simple gifts

Variations on American Hymn Tunes for Piano

by John Carter

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FOREWORD

Ever since I was a child growing up in Nashville, Tennessee I have held a love and fascination for early American hymn tunes. Their earnest and straightforward words, tunes and harmonies have been an inspiration to me, not only as a singer and choral musician; their qualities have influenced the tunes that I have composed over the years.

Many of the anthems and piano collections I have written contain tunes from this tradition, so it was natural for me to write these variations, given the encouragement to put this collection together for Word Music.

As I was working on this collection, several names of persons who helped to make me aware of and appreciate the tradition come to mind. Most of them are gone now, but in my mind and heart they are certainly not forgotten: first of all, my parents, John and Lillie Mai; Dr. Irving Wolfe and Charles F. Bryan, who took me along with other students to several Sacred Harp Conventions and saw to it that we knew how the real thing sounded; my composition teachers Forrest Goodenough and Philip Slates, who were encouraging and challenging and to whom I give thanks every time I finish a piece of music. I hear all of their voices even now, and hope that they are pleased.

Writing variations on tunes, being concise and imaginative challenges creativity; I therefore have issued the challenge to my composition students, and hope that they find a new source of creative joy in writing in this medium.

Most of all, thanks to William Walker (also known as "Singin' Billy") for his lifelong efforts to collect and arrange most of the tunes in this collection, and to travel around the countryside teaching the tunes, so that I could ultimately pay my homage to their great beauty.

John Carter

Texts used with the tunes in this book
(as found in the following hymnals)
United Methodist Hymnal (UM)
Worship and Rejoice (WR)
New Century Hymnal (NC)
Evangelical Lutheran Worship (EL)
Celebrating Grace Hymnal (CG)
Chalice Hymnal (CH)

BEACH SPRING
Come, All Christians, Be Committed (WR, CH)
Come and Find the Quiet Center (WR, CH)
As a Fire Is Meant for Burning (WR)
Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service (WR, CH, EL)
Come Away from Rush and Hurry (WR)
As We Gather at Your Table (WR)
Restless Weaver (CH)
Wash, O God, Your Sons and Daughters (CH, EL, UM)
We Are Travelers on a Journey (NC)
God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending (NC)
Jesus, at Your Holy Table (NC)
Come to Me, All Pilgrims Thirsty (EL)

CONSOLATION
O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days (EL)
The King Shall Come (EL)

DISTRESS
"Take Up Your Cross," the Savior Said (WR)
These Things Did Thomas Count (NC)
We Place Upon Your Table, Lord (EL)
O Christ, the Healer, We Have Come (EL)

DOVE OF PEACE
I Come with Joy (WR, NC, UM, EL, CG, CH)
How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds (CG, NC)

HOLY MANNA
All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly (EL, CH, CG)
God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens (EL, WR, CH, UM, NC)
We Have Come to Join in Worship (WR)
Christians (Brethren) We Have Met to Worship (CH, CG)
When the Morning Stars Together (CG)
Christians, Let Us Go and Serve Him (CG)
Sing of One Who Walks Beside Us (CH)
God, We Thank You for Our People (NC)

NEW BRITAIN
Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound (UM, WR, NC, EL, CG, CH)
Unite and Join Your Cheerful Songs (NC)

PROSPECT
Creating God, Your Fingers Trace (EL)

RESTORATION
Loving Spirit (EL)
Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy (UM)

SIMPLE GIFTS
'Tis the Gift to be Simple (CH)
(also see hymnals containing LORD OF THE DANCE, a variant of SIMPLE GIFTS)

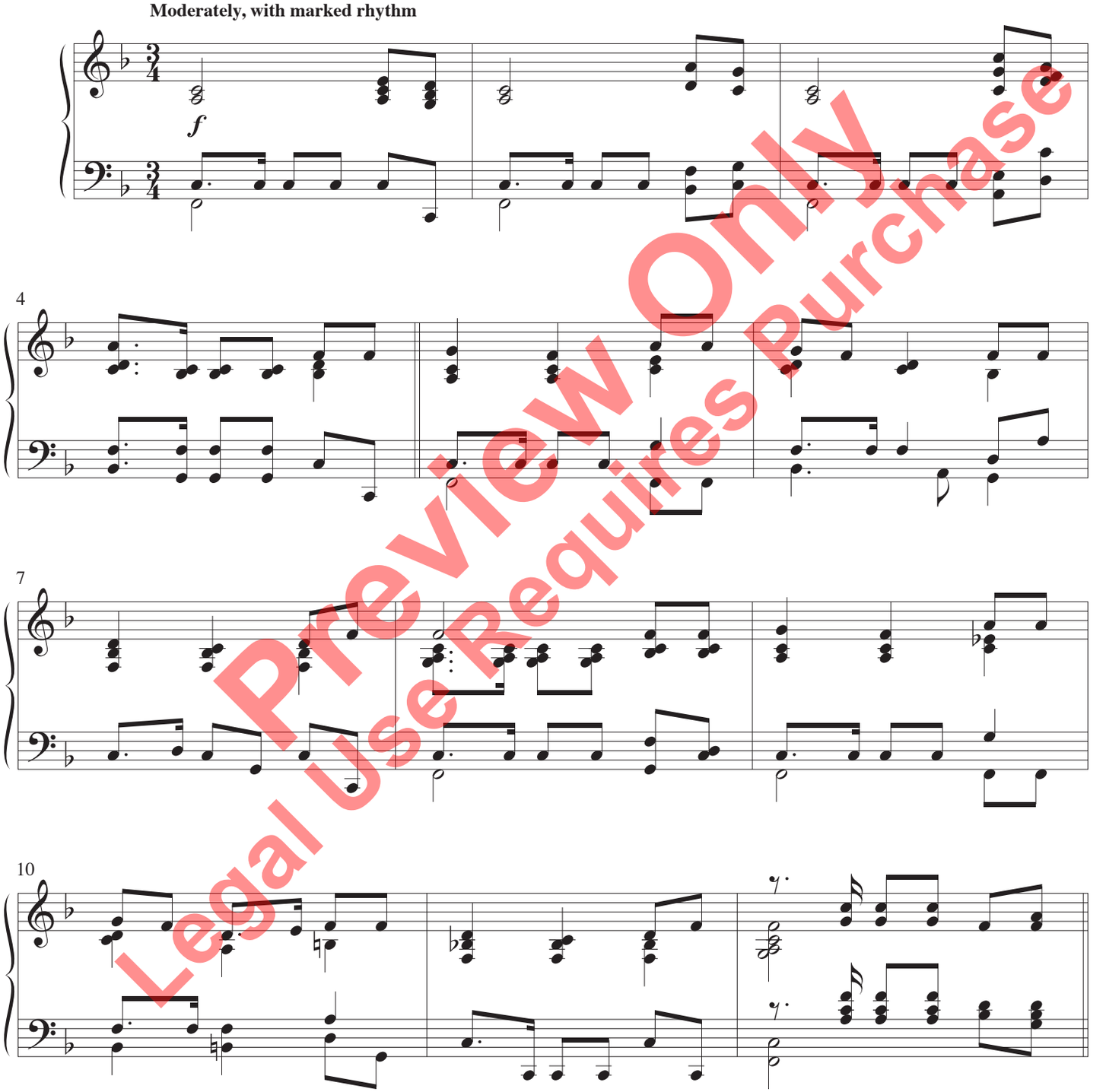
WONDROUS LOVE
What Wondrous Love Is This (WR, EL, UM, NC, CG, CH)

Beach Spring

Attributed to B. F. White
Sacred Harp, 1844
Arranged by John Carter

Variation 1

Moderately, with marked rhythm



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13

17

20

mf *rit.* *f* 8vb

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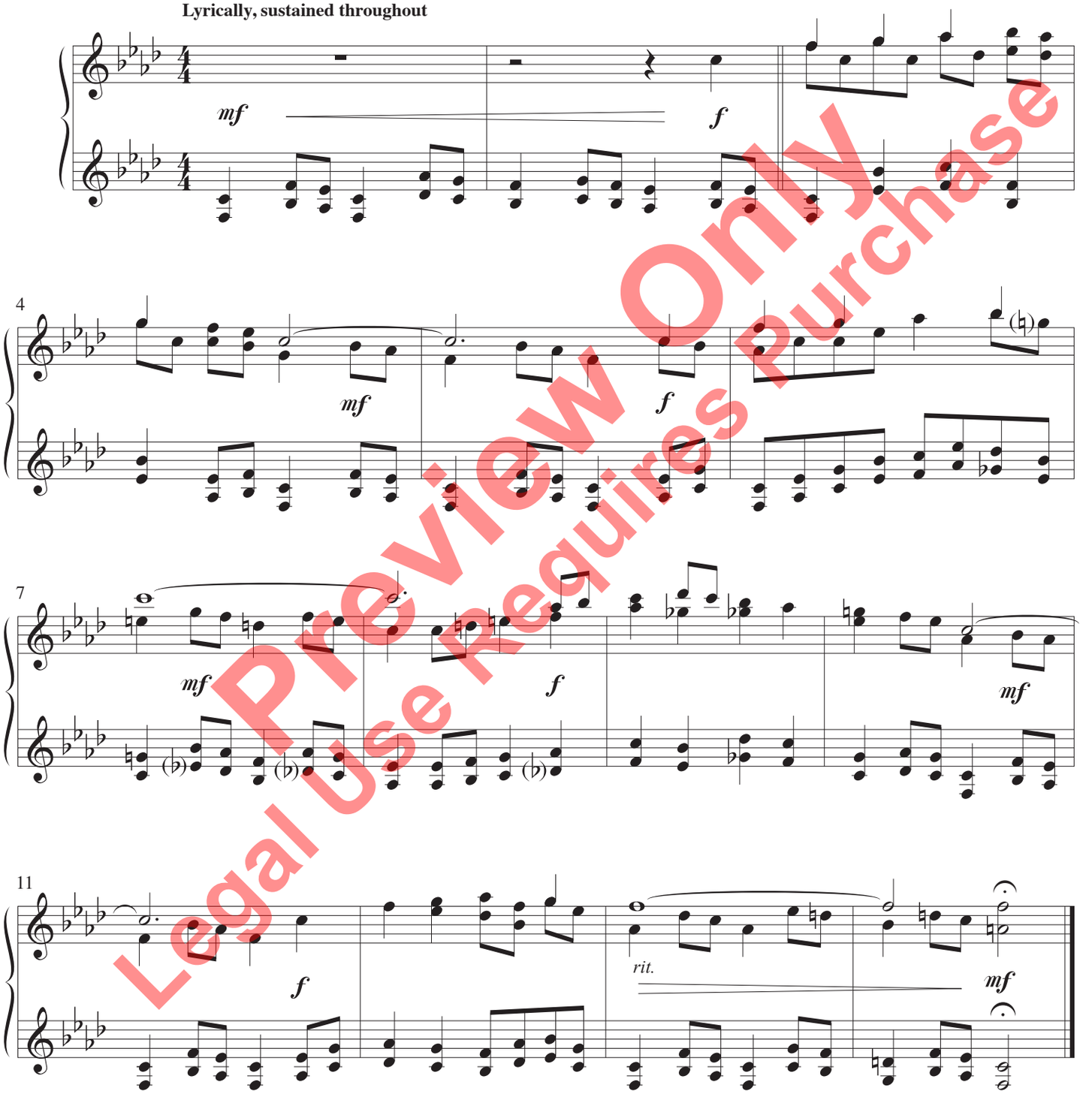
Consolation

A. Davisson
Kentucky Harmony, 1816
Arranged by John Carter

Variation 1



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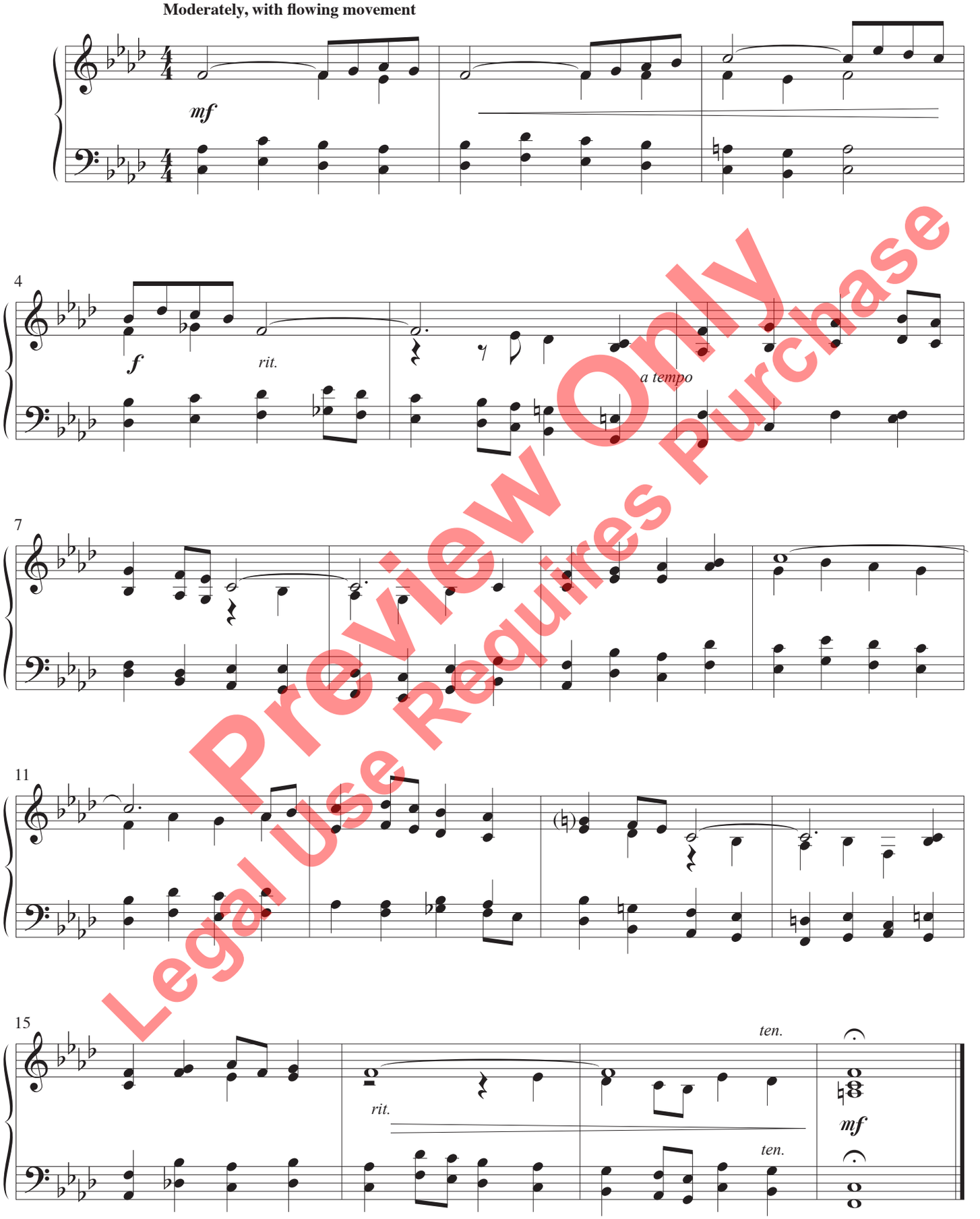
Variation 2

Moderately, with flowing movement



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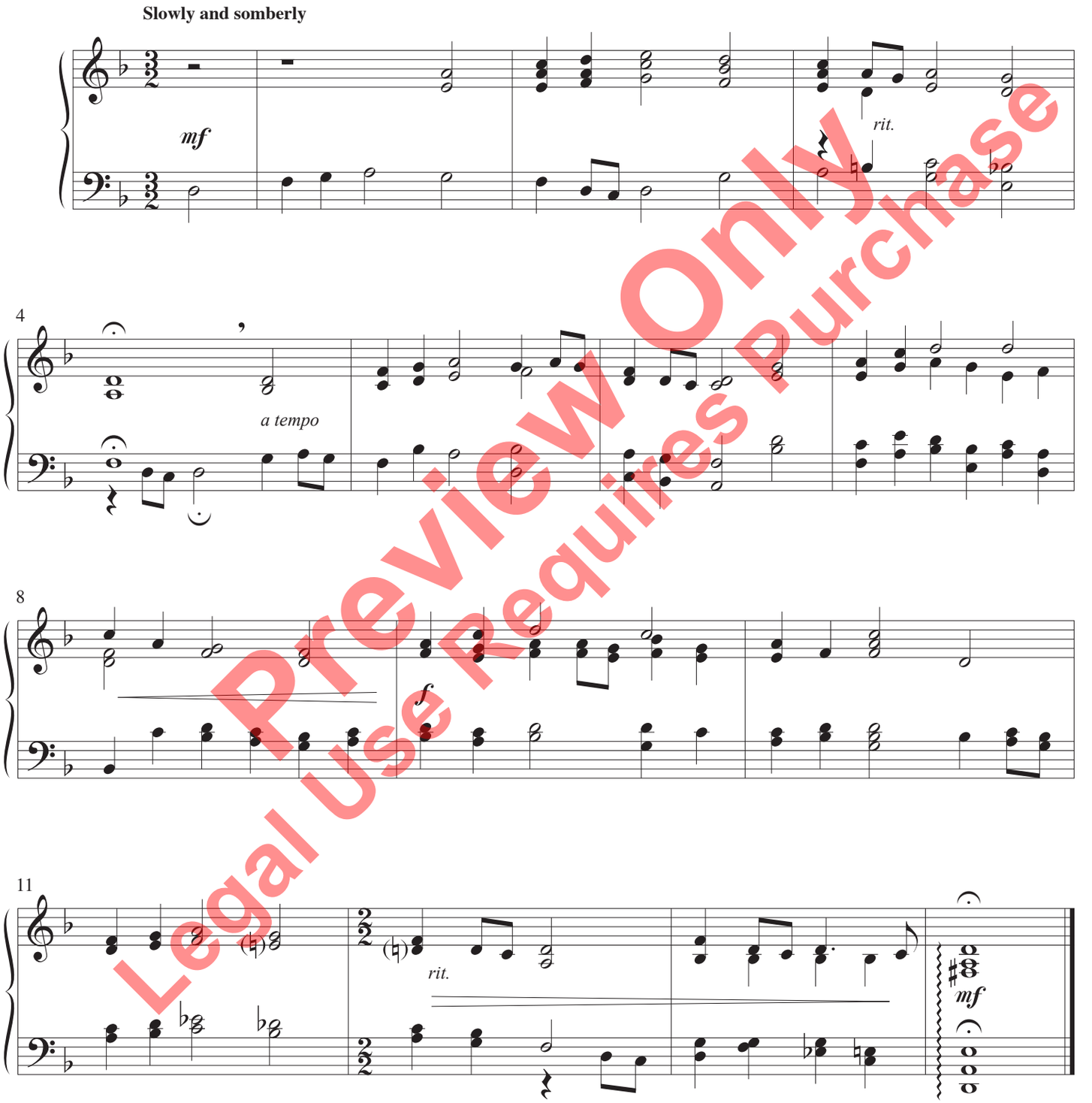
Distress

Southern Harmony, 1835
Arranged by John Carter

Variation 1



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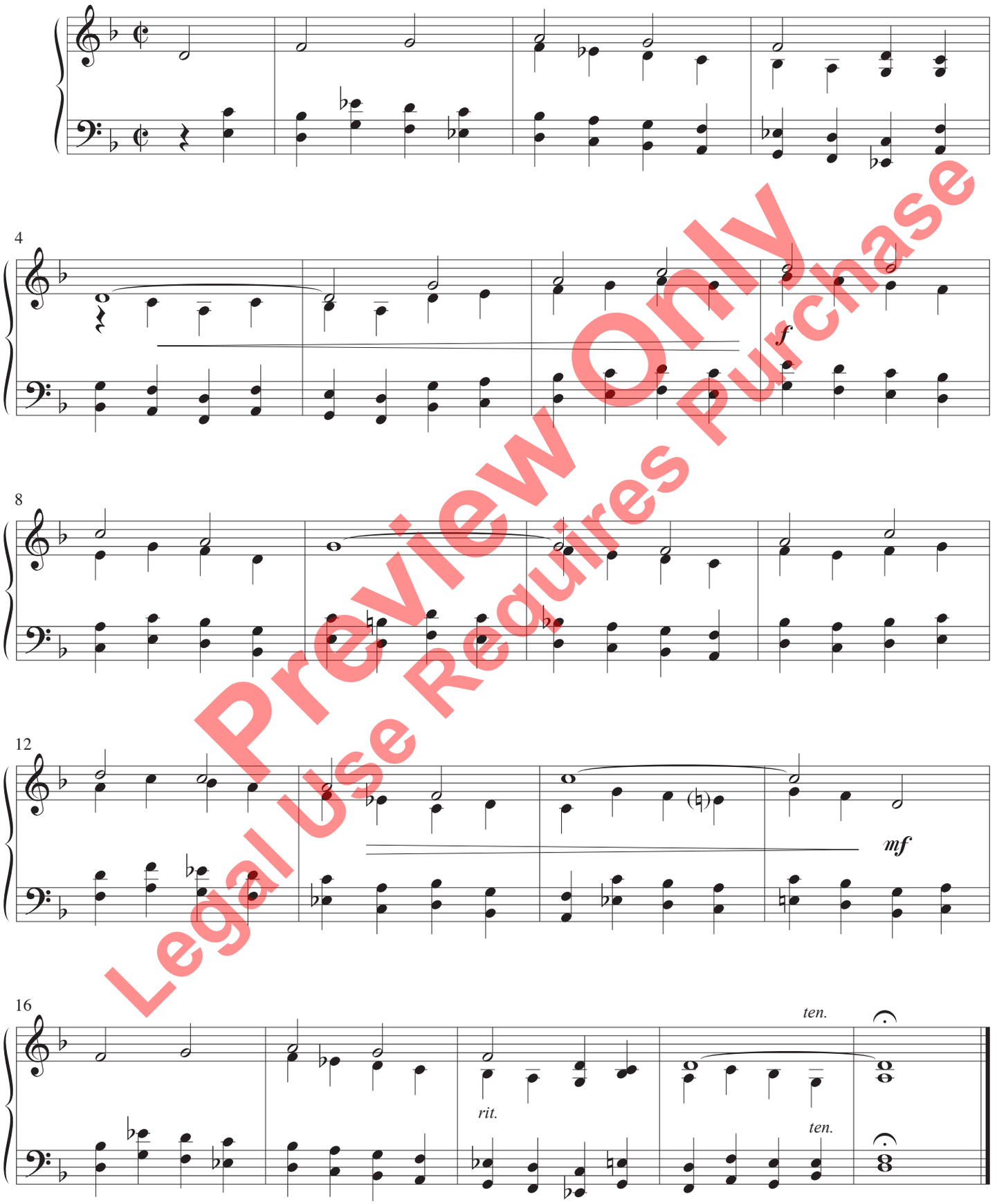
Variation 2

Moderately; lyricially and sustained



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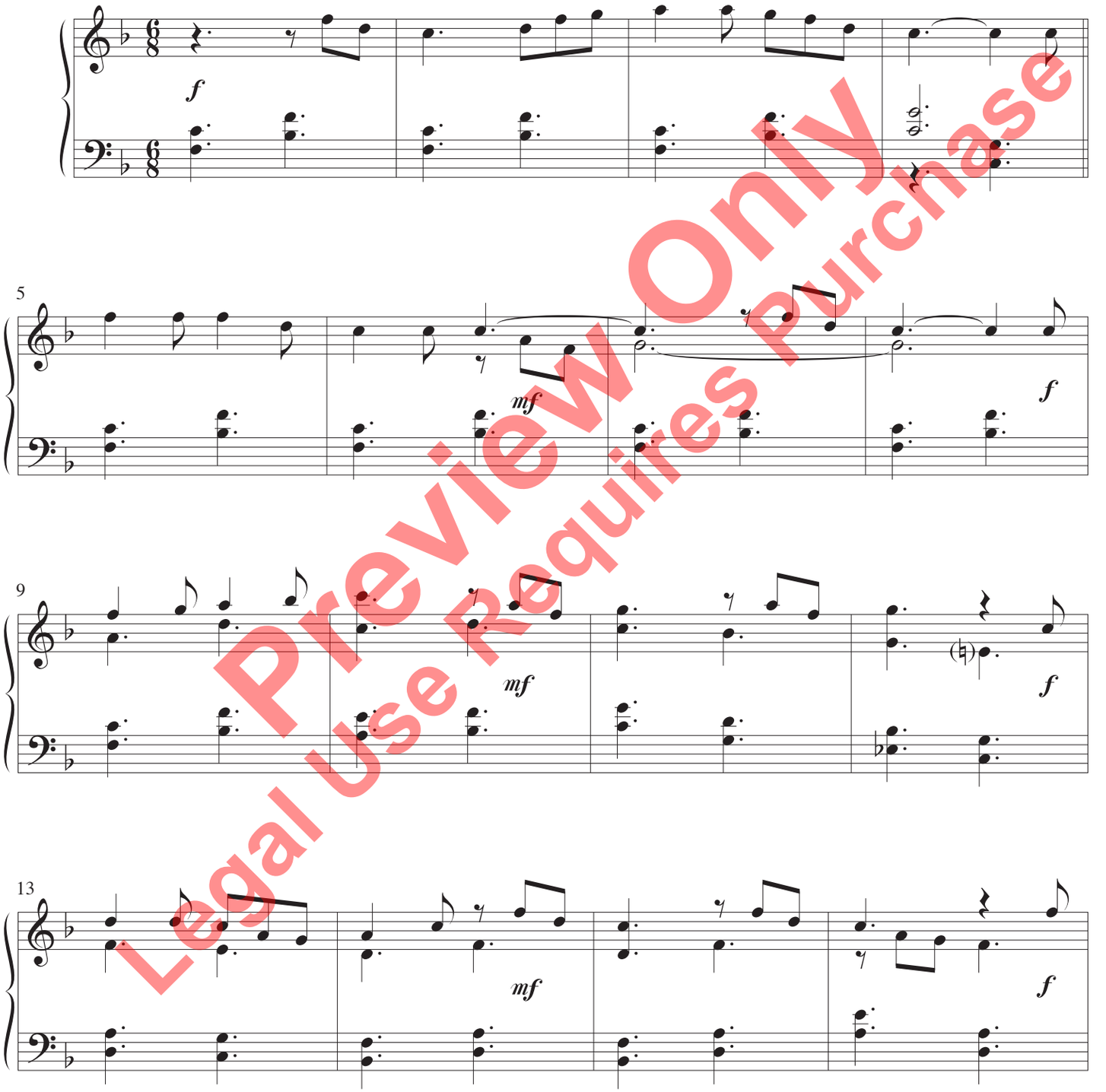
Dove of Peace

Southern Harmony, 1835
Arranged by John Carter

Variation 1

Brightly, but not too fast



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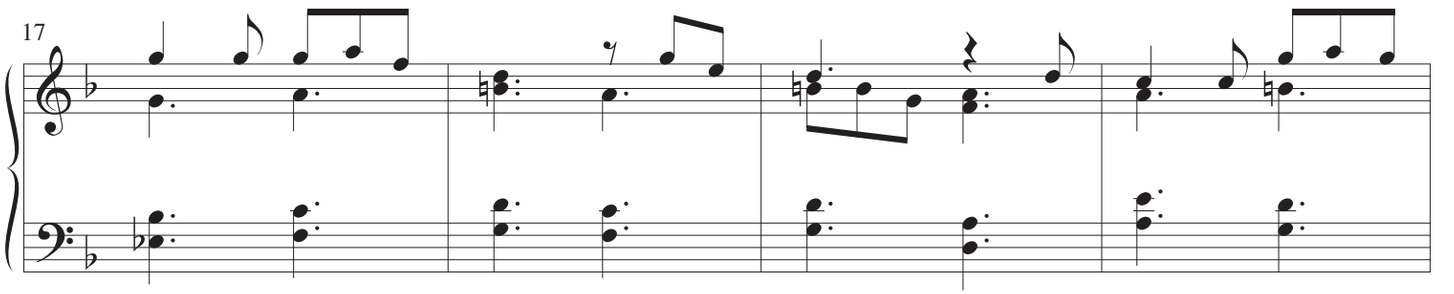
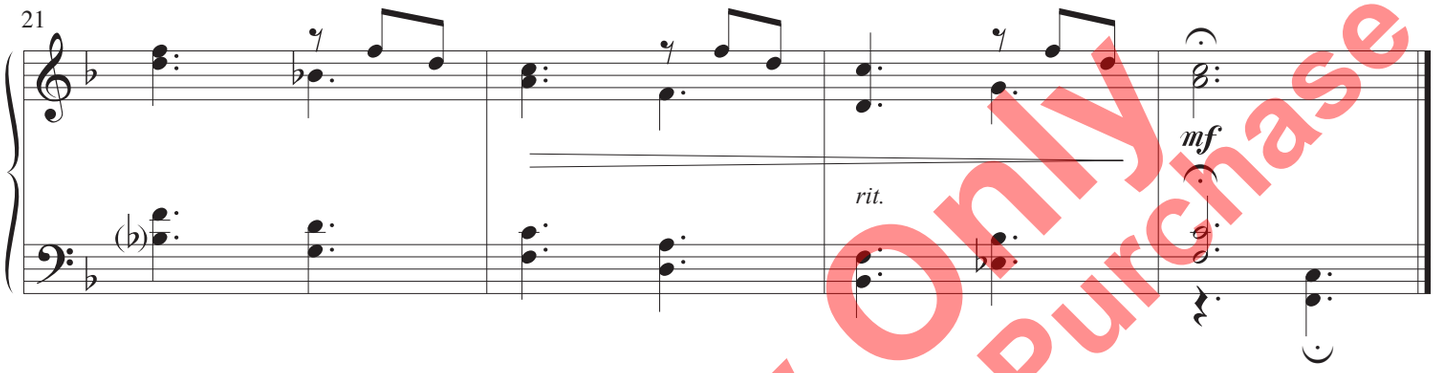
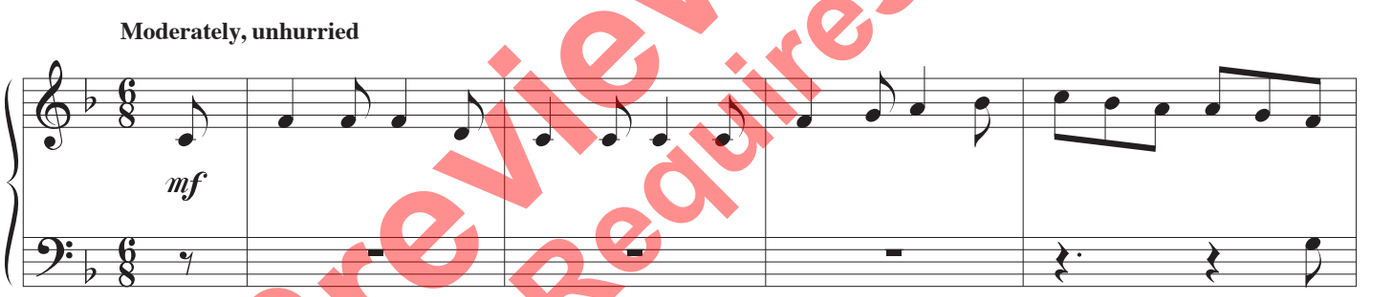
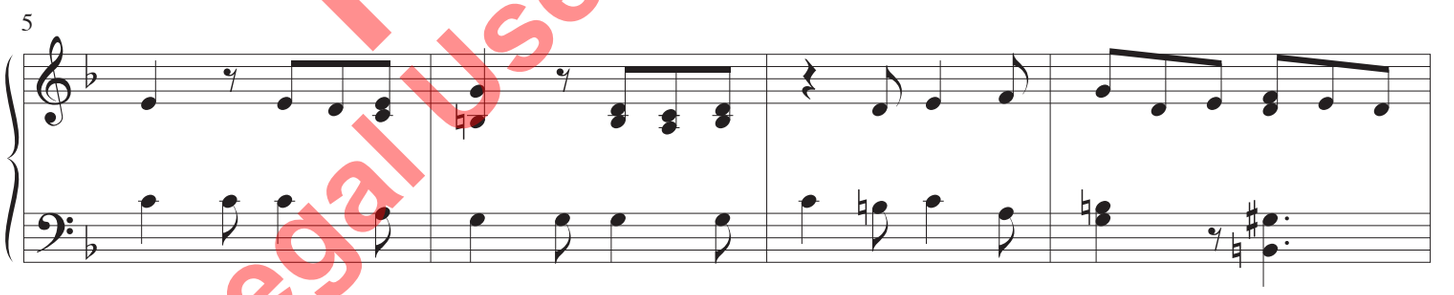
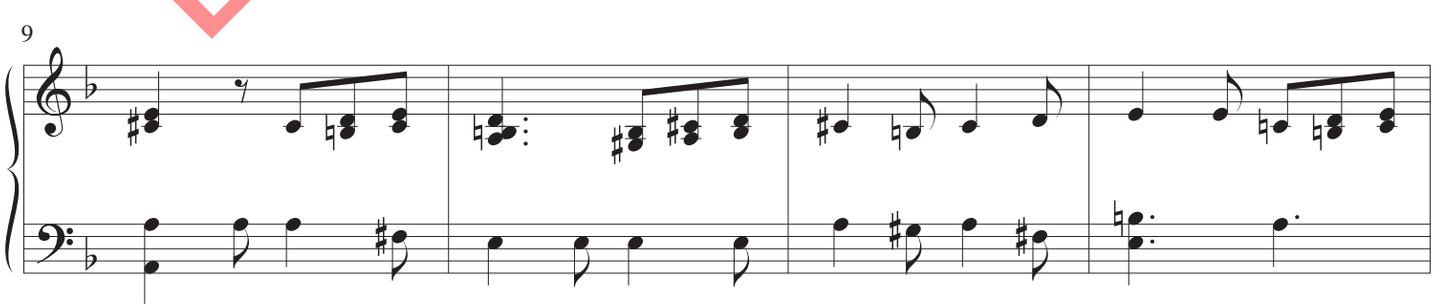




Variation 2







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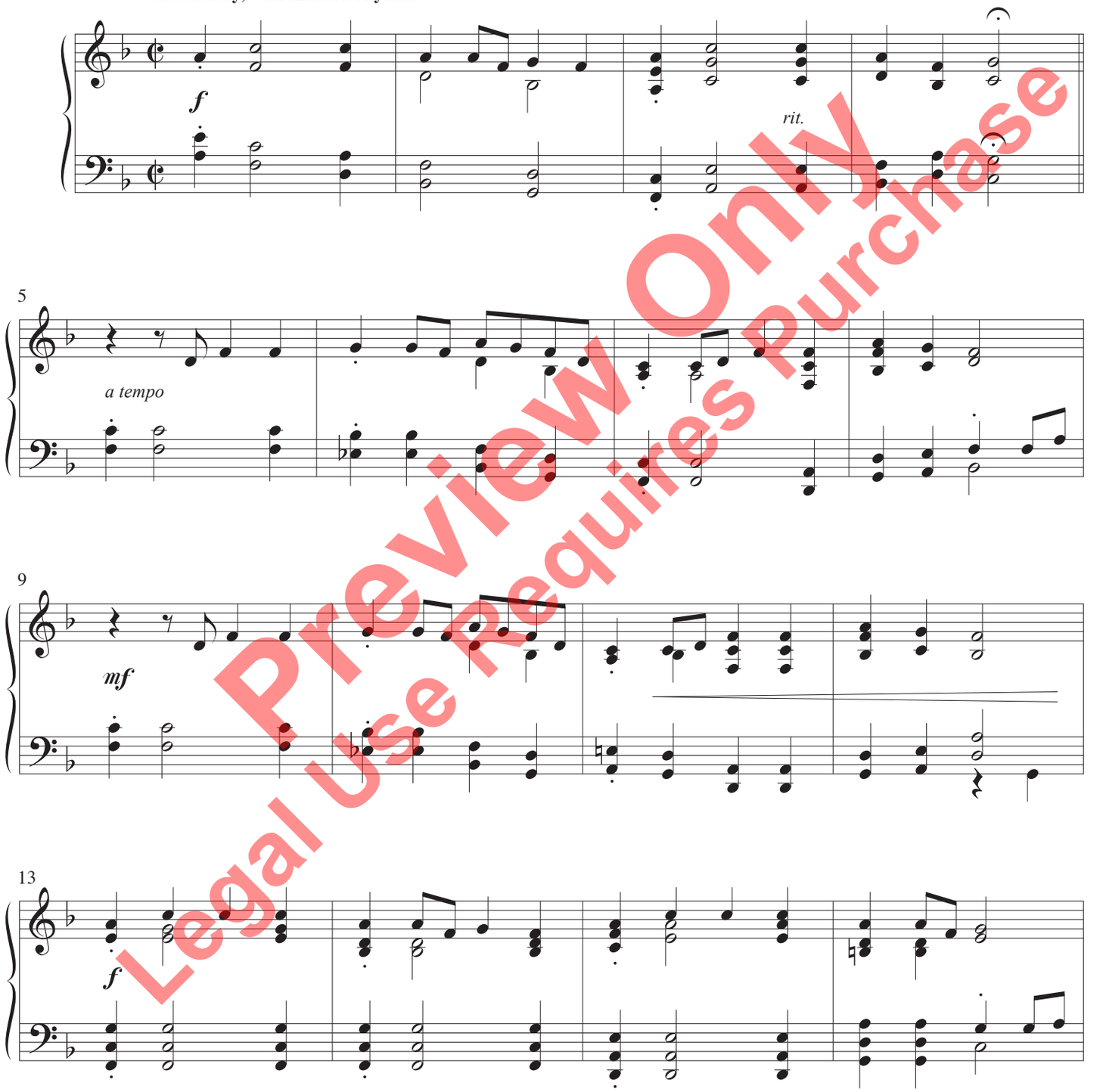
Holy Manna

Southern Harmony, 1835
Arranged by John Carter

Variation 1

Moderately, with marked rhythm



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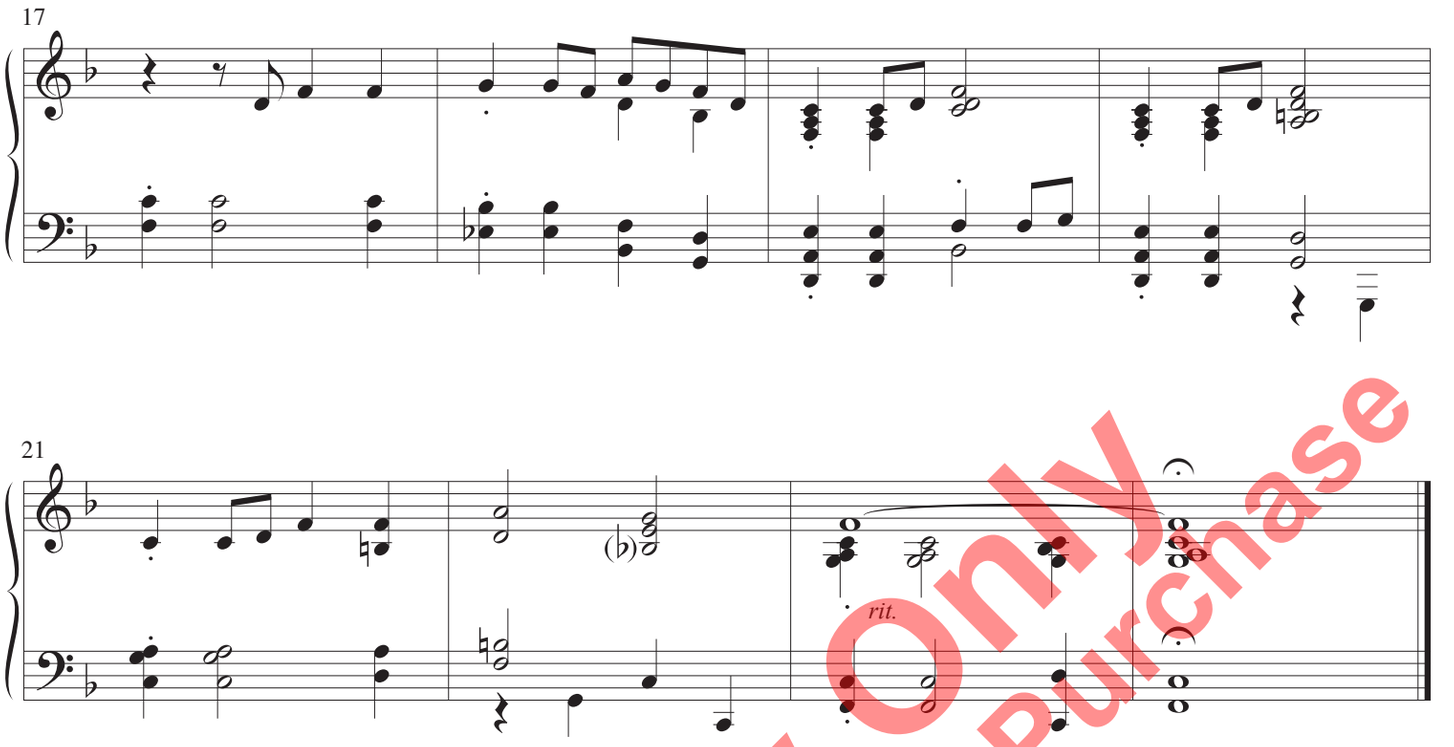
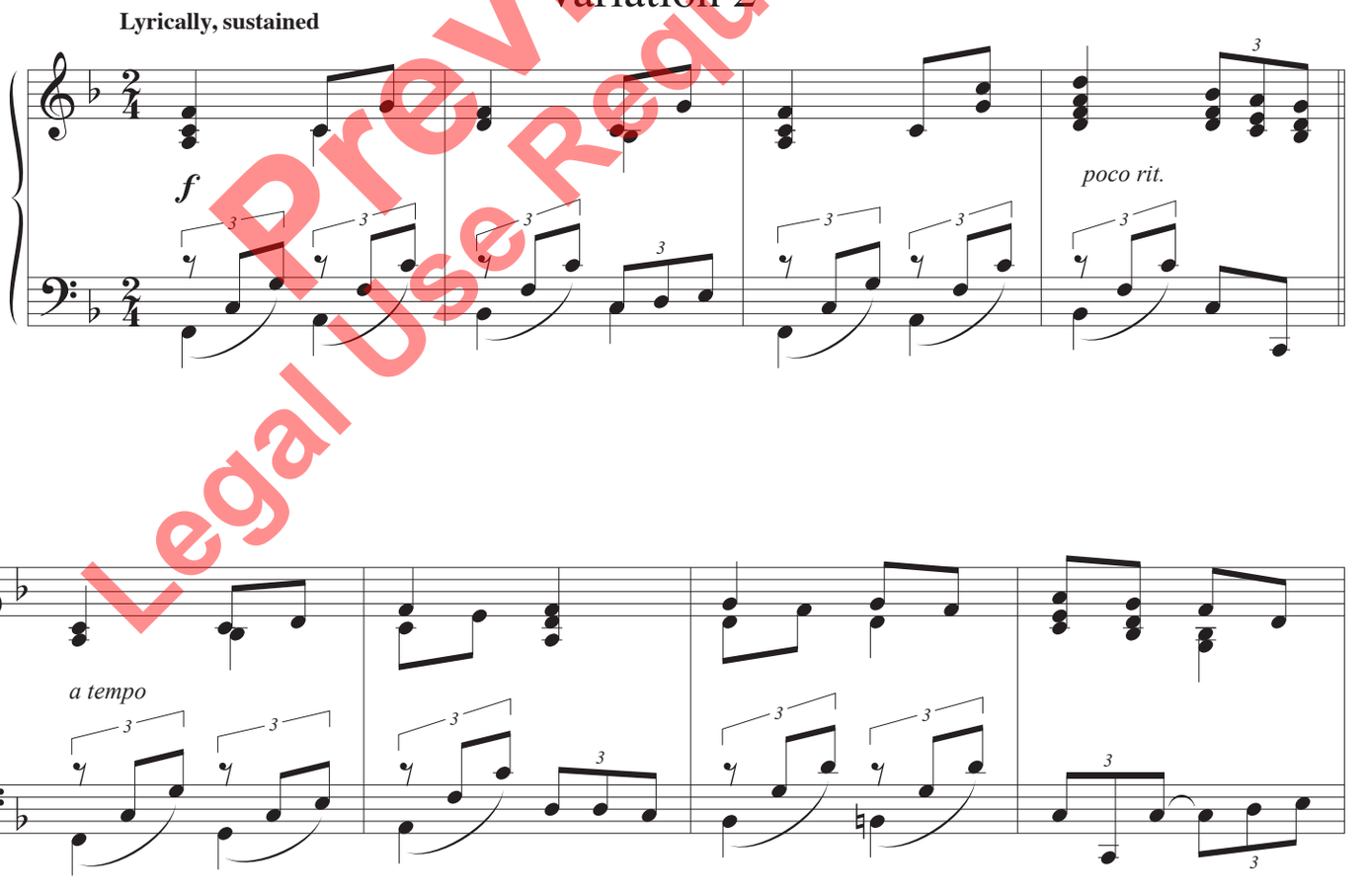


Variation 2



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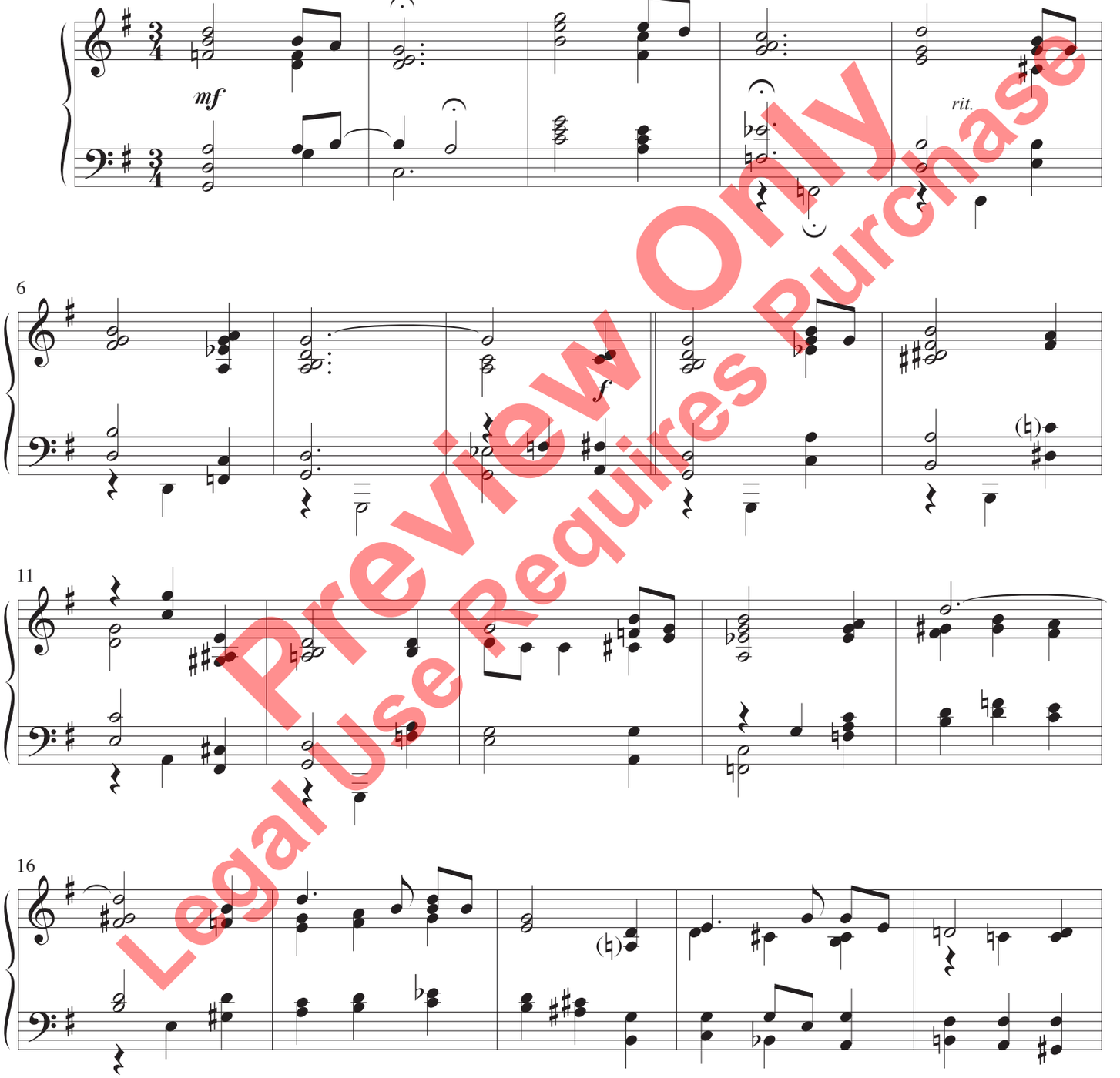
New Britain

Southern Harmony, 1835
Arranged by John Carter

Variation 1

Slowly and reflectively, with freedom



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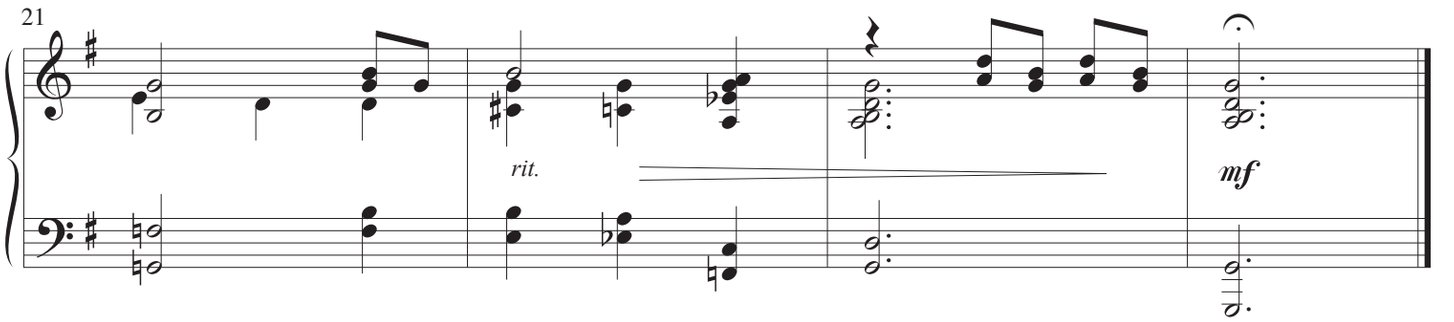
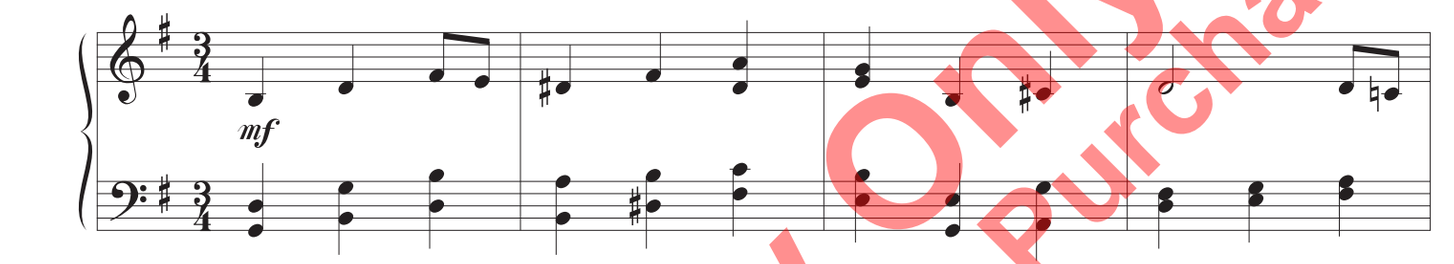
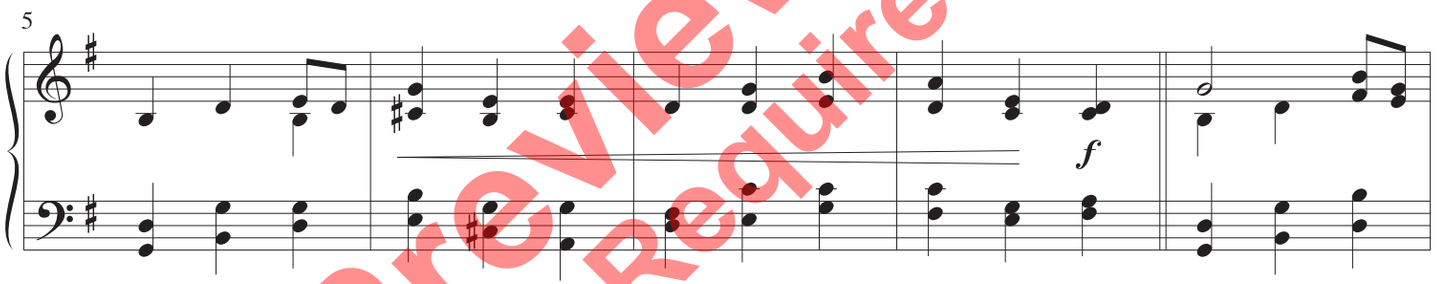
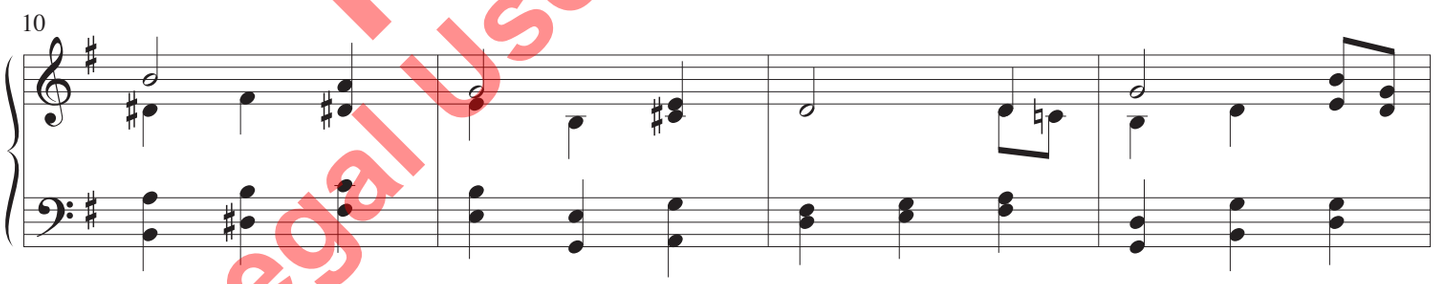


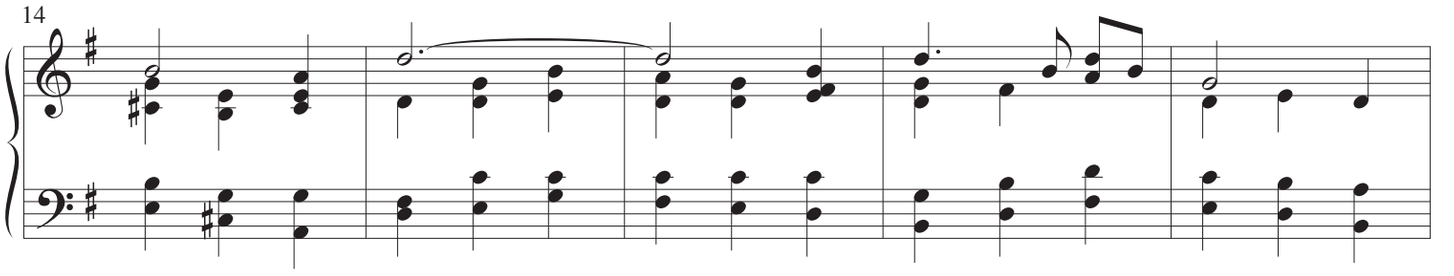
Variation 2

Moderately, sustained









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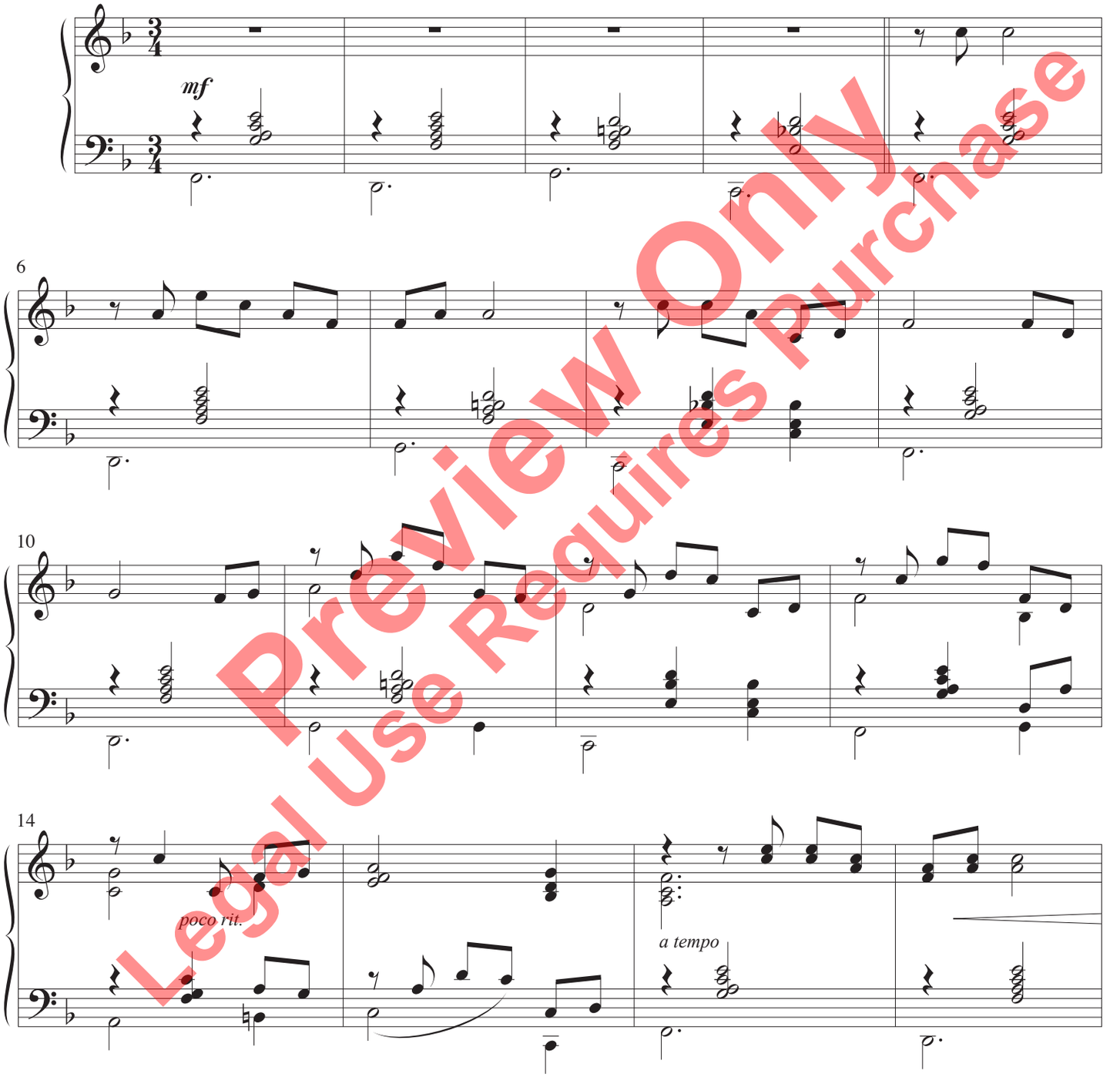
Prospect

Southern Hymn, 1835
Arranged by John Carter

Variation 1

Lyrically, with easy movement



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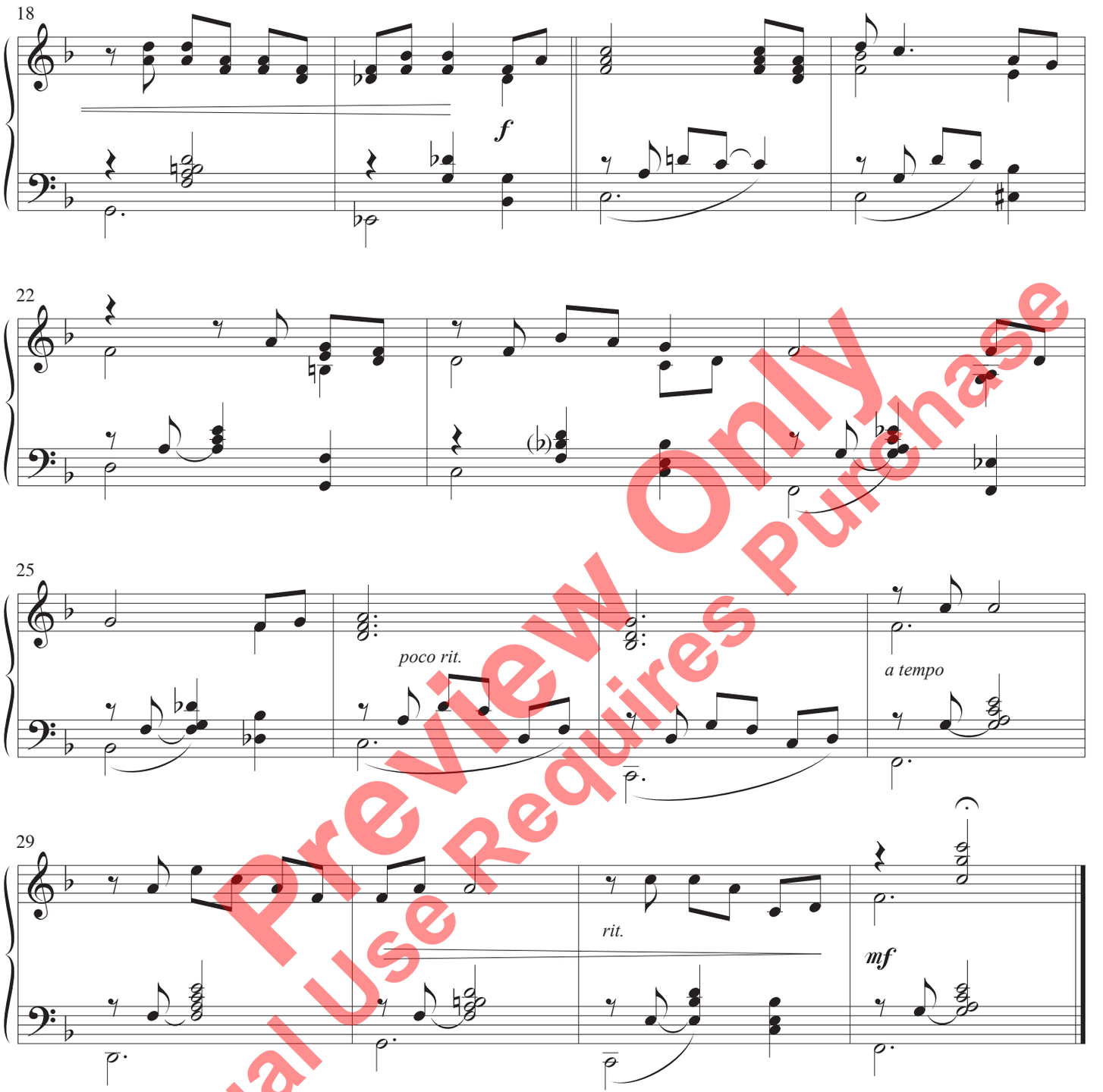

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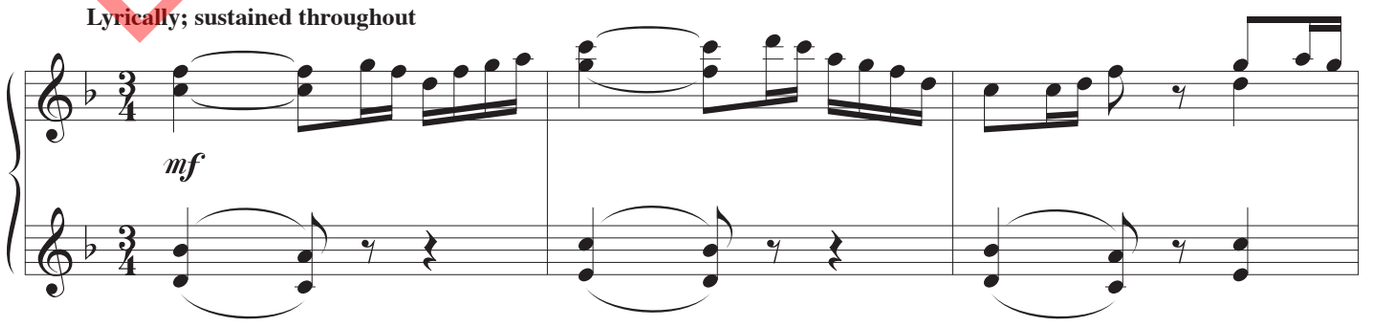
Variation 2

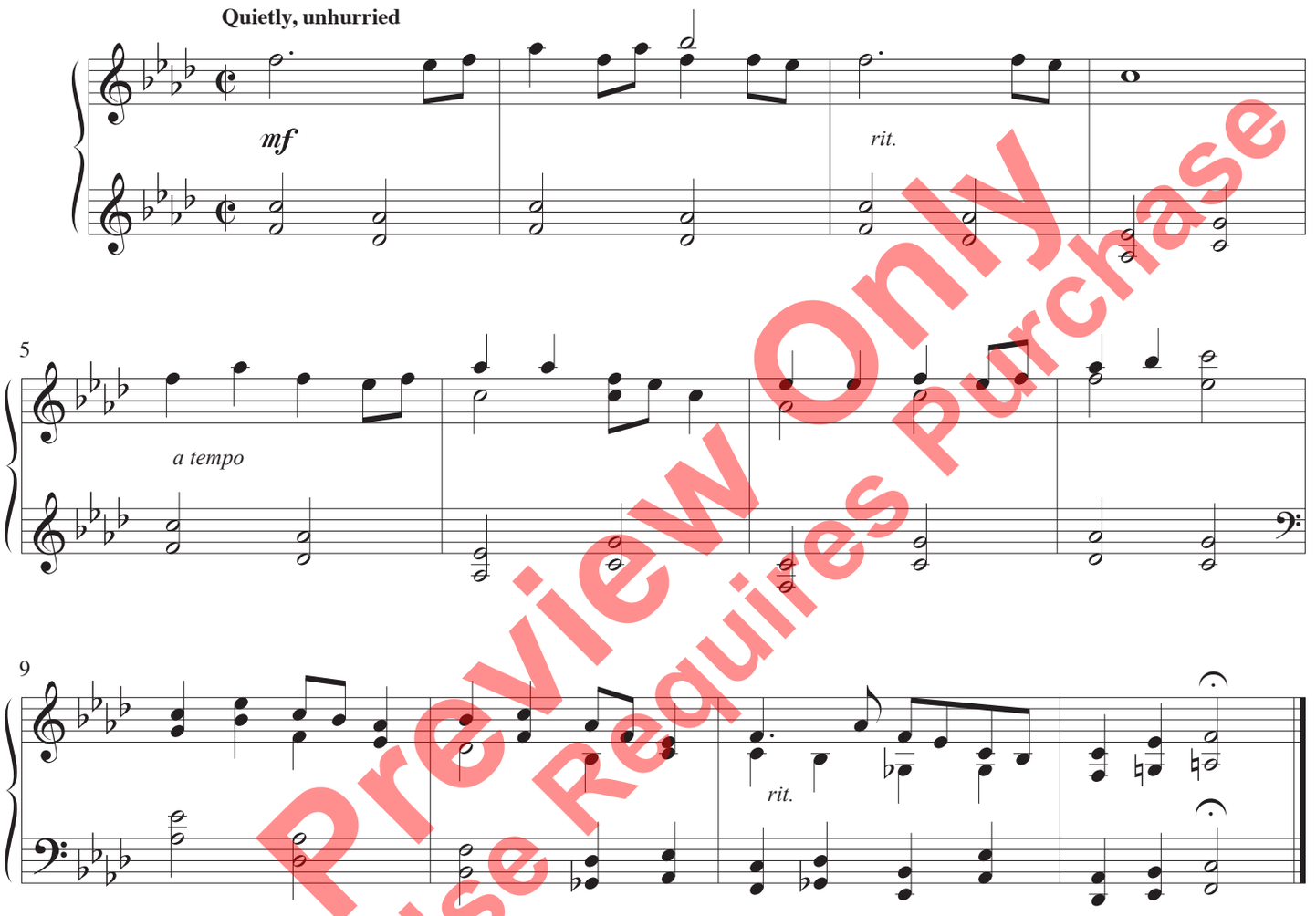
Lyrically; sustained throughout



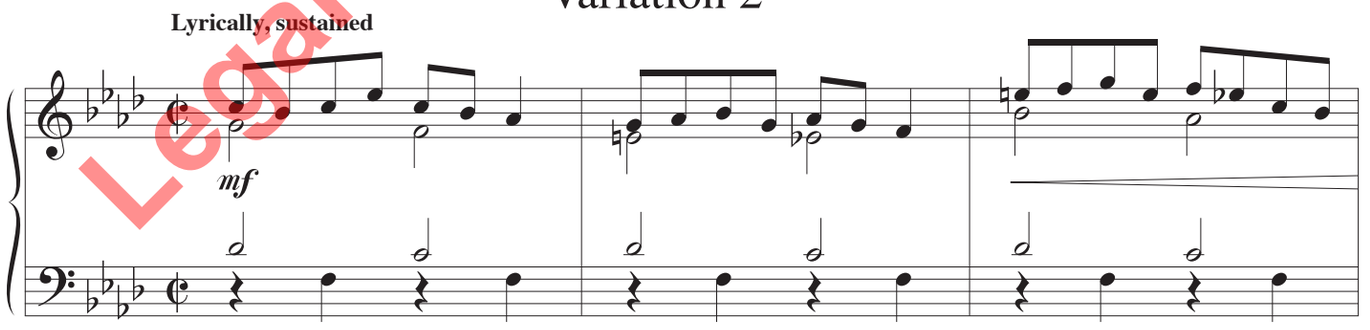
Restoration

Southern Harmony, 1835
Arranged by John Carter

Variation 1



Variation 2



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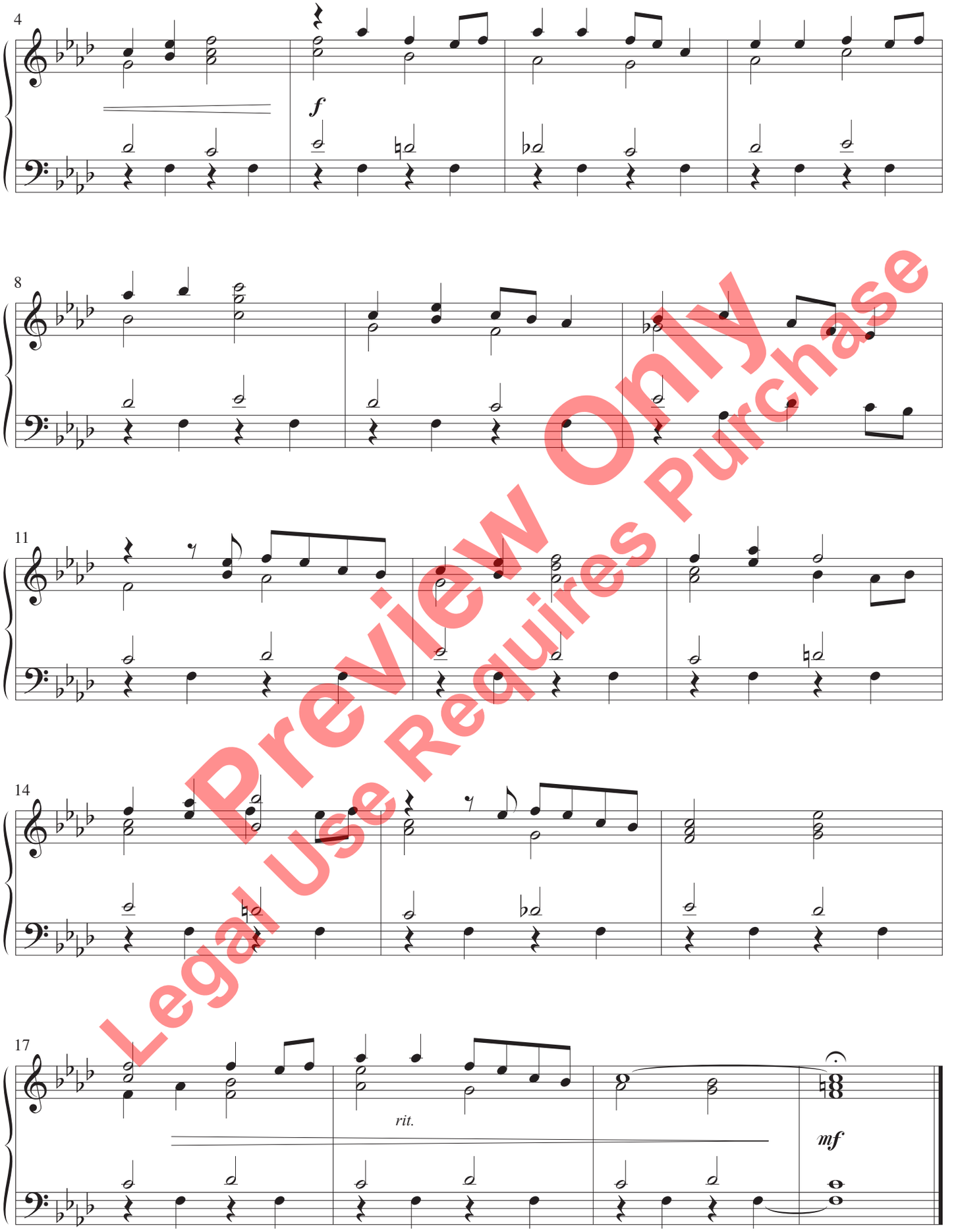

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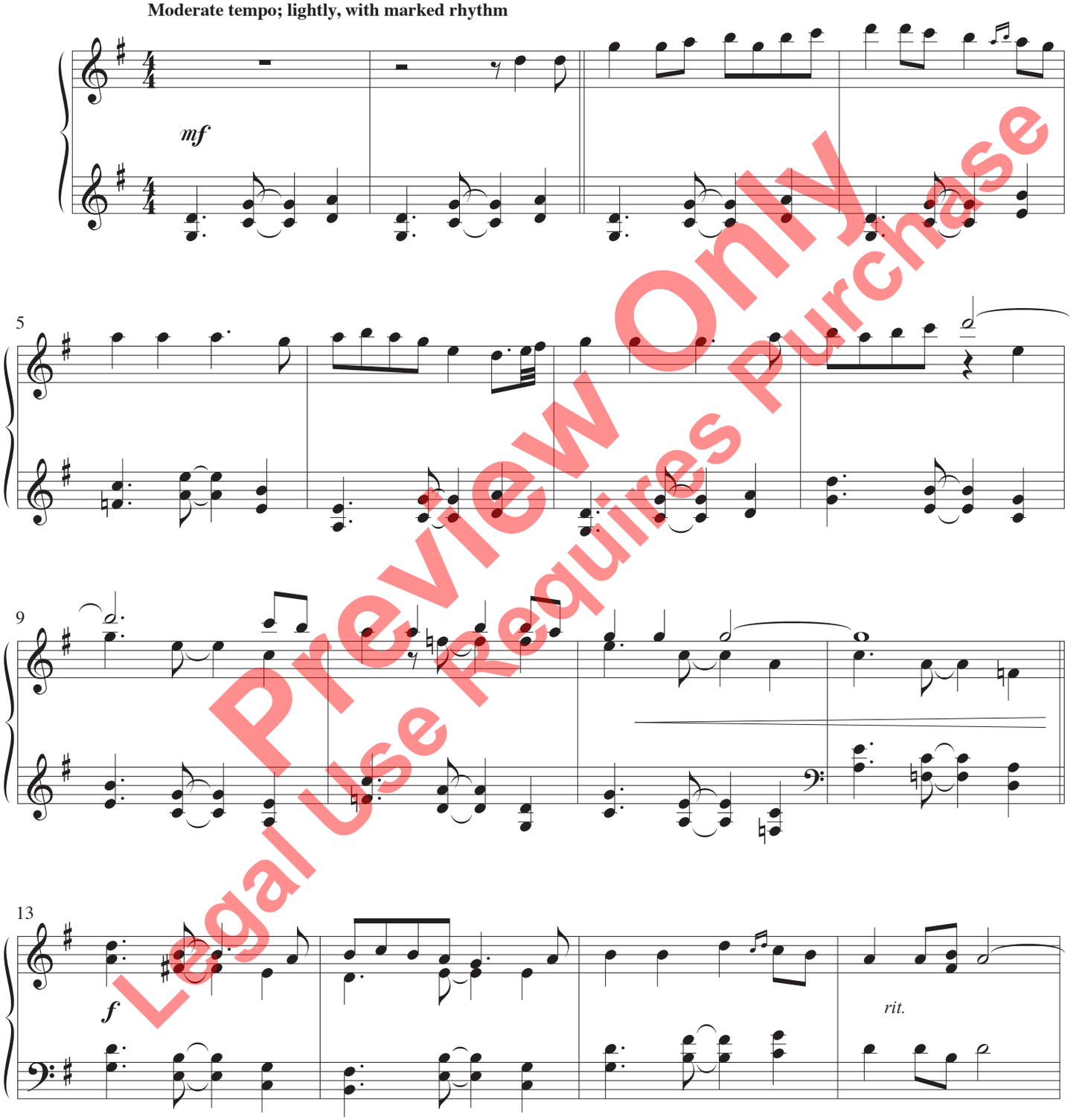
Simple Gifts

Variation 1

Shaker Tune
Arranged by John Carter

Moderate tempo; lightly, with marked rhythm



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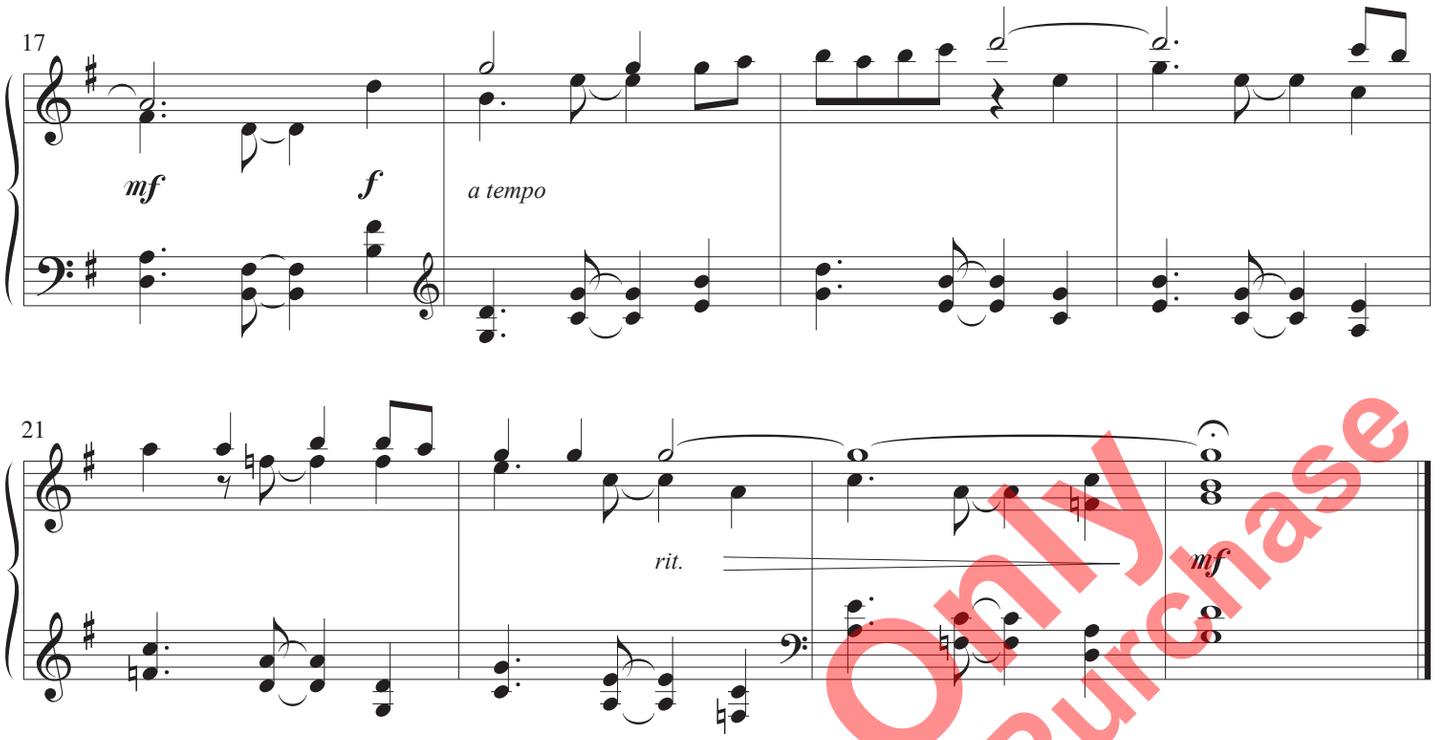
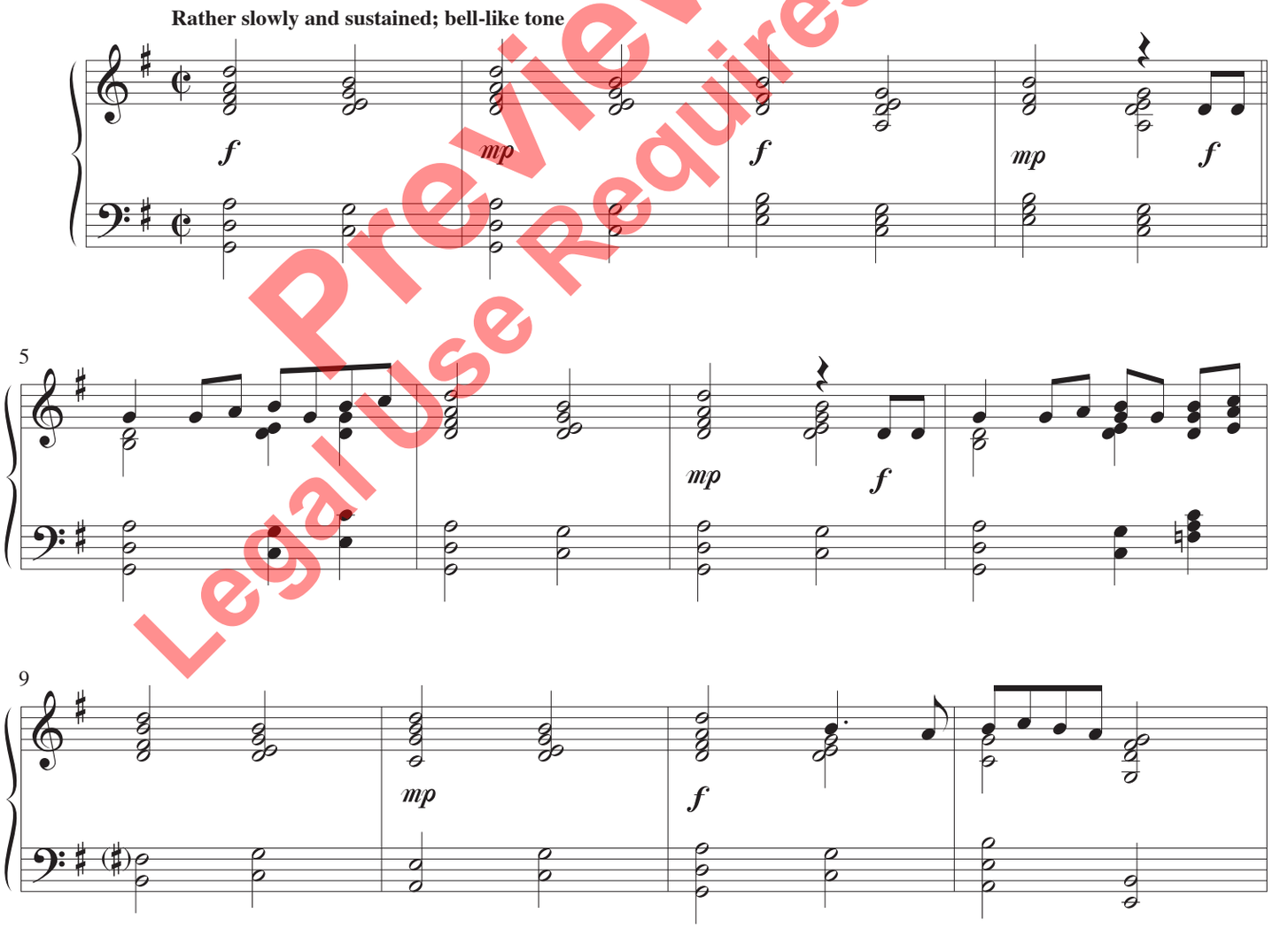


Variation 2



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Wondrous Love

Southern Harmony, 1835
Arranged by John Carter

Variation 1

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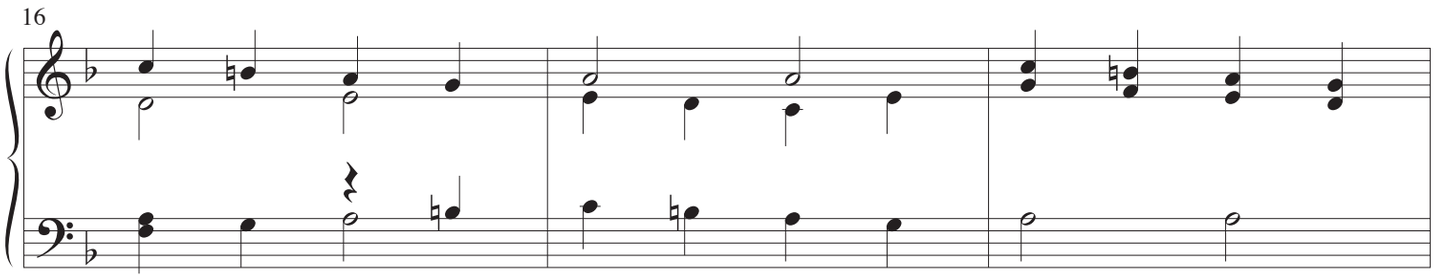
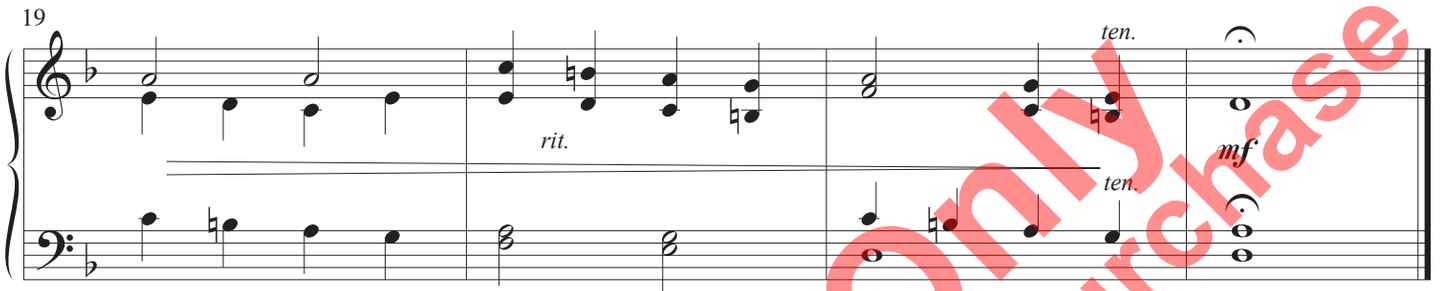
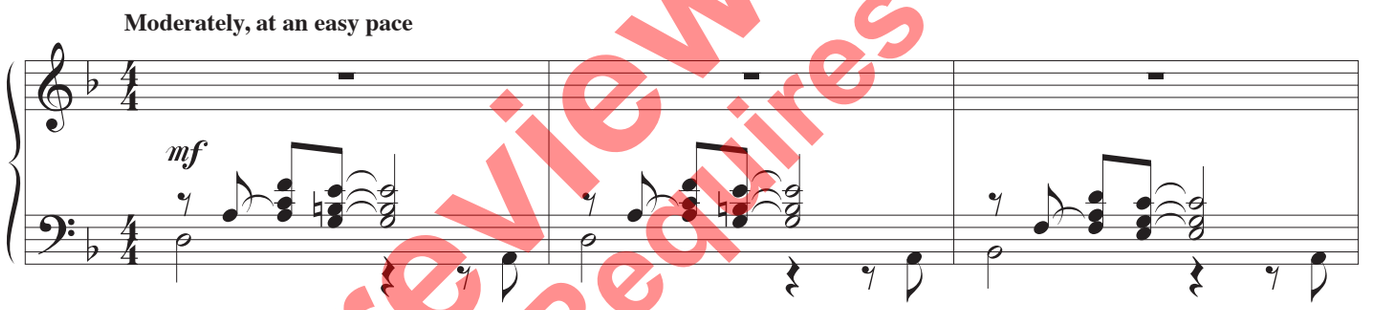
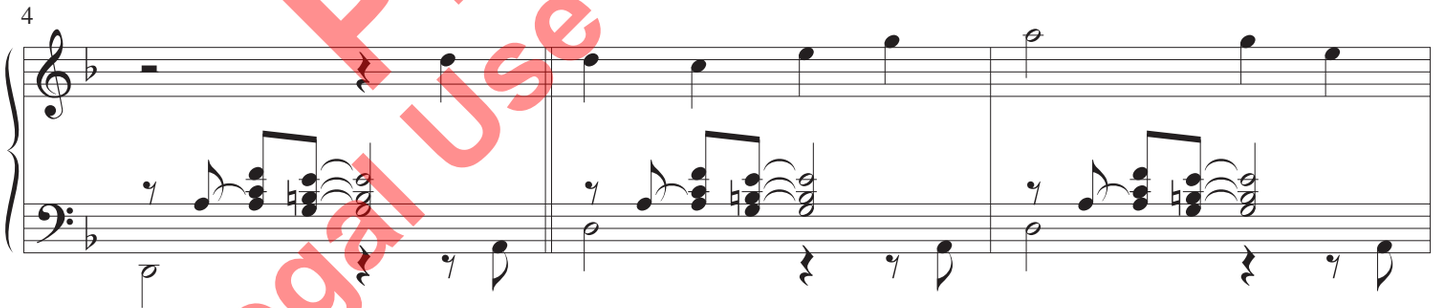
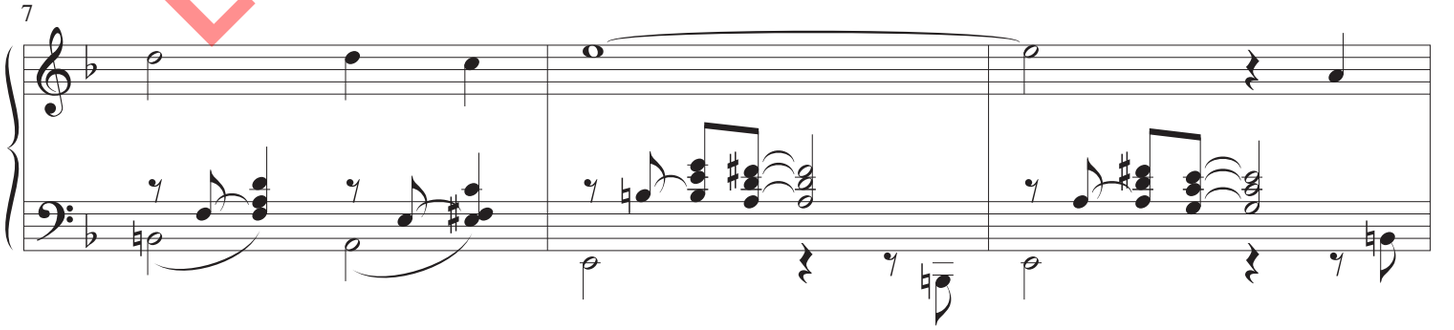




Variation 2







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