Bridging the Gap: Theatre as a Model for Meaningful Synagogue Worship

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Master of Sacred Music Degree

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

School of Sacred Music

New York, New York

January 14, 2009

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"Bridging the Gap: Theatre as a Model for Meaningful Synagogue Worship" was written as a means of researching and exploring the issues inherent in creating meaningful Jewish connections in Reform synagogue worship in the 21st century. The goal of this thesis is to examine and utilize the ritual model and the emotional experience of theatre to positively inform the emotional and spiritual experience of the synagogue, with specific focus on the ritual model used in Reform Ashkenazic Shabbat liturgical services. This study utilizes cultural and statistical reports, research texts, liturgical texts, theological texts, theatrical texts, musical scores, live and recorded performances, classroom lectures, journals, and newspaper articles. In examining and comparing the arc of a dramatic narrative, and the arc of a Reform Ashkenazic Shabbat liturgical service, I have drawn parallels of emotional content, form and function as well as compared specific pieces of liturgy with songs of musical theatre. The contribution of this thesis is a new model of prayer combining both the dramatic and liturgical arcs at the culmination of this study.

The thesis is divided into 6 parts:

Introduction

Chapter 1: Establishing the Problem

Chapter 2: Addressing Issues of Prayer

Chapter 3: Theatre as a Model: How Synagogue Worship can be Enhanced by Theatre

Chapter 4: Comparing the Two Narratives

Conclusion

Musical Examples

Bibliography

Table of Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1: Establishing the Problem

Chapter 2: Addressing Issues of Prayer

Chapter 3: Theatre as a Model: How Synagogue Worship can be Enhanced by Theatre

Chapter 4: Comparing the Two Narratives

Conclusion

Musical Examples

Bibliography

Introduction

In the spring of 2007, I presented a 10 minute community Torah chanting project as student cantor at East End Temple of Manhattan. After the *hakaffah*, I placed the Torah on the *amud* and spoke for a few minutes about the ways that we experience Torah. I talked about how we engage different senses and different aspects of ourselves according to our approaches to Torah: Intellectually we study the Torah, drawing moral guidelines from it as well as garnering insight into our rituals and observances. Physically we are very careful and protective of the Torah; we take great care in dressing, and adorning our sacred scroll in fine fabrics and jewels, careful not to touch the parchment with our own hands. We kiss and embrace the Torah, parading it around the congregation for everyone to experience. Visually we read the script, and aurally we vocalize and chant the text. At this point I very briefly explained the history of the cantillation and spoke of how this was one more layer and tool for us to interpret and experience Torah.

As volunteers handed out the color coded sheets I had prepared, I took a quick poll of how many people in the room had read Torah before. Three hands in the room were raised of 45 or 50. I explained how we were going to go about learning this together and assured them that they were in good hands. I first sang a passage of the *V'ahavta* and asked who recognized what I was chanting, everyone knew. Then I asked them to listen as I chanted the three verses we were about to study and asked if it sounded familiar. There was a resounding answer that it sounded very much like the *V'ahavta.*

At this point I told them that every musical sound that they were about to chant, they already knew. Their faces changed from worry to wonder.

I explained to the congregation that what they were about to do was to chant an entire *aliya* together as a community. I instructed them that three verses according to Reform practice and traditional *halakha* are a complete *aliya.* The congregation sang the *aliya* together with amazing passion and excitement. There was a palpable feel of concentration and determination from the collective group. When we completed the *aliya* I asked how many people thought that they would have ever been able to chant Torah and most everyone in the room said no. I reiterated to them that together as a community we just completed an *aliya,* and many people in the group were really overcome with the power of this moment, they really could not stop beaming. I left them to ponder the idea that just as the chanting is already inside of them from their knowledge of the *V'ahavta*, so too is the Torah already inside of them, we just have to keep searching for new ways to access it.

Congregants expressed to me at the *oneg* how meaningful this project was to them, and in the days and weeks following a few congregants who were not there approached me expressing their disappointment in having missed the program and requested that I do it again. I was so moved by the response; I had no idea that this would have the impact that it did.

East End Temple was waiting for a project like this, though I didn't realize this until after the community had participated so eagerly and willingly. The immediate response of the congregation was that this project was wonderful and filled a gap in the community that people felt, but were unable to put into words. They knew the gap was

there only after I had filled it even a very little bit. By inviting the congregation to engage in the text in a new way, in an experiential reading of our sacred drama, I held a mirror up to the congregation, though I must admit I did not know it until it happened.

I learned from this project that a congregation does not always have the words, the terminology, or even the understanding of what they are wanting: rather one has to interpret the sometimes vague requests and responses. Congregants are often lacking the knowledge of what it is they want; they just know that they want something, something more, maybe something new or something different, but something meaningful. It is the job of the cantor and the rabbi to provide our congregants with an engaging and relevant service to foster lines of communication and meaningful connection.

Everyone seeks connection. It is the human condition to seek out companionship, community, and a connection to things larger than oneself. As a Jew, the connection to family, community, and God would seem the three most essential connections to make, yet the development of the self required to make these connections is of paramount importance to the modern Jew. Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen in their book, *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America*[1] find that while these three connections hold great significance in the lives of the 1,000 Jews they interviewed who represent what they label "typical" Jews, the manner in which they view these connections are fundamentally different from that of previous generations.

> The principal authority for contemporary American Jews in the absence of compelling religious norms and communal loyalties, has become the sovereign self. Each person now performs the labor of fashioning his or her own self,

[1] Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000), 2.

pulling together elements from the various Jewish and non-Jewish repertoires available, rather than stepping into an inescapable framework of identity (familiar, communal, traditional) given at birth.[2]

The Jewish tradition is rich with prayers, rituals, holidays, celebrations, and daily opportunities to foster these connections and has done just that for thousands of years. Yet, as Cohen and Eisen point out, this approach through traditional ritual, religious observance and prayer does not always meet the needs of all Jews. Jews may seek many paths towards emotional and spiritual connectedness and ultimately better understanding of the self. As a modern Jew I am curious about the paths people choose; as a cantor, *shaliach tsibbur*, and leader of the Jewish people, I am compelled to lead them down these roads and discover the connections these paths have to each other and to Jewish tradition. My own journey towards connectedness has led me to this line of thinking and questioning, and my unique path from actress to cantor has greatly influenced my awareness of the emotional experiences on both the small scale of services and the larger scale of Jewish practice. I have both encountered this struggle to engage and connect within myself as well as witnessed this struggle in others on stage as an actress, and on the *bima* as a cantor.

I left my career as a professional actress in large part because I was seeking a greater connection to community and to the universe. I was seeking a deeper connection to myself as well as to something that was larger than me. I knew the bonds of camaraderie I found in a cast to be deep and true and real, but I also knew that the community and its emotional support mechanism ended with the culmination of a show's run. The connection between performer and audience was so intimate and real that it had

[2] Cohen and Eisen, *The Jew Within*, 2.

the potential to extend beyond the reaches of the show's reality. I knew I could touch peoples' lives in a very meaningful way as an actor, but I also knew that the audience changed every night. In this way, though the performance and its effects could stay with an audience member well beyond the show, the encounter and connection itself was short-lived and finite. As a student cantor, I have found great and sustaining satisfaction in the ongoing connections I have established with my community at East End Temple, and with a greater spirit we might call God or the universe.

In my move from the stage to the *bima*, I had expected to find many parallels between the theatre and the synagogue, and have rightly found them. What I was not expecting to find were some of the obstructions and stumbling blocks that keep people from connecting to the very things that they are searching for in the synagogue. I had assumed that the synagogue itself fostered a direct and unobstructed connection from an individual's most intimate soul to God and to community. I therefore assumed this connection would be stronger than that which I had experienced in the theatre. I understand now that the synagogue holds great potential to foster such a connection as I experienced it firsthand with my community Torah chanting project, but it also falls short in myriad ways. Much can be learned from the theatrical model and applied to the synagogue model to foster more direct connections and meaningful worship experiences.

This breakdown of connection and communication I have witnessed and experienced in the synagogue has led me to reexamine the relationships inherent in the theatre between actor and self, actor and audience member, actor and actor, and audience member and audience member and to compare them to their natural corresponding relationships in the synagogue of worshiper and self, worshiper and God, worshiper and

worshiper, and worshiper and clergy. With this analysis, I hope to identify some of the fundamental emotional elements people seek out in their experience of prayer. What is working by enabling and fostering connections which allow for personal and communal growth and what is not working and preventing these communications and connections?

Through this analysis I aim to examine and utilize the ritual model and the emotional experience of theatre to positively inform the emotional and spiritual experience of the synagogue, with specific focus on the ritual model used in Reform Ashkenazic Shabbat liturgical services. In the following chapters I will identify the problems of engaging Jews in prayer, experiencing Jewish prayer, making connections with God and with community, and the merging of cultural and religious identity in the 21st century. I will look at the Reform movement's most recent answer to these struggles, the introduction of the new *siddur*, *Mishkan T'filla*. I will examine and compare the arc of a dramatic narrative, and the arc of a Reform Ashkenazic Shabbat liturgical service, drawing parallels of emotional content, form and function as well as compare specific pieces of liturgy with songs of musical theatre. These comparisons will culminate in a model of prayer which combines the arc of theatre and liturgy.

Chapter 1: Establishing the Problem

Jews, it seems, are always at a crossroads. We, in the beginning of the 21st century, are no exception. We face issues of cultural and religious identity that are unique to our time and place in the historical timeline of the Jewish people. Sociologist Steven M. Cohen and current Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary Arnold Eisen, who have both studied and published extensively on the state of modern Jewish identity in America wrote in their co-authored book, *The Jew Within,* in 2000, "American Jews at century's end we believe, have come to view their Jewishness in a very different way than either their parents or they themselves did only two or three decades ago."[3] They argue that in the search for meaning and identity, the focus of Judaism has shifted away from the organizational and institutional centers that were the heart of previous generations and are focusing evermore inward into personal and familial spheres.

As American Jews in the 21st century, we have unprecedented freedoms unknown to our ancestors of three or three hundred generations. We experience choice in a marketplace of free flowing ideas; work, family, extracurricular activities, media, television, advertising companies compete for our attention at a rate difficult to process and comprehend. According to David Ellenson, President of the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, "Jews construct their individual identity and communal commitments in a world where people derive meaning against a backdrop of virtually unlimited options for affiliation and participation."[4]We value our identities but often the time designated to honor, experience, and cultivate our unique Jewish identities is

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[3] Cohen and Eisen, *The Jew Within*, 2.
[4] David Ellinson, "Courage to Create a Judaism of Meaning," Sh'ma, 2007, www shma.com/nov 07/courage.create (accessed January 1, 2008).

splintered to accommodate other needs as well. According to Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman, in their recent study, *The Continuity of Discontinuity: How Young Jews are Connecting, Creating, and Organizing their own Jewish Lives,*

> At this moment in the opening decade of the 21st century, we are experiencing widespread social and cultural change. Whether we want to understand it in terms of information technology, communications, changes in labor and economic relations, global politics or gender, the terrain of the social world is changing rapidly and Jewish communities are in the process of inventing and reinventing themselves in order to continue contributing to the conversations of their members.[5]

These issues facing Jews in the 21st century, combined with the slow change endemic to Judaism so anchored in tradition, force us to confront the questions of personal and communal Jewish identity.

Judaism is not the only religion whose religious institutions are facing disconnect with their modern populations. In *Seeker Churches*, Kimon Howland Sargeant examines the new path of churches in engaging traditional religious practice in non-traditional ways in a successful effort to engage religious seekers. The churches involved with this movement are called 'seeker churches.' Sergeant identifies "a perceived sense of crisis" as the driving force towards innovation and therefore is the first push towards these organizational changes. The issues facing modern Christian communities mirror many of those in the modern Jewish community. Examining seeker churches, one successful

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[5] Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman, *The Continuity of Discontinuity: How Young Jews are Connecting, Creating, and Organizing their own Jewish Lives*, 2008.

model Christianity is using to address these needs, can offer insight into the issues facing modern Jewish communities and our responses to them.

According to Sargeant, religion both shapes and is shaped by its surrounding environments. In the process of selection, Sargeant shows that churches compete for members not only with other churches, but ever more with competing cultural and social outlets. He cites entertainment centers such as shopping malls, and media, and leisure activities such as country clubs and athletic leagues as prime competitors for church audiences.[6]

To address these issues, successful seeker churches have sought out myriad ways to familiarize themselves with such cultural models and integrate the borrowed cultural language of these institutions into the church. By integrating popular musical styles and user friendly formats, they have made their churches and services more accessible to the general public. These churches are not tied down to church buildings in older or declining communities, but rather can situate themselves in high traffic local buildings in growing suburban communities such as schools and theatres, where by virtue of their location they have a competitive advantage. They consciously have reformatted their rituals, messages, activities and even architecture to mirror the modern culture that their constituents are most familiar and comfortable with. These rituals are reformatted in a relaxed and informal manner in deliberate stark contrast to the formal and strict ceremonial rituals of traditional churches.

The messages of seeker churches are geared towards those with little or limited knowledge of the Bible or Christian theology and are focused on everyday issues that

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[6] Kimon Howland Sereant, *Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Nontraditional Way* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

resonate with seekers. The churches also cater to the social needs and desires of their seekers by offering socially oriented group meetings and athletic events. Because "A lack of fit with environment contributes to the decreased plausibility of a religious movement," Sargeant concludes that "organizations whose cultural emphasis fit the environment have a competitive advantage."[7] Sergeant attributes the success of this movement of seeker churches in large part to the unique fusion of theology and modern culture.

A two year study of the disconnect between leaders and congregants of the Reform movement released by the Union for Reform Judaism at the 2007 biennial in San Diego addresses questions designed to better understand the mindset of our congregants and to more clearly define what they are seeking in joining a synagogue. The study found that leaders of Reform synagogues do not always understand what their members want and shows a marked disconnect in several specific areas between what the leaders think their members are looking for and what the members say they actually want. "In general, the synagogue leaders seem to underestimate their members' interest in Jewish practice and worship. And they overestimate the synagogue's importance in the religious lives of their families."[8] These findings point to what leaders of seeker churches have already recognized: congregants are seeking meaningful prayer experiences, and these needs are not being met.

The Continuity of Discontinuity: How Young Jews are Connecting, Creating, and Organizing Their Own Jewish Lives by Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman studies four North American sites, each the product of a creative single individual and each involved

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[7] Sargeant, *Seeker Churches*, 50.

[8] Sue Fishkoff, "A Reform leader-member disconnect," JTA. www.jta.org/cgibin/iowa/news/article/20071204120307URJbiennial.html (accessed January 1, 2008).

in their own way of creating Jewish communities around culture. The primary subjects are: Ikar, a Jewish spiritual community in Los Angeles, California, Storahtelling, a nonprofit musical and dramatic company, J Dub Records, a non-profit Jewish record label in New York, New York, and Salon, a place for open and honest discussion for culturally savvy Jews in Toronto, Canada. Each of these four sites was born out of a need to engage more personally and meaningfully with Judaism and to fulfill those needs through new means as they were not being met by traditional routes. In approaching this study, Cohen and Kelman heard a great deal of skepticism from many established leaders of Jewish institutions about these newer cultural Jewish groups. These leaders questioned the inherent value and enduring impact of these cultural-centric Jewish groups, some questioned the seriousness and purpose of these organizations' endeavors, and some saw these groups as "a credible distraction from things more seriously Jewish."[9] Rather than forcing Jewish communal policies to choose between organized religious entities, religious schools and synagogues, and cultural salon activities, record labels, and Jewish theatrical pursuits, Cohen and Kelman's study reveals that the modern American Jewish community is searching for a diversified multiplicity of opportunities to engage seriously in Jewish life.

Cohen and Kelman's subjects all stated that they were driven to create their institutions as much by their own personal needs to connect and build community as by a desire to offer that opportunity to others. The decision of each of these individuals to establish their institutions were marked by a lack of possibilities for various combinations of prayer, culture, discussion, music, and social action. In other words, they were borne

[9] Cohen and Kelman, *The Continuity of Discontinuity*, 8.

out of an express necessity to re-personalize Judaism to meet their own needs and the needs of their friends and communities. Aaron Bisman, founder of JDub Records states,

> There wasn't much that was fully meeting my own personal – or my friends' interests Jewishly....Nothing. No synagogue, no Hillel building was enough of what we wanted. We could go to those places and pull out of them what we wanted, but in the end we always ended up doing it ourselves because we could create exactly the environment we wanted and the experience we wanted.[10]

Bisman was staking a claim on personalizing his Judaism. Likewise, Rabbi Braus, founder of Ikar tells a similar story of she and her founding board all seeking a synagogue that fit their needs. Their failure to find such a synagogue led them to found their own. In doing so, the members of Ikar were able to take complete ownership of their Jewish lives and personalize a synagogue that would fulfill their needs. Amichai Lau-Levine, founder of Storahtelling, attributed the creation of his institution to the failure of the Torah service on Saturday to engage its audience. Mireille Silcoff, founded Salon when she could not find a place that satisfied her need to engage in meaningful Jewish dialogue.

We see through the four subjects of Cohen and Kelman's study, the model of seeker churches, and the Reform Movement's 2007 study that a call to action often comes in the form of failure. We need to examine our models of Jewish practice, recognize what is working and what is not, and adjust our practices so that they better meet the needs of the Jewish communities. As Hoffman states, "Ritual requires a

[10] Cohen and Kelman, *The Continuity of Discontinuity*, 18.

reverence for tradition, not a slavish adherence to it."[11] And, as Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Jewish Reconstructionism, put it, "Tradition should get a vote, not a veto."[12]

[11] Hoffman, The Art of Public Prayer, 1999, 31.
[12] Ibid., 31.

Chapter 2: Addressing Issues of Prayer

Clearly stated in the Reform Movement's 2007 study is the desire of congregants to connect to Judaism through prayer. We must then examine prayer, as prayer has the capacity to address both the inward search for meaning that Cohen and Eisen discuss in *The Jew Within*, as well as the outward prayer and worship communal focus identified by the 2007 study of the Reform Movement. In this chapter we will examine some of the new efforts to make prayer accessible. Specifically, we will look at how music is a motivating force in both the culture of the seeker church and in Jewish culture and its role in prayer. We will also examine how the publication of *Mishkan T'filah* has begun to respond to the need for more accessible prayer in the Reform Movement.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, in "The Vocation of the Cantor"[13] speaks about his personal emotional experience in prayer through music. Heschel states that whenever he enters a synagogue, he is in some ways yearning to be brought back to the synagogue of his youth, specifically, to the haunting melodies sung by the *shaliach tsibbur*. He is in essence looking not only to connect with God and with his community, but he is looking to connect with his own emotional experiences of years past. Music is a tool which enables people to connect to their past. That Heschel spent much of his prayer time yearning to return to his childhood through music is an indication of the power of music in prayer.

> The only language that seems to be compatible with the wonder and mystery of being is the language of music. Music is more than just expressiveness. It is rather

[13] Abraham Joshua Heschel, "The Vocation of the Cantor." In *The Insecurity of Freedom*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1966), 245.

> a reaching out toward a realm that lies beyond the reach of verbal propositions. Verbal expression is in danger of being taken literally and of serving as a substitute for insight. Words become slogans, slogans become idols. But music is a refutation of human finality. Music is an antidote to higher idolatry. While other forces in society combine to dull our mind, music endows us with moments in which the sense of the ineffable becomes alive.[14]

How he prayed, the music he identified with prayer had as much of a profound effect on Heschel as that which he was praying. Music served to elevate his prayer.

Willow Creek, a large and influential seeker church understands the power of music in prayer and follows a standard pattern within their services to capitalize on its impact. The service opens with a musical prelude and a vocal selection sung by a lead vocalist who uses the microphone with dramatic effect. The soloist is often supported by backup singers. This type of vocal performance according to Sargeant, has the look, sound and feel of a soft rock concert. This vocal performance is followed by a drama, a congregational song, and then the church's message.

The contemporary music and its performance and integration to the church service are key to the liturgy. Willow Creek insists that churches must "Crack the musical code for where they are to reach unchurched people."[15] Sergeant explains that light rock and soft jazz are such critical components to these church services because rock music has been such a significant part of the lives of the baby boomer generation. This music therefore serves as not only an entryway by means of the familiar and comfortable, but also appeals to a sense of deep rooted and emotional nostalgia.

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[14] Heschel, "The Vocation of the Cantor," 245.
[15] Sargeant, *Seeker Churches,* 65.

In their study, "Cultural Events & Jewish Identities: Young Adult Jews in New York, " Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman offer yet another perspective on the importance of music, the perspective of the young Jewish adult in New York City.[16] According to the study, popular music has been the largest and most influential force in the youth culture of America since the early 20th century. Music pervades literature on American youth culture to such an extent that is cannot be extracted from the study, even when the object of the study is not specifically music. As a result, most events examined in their study included a musical component, even if the music was not necessary or central to the event. Based on data gathered from the 2001 National Jewish Population Survey and 13 cultural Jewish events in New York City the study revealed that music is a huge motivator for participating in Jewish cultural events. Furthermore, the findings attest to young adult Jews appreciating not only music in a general sense, but specifically having a special relationship with Jewish music. If the relationship to Jewish music exists then the disconnection at hand is with Jewish music in the synagogue. Our challenge is to find music and an environment of prayer that speaks to the "unsynagogued."

Mishkan T'filah: the Reform Movement's most Recent Answer to questions of Logistics of Prayer, Language, and Performance

In the struggle for self-identity through a worship service, we can explore some key issues involving the logistics of the prayer that are connected to, but separate from the intention and meaning of the prayer. First, in what language do we pray? Second, how do we pray? Do we sing prayers together, do we chant them, and/ or do we read

[16] Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman, *Cultural Events & Jewish Identities: Young Adult Jews in New York* (New York: The National Foundation for Jewish Culture, 2005).

them responsively, collectively, silently? Third, how have the roles of congregational members and leaders of prayer changed as the relationship between knowledge and need has shifted?

The Reform Movement has attempted to address these issues in the creation and adoption of *Mishkan T'filah*, the newest Reform prayer book. *Mishkan T'filah* was created through a long and integrated process beginning with Rabbi Peter Knobel and Dan Schechter's 1994 survey funded by the Lilly Foundation. Knobel and Schechter surveyed worshipers in the Reform Movement across the United States to understand more completely what Reform congregants desired from a new prayer book. Their findings showed a desire for transliteration, 'meaningful and expanded God language,' 'relevant and compelling English prayer,' 'faithful translation,' and 'a response to the feminist critique.'[17] The new siddur tried to answer the clearly stated needs of the members of the Reform Movement, creating a siddur that would inspire worship, be user friendly while balancing tradition and inspiration, and attend to the needs of two divergent worshiping groups, "regulars" and "others." According to the Joint Commission on Religious Living, "regulars" are those worshipers who attend services at least eight to twelve times a year on Shabbat. They are expected to understand the concept of the *siddur* quickly and be able to take advantage of its multifaceted approach to prayer. "Others" include occasional worshipers, guests, and those attending for a *yahrtzeit*. This group is expected to need guidance, but as Rabbi Elyse Frishman, editor

[17] Sue Fishkoff, "A Reform Leader-Member Disconnect," posted December 4, 2007, www.jta.org/cgibin/iowa/news/article/20071204120307URJbiennial.html (accessed January 1, 2008).

of *Mishkan T'filah* points out, they already need guidance in the current Reform prayer book, *Gates of Prayer.*[18]

Regarding the question of language, the study found that of the respondents, almost half could not read Hebrew, yet they wanted Hebrew prayers, with accessible transliteration. They wanted to hear Torah and have it translated into English. Additionally, the findings showed a conflict over the language of prayer and the role of God: Though there may be less belief in a personal God, the desire to call upon God in prayer remained central and they voiced a desire for more expansive, less masculine and less hierarchical terminology for God. Regarding the style of prayer, the respondents loved to sing aloud and to pray in unison, and interestingly, they articulated that responsive readings worked the least well for them.

There are obviously great advantages to maintaining Hebrew in prayer. Hebrew has both history and mystery to it. According to Larry Hoffman in a lecture given in a liturgy course at Hebrew Union College in the Fall of 2006, most congregants do not know Hebrew, and so theological issues do necessarily have to be addressed in the same manner they would if the prayers were read in English. Hoffman further stated that people want content, but also want an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of things. With translation available to them, congregants can choose the level at which they want to engage in the prayer. It is possible in this case to choose from a broad spectrum ranging from understanding each word of the prayer, to garnering the general idea of the prayer, to simply engaging in the emotional interpretation of the piece by the cantor.

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[18] Elyse D. Frishman, "Entering Mishkan T'filah," Reprinted from *CCAR Journal: A Reform Jewish Quarterly*, Fall 2004, http://www.urj.org/mishkan, 4. (accessed January 1, 2008).

They can therefore satisfy what Hoffman identifies as their need for content while allowing them space to reflect on the prayer's broader meaning and intent.

By providing a different format and layout, *Mishkan T'filah* offers congregants choice, literally on every page. The right side of a two-page spread is the text of the prayer or the *keva* (primary, traditional) liturgy in Hebrew and transliteration as well as faithful translation. Alternative prayer choices in the form of poetry, meditations and readings relating to the text, or *kavanot* are found on the left-hand side. The left side of the page is related to the right side, but offers diverse theological points of view. This concept of an integrated theology is, according to Frishman, the true paradigm shift for *Mishkan T'filah:*

> In any worship setting, people have diverse beliefs. The challenge of a single liturgy is to be not only multivocal, but polyvocal—to invite full participation at once, without conflicting with the *keva* text. (First, the *keva* text must be one that is acceptable; hence, the ongoing conversations about retribution, resurrection, and redemption.) Jewish prayer invites interpretation; the left-hand material was selected for both metaphor and theological diversity.[19]

Below the liturgical selections are spiritual commentaries, notes on rabbinic practices, and source citations. On the outside margin of each page are rubric headings with the correct heading for the section of each page in bold face type to help orient worshipers to their place in the service at any time. An index and listing of musical choices are found in the back of the *siddur*.

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[19] Frishman, *Entering Mishkan T'filla*, 4.

All of these innovations in *Mishkan T'filah* were born of the need for congregants to better engage with prayer. With this prayer book comes great choice, but consistency in a prayer service is a powerful and important component for people feeling welcomed into a familiar and engaging space and prayer experience. Though a prayer leader can choose to create a different service each Shabbat, the advantage of familiarity with text, musical setting, and format should be utilized and not overlooked.

> *Mishkan T'filah* invites familiarity, even as it allows for diversity. Over time, one can't help but memorize the book. The content of each page spread, though varied, becomes known. Of course, the constancy of the *keva* text anchors every prayer. It is the cumulative effect of worshipping from this *siddur* that will deepen meaningful ritual.[20]

Having identified many of the problems facing modern Jews in 21st century culture, and modern Jewish worshipers in prayer, an opportunity now arises to address these issues through the perspective of theatrical experience and ritual. In the following chapters, we will examine and compare the similarities of rituals within the synagogue and within the theatrical model. We will then look at the narrative arc of a liturgical service and the narrative arc of a dramatic narrative in order to see how the attributes of the theatrical model can enhance synagogue worship, allowing for greater personal connection to prayer and the deepening of meaningful ritual.

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[20] Ibid., 3.

Chapter 3: Theatre as a Model – How Synagogue Ritual Can be Enhanced by Theatre

Theatrical success depends wholly on its efficacy to foster human emotion in a believable way. Prayer is, in its purest form, direct human emotion. For this reason, theatre stands to be an excellent model of comparison for the synagogue service. For prayer or worship to have any semantic reality, it must have meaning within genuine human experience. Likewise, for theatre to have a genuine reality it requires the audience to connect viscerally to the action on stage. These connections can be fostered by the engagement in the ritual worship of the synagogue and the ritual behavior of the theatre.

Viewing ritual[21] can be an effective means of analyzing engagement in religious, theatrical, social and personal realms. These four spheres are all intrinsically connected. As anthropologist Victor Turner taught, there is a "continuous, dynamic process linking performative behavior - art, sports, ritual, play - with social and ethical structure: the way people think about and organize their lives and specify individual and group values."[22] Taking Turner's idea one-step further, we make the connection between performative of the theatrical and the ritual of the religious and spiritual.

What if, as many claim, "Religion does not speak to me" or, "I'm Jewish by birth, but I don't practice" or, "I consider myself a cultural Jew." Has Judaism failed these Jews? For the unaffiliated Jew according to Cohen and Kelman, "Jewish cultural consumption may be their only or most prevalent form of Jewish engagement."[23] The

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[21] "That which is done in accordance with social custom, religious ceremony, or normal protocol." Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ritual. (accessed January 12, 2009).
[22] Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications), 8.
[23] Cohen and Kelman, *Cultural Events and Jewish Identities*, 7.

study shows that those population segments with "lower levels of ritual observance, affiliation, communal involvement, and Jewish social embeddedness score relatively high in Jewish cultural consumption." These Jews are testing Turner's theory by finding alternate cultural means to connect with Judaism. They are identifying individual and group values in Jewish social ritual, but not Jewish religious ritual To make the synagogue and its religious rituals relevant, we must identify the 'buy-in,' the ways in which cultural models, specifically the theatrical model, appeal to and move people. Likewise, we must identify the elements of frustration and confusion that can accompany religious rituals. In this chapter we will examine frustrations with religious rituals, how seeker churches and the Reform movement have utilized theatricality to enhance their worship rituals and identify the commonalities between the rituals of synagogue worship and theatre.

Hoffman looks at prayer and often people's dismay at prayer experiences as a systems failure. When people believe that they cannot pray correctly, that prayer does not work, or that they do not need to pray, they are mistakenly blaming themselves for a failure in a system. By mistaking "empty ritualization," going through the motions of ritual without the pragmatic and emotional connection to the task at hand, for ritual, what Hoffman defines as the, "play(ing) out (of) prearranged scripts of behavior to shape specific durations of time,"[24] they determine that religious ritual itself is meaningless. Thinking that others have somehow decoded the ritual and can bask in its secret gifts, these people blame themselves for their inability to respond to prayer.[25]

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[24] Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer*, 17.
[25] Ibid., 72.

The ritual of prayer is in place to create a sacred space, or context, in which the liturgy which brackets the prayers of our hearts into meaningful content, may be offered.[26] When the context, the content, or both are misaligned, convoluted, or too difficult to decode, prayer is interrupted, and can all too often become a disengaging and disheartening experience rather than the uplifting, meaningful and connective force that it is intended to be.

For each ritual, be it secular or religious, we follow a script of some kind and according to Larry Hoffman, we build up to a high point within the ritual. The liturgical script can be daunting and off putting, requiring innovation and interpretation like that offered in *Mishkan T'filah* to foster familiarity and comfort. Hoffman clarifies that "What is necessary in each case is the common acceptance of the script; the common decision to see symbolic significance in behavior that would otherwise appear secondary or even foolish; and the consensus to invest oneself psychologically in the whole drama."[27] What is required is 'buy-in.'

The seeker churches discussed in earlier chapters have found theatricality to be so significant in the 'buy-in' of worshipers to the prayer experience that they have sought out models from the entertainment world to guide their worship rituals. Pastor Walt Kallestad of Phoenix's Community Church of Joy and Dr. H. Edwin Young, senior pastor of Houston's Second Baptist Church both use Disney as a model for worship in their respective churches. So much do they both find the entertainment model to meet their members' needs, that Dr. Young's church sent its staff to Disney for specialty training in hospitality, guest services, and production. Kallestad decided that his church needed to

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[26] Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Liturgy" (classroom lecture, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, 2006).
[27] Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer*, 21.

attract crowds similar to those of concerts and movies, by engaging in "Imagineering," defined as "unearthing new and innovative ways to worship." In an effort to provide dramatic and exciting services that would attract such large crowds, his church offers five different services each weekend ranging from 'contemporary country' to 'spirited traditional.'[28]

A fundamental and foundational element of the seeker church is "to break with tradition and to exploit secular media for the purposes of conveying religious truths."[29] Seeker churches use contemporary forms of worship which directly draw from modern and pop culture. According to Sargeant, they are non-traditional and non-liturgical, focus on spontaneity and enthusiasm rather than formality in ritual and, their content changes constantly keeping the worshipers energized and easily surprised staving off complacency and boredom. Sergeant notes however, that despite their attempt to be non-traditionalist, they are developing their own new rituals whose ultimate function parallels that of traditional church.

Religious seekers according to Sergeant, desire experience more than tradition which translates to a need for direct involvement rather than passive observation in seeking fulfillment and purpose. Seeker churches design their rituals to meet these specific needs. The rituals are designed to mirror the informal nature of the external modern society and to fit easily within the comfort zones of religious seekers. Everything traditional from the architecture of the building to the music and liturgy is replaced by the easily digestible contemporary. Many seeker churches go so far as to remove all religious symbols from the worship space, including the cross. These

[28] Sergeant, *Seeker Churches*, 54.
[29] Ibid., 64.

churches have recognized and responded to the realization that this new generation of worshipers responds negatively to traditional services with symbols and rituals often inaccessible and incomprehensible to them, performed by clergy that seem distant and disconnected from their lives. These new rituals emphasize personalization, comfort, and modern cultural connections.[30]

Every moment of a worship service in a megachurch using the seeker church model, is meticulously calculated, planned and executed by a team of trained staff. Scott Thuma and Dave Travis, authors of *Beyond Megachurch Myths,* admit that "Worship in a megachurch can seem like a well produced show instead of a body of believers worshiping together." The combination of vast space, highly advanced technological lighting, sound, and media equipment, carefully rehearsed transitional moments. contemporary music often featuring "Praise bands" which are usually comprised of professional and highly polished singers, and a tightly scripted service leave very little if anything to chance. In this way, the rituals of traditional church have not been disposed of, rather they have been exchanged for these new rituals who by careful design offer accessible modern worship.[31]

Though I do not believe Reform synagogues are seeking to radically change all traditional liturgy to make it most easily digestible, nor create a well polished show in place of a worship service, the introduction of *Mishkan T'filah* is a clear step in the direction of making the liturgy more accessible. Likewise, the use of theatrical components has proven so effective in the worship services of seeker churches that the 2007 Reform Movement Biennial in San Diego modeled much of its five day conference

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[30] Ibid., 58.
[31] Scott Thuma and Dave Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn From America's Largest Churches* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 149.

and services after the mega-church model. Ben Harris notes that even while the Reform Movement today is increasingly embracing many Jewish traditions it once rejected. Reform leaders are insistent on remaining open to innovation. As the movement did in its earliest years of inception, again they are finding inspiration in Christian churches. Harris reported on the 2007 biennial,

> The mega-church influence was felt as well during Friday night prayers, where 6,000 worshipers gathered in a cavernous room on the convention center's ground floor for a choreographed production of sight and sound. Multiple cameras projected the service on several enormous screens suspended over the hall. A live band buoyed a service that was conducted almost entirely in song.[32]

Again, we see the experience of worshipers is enhanced not only by the drama, but by the driving force of music, and the effectiveness of the music is rooted in the careful attention cantors, rabbis and lay leaders put into creating the services and the convention. Harris reported that music was present in nearly every element of the biennial. Much like the mega-church model, a stage outside the main auditorium was platform to continuous musical performances and at the Shabbat evening sing-along, thousands of attendees were singing and dancing in the aisles. "It's all about the music," Ron Wolfson, co-founder of Synagogue 3000, said. "I've said to cantors, the cantors are absolutely critical in this revolution."[33]

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[32] Ben Harris, "Mega-churches Inspire Reform," December 17, 2007, http://jta.org/news/article/2007/12/17/105948/reformmegachurch, (accessed January 5, 2008).
[33] Harris,"Mega-churches Inspire Reform."

Foundational Elements of Comparison for the Theatrical and Liturgical Models

Turner wrote that human ritualization is primarily constructed of three separate pillars: the social ritual, religious ritual, and aesthetic ritual.[34] All three are equally significant when applied to Jewish prayer. So, what is it that drives people towards the rituals of prayer and of theatre? I have identified the following seven common elements as the foundation of the comparative relationship between the rituals of theatre and prayer. Comparing the ritual of theatre and the ritual of prayer side by side illuminates these commonalities and will help in understanding symbolic significance and creating meaningful and functional modes of connection in prayer.

1. Community
2. Sacred space
3. Binary relationship – audience to self and audience to the world of the play, worshiper to God and self and worshiper to God and community
4. Sensory experience
5. Experience of a sacred narrative
6. Engagement
7. Private experience in a public place

Community, the first categorical listing, while discussed on its own is so integrated into each of the other six elements that it cannot be extracted from succeeding categories.

[34] Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, 11.

Community

Hoffman examines the community element in religion and worship in relation to the theories of psychologist Abraham Maslow who in the 1960s attempted to replace organized religion with "humanistic personalism."[35] Maslow's argument was that while all human beings have the potential for religious experience, they can peak or plateau with these experiences on their own without organized religion. Hoffman disagrees and insists that, "psychological states depend more on the groups with which we identify than on any inherent psychological ability." He believes strongly in the power of community within religion and worship and builds his arguments for communal worship on his statement, "We need the company of others to enjoy the peaks and plateaus."[36] Hoffman's communal beliefs complement the Jewish traditional understanding of the importance of community as *Halakha* dictates that certain prayers both at synagogue and at home are altered depending on the number of people present.

Gerardine Clark, Professor of Drama at Syracuse University believes that "Implicit in the structure of theatre is its natural capacity to build community."[37] Community experience in the theatre occurs in three overlapping spheres: A tight knit community is created within the cast, as they work together to create the show long before the audience experiences it. The audience attending the performance becomes a part of a community as they view the show together, and the audience and actors together create a community as they embark on the narrative drama together. Inherent in these three communities is the understanding that the play could not exist without any one of

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[35] Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer, 24.*
[36] Ibid., 25.
[37] Gerardine Clark, *An Actors Handbook: Notes From the Road,* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Publication, 1995), 6.

them. We can enjoy the experience of prayer according to Hoffman, with a greater intensity when we are in community, and we can utilize theatre's natural capacity to build community in creating meaningful prayer.

Sacred Space

Paul Woodruff writes, "Theater is the heir of a tradition that makes spaces sacred for religious ritual."[38] In both the synagogue and the theatre, a clear distinction is made between the space of the outside world, and the sacred space within. People are seeking something separate and sacred when they enter the doors of both spaces. Whereas, according to Woodruff, "The art of theater divides the watchers from the watched by placing the watched in a measured or defined space, such as a stage, a sanctuary, or a playing field,"[39] in the synagogue sanctuary, the sacred space is a unified whole where the watchers and the watched, or the worshipers collectively are one. The significance of sacred space according to Hoffman is, "More than just a stage for the ritual drama being enacted within it, the worship space becomes a paradigm for the way worshipers would like to see the world as a whole."[40] The way we define space then, becomes a metaphor for the way we see our world.

While space is usually defined externally in theater, by a stage separating the actors from the audience, the space can be altered by the actors moving within it, therefore changing the world in which the audience and actors exist together. Woodruff explains that the crossing over of performers into audience space, or of audience into

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[38] Paul Woodruff, "*The Necessity of Theatre,*" Oxford Scholarship Online Monographs (September 2008), http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/oso/2441161/2008 (accessed January 8, 2009).
[39] Woodruff, *The Necessity of Theatre,* 3.
[40] Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer,* 205.

performing space, "can be electrifying, but only if it is seen as transgressive, and occurs only if the space has been fairly well defined at the outset."[41] If we apply this theory to the model of a traditional sanctuary space where the ark is in the east, separated and often elevated from the worshipers by the presence of a bima, we see that the congregation understands the unspoken rules of the sacred space, as they do not cross over the boundary of the bima without being invited to do so.

Woodruff continues, "Powerful theatre sometimes leads to an altar call that draws the audience into sacred space and converts them from watchers to participants, closing down the theatrical nature of the event while opening something new."[42] If we apply the experience of being called to the Torah for an honor to Woodruff's 'alter call' we clearly recognize the implications of dramatically crossing over a sacred spatial boundary. The surrounding environment has great impact on the depth of experiences within both theatre and synagogue. This is an element over which producers and directors of theatre and worship leaders can have great control. The symbolic effect of sacred space on our emotional experiences has the potential to affect our lives both inside and outside of its own physical boundaries and subsequently, we carry the messages of effective theatre and synagogue services beyond the sacred space.

Binary Relationship

During a service, congregants are personally connecting to God both individually and communally. As Heschel wrote, "The Jew does not stand alone before God; it is as a member of a community that he stands before God. Our relationship to Him is not an I to

[41] Woodruff, *The Necessity of Theatre,* 3.
[42] Ibid.,3.

a Thou, but as a We to a Thou."[43] How we relate to others directly impacts how we relate to God and ourselves during the service. As Donald M. Splansky so adeptly states in his essay, "Creating a Prayer Experience in Reform Movement Camps and Beyond," "The community makes the service unique, and the service reinforces the sense of community."[44]

Hoffman discusses the importance of the personal as well as the communal in *The Art of Public Prayer* by examining both the horizontal and the vertical axis of prayer. The vertical axis or the 'transcendent' represents the experience of the divine-human encounter what Hoffman describes as "the sense we have, when we leave worship that we have indeed prayed."[45] It is a religious experience wherein worshipers feel they have in some way experienced transcendence and encountered the divine. The horizontal axis serves to bond the praying community together so that their shared identity is intertwined with their experience of God. In this way, a praying community binds itself together as a strong unified rope, no longer merely individual strands of thread. The relationship between these two axes is delicate and complex, often so interwoven; there is difficulty in separating out the individual from the group. Hoffman states, "The key to finding God in American worship is located in the word 'community.'"[46]

The suspension of disbelief is a theatrical contract between audience and actor that allows the world of the play to exist. Watching a play unfold onstage allows the audience member to participate in the narrative from a safe distance, enabling an

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[43] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man's Quest for* God, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), 45.
[44] Donald M. Splansky, "Creating a Prayer Experience in Camps and Beyond," in *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping*, ed. Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 2006), 154.
[45] Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer*, 80.
[46] Ibid., 124.

emotional experience by linking the action on stage to the personal experience of the audience. The audience member is experiencing these personal connections with the surrounding community of audience members. This allows for a binary experience for the audience member. At once he or she is experiencing the show on a personal level, connecting the actors and the action on stage with various moments in his or her life and simultaneously having a shared experience with other audience members. The relationships experienced in both the theatre and the synagogue are multi-tiered, as worshipers and audience members are experiencing more than one connection at a time.

Sensory Experience

Being an audience member in a live show is an experience that draws on the sensory, not only on sight and hearing, but on touch, smell, and space and time. It is an experience that cannot be recreated in the exact same way ever again. Because the actors are performing live, they are also 'living' their character's experiences in a way that they will not ever again. Their experience in that moment may be informed by a myriad of experiences in their day affecting intonation and movement. Likewise, the presence of the audience has tremendous impact on the performers.

Being a participant in a congregational prayer service is also a sensory experience with music engaging our hearing, the feel of the prayer books in hand, reaching out to kiss the Torah engaging our touch, reading the prayers, watching the other worshipers engaging our vision, and at some services which conclude with special blessings, wine and bread engaging our taste and smell. Splansky writes about the effect of praying outdoors in a summer camp environment; "The benches or logs, however, may feel hard

after sitting on them awhile, or mosquitoes may be flying around, but the worshiper outdoors feels himself to be part of creation. He senses a feeling of 'creatureliness' and therefore feels indebted to the Creator."[47] For an experienced worshiper, one who attends services frequently, many of the sensory experiences happen subconsciously, just as many movements of the service are performed by sensory recall. A worshiper hardly needs to think about bowing during the *Amida*, or feeling closer to 'creatureliness' when in nature, rather the movement or sensory experience can help the worshiper connect more fully with the experience of prayer. In both the theatre and the synagogue, even the smallest sensory experience has the potential to evoke great emotional connection.

Sacred Narrative

According to Larry Hoffman the personal and the collective are intrinsically linked in a need to experience a sacred narrative, "At the very highest level, human beings innately seek the sacred and each other. Just by virtue of our humanity, we ultimately are drawn to curiosity about God, connection with the sacred, a sense of life's purpose, and a place to build a life narrative alongside others who are doing the same thing."[48] How we experience the unfolding of the narrative is one of the key distinctions of theatre from prayer. At the theatre we have the opportunity to experience narratives foreign to our own, those of different cultures, different familial structures, those of different races, religions, and even those of imaginary and metaphoric cultures and creatures. But at synagogue we have the unique opportunity to claim ownership of the ritual because the sacred narrative being told is our own. The prayer service has the

[47] Splansky, "Creating a Prayer Experience in Camps and Beyond," 155.
[48] Hoffman, *Rethinking Synagogues*, 47

added component of active participation by the community. Though the audience's participation in a play is vital, it takes on a more passive role. Both the prayer experience and the theatrical experience have the power to alter mood, to shift perspective and to enhance the participant's spiritual self.

Engagement

The purpose of theatre as defined by Gerardine Clark is, "The willing, continuous and uninterrupted interest of an audience who is there for no other purpose than attending a play."[49] She continues to define "interest" as a synonym for engagement. That is to reason that people attend the theatre to identify with what is happening on stage as well as in the audience. They go to be pulled into the drama, to engage in the text, and to leave somehow different than when they arrived. Clark believes that the principle teaching theatre can offer is in the realm of the moral and the ethical. This is achieved by offering an audience life lessons that feel and appear to have the authenticity of real experience, but that ultimately do not exist in reality.

Engagement in the synagogue service can happen in myriad ways: Participating in prayer through song, responsively, by spoken word, silently, or by active listening, listening to the sermon, responding to it with questions spoken aloud or pondered silently, fulfilling an honor, being called to the Torah for an *aliya*, chanting the Torah, opening and closing the ark, lighting Shabbat candles, leading *Kiddush*. These ritual moments have the potential to be fully realized, meaningful, and spiritual, but they also are in danger of being 'empty ritualizations.' To avoid this end, we can look to the

[49] Clark, *An Actor's Handbook*, 9.

models of the seeker churches who maintain engagement by infusing the rituals with energy and meaning through drama and music, building bridges of relevance to people's lives.

Private Experience in a Public Place

Theatre naturally builds community. It naturally groups people together through the progression of the play, as similar people will applaud a character's moral choices with which they and likely others identify, laugh at the folly or circumstance of a character with personal recognition, and cry when something is so moving that despite its imagined reality, the show changes them in a true reality. This shared experience offers theatre goers an opportunity to have a private experience in a public space, and in sharing laughter, applause and tears with other audience members enables them to identify with others who are like minded and share similar values and beliefs. According to Clark, "Few things can more quickly give a recent incomer a sense of belonging to a new community than attending cultural events like opera, symphony, or the theatre."[50]

Clark is right. I add *T'filla* to the top of that very short list of community building experiences. Engaging in prayer communally is a source of great strength for the individual, so much so that for traditional communities who are bound to the laws of *halakha*, it is a requirement. *Halakha* dictates that a *minyan* be present for the recitation of certain prayers. One such prayer is the Mourner's *Kaddish.* Though traditionally this prayer is said by an individual mourner for one of seven familial relations who have died, this very private prayer is among those that can be only said within a community of worshipers. The idea that a mourner must experience something so private and important

[50] Ibid., 7.

publically indicates that it is the job and obligation of the community to support that mourner in his or her prayer and grief.

Drama, like Jewish liturgy, is a literary art. It creates a world and a story with the words and language on a written page. Metaphor, rhyme, meter, even silence can be used to create this script and ritual can be used to define it. Most importantly, like liturgy, drama does not fulfill its potential or duty in written form, it is written to be spoken aloud, to be brought to life with the vocalization and dramatization of people. Drama and liturgy are lifeless without the actors and worshipers to enact and perform experience and feel their words. Simply put; liturgy is sacred drama ready for us to cultivate with innovative approaches and experience with meaningful and relevant rituals.

With the examples of seeker churches and the Reform Movement utilizing elements of the theatrical model, we have seen some of the potential for theatre's effectiveness in worship. By identifying the seven elements common to both the rituals of theatre and prayer we have a comprehensive understanding of the specific parallel bridges through which we can better infuse theatricality into synagogue worship. It seems clear that the same components that make theatre effective are the very components that foster connection within a successful synagogue service; a message with universal appeal delivered in a truthful, meaningful, and honest way delivered through one or more these seven elements. We must pay close attention to how we send messages, how we create meaningful rituals that they never become 'empty ritualizations,' and how we shape the ritual experience of the service in its entirety. In the following chapter I will examine both the arc of the dramatic narrative and the arc of

an Ashkenazic Reform liturgical Shabbat service and from that comparison propose a combined worship model that will further address these issues.

Chapter 4: Comparing the Two Narratives

In this chapter we will examine separately the narrative arc of theatrical drama and the narrative arc of a Reform Ashkenazic Shabbat morning service. I will then offer a combined model as an alternate method to approach the synagogue service. This model explores a comparative analysis of form, function, emotional content and emotional context. I will conclude by comparing musical theatre songs and liturgical compositions to illustrate this model.

The Narrative Arc of Theatrical Drama

The narrative arc of modern theatre was largely inherited from the Greek tradition. The most common arc, broken into three acts follows the well-worn pattern of the traditional narrative arc: Exposition which leads to Rising Action which leads to Resolution. Gustav Freytag, a 19th century theatre critic, and developer of the Freytag Pyramid believed that the dramatic narrative was divided into five; According to Freytag, exposition is followed by rising action, leading to the climax or turning point, leading to the falling action, and finally to the dénouement (comedy) or catastrophe (tragedy).[51]

Theatre begins with what Sam Smiley labels, "a disruption of the status quo."[52] A play depends on its initiating action to jumpstart the action, only after which does the play move forward. A play may actually begin with exposition to familiarize the

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[51] Gustav Freytag, *Technique of the Drama: An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art* (An authorized translation from the 6th German) ed. by Elias J. MacEwan, 1900 c.1894, http://www.archive.org/details/freytagstechniqu00freyuoft (Accessed November 10, 2008).

[52] Sam Smiley and Norman A. Bert, *Playwriting: The Structure of Action.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

audience with the characters, the setting. and the relationships, but exposition can enter the play at any time, its main function is to provide the audience with information. The rest of the narrative's arc depends on three related elements: the protagonist, the protagonist's pursuit of his or her objective which is essentially a new or better status quo, and, the protagonist's success or failure at obtaining that objective.

The plot and theme are presented in the exposition and introduction to the character, setting including time and place, social climate, and mood. Exposition prepares the audience for what will occur and enables us to create our own ideas about how the characters will struggle with the conflicts presented in the play based on the information we gather in this introduction. The better we understand the characters, the plot, the conflicts, and the structure, the more equipped we will be to understand the meaning and message of the play. There is an important distinction between the plot and the theme; the plot is the series of struggles and conflict the characters navigate through the course of the play, the theme is the message the audience retains from watching the characters' struggles.

The Rising Action is the meat of the narrative. This is the largest section of the narrative and it is where the central conflict becomes apparent and complications emerge as the protagonist tries to find his or her path. The classical conflicts are Man vs. Man, Man vs. Nature (or God), Man vs. Self. With the industrial revolution and advent of technology these basic themes have been expanded upon to include Man vs. Society, Man vs. Technology, and Man vs. Alter Ego. Today we might even add Man vs. Biotechnology and Man vs. Alien Society.

The play reaches its climax as the protagonist realizes his or her objective in the play in a positive or negative manner. The events and smaller driving conflicts have moved the plot forward to this point, and if the dramatic effect has been successful, the audience has been brought to a point of emotional investment, and truly cares what happens to the characters and how the conflict is resolved. The great moral lesson of the play is exposed in this moment, and truth is revealed.

With the falling action, the audience experiences the moment just after the climax, the immediate reaction of the characters to the action of the climax, and the effect the action has on the plot. This is a short but intensive moment in the play as objectives and plans are adjusted to meet the new circumstances the action has brought about. The falling action quickly leads to the resolution, which is where the moral truth is fully realized and consequences are accepted. The audience may anticipate what will occur to these characters in the future, before realizing that these characters' have no future beyond the reality of the last line of the play.

The Arc of Prayer

Jewish prayer can be divided into three primary categories: *Bakashot* or Petitionary Prayers, *Hodaot* or Prayers of Thanksgiving, and *Brachot* or Blessings of Praise. As we refrain from petitioning God on Shabbat, *Bakashot* are removed from prayer. While it is true that Jewish prayer follows a prescribed order, most notable for the purposes of this study, prayer also follows an emotional trajectory throughout the day. Using the model of a Reform Ashkenazic Shabbat morning service, we will examine more closely this arc.

The Arc of a Saturday morning Shabbat service has a clearly marked emotional path. It moves from private to public, from thanksgiving, to blessing and praise, building towards the climactic event of the reading of the Torah. The conclusion of the service follows, with the recitation of a few more prayers. Structure, according to Larry Hoffman, "is everything...Its (liturgy's) written contents look like literature, but people 'act it out' so it really is a subdivision of drama. That makes the prayer book into a kind of dramatic script."[53] The *Shacharit* service follows an order that was constructed from the center outwards. The basic rubric of the *Amida* forms the heart of the service, the rubric of the *Sh'ma* and its blessings form another central rubric. To these two rubrics were added more rubrics of prayer, the *Birkot Hashachar, P'sukei D'zimra,* the *Kriat HaTorah* and concluding prayers, forming the prayer service that we know today. The emotional structure corresponds in this way:

1. *Birkot Hashachar*: Daily private blessings of thanksgiving and praise said first thing in the morning that progress from celebrating being alive for a new day to celebrating that new day and all that it may offer us. When the recitation of *Birkot Hashachar* was moved into the synagogue from the home, the personal prayer became public. Consequently, this affords us the experience of our own dramatic enactment of the personal in the public sphere and while allows us witness the personal prayers of others.
2. *P'sukei D'zimrah*: Liturgical poems and psalms of praise that nurture a sense of spiritual preparation and readiness. These psalms use metaphor and imagery to evoke feelings of love and gratefulness towards God, and as a result offer us

[53] Lawrence A. Hoffman, ed., *Shabbat Morning Shacharit and Musaf,* vol.10 of *My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries* (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007), 3.

different ways to praise God. Extending outward from the wonderment of the creation of the body to realization of the creation of the world, this prayer rubric expands the worshipers' world readying them to connect with others in prayer and proclamation.[54]

3. *Barchu* and *Sh'ma* and its Blessings: The *Barchu* is an official call to prayer to introduce the core belief and proclamation of the Jewish people: the *Sh'ma.* This is a moment of emotional change, when the focus shifts from the private sphere to the public. This moment requires an emotional readiness to proclaim one's love of God publically as the *Barchu* is sung in a call and response format with the *shaliach tsibbur* literally checking in with the *kahal* to make sure they are ready for prayer. It is a prayer created for and therefore dependant on community. Much like a scripted dialogue in a play, it is the scene of preparation – the call to worship.

   The *Sh'ma* is then recited in unison. A great chorus of the entire community who at once are proclaiming to and listening to each other: "Hear oh Israel, *Adonai* is our God. *Adonai* is one." This first act of communal proclamation in prayer has a wealth of emotional dramatic opportunity within it as it is the vocalized and physicalized action of the community binding themselves together in prayer. Through the theatrical innovation of call, response and unison followed by the direct quoting of the Torah in the *V'ahavta*, the community feels

[54] Hoffman, *Shabbat Morning*, vol. 10, 22-63.

unified in solidarity and in historical commonality and commandment. The community is now ready to approach God.[55]

4. *Amida:* Literally, 'standing prayer,' the *Amida* is also known simply as *Ha-t'filah,* or 'The Prayer' which points to the essentiality of the *Amida* in the prayer service. The *Amida* in its centrality involves every type of prayer we have experienced up until this point in the service: *Hodaot* and *Brachot*, personal and communal prayers, prayers in unison and in individual silent and audible tones, and prayers with physical movements both prescribed and reactive. As a result, the *Amida* presents us with a wealth of emotional highs and lows and an opportunity for intensive and focused communal prayer and personal reflection.

5. Torah Service and *Haftarah*: God speaks directly to Us

If the *Amidah* is the central prayer of any prayer service, the Torah reading is the crowned Jewel. The Torah service is the most heightened moment of drama, as it is the surest moment when God speaks directly to the community in God's words, the direct words of the Torah. The reading of the Torah offers a tangible medium for the worshiper. It is no longer simply the worshiper offering and giving, but it is the worshiper receiving, accepting, and being strengthened. This experiential shift is the climactic moment of the service. So much has led up to the reading of the Torah, the prayers, the honors of opening the ark and lifting the Torah from its resting spot, the *hakaffah*, (Torah processional), the undressing

[55] Lawrence A. Hoffman, ed., *Birkot Hashachar, Morning Blessings,* vol.5 of *My People's Prayer Book. Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries* (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2001), 157-169.

of the Torah, and the honor of being called for an *aliya,* literally going up to the Torah for a blessing, that by the time we reach the actual event, we should be completely prepared and engaged, ready to hear wisdom and experience the words of Torah.

The Torah service is also a time when we add particular blessings for different members of the community. Traditionally, *Birkat Hagomel,* a prayer welcoming one back from a perilous situation including a journey overseas or childbirth, is offered between *aliyot.* Likewise a *Misheberach* for healing is offered between *aliyot.* It is fitting that this is the time in which such personal prayers are added, as we feel particularly close to God at this time and we have established our relationship with God up through this point.

The purpose of the prophetic *haftarah* reading and the sermon directly follows the reading of the Torah and provides *nechemta,* promise and hope, for the future. For this reason, the *haftarah* always ends on a positive note. This section is completed with a prayer sanctifying God's name and asking for the coming of God's kingdom.[56]

6. *Kaddish* and Concluding Prayers: The *Kaddish* is perhaps one of the most widely known prayers of the Jewish liturgy and great emotional weight is attached to its recitation. Because traditionally it is the prayer recited by a mourner three times a day, for the eleven months of mourning, it is common for people to come to services for the express purpose of reciting the *Kaddish* for a deceased loved one. Though the *Kaddish* does not in fact mention death, its ritualistic significance

[56] Hoffman, "Liturgy,"(classroom lecture, Fall 2006).

elevates the prayer beyond simply the meaning of the words, to the emotional yearnings of the heart.

Various other prayers end a Reform Ashkenazic Shabbat prayer service; *Aleinu. Adon Olam*, *Ein Keloheinu*, and *Yigdal* are among the most common. The *Aleinu* is a prayer of salvation that looks forward beyond the status quo of the now, towards the Messianic Era, when as the text states, "*God shall be one, and God's name shall be one.*" Problematic for many modern Jews as within its statement of praise of God as ruler and maker of all, the *Aleinu* declares that God has singled the Jewish people out from all other people of the earth. *Mishkan T'filla* has addressed this issue by offering alternate *Aleinu* texts.

The Arcs Combine to Form a New Model

If we apply the theatrical terminology to the service model, we find an alternate method to approach the prayer service. We begin with the acknowledgement that the synagogue and sanctuary in particular is sacred space. How we cultivate that space into creating a mood for the service is dependent on the layout of the space. Where are the seats for the Kahal? Where is the ark? Which was does the Bima face? Is the space set us to be warm and welcoming, to create community by allowing people to see each other, or is it set up with all pews facing front so people are focused solely towards the prayer leaders and the ark in the East? Once these physical elements are determined, we can address how we use the space throughout the service.

We know from the seeker church model, the separation of the congregation from the ark and from the clergy leaders is a crucial choice, which carries great weight. In relying too heavily on the traditional model of separation, we may alienate congregants, yet a complete abandonment of these boundaries may result in a lost sense of majesty, honor, and holiness. Because the Jewish tradition speaks so much of separation within rituals and prayer, as for example within the *havdallah* service, the precedence for separation is present. The sacred space then should be one that works within the framework of boundaries, highlighting the spiritual and ritual significance of separation without creating feelings of alienation and at the same time, creating a sense of community, fostering worship.

Music as we have learned is an essential component in creating sacred space for prayer. We have seen that contemporary music has been a successful connective force in seeker churches, and in Reform settings such as the 2007 Biennial conference. Recounting the words of Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Kimon Howland Sargeant, we also know that people seek a return to the music, sounds and feelings of their childhoods. Again, a balance needs to be struck based on the specific needs and desired direction of the synagogue. *Mishkan T'filah* offers congregations more choice in liturgy, including liturgical texts written by popular composers, and therefore more choice in song and creative musical license. It is not however, only the choice of liturgy and accompanying musical settings for prayers that enhance the service, much more can be accomplished by taking advantage of all musical resources.

Reform synagogues, unlike Orthodox and more traditional Conservative synagogues, have the advantage of using musical instrumentation to enhance worship. In

musical theatre form, underscoring often enhances dramatic moments of dialogue. So too can service leaders together with musicians create an underscoring of the entire service, utilizing the power of music to drive the service forward. A beautiful *niggun* at the beginning of the service can raise the energy of the congregation by building in intensity and volume. With the addition of instrumentation, the energy can be guided in a more precise way, adding instruments one by one to increase the volume, intensity, and tempo, or it can alternately bring the energy back down to a contemplative place by removing instruments one at a time until the congregation is left singing a cappella.

From a traditional Jewish standpoint, Shabbat is a day unlike any other in the week. If we look at the week as the status quo, we can equate Shabbat services with the theatrically described 'disruption of the status quo.' Shabbat aside, in traditional synagogues where prayer is in strict accordance with *halakha*, prayer three times a day is the status quo, but in the majority of Reform settings, a worship service is outside the daily norm, and therefore is a *disruption* of the status quo. Consequently, in preparation for any Reform service, leaders must ask themselves well before the service begins, why is this service happening now? What makes this particular service different, needed, and special? Furthermore, what are the unique opportunities to engage within this particular service? Is it a holiday? Shabbat *Shira*? *Rosh Chodesh*? Does the service fall on an important memorial? Are we marking Kristalnacht, 9/11, Yom *Hashoah*? Likewise we must ask ourselves what is going on in the world in this week, on this day. Has a new president, the first black president in the history of the United States been elected? Has there been a horrible terrorist attack in India? Why are people coming today, right now, to this service?

We have seen through the models of seeker churches and theatrical models that connections to the outside world, to things that are happening in the personal and communal lives of worshipers or audience members are the very links that make prayer and theatre relevant for them. We must be conscious of where our congregants are coming from. Prayer leaders must learn about the lives of congregants, the *yahrtzeits* that they are marking, and the baby they are naming. We must do our best to know what is happening outside of the synagogue so that we can better address it in the context of Judaism within the synagogue.

Though there is no exact liturgical section of prayer that perfectly correlates to the theatrical stage of exposition, the social correlation is clear. Exposition is the preparation for and introduction to what is happening in the service, for example if a new *siddur* is being used, if we are celebrating someone's *bar-mitzva*, if an Introduction to Judaism class is visiting the temple for the first time, or if we are waiting for a *minyan*. Social exposition is the ingathering of information useful to us to begin the service. In surveying the makeup of the group that has come to worship we can determine certain markers that can be helpful during the service. Are the majority of people in attendance considered regulars who are familiar with the rituals and the prayer book, or is this an open house Shabbat service where more guidance and explanation will make people feel welcome and at ease? What will be the cumulative rituals that most congregants will recognize and resonate with? Is it how we light Shabbat candles, how we invite people to say the names of their loved ones aloud for the *Misheberach*? If we are adding a new ritual, we must be sensitive and gradual in our introduction allowing congregants to

become comfortable with what will hopefully become an aid to experiencing and creating more meaningful cumulative rituals.

Rising action parallels the participation of the congregation in the service. This is key to moving the service forward and can determine the degree of success of a service. Because so much comes together on the social level in this segment of the service, careful attention must be paid to music selection, to speed, to language, to directions given and to communication between the leaders, the congregants, and the community as a whole. If the service is intended to be a communal singing service, the first two musical settings cannot be cantorial solos. Likewise the musical keys must be chosen with the community's vocal range in mind. If they feel uncomfortable with the keys, they will not sing, and the desired mood will not be reached. If the community is one that does not read Hebrew well and the prayers are all chanted quickly in Hebrew without explanation or time to read the English, interest will be lost. Careful attention should be paid to the transitional moments, musically and from prayer to reading to *kavannah.* If the service does not flow, if the transitions are jarring, the *kahal* will be brought out of the world of prayer possibly into a place of disturbance, annoyance, discomfort, or a non-prayerful state.

Liturgically, the rising action parallels the *Sh'ma* and its blessings, and on Shabbat as the service includes a Torah reading, the rising action also includes the *Amidah.* The transitional moment before the *Barchu* is an opportunity for engagement with great dramatic potential. Rather than just moving forward with the *Barchu*, a prayer whose Hebrew words many congregants may be familiar with, attention needs to be called to the shift in focus occurring from private prayer to public prayer, a meaning that the

community may not be aware of. This is an opportunity to strengthen bonds of community by clarifying to the congregation that this moment represents a unification of worship. A well crafted *kavannah* from the prayer leaders, followed by a dramatic pause and then a musically exciting, declamatory and unifying musical setting of *Barchu*, such as the setting by Gesher, will elevate this moment of worship, ensuring that the rising action continues to build toward the climax of the service.

The climax of the service, the reading of the Torah, ideally has the attention of every member of the congregation. We have spoken to God, we have praised God, and we have approached God in action and words, in private and in public. With the Torah reading, we now hear God speak to us. This is the heart of the service, and the point where the congregants are experiencing at greatest intensity what they were seeking in coming to the synagogue: an emotional connection or experience. Whether one believes that the words of the Torah are the exact words of God, or they are divinely inspired, the Torah is our most prized, sacred, and central text. It contains the drama and history of our people, the trials, hardships, and successes of our ancestors, the commandments of how to live and love God and each other, and hallowed wisdom. We read from the Torah to hear God's wishes for us, God's instructions to us, and to strengthen our own communication with God.

There is tremendous potential for engagement in the Torah service through traditional honors of *aliyot,* opening and closing the ark, carrying the Torah, *Hagbah* and *G'lilah,* as well as by innovative and non-traditional means. Instead of calling individuals to the Torah for an *aliya*, we can call groups of people who are marking an occasion to the Torah for an *aliya.* In between each *aliya*, an interpretation of the text, either literal

or poetic, can be read. As suggested by Paul Woodruff, the crossing over of the audience into the space of the performer and vice-versa can be most exciting and dramatically effective if the boundaries have been determined and well defined from the beginning of the show. In an effort to have everyone cross the boundary from observer to participant at some point, invite the congregation to form a circle around the Torah while it is being chanted. Finding new ways to invite people to walk through the boundary and up to the Torah can bring the text to life in a new way. Dramatic innovation in the Torah service including the recitation of the *haftarah* will allow for new connections to be made and existing connections to be strengthened between congregant and God, congregant and clergy, and the community as a whole.

The sermon, which frequently follows the Torah service, is another area of great dramatic potential and can extend the climax of the Torah service if crafted well. This is an opportunity not only to speak to congregants in their own comfortable and familiar vernacular but to make real and contemporary connections between the text and the lives of the congregants that will illuminate the relevance of Torah in their lives. Attention must be paid not only to content, but to the presentation of the sermon. Being familiar with the script of the sermon is crucial so that attention is on making eye contact and connection to the worshipers rather than buried in the written page. The sermon, in keeping with the Reform Movement's liturgical reform, should be concise and not overstated. This is not to say that the sermon must be short, it is to say that it should not be unnecessarily long. The goal here is to enlighten and connect with congregants, an end best achieved by keeping congregants engaged and focused.

Falling Action corresponds to the concluding prayers of the service. The community has experienced something meaningful and purposeful in their prayers by this point, and they should be well into the flow and rhythm of the service. From this point on, they are aware that the service is concluding, and if it drags on unnecessarily, we risk losing their attention. This is not the time to introduce a lengthy ornate new musical setting. Liturgically, the falling action can include the *Kiddush, Aleinu, Mourners Kaddish*, and *Kaddish Shalem.* There is opportunity in the falling action for eloquent moments of poignancy, specifically with a well chosen reading before the *Mourner's Kaddish*, but these should be well planned, well situated in liturgical placement, and brief.

The conclusion corresponds to the final moments of the service, which may include reflective moments, special blessings, announcements, and anything else that did not fit into the service. Emotionally, the congregation feels changed in some way, satisfied and pleased with their prayer experience, moved to think about something new, to ask some question of themselves or others. Again, musical selection is vital here as it can dictate the emotional end of the service, be it quiet and contemplative or celebratory and highly energetic. Congregants should leave feeling that they want to come back, knowing their time has been well spent, and that they have been led in prayer by people who value their presence, their commitment, and their individuality.

Comparing the Emotional Content of the Prayers to Musical Theatre Pieces

The final step of this analysis is to compare a liturgical and a dramatic musical text on a more specific level. Informed by the distinctive types of prayers, the dramatic

narrative arc, the liturgical narrative arc, and the combined narrative arc, I have chosen examples of three theatrical songs and three liturgical prayer settings from three different points in their respective arcs whose emotional intent, emotional context, form, and function have great similarities.

Exposition

"Some Enchanted Evening" (see Musical Example 1) from the musical *South Pacific* is a solo sung by the protagonist Emile de Becque, a middle aged French plantation owner as he realizes he has fallen in love with U.S. Navy nurse, Nellie Forbush stationed on his South Pacific Island during World War II.[57] The song falls towards the end of the exposition in act one as we learn how the two were immediately drawn to each other at a dinner party one 'enchanted evening.' "Some Enchanted Evening" is an introductory piece whose reflective and inviting qualities set an atmospheric and musical tone for the rest of the show. The song is romantic and beautifully lyric yet simple in form and rhythm. Written in 4/4 time, the piece remains largely in C major, using hints of F major in the B section, and follows an AABAB pattern. The focus of the song is on Emile finding and then recognizing his love. The song drives towards his final declaration to never let that love go. "Some Enchanted Evening" is story driven, and the lyrics center around the attributes of the object of his love, Nellie: At first she is a stranger, and then the sound of her laughter becomes familiar then enchanting, until Emile realizes that Nellie is the woman he loves. Once he realizes Nellie is the object of his love, Emile resolves to never let her go.

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[57] Oscar Hammerstein II and Richard Rodgers, 1949. "Some Enchanted Evening" in *South Pacific* Vocal Selections. *New York: Williamson Music, Inc.*, 3.

Though we have been utilizing the Shabbat morning service for our comparative purposes, this example which serves as the parallel to "Some Enchanted Evening" is taken from the Friday night *Kabbalat Shabbat* liturgy. Friday night Shabbat begins with a unique service called *Kabbalat Shabbat* which precedes the *Maariv* service and sets the scene for the beauty and holiness of Shabbat. *Kabbalat Shabbat* focuses on welcoming the Sabbath bride, the bride and groom being a metaphor for the loving relationship between God and the people of Israel. Much of the liturgy for this service is taken from the Song of Songs which is oriented towards the subject of love. "*Dodi Li*" (see Musical Example 2) by Steven Sher and arranged by Mary Feinsinger uses the texts from verses 2:16, 3:6, and 4:9.[58] These verses are so commonly grouped together in song, that they are printed together in this order in many prayer books including *Mishkan T'filah.*

The text translates:

My beloved is mine and I am his.

Who browses among the lilies.

Who is she that comes up from the desert in clouds of myrrh and frankincense.

You have captured my heart, my own, my bride, you have captured my heart.

Written in cut time, the piece remains in G major throughout and has rolling chordal accompaniment. The music has a romantic feel with built in suspense as it begins on the 5th of the scale descending to the tonic at the very end of the first phrase. It is as if to say that the protagonist is watching his beloved, but cannot fully see her as she browses among the lilies. The A section repeats three times throughout the piece, always

[58] Steven Sher and Mary Feinsinger, "Dodi Li," in Kol Dodi: Jewish Music for Weddings. (New York: Transcontinental Music Publications, 2001), 111.

with the same text. The music ascends in the B section as he speaks of his love ascending from the desert. An A section is then followed by a second B section with the final line of text. The song ends on the A section. "*Dodi Li*" is very simple in form and melody and is driven by the text, the vision of "my love." The text focuses on the approach of the beloved, a romantic visualization of her, her ascension to meet her love, and finally the protagonist's realization that his heart has been captured: She is his beloved, and his bride.

The pieces parallel each other in function, feel, form and subject matter. Both set up the atmospheric and musical tone of their narratives, as they are sung in the exposition at the beginning of their respective arcs. Both are romantic love songs, written in major keys with unchanging simple rhythms. The musicality of the major key speaks to the happiness of the present moment and the anticipation of the continuation of love and pleasure in the future. Both pieces are textually driven, the story lines moving towards the realization that the woman before each protagonist is their respective beloved. Each piece in its own way sets the scene for what is to come next, each a love story of its own kind.

Rising Action

"Bring Him Home" (see Musical example 3) from *Les Miserables* is a solo sung by the protagonist Jean Valjean towards the end of the rising action of the second act of the show.[59] The song is Valjean's prayer to God to safely return Marius, his intended son-in-law, from the frontlines of the French Revolution. The power of this song is in its

[59] Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schonberg, producer Cameron Mackintosh. 1987. "Bring Him Home," in *Les Miserables*. New York: Alain Boublil Music Ltd., 66.

simplicity. The words are uncomplicated; without hiding behind verbose language they expose the honesty and intensity at the core of Valjean's prayer. The words are also repetitive, "Bring him home" sung six times in a relatively short text. The music is tender and sweet exhibiting the manner of pleading that exists beyond anger, but from a place of true love, fear, and heartfelt concern. Set in the higher registers of the tenor voice, the performance requires a pure and sweet falsetto for its closing repetition of the phrase "Bring him home." The song is the prayer of a father to God to protect his child throughout the night and return him home, restoring him to safety.

Hashkivenu is a prayer sung only in the *Maariv* evening service which asks for God's protection in the coming evening. Cloaked in darkness, traditionally the night in Judaism is looked at with trepidation and weariness. In Talmudic times, sleep was considered to be $1/60^{th}$ of death, a time when our souls are placed in God's hand for safekeeping throughout the night.[60] The text of *Hashkivenu* asks for God's protection in the face of, *oyev* [enemies], *dever* [plagues], cherev [swords], *raav* [famines] and *yagon* [troubles.] It asks for God to "spread over us a shelter of peace," "*U'fros aleinu sukat shlomecha"* appealing to God as merciful guardian and granter of peace.

A.W. Binder 's setting of "*Hashkivenu"*(see Musical Example 4) utilizes the structure of a traditional recitative, the melodic line supported chiefly by single chordal structures which underpin the tonality of the piece.[61] The setting begins in E minor, and the initial phrases are structured in a free flowing form of simple phrases with little no melodic embellishment. As the text moves towards the specific request of keeping us far from clear and present dangers, the music reflects the change in intensity with a shift

[60] Hoffman, "Liturgy" (classroom lecture).
[61] A.W. Binder, *Hashkivenu,* unpublished manuscript.

from E minor to A minor and the vocal line enters into a dialogue with the accompaniment, rather than being supported by it. Everything at this point in the piece points to the gravity of what we are praying to be kept safe from. Each syllable of word depicting an 'evil' is equally accentuated on a quarter note, marked dynamically with additional accents above. Each is unaccompanied, but answered with an equivalent quarter note in the accompaniment following the completion of the word. For example, "*Oyev*" sung on E and D sharp, for a total value of a half note, are followed by a responsive A minor 7^{th} chord and an A diminished chord. The fervor and angst of our pleading in the A minor section gives way to the quieter and sweeter focus of this portion of the prayer marked *dolci,* asking for God to spread over us the shelter of peace. The first only truly florid passage is extended on the second repetition of the word '*u'vtzel*' meaning 'spread' written in C major as we pass back into the original key of E minor to finish the prayer.

The pieces parallel each other textually and musically, in form and in function providing a clear model of parallel emotional experience. Both take place just before the climax of the arc, towards the end of the rising action and both are written as solo pieces to be sung in an exposed and sincere manner. As in "Bring Him Home" the simplicity of the appeal of the prayer "*Hashkivenu*" is reflected in the honesty of the text and further reflected in the straightforward melodic line. The recitative format utilized in a clear-cut way mirrors the ease of the melodic line of "Bring Him Home." Most importantly the message of both pieces is the prayer to God to keep us and our loved ones safe from all harm throughout the night.

Resolution

The resolution of the dramatic narrative of a musical is the emphatic statement of the moral position of the show as told through a final musical number. Frequently an ensemble number, the unison provided by an ensemble singing together sends a strong message that the resolution is the summation of what the characters have experienced and learned collectively. The communal liturgical resolution to a service serves the same purpose, emphatically declaring that we have been on a journey of learning, morality and spirituality through prayer and have arrived at its end together, changed in some way.

"A Million Tomorrows" (see Musical Example 5) is the final musical number of *Wallenberg.*[62] Unlike other dramatic plays, *Wallenberg* is unique in that its climax and conclusion are so closely experienced that they are nearly one and the same. The rising action that has preceded the moment has told the tale of righteous Gentile, Raoul Wallenberg's life, his heroic and remarkable strength in the face of terror and death, and his magnificent love of humanity and personal feeling responsibility that led to his saving the lives of so many Jews during World War II. Because Wallenberg's fate remains unknown, the show must climax just as it is about to end in order to sustain the message of this one average man's extraordinary actions. The moral message is that one person's action can change the world. The final number is a direct address to the audience, and to the world. Breaking the fourth wall, the Jews of the ghetto come out in solo and then in triumphant unison to exclaim to the world that because of this one man's actions, the Jewish people will live on to see 'A Million Tomorrows.'

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[62] Laurence Holzman, Felicia Needleman, Benjamin Rosenbluth, 2004. "A Million Tomorrows," in *Wallenberg.*

"A Million Tomorrows" is musically constructed in such a way that it builds individual vocal lines, one on top of the other until the unison of the voices is a complete blend of every individual's voice, and therefore every individual's story. Each solo vocal line tells the story of an individual person living their life in his or her own unique way. We realize in the refrain that all of these individual lives are woven together because Wallenberg's action enabled them to live, have children and build new and beautiful lives. The climax of the song coincides with the climax of the show, and a mere moment later, the show reaches its conclusion and the curtain falls. The dramatic intent is that the audience has no time to ponder the significance of Wallenberg's action while the show is still being performed. They are forced then, to leave the theatre thinking about the significance of his actions, and hopefully translating that into acknowledging the importance of taking action in their own lives against injustice. The function of this song, is to at once proclaim the greatness of this one man, and then to look toward the promising future, telling the tale and continuing his good work from generation to generation.

The *Aleinu* serves as a concluding prayer to the *Shacharit* service. The first word of the prayer "*Aleinu*" and therefore its name, means, "It is incumbent upon us." It is incumbent upon us to praise God, the greater theme of the prayer. The *Aleinu* is a prayer of universal ideal and salvation that as mentioned earlier, looks towards the Messianic Era, when as the text states, "*God shall be one, and God's name shall be one.*" In praising God's greatness, The *Aleinu* declares that God has singled the Jewish people out

from all other people of the earth, as stated earlier, a cause of great discomfort historically for Reform Jews.[63]

Unlike the more popular setting of *Aleinu* written by Solomon Sulzer which sits in major, William Sharlin's setting of "*Aleinu*" (see Musical Example 6) is written in F minor, a choice which I believe addresses the complexities inherent in the text.[64] Rather than a proclamation of strength in the theological statement of a Messianic Era that would be dominant within a major key, the minor key allows the sentiment of praise to be infused with a sense of the uncertainty of our time now. This setting allows for the reality of the struggle of present life while looking forward to the dawning of a more perfect Messianic Era. The melody builds to the text "*lifnei melech, malchei hamlachim. hakadosh baruch Hu.*" The word "*melech,*" meaning *King,* referring directly to God, the central focus of the prayer, is highlighted in two ways: It is held for a full half note, the longest amount of time allotted to any one word in the piece and it is sung on D flat above middle C, the highest note musically of the piece. The melodic line is intricate and detailed while remaining fluid and forward moving. Unlike Sulzer's "*Aleinu,*" this setting does not focus on a chanting nature of prayer rather its minor melodic line with its contoured phrasing asks the worshiper to really ponder what the coming of a Messianic Era may mean and how it relates to our present lives.

A fascinating commonality is the element of Jews as 'chosen' in both pieces. In the context of the *Aleinu*, the Jewish people are chosen, "*Shelo asanu k'goyei haaratzot, vlo samanu k'mishp'chot haadama,*" "That we were not made as the other nations of the land, and not like the other families of the earth." The traditional sentiment is one of

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[63] Hoffman, *Tachanun and Concluding Prayers*, vol. 6.
[64] William Sharlin, "*Aleinu*," unpublished manuscript.

gratitude for being chosen and made different from all others, but this notion of being separate, is the very thing Reform Jews are uncomfortable with and the impetus behind altering the text in reflection of their discomfort. In *Wallenberg* the Jews are also chosen, twice. Having been born Jewish, they have been singled out by the Nazis to be murdered, and in being chosen by Wallenberg, they have been singled out to live.

The two pieces share form in that they have both have unison moments, and the unified voice joins together to proclaim the greatness of the one that they are grateful to, in the *Aleinu*, God, and in "A Million Tomorrows," *Wallenberg*. Though Sharlin's *"Aleinu"* is more contemplative and "A Million Tomorrows" more declamatory in nature, they both function as uplifting motivating moments of conclusion within their respective arcs. It is interesting to note the parallel emotional intent within the parallel emotional context; Both the *Aleinu* and "A Million Tomorrows" mark a journey of community in order to directly proclaim their gratefulness as one people to the one who managed to redeem them. Both look forward into the future, at once thanking and moving forward proclaiming to future generations the glory, holiness and in turn love of their respective redeemer.

Through the use of this new model, the power and draw of the theatre can be fully realized in Reform prayer. We have seen by example how musical theatre can parallel prayer, it also offers a helpful model for approaching and understanding prayer. Because the language of musical theatre is our common vernacular and is contemporary in usage and flow, we have the initial ability to more easily identify the song's emotional content. By looking at the musical numbers within the overarching framework of their respective

shows, we can identify the function that each song serves in driving the storyline of its play forward. This is the way we should be approaching prayer. We can look at the construct of the service in its entirety, understand why prayers are structurally where they are, and in turn have a better understanding of their overall function and intention. We can then approach the language and the music of a setting of liturgical text with an understanding of the purpose of the prayer. When we combine this intent with the melodic line, harmony, and phrasing of the musical setting, we are then well informed and ready to sing the prayer in an emotionally connected and honest way.

Conclusion: Taking Responsibility for Our Future

The need to create emotional connections within communities of worship, between Jews and God, their communities, and themselves has been clearly stated and restated by the subjects of Steven Cohen, Arnold Eisen and Ari Kelman's various studies as well as by leaders and participants in worship services of both Jewish and Christian faiths. We have a tremendous need for meaningful Jewish engagement and we have the opportunity to meet that need by addressing the model of worship we offer in Reform synagogues today.

The potential of making connections lies in the hands of the clergy and lay-leaders that create and facilitate the worship service. Drawing on popular culture, the model of the theatre and its dramatic arc, and the riches of our tradition, service leaders have the information available to them to create innovative and meaningful services that foster community, emotional connections, and religious morals in a uniquely Jewish way.

We cannot as prayer leaders make connections for people, but we can do our best to create and nurture the setting in which connections are made. In both the theatre and the synagogue, so much preparation and work is done behind the scenes to create a vibrant, beautiful, and meaningful show or service. With the preparation behind them, the actor and the service leader are free to be in the moment, responsive to the needs of the audience and the congregation in a meaningful and connected way. Though an actor cannot make an audience member feel something, they can awaken an emotion in an audience member by offering a truthful and honest performance. So too, by being as present in the moment, and as honest and heartfelt in our prayers we the cantors, rabbis

and service leaders, have the greatest chance of helping our congregants connect to all that they are seeking.

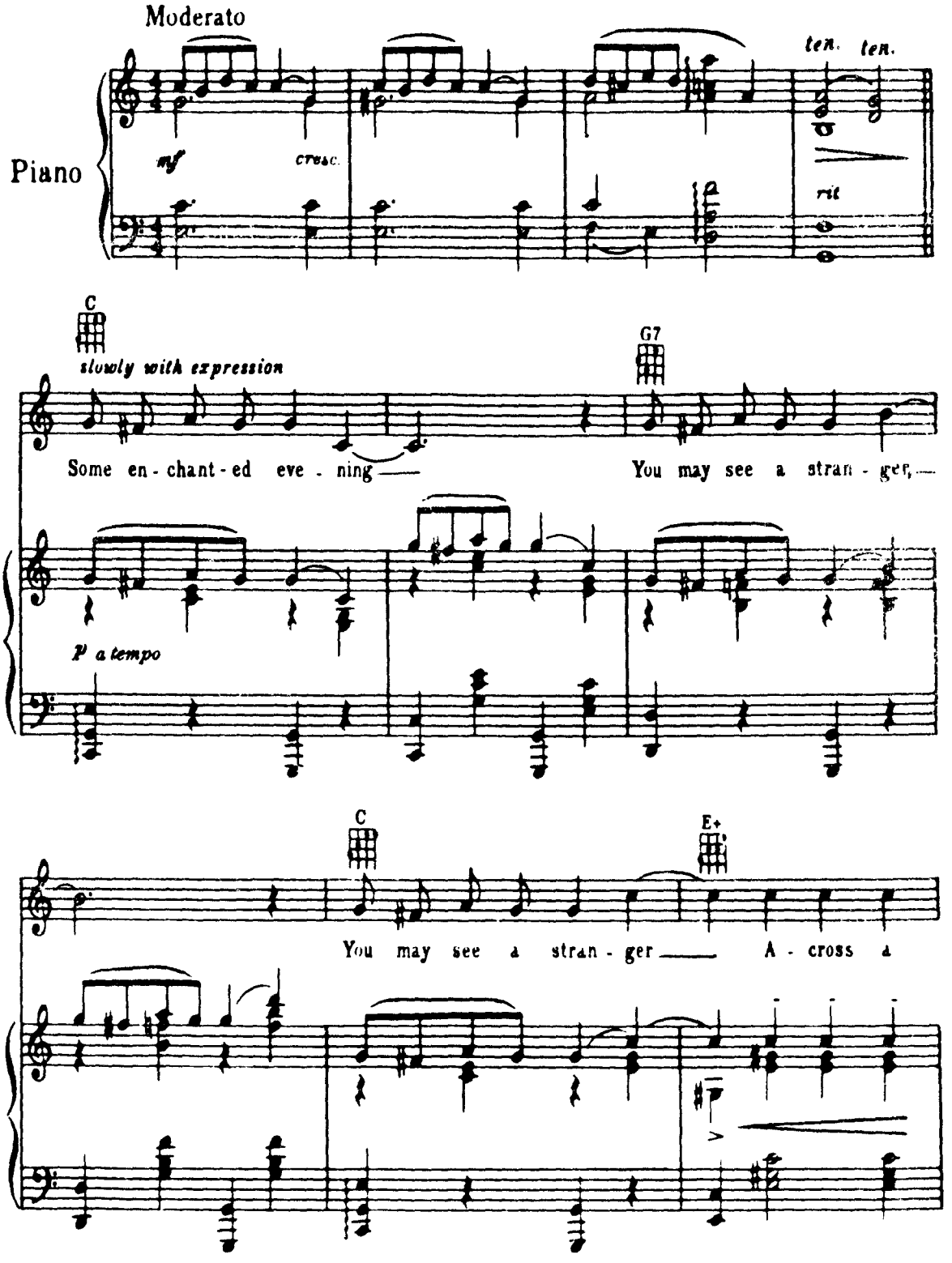
MUSICAL EXAMPLE 1

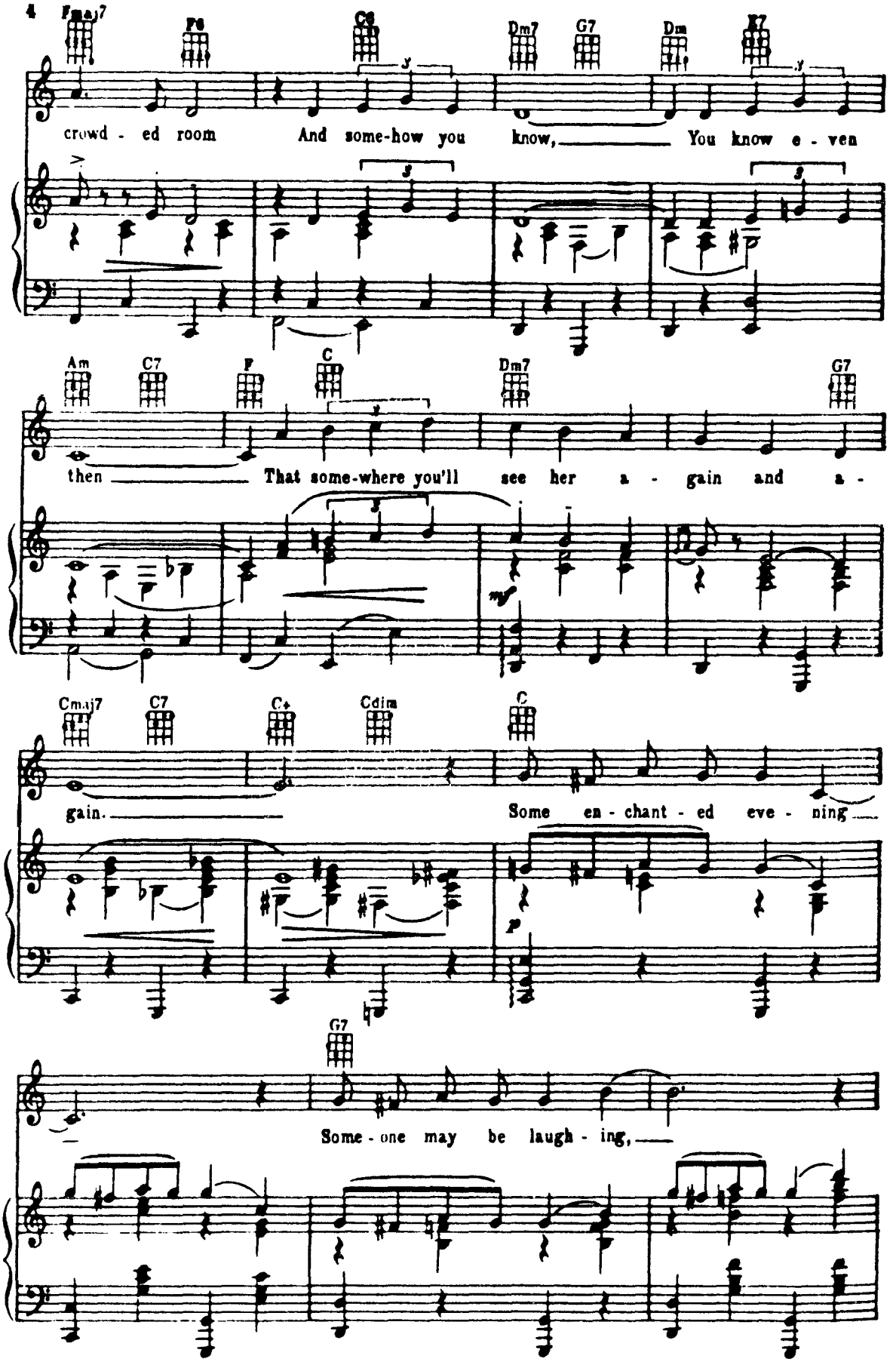
"South Pacific"

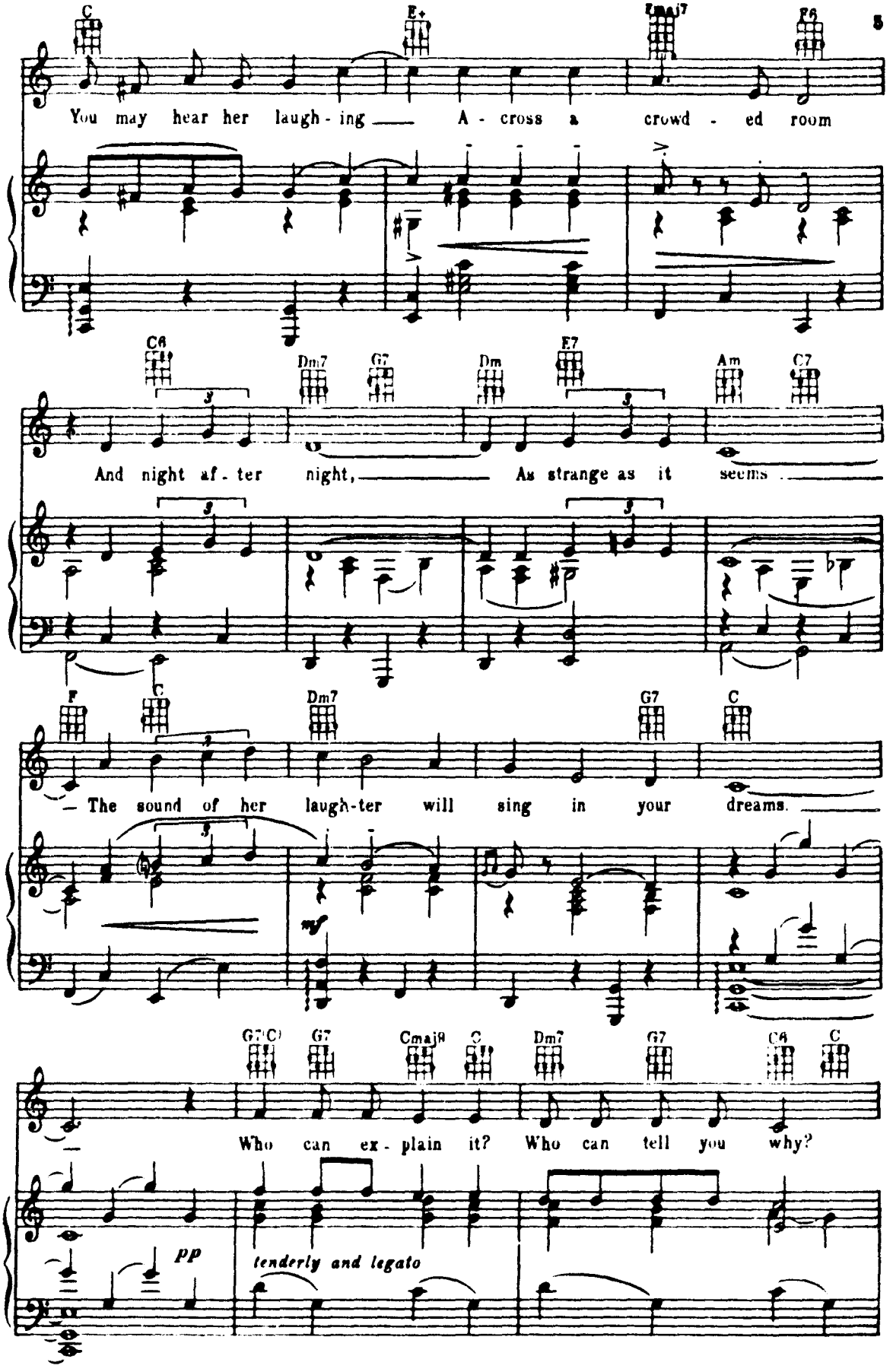
Some Enchanted Evening

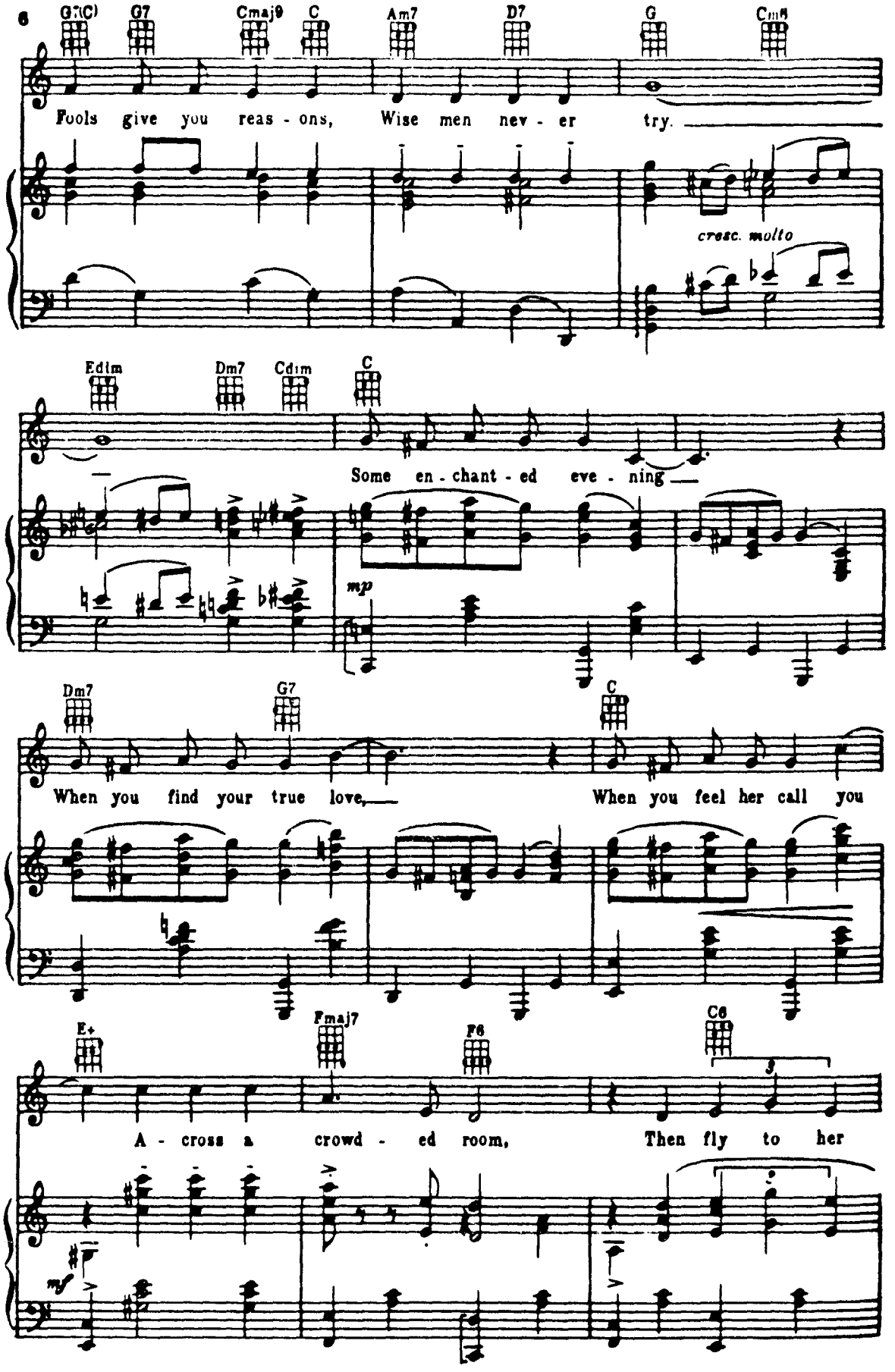
Words by
OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II

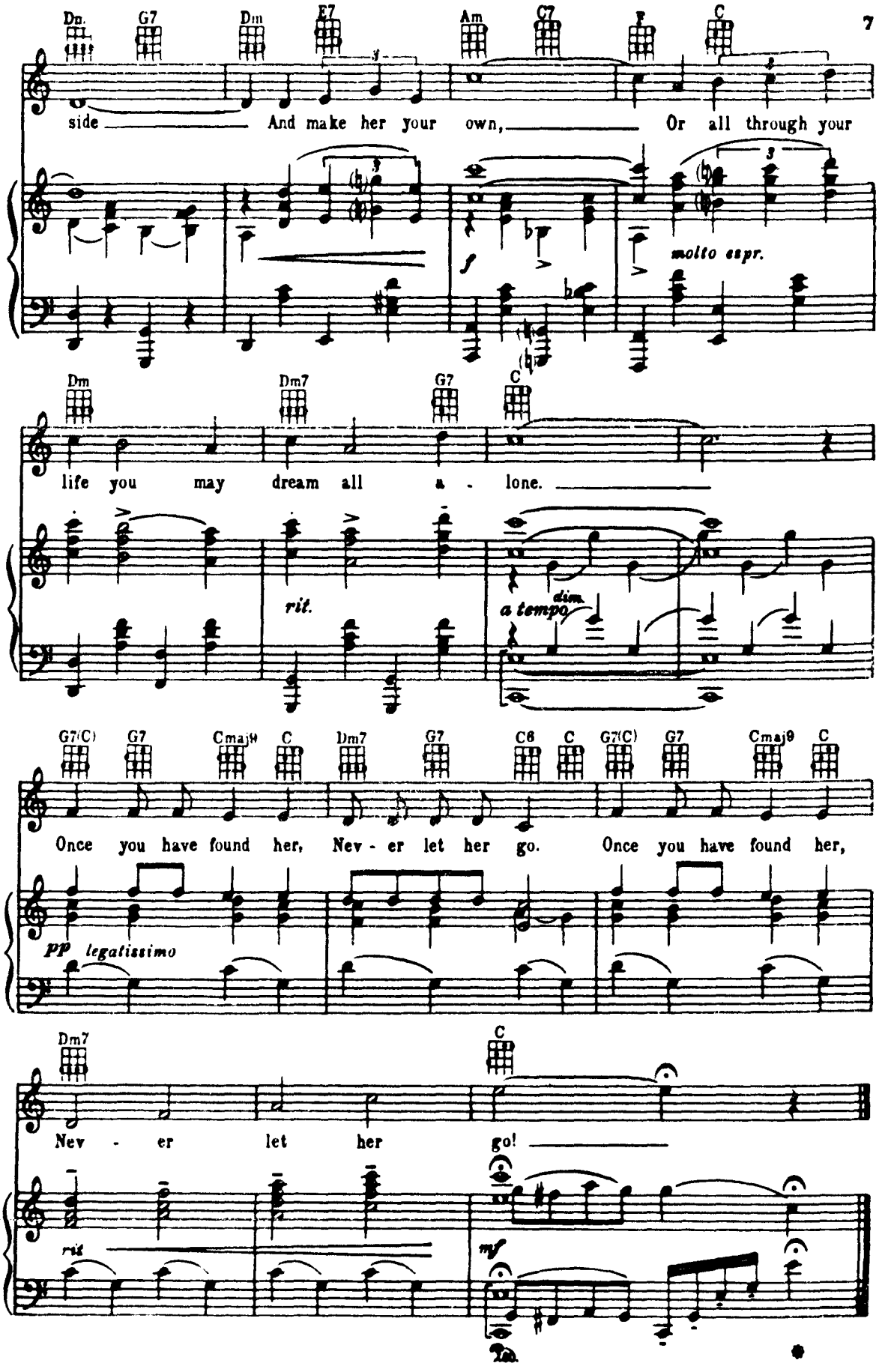
Music by
RICHARD RODGERS




4
Fmaj7
F6
C6
Dm7
G7
Dm
A7
crowd - ed room And some-how you know, You know e - ven
Am
C7
F
C
Dm7
G7
then That some-where you'll see her a - gain and a -
Cmaj7
C7
C+
Cdim
C
gain. Some en - chant - ed eve - ning
G7
Some - one may be laugh - ing,


C
E+
Emaj7
F6
You may hear her laugh - ing — A - cross a crowd - ed room
C6
Dm7
G7
Dm
E7
Am
C7
And night af - ter night, — As strange as it seems
F
C
Dm7
G7
C
— The sound of her laugh-ter will sing in your dreams.
mf
G7/C
G7
Cmaj8
C
Dm7
G7
C6
C
— Who can ex - plain it? Who can tell you why?
pp
tenderly and legato


6
G7(C)
G7
Cmaj9
C
Am7
D7
G
Cm6
Fools give you reas - ons, Wise men nev - er try.
cresc. molto
Edim
Dm7
Cdim
C
Some en - chant - ed eve - ning
mp
Dm7
G7
C
When you find your true love, When you feel her call you
E+
Fmaj7
F6
C6
A - cross a crowd - ed room, Then fly to her
mf

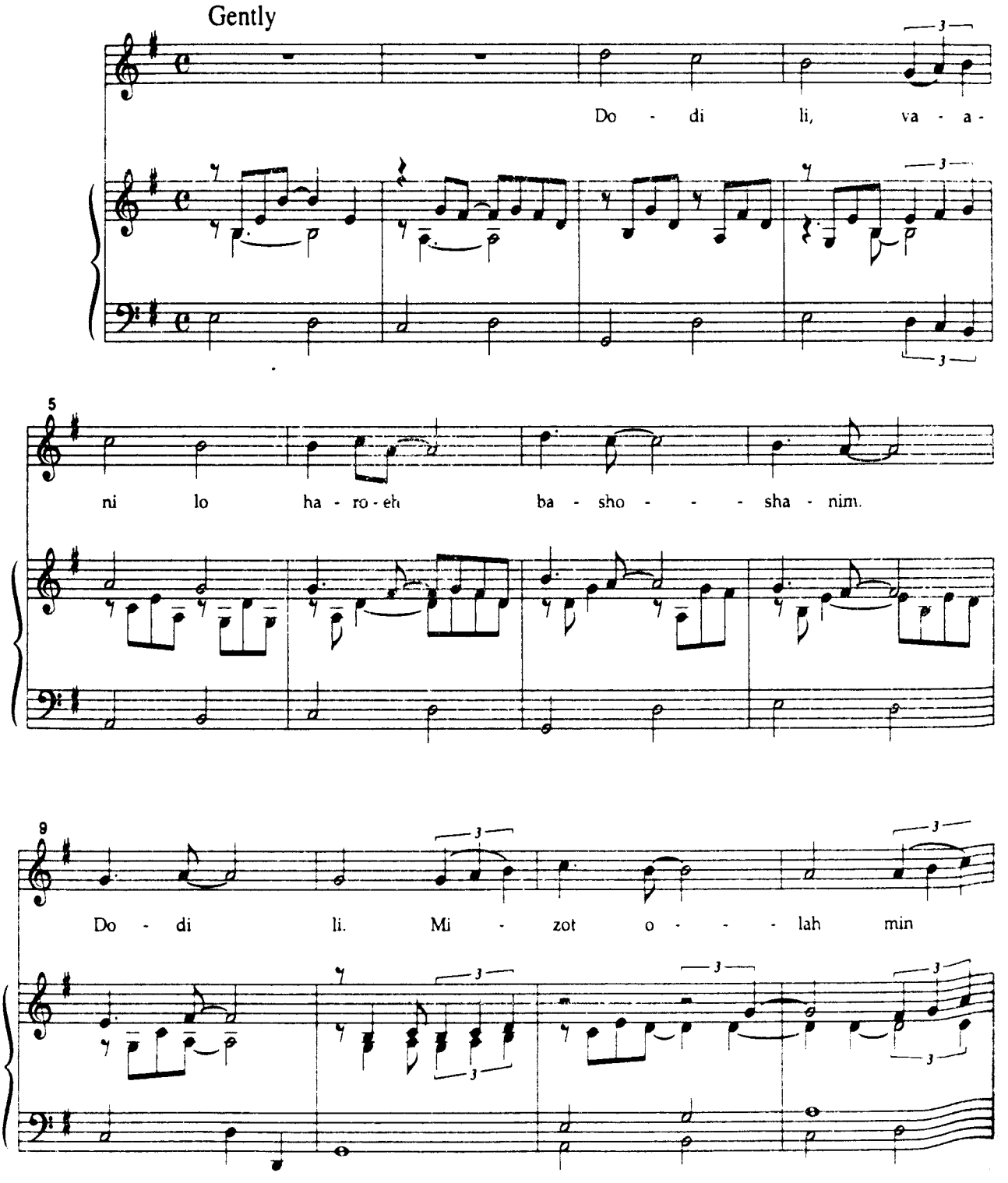

Dm G7 Dm E7 Am C7 F C
side And make her your own, Or all through your
molto espr.
Dm Dm7 G7 C
life you may dream all a - lone.
rit.
a tempo
dim.
G7(C) G7 Cmaj9 C Dm7 G7 C6 C G7(C) G7 Cmaj9 C
Once you have found her, Nev - er let her go. Once you have found her,
pp legatissimo
Dm7 C
Nev - er let her go!
rit
mf

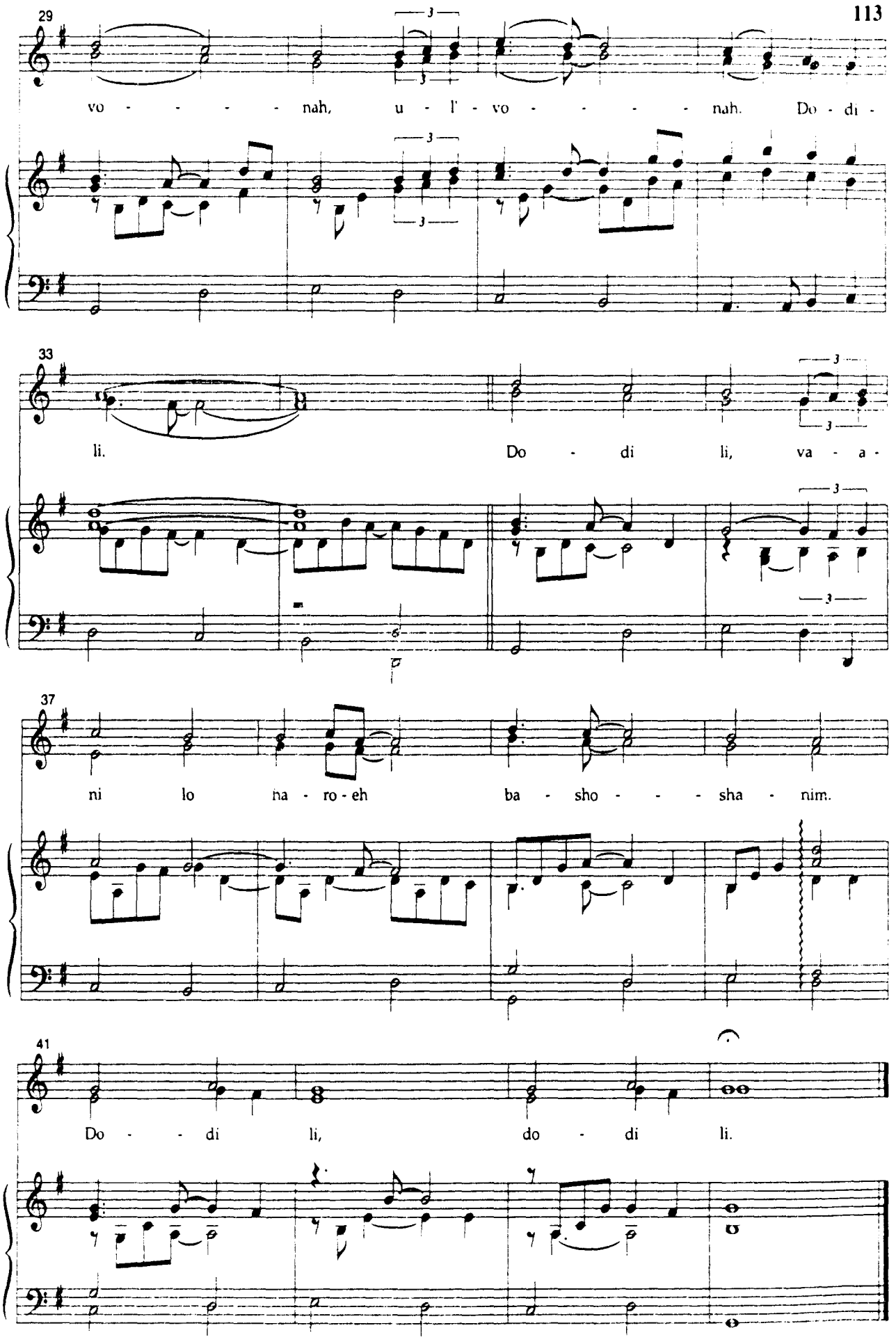
MUSICAL EXAMPLE 2

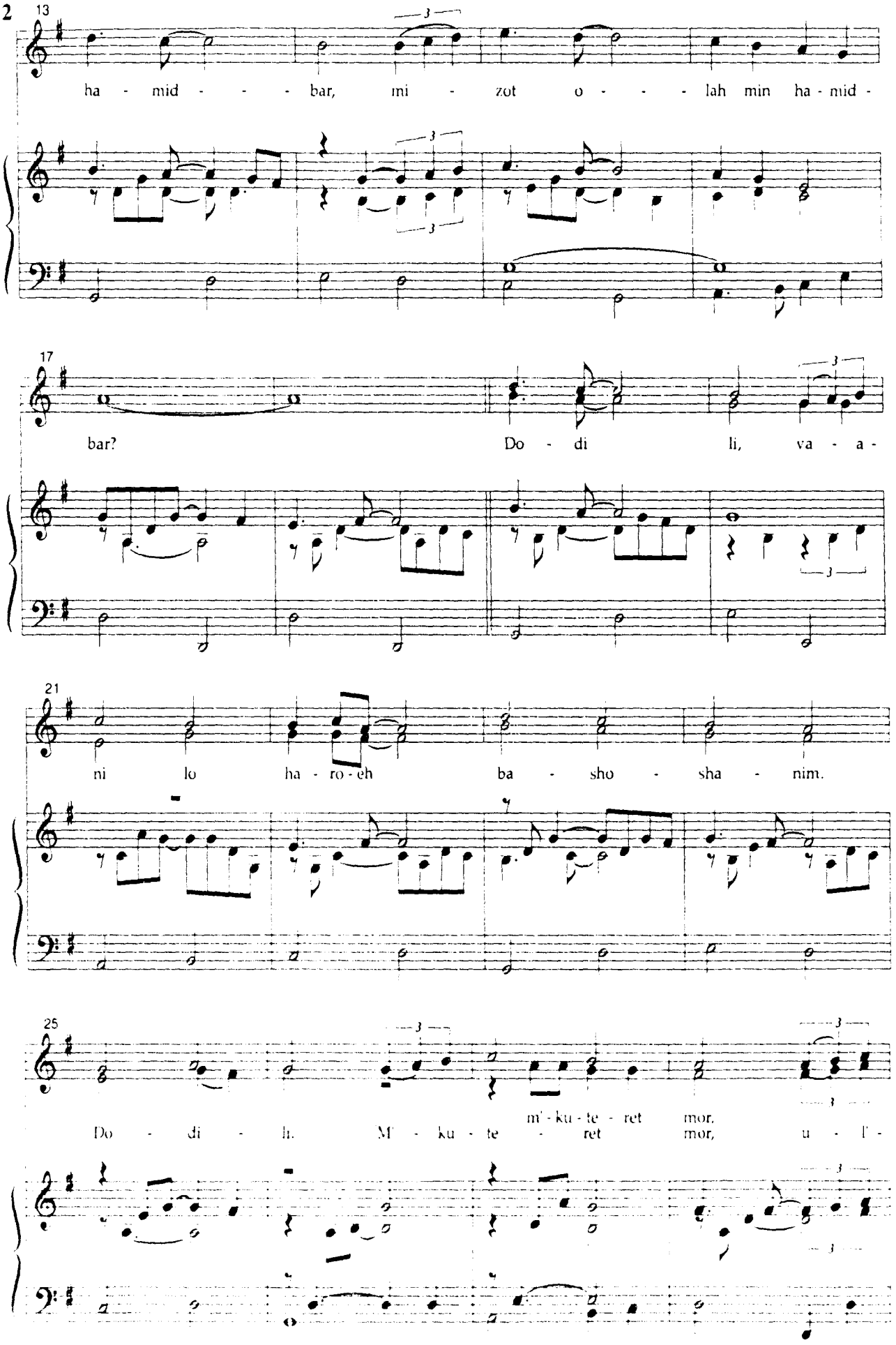
Dodi Li

Song of Songs 2:16, 3:6, 4:9

Steven Sher
arranged by Mary Feinsinger



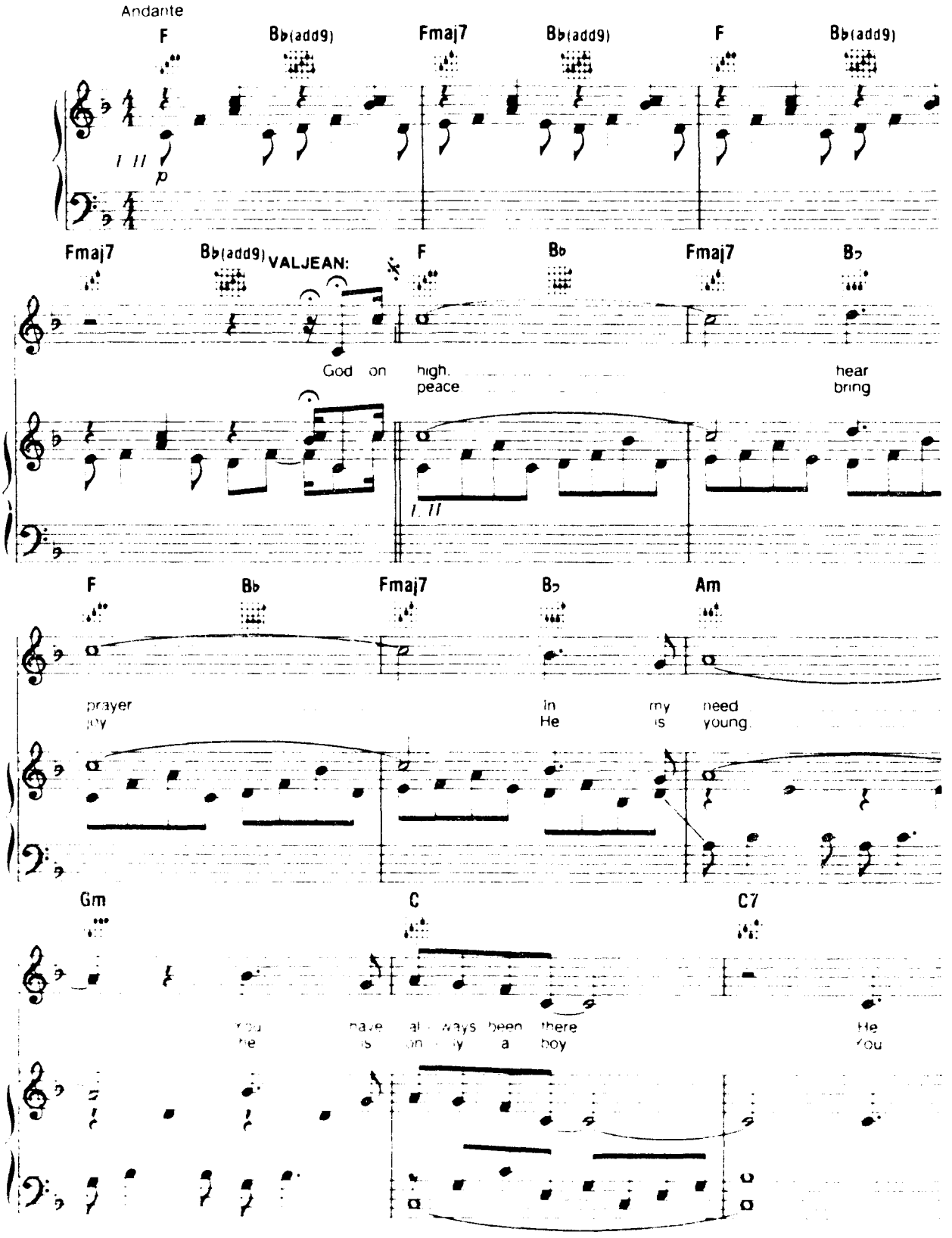

29
vo - - - - - nah, u - l' - vo - - - - - nah. Do - di -
33
li. Do - di li, va - a -
37
ni lo na - ro - eh ba - sho - - - - sha - nim.
41
Do - - di li, do - di li.

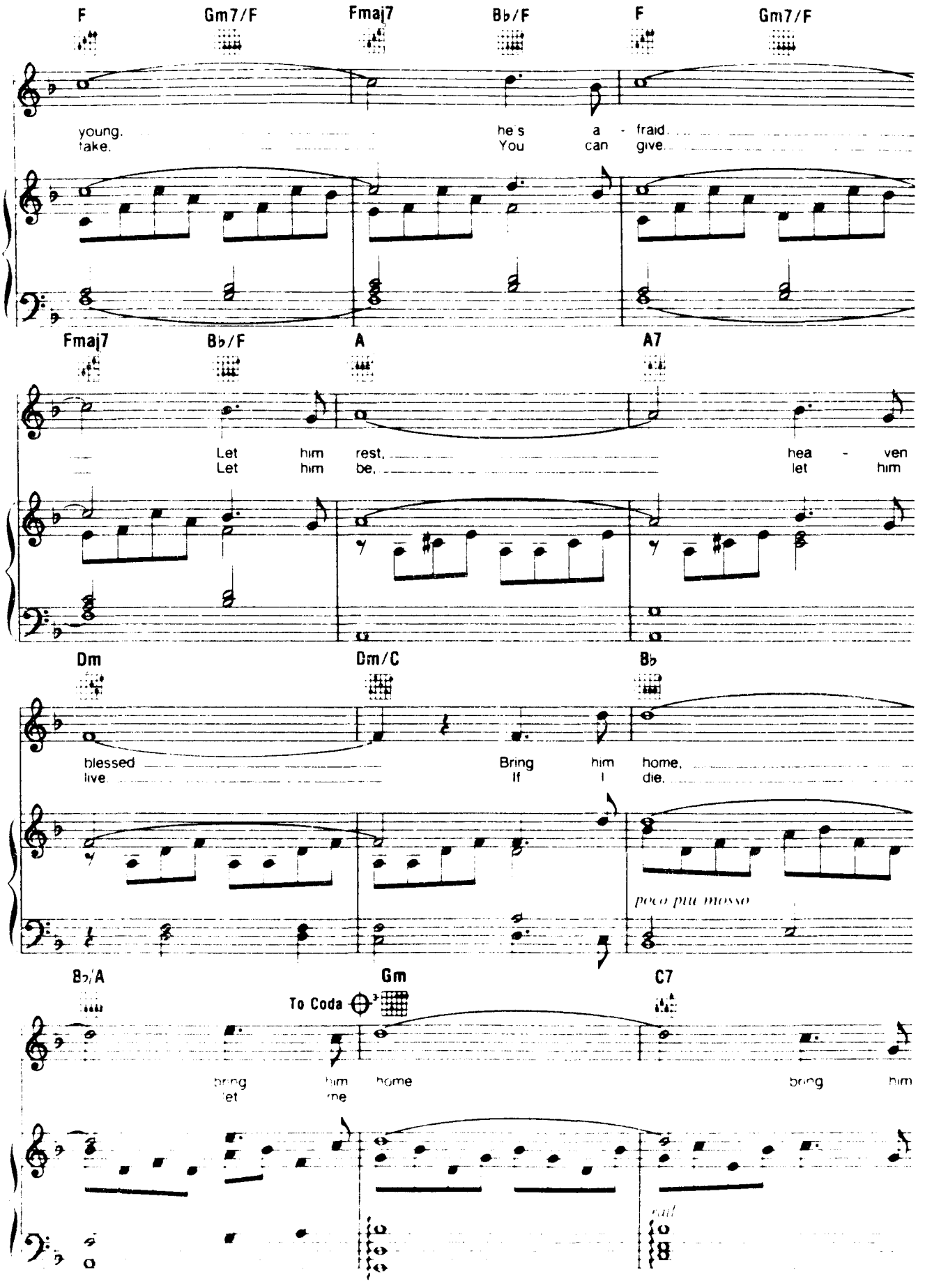

13
ha - mid - - - bar, mi - zot o - - - lah min ha - mid -
17
bar? Do - di li, va - a -
21
ni lo ha - ro - eh ba - sho - sha - nim.
25
Do - di - h. M' - ku - te - ret mor, u - l' -
m' - ku - te - ret mor,

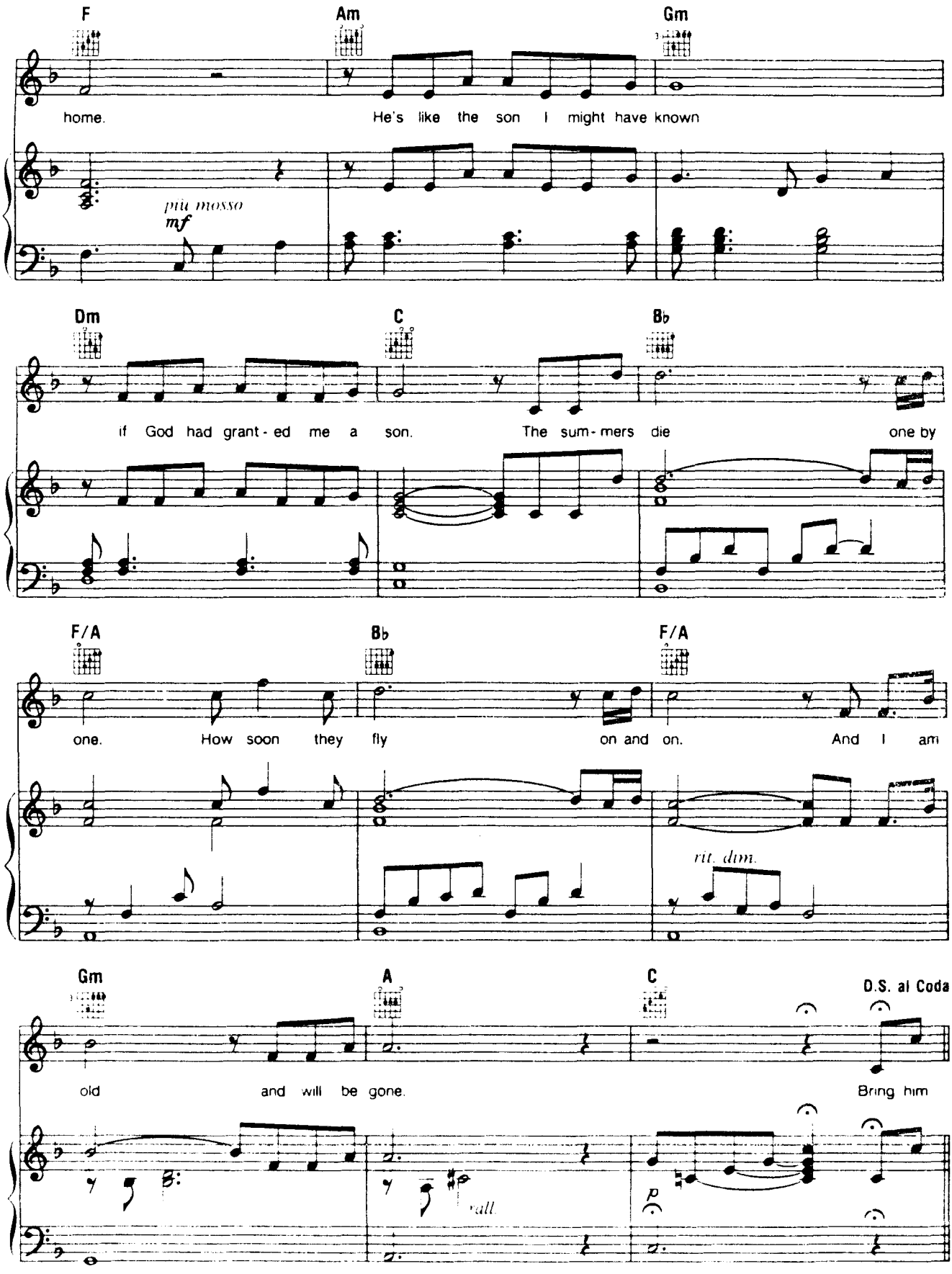
Musical Example 5

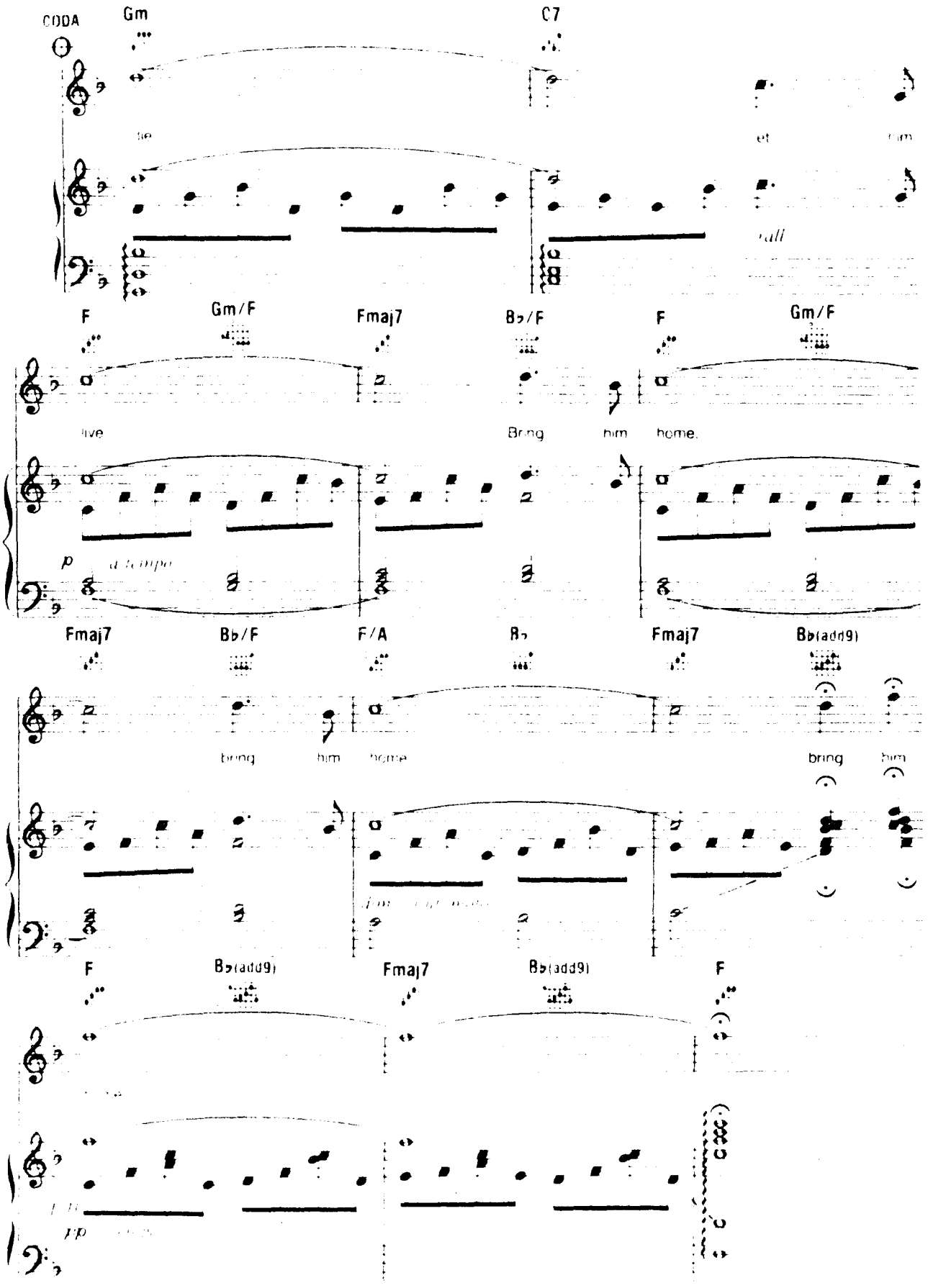
Bring Him Home

Music by CLAUDE-MICHEL SCHONBERG
Lyrics by HERBERT KRETZMER and ALAIN BOUBLIL



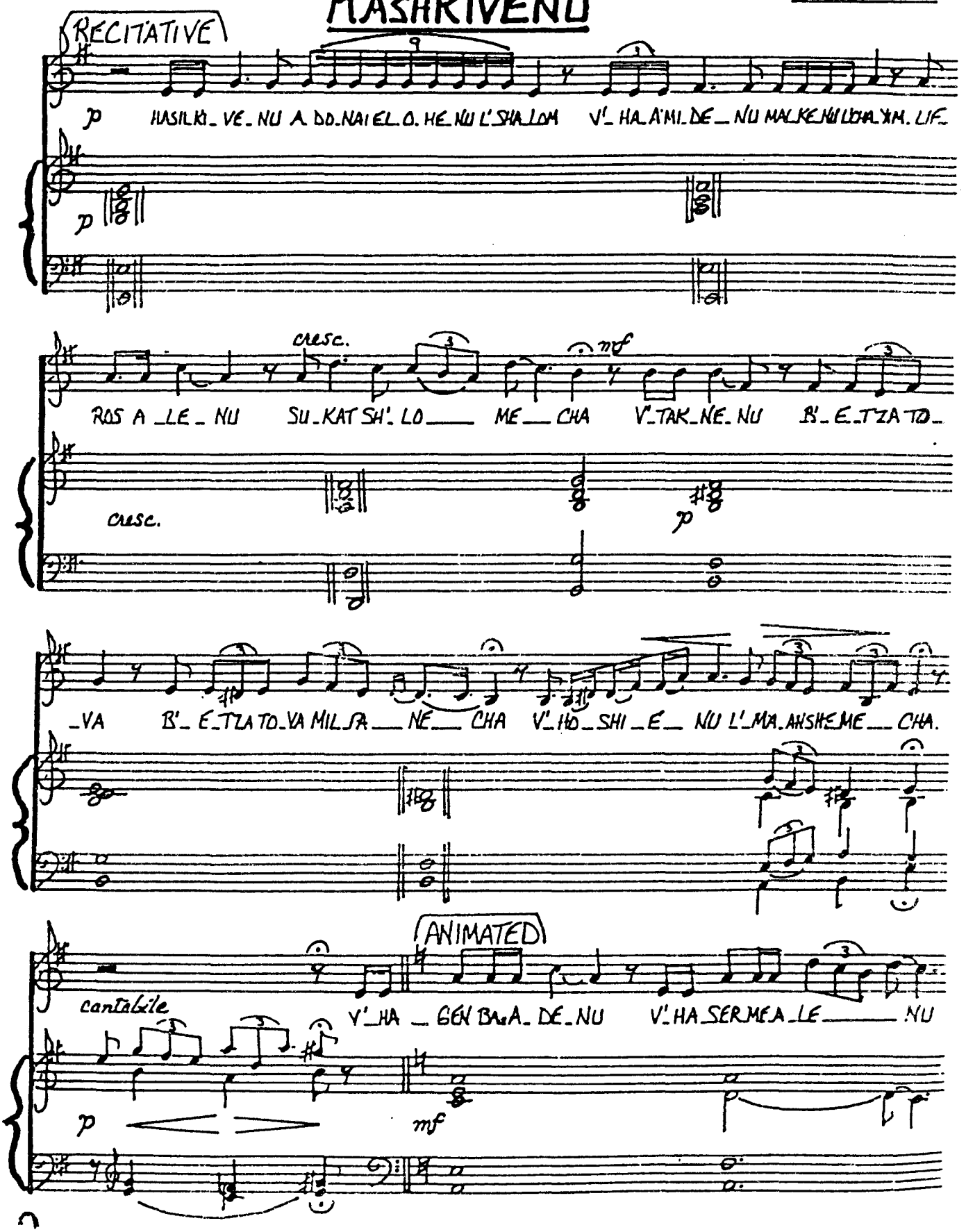

F
Gm7/F
Fmaj7
B♭/F
F
Gm7/F
young.
take.
he's
You
a - fraid.
can give.
Fmaj7
B♭/F
A
A7
Let him rest,
Let him be,
hea - ven
let him
Dm
Dm/C
B♭
blessed
live.
Bring him home,
If I die.
poco più mosso
B♭/A
Gm
C7
To Coda
bring him home
let me
bring him
cut

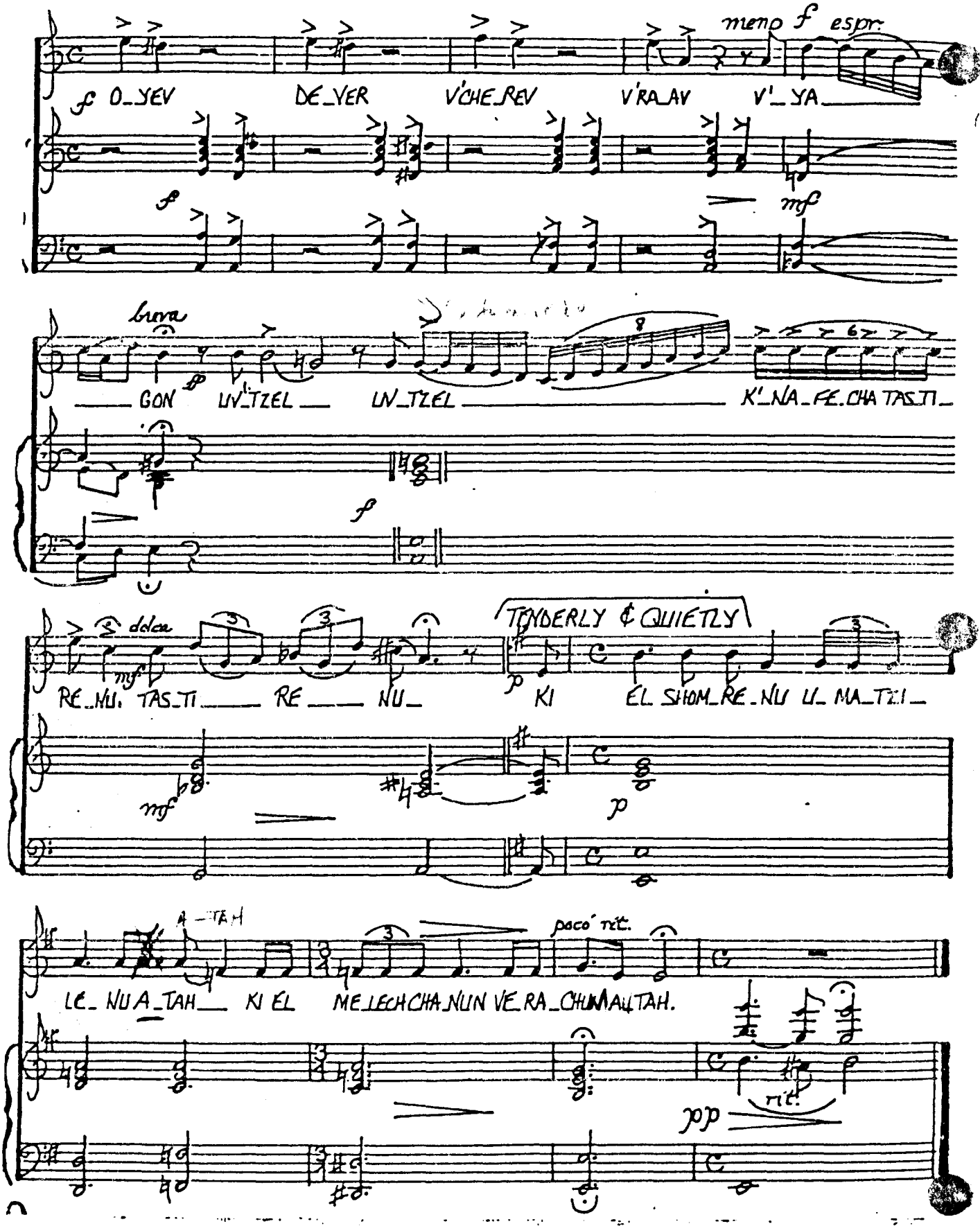

F
Am
Gm
home.
He's like the son I might have known
più mosso
mf
Dm
C
B♭
if God had grant - ed me a son.
The sum - mers die
one by
F/A
B♭
F/A
one.
How soon they fly
on and on.
And I am
rit. dim.
Gm
A
C
D.S. al Coda
old
and will be gone.
Bring him
rall
p


CODA
Gm
C7
F
Gm/F
Fmaj7
B♭/F
F
Gm/F
live
Bring
him
home.
a tempo
Fmaj7
B♭/F
F/A
B♭
Fmaj7
B♭(add9)
bring
him
home
bring
him
F
B♭(add9)
Fmaj7
B♭(add9)
F

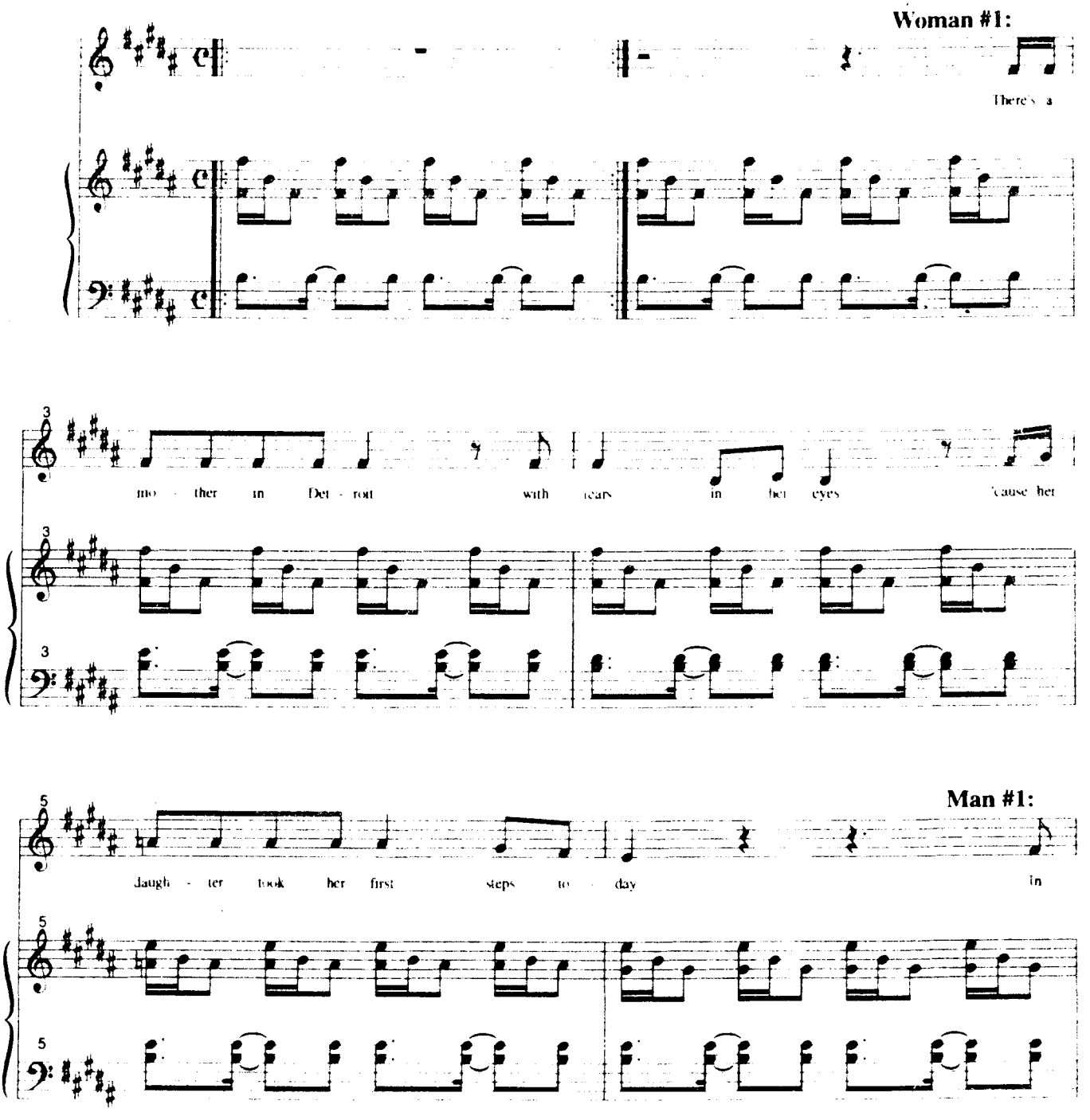
HASHKIVENU

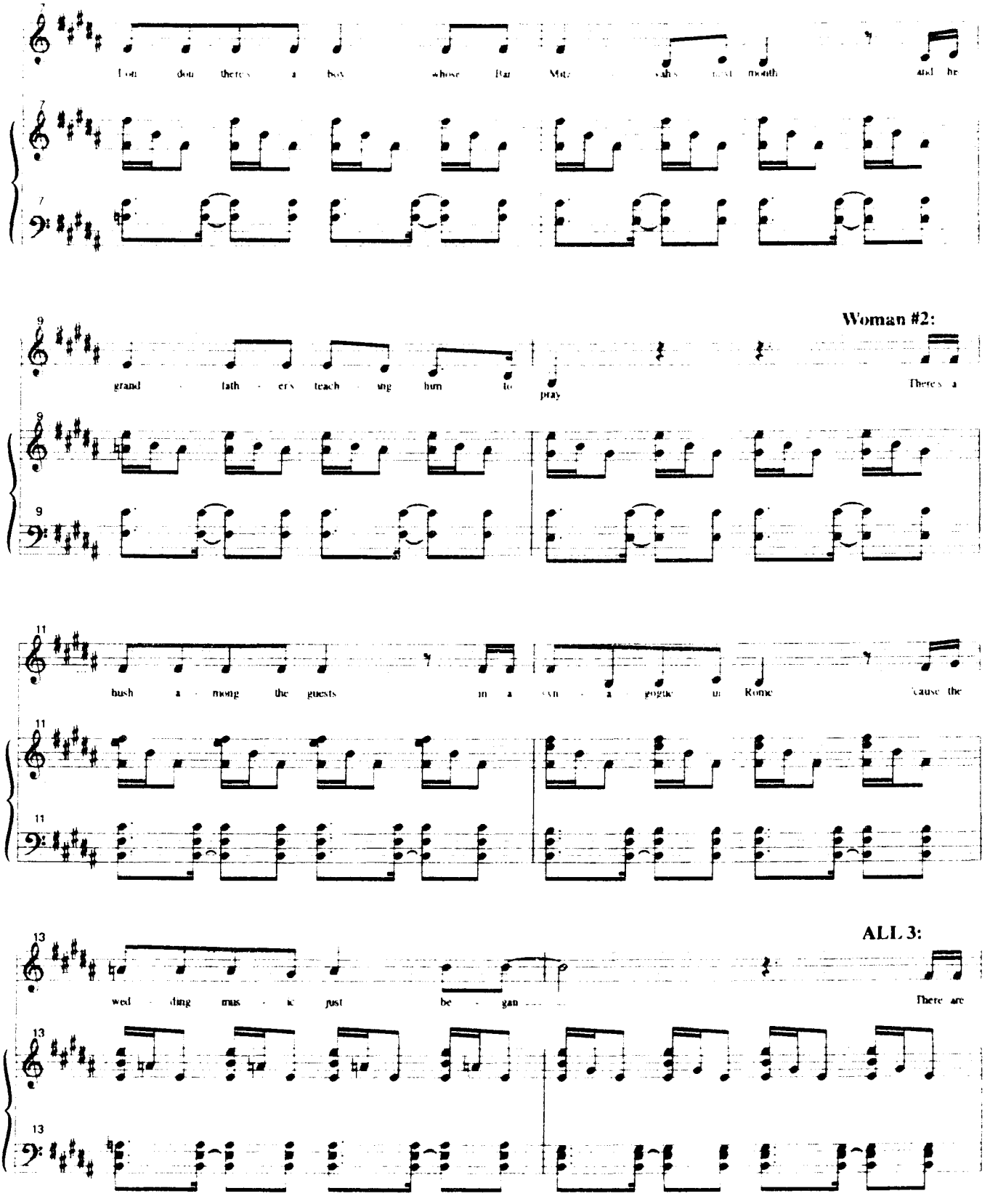
A.W. BINDER

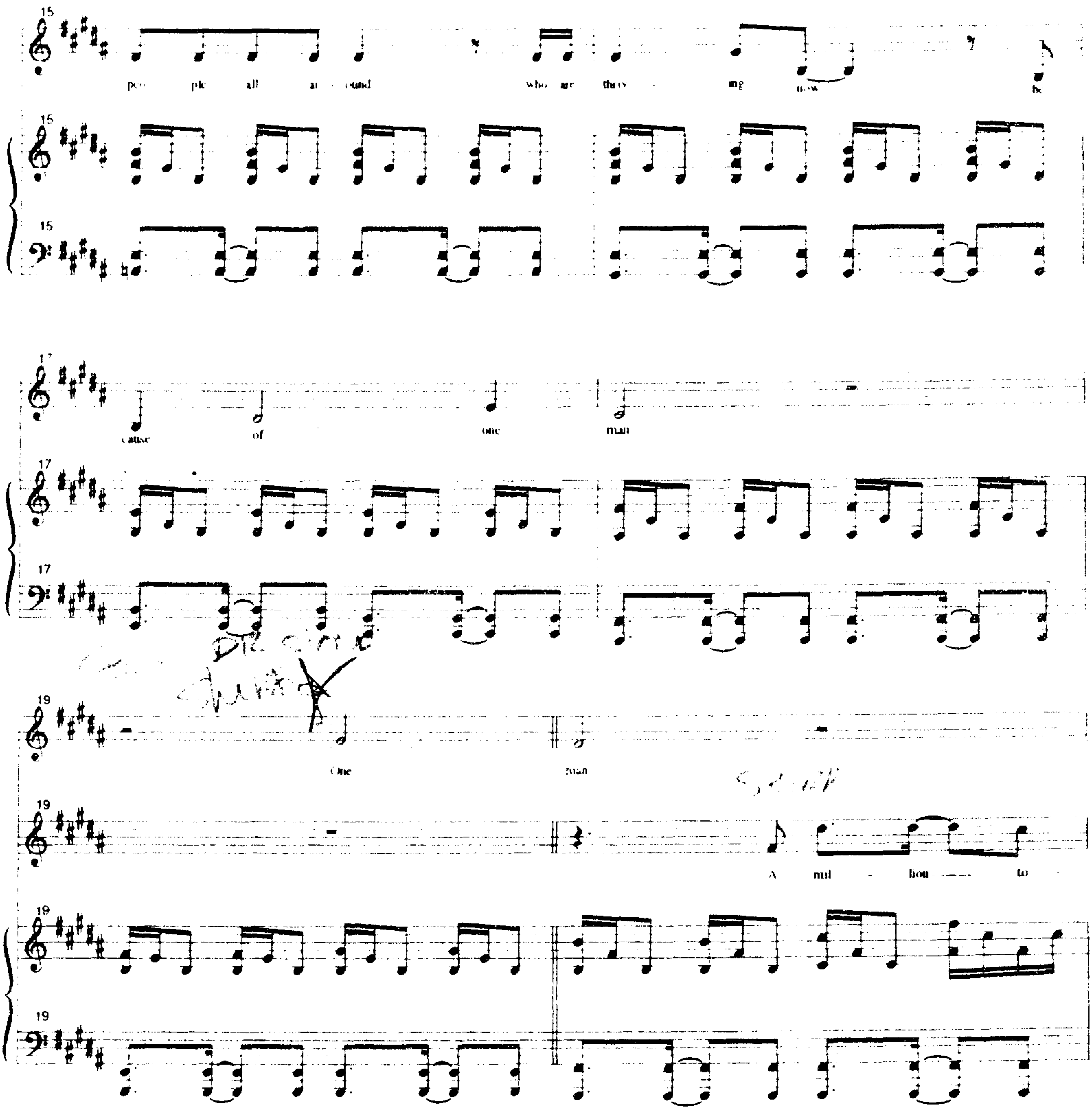


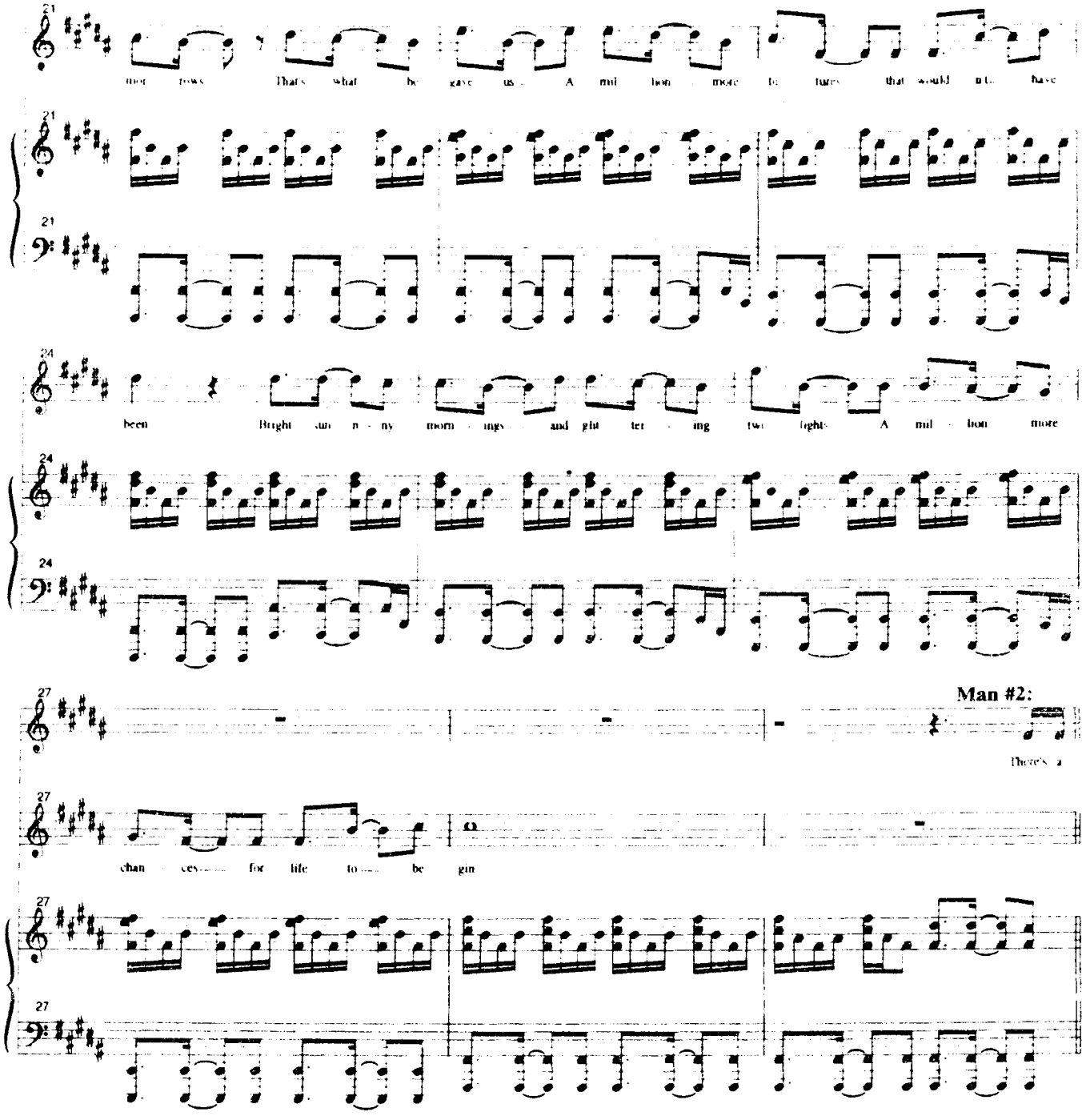

meno f espr.
f O_YEV DE_VER V'CHE_REV V'RA_AV V'_YA
mf
Lunga
GON UV'_TZEL UV_TZEL K'_NA_FE.CHA TAS_TI
f
dolce
mf
RE_NU. TAS_TI RE NU_
TENDERLY & QUIETLY
p
KI EL SHOM_RE_NU U_MA_TZI_
mf
p
A_TAH
LE_NU A_TAH KI EL ME_LECH CHA_NUN VE_RA_CHUMAH TAH.
poco rit.
rit.
pp

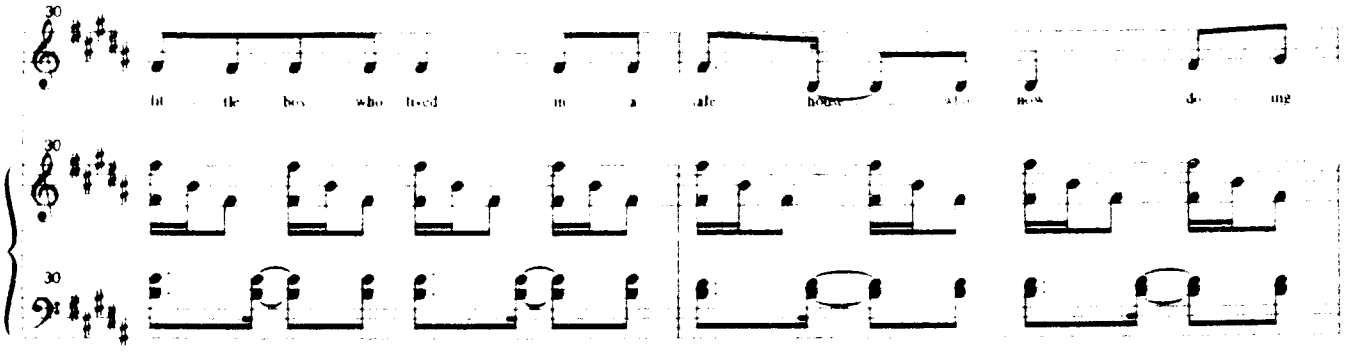
A Million Tomorrows

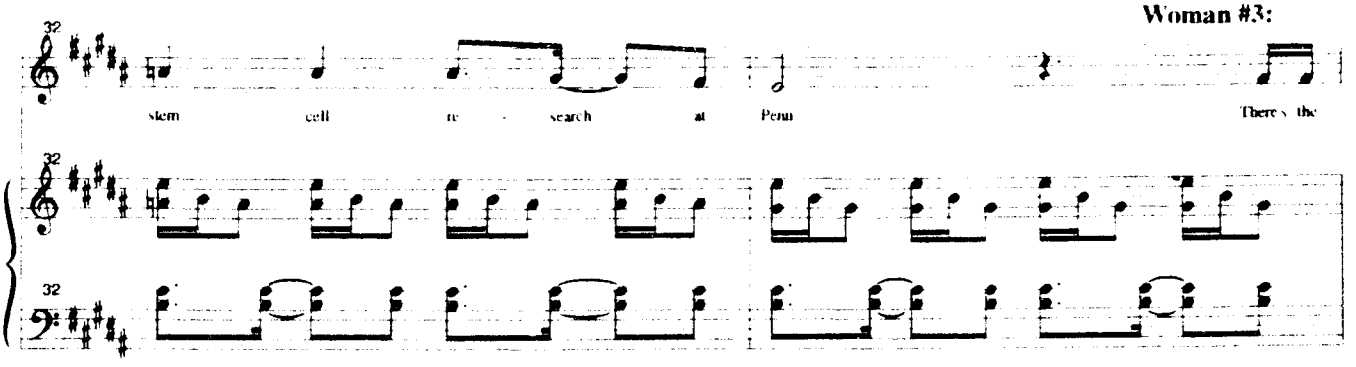


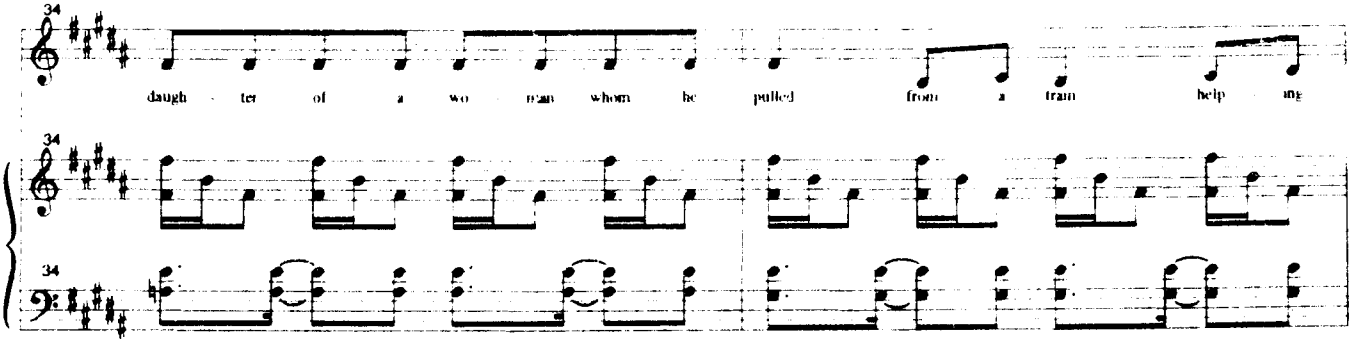

Woman #2:
ALL 3:

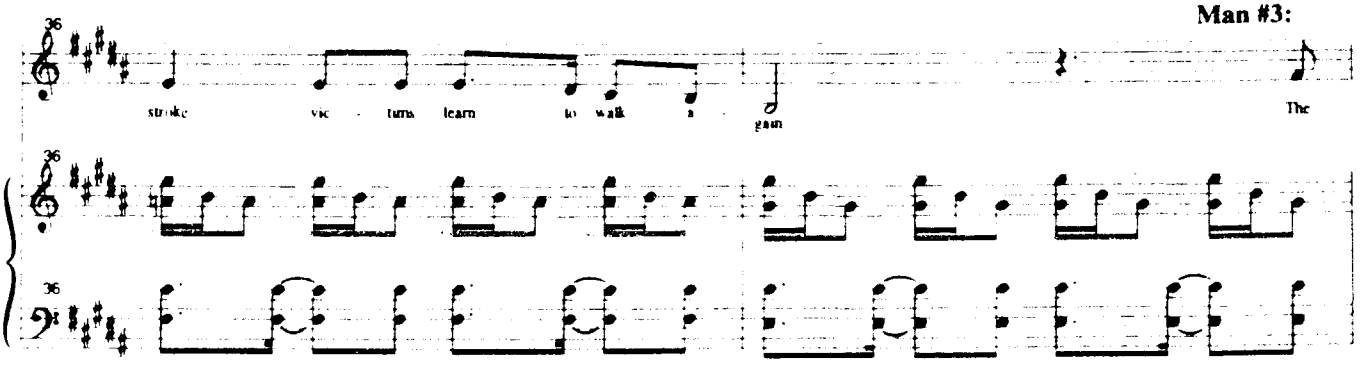

15
peo ple all a round who are throw ing now be
17
cause of one man
19
One man
A mil lion to

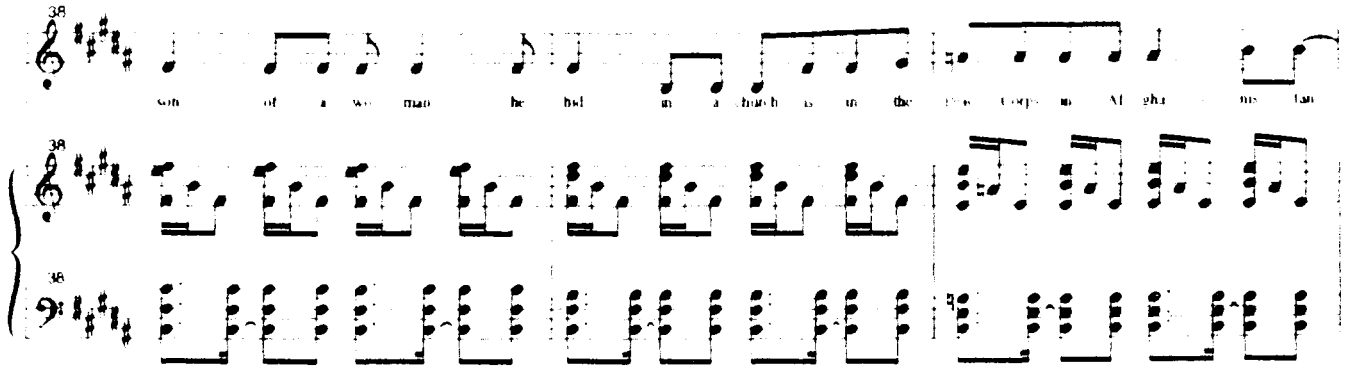

21
mor rows That's what he gave us A mil lion more to tures that would n't have
24
been Bright sun n - ny morn - ings and glit ter - ing twi lights A mil lion more
27
Man #2:
There's a
chan ces for life to be gin


30
lit tle boy who lived in a ale house

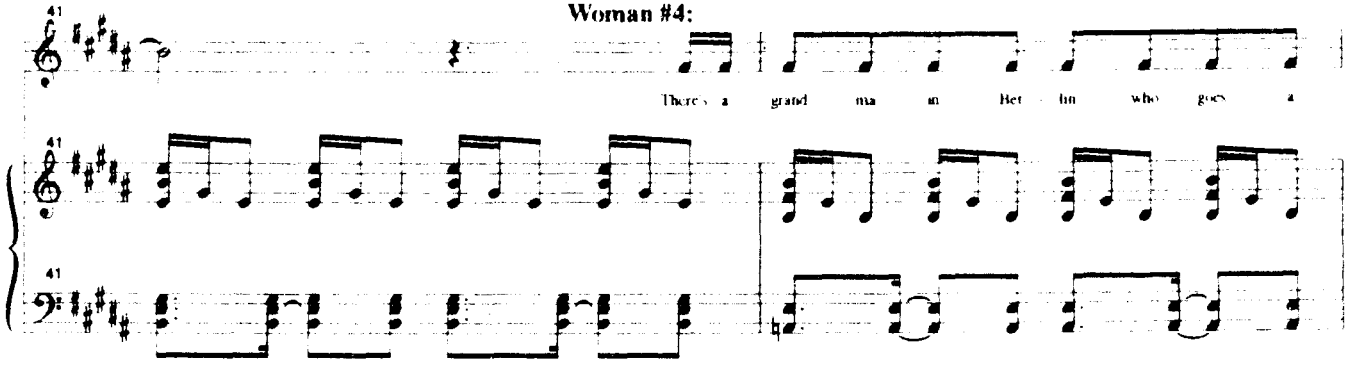

32
Woman #3:
stem cell re search at Penn
There's the

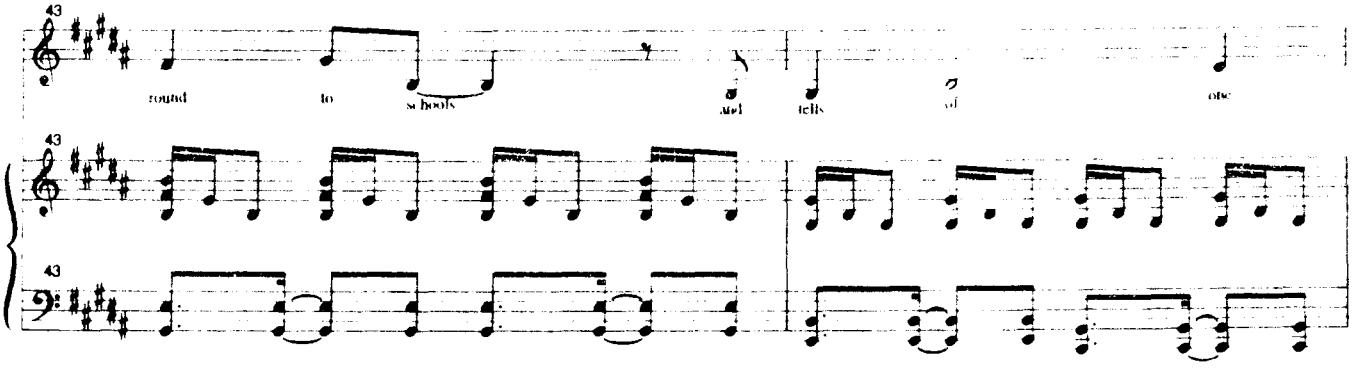

34
daugh ter of a wo man whom he pulled from a train help ing

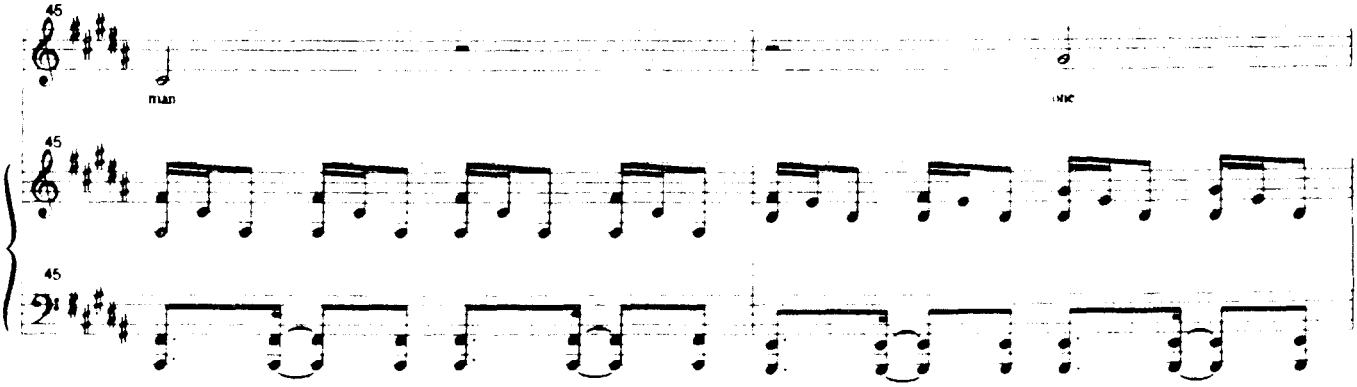

36
Man #3:
stroke vic tims learn to walk a gain
The

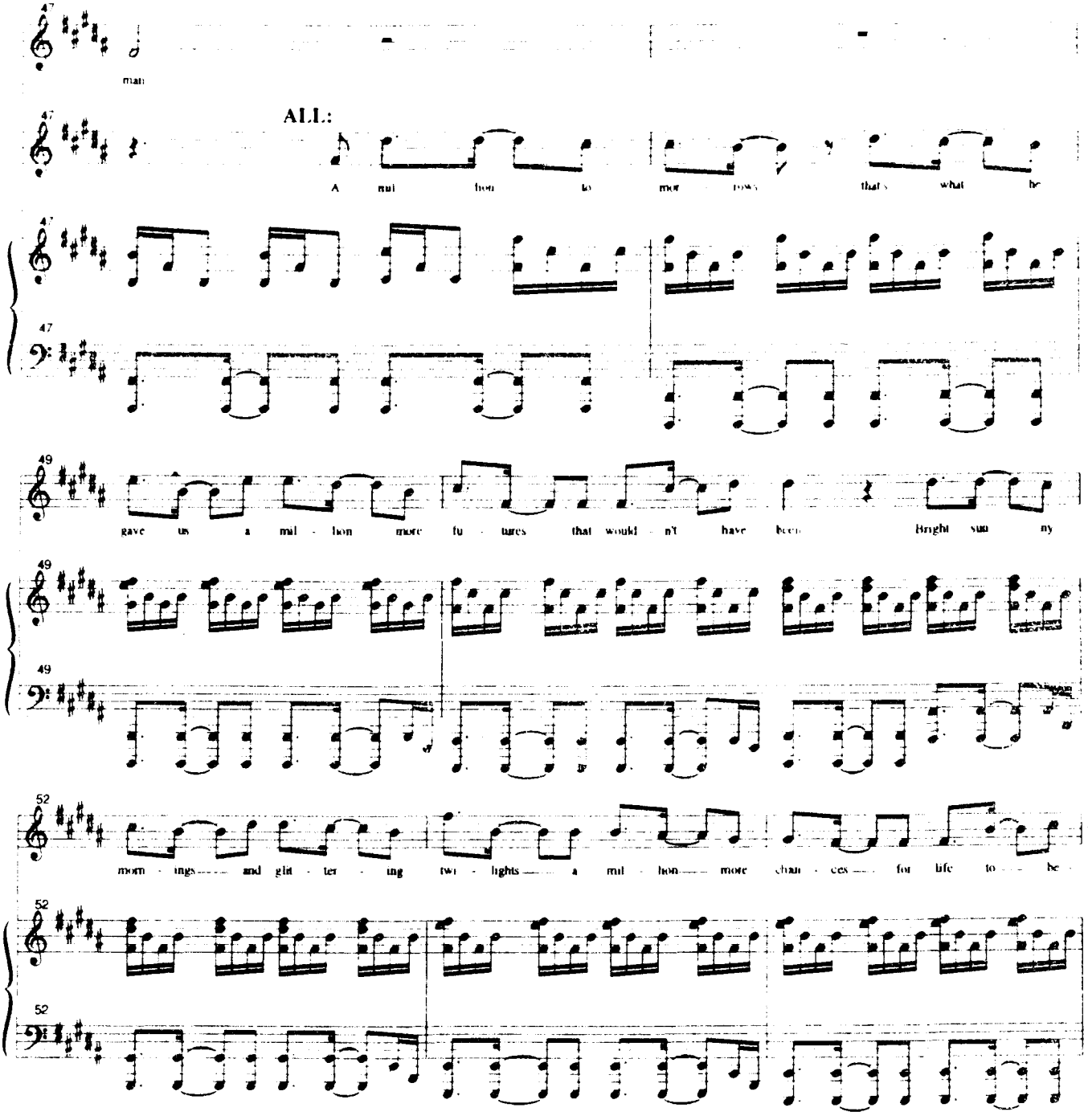

38
son of a wo man he had in a march is in the

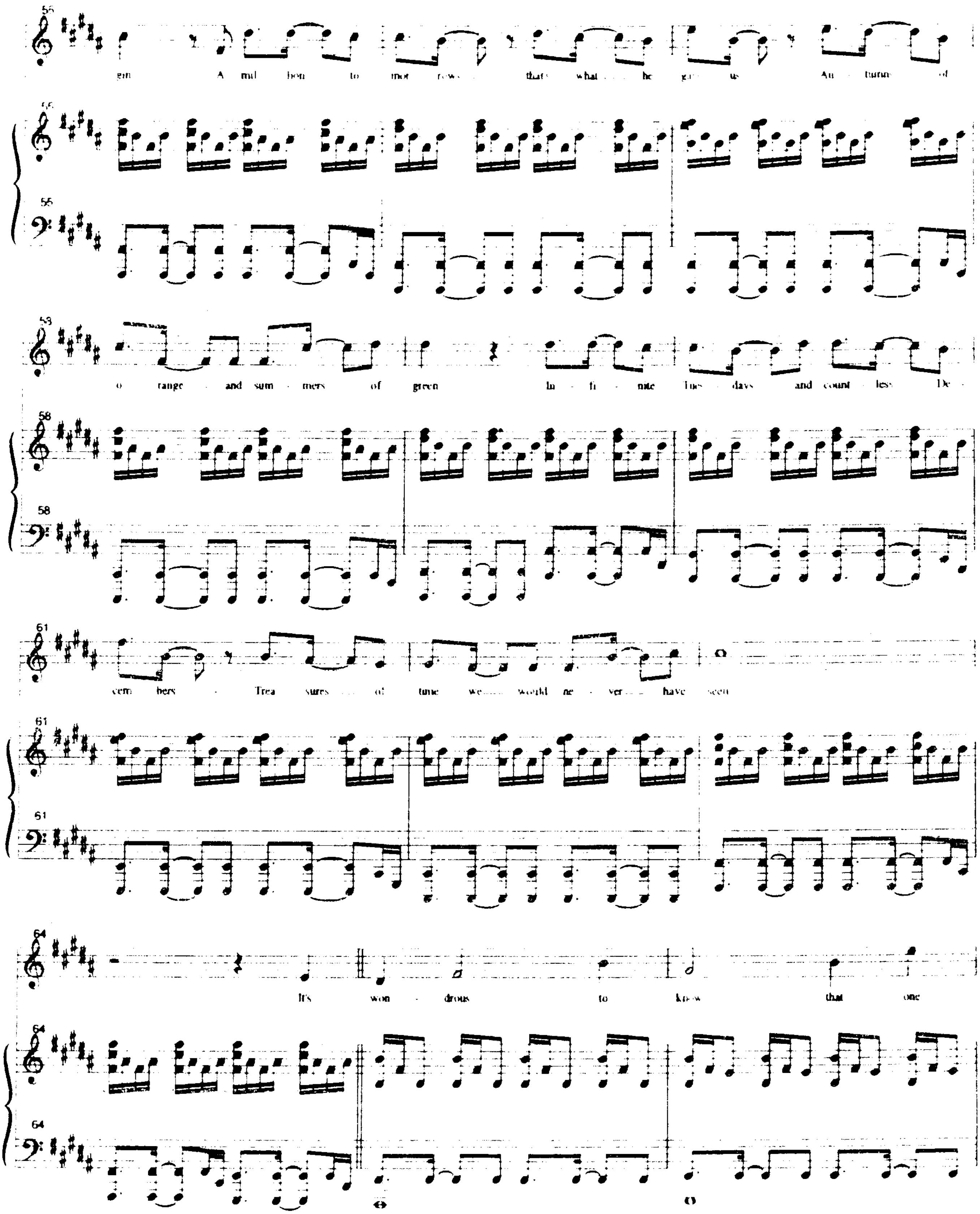
Woman #4:

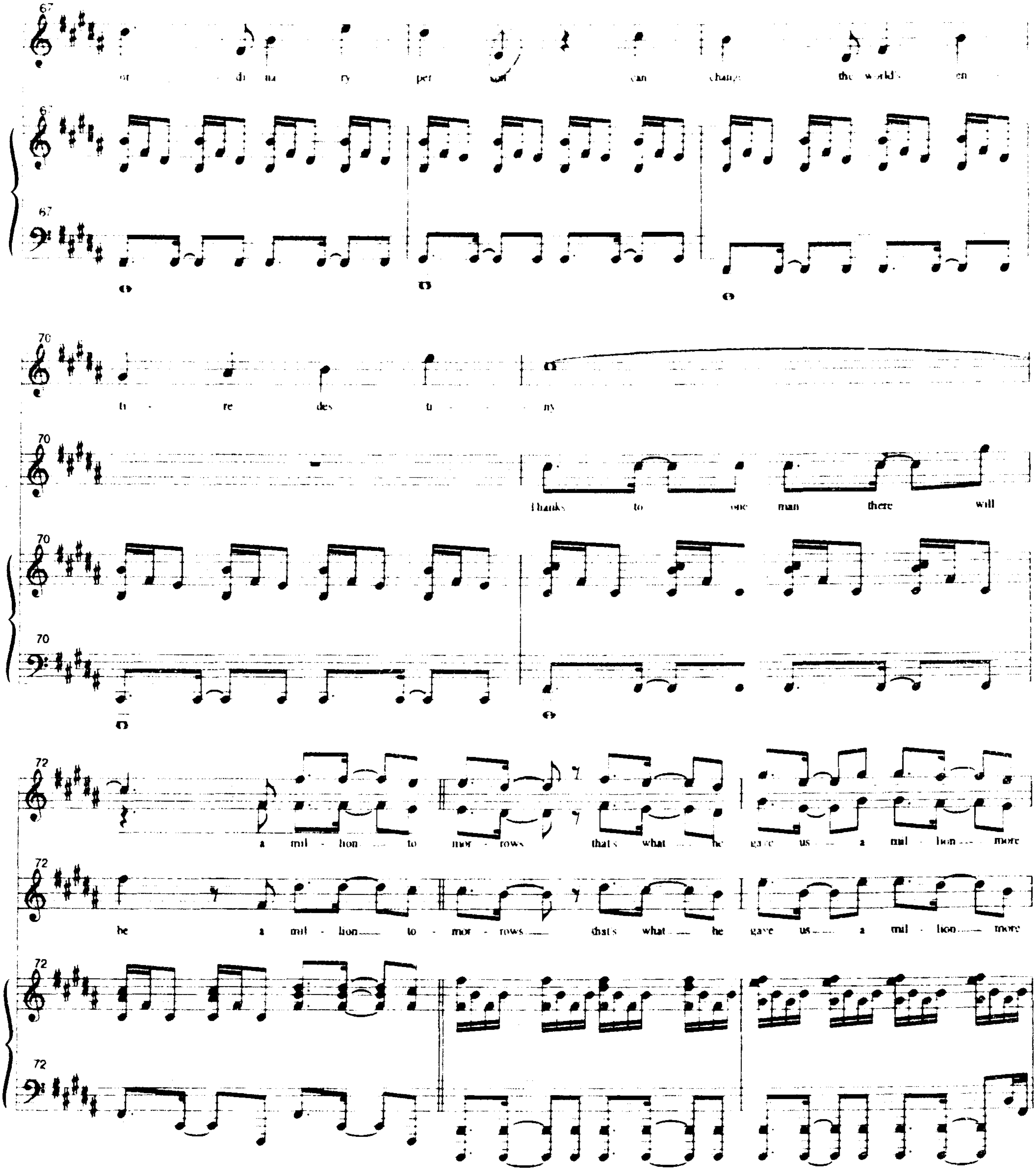

41
There's a grand ma in Bet lin who goes a

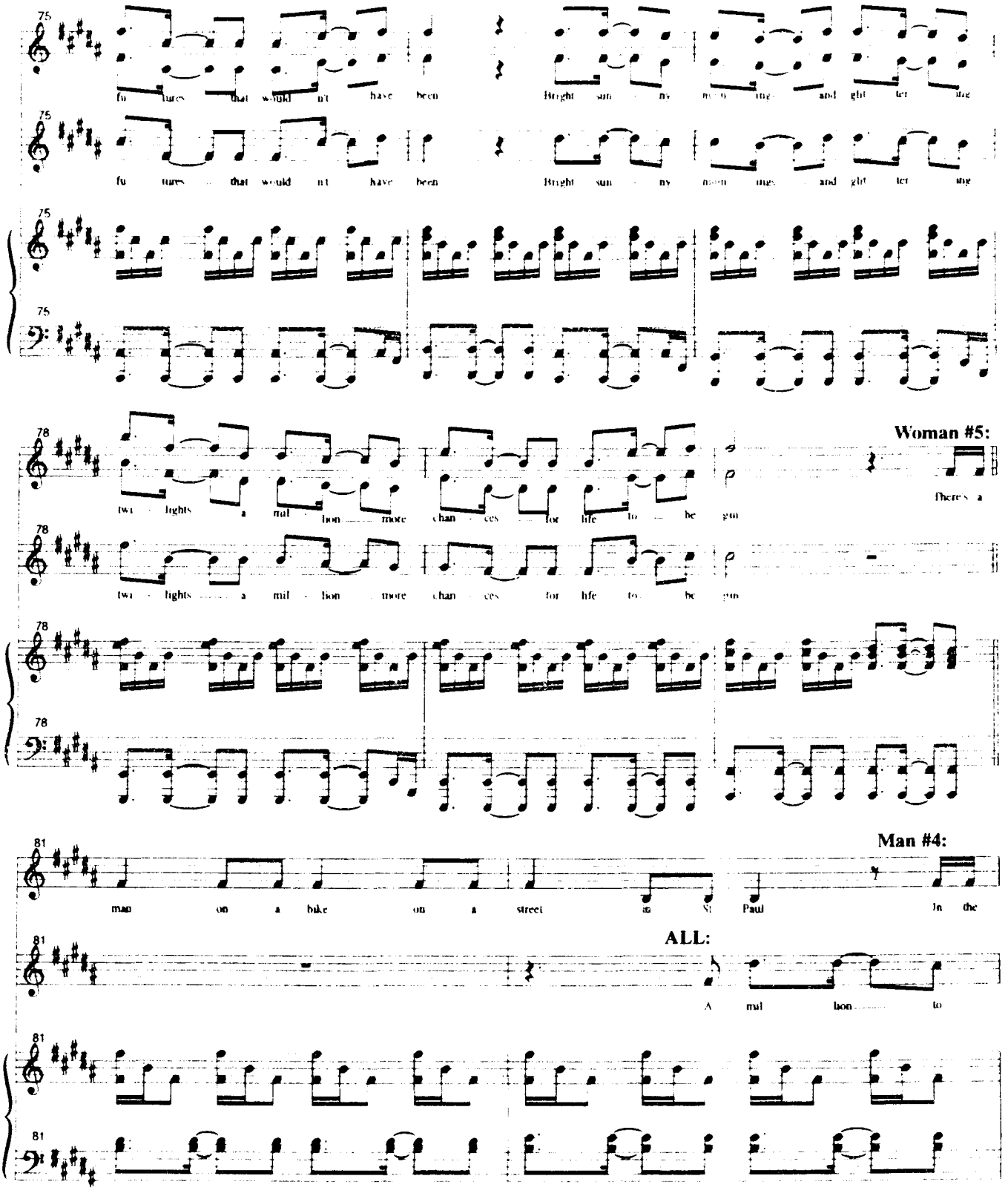

43
round to schools and tells of one

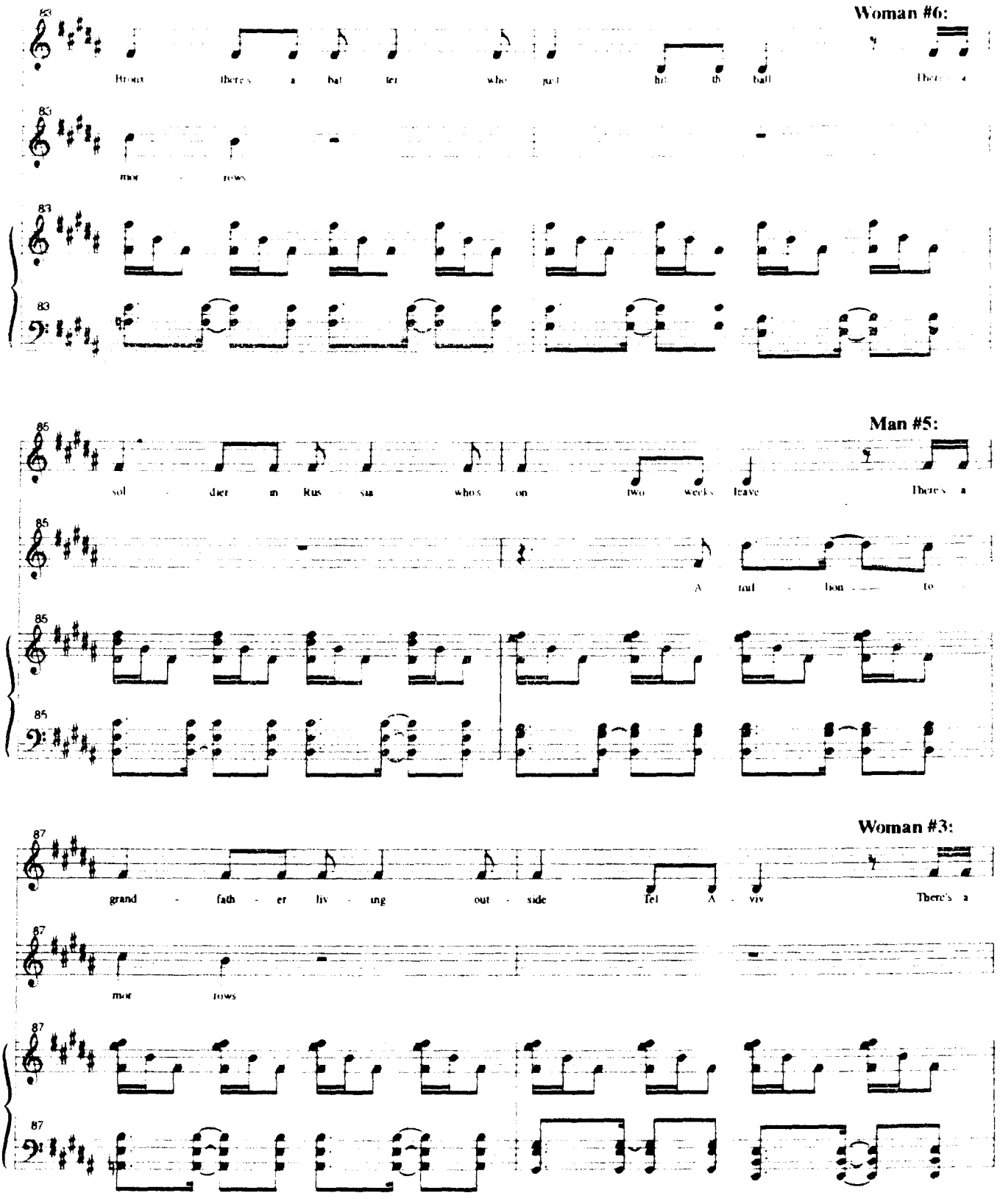

45
man one

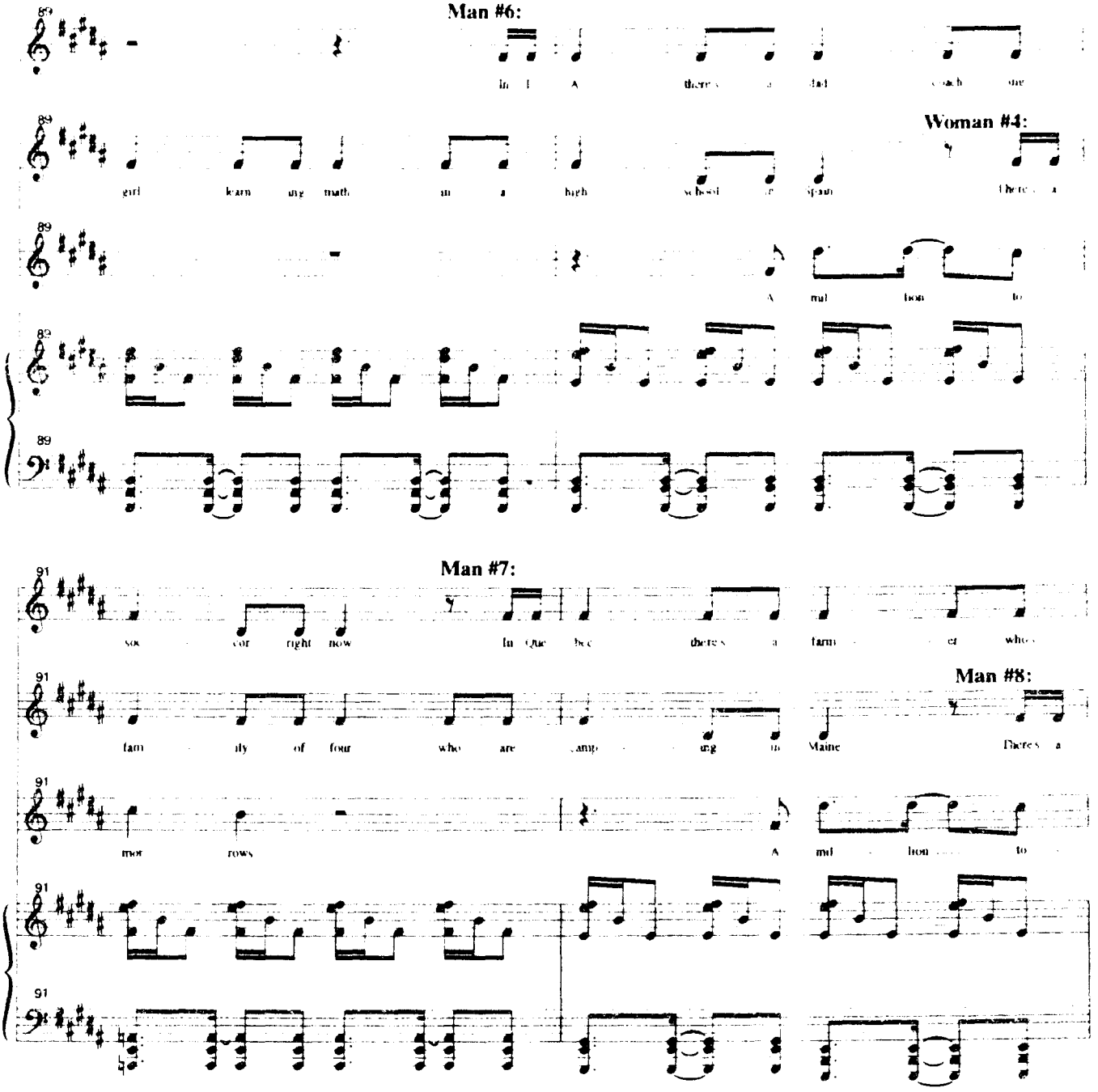

man
ALL:
A mil lion to mor rows that's what he
gave us a mil lion more fu tures that would n't have been Bright sun ny
morn ings and glit ter ing twi lights a mil lion more chan ces fo life to be

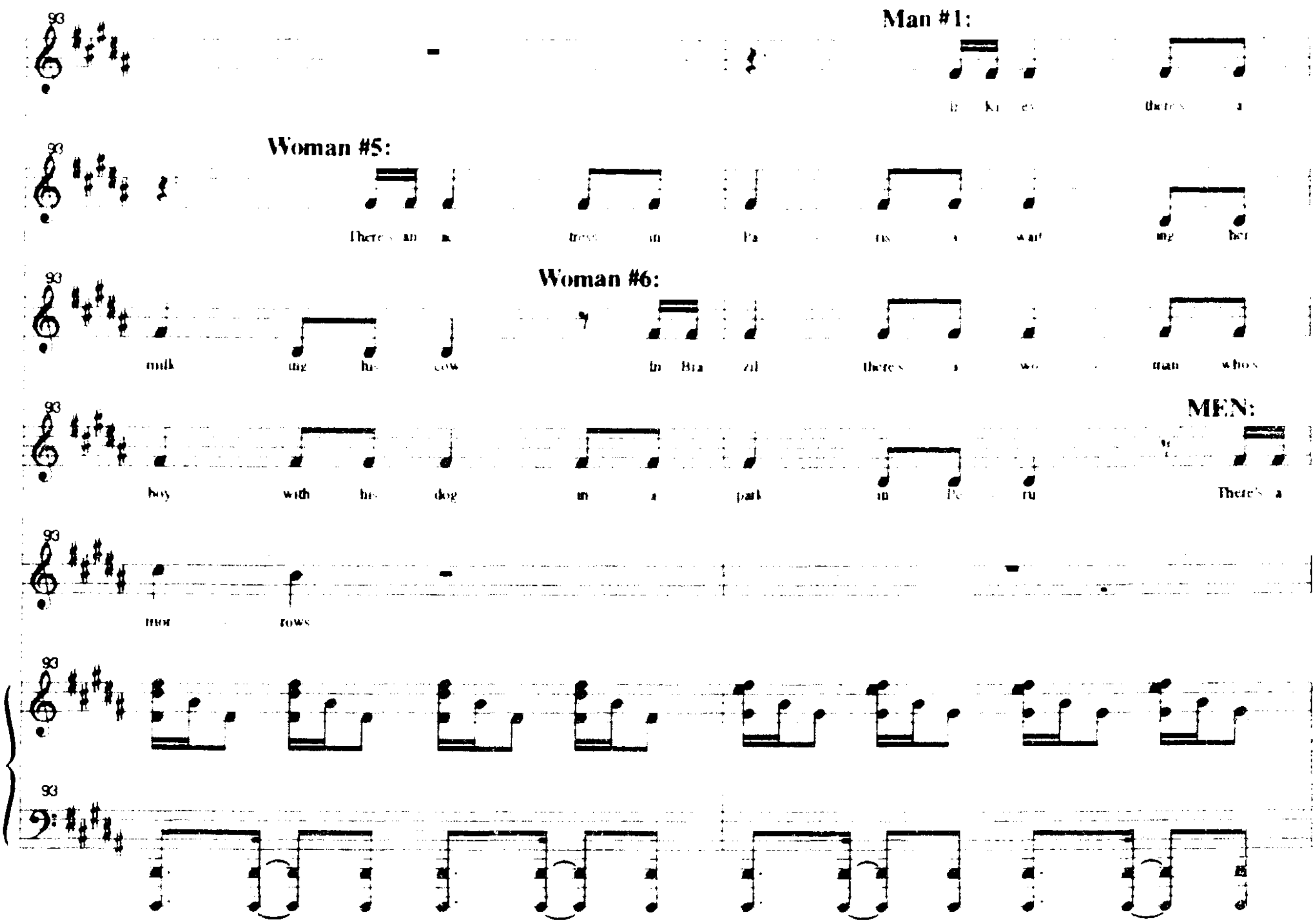

gin A mil lion to mor rows that's what he gave us Au tumns of
o range and sum mers of green In fi nite Tues days and count less De
cem bers Trea sures of time we would ne ver have seen
It's won drous to know that one

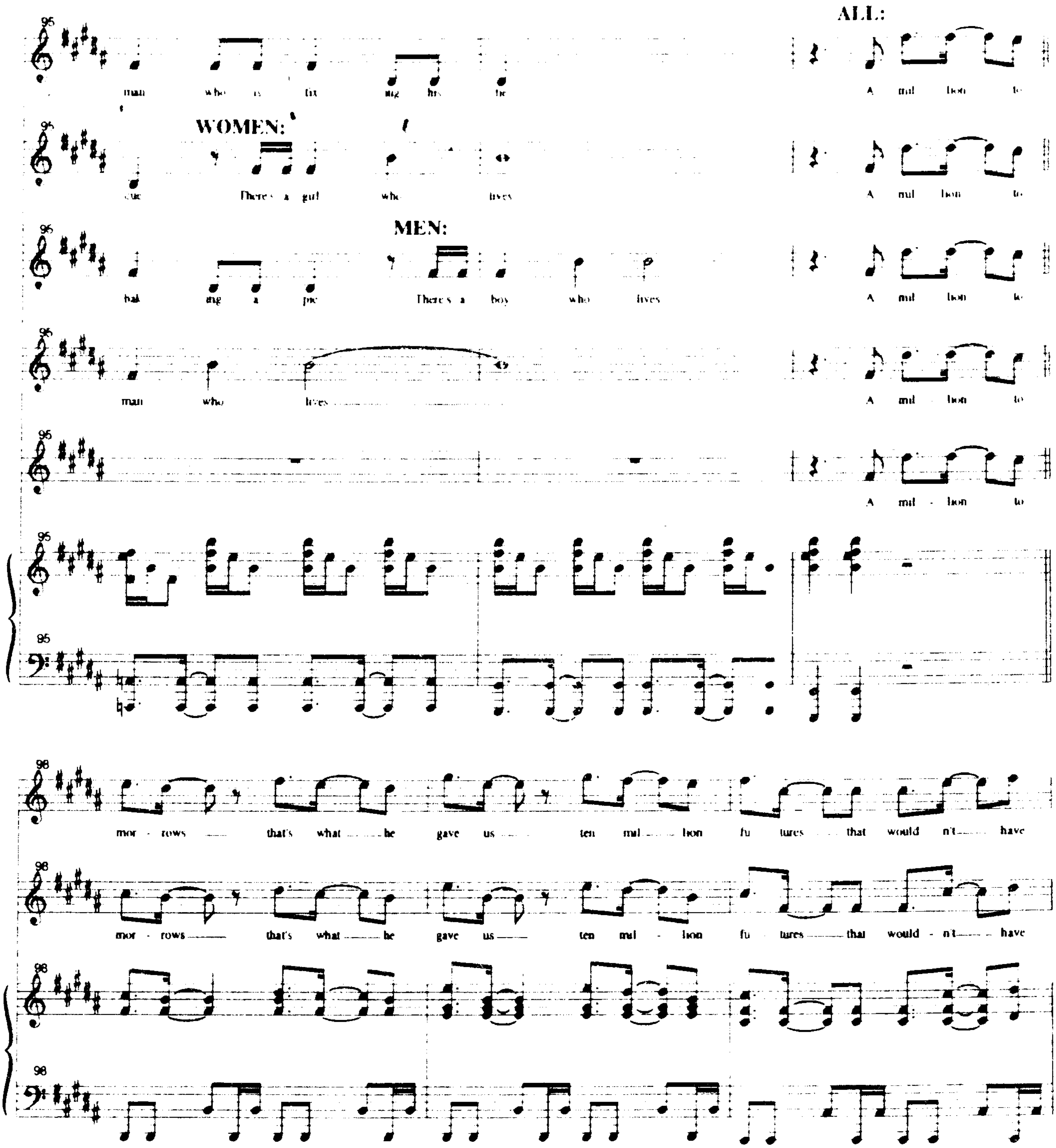

67
or di na ry per son can change the world's en
70
ti re des ti ny
Thanks to one man there will
72
a mil - lion to mor - rows that's what he gave us a mil - lion more
be a mil - lion to mor - rows that's what he gave us a mil - lion more


75
fu tures that would nt have been Bright sun ny morn ings and ght ter ing
75
fu tures that would nt have been Bright sun ny morn ings and ght ter ing
75
78
Woman #5:
two lights a mil lion more chan ces for life to be gin
There's a
78
two lights a mil lion more chan ces for life to be gin
78
78
81
Man #4:
man on a bike on a street in St Paul In the
81
ALL:
A mil lion to
81
81

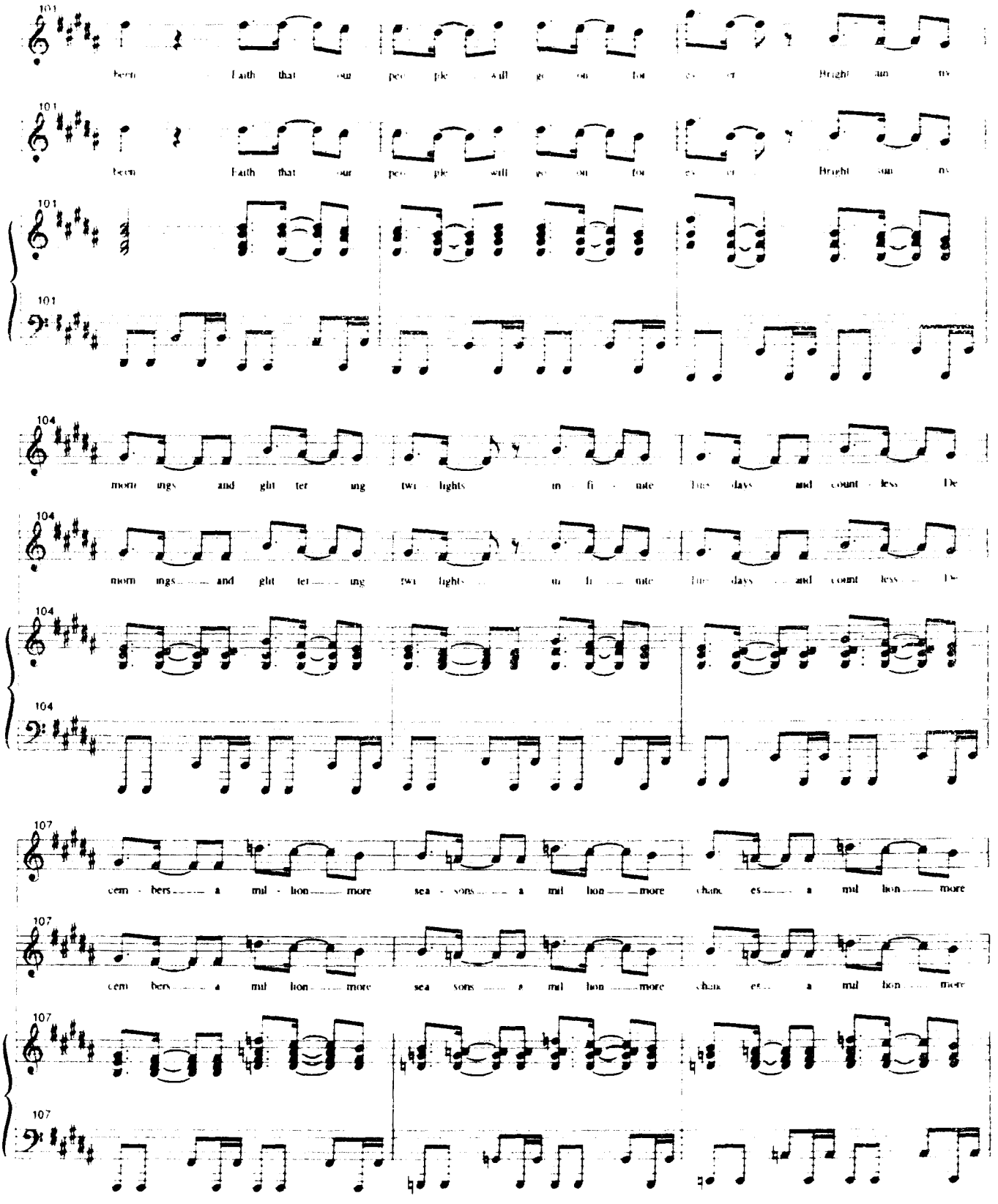

Woman #6:
Man #5:
Woman #3:

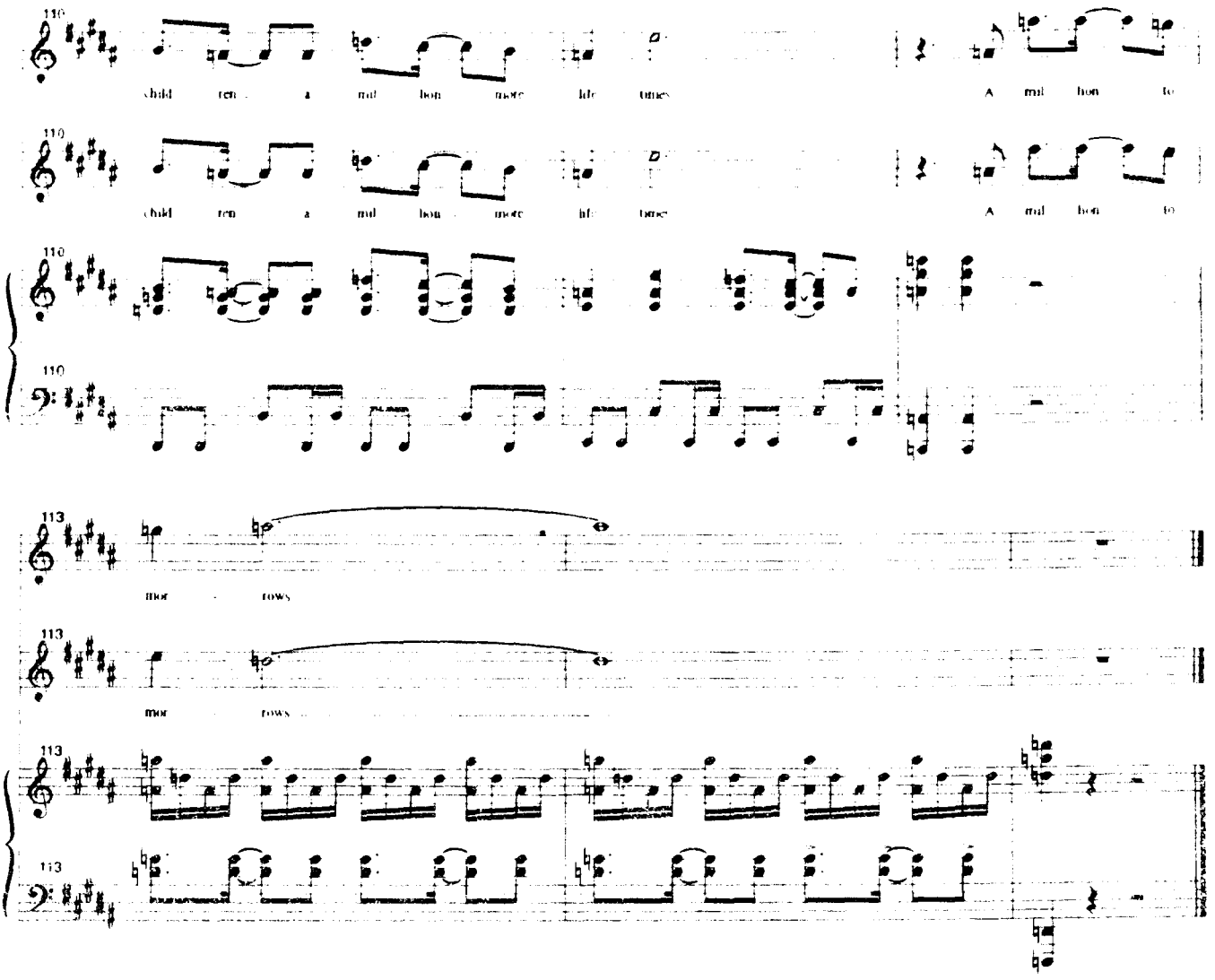

Man #6:
Woman #4:
Man #7:
Man #8:


Man #1:
Woman #5:
There's an ac tress in Pa ris
Woman #6:
milk ing his cow
In Bra zil there's a
MEN:
boy with his dog in a park in Pe ru
There's a
mor rows

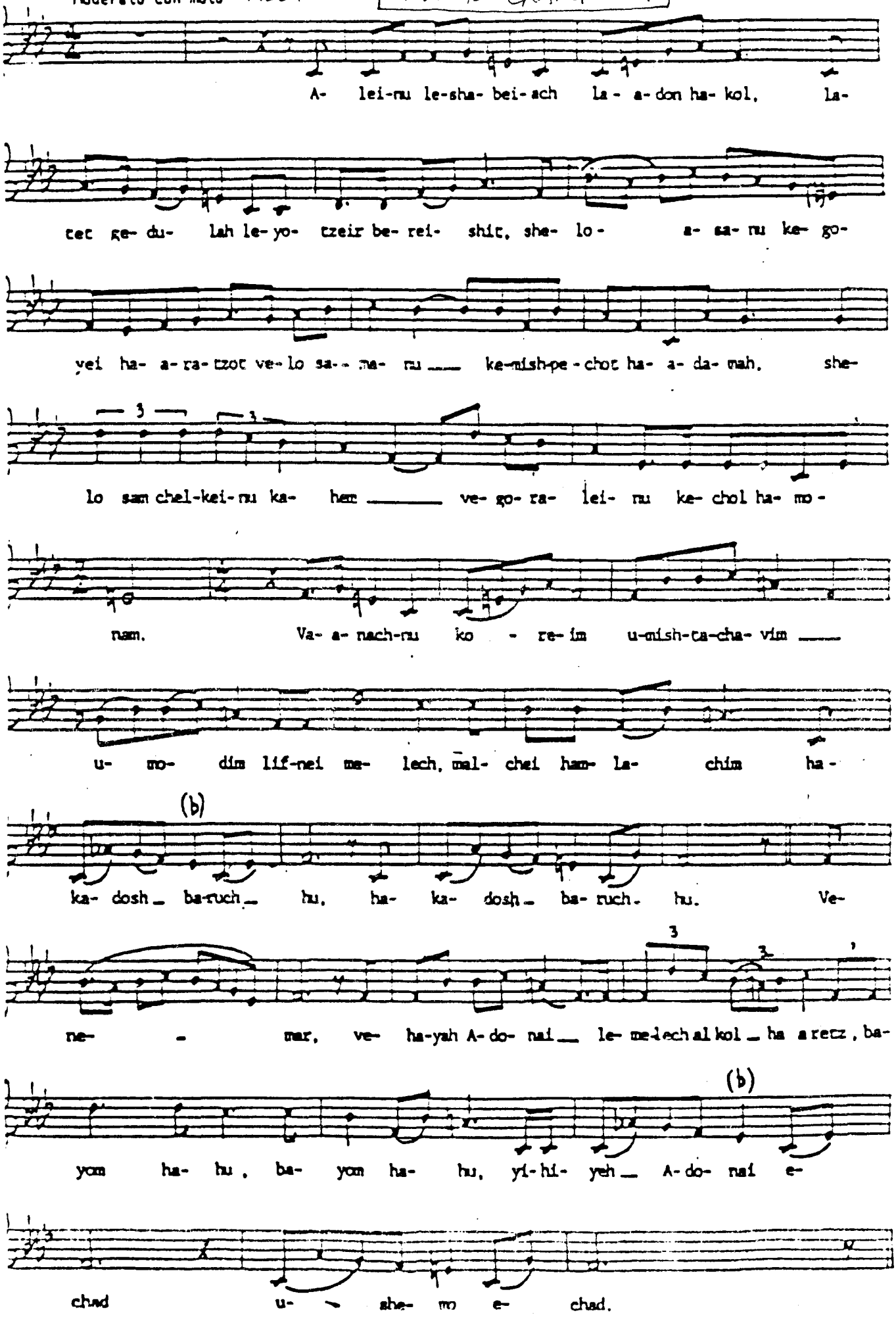

ALL:
man who is fix ing his be
A mil lion to
WOMEN:
cue There's a girl who lives
A mil lion to
MEN:
bak ing a pie There's a boy who lives
A mil lion to
man who lives
A mil lion to
A mil - lion to
mor - rows that's what he gave us ten mil lion fu tures that would n't have
mor - rows that's what he gave us ten mil - lion fu tures that would - n't have

92


101
been Faith that our peo ple will go on for ev er Bright ans wers
101
been Faith that our peo ple will go on for ev er Bright ans wers
101
101
104
morn ings and glit ter ing twi lights in fi nite Days days and count less De
104
morn ings and glit ter ing twi lights in fi nite Days days and count less De
104
104
107
cem bers a mil lion more sea sons a mil lion more chang es a mil lion more
107
cem bers a mil lion more sea sons a mil lion more chang es a mil lion more
107
107


110
child ren a mil lion more life times
A mil lion to
110
child ren a mil lion more life times
A mil lion to
110
110
113
mor rows
113
mor rows
113
113

Moderato con moto ALEINU MUSICAL EXAMPLE 6 William Sharlin



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