SAB
accompanied

Pied Beauty

text by

Gerard Manley Hopkins

music by

James Elias Pick

Preview Only

Note from the Composer

Pied Beauty is a song of joy and gratitude, praising God who created a beautifully varied world. The first stanza revels in nature's visual contrasts, such as two-color skies or the patterns on birds' wings. It goes on to describe man's interaction with creation, as famers work the land, dividing, plowing, and planting—unwitting patchwork artists.

The second stanza shifts to more abstract opposites: swift and slow, sweet and sour, adazzle and dim. The fast-paced world is full of these essential dichotomies, easy to overlook—but if one pauses and savors, glorious beauty is found in such diversity. In the end, Hopkins contrasts the variety in nature with God's changelessness. God is the author of creation, but He is not subject to its limitations and variability; He stands above: "Praise Him."

Several key words in the poem may be unfamiliar (abbreviated definitions from *Oxford Languages*):
- *Pied* [paɪd]: "covered with patches or spots of two or more colors"
- *Dappled* ['dæp əld]: "marked with spots or rounded patches"
- *Brinded* ['brɪn dɪd]: "brownish or tawny with streaks of other color"

Musically, as a song of praise, the mood is undeniably joyful. The piano bubbles with excitement, almost as if breathing in and out. The vivid poetry lends itself to text painting: a pointillistic accompaniment hints at the spotted trout (m. 19-28); the birds' flight is heard in the ascending "ah's" (m. 36-39); major seventh chords juxtapose consonance and dissonance, mirroring the poet's thoughtful consideration of various opposing words, littered with alliteration (m. 77-89).

In performance, the vibrant poetry must come through, making good diction essential. The choir should also take full advantage of the wide range of dynamics and explore different vocal colors to best convey the text.

Soli Deo Gloria.

~ James Elias Pick

Visit www.jamespick.com to contact
the composer or share recordings.

Text:

Glory be to God for dappled things –
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

~ Gerard Manley Hopkins

Preview Only

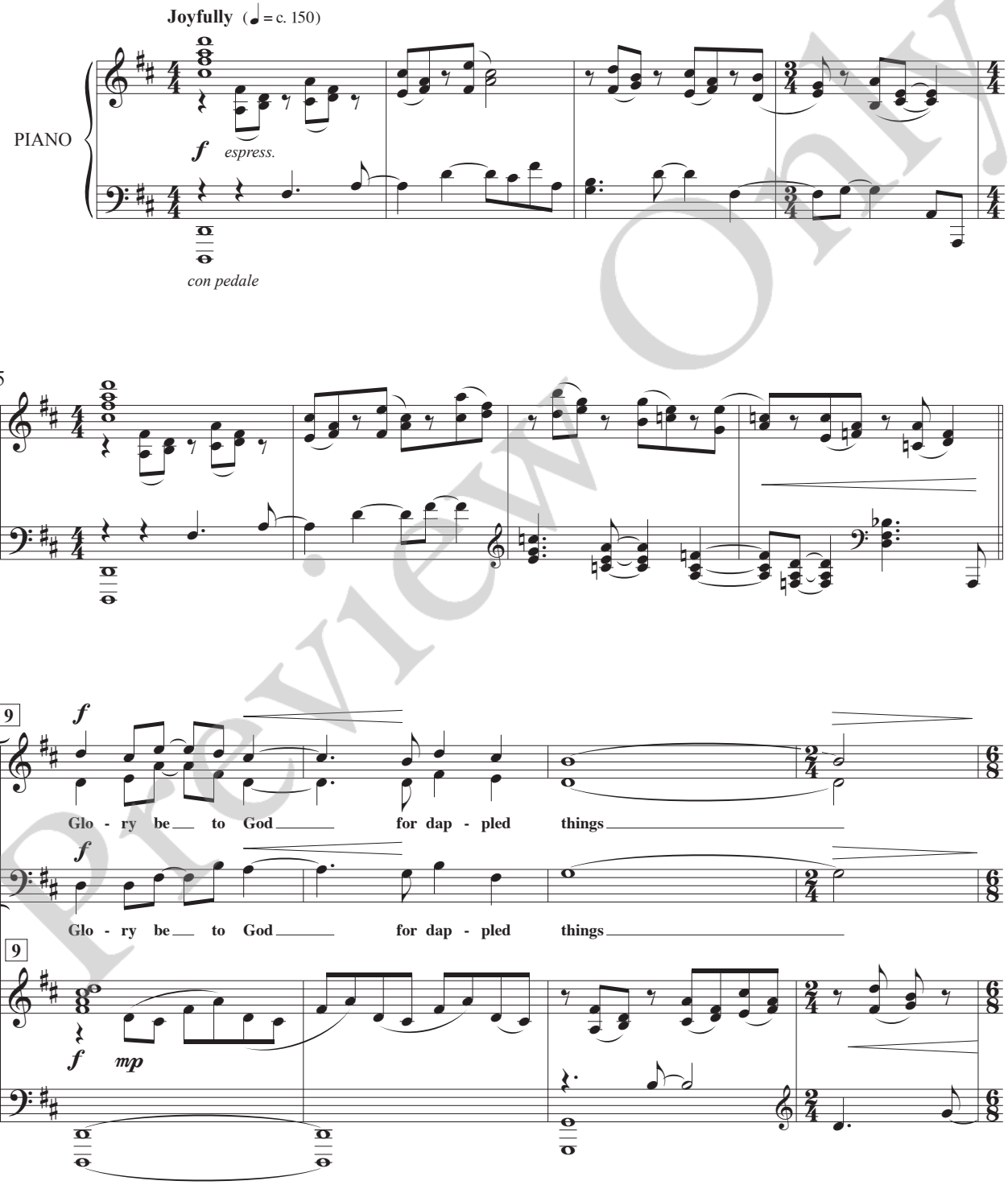
Pied Beauty

(SAB, accompanied)

Also available for SATB, SSA, and TTB

Gerard Manley Hopkins

James Elias Pick



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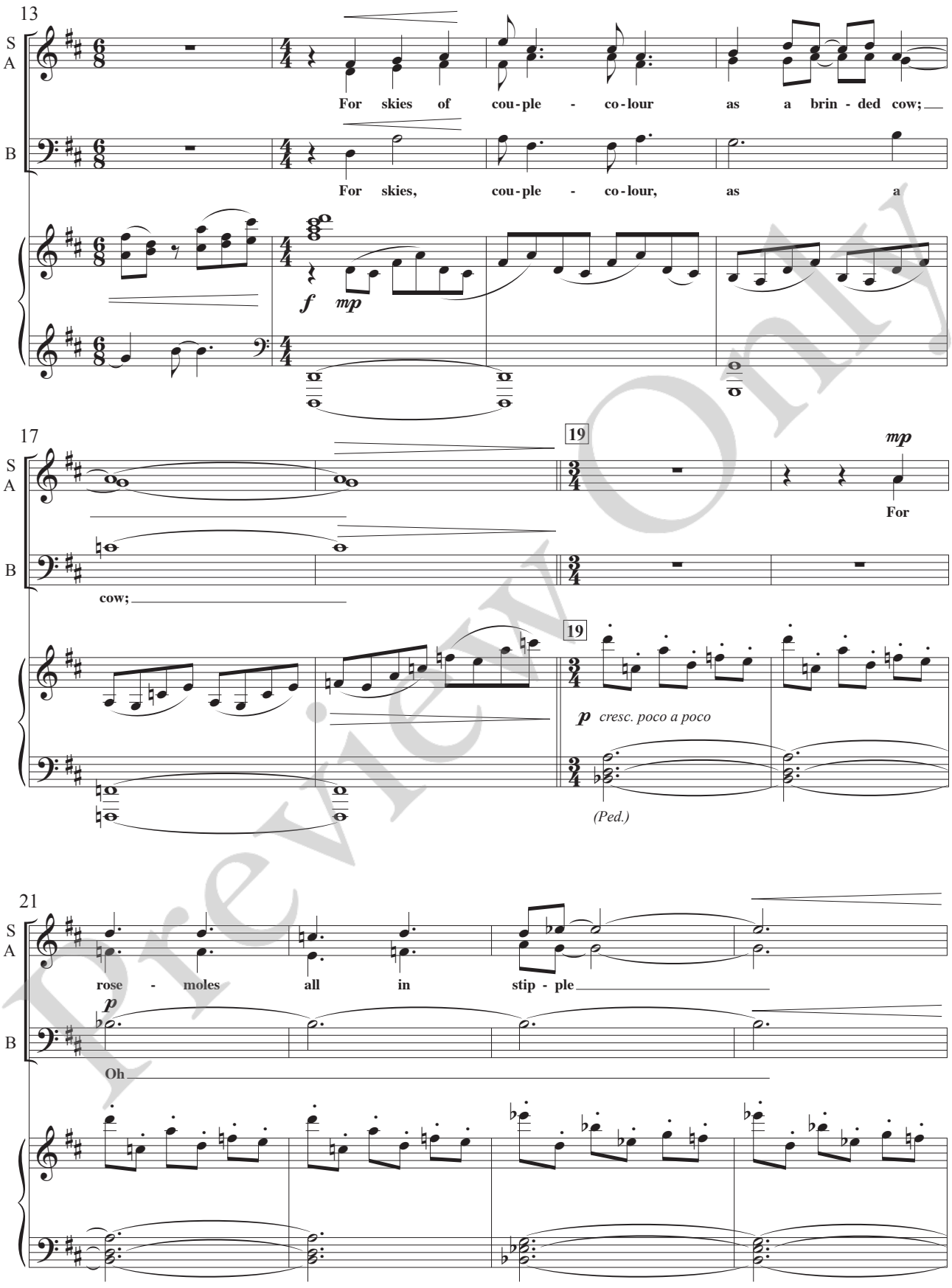

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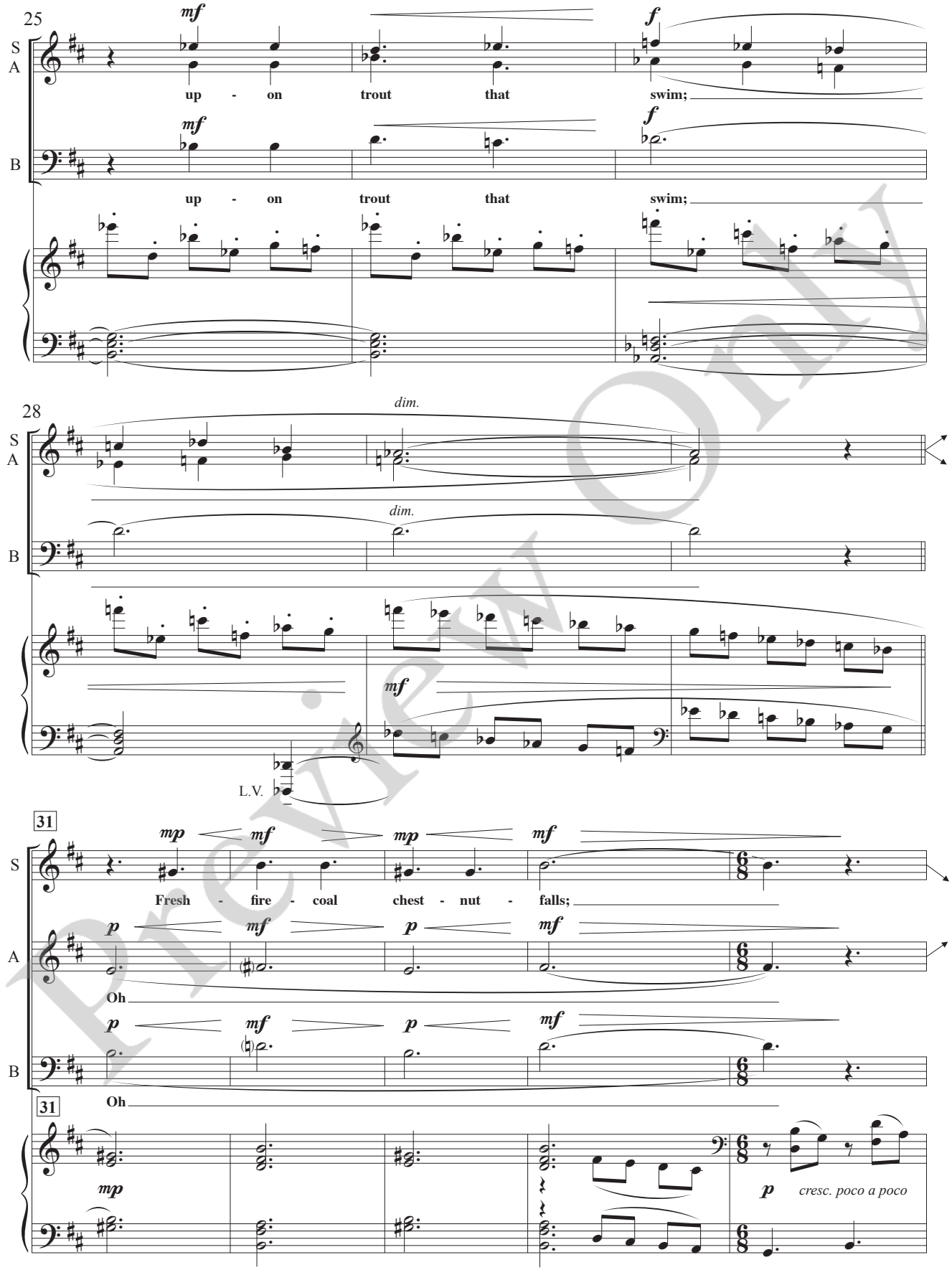

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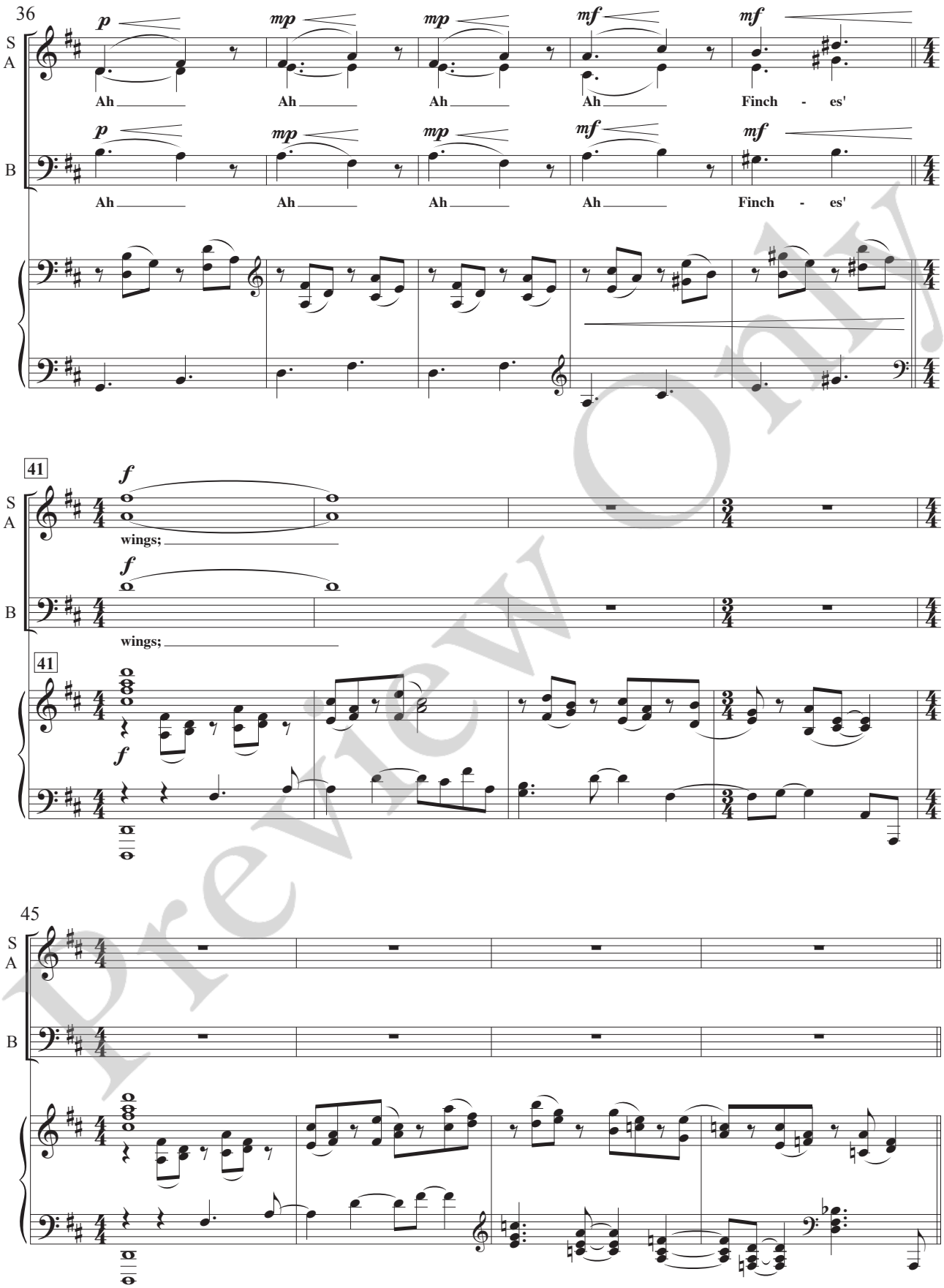

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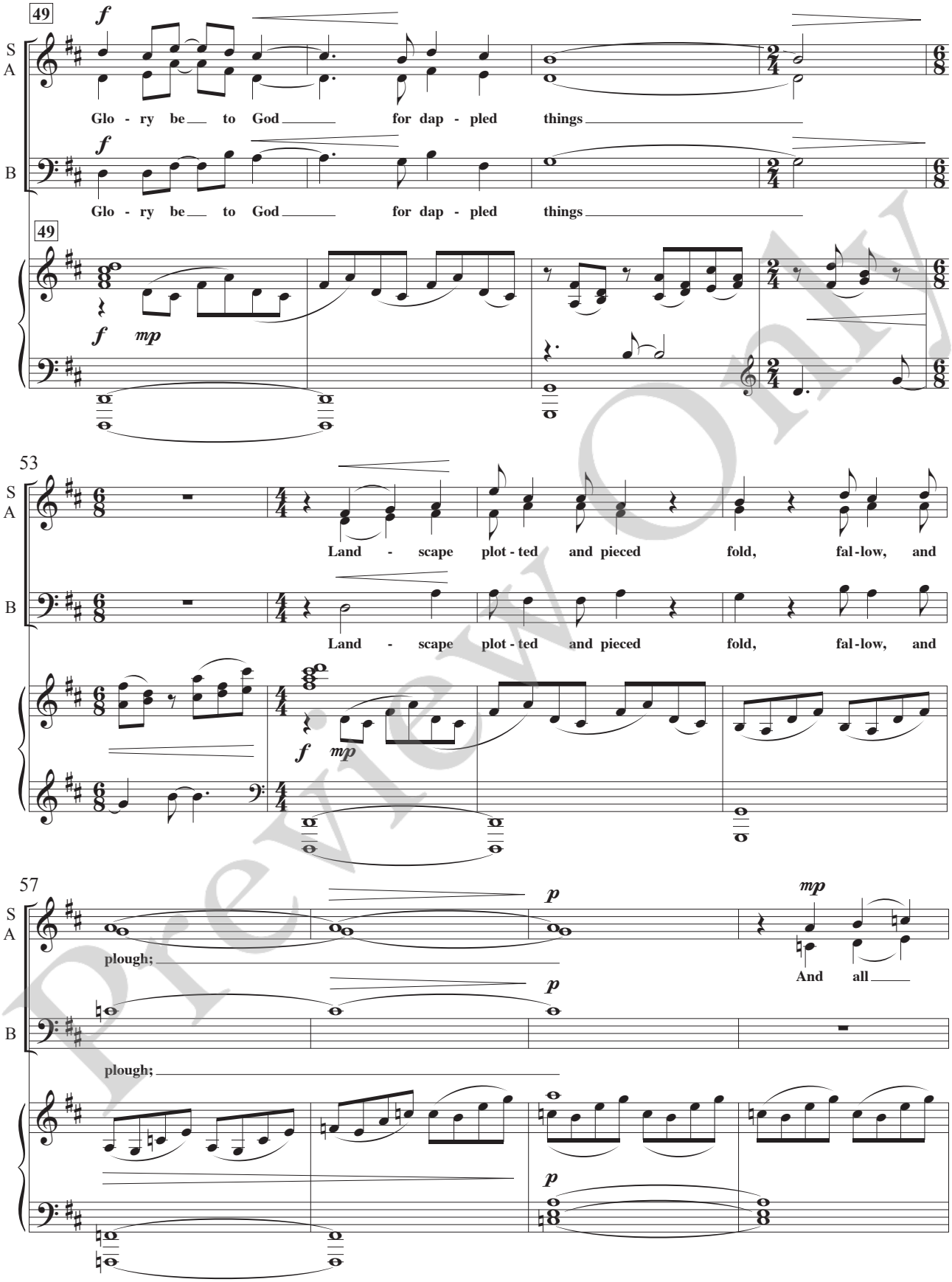

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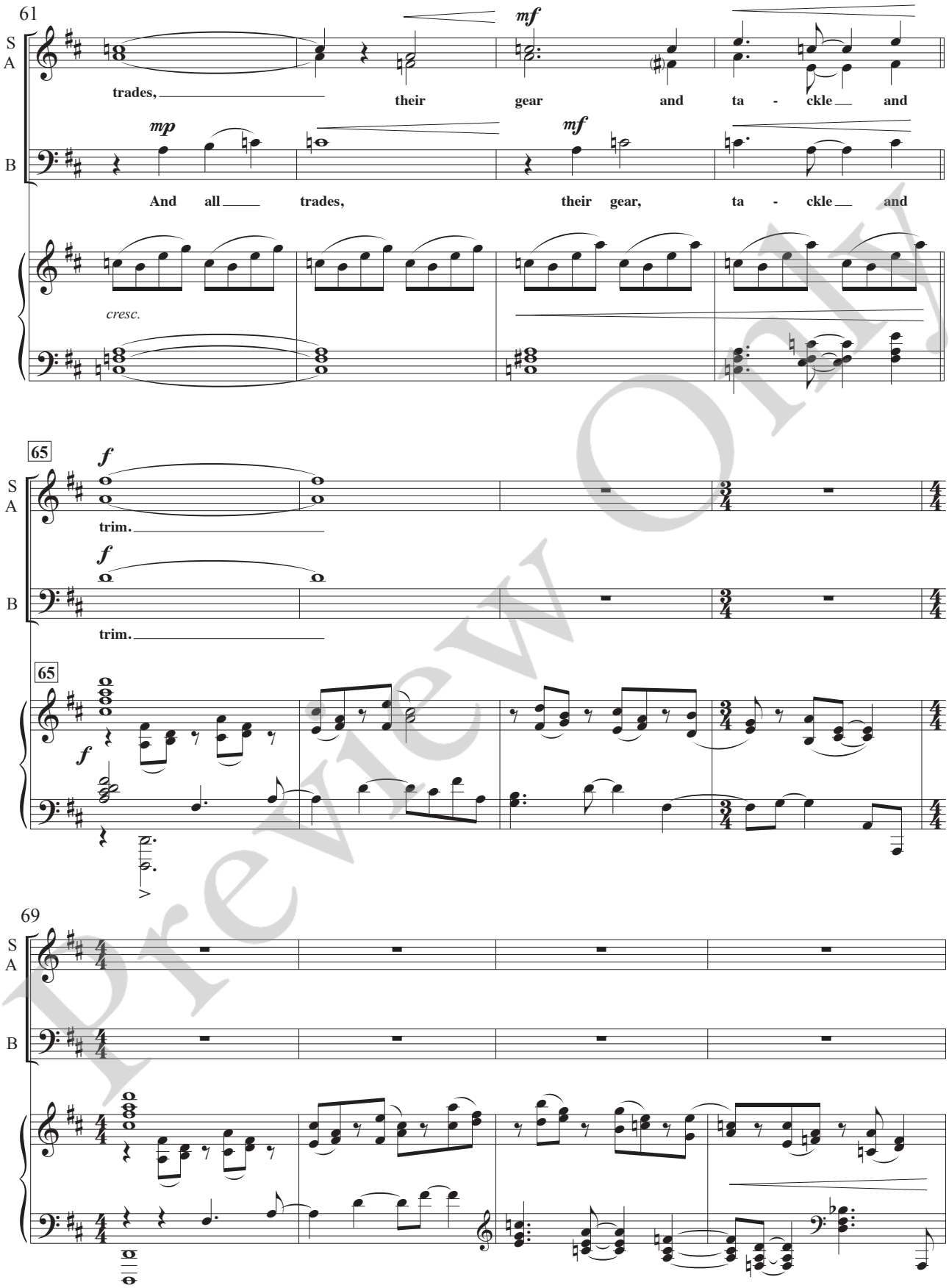

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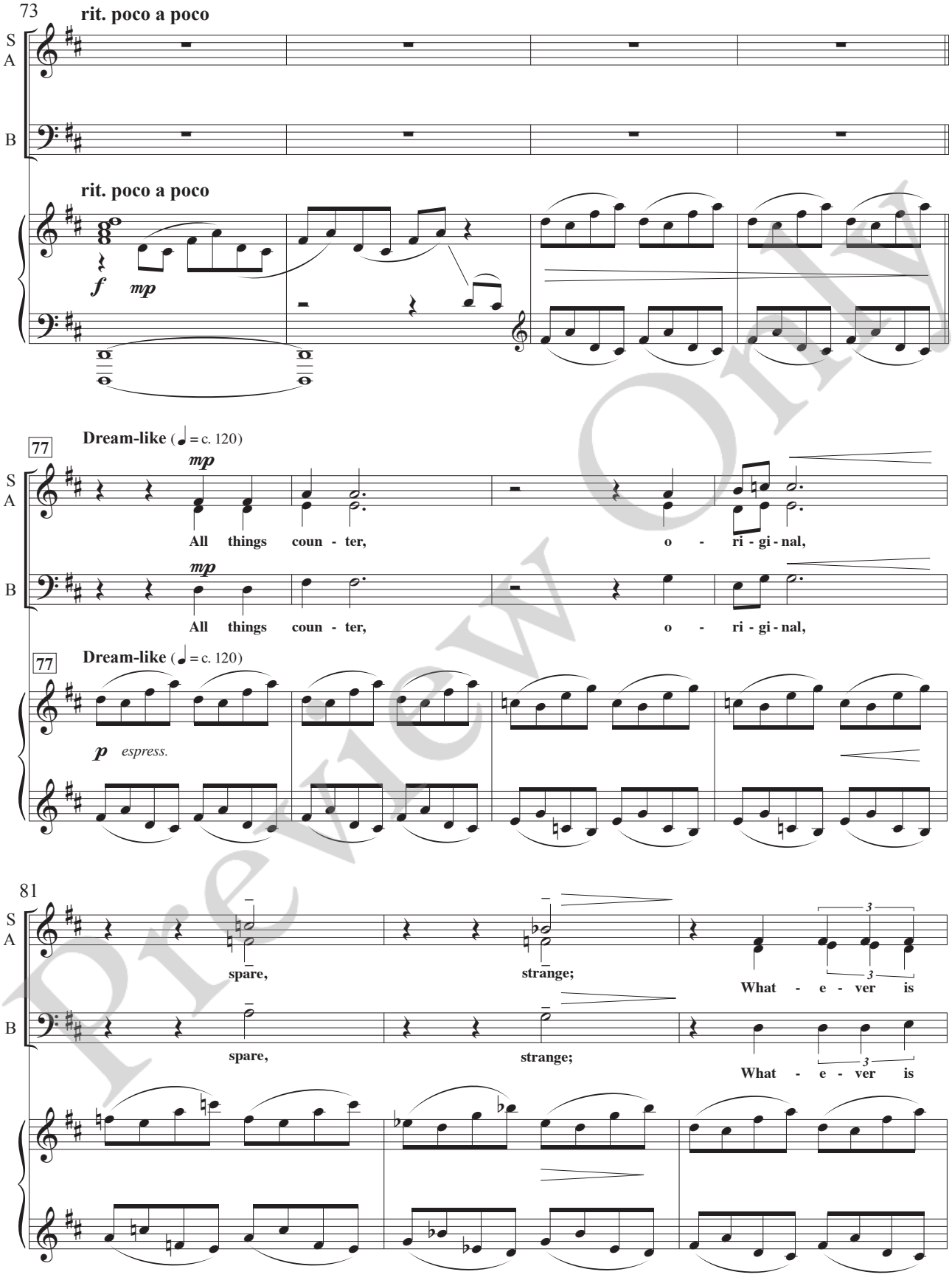

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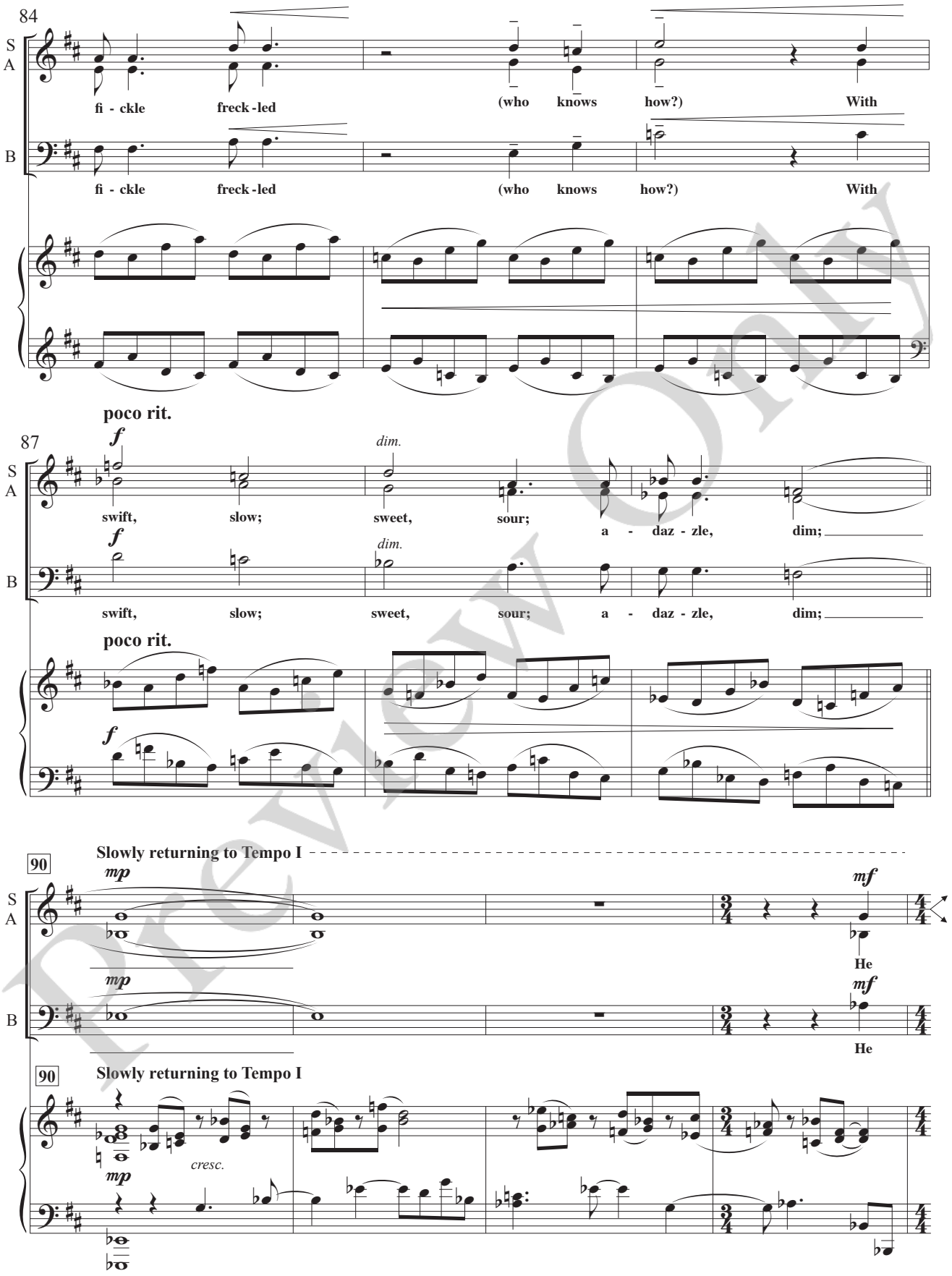

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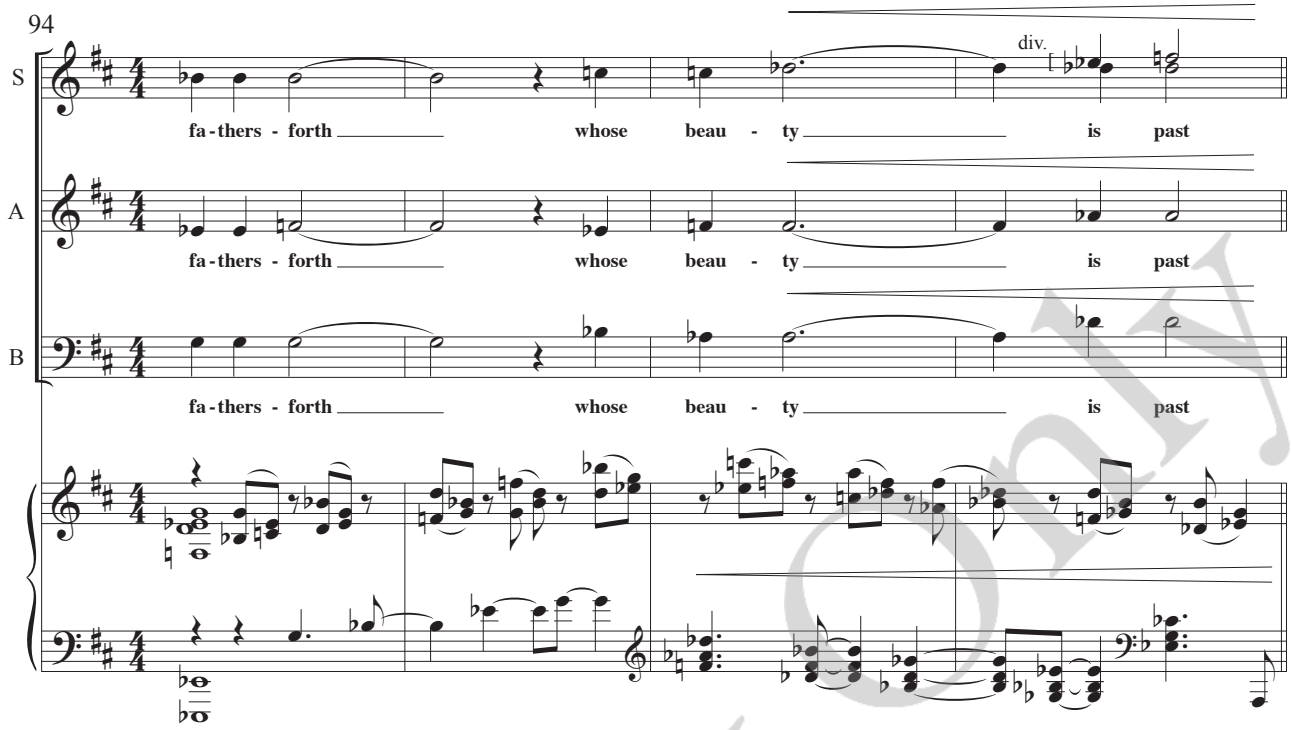

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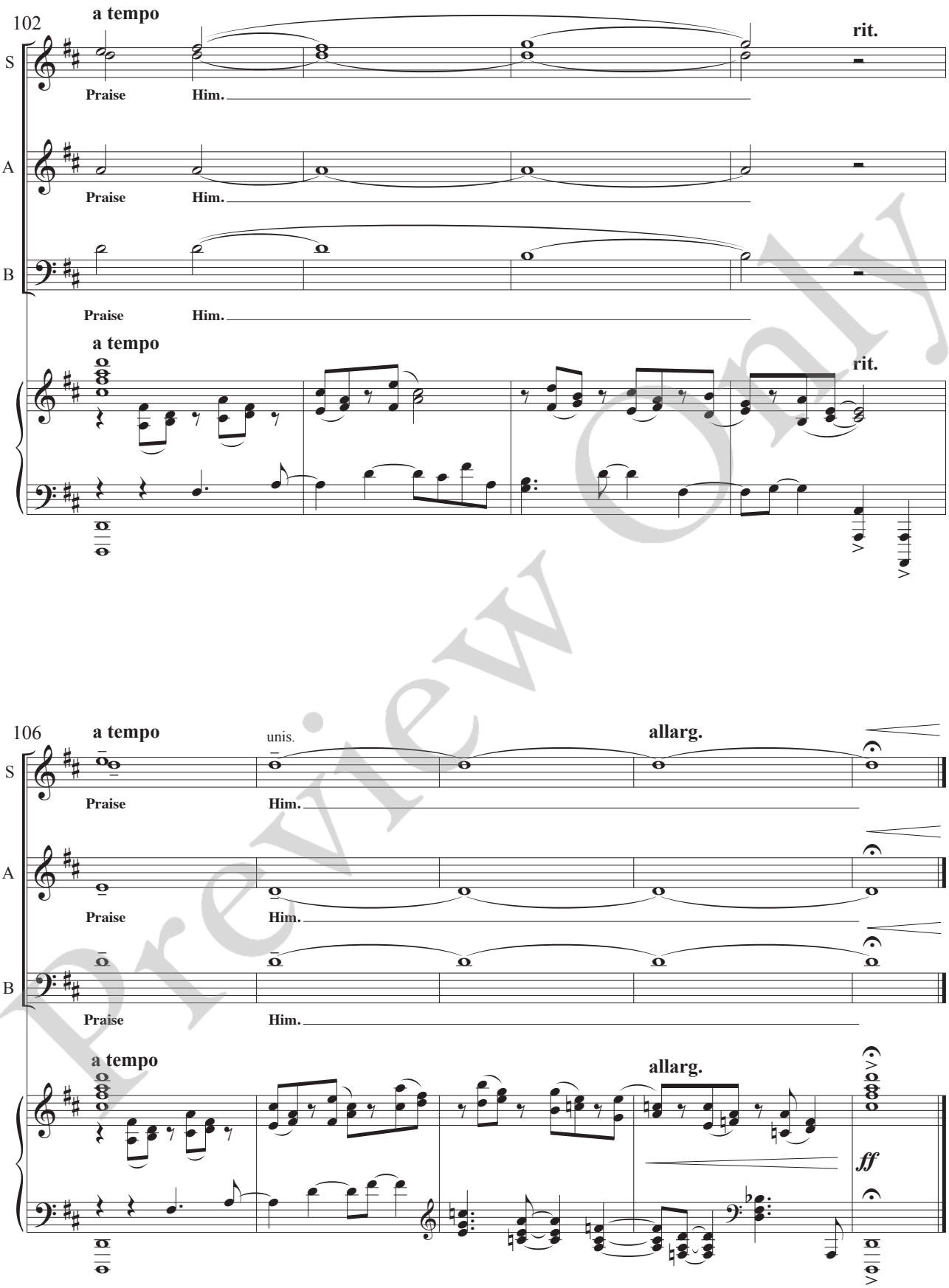

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