BriLee Music
the Voice of Choral Music

SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE A MOTHERLESS CHILD

Unison, optional Two-Part, accompanied

Traditional Spiritual

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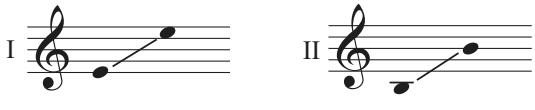
Arranged by
LYNN SHAW BAILEY

Range:



Time: Approx. 2:50
*Difficulty: Moderate

Performance Notes

Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child is an intensely emotional song. This traditional Afro-American spiritual is believed to have originated late in the 19th century and captures the lamentations of a hurting yet hopeful soul.

But we might not know about this song or many other spirituals we sing today had it not been for the work of Henry "Harry" Thacker Burleigh.

Harry Burleigh was born in 1866 in Erie, Pennsylvania. His father was active in local Civil Rights and Abolition movements. His mother was a college graduate and a teacher, as well as the daughter of a freed slave named Hamilton Waters. Grandfather Waters frequently sang spirituals to Harry as they walked the streets together. Harry also had other positive influences in his life and a legacy of quiet heroes.

Burleigh became a world-famous composer, arranger and soloist, as well as an internationally-respected music editor and humanitarian. Burleigh was one of the first to compose American spirituals in classical composition form. He and Anton Dvorak spent time together. Through his passionate work, Harry T. Burleigh bridged cultures, races and nations by using the inspiring songs of his ancestors.

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Because he popularized the spirituals and showed the world their great power and beauty, Harry T. Burleigh became known as the "Father of Spirituals." Burleigh's arrangement of *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child* was first published for accompanied solo voice in 1917 by G. Ricordi & Co. of New York. Burleigh placed the expression "Lamentoso" at the beginning of the piece, an Italian word indicating a plaintive, sad or mournful mood.

In the original performance notes to this piece, Burleigh shares that success in singing this song is "primarily dependent upon deep spiritual feeling. The voice is not nearly so important as the spirit."

When singing these great spirituals, Burleigh says, "Their worth is weakened unless they are done impressively, for through all these songs there breathes a hope, a faith in the ultimate justice and brotherhood of man. The cadences of sorrow invariably turn to joy, and the message is ever manifest that eventually deliverance from all that hinders and oppresses the soul will come, and man--every man--will be free."

So learn the right notes, words and rhythms. Sing with beautiful tone and dynamic integrity. Do all the right things from a "musical" perspective. But take it to the next level. Ask yourself, "What does it feel like to be an orphan?" Through the music, let your spirit feel and express the deep hurts and hopes of another. Create joy from the pain. Sow a seed of encouragement and love. Only then does your singing really nuture you and others. Only then does the music transcend the spiritual to become all the blessing it was created to be...

Soli Deo Gloria!

L.S.B.

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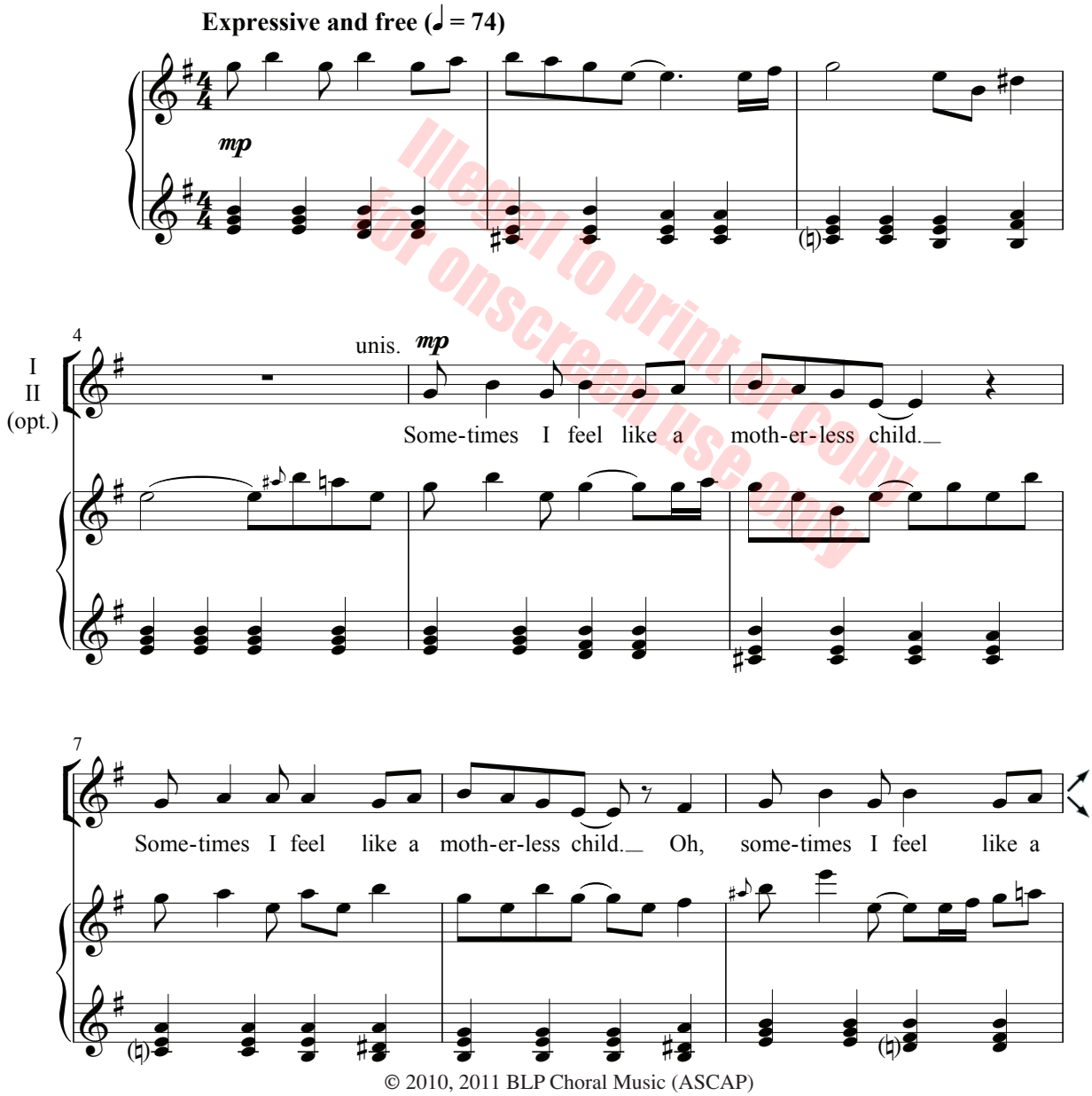
Additional Words by
LYNN SHAW BAILEY (ASCAP)

Arranged with Additional Music by
LYNN SHAW BAILEY (ASCAP)



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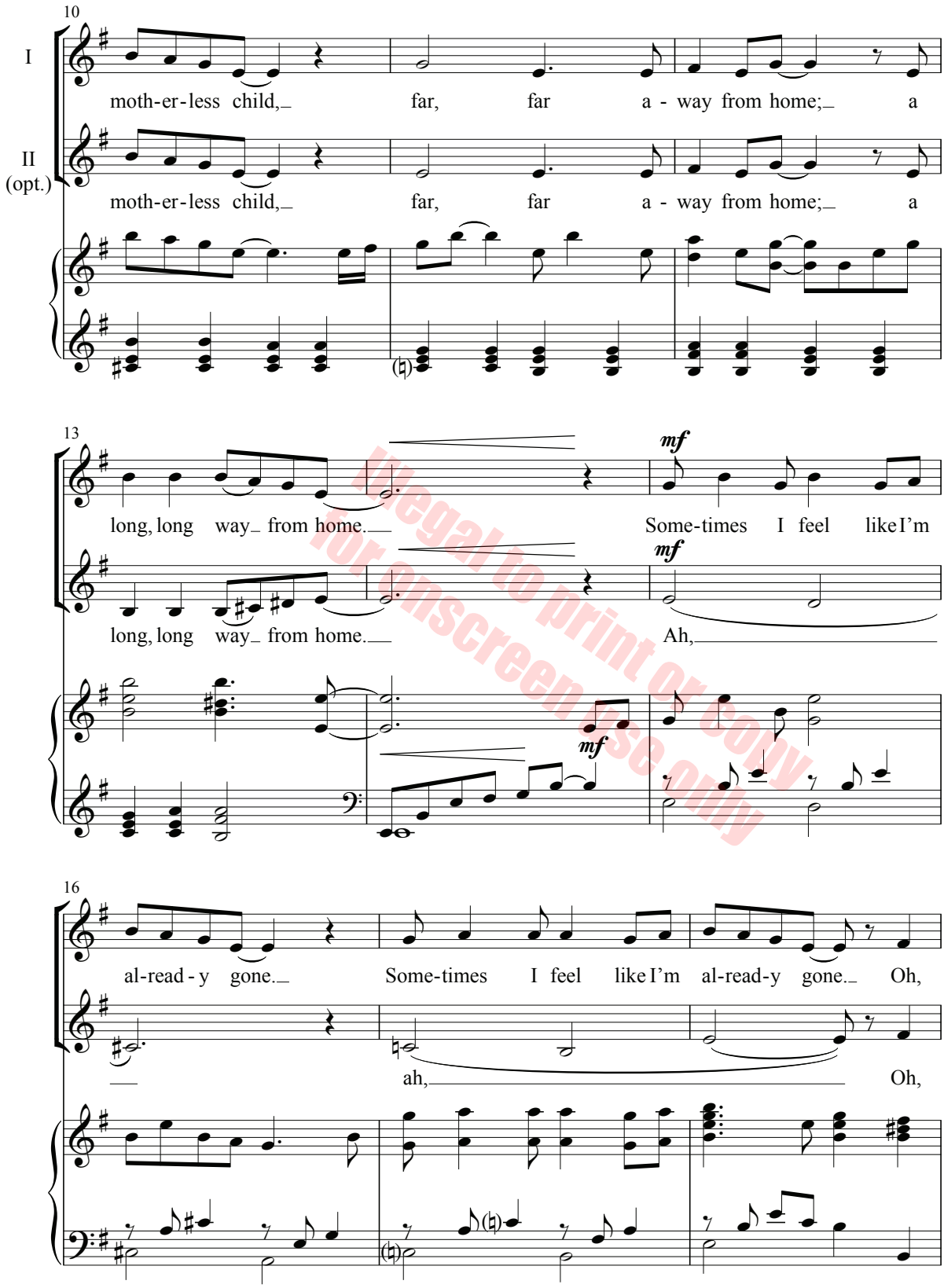

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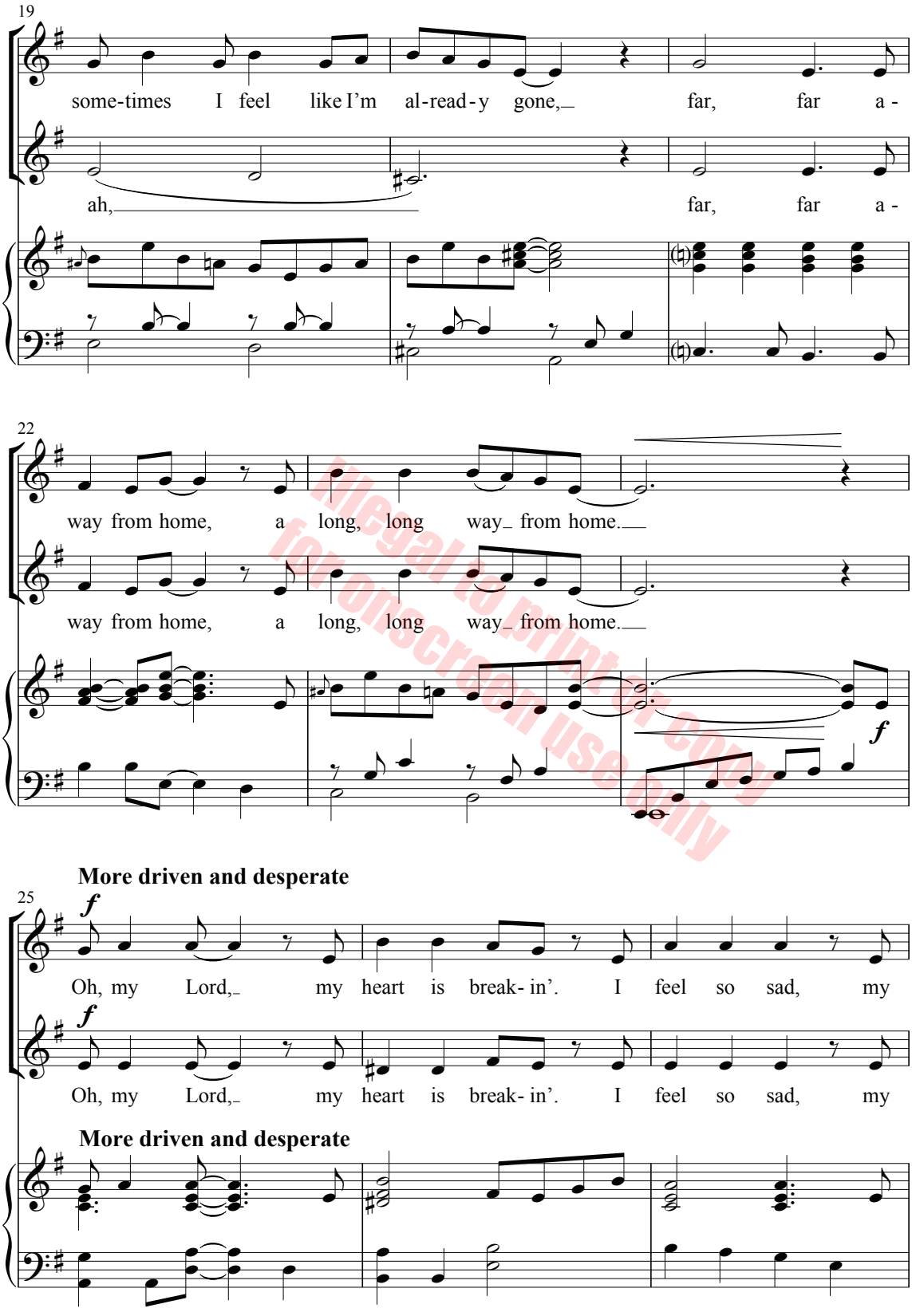

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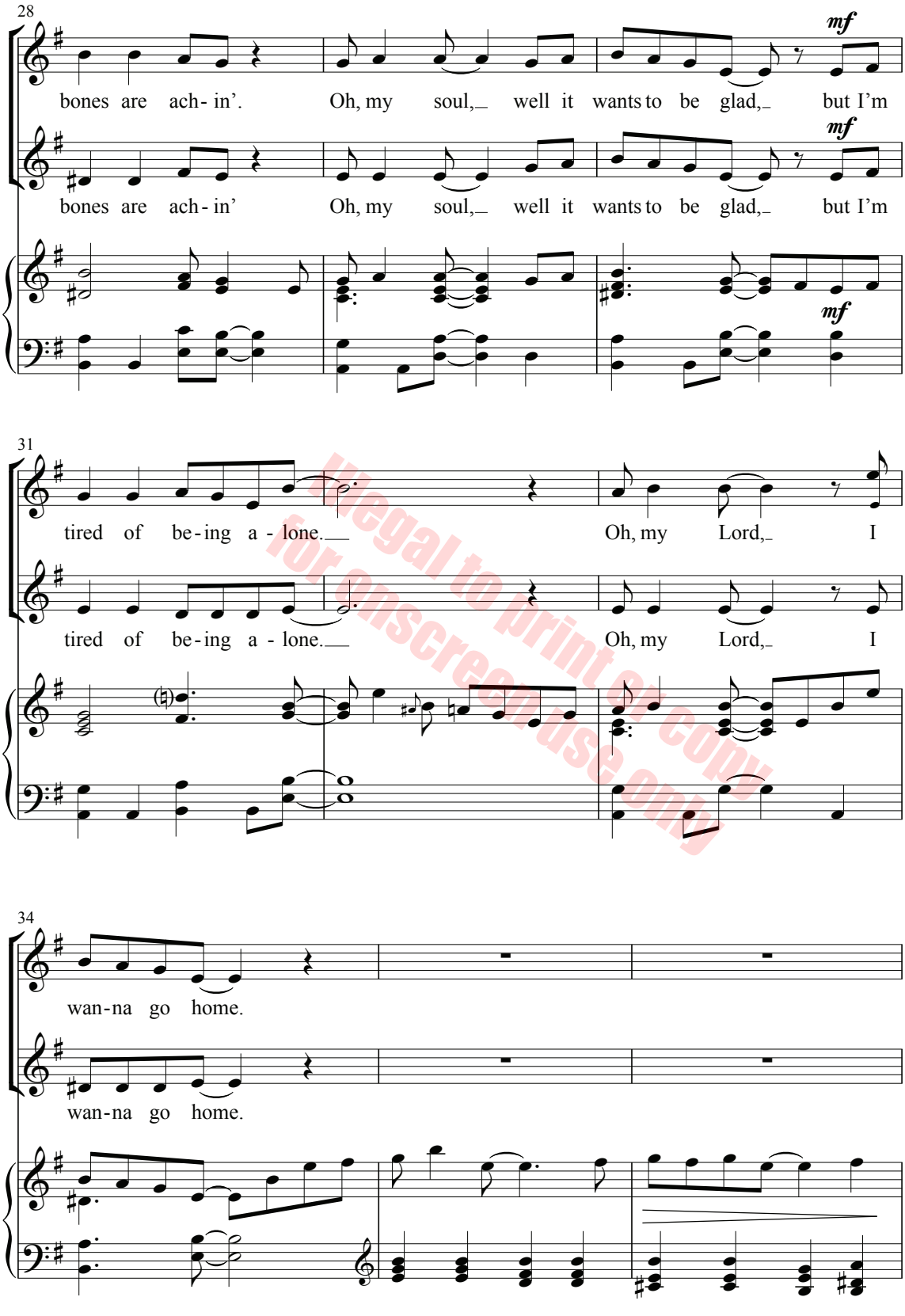

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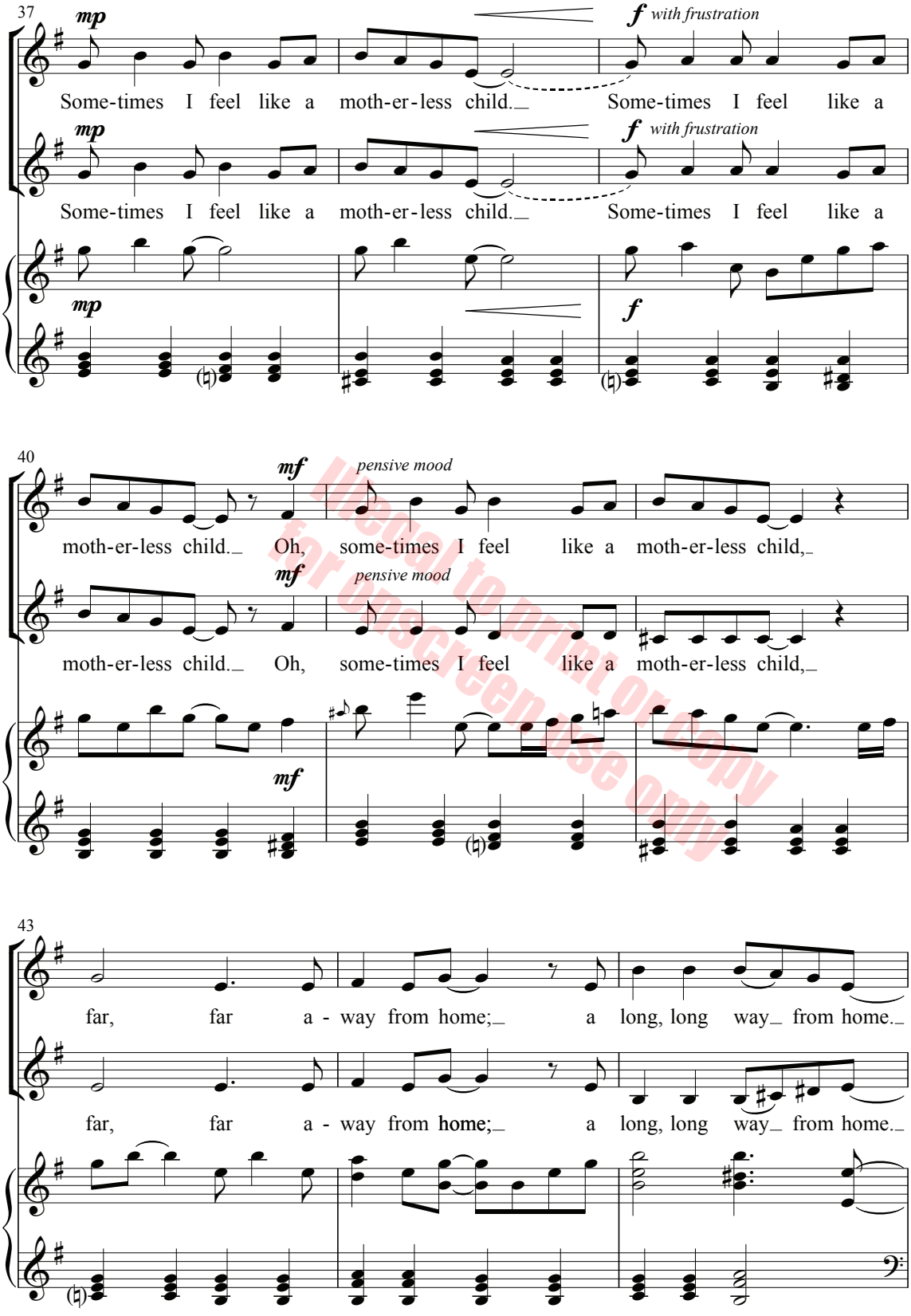

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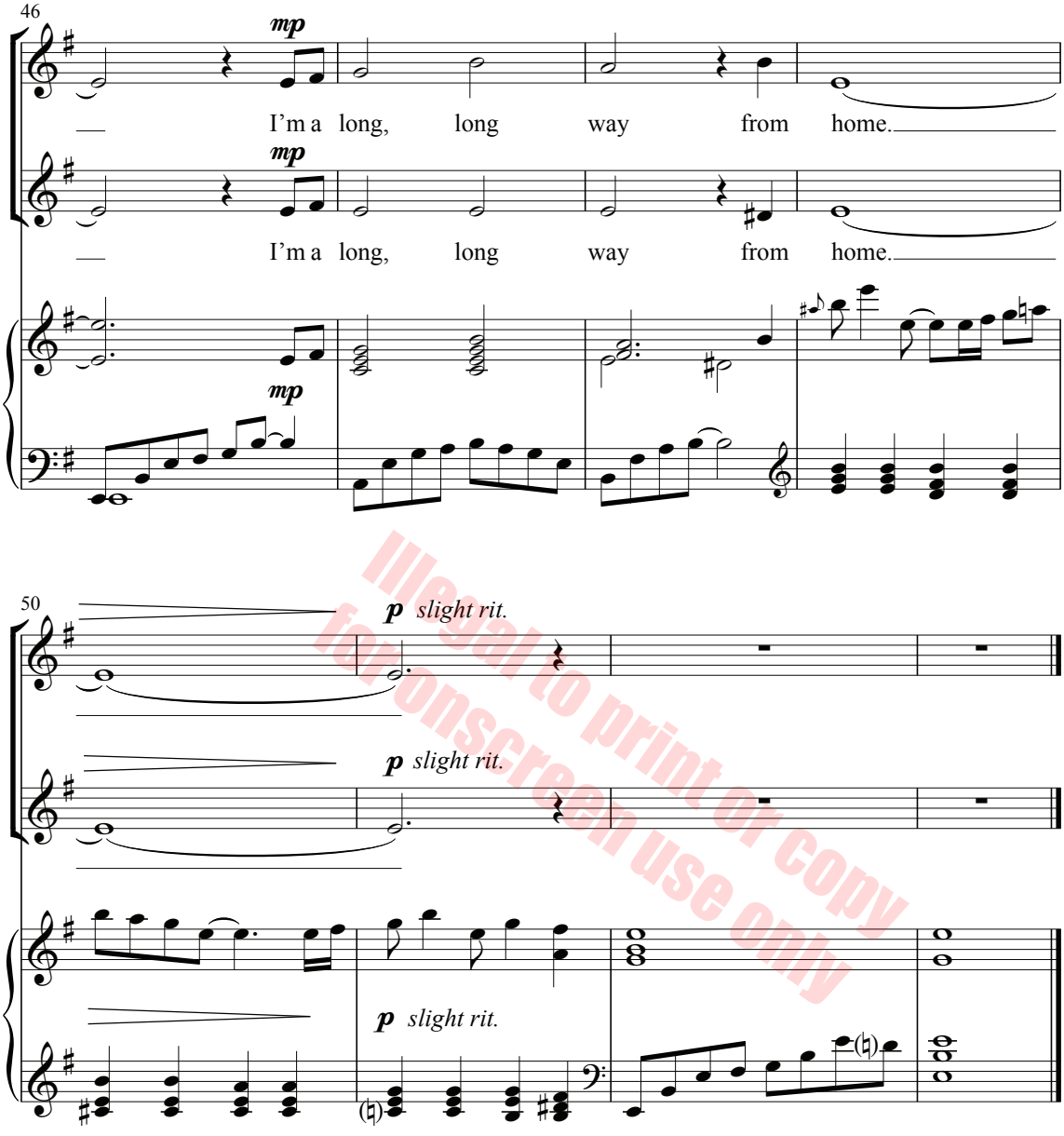

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