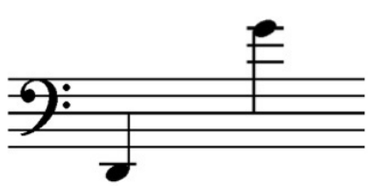
# Hold On!

A Traditional Spiritual Work Song

Low Voice



Arranged by

Steven M. Allen

## About the Work

The **Work Song** is perhaps the most indigenous of the African Diaspora. Historically, they were created by slaves who incorporated rhythm, body movement and song into their daily tasks. Heavy accents on alternating beats helped to synchronize the labor at hand.

As Olly Wilson asserts:

> *"the process of chopping wood becomes an intrinsic part of the music, wherein the work becomes the music, and the music becomes the work"*[1]

These songs often contained codified messages, stories from the Bible, and words of encouragement to one another. From the fervent cries heard in the fields, or improvised rhythmic chants from workers on the docks, and the voices heard from victims of peonage, America was built from their labor and its history hidden in a Song.

Hold On! is an extension of the traditional Work Song. Constructed by the use of the **Afro-Cuban Son rhythm**, the character in this piece has been battered by the woes of life. He goes to the present-day 'Noahs' for consolation, only to find them too preoccupied with their own lives. However, finding *"the link in Mary's Golden Chain,* he regains the strength to encourage himself, as well as others, realizing those who plow should do so in hope.

This piece is intended to be quite aggressive throughout. The dissonant chordal patterns are indicative, and indeed necessitated to emulate struggle. As well, the text has been set in a vernacular connotation reminiscent of African American cultural underpinnings.

---

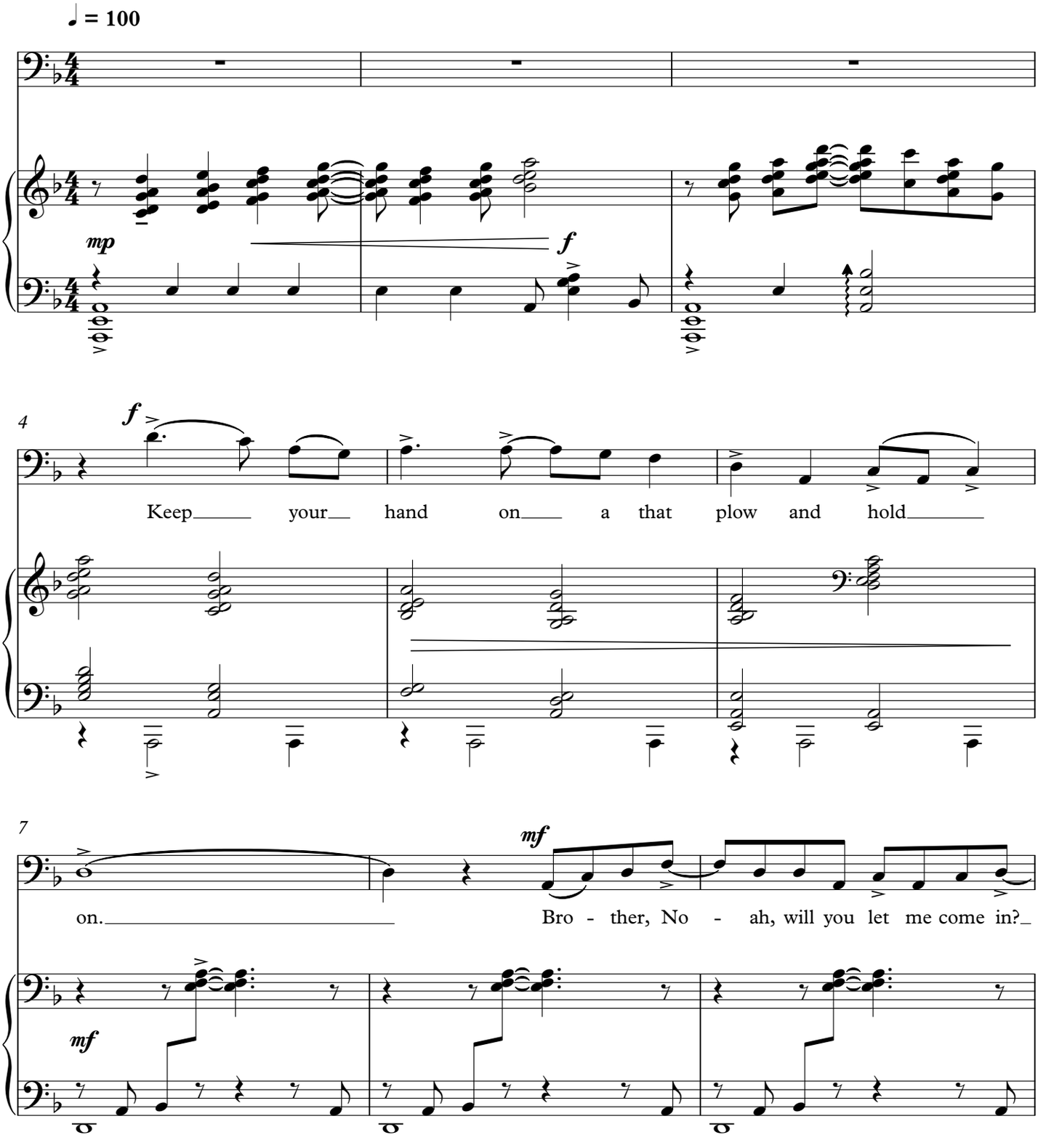
[1] Samuel Floyd: **The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United States**. p. 50

*To Alvy Powell*

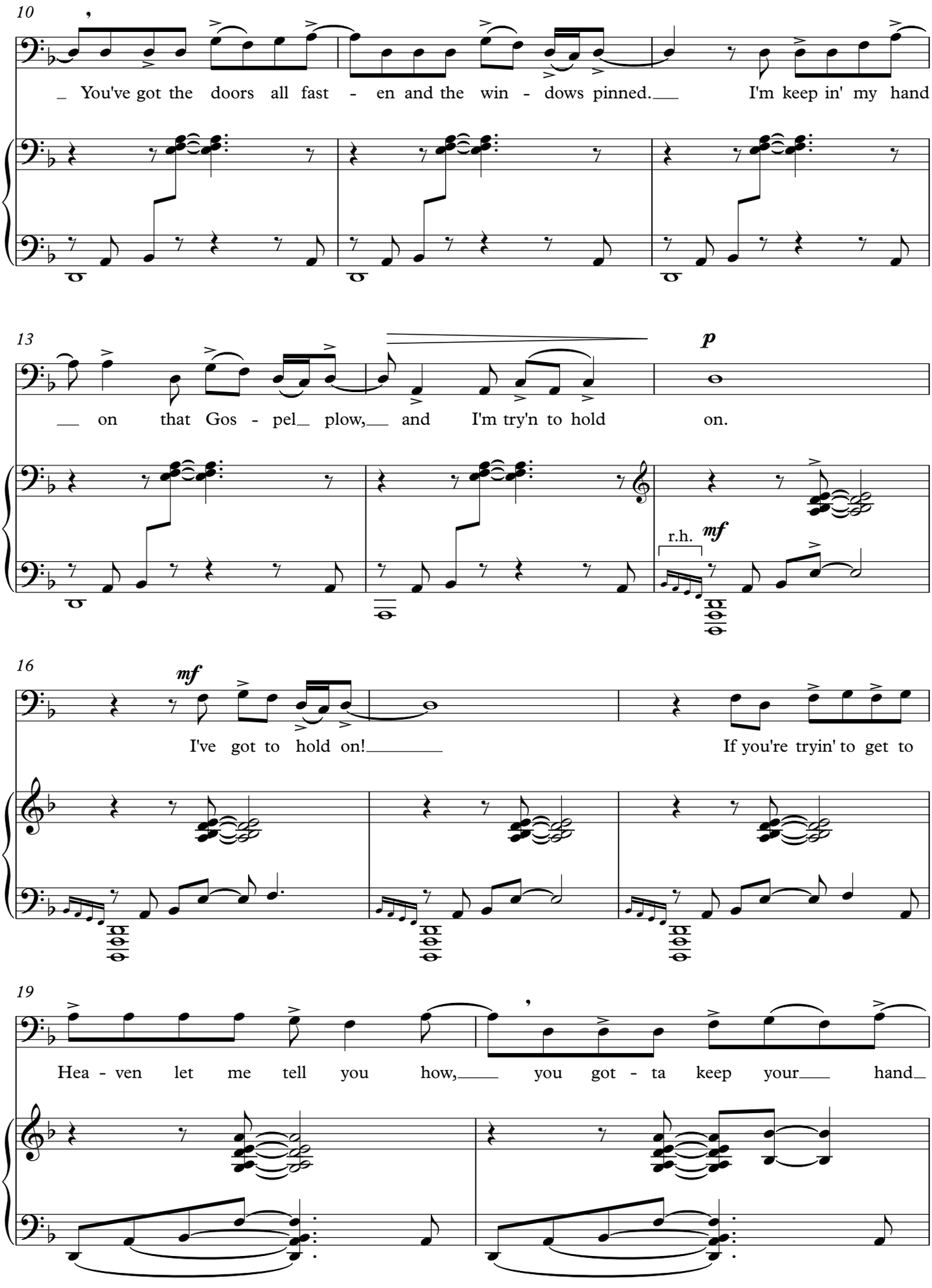
# Hold On!

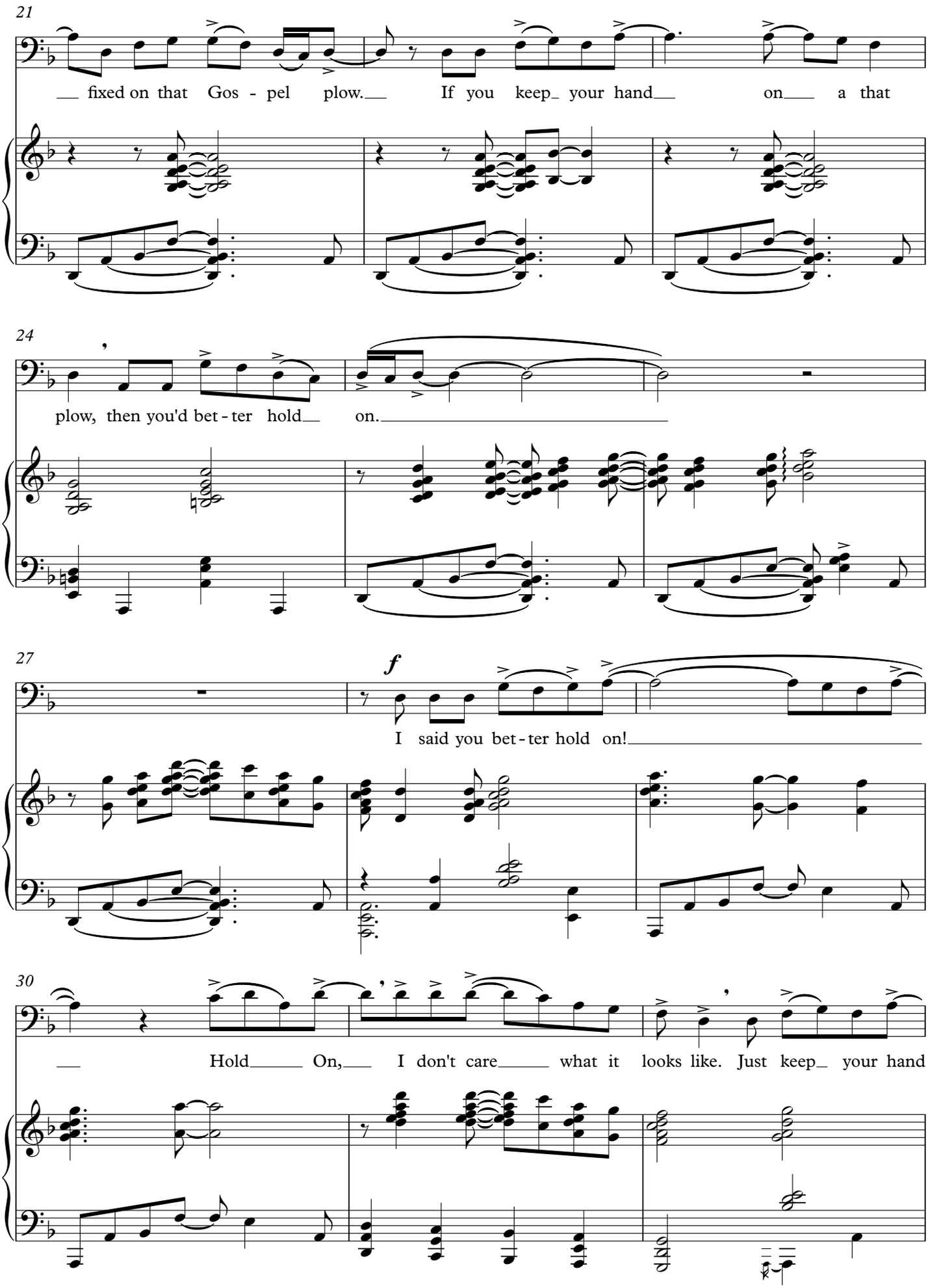
A Traditional Spiritual Work Song

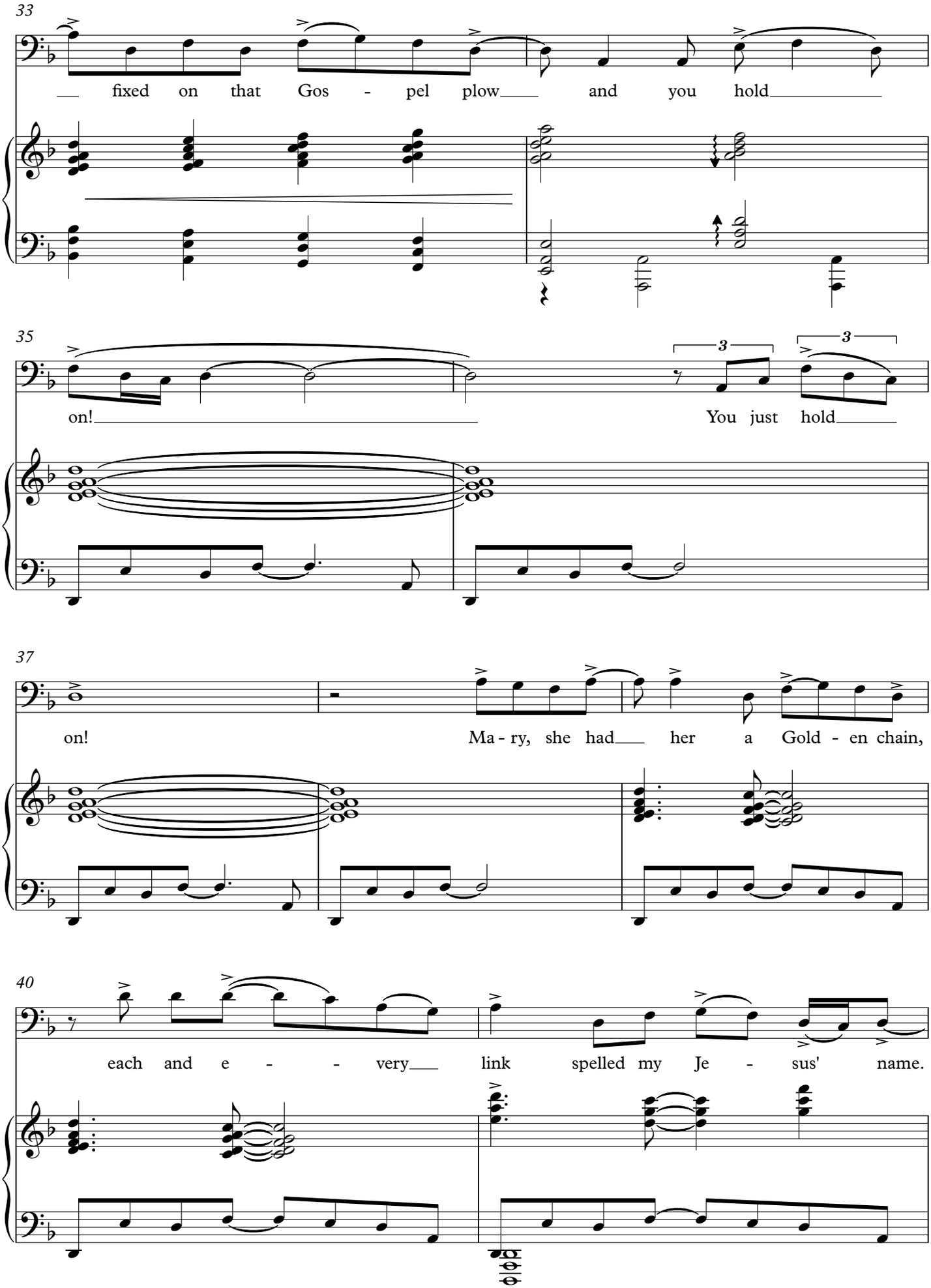
Arranged by
Steven M. Allen

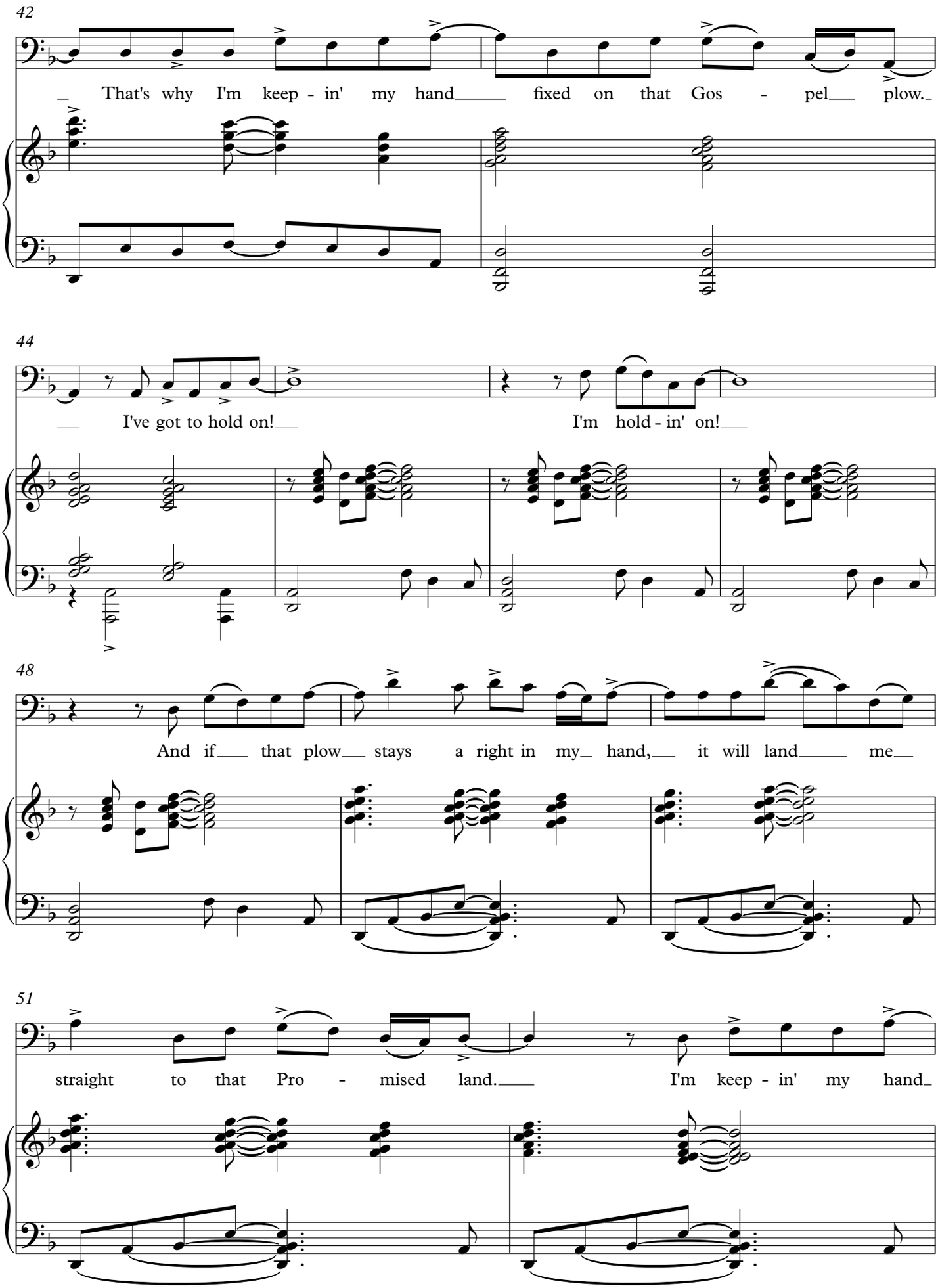


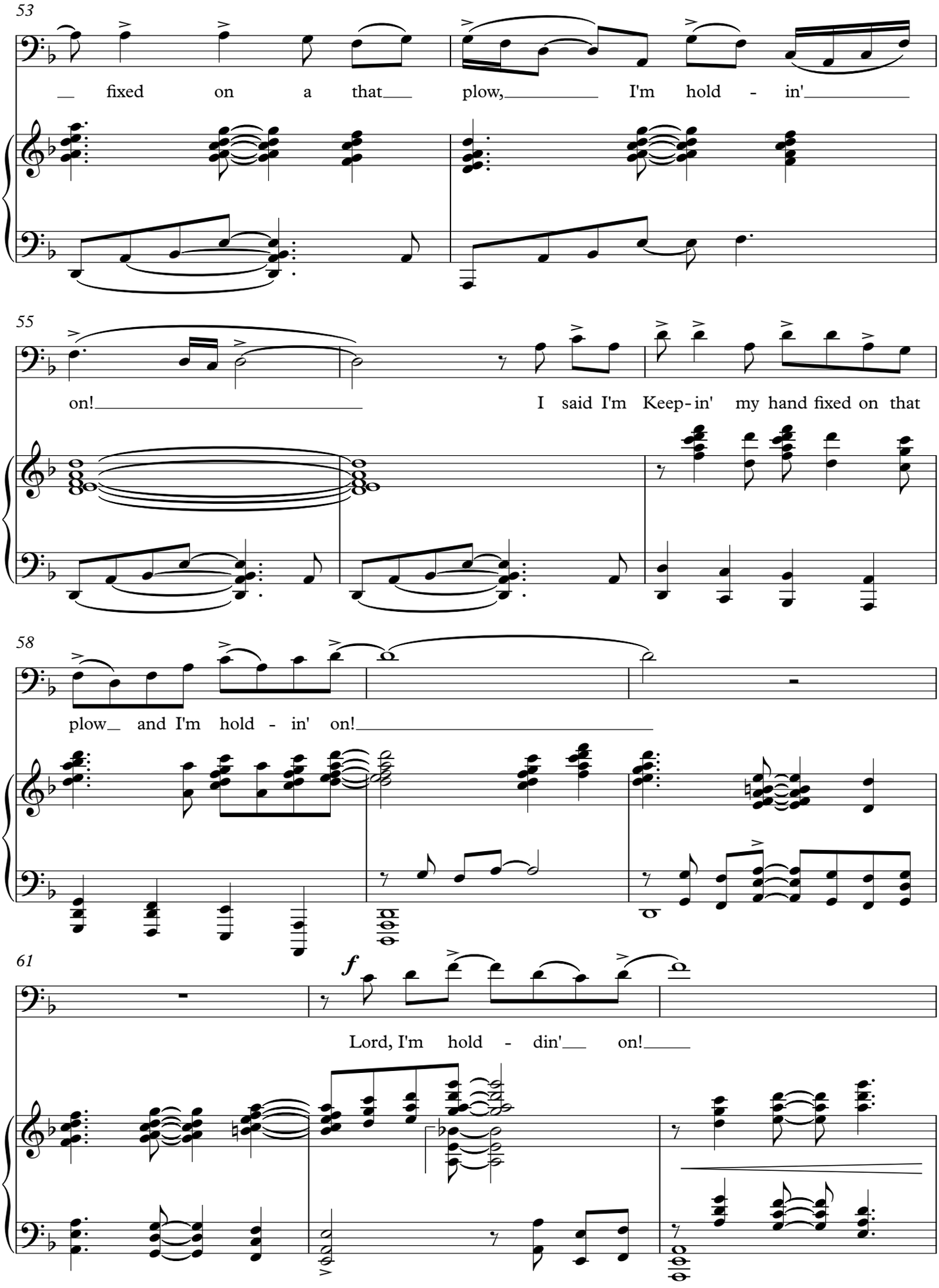

Copyright © 2016, Steven M. Allen

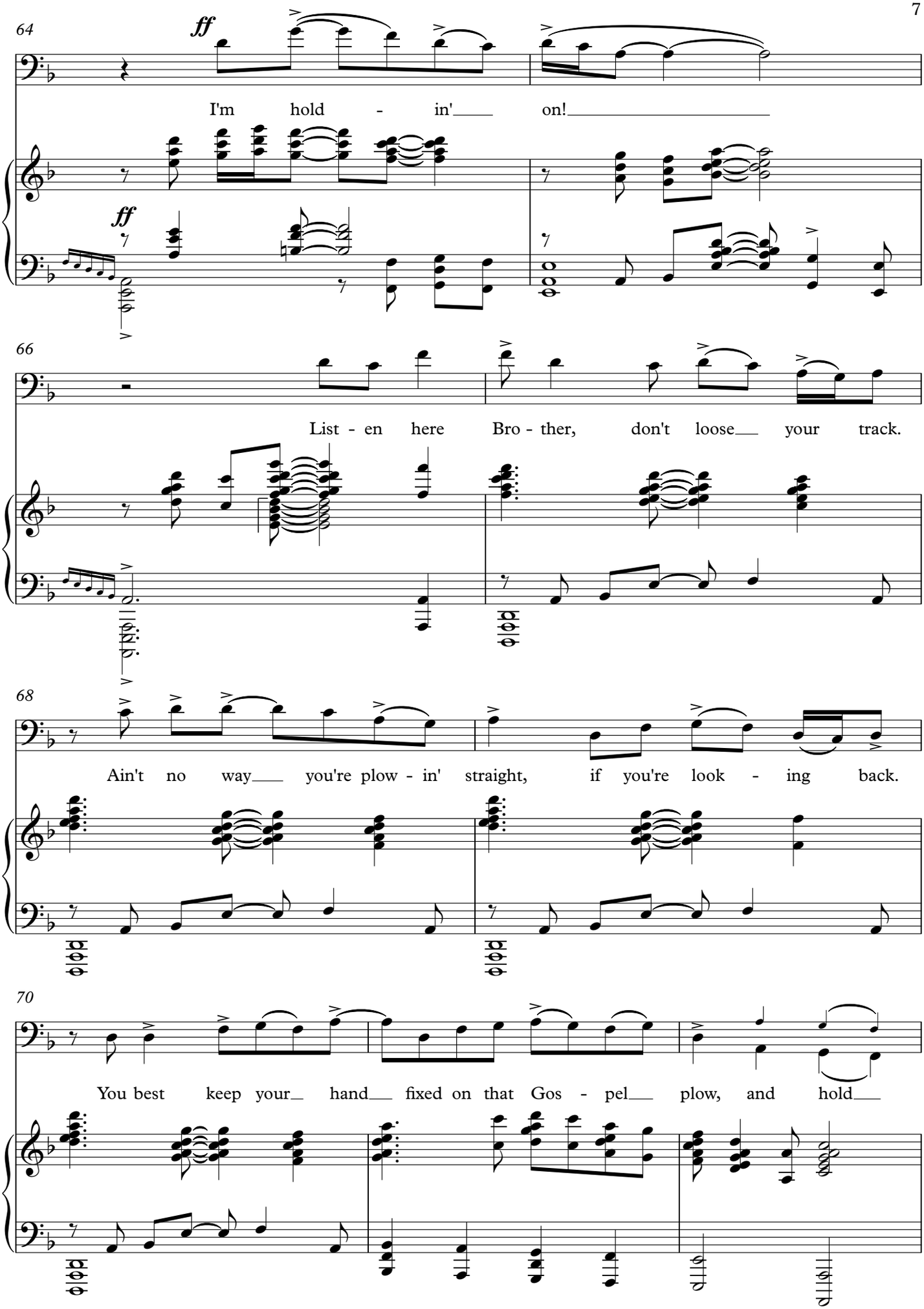

10
You've got the doors all fast - en and the win - dows pinned. I'm keep in' my hand
13
on that Gos - pel plow, and I'm try'n to hold on.
p
r.h.
mf
16
mf
I've got to hold on!
If you're tryin' to get to
19
Hea - ven let me tell you how, you got - ta keep your hand

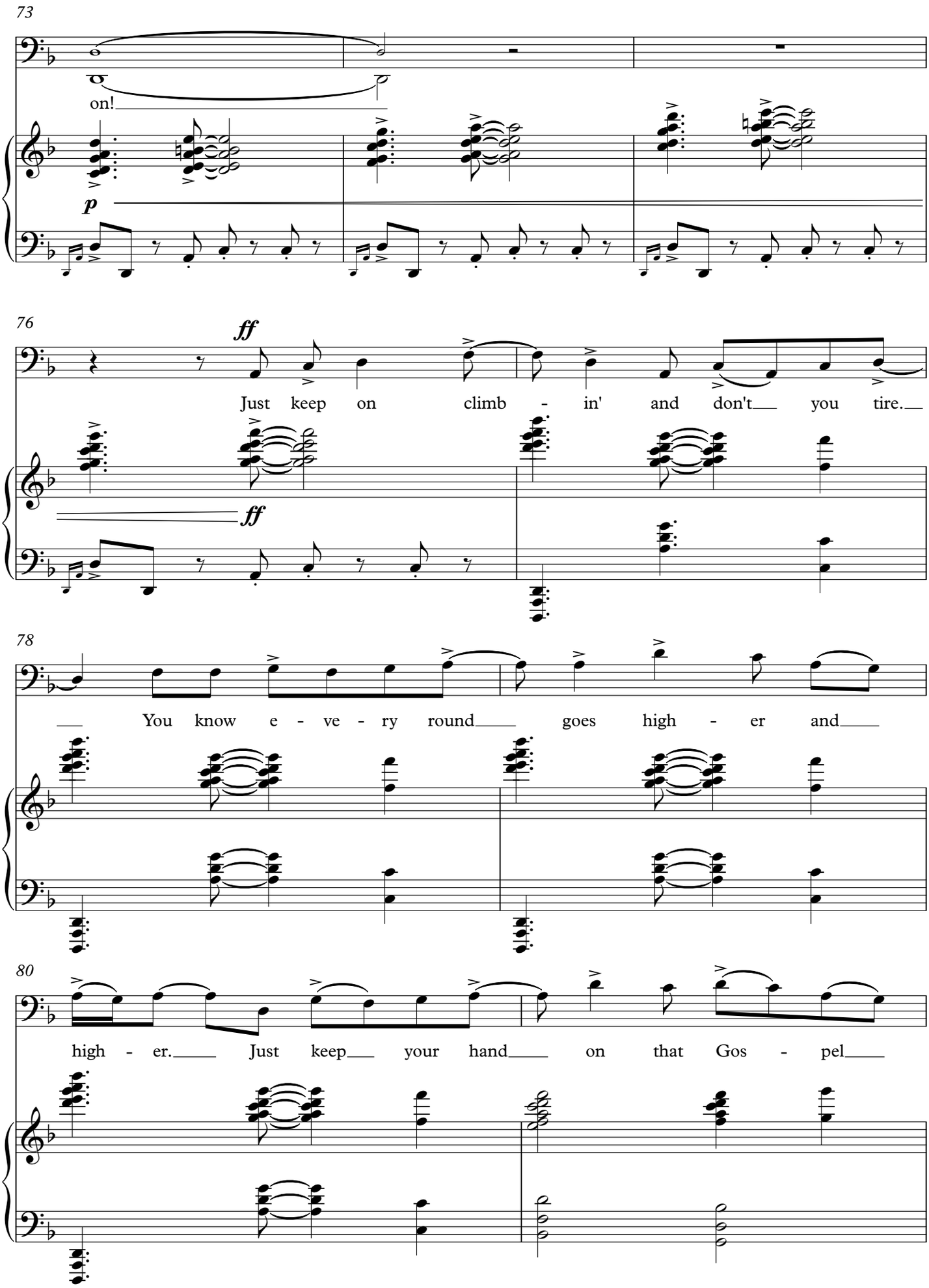

21
fixed on that Gos - pel plow. If you keep your hand on a that
24
plow, then you'd bet - ter hold on.
27
f
I said you bet - ter hold on!
30
Hold On, I don't care what it looks like. Just keep your hand

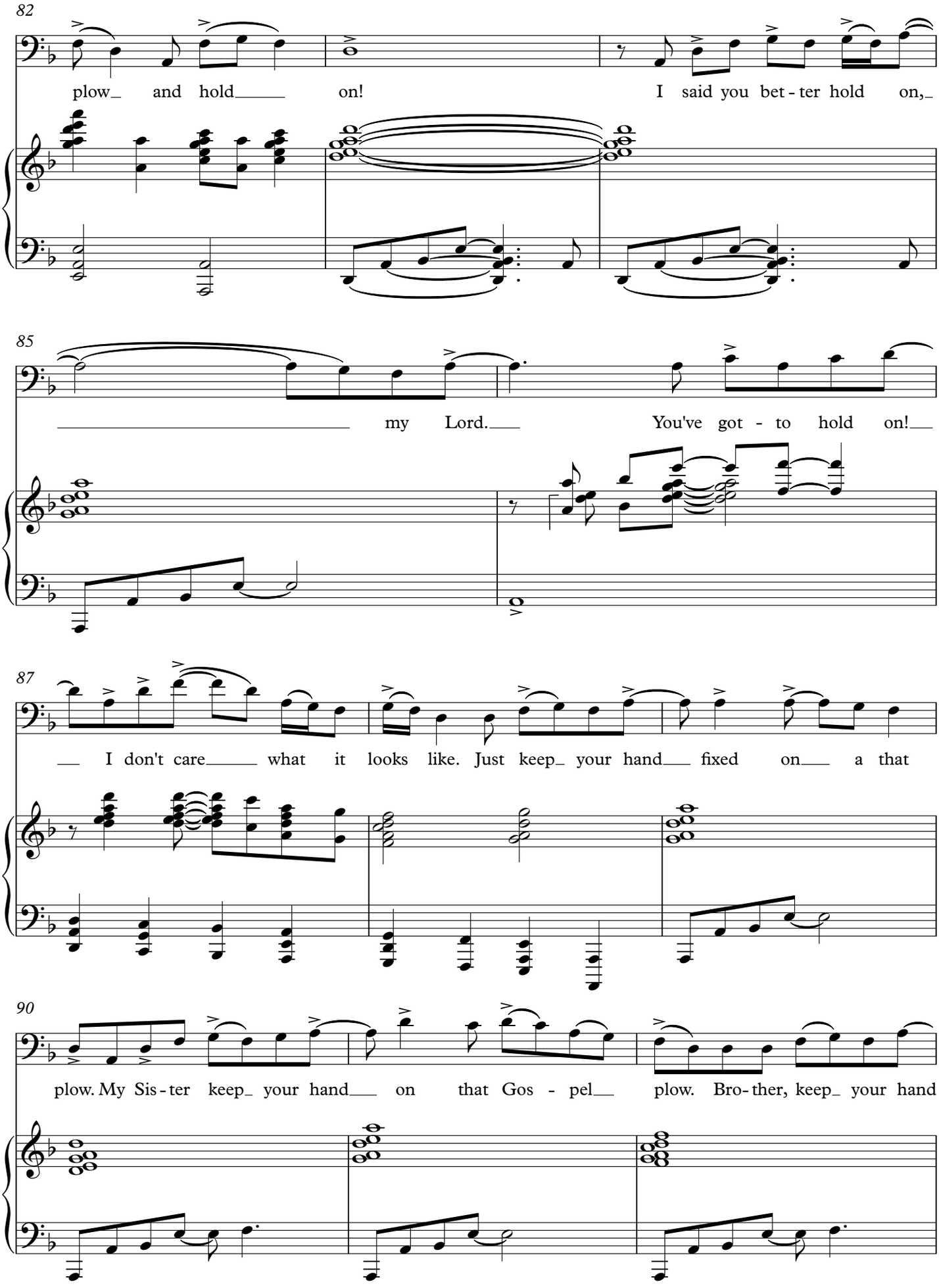

33
fixed on that Gos - pel plow and you hold
35
on! You just hold
37
on! Ma - ry, she had her a Gold - en chain,
40
each and e - - very link spelled my Je - sus' name.


42
That's why I'm keep - in' my hand fixed on that Gos - pel plow.
44
I've got to hold on!
I'm hold - in' on!
48
And if that plow stays a right in my hand, it will land me
51
straight to that Pro - mised land.
I'm keep - in' my hand


53
fixed on a that plow, I'm hold - in'
55
on! I said I'm Keep - in' my hand fixed on that
58
plow and I'm hold - in' on!
61
f
Lord, I'm hold - din' on!


64
ff
I'm hold - in' on!
66
List - en here Bro - ther, don't loose your track.
68
Ain't no way you're plow - in' straight, if you're look - ing back.
70
You best keep your hand fixed on that Gos - pel plow, and hold


73
on!
p
76
ff
Just keep on climb - in' and don't you tire.
ff
78
You know e - ve - ry round goes high - er and
80
high - er. Just keep your hand on that Gos - pel


82
plow_ and hold____ on! I said you bet - ter hold on,_
85
_____ my Lord.___ You've got - to hold on!___
87
___ I don't care____ what it looks like. Just keep_ your hand___ fixed on___ a that
90
plow. My Sis - ter keep_ your hand___ on that Gos - pel___ plow. Bro- ther, keep_ your hand

93

up - on that Gos - pel plow and hold on!

96

You'd best to keep your hand fixed on that

98

plow and hold on!

101

rit.

Hold on!

rit.