Ross C. Bernhardt

EXCELSIOR

Mixed choir, unaccompanied

FOR

2011

SWIRLY MUSIC
www.SwirlyMusic.org

COMPOSER'S NOTE

I have enjoyed Longfellow's poetry for many years–"Excelsior" in particular. However, I've never managed to develop a huge amount of sympathy for the poem's protagonist. Here we have a youth who ignores the advice of everyone around him that his journey was life-threatening. Although a part of me is saddened by the youth's eventual loss of life, I feel that perhaps it was best that he didn't contribute to the gene pool.

I have, therefore, approached the poem in a whimsical, tongue-in-cheek manner, illustrating the "Excelsior" journey with a parallel satirical journey through 500 years of composers and musical styles. My compliments–and sincere apologies–to Purcell, Mozart, Beethoven, Victoria, everyone from the Big Band era, and the composer of the theme song from the "Underdog" cartoon show, which shares the same poetic meter.

This composition won first prize in the Longfellow Choral Composition Competition in 2011.

All of the winning works were of high quality, but the most original and entertaining was the last performed: "Excelsior" by Ross C. Bernhardt. Texas composer Bernhardt does in music what James Thurber accomplished in a cartoon – a whimsical and lighthearted spoof of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's admonition to strive ever "onward and upward."
Christopher Hyde
Portland (ME) Press-Herald, March 4, 2012

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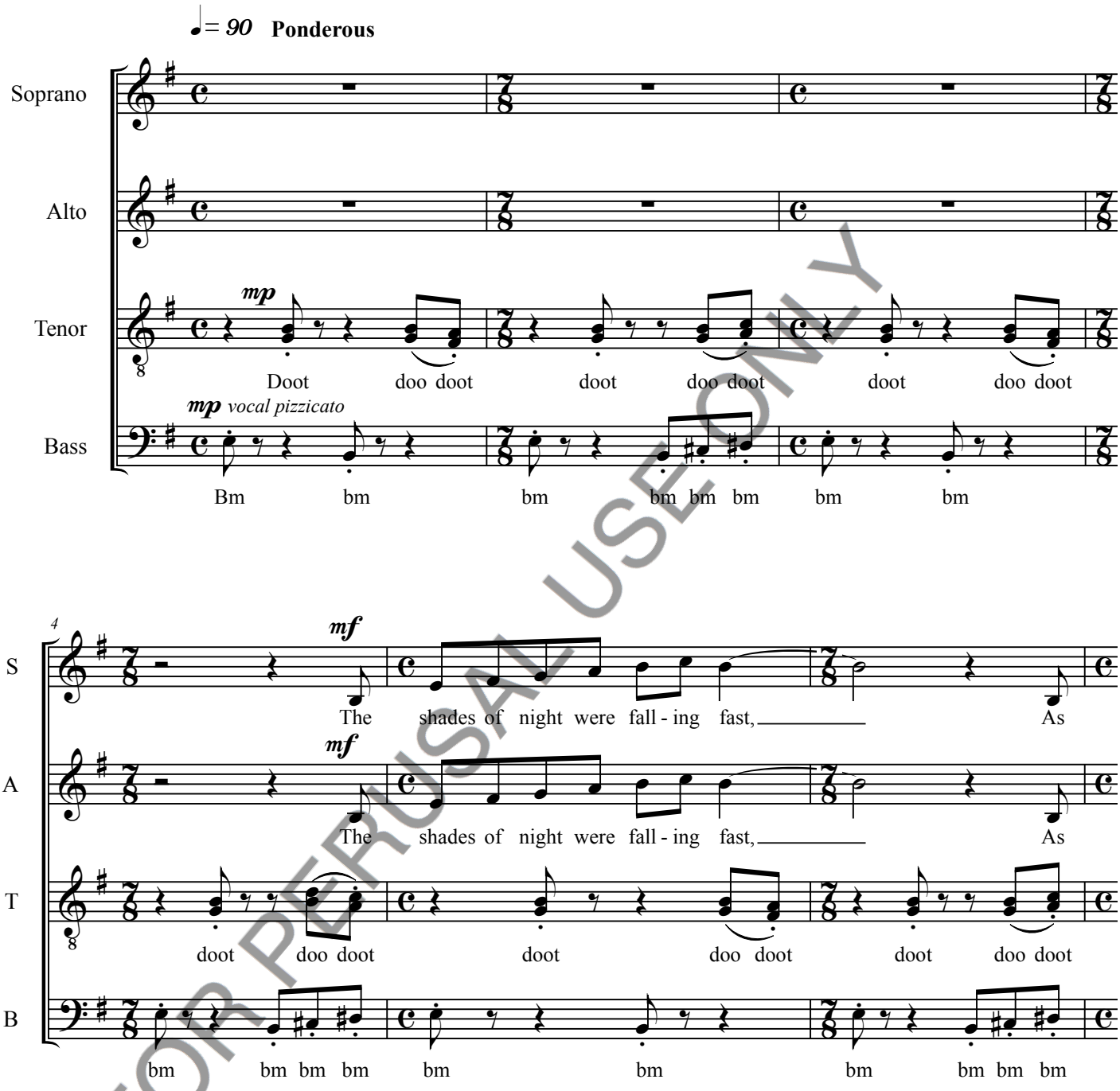
EXCELSIOR

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
(1807-82)

Ross C. Bernhardt
(ASCAP)



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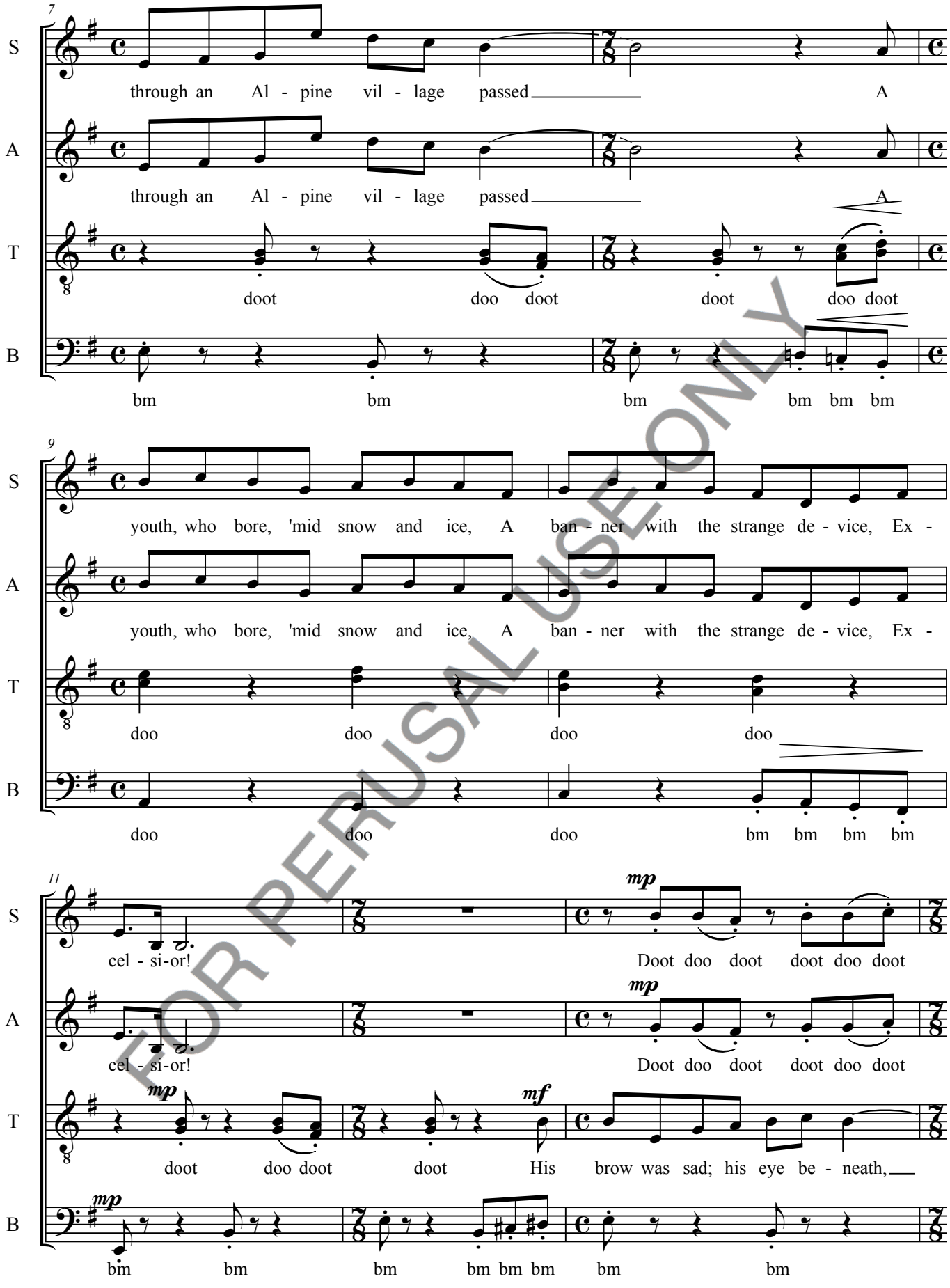

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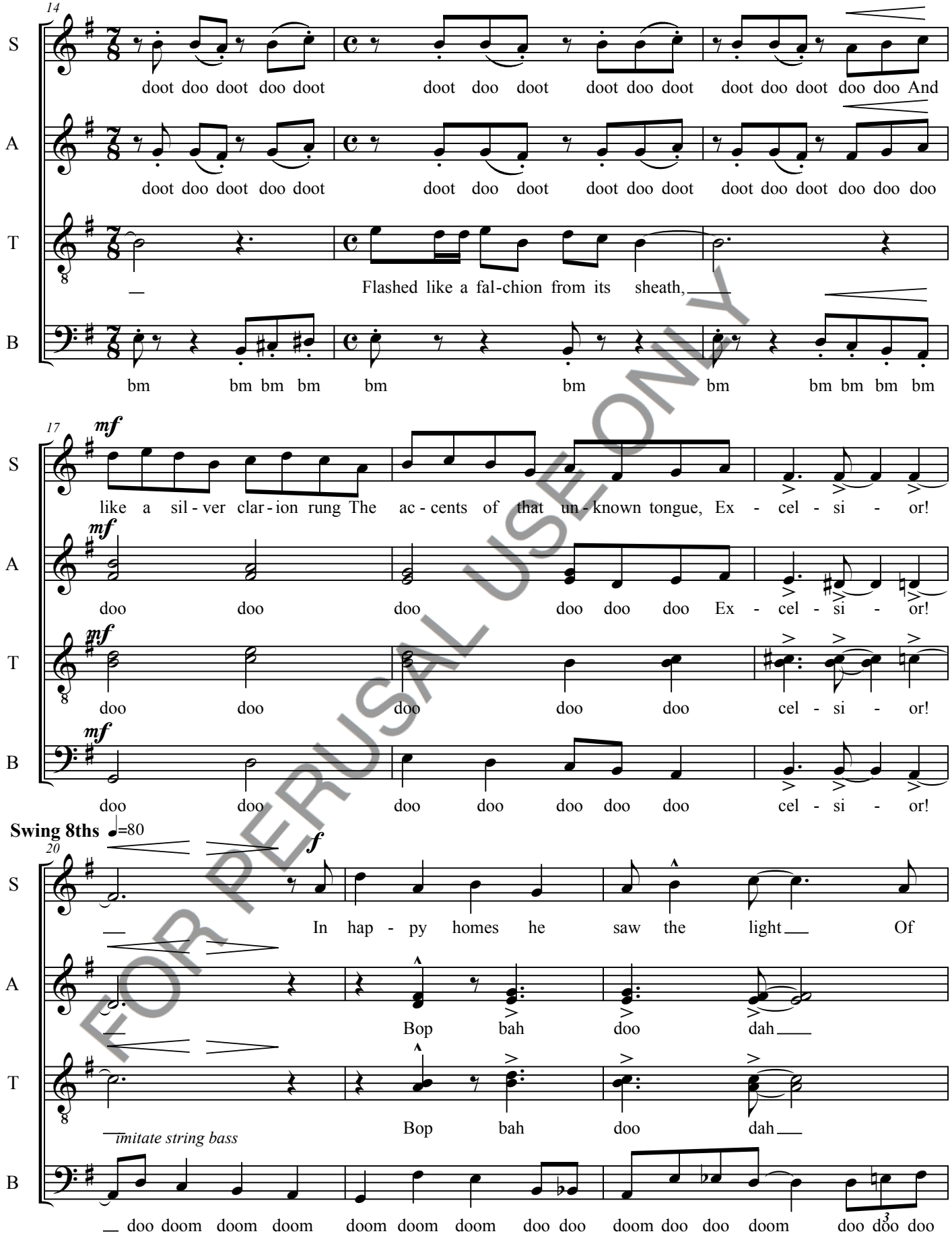

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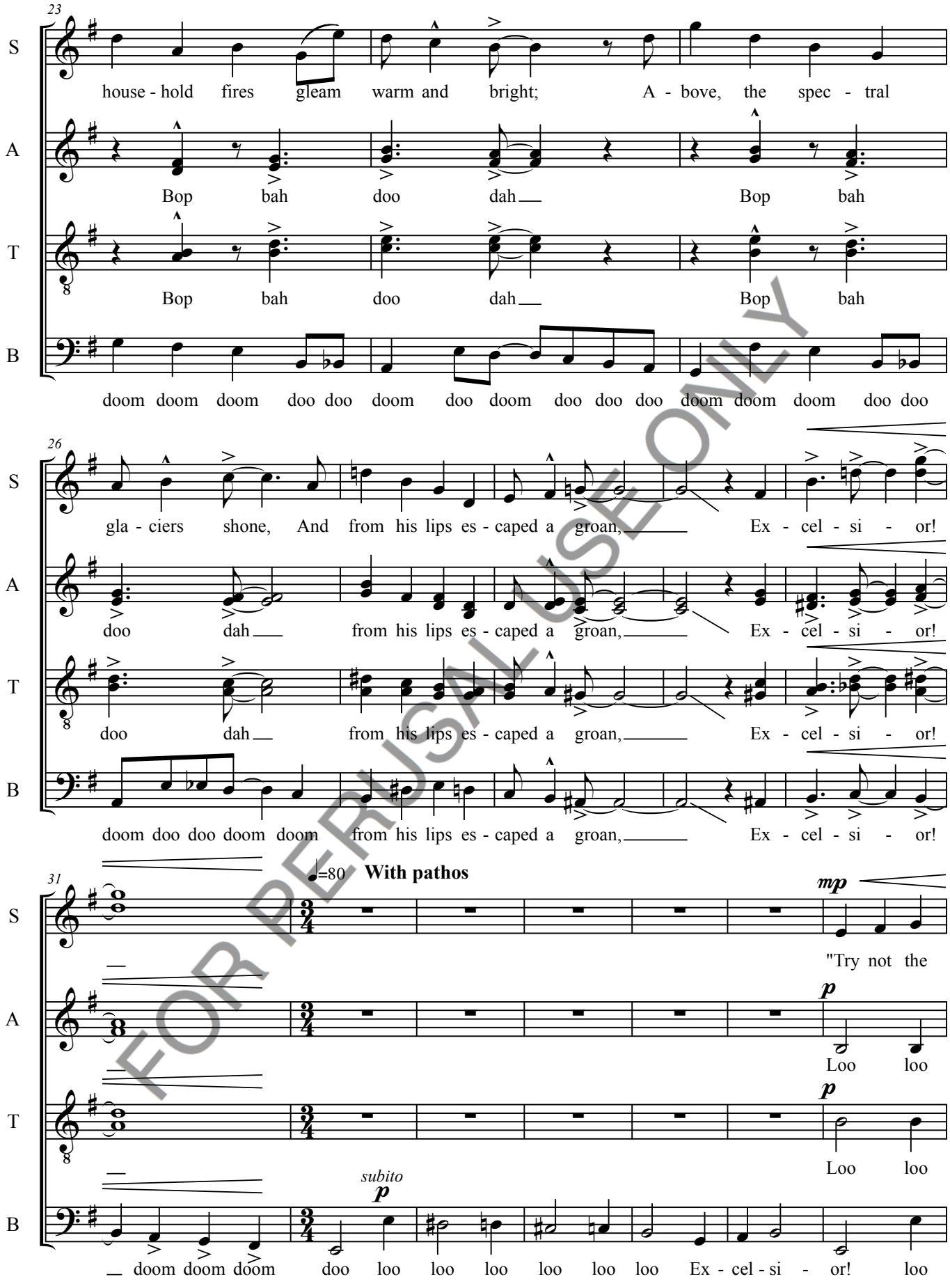

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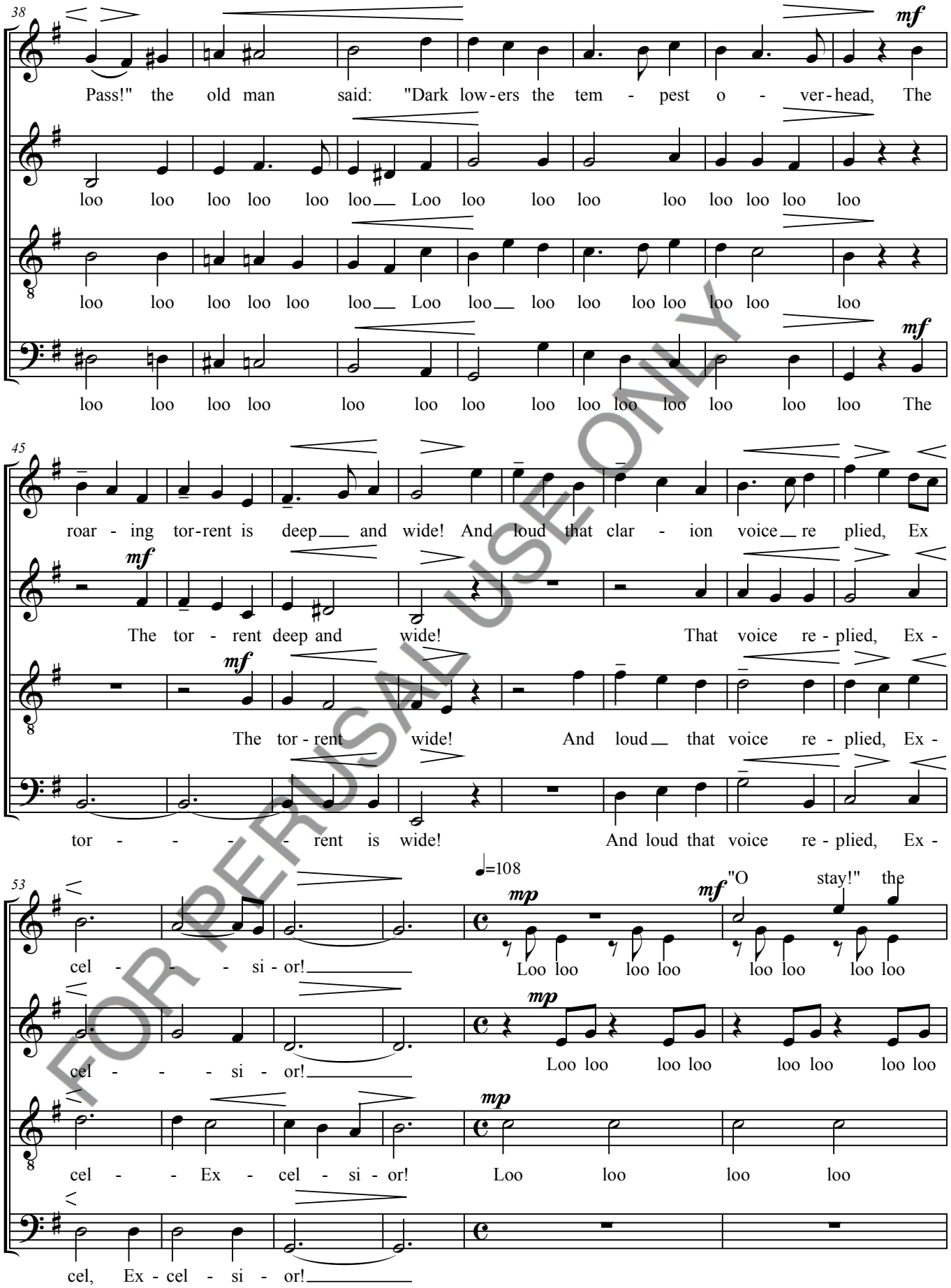

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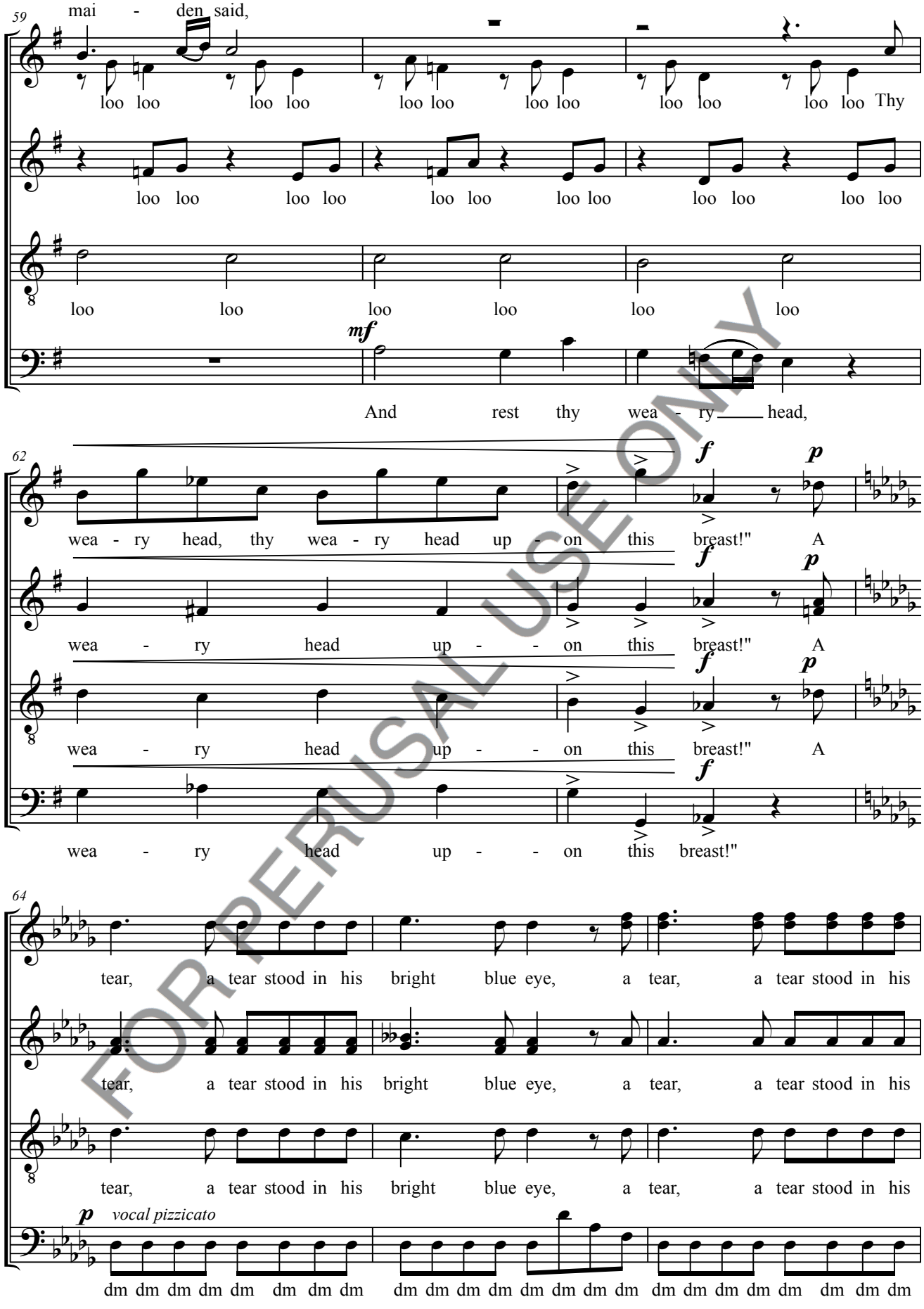

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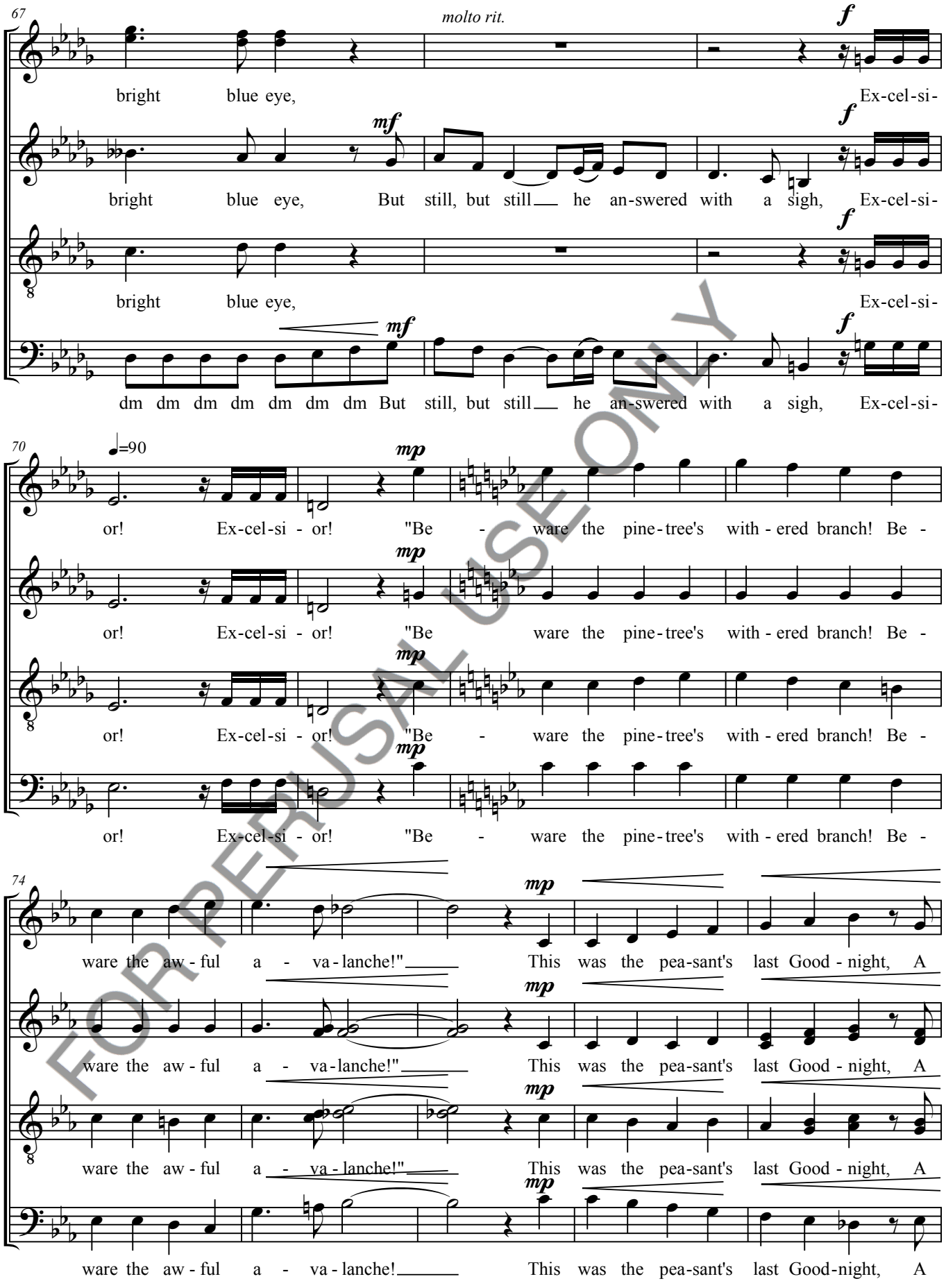

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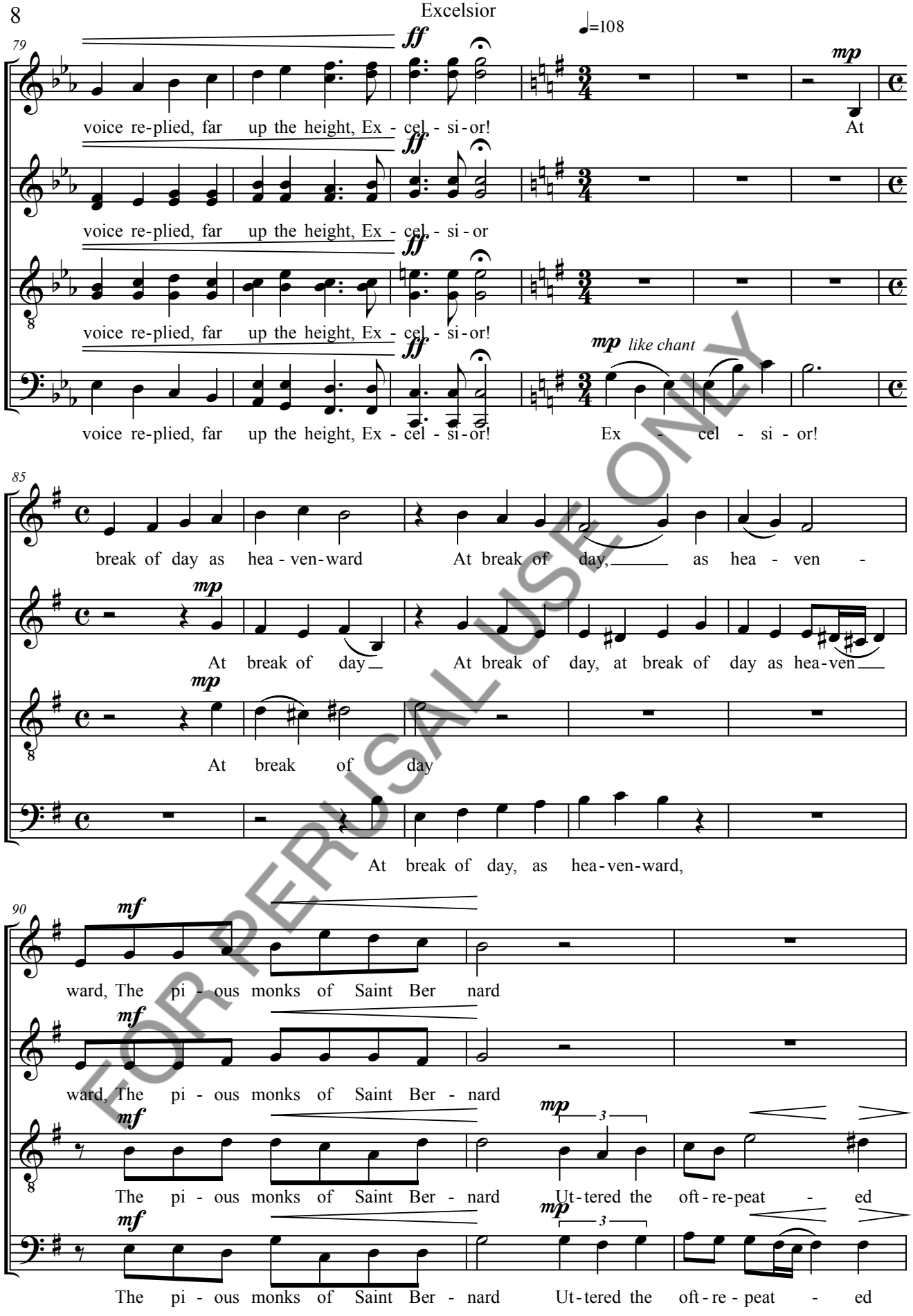

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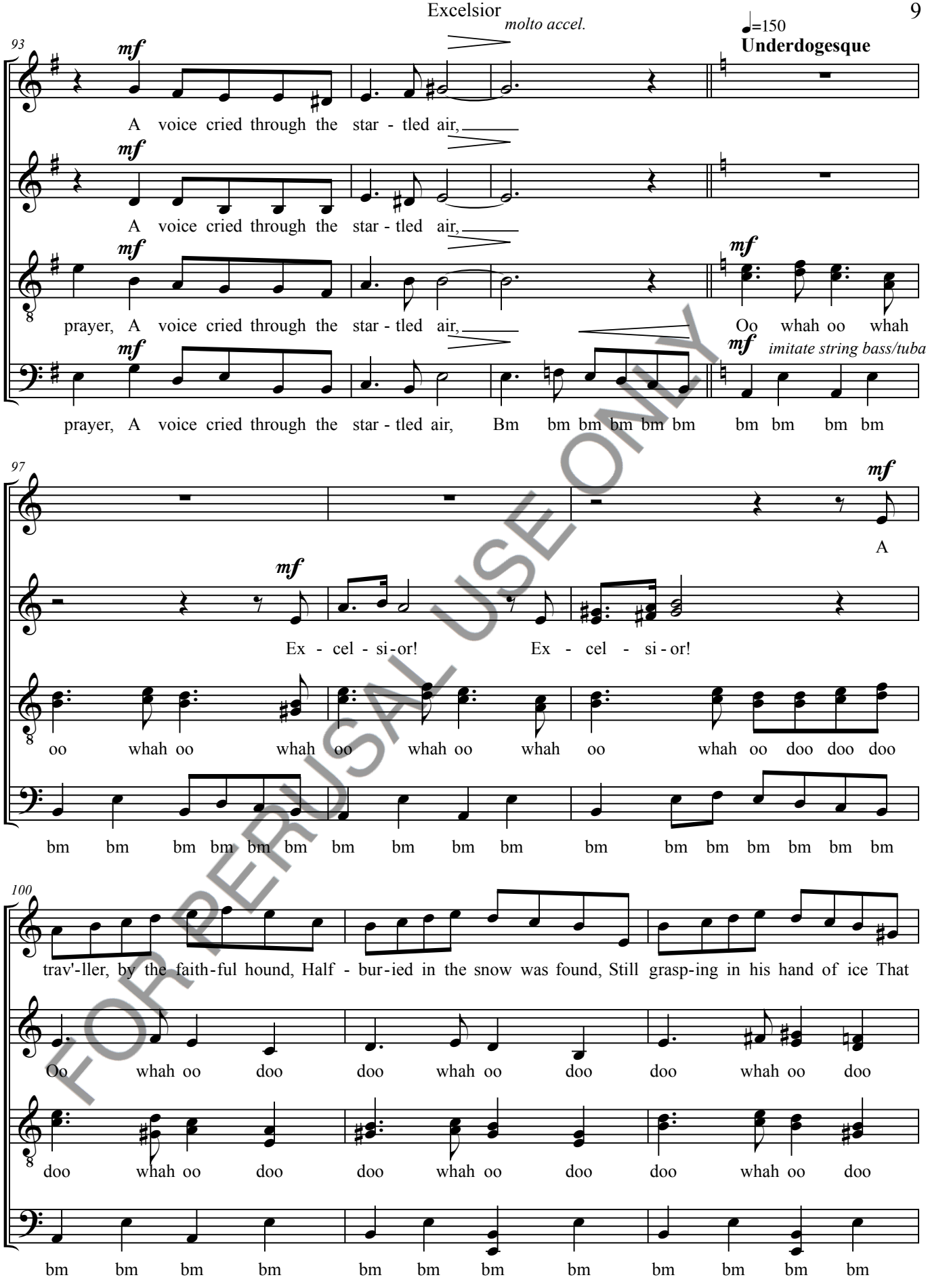

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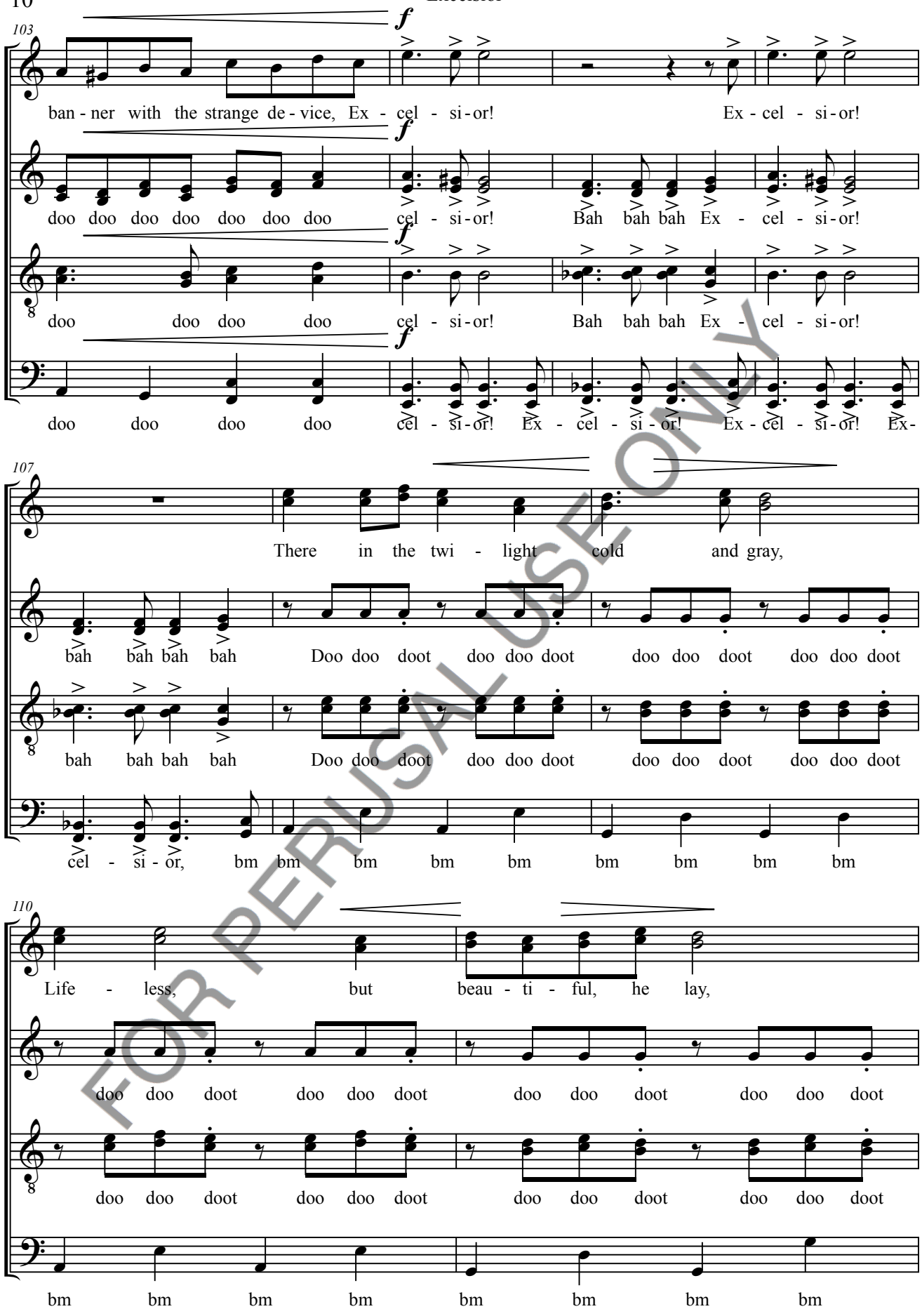

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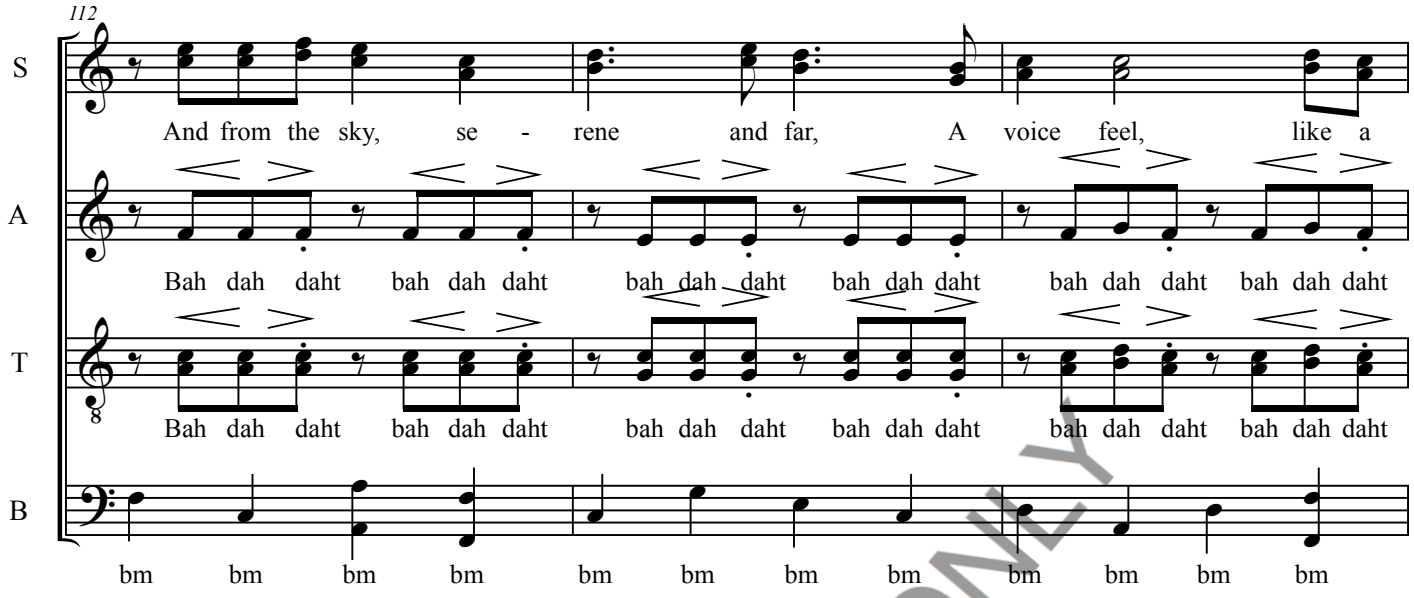

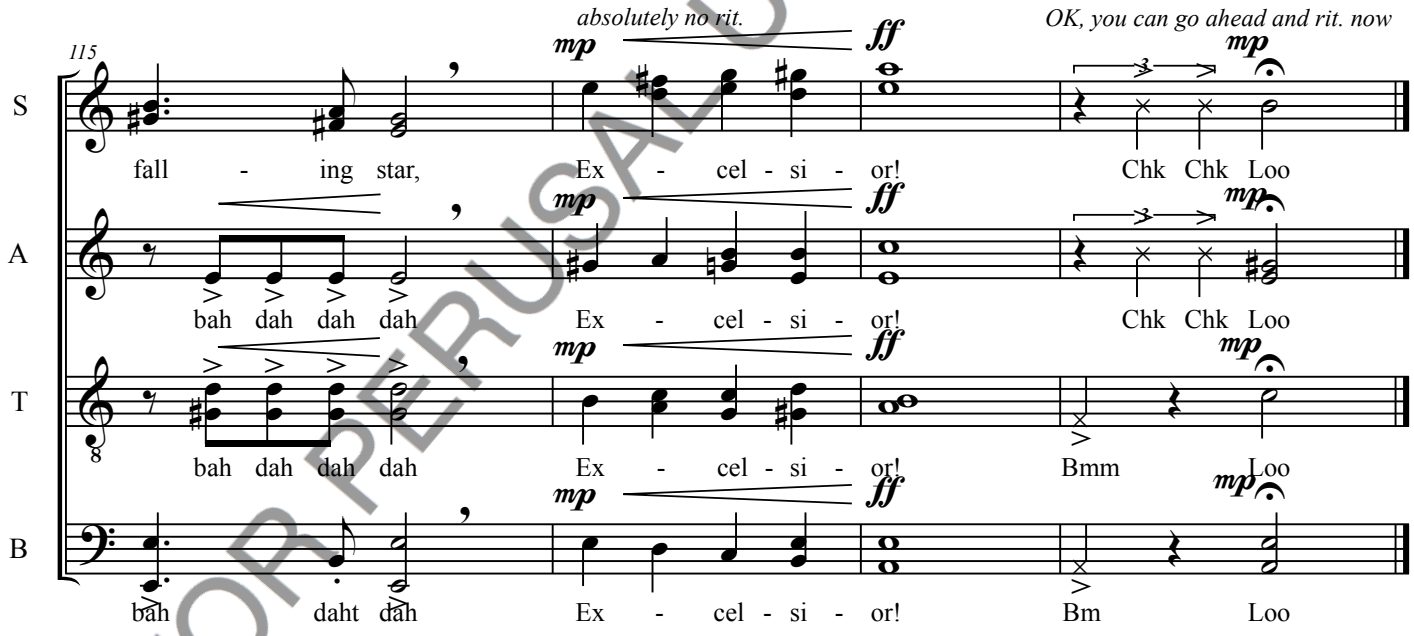

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