Russell Steinberg

PSALMS OF LIGHT AND WATER

Op. 86

1. He Has Given Us Light
(Va Ya'ér Lanú)
adapted from Psalm118

2. Save Me O God
adapted from Psalm 69

Duration: 9 minutes

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Psalms of Light and Water

1. Va Ya-'ér Lanú
(He Has Given Us Light)
adapted from Psalm 118

2. Save me O God
adapted from Psalm 69

Music by Russell Steinberg

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Notes

I composed these two psalm settings at different times: *He Has Given Us Light* during the 2020 pandemic while nationwide protests were happening over the police murder of George Floyd, and *Save Me, O God* as music director for the Stephen Wise Schools around 2003.
He Has Given Us Light is set in Hebrew. *Save Me, O God* is set in English.

He Has Given Us Light is adapted from Psalm 118 and commissioned from the Judaic Sacred Music Foundation. My thanks to Steve Rothstein for advising me with textual sources and to Hila Plitmann, first for providing an excellent phonetic translation of the Hebrew, and second, for her beautiful premiere performance.

"Light" is the emphasis of this song, but the light journeys through a festive dance pulse, a hushed contrapuntal weaving, and an unexpected arrival in the distance of millenia to an anthem of black civil rights, ultimately settling in joyful radiance. This song was written at the time of the national George Floyd protests.

Both voice and piano require special attention to changing timbre in the different sections. The piano part requires a sense of pulse and delicate resonance with the clusters, but also care not to obscure the singer.

Save Me, O God is an expressive piece adapted from Psalm 69. Shaping dynamics and color are important especially in the vocal melismas and piano pedaling. Tempo may have some freedom to create the best sense of ebb and flow.

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Va Ya-'ér Lanú

He Has Given Us Light

adapted from Psalm 118
(text in phoenetic Hebrew with English translation)

Va ya'ér lánu. El, Adonái.	He has given us light. The Almighty is God.
Va ya'ér lánu.	He has given us light.
E'ven ma'asú habonim	The stone despised by the builders
hay tál' rosh Piná.	has become the cornerstone.
Meét Adonái, Haytázot;	This emanated from the Almighty.
Hi Niflát beEynéynu.	It is wondrous in our eyes.
Isrú chag baAvotim—	Bind the festival boughs to the altar.
Ad karnót, haMizbé'ach.	
Va ya'ér lánu. El, Adonái.	He has given us light. The Almighty is God.
Va ya'ér lánu.	He has given us light.

Save Me, O God

adapted from Psalm 69

Save me, O God,
For the waters are come in unto my soul;
I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing;
I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.
I am weary of my crying, my throat is dried:
Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.

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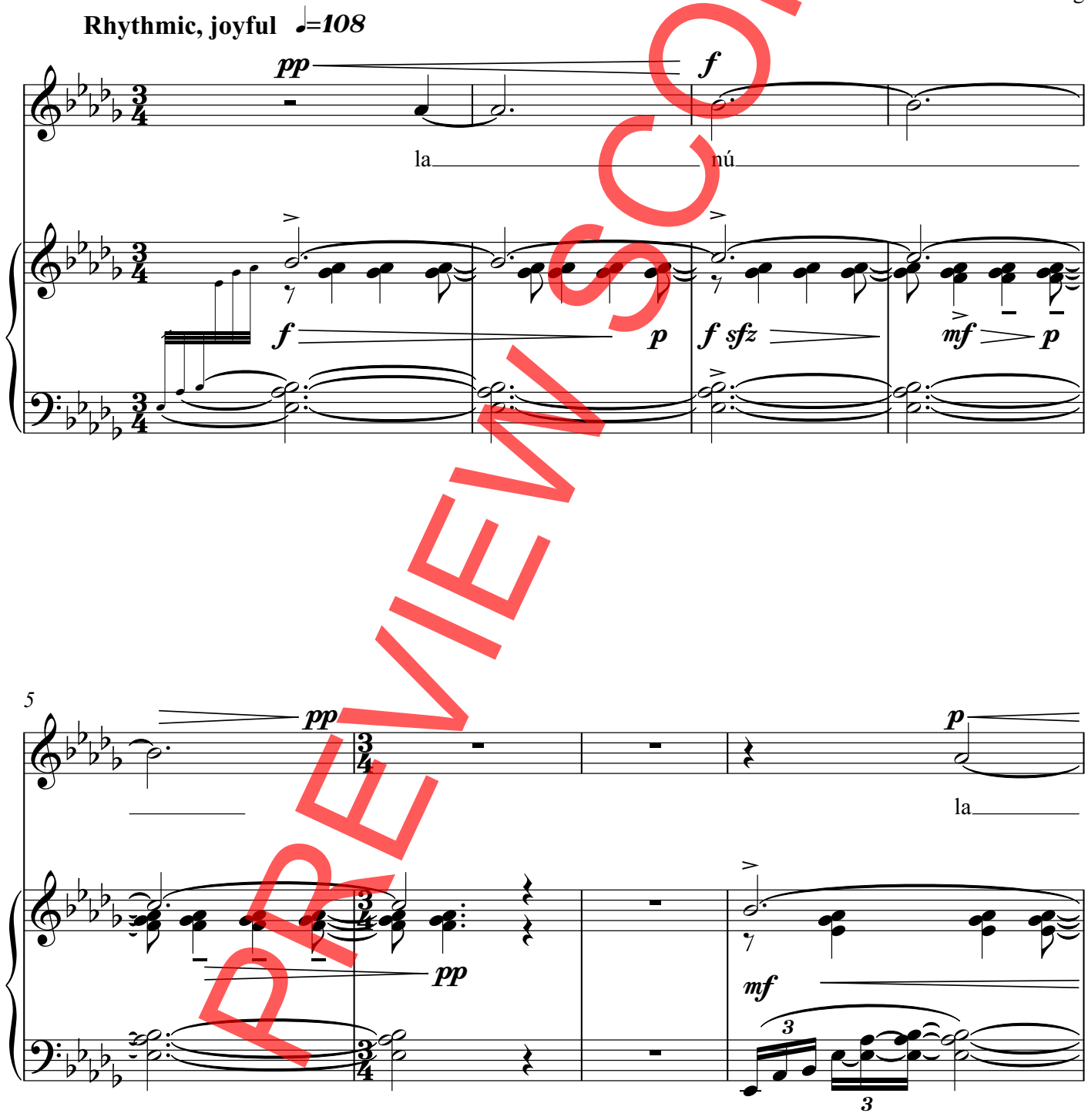
commissioned by the Judaic Sacred Music Foundation

Va Ya-'ér Lanú

(He Has Given Us Light)

adapted from Psalm118

Russell Steinberg



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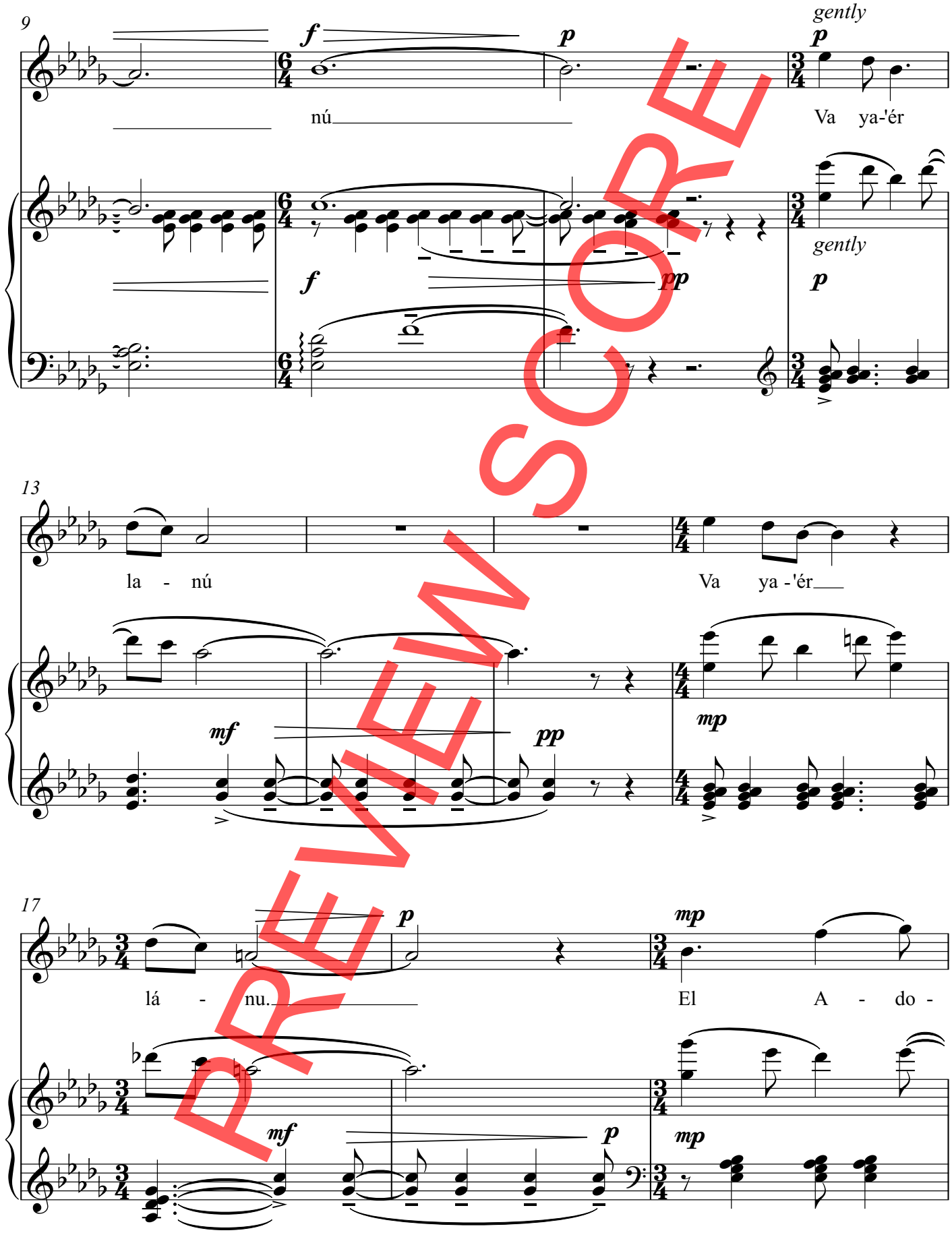

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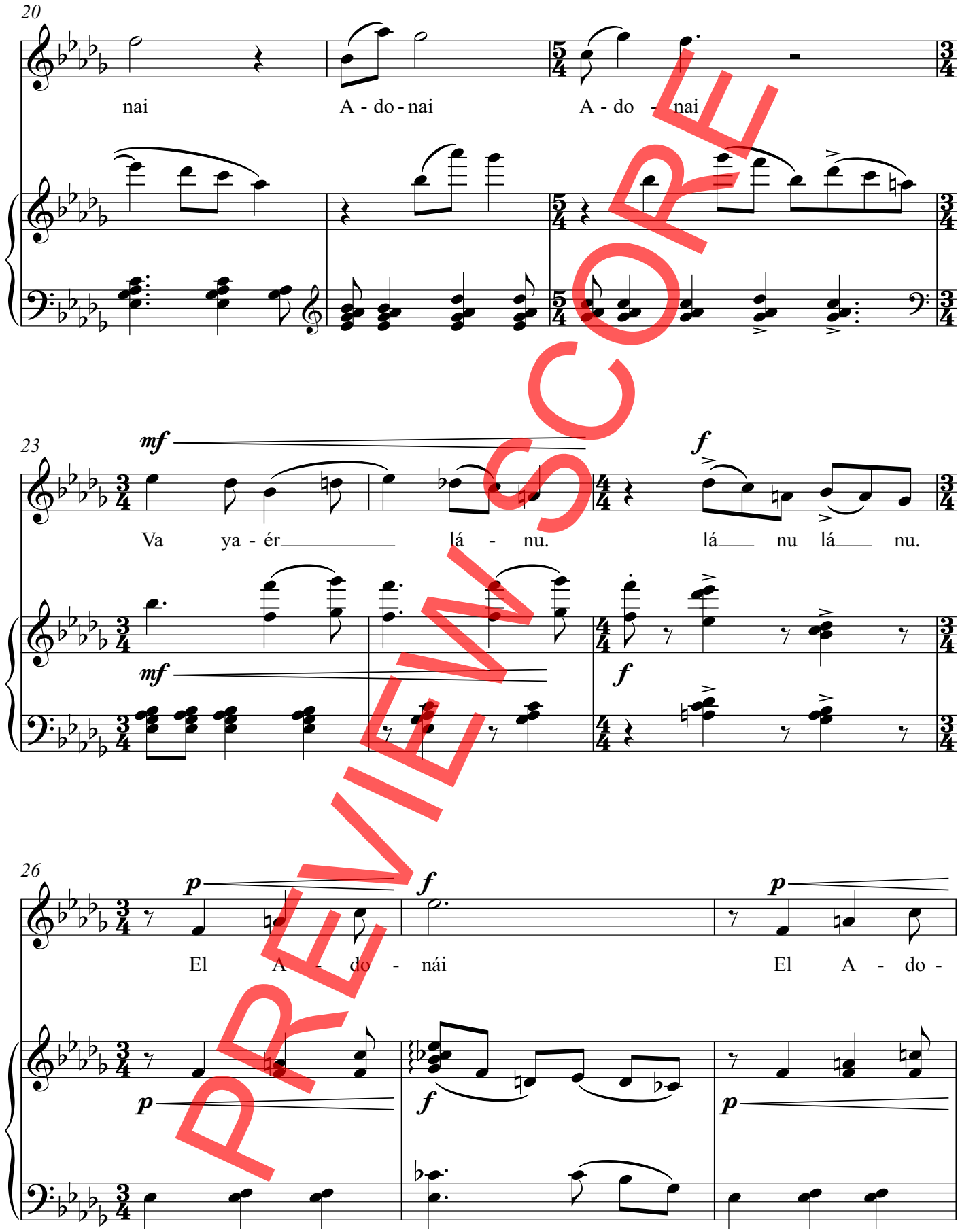

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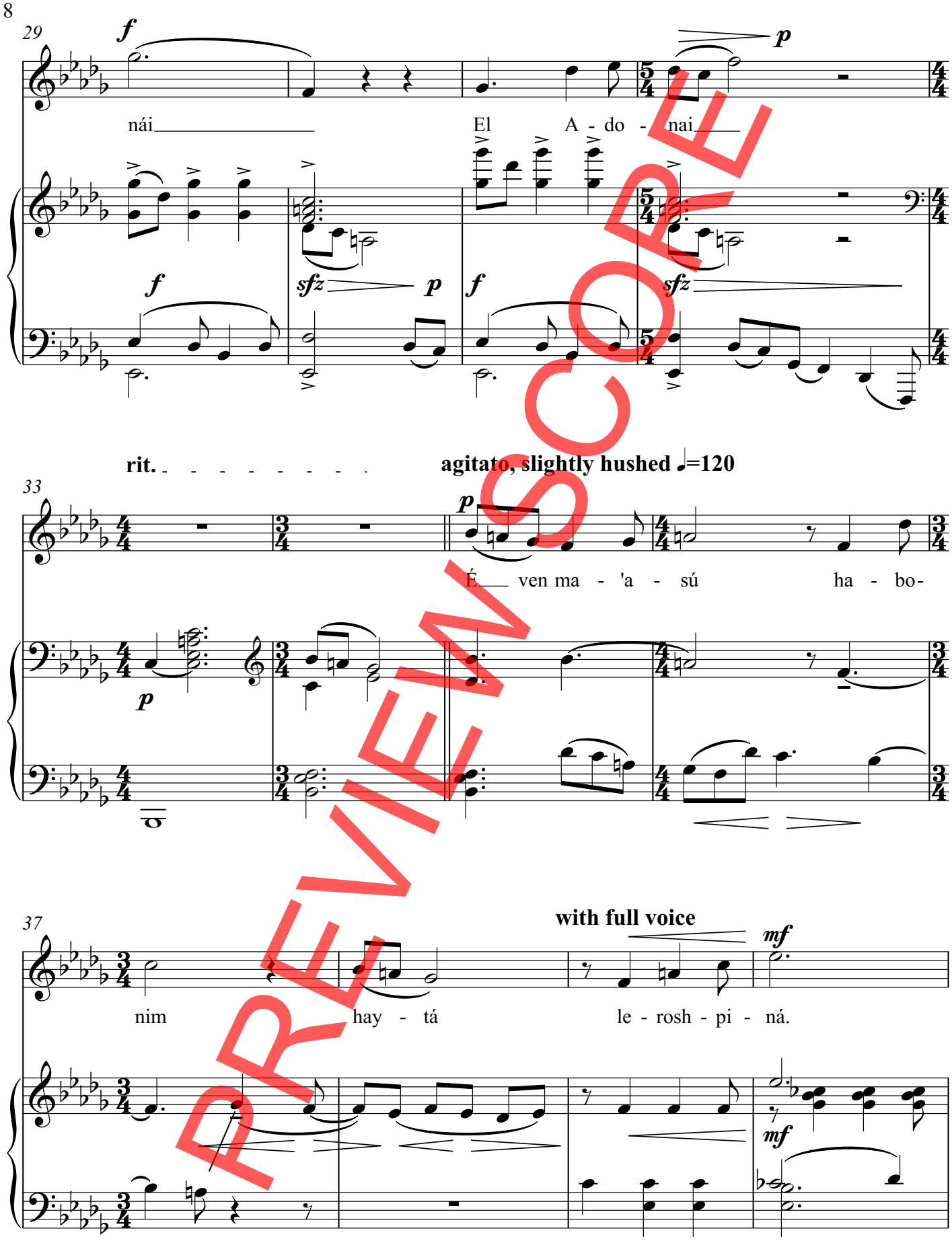

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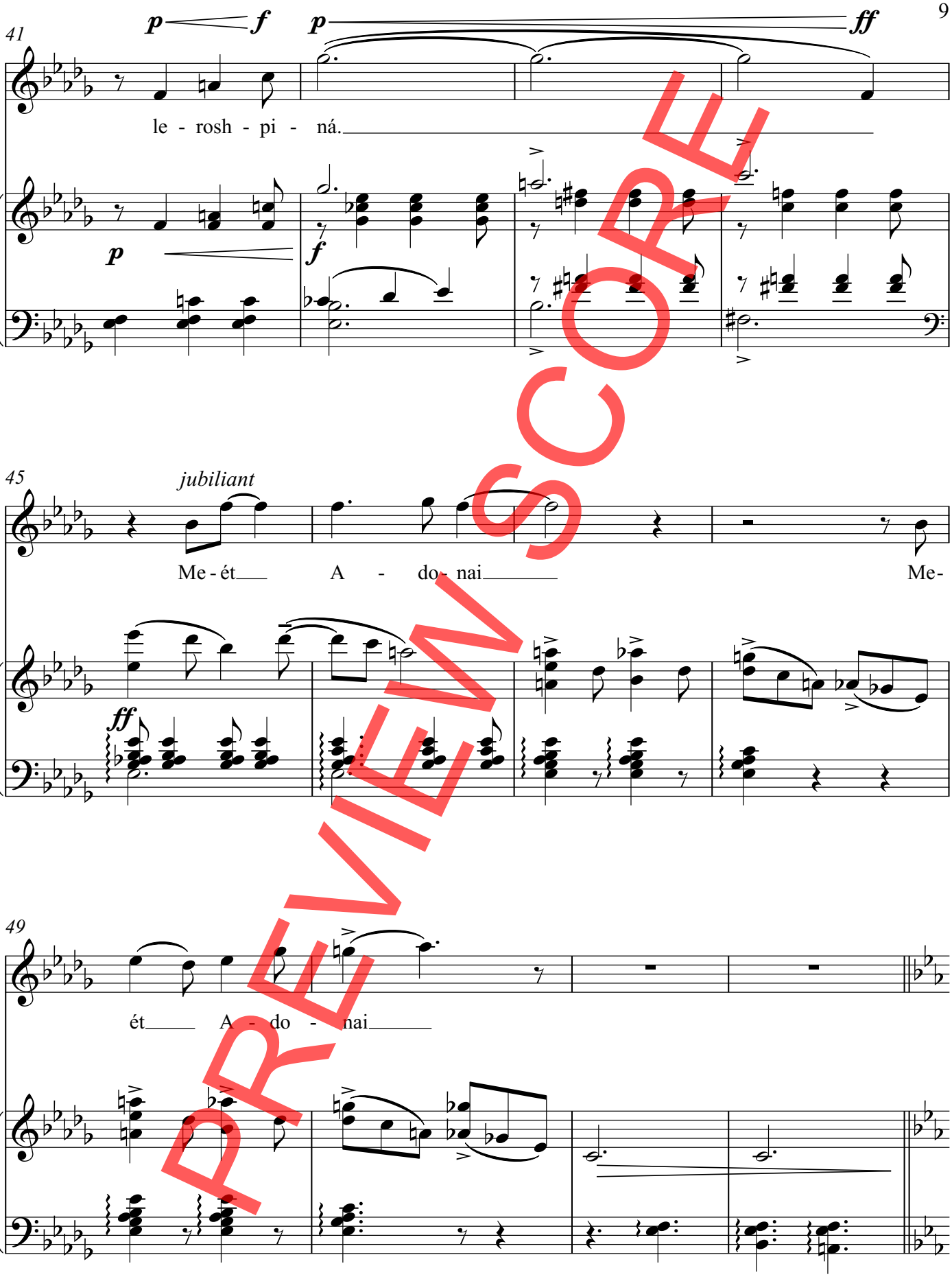

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slightly hushed

53

p

Hay - tá - zot; Hi nif - lát be - ey -

p

56

néy - nu.

59

iridescent

pp *delicately*

Is - ru - chag

pp *delicately*

8va

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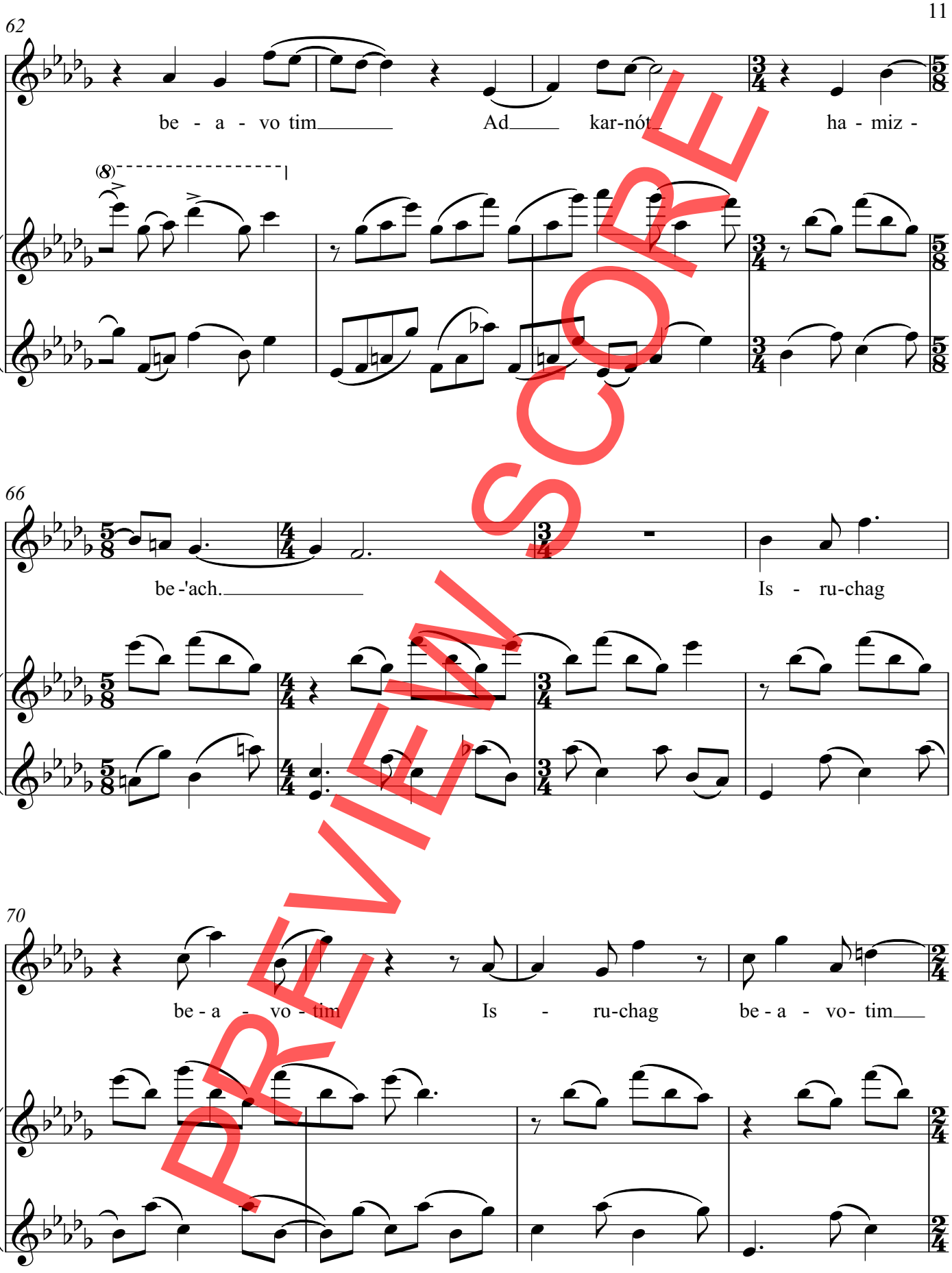

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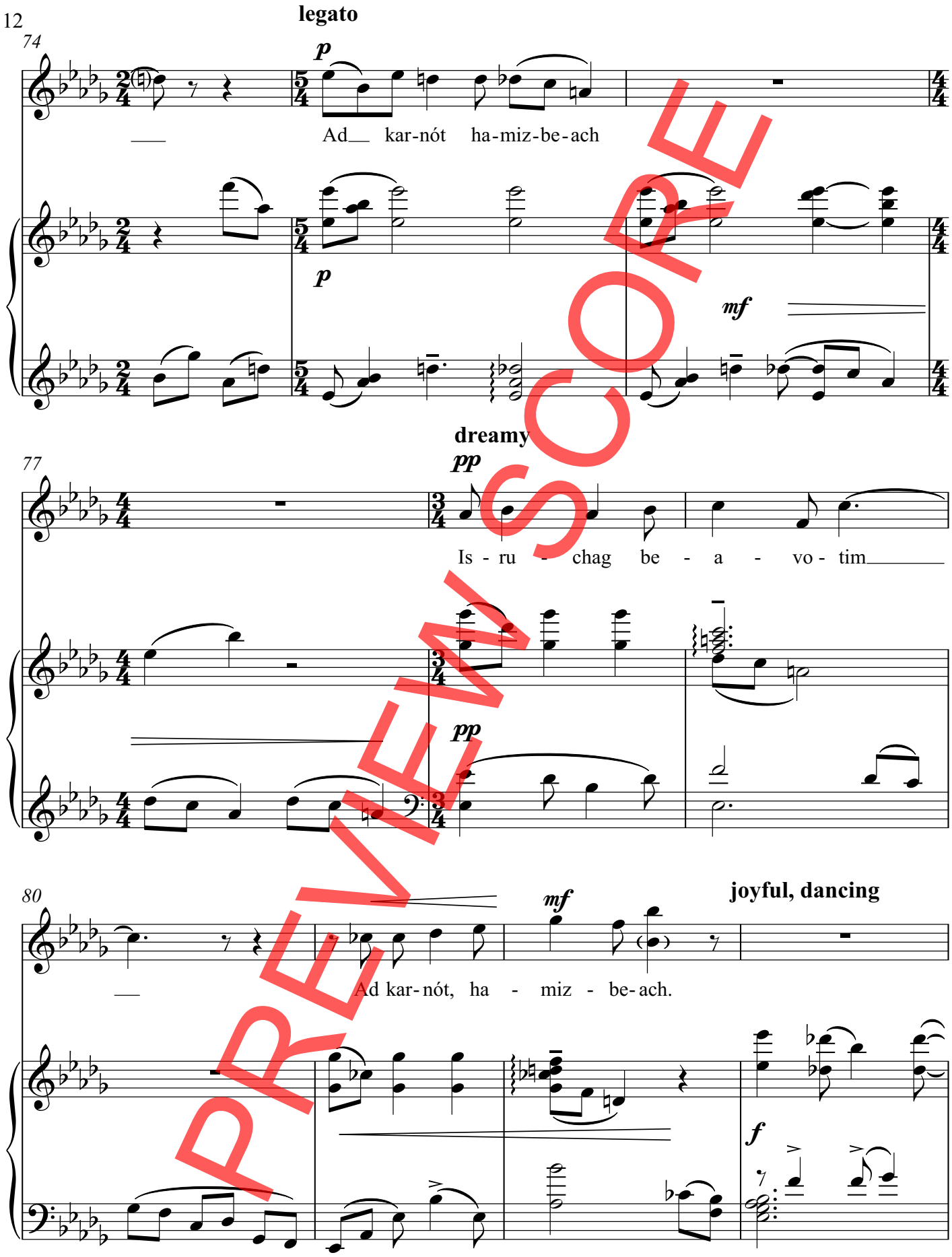

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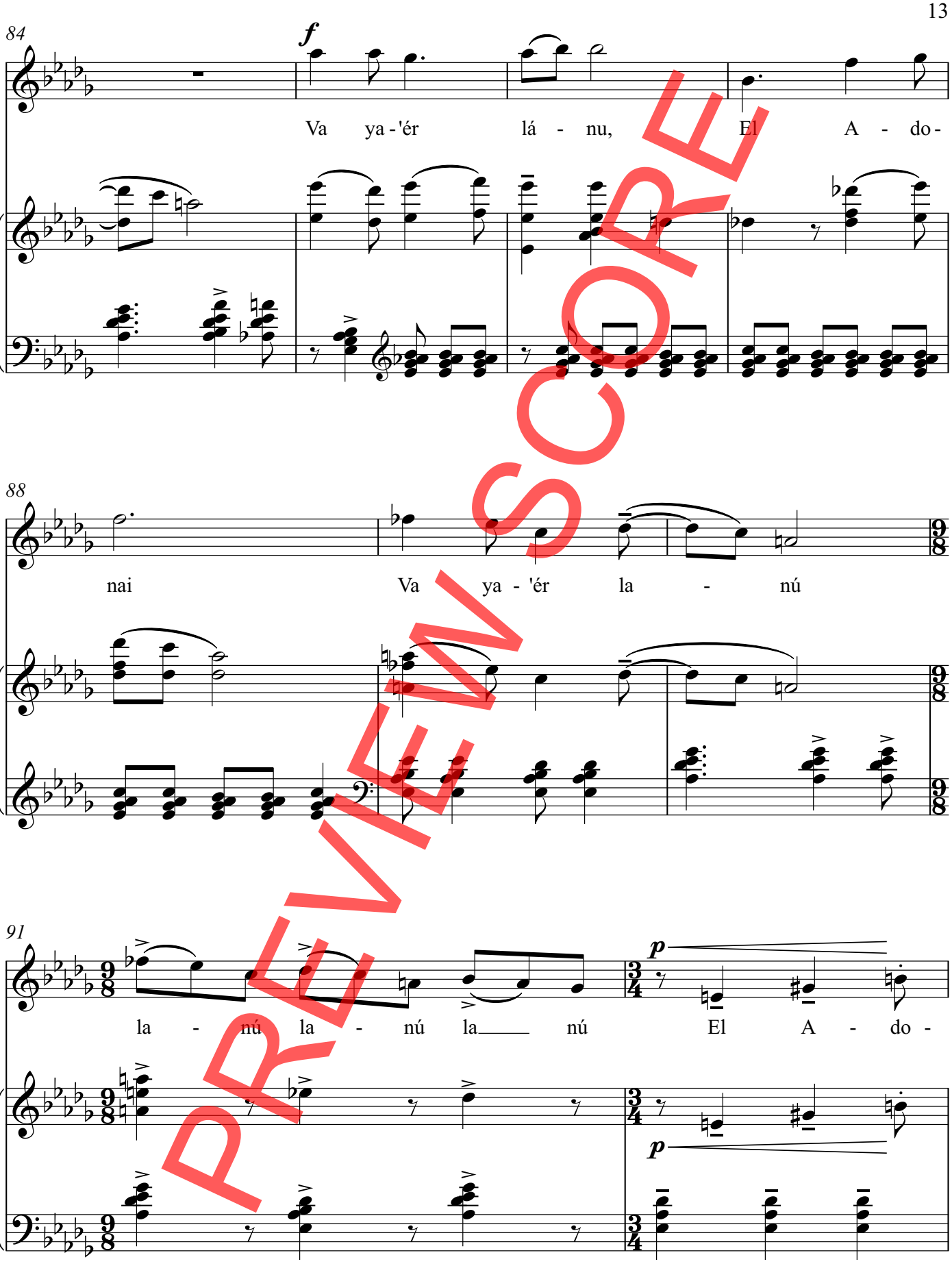

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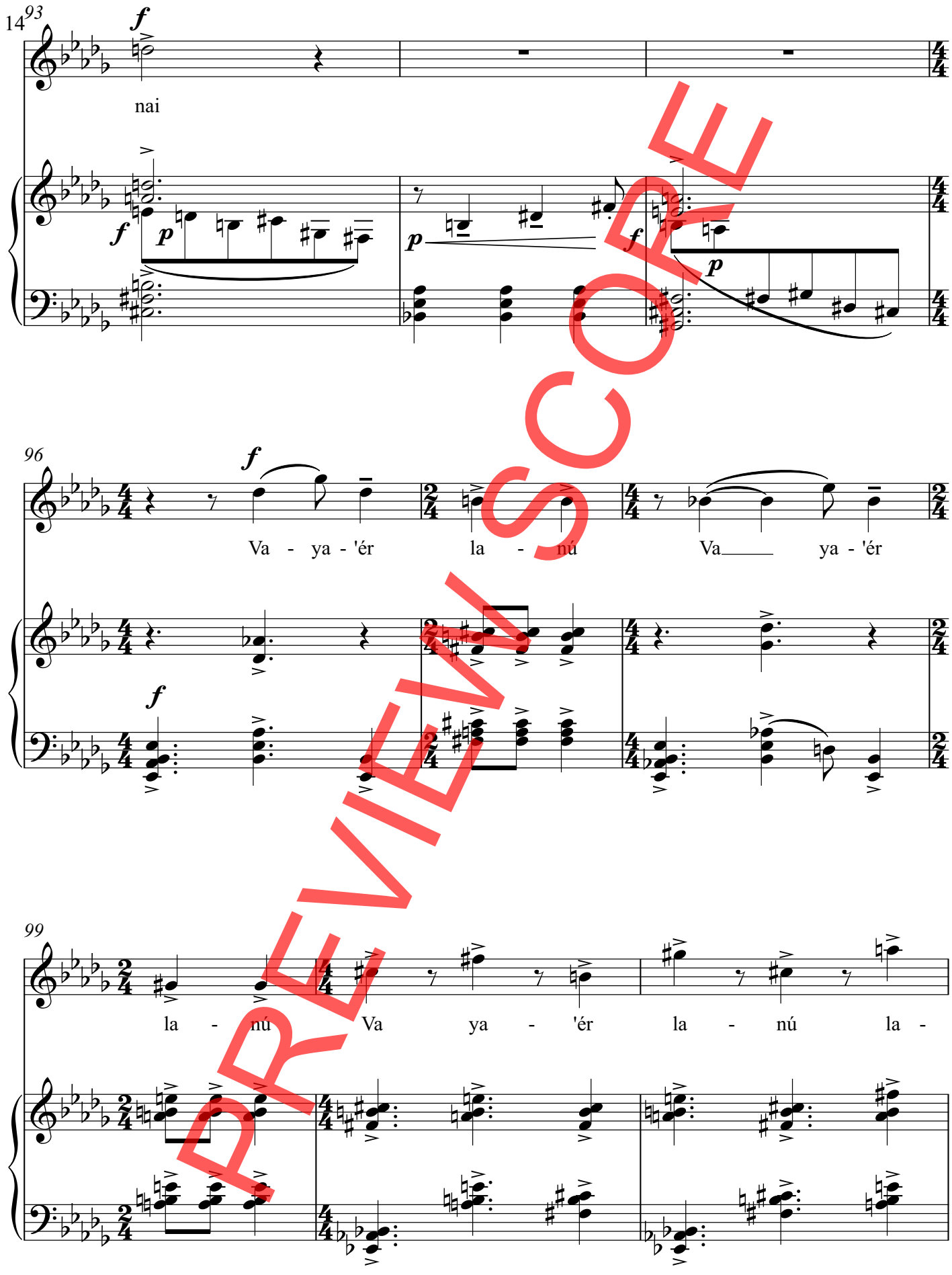

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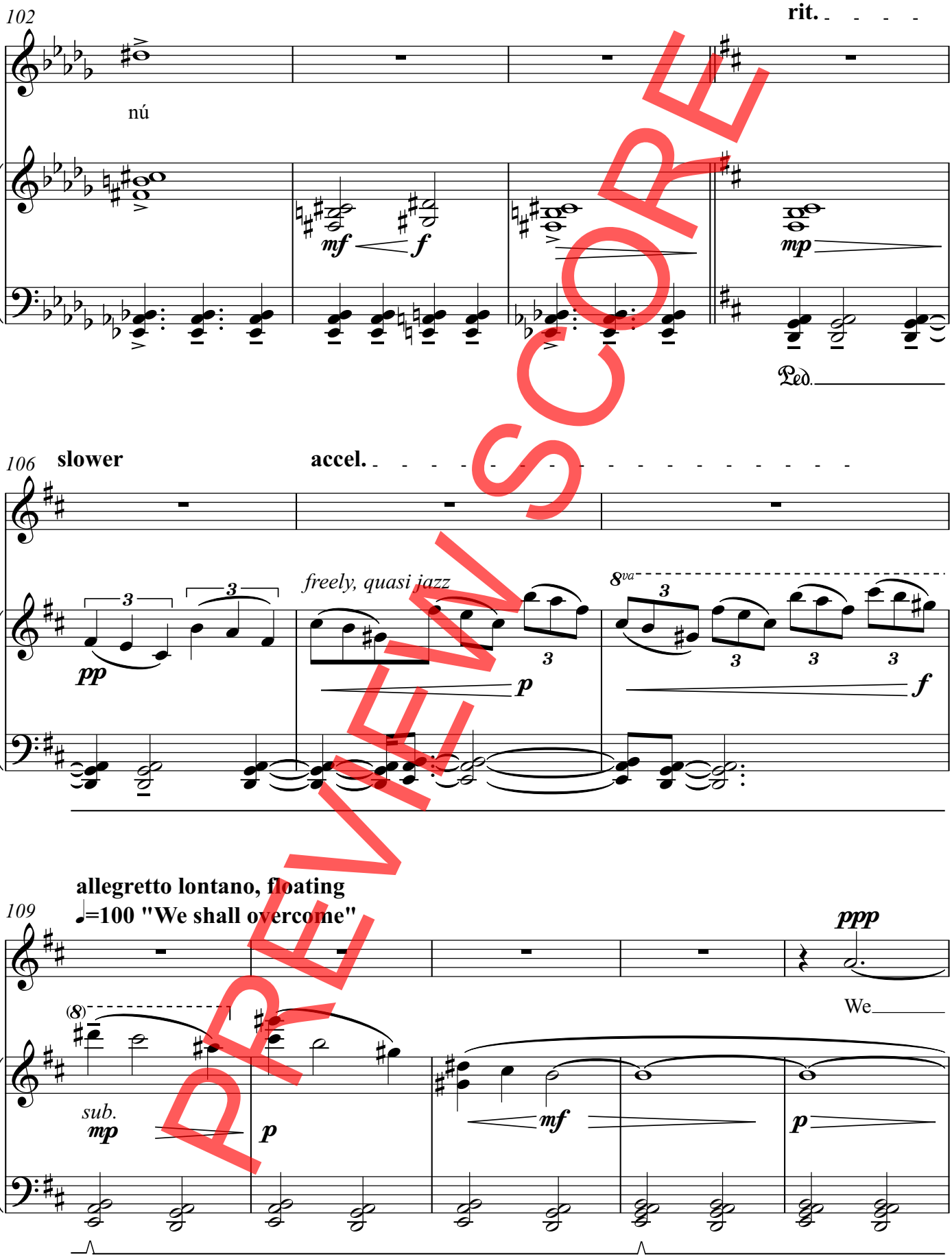

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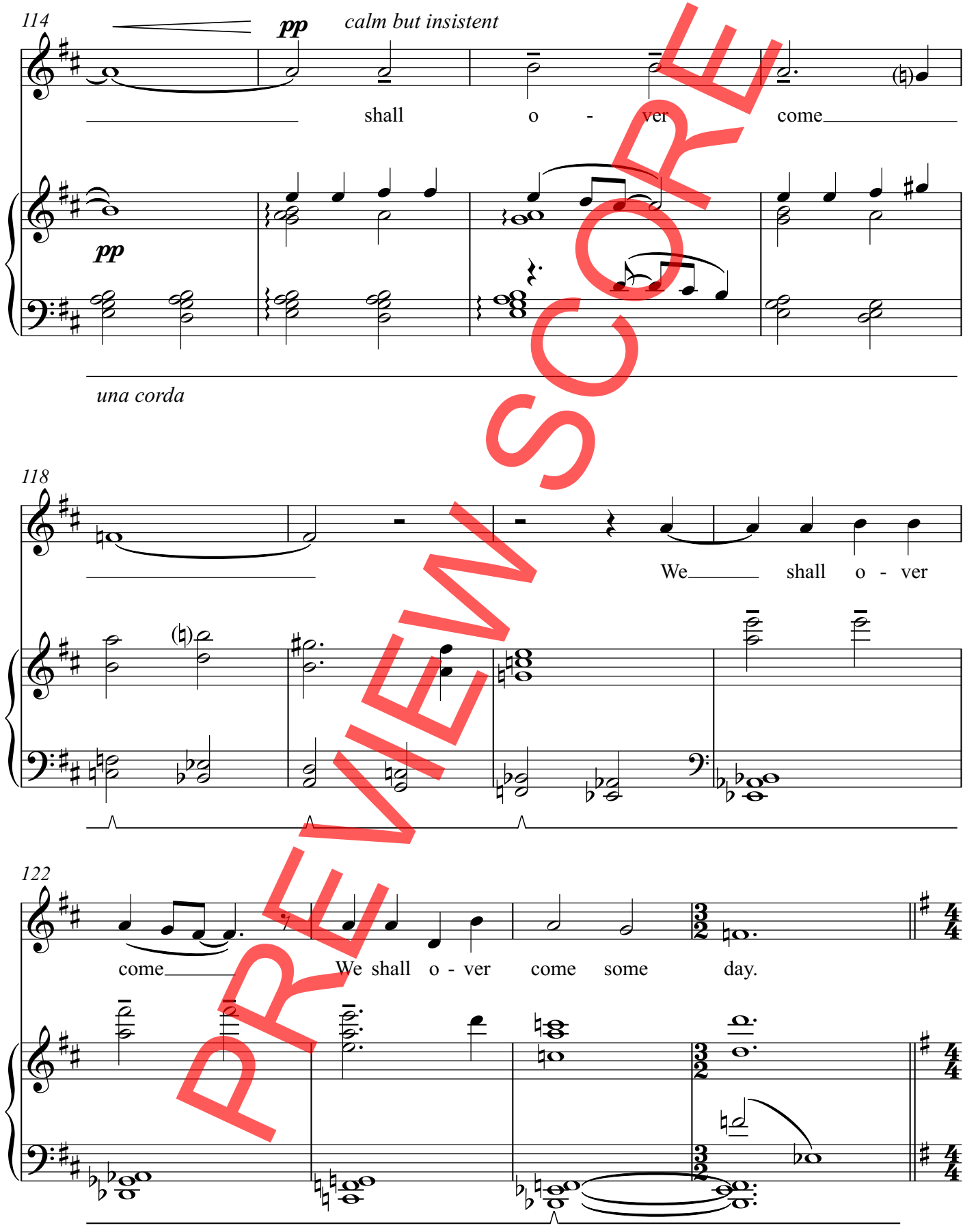

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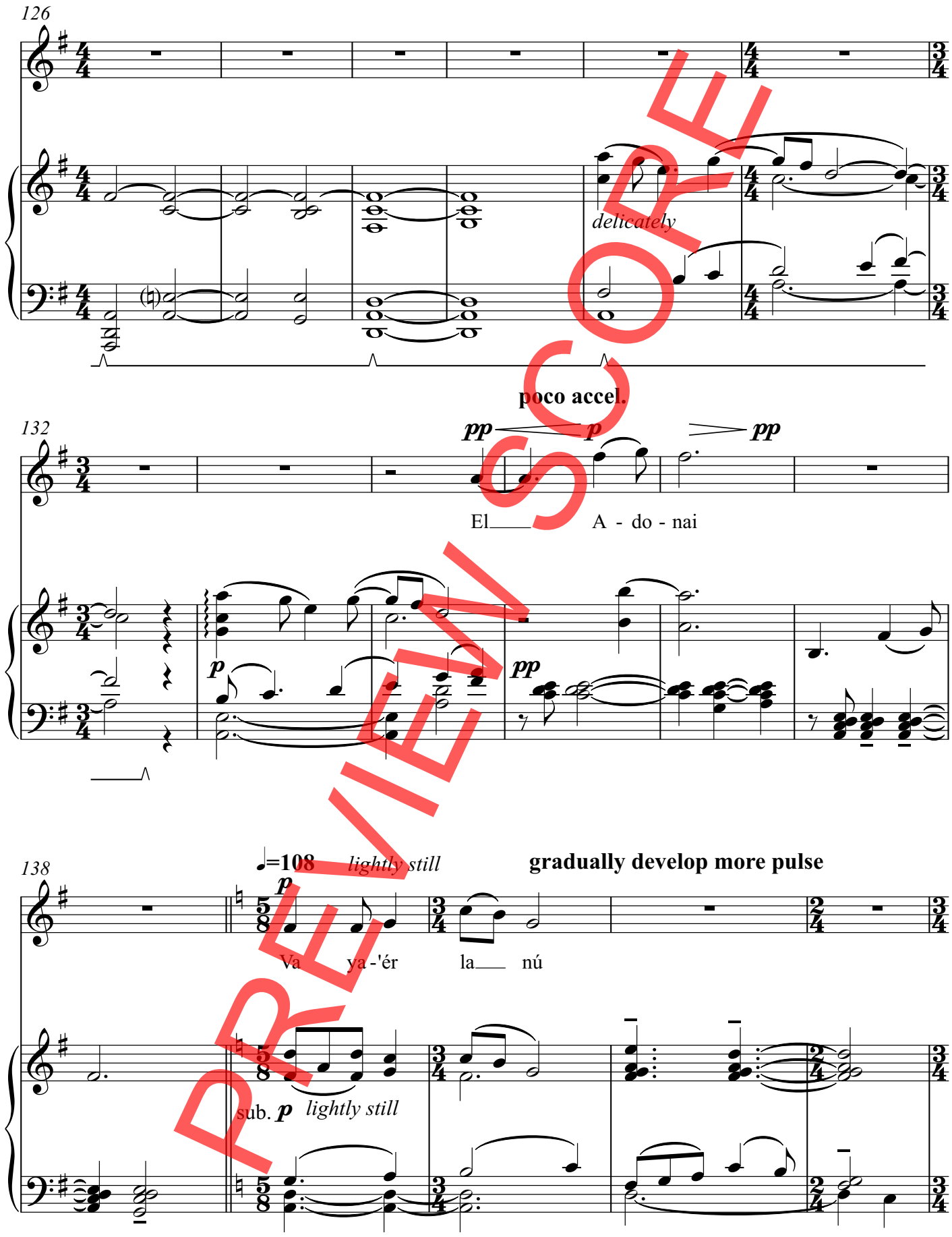

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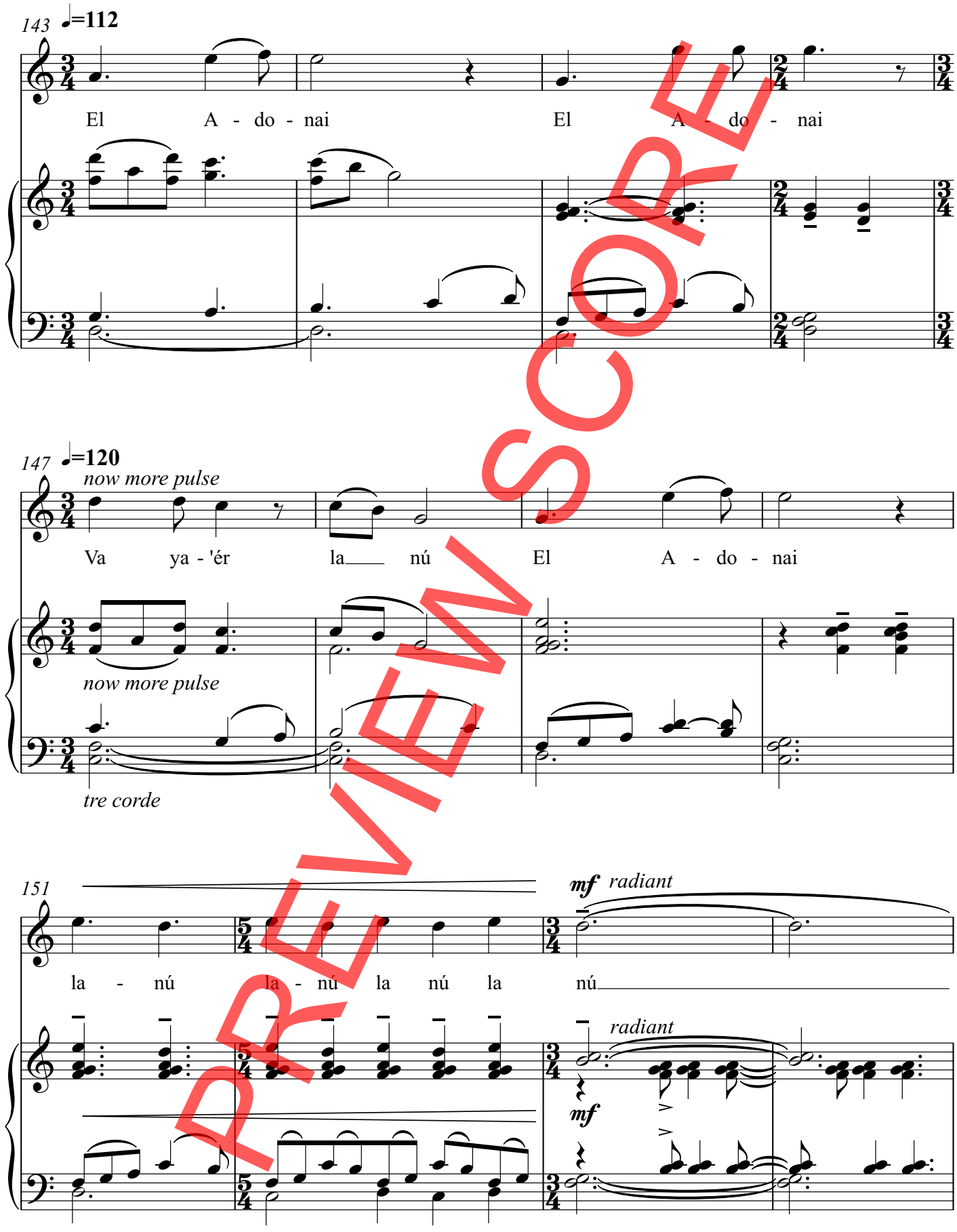

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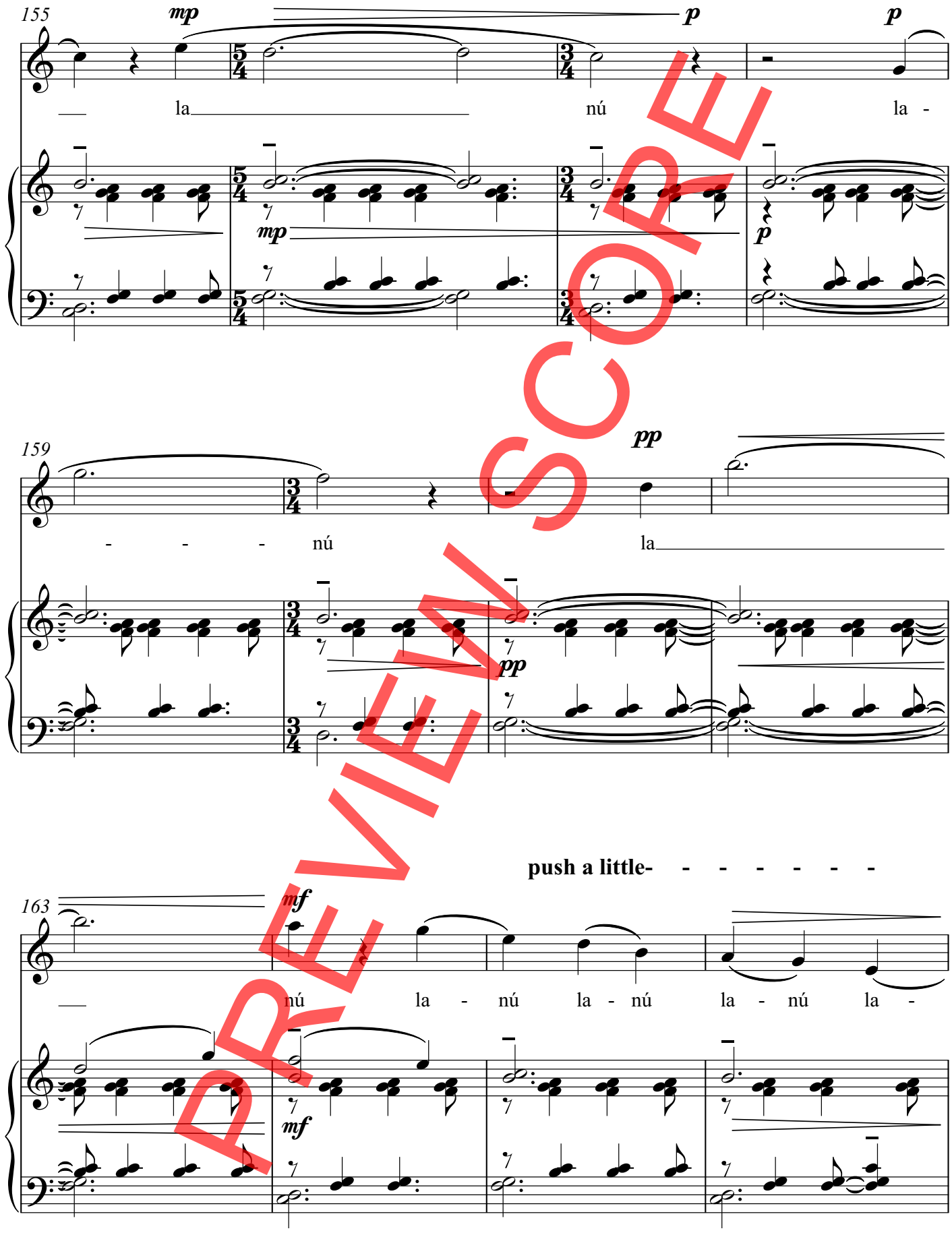

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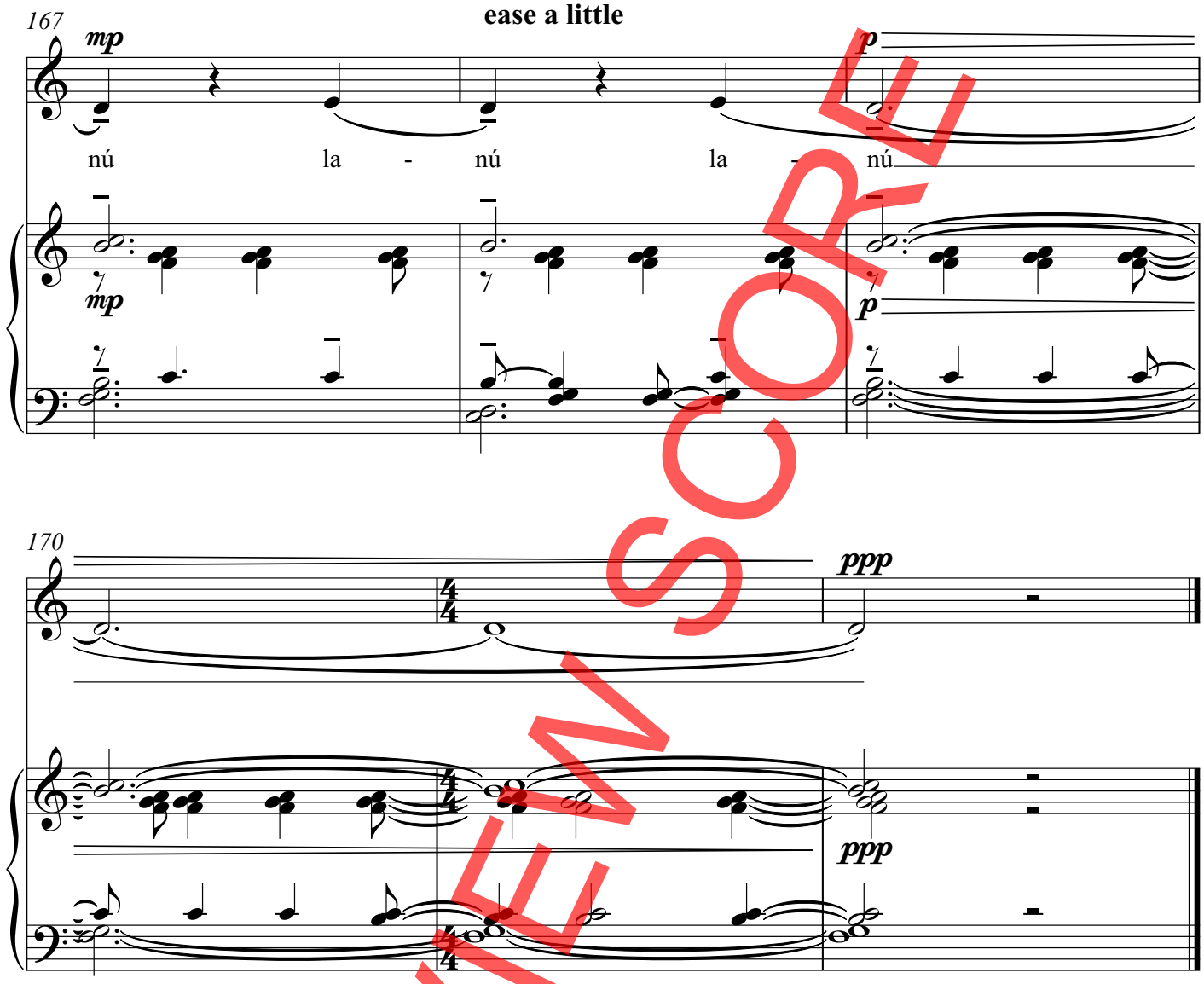

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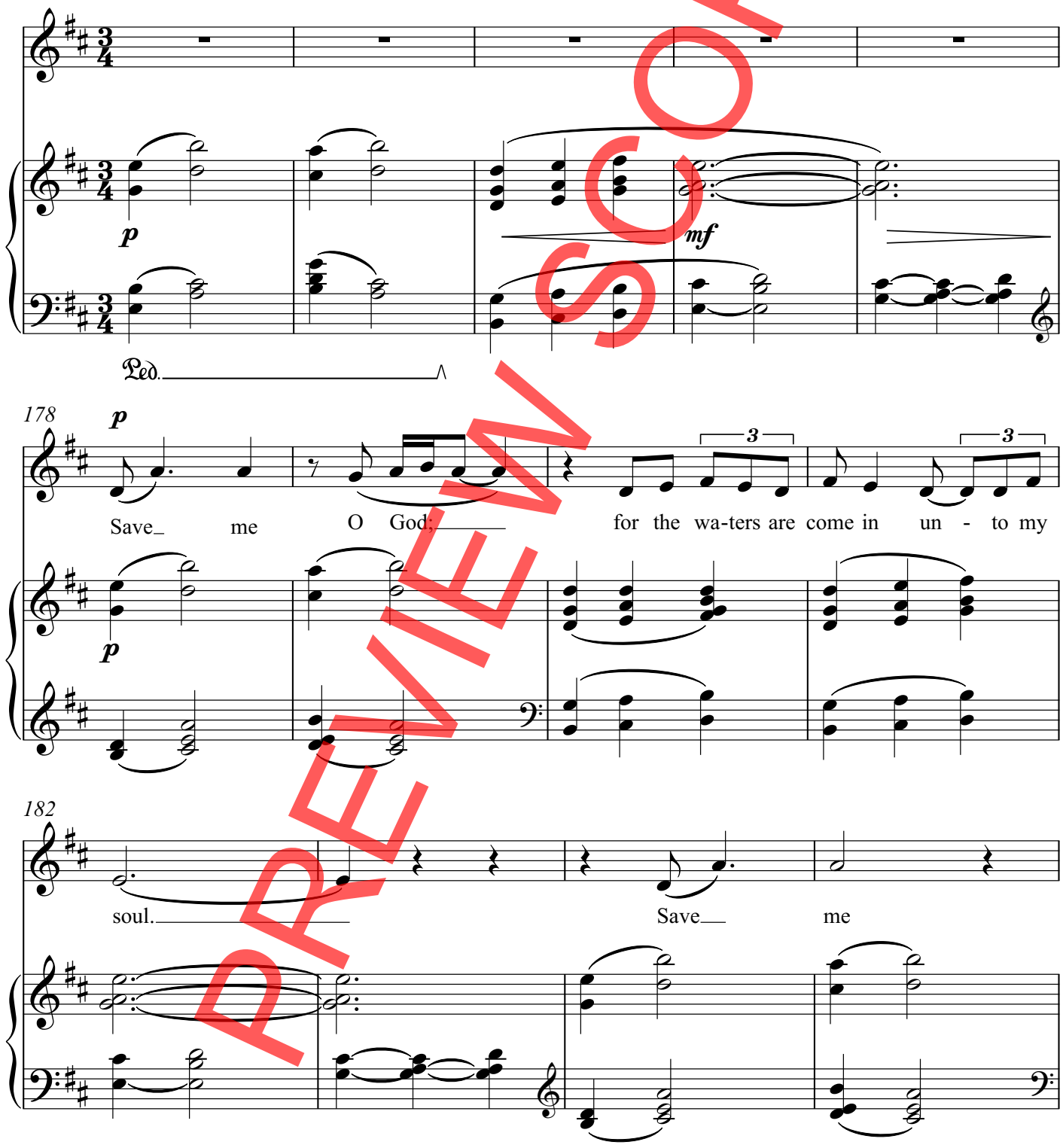
In memory of Avi Gesundheit

Save Me, O God

adapted from Psalm 69

Moderato, breathing with glowing resonance

Russell Steinberg



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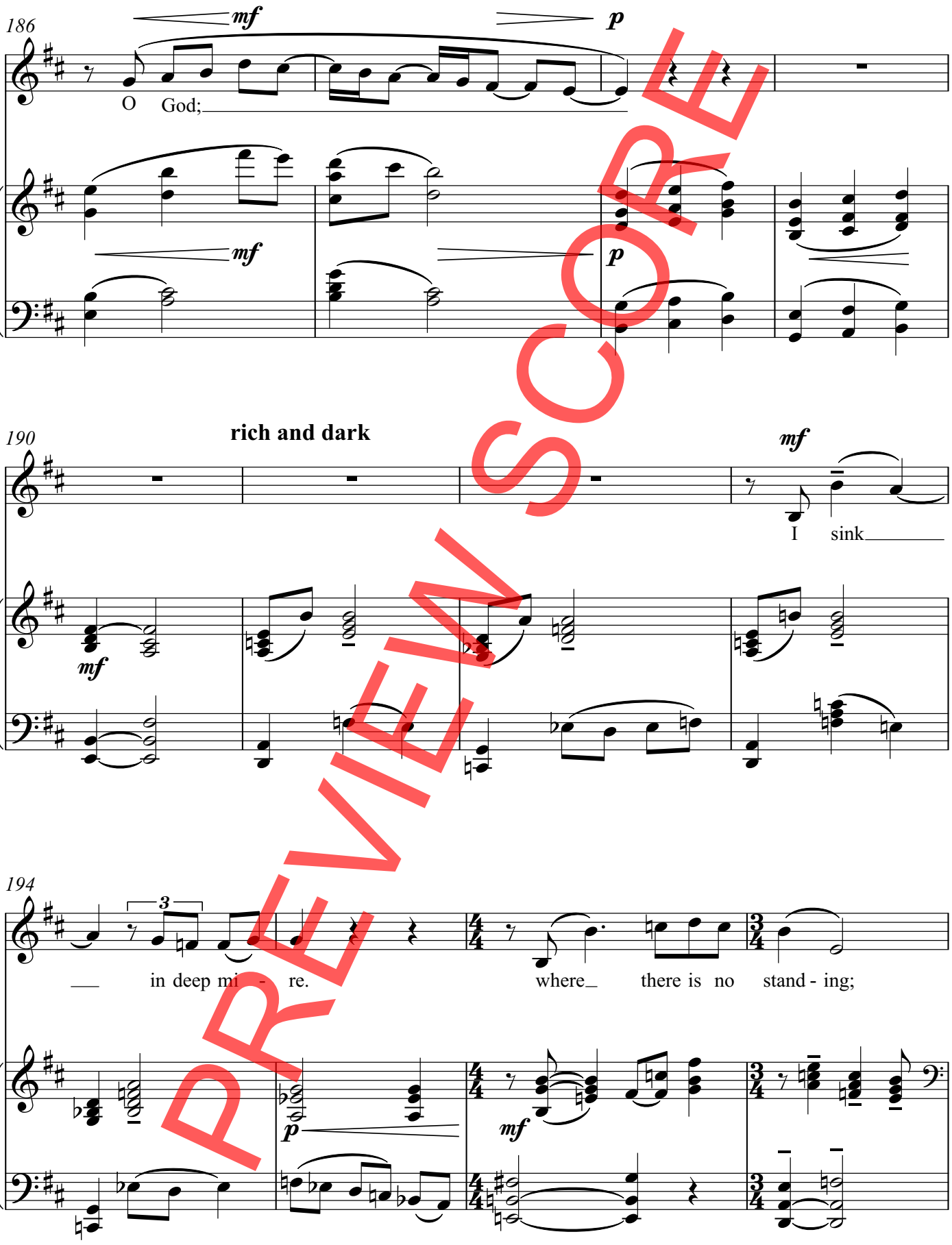

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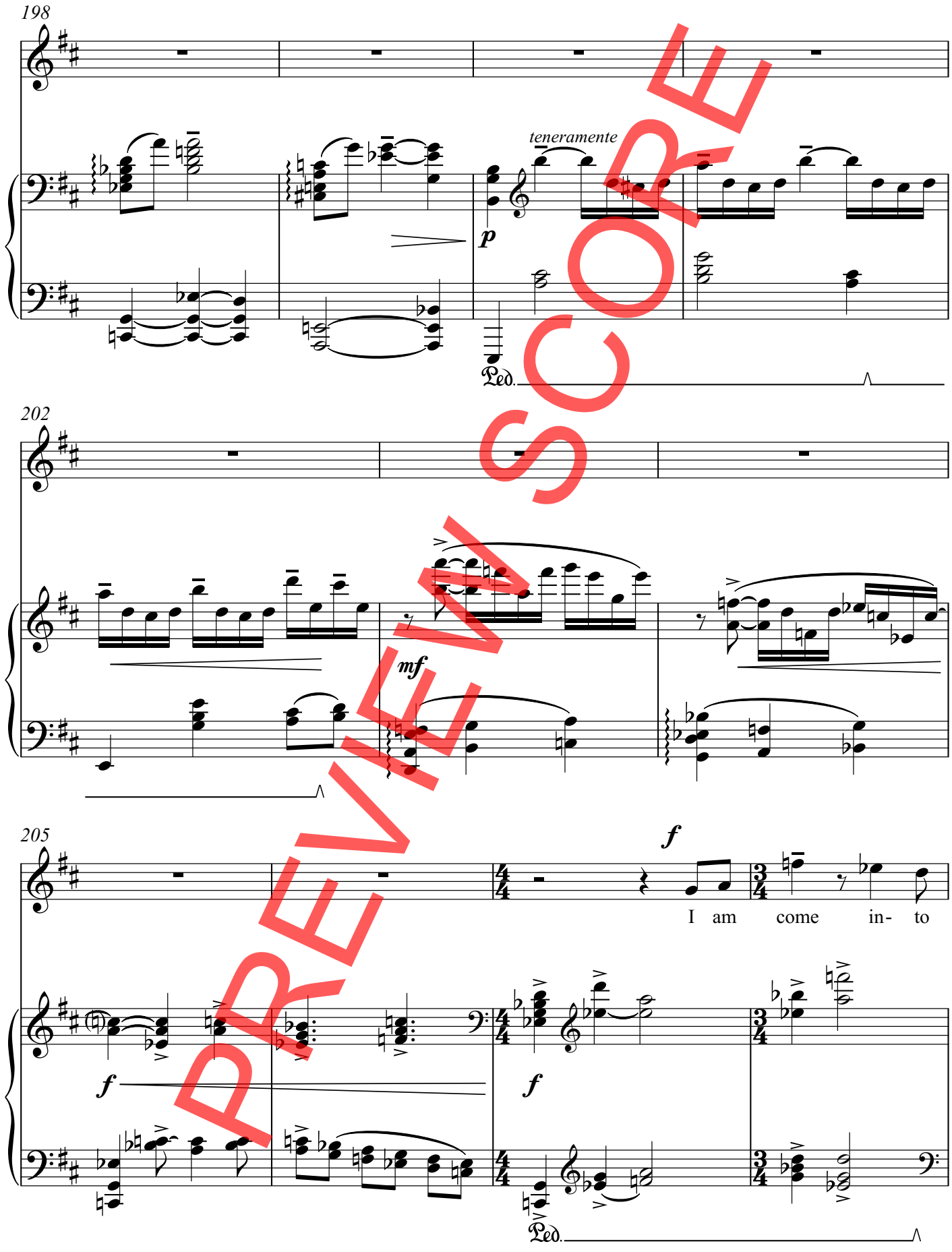

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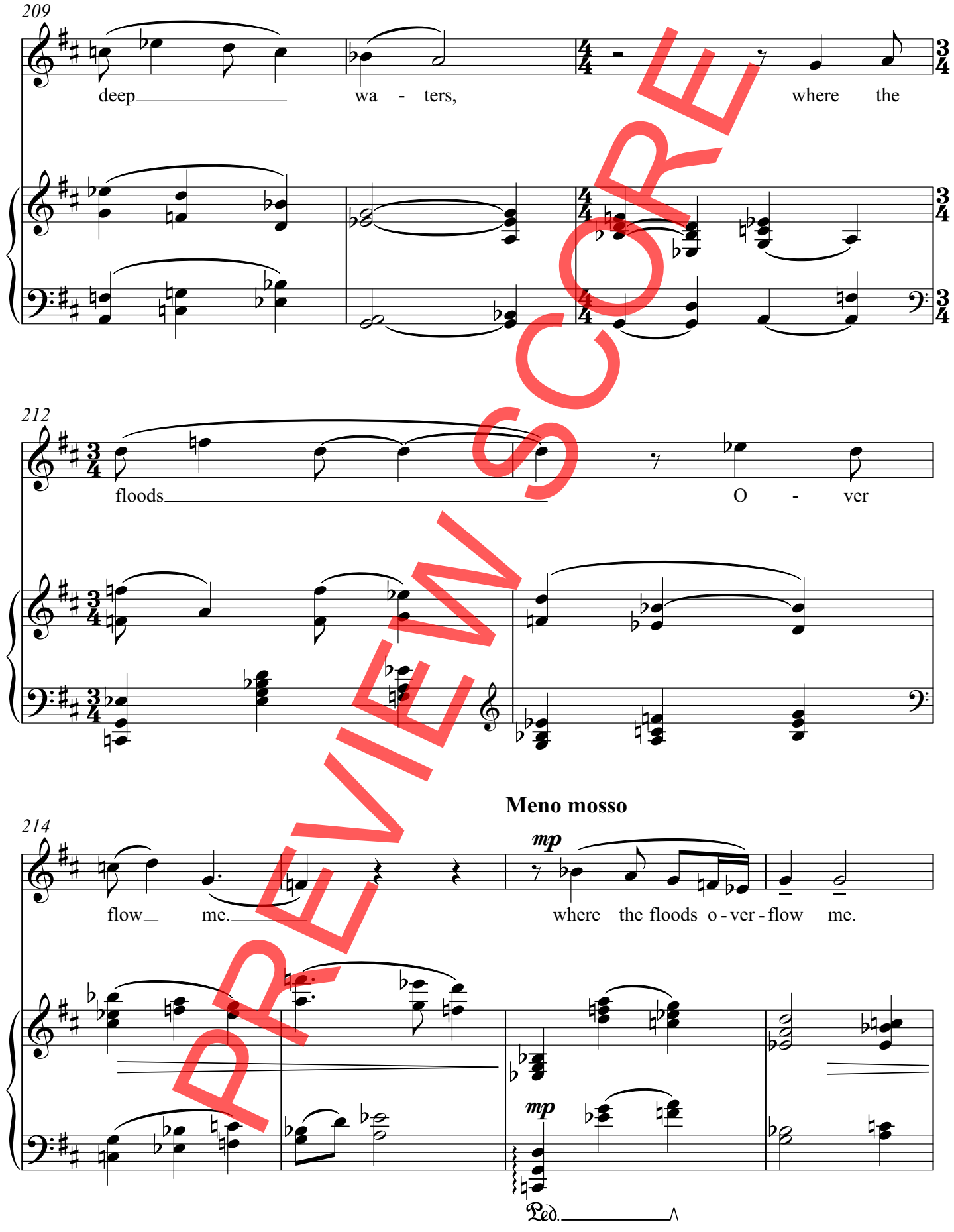

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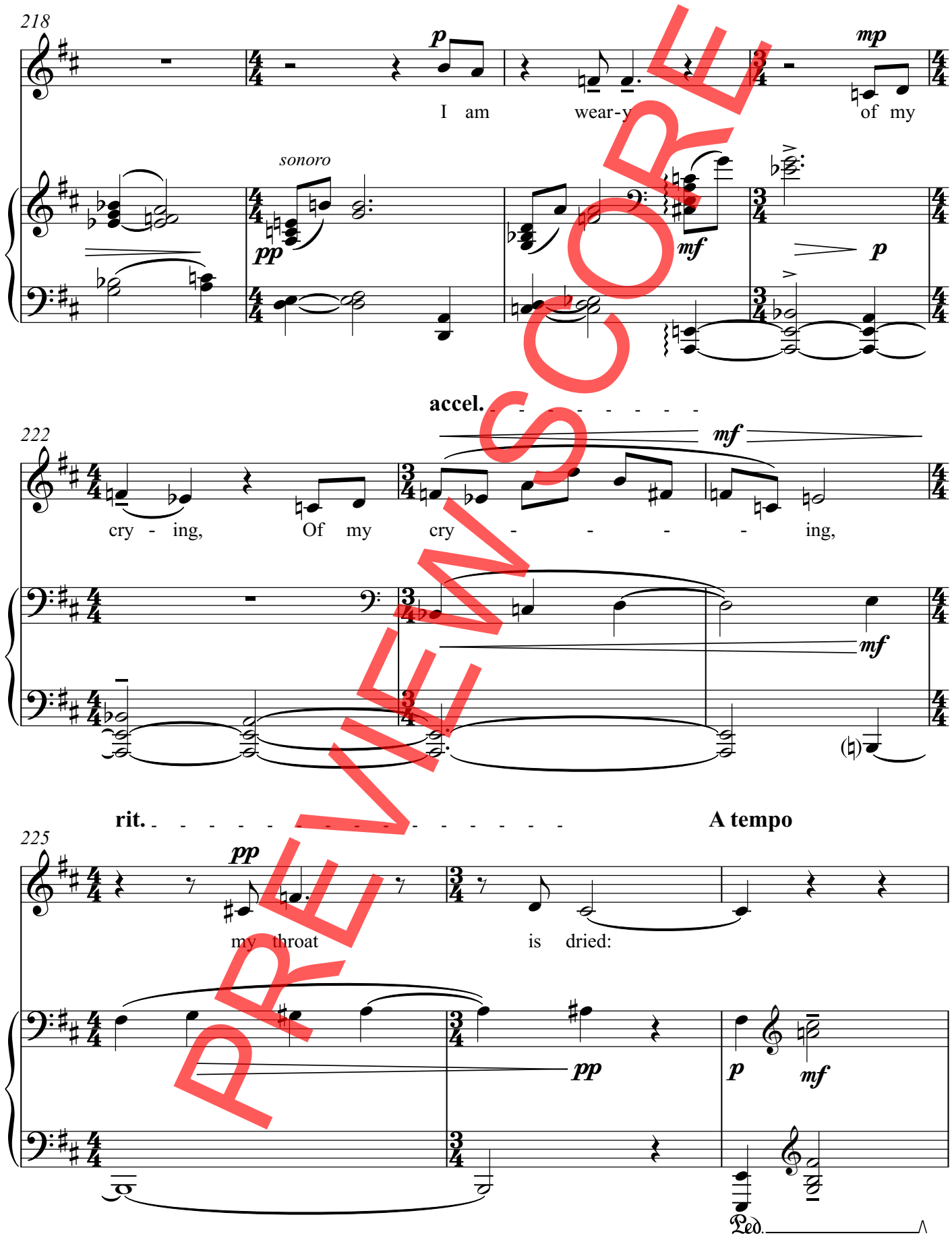

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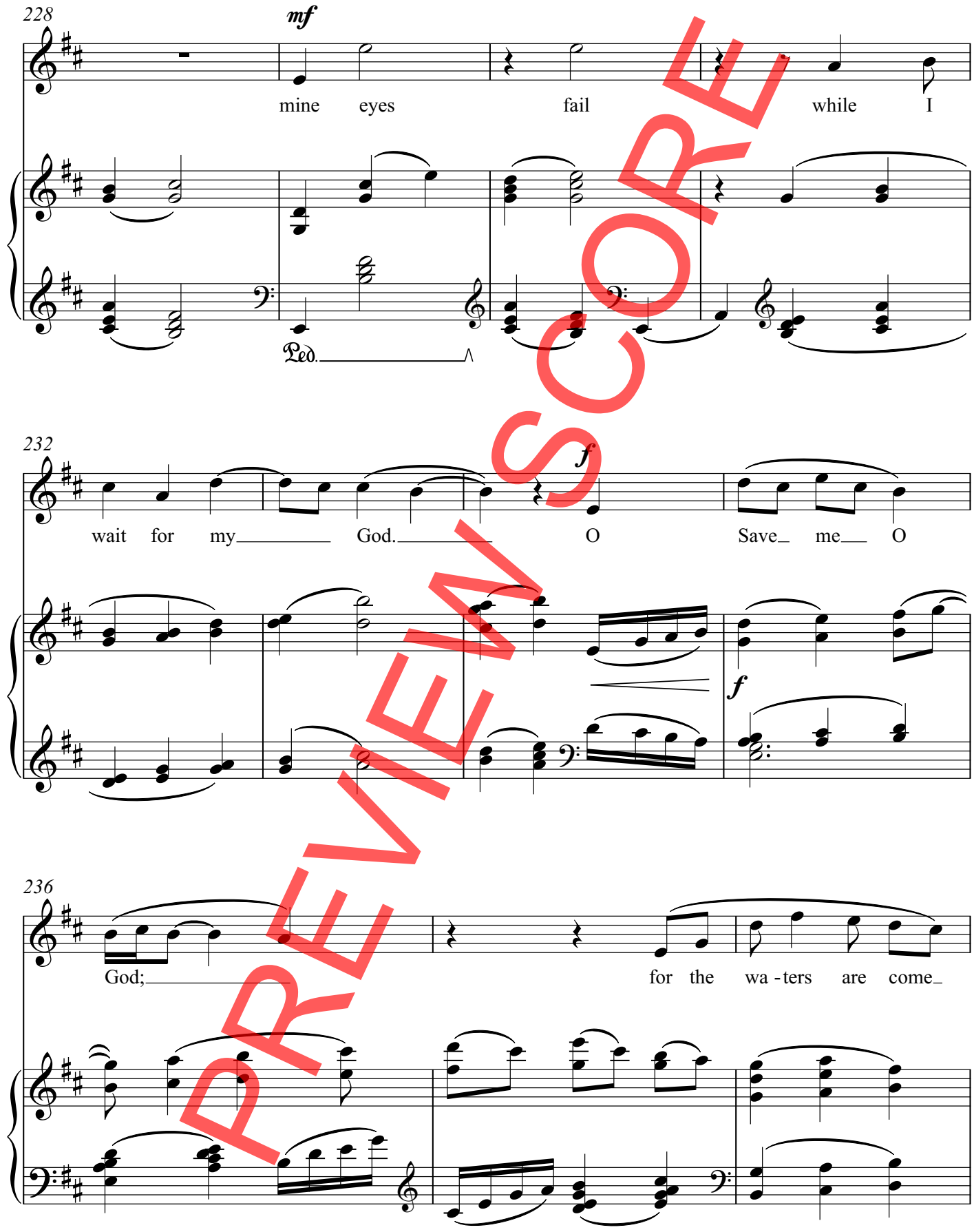

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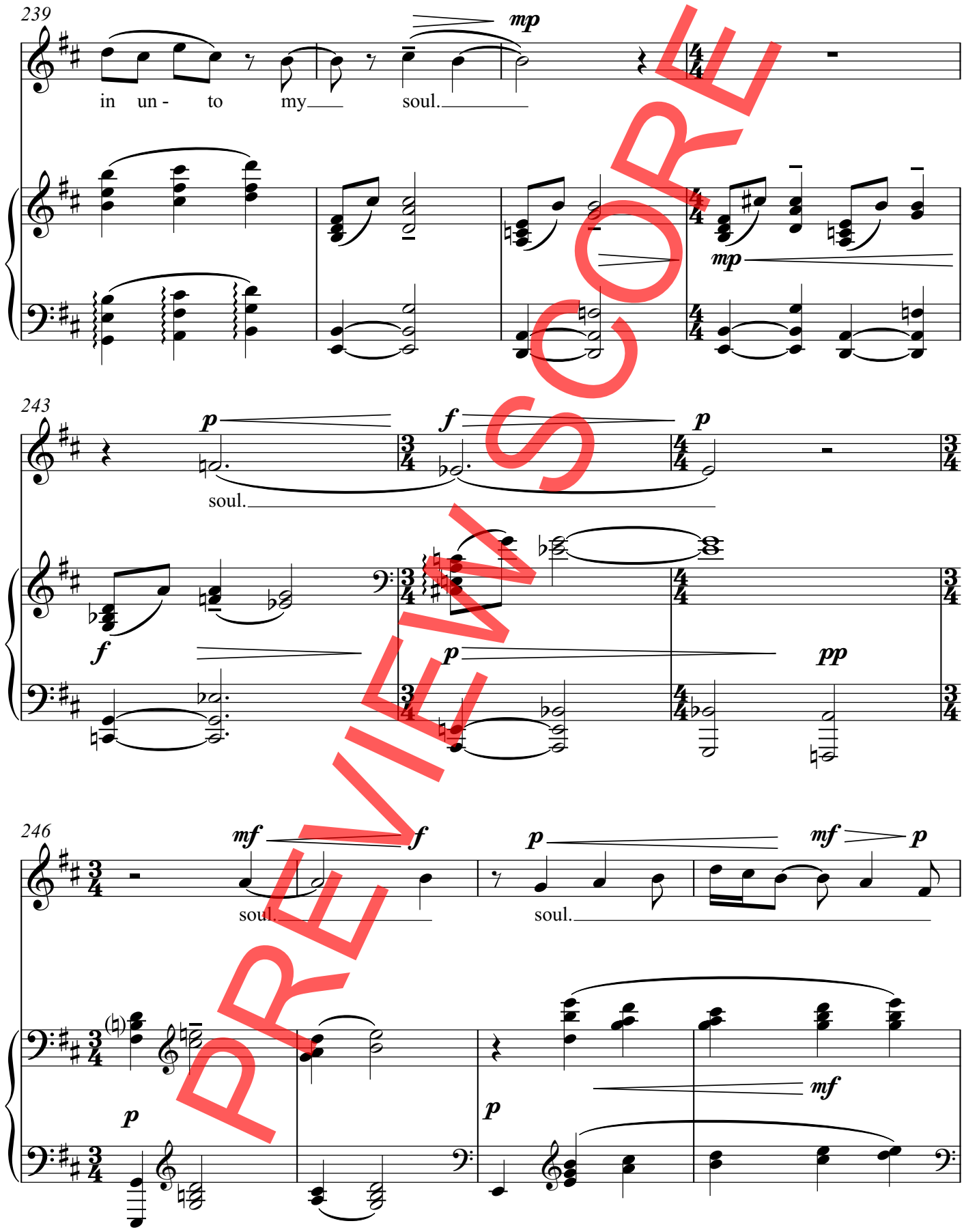

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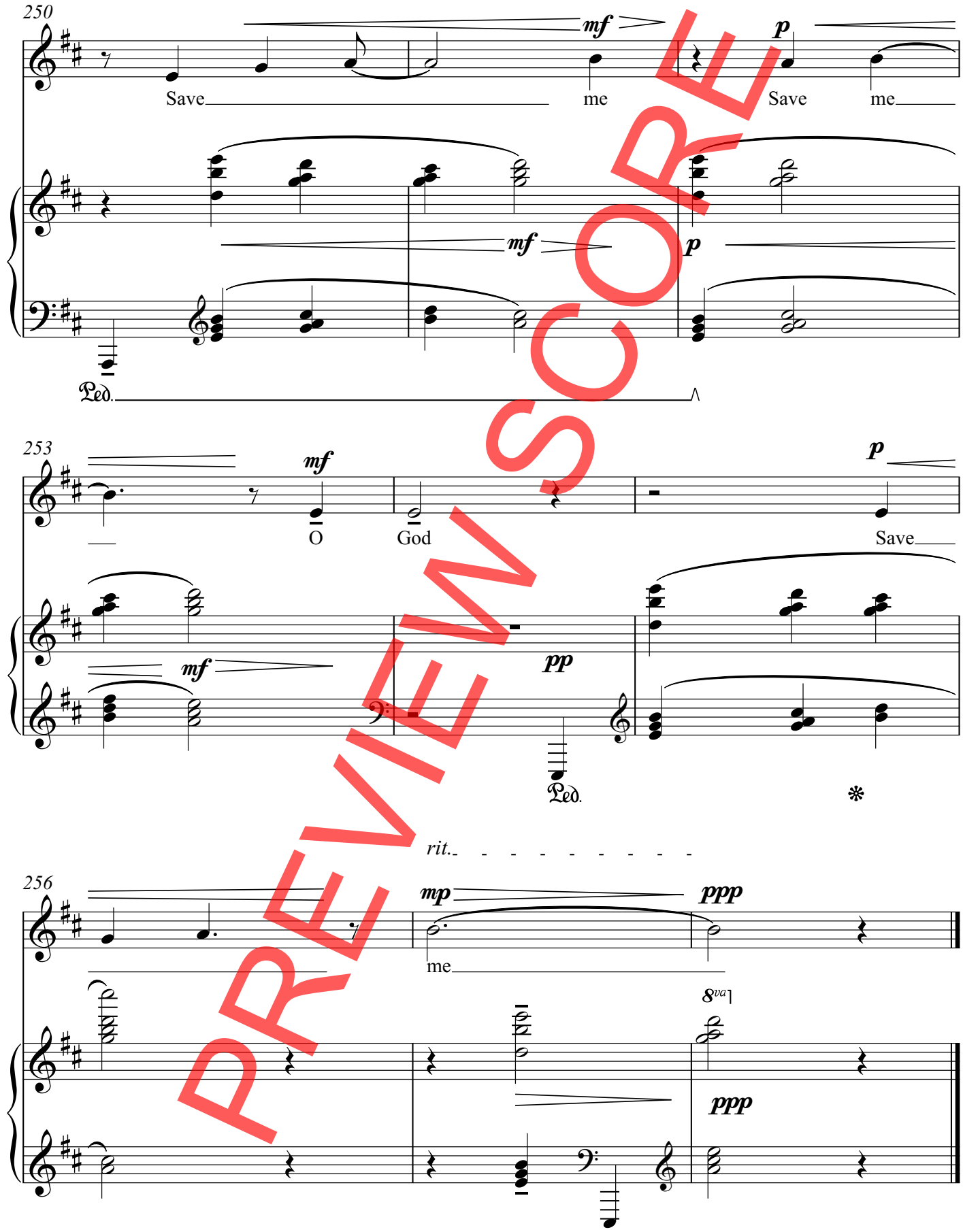

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