
Before Breakfast

Opera in One Act

PIANO-VOCAL SCORE

Libretto adapted
by FRANK CORSARO

After the play
by EUGENE O'NEILL

Oboe
B $\flat$ Clarinet/Bass Clarinet
Bassoon
F Horn
B $\flat$ Trumpet
Trombone
Piano/Celesta
2 Violins
Viola
Cello
Bass
(strings may be solo or section)

The original version of BEFORE BREAKFAST premiered on October 9, 1980 at the New York City Opera. Marilyn Zschau sang Charlotte in a production conducted by Imre Pallo and directed by Frank Corsaro.

The 2006 revised version was premiered in Dallas by Voices of Change on January 7, 2007 with Lauren Flanigan as Charlotte, conducted by Joseph Illick.

SCENE

A small room serving both as kitchen and dining room in a flat on Christopher Street, New York City. In the rear, to the right, a door leading to the outer hallway. On the left of the doorway, a sink and a two-burner gas stove. Over the stove, and extending to the left wall, a wooden closet for dishes, etc. On the left, two windows looking out on a fire escape where several potted plants are dying of neglect. Before the windows, a table covered with oilcloth. Two cane-bottomed chairs are placed by the table. In the right wall, rear, a doorway leading into a bedroom.

Duration: c. 40 minutes

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Allegro

Piano

mp

cresc.

7

Musical notation for measures 7-12. The piano part features a series of chords in the right hand and a melodic line in the left hand. The right hand has a crescendo marking.

13

Musical notation for measures 13-16. The piano part features a series of chords in the right hand and a melodic line in the left hand. The right hand has a fortissimo (ff) marking.

17

Musical notation for measures 17-23. The piano part features a series of chords in the right hand and a melodic line in the left hand. The right hand has a mezzo-piano (mp) marking.

[CURTAIN]

24

gtr

loco

Musical notation for measures 24-29. The piano part features a series of chords in the right hand and a melodic line in the left hand. The right hand has a piano (p) marking.

Ch.

Hm

p

39

Ch.

p

47

Ch.

p

52

mf

p

Ch.

Al - fred, are you up? I've put ev - ery-thing to - ge - ther. You can de -

Ch.

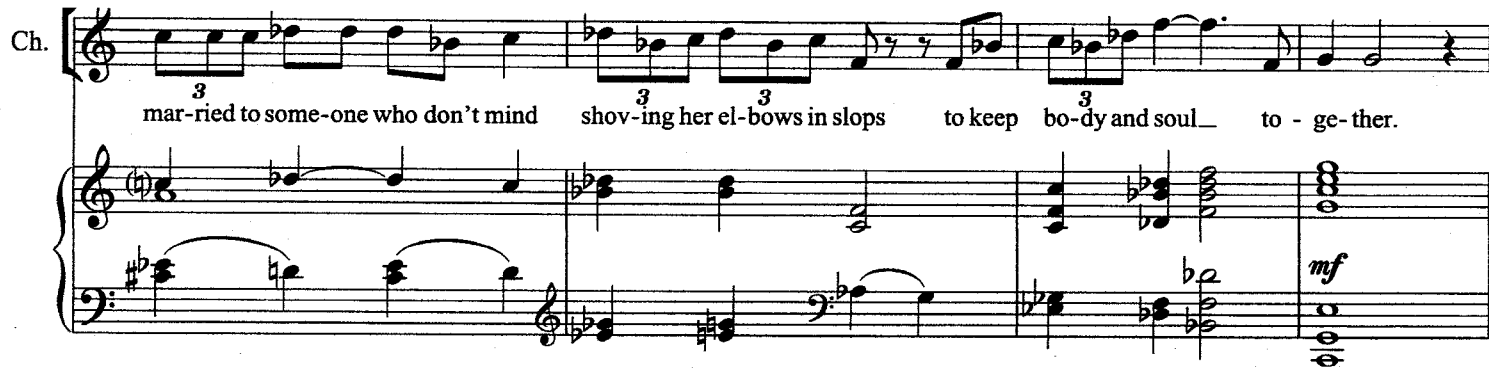
liv - er them this morn - ing, Al - fred, do you hear me? How man - y times must I call you?

58 *mf* Ch.

Break - fast is on for what it's worth. Cof - fee, bread and but - ter, Your High - ness!

60 Ch.

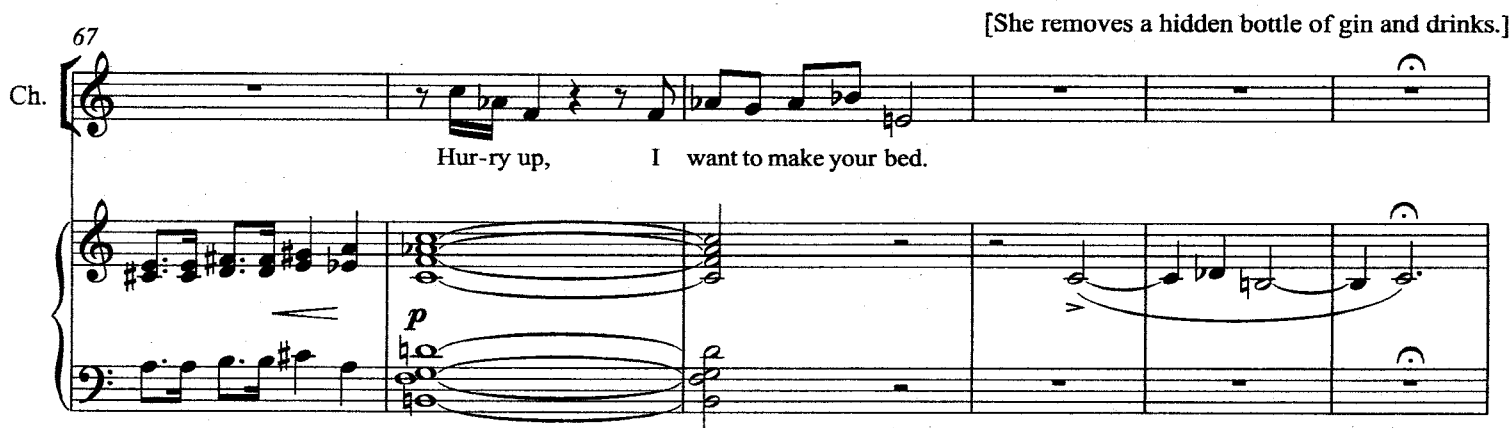
Peo - ple starv - ing but we've got our cof - fee, Thanks to me. You should be grate - ful you're

Ch. 

3 mar-ried to some-one who don't mind 3 shov-ing her el-bows in slops 3 to keep bo-dy and soul to - ge-ther.

mf

67 [She removes a hidden bottle of gin and drinks.]

Ch. 

Hur-ry up, I want to make your bed.

p

73 [A ray of sunlight brightens the window.]

Ch. 

p

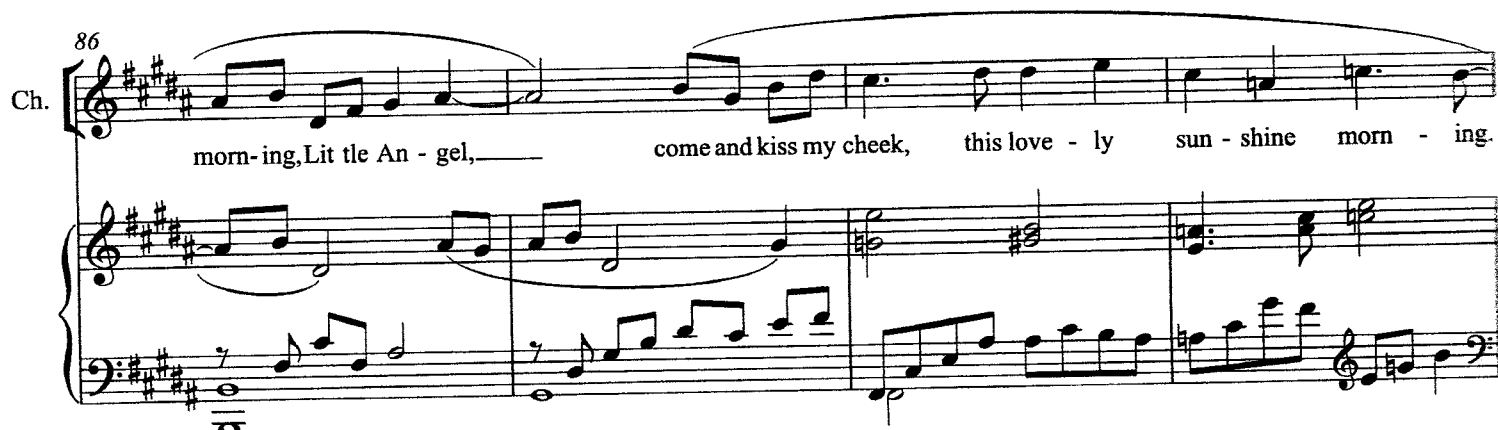
77 *p*

Ch. 

The morn - ing sun that bright-ens up your win-dow pane is real - ly

Ch. 

— a ti-ny an-gel sent from heav - en to tell you all is well. Good

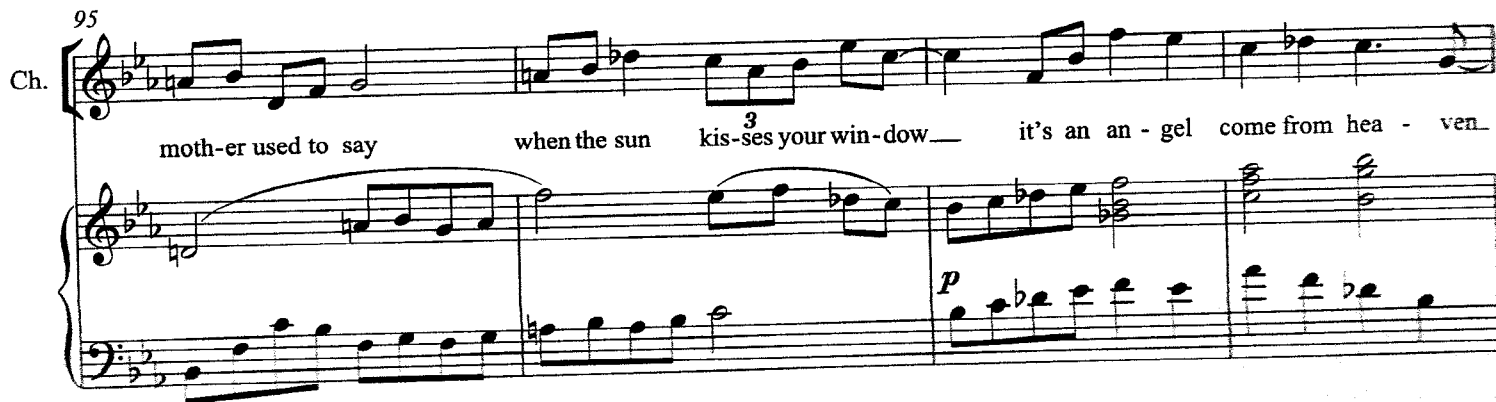
86 Ch. 

morn-ing, Lit tle An - gel, come and kiss my cheek, this love - ly sun - shine morn - ing.

90 Ch. 

Come and kiss my cheek. My

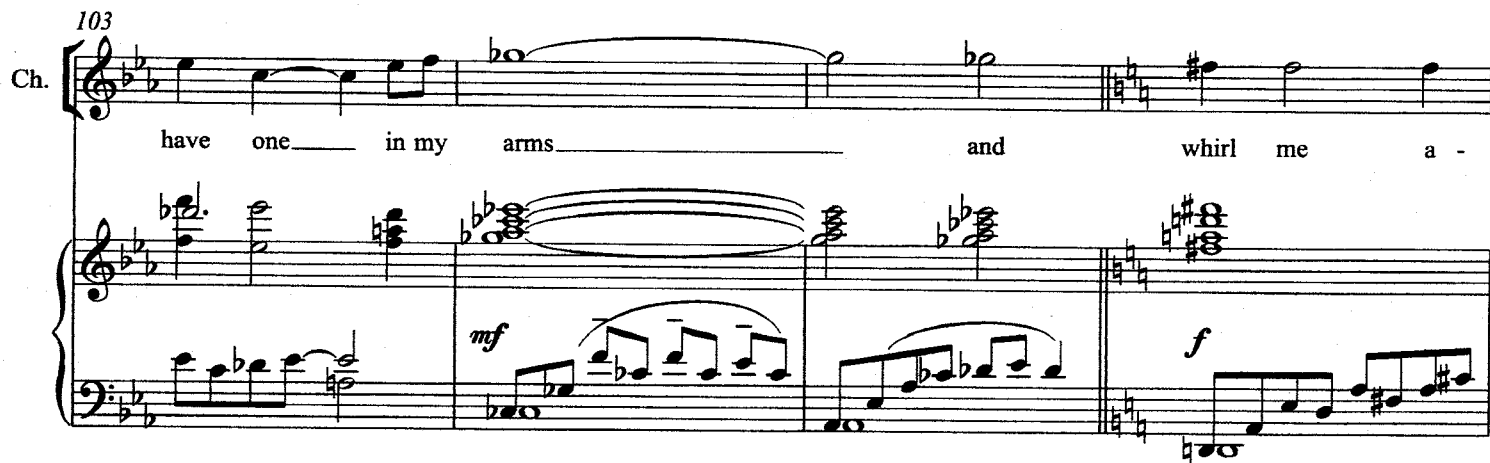
mf *f* *p*

95 Ch. 

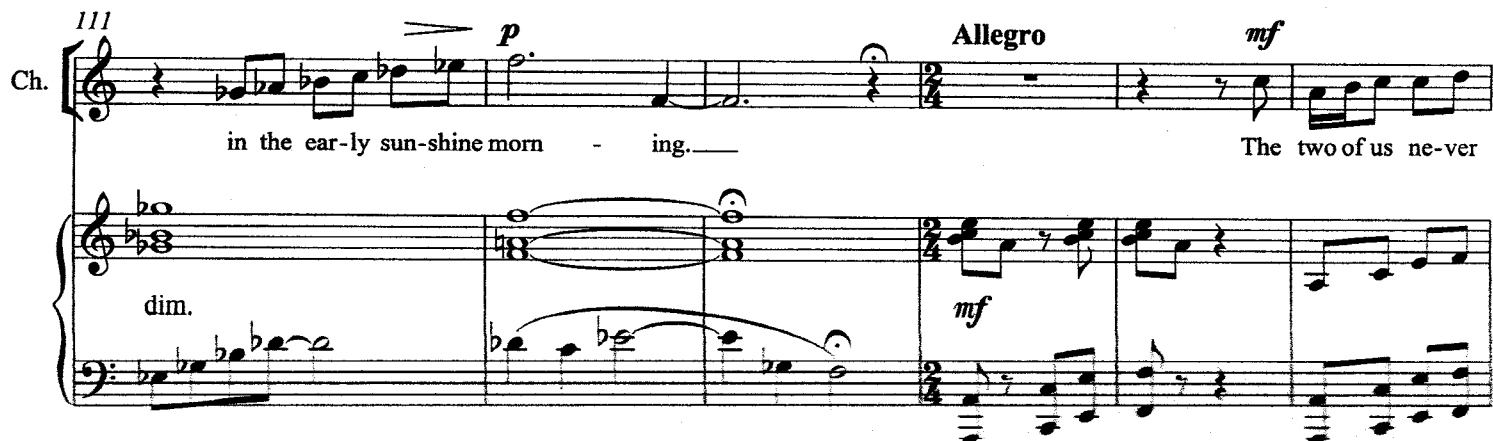
moth-er used to say when the sun kis-ses your win-dow it's an an - gel come from hea - ven.

p

Ch. 

103 Ch. 

107 Ch. 

111 Ch. 

117

Ch. 

diz-zy be-cause she had dan-cer's feet.

f

124

Ch. 

She was a pro-fes-sion-al dan-cer back in the old coun-try

mf

130

Ch. 

be-fore she mar-ried and came here.

ff

137

Ch. 

She al-ways said that I was blessed with her ta-lent

p *mp* *cresc.*

144

Ch. 

and would take up where she left off.

150 [She dances nervously and awkwardly.]

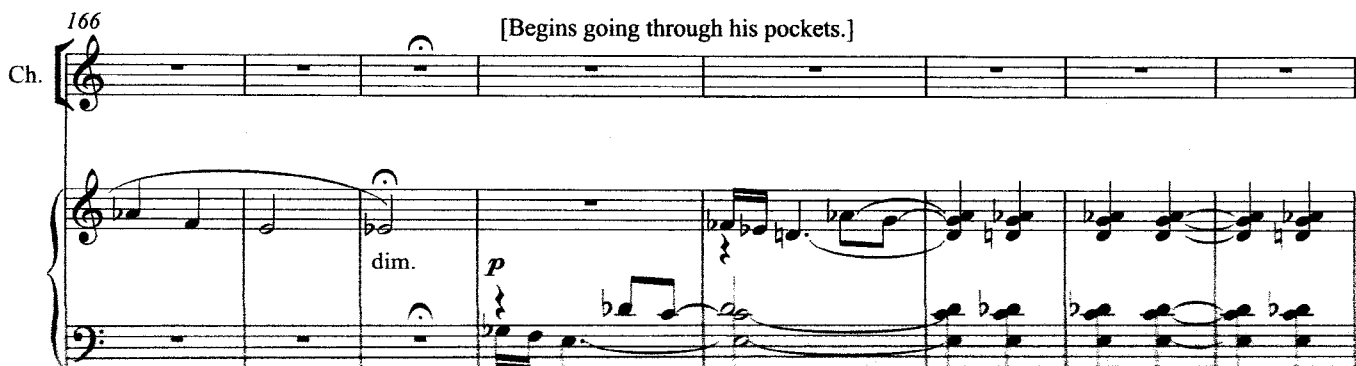
Ch. 

[She knocks over a pot from the stove.] **rit.** [Picks it up...] **Meno mosso** [Notices his jacket...]

156

Ch. 

166 [Begins going through his pockets.]

Ch. 

174 [Finds the letter and reads it.]

Ch.

8^{vb}

182 *p*

Ch. I knew it... I knew it...

mf *p*

189 *mp*

Ch. Al - fred! Did you hear what I said? Os - trow's been wait - ing a week for the de - liv - er - y.

mp

190

Ch. The soon - er you're up, the

p

192

Ch. *f*

soon-er you can get to that li - bra - ry for your re - search Hah! Re - search! I know

193

Ch. *f*

your kind of re - search. Don't think you can pull the wool o - ver my eyes. Hah!

193

Ch. *mf*

I know you col-lect-ed the mon - ey. Where did it go?

198

Ch. *f*

Down your gul - let. You and your

203

Ch. friends, loaf-ing a-round the bar- rooms... That is what you do all day, poet - o' mine,

p cresc.

209

Ch. is - n't it? Is - n't it? You play the gen - tle - man with them, al-right,

213

Ch. and bring home the drop-pings. Don't look at me like that. You don't

f

mf

220

Ch. fool me a bit. When the rest of this junk is sold, Your High - ness,

ff

f

227

Ch. *mp*

you had bet - ter be pub - lished, or you might have to look for a

dim. *p cresc.*

234

Ch. *rit.*

job. Hah! That'll be the day! That will be the

239

Ch. **Molto Meno Mosso**

day! _____

f *p*

243

pp *poco* *p* *ppp*

250 *p*

Ch. *p*

The bread's stale. I hope you like it. Hang o - ver all gone? At least shave. You look like a tramp.

[She pours water into a basin.]

[Spoken:] This is all the service you get this morning, your higness...Poet-o'-mine... [She goes into the bedroom with the basin of water]

251 **Moderato triste**

Ch.

mp

254

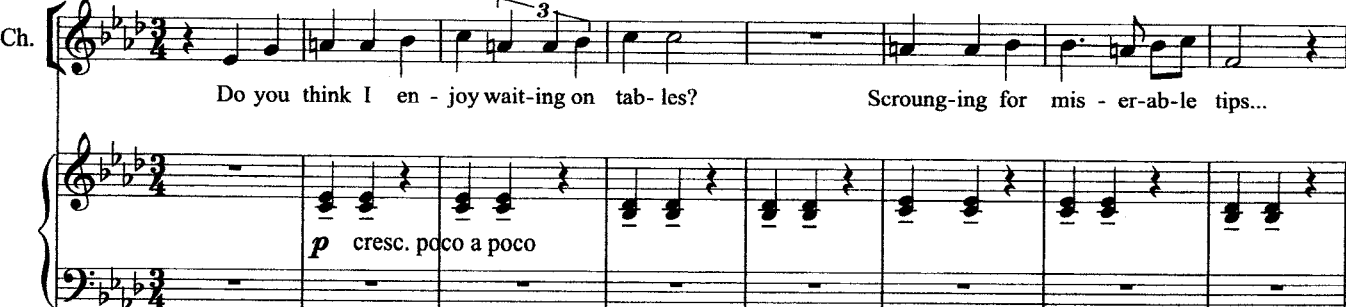
mf *cresc.*

258

Ch. [She re-enters.]

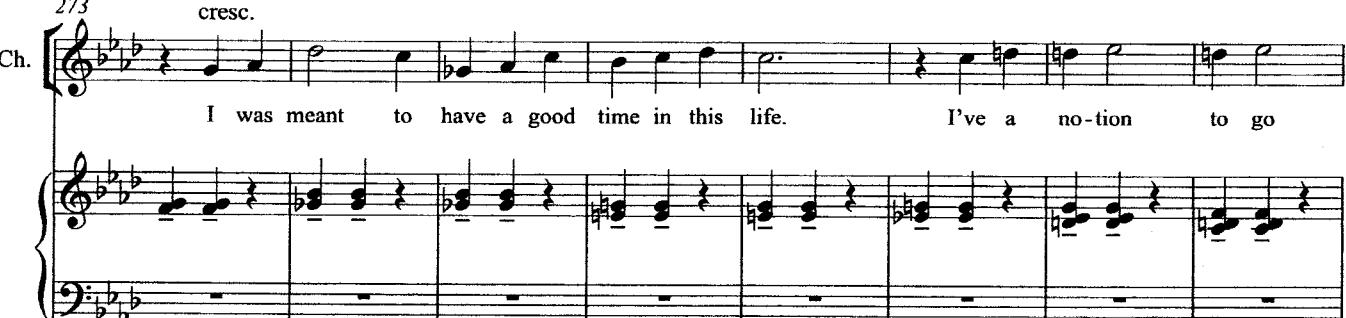
f *p* *mf* *p*

265 **Poco più mosso**

Ch. 

Do you think I en - joy wait-ing on tab-les? Scroung-ing for mis - er-ab-le tips...

p cresc. poco a poco

Ch. 

I was meant to have a good time in this life. I've a no-tion to go

cresc.

Ch. 

home. If I was-n't too proud to let them know what a

mf

Ch. 

fail-ure you've been.

poco rit.

dim.

296 **Poco meno mosso**

Ch. *mp*

You, — the mil-lion-aire Row - land's son — the Har-vard

p

303

Ch. *f*

grad - u - ate — the po - et. No — I would-n't

cresc.

311

Ch. *dim.*

break — my moth-er's heart — by tel - ling her. She still thinks

dim.

319 **Meno mosso**

Ch.

— our mar - riage — was made in Hea - ven.

p *mp*

327

Ch.

335

[The sunlight has faded.]

Ch.

p

The an - gel's gone.

[She goes to the victrola, takes a record from its paper jacket and puts it on.]

rit.

344

Ch.

Looks like more rain.

352

[On the record]

p

360 [She takes his jacket and holds it against herself. She cries and hugs the jacket tighter.]

Ch.

mp

368

mp

376

mp

384

mf

392

dim.

This system contains measures 392 through 399. The music is in a key with two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature. The right hand features a series of chords and single notes, with a long slur spanning from measure 392 to 399. The left hand plays a more active line with eighth and sixteenth notes. A 'dim.' (diminuendo) marking is placed above the right hand in measure 399.

400

mp dolce

This system contains measures 400 through 406. The right hand continues with a melodic line of eighth notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. The dynamic marking '*mp dolce*' is placed at the beginning of the system in measure 400.

407

mf *mp*

This system contains measures 407 through 415. The right hand features a more complex melodic line with some triplets and slurs. The left hand continues with a consistent eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamic markings '*mf*' and '*mp*' are placed above the right hand in measures 407 and 410, respectively.

416

p

This system contains measures 416 through 423. The right hand plays a series of chords and single notes, with a long slur spanning from measure 416 to 423. The left hand continues with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The dynamic marking '*p*' (piano) is placed at the beginning of the system in measure 416.

426 *p* *mf*

Ch. You and your blar - ney, tel-ling me I smelled just like a bar of soap af - ter five hun-dred

427 *p*

Ch. hours on that dance floor. Five hun-dred hours on that dance floor, in the long-est run-ning dance ma-ra-thon

427 *mf*

Ch. on the east coast. "Who will sur-vive? Meet your favor-ite at the fin-ish line!"

430 *p*

Ch. Five hun-dred hours on that dance floor... five hun-dred hours on that dance floor...

435 **Allegro** *mp*

Ch. You and your swell friends sit-ting in the front row

439

Ch. pas - sing that sil-ver flask a-round and tos - sing

443

Ch. mon-ey and sym-pa-thy each time I danced past, 'till ev-'ry bo-dy was jea-lous of

P *cresc.*

448 *mf*

Ch. "Lit-tle Char-lotte" "Lit-tle Char-lotte..." the long-est run-ning dance ma ra- thon...

452

Ch. *on the east coast...*

457

Ch. *p* *cresc.*

Thanks to you all I could look fresh and new

462

Ch. *dim.*

with a per-ma-nent wave and clean li-nen all paid for.

467 **Meno mosso**

Ch. *p*

"Char-lotte's got her-self a sug-ar dad-dy." That was the word, and what a

472

Ch. *sug-ar dad-dy, The hand-som-est jun-ior in town pul-ling for me.*

cresc. *p*

477

Ch. *That's what start-ed the fight be-tween Spike and me af-ter me*

mp *cresc.*

482

Ch. *lug-ging him a-round that floor, when he dropped. He hit me and got us dis-*

p sub. *cresc.*

487

Ch. *qual - i - fied. dis - qual - i - fied... He walked*

rit. *Meno mosso* *mf* *p sub.* *mf*

492

Ch. out on me and you sat there while I cried my heart out.

497

Ch. My one chance gone, _____ and you tel-ling me _____ that

p

mf *p*

504 *mf* *p* **Più mosso** *mp* *cresc.*

Ch. life _____ was not as pret-ty as my face. "Life was raw," you said, and

mf *p* *mp* *cresc.*

511 *f*

Ch. you were _____ it's true lo - ver.

f

519

dim. *p*

527

Ch. E - ven be - fore your fa - ther died ow-ing ev-ery-one mo-ney, you ne - ver was-ted an - y

531

Ch. time on your wife. You thought I ought to be glad you were hon-or-ab-le e-nough to mar - ry me

Più Mosso

531

Ch. af-ter get-ting me in-to troub-le. You were a - shamed of me,

mf

536

Ch.

with your fine friends, be - cause my fa - ther was an

544

Ch.

im - mi - grant and a gro - cer. At least he died ho - nest,

552

Ch.

which is more than an - y - one could say a - bout yours. You made me

558

Ch.

think you did - n't want your fa - ther to buy me off as he tried to do.

565 *f*

Ch. It's lu-cky that she was born dead, our dau-ghter born dead af-ter all.

573

Ch. What a fa... ther

581 *p*

Ch. you'd have been. I thought you wan-ted the ba... by. The lit-tle toys

588

Ch. you'd bring home. The lit-tle crib with the pink em-broi-dered blan-ket, the

593 **Lento**

Ch. 

lit - tle tub and ti - ny shoes and dolls, so ma - ny dolls, all

599

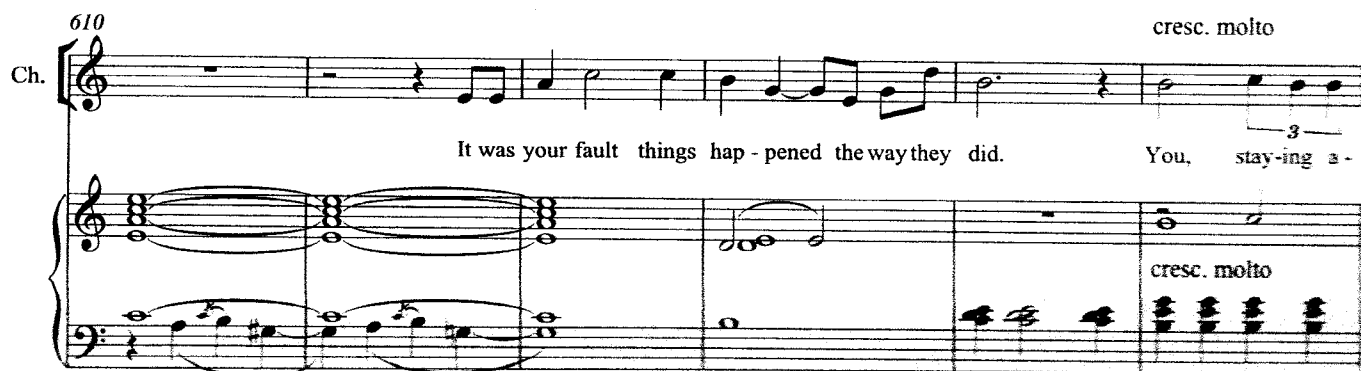
Ch. 

wait - ing. Pre - pa - ra - tions and wait... ing.

604 **Andante triste**



610

Ch. 

It was your fault things hap - pened the way they did. You, stay - ing a -

616

Ch. way weeks at a time. Stay-ing a-way weeks at a time...

622 *f*

Ch. I sat up for you, hop - ing and pray - ing

627

Ch. pray - ing and lis - ten-ing to my on - ly faith-ful com-pan - ion in - side of

632

Ch. me... put-ting the words in her mouth 'til we thought the prayer to -

rit. dim.

dim.

637 **Lento** *p*

Ch. geth - er. "Keep us Lord in your charge.

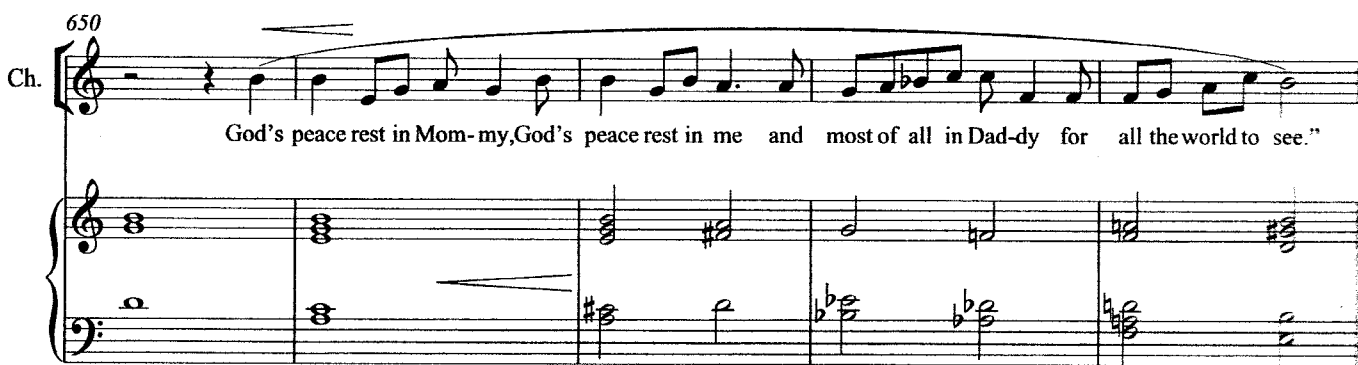
pp

644

Ch. Save us in our sleep. So that we may wake with Christ and rest in peace.

650

Ch. God's peace rest in Mom-my, God's peace rest in me and most of all in Dad-dy for all the world to see."



Più mosso

655 *p*

659

Ch. *p* a piacere

You came back. I had to pick you off the floor. I did-n't

Ch. *mf*

mind be - cause you came back to us, un - til the next time

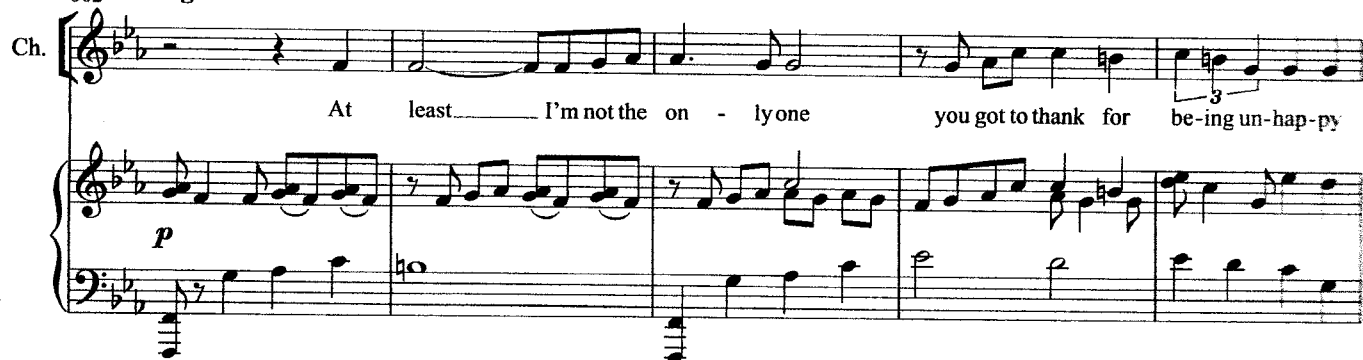
Ch.

and the next time, un - til the Lord would - n't lis - ten an - y - more

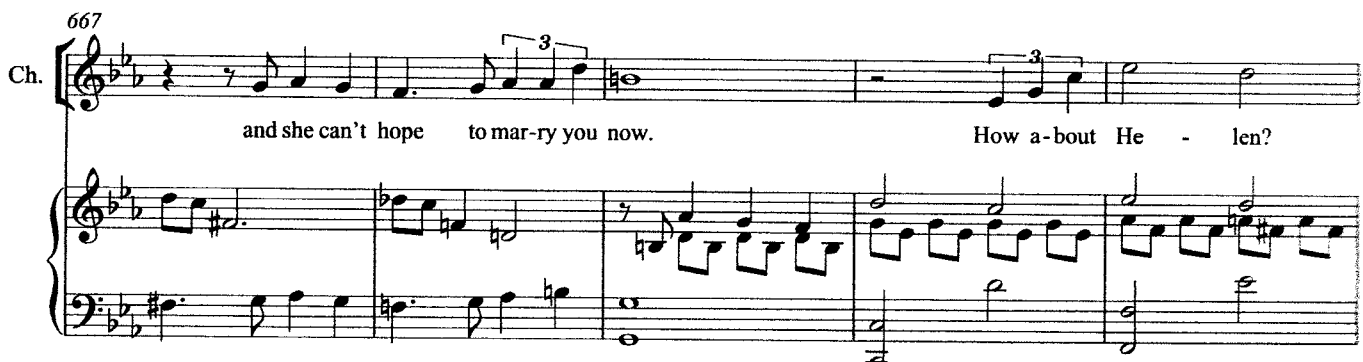
Ch. *p*

and I stopped hear - ing an - y - thing in - side me.

662 Allegretto

Ch. 

At least I'm not the only one you got to thank for be-ing un-hap-py

Ch. 

and she can't hope to mar-ry you now. How a-bout He - len?

Ch. 

Yes, I read her let - ter. I got a right to. I'm your

Ch. 

wife. Go on, stare. What a-bout this

682

Ch. [She slams the bedroom door shut.]

He - len? Why don't you an - swer me? Damn you!

686

ff *dim.*

691

Ch. *mp*

My head aches so this morn - ing. You

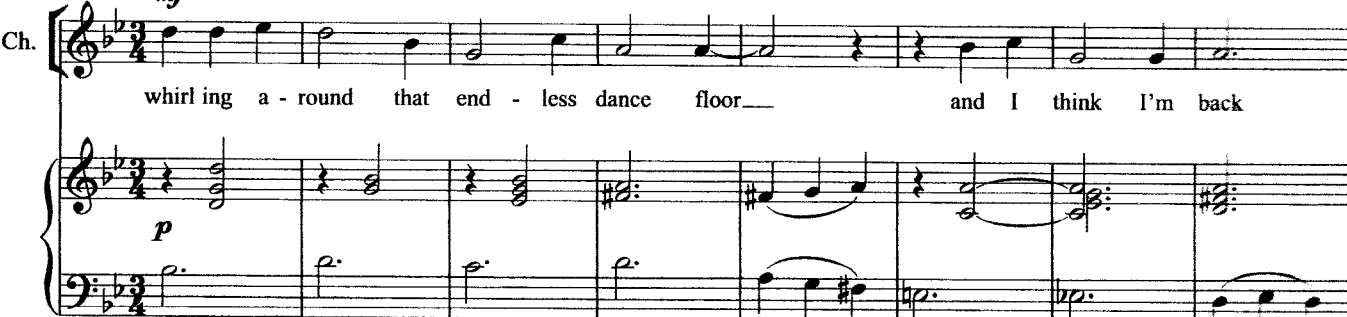
p

696

Ch.

know how sick I've been this past year. I can't sleep nights. I keep

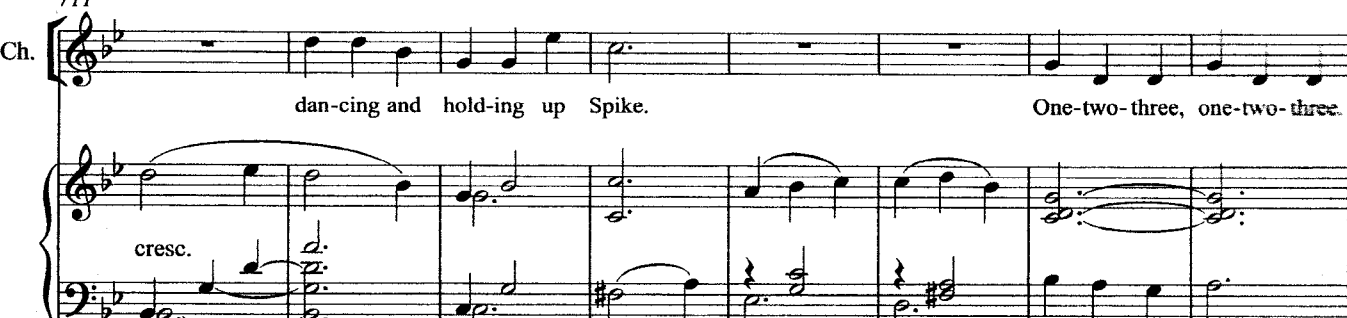
Allegro
703 *mf*

Ch. 

whirl ing a - round that end - less dance floor___ and I think I'm back

p

711

Ch. 

dan-cing and hold-ing up Spike. One-two-three, one-two-three.

cresc.

719

Ch. 

Keep-ing our feet mov - ing, our feet al - ways mov-ing.

mp

727

Ch. 

"Who will sur - vive?"___ That sign spin - ning in my brain. We

mf

735

Ch. must not touch our knees to the floor. One touch, you're out! You're out...

743

Ch. one - two - three. Keep mov - ing. We must al - ways keep mov - ing. —

751

p

760

Ch. *p* And I wake up pray - ing: "Dear God, don't let it hap - pen.

pp

768

Ch.

Dear God, don't let it hap - pen. Dear God...

776

Ch.

Dear God..." I know that you would be glad to see me

784

Ch.

dead then you would be free

792

Ch.

Did you cut your-self? Serves you right. You shoud-n't be run-ning a-round nights

795 *mp*

Ch. with your nerves in such an aw-ful state. I

799

Ch. know what I've be-come. Do you think I like it an-y-more than you do?

807

Ch. Don't you know I loathe my-self more than you do?

813

Ch. I've be-come worse that a drudge. I'm no - thing... a joke...

819 *cresc. poco a poco*

Ch. *I'm sor-ry for this He-len. What's she going to*

p *cresc. poco a poco*

827

Ch. *do, have the child? Does she ex - pect that I'll di - vorce you and let her*

833

Ch. *mar - ry you? She could have the ba - by then. And what will you do.*

838 *f*

Ch. *dis-ap-pear on her the way you did me? He-len and I could share the ba - by*

f

843

Ch. then. One ba-by to trade for an - oth - er. We could be

849

Ch. *ff* **Allegro molto** rid of you. Rid of you... Rid of the cod - dling, The clean - ing

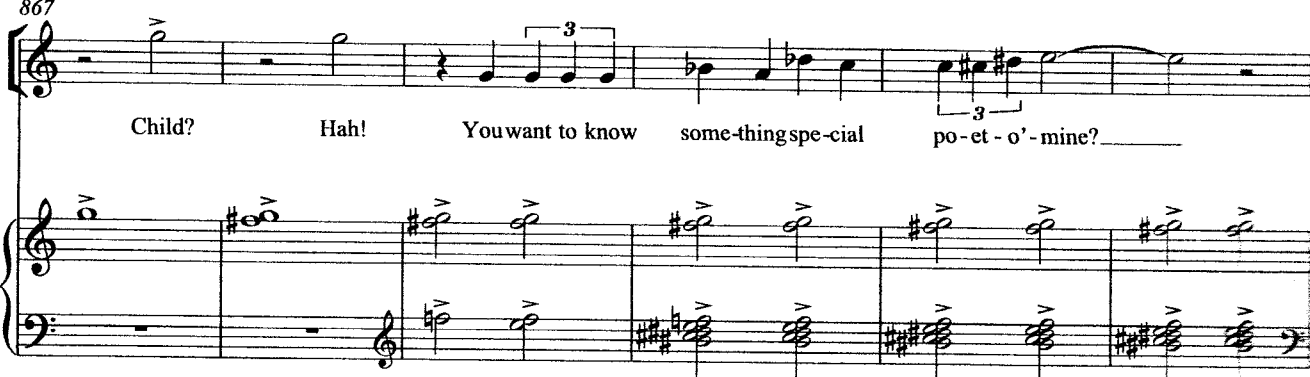
855

Ch. up, the end - less re - con-cil - i - a - tions. Go on, go to her.

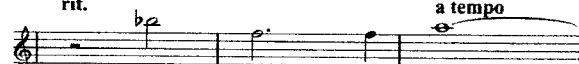
861

Ch. Have the child. Have the child. You'll come crawl-ing back here on your knees.

867

Ch. 

Child? Hah! You want to know some-thing spe-cial po-et - o' - mine? _____

rit. 

You are the child! _____

a tempo

Lento

Ch. 

You're the child! You're the child! You are the child! _____

880

Ch. 

Allegro molto
[She laughs hysterically.]

884 **Lento** [frightened] *pp*

Ch. Al- fred, why don't you an- swer me?

pp

(8)-----

891 *p* *pp*

Ch. What is it that you knocked ov - er? Al - fred?

pp *ff*

Allegro violento [Terrified, she opens the bedroom door.]

896 *ff*

Ch. Oh, no!

Oh, no!

Ch. Ho - ly Mo - ther of God! Oh, no! Oh, no!

911

Ch. No! _____

No! _____ He's done it. He's gone and done _____ it. This time he's done it.

sf sf sf sf

918 **Meno mosso**

Ch. _____

One-two-three one-two-three

mf mp

927 [CHARLOTTE has collapsed.]

Ch. _____

One - two - three one - two three

p

932

[CHARLOTTE picks up the little doll and slowly begins to manipulate its legs in a waltz tempo.]

933

Ch. *p*

"God's peace rest in Mom-my, God's

939

Ch. peace rest in me..."

945

Ch. [Curtain.]

cresc. molto *fff*