Choral Works of John Muehleisen

Stabat Mater

for SATB Choir (divisi)

Music by
John Muehleisen
(2002, rev. 2003, 2014)

Text ascribed to
Jacopone di Todi (c. 1228-1306)

Commissioned by Opus 7 Vocal Ensemble
Loren Pontén, Artistic Director
in honor of their 10th Anniversary Season

Program Notes

The following program notes are from the premiere performance of the work on March 22, 2003.

> "John Muehleisen's *a cappella* setting of the *Stabat Mater* is actually the framework of a much longer work based on several sections of the Servite-originated *"Septem Dolorum"* ("Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary"), which is celebrated on Good Friday. There are many settings of the *Stabat Mater*, including well-known settings by nineteenth-century composers such as Rossini, Dvorak, and Verdi, who constructed large operatic scenarios, with full orchestra and virtuoso soloists. The twentieth-century witnessed composers such as Poulenc and Penderecki composing settings more attuned to liturgical styles. Muehleisen attributes his own inspiration to a less extroverted setting by the 18th-century composer Antonio Caldara, borrowing one particularly riveting phrase for a unifying feature in his setting. This is a tightly organized work, with thematic and ostinato repetitions that unify the various contrasting sections. The poetry encourages episodic construction, but by dealing with six-line units and careful variation of his choral "orchestration," the work achieves an archlike flow, with a hymnlike setting at the apex. This is music that benefits from a careful following of the text, because the composer has looked deeply into the poetry, resulting in an impassioned musical rhetoric.
>
> "Composers have loved the *Stabat Mater* text because the fervent diction provides so many possibilities for contrast. For example, out of the chantlike quietness of the opening pages, the solo soprano interjects the primary Caldara motive on the text *"lacrimosa"* ("weeping"), which is elaborated over an insistent ostinato by the male chorus in the next episode. In the next section, the *"lacrimosa"* theme is varied again, and treated in imitation. Typical of the highly integrated thematic texture is the opening of *"Quis est homo"* ("Who would not weep?") where the initial phrase sung by the women becomes an urgent rhythmic ostinato in the men's voices.
>
> "The section that centers on the word "*flagellis*" (referring to the 39 lashes) is a brilliant choral toccata, with fragmented exclamations and exploding pyramids of sound culminating in a terrifying dissonant climax. At a central point, the hymn *Sancta Maria* provides a sense of resolution. The following sections reprise melodically the opening sections, giving a sense of *da capo* balance to the larger picture. A wordless lament, which further develops the *"lacrimosa"* theme, prepares the development of the final pages, which focus on the promise of Paradise."
>
> *Program Notes by Dr. Robert Scandrett & John Muehleisen*

Performance Note

Unless otherwise noted, when the women or men are divided in three parts (SSA, SAA, TTB, or TBB), divide the voices evenly between the three-parts. Three-part divisi that should be performed as distributed amongst the voices is noted as "div. as written."

Stabat Mater, Original Latin Lyrics

1. Stabat mater dolorosa
   juxta Crucem lacrimosa,
   dum pendebat Filius.

2. Cuyus animam gementem,
   contristatam et dolentem,
   pertransivit gladius.

3. O quam tristis et afflicta
   fuit illa benedicta
   Mater Unigeniti.

4. Quae moerebat et dolebat,
   Pia Mater cum videbat
   Nati poenas incliti.

5. Quis est homo qui non fleret,
   Matrem Christi si videret
   in tanto supplicio?

6. Quis non posset contristari,
   Christi Matrem contemplari
   dolentem cum Filio?

7. Pro peccatis suae gentis
   vidit Jesum in tormentis
   et flagellis subditum.

8. Vidit suum dulcem natum
   moriendo desolatum,
   dum emisit spiritum.

9. Eia Mater, fons amoris,
   me sentire vim doloris
   fac, ut tecum lugeam.

10. Fac ut ardeat cor meum
    in amando Christum Deum,
    ut sibi complaceam.

11. Sancta mater, istud agas,
    crucifixi fige plagas
    cordi meo valide.

Stabat Mater, English Lyrics

1. At the cross her station keeping,
   Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
   Close to Jesus to the last.

2. Through her heart, His sorrow sharing,
   All His bitter anguish bearing,
   Now at length the sword had pass'd.

3. Oh, how sad and sore distress'd
   Was that Mother highly blest
   Of the sole-begotten One!

4. Christ above in torment hangs;
   She beneath beholds the pangs
   Of her dying glorious Son.

5. Is there one who would not weep,
   Whelm'd in miseries so deep
   Christ's dear Mother to behold?

6. Can the human heart refrain
   From partaking in her pain,
   In that Mother's pain untold?

7. Bruis'd, derided, curs'd, defil'd,
   She beheld her tender child
   All with bloody scourges rent.

8. For the sins of His own nation,
   Saw Him hang in desolation,
   Till His spirit forth He sent.

9. O thou Mother! fount of love!
   Touch my spirit from above;
   Make my heart with thine accord.

10. Make me feel as thou hast felt;
    Make my soul to glow and melt
    With the love of Christ our Lord.

11. Holy Mother! pierce me through;
    In my heart each wound renew
    Of my Saviour crucified.

Stabat Mater, Original Latin Lyrics

12. Tui nati vulnerati,
tam dignati pro me pati,
poenas mecum divide.

13. Fac me tecum pie flere,
crucifixo condolere,
donec ego vixero.

14. Iuxta crucem tecum stare,
et me tibi sociare
in planctu desidero.

15. Virgo virginum praeclara,
mihi iam non sis amara:
fac me tecum plangere.

16. Fac ut portem Christi mortem,
passionis fac consortem,
et plagas recolere.

17. Fac me plagis vulnerari,
fac me cruce inebriari,
et cruore Filii.

18. Flammis ne urar succensus
per te Virgo, sim defensus
in die judicii

19. Christe, cum sit hinc exire,
da per matrem me venire
ad palmam victoriae.

20. Quando corpus morietur,
fac ut animae donetur
Paradisi gloria.

Amen.

Stabat Mater, English Lyrics

12. Let me share with thee His pain,
Who for all my sins was slain,
Who for me in torments died.

13. Let me mingle tears with thee,
Mourning Him who mourn'd for me,
All the days that I may live.

14. By the cross with thee to stay,
There with thee to weep and pray,
Is all I ask of thee to give.

15. Virgin of all virgins best,
Listen to my fond request
Let me share thy grief divine.

16. Let me, to my latest breath,
In my body bear the death
Of that dying Son of thine.

17. Wounded with His every wound,
Steep my soul till it hath swoon'd
In His very blood away.

18. Be to me, O Virgin, nigh,
Lest in flames I burn and die,
In His awful Judgment day.

19. Christ, when Thou shalt call me hence,
Be Thy Mother my defence,
Be Thy cross my victory.

20. While my body here decays,
May my soul Thy goodness praise,
Safe in Paradise with Thee.

Amen.

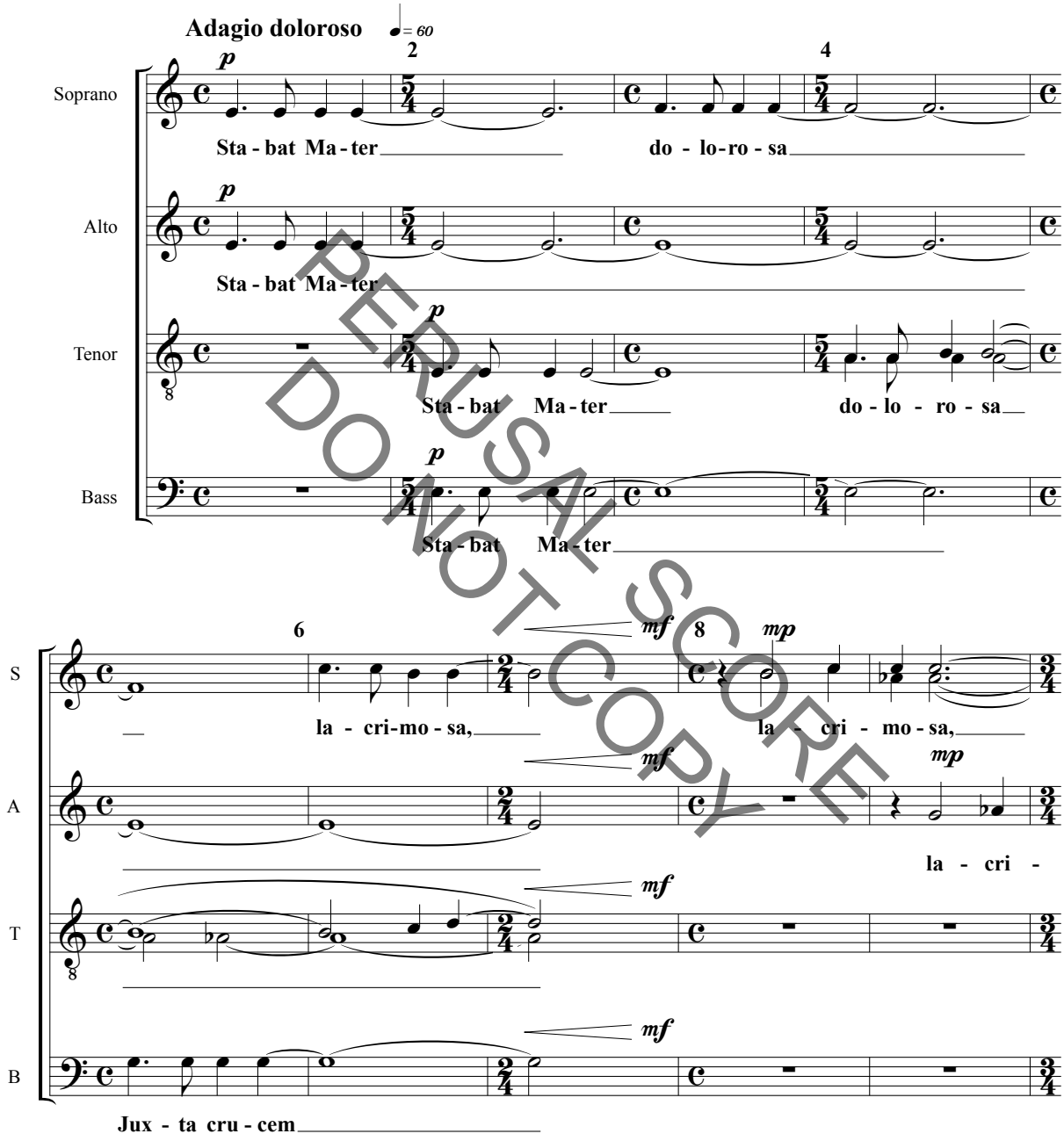
Stabat Mater

Commissioned by Opus 7 Vocal Ensemble (Loren Pontén, Artistic Director)
in honor of their 10th Anniversary Season

Jacopone da Todi (c. 1228–1306)

John Muehleisen
2002 *(rev. 2003, 2014)*

1. Stabat Mater dolorosa



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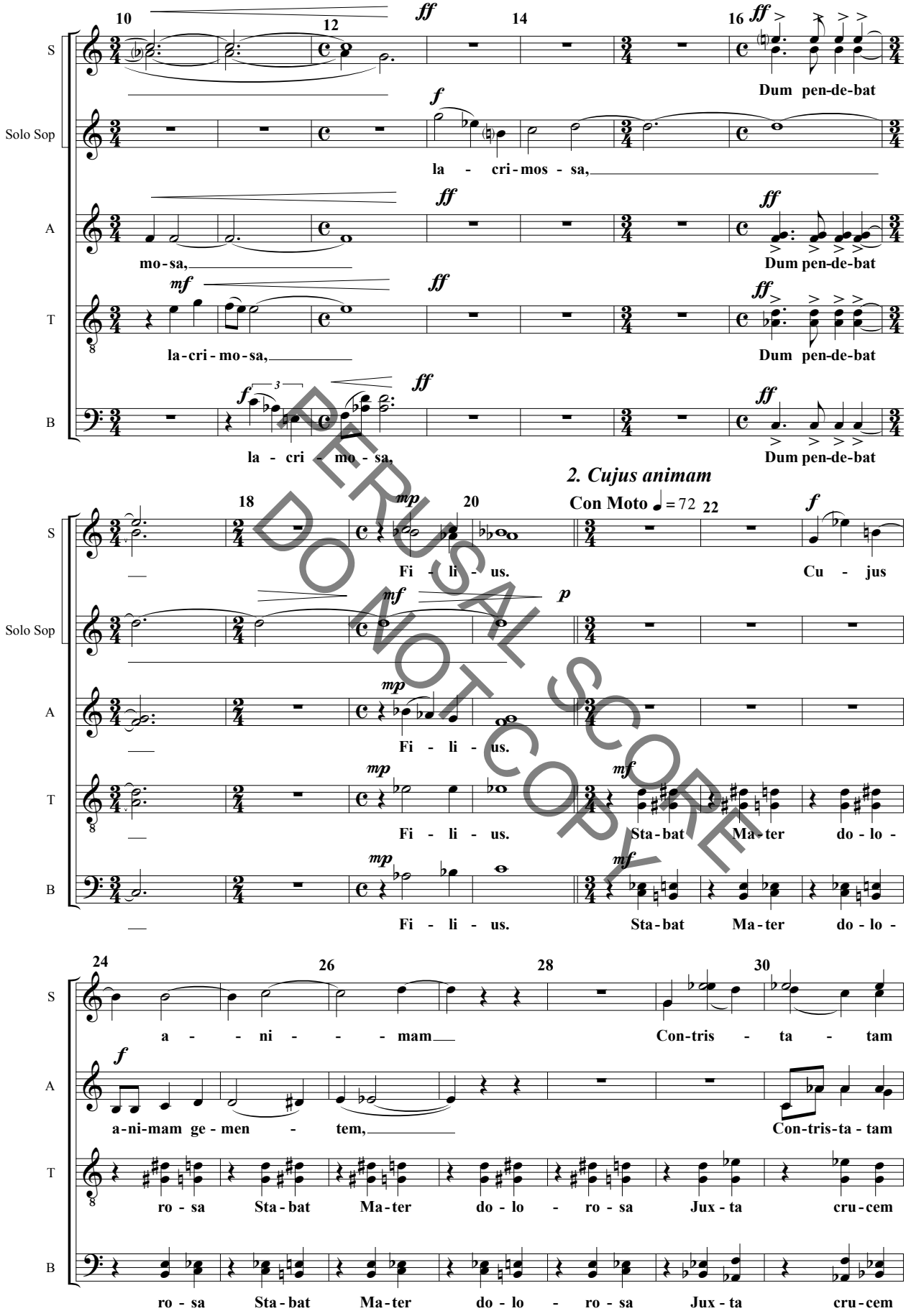

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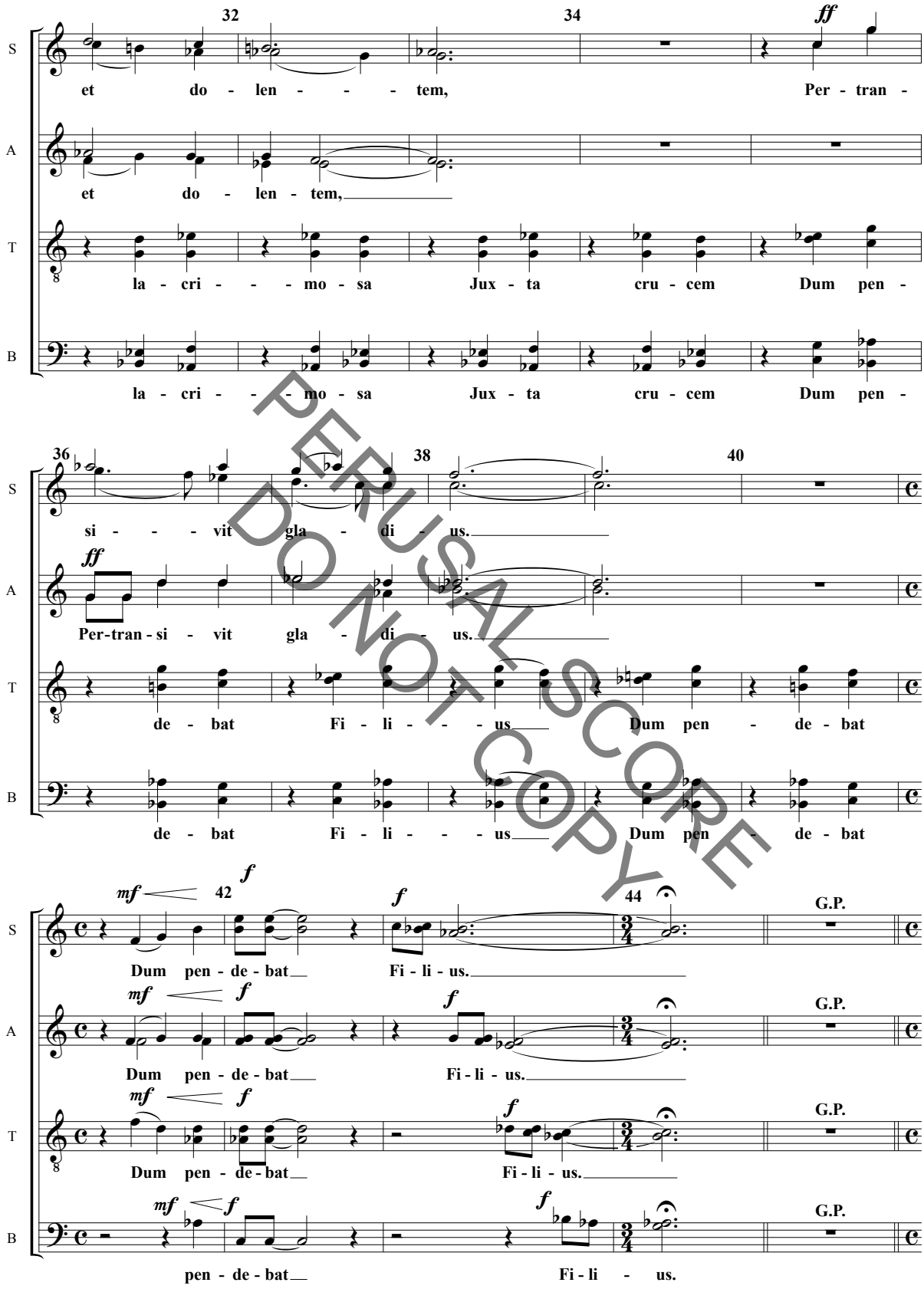

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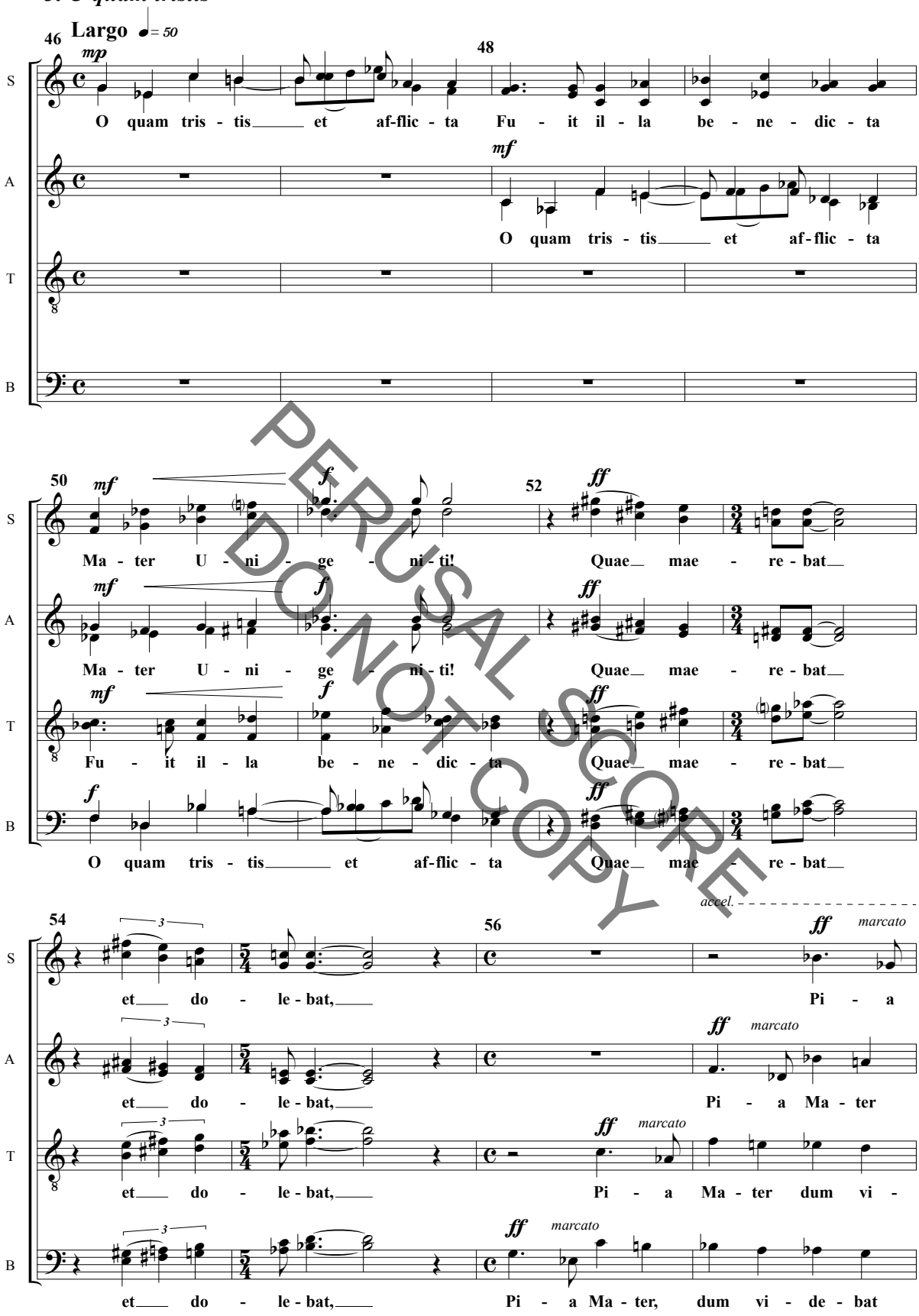
3. O quam tristis



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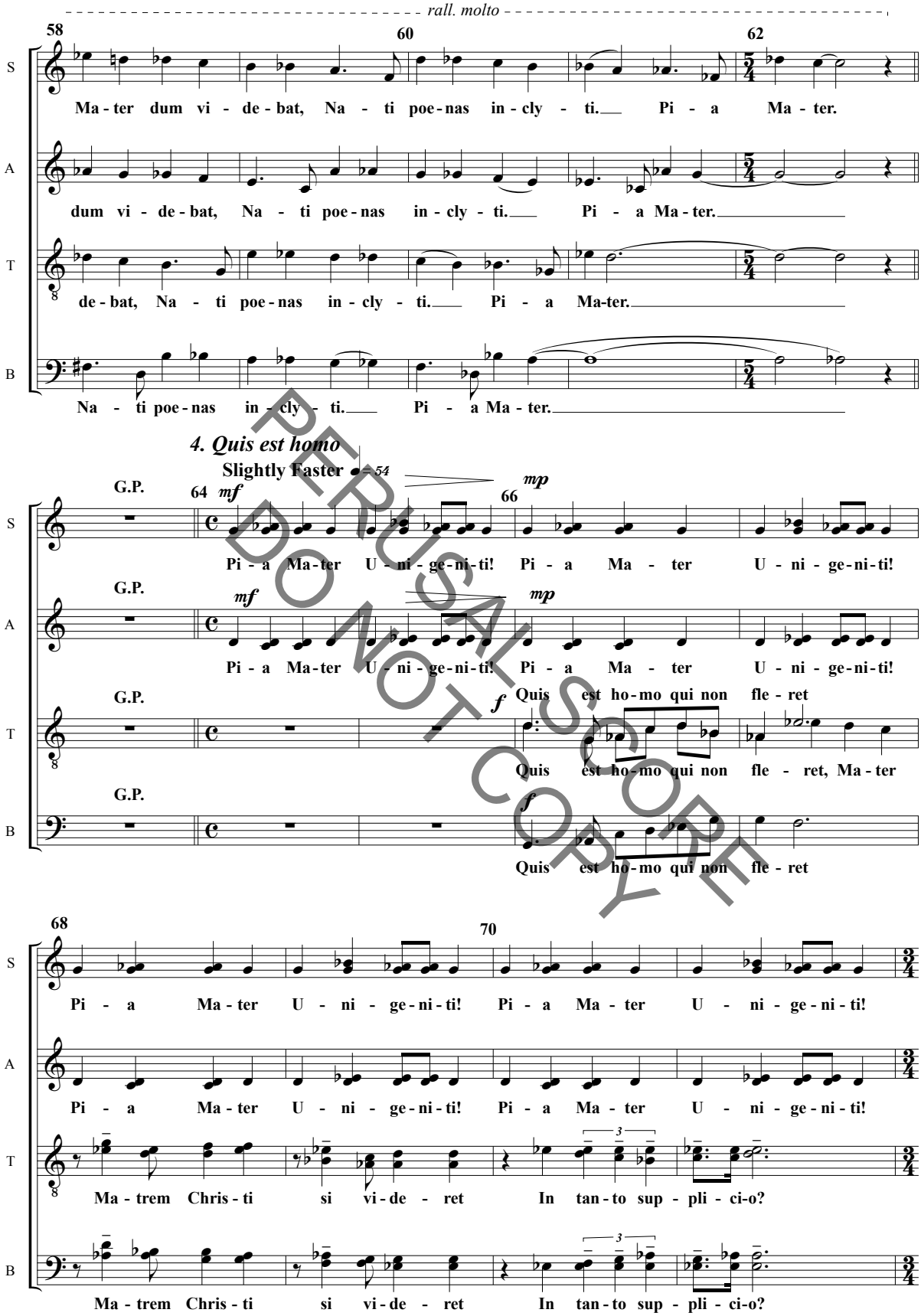

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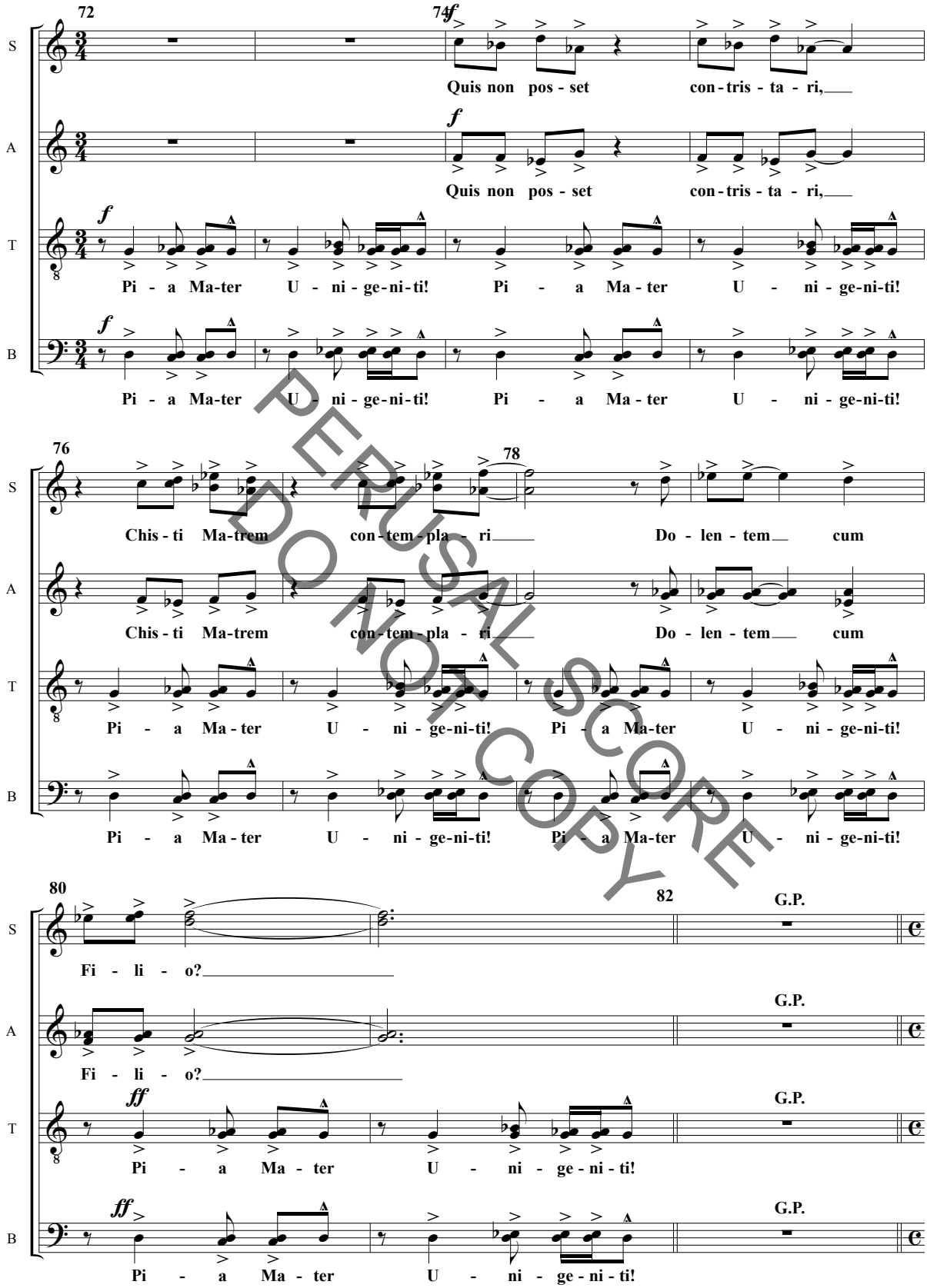

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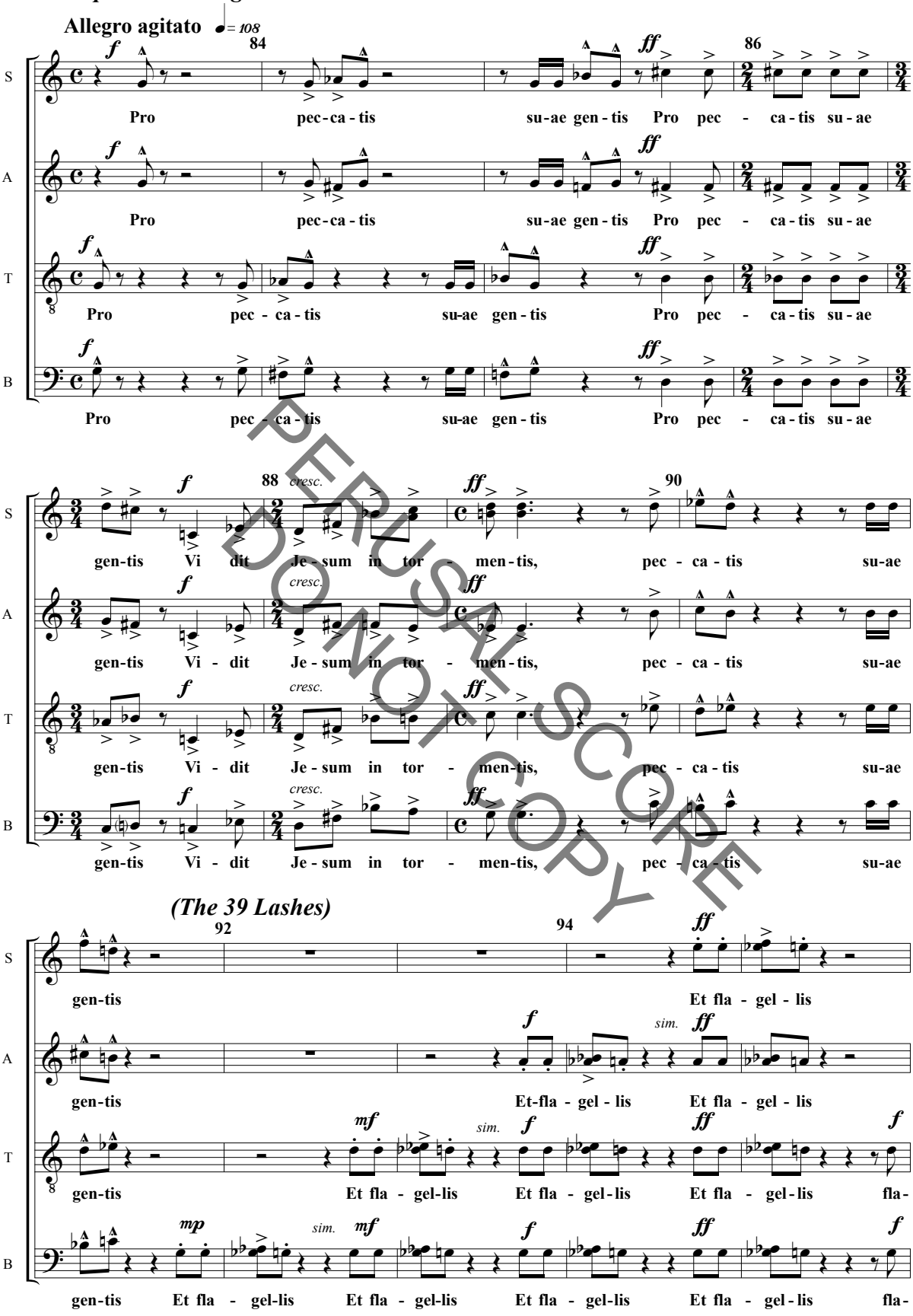
5. Pro peccatis suae gentis



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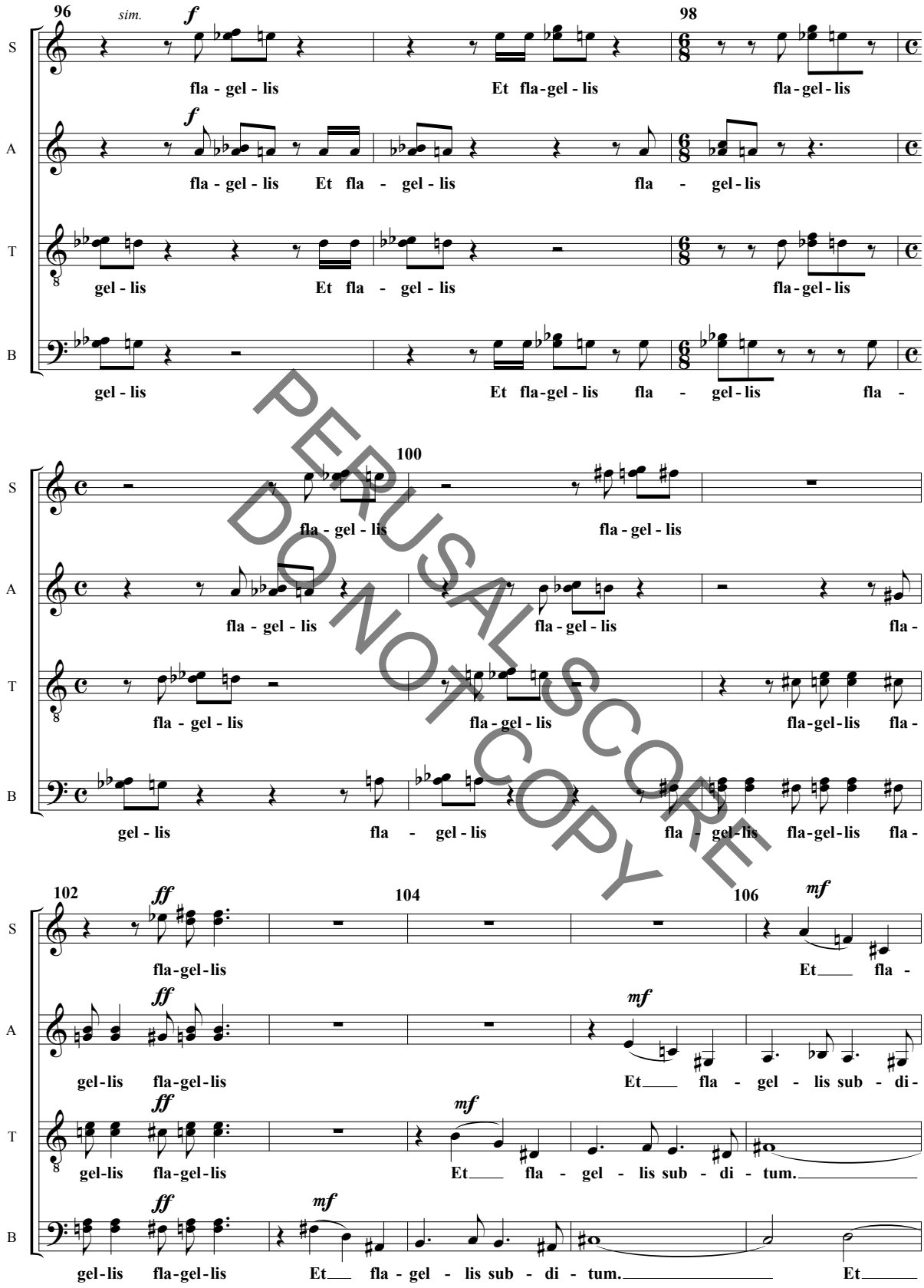

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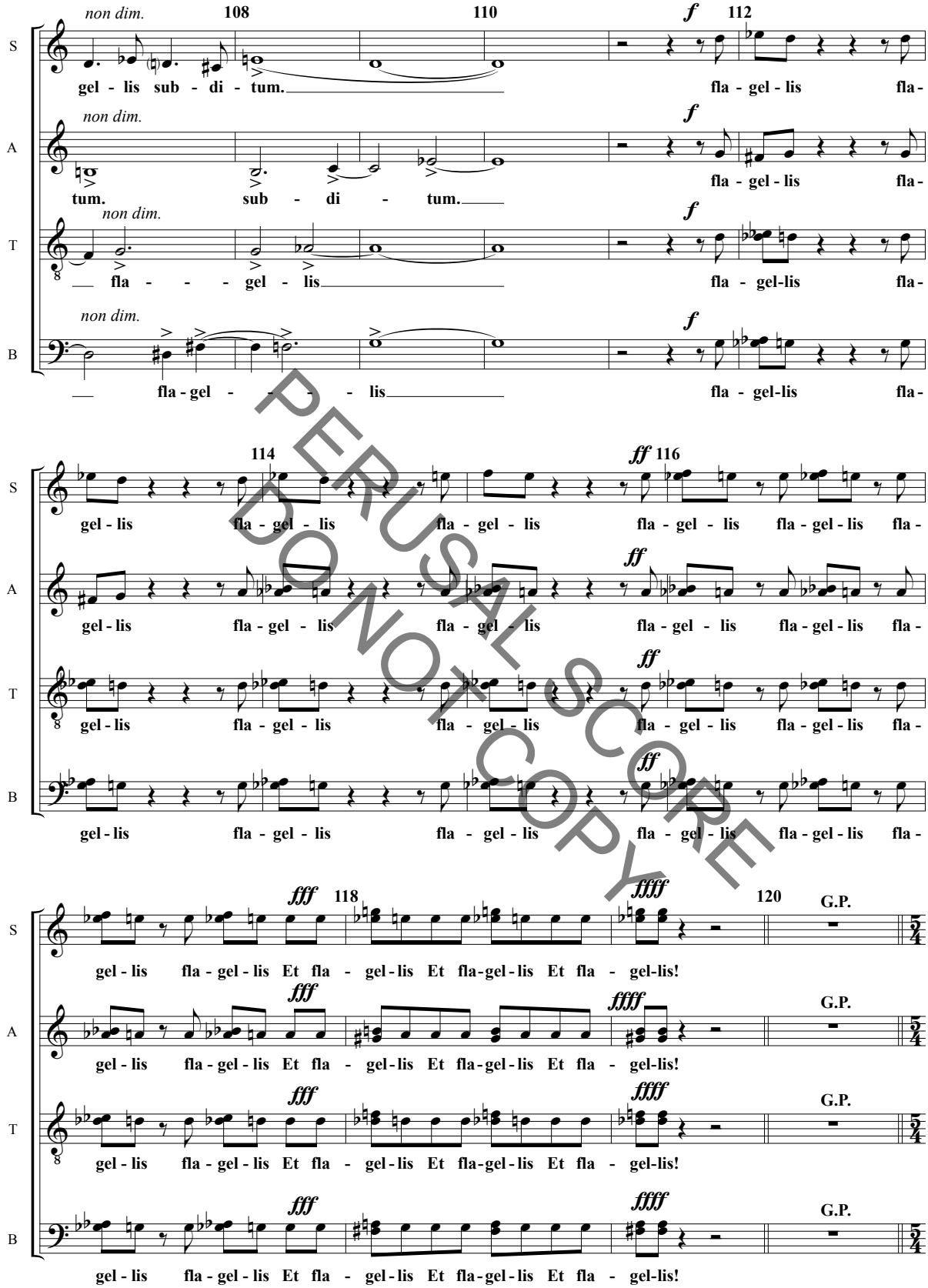

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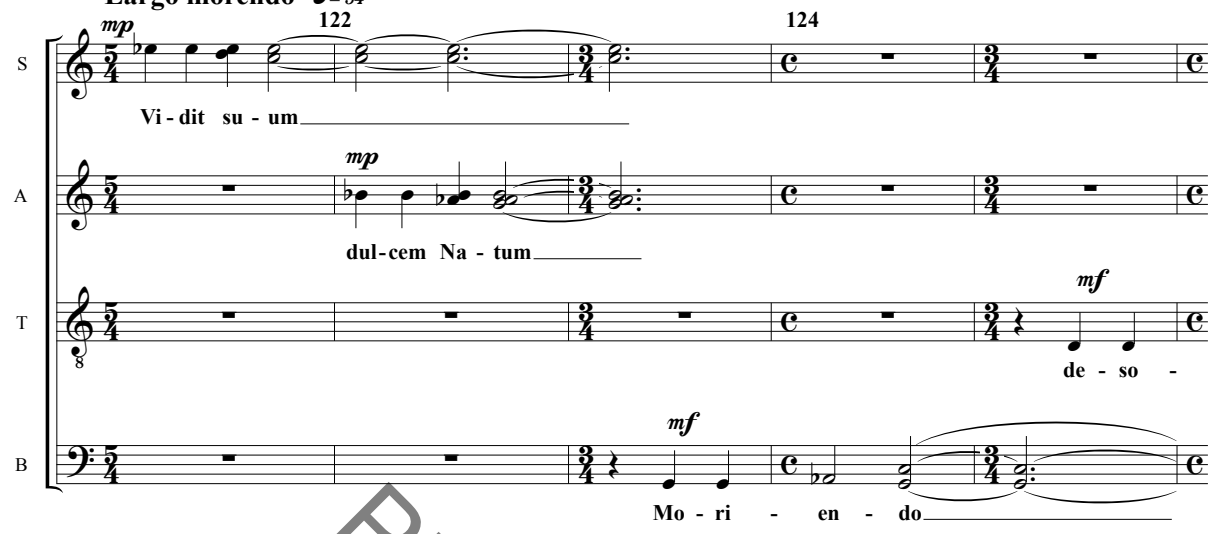
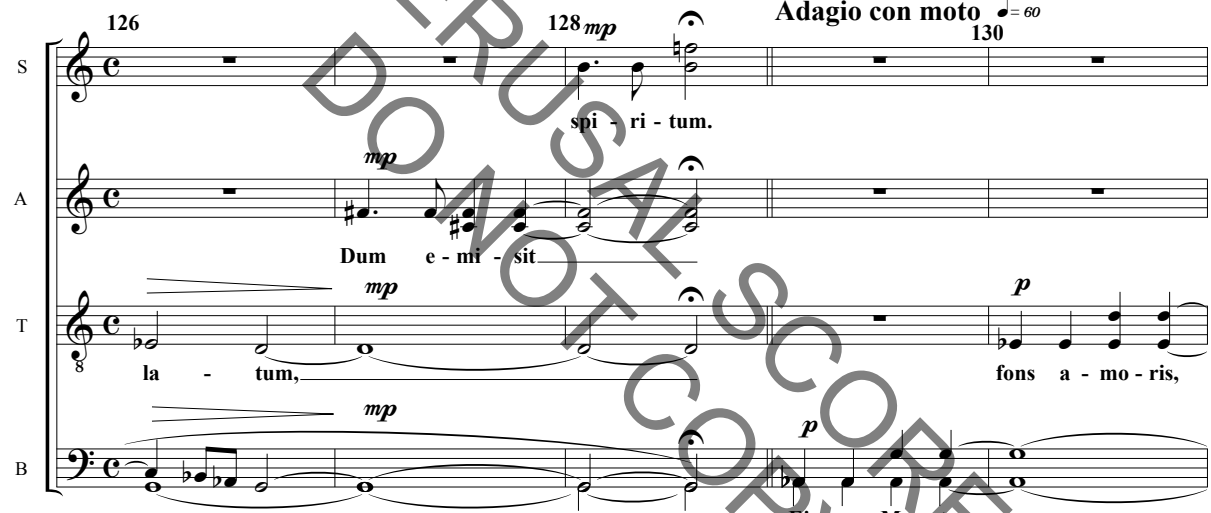
6. Vidit suum dulcem Natum

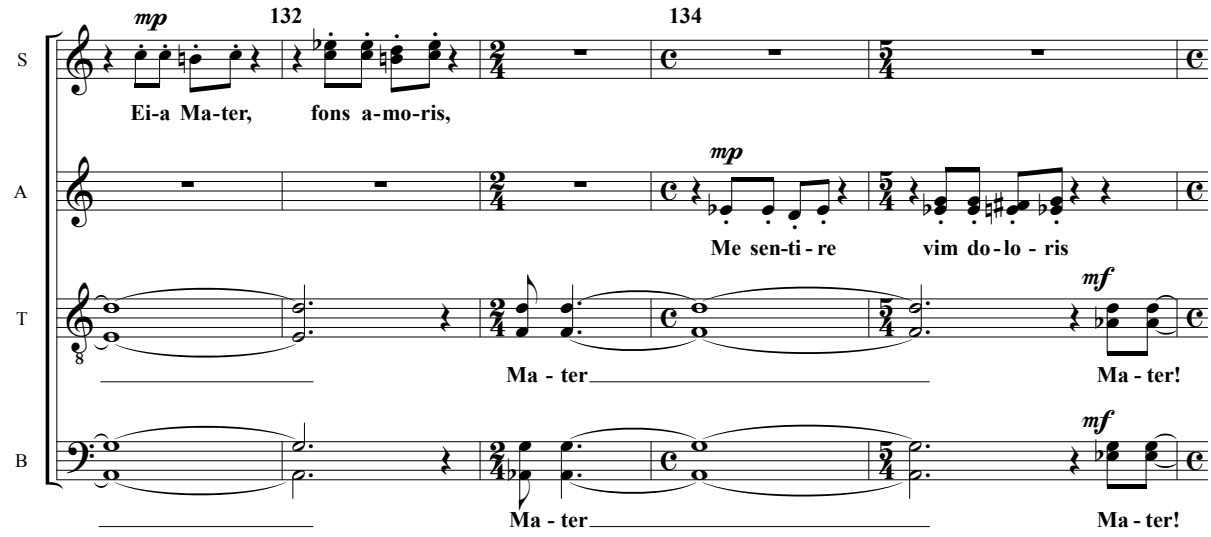
Largo morendo ♩= 54



7. Eia Mater, fons amoris

Adagio con moto ♩= 60





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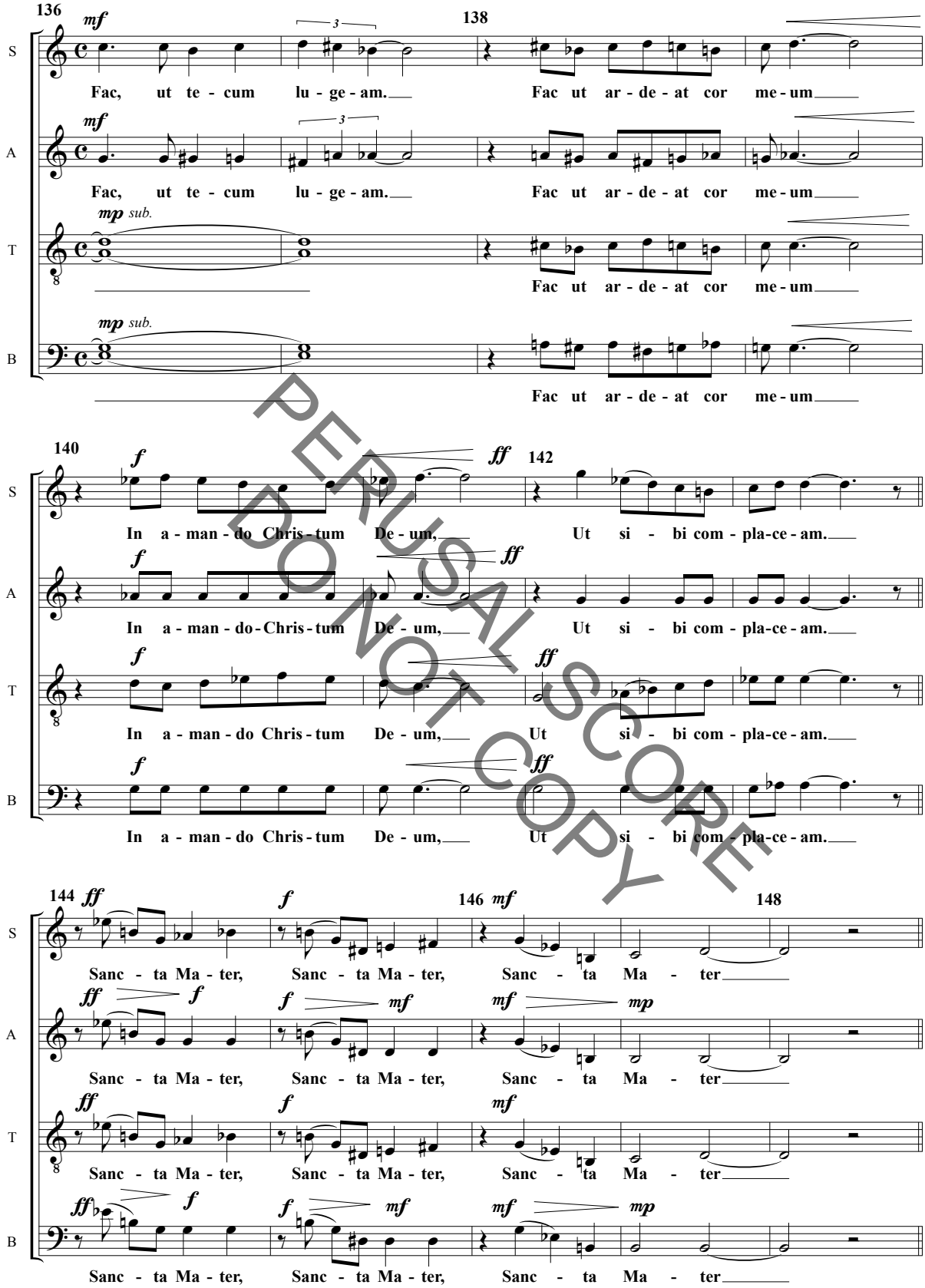

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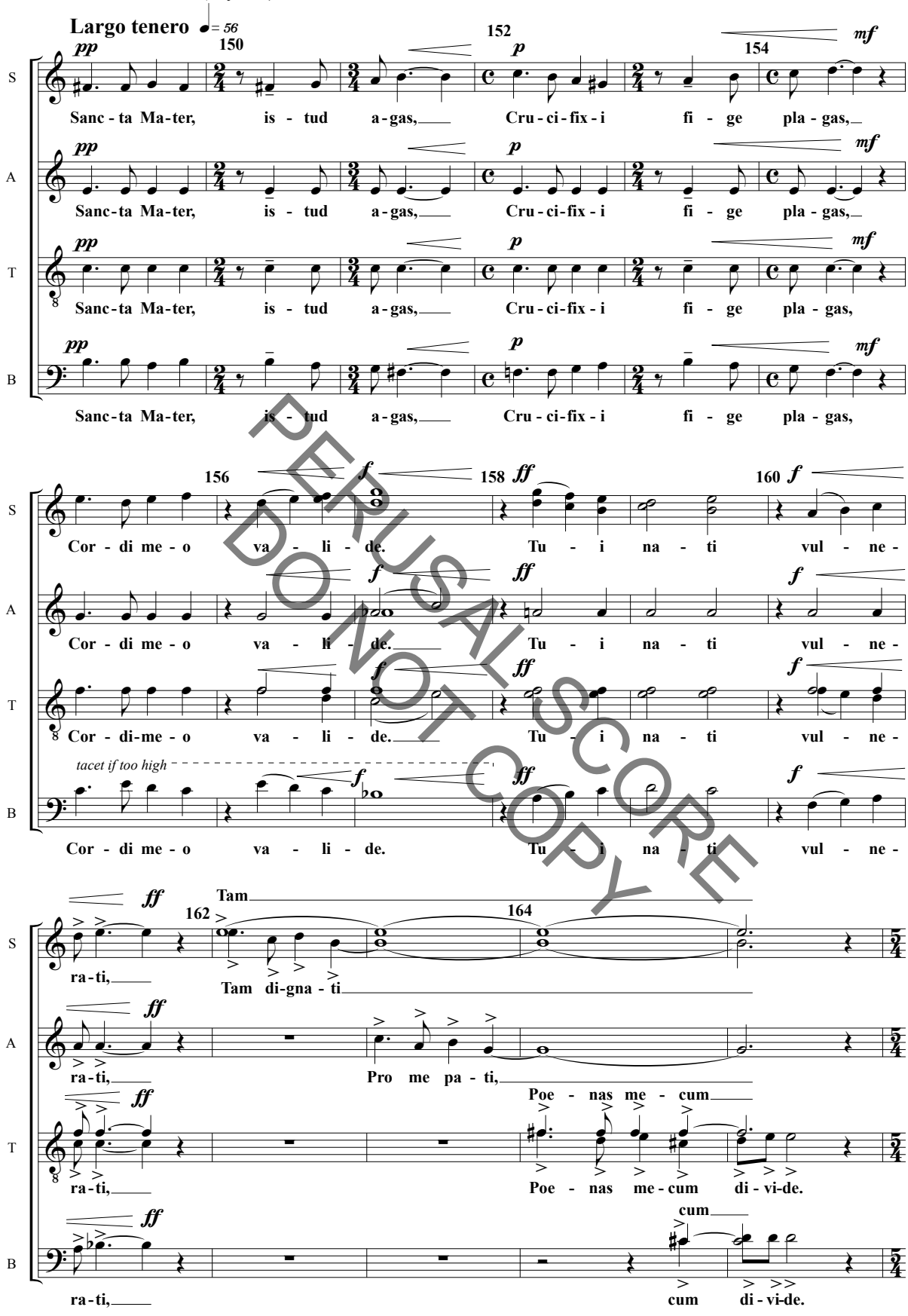
8. Sancta Mater (Hymn)



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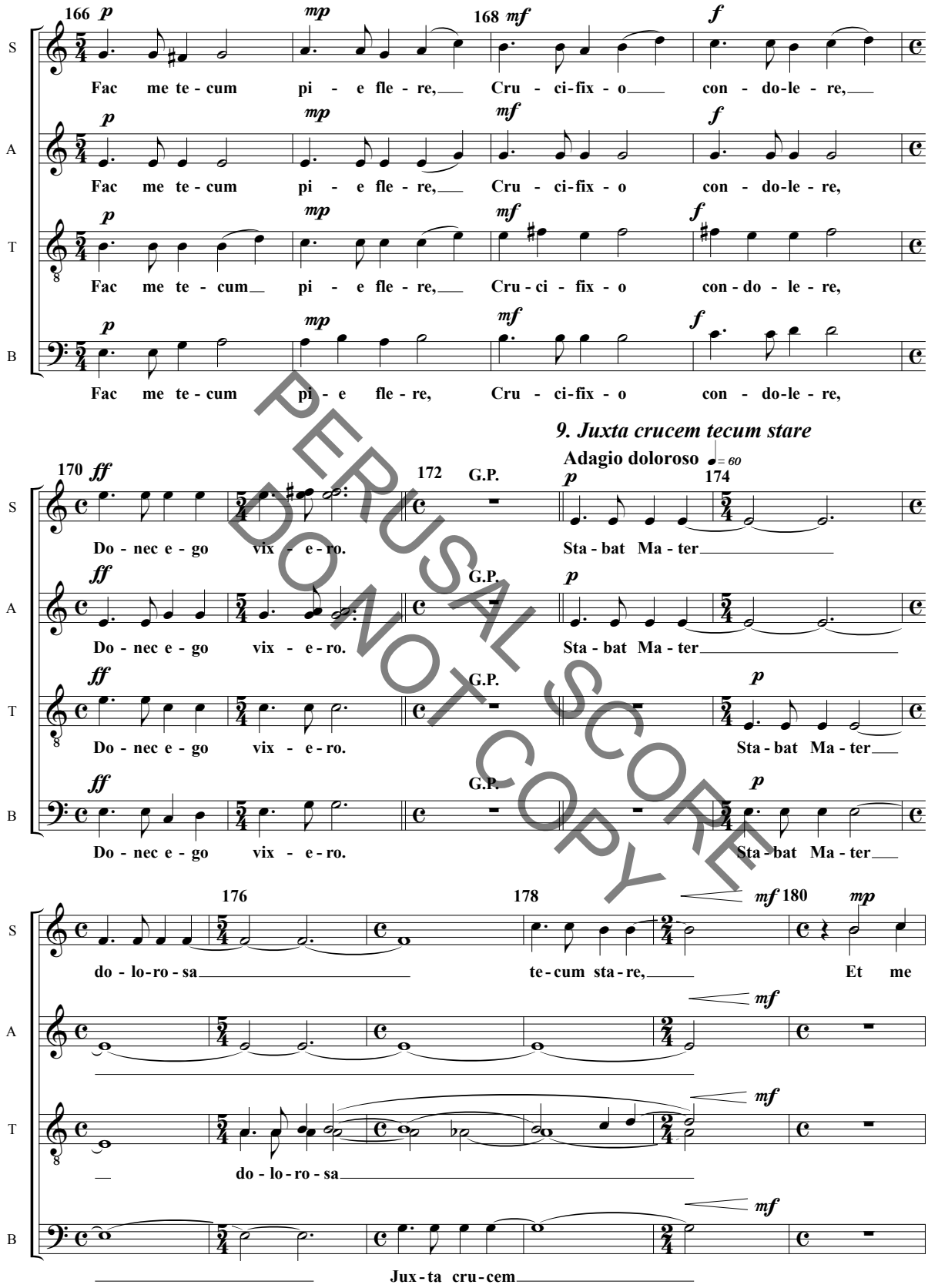

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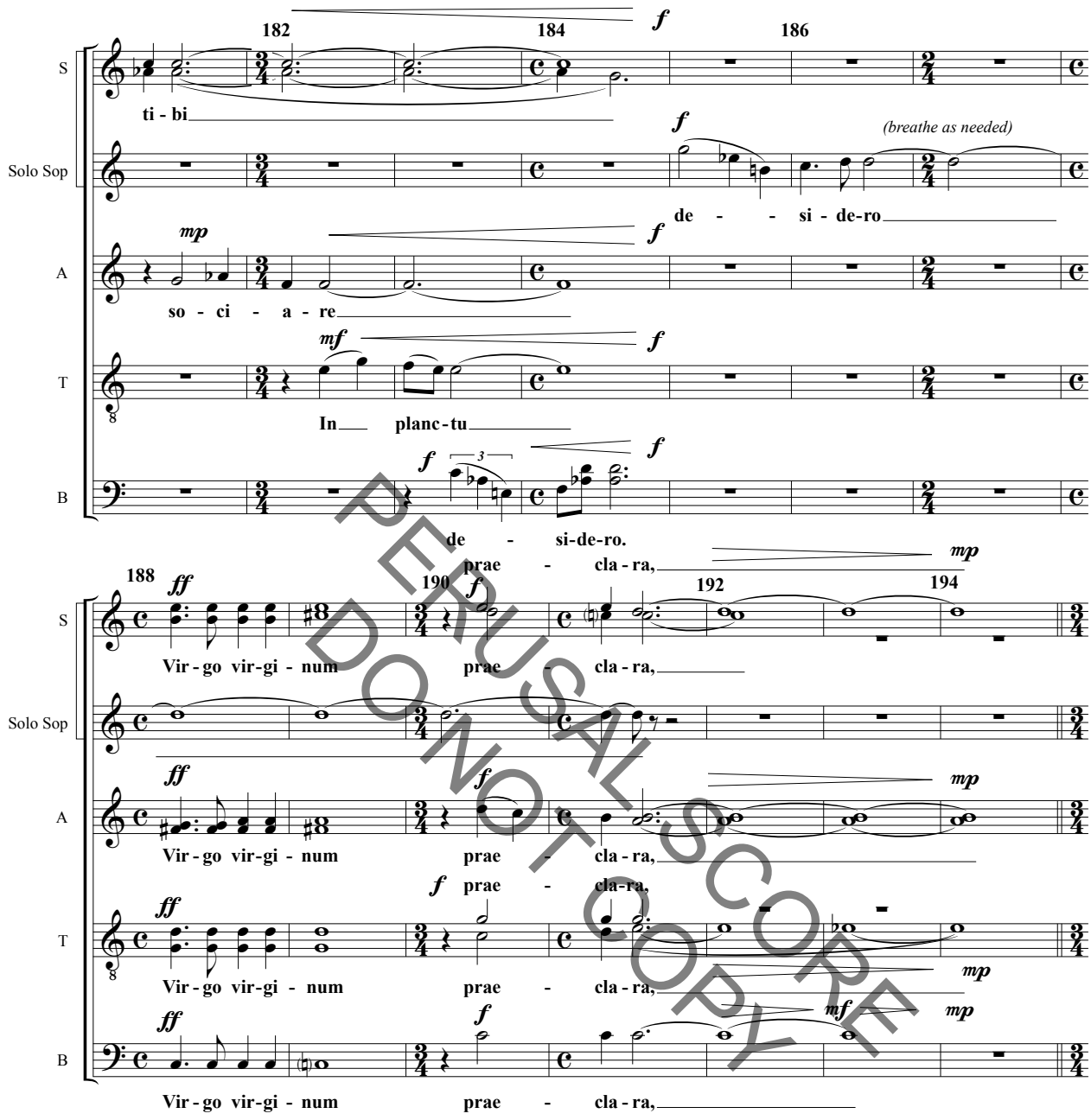

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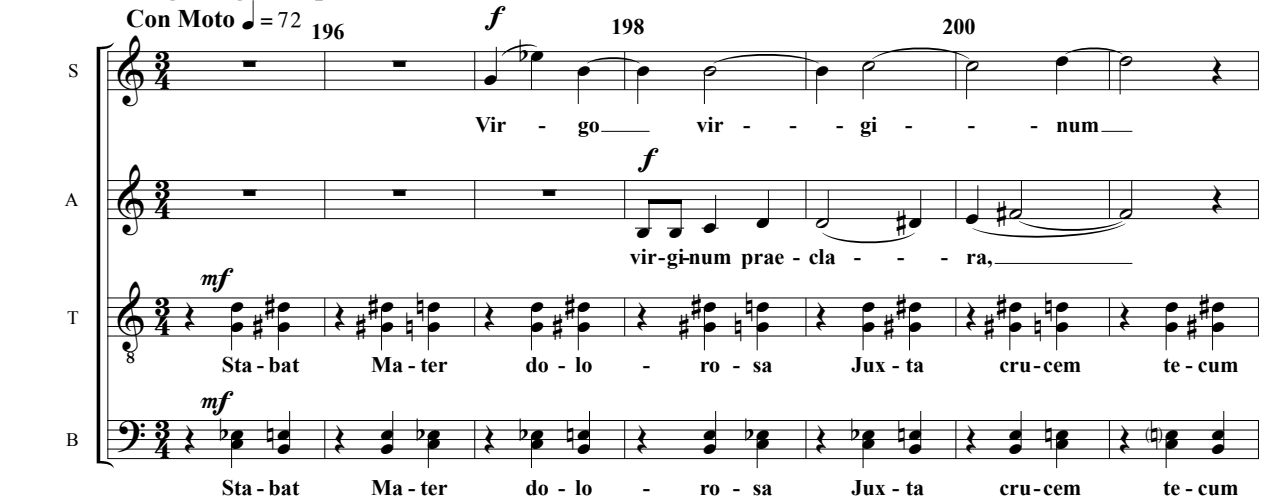
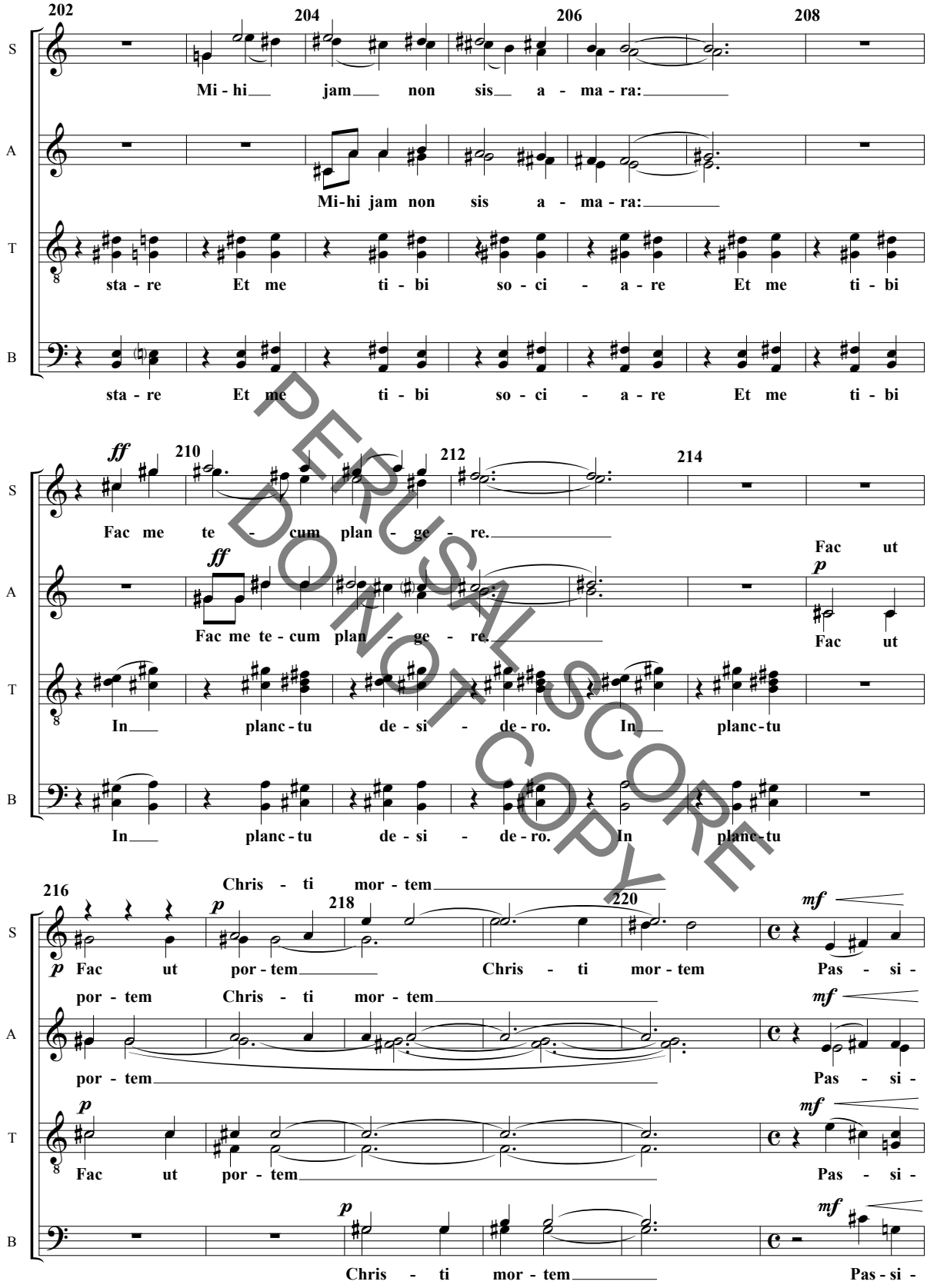
10. Virgo virginum praeclara





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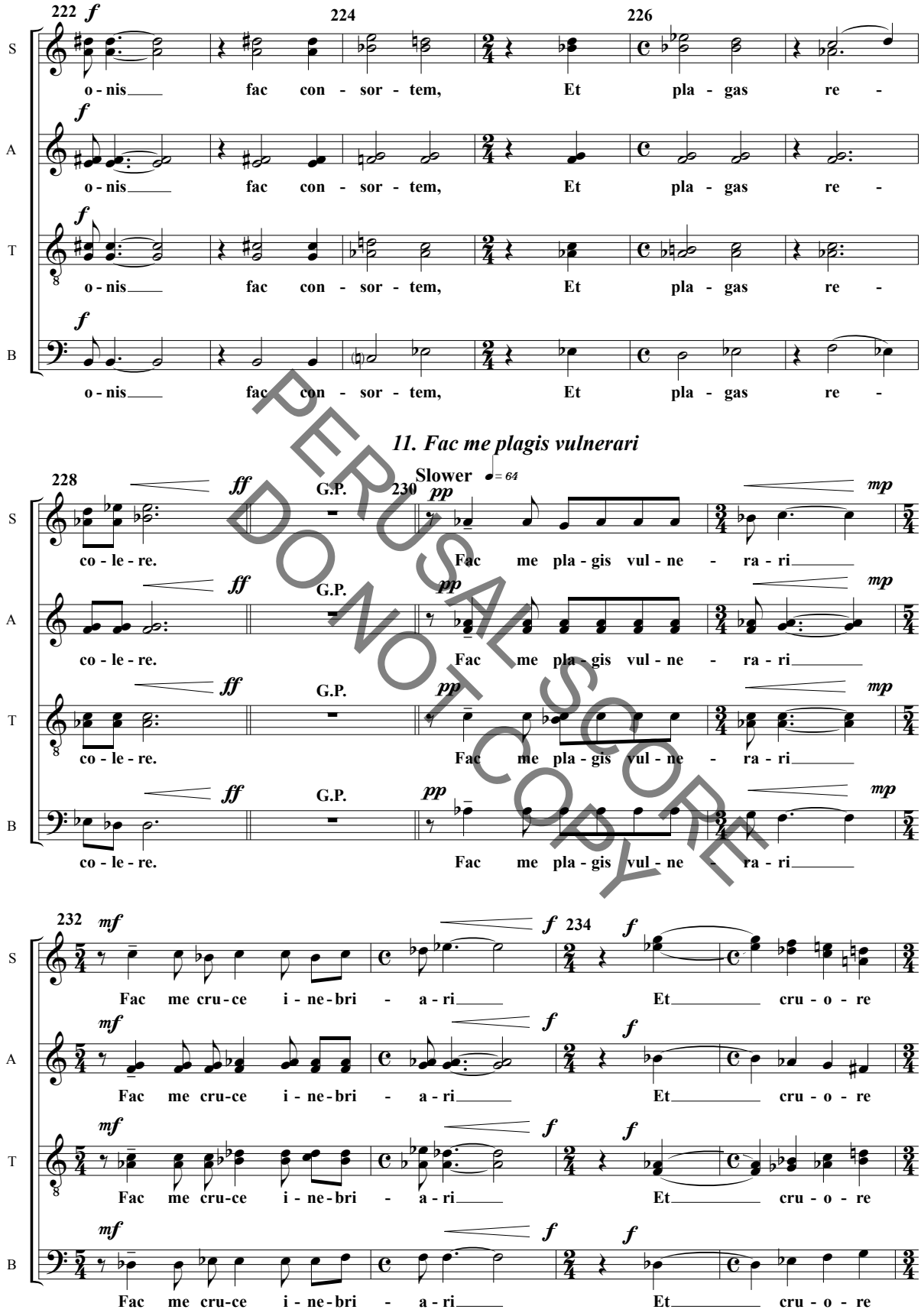

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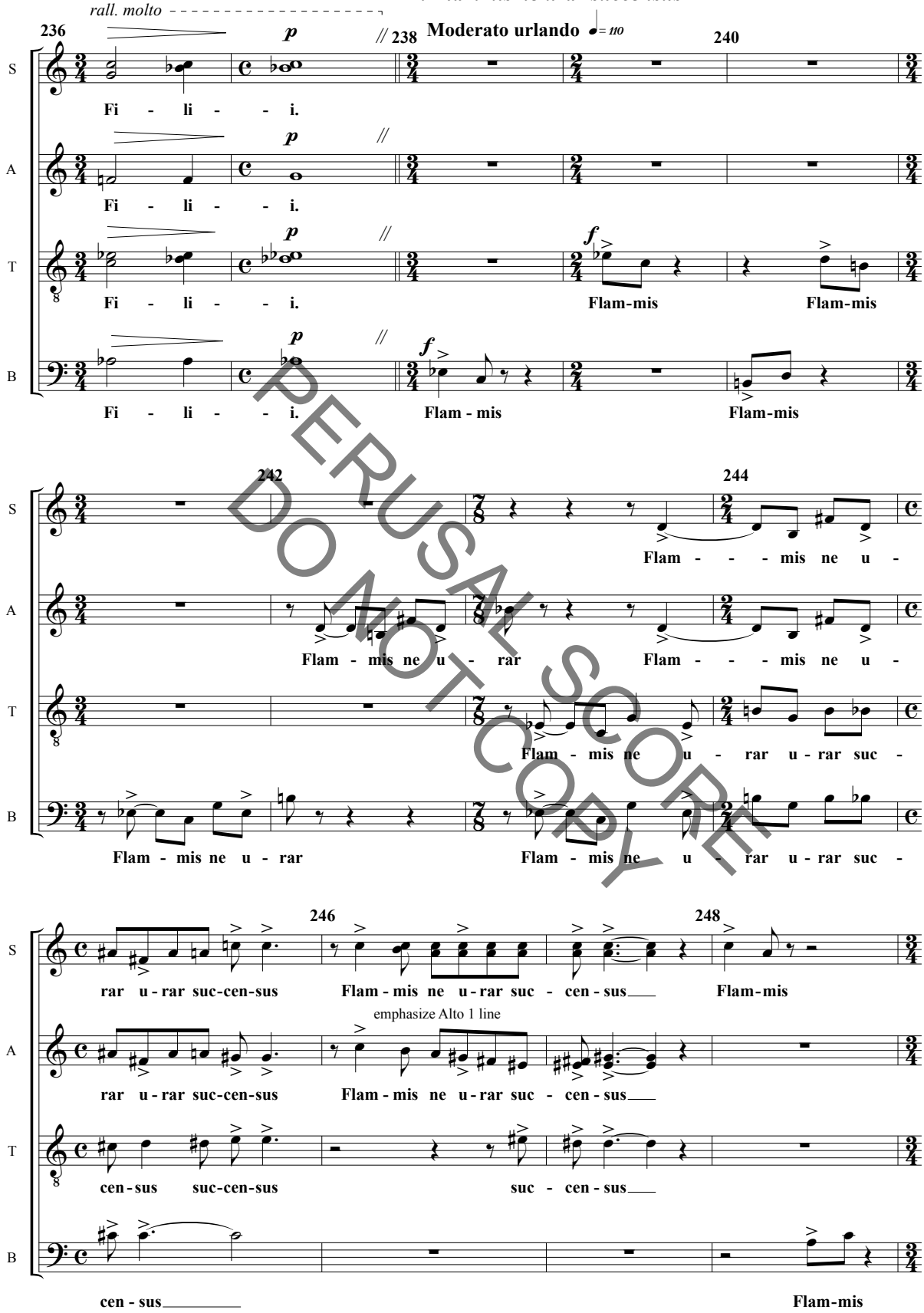

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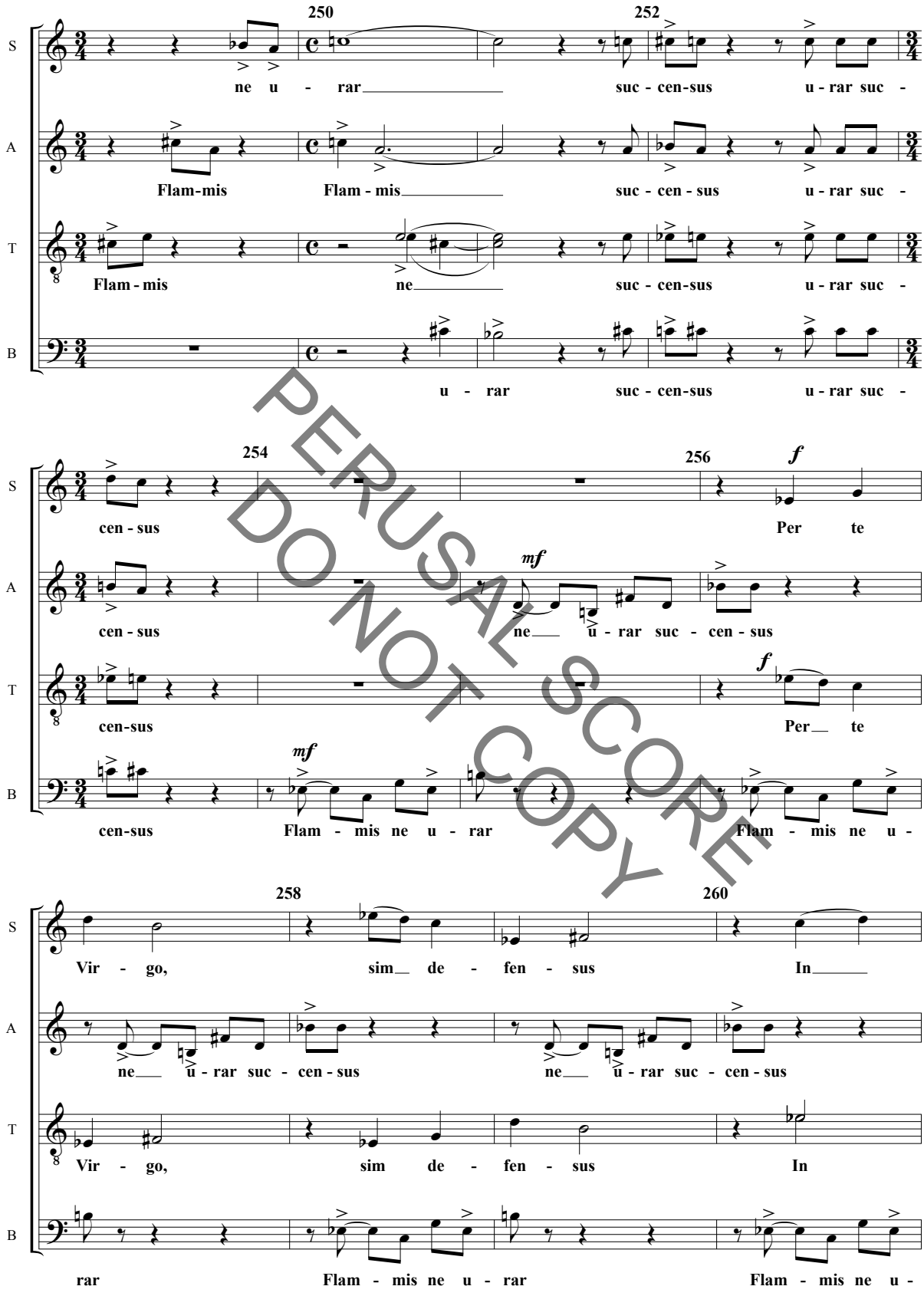

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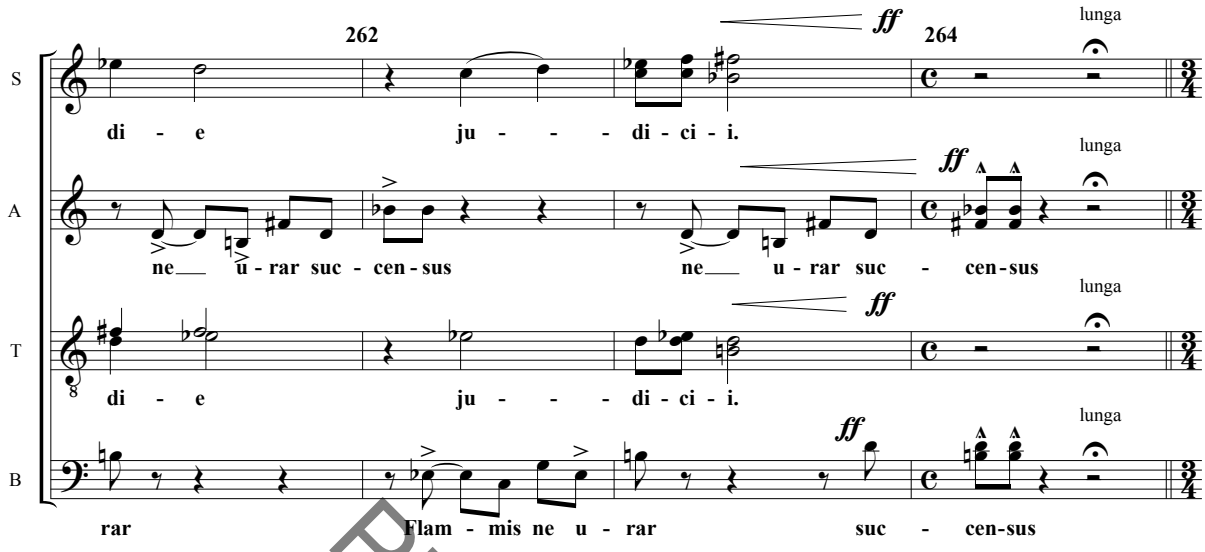
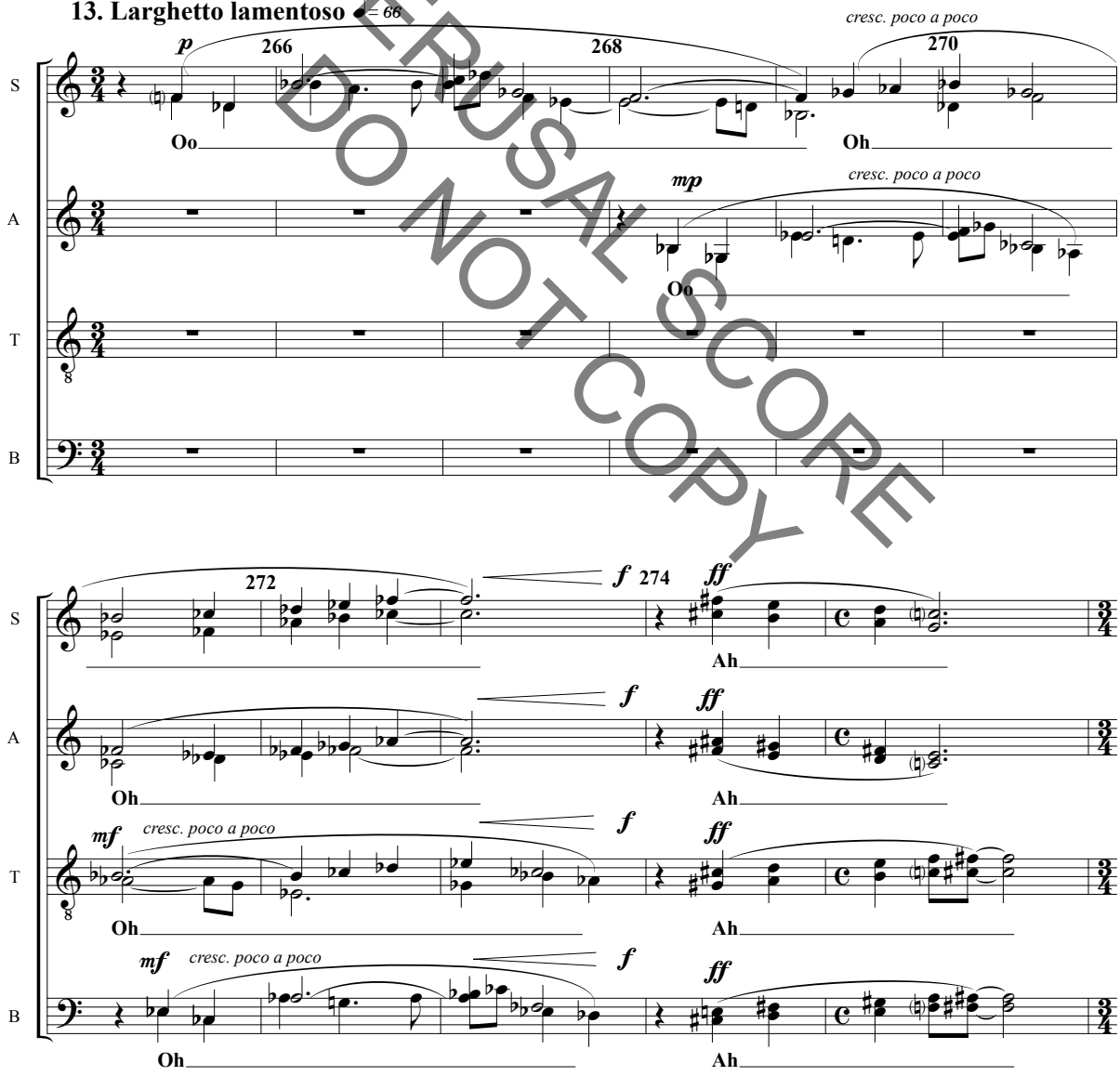


13. Larghetto lamentoso ♩= 66



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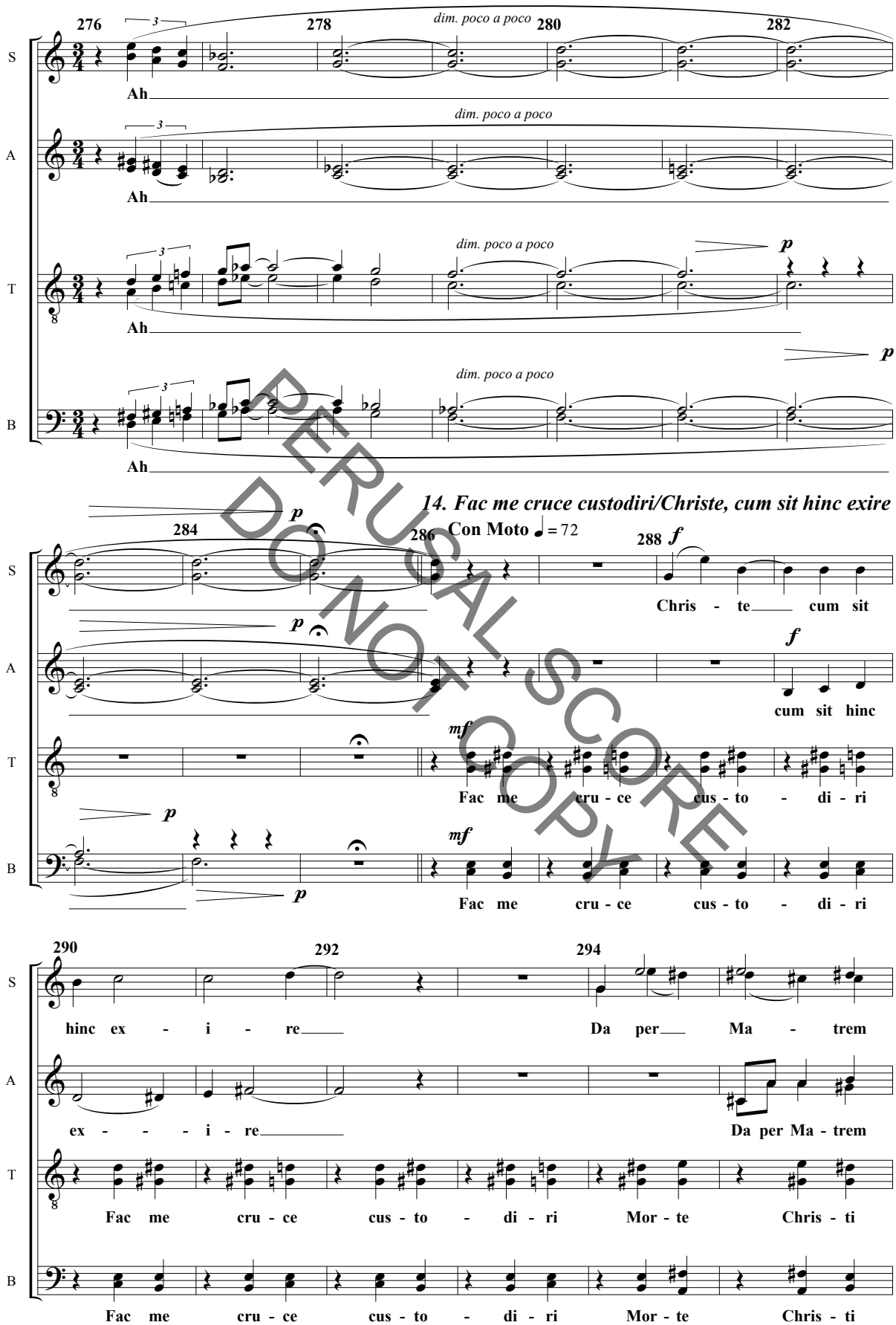

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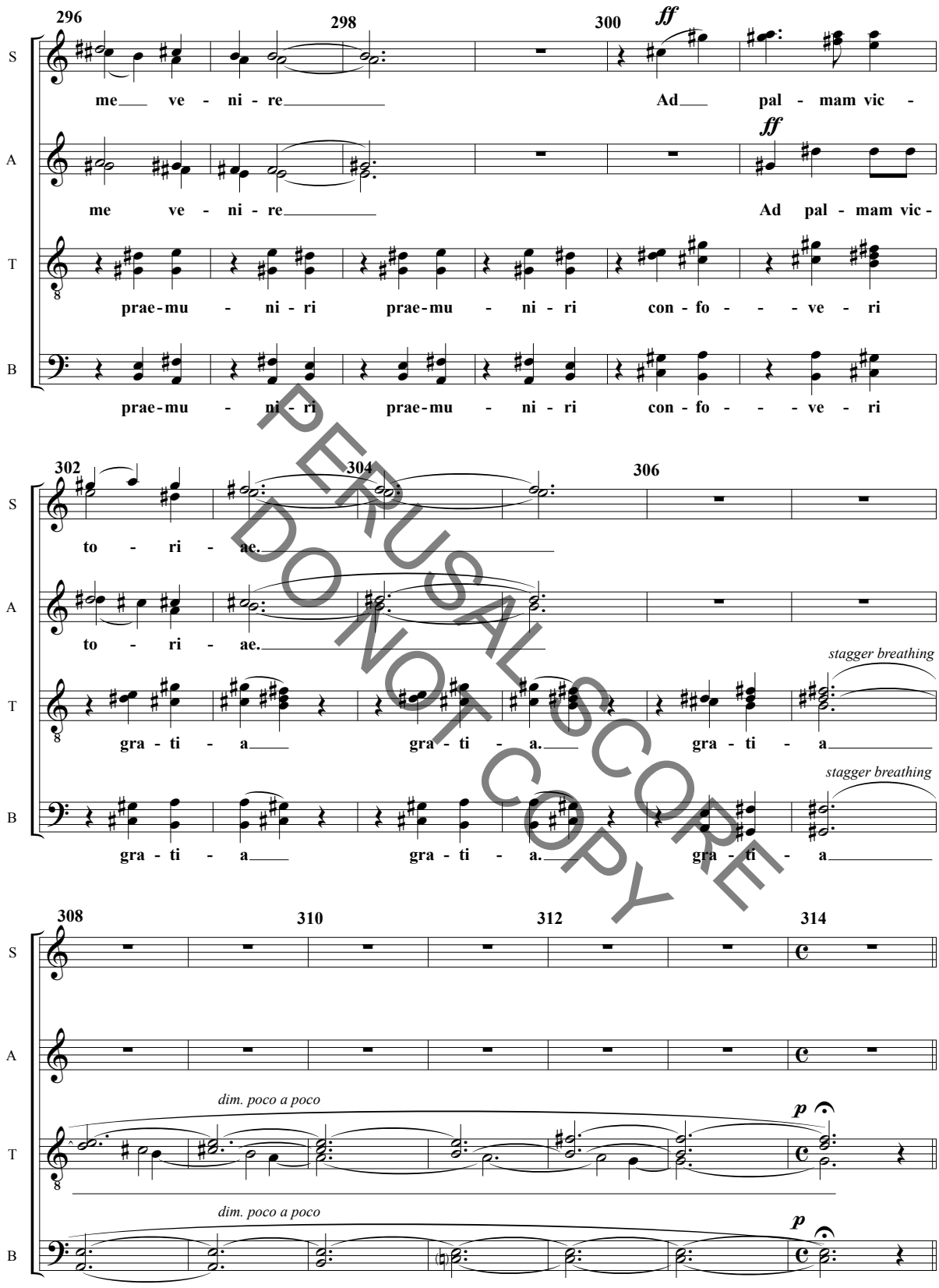

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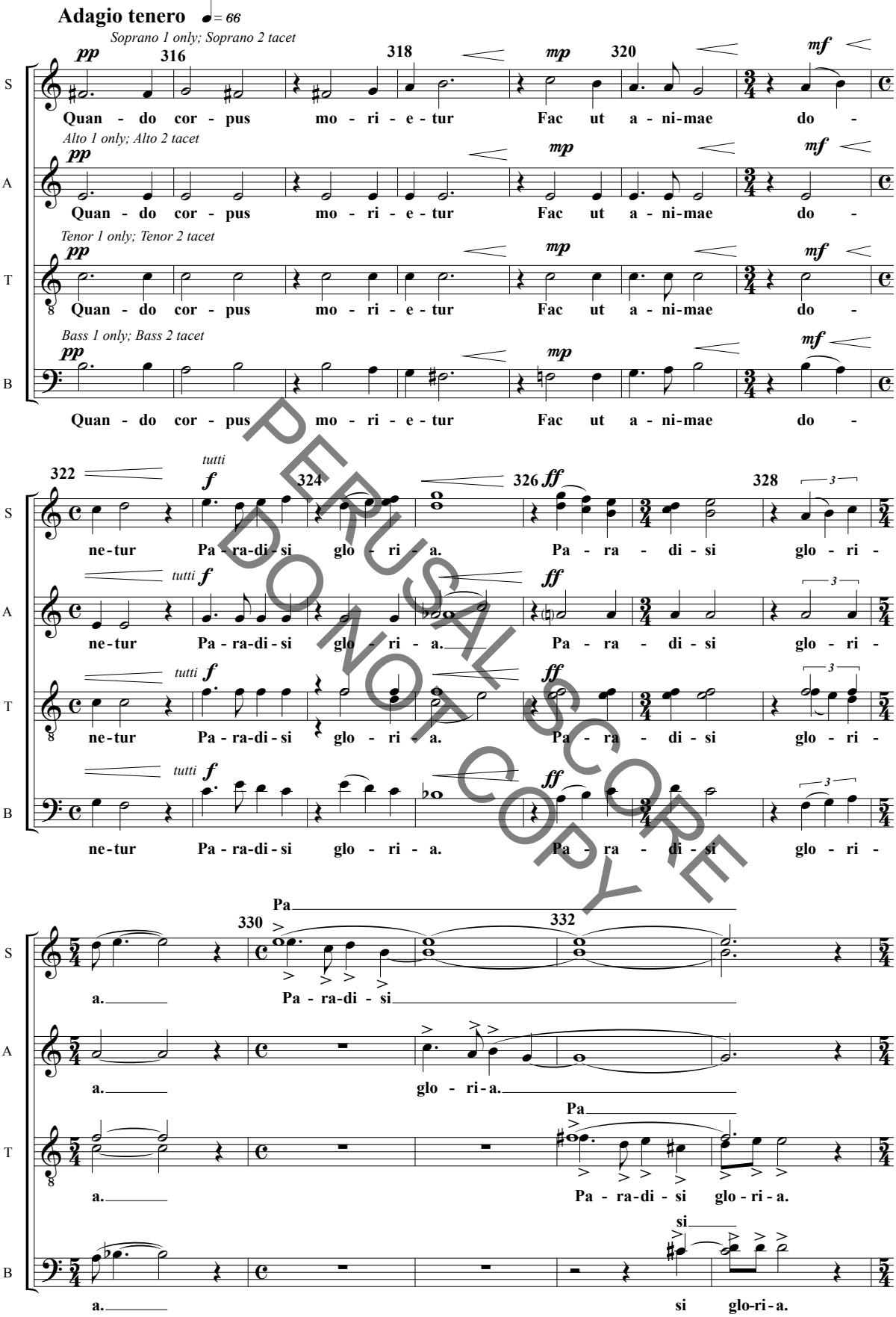
15. Quando corpus morietur



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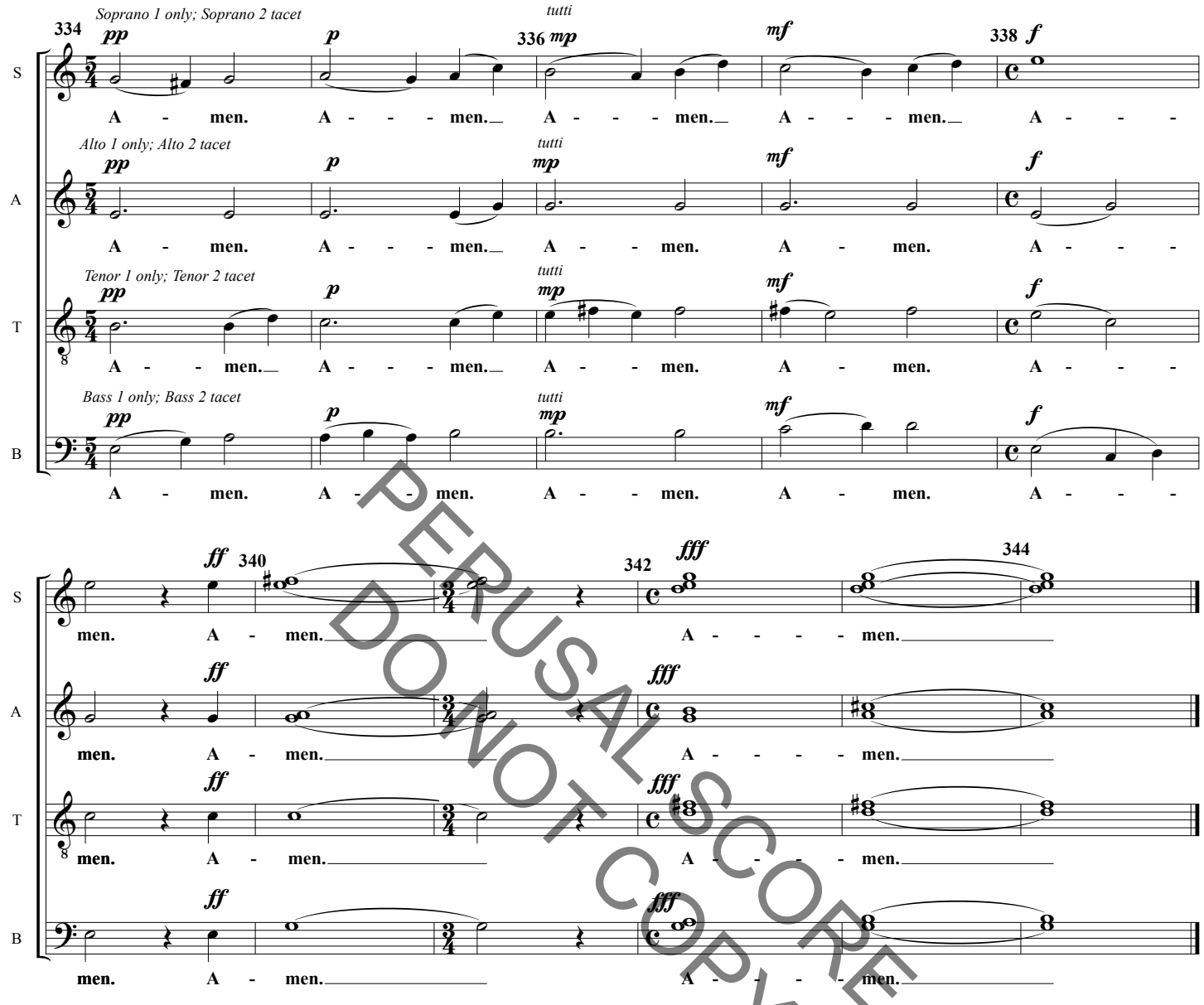

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