Notes

About the Composer: Gregg Smith (1931 - 2016) studied composition with Lukas Foss at UCLA, earning a B.A. and M.A. in music composition. While a graduate teaching assistant, Smith assembled 20 performers to record Stephen Foster songs for a television documentary thus initiating the formation of the Gregg Smith Singers. He subsequently created folksong arrangements for recordings as well, many of which are included in the current "Gregg Smith Folksong Series" publications, (though O, What a Beautiful City is a spiritual, not a folksong). The Gregg Smith Singers toured nationally and internationally, performed hundreds of pieces of new music and recorded more than 100 albums, winning Grammy Awards for "Ives, Music for Chorus" in 1966, "The Glory of Gabrieli" in 1968 and "New Music of Ives" in 1970. One of Gregg's most significant undertakings was the creation of the "Adirondack Festival of American Music," an important summer music festival that ran for 34 years. He also founded the Long Island Symphonic Choral Association (LISCA) which he led for 40 years. He taught at UCLA, Ithaca College, State University of New York at Stony Brook, Peabody Conservatory, Columbia University and Manhattan School of Music. Smith is the composer of more than 400 works for chorus, solo voices, orchestra and chamber ensembles.

About the Music: ***O Magnum Mysterium*** is one of the greatest texts for choral music from the Renaissance to the present day but has some variations used by composers from Victoria to Poulenc. Gregg has chosen the version of the text that includes Dominum ***Jesum*** Christum and includes a final ***Alleluia*** instead of ***Amen.*** The image of the oxen and donkey next to the crib is found in Isaiah and is traditionally related to the nativity scene at the birth of Jesus in Luke 2. The image continued to spread from the 13th century onwards becoming the most popular symbol for the mystery. The second part of the responsory relates to the words with which Elizabeth welcomes Mary, mother of Jesus on her visitation. Gregg uses a mixture of notation styles in this piece with dissonant harmonies and instances of polytonal chords with a challenging piano part. The entire piece is based on the ***O Magnum Mysterium*** of Tomás Luis de Victoria. There is a wonderful "insider joke" on page 16 in the piano part at the beginning and following of the 6/8 meter where Gregg refers to the first notes of the lullaby "Rock-a-bye Baby" in the right hand. The concluding Alleluia section is greatly inspired by the Victoria setting. All metronomic values are editorial decisions. If possible, when the chorus is divided into two choirs, Choir II should be in the back of the hall.

Notes by Dale Jergenson

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O Magnum Mysterium

Based on passges from Luke and Habakkuk
5th responsory for Christmas Matins

Latin text	English translation
O magnum mysterium, et admirabile sacramentum, ut animalia viderent Dominum natum, jacentem in praesepio! Beata Virgo, cujus viscera meruerunt portare Dominum Jesum Christum. Alleluia!	O great mystery, and wonderful sacrament, that animals should see the new-born Lord, lying in a manger! Blessed is the Virgin whose womb was worthy to bear our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Alleluia!

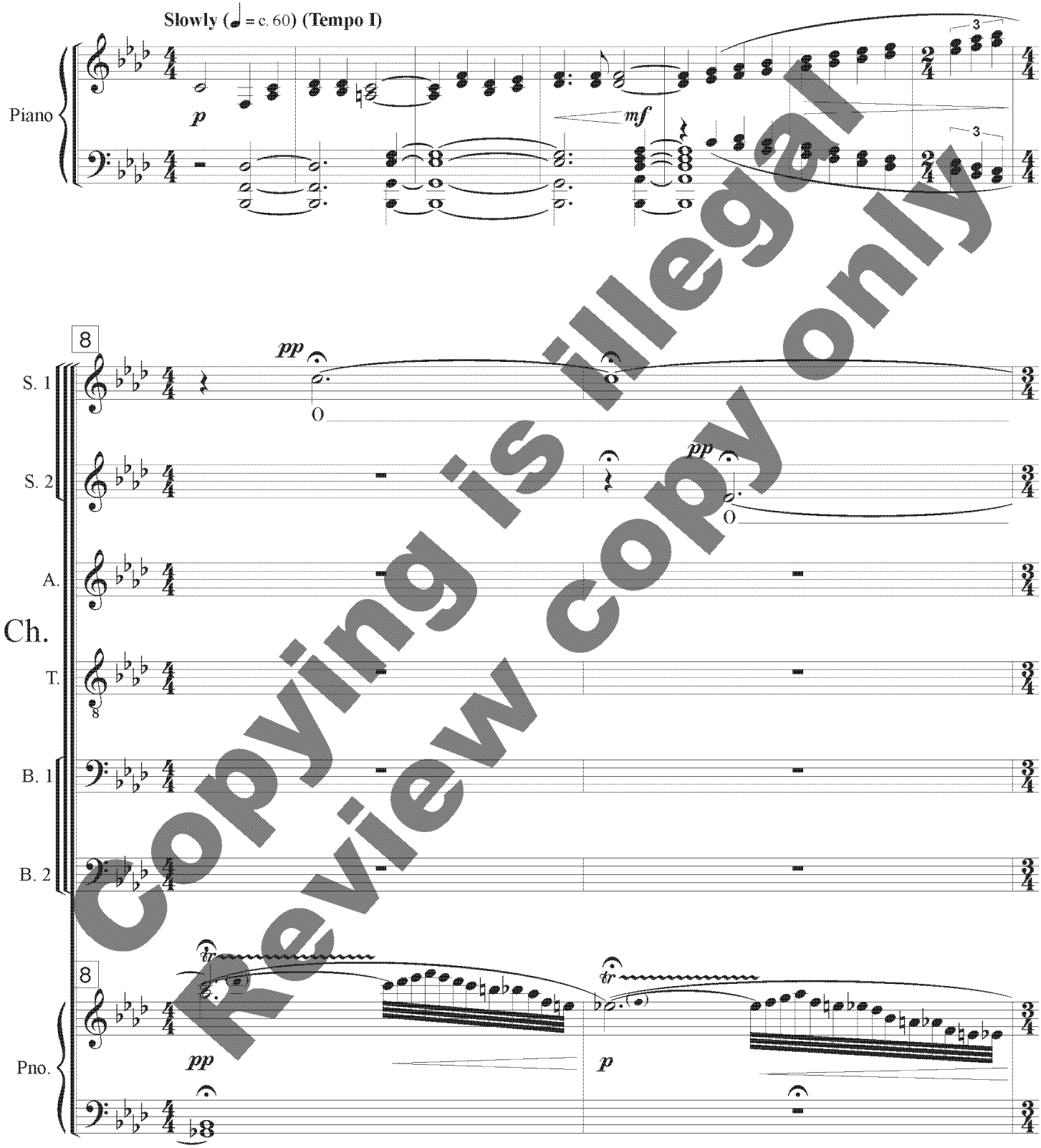
See page 39 for the Gregorian Chant version.

Laurendale Associates
15035 Wyandotte Street, Van Nuys, CA 91405-1746
voice: 818•787•3033 fax: 818•994•6958
e-mail: dale@laurendale.com www.laurendale.com

O Magnum Mysterium

Text: Traditional

Gregg Smith



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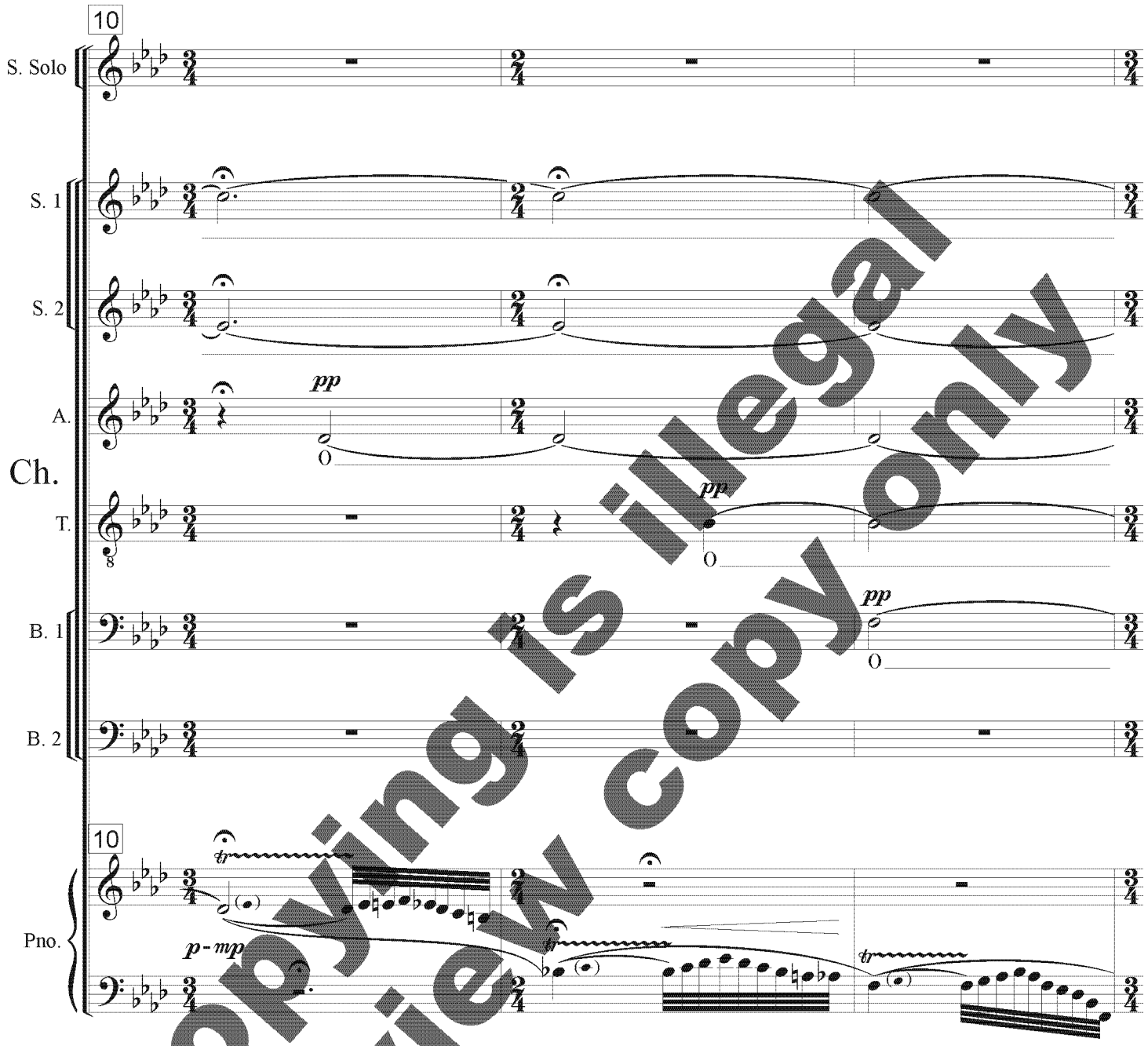

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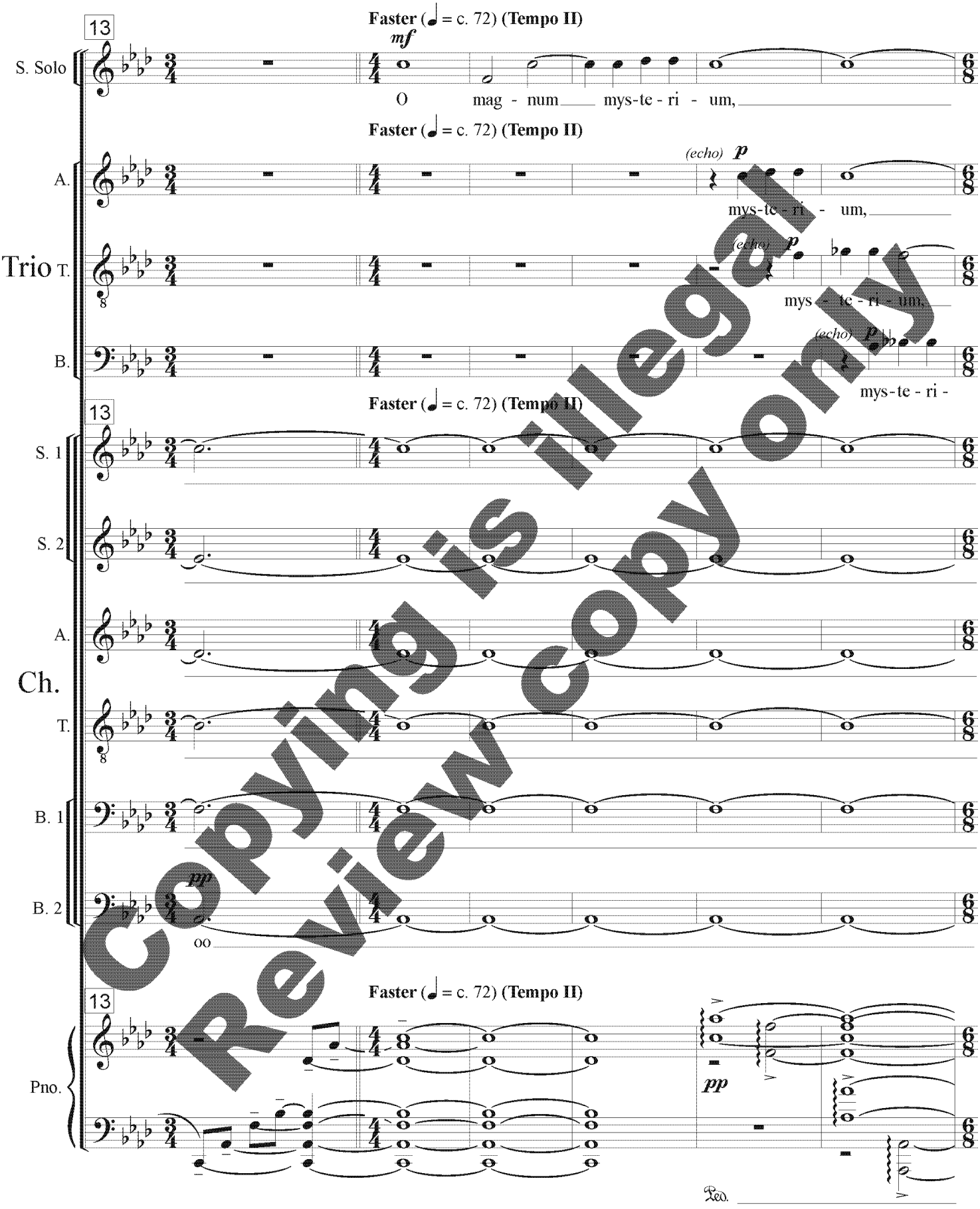

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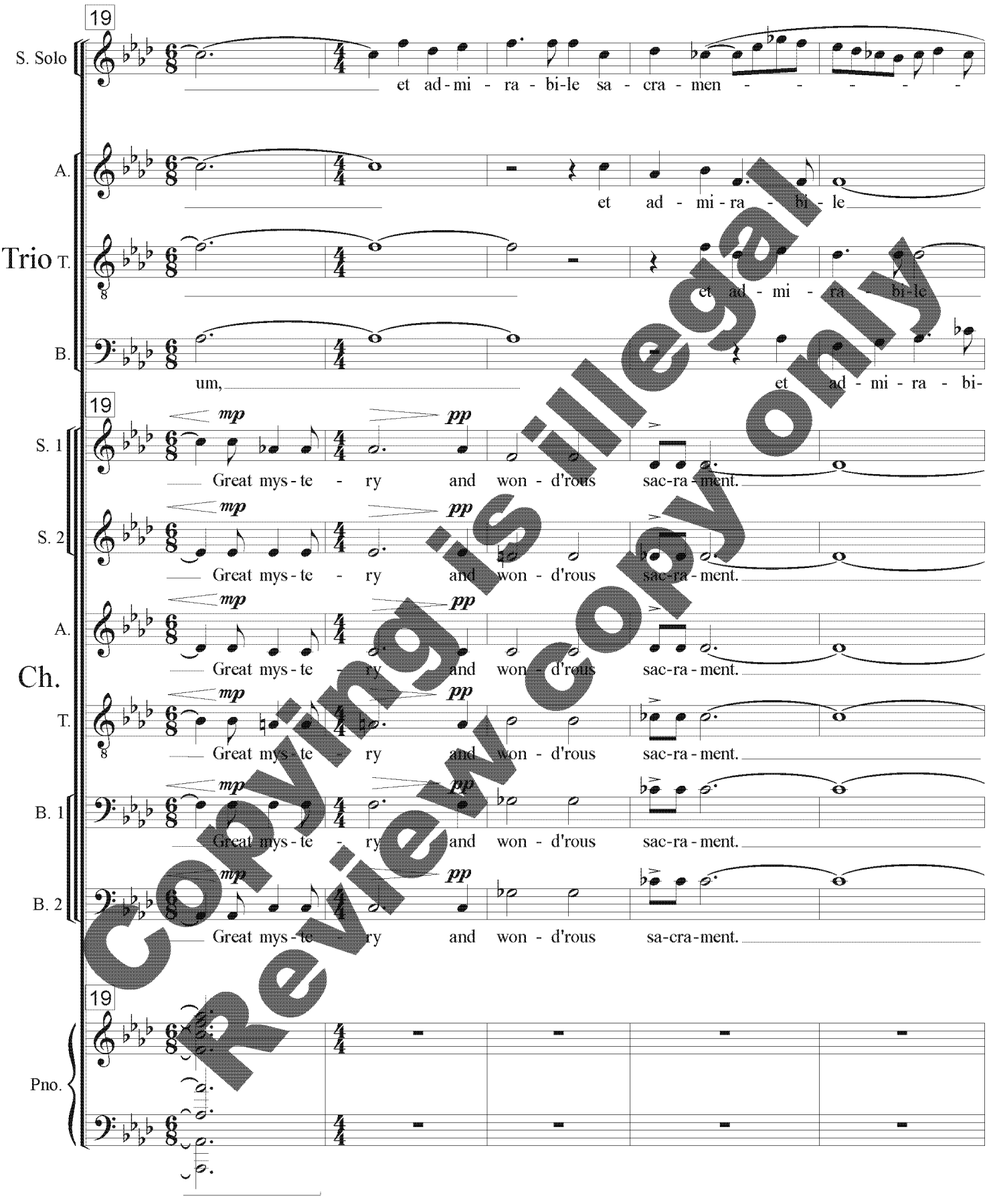

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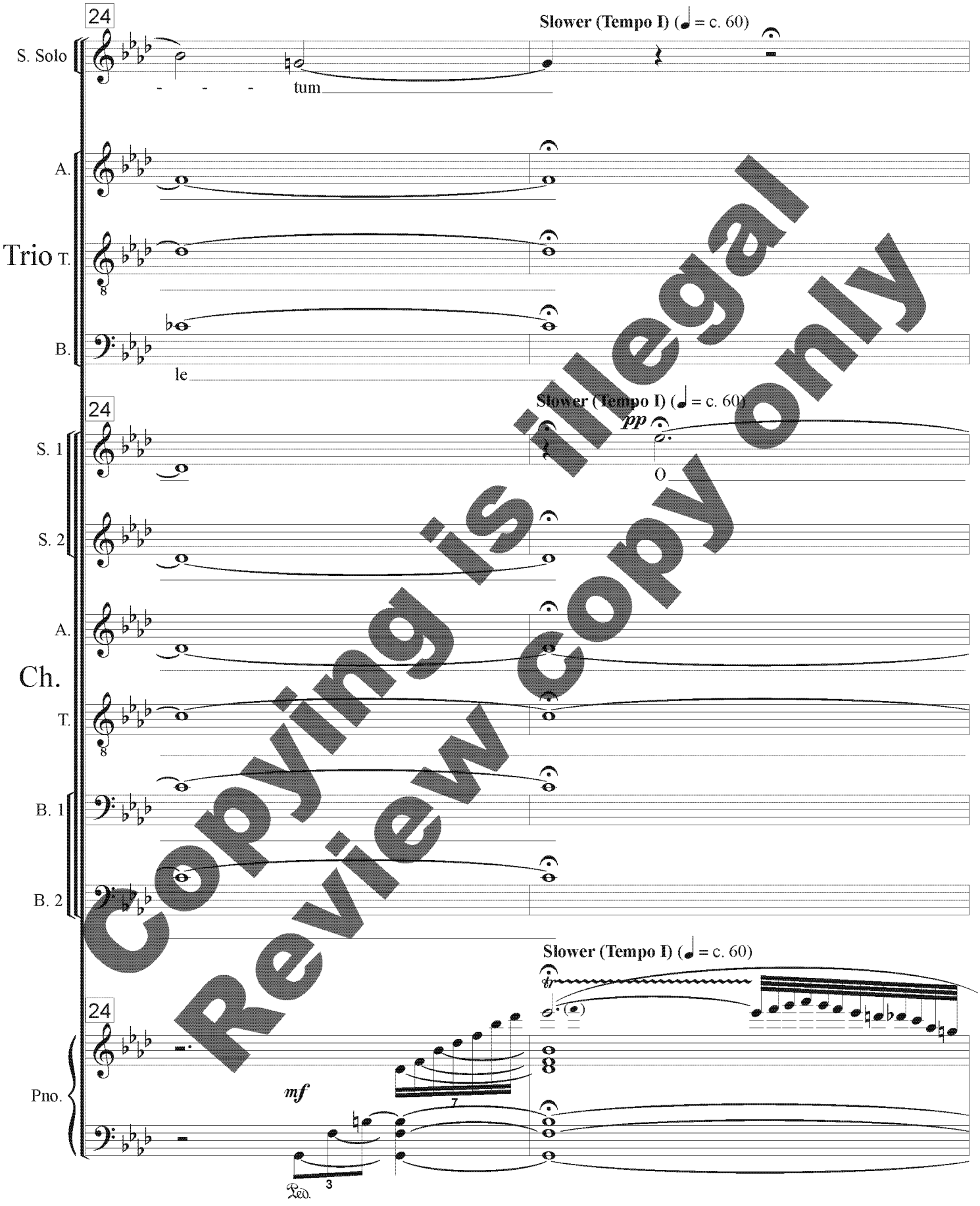

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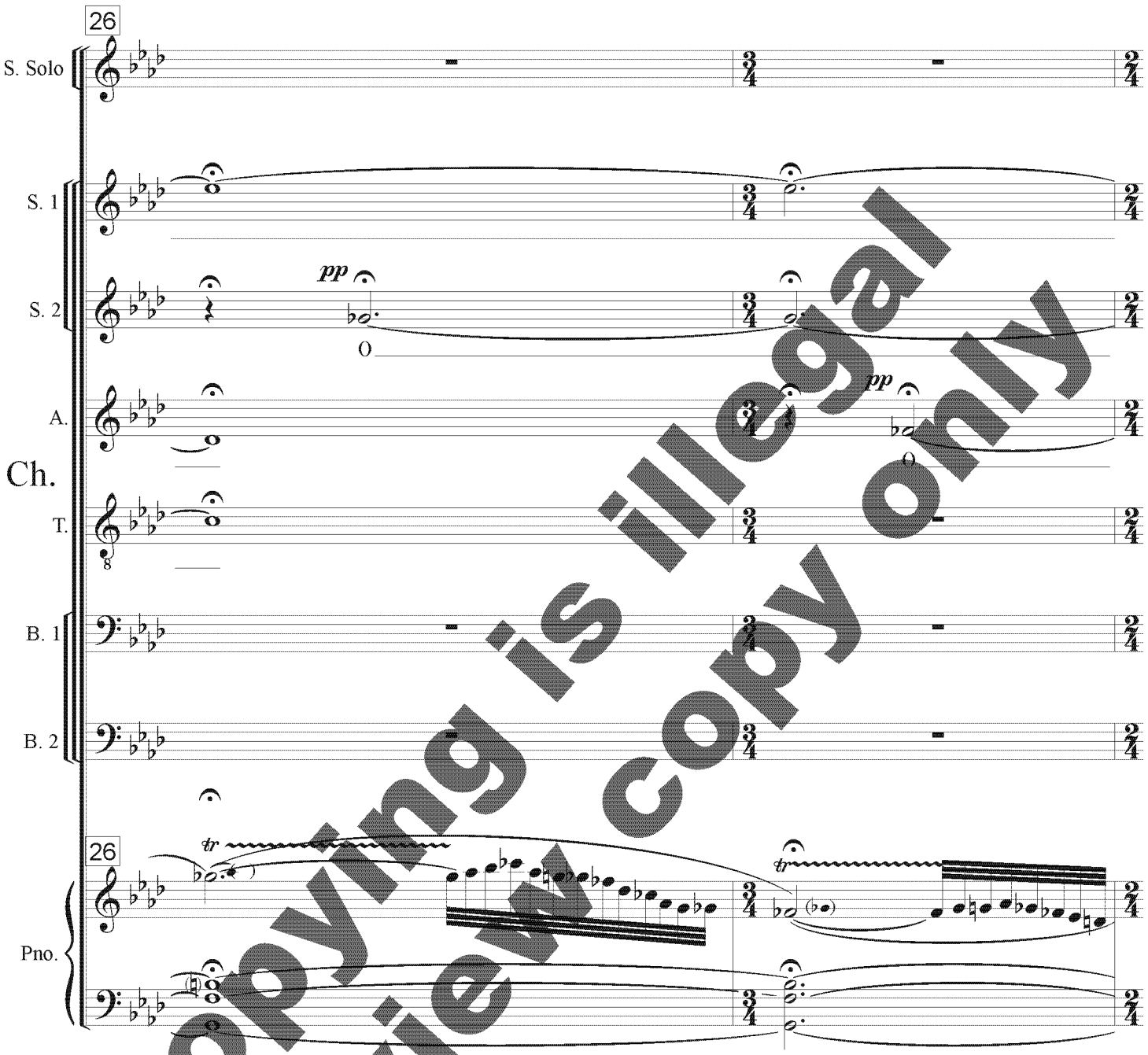

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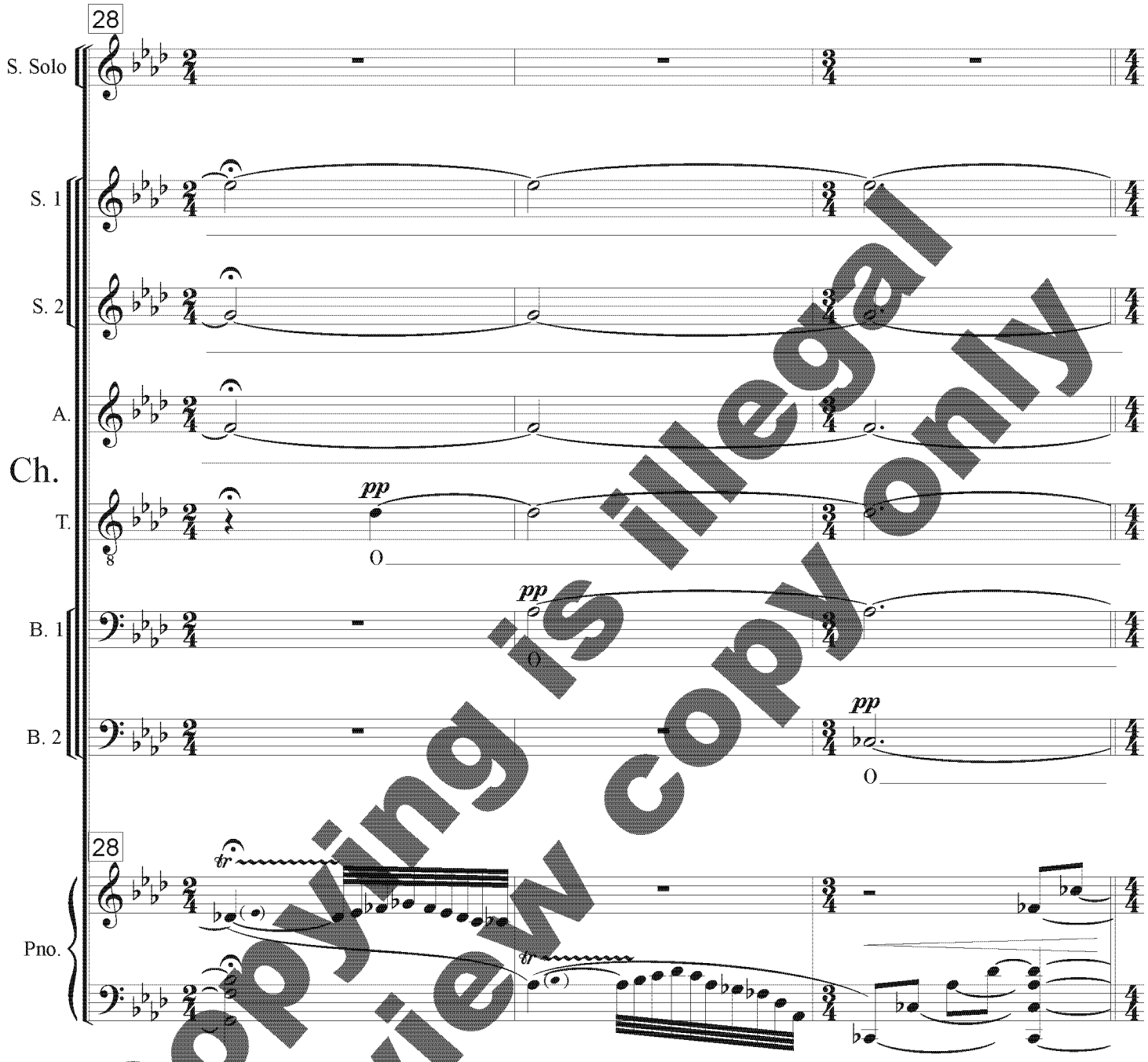

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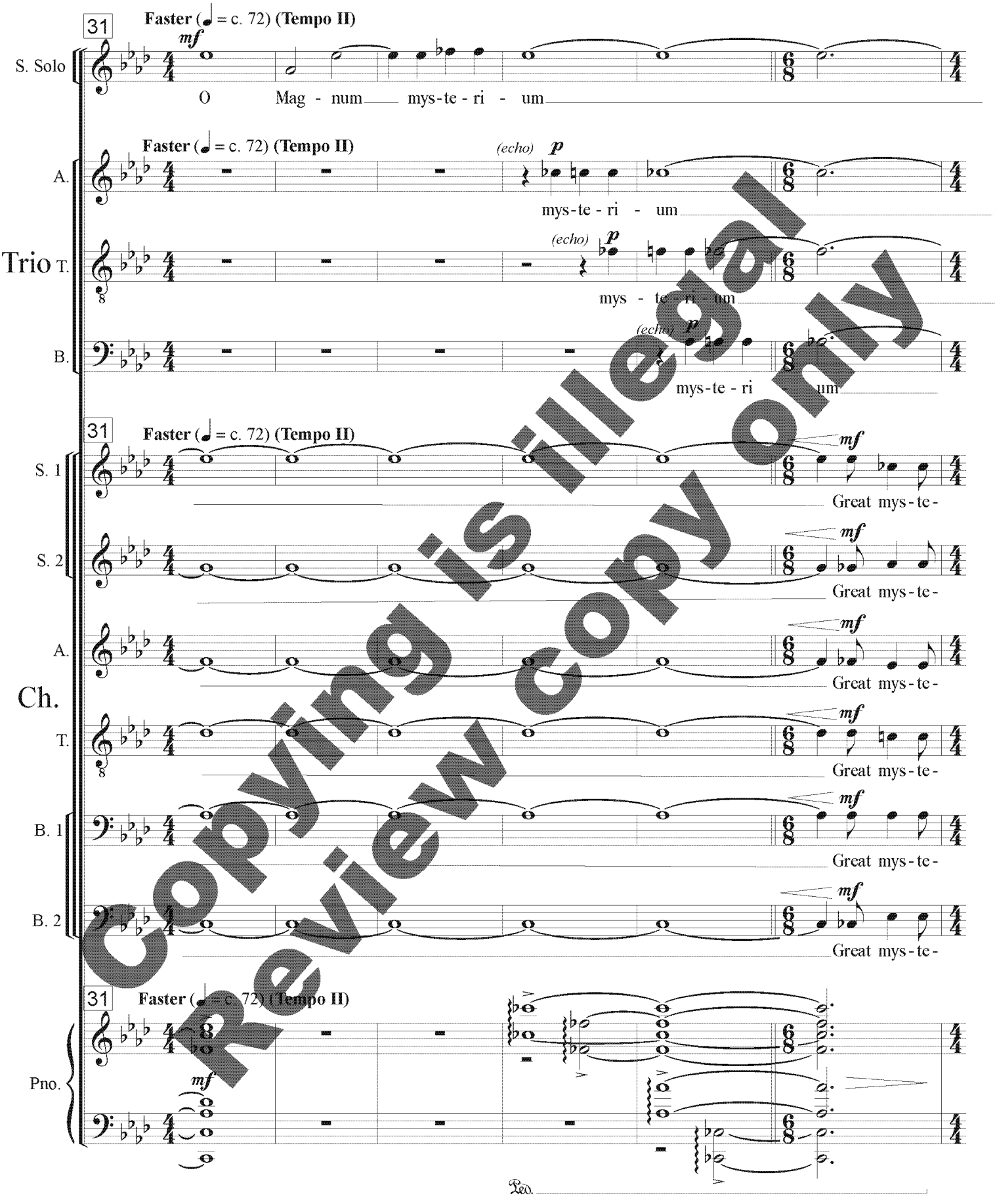

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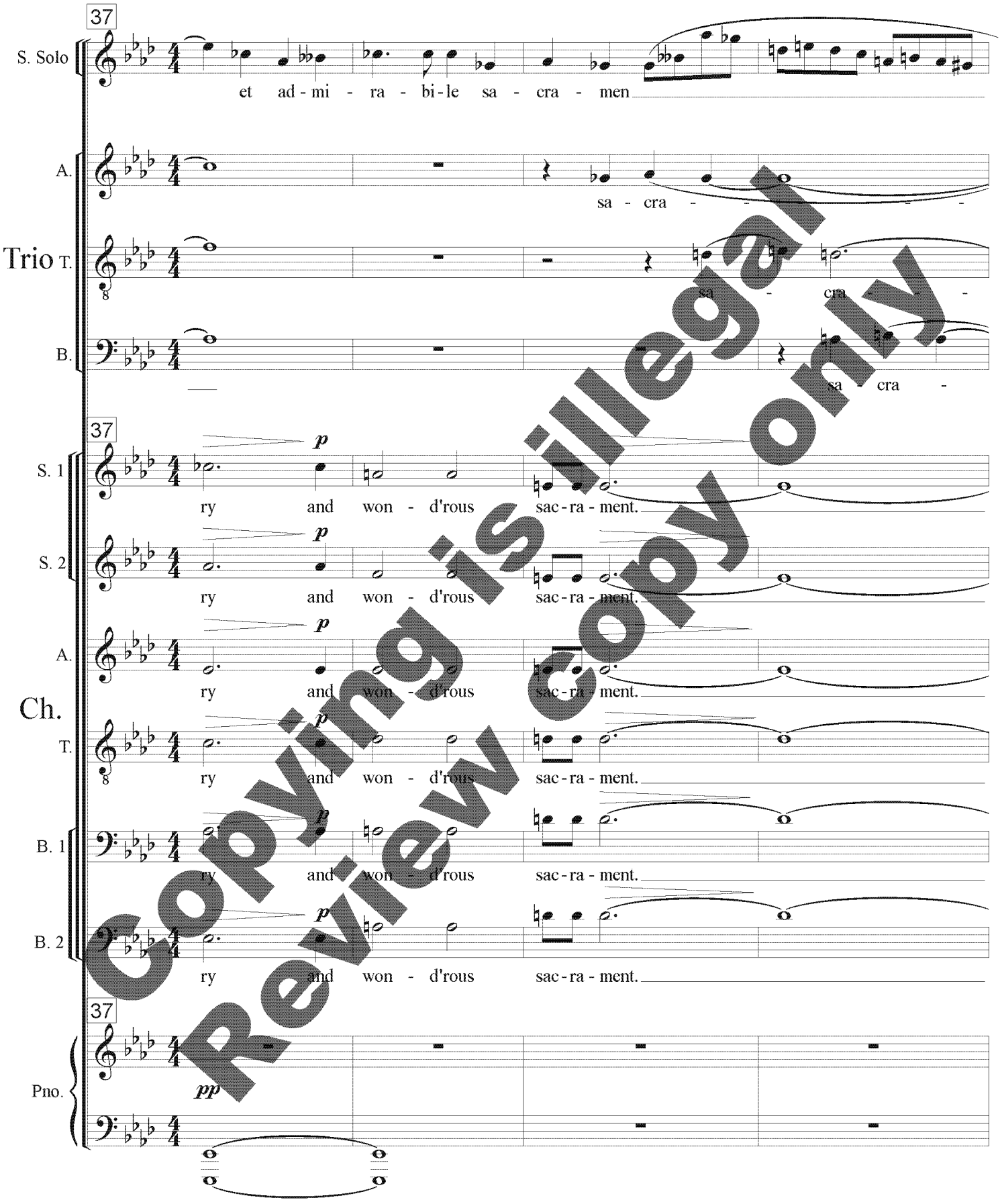

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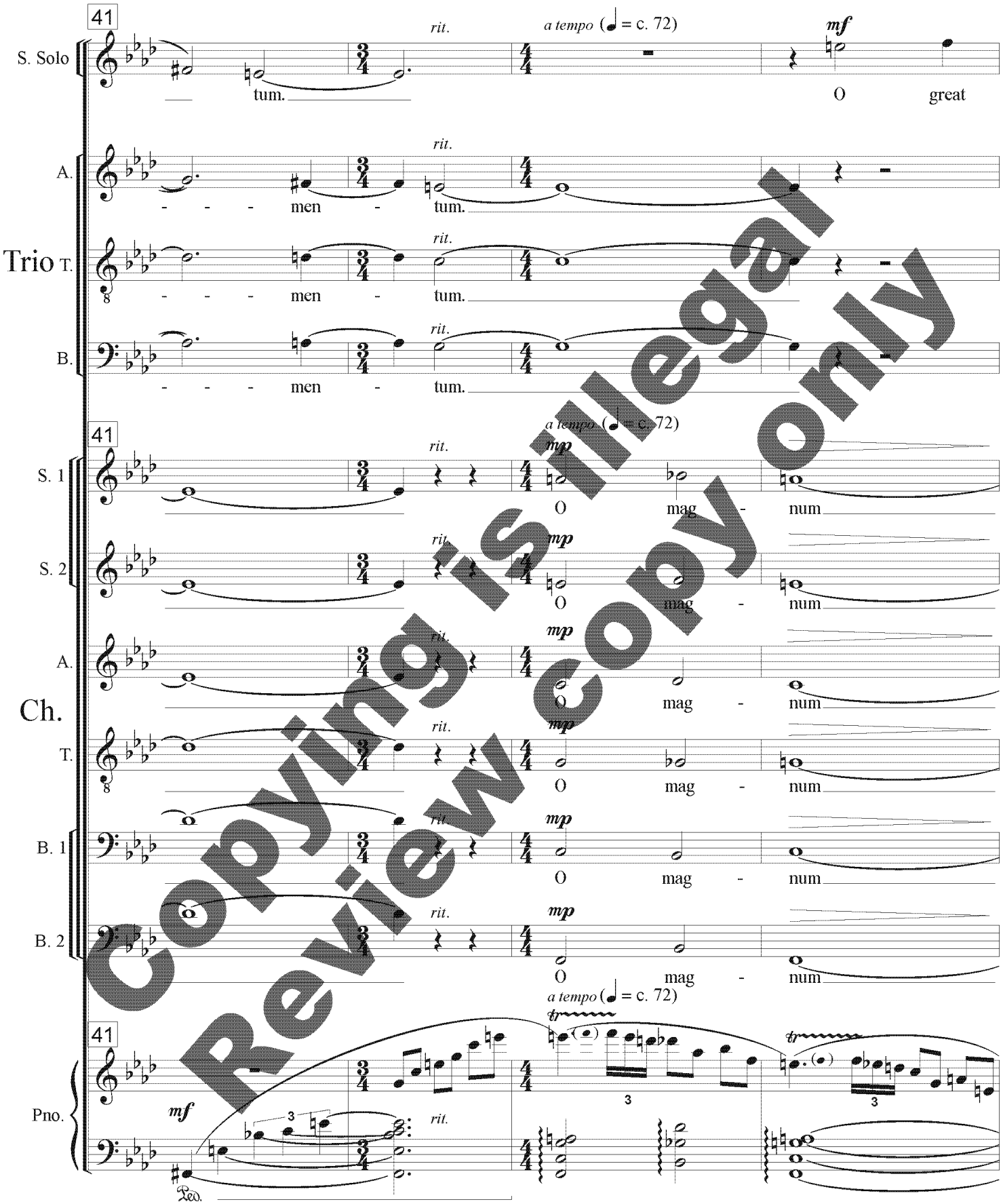

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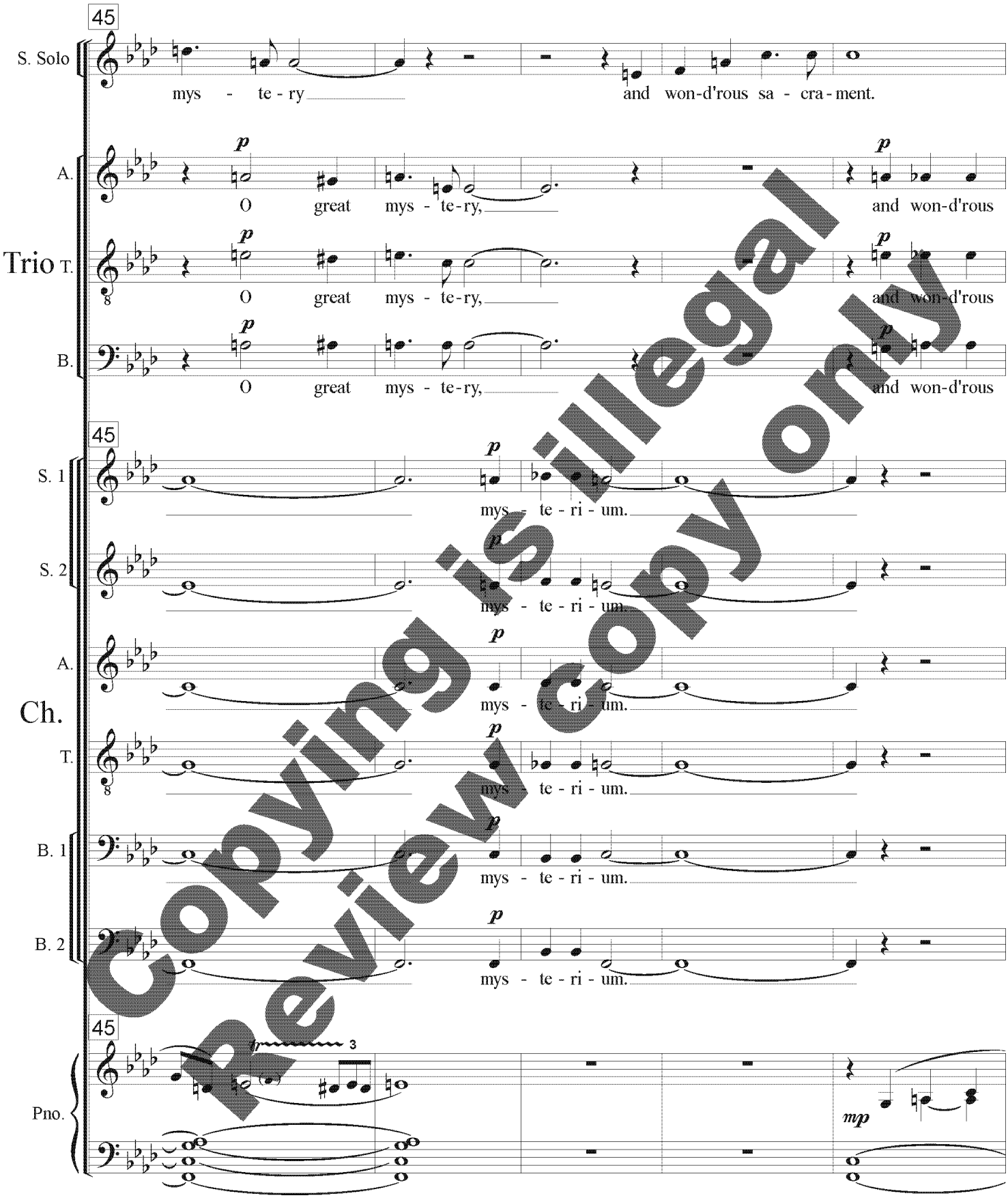

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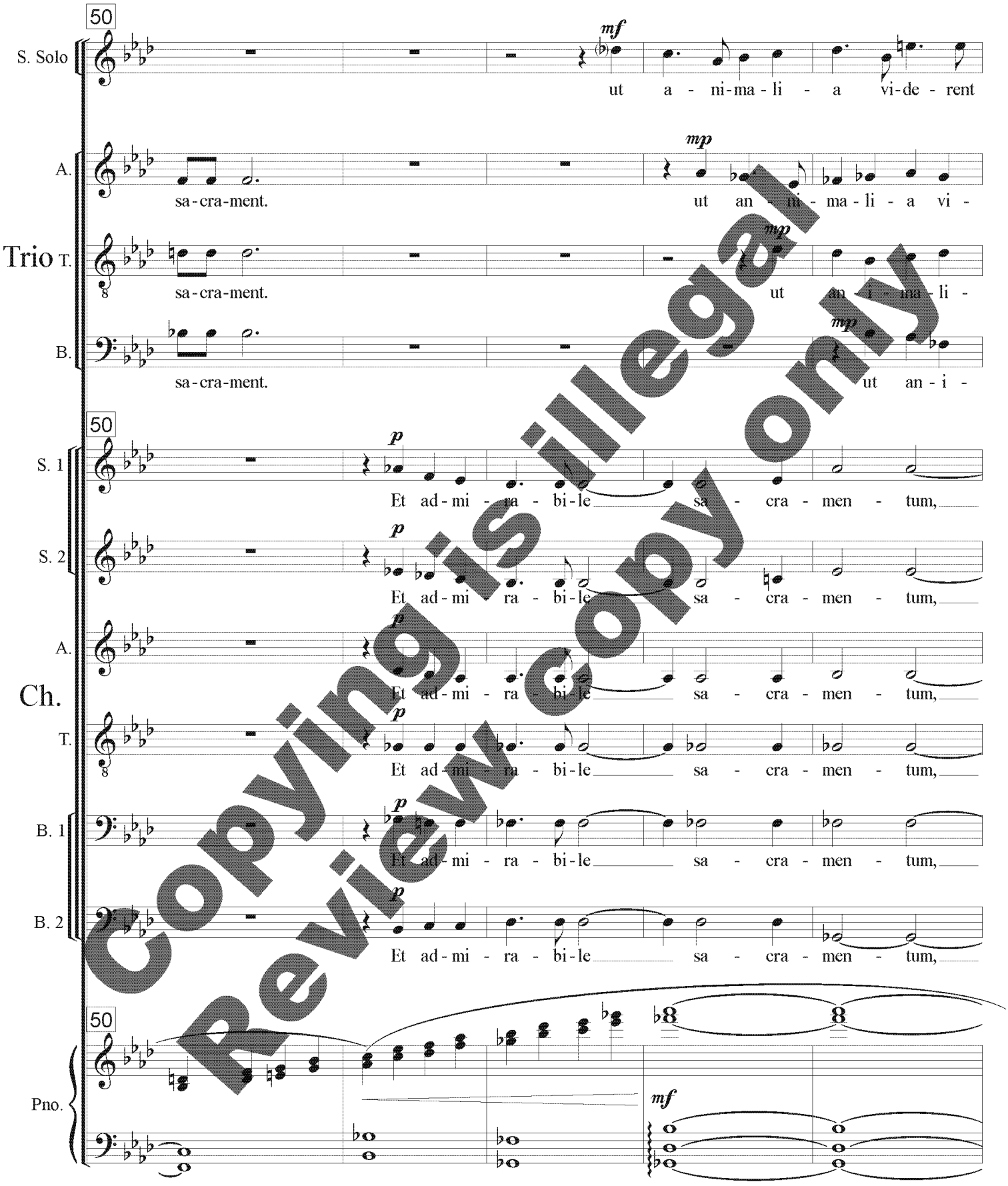

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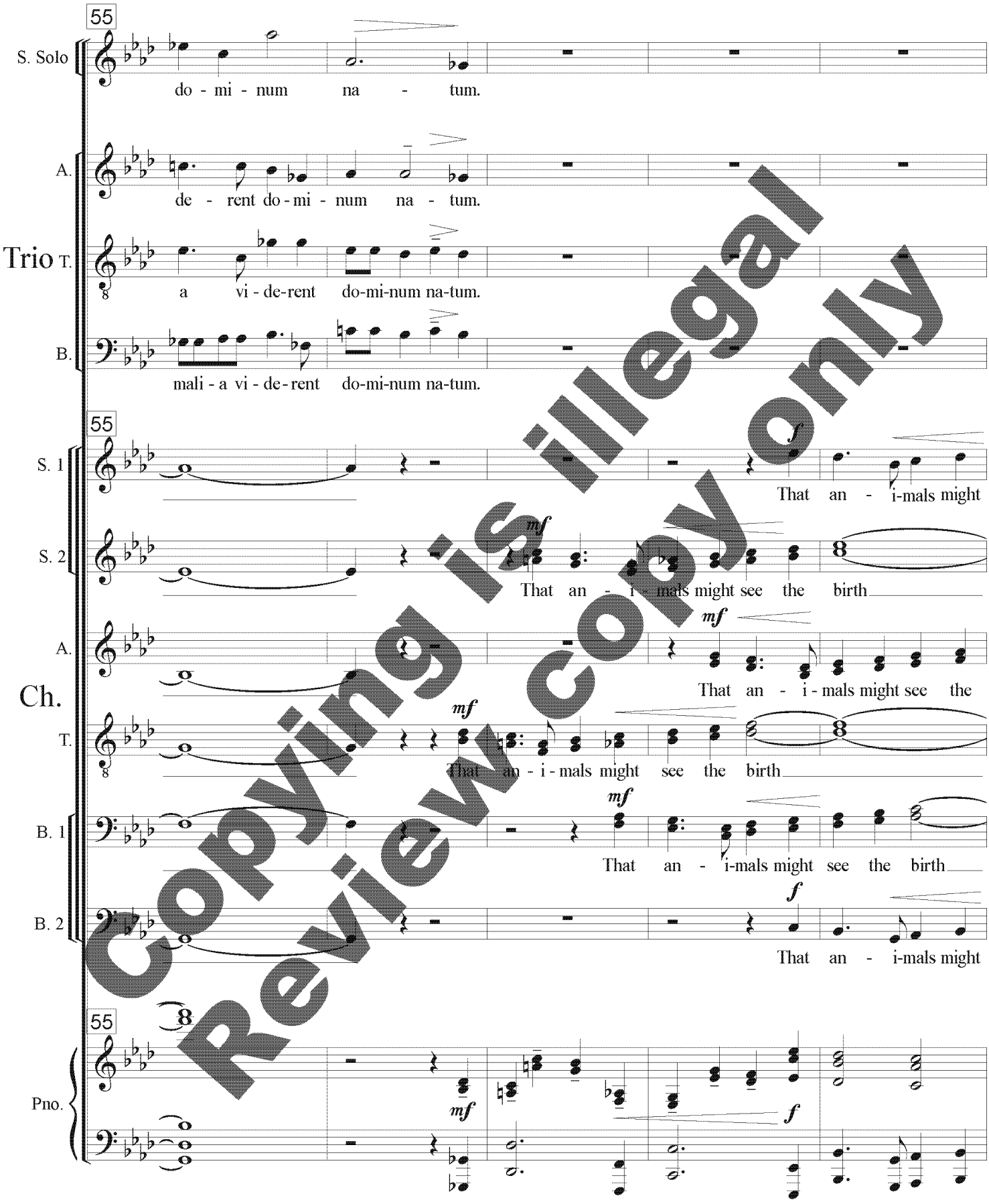

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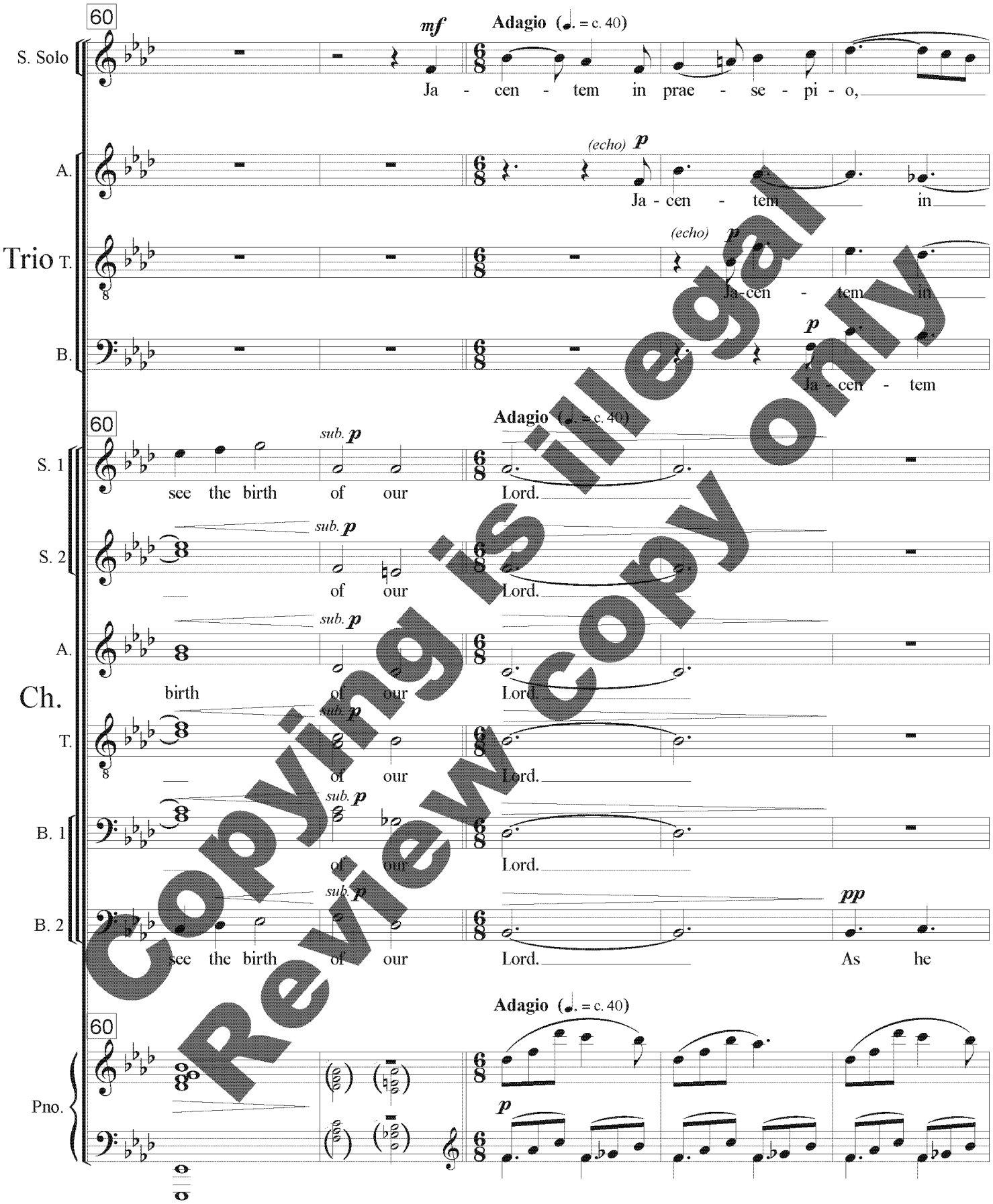

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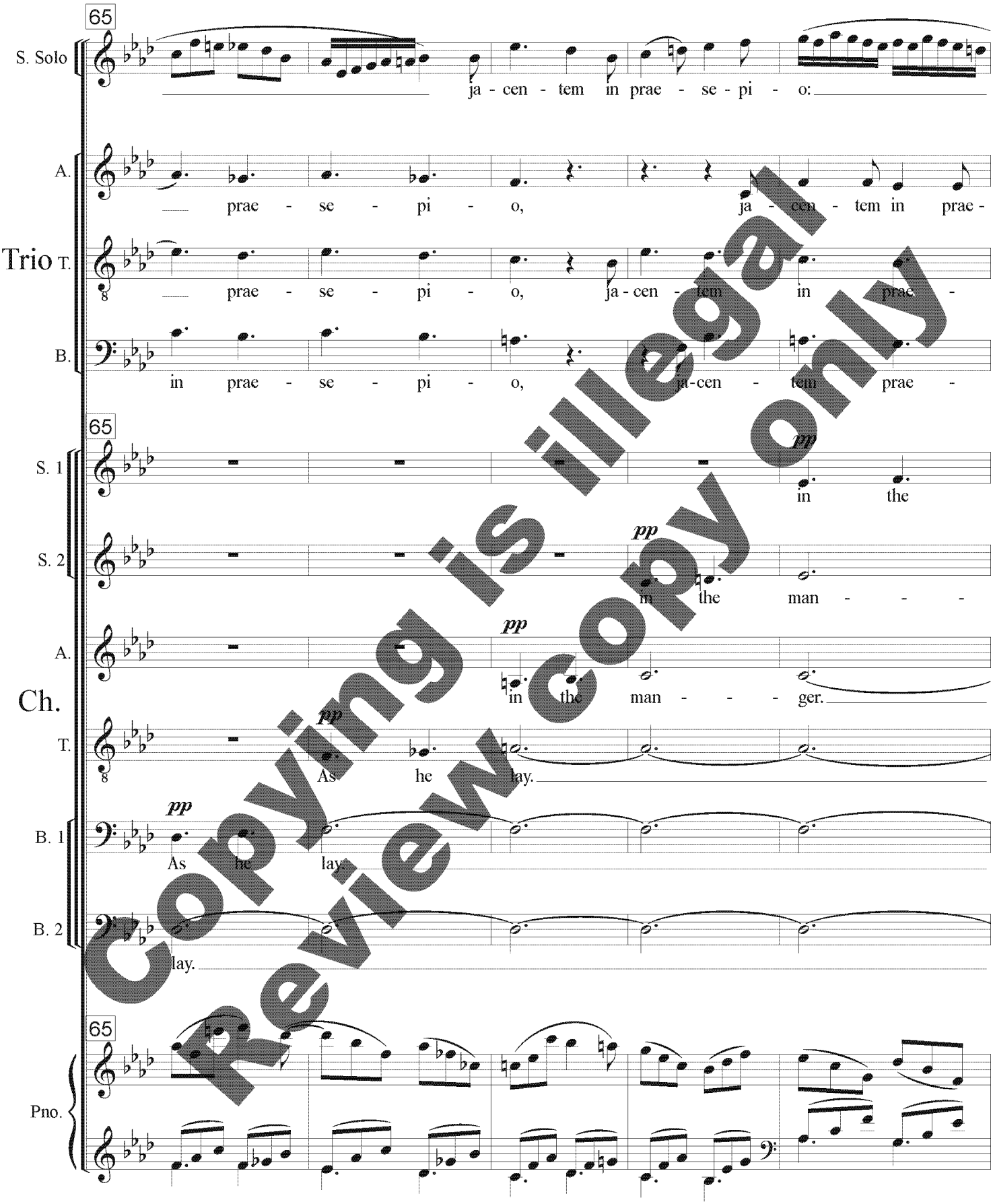

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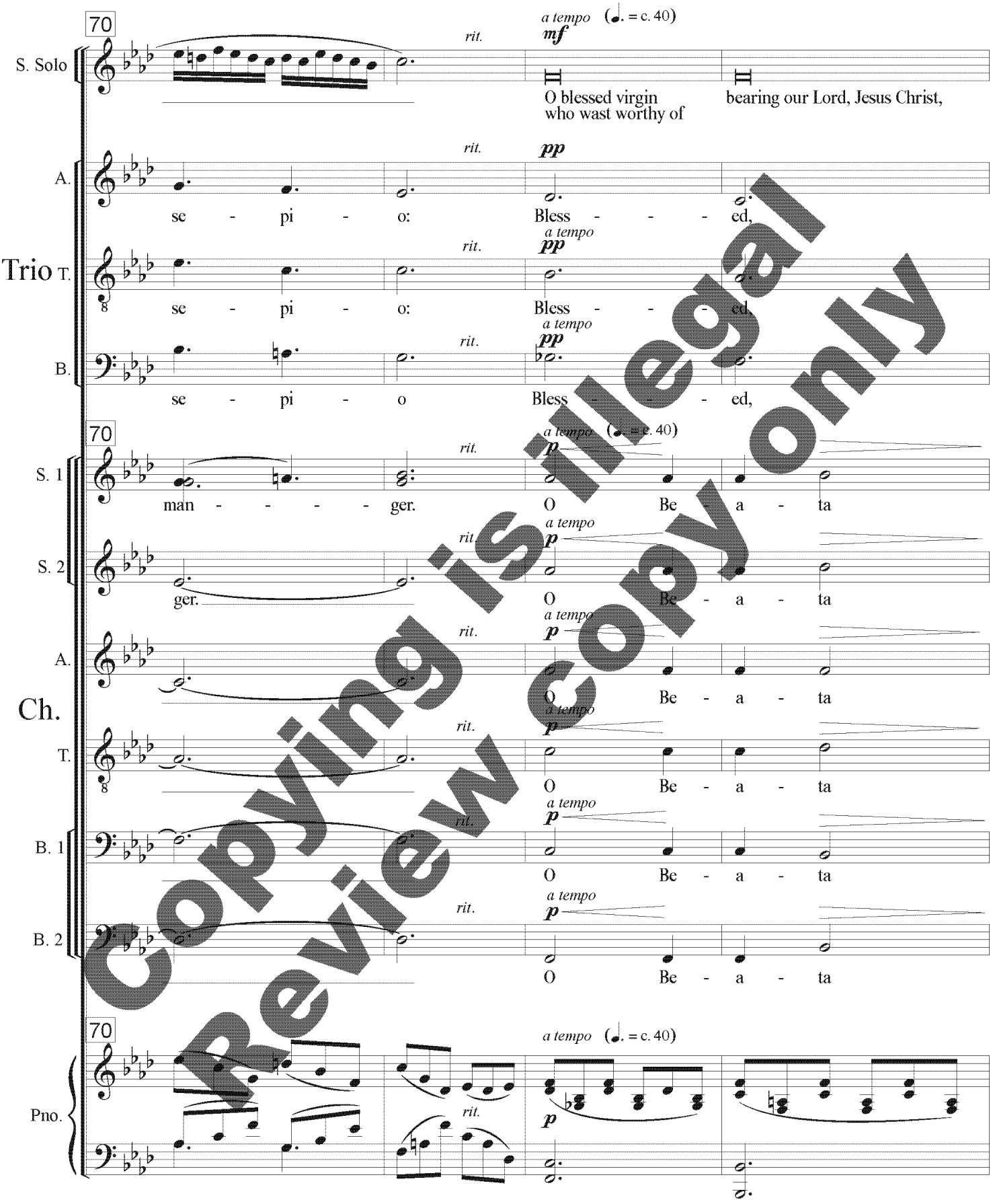

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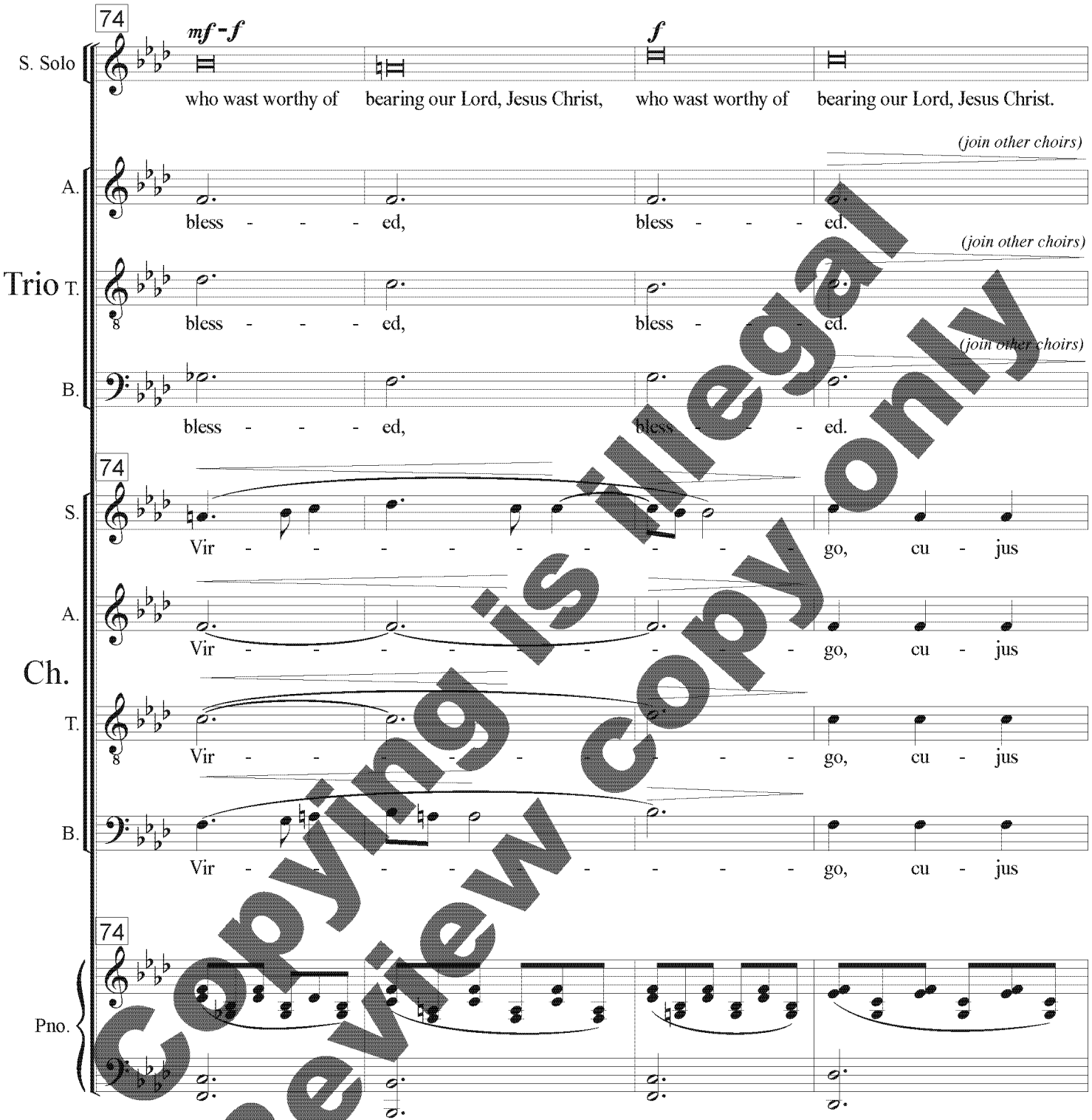

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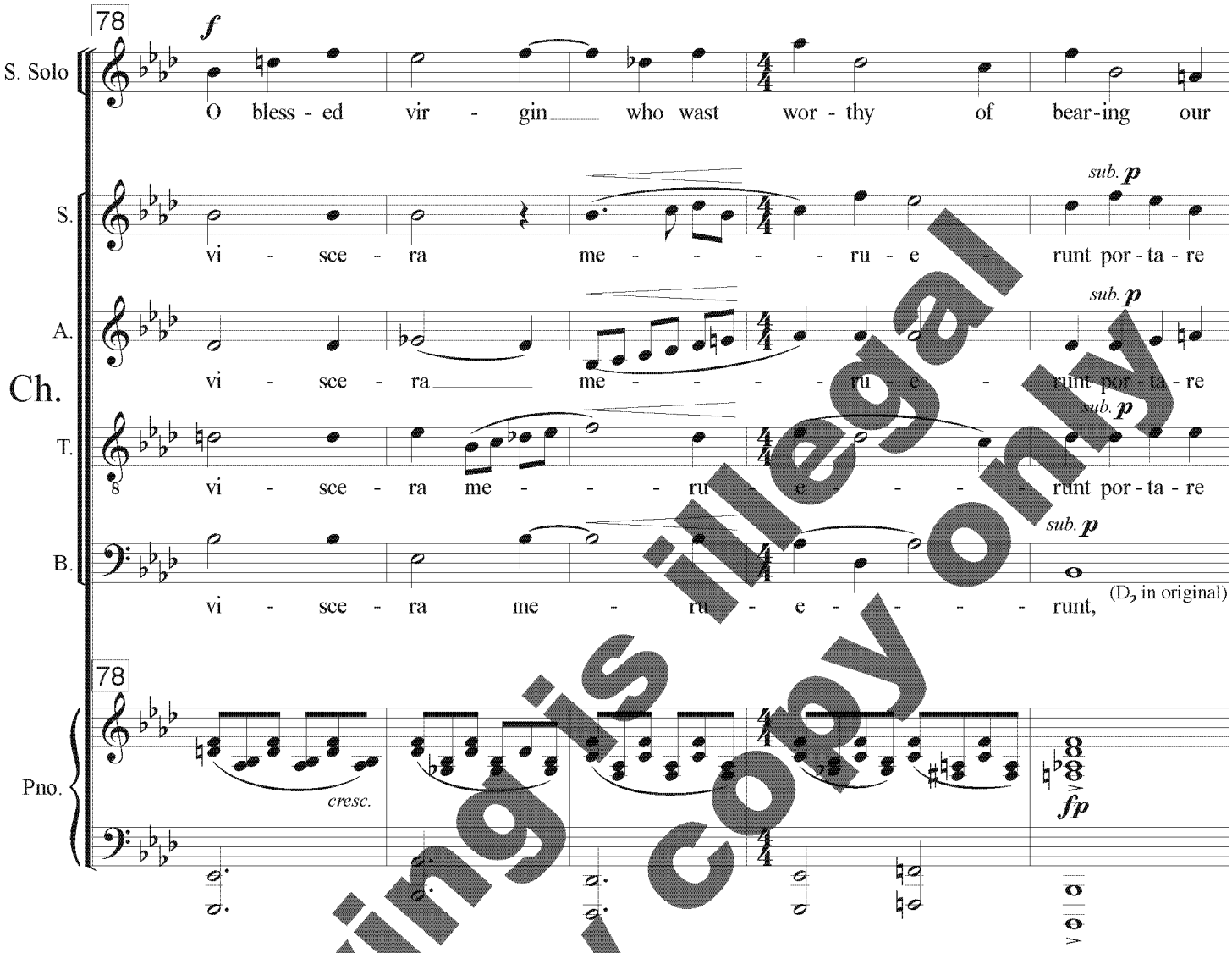

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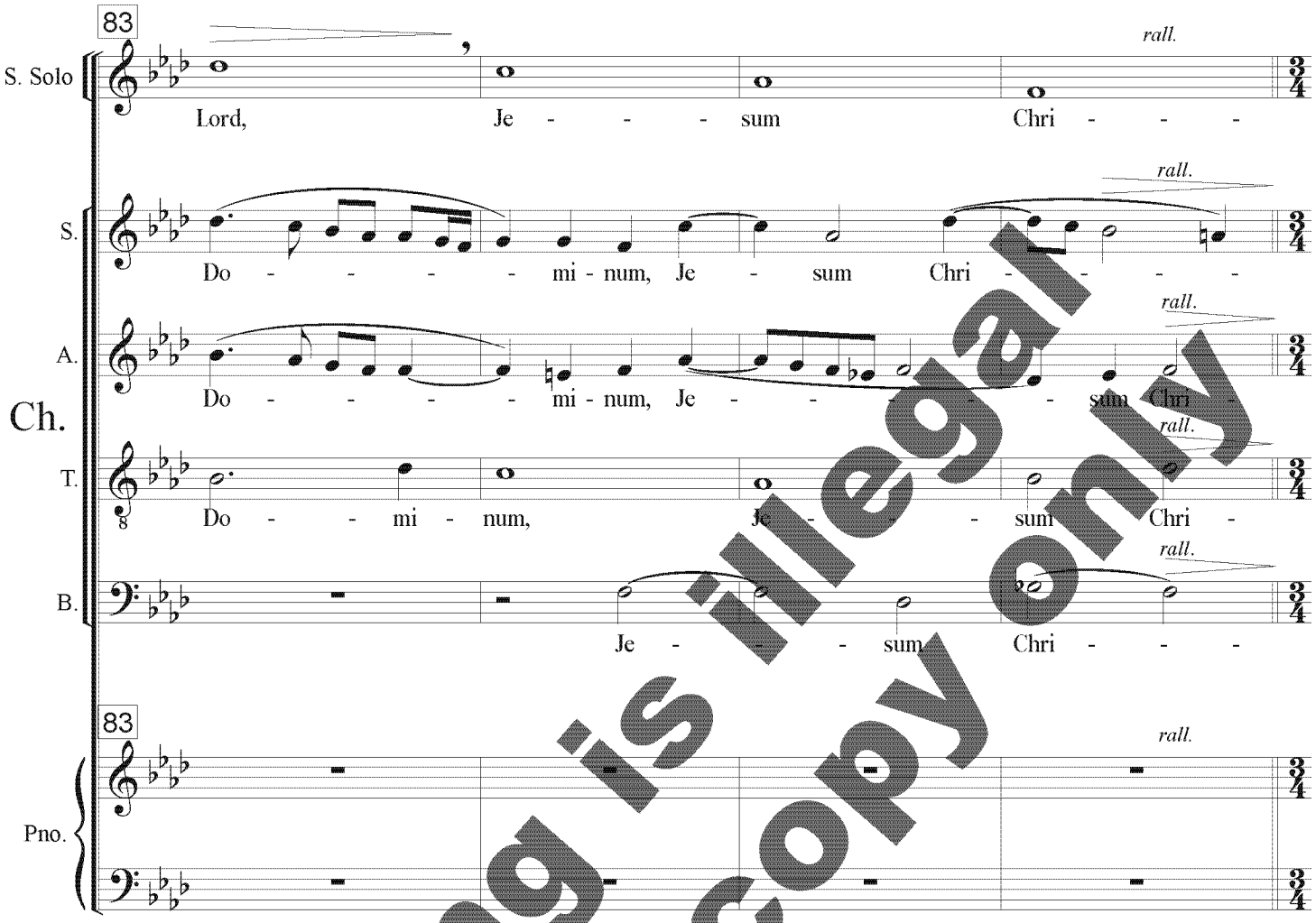

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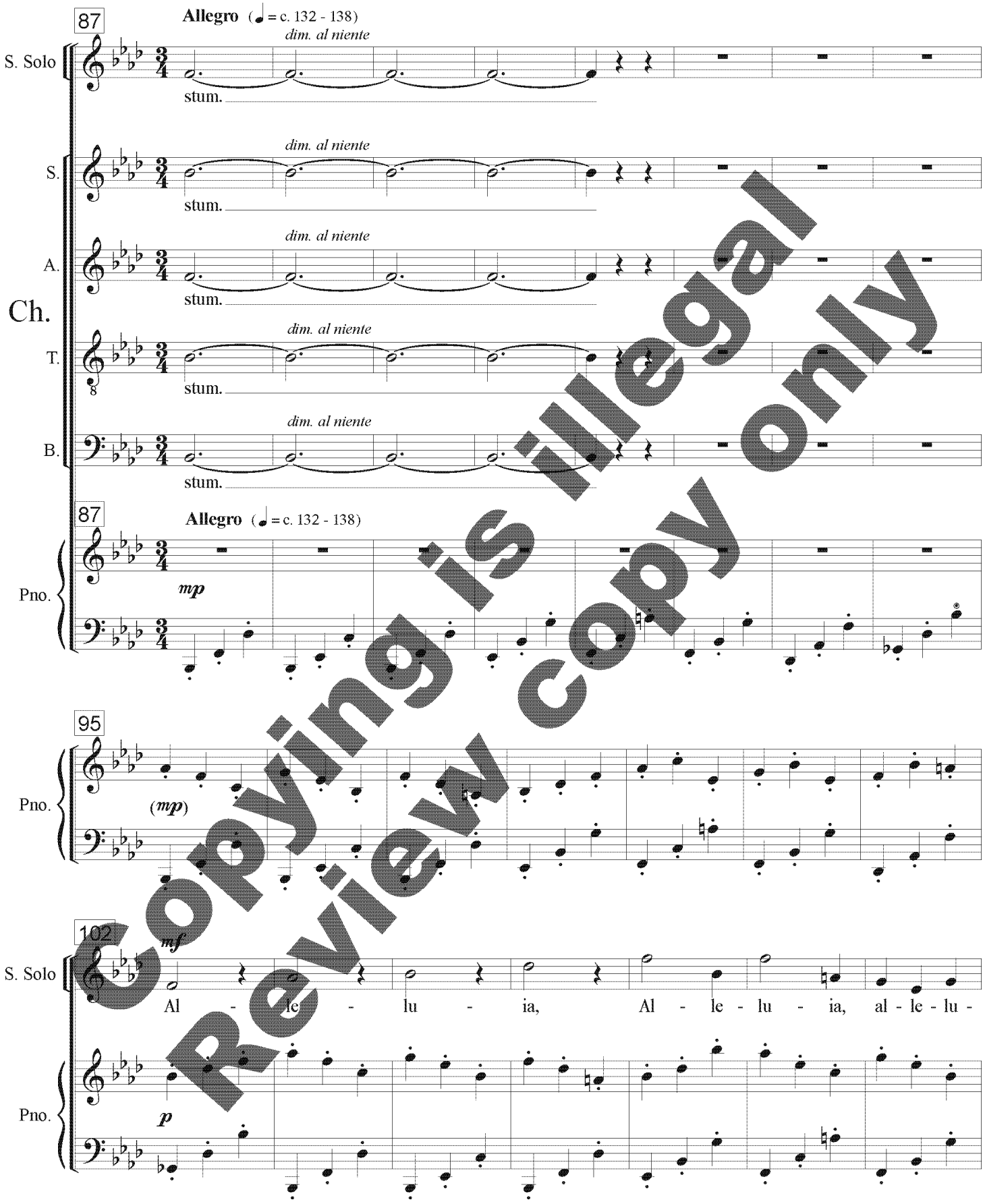

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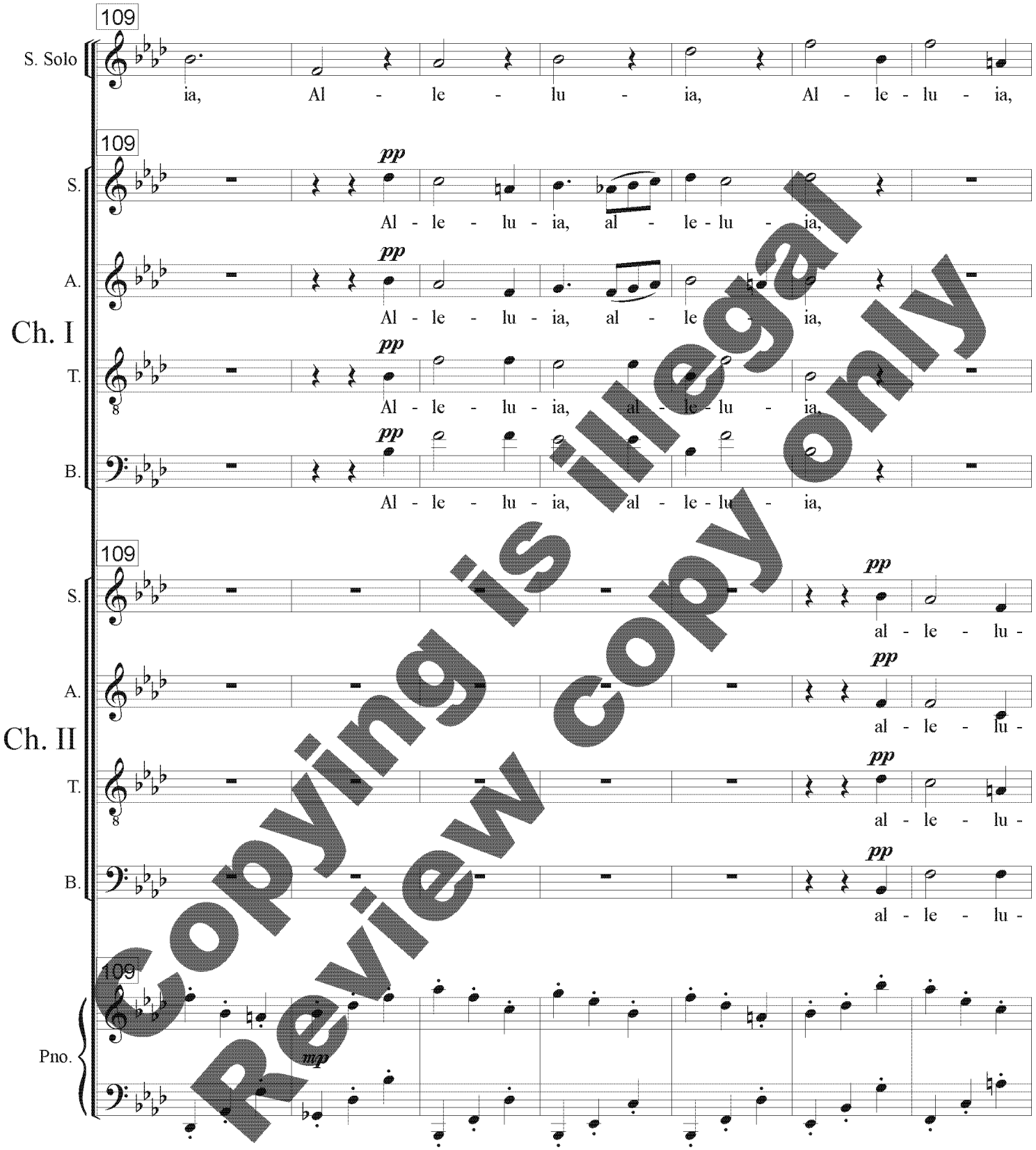

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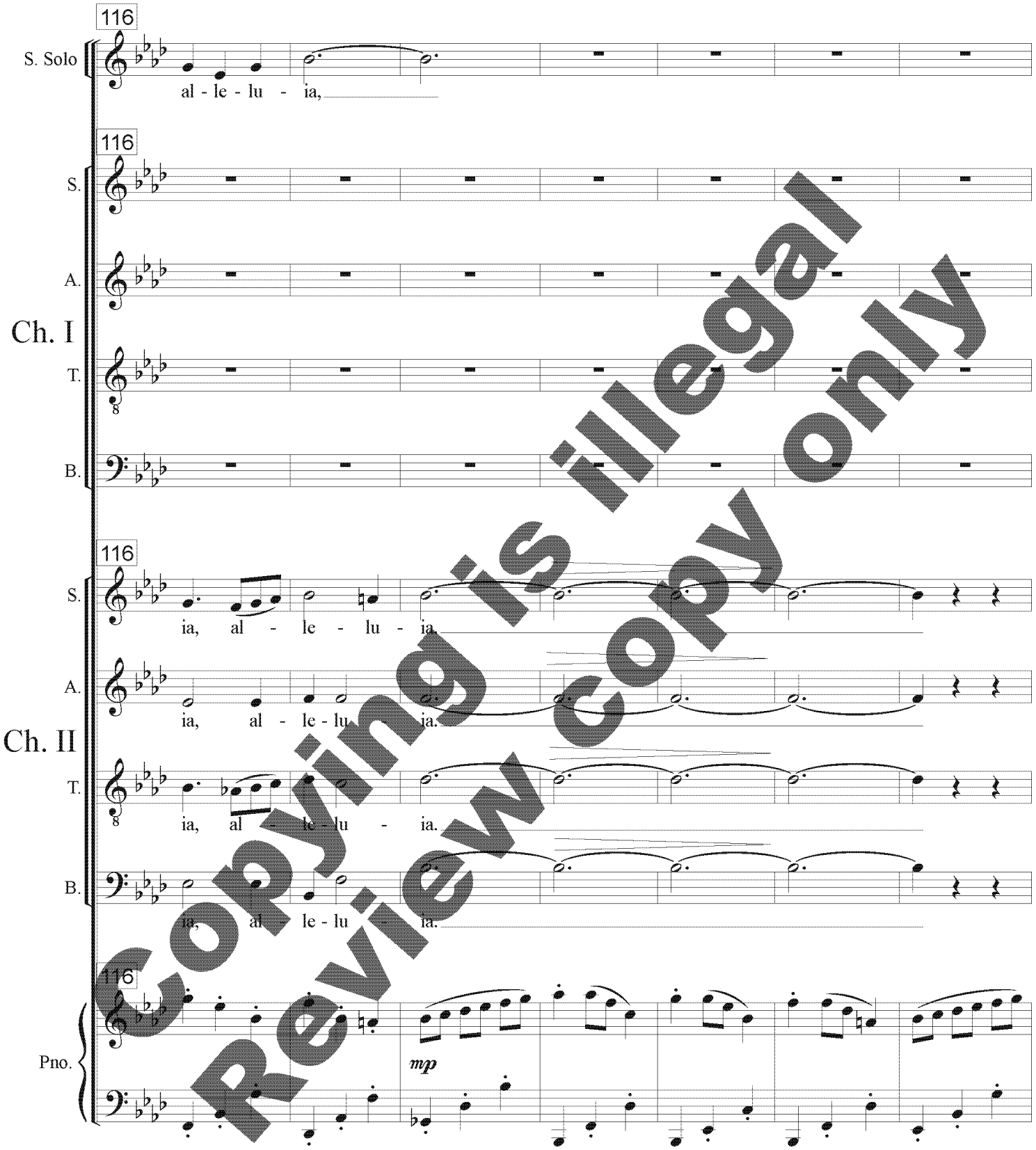

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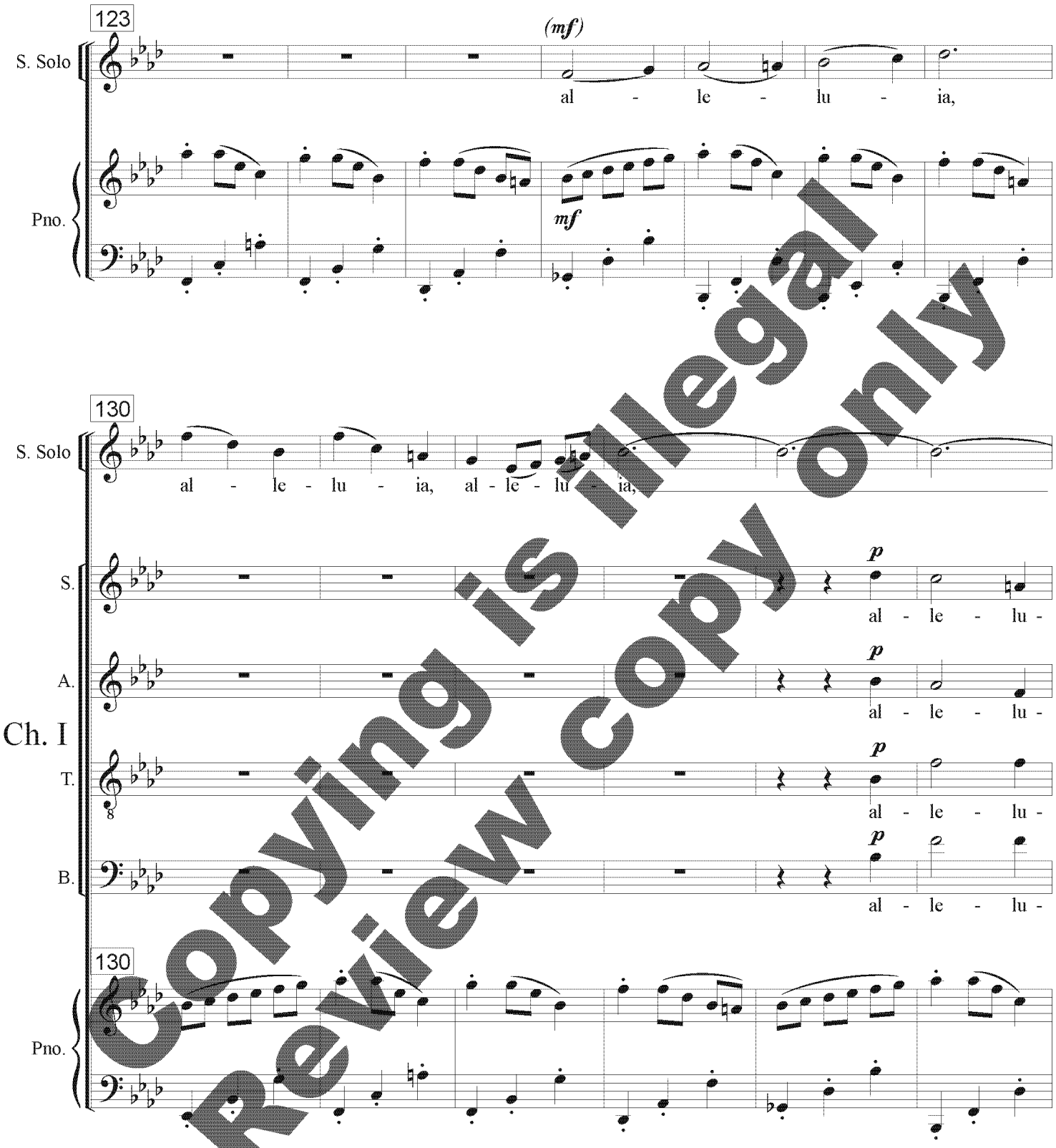

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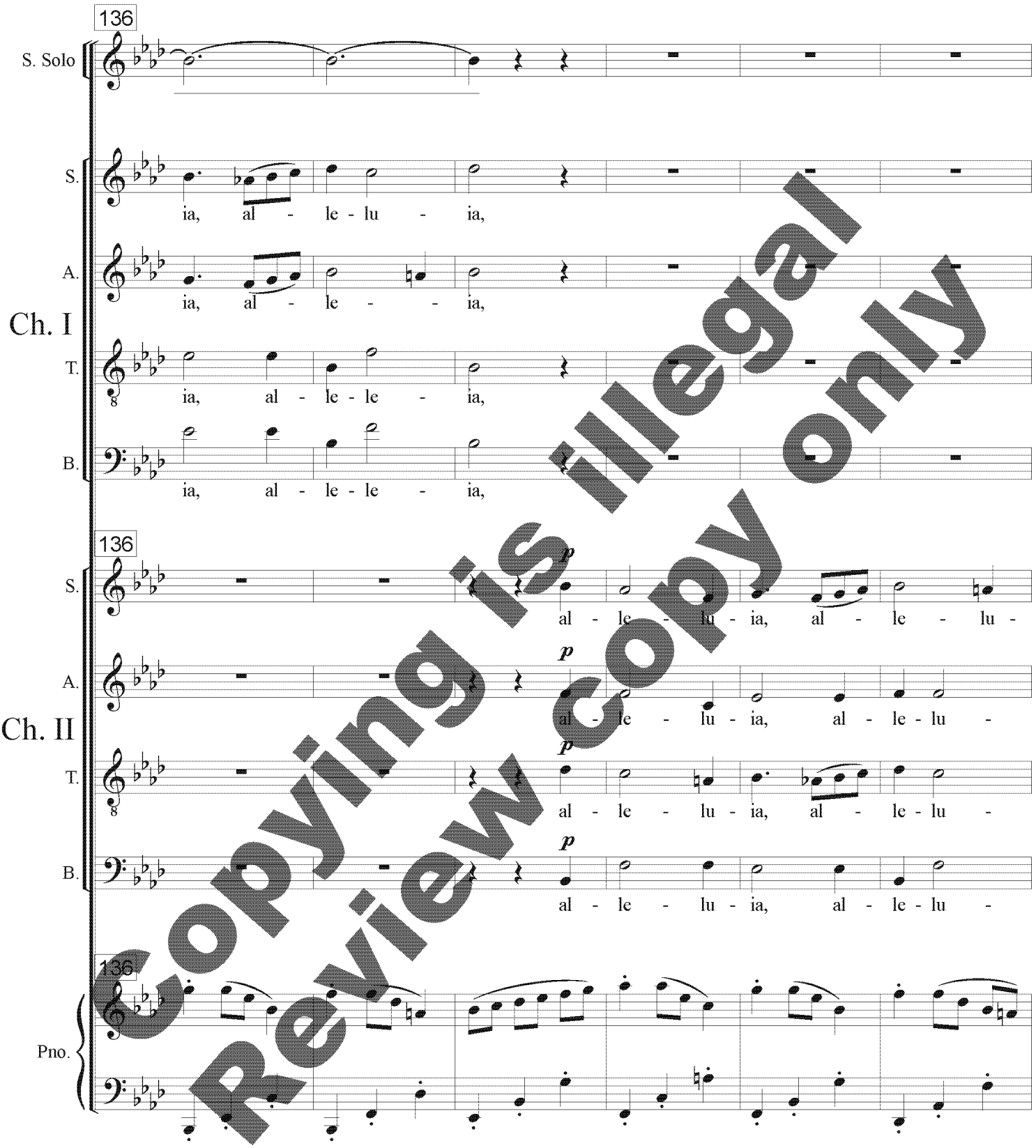

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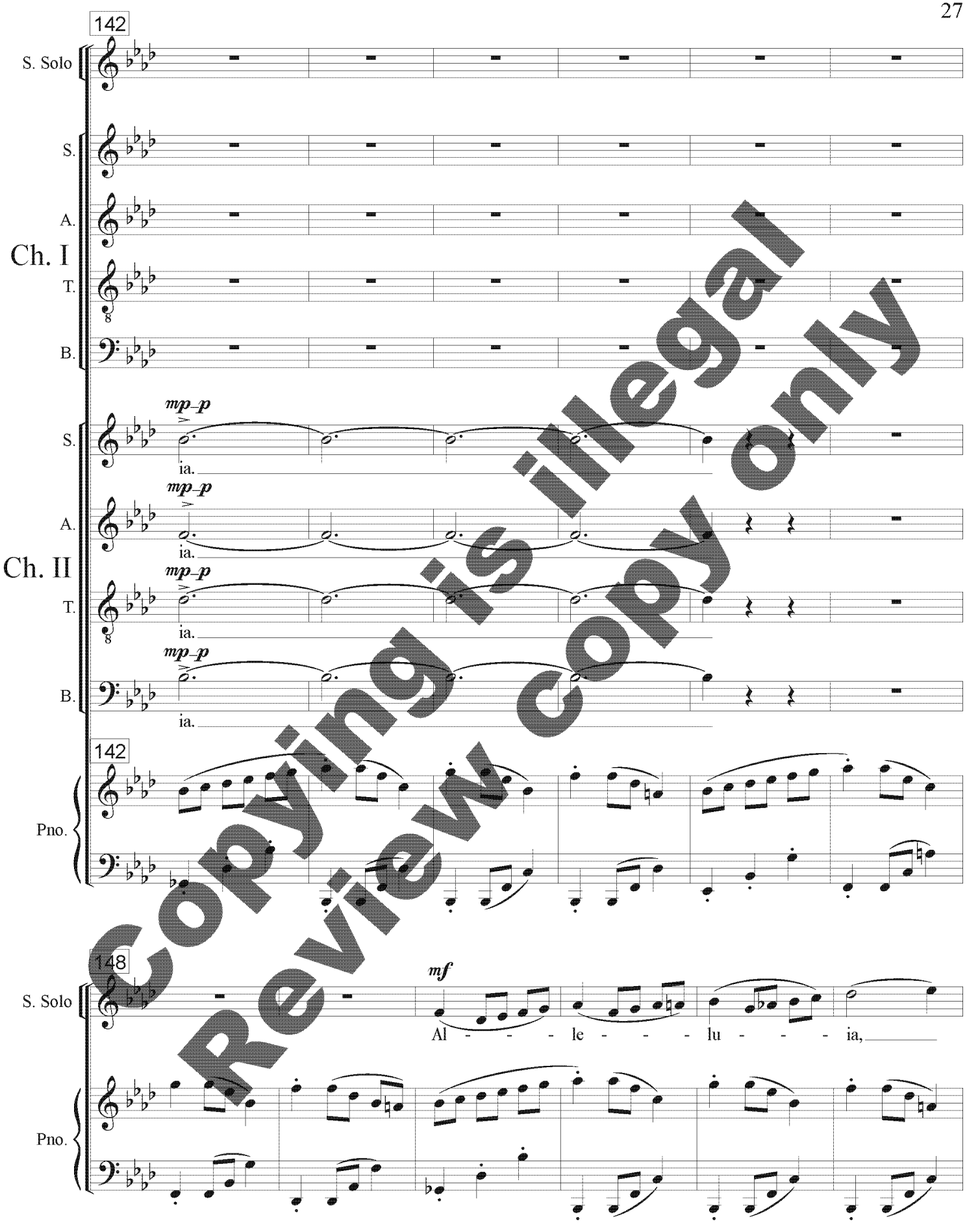

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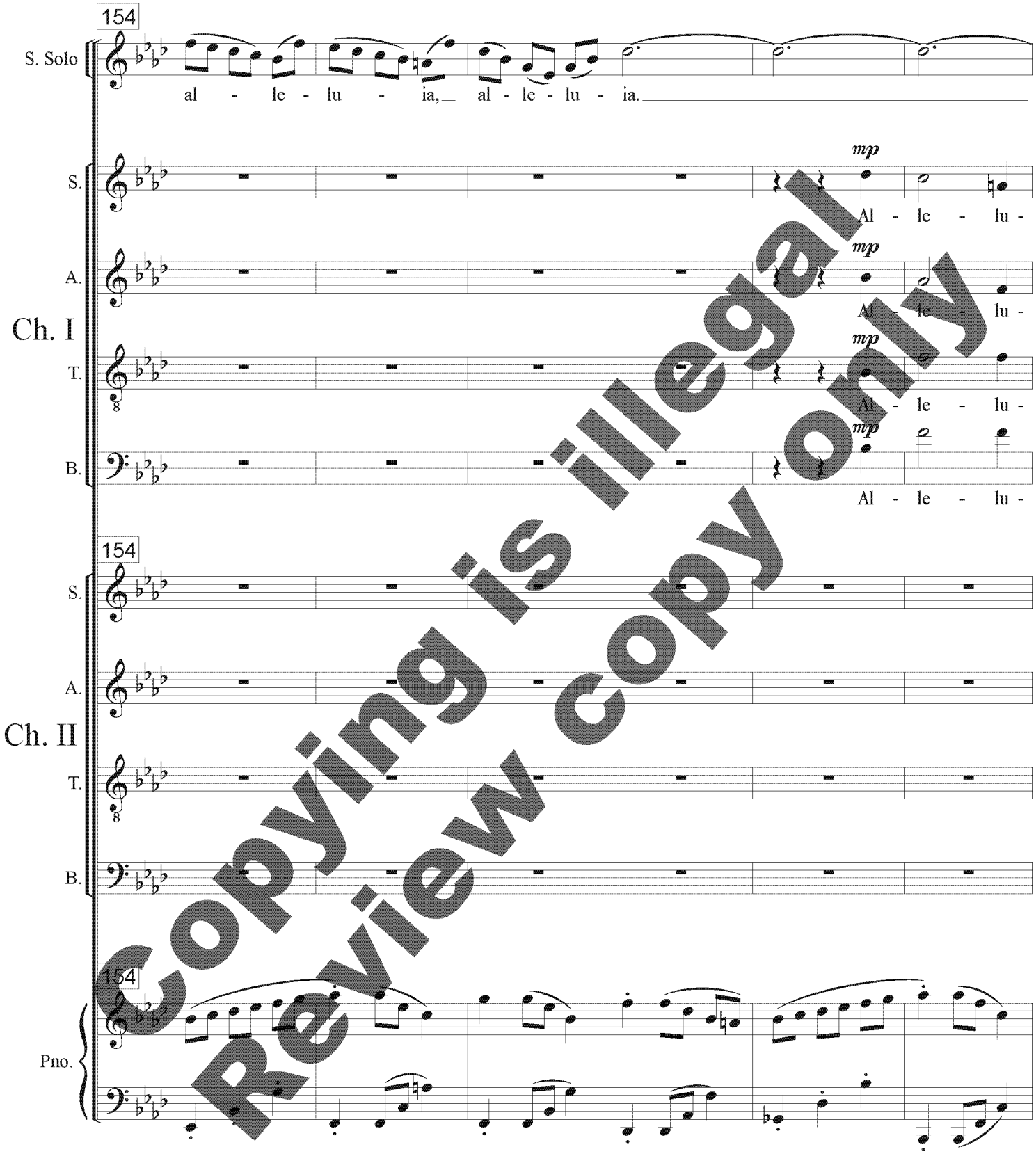

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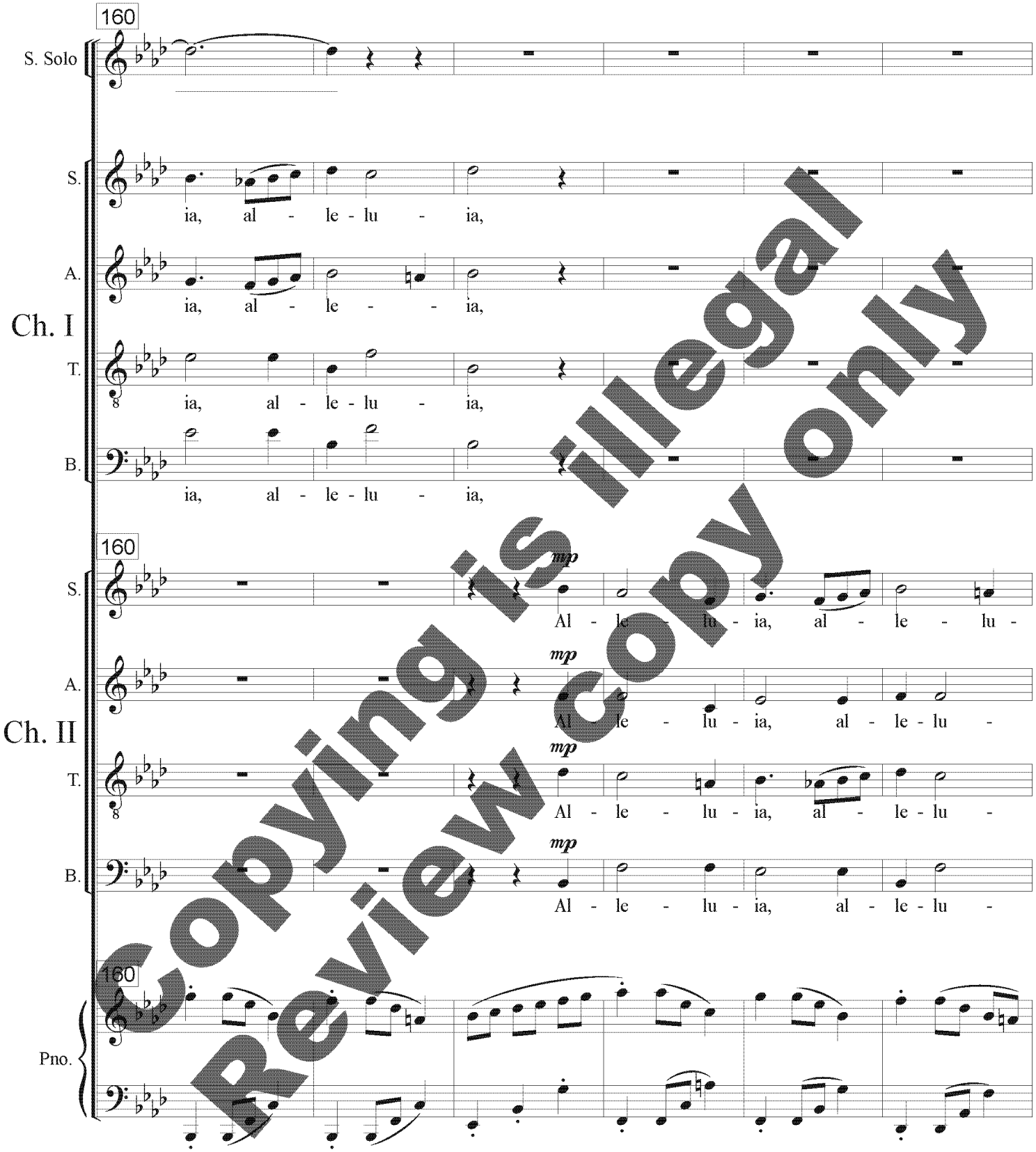

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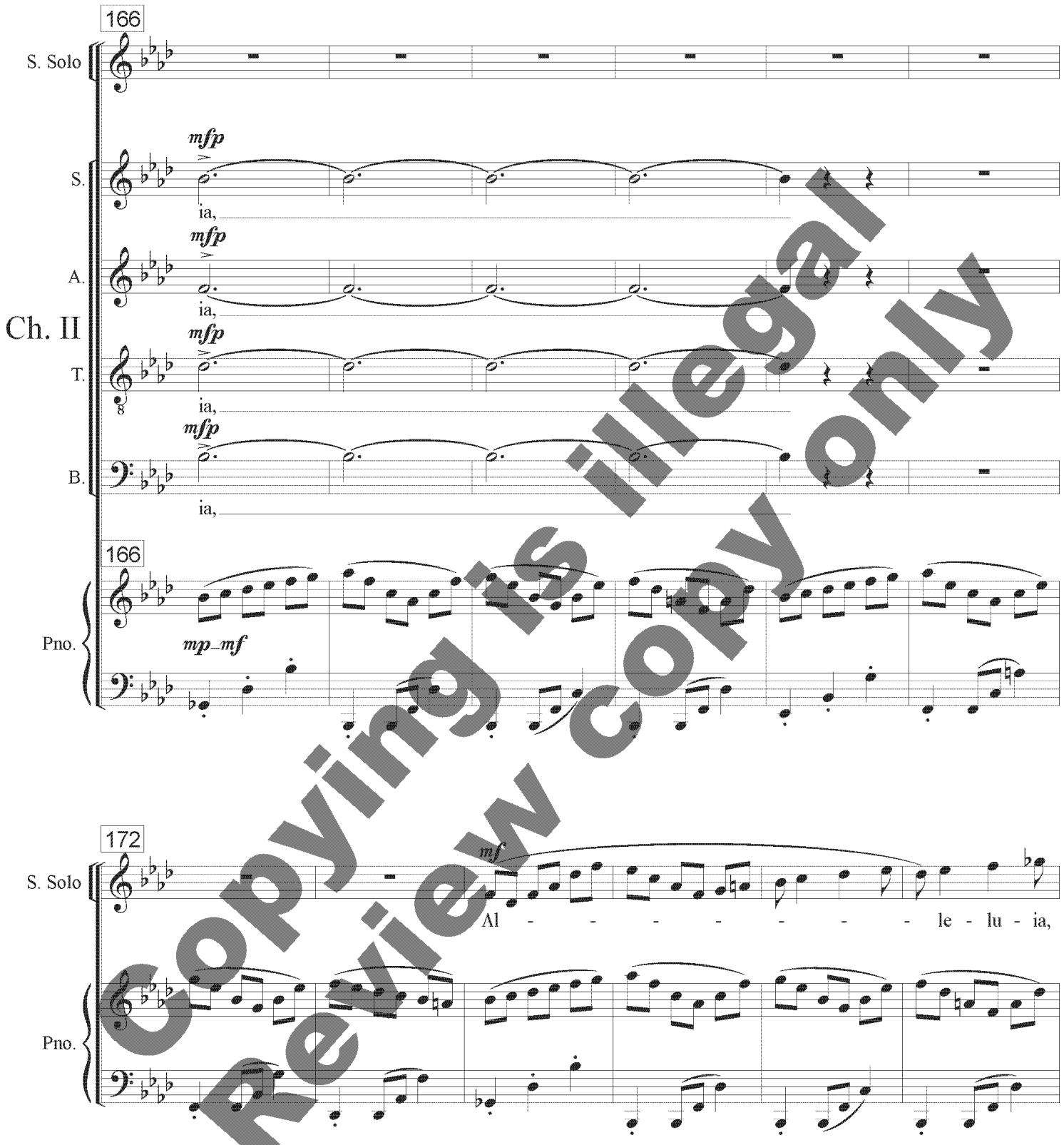

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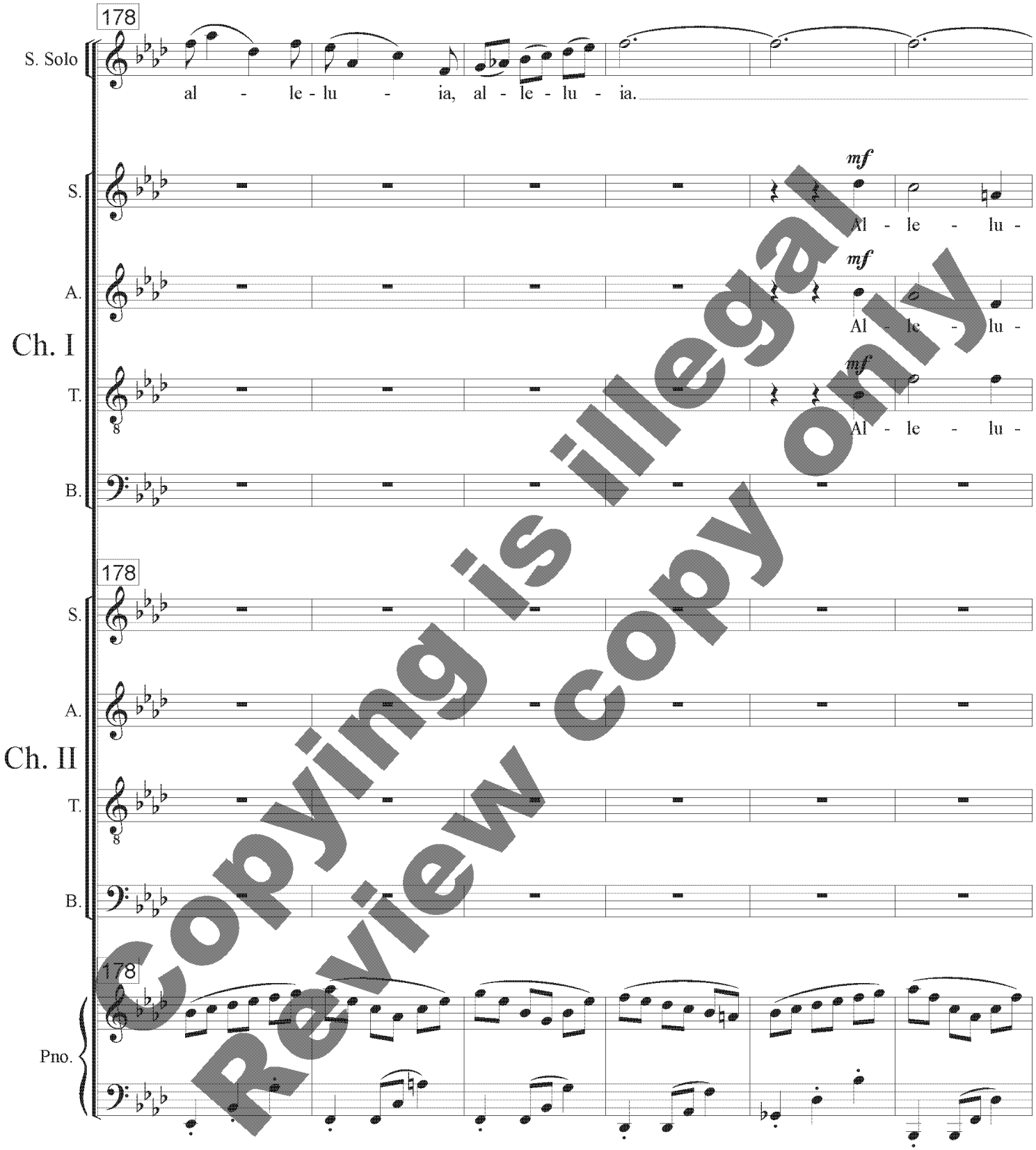

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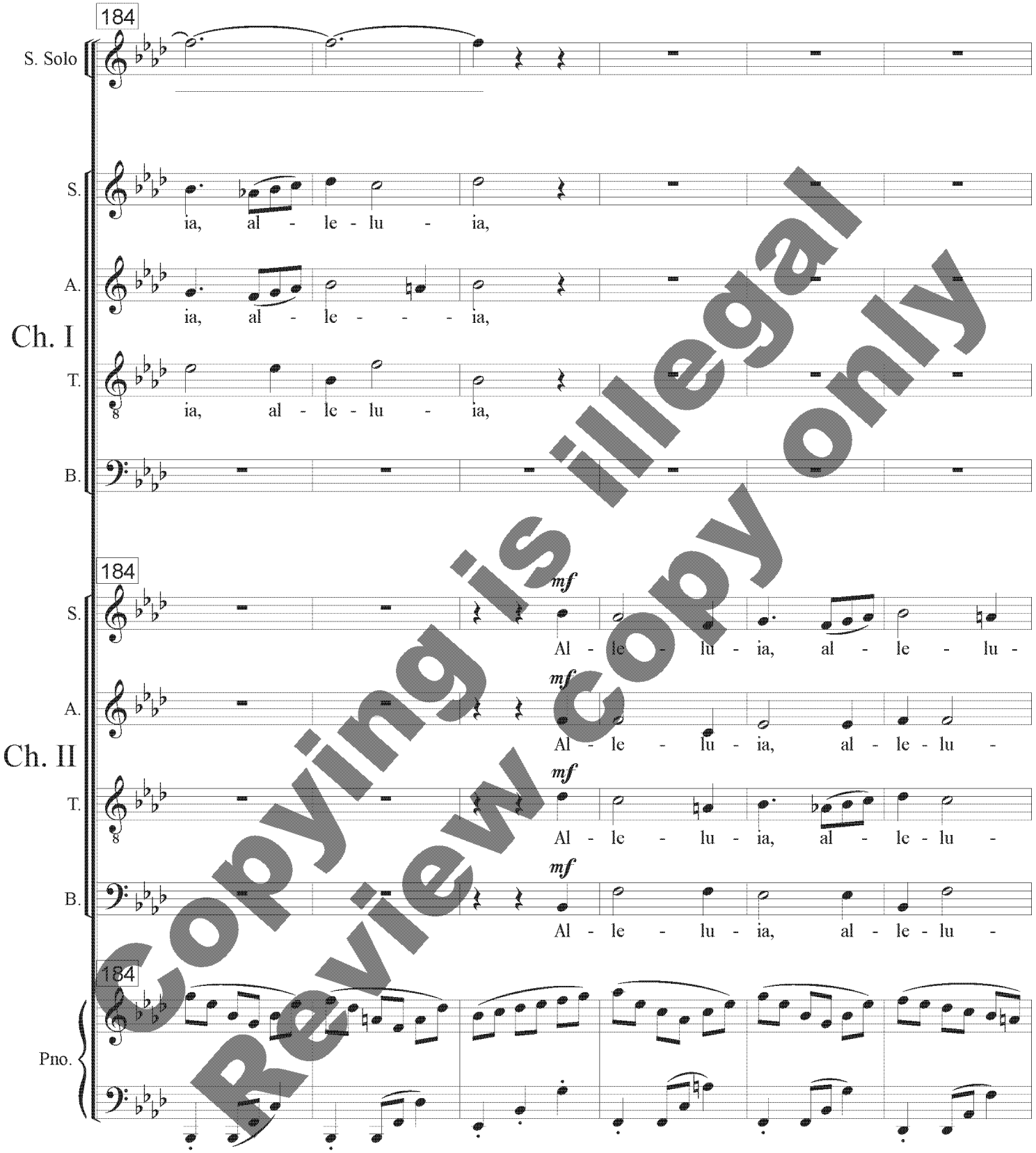

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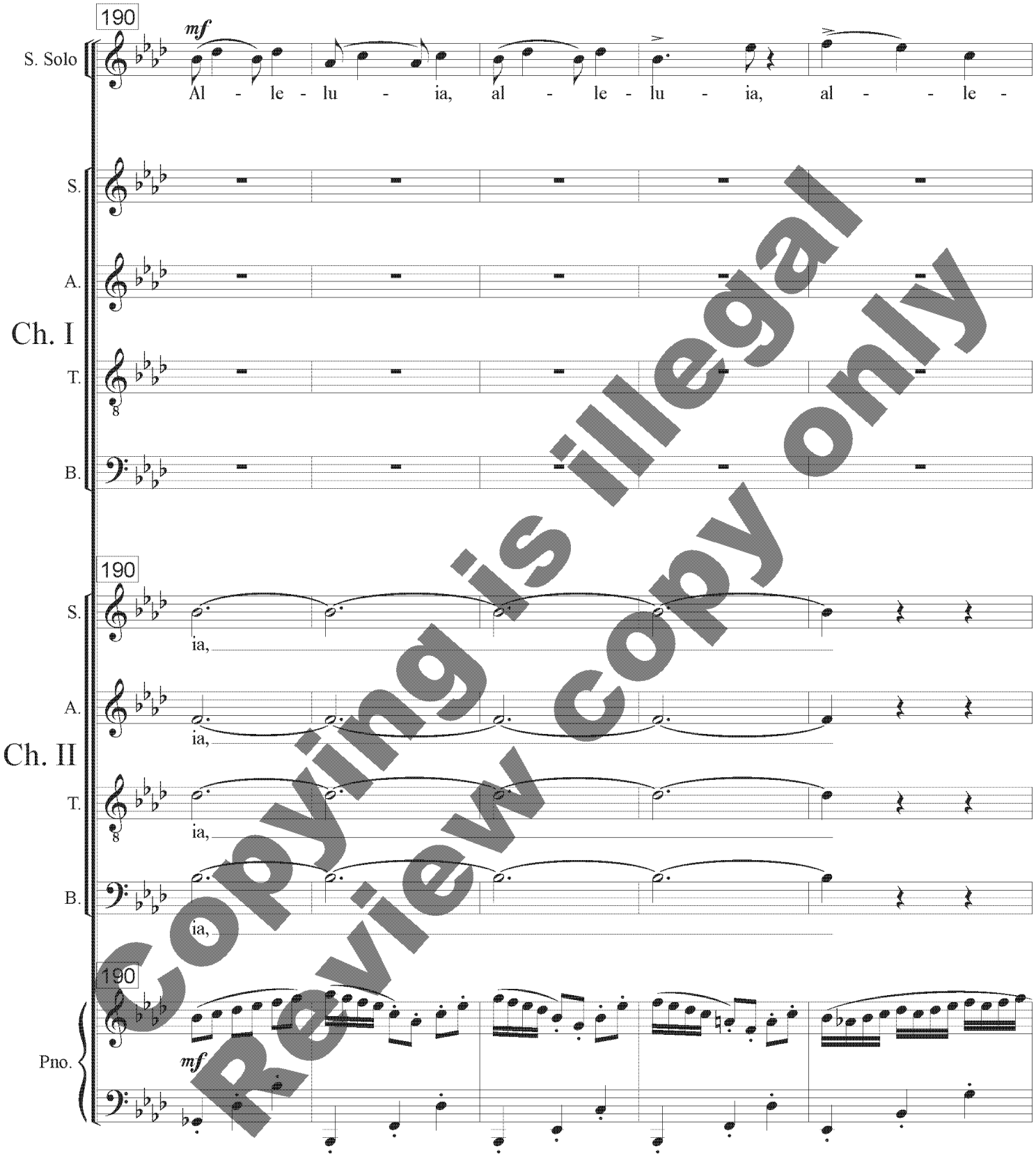

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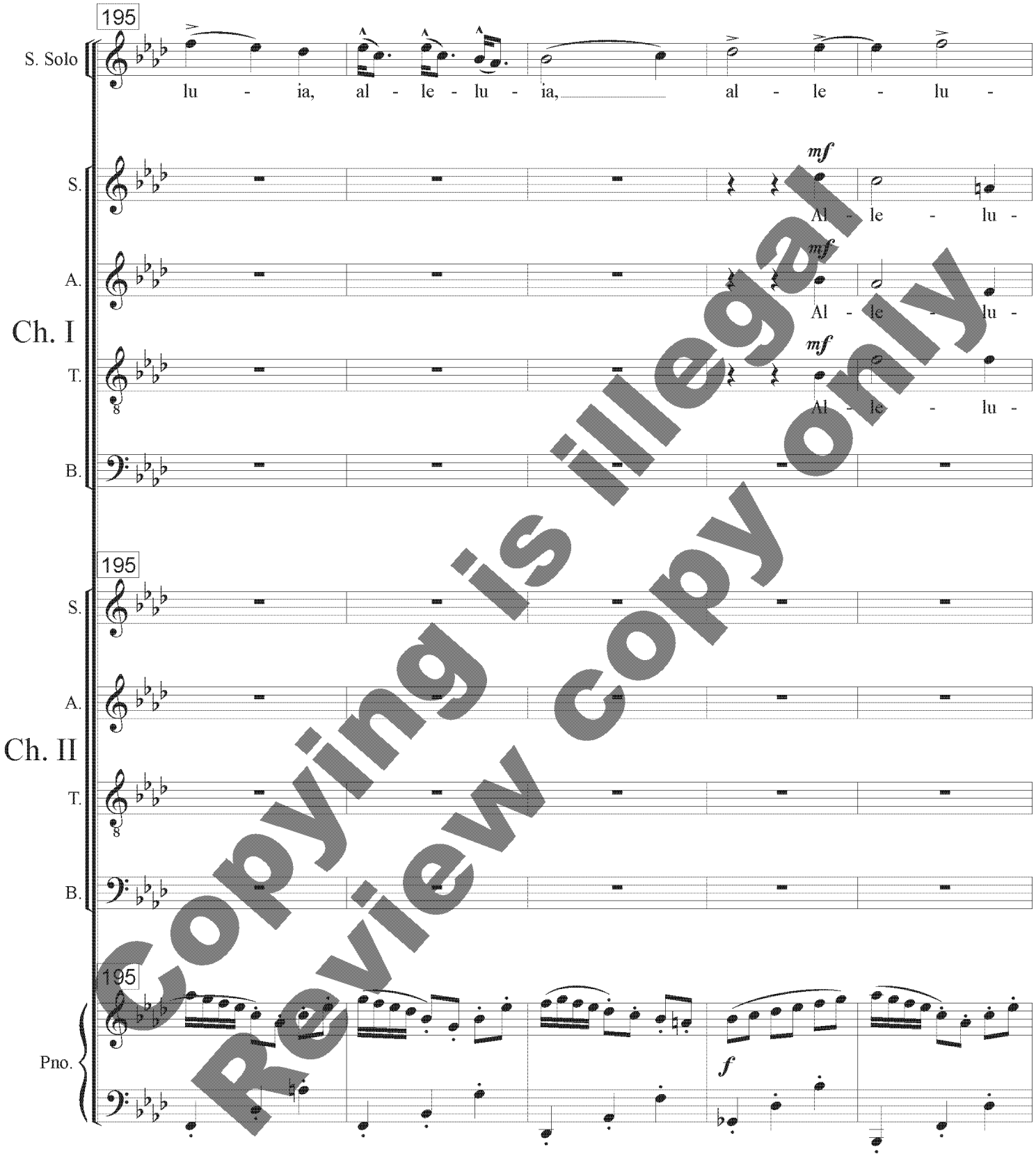

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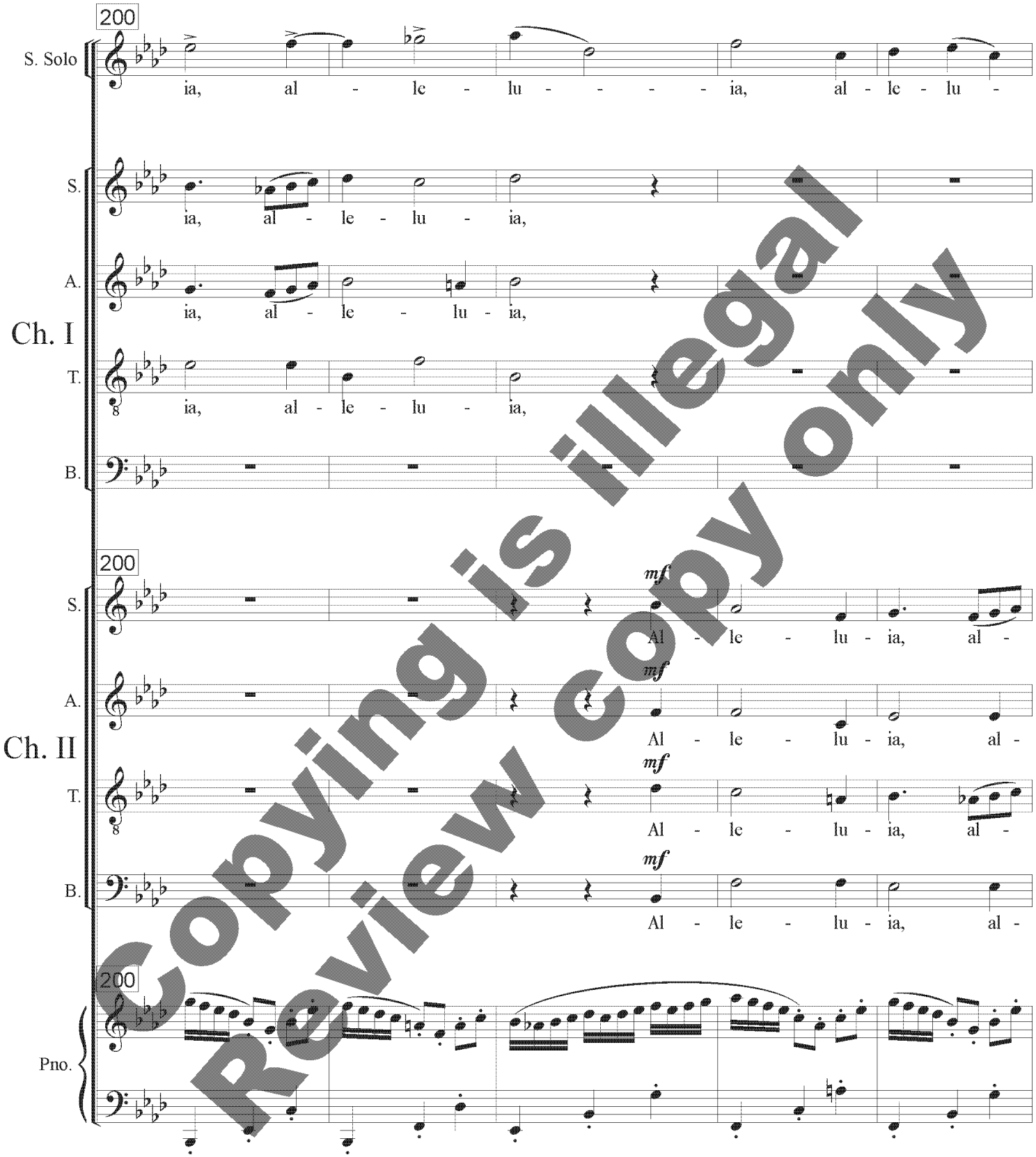

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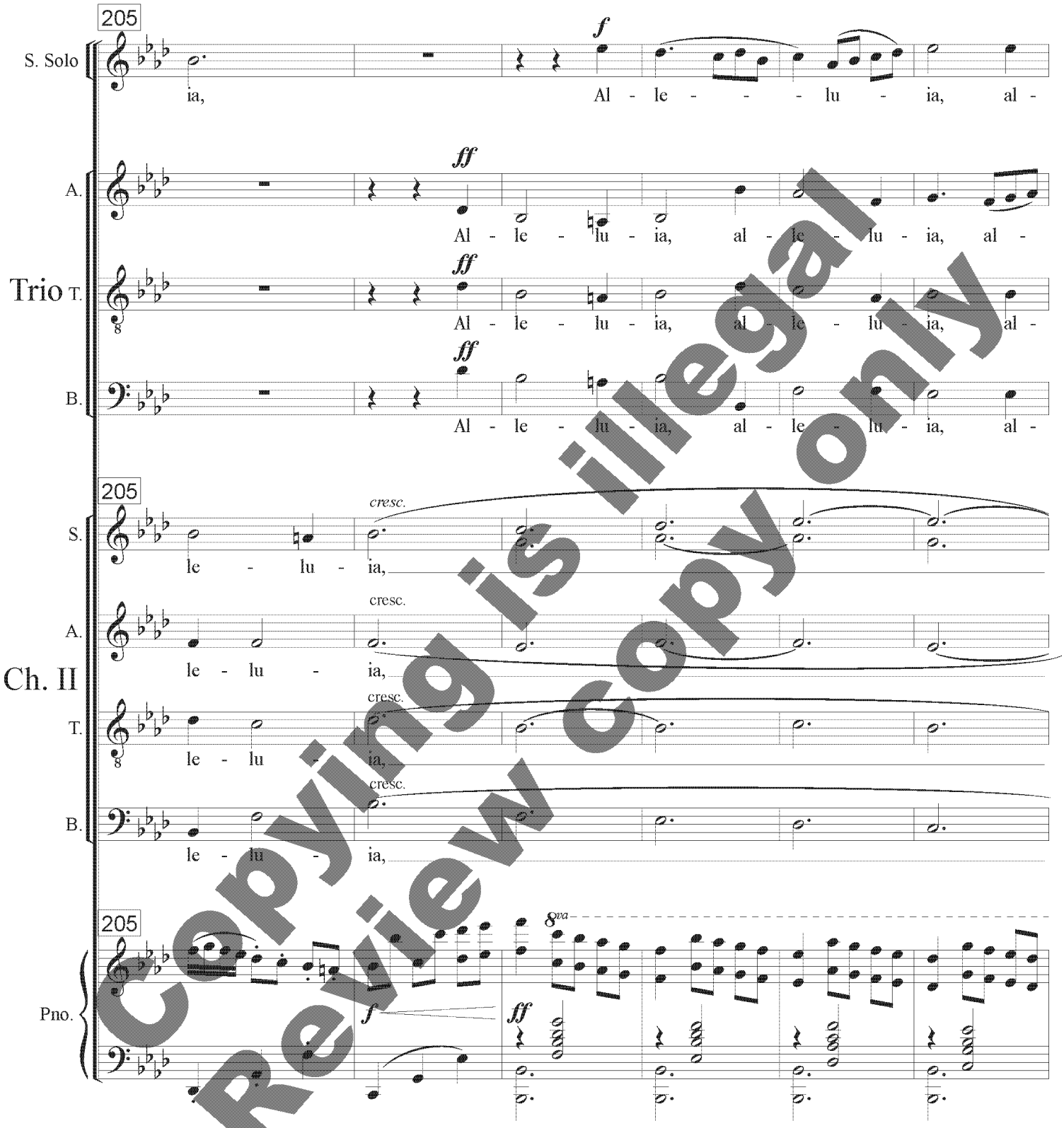

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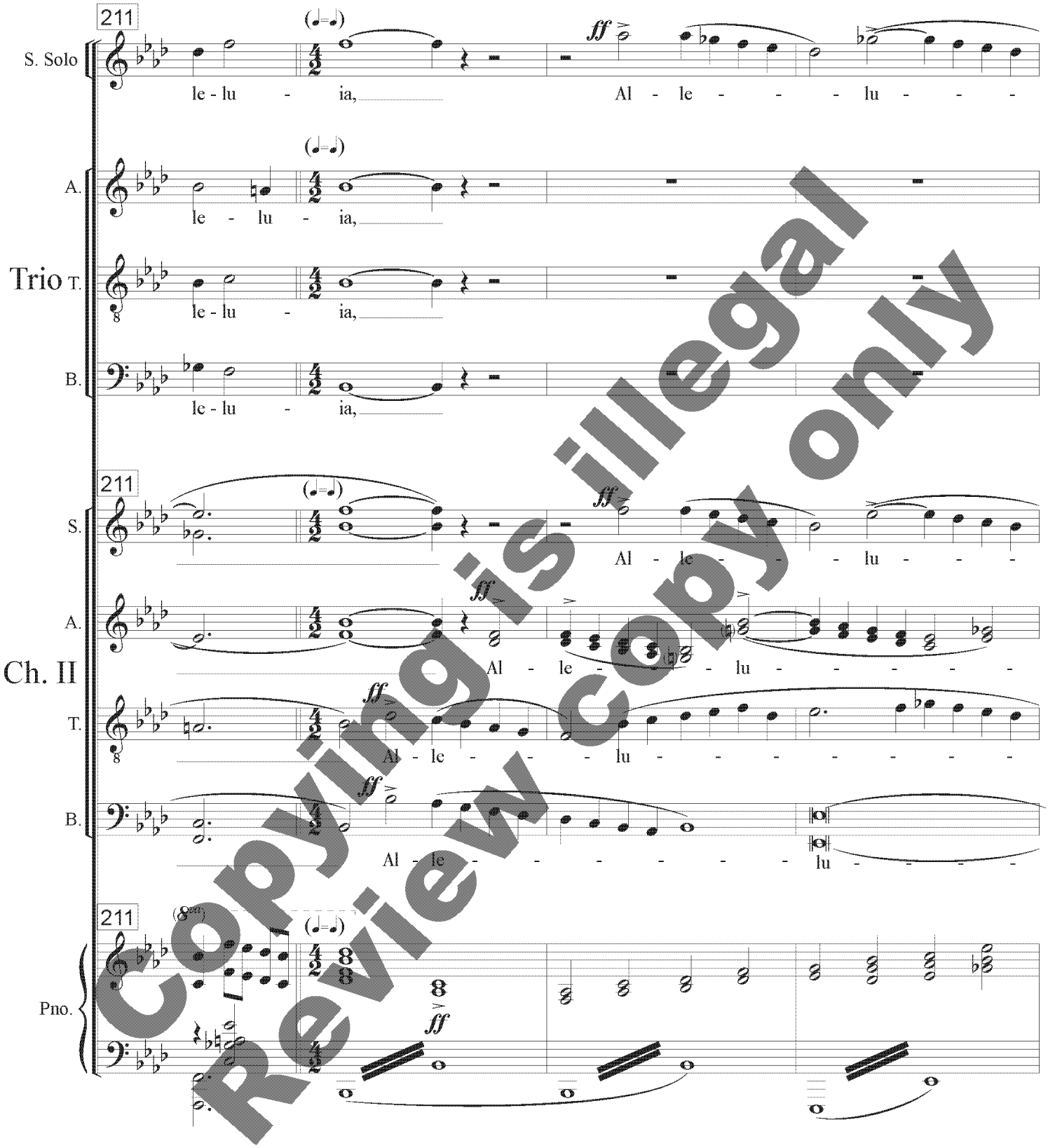

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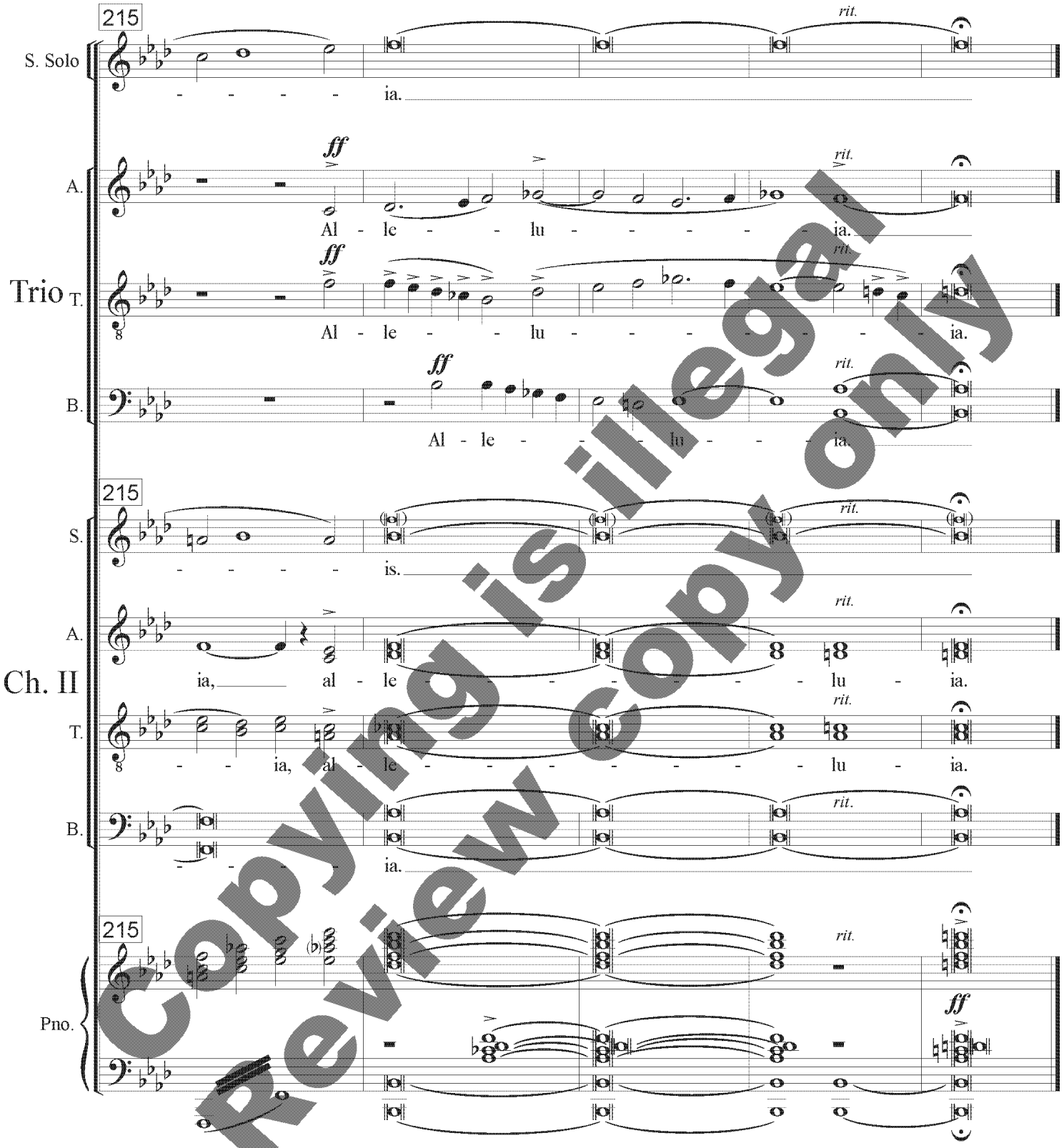

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