N Box

THE RUIN

Martin Read

SATB
and wind ensemble

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THE RUIN

Written on two leaves, badly scarred by fire, this description of a deserted Roman city - the first of many English meditations on old stones - is perhaps the earliest of all Anglo-Saxon poems. The probable city of the poem is Aquae Sulis, the Roman Bath; and we may imagine the anonymous author walking about the overgrown streets. The Romans had held this province for four centuries before the Angles came; and had been gone three centuries when this poem was written. It was another three hundred years before the Normans reintroduced the art of massive construction in stone to these islands: the Anglo-Saxons usually referred to Roman ruins as "the work of the Giants".

The Ruin *was commissioned by Maurice Walsh, on behalf of the Malvern Festival, as a companion piece to the Stravinsky "Mass". It is dedicated to Catherine and Paul Barnes with love and grateful thanks.*

The Ruin

Well-wrought this wall: Weirds broke it.
The stronghold burst. . . .

Snapped rooftrees, towers fallen,
the work of the Giants, the stonesmiths,
mouldereth.
Rime scoureth gatetowers
rime on mortar.

Shattered the showershields, roofs ruined,
age under-ate them.
And the wielders & wrights?
Earthgrip holds them - gone, long gone,
fast in gravesgrasp while fifty fathers
and sons have passed.
Wall stood,
grey lichen, red stone, kings fell often,
stood under storms, high arch crashed -
stands yet the wallstone, hacked by weapons,
by files grim-ground. . .
. . . shone the old skilled work
. . . sank to loam-crust.

Mood quickened mind, and a man of wit,
cunning in rings, bound bravely the wallbase
with iron, a wonder.

Bright were the buildings, halls where springs ran,
high, hornagabled, much throng-noise;
these many meadhalls men filled
with loud cheerfulness: Wierd changed that.

Came days of pestilence, on all sides men fell dead,
death fetched off the flower of the people;
where they stood to fight, waste places
and on the acropolis, ruins.

Hosts who would build again
shrank to the earth. Therefore are these courts dreary
and that red arch twisteth tiles.
wryeth from roof-ridge, reacheth groundwards. . . .
Broken blocks. . . .

There once many a man
mood-glad, goldbright, of gleams garnished,
flushed with wine-pride, flashing war-gear,
gazed on wrought gemstones, on gold, on silver,
on wealth held and hoarded, on light-filled amber,
on this bright burg of broad dominion.

Stood stone houses; wide streams welled
hot from source, and a wall all caught
in its bright bosom, that the baths were
hot at hall's hearth; that was fitting. . . .
. . . . . .

Thence hot streams, loosed, ran over hoar stone
unto the ring-tank. . . .
. . . It is a kingly thing
. . . city. . . .

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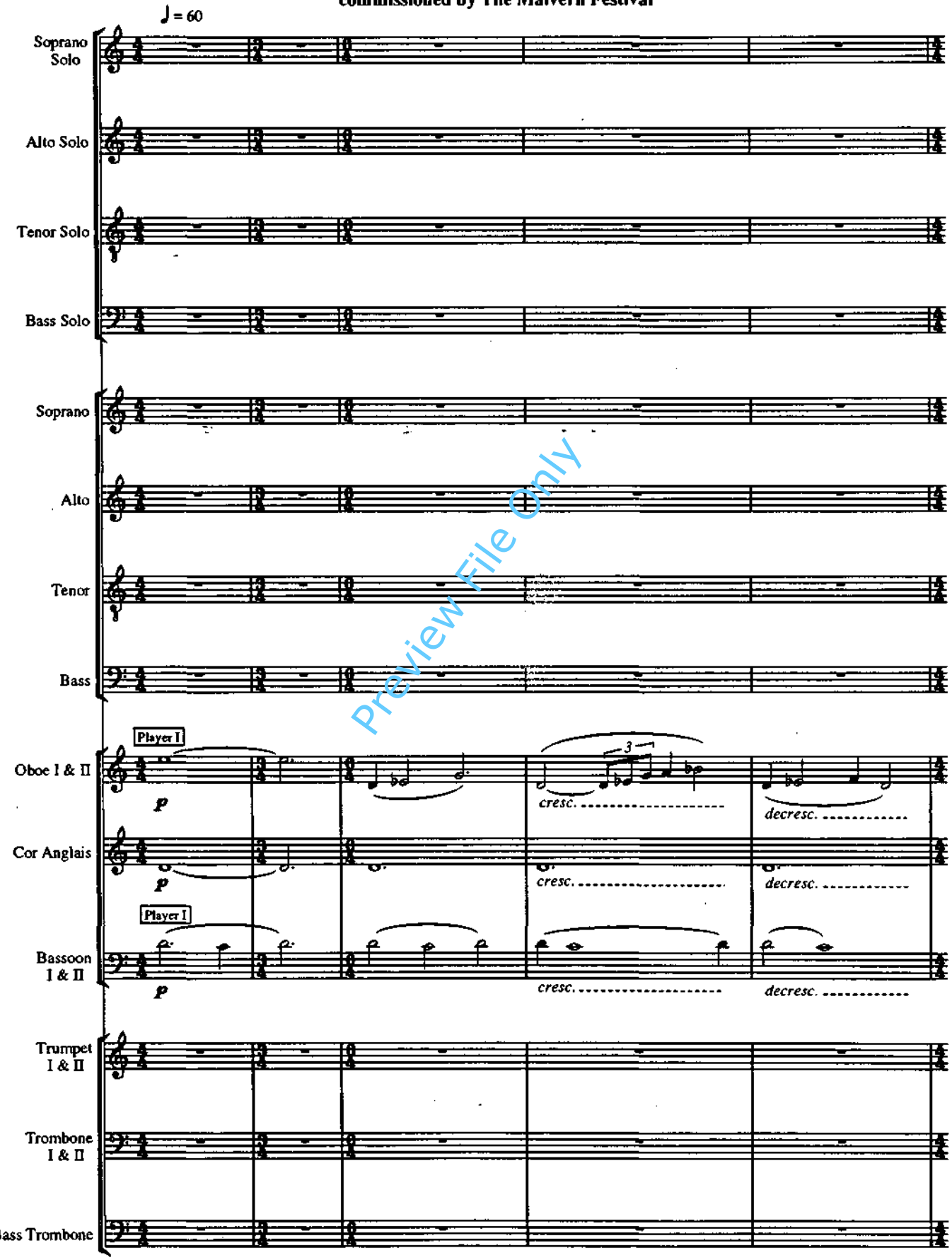
for Catherine and Paul with grateful thanks

THE RUIN

Words: Anon

commissioned by The Malvern Festival

Music: Martin Read



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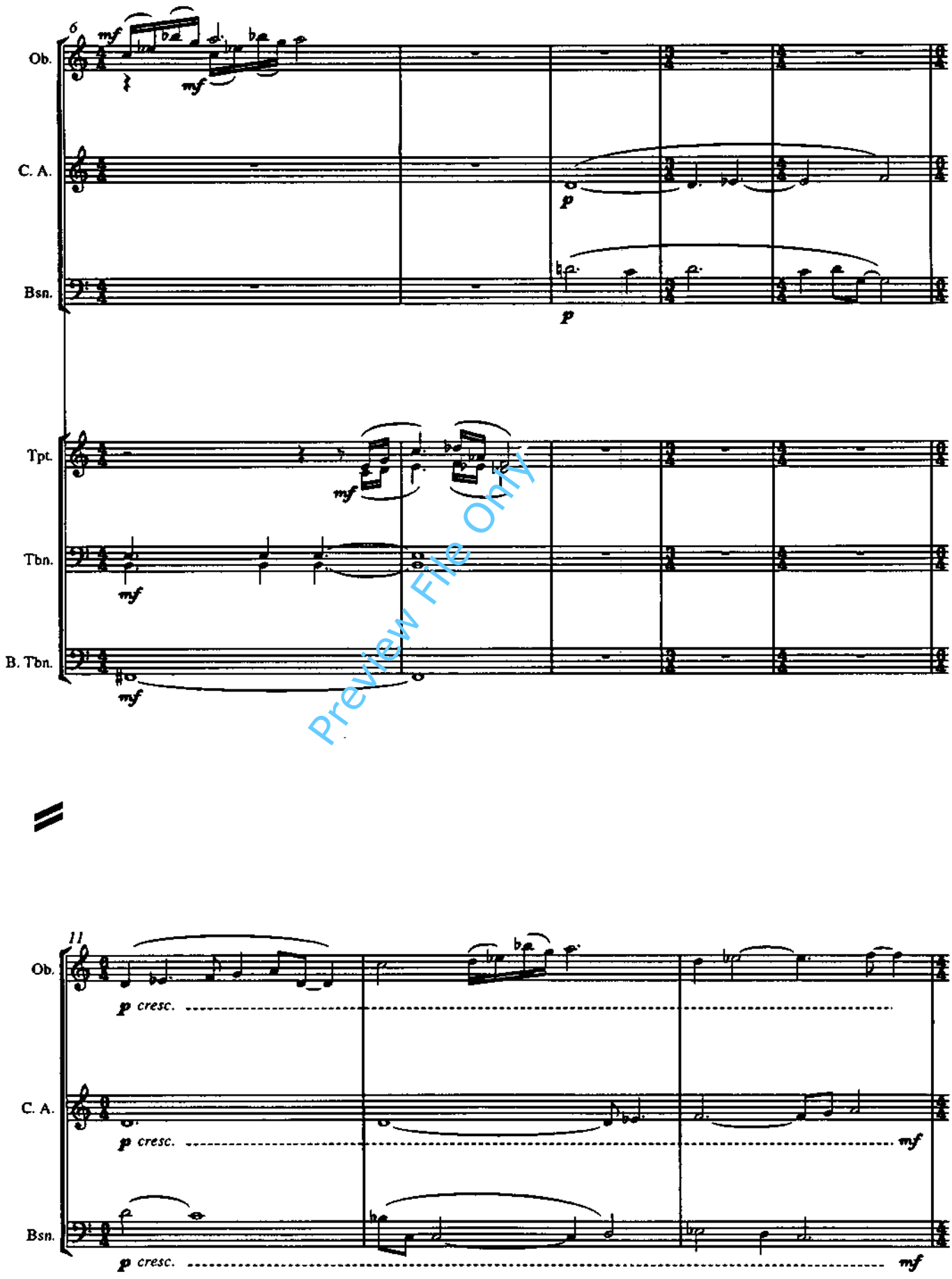

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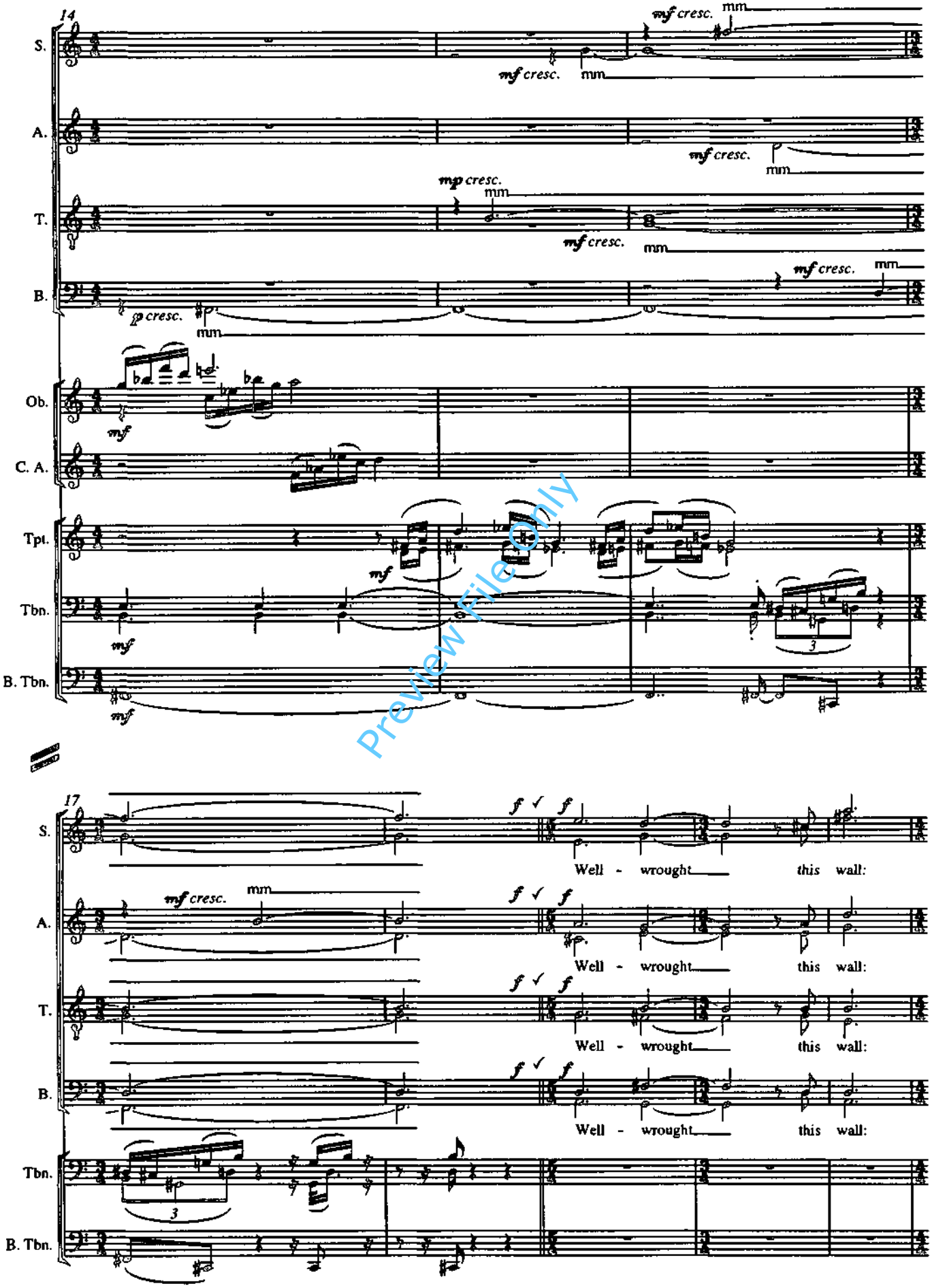

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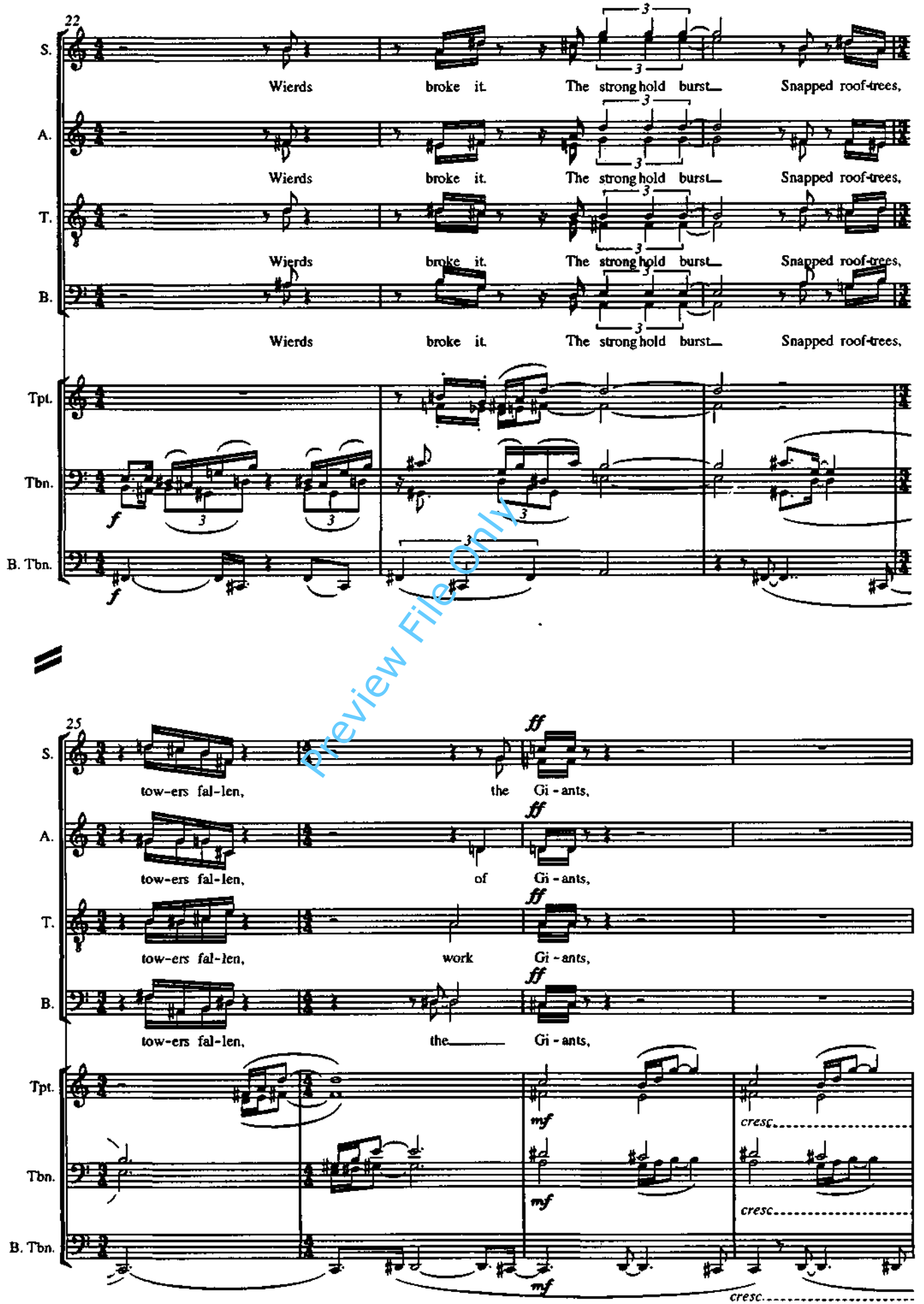

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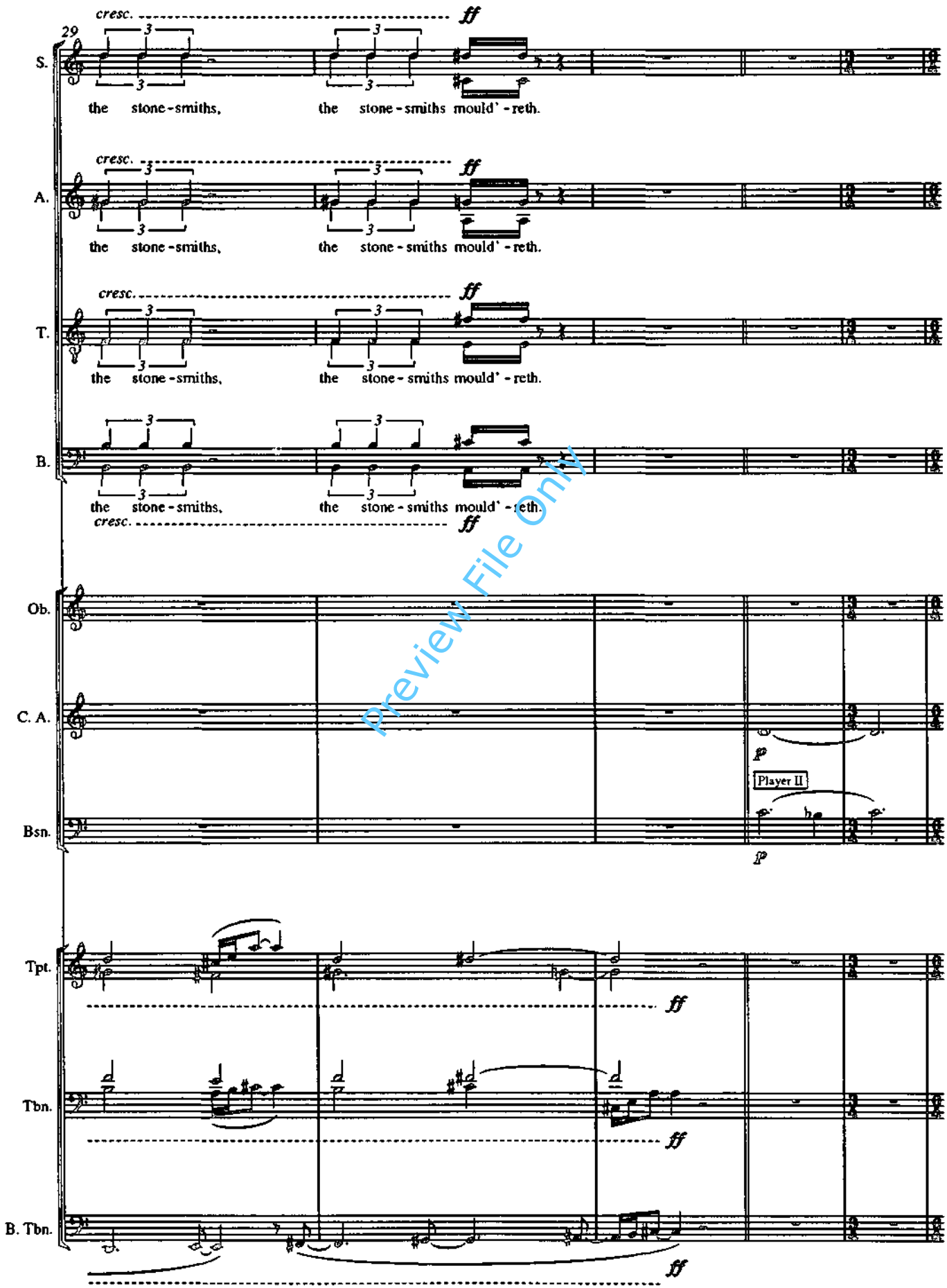

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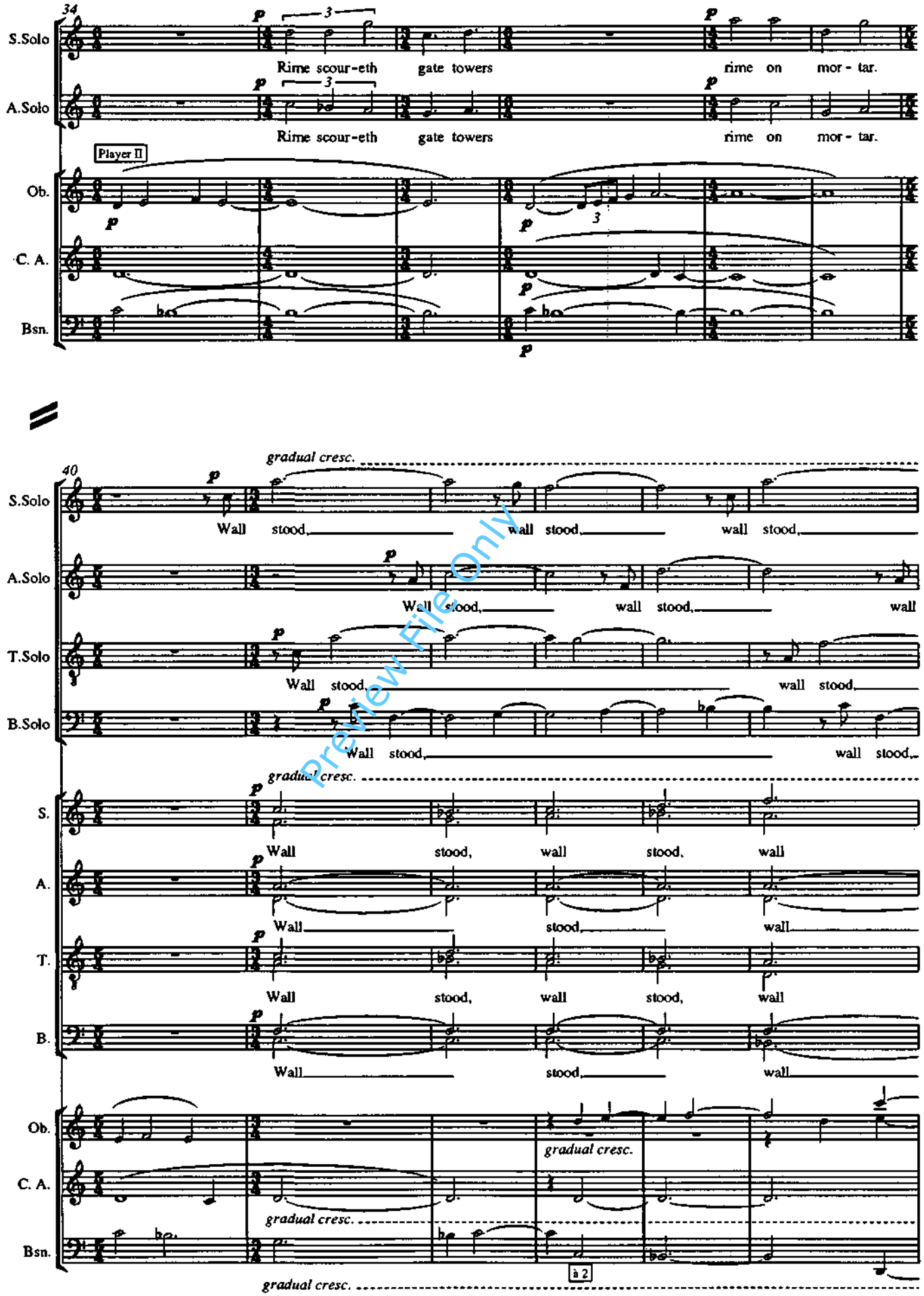

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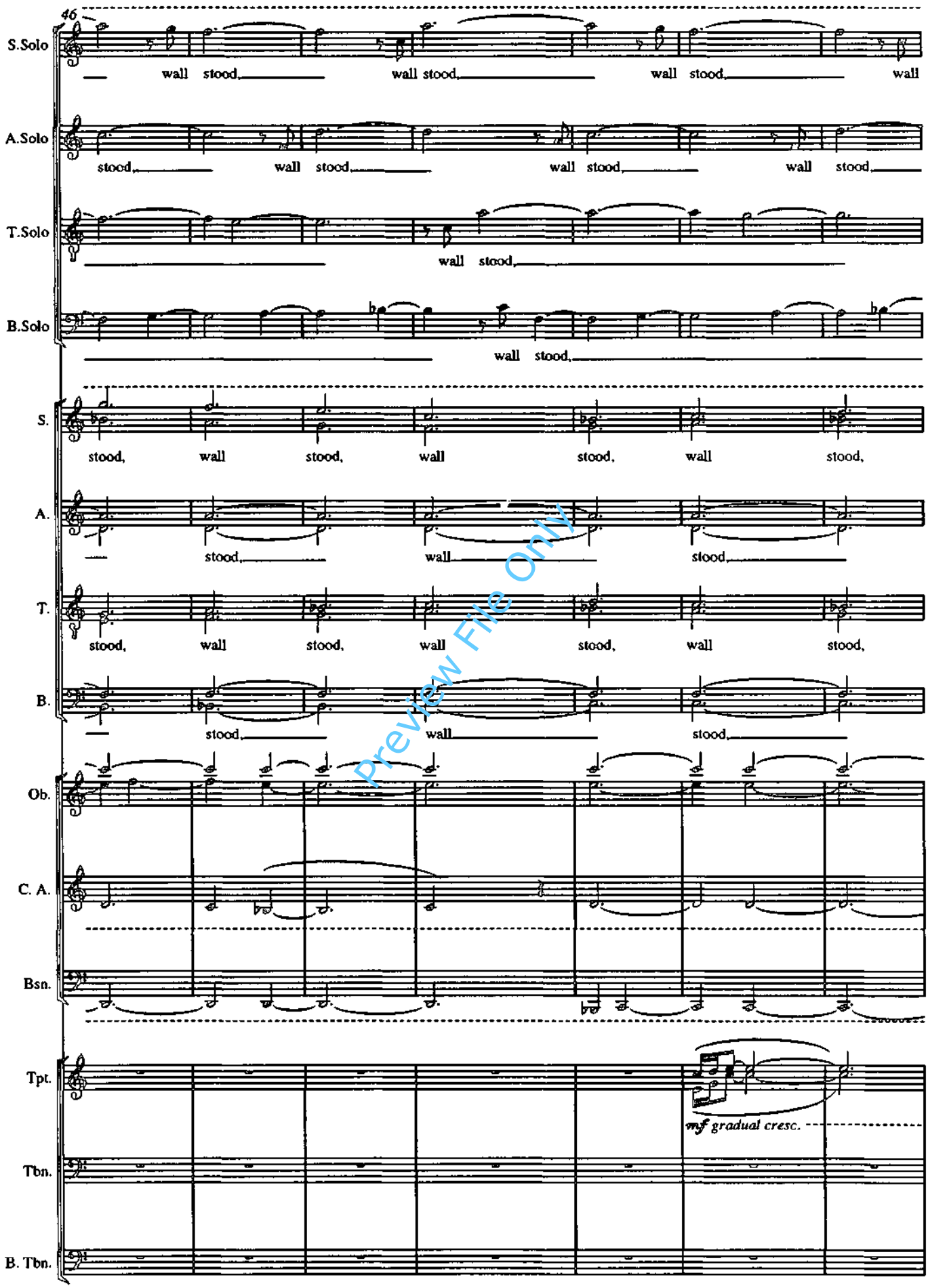

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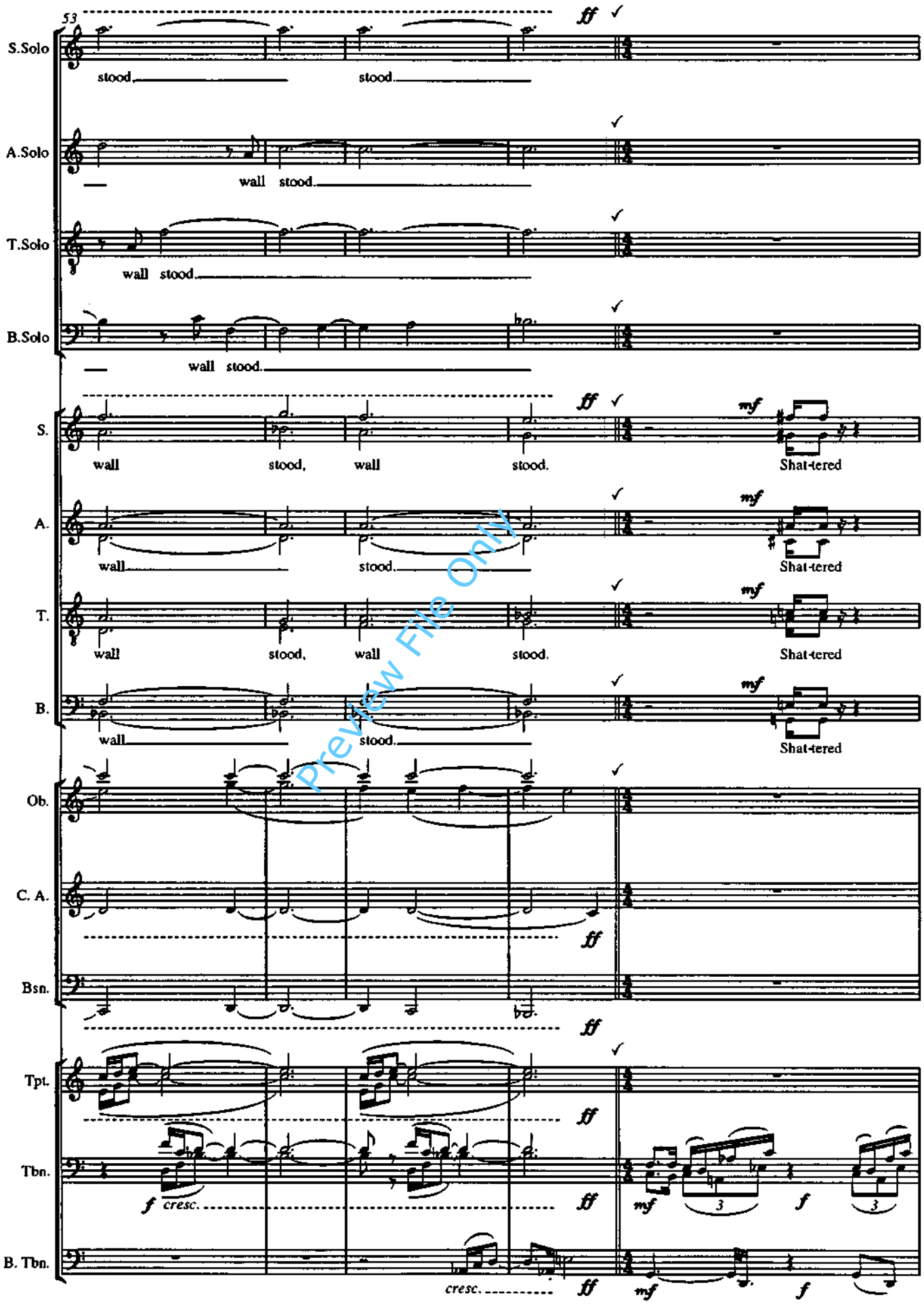
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S.Solo
stood, stood.
A.Solo
wall stood.
T.Solo
wall stood.
B.Solo
wall stood.
S.
wall stood, wall stood. Shat-tered
A.
wall stood. Shat-tered
T.
wall stood, wall stood. Shat-tered
B.
wall stood. Shat-tered
Ob.
C. A.
Bsn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
cresc.
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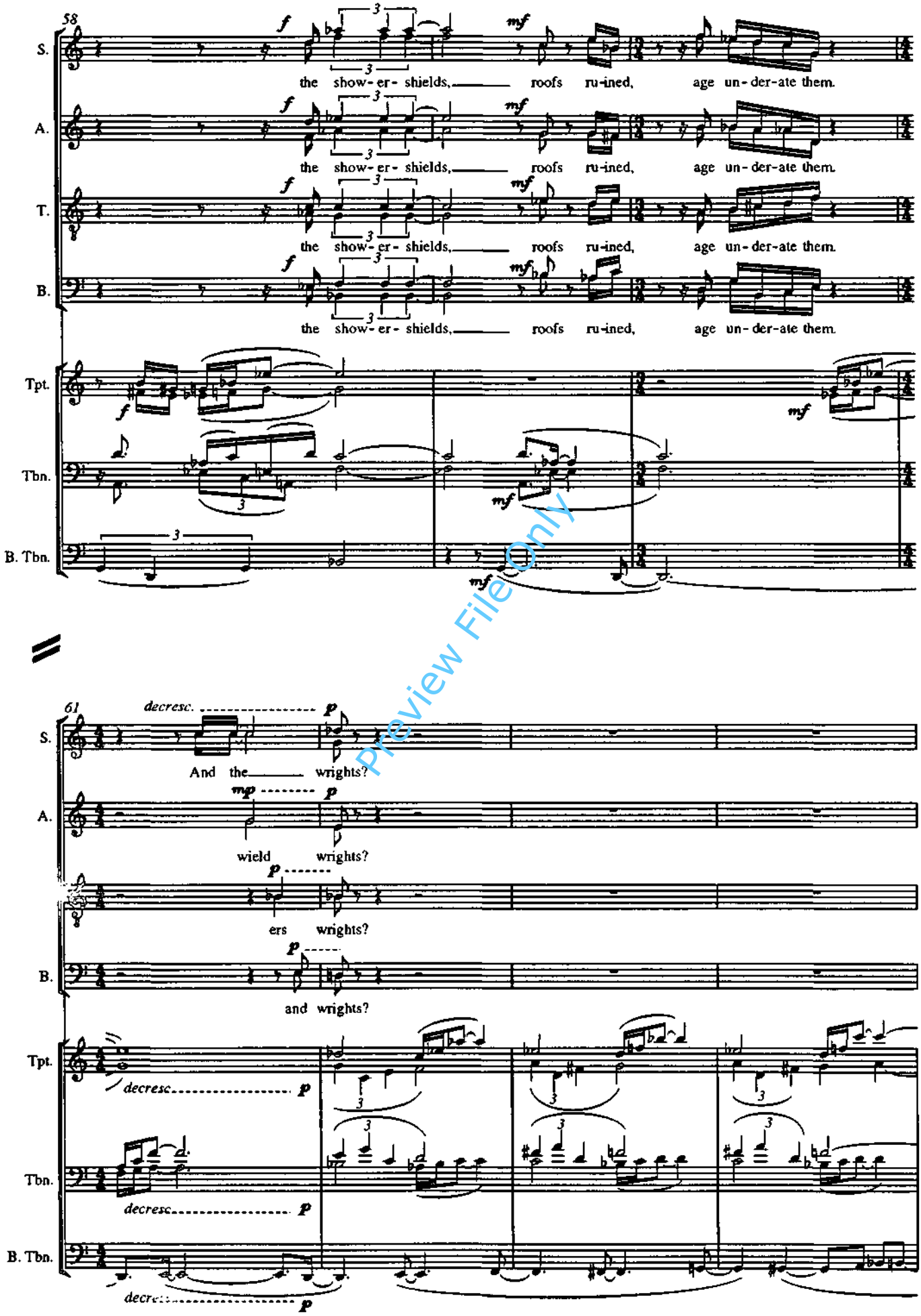

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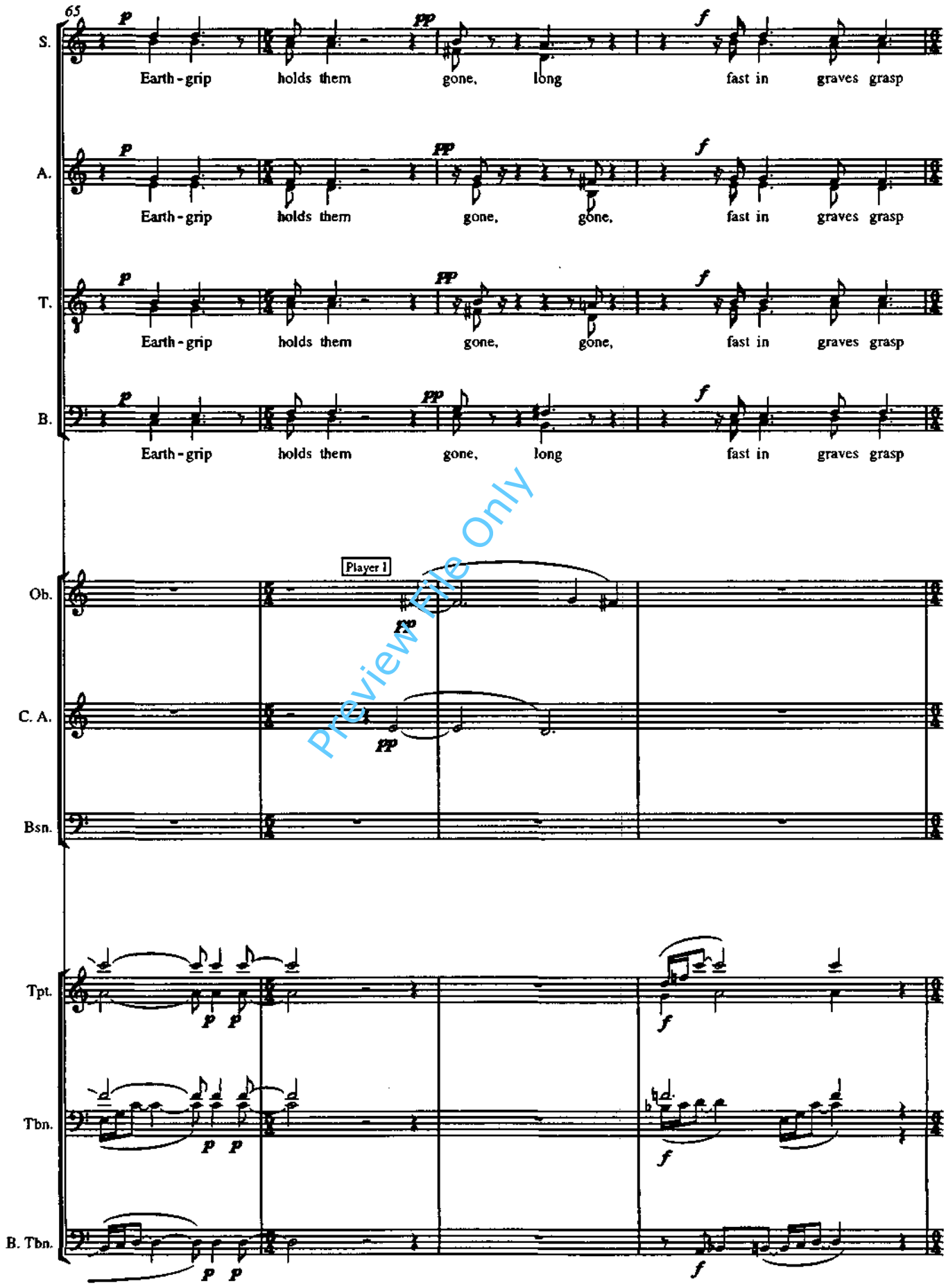

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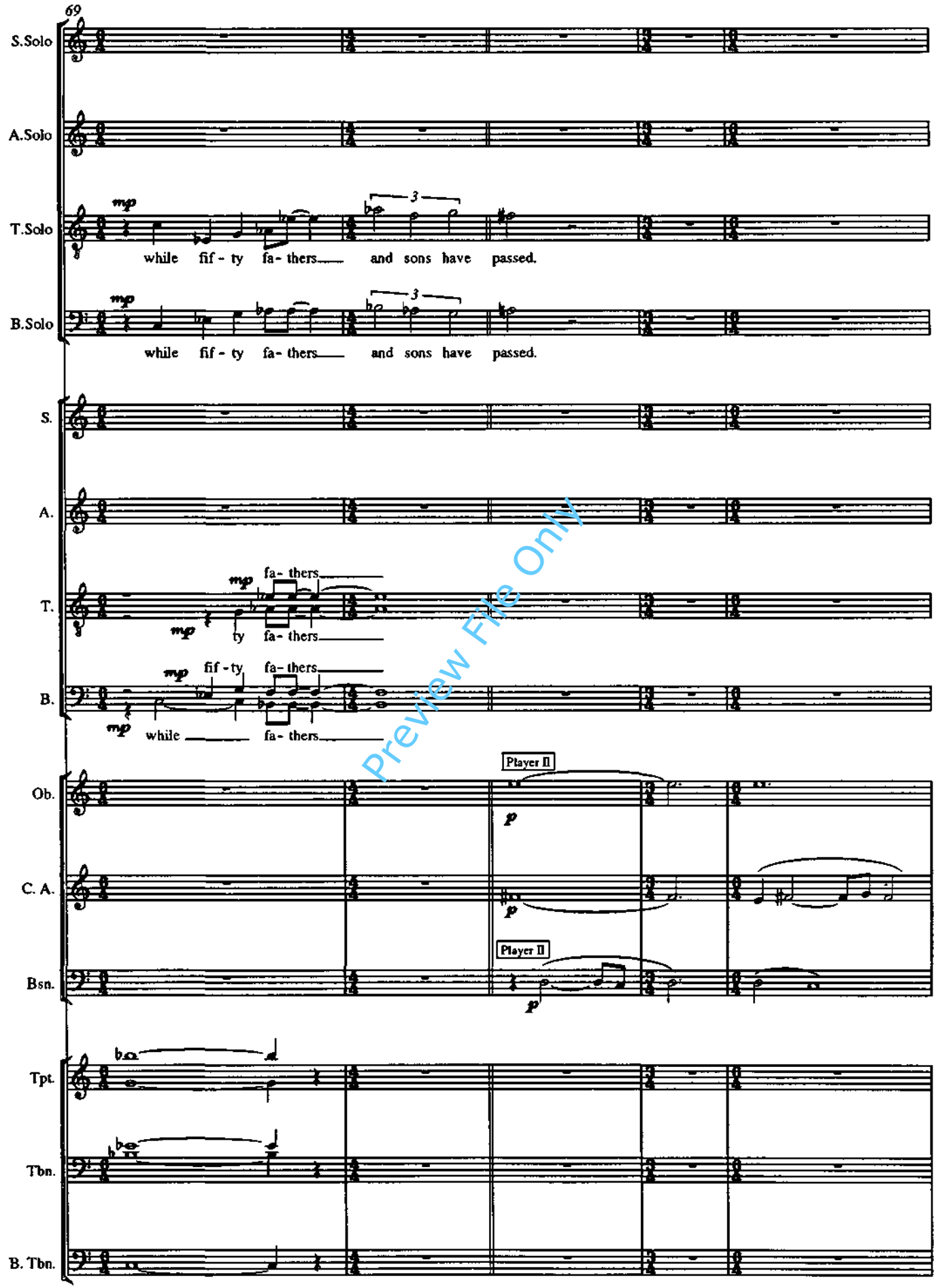

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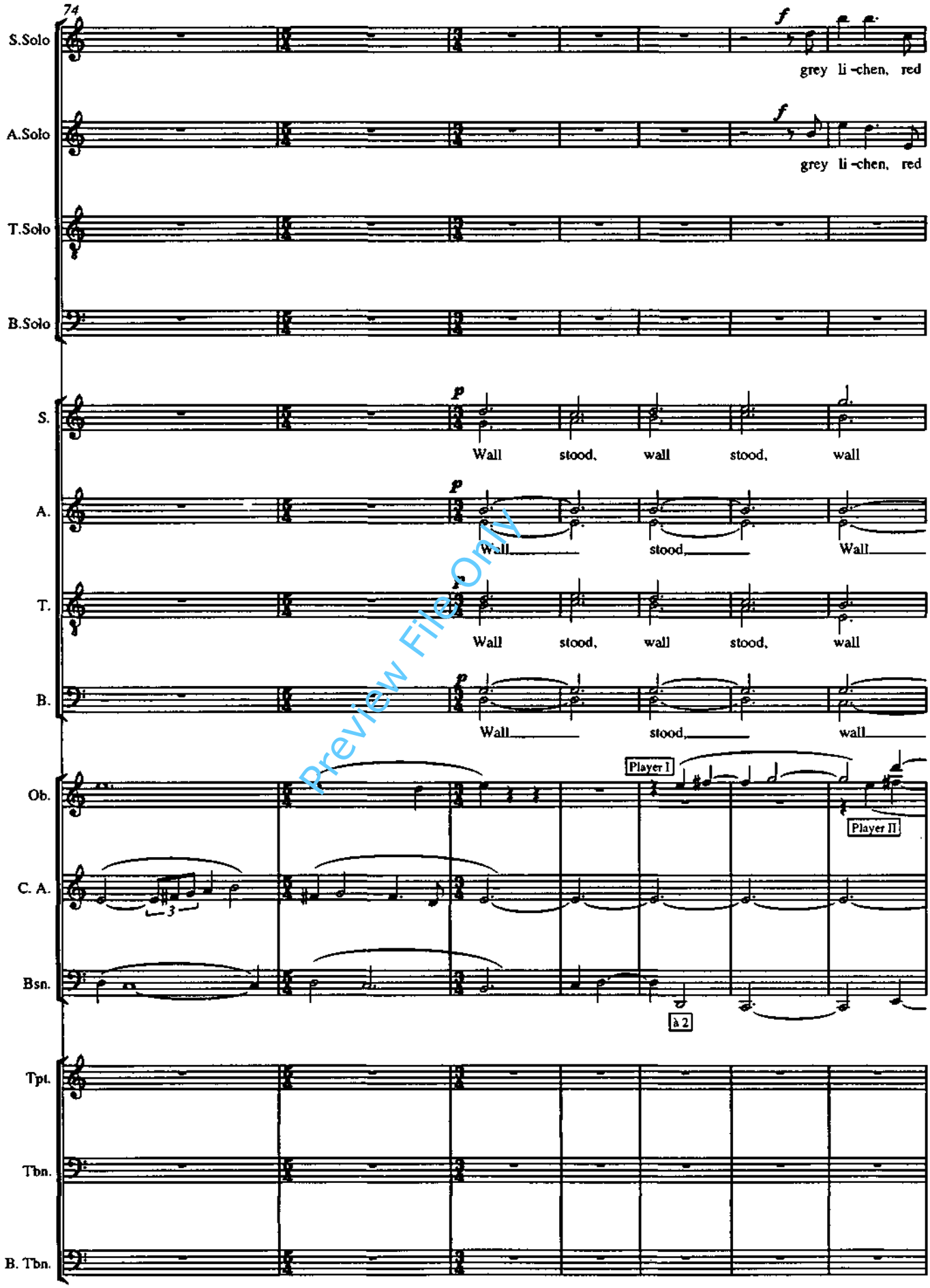

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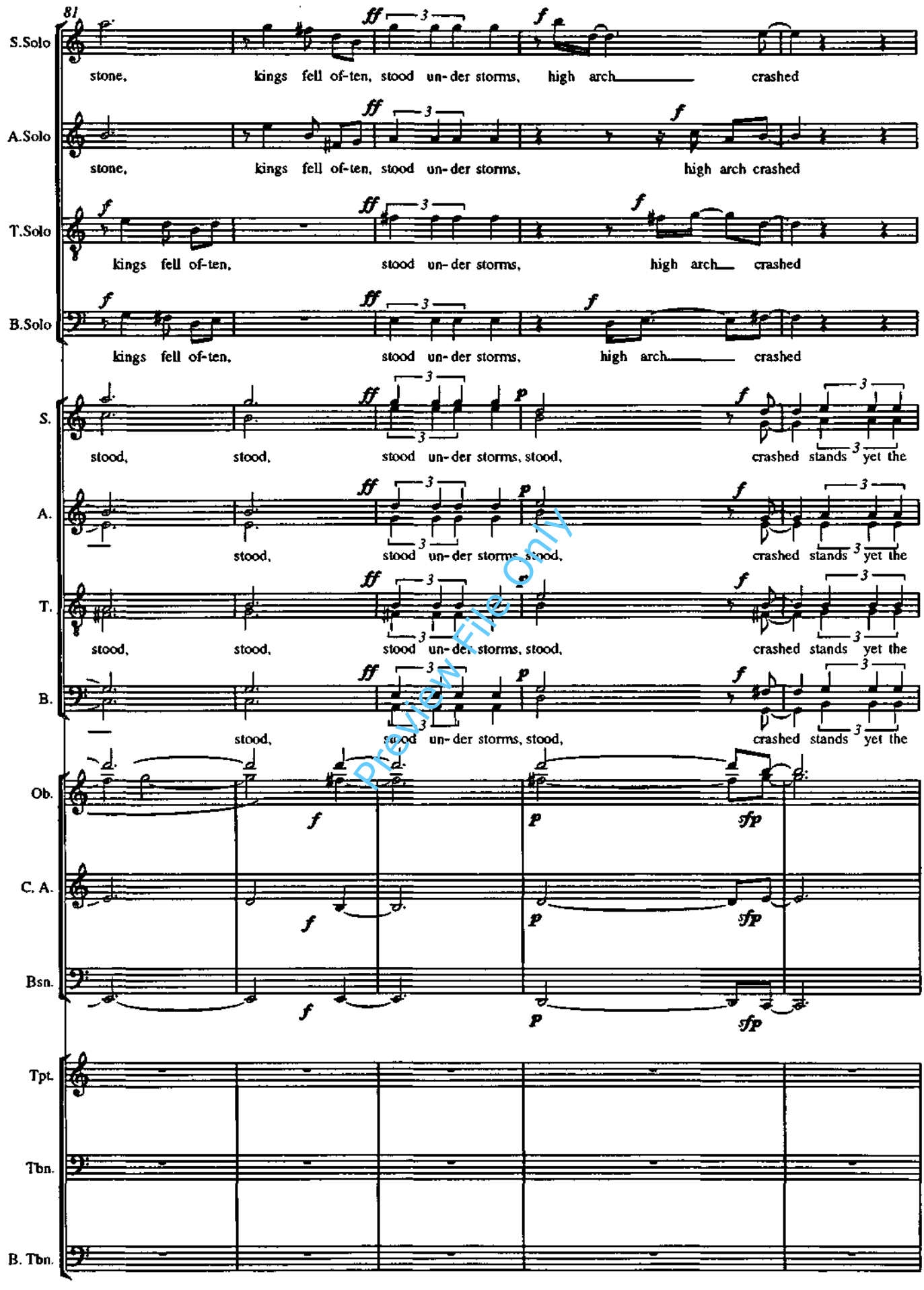

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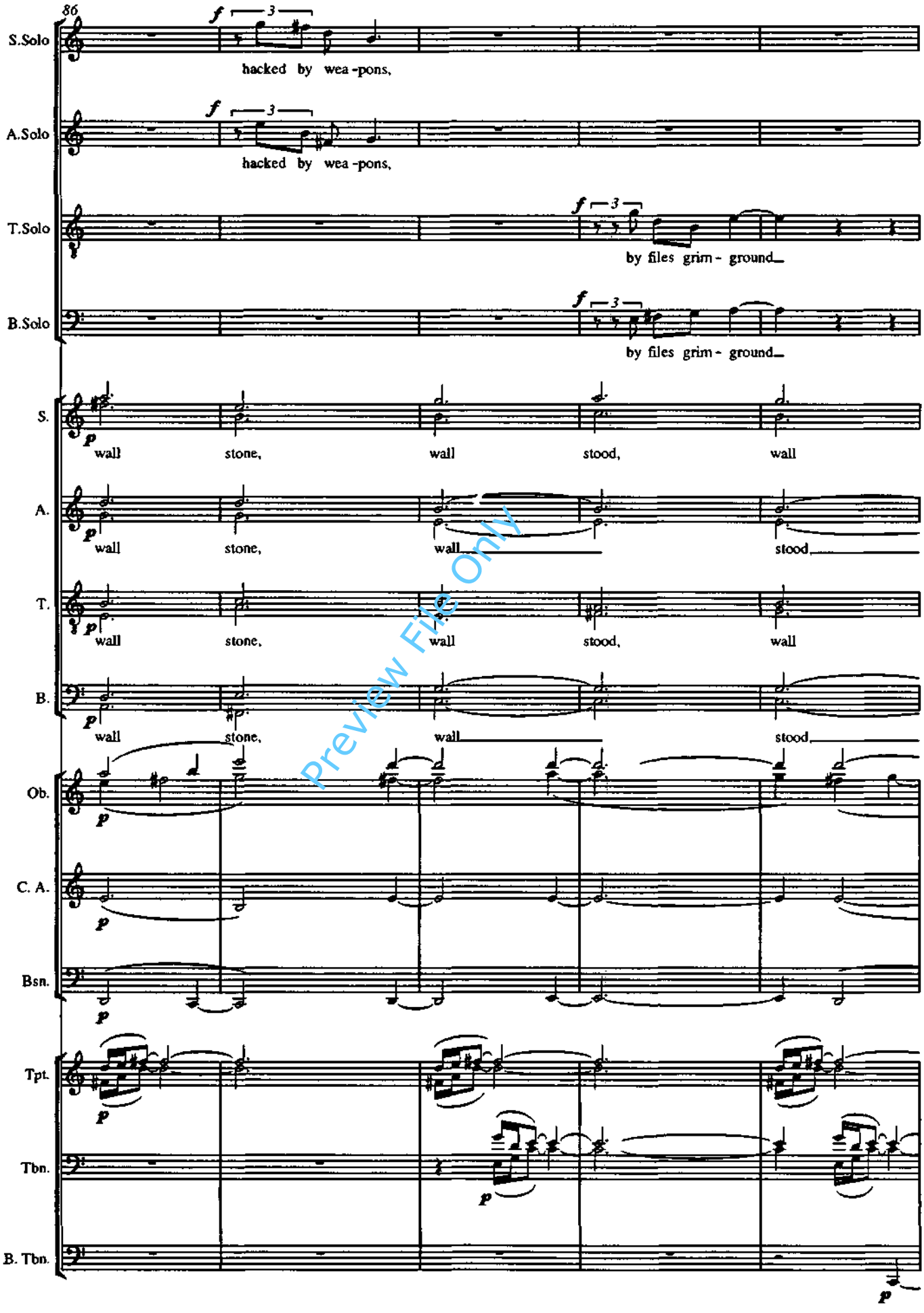

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