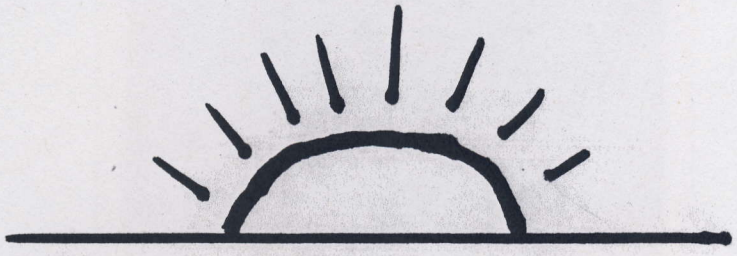
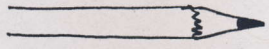


Sermon

(2010)

for narrating pianist

Andy Costello



Pencil and Eraser
Press

Program Notes

"***Sermon*** is essentially a history lecture on the piano recital tradition, with piano accompaniment (or as I like to say, 'A history lesson on wheels'). The musical content is comprised almost entirely of quotation, both from well-known excerpts from the piano literature, and lesser-known ones, of which perhaps only one or two (or three) people in the world would recognize. The text is newly written (aside from a few quotes), and it is entirely married to its musical accompaniment (please keep this mind if you decide to read the text before the piece's audition). Although I generally have an inclination for verbosity in my program notes, I feel this is all there is to say, since I do so much damn talking in the piece itself." -AC

~~~

Andy Costello (b. yesterday) is a pianist, composer, and musicologist currently living in Montréal. As a pianist, he focuses on contemporary music. As a composer, he focuses on the piano. He is also interested in non-classical use of the voice, and humor. In musicology, Andy researches whatever he feels like. His website is www.MyNameIsAndyCostello.com.

~~~

Andy Costello (né hier) est un pianiste, compositeur et musicologue habitant présentement à Montréal. Comme pianiste, il est passionné par la musique contemporaine. Comme compositeur, il se concentre sur le piano. Il s'intéresse aussi à l'utilisation de la voix hors d'un contexte classique, et à l'humour en musique. Ses activités de musicologue touchent à n'importe quel sujet qui l'intéresse. Présentement, Andy n'a ni femme, ni chien. Son site web est www.MyNameIsAndyCostello.com.

Text:

When we sit down for a piano recital, we want to hear… new… sounds. Or maybe, we want to hear old sounds in a new time and place. But unfortunately, we no longer live in the eighteenth century (or nineteenth for that matter!), and we find ourselves drowning our future in our past. So where do we go from here? No. No. Maybe. No. No. No. No. Okay!

Of course, at a piano recital, there are *plenty* of things one wishes *not* to hear. For example, we don't want to hear pedantry. Nor do we want to hear… Bloop… Blop… Bleep! But, my oh my how we *love* virtuosity! But there's a slight problem.

Sometimes, the taste of the performer is not in agreement with those of the listener. "We want to hear the waves of the ocean and sea…" I don't care about what you want, I only care about me! See… I want to win competitions! I want to make a career! All these composers try to tell me what to do. For example, "Gesanvoll mit innigster empfindung. Andante molto molto molto cantabile ed espressivo! Crescendo! Descrescendo… Grace notes! Crescendo… piano, piano, piano." But I for one have a mind of my own! For example, at this very moment, this composer is telling me to improvise! So/But enough about me, and you... Let's talk about history!

The piano recital tradition began abruptly. A guy named Liszt lovingly dreamt of a world where pianists, in order to play a recital, were required to memorize their music… There were many to follow in the footsteps of Liszt. One could even say, the Liszt goes on! Hoffman! Argerich! Friedmann! Moisewitch! Rosenthal, Thalberg, D'Albert, Cramer, Lupu, Van Cliburn, Herz! Ax, Pugno, Bülow, Joseffy, Jan Dussek, Gieseking, Rzewski! Ziloti, Clementi, Busoni, Pollini… Tausig, Bülow, Neuhaus, Bach! Gould, Gulda, Rice (Connie), Risler. Zimmerman (Pierre Joseph Guillaume), Zimmerman (Christian)! Hess! Fischer! Gilels! Richter!

There were plenty more to follow this path. But let's leave it at that, I'd rather not do the math. To answer this question is not very fun, and the question is this: What's infinity plus one?!

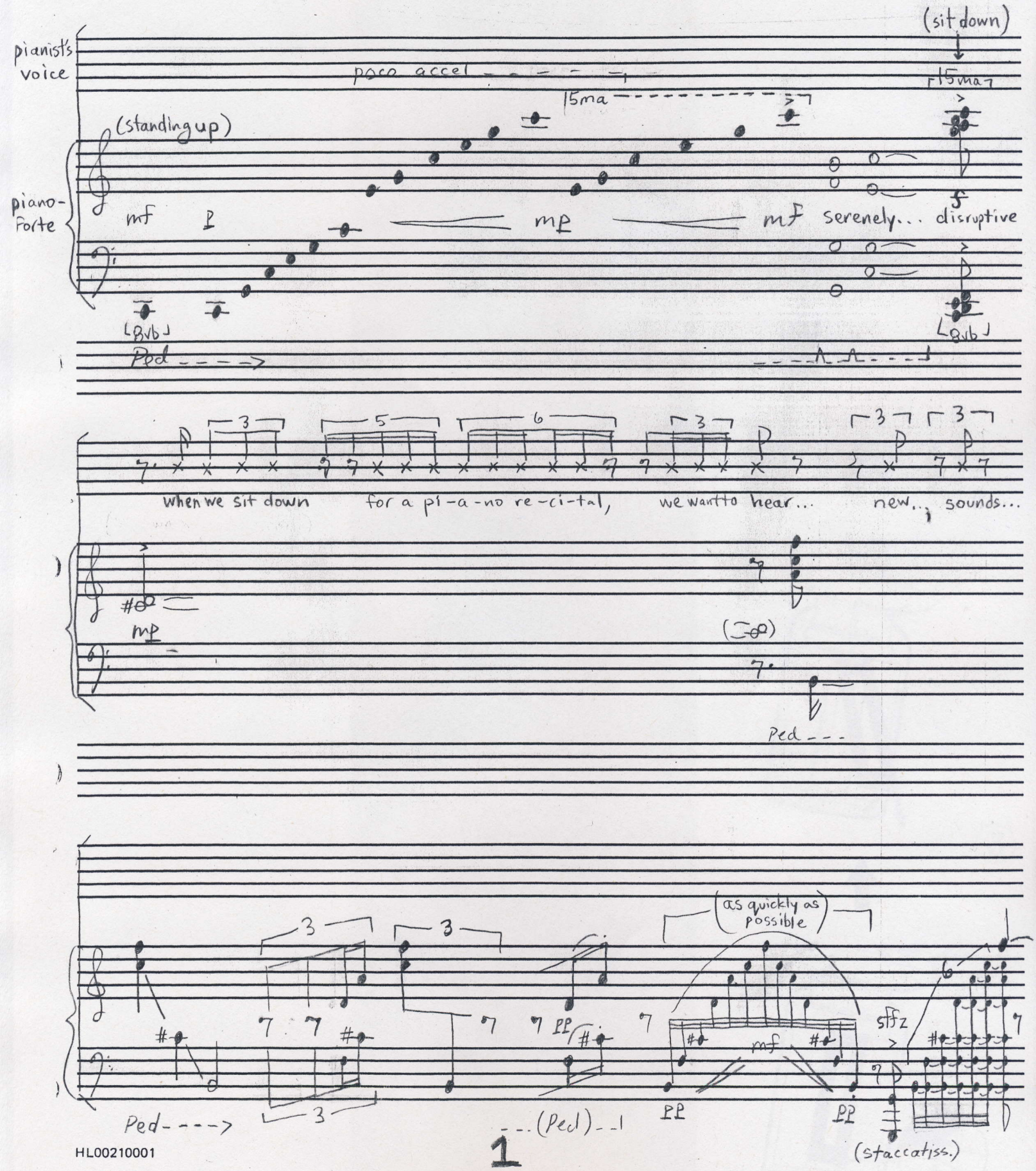
To make a long story short, Liszt's life marked the beginning, as well as the end, of the piano recital. And we all follow drearily in his footsteps.

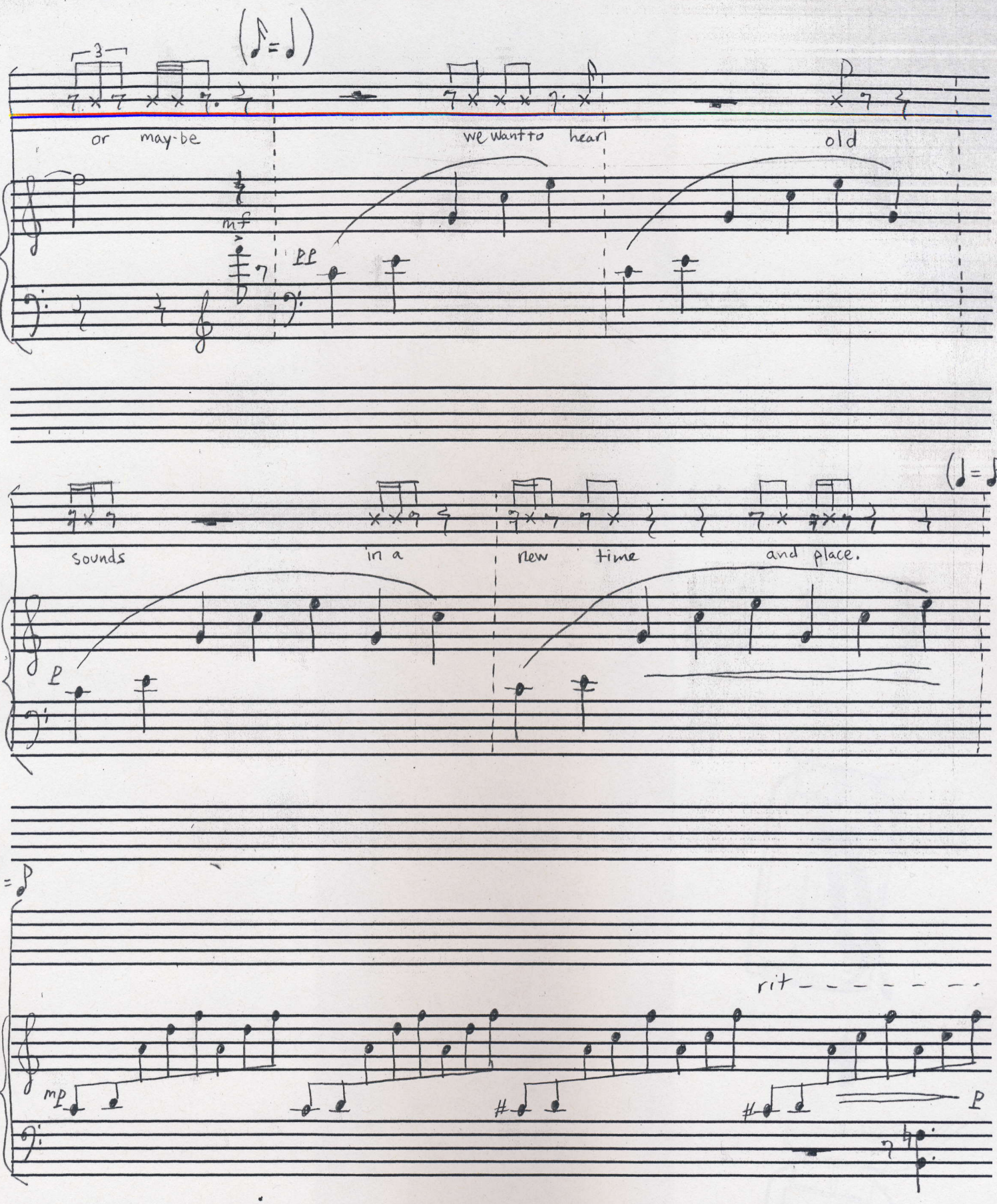
So if there is a lesson to learn from all of this, it is: "Don't stretch further than you can reach!" Or, if you are not a fan of practical discouragement, I will say this: Lend me a hand.

Sermon

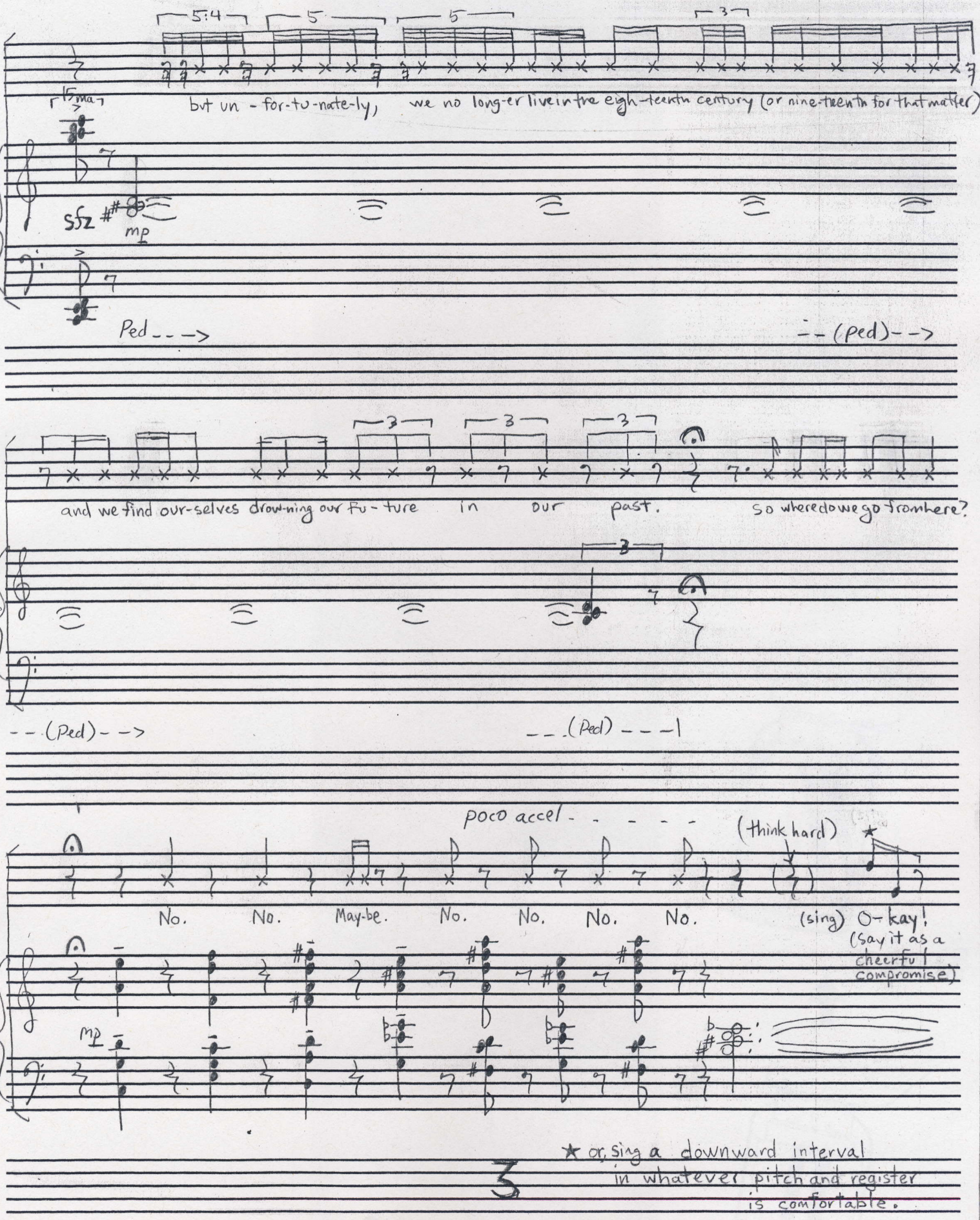
Andy Costello

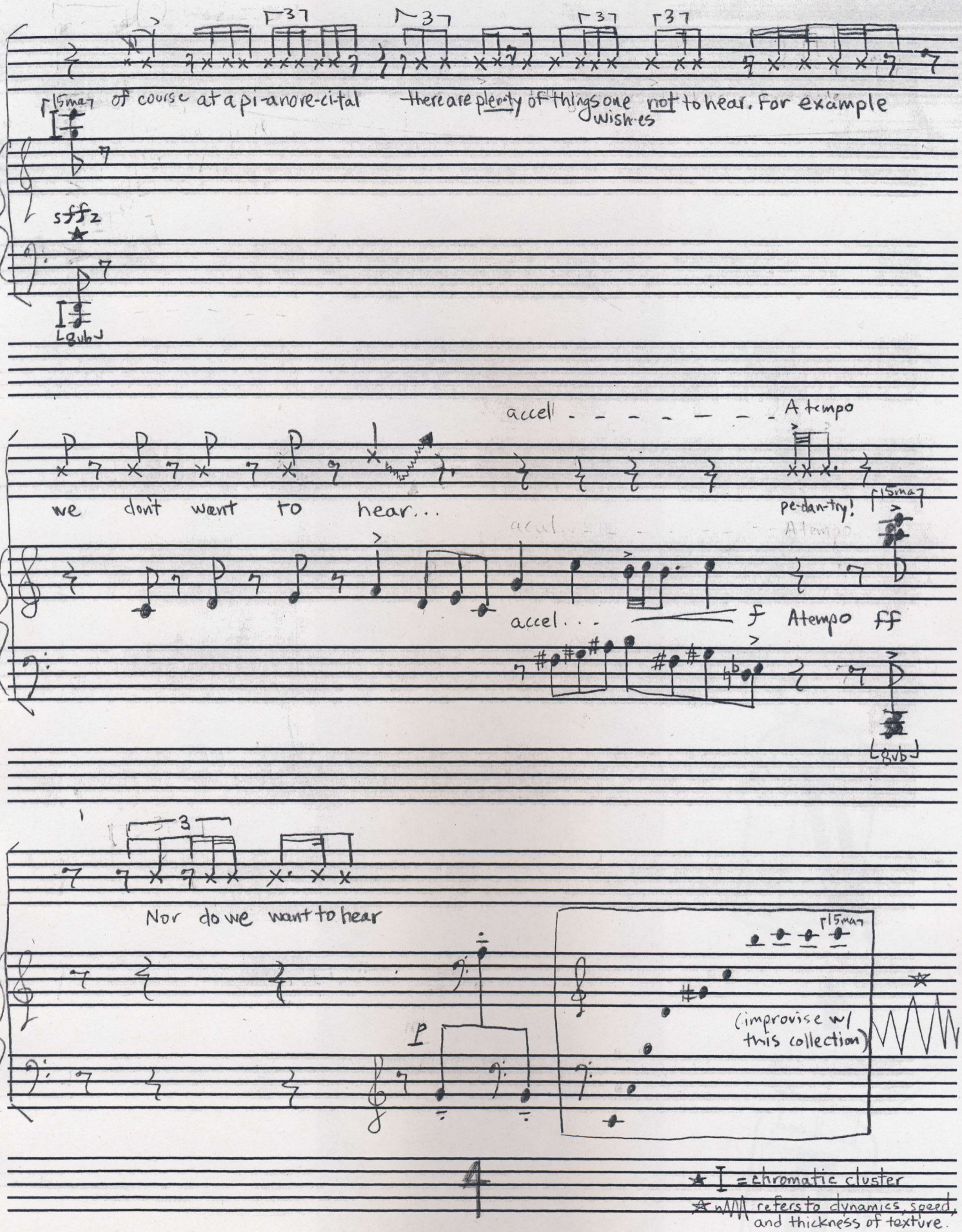
for narrating pianist

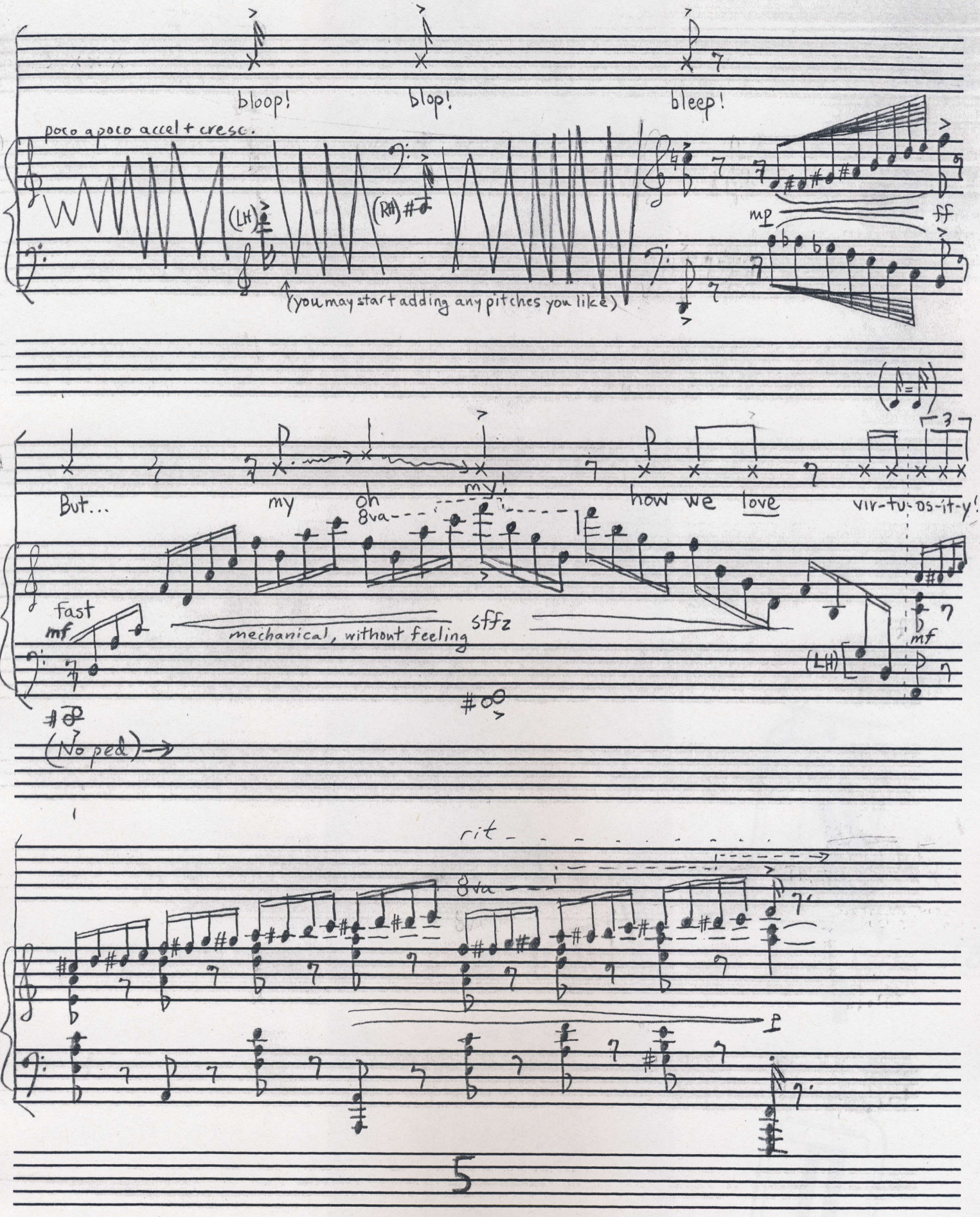


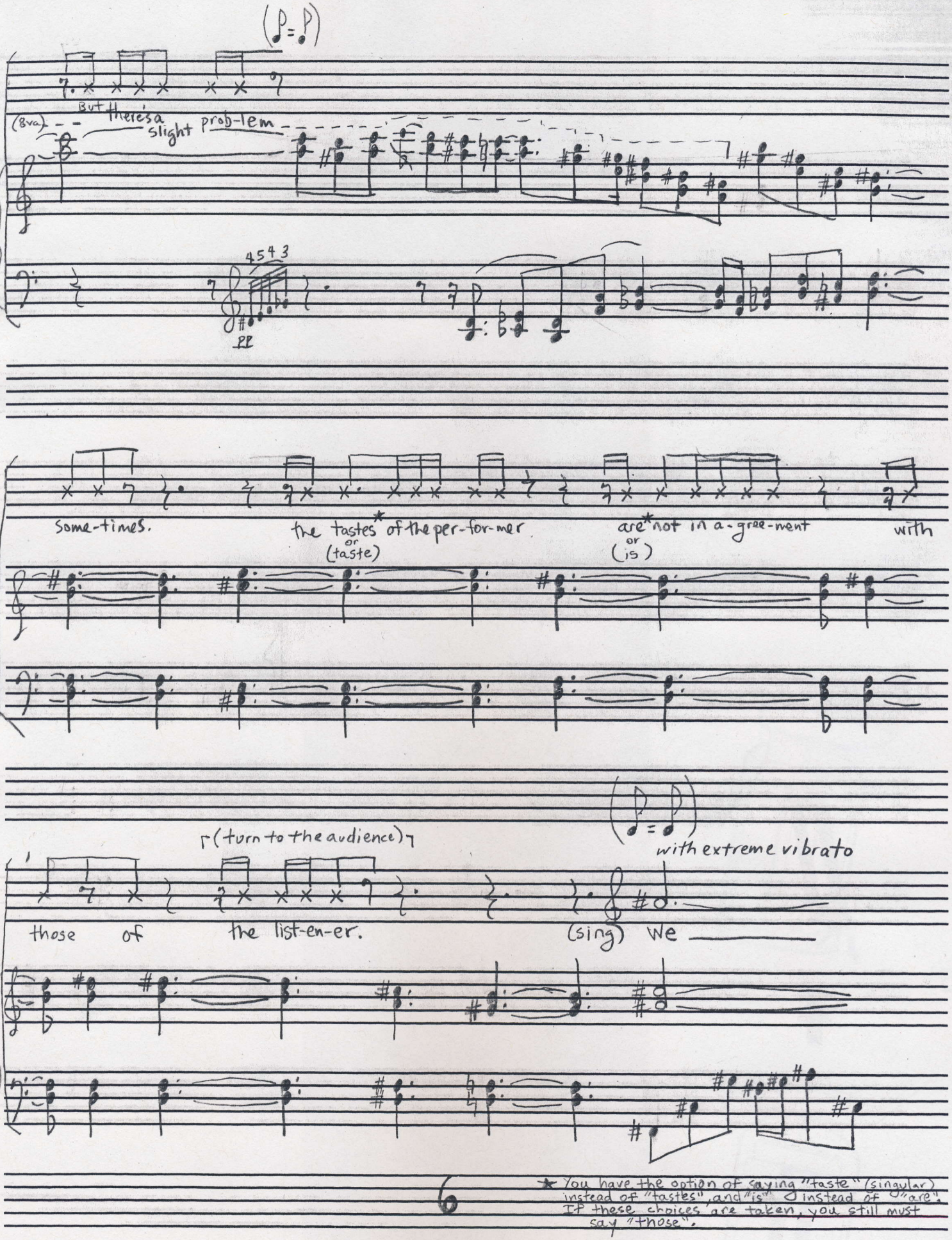

3
or may-be
mf
pp
we want to hear
old
sounds
in a
new time
and place.
p
mp
rit
p

HL00210001


5:4
5
5
3
but un - for-tu-nate-ly, we no long-er live in the eigh-teenth century (or nine-teenth for that matter)
sfz
mp
Ped - - ->
- - (Ped) - ->
3
3
3
and we find our-selves drow-ning our fu - ture in our past. so where do we go from here?
- - (Ped) - ->
- - (Ped) - - -|
poco accel - - - - -
(think hard)
No. No. May-be. No. No. No. No.
(sing) O-kay!
(say it as a cheerful compromise)
mp
3
★ or, sing a downward interval in whatever pitch and register is comfortable.

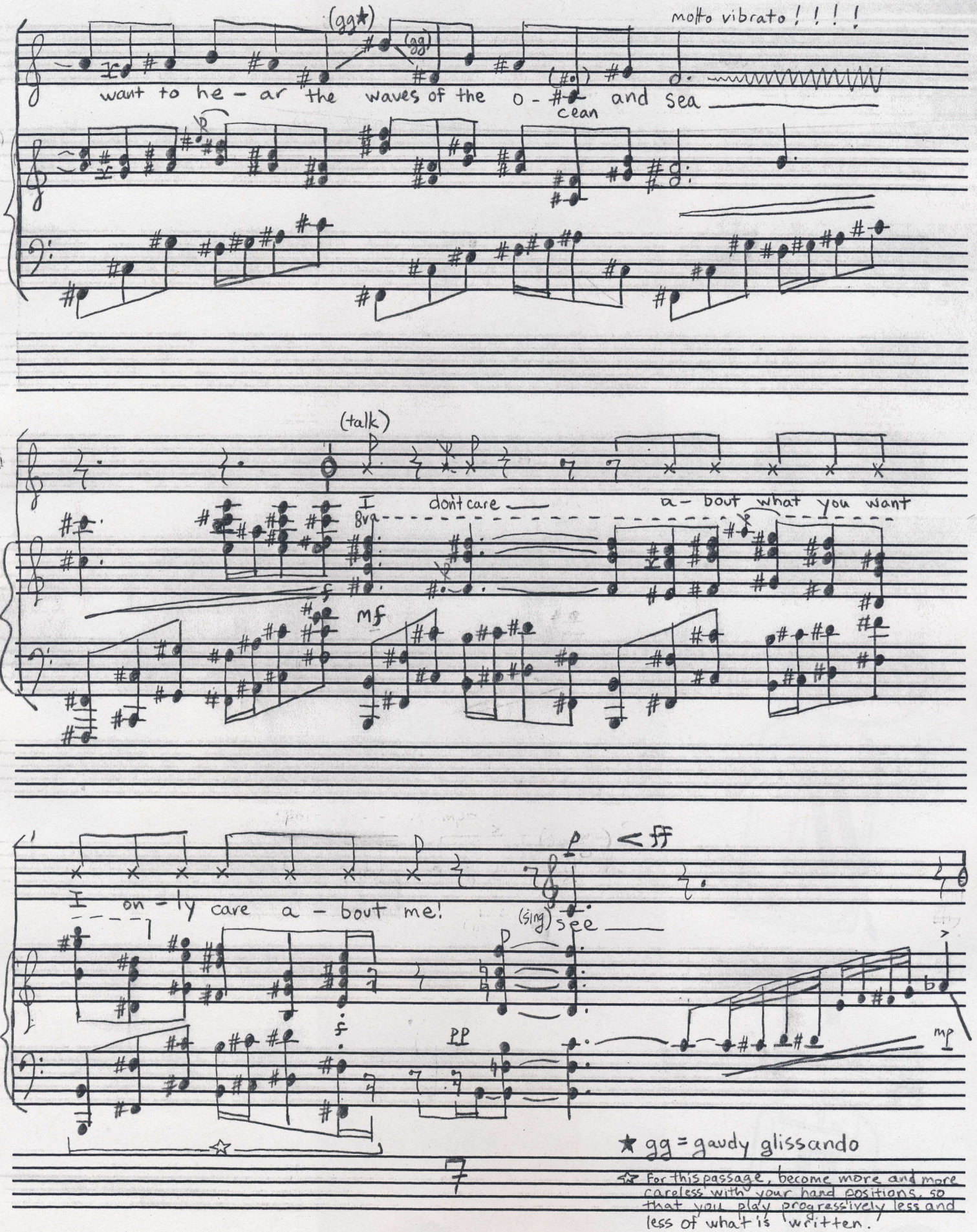

of course at a pi-ano re-ci-tal
there are plenty of things one wishes not to hear. For example
sffz
accel - - - - - - - - A tempo
we don't want to hear...
pe-dan-try!
accel...
f
A tempo
ff
Nor do we want to hear
(improvise w/ this collection)
= chromatic cluster
refers to dynamics, speed, and thickness of texture.

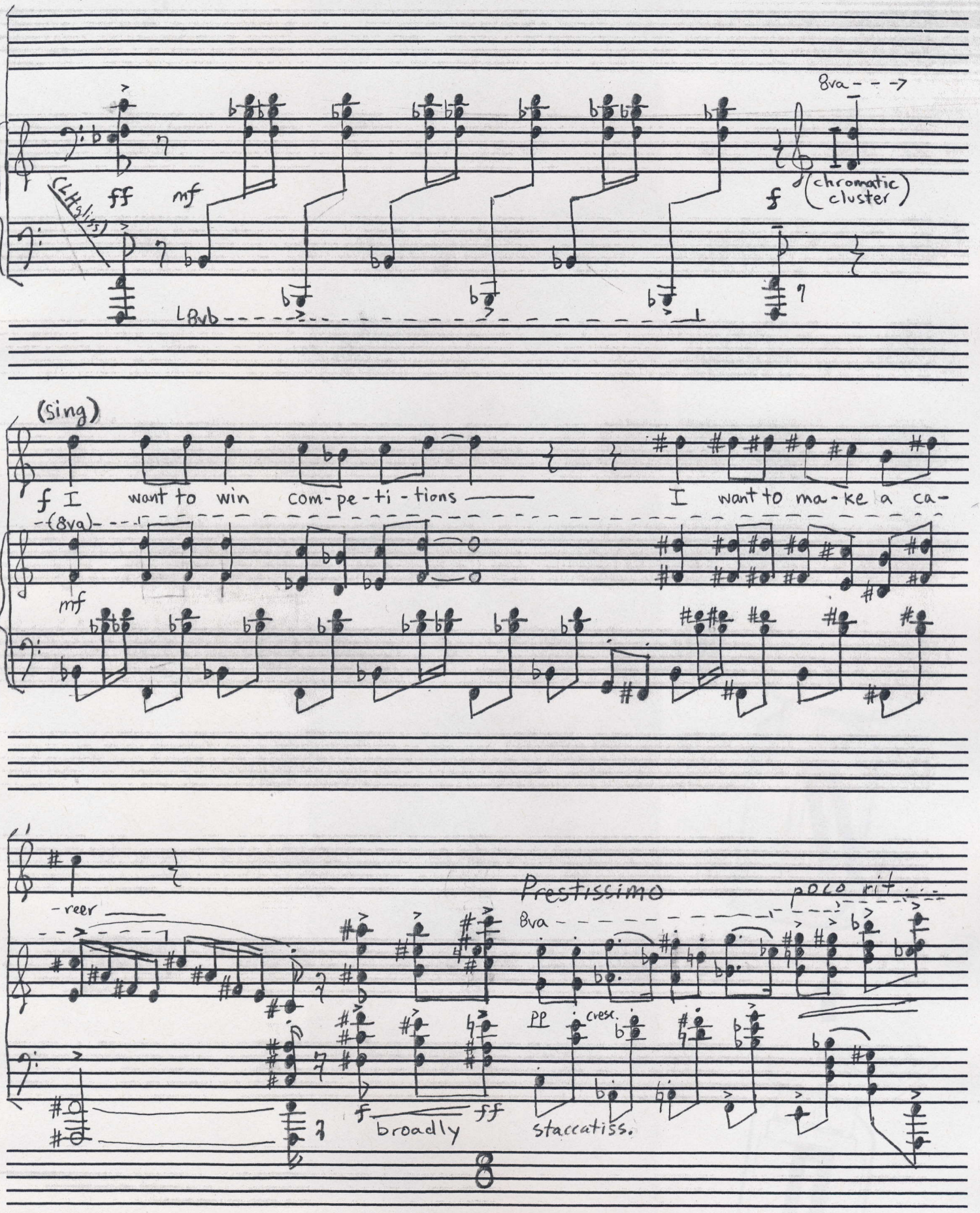

bloop!
blop!
bleep!
poco a poco accel + cresc.
(LH)
(RH)
(you may start adding any pitches you like)
mp
ff
But...
my
oh
my!
how we love
vir-tu-os-it-y!
8va
Fast
mf
mechanical, without feeling
sffz
(LH)
mf
(No ped)
rit
8va
f
5

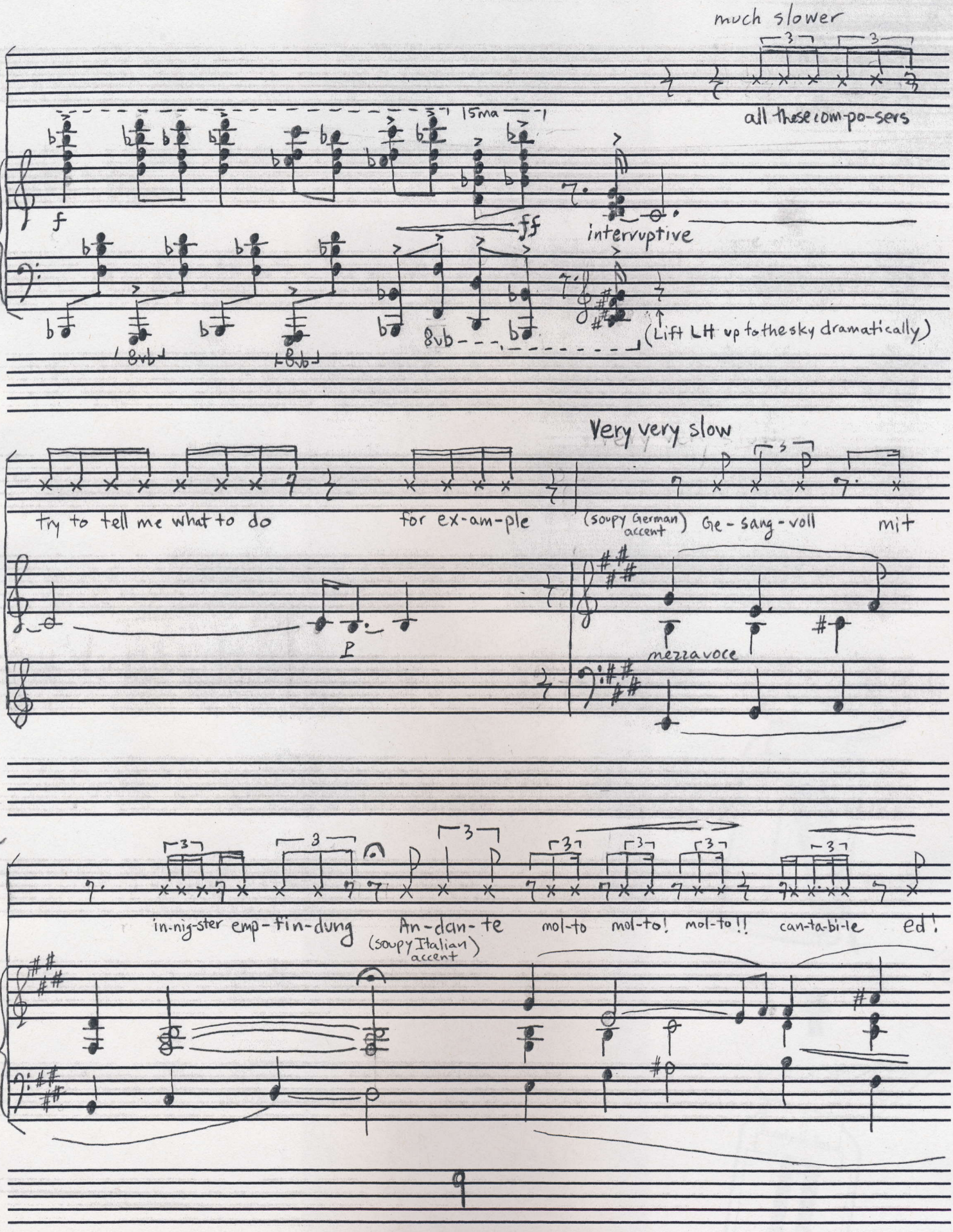


* You have the option of saying "taste" (singular) instead of "tastes", and "is" instead of "are". If these choices are taken, you still must say "those".

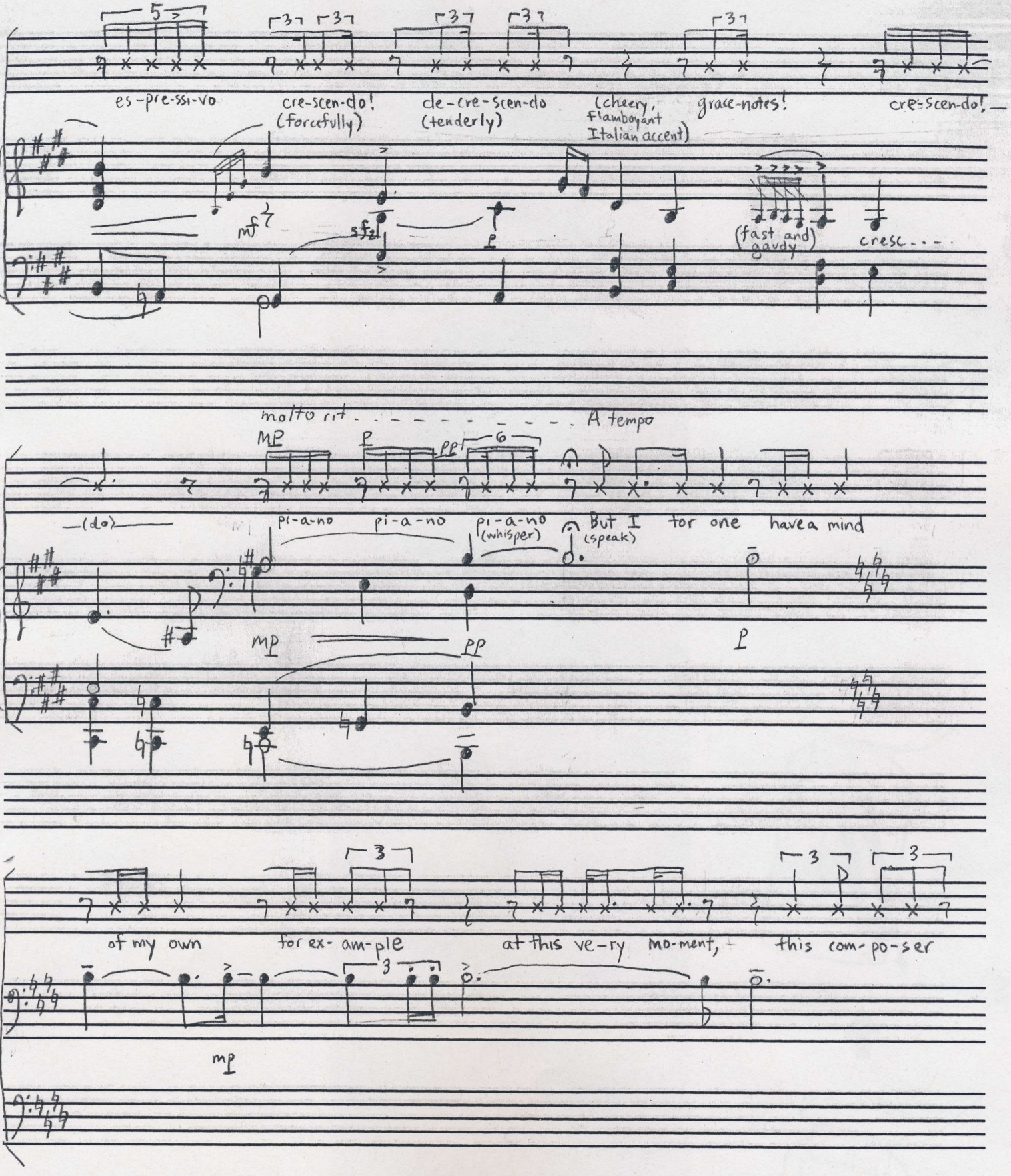
HL00210001


(gg★)
(gg)
molto vibrato!!!!
want to he - ar the waves of the o - (#o) cean and sea
(talk)
don't care
a - bout what you want
8va
mf
I on - ly care a - bout me!
(sing) see
p
< ff
f
pp
mp
★ gg = gaudy glissando
☆ For this passage, become more and more careless with your hand positions, so that you play progressively less and less of what is written.

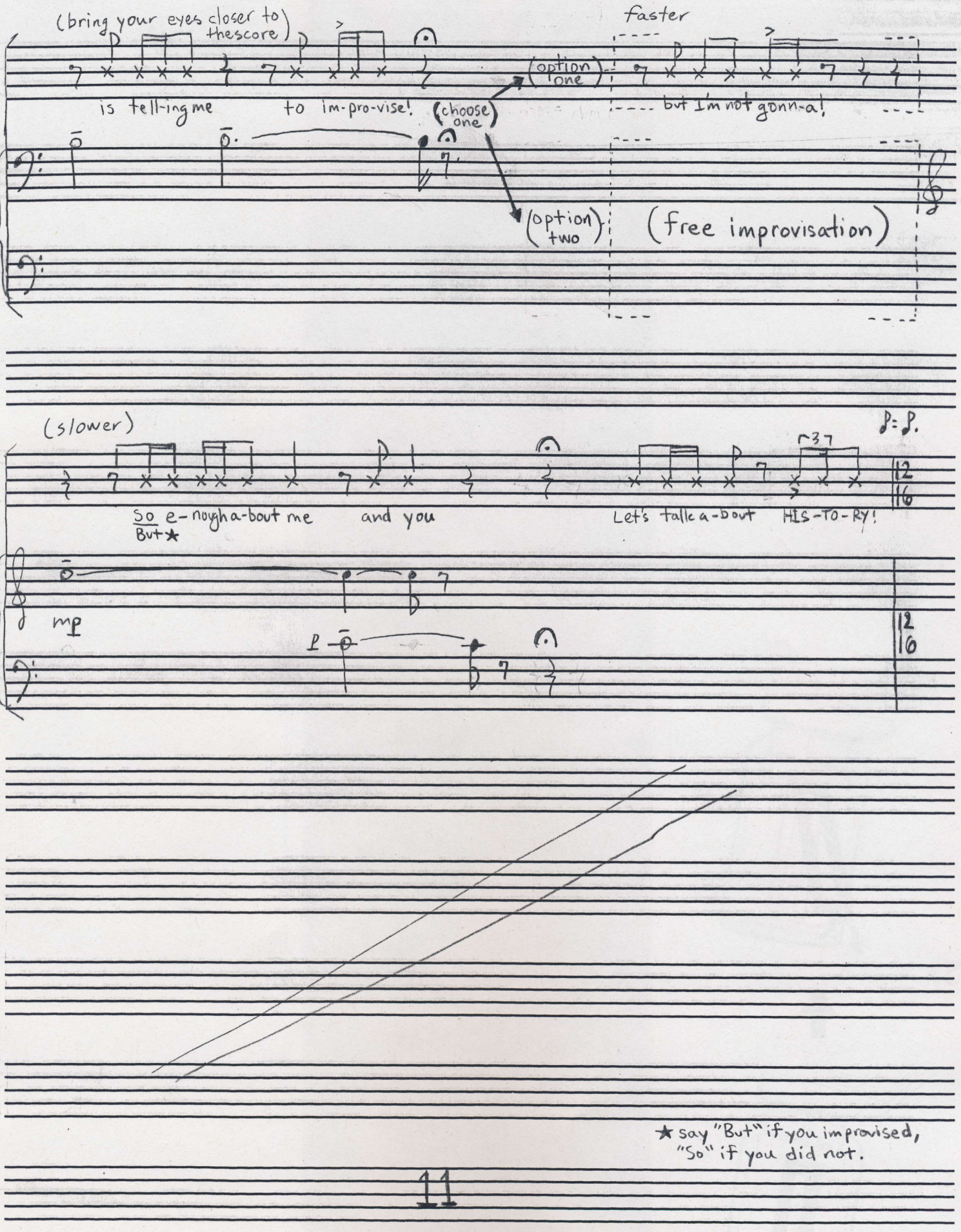

8va
(chromatic cluster)
ff
mf
f
8vb
(sing)
f I want to win com-pe-ti-tions
I want to ma-ke a ca-
(8va)
mf
-reer
Prestissimo
poco rit.
8va
pp
cresc.
f
broadly
ff
staccatiss.


much slower
all these com-po-sers
15ma
f
ff
interruptive
8vb
8vb
8vb
(Lift LH up to the sky dramatically)
Very very slow
try to tell me what to do
for ex-am-ple
(soupy German accent) Ge-sang-voll
mit
p
mezza voce
in-nig-ster emp-fin-dung
An-dan-te
(soupy Italian accent)
mol-to
mol-to!
mol-to!!
can-ta-bi-le
ed!

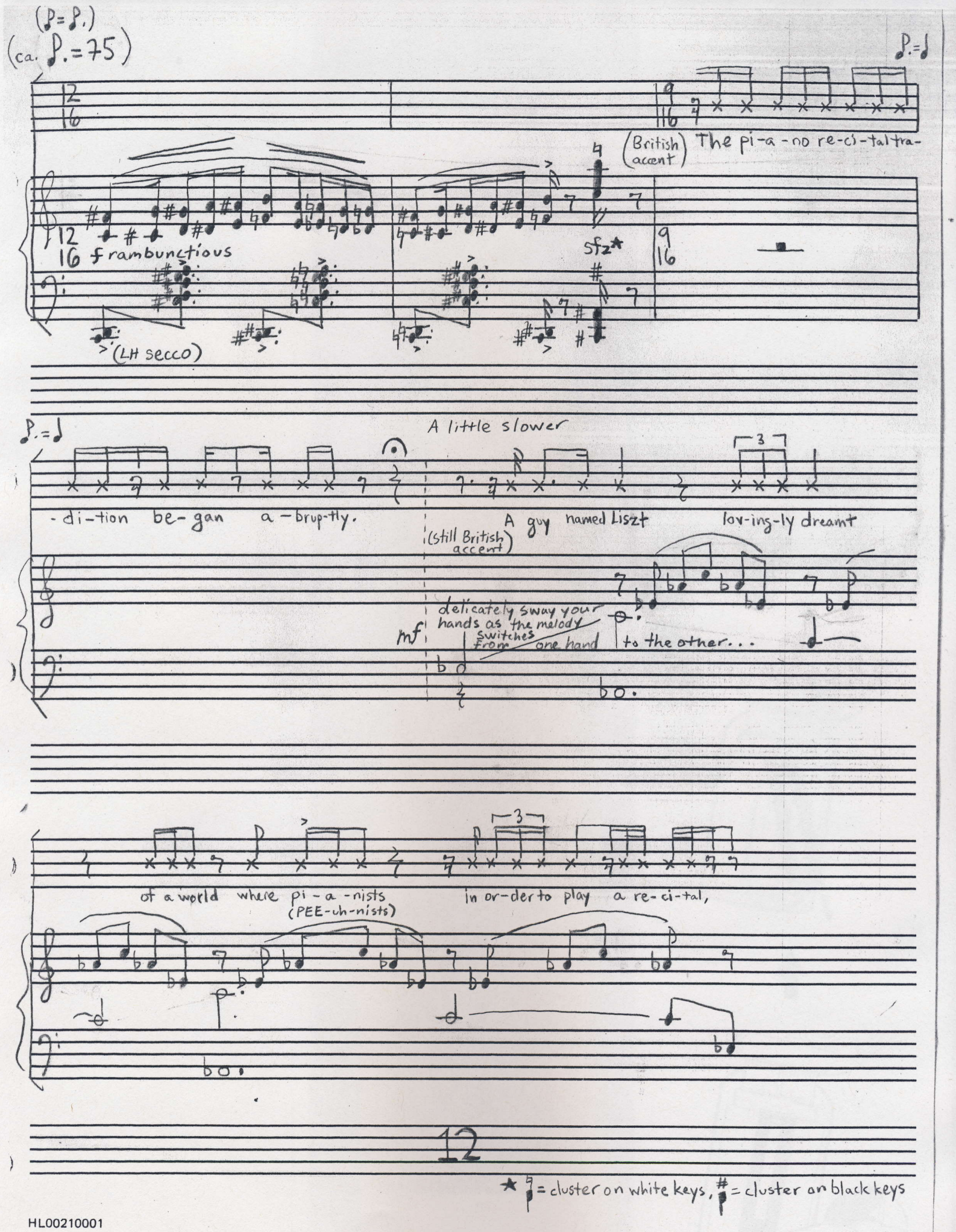
HL00210001

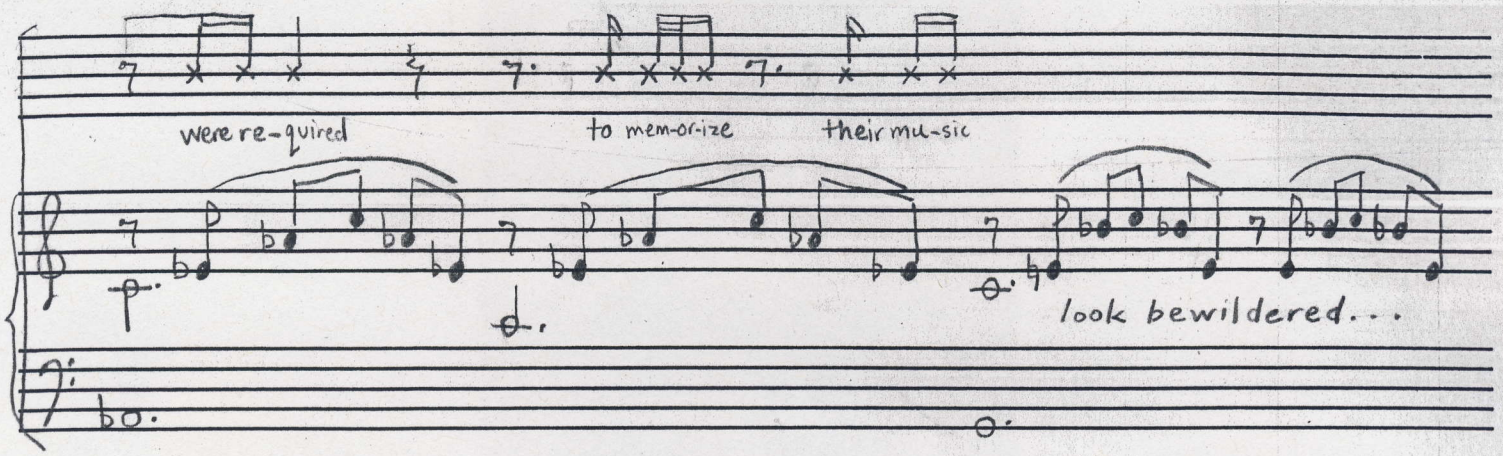

es-pre-ssi-vo
cre-scen-do! (forcefully)
de-cre-scen-do (tenderly)
(cheery, flamboyant Italian accent)
grace-notes!
cre-scen-do!
mf
sf
p
(fast and gaudy)
cresc....
molto rit. . . . . A tempo
MP
p
pp
(do)
pi-a-no
pi-a-no
pi-a-no (whisper)
But I (speak)
for one
have a mind
mp
pp
p
of my own
for ex-am-ple
at this ve-ry mo-ment,
this com-po-ser
mp

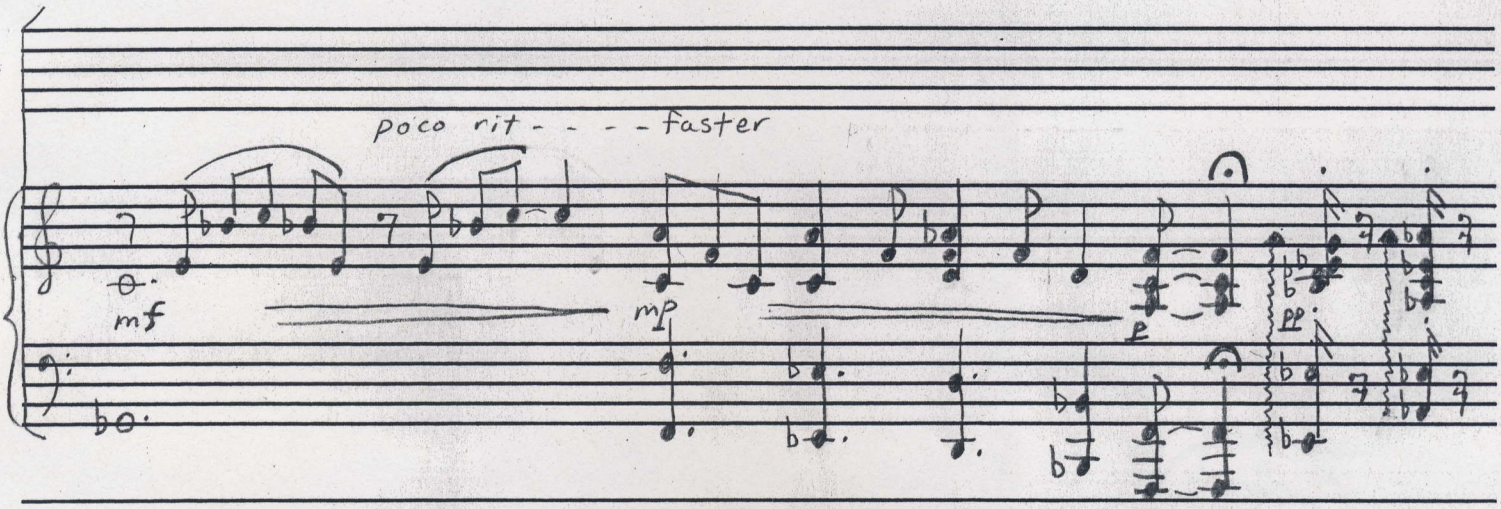
HL00210001

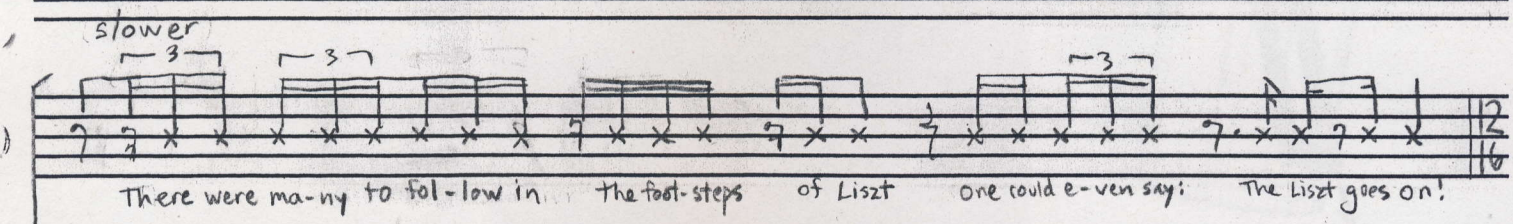

(bring your eyes closer to the score)
is tell-ing me
to im-pro-vise!
(choose one)
(option one)
faster
but I'm not gonn-a!
(option two)
(free improvisation)
(slower)
So e-nough a-bout me
But★
and you
Let's talk a-bout
HIS-TO-RY!
mp
p
12
16
★ say "But" if you improvised,
"So" if you did not.

HL00210001


(ca. ♪. = 75)
(British accent)
The pi-a-no re-ci-tal tra-
frambunctious
sfz*
(LH secco)
A little slower
-di-tion be-gan a-brup-tly.
A guy named Liszt
lov-ing-ly dreamt
(still British accent)
delicately sway your hands as the melody switches from one hand to the other...
mf
of a world where pi-a-nists
(PEE-uh-nists)
in or-der to play a re-ci-tal,
12
★ = cluster on white keys, # = cluster on black keys


were re-quired
to mem-or-ize
their mu-sic
look bewildered...


poco rit - - - - faster
mf
mp
p
pp


slower
There were ma-ny to fol-low in the foot-steps of Liszt one could e-ven say: The Liszt goes on!

HL00210001

A little faster than ♪. = 75

12/16

12/16 f rambunctious

(LH secco)

sfz

(1st repeat)

Hoff - man!

(2nd repeat)

Ar - ge - rich!

f

sffz

♪ = ♪

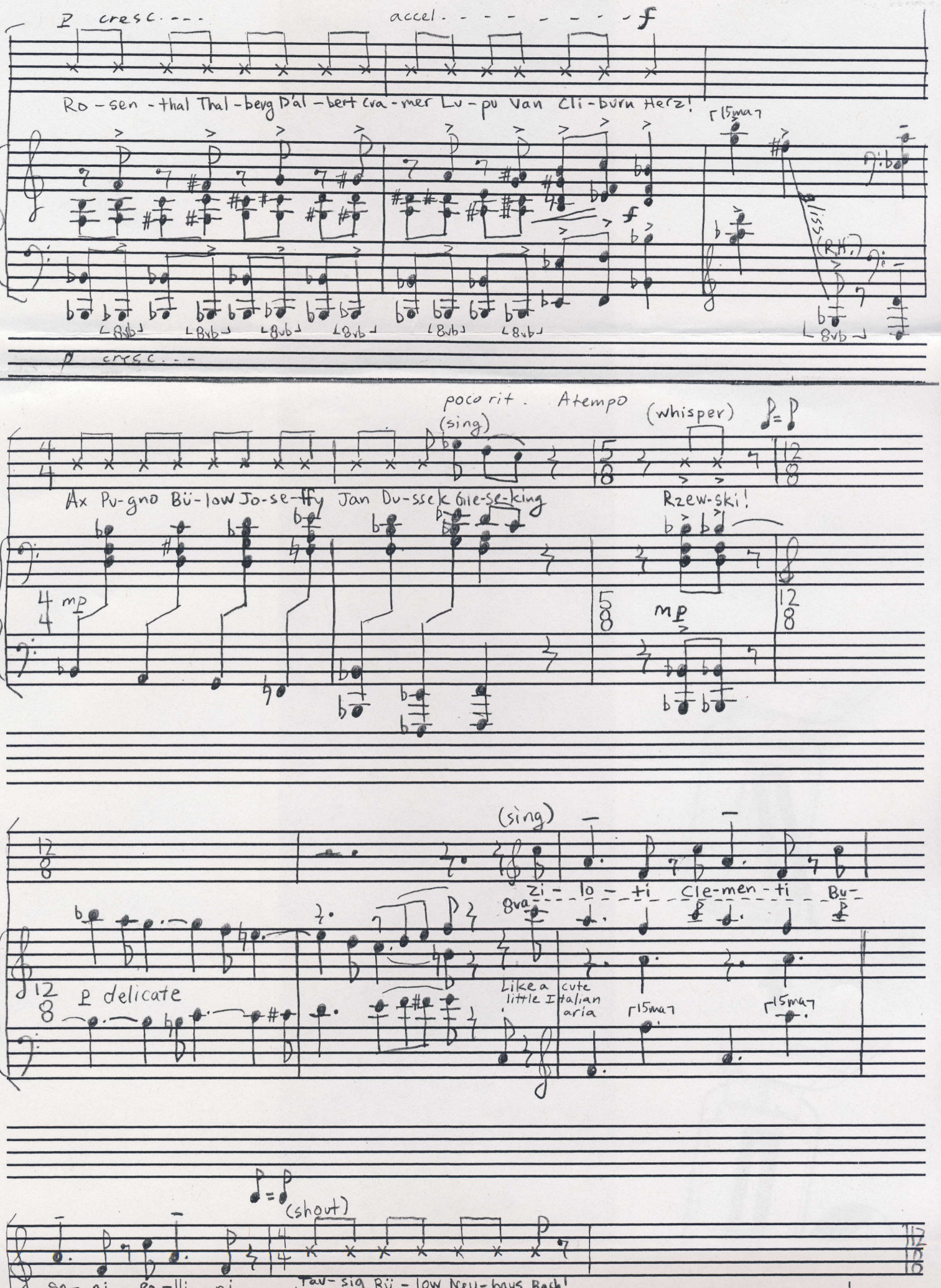
Fried - mann!

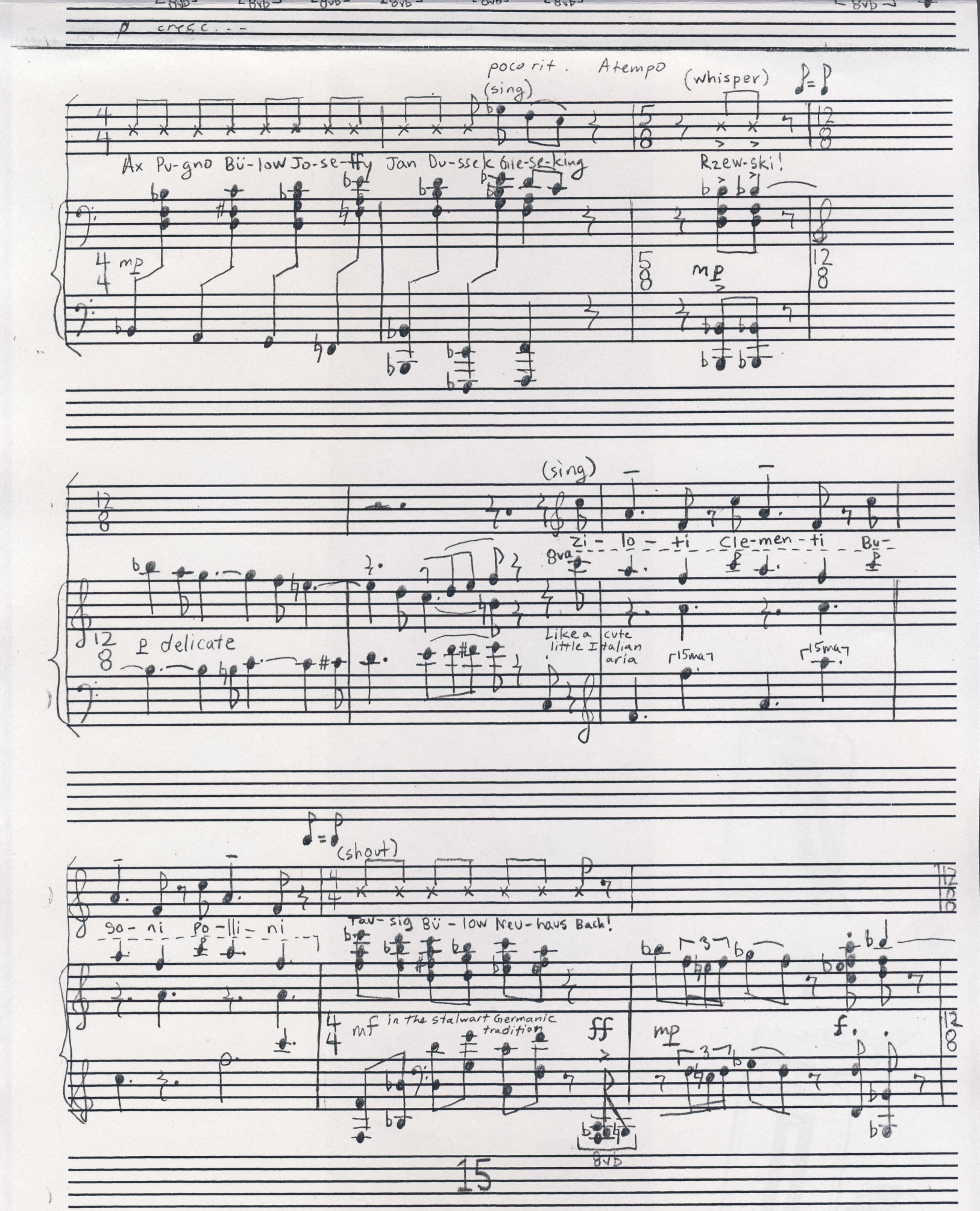
Moi - se - witch!

f

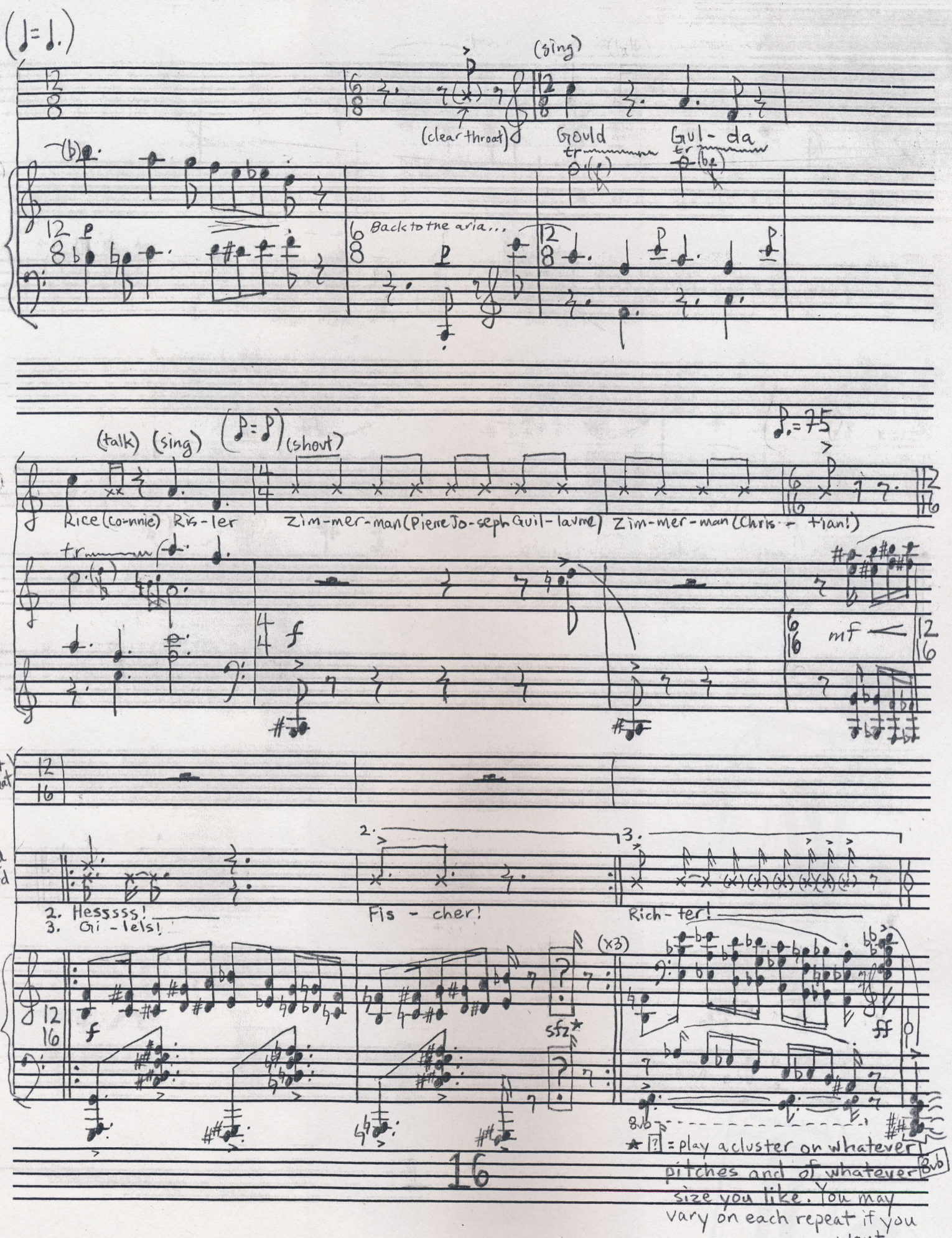
4/4

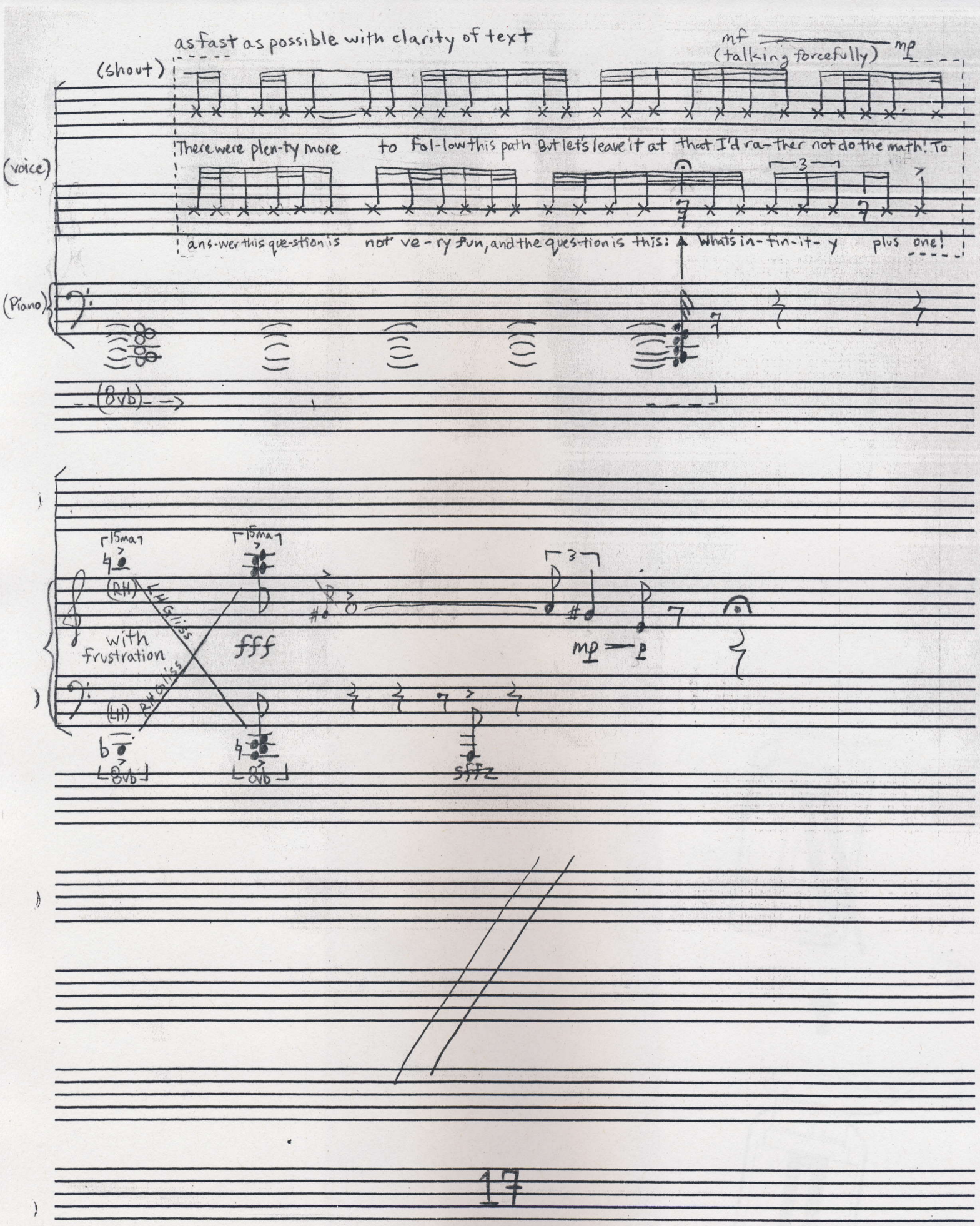
★ = cluster on white keys, # = cluster on black keys


p cresc. - - -
accel. - - - - - - - - - f
Ro - sen - thal Thal - berg P'al - bert Cra - mer Lu - pu Van Cli - burn Herz!
15ma
glissando (R.H.)
8vb
p cresc. - -
poco rit. A tempo
(sing)
(whisper)
Ax Pu - gno Bü - low Jo - se - ffy Jan Du - ssek Gie - se - king
Rzew - ski!
mp
mp
(sing)
zi - lo - ti Cle - men - ti Bu -
8va
p delicate
Like a little I
cute Italian aria
15ma
15ma
(shout)
so - ni Po - lli - ni
Tau - sig Bü - low Neu - haus Bach!


cresc. - - -
poco rit. A tempo
(sing)
(whisper)
Ax Pu-gno Bü-low Jo-se-ffy Jan Du-ssek Gie-se-king Rzew-ski!
mp
mp
(sing)
zi - lo - ti cle-men - ti Bu-
8va
p delicate
Like a little Italian aria
15ma
15ma
(shout)
so - ni po - lli - ni
Tau-sig Bü - low Neu-haus Bach!
mf in the stalwart Germanic tradition
ff
mp
f.
8vb

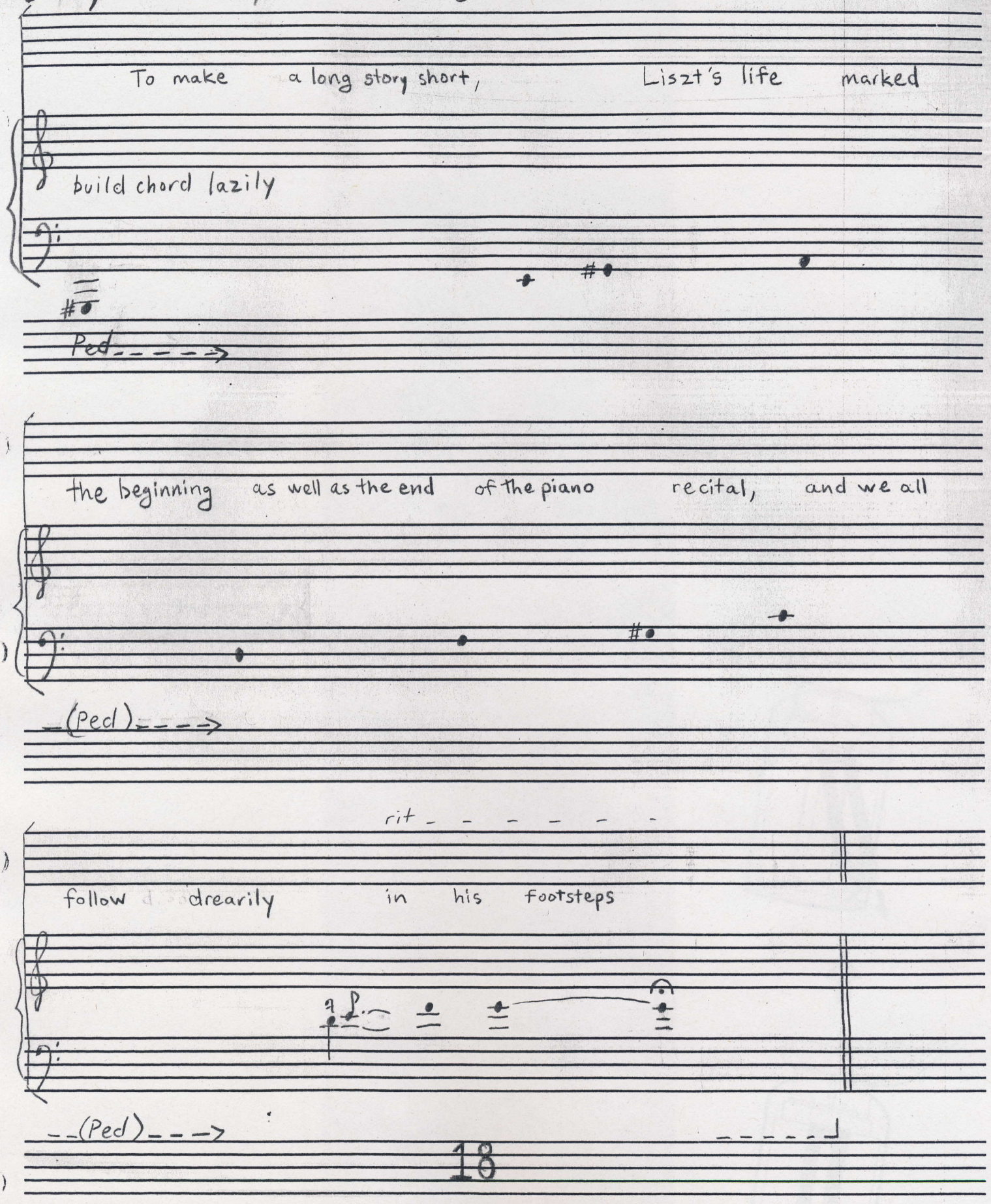
HL00210001


(sing)
(clear throat)
Gould
Gul-da
Back to the aria...
(talk)
(sing)
(shout)
Rice (co-nnie) Ris-ler
Zim-mer-man (Pierre Jo-seph Guil-laume)
Zim-mer-man (Chris-tian!)
1st repeat
2nd 3rd
2. Hesssss!
3. Gi-lels!
Fis-cher!
Rich-ter!
(x3)
8vb
⋆ [?] = play a cluster on whatever pitches and of whatever size you like. You may vary on each repeat if you want.
8vb
16

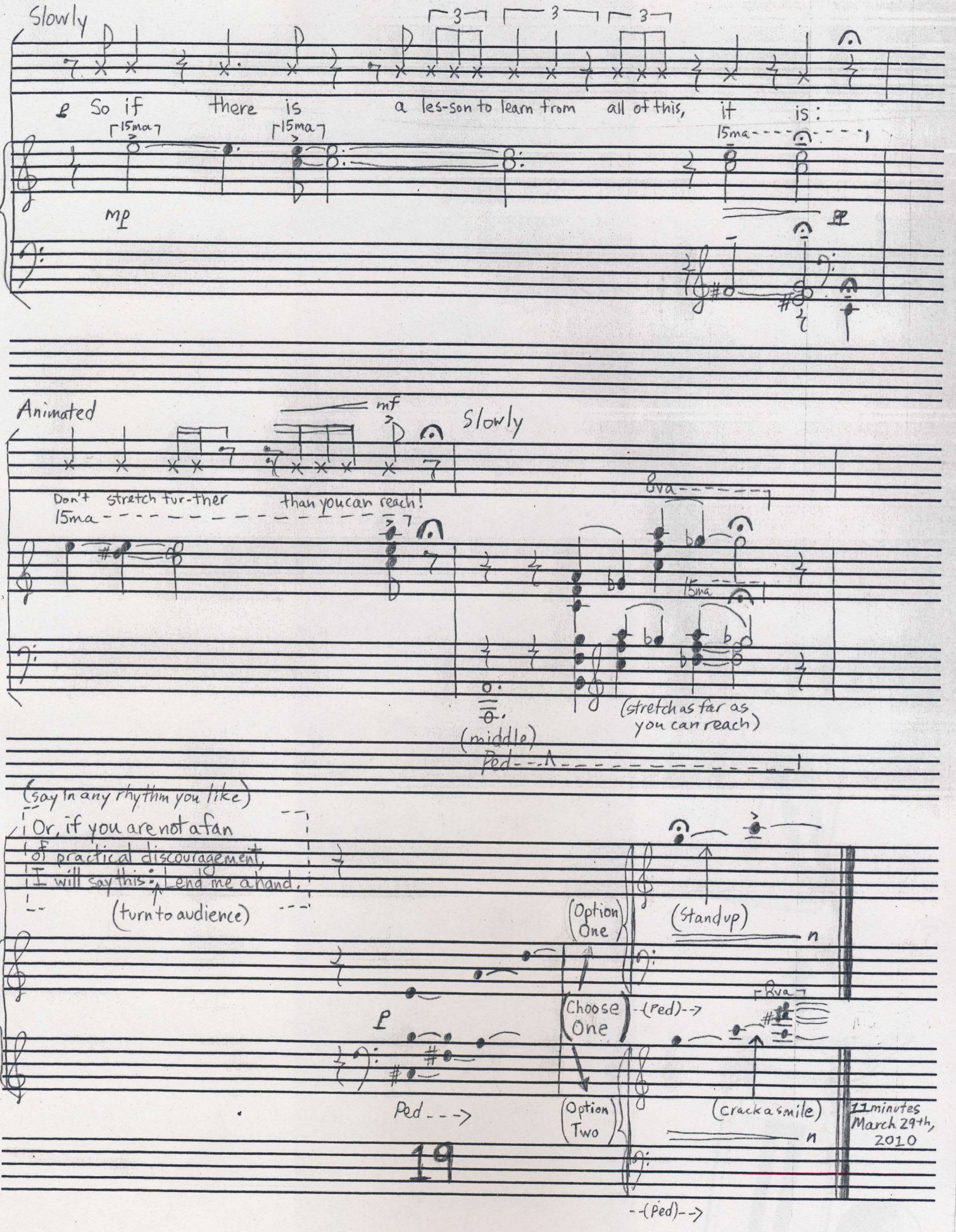

as fast as possible with clarity of text
(shout)
nf
(talking forcefully)
mp
(voice)
There were plen-ty more to fol-low this path But let's leave it at that I'd ra-ther not do the math! To
ans-wer this que-stion is not ve-ry fun, and the ques-tion is this: What's in-fin-it-y plus one!
(Piano)
(8vb)
15ma
(RH)
(LH)
with frustration
fff
mp
p
sffz
8vb

HL00210001

Dreary and non-rhythmic (the passage of time is represented spatially)



HL00210001


Slowly
So if there is a les-son to learn from all of this, it is:
15ma
mp
Animated
mf
Slowly
Don't stretch fur-ther than you can reach!
8va
(middle)
Ped
(stretch as far as you can reach)
(say in any rhythm you like)
Or, if you are not a fan of practical discouragement, I will say this: Lend me a hand.
(turn to audience)
(Option One)
(Stand up)
(Choose One)
(Ped)
(Option Two)
(Crack a smile)
11 minutes March 29th, 2010
19