NOTES

The Sacred Harp

(Arrangements of Original American Folk Hymns)

Sacred Harp or *Shaped Note* singing is a uniquely American style of music. It evolved in the early 18th. century when traveling choir masters used the FA SOL LA method to teach their mostly Appalachian choirs part singing. Traditionally, the songs are sung through, first using the symbols FA SOL LA MI FA for the pitch names as indicated by the shape of each note.

The music is richly modal with a surging pulse. The melodic nature of each part is stressed over its place in the harmony so that the lines retain a vigorous independence. The lyrics create strong poetic images that match the strength of the music. In performance, the singers often resonate the sound in a slightly nasal fashion with the tenor (the melody) and the soprano often sung by both men and women in octaves. Performances are most often done A Cappella.

In these arrangements, I attempted to retain the characteristic aspects of the style while making it accessable and varied enough to be enjoyable. An excellent grouping for these pieces would be (1) **Soar Away** speaks of man's desire to be more like and ultimately with God, (2) **Sweet Prospect** describes a beautiful hereafter, (3) **Windham** warns of the reality of death, (4) **Evening Shade** presents a resignation that death is indeed inevitable, while (5) **Northfield** brings forth the joy and hope of rebirth when "death itself shall die". When performing as a group, I suggest omitting the second verse in **Sweet Prospect** and verses two and four in **Windham**.

G. S. C.

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Soar Away

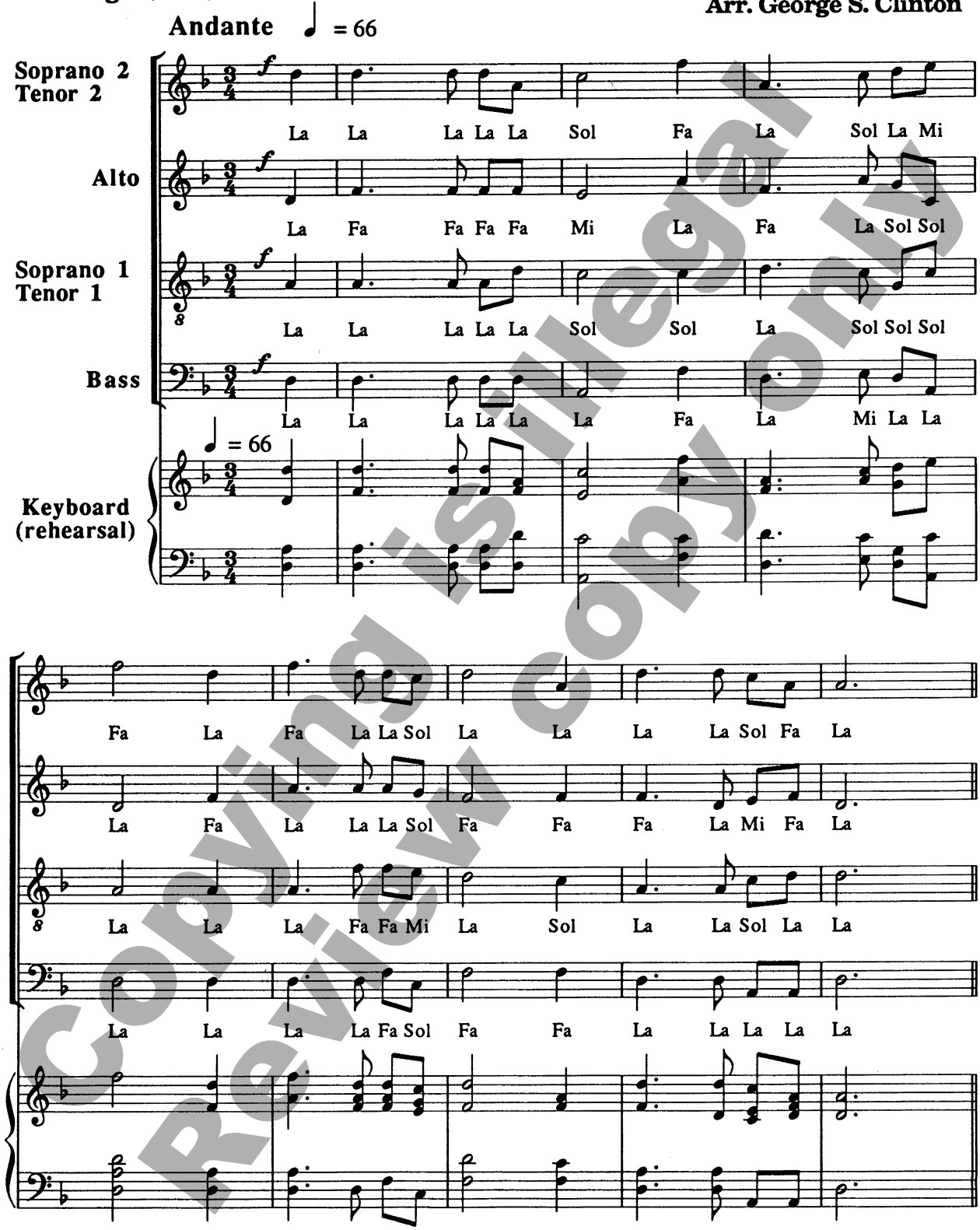
(from The Sacred Harp)

S.S.A.T.T.B.

Performance time: 2:00

A. M. Cagle (1935)

A. M. Cagle (1935)
Arr. George S. Clinton



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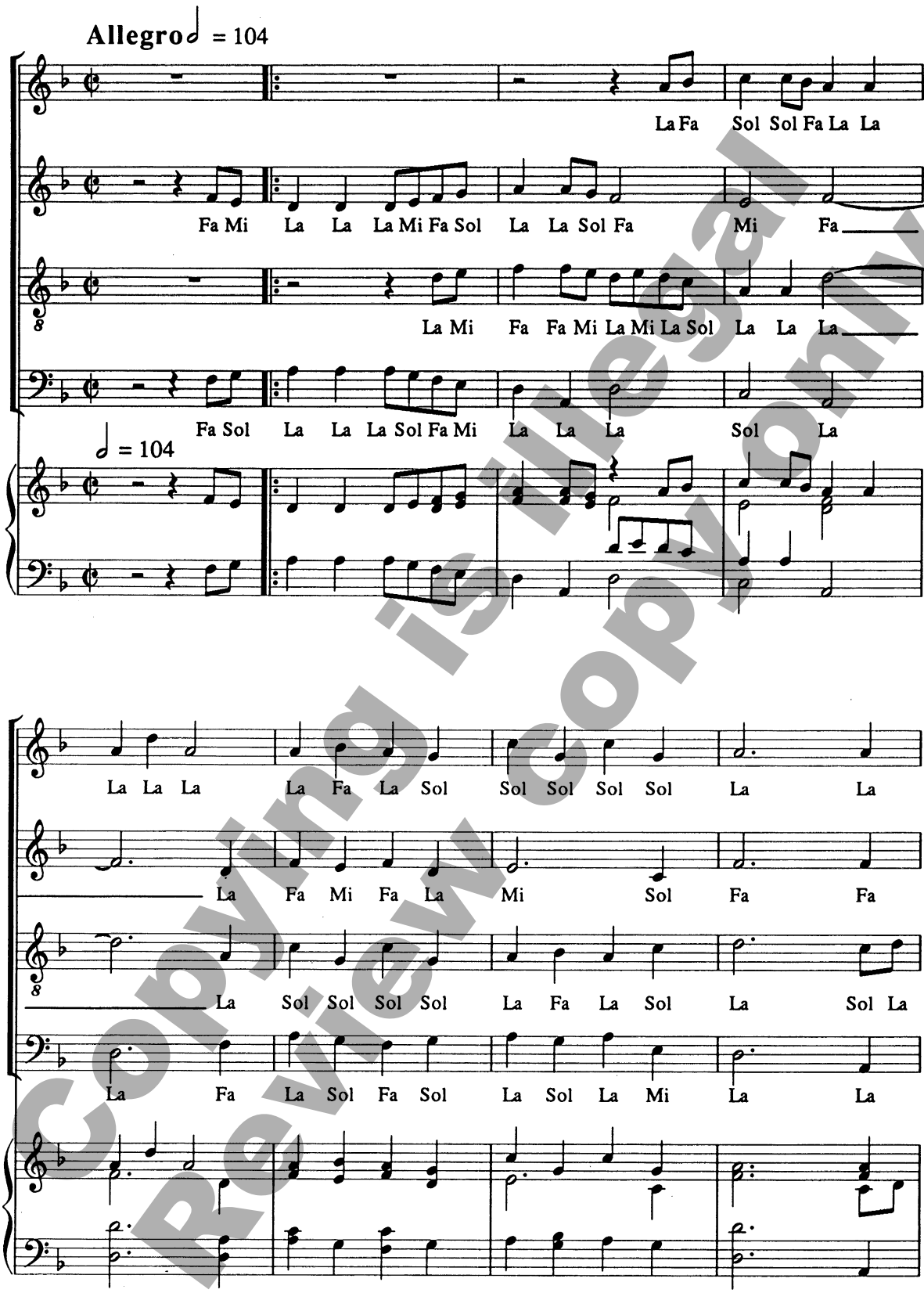

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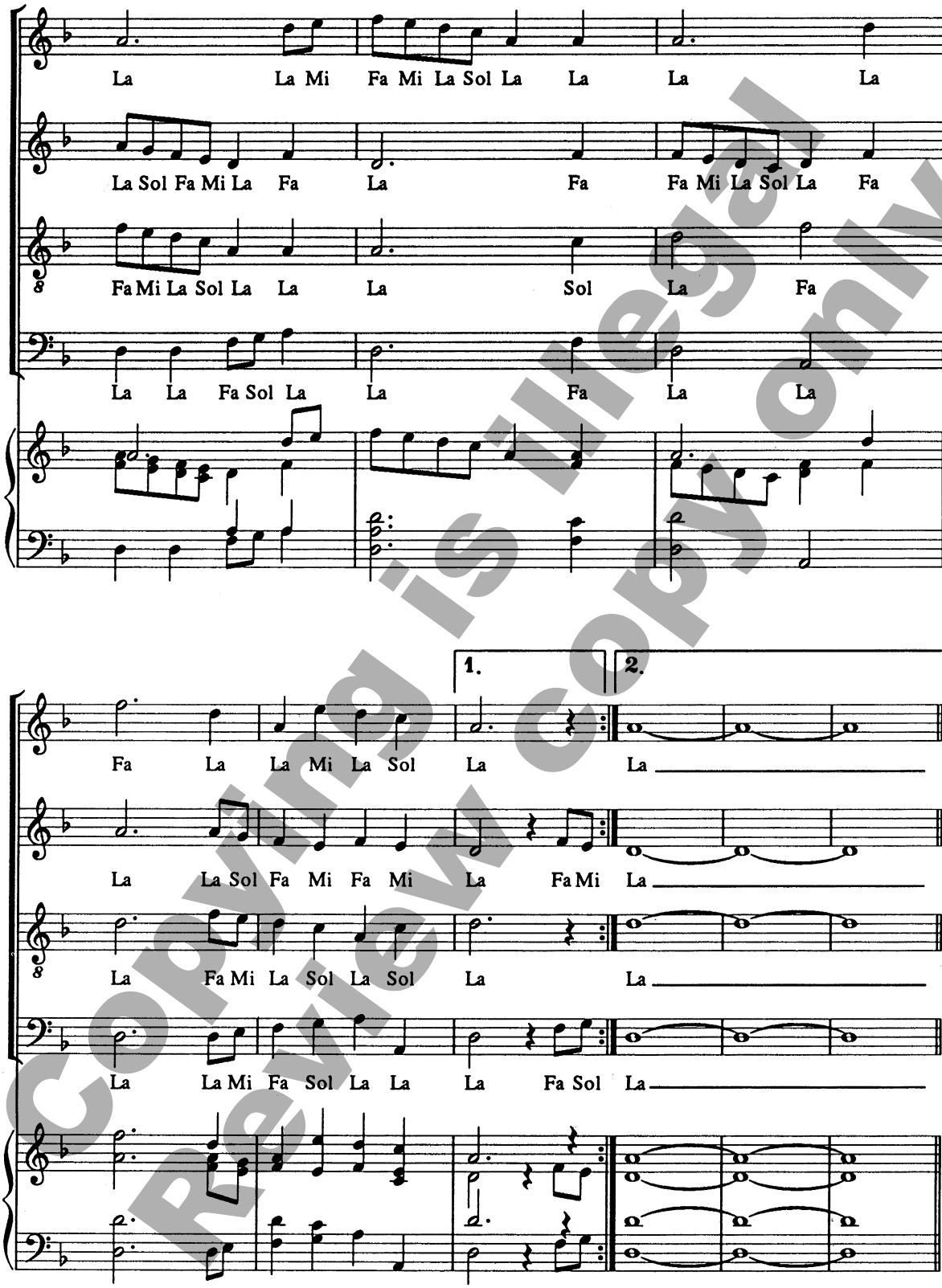

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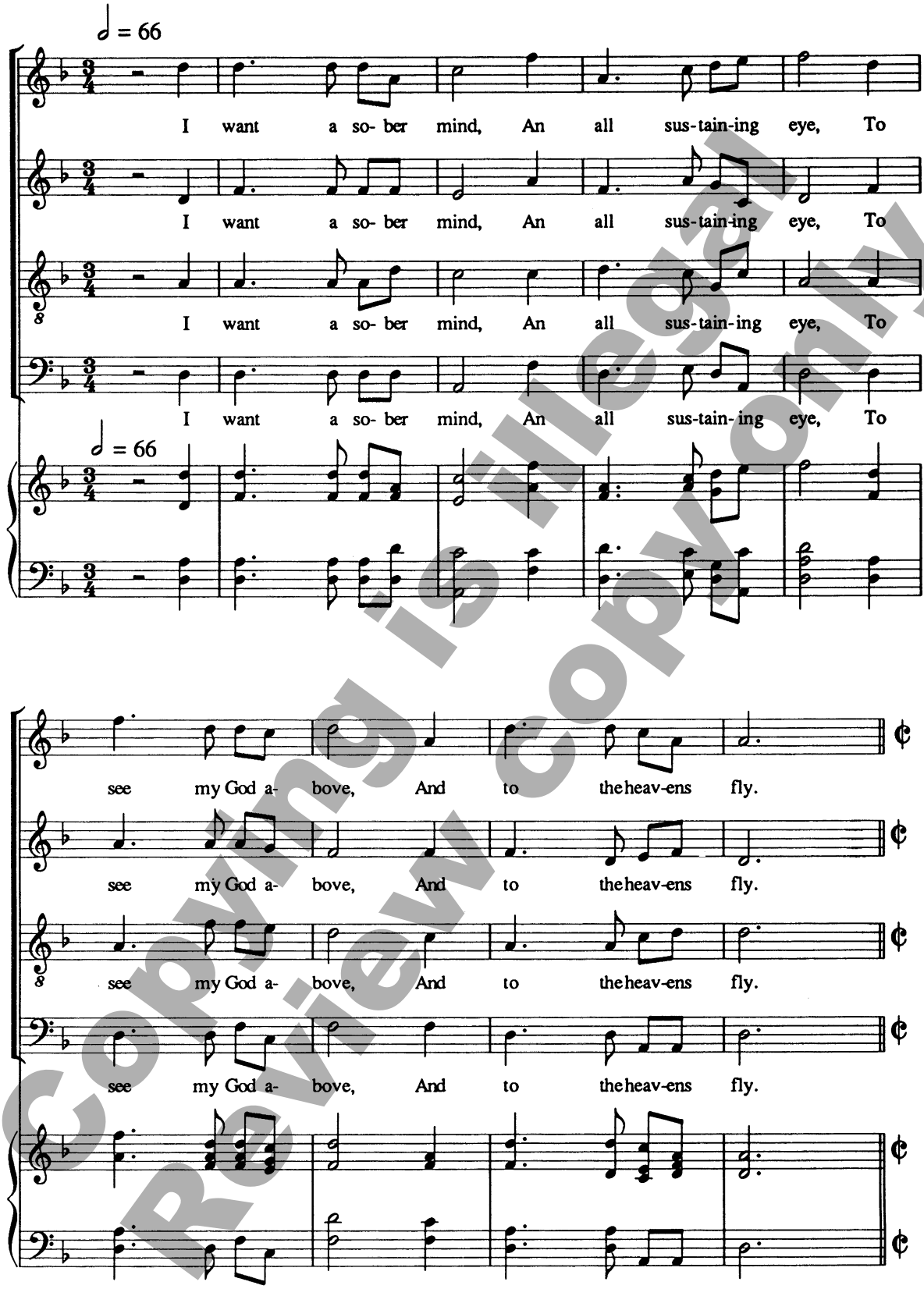

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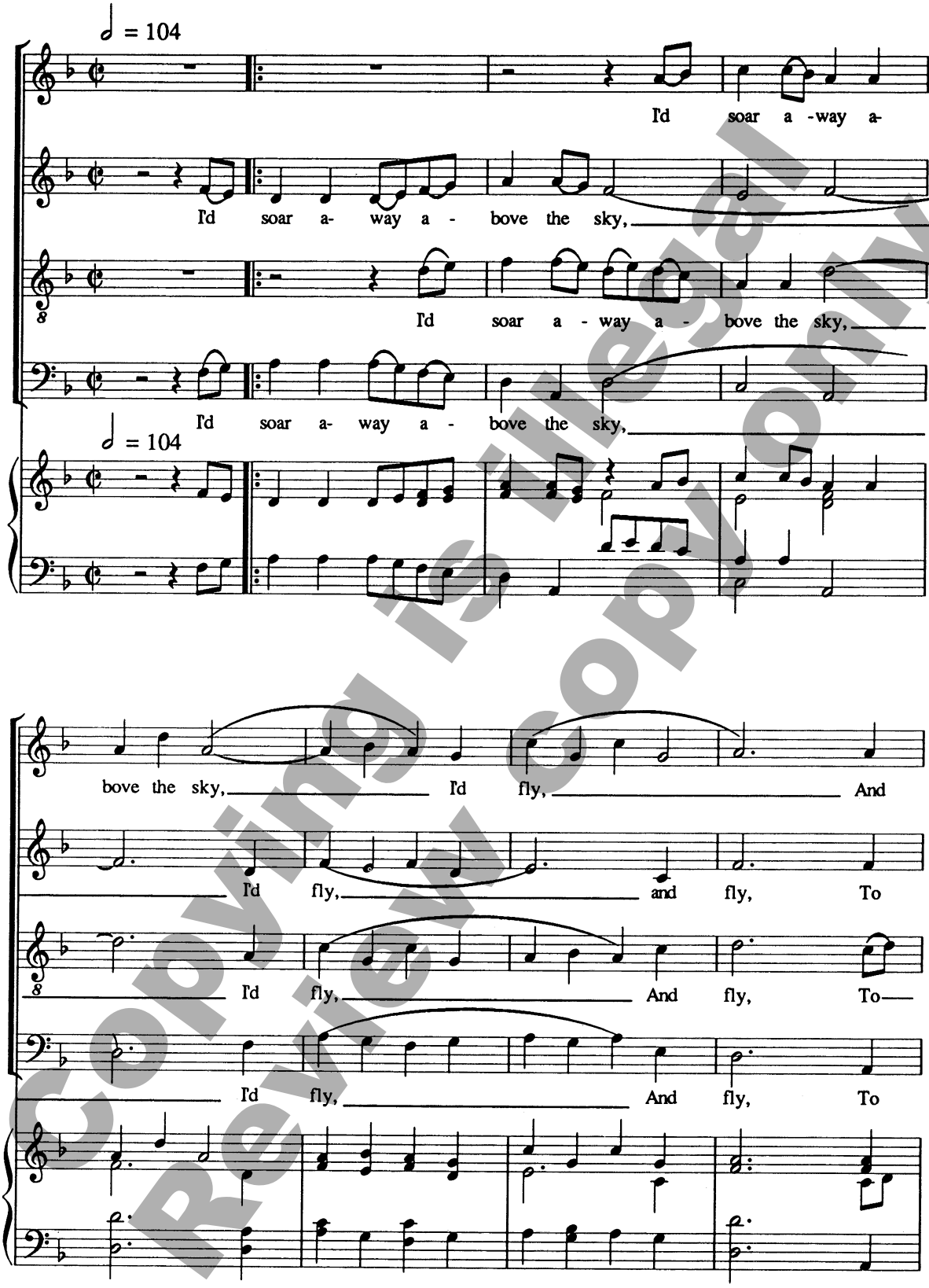

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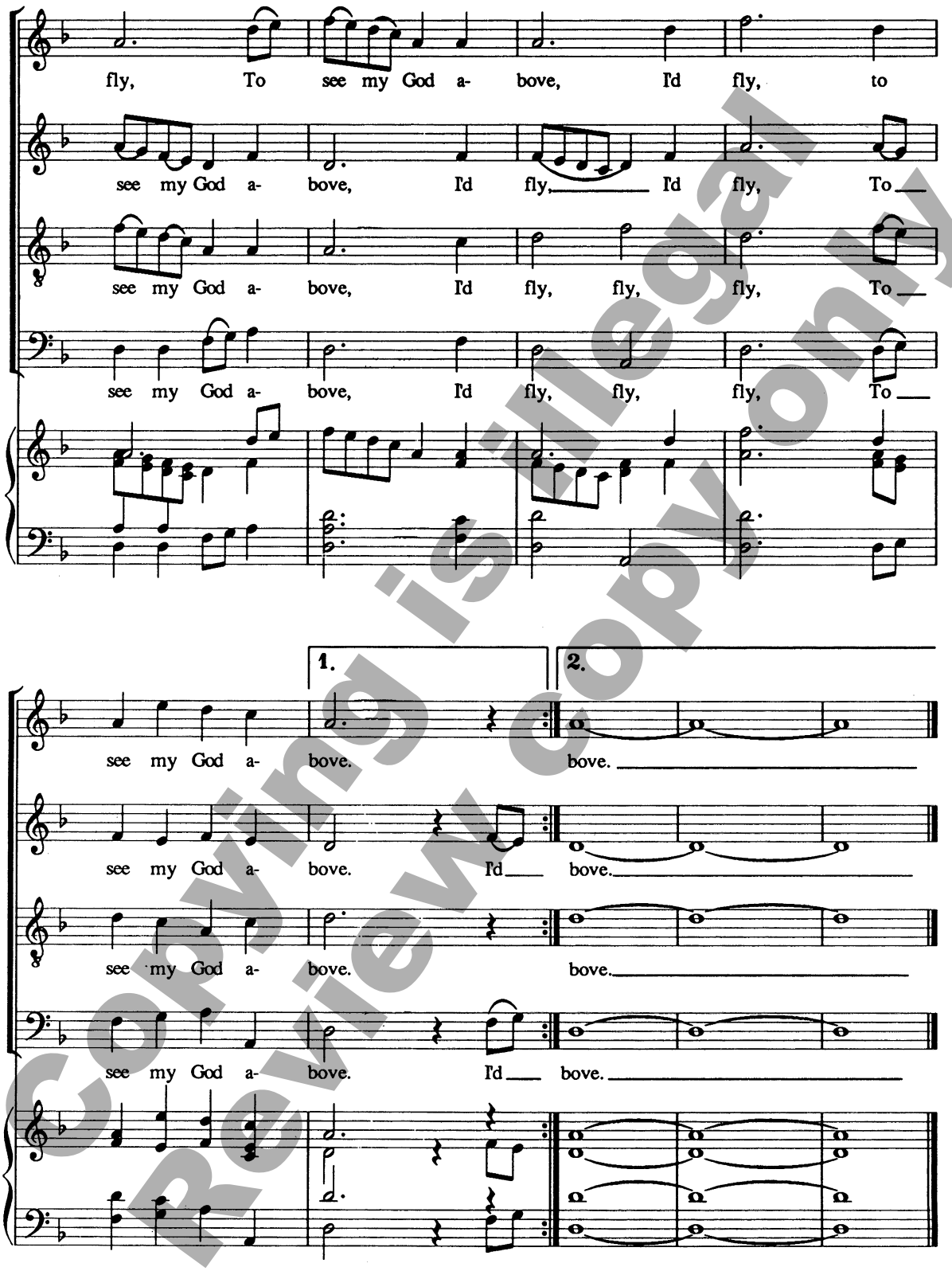

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