusalem creates a context for her admission of guilt. In "*Tsror Hamor*," the indirect dialogue created in the music implies the presence of an observer in the lovers' world. In "Set Me as a Seal Upon Thy Heart," Helfman employs a modal detour to offer additional interpretation. He introduces Ahavah Rabbah momentarily at the place in the text where, some commentators argue, God's

name is mentioned. Helfman does not set the specific word, "*shalhevetyah*," in the piece, but his use of the prayer mode Ahavah Rabbah may imply his take on the presence of God in the text. In "*Ana Dodi*," the music illustrates the woman's sigh to indicate her memory of her lover's voice. Such a moment of revelry is not indicated in the text, but in order to serve his interpretation, Helfman adds the moment musically.

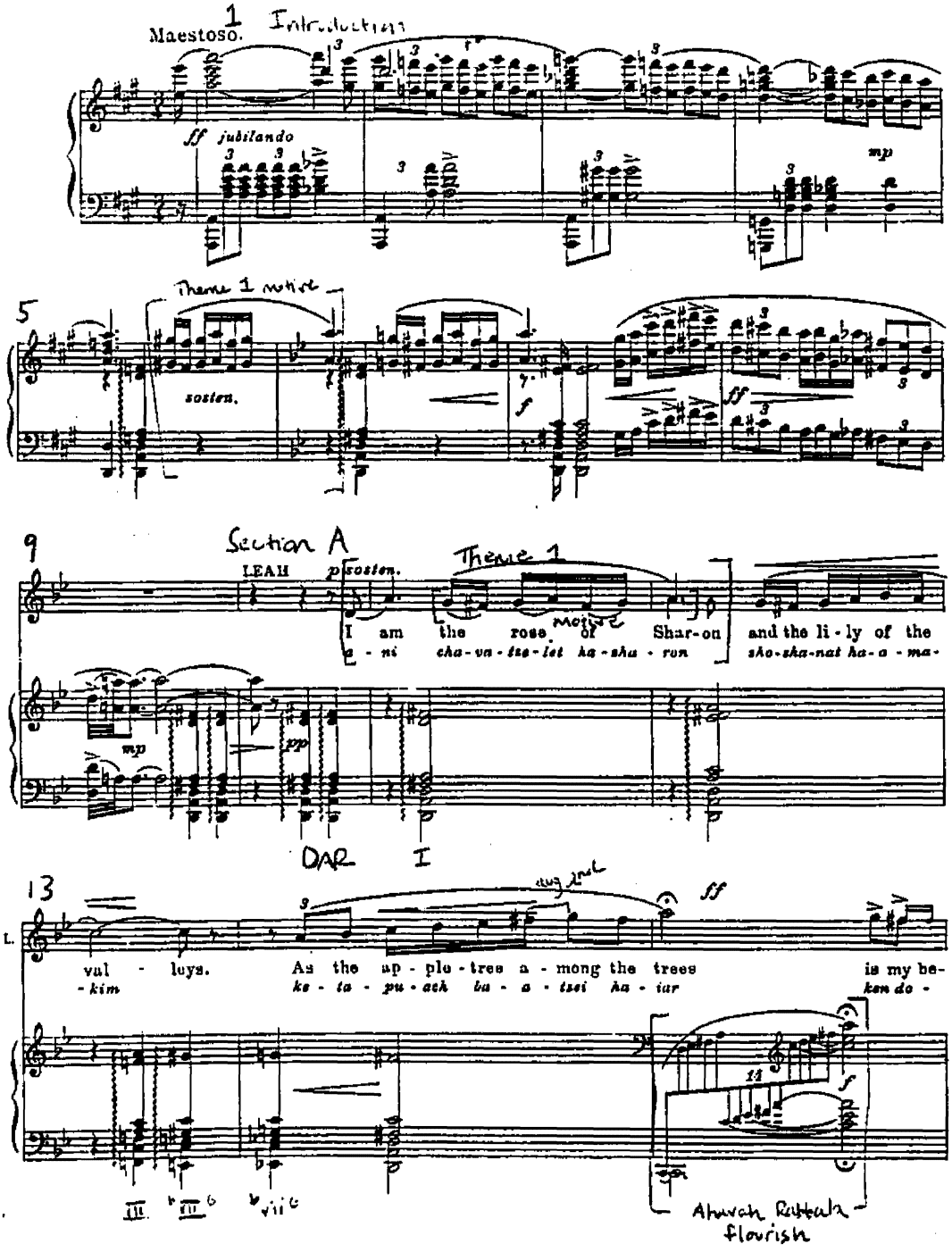
Finally, the music adds depth to these pieces as a whole by illustrating the images evoked by the text. Weinberg creates an emotional ascent up the scale to prepare for a high flourish on the text "*cholat ahavah ani* (I am sick with love)." In "*Shchorah Ani*," Lavry creates an intricate and sensual motive for the word "*navah* (comely)." In "*Tsror Hamor*," the accompaniment changes into a flurry of 32nd notes to illustrate the text "*Brach dodi* (Hurry my love)." Helfman creates an intense ascent up the scale to illustrate "fire" and a quick descent back down the scale to illustrate "floods" in "Set Me as a Seal Upon Thy Heart." In "*Ana Dodi*," the accent of the musical line falls on the harsh "k" of "*kumi lach*," illustrating the intensity of the command to "rise."

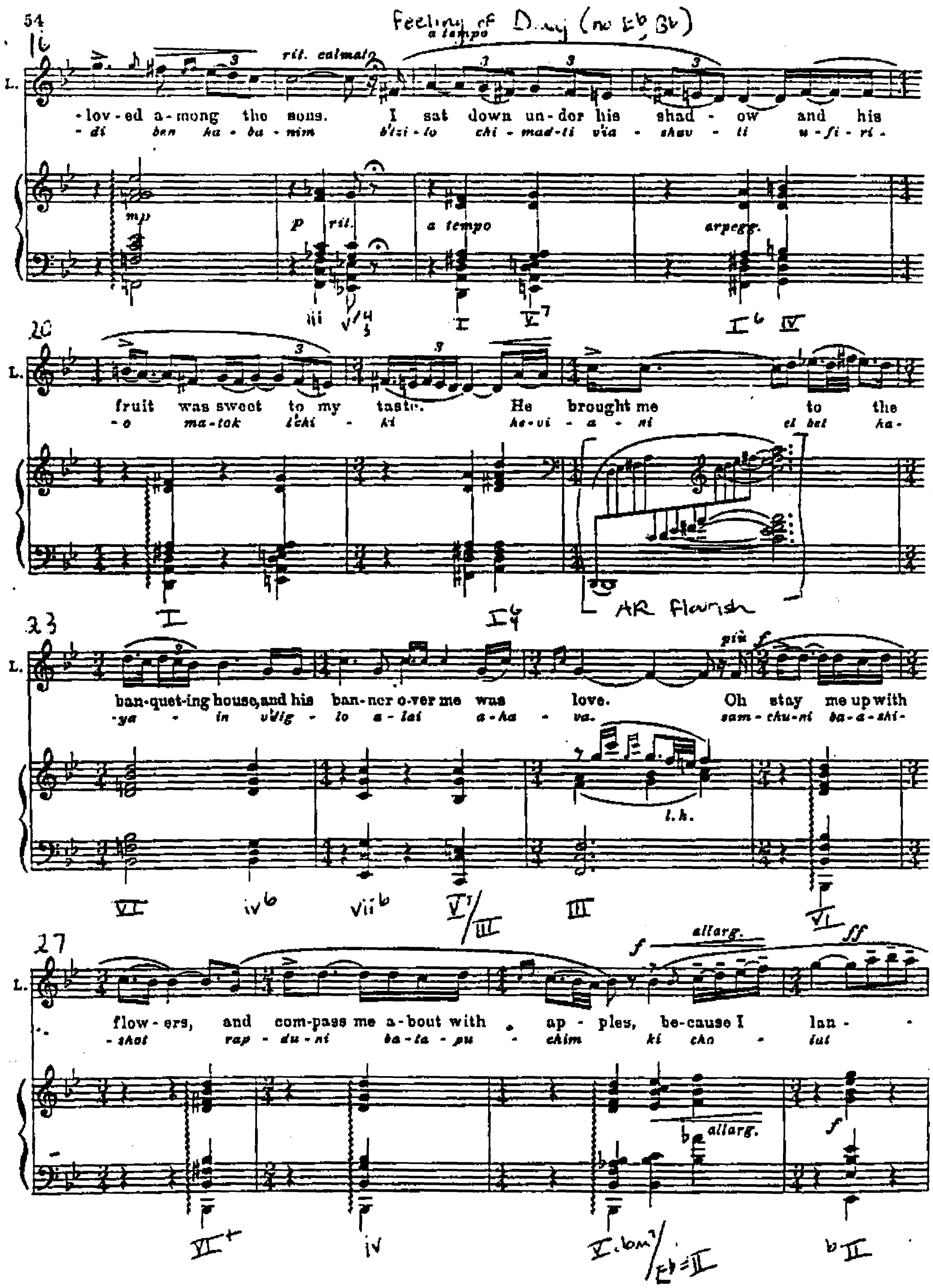
Through the text and the musical line, the composers offer very different interpretations of *Shir HaShirim*. For Weinberg and Lavry, the depiction of the land of Israel in the Song reflected their love for Palestine and Zionism. Setting *Shir HaShirim* texts served the perceived mission of classical musicians in Palestine to help create a national culture. All Jews living in Palestine could identify with the Song's love for the land of Israel. For Helfman, on the other hand, the passion of love itself as portrayed in the Song motivated him to composer these settings. Helfman, like many modern Jews, saw some element of his own experience in *Shir HaShirim*. Through the music, he explored the layers of meaning in the text's rich imagery to identify his connection.

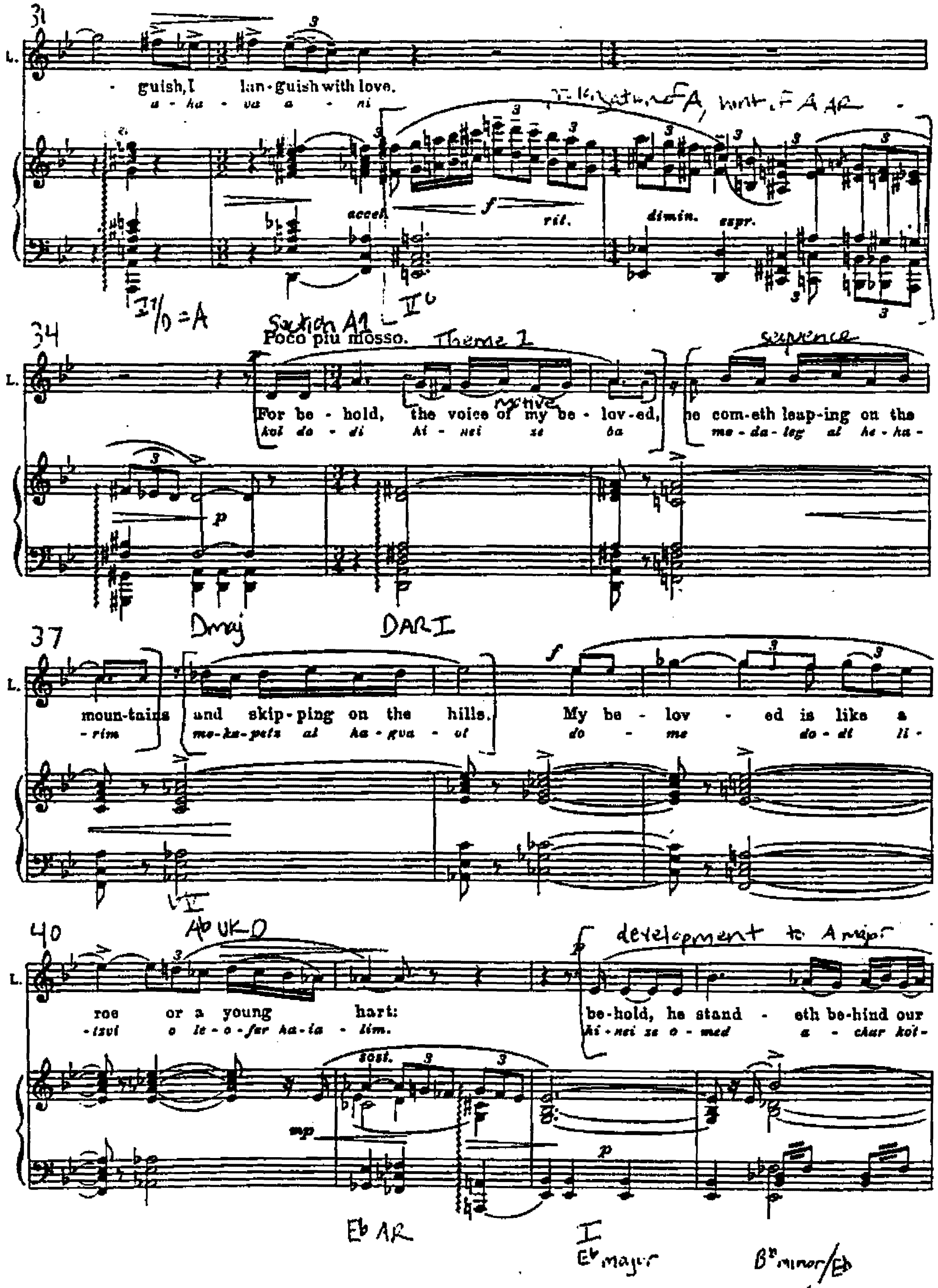
The legacy of biblical love poetry in 20th century art song is that connection to the text, whether ideological or experiential. Both modern Jewish composers and biblical scholars see themselves reflected in the Song's description of the passion of love. That connection to the text inspired composers to write sophisticated and beautiful art song. Musical expression of *Shir HaShirim* texts may be as ancient as the Masorites' cantillation or the festival banquets' celebratory songs, but the Songs is explored and represented most deeply in 20th century art song. The vivid illustration of the imagery and language of *Shir HaShirim* is the contribution of modern composers to this continuing musical tradition.

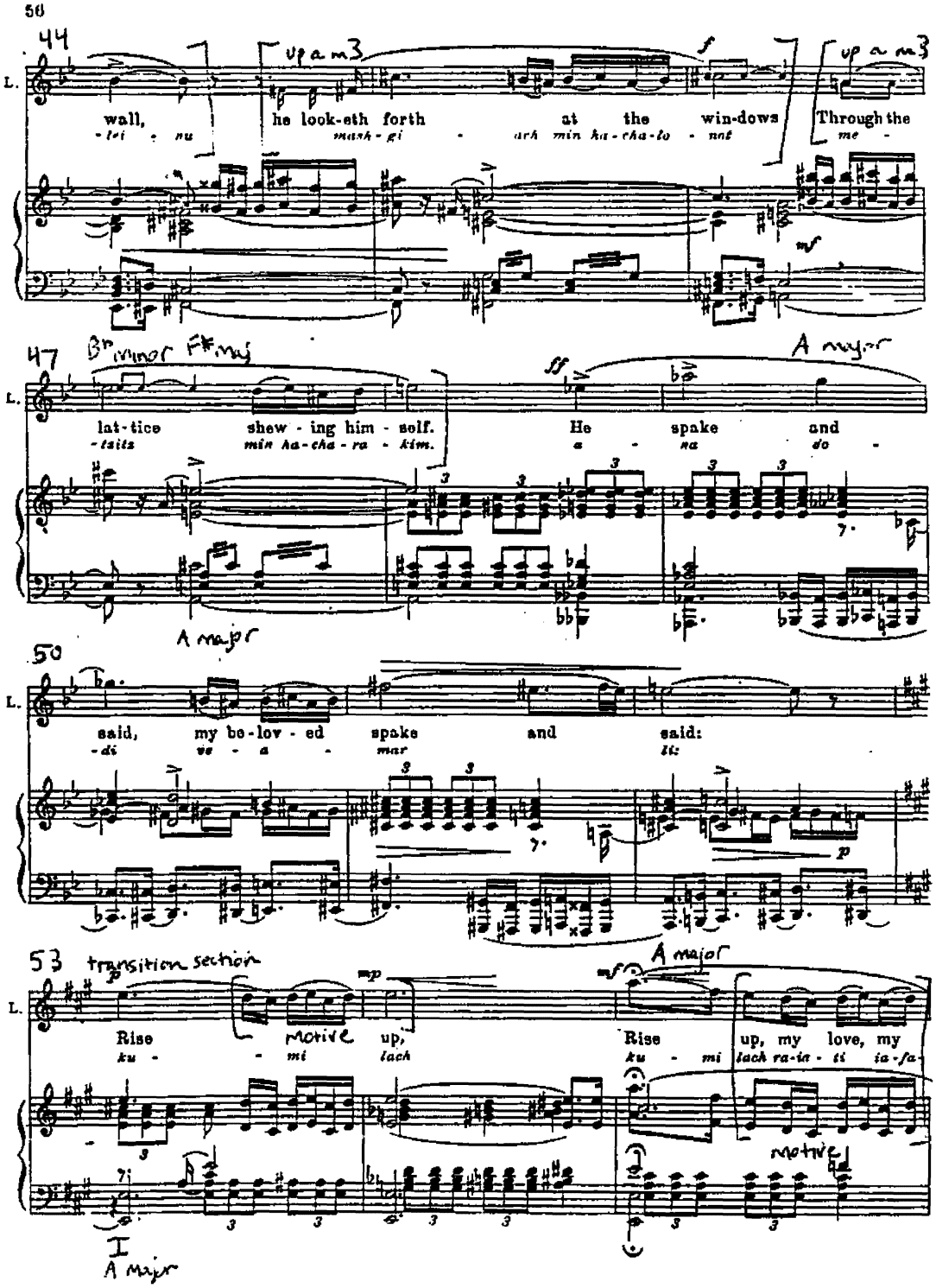
Example 1

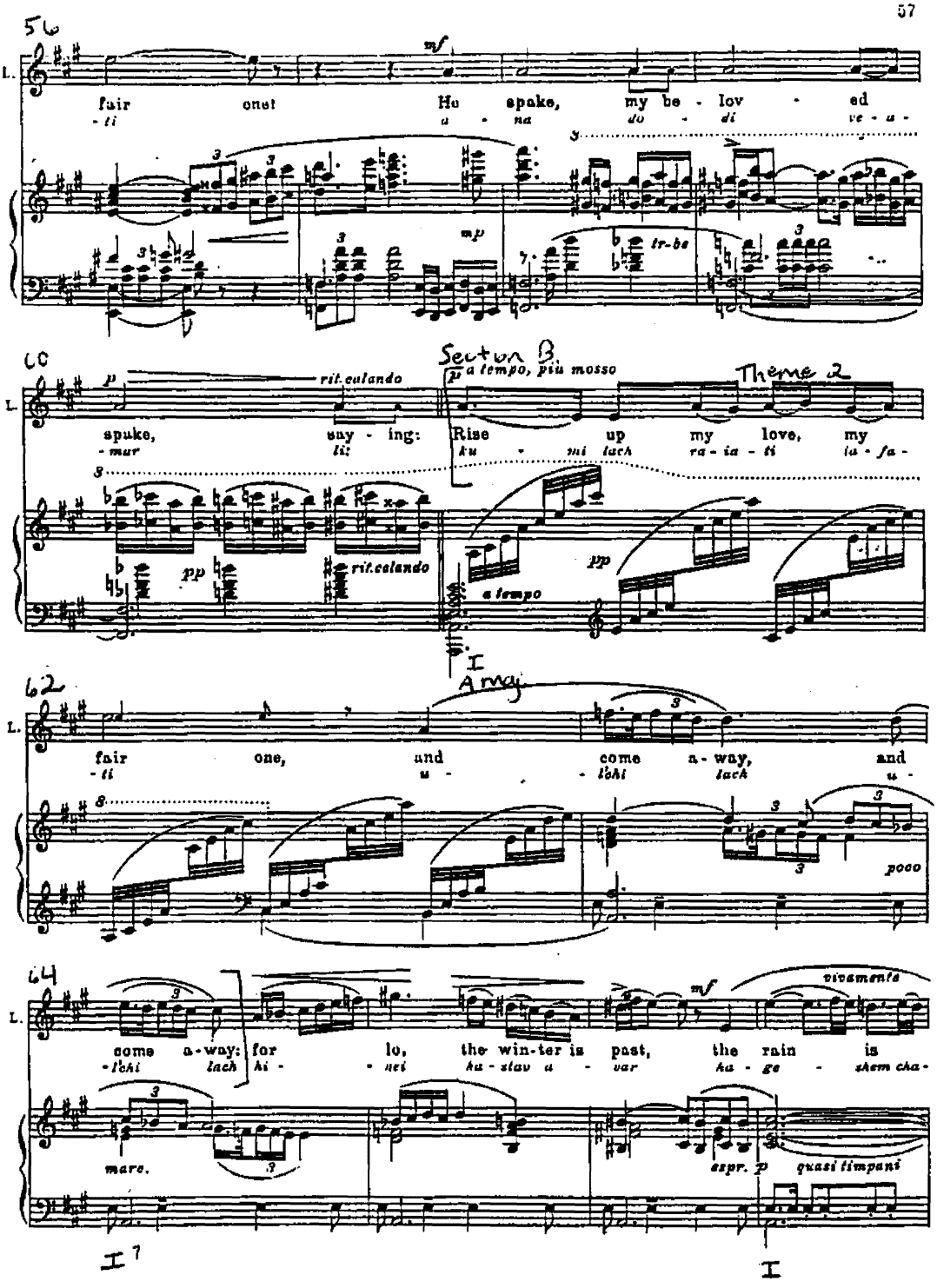
Aria (Song of Songs).

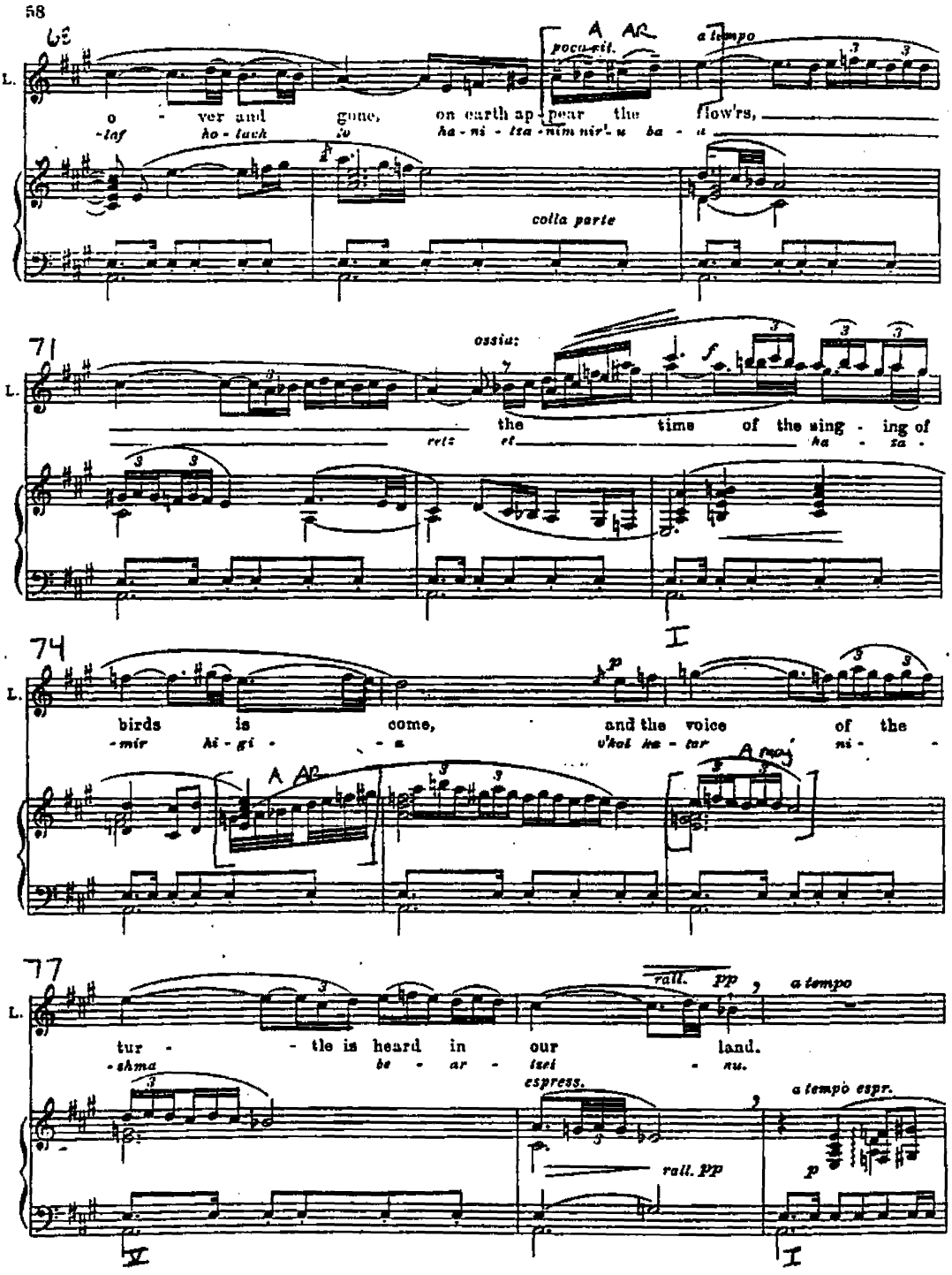


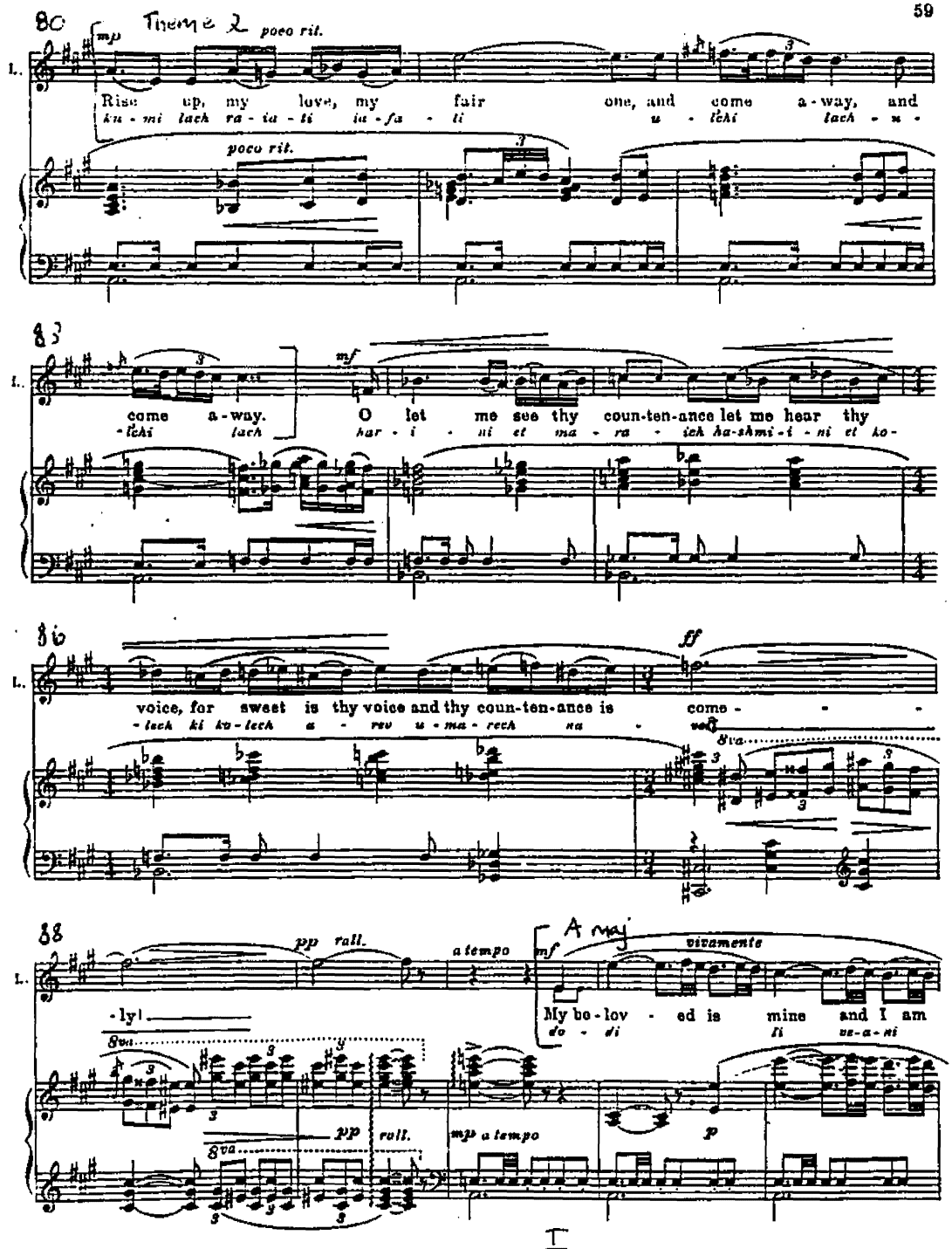

54
Feeling of D maj (no E♭ B♭)
rit. calmato
a tempo
-lov-ed a-mong the sons. I sat down un-der his shad-ow and his
-di ben ha-ba-nim b'tzi-lo chi-mad-ti v'ia-shav-ti u-fi-ri-
mp
p rit.
a tempo
arpegg.
iii V 6/4
I V7
I6 IV
20
fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the
-o ma-tok l'chi-ki he-vi-a-ni el bet ha-
I
I 6/4
AR Flourish
23
ban-quet-ing house, and his ban-ner o-ver me was love. Oh stay me up with
-ya-in v'dig-lo a-lai a-ha-va. sam-chu-ni ba-a-shi-
più f
l.h.
VI iv6 vii6 V7/III III VI
27
flow-ers, and com-pass me a-bout with ap-ples, be-cause I lan-
-shot rap-du-ni ba-ta-pu-chim ki cho-lat
f allarg. ff
allarg.
f
VI+ iv I bm7/E♭=II ♭II


guish, I lan-guish with love.
a - ha - va a - ni
accel. f rit. dimin. espr.
Poco più mosso.
For be - hold, the voice of my be - lov-ed, he com-eth leap-ing on the
kol do - di hi - nei ze ba me - da - leg al he - ha -
p
moun-tains and skip-ping on the hills. My be - lov - ed is like a
- rim me - ka - petz al ha - gva - ot do - me do - di li -
f
roe or a young hart: be-hold, he stand - eth be-hind our
- tzvi o le - o - fer ha - ia - lim. hi - nei ze o - med a - char kot -
sost. mp p

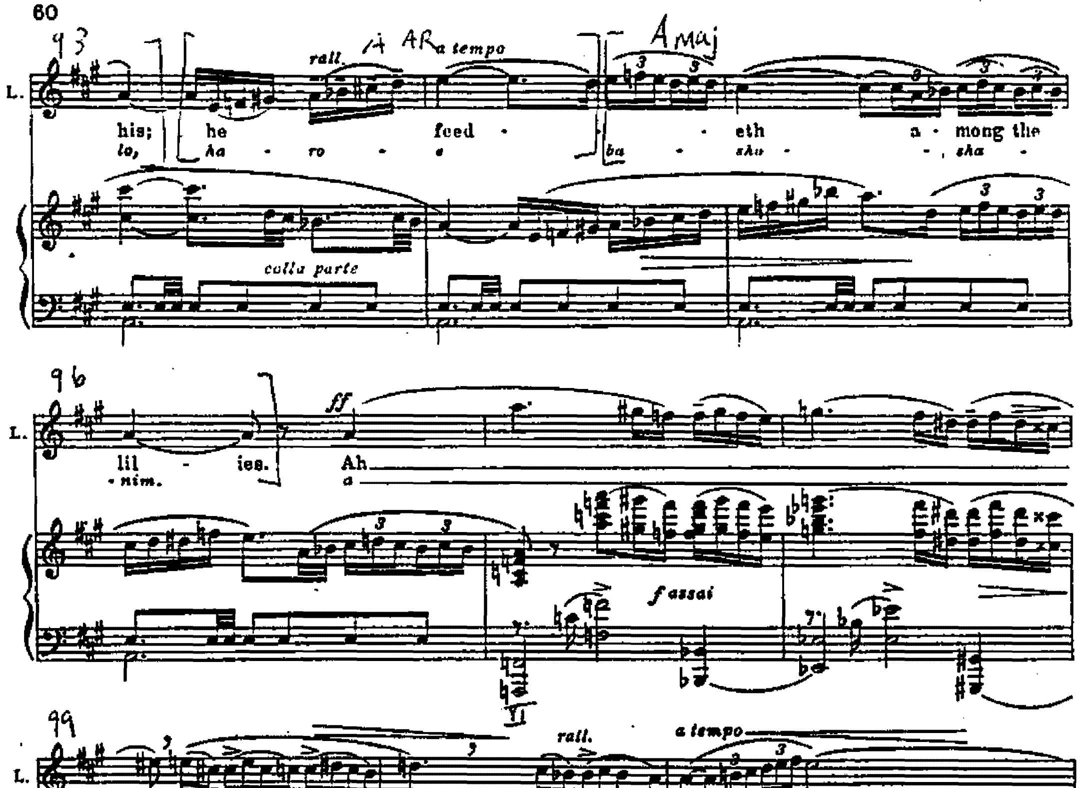

44
up a m3
up a m3
L.
wall, he look-eth forth at the win-dows Through the
-ței nu mash-gi urh min ha-cha-lo nné me -
47
B♭ minor F♯ maj
A major
lat-tice shew-ing him-self. He spake and
-tsits min ha-cha-ra -kim. a -na do -
A major
50
said, my be-lov-ed spake and said:
-di ve -a -mar ti:
53
transition section
A major
Rise motive up, Rise up, my love, my
ku - mi lach ku - mi lach ra-ia - ti ia-fa-
motive
I
A major


56
mf
fair one! He spake, my be - lov - ed
- ti u - na do - di ve - u -
mp
tr-be
60
Section B
rit.calando
a tempo, più mosso
Theme 2
spake, say - ing: Rise up my love, my
- mur li! ku - mi lach ra - ia - ti ia - fa -
pp
rit.calando
a tempo
I
Amaj
62
fair one, and come a - way, and
- ti u - lchi lach u -
poco
64
mf
vivamente
come a - way: for lo, the win - ter is past, the rain is
- lchi lach hi - nei ku - stav a - var ha - ge - shem cha -
mare.
espr. p
quasi timpani
I7
I


62
A AR
poco rit.
a tempo
L.
o - ver and gone, on earth ap - pear the flow'rs,
-laf ho - tsuch lo ha - ni - tza - nim nir'u ba - a
colla parte
71
ossia:
L.
the time of the sing - ing of
retz et ha - za -
I
74
L.
birds is come, and the voice of the
-mir hi - gi - - u v'kol ha - tor ni - -
A AR
A rico
77
L.
rall. pp
a tempo
tur - - tle is heard in our land.
-shma be - ar - tzei - nu.
espress.
a tempo espr.
rall. pp
p
V
I


80
Theme 2
mp
poco rit.
L.
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come a-way, and
ku-mi lach ra-ia-ti ia-fa-ti u-lchi lach-u-
poco rit.
83
mf
come a-way. O let me see thy coun-ten-ance let me hear thy
-lchi lach har-i-ni et ma-ra-ich ha-shmi-i-ni et ko-
86
ff
voice, for sweet is thy voice and thy coun-ten-ance is come-
-lach ki ko-lech a-rev u-ma-rech na-
8va
88
pp rall.
a tempo
mf
A maj
vivamente
-ly!
My be-lov-ed is mine and I am
do-di li ve-a-ni
8va
pp
rall.
mp a tempo
p

I


L.
rall.
a tempo
his; he feed - eth a - mong the
lo, Aa - ro - e ba - sha - - , sha -
colla parte
ff
lil - ies. Ah
-nim. a
f assai
rall.
a tempo
Ah
a
trillo
p
ff
pp ten. ad libit.
8va
rall. pp
a tempo
mf
pp calando

"Aria" from [illegible]

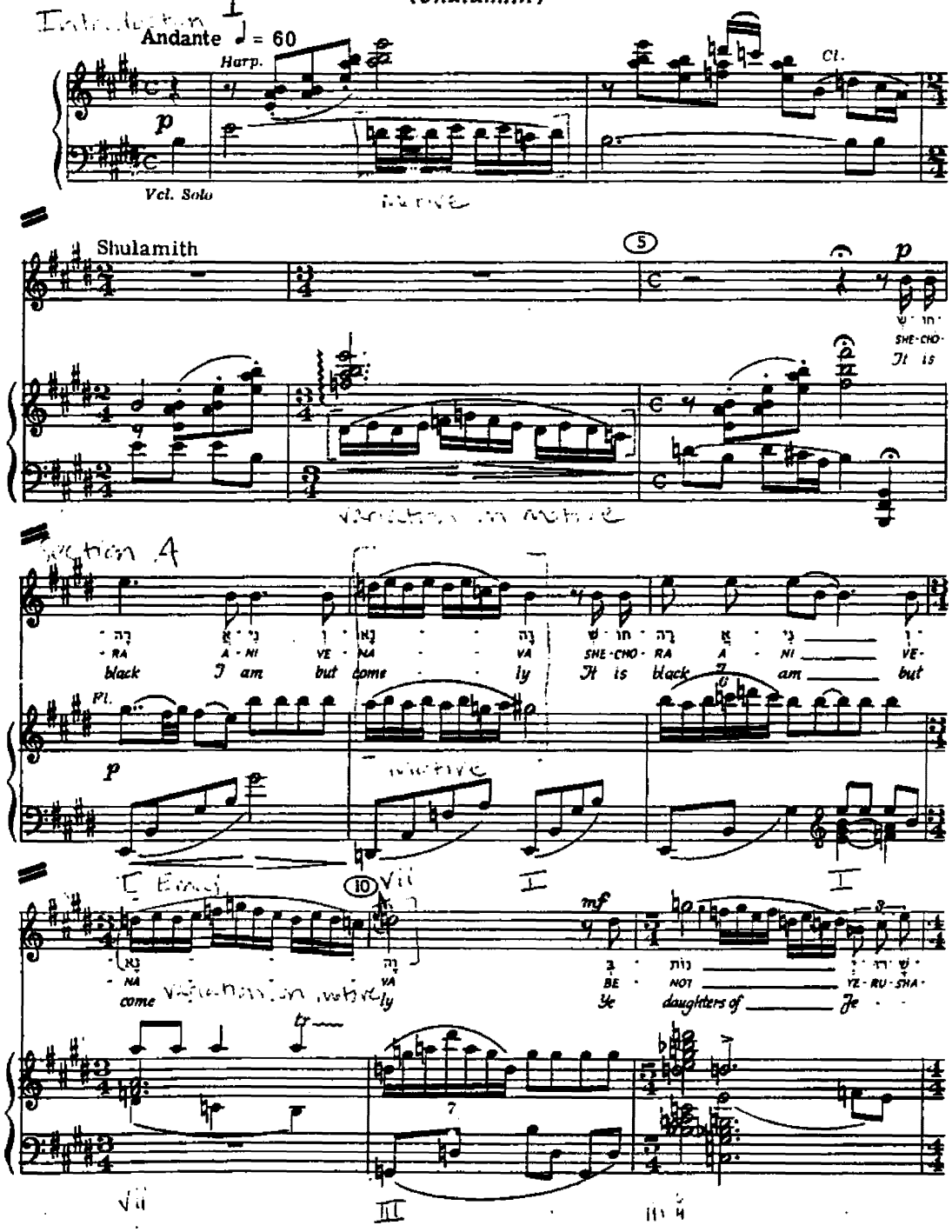
Section	Introduction	A	A1	transition	B
Measures	1-9	10-34	35-52	53-60	61-107
Key	E♭R -> D maj -> D♭R	D♭R -> E♭ maj -> A maj -> D♭R	D♭R -> A♭ [illegible] -> E♭ 4R -> A maj	A maj	A maj
Use of major	Theme 1 motive in m: 6	m: 35 is pleading; m: 17-19 is reminiscing	m: 42, sets up new use of major	m. 53, rise of commanding presence	m: 61, new theme in major, emergence of [illegible]
Use of [illegible]	m: 1-5 [illegible] use of [illegible]	m: 10, identification with [illegible]; m: 22, flourish	m: 35-37, [illegible] later	no	m 64, [illegible] of future [illegible]
succession/progression	progression	m: 10-22 = succession; m. 23-34 = progression	progression to A maj	succession	succession
pedal tone	no	no	no	no	double pedal
use of techniques	sequence, m: 1-5	no	sequence m. 35-37 and m: 42-47	no	sequence, m. 84-87
accompaniment	melody and accompaniment together in octaves [illegible] rich sound, [illegible] importance of [illegible]	chords underpin harmonic movement	exchange with melody line of Theme 1 motive	theme with melody, then movement in accompaniment with no movement in melody	texture, rolling chords and pedal tone
theme	Theme 1 motive in major	Theme 1 in opening melody line, m: 10-11	development based on sequence of Theme 1 motive	Theme 1 motive in major	Theme 2 in major

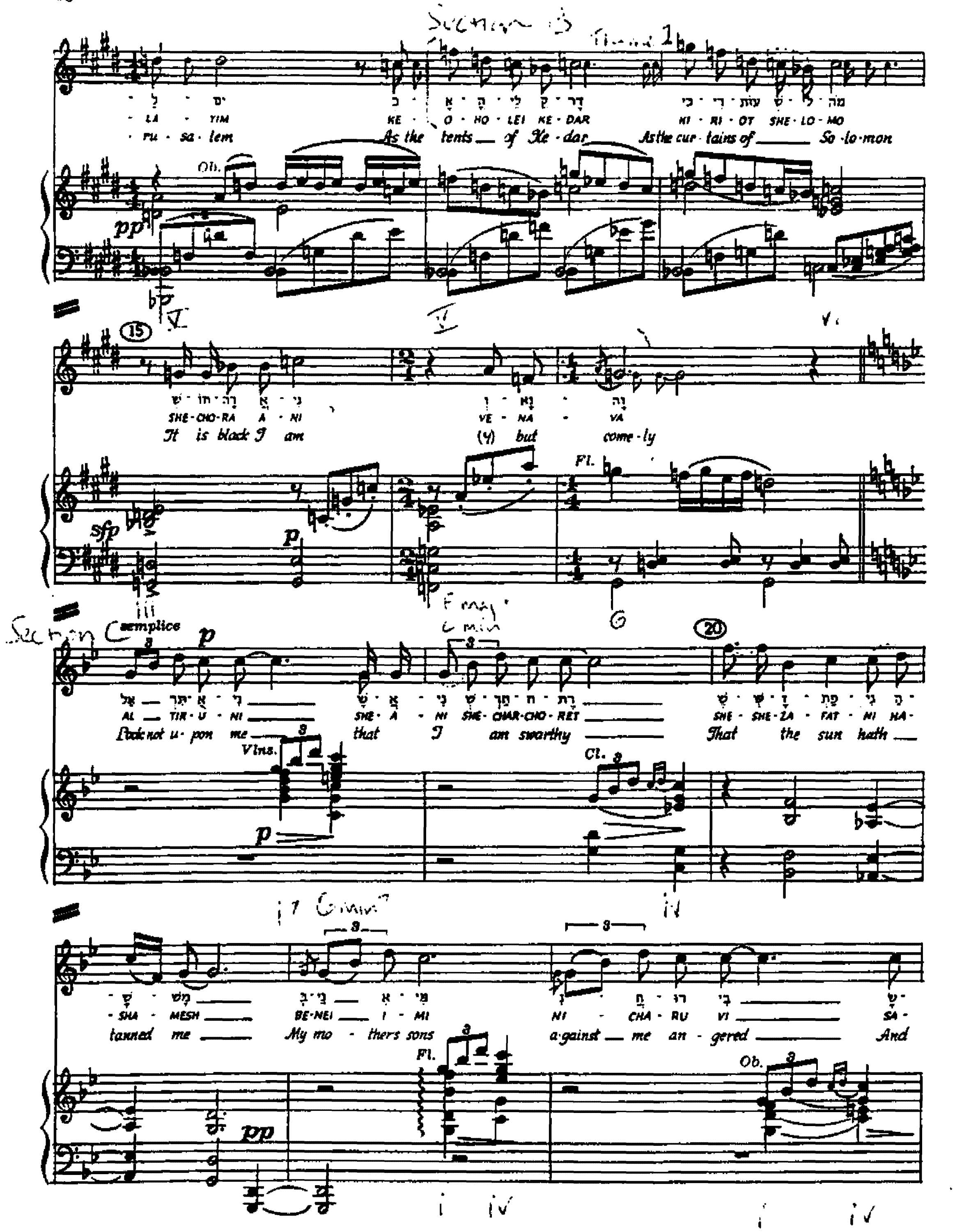
Example 2

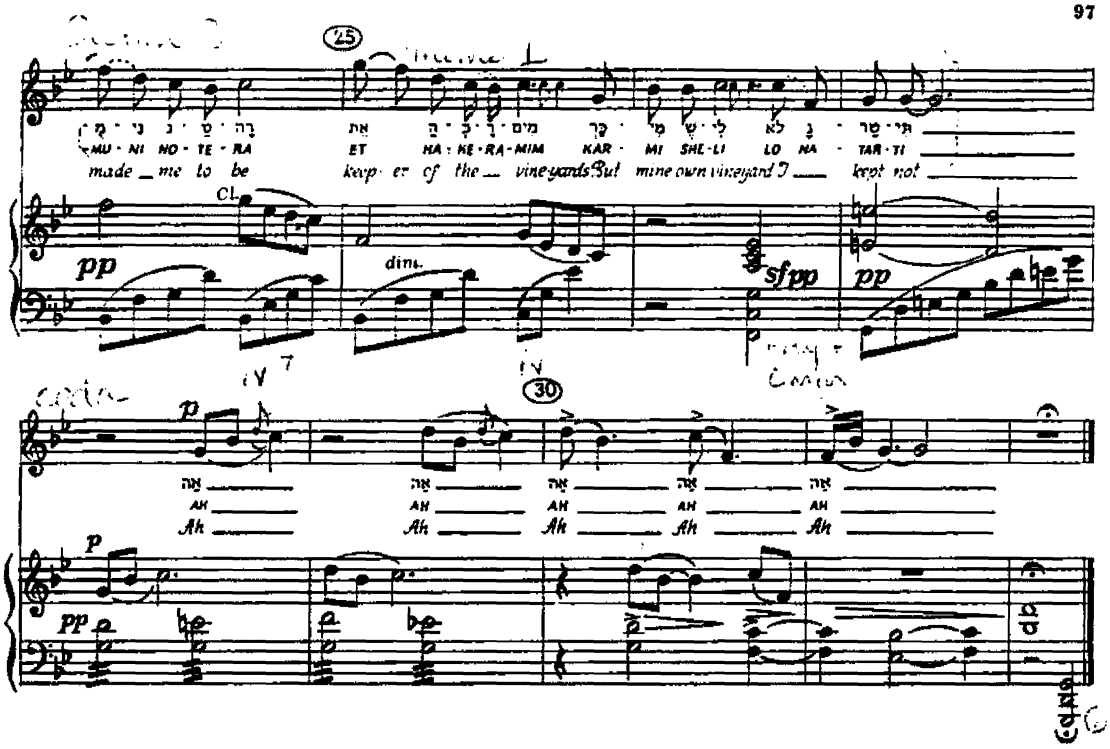
"Shchorah Ani"

14. Aria

(Shulamith)




LA - TIM
KE - O - HO - LEI KE - DAR
HI - RI - OT SHE - LO - MO
-ru - sa - lem
As the tents of Ke - dar
As the cur - tains of So - lo - mon
Ob.
15
SHE - CHO - RA A - NI
VE - NA - VA
It is black I am
(V) but
come - ly
Fl.
semplice
20
AL - TIR - U - NI
SHE - A - NI SHE - CHAR - CHO - RET
SHE - SHE - ZA - FAT - NI HA -
Look not u - pon me
that I am swarthy
That the sun hath
Vlns.
Cl.
- SHA - MESH
BE - NEI - I - MI
NI - CHA - RU VI
SA -
tanned me
My mo - thers sons
a - gainst me an - gered
And
Fl.
Ob.


25
30
CL.
pp
dim.
sfpp
pp
p
AH
Ah

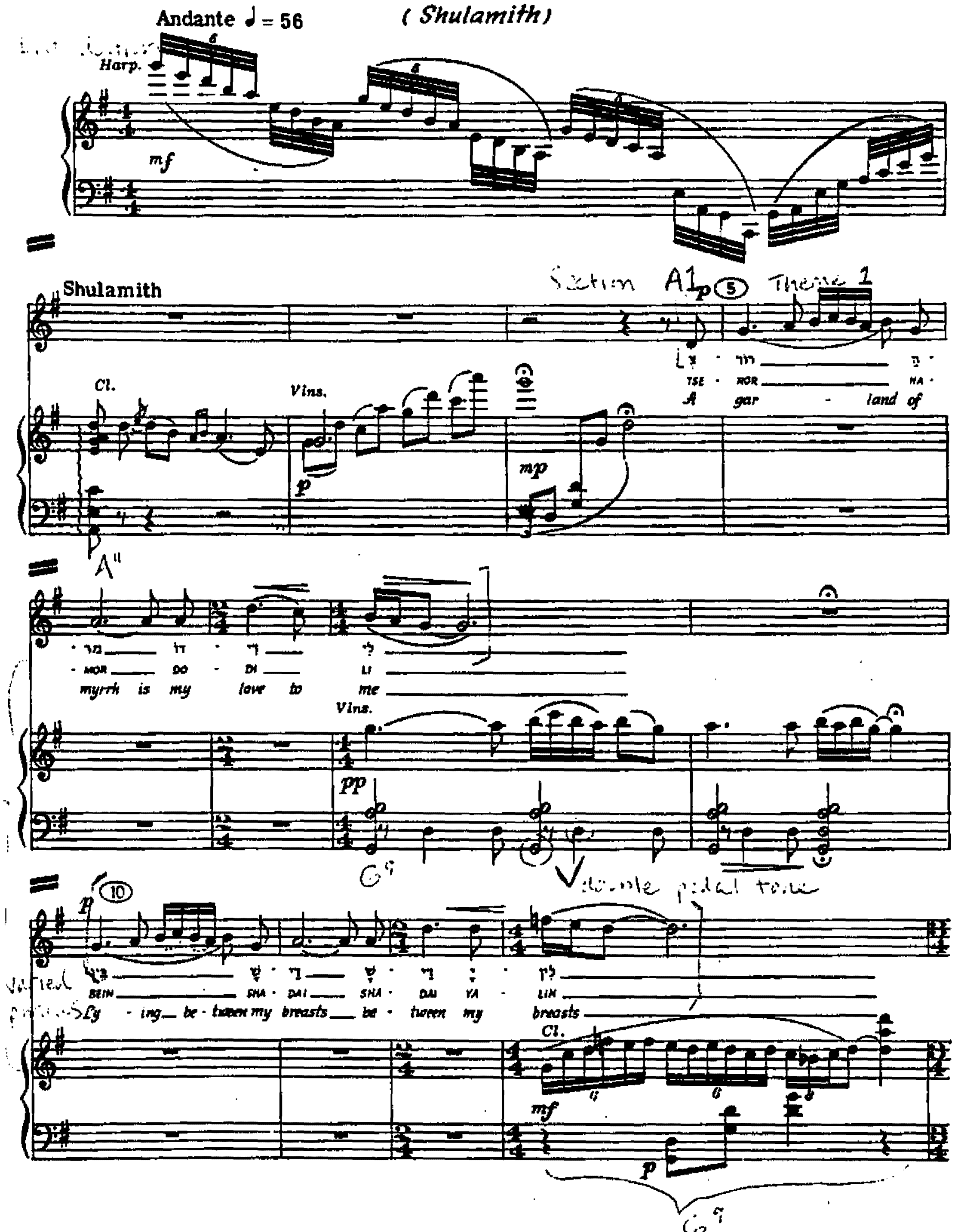
"[illegible] Aria"

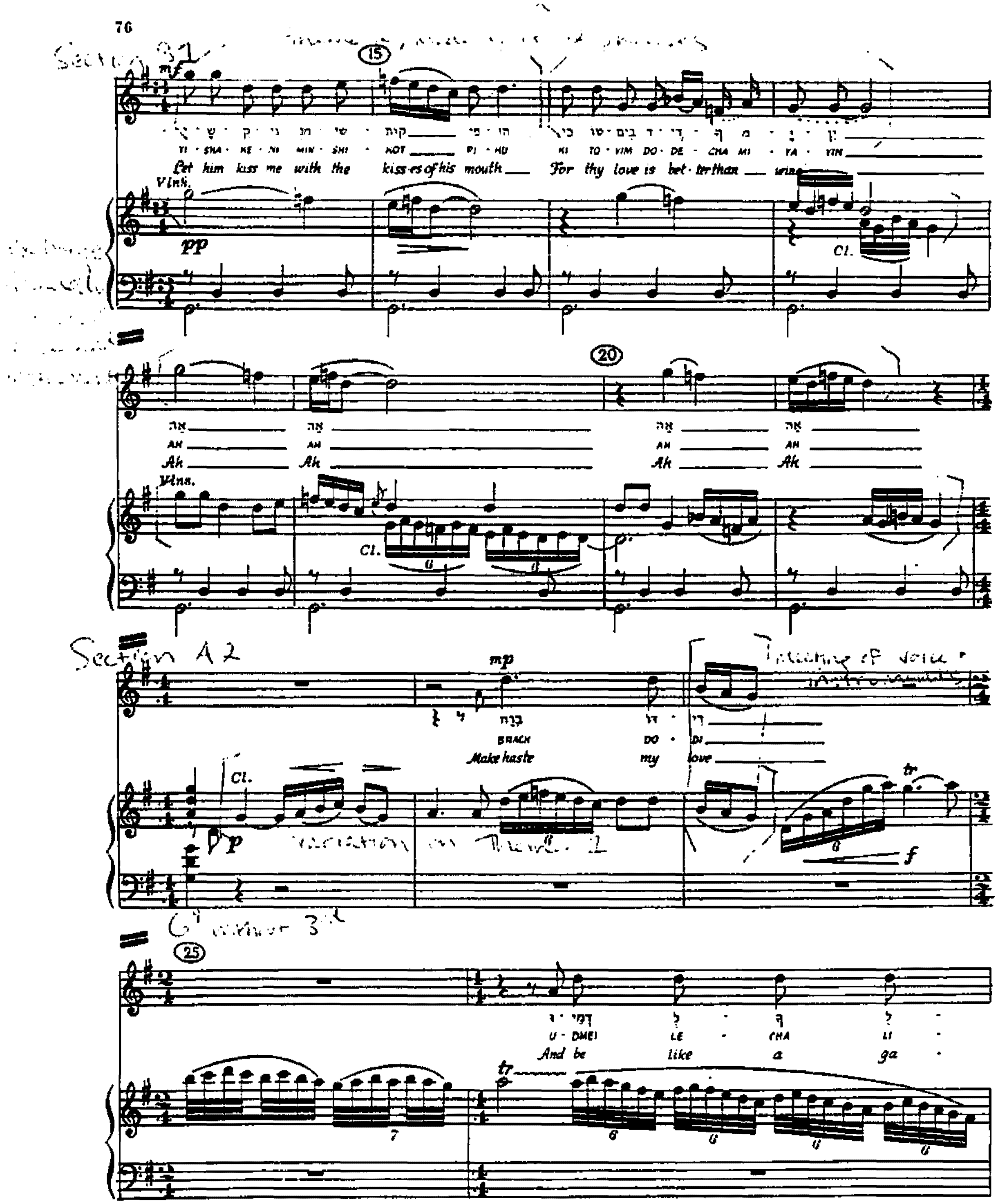
Section	Intro	A	B	C	B	coda
measures	1-5	6-12	13-17	18-23	24-27	28-32
key	E maj.	E maj → G min	G maj → C min → C min	G min	C min	G min
melodic devices	motive M: 1, 4	motive M: 7 variation on motive M: 9, 12	Theme 1 M: 13-17		Theme 1 M: 24-27	
character of musical line	sustained chords emphasize motive	emphasizes motive in M: 7, doubles motive melody in M: 9, drops away to highlight motive	flow arpeggios emphasize whole section	conversation with vocal line	flow arpeggios emphasize section	conversation with vocal line

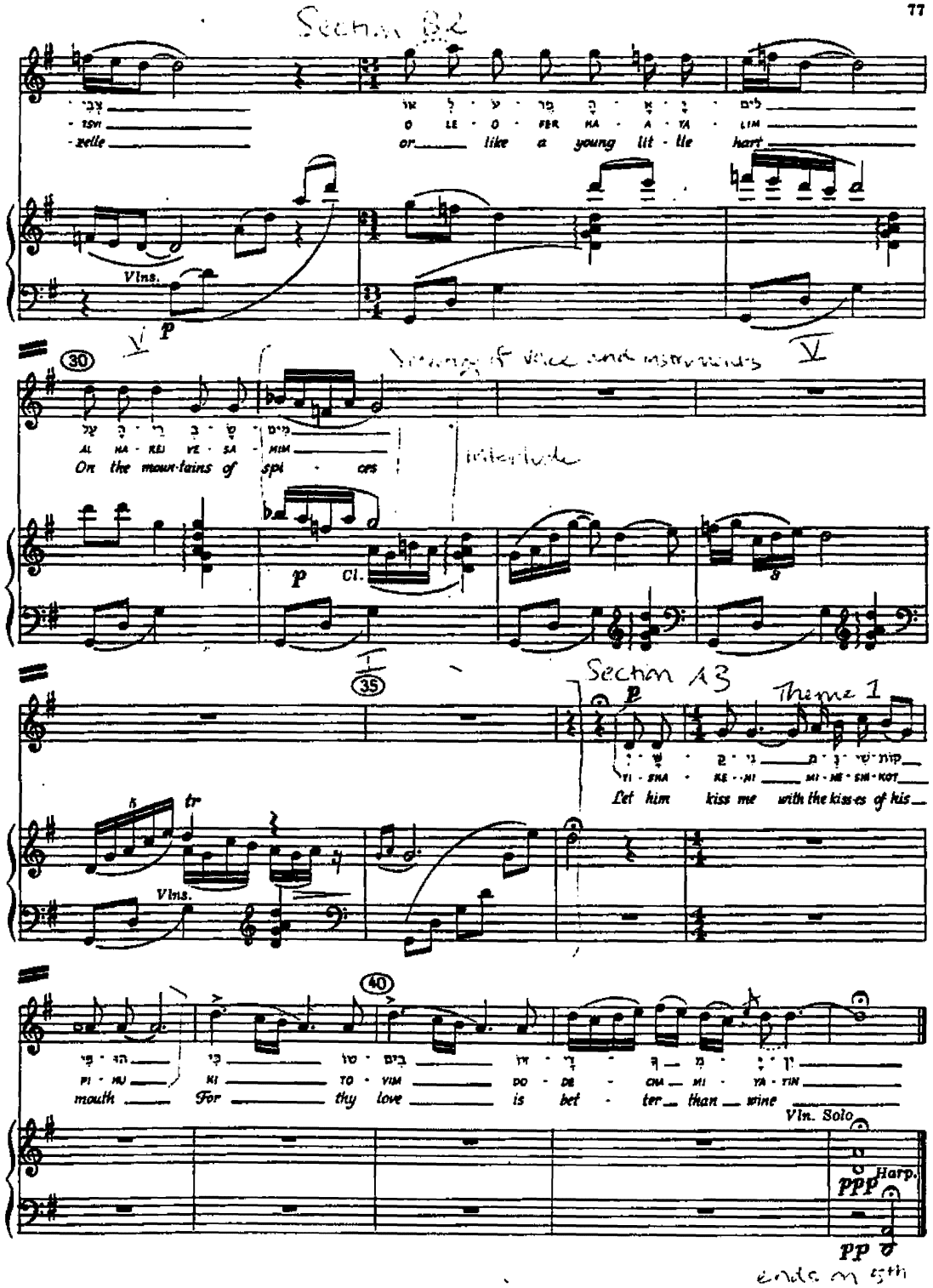
Example 3

"Tsror Hamor"

9. Aria
(Shulamith)




15
mf
TI - SHA - KE - NI MIN - SHI - KOT PI - HU KI TO - VIM DO - DE - CHA MI - YA - YIN
Let him kiss me with the kiss-es of his mouth For thy love is bet-ter than wine
Vlns.
pp
Cl.
20
AH
Ah
Vlns.
Cl.
Section A 2
mp
BRACH DO - DI
Make haste my love
Cl.
p
tr
f
25
tr
U - DMEI LE - CHA LI
And be like a ga -

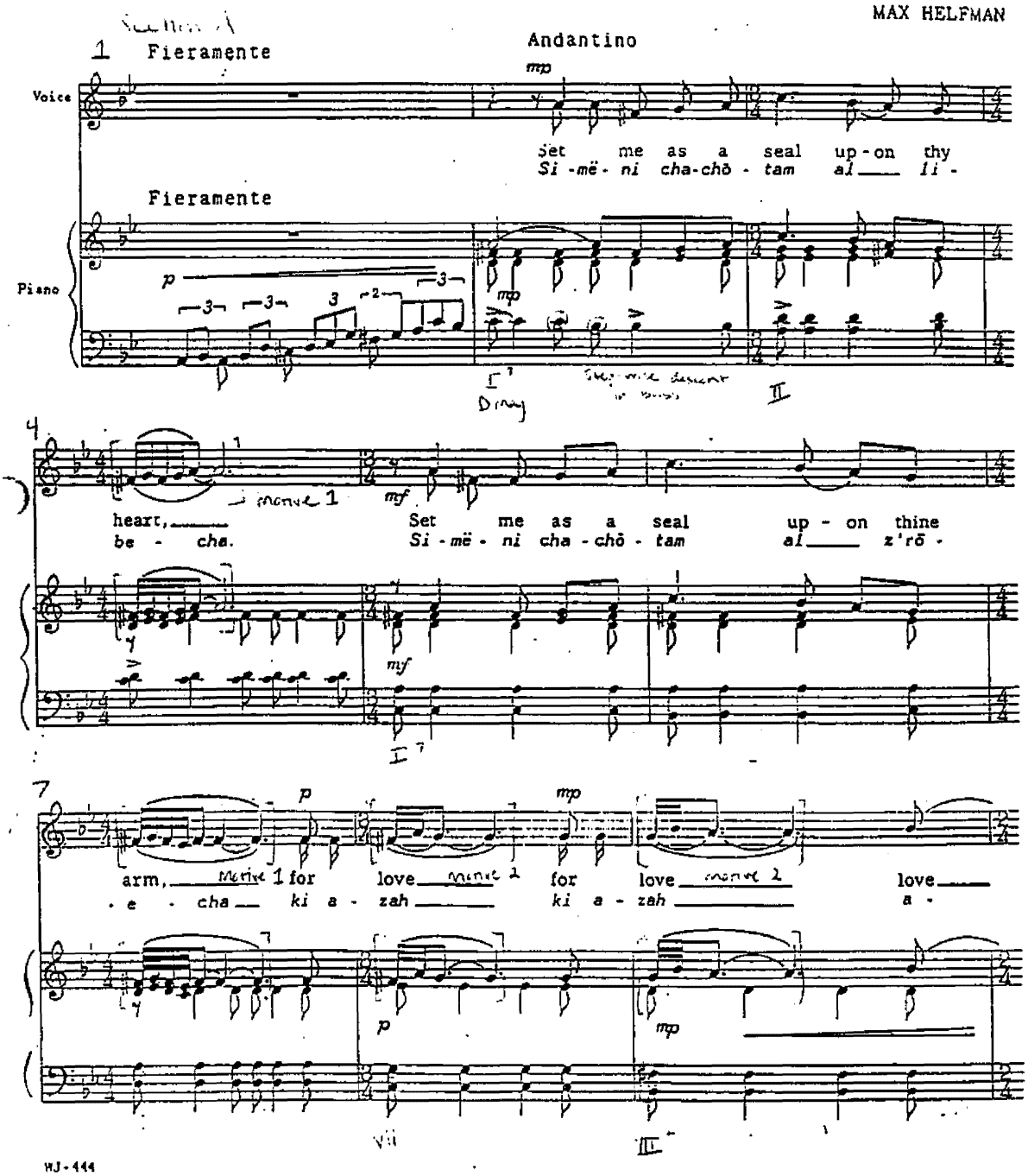

Section B2
-zelle
or like a young lit-tle hart
Vlns.
p
30
On the moun-tains of spi-ces
Interlude
p
Cl.
35
Section A3
Theme 1
p
Let him kiss me with the kiss-es of his
tr
Vlns.
40
mouth For thy love is bet-ter than wine
Vln. Solo
ppp
Harp.
pp
ends on 5th

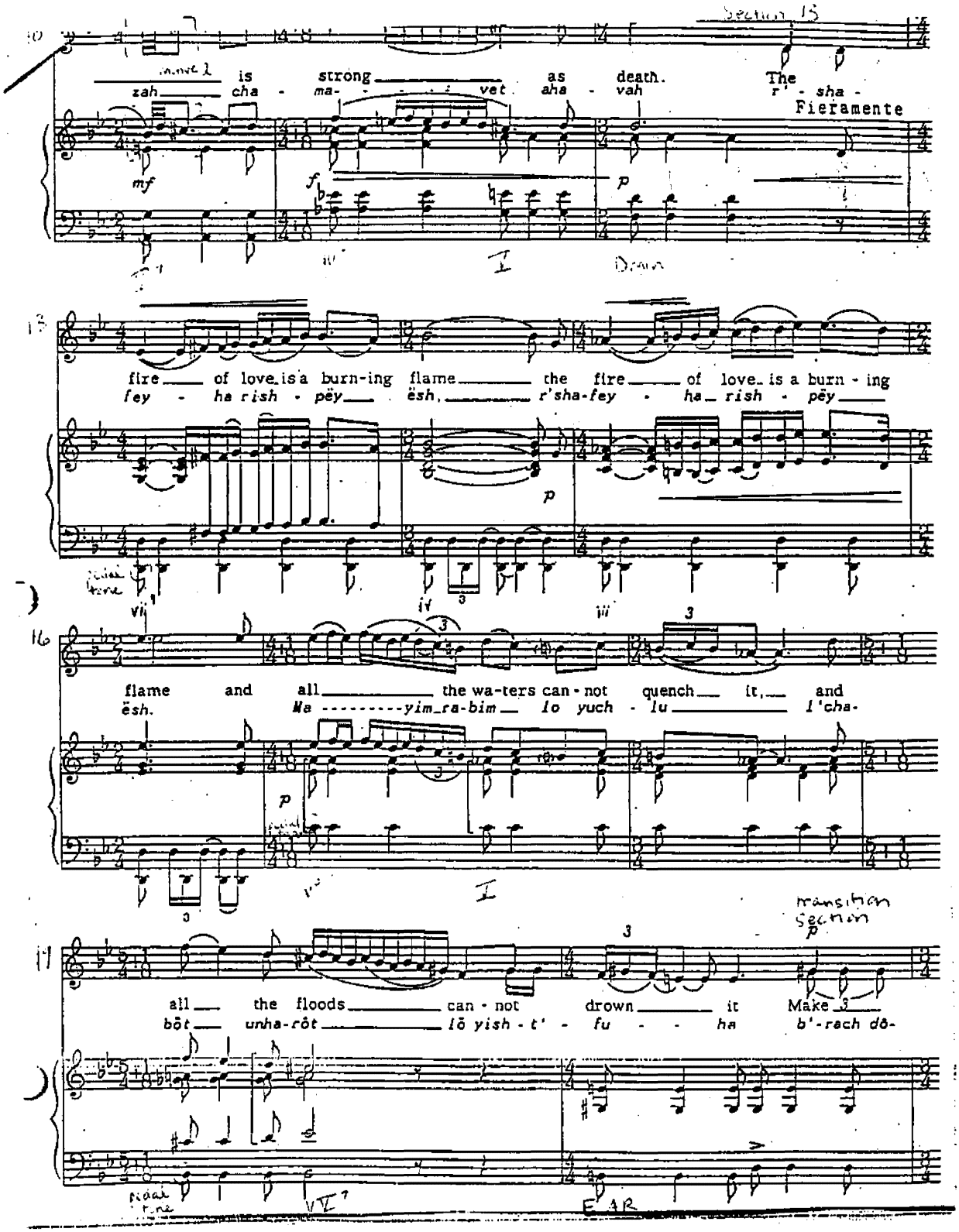
Section	Intro.	A1	B1	A2	B2	A3
measures	1-4	5-13	14-21	22-27	28-35	36-42
key	A	G	G	G	G	G → D
harmonic progression	A → G	no	no	no	no	G → D
pedal tone	no	2 bars	8 bars	no	no	no
phrasing		2 in voice 2 in instru exchange	2 in voice 2 in instru exchange	2 in voice 3 in instru no exchange	2 in voice 2 in instru no exchange	2 in voice
use of theme	no	Theme 1 in voice m:5-8; variation on Theme 1 in voice m:10-13; variation on Theme 1 in instru m:8-9	Theme 2 in voice m:14-17; variation on Theme 2 in instru m:18-21	Variation on Theme 1 in instru. m:22-24	no	1st part of theme 1 in voice m:36-38
meeting of voice and instruments	no	no	no	m:24	m:31	no

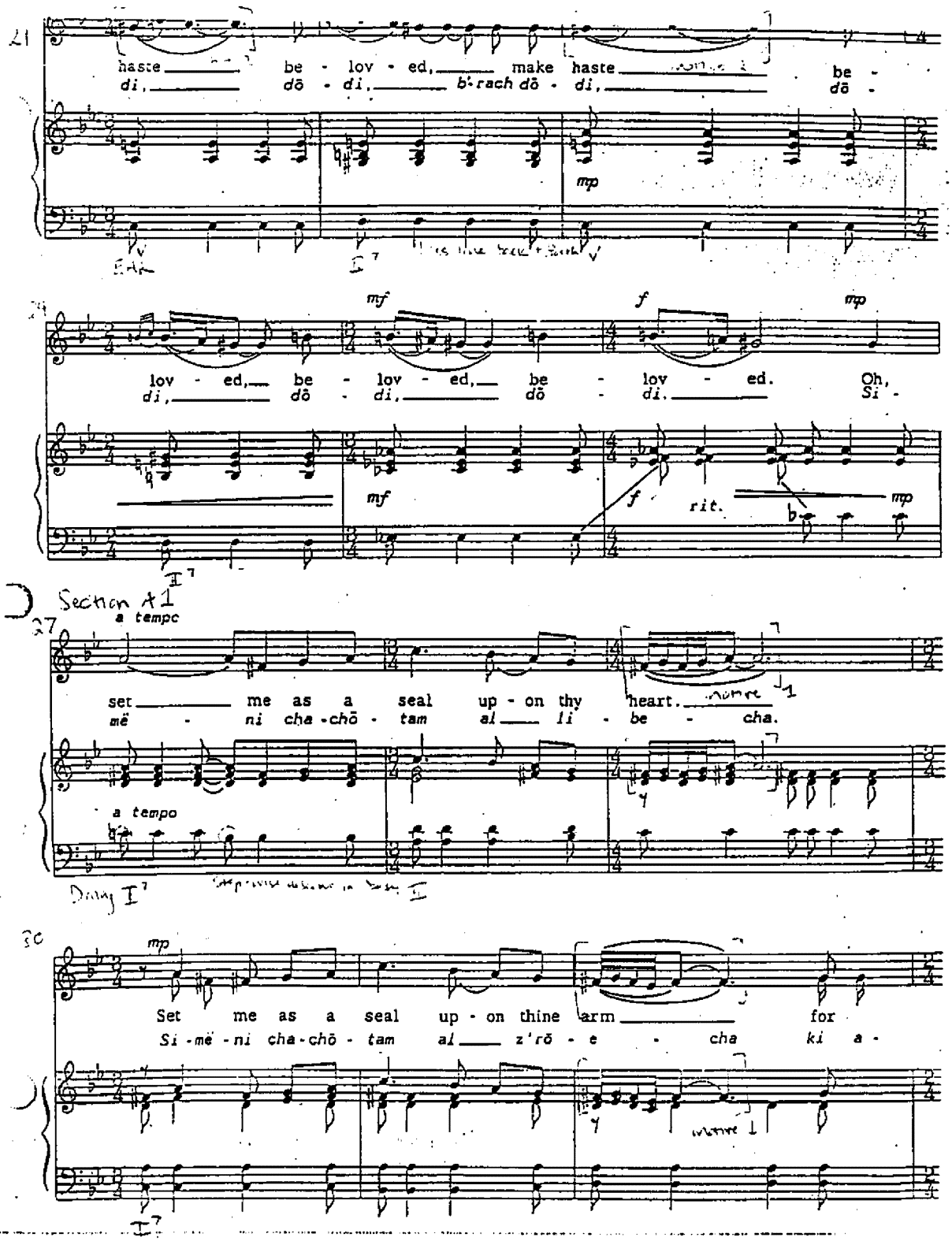
Example 4

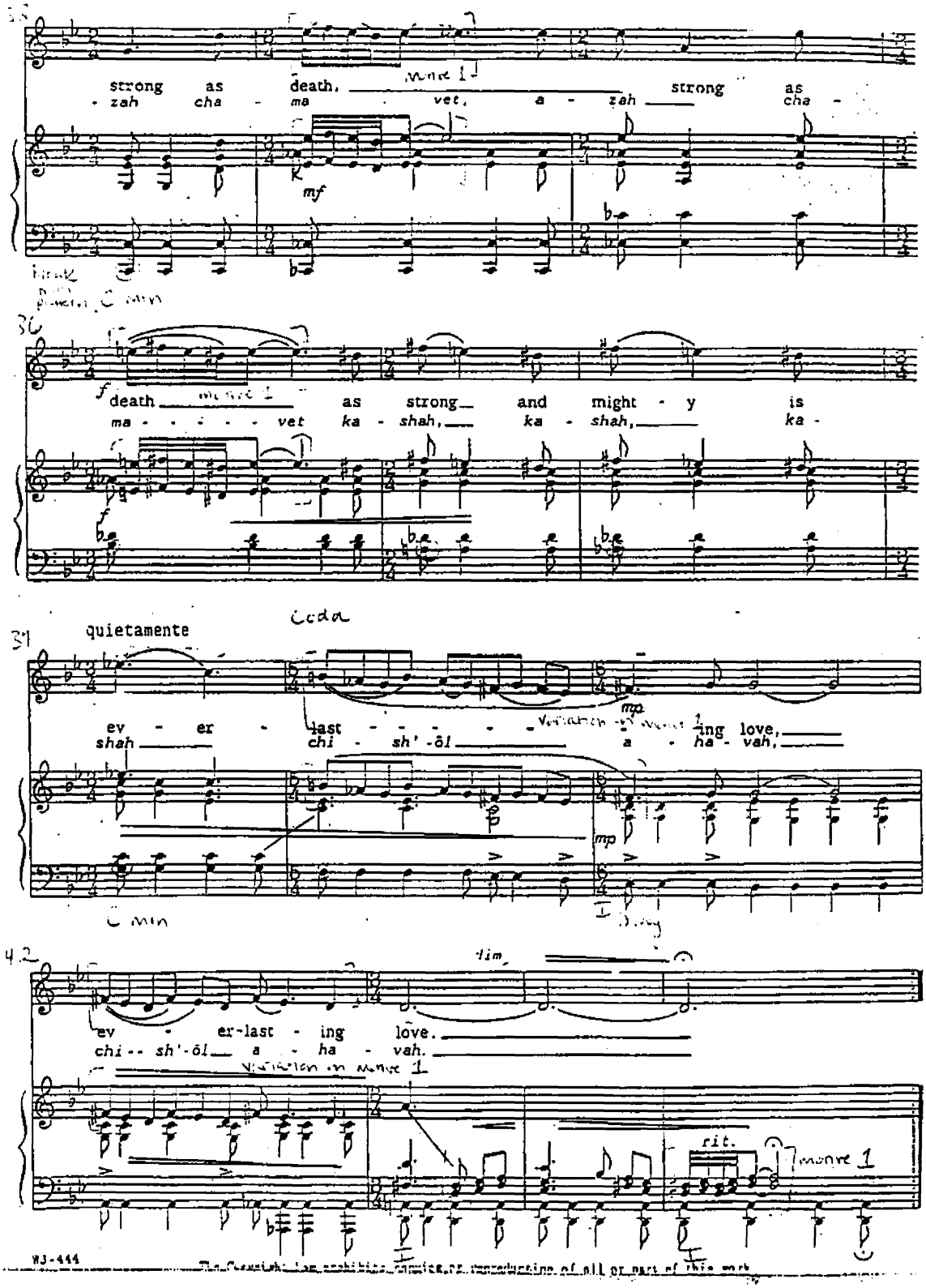
Set Me As A Seal Upon Thy Heart

(From "Song of Songs" 8:6-7)




Section 15
is strong as death. The
zah cha - ma- - - vet aha - vah r' - sha -
Fieramente
mf
f
p
fire of love is a burn-ing flame the fire of love is a burn - ing
fey - ha rish - pëy ësh, r'sha-fey - ha rish - pëy
flame and all the wa-ters can-not quench it, and
ësh. Ma ---------yim ra-bim lo yuch - lu l'cha-
all the floods can-not drown it Make
bōt unha-rôt lō yish - t' - fu - - ha b'-rach dō-


haste be - lov - ed, make haste be -
di, dō - di, b'rach dō - di, dō -
mp
lov - ed, be - lov - ed, be - lov - ed. Oh,
di, dō - di, dō - di. Si -
mf
f
mp
rit.
Section A1
a tempo
set me as a seal up - on thy heart.
mē - ni cha-chō - tam al li - be - cha.
a tempo
Set me as a seal up - on thine arm for
Si - mē - ni cha-chō - tam al z'rō - e - cha ki a -

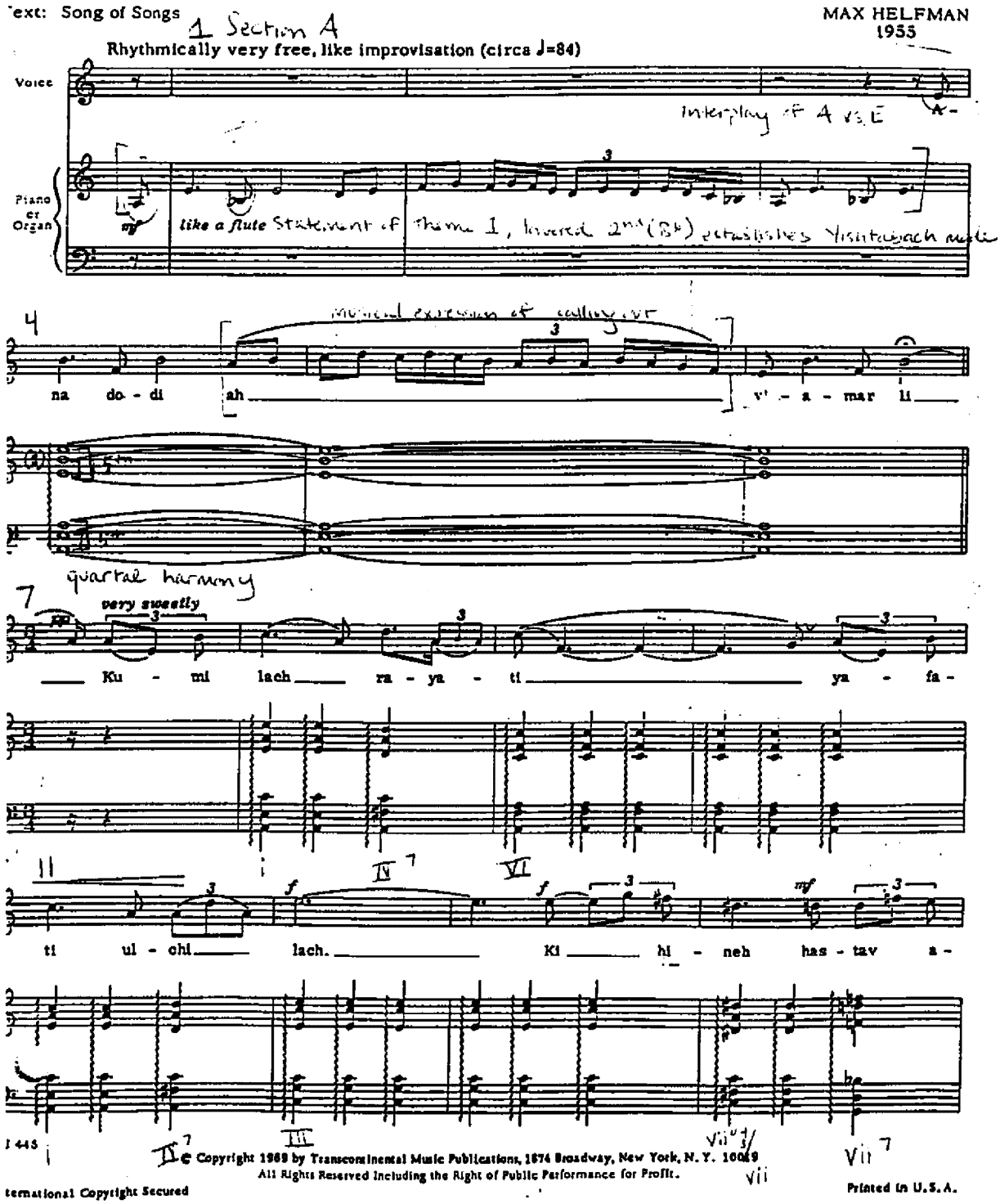


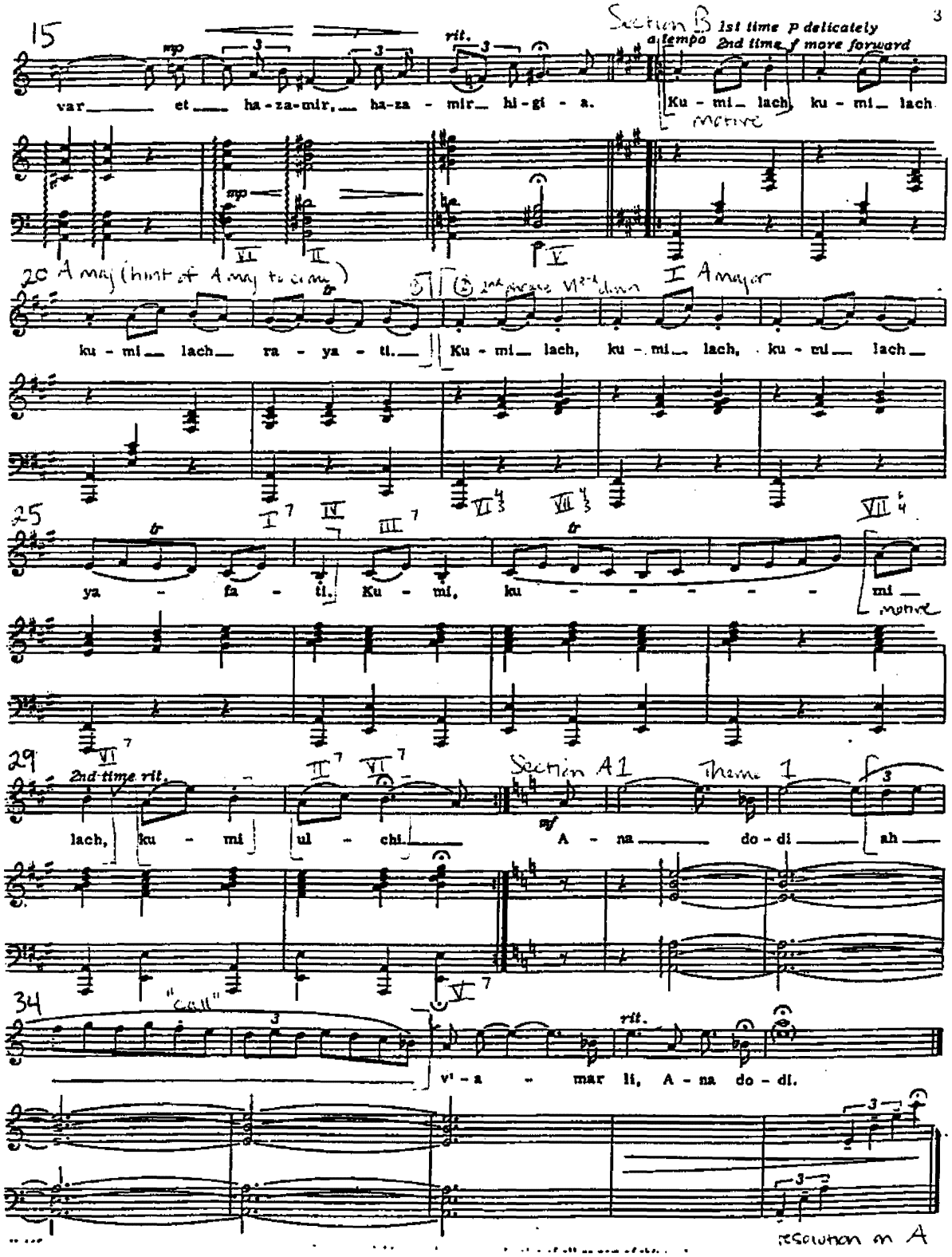
"Set Me As A Seal Upon Thy Heart"

Section	A	B	Transition	A1	Coda
Measures	1-12	13-20	21-26	27-39	40-45
Key	D maj → D min	D maj → A → E A2	E A2	D maj → C min	D maj
Pedal tone	no	D & C → 3?	E above middle C	no	no
Tension between bass line + melody	m:2-7 = yes m:8-10 = no m:11 = yes m:12 = no	m:13-20 = yes	m:21-23 = no m:24-26 = yes	m:27-38 = yes m:39 = no	m:40 = yes m:41-45 = no
Pattern of meter and melodic rhythm	4/4 [3/4] 4/4 [4/4] 4/4 → [3/4 3/4 4/4] : 4/4 4/4 = [illegible] 3/4 = [illegible]	4/4 [4/4 4/4 4/4]... alternating measure by measure	4/4 4/4 4/4 4/4 4/4 [4/4] static rhythm until last measure, sets up return to meter/rhythm pattern of A	4/4 [4/4] 4/4 [4/4 4/4 4/4] → m:32 2/4 2/4 2/4 3/4 2/4 2/4 2/4 → m:39 4/4 = [illegible] 3/4 = [illegible]	3/4 4/4 4/4 [4/4 4/4 4/4] 3/4 = [illegible] 4/4 = [illegible] 3/4 = [illegible]
Pattern of bass line descent	Step-wise 3 measures around C 6 measures descent 2 measures ascent	Sustained pedal tones	Step wise back and forth each measure between C + D	Step-wise movement around C to m:32 m:33 pattern broken for 3 measures m:36-42, step-wise 10 note descent	part of 10 note descent beginning in Section A1
Motive 1	m:4, 7	no	no	m:29, 32, 34, 36	m:45
Variation on motive 1	m:11	m:17, 20	no	no	m:40, 42
Motive 2	m:8, 9, 10	no	m:21, 23	no	no

Example 5

ANA DODI




15
Section B
1st time p delicately
2nd time f more forward
a tempo
rit.
mp
var et ha-za-mir, ha-za-mir hi-gi-a.
Ku-mi lach, ku-mi lach
motive
20
A maj (hint of A maj to come)
I A major
ku-mi lach ra-ya-ti.
Ku-mi lach, ku-mi lach, ku-mi lach
25
ya-fa-ti. Ku-mi, ku- - - - - mi
motive
29
2nd time rit.
Section A1
Theme 1
lach, ku-mi ul-chi.
A-na do-di ah
34
"call"
rit.
vi-a-mar li, A-na do-di.
resolution in A

Music Score

Section	A	B	A1
Measures	1-17	18-30	31-38
Key	Yishtahach mode established with lowered 2nd (Bb) interplay of A + E	A key	A Yishtahach
Melody	long, legato phrases	short, staccato phrases	legato
phrasing	M: 1-6 = Theme 1 + restatement a fifth up M: 7-12 = 2 varied phrases M: 13-17 = 2 dissimilar phrases, end on half cadence	M: 18-25 = 2 phrases, 2nd is a M3rd down, based on motive M: 26-30 = one phrase, ends with 3 repetitions of motive	restatement of Theme 1
harmonization	open, quartal harmony gives way to a succession of falling chords	succession of seven chords drives melody, bass pulse on downbeat	open, quartal harmony, bass note = tonic of theme, pull to A
cadence	half cadence	half cadence	ends on i
character of section	free, dreamy, gentle	hurried, energized, harsh	free, dreamy, gentle

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