WALTER DAMROSCH'S *CYRANO*: OLD WORLD THEMES RECAST AS AUTHENTIC AMERICAN OPERA

"I am an American musician."

With these words, German-born Walter Damrosch opened his autobiography, *My Musical Life*, published in 1923.[1] At this time, Damrosch had been a prominent member of the American musical establishment for thirty-eight years, and would remain so for nearly another quarter of a century. That he was regarded as an American rather than a German musician is important, for when Giulio Gatti-Cazzaza commissioned Damrosch to write his opera, *Cyrano*, for the 1912-13 season of New York's Metropolitan Opera, it was one of a series of annual projects undertaken to encourage the development of native American Opera. Gatti, as he was called by his associates, became manager of the Met in 1908 and produced his first original American opera in 1910. With the support of an exceedingly wealthy Board of Directors under the leadership of Otto Kahn, he would continue to present one American work each season, with very few exceptions, until his retirement in 1935.[2] These were usually presented in March, and the notes given for the stage setting at the beginning of the second act of *Cyrano*[3] give a hint of the kind of spectacle with which the "First Nighters" were rewarded for their generosity. There can be little doubt that the Met's comfortable financial situation allowed

1. Walter Damrosch: *My Musical Life.* New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923. p. 1ff.
2. Irving Kolodin: *The Metropolitan Opera*: A candid history, 1883-1966. New York, Alfred A. Knopf. 1966. p. 219.
3. Walter Damrosch; William J. Henderson: *Cyrano*, Piano-vocal score, plate number 23691. New York, G. Schirmer, 1913.

Gatti to indulge in these experiments.[4] A complete listing of these operas can be found in Appendix I, showing *Cyrano* in historical context as the fourth production in the series.

In 1913 Walter Damrosch was fifty-one years old, in the prime of his life as a musician, already having achieved a measure of fame as conductor, entrepreneur and composer. He had one full-length opera to his credit, *The Scarlet Letter*, a faithful adaptation of Nathanial Hawthorne's novel, produced by his own Damrosch Opera Company in 1896. His third opera, *The Man Without a Country*, based, although a little more loosely, on the Arthur Guiterman story, would be produced at the Met in 1939.[5] *Cyrano*, his second opera, was given a lavish production, with elaborate staging, and full orchestra. Pasquale Amato, Frances Alda and Riccardo Martin, the principal singers in the first and only Met production of *Cyrano*, were internationally famous artists.[6] Although his other two operas were adapted from American fiction, it is not surprising, given his romantic nature, and his outspoken admiration for the French, that Damrosch should choose Edmond Rostand's play, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, as the basis for his second opera.[7] A synopsis of the play is included as Appendix III.

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4. Kolodin notes that from 1910 to 1930, the organization showed a profit each season, although this fact was not generally advertised. In fact, the Board of Directors issued periodic statements worded to give the impression that they were operating on a deficit, which tended to increase the flow of contributions.

5. Edward Ellsworth Hipsher: *American Opera and its Composers*. New York, Da Capo Press. 1978(reprint). pp. 139-148.

6. Kolodin, p. 219 ff.

7. Edmond Rostand: *Cyrano de Bergerac*, ed. Oscar Kuhns. New York, Henry Holt Co., 1899. Introduction to, p. viii.

Frances Alda, the diva who was to create the role of Roxanne, mentions in her memoirs that:

> . . . he [Damrosch] came to Gatti and asked him and Toscanini to come to his house one evening to hear an opera he had composed eight or nine years before and which he had recently revised. This was *Cyrano de Bergerac*. The libretto, in English, was by William J. Henderson, now music critic for *The Sun*. In it he had followed closely the outlines of Rostand's famous play, which Walter Hampden later produced on Broadway. Gatti and Toscanini heard Damrosch play the score through. They asked him to rewrite the Fourth Act, and when that had been done, Gatti accepted Cyrano for the Metropolitan.[8]

An article in *The New York Times* of February 22, 1913,[9] states that Edmond Rostand was indignant over what he considered unauthorized use of his material, and that Damrosch expressed surprise at this, saying that he had written to the French Society of Dramatic Authors and offered to pay Rostand a royalty, even though the play had not been copyrighted in the U.S. When the authorized version of the play, *Cyrano de Bergerac* was first presented in New York in 1898, Rostand failed to claim a United States copyright. This oversight left the work prey to indiscriminate piracy. It was subjected to a burlesque treatment in 1898 under the title: *Cyranose de Bric-a-brac*,-- "a prominent feature, amputated from the French, and disfigured without permission." Victor Herbert's operetta *Cyrano de Bergerac* was produced in Montreal at the Academy of Music in 1899.[10] It is no wonder that Rostand was out of patience by the time Damrosch's version came along. William J. Henderson's English libretto is, except for the opening of Act III, and the second scene of Act IV, a close translation of the original. Less easily

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8. Frances Alda: *Men, Women and Tenors.* Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1937. p. 186ff.

9. Ref. *New York Times Index, 1913, Jan-Jun.*

10. Edward N. Waters: *Victor Herbert: A Life in Music.* New York, Macmillan Publishing Co., 1955. Reprinted by Da Capo Press, 1978, p. 154-5.

explained is Rostand's refusal to be mollified by Damrosch's offer of royalty payments, considering the care taken by the translator in preserving the character of the work.

Damrosch made every effort to keep his opera faithful to the original play, and this in itself caused it to be excessively long. Compounding the problem were the conventions of opera: long and brilliant arias for the principal singers and fully developed choruses spaced at regular intervals. One of these choruses was already provided by Rostand in the Act I entrance of the pages: *". . . in farandole and song(en farandole et chante")* and in the general exit, to the same *farandole* rhythm, at the end of the act. Unfortunately the interpolation of the above-mentioned arias for the principals necessitated the deletion of large sections of Act I. Christian's exit, in an effort to keep the drunken Ligniere out of trouble, Cyrano's motivation for hating Monfleury-- he had seen him looking lecherously upon Roxanne-- and Cyrano's payment, with his entire month's allowance, to pacify the theater owner and the disgruntled patrons, were all sacrificed in the interest of expediency. As a result, the motives for Cyrano's actions were lost. In the play, Cyrano is a violent character, but he is also logical. In the opera he comes across as a capricious madman. Still in opera, plot is not the only concern, and *Cyrano*, the opera,[11] judging from the piano/vocal score, published by G. Schirmer in 1913, reads every bit as well as *Cyrano de Bergerac*, the play. In fact, the forward movement is such that the reader does not sense that a stage performance would run over three hours. The fast action propels the reader along and interest is maintained throughout.

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11. Damrosch/Henderson: *Cyrano*.

Damrosch employed a lush, chromatic style in his music, similar to that of other late-romantic compositions, notably the tone poems of Richard Strauss and the early works of Arnold Schoenberg. An illustration of this is the coda of the prelude to Act II, "Cyrano's Letter to Roxanne". Example 1-A:

The Act II prelude could be characterized as a *Romance* or perhaps as one movement of a sonata. Scored for solo violin and orchestra, for its first half, it has a lovely, flowing melodic line consistent with the prevailing musical style of the period around 1900. In the second half of the prelude, the solo violin is joined by the rest of the string section. As might be expected from the title given to it by the composer, this melody, which we shall call the "Letter/Love" theme, usually makes an appearance when the letters that Cyrano has written for Christian to send to Roxanne are mentioned in the text. It is also used in many instances to describe Cyrano's hidden love for Roxanne. The major occurences of the "Letter/Love" theme are listed in Appendix II. The page and measure numbers refer to those in the piano-vocal score. Sometimes the "Letter/Love" theme is imbedded in the musical texture, as in Ex. 1-B, where it flows along under a counterpoint of soloists and men's chorus, basses divided. The example gives only the portion near the end of the orchestral melody, here in B-flat major.

At other times this theme dominates. In Act II, for instance, the solo violin emerges in a melodic representation of Cyrano's false hopes, EX. 1-C:

It soars ecstatically until Roxanne declares that the man she loves is as "handsome as a young Olympian God." At the word "handsome," Cyrano's fantasy shatters, the love theme breaking off into an ascending whole tone

scale. Damrosch's use of the whole tone scale will be discussed later on. The "Letter/Love" theme also forms a brief interlude in Act IV, just before the battle scene as Cyrano is composing "Christian's" last letter, and recurs again when Christian realizes that Cyrano put his own heart into the letters he sent Roxanne and forces Cyrano to admit to his feelings. Ex. 1-D shows the opening of the melody.

Ten measures later, as Christian sings his last words, "Then tell her, and let her choose between us. . . ." the theme transmutes into a whole tone melody.

We have seen that in more than one instance the "Letter/Love" theme is superseded by, or is transformed into a whole tone motive. There are many instances in the score in which the whole tone scale is employed as a *leitmotiv* for Cyrano. A listing of these can be found in Appendix II. Most frequently the whole tone motive symbolizes Cyrano's famous nose, but at other times it indicates his wit and intellect, and at still others, his deadly sword. It appears in a long descending line at the very beginning of the Overture, Ex. 2-A:

It can also be found in some remarkable transformations in the body of the opera, such as in Act I, when it occurs in staccato eighth notes, in dotted quarters and eighth notes, and in the bass line in sixteenth notes, as Ragueneau is describing Cyrano. Ex.2-B:

The whole tone scale makes its last full-fledged appearance as Cyrano, now dying, is hallucinating, and talking to the moon. Ex. 2-E:

In both the play and the libretto there is an interplay between the violent surface of Cyrano's life and his inner spirituality. This gives rise to tender, romantic reveries, such as the Act I aria, "Lo, Paris", in which a *cantabile* melody flows effortlessly over a gently rocking accompaniment, providing the principal bass with an opportunity for *bel canto* singing. It also marks a pause in the action before the rowdy *farandole* that brings the act to a close.

The offstage chorus with soprano obligato, *Roses are fair. . . . "* that sets the scene for Act III also shows this sort of atmospheric effect. The text of *Roses are fair. . . ."* does not occur in the play-- one of the few places in which material is interpolated with no clue given as to its origin. Ex. # 3

These brief examples fairly represent the opera as a product of a particular era, that is, the first two decades of the twentieth century. Like the other operas produced by Gatti at the Met, it bears the stigma of not being able to survive in the repertoire. Only a few of these works were given a second season in which to prove themselves, and *Cyrano* was not among them. This was Gatti's usual procedure where his American operas were concerned. He gave token support to the development of native opera, but showed almost no interest in nurturing these infant creations by maintaining them in the repertoire. If *Cyrano* had been held over for another season, there would have been an opportunity to smooth out the cuts and do the re-writing Henderson thought necessary. Gatti, who was first and foremost a businessman, obviously believed that the risk of time, money, and artistic talent on only five performances made good economic sense and validated the expenditure. He recorded his feelings about *Cyrano*, with characteristic

reserve and pragmatism, in his memoirs:[12]

> The third American opera we presented was Walter Damrosch's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, with a very good libretto by the music critic, William J. Henderson of *The New York Sun*. The premiere was February 27, 1913, and the leading roles were taken by Frances Alda and Pasquale Amato. The production in its ensemble proved to be interesting owing to a most appropriate cast and a picturesque mise-en-scene. Damrosch is a good musician with a good experience of theatre.

The most unfortunate outcome of Gatti's failure to keep *Cyrano* in the repertoire of the Met is that it has been allowed to come down to us as evidence of some lack of talent or imagination on Damrosch's part. In a recent, exhaustive book on the Damrosch family, George Whitney Martin dismisses his operatic ventures in one paragraph(much less than that given to his discreet love affair with dancer Isadora Duncan):[13]

> "...critics generally thought it the best of the four operas by Americans...yet produced at the Met... it had only five performances, again because the composer's hand was not practiced. Despite some attractive music, the opera ran too long, nearly four hours after cutting; and was theatrically unsure, the play's famous balcony scene being one of the opera's least effective. And finally, there was the disability affecting all American composers at the time: there was very little of anything American in the style."

But a contrasting, kindly criticism is the substance of a letter from composer Charles Martin Loeffler, who was, like Walter Damrosch, a naturalized American, and a friend of the family. He writes:[14]

> Your orchestration sounded superbly. Your choruses blended wonderfully with the orchestra. . . I understand that you have already made considerable cuts, still do I advise cutting out more. Four Acts is a long proposition . . . .

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12. Gatti-Casazza, Giulio: *Memories of the Opera*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941. p. 403.

13. George Whitney Martin: *The Damrosch Dynasty*, Boston, Houghton Miffln Co., 1983. pp. 287-88

14. Damrosch, *My Musical Life* pp. 151-153

. . . . There are really extraordinary effects in this final Act of yours. . . . "

We have seen from the documentary evidence presented here that the failure of this opera to be repeated in subsequent seasons was due more to the manner in which new, particularly American, works were regarded by the management of the opera house than any lack of creativity on Damrosch's part. Another factor in this neglect has been the significant bias of music critics and historians whose influence extends to the present day. This paper should provide a new starting point for research for those interested in the revival of long-neglected American operas. What is, or was then, "American" style and effective presentation is a subject that can be left for subsequent investigation.

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The New York Times, February 22, 1913; New York.

APPENDIX I

American Works presented by the Metropolitan Opera: 1912-1935

Note: Dates indicate First Performance. If opera was presented for more than one season, it is so indicated.

Frederick Converse: *The Pipe of Desire.* March 31, 1910
Victor Herbert: *Natoma.* February 28, 1911.
Horatrio Parker: *Mona.* March 14, 1912
Walter Damrosch: *Cyrano.* February 27, 1913
Reginald de Koven: *The Canterbury Pilgrims.* March 8, 1917
Charles Wakefield Cadman: *Shanewis.* March 23, 1918. 2 seasons
Joseph C. Briel: *The Legend.* March 12, 1919
Henry Hadley: *Cleopatra's Night.* January 31, 1920
Reginald de Koven: *Rip Van Winkle.* January 28, 1921
Deems Taylor: *The King's Henchmen.* February 16, 1929. 3 seasons
Deems Taylor: *Peter Ibbetson.* February 7, 1931. 2 seasons
Louis Gruenberg: *Emperor Jones.* January 7, 1933. 2 seasons
Howard Hanson: *Merry Mount,* February 10, 1934
John Lawrence Seymour: *In The Pasha's Garden.* January 24, 1935

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Appendix II

Damrosch, Walter, Henderson, W.J.: *Cyrano*, Piano-Vocal score, Schirmer, N.Y., 1913.

MAJOR OCCURRENCES OF THE "LETTER/LOVE" THEME

p. 107-09 incl.(Prelude to Act II): Ex.1-A
" 123: meas. 5-18
" 125-30: Ex. 1-B
" 161-163(Cyrano's false hopes): Ex. 1-C
" 212-13. begins on meas 12, p.212 at change of key to G-flat.
" 288: meas. 9-12
" 289: " 1-5
" 290: 1-2
" 340: " 1-8
" 342: " 20(?)
" 346: " 1-13(Interlude, Act IV)
" 350: " 10-13
" 368: " 9-14
" 369-70: " 15-16: Ex. 1-D Goes to whole-tone at meas. 7, p. 370
" 372: " 5-10(?)
" 373: " 1-3(?)
" 374: " 2-5(?)
" 386-89: " 4-17. Clarinet states theme in key of D, meas.4, p. 386
" 390: " 10-17, in key of C-flat
" 393: " 12-17.

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MAJOR OCCURRENCES OF THE WHOLE-TONE SCALE

NOTE: x's indicate passages that directly relate to Cyrano; x's, those that do not, or only indirectly; (?)self-explanatory

p. 1: meas. 1-3(Overture)(x) Ex. 2-A
" 8: " 3(x)
" 20-21 (x) Ex. 2-B
" 23:" 3-4, 5(x)
" 33: " 11(?)
" 47: " 4-12(x)
" 56: " 1-2(x)
" 57: " 16(x)
" 58: " 15-16(x)
" 62: " 10,12(x)
" 67: " 13-14(x)
" 68: " 1-2(x)
" 70: " 1-2(x)
" 75: " 7-9(x)
" 76: " 17-22(x)
" 78: " 23-24(x)
" 79: " 1-5(x)
" 84: " 6,8(x)
" 105: " 6-7(x)
" 135: " 5-6(x)
" 138: " 11-12(x)
" 139: " 4,5(x)
" 143: " 4,5(x)
" 144: " 9-11(x)
" 163: " 17-18(x) Ex. 2-C
" 180: " 4-6(x)
" 186: " 5-6(x)
" 194: " 16-17(x)
" 195: " 2, 4-5(x)
" 196: " 9(x)
" 197: " 9-11(x)
" 198: " 13-15(x)
" 199: " 1-16(x)
" 200: " 9-11(x)
" 201: " 17-19(x)
" 202: " 1-3(x)
" 211: " 9-11(x)
" 214: " 14-17(x)
" 215: " 6-8(x)
" 216: " 1(x)
" 230: " 6, 8-12(x)
" 252: " 9-10,12(x)
" 253: " 1(x)
" 267: " 9-10(x)
" 273: " 5-6(x) Ex. 2-E
" 282: " 9-11(x)
" 285: " 5-6(x)
" 295: " 1-3(x)
" 296: " 3-4(x)
" 304: " 9(x)(?)
" 307: " 18-19(x)
" 308: " 7(x)
" 309: " 8(x)
" 324: " 8-9(x)
" 325: " 8-14(x)
" 335: " 7-10(x)
" 367: " 16-17(x)
" 370: " 7-13(x) Ex. 2-D
" 371: " 1-8(x)
" 372: " 1, 11-12(x)
" 373: " 9(x)
" 377: " 3-8, 11(x)(?)
" 398: " 1-3(x)
" 402: " 3-6(x) Ex. 2-E

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APPENDIX III: SYNOPSES

Cyrano de Bergerac play by Edmond Rostand

Act I

The year is 1640. Scene: The Hall of the Hotel de Bourgogne, formerly a grand palace, but in the XVII Century it was used for theater productions. People are waiting for a play to begin. Christian de Neuvelette enters with a slightly inebriated friend, Ligniere. Christian wants Ligniere to identify a lady with whom Christian has fallen madly in love, from a distance. The lady turns out to be Roxanne, a beautiful intellectual. Christian is a brave soldier, but has no way with words. His affair with Roxanne seems doomed from the beginning. A powerful nobleman, Comte de Guiche, arrives. He is married himself, but is trying to have Roxanne married to Valvert, a nobleman described as "accomodating." Ragueneau, a jack-of-all-trades, who at present is running "The Bakery of the Poets", enters, looking for Cyrano de Bergerac, an officer in the Gascon Guards. Cyrano has threatened to stop the play if a certain actor, Montfleury, appears. Cyrano is described as a fighter, poet, and philospher, who is very sensitive about his large nose, and will fight a duel if a person so much as looks at it. "His sword is half the shears of Fate." The play begins, only to be stopped by the arrival of Cyrano, who chases the unfortunate actor off the stage. The crowd is angry until Cyrano throws his purse to the theater manager. They all get their money back, and everyone is happy, except the actor, and Valvert, who insults Cyrano's nose. They fight a duel, in which Cyrano simultaneously composes a ballad, and at the end of which, Valvert falls wounded. Roxanne is concerned, because Cyrano, who is her cousin, has now made an enemy of the powerful de Guiche. When all the nobles have gone, Cyrano's friend, Le Bret, discovers that Cyrano has given the theater manager his entire month's allowance, and cannot afford to buy dinner. Cyrano also tells him why he stopped the play. He had seen the fat actor, Montfleury, leering at Roxanne. Le Bret realizes that Cyrano is hopelessly in love. At that moment, Roxanne's duenna appears, saying that the lady wishes to speak privately with him after Mass the next morning. Cyrano tells her that he will meet them at Ragueneau's bakery at seven the next morning. Ligniere, the soldier who was with Christian earlier, and is now more drunk than ever, comes in, saying he has been accosted by a gang of men in the pay of Comte de Guiche. There are supposed to be a hundred of them. Cyrano goes off to fight them single-handed, followed by a motley entourage of actors and musicians.

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Cyrano opera by Walter Damrosch

Act I

Scene: Same as in play. Christian enters with LeBret. Asks him to identify the lady who sits in a certain box. LeBret tells him it is Roxanne: ". . .whose wit is like a sword, with words alone her heart you may attack. . . ." Roxanne arrives, sings: "Oh, woo a woman not. . . ." Chorus takes up the theme of her aria. Comte de Guiche enters, monopolizes Roxanne. The play begins. Montfleury, a very fat actor, begins declaiming his lines. Cyrano's voice, offstage, orders him to stop. De Guiche comes down from Roxanne's box and castigates Cyrano for pushing his big nose in where it doesn't belong. They fight a duel, with Cyrano composing a ballad as he fences. De Guiche is wounded, and is carried off by members of his entourage. Roxanne warns Cyrano that he has made a powerful enemy. After the nobles leave, Cyrano confides to LeBret that he is in love with Roxanne. Sings: "Yea, even this(his monstrous nose) may smell the budding spring. . . ." Roxanne's duenna comes in. Tells Cyrano that Roxanne wants to talk to him after Mass the next morning. Cyrano is transported with joy. LeBret, who has left the theater, comes back in to tell Cyrano that some of de Guiche's men are waiting to ambush him. He is eager to fight. When the door is opened, Cyrano contemplates the peaceful sight of Paris by moonlight, singing a cantabile aria: "Lo, Paris that sleeps-- and is breathless in silence and midnight mist. . . ." Then he goes out with LeBret, the actors and musicians, to fight de Guiche's men.

Act II

Scene: The "Bakery of the Poets," operated by Ragueneau and his shrewish wife Lise. Ragueneau is a poet himself, and in the habit of feeding his starving poet friends. This causes dissention between him and Lise. She makes paper bags out of their manuscripts. Cyrano arrives demanding to know the time. It is six A.M., and he is impatient for seven, and the rendesvous with Roxanne. Thinking that by some miracle Roxanne returns his feelings, he writes her a letter, intending to give it to her when she comes, as he is too reticent to declare his love in person. While he is in the throes of composition, Ragueneau recites his poem: "A Recipe for Almond Tarts." When Roxanne arrives, she and Cyrano reminisce about their carefree childhood, when they used to play together. She notices that he has hurt his hand(in the fight with the hundred ruffians) and bandages it with her handkerchief, as she used to do when they were children. She is in love, but with Christian. She has discovered that Christian is in Cyrano's company of the Guards, and she begs Cyrano to become Christian's friend and keep him safe from harm. She leaves, never knowing how devastated Cyrano is by her thoughtless words. De Guiche arrives, and then the Gascon Cadets with their captain. Cyrano declaims the ballad of: "The Cadets of Gascoyne." De Guiche discovers that it was Cyrano who dispersed the gang of men he sent to do in Ligniere. He asks Cyrano, in a very patronizing manner, if he would like to be his resident poet. Cyrano refuses, and shrugs off de Guiche's hint that he might be able to induce Cardinal Richlieu to be his patron. Cyrano is his own man. Christian enters. In his ignorance and bravado he makes enraging references to Cyrano's nose. Cyrano asks everyone to leave except for Christian. The cadets think he is going to chop Christian into sausage. Instead, he embraces him as a friend, and offers to help him win Roxanne by composing the love letters that Christian is too stupid to write for himself. When the cadets come back in, they are astounded to see that Christian is still alive.

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Act II

Scene: Same as play. Cyrano arrives at the "Bakery of the Poets." Ragueneau is directing his apprentices and arguing with his wife, Lise. Cyrano sits down to write a letter to Roxanne. An admirer of Lise's, a Musketeer, arrives, and then some of Ragueneau's poet friends. Cyrano's voice continues with the letter in all the ensuing hub-bub. Ragueneau is busy feeding the poets, Lise is flirting with the Musketeer. Cyrano sees Roxanne approaching. He and Ragueneau chase everyone out. Roxanne's duenna comes in. Cyrano gives her a bag of sweet rolls and tells her to eat them outside. Roxanne enters. Sings of their childhood together: *Andante Semplice*. Then she reveals that she is in love with a Gascon Cadet. Cyrano mistakenly thinks she is declaring her love for him. Then the blow falls. It is Christian she loves. She begs Cyrano to look after Christian. He agrees, but his heart is broken. The duenna comes in looking for more sweet rolls. Ragueneau distracts her. Quartet follows, with Roxanne singing joyfully of her love, Ragueneau plying the duenna with sweets, and Cyrano bemoaning his fate. De Guiche arrives, willing to make peace with Cyrano. He is the new commander of the Cadets. Cyrano introduces them to him, and they all sing: "We are the Cascony Cadets." Christian has come in. Even though the Cadets warn him about "nose jokes," he persists in baiting Cyrano. Cyrano tells the Cadets to leave him alone with Christian. They fear the worst: "What shall we see when we come back? Yon idiot's dust in ev'ry crack!-- " Instead, Cyrano embraces Christian and offers to help him win Roxanne. The sing a duet. Cyrano: "If I had half your manly beauty. . . ." Christian: "Oh, for the cunning and the craft of tongue. . . ." The Cadets come back in and are amazed to find that Christian is still alive. The Musketeer comes in, and hearing this, is emboldened to make a "nose joke." Cyrano knocks him down. The Cadets rejoice. They were afraid that Cyrano was mellowing.

Act III

Scene: the square in front of Roxanne's house. Roxanne and her duenna are on their way to a lecture at the house across the square. Cyrano appears with two musicians and serenades Roxanne. He has won their services on a bet, but can't stand them because they play out of tune. He sends them off to serenade his enemy, Montfleury the actor. He asks Roxanne about Christian. She is ecstatic in his praise. No man ever wooed a woman with such poetic conceits. The duenna interrupts them, saying that de Guiche is coming. Cyrano goes into the house. De Guiche, who is also in love with Roxanne, has come to bid her farewell. He has been made a colonel of the Gascon Guards, and is now Cyrano's and Christian's commanding officer. Roxanne tries to persuade him to leave Cyrano and the cadets behind when he goes to beseige Arras—as the best way of revenging himself on the action-loving Cyrano. She pretends to agree to a rendevous with de Guiche. He leaves. Roxanne and her duenna go across the square to the lecture, and Christian enters. He and Cyrano are supposed to rehearse his "lines" for that evening. Christian has changed his mind. He is tired of having words put in his mouth. When Roxanne returns from the lecture, she sits on a bench with Christian. He can't think of a thing to say. He expresses his passion in a physical way, and she fends him off. She wants to be courted with more beautful poetry, and she is very disappointed in him. She goes into the house, leaving him desolate. Cyrano tells him that all is not lost. The musicians have returned. Cyrano tells them to go to the corner and play as a signal if they see anyone coming—a sad tune if it is a man, a merry one if it is a woman. Then he throws pebbles at Roxanne's window until she comes out on the balcony. He feeds Christians lines to him until she begins to soften. Finally, however, it becomes too awkward. Pushing Christian aside, he pours out his heart to Roxanne. Roxanne is completely fooled. She thinks that love has brought about the "transformation" in Christain, even changing the timbre of his voice. Cyrano stays in the shadows, not letting her see his face. The musicians start to play—one a sad tune, and the other a merry one. A Capucian monk enters, seeking Roxanne's house. Cyrano misdirects him. Christian, out of his mind with passion, is determined to kiss Roxanne. Cyrano, out of his mind with jealousy, reluctantly acquiesces. Christian climbs to the balcony and claims his kiss while Cyrano watches, suffering, in the shadows. The monk, having discovered the ruse, returns. He has a letter for Roxanne. It is from de Guiche, containing details of a proposed assignation, but the wily Roxanne, pretending to read it aloud, changes the wording. The old monk is ordered to marry her to Christian immediately. The simple old man is delighted by the task. When de Guiche arrives a few minutes later, he is too late. Cyrano, his face still in the shadows, plays a madman—quoting lines from his own work: "Les etats de la lune," until Chrstian and Roxanne are man and wife. When de Guiche discovers the deception, he flies into a rage and orders Cyrano and the Gascon Cadets to the battlefront. Roxanne is in despair. She takes Cyrano aside and tries to extract a promise from him that he will protect Christian. He tells her that he will do his best. Roxanne also says that he must see that Christian writes a letter to her every day. That, at least, will be accomplished, he promises.

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Act III

Scene: Same as in play. Overture: *Andante tranquillo.* Offstage chorus: *Roses are ever fair. . .so is love sweet. . . .* Roxanne, also offstage sings a countermelody ending: ". . .*Death and life are at Love's feet.* Roxanne and her duennea come out of a house across the street from Roxanne's house.. Roxanne sends the duenna away and sits by the fountain dreaming of Christian's poetic letters. The duenna comes back to warn her that de Guiche is coming. He has come to bid her fairwell. The Gascony Cadets are leaving for the battlefront. Roxanne tries to convince him that he could revenge himself on Cyrano by keeping the Cadets out of the battle. De Guiche thinks she is concerned about his(de Guiche's) safety. He decides that Arras can wait while he has his affair with Roxanne. He leaves, saying he will return late that night. Roxanne is prepared to sacrifice herself for Christian's sake. She goes into the house. Cyrano and Christian arrive. Cyrano wants Christian to rehearse his lines for that evening, but Christian refuses. He is tired of mouthing another man's words. Cyrano is doubtful, but assents. Roxanne comes out singing wistfully that it is two nights since she has seen Christian. When he comes out of the shadows she greets him with joy, but she is soon bored by his clumsy protestations of love. She goes into the house. Christian begs for help from Cyrano, who directs him to call to Roxanne. When the lady appears on her balcony, Cyrano feeds Christian his lines until it becomes impossibly awkward. Then he pushes Christian aside and speaks from his own heart. In the darkness Roxanne thinks that Christian is still speaking. Cyrano and Roxanne sing a duet: *The night is holy. . .* Then Christian climbs up to the balcony and kisses Roxanne while below in the shadows Cyrano sings: *Turn in my heart, thou deadly knife of woe! Dives he, I Lazarus below.* A Capuchin monk comes with a letter to Roxanne from de Guiche. It is really about the assignation, but Roxanne on discovering that the monk has no notion of its contents, tells him that the letter commands him to marry her and Christian. Cyrano delays de Guiche's arrival by pretending to be mad. Sings of his fanciful journey to the moon. When de Guiche discovers that he has been tricked, he goes back on his promise to keep the Cadets away from the battlefront. Roxanne begs Cyrano to look out for Christian. He can't promise to keep him from harm but he will see that Roxanne gets a letter from him every day.

Act IV

Scene: The battlefield before Arras. The cadets are exhausted and starving. Cyrano appears, having risked his life once again to post Roxanne's daily letter. The roll of drums presages a coming battle. Cyrano shows Christian the next letter that will go to Roxanne. Christian takes it and puts it in his pocket. A coach arrives--"on the King's service". Roxanne is inside. She couldn't bear to be away from Christian any longer, and the gallant Spaniards have given her safe-conduct through the lines. She has brought baskets of food for the starving Cadets. When she is able to talk to Christian alone, she tells him how profoundly she has been affected by his daily letters. She tells him that she would love him for his beautiful soul, even if he were ugly. Christian sends her to cheer up the other cadets. He takes Cyrano aside and tells him what Roxanne has said. "Let her choose between us!" he says. He goes out. Roxanne tells Cyrano the truth. The man she loves is the writer of the letters. They hear the sound of gunfire. Christian is carried in, mortally wounded. The Cadets try to hide him from Roxanne, but she notices, runs to him, and finds the letter in his jacket pocket. Christian dies, assured of Roxanne's eternal devotion. The scene ends in the confusion of battle.

Act V

Scene: The garden of a convent. The time is fifteen years later. Roxanne, dressed in black, enters with her embroidery. She sits under a tree, working on her tapestry and waiting for Cyrano who visits her every week. De Guiche enters, and begs her forgiveness, to which she graciously assents. Le Bret comes in, followed by Ragueneau. Ragueneau takes Le Bret aside and tells him that Cyrano has been gravely injured in an accident. He suspects foul play. Cyrano has many enemies. Unaware of this, Roxanne wonders why Cyrano is late. Cyrano enters, his bandaged head hidden under his great plumed hat. He begins to recite the court news for Roxanne--"Cyrano's Gazette," as he has been doing for the past fifteen years. When he includes an item about his own death, she realizes that something is wrong. Cyrano becomes faint. Roxanne, alarmed, wants to call the nuns from the convent, but Cyrano assures her that it is merely one of his old war wounds--from the siege of Arras--acting up. Roxanne reminds him that they all have wounds from the siege of Arras, but not all are the kind that show. Hers is Christian's last "letter," which she carries next to her heart. Cyrano reminds her of her promise to let him read it some day. She takes it out and gives it to him. He starts reading it aloud in the twilight. After awhile Roxanne realizes that it is too dark for him to be reading it from the page. He knows it by heart. As she listens, it comes to her that this is the voice she heard under her balcony years ago, and that Cyrano is the man she truly loves. Le Bret and Ragueneau come in and tell her that Cyrano is dying. Coming to see her has ruined any hope of his recovery. Roxanne is distraught that she has been the cause of Cyrano's suffering. He smiles and reassures her:

"Je vous dois d'avoir, eu tout au moins, une amie. Grace a vous une robe a passe dan ma vie." They have been friends, and one woman's gown has rustled across his life.

Le Bret points to the rising moon. "Another friend has come to see you." "I see," says Cyrano, looking at the moon. Roxanne:

"Je n'aimais qu'un seul etre and je le perds deux fois!" "I have loved only one, and I have lost him twice."

Cyrano, delirious, fights an imaginary duel with Death--and falls into the arms of Le Bret and Ragueneau. Roxanne kisses him.

Curtain

Act IV, Scene 1.

Scene: same as the play. Cyrano returns from posting a letter to Roxanne. This is dangerous, as he has to go through the enemy lines. He immediately sets to work on another letter amid the morning clatter of the camp. Christian comes in. Reads Cyrano's letter and notices that there are tears on it. Realizes that Cyrano has been putting his own heart into the letters. He is very upset. Puts the letter into his jacket pocket. Ragueneau arrives in a carriage with Roxanne. They have brought baskets of food to the Cadets. Roxanne couldn't bear to be apart from Christian any longer. She has come at an awkward time, as the battle is beginning. She is not afraid, and will be at Christian's side whatever happens. Sings: *Thy letters, thy dear letters writ in tears. . . .* Tells Christian that she would still love him even if he were ugly. He realizes that it is really Cyrano that she loves. Sends her off to cheer up the Cadets. Tells Cyrano that Roxanne will have to choose between them. He rushes out and is immediately killed. The Cadets try to keep her from finding out, but she sees them trying to conceal Christian's body. Kneeling beside him, she finds the farewell letter in his pocket. Cyrano's lips are sealed. As the battle begins in earnest, Roxanne falls in a faint. Rageneu carries her out of danger. Cyrano sings: *Fairwell to light and life!— Now welcome death!* The Gascony Cadets make a brave charge, singing a reprise of *The Gascony Cadets*, "Like the whirlwind, gust on gust, charge the Gascony Cadets!" but they are hoplessly outnumbered. De Guiche is among those killed. Cyrano falls wounded.

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Interlude.

Scene 2. A convent in the vicinity of Arras. All is calm. The sun is setting. The stage is filled with nuns in attitudes of prayer. They sing: *Adoremus te. . . .* Ragueneau and Roxanne enter, weary and disheveled. Roxanne begs the Mother Superior to give them shelter. They have been fleeing from the battle all day long. The Mother Superior tells them that they will find peace here, although the convent has not been completely untouched by the war. There are two wounded soldiers inside. She takes Roxanne and Ragueneau into the convent. Cyrano, dying, comes out and sinks down on a garden seat. Sings: *So runs the silly world away. . . .* Roxanne comes out and is shocked by his appearance. He tells her he is merely exhausted from the long retreat. She shows him Christian's last letter. He takes it, but does not look at it. It's too dark to read anyway. Sings: *Today will come the end of time for me. . . .* Roxanne recognizes the voice she heard under her balcony. They sing a duet: "And so twas you. . . . Though Cyrano denies it, she knows that it is true. Le Bret comes out. Cyrano shouldn't be out of bed. He is bleeding to death.

Roxanne: *My God! and I have hurt you, have wrecked your life!*

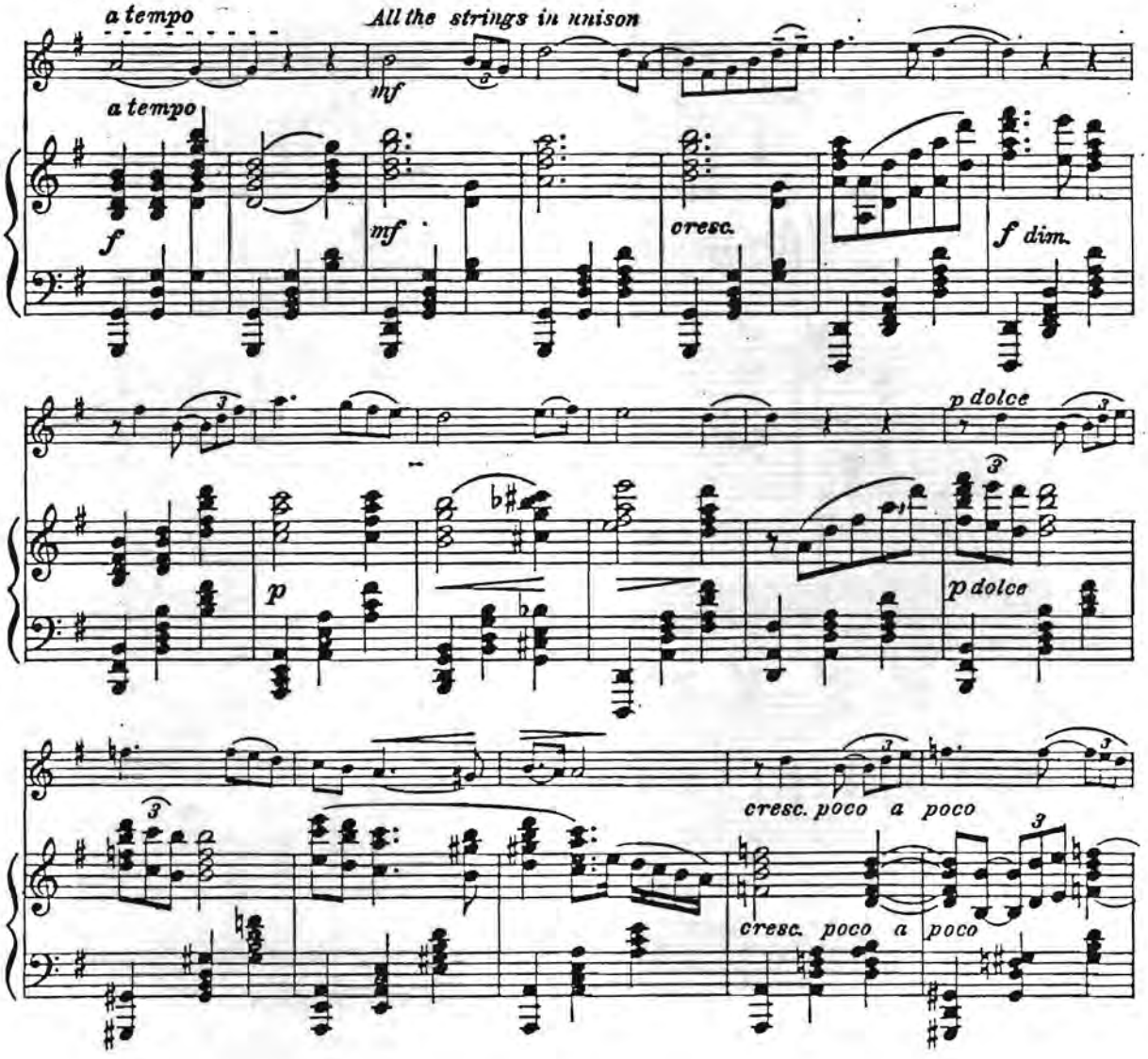
Cyrano: *Nay,— do thyself no wrong! Because of thee across my life— has passed the silken rustle of a woman's gown.—*

Cyrano hallucinates that the "Lady Moon" is waiting for him. He staggers to his feet. He will not meet Death lying down. Leans against the tree and draws his sword. Sings:

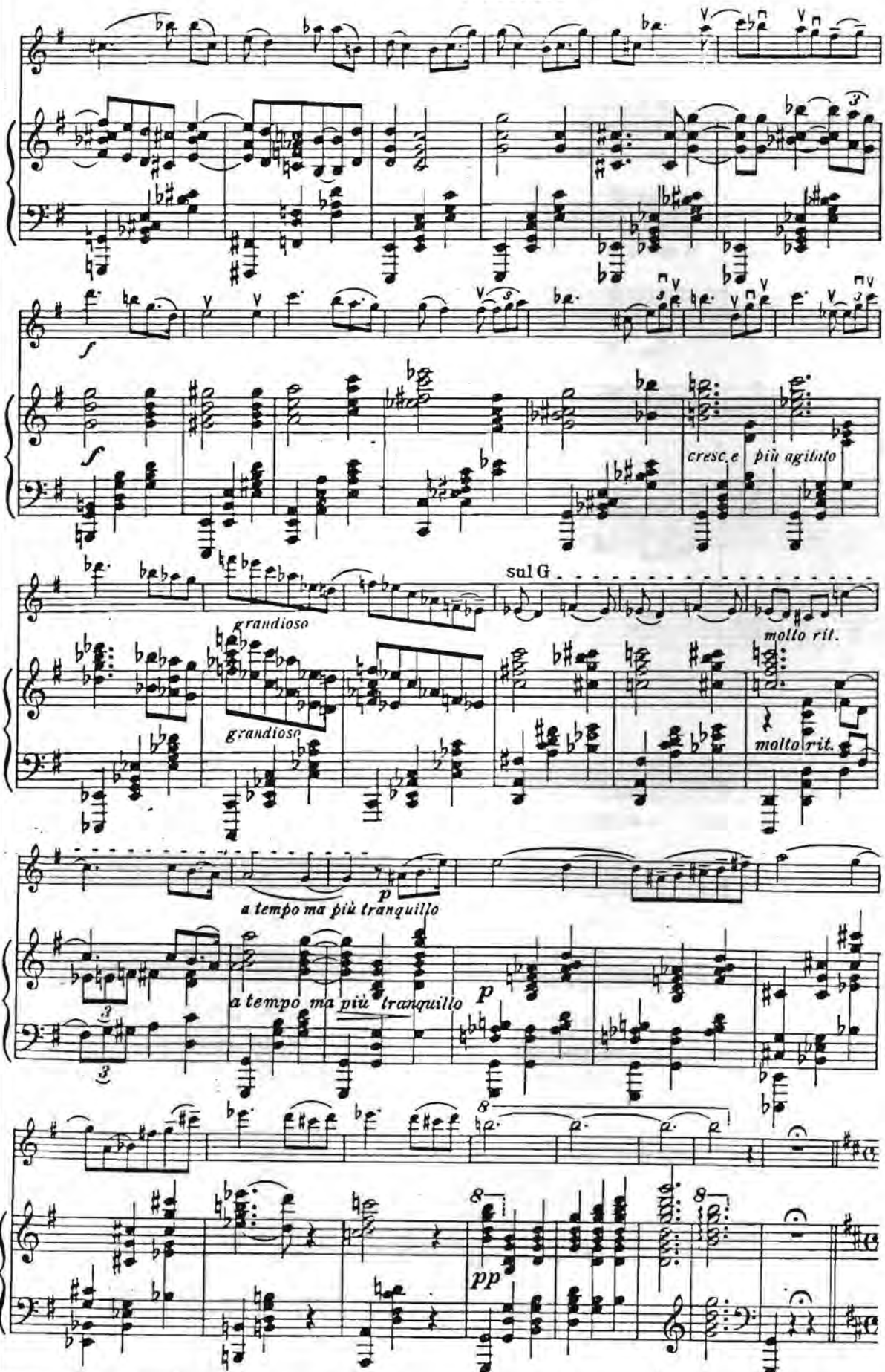
What, madame(the moon) do you mock— me?— But when tonight I pass the jewelled gates of Paradise and face the crystal throne of Majesty inscrutable, I shall salute the Infinite on high with that which enters heaven without stain— He falls. Roxanne, kissing him: *And that shall be?* Cyrano: *My soldier's snow white plume.* He dies.

Curtain

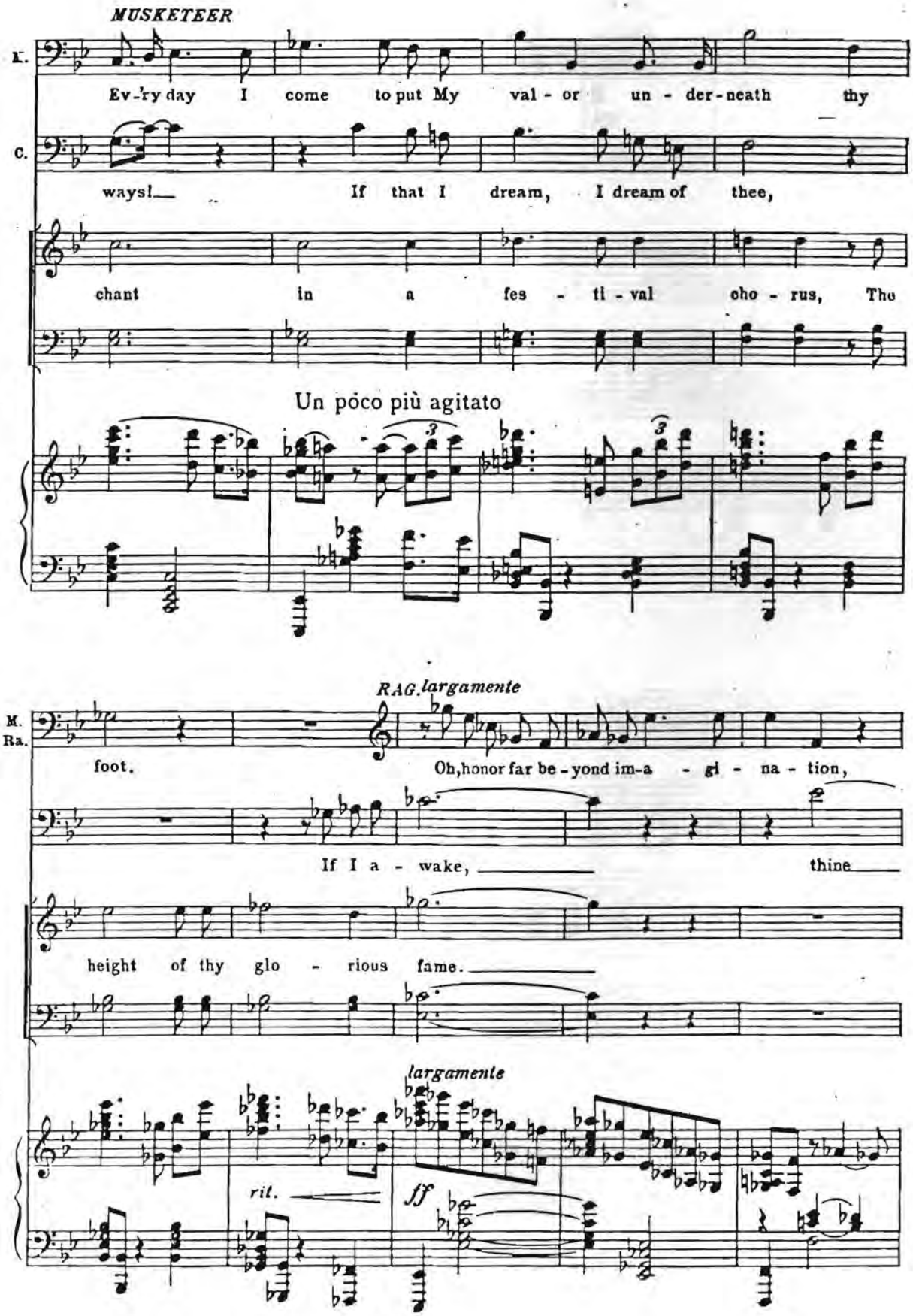
Example 1A
"Letter/Love" theme in Act II Prelude)



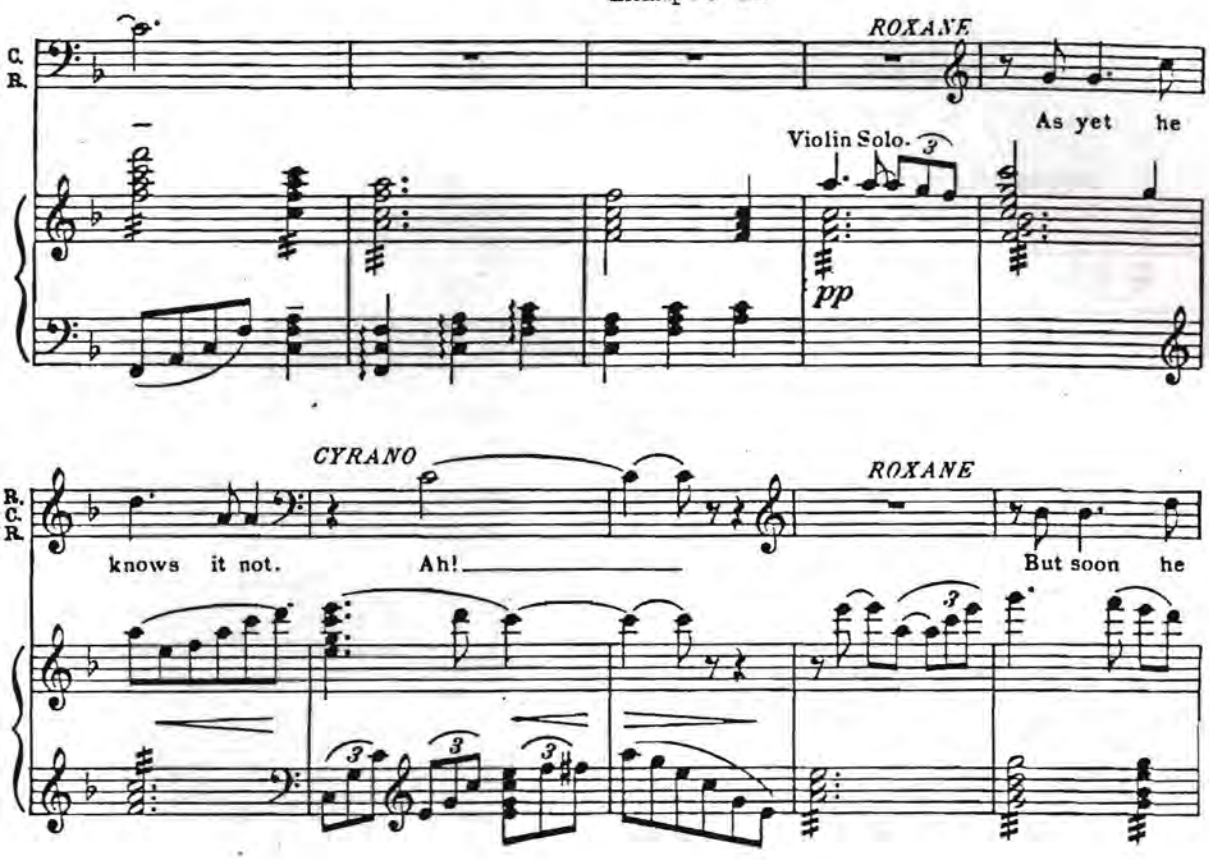
Example 1A
Concluded



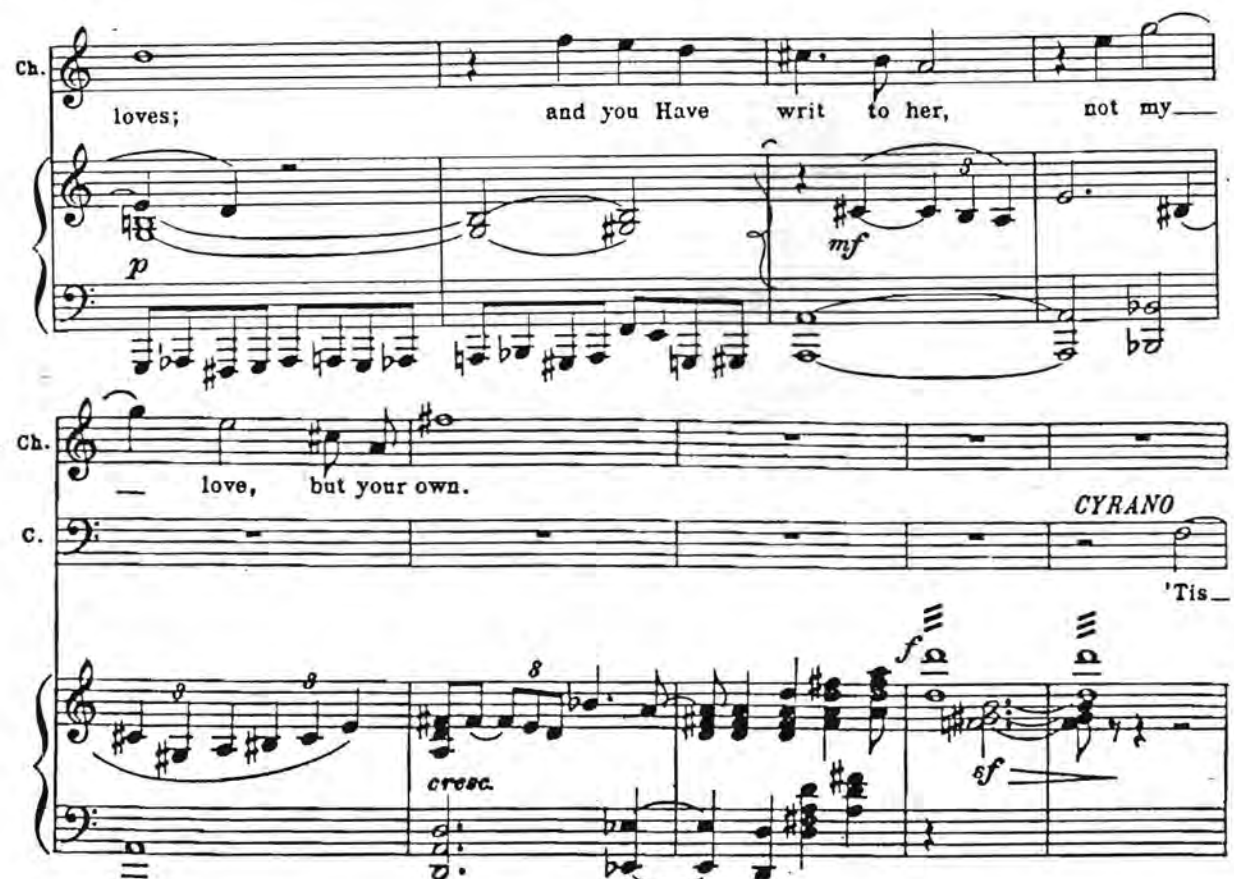
Example 1B
"Letter/Love" theme against a vocal counterpoint



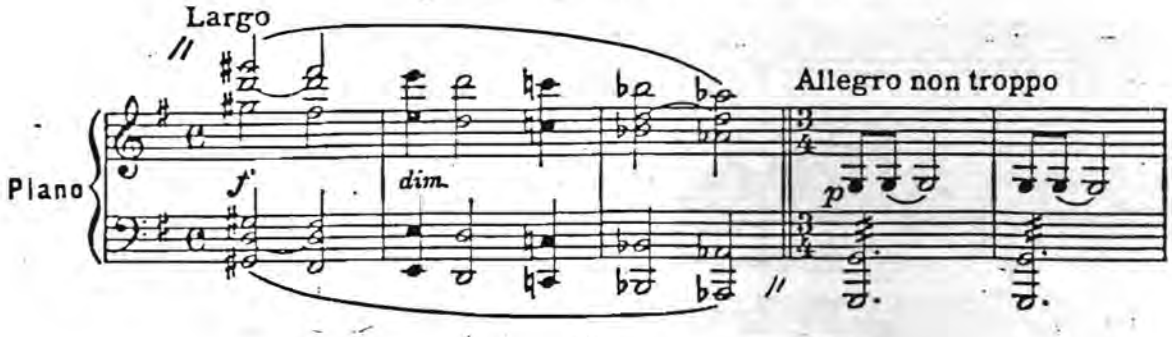
Example 1C



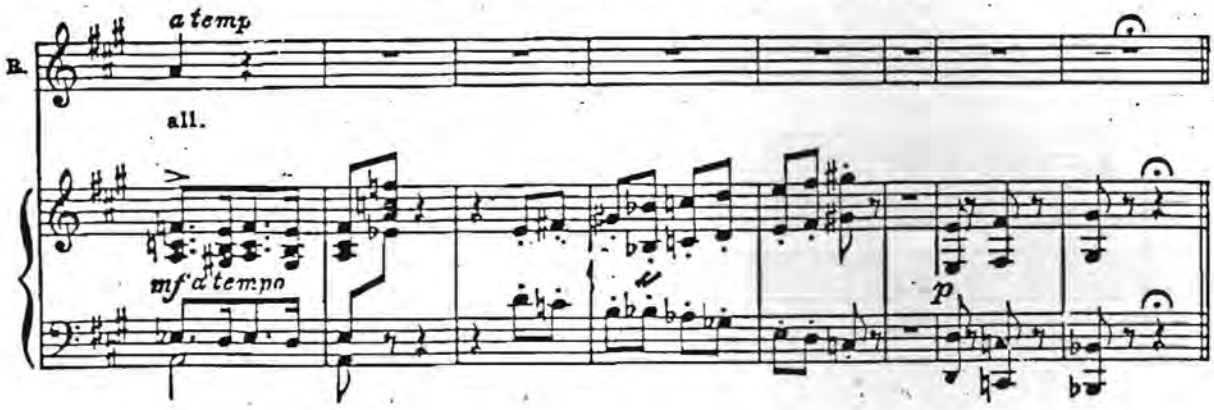
Example 1D



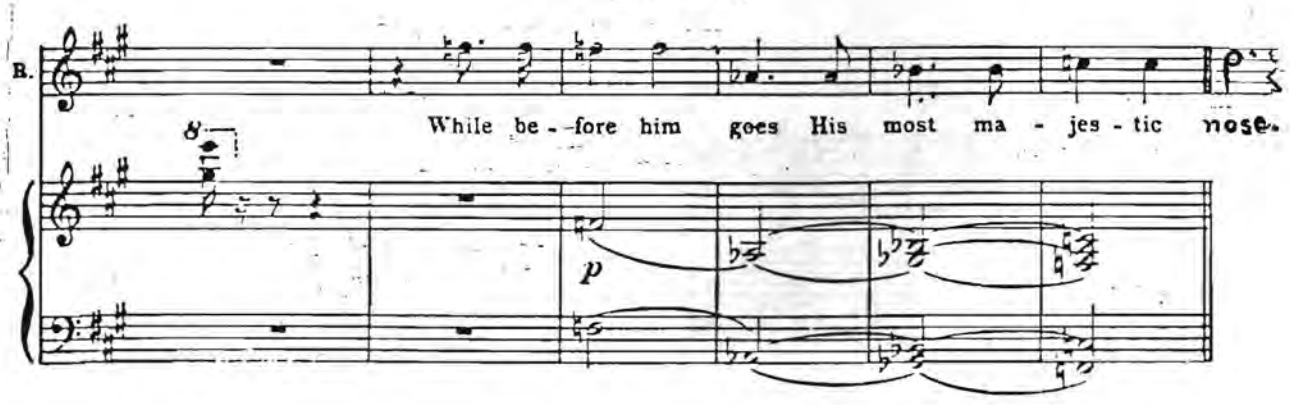
Example 2A
Whole-Tone Melody in Act I Prelude



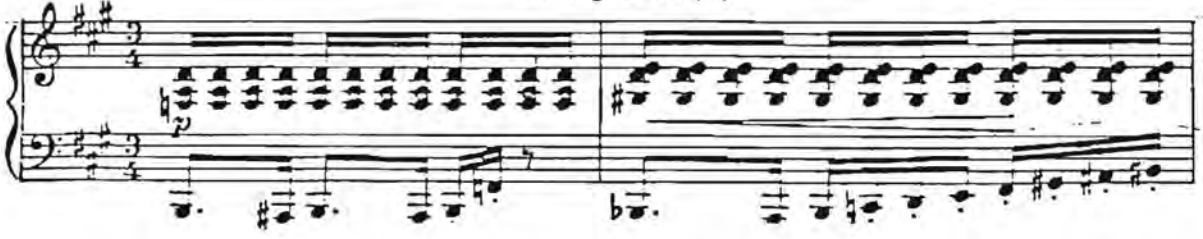
Example 2B(1)
Whole-Tone Rhythmic Transformations



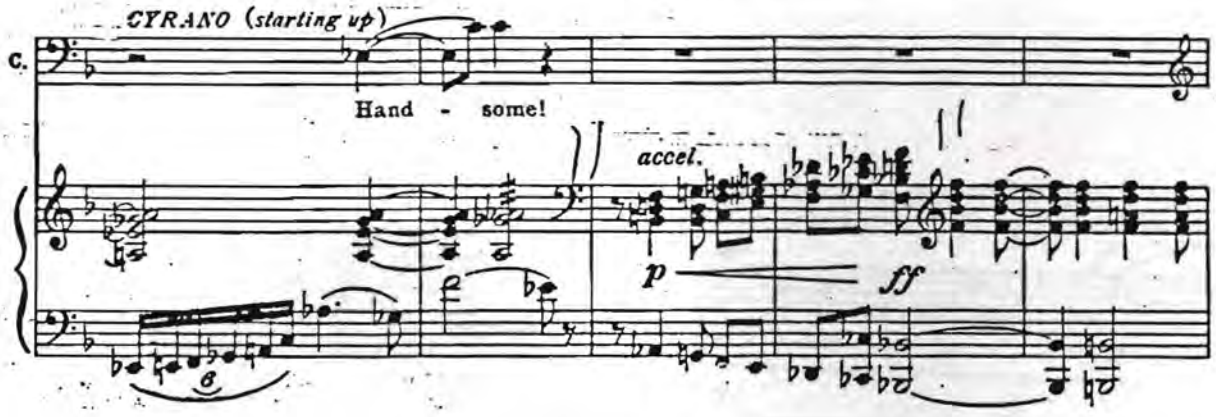
Example 2B(2)



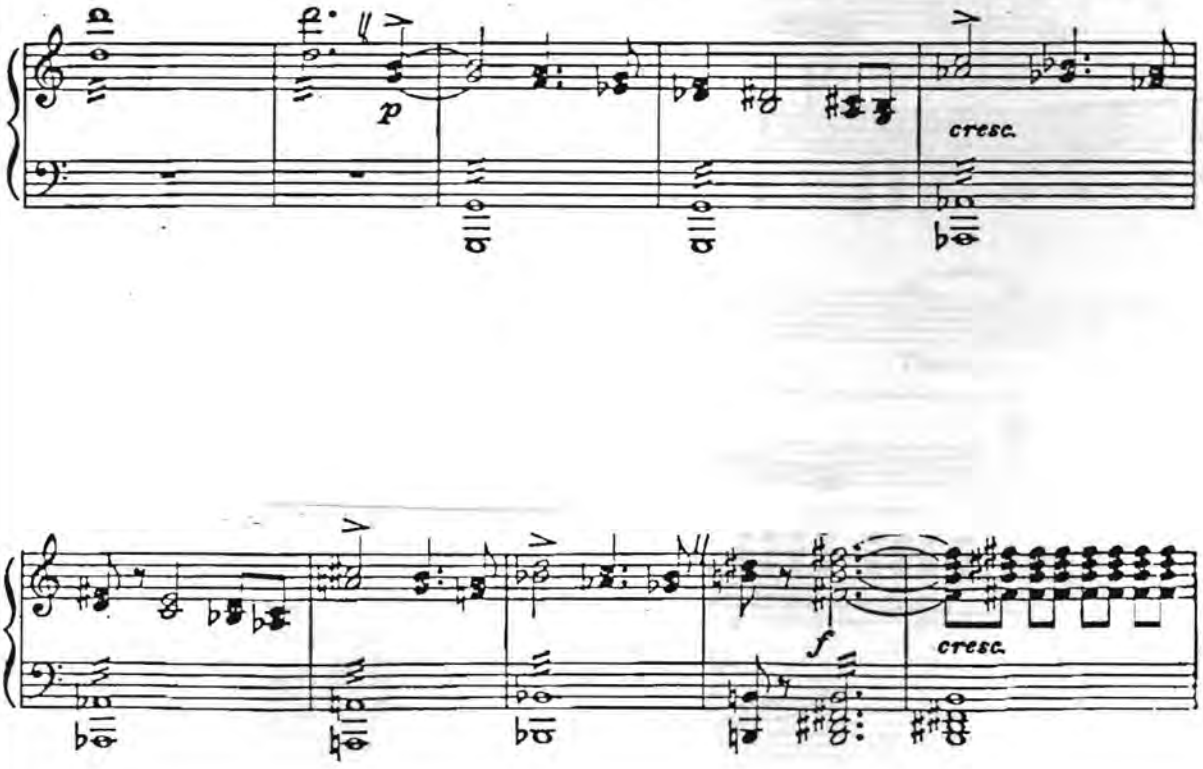
Example 2B(3)



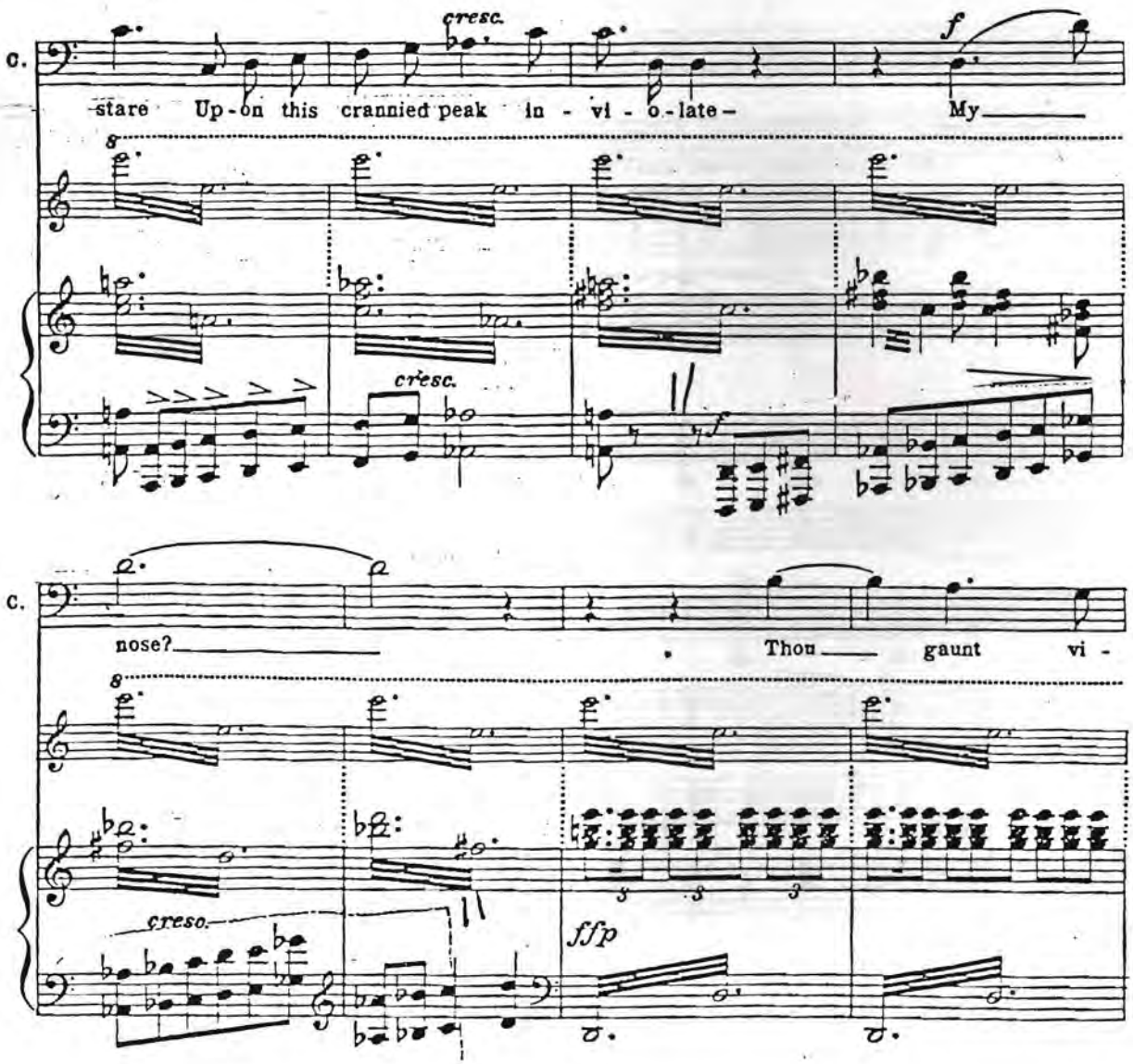
Example 2C
Whole-Tone Melody



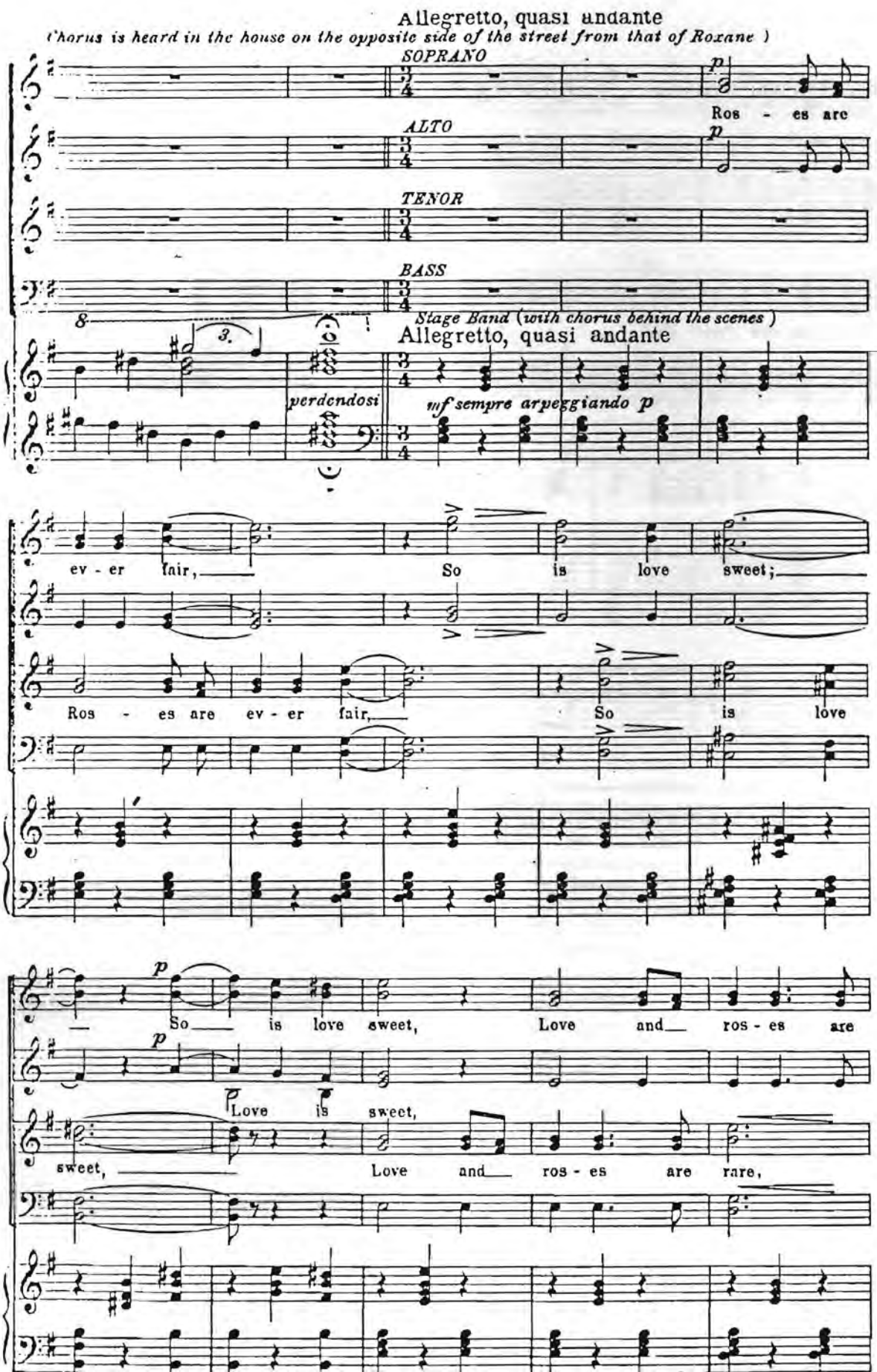
Example 2D



Example 2E
Whole-Tone Melody--Last Complete Statement



Example 3


Allegretto, quasi andante
(Chorus is heard in the house on the opposite side of the street from that of Roxane)
SOPRANO
ALTO
TENOR
BASS
Ros - es are
Stage Band (with chorus behind the scenes)
Allegretto, quasi andante
perdendosi
mf sempre arpeggiando p
ev - er fair, So is love sweet;
Ros - es are ev - er fair, So is love
So is love sweet, Love and ros - es are
Love is sweet,
sweet, Love and ros - es are rare,

Example 3
Continued