Selbstbildnis als Laute

for four solo voices, SATB

Duration
4 minutes

Performance note
Alignment of the soprano part is accurate in the score, but exact co-ordination of S with ATB on pages 4-8 is not as important as maintaining two independent tempos. Adjustments may be made at the start of each subsection, which should be accurately co-ordinated.

Die Laute *[sung by alto, tenor and bass]*
Ich bin die Laute. Willst du meinen Leib
beschreiben, seine schön gewölbten Streifen:
sprich so, als sprächest du von einer reifen
gewölbten Feige. Übertreib

das Dunkel, das du in mir siehst. Es war
Tullias Dunkelheit. [In ihrer Scham
war nicht so viel, und ihr erhelltes Haar
war wir ein heller Saal.] Zuweilen nahm

sie etwas Klang von meiner Oberfläche
in ihr Gesicht und sang zu mir.
Dann spannte ich mich gegen ihre Schwäche,
und endlich war mein Inneres in ihr.

The Lute
I am the lute. If you would describe
my body, its beautiful, curved stripes,
speak as you would of a ripe and
rounded fig. Emphasise

the dark you see in me. It was
Tullia's darkness. [Her shame
was not so dark as I, and her shining hair
was like a bright-lit room.] At times

she took a little sound from my surfaces
into her countenance, and sang to me.
Then I tautened myself against her weakness,
and finally my heart entered into her.

[Note: Tullia was a famous 16thC Italian courtesan]

Schlaflied *[sung by soprano]*
Einmal wenn ich dich verlier,
wirst du schlafen können ohne
daß ich wie eine Lindenkrone
mich verflüstre über dir?

Ohne daß ich hier wache und
Worte, beinah wir Augenlieder,
auf deine Brüste, auf deine Glieder
niederlege, auf deinen Mund.

Ohne daß ich dich verschließ
und dich allein mit Deinem lasse
wie einem Garten mit eine Masse
von Melissen und Stern-Anis.

Sleep song
If some day I have to lose you
what could bring you sleep, unless,
like the crown of a lime tree,
I were whispering above you?

Unless I here keep watch over you,
caress you with words which fall
almost like eyelids on your breast,
on your limbs, on your mouth.

Unless I enfold you close
in what you truly possess,
as if in a garden, filled
with lemon-balm and star-anise.

Rainer Maria Rilke, *Neue Gedichte II, 1908*

to members of EXAUDI - Juliet Fraser, Iestyn Davies, Ross Buddie, Gareth Jones – who gave the first performance in the National Portrait Gallery, London, on 3 October 2003

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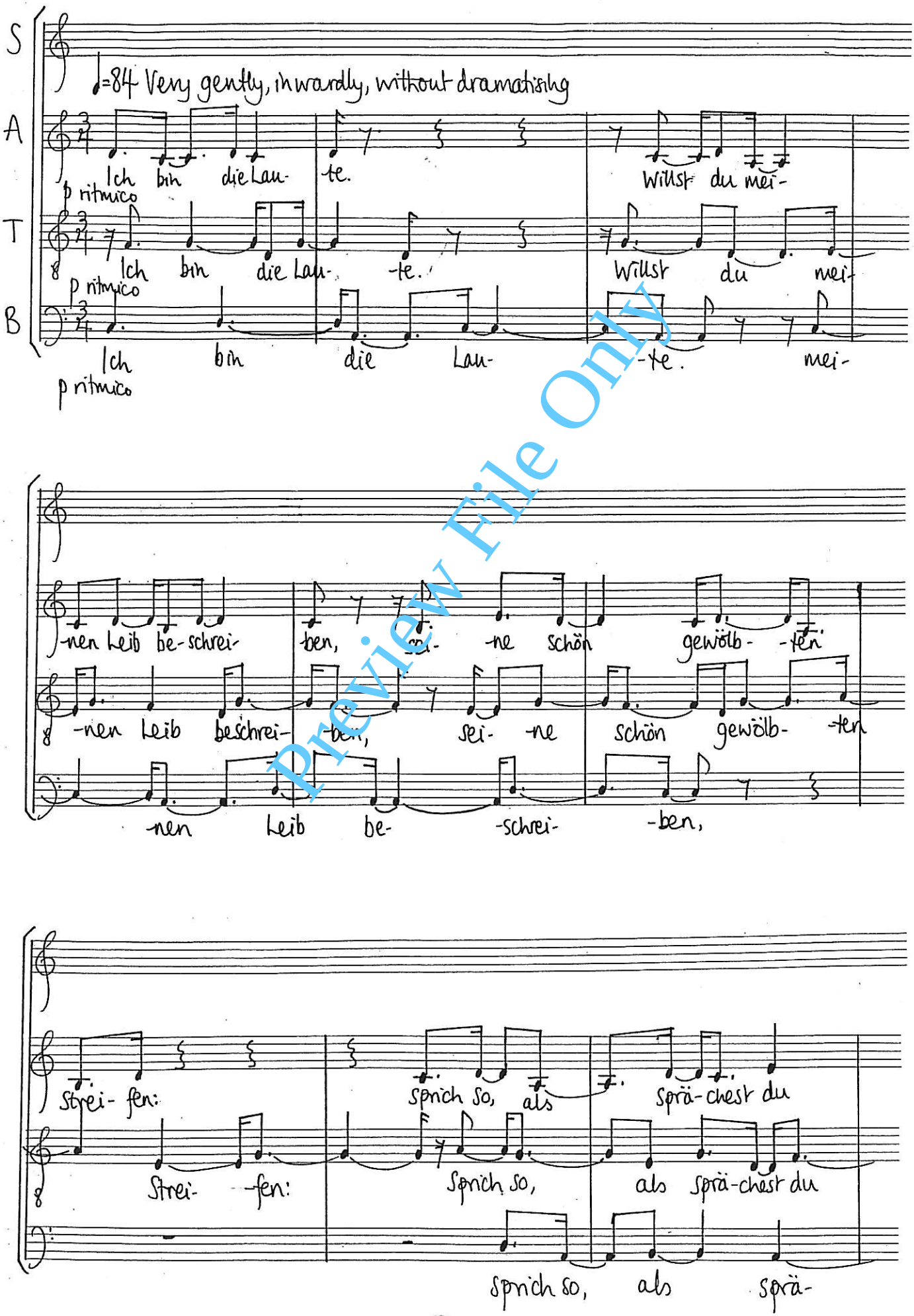

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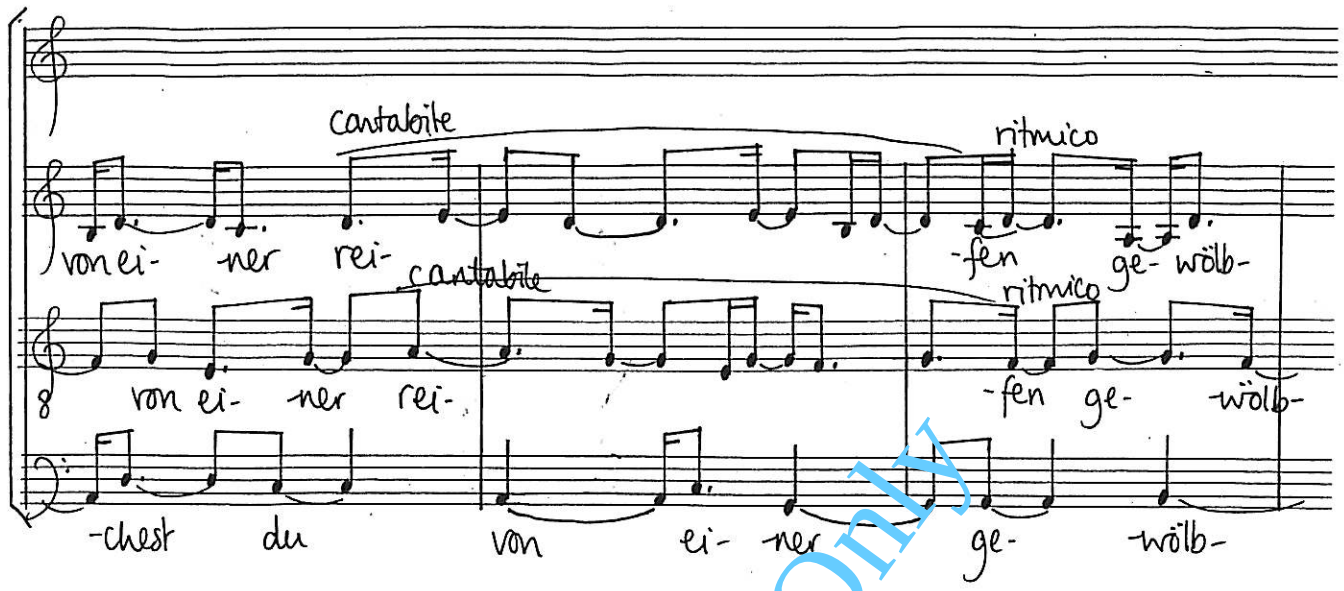

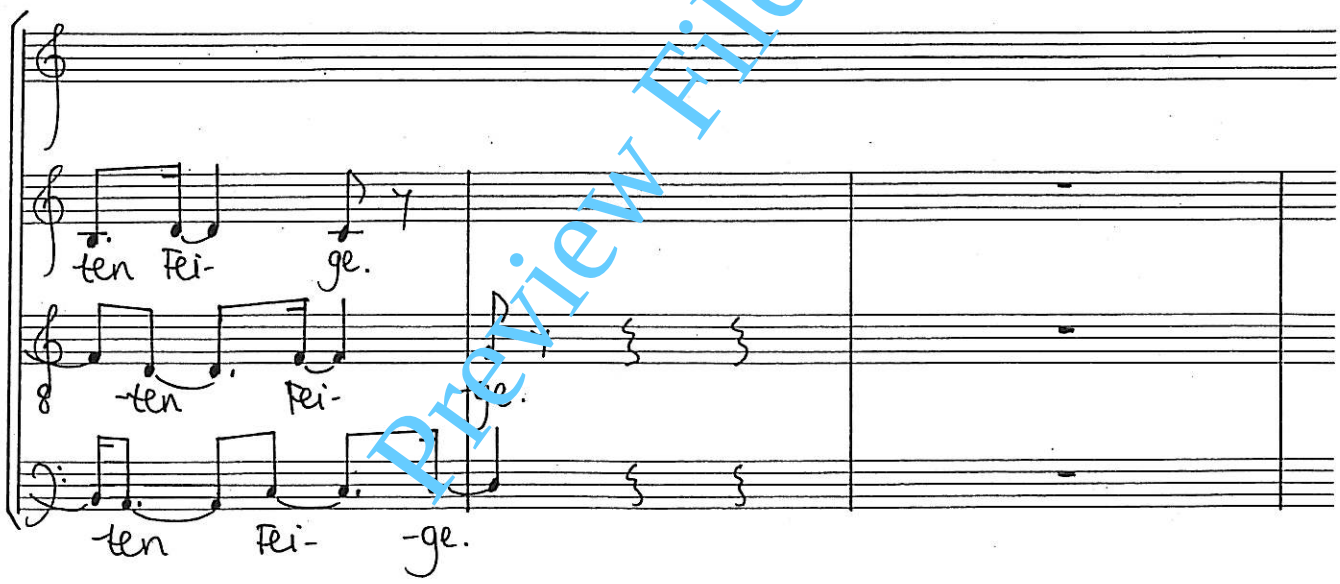

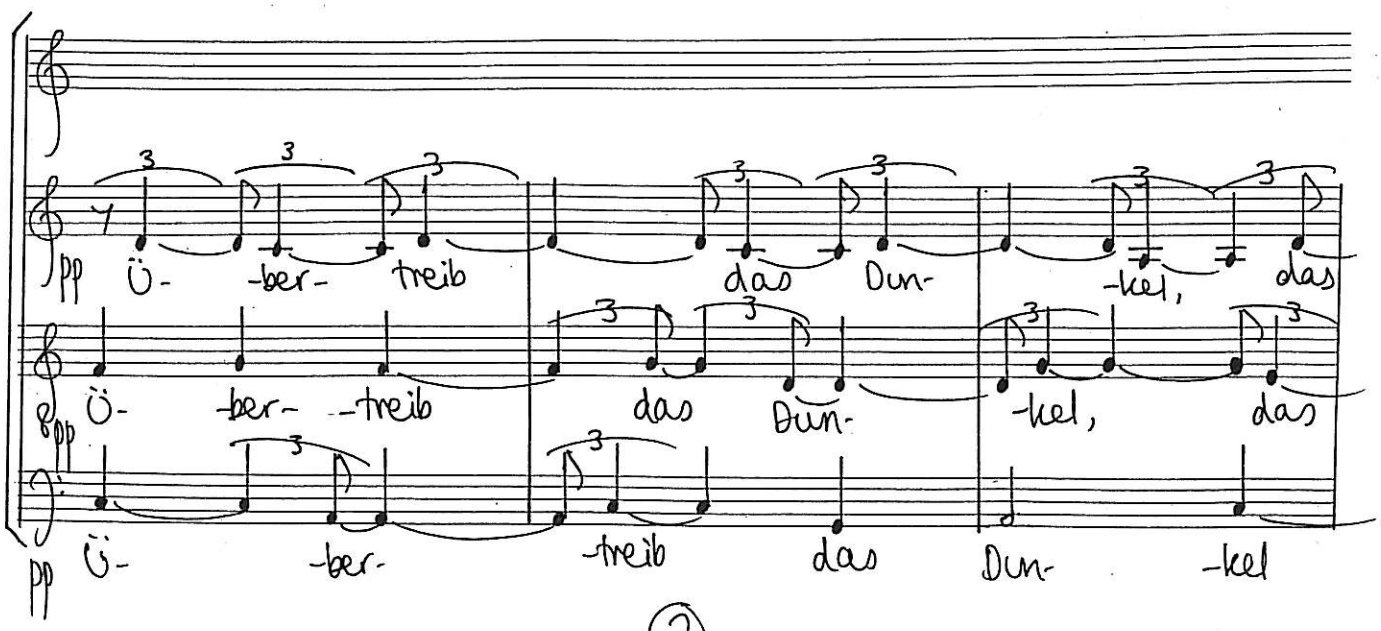

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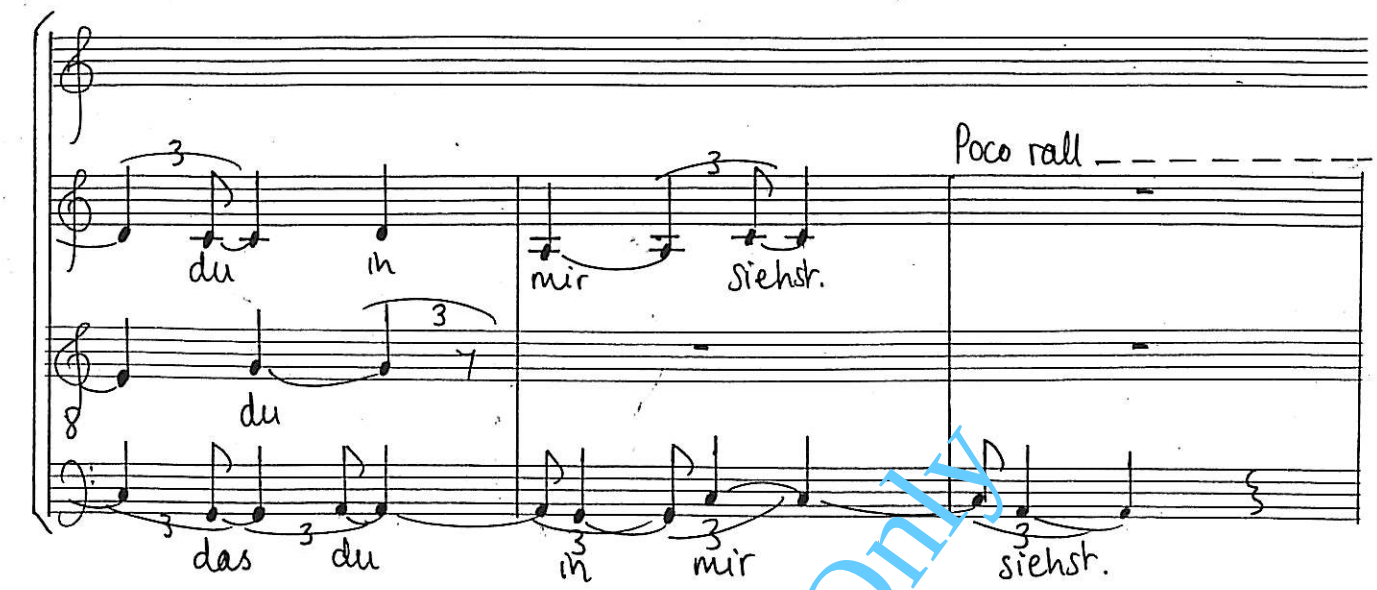

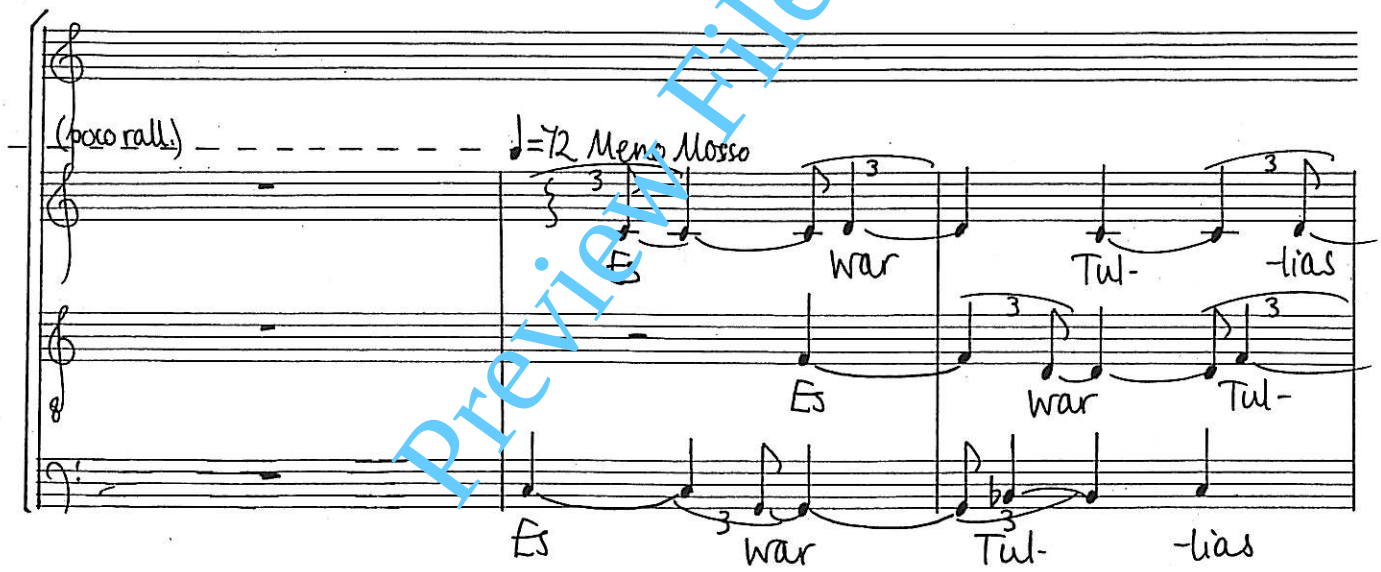

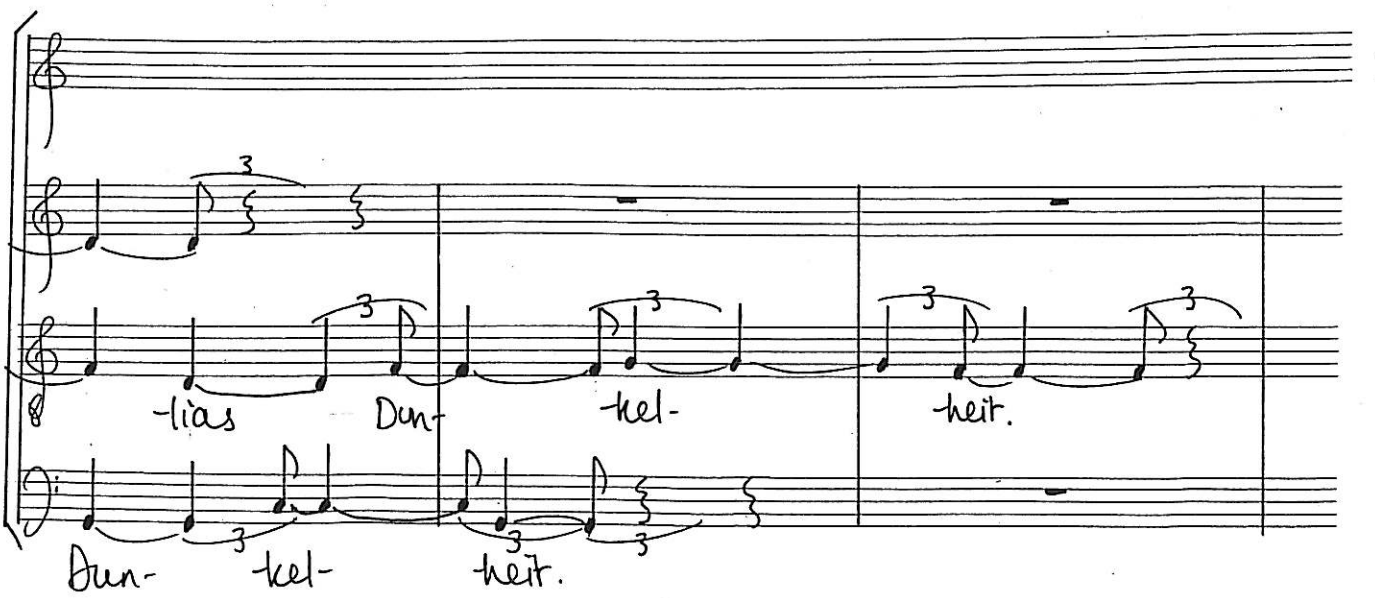

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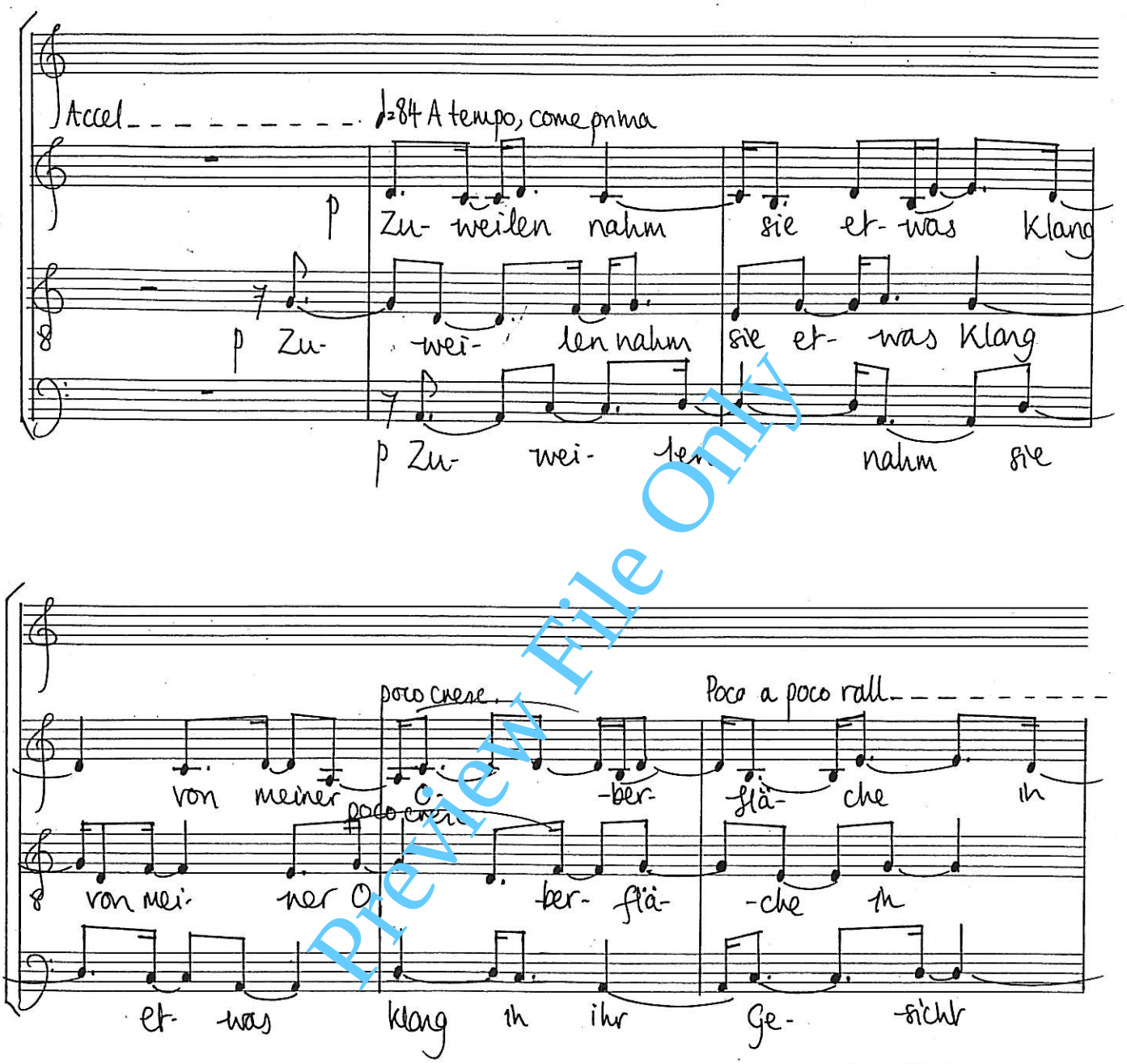

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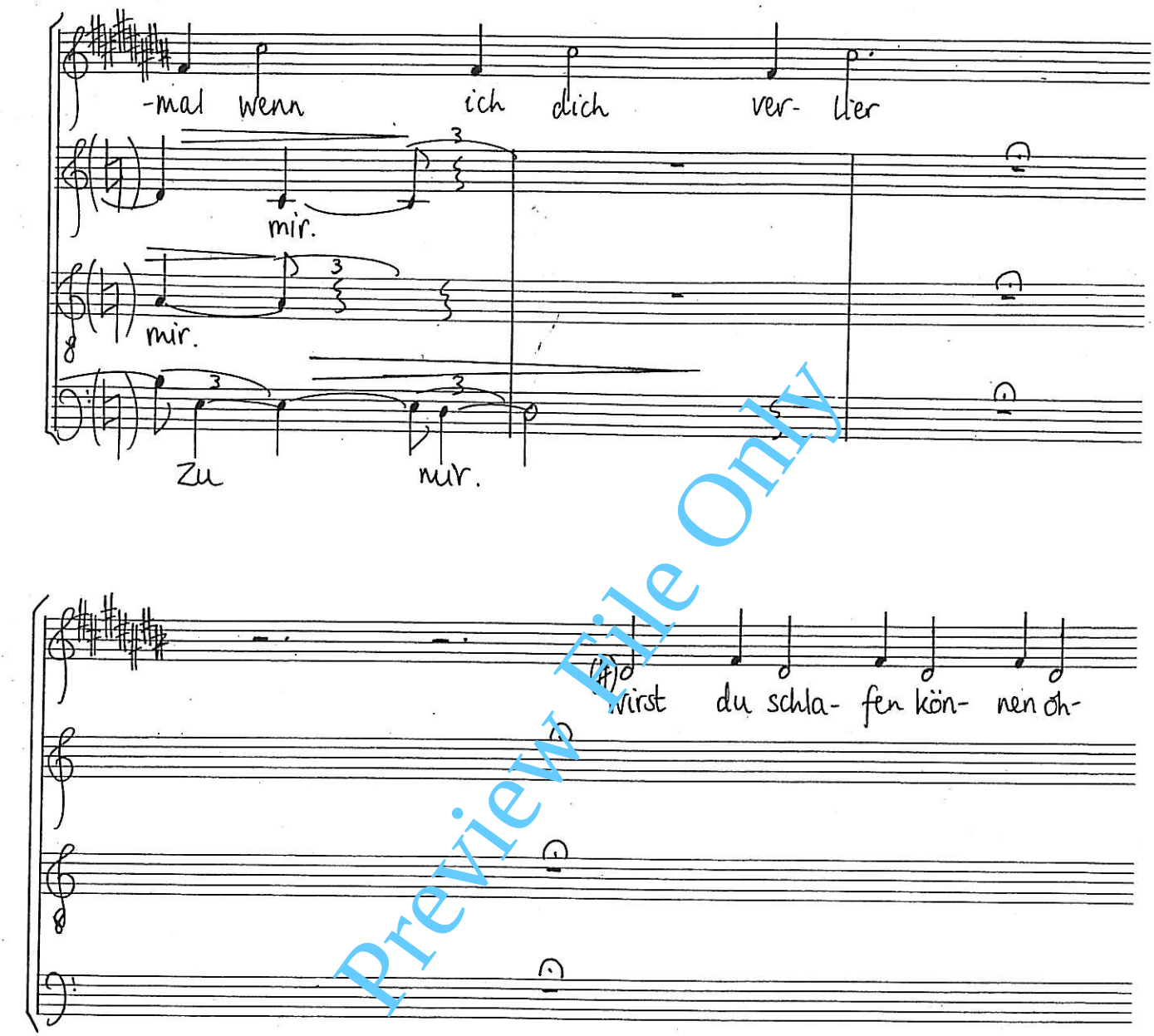

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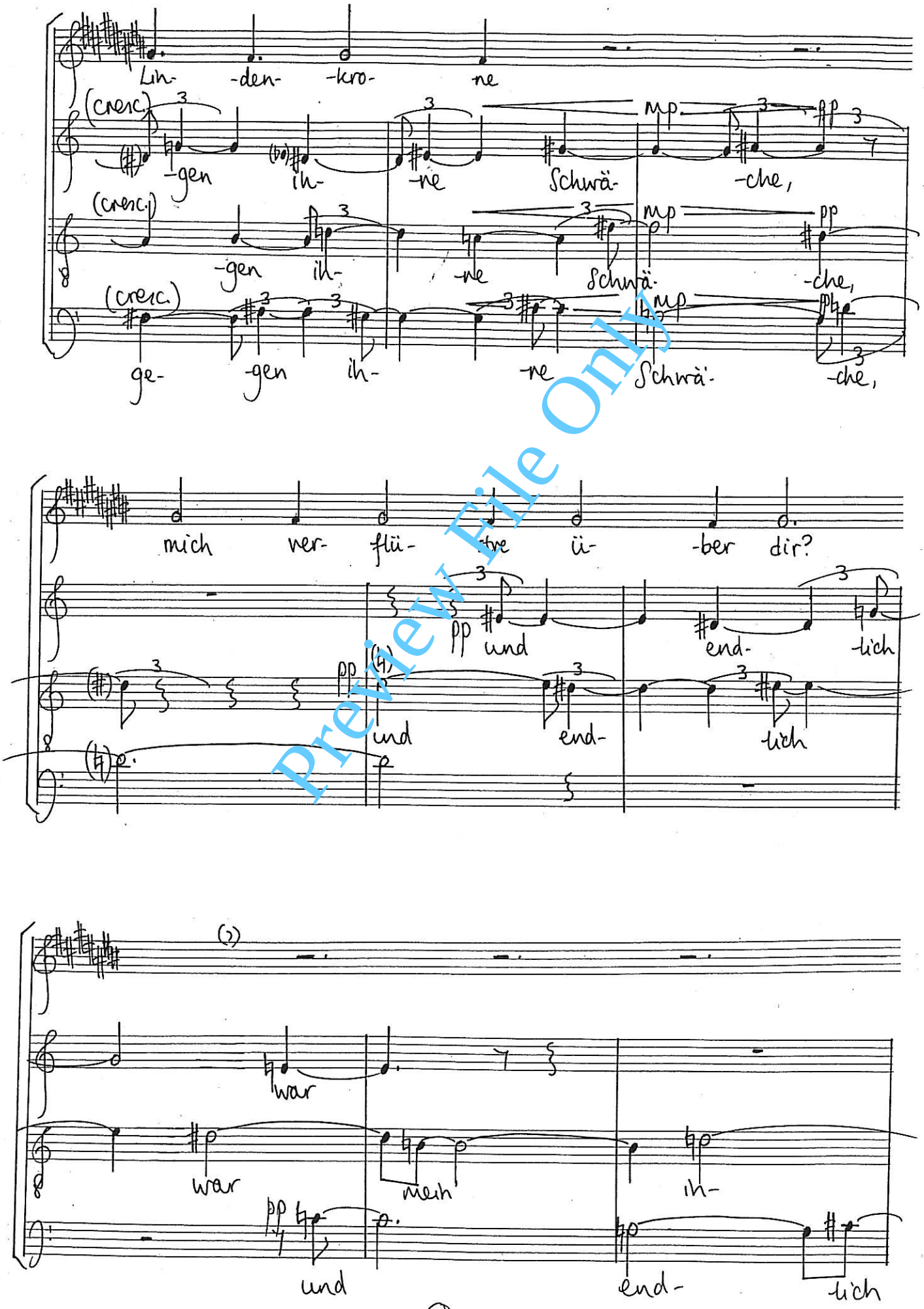

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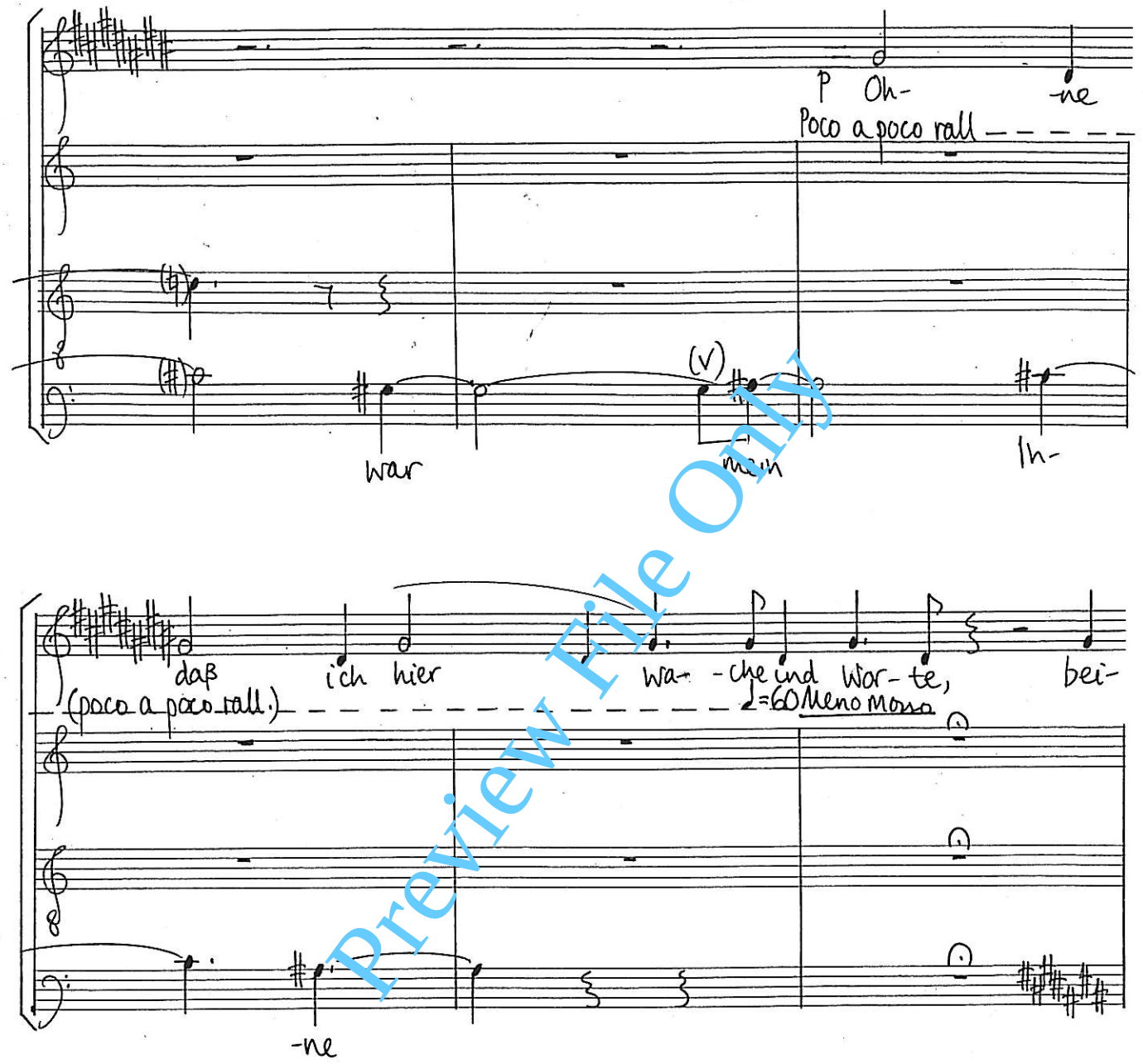

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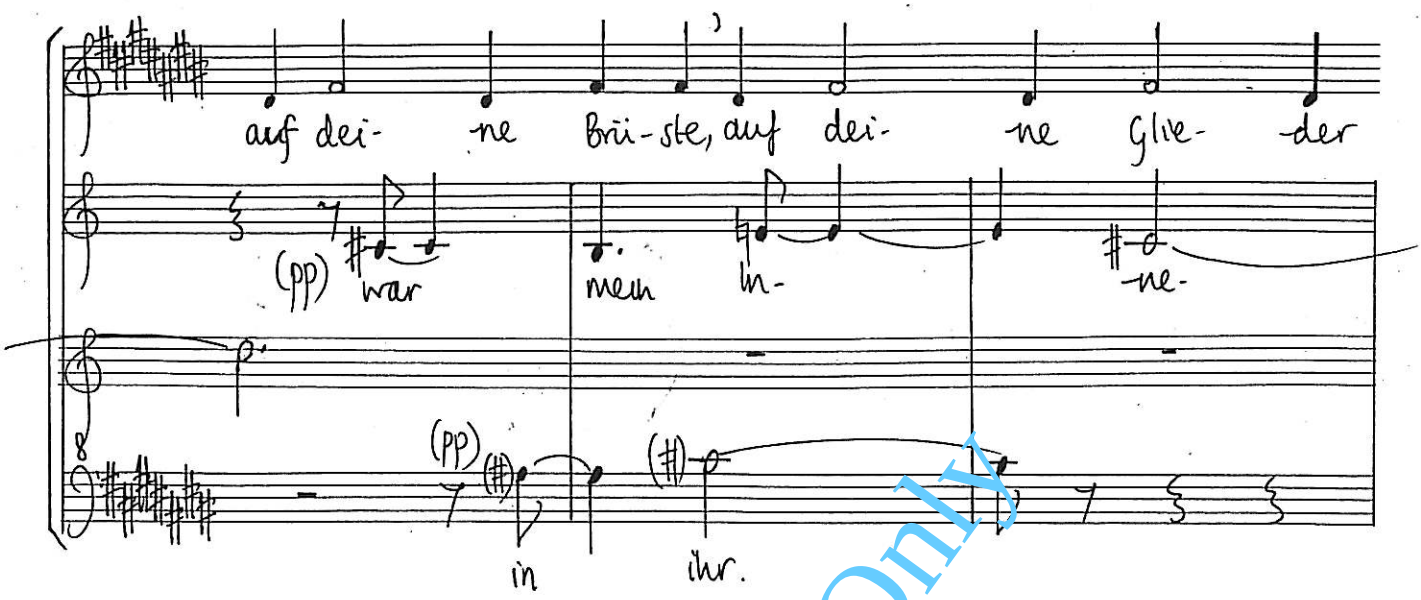

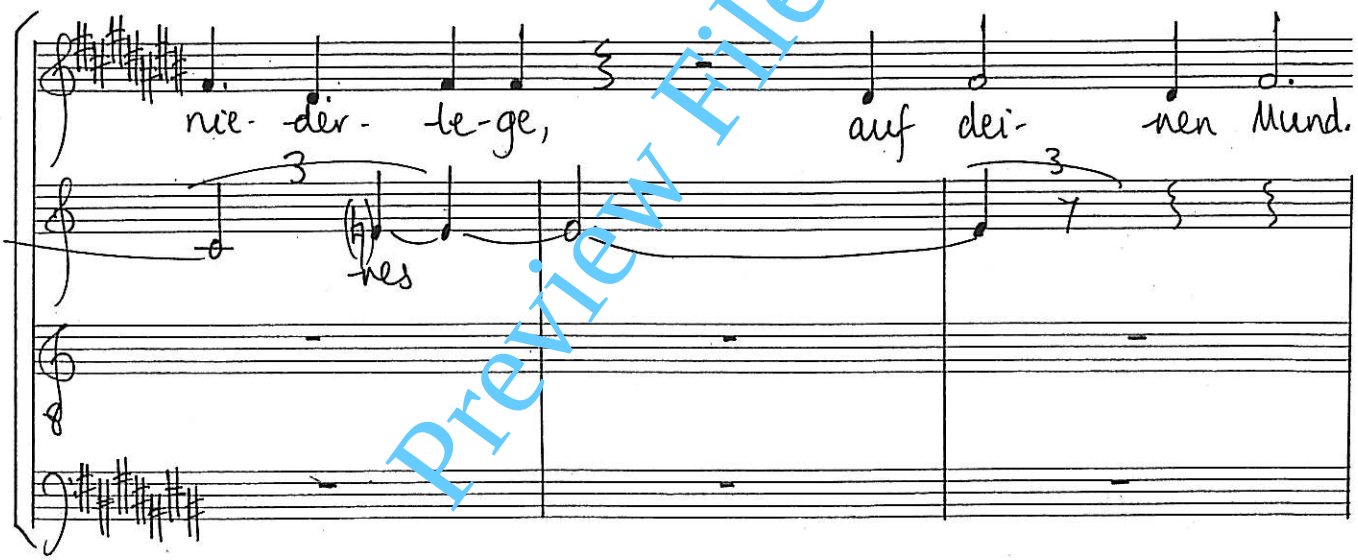

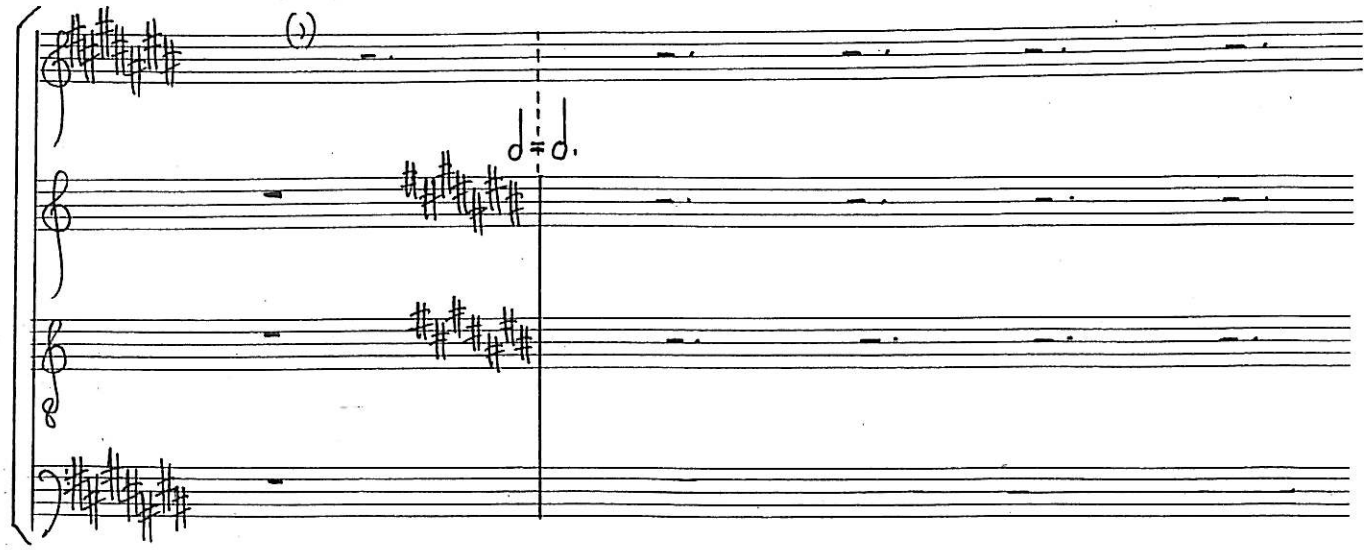

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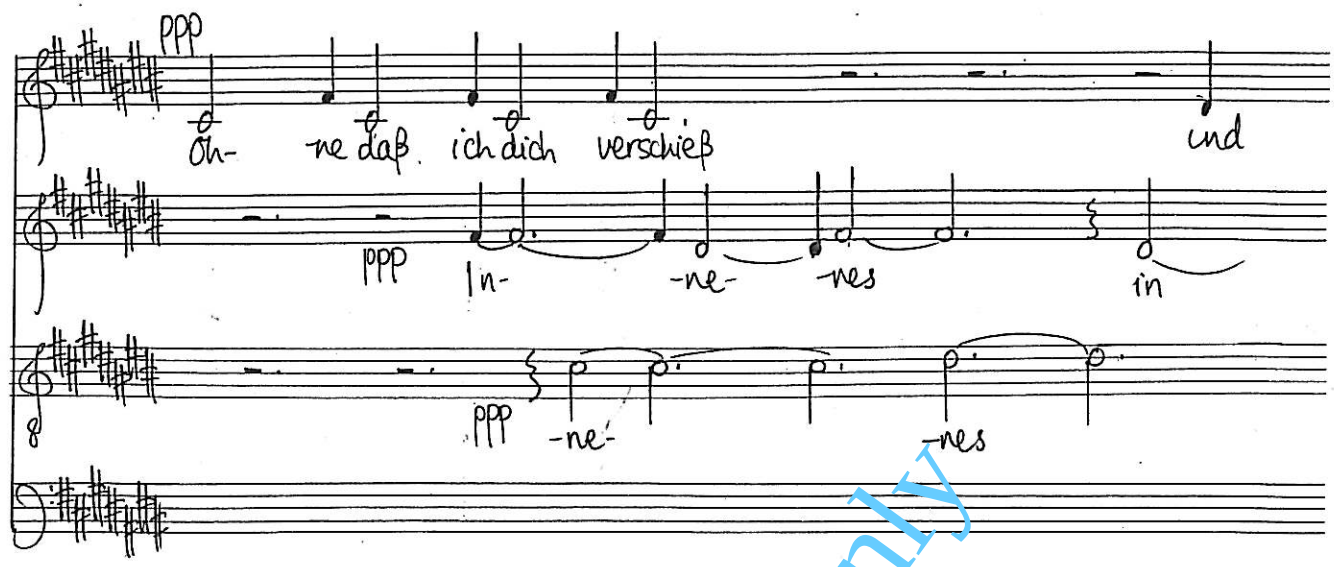

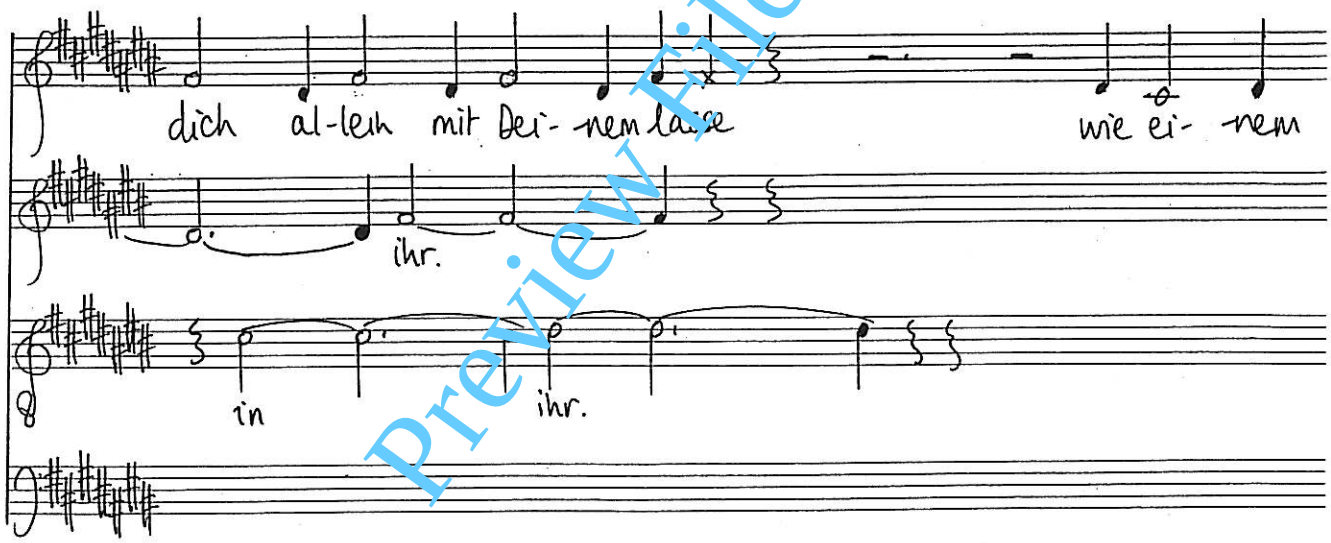

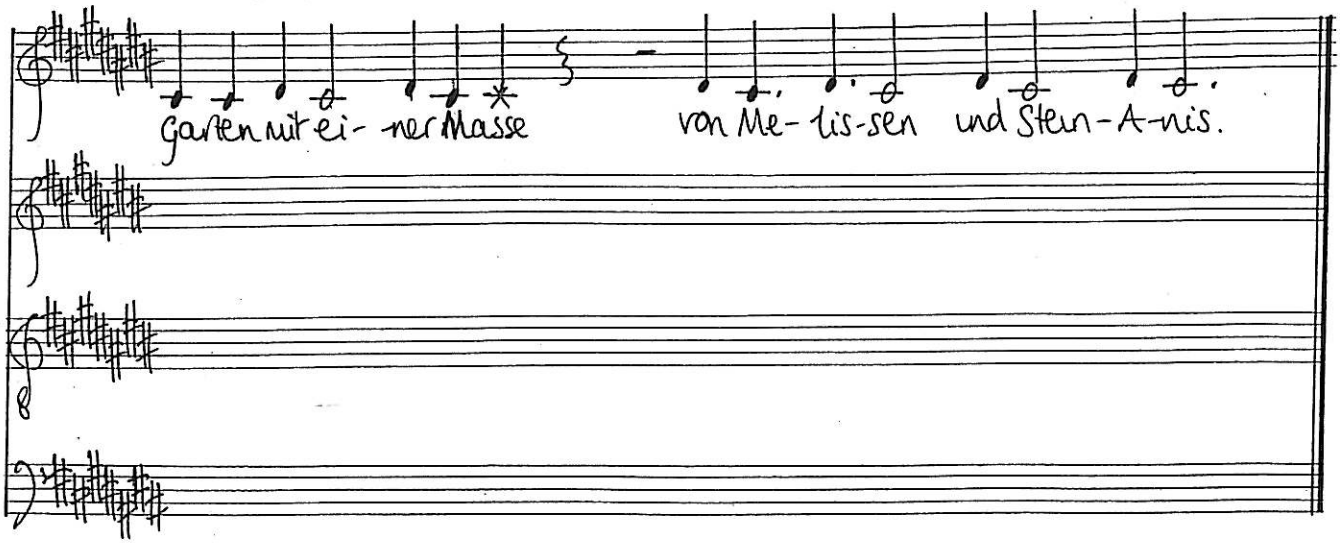

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