THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF WRITING

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Tui St. George Tuck

PART 2

There are different kinds of writing. For instance, there's the kind of writing where you walk over to the typewriter, sit down, and write a first line. You go into the kitchen for a glass of water, light a cigaret, all the while thinking of what you've written. You return to the typewriter and write a second line, then you write a third line, and oh — all sorts of things happen, and there — you find you've written the last line, and if what you've written is any good, why, it's all of a piece, as if the whole thing were implicit in the beginning.

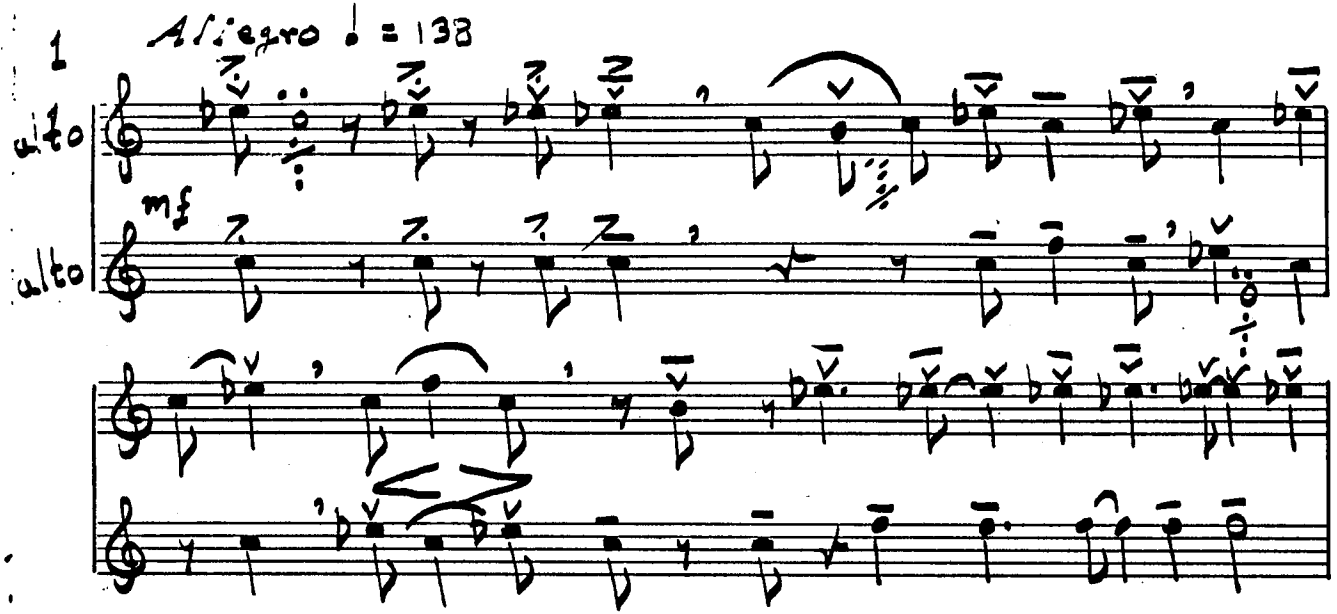
As if you put your hand in the water and catch a fish by the tail.

However, there is a different kind of writing: you sit down at the typewriter, just as before, and write a beginning. But when it comes to writing more — nothing happens. You have many thoughts, your mind is aswim with phrases, but your hands don't move toward the keys. Finally, you begin again, and write a new first line.

I have a big old wire wastebasket which I never empty in which I put things that I think I might work more on, and over a number of years it's got chock-full of beginnings, false starts *some might say, failures perhaps — but I've made a book of them, or what-you-might-call a book, of ~~a hundred and one~~ examples of this nameless genre of writing. And I have given them names, just as if they were regular stories.*

Sometimes I wonder whether there are real stories implicit in such first lines — you might say virtual stories, *not unreal, but existing in some never-never realm ~~not inaccessi-~~*

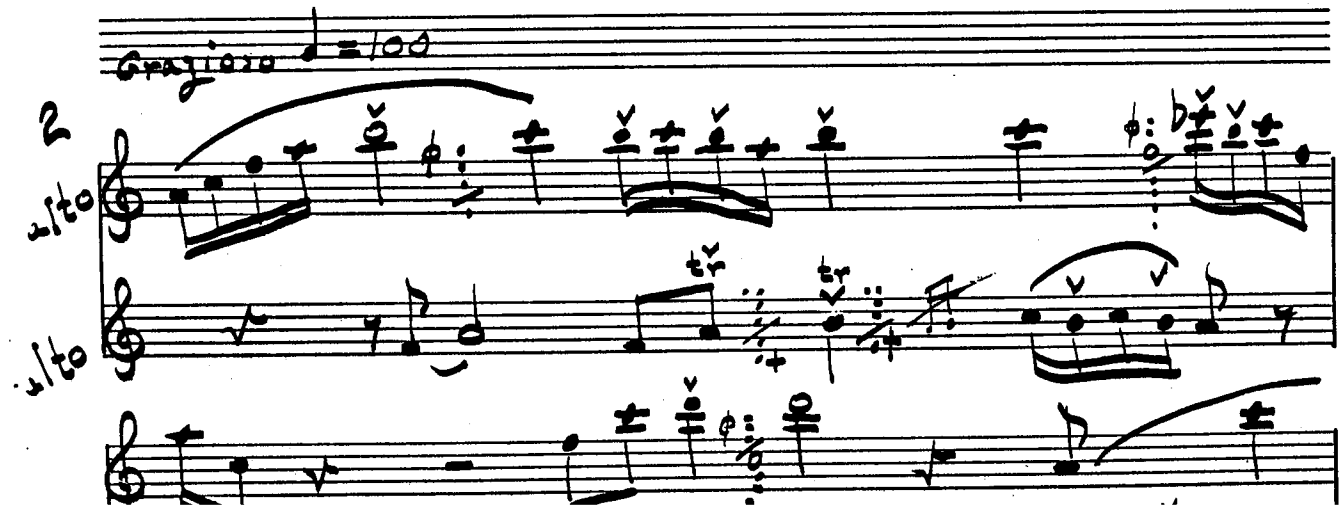
I have also included some different kinds of writing.



1

Where Is That Part of Me?

Where is that part of me that writes long elaborate stories, writes line after line? No doubt that "personality" thinks that it deserves a vacation in the Caribbean and has departed leaving me here for a while. Or perhaps it is in Canada eating bacon and eggs by candlelight while the Eskimos patiently wait for him and impatient huskies howl. Yet does he loll perhaps in India collecting prayer wheels and certain satins, green gauzes and yellow scarves ordinarily only treasured by primitive maidens and monks; now in some Himalayan hideaway he drinks dark tea surrounded by chests of ebony in which he keeps his collection of marbles, shining spheres of immortality; and does he not, though I be distant as in some ~~opium~~ dream, ever think of me? does he not



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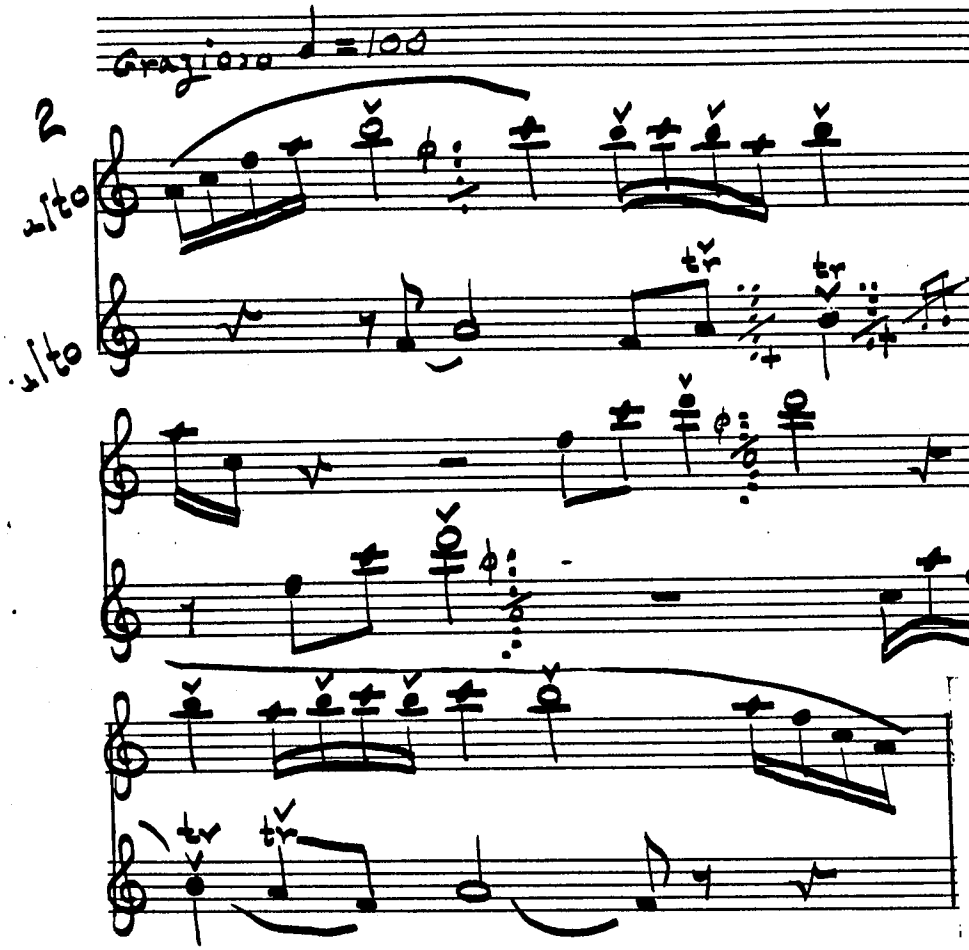
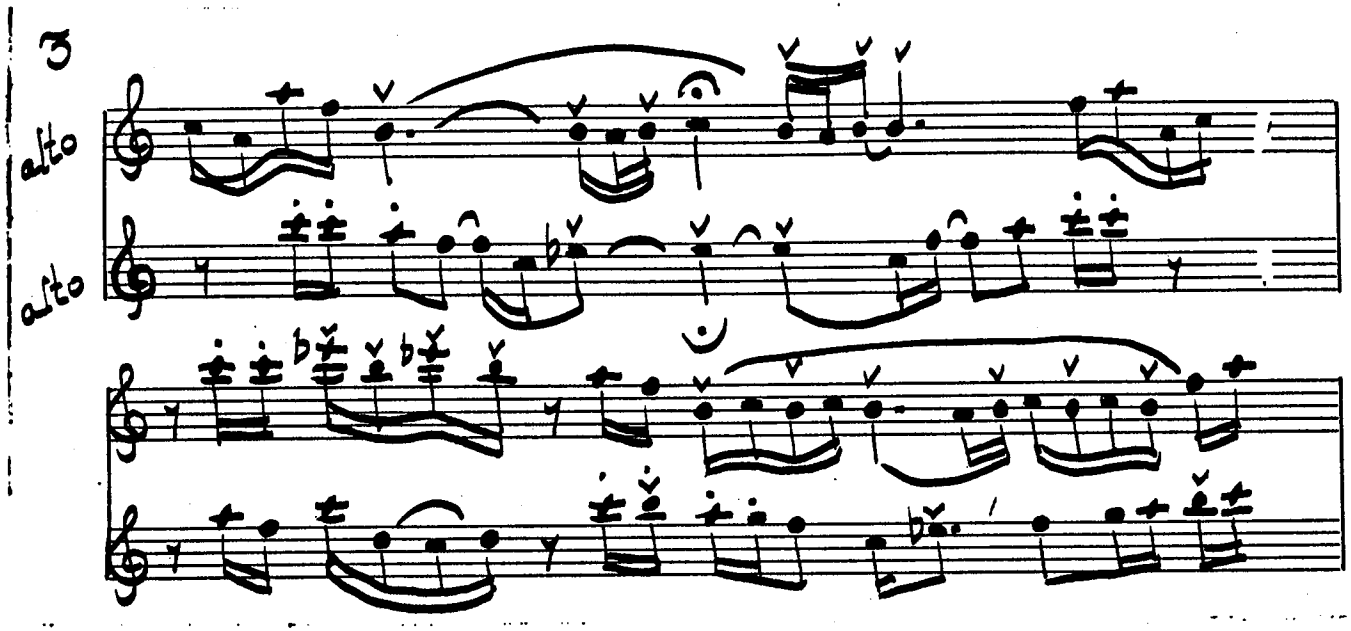


The Stamp Collectors

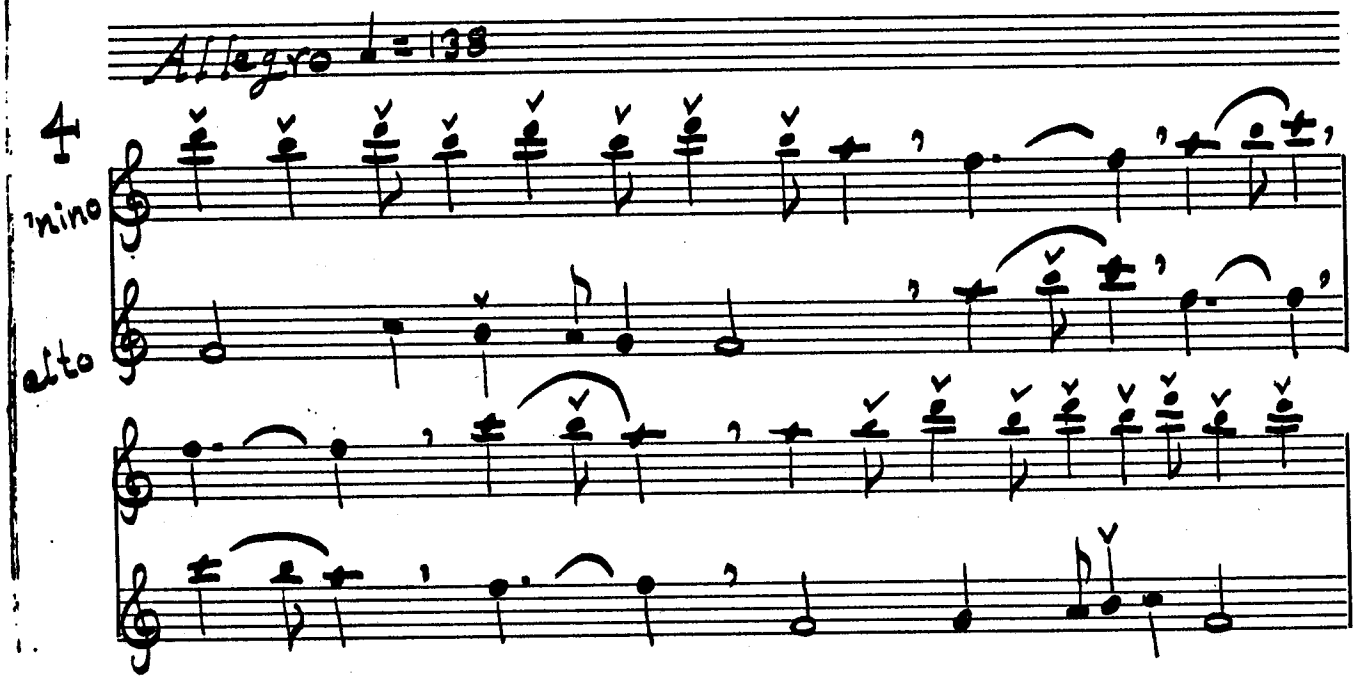
The brown stamp on the envelope was carefully removed by a jet of steam from a teakettle by the eight-year-old collector in Venezuela who had just received the letter from Pennsylvania, from an older collector who lived in a tiny house in the woods, who had been snowbound for three weeks, who had been a sailor since his youth and had become familiar with the oceans, for forty years the lookout in the crows'-nest of a clipper ship, come-home old to his birthplace to die in comfort, whiling away the time, doting on his stamp book, cared-for by two orphan girls; and with a fine Spencerian hand he kept up a constant correspondence with those living in many foreign lands — for he had a wife in Borneo, Alaska, Australia, Norway, India, Malta, and in China, as well as Venezuela.

All his grandchildren collected stamps.



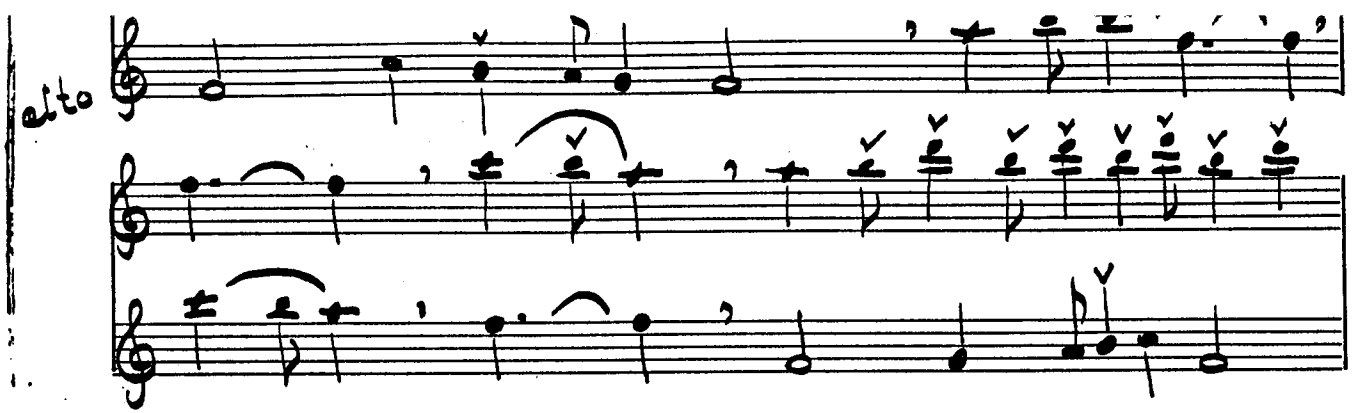
Lemon

He cut the lemon in half and found a hardboiled egg inside.



The Floodwaters

The floodwaters left a ring on the outside of the bathtub.



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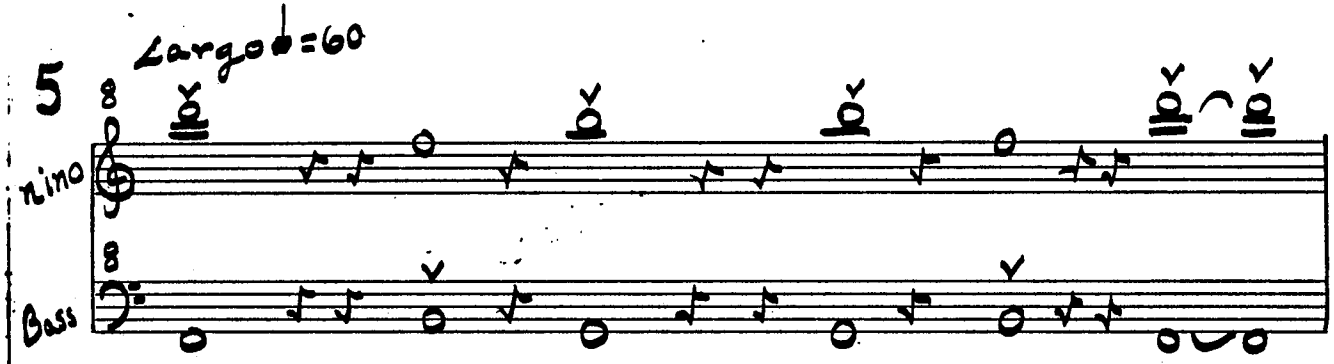
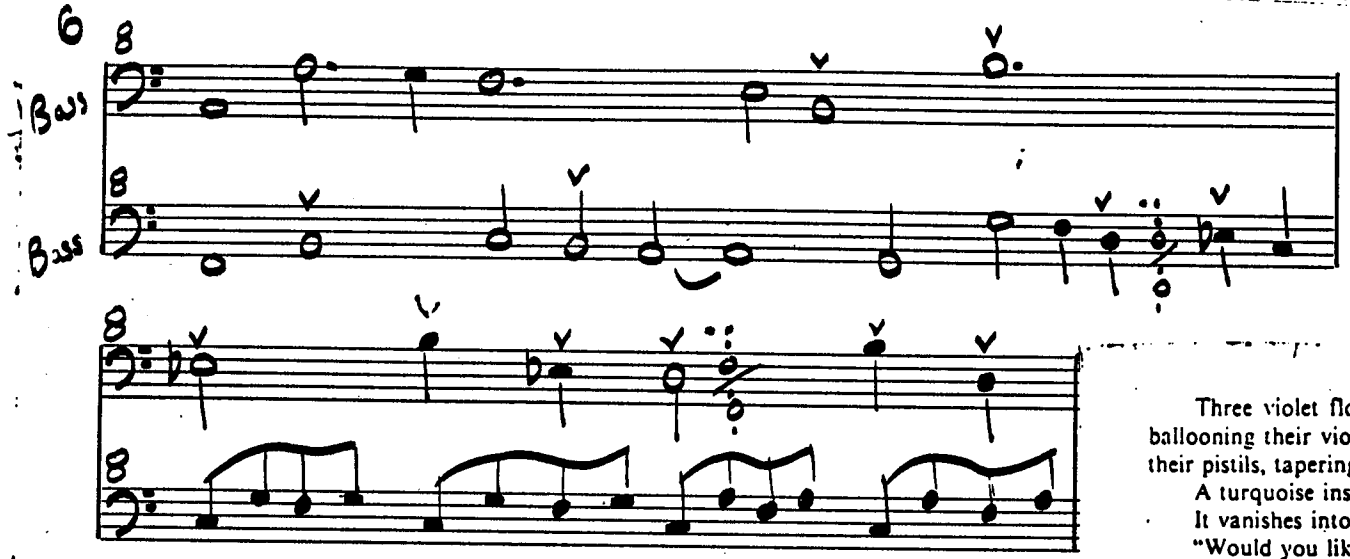


The Whistling Buddha

The unciled wagon sang a song, some Oriental mountain melody that plain folk from Kansas cannot appreciate, but the whining of the wheel is the whistling of a god, a Buddha no bigger than an elf that sits six inches high between the ears of a horse heading for a house where a baby will be born, The baby will be the reincarnation of of so-and-so (I would not dare to try to spell that name).

For centuries upon centuries it has always been the duty of this immortal, magnificent, miniature Buddha to attend such the rebirth of so-and-so.

It is his first visit to America.



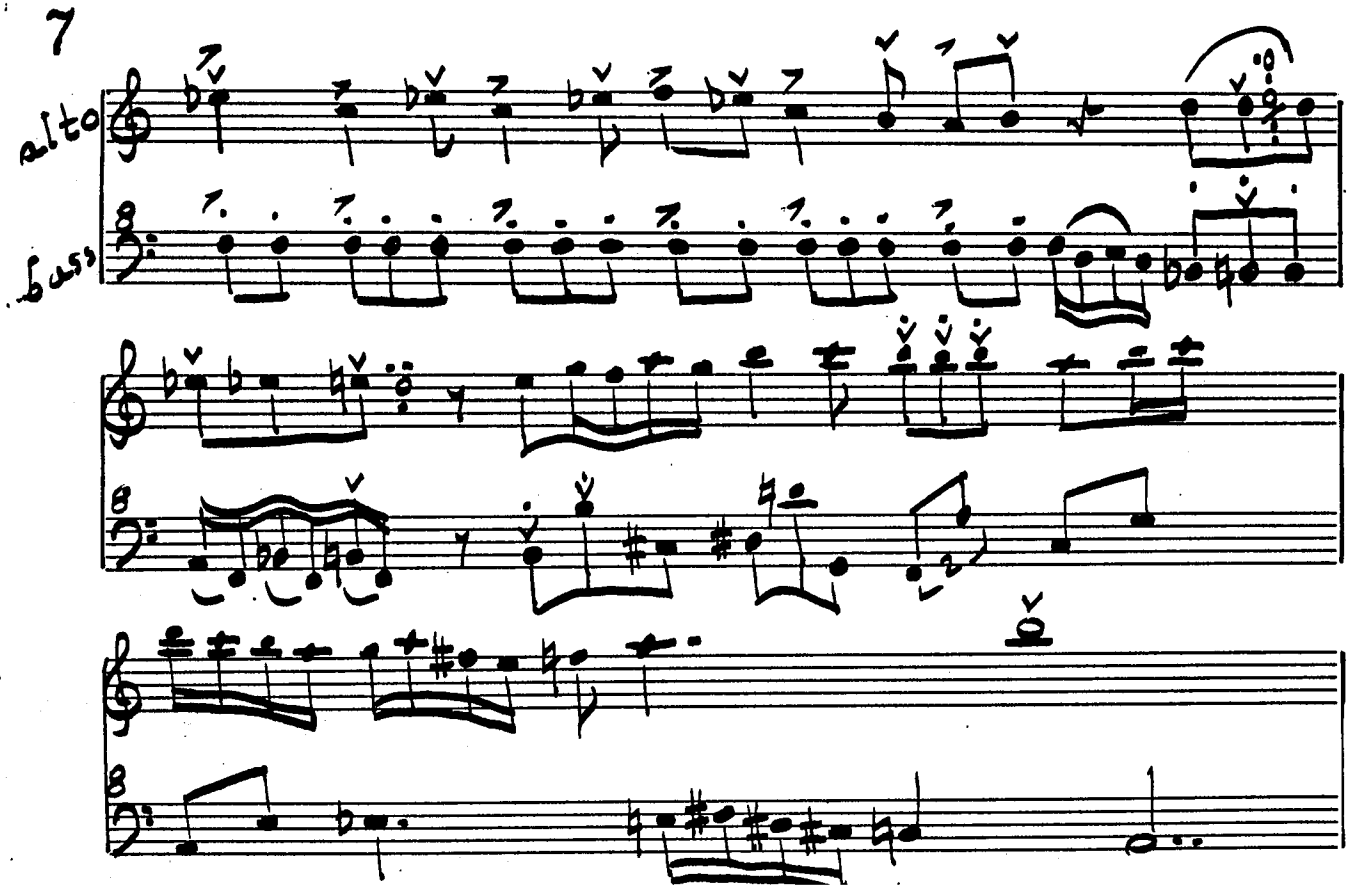
Blue

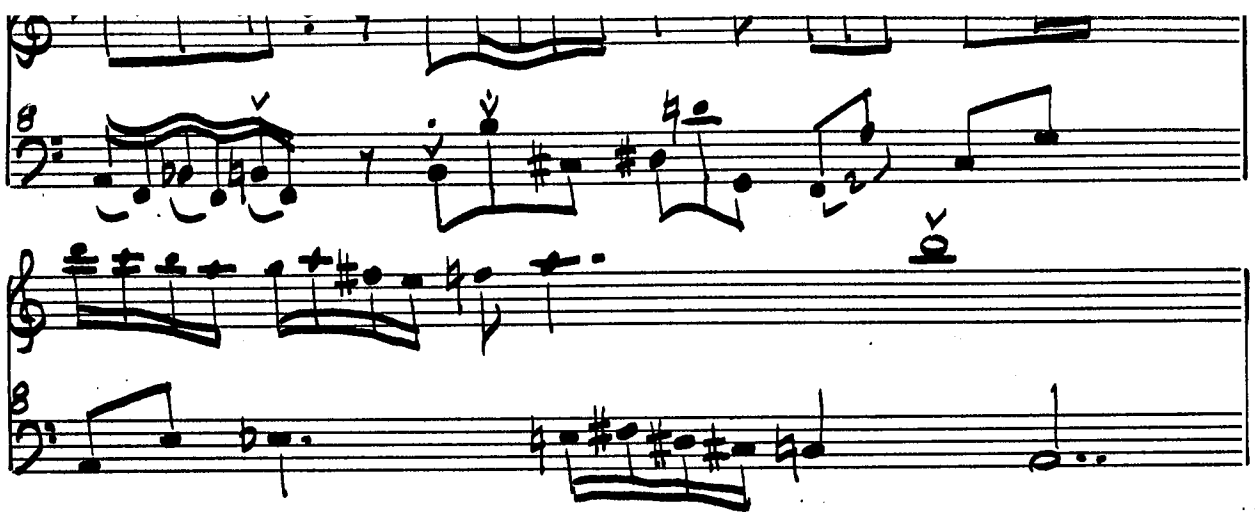
Three violet flowers nod in the breeze, busying bees, ballooning their violent color in an ultra-violet fog around their pistils, tapering to cobalt.

A turquoise insect appears on a twig.

It vanishes into the blue sky.

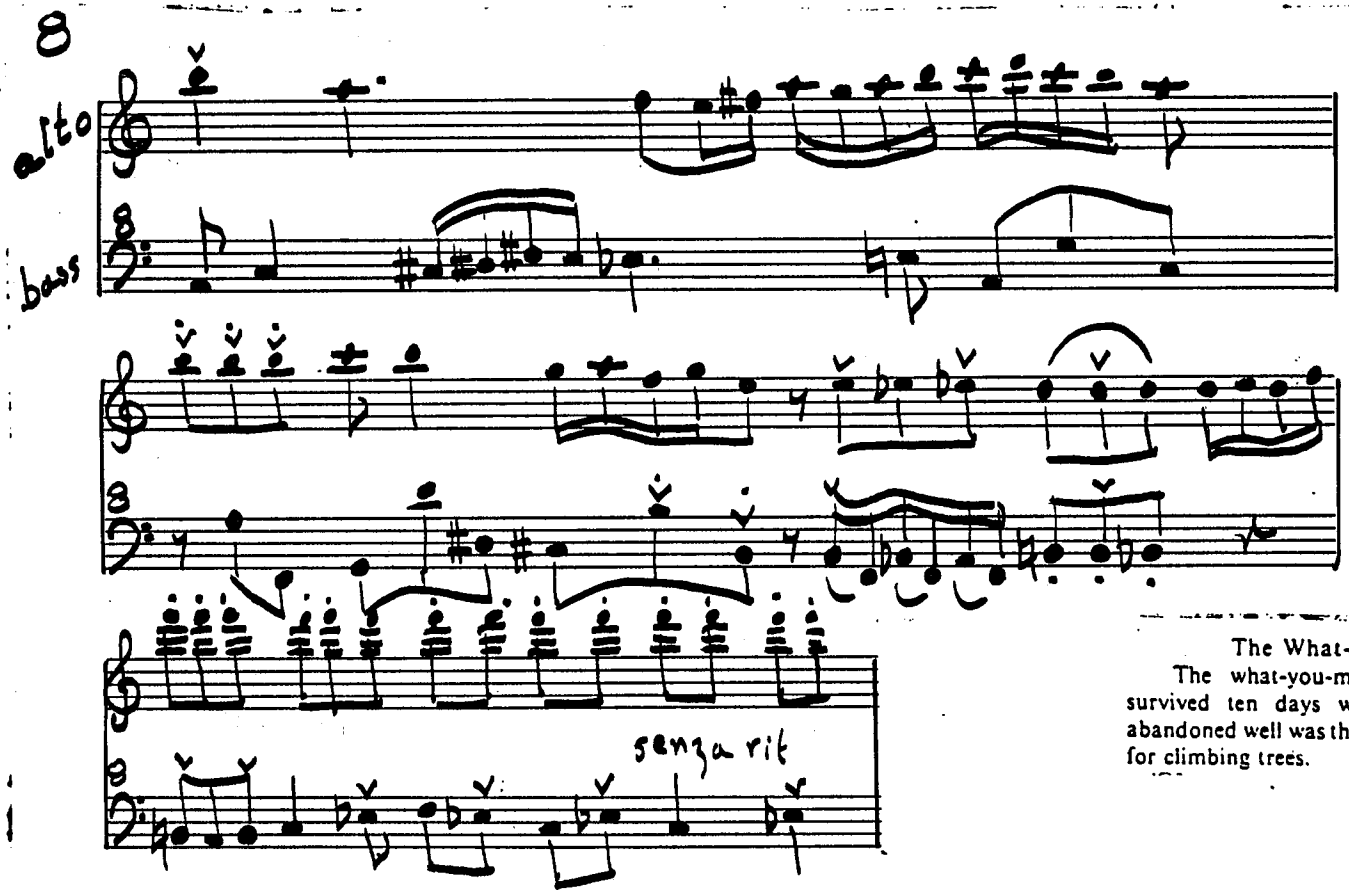
"Would you like an orange?"





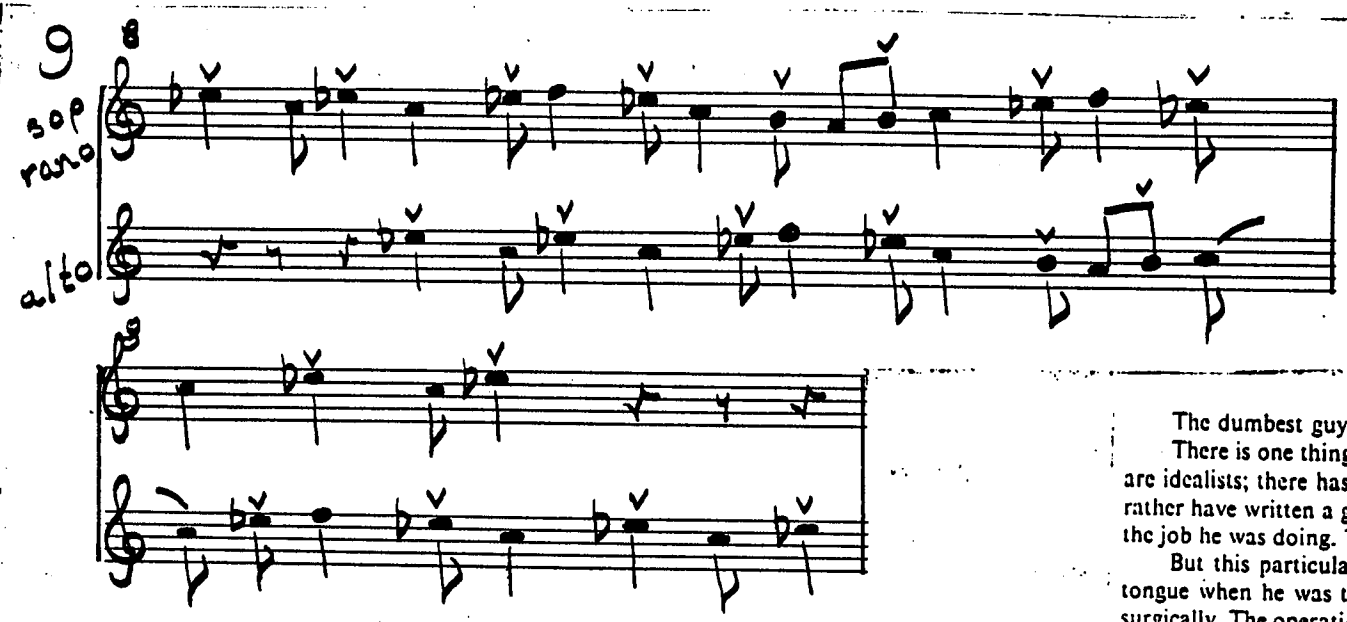
A Jumpy One

The evening was a jumpy one, the mosquitoes were insufferable, the distant drums were wild, their pet monkey spit in the soup, and so it was no wonder, what with the piano out-of-tune, their servant in tears, her best dress torn by a thorn, that the wife of the escaped convict was fed-up.



The What-you-might-call Madness

The what-you-might-call madness of a man who survived ten days without food at the bottom of an abandoned well was that from then on he developed a passion for climbing trees.



Hmm . . .

The dumbest guy I have ever met was an editor.

There is one thing that can be said about editors — they are idealists; there has never been an editor who would not rather have written a great novel or a great poem than doing the job he was doing. They are all failures in their own eyes.

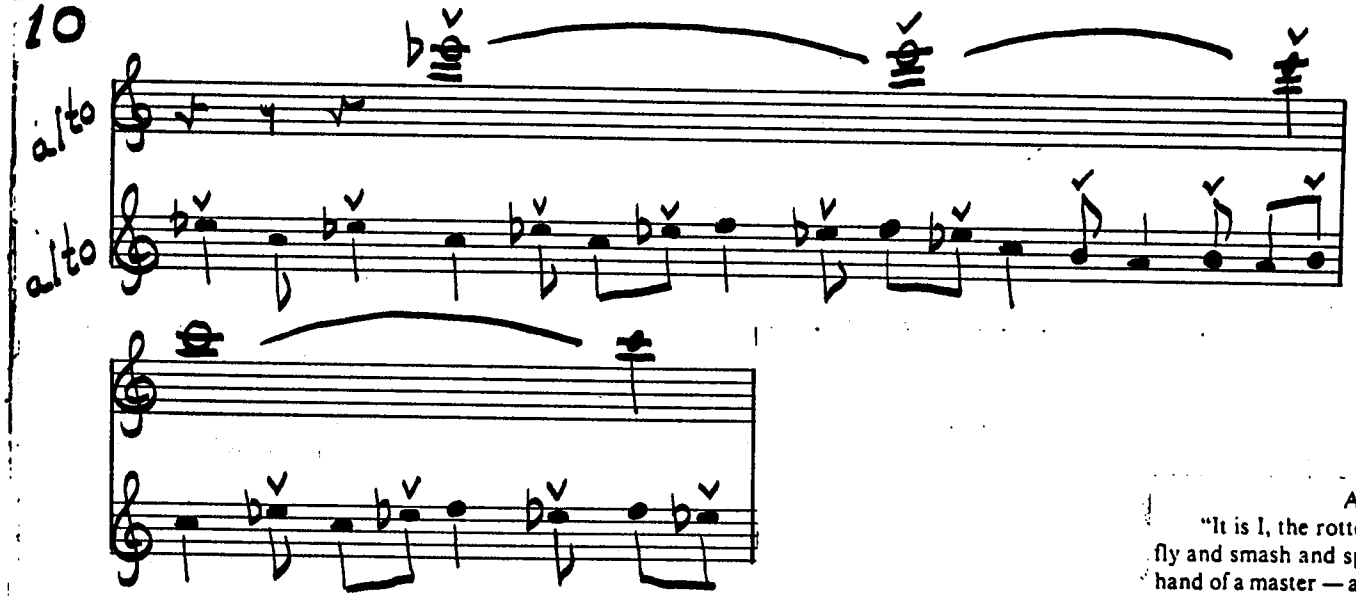
But this particular editor had developed cancer of the tongue when he was ten and his tongue had been removed surgically. The operation had been successful, and the disease did not recur. However, for the rest of his life he was unable to speak, other than those certain words which can be pronounced without opening the mouth. He breathed through his nose when he spoke.

When he wanted to say "yes", he said — Un-hunh.

When he would say "no", he said — Unh-unh.

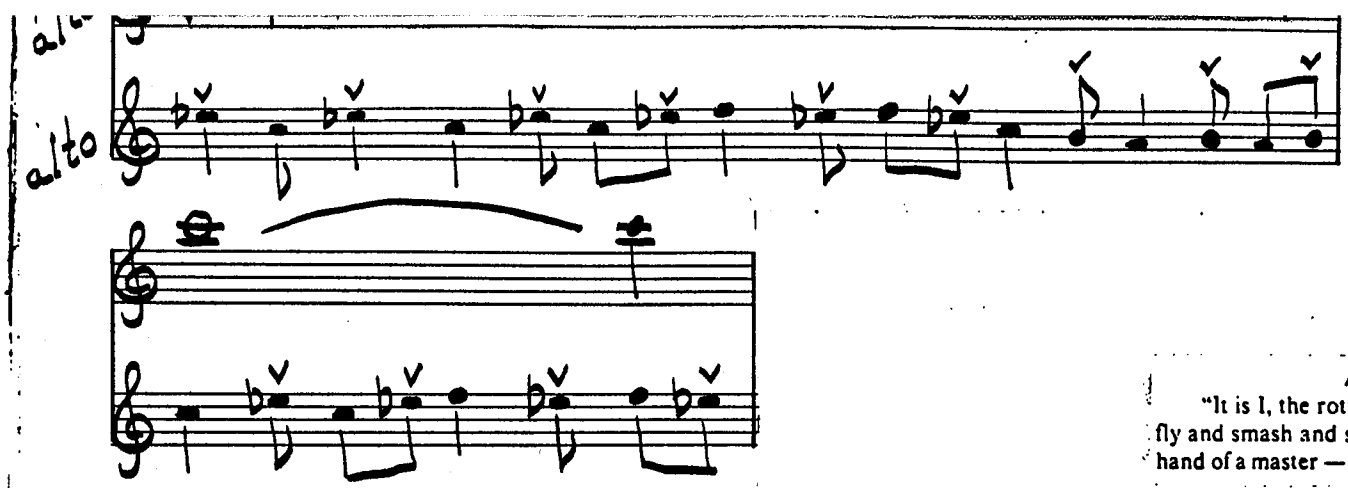
When he didn't understand, he would say — Hunh?

When he was thinking something over he would say — Hmm. . . .



A Peculiar Greeting

"It is I, the rotten apple in the barrel, whose turn it is to fly and smash and splatter, thrown like a meteorite from the hand of a master — ah! I have caught your eye — I greet you!"



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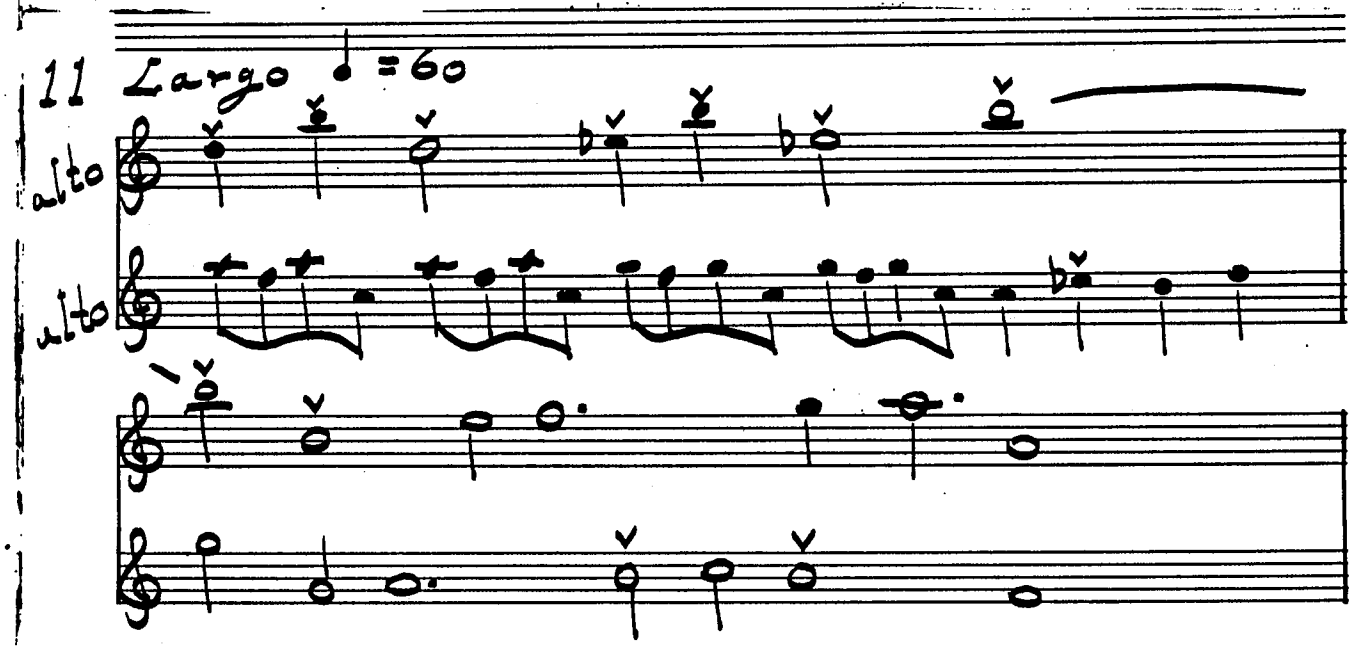
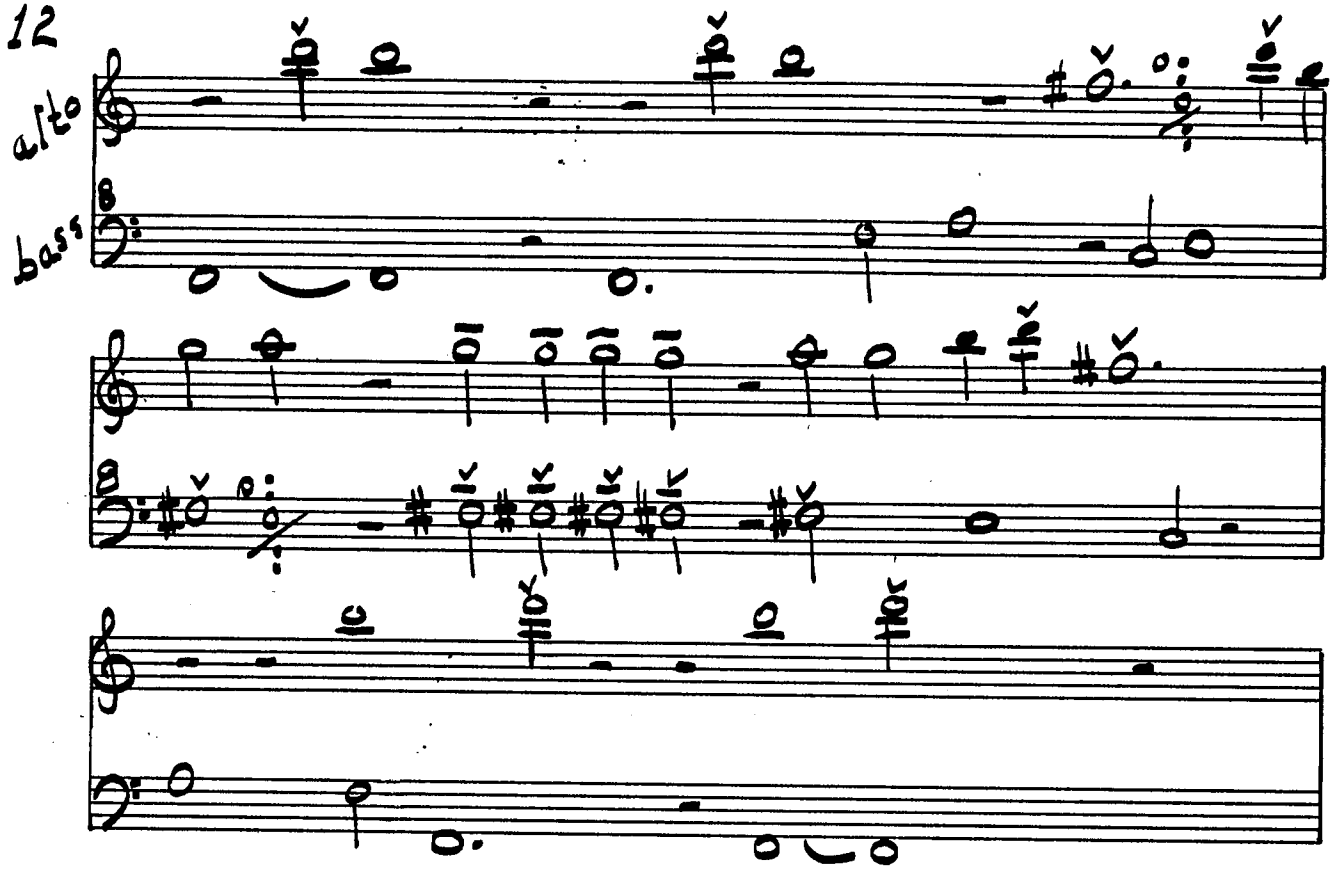


Freedom

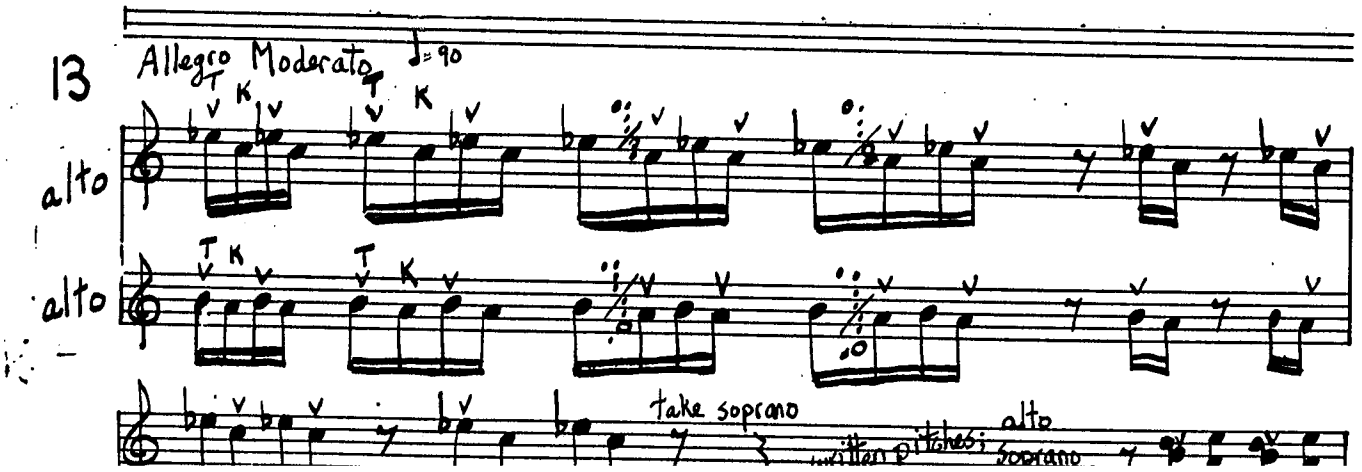
"*Freedom* is spelled with seven letters," noticed the wise man, fondling his beard with his finger, thumbing its curls, while with his other hand he turned the pages of the Bhagavad Gita, and at that same moment that he said it, he opened the Book of Splendor, while with his other hand he made a note in pencil of a paragraph in the New Testament, while his other hand held up the Confucian Analects, and his other riffled the Koran, his other two hands are holding this book. He frowns.

"Bring me more light! Bring me my glasses!" he exclaims to a disciple, "I have only two eyes, and I can hardly believe what I see here!"



The Shoemaker

To be a shoemaker in a land where the people go predominantly barefoot is an art.



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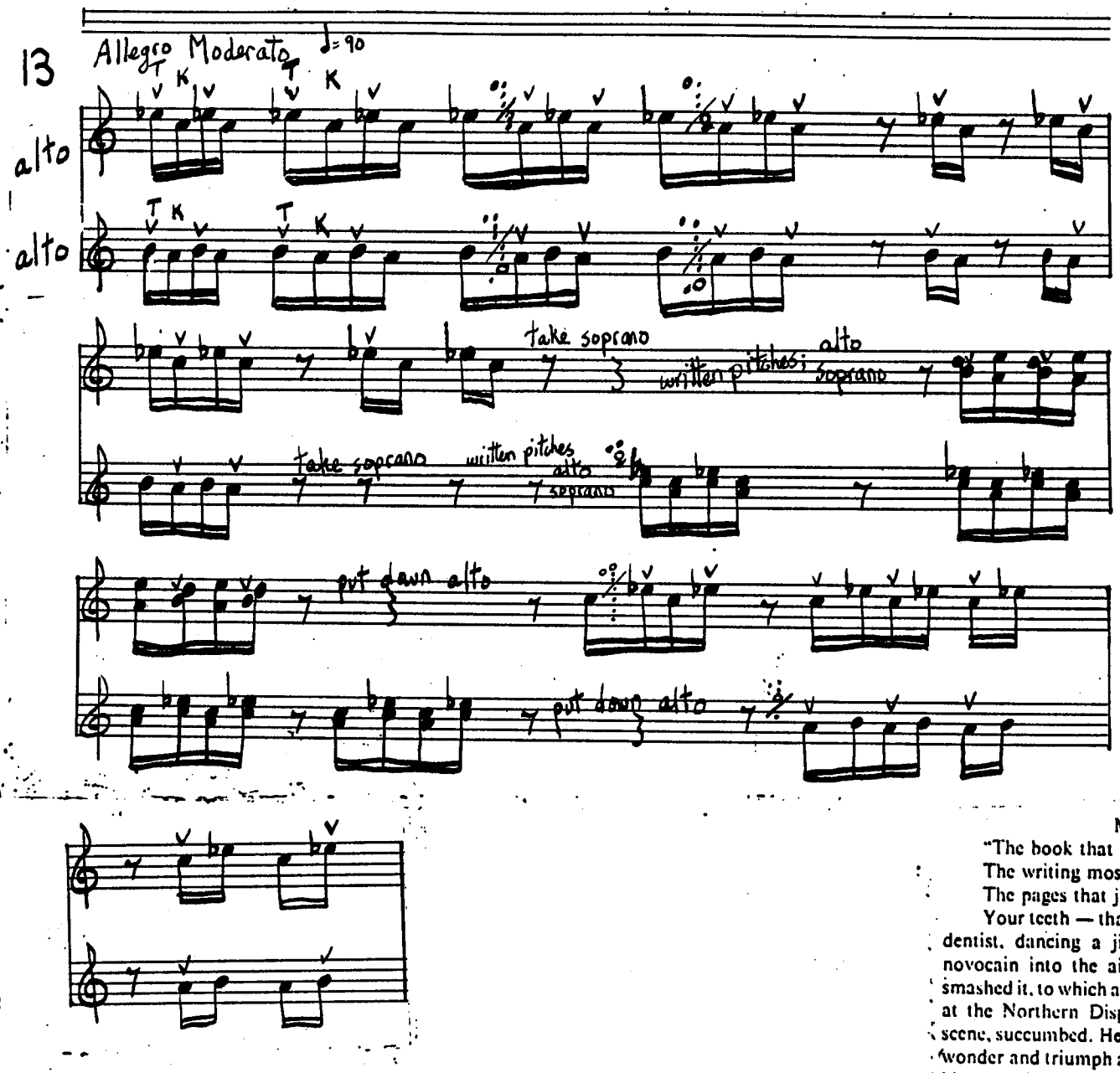
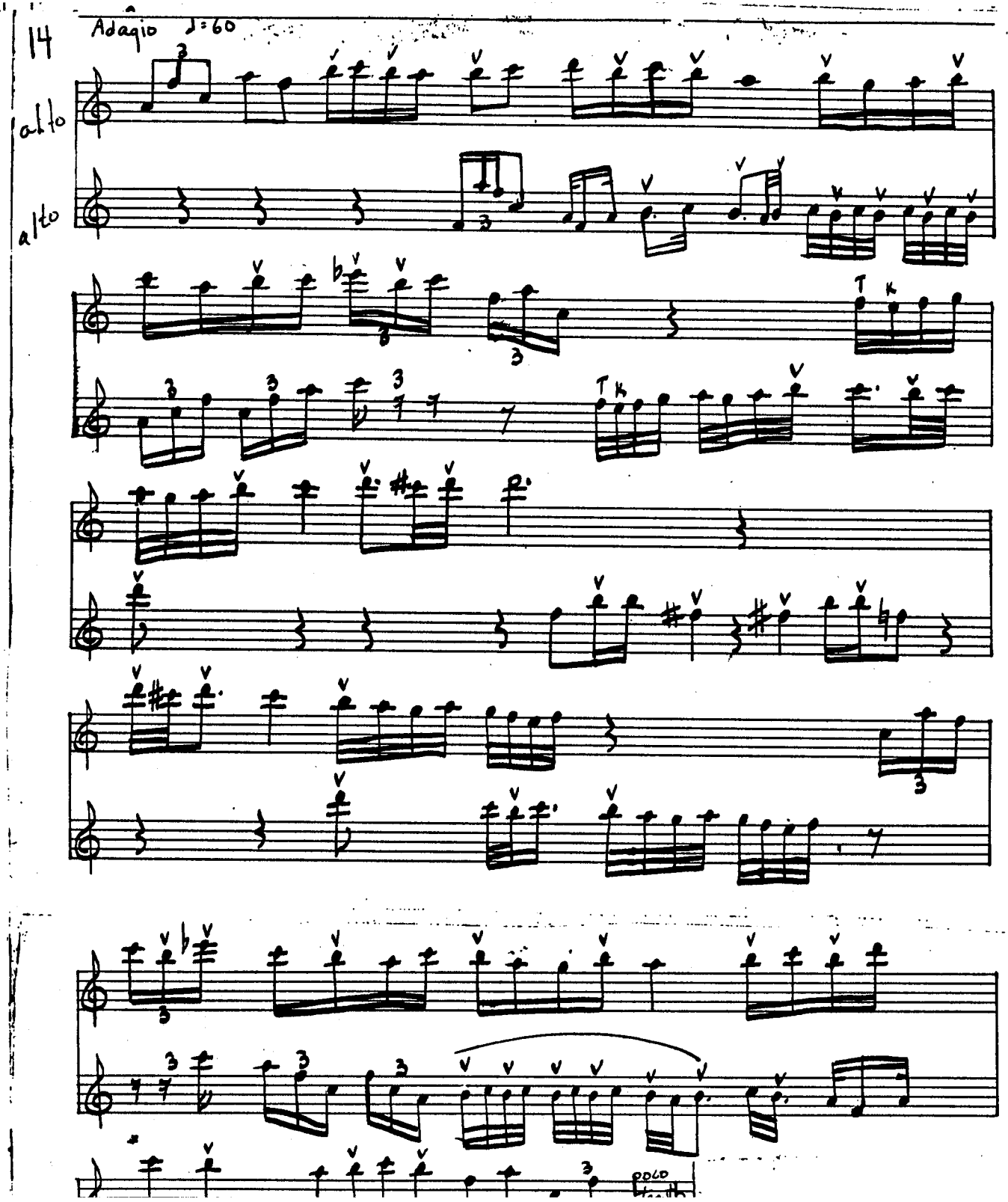
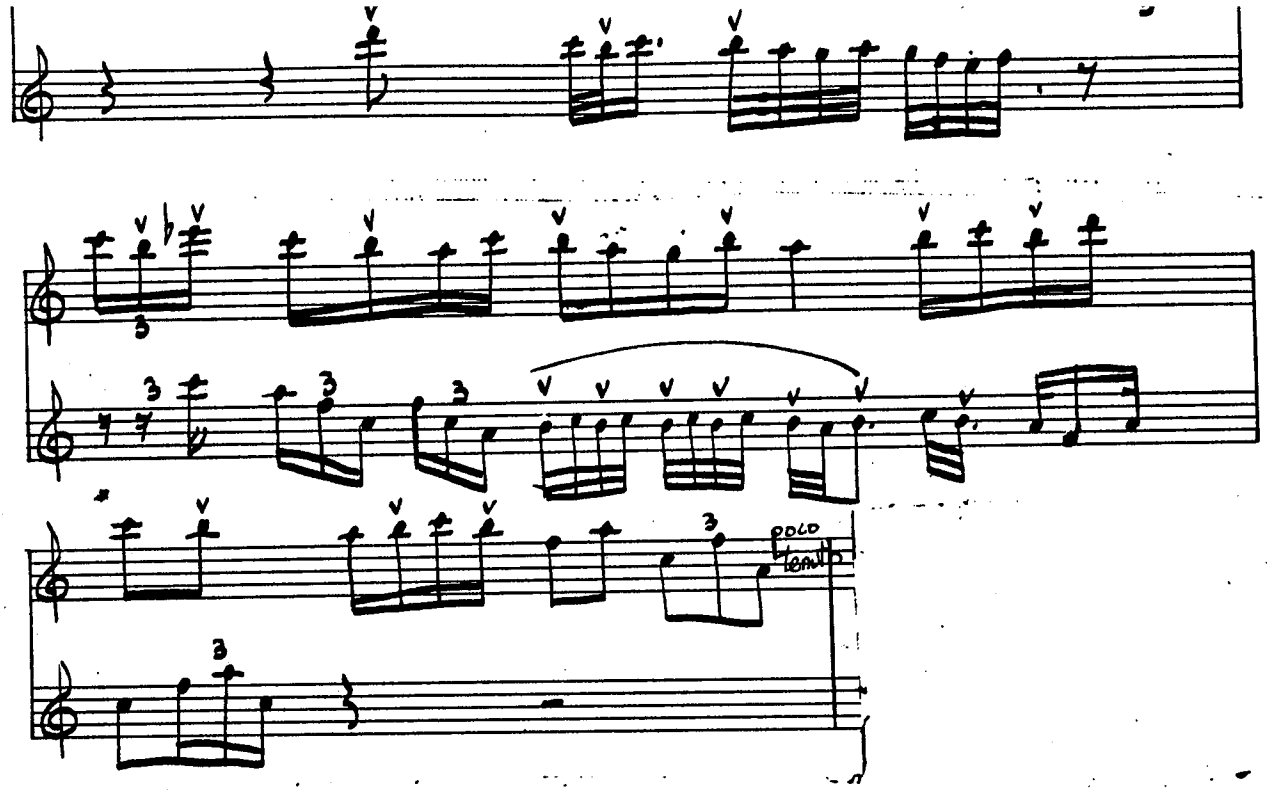


My Dentist Story

"The book that glitters with mischief
The writing most sparkling with glee
The pages that jump at my touch —
Your teeth — that is the book for me!" . . . sang the mad dentist, dancing a jig on a tilted dental chair, shooting novocain into the air; he made a leap for the ether and smashed it, to which all the dentists and nurses and attendants at the Northern Dispensary Clinic who had rushed to the scene, succumbed. He stood on the dental chair and stared in wonder and triumph at the dozen unconscious forms around him. As his co-workers slept their deep sleep, before he left them forever, to vanish into the labyrinth of the non-dental world, there to become a respectable old sculptor — he pulled all their teeth.

14 Adagio ♩=60





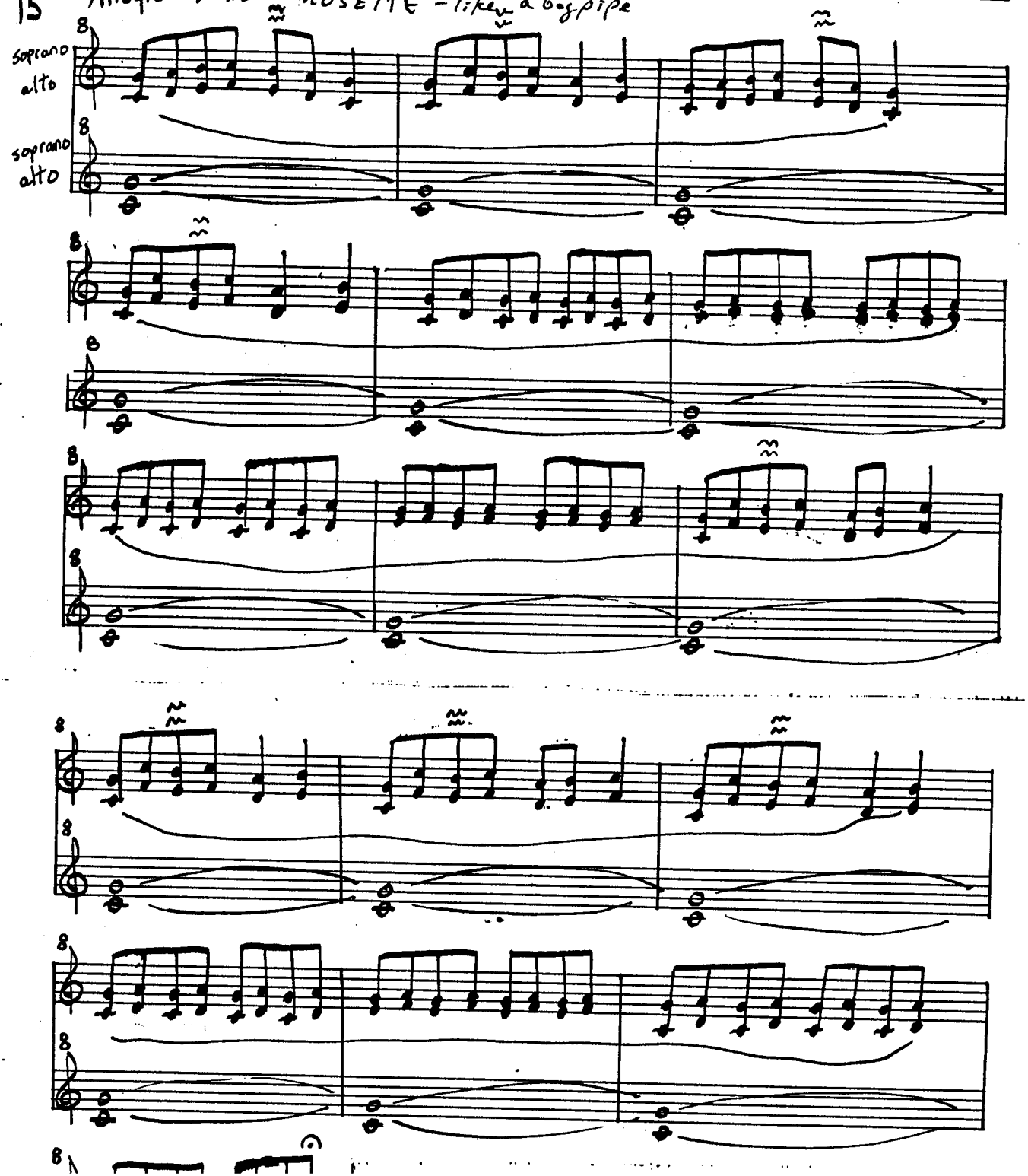
The Emperor of Antarctica

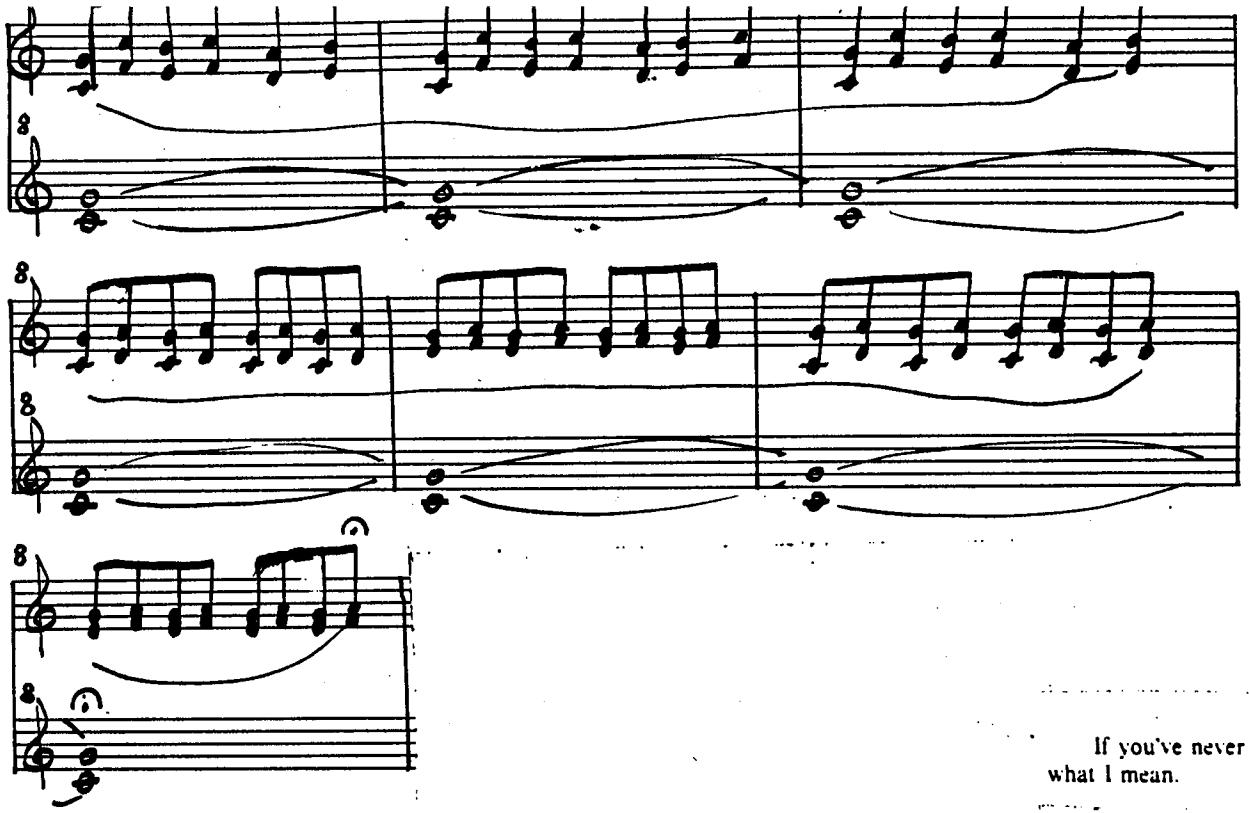
He was the Emperor of Antarctica.

He was the dominant male in the colony of Emperor Penguins that meet to breed on the Ross Ice Shelf.

He was the Emperor of Emperors.

15 Allegro ♩= 100 MUSETTE - like a bagpipe



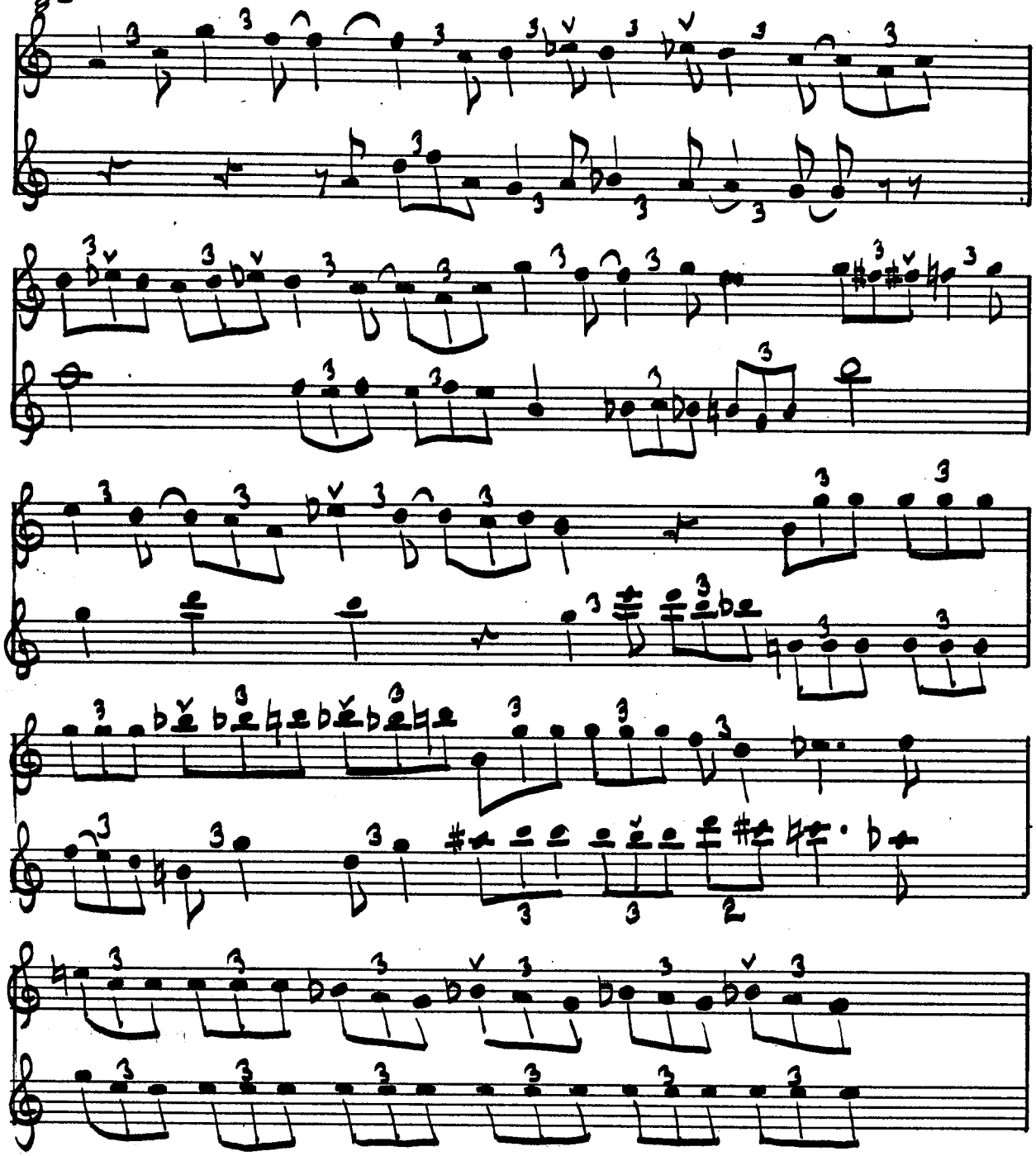


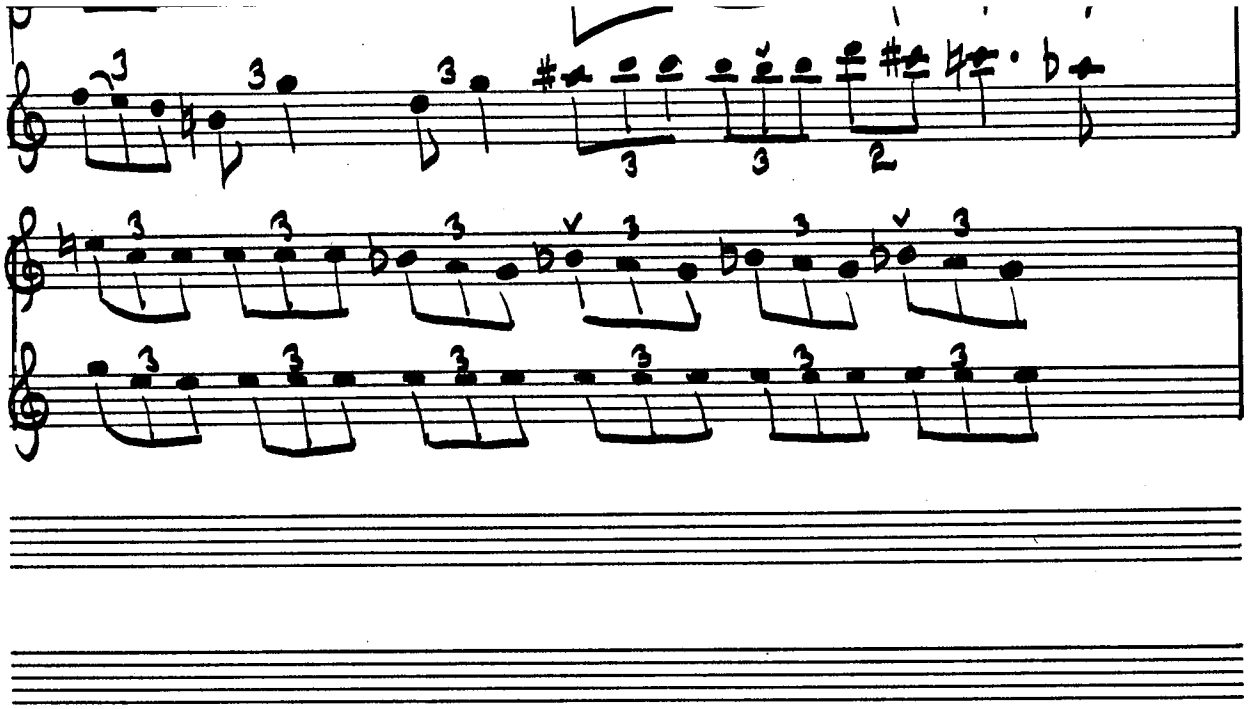
Gumball

If you've never swallowed a gumball you won't know what I mean.

16

In Jazz style

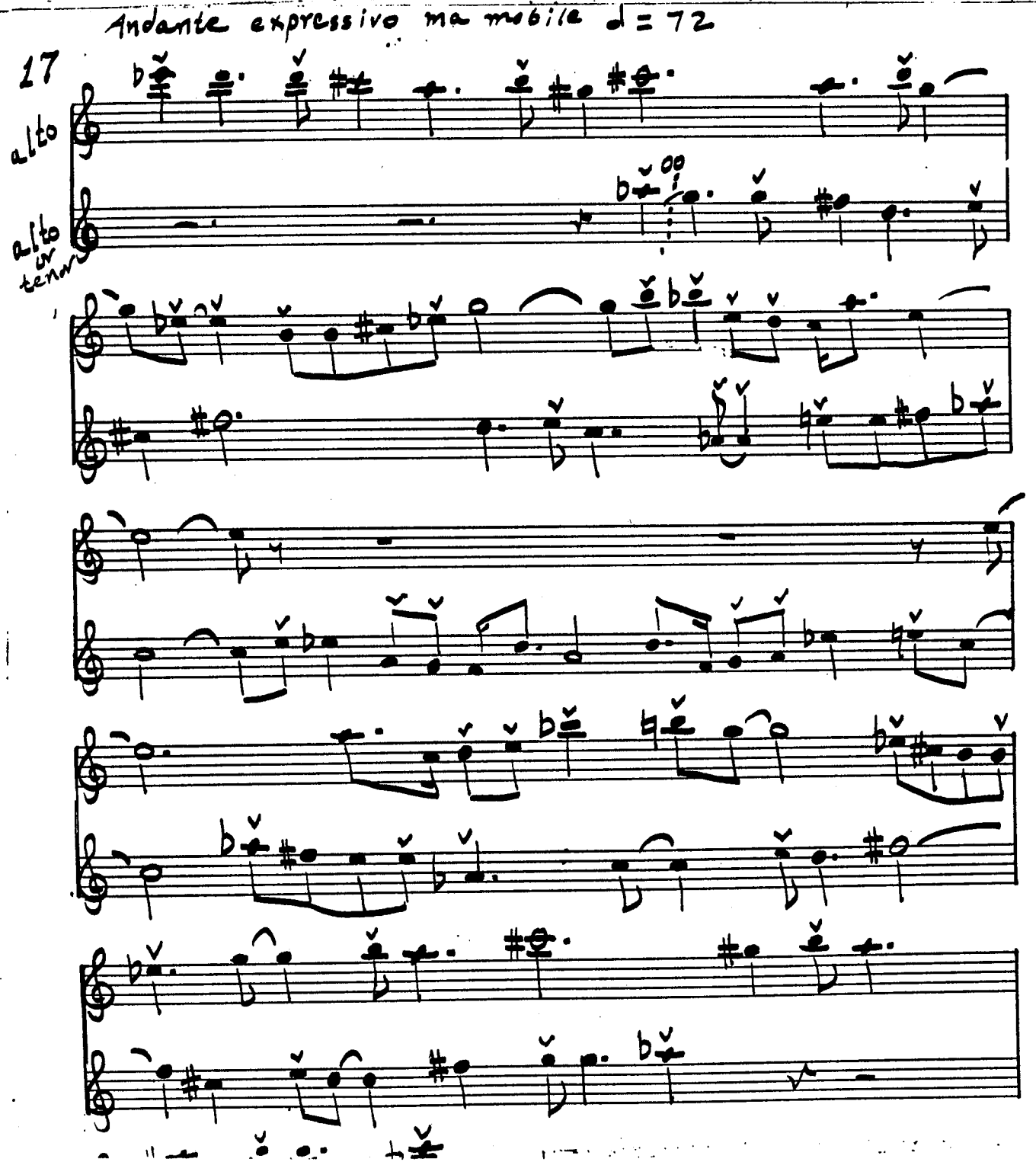




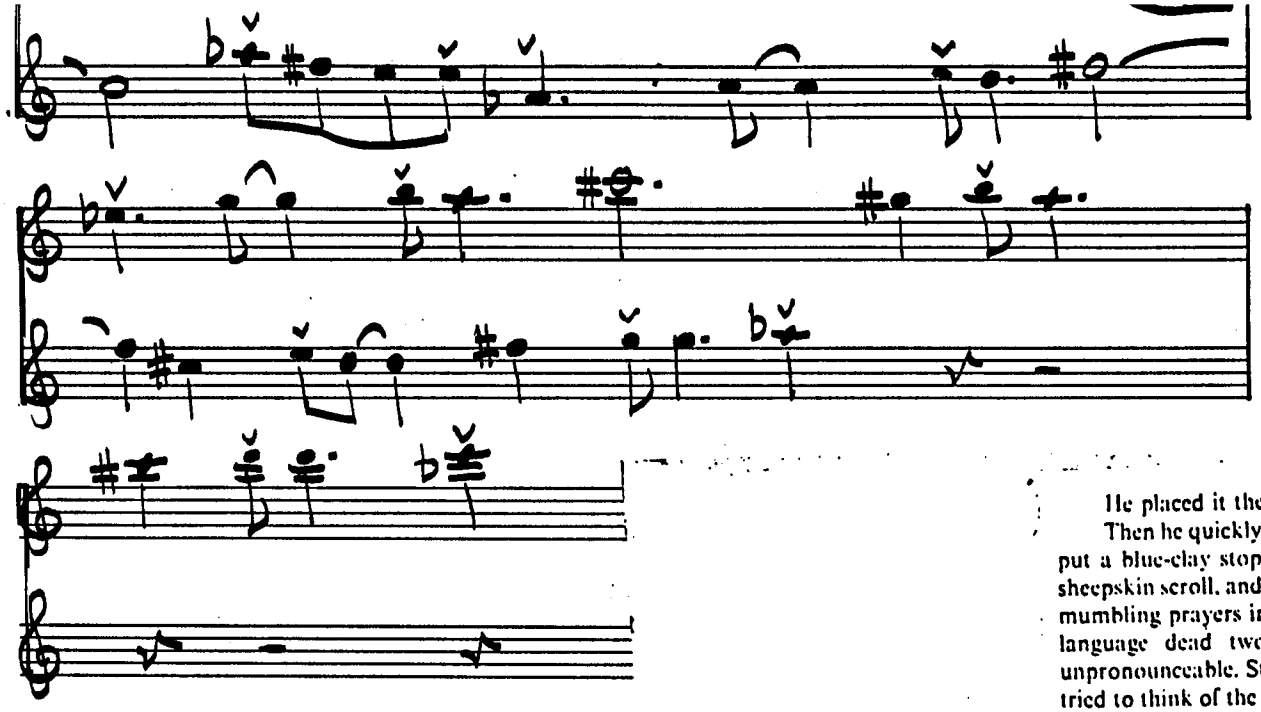
The Firecracker Orchid

The orchid opened like a firecracker, all at once, with a silent explosion of odor that struck like a gong in the jungle gloom, with a stench so strong it seared the nostrils of mammals of every size and species, from jungle mouse to jaguar, that were within twenty yards of the gaping blossom, inducing in them symptoms of extreme seasickness.

It is the only flower fertilized by snakes.



Thud

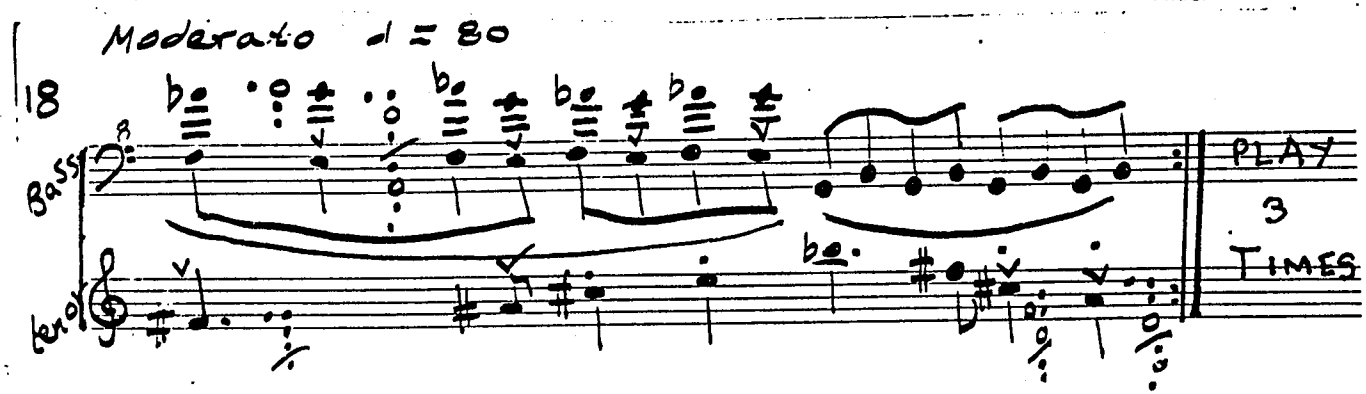


Thud

He placed it there with a thud.

Then he quickly covered its lip with melted beeswax and put a blue-clay stopper on the huge jar that contained the sheepskin scroll, and he covered it in the deep hole with earth, mumbling prayers in a tongue that no one speaks now, in a language dead two thousand years, its writing utterly unpronounceable. Stamping the earth firm over the grave, he tried to think of the future, much as you or I might think of the future, imagining someone coming across this page two thousand years hence, but nobody understanding the language.

Thud.

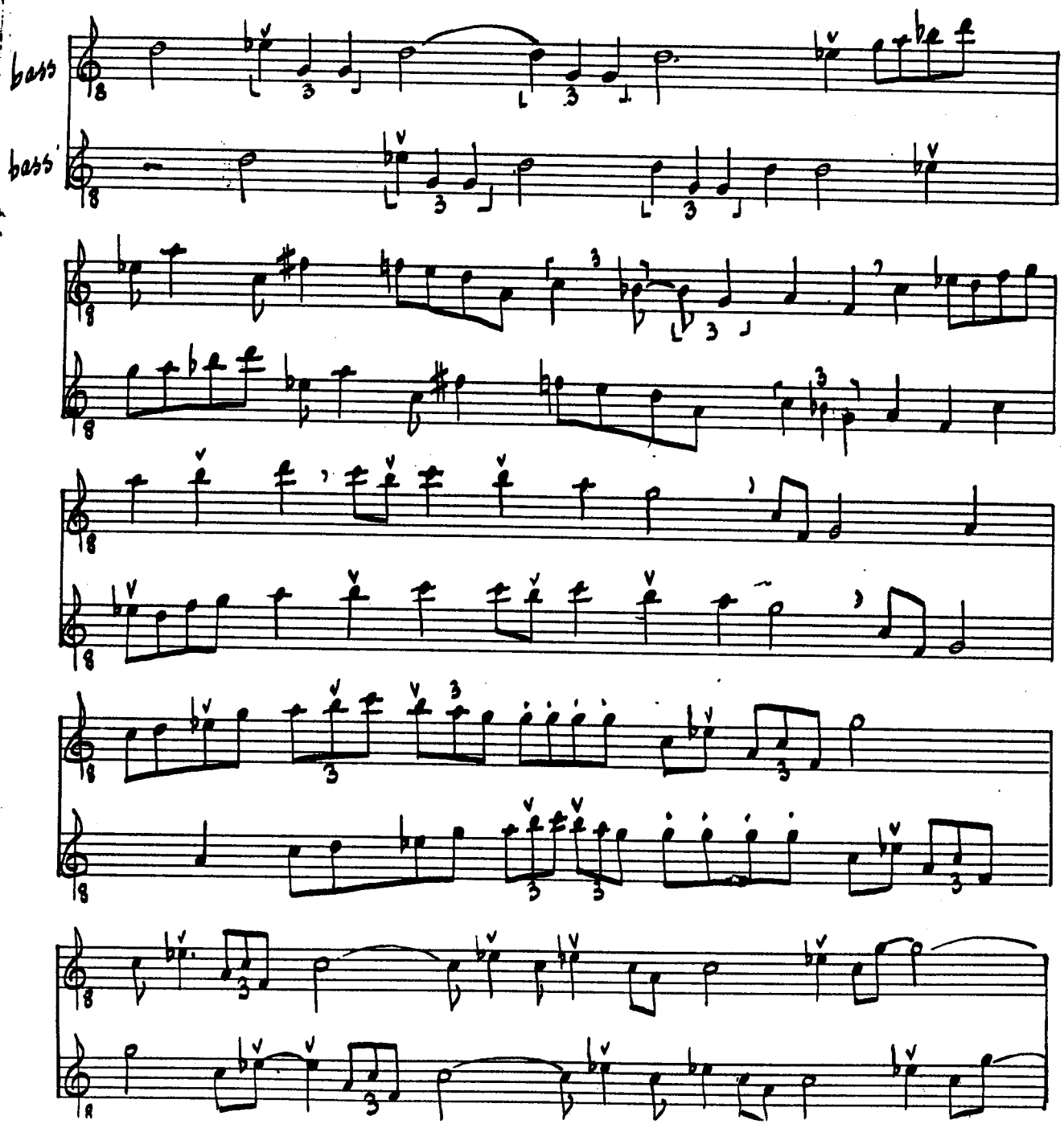


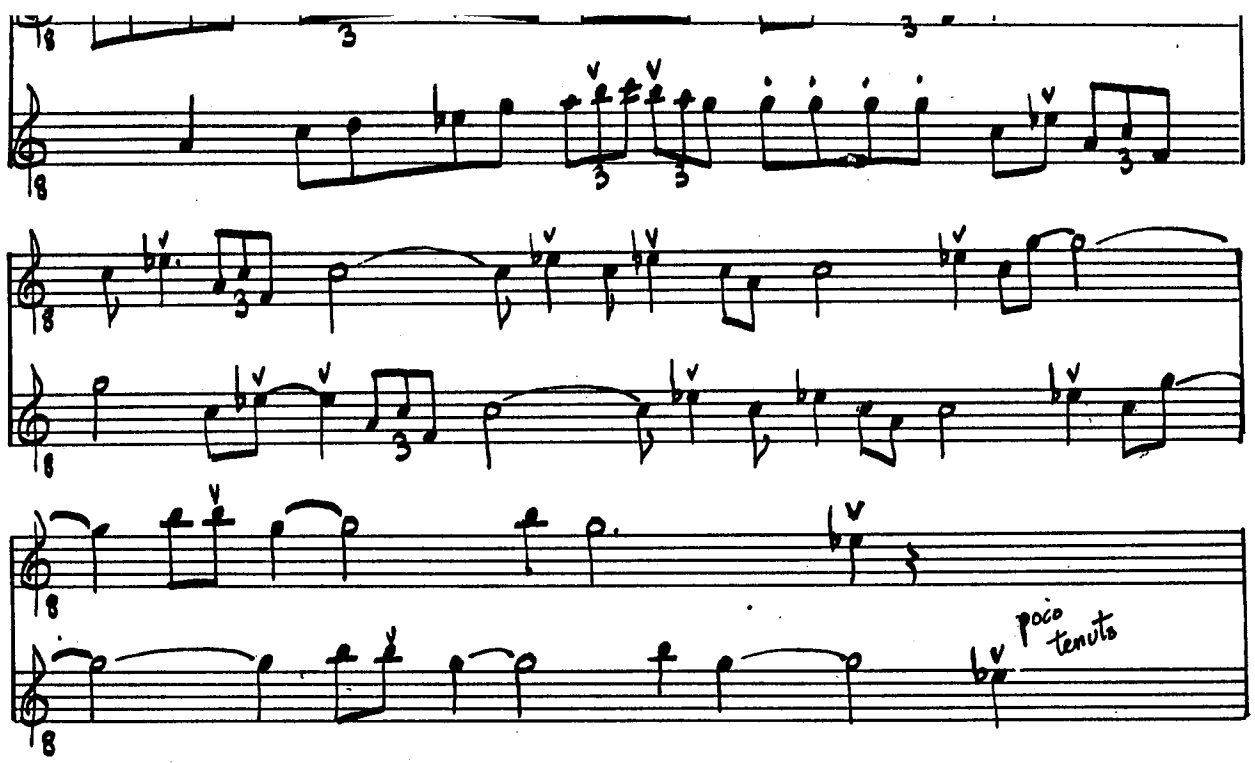
The Opera Singer's Vacation

On her vacations the famous opera singer lived alone in a cottage on a small island where she practiced to her heart's delight, and she could be heard at all hours like a faraway bird by wild animals on the most distant shores of the Canadian lake which lay at the bottom of an uninhabited valley.

The silence at the center of a becalmed lake is for her the most beautiful sound in the world.

19 Largo ♩=60 Con vibrato In blues style, with wail

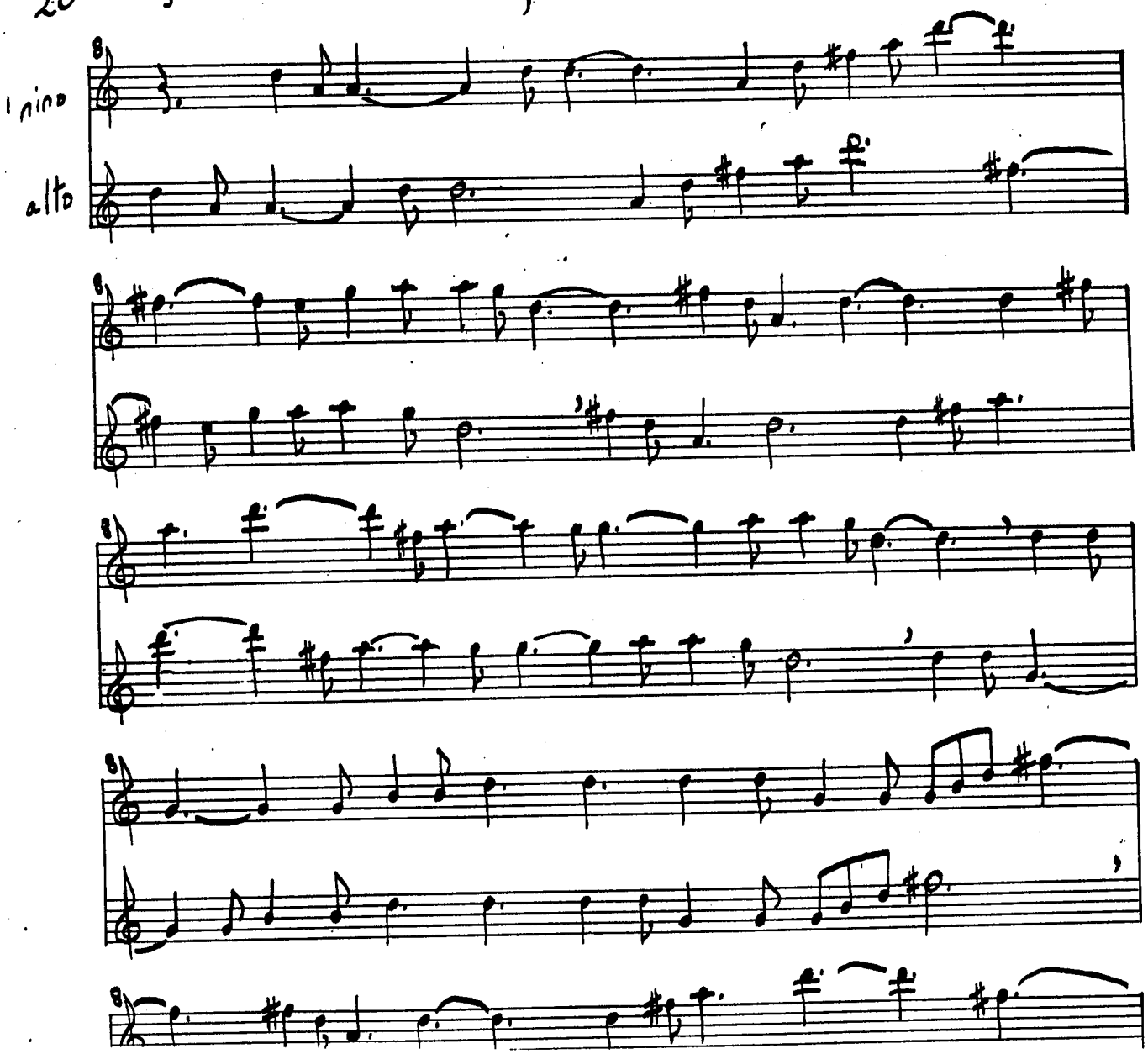




The Arsonist At The Zoo

The poisonous orange salamander of Peru in its glass cage at the Staten Island zoo attracted the gaze of the arsonist (wearing blue sneakers and carrying a rope in his belt) who had broken in at midnight to start a fire, but had become distracted from his insane design by the liveliness of the nocturnal animals: not that they were wild or especially noisy — they were merely awake and alert. The great cats were playing with their cubs, the raccoons were chasing each other, the primates played quiet games, and the place was alive with moving reptiles. After an hour he left without having started a fire and he never returned to that scene of what could have been his greatest crime.

And he never set another fire, but he became a drunk, closing the bars each night and staggering home at dawn.

There is something about us, we who are nocturnal, that nobody can ever understand.

20 Allegro Moderato ♩.=100 Senza vibrato. Should sound like organ pipes.