Giacomo Meyerbeer

Giacomo Meyerbeer:
L'Africaine Deuxième Partie
(22 morceaux et fragments inédits)

Edited by

Robert Ignatius Letellier

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Giacomo Meyerbeer: *L'Africaine Deuxième Partie* (22 morceaux et fragments inédits),
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GIACOMO MEYERBEER.

Giacomo Meyerbeer in 1862 (*Illustrated London News*)

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The Second Part of the vocal score of L'AFRICAINE

The music in small format can be found in the first part of *L'Africaine* (the vocal score). Those parts engraved in large format are otherwise unpublished, and represent the pieces and fragments not given at performances in the Paris Opéra. The piano score was arranged by Eugène Vauthrot.

PREFACE

FRANÇOIS-JOSEPH FÉTIS

When I was asked to give my attention to the last work of Meyerbeer, I was well aware of all the problems attached to this honour. I did not know a single piece of this score on which the attention of the world had been fixed for more than fifteen years. In our most intimate conversations, the illustrious maestro had never communicated to me his thoughts about *L'Africaine*. I was completely ignorant of the subject. Rarely did Meyerbeer ever speak of one of his works; our conversations were about art in general: about the new paths one could open up, and the resources it offered to a man of genius. I used to think then that I could have divined the intentions of the master as to the character of each piece, and even its tempo. But even this was a difficult task since the master himself, as people learned who had seen him directing the study of his works, often finalized essential aspects of performance only in the last general rehearsals. Stage effects were always directed in this way, and because of this habit he never indicated the *tempi* in the manuscripts, except by more or less vague expressions, and never fixed them by metronome markings until the time for publication.

I understood therefore from the first moments that there would be difficulties in interpreting this posthumous work, besides many other problems that there is no point in talking about here. Nevertheless, whatever the difficulties, a friendship of more than forty years imposed on me the duty of taking it all on: and I accepted the task.

I arrived in Paris on 16 August 1864, and M. Perrin, the director of the Opéra, installed me in a study where I could be in communication with the various heads of services when it became necessary. This was when the manuscript of Meyerbeer's score was placed in my hands, as well as the libretto. My first task was to familiarize myself with the poem, the various different challenges of which struck me on the first reading. I realized that changes would be necessary, the difficulties increased by the fact that both poet and composer were in their graves.

After the libretto came the reading of the score. Here, all changed, since for me it was a joy, during the eight hours I needed to read this work, to encounter inspiration, feeling, and the gifts of form and experience, united in all their richness. A piano had been placed in my study, but I was reluctant to approach it since one is not able to appreciate great compositions if one has tried to interpret the immense instrumental combinations imperfectly on the piano, instead of hearing by simple reading the ensemble of voices and instruments, as if they were actually performing the pieces with all their nuances and perfections as imagined by the composer.

Convinced, after a first reading of the score of *L'Africaine*, that this work was the master's most complete, most perfect oeuvre, the crowning achievement of his work, I then began a study of each of the parts, in order to prepare the score for the copying of the roles, the separate parts for the chorus and orchestra; and finally for the heads of the various services. There began my task: sometimes several arias had been composed for the same situations, just as the composer was accustomed to do with his other operas, not fixing his choice until he had assessed the effect in rehearsals. He had also written many variants for the ensembles, particularly for the finale of act 4. Finally, indicators of performing abridgements for certain numbers of bars in many scenes were found in the manuscript for those instances where the musical development would be too long for the appropriate dramatic effect. Not wanting to prejudge the solutions that Meyerbeer had taken for many of these situations, I decided to make my choices according to my instincts, amidst all these matters left uncertain by the master. These choices were all made before I delivered the score to the copyist. During the rehearsals, the artists and the heads of services concurred that I had chosen well.

Another considerable difficulty presented itself in the reading of the score. Meyerbeer wanted a ballet in act 4. He marked the place, but, following his usual practice, he would not have added the finished compositions until he had established with the ballet master the number and character of the dances. Having taken the firm resolution not to add anything of my own to the master's work, I could see no other way of fulfilling his intentions with regard to the ballet than to arrange the music for a second version of the *air du sommeil* (the alternative to the one I preferred for inclusion in act 2), and the *ronde bachique* for the sailors in act 3, which I had to suppress because it followed several other pieces which held up the dramatic action. Eventually the ballet was discarded at rehearsals, so these dances were never performed.

After the remarkable duet for Vasco and Sélika in act 2, Nélusko returns to the stage at a moment when one hears the sound of bells imitated by the harps in the orchestra. Vasco asks the meaning of this rejoicing, and Nélusko tells him that it announces the marriage of Don Pedro, and that because of this occasion they will be granted their liberty. In reading the libretto, I had not noticed an error in Scribe's usual skill: it destroyed the dramatic effect of the moment when Inès, in the finale of the same act, tells Vasco in prison that she has obtained his liberty, and hands to him the Royal act of clemency. Moreover, this scene caused the fervent ending of the duet for Vasco and Sélika, *Combien tu m'es chère, ange tutelaire*, to lose its impact, since at the moment when he embraces her, Inès and Don Pedro enter, generating much theatrical effect, and providing a natural context for the words *On nous l'avait bien dit!* I believed, therefore, notwithstanding the regret I felt, that it was necessary to sacrifice the charming arioso for Sélika, and to suppress all that followed the duet, to arrive immediately at the magnificent finale of the act, one of the most beautiful manifestations of Meyerbeer's genius.

Such were the intentions as to the responsibilities that weighed uniquely upon me. But far from regretting them, I declared that I would have undertaken them again if I had found myself in the same situation, because the experience of performance showed me that my first impressions had been trustworthy. This did not hinder me from pursuing with lively satisfaction the resolution taken by the editors of *L'Africaine* to make known to the musical world the inspirations of the master, sacrificed by necessity to the exigencies of the stage. If something similar had been done for *Robert le Diable*, and for *Les Huguenots*, one would have discovered further musical treasures which could have made up several beautiful operas. I have seen enormous portions of these scores cut by Meyerbeer during rehearsals, to be replaced by other arias written with a rapidity that silences those who accuse him of working laboriously. He resisted the demands for cuts from the librettist and the director of the Opéra unless he himself judged them necessary. Thus, after a general rehearsal of *Les Huguenots*, he objected to the performance, removing himself for a few days after which, finding myself at his home when the director of the Opéra arrived, I heard Meyerbeer say, "Dear M. Duponchel, you will be pleased with me: I have cut an hour's worth of music." All this music has disappeared for ever. And this does not include the moving scene of the Protestant ball at the Hotel de Nesle in act 5 scene 1, and all that which follows, which has been cut without his consent.

I should add an observation as to where I have taken the initiative, especially as regards the intention of providing metronome markings for all the movements before sending them to the copyist. These have not been modified during rehearsals, and remain as I fixed them, where I was obliged to conclude, because of the effect produced, that I had happily discerned the master's intentions. Once this was done, the score was sent for copying. At the end of September, the casting was allocated, and study began in the first days of October.

All composers who have worked for the stage know that a work is never accepted without objections from the singers. After some sessions of study, one is more or less certain to hear some of them expressed in these terms: "Maestro, I will never be able to sing this passage, it is not right for my voice; it simply has to be changed." Or even; "This is too high or too low. This final phrase is too short, and I will make no effect. I do not like this pause or this *fioriture*, would you please give me something different. I need other words for this phrase, because they are very unpleasant to sing. I cannot vocalize on this syllable which deadens my voice or makes it shrill." And a thousand other such things. I tried, since I refused absolutely to interfere with the composition of *L'Africaine*, to place myself in what would have been Meyerbeer's position, if he had himself directed the study and execution of his own work, and, constrained by necessity, modified here and there some phrases, arranged some pauses. On stage the régisseur said to me: "This movement of scenery cannot be done in the necessary time, if I do not have at this point some measures of *ritornello*." And since it was my intention not to touch Meyerbeer's work, I had to supply the requested additions, but in every case using the master's own themes. In this way I wrote eight bars in act 1, in order to give the bishops time to take their places in the council; and did similarly in act 3, for the manoeuvring of the vessel. I make this declaration for those people who would like to compare the original manuscript with the printed score.

The rehearsals began some fifteen or twenty days later, and the first request for cuts began. My usual response would be: "Let's wait for the stage effect." Nevertheless, some faults in the libretto became more and more evident, and made it necessary to sacrifice some music, even if one had wanted to avoid it. In act 3 especially, the emerging problems of staging worried me and made me realize the need to cut some lovely pieces of the score. If cuts are considered necessary, the suppression of an entire scene has always seemed preferable to its partial dismemberment. The librettist of *L'Africaine* did not seem to have perceived the principal problems of two similar situations following immediately on each other in act 3. In the first, Don Pedro wants to have Vasco killed before his eyes by the sailors; Sélika, in her devoted energy, saves the hero by menacing Inès with a knife. On the instant, Don Pedro's fury turns from Vasco to her, and he orders her to be beaten *par une verge sanglante*. So to the

long scene of Vasco's arrest, concluding with a slow movement, is added another scene—long, cold, impossible—in which two characters sing alone, while all the others remain immobile and mute. Notwithstanding the beauty of the music (No. 15 of this supplementary volume), I felt, from the very first days, that this scene would compromise the success of the act, and I relayed my feelings to the artists singing the principal roles, as well as to MM. Germain Delavigne and Mélesville who had accepted the task of directing the *mise en scène*. The scene was nevertheless retained until the last rehearsals.

Another danger, even more serious, was located in the first scenes of act 5. In the premiere, Inès, having escaped the death that overtook her companions under the mancenillier trees, sings a recitative and aria (No. 16 in this volume). Vasco has also survived, having become Sélika's husband, and there follows a scene of regret between the two lovers. In the third scene, Sélika surprises them together, and in her indignation, not brooking any explanation, orders Vasco to leave. He obeys, and disappears from the opera. One observes in the notebook left by Meyerbeer, which was passed on to me so that I could conform as nearly as possible to his intentions, that he was concerned about the possible danger of this ridiculous exit. But he did not find a solution. At the last rehearsals, the suppression of these first two scenes was seen as inevitable. Act 5 now began with the duet for Sélika and Inès.

The long duration of this score was a cause of concern for everyone, because the amount of work required of the stage hands and the details of the *mise en scène* made very long intervals necessary. I was obliged to make cuts in all parts of the work. Every day they became more pressing and concerned a greater number of pieces. I resisted these mutilations with all my strength, inspiring as they did a repugnance in me. Nevertheless, the administration of the Opéra and the *littérateurs* in charge of the course of rehearsals, as well as the heads of services, were unanimous about their necessity. In order to judge for myself, I asked the director of the Opéra for a rehearsal of the music alone, without machinery, changes of scenery, or intervals. It lasted four and a half hours. This experience forced me to consent to the cuts that were requested. In the first place, the difficulties of constructing and then deconstructing the vessel in act 3, and the positioning of the décor for acts 4 and 5, required intervals of great length. Commencing at 7 pm., the performance of *L'Africaine* would not have finished before 2 a.m. the next morning. Notwithstanding the abridgement of the music that was imposed on me by the experience I have just described, the first performance finished almost an hour after midnight. Nevertheless, the public was so charmed by the abundance of beautiful melodies, the novelty of the forms, the richness of detail, and the supreme distinction of the whole work, that enthusiasm was maintained until the end.

A judgment was pronounced on the merits of Meyerbeer's works by a tribunal against which there was neither appeal nor cassation. This tribunal was made up of a vast public constituted from all kinds of people. All applauded every day; all were hungry for the emotions the work provided, since this drama exercised an active topical appeal in the 19th century, and no one could compare with Meyerbeer for dramatic power. In certain moving situations, he achieved effects of irresistible compulsion, something no other artist has succeeded in doing. This is the reason for the innumerable performances of these musical dramas for the past 35 years that have so moved the crowds, and that always have the same attraction for them when they are properly interpreted.

This is not to say that this general admiration has not been not questioned by the denigration of some people, since Meyerbeer is in the position of all the very famous. If he excites the enthusiasm of people of both worlds, he also has his detractors who, for whatever reasons, be they to do with method or the perceived inferiority of an eclectic aesthetic, have given themselves the task of casting shadow on his glory. The usual theme of these critics is to turn the composer of *Robert le Diable*, *Les Huguenots* and *L'Africaine* into a musician without genius, a knowledgeable calculator of notes. In this way a man of great spirit, polished, convincing, discreet, whose *savoir-faire* is far superior to ordinary knowledge, has been depicted as an upstart to millions of individuals who have had the pleasure of hearing his music. This music is said not to be the result of inspiration, but of obstinate application and hard labour. Every phrase has been the result of effort, and what he has delivered to the public should be filed away in secret from all rather than being heard.

One would astonish many of these people if one told them that Beethoven, who is discussed these days only in terms of genius, never produced his music with ease. Anyone who has seen, like the author of this preface, the notebooks in which this same genius wrote the themes of his compositions, would know how many ideas were subjected to transformation, correction, change of movement and even of mode. Many phrases written in a major key were definitively realized in the minor mode. When the work was finished, the labour recommenced to perfect it, and this took a long time. One should read, on this subject, the book on Beethoven and his works by Schindler, the intimate friend of the great man, who never left him during the last fifteen years of his life. In a passage in this book Schindler wrote: "The publishers paid Beethoven only thirty ducats (330 francs) for a piano sonata that

cost him three months of work." Three months to write a sonata! What are you saying, sirs? (Anton Felix Schindler, *Histoire de la vie et de l'oeuvre de Beethoven*, translated by M. Sowinski, Paris 1864).

I know that there are quick methods of writing fresh music, methods practised by the composers of Italian operas, especially in the good old times when genius was not in short supply; and a composer was expected to be nothing less than one. Such a *maestro*, employed to write in a city, arrived there a month or five weeks before the opening of the season. One would give him the libretto of an opera which he had to set to music. There was only a certain amount of time for him to read and grasp the situations. Then he worked in haste, because the work had to be performed on a fixed date; the pages were taken for copying as soon as they were written, and were rehearsed immediately. If the master had genius, he created lovely pieces for the principal situations; the rest were neglected, full of banalities and vulgarities because there was no time to compose with greater care. Meyerbeer himself passed along that way. However, it was not necessary for such composers to give themselves more trouble because the public would listen only to the best pieces; during the rest of the performance, they chatted, and did all sorts of other things. No one dreamt of creating a work which would survive beyond the time for which it was created. If the inspiration was happy, one rejoiced; if it was otherwise, the composer was easily consoled, and some days after the fiasco no one even thought of it again.

Art cannot be made up solely of artists of the calibre of Beethoven, Weber, Meyerbeer and Mendelssohn, whose aim was to create works that would live into the future. "I am offered three months to compose my work," wrote Weber; "this time hardly suffices for me to read the libretto and grasp the character of the scenes." The work of Meyerbeer, that some critics present as a laborious birth, is an art of far-reaching implication, which differs radically from the improvisation of which I have spoken. This is what has distinguished the fine German school from the Italian one for more than a century. When Meyerbeer changes one phrase for another, when he modifies his harmony, or when one way of instrumentation seems preferable to another for the accentuation of his thoughts, this is not calculation, as many of his critics are persuaded—though these include few or no musicians. All is feeling in these transformations; all is dictated by an exquisite delicacy. Far from writing with difficulty, Meyerbeer had the facility of improvisation to a remarkable degree, and in fact wrote many pieces for his operas during the period of rehearsals. This is particularly true of the ballet music, where he created forms as original as they are graceful.

In an article with an ironic title, Meyerbeer was recently represented as having been able to arrive with difficulty at the final realization of his talent, and then only by successively imitating the styles of other composers. The same writer should have selected the connecting pieces in Meyerbeer's works above all; he would then have been less positively inspired in trying to denigrate the master, because the essential character of Meyerbeer's talent consists precisely in not resembling any other composer. One could perhaps prefer other music to his; one may not like the strange elements he sometimes used. But to disregard his originality reveals an inability to appreciate music. Meyerbeer began by imitating others. But who has not started in such a way? Who has first found his own voice at the very beginning? Gluck, cited by the writer I have just mentioned, wrote only imitations of the Italians in the 25 operas he produced from his *Artaserse* written in Milan in 1744 up to his *Orfeo* written for Vienna in 1762. Beethoven was inspired by Mozart up to his Opus 27 (the 'Moonlight' Sonata). Genius reveals itself in various ways: sometimes it flashes out in youth and produces treasures in the first works; but it exhausts itself in quick time and shows signs of depletion before old age. Sometimes energy develops slowly, remains uncertain for a section of the journey, but when the way is found, progresses with the steps of a giant. This is how Gluck and Meyerbeer followed their careers, each one with his own immense qualities and his own faults. Finally, there is the example of men of genius who do not reveal themselves until their old age. Such was Rameau, first a theoretician, then the transformer of French opera at the age of fifty.

Meyerbeer's success has too much brilliance and durability to be injured by the interests of self-esteem. Usually, in art as in letters, the dead find mercy from their enemies, but on condition that they are dead and will speak no more. I fear that the author of *L'Africaine* will not enjoy this prize of the tomb for a long time.

I return to this work for a few more words. I have spoken of the regret that I was obliged to sacrifice many musical beauties because of theatrical exigencies. The exact reproduction of the original manuscript in the big printed orchestral score has much alleviated the vexatious memories caused me by the mutilations. Nevertheless, the big score is destined only for opera managements and some specialist libraries. The public would never have the knowledge of the existence and merit of things cut from this work, if the editors had not had the happy idea of publishing these pieces in a popular format, like a supplementary vocal score. I hope I have grasped the opportunity of explaining in this preface the reasons for the disappearance of some pieces from the performances of *L'Africaine*, and the cuts made

by others. The twenty-two numbers that constitute this volume, when reunited with the content of the first vocal score, re-establish the master's work in its integrity.

Francois-Joseph Fetis
Brussels, 23 November 1865.

Translation: Robert Ignatius Letellier
Cambridge, 23 March 2009.

François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871)

DEUXIÈME PARTIE.

Contenant 22 Morceaux et Fragments qui n'ont pas été exécutés à l'Opéra

DEUXIÈME PARTIE.

de l'Opéra en 5 Actes.

L'AFRICAINE

Paroles de E. SCRIBE

MUSIQUE DE

G. MEYERBEER

PARTITION CHANT et PIANO

Précédée d'une Préface de M. J. FÉTIS

et contenant

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DEUXIÈME PARTIE DE LA PARTITION, PIANO ET CHANT DE

L'AFRICAINE.

TABLE DES MORCEAUX

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ACTE II.

ACTE III.

ACTE IV.

ACTE V.

La musique gravée en petites notes se trouve déjà dans la première partie de la partition de l'**Africaine;**
Celle gravée en grosses notes est entièrement inédite.

Cette Édition contient tous les Morceaux et Fragments qui n'ont pas été exécutés à la représentation de l'Opéra, à Paris.

L'accompagnement de piano est arrangé par M. E. VAUTHROT.

PARIS. — IMPRIMERIE CENTRALE DES CHEMINS DE FER DE NAPOLÉON CHAIX ET Cie, RUE BERGÈRE, 20. — 7723.

L'AFRICAINE

G. Meyerbeer.

1

2.me Partie.

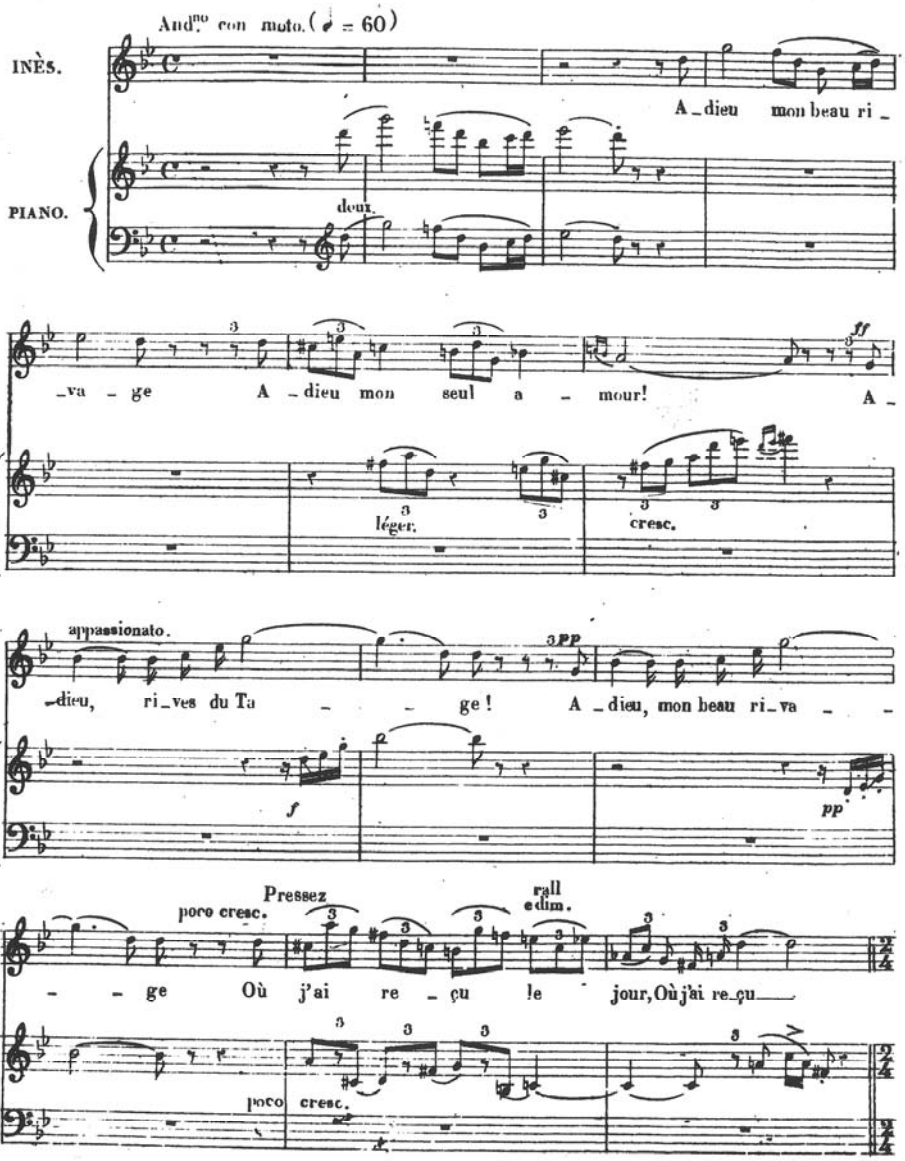
ACTE Ier

DEUXIEME VERSION
de la
ROMANCE.

N°. 1.

Adieu mon beau rivage.

N°. 1.
DE LA PARTITION.



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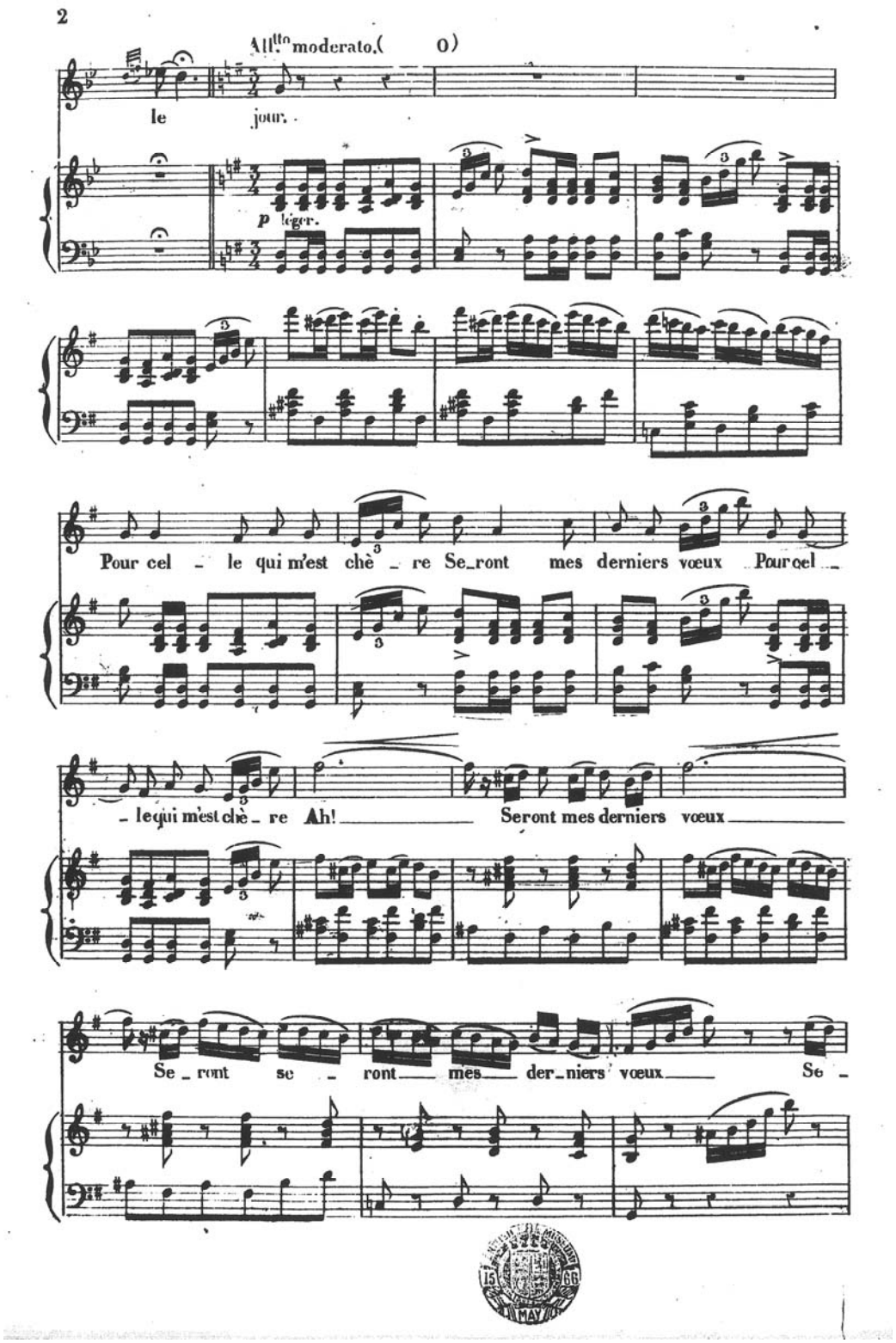
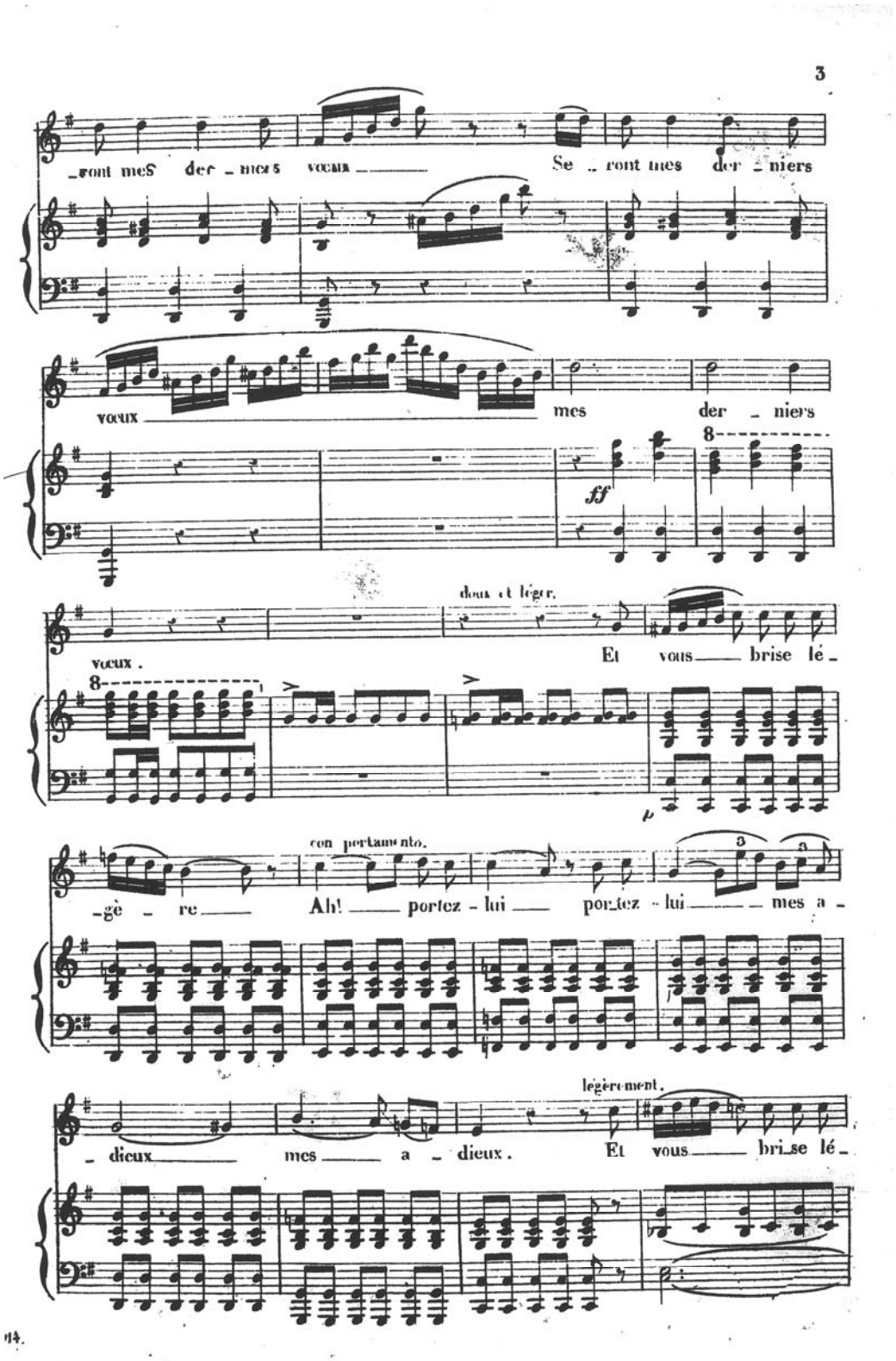
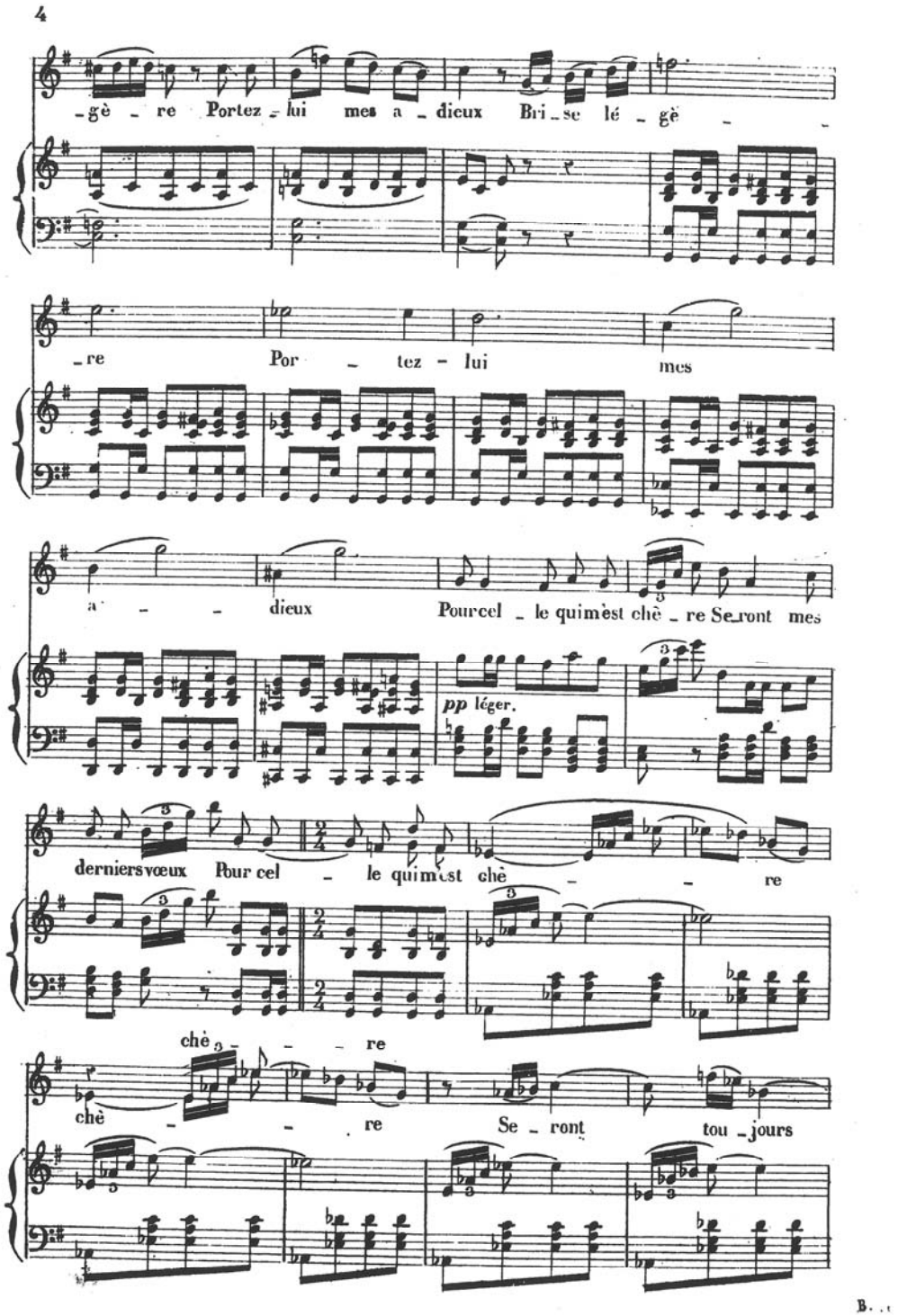
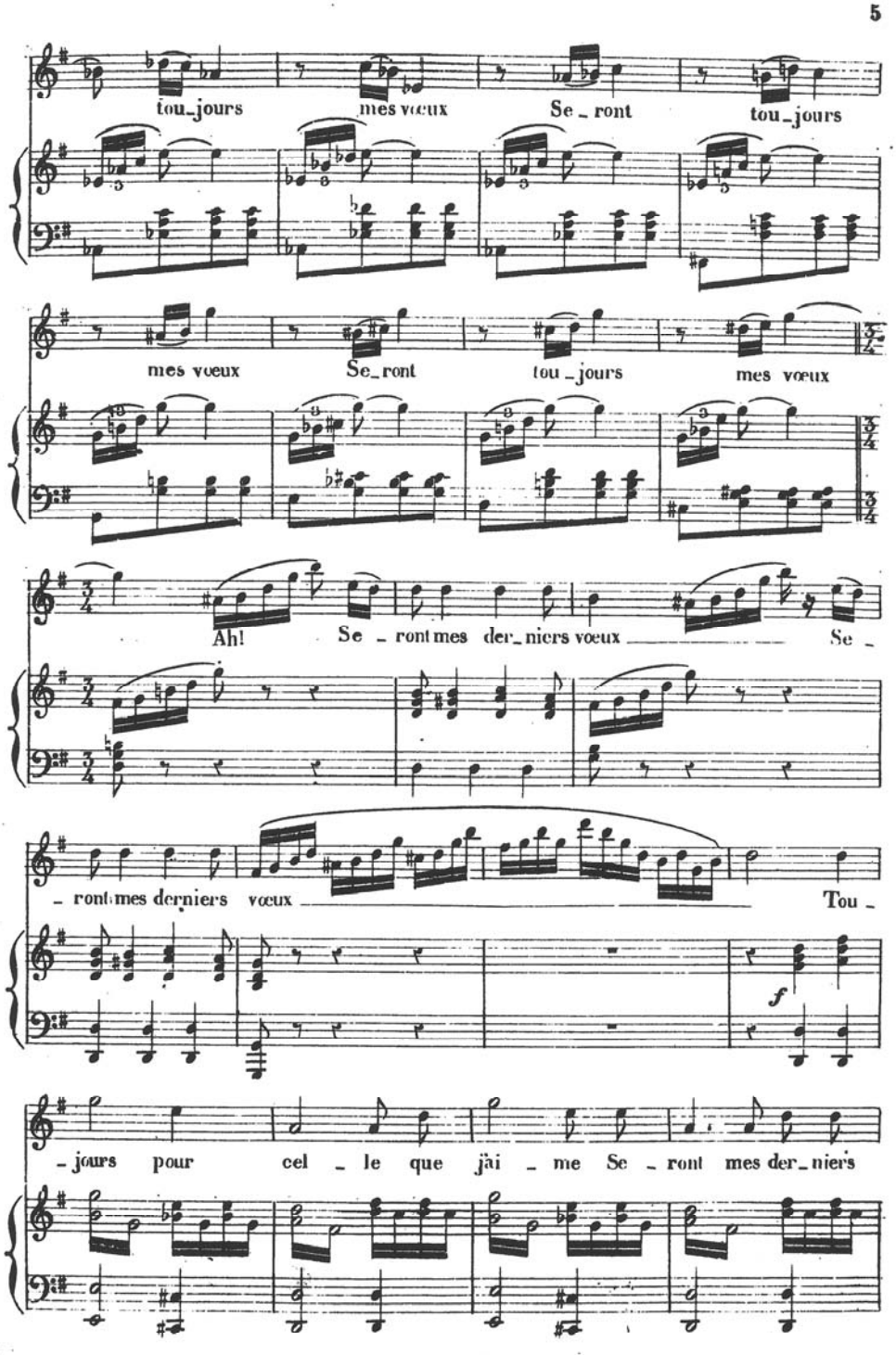
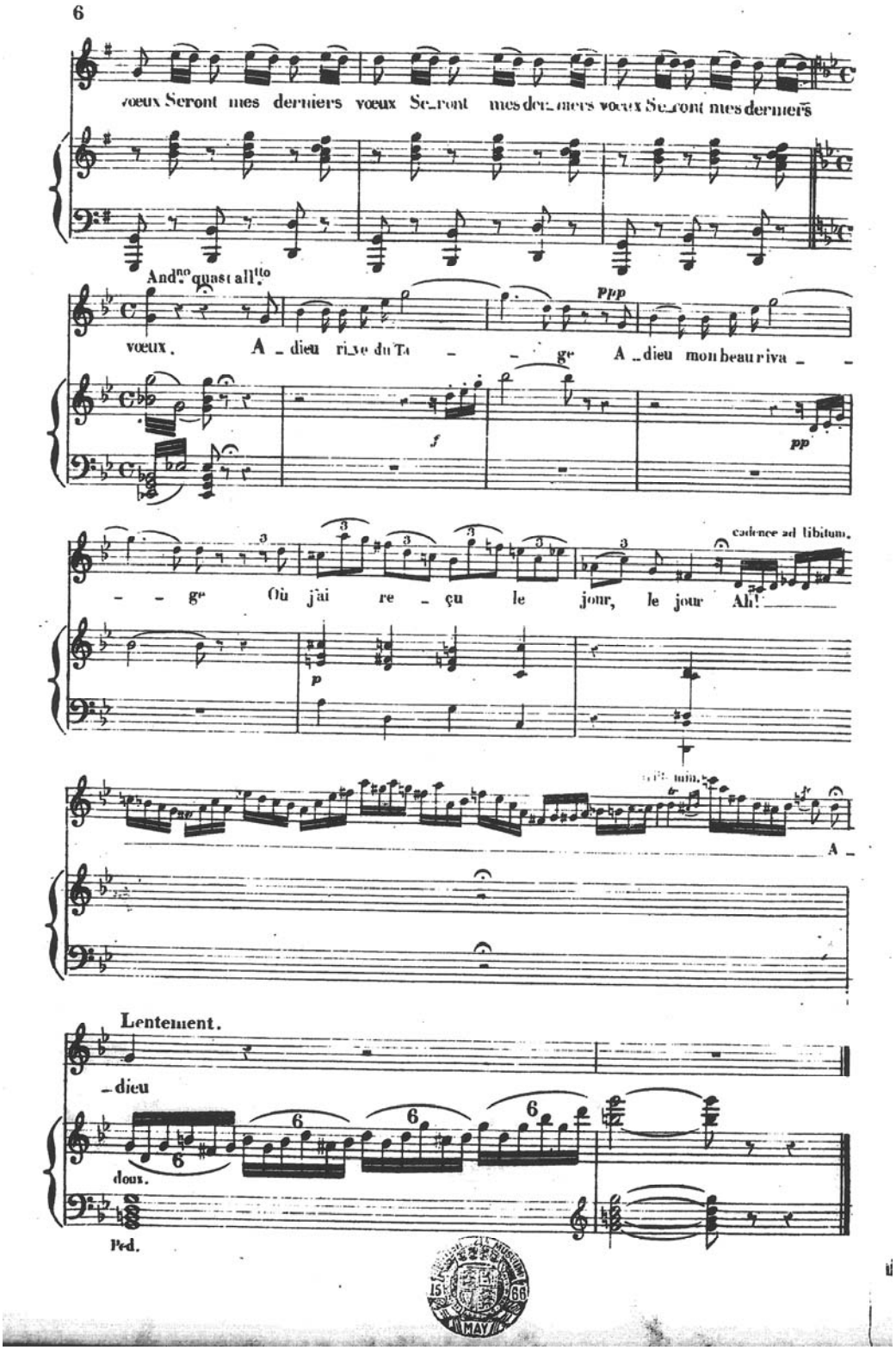

2
All.tto moderato.(o)
le jour.
p léger.
Pour cel - le qui m'est chè - re Se_ront mes derniers vœux Pourcel -
- lequi m'est chè - re Ah! Seront mes derniers vœux
Se - ront se - ront mes der_niers vœux Se -


3
_ront mes der _ niers voeux _____ Se _ ront mes der _ niers
voeux _____ mes der _ niers
ff
doux et léger.
voeux . Et vous ____ brise lé _
con portamento.
_gè _ re ____ Ah! ____ portez - lui ____ portez - lui ____ mes a _
légèrement.
_ dieux ____ mes ____ a _ dieux . Et vous ____ brise lé _


4
-gè - re Portez - lui mes a - dieux Bri - se lé - gè -
- re Por - tez - lui mes
a - - dieux Pourcel - le quimèst chè - re Seront mes
pp léger.
derniersvœux Pour cel - le quimest chè - re
chè - re
chè - re Se - ront tou - jours

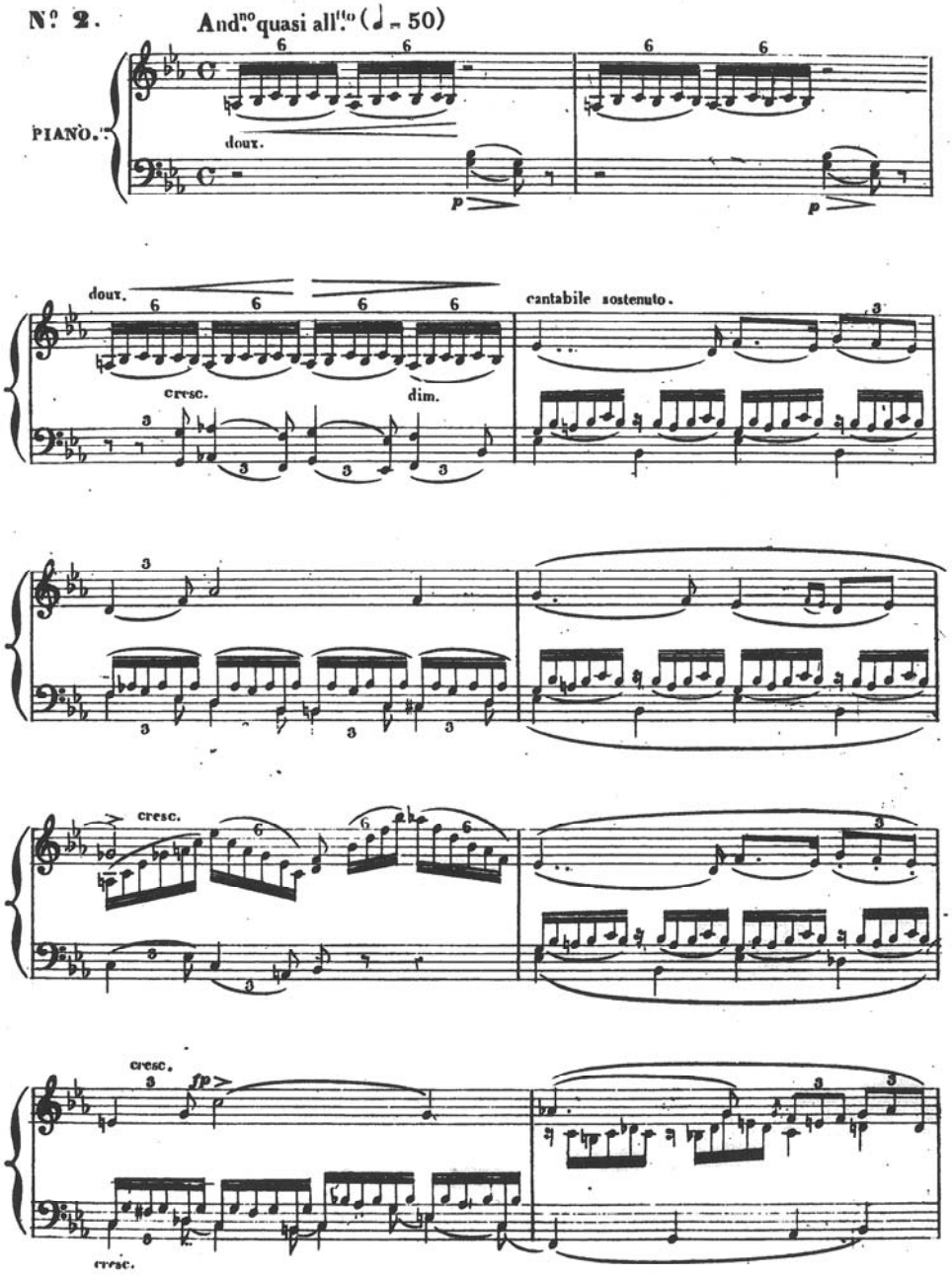

5
tou_jours mes vœux Se_ront tou_jours
mes vœux Se_ront tou_jours mes vœux
Ah! Se_ront mes der_niers vœux Se_
ront mes derniers vœux Tou
f
_jours pour cel_le que jài_me Se_ront mes der_niers

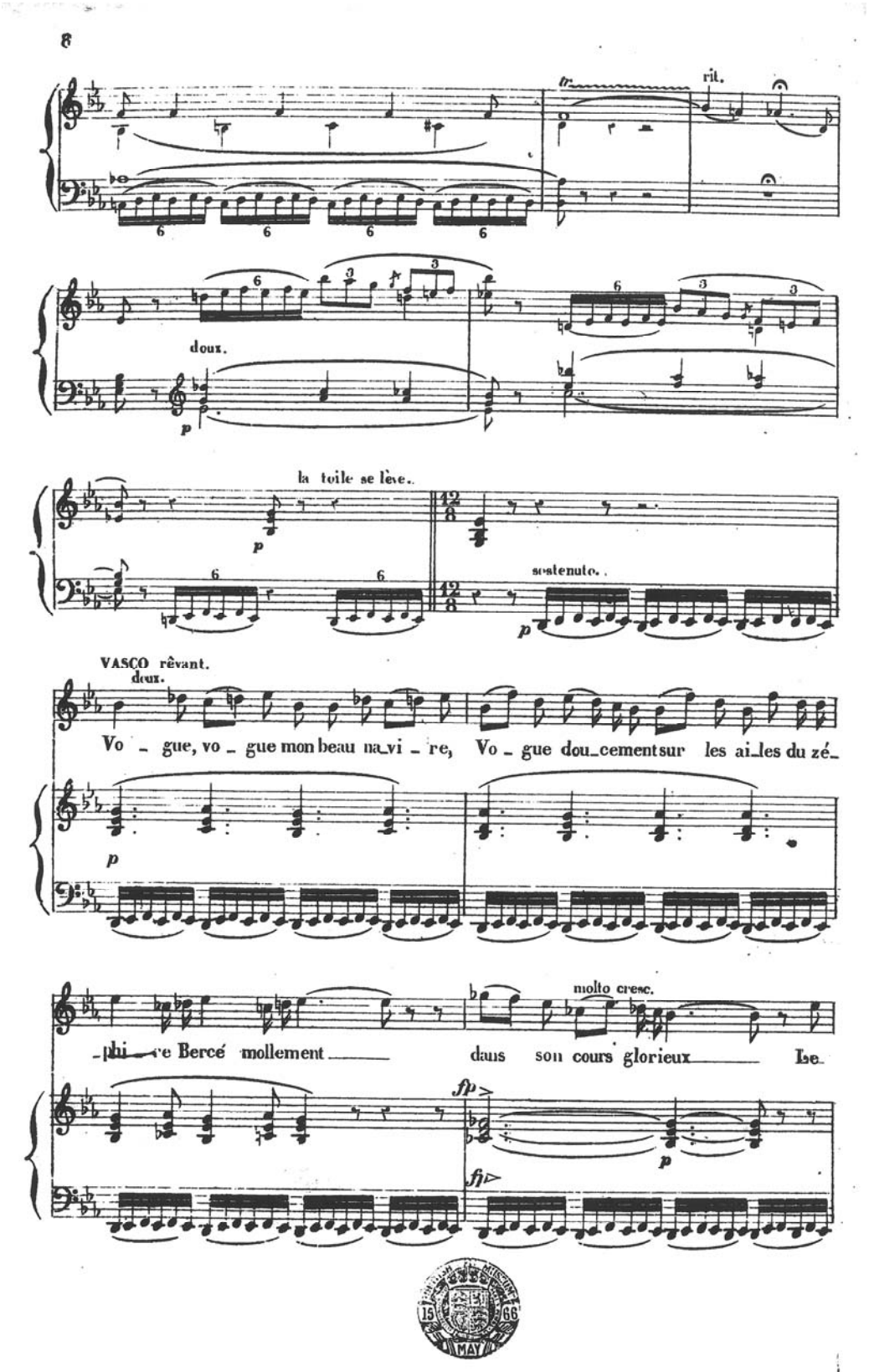

6
voeux Seront mes derniers voeux Seront mes derniers voeux Seront mes derniers
And.no quasi all.to
voeux. A - dieu rivage du Ta - ge A - dieu mon beau riva -
ge Où j'ai re - çu le jour, le jour Ah!
cadence ad libitum.
A -
Lentement.
- dieu
doux.
Ped.

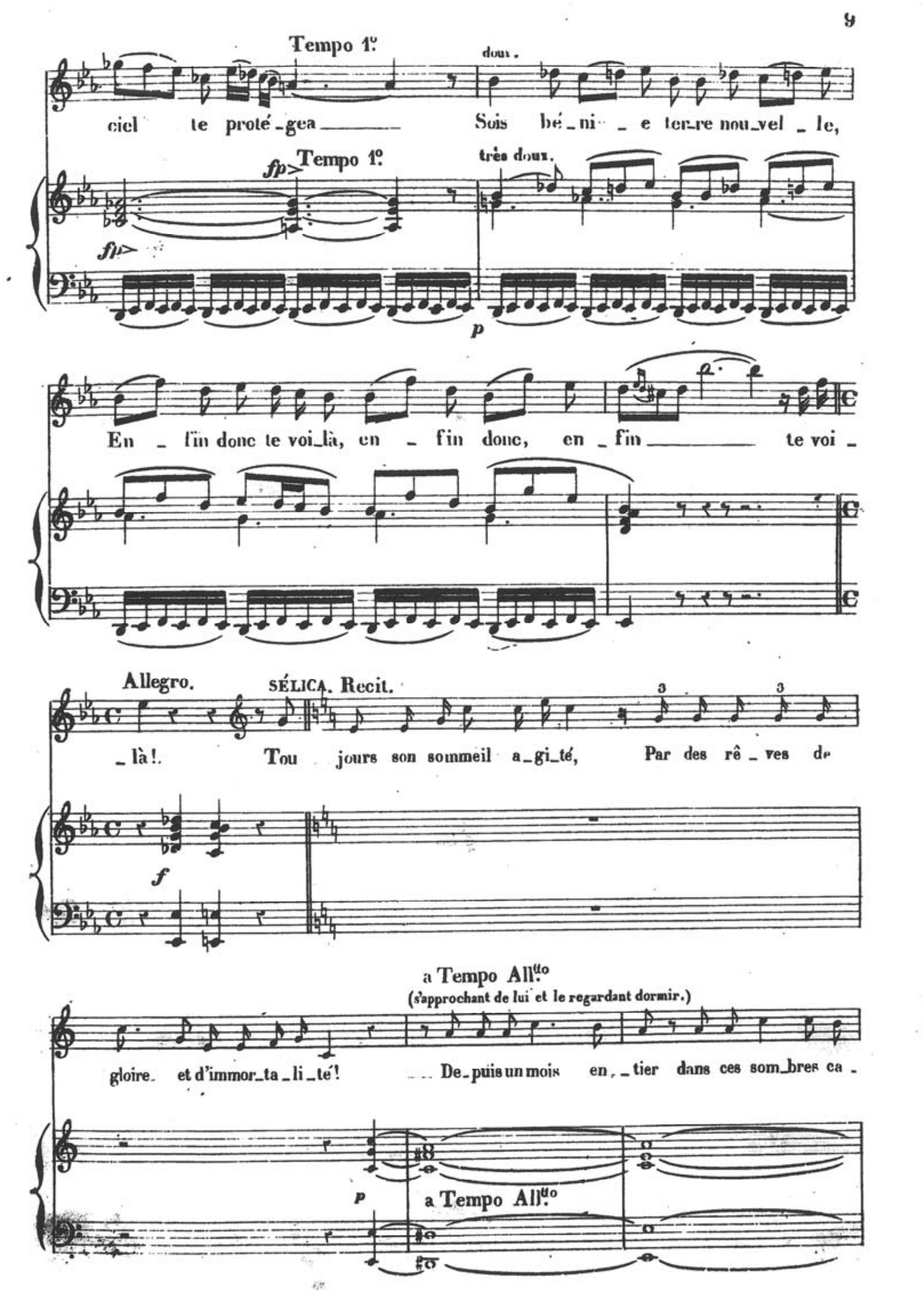
7

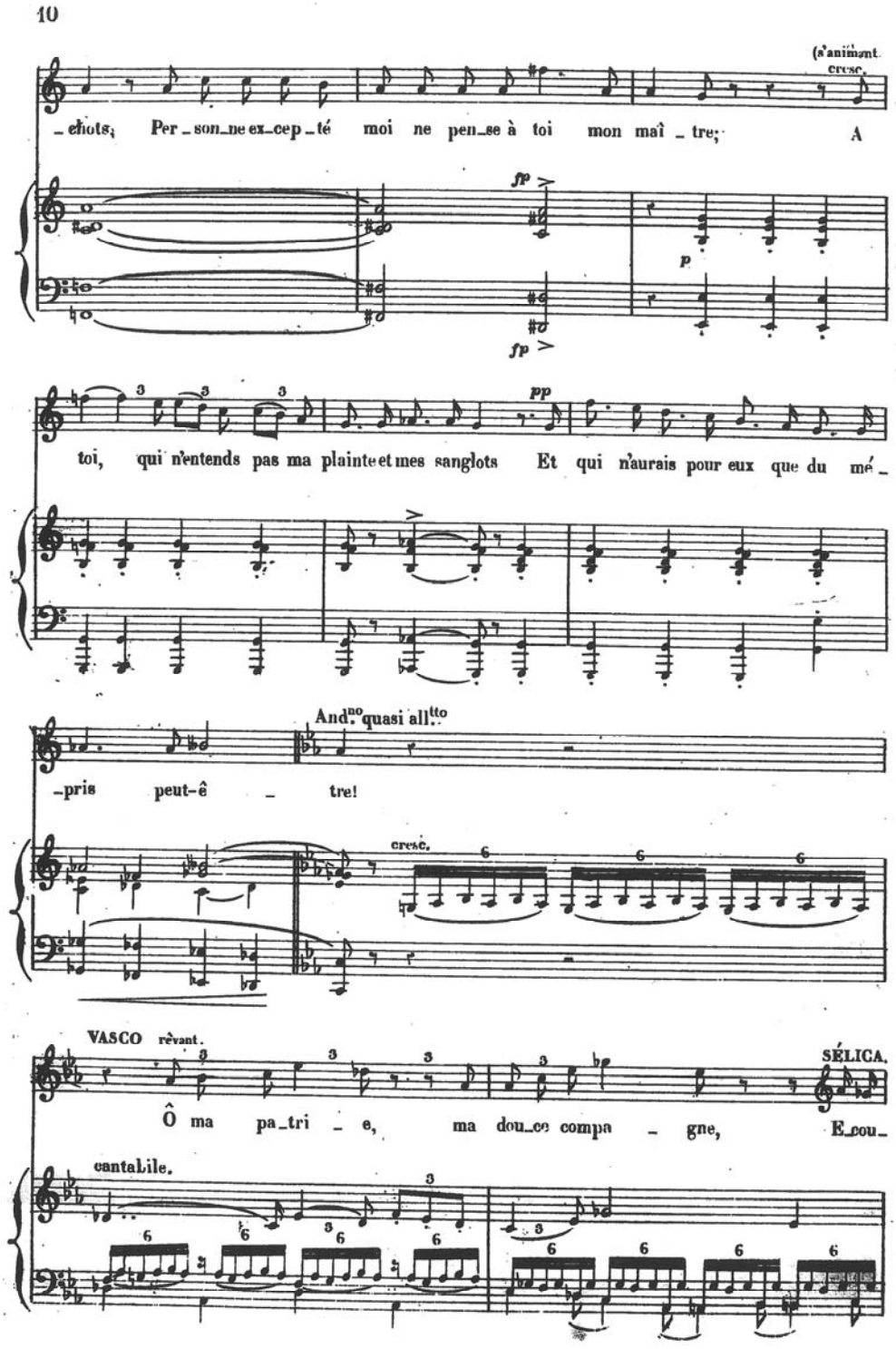
ACTE 2me

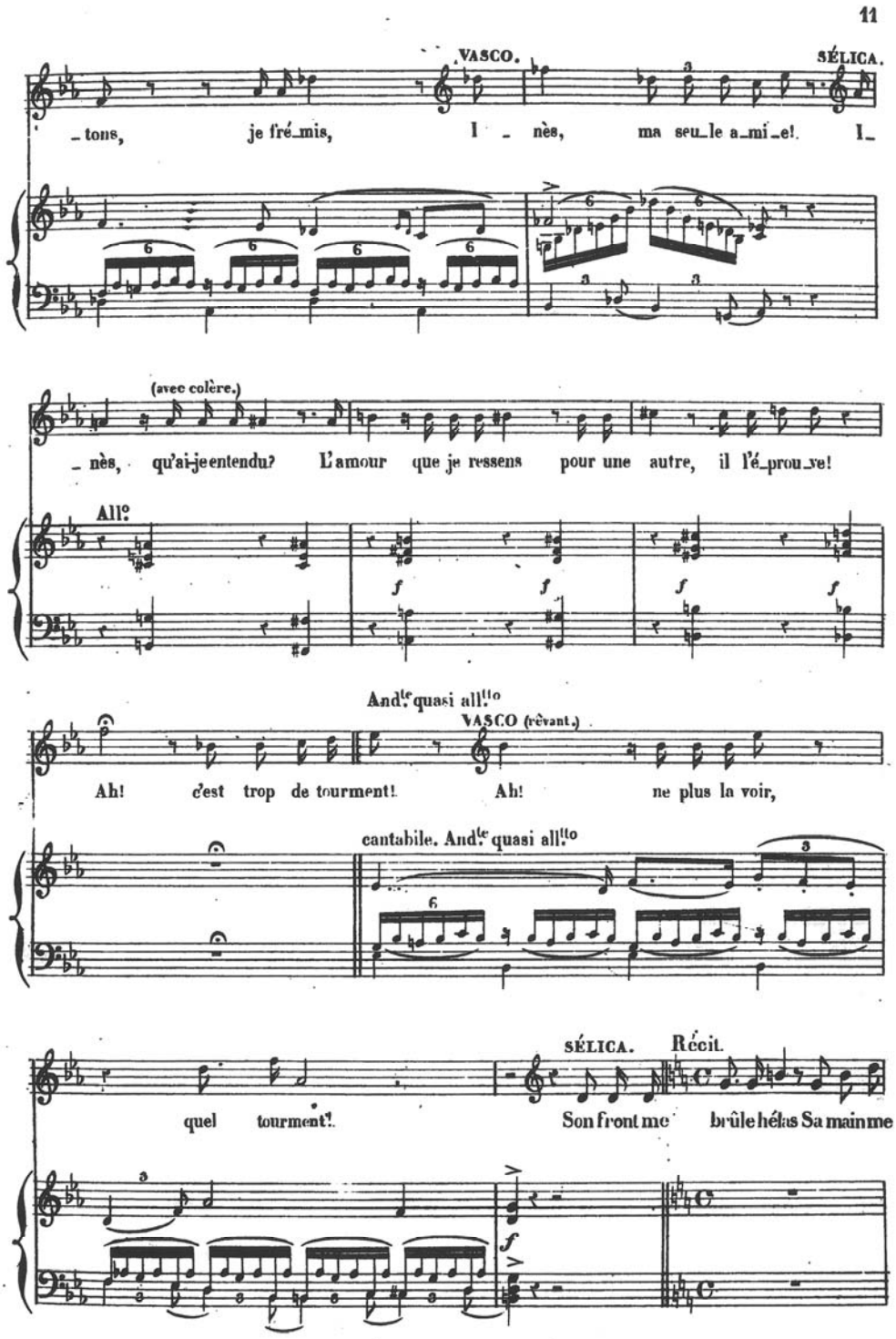
INTRODUCTION et SCÈNE.

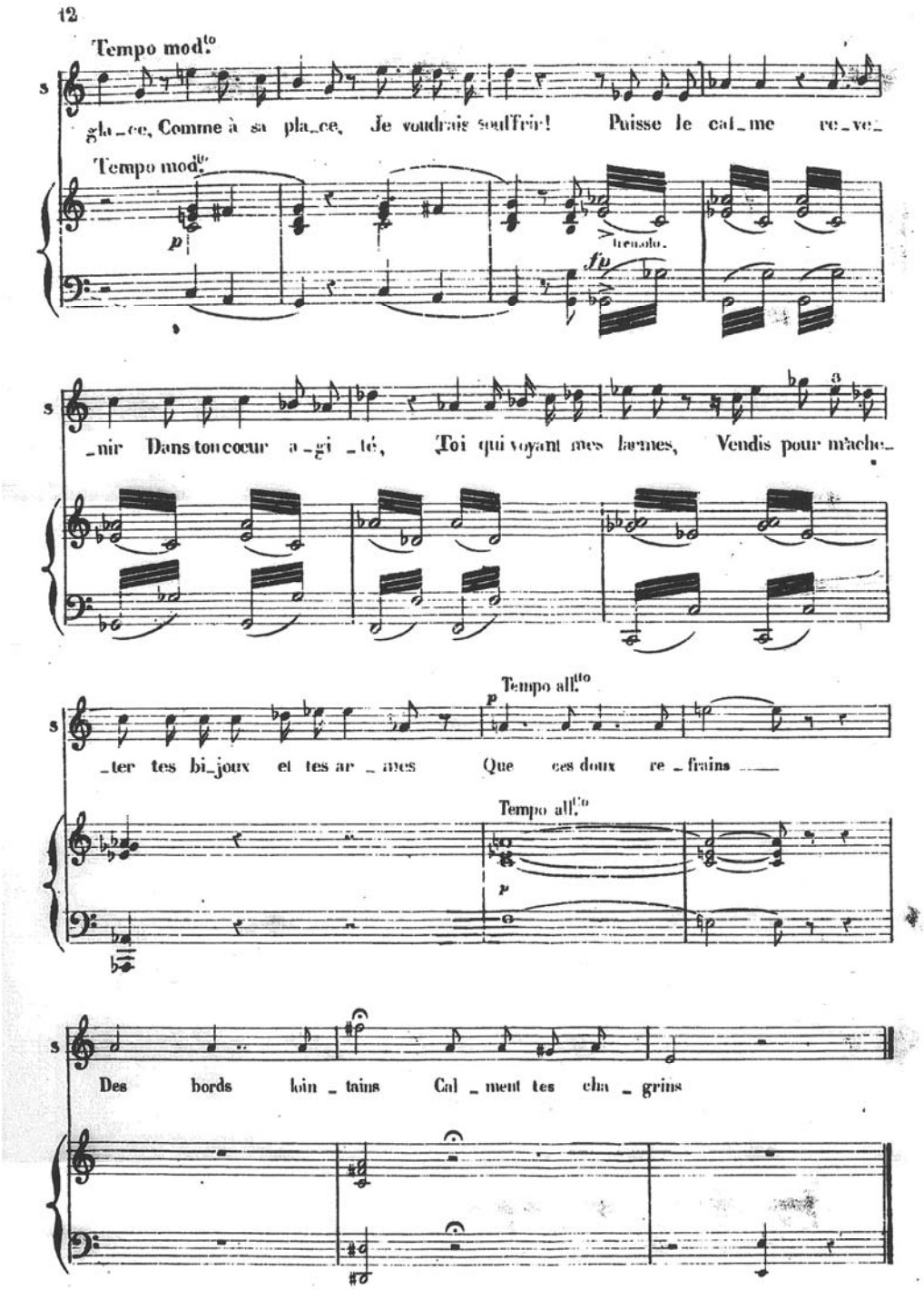


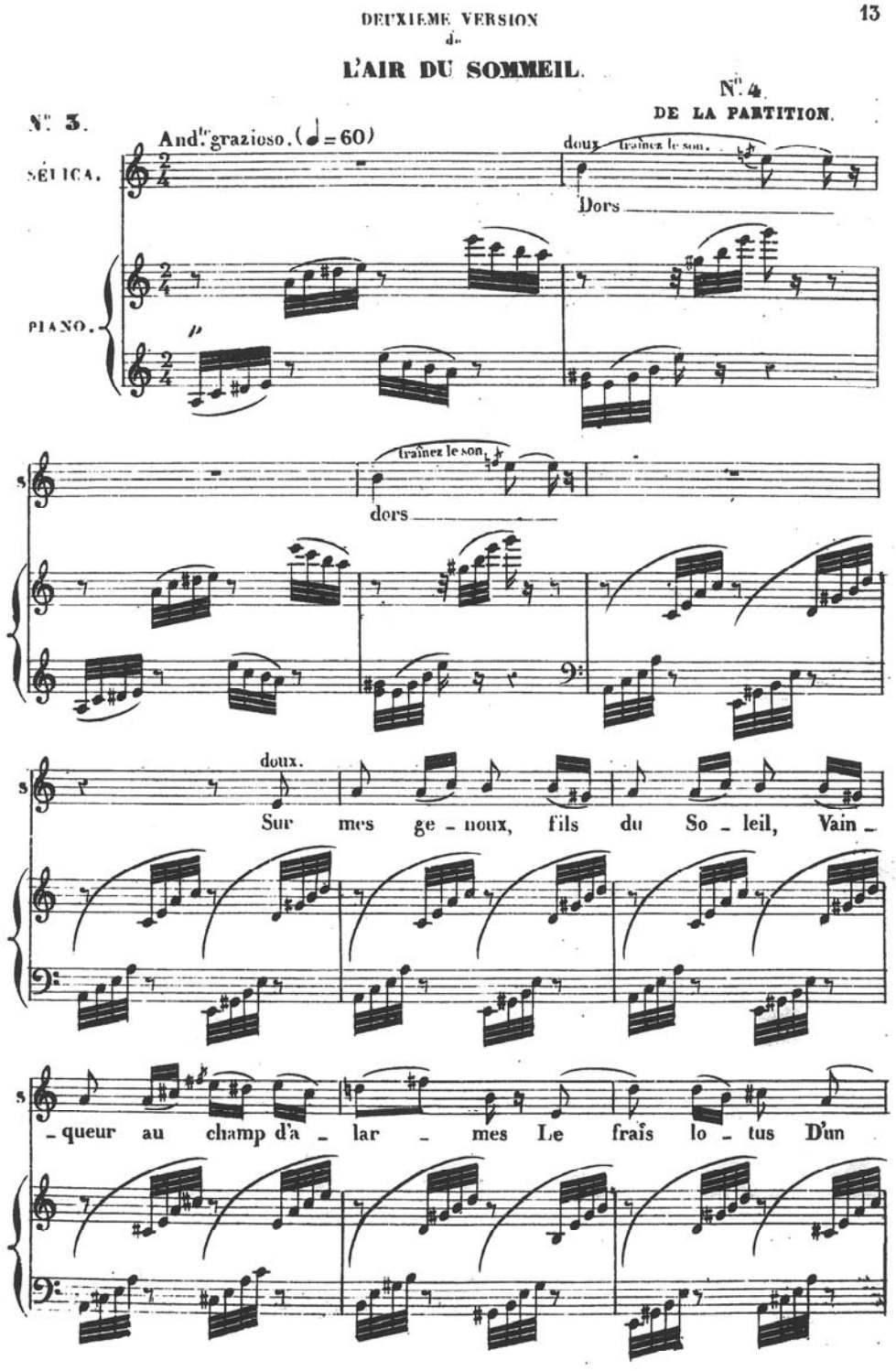

8
rit.
doux.
la toile se lève.
sostenuto.
VASCO rêvant.
doux.
Vo - gue, vo - gue mon beau na - vi - re, Vo - gue dou - cement sur les ai - les du zé -
molto cresc.
- phi - re Bercé mollement dans son cours glorieux Le
fp
fp
p

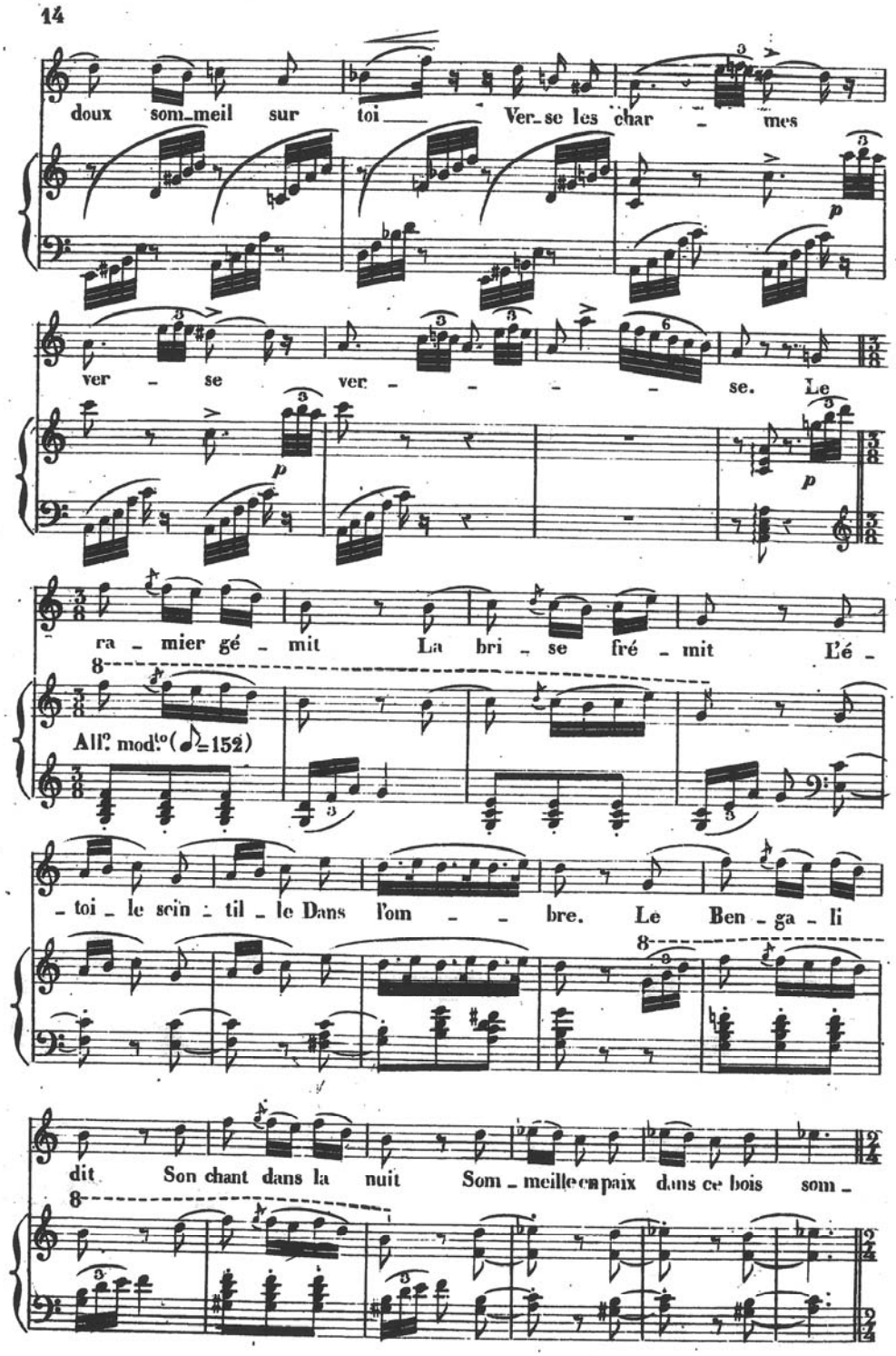

9
Tempo 1°
doux.
ciel te proté_gea Sois bé_ni _ e ter_re nou_vel _ le,
fp
très doux.
p
En _ fin donc te voi_là, en _ fin donc, en _ fin te voi _
Allegro. SÉLICA. Recit.
_ là!. Tou jours son sommeil a_gi_té, Par des rê _ ves de
f
a Tempo All^to
(s'approchant de lui et le regardant dormir.)
gloire. et d'immor_ta _li _té! De_puis un mois en _ tier dans ces som_bres ca _
p
a Tempo All^to


10
(s'animant
cresc.
-chots; Per-son-ne ex-cep-té moi ne pen-se à toi mon maî-tre; A
fp
fp
p
pp
toi, qui n'entends pas ma plainte et mes sanglots Et qui n'aurais pour eux que du mé-
And.no quasi all.tto
-pris peut-ê-tre!
cresc.
VASCO rêvant.
SÉLICA.
Ô ma pa-tri-e, ma dou-ce compa-gne, E-cou-
cantabile.


11
VASCO.
SÉLICA.
_ tons, je fré_mis, I _ nès, ma seu_le a_mi_e! I_
(avec colère.)
_ nès, qu'ai-je entendu? L'amour que je ressens pour une autre, il l'é_prou_ve!
All.o
And.te quasi all.tto
VASCO (rêvant.)
Ah! c'est trop de tourment! Ah! ne plus la voir,
cantabile. And.te quasi all.tto
SÉLICA. Récit.
quel tourment! Son front me brûle hélas Sa main me


12
Tempo mod.to
s
gla_ce, Comme à sa pla_ce, Je voudrais souffrir! Puisse le cal_me re_ve_
Tempo mod.to
p
tenuto.
fp
s
_nir Dans ton coeur a_gi_té, Toi qui voyant mes larmes, Vendis pour m'ache_
Tempo all.to
p
s
_ter tes bi_joux et tes ar_mes Que ces doux re_frains
Tempo all.to
p
s
Des bords loin_tains Cal_ment tes cha_grins


13
DEUXIEME VERSION
de
L'AIR DU SOMMEIL.
N°. 4.
DE LA PARTITION.
N°. 3.
And.te grazioso. (♩=60)
doux
traînez le son.
Dors
SÉLICA.
PIANO.
p
traînez le son.
dors
doux.
Sur mes ge - noux, fils du So - leil, Vain -
- queur au champ d'a - lar - mes Le frais lo - tus D'un


14
doux som_meil sur toi Ver_se les char _ mes
ver _ se ver _ _ _ _ se. Le
ra _ mier gé _ mit La bri _ se fré _ mit L'é _
All.o mod.to (♪=152)
_ toi _ le sein : til _ le Dans l'om _ _ bre. Le Ben _ ga _ li
dit Son chant dans la nuit Som _ meille en paix dans ce bois som _