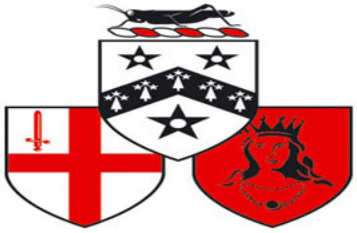

GRESHAM COLLEGE

*Founded 1597*

# Events and Emergencies: What the Sources Can and Cannot Tell Us about Performing Seventeenth-Century Italian Opera

Jennifer Williams-Brown,
Grinnell College

# “Events and Emergencies”: What the Sources Can and Cannot Tell Us About Performing 17th-Century Opera

Jennifer Williams Brown
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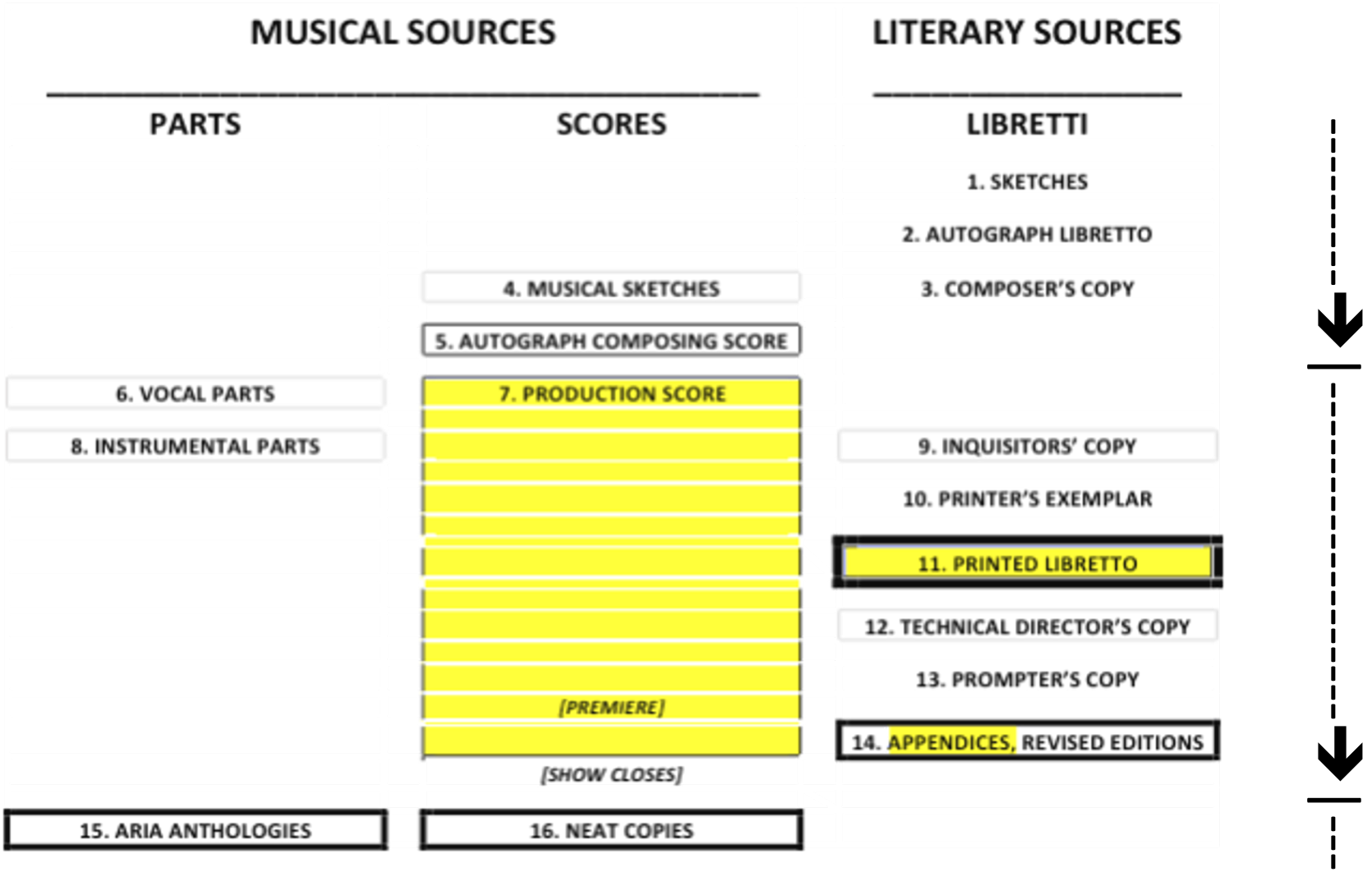
# Excerpt from Cavalli's contract with the Teatro S. Cassiano, 1658

- *Signor Cavalli [is] obligated...to attend in person all the rehearsals that will be necessary, as well as to transpose, change, cut, and add whatever might be necessary in the music in service of the opera, as dictated by the events and emergencies that tend to happen on such occasions.*

# Written Sources Generated by a Typical Premiere Season in 17th-Century Italy

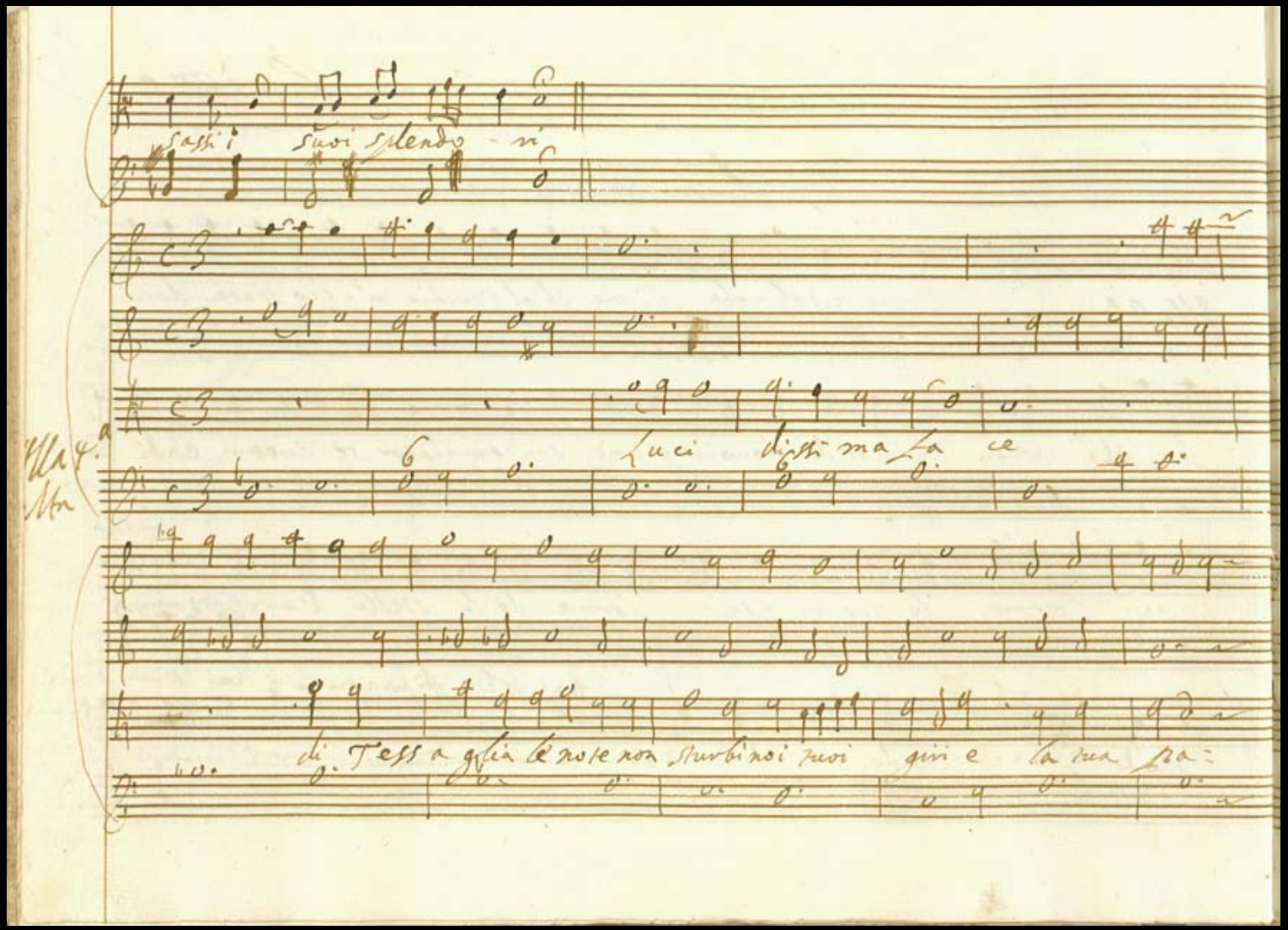
## *(Yellow = Surviving Sources of La Calisto)*



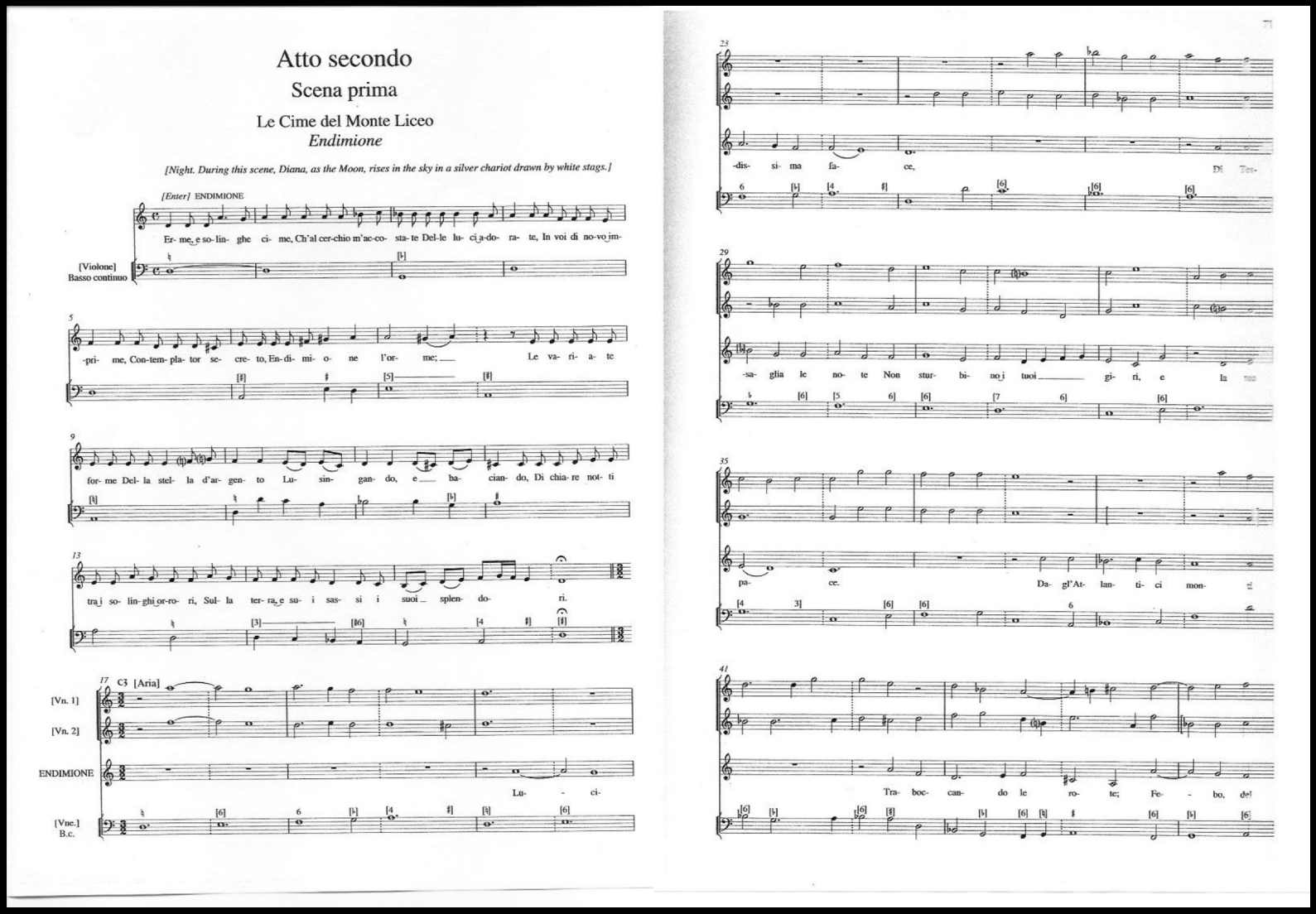
# Francesco Cavalli, *La Calisto*, f. 48v

(Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana)

## Endymion's aria "Lucidissima face, " Act II, sc. 1



# *La Calisto*, Act II, scene 1
# edited by Jennifer W. Brown (A-R Editions, 2007)



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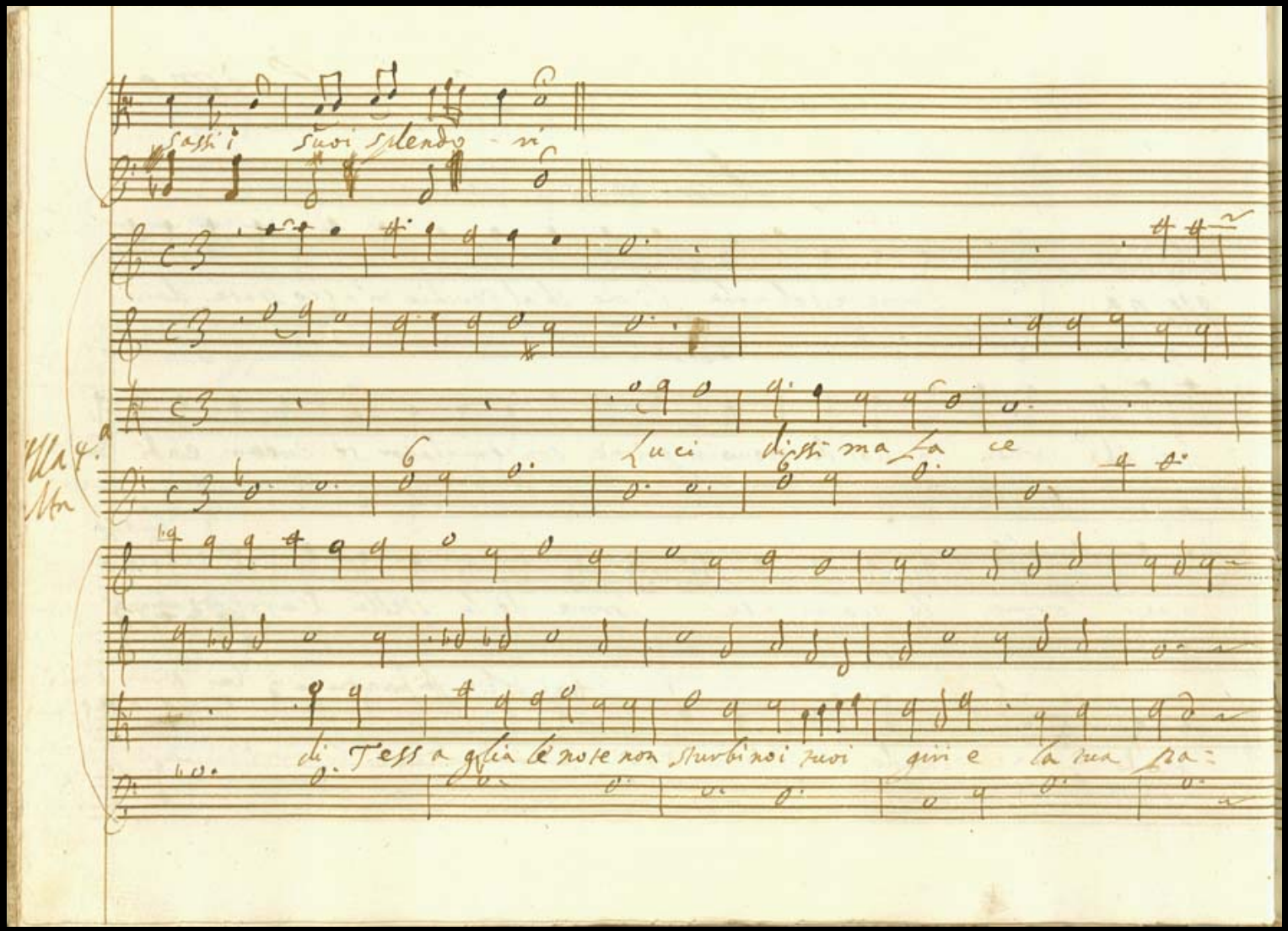
- *Signor Cavalli [is] obligated… [to have] all the copies and originals that will be necessary made at his own expense, without the theatre managers having to hear any complaints, whether about paper or copyists or anything else.*

# 1. TRANSPOSITION

## Aria (Endymion) transposed up a fourth (“Alla 4.a alta”)

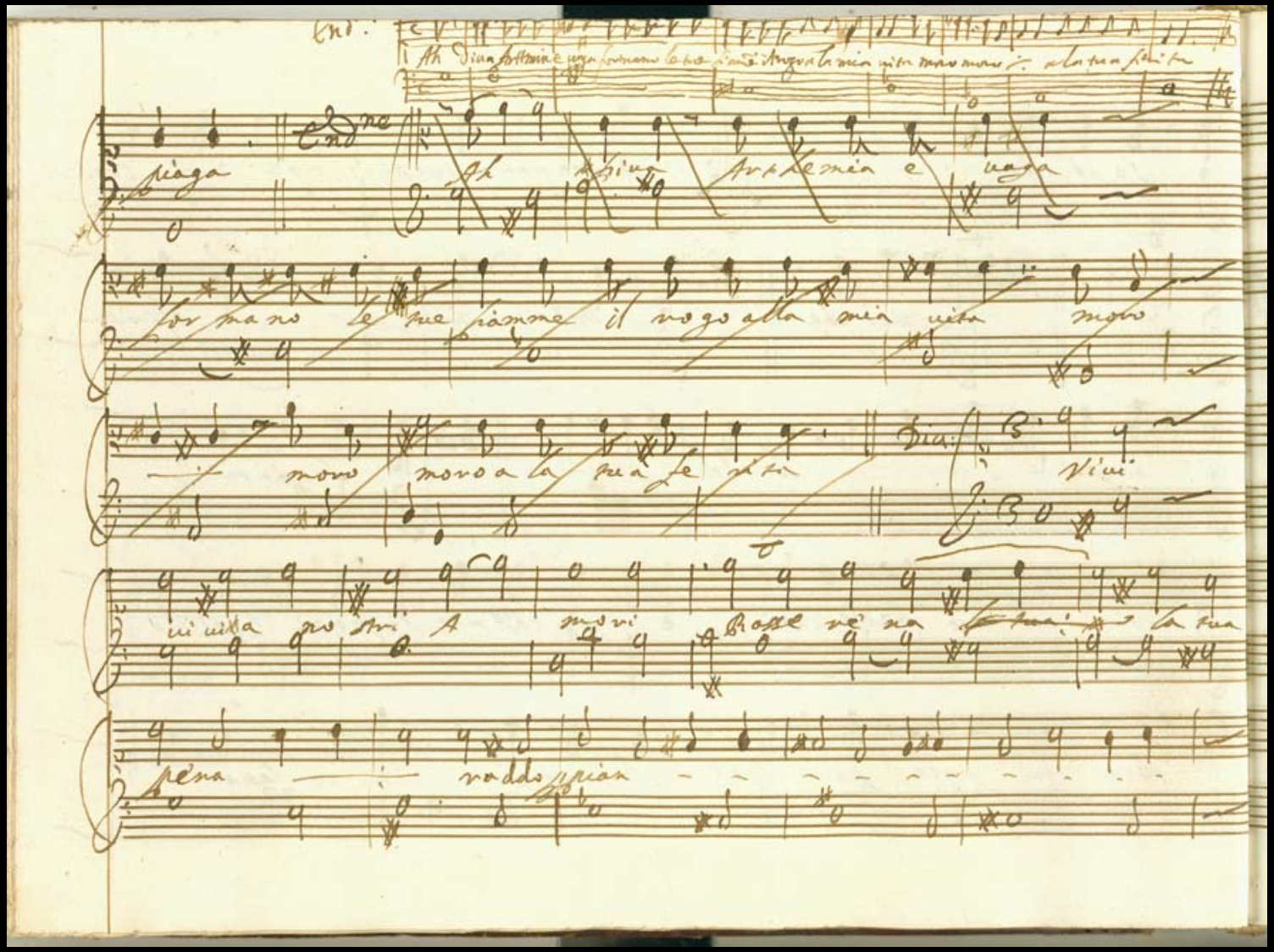
*La Calisto*, f. 48v



# 2. REWRITING

## New recitative (Endymion) notated in soprano register

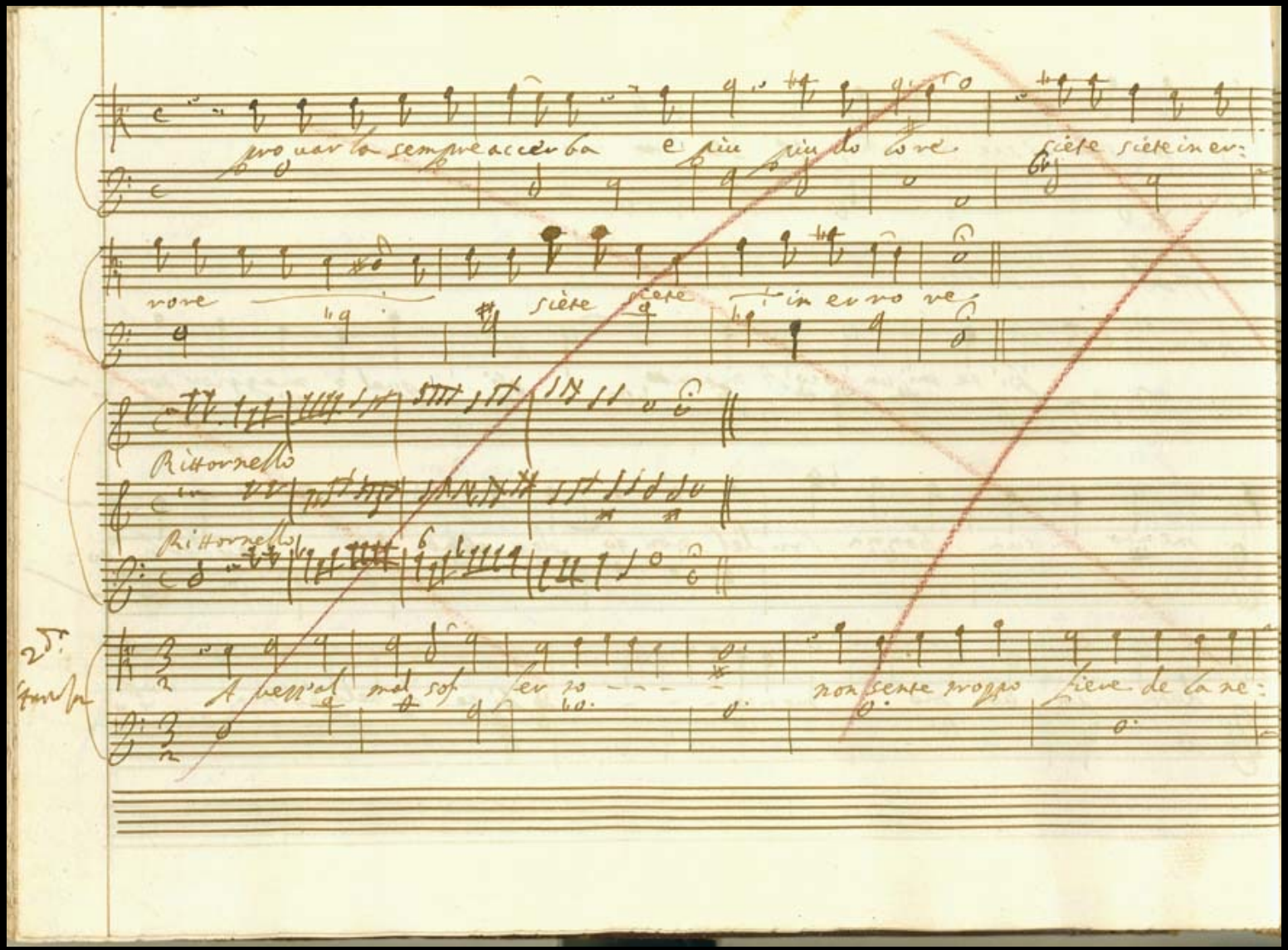
*La Calisto*, f. 55v



# 3. CUTS

## Scene (Endymion) crossed out

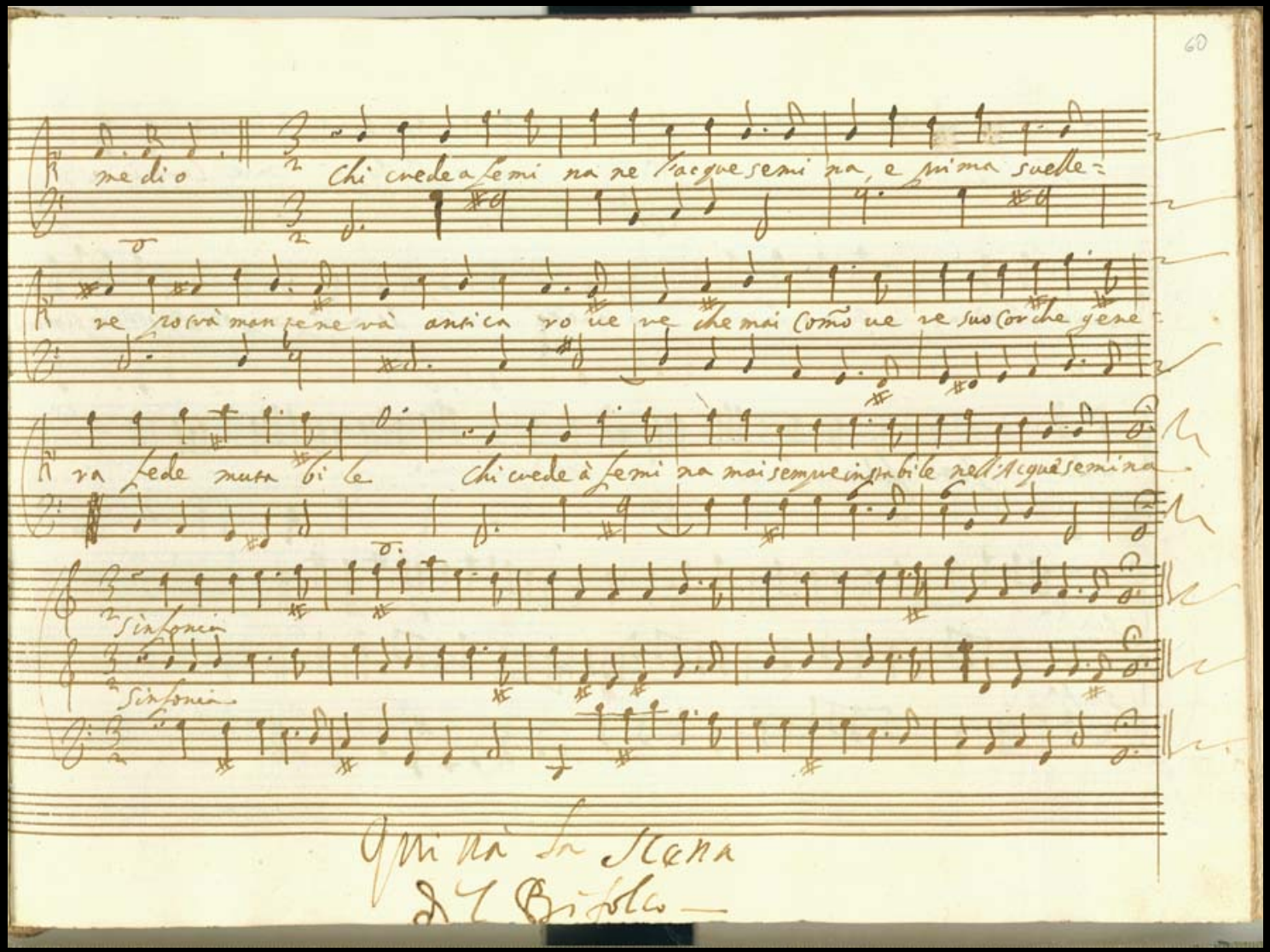
*La Calisto*, f. 58v



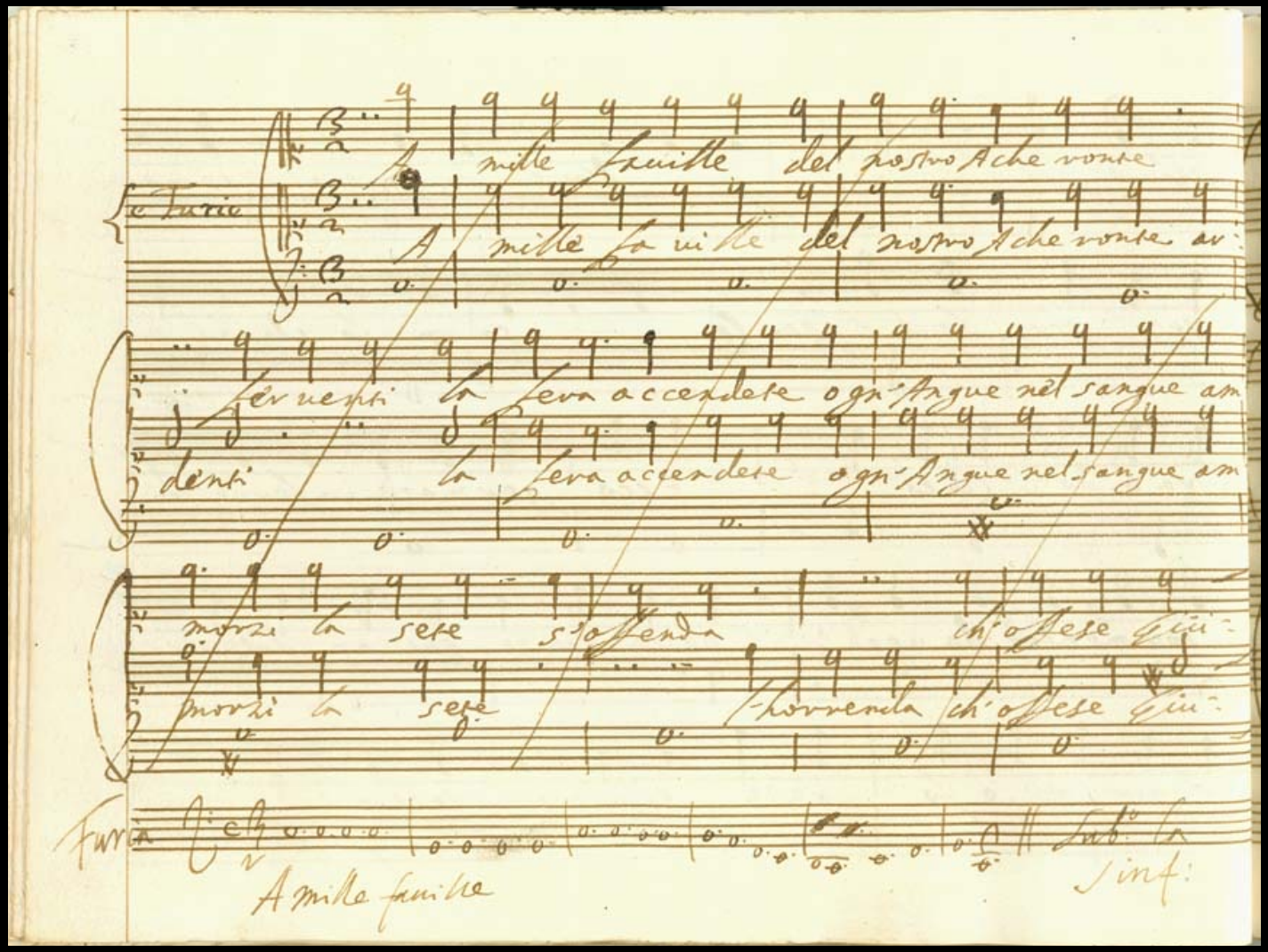
# 4. ADDITION

## Cavalli's annotation "The shepherd scene goes here"

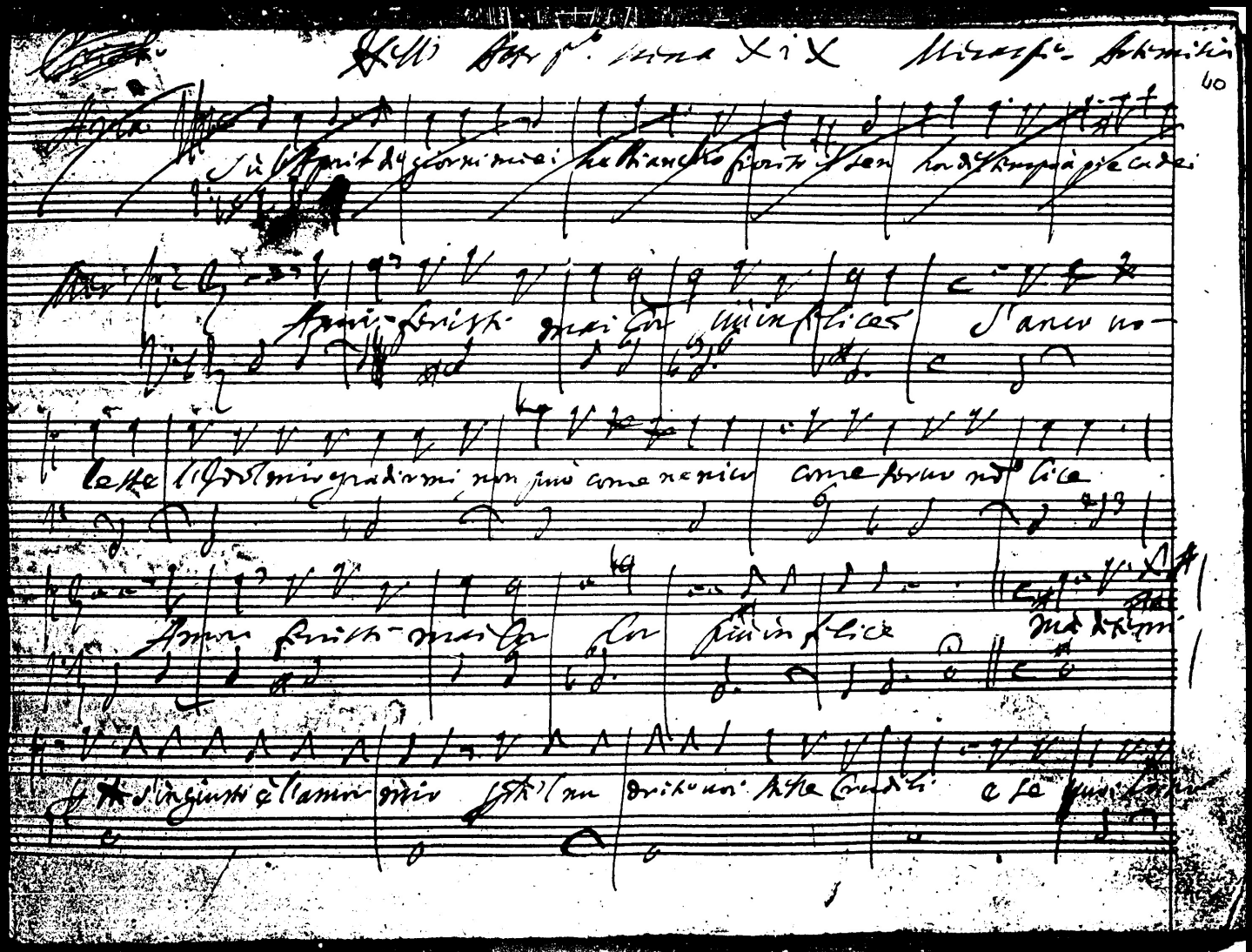
*La Calisto*, f. 60r



# VOCAL LINES MISSING
## Furies' duet replaced by bass line only
*La Calisto*, f. 98v



# Only Surviving Vocal Part from 17th-Century Opera
Cavalli, *Artemisia*, Act I, sc. 11 (autograph)
Discarded page from part for Erisbe (crossed out)



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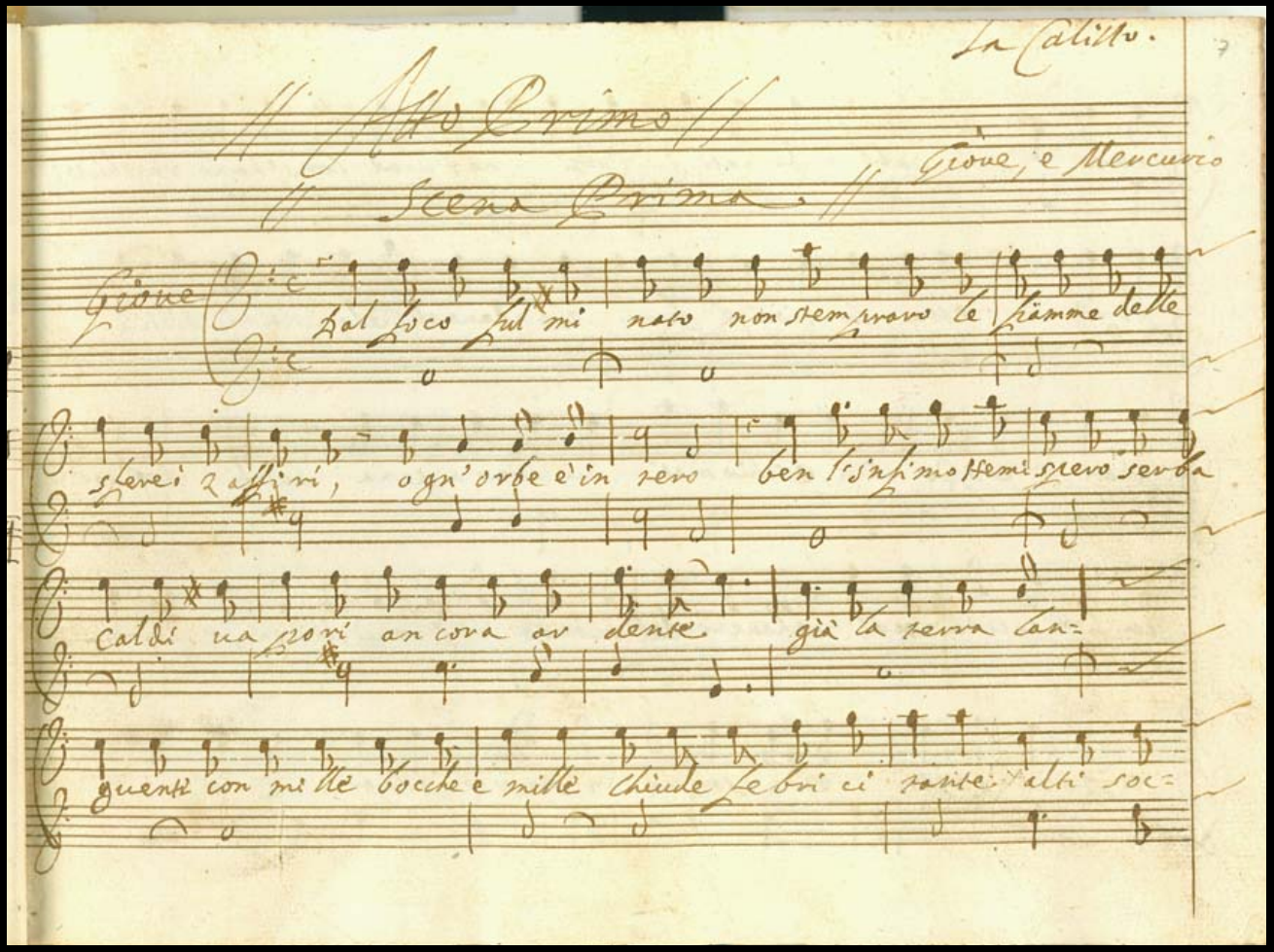
# *La Calisto*, Act I, scene 1
(Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana)
hand of Maria Cavalli, annotations by Francesco Cavalli



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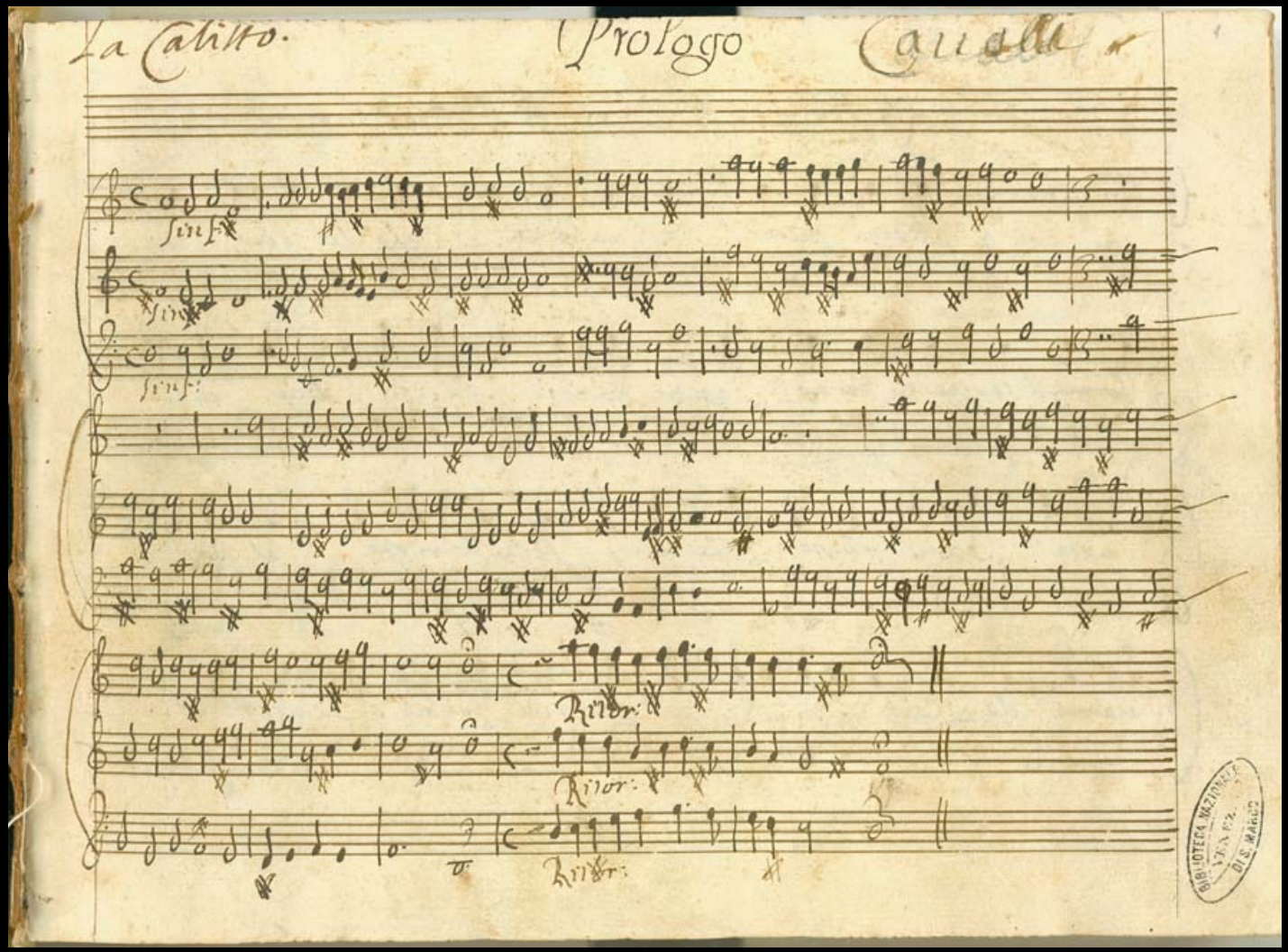
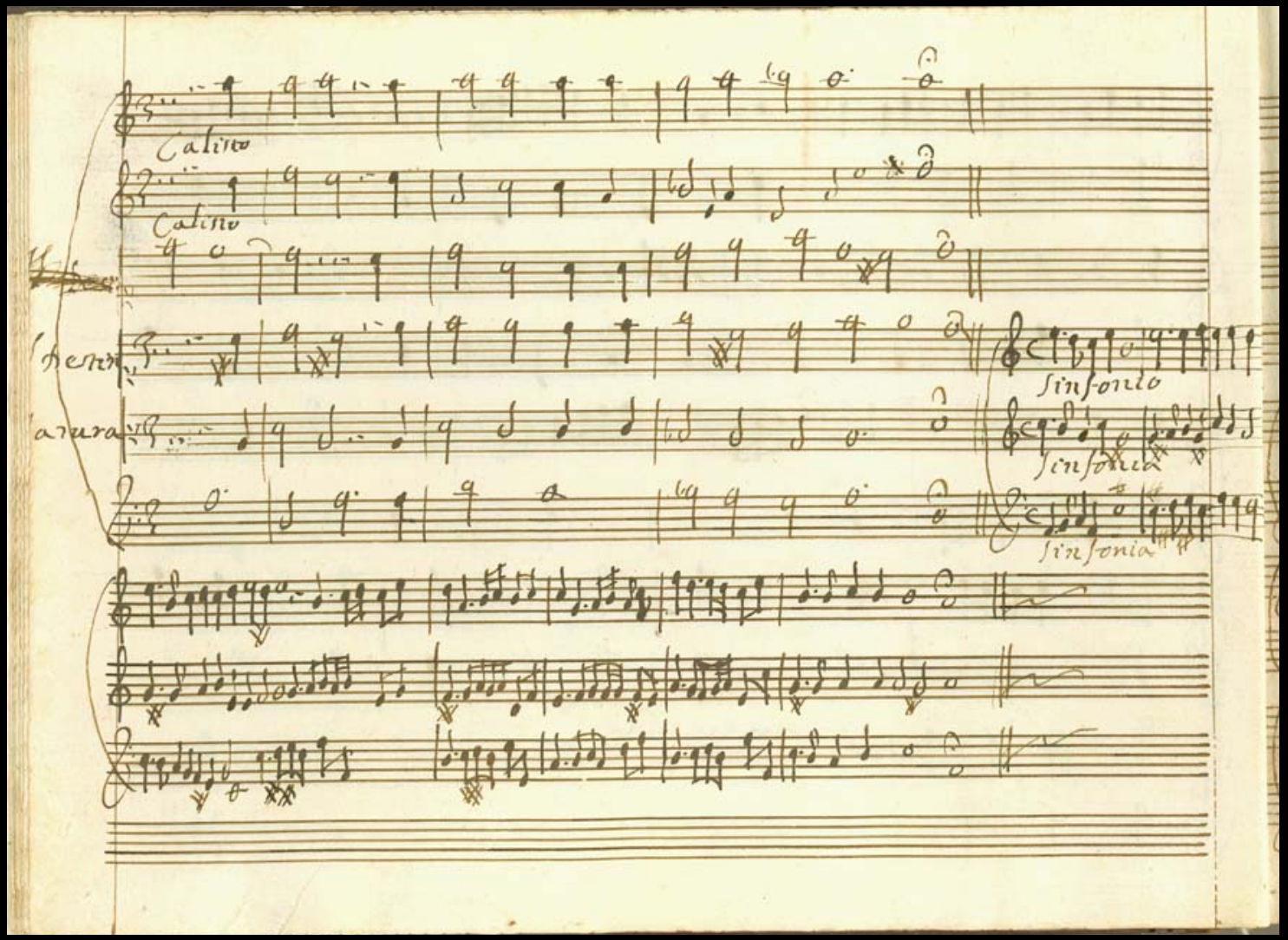
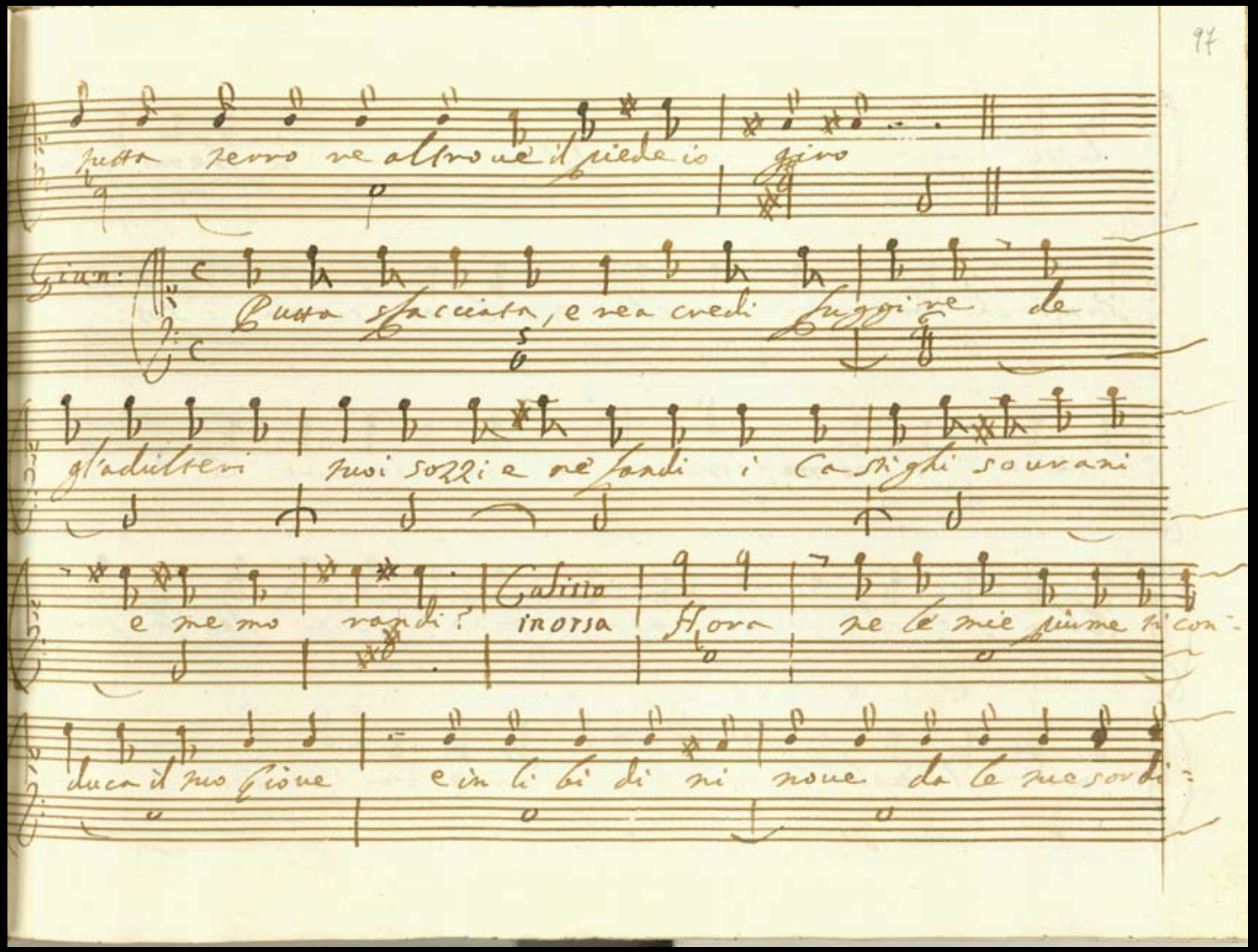


# *La Calisto*, end of Prologue; “Sinfonia” added later



# *La Calisto*, f. 97r
## bar 1, bass line: semibreve altered to tied minims



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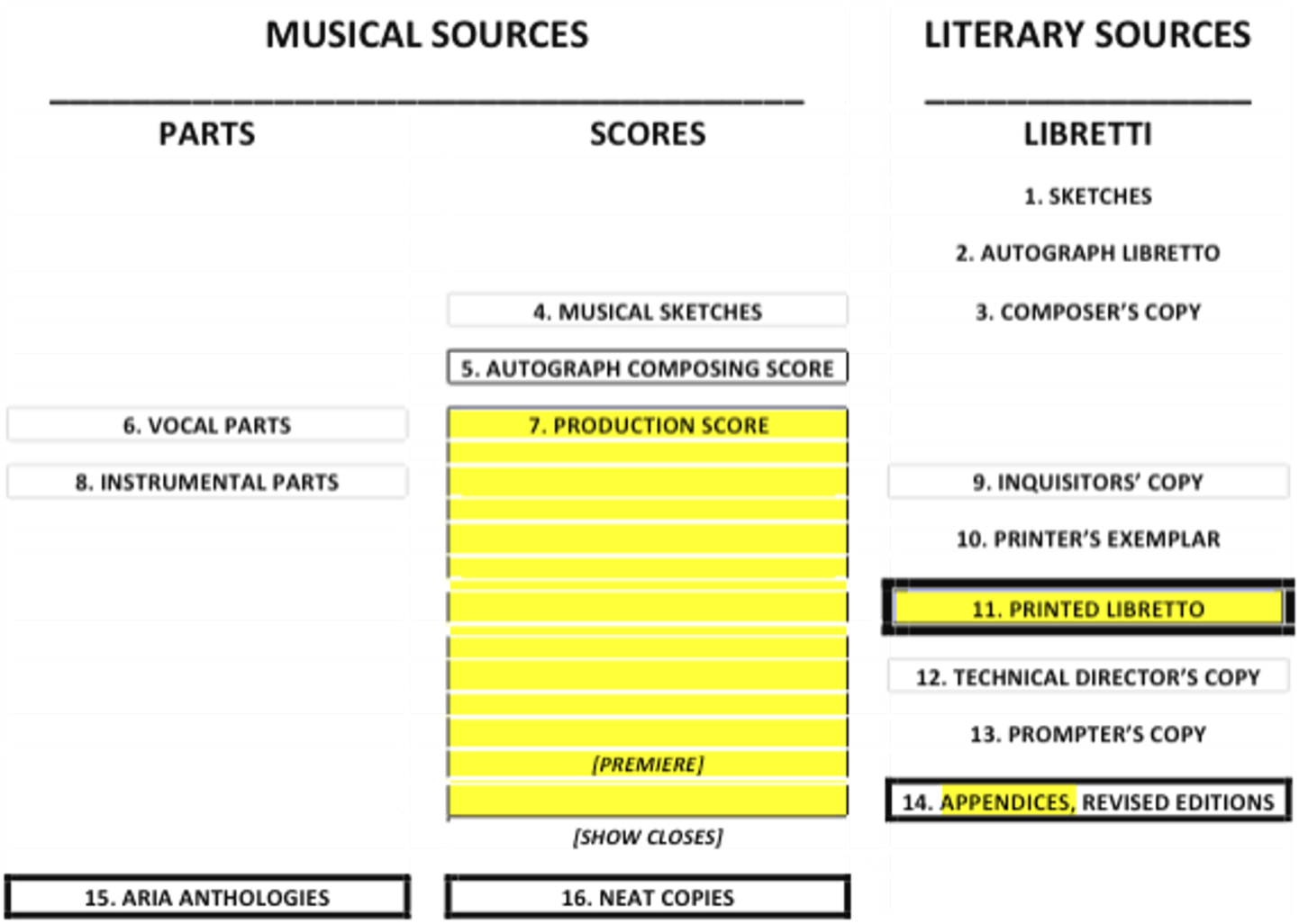
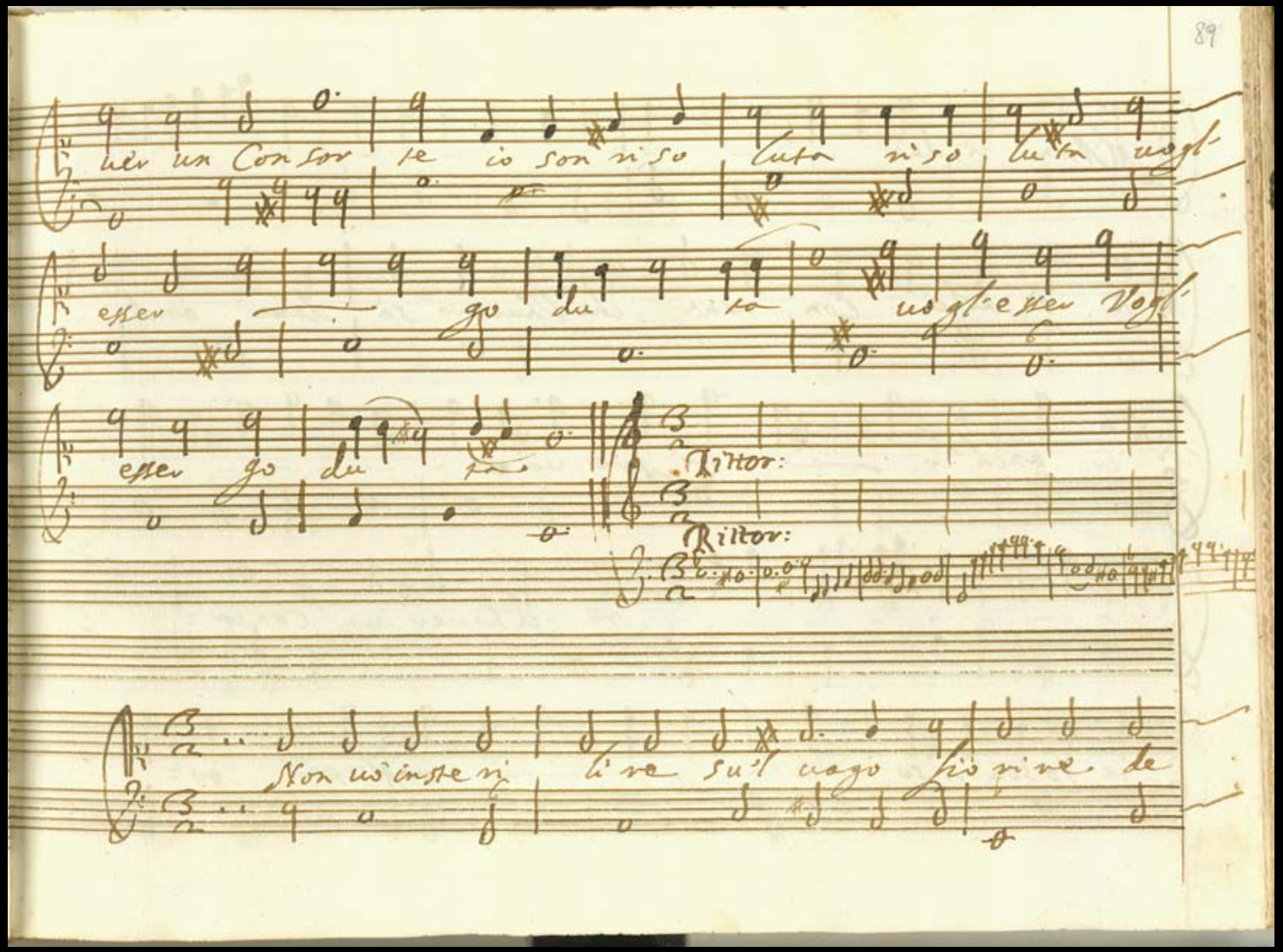


# Letter from Giovanni Grimani, owner of the Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo, Sept. 11, 1655 to Cornelio Bentivoglio in Ferrara

- "Only the original [production score] can be found, in the possession of Signor Cavalli, but it is all so worked over, and so filled with annotations that it could not be understood; rather if it were necessary to have it copied, the assistance of the same Cavalli would be necessary."

# INSTRUMENTAL LINES MISSING

## Scribe left 3 empty staves; Cavalli later filled in bass line only

*La Calisto*, f. 89r