THE PLAGUE'S THE THING

a Musical by

Tim O'Brien

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CHARACTERS

The King

The First Queen

Princess Eleanor

The Narrator (male or female)

Erronius, Counselor to the King (male or female)

The Countess of Corpus Christi

Phizz, the Alchemist

Three Ticket Takers (male or female)

La Forza

Bartholomew, the Rat

Musetta, Leader of the Dance Troupe

Dance Troupe

Members of La Forza's Traveling Troupe

Courtiers, guards and villagers

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT I

Prologue (Narrator)

Opening Chorus – The Plague's the Thing (entire cast)

Audition (dance troupe, Queen Candidate)

Sometimes I Think You're the Only Friend I've Got (Princess and Rat)

Something as Good as Gold (Phizz and Princess)

The Ticket Takers Song (Ticket Takers)

You Will See a Change (La Forza and cast)

Anyone Can Learn to Dance (cast)

ACT II

Prologue (Narrator)

The Plague's the Thing (reprise) (cast)

The Royal We (King and cast)

The Ticket Takers Song (reprise) (Ticket Takers)

The Royal We (reprise) (King and La Forza)

Something as Good as Gold (reprise) (Princess and Phizz)

You Will See a Change (reprise) (Princess, Narrator, cast)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

The King

The King is in his mid-thirties, still young and strong. He is temperamental and lonely. He doesn't know how to handle his daughter, Eleanor. He is very indulgent toward Erronius, his old friend and adviser. The King is a lousy dancer, but has a strong voice.

The First Queen

A graceful singer and dancer who appears in the Opening Chorus. Out of the goodness of her heart she goes out to nurse the plague victims, and dies of the disease herself. The First Queen must establish, in the Opening Chorus, why it is that the King would spend the next thirteen years looking for her replacement instead of getting on with his life.

Princess Eleanor

Spoiled, clever and stubborn. Her best friend is her pet rat, Bartholomew. She likes to be in charge, and wants people to treat her like an adult. She is an excellent singer and dancer.

The Narrator (male or female)

The Narrator is a good story teller and a strong singer. The Narrator sets the tone in the Prologue of each act.

Erronius, Counselor to the King (male or female)

Erronius is the trusted old adviser to the King. Erronius carries a large book every wherever he goes, in which he writes down everything that happens. He is a bumbler, and he writes everything down wrong. Unlike other leads, Erronius does not need a strong singing voice. This is a good role for a funny character actor.

The Countess of Corpus Christi

The Countess is bossy but also panic-stricken. She thinks she is a good singer, but mainly she is just loud. This is a terrific small comic part.

Phizz, the Alchemist

Phizz is charming, but a bit of a dreamer. His goal in life is to turn lead into gold. He can hold his own in an argument, but would prefer to diffuse tension and find a middle way. Phizz is a good singer, and a passable dancer.

Three Ticket Takers (male or female)

The Ticket Takers are La Forza's right assistants. They are rambunctious, good-timing extroverts who love tongue twisters. The Ticket Takers Song is the funniest in the play, and the Ticket Takers have to be able to sell it.

La Forza

La Forza, like the King, is in her mid-thirties. She is tough, bold and brassy, but also has a good heart. She has seen it all as the leader of her own traveling troupe. She likes to get to the point, and she is not impressed by people who try to pull rank on her. She has a very strong voice, but does not need to be much of a dancer.

Musetta, Leader of the Dance Troupe

Musetta is excellent both as a dancer and singer. She is a bit academic, and keeps her troupe in line.

ACT I

(The Narrator is alone in front of the curtain. He/she lights a candle and sings the Prologue.)

Narrator:

IMAGINE IF YOU CAN A WORLD LIT ONLY BY FIRE
A WORLD OF SUPERSTITION AND OF FEAR
A WORLD WHERE FEW CAN READ OR WRITE
AND SCHOLARS TRY TO KEEP ALIGHT
THE FLAME OF KNOWLEDGE BURNING IN THE NIGHT

THE LATE MEDIEVAL AGES ARE A TIME SUCH AS THIS
AND OUR TALE IS SET IN SUCH A YEAR
A CASTLE IN A KINGDOM IN A TINY LITTLE LAND
WHERE NOTHING THAT WAS MEANT TO BE IS TURNING OUT AS PLANNED

AND SO OUR TALE BEGINS!

(The curtain rises, to reveal the throne room of a medieval castle. The entire cast is on stage for the Opening Chorus.)

Opening Chorus:

THE PLAGUE'S THE THING
THE PLAGUE'S THE THING
THAT SETS OUR PLAY IN MOTION

THE PLAGUE'S THE THING
THAT CAUSED THE KING
TO LOSE HIS HEART'S DEVOTION

SETTLE IN AND LEND YOUR EARS
TO A TALE FROM FIFTEEN YEARS AGO

WHEN NO MISFORTUNE HAD VISITED OUR REALM
AND A NEW YOUNG KING WAS AT THE HELM

THE KING WAS HANDSOME
AND STRONG AND BRAVE
AND NOT THE SHY WITHDRAWN SORT

BUT HIS DEMEANOR
WAS ALWAYS GRAVE
BECAUSE HE HAD NO CONSORT

THEN ONE DAY HE HEARD A VOICE
SINGING FROM WITHIN A CLOISTERED HALL

Queen: THOUGH SEASONS CHANGE
THOUGH WINTER FOLLOWS FALL
I WILL BE FAITHFUL
I WILL NEVER CHANGE

HE CLIMBED THE WALL TO GET A BETTER VIEW
WHAT HE SAW WAS LIKE A DREAM COME TRUE

FOR THERE HE SAW A BEAUTIFUL GIRL
DANCING UPON THE GRASS
HE'D NEVER SEEN IN ALL OF THE WORLD
SO LIKELY A LOVELY LASS

THE KING APPROACHED HER WITH ALL OF HIS CHARM
AND ASKED IF HE COULD JOIN IN
BUT SHE HAD BARELY TAKEN HIS ARM
BEFORE HE HAD KICKED HER SHIN

Queen: Ouch!

AND SO IT STARTED
A GREAT ROMANCE
THE STUFF THAT POETS TRADE IN

OUR KING, THE KLUTZ
WHO COULDN'T DANCE
YET WON A FAIR YOUNG MAIDEN

WEDDING BELLS WERE IN THE AIR
FOLLOWED IN A YEAR BY THEIR FIRST CHILD

BEGUILED AND HAPPY OUR KING HAD SETTLED DOWN
TO ENJOY HIS DAUGHTER, QUEEN AND CROWN

BUT THEN THE PLAGUE, THE SCOURGE OF OUR AGE
INVADED OUR LITTLE LAND
THE CASTLE GATES TURNED INTO A CAGE
CLOSED BY THE KING'S COMMAND

EACH NIGHT THE QUEEN LEFT THE CASTLE TO NURSE
THE VICTIMS BOTH LOW AND HIGH
AND FOR HER COURAGE THIS WAS THE CURSE:
THE QUEEN WAS THE LAST TO DIE

A STATE IN MOURNING
A WIDOWED KING
A CHILD WITHOUT A MOTHER

BUT ONE YEAR LATER
A HOPE TAKES WING
THAT THEY MIGHT FIND ANOTHER

COUNTLESS CANDIDATES APPLY
ONE BY ONE THEY COME TO TRY AND FAIL

BRING IN THE NEXT QUEEN CANDIDATE!

First Candidate: THOUGH SEASONS CHANGE
THOUGH WINTER FOLLOWS FALL

Erronius: Next!

Second Candidate: I WILL BE FAITHFUL
I WILL NEVER CHANGE

Erronius: Next! (A Candidate comes forward so unsuitable that the Erronius instantly dismisses her.) Next!

THEY PALE COMPARED TO THE QUEEN THEY WOULD REPLACE
NO ONE HAS HER CHARM OR VOICE OR GRACE

AND SO TIME PASSES
WITH THIRTEEN YEARS
OF ENDLESS QUEEN AUDITIONS

BUT HOPE IS FADING
NO QUEEN APPEARS
WHO MEETS THE KING'S CONDITIONS

MEANWHILE HE NEGLECTS THE CHILD
SO HIS DAUGHTER GROWS UP WILD AND SPOILED

SO SPOILED HER MOTHER
WOULD FIND HER DAUGHTER STRANGE

STRANGE AND WILD AND SPOILED AND CLEVER
COUNTLESS CANDIDATES ENDEAVOR
THIRTEEN YEARS AND STILL THINGS NEVER CHANGE

(As the Opening Chorus ends the King takes the throne. Erronius, his adviser, steps forward. Erronius always has a large book in hand, in which he keeps a record of everything that occurs. Right now he also has a large hand bell, the audition bell. The Princess is on stage, holding her pet rat, Bartholomew.)

ERRONIUS

Audition Day! Audition Day! All Queen Candidates approach and present your credentials! (puts audition bell in a prominent place.)

KING

Good day, Erronius.

ERRONIUS

Good day, Your Majesty.

KING

How many auditions do we have today?

ERRONIUS

Only one, Your Majesty. But perhaps this one will be the next queen.

KING

I suppose we can always hope. All right, let's get on with it.

(The Countess of Corpus Christi comes forward and rings the audition bell. She is brittle, bullying and panic-stricken.)

CHORUS

BRING IN THE NEXT QUEEN CANDIDATE!

COUNTESS

(She does a vocal warm up and tries a few dance steps. She stumbles, and calls for Phizz imperiously, and with a touch of hysteria.) Phizz! Phizz!

PHIZZ

Right here, Countess.

COUNTESS

Something's wrong. Fix it.

PHIZZ

No, no, nothing's wrong. Everything's going to be fine.

COUNTESS

(pleading) Are you sure? (threatening) It better be.

PHIZZ

You must remember, Countess. Breathe deeply. In out, in out. That's right. (He is fussing about her, trying to psyche her up.) Posture, posture. Keep breathing. Wait! Hold still. (She holds her breath. He adjusts her hair, etc.) That's it! (She exhales loudly.) In out, in out. Now focus, focus.

ERRONIUS

Present your credentials!

COUNTESS

(She takes a sharp breath and freezes.) That's you. Get going.

PHIZZ

(to her) In out, in out. (crosses to Erronius and the King) Why did I ever take this job?

(As Phizz approaches the King, the audition troupe prepares the Countess, dressing her in a costume, giving her sheet music, showing her dance steps, etc.)

Your Majesty, I present, the Countess of Corpus Christi.

KING

(to Erronius) Did you get that down?

ERRONIUS

(writing) The Countess of Crispy Corpulence.

KING AND PHIZZ

Close enough. (They share a laugh, surprised that they said the same thing together.)

KING

(to Phizz) And who are you?

PHIZZ

My name is Phizz, Your Majesty.

KING

Just Phizz?

PHIZZ

It's my trade name. I'm an alchemist.

KING

An alchemist?

PHIZZ

Yes, I turn lead into gold.

KING

(interested) Can you really do that?

PHIZZ

Not yet.

KING

(Disappointed, he indicates the Countess) What about her?

PHIZZ

Tin ear, brass lungs. No gold there.

KING

No, I mean what are you doing with her?

PHIZZ

She's paying me, until my career gets going.

KING

Surely you can do better.

MUSETTA

(Claps her hands.) All right, let's begin. (She hands sheet music to the Countess and signals for music.) Maestro! (The audition music starts. Musetta turns to the Countess.) You sing this while dancing with them. We'll go through it once for practice, then it's your turn.

(Musetta sings the tune to the Countess, while the dance troupe goes through the steps. The Princess joins the dance troupe, with the Rat hidden in her costume. The Countess is confused, trying to follow both the sheet music and the dancers.)

THOUGH SEASONS CHANGE
THOUGH WINTER FOLLOWS FALL
I WILL BE FAITHFUL
I WILL NEVER CHANGE

All right, it's your turn.

COUNTESS

Can't we go over it once more?

MUSETTA

(shakes her head) One time only, those are the rules. Good luck! Maestro! (Musetta signals to the orchestra, which plays the music again. The Countess looks around for Phizz. He motions to her to breathe in and out. The Countess does her best to dance and sing the audition. At the end, as she turns around for the last flourish, the Princess dangles the Rat in front of her.)

COUNTESS

THOUGH SEASONS CHANGE
THOUGH WINTER FOLLOWS FALL
I WILL BE FAITHFUL
I WILL . . . .

A rat!!!

(The Countess screams. The audition stops. The Countess is furious and humiliated. Phizz is laughing.)

Who's the brat with the rat?

KING

(weary) This is my daughter, Eleanor. And her rat.

ELEANOR

Bartholomew. (The Rat offers to shake hands with the Countess.)

COUNTESS

That does it! You can have your stupid audition. I'm leaving! (She storms off. As she reaches the exit she turns around to find Phizz.) What are you laughing at? You're fired! A plague upon you all! (She exits.)

(Phizz and the King look at each other, startled. Then they start to laugh again.)

KING

(to Phizz) Well, now what are you going to do?

PHIZZ

Do you need an alchemist?

KING

Sure, get your stuff. I can use the laughs. (Phizz exits.) Erronius, I think we've seen enough for one day.

ERRONIUS

Court is adjourned.

(Everyone exits except the King and the Princess Eleanor.)

KING

(to Eleanor as she leaves) Just a minute, Eleanor.

PRINCESS

Uh-oh. (to Rat) Did you hear something?

KING

Eleanor, how many times do I have to tell you? Don't disrupt the auditions.

PRINCESS

(Ignoring him, she talks to her Rat.) How many times do I have to tell you? Don't disrupt the auditions.

KING

And do you have to carry that rat with you everywhere?

PRINCESS

(to Rat) And do you have to follow me everywhere?

KING

Eleanor, will you look at me when I'm talking to you? You're fourteen. It's time for you to grow up.

PRINCESS

(still focused on Rat) You're the king. It's time for you to grow up.

KING

What does that mean?

PRINCESS

(looking right at King for the first time) All the singers and dancers in the world won't bring back Mother. Can't you see? You'll never find another one like her.

KING

(He stiffens, then speaks harshly.) Once I thought she would be reborn in you. But now I see that will never happen. (He turns to go, then turns back.) I don't want to see that rat again, Eleanor. (He exits.)

PRINCESS

(She is stung. She turns to the Rat.) Oh, Bartholomew, what are we going to do? No, you can't run away. Stay with me. I need you.

(She sings "Sometimes I Think You're the Only Friend I've Got.")

SOMETIMES I THINK YOU'RE THE ONLY FRIEND I'VE GOT
SOMETIMES I THINK YOU'RE THE ONLY FRIEND I'VE GOT
NO ONE UNDERSTANDS LIKE YOU
NO ONE WARMS MY HANDS LIKE YOU
SO LIKE IT OR NOT
SOMETIMES I THINK YOU'RE THE ONLY FRIEND I'VE GOT

NO ONE UNDERSTANDS LIKE YOU
NO ONE WARMS MY HANDS LIKE YOU
SO LIKE IT OR NOT

SOMETIMES I THINK YOU'RE THE ONLY FRIEND I'VE GOT

(Phizz enters as she sings the end of the song.)

Oh, Bartholomew.

PHIZZ

Who are you talking to?

PRINCESS

(defensive) Do you know who you are talking to?

PHIZZ

You know, you're kind of cute.

PRINCESS

You've got a lot of nerve.

PHIZZ

I was talking to the rat. What's its name again?

PRINCESS

Bartholomew.

PHIZZ

Pretty big name for such a small . . . (reaches out to pet it and gets bit) Ow!

PRINCESS

Watch out, he bites.

PHIZZ

Thanks. Wait a minute. (He reaches into his pocket, pulls out bit of food and feeds it to the Rat.) Here you go.

PRINCESS

What did you say your name was?

PHIZZ

Phizz.

PRINCESS

You're not really an alchemist, are you?

PHIZZ

Sure I am. I mean, I'm going to be.

PRINCESS

What makes you think you can turn lead into gold?

PHIZZ

I don't know. Maybe it's crazy, but that's my goal.

(They sing "Something As Good as Gold.")

Phizz: AS A STUDENT OFTEN I READ
AN ELEMENT AS COMMON AS LEAD
CAN BE TURNED TO SOMETHING AS GOOD AS GOLD

Eleanor: ONLY FOOLS WOULD BELIEVE IT

Phizz: SO MY DREAM IN LIFE IS TO FIND
THE MIX OF MATTER THAT WHEN COMBINED
IS TRANSFORMED INTO SOMETHING AS GOOD AS GOLD

Eleanor: YOU'LL NEVER FIND THE SECRET
A BROKEN DREAM
IS ALL YOU'LL EVER HOLD

Phizz: ALL I ASK IS ONCE IN MY LIFE
THROUGH ALL THE YEARS OF LABOR AND STRIFE
THAT I DISCOVER SOMETHING AS GOOD AS GOLD
ALL I ASK IS SOMETHING AS GOOD AS GOLD

PRINCESS

You know, the way you say it, it almost seems possible. Almost!

PHIZZ

Well, you've got to aim for something. Might as well make it something big.

PRINCESS

(She asks the Rat for an opinion about Phizz) What do you think? I agree. He needs help. (to Phizz) So, what does it take to be an alchemist, exactly?

PHIZZ

Well, you set up a laboratory and do experiments with stuff. Like lead, sulfur, any kind of potion or powder.

PRINCESS

Sounds interesting.

PHIZZ

(He gets the hint) But what I really need is a good assistant.

(They are interrupted by the three Ticket Takers, who enter with a flourish.)

TICK

Hear ye, hear ye!! Announcing, the arrival of La Forza's traveling troupe!

TACK

Come one, come all, see La Forza's marvelous minstrels!

TOE

Get you're tickets now!

TICK

We have jugglers juggling jars of jelly –

TACK

Dancers dressed like devilish dunces –

TOE

Actors hectoring in fractured octaves –

ALL THREE

Actors. Talk about your prima donnas!

PRINCESS

And who are you?

TICK

We are Tick –

TACK

Tack –

TOE

And Toe.

ALL THREE

The Ticket Takers!

PHIZZ

Ha, ha!

TICK

You laugh, sir. But the ticket takers are the most important members of the troupe.

TACK

Without us, the troupe would collapse.

PRINCESS

Well of course. Who would take the tickets? (She and Phizz laugh.)

TOE

Ah, but we do so much more than that.

TICK

We have our own guild –

TACK

Our own greatness –

TOE

Our own glory.

(They sing the Ticket Taker song.)

Tick: WHEN YOU'RE IN A MUDDLE
AND NEED SOMEBODY SUBTLE
TO SOLVE A TICKLISH PROBLEM, WE'RE THE GUYS

Tack: FOR INSTANCE, IF AN ACTOR
INSULTS A BENEFACTOR
WE'LL NEGOTIATE A COMPROMISE

Toe: OR IF YOU THINK SOME STRONG GUY
IS PICKING ON THE WRONG GUY
WHO IS IT WHO LOOKS HIM IN THE EYES AND ASKS?

All: TICKET TAKERS TACKLE TICKLISH TASKS
TICKET TAKERS TACKLE TICKLISH TASKS
WE PROTECT THE TIMID, IF ANYBODY ASKS
TICKET TAKERS PRACTICE TACT AND TACKLE
TICKLISH TASKS

Tick: IF THE CROWD GETS ROWDY
AND THINGS ARE LOOKING CLOUDY
WE CAN MAKE A CITIZENS ARREST

Tack: OR IF A NOBLE NEIGHBOR
GETS CARELESS WITH HIS SABER
WE DISPEL THE TENSION WITH A JEST

Toe: OR AS WE WATCH THE LINE IN
IF SOME ONE SNEAKS SOME WINE IN
WE'RE THE GUYS WHO CONFISCATE CLANDESTINE FLASKS

All: TICKET TAKERS TACKLE TICKLISH TASKS
TICKET TAKERS TACKLE TICKLISH TASKS
WE RESTORE THE ORDER AND FRISK 'EM FOR THEIR FLASKS
TICKET TAKERS TAKE THE TIME TO TACKLE TICKLISH TASKS

Tick: IT'S SIMPLY UNDENIABLE
YOU NEED SOME ONE RELIABLE
TO HELP YOU WHEN THE ROAD COMES TO A FORK

Tack: SOME ONE WHO'S REALISTIC
BUT ALSO OPTIMISTIC
WHO DOESN'T SEE THE PIG, HE SEES THE PORK

Toe: AND NO ONE GETS THERE FASTER
TO COPE WITH A DISASTER
OR HELP THE QUARTER MASTER TO UNCORK THE CASKS

All: TICKET TAKERS TACKLE TICKLISH TASKS
TICKET TAKERS TACKLE TICKLISH TASKS
WE COPE WITH DISASTER, AND TAKE THE CORKS FROM CASKS
TICKET TAKERS

Tick: PRACTICE TACT

Tack: FRISK FOR FLASKS

Toe: UNCORK CASKS

All: TICKET TAKERS TAKE THE TIME TO TACKLE TICKLISH TASKS

TICK

And now, ladies and gentlemen, we present –

TACK

The One –

TOE

The Only –

TICK

The First –

TACK

The Fairest –

TOE

And the Foremost –

ALL THREE

La Forza and her traveling troupe!

(La Forza enters, followed by a rag tag group of traveling players. The courtiers and villagers also filter in, attracted by the commotion.)

LA FORZA

(looks around) Well, I've seen worse, though I'm not sure when. But at least it doesn't smell too bad. (to her troupe) All right, folks! We'll set up here!

PRINCESS

(to La Forza) Hold on. Wait a minute. What's going on?

LA FORZA

(looks her up and down) Clever, stubborn and spoiled. Pretty enough, though. Turn around. I'd say about fourteen years old. Am I right?

PRINCESS

Do you know who you're talking to?

PHIZZ

She asked me the same question.

LA FORZA

(to Eleanor) Who's your friend? He seems all right.

PRINCESS

(angry) Can't you see that I'm the Princess?

LA FORZA

My dear, that's pretty obvious. (La Forza turns her back on the Princess and starts giving directions to her troupe.) Careful with that. Put it over there.

PRINCESS

I could have you thrown out of here.

LA FORZA

What's this? A rat?

PRINCESS

Go ahead, bite her, Bartholomew.

LA FORZA

I don't care much for rats. They carry fleas. You may have fleas yourself. (She picks something out of Eleanor's hair.)

PRINCESS

That does it. Guards!

LA FORZA

It'll take more than a sharp-tongued rat catcher to throw me out! (to Ticket Takers) Boys! (The Ticket Takers come to her side.)

PRINCESS

(To the guards.) Throw them out!

(The Guards, rather dubiously, approach La Forza and the Ticket Takers. La Forza looks around for inspiration, grabs the audition bell and rings it. This brings in the remainder of the chorus, as well as Erronius. The King is the only one not to enter.)

CHORUS

BRING IN THE NEXT QUEEN CANDIDATE!

PRINCESS

Very clever, but I'll make sure you don't win.

LA FORZA

We'll see about that. Win what?

PHIZZ

You're officially auditioning to be the next queen.

LA FORZA

What?

PHIZZ

I hope you can dance.

ERRONIUS

Approach and present your credentials!

TICK

And now, ladies and gentlemen, we present –

TACK

The One –

TOE

The Only –

TICK

The First –

TACK

The Fairest –

TOE

And the Foremost –

TICK

The Fearless –

TACK

The Foolhardy –

TOE

And the Frightening –

LA FORZA

(to Ticket Takers) That's enough!

ALL THREE

La Forza! (Erronius writes it all down.)

LA FORZA'S TROUPE

Yay!

ERRONIUS

Land of birth?

LA FORZA

DeNunzio. (Erronius writes it down.)

KING

(enters and takes throne) What have we here?

ERRONIUS

A late entry, Your Majesty. This is, ah, (reading) La Forza del Destino.

PHIZZ AND TICKET TAKERS

Close enough.

MUSETTA

All right, let's begin. (She hands a sheet of music to La Forza.) Maestro! (The audition music starts.) You sing this while dancing with them. We'll go through it once for practice, then it's your turn.

LA FORZA

You can't be serious.

(As before, Musetta sings the tune to La Forza, while the audition troupe goes through the steps. The Princess joins the dance troupe, with the Rat hidden in her costume. La Forza pays no attention to anything but the Princess, whom she watches carefully.)

MUSETTA

THOUGH SEASONS CHANGE

THOUGH WINTER FOLLOWS FALL
I WILL BE FAITHFUL
I WILL NEVER CHANGE

All right, it's your turn. Good luck! Maestro! (She signals to the orchestra, which starts the music again. La Forza ignores the audition and approaches the King.)

LA FORZA

Begging your pardon, Your Highness. But this is a ridiculous way to pick a queen.

KING

Do you or don't you want the job?

(The Princess begins creeping up behind La Forza with the Rat, to scare her. La Forza senses her approach.)

LA FORZA

(still looking at the King, but addressing Princess) One more step and you're going to eat that rat. (The Princess stops dead in her tracks. The King sees what is going on.)

KING

Eleanor!

LA FORZA

I was just getting acquainted with your daughter.

KING

Eleanor, go to your chamber.

PRINCESS

(to Rat) Uh, oh. Here we go again.

KING

(to La Forza) I apologize about the rat.

LA FORZA

No need. The rat has been perfectly polite.

KING

(to Eleanor) I thought I told you to get rid of the rat.

PRINCESS

(defiant) Bartholomew stays!

KING

We'll see about that. Guards! Get rid of the rat.

LA FORZA

Hold on, hold on! (rings audition bell) Maestro! (signals to orchestra, which begins to play "You Will See a Change.") This place could use a queen, all right, if only to give some guidance to this girl. (to King) Eleanor won't be a girl much longer. Some day soon she's going to surprise you.

YOU WILL SEE A CHANGE
WINTER ALWAYS TURNS TO SPRING

LEAVE A YOUNG ONE TIME TO GROW
YOU WILL SEE A CHANGE

TAKE A FLEDGLING HAWK
GIVE IT ROOM TO SPREAD ITS WINGS
AND IN TIME THE HAWK WILL LEARN TO SOAR ACROSS ITS
RANGE
GIVE IT TIME AND YOU WILL SEE A CHANGE

(As the Chorus sings the second half of the song, the audition troupe dances to the new melody and meter. The Princess puts the Rat down and joins them.)

Chorus and La Forza:

TAKE A FLEDGLING HAWK
GIVE IT ROOM TO SPREAD ITS WINGS
AND IN TIME THE HAWK WILL LEARN TO SOAR ACROSS ITS
RANGE
GIVE IT TIME AND YOU WILL SEE A CHANGE

(Everyone is impressed. But the Princess suddenly feels self-conscious and stops. She picks up the Rat and moves off. La Forza hands the music sheet back to Musetta.)

LA FORZA

How was that?

KING

(leading the applause) That was great! (he approaches her) Can you dance as well as you sing?

LA FORZA

(wary) Wait a minute. Singing is one thing, but dancing is quite another.

KING

Oh, I insist. (The King takes La Forza by the hand and signals for music.) Maestro!

(The Orchestra starts the audition music. They start to dance. Within a moment, she kicks him. He hollers.)

LA FORZA

Sorry, but I warned you.

KING

(rubbing ankle.) No, no. My fault. Come on, let's try again. Maestro!

(The music starts again, this time he kicks her. She hollers.)

I'm so sorry. Are you all right? (He approaches her. She backs away warily and starts to circle. At this point it looks more like a prize fight than a dance. Phizz rings the bell. Both retire, like fighters, to their corners. La Forza goes to the Ticket Takers, the King to Erronius.)

TICK

Let's go. One more time.

LA FORZA

I don't think I can do it.

ERRONIUS

How do you feel, sire?

KING

I don't know. She's tough. She's tough.

(Phizz rings bell. The music starts again.)

TACK

Come on, now. Two out of three.

LA FORZA

No! I can't dance and that's that.

ERRONIUS

All right, Your Majesty. Do your best.

KING

Forget it. I know when I'm licked.

PHIZZ

(to La Forza and King) Don't give up now! It's easy. I'll show you. (He offers his hand to the Princess. They sing "Anyone Can Learn to Dance." During the first verse Phizz and the Princess dance alone.)

Phizz:

ANYONE CAN LEARN TO DANCE
ANYONE CAN LEARN TO DANCE
ONE TWO THREE
STEP TWO THREE
BACKWARDS, ADVANCE
ANYONE CAN LEARN TO DANCE

(During the second verse, Phizz dances with La Forza, and the Princess dances with the King. Everyone else pairs up.)

Chorus:

ANYONE CAN LEARN TO DANCE
IF YOU GIVE IT HALF A CHANCE
ONE TWO THREE
STEP TWO THREE
BACKWARDS, ADVANCE
ANYONE CAN LEARN TO DANCE

(As the second verse ends they all applaud each other. During the third verse everyone dances a waltz.)

ANYONE CAN LEARN TO DANCE
(ISN'T THIS FUN?)
ANYONE CAN LEARN TO DANCE
(ISN'T THIS FUN?)
ONE TWO
STEP TWO
BACK, ADVANCE
ANYONE CAN LEARN TO DANCE

(During the rest of the number the King and La Forza try to work their way toward each other, but are interrupted by a series of dancers who cut in. Several of the dancers are kicked by the King and La Forza.)

Chorus:

ONE TWO THREE
STEP TWO THREE
BACKWARD, ADVANCE

(The King and La Forza finally meet in center stage and begin to dance.)

King and La Forza:

ONE TWO THREE
STEP TWO THREE
BACKWARD, ADVANCE

(As they "advance", the King and La Forza kick each other. They both cry out in pain.)

Ouch!

Chorus: ANYONE CAN LEARN TO DANCE!

(As the curtain falls on Act I, the King and La Forza hop and howl as the rest of the cast continues to dance.)

THE PLAGUE'S THE THING

(Piano Score)

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT I

Prologue (Narrator)

Opening Chorus – The Plague's the Thing (entire cast)

Audition (dance troupe, Queen Candidate)

Sometimes I Think You're the Only Friend I've Got (Princess and Rat)

Something as Good as Gold (Phizz and Princess)

The Ticket Takers Song (Ticket Takers)

You Will See a Change (La Forza and cast)

Anyone Can Learn to Dance (cast)

ACT II

Prologue (Narrator)

The Plague's the Thing (reprise) (cast)

The Royal We (King and cast)

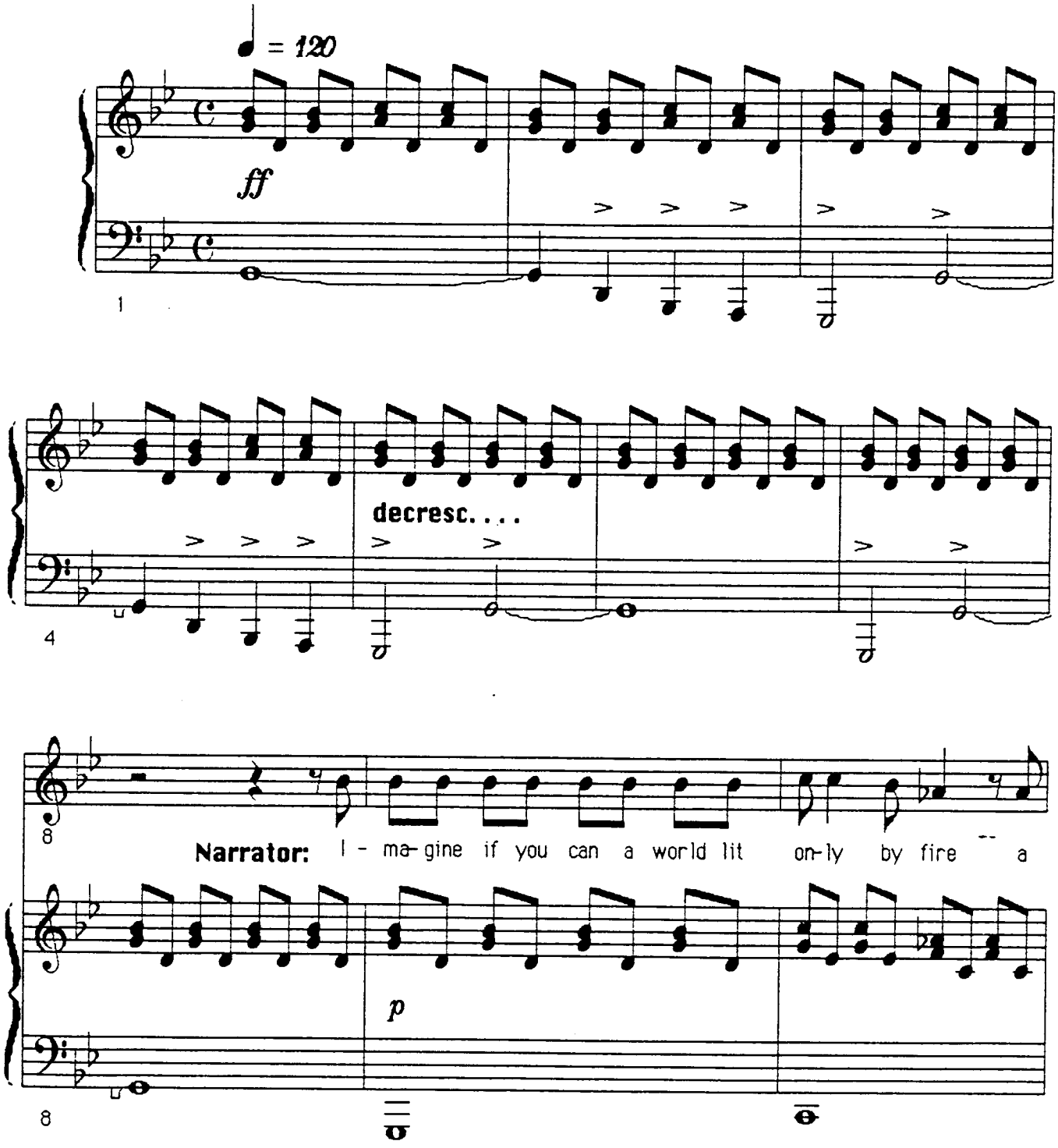
The Ticket Takers Song (reprise) (Ticket Takers)

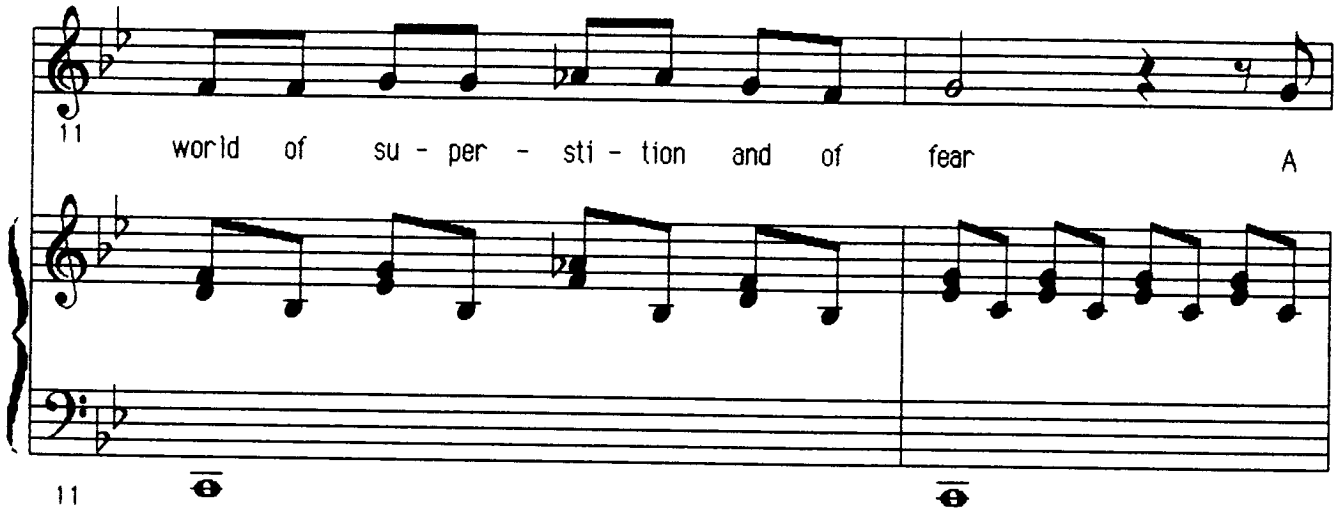
The Royal We (reprise) (King and La Forza)

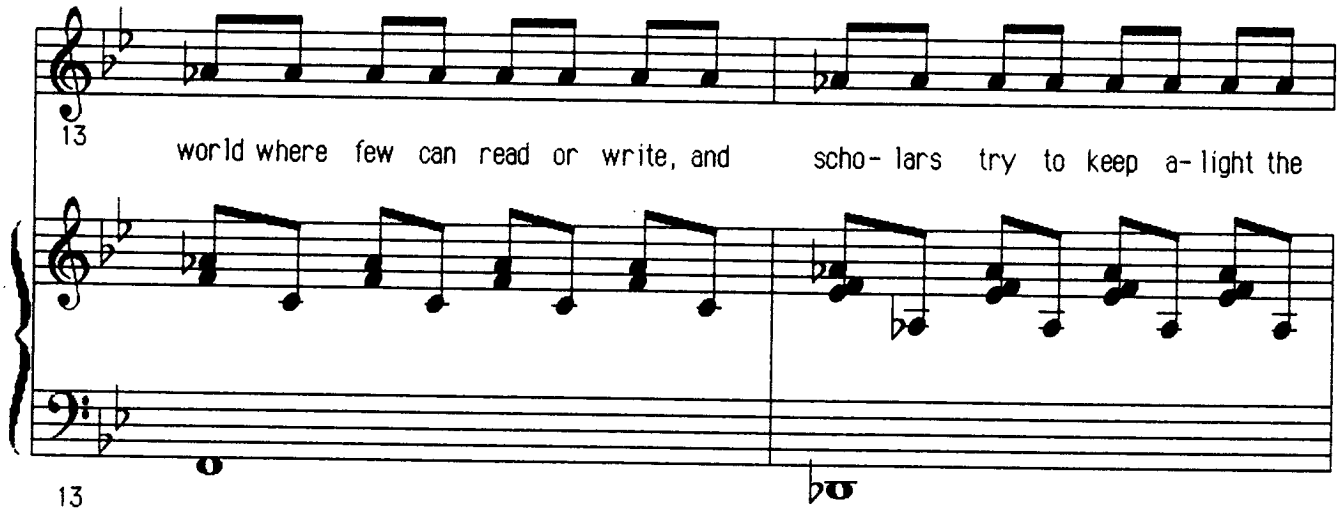
Something as Good as Gold (reprise) (Princess and Phizz)

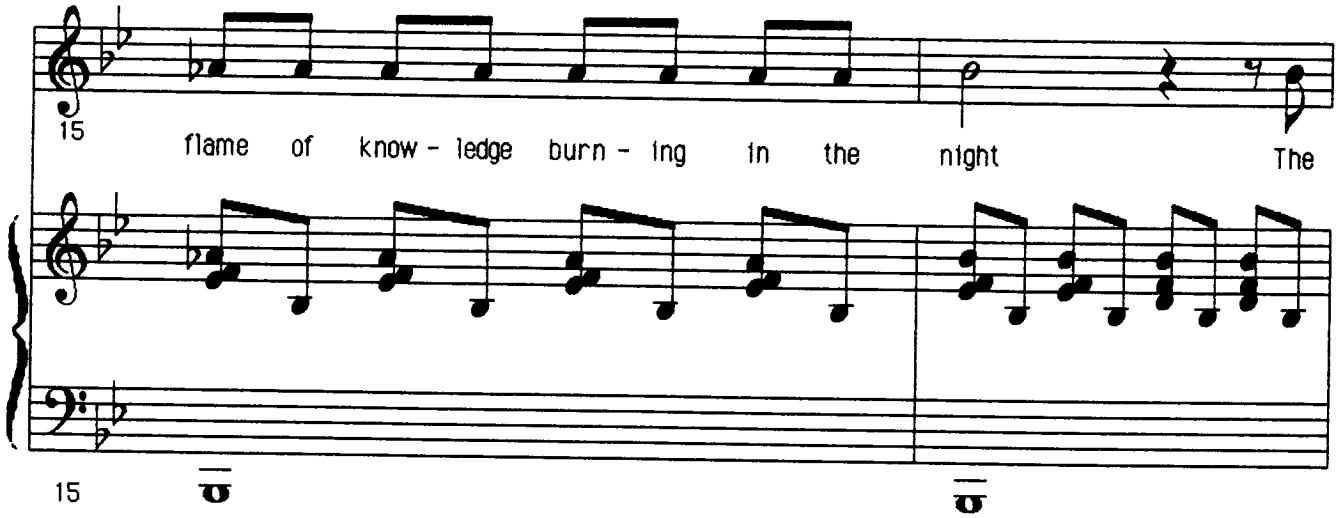
You Will See a Change (reprise) (Princess, Narrator, cast)

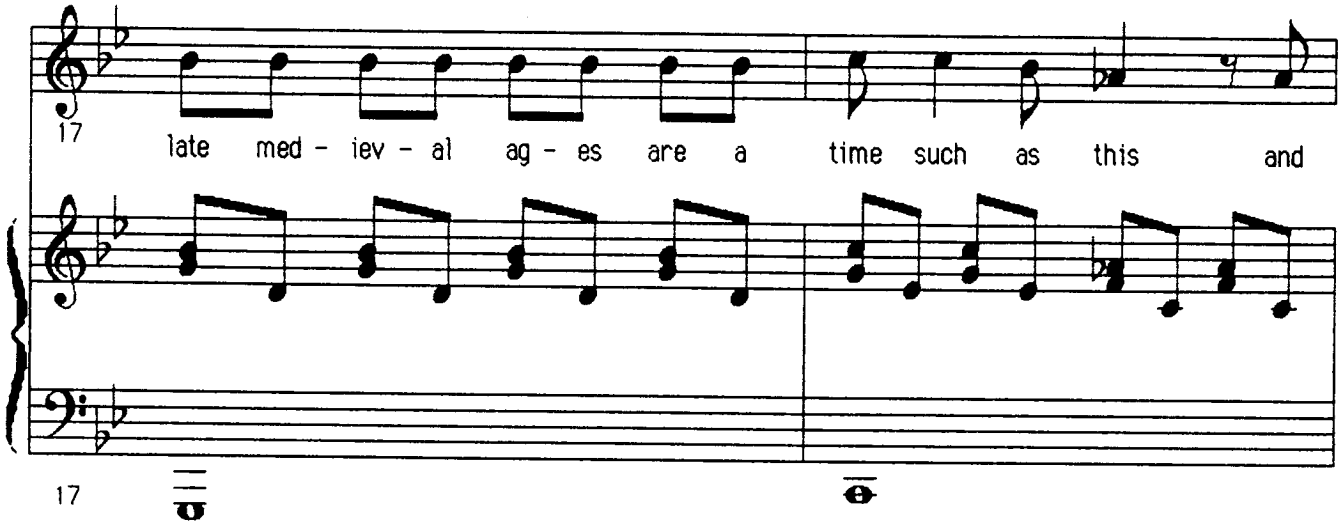
Opening Chorus

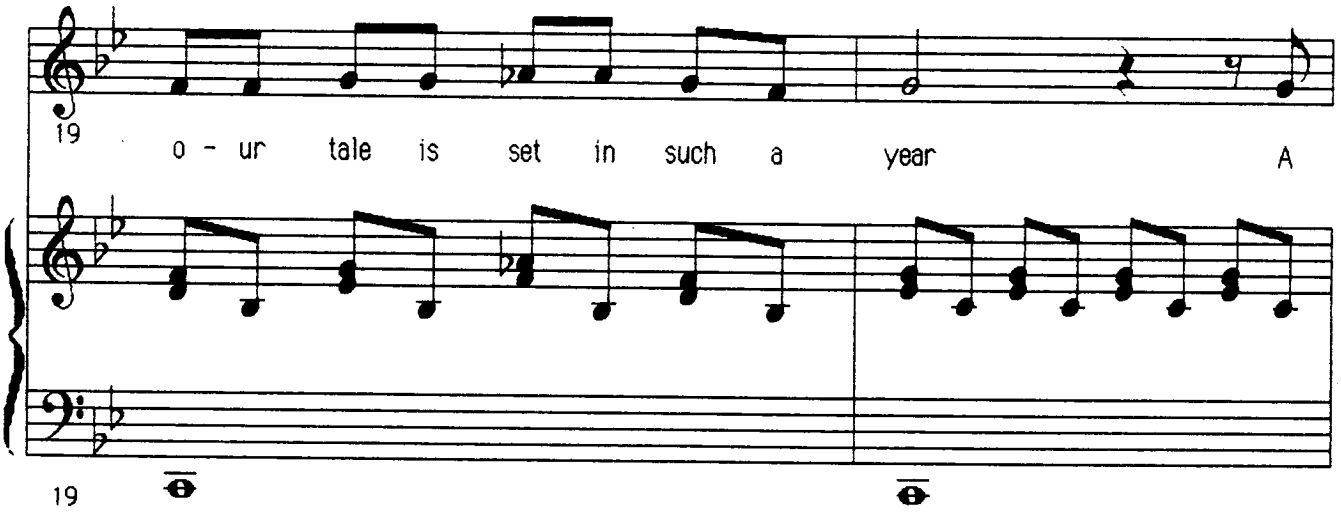


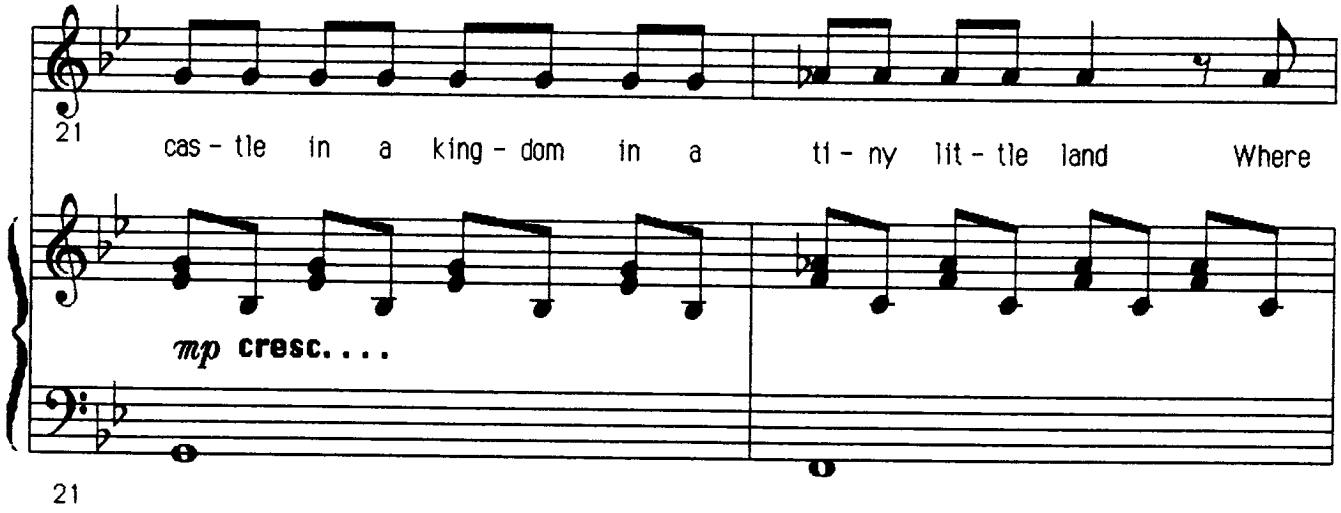

11
world of su - per - sti - tion and of fear
A
11

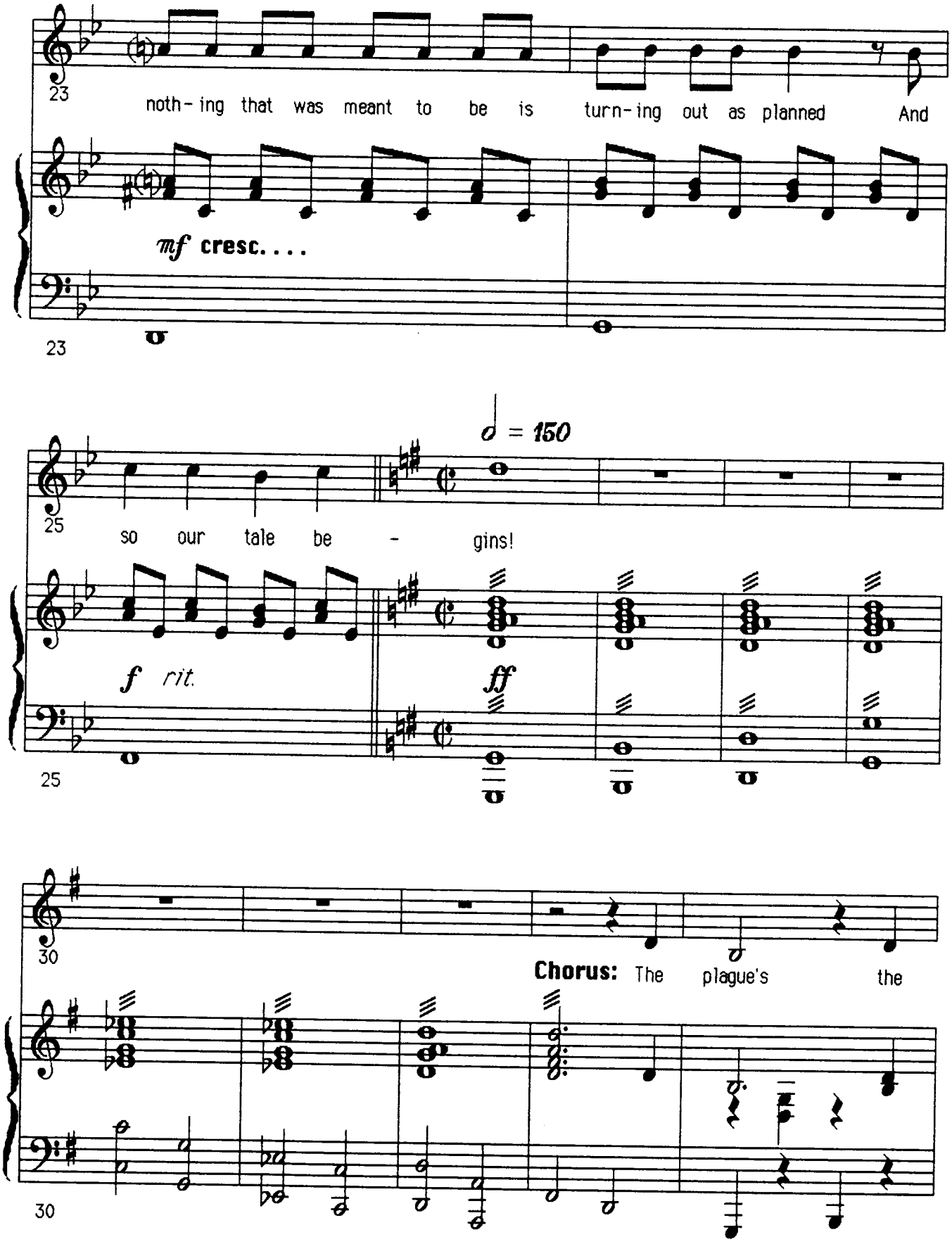

13
world where few can read or write, and scho- lars try to keep a- light the
13

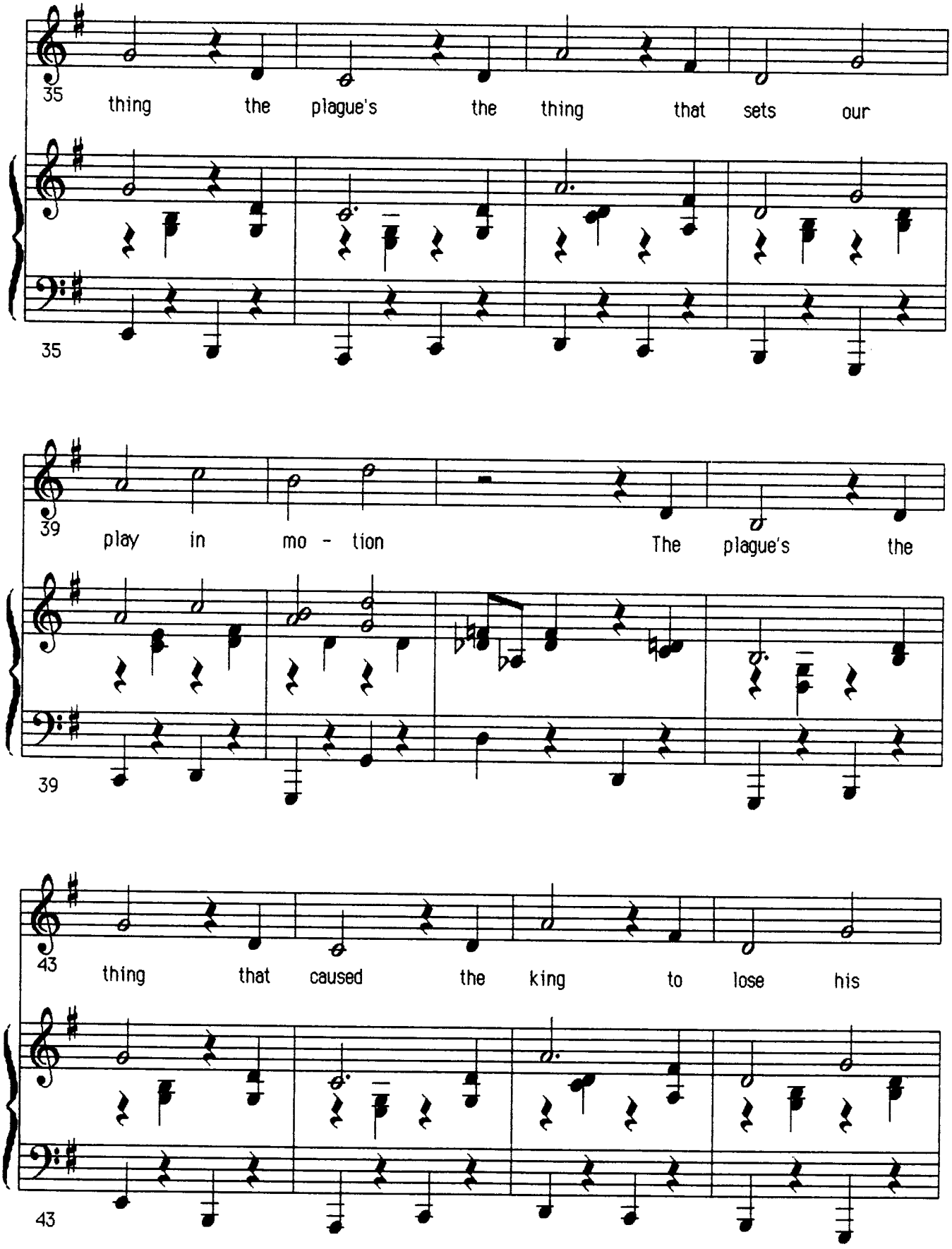

15
flame of know - ledge burn - ing in the night
The
15

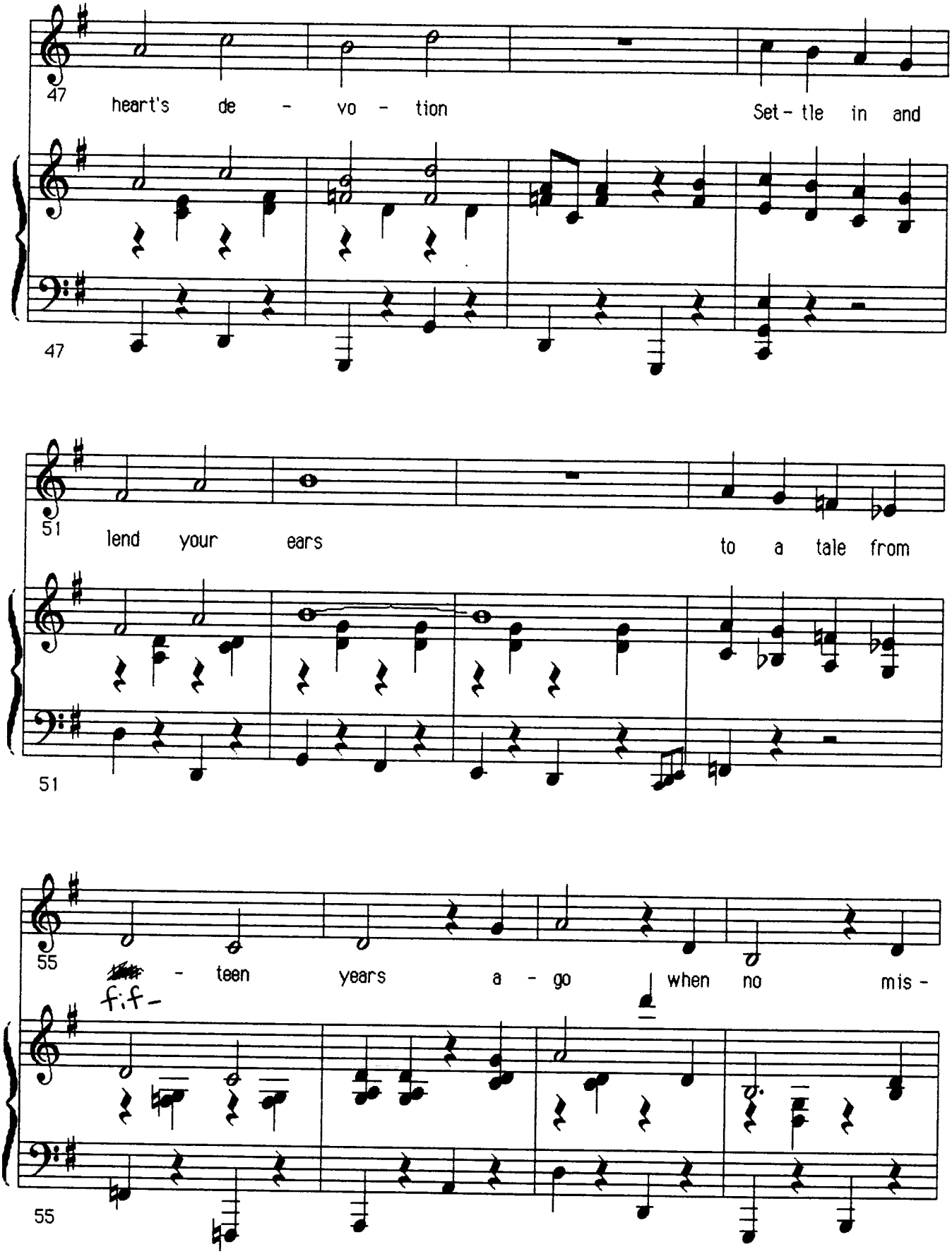

17
late med - iev - al ag - es are a time such as this and
17

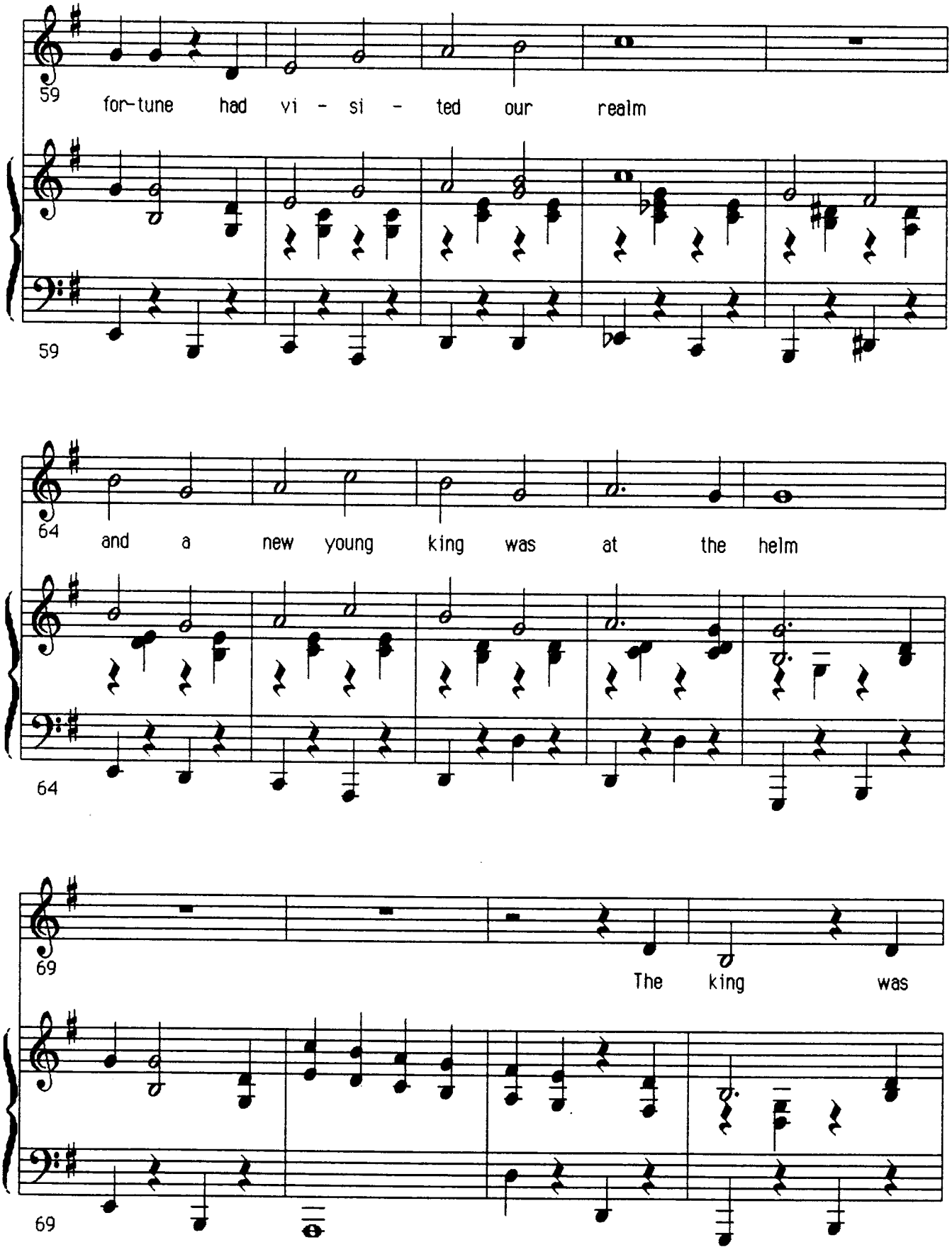

19
o - ur tale is set in such a year A
19

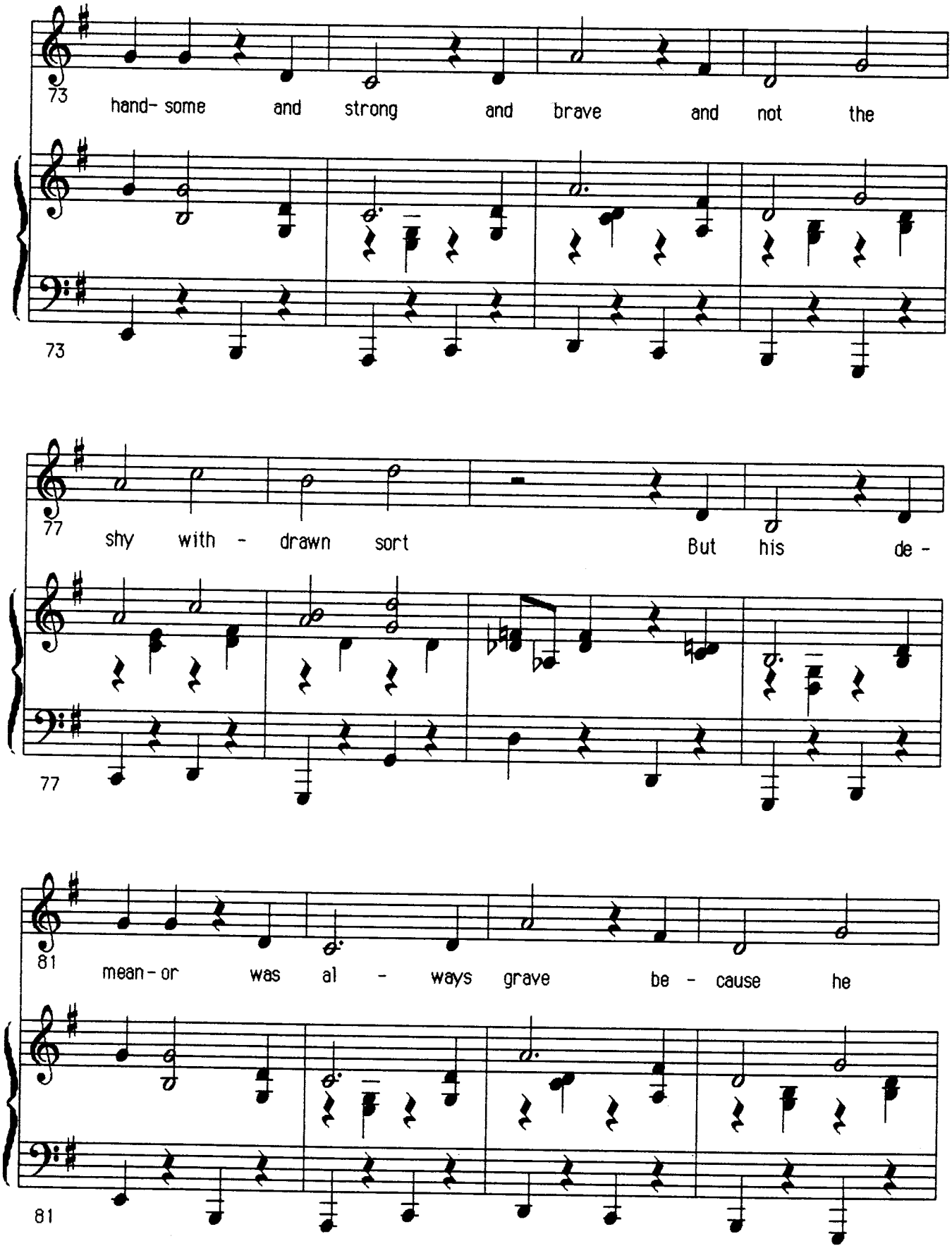

21
cas - tle in a king - dom in a ti - ny lit - tle land Where
mp cresc. . . .
21

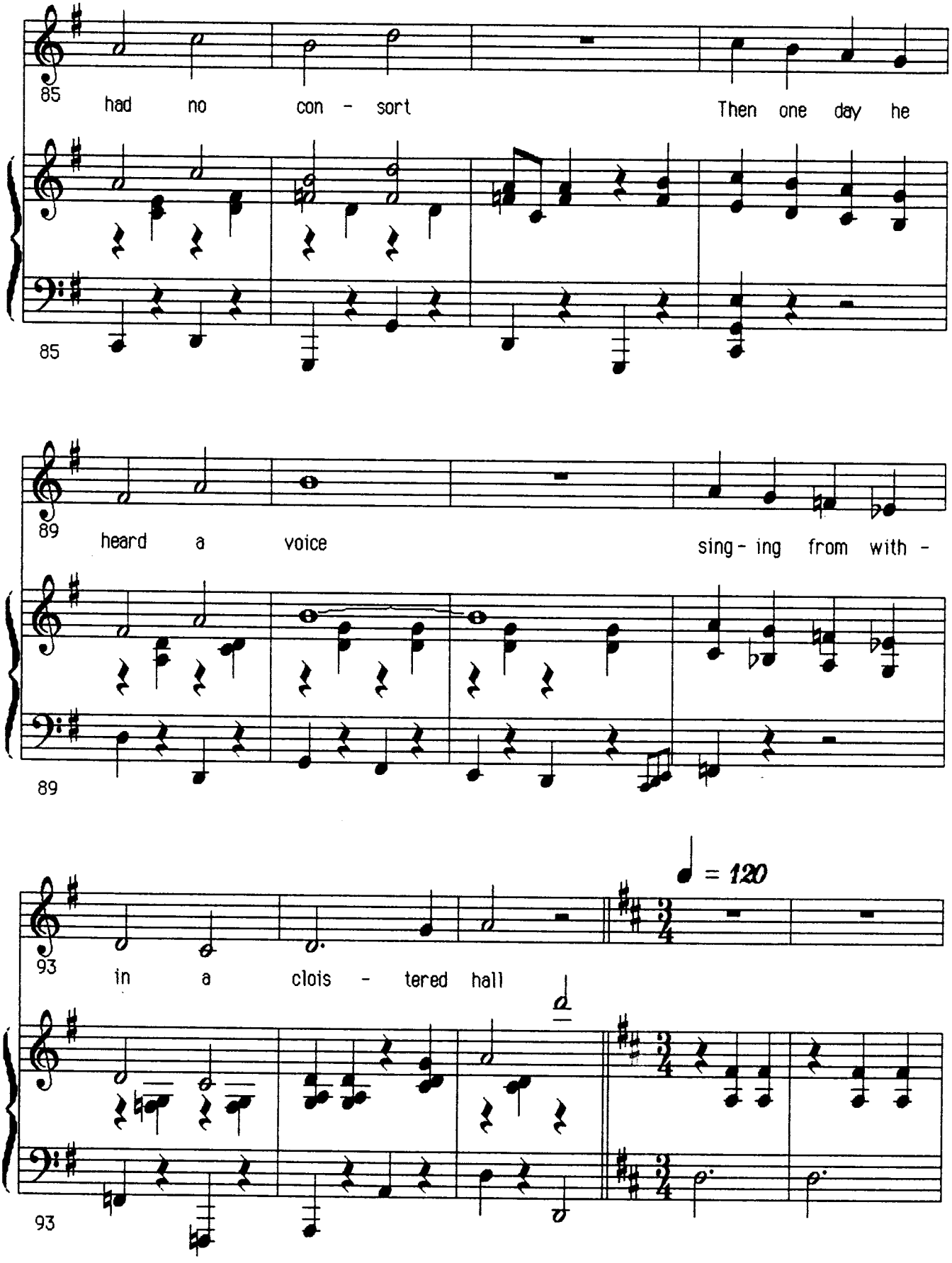

23
noth- ing that was meant to be is turn- ing out as planned And
mf cresc. . . .
23
♩ = 150
25
so our tale be - gins!
f rit.
ff
25
30
Chorus: The plague's the
30

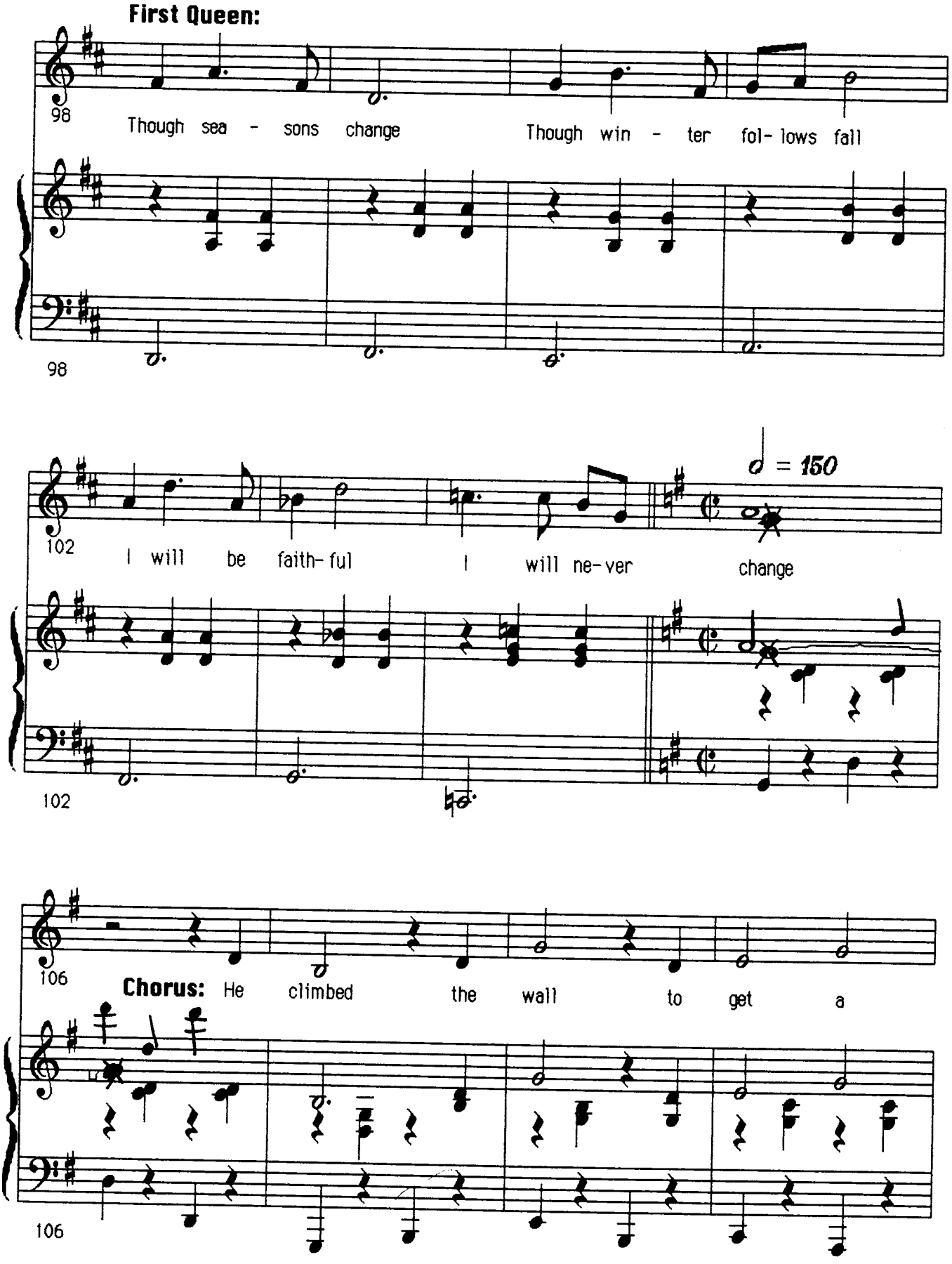

35
thing the plague's the thing that sets our
35
39
play in mo - tion The plague's the
39
43
thing that caused the king to lose his
43

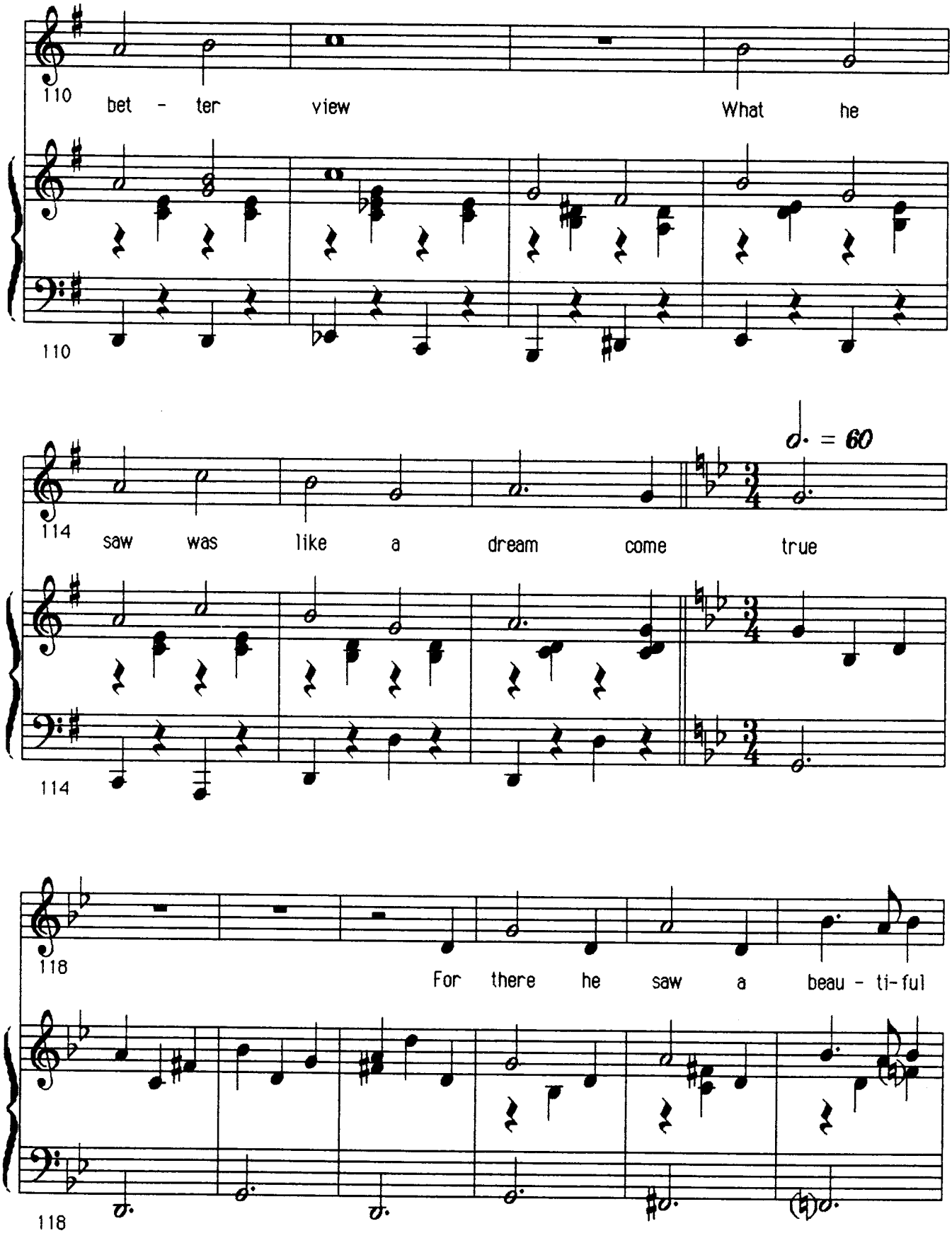

47
heart's de - vo - tion
Set - tle in and
47
51
lend your ears
to a tale from
51
55
- teen years a - go when no mis -
fif -
55

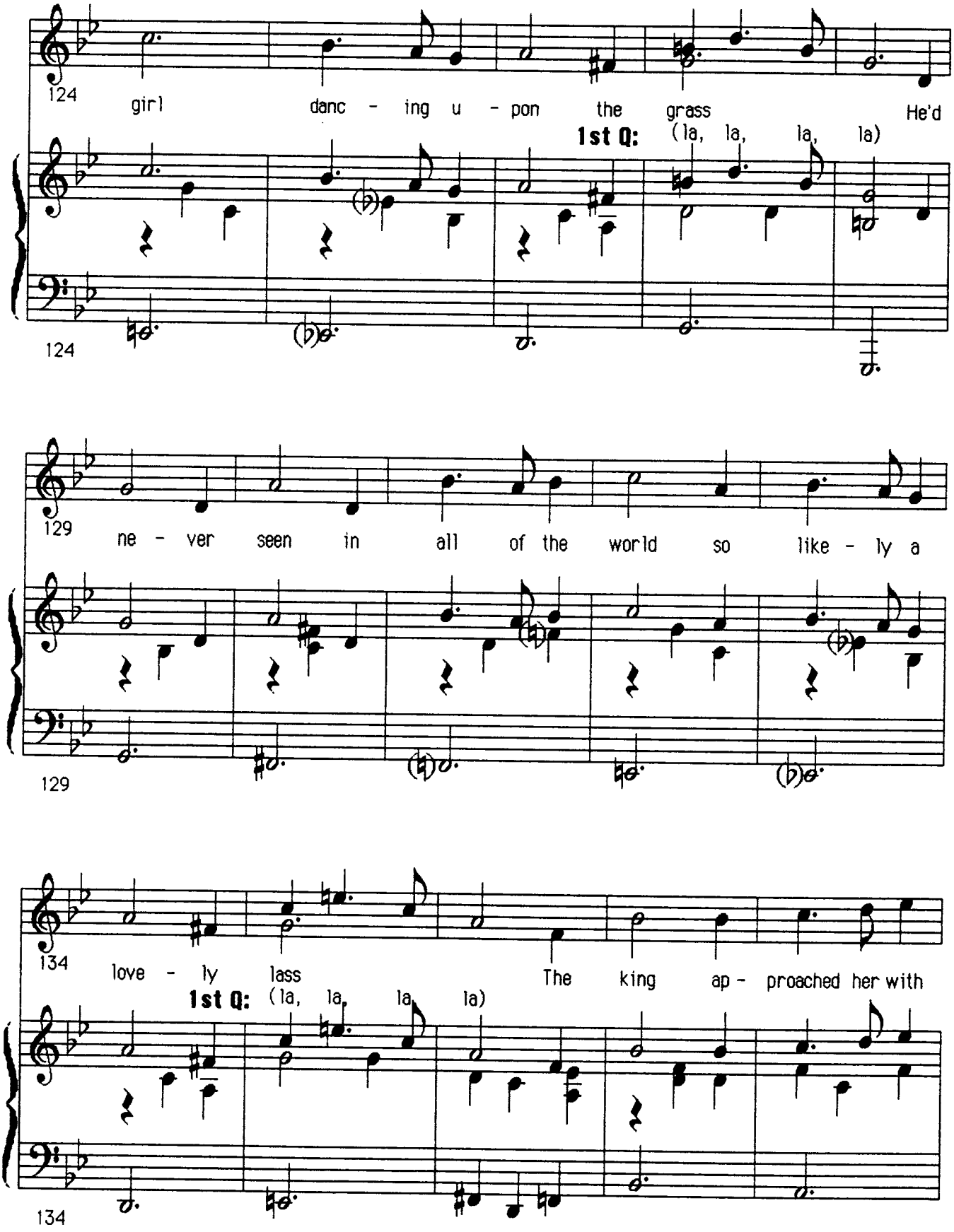

59
for-tune had vi - si - ted our realm
59
64
and a new young king was at the helm
64
69
The king was
69

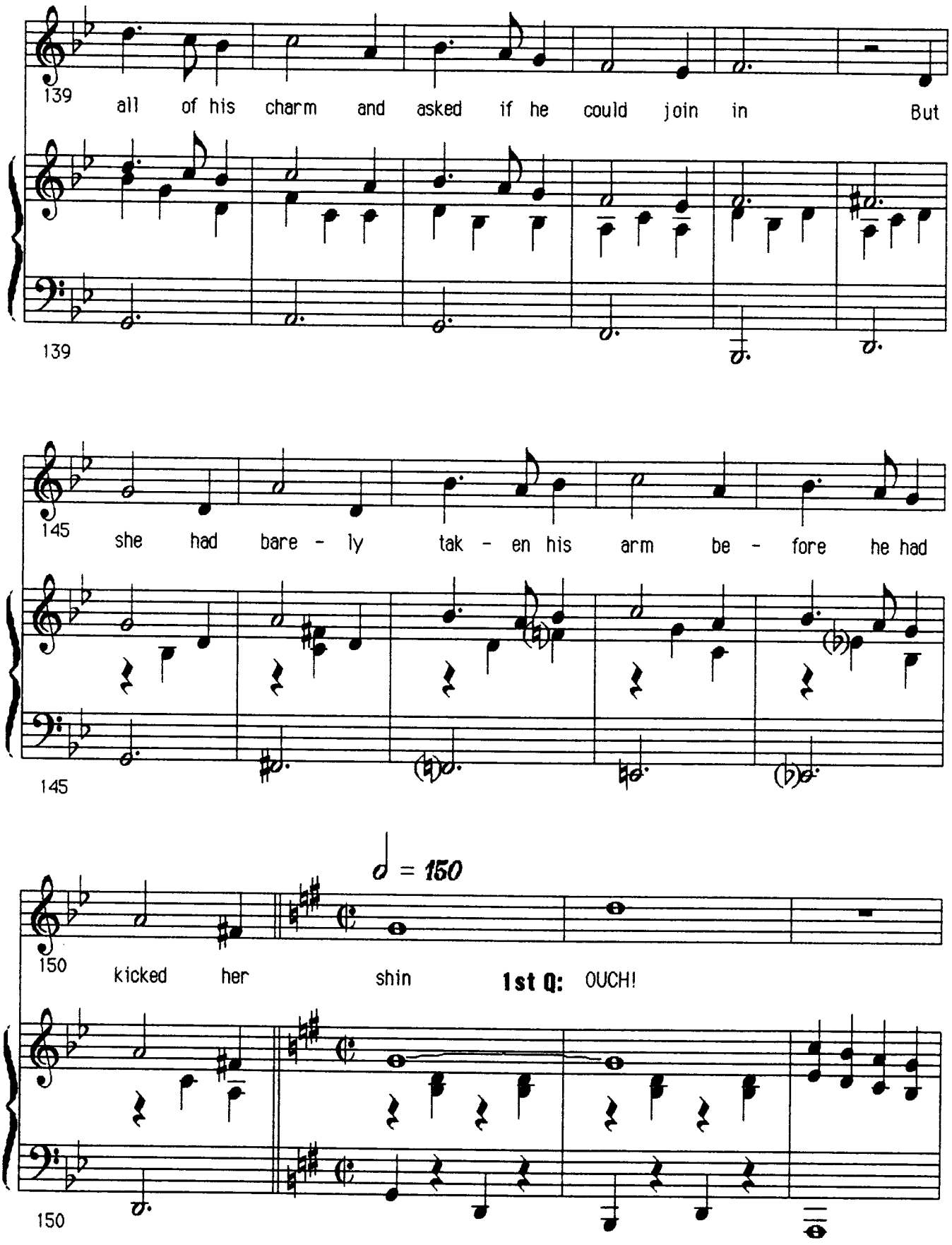

73
hand- some and strong and brave and not the
73
77
shy with - drawn sort But his de -
77
81
mean - or was al - ways grave be - cause he
81

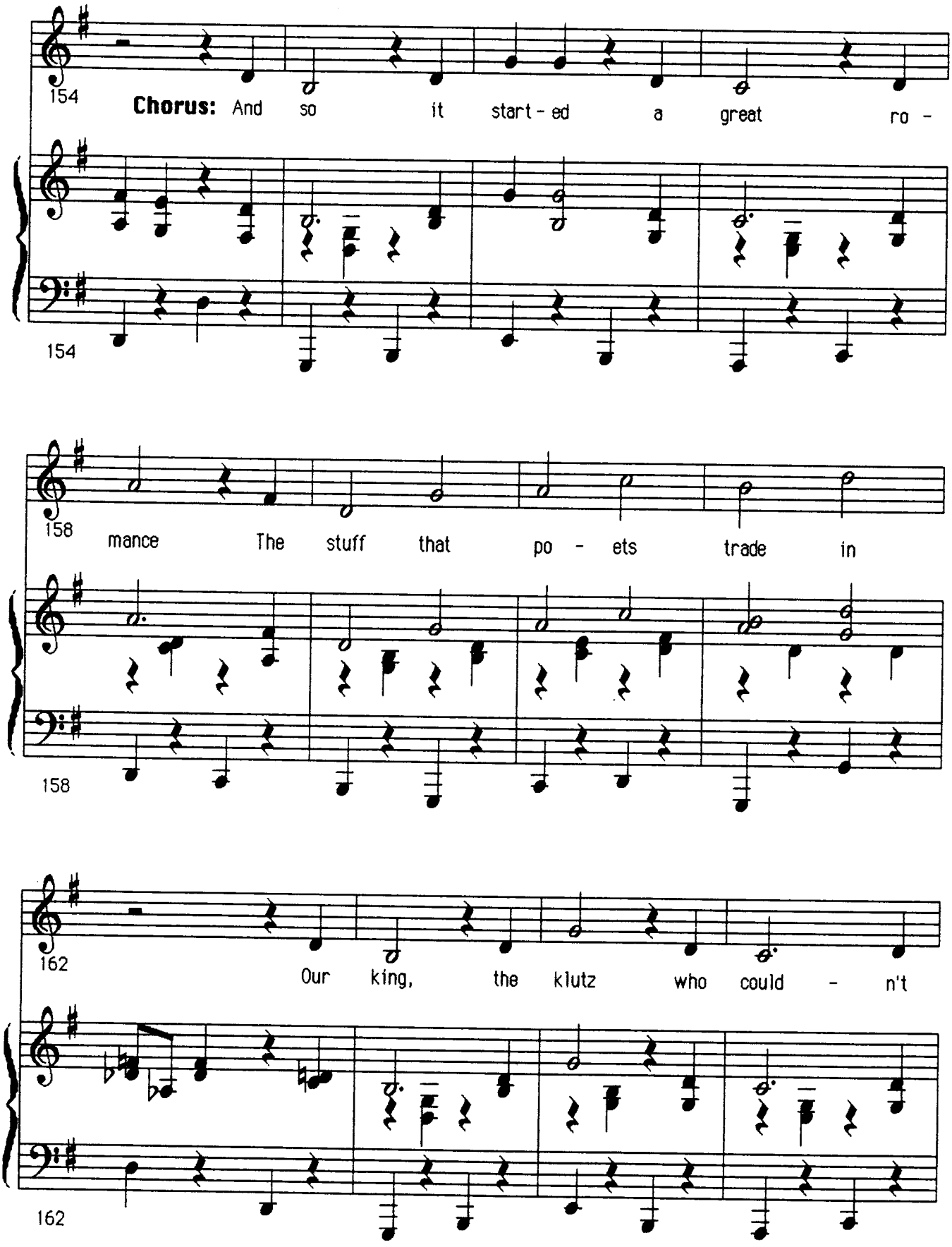

85
had no con - sort
Then one day he
85
89
heard a voice
sing - ing from with -
89
93
in a clois - tered hall
♩ = 120
93

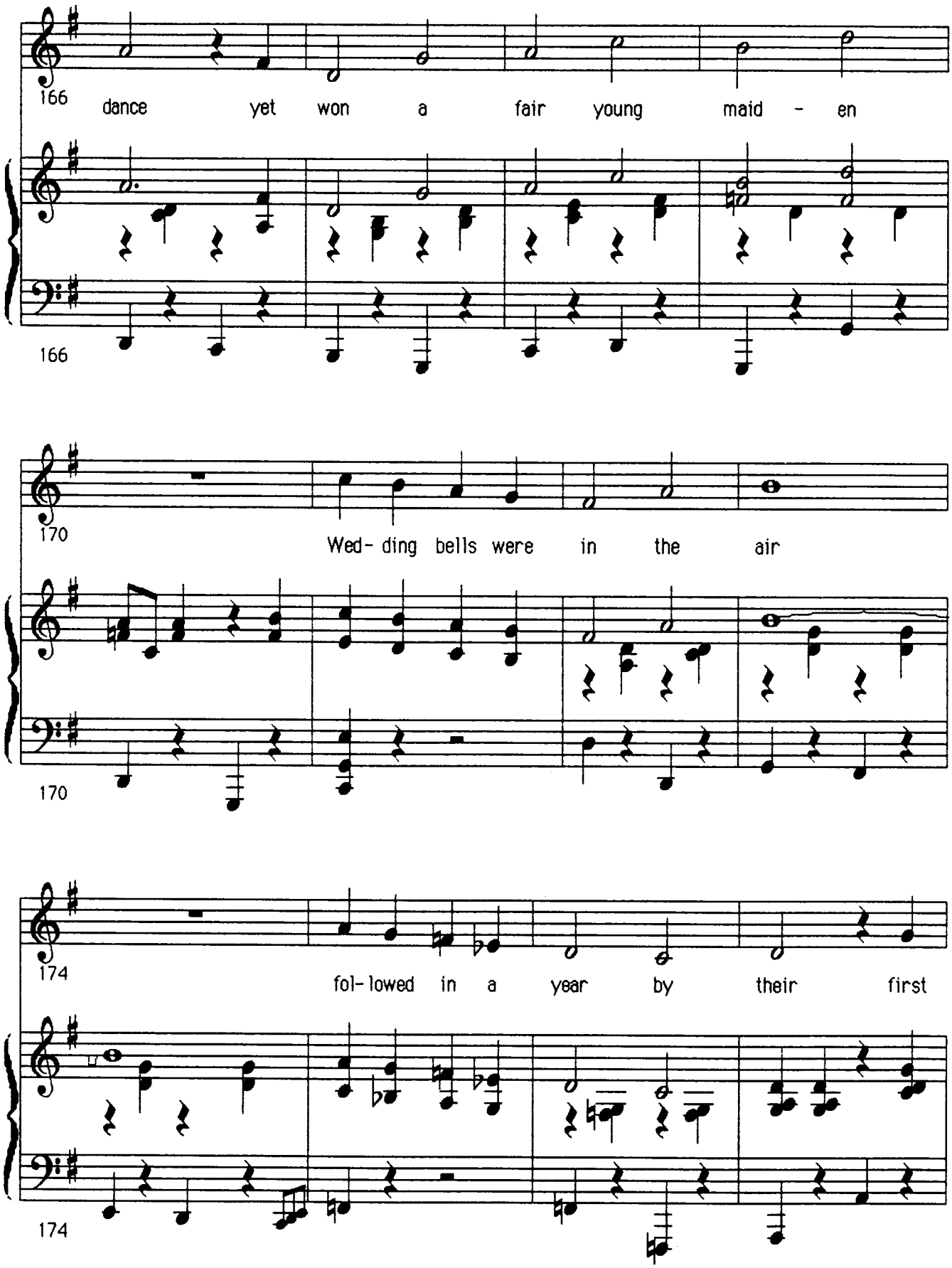

First Queen:
98
Though sea - sons change
Though win - ter fol- lows fall
98
102
I will be faith- ful
I will ne- ver change
♩ = 150
102
106
Chorus: He climbed the wall to get a
106

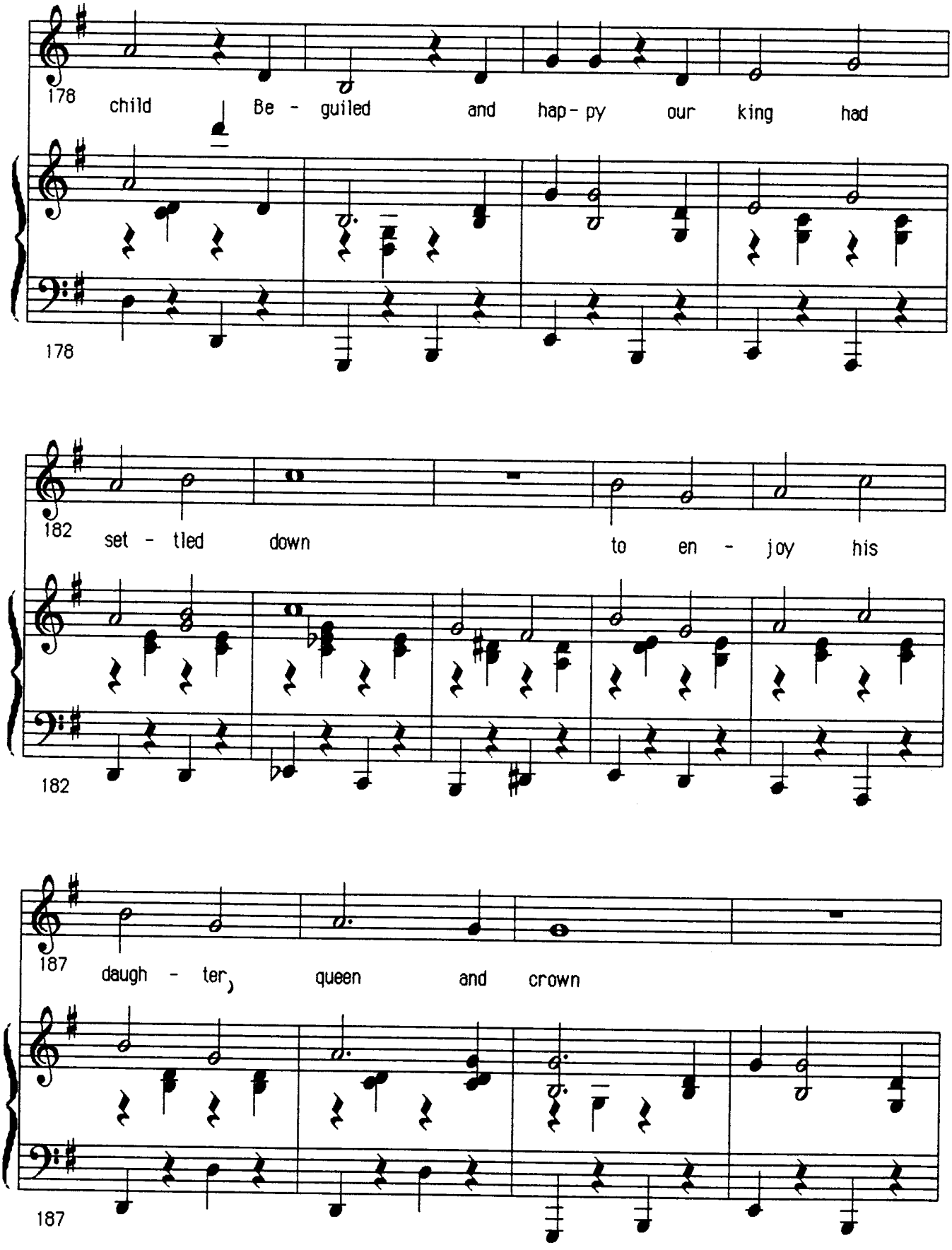

110
bet - ter view What he
110
114
saw was like a dream come true
d. = 60
114
118
For there he saw a beau - ti-ful
118

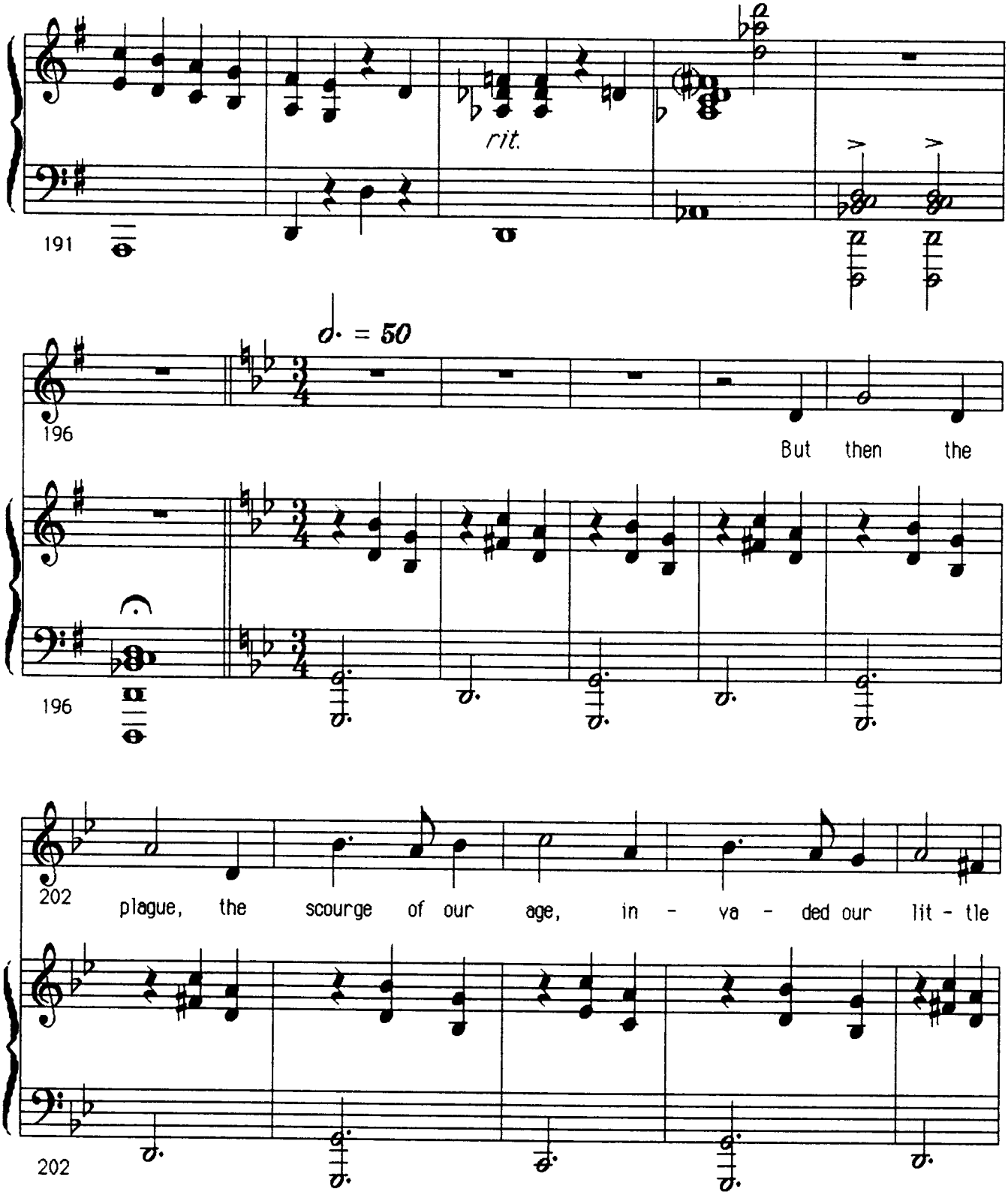

124
girl danc - ing u - pon the grass He'd
1st Q: (la, la, la, la)
124
129
ne - ver seen in all of the world so like - ly a
129
134
love - ly lass The king ap - proached her with
1st Q: (la, la, la, la)
134

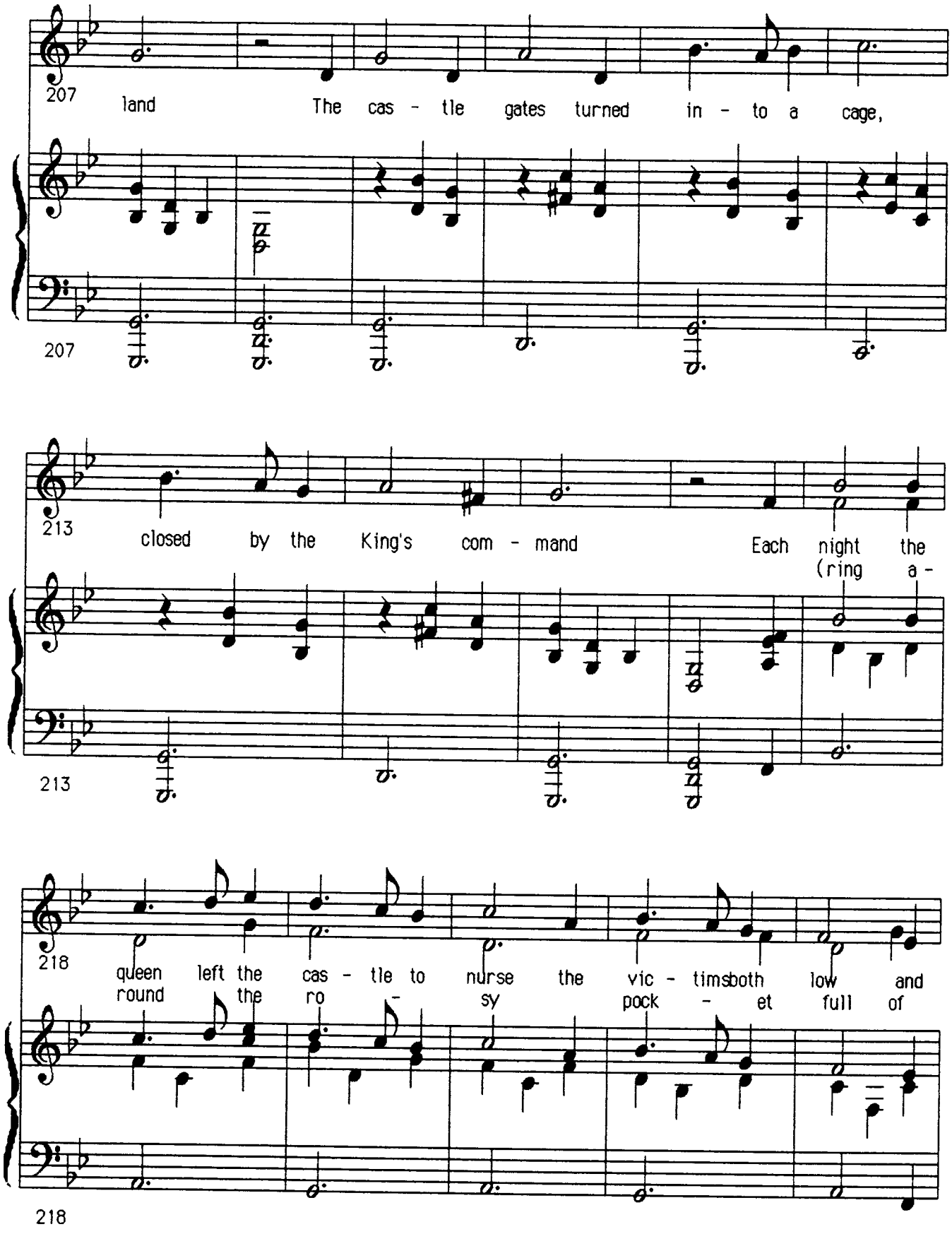

139
all of his charm and asked if he could join in But
139
145
she had bare - ly tak - en his arm be - fore he had
145
♩ = 150
150
kicked her shin
1st Q: OUCH!
150

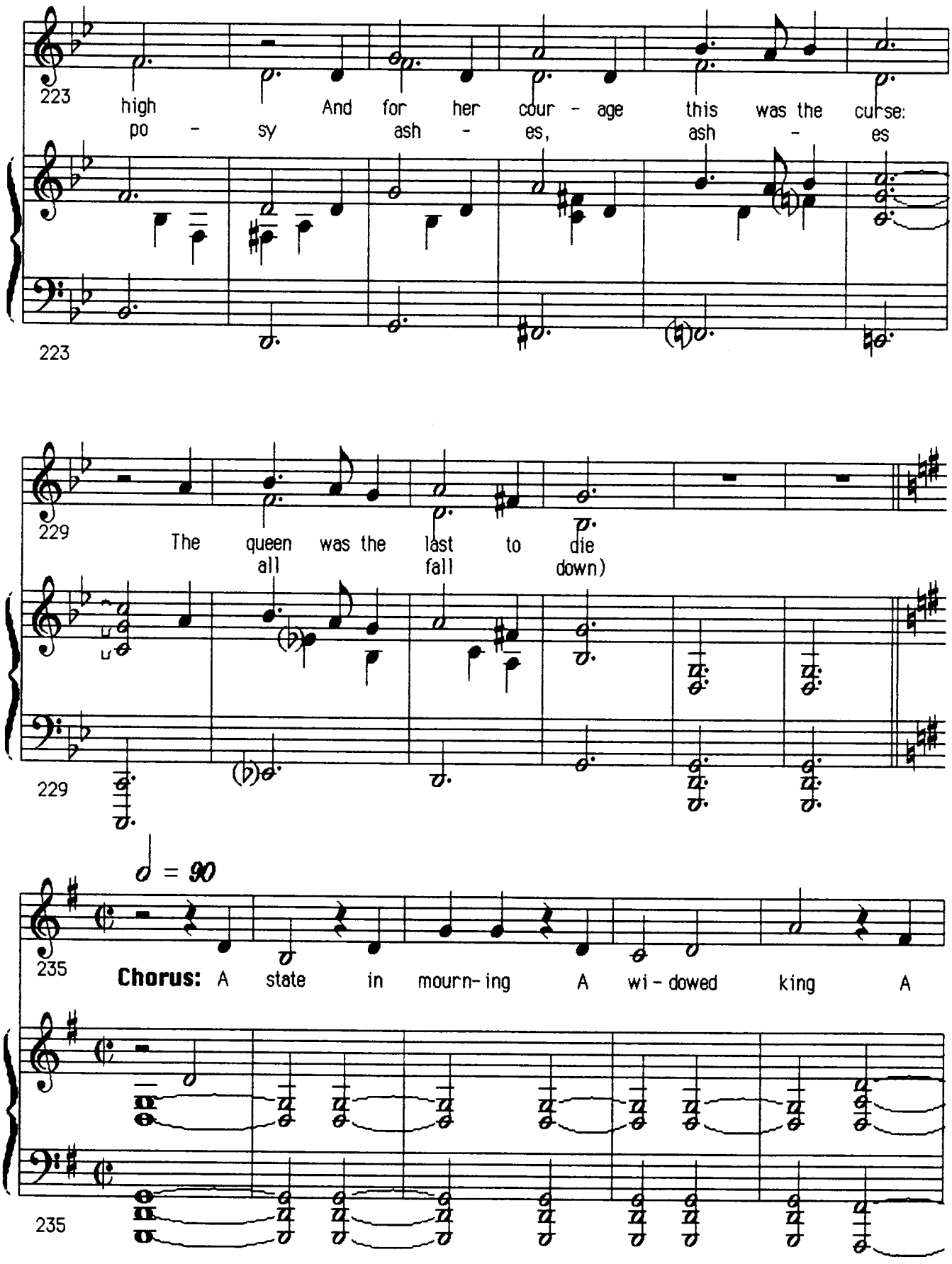

154
Chorus: And so it start - ed a great ro -
154
158
mance The stuff that po - ets trade in
158
162
Our king, the klutz who could - n't
162

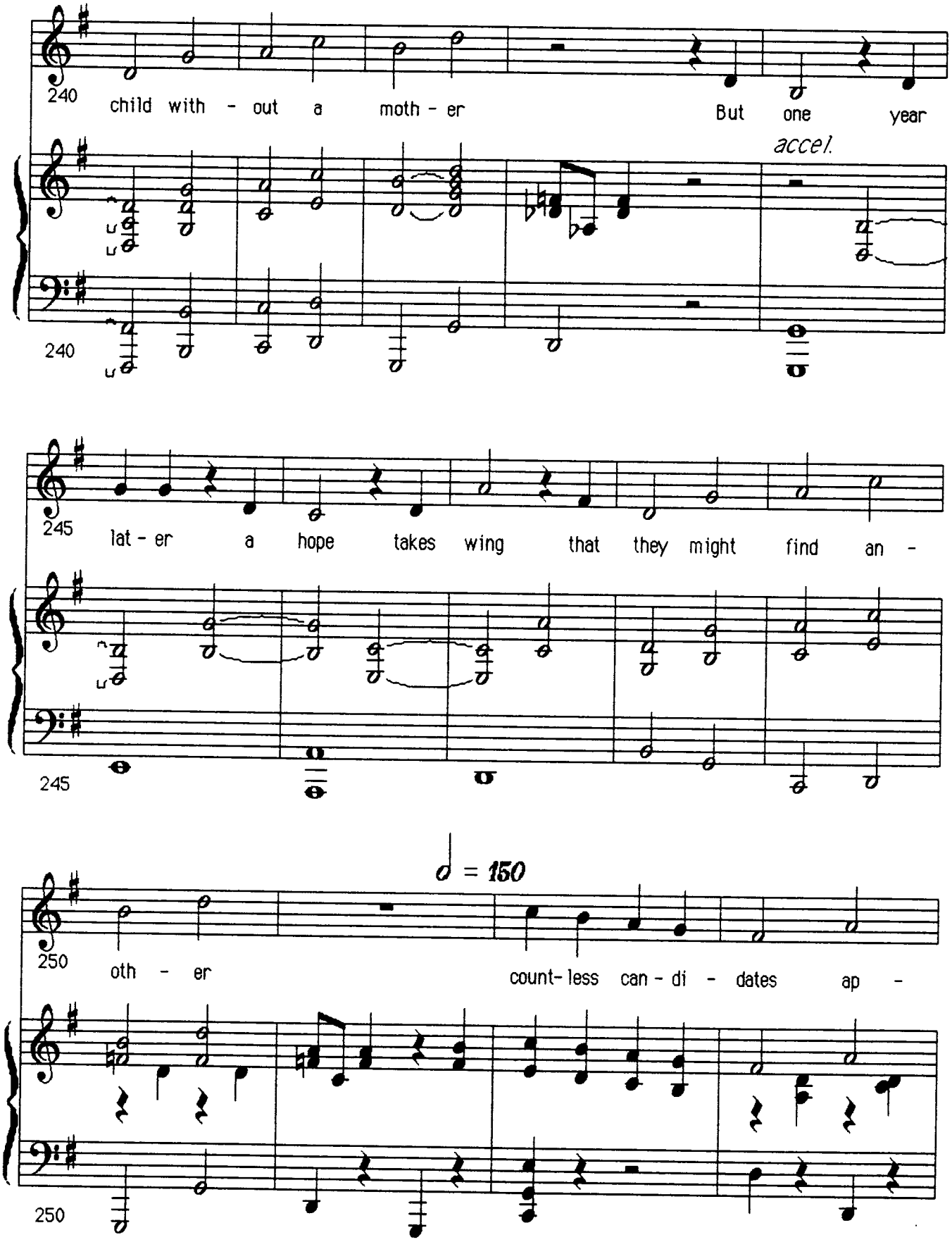

166
dance yet won a fair young maid - en
166
170
Wed- ding bells were in the air
170
174
fol- lowed in a year by their first
174

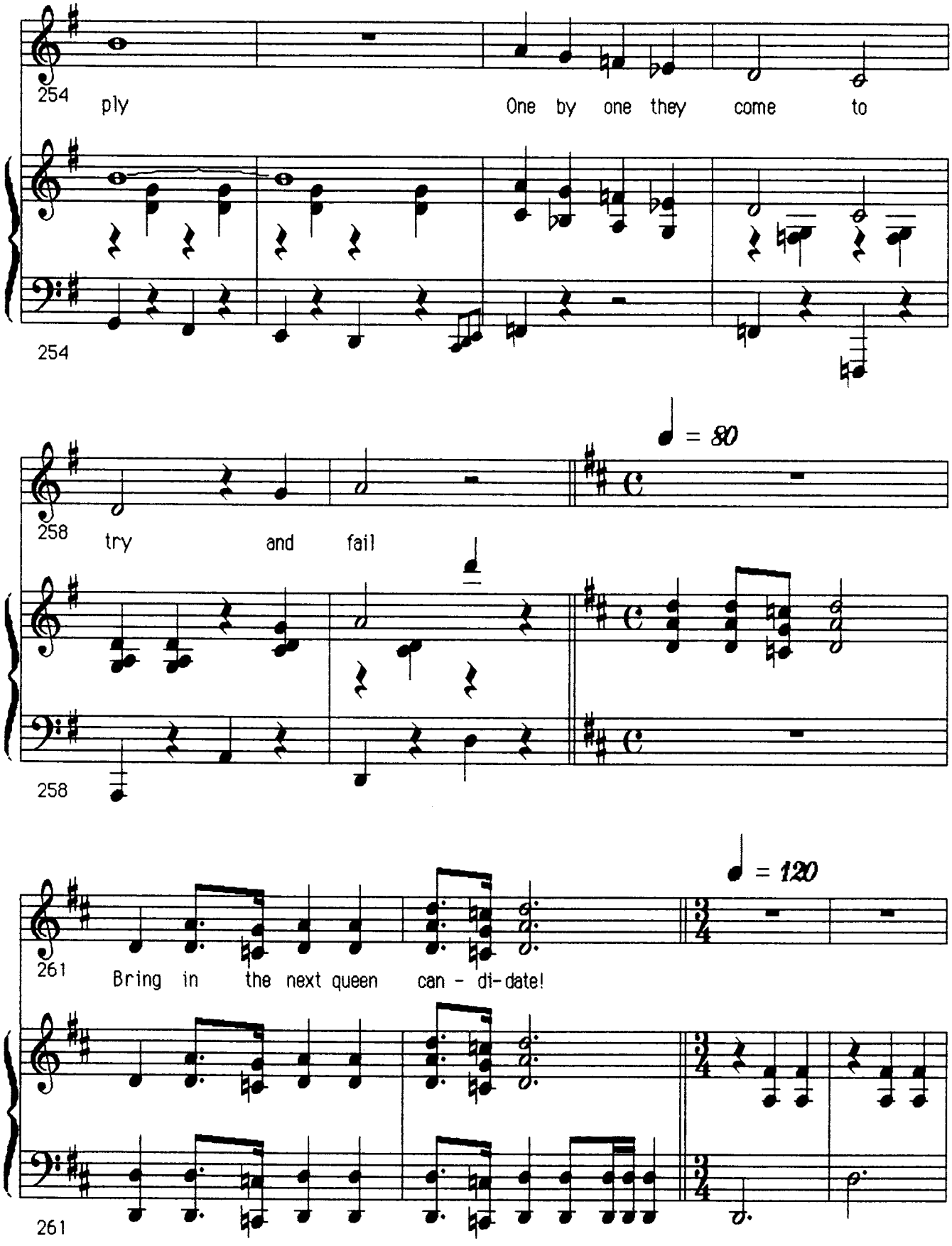

178
child Be - guiled and hap - py our king had
178
182
set - tled down to en - joy his
182
187
daugh - ter, queen and crown
187

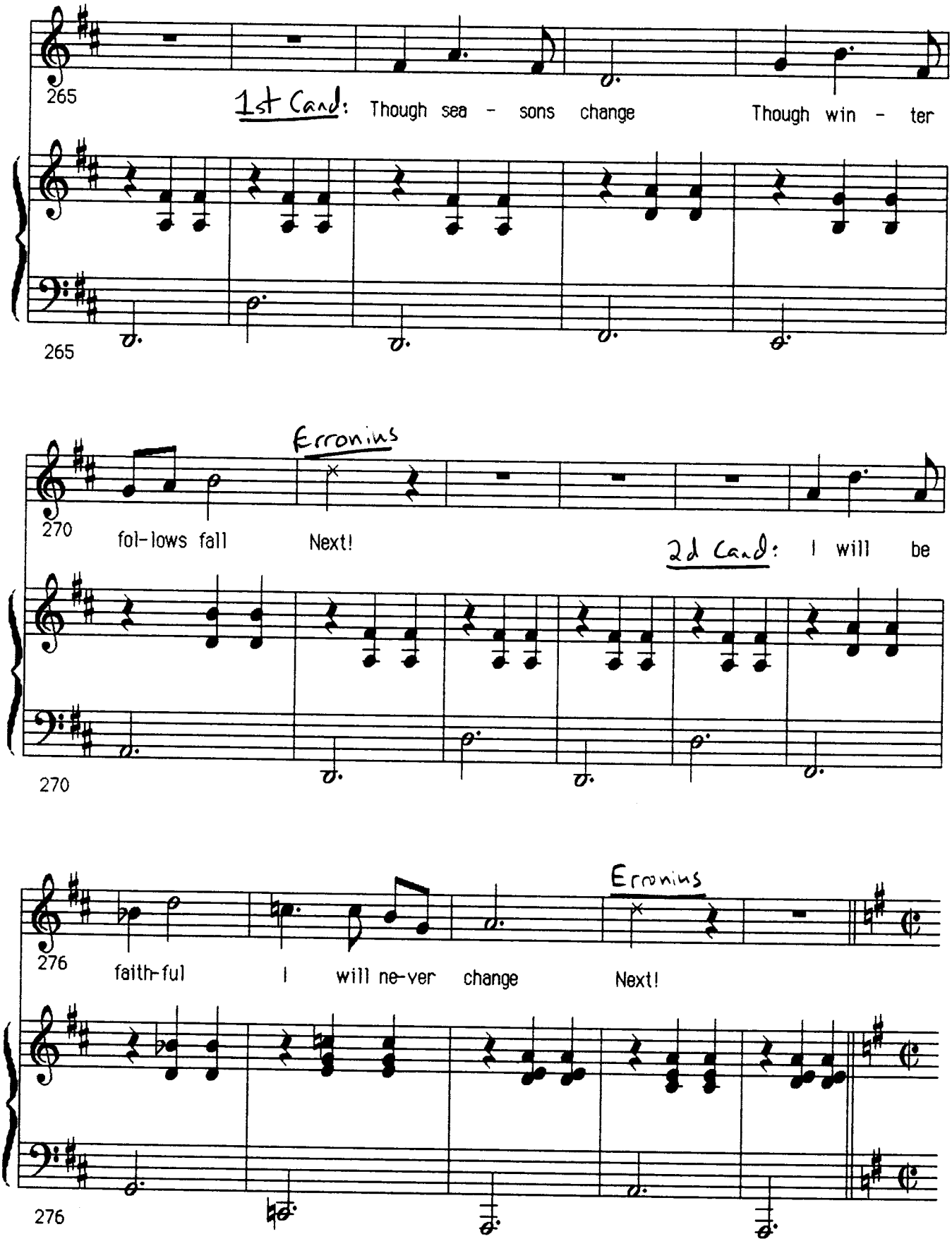

191
rit.
196
♩. = 50
But then the
196
202
plague, the scourge of our age, in - va - ded our lit - tle
202

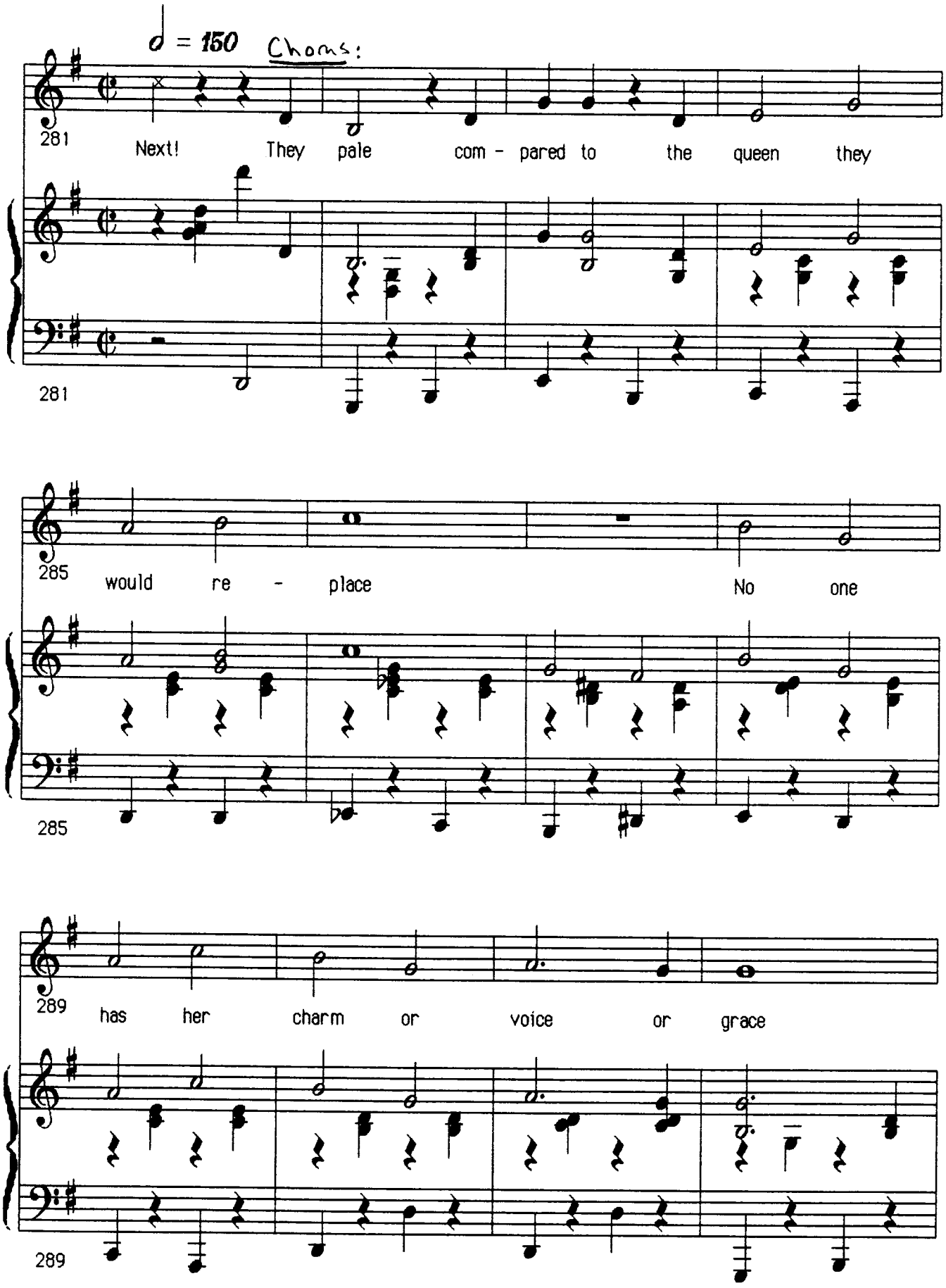

207
land The cas - tle gates turned in - to a cage,
207
213
closed by the King's com - mand Each night the
(ring a -
213
218
queen left the cas - tle to nurse the vic - timsboth low and
round the ro - sy pock - et full of
218

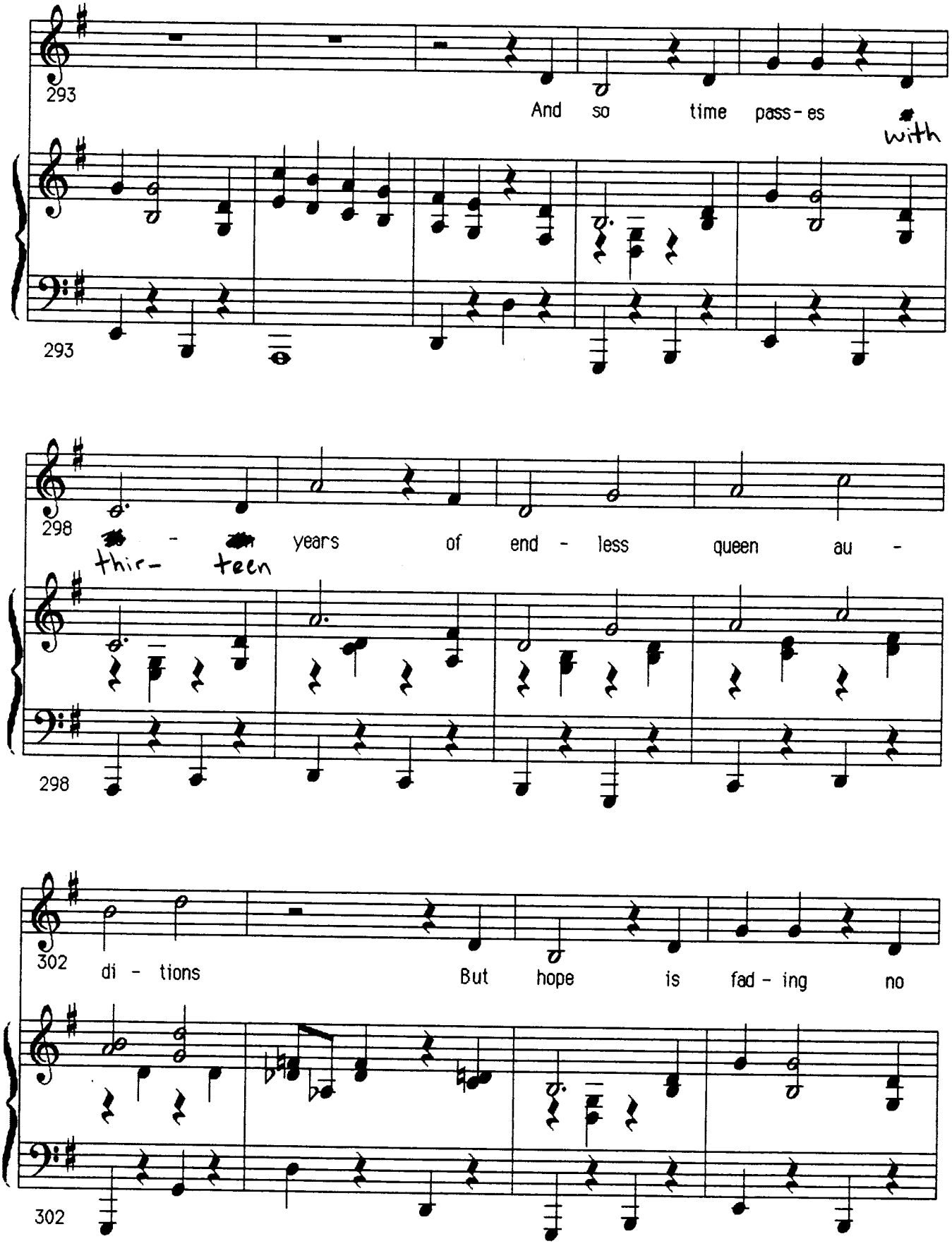

223
high po - sy And for her cour - age ash - es, this was the curse: ash - es
223
229
The queen was the last to die all fall down)
229
♩ = 90
235
Chorus: A state in mourn-ing A wi-dowed king A
235

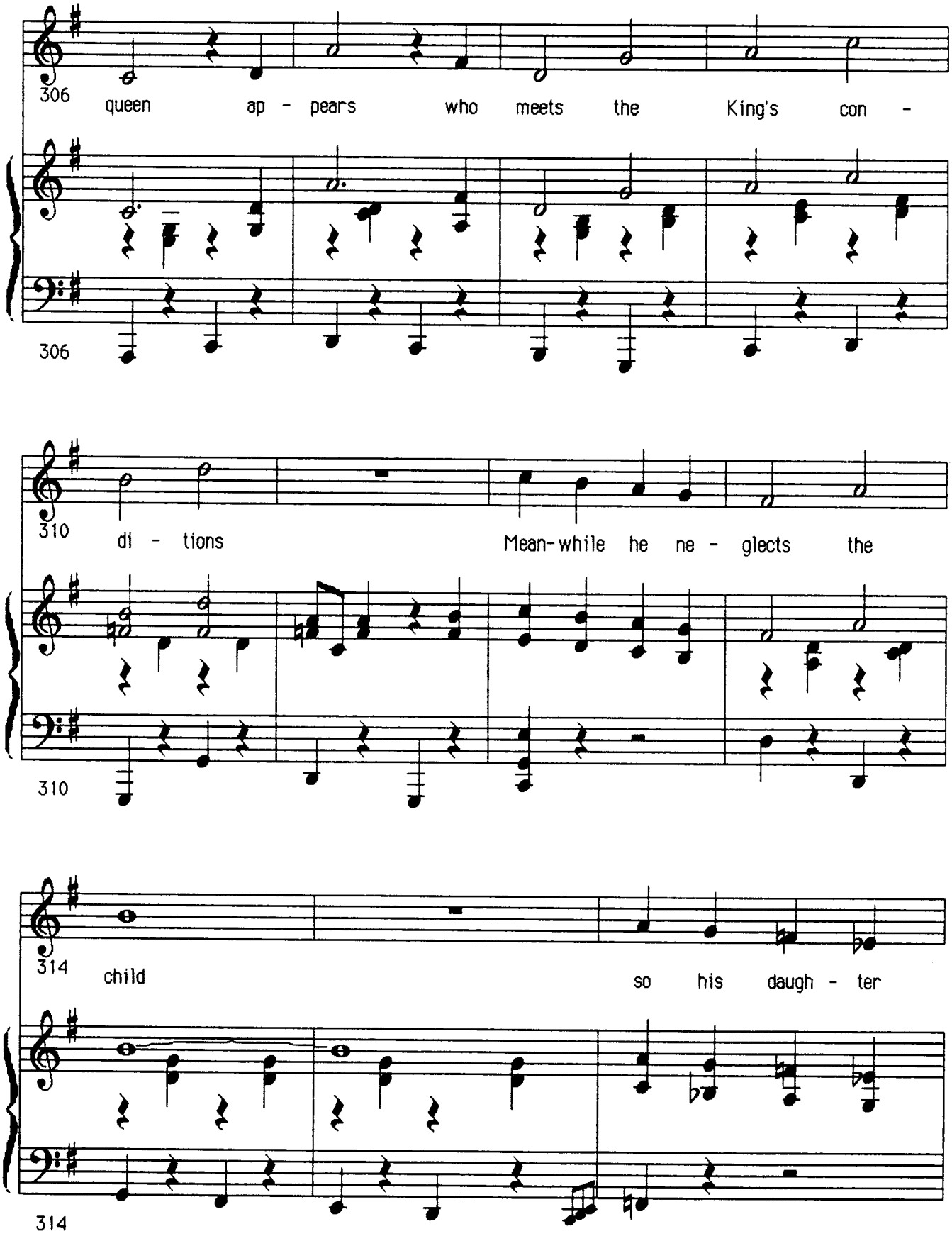

240
child with - out a moth - er
But one year
accel.
240
245
lat - er a hope takes wing that they might find an -
245
♩ = 150
250
oth - er
count- less can - di - dates ap -
250

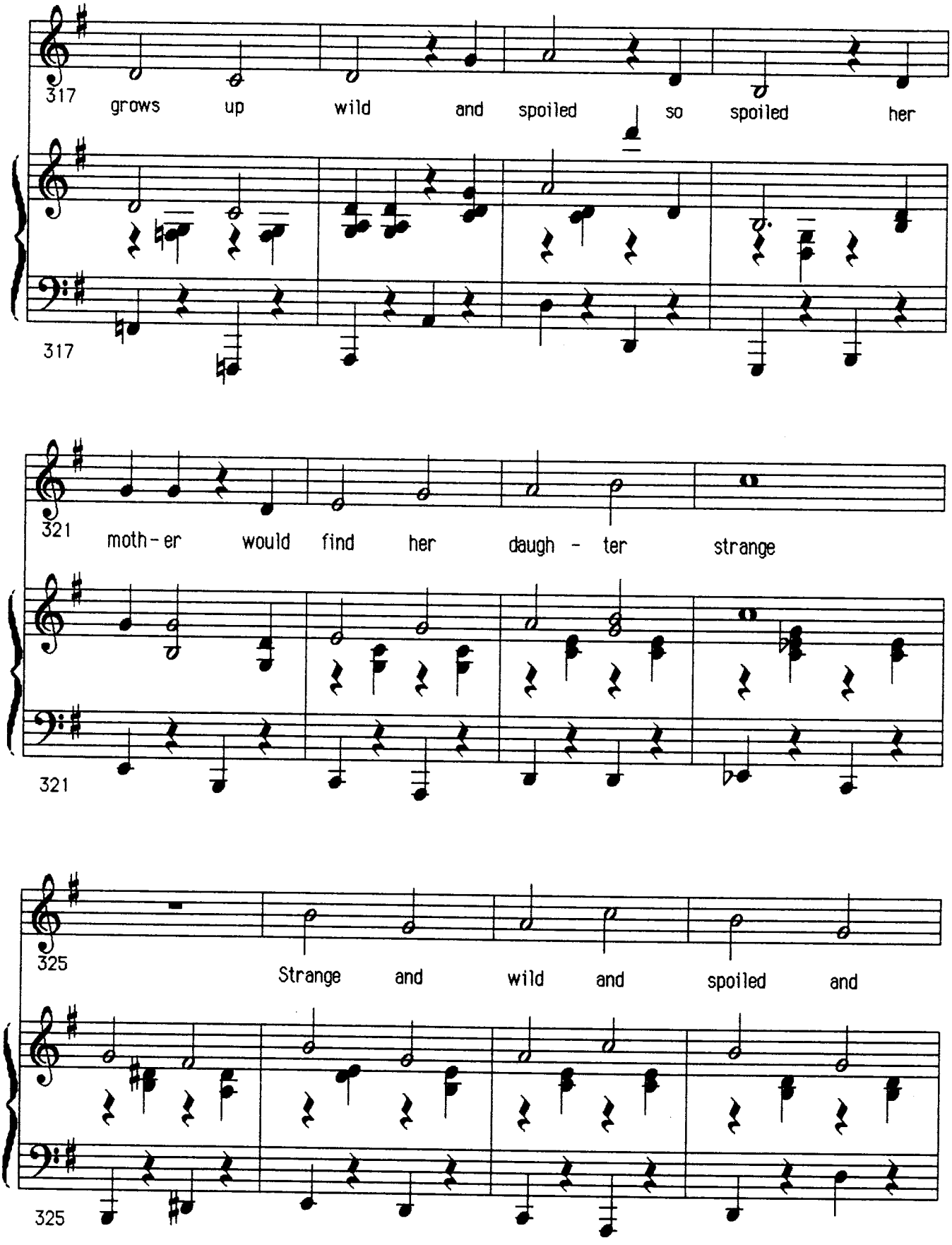

254
ply
One by one they come to
254
258
try and fail
♩ = 80
258
261
Bring in the next queen can - di-date!
♩ = 120
261

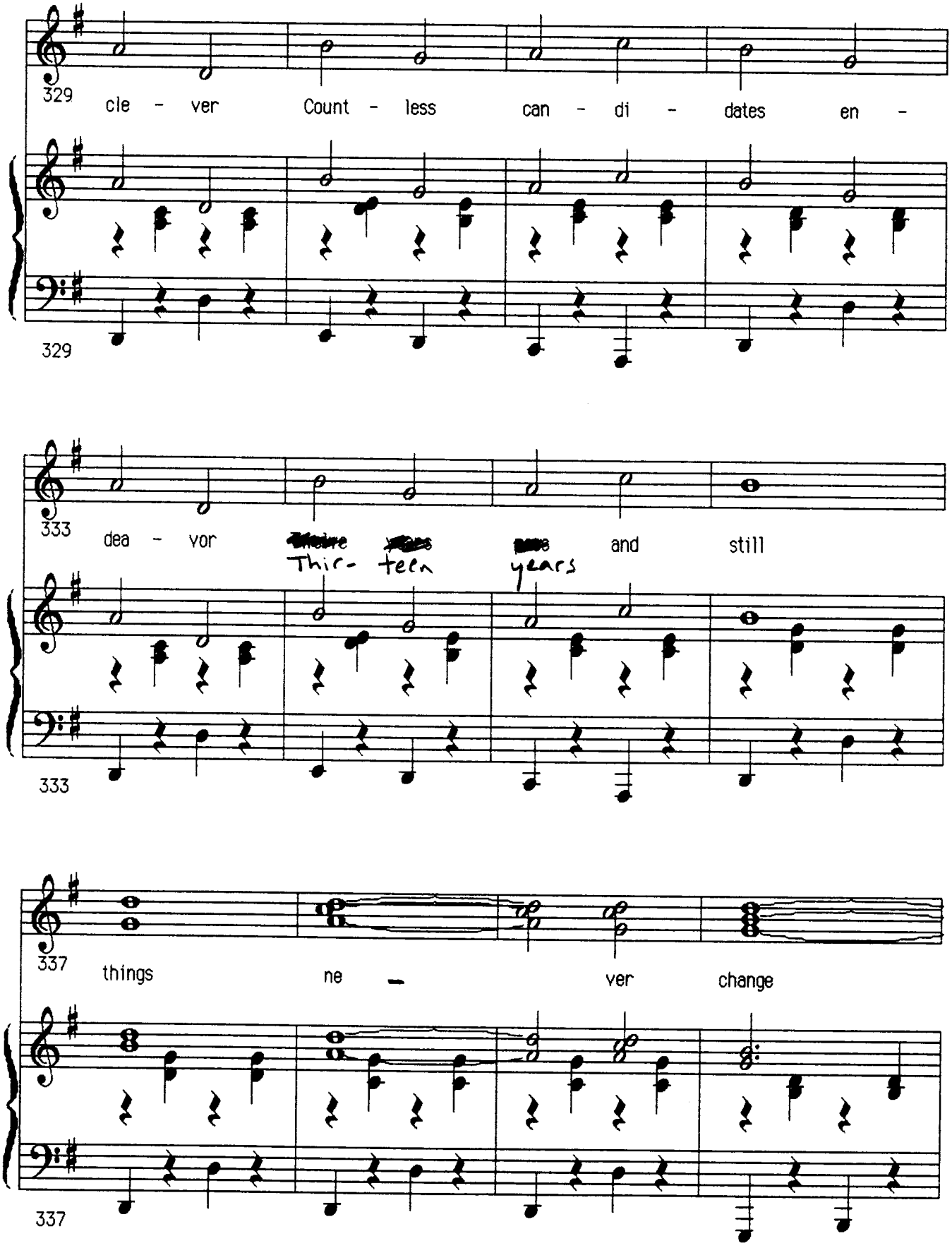

265
1st Cand: Though sea - sons change Though win - ter
265
270
Erronius
fol-lows fall Next!
2d Cand: I will be
270
276
Erronius
faith-ful I will ne-ver change Next!
276

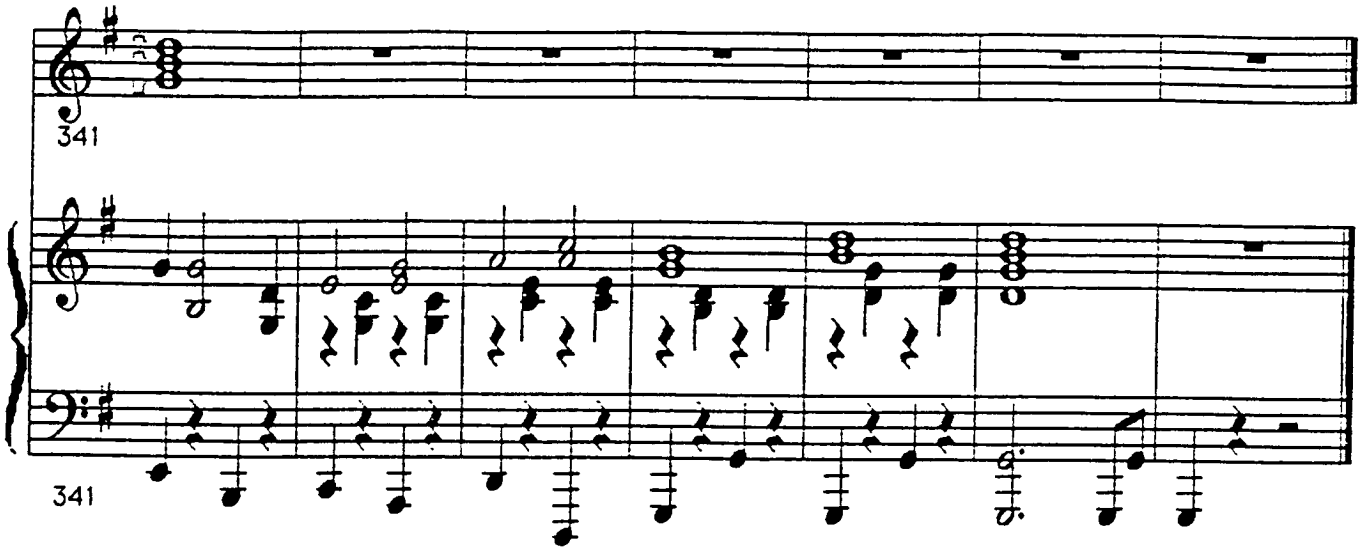

♩ = 150
Chorus:
281
Next! They pale com - pared to the queen they
281
285
would re - place No one
285
289
has her charm or voice or grace
289


293
And so time pass - es
with
293
298
- years of end - less queen au -
thir- teen
298
302
di - tions But hope is fad - ing no
302

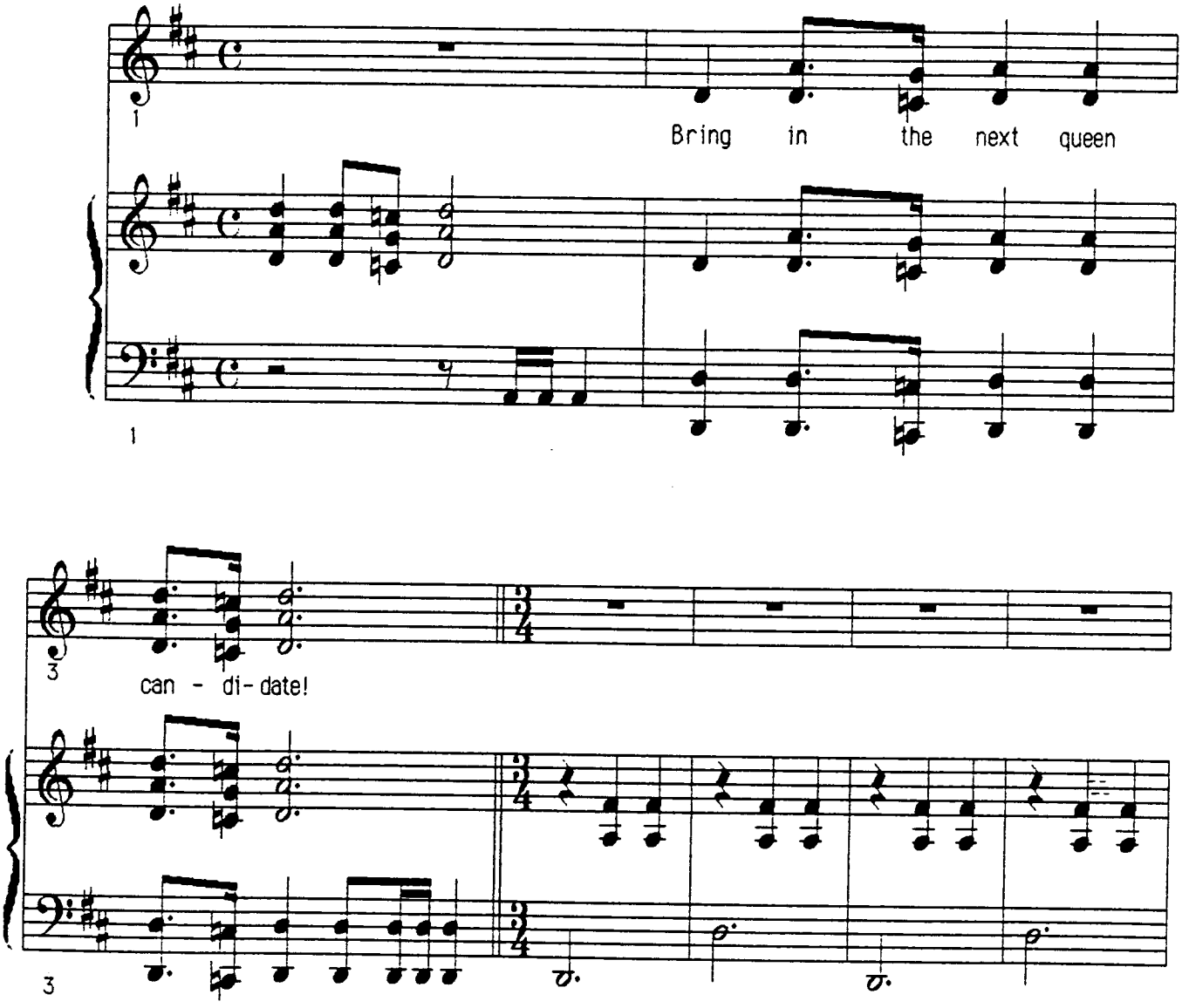

306
queen ap - pears who meets the King's con -
306
310
di - tions Mean-while he ne - glects the
310
314
child so his daugh - ter
314

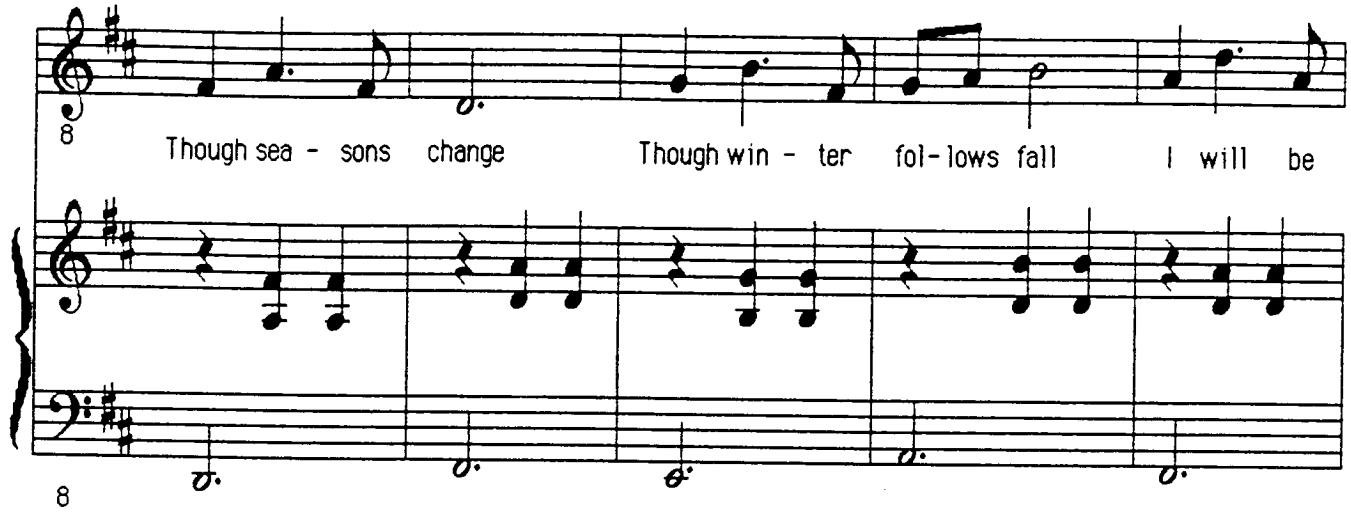

317
grows up wild and spoiled so spoiled her
317
321
moth-er would find her daugh - ter strange
321
325
Strange and wild and spoiled and
325

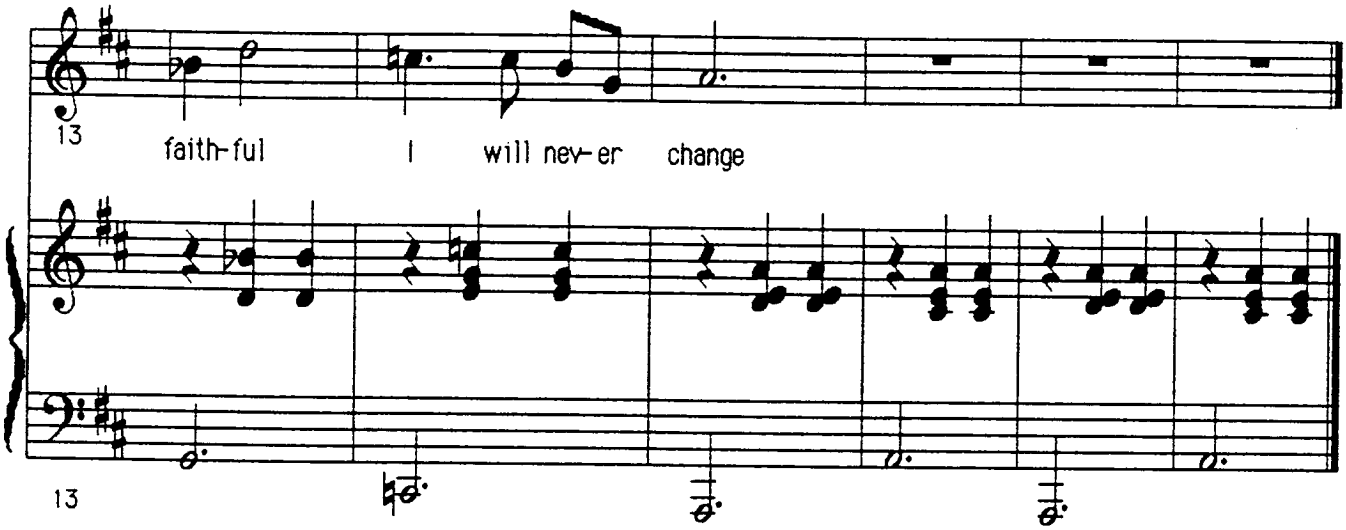

329
cle - ver Count - less can - di - dates en -
329
333
dea - vor Thir- teen years and still
333
337
things ne - ver change
337


341
341

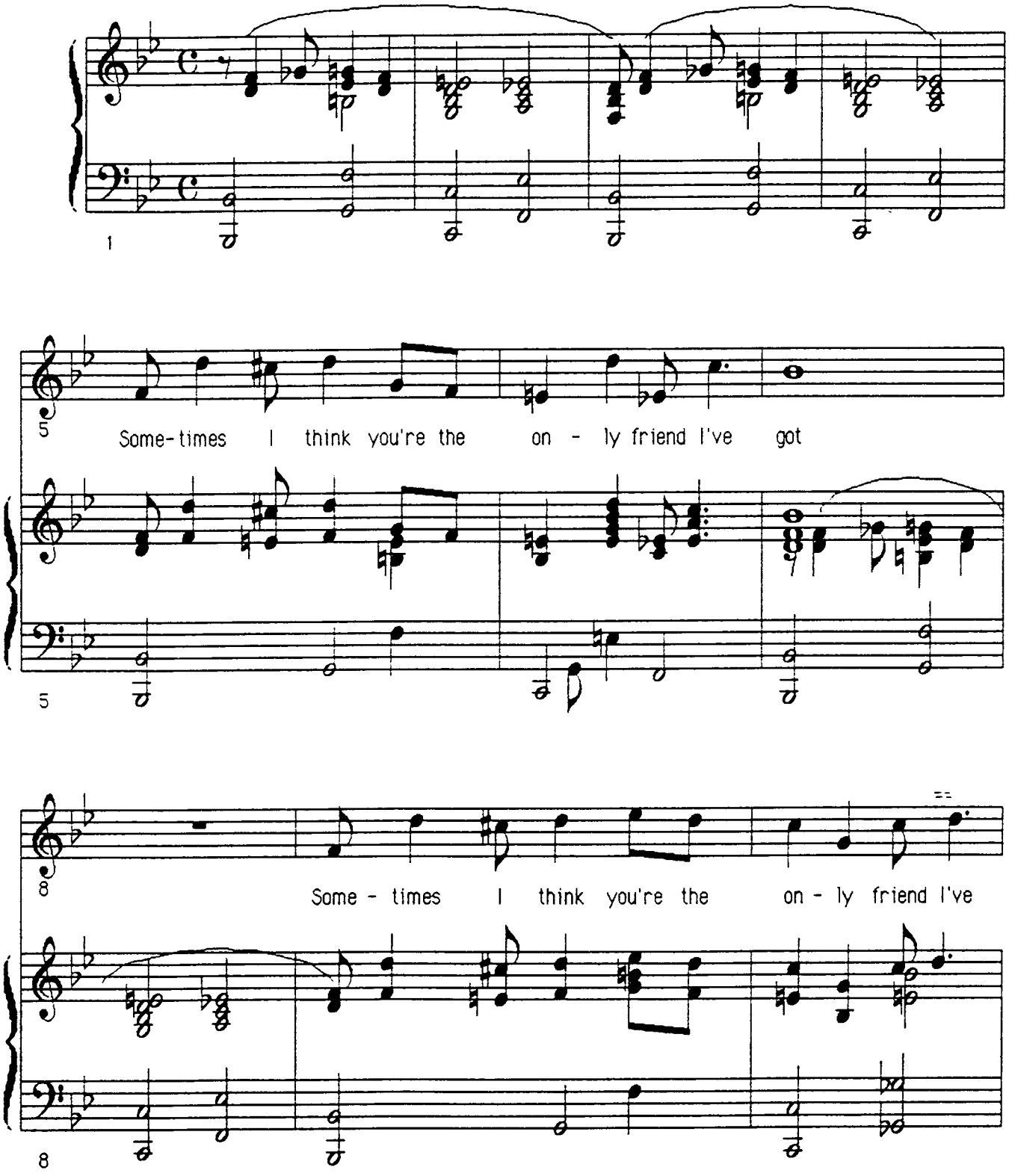
Audition Music

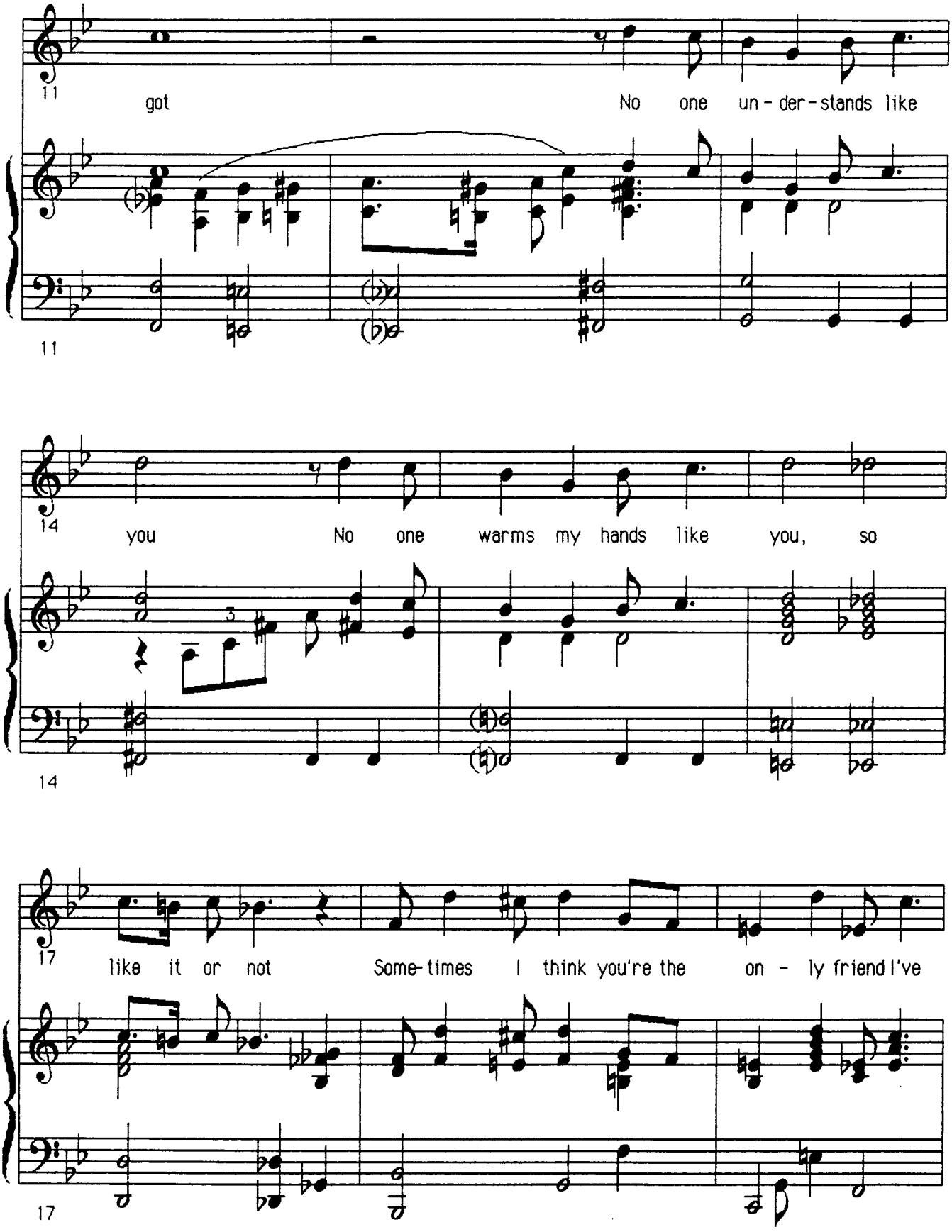


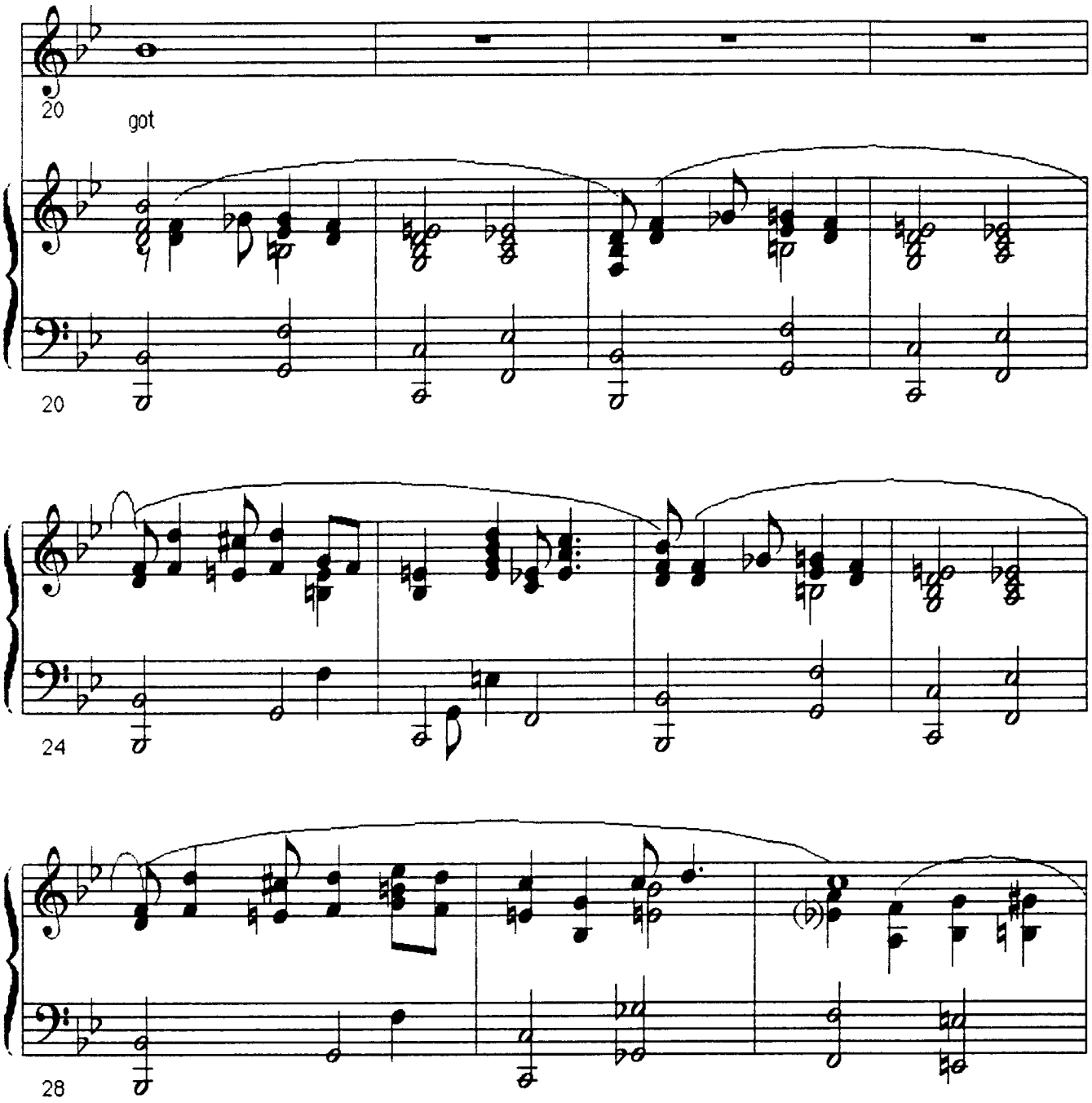

8
Though sea - sons change
Though win - ter fol-lows fall
I will be
8

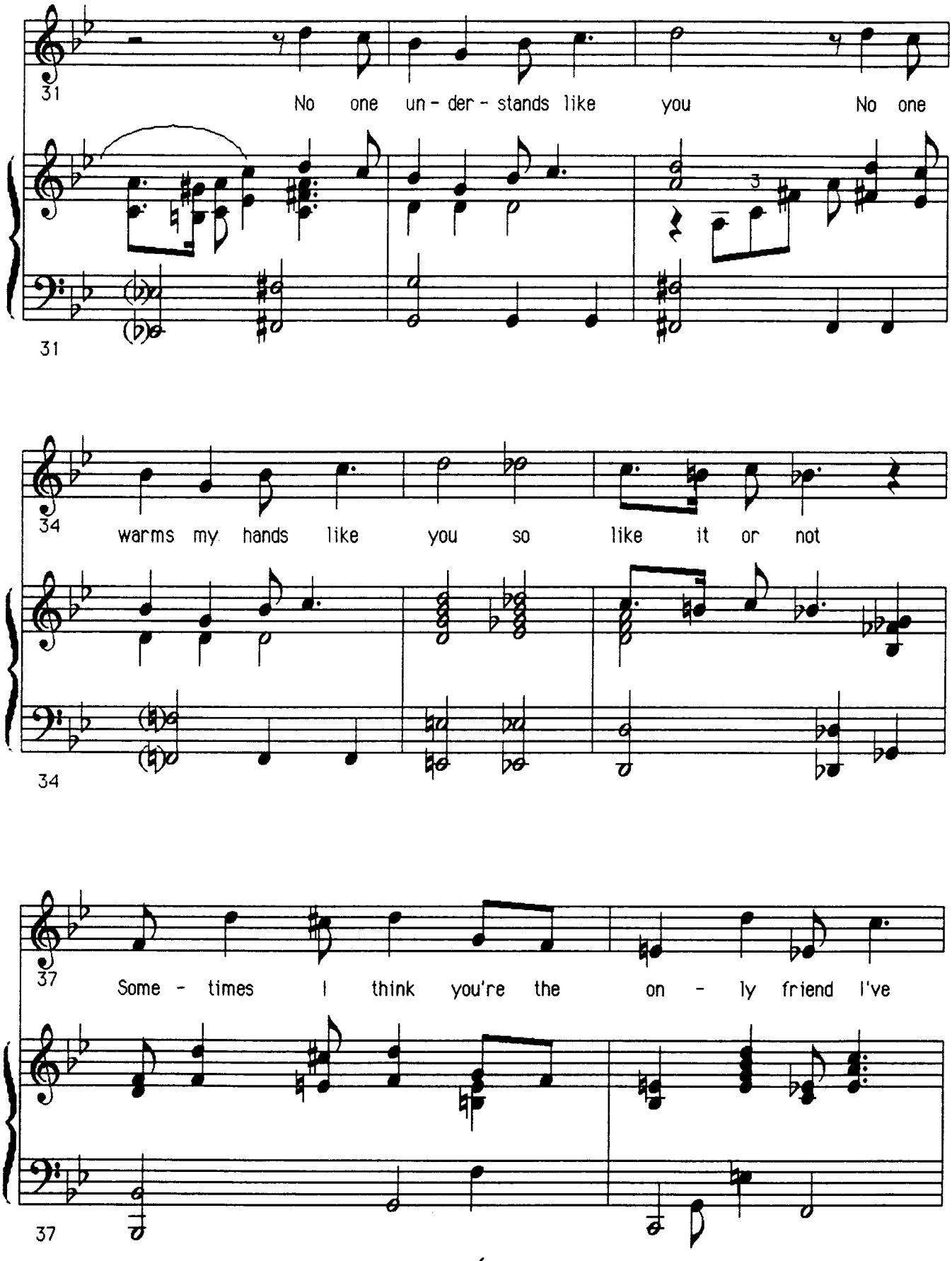

13
faith-ful
I will nev-er change
13

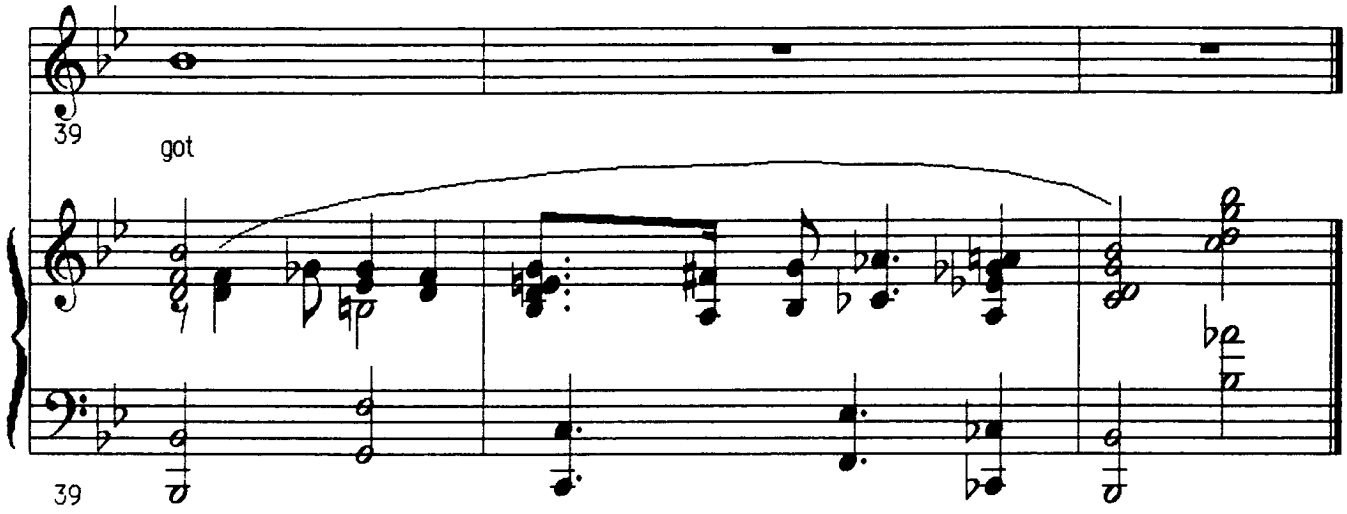
Sometimes I Think
You're the Only Friend I've Got



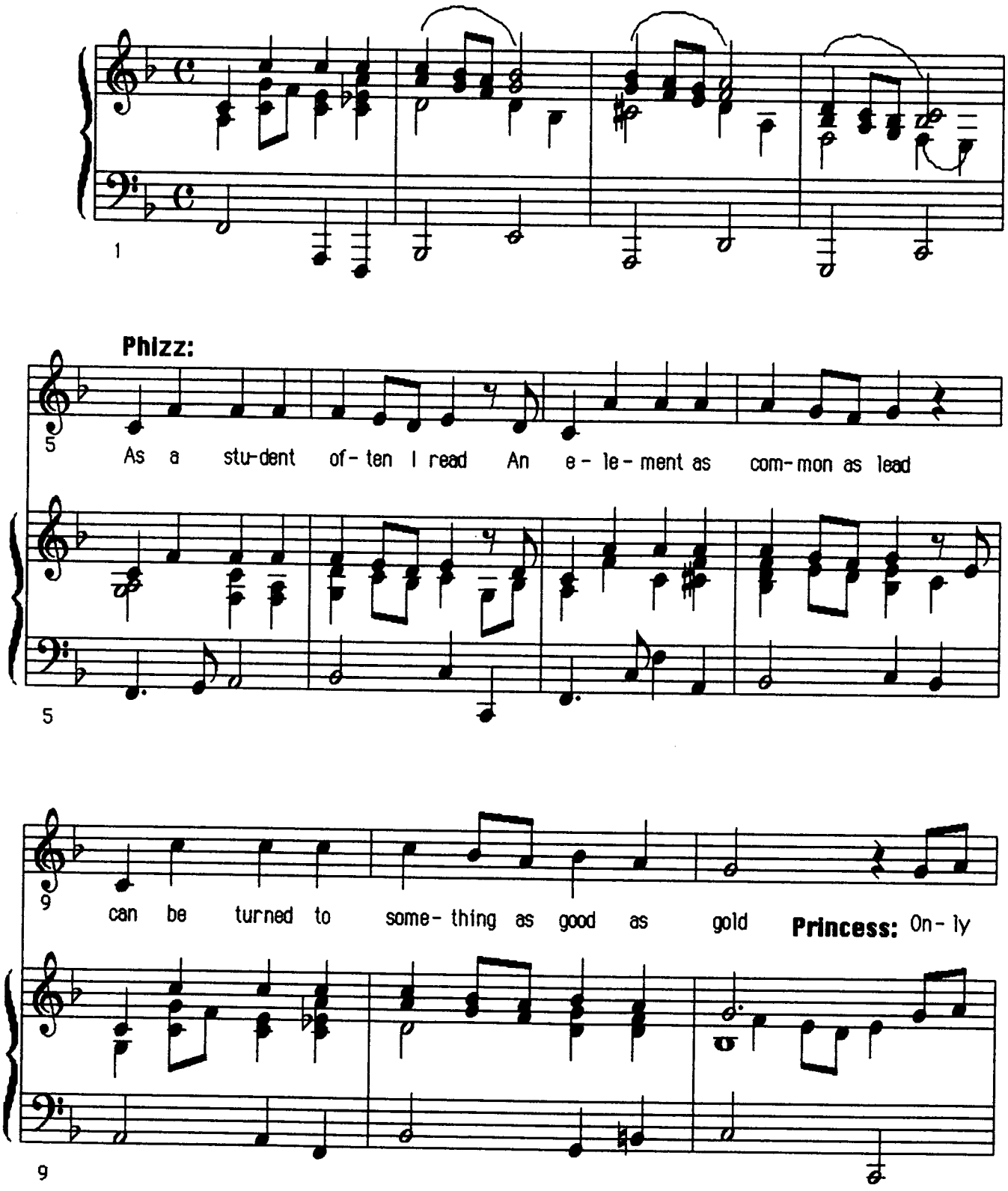

11
got
No one un - der - stands like
11
14
you
No one warms my hands like you, so
14
17
like it or not
Some - times I think you're the on - ly friend I've
17

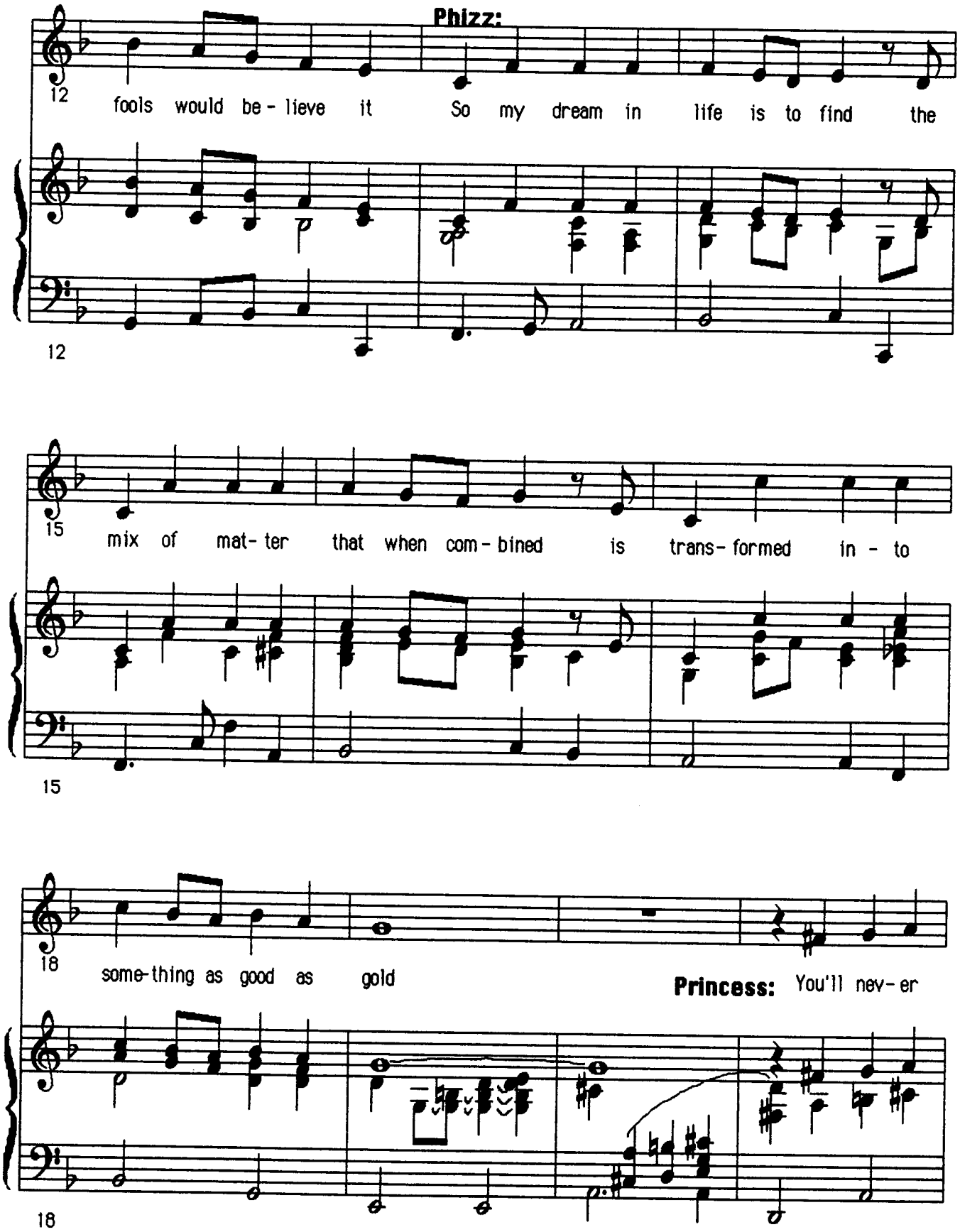

20
got
20
24
28

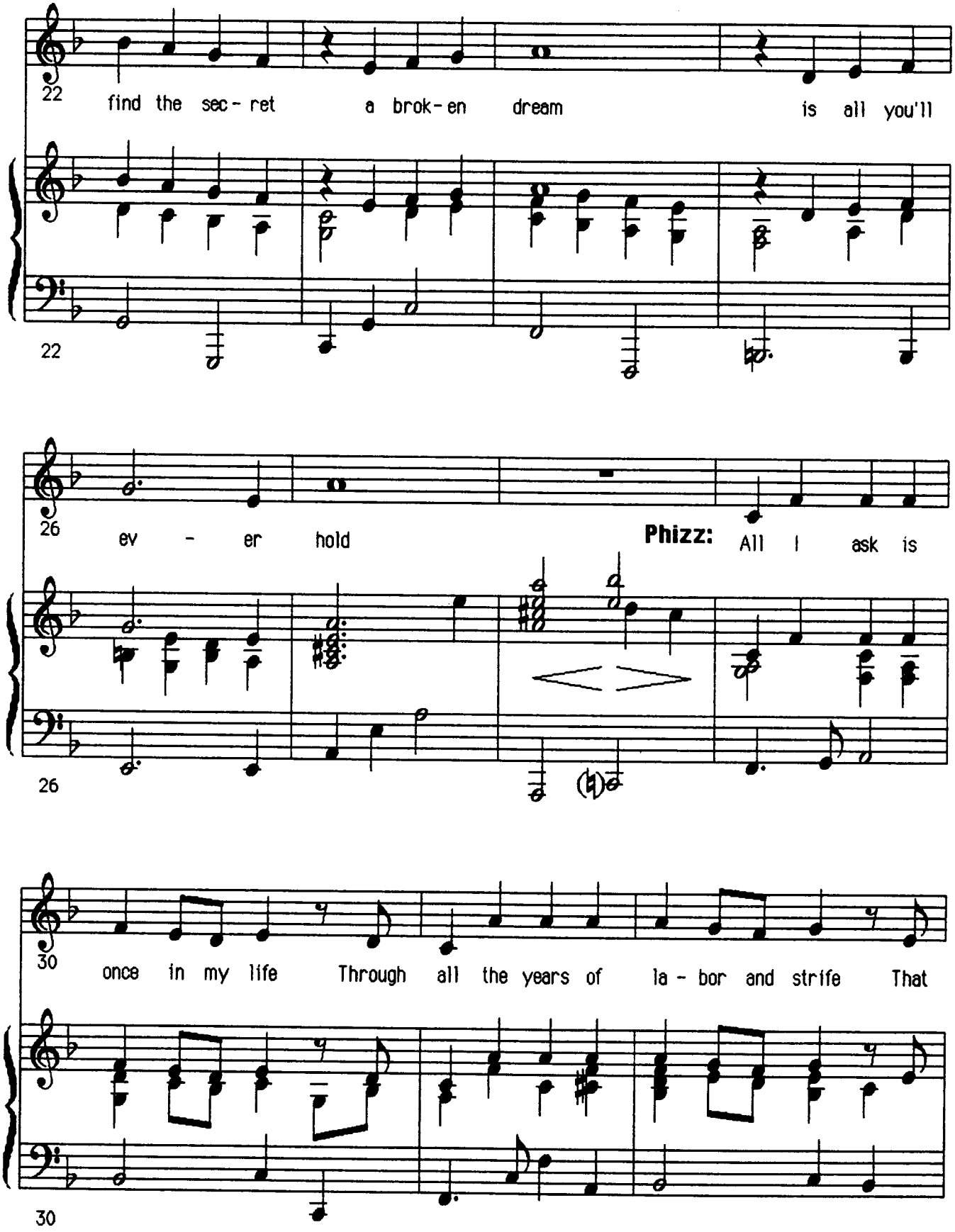

31
No one un - der - stands like you No one
31
34
warms my hands like you so like it or not
34
37
Some - times I think you're the on - ly friend I've
37

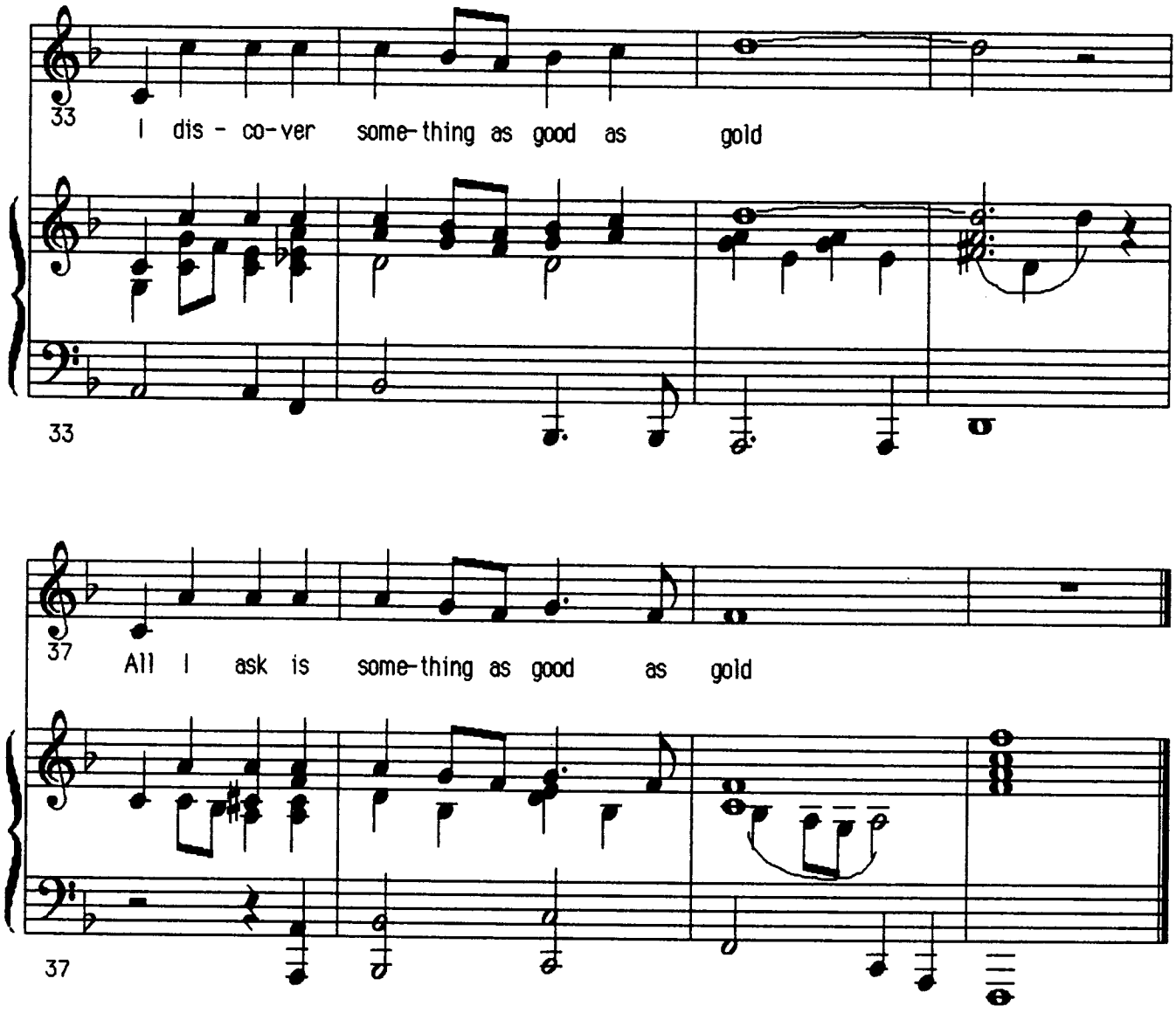

39
got
39

Something As Good As Gold

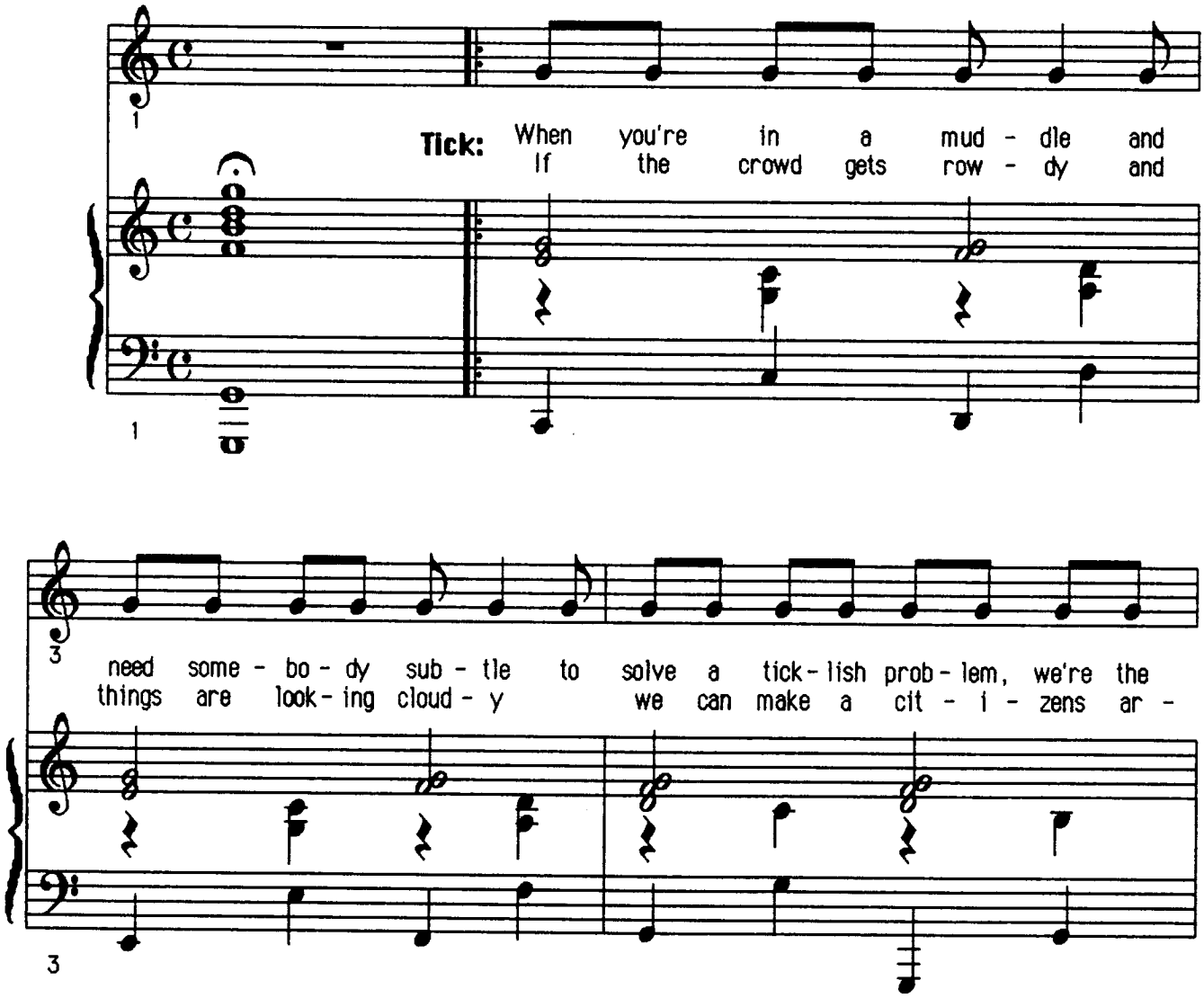


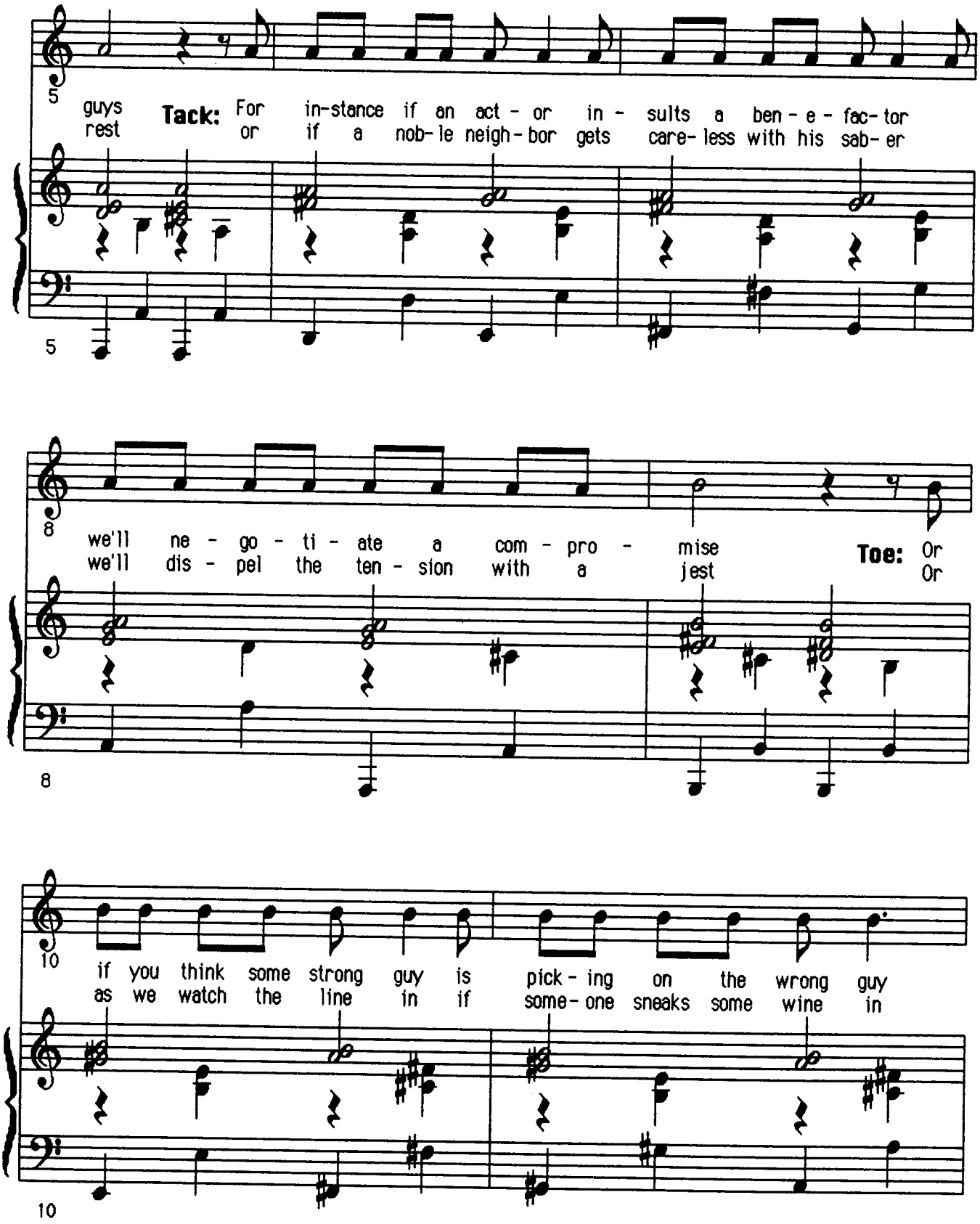

Phizz:
12
fools would be - lieve it So my dream in life is to find the
12
15
mix of mat- ter that when com - bined is trans- formed in - to
15
18
some-thing as good as gold
Princess: You'll nev- er
18

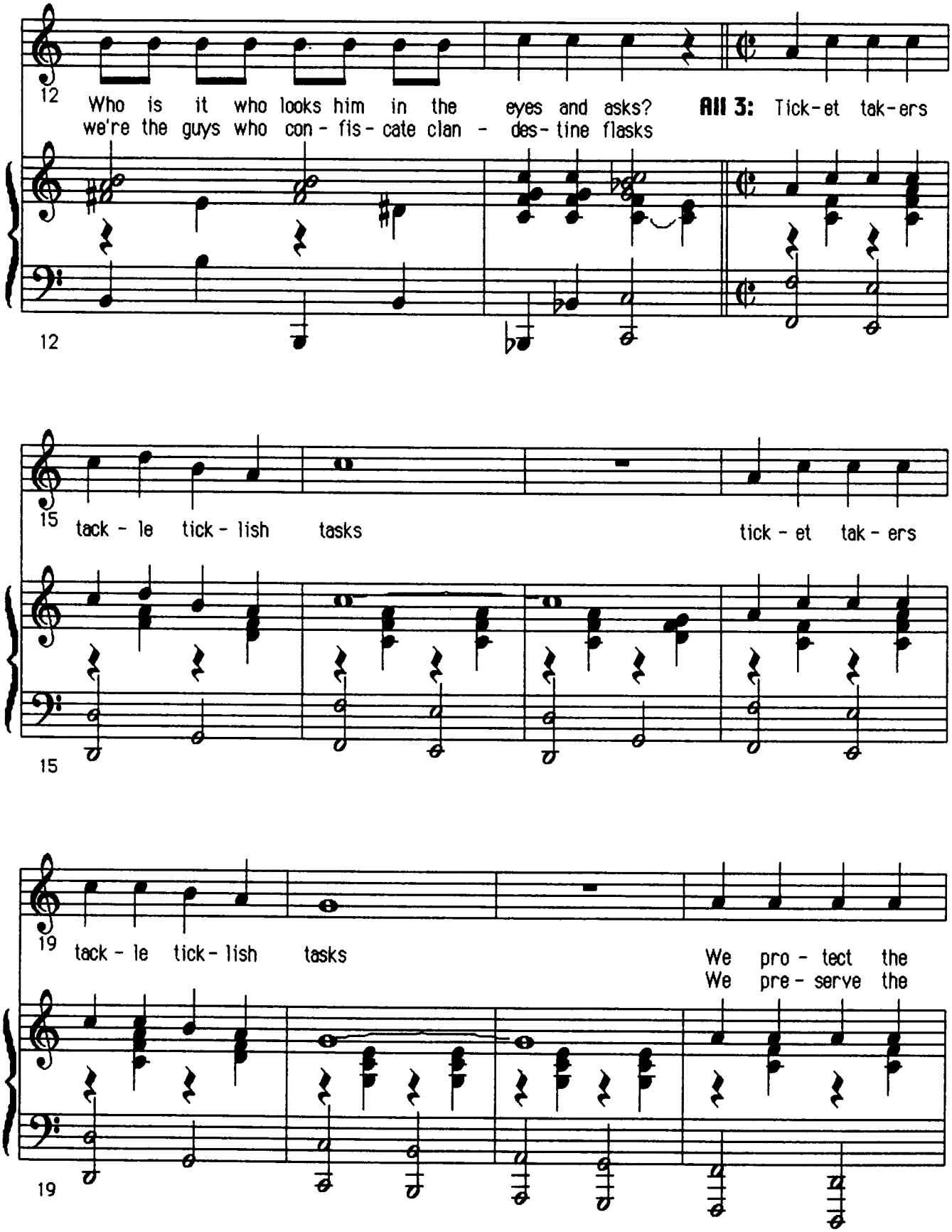

22
find the sec - ret a brok - en dream is all you'll
22
26
ev - er hold
Phizz: All I ask is
26
30
once in my life Through all the years of la - bor and strife That
30

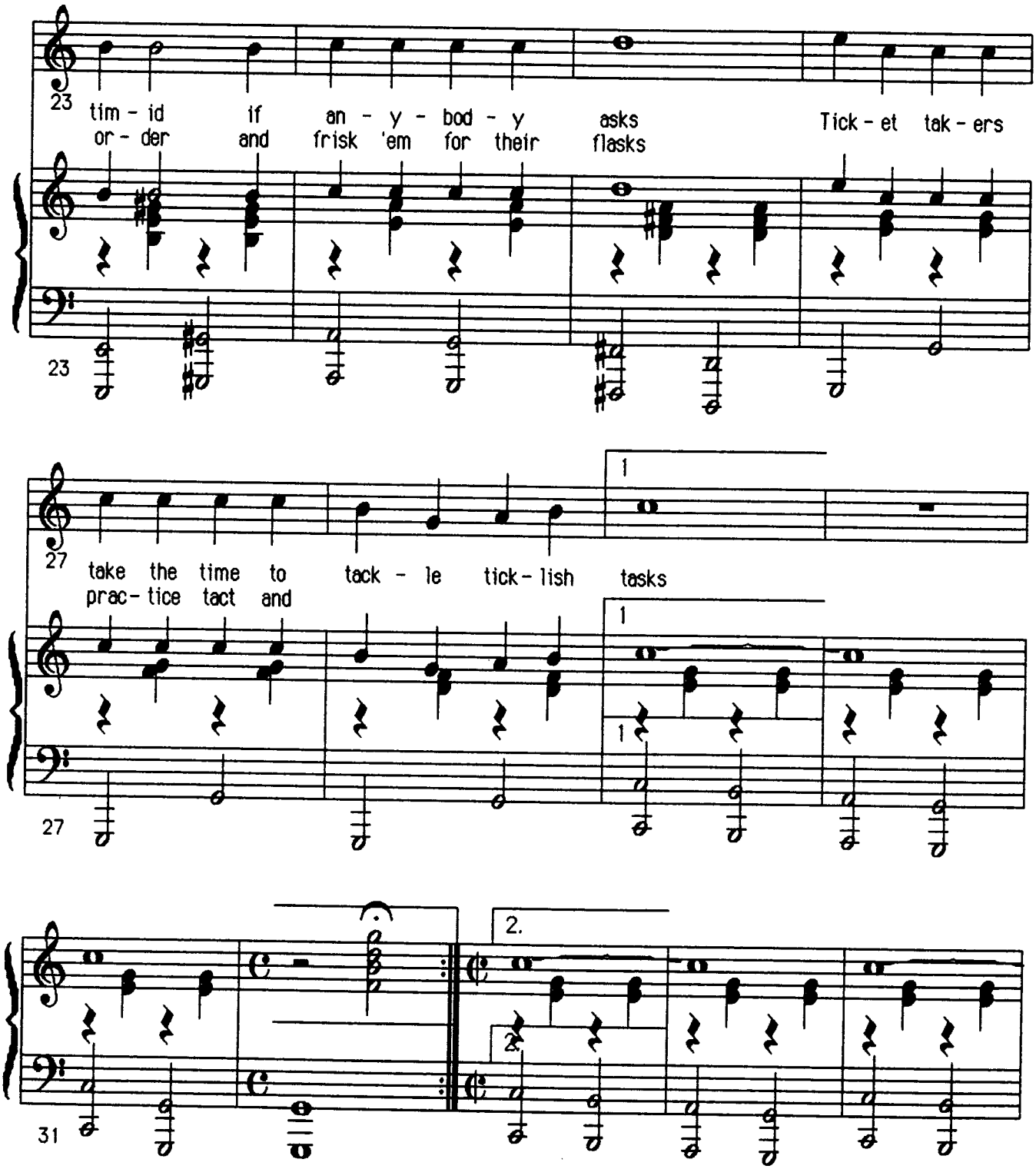

33
I dis - co-ver some-thing as good as gold
33
37
All I ask is some-thing as good as gold
37

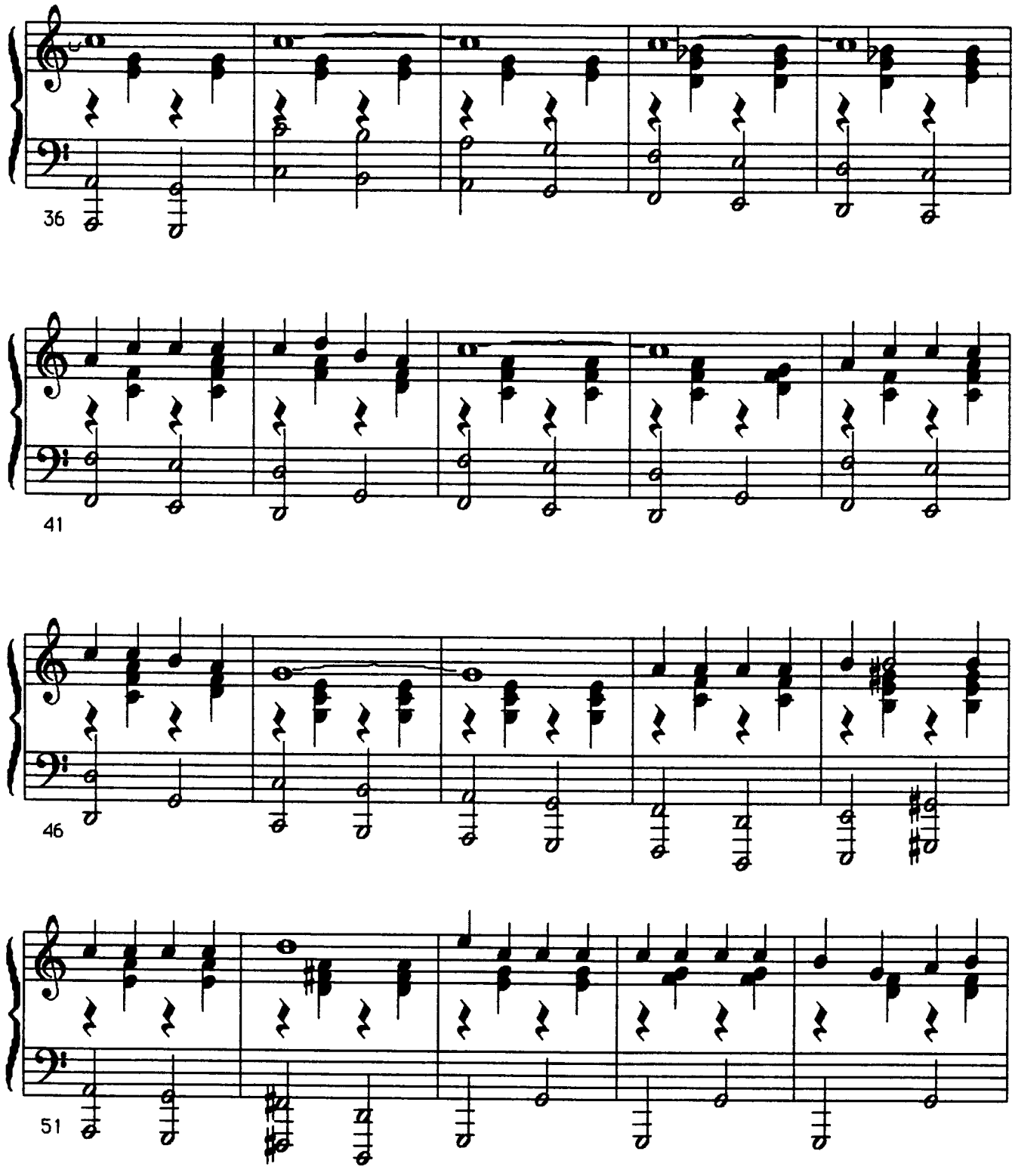
The Ticket Takers Song

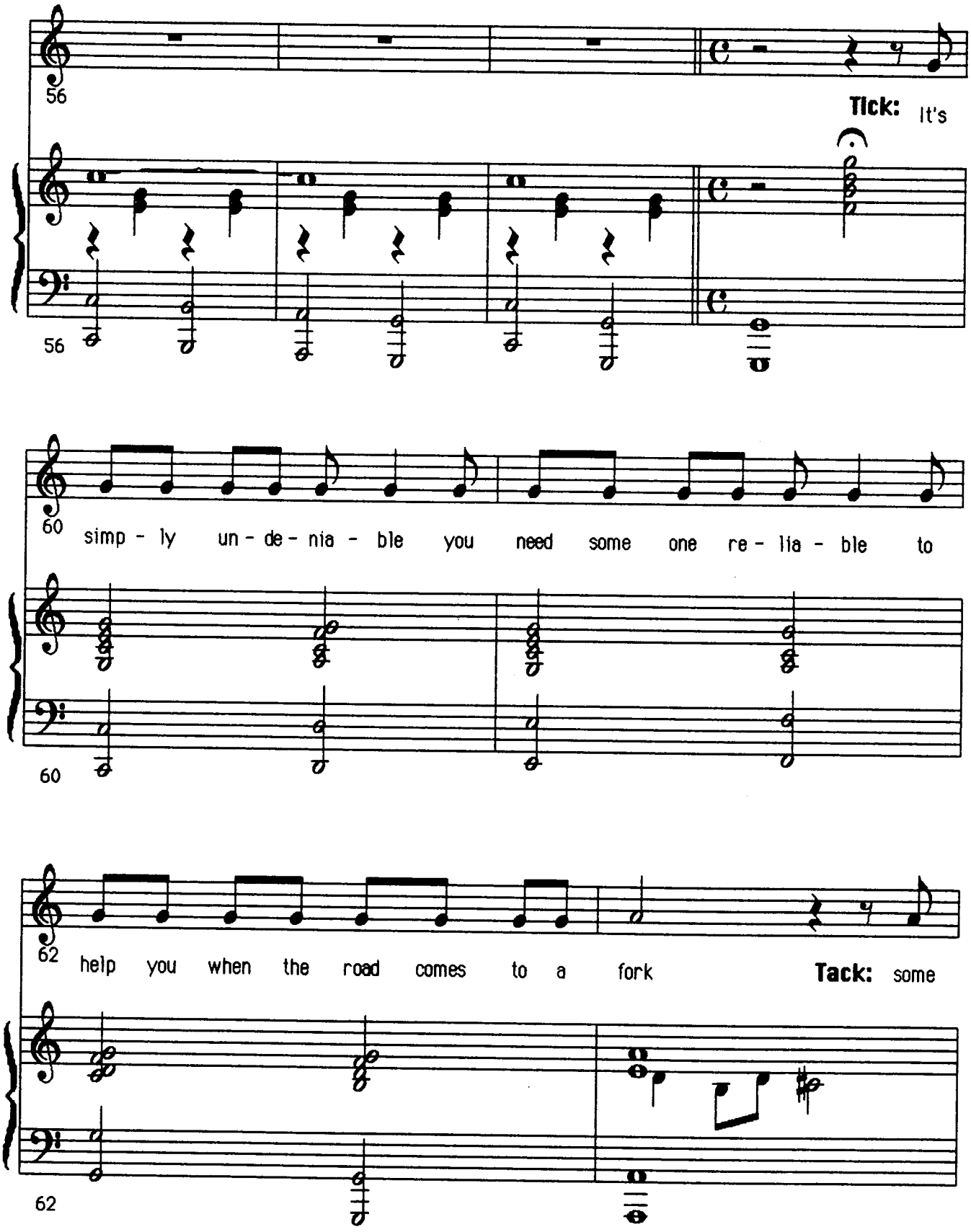


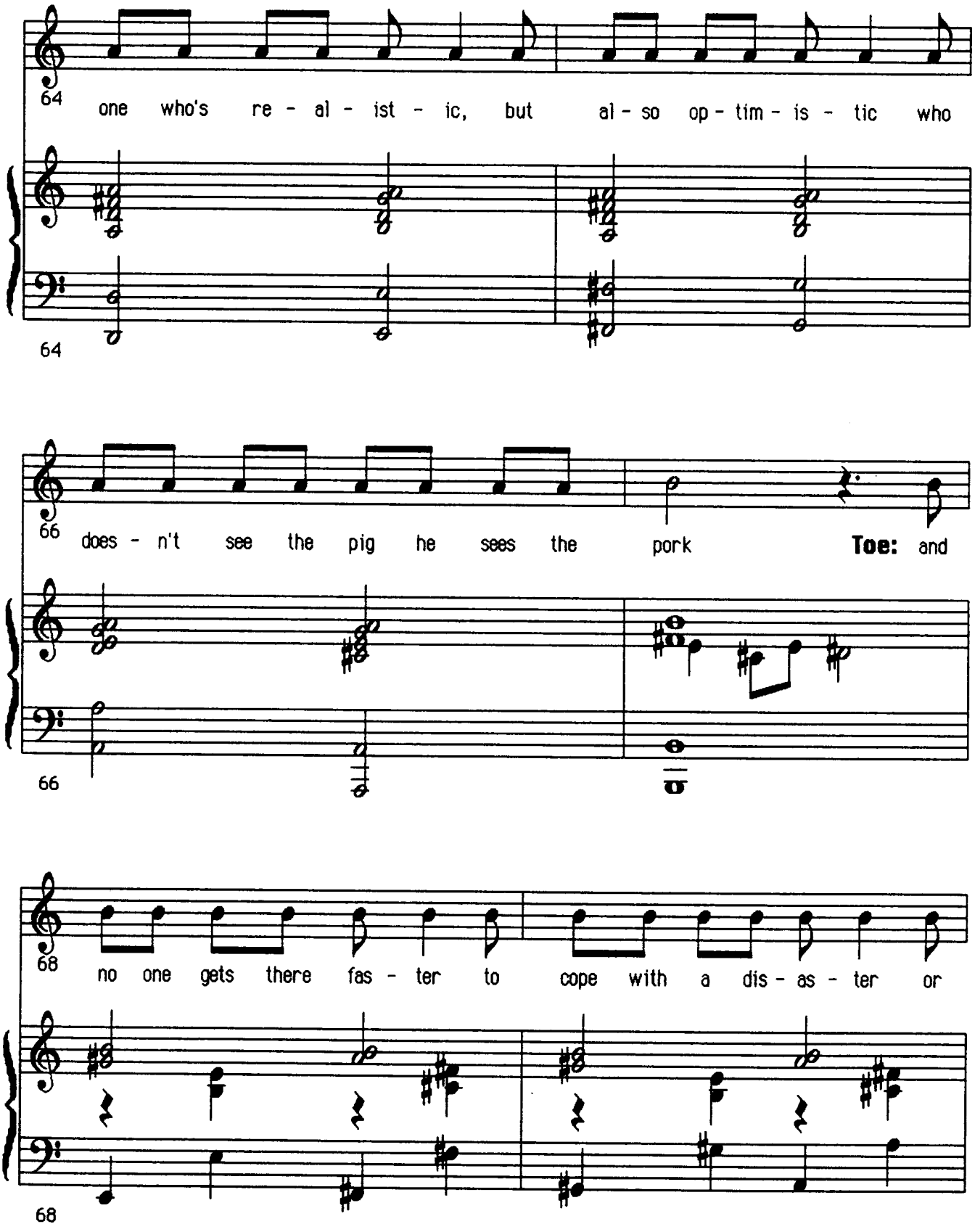

5
guys
rest
Tack: For in-stance if an act - or in - sults a ben - e - fac- tor
or if a nob- le neigh - bor gets care- less with his sab- er
5
8
we'll ne - go - ti - ate a com - pro - mise
we'll dis - pel the ten - sion with a jest
Toe: Or
Or
8
10
if you think some strong guy is pick - ing on the wrong guy
as we watch the line in if some- one sneaks some wine in
10

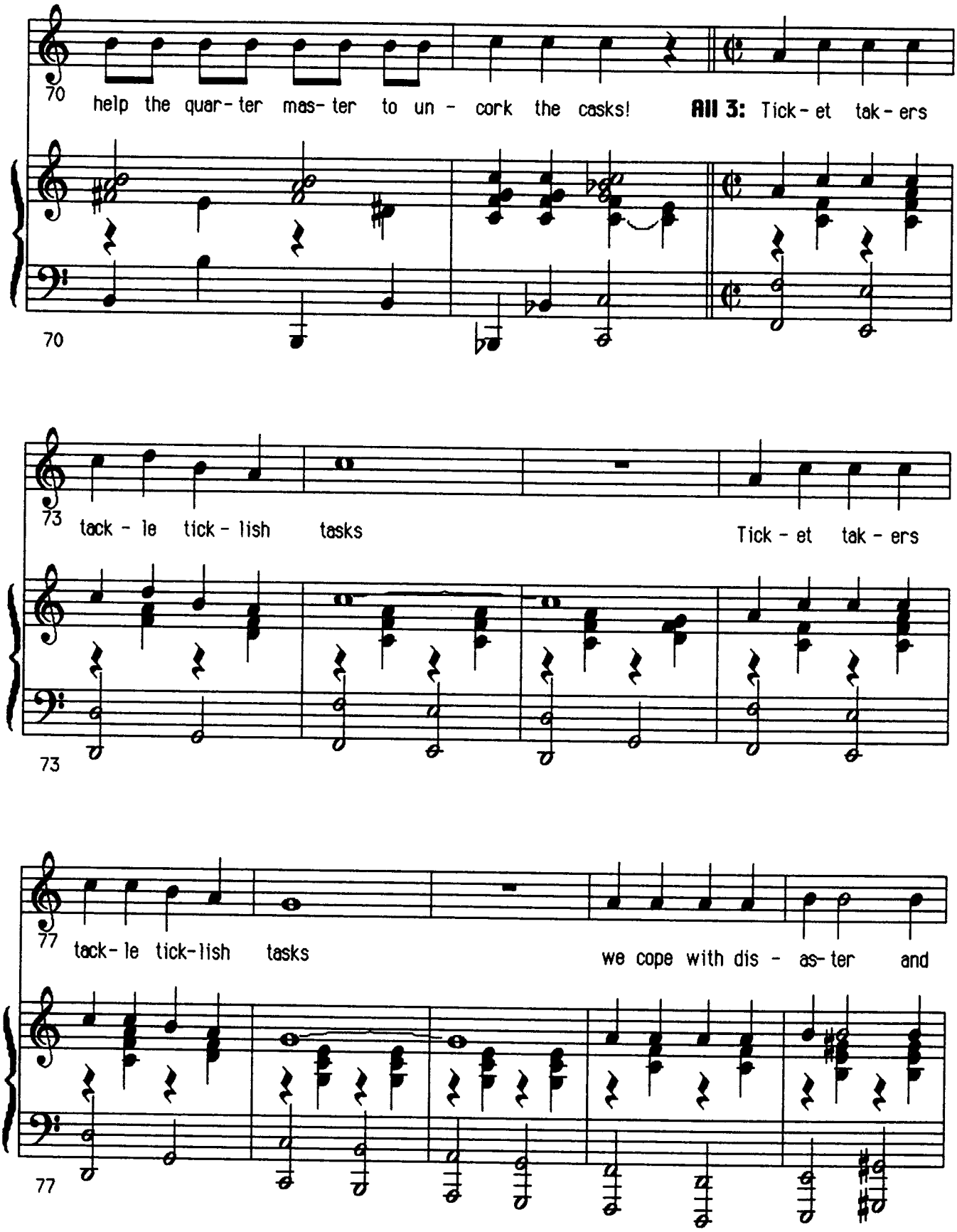

12
Who is it who looks him in the eyes and asks?
we're the guys who con - fis - cate clan - des - tine flasks
All 3: Tick - et tak - ers
12
15
tack - le tick - lish tasks
tick - et tak - ers
15
19
tack - le tick - lish tasks
We pro - tect the
We pre - serve the
19

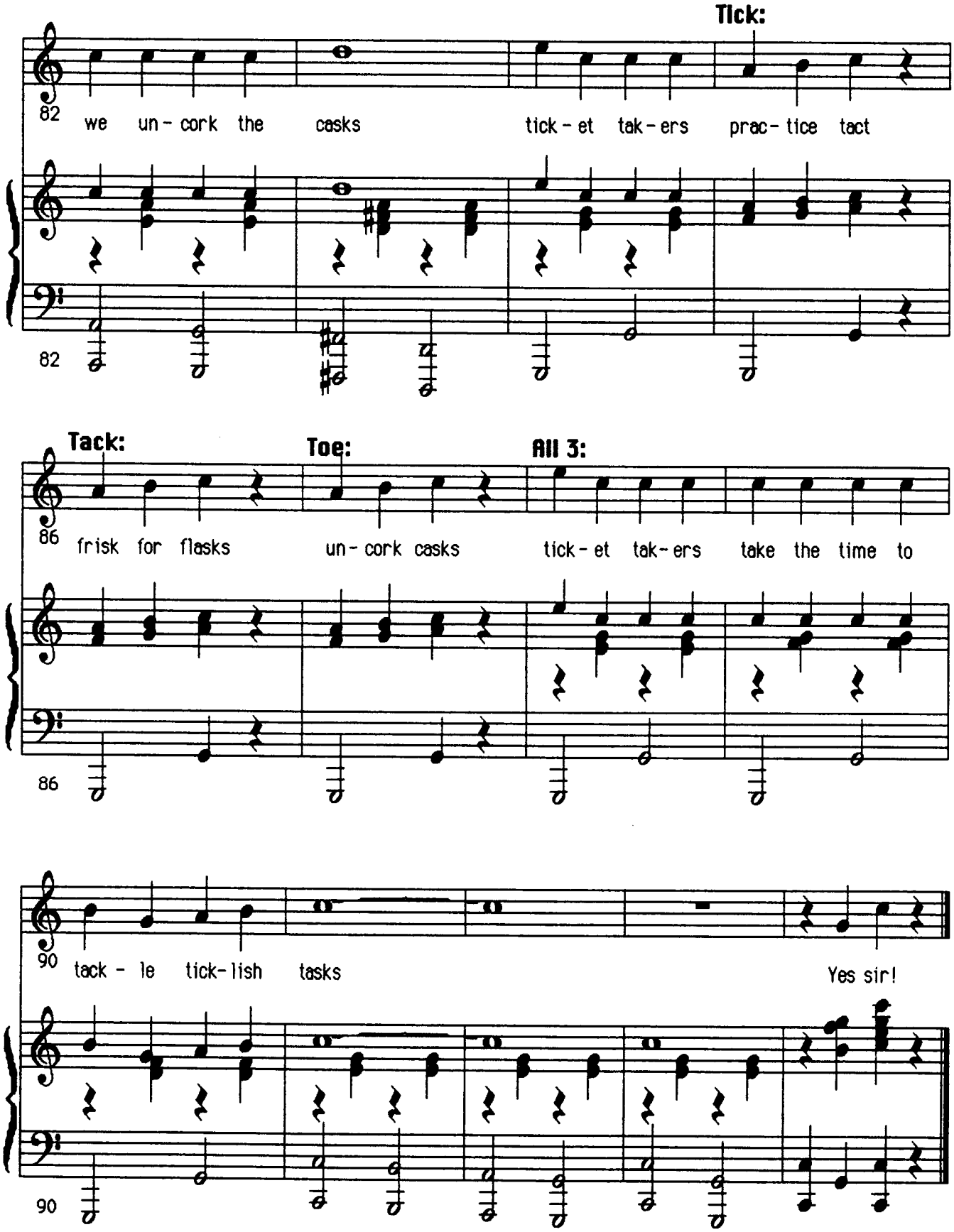

23
tim - id if an - y - bod - y asks Tick - et tak - ers
or - der and frisk 'em for their flasks
27
take the time to tack - le tick - lish tasks
prac - tice tact and
1
2.
31


36
41
46
51

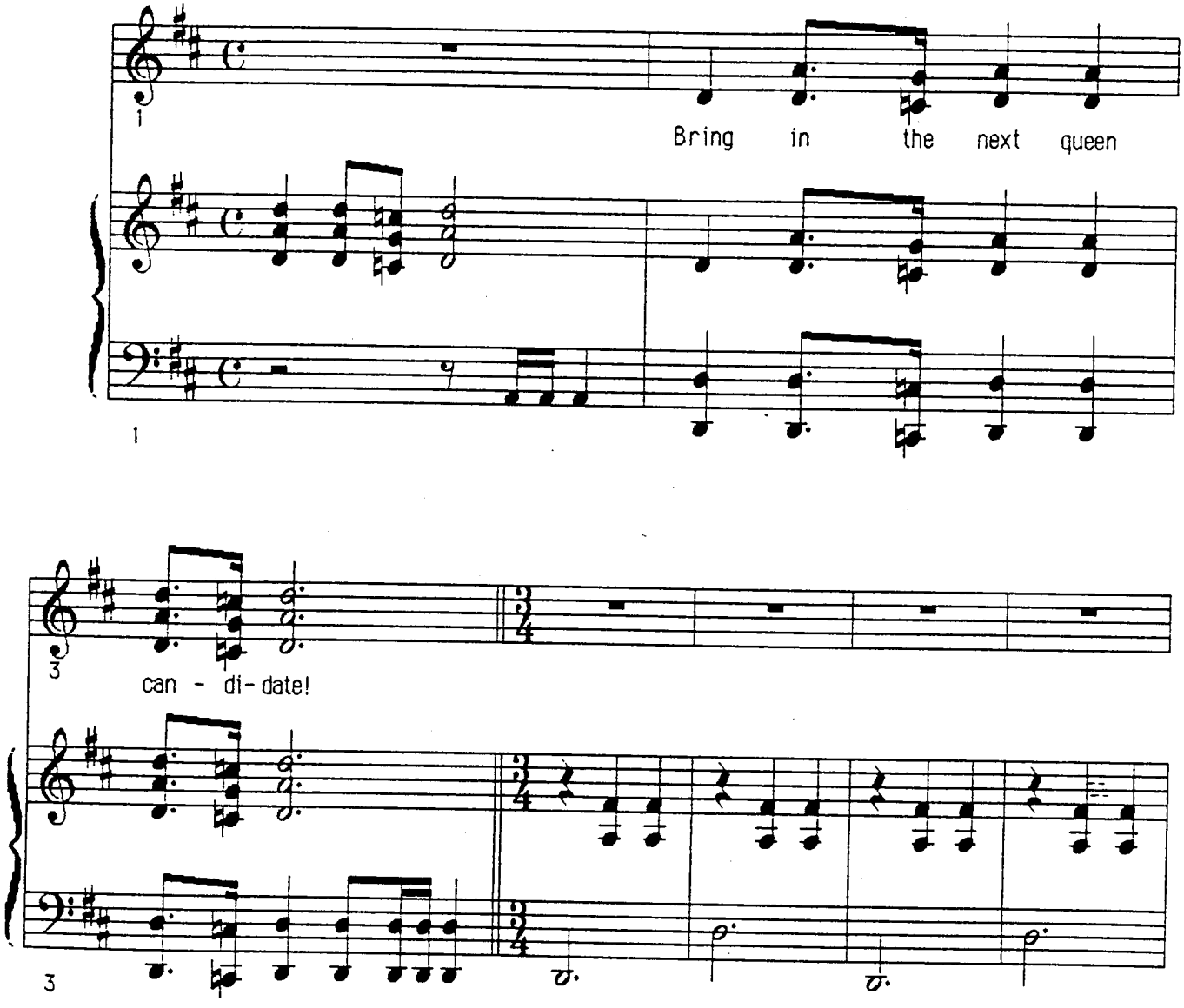

56
Tick: It's
56
60
simp - ly un - de - nia - ble you need some one re - lia - ble to
60
62
help you when the road comes to a fork
Tack: some
62

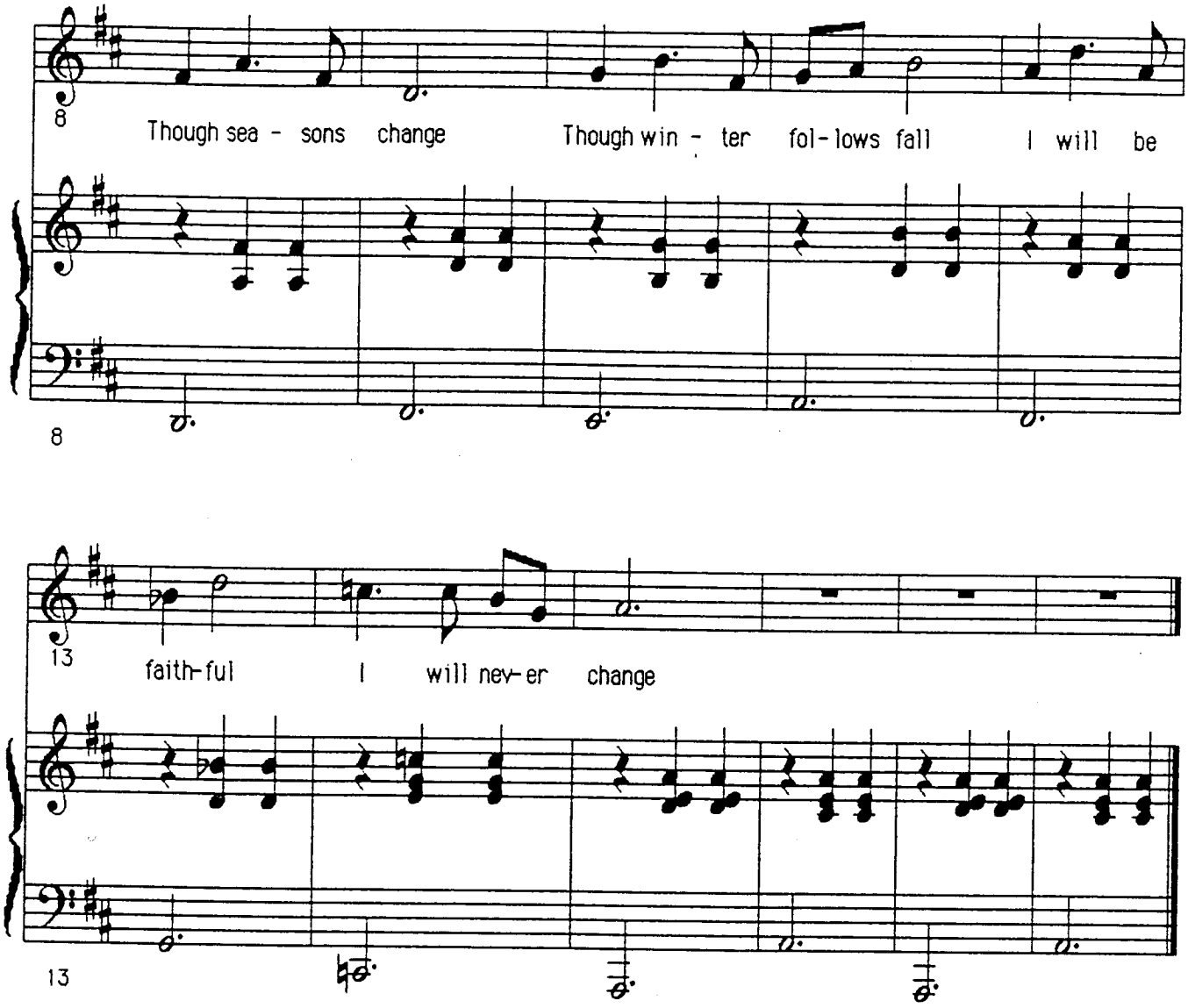

64
one who's re - al - ist - ic, but al - so op - tim - is - tic who
64
66
does - n't see the pig he sees the pork
Toe: and
66
68
no one gets there fas - ter to cope with a dis - as - ter or
68


70
help the quar-ter mas-ter to un - cork the casks!
All 3: Tick-et tak-ers
70
73
tack - le tick - lish tasks
Tick - et tak - ers
73
77
tack-le tick-lish tasks
we cope with dis - as-ter and
77


Tick:
82
we un - cork the casks tick - et tak - ers prac - tice tact
82
Tack:
Toe:
All 3:
86
frisk for flasks un - cork casks tick - et tak - ers take the time to
86
90
tack - le tick - lish tasks
Yes sir!
90

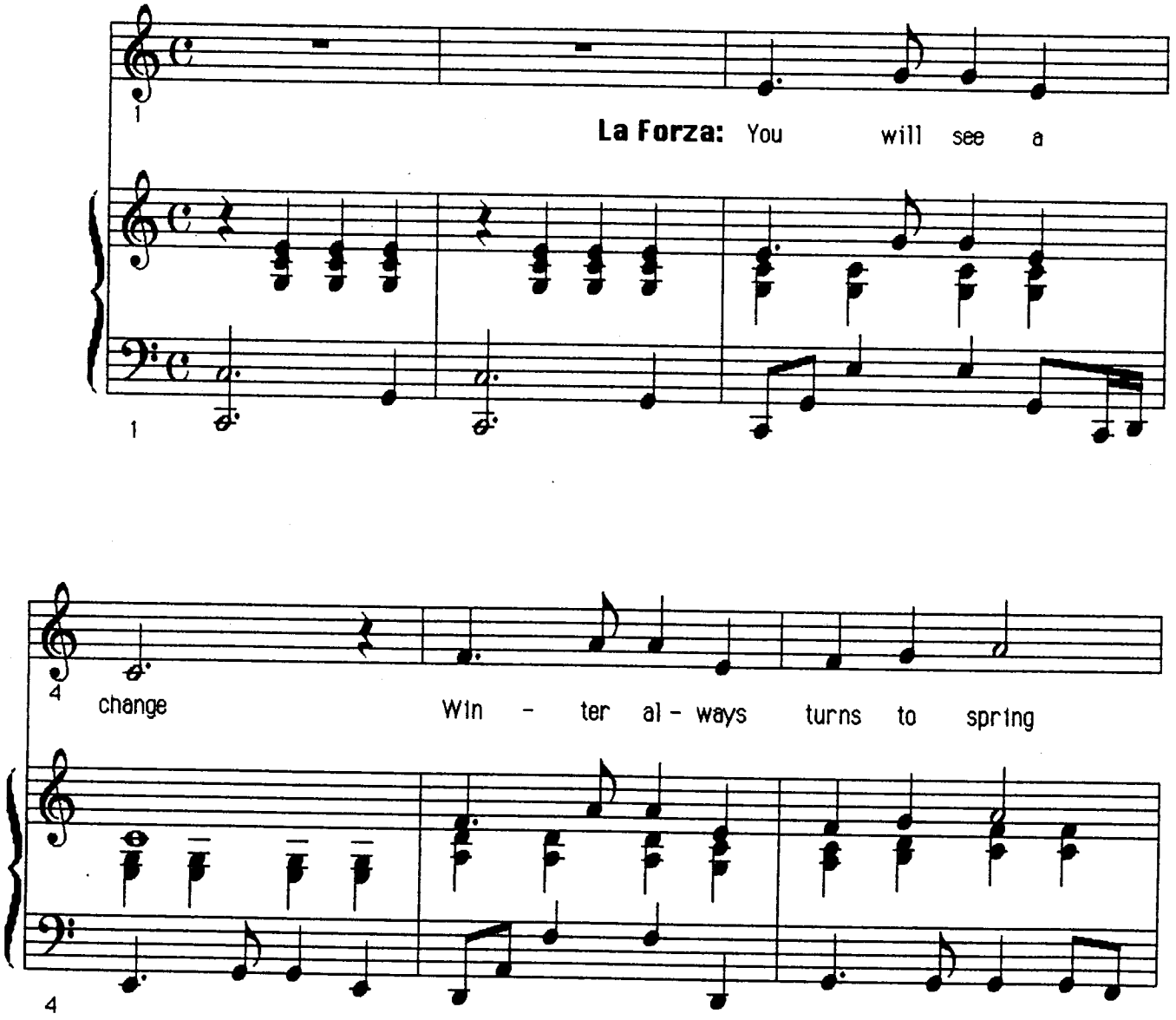
Audition Music

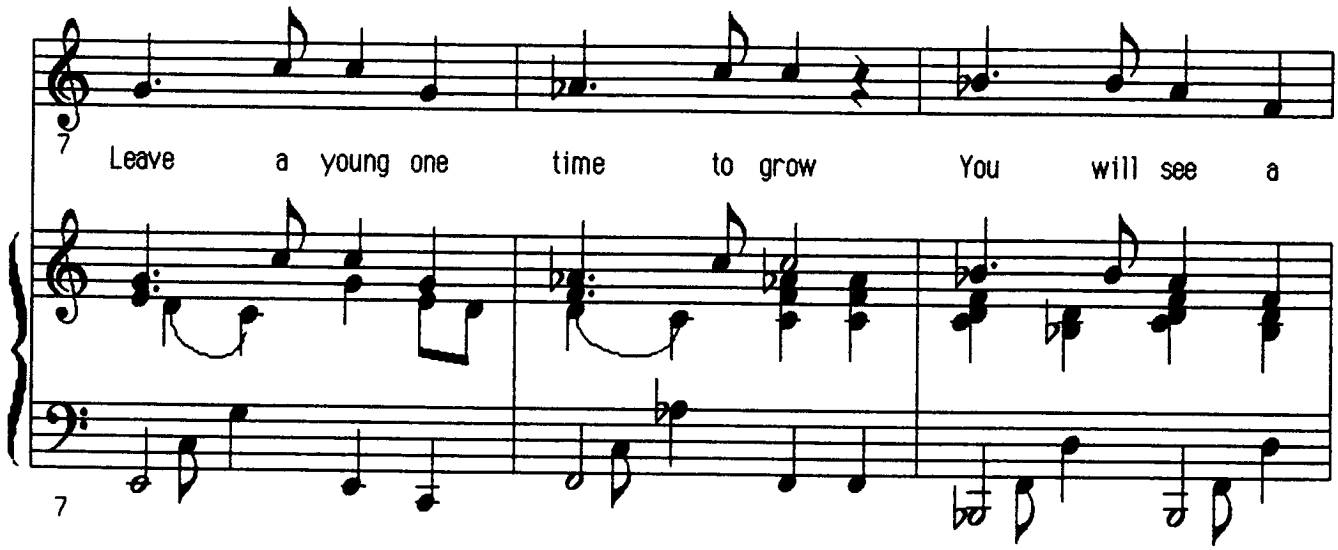


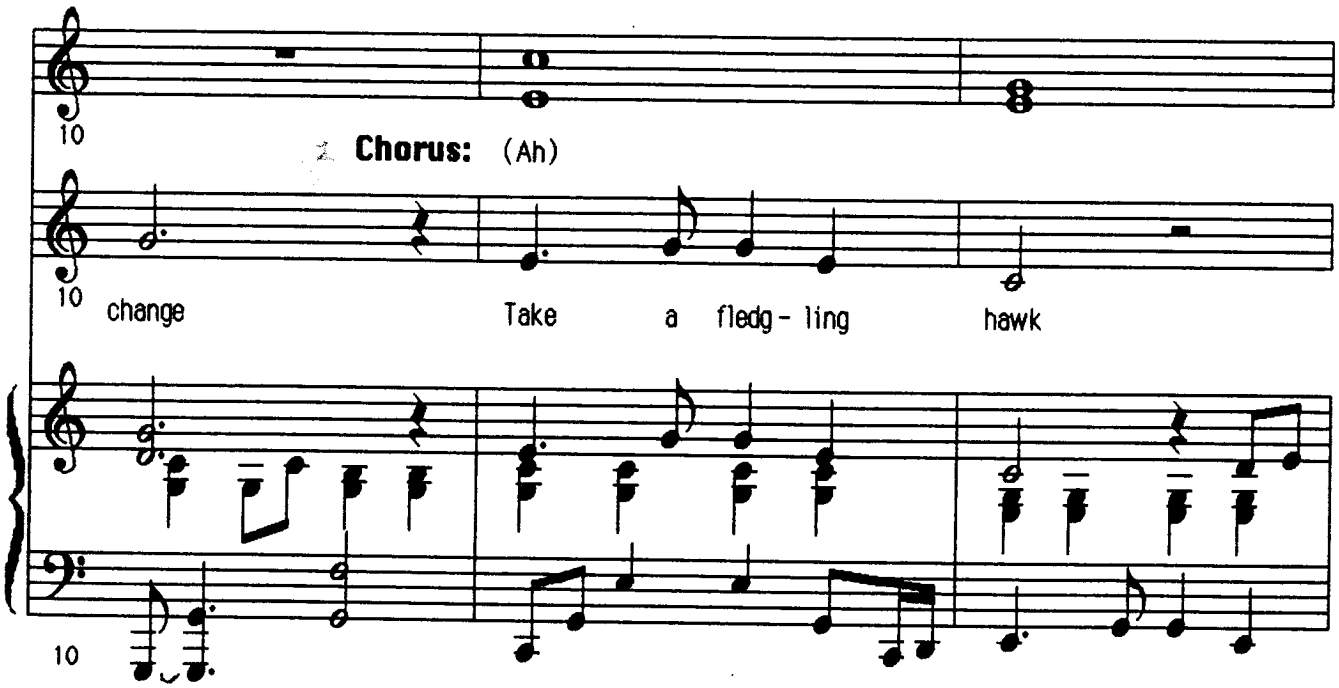

8
Though sea - sons change
Though win - ter fol-lows fall
I will be
8
13
faith-ful
I will nev-er change
13

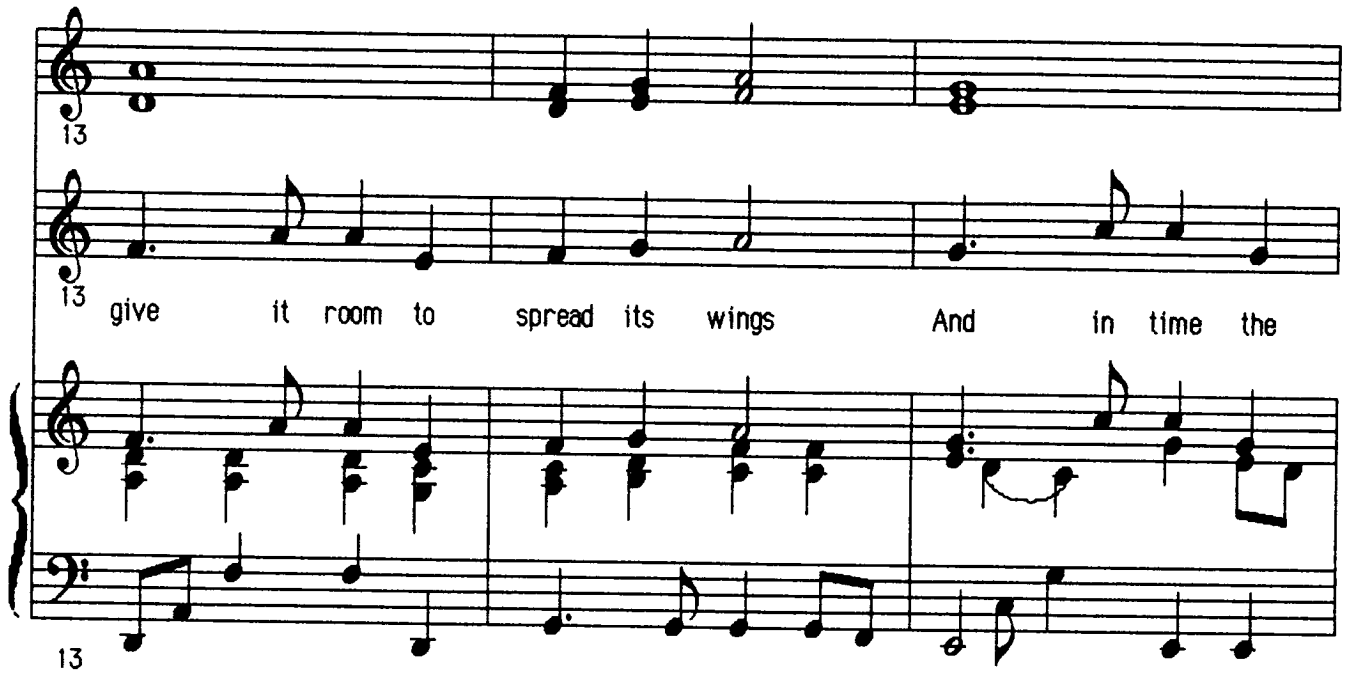
Note: With orchestra, piano part is different.
See orchestra score.

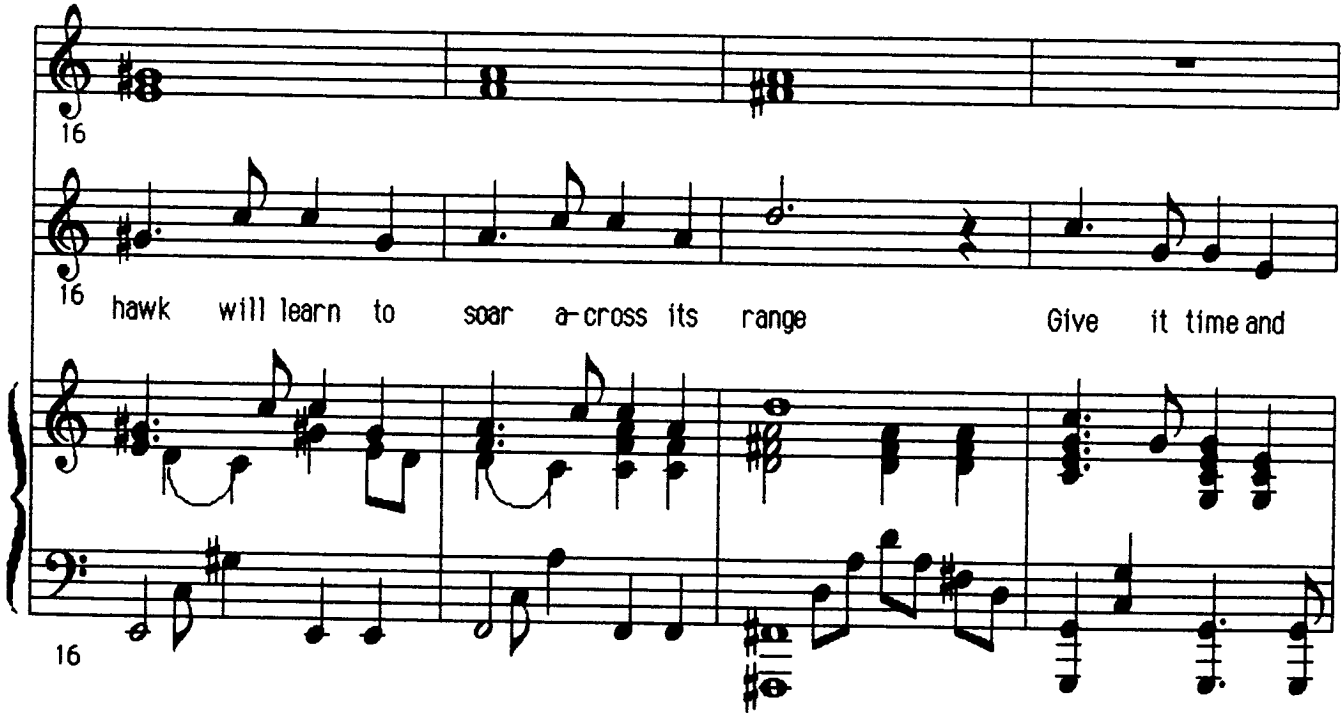
You Will See a Change

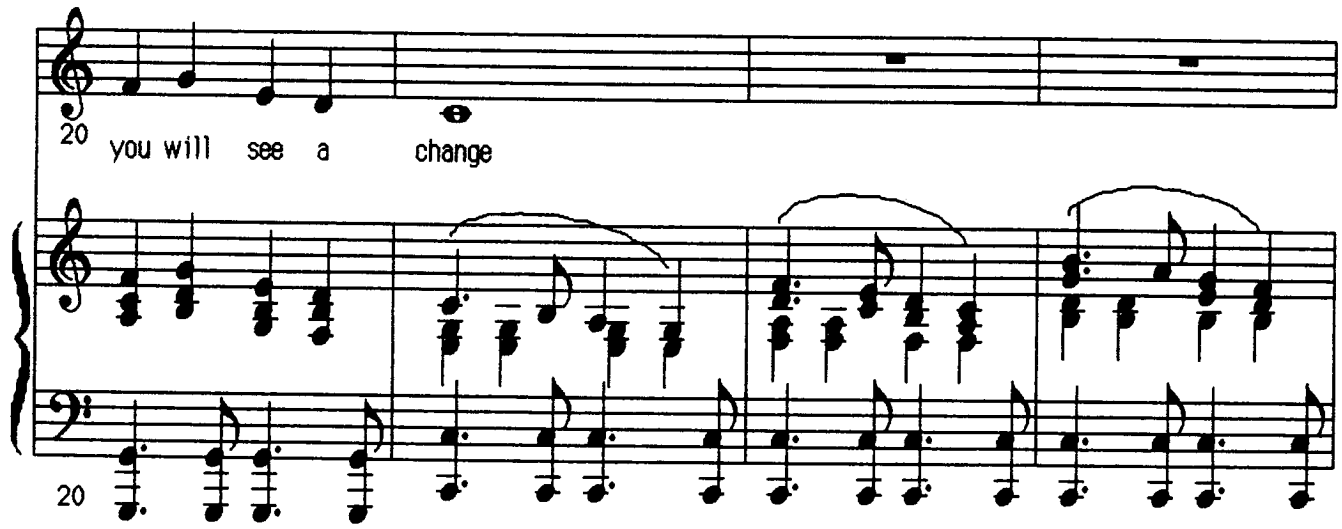


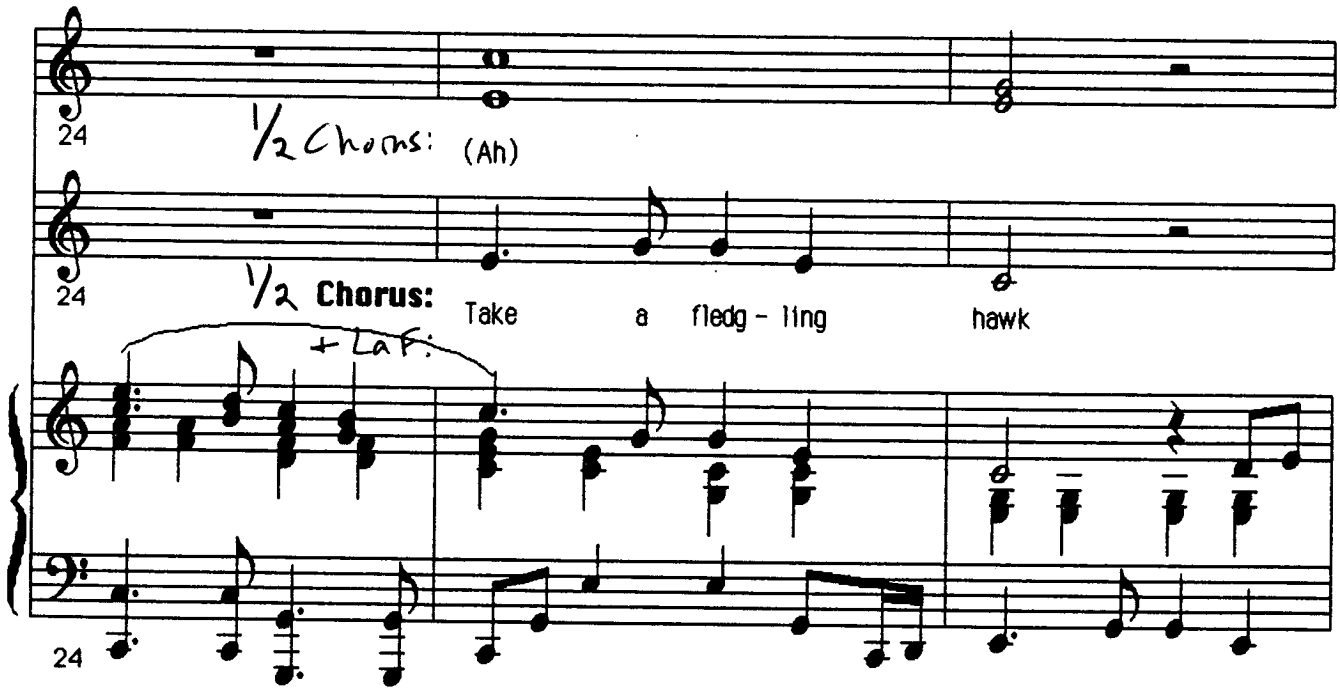

7
Leave a young one time to grow You will see a
7

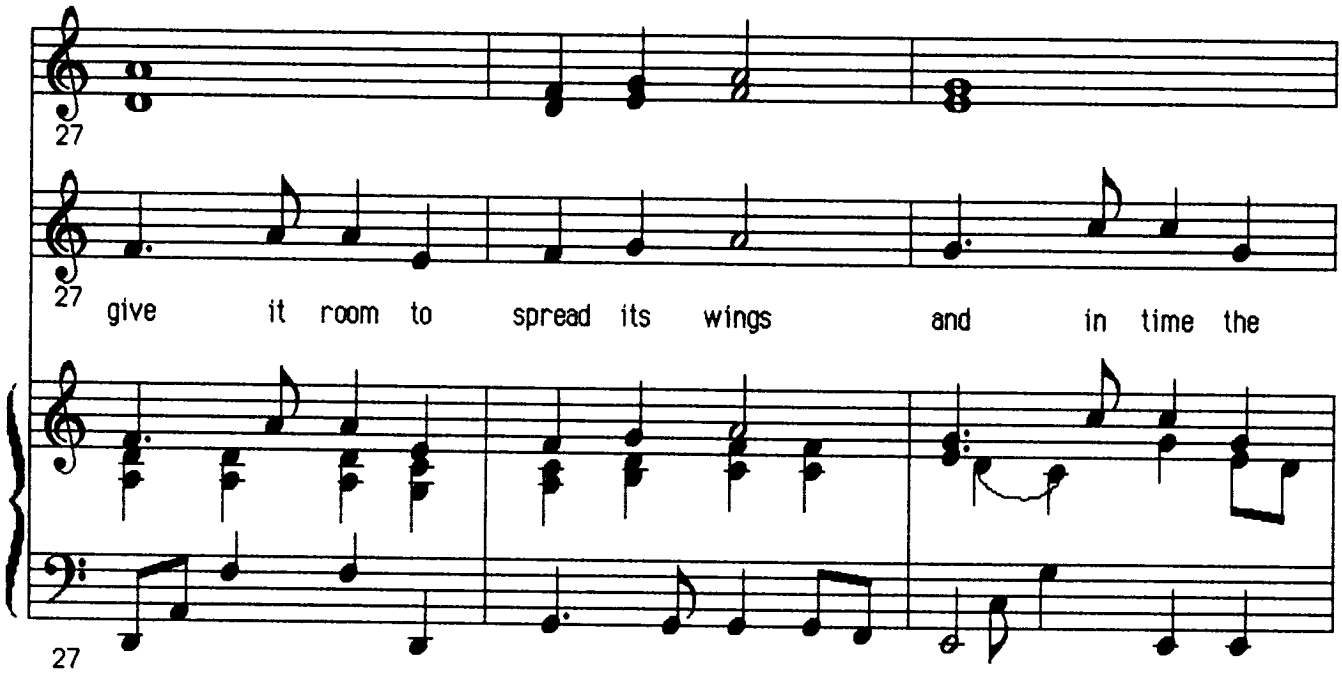

10
Chorus: (Ah)
10
change Take a fledg - ling hawk
10

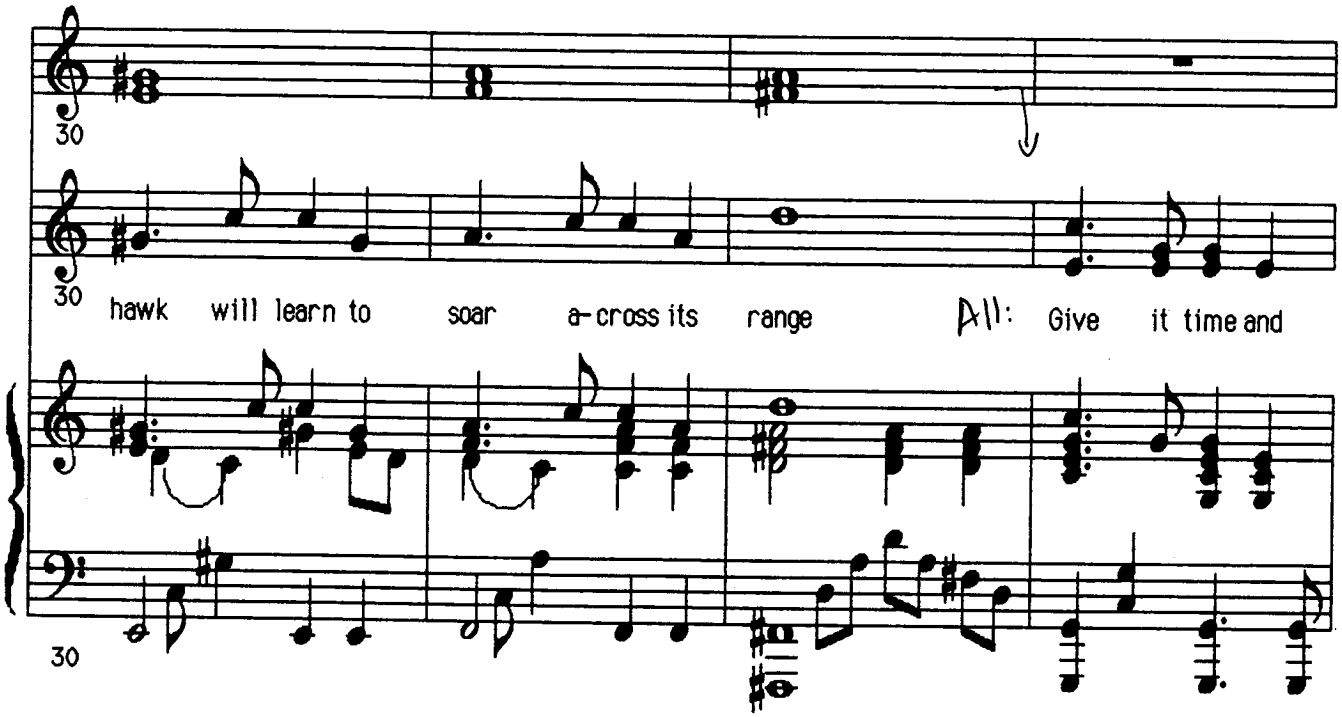

13
13
give it room to spread its wings And in time the
13

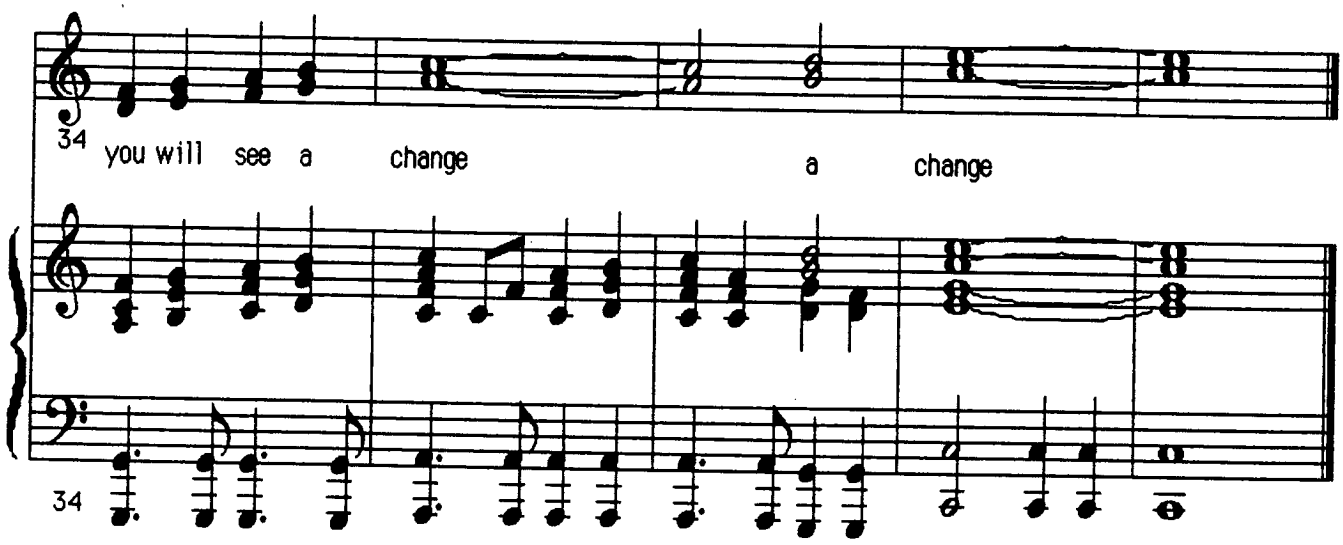

16
16
hawk will learn to soar a-cross its range Give it time and
16


20
you will see a change
20

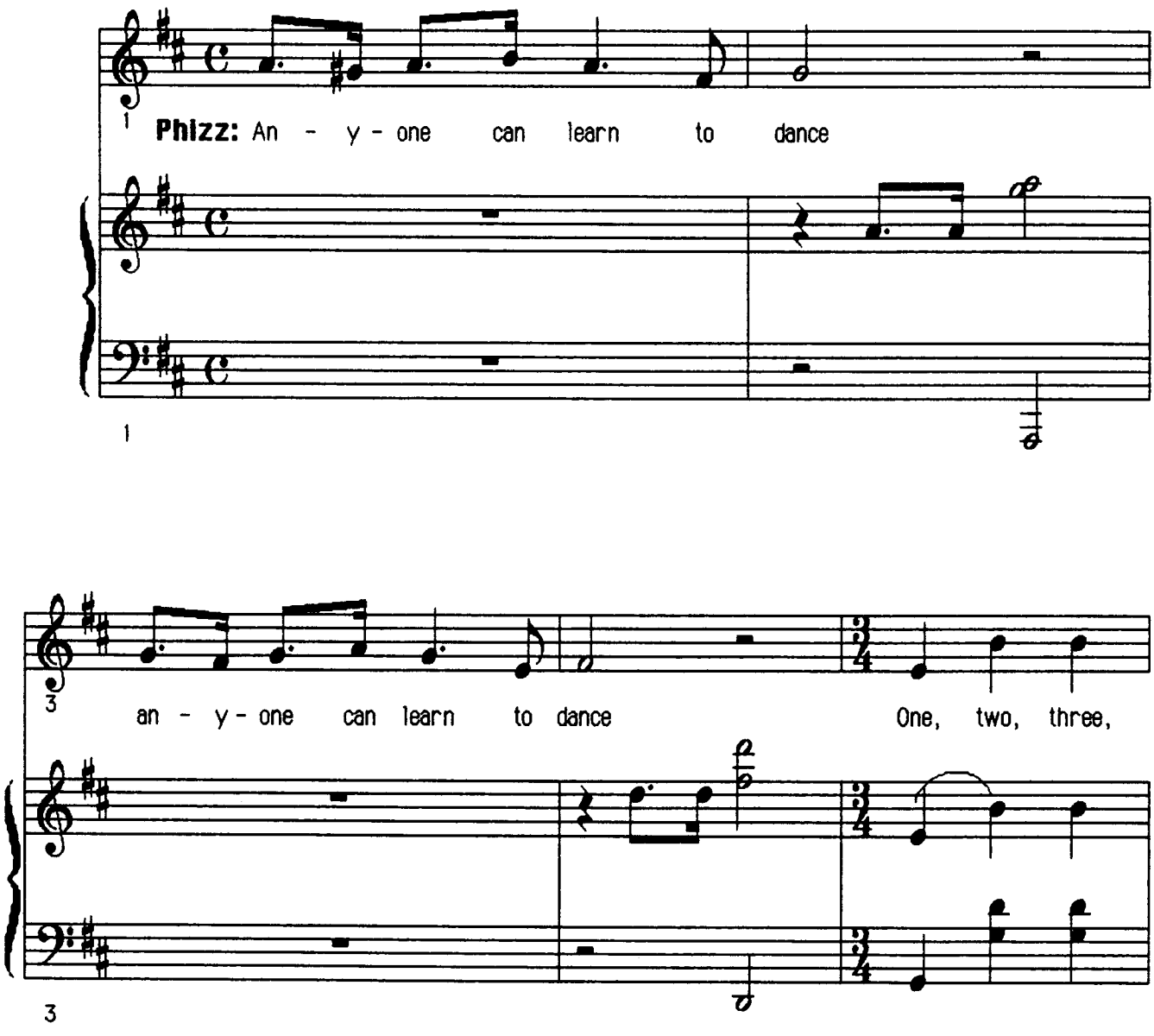

24
1/2 Chorus: (Ah)
24
1/2 Chorus: Take a fledg - ling hawk
+ La F:
24

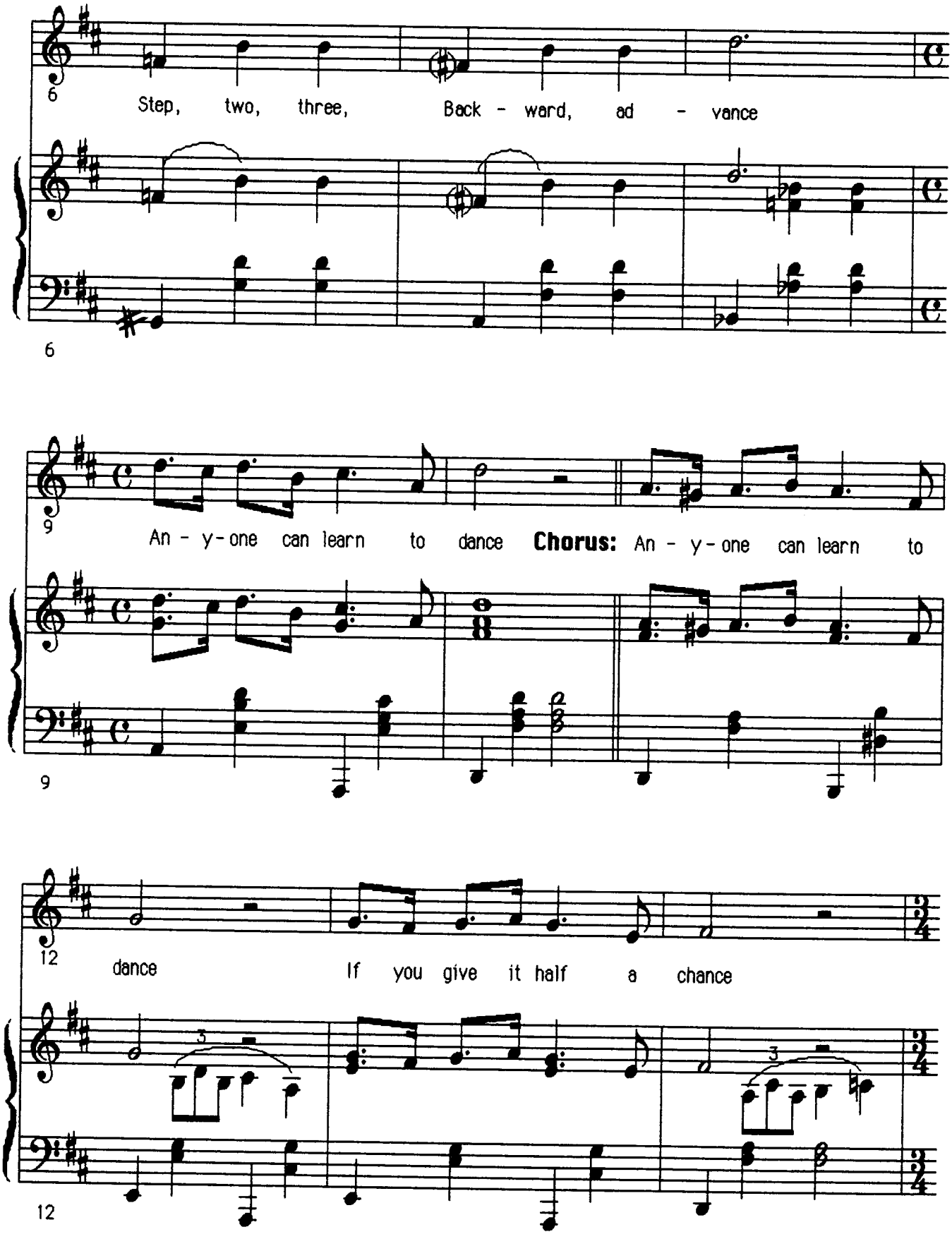

27
27
give it room to spread its wings and in time the
27

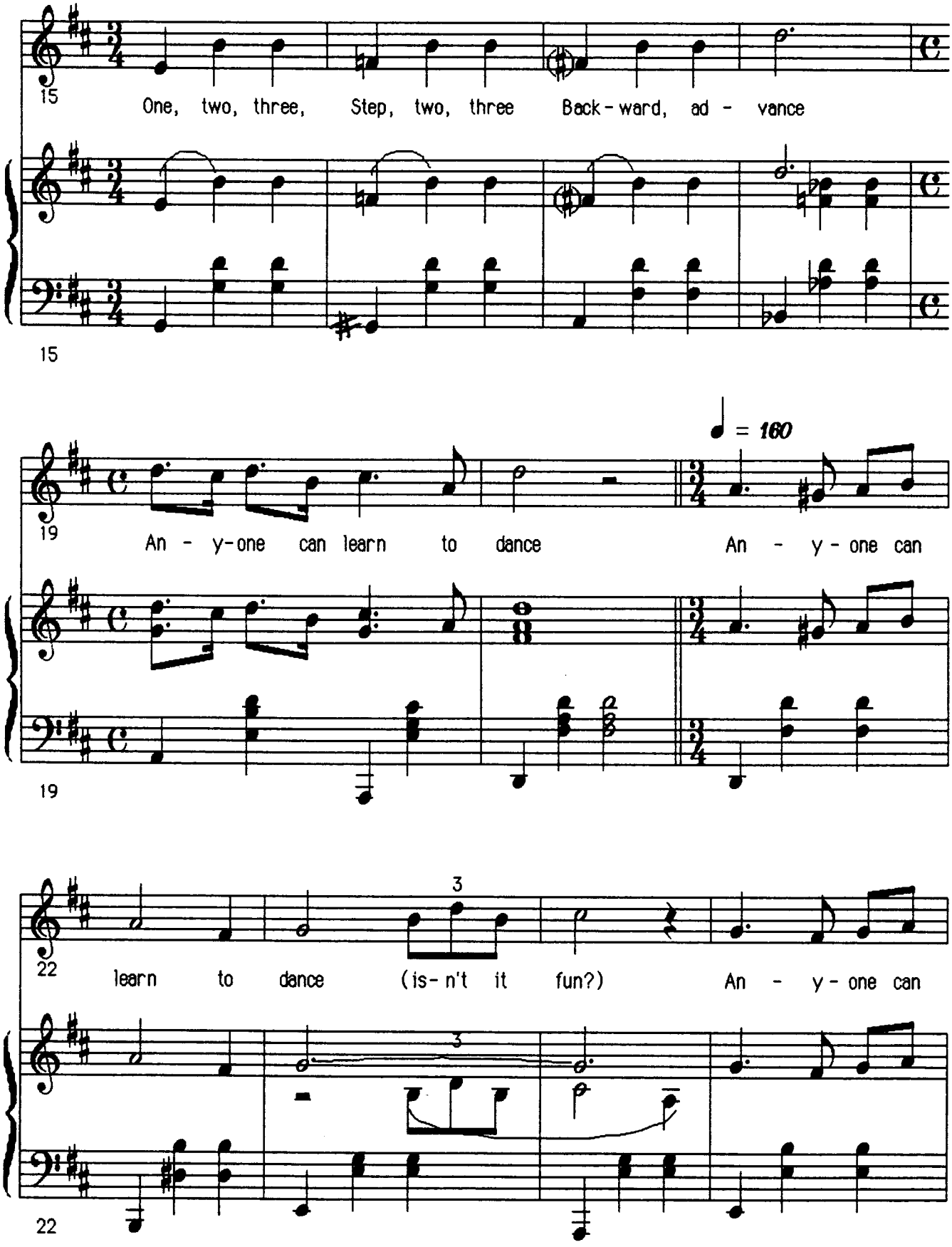

30
30
hawk will learn to soar a-cross its range All: Give it time and
30

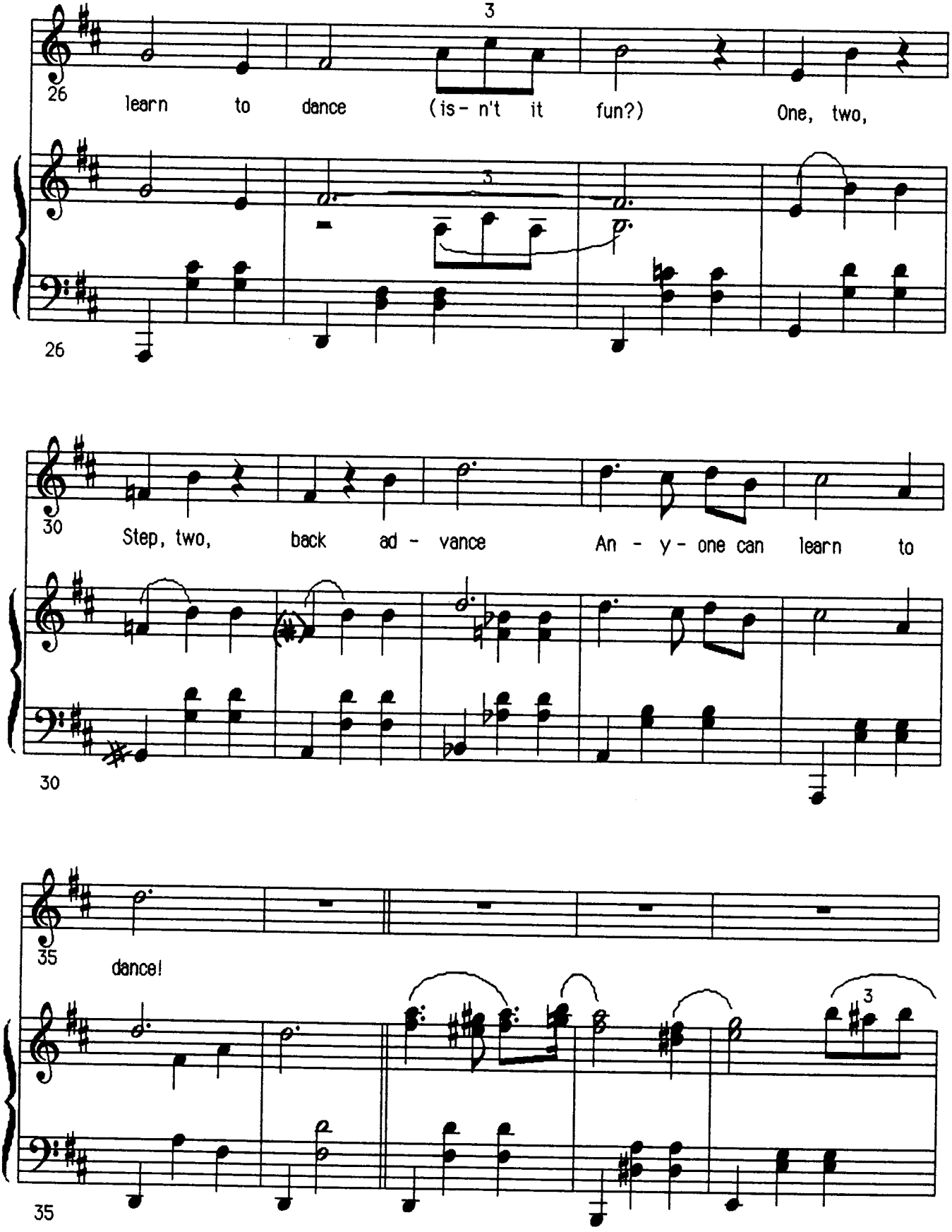

34
you will see a change a change
34

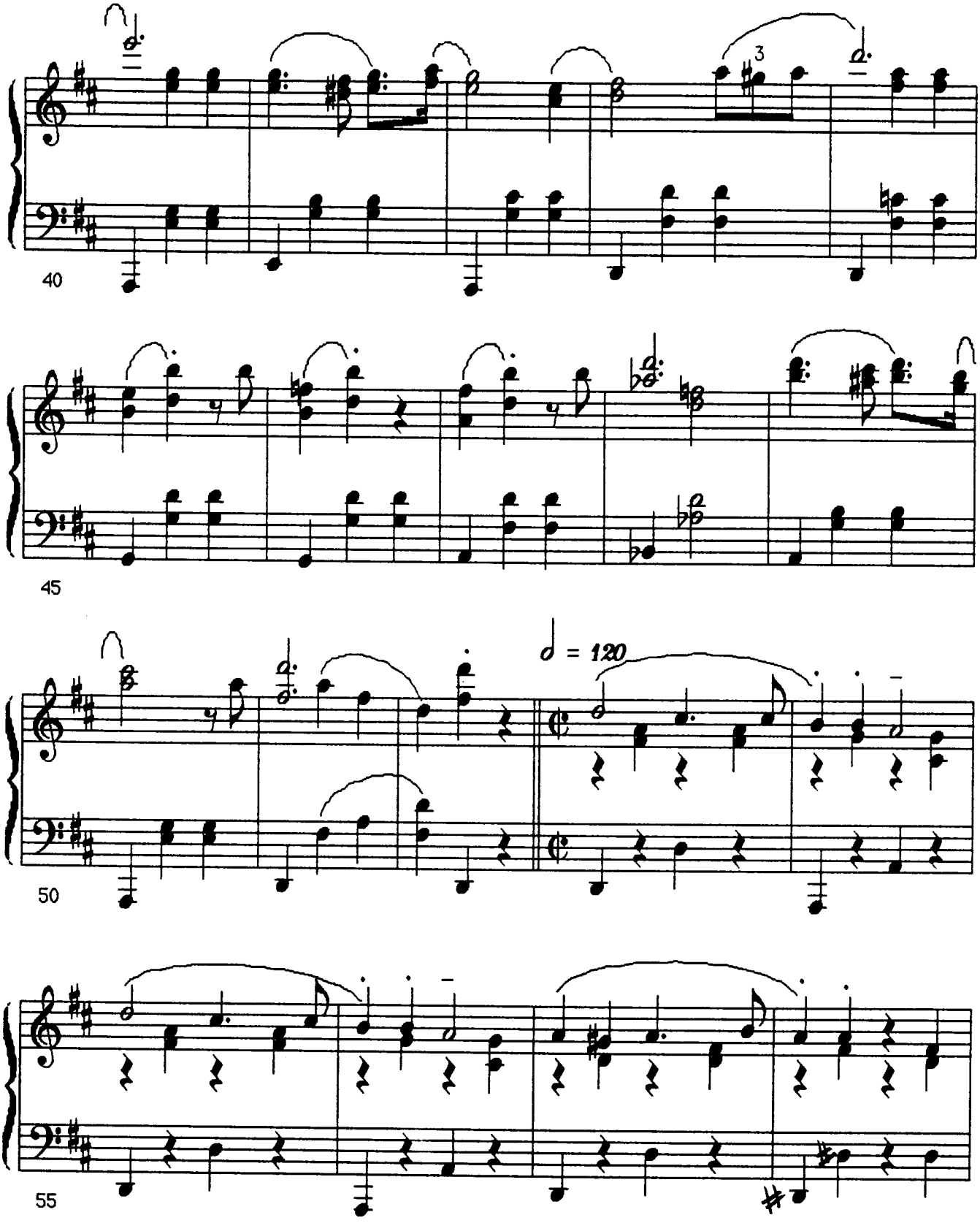
Anyone Can Learn to Dance

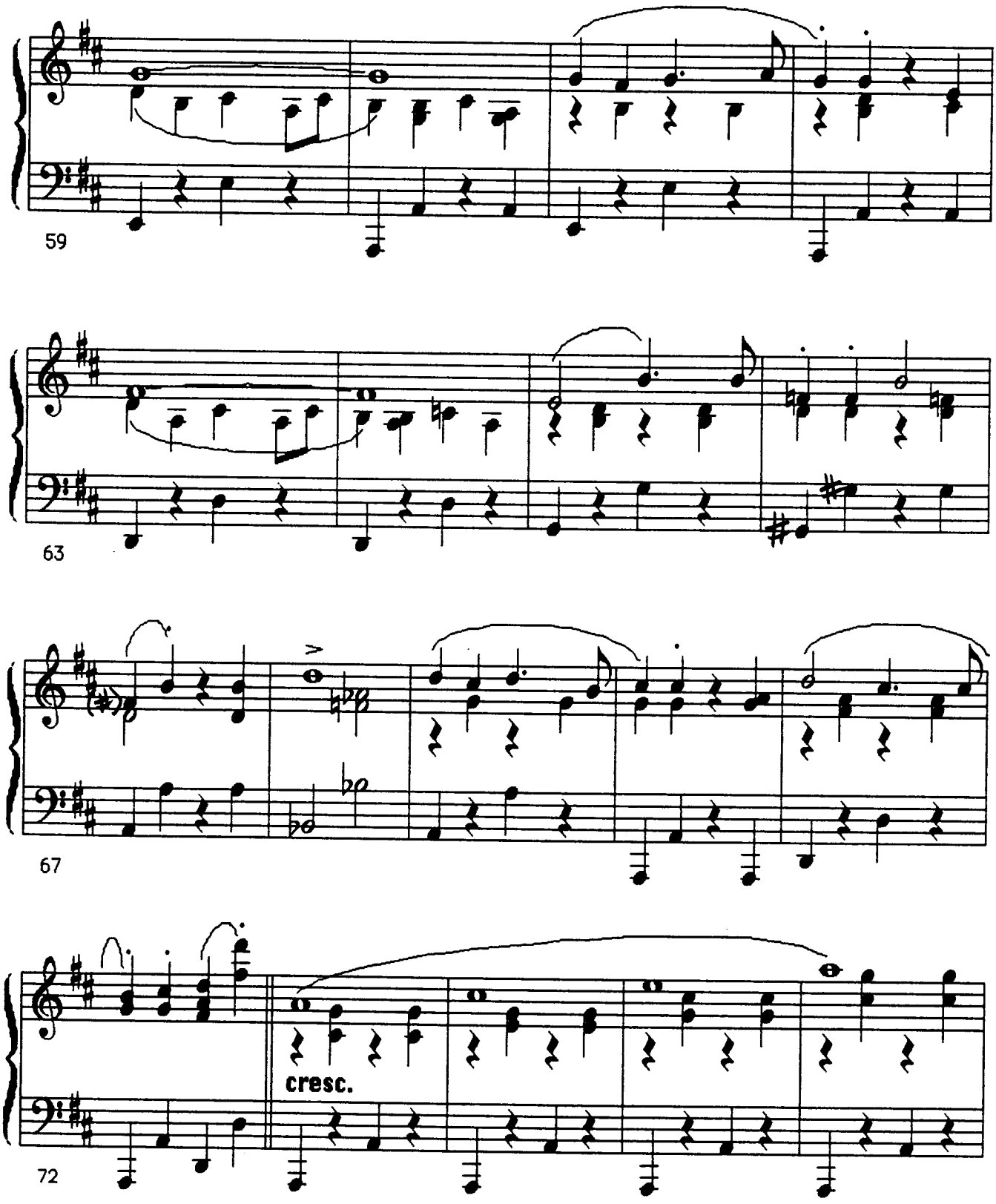


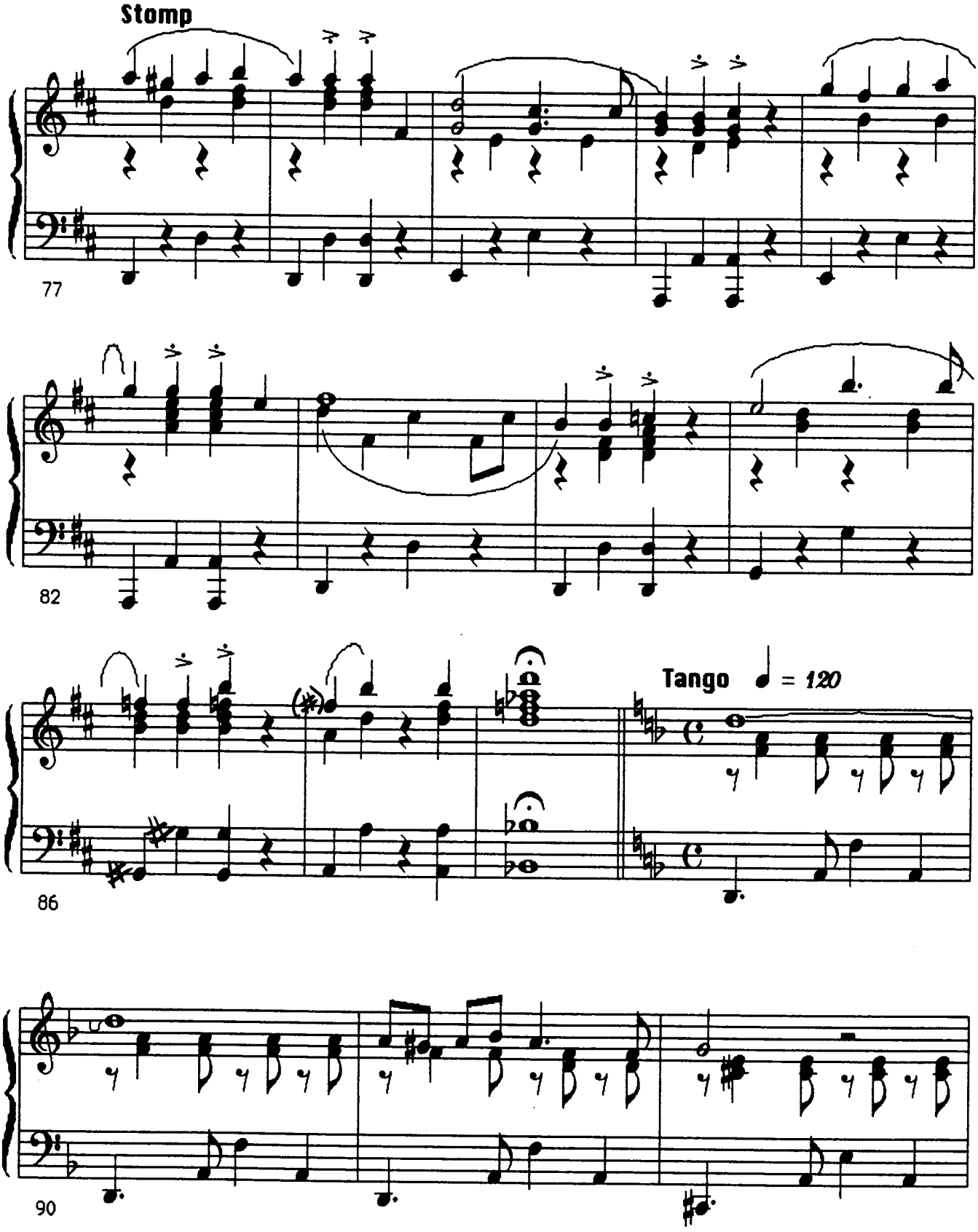

6
Step, two, three, Back - ward, ad - vance
6
9
An - y - one can learn to dance Chorus: An - y - one can learn to
9
12
dance If you give it half a chance
12

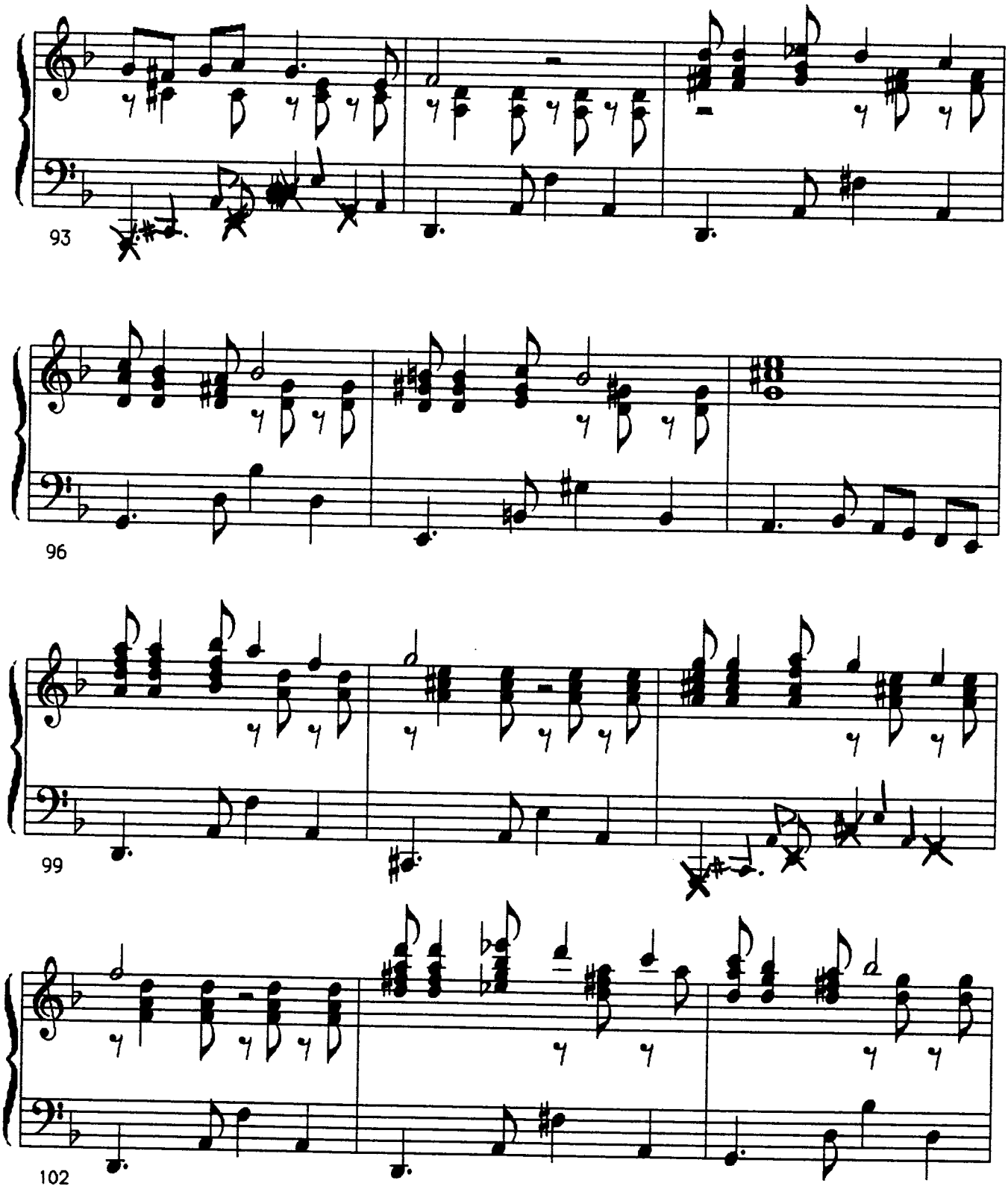

15
One, two, three, Step, two, three Back-ward, ad - vance
15
19
♩ = 160
An - y-one can learn to dance An - y - one can
19
22
3
learn to dance (is-n't it fun?) An - y - one can
3
22

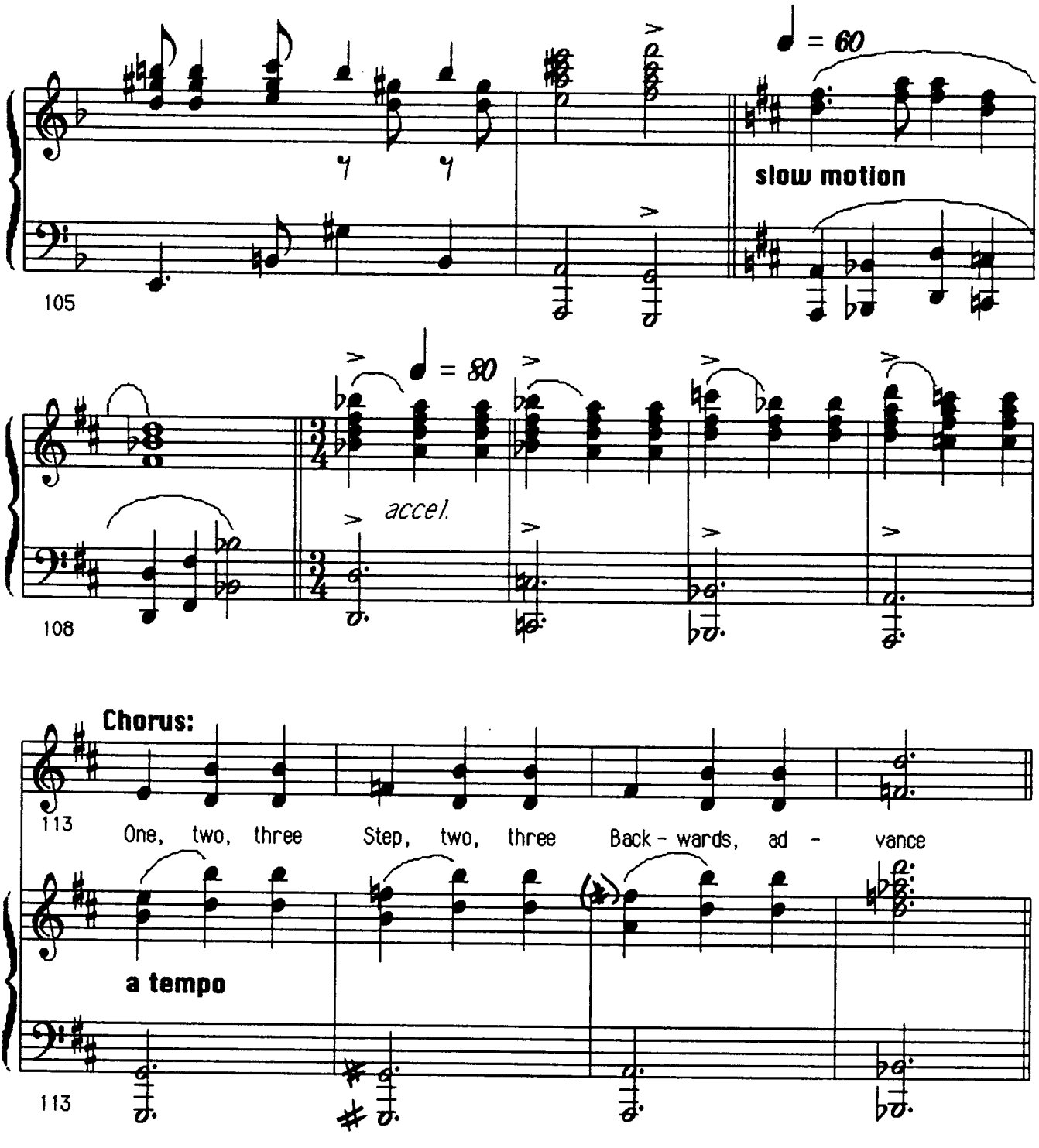

26
learn to dance (is- n't it fun?) One, two,
3
3
26
30
Step, two, back ad - vance An - y - one can learn to
30
35
dance!
3
35

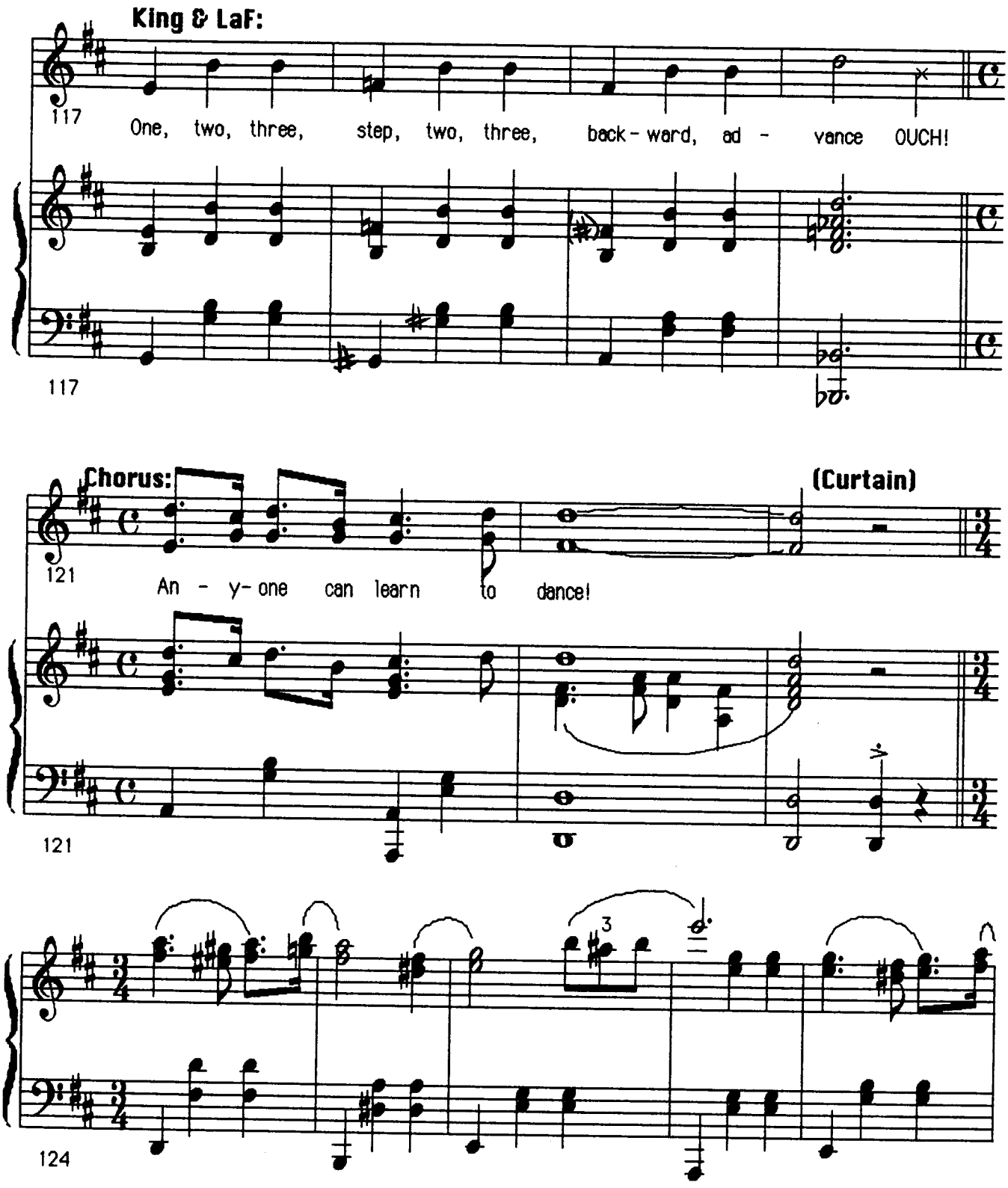

3
40
45
50
♩ = 120
55

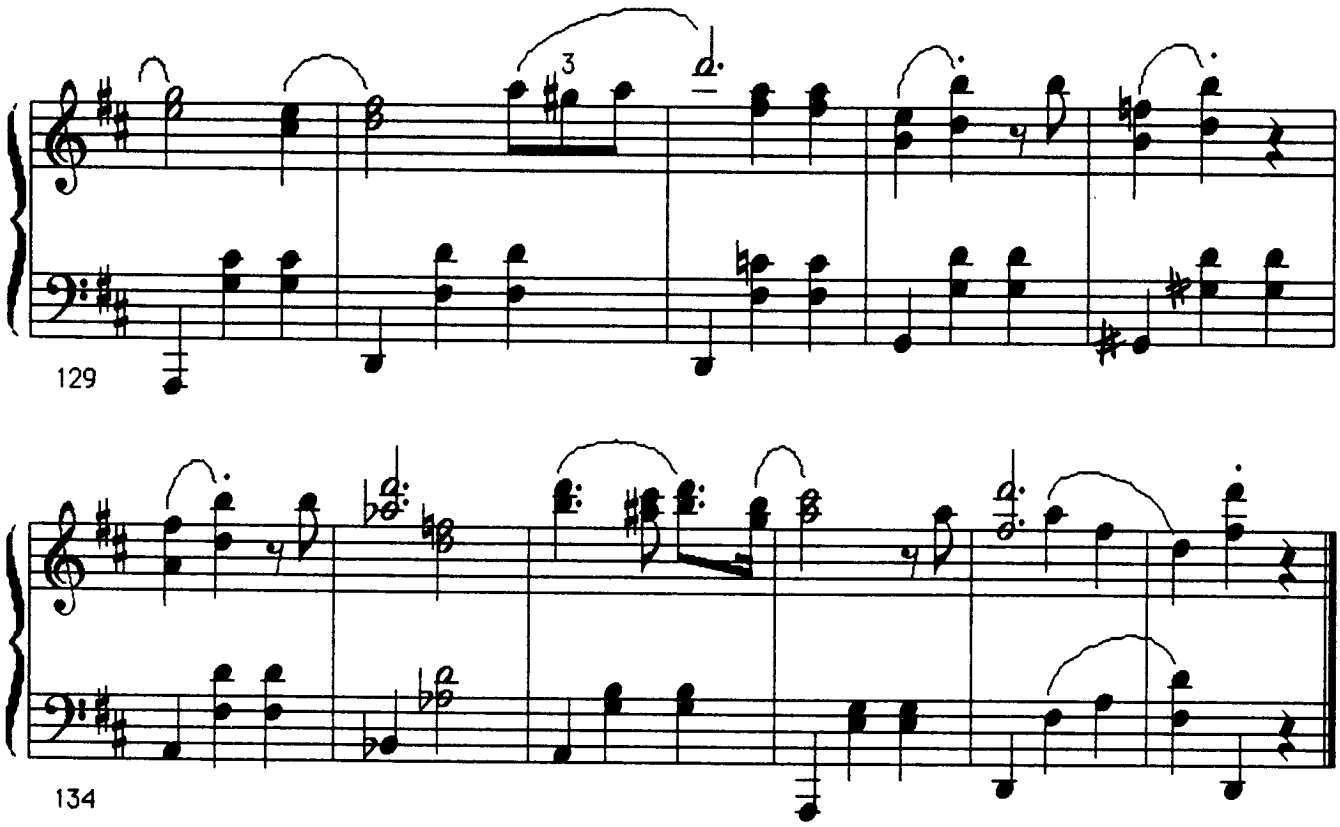

59
63
67
cresc.
72


Stomp
77
82
86
Tango
= 120
90


93
96
99
102


♩ = 60
slow motion
105
♩ = 80
accel.
108
Chorus:
113
One, two, three Step, two, three Back - wards, ad - vance
a tempo
113


King & LaF:
117
One, two, three, step, two, three, back-ward, ad - vance OUCH!
117
Chorus:
(Curtain)
121
An - y-one can learn to dance!
121
3
124


3
129
134