Five Minutes, Oleo

By H. H. Lewis

Ole Olson,
"Prominent farmer of this community,"
Paused at the bottom rung of the ladder leading from the hallway of his barn, up through the loft, up toward a rafter.
Many a time he had mounted that total height to throw hay down from a crammed harvest.
But now—
His purpose very different.

Forty rungs in that ladder,
Worn glossy by the callouses of as many years:
To climb now,
Pausefully,
Reluctantly,
Was to epitomize it all . . .

Never had he been called lazy.
In Minnesota, across the flat visibility of the Swedish township, his woman's kitchen-light had always been the first to appear at morning, his lantern the first to go swinging barnward;
Five miles away some Erik prompting, "Greta, Greta, time to get up, that Olson's at his cows";
All the local Knutes pillowed conveniently beside windows that faced the *center:*
Ole the free alarm clock,
Ole the pace-setter,
"Pushing on the reins."

Never had he been called extravagant.
"Oleo" becoming "Alarm Clock's" other nickname after a gossipy neighbor discovered him selling all his butter and eating oleomargarine.

Never had he been called a poor manager—
"Keeping books" for the Extension Service of the State College of Agriculture, filling the blank spaces in big annuals, achieving more than a mere-factive ledger, a heartfelt diary of his heydays
From the World War to the World Depression,
Till *loss* became too remindful.

Now once more upon the ladder,
Up to the crossbeam holding the framed parchment MASTER FARMERS OF AMERICA, his own name gorgeously calligraphed hereunder as one of the 48 so honored for 1927—
He extended a gnarled finger,
Fondlingly,
Tremblingly,
Rubbing away some fly-specks . . .
Up to the roof at last,
He opened his eyes again, facing the cowled hay-entrance, and peered out upon the familiar landscape shimmering in earthlight real;
And he gripped the rung tighter,
Holding on,
Holding on,
And he rested chin upon it, looking . . .
Could Heaven itself be dearer?
But could Hell be worse than banishment alive from *this?*
Ole Olson,
Not praying to God and Frazier-Lemke any longer,
Removed a coil of rope from his shoulder, tying one end to a rafter and the other around his neck.

II

Scratching like a mole,
Dusty old soul,
Oleo, Oleo-Ole."
*"Ole, Ole, Oleo-Ole,**
Longest-houred clodsman in the country whole,
Worst to hirling roustabouts from Pole to Pole,

Had he jumped,
Was he dead?
Satan taunting him with that old ditty?

No,
Worse yet,
Sounds like Nels Nelson!
Mortification at death's door—
His former hired man, the belly-aching Bolshevik, the organizer in the Farmers' Holiday Association,
That fellow at just *this* time
Popping into the hallway below!

III

Two hundred pitchfork-men waiting yonder,
Tines sharp as the logic of Lenin,
Courthouse-bound to prevent a number of foreclosures by threat of low bidding:
Nelson announces,
Palming his timepiece with a flourish toward the one who has stopped trying to de-noose himself quickly enough.

"All right now,
If you can decide to be saved by 'damn Reds,'
Five minutes, Oleo" . . .

---

* Concocted years ago by a Yankee harvest-follower, this being doubly vicious because Ole does not rhyme with whole, the mispronunciation still parroted by certain local Swedes for pure damned meanness.

2.15.38 New Masses

1SSM-158

"Five Minutes - Oleo"

H. H. Lewis

Irving Schlein

Speaker

~~Dramatic Tenor~~

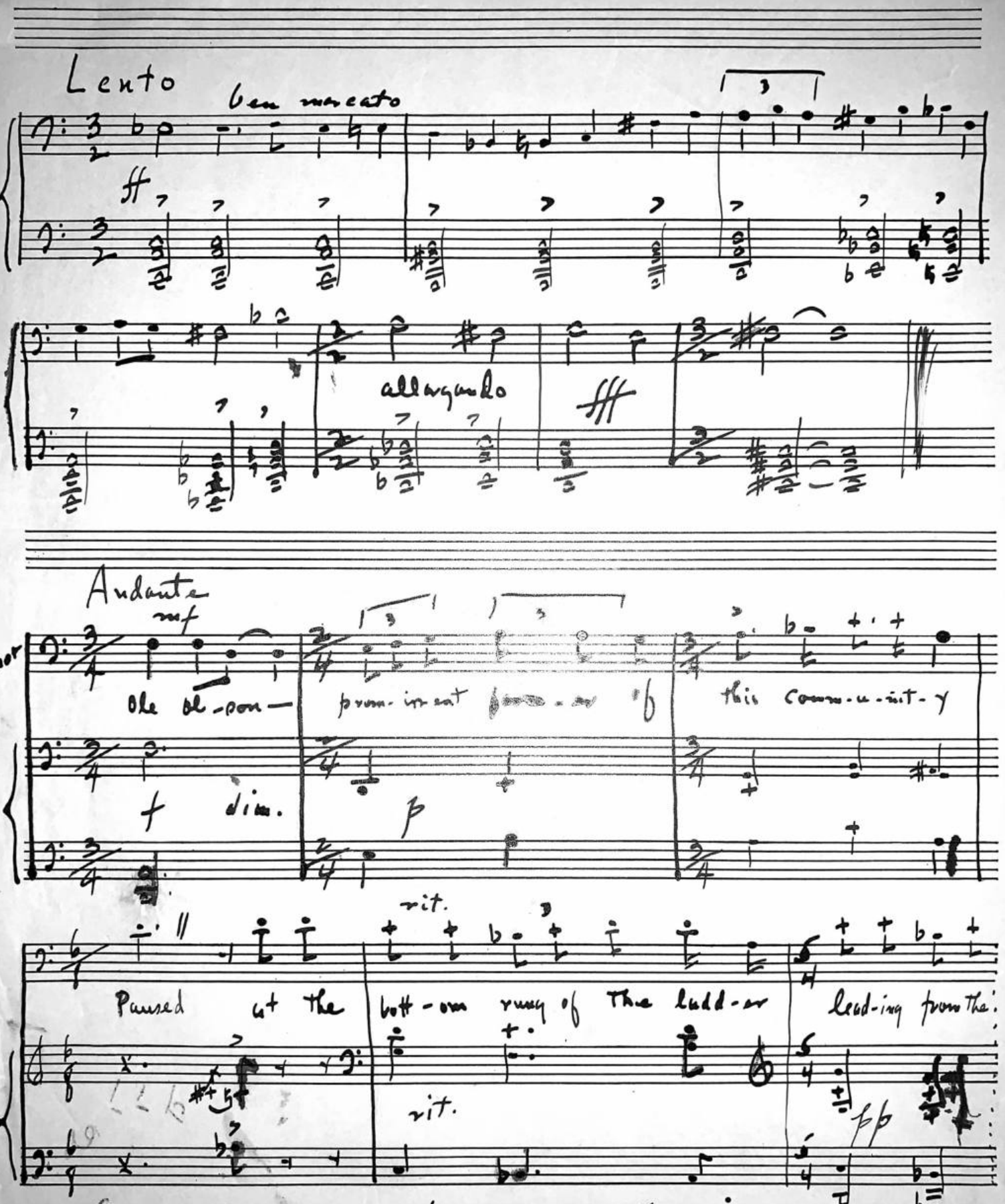
Chorus { Tenors
Baritones
~~Basses~~

Chorus { Sop.
Alto.
Ten.
Bar.
Bass.

Words by
H. H. Lewis

Five Minutes, Oleo

Music by
L. Schlein



Note: The vocal parts are written in the pitch in which they actually sound.

Nacto—12 Stave
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~~a tempo~~ string

ff

hall-way of his barn up though the loft up toward a raft-er

string

Andante pio mosso

Presto

Man-y a time he had mount-ed that tot-al height to

p rubato e cresc.

ff

accel. rit. Lento

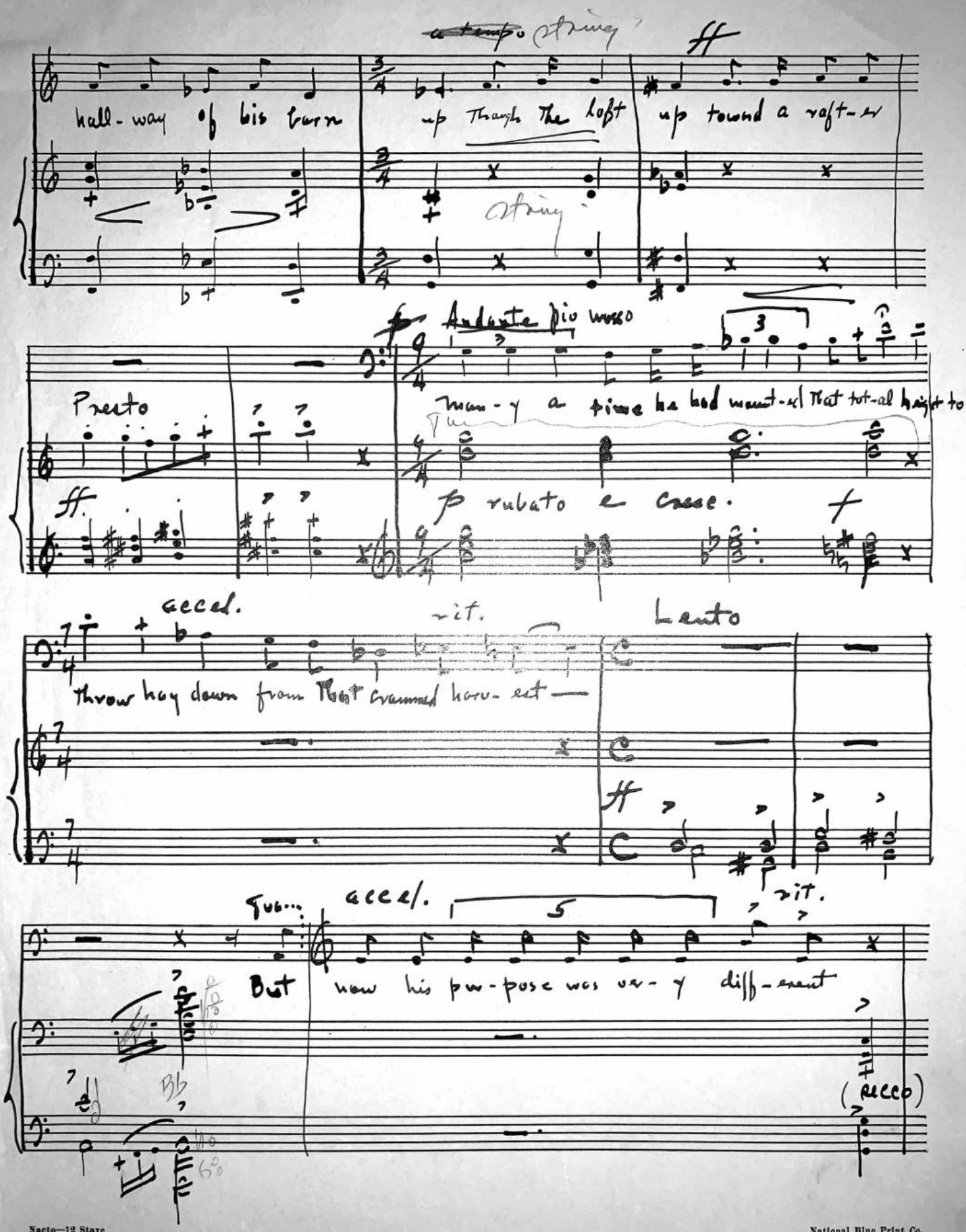
throw hay down from that crammed harv-est —

ff

Tua... accel. rit.

But now his pur-pose was ver-y diff-erent

(secco)



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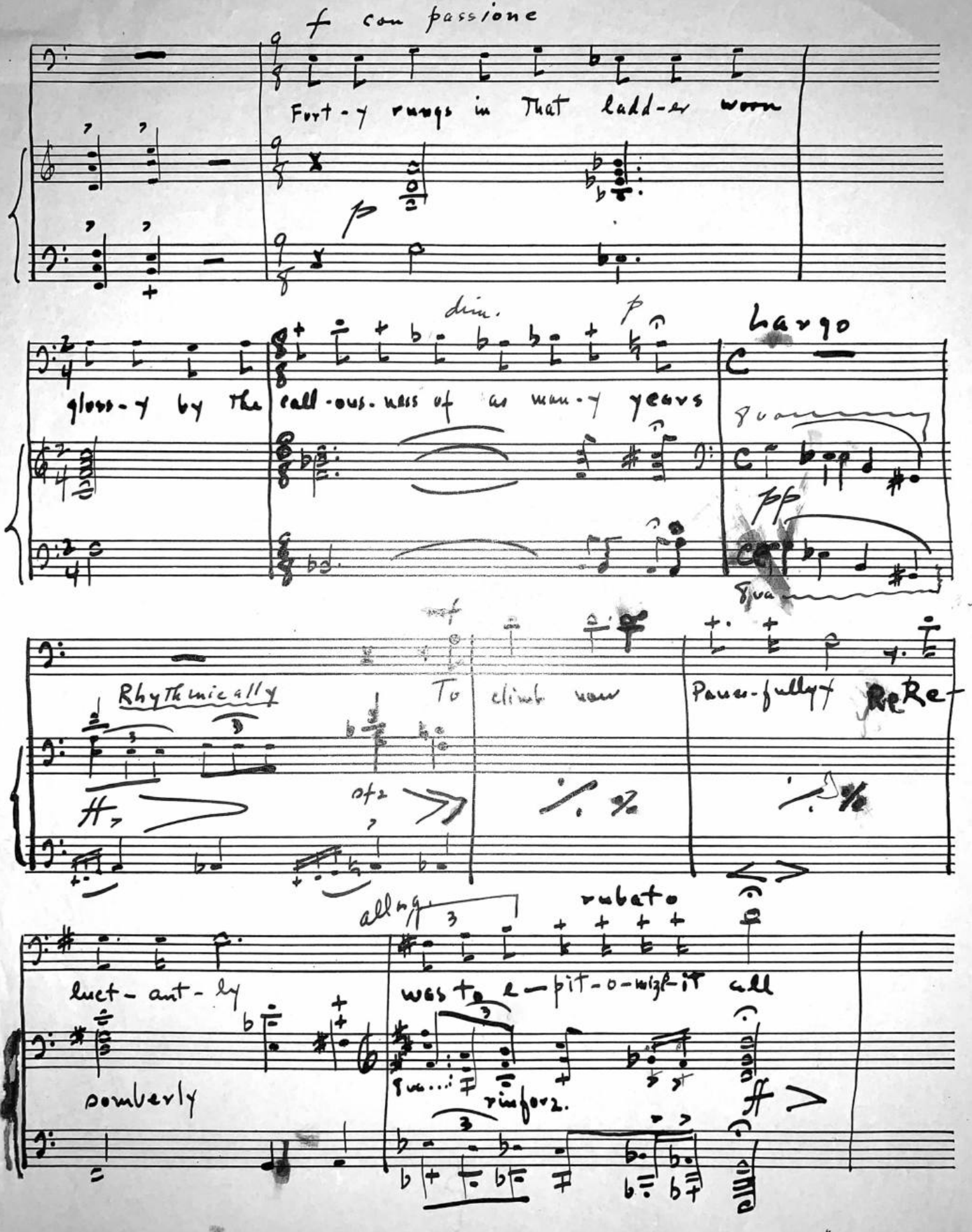

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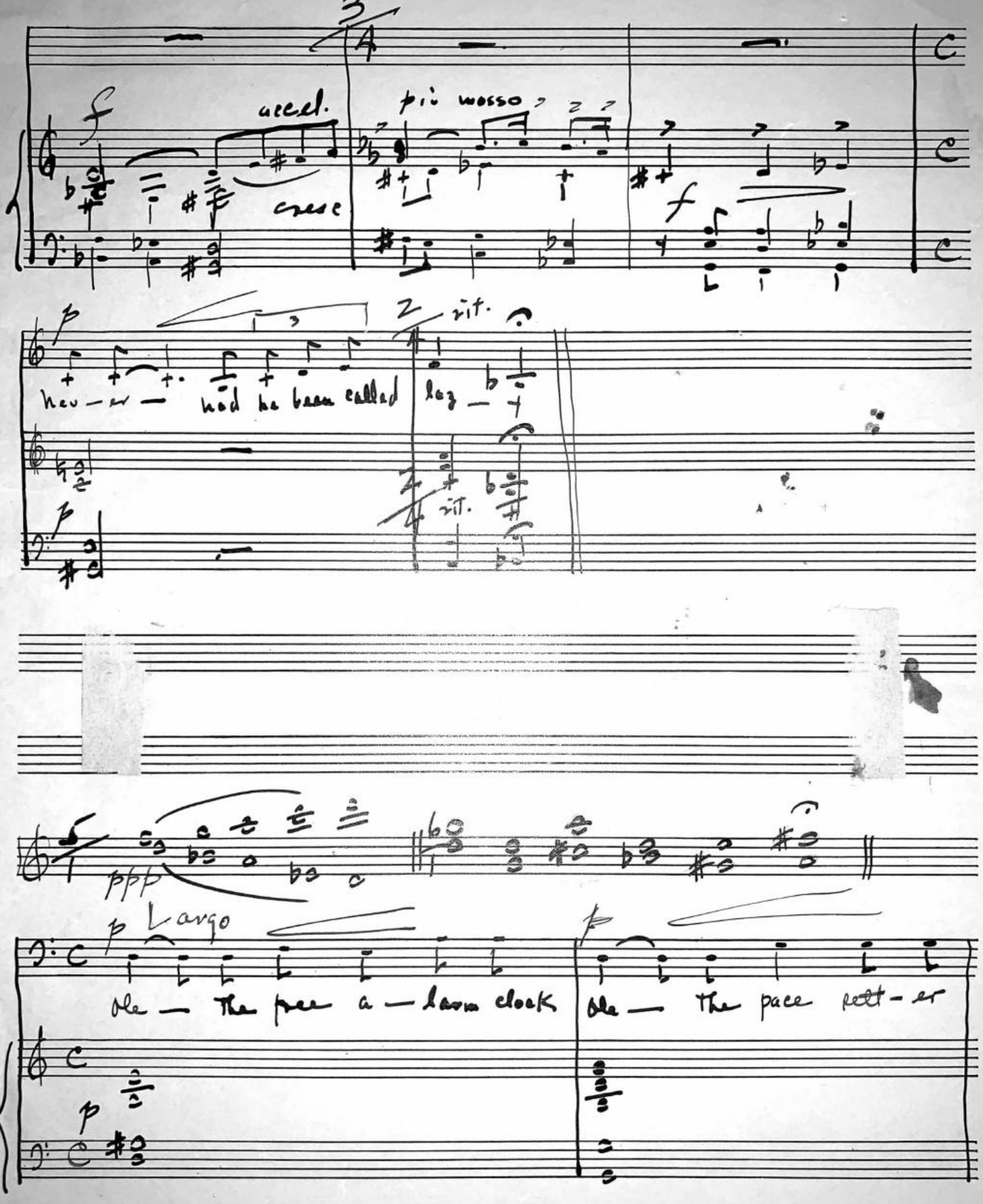

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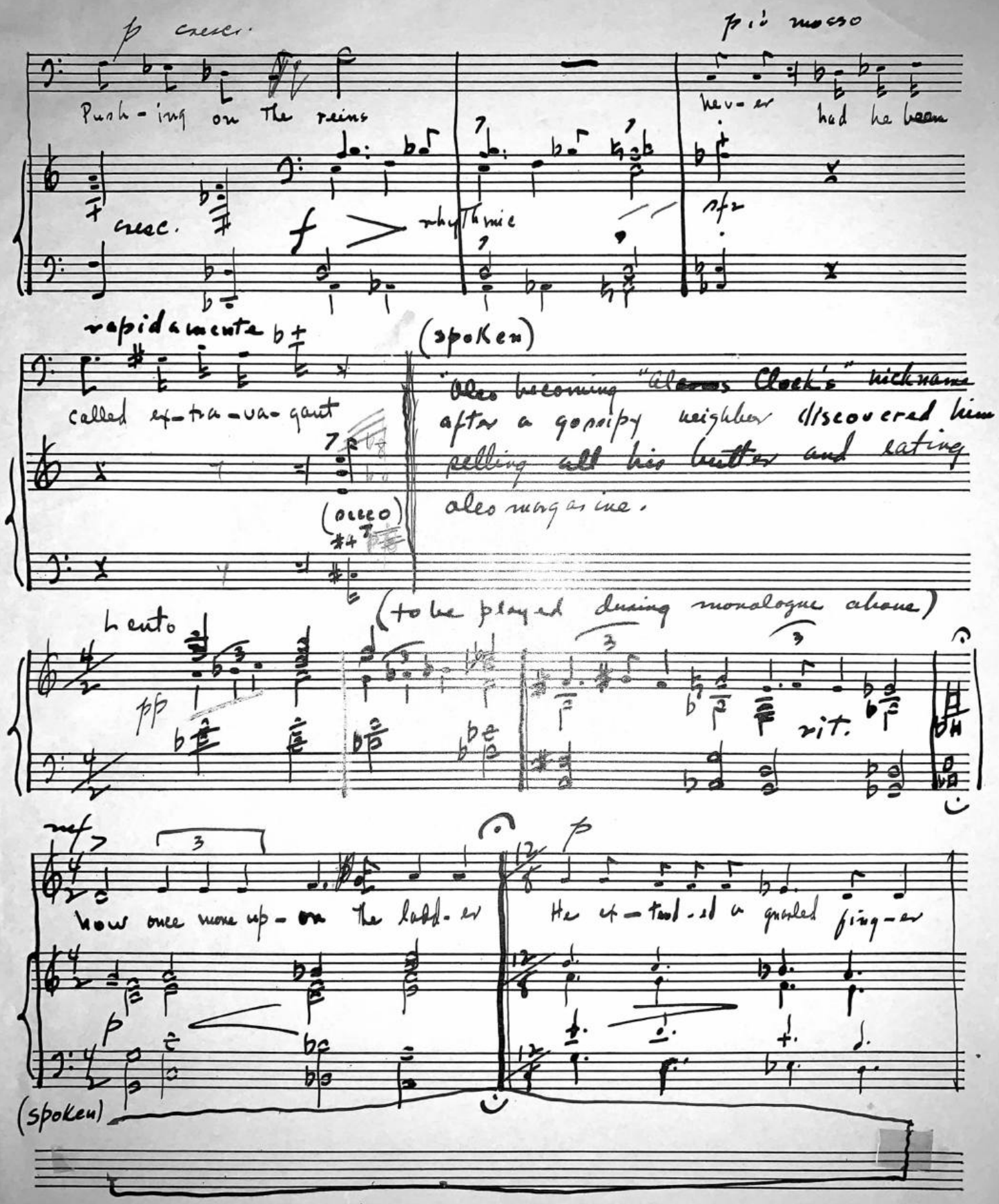

d E Ab, B | Db, e

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p con passione

agitato

Fond-ling-ly

Tremb-ling-ly

pp rhythmic

cresc . . . . . p . . . . . f

più mosso

più a più accel.

Rub-ing a-way some fly specks

p

up to the roof at last

più a più accel.

(trem. ad libitum)

He op-ened his eyes a-gain

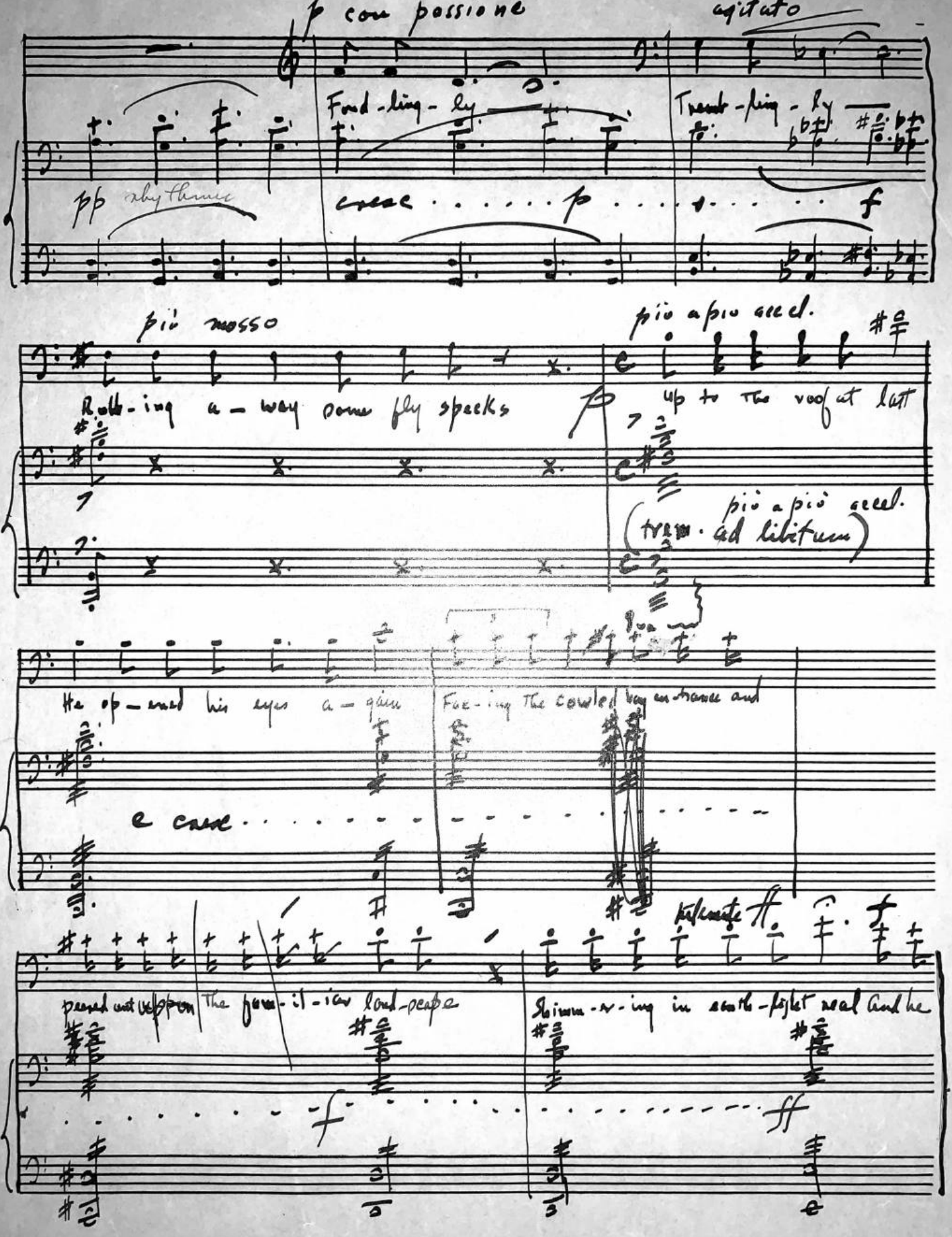
Fac-ing the cowled hay en-trance and

e cresc . . . . . .

peered out upon the fam-il-iar land-scape

Shimm-er-ing in earth-light real And he

f . . . . . ff



ff Andante sostenuto

dim.

gripped The rung tight-er Hold-ing on Hold-ing on And he

pedale

ff ben sostenuto

dim.

8va meno mosso rit.

appassionato

subito f

p rest-ed chin up-on it look-ing Could Heav-en it-self be dear-er But could

p meno mosso pp rit. rubato

8va

più allegro e f

Hell be worse Than ban-ish-ment a-line from this?

f

8va 8va loco

(spoken)

pp meno mosso

Chorus Lento

Tenor

pp Ole Ole O - le - o Ole Long-est-horned

Baritone
Bass

clods-man in The count-ry shade Worst to hine-ling

roust-a-bouts from Pole to Pole — Scratch-ing like a

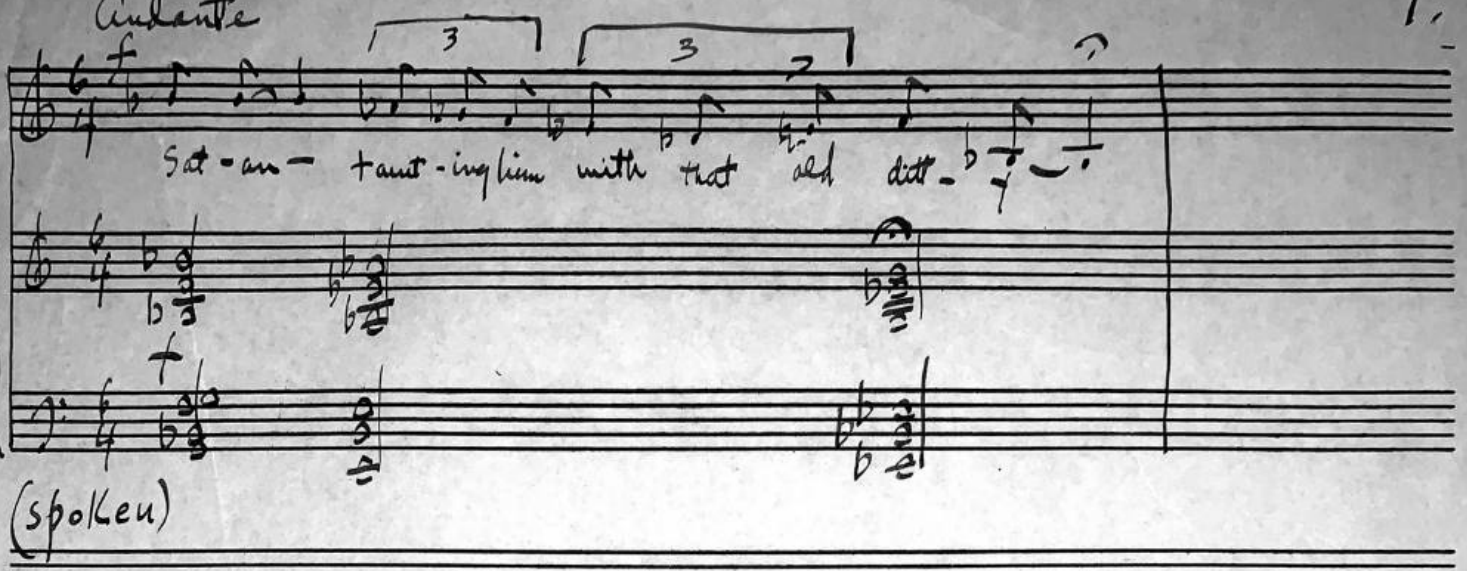
Mole — Dust-y old soul — O - le - o O - le - o

rit.

Ole

(Tenor Solo) Allegro ma non troppo

f Had he jumped was he dead



Repeat Chorus pp (fig. 8) as accompaniment to monologue above.

(spoken)

Repeat Intro. pg. 1 as monologue proceeds.

V.S.

Andante con moto

Sop. Alto. Ole Ole O-le-o Ole Long-est horned clods-man in the count-ry

Ten. Ole Ole O-le-o Ole Long-est-horned clods-man in the count-ry

Bar. Bass.

cresc. dim.

whole whist to hire-ling roust-a-bouts from Pole to Pole — Scratch-ing like a

whole Worst to hire-ling roust-a-bouts from Pole To Pole — Scratch-ing like a

dim

allargando

mole — Dust-y old soul — O-le-o O-le-o

mole — Dust-y old soul — O-le-o O-le-o

Ole.

Ole.

Finis