A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Bethlehem

a children's Christmas musical
with piano and split-track accompaniment



Preview Only

story and lyrics by Emil Bertalot
music by Taras Nahirniak

"A funny thing happened on the way to Bethlehem"

A very different Christmas Pageant.

Story and Lyrics by Emil Bertalot
Music by Taras Nahirniak

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SONGBOOK

SCENE 1: Luke at his desk/Mary & Joseph in the desert

Luke is sitting at a table, with a quill in his hand and a scroll spread out in front of him. He's writing. After a moment, he looks up and notices the audience for the first time.

Luke: Another day, another morning at the scrolls. It's my job, you see. In the old days I used to travel more, spreading the good word to anyone who would listen. But now, I'm getting old and the legs don't work as well as they used to. So the Lord tells me, "I'm giving you a new job, one that requires your hands instead of your feet." I ask him what He means. "Write down the story," he says.

And I ask, "the whole thing?" And he says, "Of course the whole thing!" So here I am, telling it, building it, watching it take shape, one word, one sentence, one paragraph at a time. With His guidance, of course. I sometimes forget a detail here and there, so He helps me remember. Always looking over my shoulder!

(Music starts)
Of course I don't mind. It's very good story. Perhaps, the best story of all.
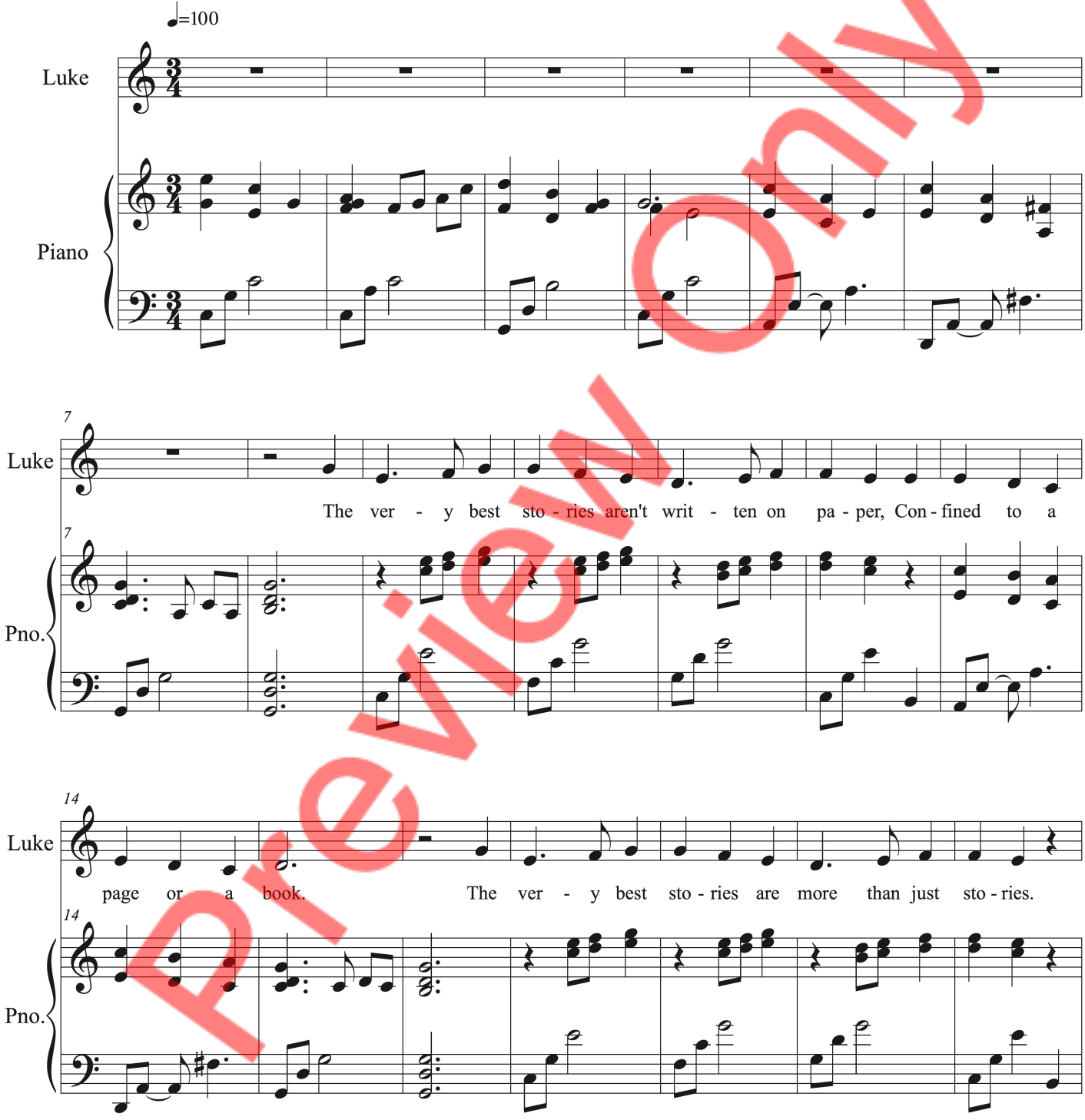
(Dialogue during song)
It's not an easy assignment, you know. I suspect every word has a value, every sentence an insight, every paragraph, an inspiration. How can I possibly write such a story? It's very simple; I don't. *(points up to the sky)* HE does.

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The Very Best Stories
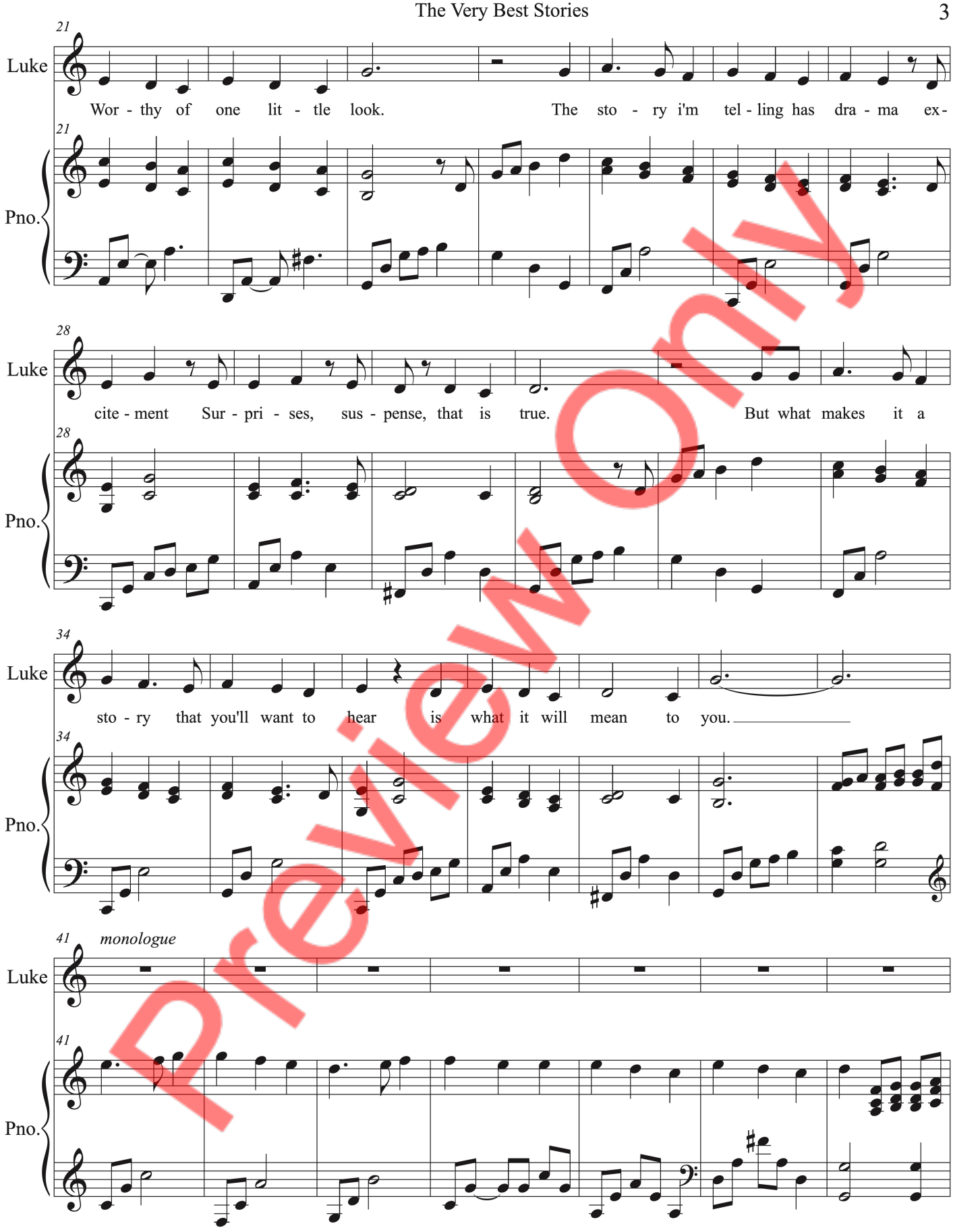
Emil Bertalot

Taras Nahirniak
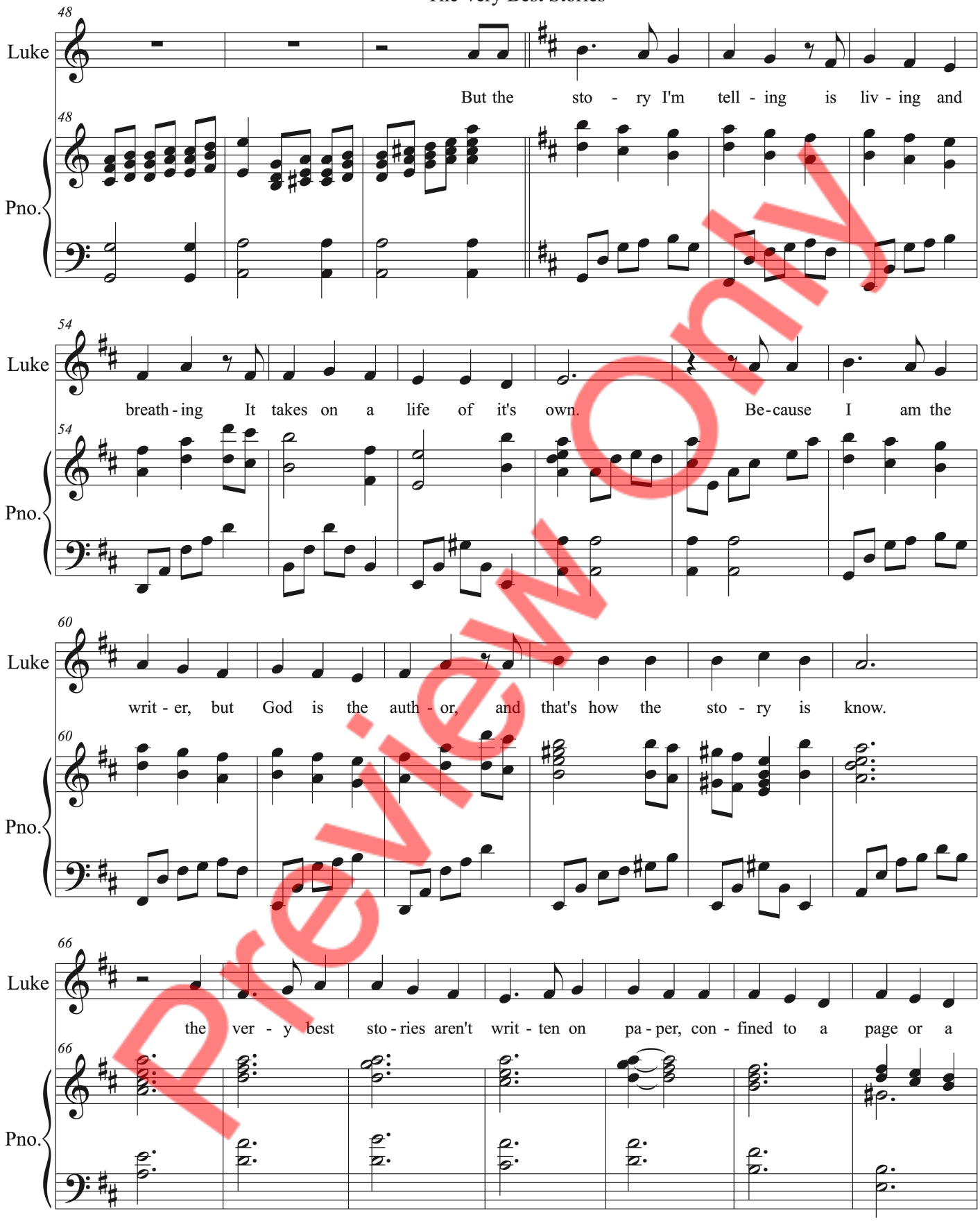


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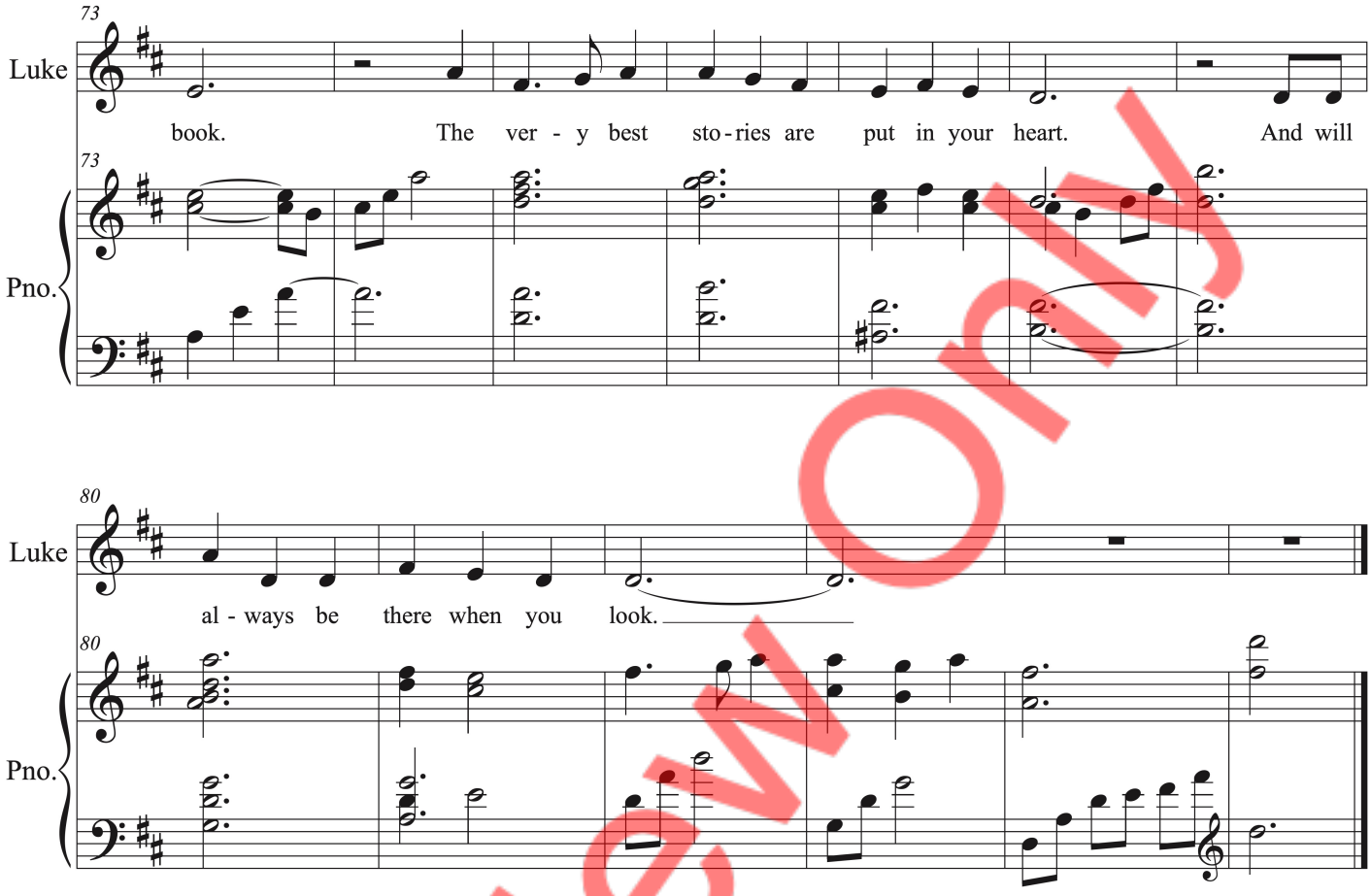
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The Very Best Stories



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Luke: Let's see now . . . where was I? Oh yes . . .

He begins to write on the scroll.

Luke: And it came to pass in those days *that* a decree went out from Caesar Augustus . . .
He pauses to dip his quill into ink.

Luke: that all the world should be registered. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

He pauses to dip his quill into ink.

Luke: Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth,

At the word "Joseph," Joseph should appear on stage, perhaps from a hiding place behind a prop, as if Luke's words brought him into being.

Luke: to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child.

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At the word "Mary," Mary should appear on stage, perhaps from a hiding place behind a prop, as if Luke's words brought her into being. She joins Joseph on stage and they just start to walk down the aisle.

Luke: And so it was —

A deep, booming, off-stage voice suddenly interrupts Luke. Mary and Joseph freeze.
GOD: LUKE.

Luke: Lord, is that you?

GOD: LUKE. COME WITH ME. I HAVE NEED OF YOU.

Luke: But, but Lord, I was just telling the story of Christmas. The birth of your son!

GOD: LUKE.

Luke: But I can't stop just now, and leave Mary and Joseph wandering in the desert!

GOD: LUKE . . . I AM YOUR FATHER.

Luke: Oh, very well, Lord. When you call, I answer. These old legs could use some stretching anyway.

Luke gets up from the table and departs off-stage. After a pause,
Mary and Joseph unfreeze, as if awakening from a trance.

MARY: Joseph?

JOSEPH: Mary?

MARY: Where are we?

JOSEPH: Judging by all this sand, I'd say . . . the desert.

MARY: But why? What are we doing out here?

JOSEPH: I don't know. It was like a voice was guiding us . . . and now it's gone. Do you remember anything?

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MARY: There was something about Caesar . . .

JOSEPH: And a . . . salad?

MARY: No.

JOSEPH: A palace?

MARY: No.

JOSEPH: Wait . . . a census!

MARY: That's it!

MARY: Because Caesar had decreed it! *(pause)* You know what?
JOSEPH: What?

MARY: That's an awful idea!

JOSEPH: You said it!

(What's The Sense of a Census starts)

(Dialogue during the song)

JOSEPH: Don't worry Mary, we'll be out of this hot sun soon.

MARY: But where? I don't see any sign of a town.

JOSEPH: I'm sure there's one not far from here.
MARY: How far?

JOSEPH: I don't know. They won't invent GPS devices for another 2,000 years.
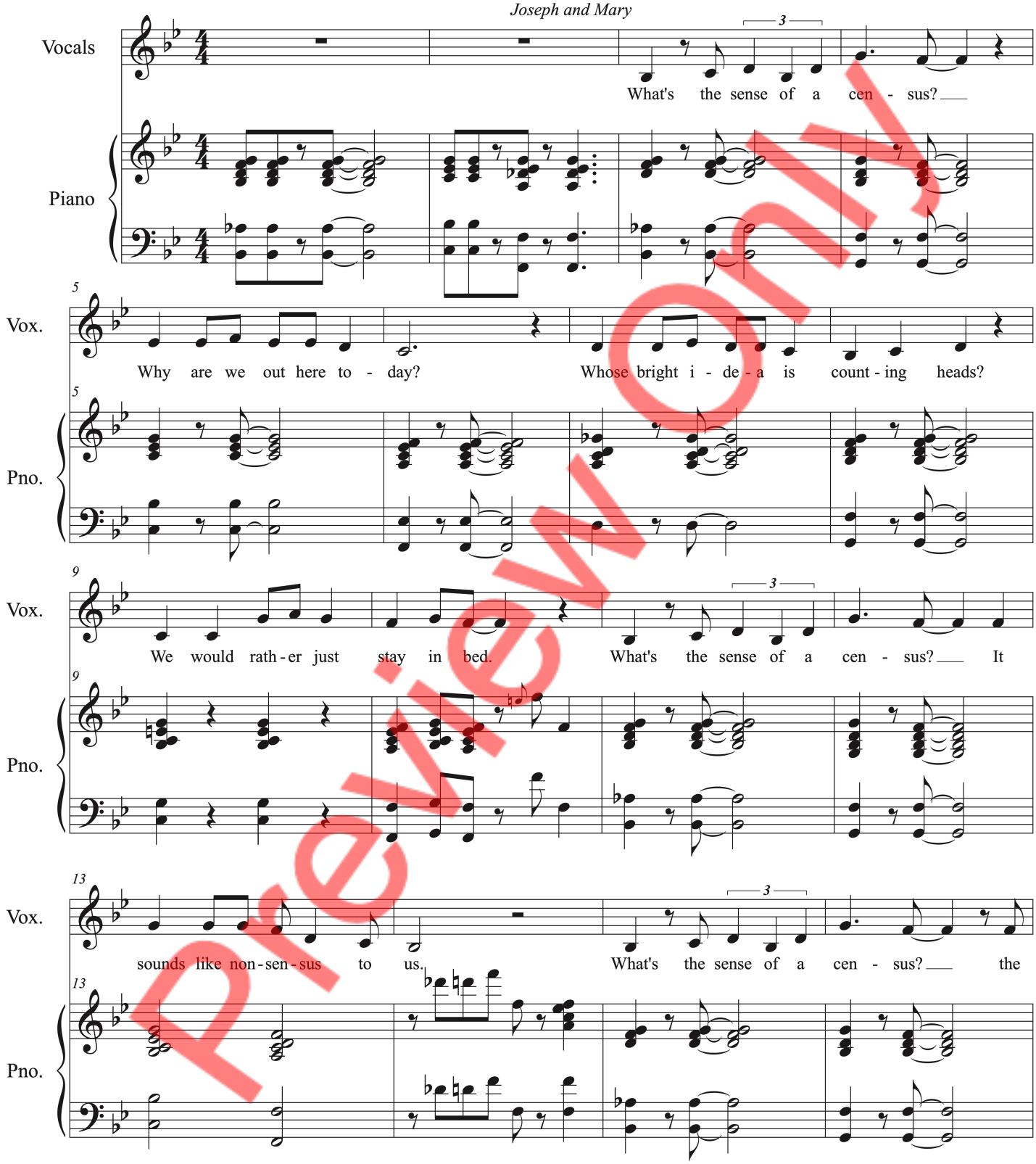
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What's The Sense

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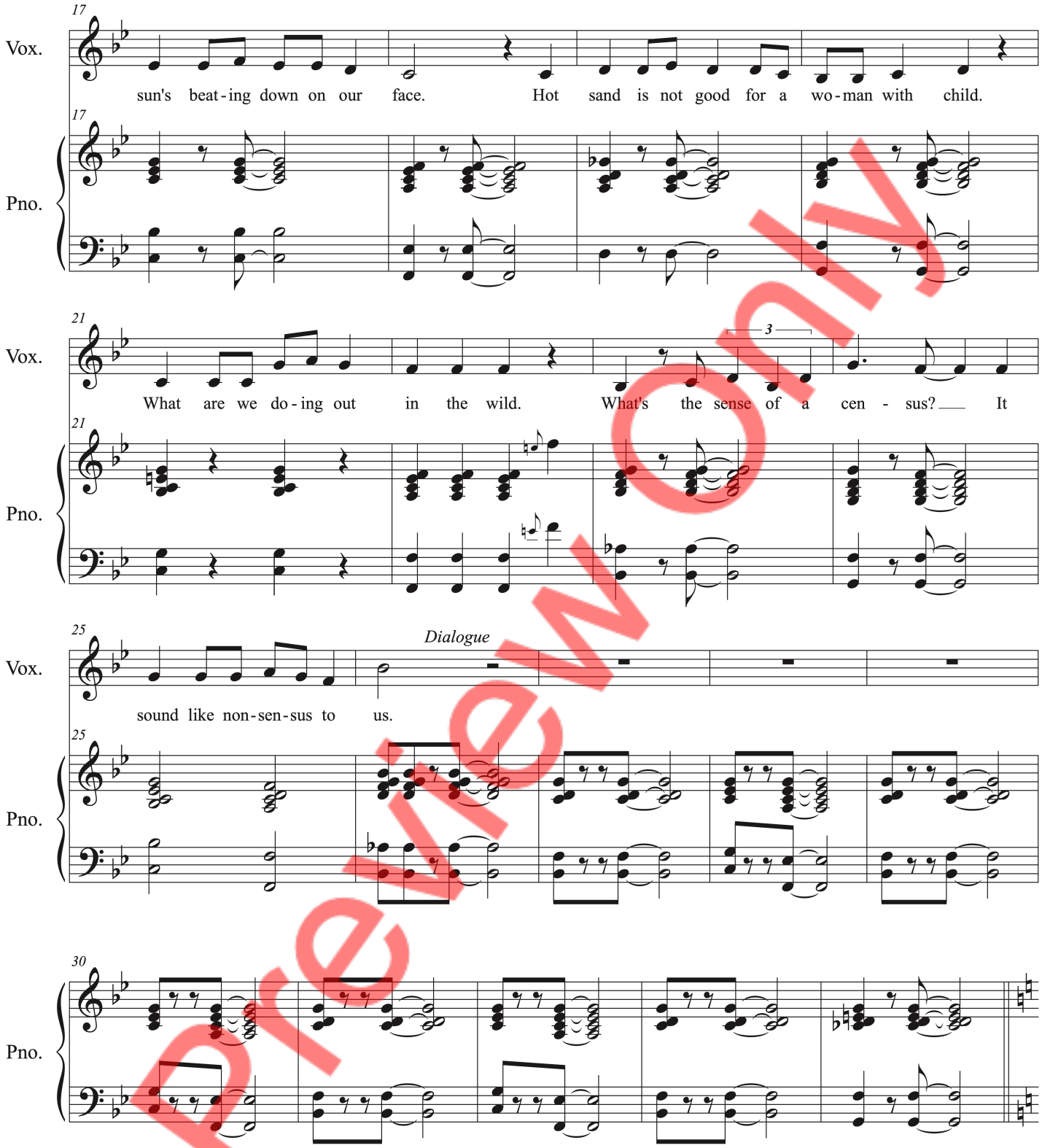
Taras Nahirniak

Joseph and Mary
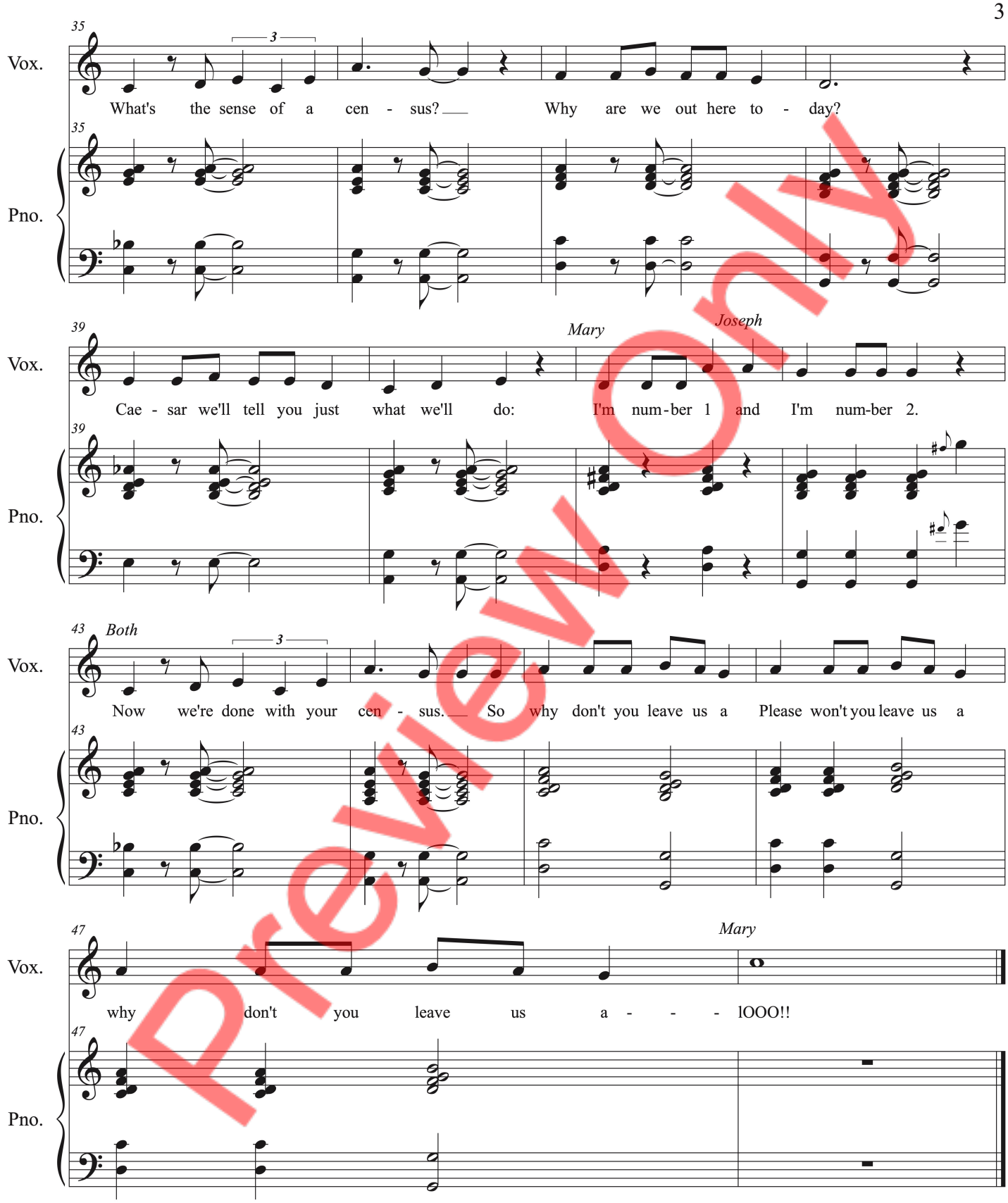


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JOSEPH: What is it?

MARY: The baby. It won't be long now.

JOSEPH: We have to find shelter for the night. Come on, I thought I saw something over the next ridge.

SCENE 2: Main Street of Christmastown

They walk down the aisle, then back up one side. As they near the front again, they continue:

MARY: Brrrr! How cold it gets at night in the desert!

JOSEPH: Yes, it is cold. Cold enough to —

Small flakes fall down upon their heads.

MARY: What's this?

JOSEPH: Snow!
MARY: Joseph, look!

They notice the buildings and props. Lights on the buildings are turned on. Elves and reindeer hurry around the stage, with elves carrying wrapped presents back and forth and reindeer prancing and jumping. It's all very frantic-feeling.

MARY: Those buildings! The lights! I've never seen anything like them!

JOSEPH: And look! Are they children?

MARY: I don't think so. Their ears . . .

JOSEPH: They're pointed!

MARY: Where are we, Joseph?

All the elves and reindeer pause, as if hearing them for the first time, and turn to face them.

Elf 1: Where are you?

Elf 2: You must be lost!

Elf 3: You must be new!

Elf 4: With all the presents?

Elf 1: And the snow?

Elf 3: And the elves?

Elf 4: And you don't know?

ALL: Ho ho ho!
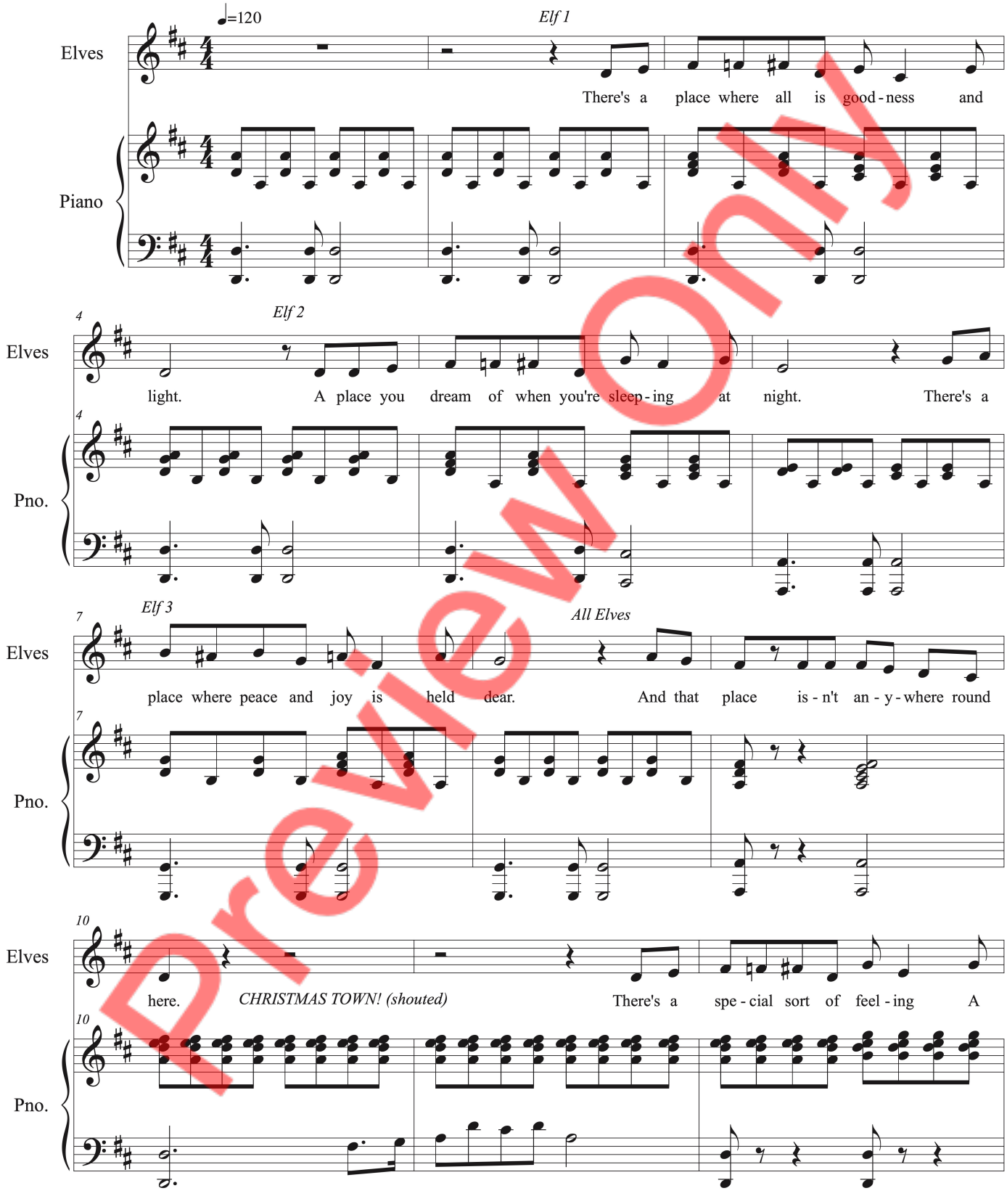
Elf 1: Hit it, gang!

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Welcome to Christmas Town
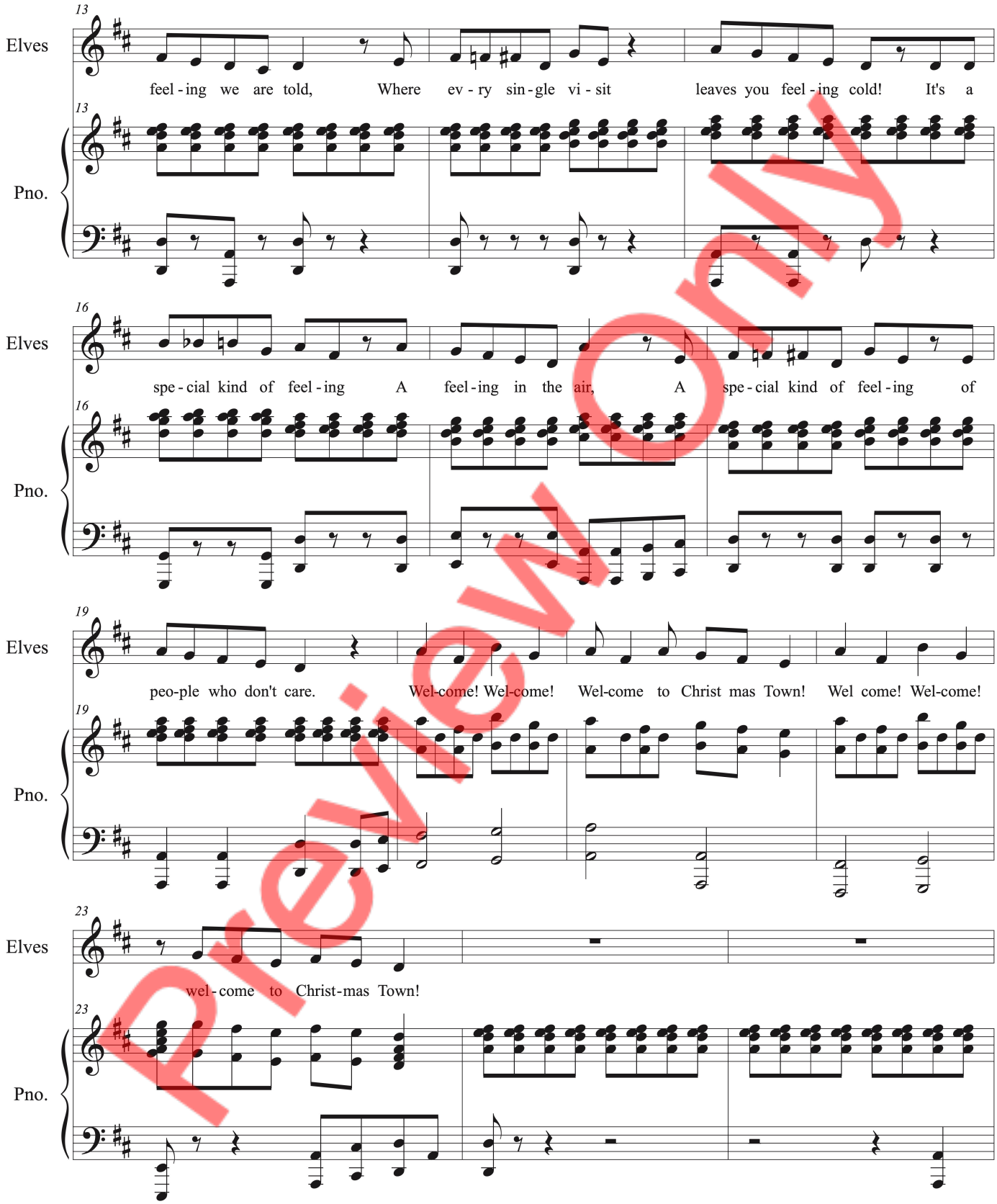
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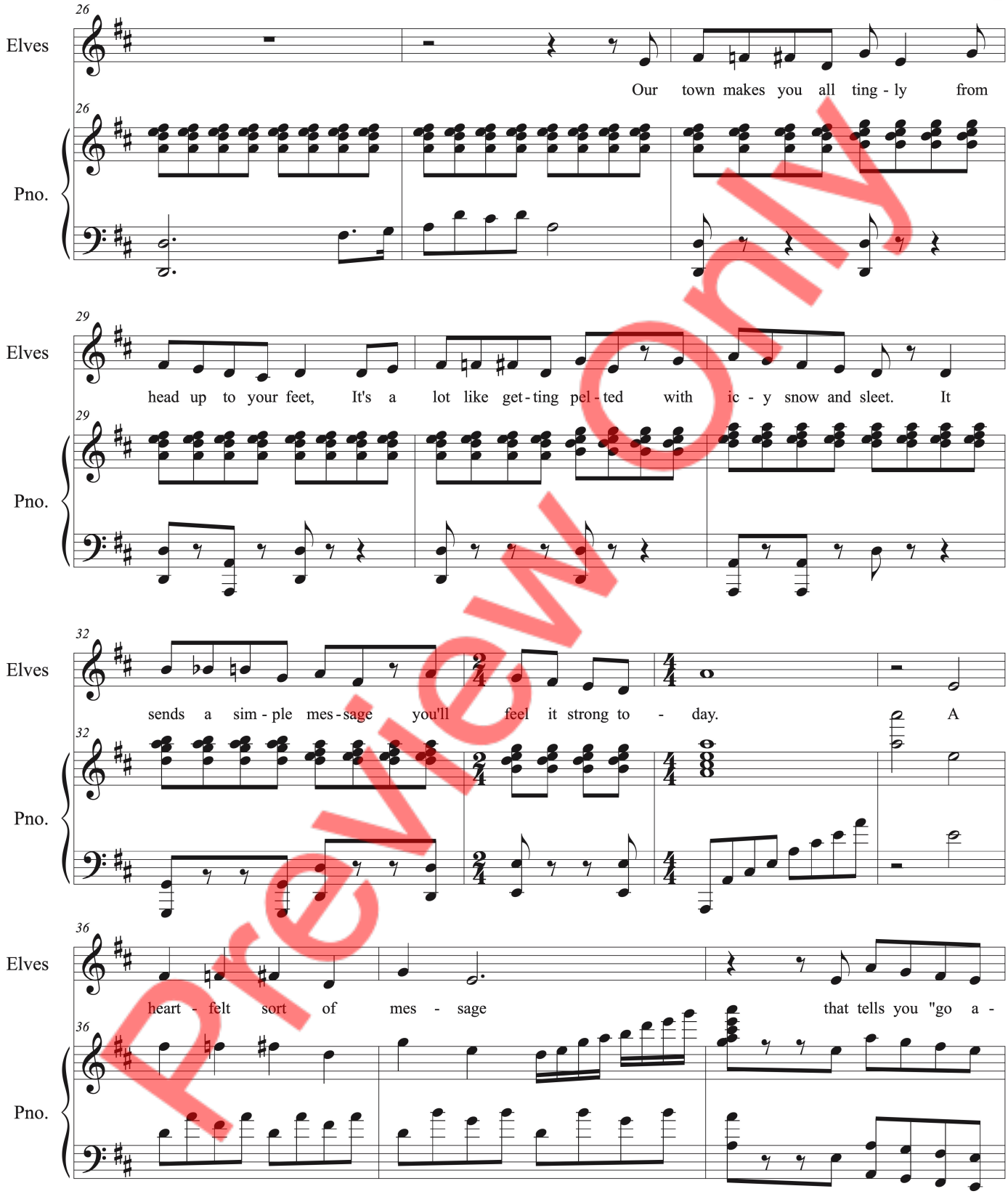


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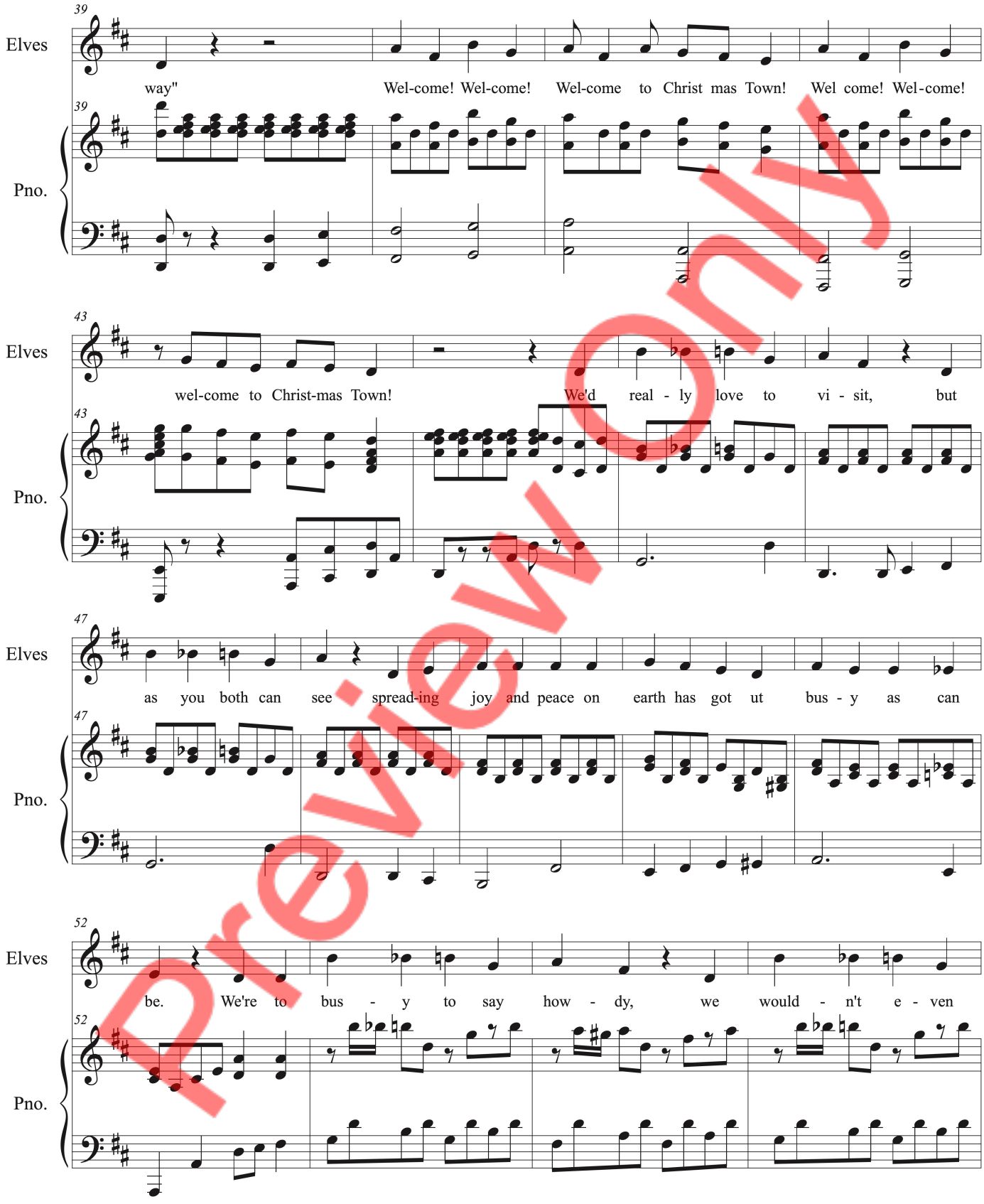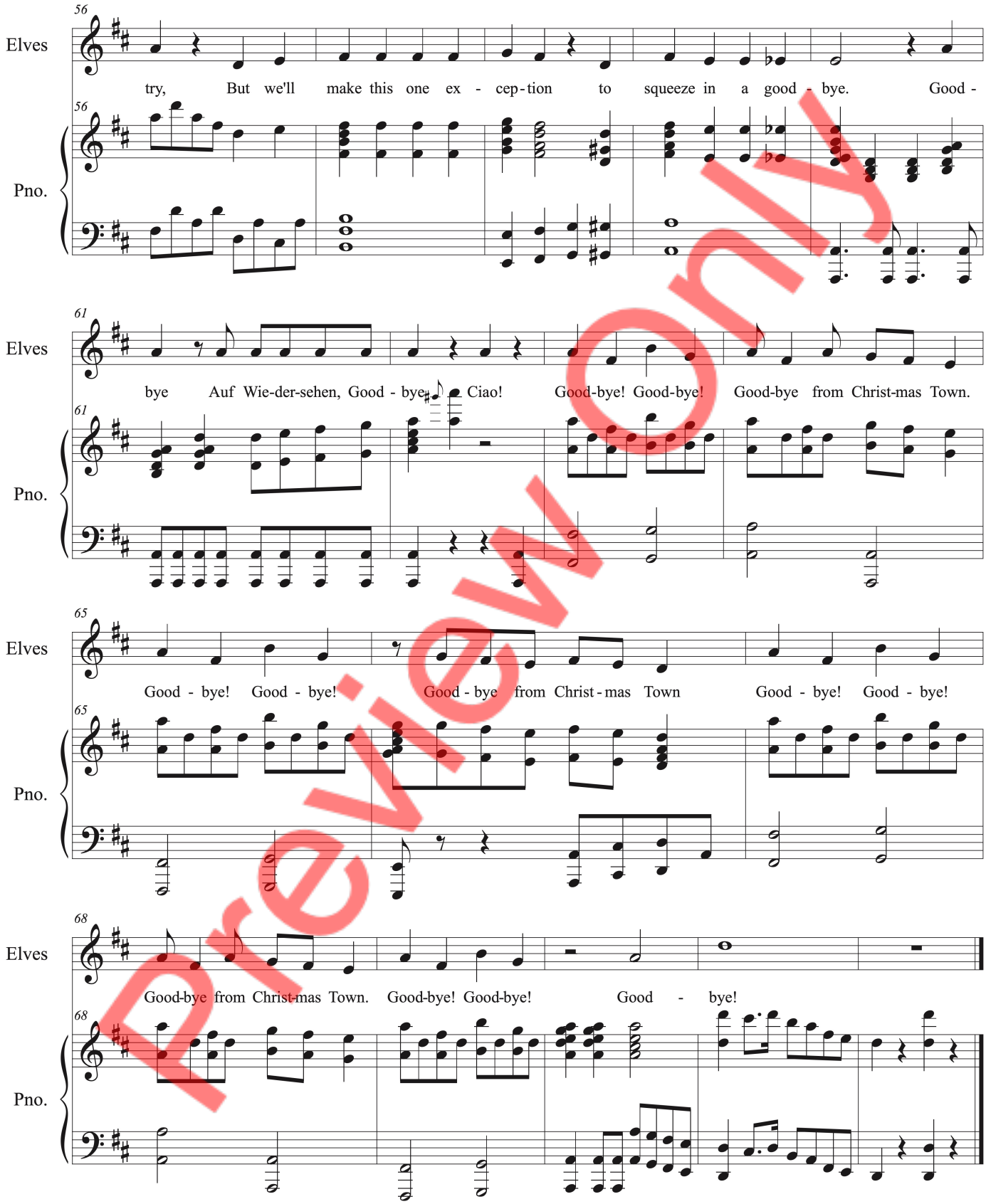
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All the elves and reindeer march off, waving.

MARY: So this is . . . Christmastown?

JOSEPH: I've never heard of it. But then, I don't get out of Nazareth much.

MARY: It's strange, but there's something . . . well . . . familiar about it.

JOSEPH: Strange or familiar, we have to find you a place to rest.

MARY: But they've all gone away!

A lone elf has re-entered the scene. He picks up a present he's forgotten, and begins carrying it off-stage.

JOSEPH: Not all of them! Look!

MARY: Excuse me? Are you one of the . . . elves?

ELF 1: I don't want to be an elf. I want to be a dentist.

MARY: What's a dentist?

ELF 1: They specialize in wide open mouths.

MARY: Oh, so you're a prophet!

JOSEPH: Can you help us? My wife is with child and needs a place to rest for the night.

ELF 1: Sorry, there's no room anywhere in Christmastown. It's the busy season.

MARY: Busy season?
ELF 1: Yep, the 365 days leading up to the big night — Christmas Eve! I've got to go — they're waiting for these snuggies up at headquarters!

Elf begins to leave.

JOSEPH: Wait! We only need a place to rest for the night! Can't you help us?

Elf stops and sighs.

ELF 1: Tell you what — check with the reindeer. There might be room in their manger!

MARY: Where is this manger, prophet?

ELF 1: Three prances up the road, take a right on Candy Cane Lane, turn left at the snowman who keeps yelling "happy birthday." Gotta go!

Elf runs off.

MARY: Joseph?

JOSEPH: Come on Mary, just a little further.

They leave the stage. The elf reappears, watching them go, then exits himself.
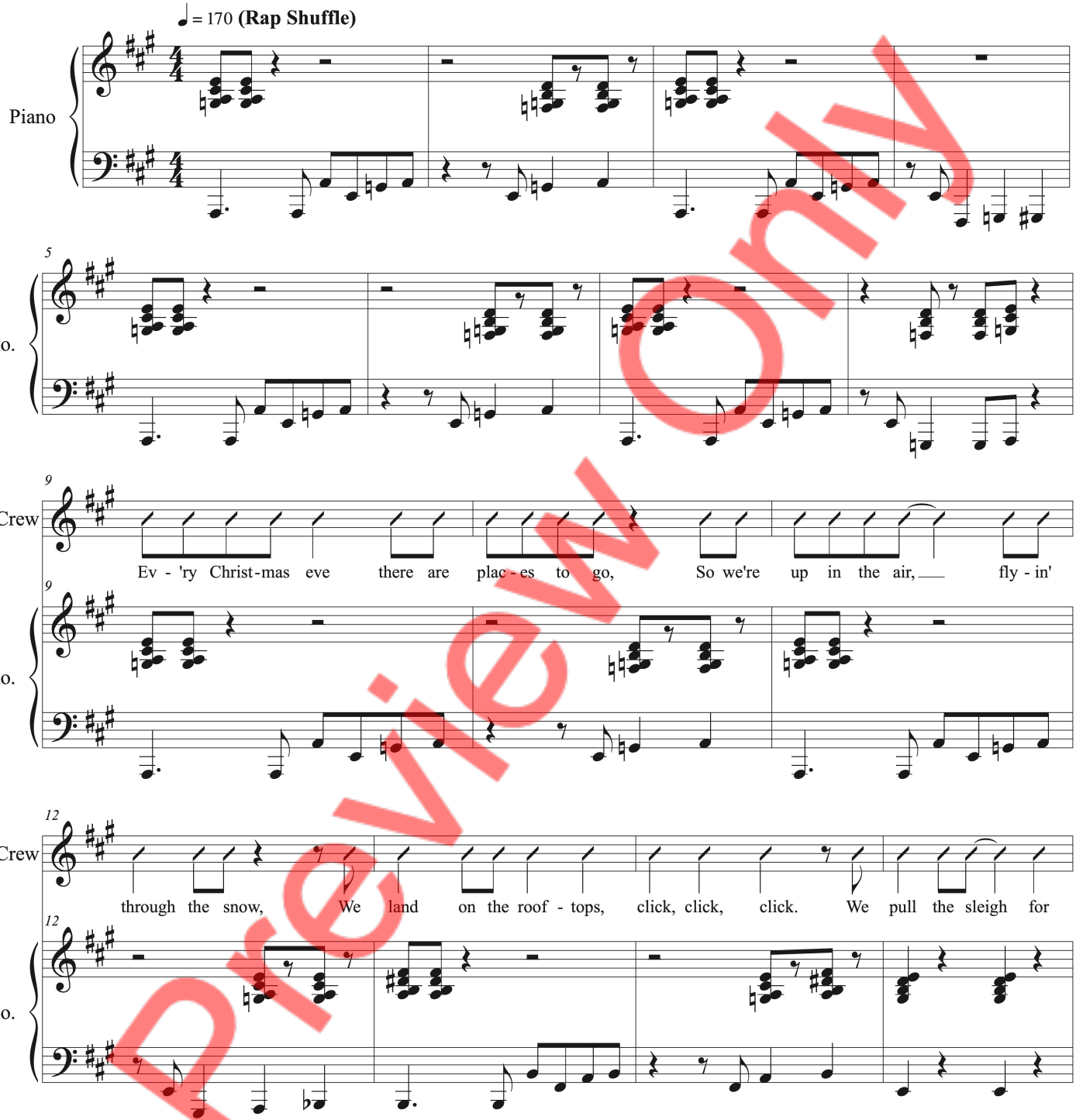
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Piano Vocal

Reindeer Crew

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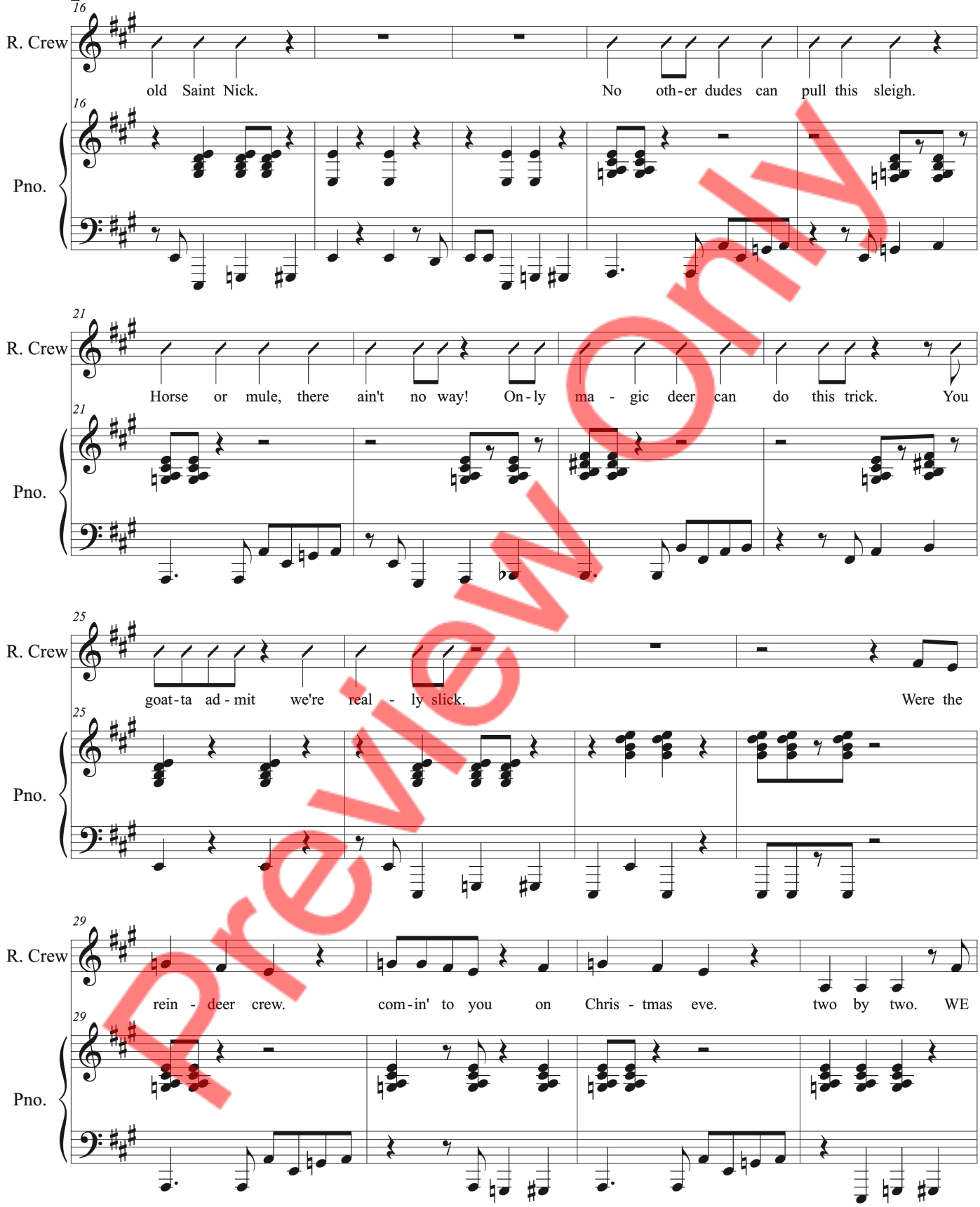
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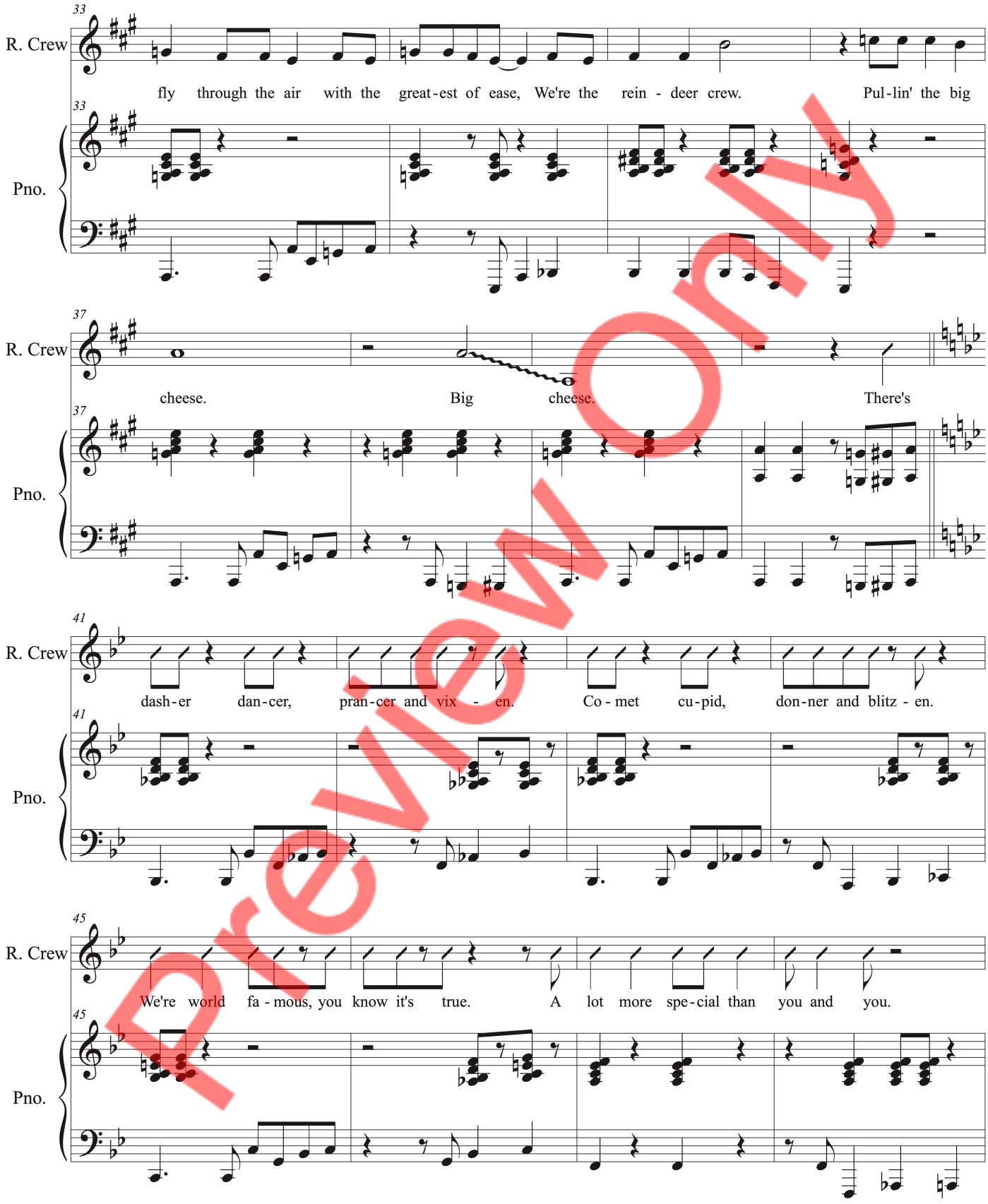


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Reindeer Crew
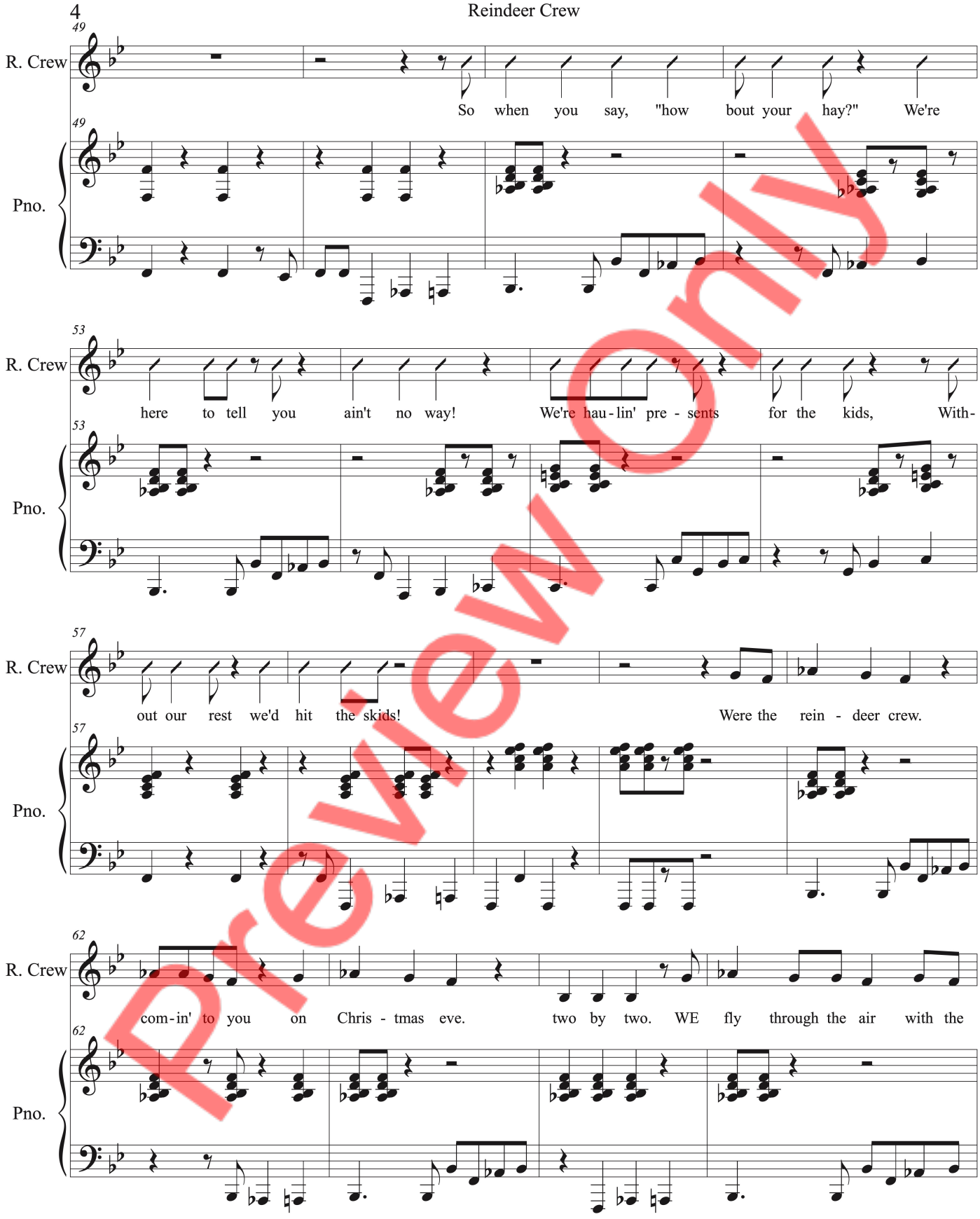


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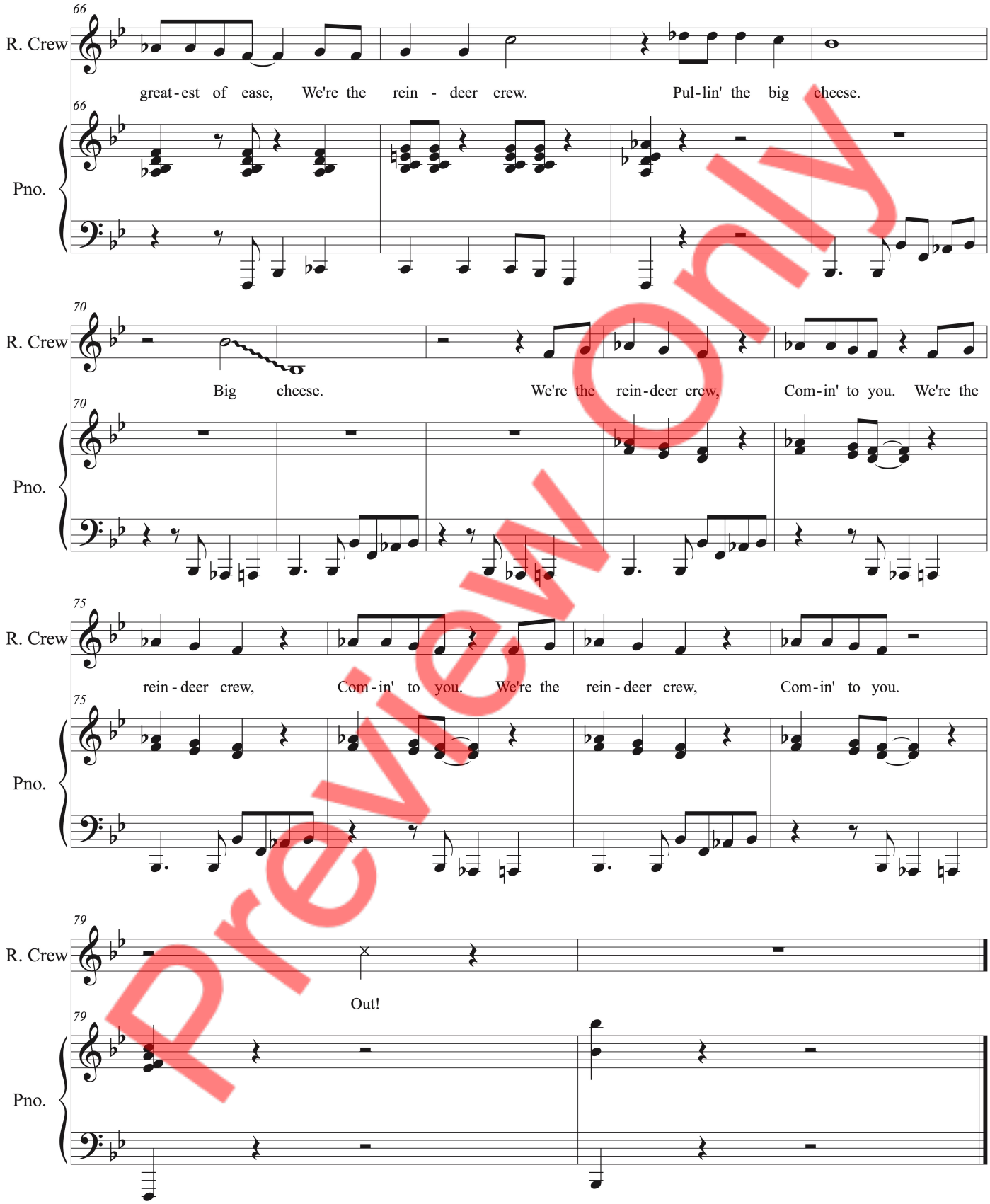


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Reindeer Crew



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JOSEPH: I guess that's a 'no."

MARY: What do we do now?

JOSEPH: There has to be someone here who can help.

Elf 1 enters with a load of presents in his arms.

MARY: I t's the prophet! Excuse me!

ELF 1: *(twirls around trying to see over presents)* What? Who? You? What are you doing out here?

JOSEPH: They wouldn't let us in there.

ELF 1: The reindeer said no, eh? They're getting too big for their sleigh bells, if you ask me.

MARY: Do you have any other ideas?

ELF 1: Tell you what, follow me. I'm headed towards the factory. It's filled with toys this time of year, but who knows? They might have some room.

They walk down the aisle and around, back up front, allowing for a scenery change.

SCENE 4: The Toy Factory

Factory whistle sounds.

MARY: What's that?

ELF 1: Shift change.

JOSEPH: What's a shift?

ELF 1: The changing of the elf workers. It's a very serious ceremony. Watch.
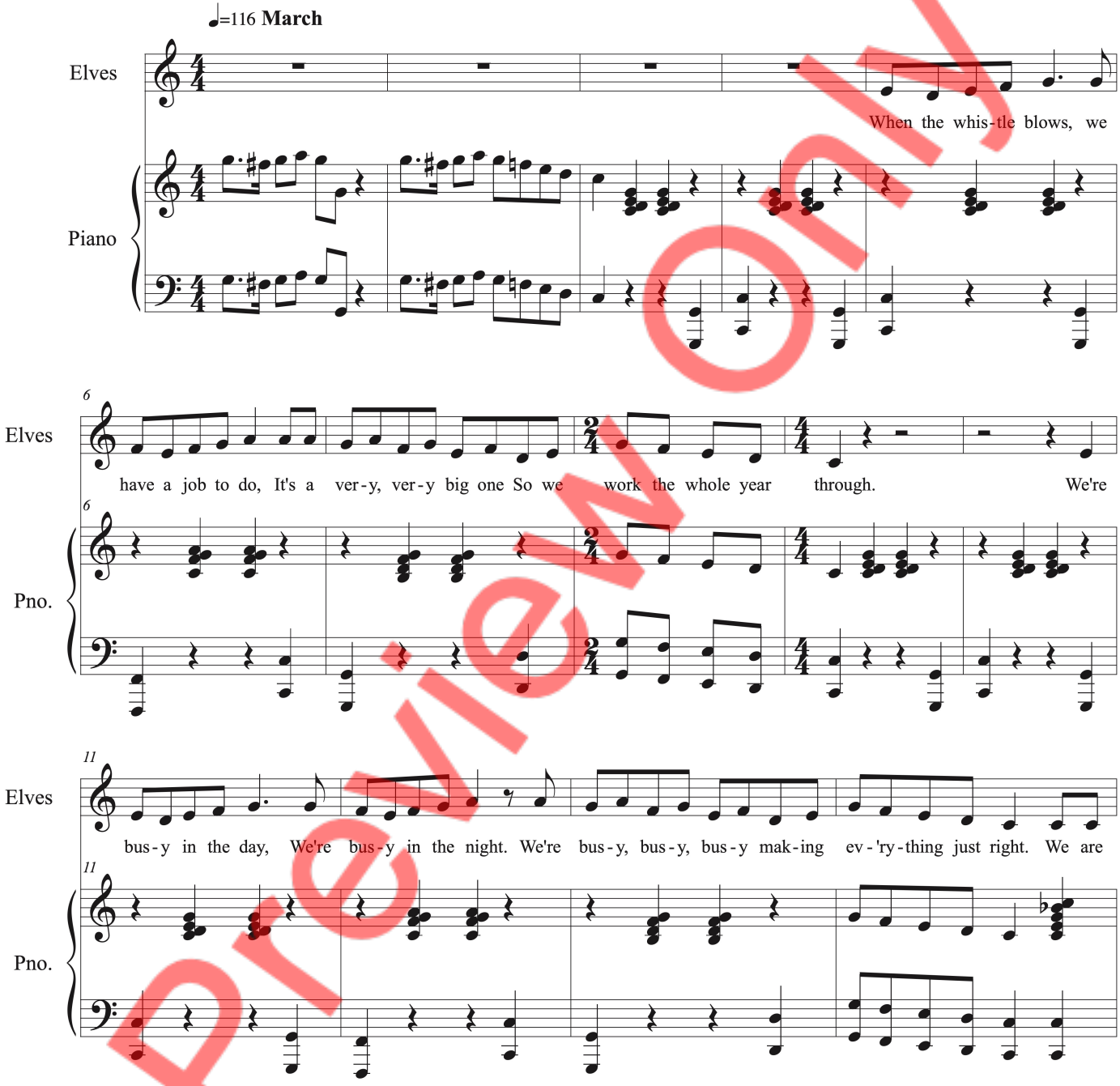
Two elf guards come down the aisle leading a group of elf-workers. The guards are armed with giant (cane-sized) candy canes. While the workers wait in the aisle, the guards begin to do maneuvers in unison. The moves start out serious like a changing of the guard, but getting increasingly silly and elf-like. At the end, there's another whistle, and all the elves cheer and run to their places at the factory tables. The song begins:

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All About The Toys
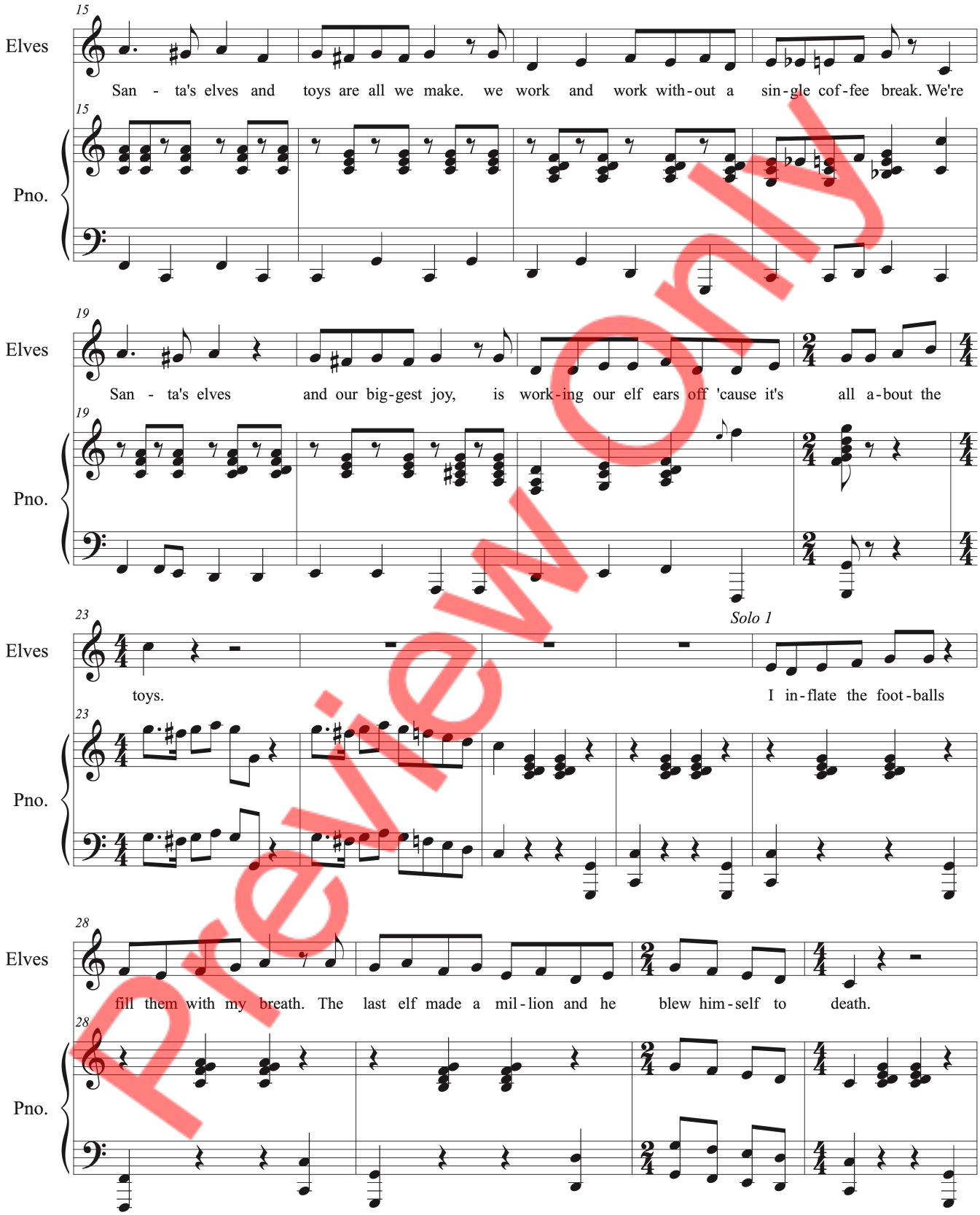
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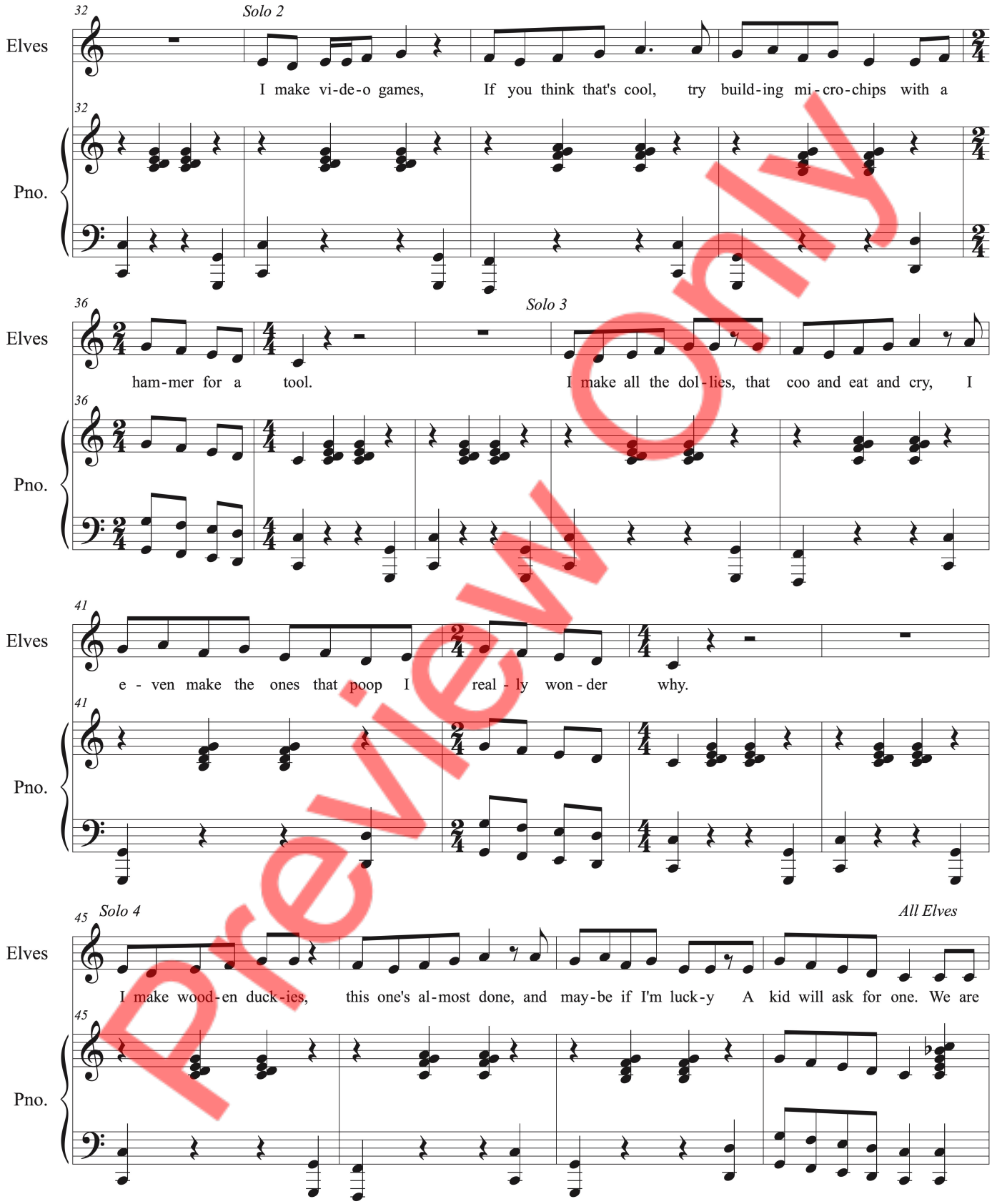


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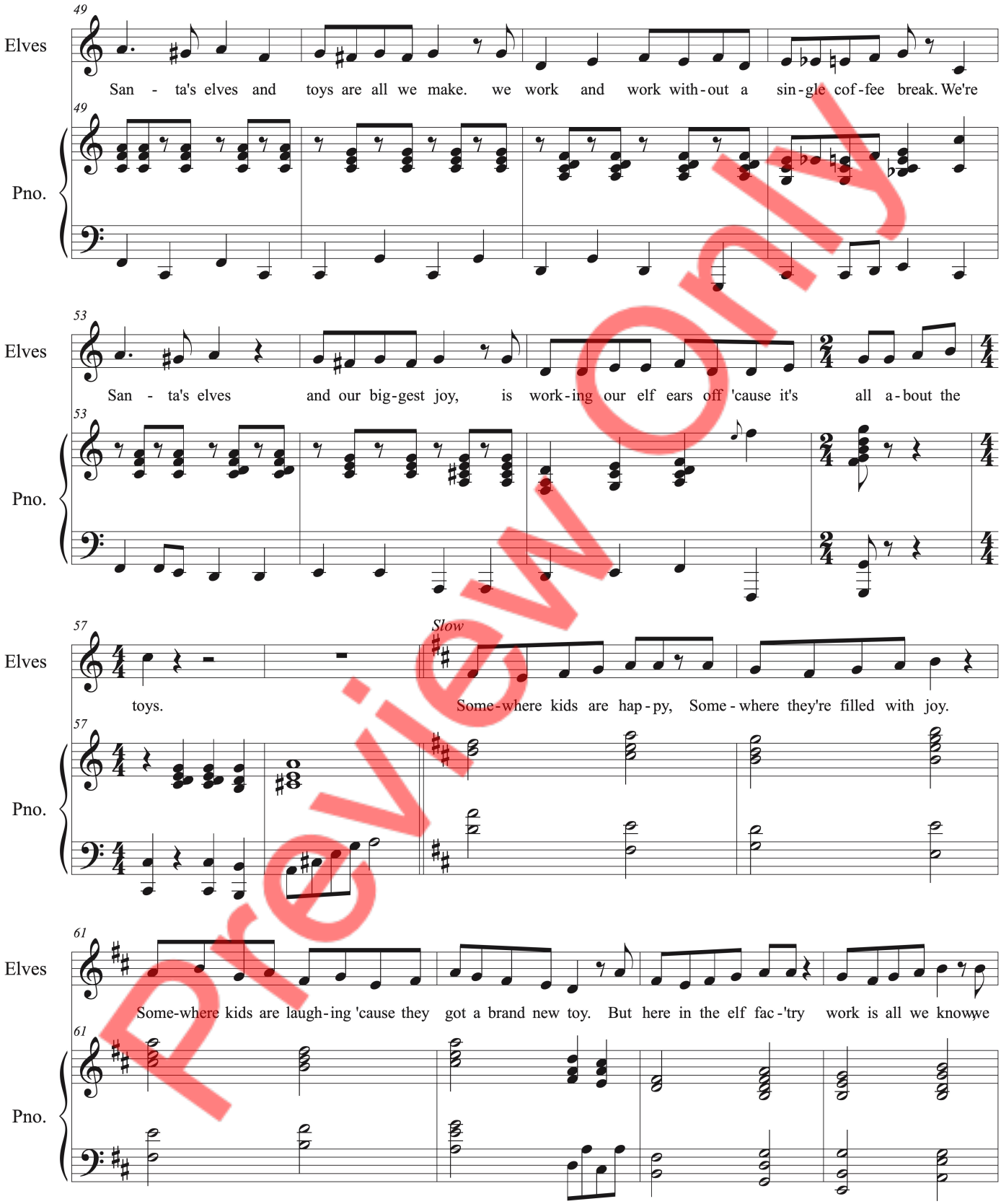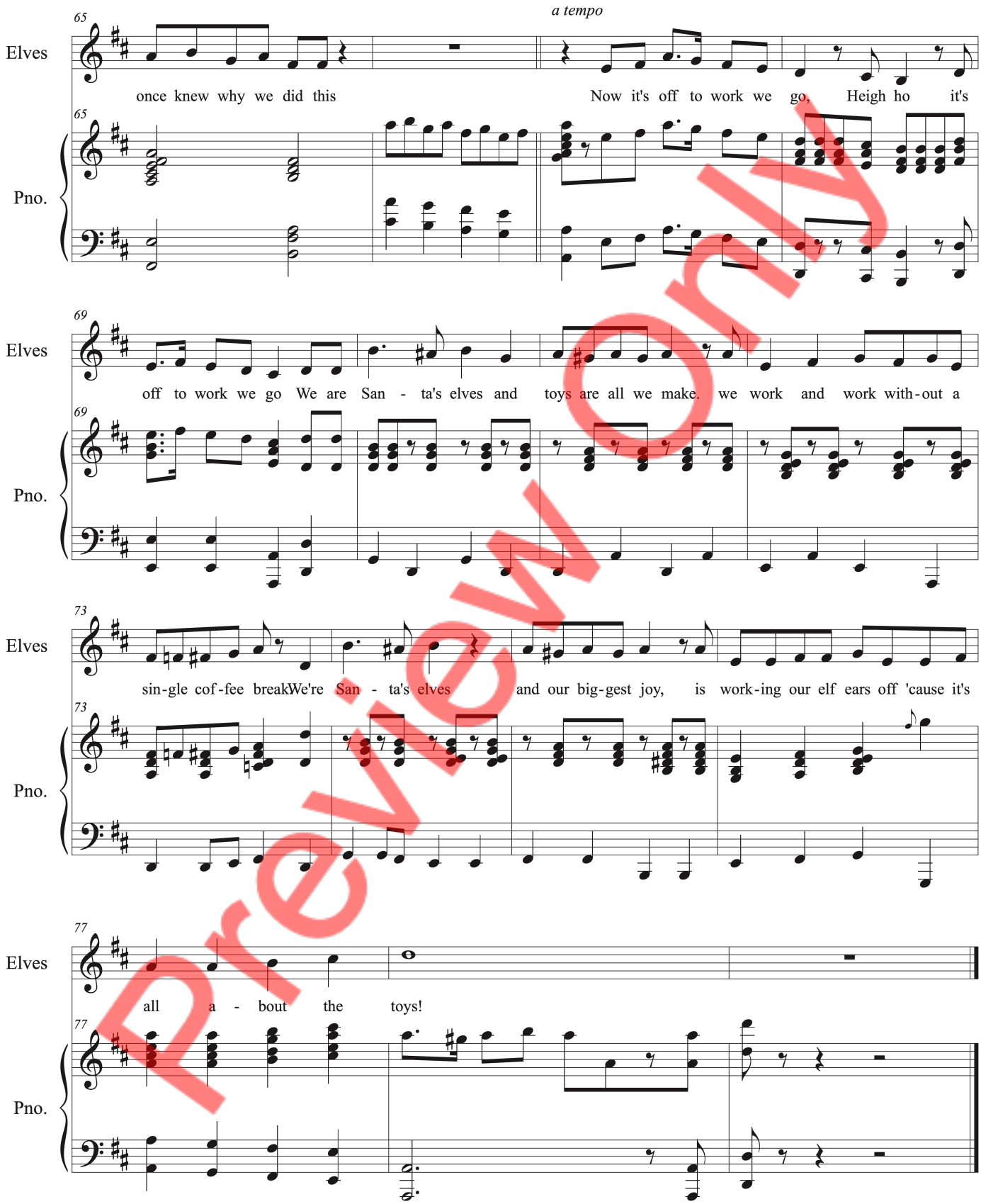
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All the elves go back to working on their toys.

ELF 1: Excuse me, guys? Guys? Guys!!!

ELF 6: What?

ELF 7: Where?

ELF 4: Who?

ELF 5: Oh, it's you.

ELF 2: Who?

ELF 3: The dentist.

ELF 4: *(opens his mouth and points inside)* I've been having a pain right here . . .

ELF 6: Quiet! Can we help you?

ELF 1: Yes! These two strangers need a place to stay for the night.

ELF 2: Let them stay here?

ELF 5: That would be against Kringle code 3455-7770453.

MARY: What?

ELF 3: Santa's rule: "No unauthorized personnel in the factory at any time."

ELF 4: Someone might steal our secrets!

JOSEPH: Like who?

ELF 3: Anyone! Jack O'Lantern, the Easter Bunny, plus there's this one groundhog —

JOSEPH: But it's just for one night!

ELF 2: Sorry, we can't ever go against an official Santa directive!

MARY: Why not?

ELF 3: There's a CLAUS in our contact.

All characters pause and look at the audience.

MARY: Isn't there anything you can do?

ELF 5: I can make wooden yellow duckies!

JOSEPH: No, isn't there anything you can you do about us staying the night?

ELF 6: No way!

ELF 4: Sorry!

ELF 7: Not today!

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ELF 5: How about a duck?

ELF 1: Wait! What if we appeal for a one-night exception?

ELF 3: Appeal? To the big fella?

ELF 2: Tonight is the busiest night of the year for him!

ELF 5: And for us!

ELF 3: We've got toys to get to the sleigh — it's almost time!

ELF 1: Well, I'm going to take these two to the big guy, anyway.

ELF 3: You're wasting your time!

ELF 4: And ours!

ELF 2: Back to work everyone!

ELF 5: I think I have time to make another duck!

ELF 1: Come on, let's go.

Mary, Joseph and Elf 1 come front and center, down to main floor in front.

SCENE 5: Santa's headquarters

The factory scene is taken away while they talk, replaced with a "hall of elves," with two lines of elves running from the front of stage to back of stage, on either side.

MARY: Where? Prophet, where are we going?

ELF 1: I'm through messing around. We're going right to the top!

JOSEPH: The top of what?

ELF 1: The top of the heap. The big man. The one and only.

MARY: Who?

From off-stage: Ho ho ho!

ELF 1: *(with reverence)* Him.

The new stage is set. Santa appears at the top of the stage. All the elves bow.

JOSEPH: Who are you, sir?

SANTA: Excuse me? Exccccuuuuuusssssseeeee meeee? Who am I?

(to elves) He, uh, doesn't know who I am.

(done like a low chuckle) Ho, ho, ho!
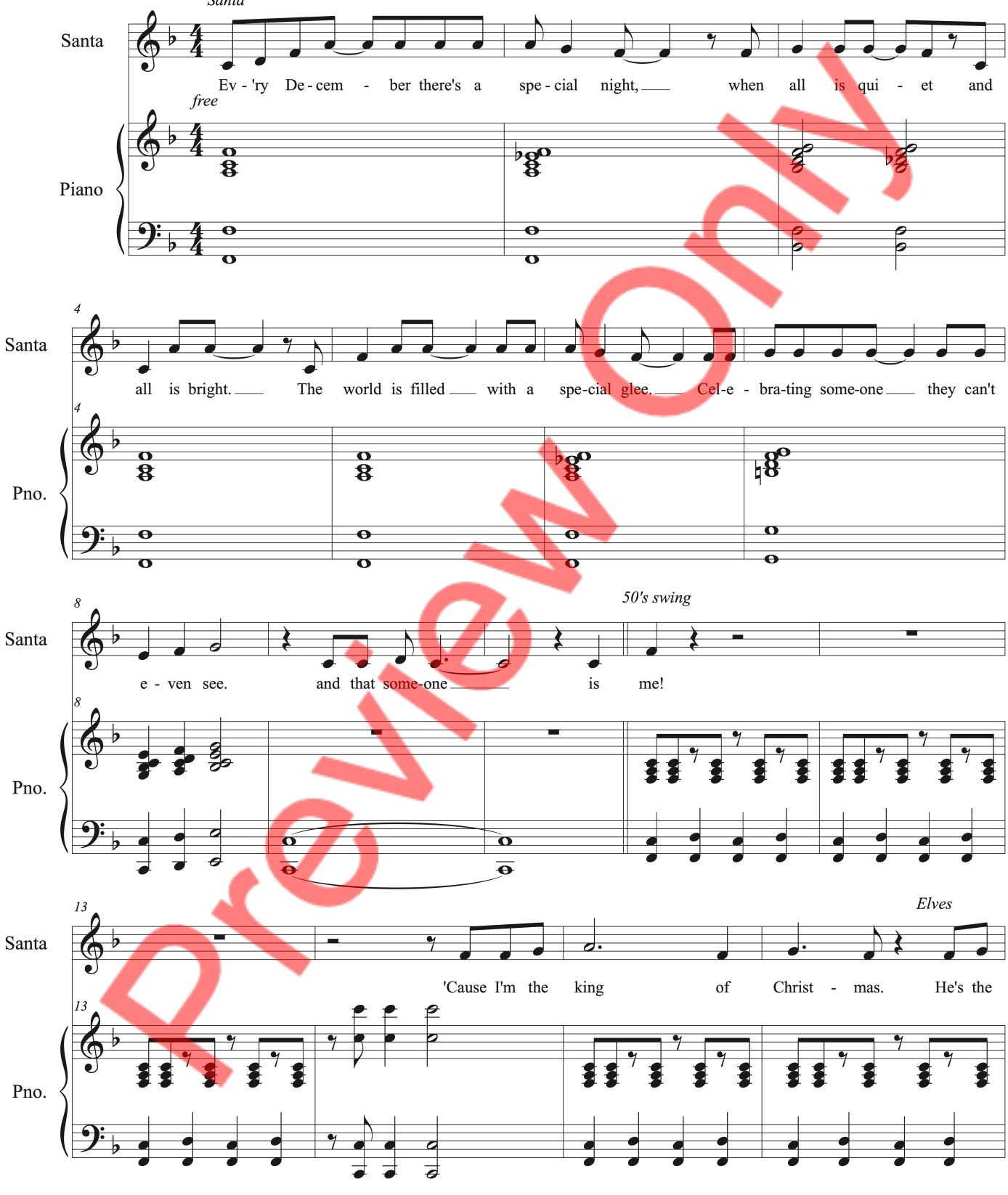
Well, I guess I'd better, uh, fill him in. Hit it, boys!

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The King Of Christmas

Emil Bertalot
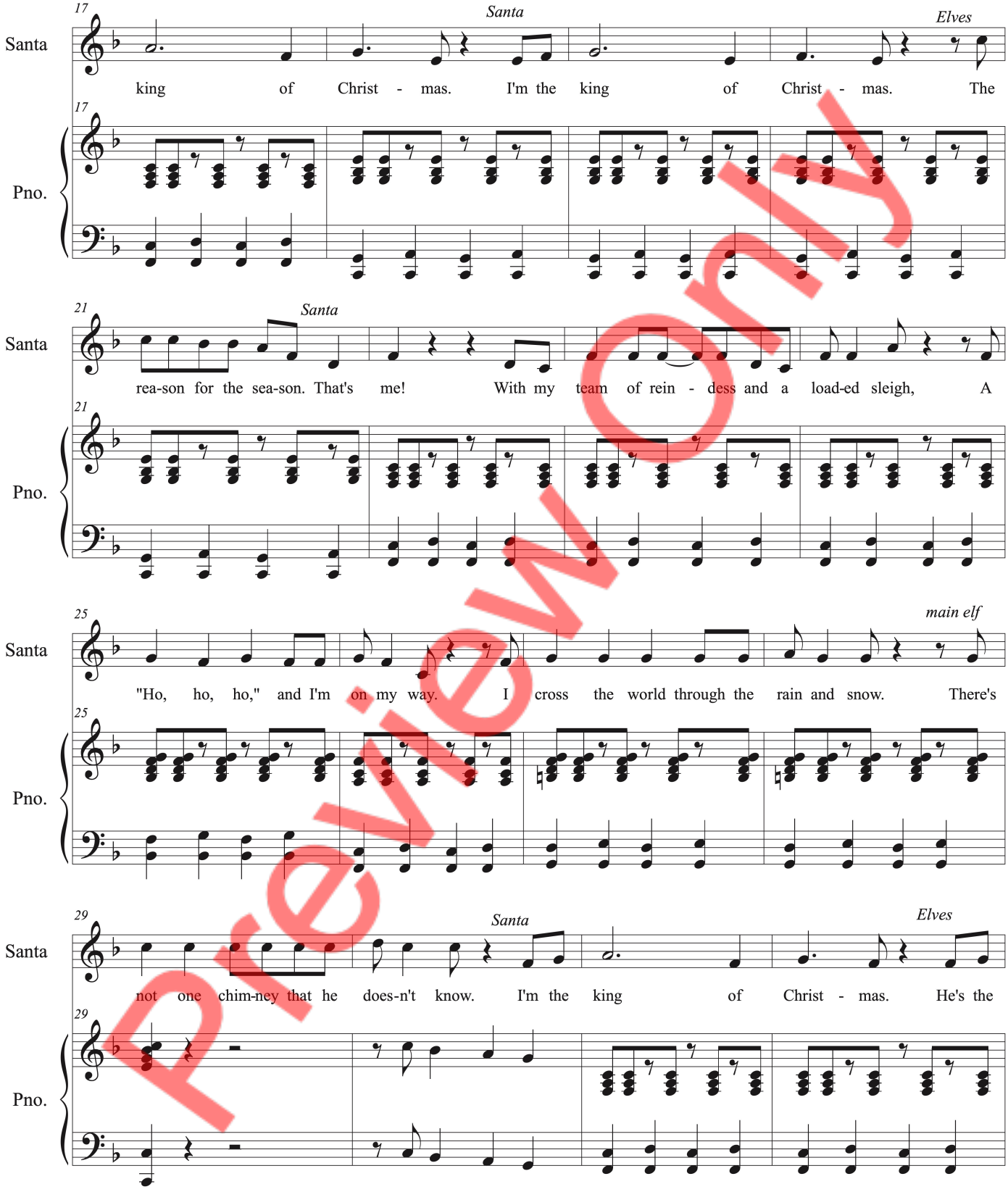
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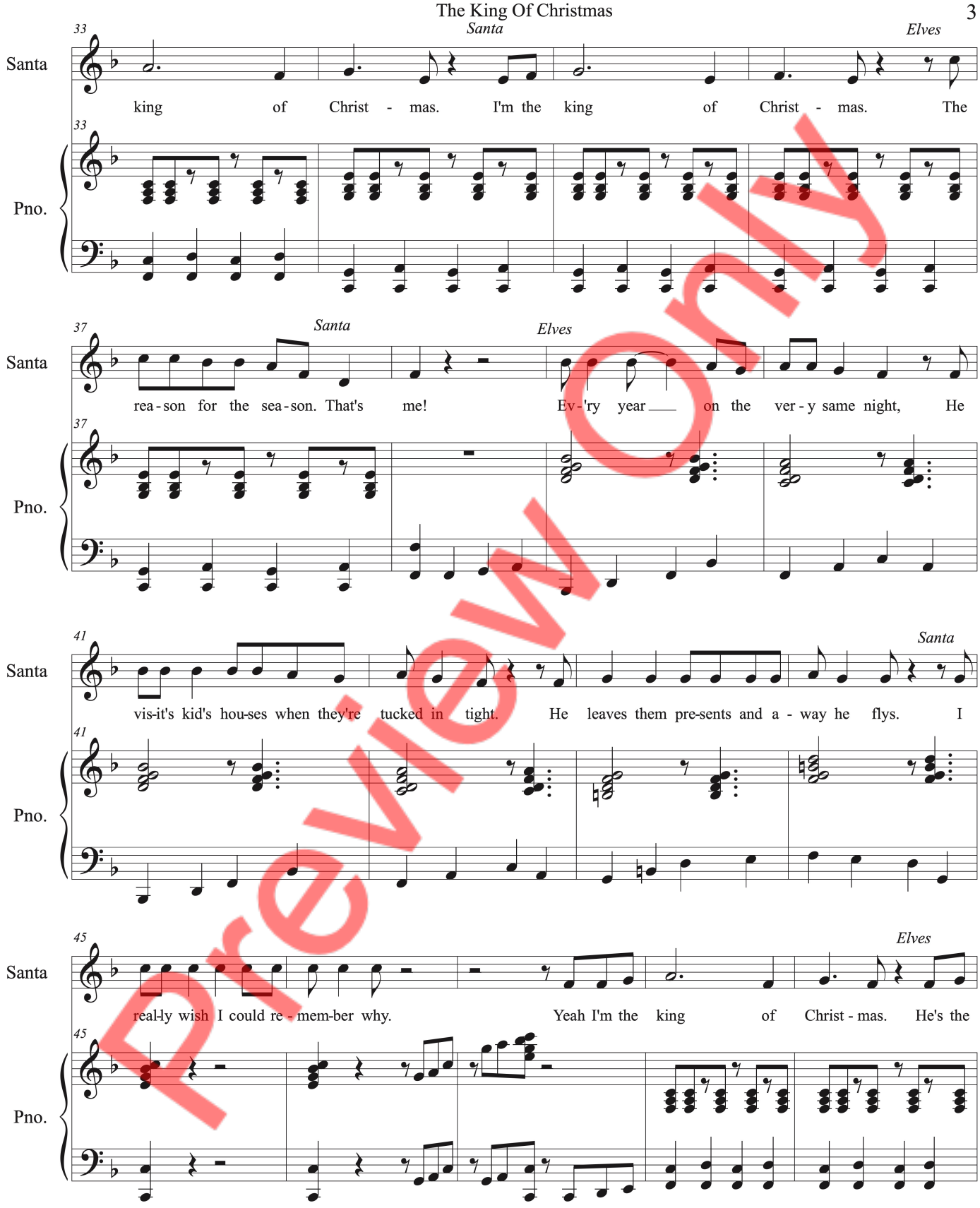


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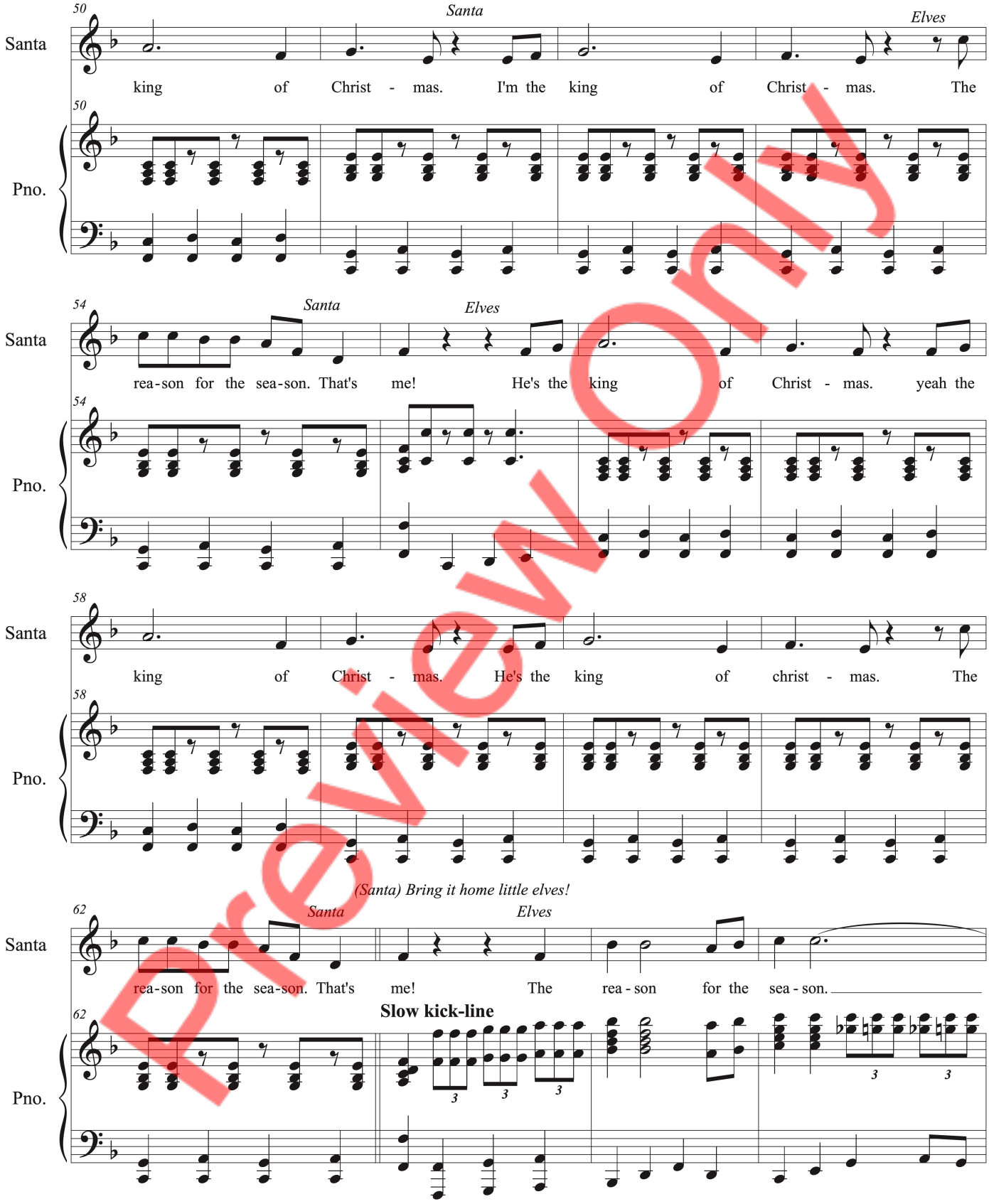
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The King Of Christmas



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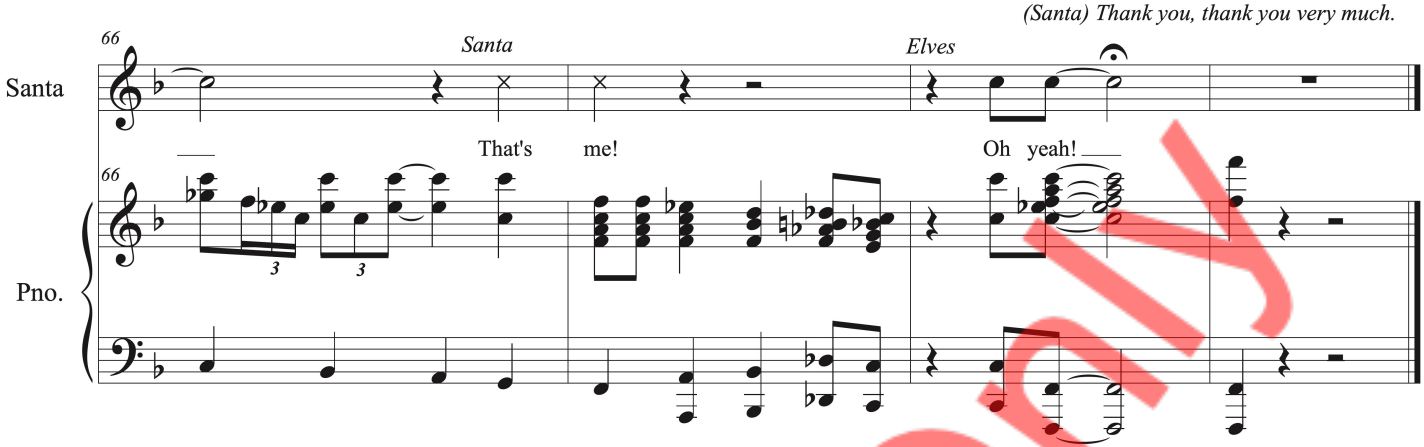


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(Santa) Thank you, thank you very much.



SANTA: Ho ho ho! It's nearly time, boys! Hitch the reindeer! Load the sleigh! There are toys to deliver without delay!

ELF 1: Santa, wait!

SANTA: Wait? Ho ho ho, I can't wait, there's a schedule to keep!

ELF 1: But can't you just help these people?

SANTA: Come now, little elf. How could I do any good out there, if I spent all my time doing good right here?

ELF 1: But they're not looking for much!

SANTA: Then how about a nice wooden yellow duckie?

ELF 1: They don't want a wooden yellow duckie!

SANTA: Then have them submit a list like everyone else, I'll see if I can get them on the schedule for next Christmas.

ELF 1: Next Christmas? But —

SANTA: *(to Elf 1)* And if I were you, I'd get back to work before you wind up on the naughty list.
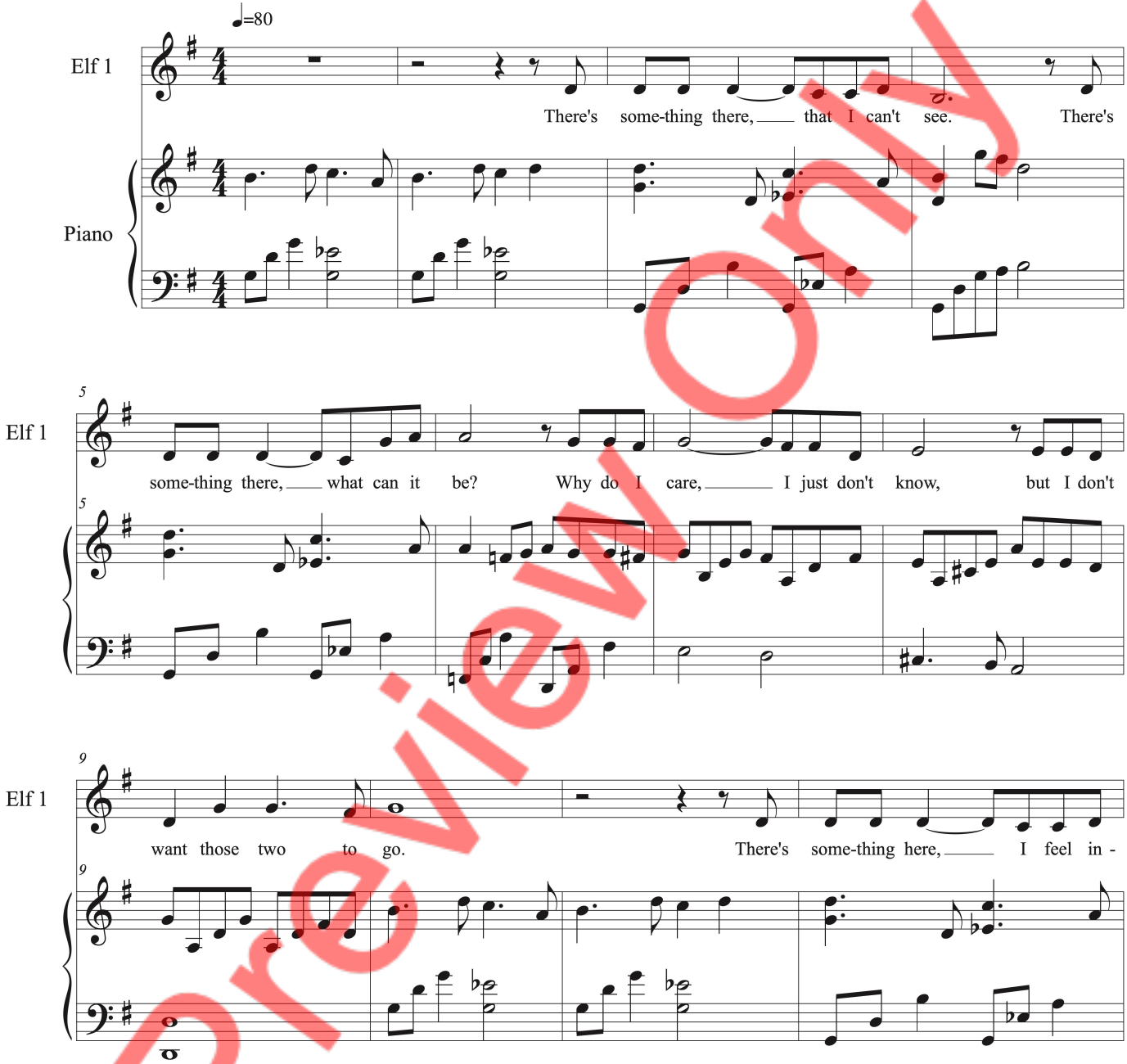
(to Mary and Joseph) Thanks for stopping! Don't forget to visit the gift shop on your way out!

Santa and extra elves exit.

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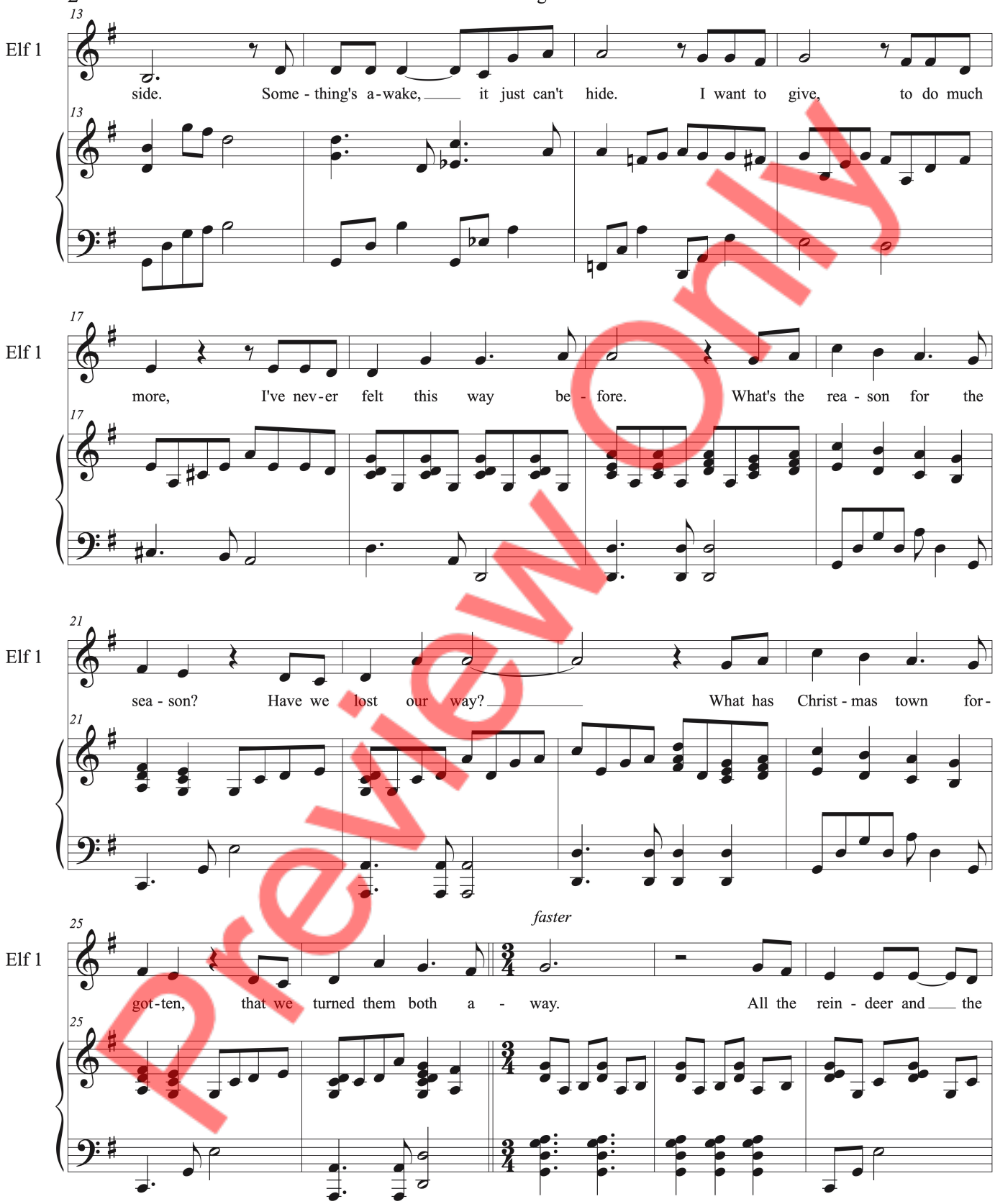
Something There

Emil Bertalot Taras Nahirniak
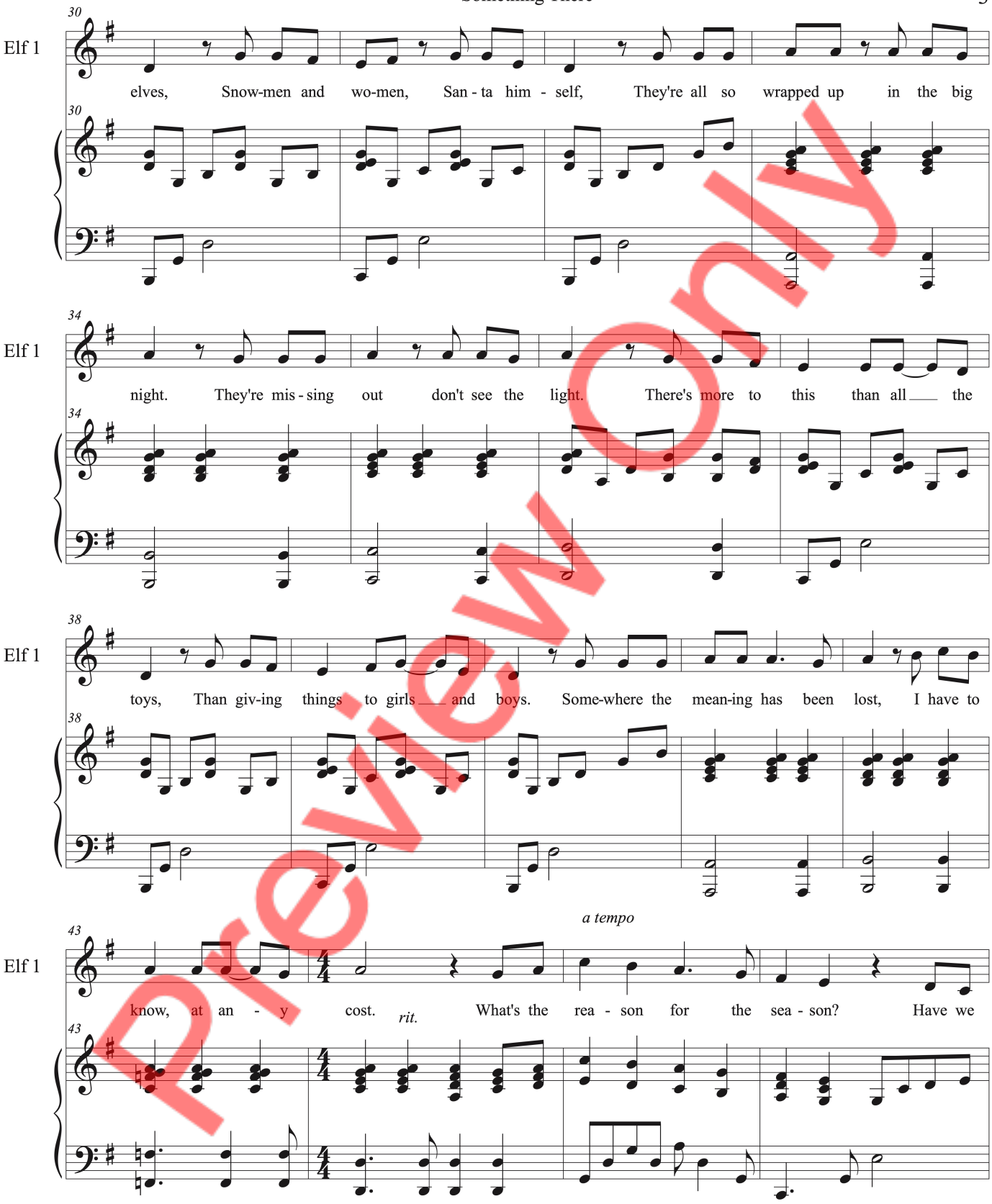


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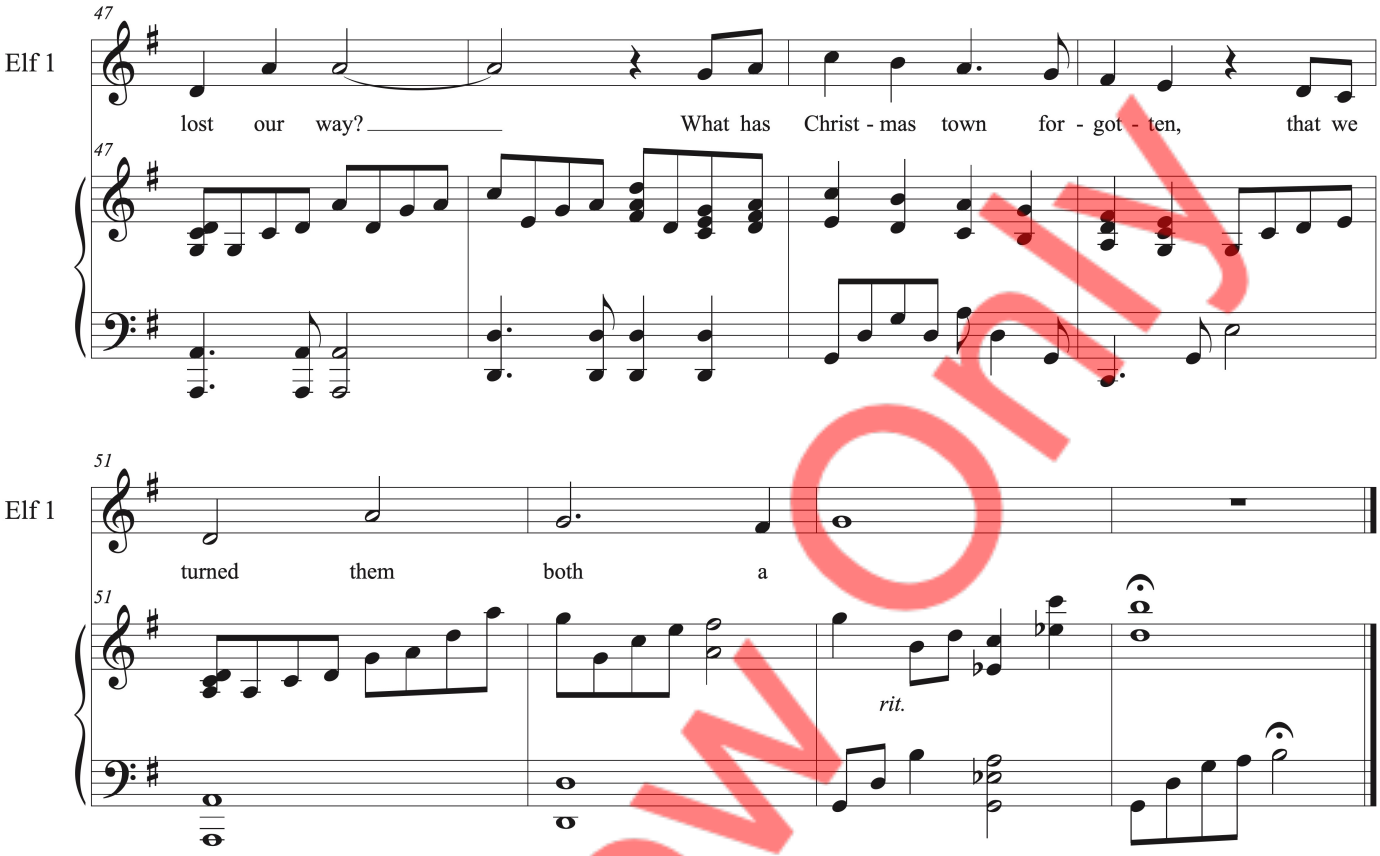
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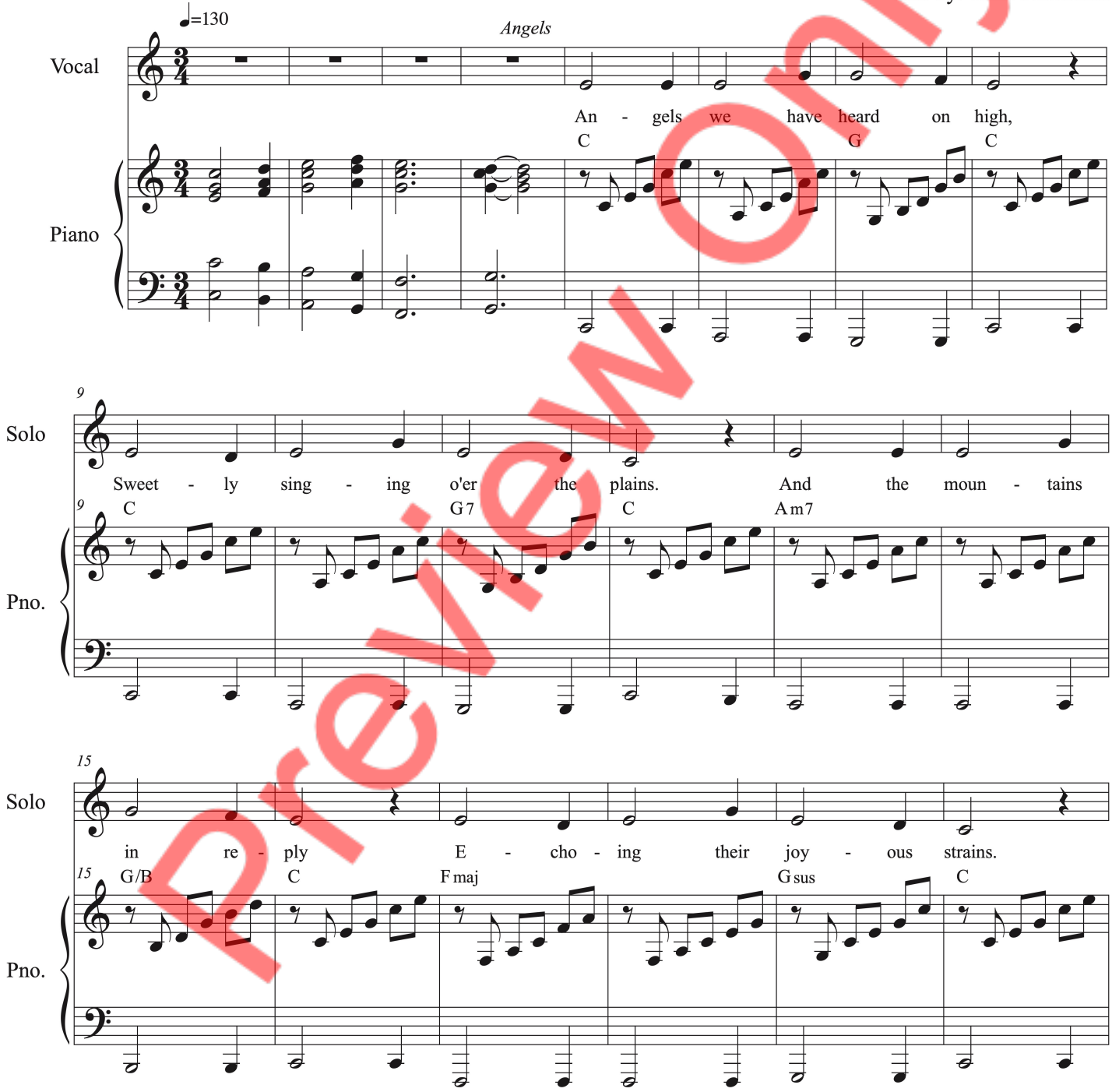


Elf sits down glumly. As he sits there, the angels appear and sing:

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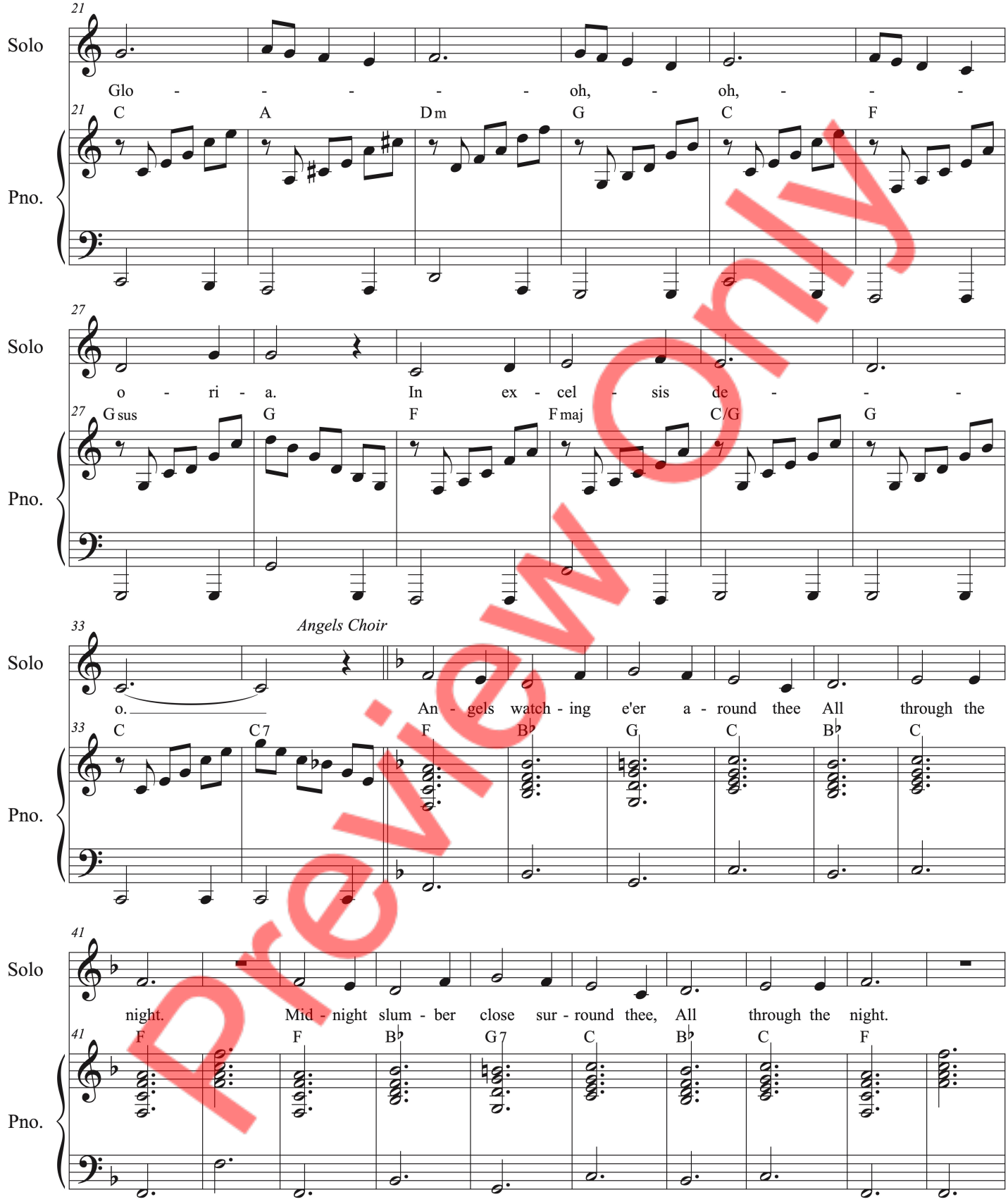
Angels We Have Heard On High
All Through The Night

"Angels We Have Heard On High"
James Chadwick, Edward Shippen Barnes
"All Through The Night"
John Ceiriog Hughes, Reginald Heber
Arr. by: Taras Nahirniak
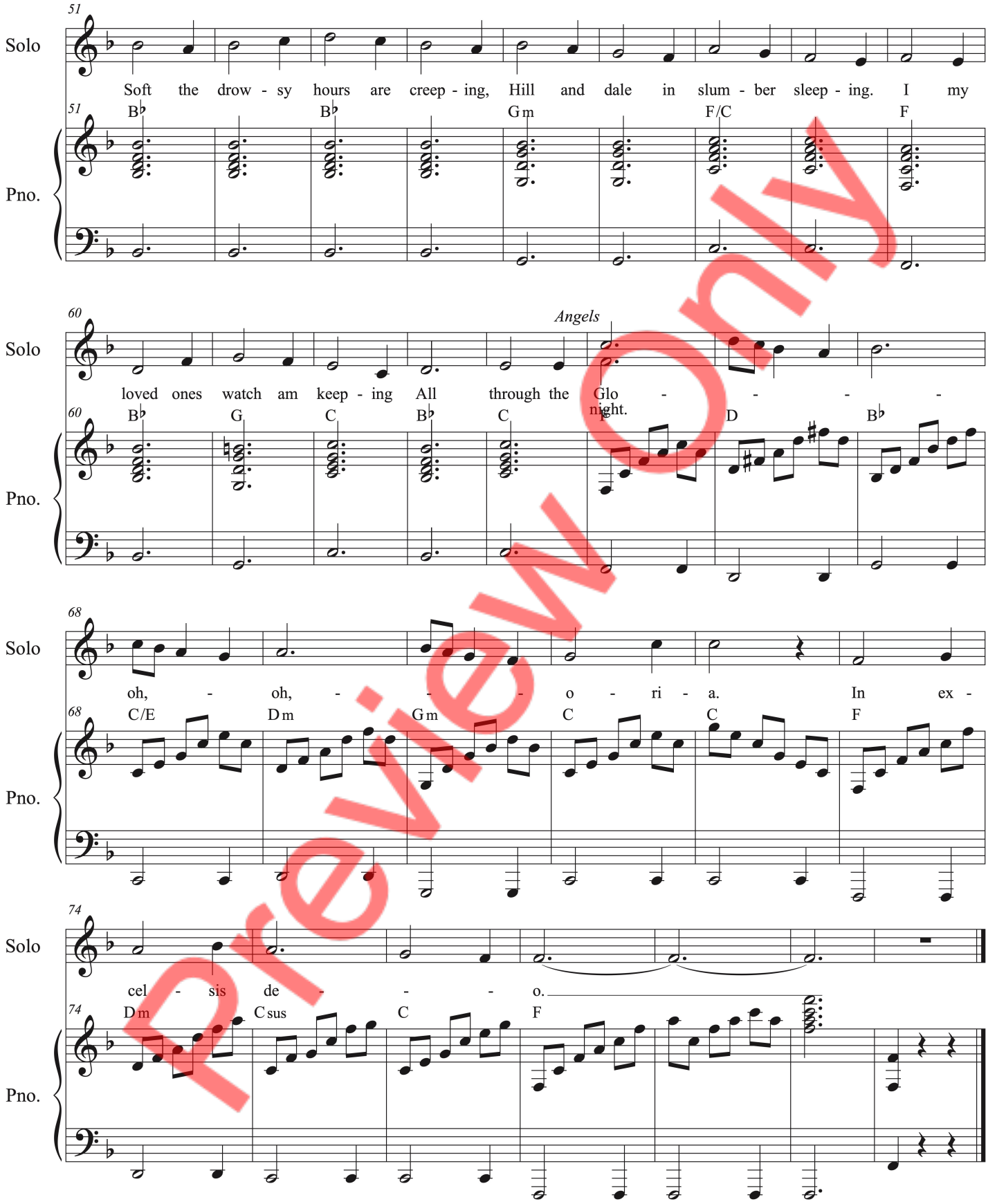


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Angels finish singing and announce in a big, loud voice:

ANGEL 1: Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is —

ANGEL 2: Hang on, wait a minute . . . where are your sheep?

ELF 1: My what?

ANGEL 1: Your sheep. You know, four legs, curly white wool,

ANGEL 2: baaaaaaaaahhhh!

ELF 1: I don't have any sheep.

ANGEL 1: No sheep! What kind of a shepherd are you?

ELF 1: I'm not a shepherd. I'm an elf.

ANGEL 2: An elf? What's an elf?

ELF 1: We make toys up at the north pole.

ANGEL 1: The north pole? You mean this isn't the desert?

ELF 1: No.

ANGEL 2: And you're obviously not a shepherd.

ELF 1: Um, no, sorry.

ANGEL 1: Wow, are we off-course!

ANGEL 2: That's what we get for not waiting for the narrator.

ELF 1: What was that you were saying, when you first appeared?

ANGEL 1: What, our big announcement? That's for the shepherds.

ELF 1: You could practice on me!

ANGEL 2: Hmm, that's not a bad idea. Wouldn't want to make a mistake later — I've made enough today already.

ANGEL 1: Well, here goes . . . *Clears throat*. Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

ANGEL 2: For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

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ANGEL 1: And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

ELF 1: The good news is about . . . a baby?

ANGEL 2: Not just any baby, the son of God. His birth is a sign of God's love!

ANGEL 1: And his life with us comes with the promise of everlasting life.

ELF 1: That's hard to imagine. And I should know; I'm an imaginary creature.

ANGEL 2: But it's true. His birth will be heralded by a new star shining in the sky.

ANGEL 1: And wise men will come from afar and give him gifts.

ELF 1: Wait . . . did you say "gifts?"

ANGEL 2: Yes, and it will grow into a tradition, so that once a year, people will give gifts to their friends and family, to express love for each other —

ANGEL 1: and to remember Jesus' love for us.

ELF 1: Once a year, you say? And what was his name again?

ANGEL 2: Jesus.

ANGEL 1: But he is often called "The Christ child."

ELF 1: Christ?!? You mean, as in "Christmas?"

ANGEL 1 & 2: Of course we mean Christmas! Duh!

ELF 1: That's it! That's the true meaning of all this! Love for this child, and love for our fellow man! That's why we make toys for girls and boys — and that's why it felt so wrong to turn Mary and Joseph away! See you later!

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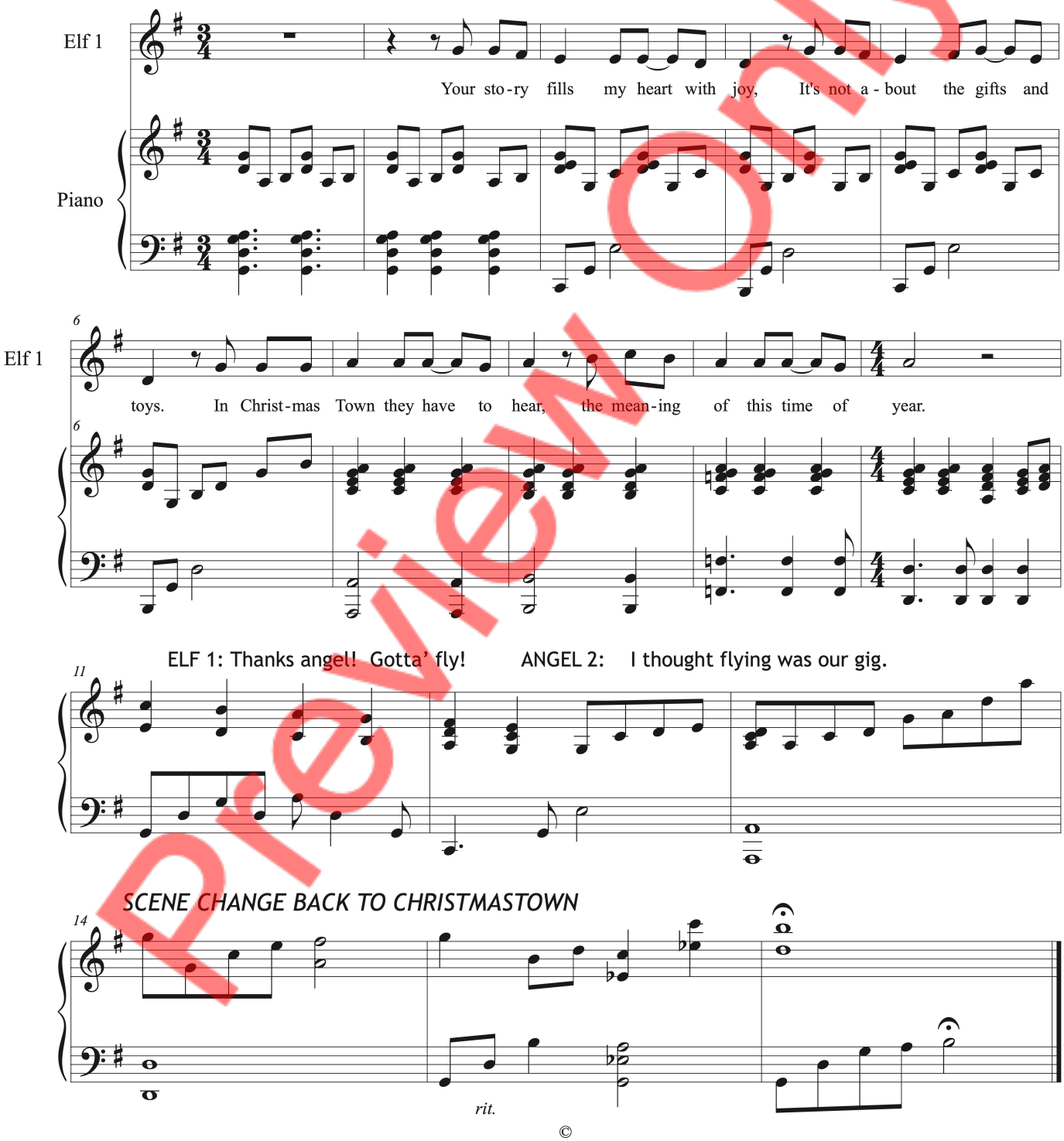
Something There Reprise

Emil Bertalot

Taras Nahirniak

ANGEL 1: Where are you going?

ELF 1: To tell the others! They need to hear this!



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SCENE 7: Christmastown

Is the cast reprising "Welcome to Christmastown" and Elf #1 interrupts?

ELF 1: Everybody! Listen! I need your attention!

ELF 5: Now?

ELF 3: Can't you see we're busy?

ELF 2: All the reindeer and the elves,

ELF 6: Putting on our jingle bells!

ELF 4: Wrapping presents!

ELF 7: Making toys!

ELF 5: For midnight visits to girls and boys!

ELF 1: I know, I know. But here's question: Do you have any idea WHY you're doing all this?

Silence.

ELF 3: Hmmm, now that you mention it . . .

ALL: NO.

ELF 1: Then gather around, everyone! I have good news to share . . . and a plan.

SCENE 8: Luke's desk / the desert / the manger

Luke walks in from off-stage and takes a seat at his desk.

LUKE: Dear me, how long did God have me away? I've almost forgotten where I was in the story. If I recall, Joseph and Mary were wandering in the desert, poor things. Ah, here we are . . . . *Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, (the next words are given emphasis, as he's writing them) into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child.*

There, that brings us back to where I left off. And now for the manger scene.

Stagehands bring in the manger at this point. Mary and Joseph enter the manger and sit down.

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While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. (Mary holds up a bundled Jesus and cradles him) She wrapped him in swaddling cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now, what am I forgetting?

Shepherds enter.

Oh yes, the shepherds!

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And then . . .

Angels enter.

Of course! The angels!

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. And the shepherds said to one another,

SHEPHERD: Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened.

LUKE: *So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.* And they were joined there by —

Three reindeer enter.

— three . . . strange-looking horses? . . . with antlers?

Three elves enter with three wrapped boxes.

And . . . little creatures . . . wearing striped stockings?

Santa appears with wrapped presents

And . . . a chubby man . . . in a red suit . . . carrying gifts?

ELF 1 opens his box and takes out the yellow duck, that he presents to Mary and Joseph.

. . . including a . . . wooden yellow duck?

(after a pause) All right, that's enough! No one would ever believe this. (*Music starts*) In the best interests of this gospel, I think it's wisest th (music starts)at my official account ends with the shepherds.

Big pause.
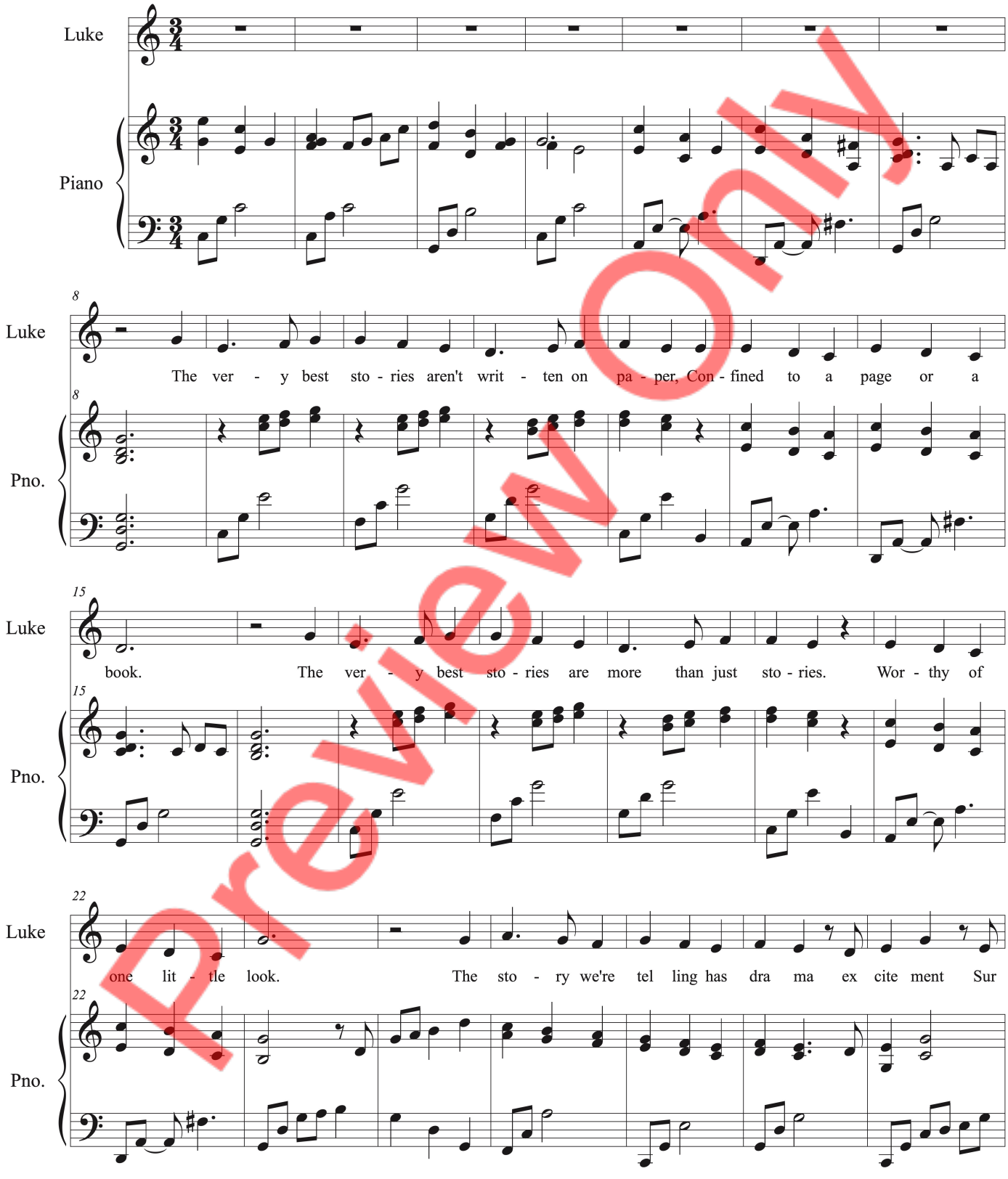
(with a smile) Still, it makes a very good story, doesn't it?

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The Very Best Stories Reprise
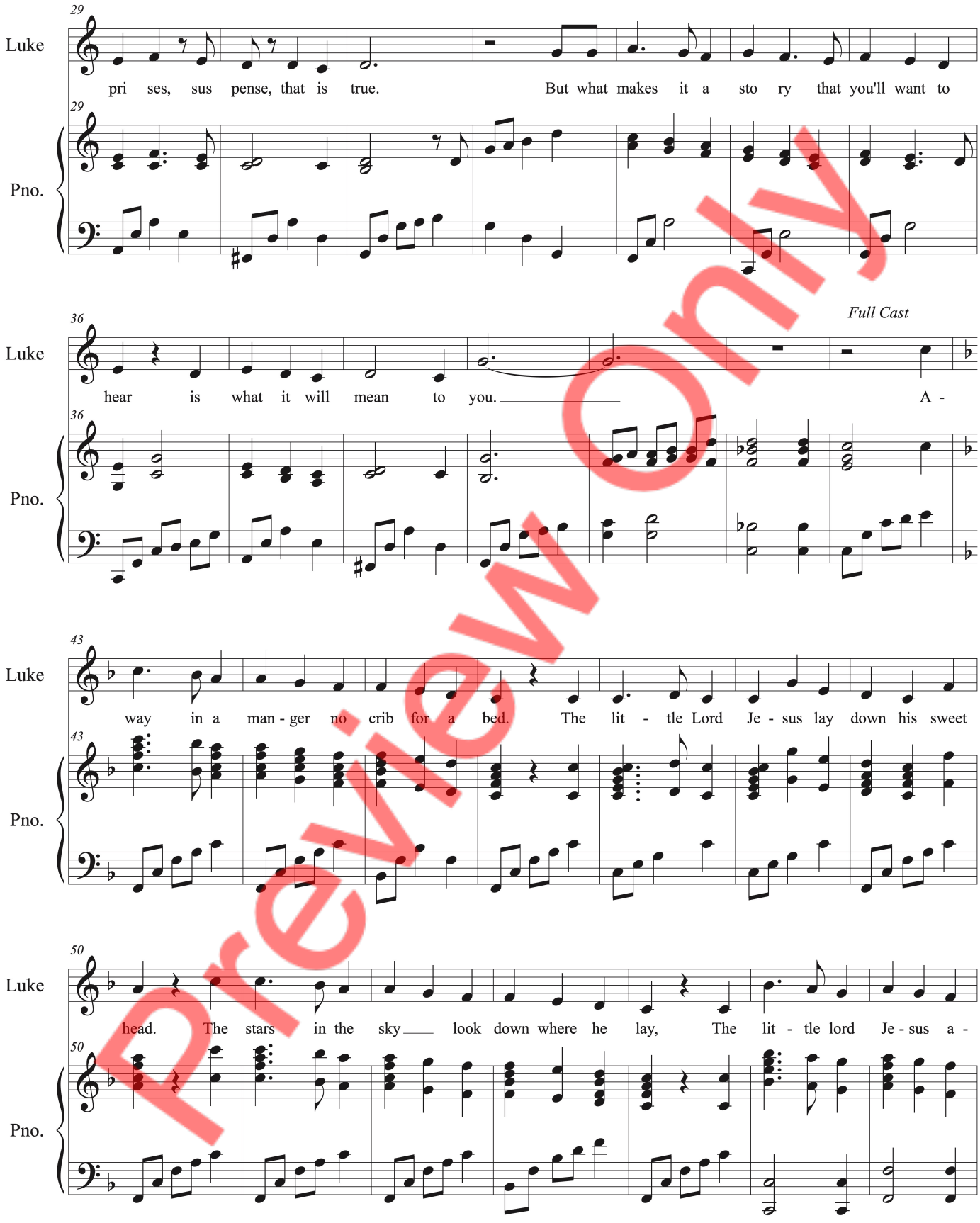
Emil Bertalot

Taras Nahirniak
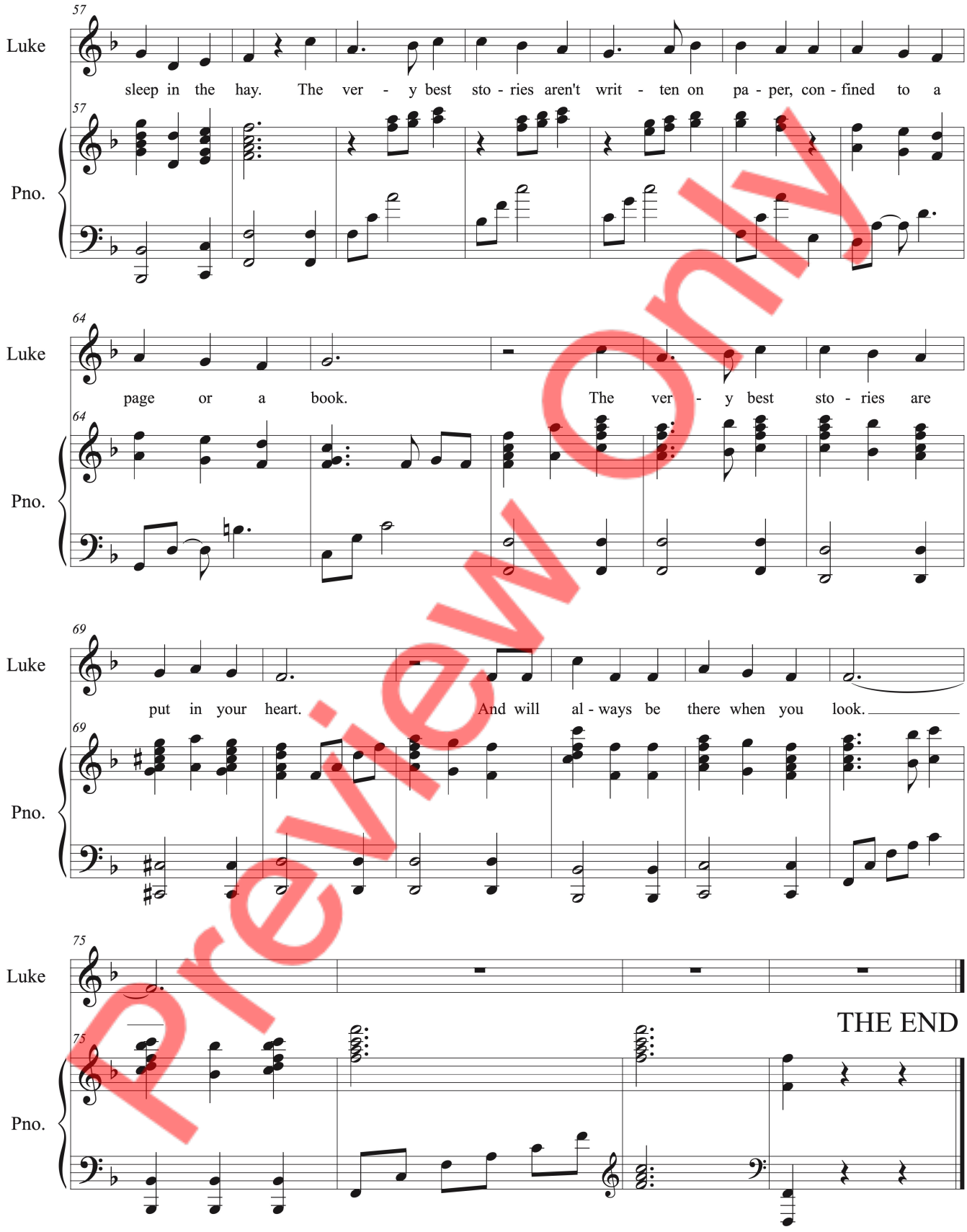


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