Practical Score Markings

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Emerald Choral Academy

Thursday, September 3, 2020

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Basics

- The score is a working paper, not a sacred relic.
  - There is no reward for cleanest score.
- Don’t trust your memory.
  - Self-reliance: write what you need.
  - If the conductor says something, write it down.
  - Conductor will be able to give more time to phrasing, tuning, text, etc.
- Ask the choir librarian before making a permanent marking.
  - Such as hole punching, highlighting, or colored pencil.

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How to make a great score marking

Location

The staff is crowded, so…
write above or below!

Shapes

The staff has many lines already, so…
use slashes, circles, curves, angles, etc.

Size

The staff is compact, so…
write bigger!

Symbols

The brain takes time to interpret words, so…
use symbols!

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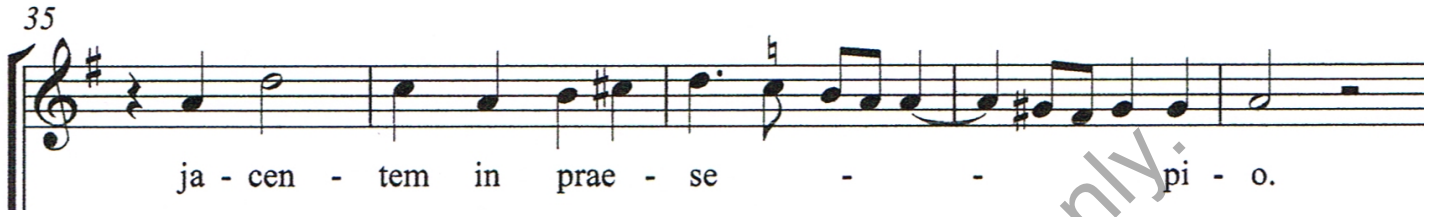
RHYTHM – Count



Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.35-39, soprano

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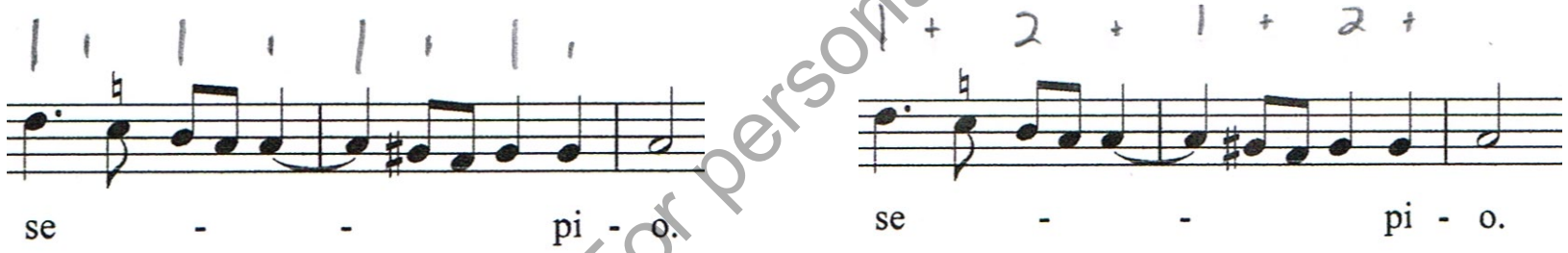
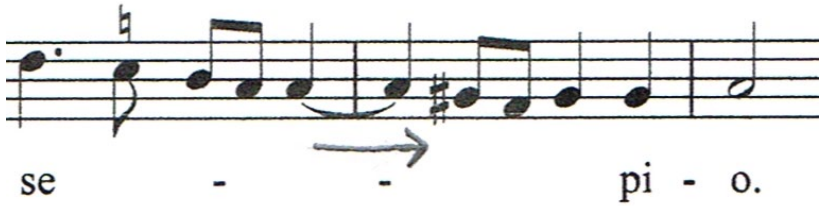
Marking beats above the staff



Reminder to sustain

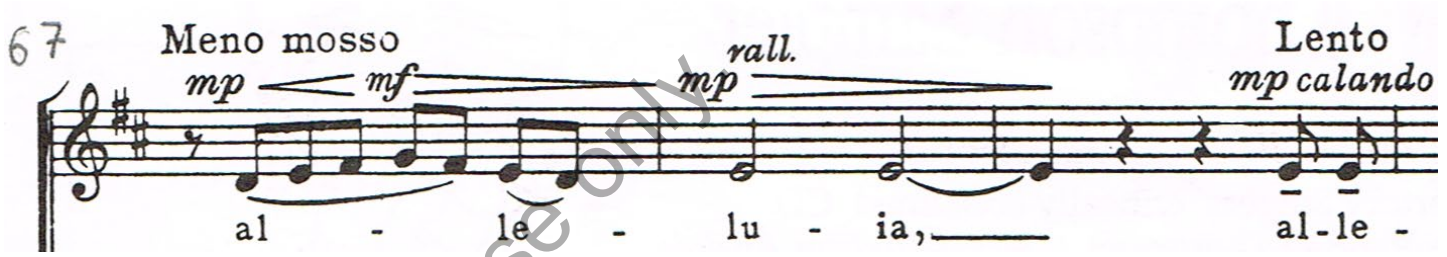


RHYTHM – Cut-offs

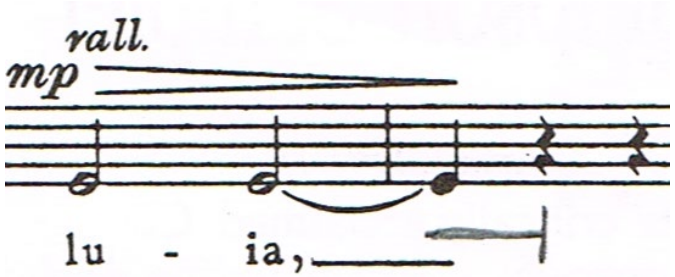
Method 1

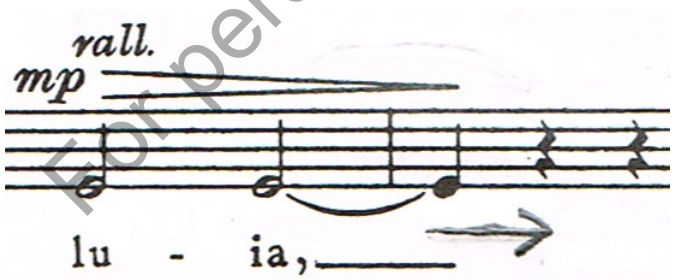
Assorted lines, arrows, arcs

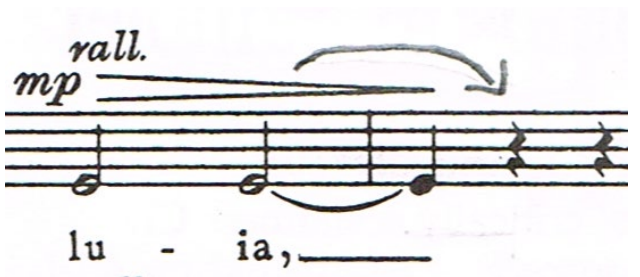
Can be used together with rhythm lines.



Thompson: *Alleluia*, mm.67-69, soprano







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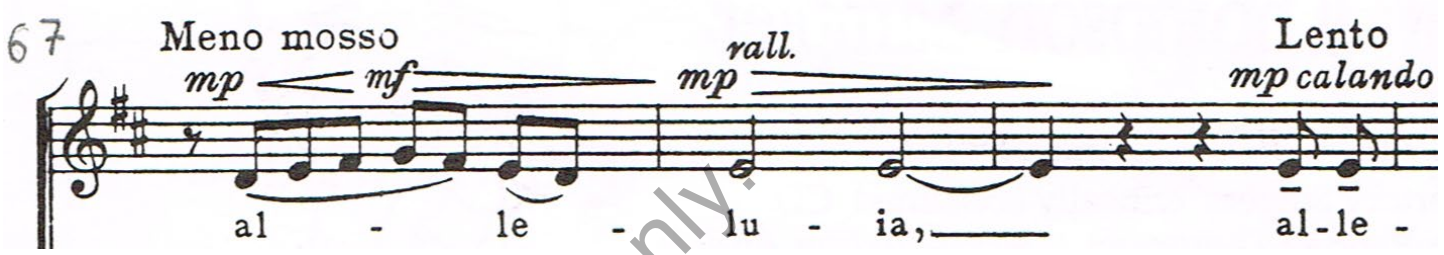
RHYTHM – Cut-offs

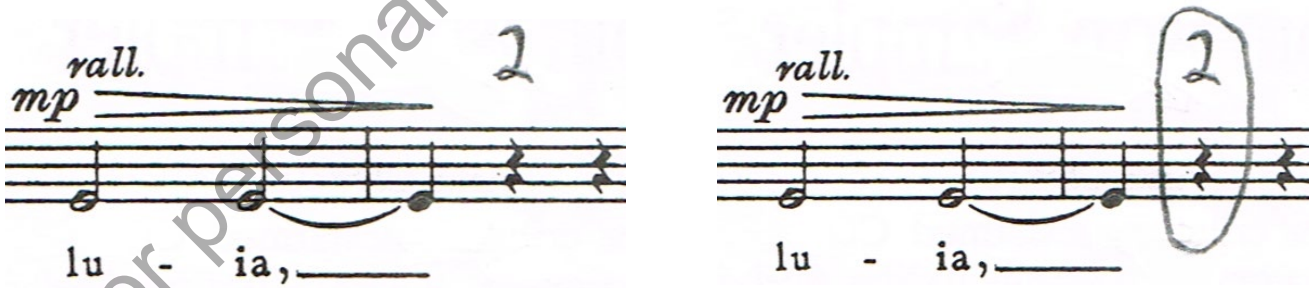
Method 2

Accentuate the rest by…

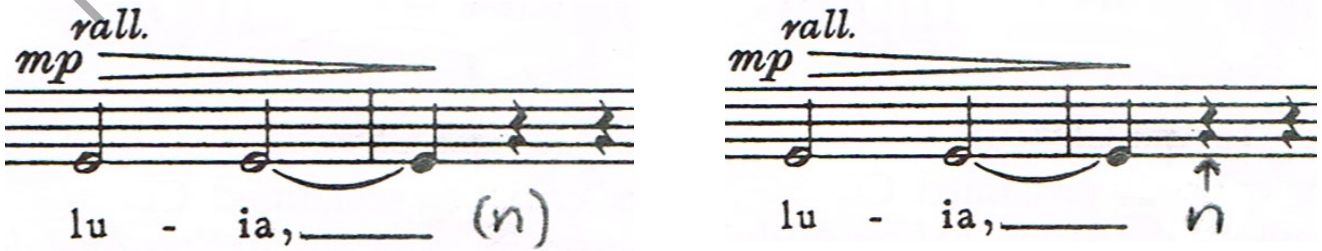


Thompson: *Alleluia*, mm.67-69, soprano

… reinforcing the beat number.



… reinforcing the consonant
(if any).



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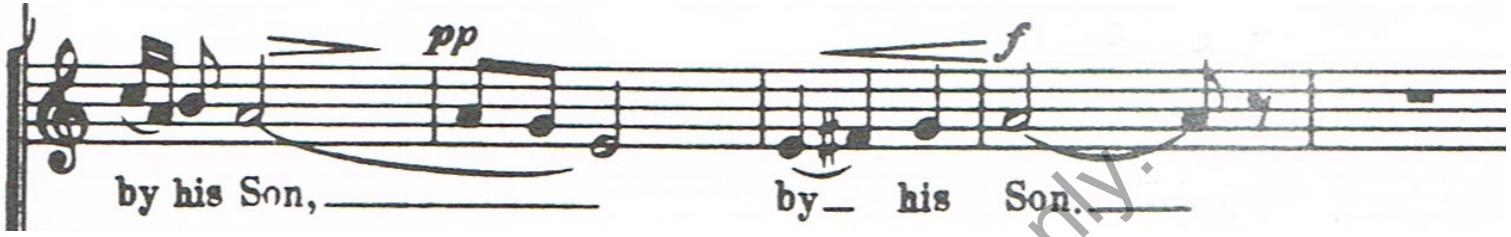
RHYTHM – “English” cut-offs



Vaughan Williams: *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, mm.63-67, soprano

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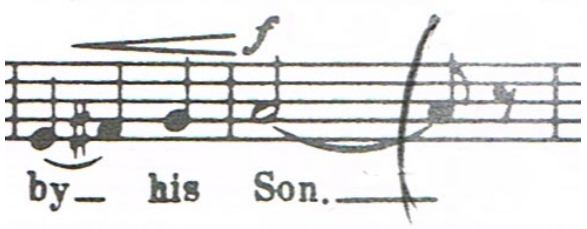
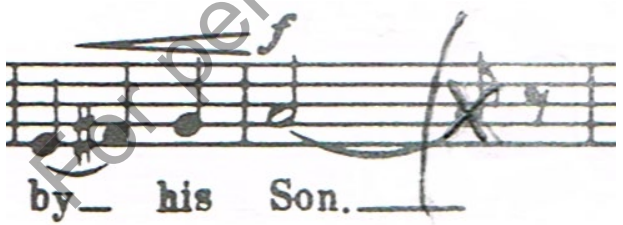
To cut off on the tied eighth note…

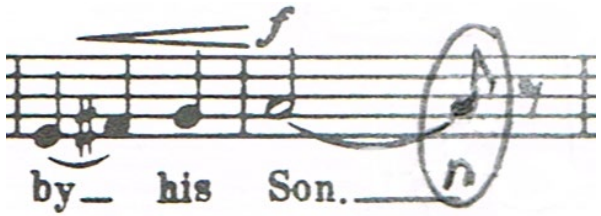
… chop it off.



… maybe cross it out.



… remember the consonant.



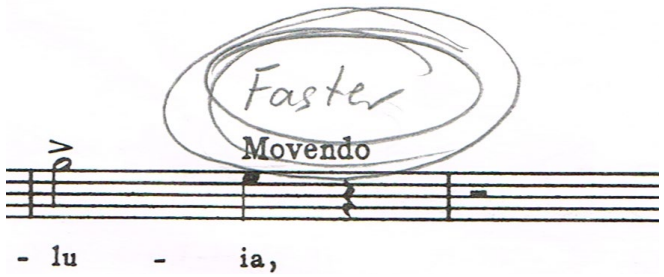
To sustain to the printed rest…

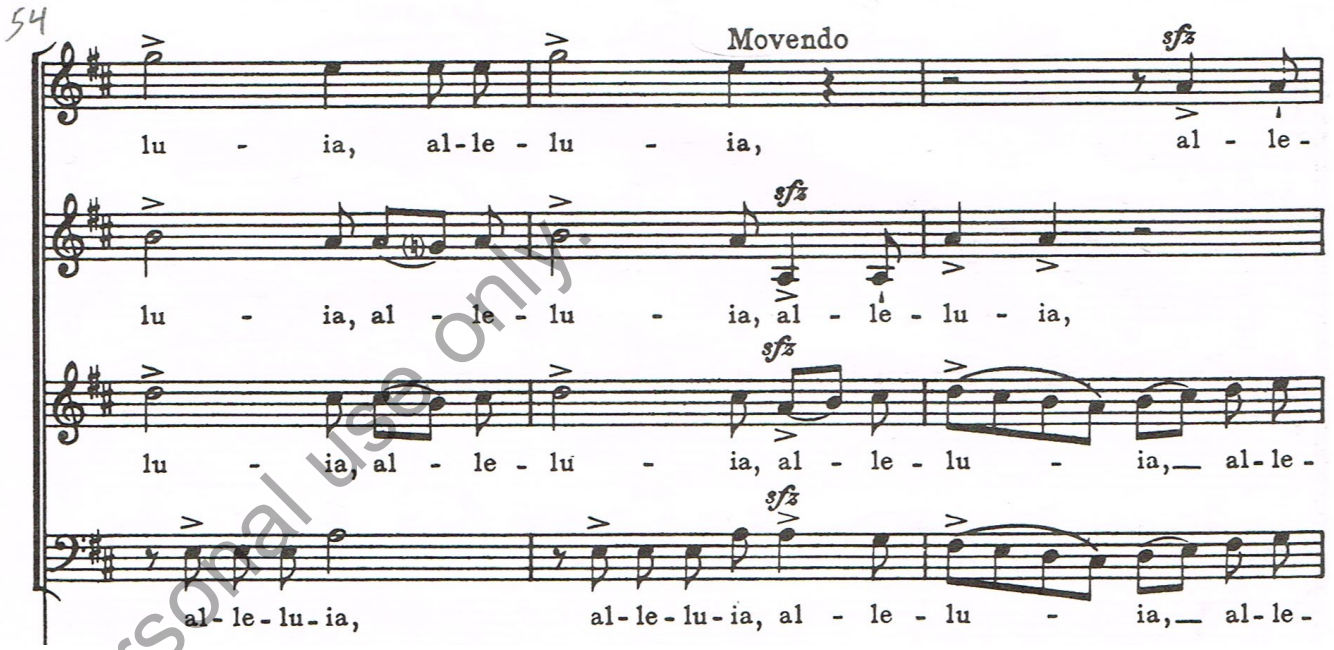
… use regular cut-off methods.

TEMPO – Sudden changes

The “Movendo” applies to everyone, not just the sopranos...

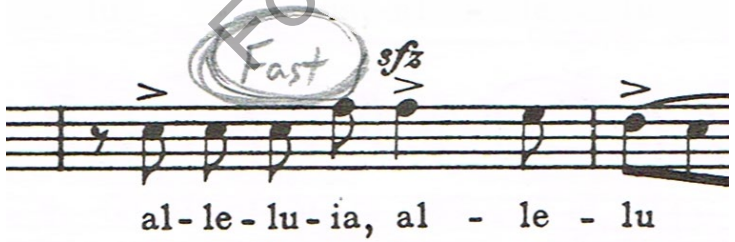
… so **MAKE IT BIG**,
and **translate it** (if desired).



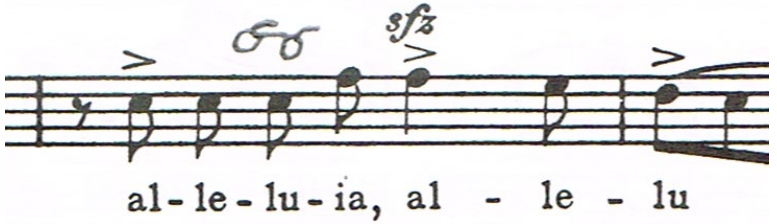


Thompson: *Alleluia*, mm.54-56, tutti

Basses (and anyone else) can write it above their staff…



… or wear their glasses.



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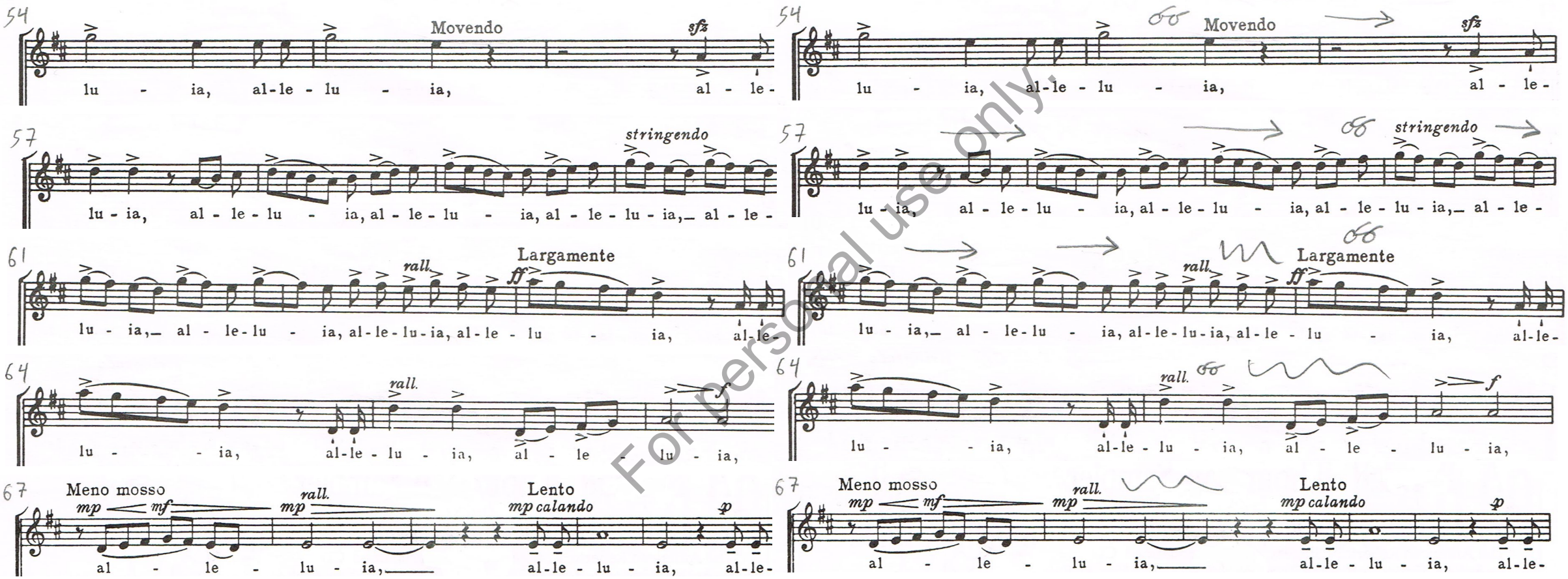
TEMPO – Gradual changes

Arrow = Speed up **Glasses = Watch**

Squiggle = Slow down



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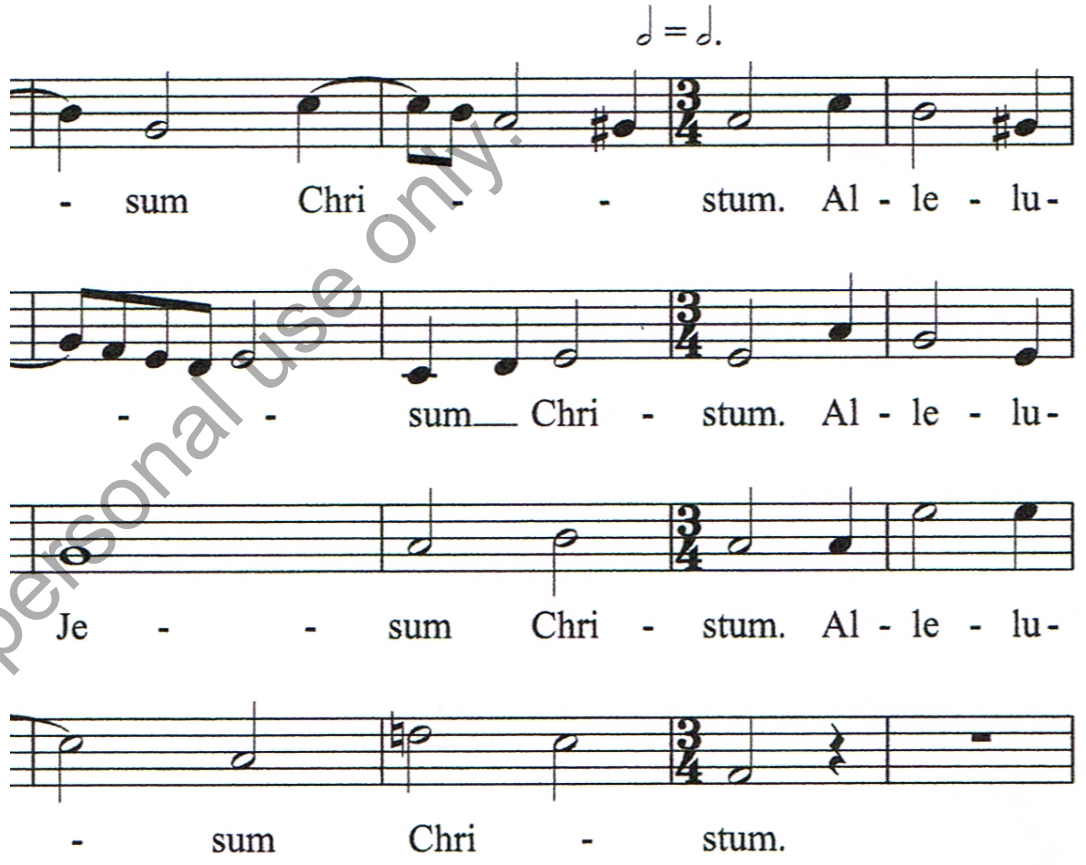
Thompson: *Alleluia*, mm.54-71, soprano

METER – Meter changes

Old Unit = New Unit

- Place = directly above the barline.
- Use conductor's beat as "old unit."



Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.51-54, tutti

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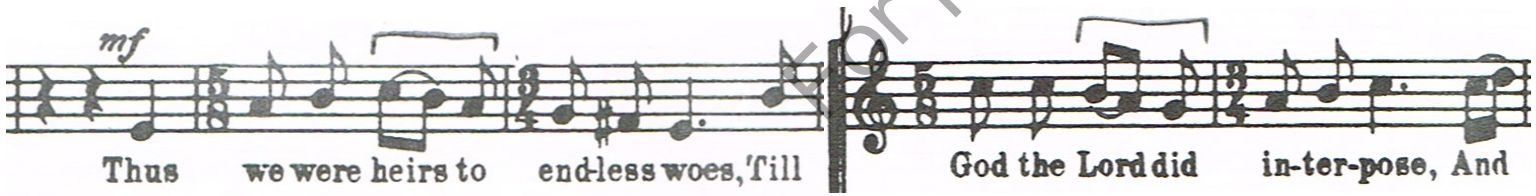
METER – Mixed meter

Vaughan Williams: *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, mm.55-59, soprano

Marking the subdivided beats is visually cumbersome.

Bracket the 3s.



Can also use brackets for hemiolas!

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TIME

Rhythm

- General. Mark beats above the staff as lines or beat numbers. Can also subdivide.
- Reminder to sustain. Arrow underneath notes.
- Cut-offs. Halted lines, arrows, arcs, above or below staff.
  Can also write beat number or consonant, and circle it with rest.
- "English" cut-offs. Strong slash before the tied note.

Tempo

- Sudden changes: Mark above *your* staff, and/or circle it obnoxiously.
- Gradual changes: Forward arrow for *accel.* Squiggly line for *rit*. Above staff.
- Reminder to watch: Add eyeglasses.

Meter

- Starting meter: Mark conductor's starting pattern or beat.
- Meter change: Old Unit = New Unit, with "=" over barline.
- Mixed meter: Bracket the 3s.

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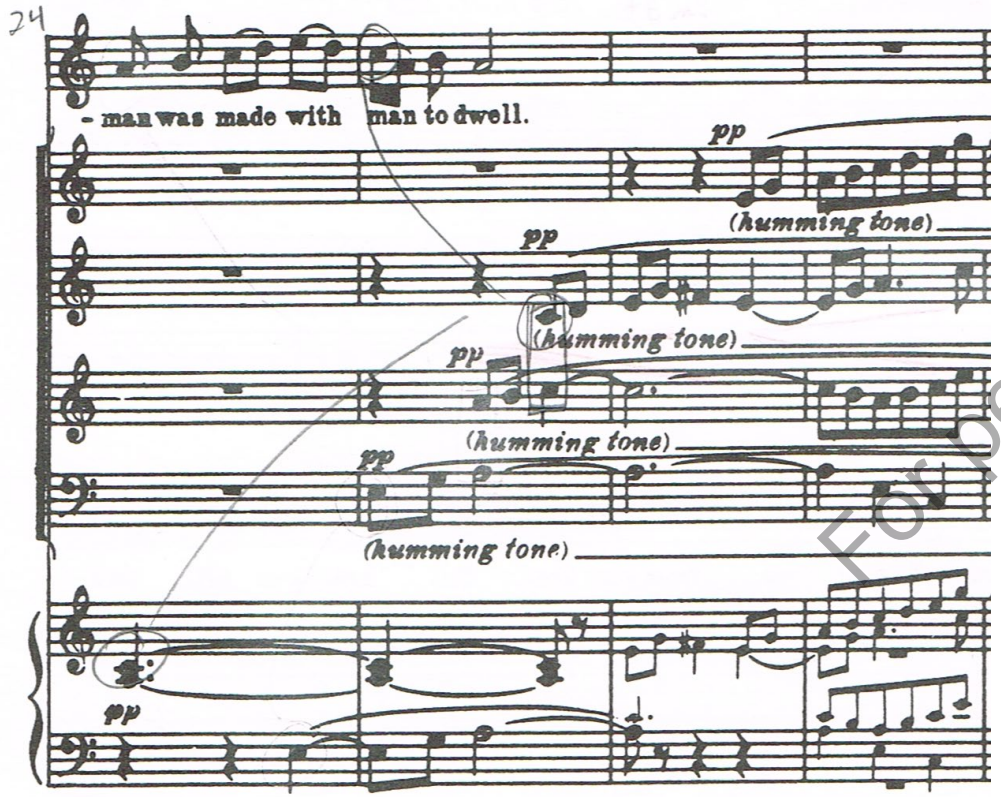
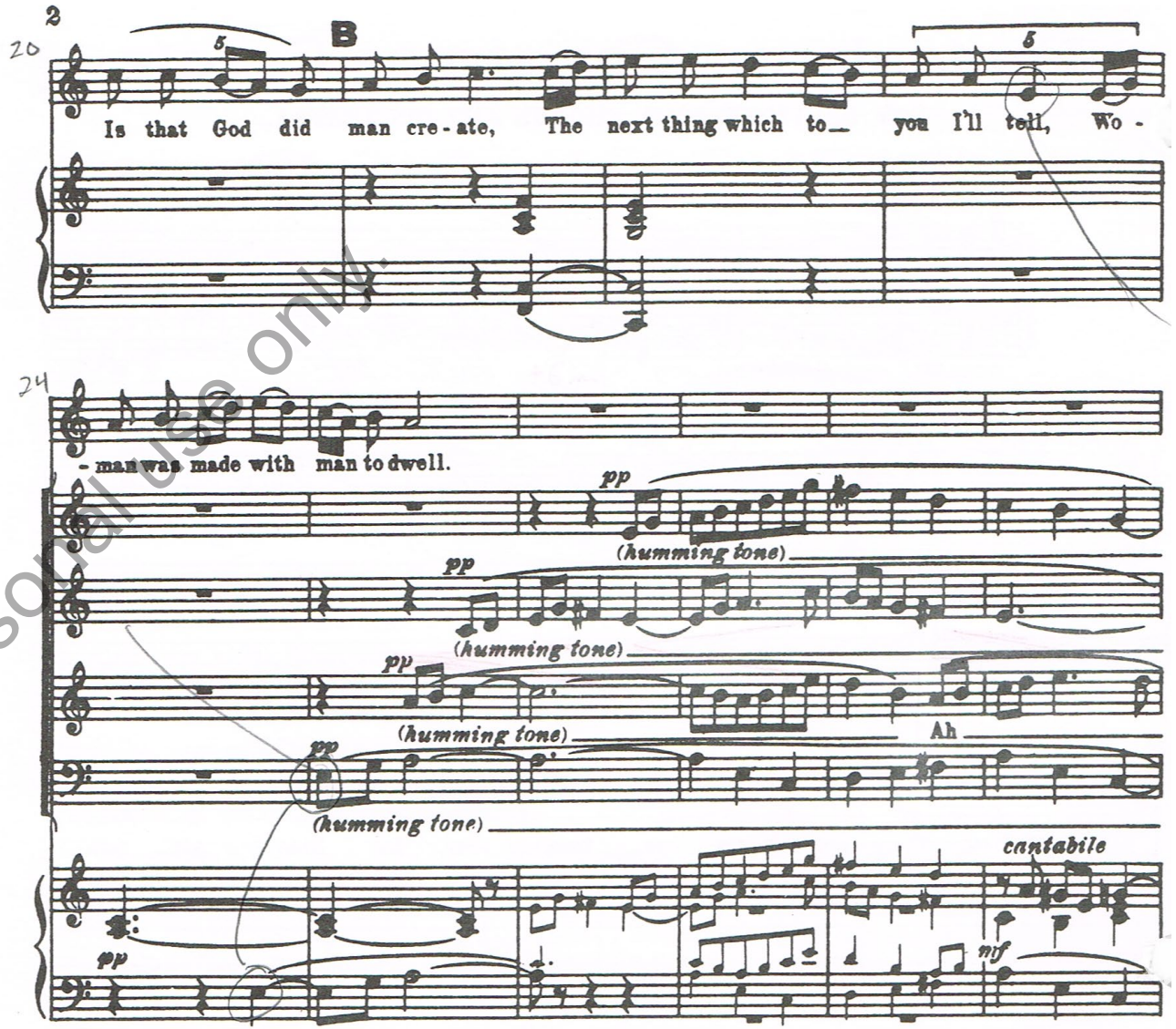
QUESTIONS? SUGGESTIONS?

PITCH – Starting pitch

(1) Find it somewhere.
(2) Circle it.
(3) Circle yours.
(4) Connect them.



Vaughan Williams: *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, mm.24-27, tutti



Vaughan Williams: *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, mm.20-29, tutti

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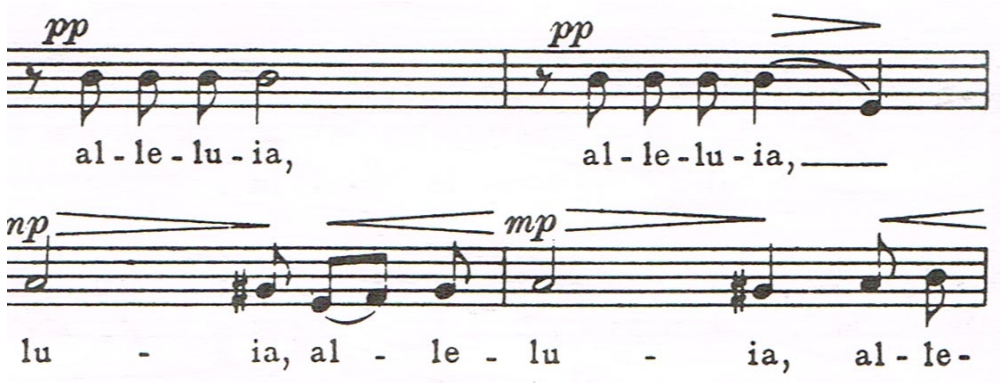
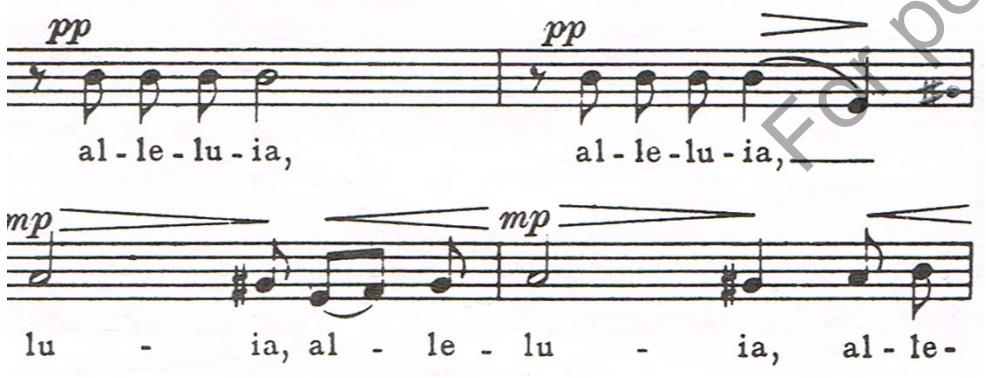
PITCH – Turning pages

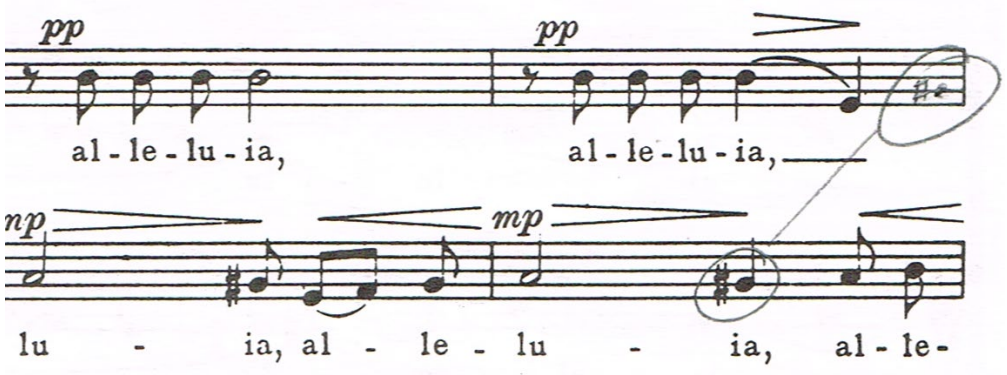


Thompson: *Alleluia*, mm.18-19, soprano and alto

Meet the *custos*, a hint of next page's pitch. ↓



Can also add connection to visible pitch.



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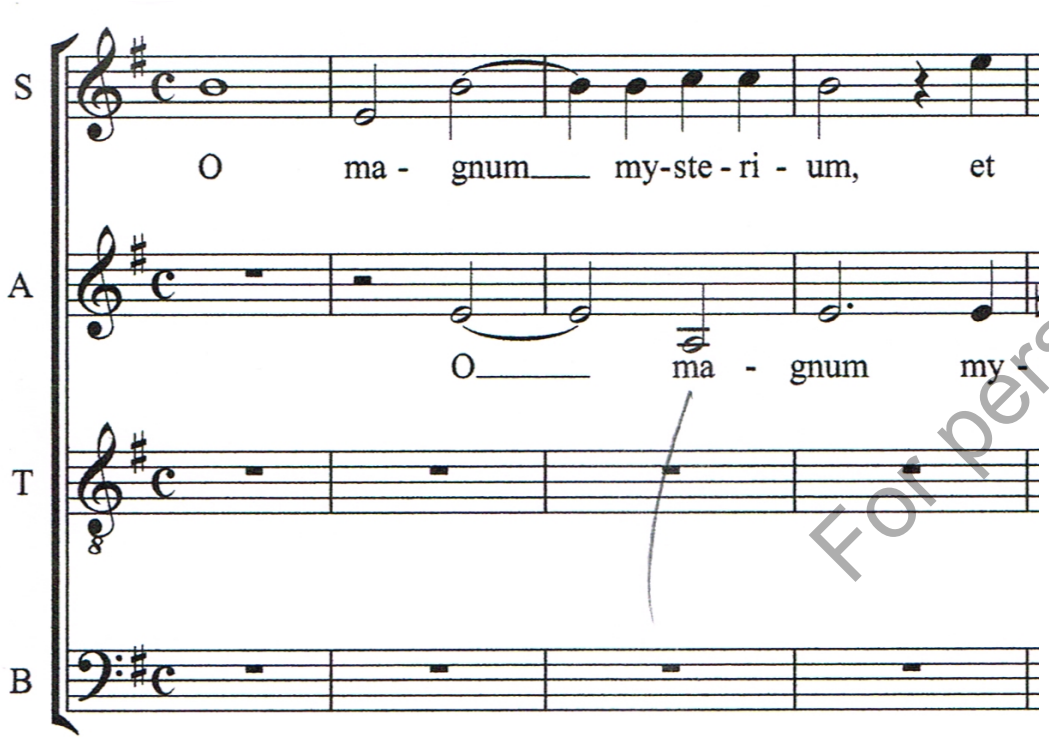
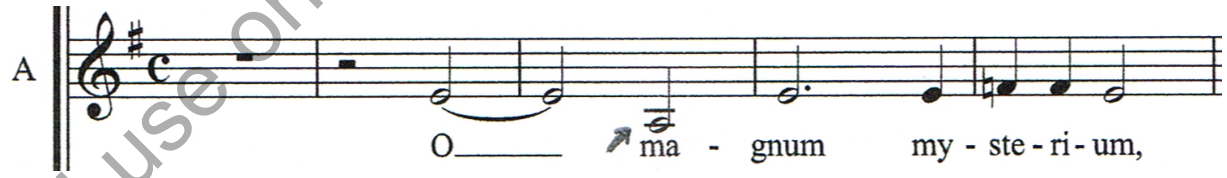
PITCH – Tricky pitches

Need to work on a pitch at home?
Use a **gigantic slash** underneath, to find it quickly.
(And dog-ear the page, too.)

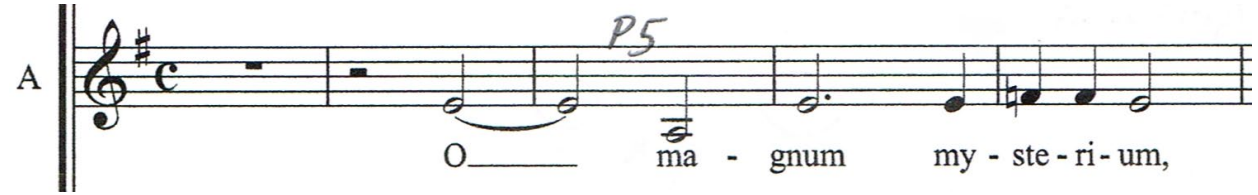


Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.1-4, tutti

If you usually go too far (or not far enough),
add **small arrow** as reminder.



If you feel comfortable with music theory,
write the intervals.



= , m2, M2, m3, M3, P4, tt, P5, m6, M6, m7, M7, 8ve, etc.

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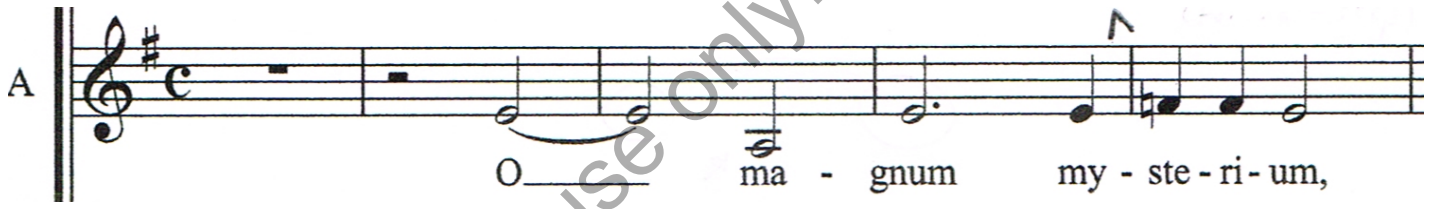
PITCH – Half steps, whole steps, unisons

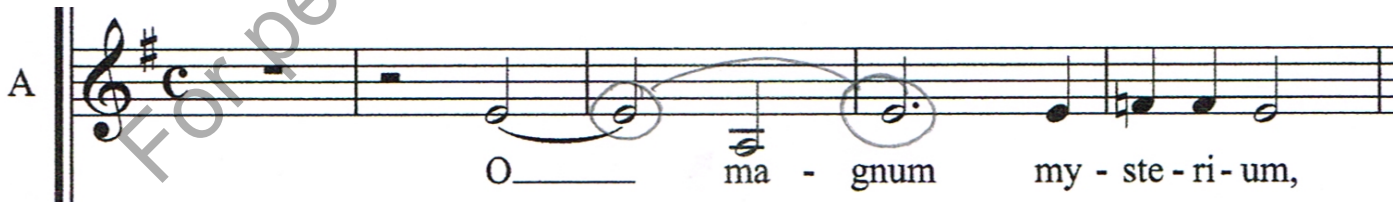
Two short-hand symbols:

- **^ = half step**
- **⊓ = whole step**



Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.1-5, alto

For equal pitches,
draw circle around both,
then **connect** them.



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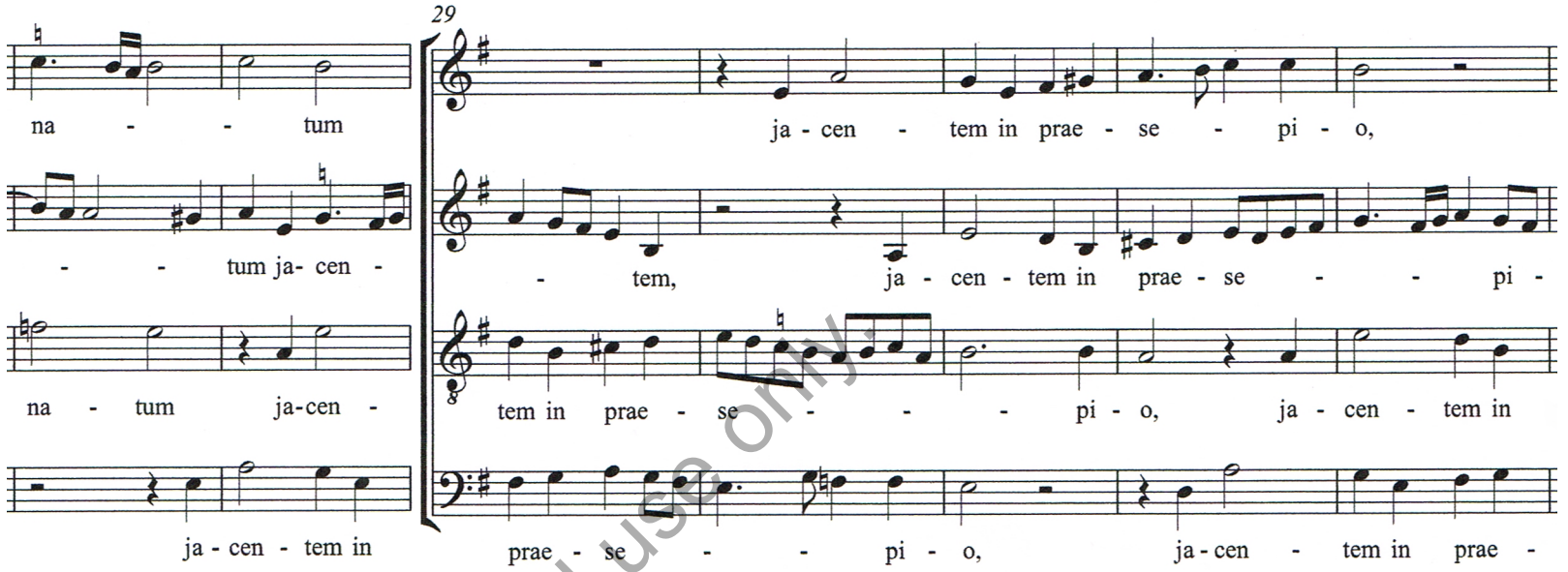
PITCH – Imitative entrances

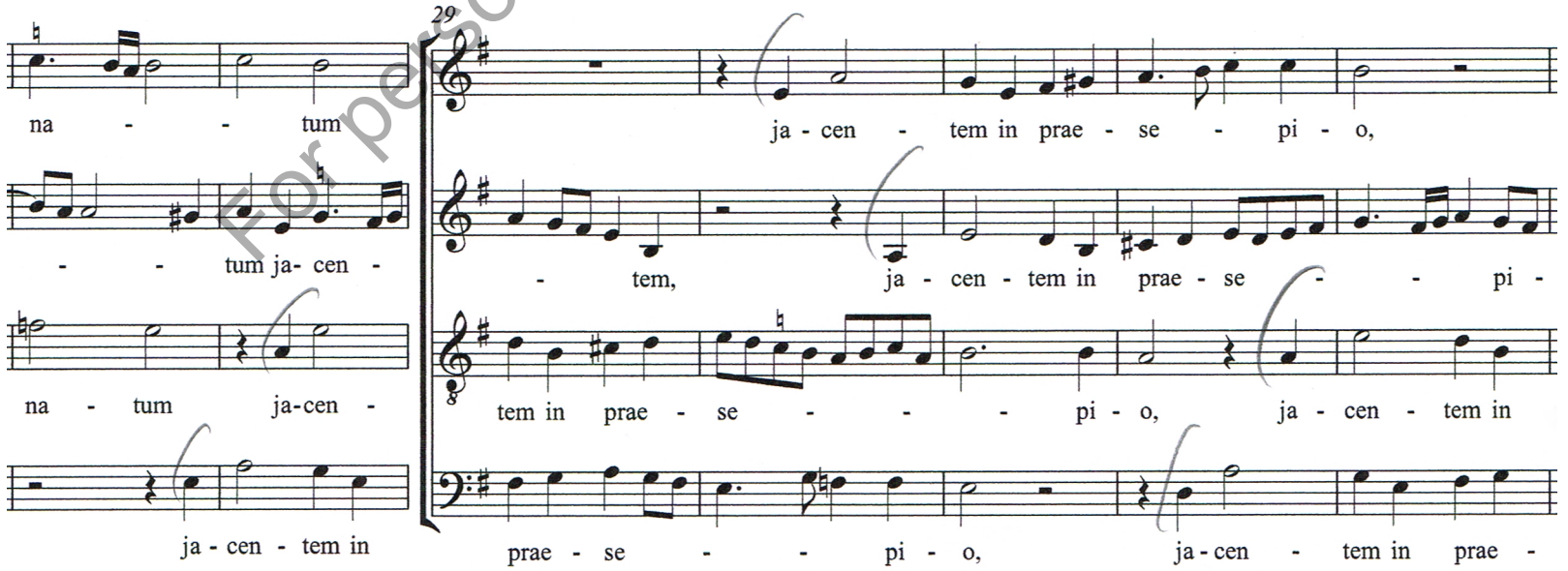


Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.27-33, tutti

Mark with curved lines

Can also use ⌜

… especially if there are ***two*** *imitative elements*.



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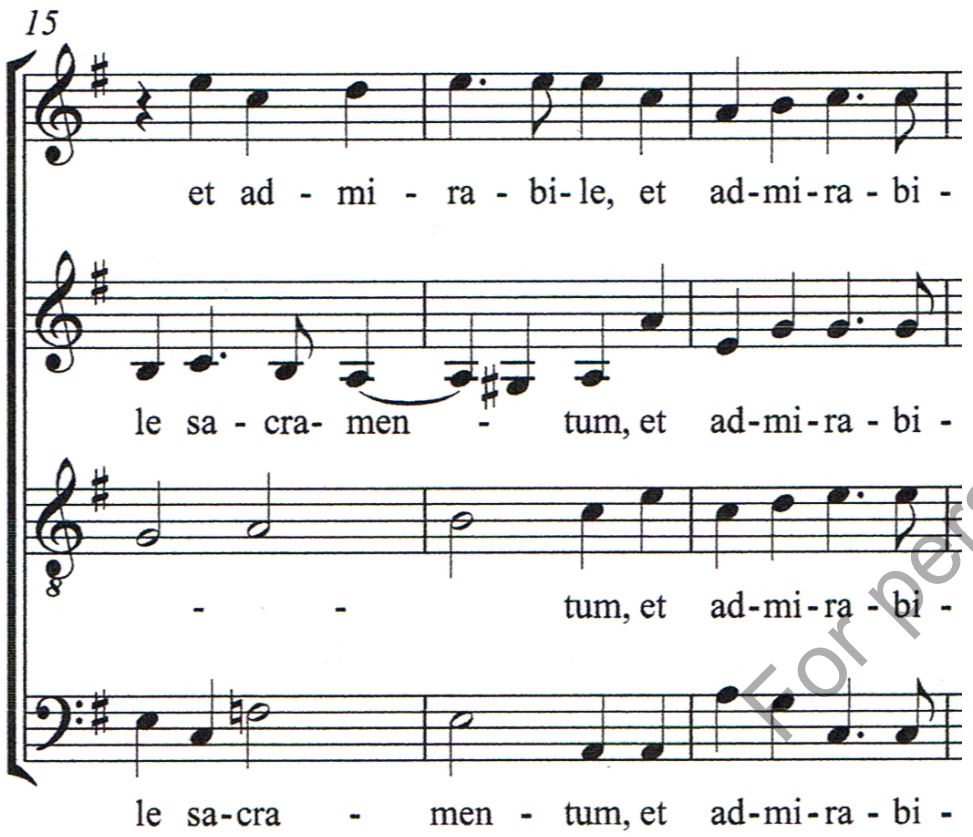
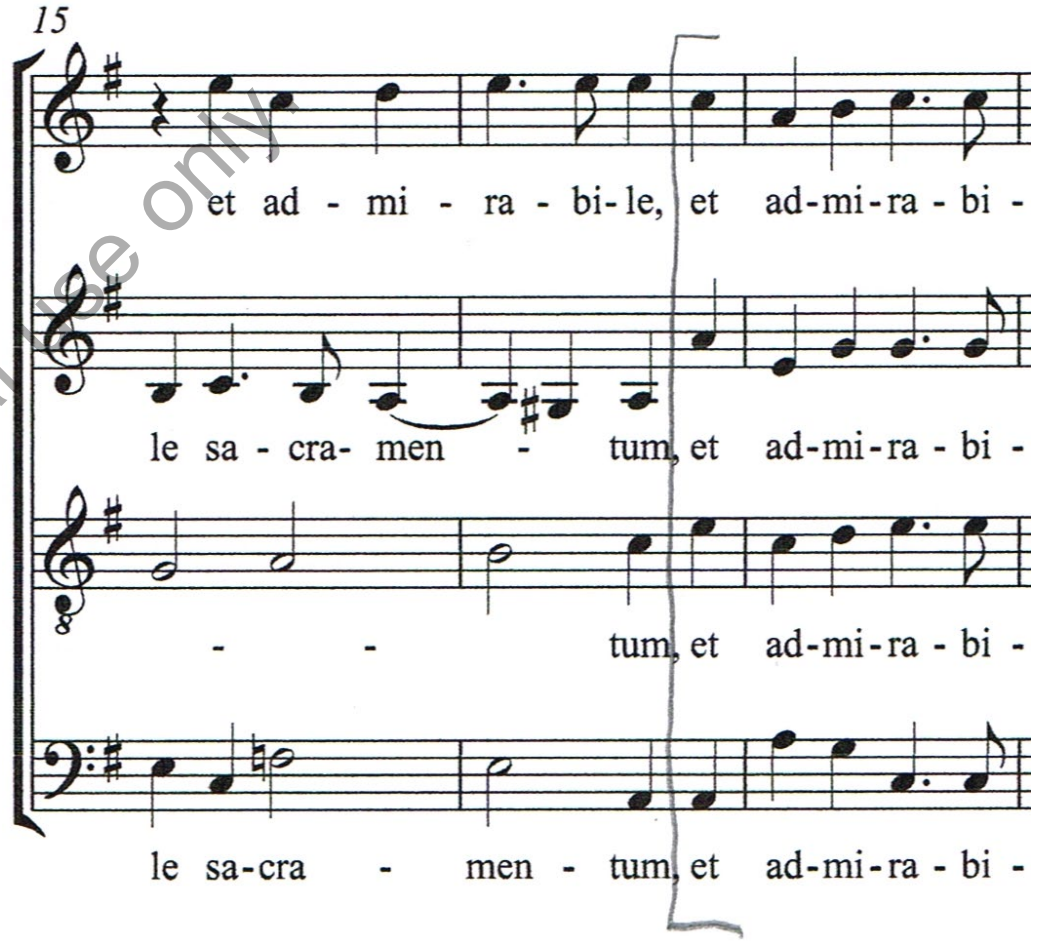
PITCH – Homophonic entrances

Add **big bracket** to denote homophonic moments ↓





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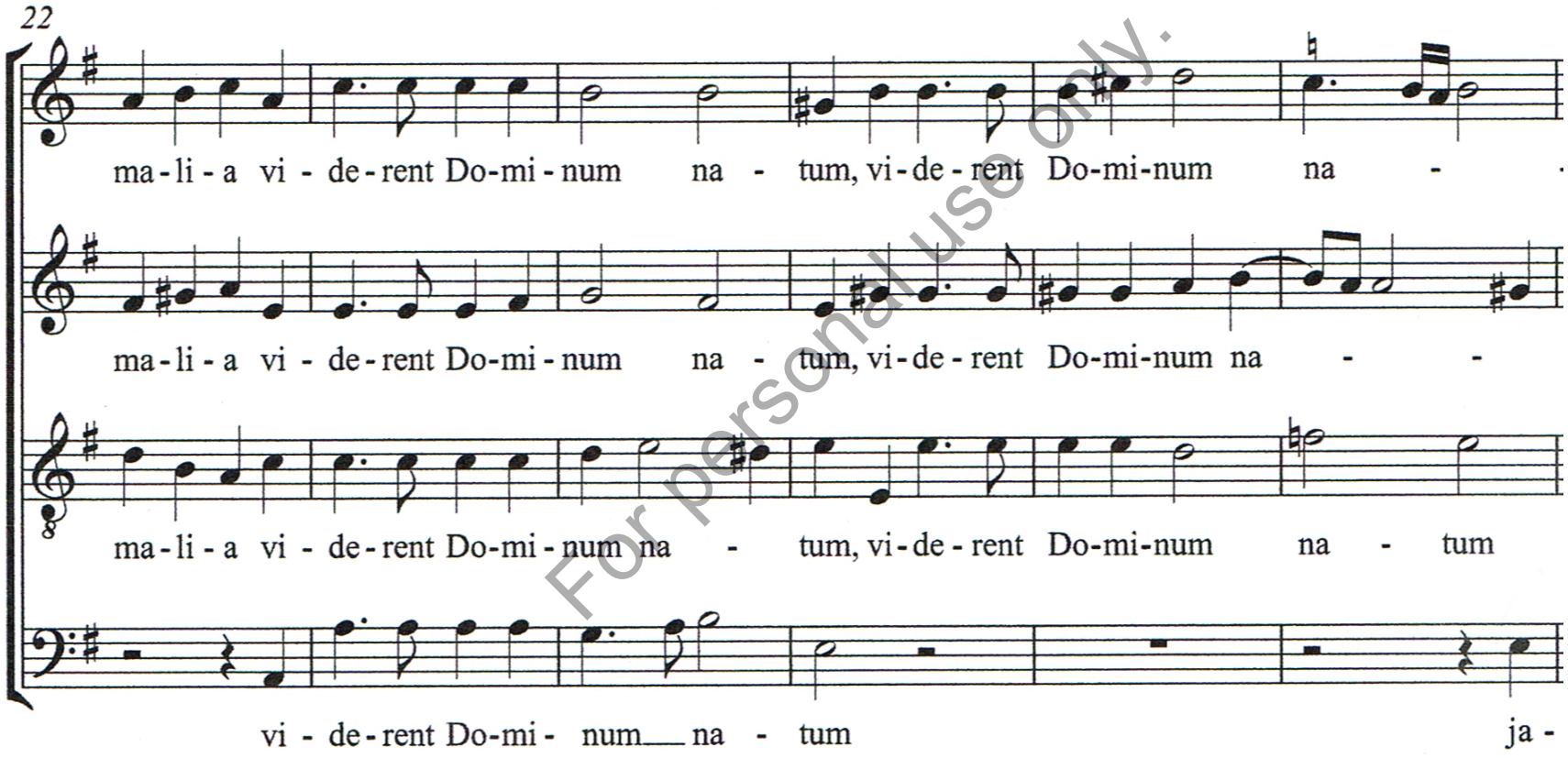
Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.12-17, tutti

ALSO HELPS TUNING!

PITCH – Tuning



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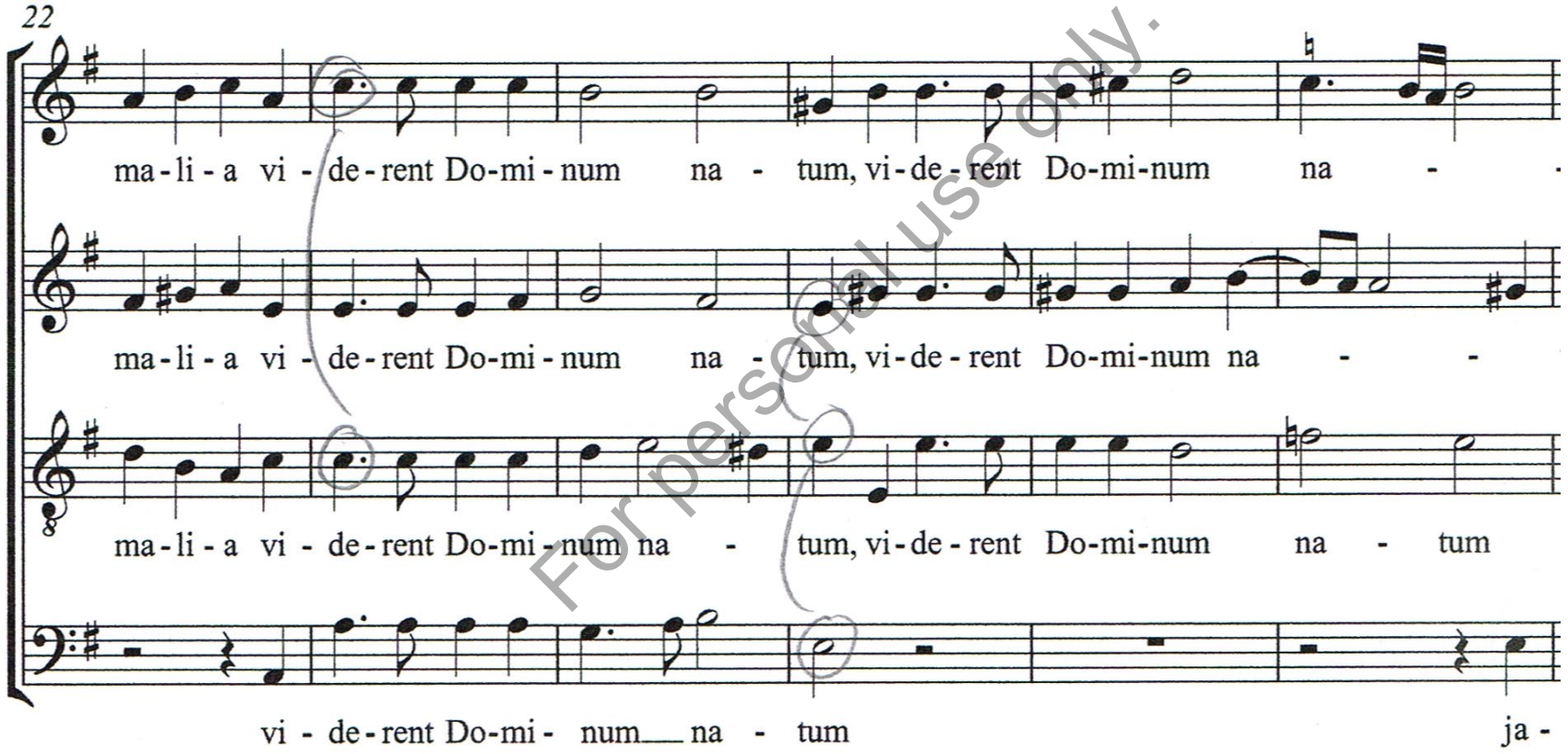
Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.22-27, tutti

PITCH – Vertical tuning

Connect prominent unisons and octaves, and/or other intervals helpful to you, especially at phrase entries, arrivals, and cadences.



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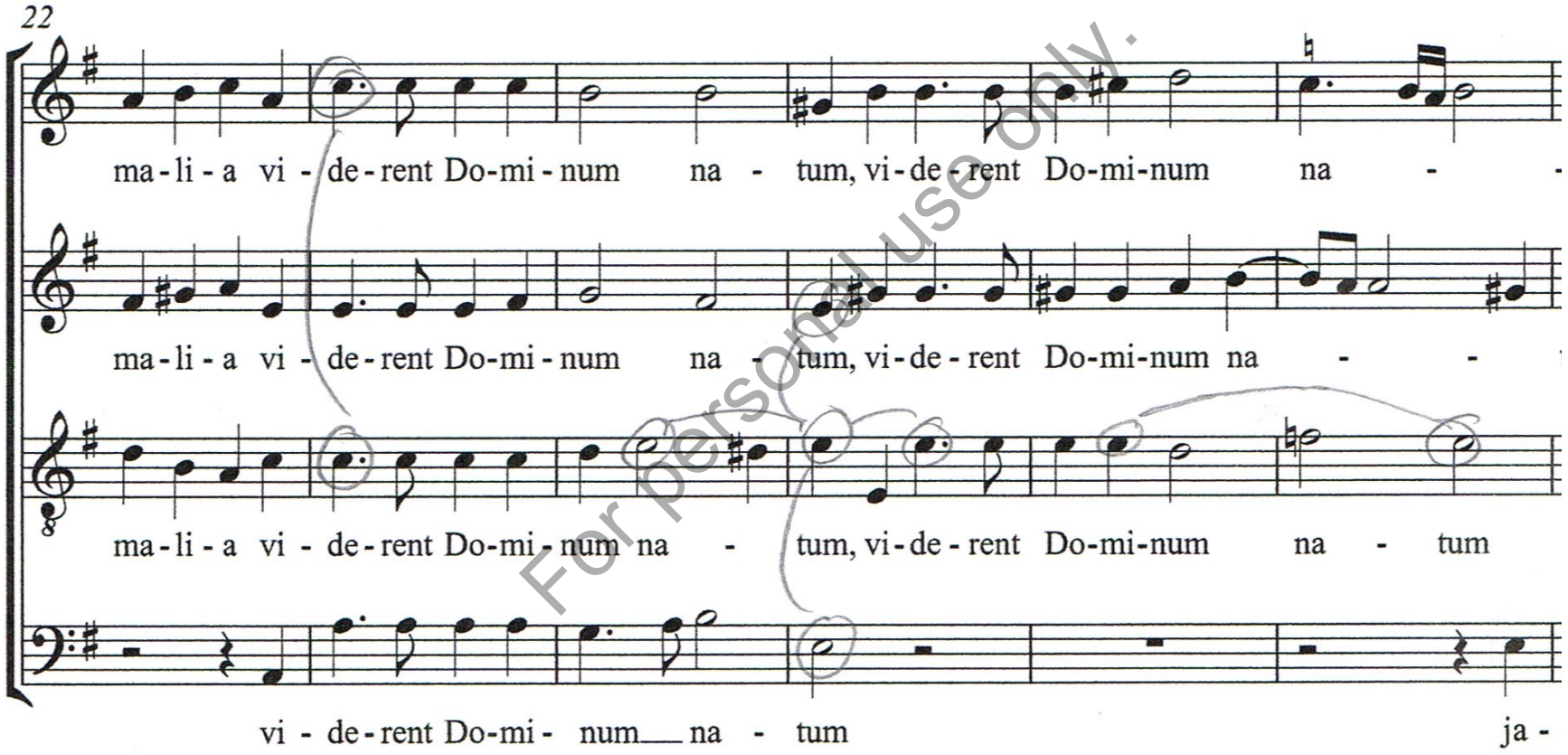
Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.22-27, tutti

PITCH – Horizontal tuning

Connect prominent pairs of same pitches, especially high pitches and tonics.



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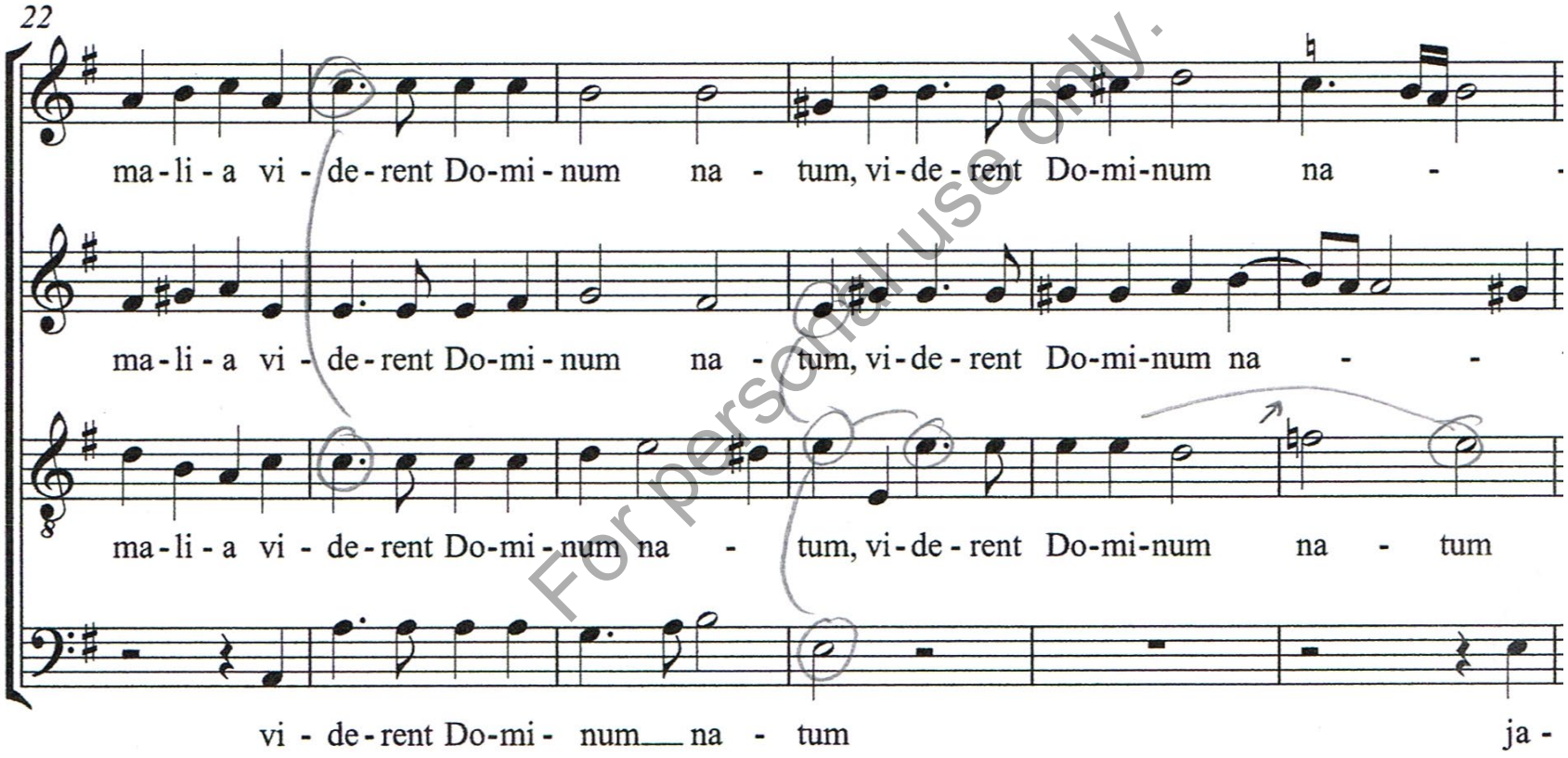
Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.22-27, tutti

PITCH – Tuning tweaks

Small arrow can show pitches that need tuning attention. ↓



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Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.22-27, tutti

PITCH

Starting pitches

- From elsewhere: (1) Find it. (2) Circle it. (3) Circle yours. (4) Connect them.
- Turning pages: Use a custos (hint of next pitch).

Tricky pitches

- For personal study: Mark prominently. Can dog-ear page.
- Reminders: Small arrow, interval abbreviation, ^ / ⊓ , circle and connect unisons.

Tuning

- Imitative entrances: Mark with curve at each part.
- Homophonic entrances: Mark with large bracket.
- Horizontal and vertical tuning: Find, circle, and connect helpful pitches.
- Tweaks: Small arrow.

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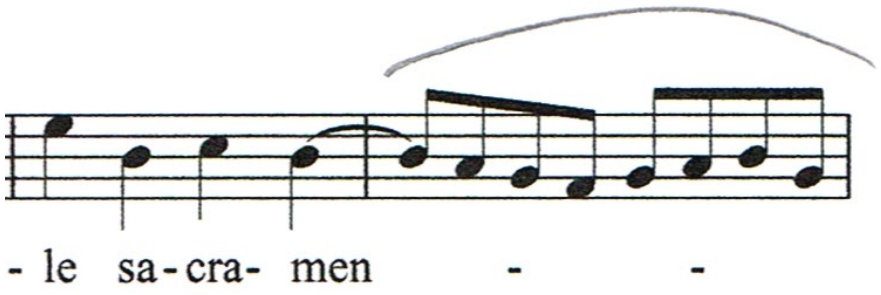
QUESTIONS? SUGGESTIONS?

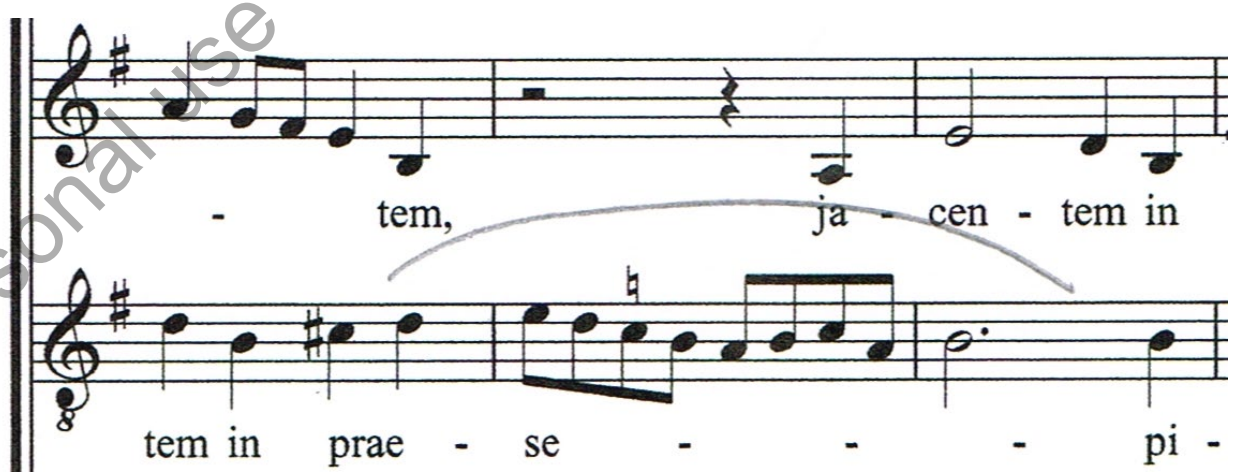
PHRASING – Legato

MAKE IT BIG!!!



Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.7-8, soprano

COVER OTHER PARTS!!!



Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.29-31, alto and tenor

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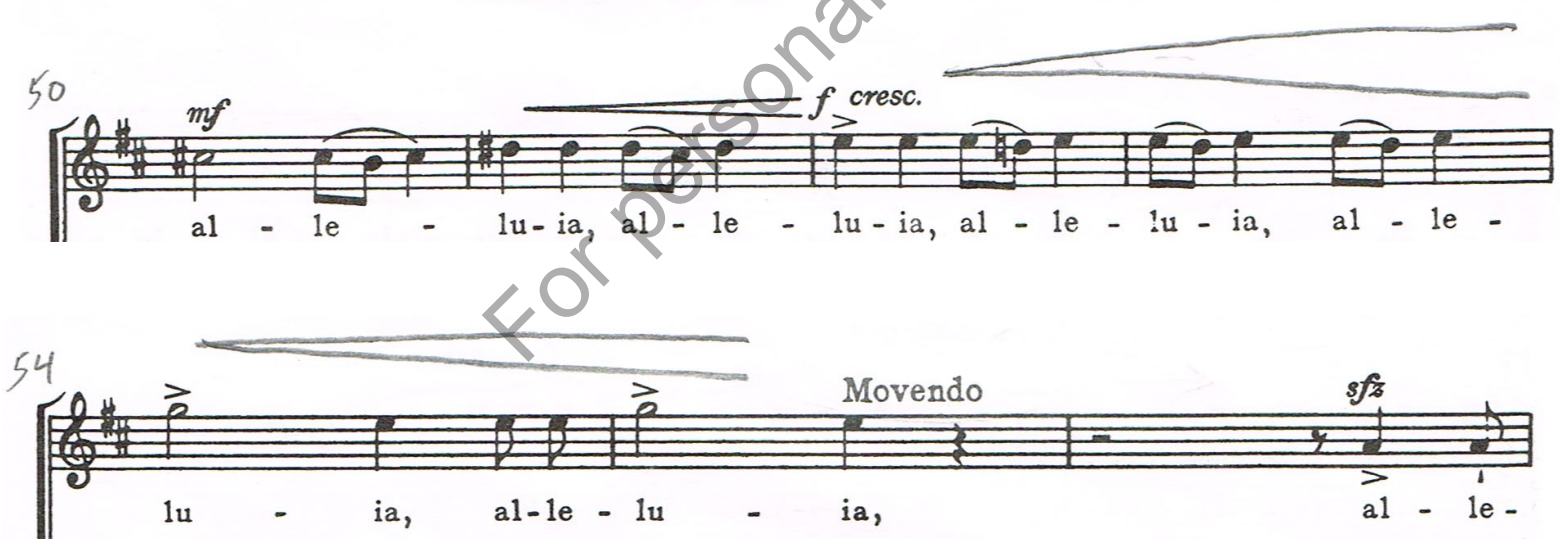
PHRASING – Gradual dynamic changes

MAKE IT BIG!!! COVER OTHER PARTS!!!

Hairpins work best.

Also **add reminders**, as needed.



Thompson: *Alleluia*, mm.50-56, soprano

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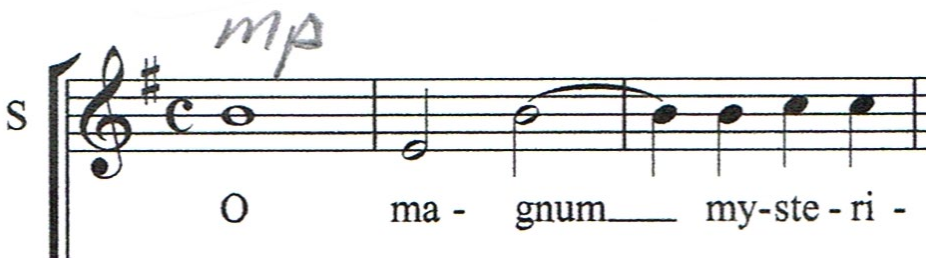
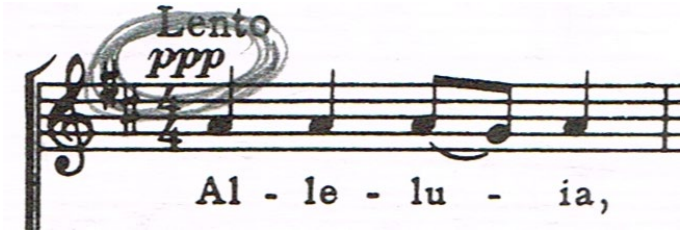
PHRASING – Dynamic markings

MAKE IT BIG!!!



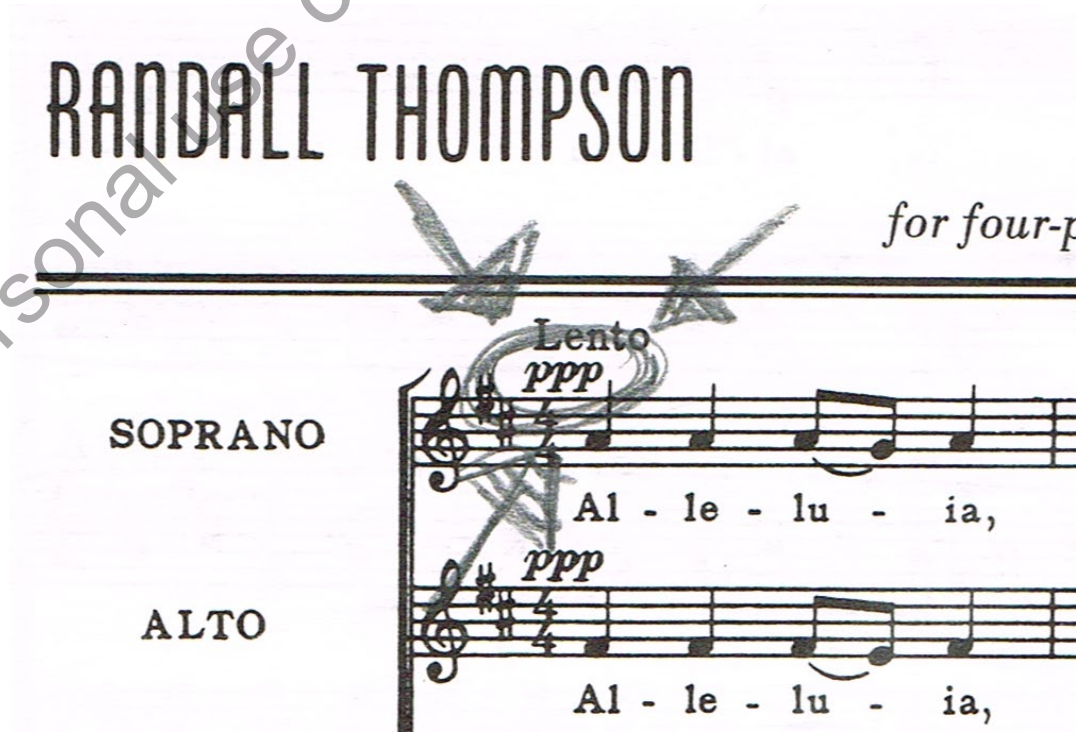
Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.1-3, soprano

Circle it obnoxiously!



Thompson: *Alleluia*, m.1, soprano

Or go *really* wild!



Thompson: *Alleluia*, m.1, soprano and alto

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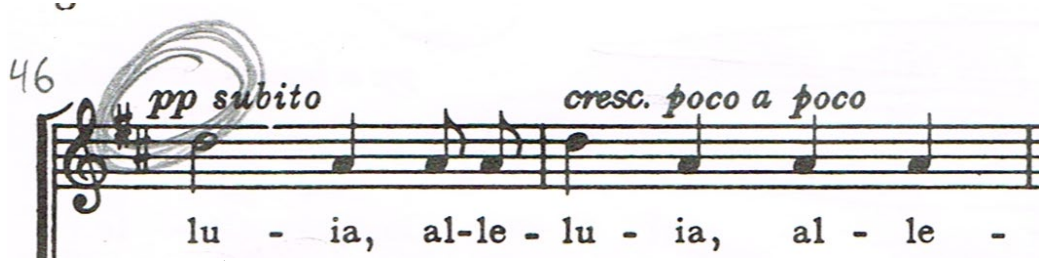
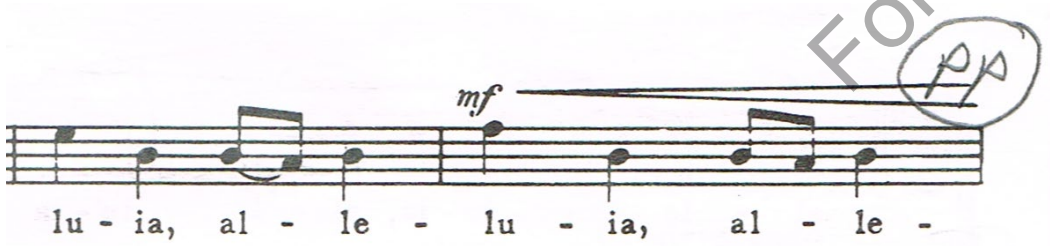
PHRASING – Page breaks

Mark it *before* you need it.





Thompson: *Alleluia*, mm.44-47, soprano

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PHRASING – Articulation

· > –

Place your articulations:

(a) Near the notehead.
(*This is standard editorial practice*)

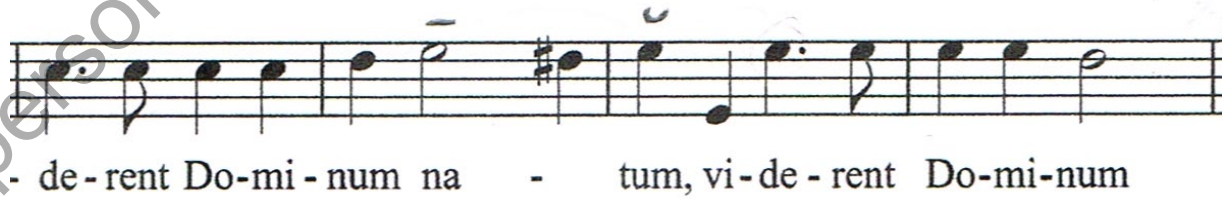
…or…

(b) **All *above* the staff**.
(*This is MUCH easier to see on the quick.*)

Can also use…

U **= weak, unaccented note**

… especially helpful at cadences,
and in a – U combination.



Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.23-26, tenor

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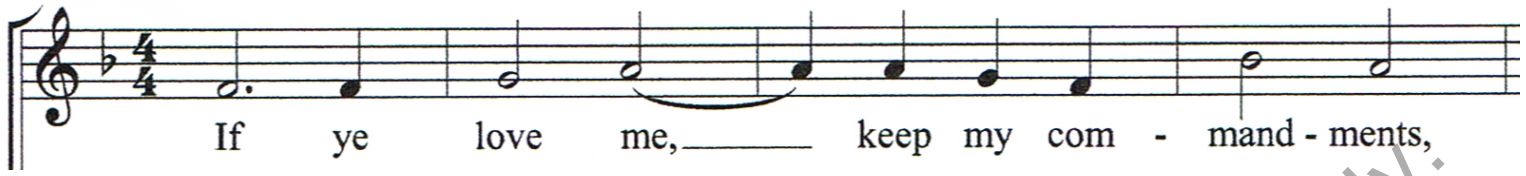
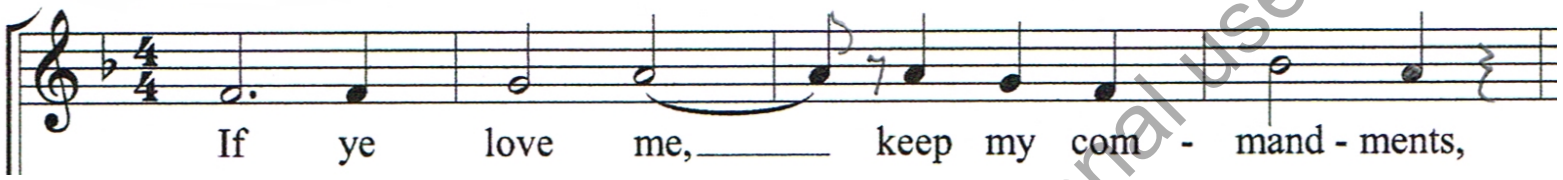
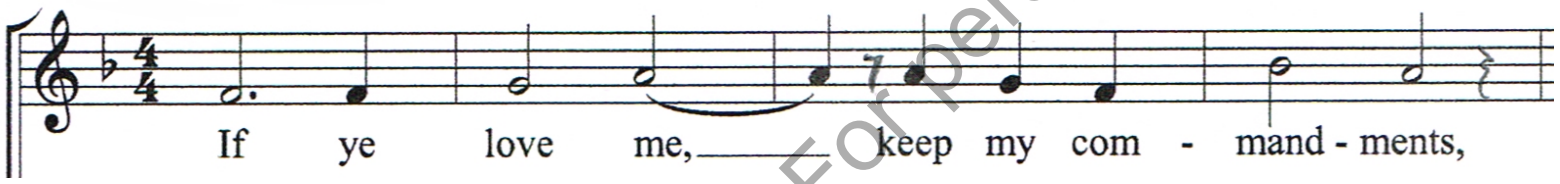
BREATHING – Rhythmic



Tallis: *If ye love me*, mm.2-4, soprano





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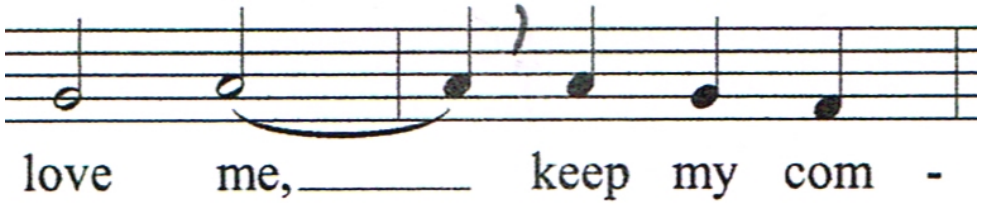
For strict accuracy,
re-write the rhythm.

Or **add rests alone**.

BUT cumbersome for small print,
and implies that the phrase breaks.

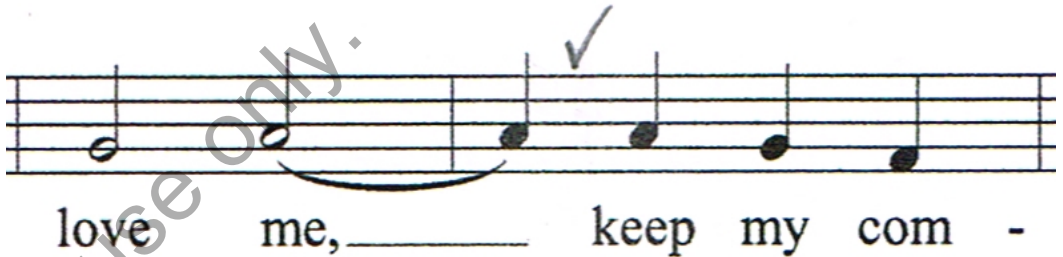
BREATHING – Alternate options

Curved line

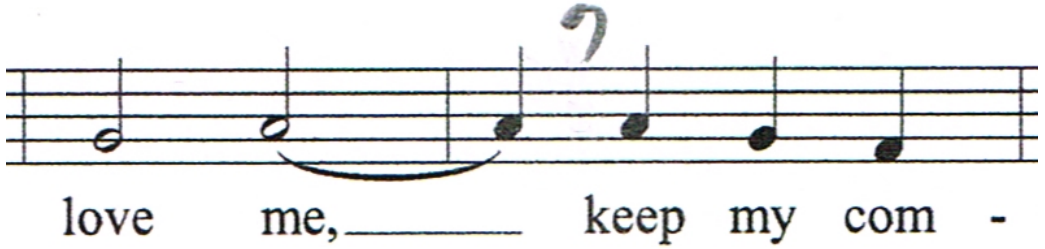


Tallis: *If ye love me*, mm.2-3, soprano

Check mark



Apostrophe



Need a big breath?

MAKE IT BIG!!!

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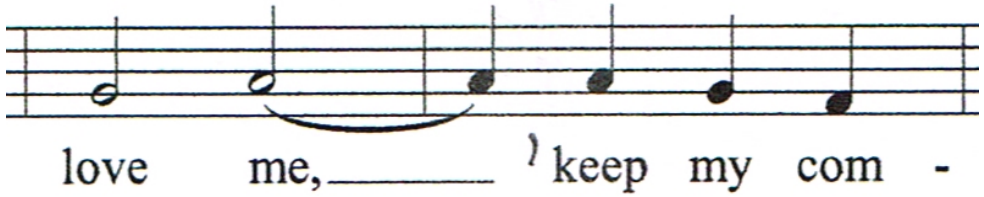
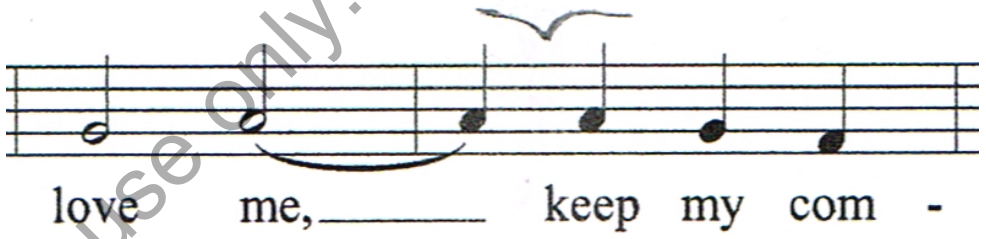
BREATHING – Not quite a breath

Glottal stop



Tallis: *If ye love me*, mm.2-3, soprano

No breath, but phrase



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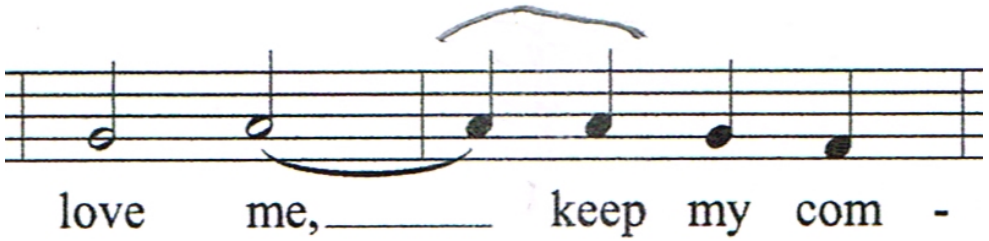
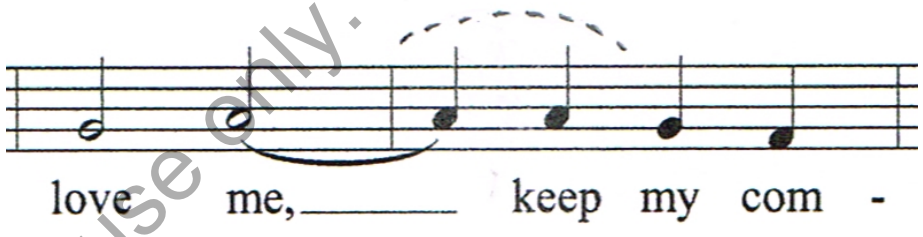
BREATHING – No breath

Slur

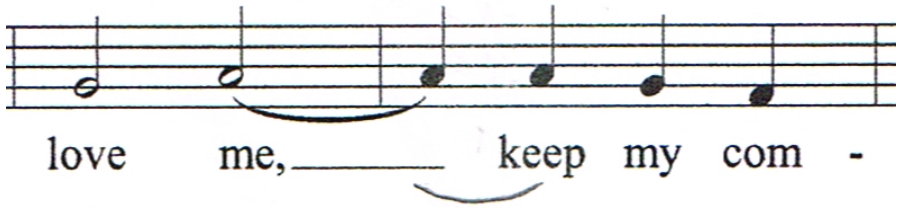


Tallis: *If ye love me*, mm.2-3, soprano

Dotted slur



Or below the text



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PHRASING & BREATHING

Phrasing

- **MAKE IT BIG!!** It's OK to cover other parts.
- Dynamic changes. Hairpins preferred.
- Dynamic markings. Make it big. Can circle and draw arrows. Mark *before* you need it.

Articulation

- Standard markings. Near the notehead, or all above staff.
- Weak syllable. Can use ∪ .

Breathing

- Rhythmic. Re-write rhythm, or just the rests.
- Alternatives. Curved line, check mark, apostrophe.
- Not quite a breath. Glottal stop, phrase points.
- No breath. Slur, or dotted slur. Above staff, or with text.

QUESTIONS? SUGGESTIONS?

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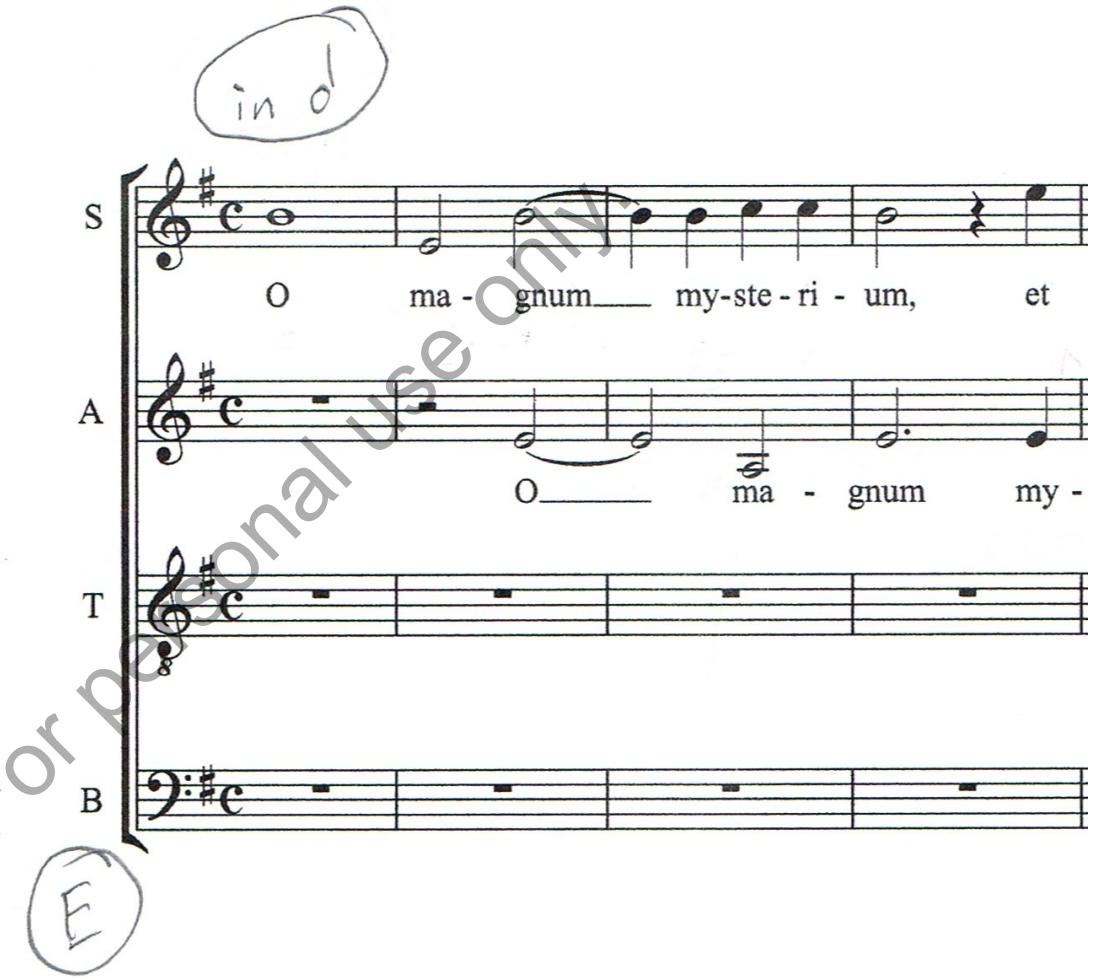
STRUCTURE – Starting

Write what unit gets the beat
(*or the conductor's beat pattern*)
above the soprano.

Write the given starting pitch
below the bass.



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Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.1-4, tutti

STRUCTURE – Measure numbers

- **Write at beginning of system**
  (*not every 5 or 10 bars*)

- Usually best to write **above the soprano staff**.

- When counting…
  ignore pick-up measures, and
  don’t re-count repeated measures.

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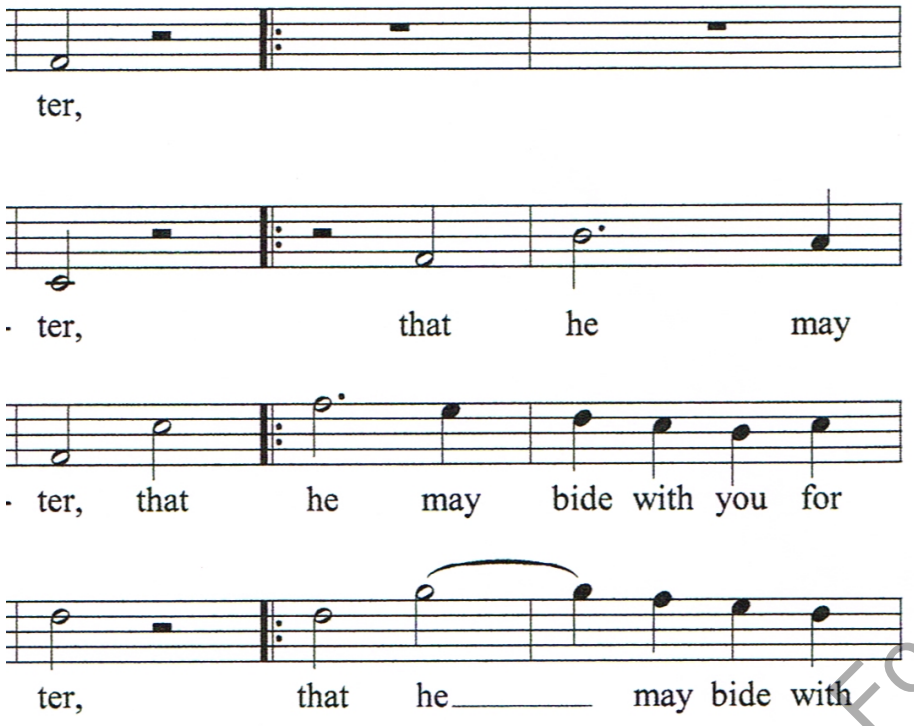
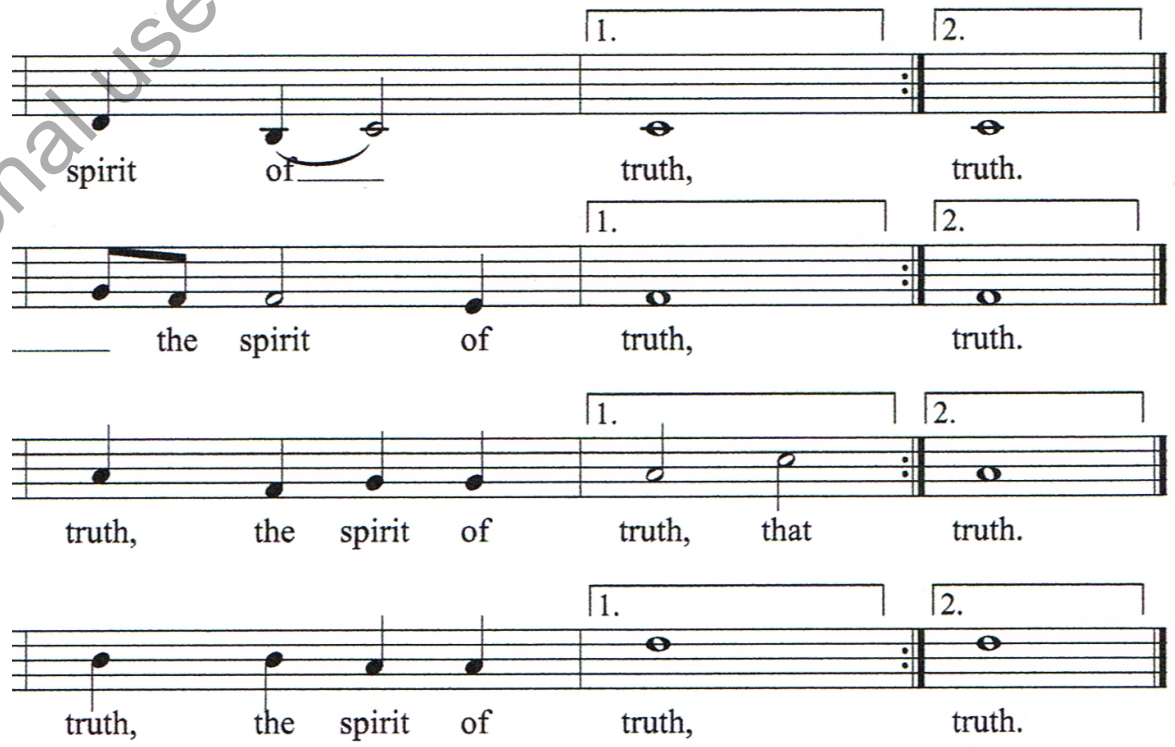
STRUCTURE – Repeats



Tallis: *If ye love me*, mm.13-15 & 25-27, tutti



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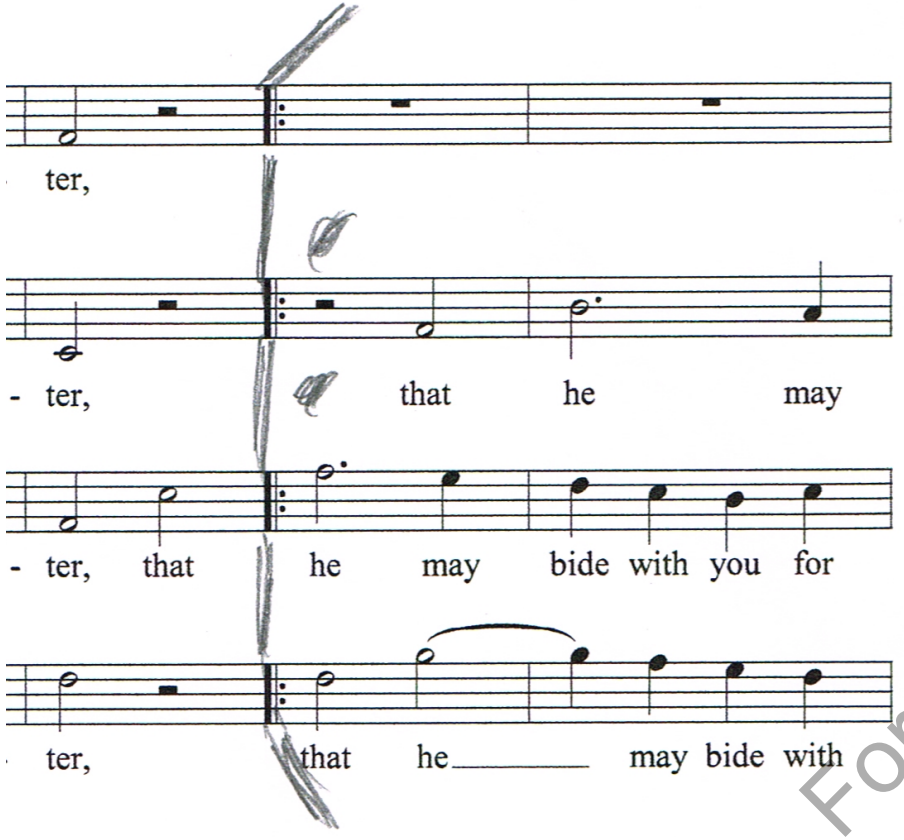
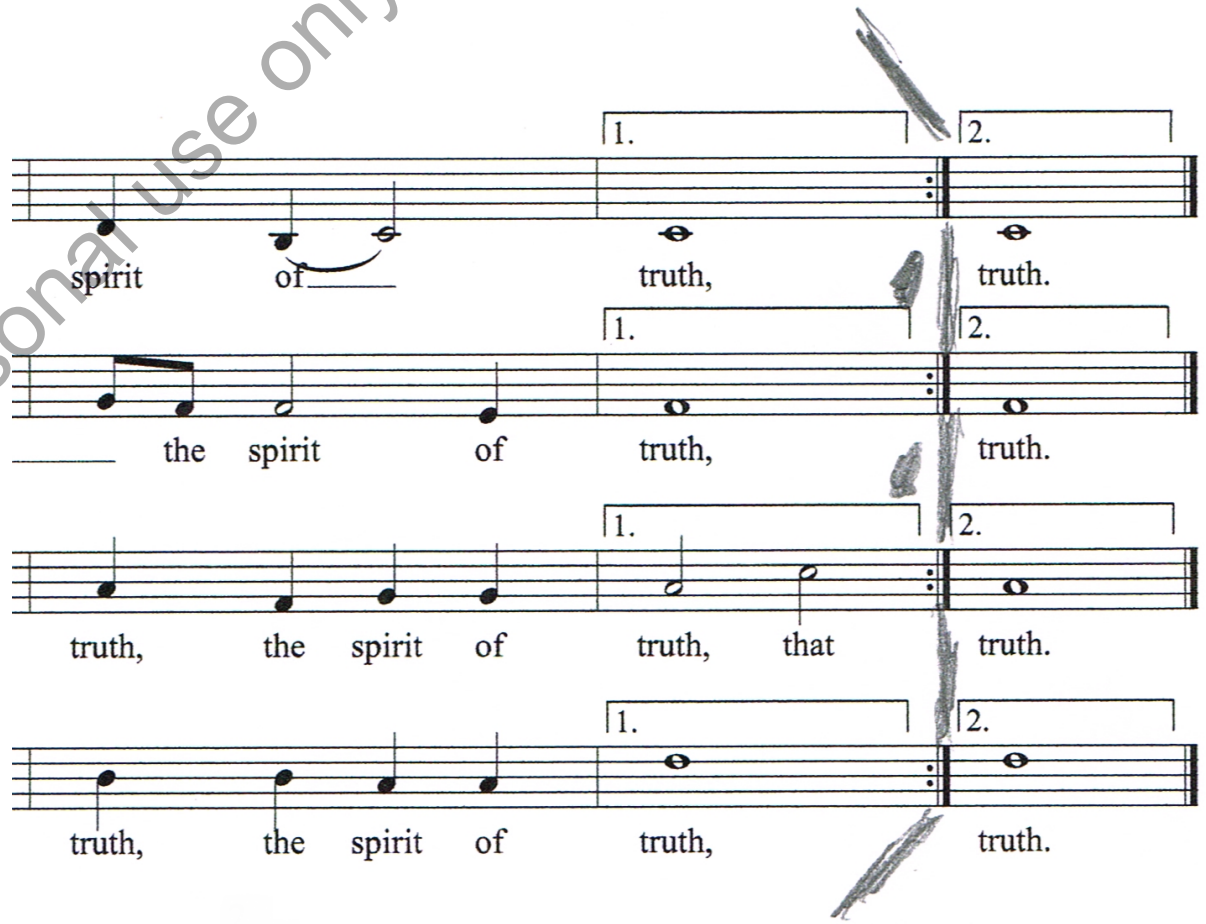
STRUCTURE – Repeats



Tallis: *If ye love me*, mm.13-15 & 25-27, tutti

MAKE IT BIG!!!



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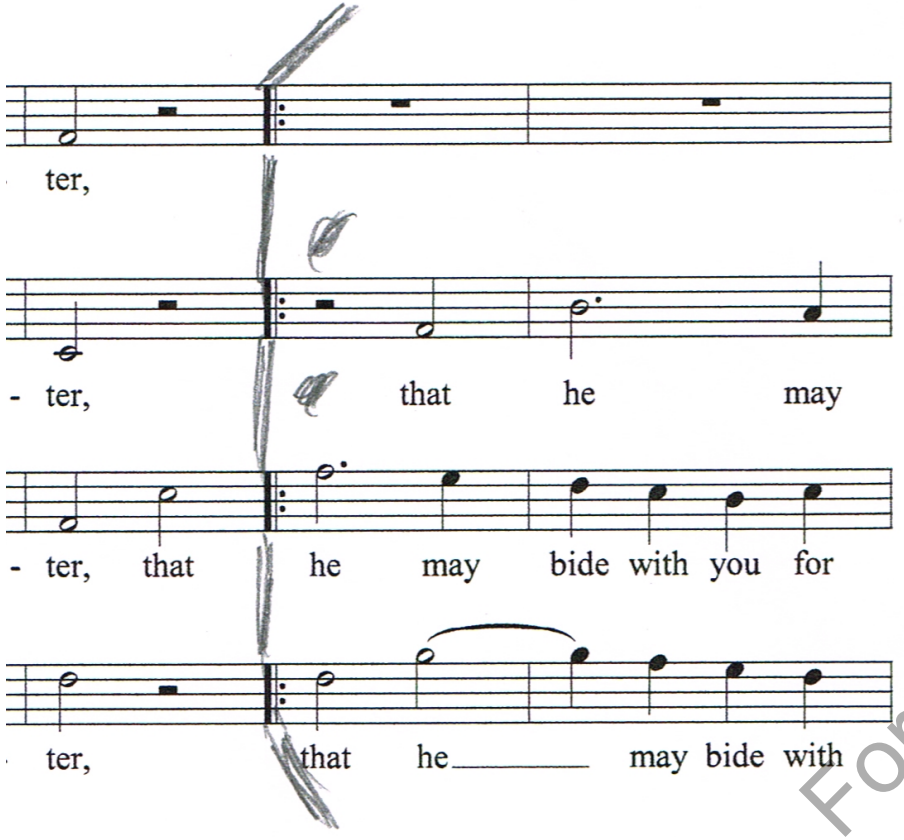
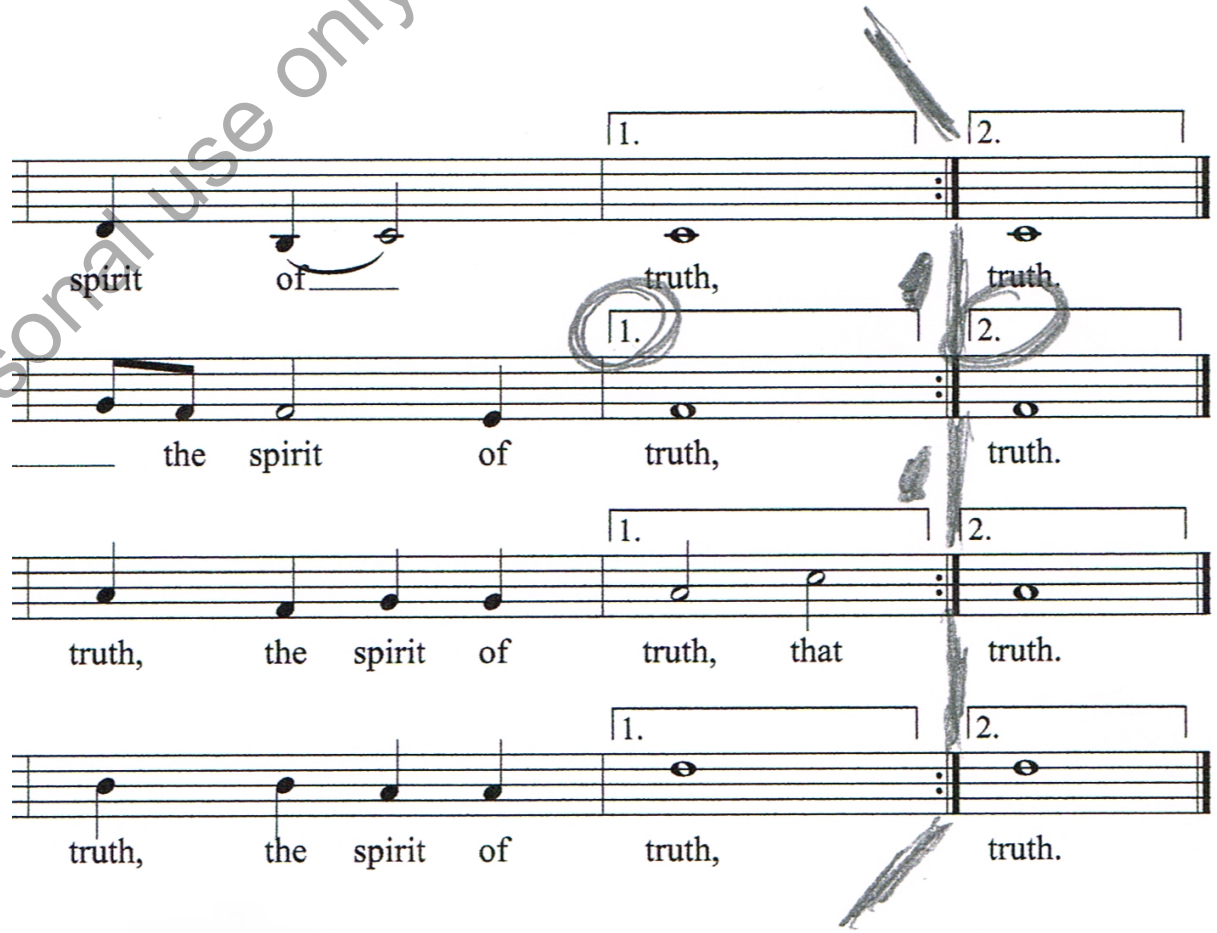
STRUCTURE – Repeats



Tallis: *If ye love me*, mm.13-15 & 25-27, tutti

MAKE IT BIG!!!

… and draw attention to first/second endings.



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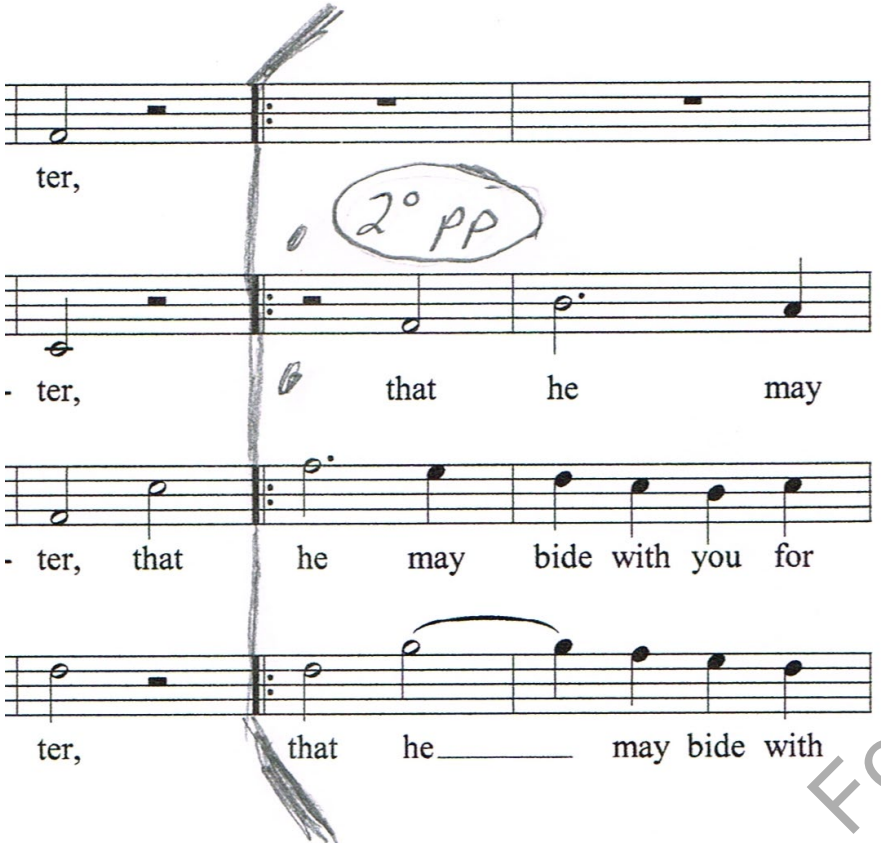
STRUCTURE – Repeats

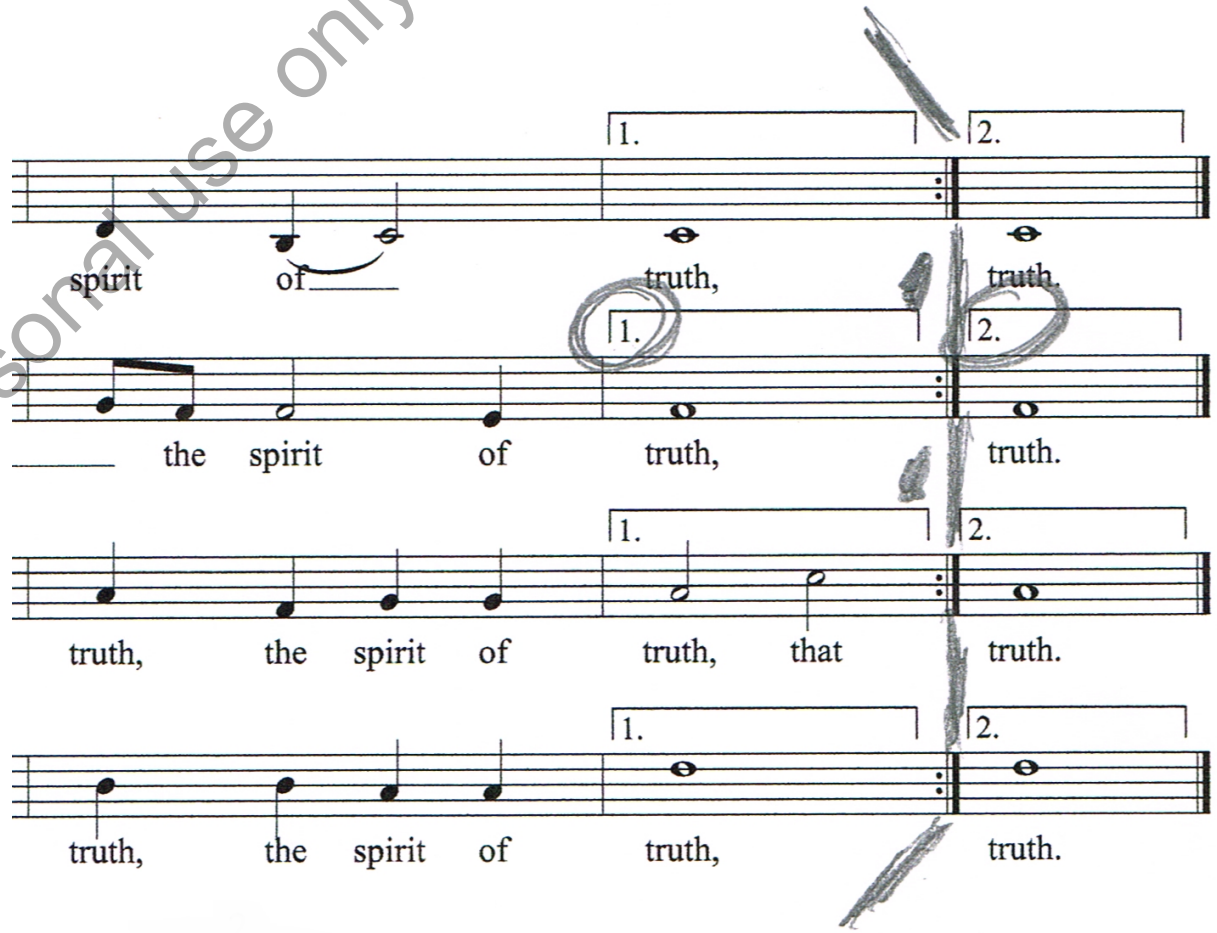


Tallis: *If ye love me*, mm.13-15 & 25-27, tutti

MAKE IT BIG!!!

… and draw attention to first/second endings.

… and note if there are differences the second time.



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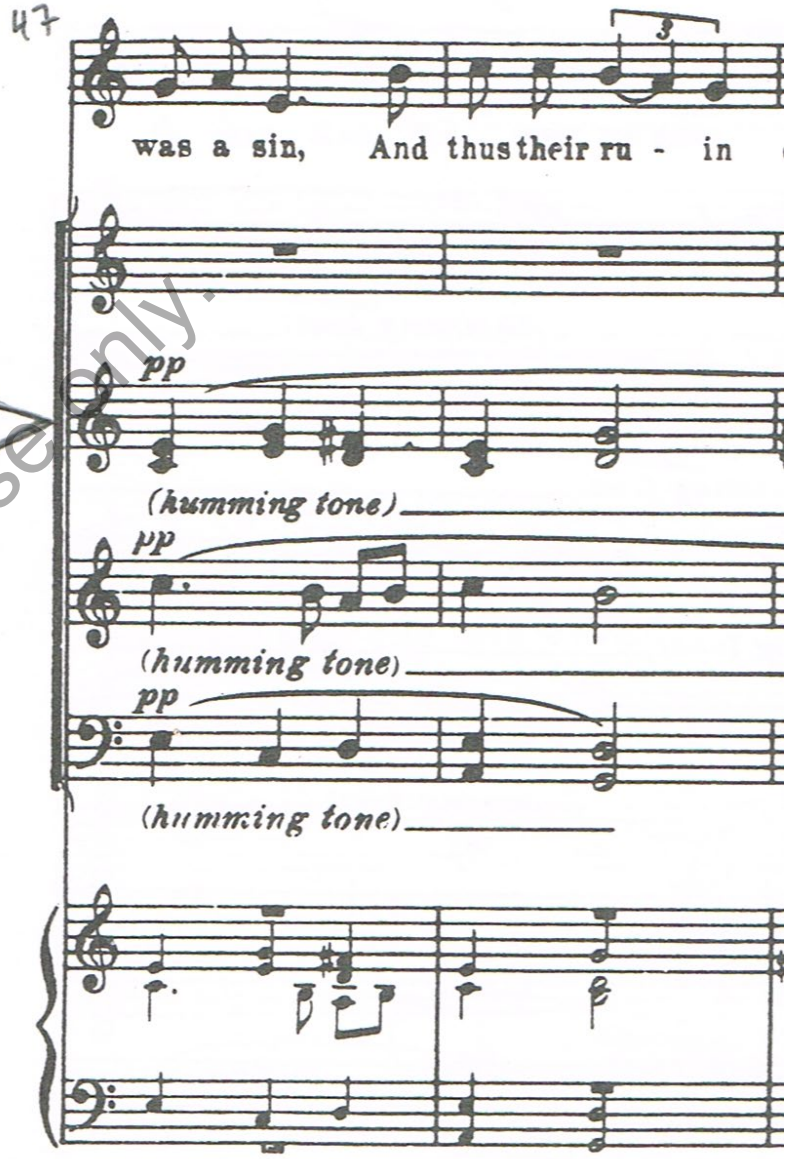
LAYOUT – Marking your line

- Some like to highlight their text.
  BUT that discourages
  (a) counting rests, and
  (b) noticing your relationship to other parts.

- Instead, **mark the beginning of your staff**.
  … or highlight just the beginning of the staff.
  … or highlight just the beginning of every other measure.



Vaughan Williams: *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, mm.47-48, tutti

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TEXT – Consonants

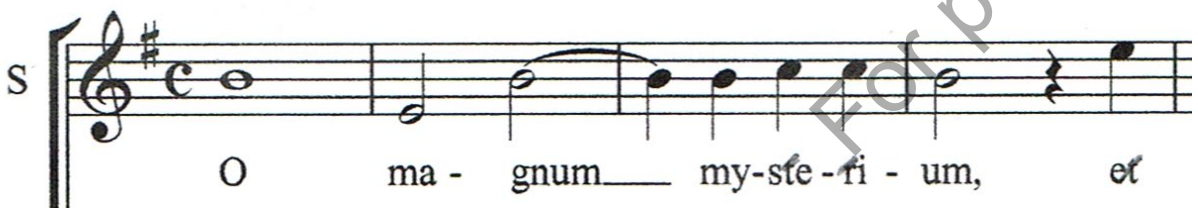
My top recommendation…

The **International Phonetic Alphabet** to the rescue!!!

As a start, attend Emerald Choral Academy, October 12th.

But, barring that…

Some advice if you're using English near-equivalents:
(*especially for Latin*)



Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.1-4, soprano

g = hard "g"
ǵ = soft "g"
(*or slash through top*)

ŕ = rolled or flipped "r"
(*or slash through top*)

ť = unaspirated
(*or slash through top*)

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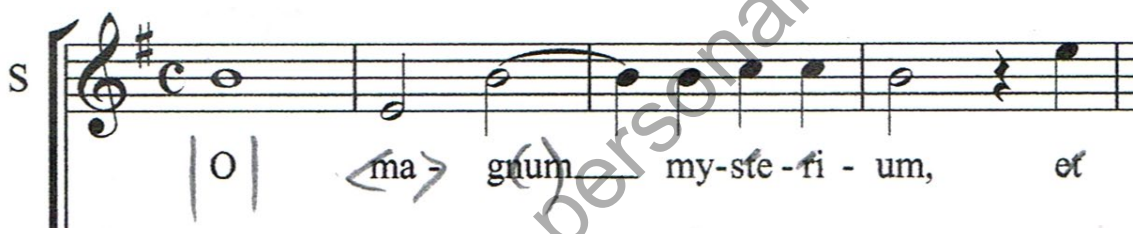
TEXT – Vowels

| | = “taller” vowel

< > = “brighter” vowel

( ) = “darker” vowel



Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.1-4, soprano

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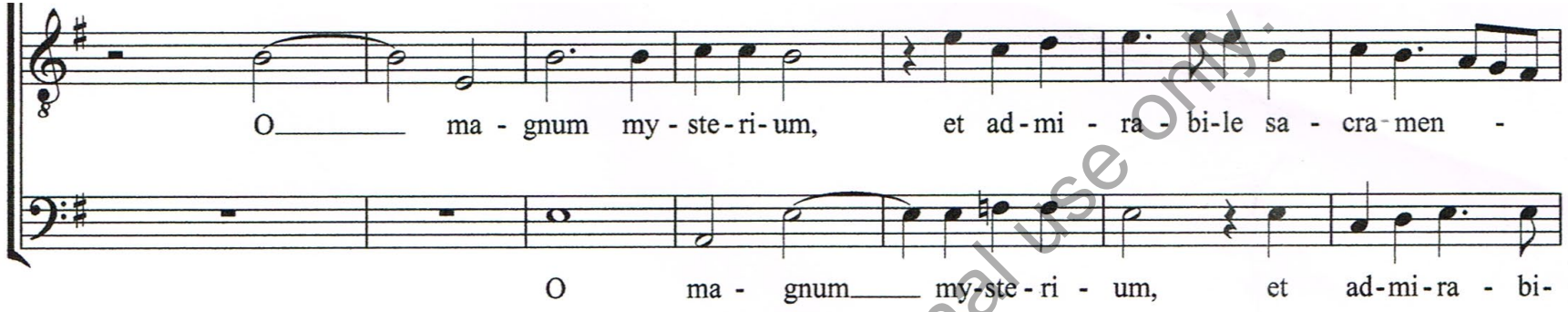
TEXT – Translation

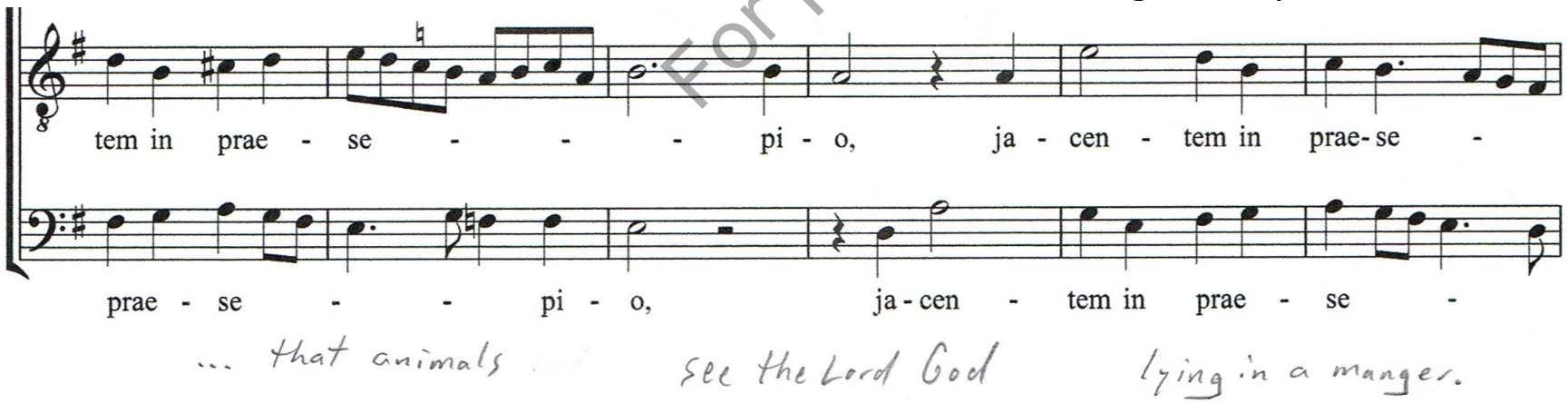
Some prefer word-for-word translations, under their text.

Write translation between systems, or at bottom of page.



Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.8-14, tenor and bass

Victoria: *O magnum mysterium*, mm.29-34, tenor and bass



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STRUCTURE & TEXT

Structure

- Starting. Write the given pitch and the unit that gets the beat.
- Measure numbers. Every system, above soprano.
- Repeats. **MAKE IT BIG!!** Mark even at start/end of piece.
- First and second endings. Draw attention. Note differences on second time.

Layout

- Marking your line. Arrow at start of system.

Text

- Consonants. Slash above (or through) for soft g, rolled r, unaspirated t.
- Vowels. | | = taller. < > = brighter. ( ) = darker.
- Translation. Write between systems, or at bottom of page.

QUESTIONS? SUGGESTIONS?

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Practical Score Markings

Gary D. Cannon

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Emerald Choral Academy

Thursday, September 3, 2020

www.emeraldensemble.org/eca

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Location — Size — Shapes —Symbols

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