Hop bodee boody's Last Will and Testament

by

John Webb

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Hop-bodee-boody's Last Will and Testament

for voice soprano, four violas and harpsichord

by John Webb

Whilst researching in the British Library, I came across a 17th century book written about my namesake, who was listed in the catalogue as "Webb, John *Idiot*". The book, 'Hop-bodee-boody's Last Will and Testament....with his Petty Exploits, Character, Sayings and Epitaph' concerns a minor character in London life. Webb lived to the grand old age of 85 (dying in 1674); he was simpleton, who spent his entire life in the care of a nurse. The book contains a few humorous stories about his exploits including one concerning a Groat, his nurse, a large quantity of marmalade and severe beatings:

"The cruel Hagg so flogg'd his buttocks Brawny
She mixt the purple Gore with squitter'd Tawny"

The book also explains that his nickname came from Webb's habit of hopping everywhere - Hopbodeeboody is a corruption of 'Hopping booby'. Although a figure of fun, there was also a slightly tragic quality to his Webb's existence, best seen in his epitaph:

Reader! Under this heap of stones
Lyes old Hopbodeeboody's bones
Who always beg'd for farthing token
And with good Ale was always soaken:
Long time he lived, enough to see,
Most men do sillier things than he:
But now he's gone, tis ne'r the worse
For any I know but his Nurse;
Yet still to her his love appears,
For all his Bibbs and Muckenders,
He left to her as legacies
Wherewith to dry her blubber'd eyes.

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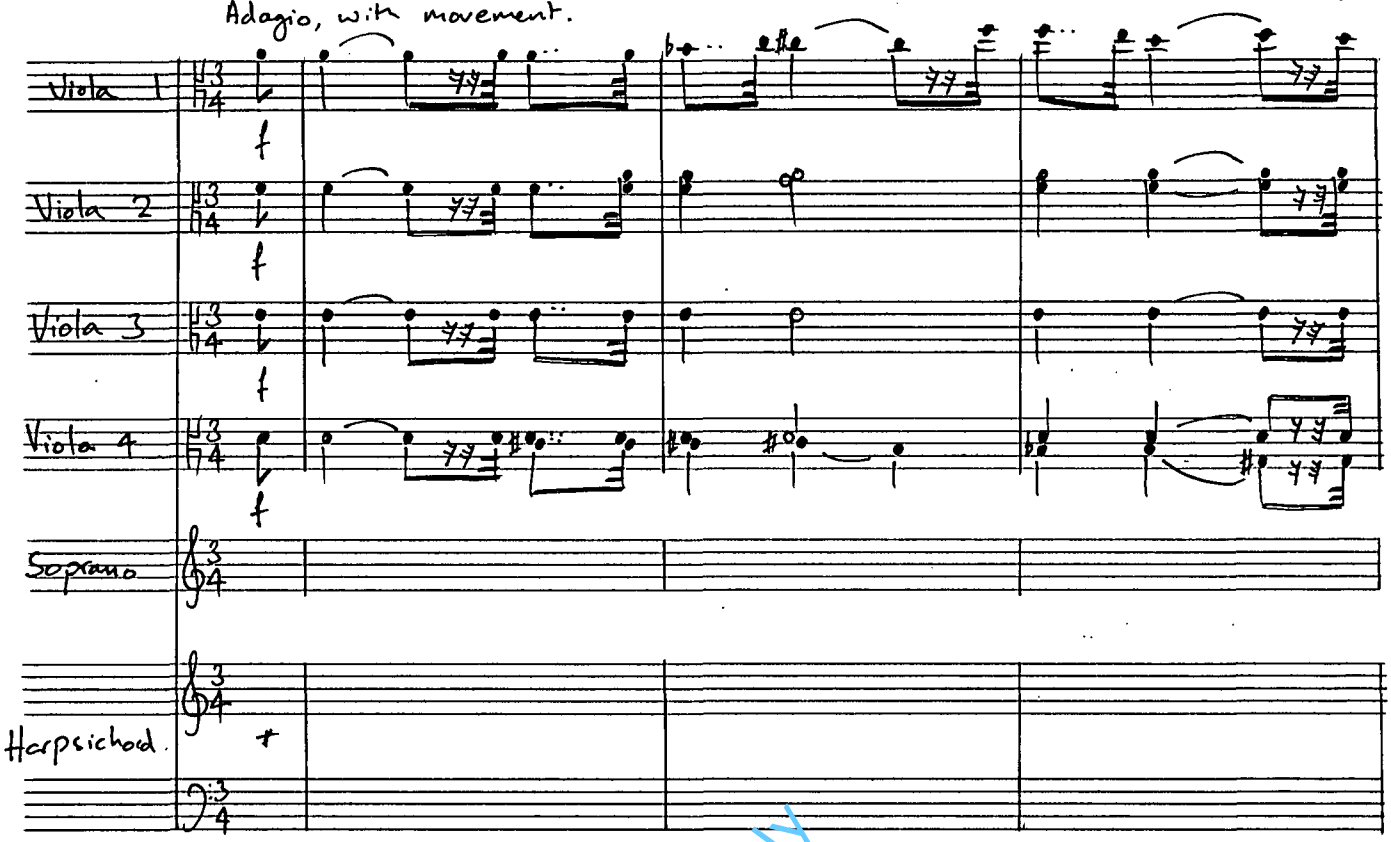
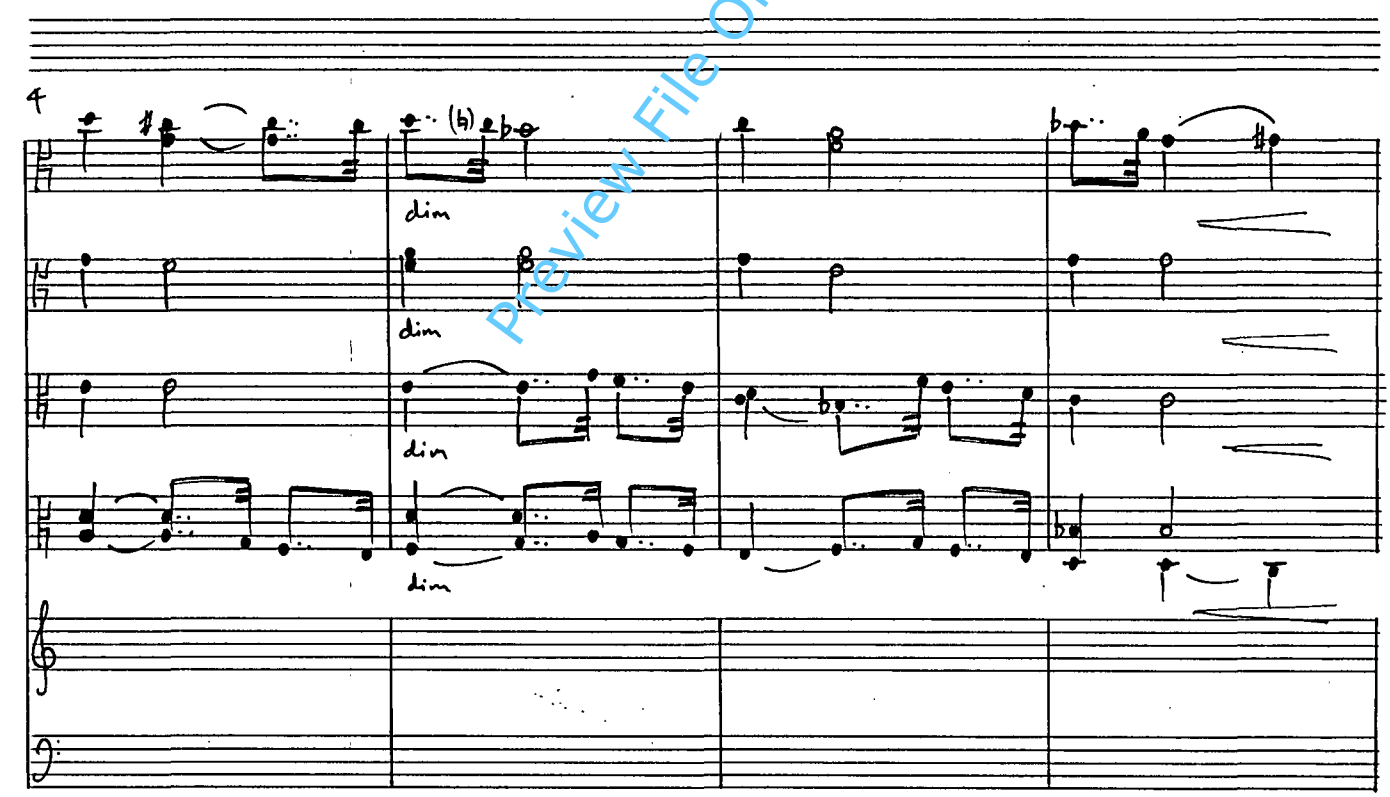
Hopefully, the composition captures both the humour and the sadness. It uses baroque elements in a Twentieth Century manner, and after an introduction, there follows a setting of Webb's epitaph.

Hop bodee boody's Last Will and Testament

John Webb.

Adagio, with movement.





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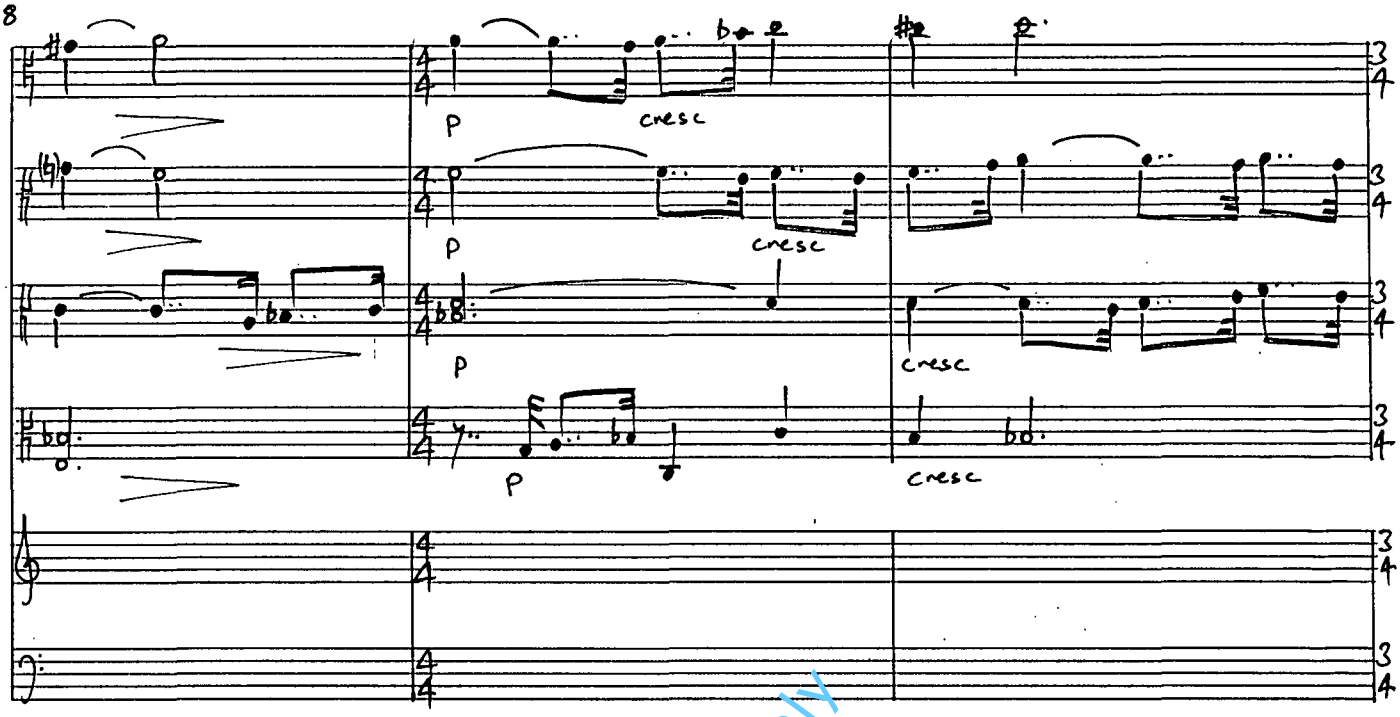
* In this first section (bars 1–16), the harpsichord may double the viola parts (with the bass line an octave lower). A chance to practice viola clef score reading!



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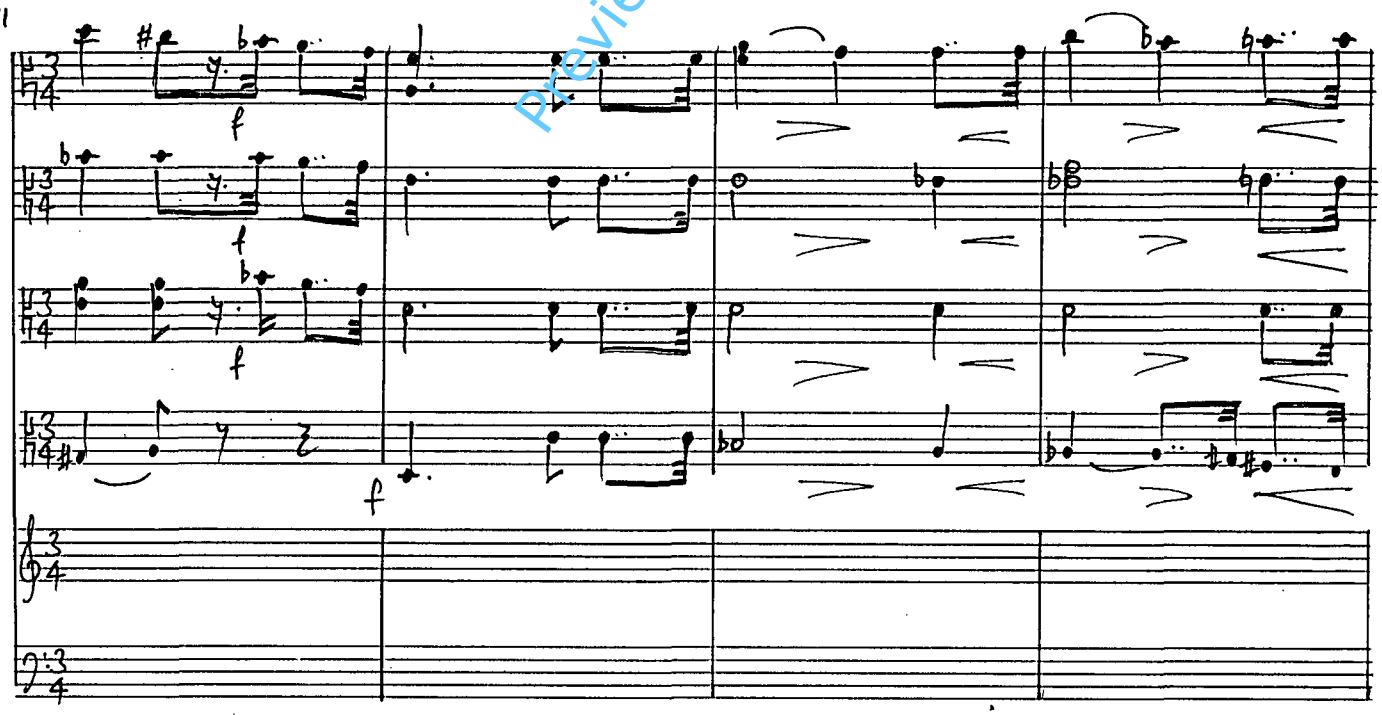

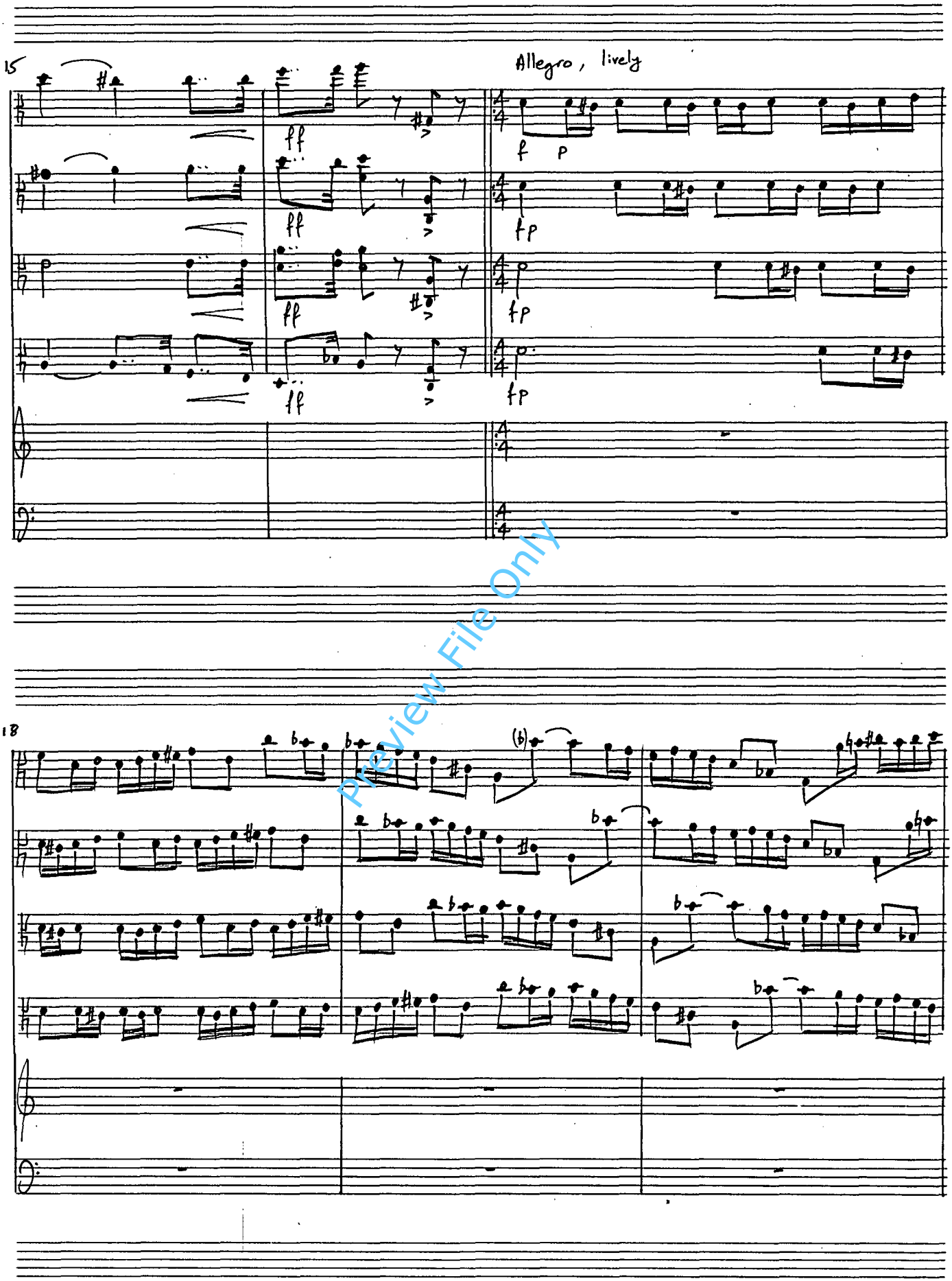

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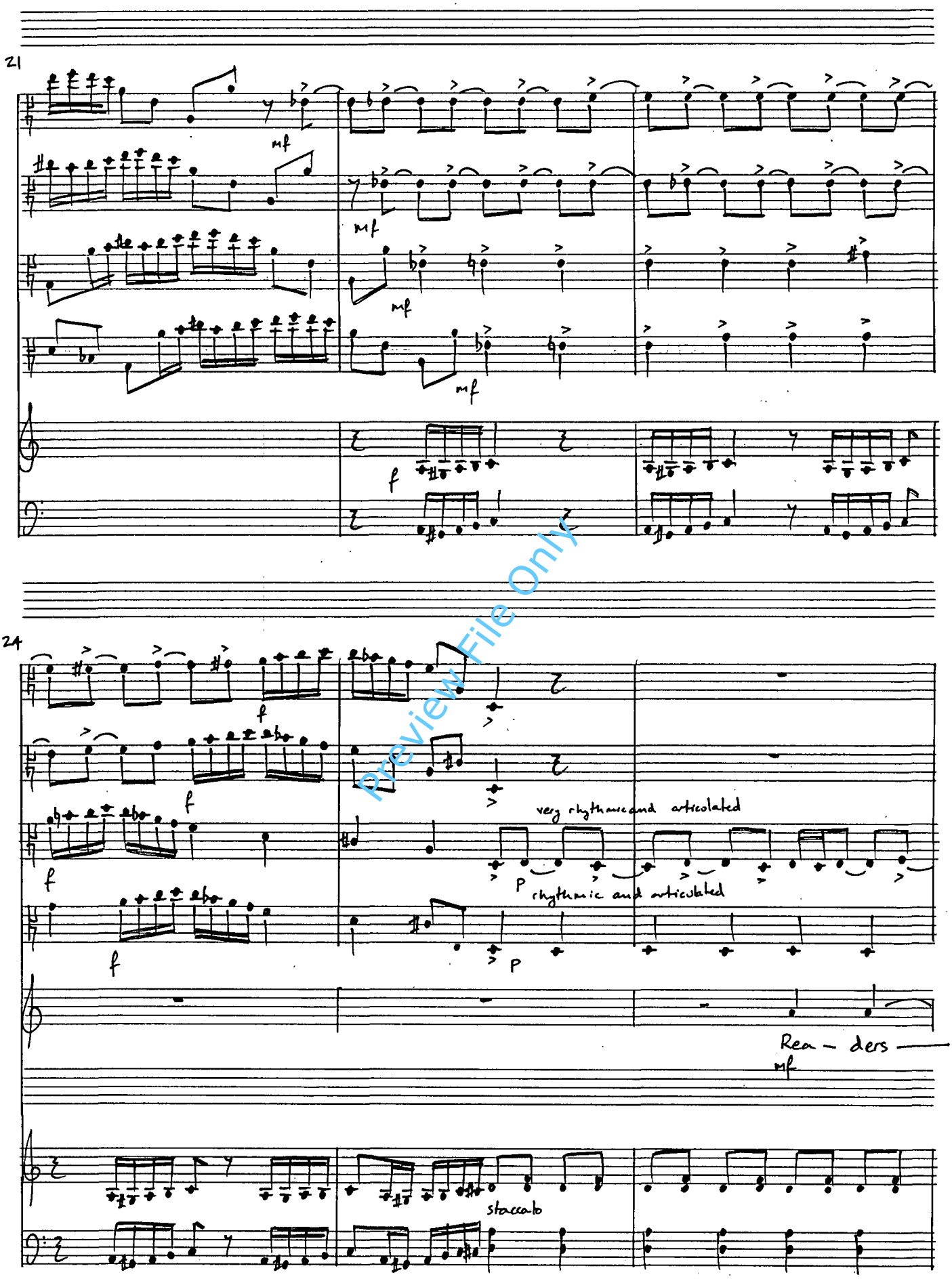

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27

3

sim.

cresc.

4

sim.

cresc.

un - der this heap of stones lies old

cresc.

* ossia marked in brackets

30

mf

mf

mf

mf

p

p

p

Hop bo de boo dy's bones

f

mf

stacc.

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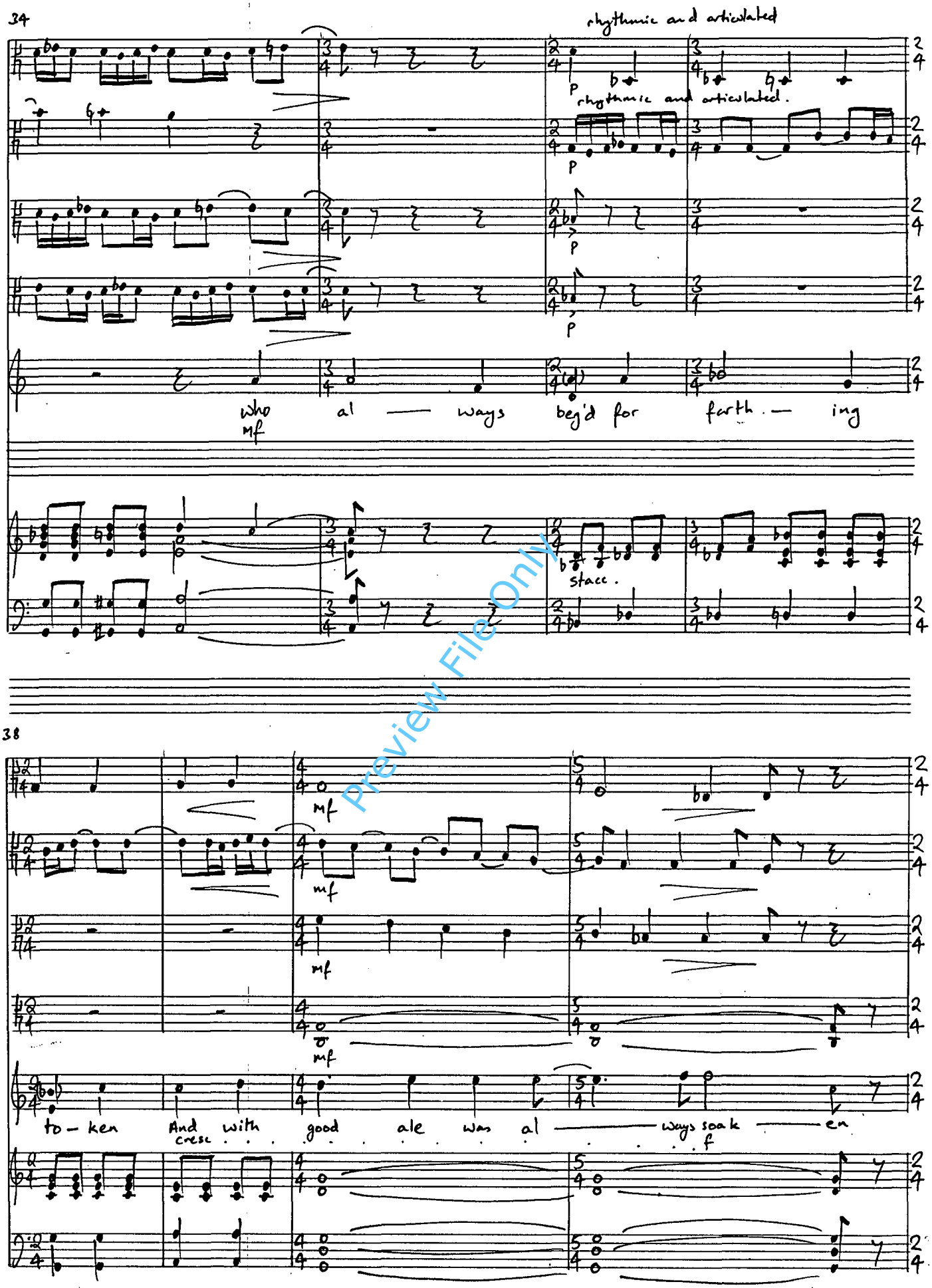

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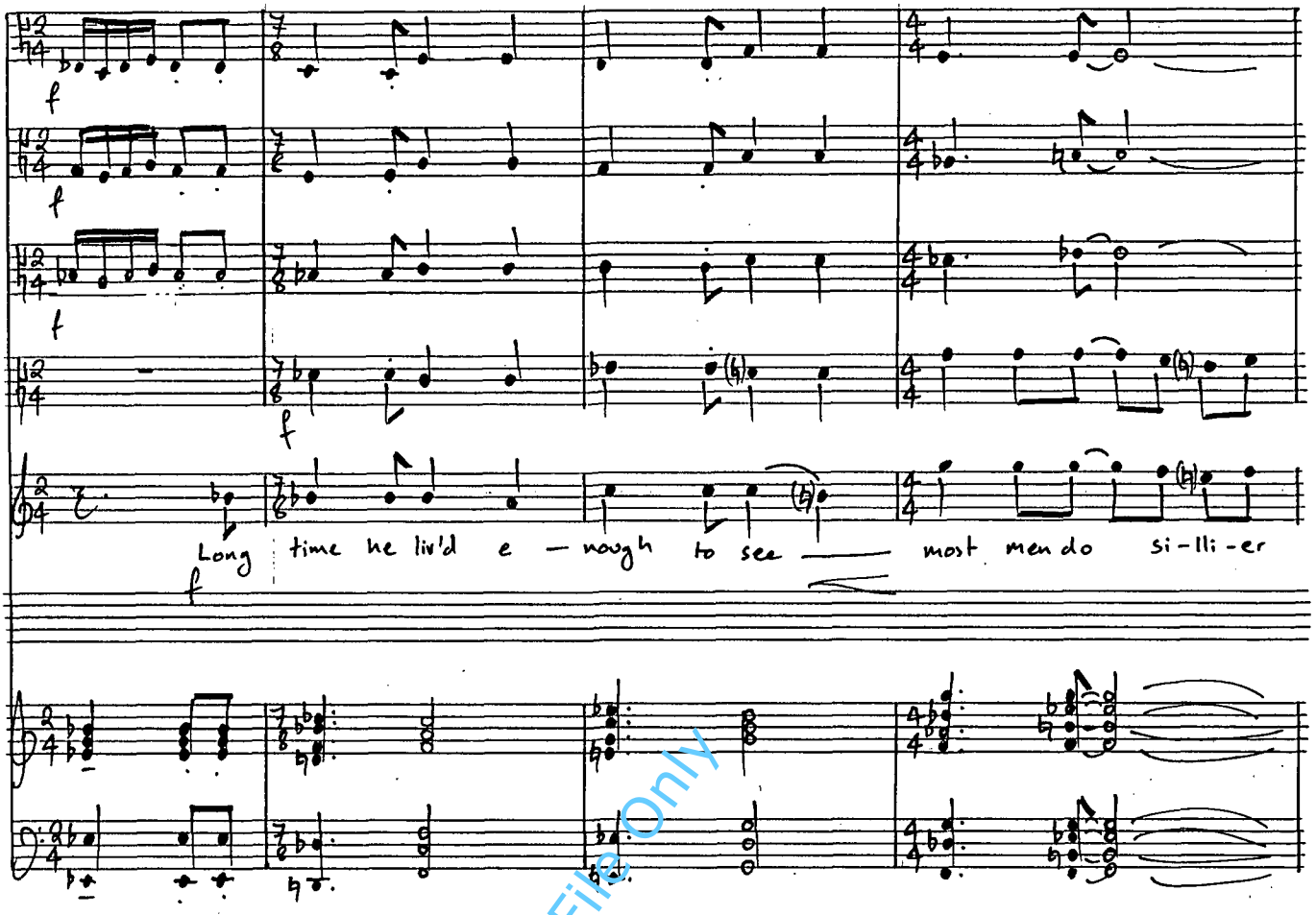
42



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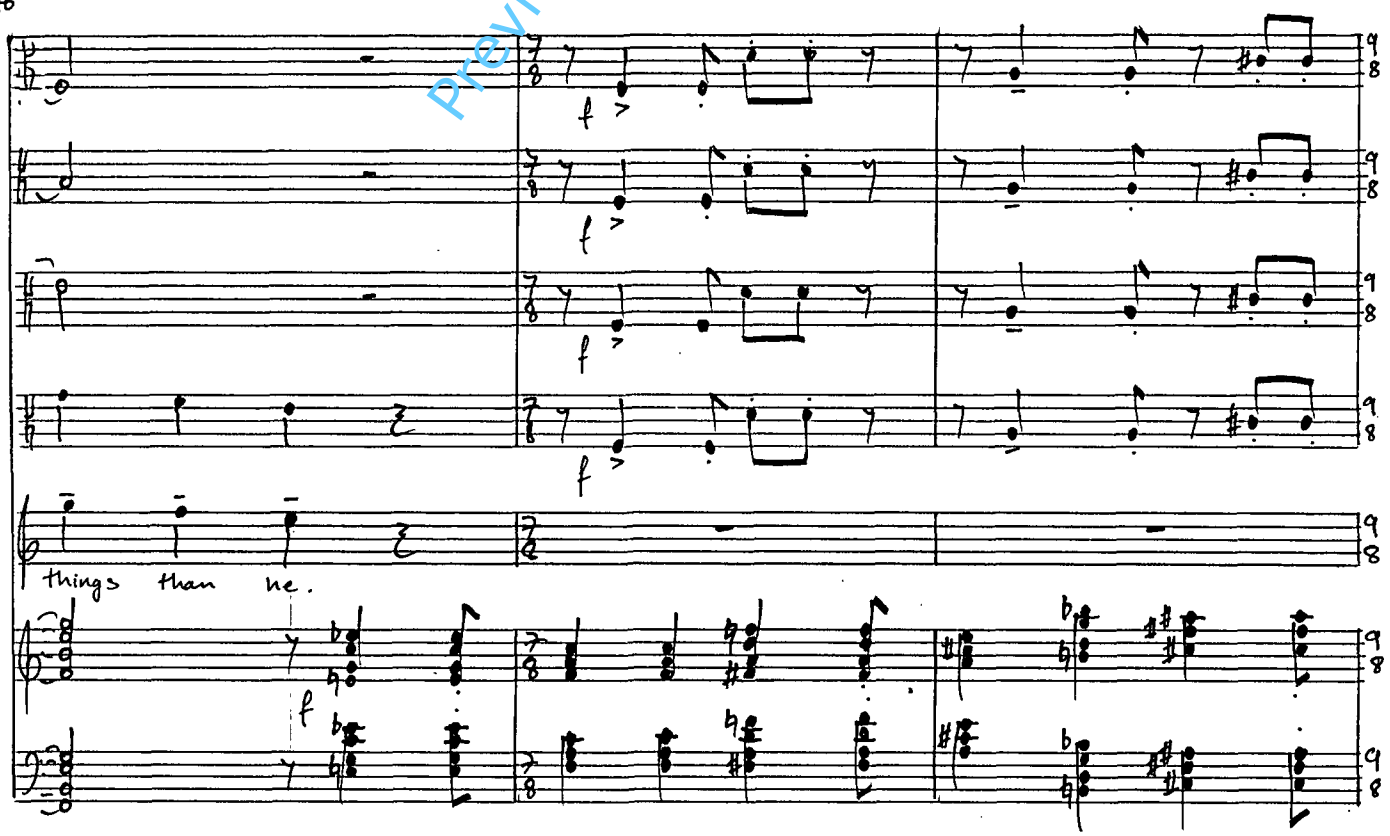

49 2+3+2+2

sub p

sub p, stacc.

sub p.

sub p.

p But now he's gone, his

52

sempre pp

(pp)

sempre pp

sempre pp.

ne'er the worse But now he's gone, But

espressivo.

mf

Sim

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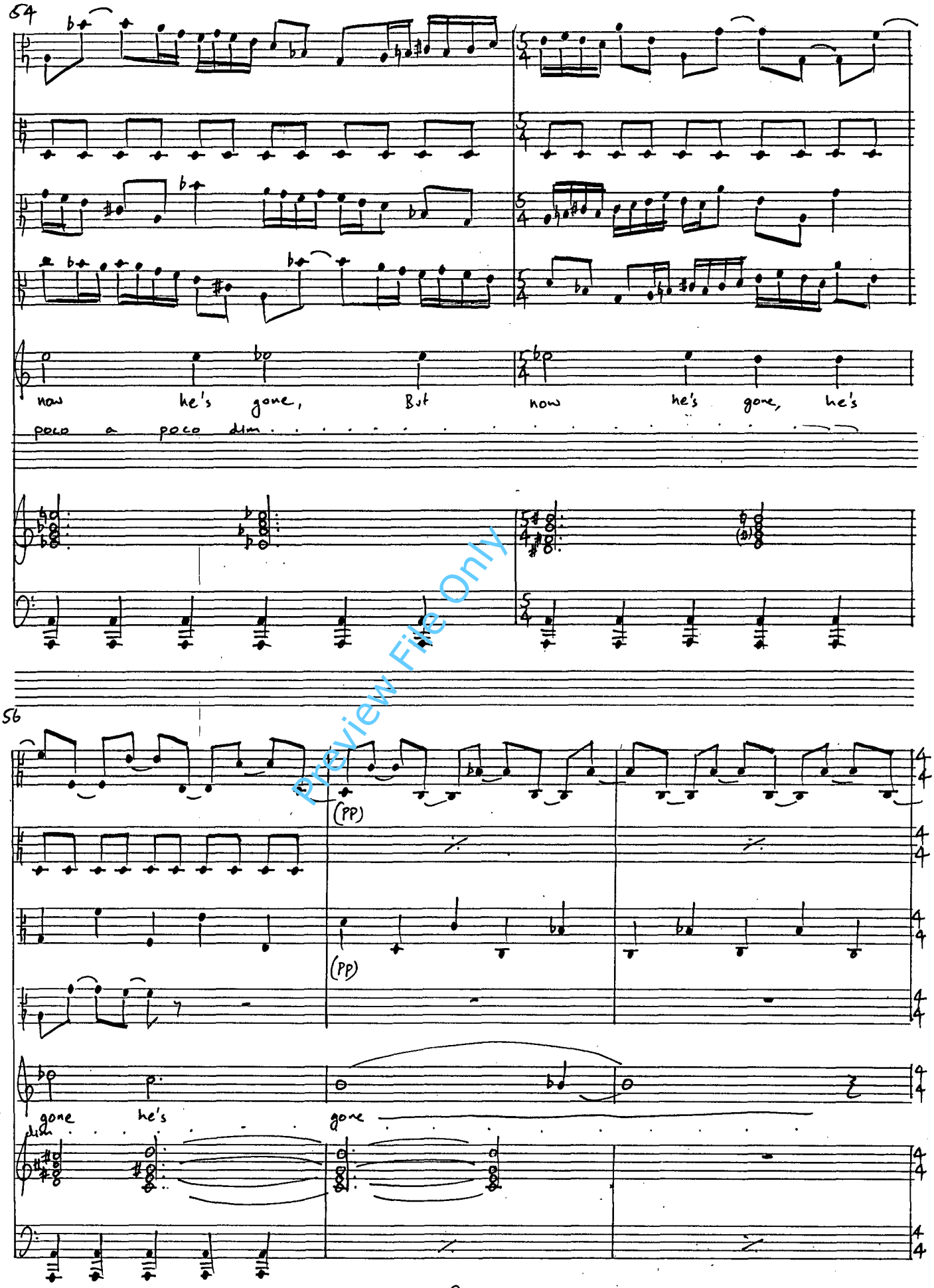

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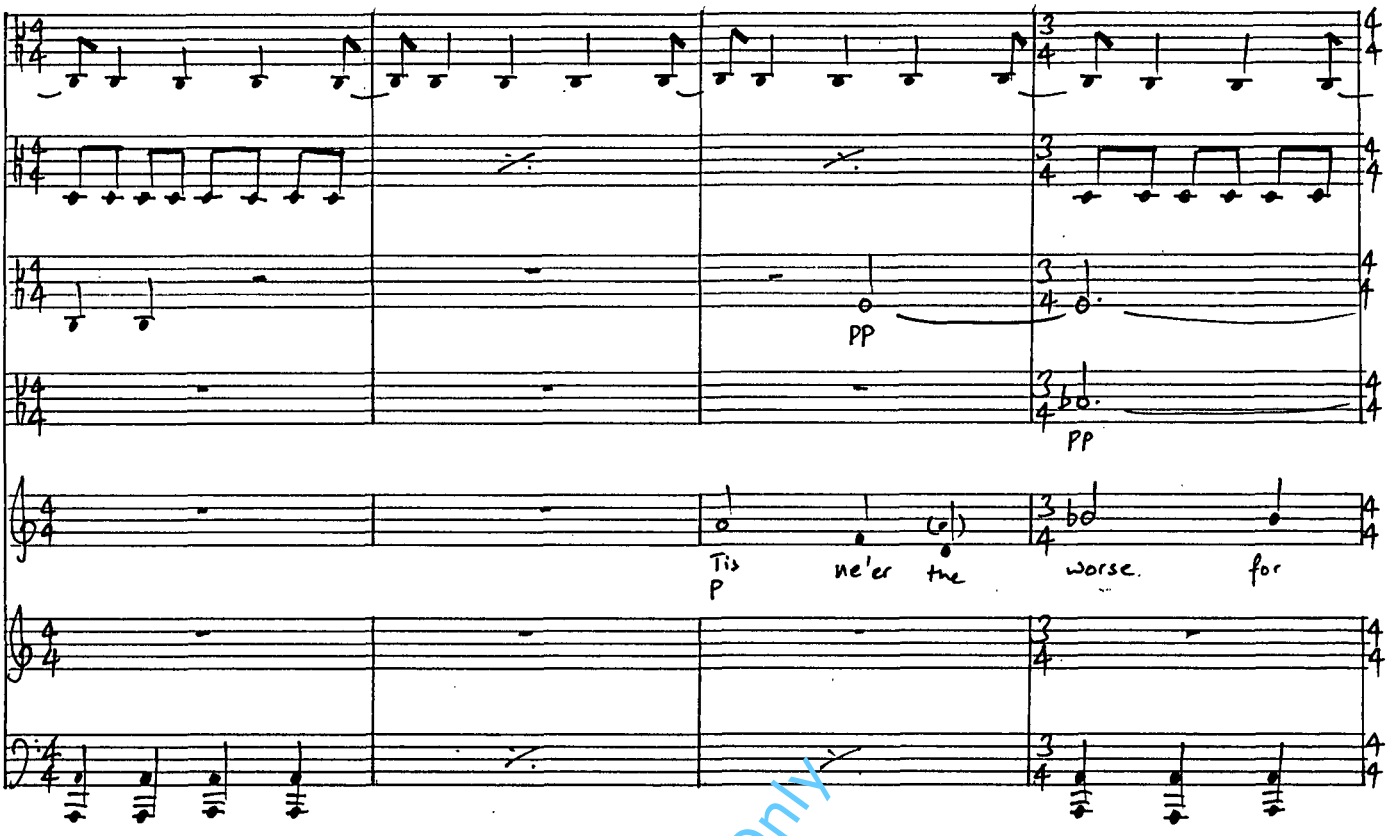

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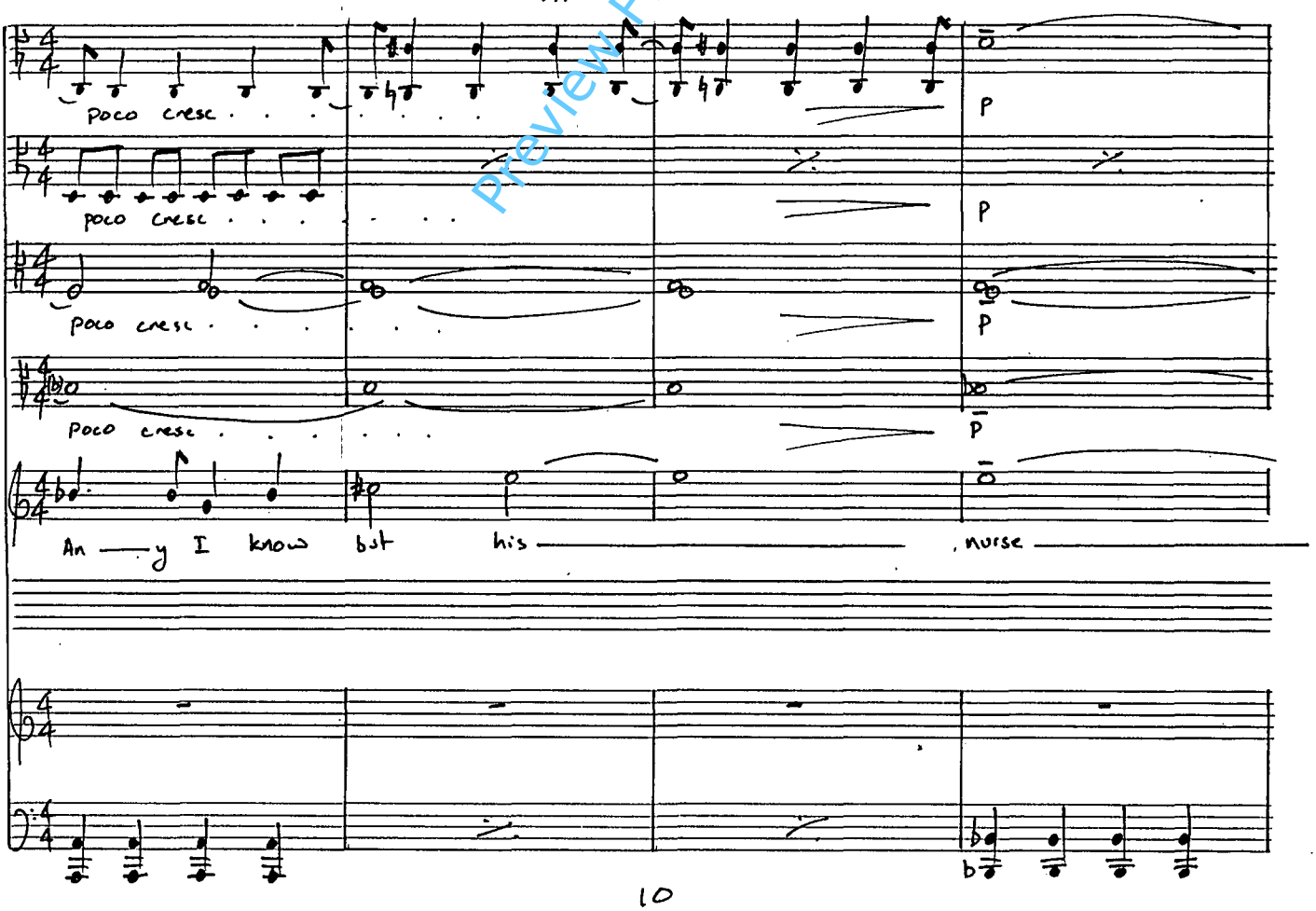

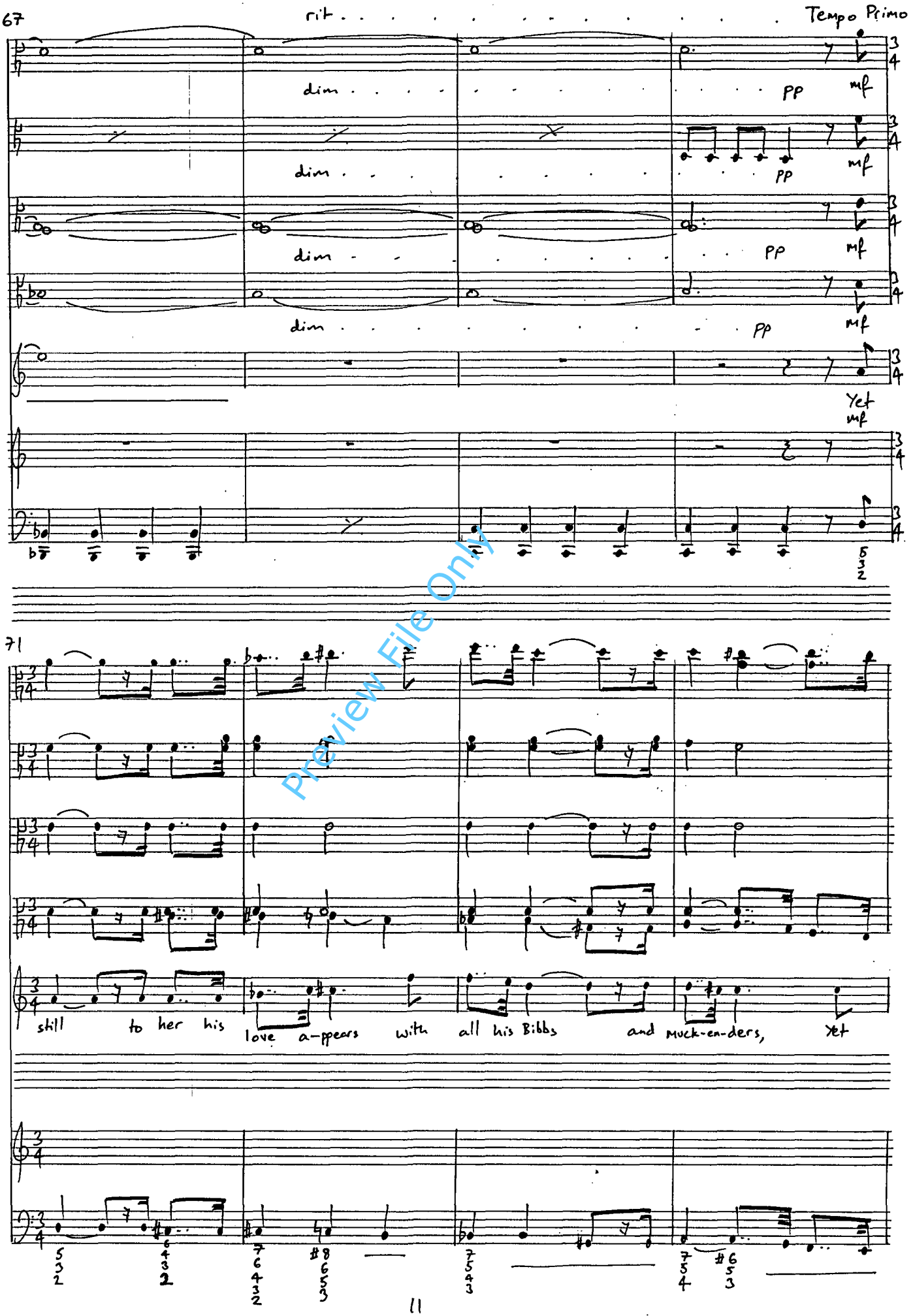

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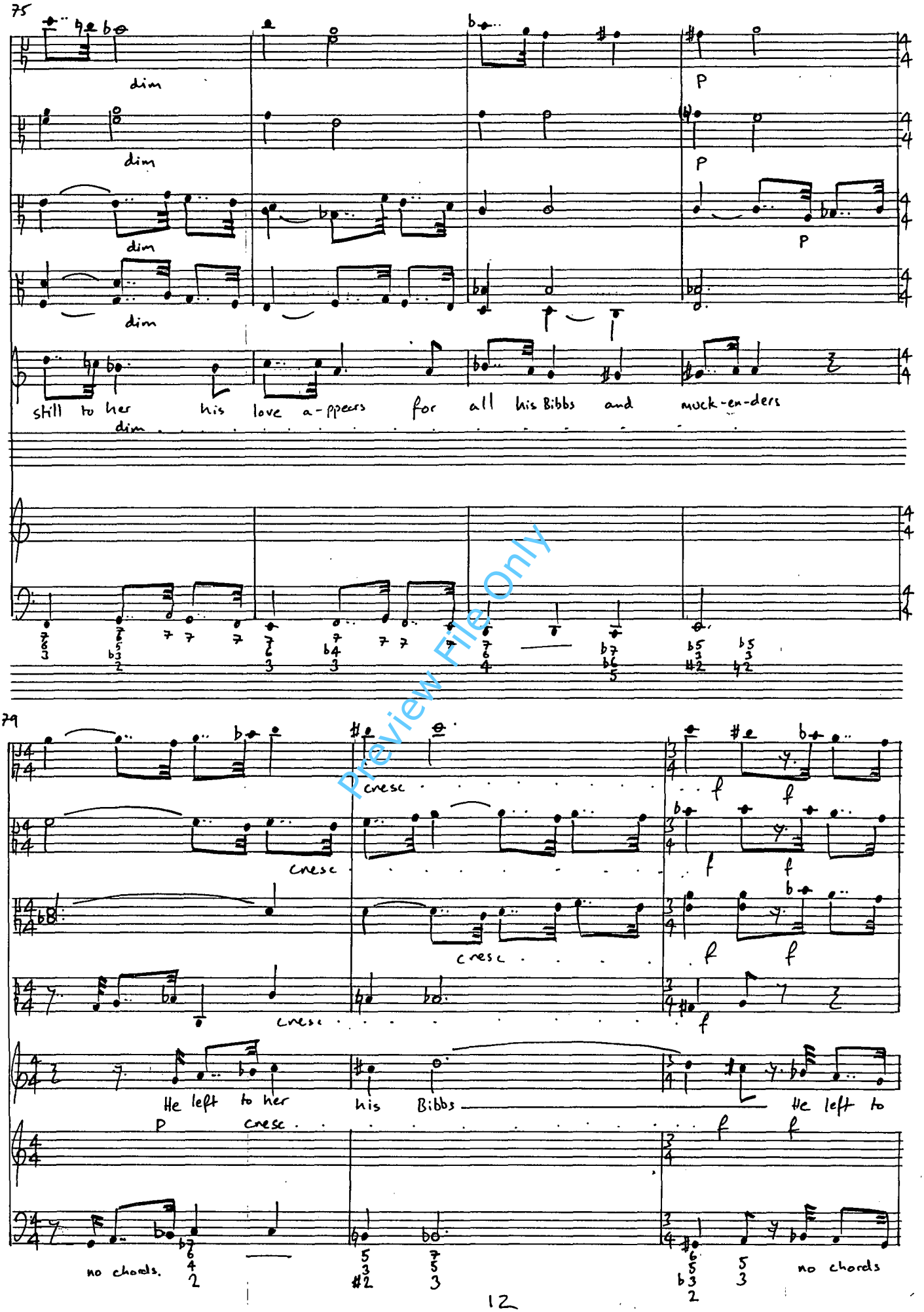

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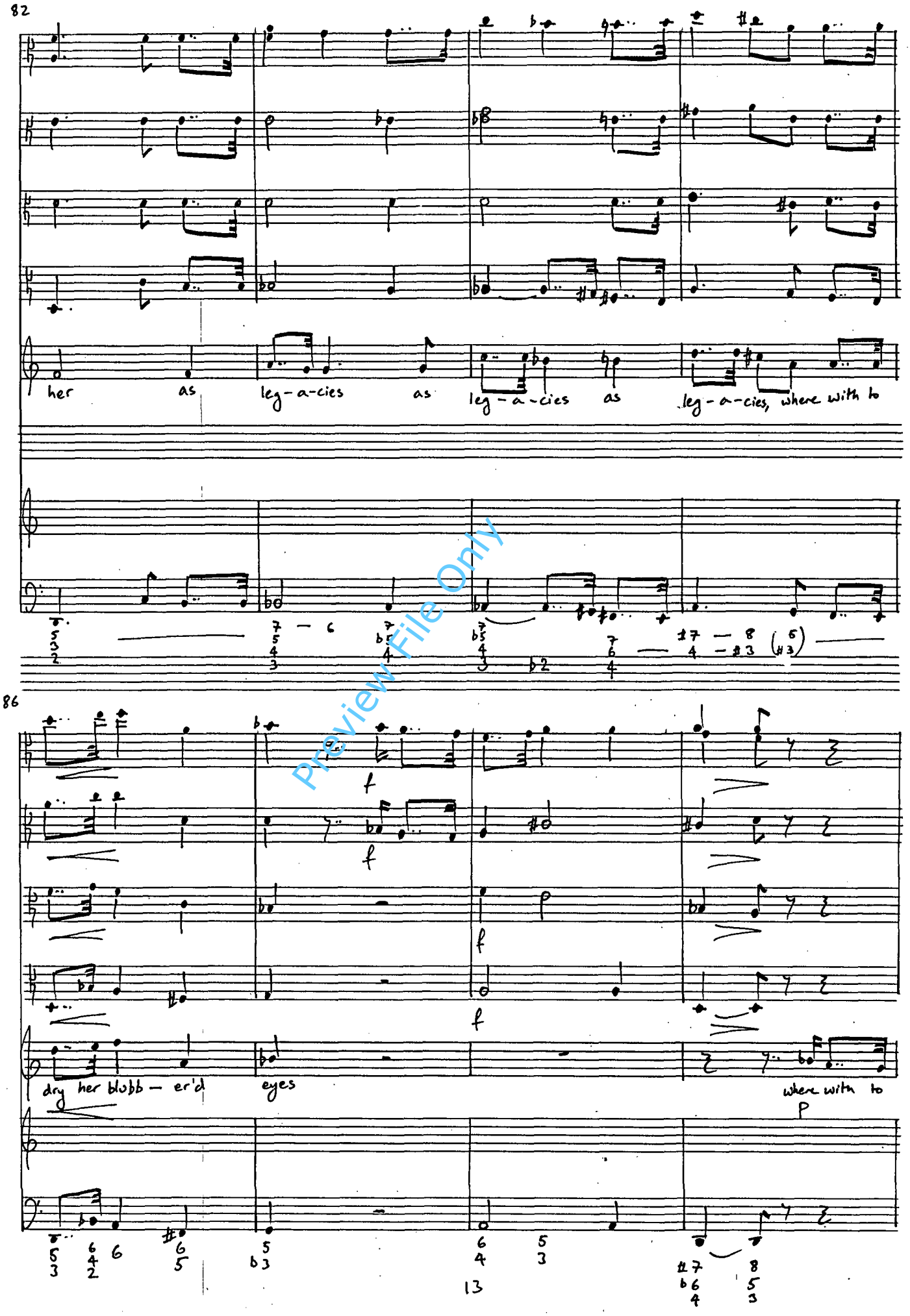
82
her as leg-a-cies as leg-a-cies as leg-a-cies, where with to
86
dry her blubb-er'd eyes where with to
f
P
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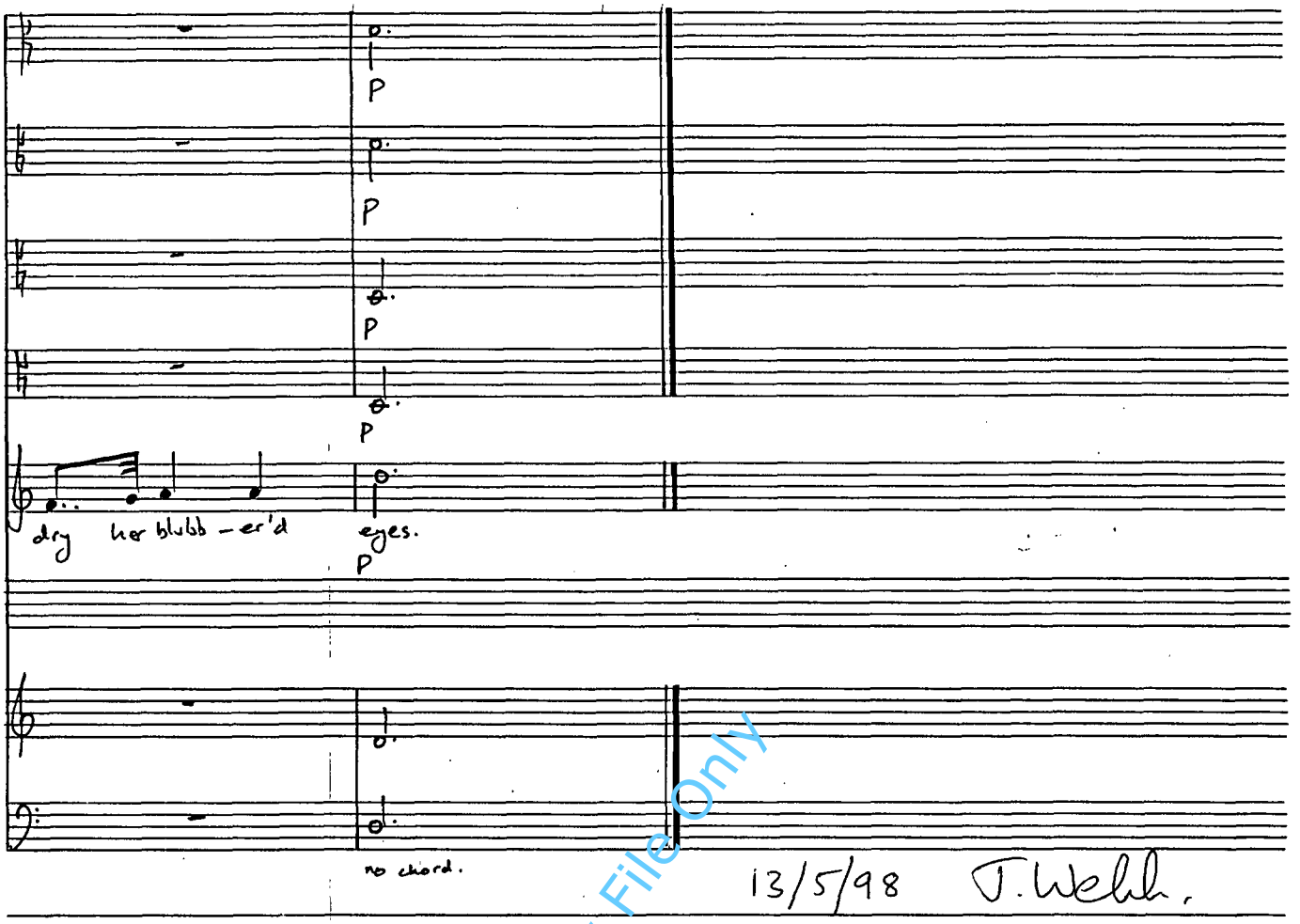

13/5/98 J. Welch.

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