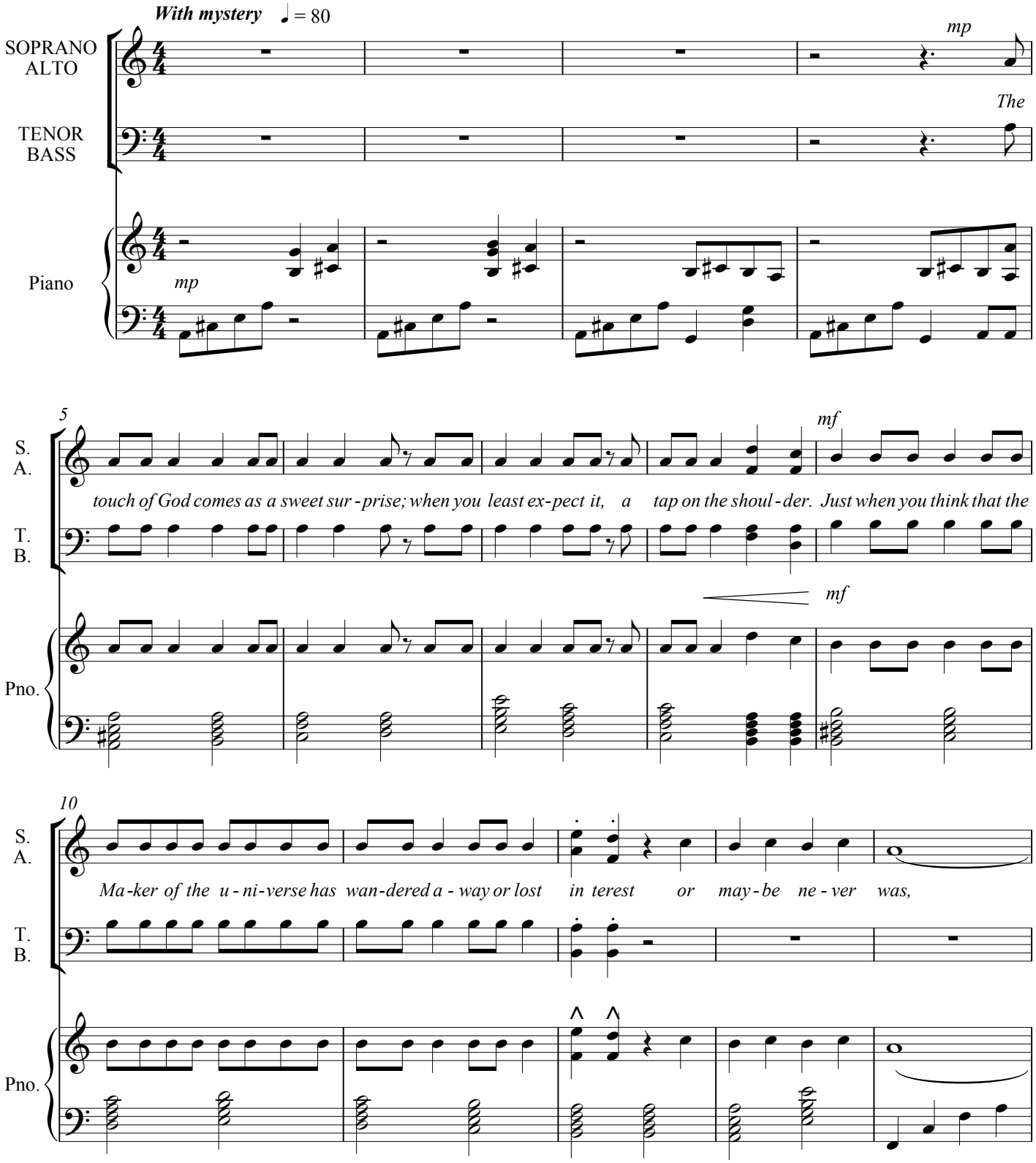
The Touch of God

A Cantata for Christmas

William R. Miller

1. Sweet Surprise

William R. Miller



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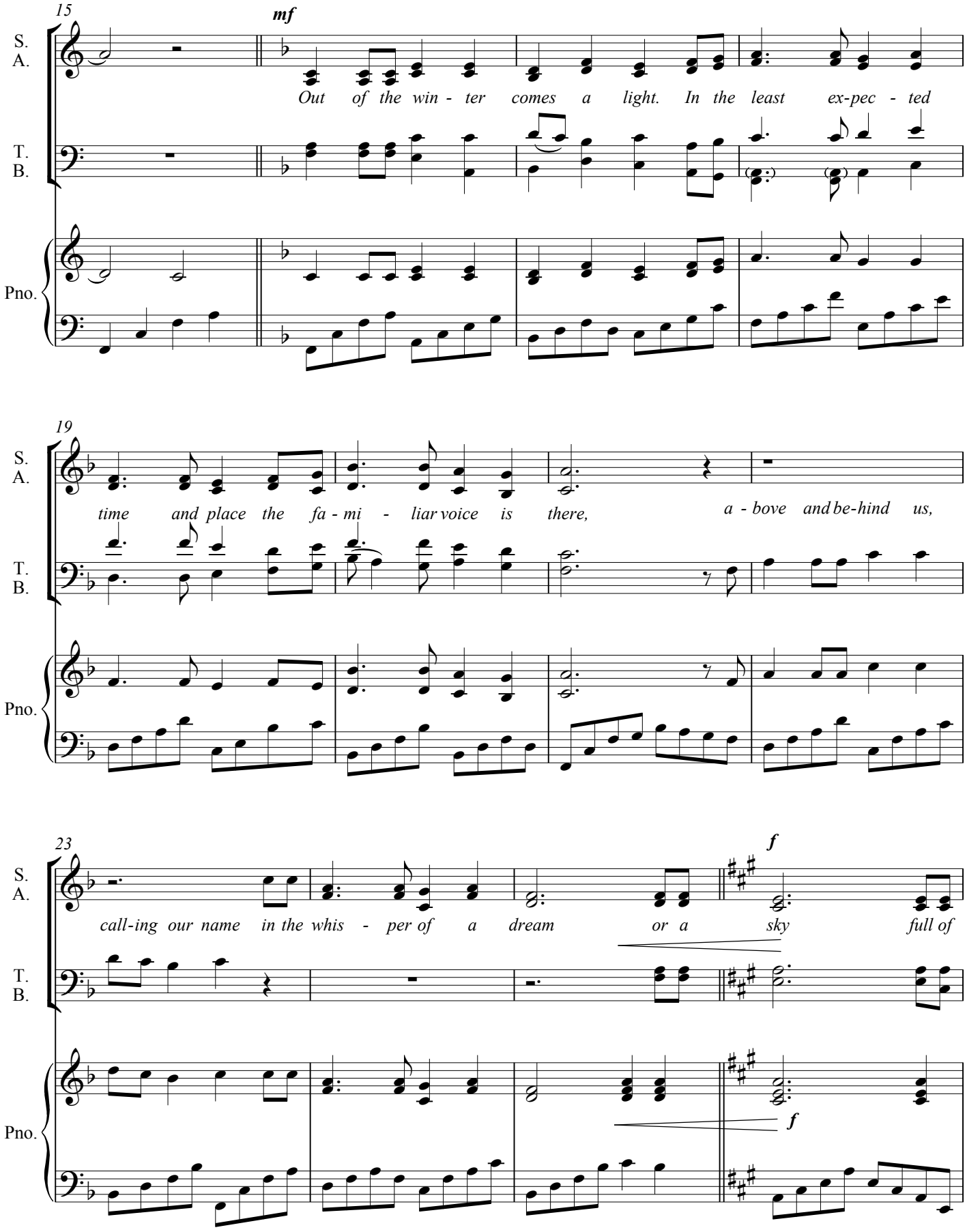
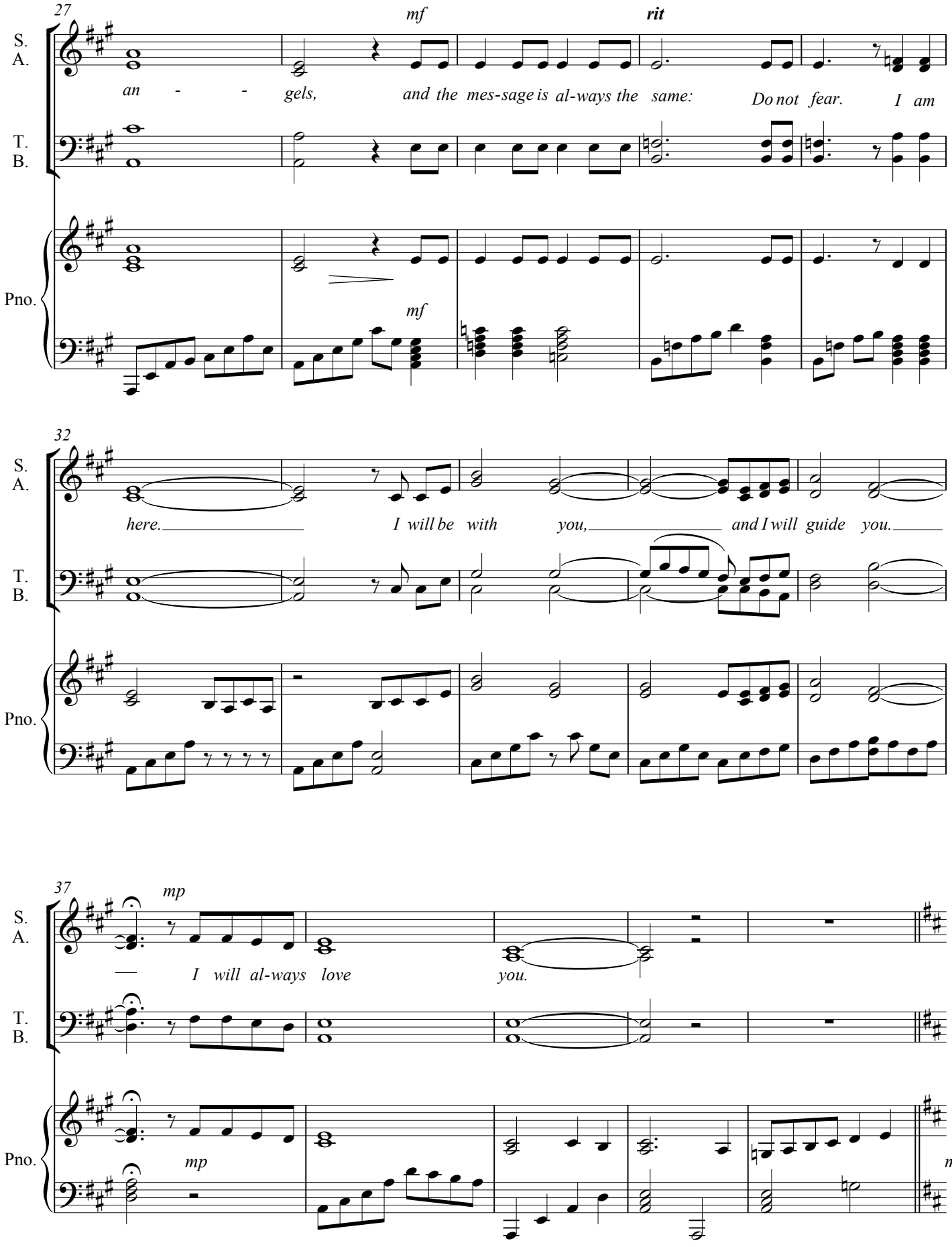
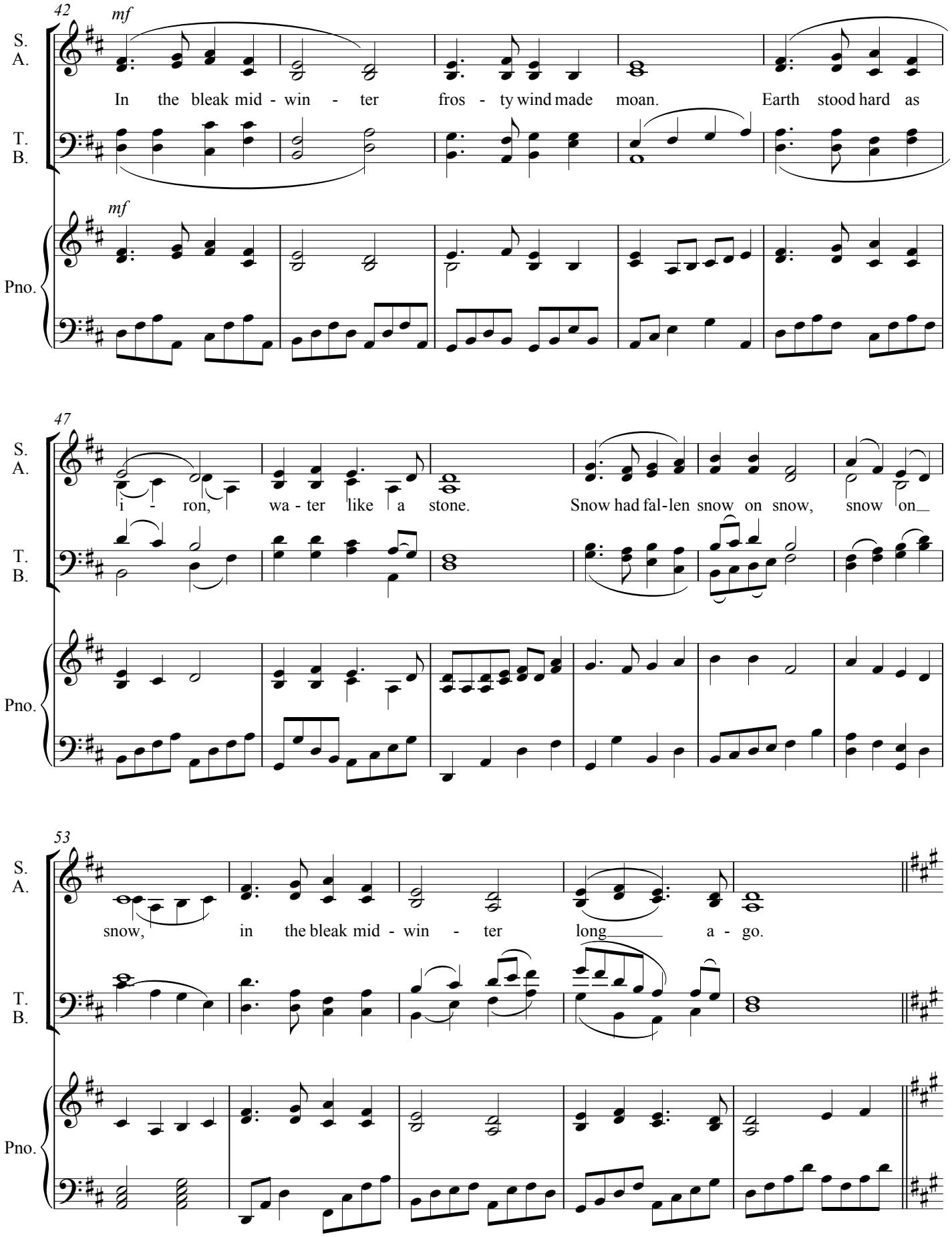
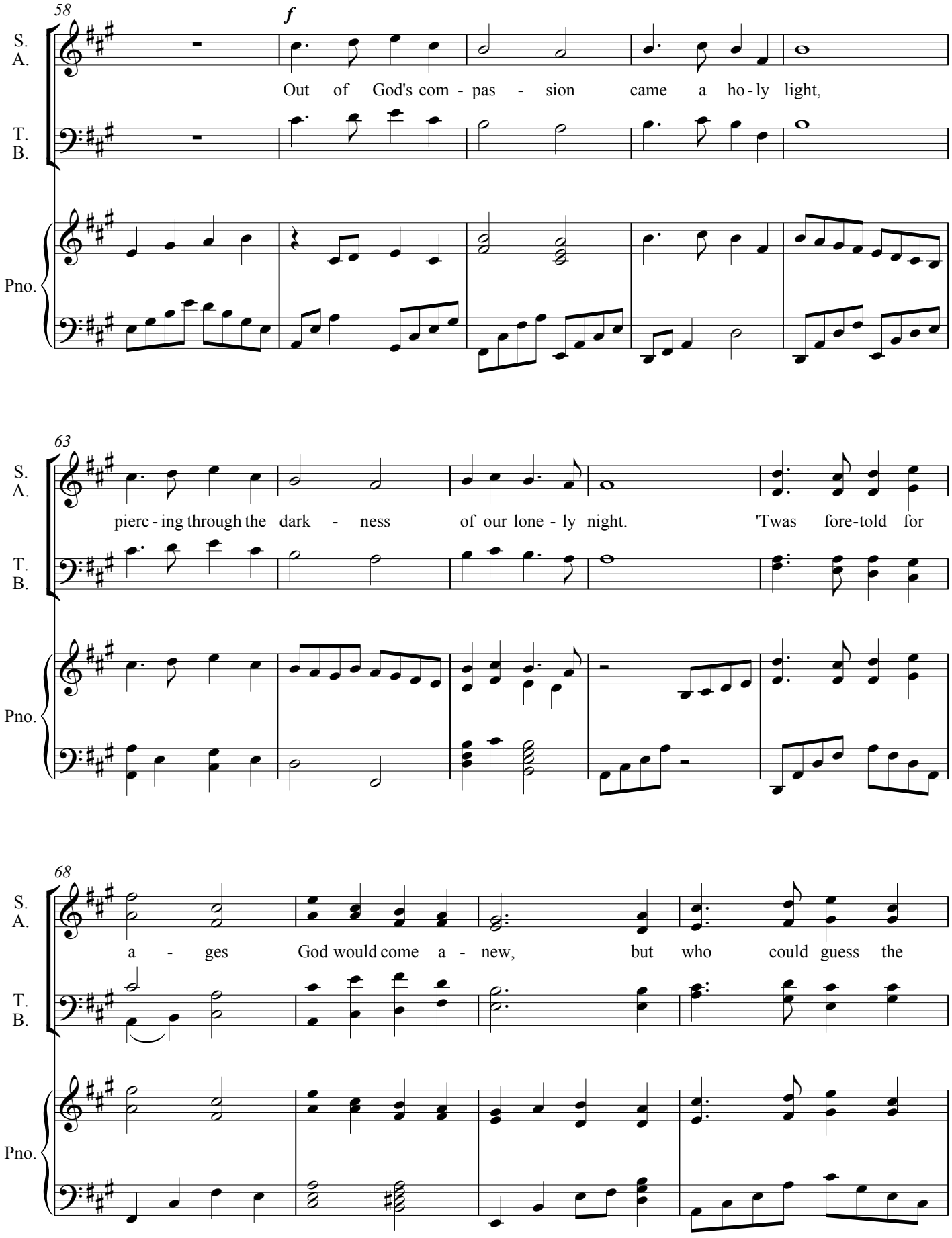
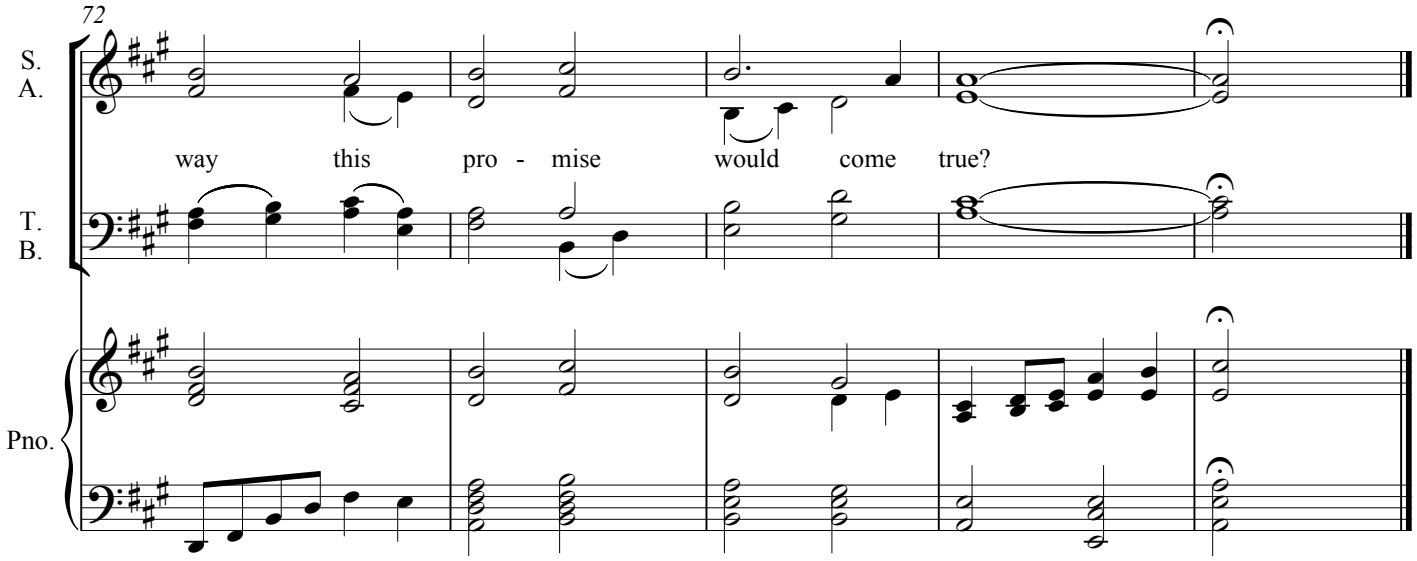

15
mf
S.
A.
Out of the win - ter comes a light. In the least ex-pec - ted
T.
B.
Pno.
19
time and place the fa - mi - liar voice is there, a - bove and be-hind us,
23
f
call-ing our name in the whis - per of a dream or a sky full of
f


27
mf
rit
S.
A.
an - - gels, and the mes-sage is al-ways the same: Do not fear. I am
T.
B.
Pno.
mf
32
here. I will be with you, and I will guide you.
37
mp
I will al-ways love you.
mp
mf


42
mf
S.
A.
In the bleak mid - win - ter fros - ty wind made moan. Earth stood hard as
T.
B.
mf
Pno.
47
S.
A.
i - ron, wa - ter like a stone. Snow had fal-len snow on snow, snow on
T.
B.
Pno.
53
S.
A.
snow, in the bleak mid - win - ter long a - go.
T.
B.
Pno.


58
f
S.
A.
T.
B.
Pno.
Out of God's com - pas - sion came a ho - ly light,
63
pierc - ing through the dark - ness of our lone - ly night. 'Twas fore-told for
68
a - ges God would come a - new, but who could guess the

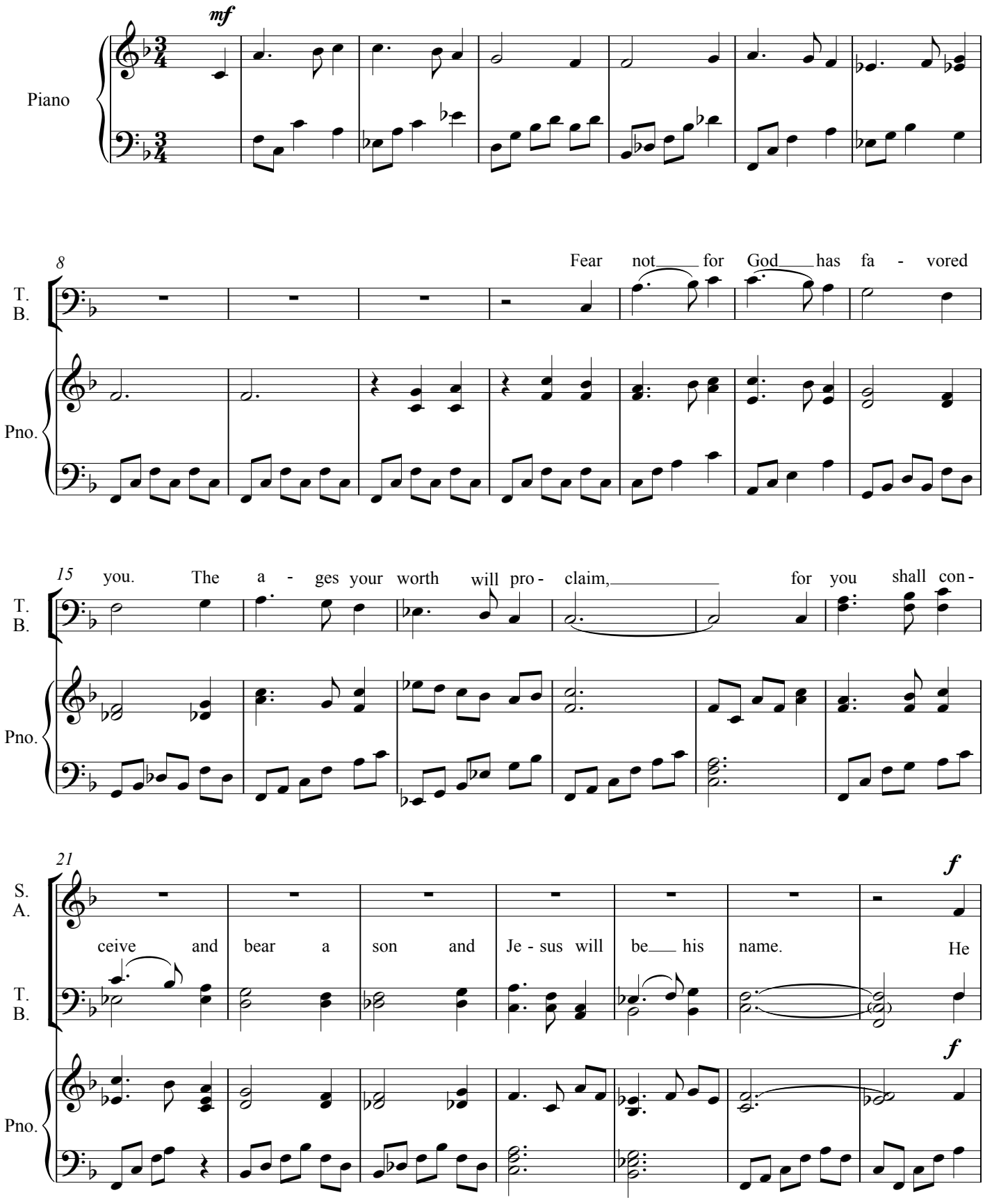


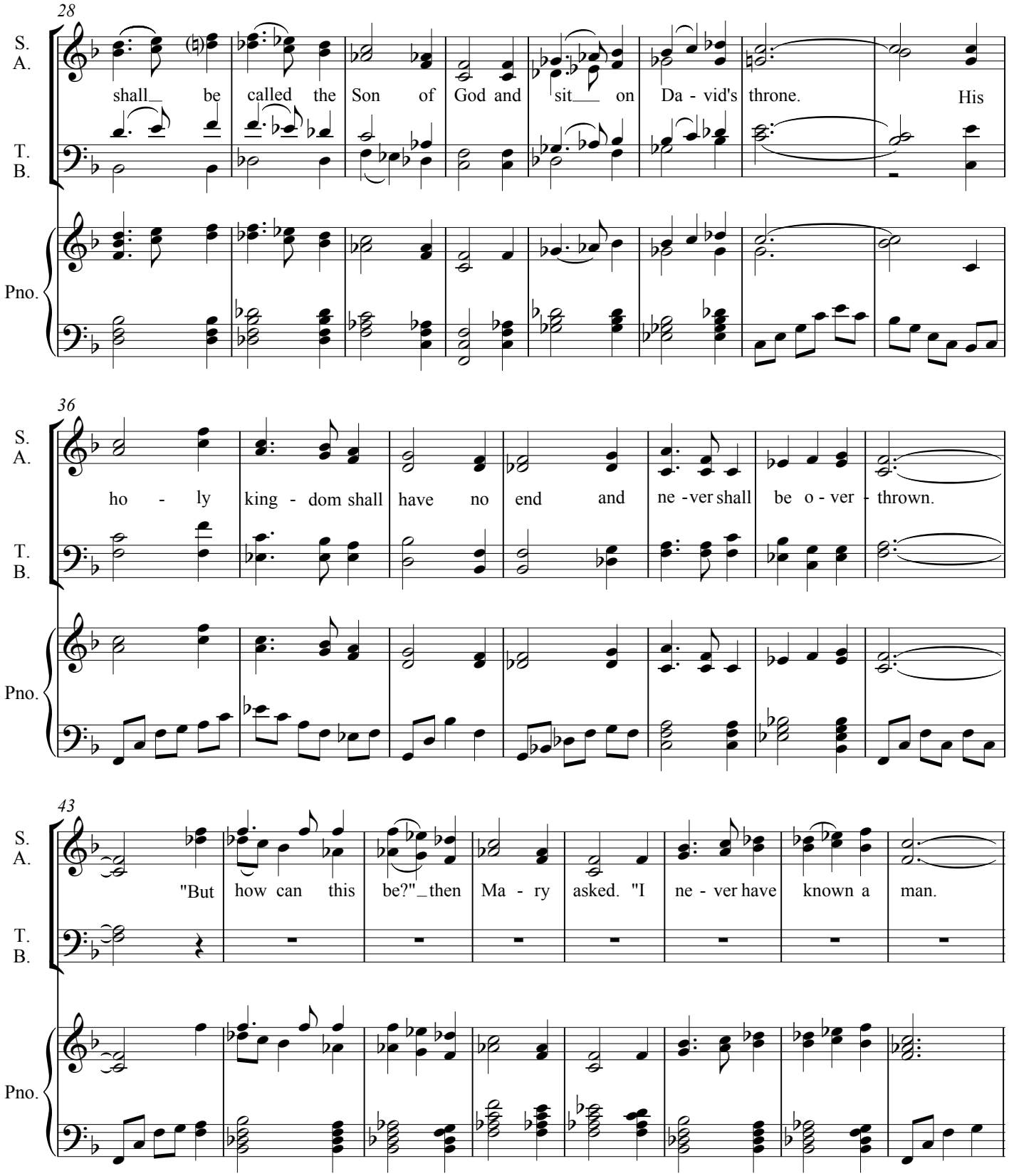
Narrator: Now the great angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young woman who was engaged to be married to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The young woman's name was Mary.* The messenger Gabriel came to her and said, "Greetings!"

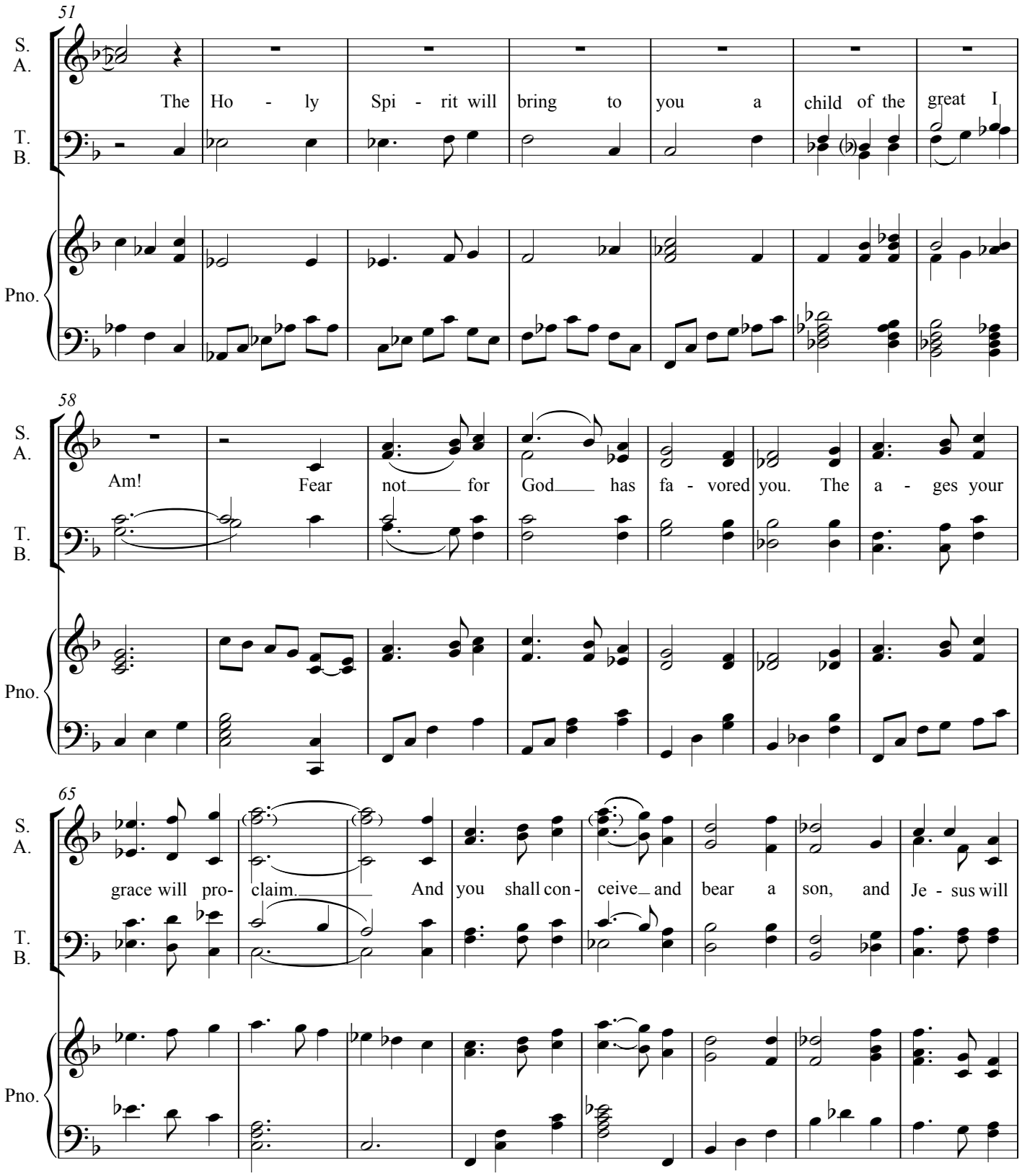
*Piano begins "Gabriel's Message" here

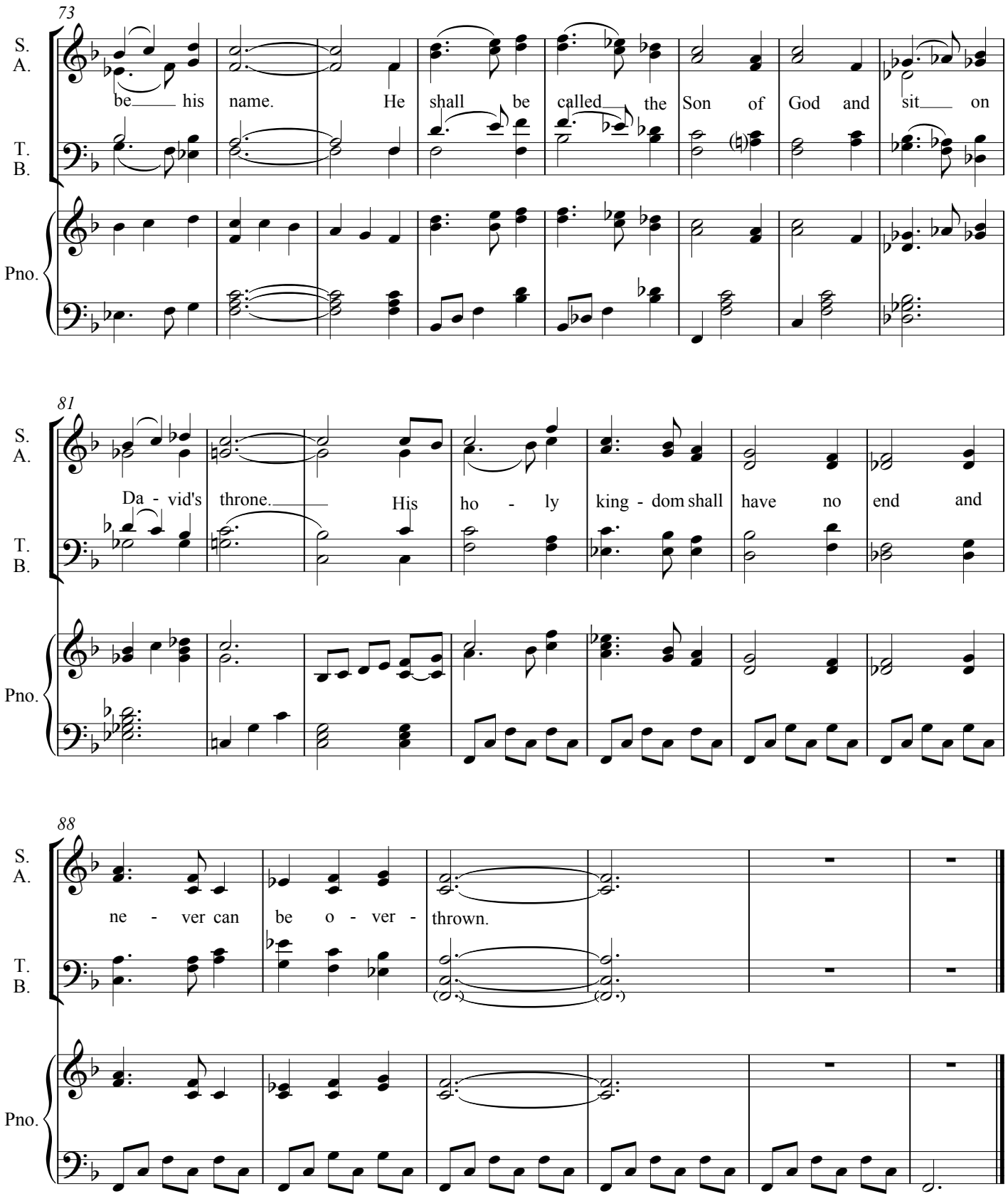
2. Gabriel's Message

William R. Miller




28
S.
A.
T.
B.
Pno.
shall be called the Son of God and sit on Da - vid's throne. His
36
ho - ly king - dom shall have no end and ne - ver shall be o - ver - thrown.
43
"But how can this be?" then Ma - ry asked. "I ne - ver have known a man.


51
S.
A.
T.
B.
Pno.
The Ho - ly Spi - rit will bring to you a child of the great I
58
Am! Fear not for God has fa - vored you. The a - ges your
65
grace will pro- claim. And you shall con - ceive and bear a son, and Je - sus will



Narrator: So Mary was going to have a baby, which for an unmarried woman was a shameful thing, punishable by death. Being a good man, Joseph had resolved just to quietly end their engagement, but then he had a dream with a messenger of his own. . . .

3. Joseph's Dream

♩ = 80

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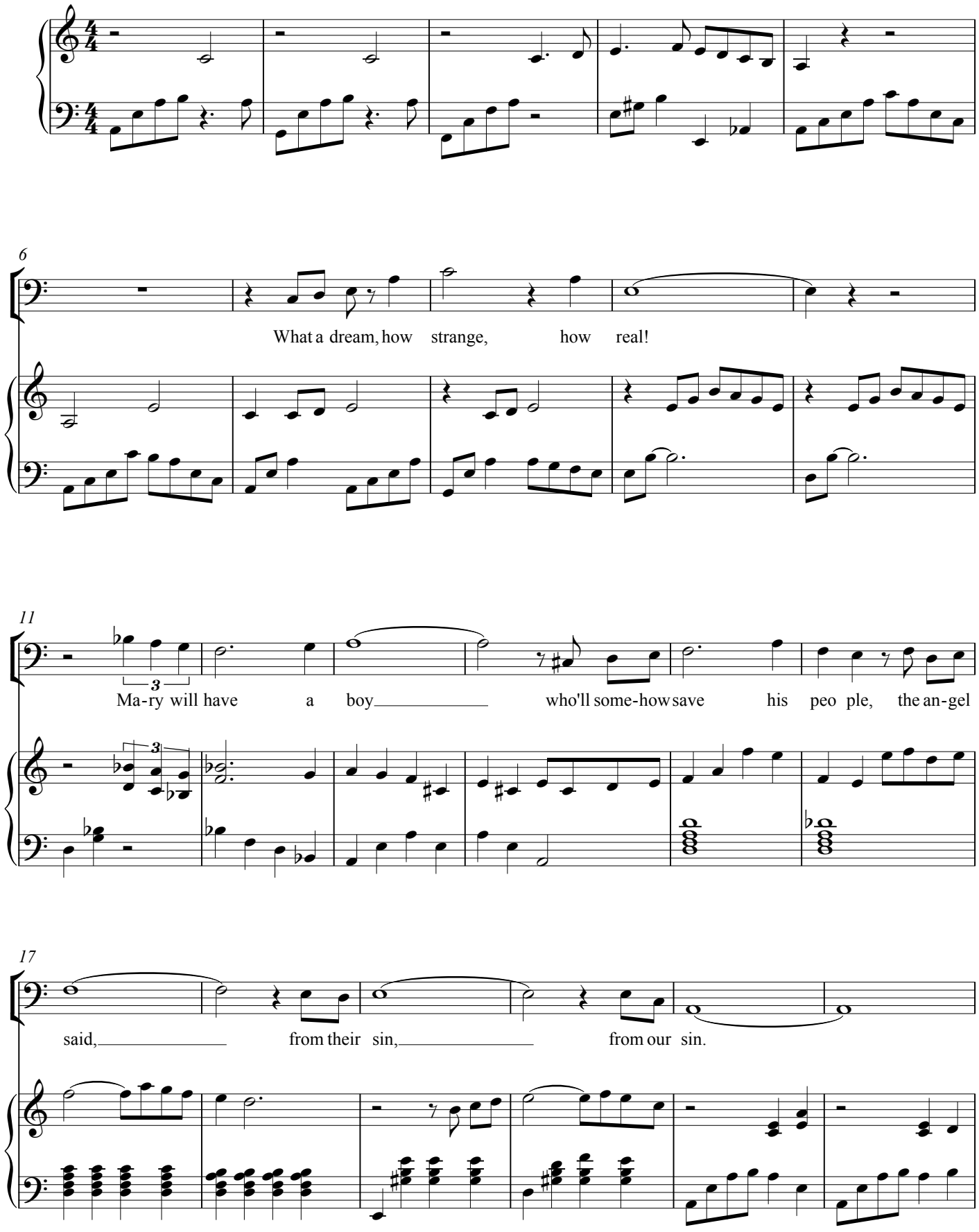
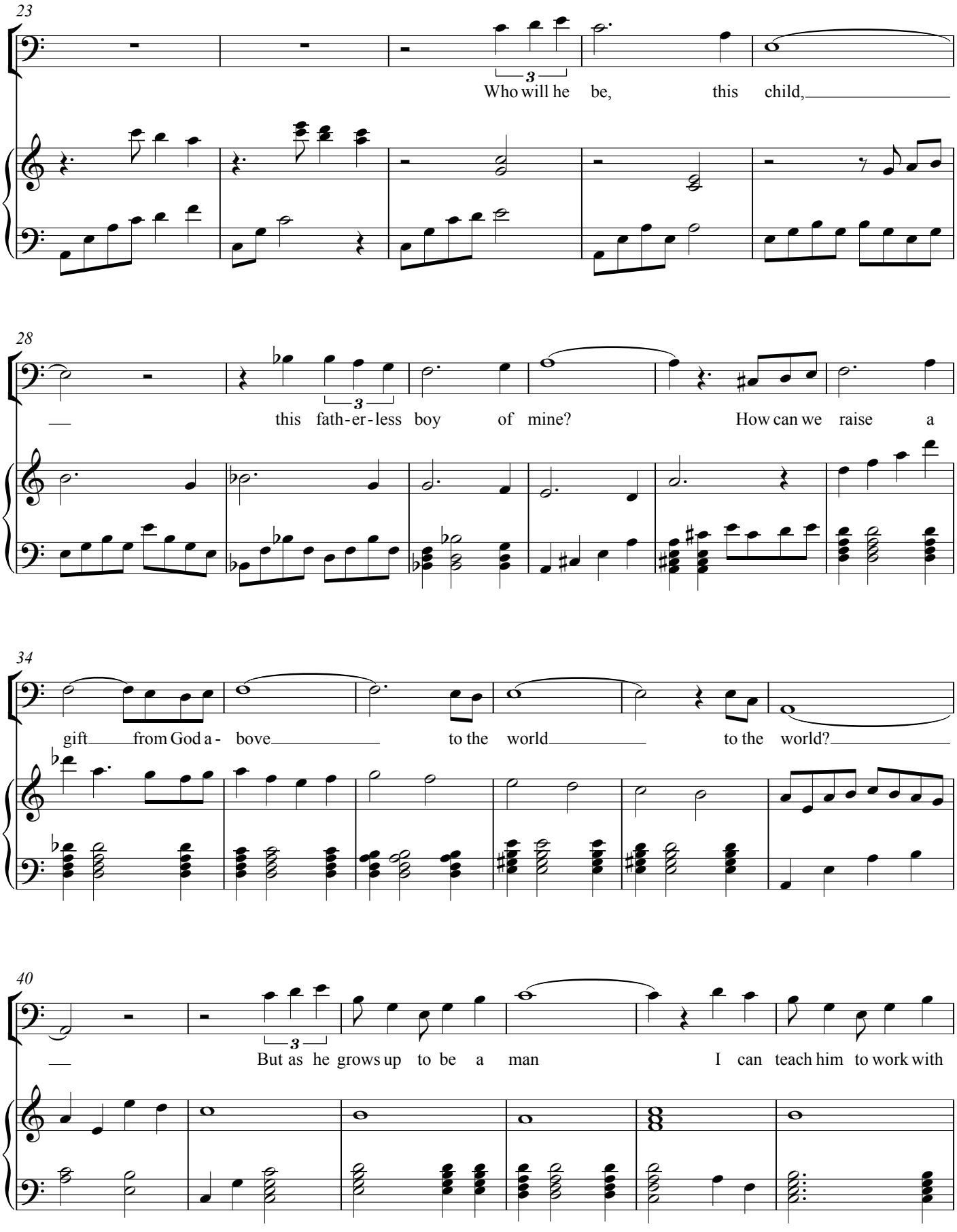
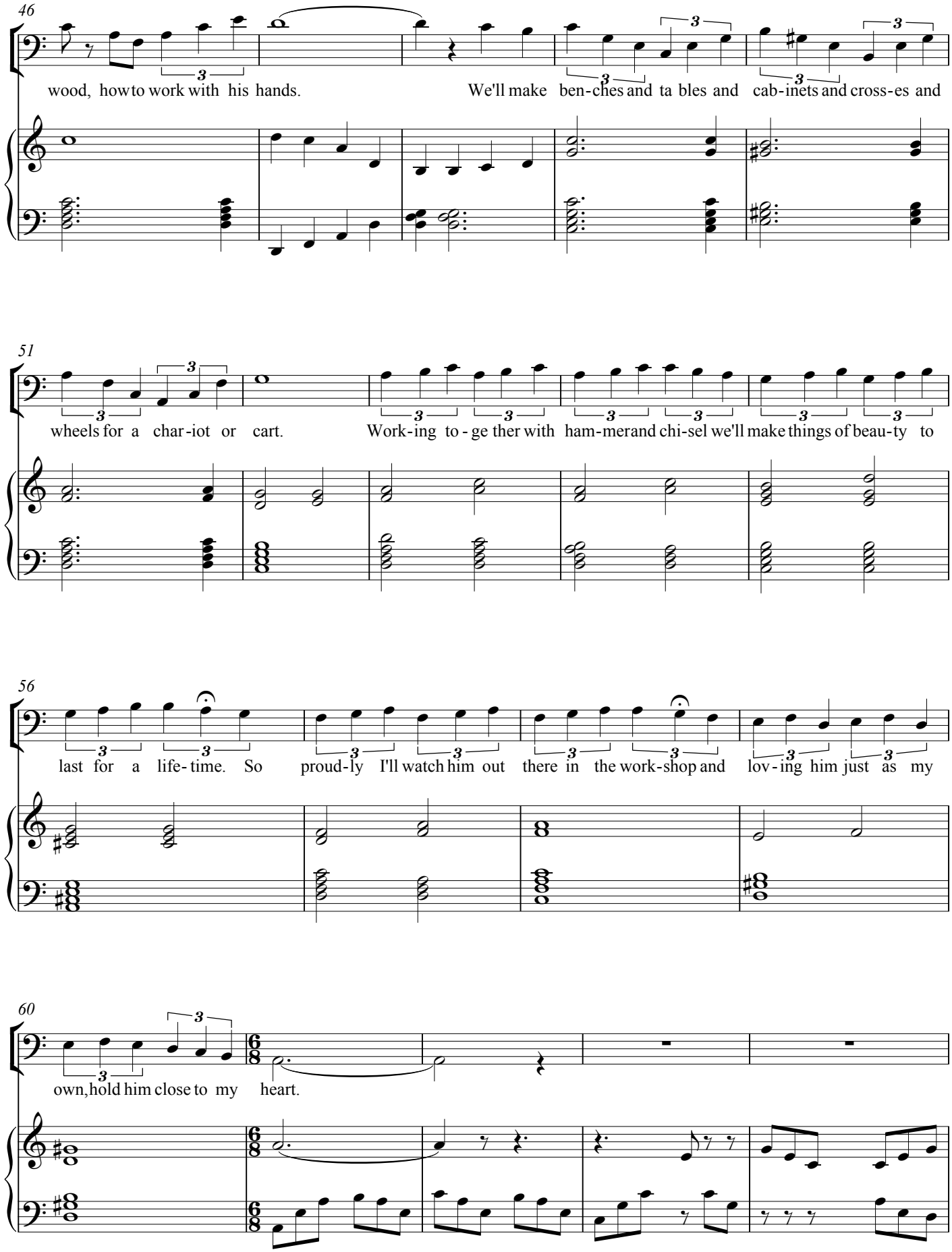
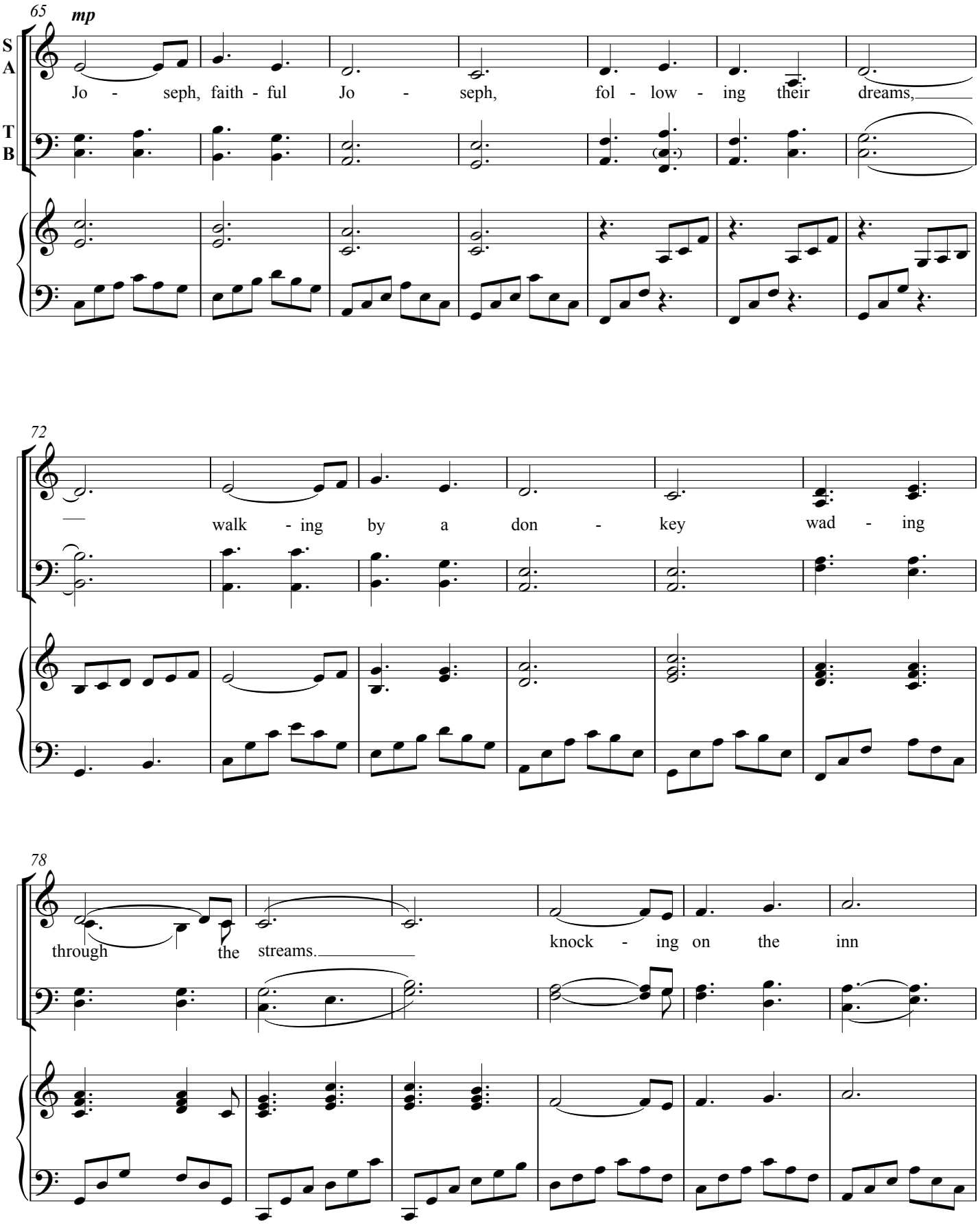
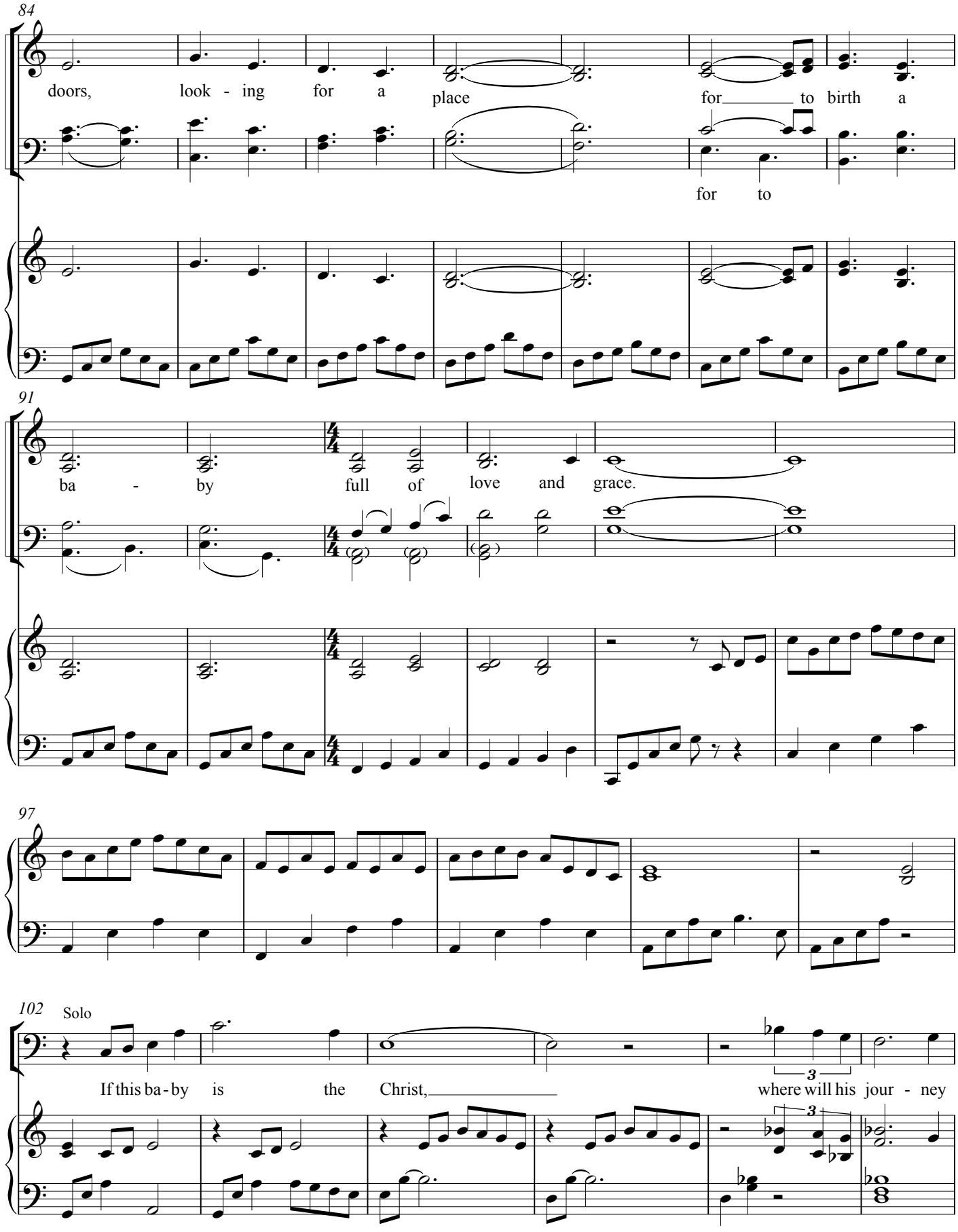
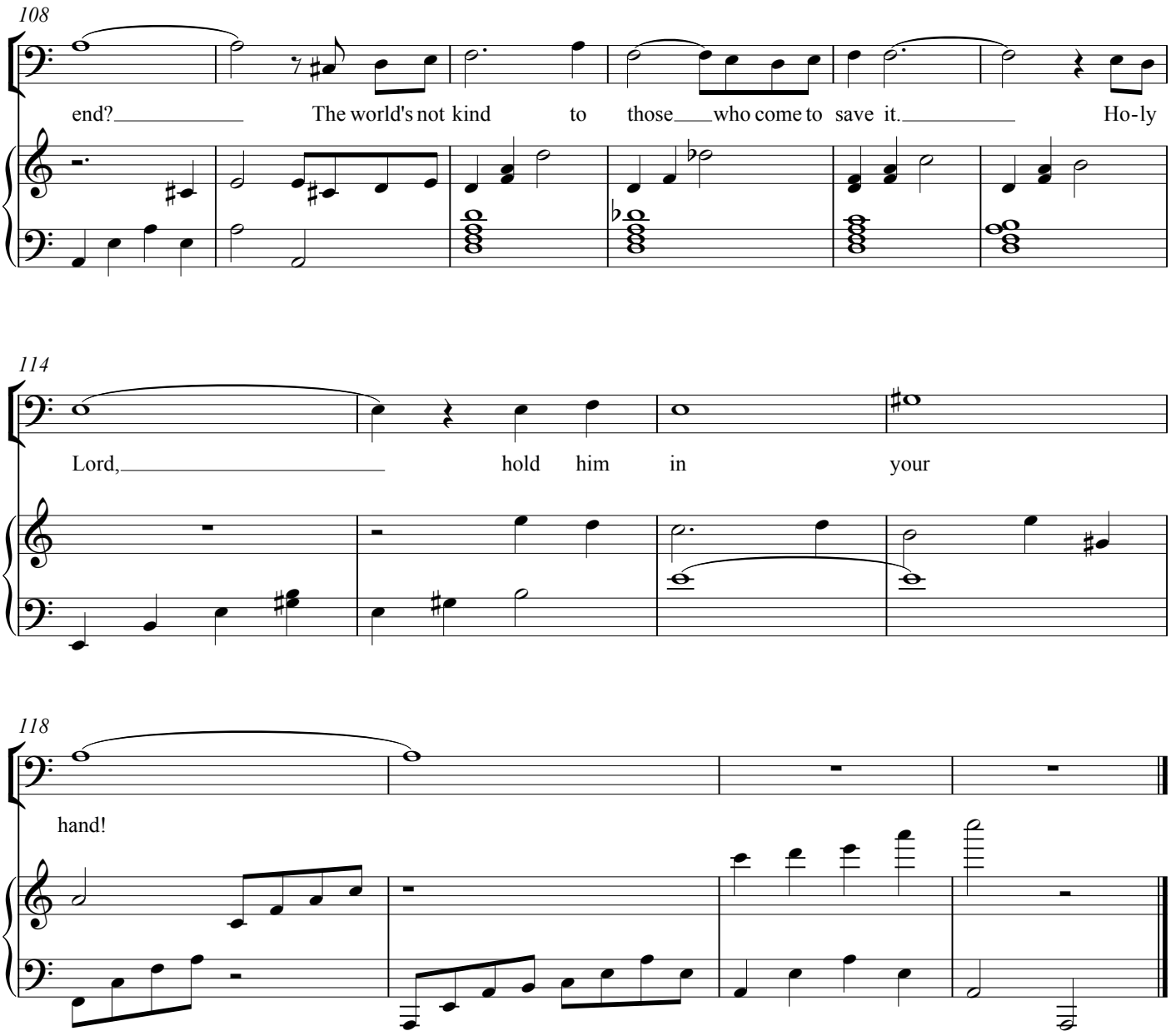



23
Who will he be, this child,
28
this fath-er-less boy of mine? How can we raise a
34
gift from God a- bove to the world to the world?
40
But as he grows up to be a man I can teach him to work with


46
wood, how to work with his hands. We'll make ben-ches and ta bles and cab-inets and cross-es and
51
wheels for a char-iot or cart. Work-ing to-ge ther with ham-mer and chi-sel we'll make things of beau-ty to
56
last for a life-time. So proud-ly I'll watch him out there in the work-shop and lov-ing him just as my
60
own, hold him close to my heart.

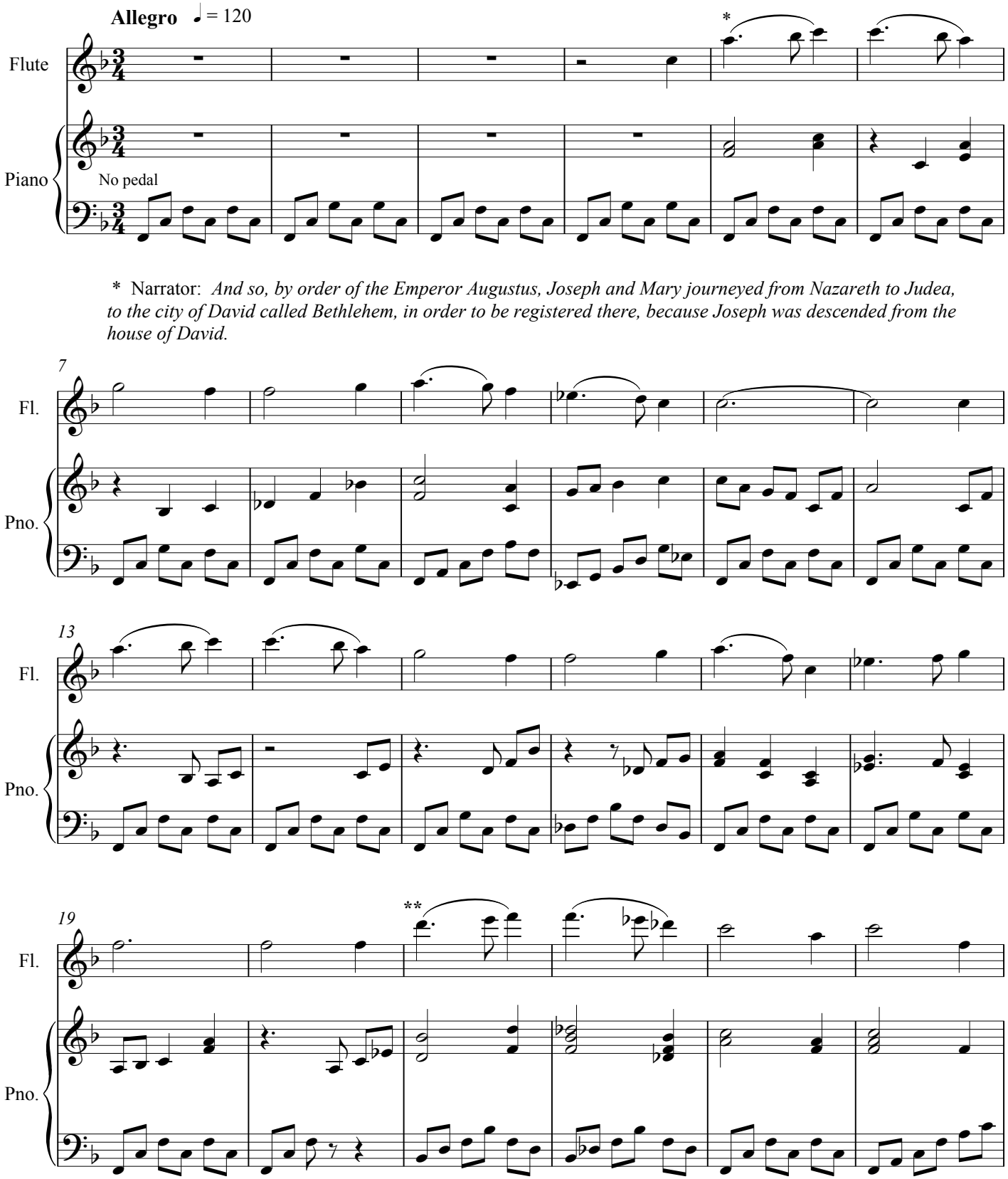

65
mp
S
A
T
B
Jo - seph, faith - ful Jo - seph, fol - low - ing their dreams,
72
walk - ing by a don - key wad - ing
78
through the streams.
knock - ing on the inn


84
doors, look - ing for a place for to birth a
for to
91
ba - by full of love and grace.
97
102
Solo
If this ba - by is the Christ, where will his jour - ney


108
end? The world's not kind to those who come to save it. Ho-ly
114
Lord, hold him in your
118
hand!

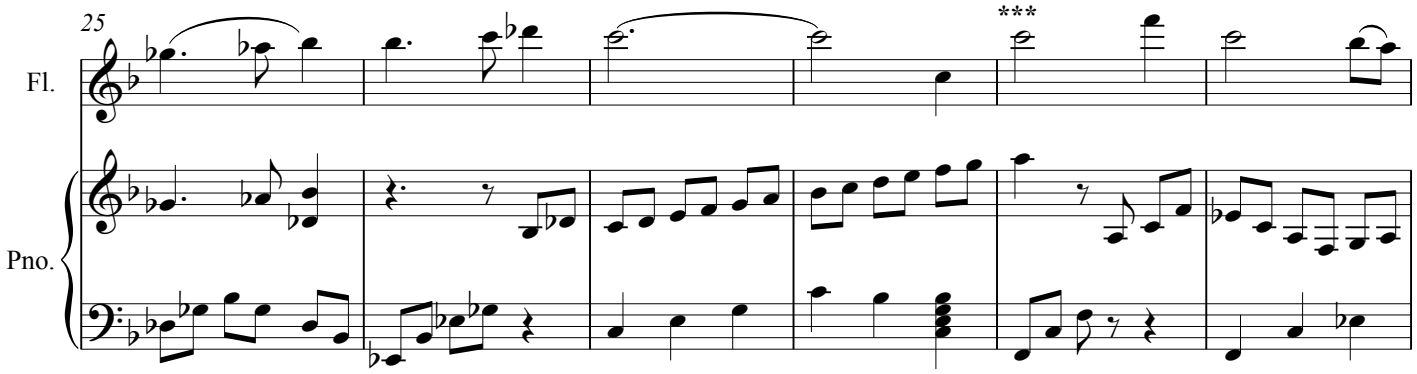
4. Journey to Bethlehem

William R. Miller

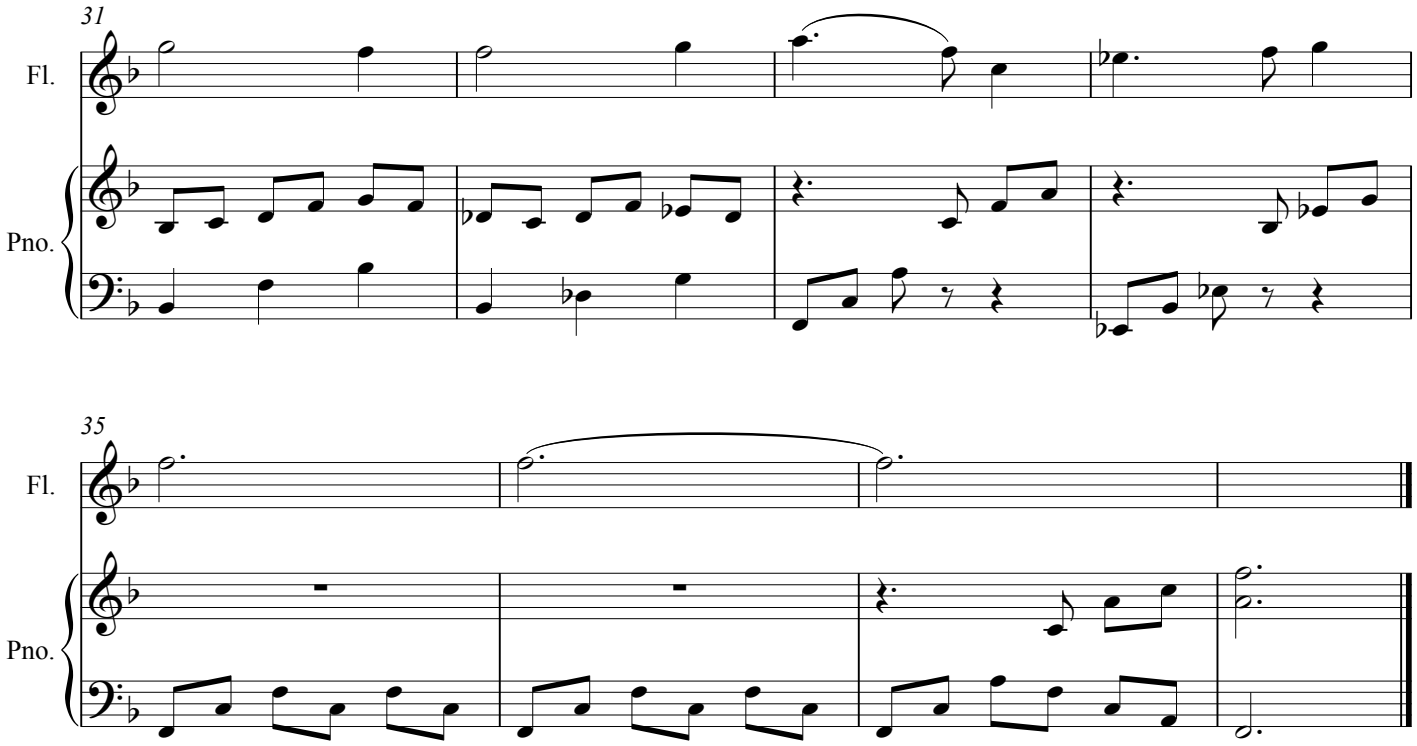


* Narrator: *And so, by order of the Emperor Augustus, Joseph and Mary journeyed from Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, in order to be registered there, because Joseph was descended from the house of David.*

** Narrator: *When they arrived, they found that the inn was already full, and there was no room for them to stay, although it was time for Mary to deliver her firstborn.*



*** Narrator: *So when the baby arrived, they wrapped him in strips of cloth and placed him in the hay trough of a stable behind the inn.*



[After music ends]

Narrator: *And that night, God sent a messenger to a group of shepherds who were working in the hills nearby.*

5. Angels' Announcement

William R. Miller

With a relaxed flow ♩ = 100

Piano

6

Pno.

11

Pno.

16

mf

S. A. Ma - ry birthed her ba - by in a hum-ble place.

T. B.

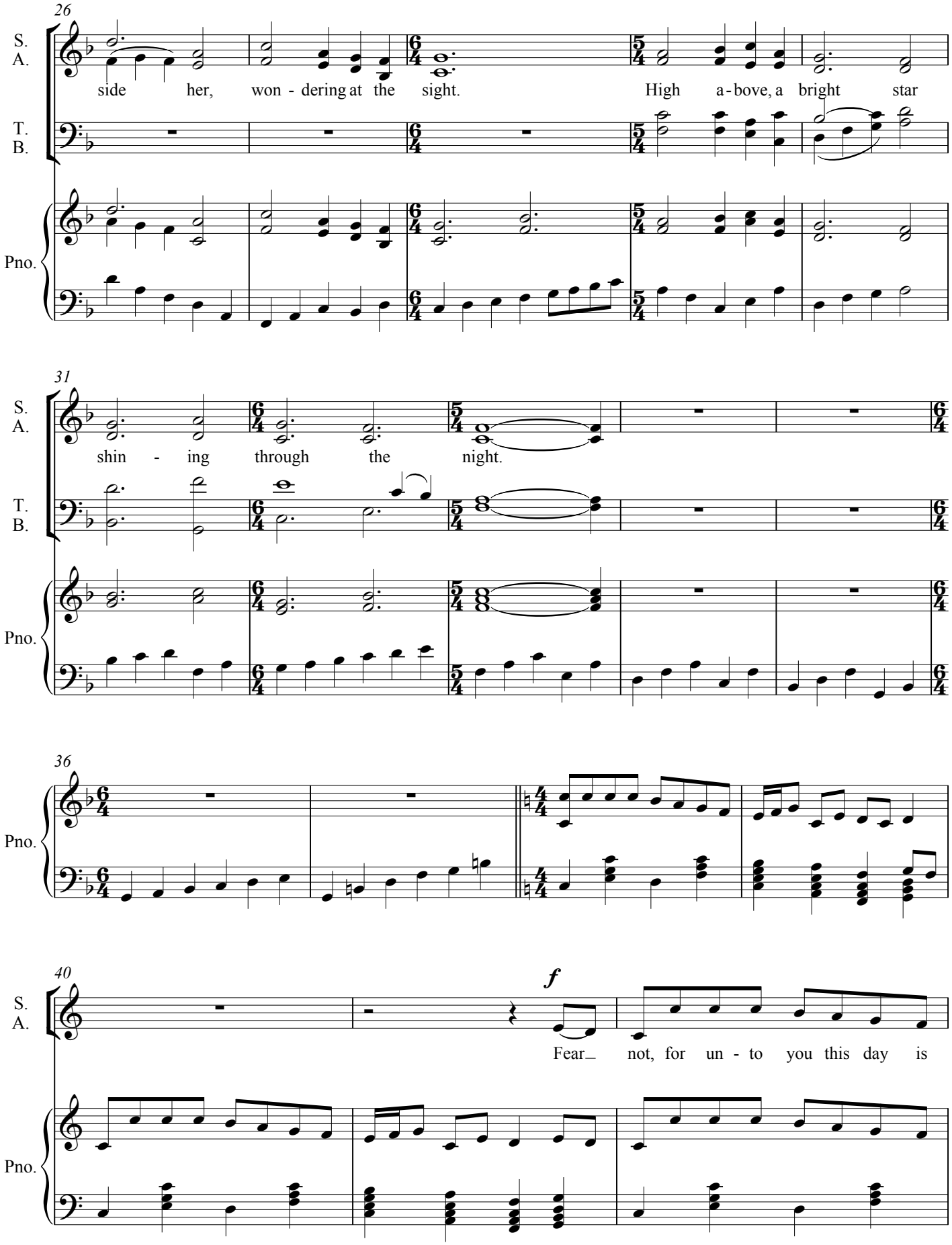
Pno.

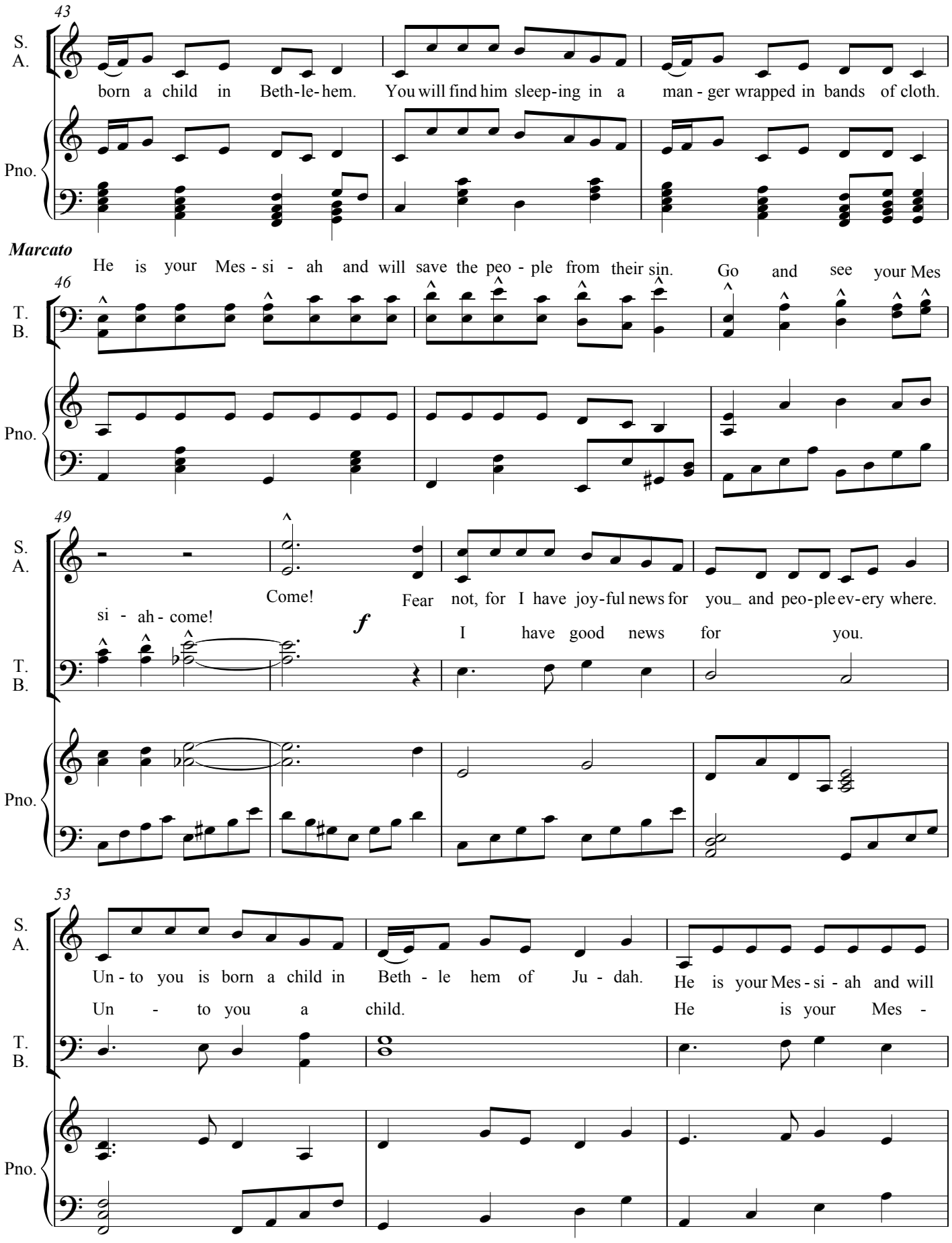
21

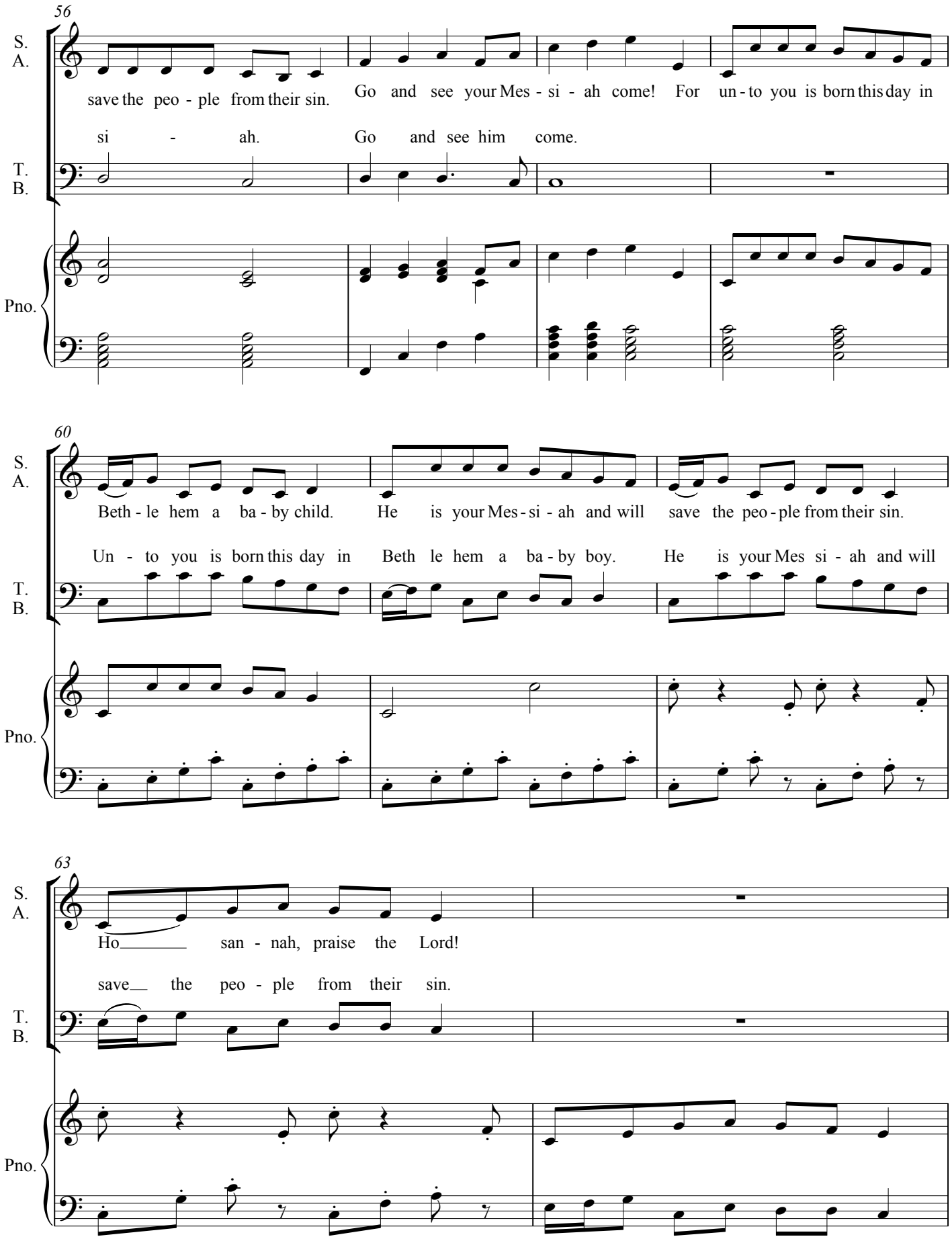
S. A. Through the cold and dark - ness shone his ho - ly face. Jo - seph strong be -

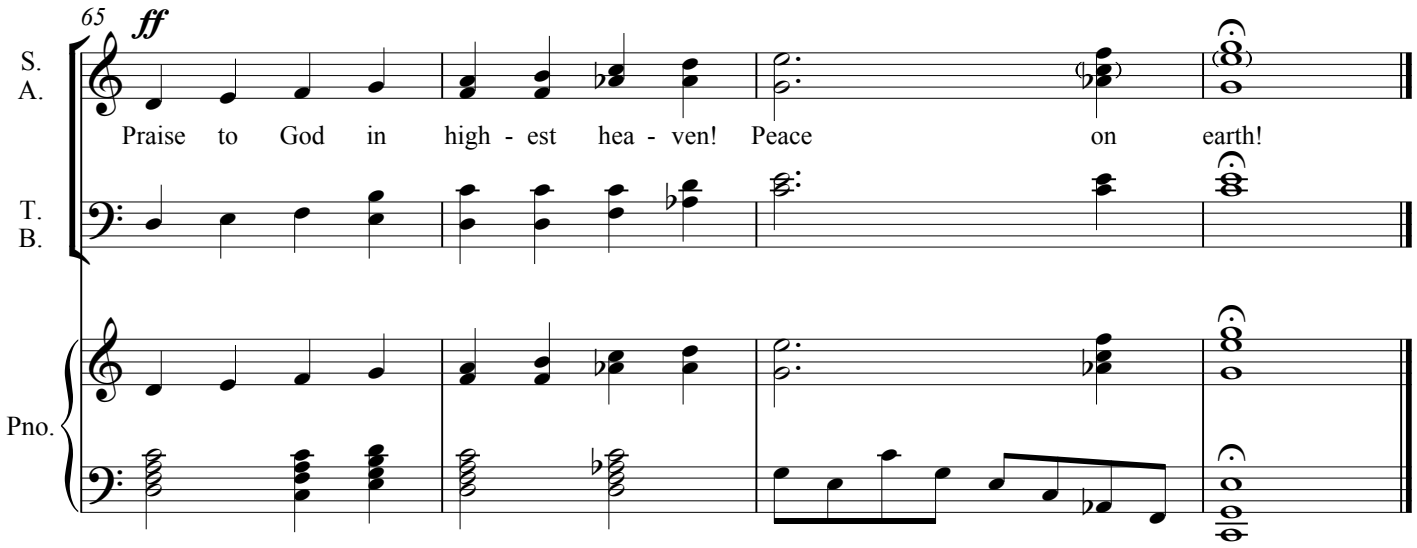
T. B.

Pno.


26
S.
A.
T.
B.
Pno.
side her, won - dering at the sight. High a - bove, a bright star
31
shin - ing through the night.
36
40
f
Fear not, for un - to you this day is


43
S.
A.
born a child in Beth-le-hem. You will find him sleep-ing in a man - ger wrapped in bands of cloth.
Pno.
Marcato
He is your Mes - si - ah and will save the peo - ple from their sin. Go and see your Mes
46
T.
B.
Pno.
49
S.
A.
Come!
Fear not, for I have joy-ful news for you_ and peo-ple ev-ery where.
si - ah - come!
f
I have good news for you.
T.
B.
Pno.
53
S.
A.
Un - to you is born a child in Beth - le hem of Ju - dah. He is your Mes - si - ah and will
Un - to you a child. He is your Mes -
T.
B.
Pno.


56
S.
A.
save the peo - ple from their sin.
Go and see your Mes - si - ah come!
For un - to you is born this day in
si - ah.
Go and see him come.
T.
B.
Pno.
60
S.
A.
Beth - le hem a ba - by child.
He is your Mes - si - ah and will save the peo - ple from their sin.
Un - to you is born this day in Beth le hem a ba - by boy.
He is your Mes si - ah and will
T.
B.
Pno.
63
S.
A.
Ho_____ san - nah, praise the Lord!
save__ the peo - ple from their sin.
T.
B.
Pno.


65
ff
S.
A.
Praise to God in high - est hea - ven! Peace on earth!
T.
B.
Pno.

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6. Shepherds' Dance

Lively ♩. = 110

William R. Miller

Bodhran

6

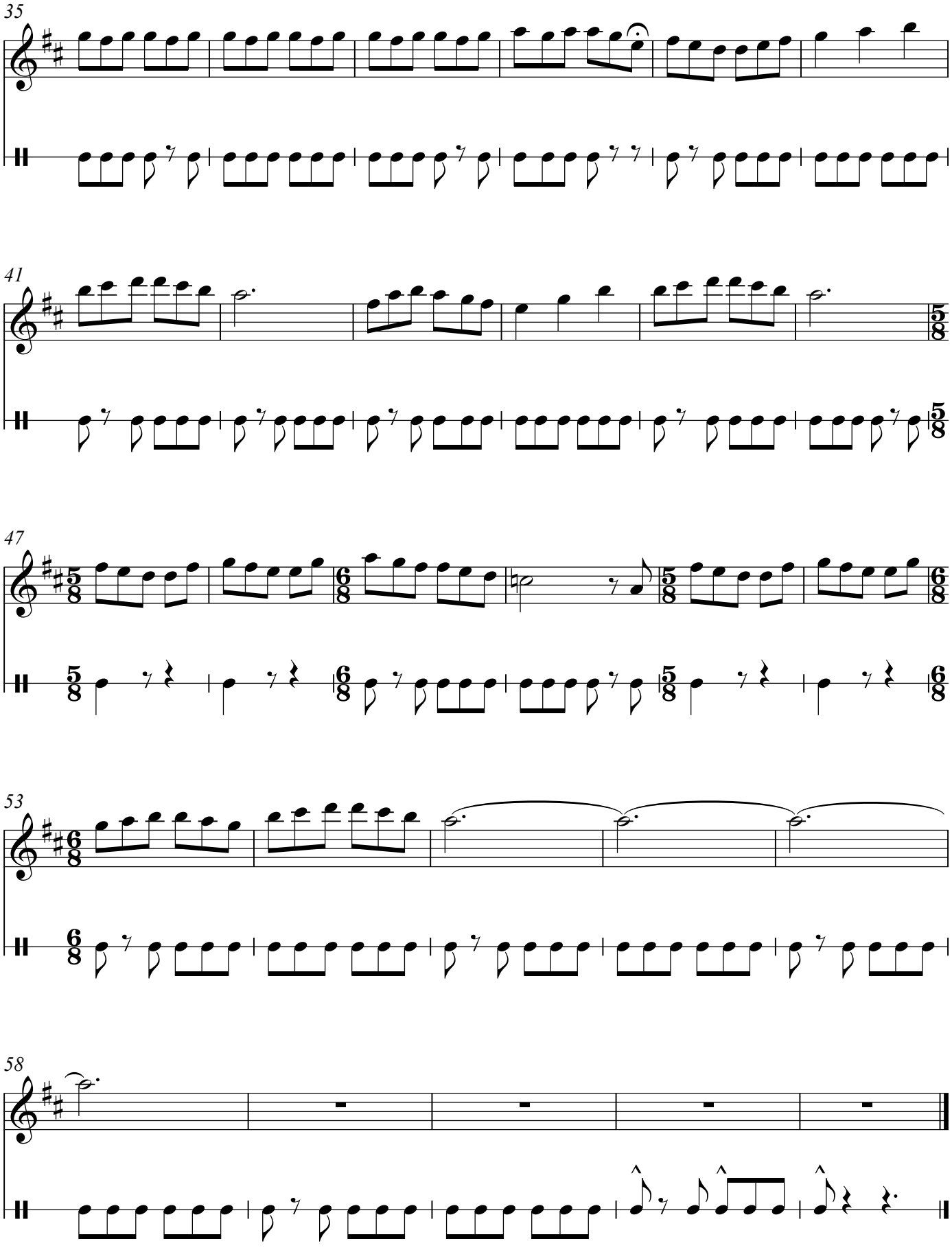
Flute

12

18

24

29


35
41
47
53
58

7. Mary's Lullabye

♩ = 60

William R. Miller

Soprano Solo

PIANO

Sleep now, my

5

S. Solo

ba - by. Rest from your jour - ney, wrapped safe - ly in my arms,

PNO.

10

S. Solo

lit-tle Je - sus. Shep-herds a - dore you.

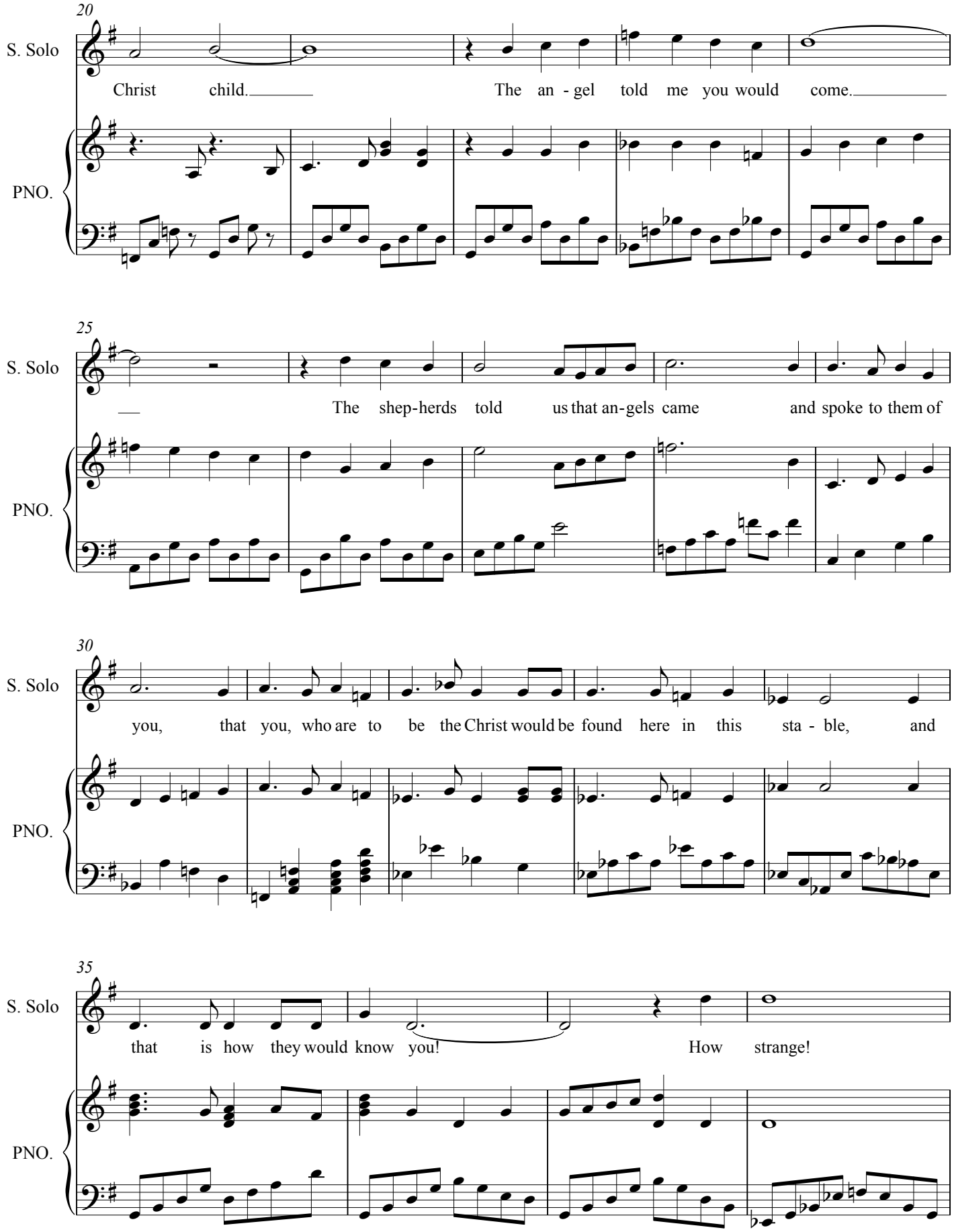
PNO.

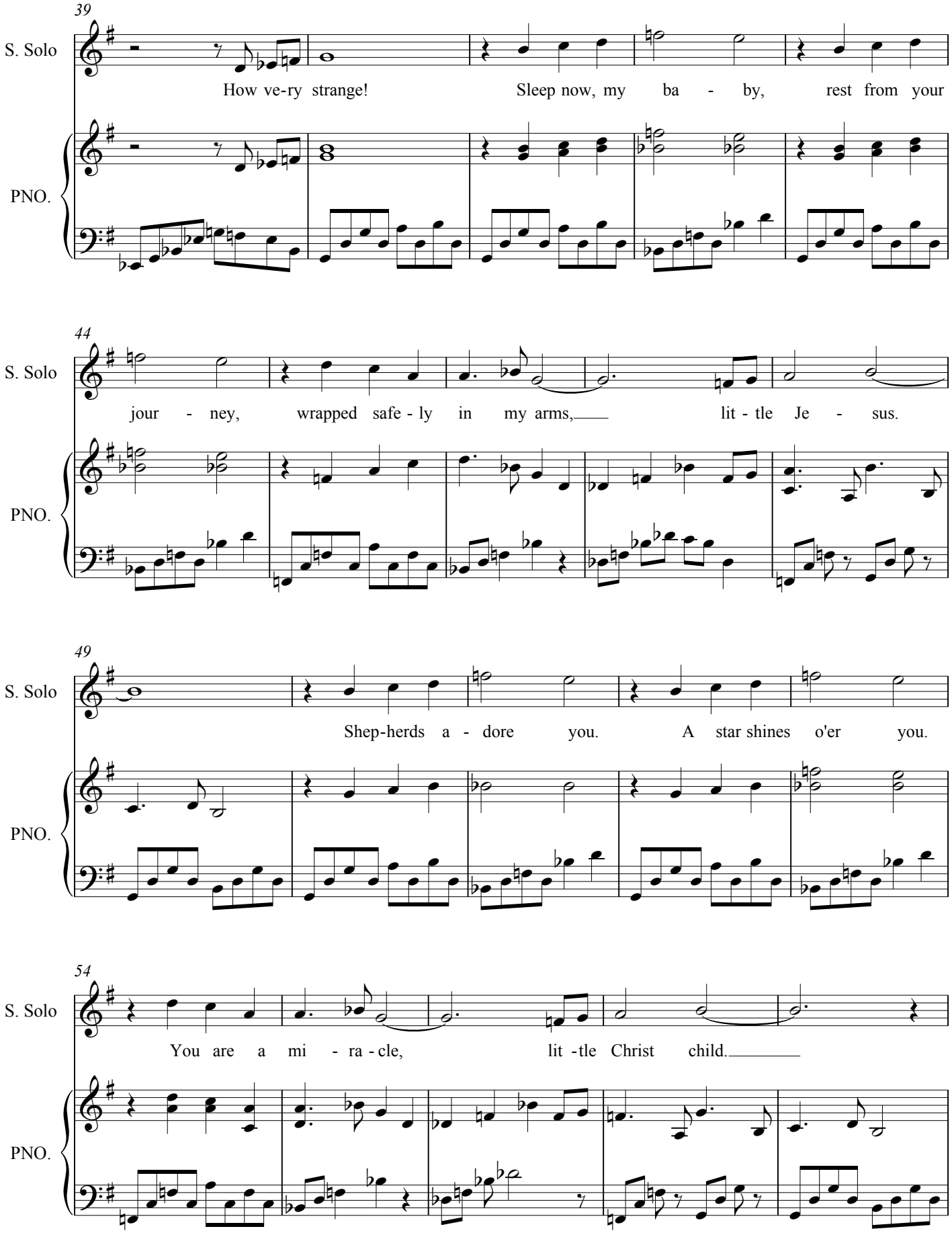
15

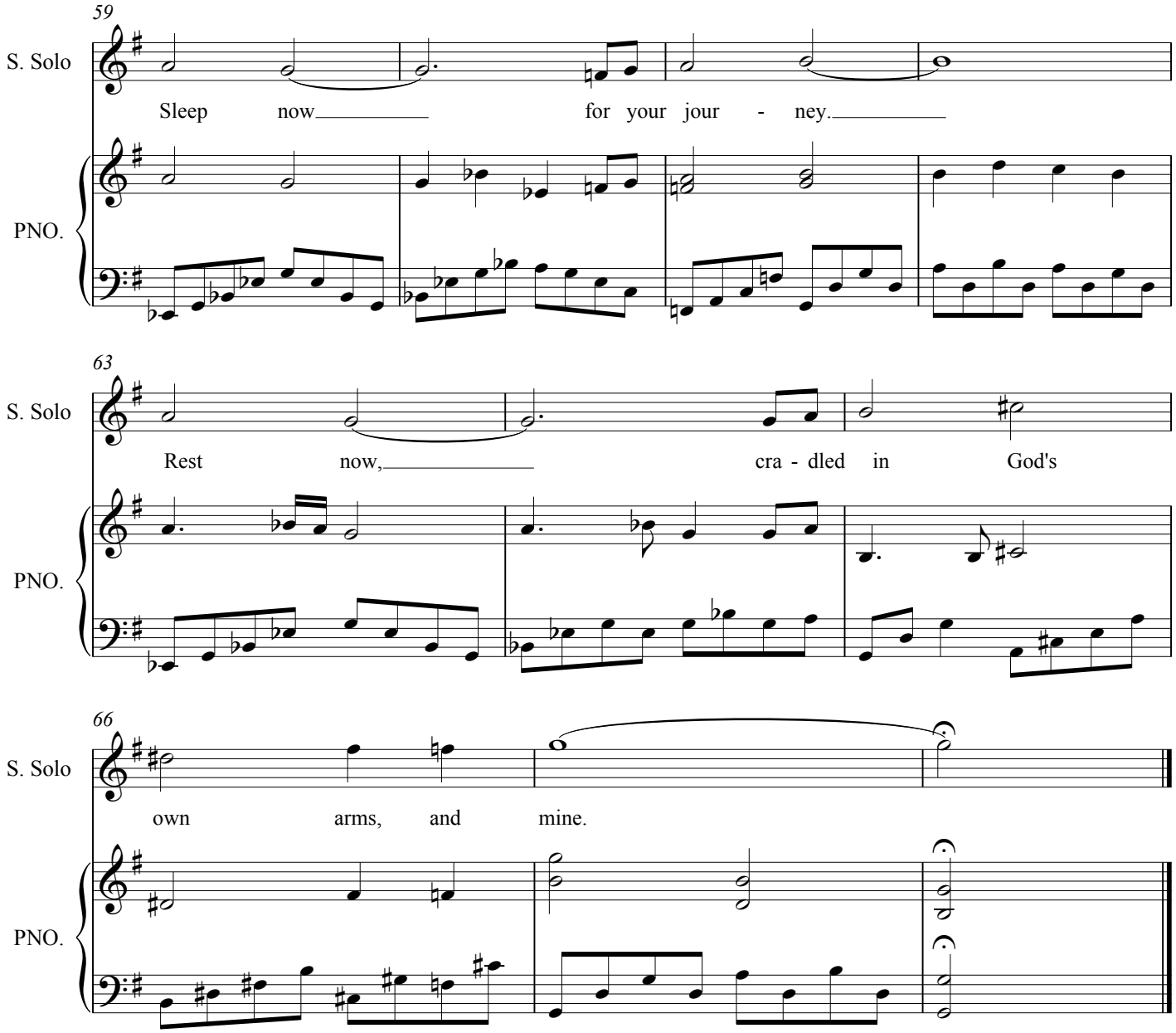
S. Solo

A star shines o'er you. You are a mi - ra - cle, lit-tle

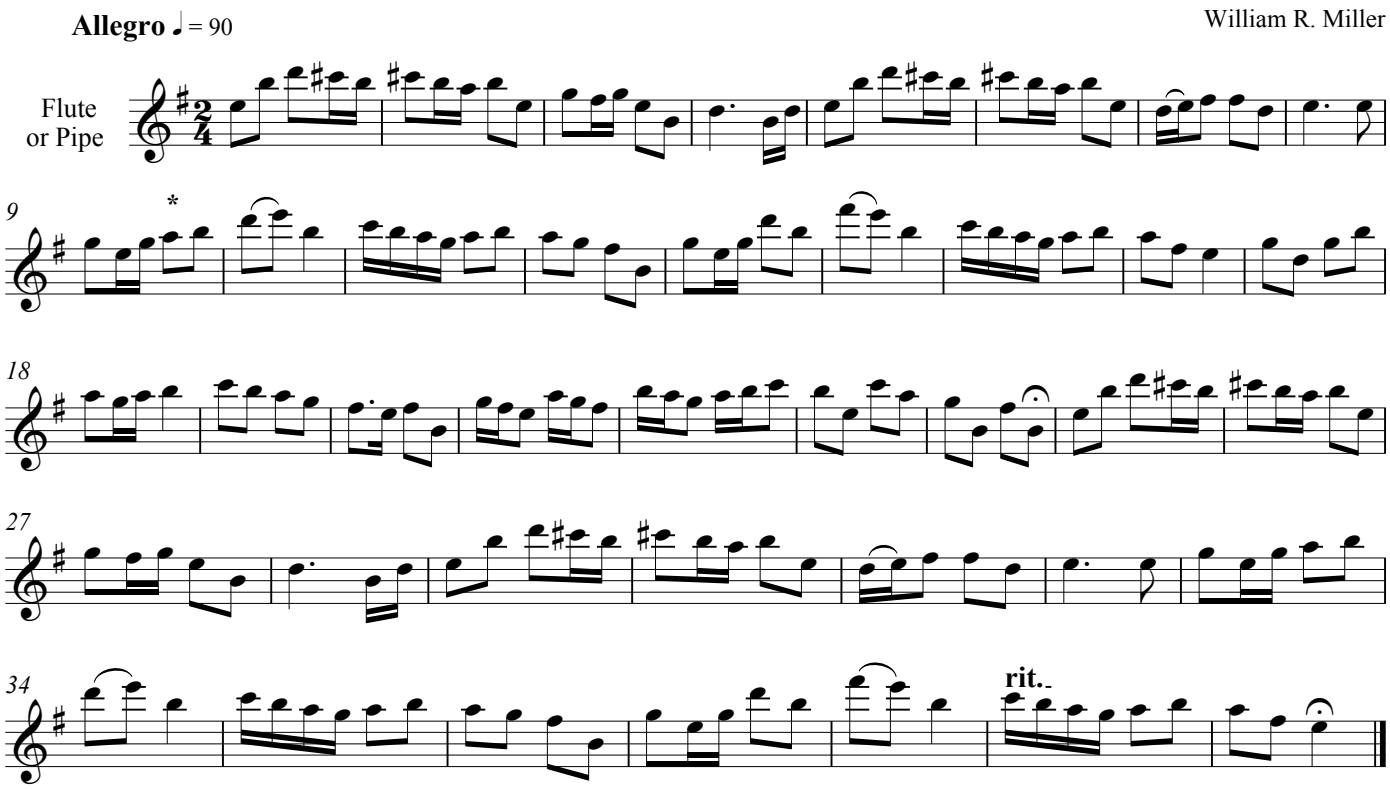
PNO.


20
S. Solo
Christ child.
The an - gel told me you would come.
PNO.
25
S. Solo
The shep-herds told us that an-gels came and spoke to them of
PNO.
30
S. Solo
you, that you, who are to be the Christ would be found here in this sta - ble, and
PNO.
35
S. Solo
that is how they would know you!
How strange!
PNO.


39
S. Solo
How ve-ry strange!
Sleep now, my ba - by, rest from your
PNO.
44
S. Solo
jour - ney, wrapped safe - ly in my arms, lit - tle Je - sus.
PNO.
49
S. Solo
Shep-herds a - dore you.
A star shines o'er you.
PNO.
54
S. Solo
You are a mi - ra - cle, lit - tle Christ child.
PNO.


59
S. Solo
Sleep now for your jour - ney.
PNO.
63
S. Solo
Rest now, cra - dled in God's
PNO.
66
S. Solo
own arms, and mine.
PNO.

8. Shepherds' Pipe



* Narrator begins reading here, finishing at about the same time as the flute:

In the traditional Christmas story, Mary and Joseph are rebuffed by innkeepers and left to sleep outside in a stable. Yet it seems unlikely that the people of Bethlehem, whose religion demanded hospitality to strangers, could be so callous, and Matthew reports that by the time the Magi arrived, they found Jesus and his family in a house. A house? What house? If indeed there was no room for them when they arrived, and they had to spend that first night out back in a stable, then perhaps it was the very same innkeepers who took them in as soon as a room was available.

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9. Innkeepers' Welcome

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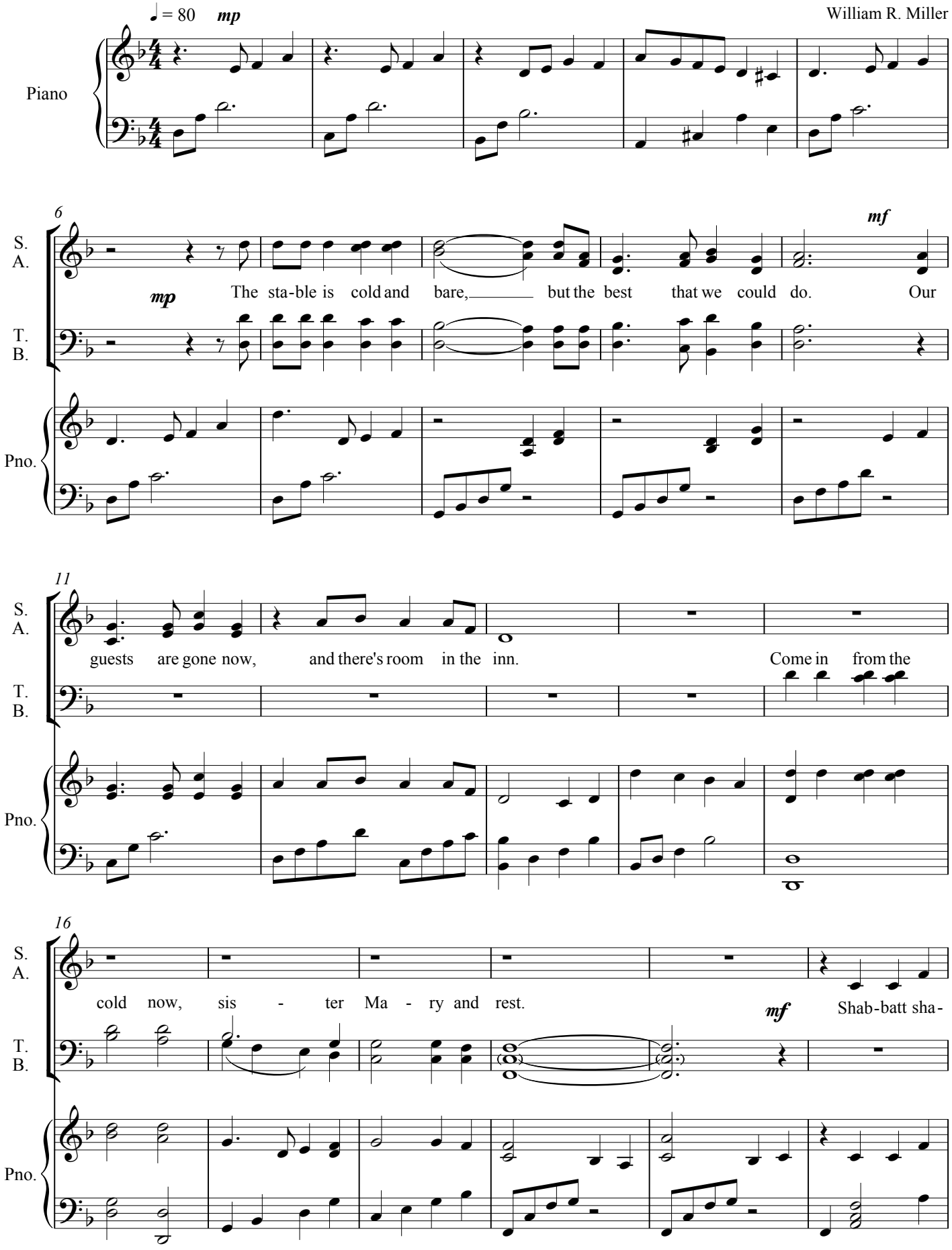
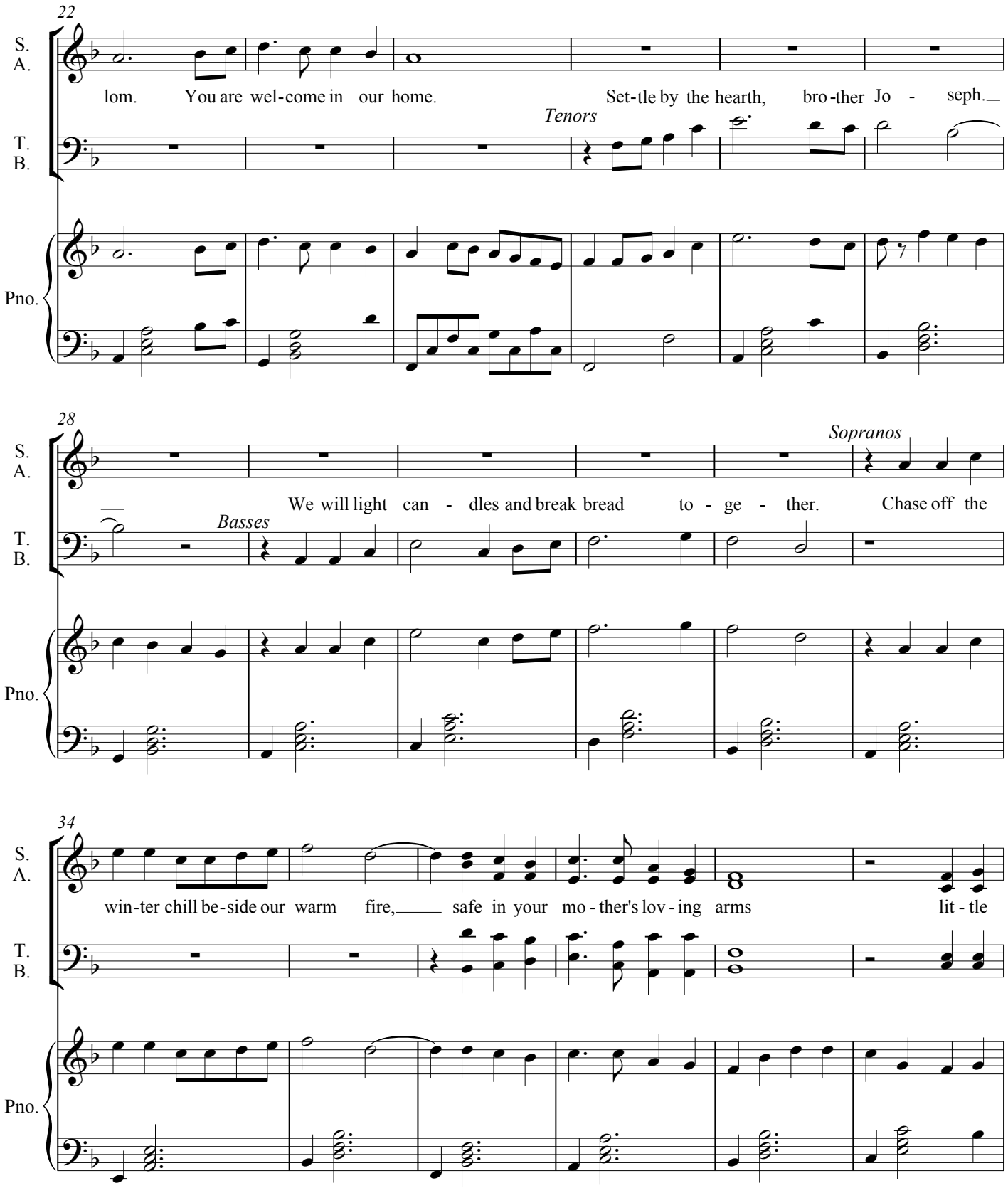
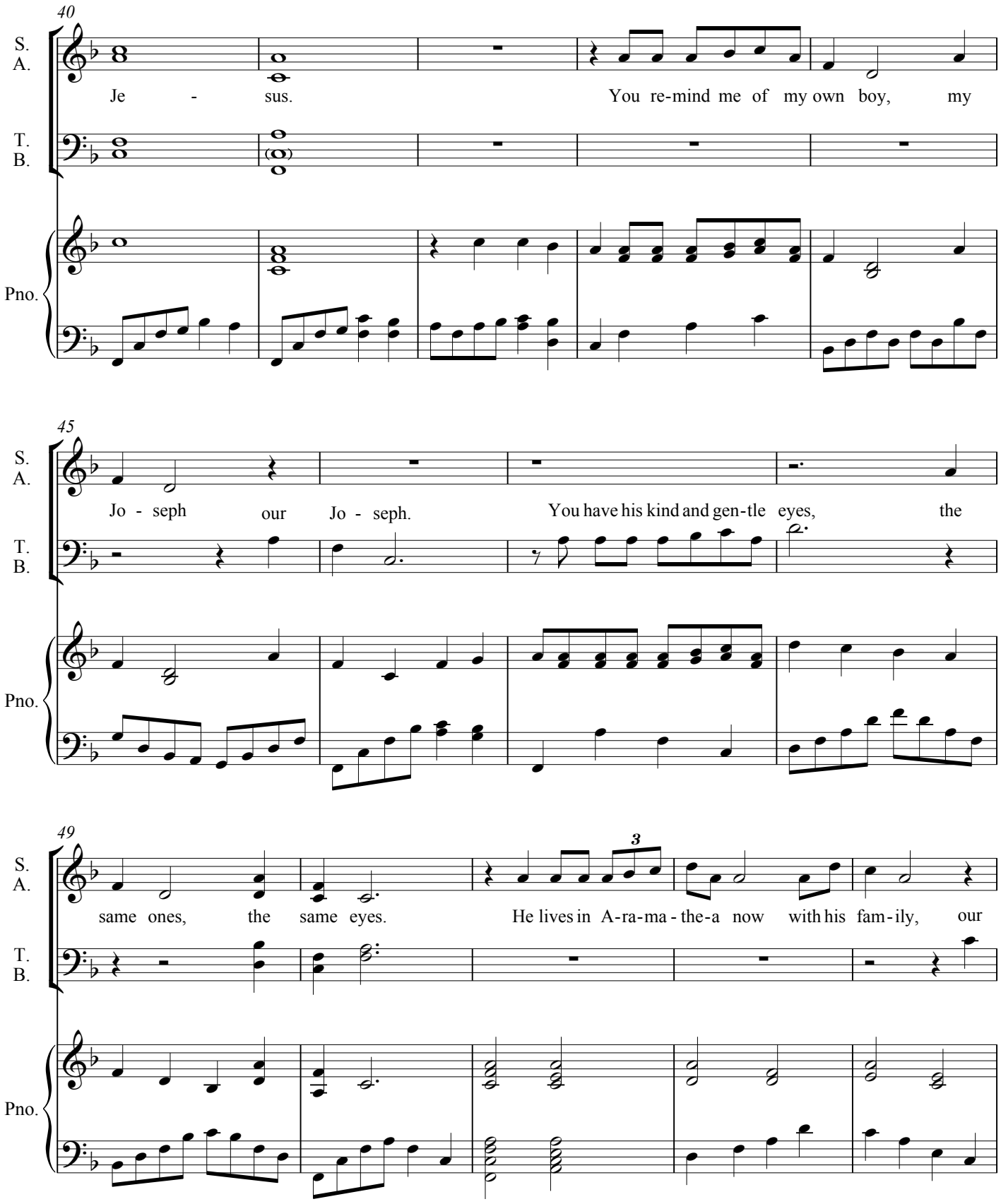
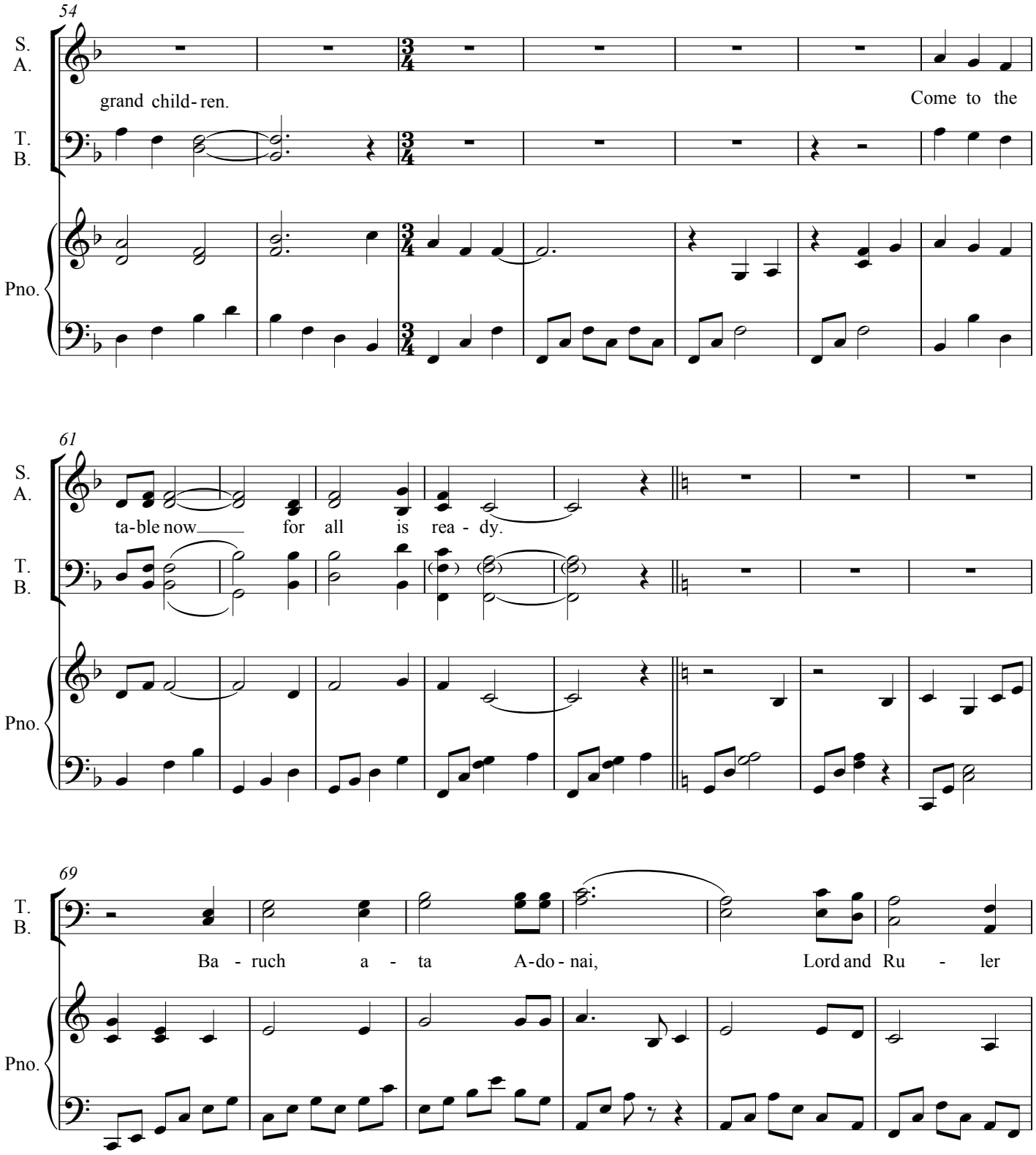
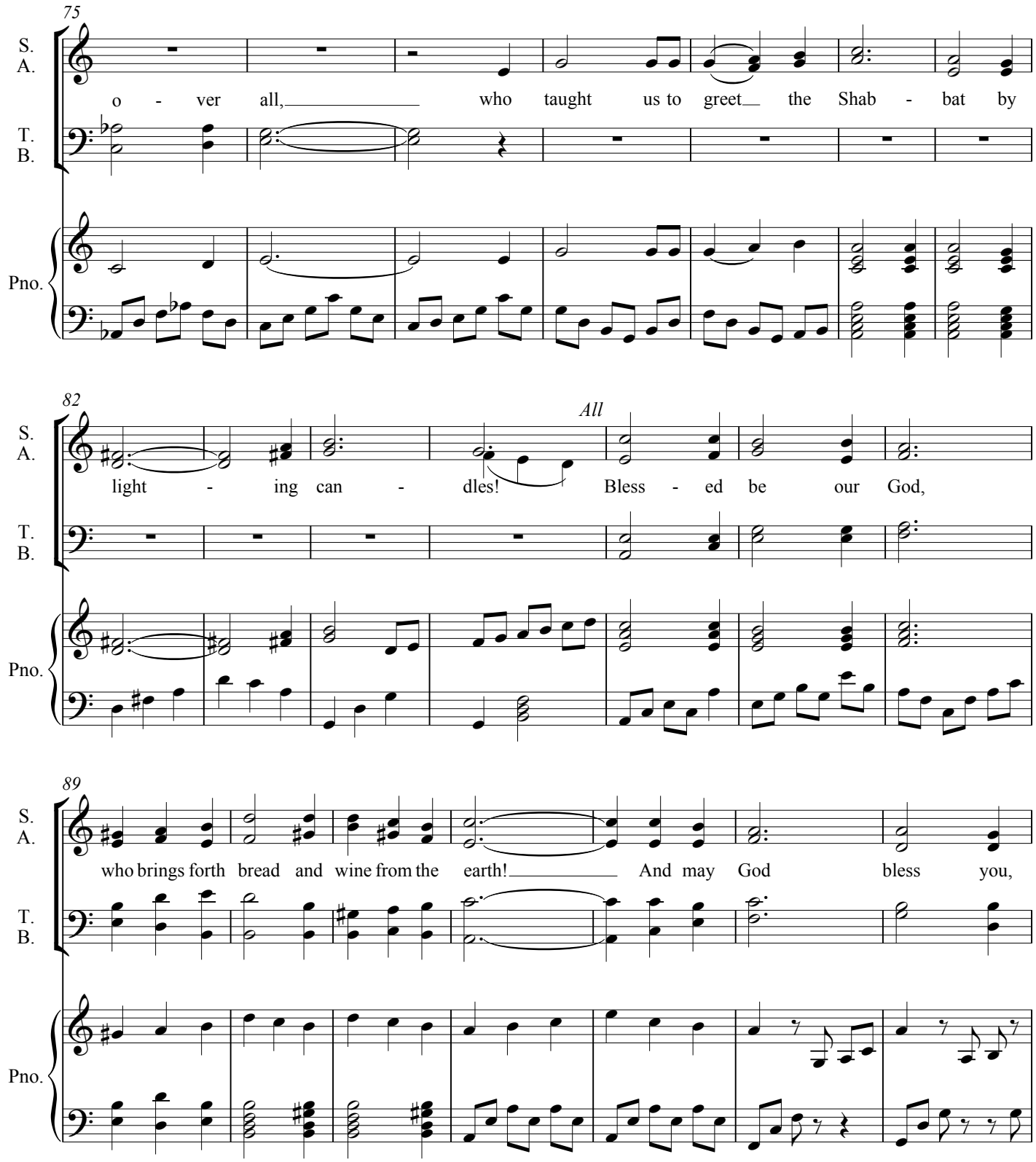
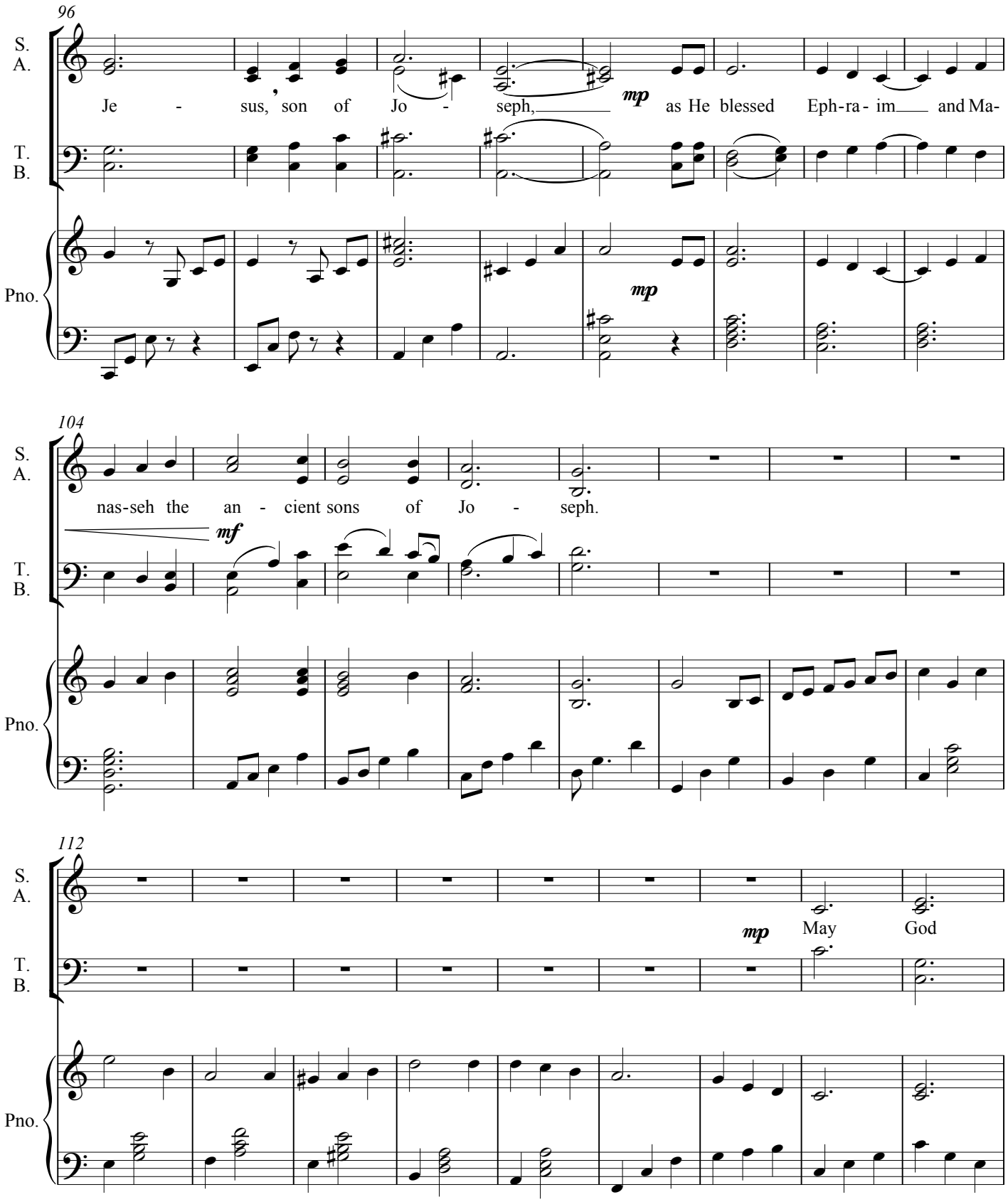


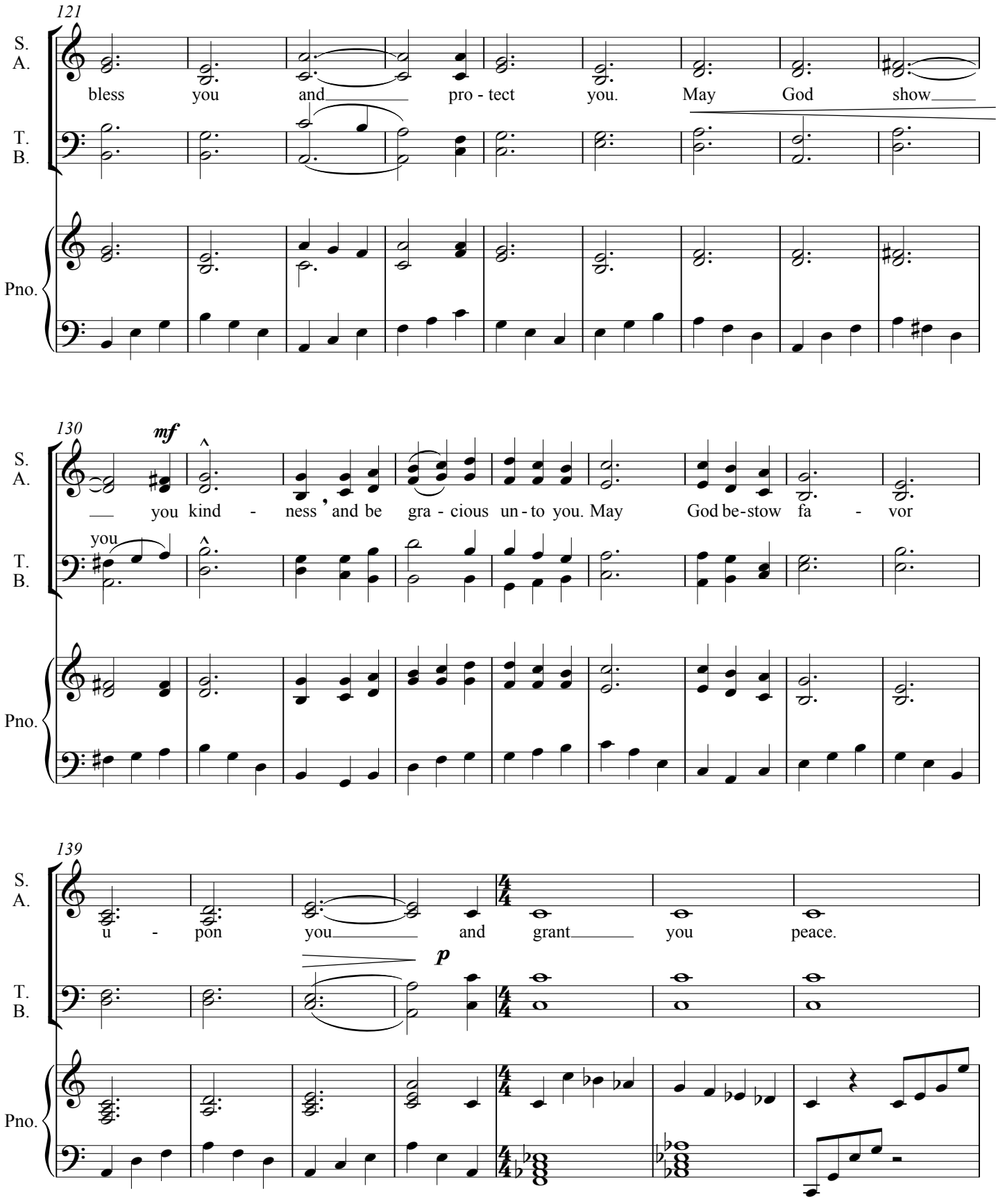

22
S.
A.
lom. You are wel-come in our home. Set-tle by the hearth, bro-ther Jo - seph.
Tenors
T.
B.
Pno.
28
Sopranos
We will light can - dles and break bread to - ge - ther. Chase off the
Basses
34
win-ter chill be-side our warm fire, safe in your mo-ther's lov-ing arms lit-tle

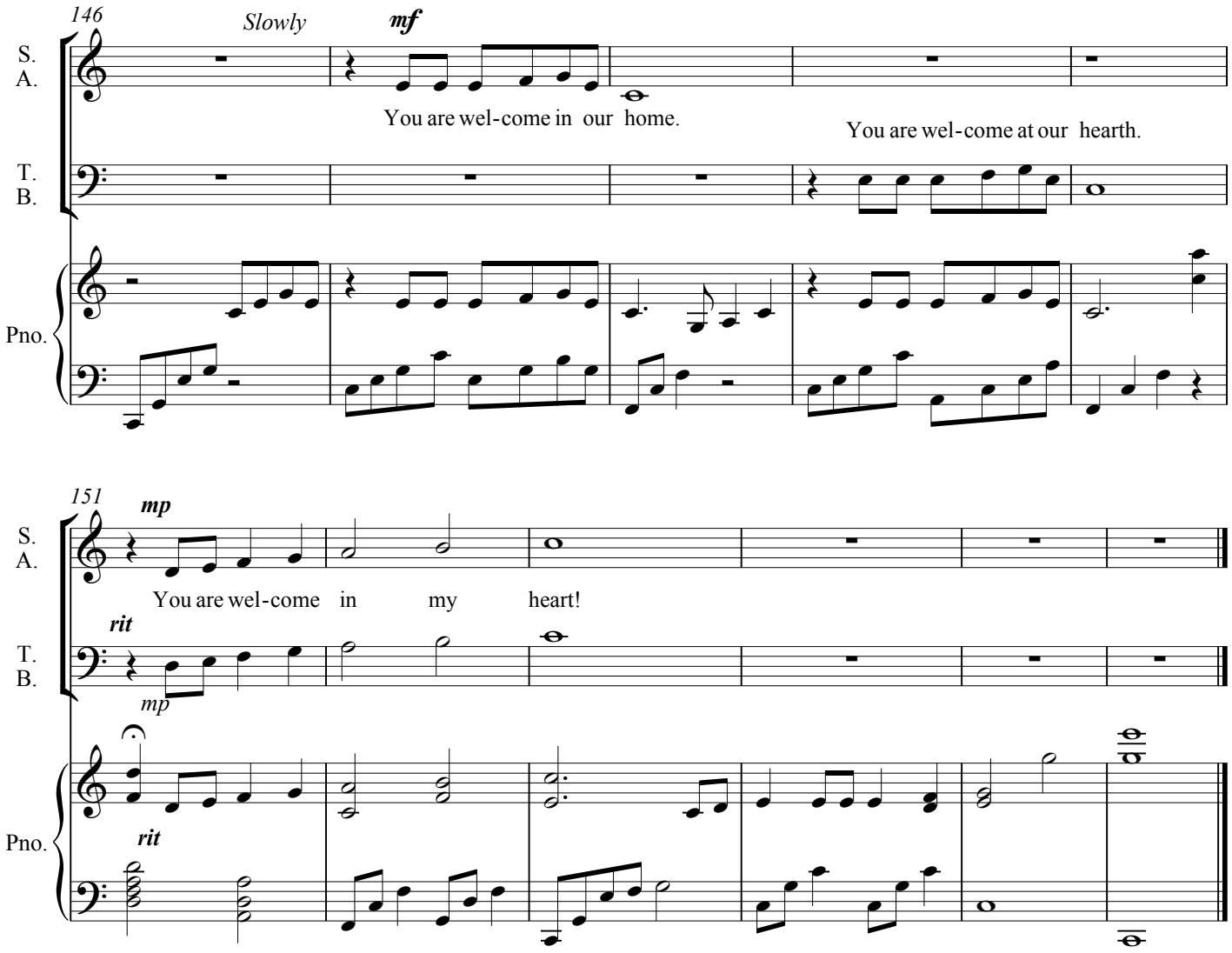

40
S.
A.
T.
B.
Pno.
Je - sus.
You re-mind me of my own boy, my
45
Jo - seph our Jo - seph.
You have his kind and gen-tle eyes, the
49
3
same ones, the same eyes.
He lives in A-ra-ma - the-a now with his fam-ily, our


54
S.
A.
grand child- ren.
Come to the
T.
B.
Pno.
61
S.
A.
ta-ble now for all is rea - dy.
T.
B.
Pno.
69
T.
B.
Ba - ruch a - ta A-do - nai,
Lord and Ru - ler
Pno.


75
S.
A.
T.
B.
Pno.
o - ver all, who taught us to greet the Shab - bat by
82
All
light - ing can - dles! Bless - ed be our God,
89
who brings forth bread and wine from the earth! And may God bless you,


96
S.
A.
T.
B.
Pno.
Je - sus, son of Jo - seph, as He blessed Eph-ra- im and Ma-
mp
104
nas-seh the an - cient sons of Jo - seph.
mf
112
May God
mp


121
S.
A.
T.
B.
Pno.
bless you and pro - tect you. May God show
130
mf
you kind - ness and be gra - cious un - to you. May God be - stow fa - vor
you
139
u - pon you and grant you peace.
p



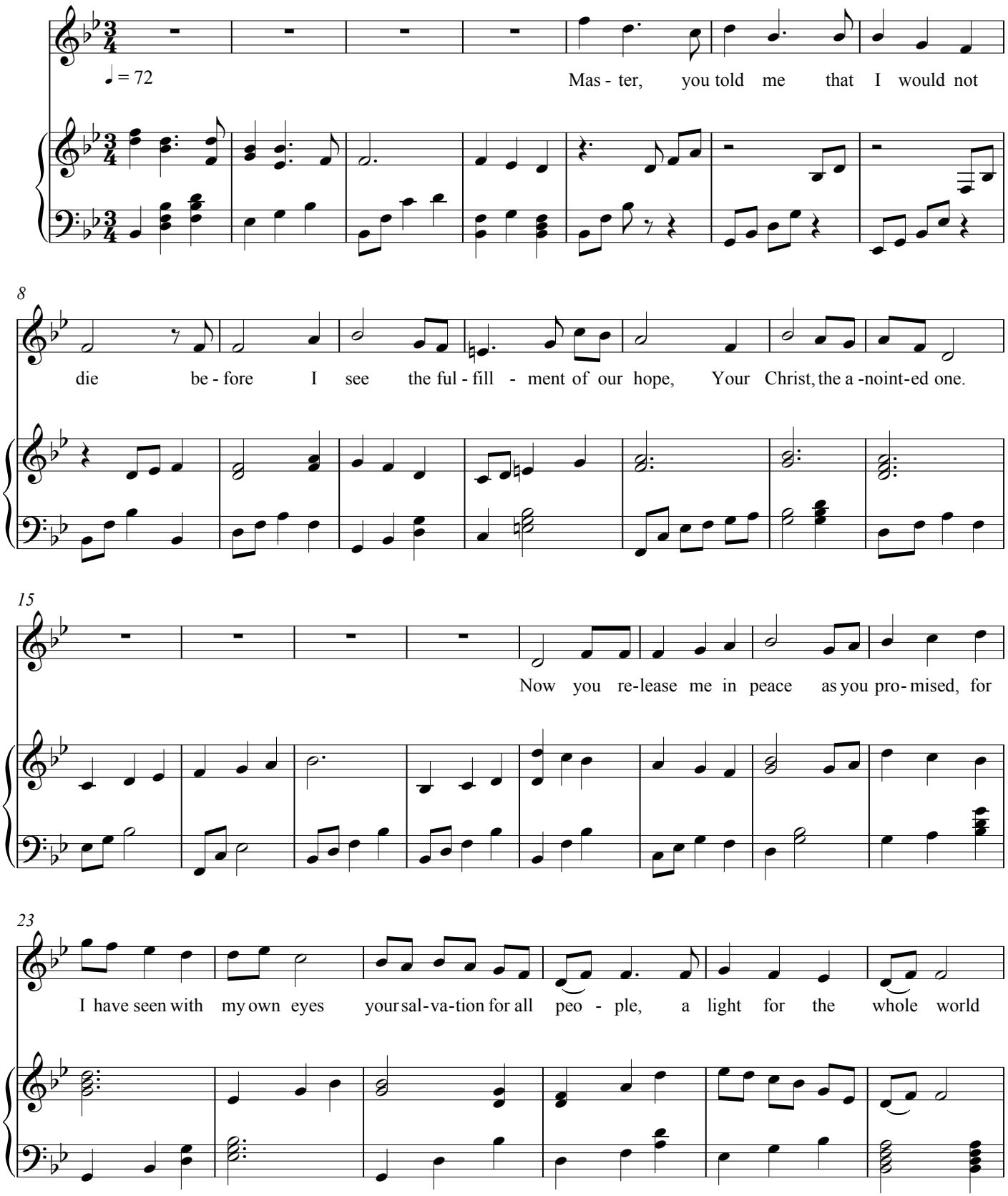
Narrator: Now there was in Jerusalem a man whose name was Simeon, a righteous and devout man who was longing for the deliverance of Israel. The Holy Spirit rested on him and revealed that, though he was aged, he would not die before he had seen the Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon when into the great temple, and at the same time Joseph and Mary brought the baby Jesus, forty days old, into the temple for the rite of purification, as was customary under the law. Simeon saw the child, and immediately took him in his arms, praising and thanking God, and his parents were amazed at what the prophet said.

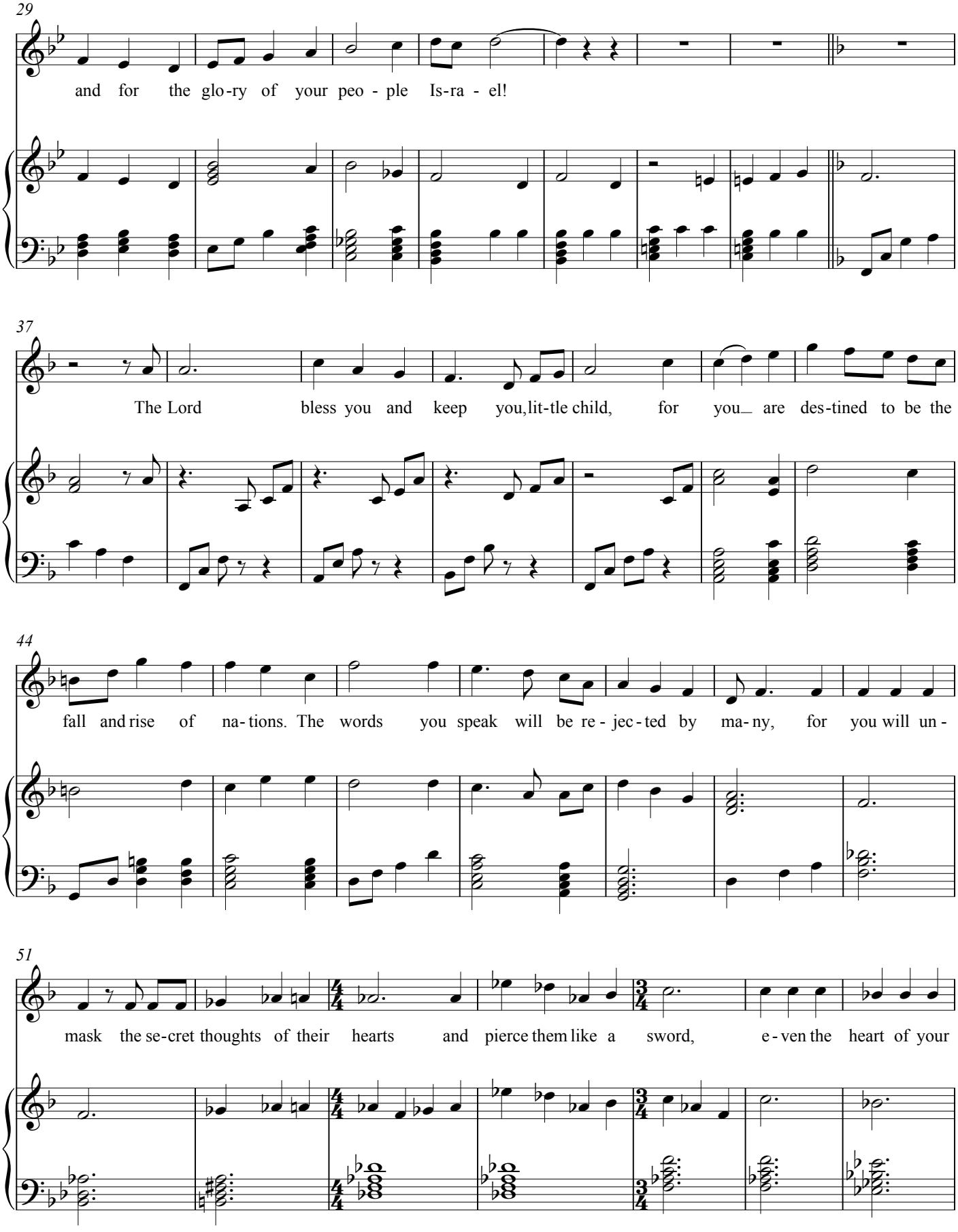
Simeon reminds us that we must not, dare not separate the sweet babe of Bethlehem from the man he would become -- the Holy Child whom rich and poor alike could adore, from the homeless prophet of God who was both deeply loved and passionately hated, and who would ultimately, like so many prophets before and since, be murdered for what he said and was.

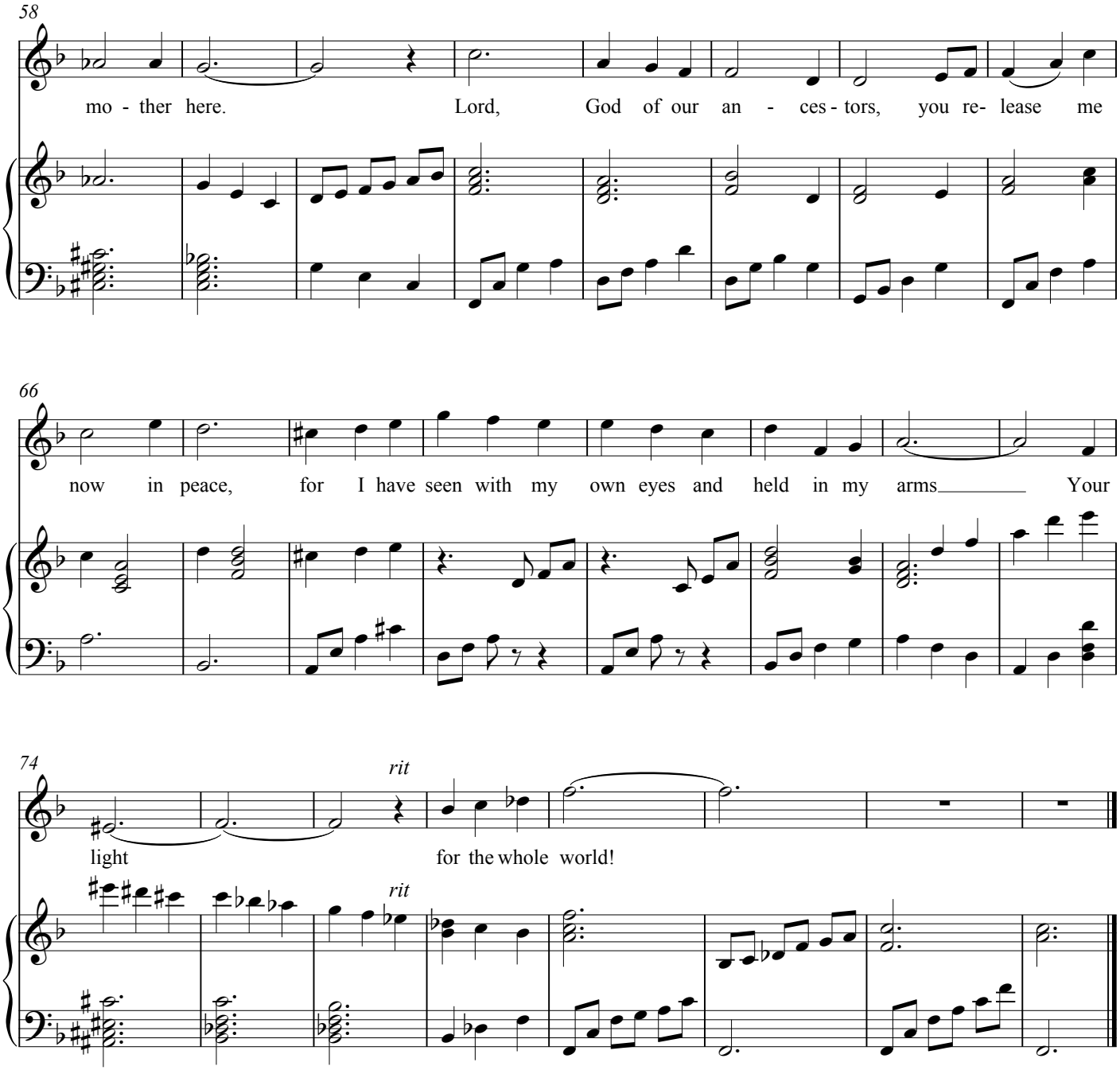
10. Simeon's Prophecy

William R. Miller

♩ = 72

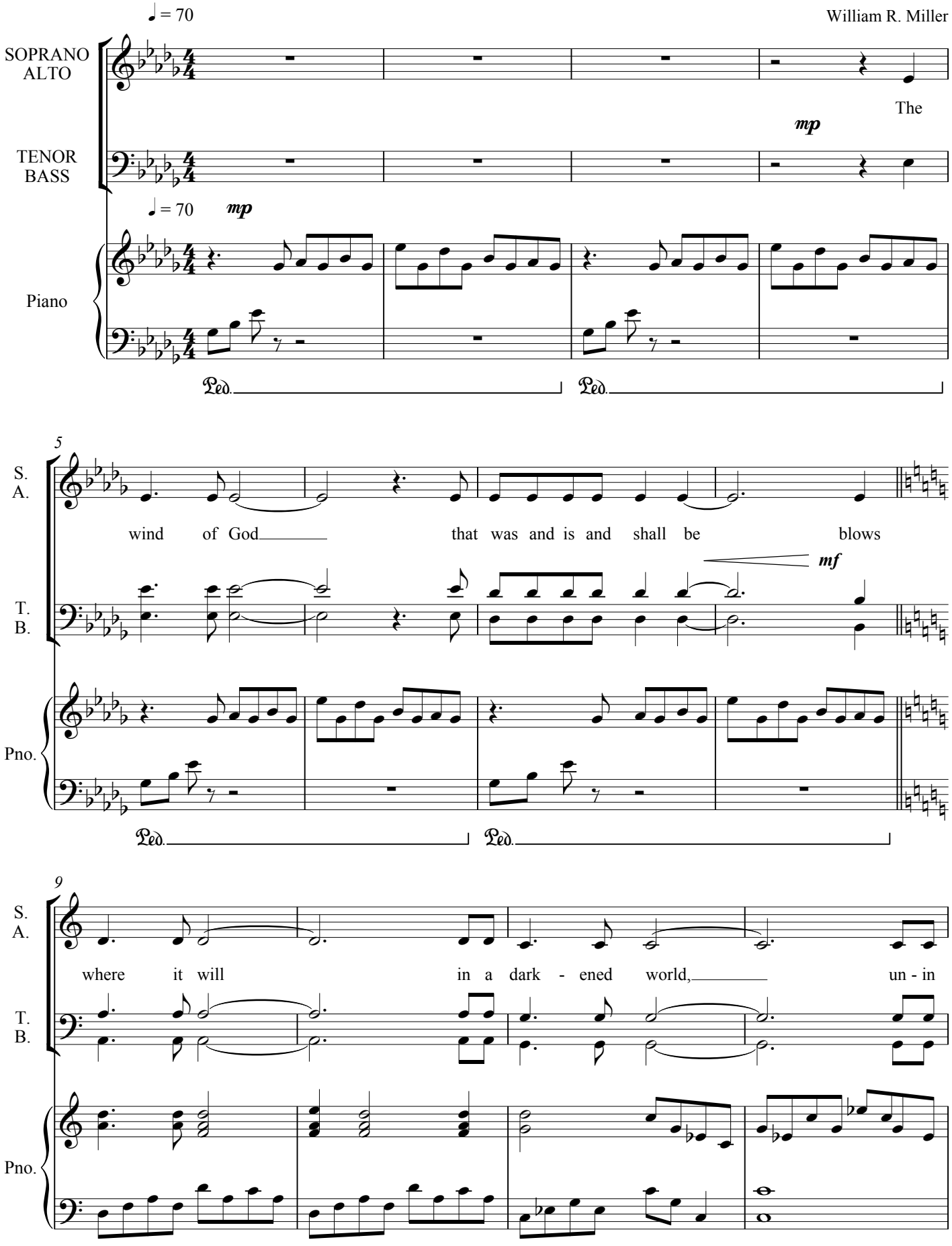


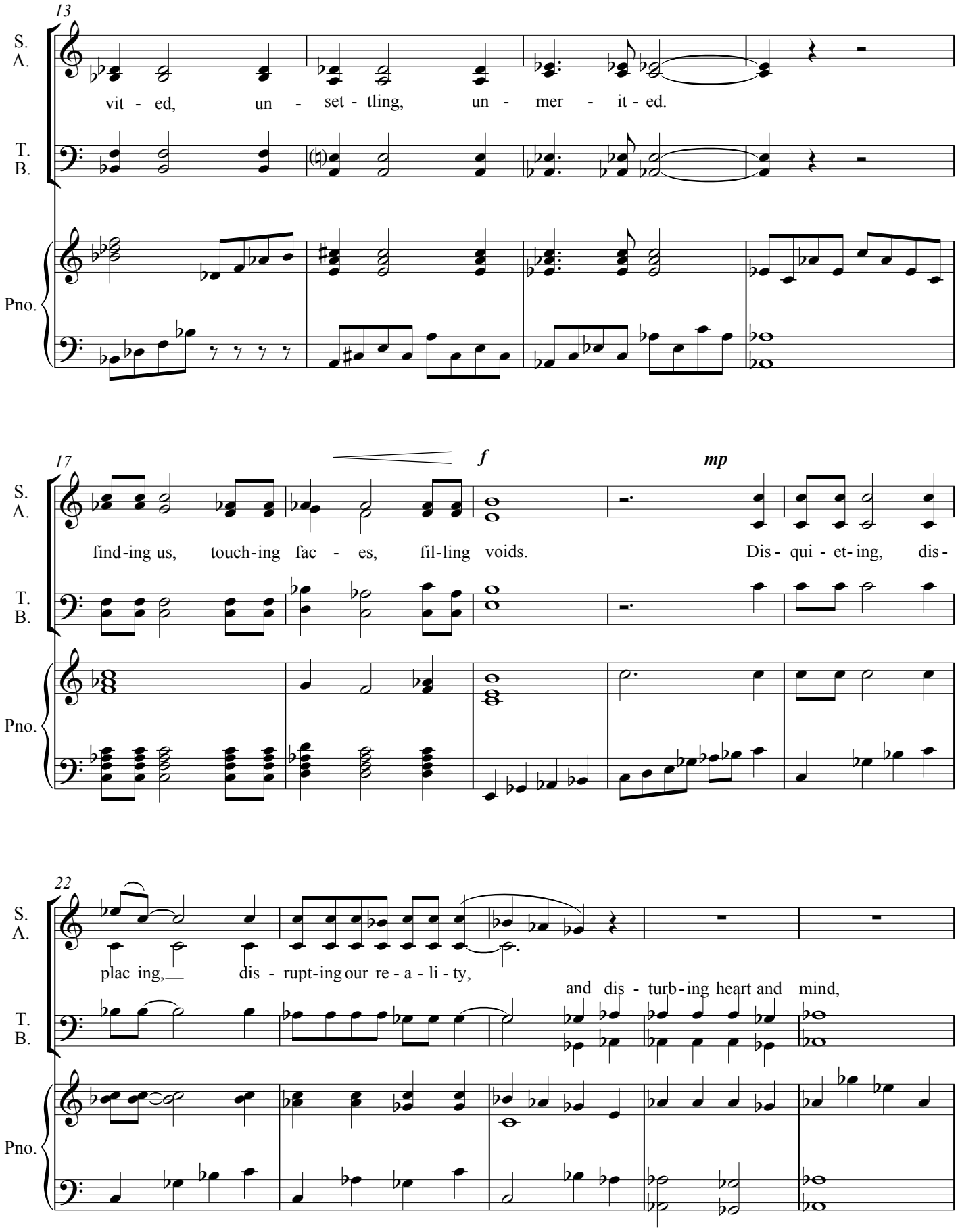

29
and for the glo-ry of your peo - ple Is-ra - el!
37
The Lord bless you and keep you, lit-tle child, for you_ are des-tined to be the
44
fall and rise of na- tions. The words you speak will be re - jec - ted by ma- ny, for you will un -
51
mask the se-cret thoughts of their hearts and pierce them like a sword, e - ven the heart of your

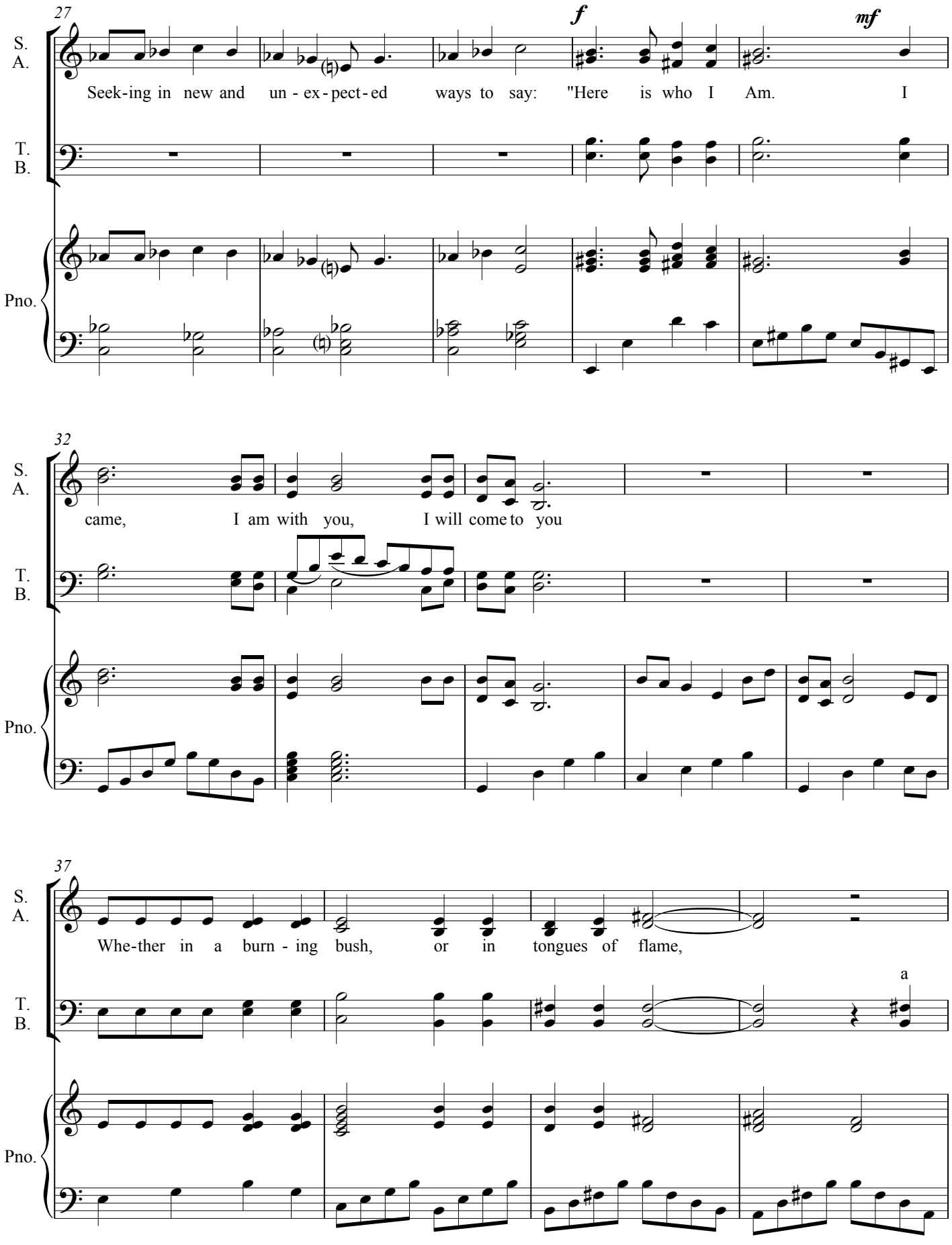

58
mo - ther here.
Lord, God of our an - ces - tors, you re- lease me
66
now in peace, for I have seen with my own eyes and held in my arms
Your
74
rit
light
for the whole world!
rit

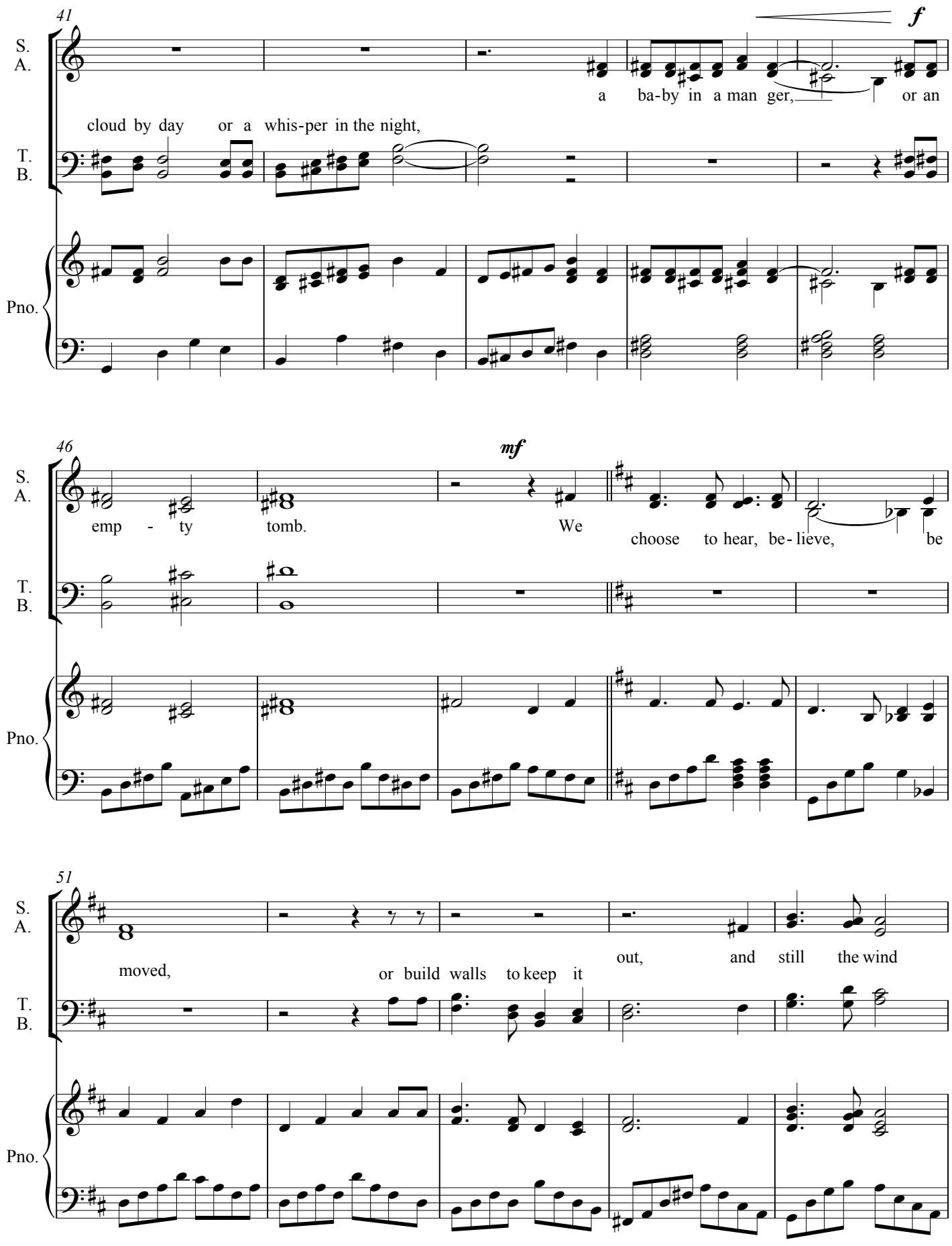
11. The Wind of God

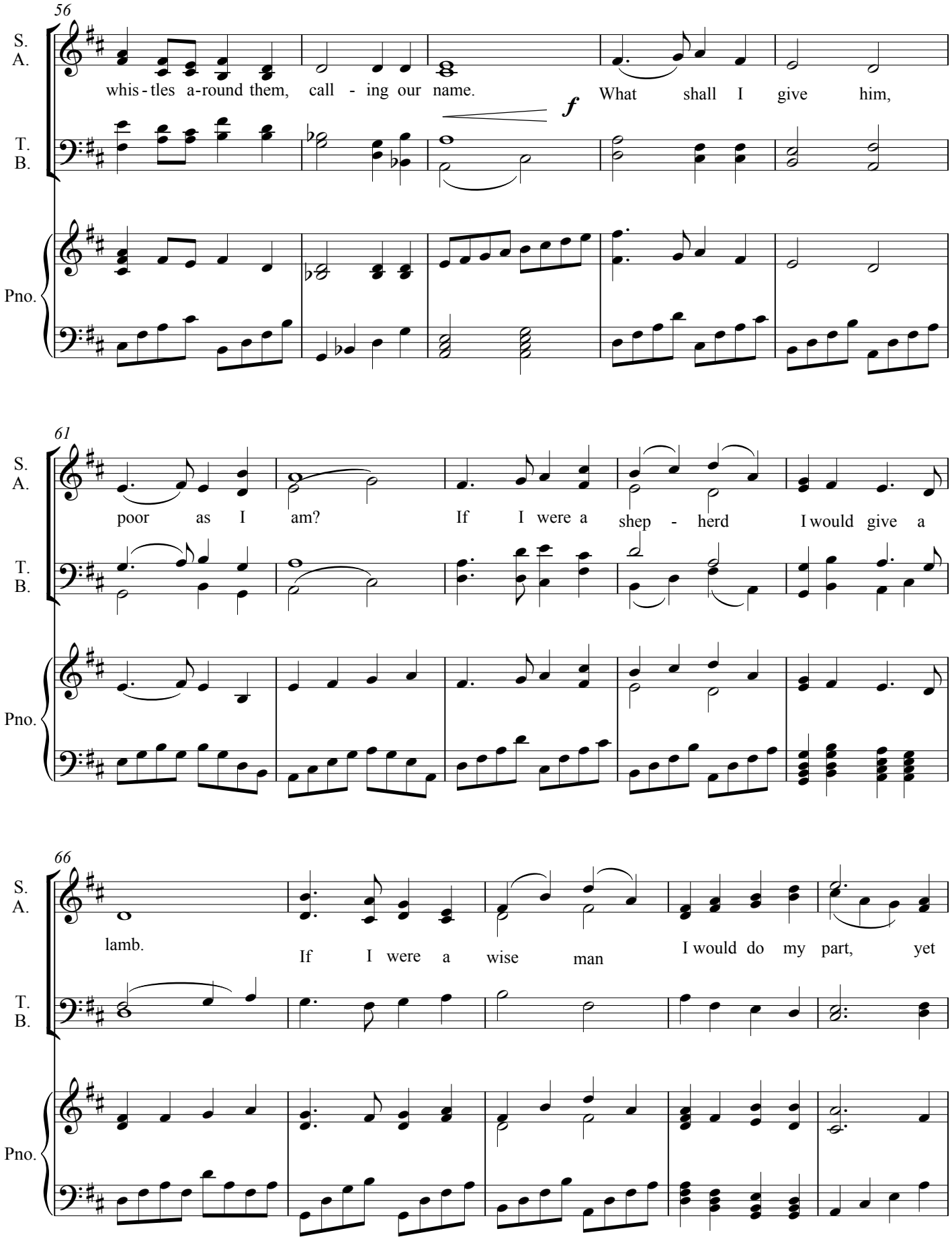
William R. Miller

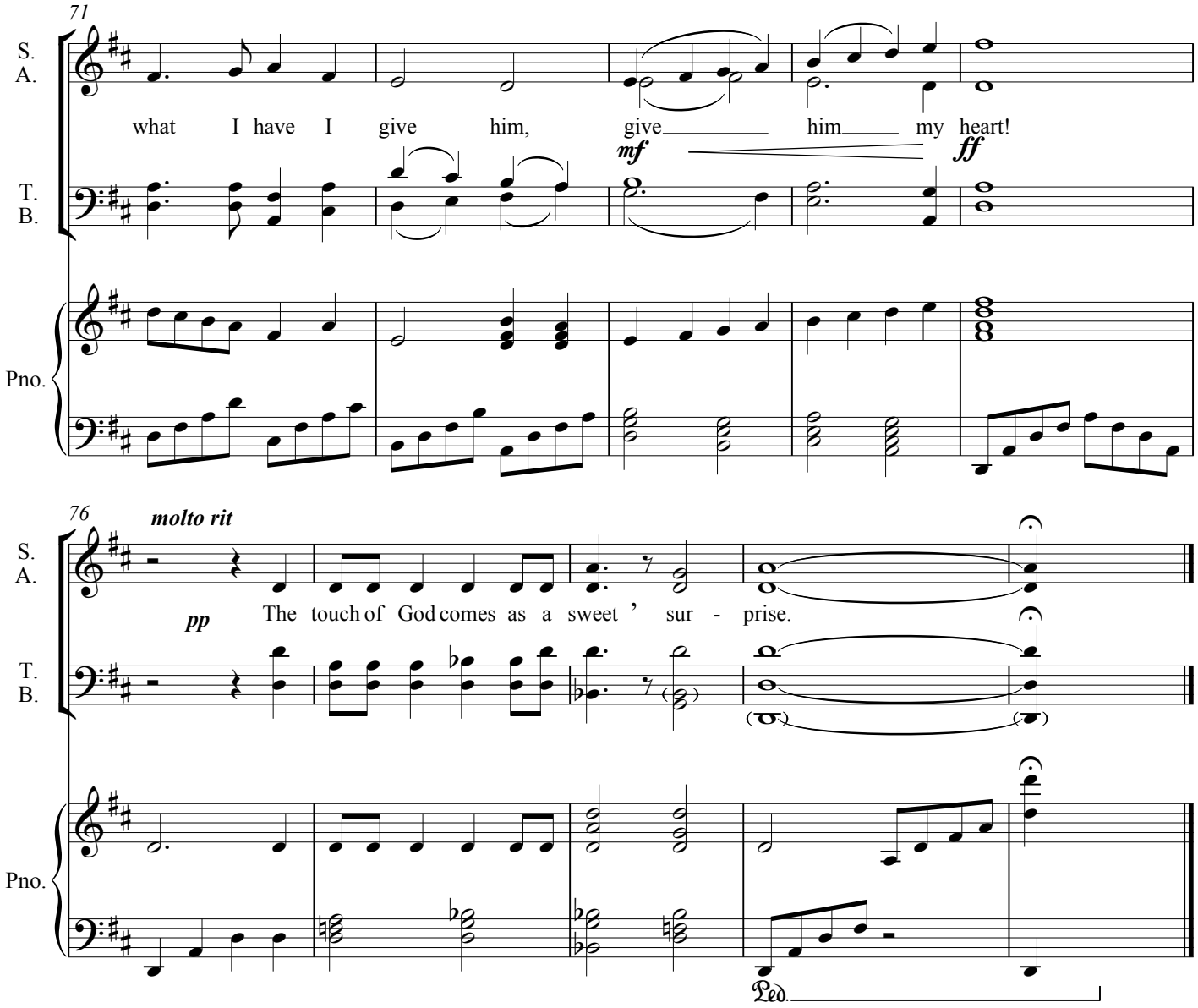



13
S.
A.
vit - ed, un - set - tling, un - mer - it - ed.
T.
B.
Pno.
17
f
mp
S.
A.
find-ing us, touch-ing fac - es, fil-ling voids. Dis - qui - et-ing, dis -
T.
B.
Pno.
22
S.
A.
plac ing, dis - rupt-ing our re - a - li - ty,
and dis - turb-ing heart and mind,
T.
B.
Pno.


27
f
mf
S.
A.
Seek-ing in new and un - ex - pect - ed ways to say: "Here is who I Am. I
T.
B.
Pno.
32
S.
A.
came, I am with you, I will come to you
T.
B.
Pno.
37
S.
A.
Whe-ther in a burn - ing bush, or in tongues of flame,
T.
B.
a
Pno.


41
f
S.
A.
a ba-by in a man ger, or an
cloud by day or a whis-per in the night,
T.
B.
Pno.
46
mf
emp - ty tomb. We
choose to hear, be- lieve, be
51
moved,
or build walls to keep it
out, and still the wind


56
S.
A.
T.
B.
Pno.
whis - tles a-round them, call - ing our name.
f
What shall I give him,
61
poor as I am?
If I were a shep - herd
I would give a
66
lamb.
If I were a wise man
I would do my part, yet


71
S.
A.
what I have I give him, give him my heart!
mf
ff
T.
B.
Pno.
76
molto rit
S.
A.
pp
The touch of God comes as a sweet ' sur - prise.
T.
B.
Pno.
Ped.