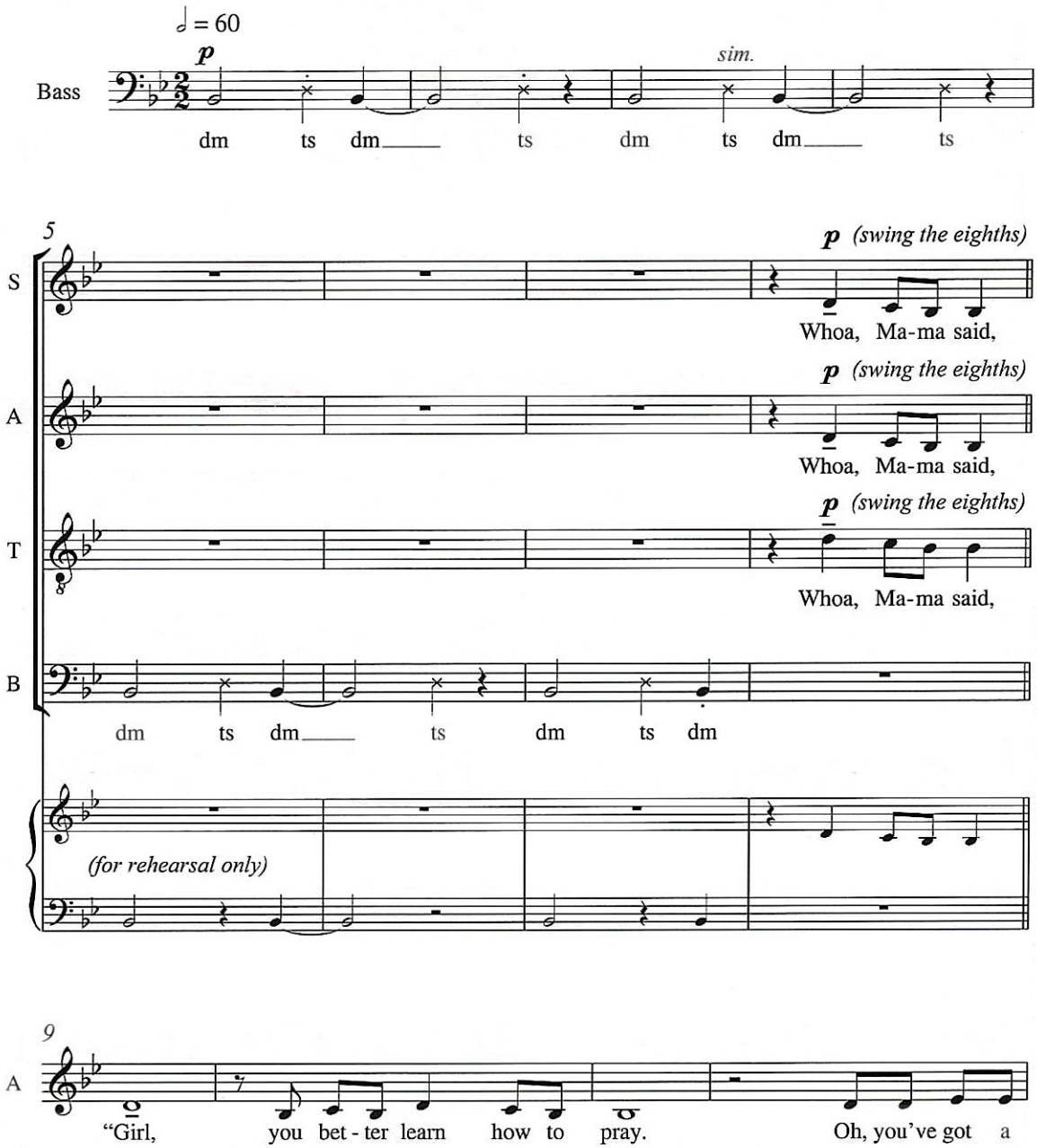
To the Temple University Choir

Mama Said

for SATB Chorus (divisi) unaccompanied

Ruthie Foster (BMI)
Arranged by Paul Rardin



"Mama Said," music and lyrics by Ruthie Foster,
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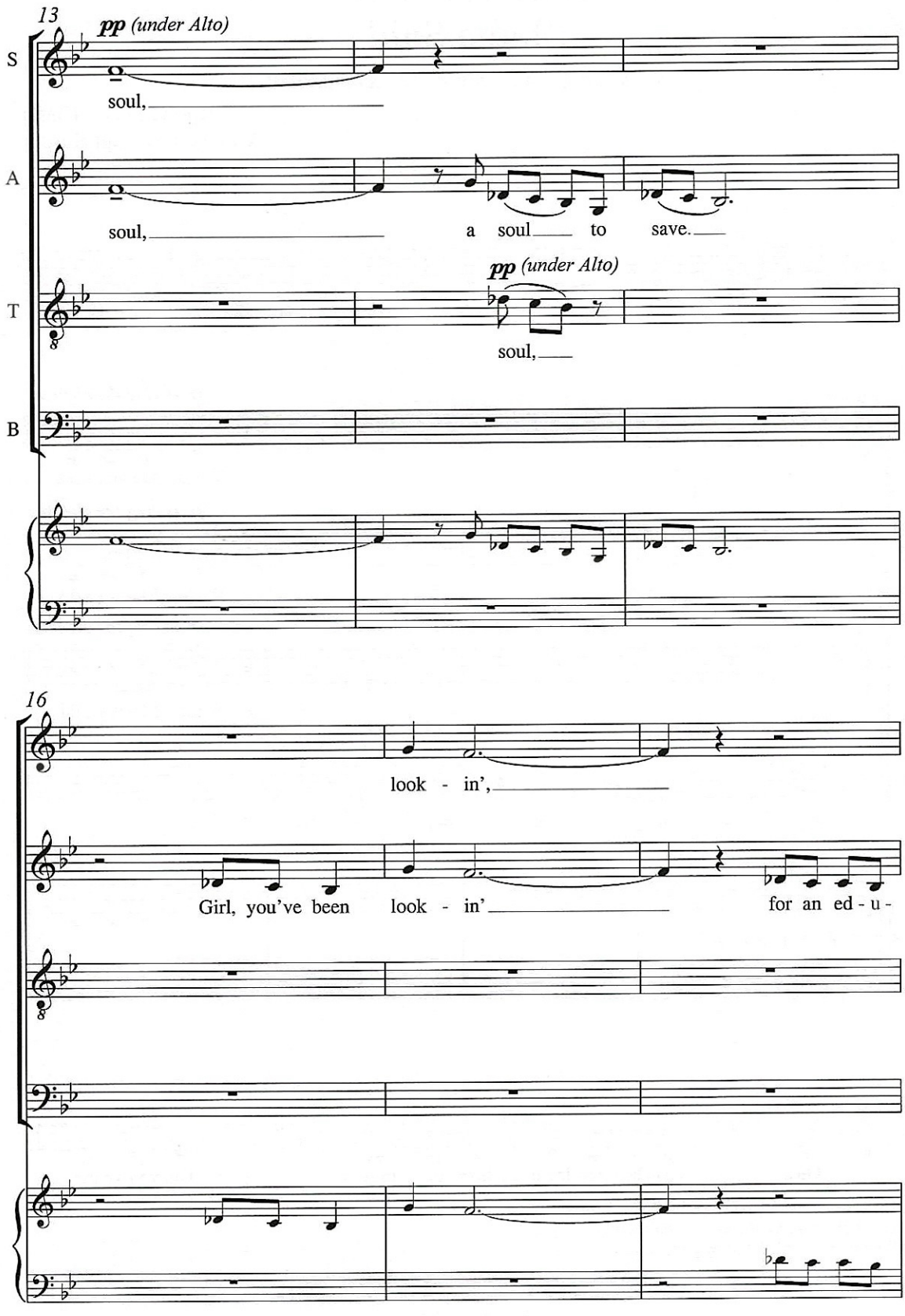
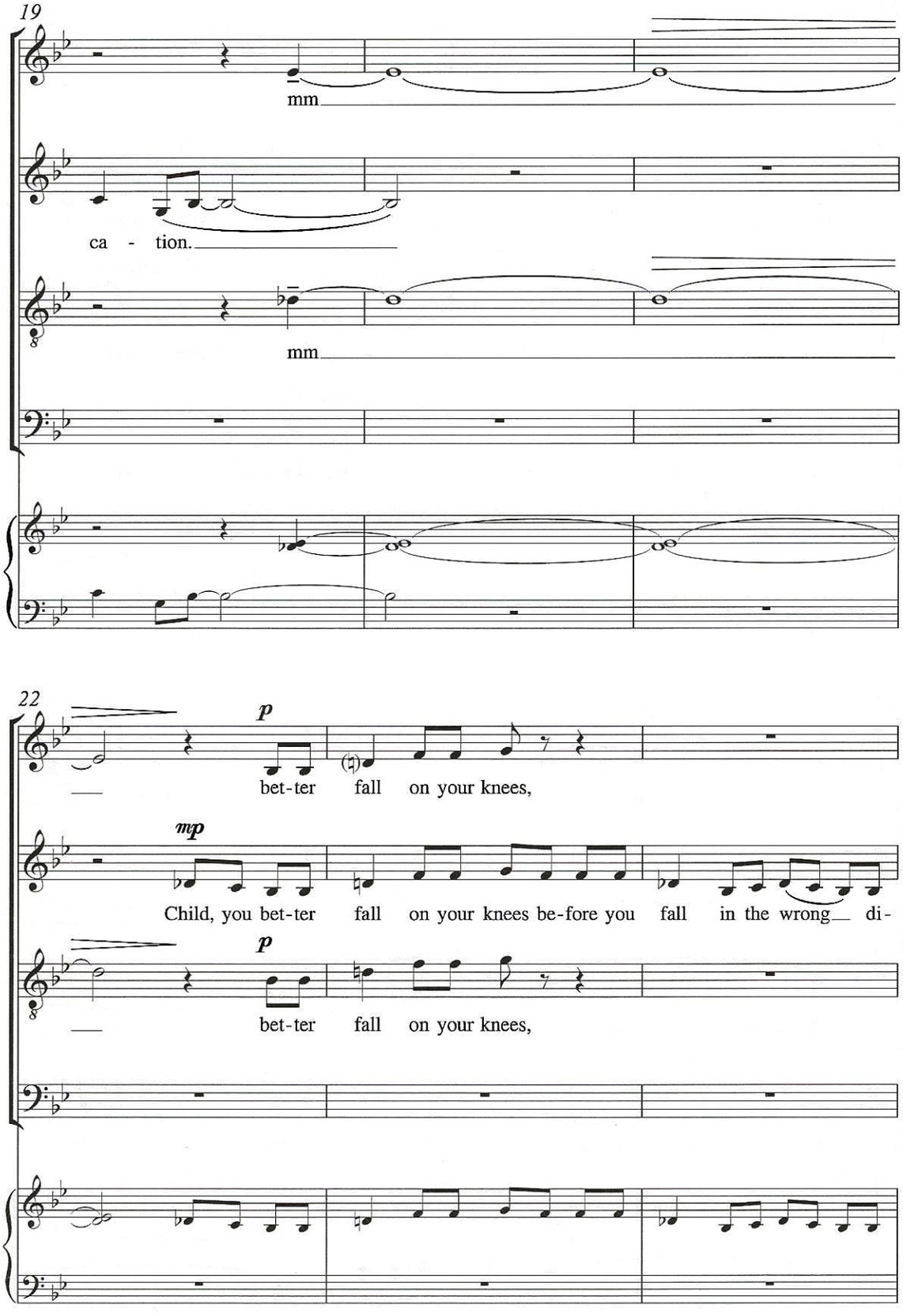
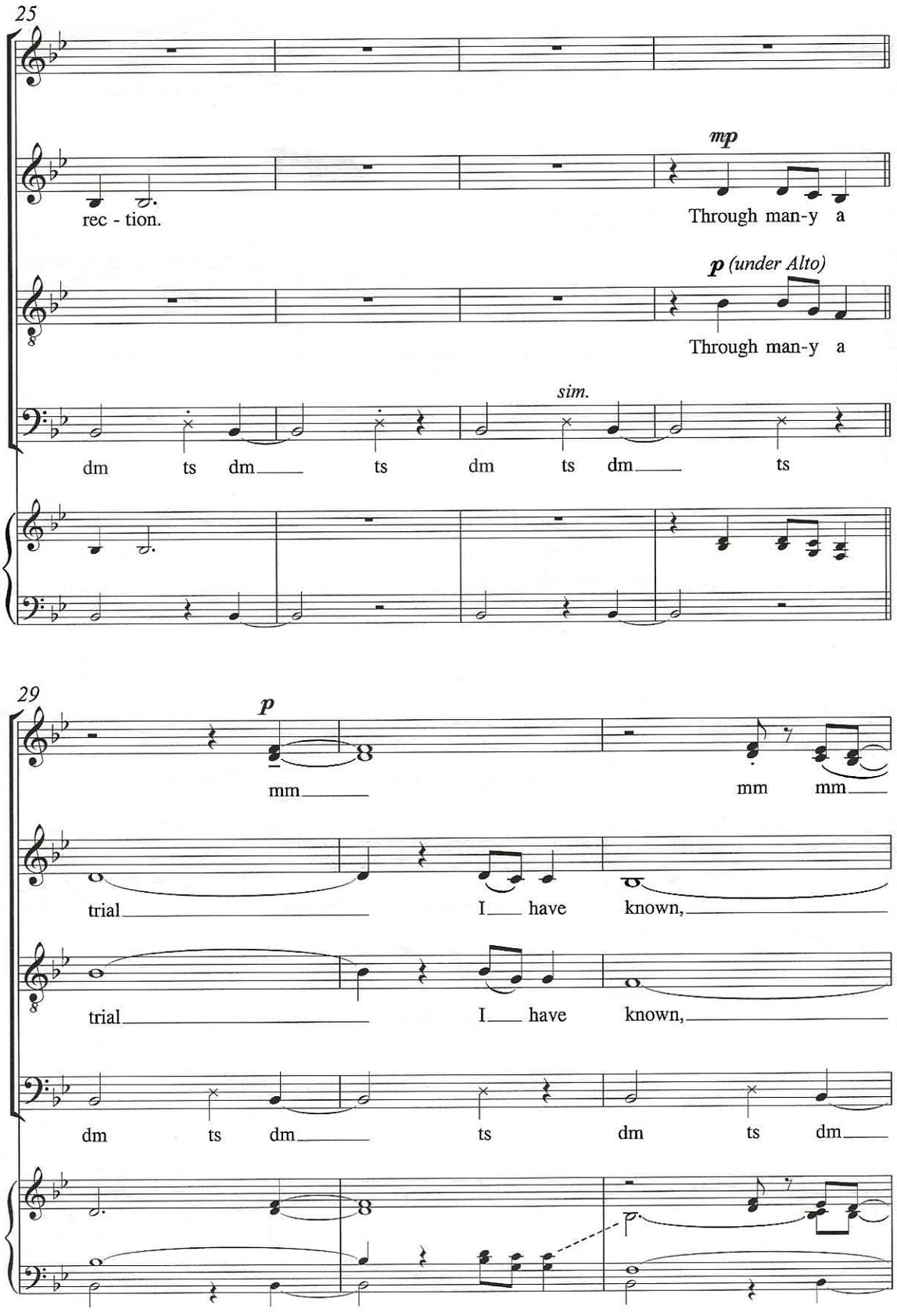
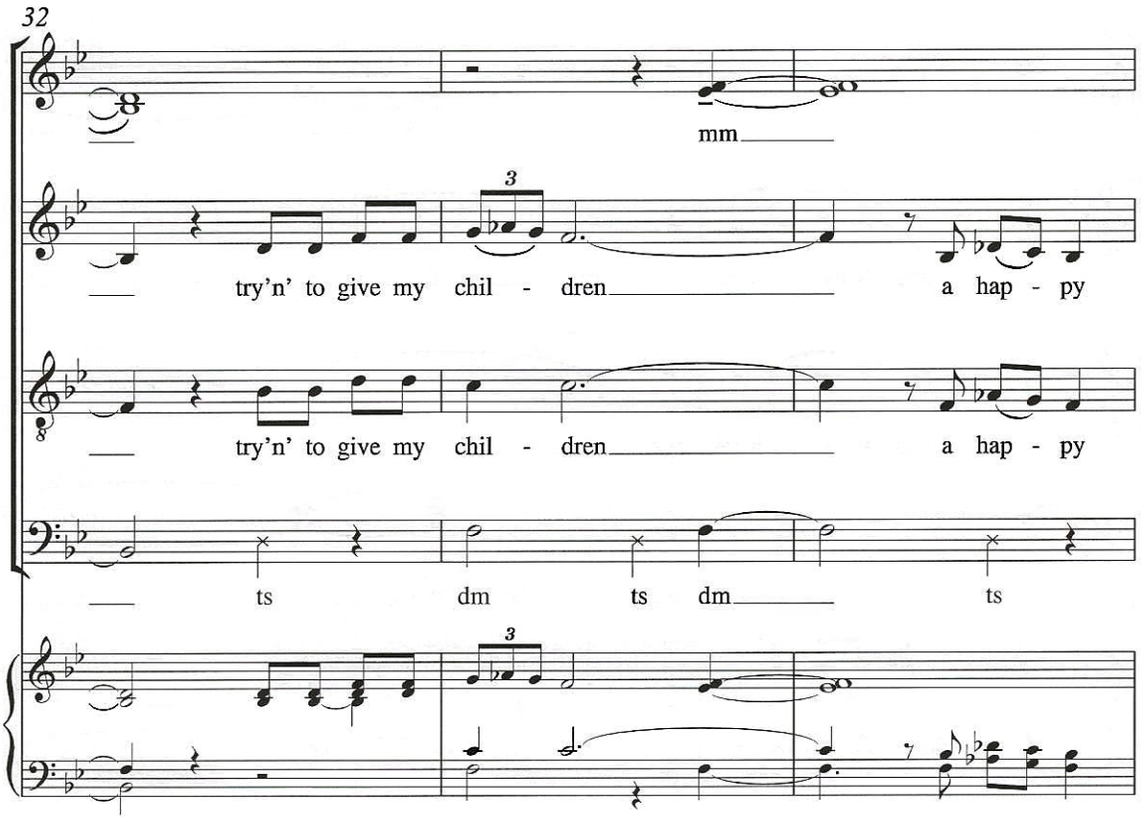
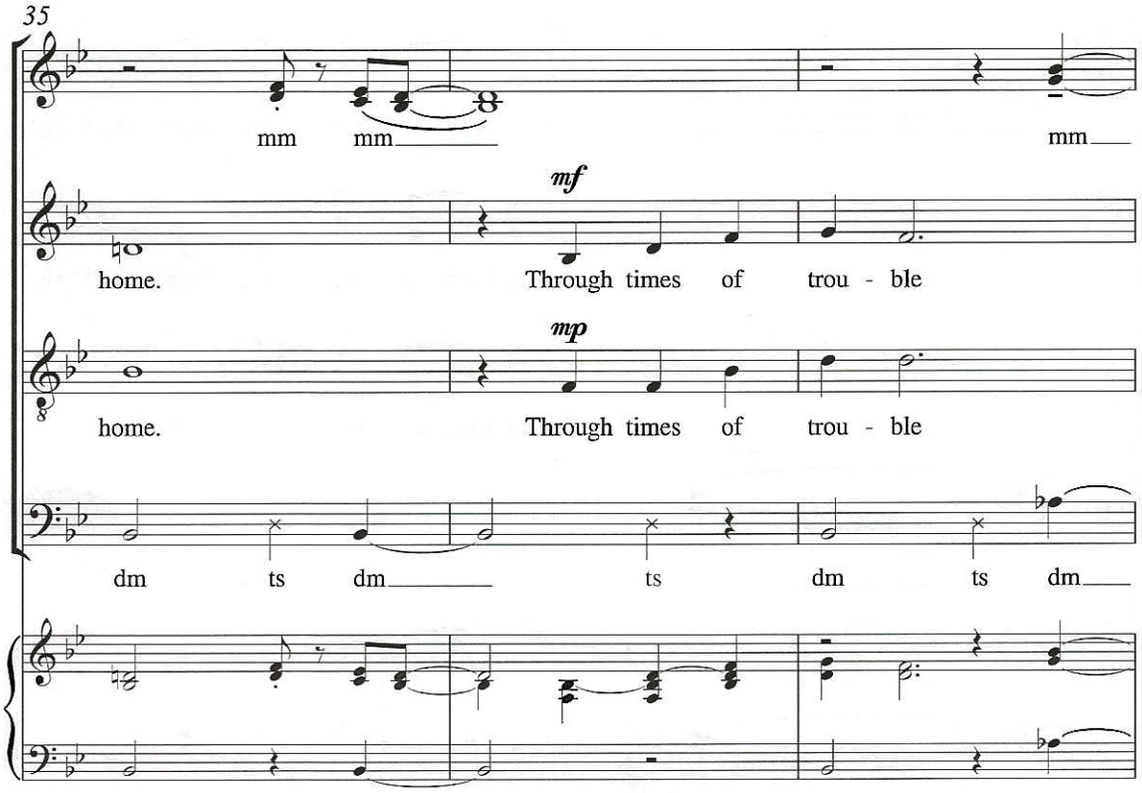
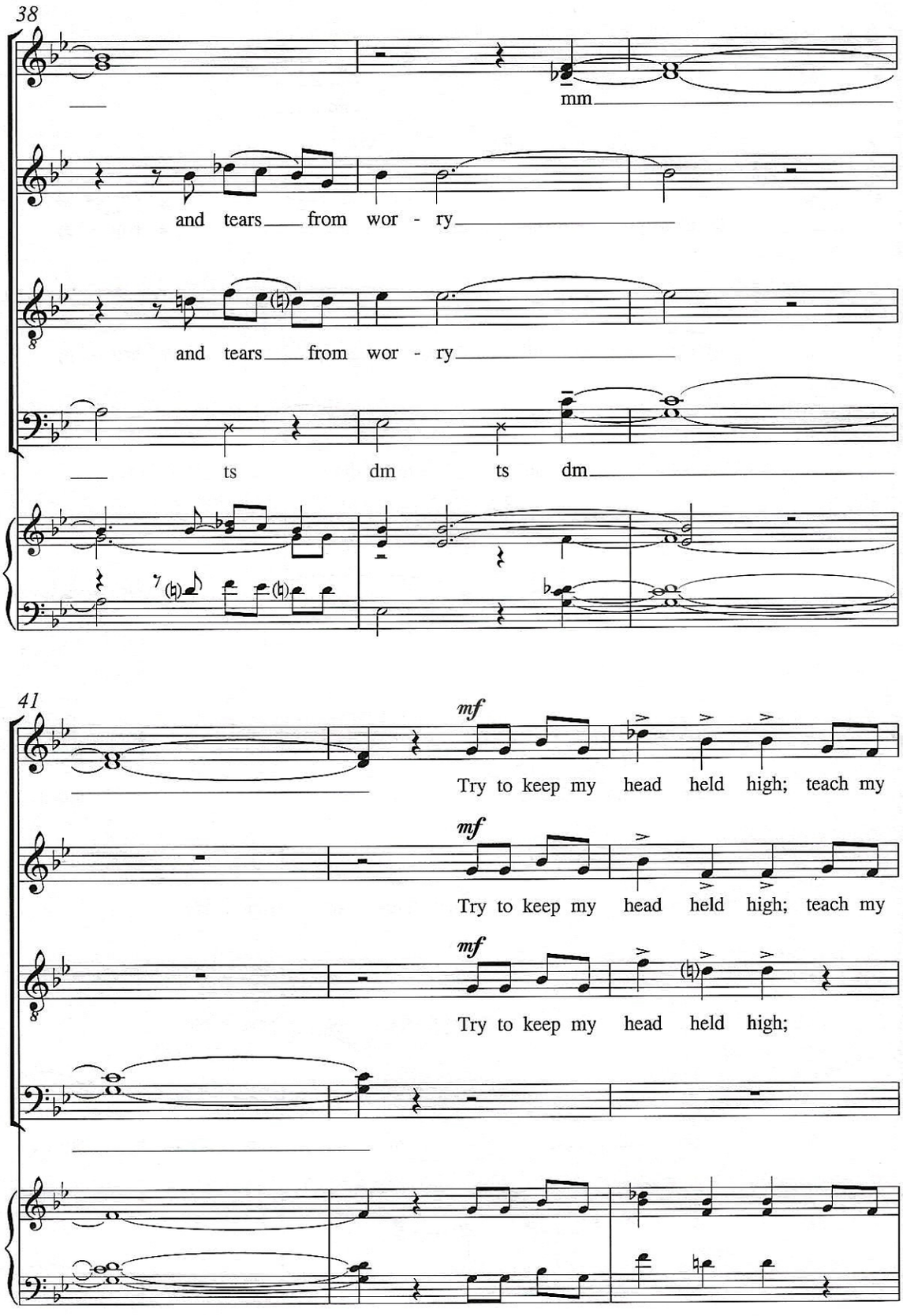

13
pp (under Alto)
S
soul,
A
soul,
a soul to save.
pp (under Alto)
T
soul,
B
16
look - in',
Girl, you've been look - in'
for an ed - u -

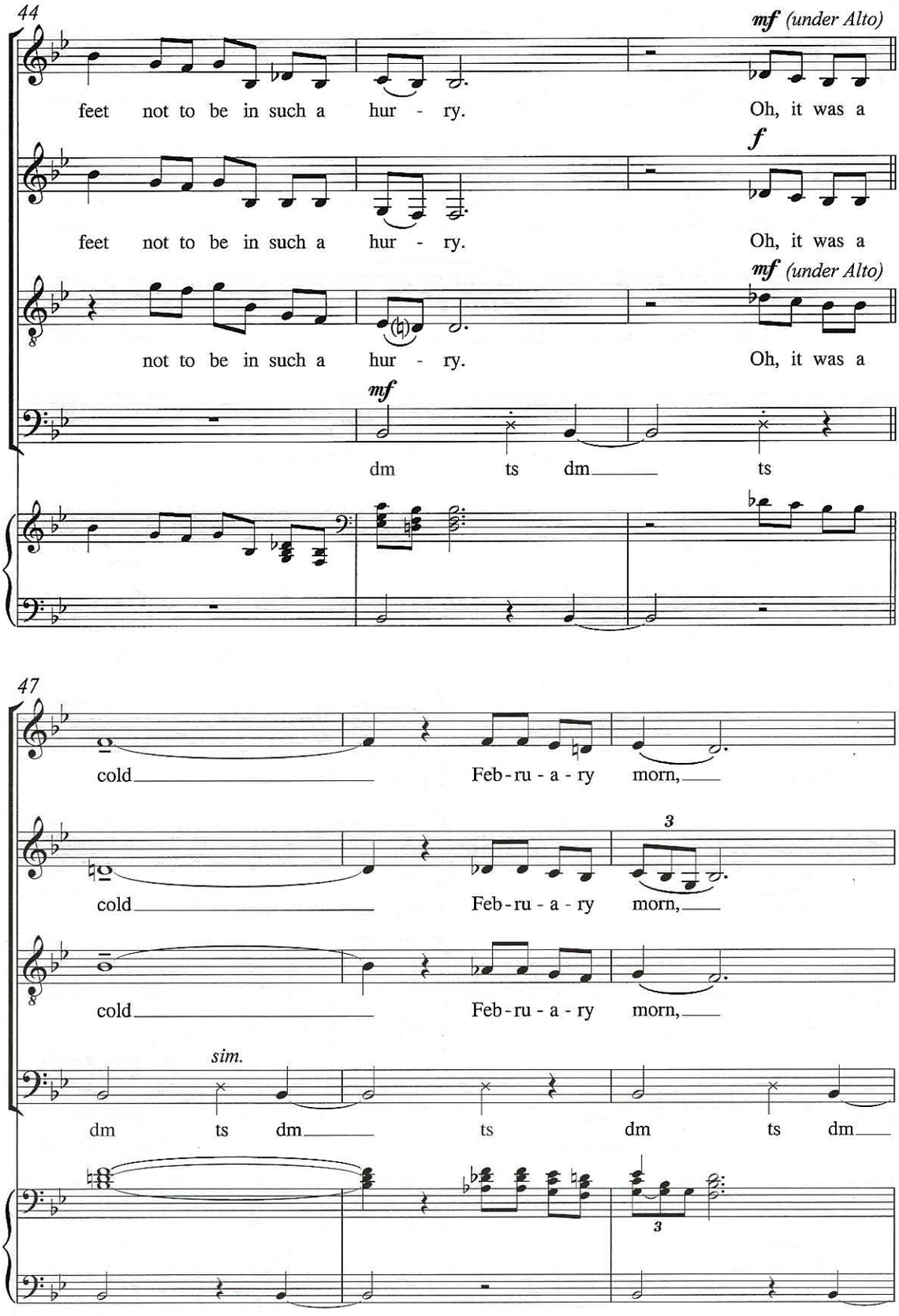

19
mm
ca - tion.
mm
22
p
bet-ter fall on your knees,
mp
Child, you bet-ter fall on your knees be-fore you fall in the wrong di-
p
bet-ter fall on your knees,

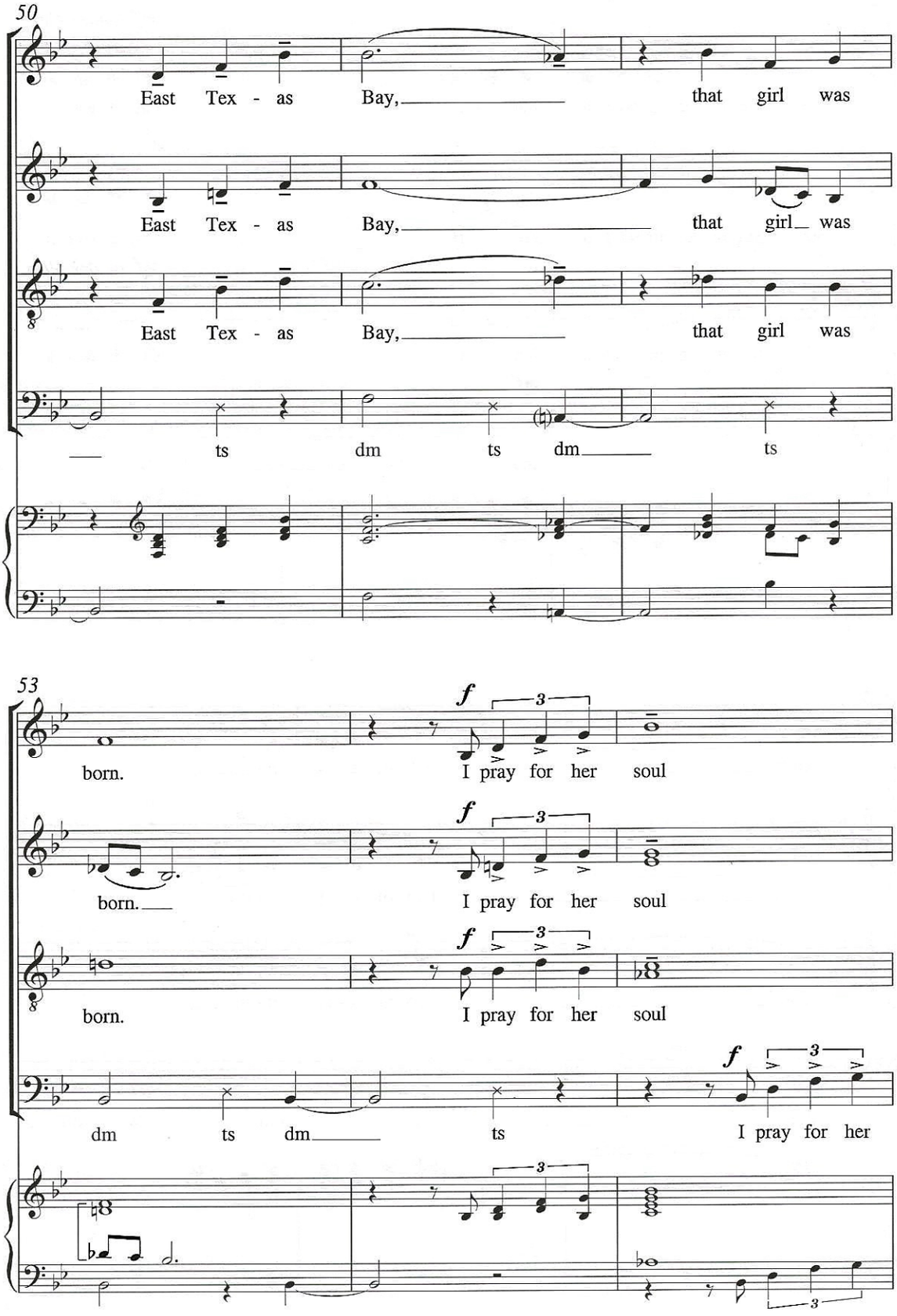

25
mp
rec - tion.
Through man-y a
p (under Alto)
Through man-y a
sim.
dm ts dm ts dm ts dm ts
29
p
mm
mm mm
trial I have known,
trial I have known,
dm ts dm ts dm ts dm

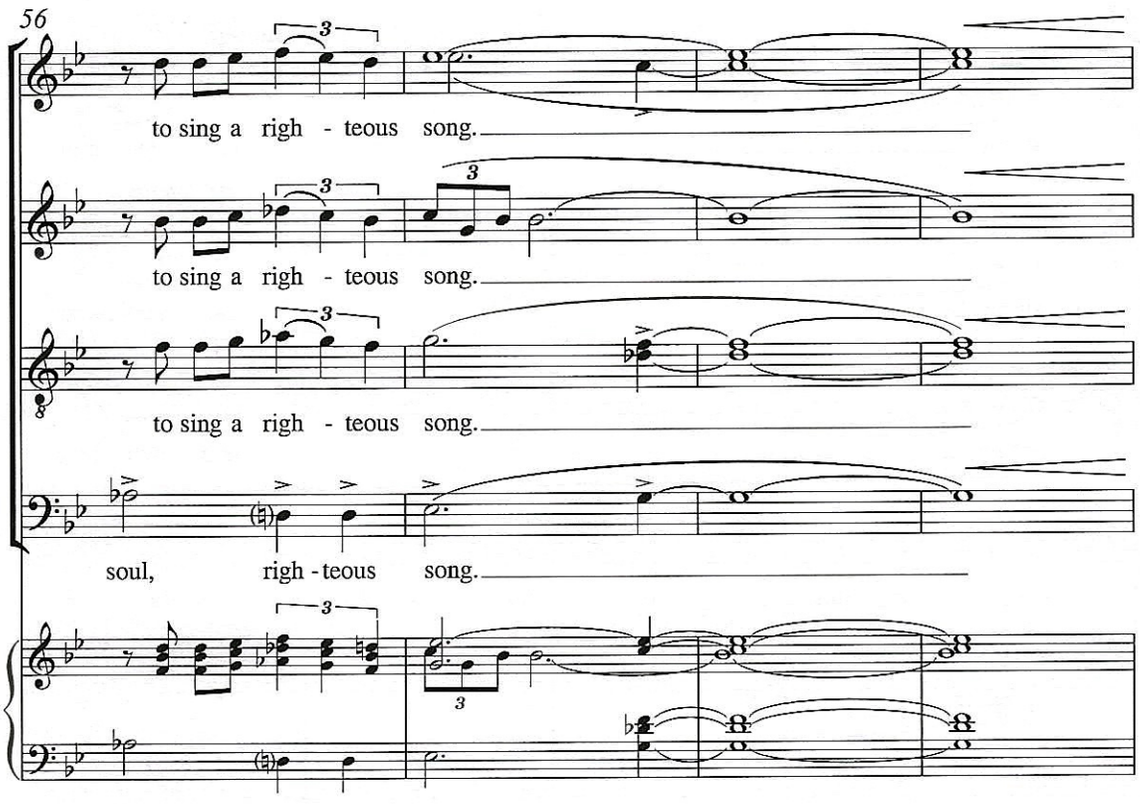

32
mm
try'n' to give my chil - dren a hap - py
try'n' to give my chil - dren a hap - py
ts dm ts dm ts

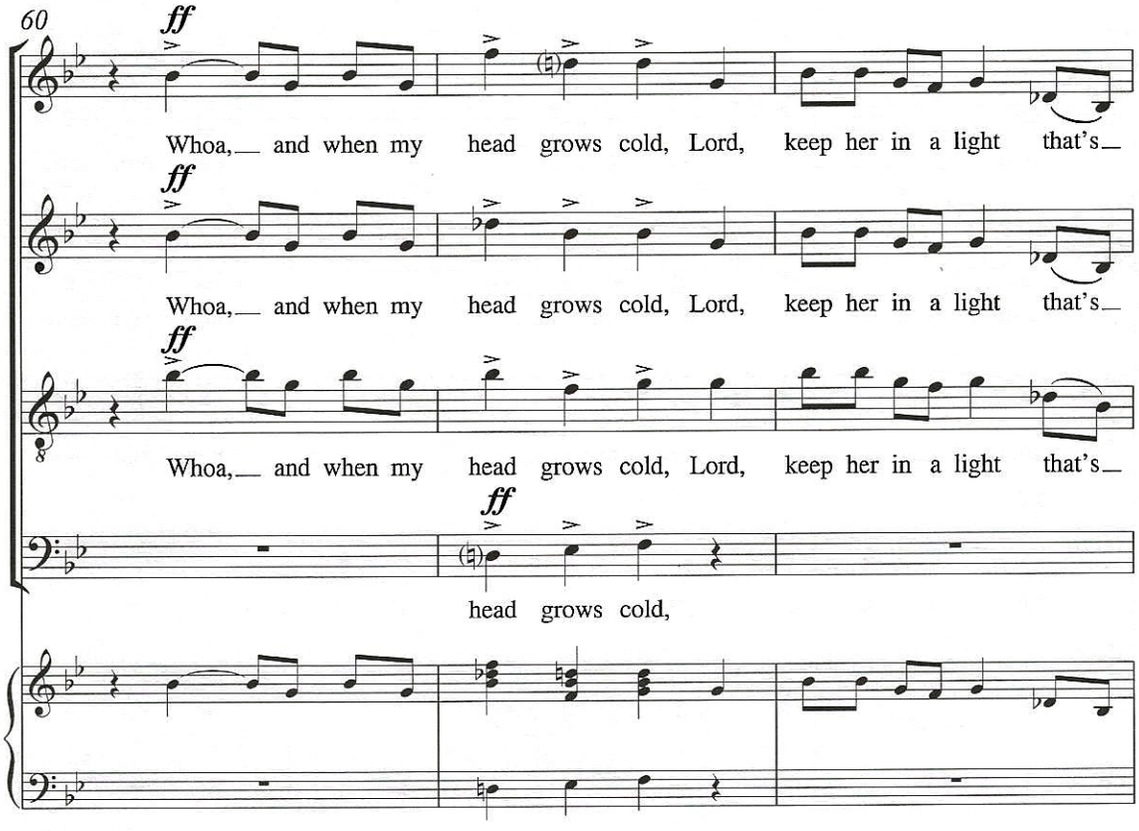

35
mm mm mm
mf
home. Through times of trou - ble
mp
home. Through times of trou - ble
dm ts dm ts dm ts dm

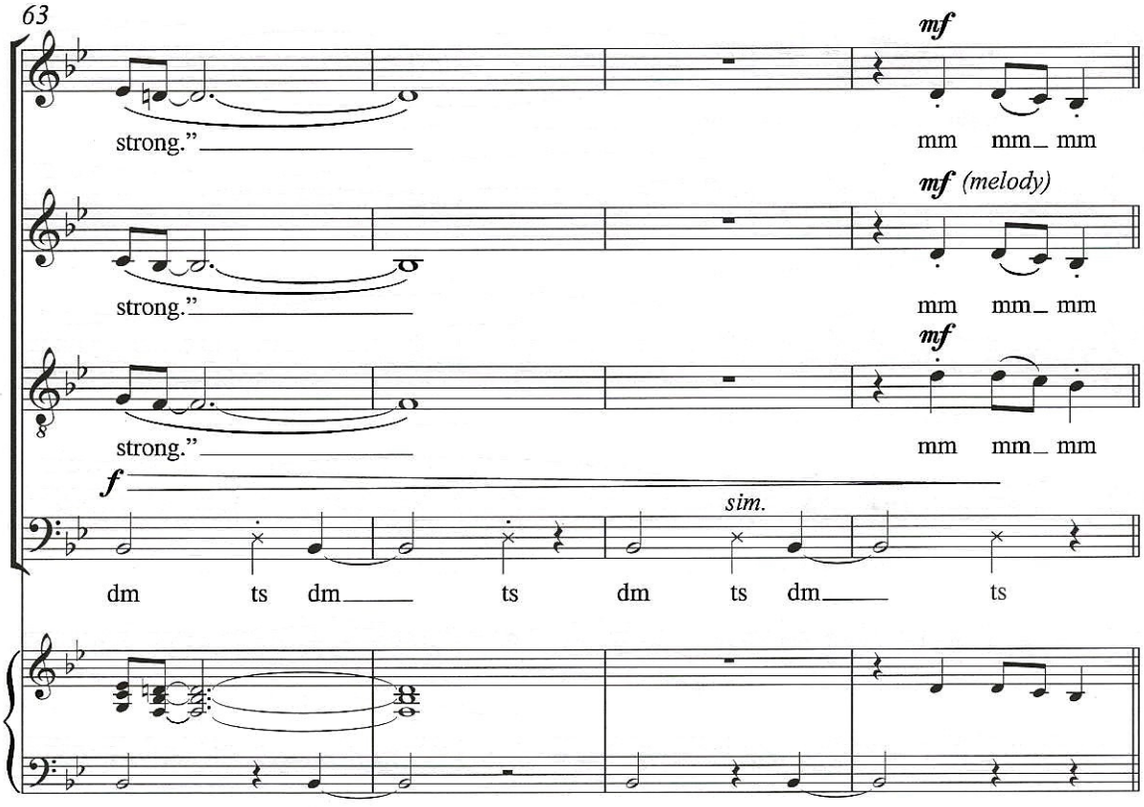

38
mm
and tears from wor - ry
and tears from wor - ry
ts dm ts dm
41
mf
Try to keep my head held high; teach my
mf
Try to keep my head held high; teach my
mf
Try to keep my head held high;


44
mf (under Alto)
feet not to be in such a hur - ry. Oh, it was a
f
feet not to be in such a hur - ry. Oh, it was a
mf (under Alto)
not to be in such a hur - ry. Oh, it was a
mf
dm ts dm ts
47
cold Feb-ru-a-ry morn,
3
cold Feb-ru-a-ry morn,
cold Feb-ru-a-ry morn,
sim.
dm ts dm ts dm ts dm
3

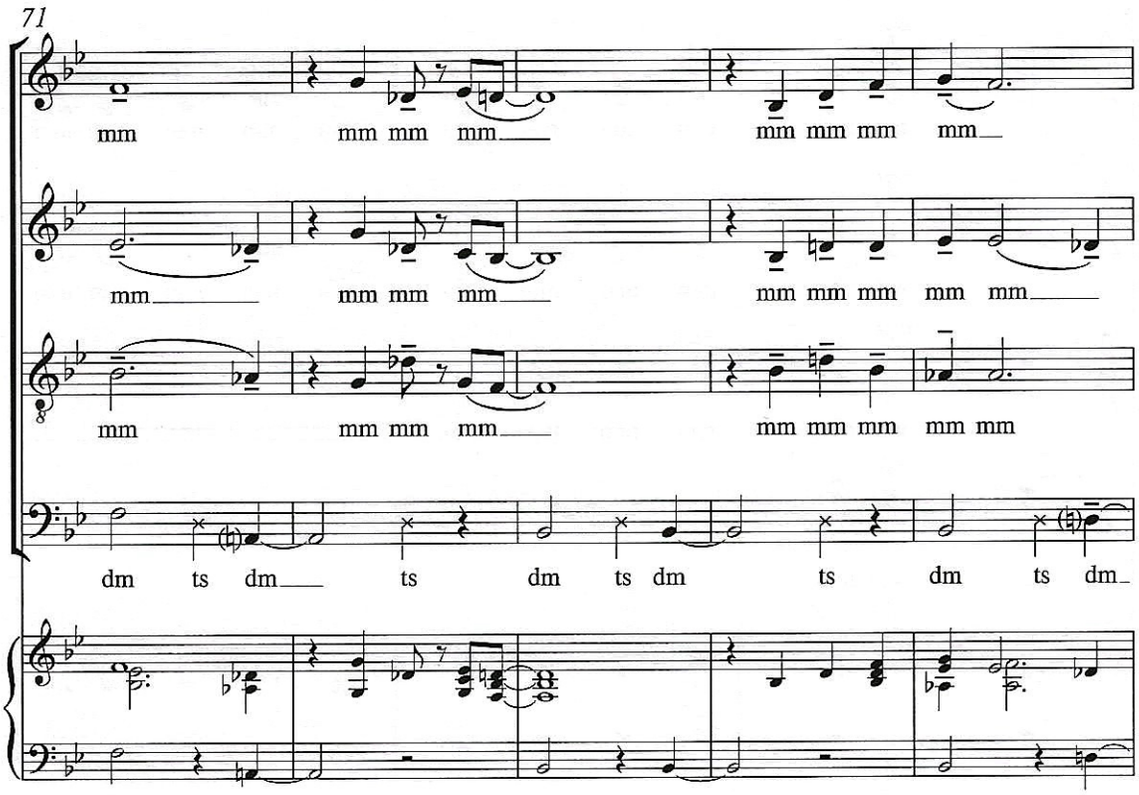

50
East Tex - as Bay, that girl was
East Tex - as Bay, that girl was
East Tex - as Bay, that girl was
ts dm ts dm ts
53
born. I pray for her soul
born. I pray for her soul
born. I pray for her soul
dm ts dm ts I pray for her

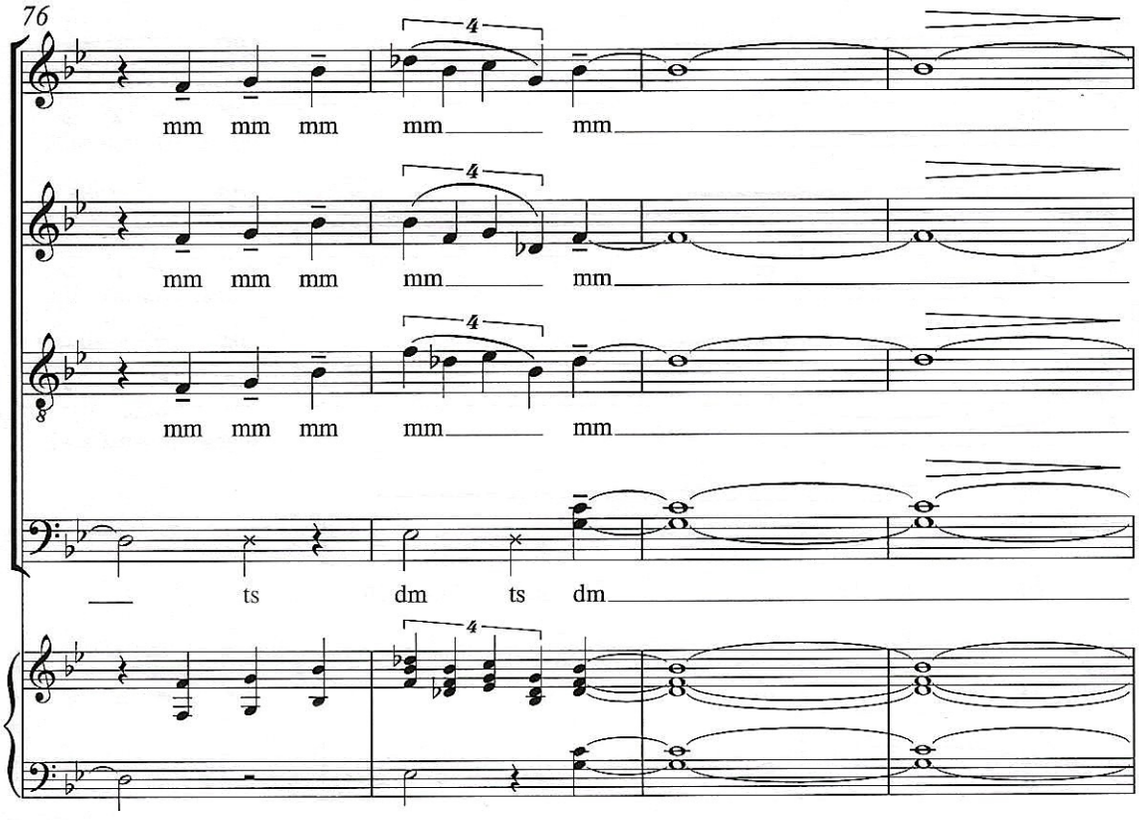

56
to sing a righ - teous song.
to sing a righ - teous song.
to sing a righ - teous song.
soul, righ - teous song.

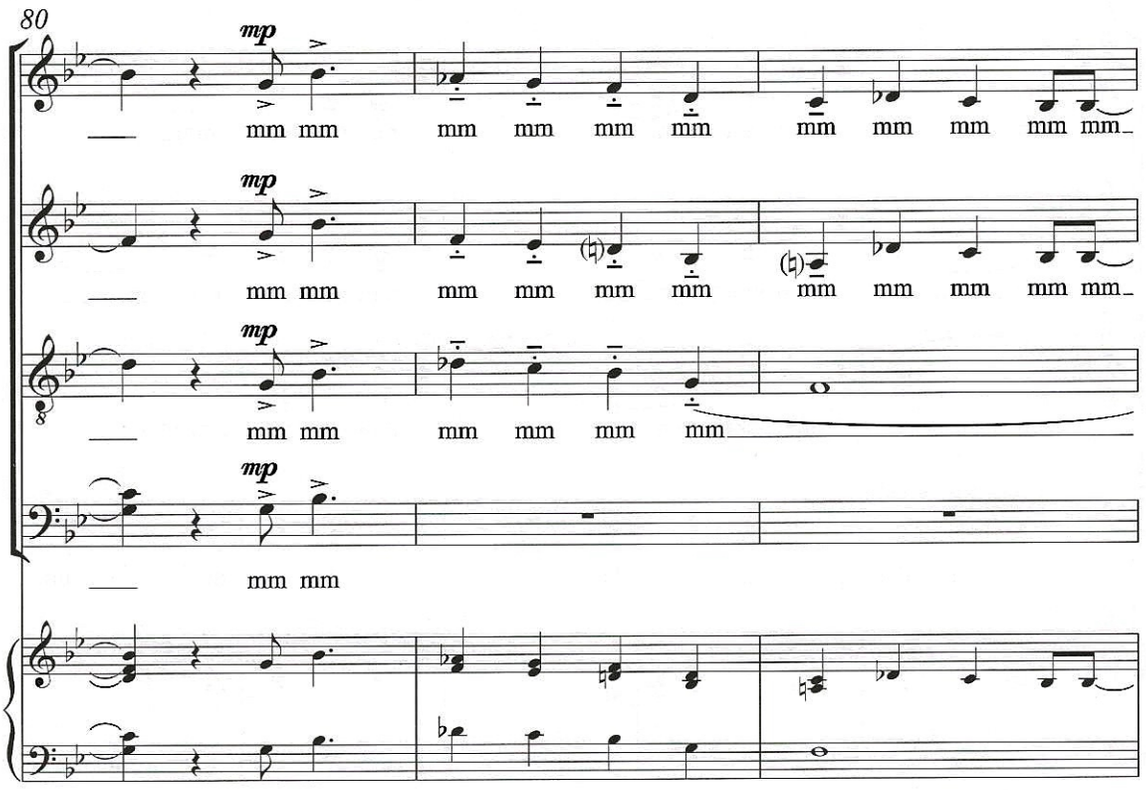

60
ff
Whoa, and when my head grows cold, Lord, keep her in a light that's
ff
Whoa, and when my head grows cold, Lord, keep her in a light that's
ff
Whoa, and when my head grows cold, Lord, keep her in a light that's
ff
head grows cold,

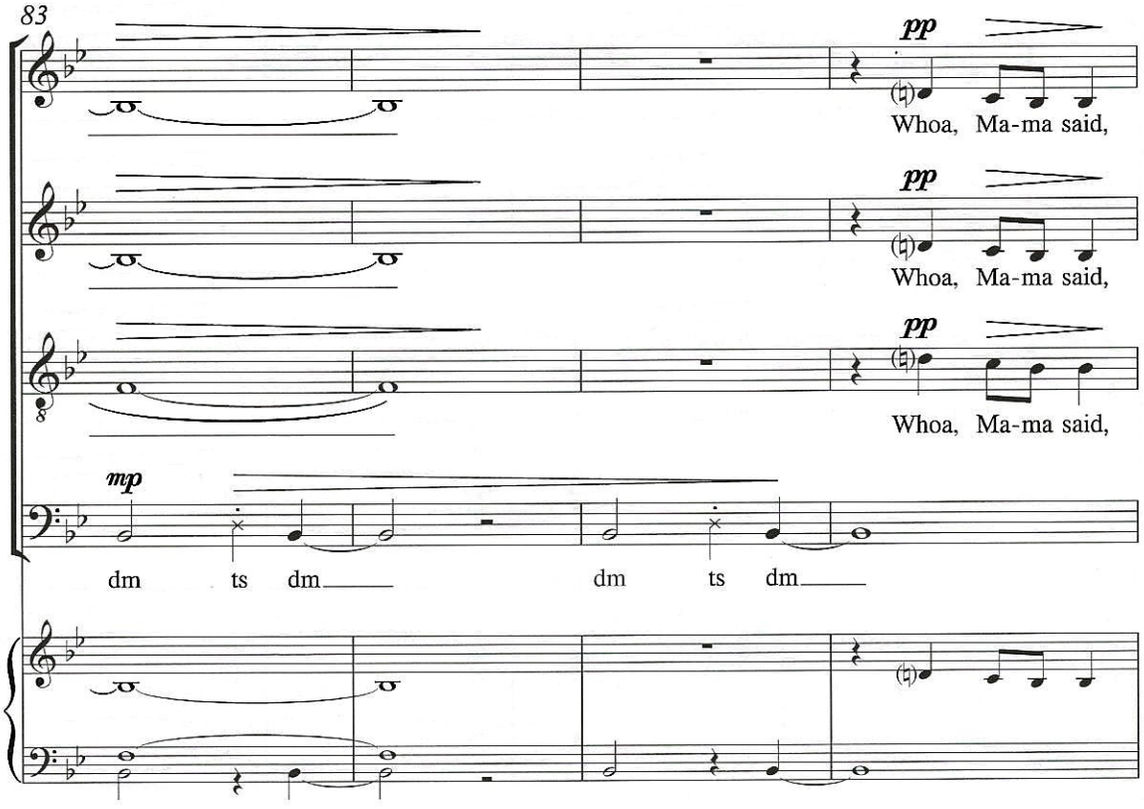

63
mf
strong."
mm mm mm
mf (melody)
strong."
mm mm mm
mf
strong."
mm mm mm
f
sim.
dm ts dm ts dm ts dm ts

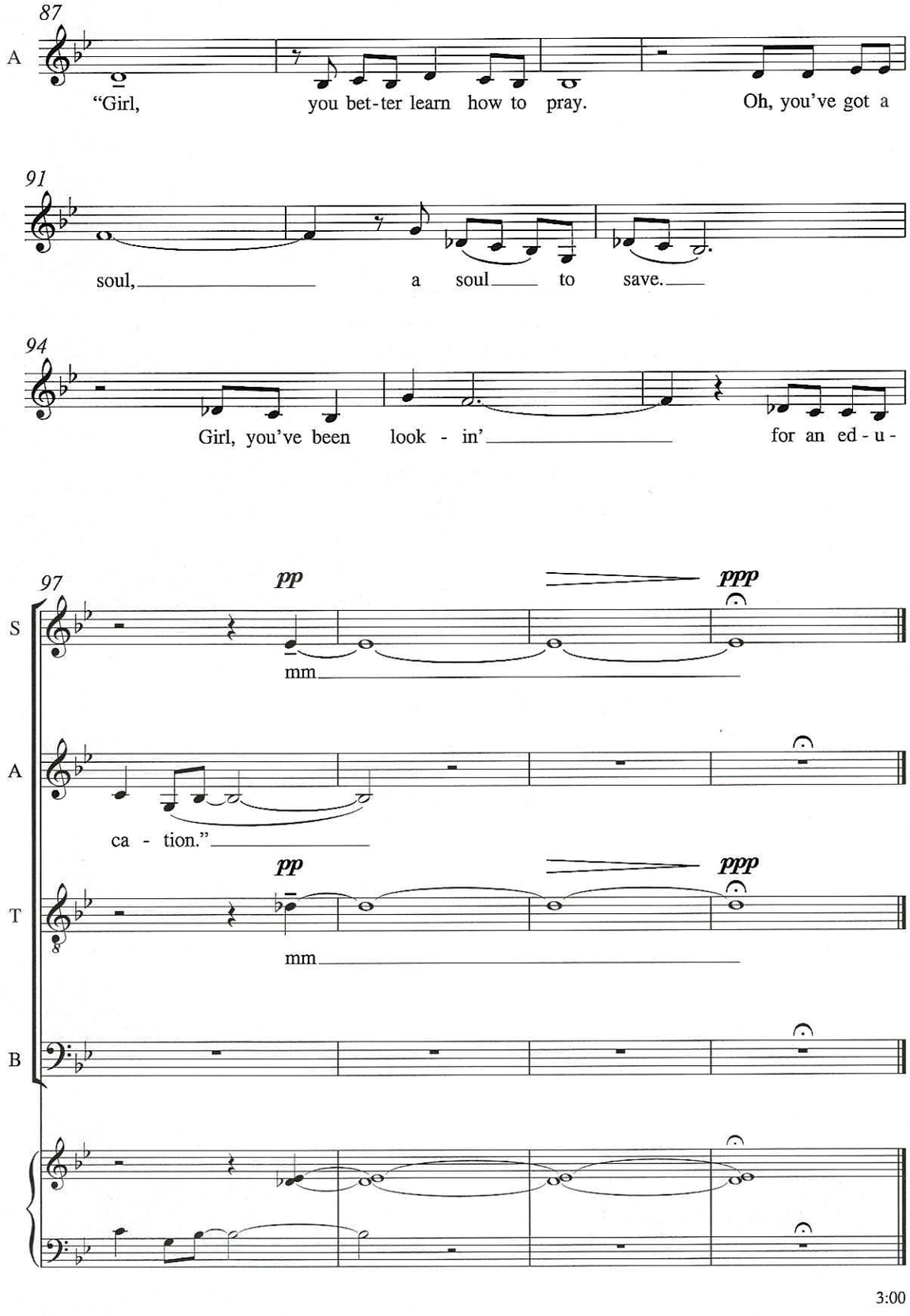
67
(melody)
mm mm mm mm mm
mm mm mm mm mm
mm mm mm mm mm
mf
dm ts dm ts dm ts dm ts


71
mm mm mm mm mm mm mm mm
mm mm mm mm mm mm mm mm mm
mm mm mm mm mm mm mm mm mm
dm ts dm ts dm ts dm ts dm ts dm


76
4
mm mm mm mm mm
mm mm mm mm mm
mm mm mm mm mm
ts dm ts dm


80
mp
mm mm
mm mm mm mm mm mm mm mm mm
mp
mm mm
mm mm mm mm mm mm mm mm mm
mp
mm mm
mm mm mm mm
mp
mm mm


83
pp
Whoa, Ma-ma said,
pp
Whoa, Ma-ma said,
pp
Whoa, Ma-ma said,
mp
dm ts dm
dm ts dm


87
A
"Girl, you bet-ter learn how to pray. Oh, you've got a
91
soul, a soul to save.
94
Girl, you've been look - in' for an ed - u -
97
S
pp
ppp
mm
A
ca - tion."
T
pp
ppp
mm
B
3:00

Program Notes

American blues icon Ruthie Foster released ***Mama Said*** on her 2007 recording *The Phenomenal Ruthie Foster.* The lyrics are a mother's advice to her daughter, warning her to "learn how to pray" and to "fall on your knees before you fall in the wrong direction." The original recording is somehow languid and urgent at the same time; a quiet steel guitar and harmonica evoke a lazy Saturday, then suddenly Ms. Foster's buttery voice turns steely with a Sunday gospel shout. Conductors are encouraged to consult the original recording for this remarkable range of colors and textures.

This arrangement strives to capture the piece's prevailing sense of calm. It is deliberately "choral," preferring to honor Ms. Foster's exquisite vocal shadings—a bend here, a fall-off there—by avoiding exact imitation. Singers should, however, use the articulation markings as license to inflect certain pitches; many of the tenuto markings, for example, invite a "swell" (initiating the printed pitch slightly below), using the recording as a guide. The basses provide the rhythm section of electric bass and closed hi-hat cymbal; the "dm" sound should have the vowel [ʊ] (as in "good") while closing very quickly to the "m," and the "ts" sound should be unpitched and staccato.

—Paul Rardin

Text

Whoa, Mama said,
"Girl, you better learn how to pray.
Oh, you've got a soul to save.
Girl, you've been lookin' for an education.
Child, you better fall on your knees
before you fall in the wrong direction.

Through many a trial* I have known,
tryin' to give my children a happy home.
Through times of trouble and tears from worry
try'n' to keep my head held high;
teach my feet not to be in such a hurry.

Oh, it was a cold February morn,
East Texas Bay, that girl was born.
I pray for her soul
to sing a righteous song.
Whoa, and when my head grows cold, Lord,
keep her in a light that's strong."

Whoa, Mama said,
"Girl, you better learn how to pray.
Oh, you've got a soul to save.
Girl, you've been lookin' for an education."

* Ms. Foster sings the word "trials" on her track.

—Ruthie Foster

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