Thee We Adore

ORGAN SETTINGS OF CHANT-BASED HYMNS

CHRISTOPHER J. HOH

Sample

Editor: Carson Cooman
Cover Design: Danielle M. Reinicke
Engraver: Lyndell Leatherman

ISBN: 978-0-7877-7915-3

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Foreword

These eight organ pieces are based on hymn tunes with roots in Gregorian chant, the ancient song of the Christian church. Each composition sets an established melody sung today, often to words derived from the original chant. These selections span the church year and could serve as offertories or postludes as well as preludes depending on the worship service. Church organists may excerpt them for hymn introductions or interludes, and all could figure in a recital.

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Notes

Although *Adoro te devote* is often called a chant tune, it evidently originated in 17th-century France. Sounding like chant, however, it is often paired with a medieval text (translated). This setting begins as a quiet meditation with a tenor melody before moving higher and taking on livelier rhythms. Then it sounds as a cantus firmus in the pedal underneath resolute music, a kind of marching toward the vision of glory prayed for in the hymn.

Christ ist erstanden arose in the 1500s from the 11th-century Easter sequence "Victimæ Paschali laudes" (to the Pascal Victim praise). Tonally ambiguous, the tune begins in A Minor (Aeolian) and modulates to D Minor (Dorian and Aeolian). This setting begins in quiet mystery, with high organ notes like dawn breaking. Next comes a low countermelody against the slow cantus firmus above. At the "Alleluia" chorus, the music turns quick and joyful, like the women running to share the good news. Throughout, syncopation and harmony allude to the melody's medieval origins.

Conditor alme siderum, for Christmas, endures with its beautiful tune virtually unchanged through the centuries. In G Phrygian, its key signature has three flats. First the organ presents

Sample

the melody simply. Then shimmering keyboard figures appear to accompany it. Next the pedal takes it up slower, with a harmonic overlay in triple meter and echoes of arpeggios heard earlier. The result is three contemplative verses with a sense of divine mystery.

Hamburg, the straightforward melody by American music reformer Lowell Mason, was based on Gregorian Psalm Tone I. Mason found it in an English Benedictus for Tenebræ, but he did not pair his tune with the Lenten words "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" until decades later. Here the melody unfolds first with calm chords. The middle section reimagines its notes in a freer, chantlike rhythm. Then the hymn tune returns amid moving figures and gentle interludes before a quiet close.

Erhalt uns Herr is a strong German 16th-century tune, but it derives from the Ambrosian chant "Veni redemptor gentium," which Martin Luther adapted for several hymns. In this piece, the organ states the chorale at the outset. Next comes music of flowing tones, essentially the original chant. The regular tune then returns in the tenor octave while a mellifluous descant hearkens back to the middle section. Finally, an echo of the chant leads to a confident ending.

The *Veni Creator Spiritus* hymn tune arose from the Pentecost sequence, which borrowed the melody from an Ambrosian Easter chant. It is in F Mixolydian (two flats). Evidently in continuous use for at least 1,500 years, the tune appears in today's hymnals with notes and words close to the venerable Pentecost chant. Reflecting the drama of the occasion, this composition sets the melody in a toccata of fiery descending figures. Between the first and third verses, a quiet section offers a reverent take. The final section grows higher and more brilliant. Then vigorous "amen" music leads to an ecstatic close.

The *Veni Emmanuel* tune is a 19th-century English adaptation of a 15th-century French melody. It has become associated with words from the Advent "O Antiphons," i.e., O Emmanuel, O Wisdom, O Root of Jesse, etc. Here the music juxtaposes the antiphon chant against the familiar tune. The piece opens with big chords, "rejoice," strong but not loud. Then we hear a high flute on chant lines before the hymn tune sounds on a lower reed. The next section starts with phrases low and slow followed by rapid high passages that descend—humankind's plea for the Messiah answered by heaven above. The organ opens up at "rejoice" again and moves to a majestic, expectant end.

Pange Lingua descends from a plainsong melody of likely Gallican origin. Its key is E Phrygian, no sharps or flats. The text "Sing, My Tongue" celebrates the body, blood, and passion of Christ, based on verses by Aquinas (Corpus Christi) and/or Fortunatus (adorations of the Cross). The organ in this setting sings three verses, each a canon (round) between the hands at various intervals. Underneath, the pedal intones the melody in long notes.

Registrations are indicated, but these are suggestions. They should be considered and then adapted based on the instrument's disposition and the performer's good taste.

—Christopher J. Hoh
Arlington, Virginia

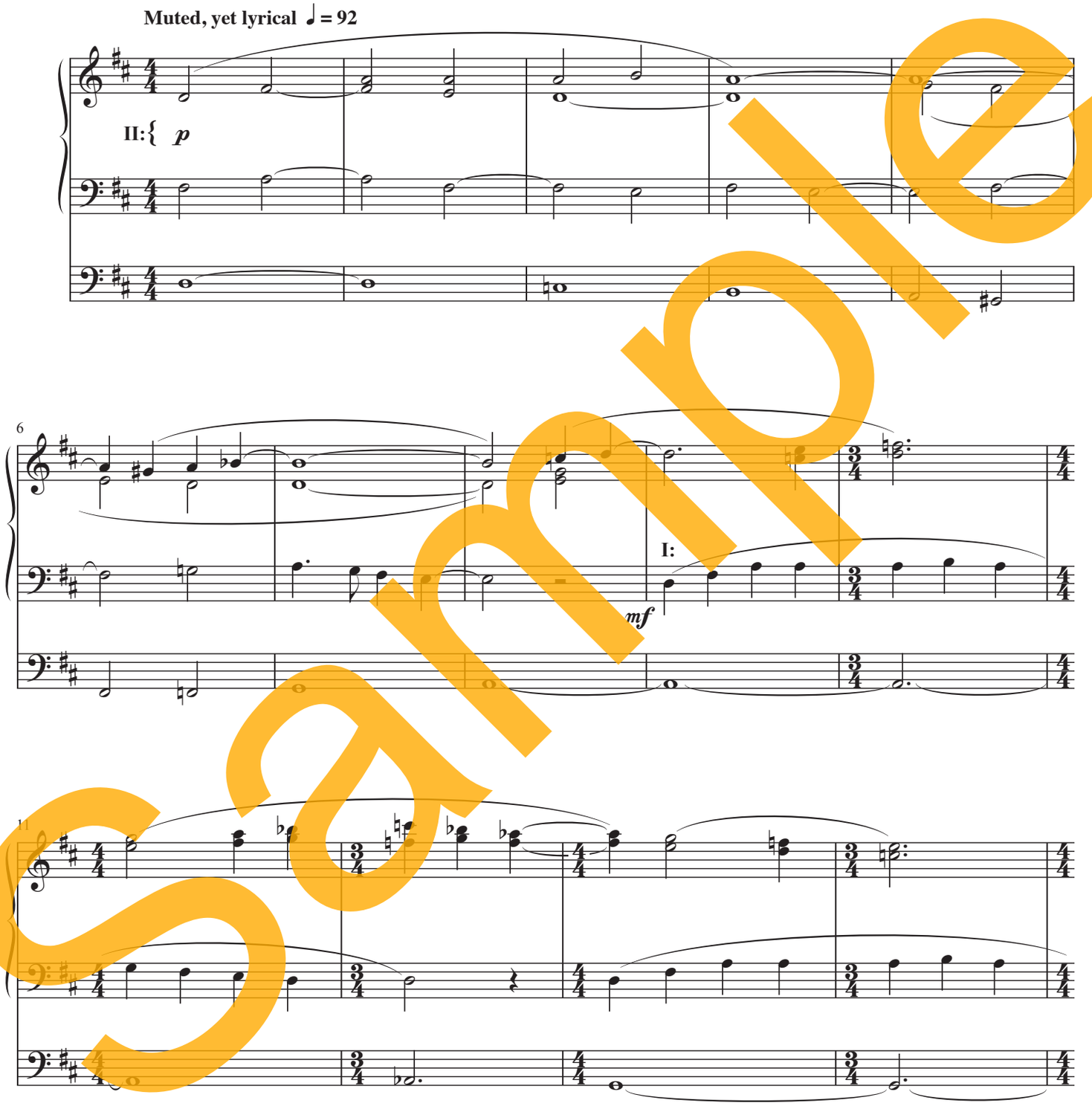
Sample

Adoro te devote

("Thee We Adore")

I. medium Diapason (*mf*)
II. Flute(s) (*p*)
P. 16, 8 (*p*, then *mf*+)

Christopher J. Hoh
Plainchant



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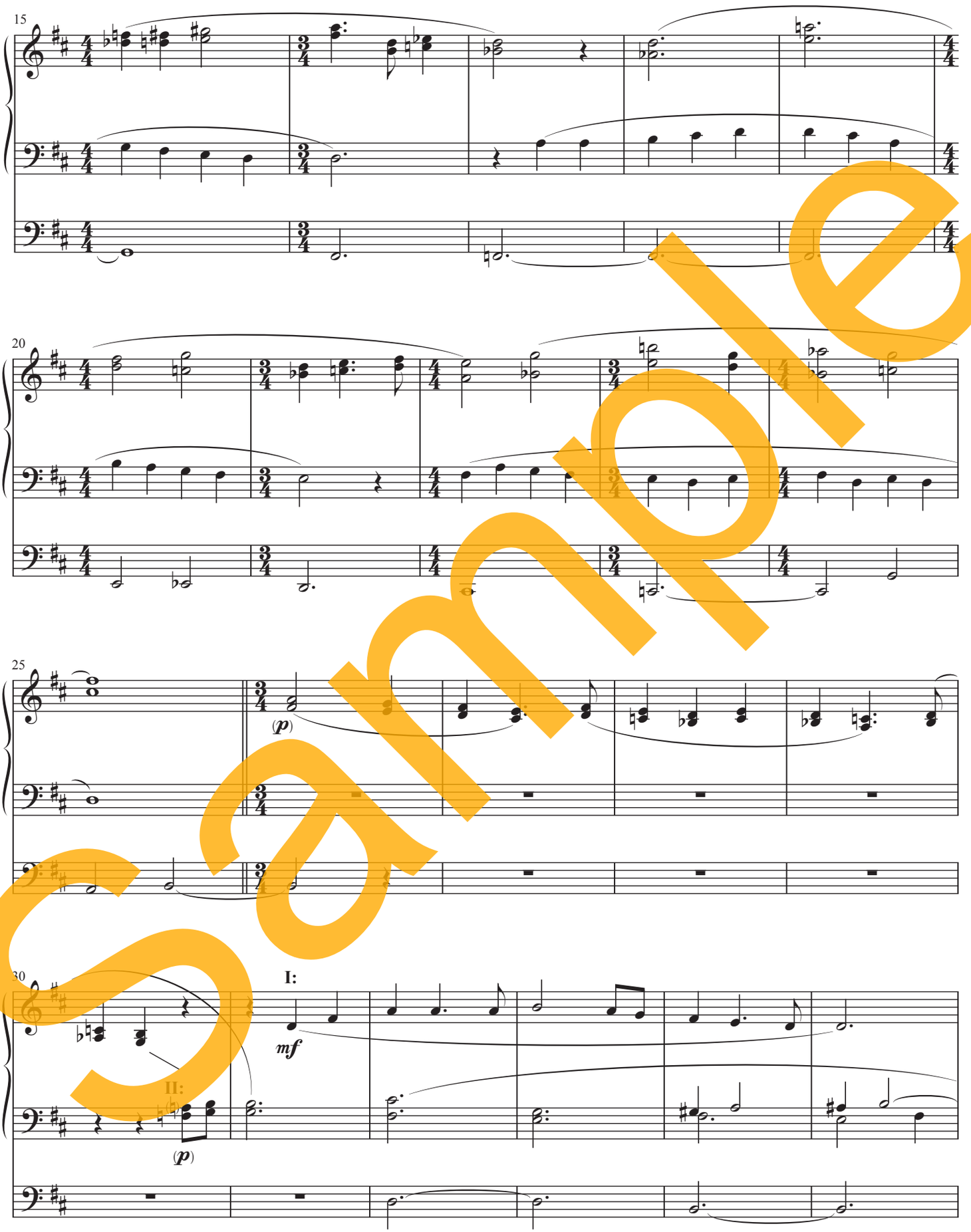

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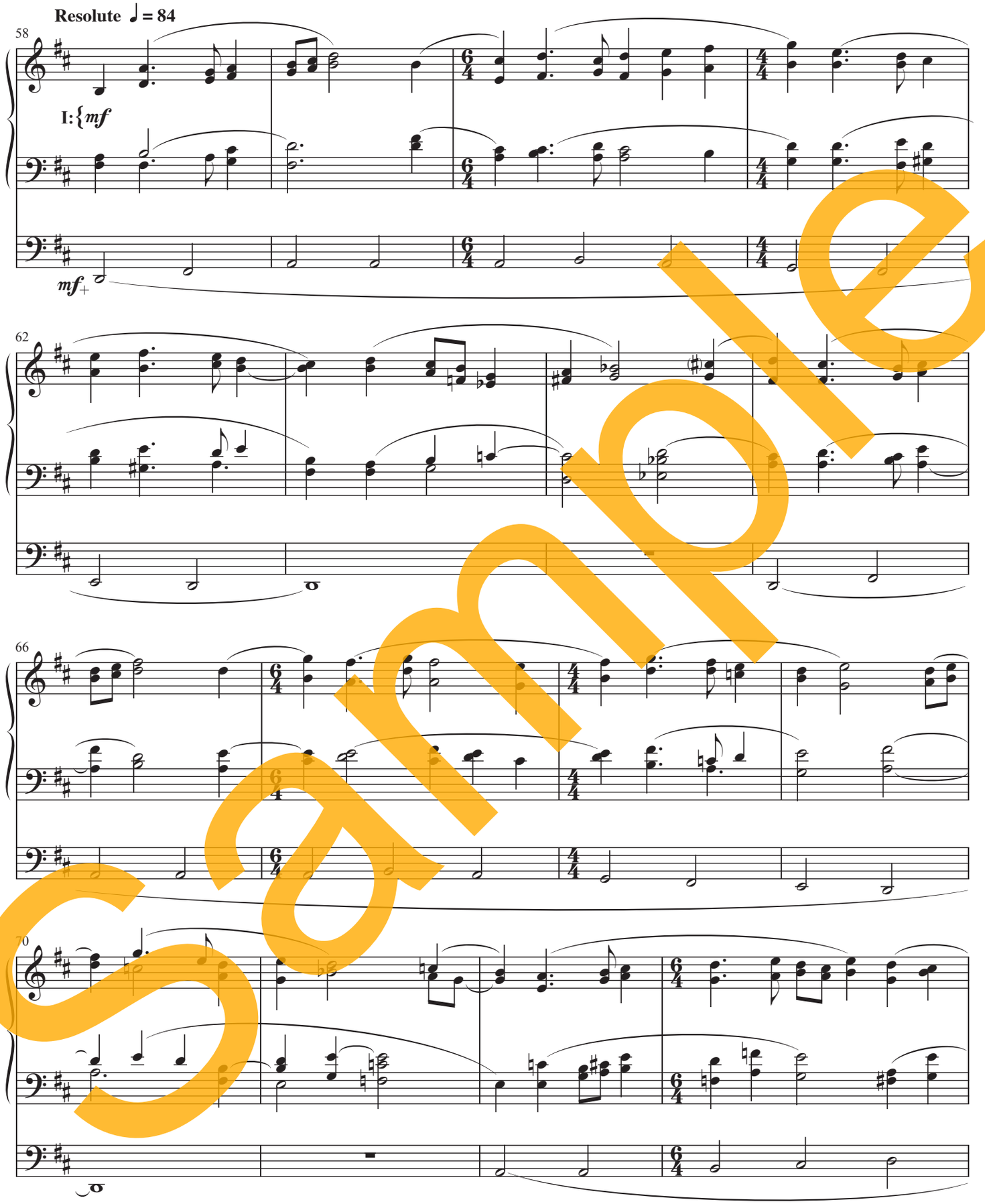

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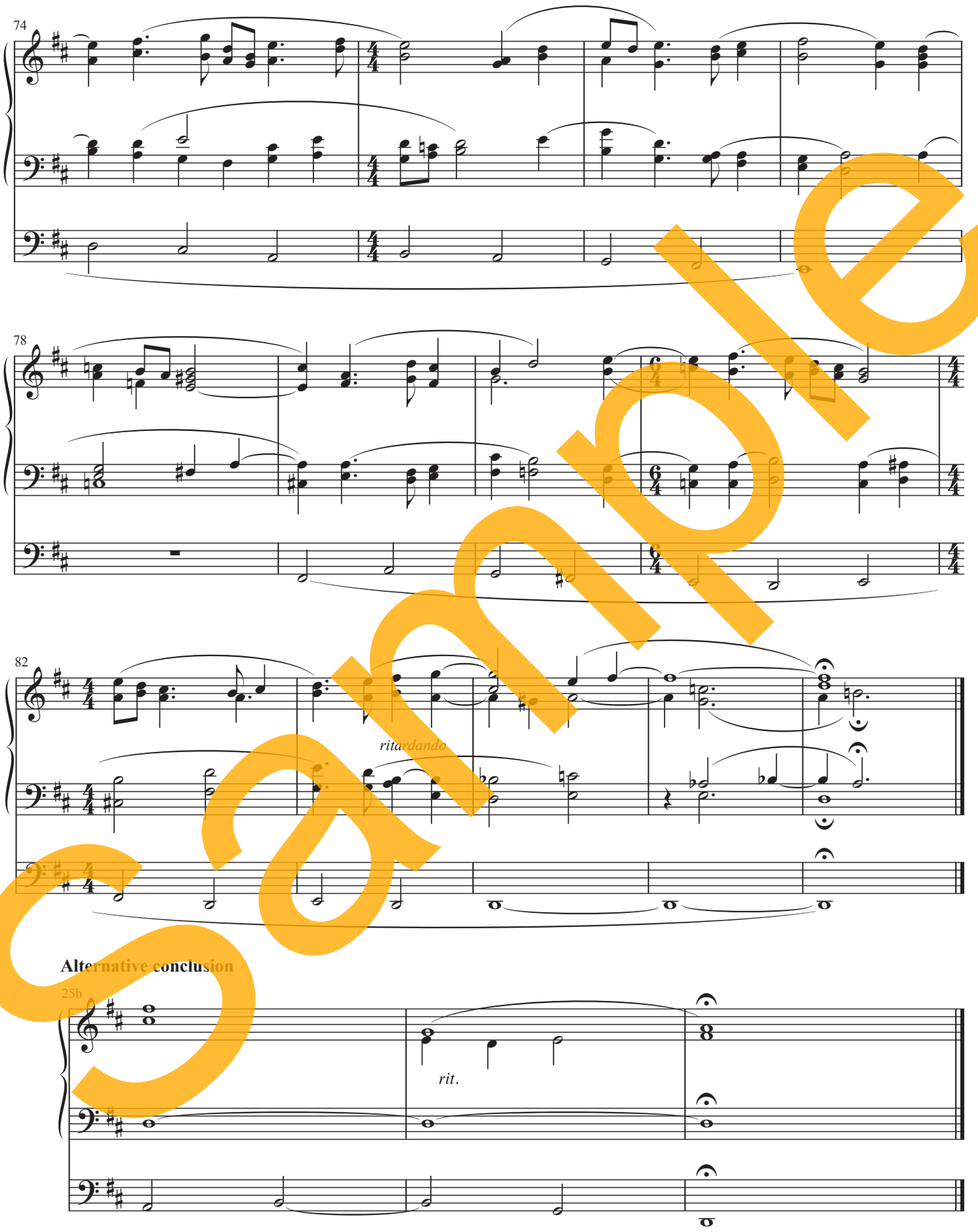
Note: An alternative for a quiet ending is to omit the Resolute section and repeat the first section. That is, jump from meas. 57 back to meas. 9. Repeat the music through meas. 24 and then play the alternative conclusion.



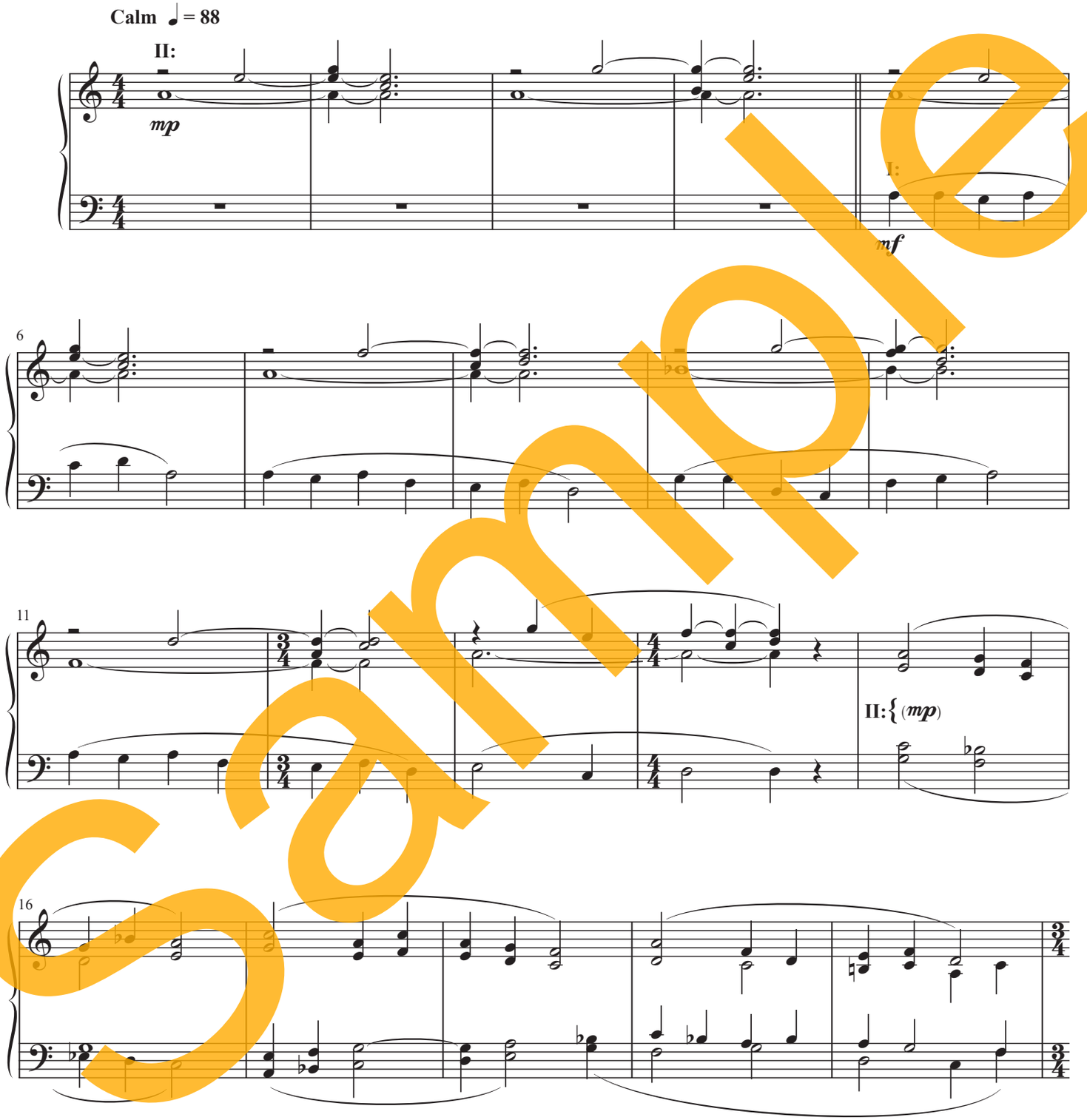
Sample

Christ ist erstanden

("Christ the Lord Is Risen Again")

I. medium Diapason (*mf*), then add (*f*)
II. soft Flute(s) (*mp*)

Christopher J. Hoh
Chorale derived from the plainchant
Victimae paschali laudes



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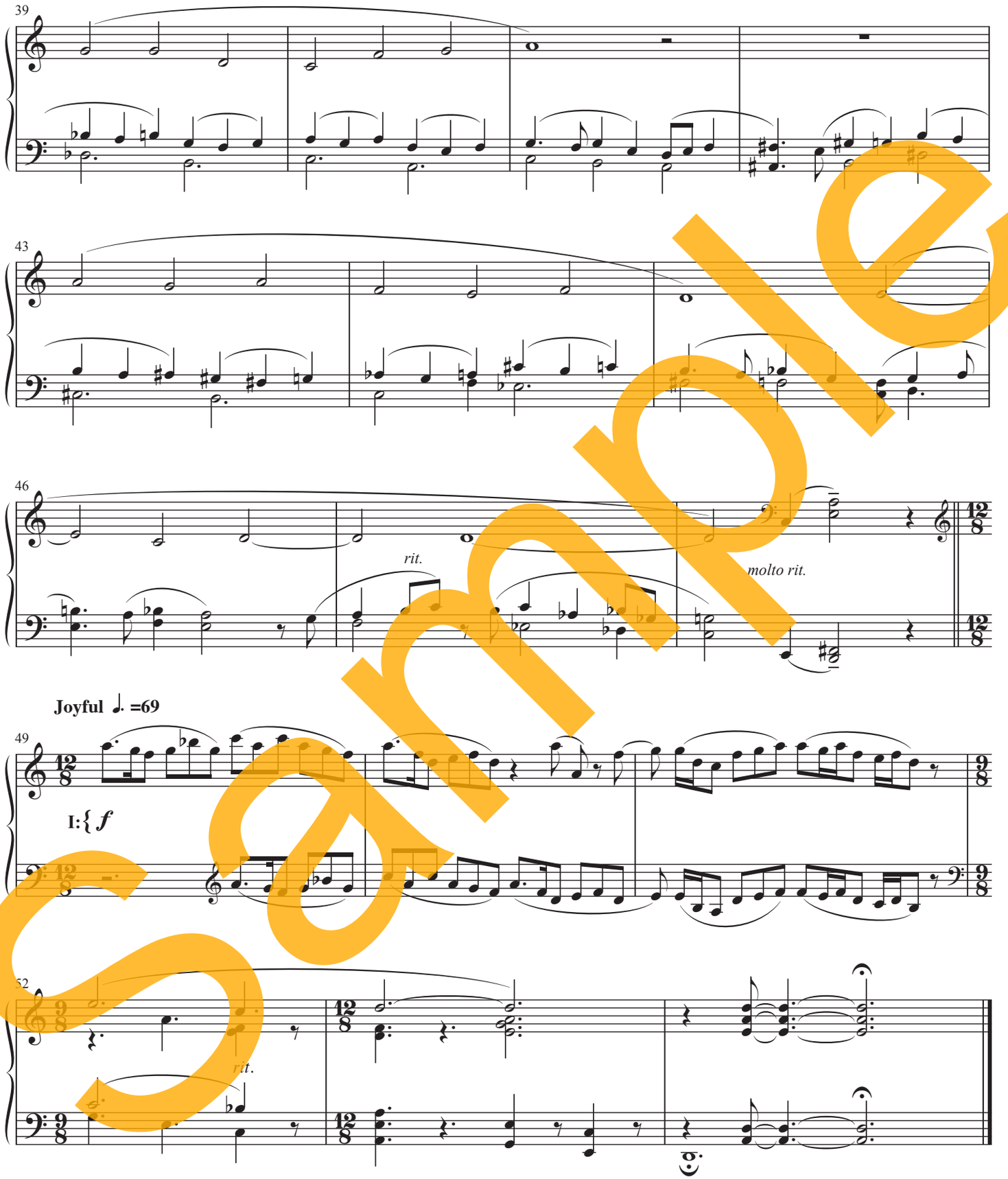

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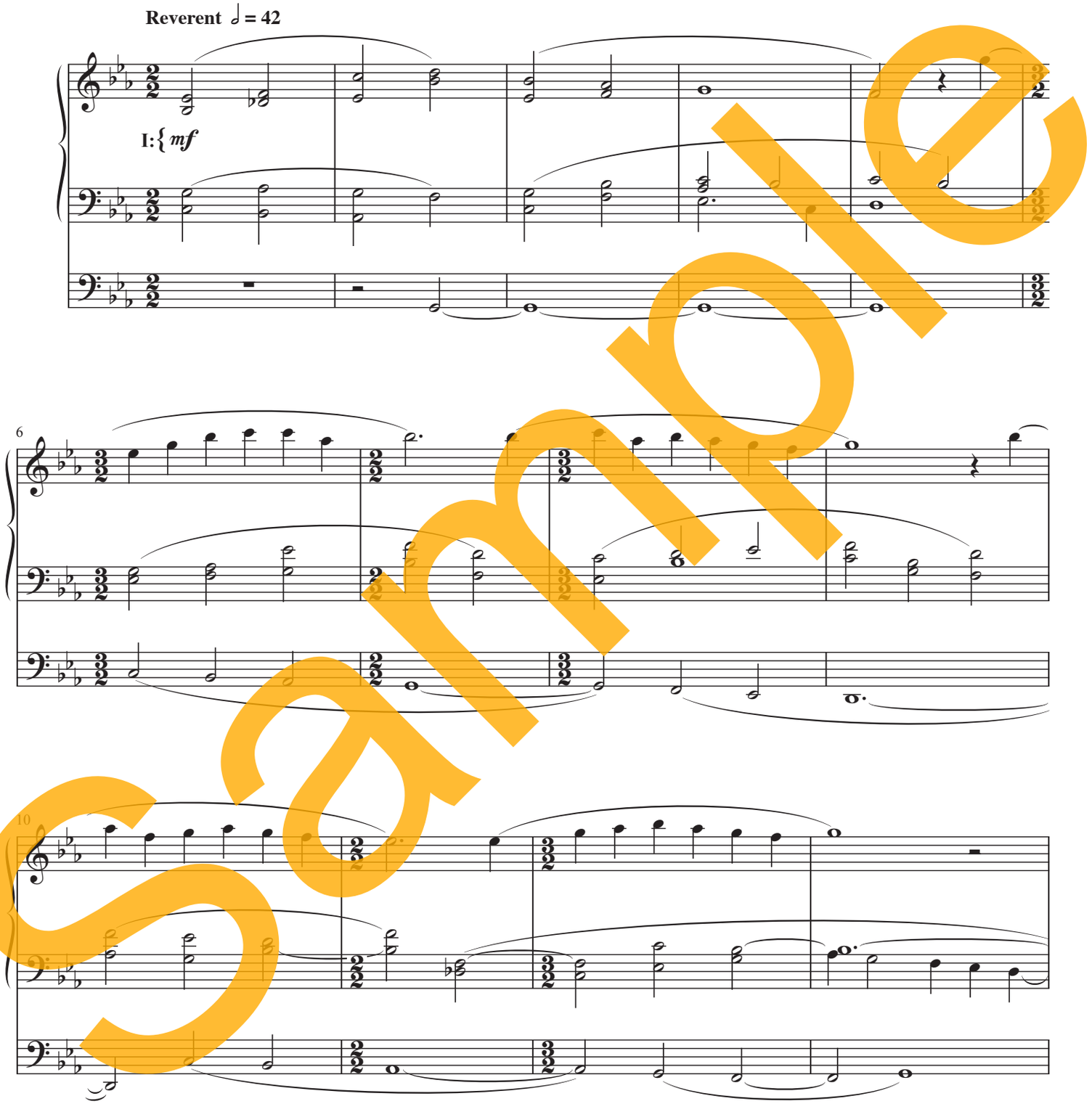
Note: Although this piece is scored without pedal, the performer may use pedal for the lowest note(s) of the ending, starting in measure 52 or 54.

Conditor alme siderum

("Creator of the Stars of Night")

I. Strings or light Diapason (*mf*)
II. soft Flute(s) (*p*)
P. 16, 8 (*mf*, then *f*)

Christopher J. Hoh
Plainchant



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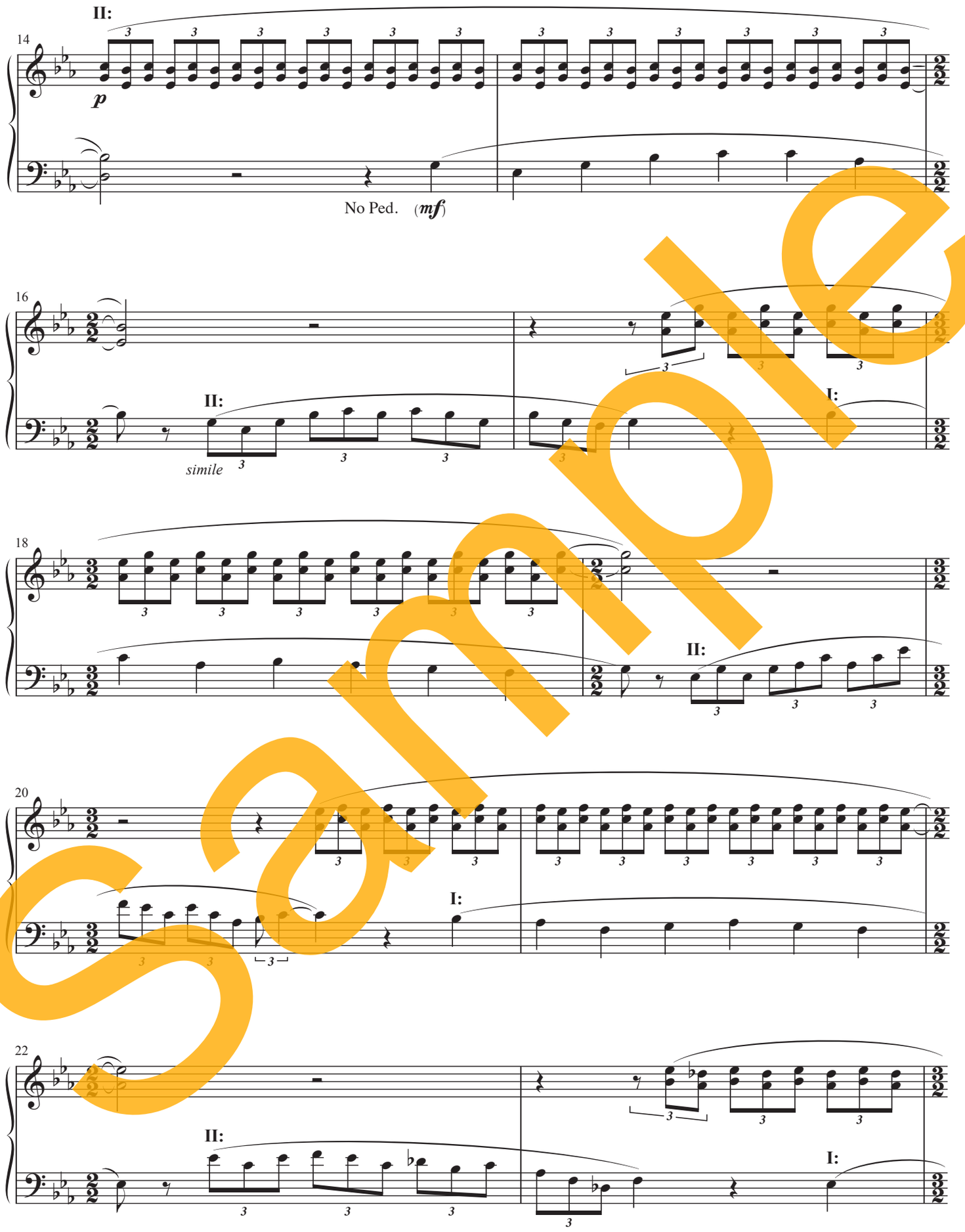

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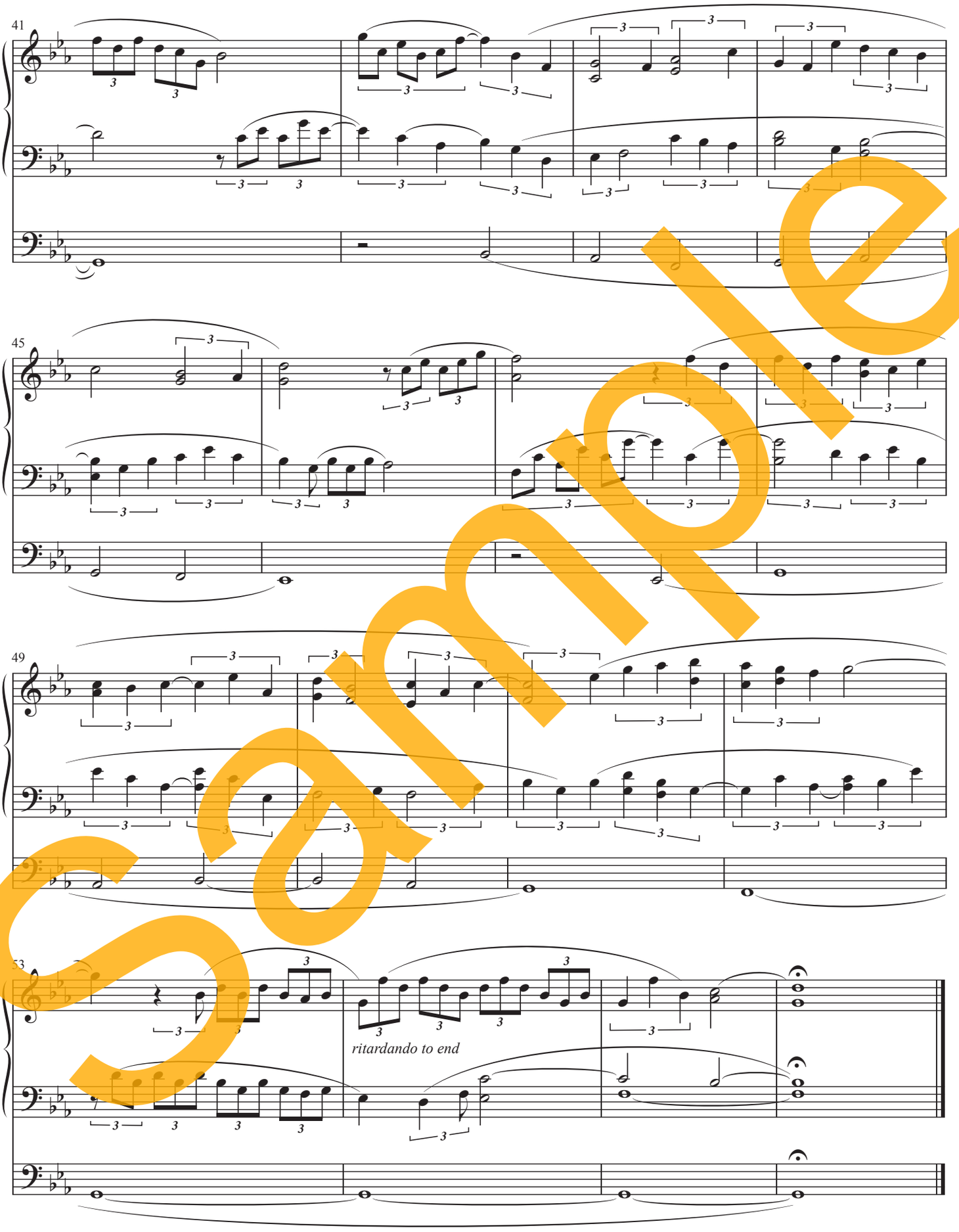


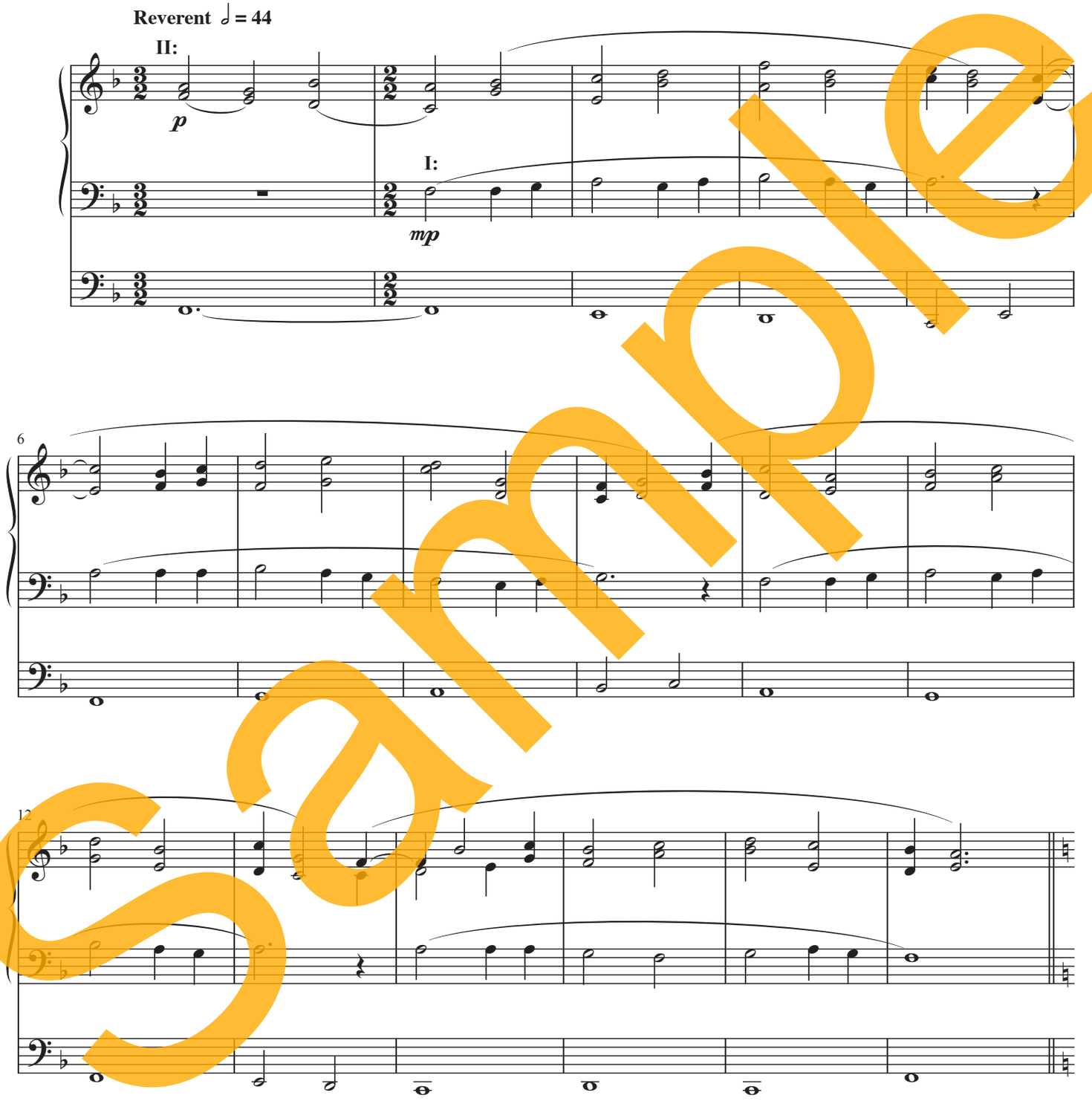
Sample

Hamburg

("When I Survey the Wondrous Cross")

I. soft Diapason (*mp*)
II. soft Flute(s) (*p* to *mp*)
P. 16, 8 (*p*, then *mp*)

Christopher J. Hoh
Melody adapted by Lowell Mason
from the Gregorian Psalm Tone I



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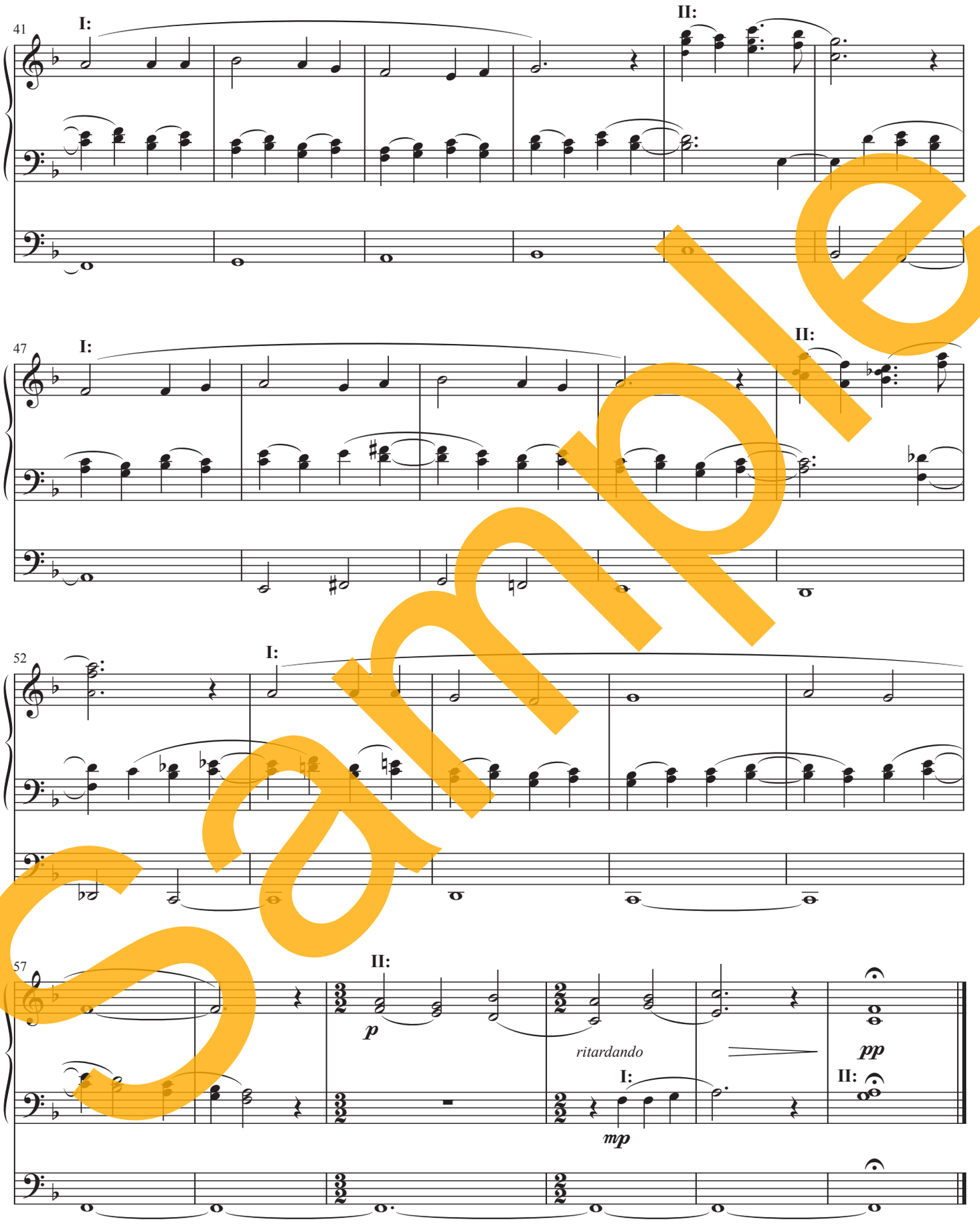


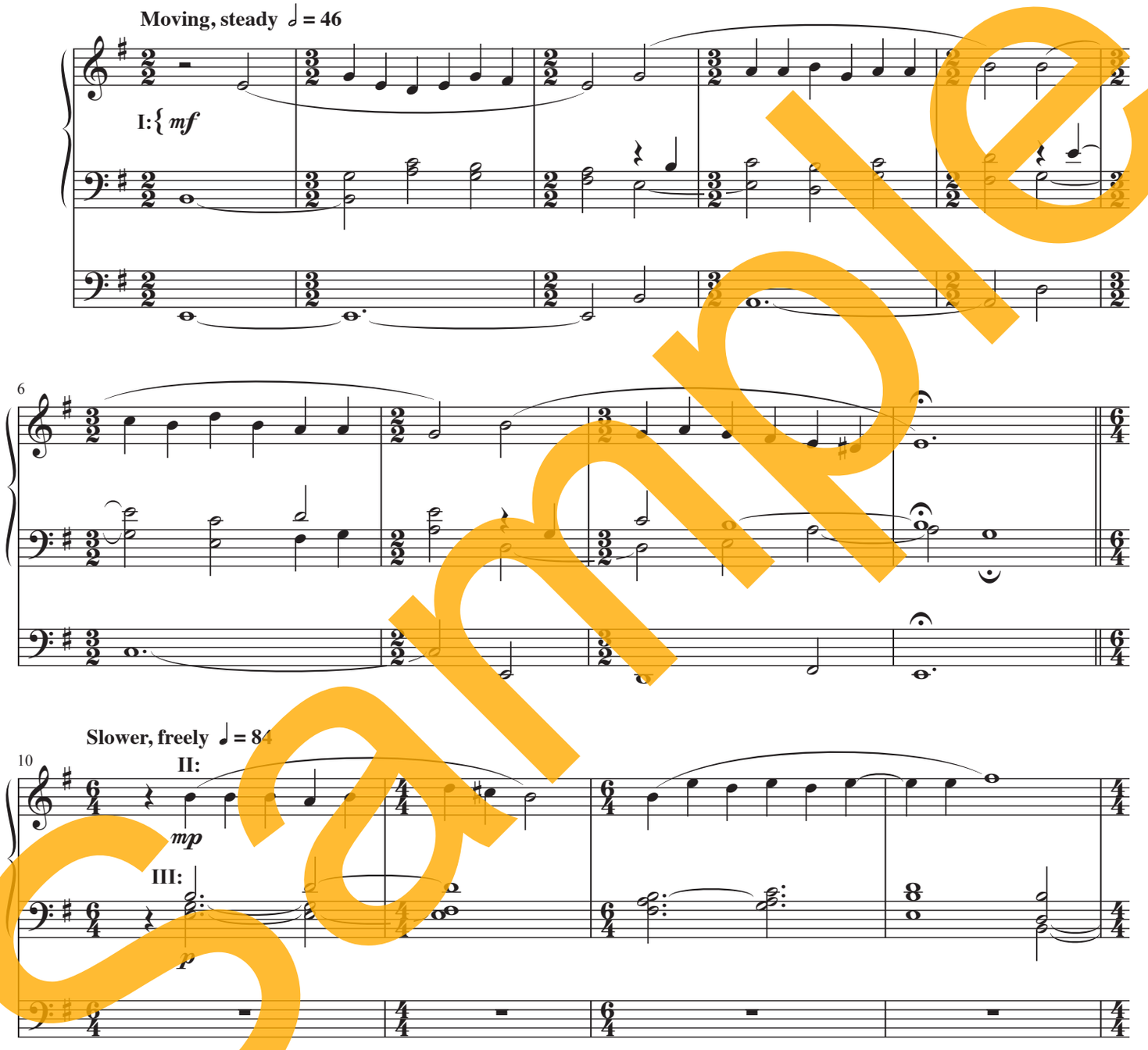
Sample

Erhalt uns, Herr

("Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word")

I. Principals
II. solo Flute
III. soft Strings (or I)*
P. 16, 8

Christopher J. Hoh
Chorale derived from the plainchant
Veni redemptor genitum



*Registration Note: Although the suggested registration is for a three-manual organ, the piece can easily be played on a two-manual instrument. The important aspects are that the right hand should play the same stop(s) from measure 10 thru 37, while the principals registration from the opening section should return in the last seven bars. The pedal should change to complement the manuals, i.e., less in measures 21 to 37, and stronger as of measure 39. Depending on the organ, the cantus firmus in the left hand measures 20 to 37 could be a solo sound rather than, as implied, the principal registration of the opening section.

Duration: 2:15

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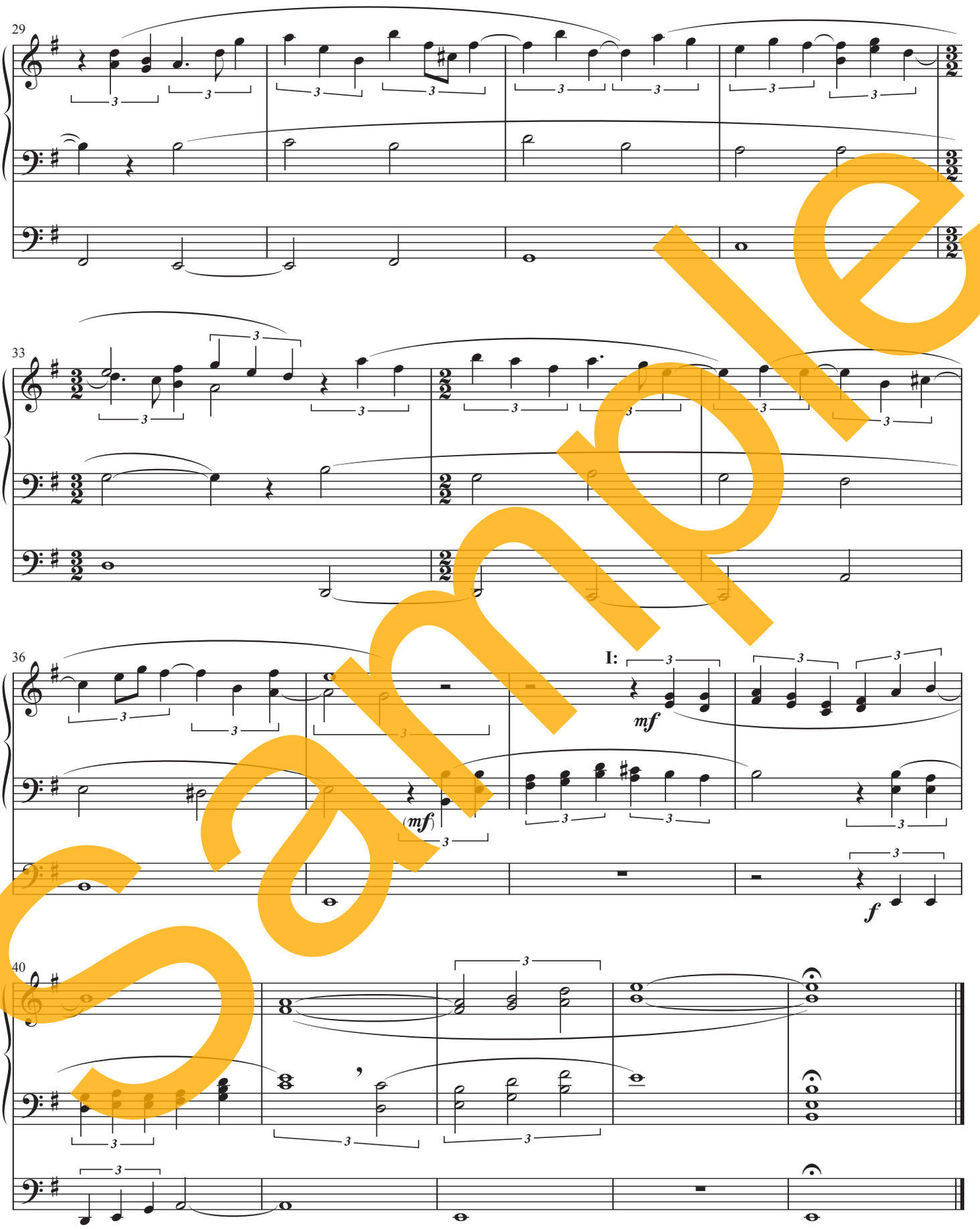


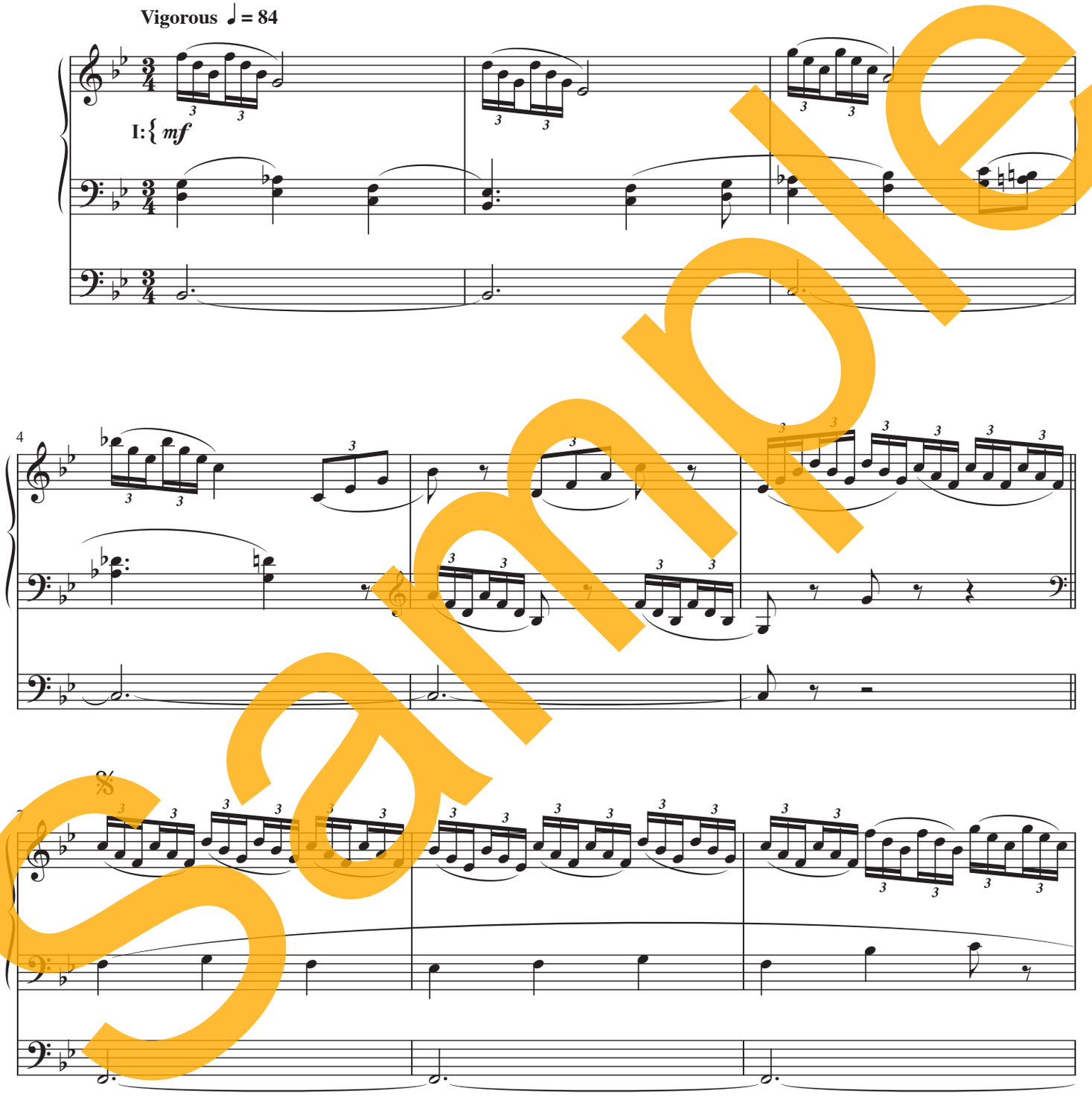
Sample

Veni Creator Spiritus

("Come, Holy Ghost, Our Souls Inspire")

I. Principal(s) (*mf*), then add
II. Flute(s) (*mp*)
P. to balance

Christopher J. Hoh
Plainchant



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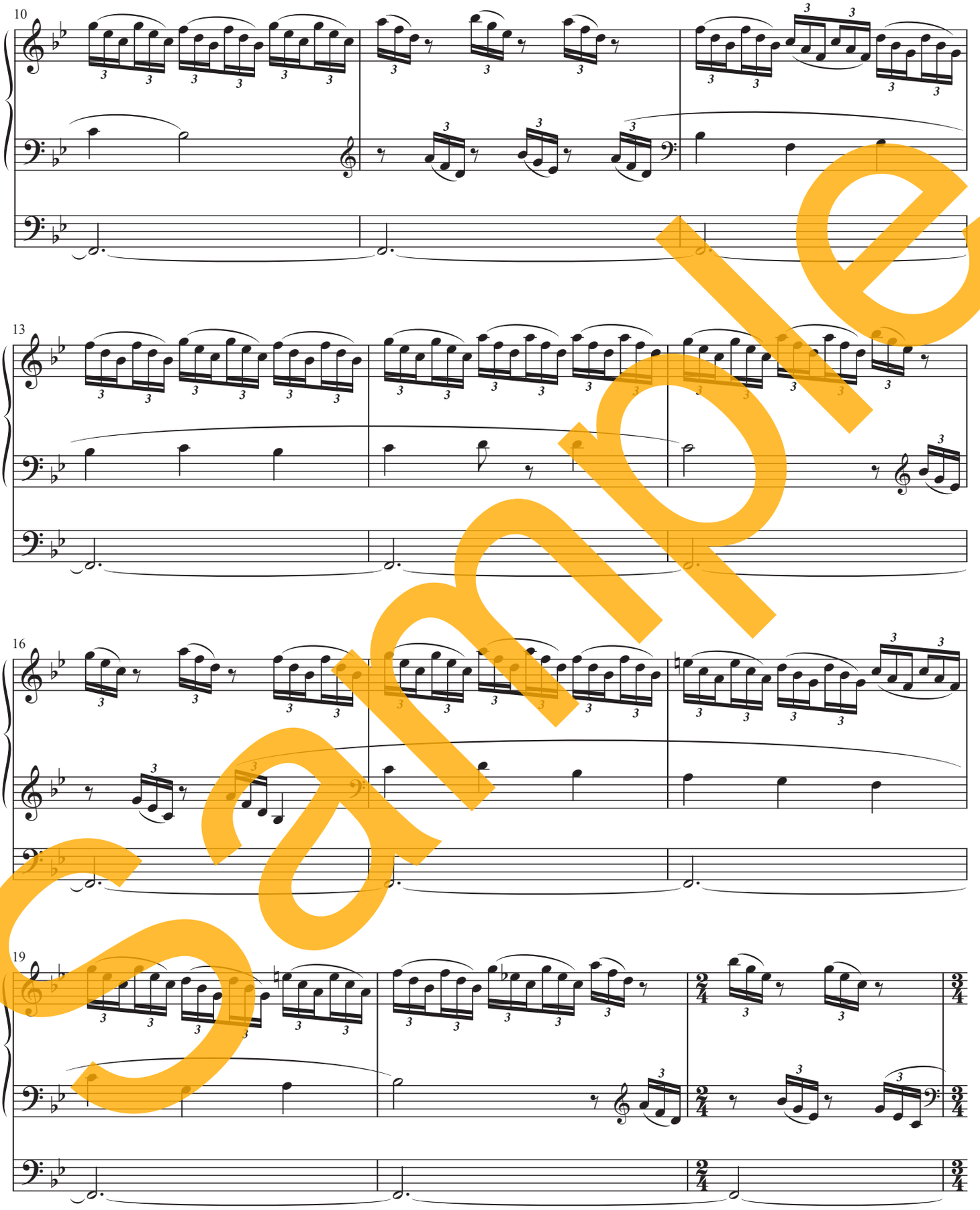

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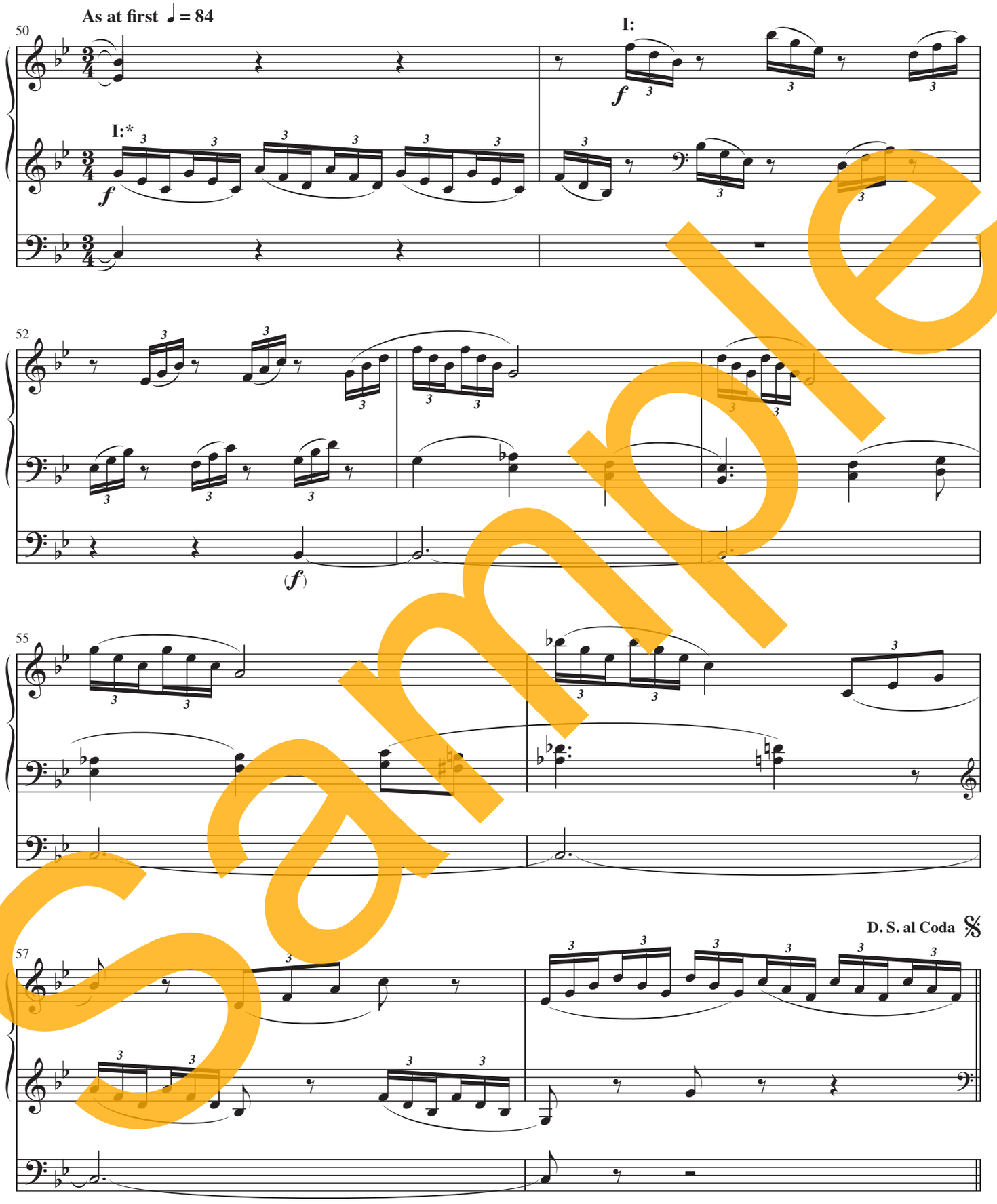

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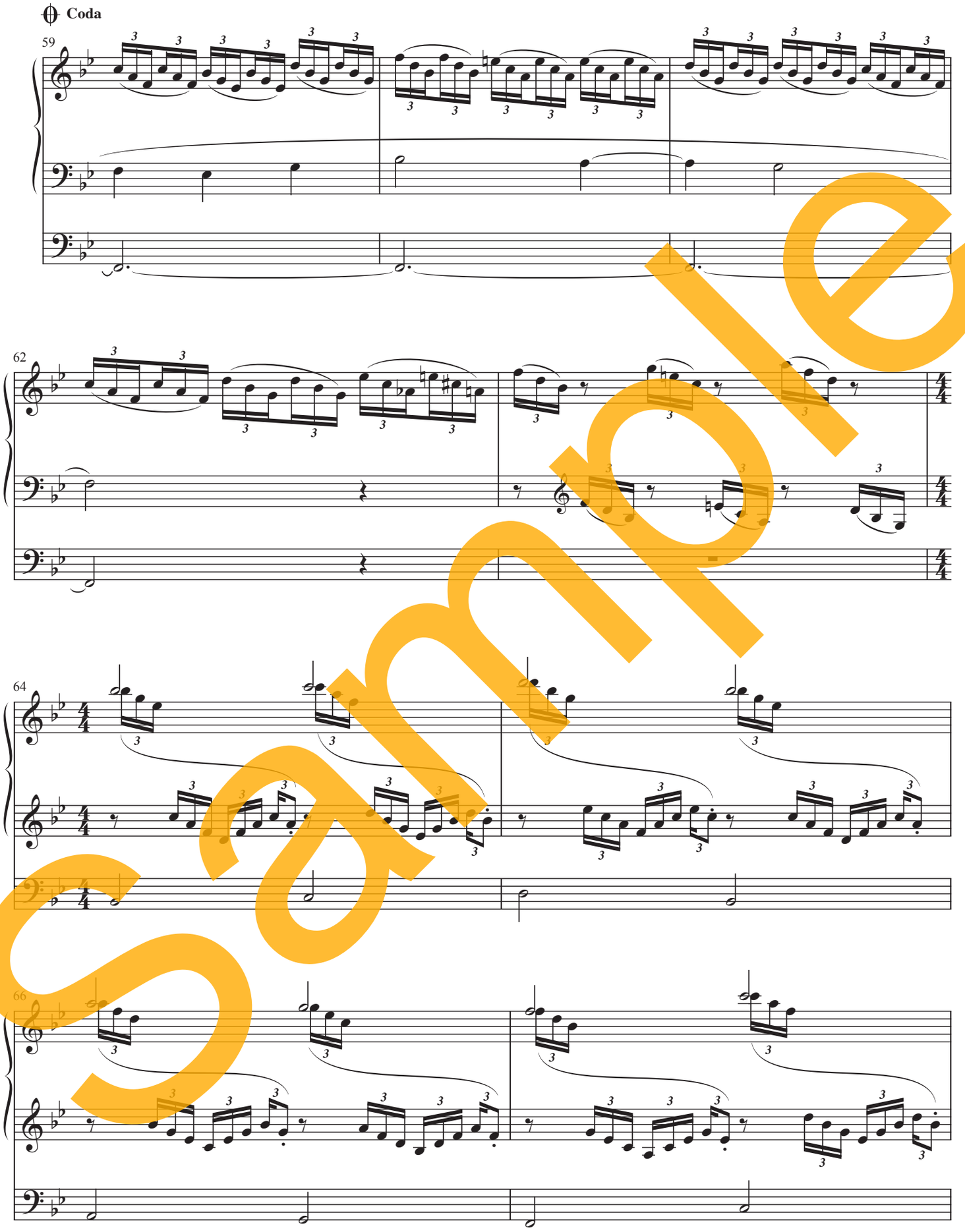
* Add to manual I with Reed(s) and/or Mixture(s) before this point.



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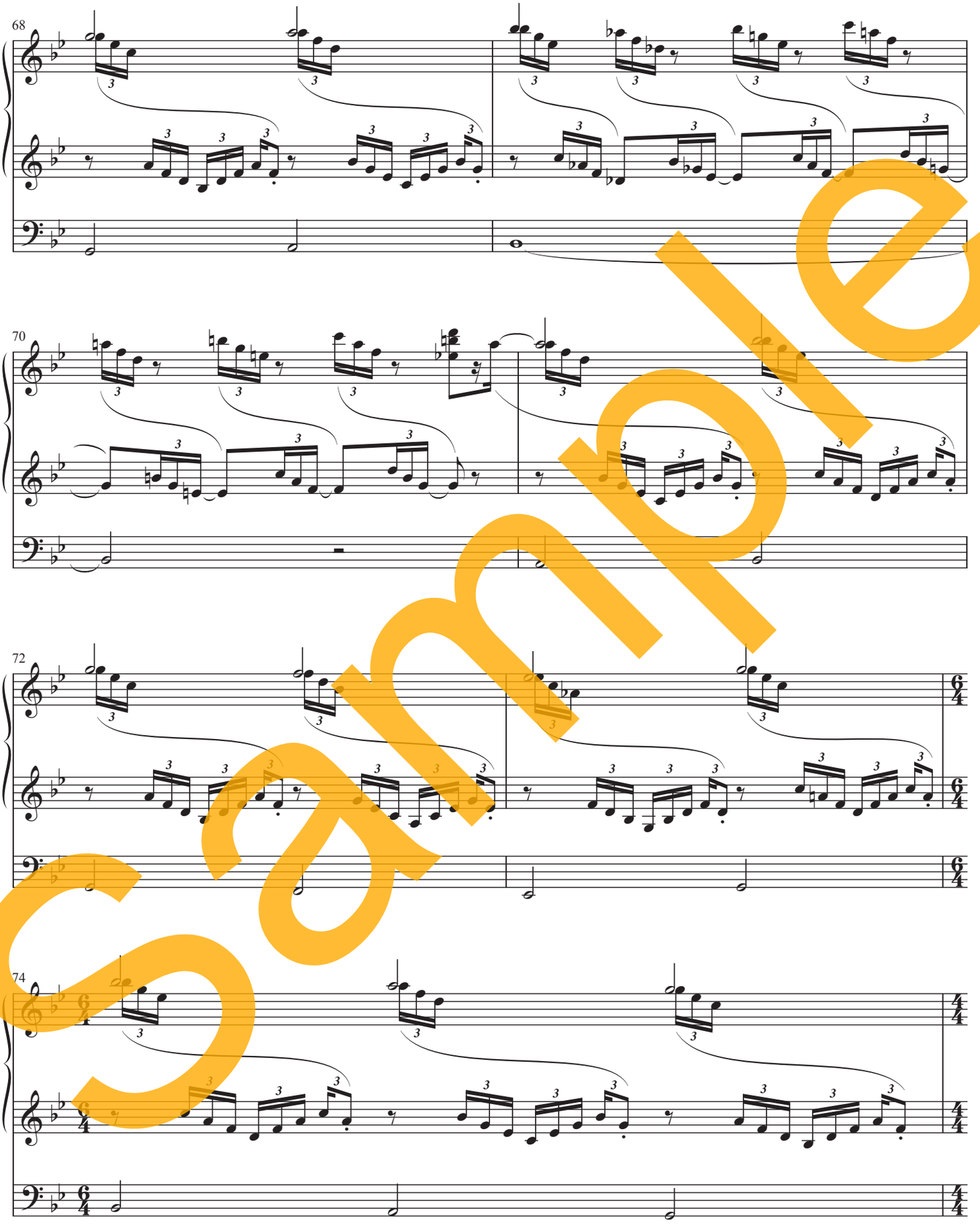

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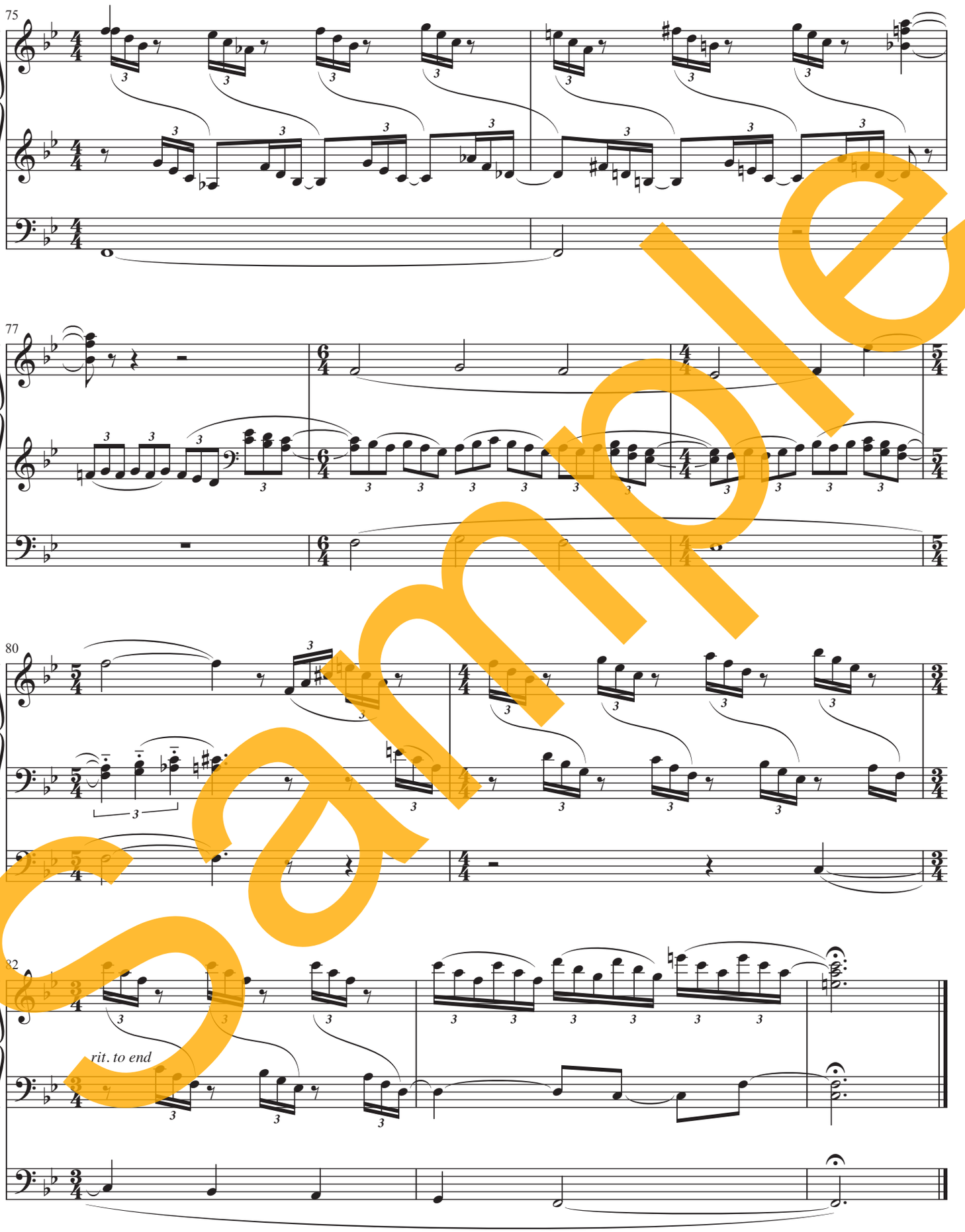


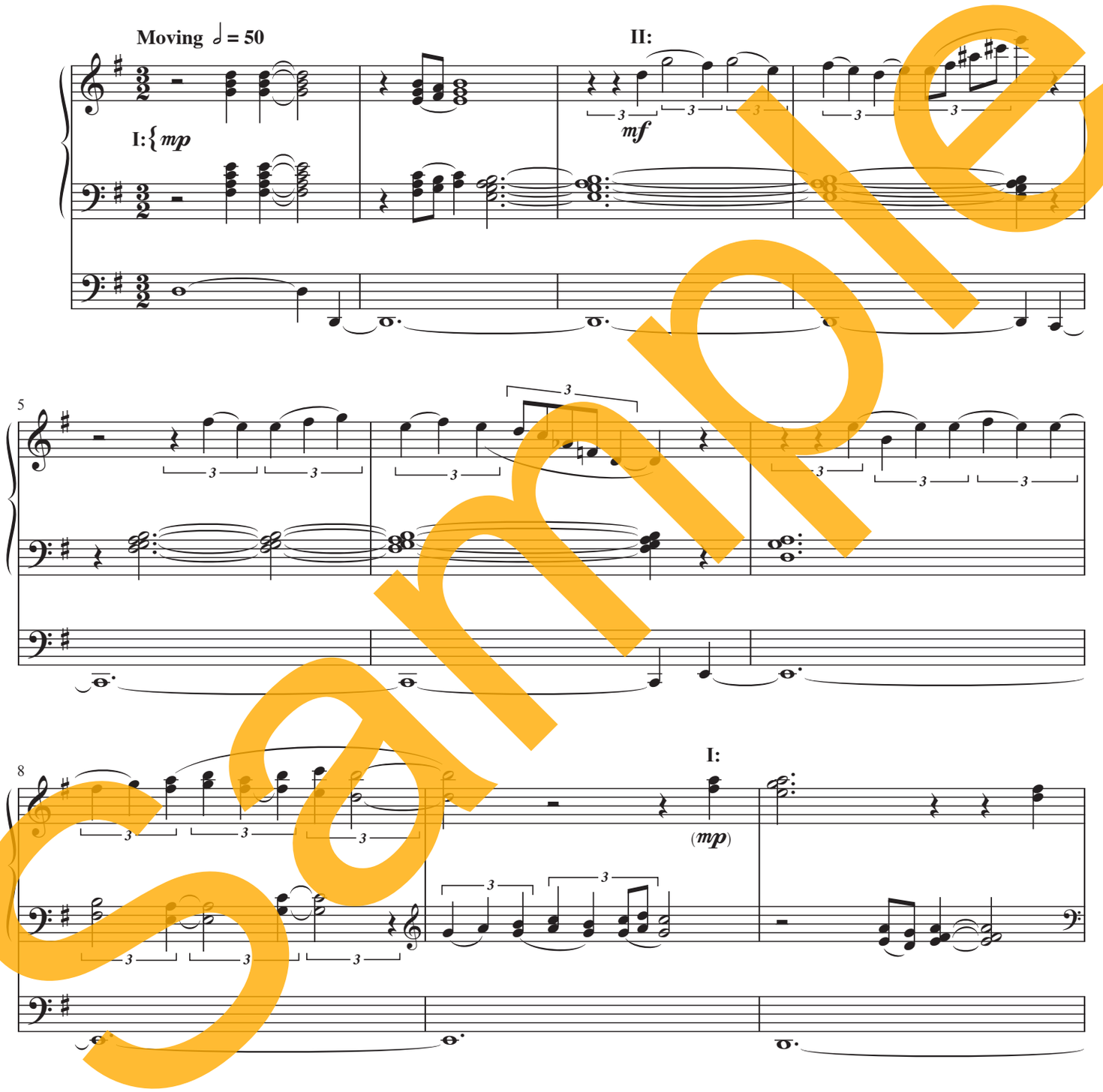
Sample

Veni Emmanuel

("O Come, O Come, Emmanuel")

I. soft Diapasons or Strings (*mp*), then louder, later Full
II. solo Flute(s) (*mf*), then solo Reed*, later Full
P. 16, 8 to balance, later Full

Christopher J. Hoh
Melody adapted by **Thomas Helmore**
from plainchant



* Reed solo could be played on third manual, if available.

Duration: 3:05

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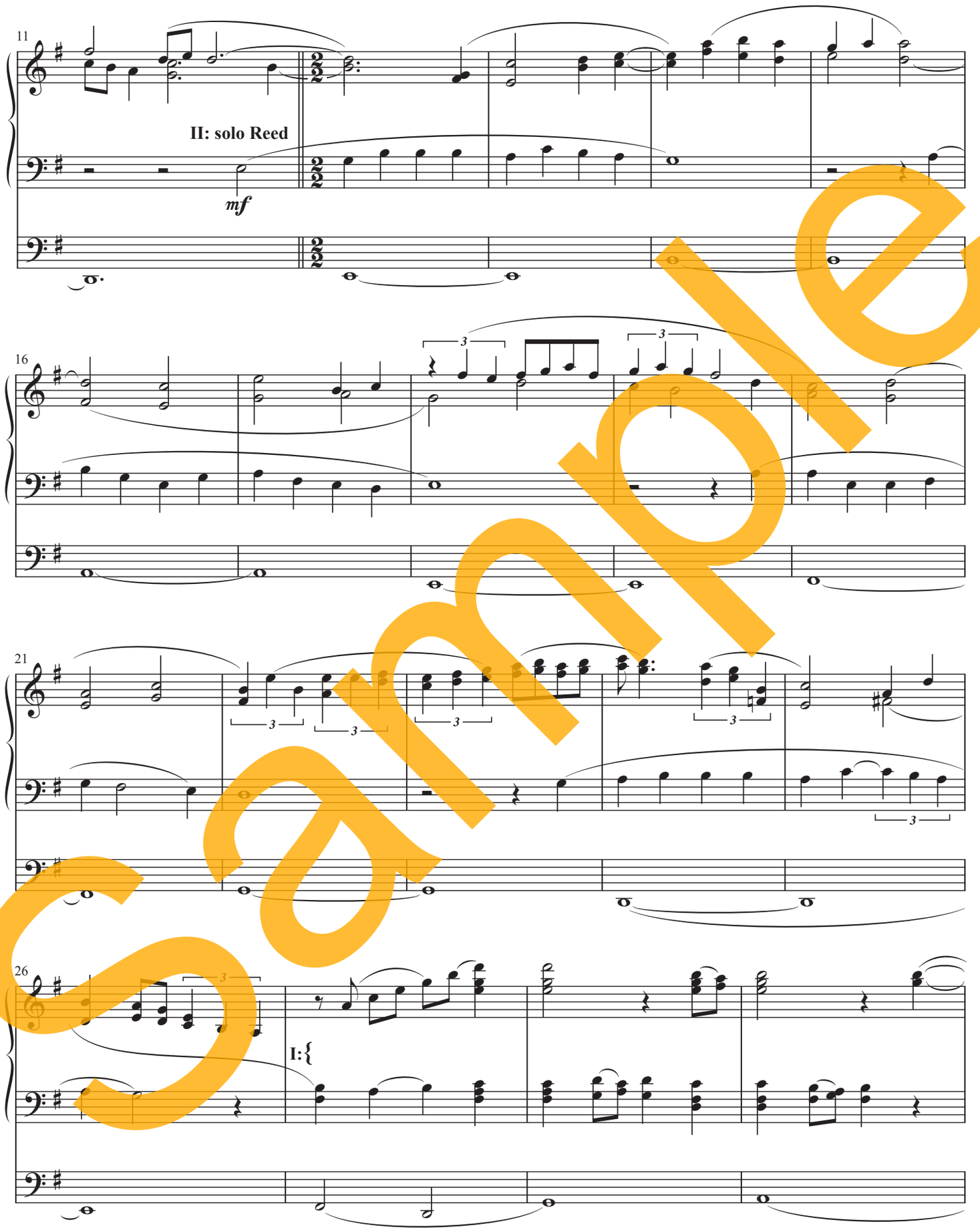

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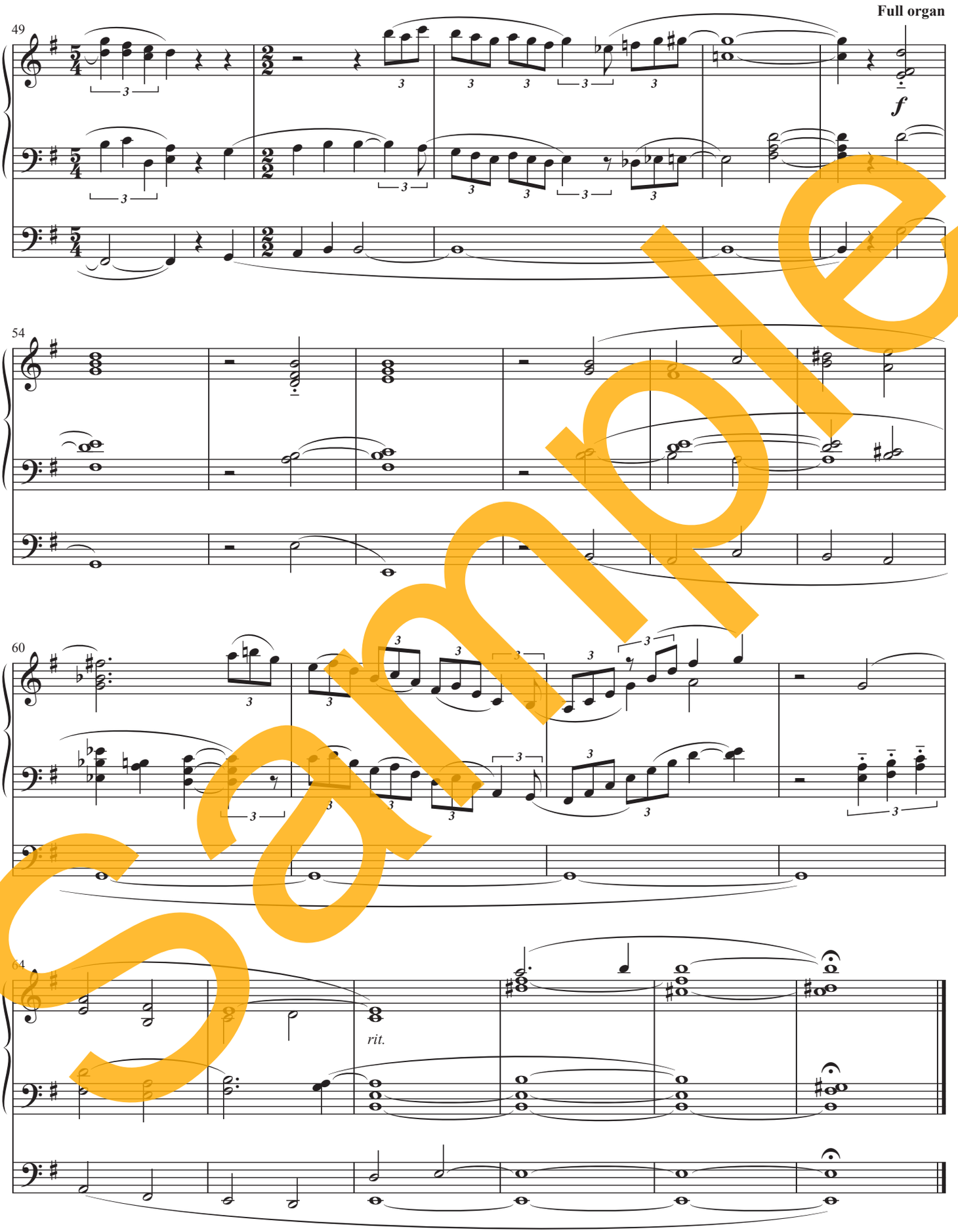


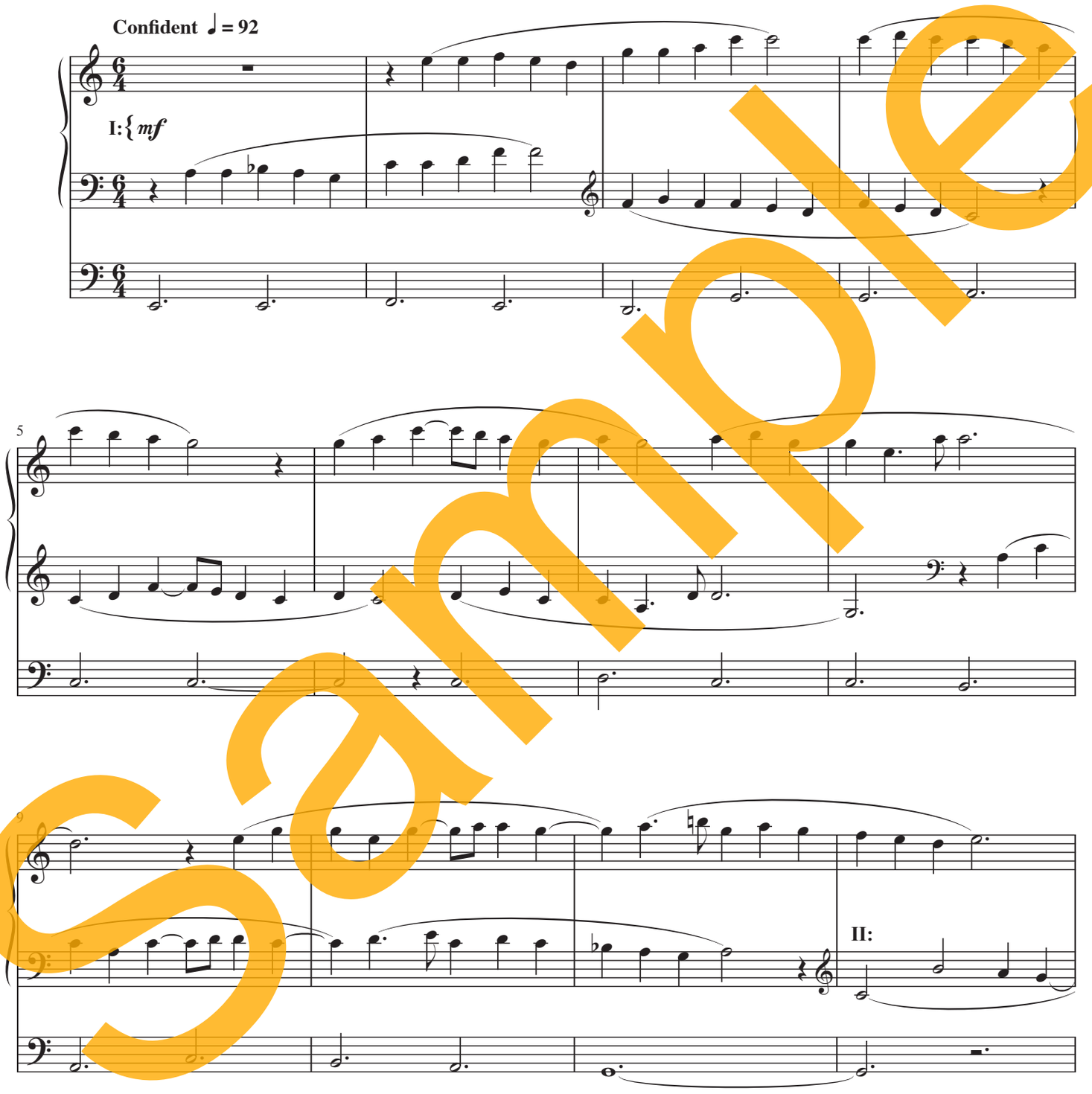
Sample

Pange lingua

("Sing, My Tongue")

I. Principal(s)
II. strong Flutes
P. Principals, Reed

Christopher J. Hoh
Plainchant



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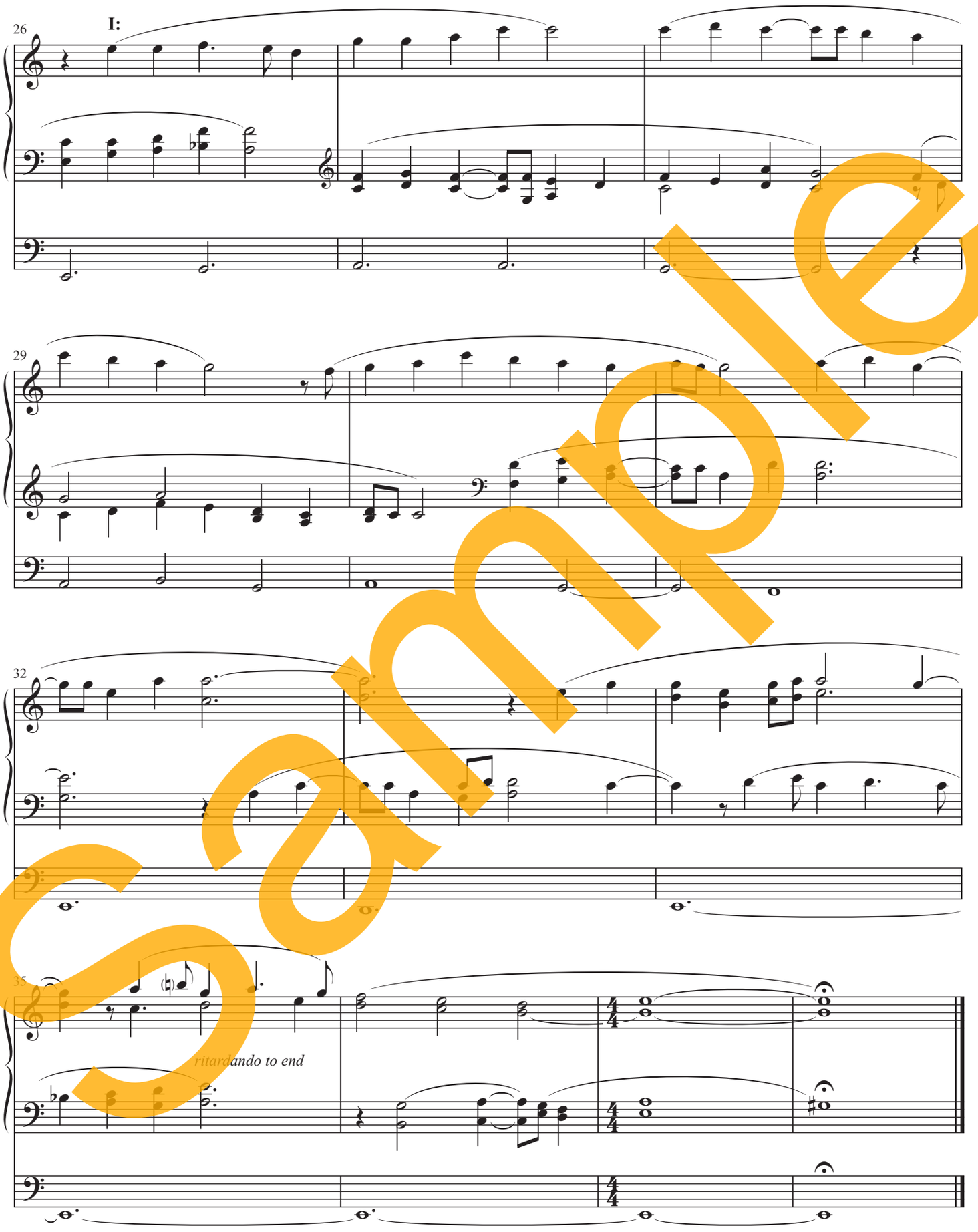

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