Commissioned by the women of Cantabile
in celebration of their 20th Anniversary (2001–2021)

Program Notes

Help is the first of three compositions based on Anne Lamott's book *Help Thanks Wow: Three Essential Prayers*, her unique take on keeping prayer simple. Responding with these three words alters how we see things. Asking for help makes us feel less helpless. Giving thanks reminds us of the good in our lives. Uttering "wow" means we notice wonders around us. As C. S. Lewis wrote, "prayer changes me."

Following the longstanding choral tradition of the sung mass, I translated some of Lamott's writings into Latin including one word for each prayer: adiuva (help), gratias (thanks), and mirabilia (wonderful). I musicalized the natural rise and fall of Lamott's words, noting that "wow" is really a series of vowels: oo-ah-oo, as is "ow" (ah-oo) in response to pain (prelude).

The recurring interval of a minor second creates aural tension, a corollary to emotional anguish. This half step, specifically between a white piano key above a black one, captures a piercing clash, a visible reminder of a white police officer kneeling on the neck of a black man pleading for his life.

The chantlike Latin phrases at the end of each movement reflect the speaker's altered state, transformed by the act of praying. For the final movement, I incorporated Lamott's translation of amen: "and so it is," as if to say, "it's out of my hands"—making peace with uncertainty through surrender, letting prayer change us.

—Philip E. Silvey

Text

Adiuva nos ambulare per hoc
(Help us walk through this.)
Hold my friends in your light.
Rerum a depto melius cum quaeritur auxilium
(Things get better when we ask for help.)

—Anne Lamott

Philip E. Silvey is Associate Professor of Music Teaching and Learning at the Eastman School of Music where he teaches the Treble Chorus, Choral Arranging, and other courses in music education. He has served as guest conductor, clinician, and adjudicator in numerous states and directed state honors choruses in Maryland, Virginia, New York, New Jersey, and Georgia. He held the position of president of the Maryland-DC chapter of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and the role of Repertoire and Resources Chair for SSAA Choirs for the New York state chapter of ACDA. He has presented interest sessions at the International Society for Music Education World Conference and at national, regional, and state ACDA and NAfME (National Association for Music Education) conferences in the United States. He has contributed to two textbook series, *Experiencing Choral Music* and *Teaching Music through Performance in Choir, Volumes II* and *III.* His scholarly writings have been published in the *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *Music Educators Journal*, the *Bulletin for the Council for Research in Music Education*, *Choral Journal*, and the *Arts and Learning Research Journal*. His choral compositions and arrangements, published by Santa Barbara Music, Carl Fischer, Boosey & Hawkes, Hal Leonard, and E. C. Schirmer Music Company have been performed by all-state and national honors choruses in the United States. Learn more at www.ecspublishing.com.

AVAILABLE EDITIONS

Complete work		*Available individually*	
Help, Thanks, Wow	1.3767	**Help**	**1.3717**
		Thanks	1.3736
		Wow	1.3737

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Catalog No. 1.3717

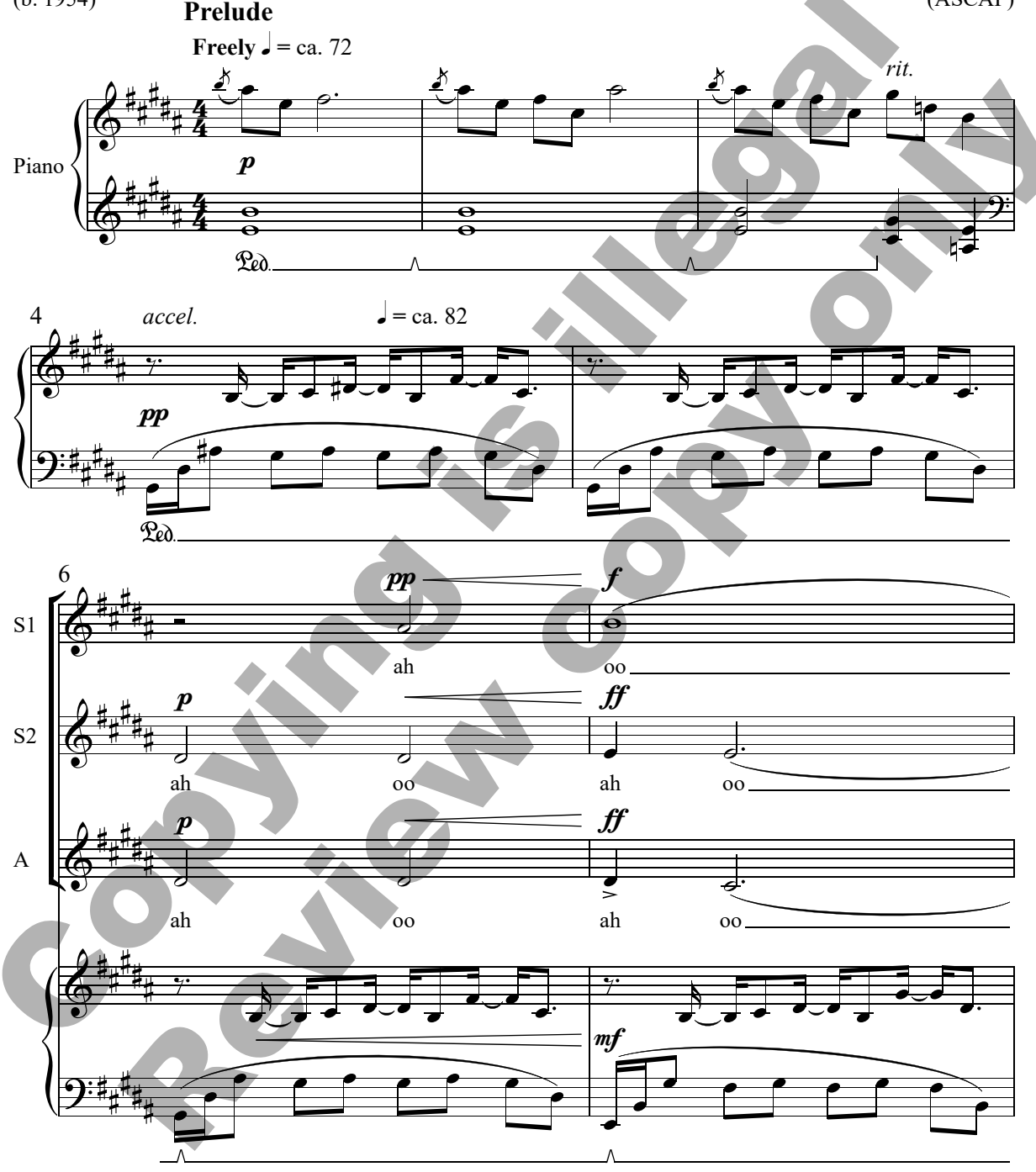
Help

Adiuva

for SSA Chorus and Piano

Anne Lamott
(b. 1954)

Philip E. Silvey
(ASCAP)



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Text: Excerpts from HELP, THANKS, WOW: THREE ESSENTIAL PRAYERS by Anne Lamott.
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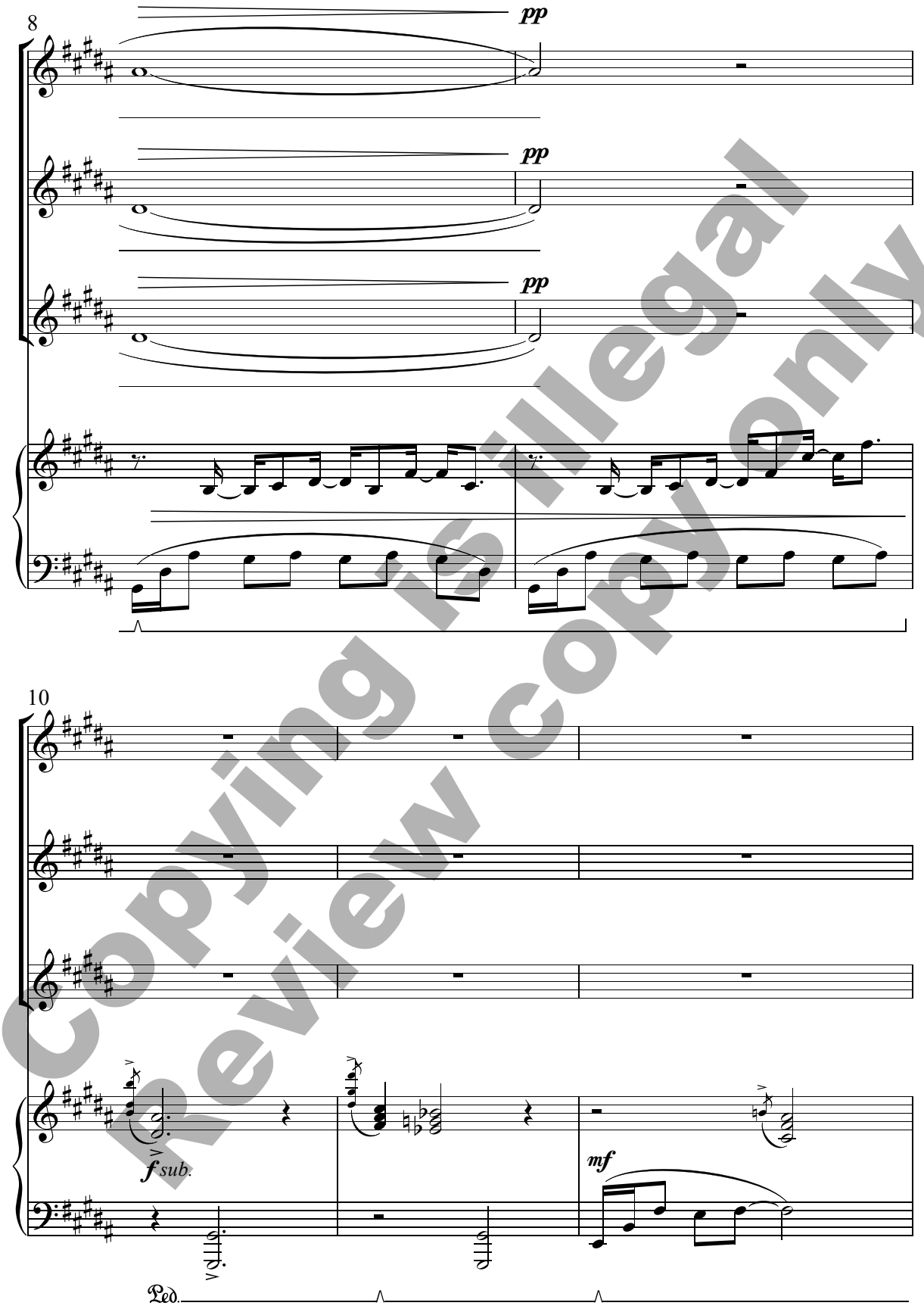

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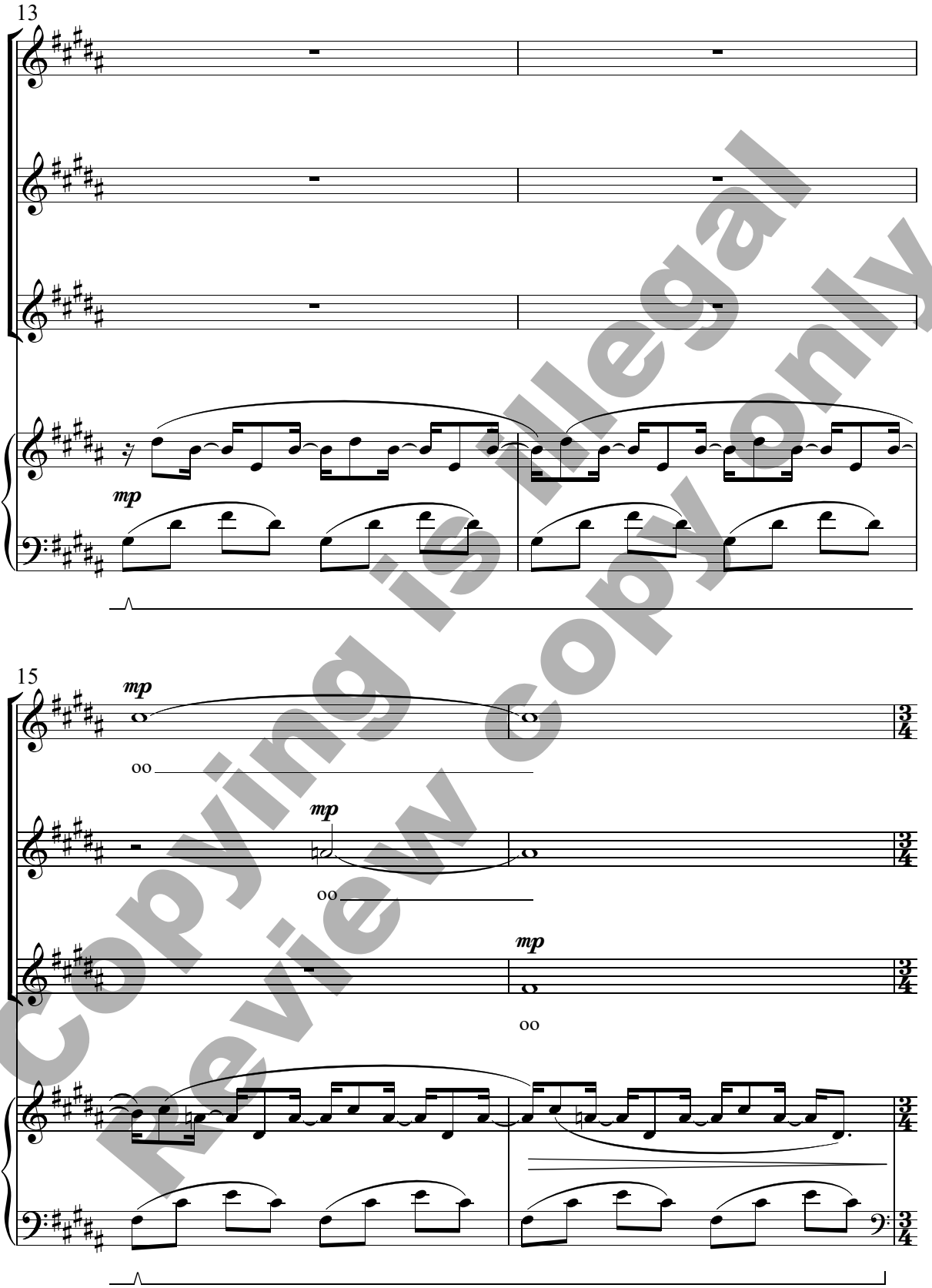

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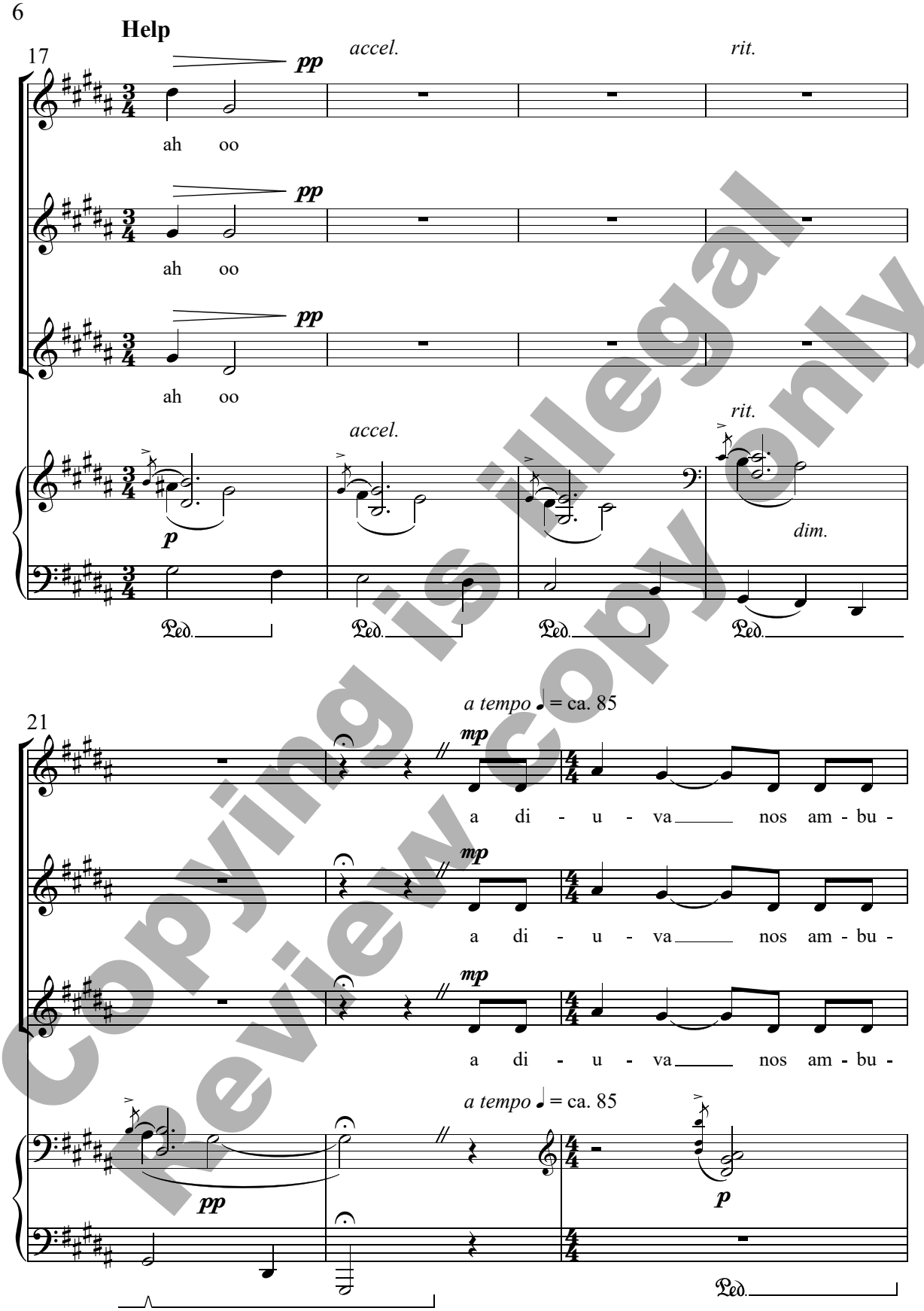

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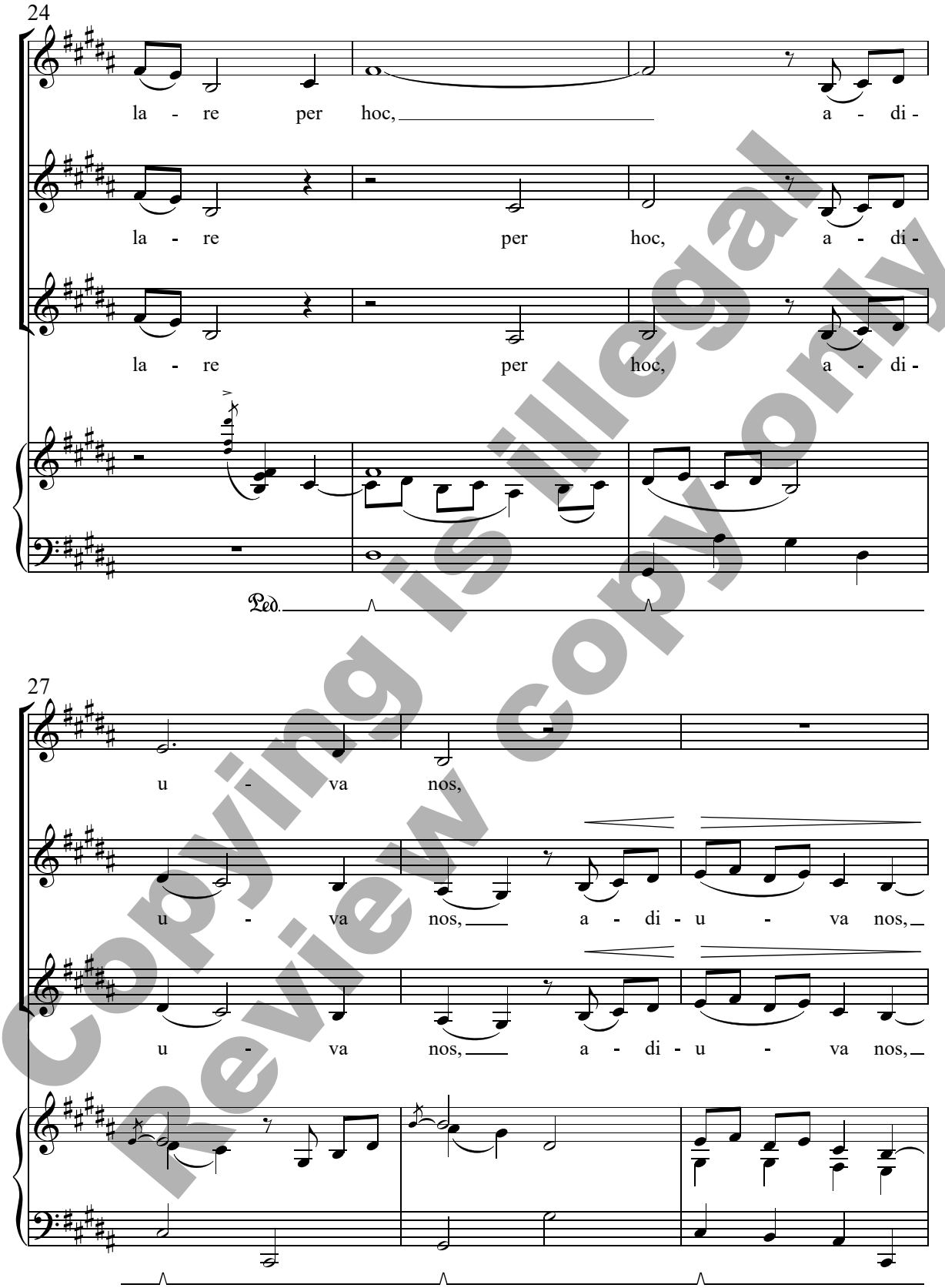

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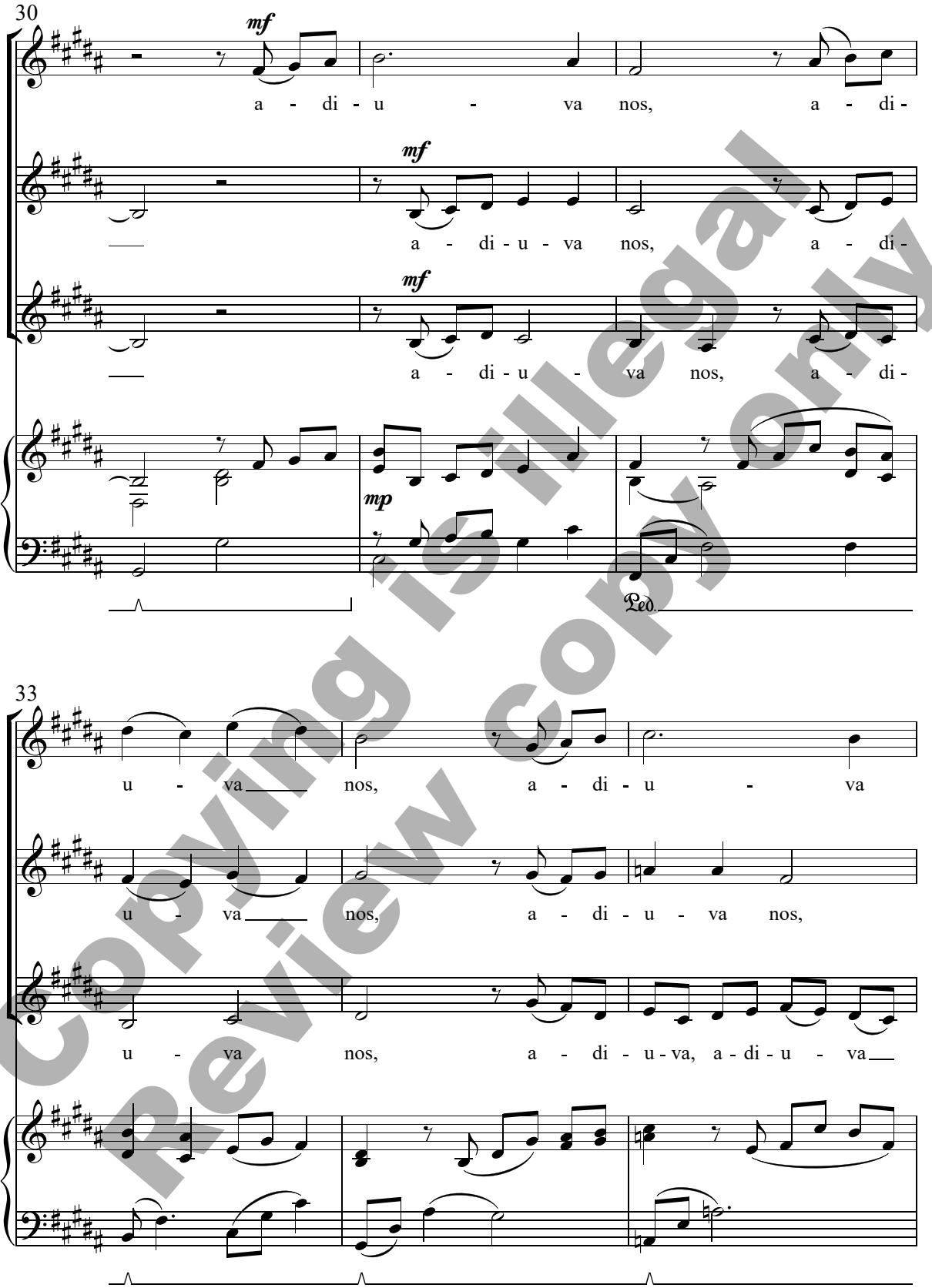

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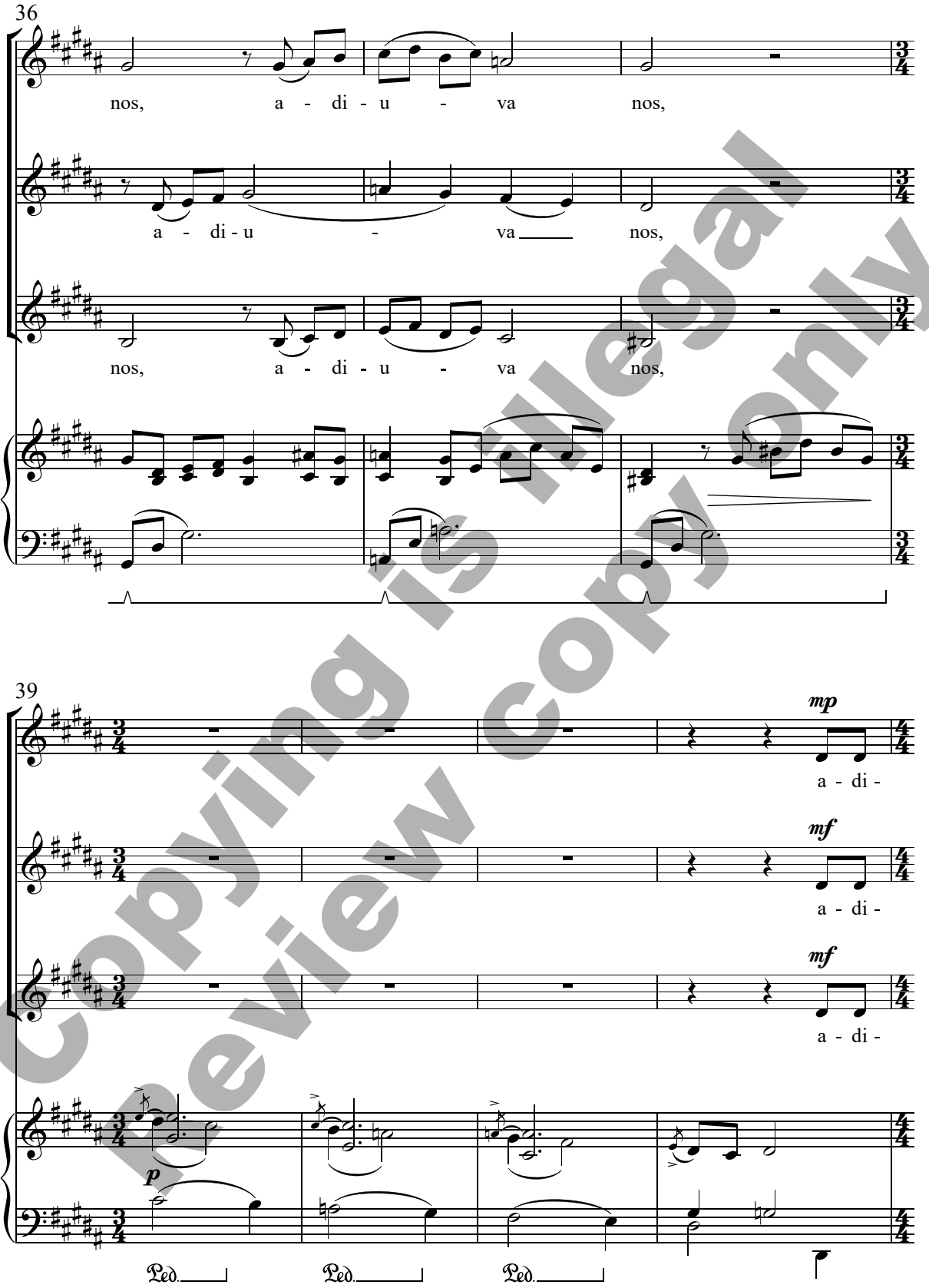

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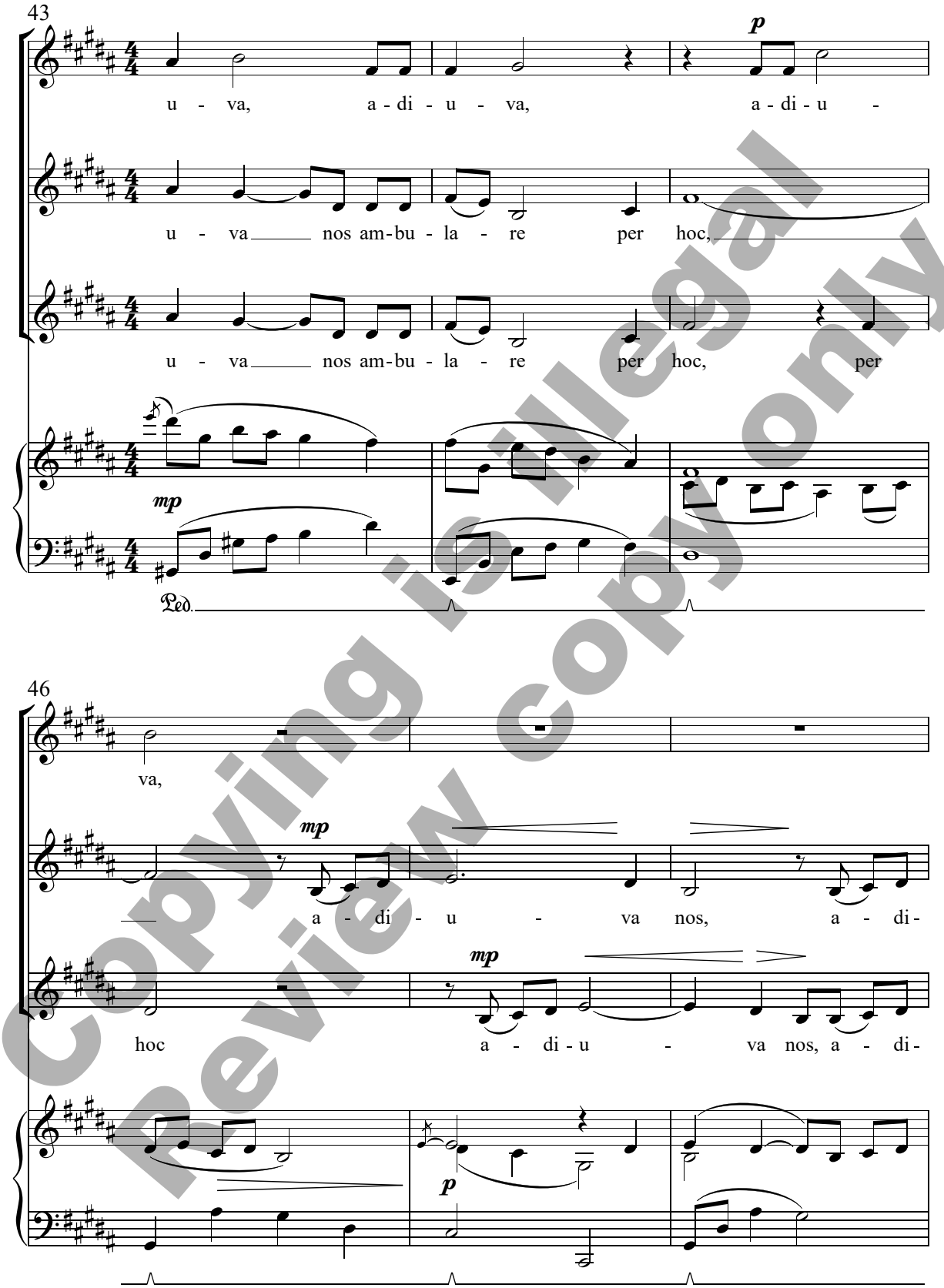

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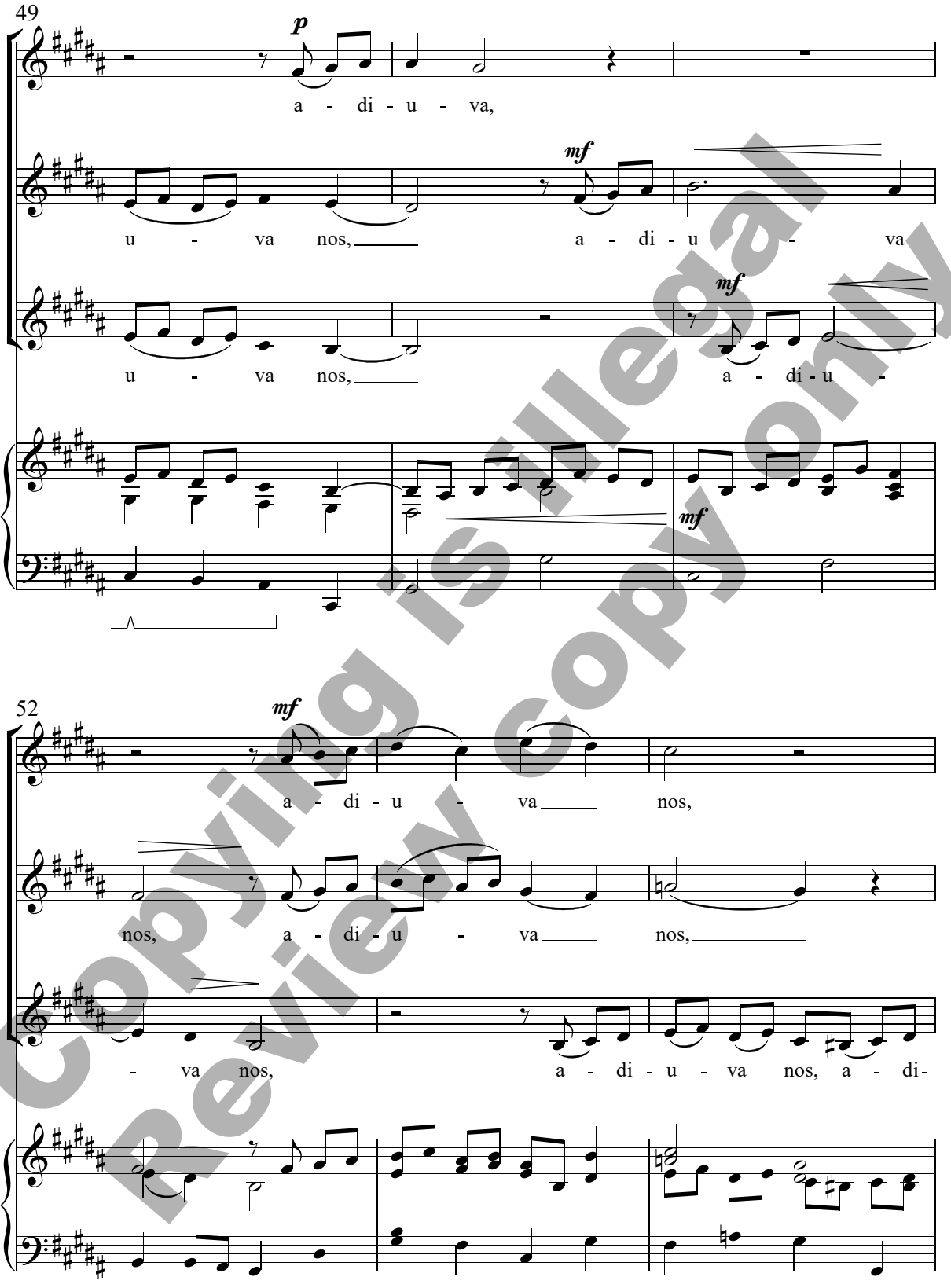

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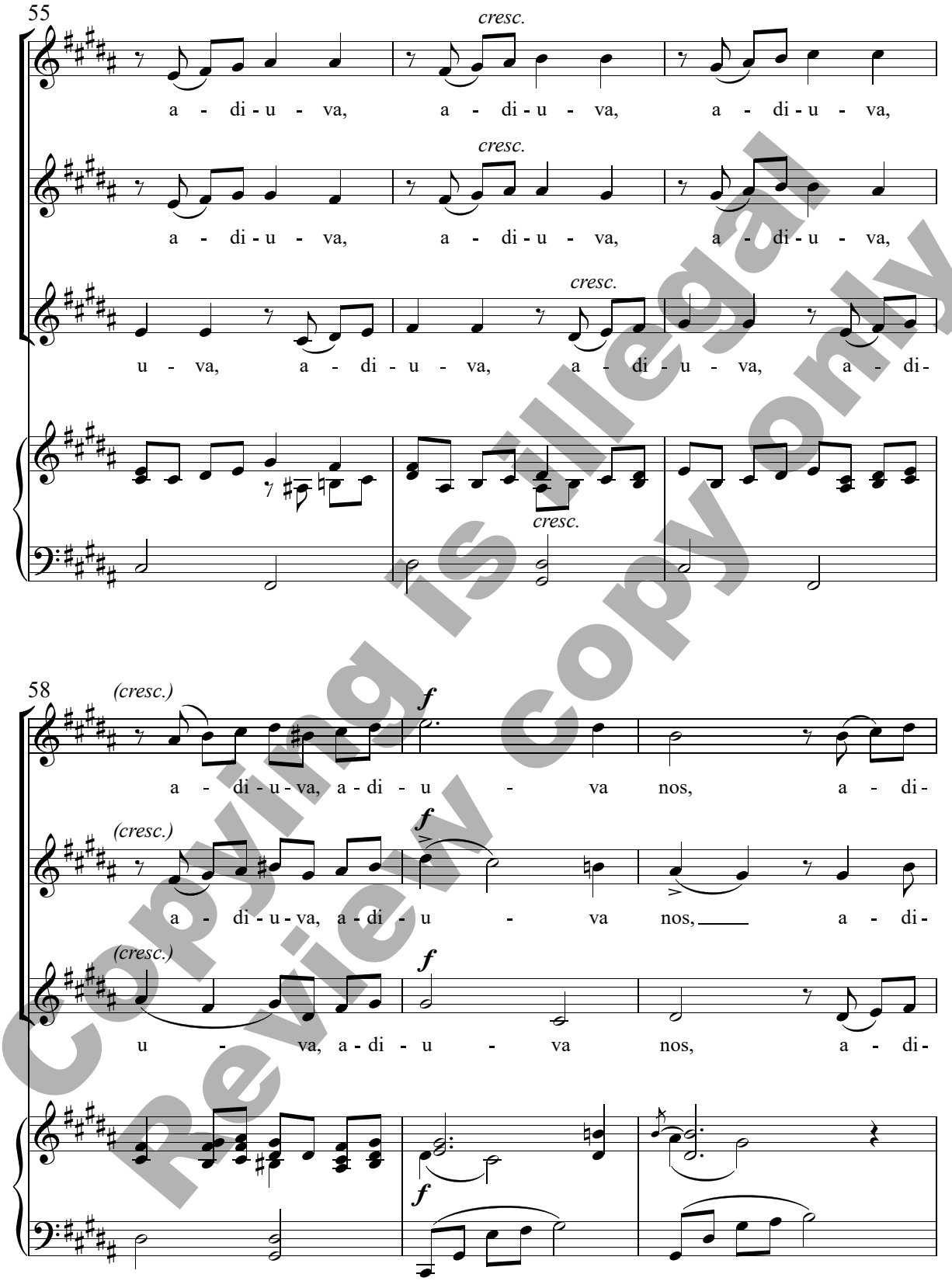

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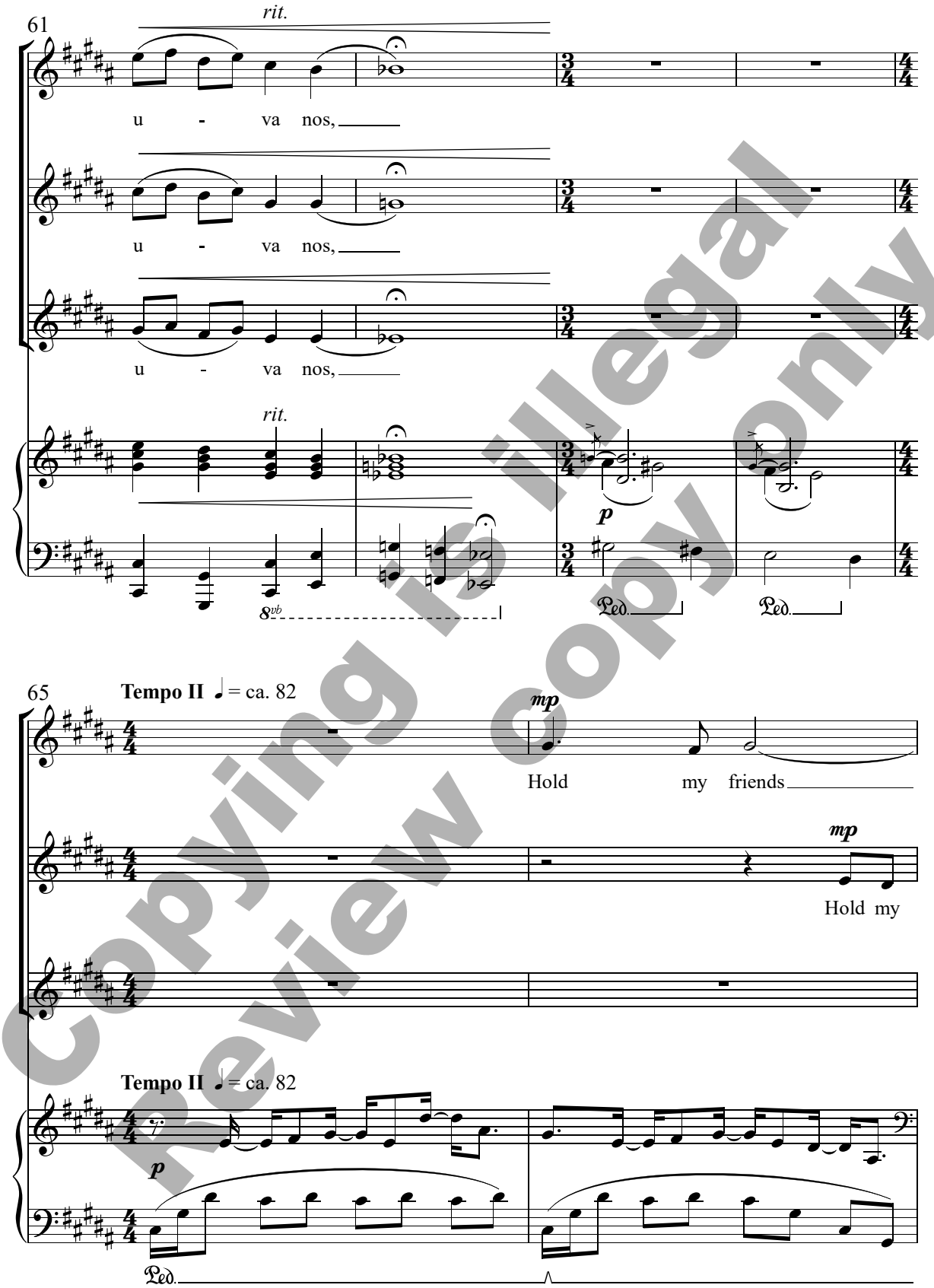

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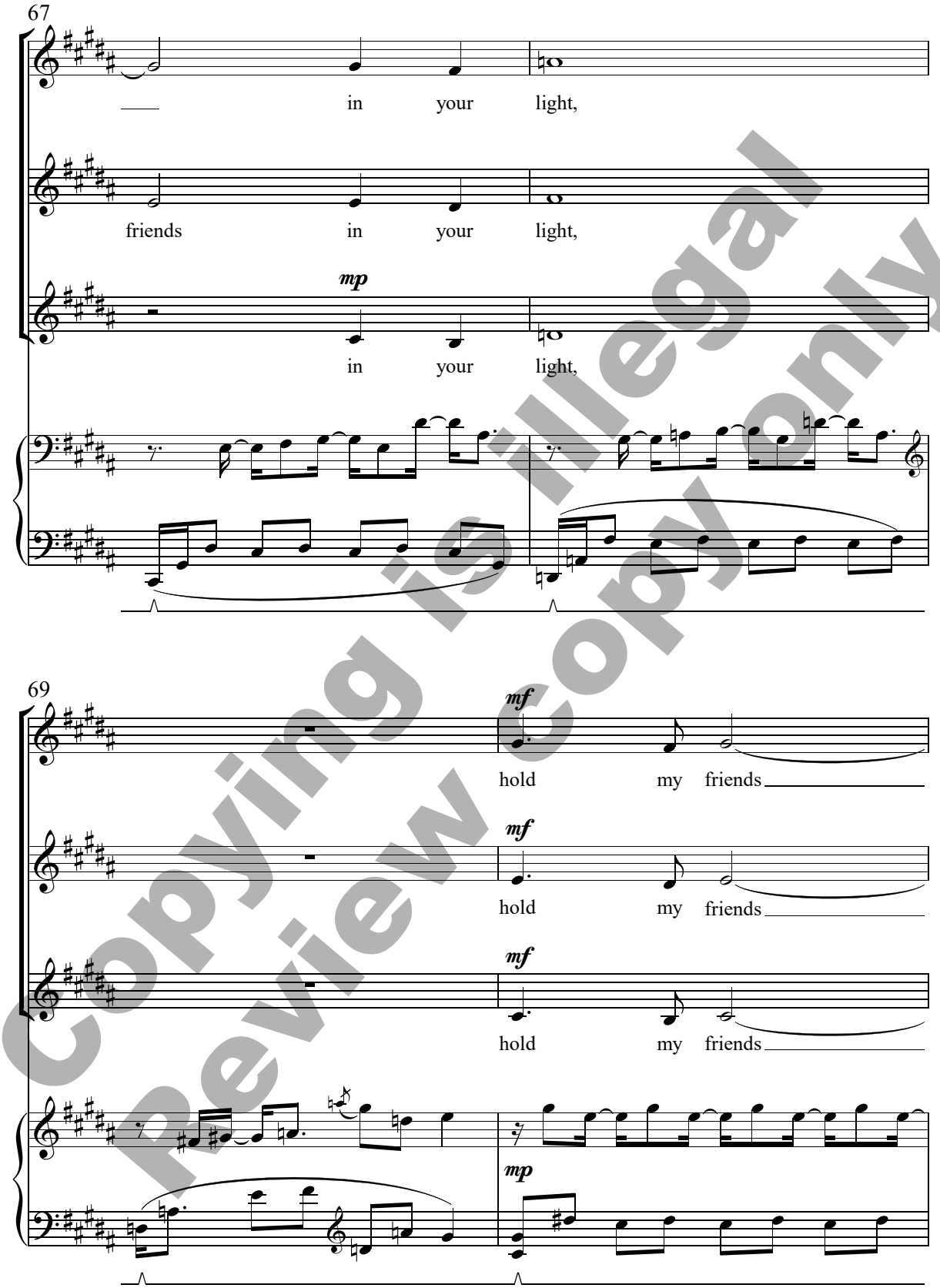

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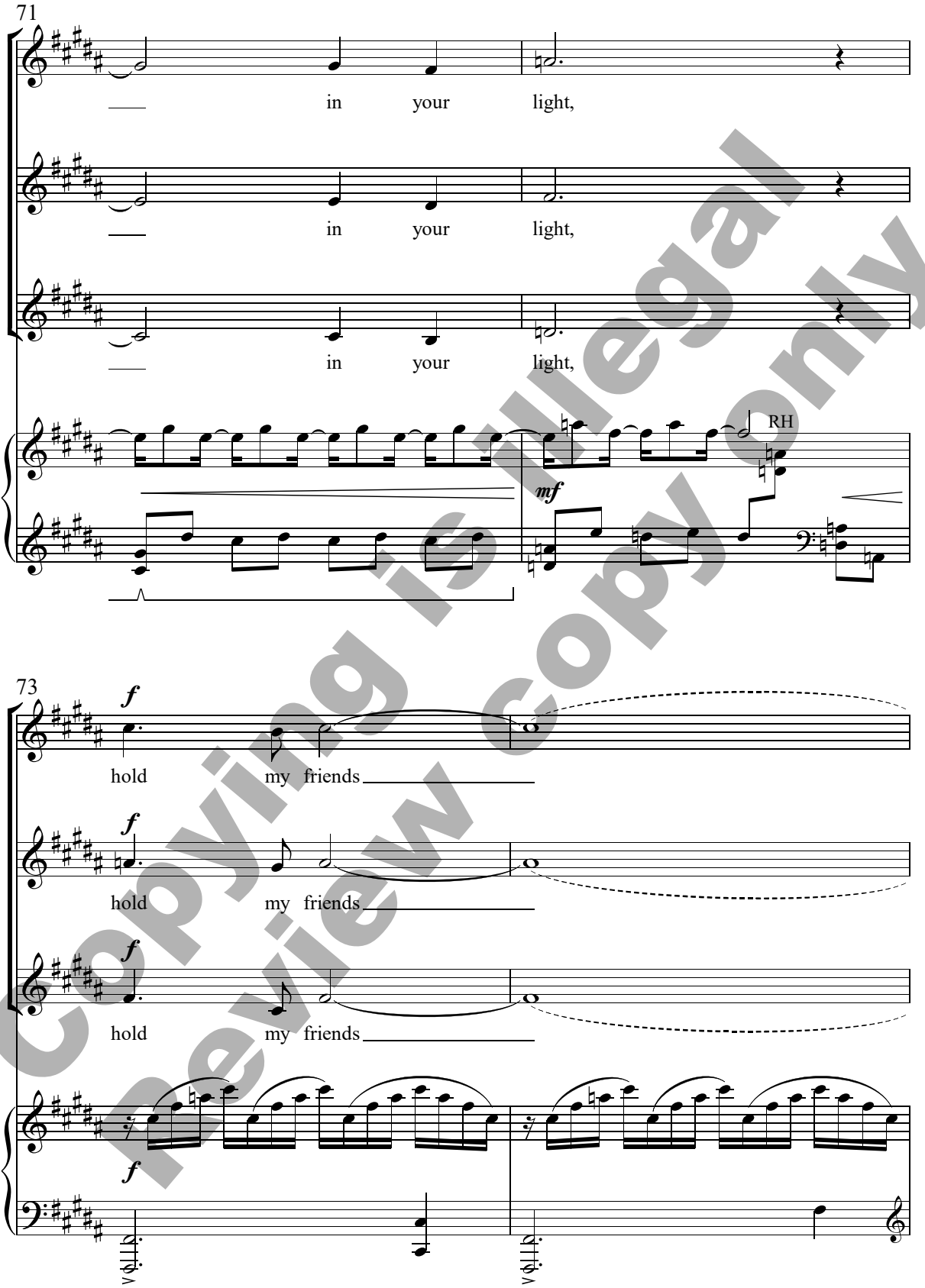

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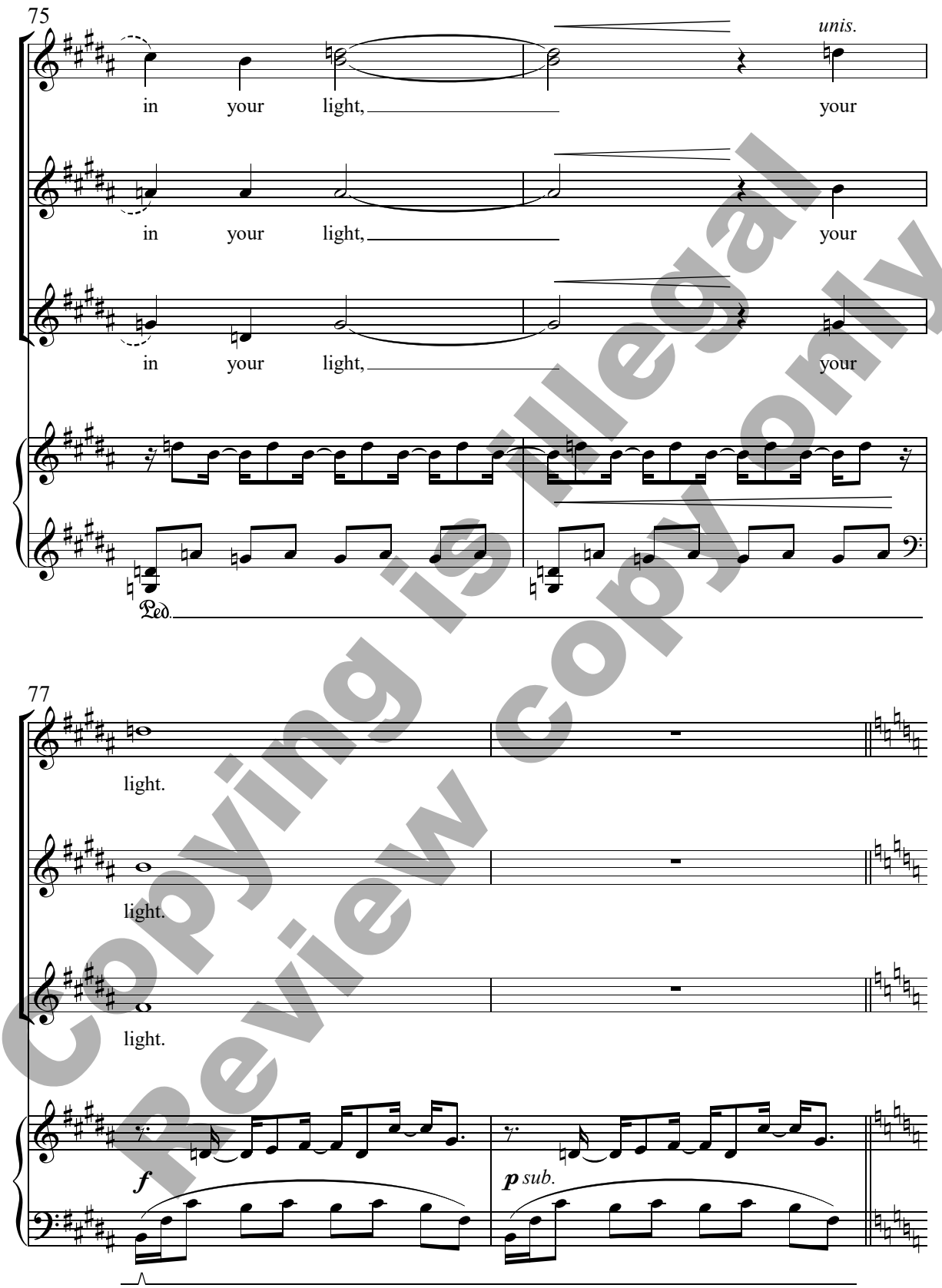

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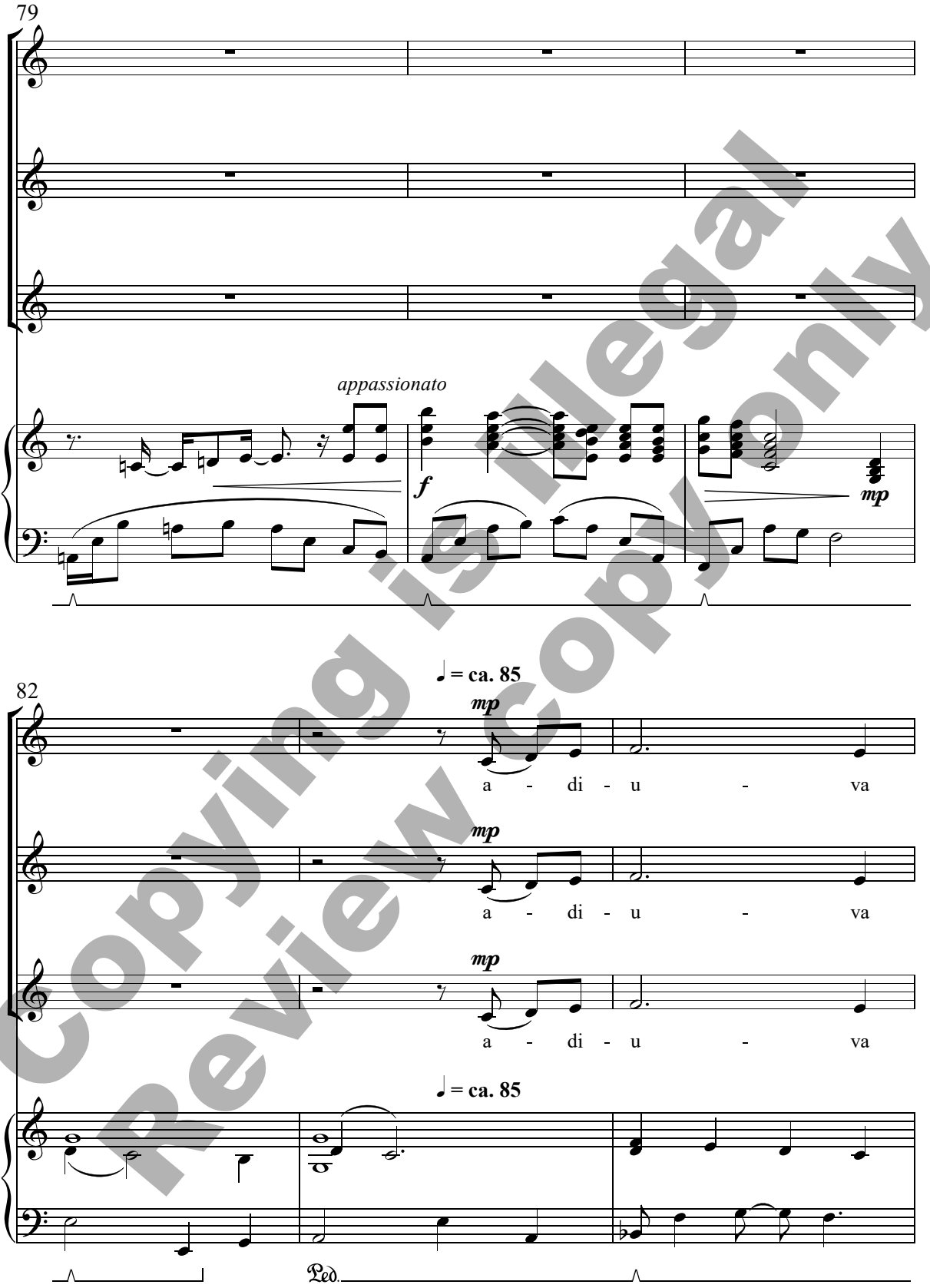

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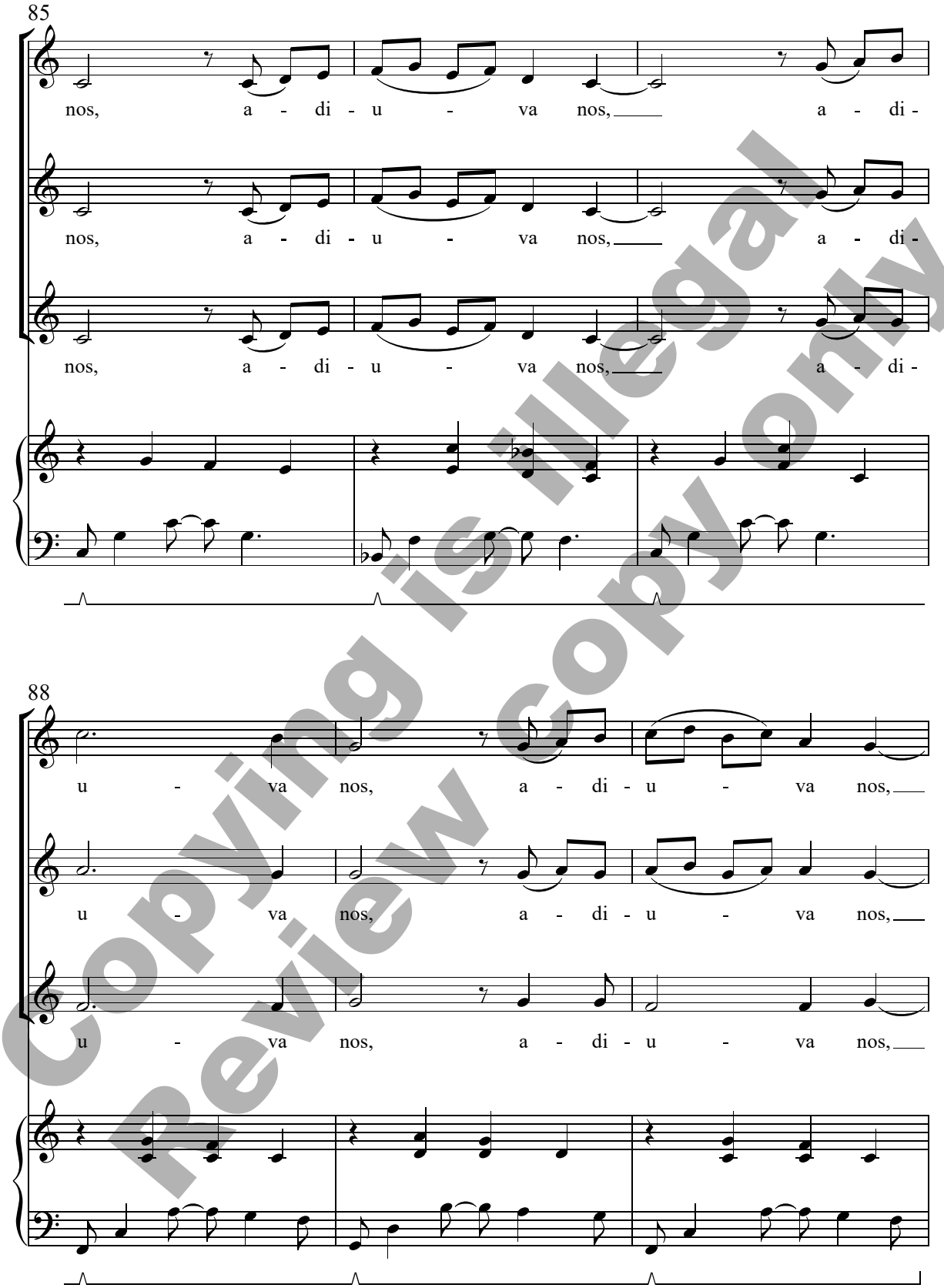

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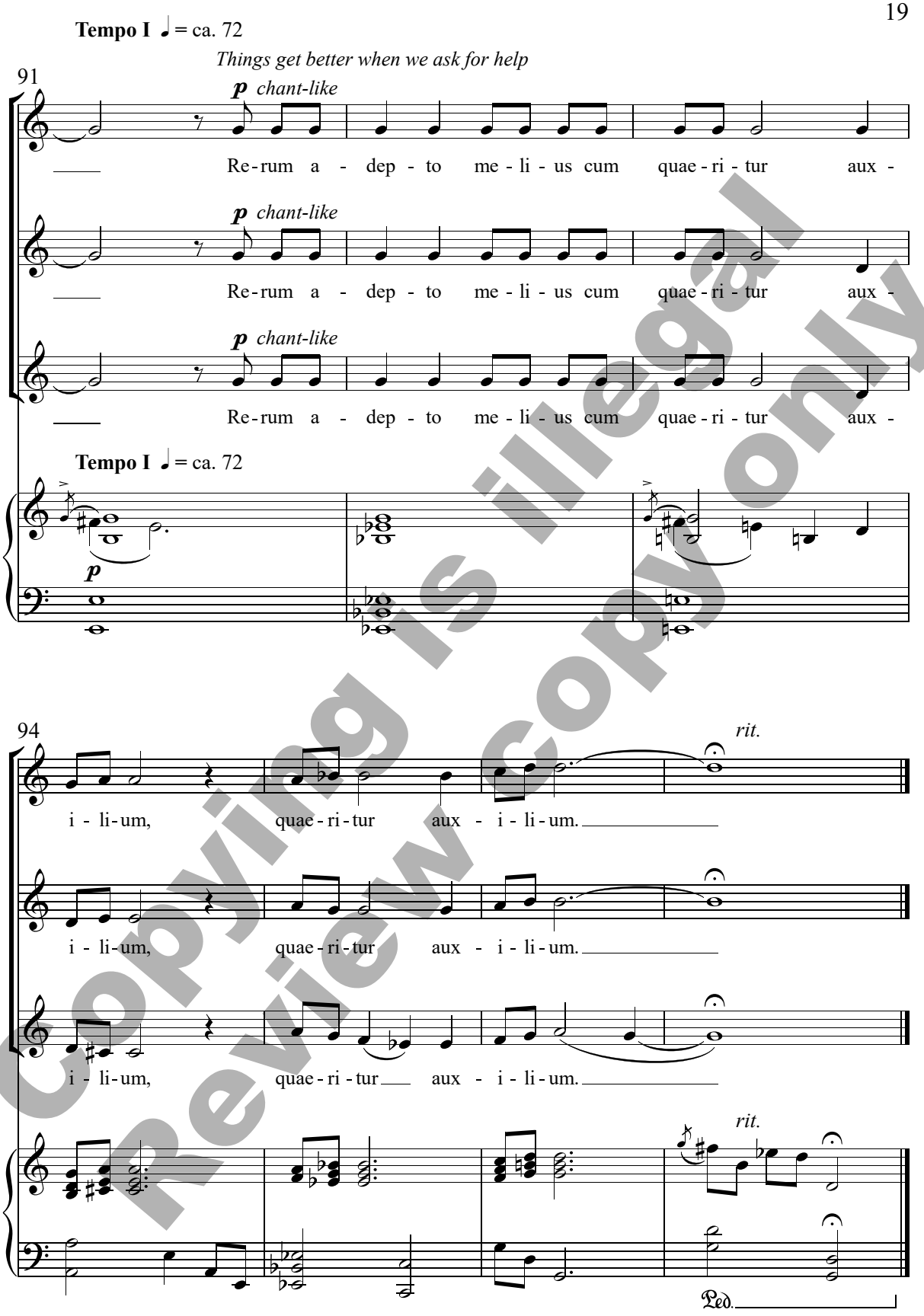

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