Judith Shatin

LA Frontera

For SSAA Choir & Piano

Poem by Unidentified Detained Immigrant Youth

*La Frontera (The Border)

Translation by Seth Michelson

un lugar a que todo el mundo	a place the whole world
vamos al tener un sueño	goes when we dream
y ver a mi familia feliz	and want to see our families happy
pero no nos dejan llegar a la	but they don't let us reach
frontera por ser de otro país	the border because we're from
	other countries
y me pregunto por qué	and I ask myself why
si todos somos seres	if we're all human
humanos somos los	beings if we're all
mismos	the same don't we
no tenemos papeles	have papers too
porque estamos en el mismo	because we're all in the same
mundo tenemos sentimientos	world have the same feelings
iguales	
el color de piel es diferente	though our skin colors may differ
pero eso no quiere decir que no	but that doesn't mean we're not
somos iguales es que en este país en	the same it means that in this
mi país	country in my country there are
hay mucha gente racista	lots of racists
el ser blanco, el ser	to be white, to be black
negro no quiere decir	doesn't mean we are
	unequal
que somos iguales	we're equal
somos todos iguales	we have the same
tenemos la misma	thoughts the same
mente la misma	goal
meta	
el caminar dias por el	to walk for days across the
desierto al inmigrar nos	desert called to immigrate
agarra	

Program Note

La Frontera (*The Border*) is a poem by an undocumented immigrant youth held in an American maximum security detention center. Sadly, we cannot know the identity of the author due to government restrictions. I was drawn to set this poem because it captures the stark realities of the immigration process as well as the powerful desire to immigrate to America. As the granddaughter and wife of immigrants, indeed as a citizen of the United States, I am deeply aware of both the astonishing and ongoing contributions of immigrants as well as the despicable treatment so many experience. Why do we forget our own status as immigrants or descendants of immigrants, and then deny the status of those who descend from indigenous peoples?

This poem, and the others published in the collection *Dreaming America*: *Voices of Undocumented Youth in Maximum Security Detention* was written during workshops for immigrant youths in detention led by poet Seth Michelson. Some were created in collaboration with students from Washington and Lee University; others benefitted from visits by guest artists Jimmy Santiago Baca and Ricardo Dominguez. Larry Moffi, publisher of Settlement House Books, brought the book, *Dreaming America* to fruition, and kindly granted permission to set this poem. Profits from the book sales are donated to the Detained Children's Program of the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition (www.caircoalition.org) as will be profits from this composition. For more information visit www.judithshatin.com –JS

*From *Dreaming America*: *Voices of Undocumented Youth in Maximum-Security Detention*, used by kind permission of poet Seth Michelson and Larry Moffi, publisher of Settlement House Books, First Edition, ©2017.

Duration: 4:30

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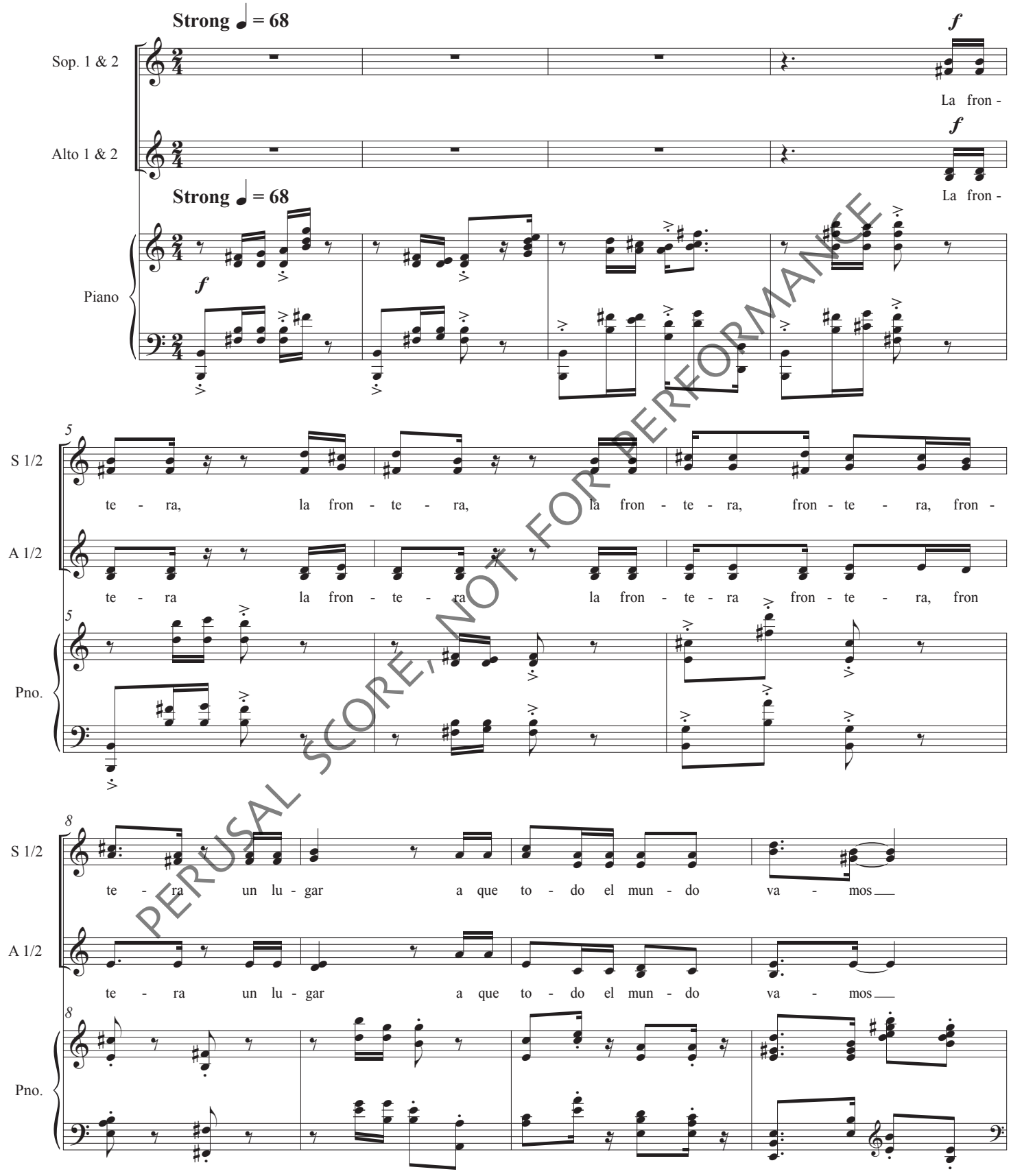

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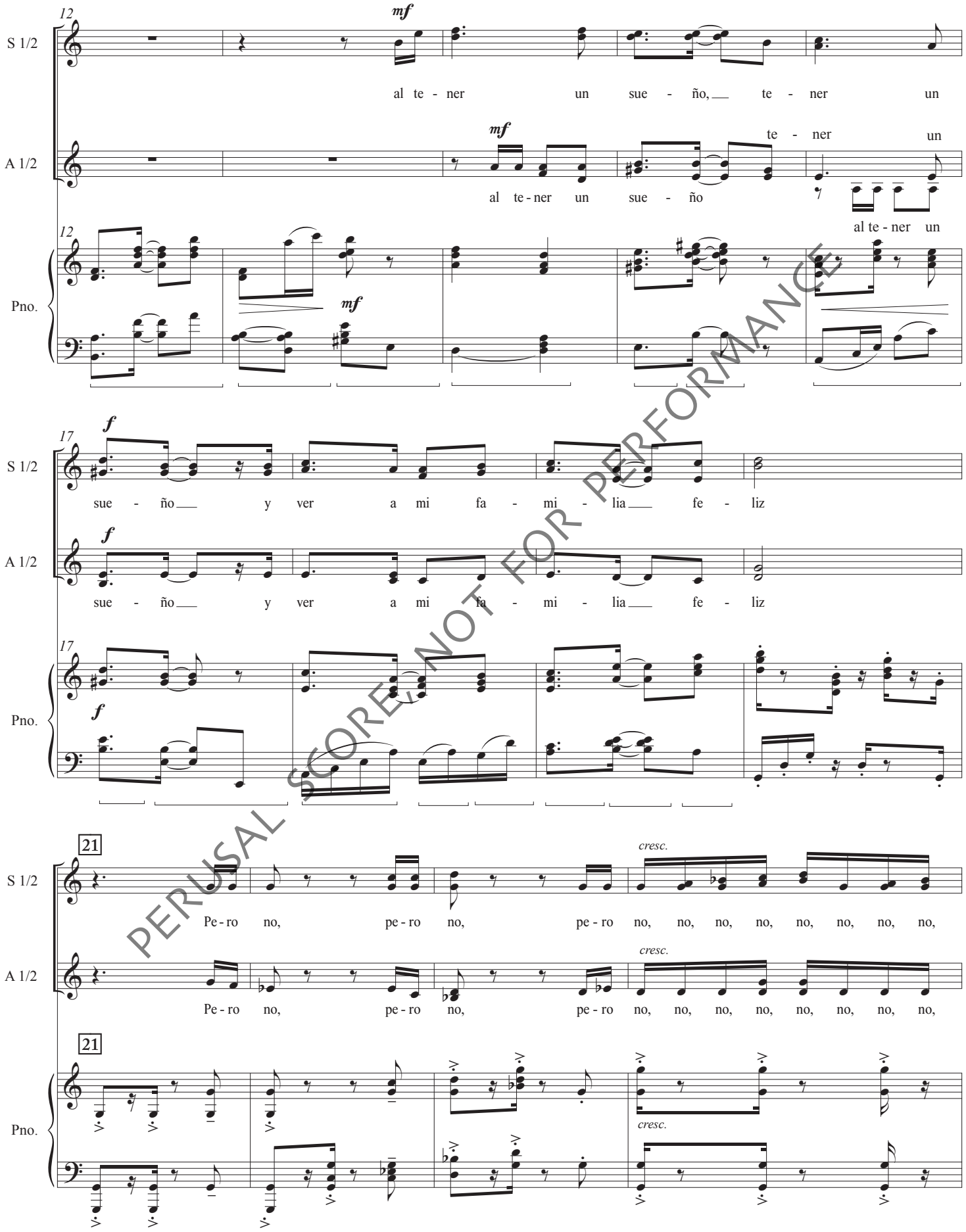

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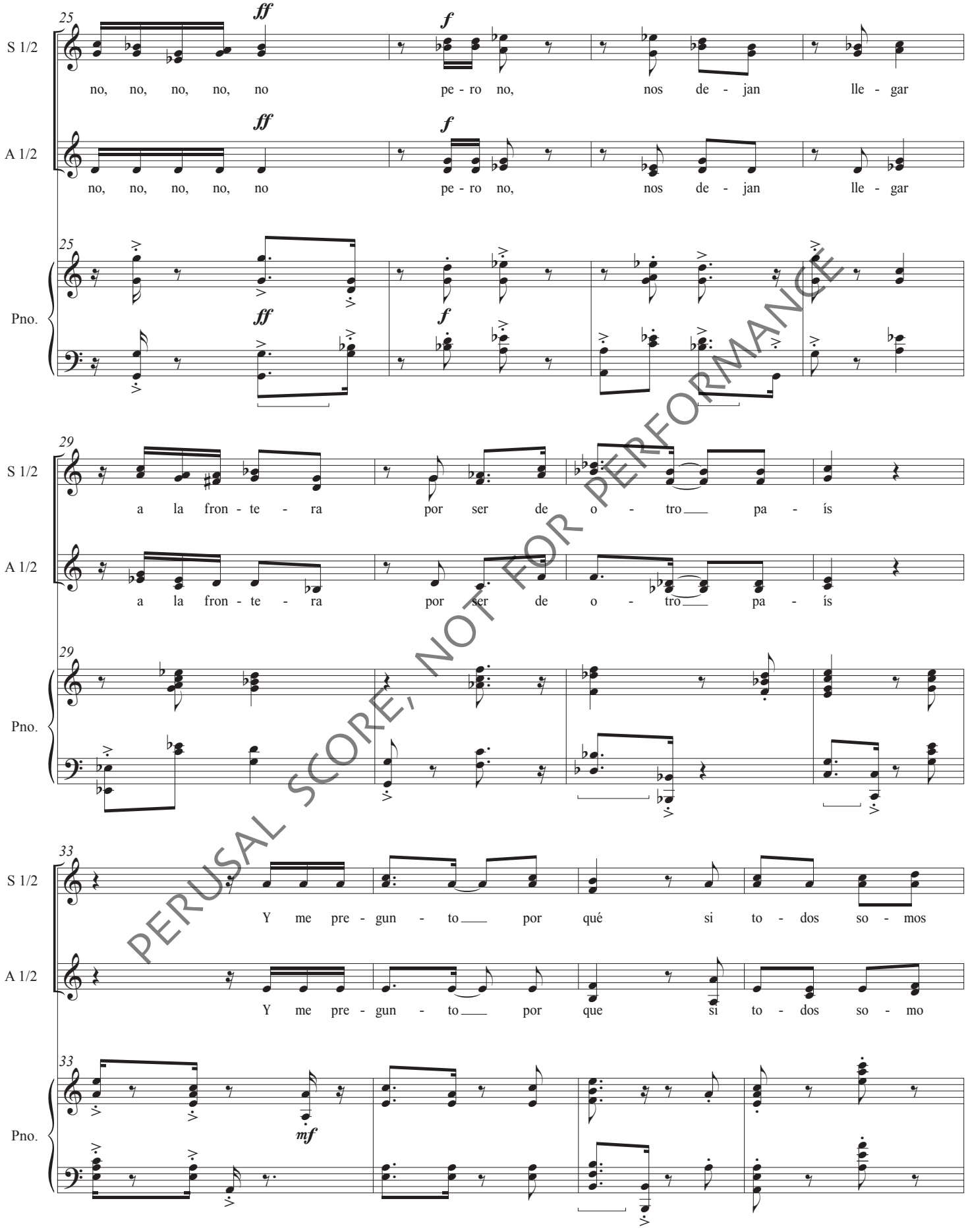

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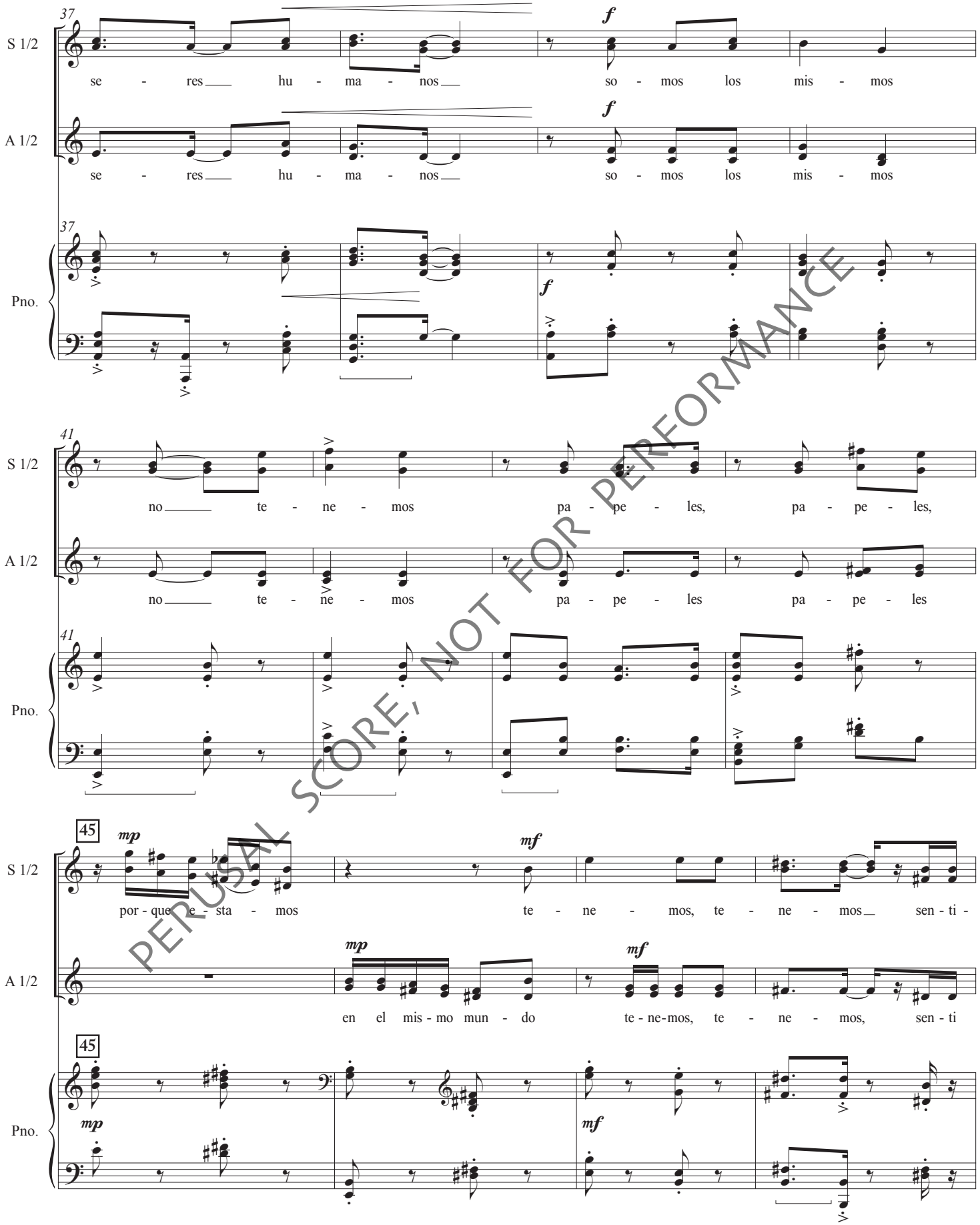

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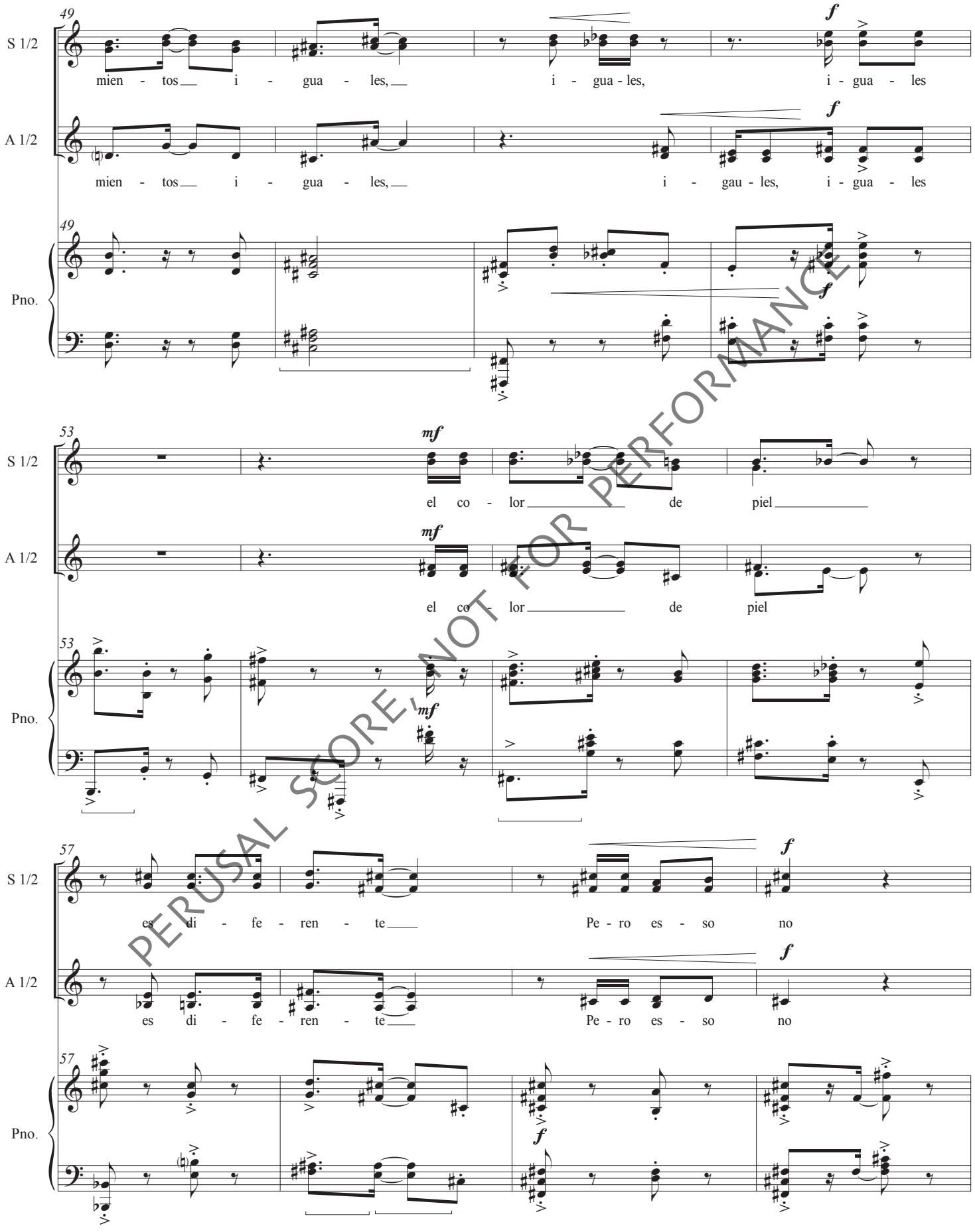

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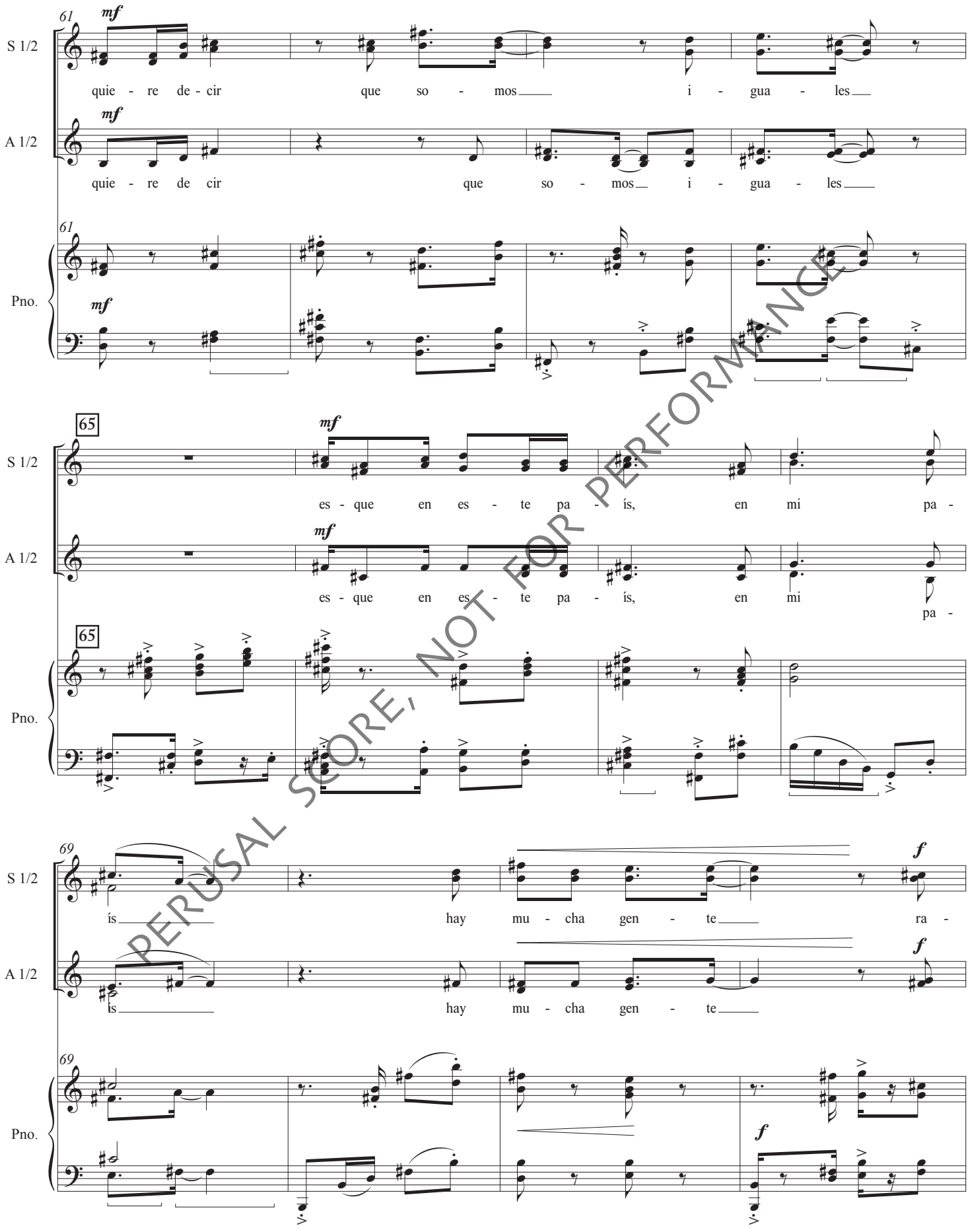

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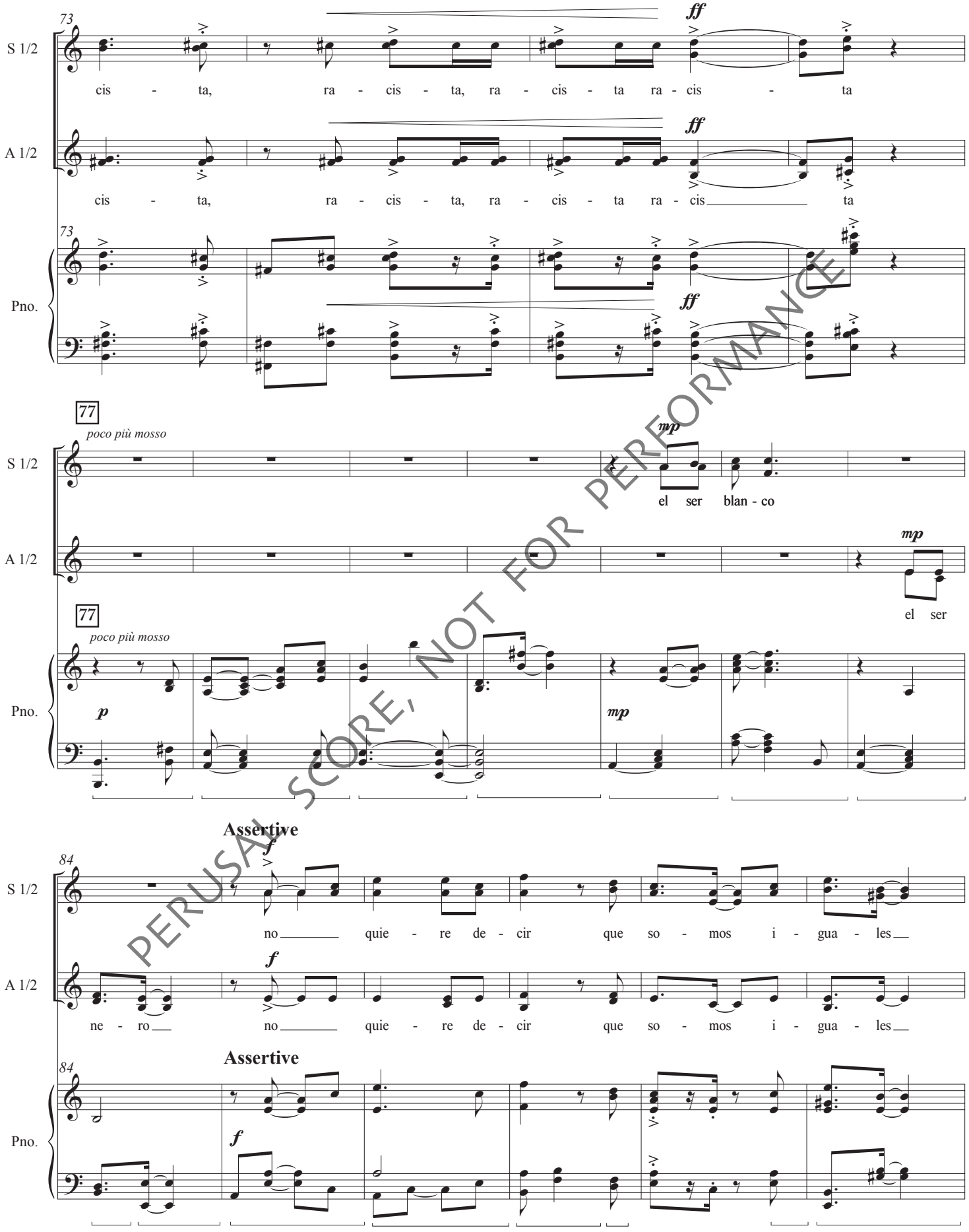

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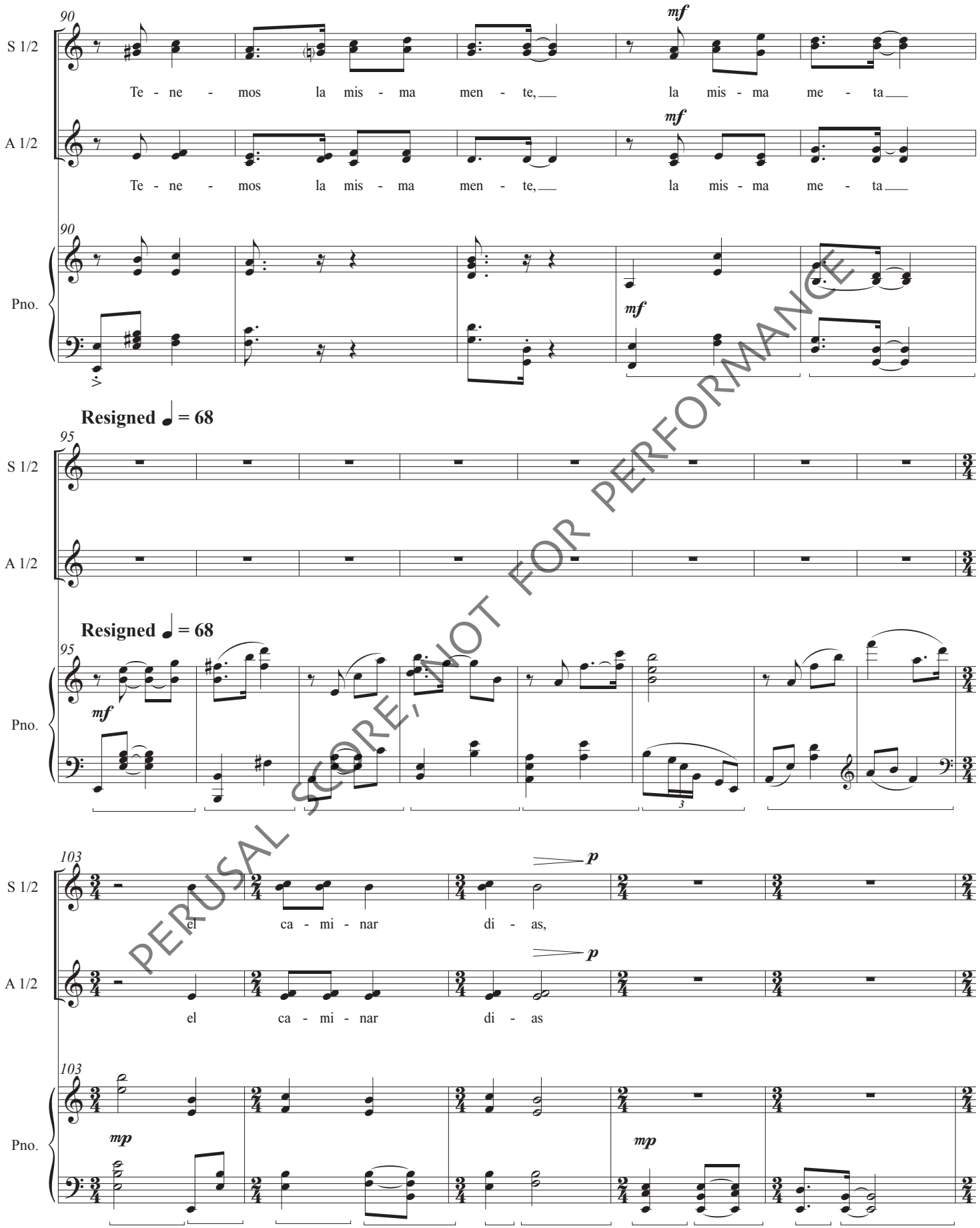

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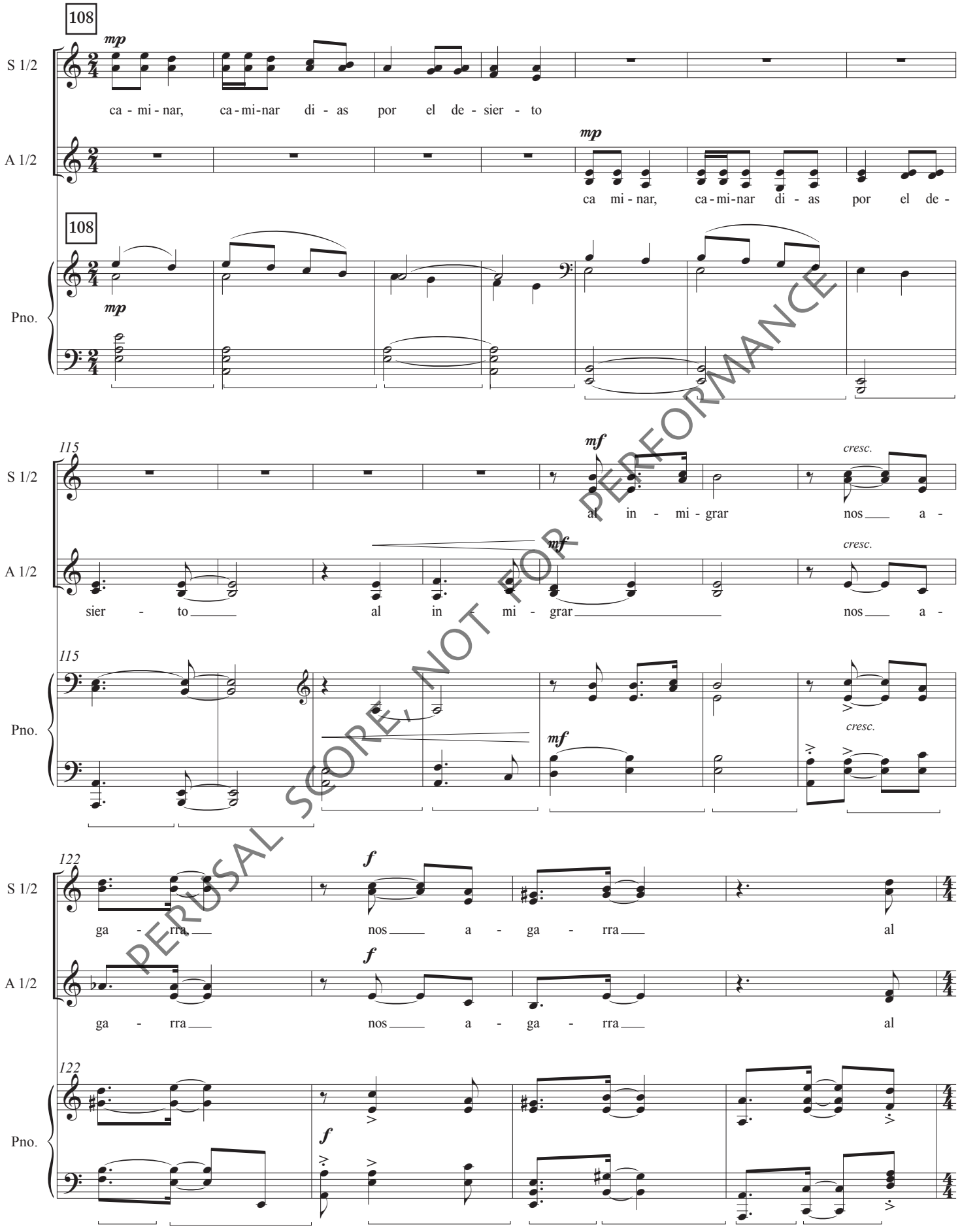

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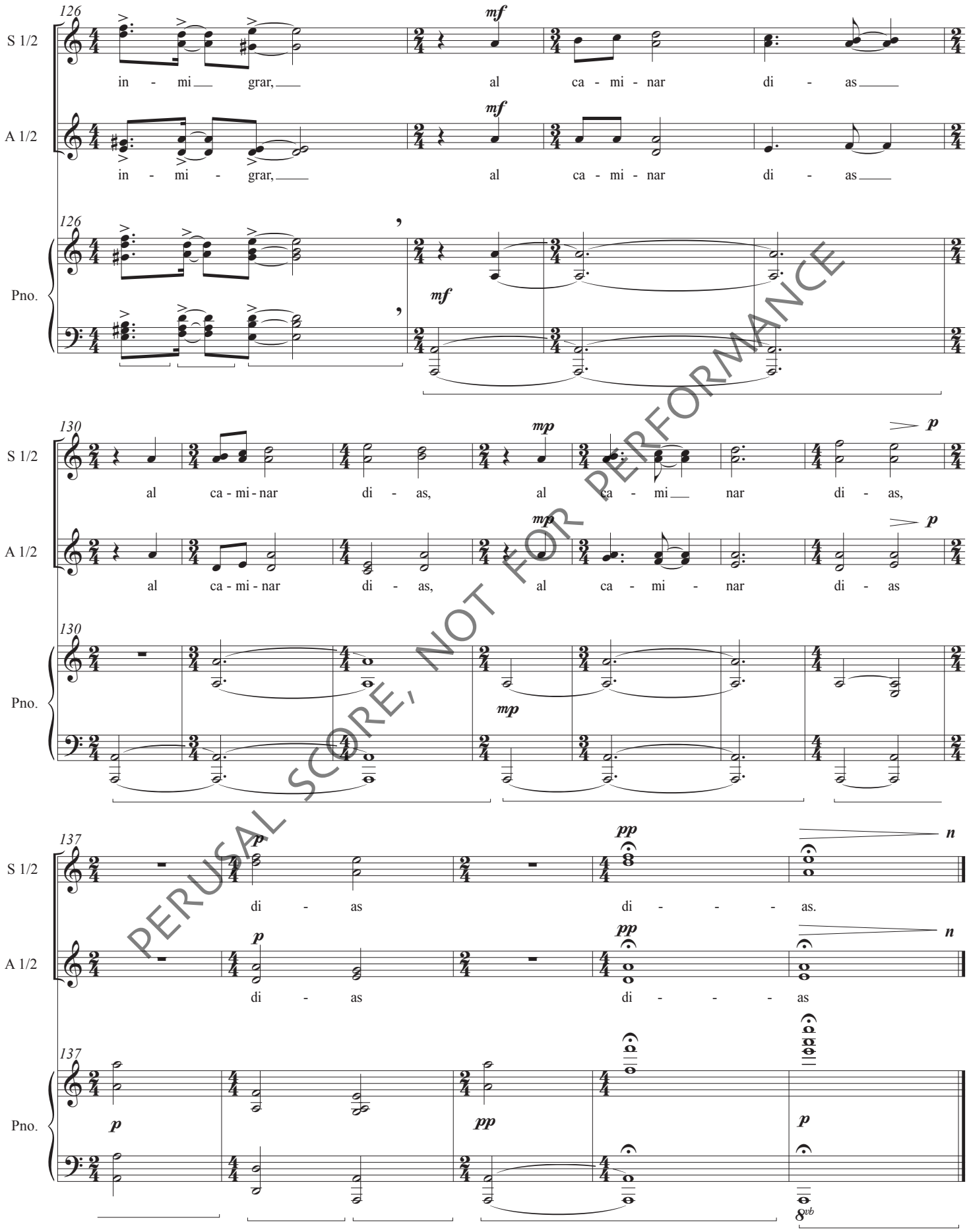

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