Hail, Lady, Sea-Star Bright -- Composition notes

The EU-funded Old Hispanic Office project at Bristol University focuses on musical, liturgical, theological, notational and historical aspects of the rite celebrated in medieval Iberia until it was suppressed in favour of the Roman liturgy with its Gregorian chant repertoire.

As well as presenting their work through conventional means, the Old Hispanic Office team shared their findings with composers within and beyond the project team. These composers are then responding to the historical findings in compositional form, capturing something of the aesthetic and purpose of the medieval material, in modern music for modern contexts. I was pleased to participate in this as one of twenty composers selected to attend workshops with Bristol Cathedral Choir, the choir of Christ Church Oxford, and the Kokoro Ensemble as part of the project.

I have been fond of the Ave maris stella text since studying it for an improvisation class while at Trinity College of Music, but it is also relevant to this project because of the long association between Bristol and the sea. Some of the tombs in the Lady Chapel in Bristol Cathedral are in 'stellate' recesses and it was while looking at these that I thought this would be an appropriate text; I was pleased to then find that it was in the manuscript.

However, I didn't only want to set a Latin text. I chose the Herebert translation, which I found at Eleanor Parker's blog (http://aclerkofoxford.blogspot.co.uk/2013/12/ave-maris-stella-hail-lady-sea-star.html) because at the time that the Old Hispanic Office manuscripts were in use, Spanish was beginning to develop out of various Latin and other dialects. I imagine Latin would have been understood, but it might have sounded slightly strange and archaic; using an older English text recreates this effect. Unfortunately the Herebert is old enough that it doesn't quite make sense on first hearing and so I asked Eleanor Parker if I could use her translation: this is still slightly archaic as she has kept some of the older words, but is likely to be more understandable by a modern congregation than Herebert's earlier version.

Looking at the manuscript I could see that there was not much variation from one verse to the next in terms of the musical notation. There are a few substitutions of symbols, but it follows the same basic four-line pattern throughout. Of course there is no pitch or intervallic information there, so I had to make that up, but there is some internal consistency in terms of what the shapes are and the melody I used. I chose a minor mode with a major sixth because the Roman chant for the Ave maris stella uses it and I wanted to allude to that. The manuscript doesn't have any rhythmic information either, so I decided to use rhythmic development to explore different ways it might have been interpreted, starting with a very plain section, almost free-rhythm, then moving to a more regular 6/8 feel, and by the middle verse overlaying the English and Latin texts and using a more intricate rhythm. This process is reversed in the last three verses, and the leading voices switched, resulting in a structure reminiscent of the cathedral arches.

Biography

Kathryn Rose was born in Saskatchewan, Canada. She studied horn and piano at the University of Lethbridge, Canada before moving to London in the year 2000. She has a BMus(Hons) in French horn performance from Trinity College of Music.

After her degree, Kathryn turned her hand to church music. She is currently Director of Music at St Andrew's Leytonstone, where several of her works for smaller choirs have been sung.

Kathryn has a keen interest in making music more readily available to the general public and is passionate about improving accessibility. When not performing or composing she enjoys theology, cycling and cats. Do visit her website at www.artsyhonker.net to see and hear more of her choral work.

Hail, Lady, Sea-Star Bright

Ave maris stella
Tr. William Herebert
Tr. Eleanor Parker
(used with permission)

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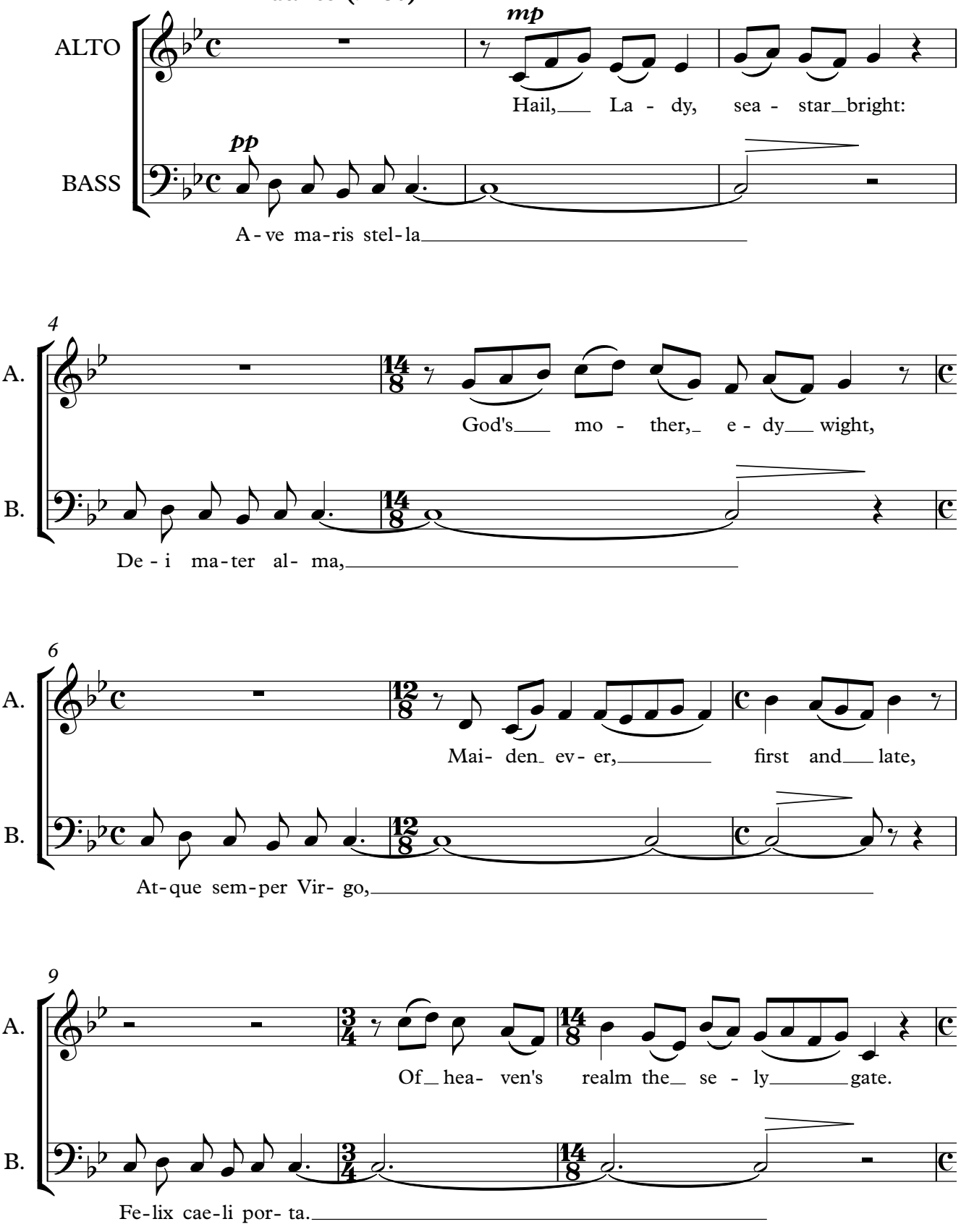
Andante (♩=80)



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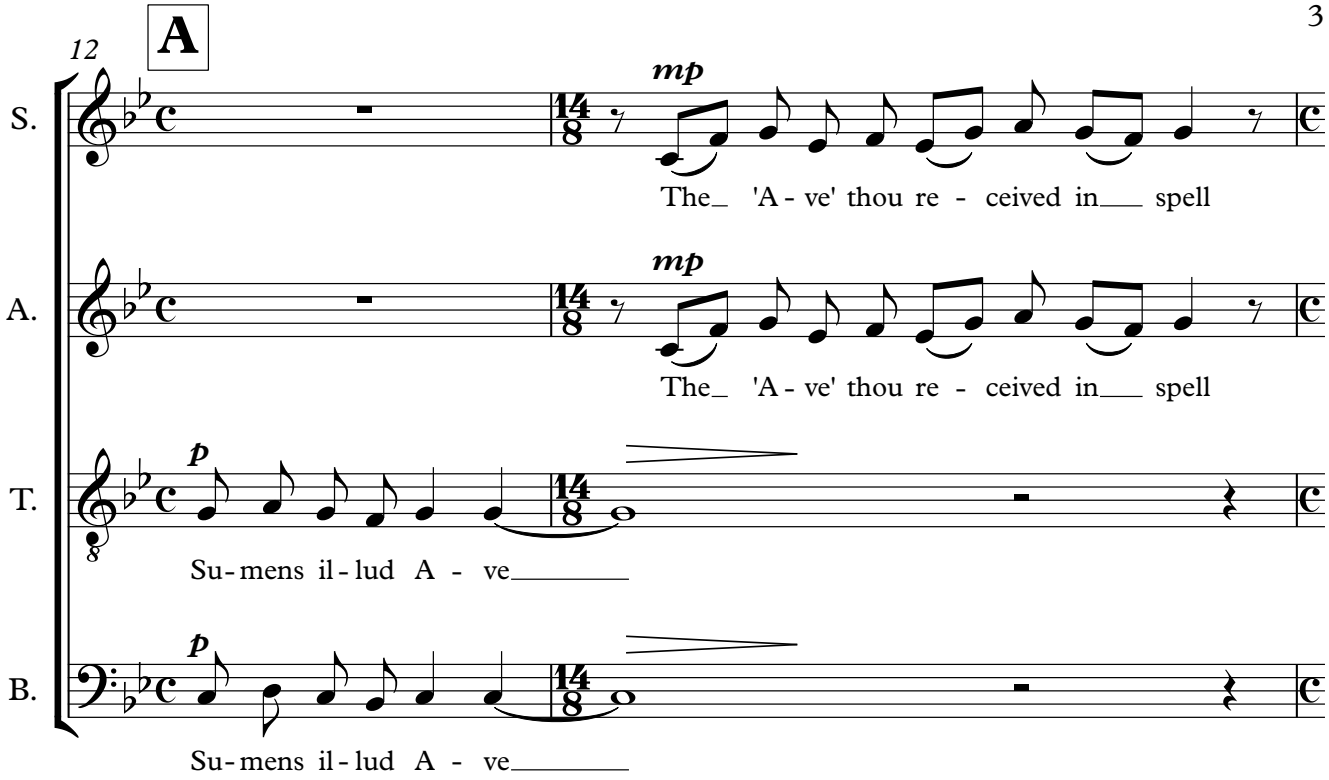

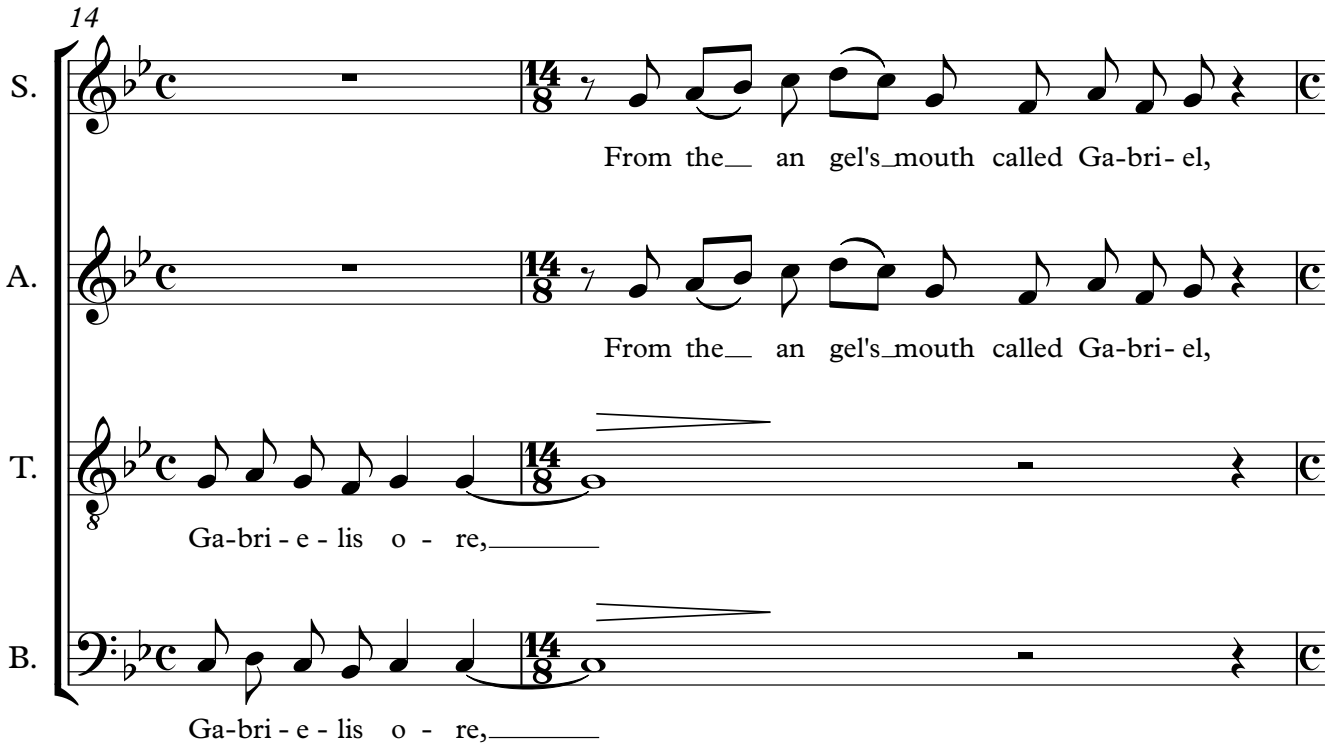

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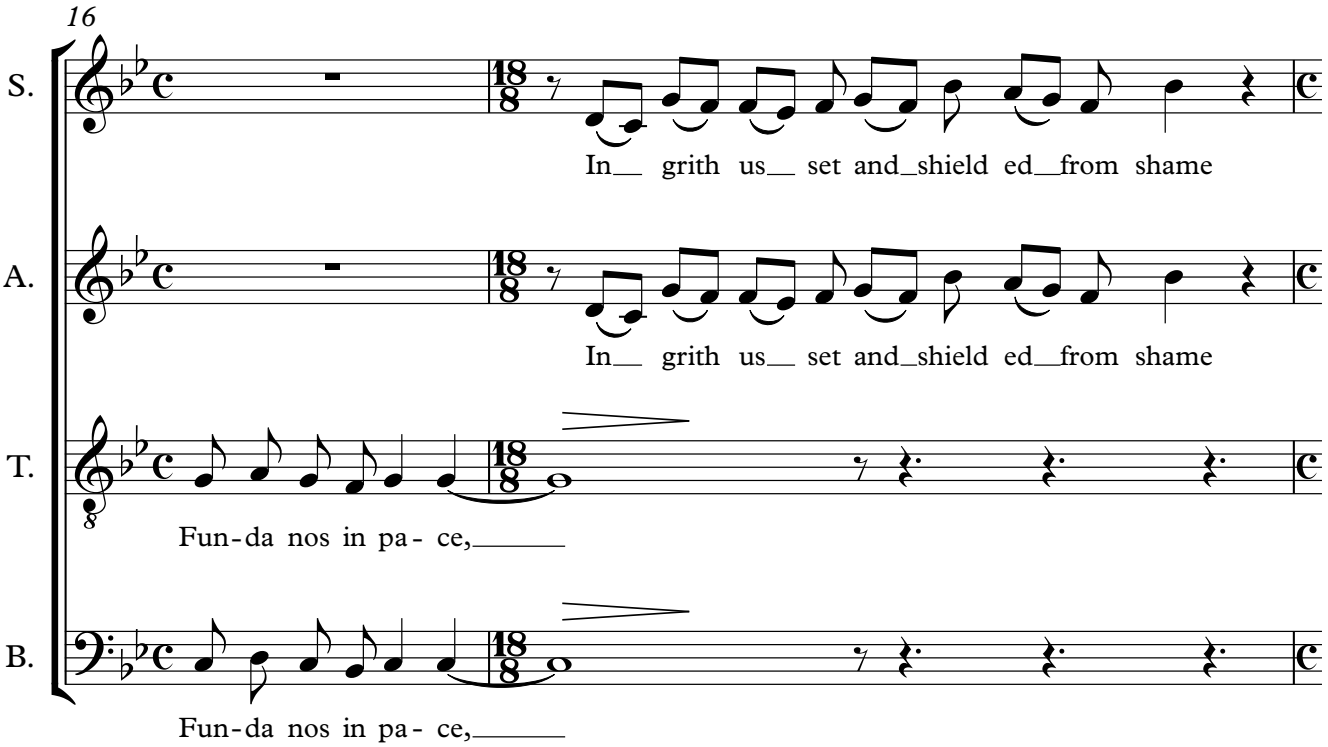

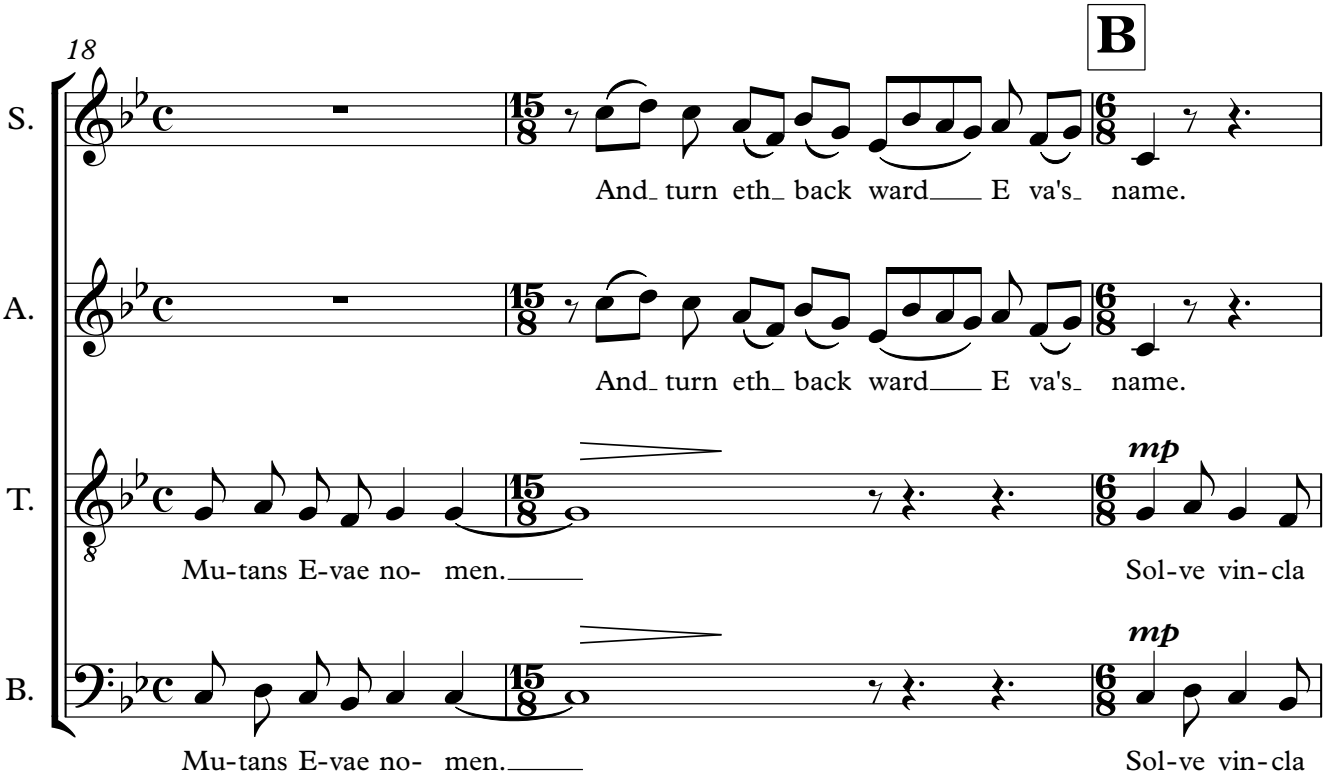

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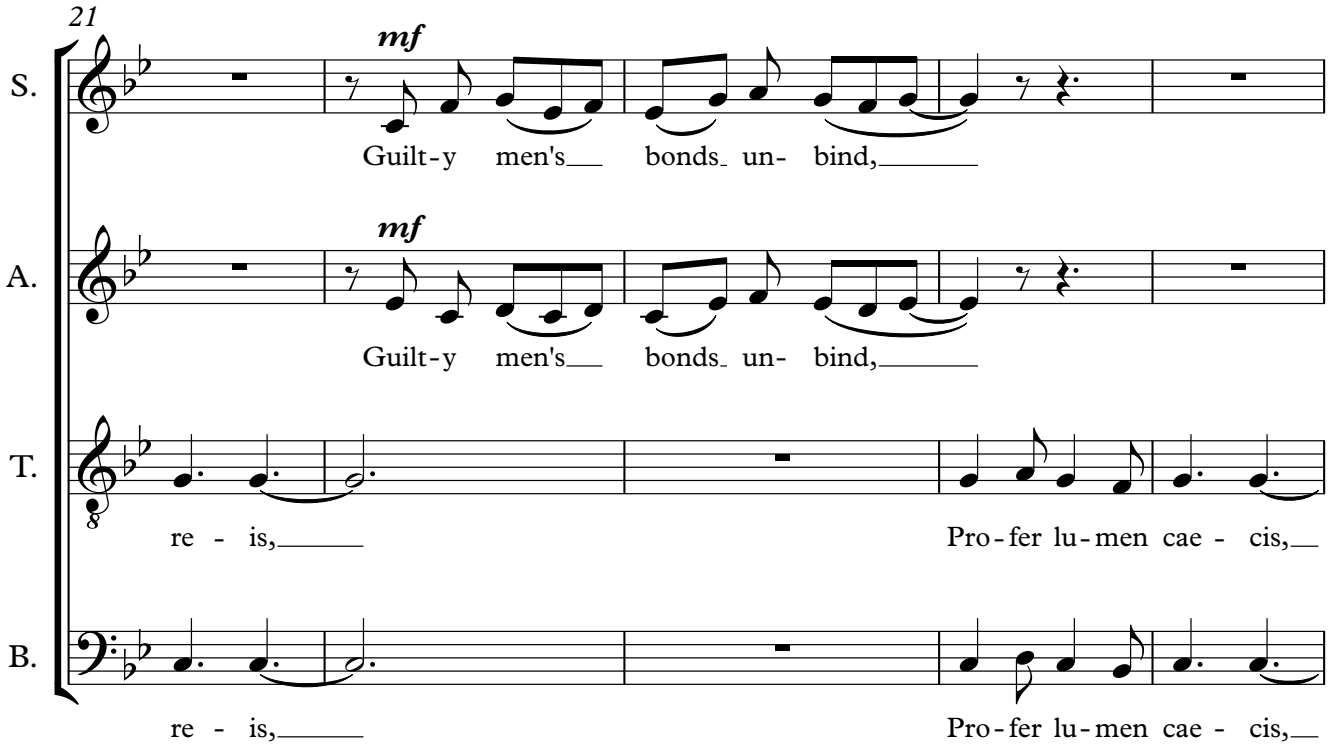

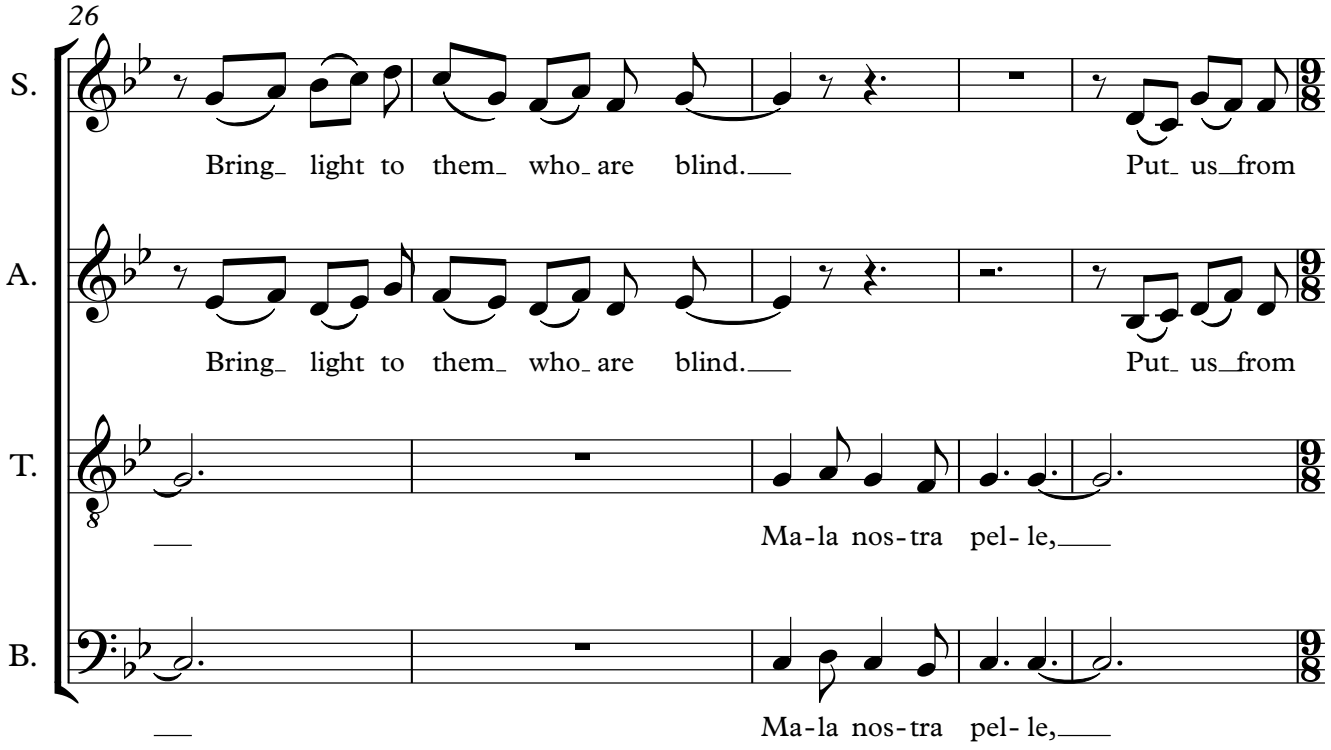

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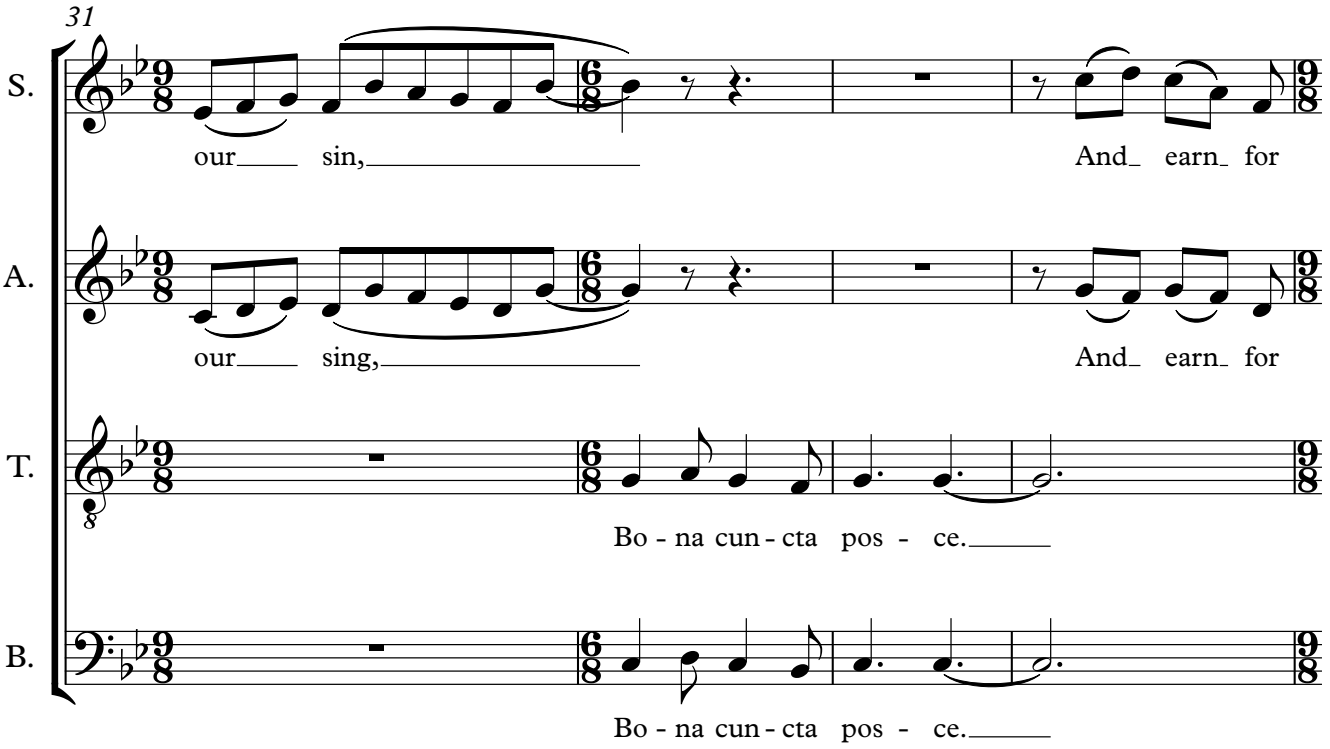
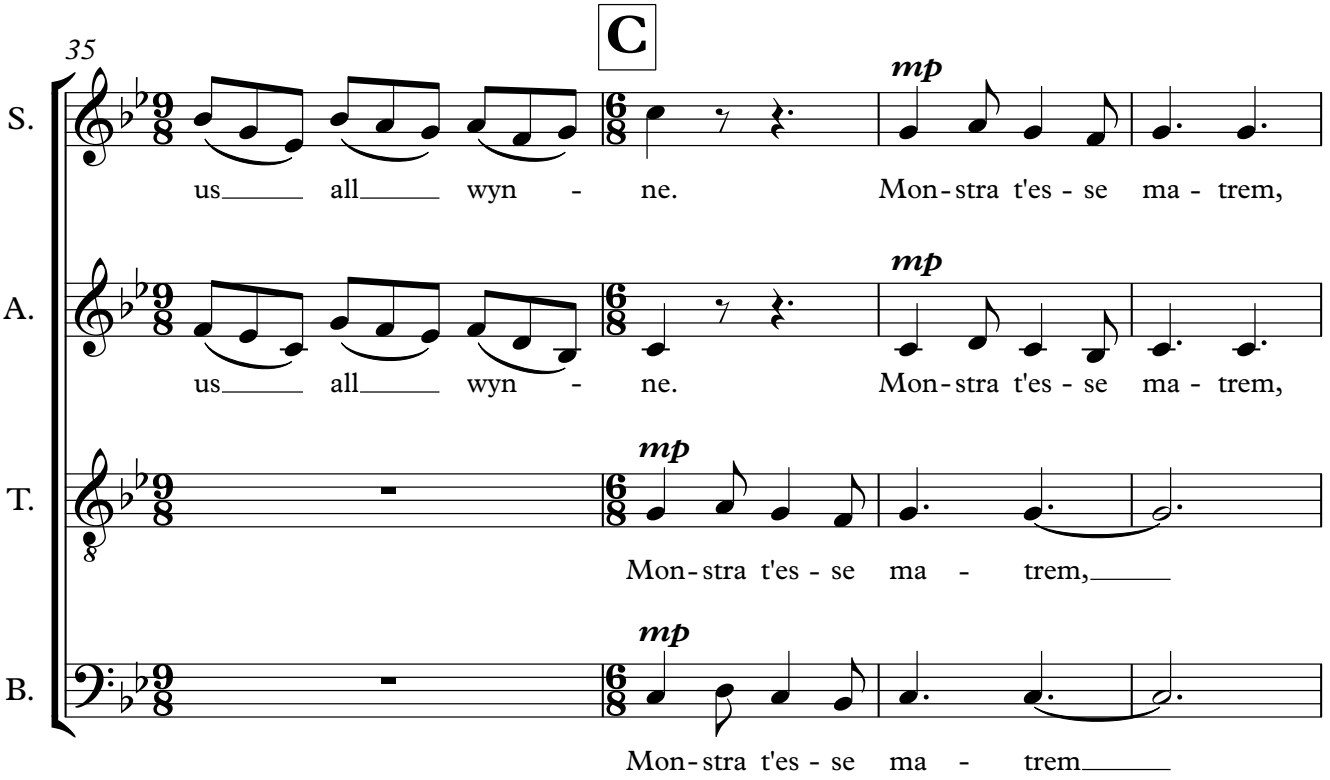
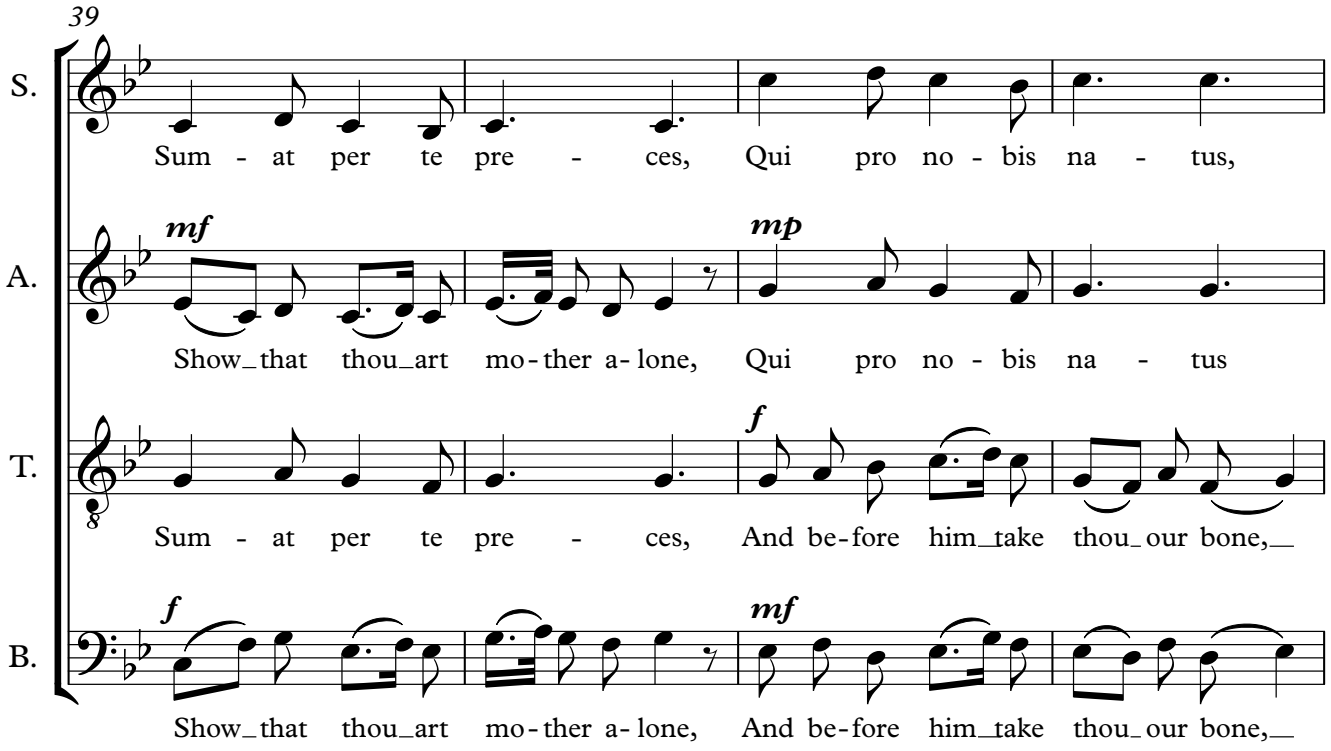
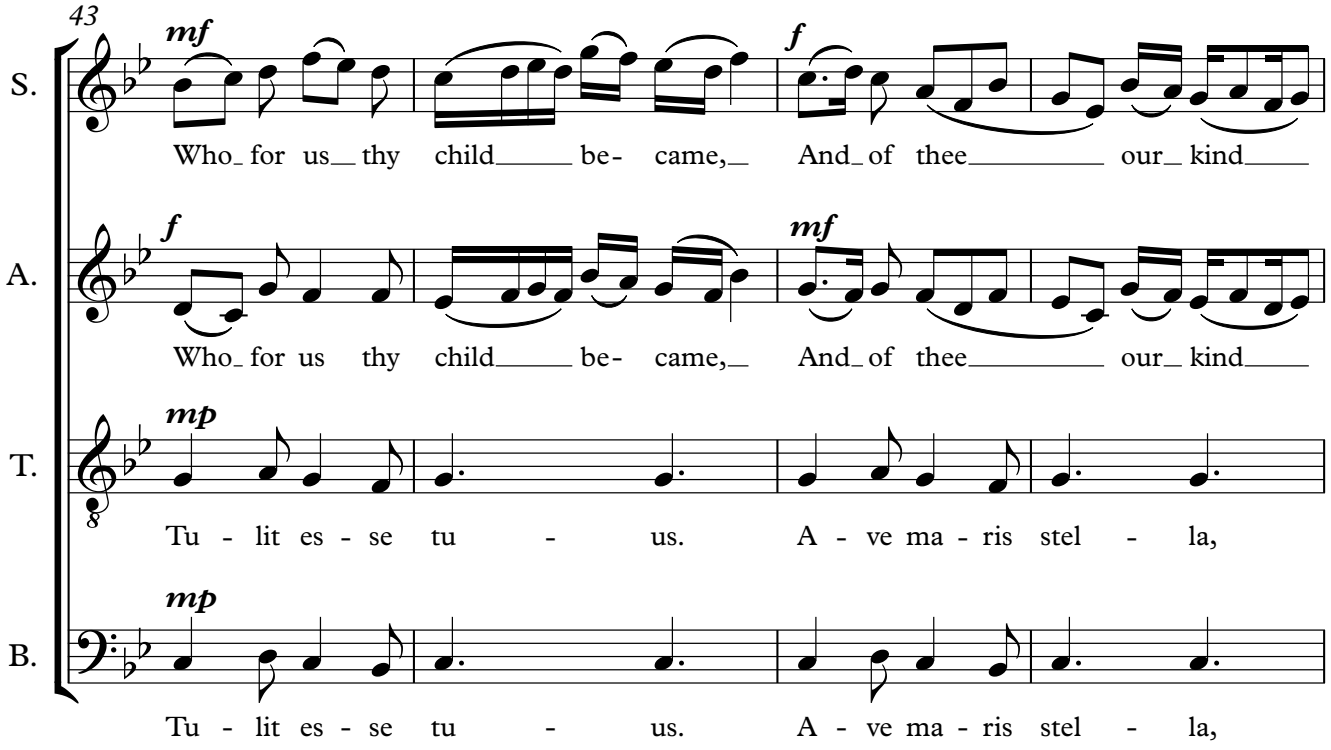
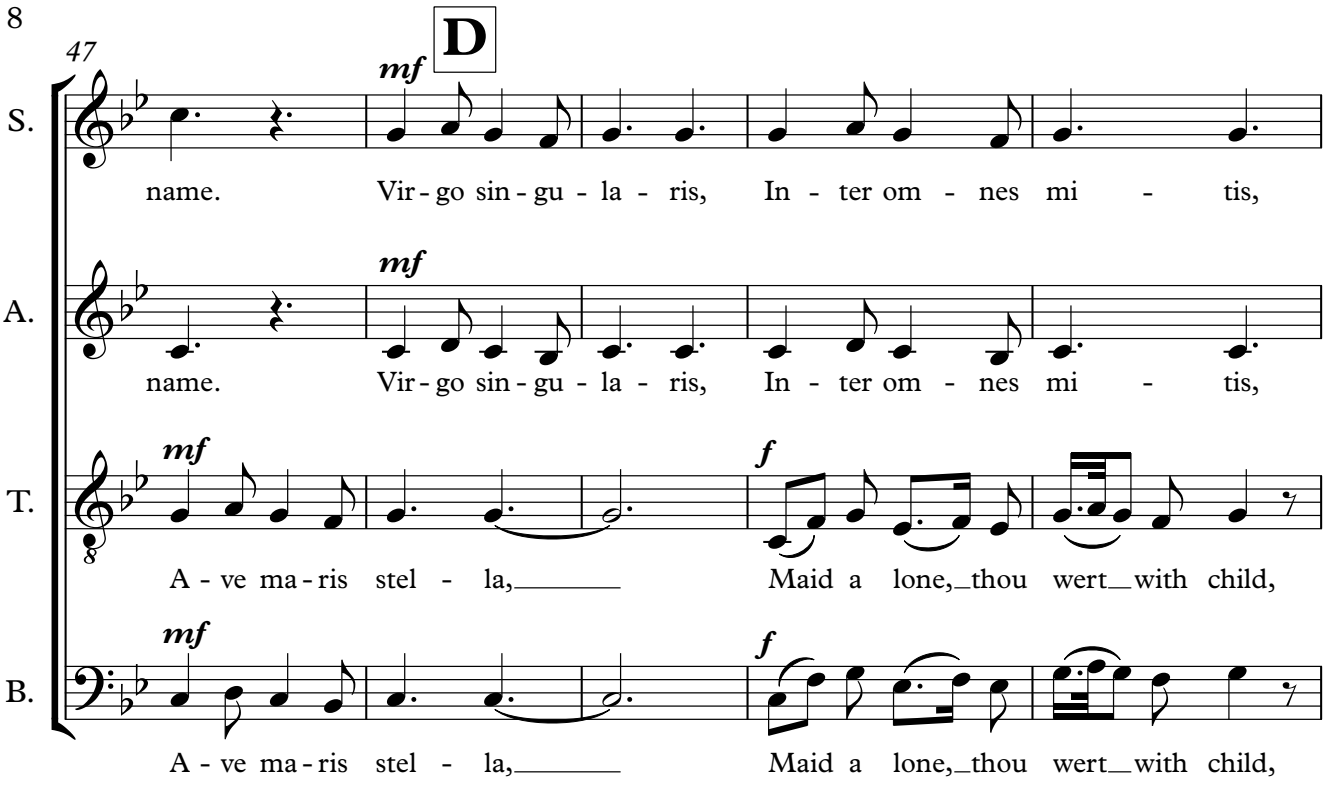
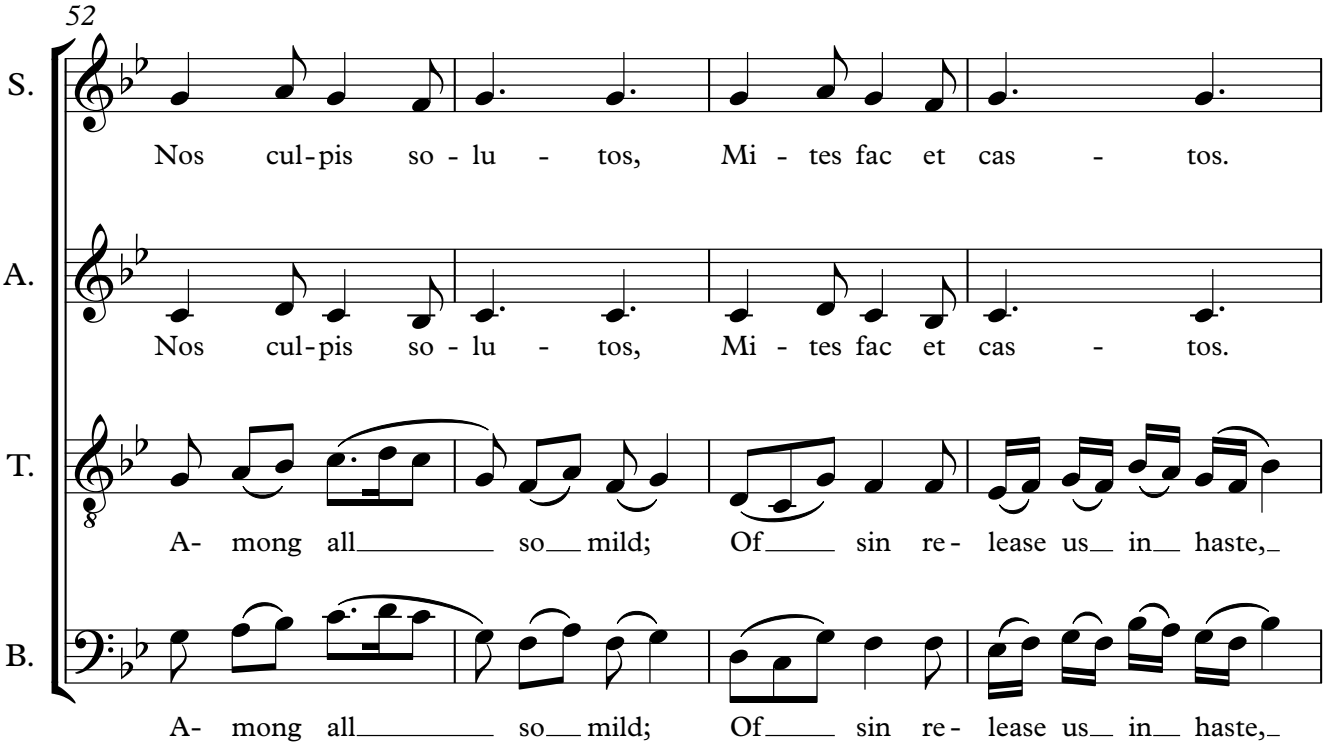

31
S.
our sin, And earn for
A.
our sing, And earn for
T.
Bo - na cun - cta pos - ce.
B.
Bo - na cun - cta pos - ce.


C
35
S.
us all wyn - ne. mp Mon - stra t'es - se ma - trem,
A.
us all wyn - ne. mp Mon - stra t'es - se ma - trem,
T.
mp Mon - stra t'es - se ma - trem,
B.
mp Mon - stra t'es - se ma - trem


39
S.
Sum - at per te pre - ces, Qui pro no - bis na - tus,
A.
mf
Show_that thou_art mo-ther a-lone, Qui pro no - bis na - tus
mp
T.
Sum - at per te pre - ces, And be-fore him_take thou_our bone,
f
B.
f
Show_that thou_art mo-ther a-lone, And be-fore him_take thou_our bone,
mf


43
S.
mf
Who_ for us__ thy child_____ be- came,_ And_ of thee_____ our_ kind____
f
A.
f
Who_ for us thy child_____ be- came,_ And_ of thee_____ our_ kind____
mf
T.
mp
Tu - lit es - se tu - us. A - ve ma - ris stel - la,
B.
mp
Tu - lit es - se tu - us. A - ve ma - ris stel - la,





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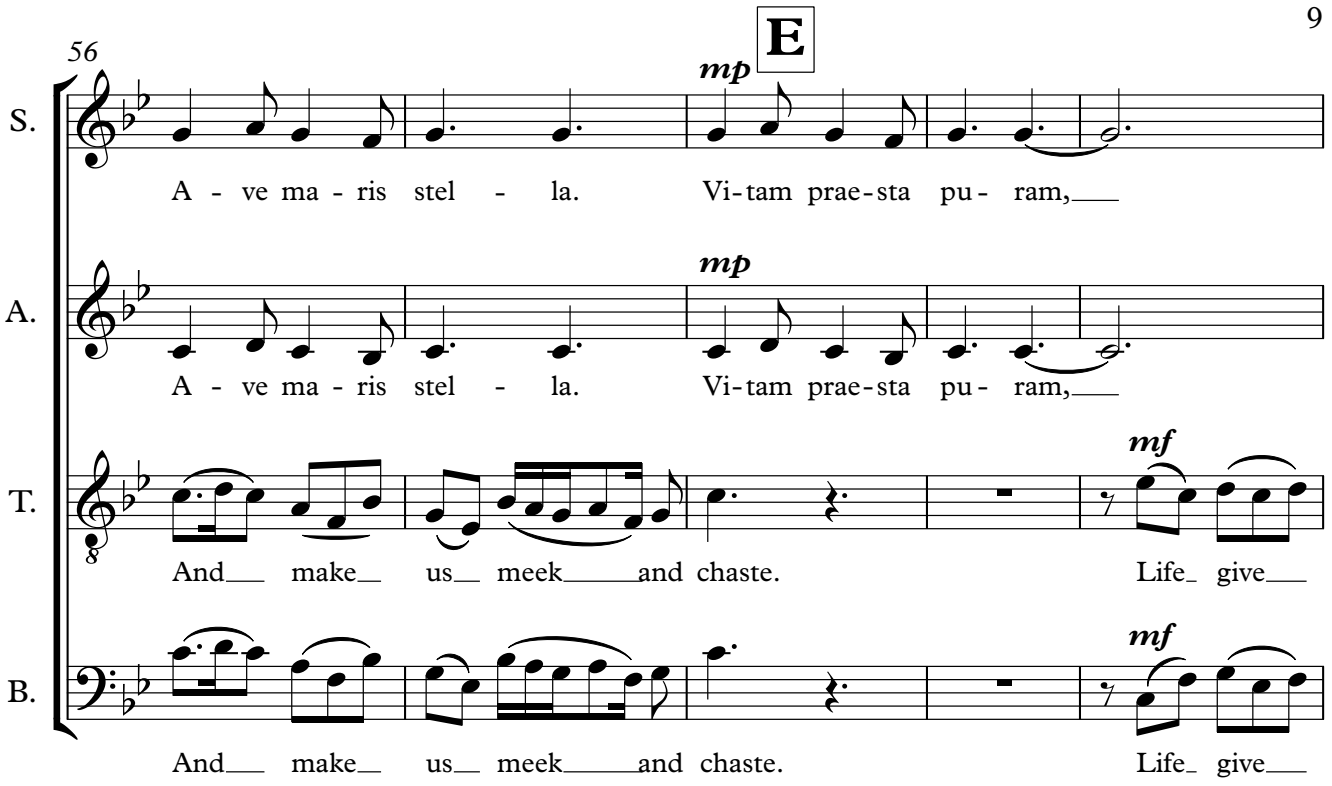

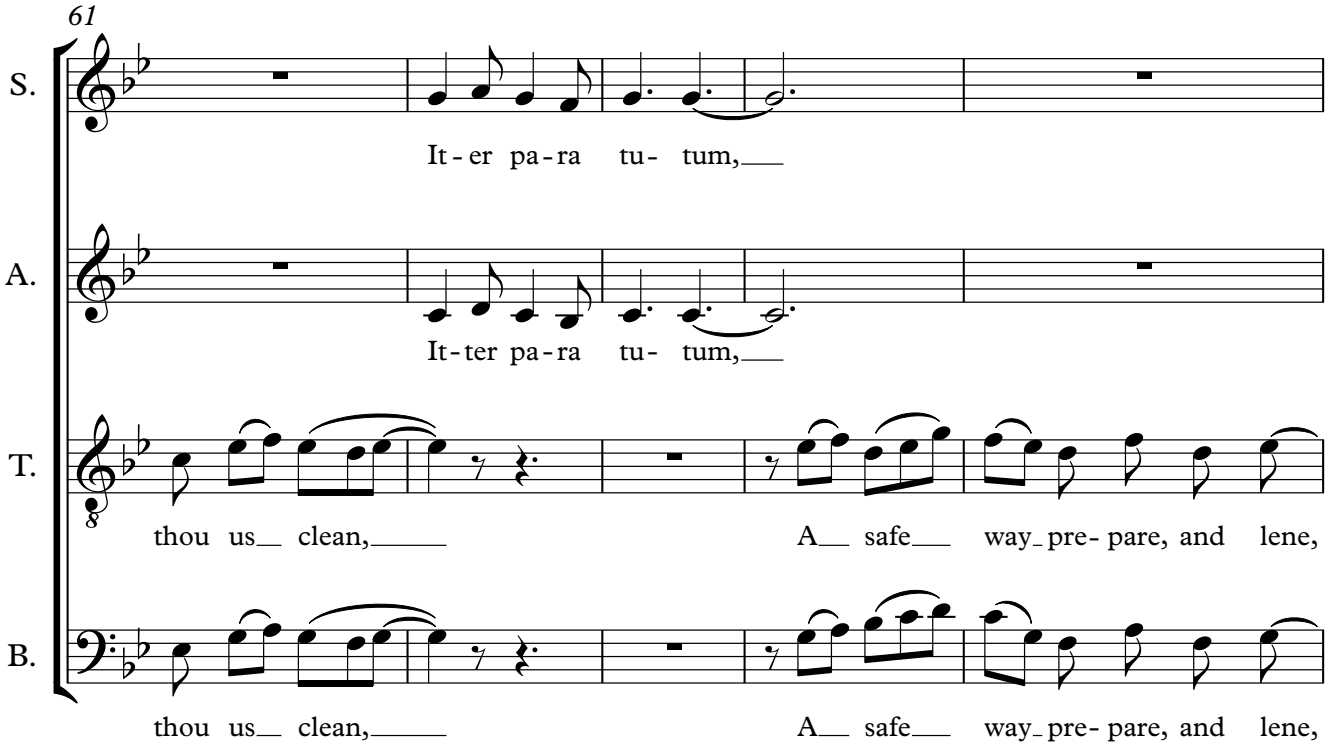

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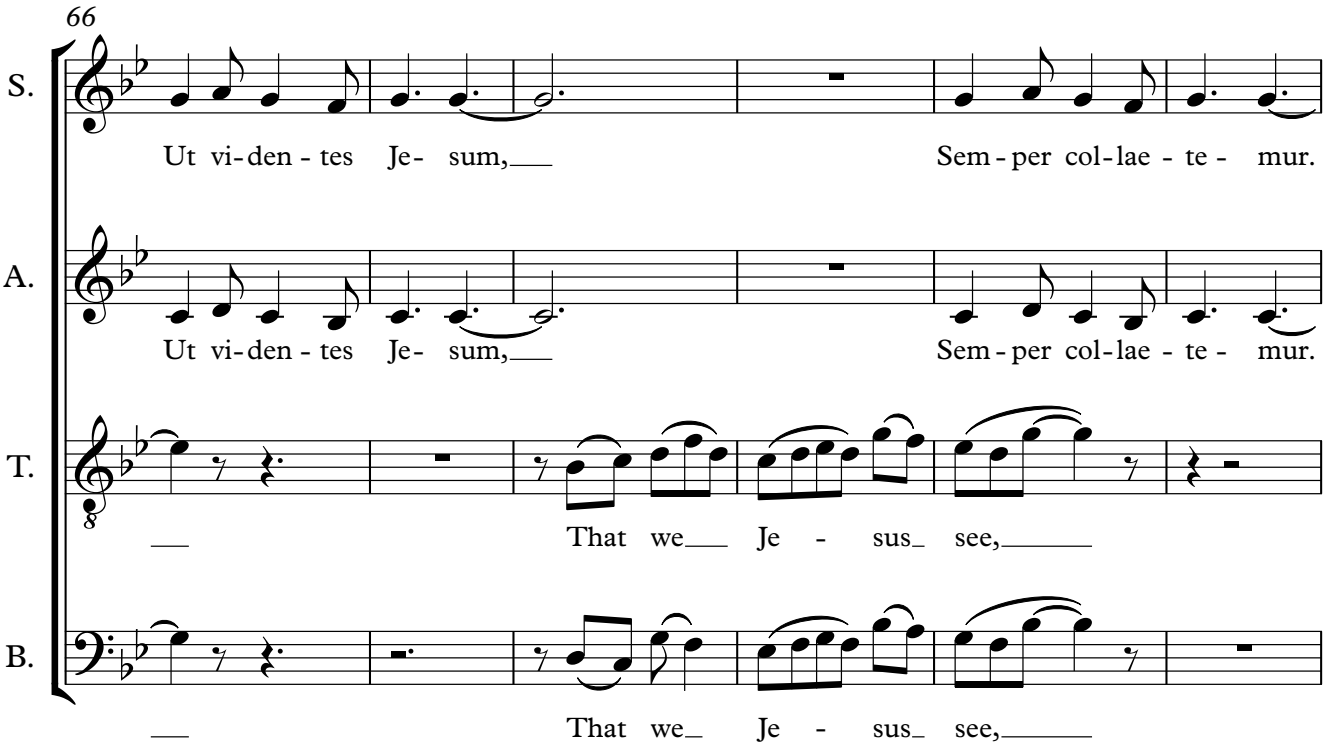

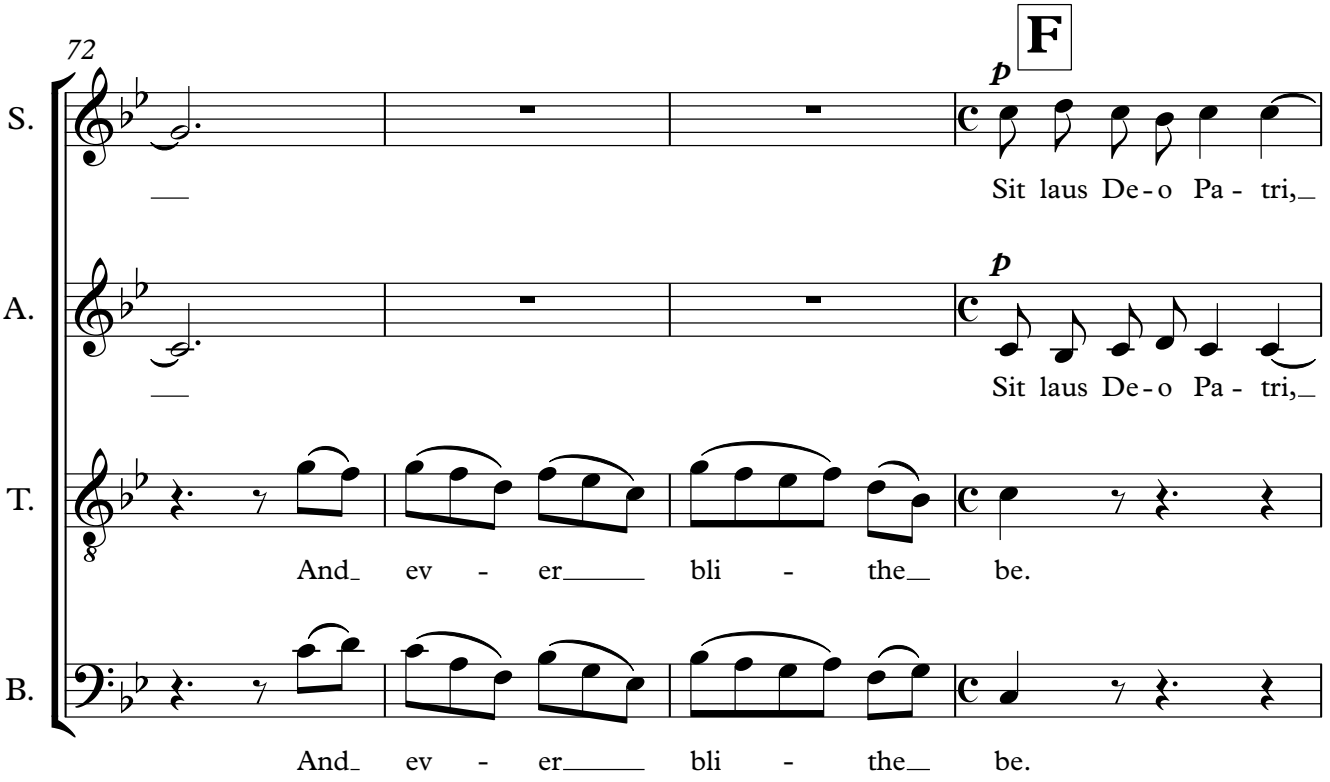

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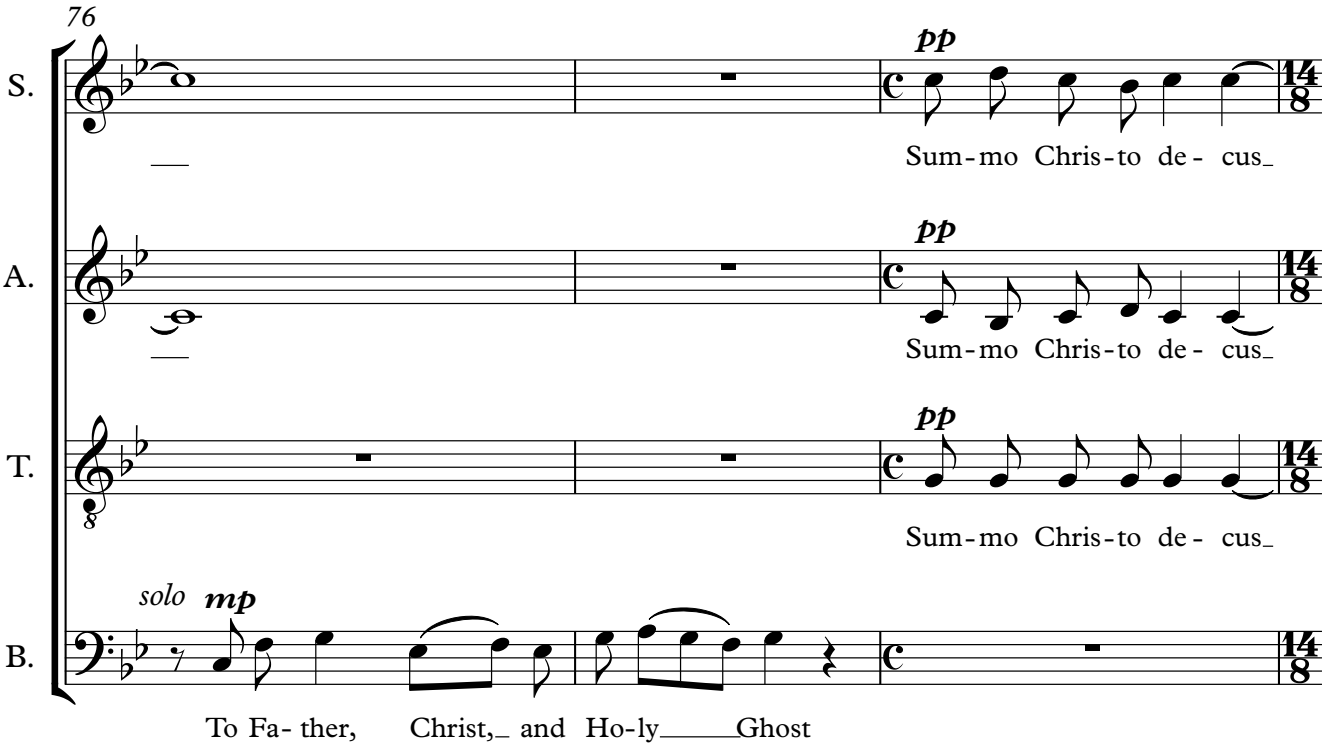
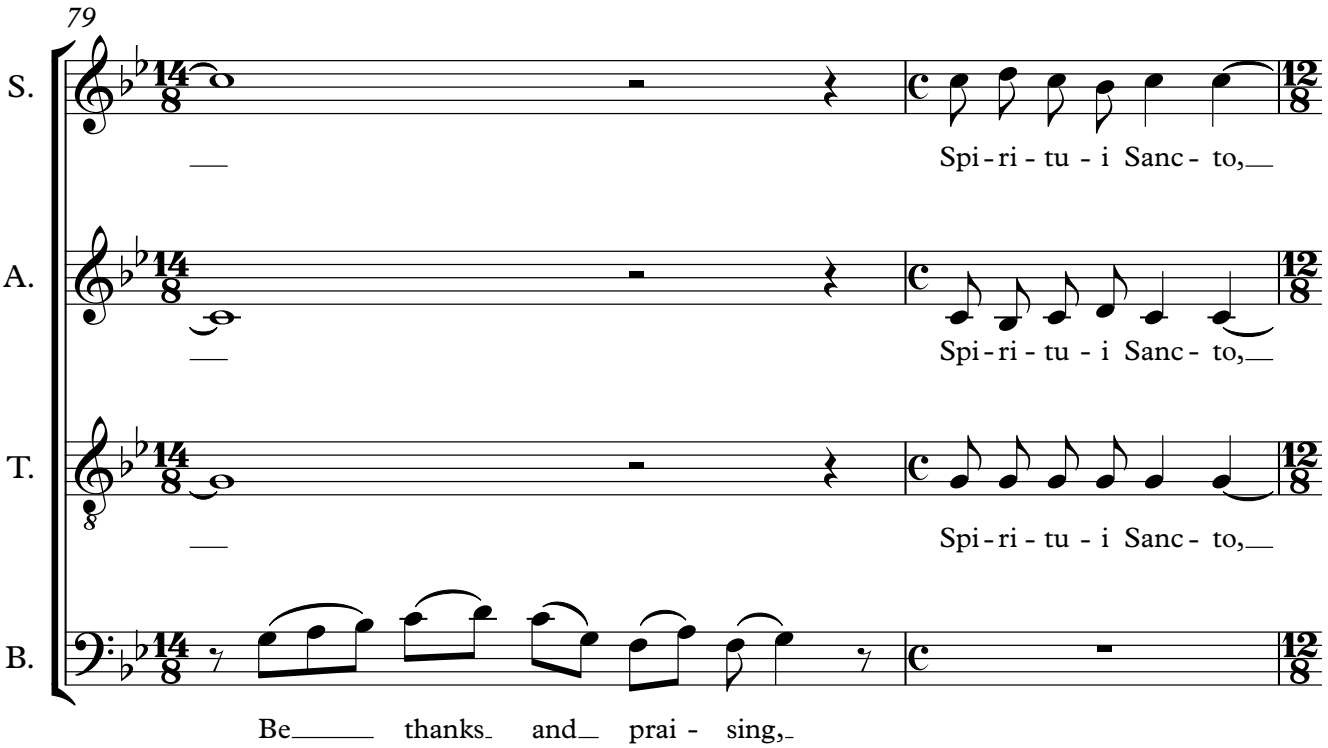
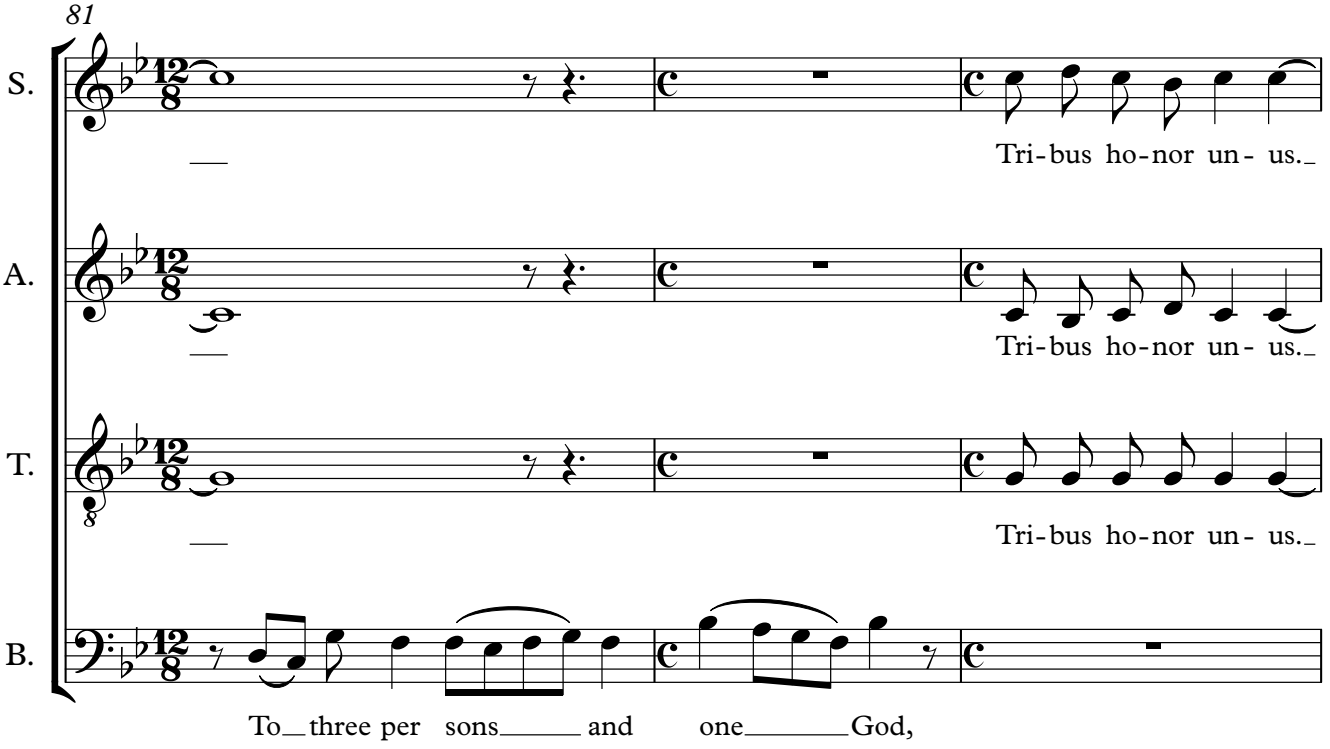
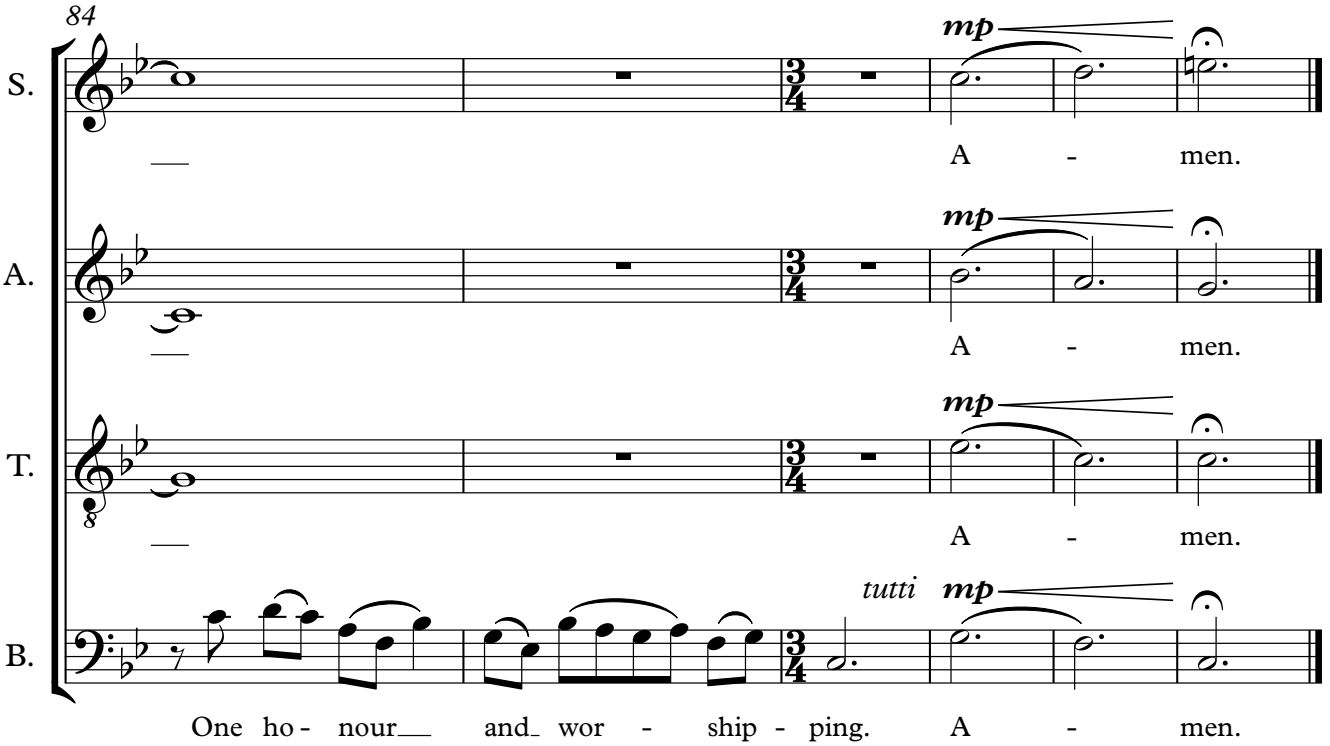

76
S.
A.
T.
B.
pp
Sum-mo Chris-to de- cus_
pp
Sum-mo Chris-to de- cus_
pp
Sum-mo Chris-to de- cus_
solo
mp
To Fa- ther, Christ,_ and Ho-ly_____Ghost


79
S.
A.
T.
B.
Spi-ri-tu-i Sanc- to,__
Spi-ri-tu-i Sanc- to,__
Spi-ri-tu-i Sanc- to,__
Be_____ thanks_ and__ prai- sing,_





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