We Wommen Konne No Thyng Hele

for 6 voices or 6-part choir
and hand drum

anthony linden jones

Lindensong
Sydney - Australia

We Wommen Konne No Thyng Hele

text: Geoffrey Chaucer, from 'the Wife of Bath's Tale', of 'the Canterbury Tales'
music by anthony linden jones © 1992, rev. 2001
dur: ~3:15

Original Text	**Paraphrased interpretation**
We wommen konne no thyng hele;	We women can conceal no secret.
Witnesse on Myda, - wol ye heere the tale?	Look at Midas – will you hear the tale?
Ovyde, amonges othere thynges smale,	Ovid, among other things small,
Seyde Myda hadde, under his longe heres,	Said Midas had, under his long hair,
Growynge upon his heed two asses eres,	Growing upon his head, two asses ears.
The whiche vyce he hydde, as he best myghte,	This defect he hid as best he could
Ful subtilly from every mannes sighte,	Cleverly from everybody's sight
That, save his wyf, ther wiste of it namo.	So that, except for his wife, nobody knew of it.
he loved hire moost, and trusted hire also;	He loved her completely, and entrusted
He preyede hire that to no creature	And entreated her that to no creature
She sholde tellen of his disfigure.	Should she tell of his disfiguration.
She swoor him, 'Nay,' for al this world to wynne,	She swore him 'No, not for the whole world.'
She nolde nat do that vileynye or synne,	That she wouldn't do such a villainous thing.
To make hir housbonde han so foul a name.	To make her husband suffer such a bad name –
She nolde nat telle it for hir owene shame.	She dare not do it for her own shame.
But natheless, hir thoughte that she dyde,	But nevertheless, she thought she would die
That she so longe sholde a conseil hyde;	After keeping the secret for such a long time.
Hir thoughte it swal so soore aboute hir herte	She thought it swelled so painfully in her heart
That nemely so work hire moost asterte;	That surely some word of it would burst out,
And sith she dorste telle it to no man,	And since she dare not tell it to anyone,
Doun to a mareys faste by she ran –	She ran down to a nearby marsh.
Til she cam there, hir herte was a-fyre –	As she ran, her heart was all on fire
And as a bitore bombleth in th emyre,	And as a heron boomed across the mire,
She leyde hir mouth unto the water doun;	She put her mouth into the water.
'Biwreye me nat, thou water, with thy soun,'	'Oh water, don't betray me with your sound.'
Quod she; 'to thee I telle it and namo;	She said, 'I'll tell it to you and to nobody else.
Myn housbonde hath longe asses erys two!	My husband two long asses ears.
Now is myn herte al hool, now is it oute.	Now my heart is whole, now that it's out.
I myghte no lenger kepe it, out of doute.'	I can no longer keep it secret, without doubt.'
Heere may ye se, togh we a tyme abyde,	Here you can see, though we might keep it awhile,
Yet out it moot; we kan no conseil hyde.'	Yet, it must out – we can hide no secret.

This piece uses some extended vocal techniques to highlight particular aspects of the Chaucer text, but it is essentially a simple strophic song. A frame drum (could be a *bodhran* or *tambour*) is used to both drive the pulse of the piece and to recall the sound of medieval dance music. The rhythm is derived from the iambic pentameter of the text.

The drum part is built from a number of rhythmic cells – all variants of the rhythmic feel of the text – which undergo simple transformations.

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We Wommen Konne No Thyng Hele

Text: Geoffrey Chaucer
Music: E.I.E.I.O.
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♩. = 90

Soprano: *spoken* **f** We wom - men kon - ne no thyng hele — *Glissando*

Mezzo Soprano: *spoken* **f** We wom - men kon - ne no thyng hele — *Glissando*

Alto: *spoken* **f** We wom - men kon - ne no thyng hele — *Glissando*

Tenor: **p** kon - ne no thyng hele

Baritone: **mf** Wit-nesse on My - da, wol ye heere the ta - le

Bass: **p** kon - ne no thyng hele

Frame Drum: **f** **mp** **p**

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S: **f** two ass - es

M: **f** two ass - es

A: **f** two ass - es

T: kon - ne no thyng hele — **mf** Grow-ynge u-pon his heed two ass - es

B: Ov-yde a-mong-es o - there thyng-es smal - le — **f** We

B: kon - ne no thyng hele Sey-de My - da had - de un-der his long-e heres — **f** We

Dr.

8

S: *Glissando* eres

M: *Glissando* eres

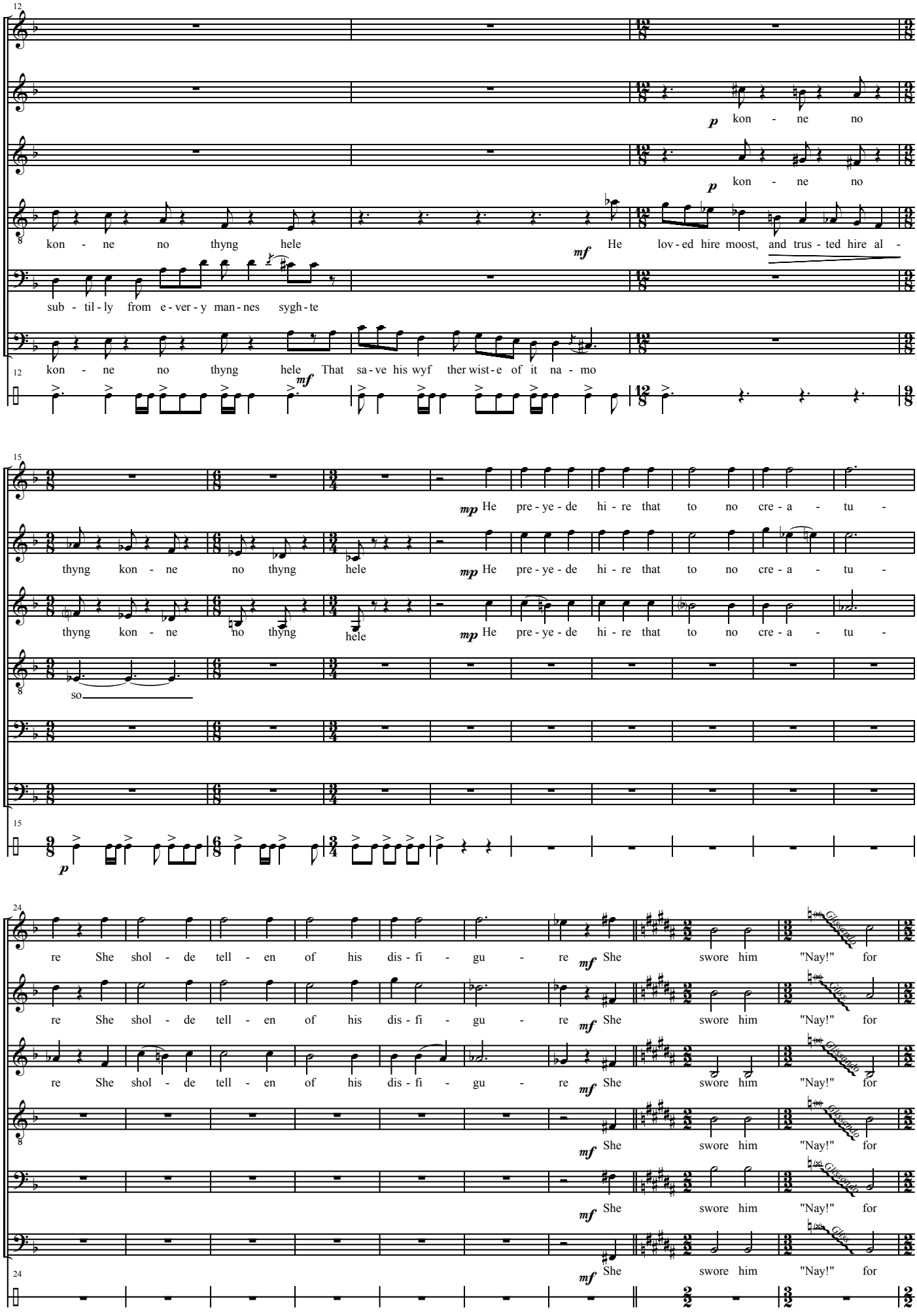
A: eres

T: **f** eres — **p** kon - ne no thyng hele

B: *Gliss.* *Glissando* wom - men kon - ne no thyng hele — **mf** The whych - e vice he hyd - de as he best mygh - te Ful

B: *Gliss.* *Glissando* wom - men kon - ne no thyng hele — **p** kon - ne no thyng hele

Dr. **f** **mf** **p**



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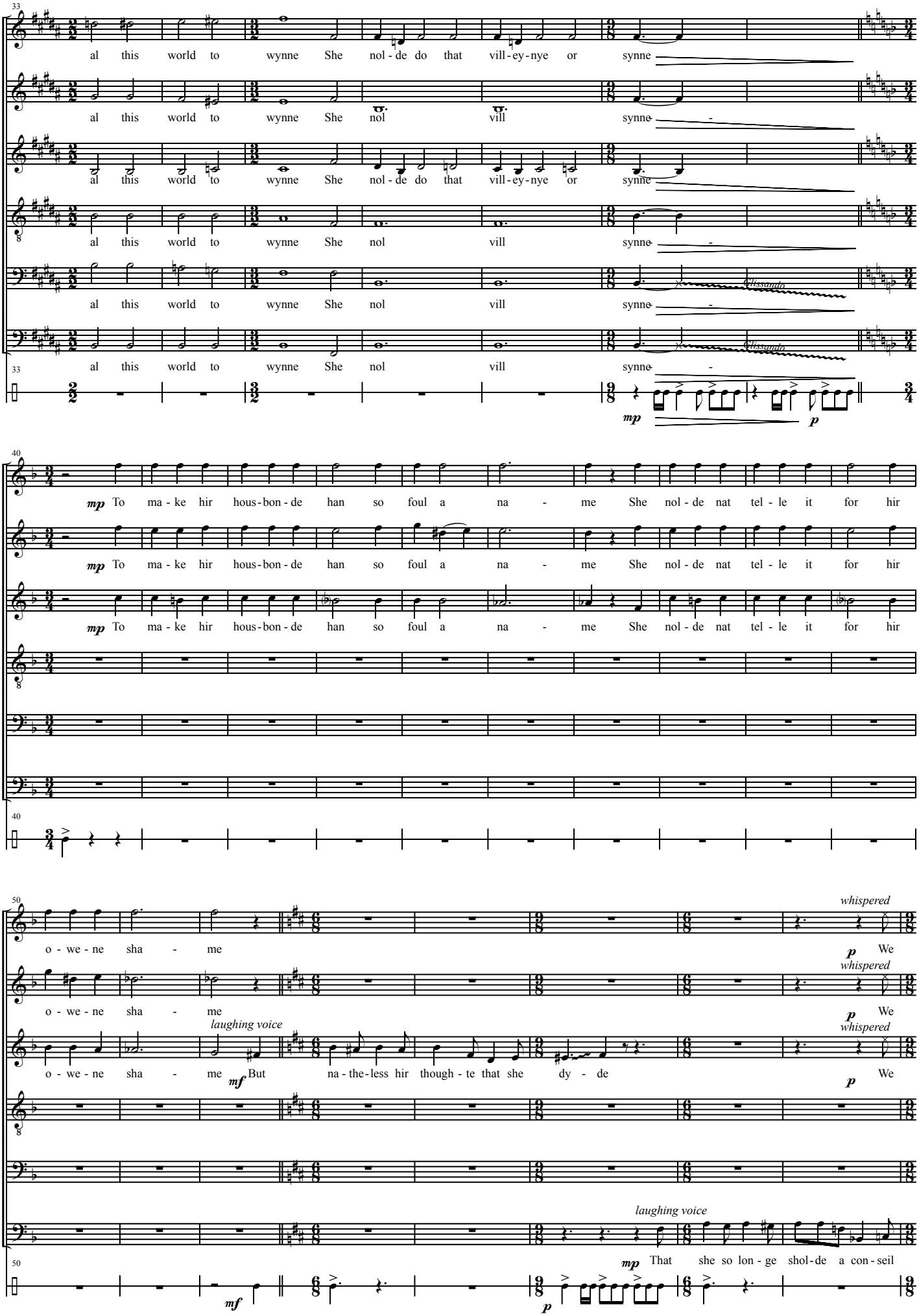

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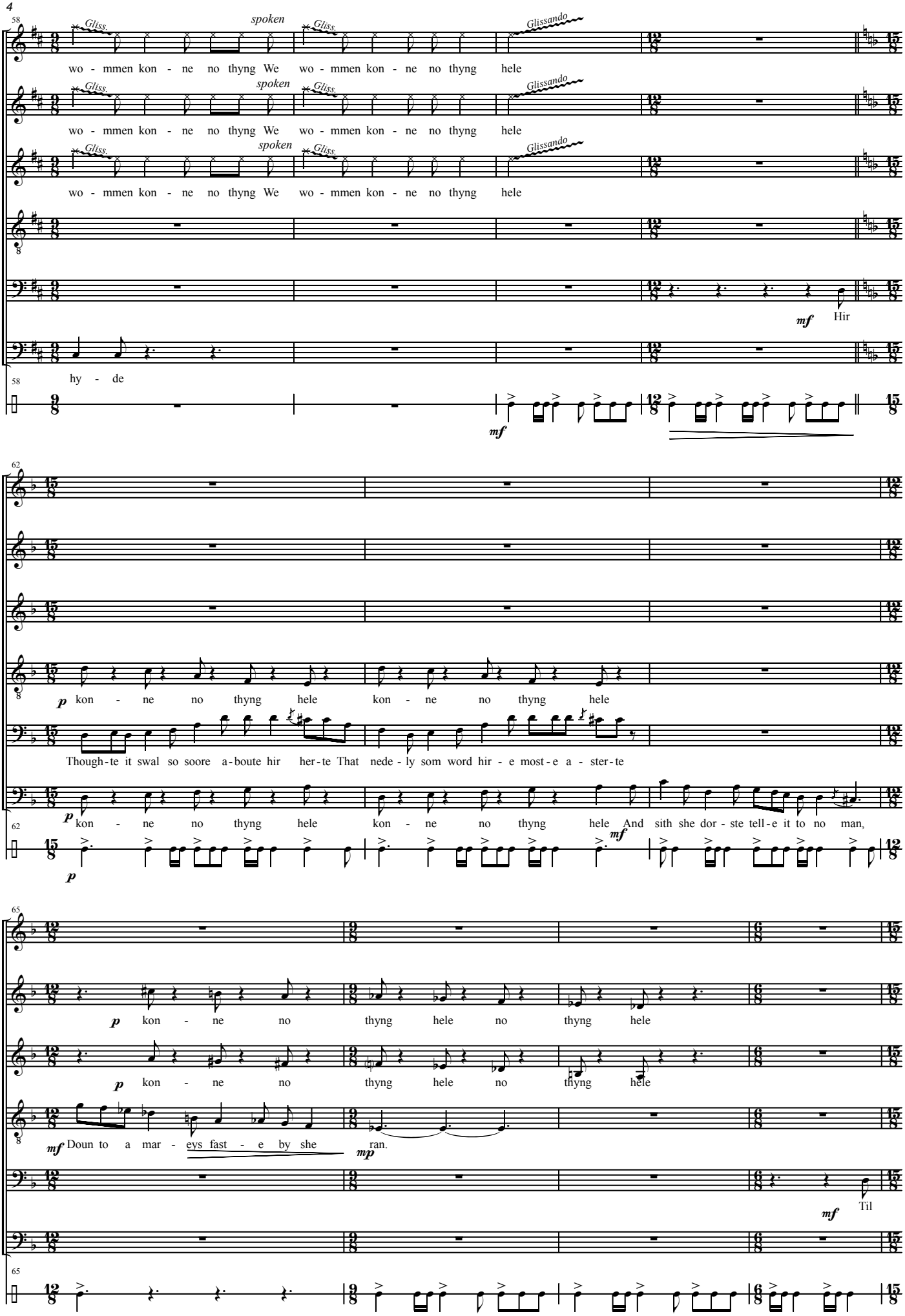
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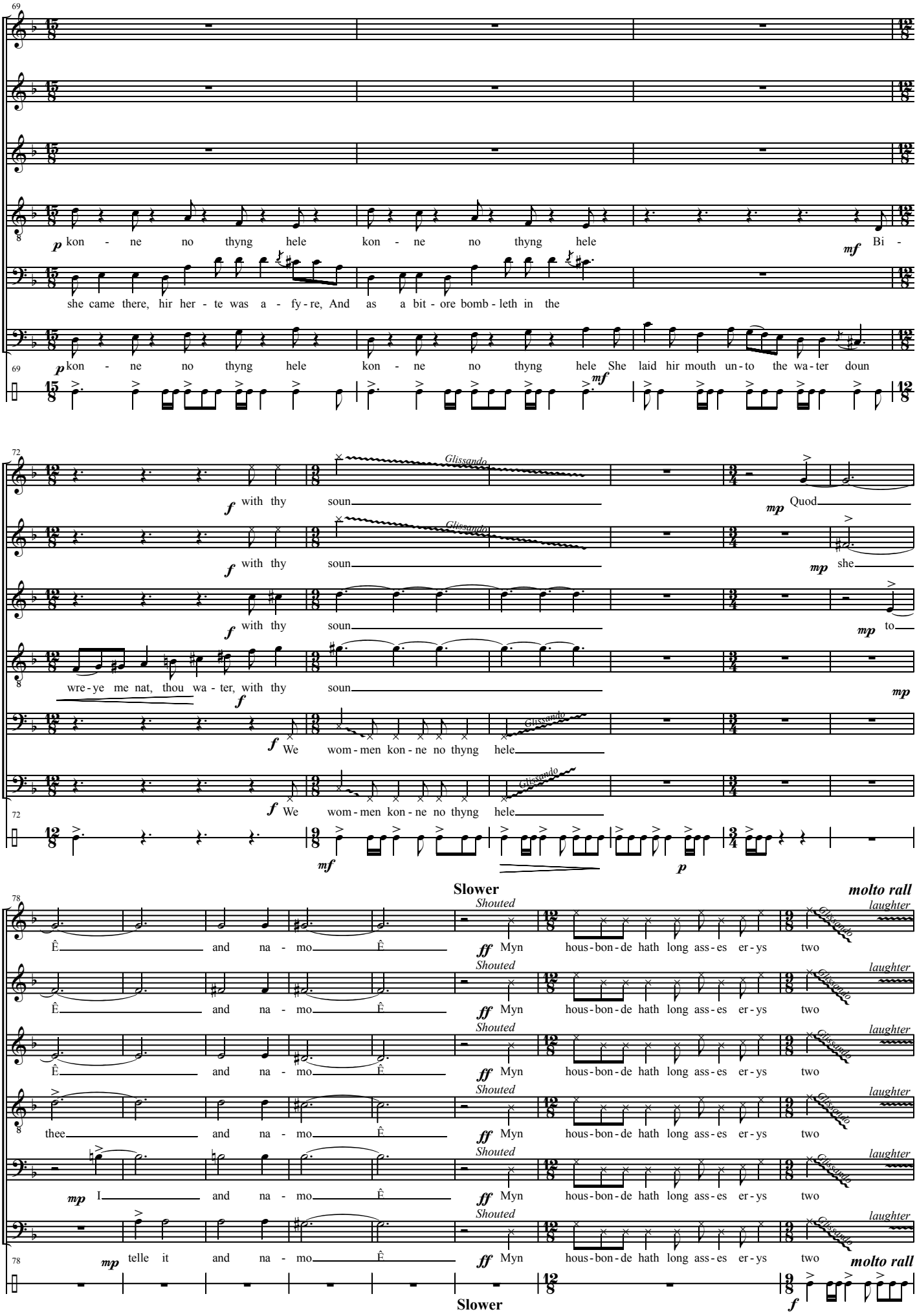
S
M
A
T
B
B
Dr.
Gliss.
spoken
Glissando
wo - mmen kon - ne no thyng We wo - mmen kon - ne no thyng hele
mf
Hir
hy - de
62
p
kon - ne no thyng hele kon - ne no thyng hele
Though-te it swal so soore a-boute hir her-te That nede-ly som word hir - e most-e a - ster-te
kon - ne no thyng hele kon - ne no thyng hele And sith she dor - ste tell-e it to no man,
65
kon - ne no thyng hele no thyng hele
Doun to a mar - eys fast - e by she ran.
mp
Til



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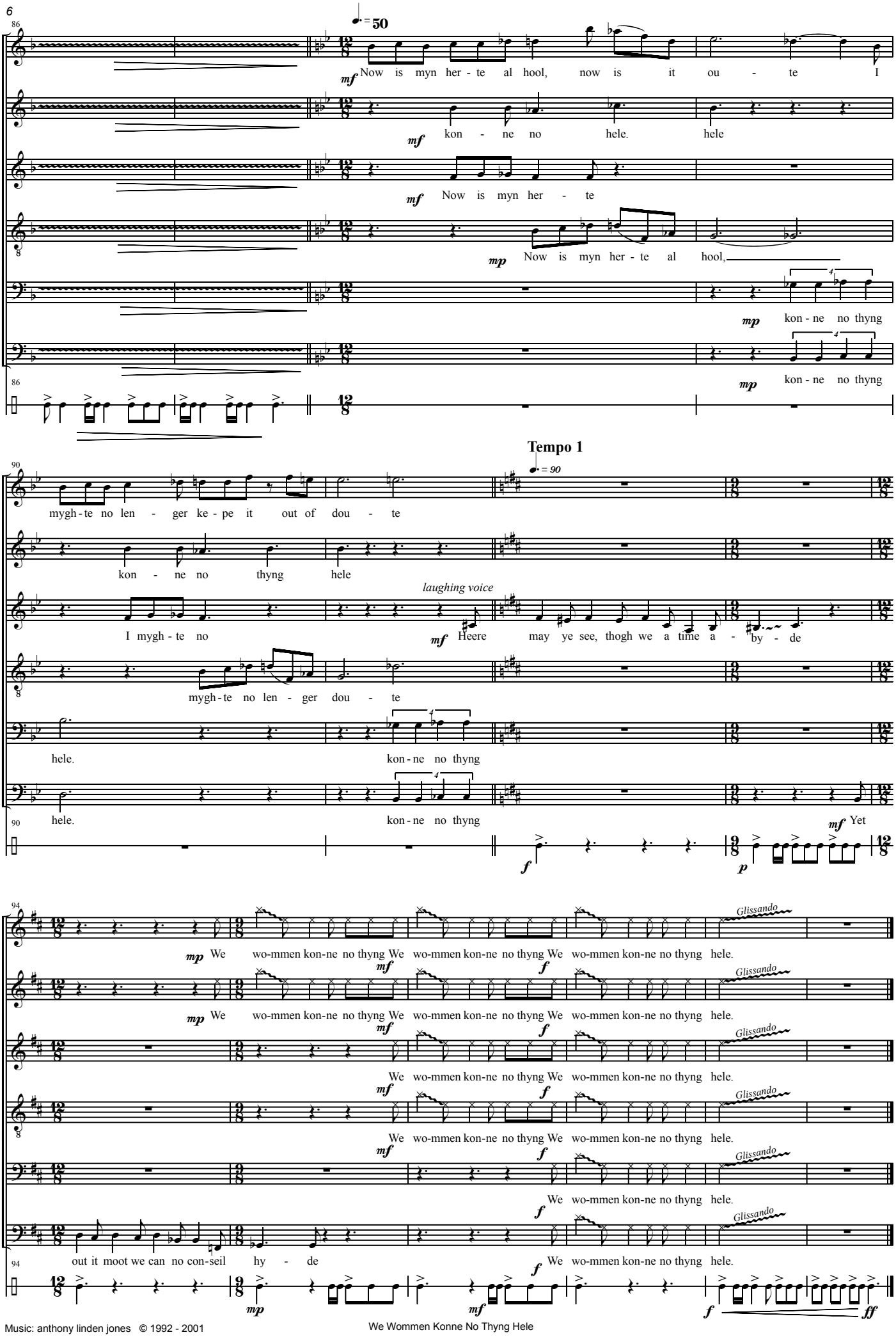

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