GENTLE ANNA

a comic opera in two acts

Music and Libretto by

Michael J. Holderer

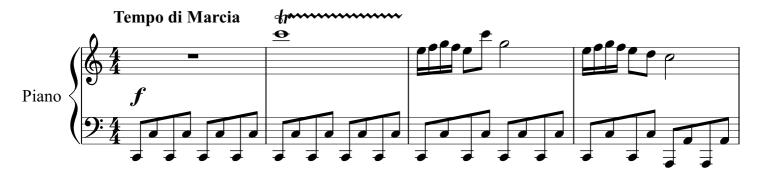
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Cast of Characters:

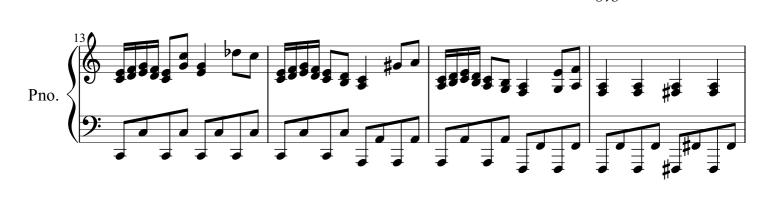
| Anna: (Soprano) | Step-daughter of John Arbitrage. Treated like a servant by all other family members. |
|------------------------|--|
| Esmeralda | Daughter of John Arbitrage. Bi-polar. |
| Arbitrage: | Has a habit of hurting others and |
| (Mezzo) | herself. |
| Rasputina | Second Daughter of John Arbitrage. |
| Arbitrage: | Exceedingly promiscuous. Has a high |
| (Mezzo) | opinion of herself. |
| John Arbitrage: | Patriarch of the Arbitrage family. |
| (Bass) | Highly concerned with finances. |
| Prince Virgil: | Moldavian prince, seeking a wife in |
| (Tenor) | America. |
| Nikolai: (Baritone) | Servant to Prince Virgil. A lady's man |

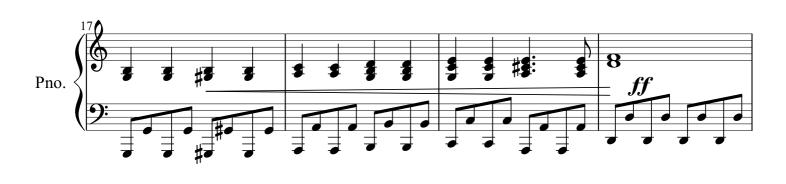
No. 1: Prelude







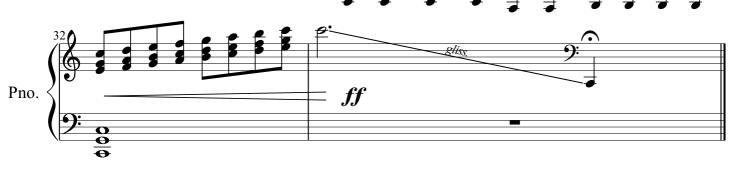












ACT I

Scene 1: On the Town

Esmeralda (Demandingly and in a shrill voice): Father! I'm bored!

Rasputina: I concur, Father! Boredom's malaise is killing me! Let's go out and spend some money!

Father (grumbling): Yes, MY money...

Esmeralda: Oh Father, you know how much we love to go out... especially downtown.

Father: Yes girls, I know, but we cannot leave until Anna is done with her work.

Rasputina: Forget Anna! Can you imagine what it would be like to been seen with her. Her ugly outfit!

Esmeralda: Her ugly face! (Both girls laugh)

Anna: I'm done with my chores!

Esmeralda: Finally! I've been itching to go out!

Rasputina: Oh Look! She got fleas from Anna!

Father: Girls! Play nice or we won't go out at all!

Rasputina and Es: Aww ...

Esmeralda: But Father, you know how we love each other (makes throat cutting motion to Rasputina).

Anna: Yes Father, we love each other.

Rasputina: Except you Anna, nobody loves you. (Rasputina and Esmeralda laugh)

Anna: Hey!

Father: Oh come now girls. There's no time for arguing if we're going out. A life of leisure - however expensive- is important for people like us. It's important to be seen. Appearances are EVERYTHING. Besides, you never know who you might meet when you're out on the town.

Rasputina: Like a handsome man!

Esmeralda: ooh... a man!

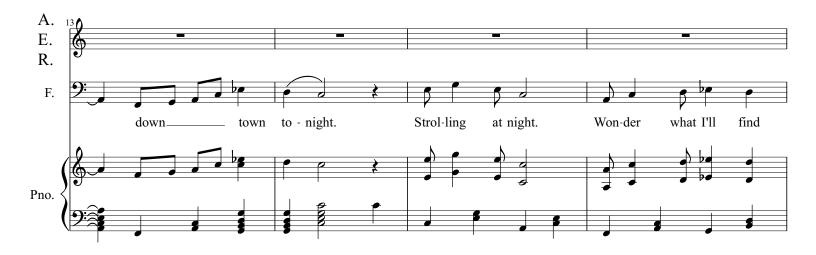
Anna: A man who will make all of your dreams come true.

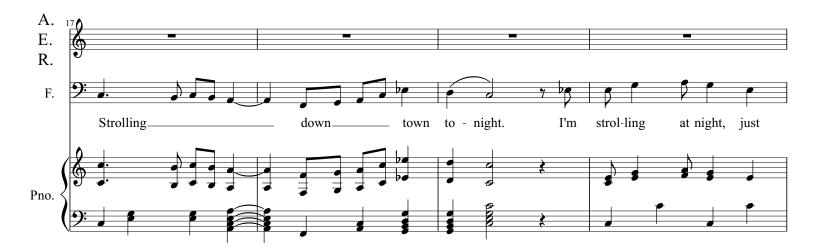
Rasputina: Maybe you could dream yourself up an outfit that doesn't make it look like you were raised in a barn! (Esmeralda and Rasputina laugh)

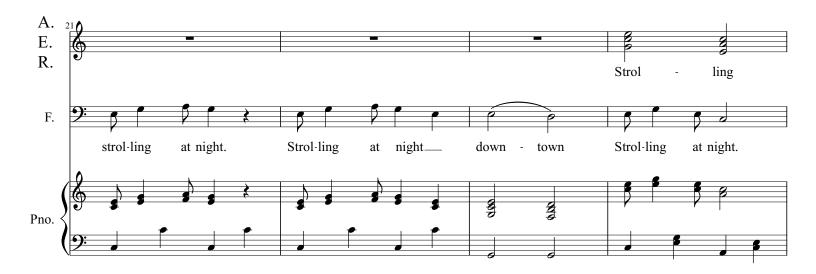
Father: Alrighty girls, best faces forward, we're heading out on the town! (Cue Aria)

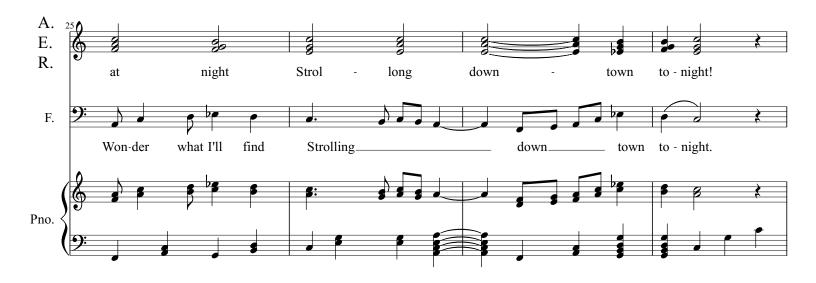
No. 2: Strolling at Night

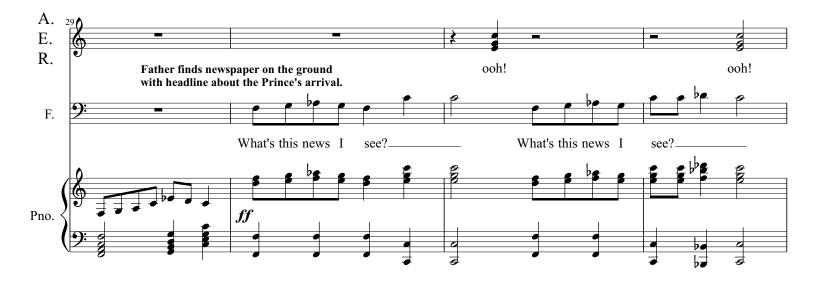


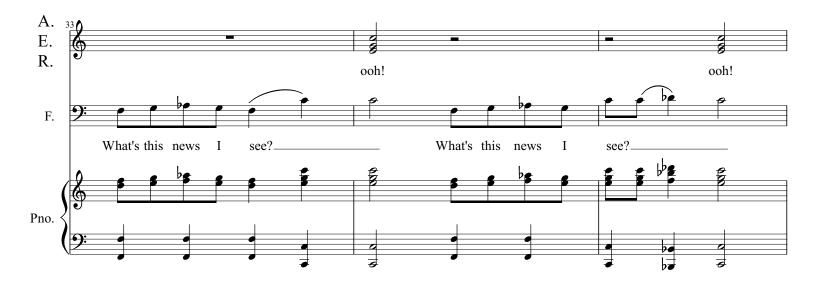




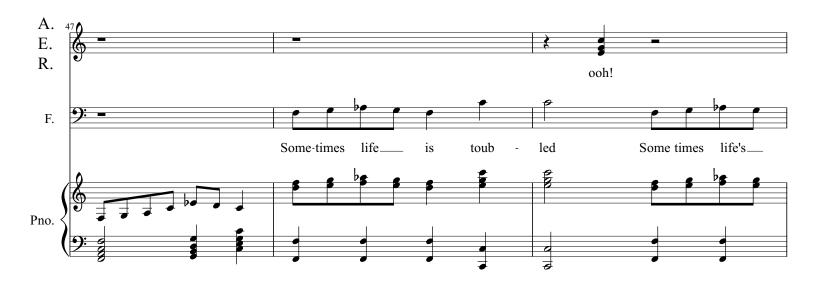


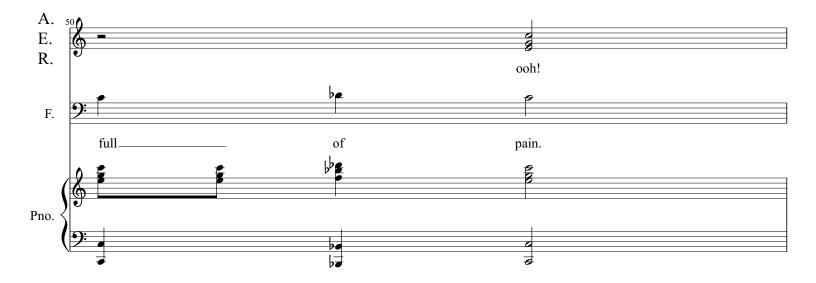


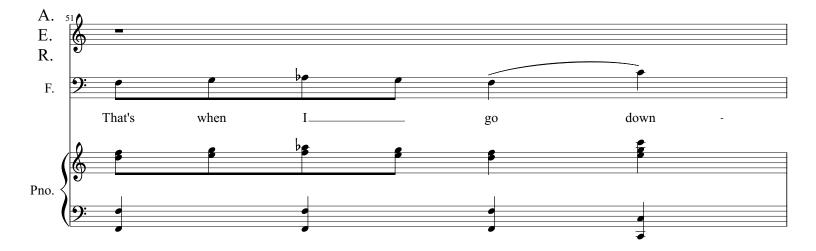


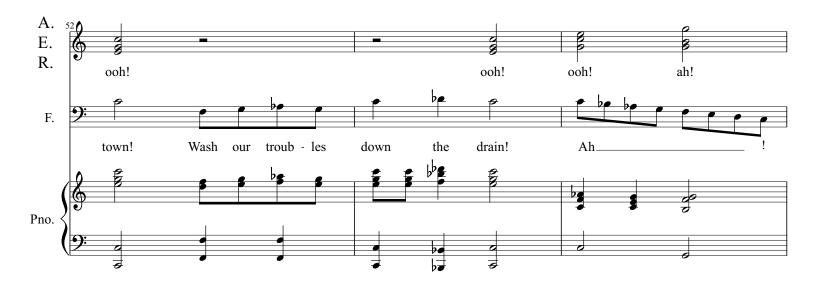


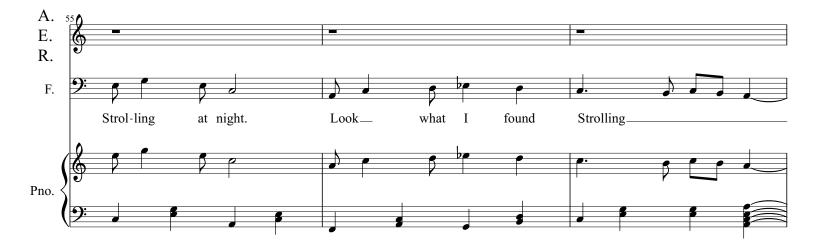


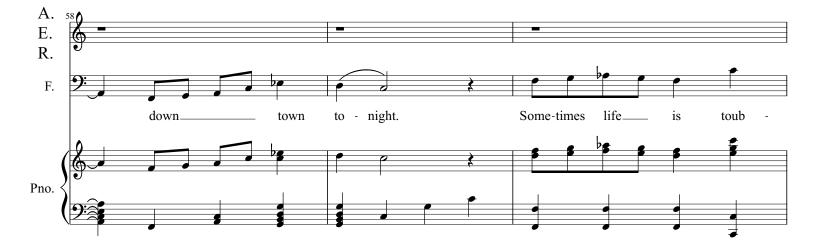


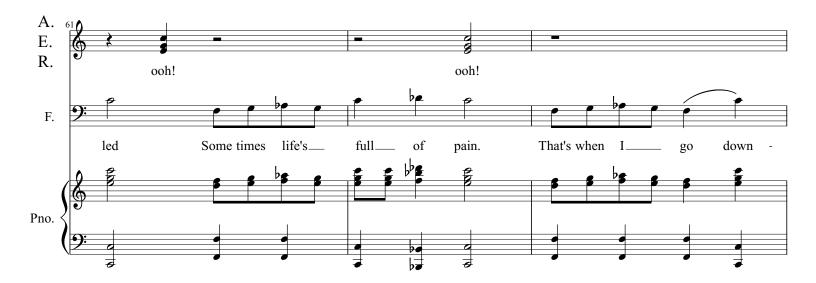


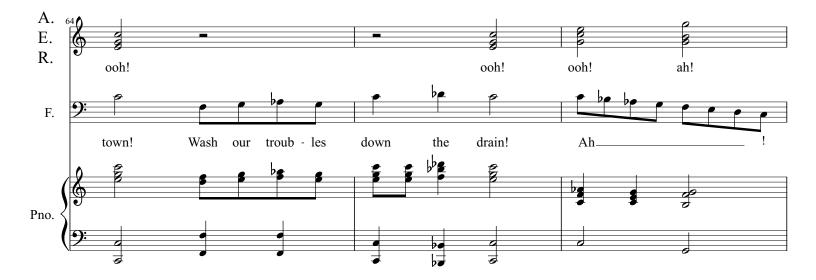


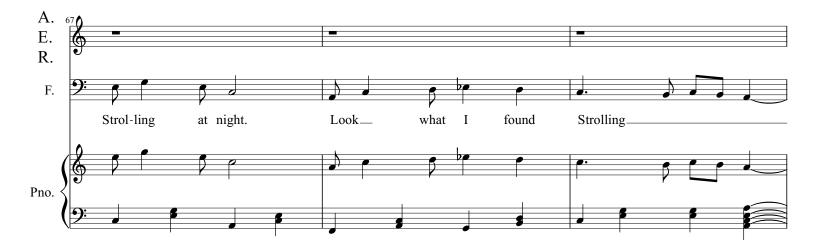














Father: Girls! We're going to be rich!

Rasputina: What?

Esmeralda: What is it Father?

Father: It says here that Prince Virgil of Moldavia is visiting town in search of, "his one true love" - a wife - and we're his final stop before he resigns himself to life in a monastery!

Rasputina: Let me see his picture! Oh my! I can't possibly let him waste those good looks on a bunch of celibates!

Esmeralda: What makes you think that he'll pick you?

Rasputina: Well... for one ...

Esmeralda: Yes?

Rasputina: I'm not you!

Esmeralda: Well, maybe he wants beauty AND brains... in which case...

Rasputina: He'll still pick me. Darling he wants brains and a view, not Bellevue!

Esmeralda: You're not so perfect yourself- although- you may remind him of home- if he were from TRAMPsylvania!

Father: Girls! Stop this! Fortune befitting one of you is fortune for us all! I didn't want to tell you girls this but... oh God! We're ruined! Girls, I'm broke! Our family fortune is gone! Expensive dining...gone! Our summer house... gone!

Es: Well, at least we'll still have Anna to empty our chamber pots!

Father: We don't have chamber pots ...

Rasputina: (to father) I told you that wasn't the dog leaving us presents!

Anna: At least we have each other.

Rasputina: (imitating Anna) At least we have each other. Oh who cares about you? When we run out of money, we'll just kick you out on the street. That should leave us enough money for one last night of fine dining.

Father: Girls, one of you needs to woo this charming prince! He's our only way out of this mess. If there's any hope in saving our estate, it's by one of you girls getting into a wedding dress.

Rasputina: Or the Prince getting me out of one! (All laugh)But seriously, father, what of our reputations? The last boy I was engaged to left me at the altar. He took my money and my innocence.

Esmeralda: Well, at least he got one valuable thing out of it.

Rasputina: Really? You're lucky he didn't find out about the girl whose legs you broke.

Esmeralda: Oh ha ha. You know that's not true. That's a rumor.

Rasputina: That's not how the witnesses at the Children's Center described it. (to Father) Father, rumors have a nasty habit of getting around.

Esmeralda: Much like Rasputina.

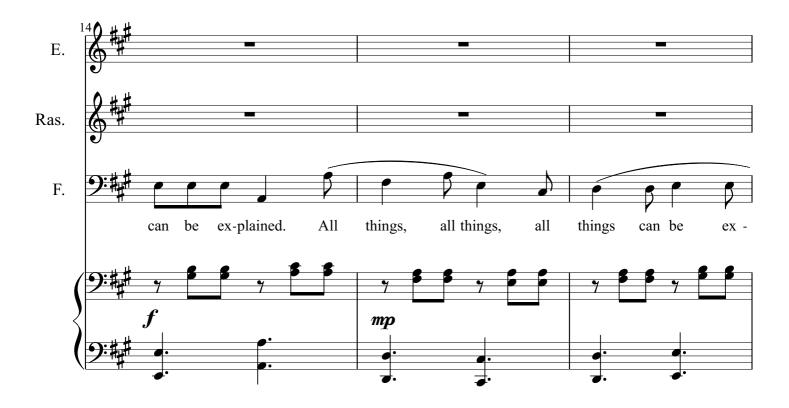
Father: Gossip can be vicious but remember girls, there's nothing new under the sun. All things can be explained! (cue trio)

No. 3: All Things Can be Explained







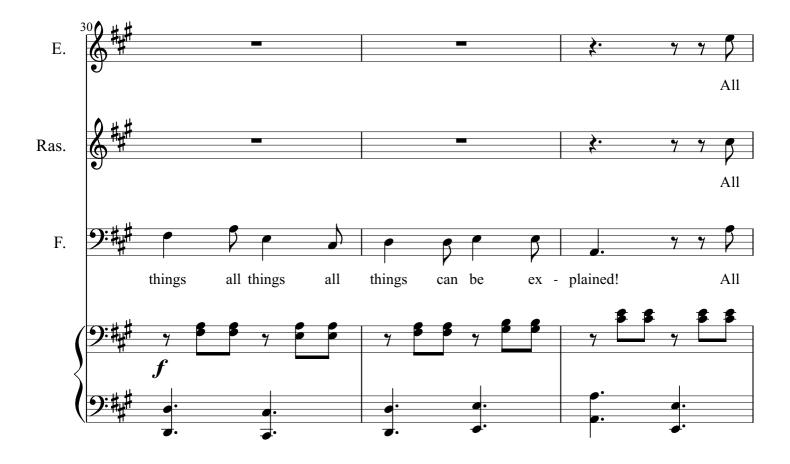


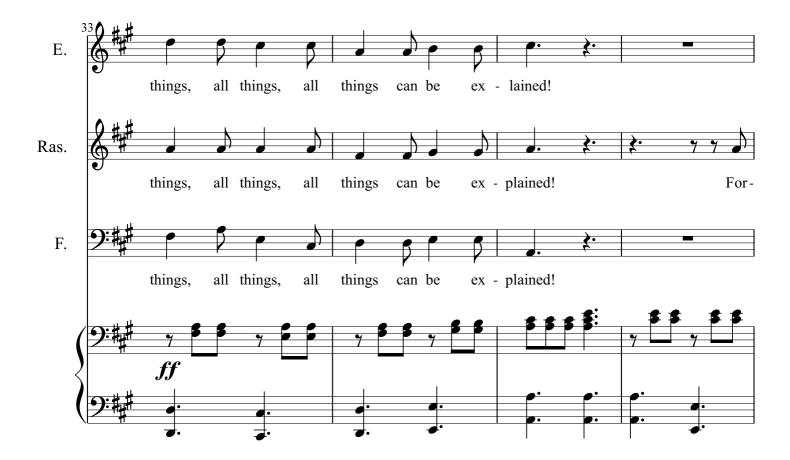


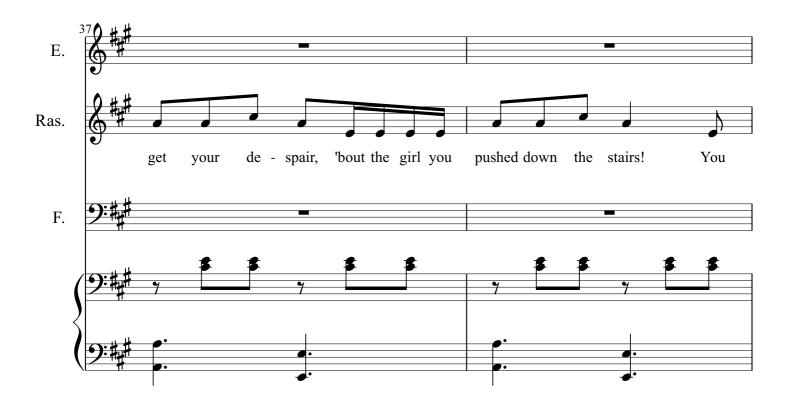








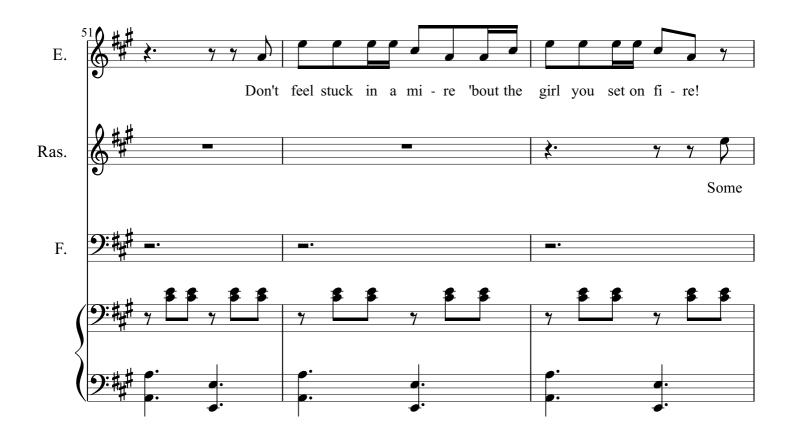






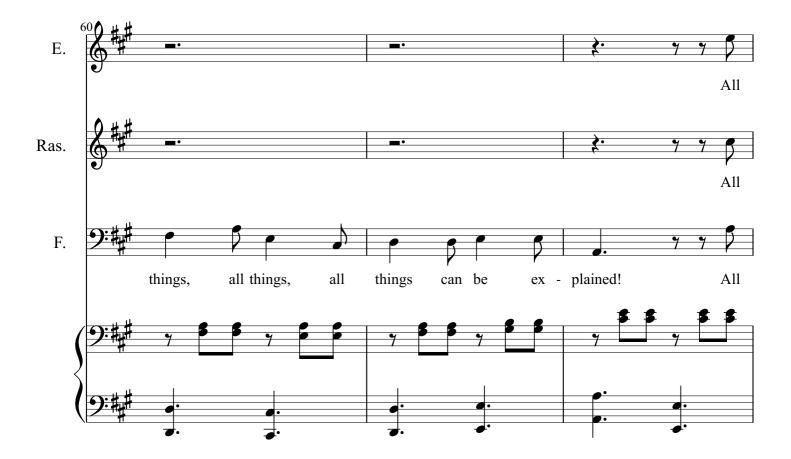


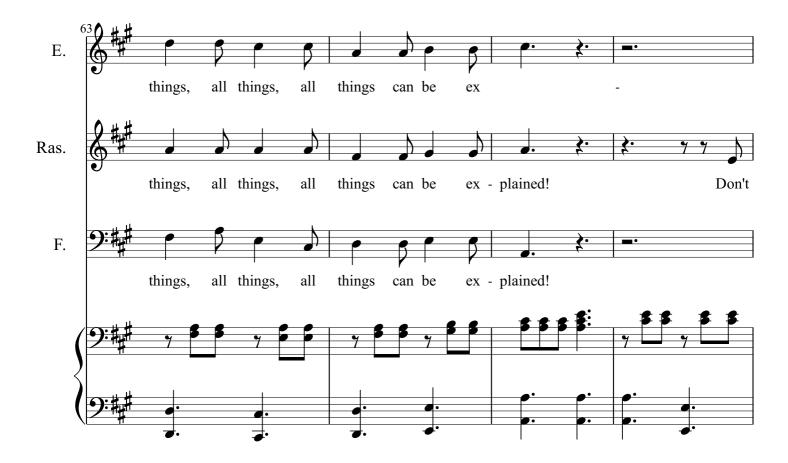


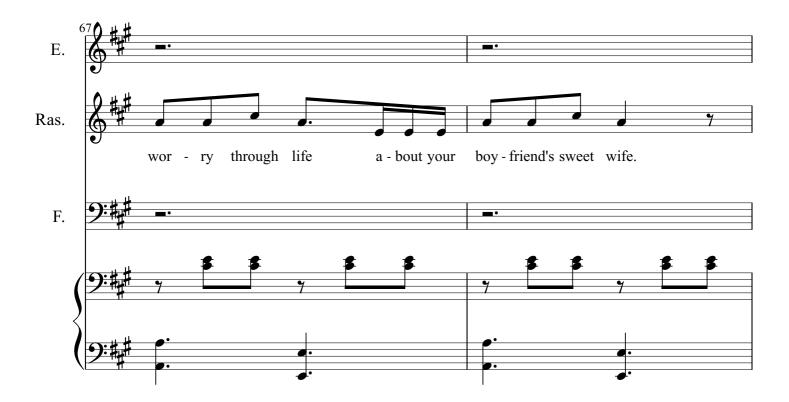






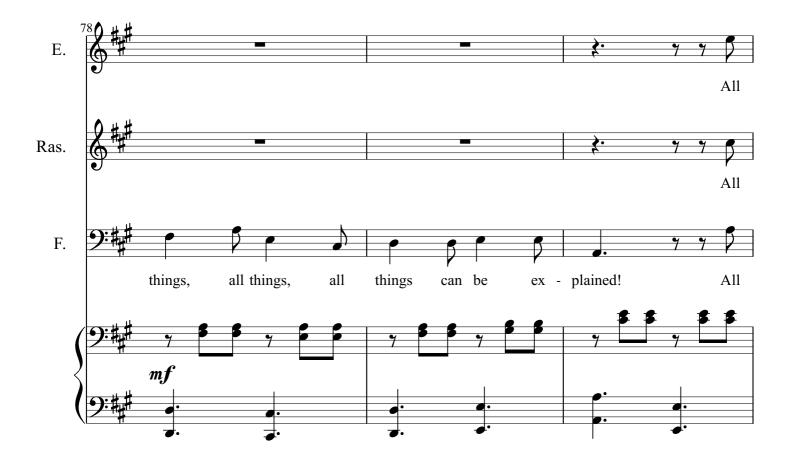




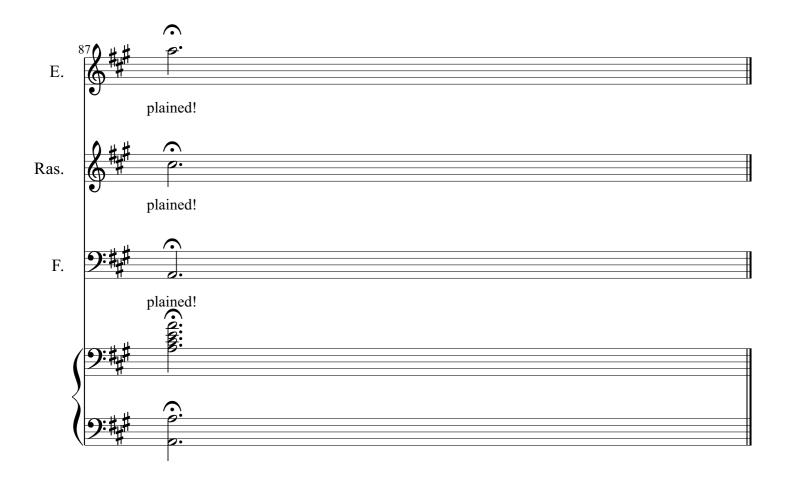












All: (Everyone laughs, including Anna)

Esmeralda: What are you laughing about?

Rasputina: It's not like you've ever had a social life *to* gossip about!

Esmeralda: (mockingly) oh what you do today? I went shopping. And you? Oh, I cleaned the floors! Look at me! I'm the best cleaner around! My name's Anna!

Anna: That's not true! I do plenty of interesting things! You're just never around to see them!

Rasputina: Like what? Steal the silverware? Seriously, Anna, the only way we'd know if you went missing is that I wouldn't have the sound of your incessant vacuuming waking me up at 7am. (Turning to Father) Enough of this. Father, we need to go home and prepare to meet the prince. (Grabs Father and Esmeralda's arm. Walks fast off-stage, leaving Anna).

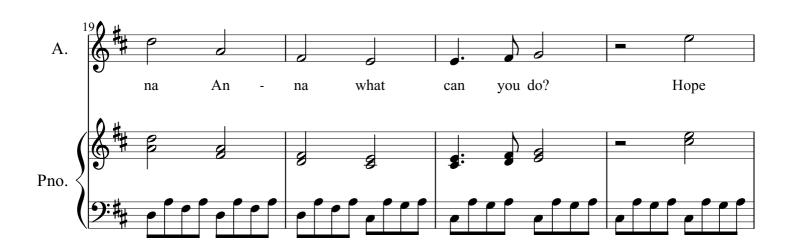
Anna: (sad) It's not true, Rasputina! I do more than just clean! I have a lot to offer! (Cue Aria)

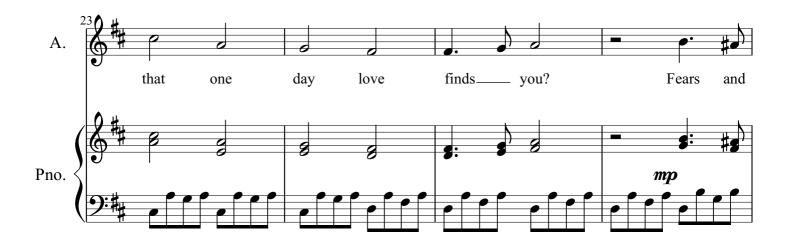
No. 4: (Somehow) It will be alright



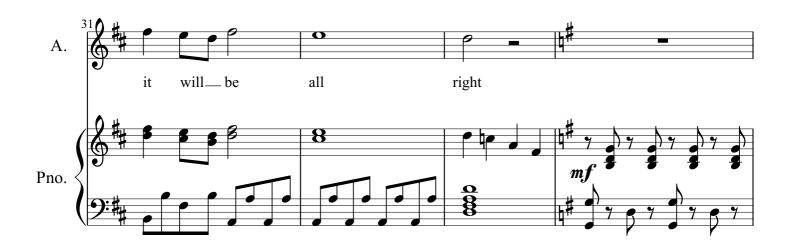


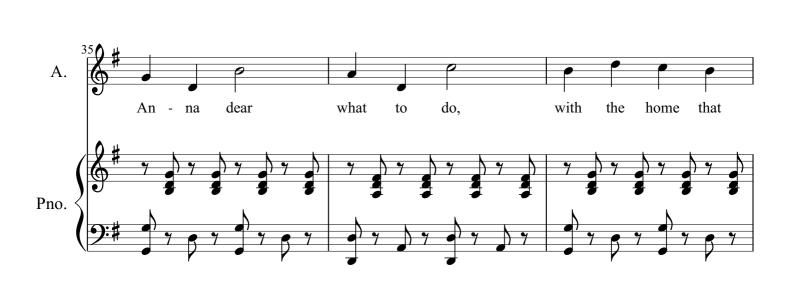




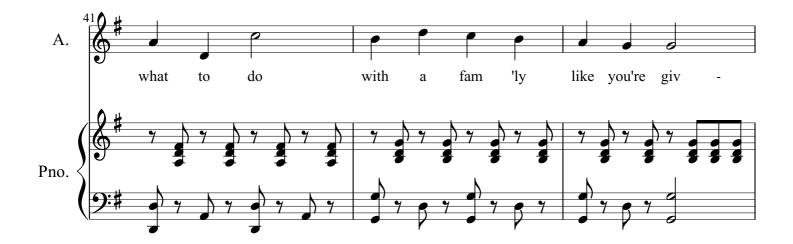










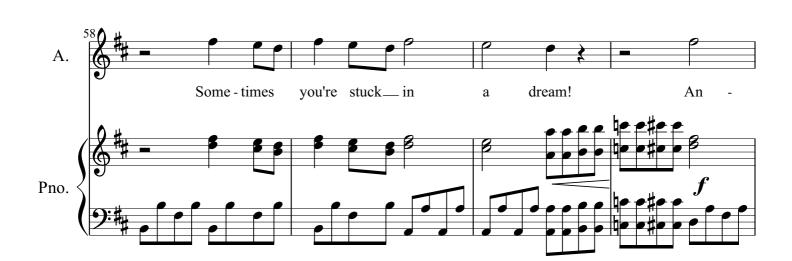


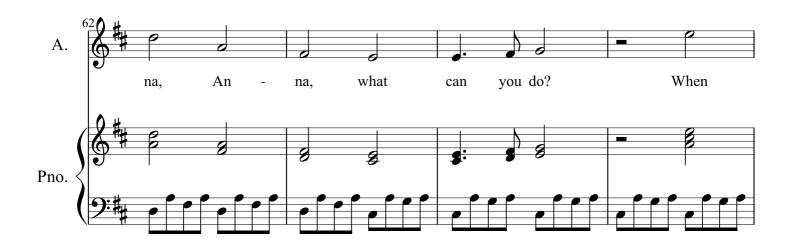






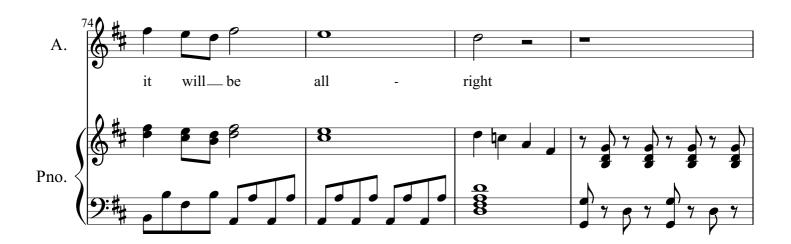




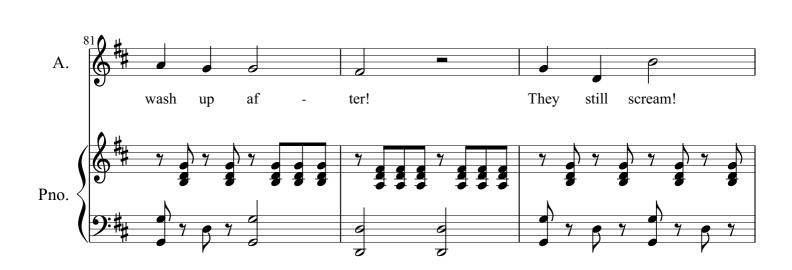






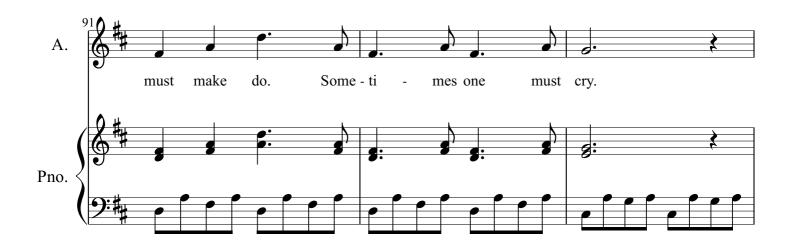




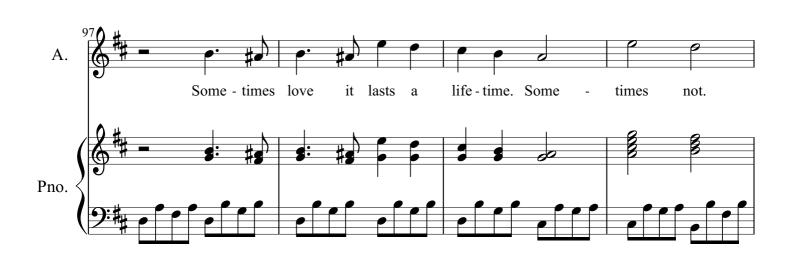


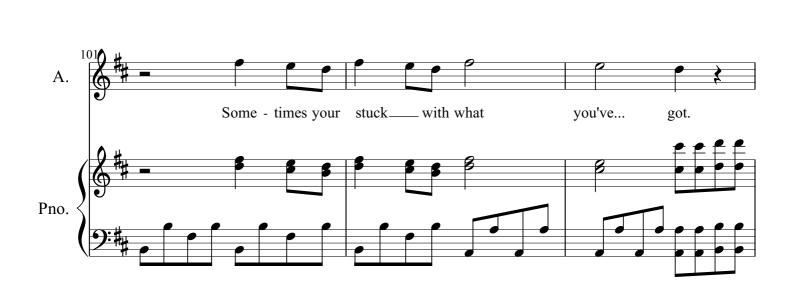




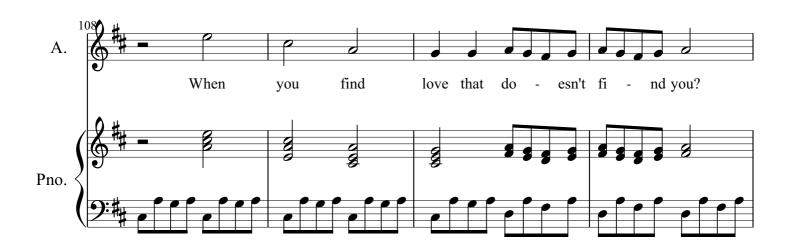




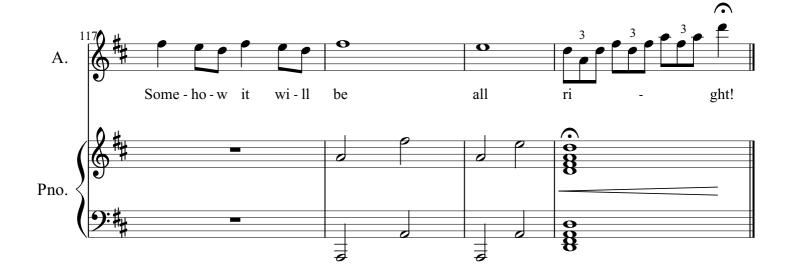












SCENE 3: Entrance of Prince Virgil and Nikolai

Prince: Nikolai, where are you?

Nikolai: Here, your highness, in front of you.

Prince: Stay where I can find you! I'm new to this place, I don't want you to get lost!

Nikolai: Sir, you're unlikely to get lost. You were the finest navigator in the Northern Moldavian fleet. You're just a little thrown off from drinking the night away at the Stephen Foster Festival. A couple days and you'll be fine.

Prince: My nerves are shot! I'm done! I can't go on! Goodbye ladies! Goodbye World! I can feel my loins deteriorating already! I can't move my left leg... the atrophy is spreading!

Nikolai: Prince Virgil, it's all in your head!

Prince: (covering his groin) No, not there! Amy place but THERE!

Nikolai: No, not THERE... there! (pointing above the prince's shoulders)

Prince: I can't do it!

Nikolai: Nonsense! I could do it and if I can, you can!

Prince: Then you do it!

Nikolai: (laughing it off) no, no, I ...

Prince: No, I'm serious! You do it for me. I've been all over the world. I've experienced everything. Something I've noticed though- you have a certain way with women. You would say that you know them well, yes?

Nikolai: I guess you could say that I know them in and out!

Prince: Then we'll switch places - temporarily - you be me, I'll be you. You go out there and find me a wife. Someone caring, someone, pure and faithful, someoneNikolai: Boring.

Prince: Nikolai!

Nikolai: I kid your highness! I will scour this town and find you your ideal woman.

P: Remember though- the ones that don't make the cut- be gentle!

N: I'll let them go down easy!

P: Are you ready for my debut?

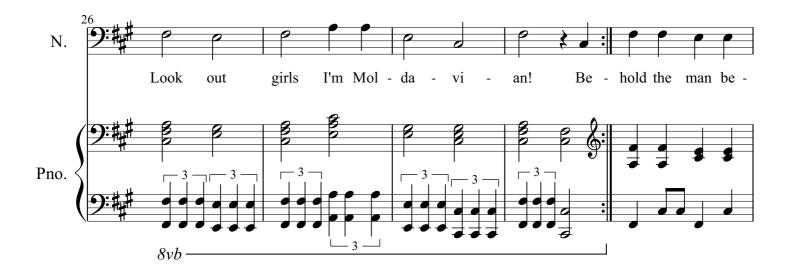
N: You mean MY debut?

P: After you... your majesty! (cue Aria)

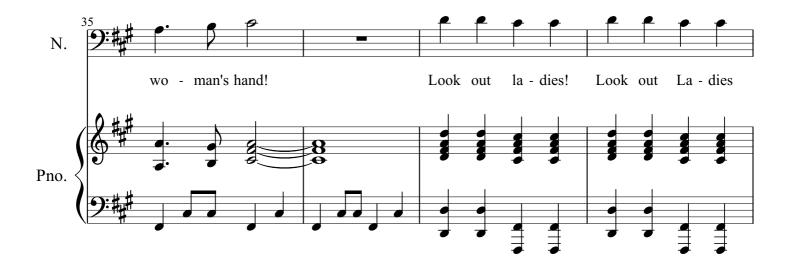
No. 5: The Mighty Prince

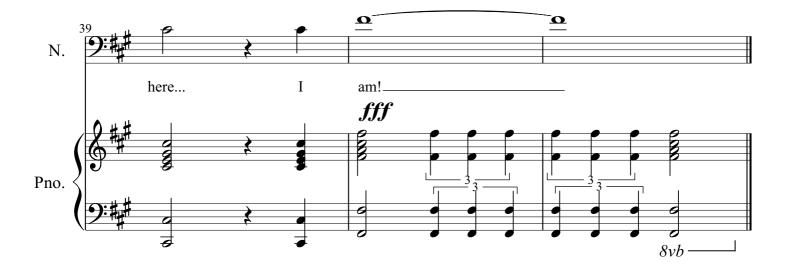












Prince: They'll never believe you're me?

Nikolai: Why? I wasn't princely enough?

Prince: No, you act like a pompous jackass and I do not. You sing as if you're God's gift to women.

Nikolai: And I'm not? Come on, it's not that bad.

Prince: (Shakes his head) Well, I'm just concerned. What happens when we do find a girl-

Nikolai: If ... we find a girl.

Prince: *If* we find a girl and I have to talk- I'll start stammering like a nervous fool, like I always do.

Nikolai: Nonsense... if you start stammering, just break into song- something that you know real well. A nice fluid melody will cure a wretched staccato.

Prince: All I can hear in my head are those damn Stephen Foster songs.

Nikolai: What's wrong with those? Some folks like to cry, but that's not me or you.

Prince: Ha ha, Nikolai! I'll kick you in your merry heart and laugh all night and day.

(Arbitrage Family is walking onstage- Father purposely bumps into Nikolai, whom he believes to be the prince)

Father: Oh, Pardon me your Highness! I didn't see you there!

Nikolai: No matter good sir! And you are?

Father: John Arbitrage and these are my lovely daughters, Esmeralda and Rasputina.

Nikolai: Charmed! What lovely daughters you have!

Prince: And who is that other lovely lady behind you?

Father: Your majesty?

Nikolai: Allow me to introduce you to my servant, Nikolai. He has incurable romantic urges and an eye towards all women! Keep him away from your prized possessions!

Prince: I have WHAT?!?!

Nikolai: He also suffers from short term memory loss.

Father: Yes, I see well, that girl is Anna, she's my step-(interrupted)

Rasputina: She's our servant and of little to no consequence to anyone... hello, I'm Rasputina.

Esmeralda: She's the cat's meow from the opposite end and twice as filthy... Esmeralda... charmed, your majesty.

Nikolai: Well, where would we be without our servants? Someone has to serve the beautiful people! Shine my shoes Nikolai... Nikolai... my shoes!

Prince: (realizing he is being ordered) Right away!

Father: Perhaps his majesty would like to visit our home tonight?

Rasputina: My sister and I would love to have you!

Nikolai: Well, how could I turn down such lovely ladies. I shall be by at 8 o'clock.

Father: Until then, your majesty. (turning to) Anna, I need you to help me pick out something for dinner- something fine. Girls, I trust I can leave you to your own devices. Rasputina, make sure your sister finds her way home. We don't want her taking any short... cuts...

Rasputina: I will father! Don't worry, Esmeralda is only a risk to herself!

Esmeralda: (under her breath) You bitch.

Father: (exiting with Anna) what was that?

Esmeralda: I said, "as you wish!"

(Rasputina and Esmeralda Alone)

Rasputina: I can hardly wait for the prince's hand in marriage! It will be splendid. *I* will be resplendent. Gold and jewels all over me; the finest silks!

Esmeralda: What you're describing dear sister, is my life after the prince marries ME!

Rasputina: Oh really now? The prince is looking for stability in his life, not a rollercoaster of unchecked emotions!

Esmeralda: I'm HARDLY the only one with skeletons in the closet!

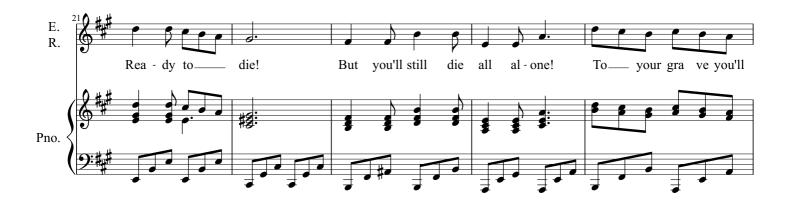
Rasputina: Yes, dear sister, but mine are decaying morally, yours are just decaying.

Esmeralda: Not true!

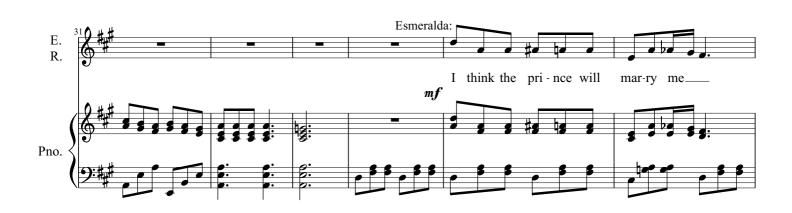
Rasputina: Oh sister, surely we can sort this all out! (cue Duet)

No. 6: Sister Duet



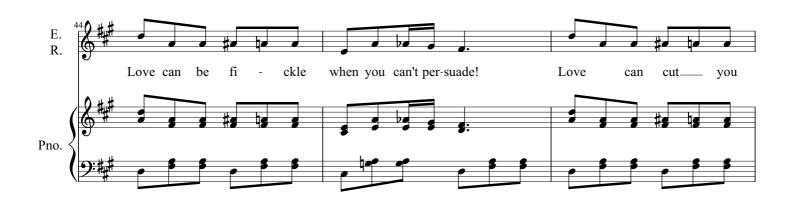






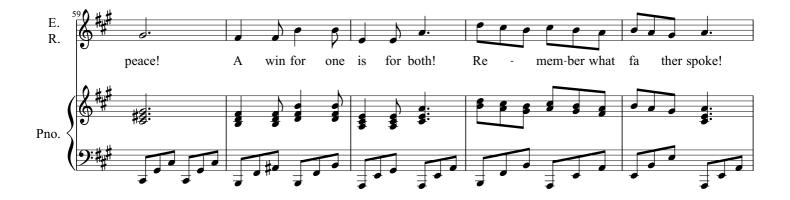




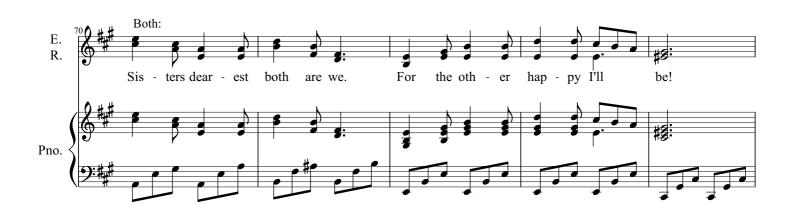
















Scene 4: Kitchen in the House of Arbitrage (Dinner is finishing up offstage, everyone is merry and drunk) (hushed laughter) Rasputina: So I said, "Who care's if I'm naked? The Mayor's still smiling!" (Everyone laughs) Father: Someone needs to clear these plates... Anna, where are you? Nikolai: I'll have my servant do it. Nikolai, you lazy bum, come clean these dishes! Prince: Right away! Nikolai: Try whistling while your cleaning, it'll help you work faster. Prince: I can't whistle. Nikolai: Maybe if you kept your lips off the women, you could learn to apply yourself to more wholesome tasks- now hurry up! Prince: Yes, your majesty. Nikolai: If you can't whistle, then try singing! But don't do it here. None of us want to hear it! (laughter)

Prince: Yes, your majesty.

Nikolai: Now hurry up and get these dishes out of here!

Prince: Yes, your majesty...(entering on stage) Sing something... sing something... (sighs... cue aria)

No. 7: Gentle Annie





(Anna is in the kitchen, listening in)

Anna: (startling the prince): That was a lovely song.

Prince: Oh, why thank you. It's nothing really. What was your favorite part.

Anna: The part about Annie... my name's Anna, so I'm kind of partial to songs about me.

Prince: Well, a lovely song for a (stammers) lovely girl.

Anna: When you sang it, it was like you were singing to me.

Prince: I was- I mean, in a way I was- well, you're the only other person in the room. Some party, huh? The Prince sure knows how to pick his friends.

Anna: I know they're not perfect, but they are my family. We don't get to choose our family. We make do with what we have.

Prince: Well, we could make like Eskimos and set the unwanted ones adrift on chunks of ice. Polar bears have to eat too, you know.

Anna: That's terrible. Your humor is so cold.

Prince: Not really just- oh... (both smile realizing she made a pun. Anna gets up to move and drops a dish).

Anna: Oh no! They're going to kill me! That was some of our fine china! I never do anything right!

Prince: That's not true. You do a lot of things right. You keep this house running, you keep your sisters from killing each other, you-

Anna: All true, but good deeds do not mend broken china.

Father (Offstage): Anna! We need you in here!

Prince: Blame me for the plate. Say it was my fault.

Anna: You'd take the blame for me?

Prince: Sure.

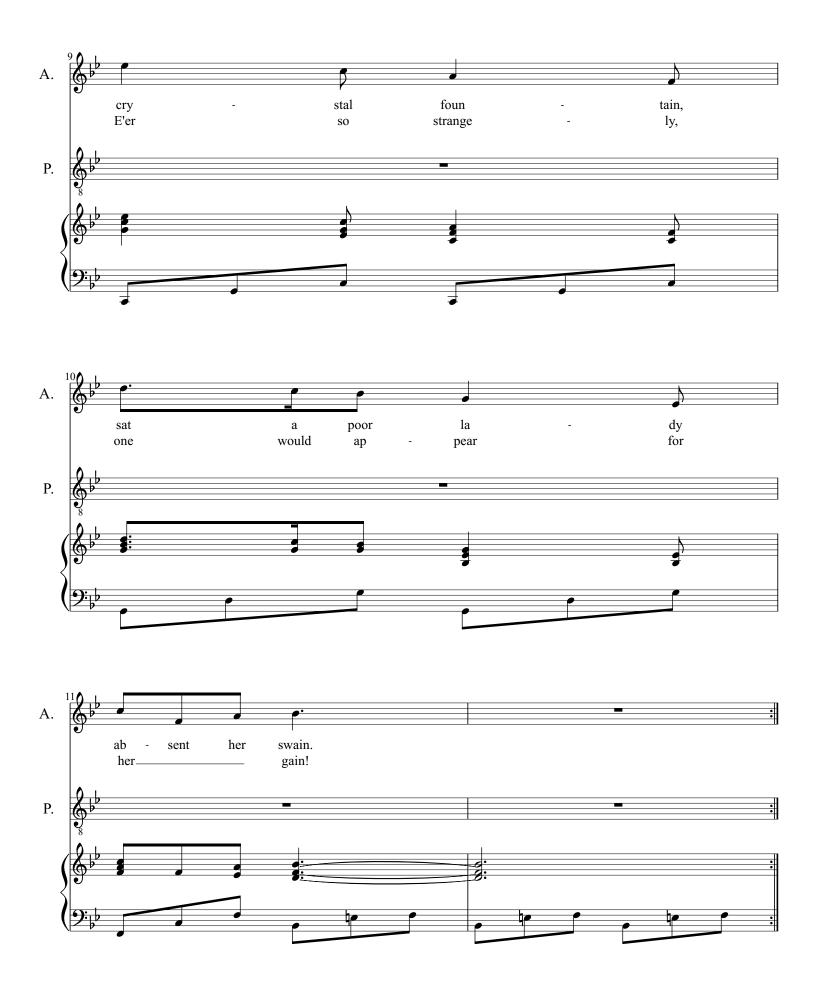
Anna: That's mighty noble of you. You're a real prince, you know that?

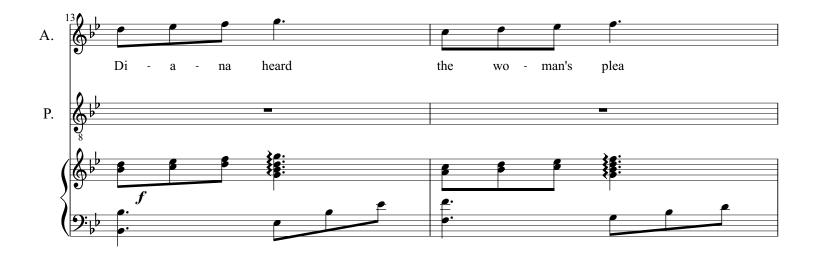
Prince: (under his breath) You have no idea.

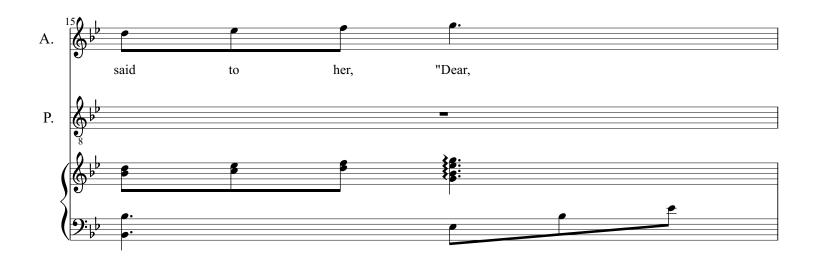
(Anna goes to leave and stops at the end of stage. Cue duet)

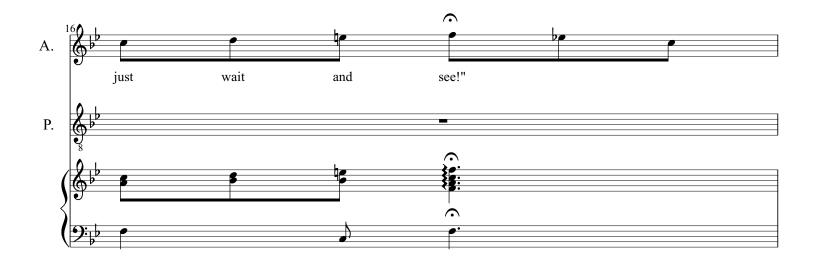
No. 8: Duet: "Constant Billy"

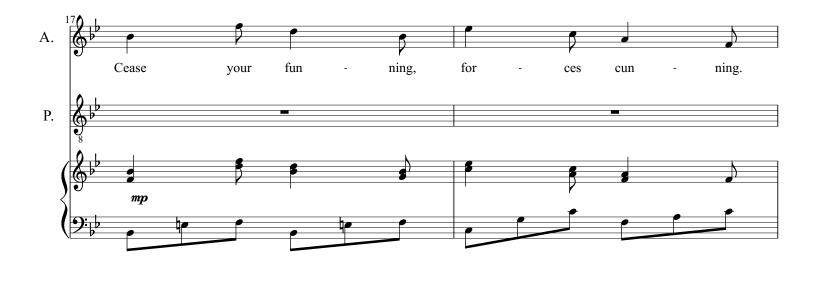


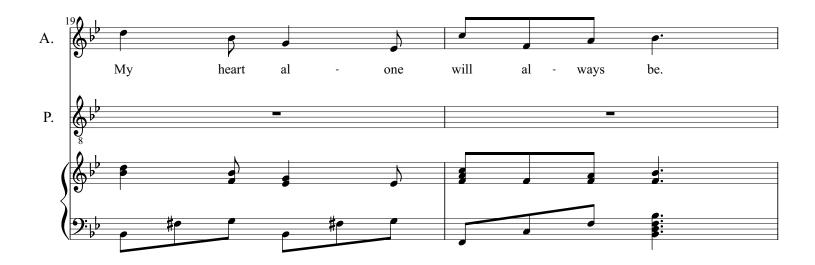


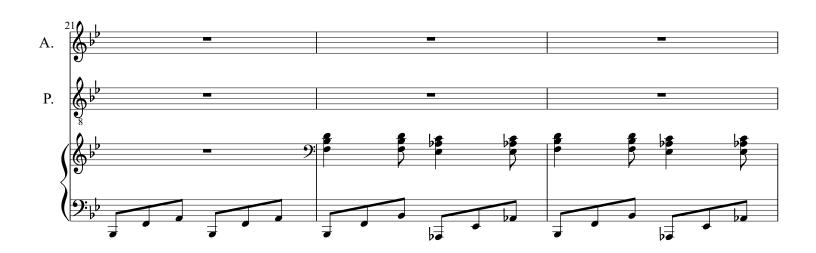


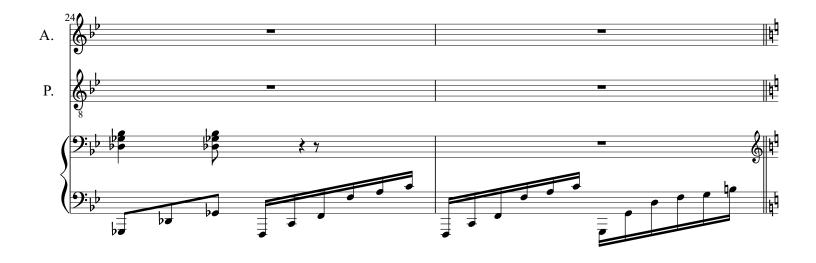


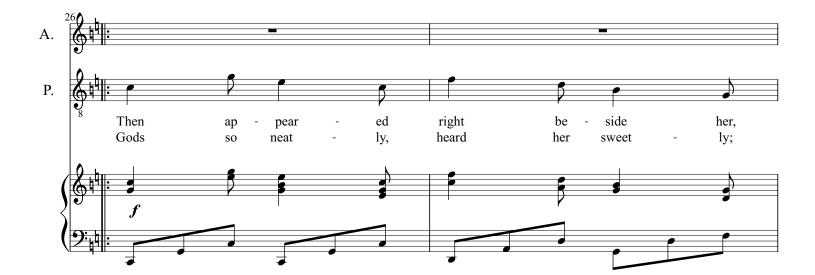


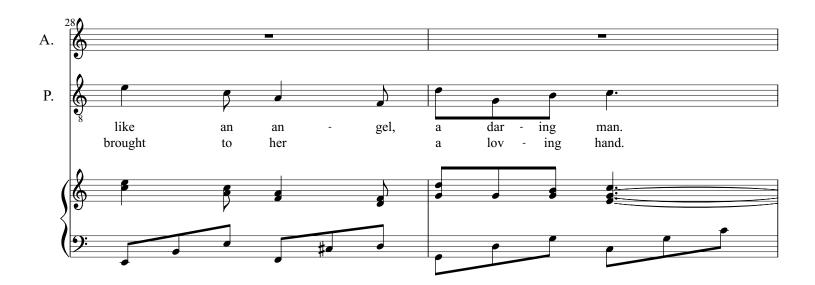


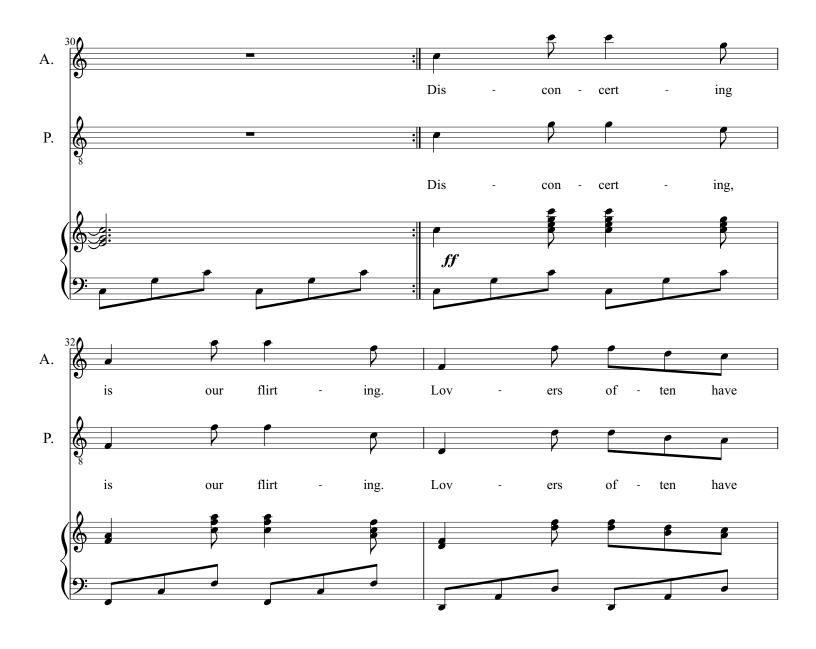












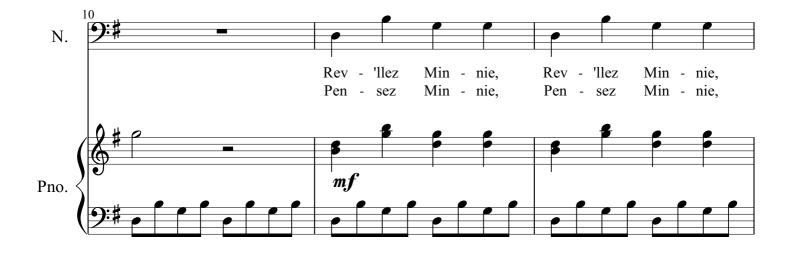


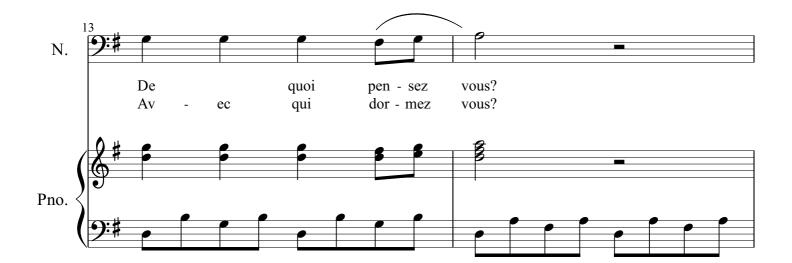


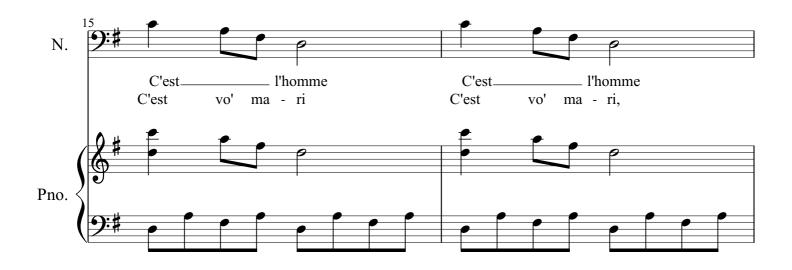
Scene 5: Esmeralda's Bedroom Nikolai: (entering her room). Why Esmeralda, you exotic treasure, you. I feel transformed by your very presence. Esmeralda: Really? Nikolai: My God, I've never seen such a treasure. All the jewels in Atlantis could not compare to you! Esmeralda: You've been that far south? Nikolai: Huh? Esmeralda: Down to Atlantis. Nikolai: Atlantis isn't- er - yes, you could say I go down quite frequently. Esmeralda: I'd love to go down with you some time. Nikolai: Oh, I'm sure you will, soon! My darling, you transport me to a place far away. Esmeralda: Like heaven? Nikolai: Eh... no... not that far? Esmeralda: Like Spain? Nikolai: No... not quite ... Esmeralda: Like [name of small local town] Nikolai: how about, Canada? Esmeralda: ooH! I like that! Nikolai: And from Canada, comes this beautiful lover's serenade... (cue aria)

No. 9: Reveillez Minnie



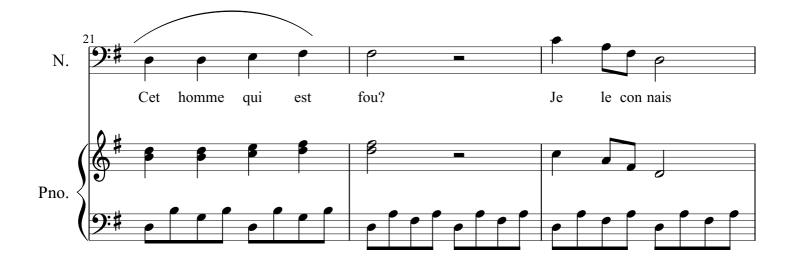


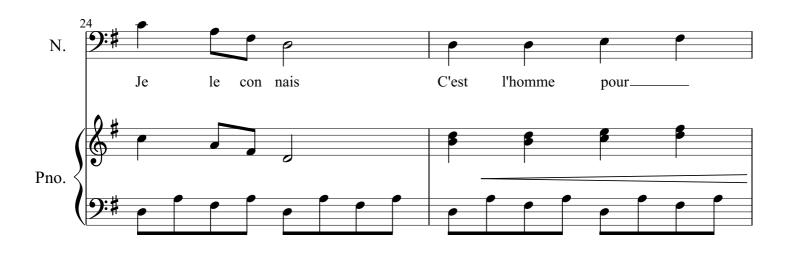




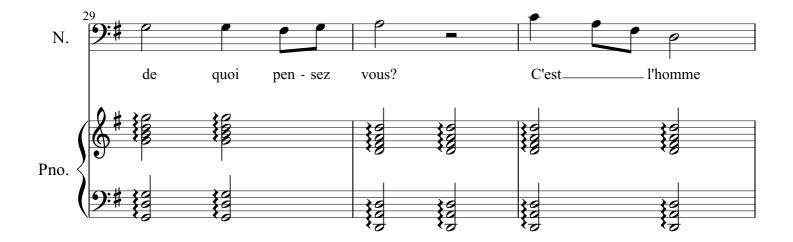


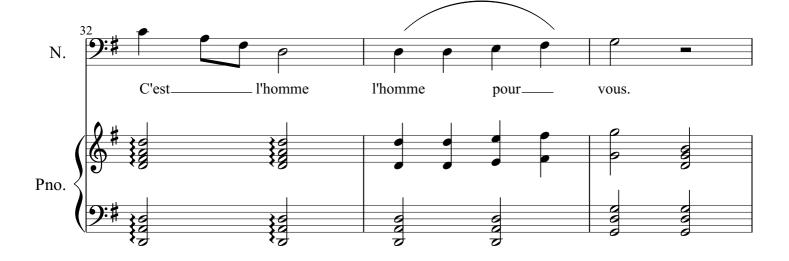




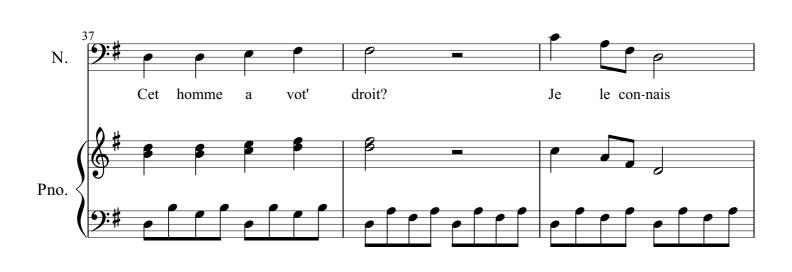














Esmeralda: Oh Prince! That was beautiful. I could literally die in your arms right now and never hear a more beautiful song! Nikolai: Why thank you dear (getting more seductive with her) why I could die in your arms as well. Esmeralda: Really? Nikolai: Yes. Esmeralda: You'd really like to die with me? Nikolai: uh... Esmeralda: Oh your majesty, I love you and I will marry you.

Nikolai: Wait a minute... (cue aria)

No. 10: Esmeralda Aria







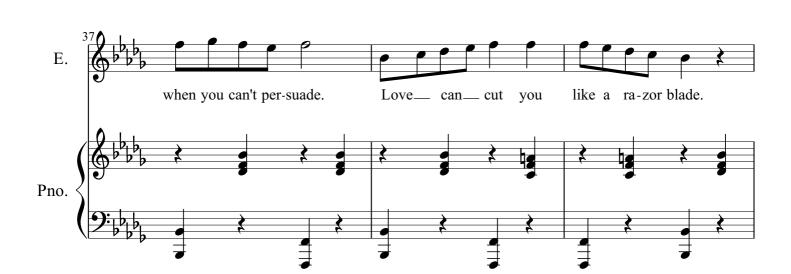


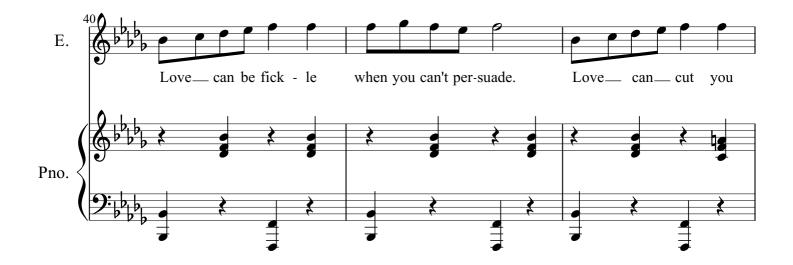


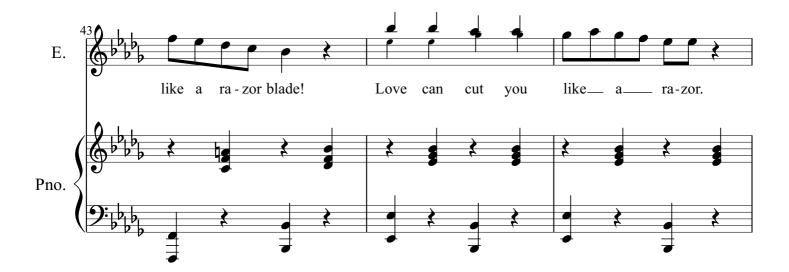


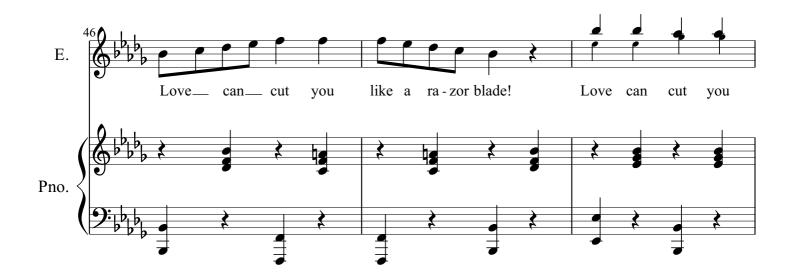


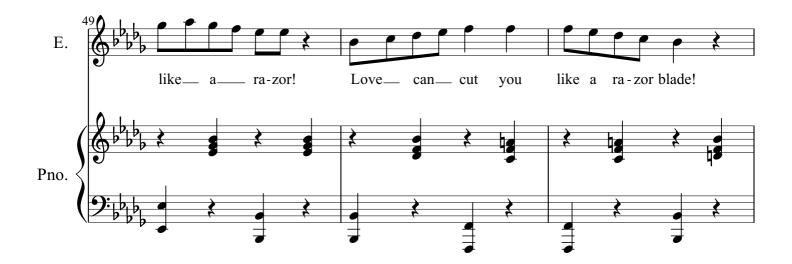


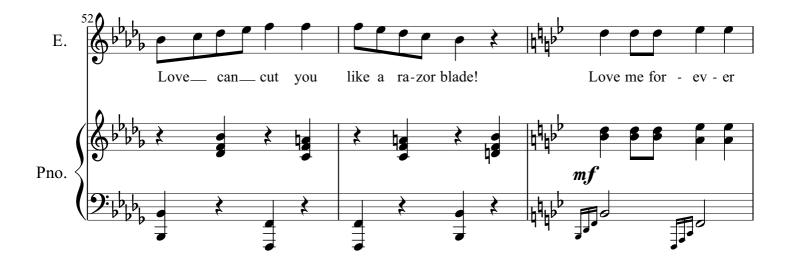










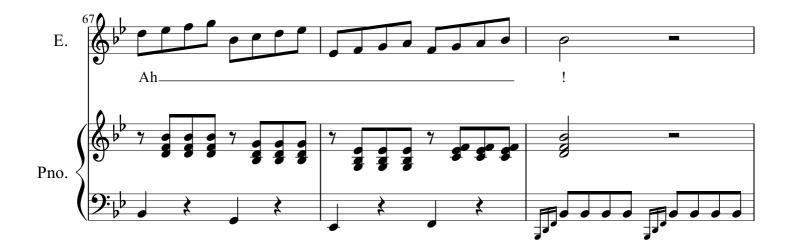














Scene 6: Prince alone on stage

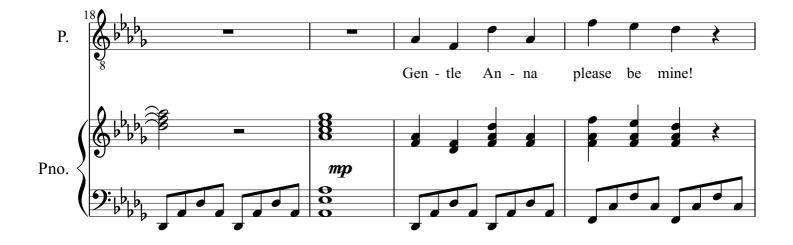
Prince: My God, she is a vision from heaven. I can hardly contain myself. Anna! I can't get you out of my head. Who cares if we're from different worlds? I want everyone to know: (yelling) Anna, I love you! Anna, I love you! (Anna, appearing by proscenium, listening to prince but hiding herself). I make the rules. I'm the real prince! Anna... Anna... (Cue aria)

No. 11: Prince's Aria: "Gentle Anna, Please Be Mine"

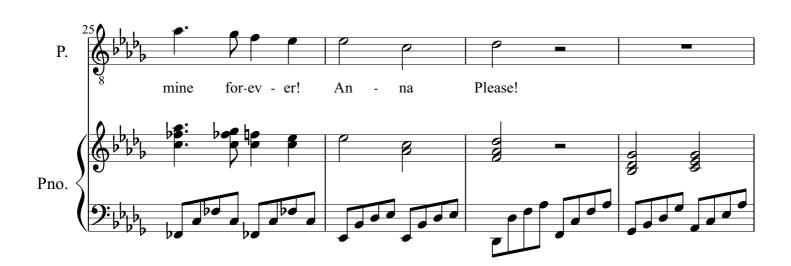


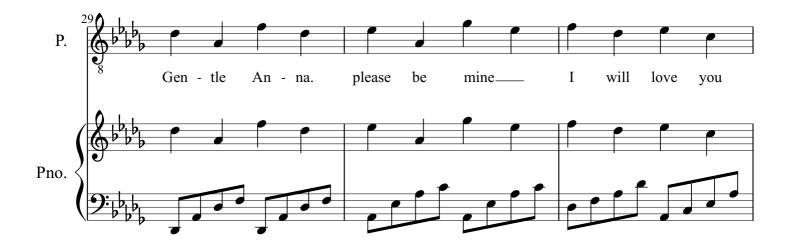












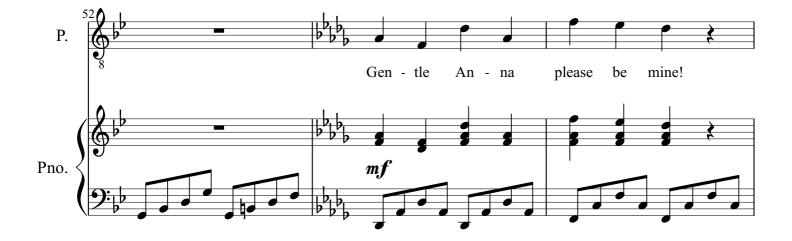






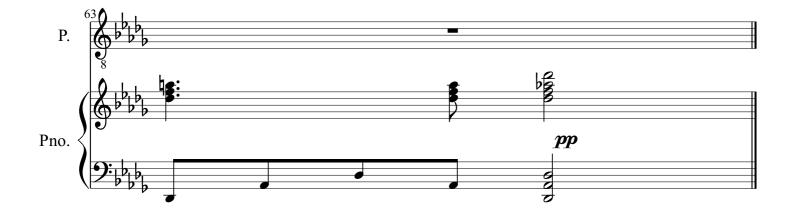












ACT II

Scene 1: Living Room

Father: (comes on stage with crying Es.)

Esmeralda: Wah! He doesn't love me! He used me!

Father: Now, now, I'm sure it wasn't that bad!

Esmeralda: He seduced me with a Canadian love song.

Father: Well... maybe it is that bad ...

Rasputina: that filthy man! What I'd do to him if I got my hands around his... (drifting off into thought)... hmm

Esmeralda: (Crying loudly).

Father: The great white north is a cruel lover. Darling, go back to your room, I'll be there in a bit. Also... stay away from anything sharp... (Esmeralda leaves)

(To Ras.) You let him talk to your sister first? She's bipolar for heaven's sake!

Rasputina: Oh, she's more like tri-polar

Father: Rasputina!

Rasputina: I know, I know, I'll take care of the rest. The prince is in his room. I'll make sure he doesn't leave without putting a ring on my finger. (Ras. leaves).

(Anna Enters)

Father: Anna?

Anna: Yes Father?

Father: I need you to be my eyes and ears tonight- you're always snooping around- and nobody ever seems to notice you anyway. I need you to wait outside the prince's bedroom. I want you to give me a play by play detail of everything they say.

Anna: Yes, father, you can count on me.

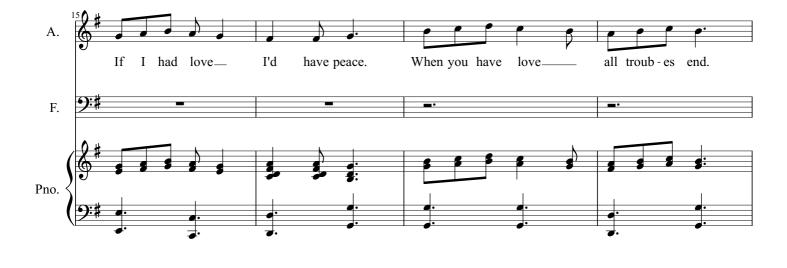
Father: Thank you, Anna.

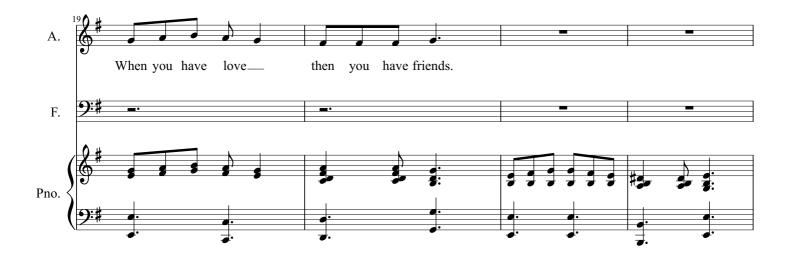
Anna: (going to leave and then stops to turn around) You know, Father, I think you worry too much... money isn't everything you know. Love is really what's important.

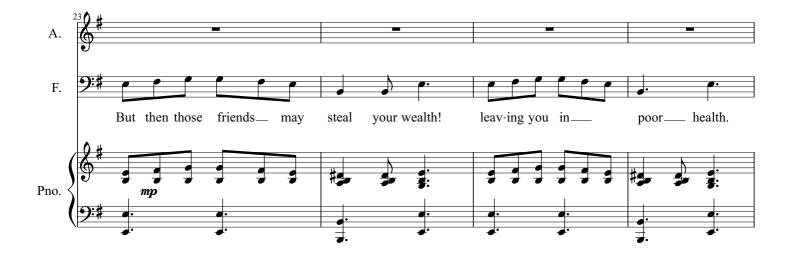
Father: Easy for you to say, you don't have a lavish lifestyle to maintain. You don't really know what money can bring until you have some. (Cue Duet)

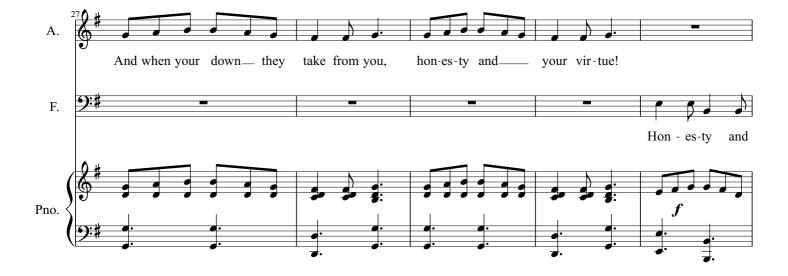
No. 12: Father and Anna Duet ("If I Had Money")

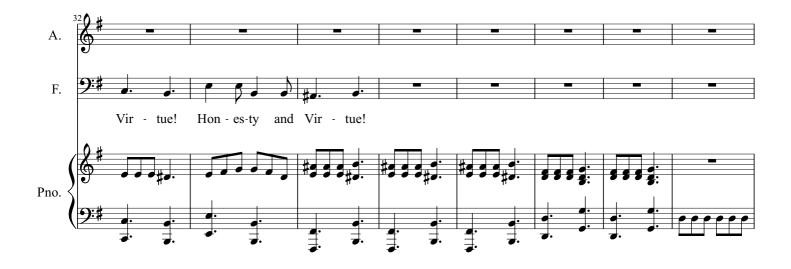


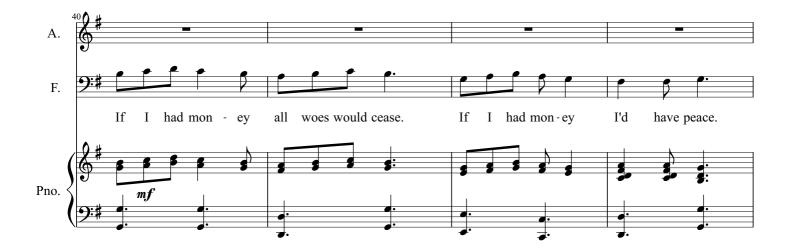


















Scene 2: Prince's room

Rasputina: (at door, looking seductive) Your highness.

Nikolai: Why- hello- you're a pleasant distraction.

Rasputina: Well, I hope I'm more than just a distraction.

Nikolai: Oh you've got my full attention.

Rasputina: Has someone been having a rough night?

Nikolai: Oh, it's been- crazy- so far.

Rasputina: I hope you're not too tired for company?

Nikolai: No, I'm fully- awake. (tries to kiss her)

Rasputina: oh! Your majesty! So soon! So impulsive! Love is patient, love is kind!

Nikolai: Tell that to my libido!

Rasputina: Your majesty, a love born in pure waters- a love like ours- knows how to show restraint.

Nikolai: I'm from Eastern Europe. What is this pure water you speak of? Besides, I'm leaving tomorrow, unless-

Rasputina: And you'll leave me? Leave me to all those other suitors?

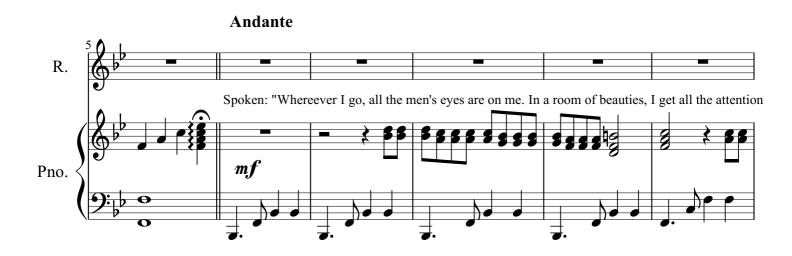
Nikolai: What other suitors?

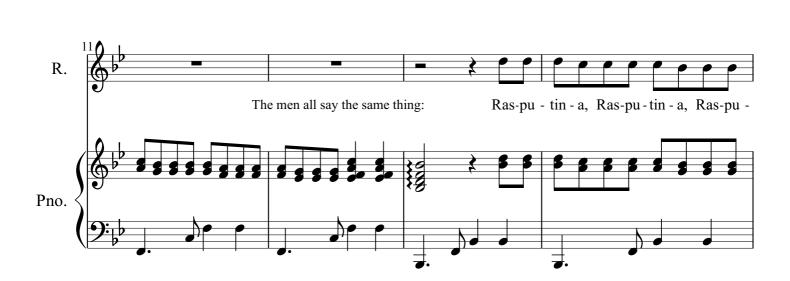
Rasputina: Your highness... (cue aria)

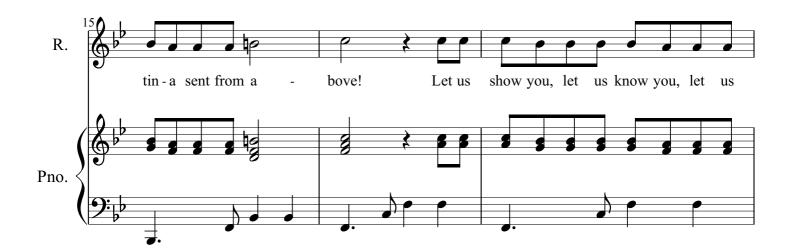
No 13: Rasputina Aria

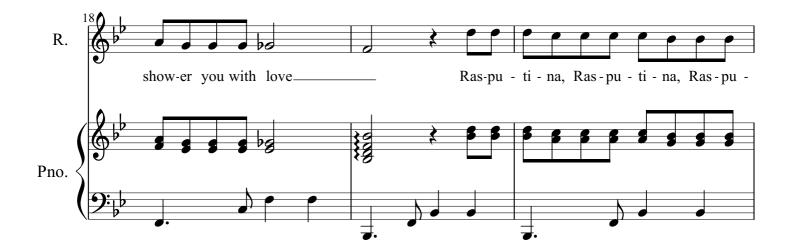


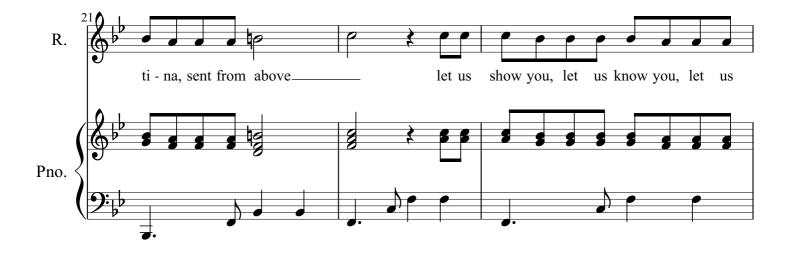


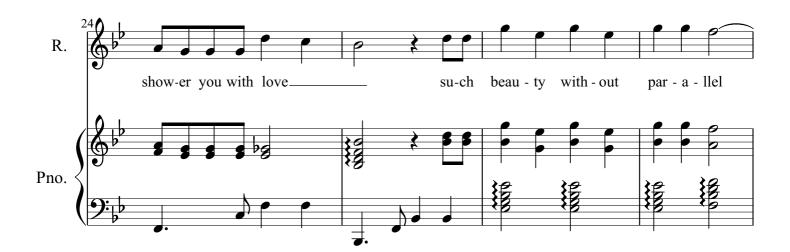




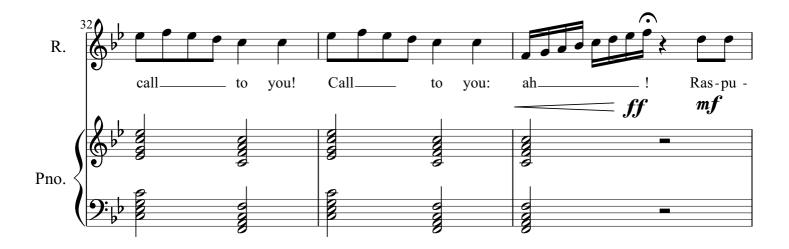


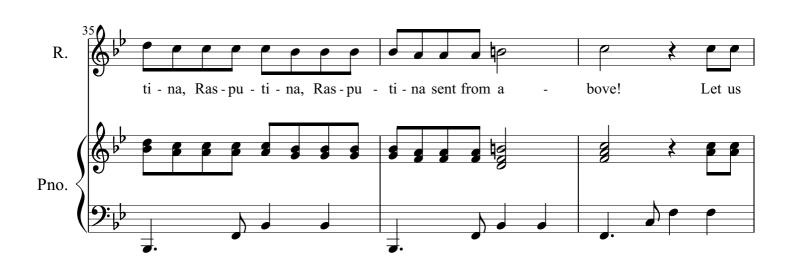


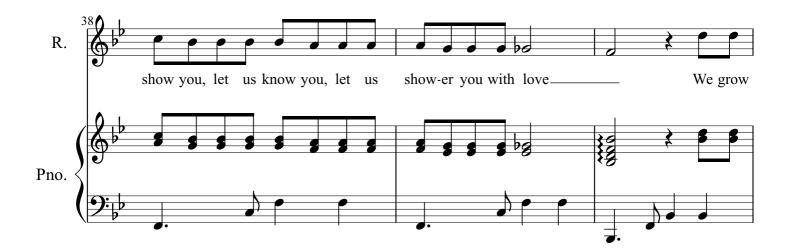


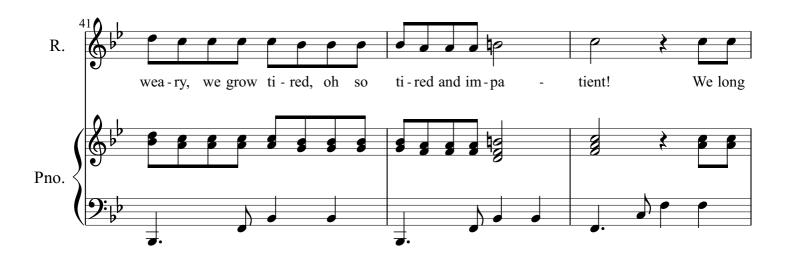




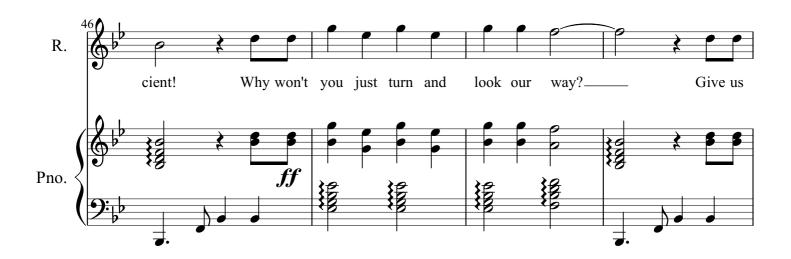


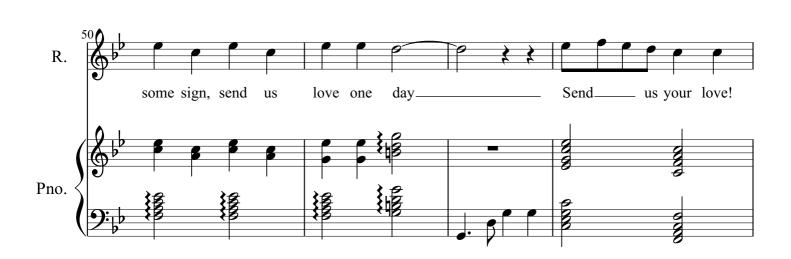


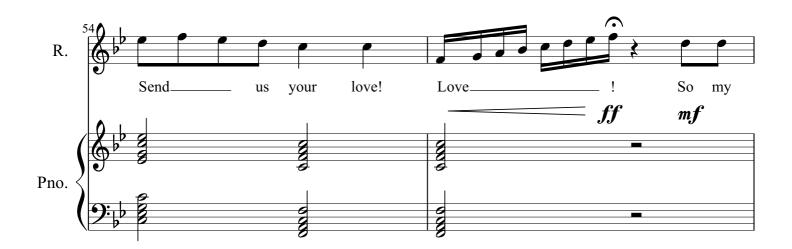


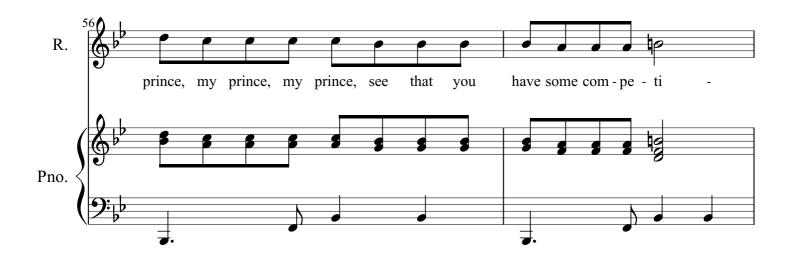


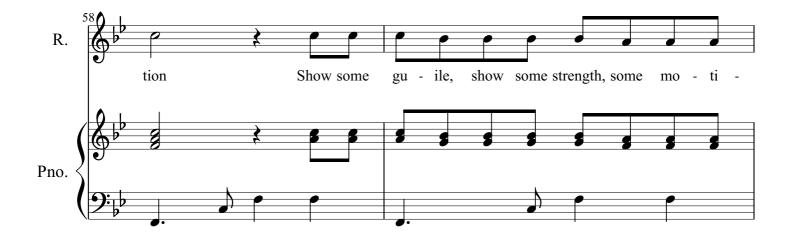


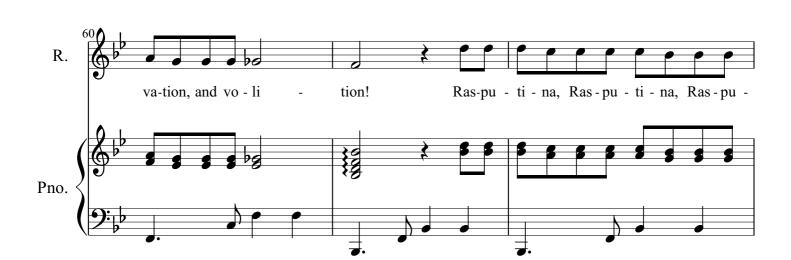


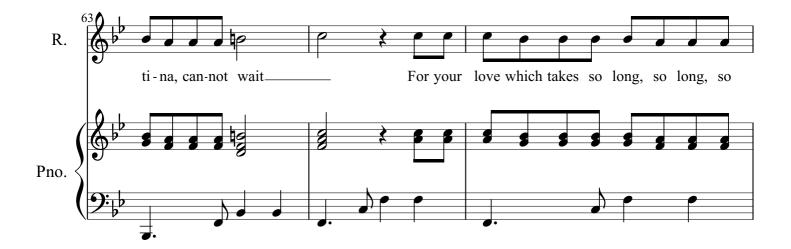


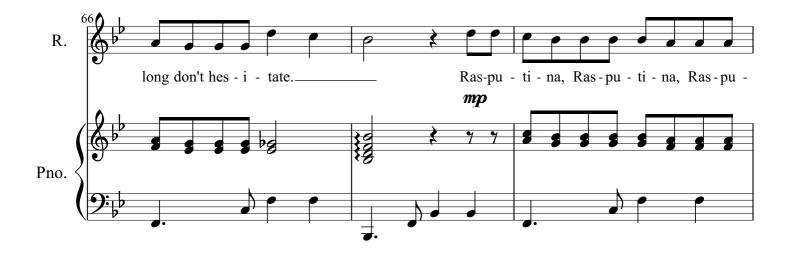


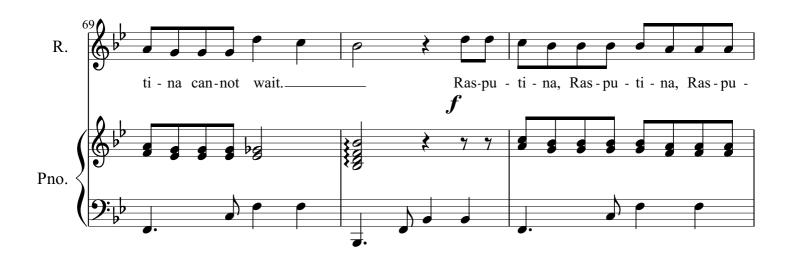


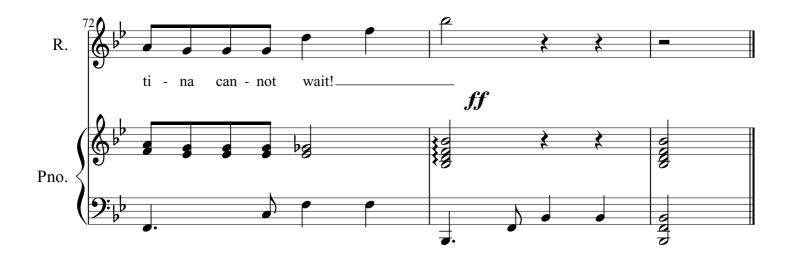












Scene 3: Living Room

Father: (pacing around) I haven't heard anything yet... what could be taking them so long.

Anna: (entering quickly) Well, things seem to be going well!

Father: How so? Has the prince proposed to her yet? Did she accept?

Anna: I think so. She kept screaming, "yes, yes!"

Father: Oh... I'm ruined...

Anna: If you had money?

Father: If we had his love, we'd have his money... oh damnit... (Both exit to opposite sides, prince and Nikolai enter)

Prince: So, how'd it go? (Rasputina heard crying off stage)... that good, huh?

Nikolai: Oh whatever, nobody ever died of a broken heart! Your majesty, none of these women are worth your time- they are either too crazy or too promiscuous-

Prince: For me, but not for you, right? (rolls eyes) (Anna appears in the wings)

Nikolai: Right, your majesty.

Prince: I'm not ready to give up yet. You know Anna?

Nikolai: Anna, the servant?

P: Yes. I'm madly in love with her. I knew it the moment I saw her. And I think that she loves me too- I know she does- She doesn't love me for my wealth, she loves me for who I am. I want to make her my princess.

Nikolai: Are you sure?

Prince: Yes.

Nikolai: Your majesty, what will your subjects think?

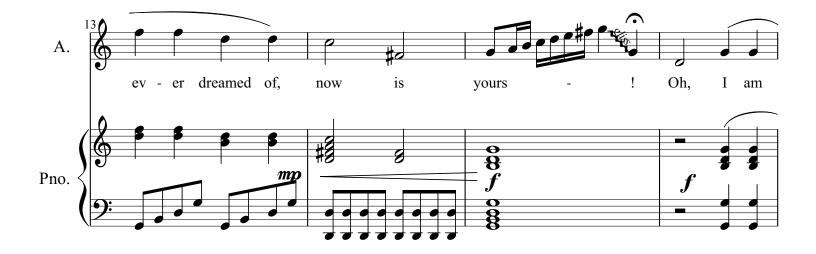
Prince: Nobody even knows where the hell Moldavia is, let alone cares about what they think of my marriage!

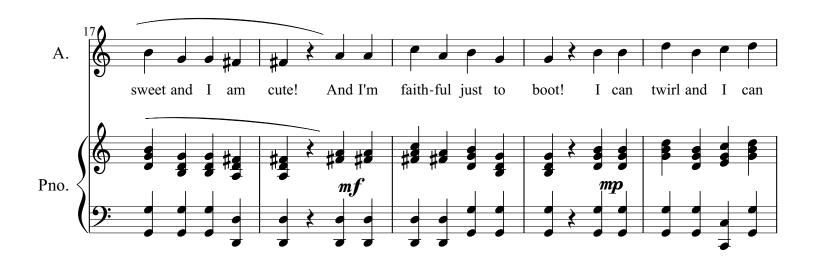
Nikolai: Still, you should let me talk to Anna first, you know, servant to servant. She may not be what you think.

Prince: She's all I ever think about. Talk to her if you wish, but I have a feeling she'll say "yes" to me. (Both Exit, Anna comes center stage)(cue Aria)

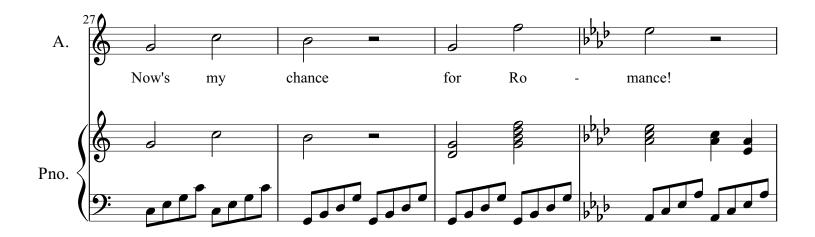
No. 14: Now's my chance



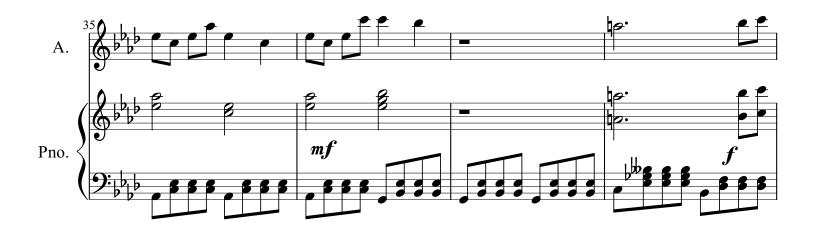




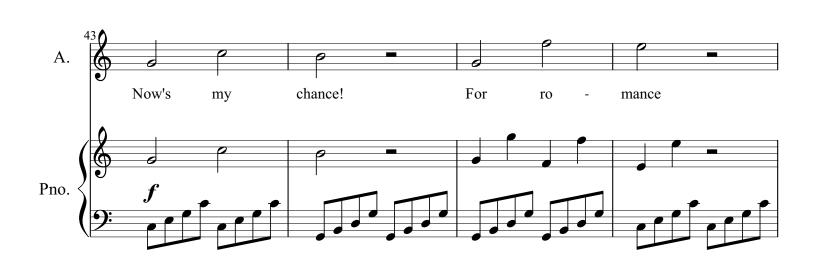








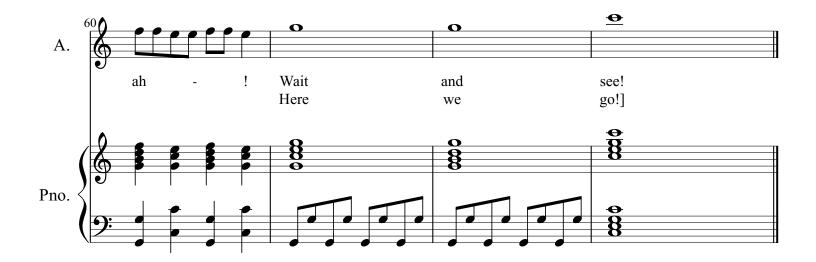












Nikolai: Darling Anna! How my heart has longed for you.

Anna: (playing along) Oh, your majesty!

Nikolai: Anna, I cannot deny it! I love you! I love you, I love you, I love you! I cannot resist your charms! Anna, give me a kiss!

Anna: Sir, I am not that kind of woman! I don't kiss men at the drop of a compliment?

Nikolai: How about at the drop of a song!

Anna: Well...

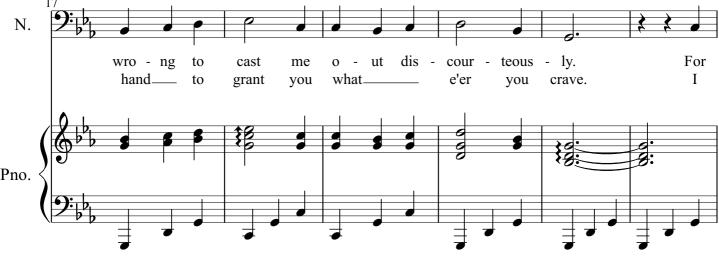
Nikolai: Begins singing "Reville Minnie"

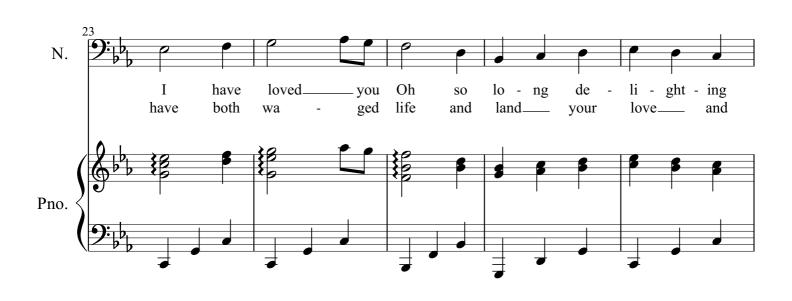
Anna: Sir! That song is too vulgar! Too... Canadian!

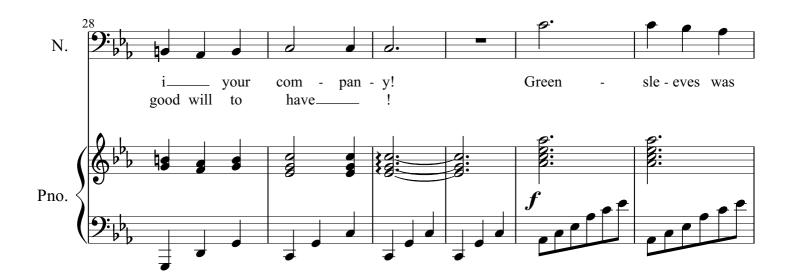
Nikolai: Yes, you're right... you're a traditional girl. How about something old- real old- and traditional. (cue aria)

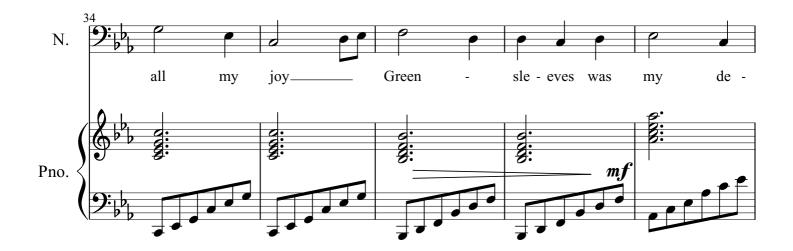
No. 15: Greensleeves

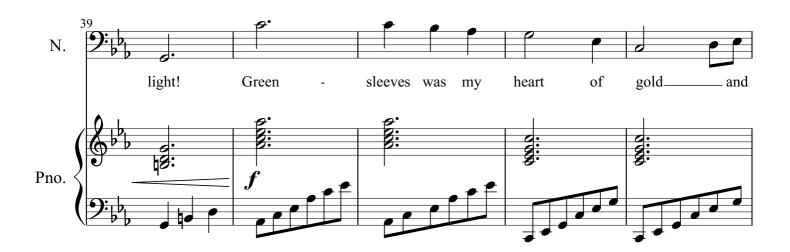






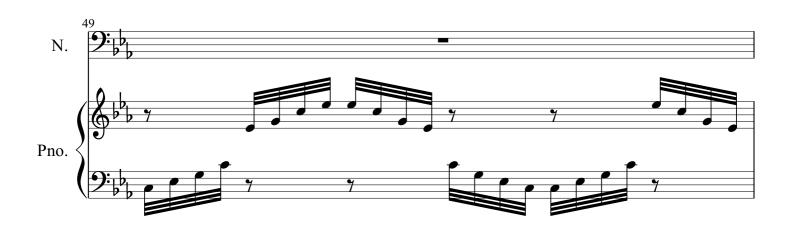


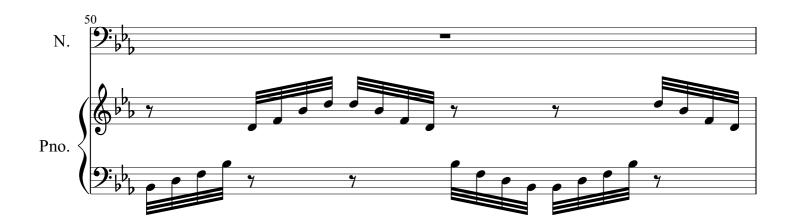


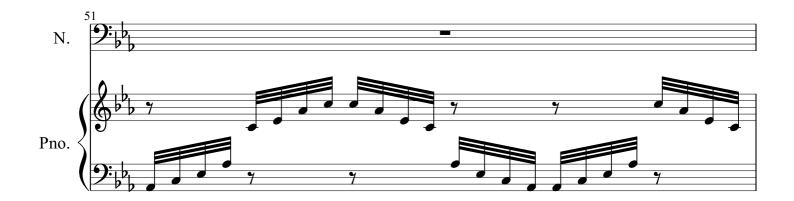


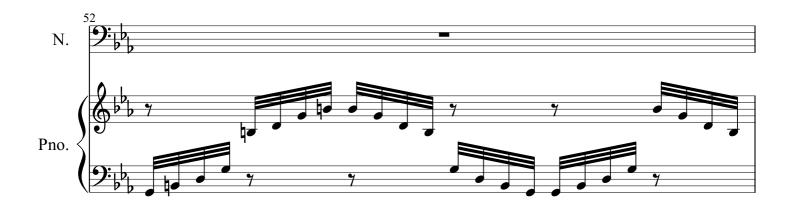


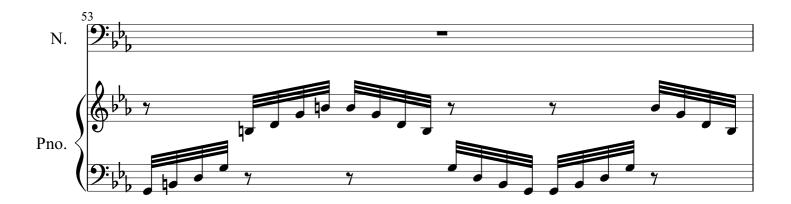


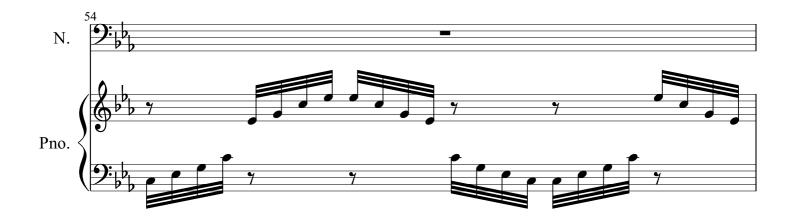








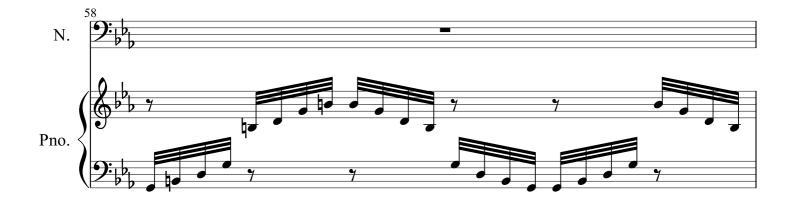


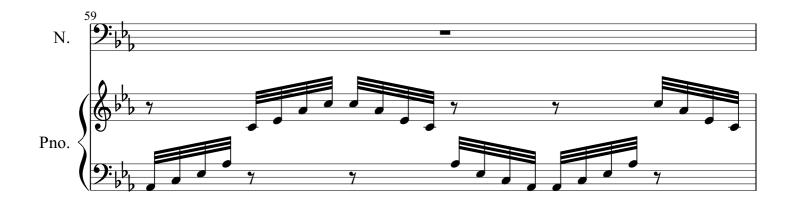


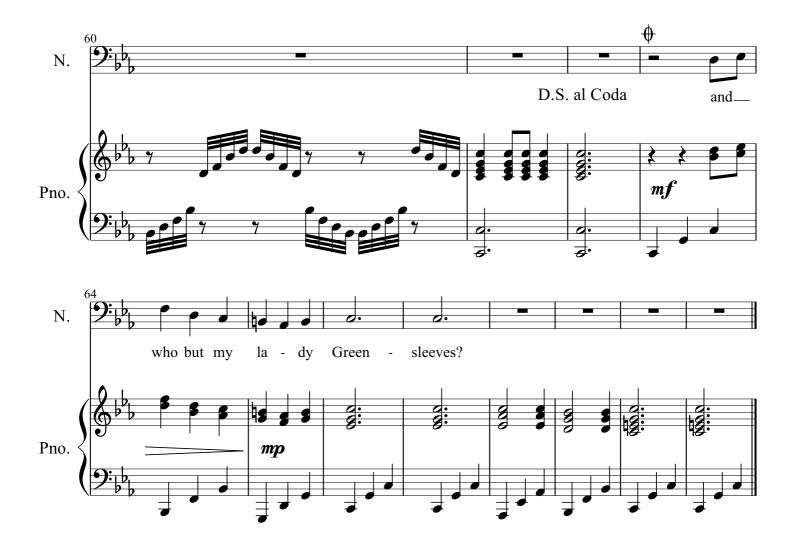












FINALE

Nikolai: (Finishing song- goes in for a kiss)

Anna: (Slapping him in his face)

Nikolai: (angrily) you would slap a prince?! You, a servant, would slap a prince! Why I have never been so insulted! You insult my honor, my dignity, my-

Anna: Libido? I know your game Nikolai. You are not the real prince.

Nikolai: Nonsense!

Anna: You took advantage of the Prince and of my family!

Nikolai: Lies!

A: You did! You took advantage of everything and I am going to tell the Prince!

Nikolai: Absurd! You lie! Mr Arbitrage! Sisters! You've done it now Anna! You've really done it! (Cue Finale)

No. 16: Finale





