BriLee Music
the Voice of Choral Music

KEEP YOUR LAMPS TRIMMED AND BURNING

Two-Part, accompanied

African-American Spiritual

Arranged by
GLENDA E. FRANKLIN

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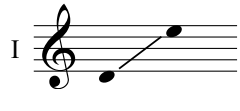
BriLee Music
Part-by-Part

Free MP3 rehearsal and accompaniments
Go to: www.BriLeeMusic.com

Range:



Time: Approx.: 2:05
*Difficulty: Moderate

Performance Notes

The history of African-Americans during the time of slavery is not as well documented and rich in information as it is in other cultures. While life was often difficult for slaves to endure, these hardships created an inner strength and continued faith that freedom awaited them in heaven. History has revealed that music during these times was not only a reflection of that strength and faith, but also an ingenious method of communication with one another.

As with traditional folk music, it is often difficult to determine the composer and/or origin of spirituals. The songs were passed along in many ways: one person singing to another: mother to child, and neighbor to neighbor to neighbor to neighbor. As they were passed on, the songs would sometimes change because the singer either couldn't remember it exactly as they originally heard it or thought it could be improved upon.

It is thought that *Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning* was one of the code, or communication, songs used in the under-ground railroad. The words take on a new meaning when "keep your lamp trimmed and burning" means watching out for a conductor (the person responsible for moving fugitives from place to place) of the underground railroad.

Another Biblical connection to the song comes from Matthew 25: 1-13 which tells the parable of ten bridesmaids given the honor of attending a wedding. Each, awaiting the bridegroom, is carrying a lamp. The bridesmaids expect the bridegroom (Jesus) to arrive sometime during the night. Five of the bridesmaids are wise and have brought sufficient oil for the night; five are foolish and have not.

When the bridegroom arrives late into the night, the foolish bridesmaids ask the wise ones to share their oil, but are refused. As they go in search for oil, the wise bridesmaids are there to welcome the bridegroom; the foolish ones arrive too late and are excluded.

This arrangement is an effective piece for teaching independent part-singing to younger choral students. Always work for homogenous vowel sounds in order to achieve a beautiful tone quality. Long notes should always be energized and have direction.

When the melodies merge, listen carefully for balance and blend to ensure a beautiful performance. Keep the tempo moving forward with a sense of urgency. Be sure to get a good breath so you can hold out the notes in the final phrase. I hope you enjoy this arrangement!

Glenda E. Franklin

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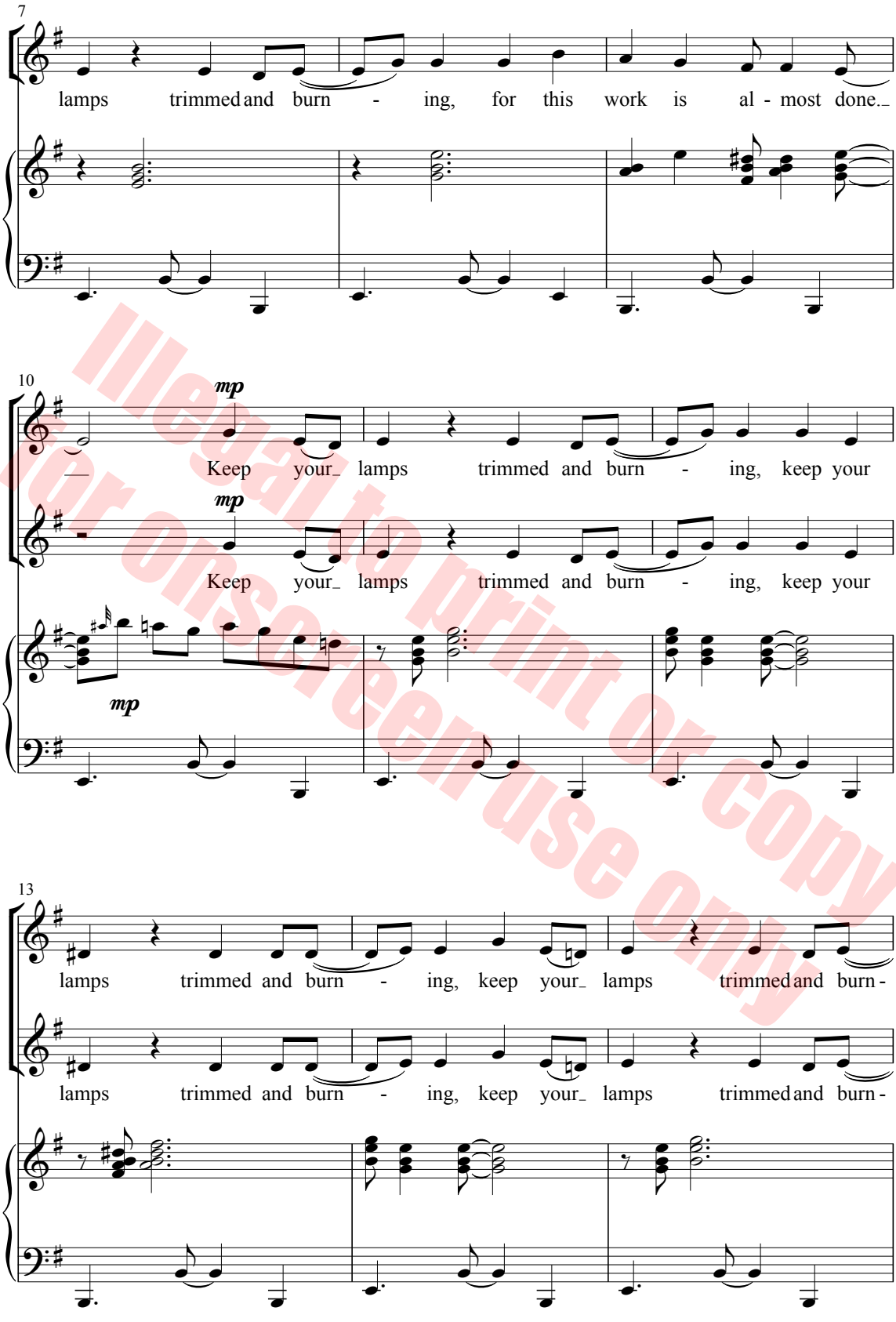

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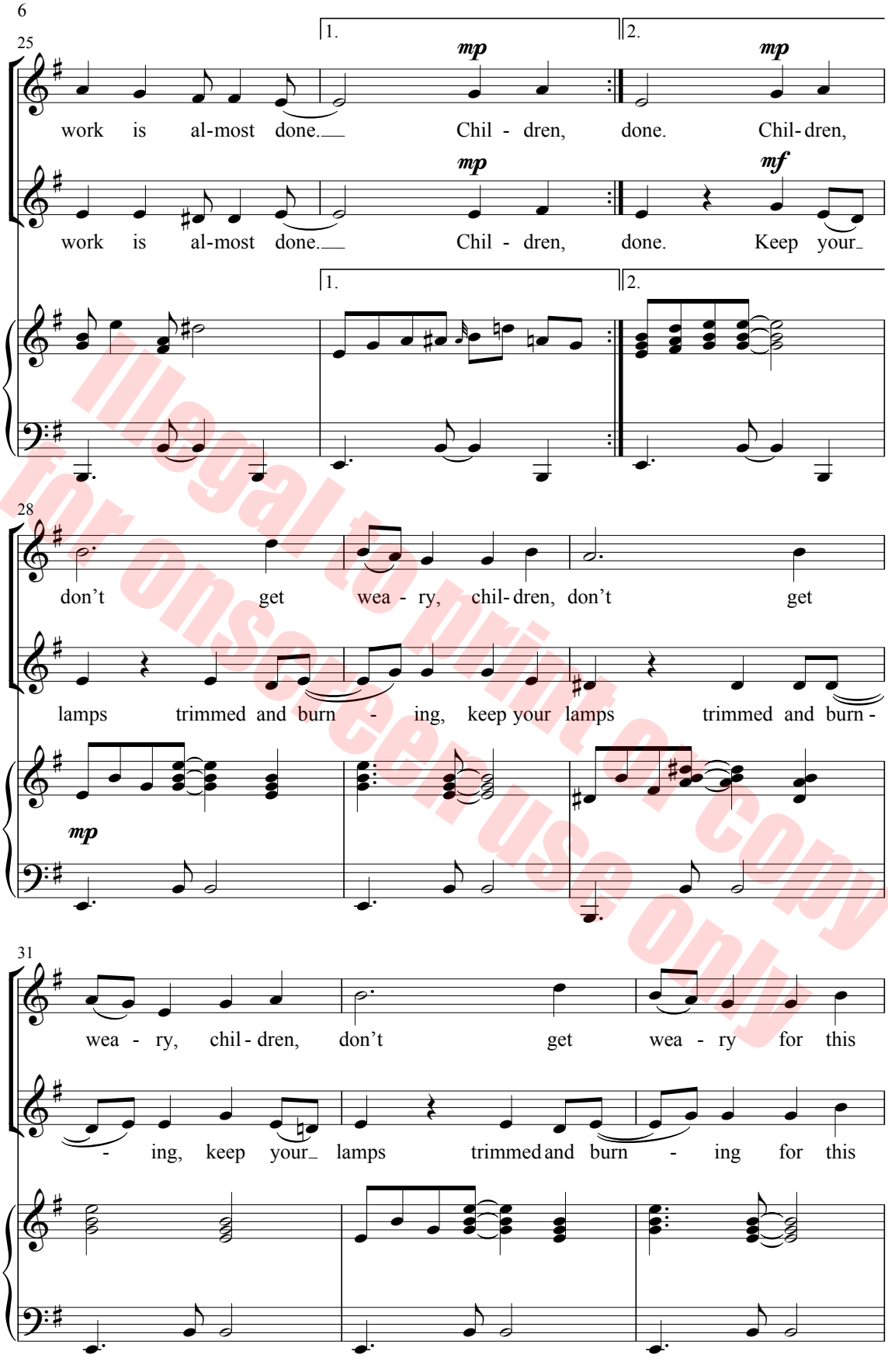

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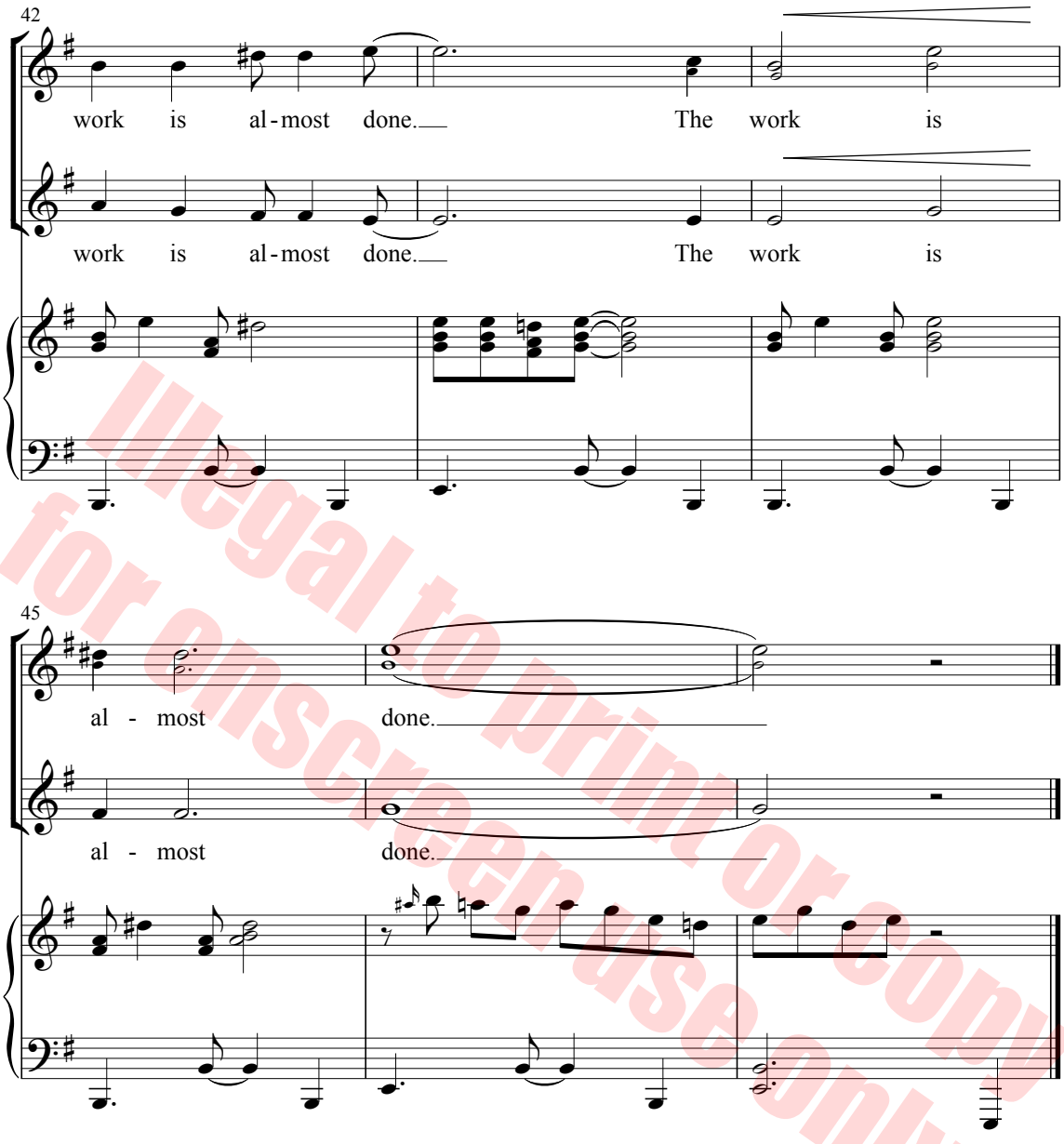

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