Joanna Marsh

The Veiled Sisters

SSSAAA

with organ and bass viol

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The Veiled Sisters (August 2021)

SSSAAA
with organ and bass viol

Duration c.5'30''

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The Veiled Sisters intertwines two texts, a poem by Esther Morgan b.1970, 'Half Sister', and a poetic description of Erminia Caterina Abelli a celebrated singer and nun at the convent of San Giovanni Battista in Bologna, who entered monastic life in 1620. This text is by Alessandro Francucci, a lawyer from Parma, collected in a volume of his poetry, Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Manoscritti Parmense 1198.

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The Veiled Sisters

Costei, che il bello col suo bello, abbella;
Onde d'Abelli li serva bel nome
Sotto l'incarco di corpore some
Vive fatta à Dio sposa, e come Ancella.
(She, that beautifies Beauty with her beauty,
So that Abelli is a good name for her,
Under the bond of fleshly duties
Lives made into God's bride, and handmaiden.)

I watch you from my dark house,
How the sun tilts your face towards me,
Your smile blossoming in the warmth.

Al'hor, che elesso solitaria cella

I leave this house rarely
Wrapped in white layers like a bee-keeper
To protect me from the swarms of light,

Con Forbice crudel troncò le chiome
E fe novo stupor,
(Now she has chosen the solitary cell
With cruel shears she cut her hair
And made a new wonder,)

Or like the veiled princess
Whose throat was so translucent
The swallowed wine showed through.

Do you sense the thinness of my skin,
How, exposed, it would simmer like milk?
Do I arouse a cruelty in you or tenderness?

Quivi romita et à compagna giace
Romita al Mondo, accompagnata à Dio
(Now enclosed and frozen to marriage,
Shut away from the world, wed to God,)

Quivi in fiamme d'amore suo cor si sface,
E col dolce cantar pone in oblio
L'humane cure, e imparadisa i Chiostri.
(Here in flames of love she turns her heart,
And with sweet singing puts into oblivion
Human worries, and makes the cloisters into a paradise.)

Last night I offered my sleeplessness to you,
My body glowing like a candle
Under the magnolia's gloved hands.

Esther Morgan b.1970
Alessandro Francucci Fl 1620s

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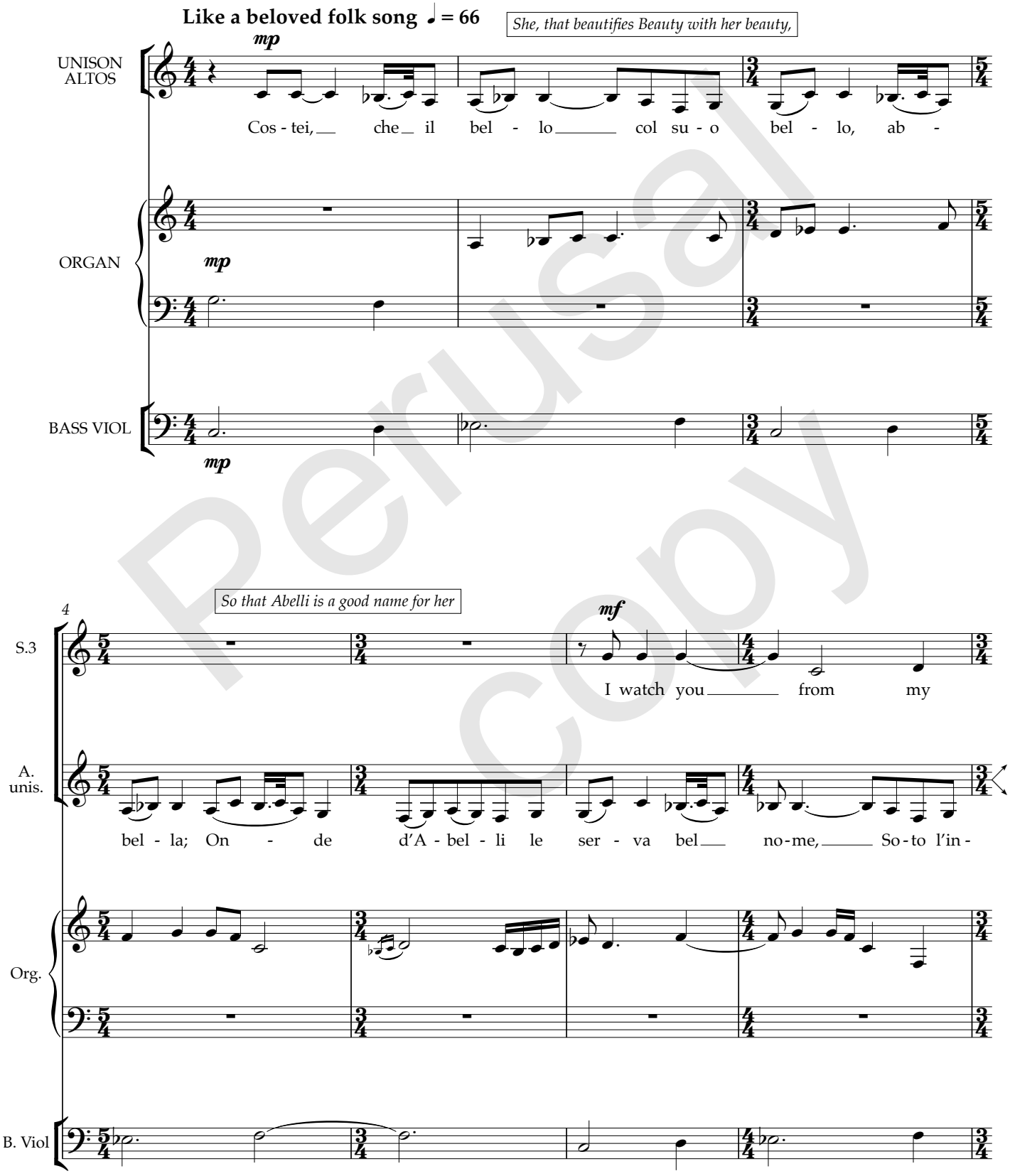
Commissioned by Laurie Stras for Musica Secreta
for the album Mother Sister Daughter, *2022*

The Veiled Sisters

Esther Morgan b.1970
Alessandro Francucci Fl 1620s

Joanna Marsh



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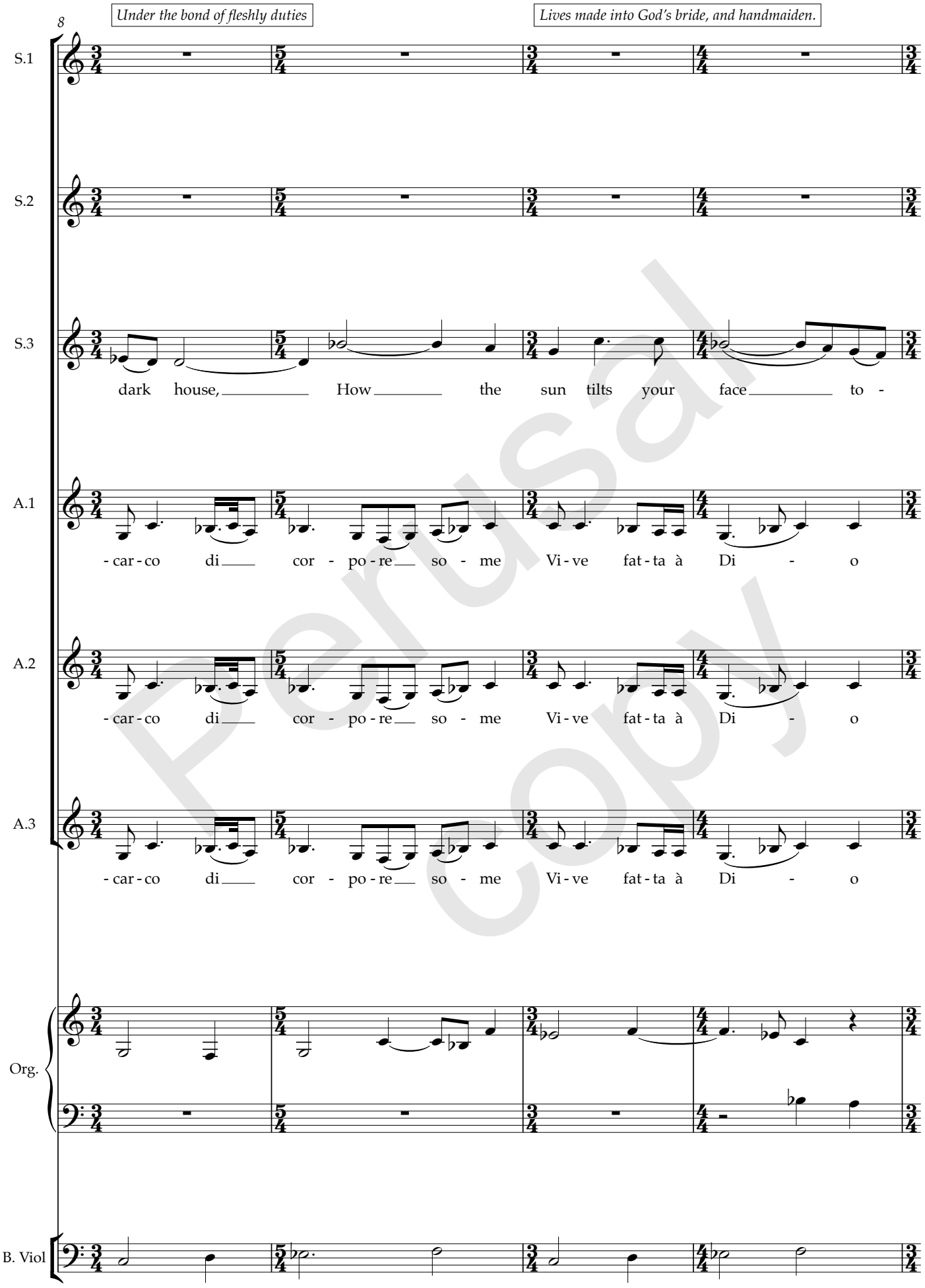

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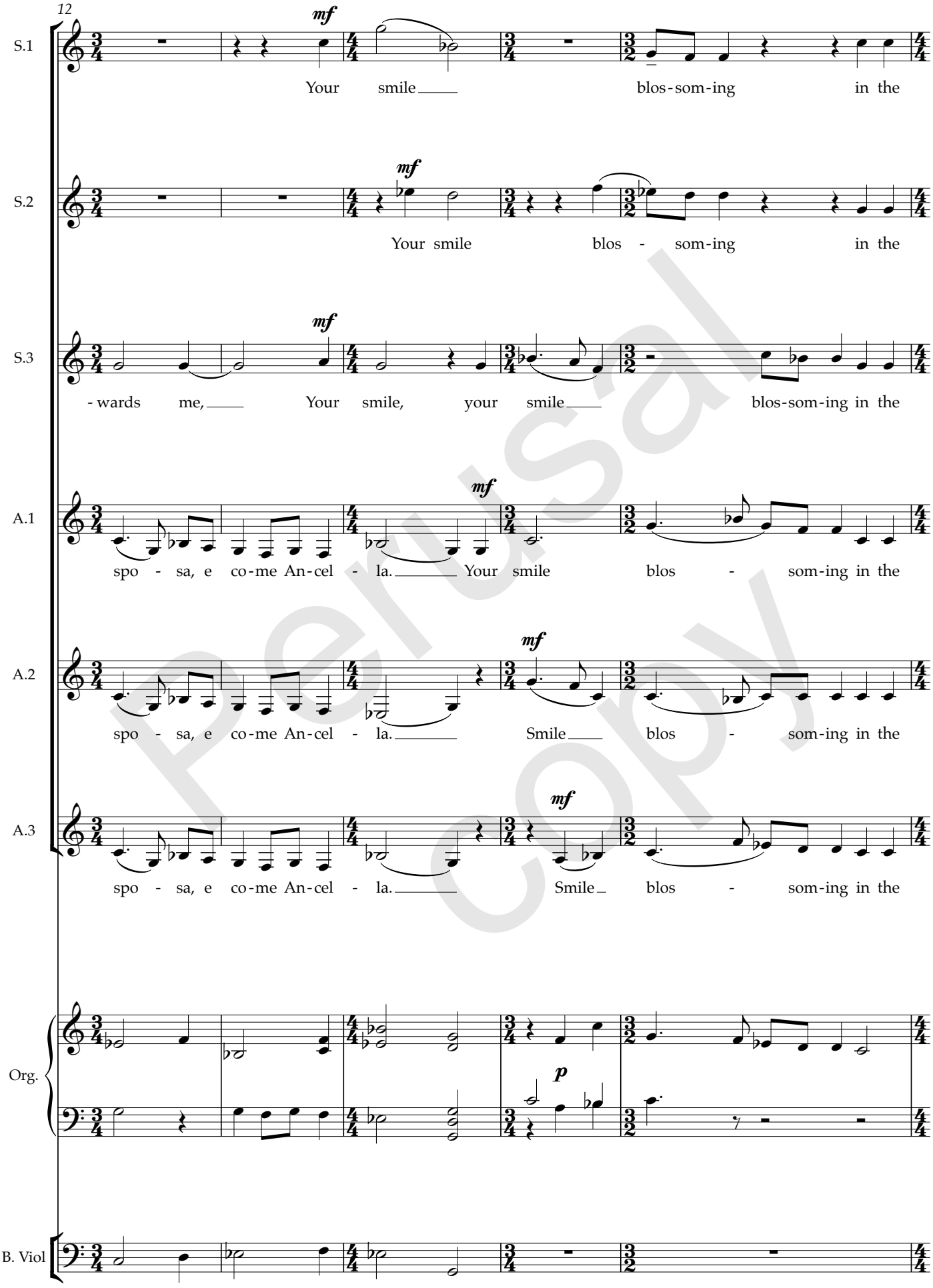

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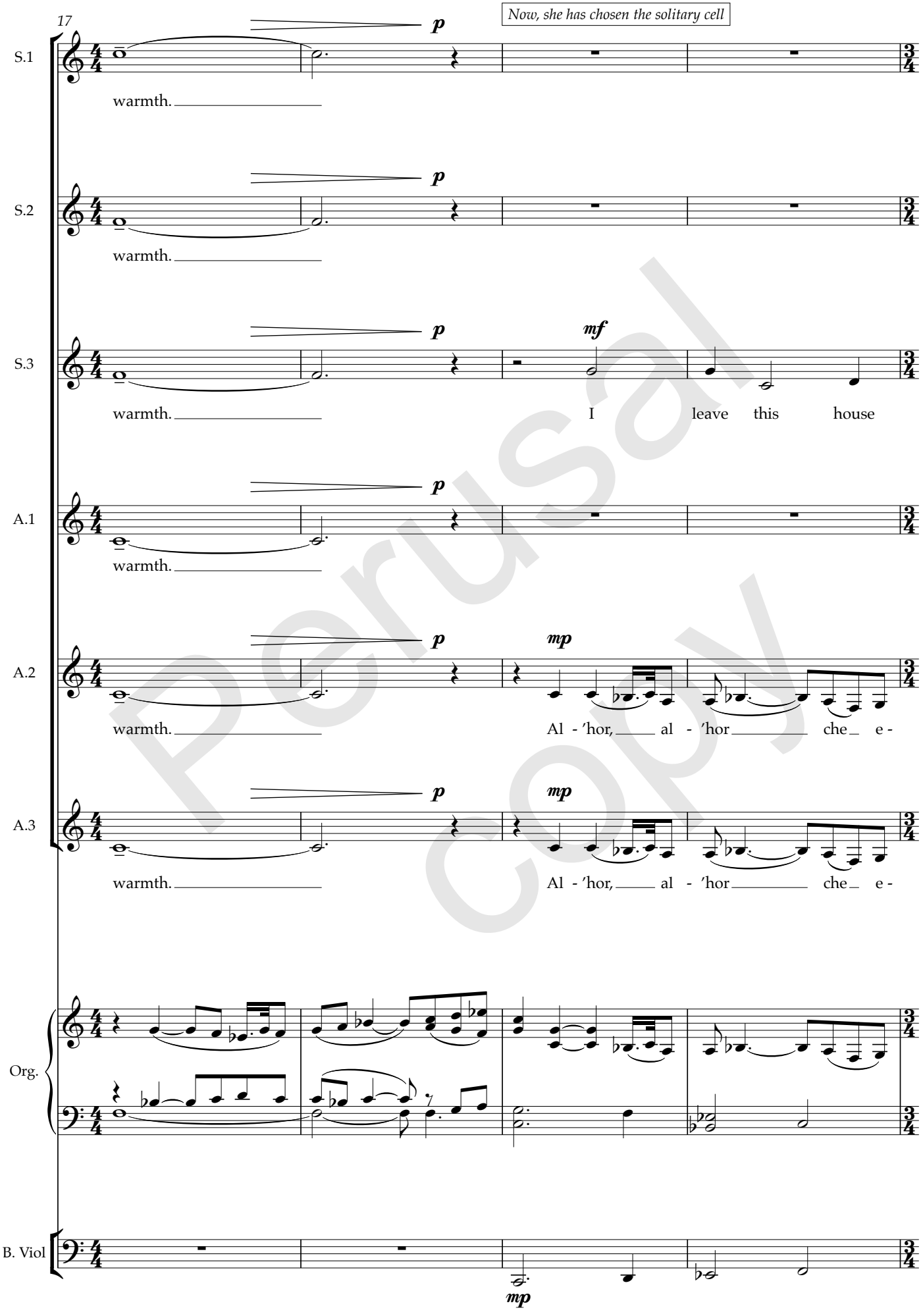

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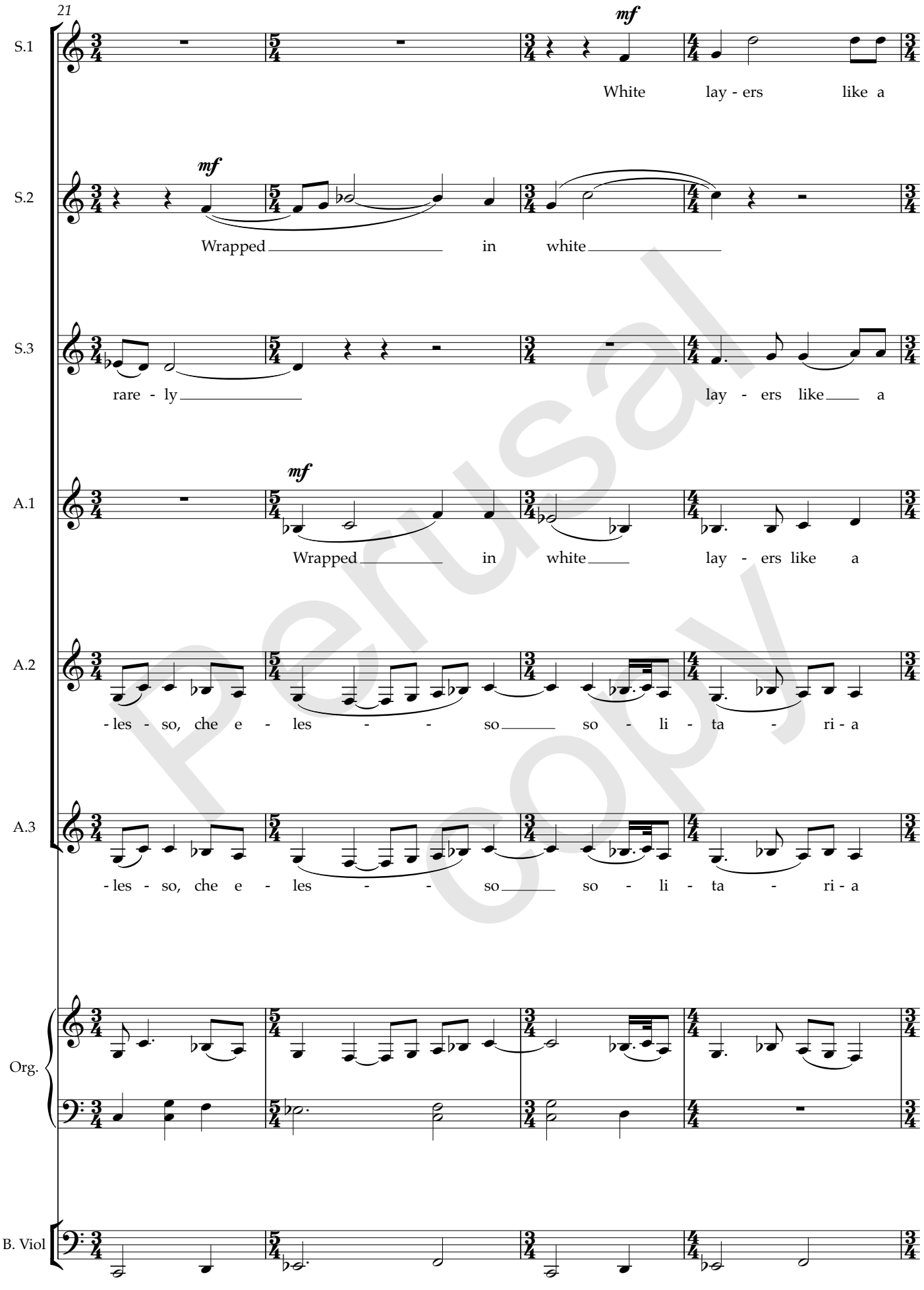

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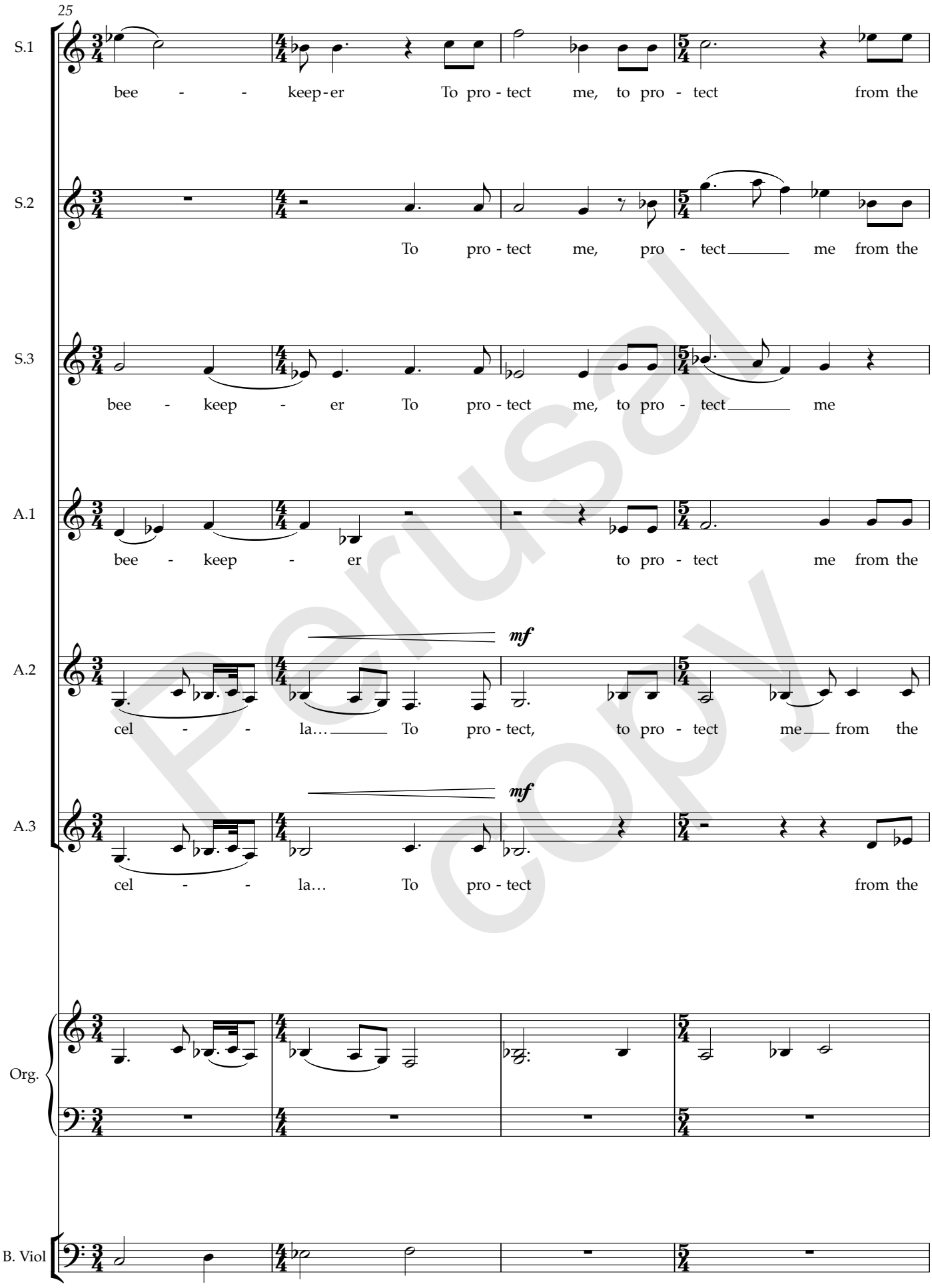

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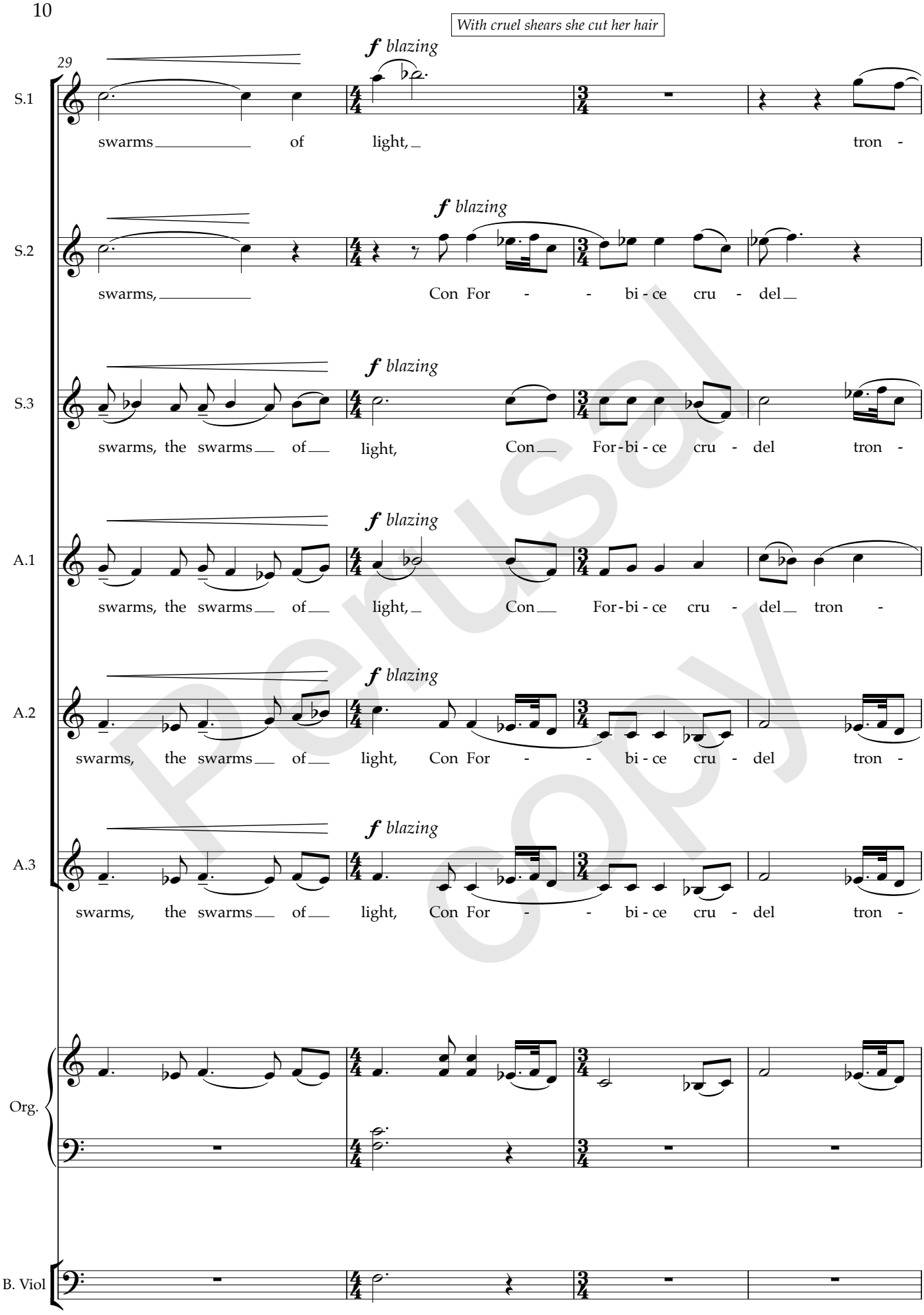

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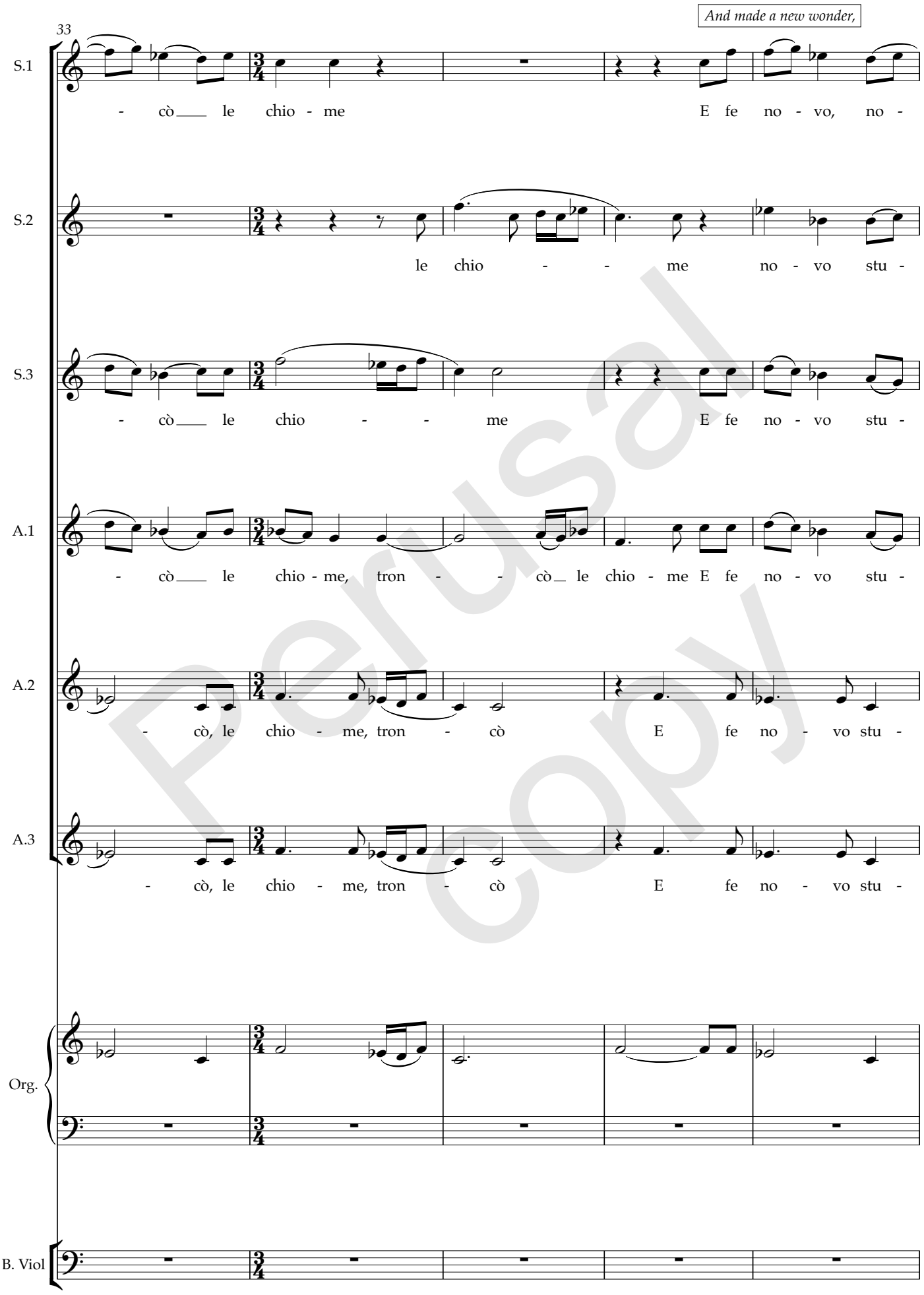

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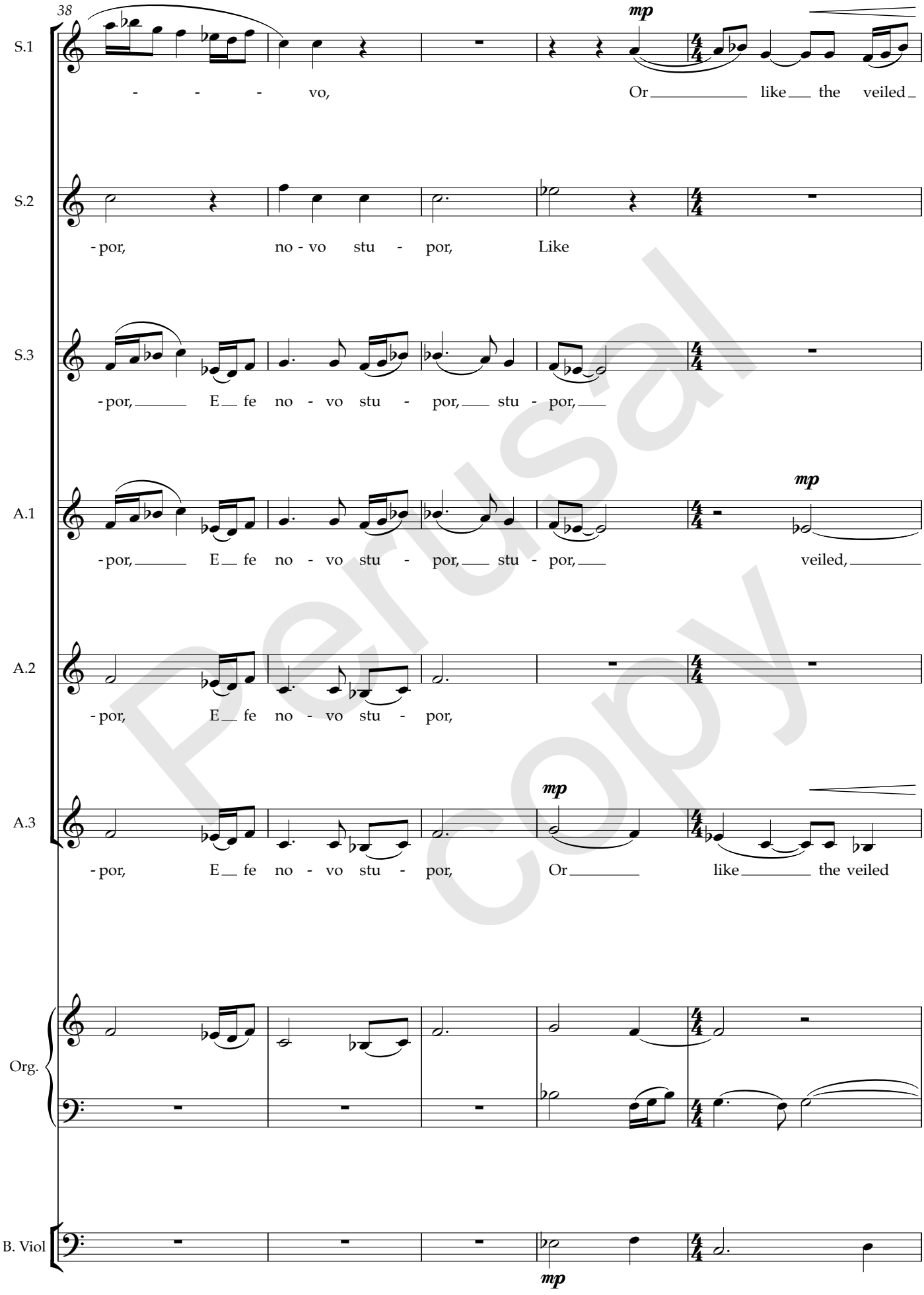

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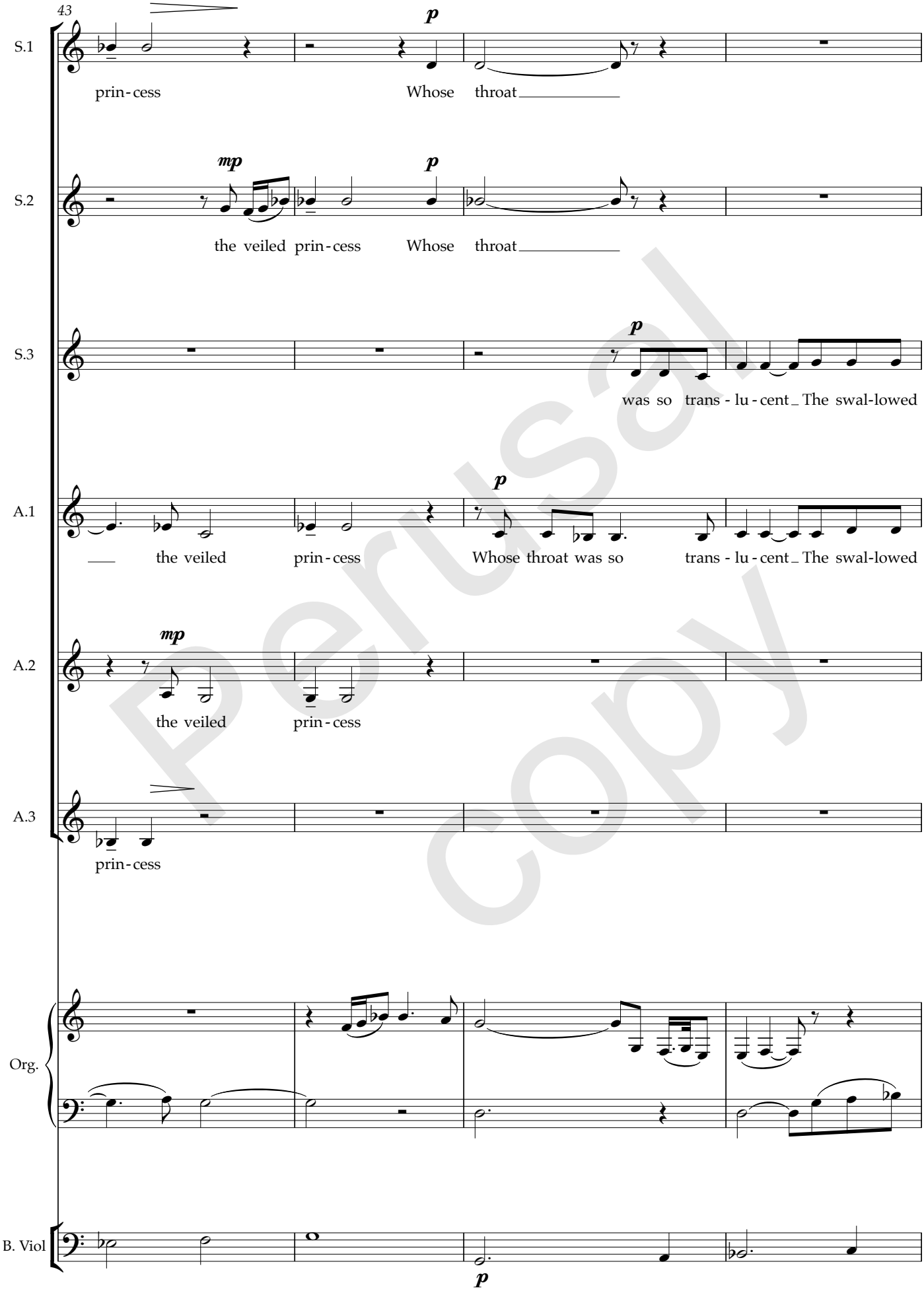

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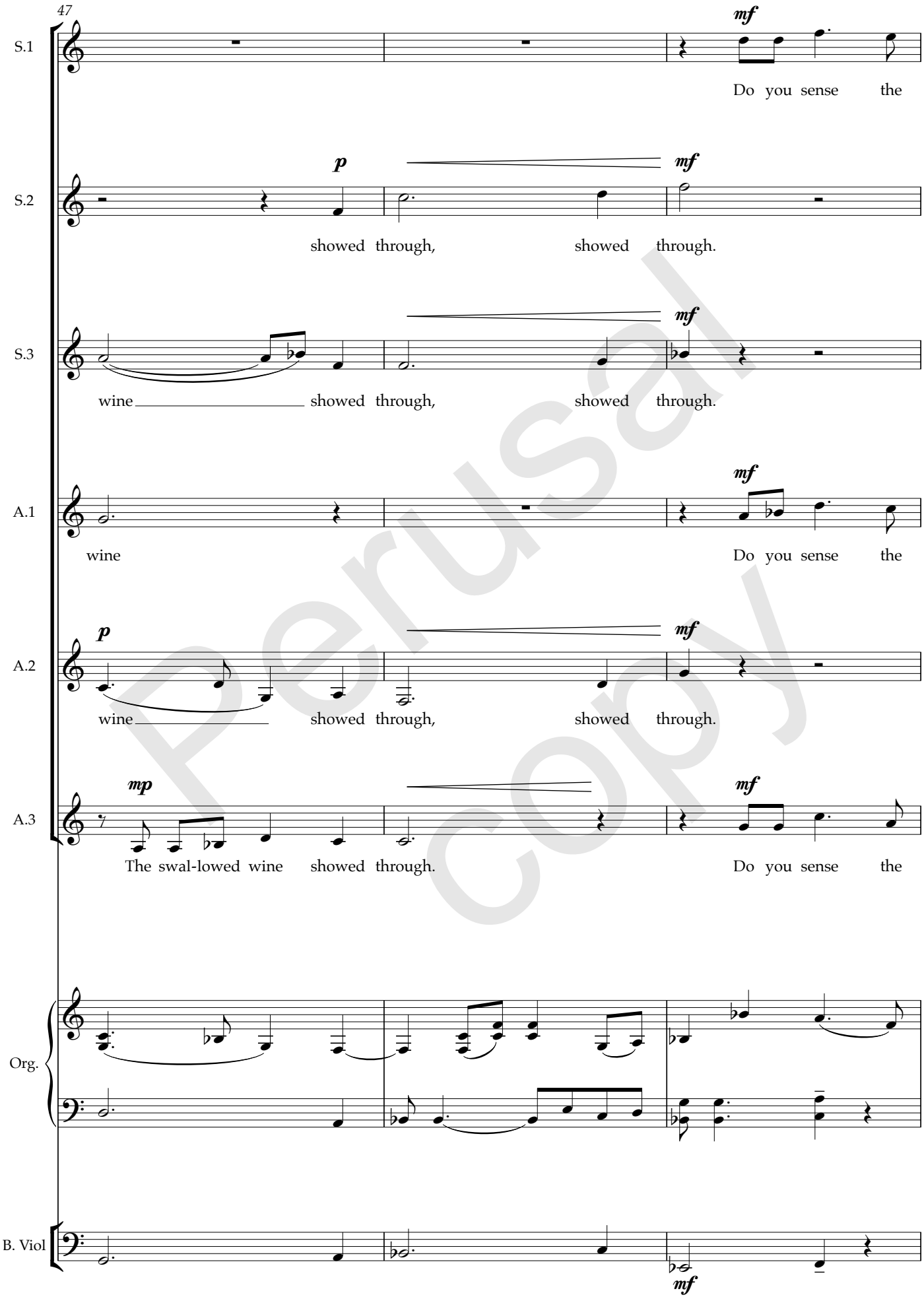

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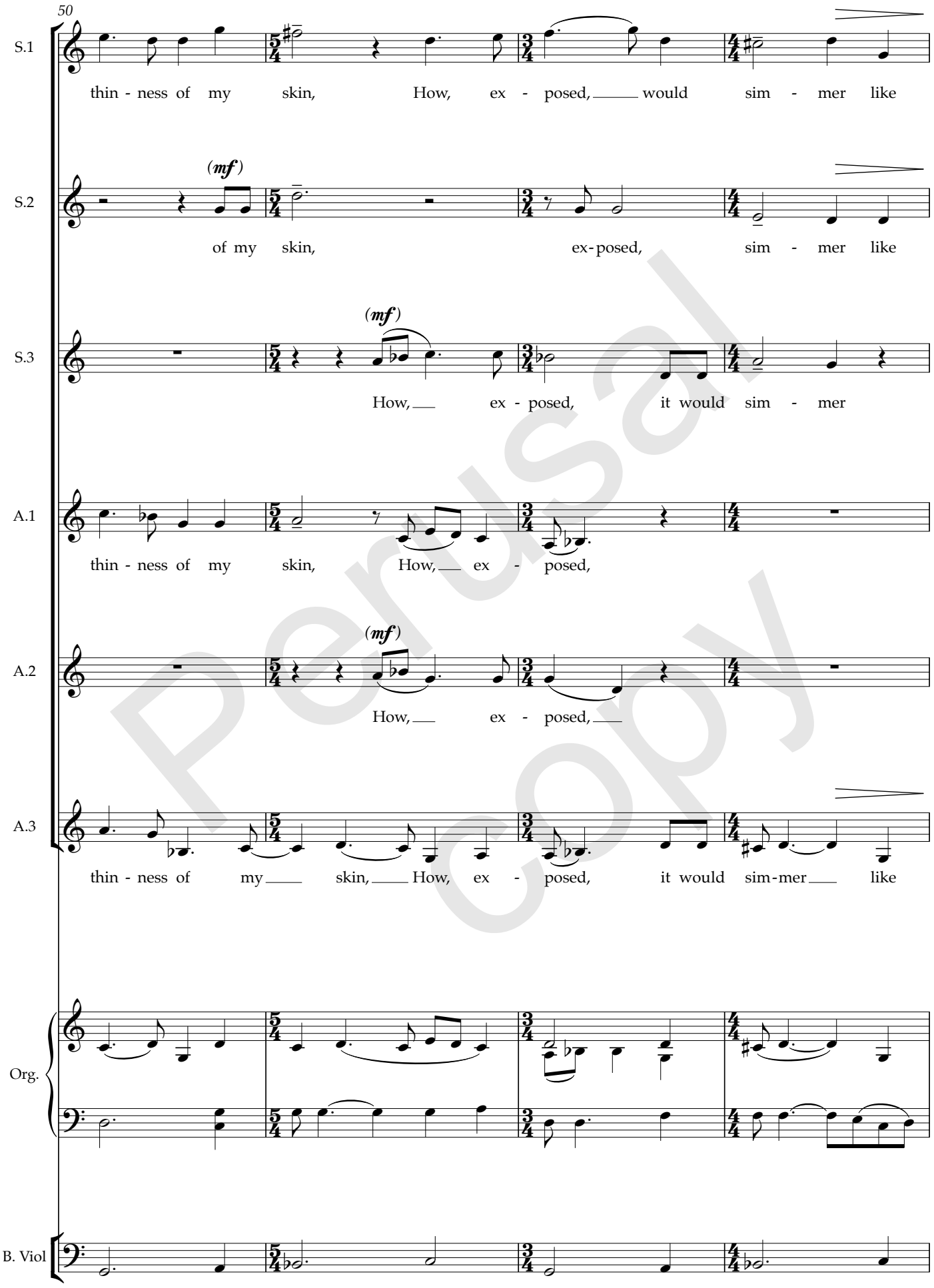

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Now enclosed and frozen to marriage,

54

S.1 *p* *pp*
milk, would sim - mer like

S.2 *p* *pp*
milk, like

S.3 *p* *mp*
like milk, like

A.1 *p* *pp*
milk, like milk, like milk?

A.2 *p*
Qui - vi ro - mi - ta et à com - pag - na, com-pag-na

A.3 *p*
milk? Qui - vi ro - mi - ta et à com - pag - na, com-pag-na

Org. *p*

B. Viol *p*

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Shut away from the world, wed to God,

58

S.1
milk? Do I a-rouse cru - el - ty or ten - der - ness?

S.2
milk? or ten - der-ness?

S.3
milk? or ten - der - ness?

A.1
Do I a-rouse cru - el - ty or ten - der - ness?

A.2
gia - ce, Ro - mi-ta al Mon - do, ac-com-pag-na - ta à Di - o

A.3
gia - ce, Ro - mi-ta al Mon - do, ac-com-pag-na - ta à Di - o

Org.

B. Viol

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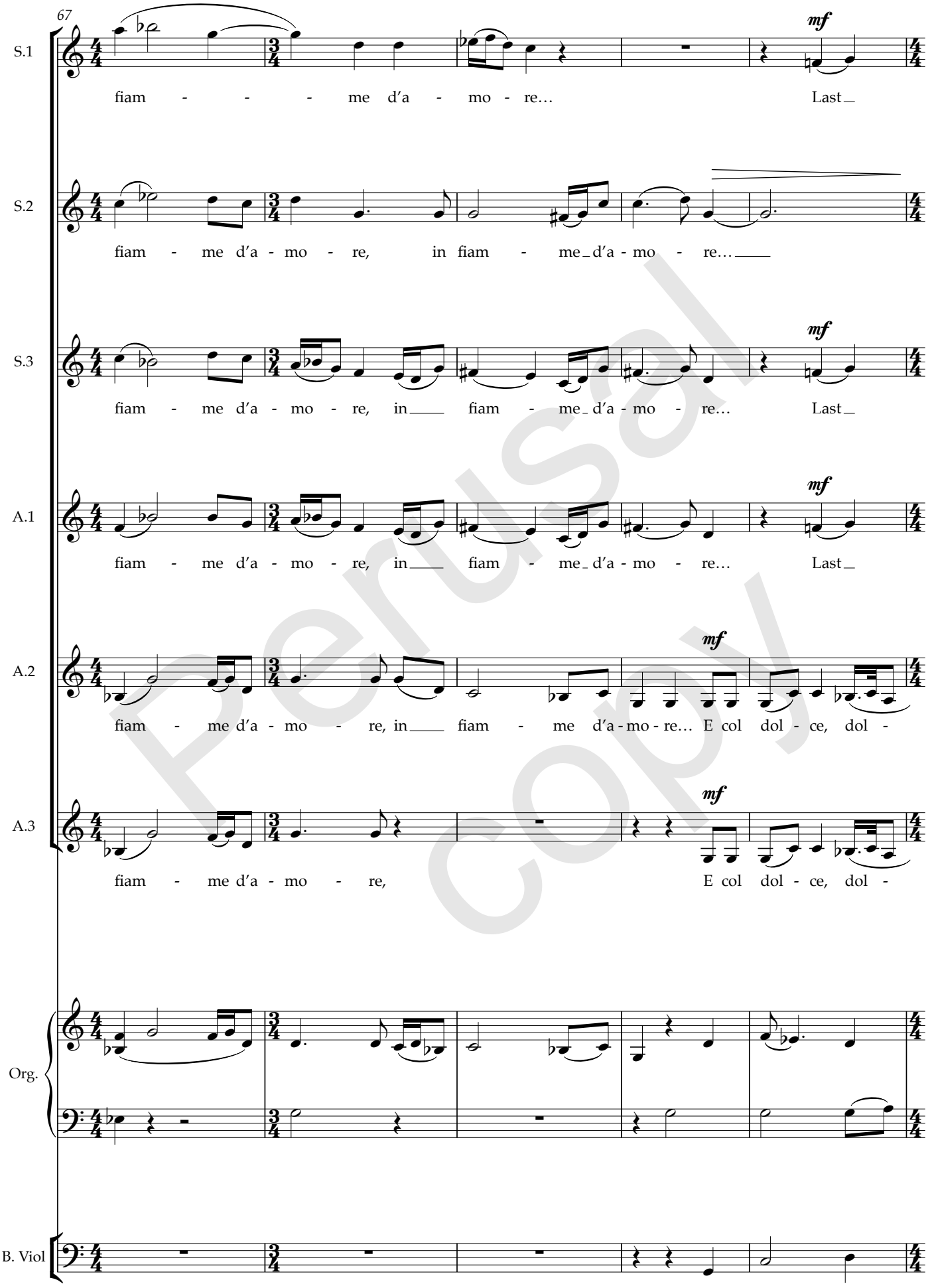

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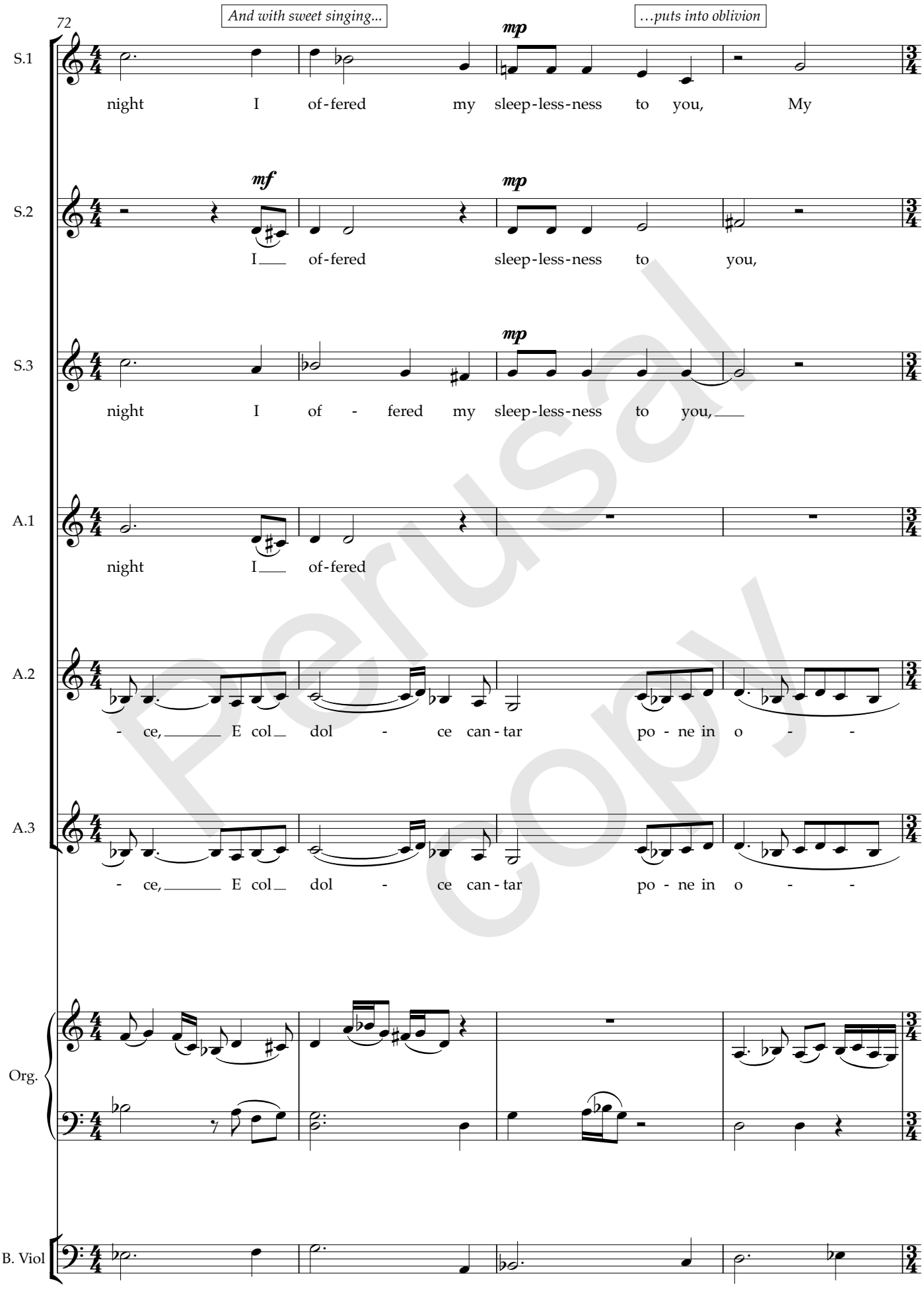

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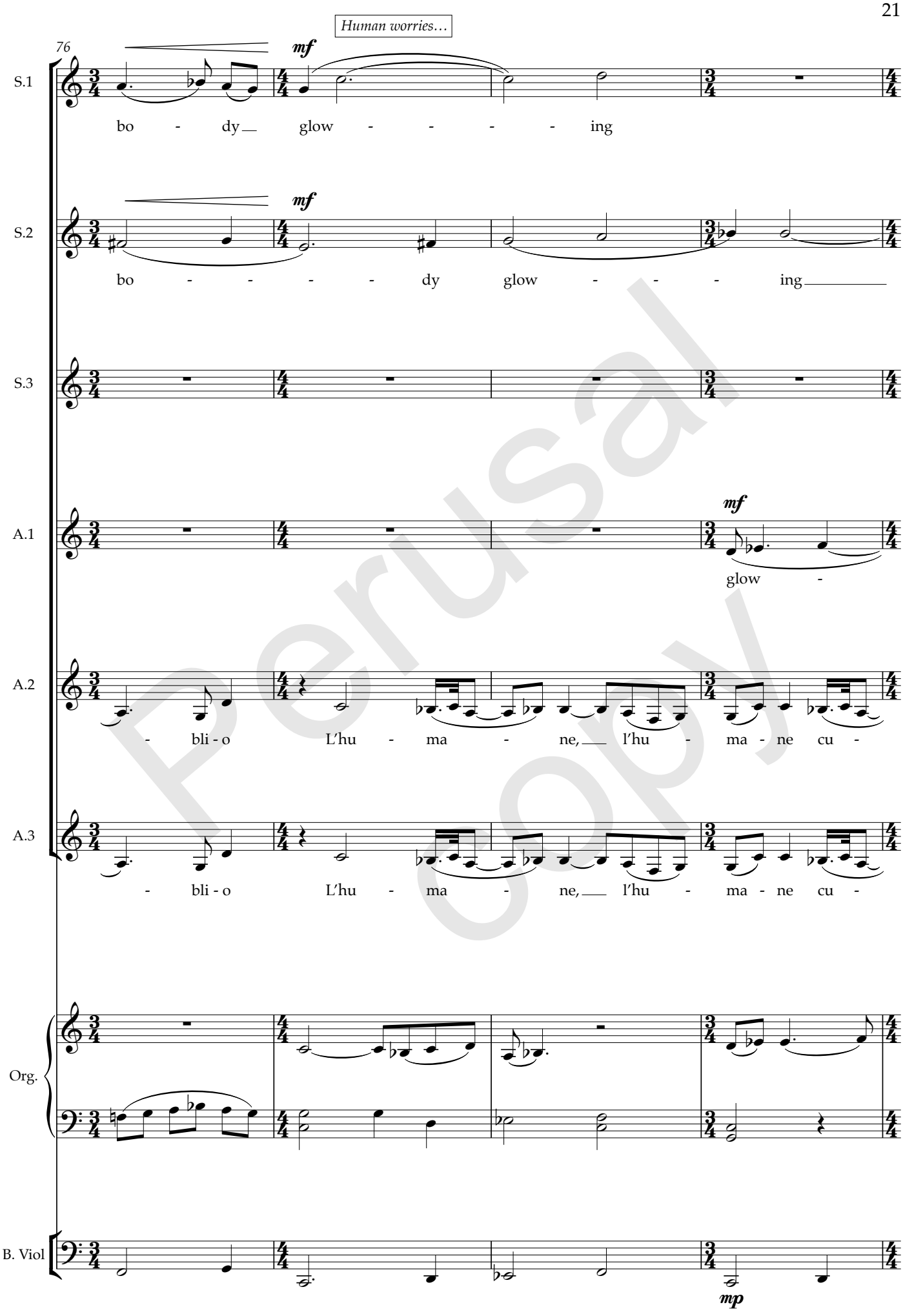

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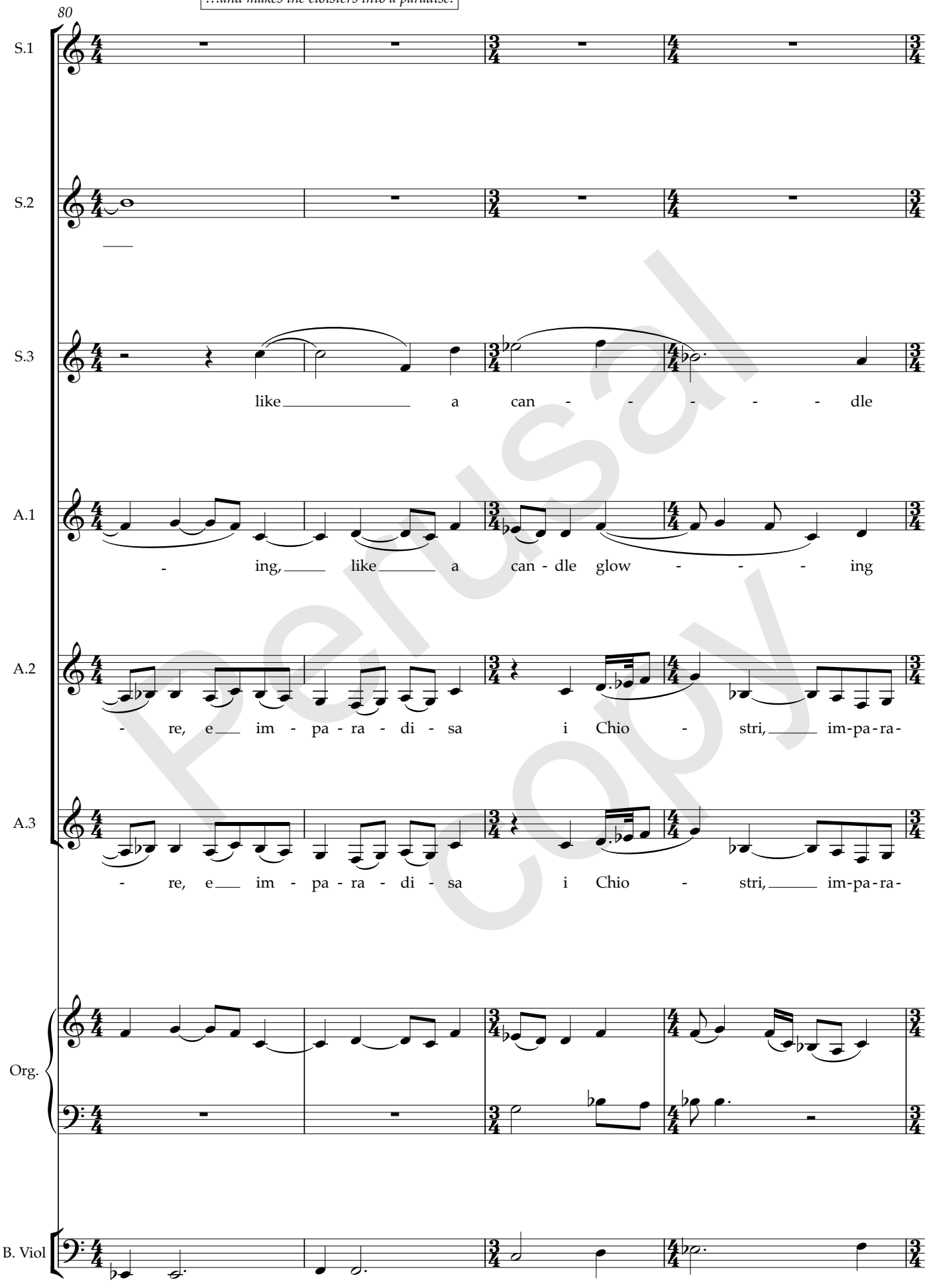
…and makes the cloisters into a paradise.



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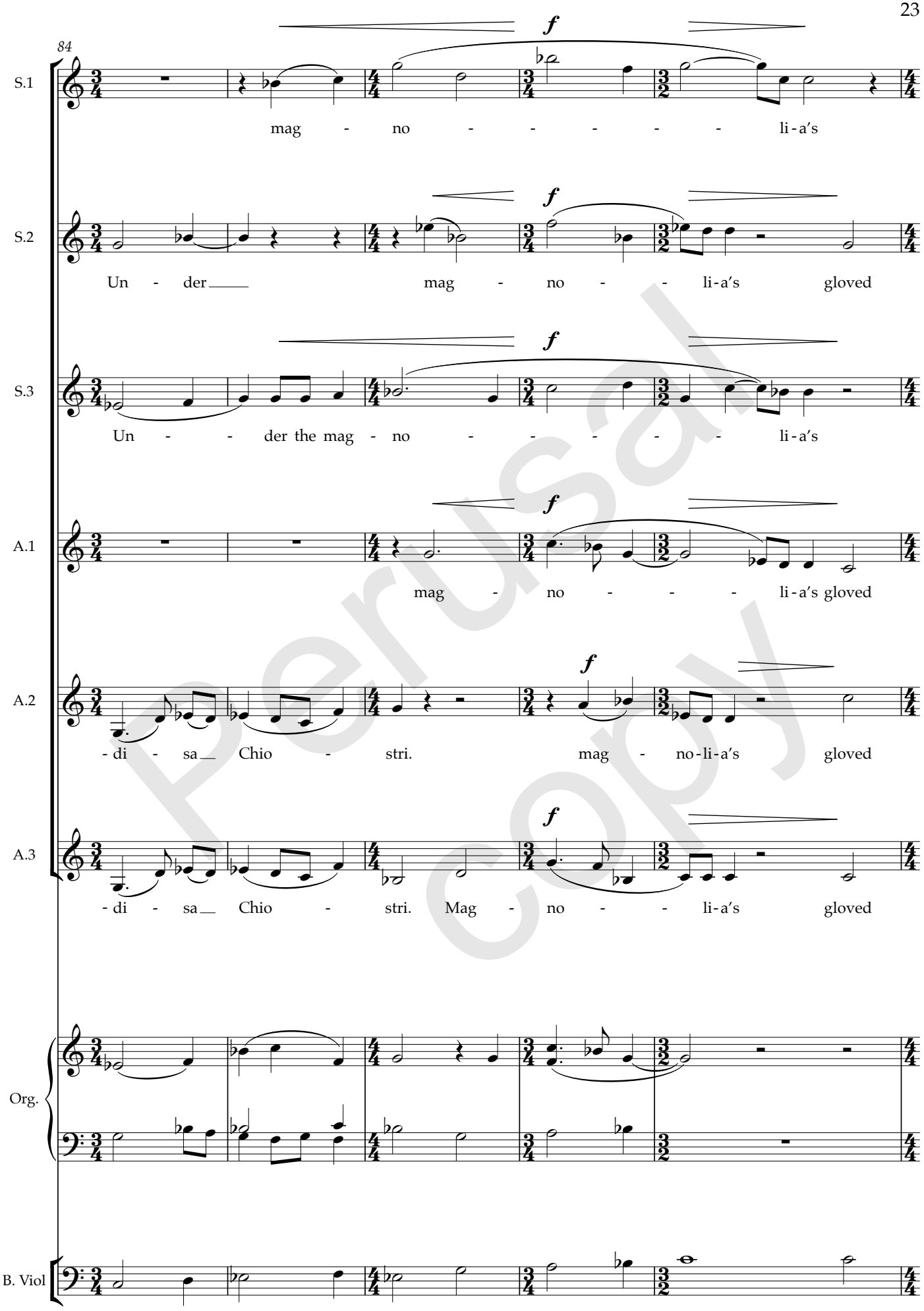

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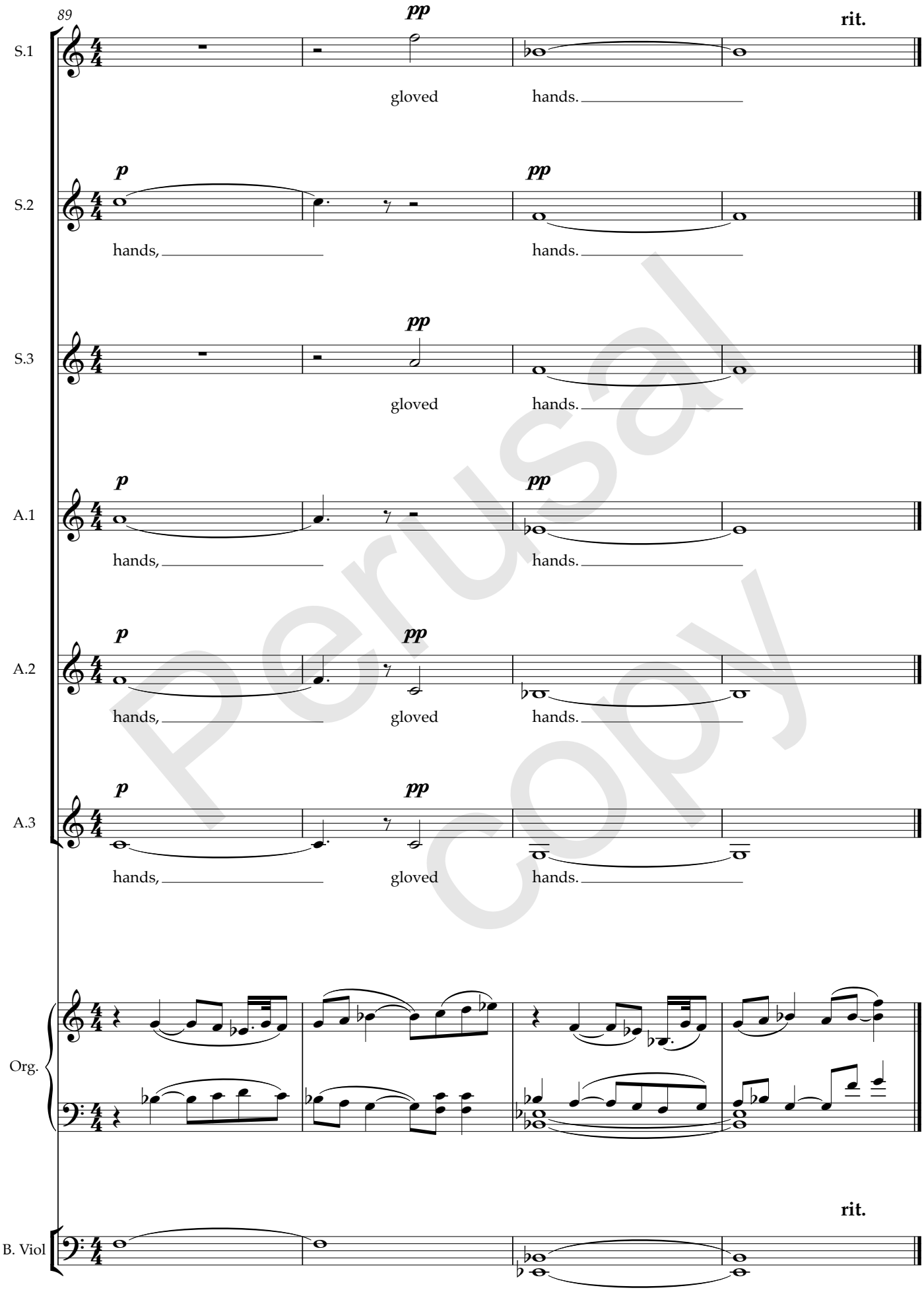

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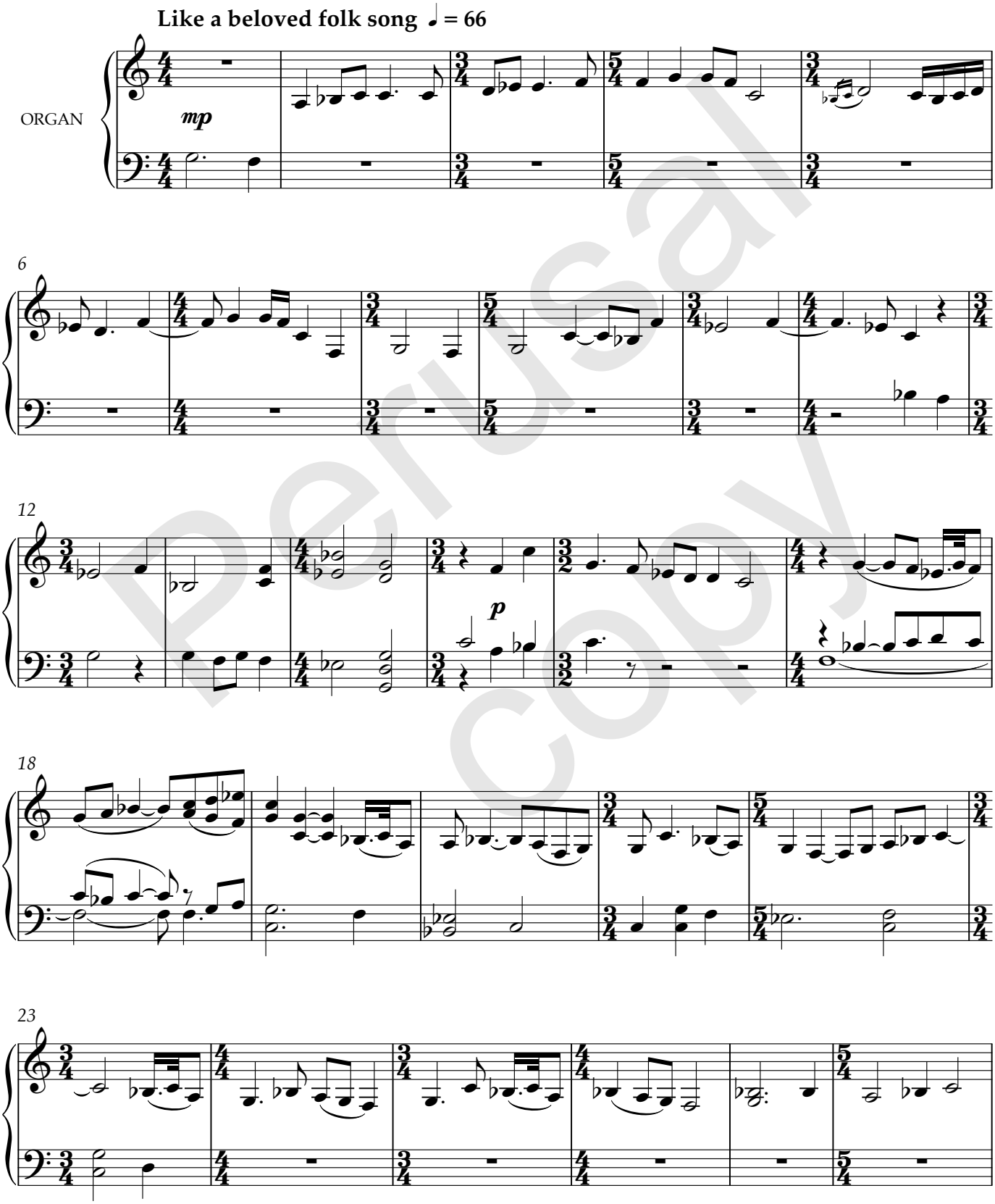

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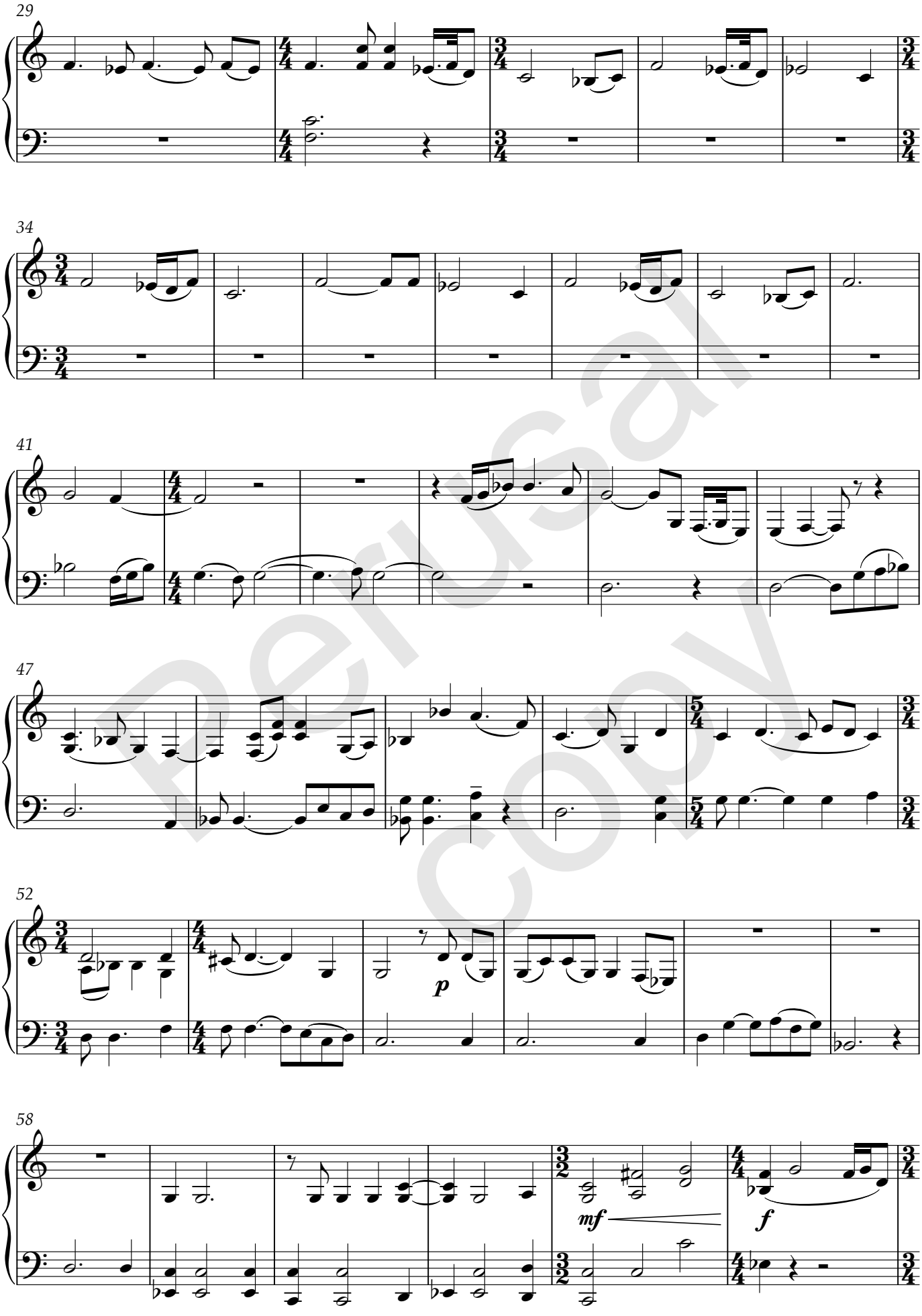

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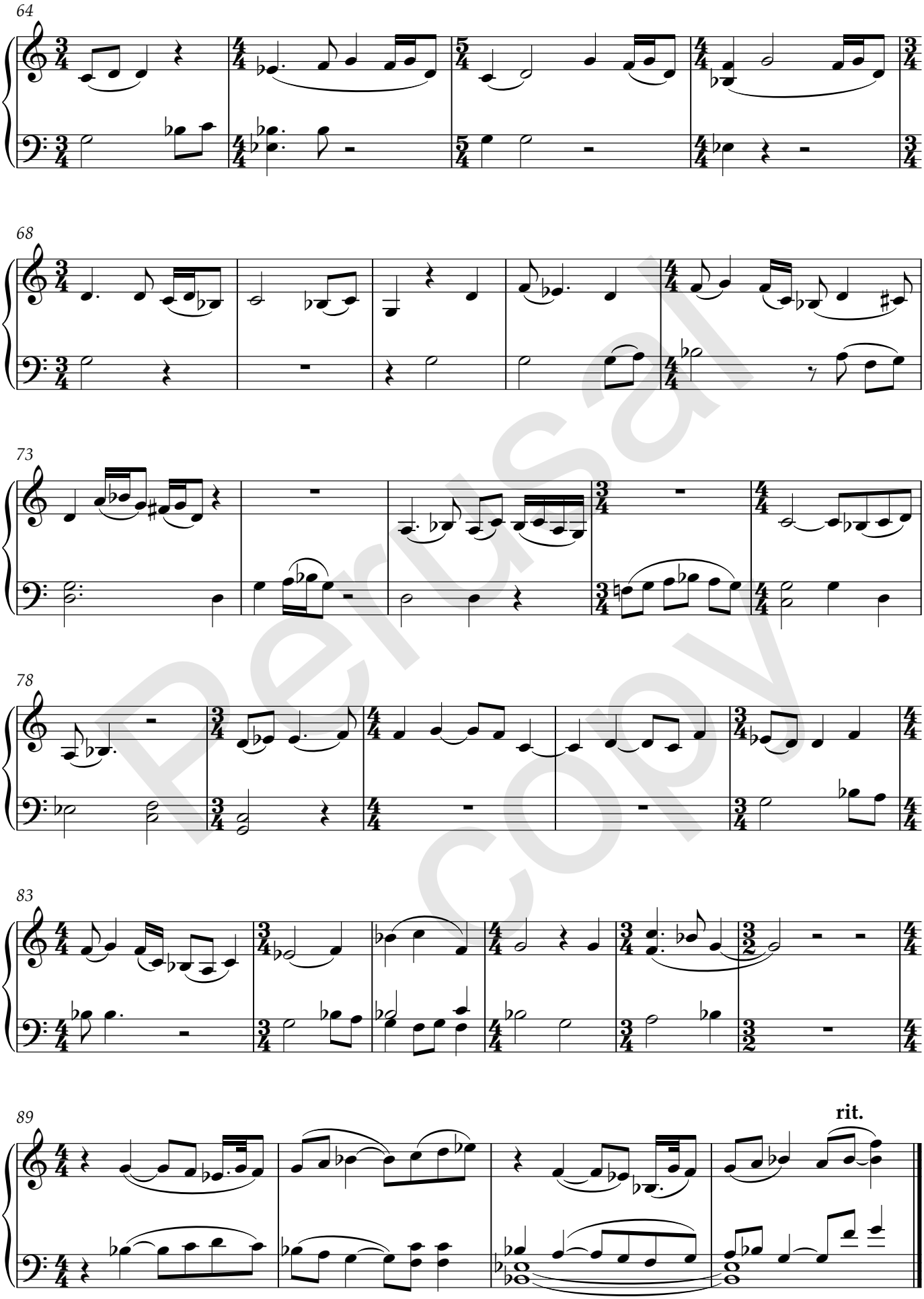

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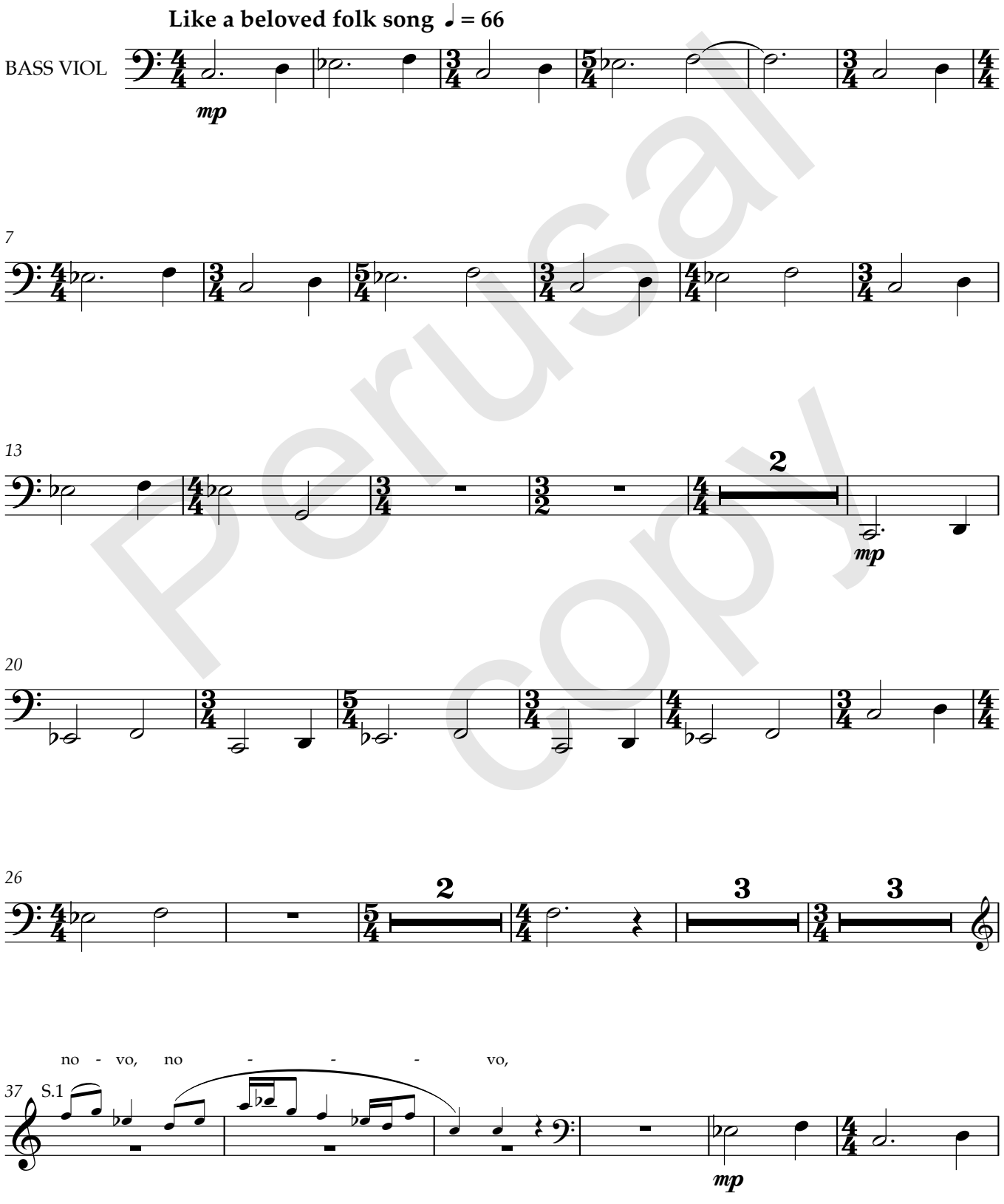

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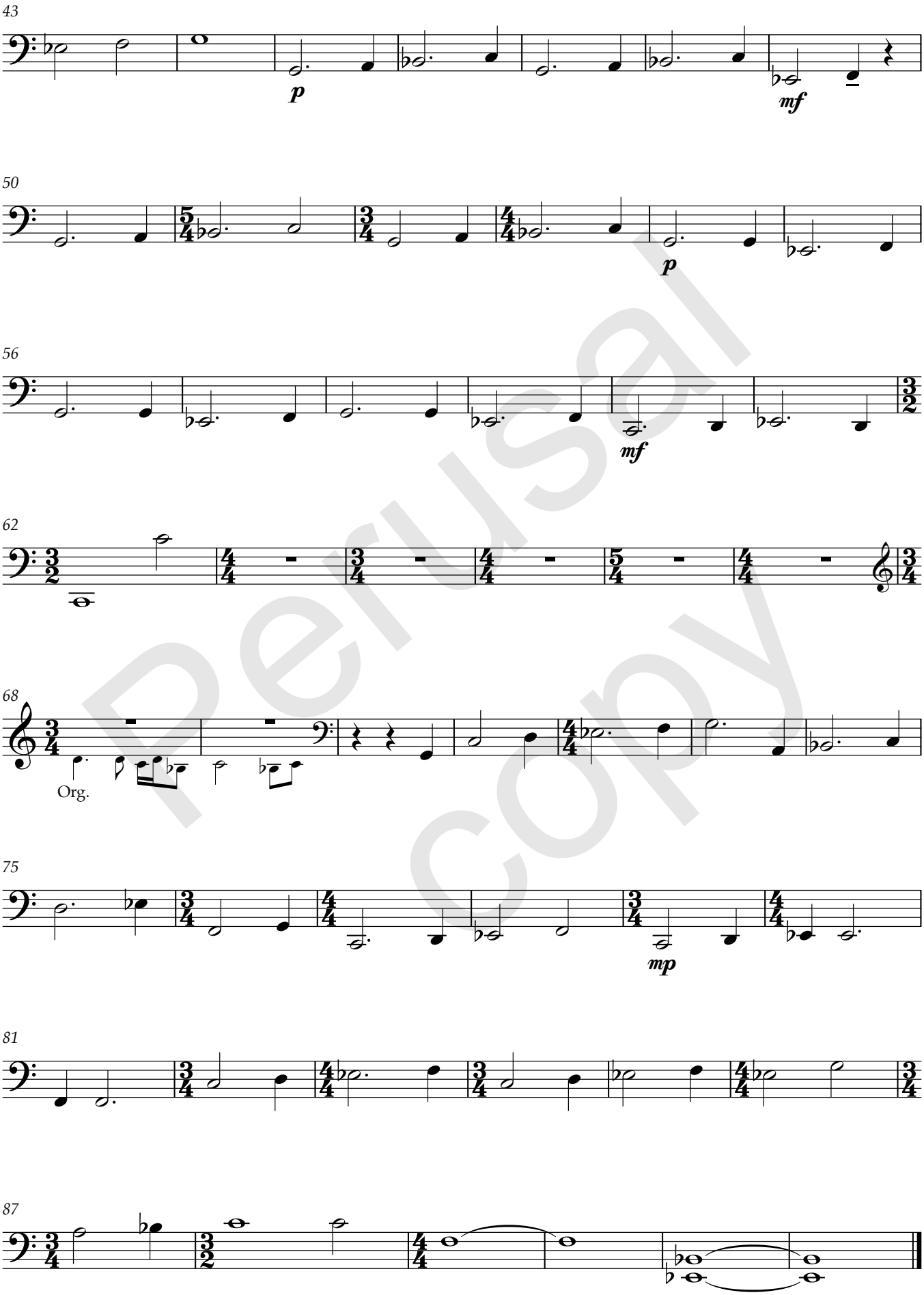

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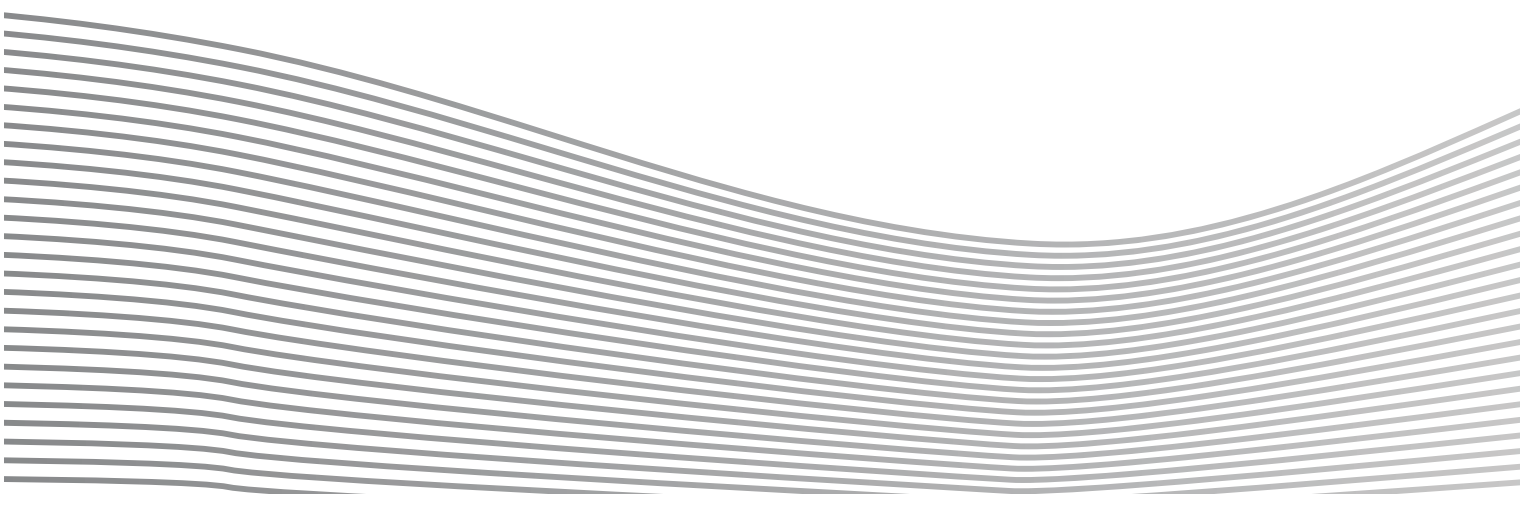
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