ONCE ON THIS ISLAND

As a violent thunderstorm rages, a group of peasant island storytellers gathers around a frightened young girl to comfort her. They enact for her the story of Ti Moune, an orphan girl who is saved from a flood by the gods. An old couple finds little Ti Moune in a tree and chooses to raise her as their own daughter. As she grows into a beautiful young woman, she longs to experience things beyond the poor village where she lives. The gods of love, water, earth, and death hear her prayer and, wondering whether love can conquer death, they devise a plan to grant the girl what she desires. Agwe, the god of water, sends a storm that causes Daniel, a young man from the wealthy side of the island, to crash his car. Ti Moune comes to Daniel's rescue and saves him from Papa Ge, the god of death, by making a promise: Ti Moune will trade her life for Daniel's. The young man returns to his family's estate and Ti Moune follows to nurse him back to health. They fall in love, but Ti Moune's happiness is short-lived, for she discovers that Daniel is engaged to a beautiful girl named Andrea. The marriage was pre-arranged when he was a child and Daniel realizes that he must honor the traditions of his social class, so he rejects Ti Moune. Papa Ge appears and instead of taking her life, he offers Ti Moune a choice: he will free her from her promise if she kills Daniel. Ti Moune refuses and surrenders herself to Papa Ge, proving that love is stronger than death. Crying tears of compassion, the gods bless Ti Moune and transform her into a tree that grows outside the gates of Daniel's estate and watches over him for his lifetime.

LYNN AHRENS and STEPHEN FLAHERTY

Born in New York in 1948, lyricist Lynn Ahrens did not initially pursue a career in musical theatre. After she received a degree in journalism from Syracuse University, she spent several years in the advertising industry. During this time, she experienced success as a contributing songwriter to the classic *Schoolhouse Rocks!* animated children's series. Ahrens formed her own production company in 1978 and created a series of educational programs for children, which garnered her recognition and awards. Four years later, she auditioned for a BMI Musical Theatre Workshop, which brought her together with future writing partner, Stephen Flaherty.

Unlike Ahrens, Stephen Flaherty grew up participating in music. Born in 1960 in Pittsburgh, he developed an ardent interest in musical theatre and began composing as a teenager. Following his graduation from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music in 1982, he moved to New York City. Because his mentor, Lehman Engel, was a founder and director of the BMI Workshop, Falherty enrolled. There he met Lynn Ahrens and they began collaborating in 1983, with Ahrens as lyricist and Flaherty writing the music.

Their first effort, which was performed only in a workshop setting, gained the attention of a director from Playwrights Horizons; by 1988, *Lucky Stiff* premiered. A musical farce based on the book *The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo*, the show closed after six weeks. Their next musical, *Once On This Island*, met with greater success. Also based on a novel (Rosa Guy's *My Love, My Love*), the show had at its center an emotional story of love and social classes. It moved to Broadway and earned Ahrens and Flaherty significant recognition as a writing team. Although *My Favorite Year* in 1992 was a failure at the box office, their reputation was unaffected and along with ten other writing teams, they were selected to submit four songs for consideration for a new show called *Ragtime*. Ahrens and Flaherty completed the songs in less than two weeks and were selected to write the entire score. Hollywood also took notice, and the pair was chosen to write songs for an animated film, *Anastasia*. Since 2000, their Broadway and Off-Broadway offerings have been as stylistically diverse as *Seussical: The Musical, A Man of No Importance,* and *Dessa Rose.*

Background information by Brian Fisher.

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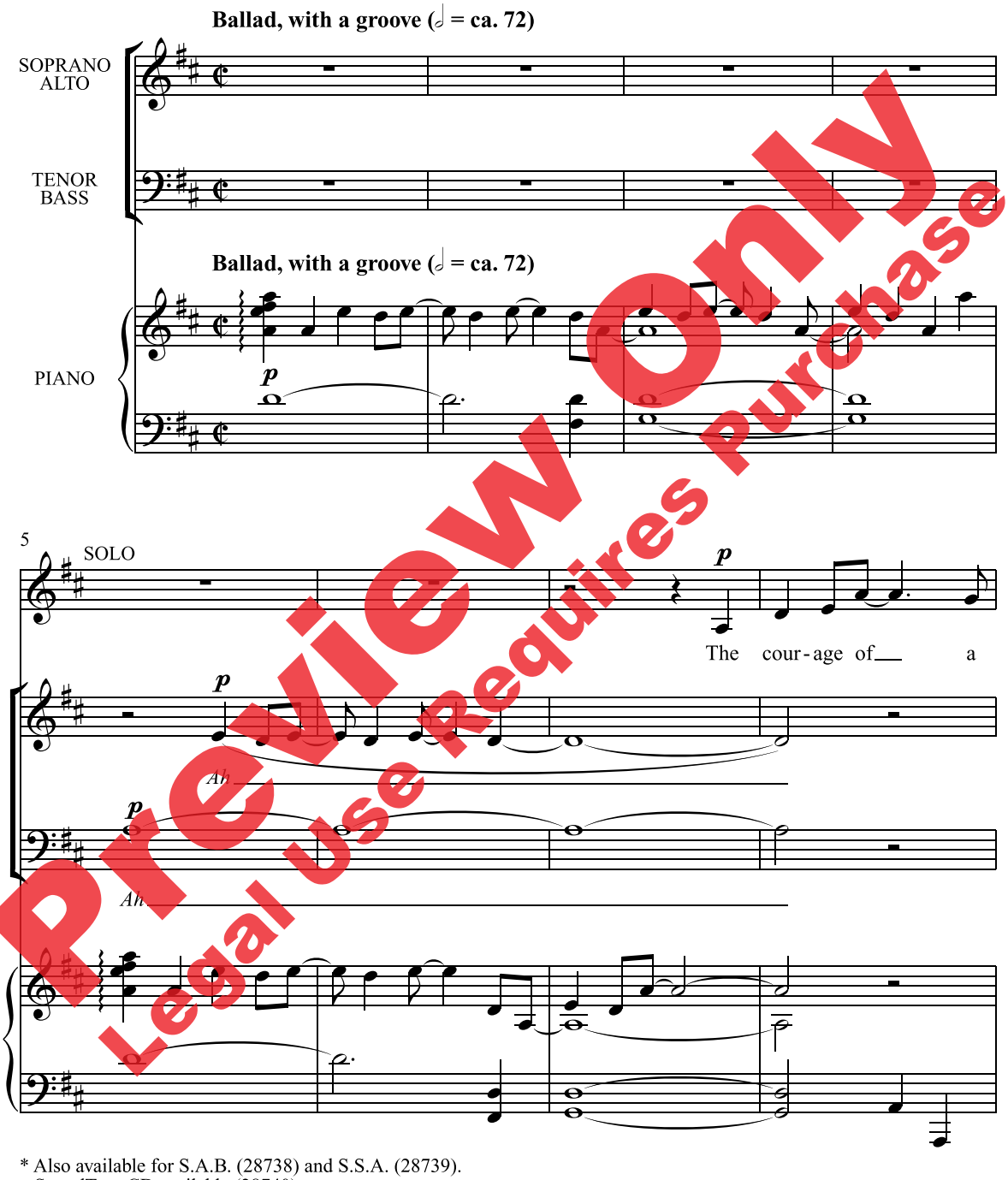
from the musical "Once On This Island"

THE HUMAN HEART

for S.A.T.B. voices and piano
with optional SoundTrax CD*

Arranged by
ANDY BECK

Lyrics by **LYNN AHRENS**
Music by **STEPHEN FLAHERTY**



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* Also available for S.A.B. (28738) and S.S.A. (28739).
SoundTrax CD available (28740).

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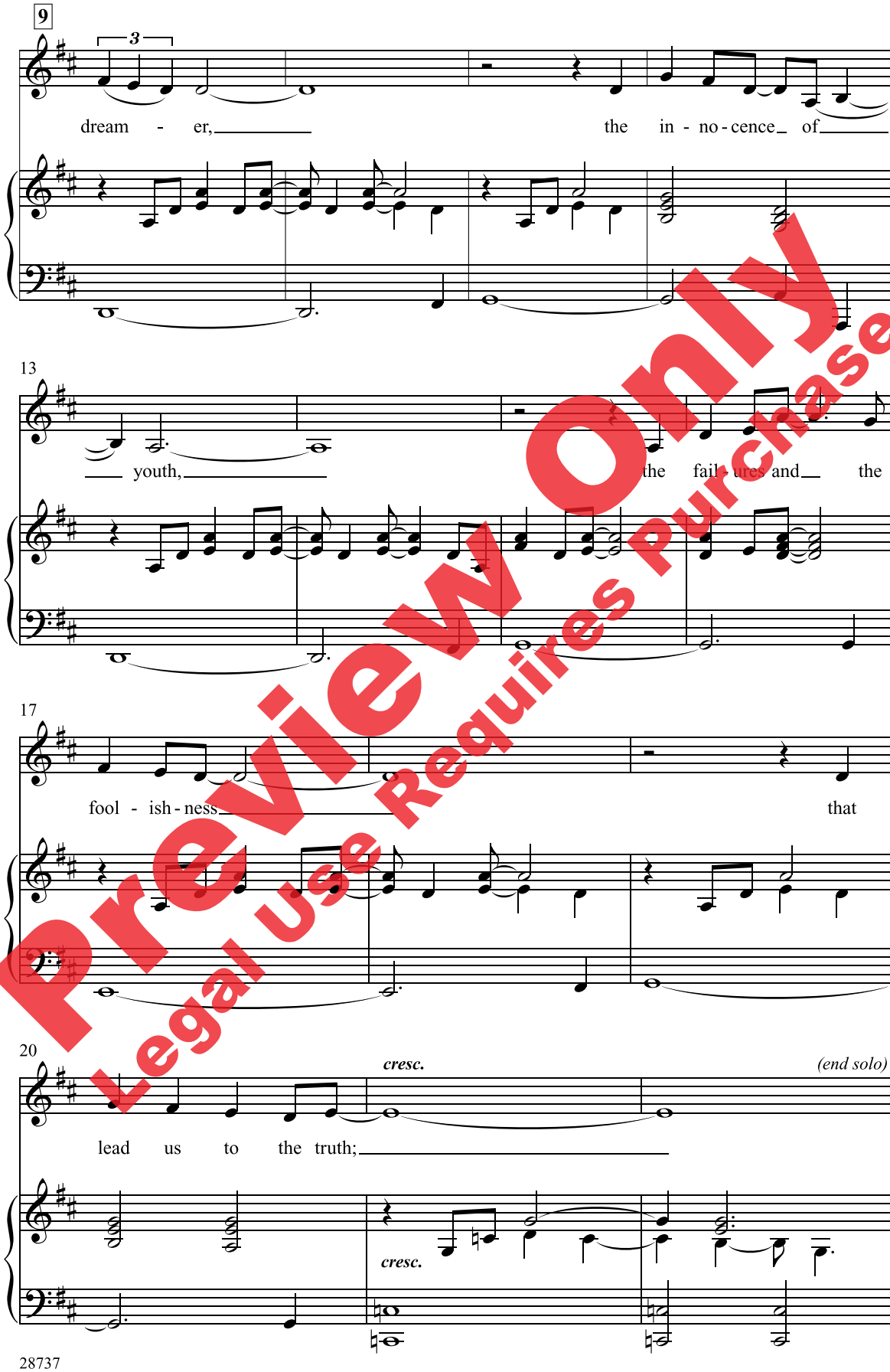

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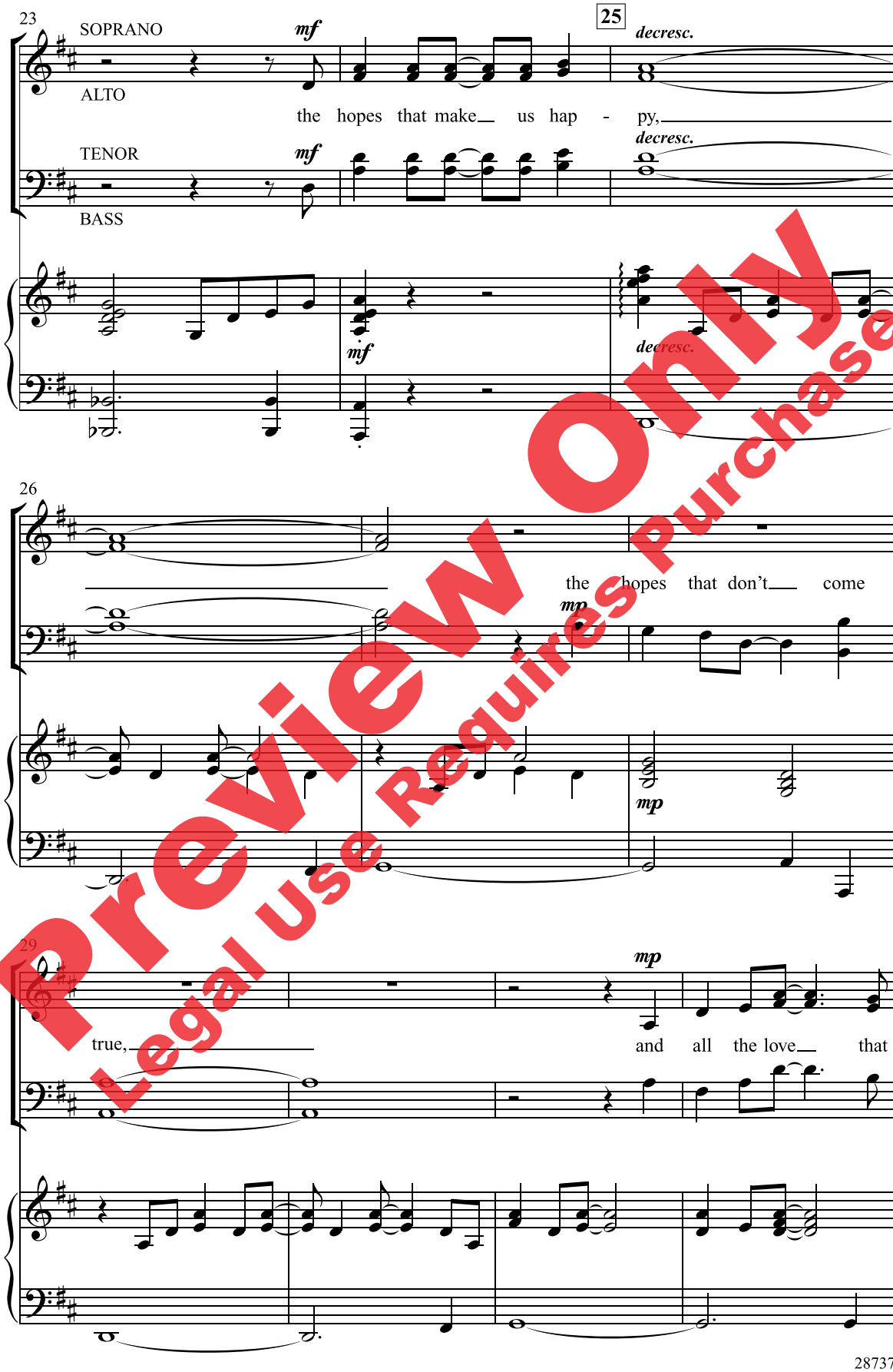

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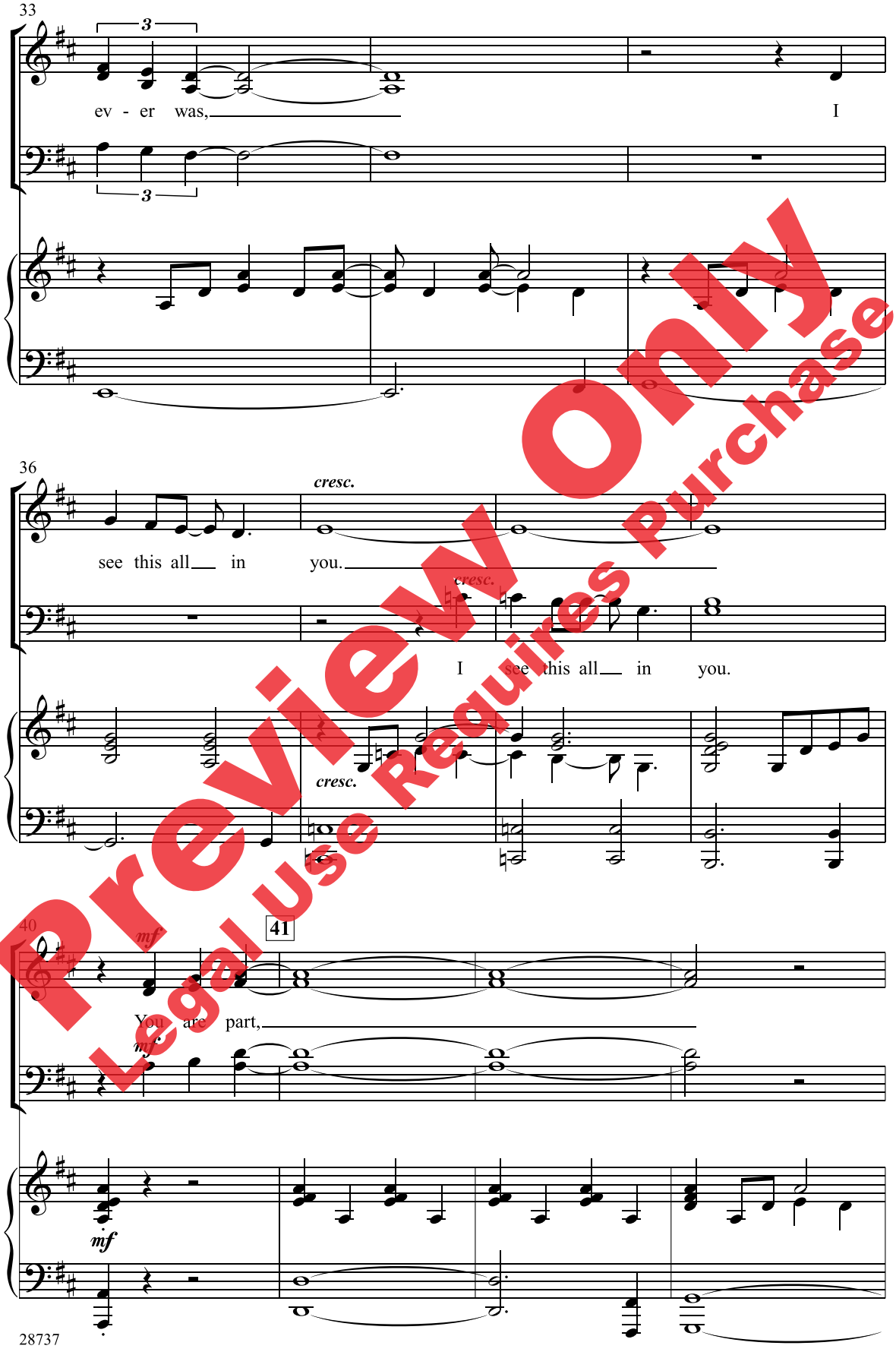

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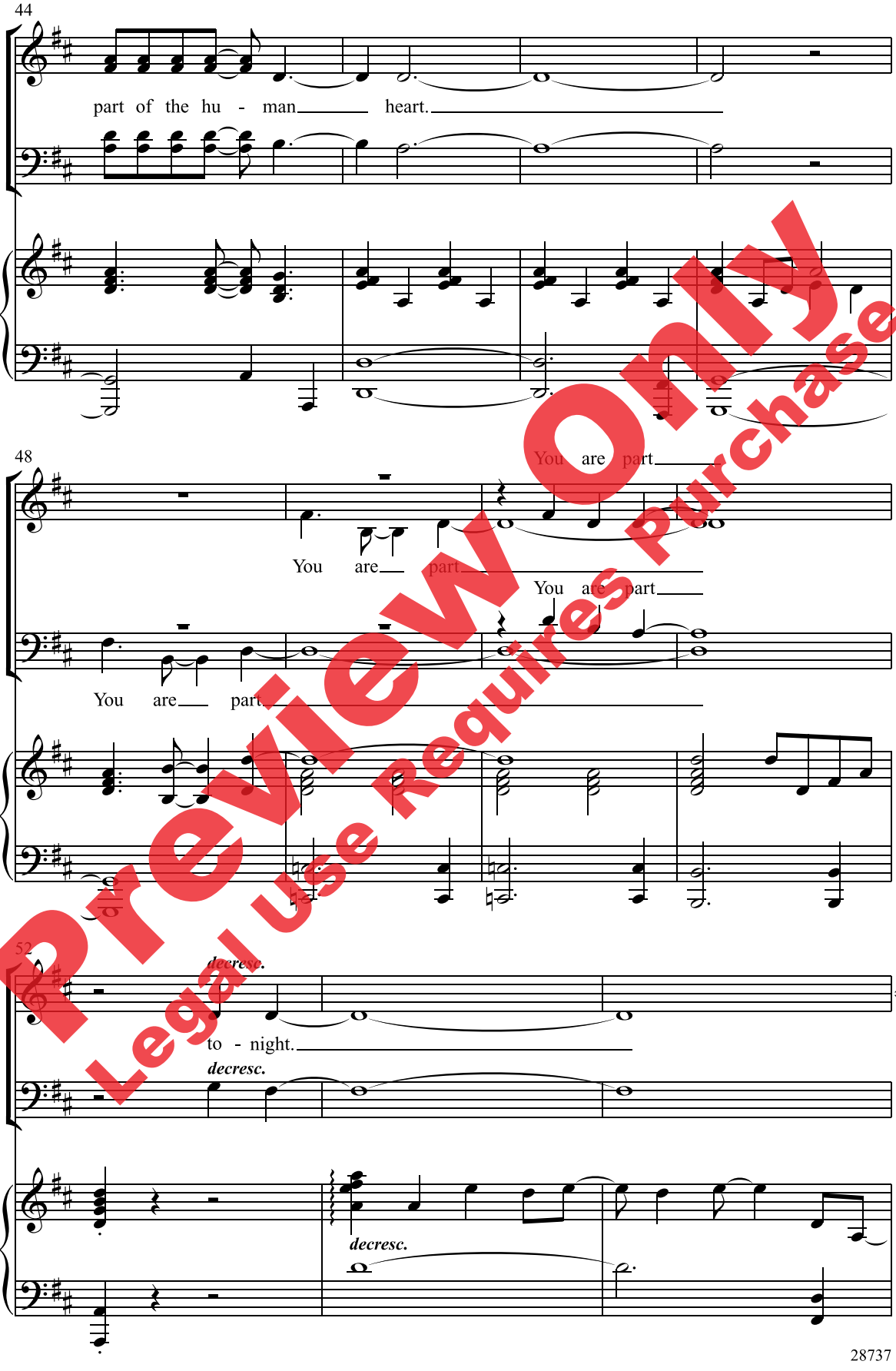

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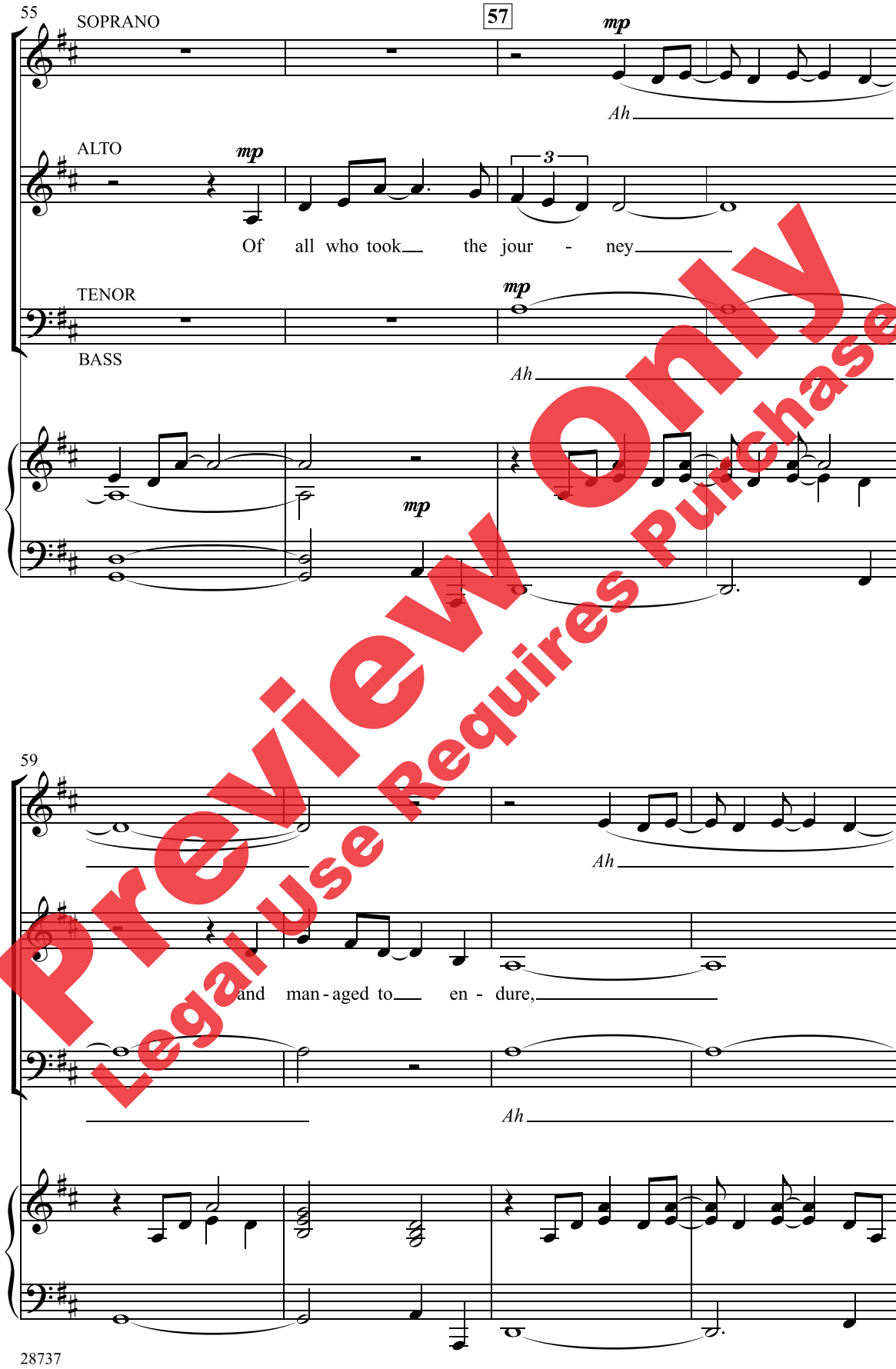

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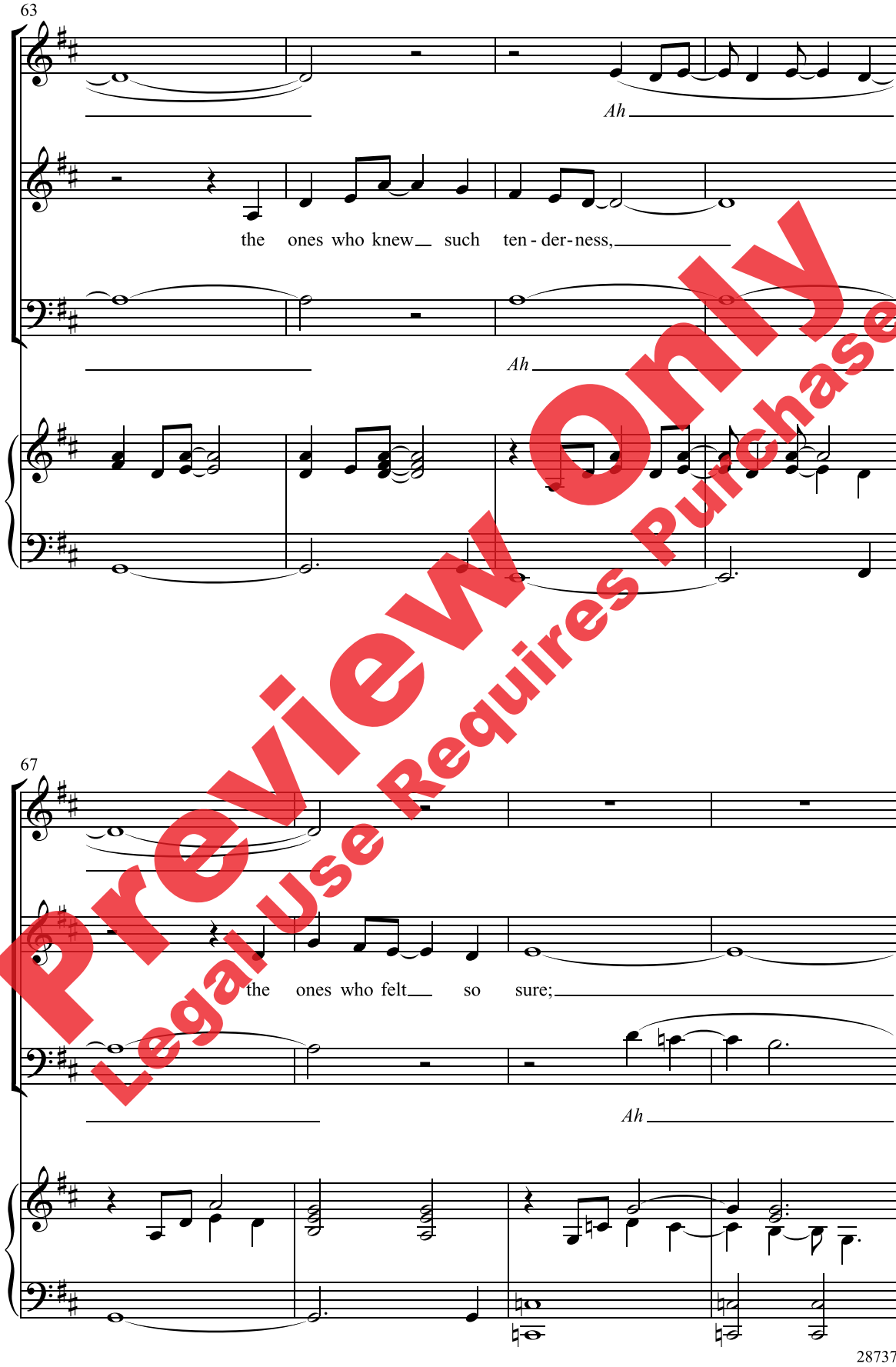

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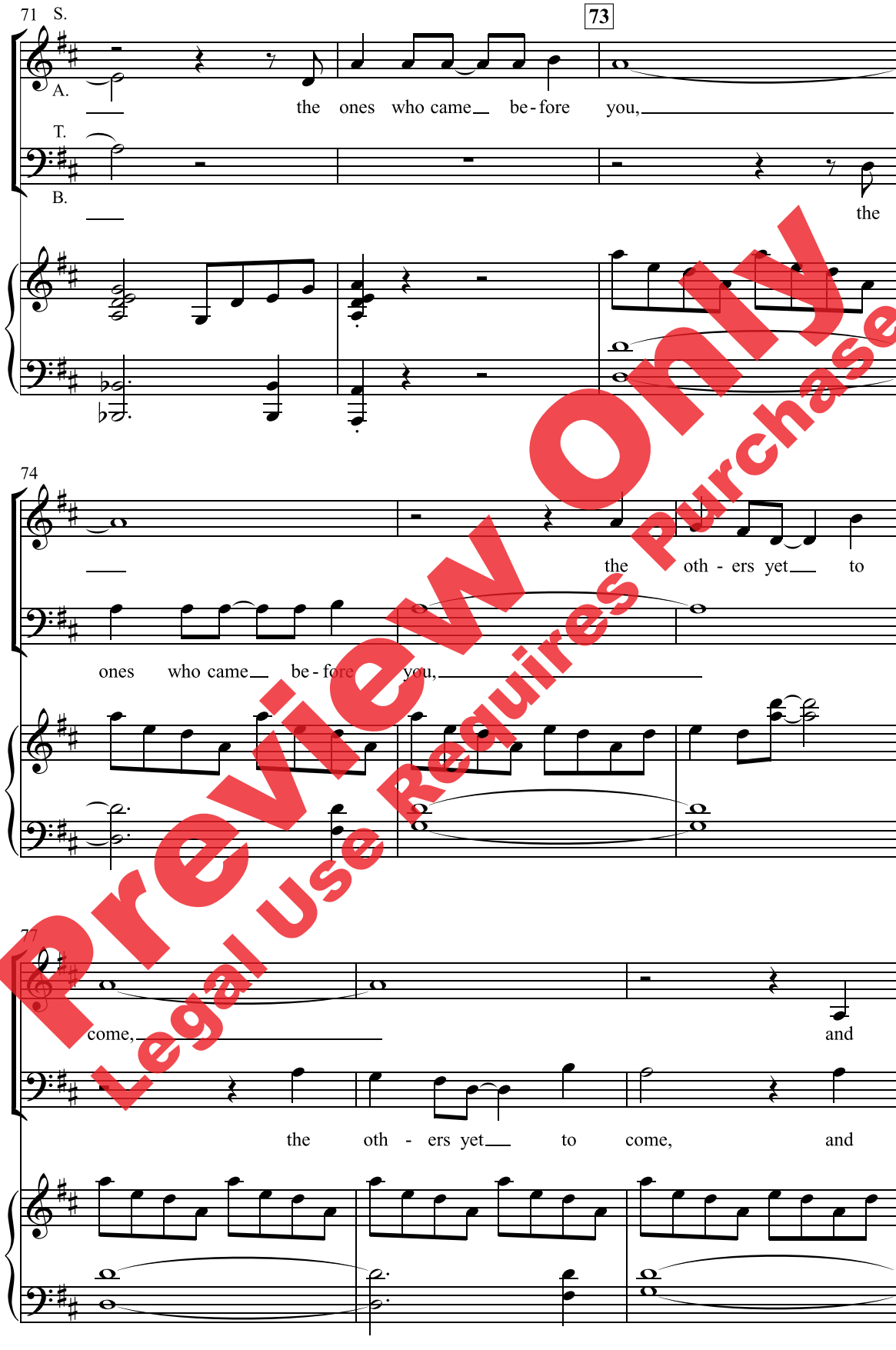

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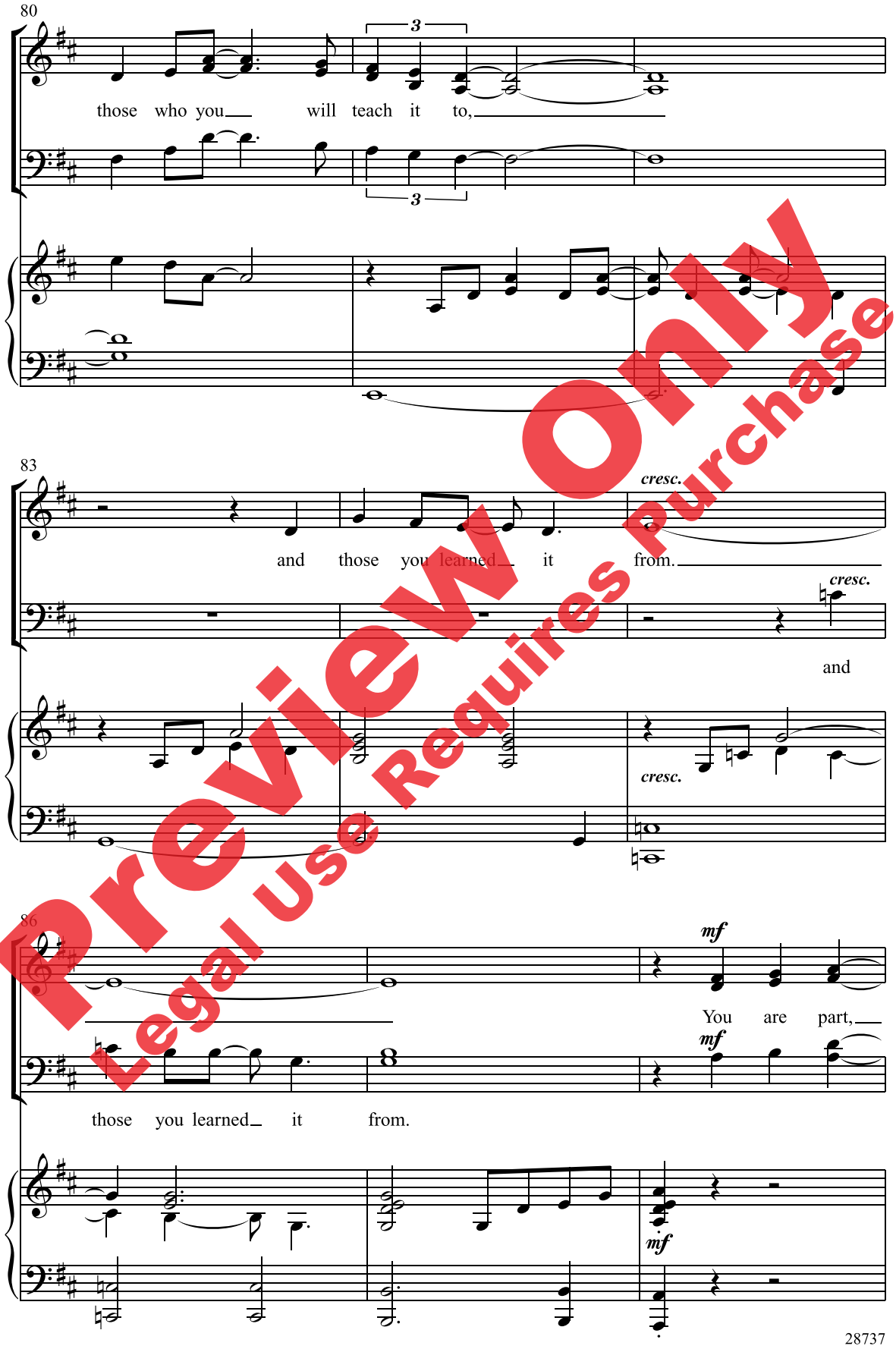

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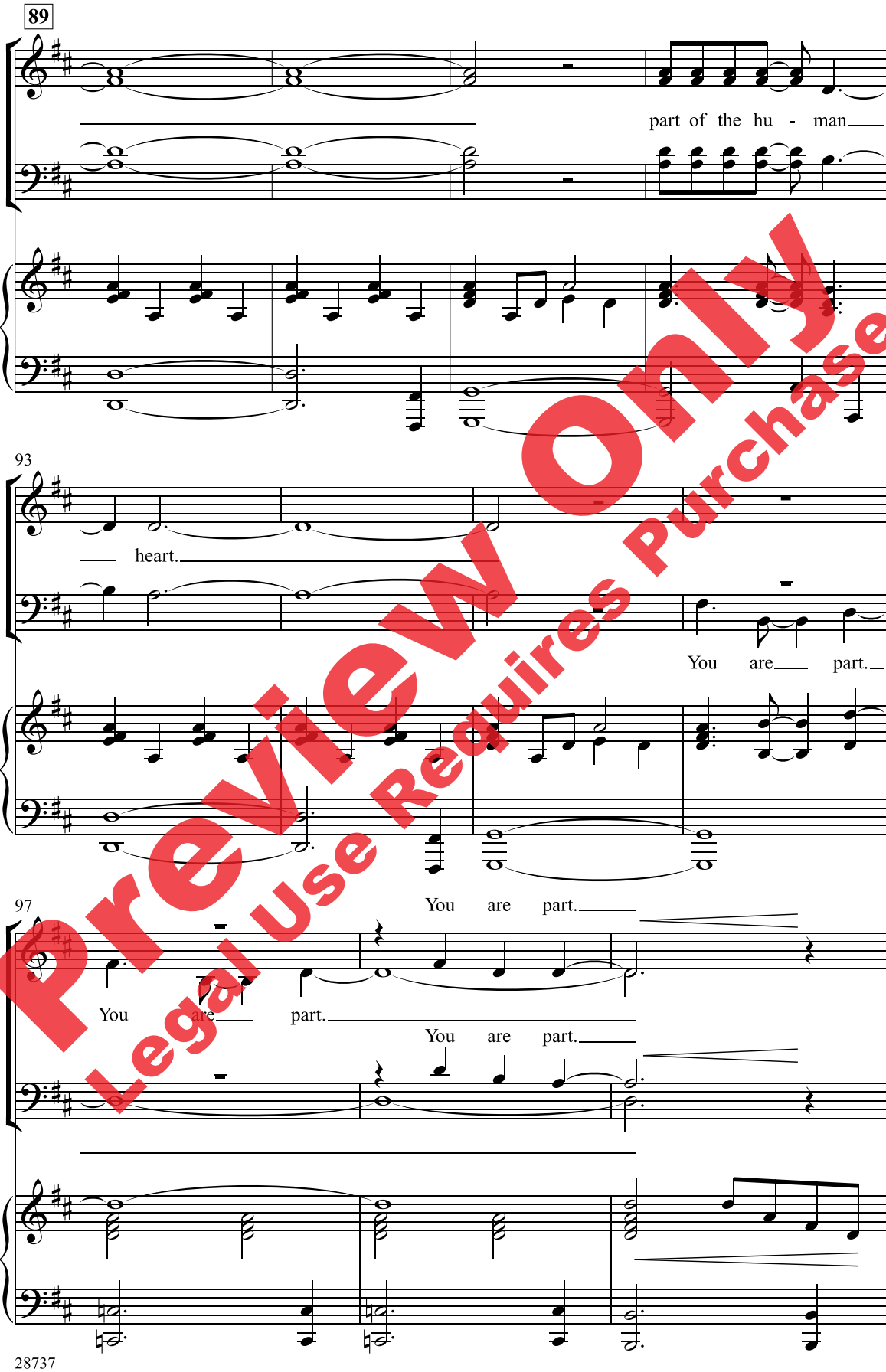

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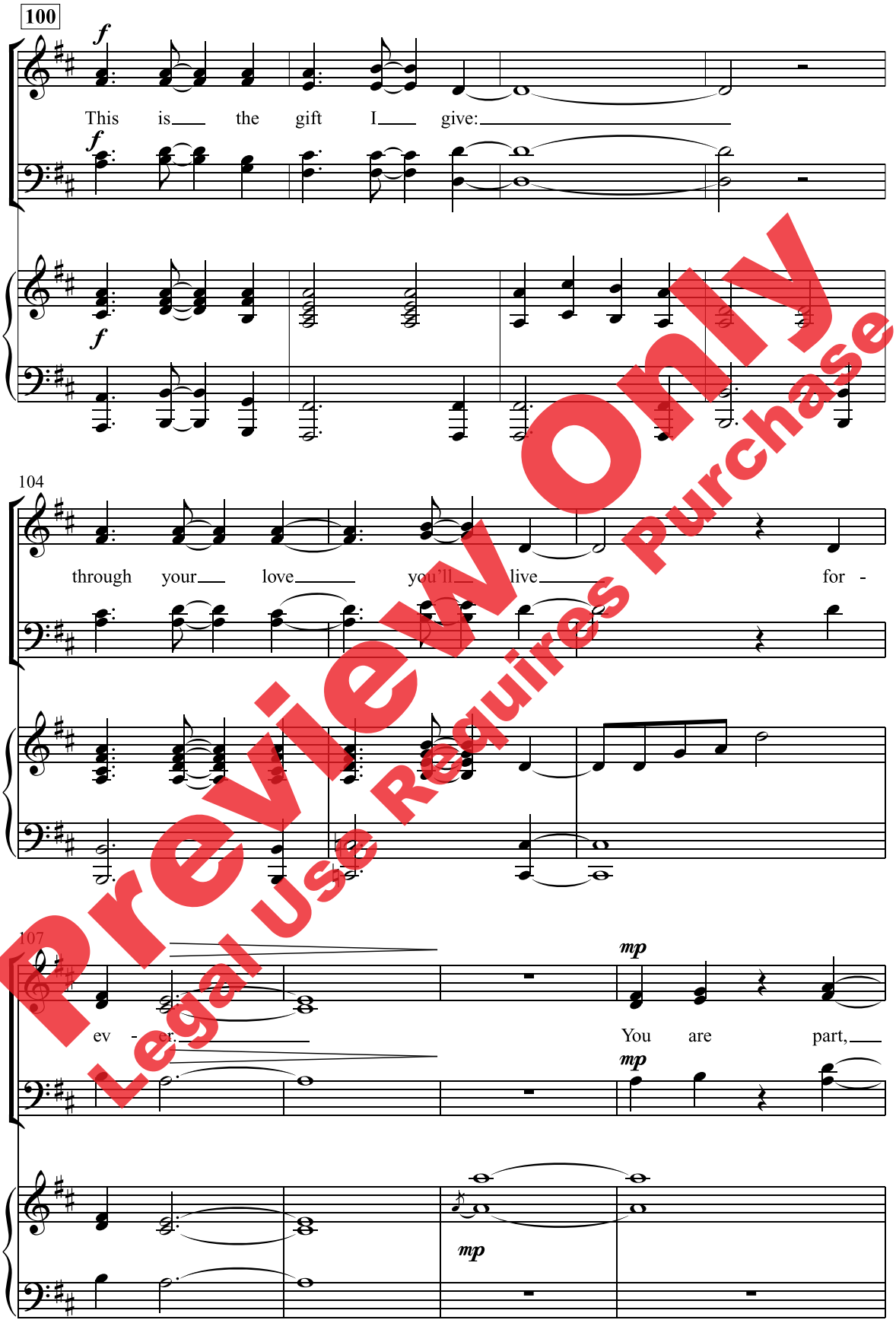

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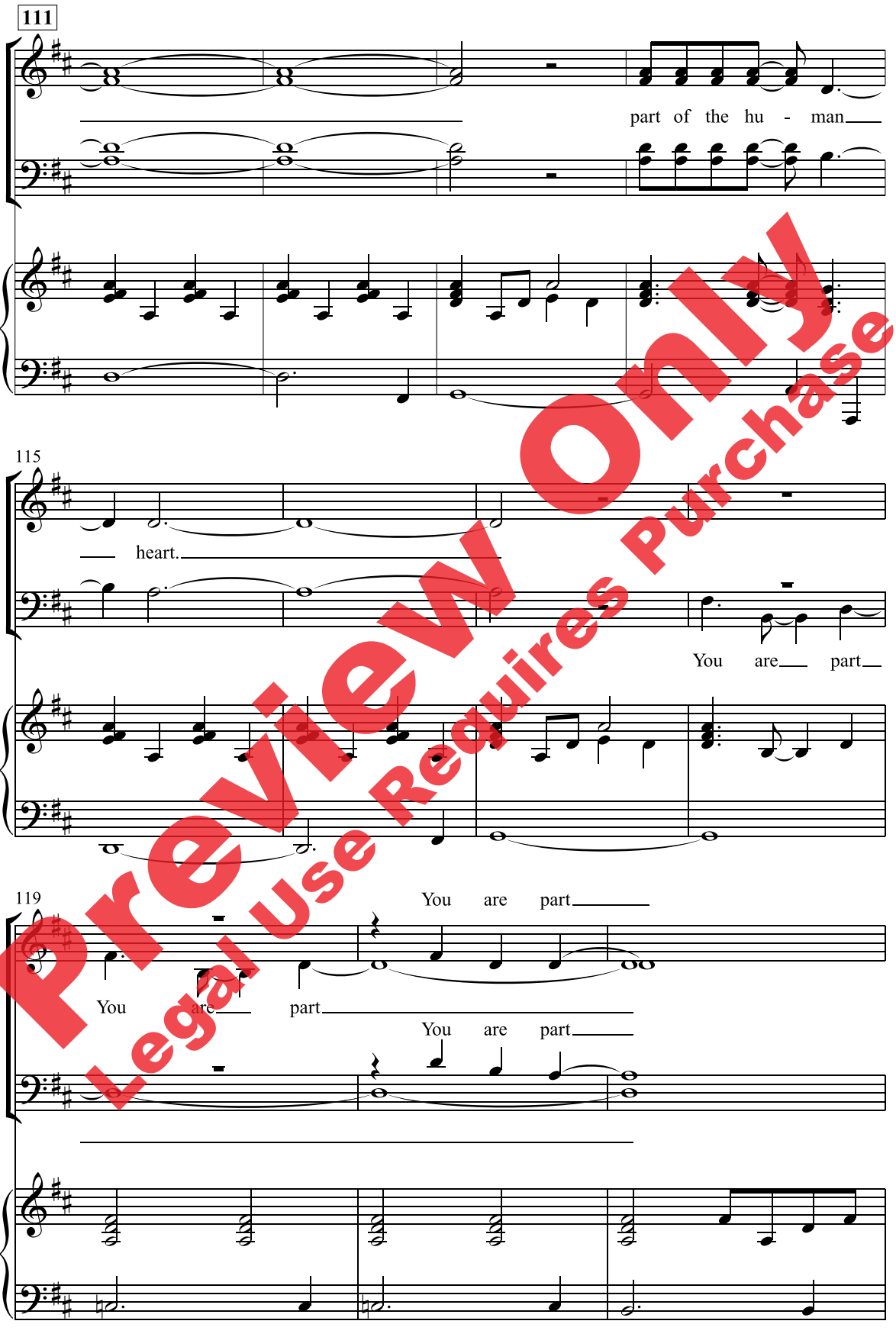

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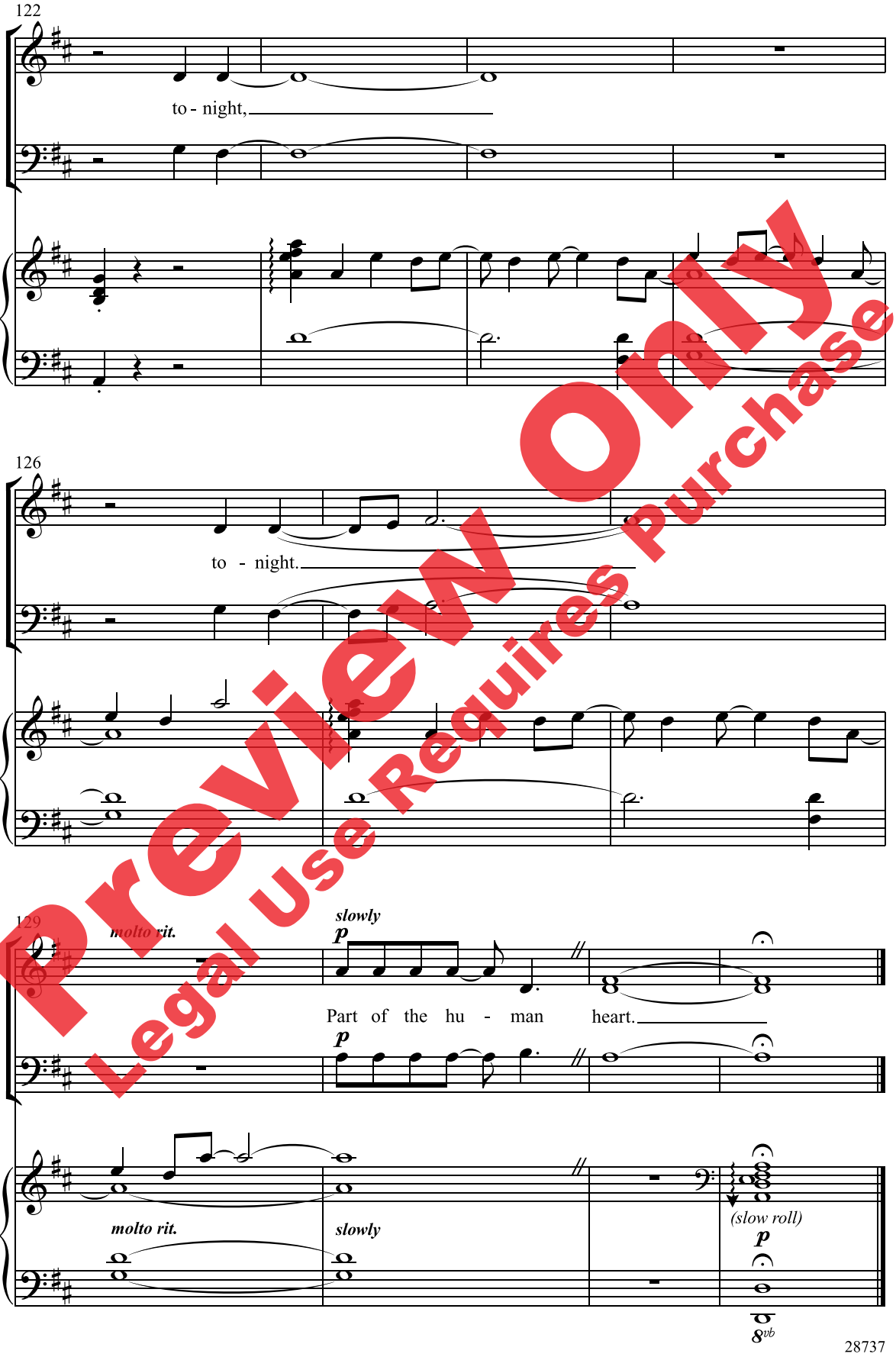

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