Carol Barnett

Longing for Home

*I. Jerusalem

II. Mother

III. Voyager Dust

IV. A Letter to Marianne Moore

V. Dancing Toward the Promised Land

A song cycle for mezzo, baritone, and piano

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JERUSALEM (after Halevi)

Beautiful heights, city of a great King,
From the western coast my desire burns towards thee.
Pity and tenderness burst in me, remembering
Thy former glories, thy temple now broken stones.
I wish I could fly to thee on the wings of an eagle
And mingle my tears with thy dust.
I have sought thee, love, though the King is not there
And instead of Gilead's balm, snakes and scorpions.
Let me fall on thy broken stones and tenderly kiss them—
The taste of thy dust will be sweeter than honey to me.

Robert Mezey (b. 1935)

duration: c. 2:45

Composer's note

Physician, poet and philosopher Judah Halevi was born in Spain, in 1075 or 1086, and died in 1141 shortly after arriving in the Holy Land. He is considered one of the greatest Hebrew poets, celebrated both for his religious and his secular works, many of which appear in present-day Jewish liturgy. American poet and academic Robert Mezey is also a noted translator. He was born in Philadelphia and attended Kenyon College, the University of Iowa, and Stanford University. He has held various teaching positions and retired in 1999 after 23 years at Pomona College. He currently resides in Maryland.

Jerusalem is the first of five songs comprising *Longing for Home*, a cycle written to celebrate Source Song Festival's fifth season. The texts all reference homecoming in various ways – the enduring wish to return to a place remembered with love and longing, as well as the uncertainty, the impossibility of doing so. The musical influences of *Jerusalem* include Jewish liturgical cantillation, middle-eastern scales with their frequent augmented seconds, and word-painting – the soaring of an eagle, the excruciating sting of a scorpion.

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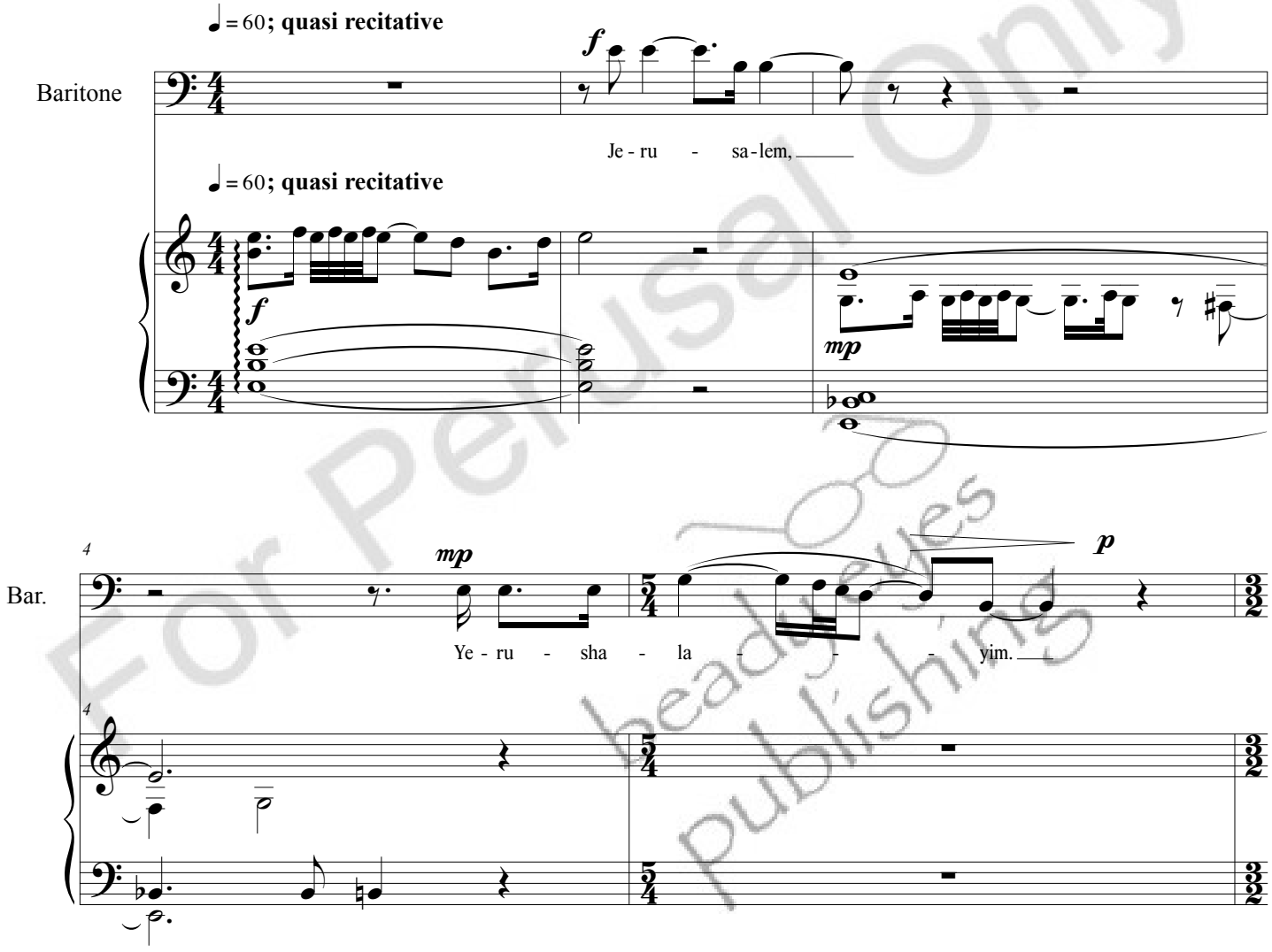
LONGING FOR HOME

I. Jerusalem

Judah Halevi
translated by Robert Mezey

Carol Barnett



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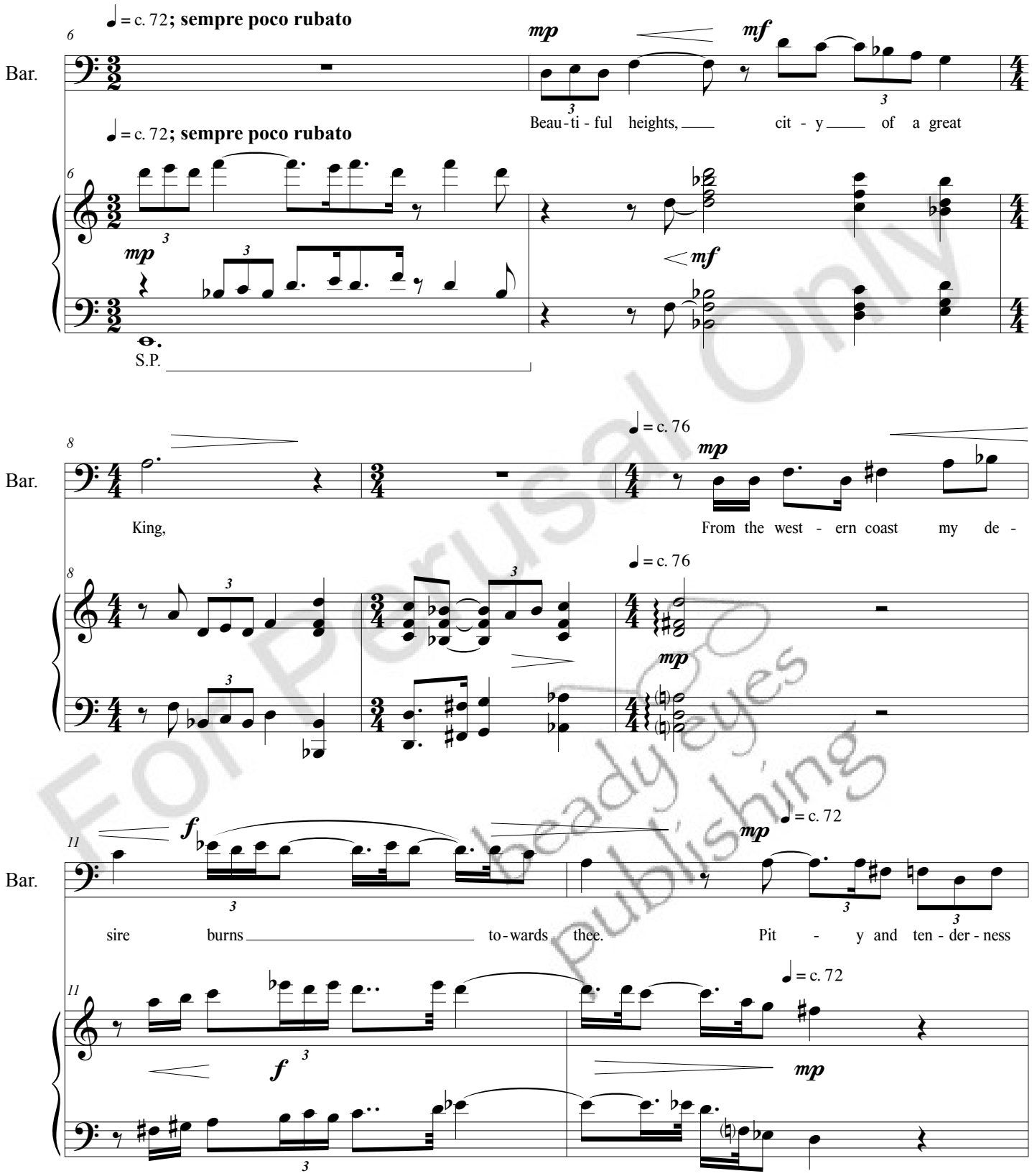

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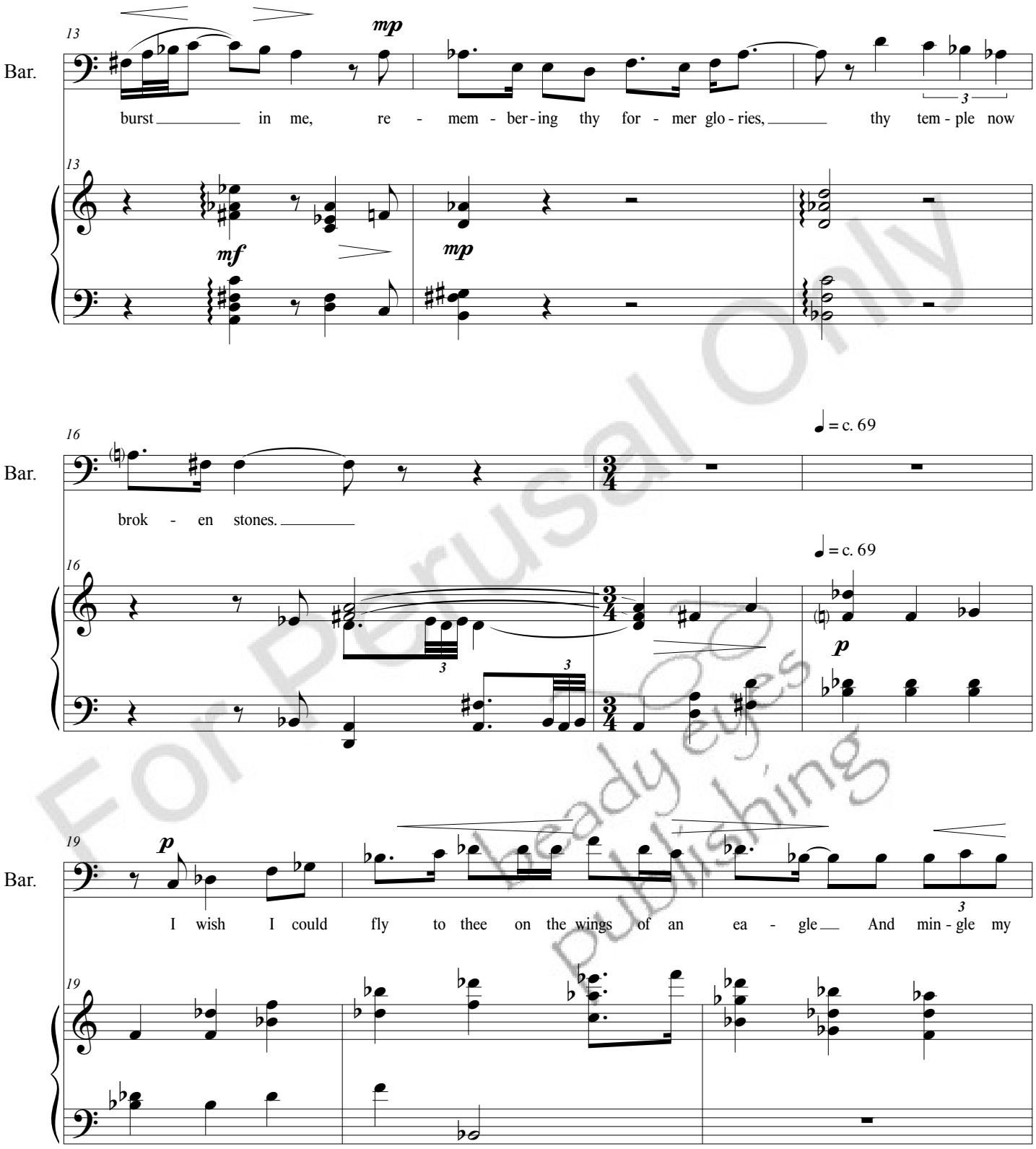

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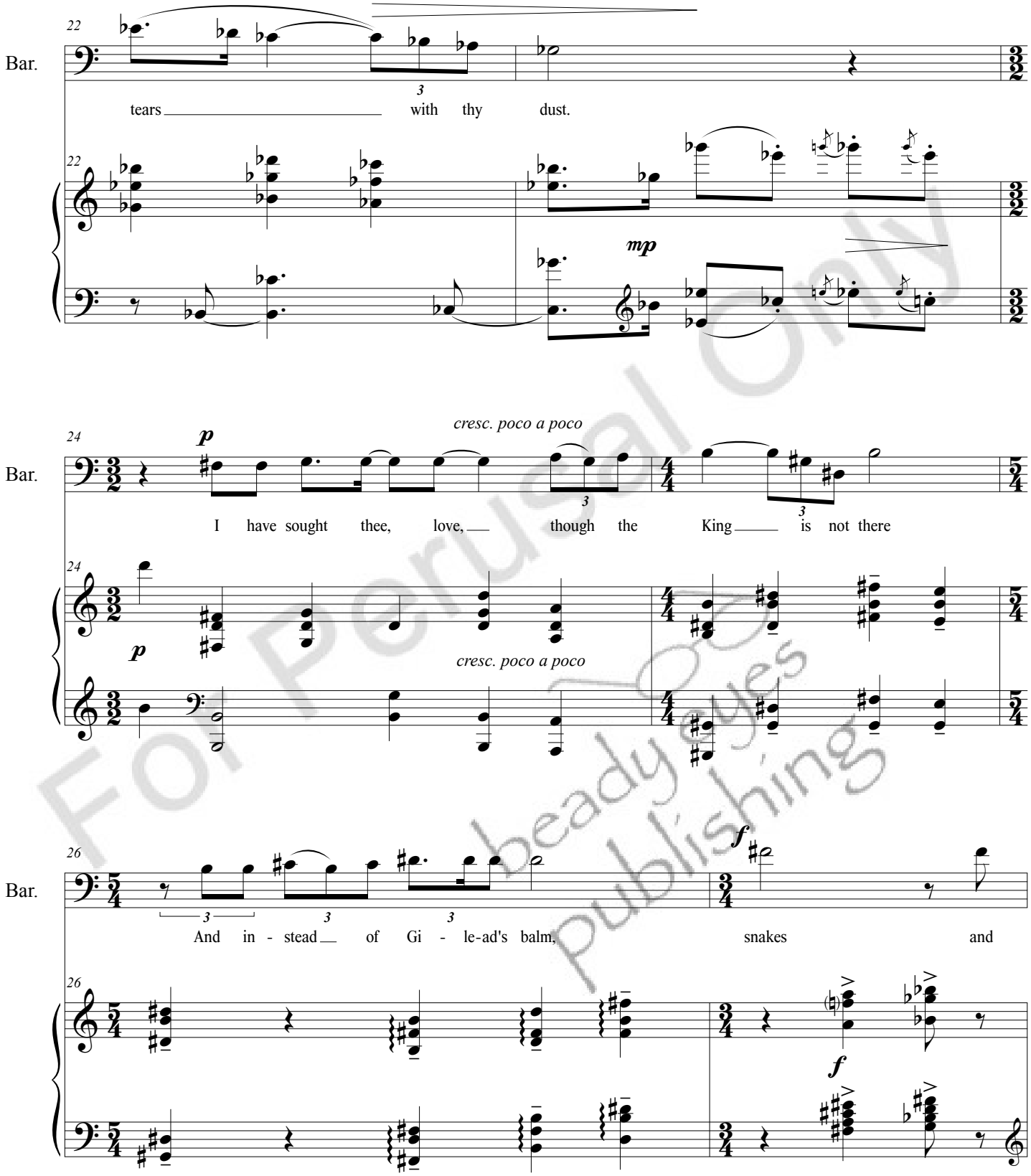

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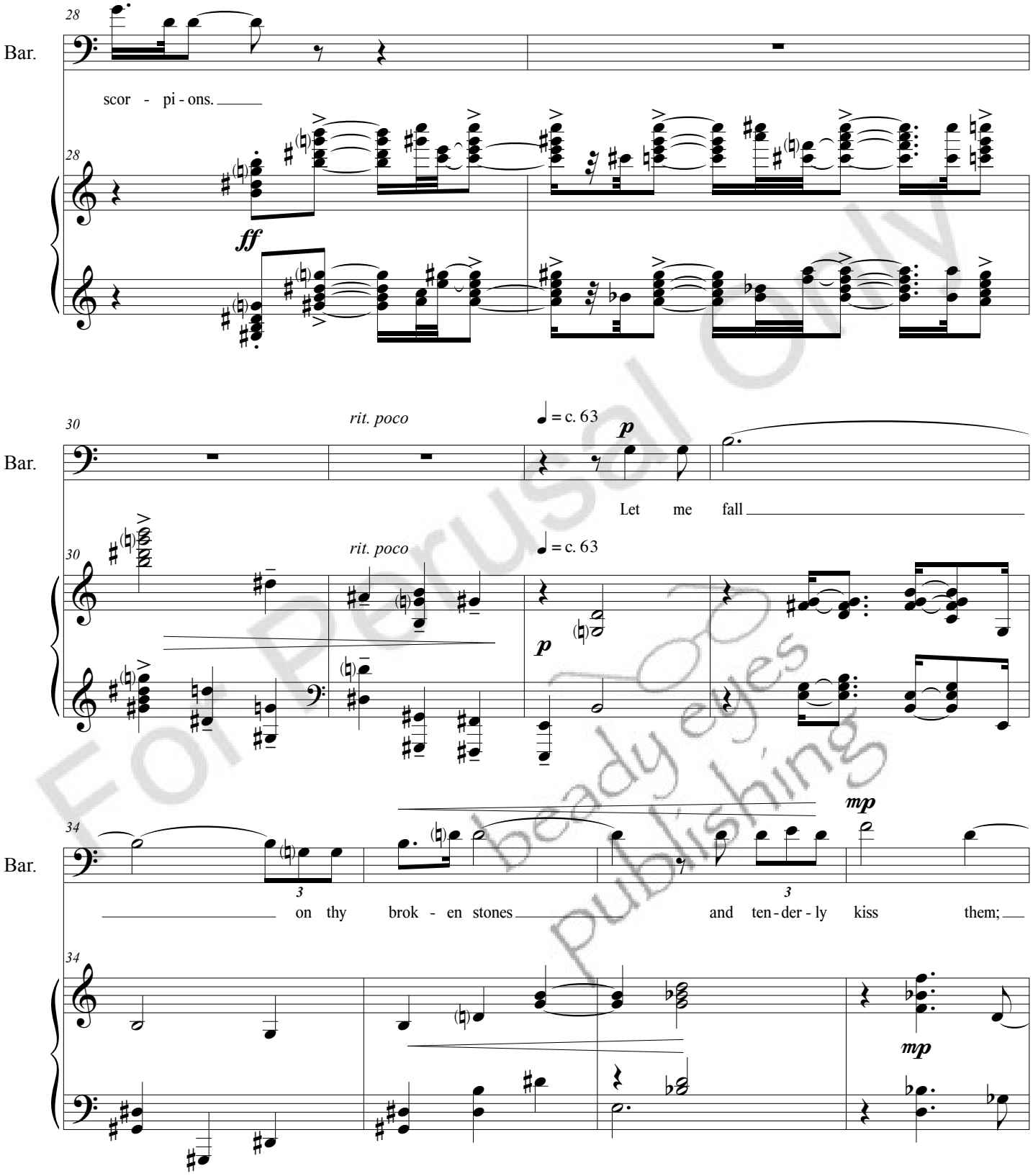

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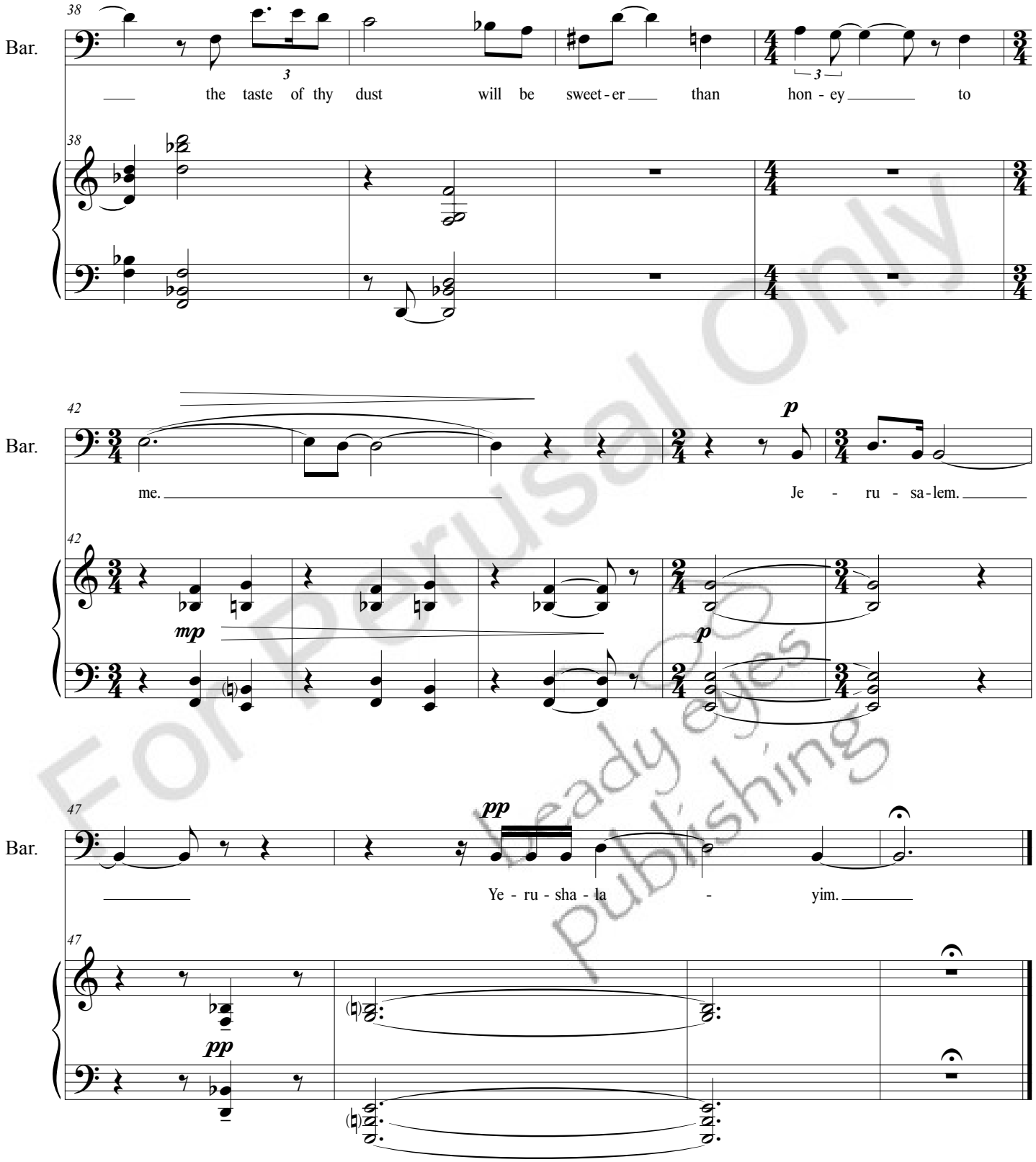

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MOTHER

I wish that I could talk with her again.
That's what I thought of when I thought of home,
Always supposing I had a home to come to.
If she were here, we'd warm the Chinese pot
To brew a jasmine-scented elixir,
And I would tell her how my life has been—
All the parts that don't make sense to me,
And she would let me talk until the parts
Fitted together.

That will never be.
She couldn't wait for me to come to her—
Ten years away. I couldn't wish for her
To wait, all blind and helpless as she was.
So now I have come home to emptiness:
No silly welcome-rhyme, no happy tears,
No eager questioning. No way to get
An answer to my questions. Silence fills
The rooms that once were vibrant with her song,
And all the things I wanted to talk out
With her are locked forever in my heart.

I wander through the rooms where she is not.
Alone I sit on the hassock by her chair,
And there, at last, I seem to hear her voice:
"You're a big girl now. You can work things out."

Bea Exner Liu (1907-1997)

duration: c. 3:45

Composer's note

Bea Exner Liu was born and raised in Northfield, Minnesota, and graduated from Carleton College. She moved to China in 1935 to teach English, since teaching positions were scarce in the United States during the Depression. While there, she married a Chinese classmate from Carleton, and witnessed the Japanese invasion of China during the years 1935 to 1945. The eventuality of a Communist takeover finally brought Liu and her family back to Minnesota. She later published an award-winning children's book as well as her memoir, *Remembering China, 1935–1945*.

Mother is the second of five songs comprising *Longing for Home,* a cycle written to celebrate Source Song Festival's fifth season. The texts all reference homecoming in various ways – the enduring wish to return to a place remembered with love and longing, as well as the uncertainty, the impossibility of doing so. The music of *Mother* mirrors the unsettled sadness of a daughter's long-delayed visit home, now bereft of its center of gravity. Memories of beloved rituals, of a sympathetic ear, are brought to life once more by the nearness of familiar objects, and finally, the almost tangible sound of her mother's voice: "You're a big girl now. You can work it out."

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LONGING FOR HOME

II. Mother

Bea Exner Liu (1907-1997) Carol Barnett

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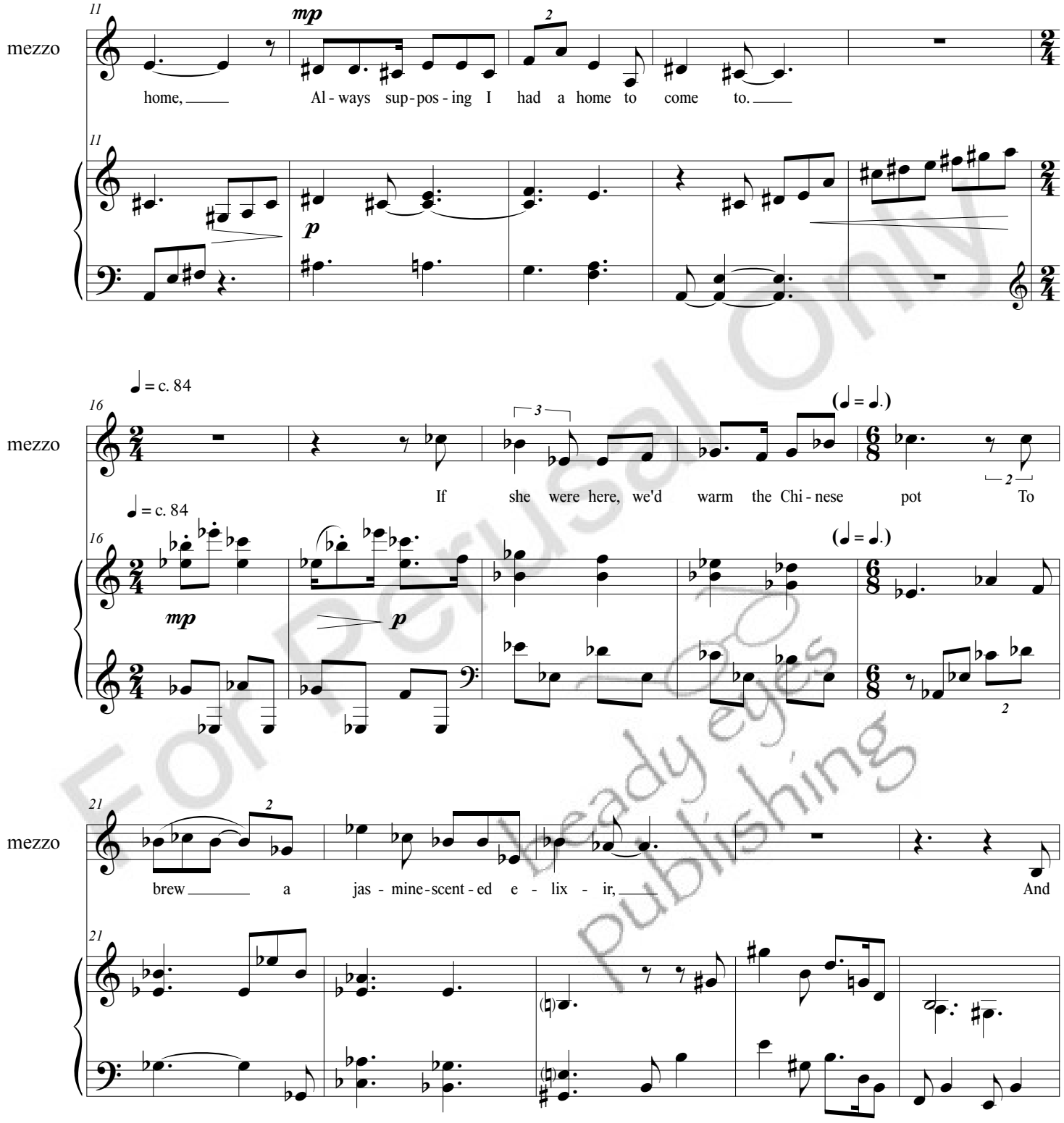

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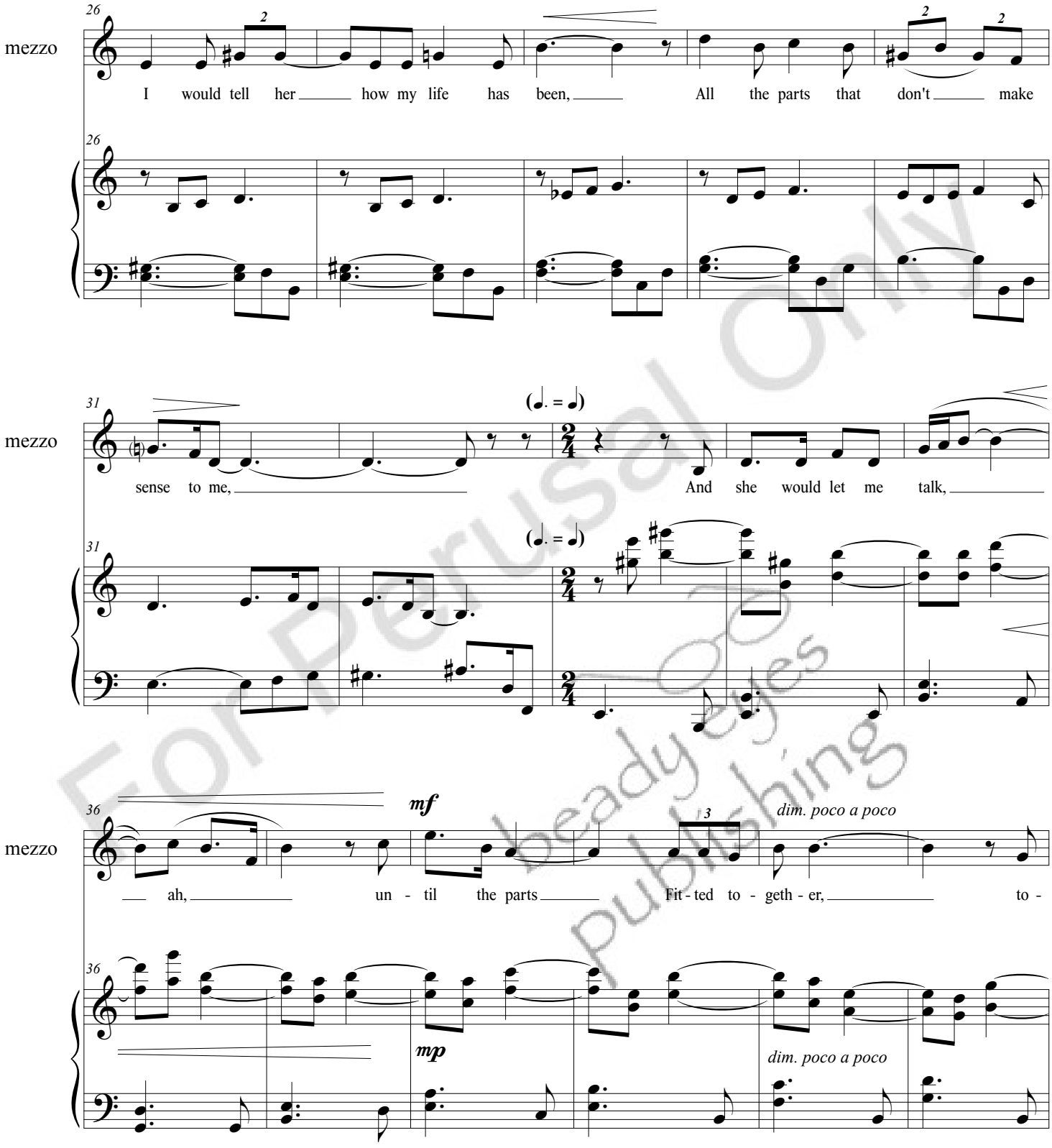

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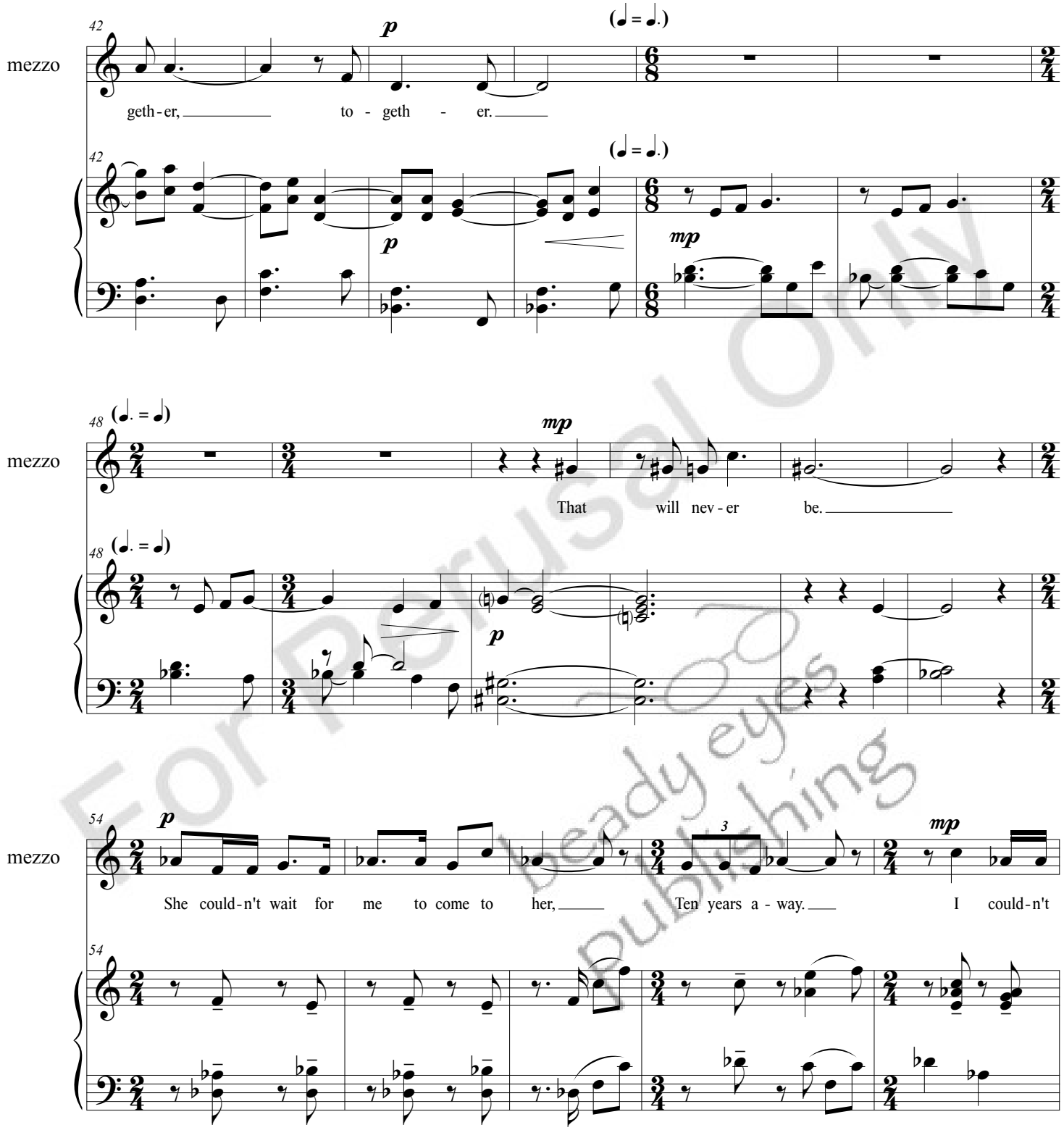

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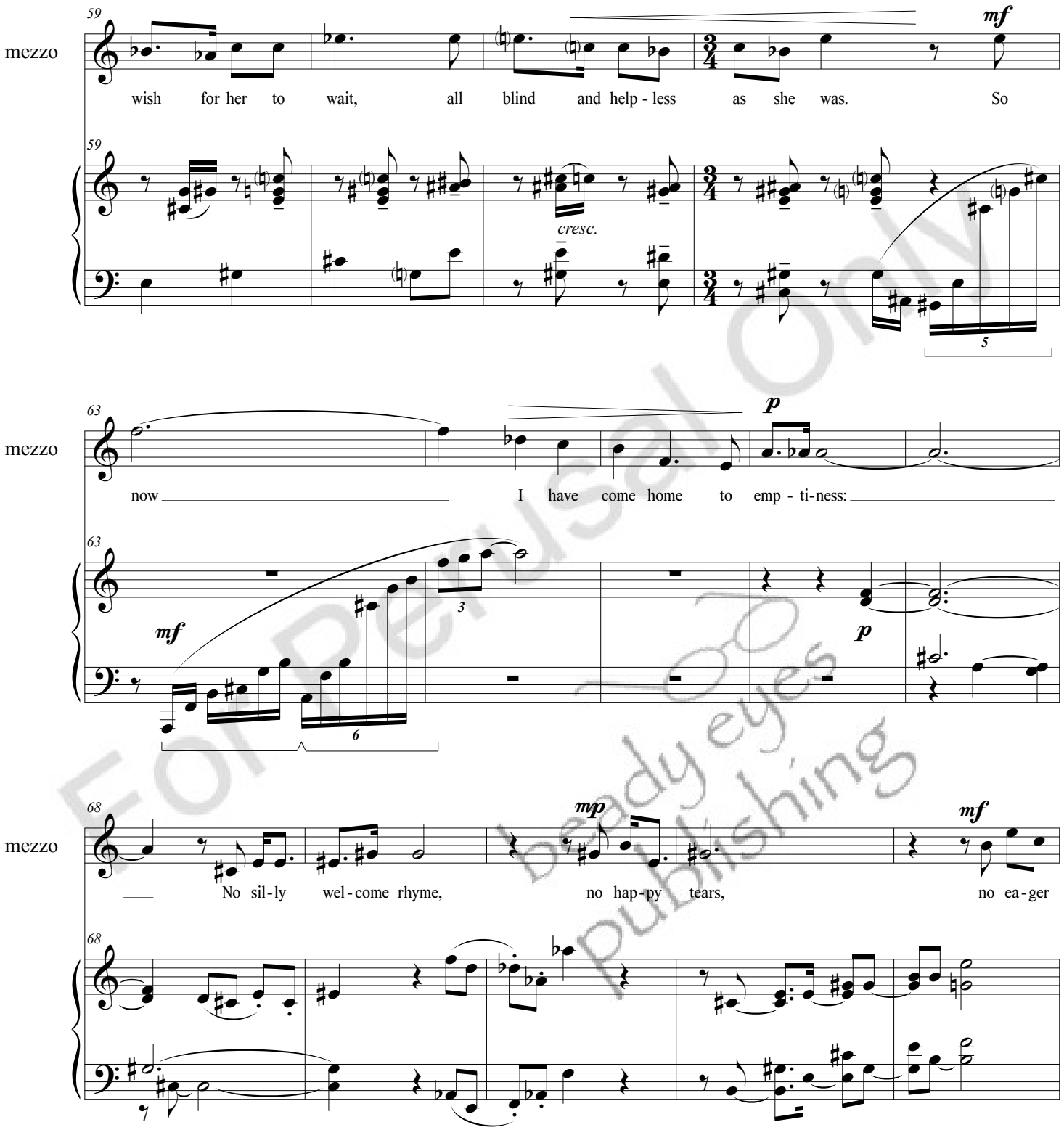

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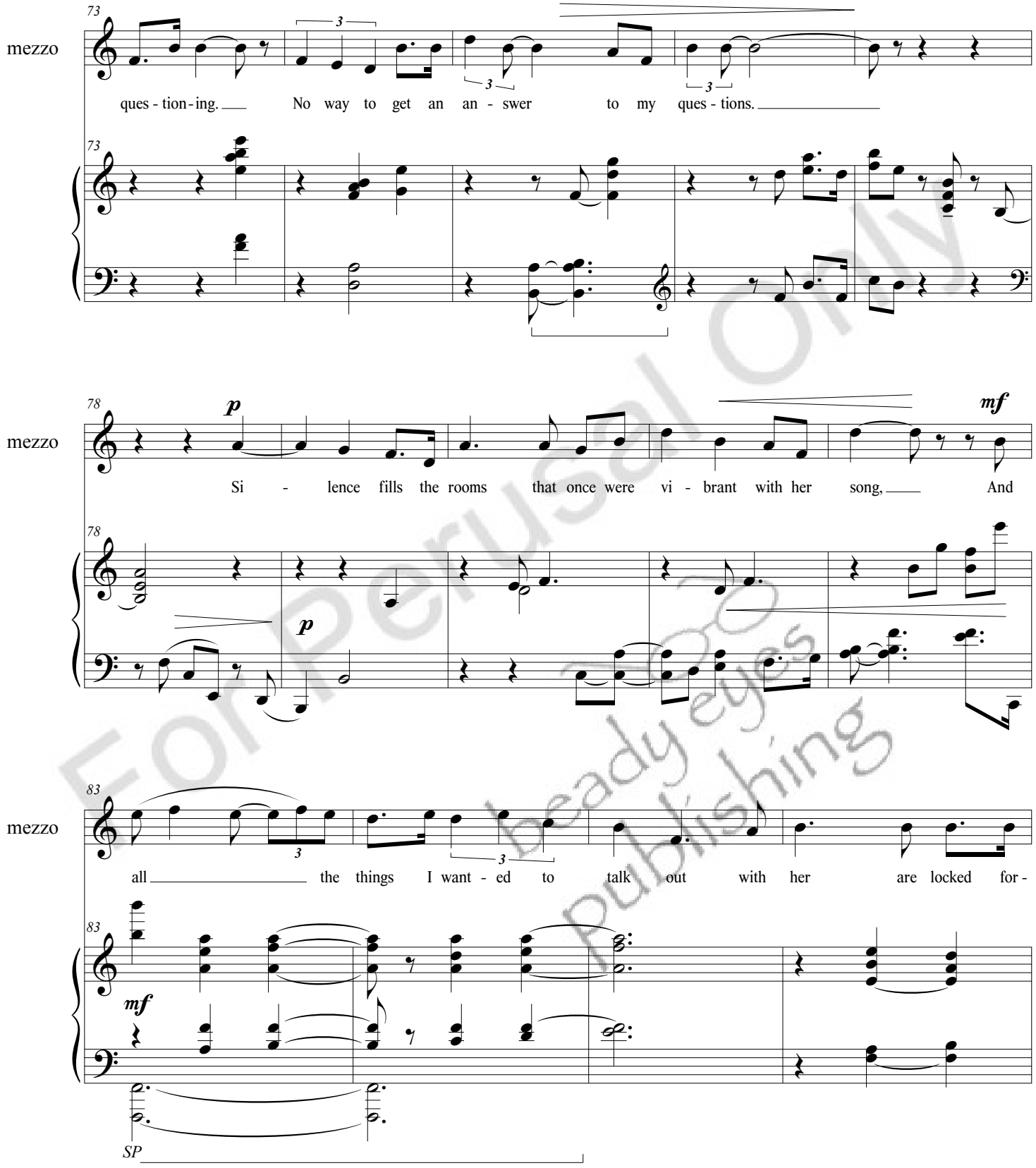

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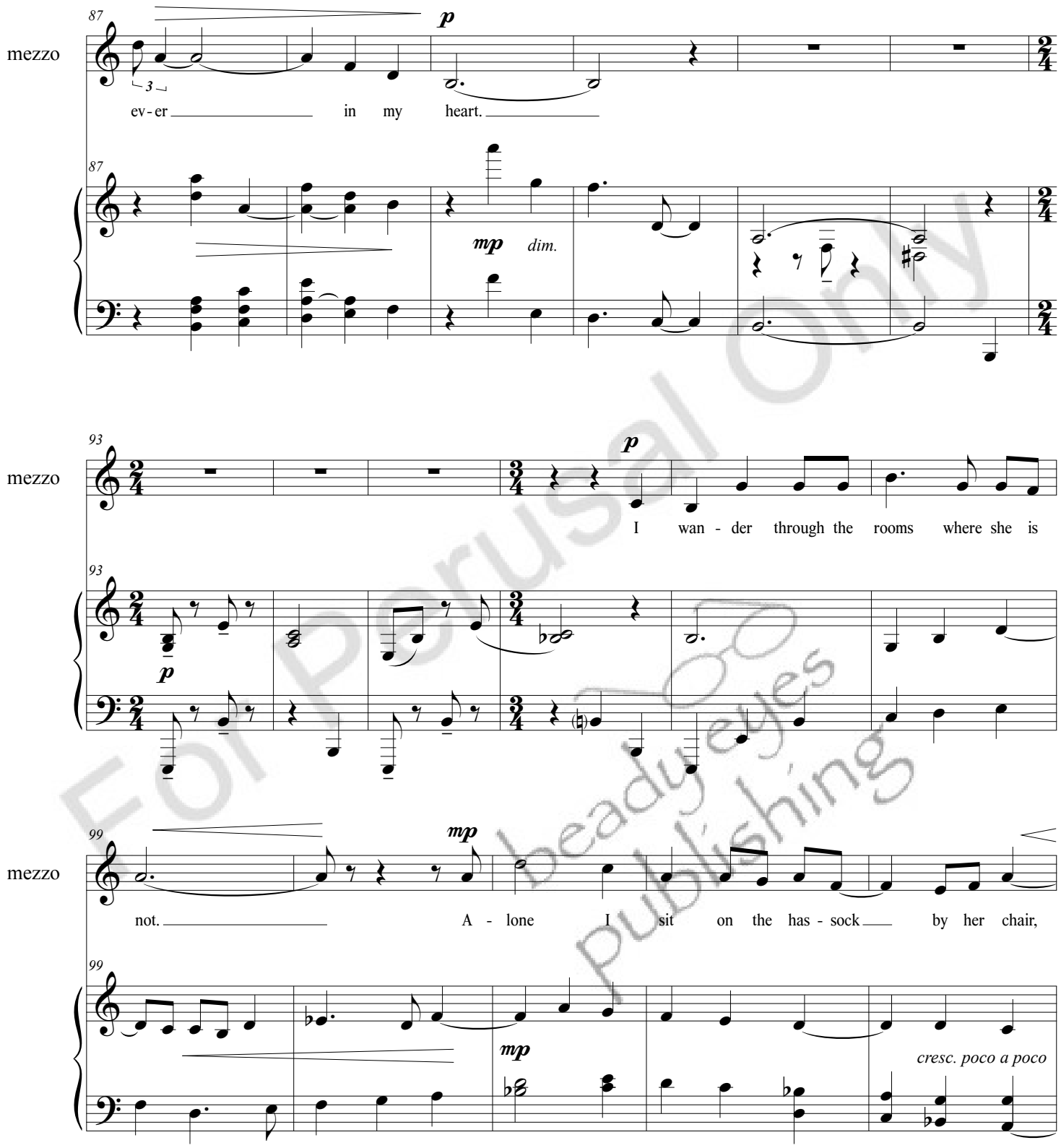

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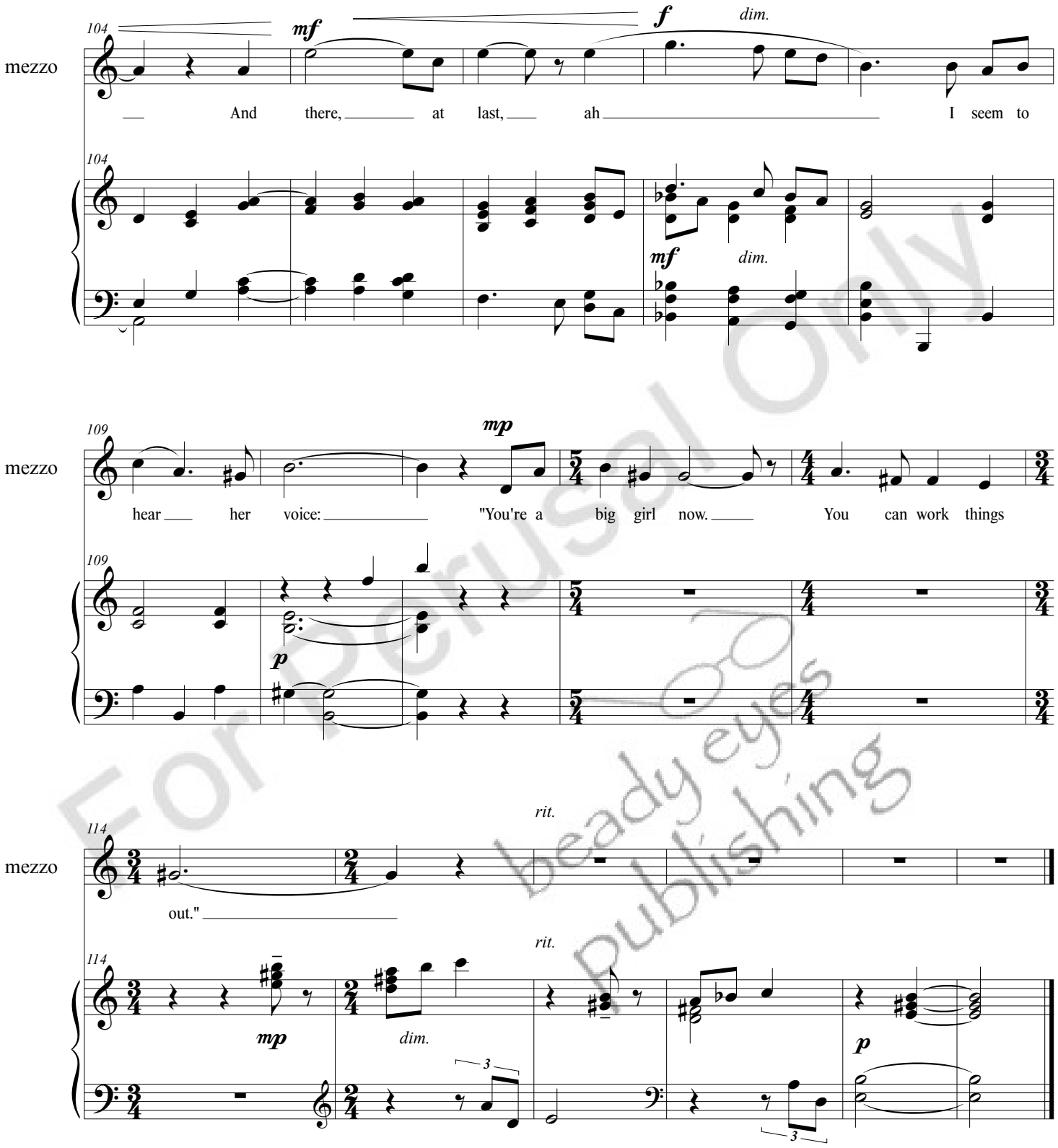

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VOYAGER DUST

When they arrive in the new country,
voyagers carry it on their shoulders,
the dusting of the sky they left behind.
The woman on the bus in the downy sweater,
I could smell it in her clothes.
It was voyager's dust from China.
It lay in the foreign stitching of her placket.
It said: *We will meet again in Beijing,*
in Guangzhou. We will meet again.
My mother had voyager's dust in her scarves.
I imagine her a new student like this woman on the bus,
getting home, shaking out the clothes from her suitcase,
hanging up, one by one, the garments from the old country.
On washing day my mother would unroll her scarves.
She'd hold one end, my brother or I the other,
and we'd stretch the wet georgette and shake it out.
We'd dash, my brother or I, under the canopy,
its soft spray on our faces like the ash
of debris after the destruction of a city,
its citizen driven out across the earth.
We never knew
it was voyager dust. It said:
We will meet again in Damascus,
in Aleppo. We will meet again.
It was Syria in her scarves.
We never knew it.
Now it is on our shoulders too.

Mohja Kahf (b. 1967)
published in Mizna: LITERATURE IN REVOLUTION Summer 2012, Vol 13.1

duration: c. 3:30

Composer's note

Syrian-American poet, novelist, and professor **Mohja Kahf** emigrated to the United States with her family in 1971. She graduated from Douglass College in 1988, and later received her Ph.D. in comparative literature from Rutgers. Since 1995, she has taught at the University of Arkansas. *Voyager Dust* is the third of five songs comprising *Longing for* Home, a cycle written to celebrate Source Song Festival's fifth season. The texts all reference homecoming in various ways – the enduring wish to return to a place remembered with love and longing, as well as the uncertainty, the impossibility of doing so. In this poem, I was especially intrigued by the chance to evoke the faraway places of Beijing, Guangzhou, Damascus and Aleppo with musical gestures.

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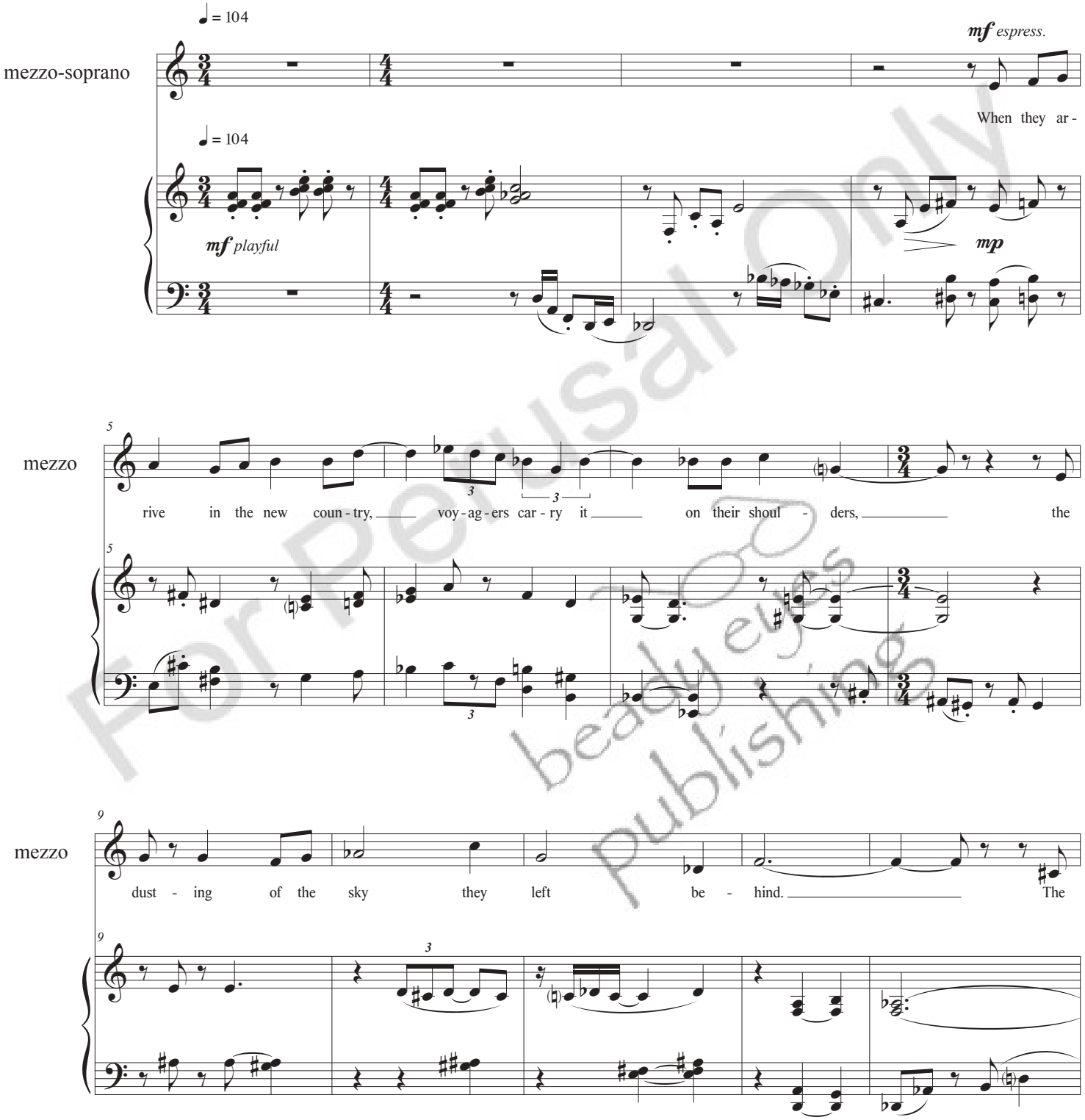
LONGING FOR HOME

III. Voyager Dust

Mohja Kahf

Carol Barnett



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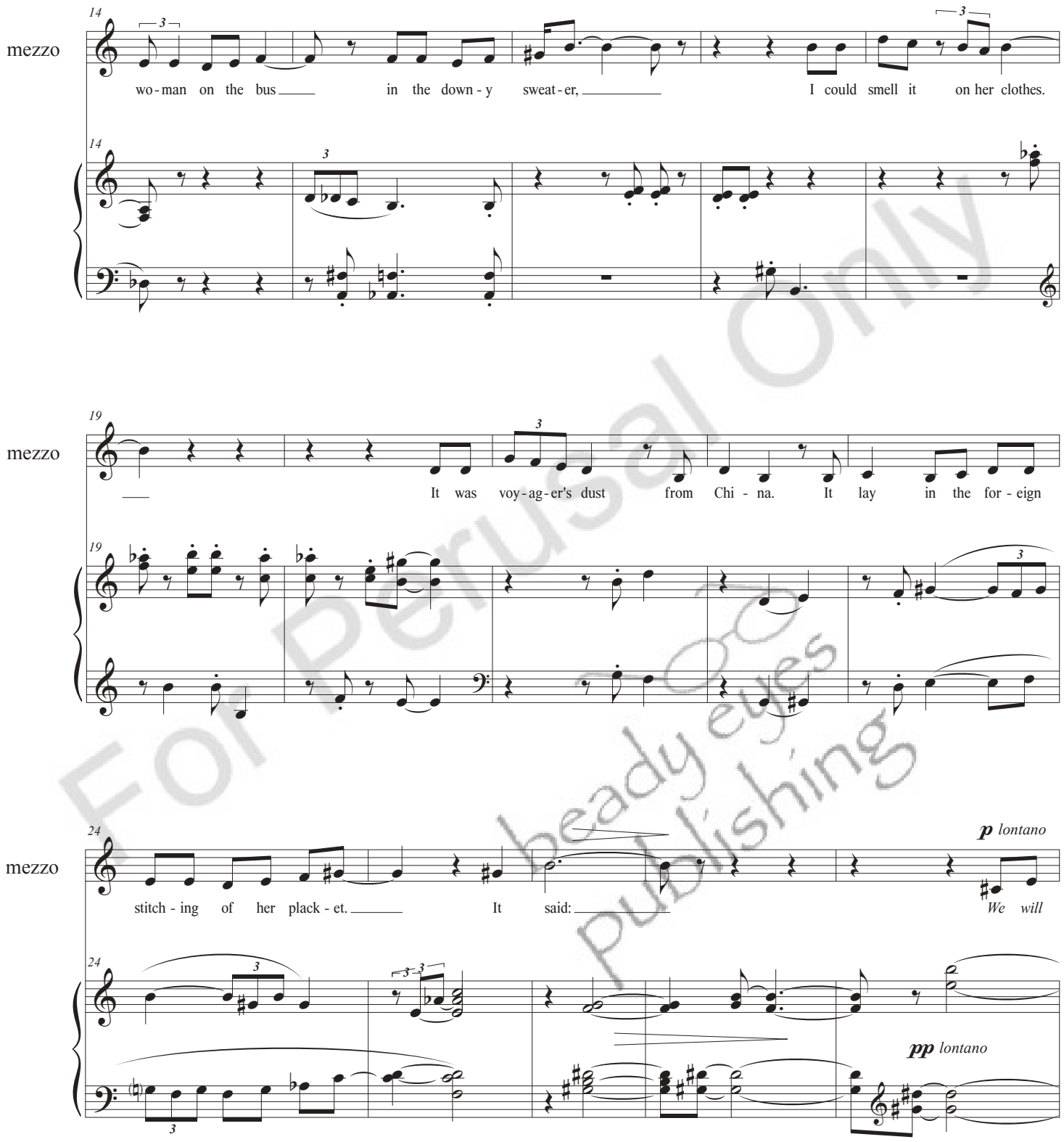

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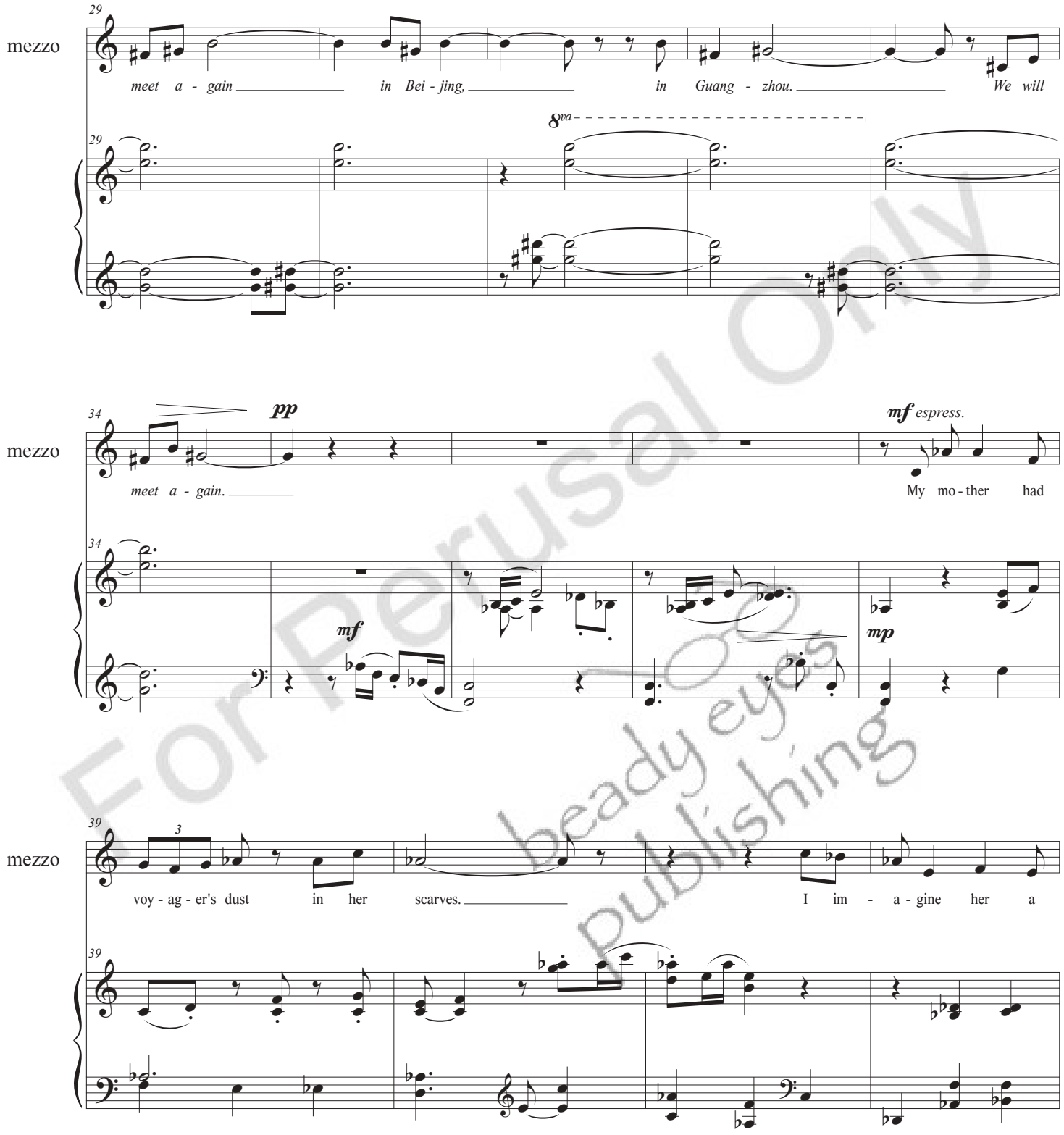

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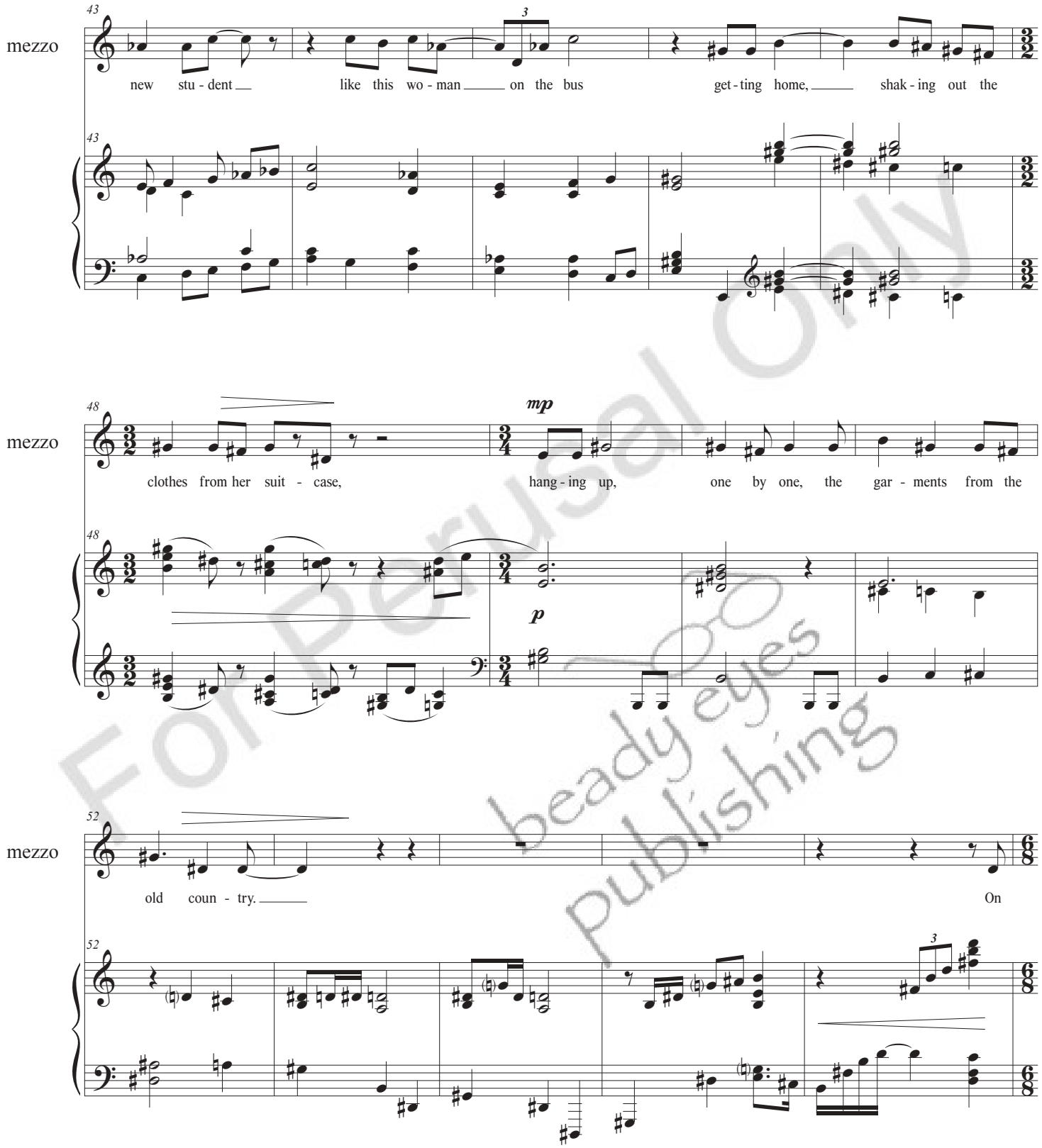

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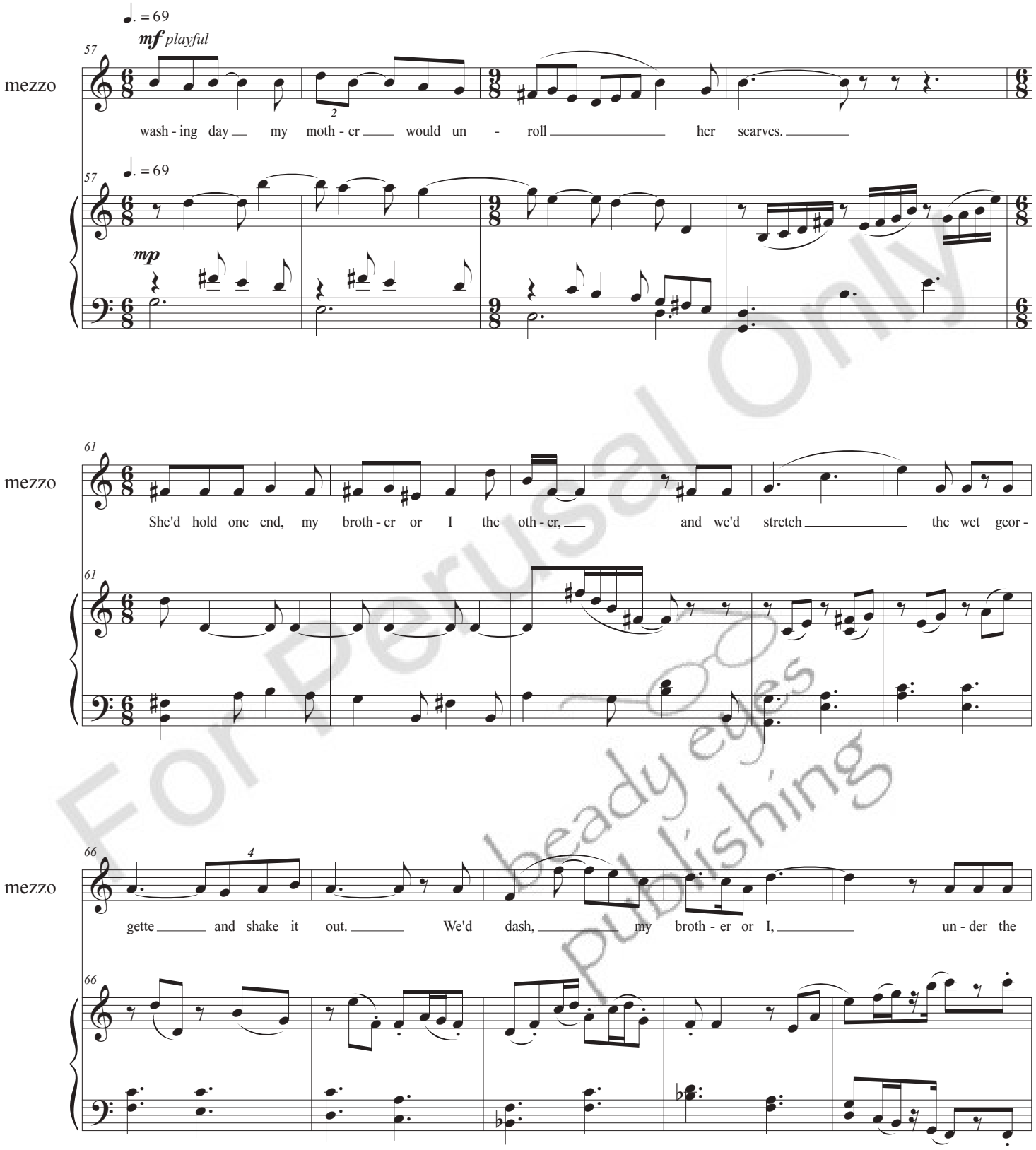

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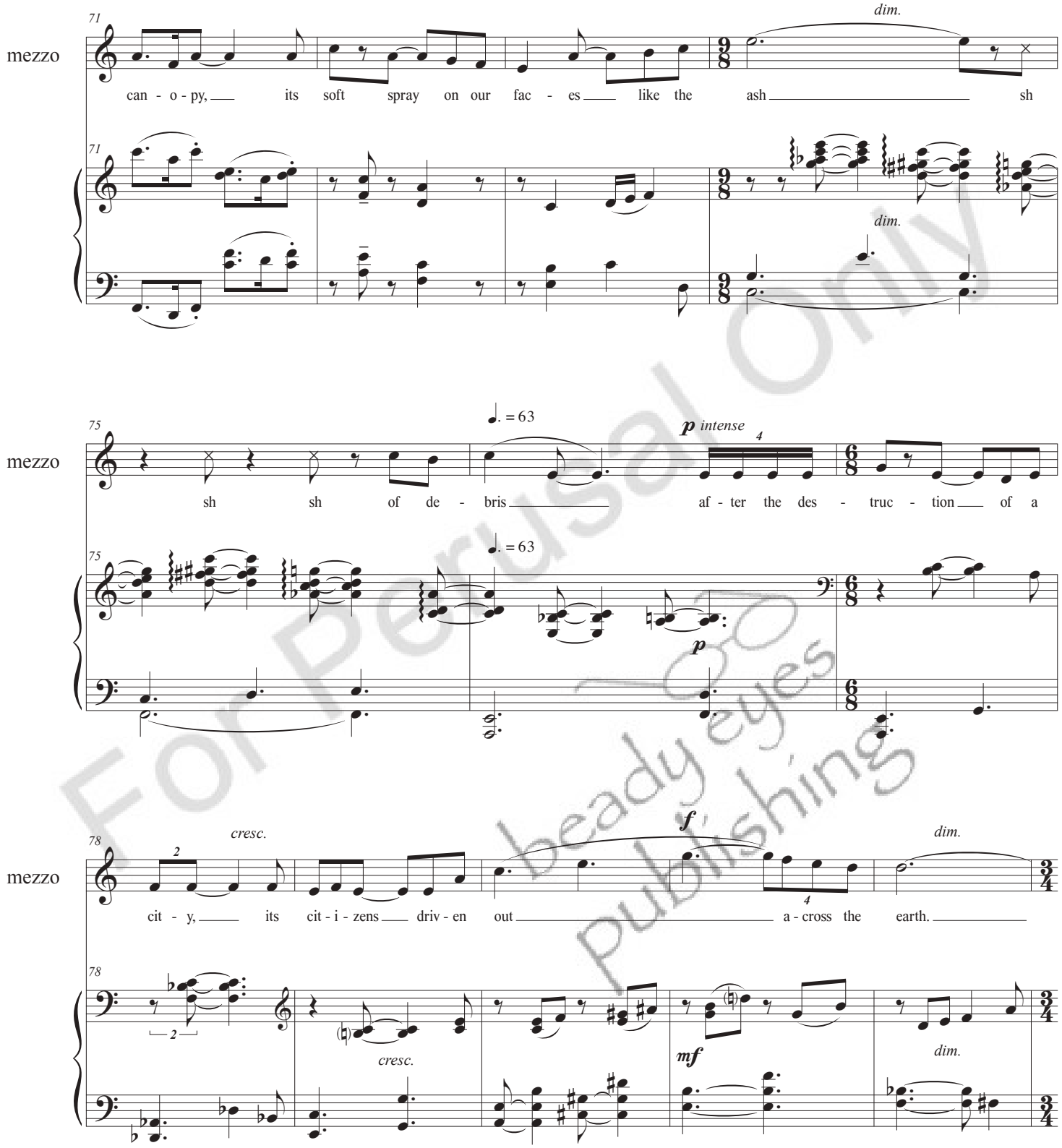

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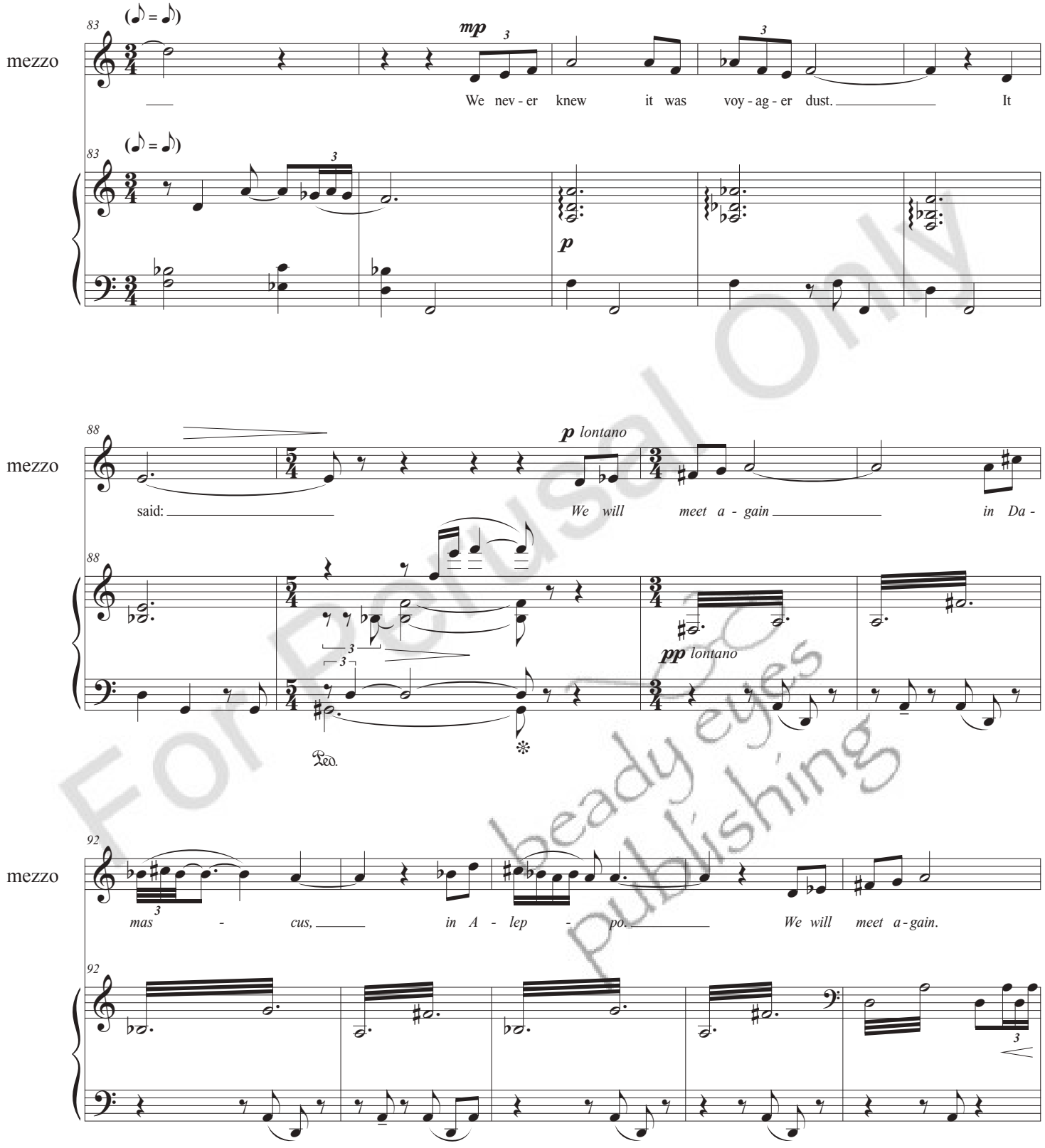

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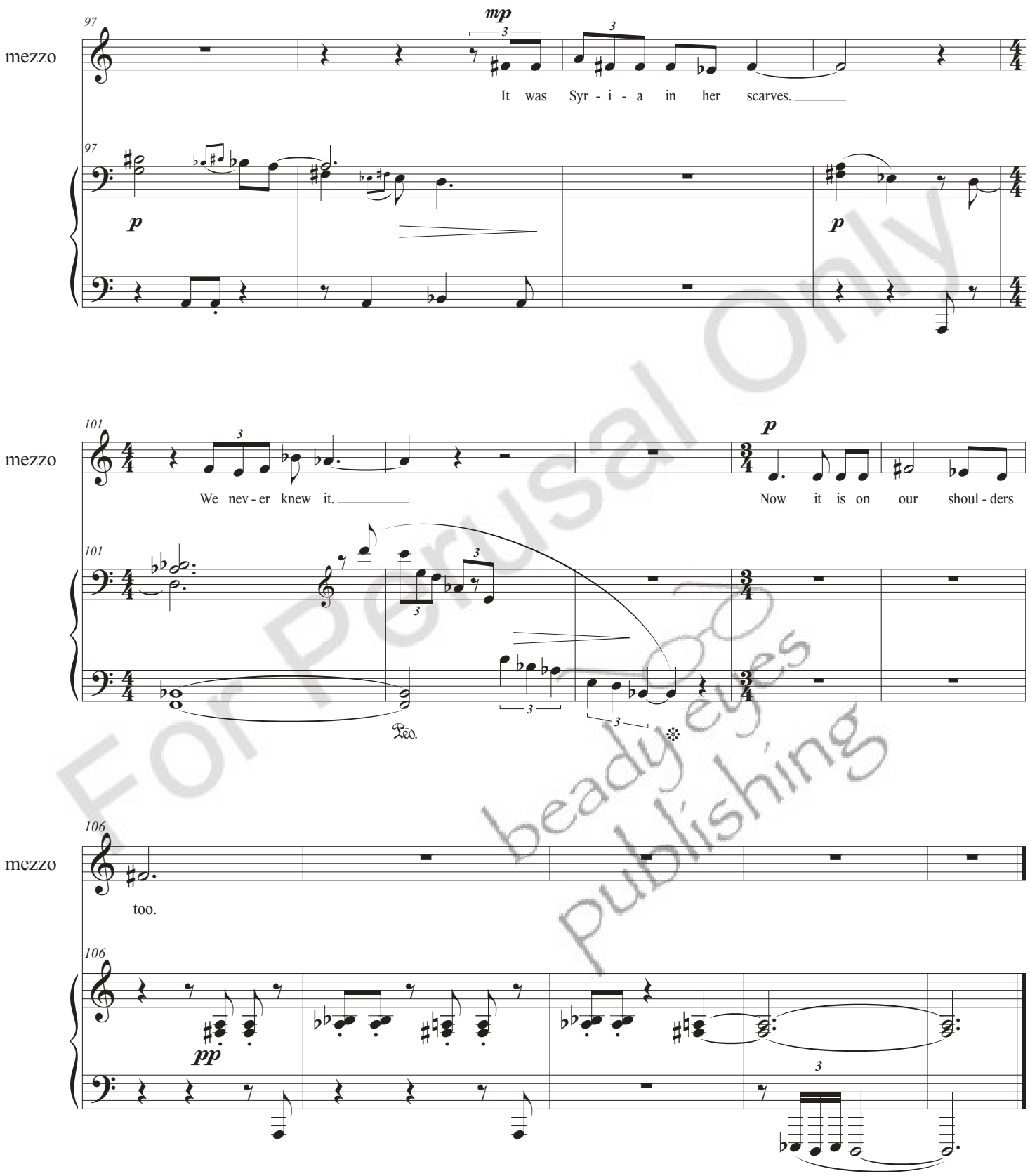

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LETTER TO MARIANNE MOORE

(in tribute to Joseph Grucci)

Come quickly to your city.
All the boats at the piers
are quiet, waiting for you.
Only their flags and pennants move
and those gently as tongues whispering
you down from the sky.
The horns and whistles all are silent,
so that you can hear our softer call.

The Staten Island Ferry leaves no wake.
All the waters are still
mirrors waiting for your face.
If another looks, they erase
with quick ripples and regret.

The bridges are bowed,
waiting, and the tunnels call.
The gargoyles hold their stern faces,
but like children waiting to open
presents, threaten to smile.

The lions at the library, one can see
in peripheral vision, twitch their tails,
eager to follow you down the street.
We have promised them your coming
to quiet them.

Everyone knows that there are brown butter-
flies in your hair, and agates
and small mirrors in your purse
and words.

Come quickly to your city.

Eugene McCarthy (1916-2005)

duration: c. 3:15

Eugene Joseph McCarthy (1916-2005) was an American politician, poet, and long-time Congressman from Minnesota. He took up writing poetry in the 1960s, and his increased political prominence led to increased interest in his published works. "If any of you are secret poets, the best way to break into print is to run for the presidency", he wrote in 1968.

A Letter to Marianne Moore is the fourth of five songs comprising *Longing for Home*, a cycle written to celebrate Source Song Festival's fifth season. The texts all reference homecoming in various ways – the enduring wish to return to a place remembered with love and longing, as well as the uncertainty, the impossibility of doing so. Eugene McCarthy's fanciful invitation to Marianne Moore, who died in 1972, mentions several landmarks in the city where she was a long-time resident. The boats, the piers, the ferry, the bridges, the gargoyles and the lions at the library all afford opportunities for sonic pictures – horns, still waters or ripples, and those library lions sashaying down the street.

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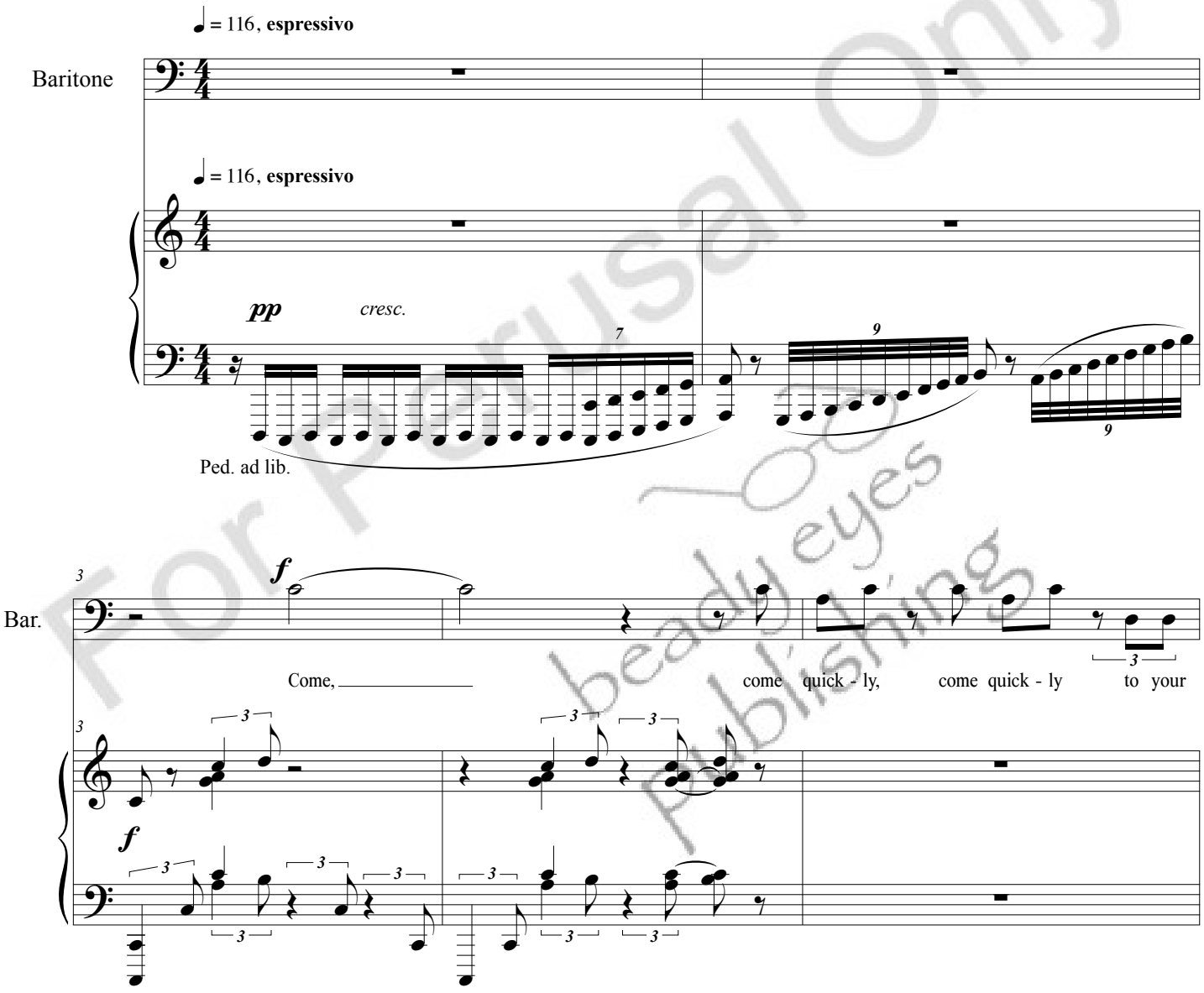
LONGING FOR HOME

IV. A Letter to Marianne Moore

Eugene McCarthy

Carol Barnett



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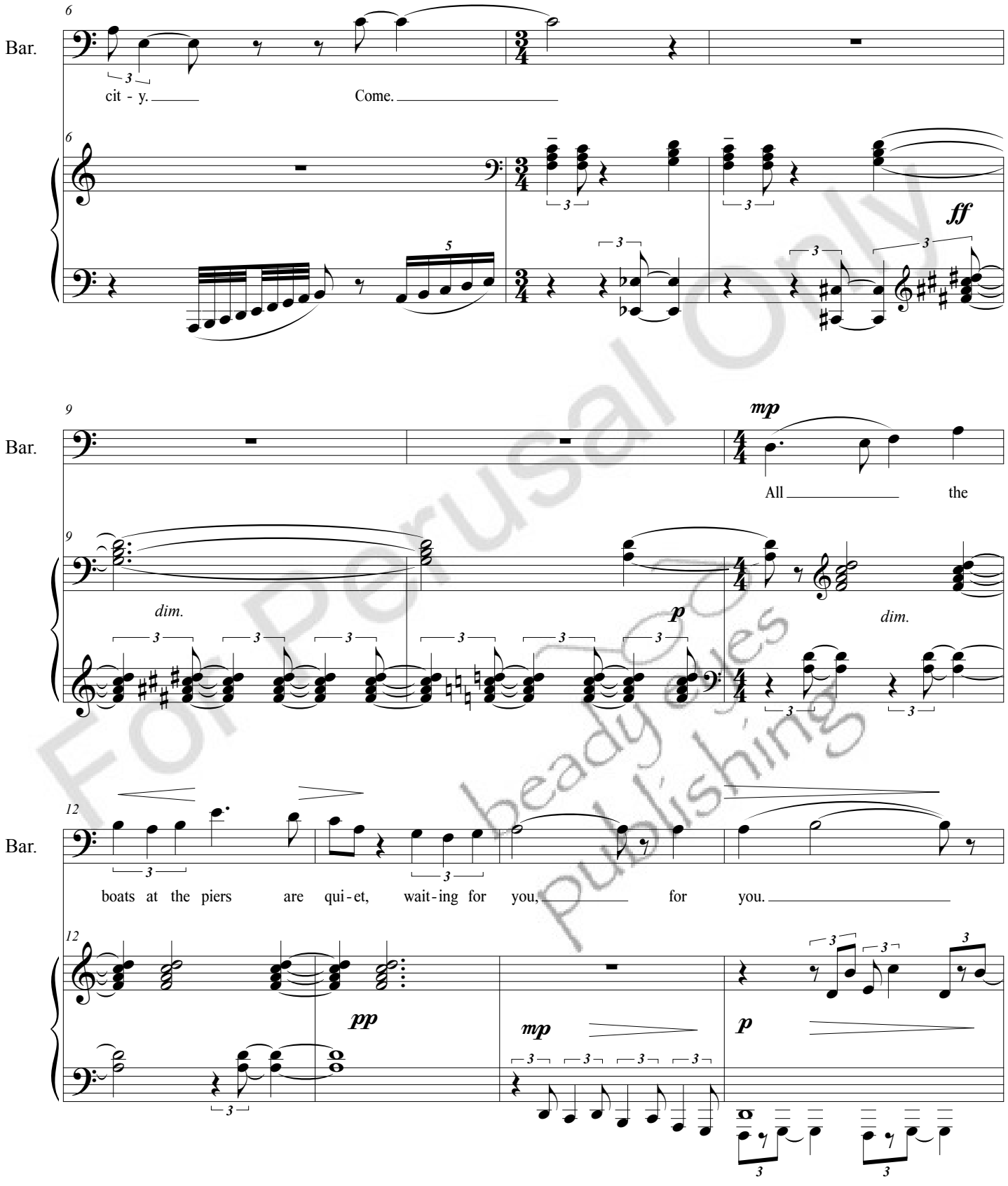

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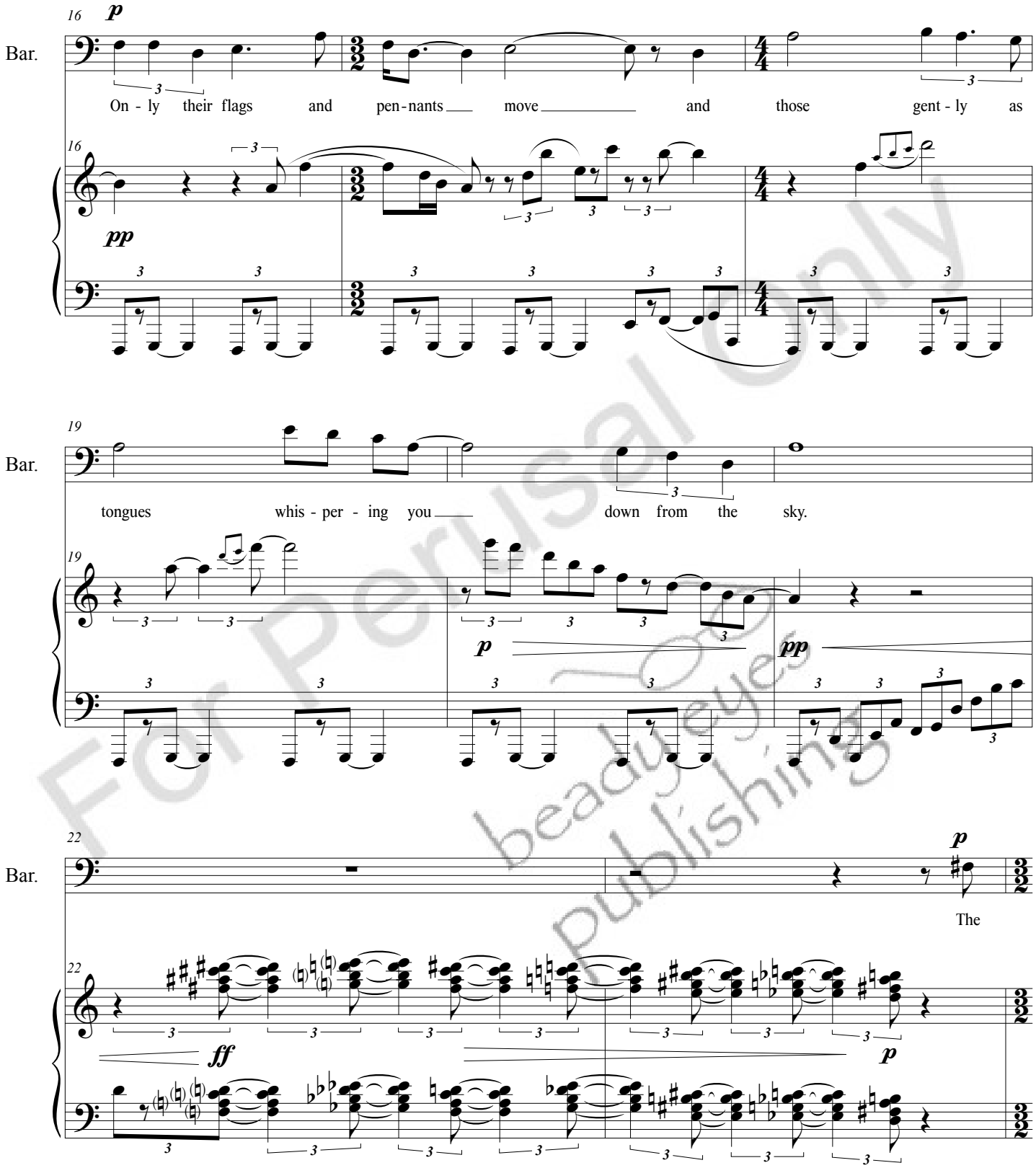
IV. A Letter to Marianne Moore



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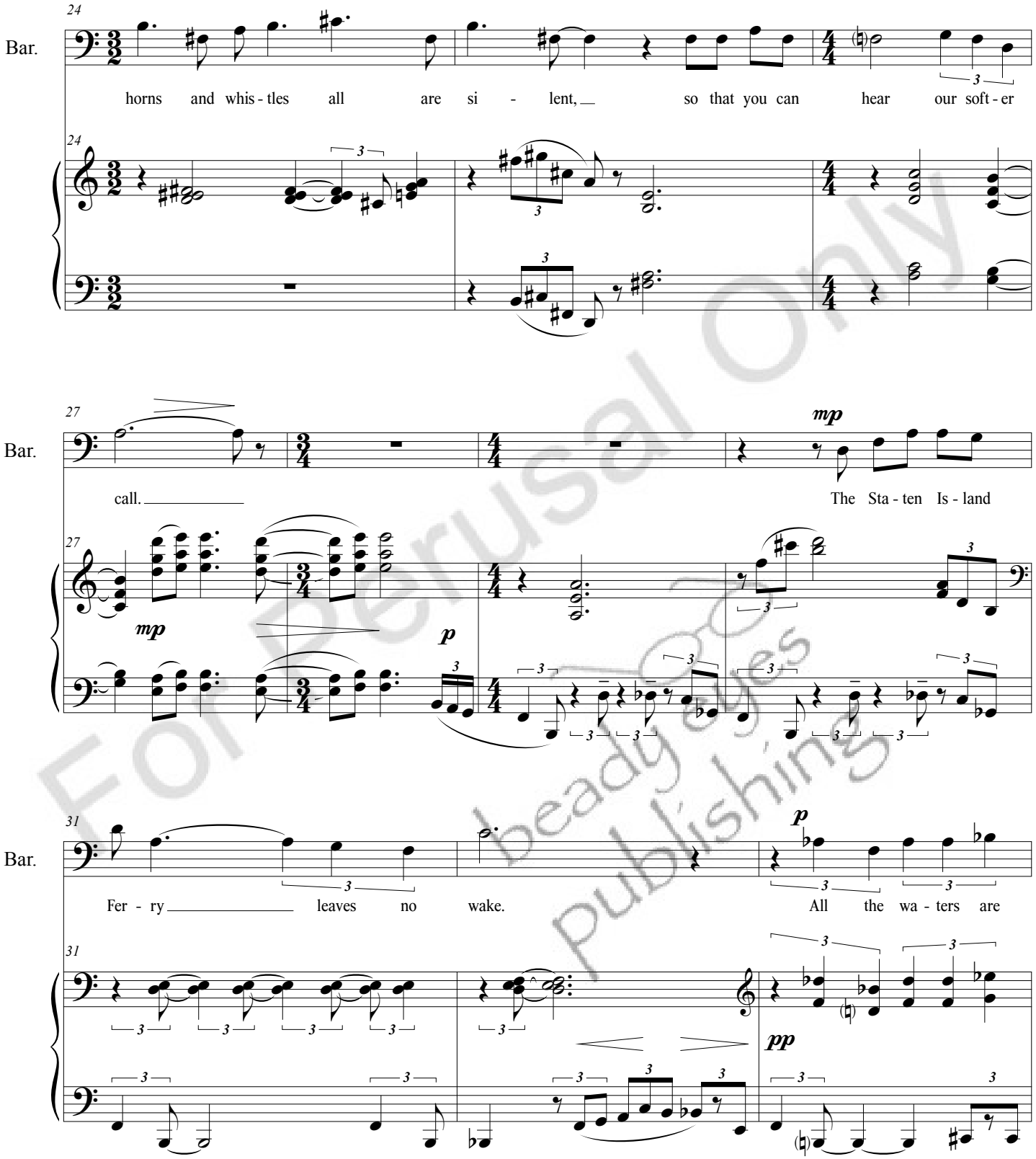

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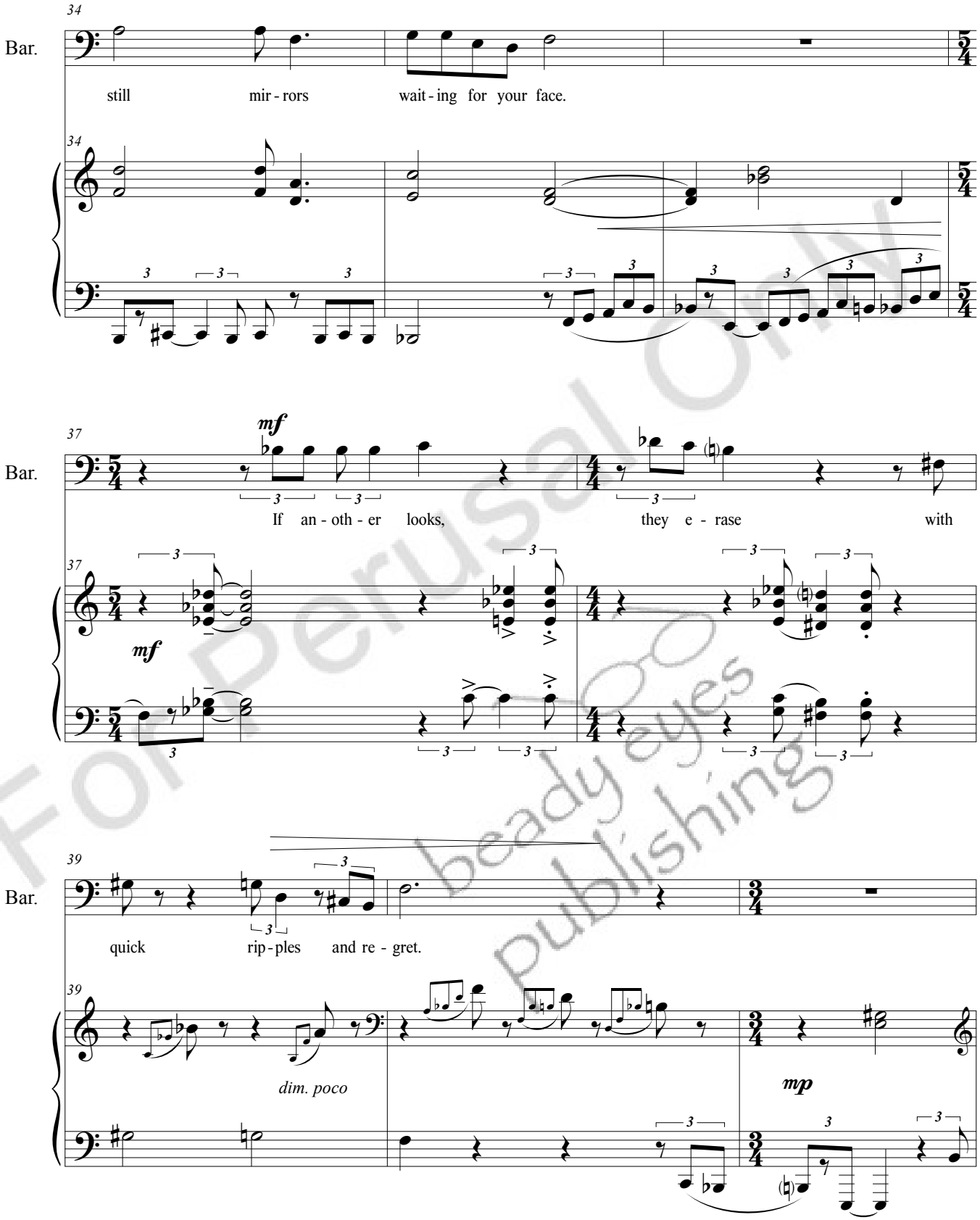

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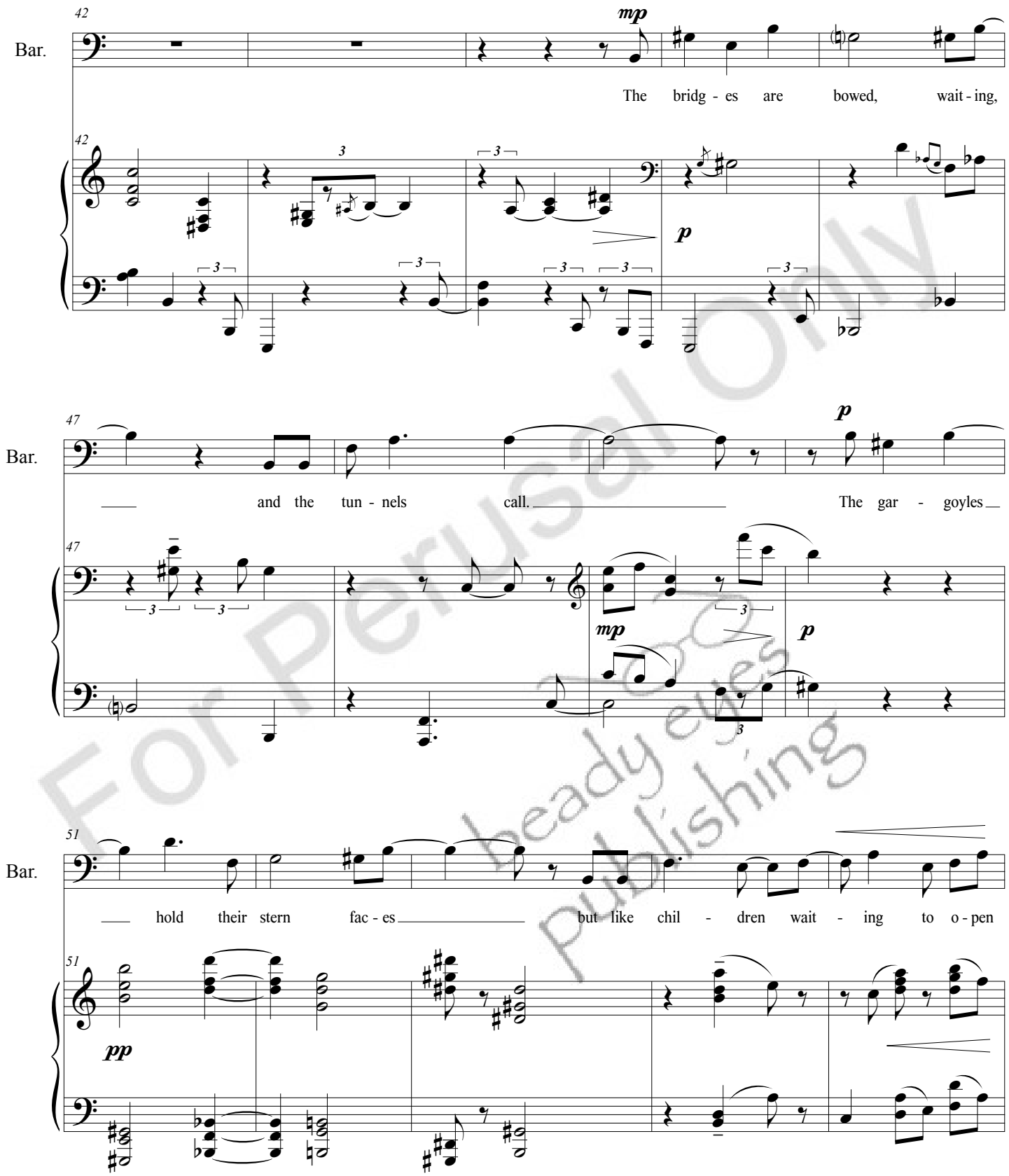

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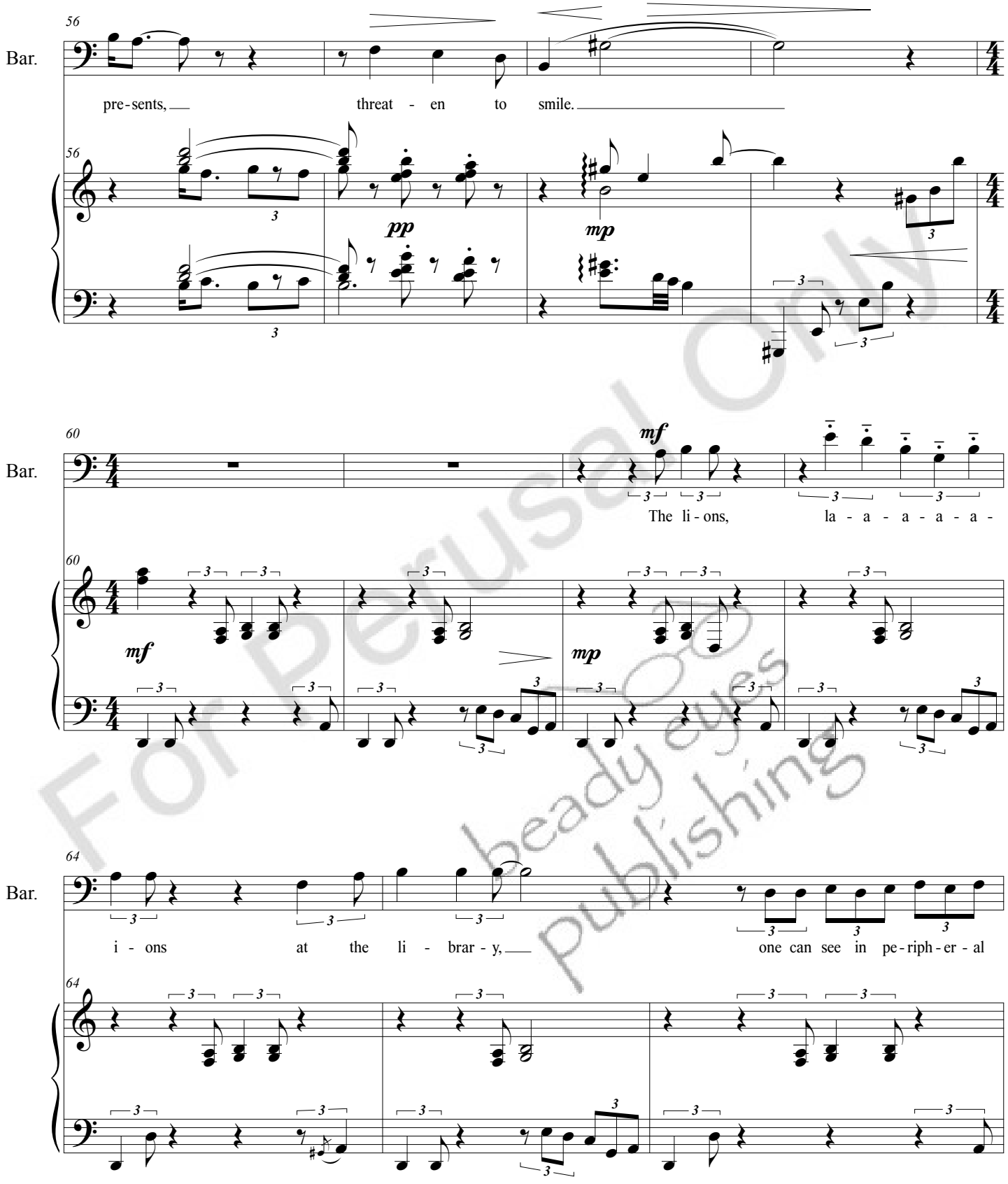

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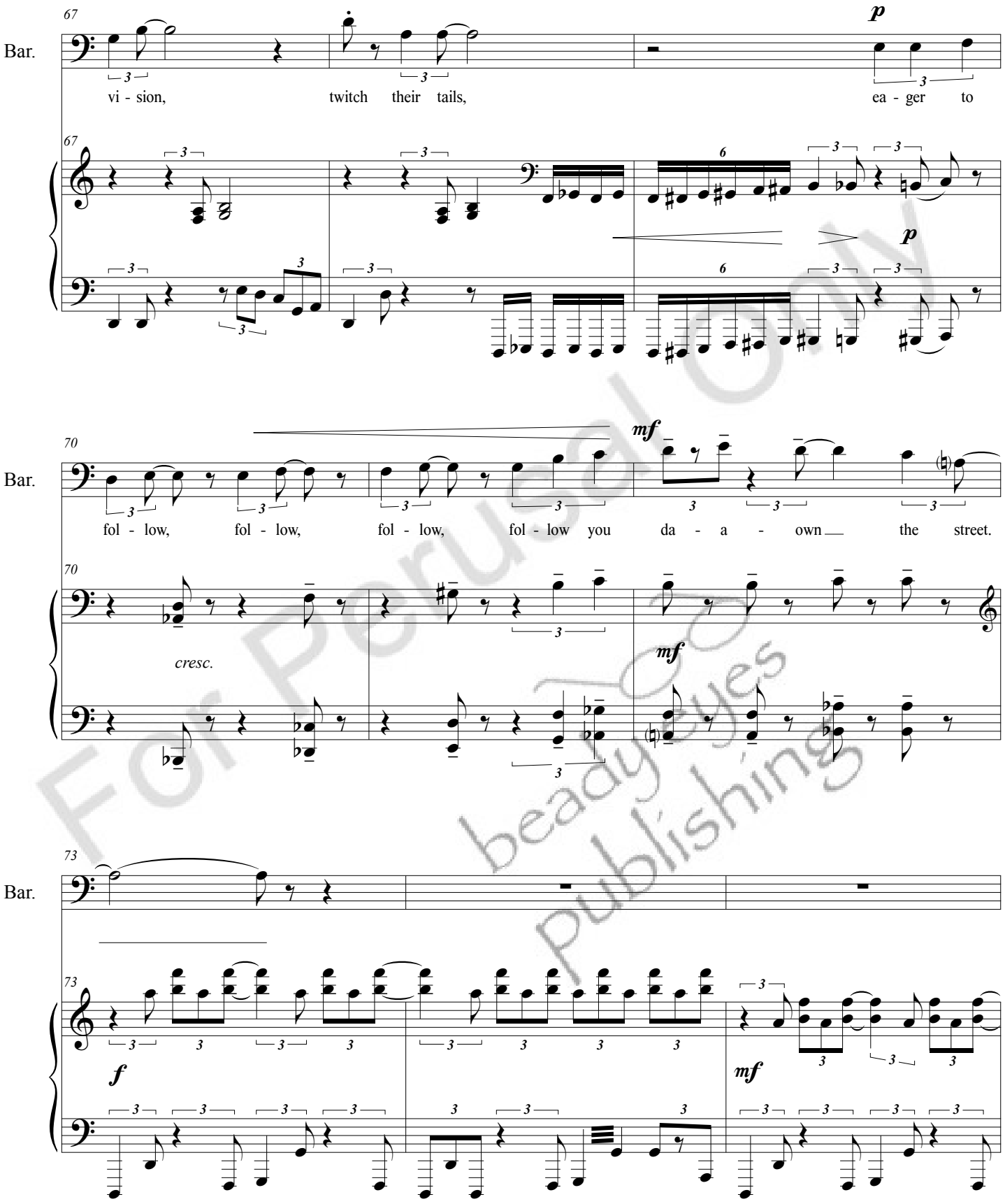

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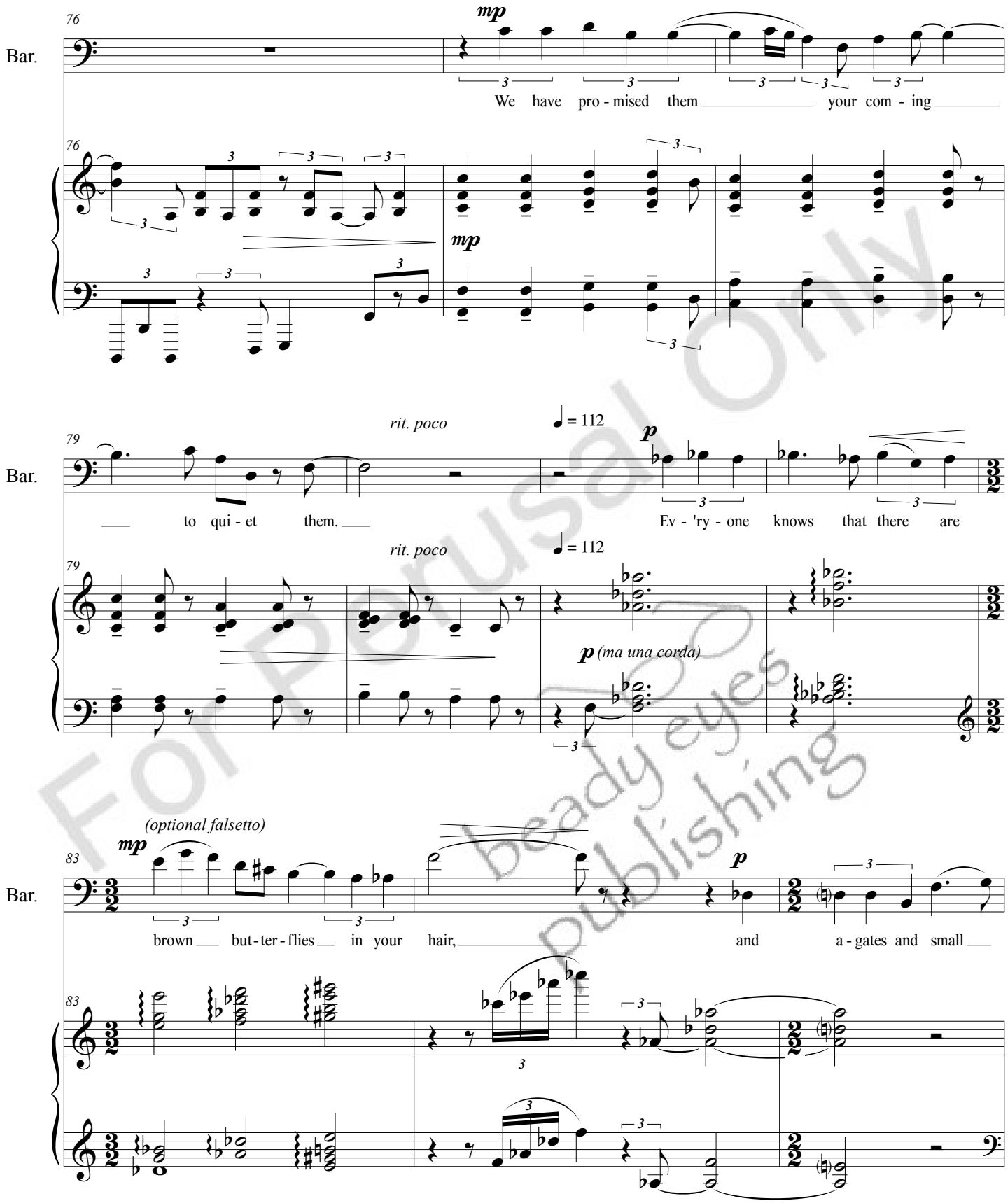

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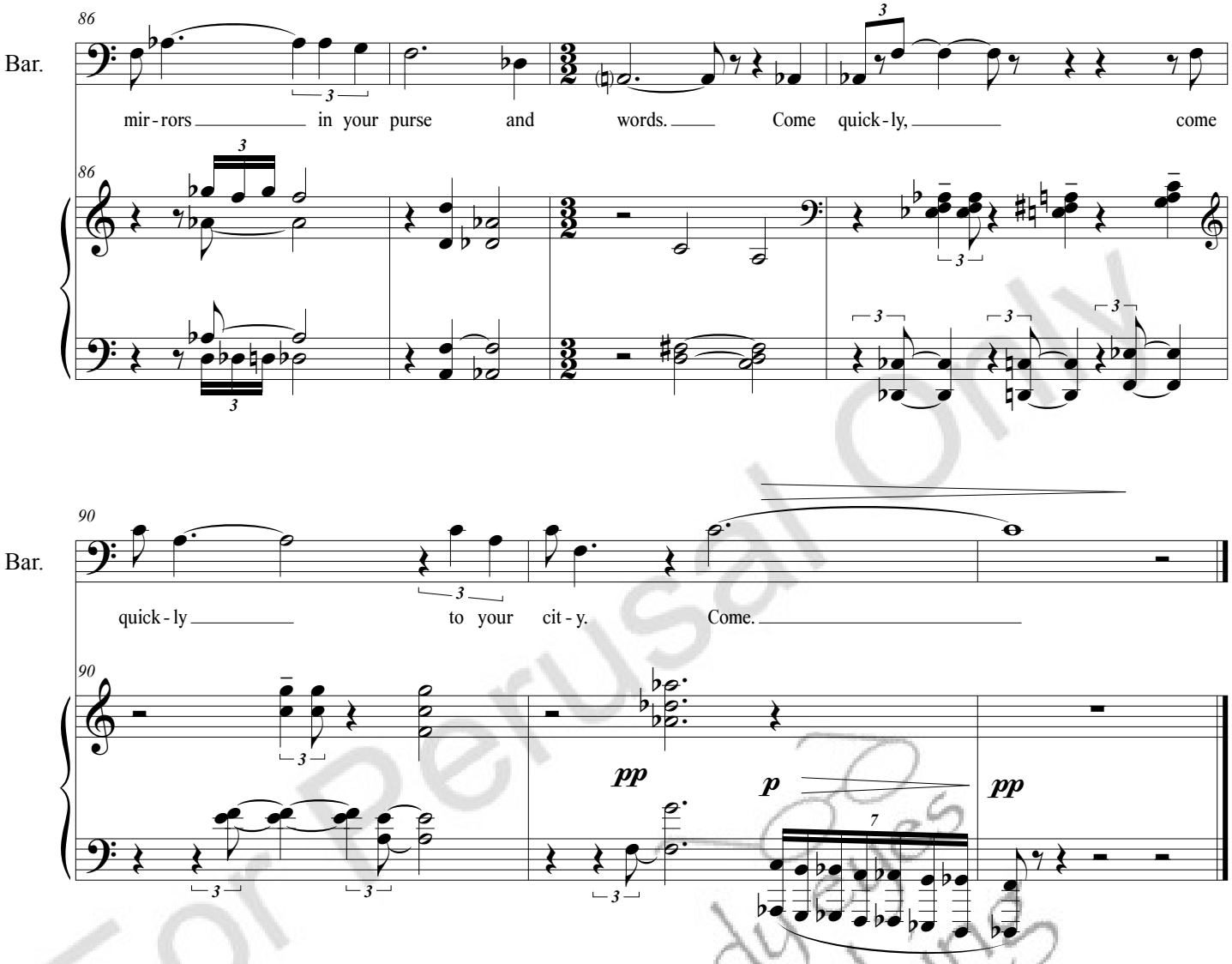

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DANCING TOWARD THE PROMISED LAND

I, Miriam, took my tambourine
and finger cymbals with me
out of the land of slavery
with its daily insults and petty
exemptions, and so remain always
ready to dance on the long, long journey,
dance at every victory, beginning with
surviving the Passover, then the strange
occurrence when the Red Sea dried beneath
our feet as we ran, safely passing over the narrow
strip onto the Sinai Peninsula, all the way out
from the land of longing toward the storied memory of Home.

I danced to the song that spilled out of me,
loud up to Heaven, rejoicing on hopeful feet,
rejoicing with arms flying through warm air like wings.

God knows it may take a long time to return.
It's been five hundred years, after all.
A long time gone, but our stories keep it alive
in our hearts. I wonder if I'll live to see it from
the mountains across River Jordan. I wonder
if I'll be an old woman, and dance down
the side of Mt. Nebo with arms wide open,
heart fluttering strong, leading the way
with cymbals and songs into the Promised Land.

This poem is in the unpublished book, *My Blessed Misfortunes*, by Alla Renée Bozarth,
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duration: c. 3:00

Composer's note

Poet and prose writer **Alla Reneé Bozarth** was among the first eleven women ordained as Episcopal priests in 1974. She has over forty years of professional experience as a soul caregiver—soul-mending as a psychotherapist, and soul-tending as a spiritual director.

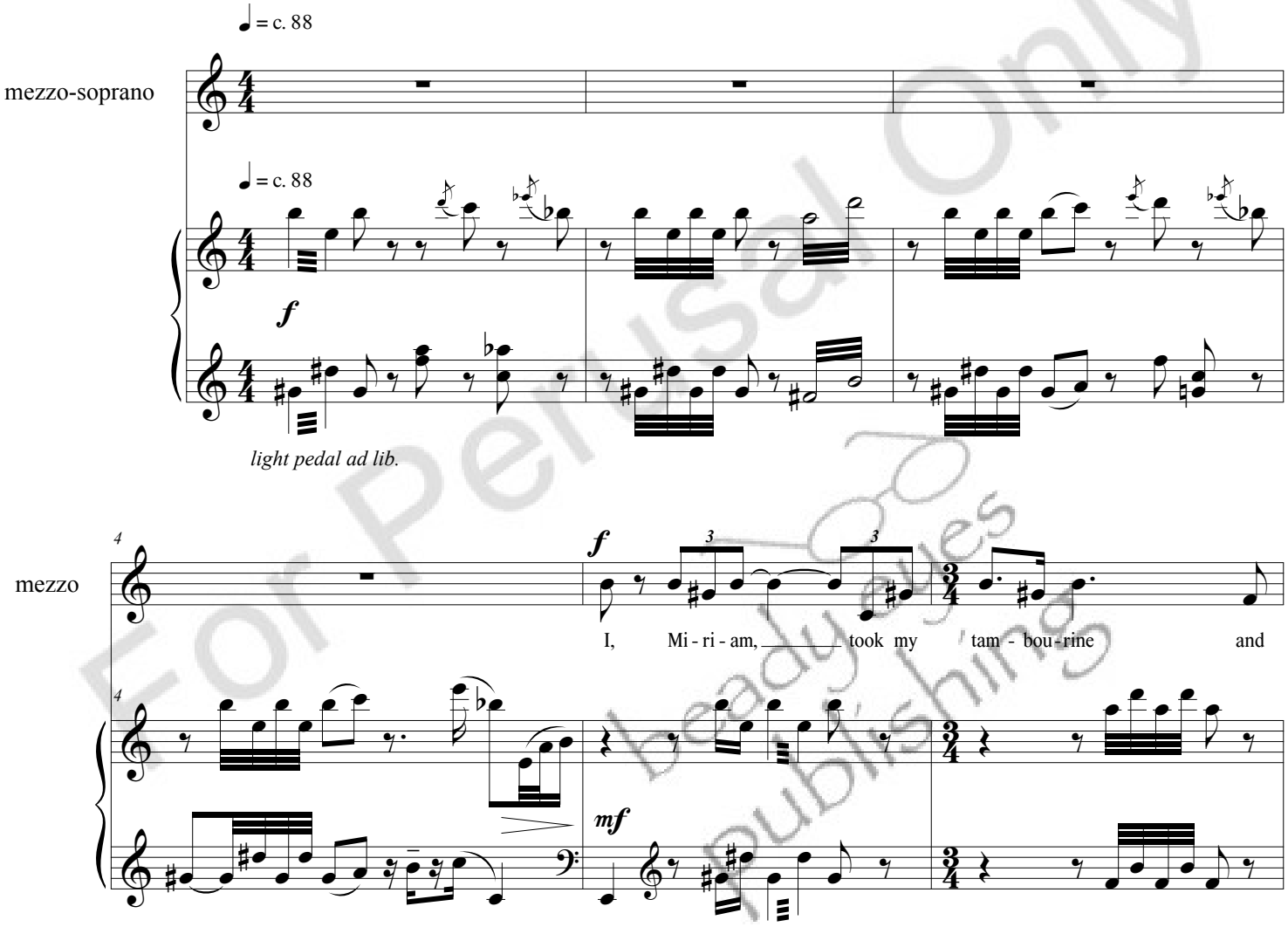
Dancing Toward the Promised Land is the fifth of five songs comprising *Longing for Home*, a cycle written to celebrate Source Song Festival's fifth season. The texts all reference homecoming in various ways – the enduring wish to return to a place remembered with love and longing, as well as the uncertainty, the impossibility of doing so. Ranging freely across the centuries, Miriam, sister of Moses, remembers her younger self leading the way out of Egypt with her dances and songs, and imagining what it will be like to enter the Promised Land. But Miriam never did reach the Promised Land, and the poet is writing many centuries later. How powerfully historical events still influence us, and how strong is the urge to return to the promised land of home.

LONGING FOR HOME

V. Dancing Toward the Promised Land

Alla Renée Bozarth

Carol Barnett



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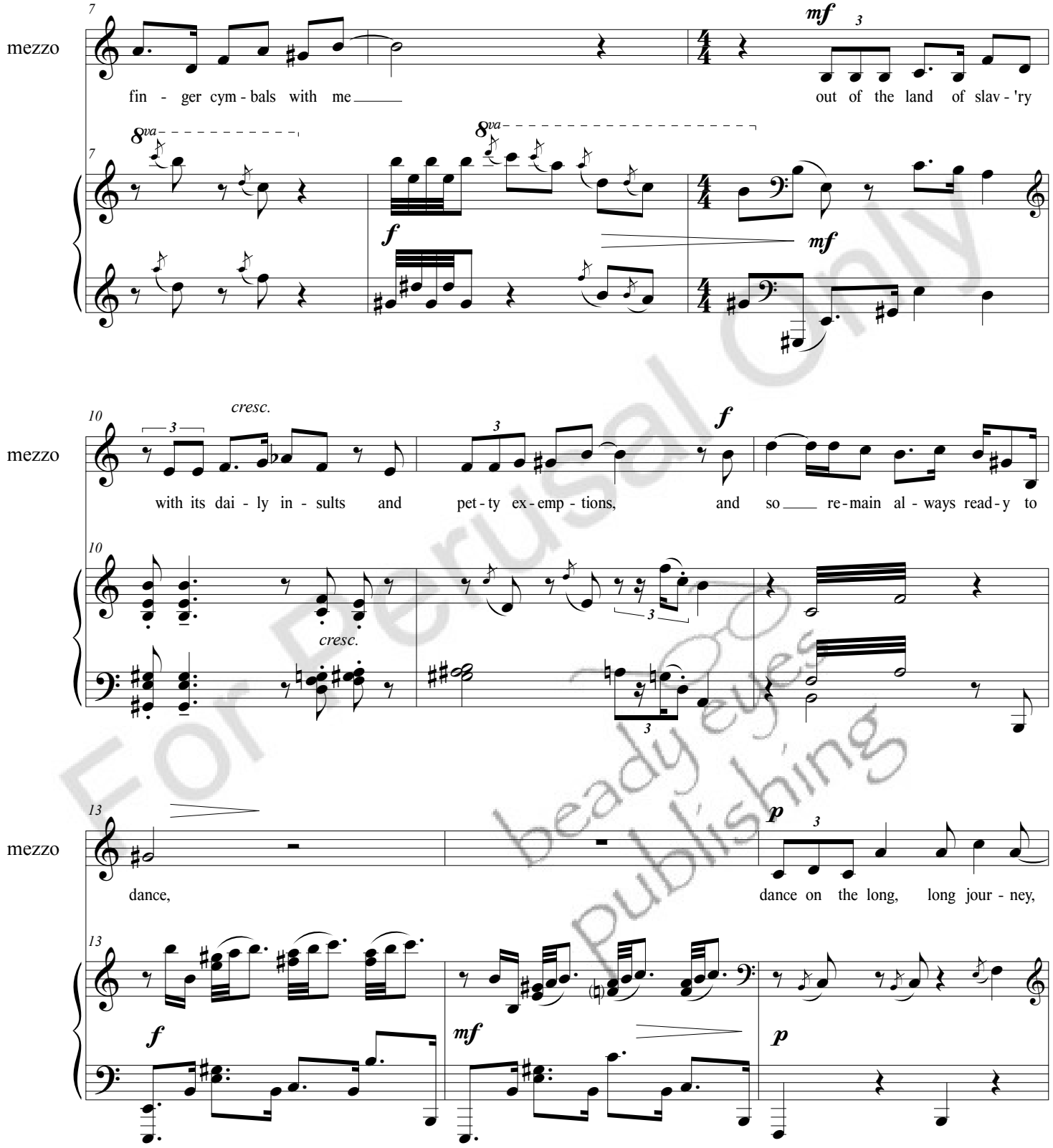
V. Dancing Toward the Promised Land



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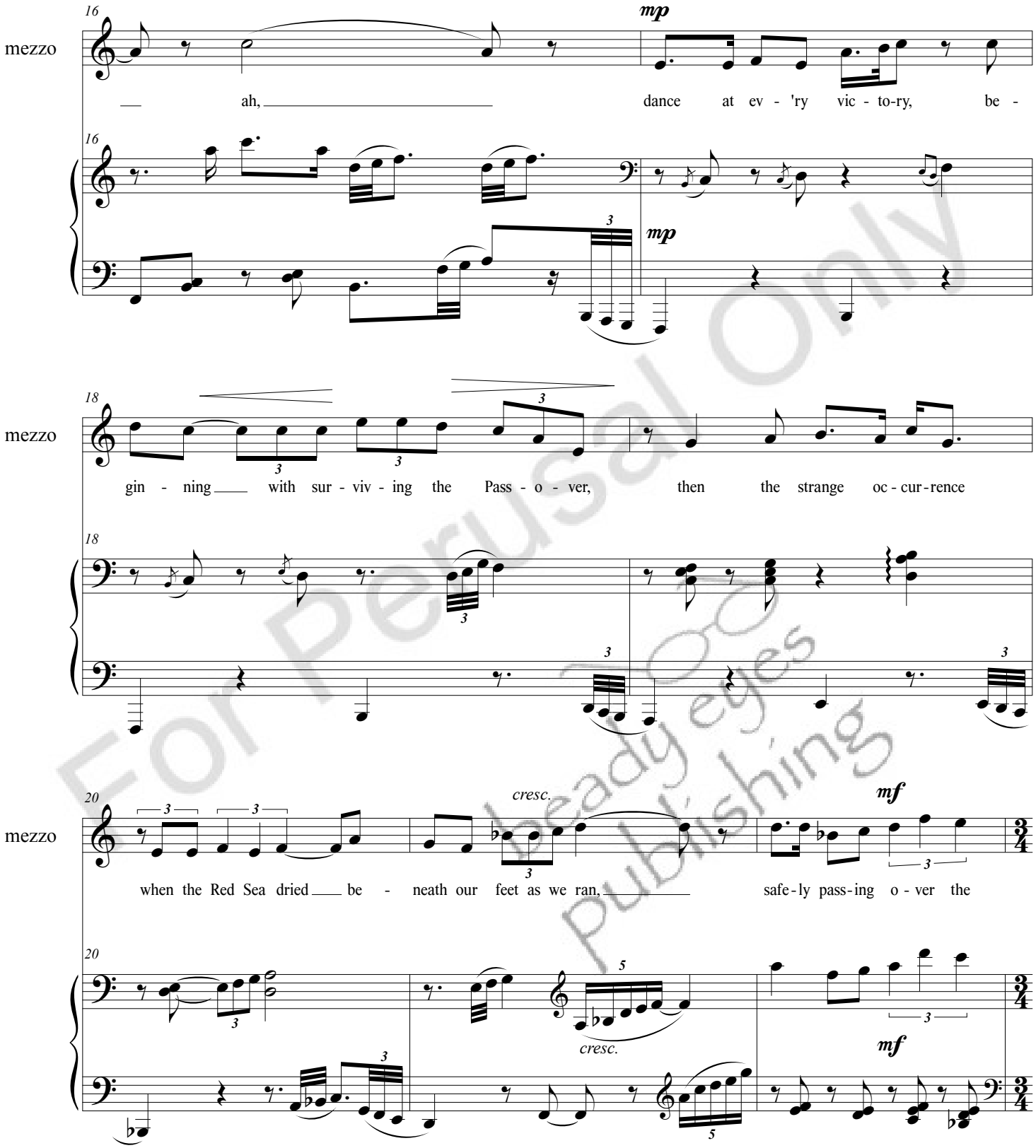
V. Dancing Toward the Promised Land



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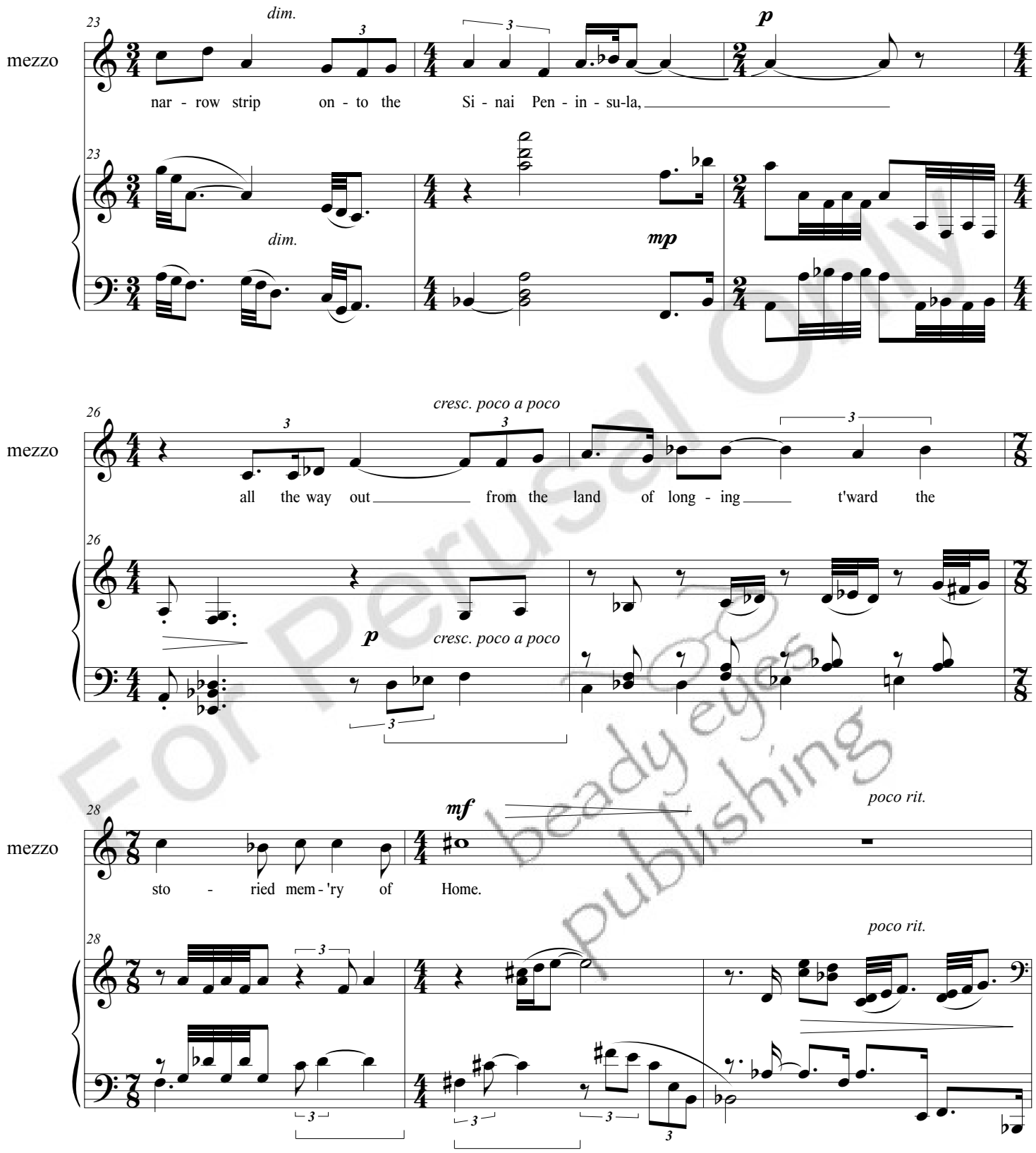

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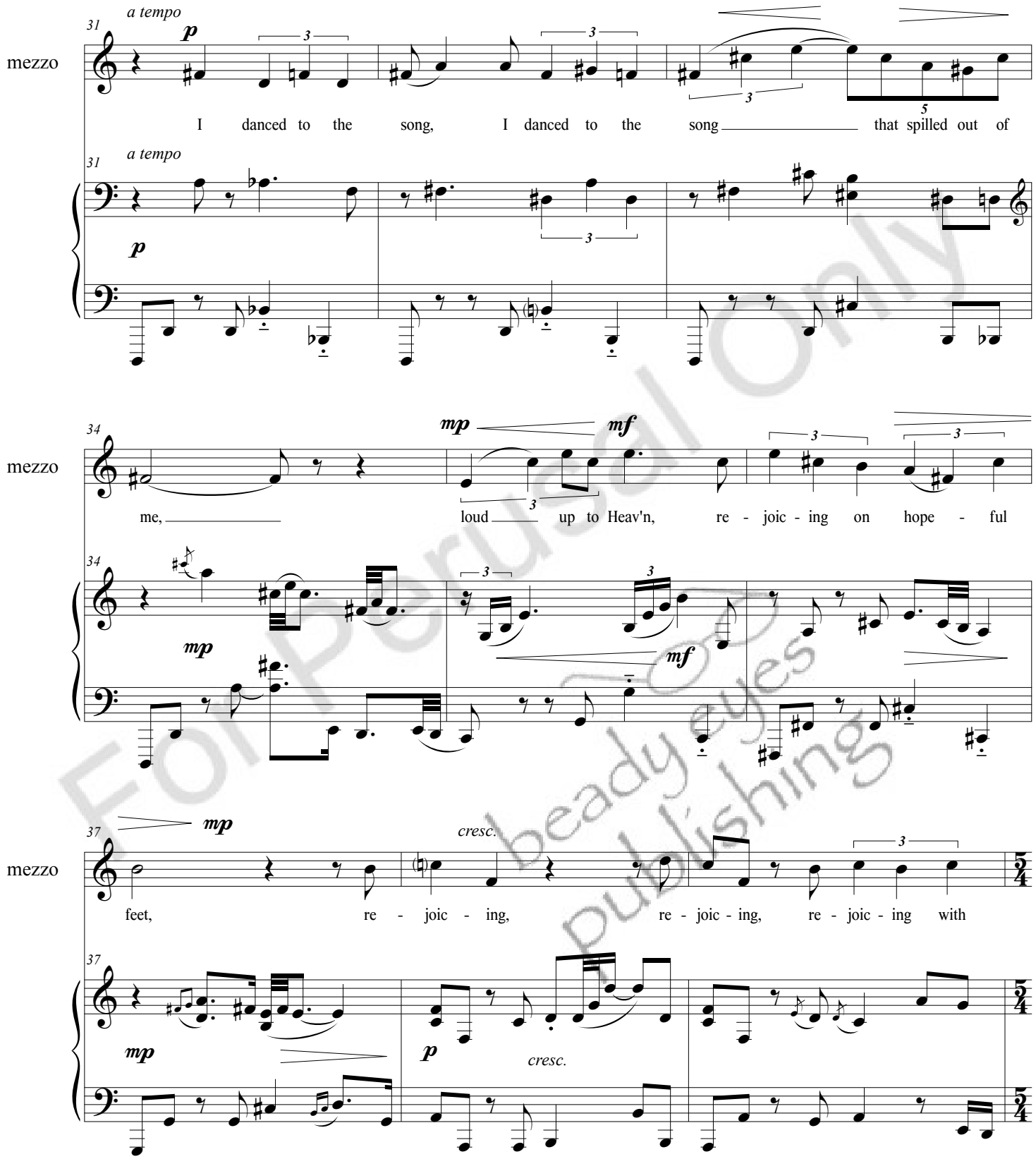

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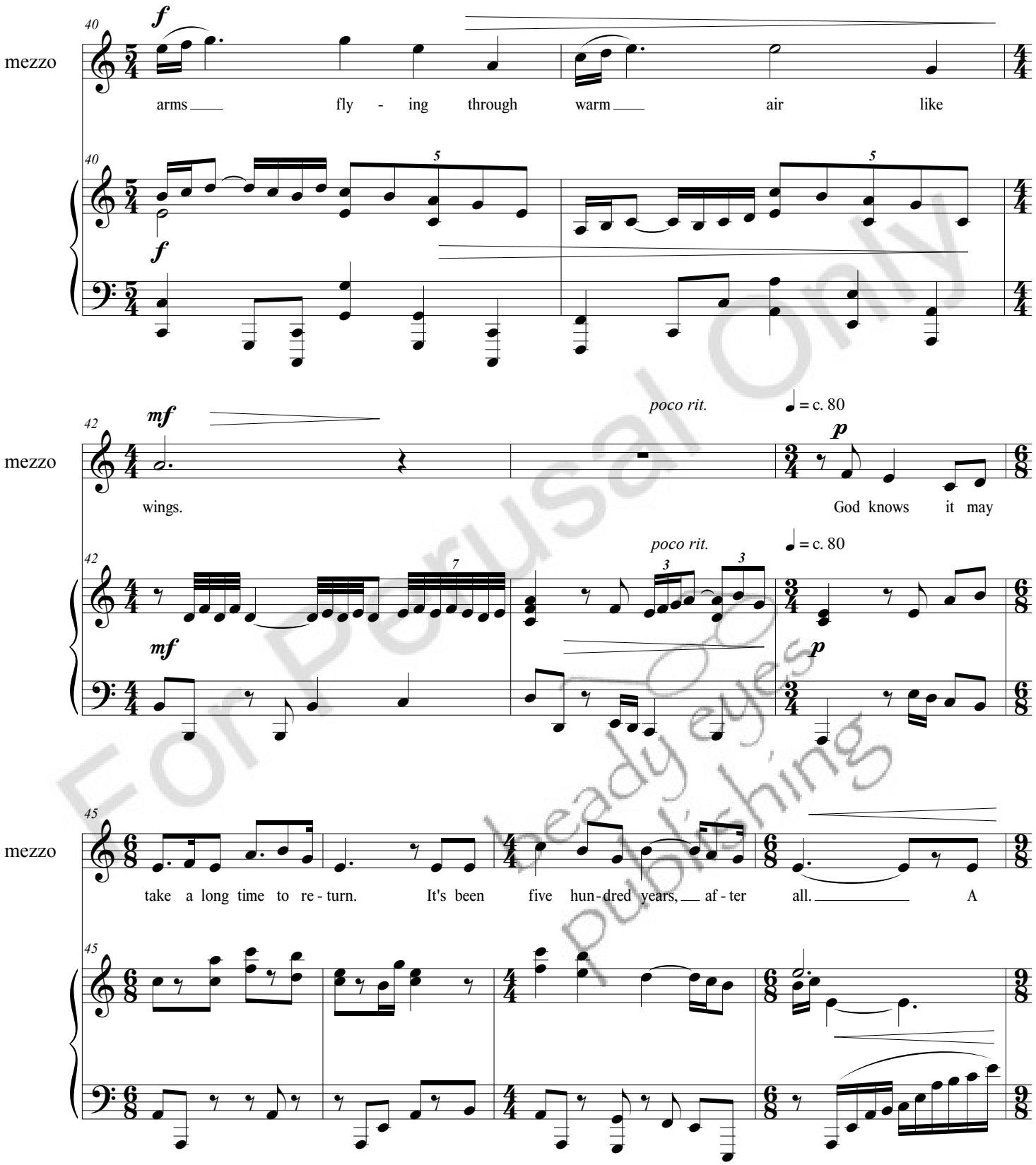

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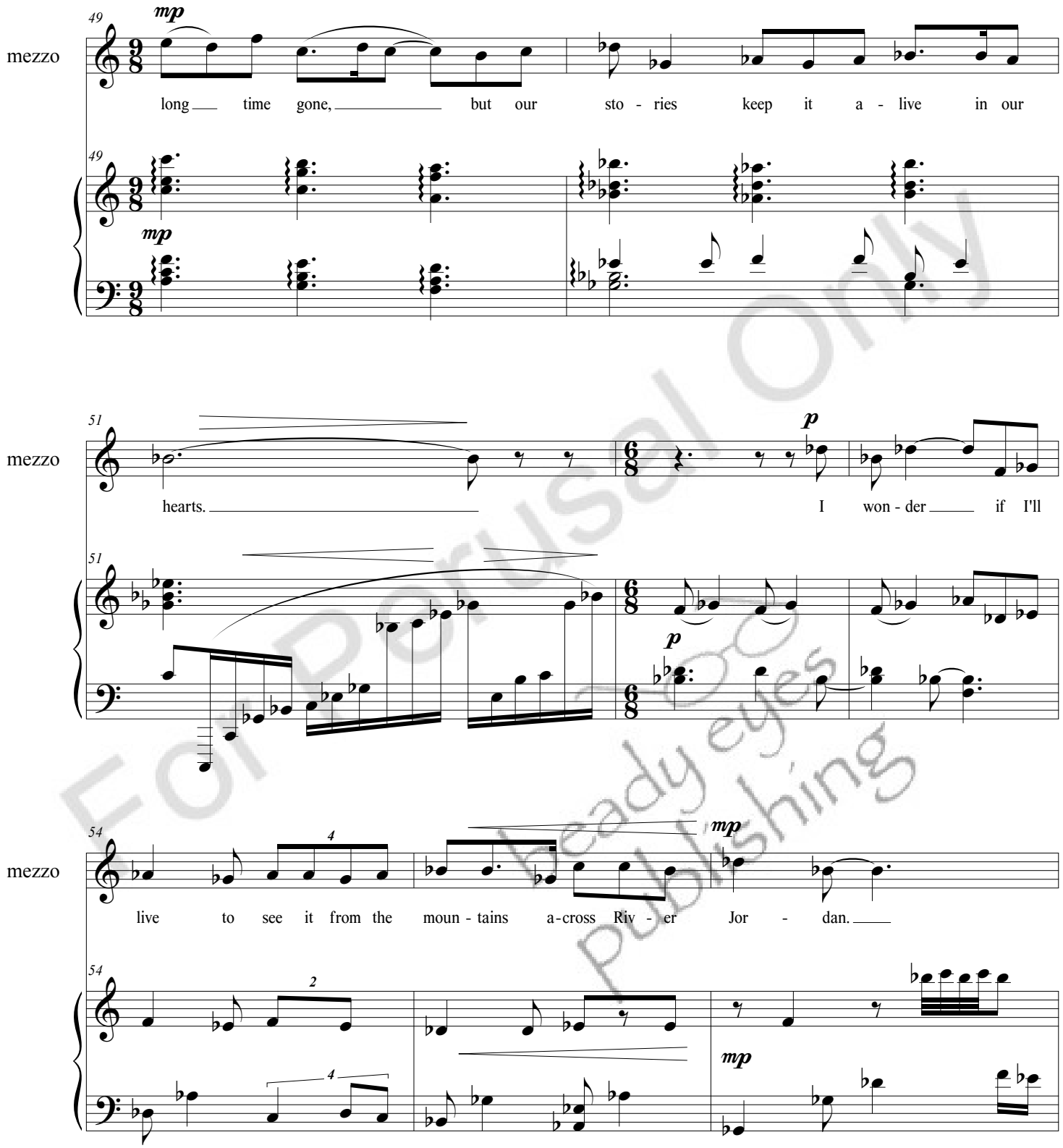

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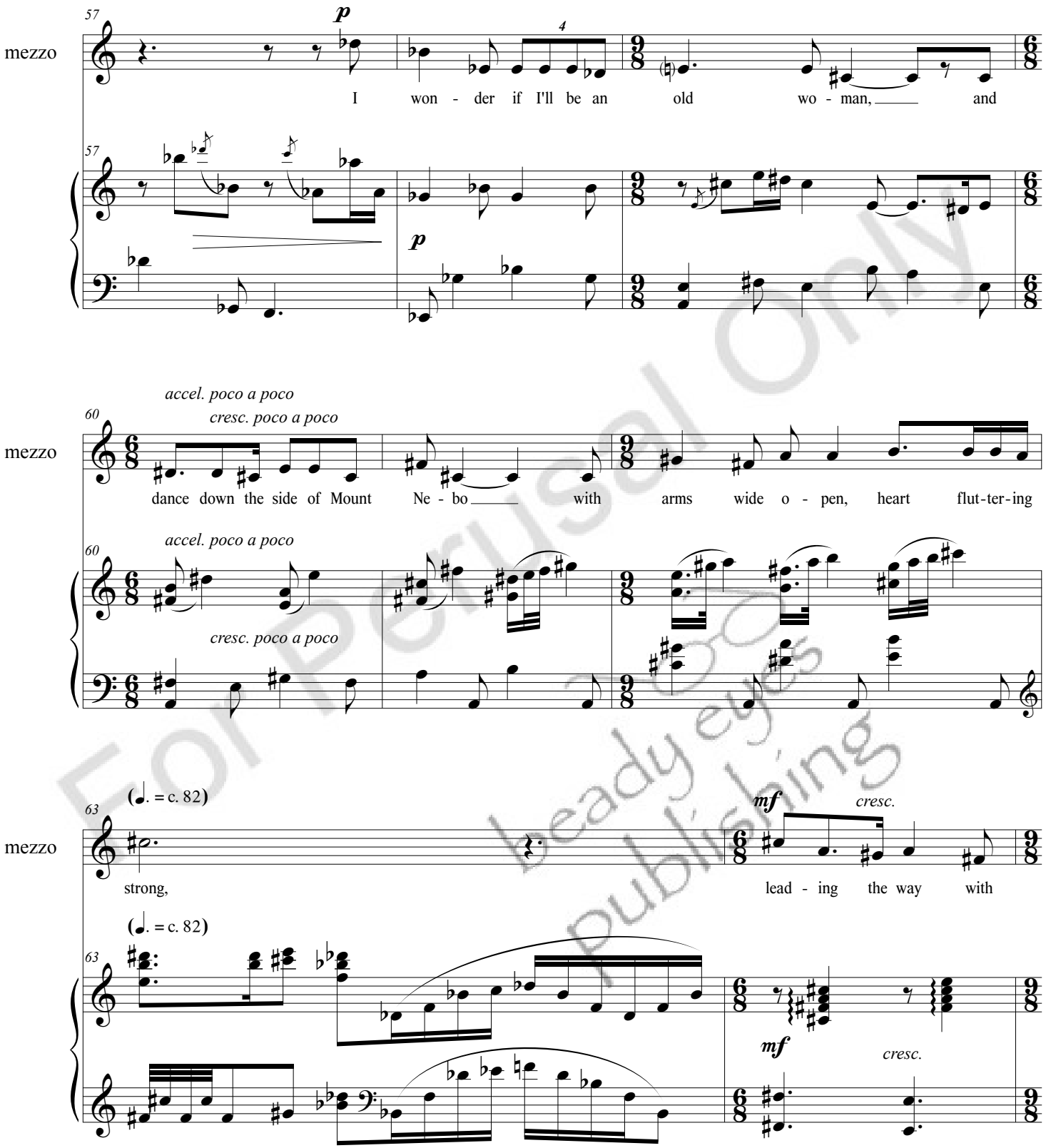

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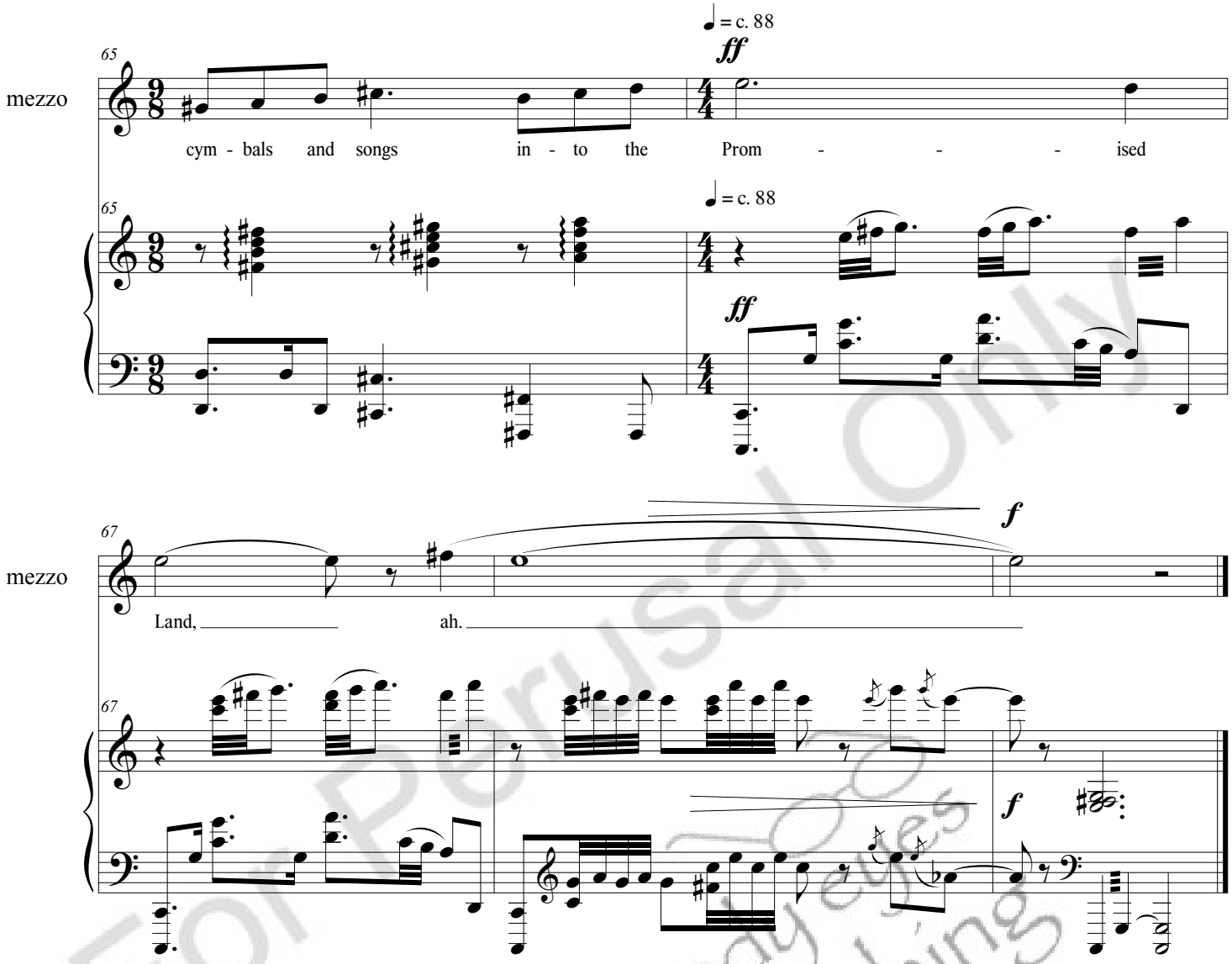

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