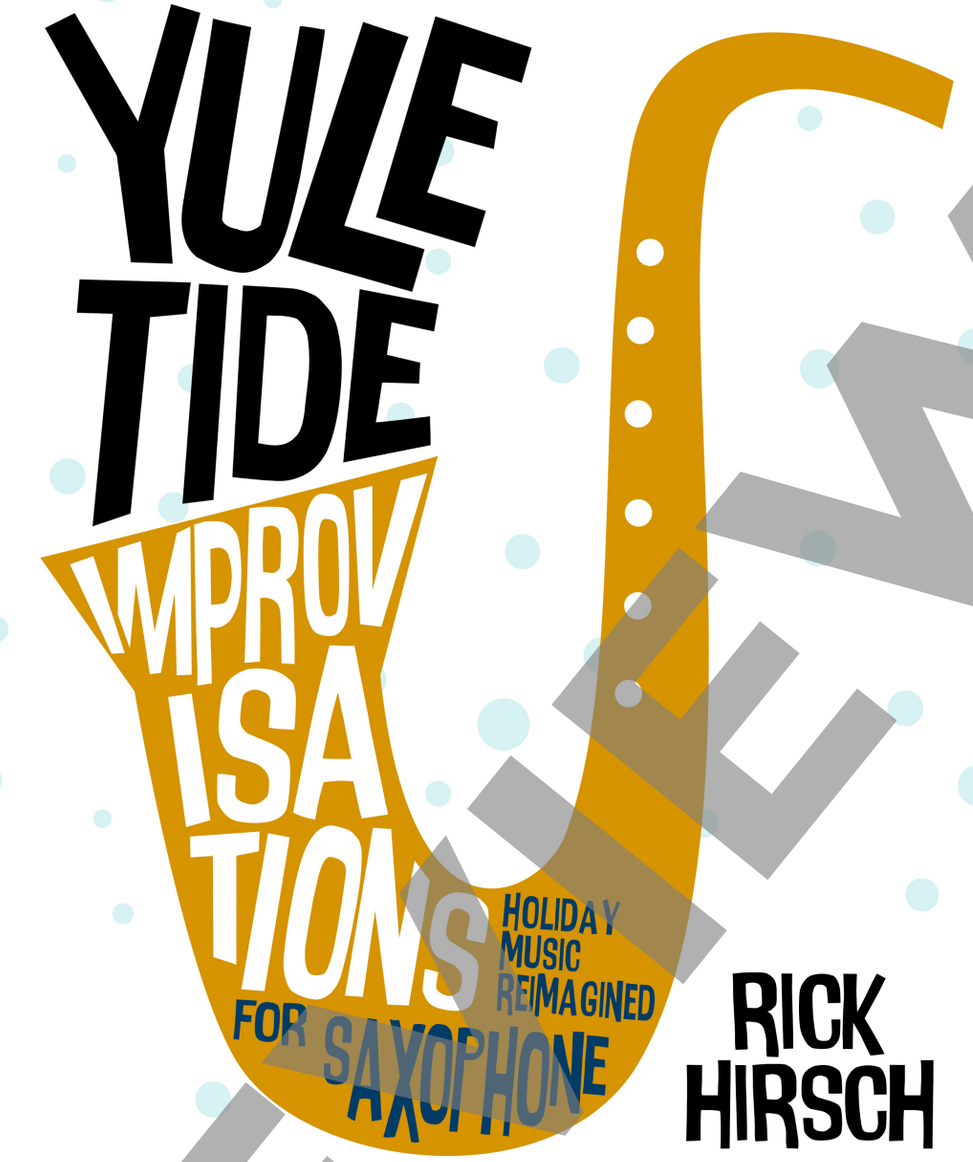
YULE TIDE IMPROVISATIONS

HOLIDAY MUSIC REIMAGINED FOR SAXOPHONE



RICK HIRSCH

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PREVIEW

HIRSCH MUSIC

Introduction

Here are imaginative interpretations of fifteen beloved Christmas and Chanukah songs. I believe there's a piece in here for every holiday mood, from peaceful to sugar-buzzed, sentimental to sneaky.

My intent is to reveal something new about the character of each of these melodies, and to have them sound as though the performer is improvising.

I hope this music brings much joy and warmth to you, your family, and your community.

Rick Hirsch

Performance Notes & Tips

- Interpret this music as you wish. You can play it from a *classical* perspective, a *jazz* viewpoint, or anywhere in between.
- These pieces sound great at various tempos. Play them at the speeds(s) you like best.
- Learn and perform these pieces in any order you choose. They appear here alphabetically—not in a performance sequence or order of difficulty.
- Don't let the extended techniques get in your way of making good music. If you struggle with them, keep working at it. Or, simply disregard them.

About the Arranger

Rick Hirsch (b.1970) is an award-winning composer, arranger, educator, and saxophonist based in State College, Pennsylvania.

His music has been performed by the Capitol Quartet, US Navy Commodores, Birdland Big Band, Osland Saxophone Quartet, and countless students, amateurs, and professionals worldwide.

He studied saxophone and improvisation with Yusef Lateef, Lynn Klock, Steve Duke, Boysie Lowery, and Bill Byerly. He grew up in Delaware and has music degrees from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and Northern Illinois University.

Program Notes

Adeste Fidelis is presented in a lyrical 5/4. The trick is to play it so smoothly your listeners don't notice the odd meter.

Angels We Have Heard on High is hopped-up on sweets. Good luck.

Away in a Manger is gentle, with a little bounce.

Deck the Halls keeps changing keys, and ends with a taste of the Blues.

God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen is slightly abstract, but there's no doubt what tune this is.

Go Tell It on the Mountain is a joyful swinger.

Here We Come A-wassailing is a little cheeky. It's okay if it makes people chuckle.

I Saw Three Ships borrows an ornamentation technique from traditional Celtic music, and ends with a brief nod to French Impressionism. *Tres bien!*

Ma'oz Tzur (Rock of Ages) is traditionally sung when lighting the menorah. It's presented here in 3/4.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel is a haunting Advent melody in the Aeolian mode. This version begins and ends with an ostinato figure.

Oh Chanukah can't decide if it's a Klezmer romp or a funky groove tune. *Oy vey!*

Oh Tannenbaum is short and sweet, inspired in part by Johann Sebastian Bach.

Silent Night features interplay between the melody and implied counter-melodies.

We Wish You a Merry Christmas is over-excited, and uses extended techniques galore.

The Wexford Carol alternates between Mixolydian and Dorian modes. Unusual fingering techniques enhance its unique mood.

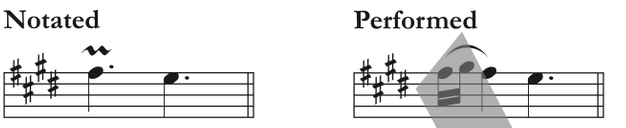
PREVIEW

Ornamentation and Extended Techniques used in *Yuletide Improvisations*

watch detailed explainer videos at YouTube.com/8 l 4jazzer

Mordent 𝆔

Swiftly play the written note, the note above it (in the key signature), then return to the written note.

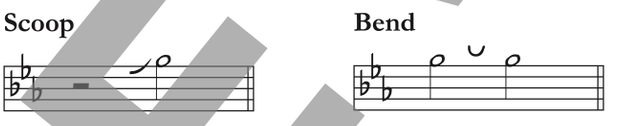


Turn or Flip 𝆓

Insert two quick notes that lead into the next note: the note above the written pitch, then the written pitch. The note above is usually in the key, unless a note out of the key is easier to execute.

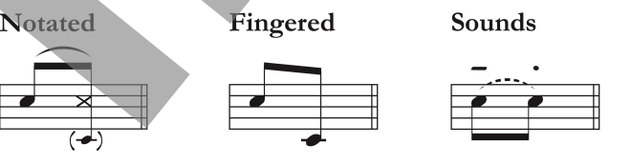
Vocal Gestures: Scoop ⌒ **Bend (or Dip)** ∪

Use your vocal mechanism to change the tuning, just as you would if you were to sing them. A *scoop* begins flat, then slides up into the notated pitch. A *bend* begins in tune, drops flat, then returns to pitch.



Rhythmic Overtones

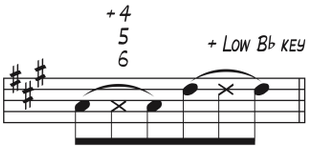
This is a way to articulate rhythm without tonguing each note. Play a low-note fingering, but produce a higher pitch. Overtone fingerings are used here to create an effect in which there's a subtle change of timbre on consecutive notes on the same pitch.



Rhythmic Venting

This is another way to articulate rhythm without tonguing. Press additional key(s) to change the timbre of a note without changing the note itself, other than slightly changing the intonation. The notations indicate which keys to add.

In the example *4, 5,* and *6* are the right-hand keys *F, E,* and *D*. Add these keys to your usual *A* fingering. On the vented *D*, add low *Bb* pinky key.



Slap Tongue

This is a percussive effect involving your tongue, reed, and extra air pressure. Check out one of the several good tutorials on YouTube.

watch videos

Finger Pop

Create a percussive sound by firmly closing a low *D* fingering (or low *Bb*). When done properly, the sound has some *thunk*—not just *clack*.

PREVIEW

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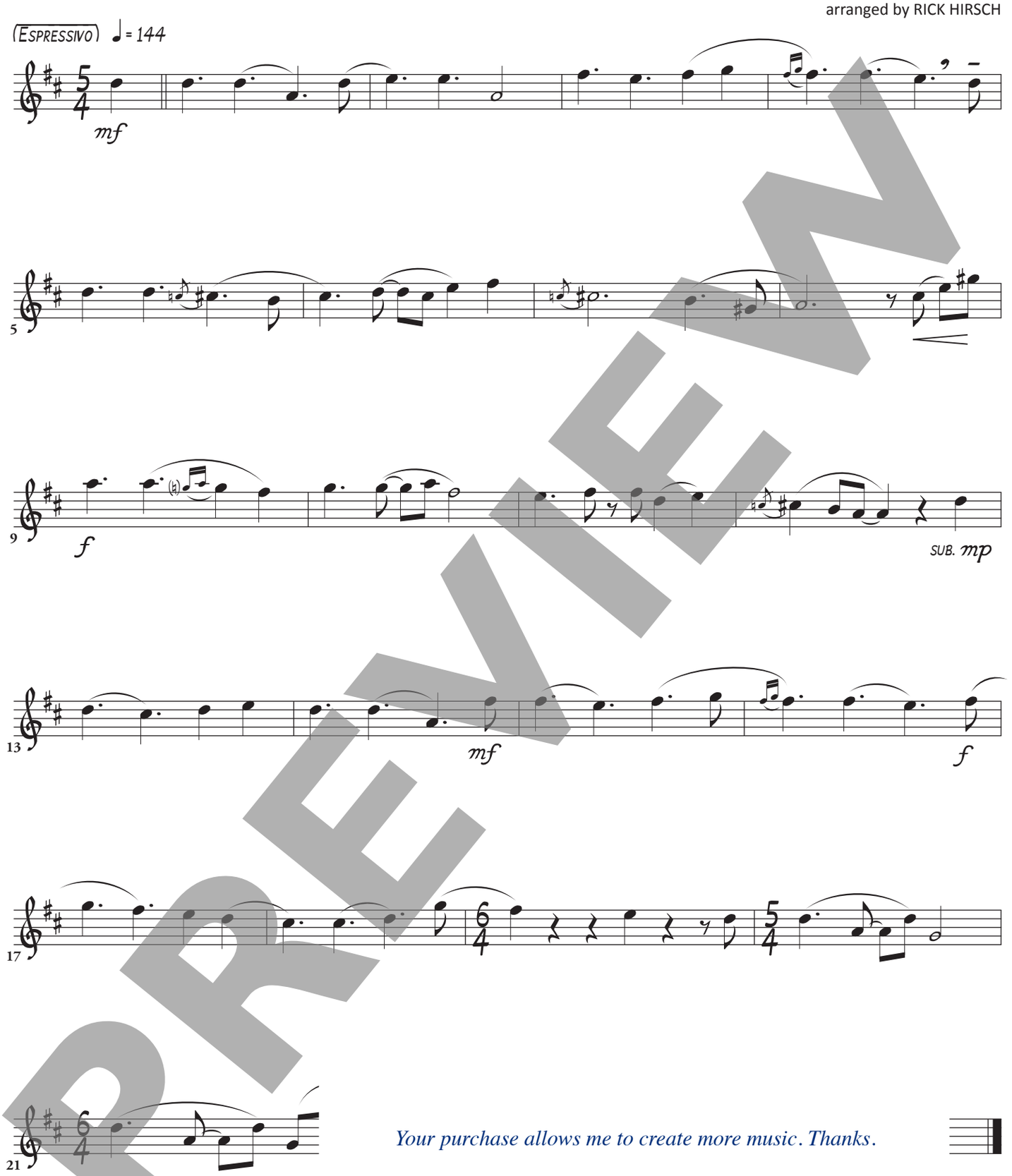
Adeste Fidelis

for solo saxophone

Duration :50

TRADITIONAL

arranged by RICK HIRSCH



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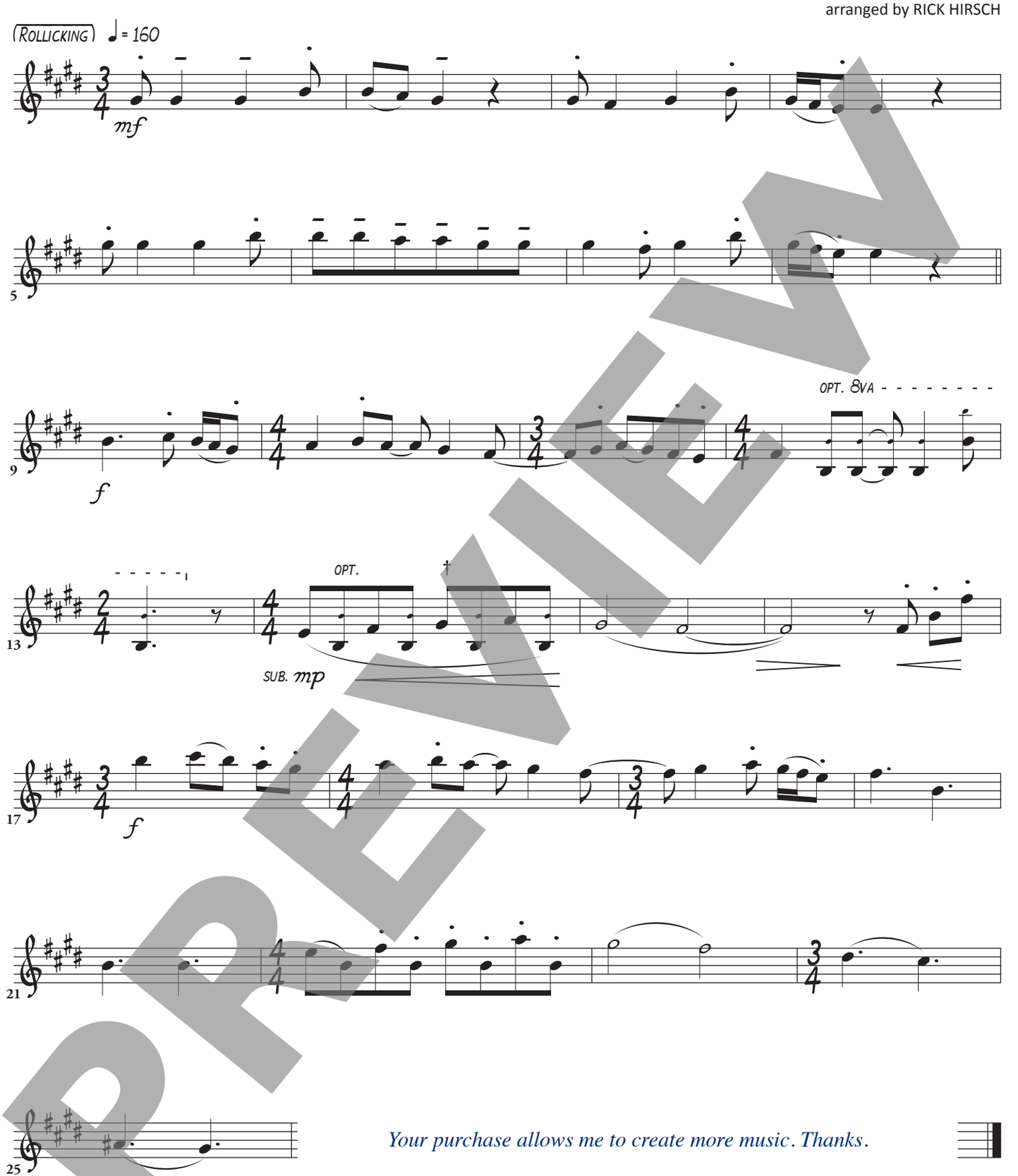
Angels We Have Heard on High

for solo saxophone

Duration :35

TRADITIONAL
arranged by RICK HIRSCH



† play G# with low B key

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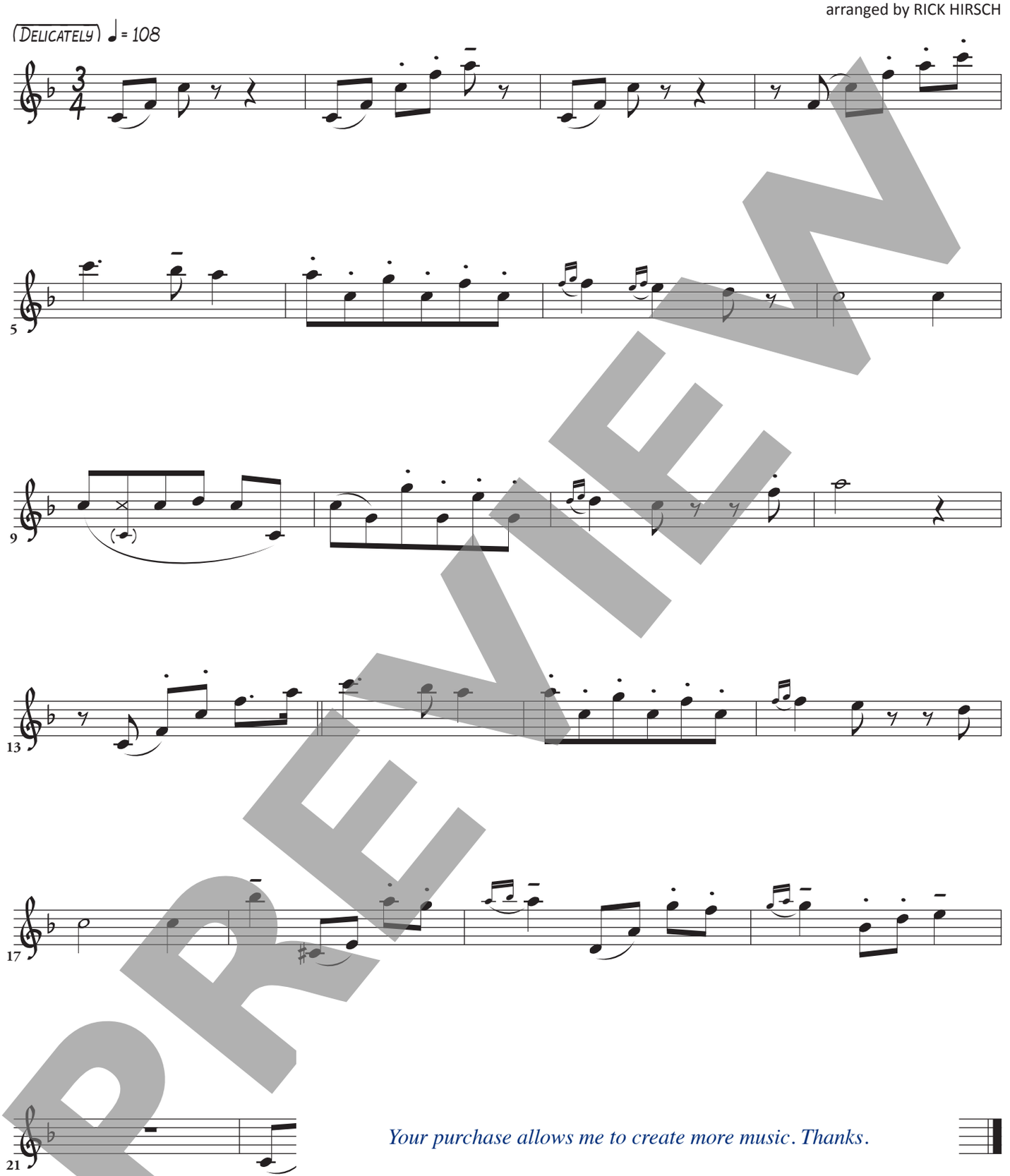
Away in a Manger

for solo saxophone

Duration :40

JAMES R. MURRAY
arranged by RICK HIRSCH



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† **front F**

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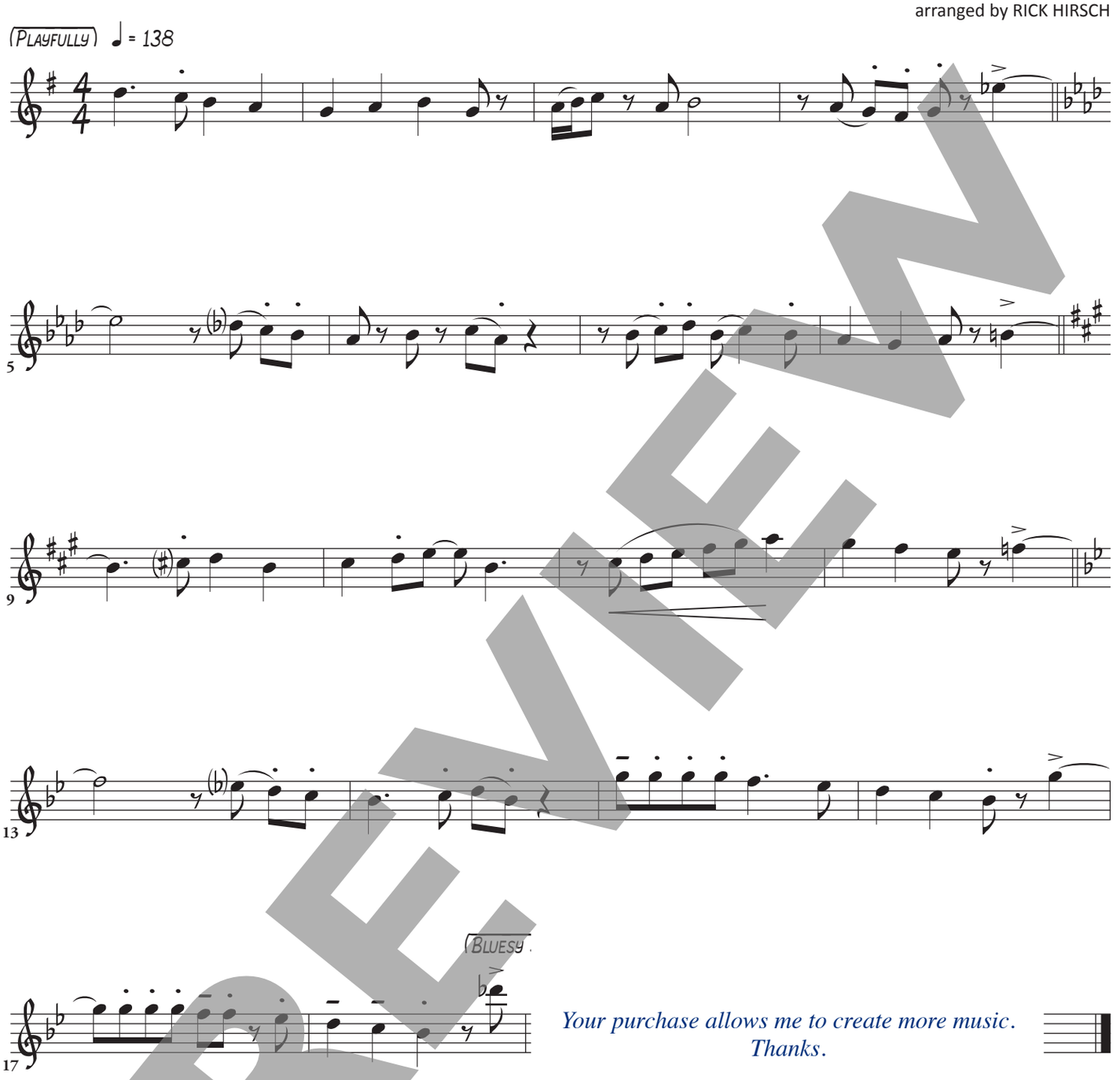
Deck the Halls

for solo saxophone

Duration :35

TRADITIONAL

arranged by RICK HIRSCH



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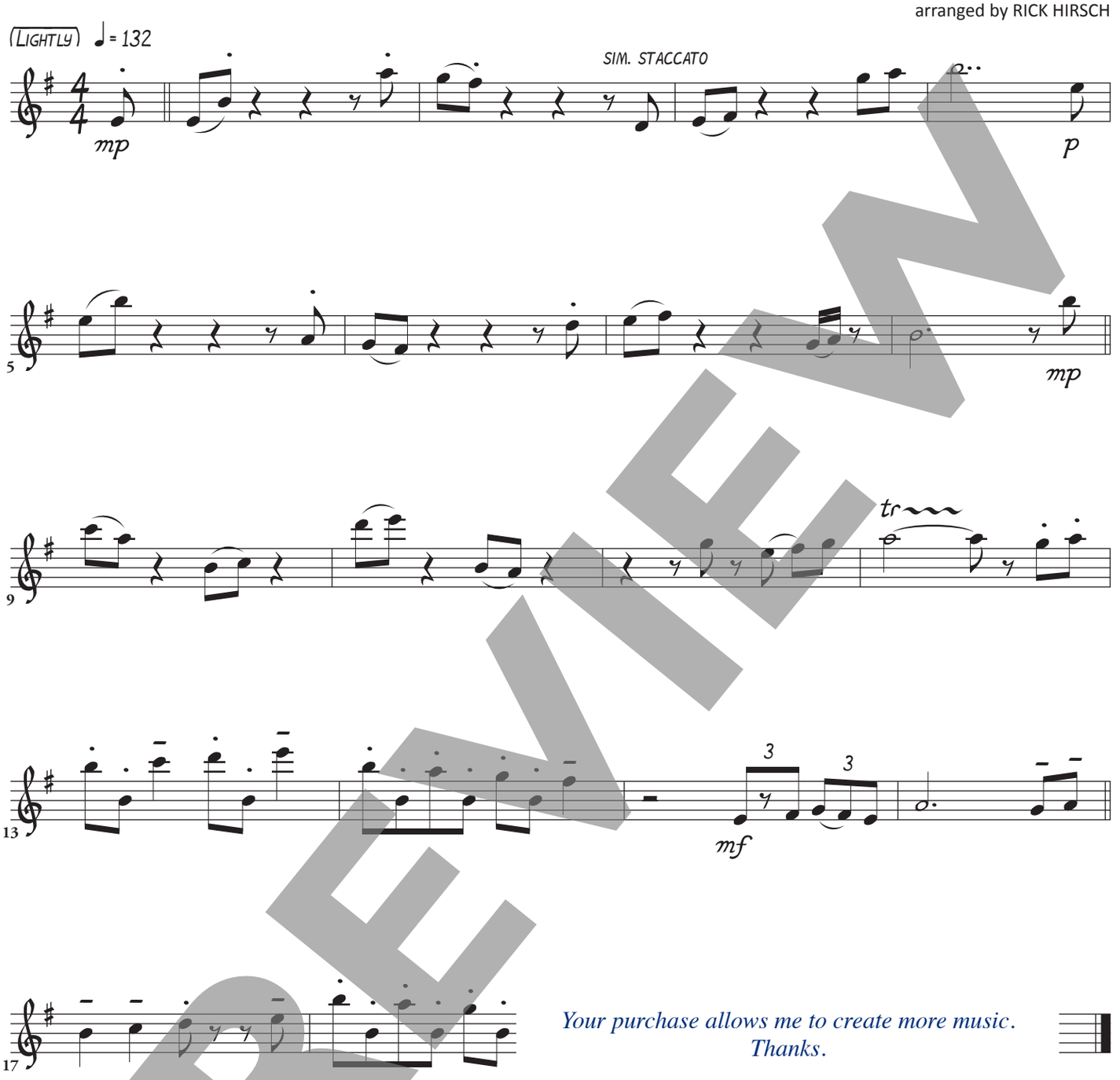
God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

for solo saxophone

Duration :40

TRADITIONAL
arranged by RICK HIRSCH



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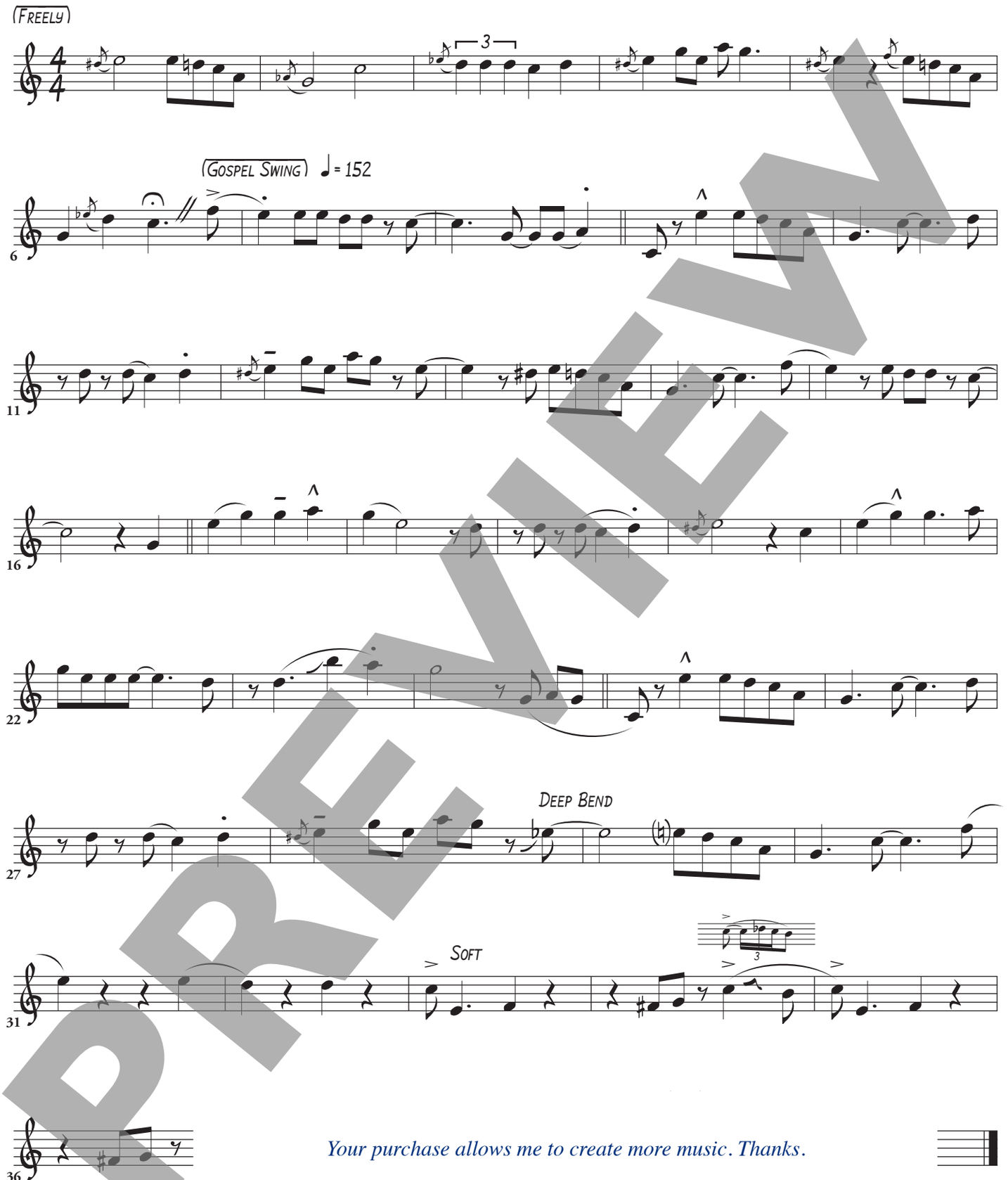
Go Tell It on the Mountain

for solo saxophone

TRADITIONAL

arranged by RICK HIRSCH

Duration 1:20



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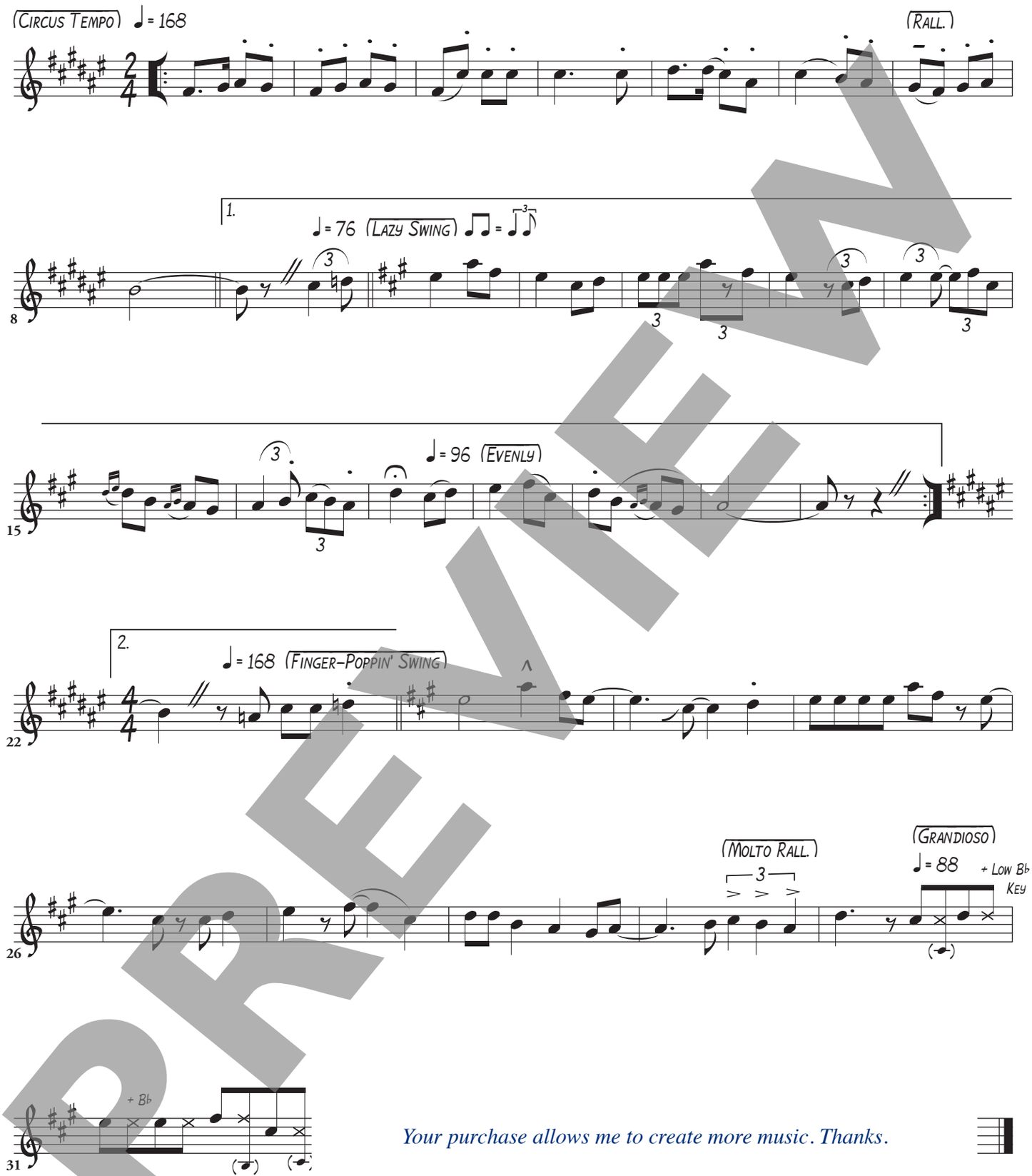
Here We Come A-Wassailing

for solo saxophone

TRADITIONAL

Duration 1:00

arranged by RICK HIRSCH



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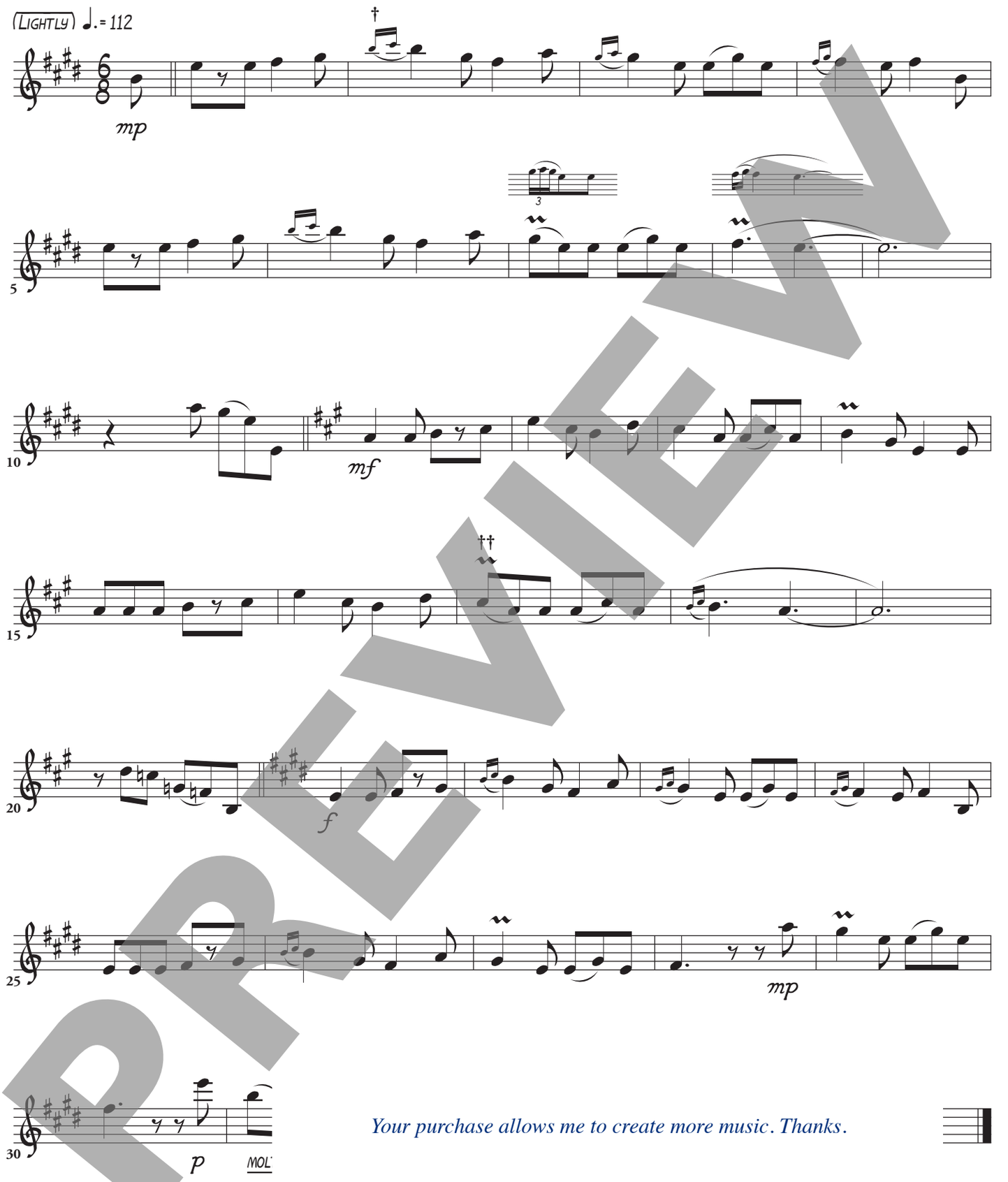
I Saw Three Ships

for solo saxophone

TRADITIONAL

arranged by RICK HIRSCH

Duration :40



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† play grace notes before the beat.

†† use side D on this mordent (palm key only, no octave key).

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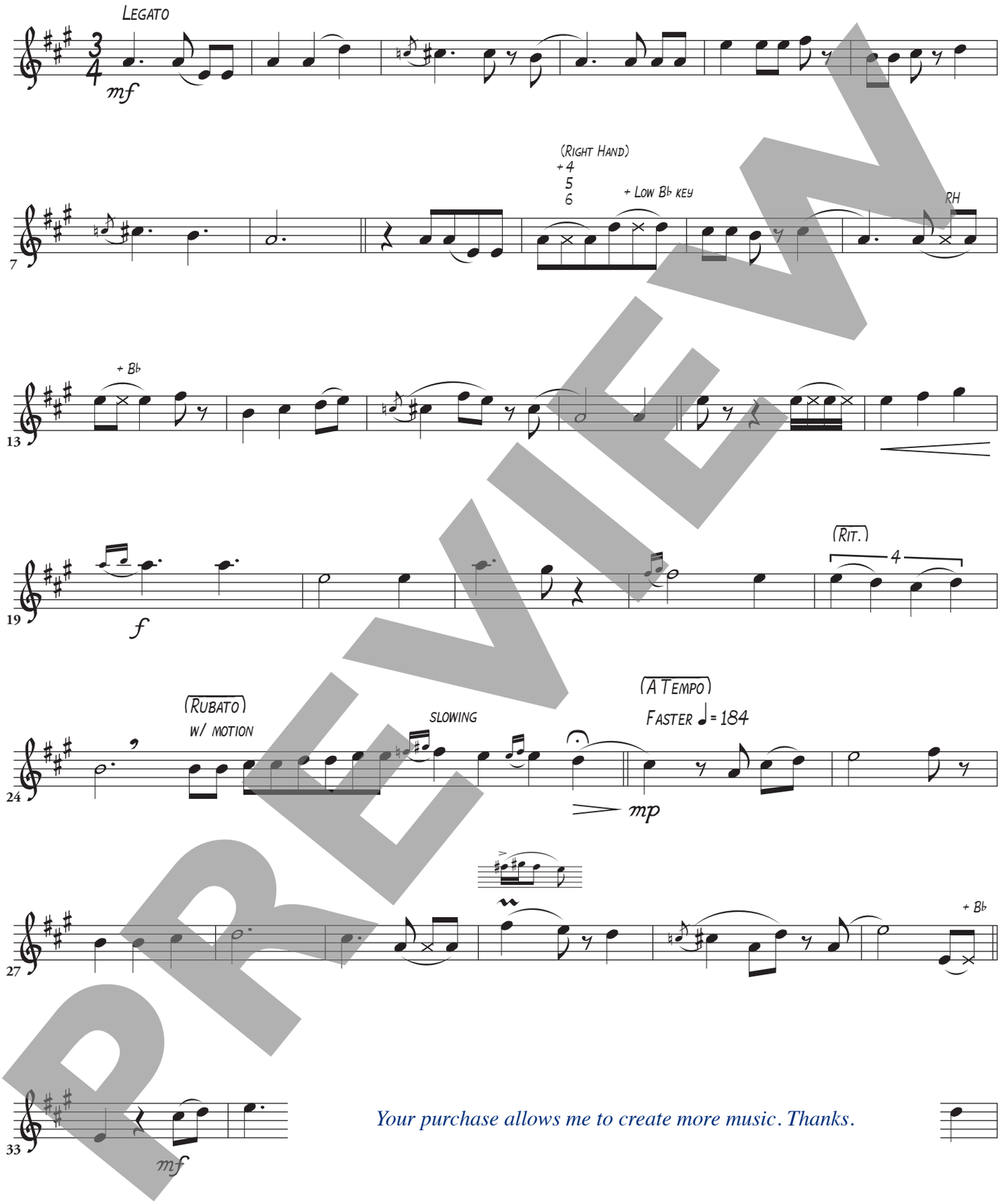
Ma'oz Tzur

for solo saxophone

Duration 1:10

TRADITIONAL
arranged by RICK HIRSCH



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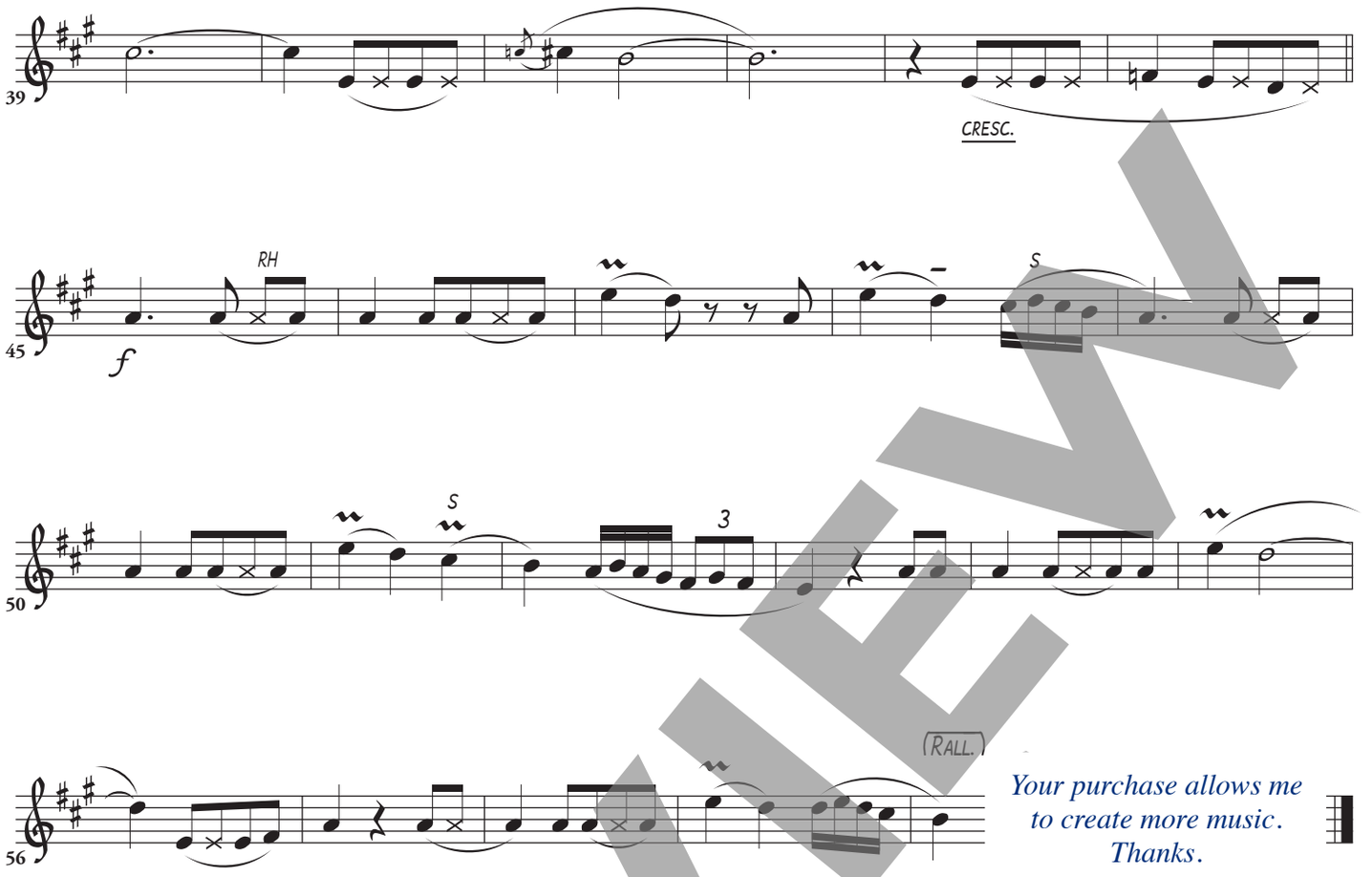

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S = **use side D (palm key, no octave key)**

PREVIEW

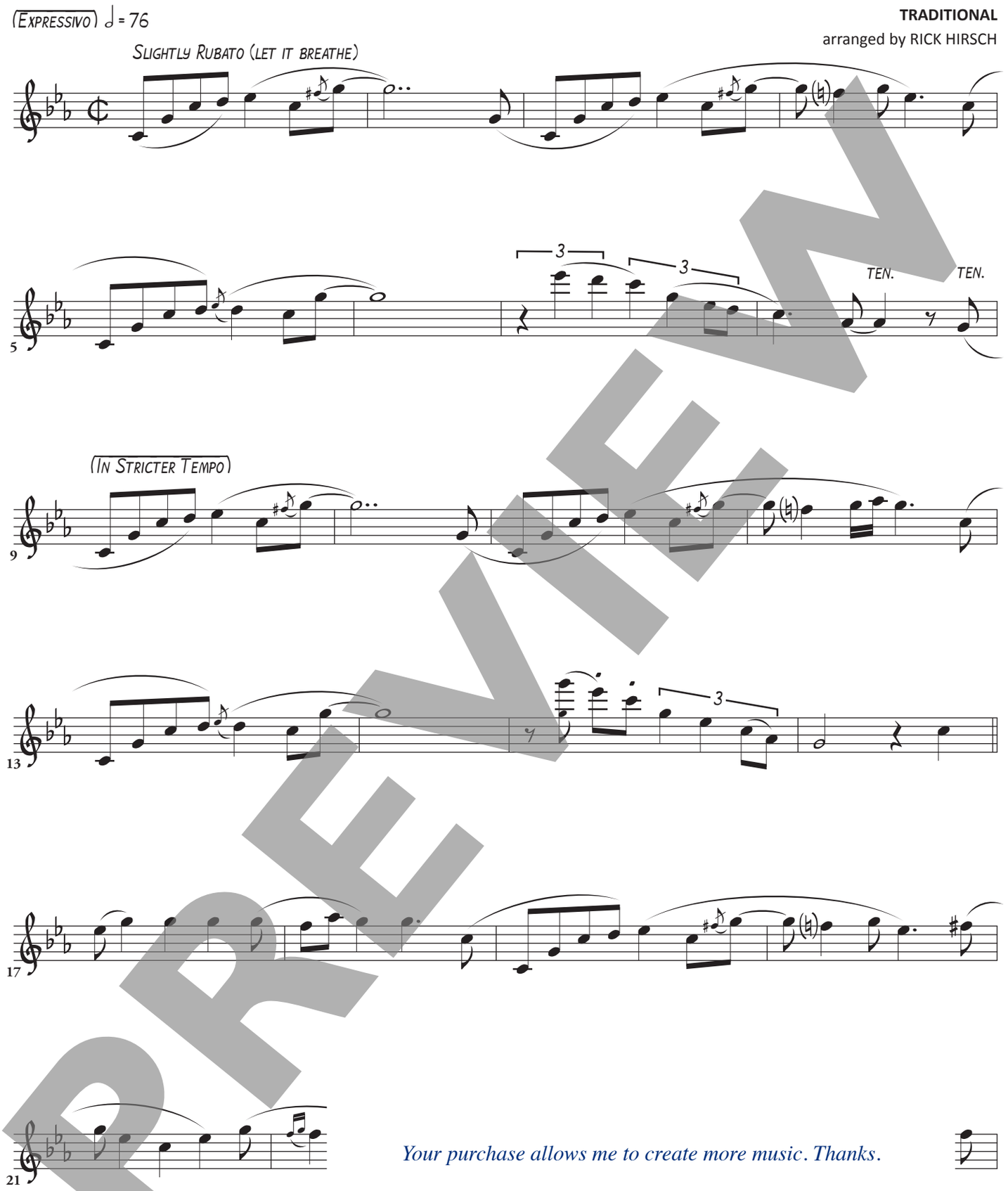
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

for solo saxophone

Duration 2:00

TRADITIONAL

arranged by RICK HIRSCH



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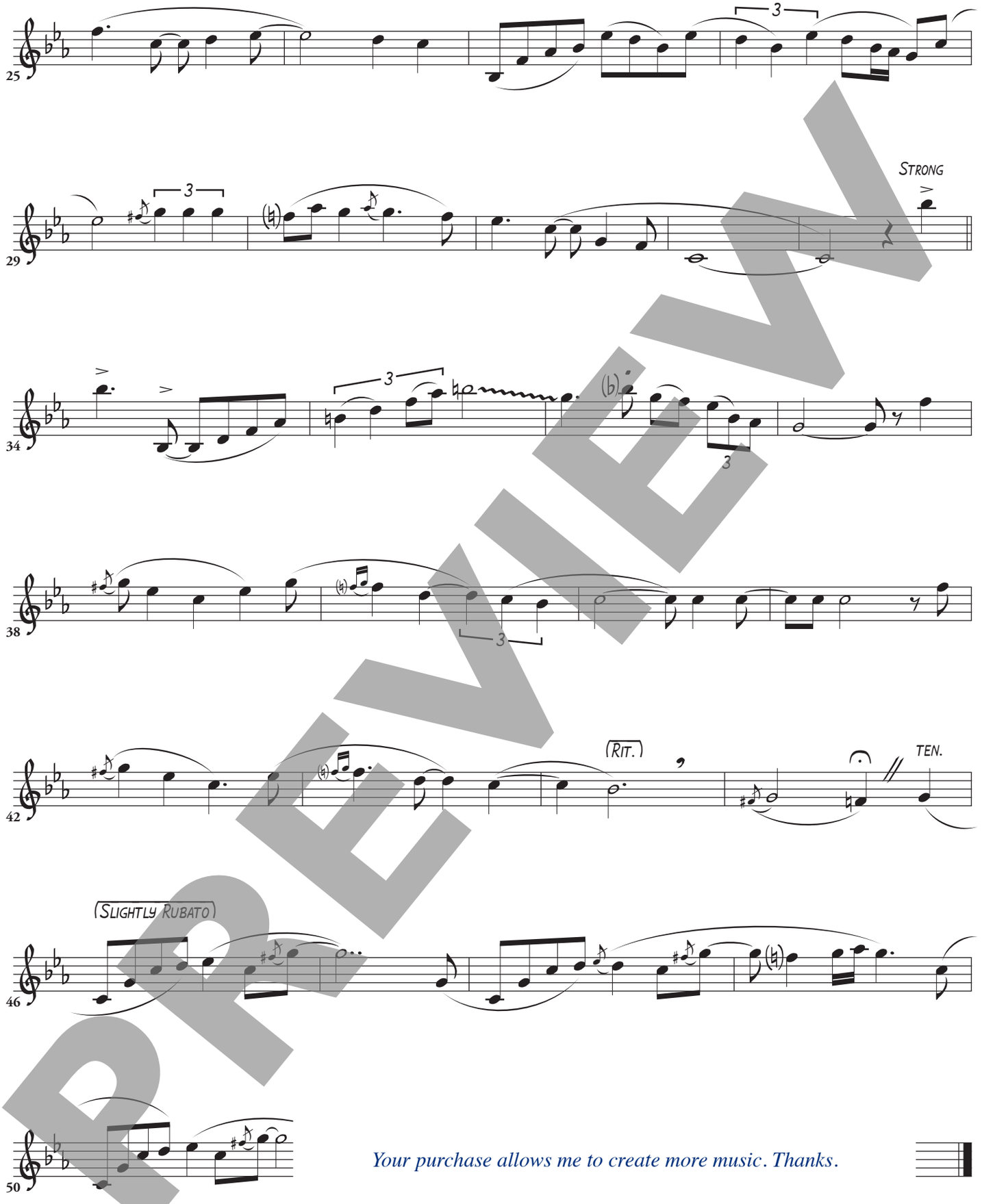

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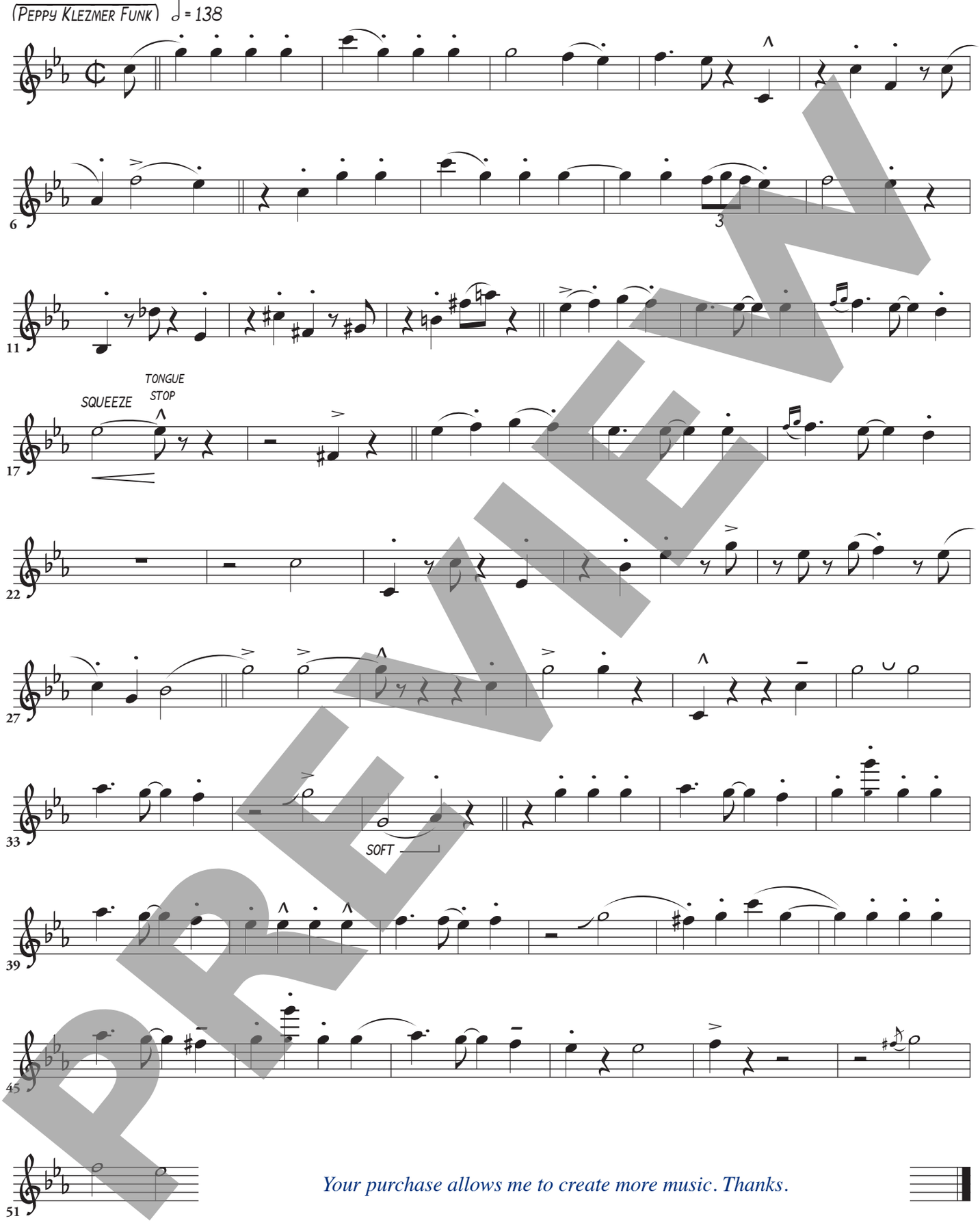
Oh Chanukah

for solo saxophone

Duration :50

TRADITIONAL

arranged by RICK HIRSCH



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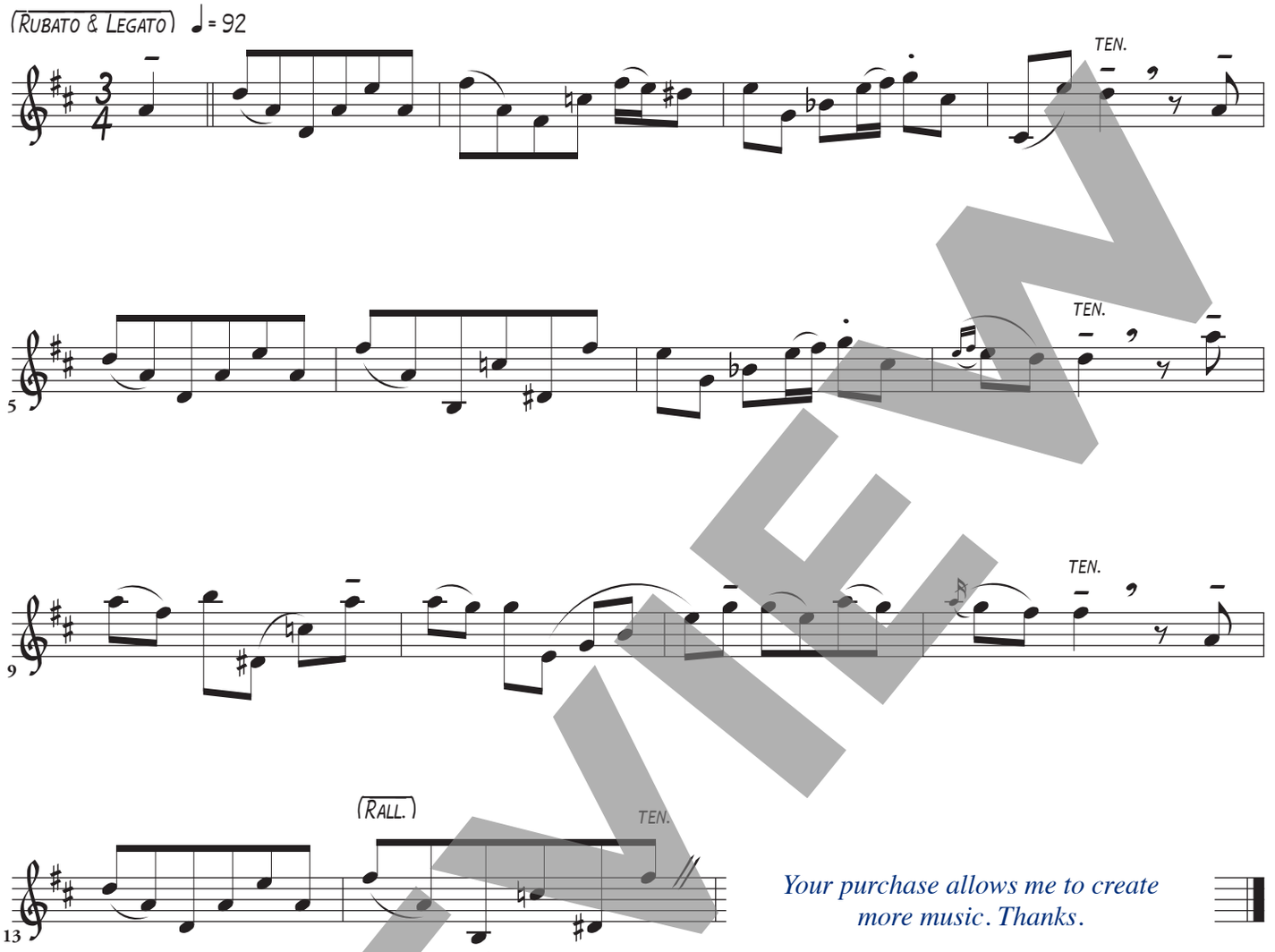
O Tannenbaum

for solo saxophone

TRADITIONAL

arranged by RICK HIRSCH

Duration :45



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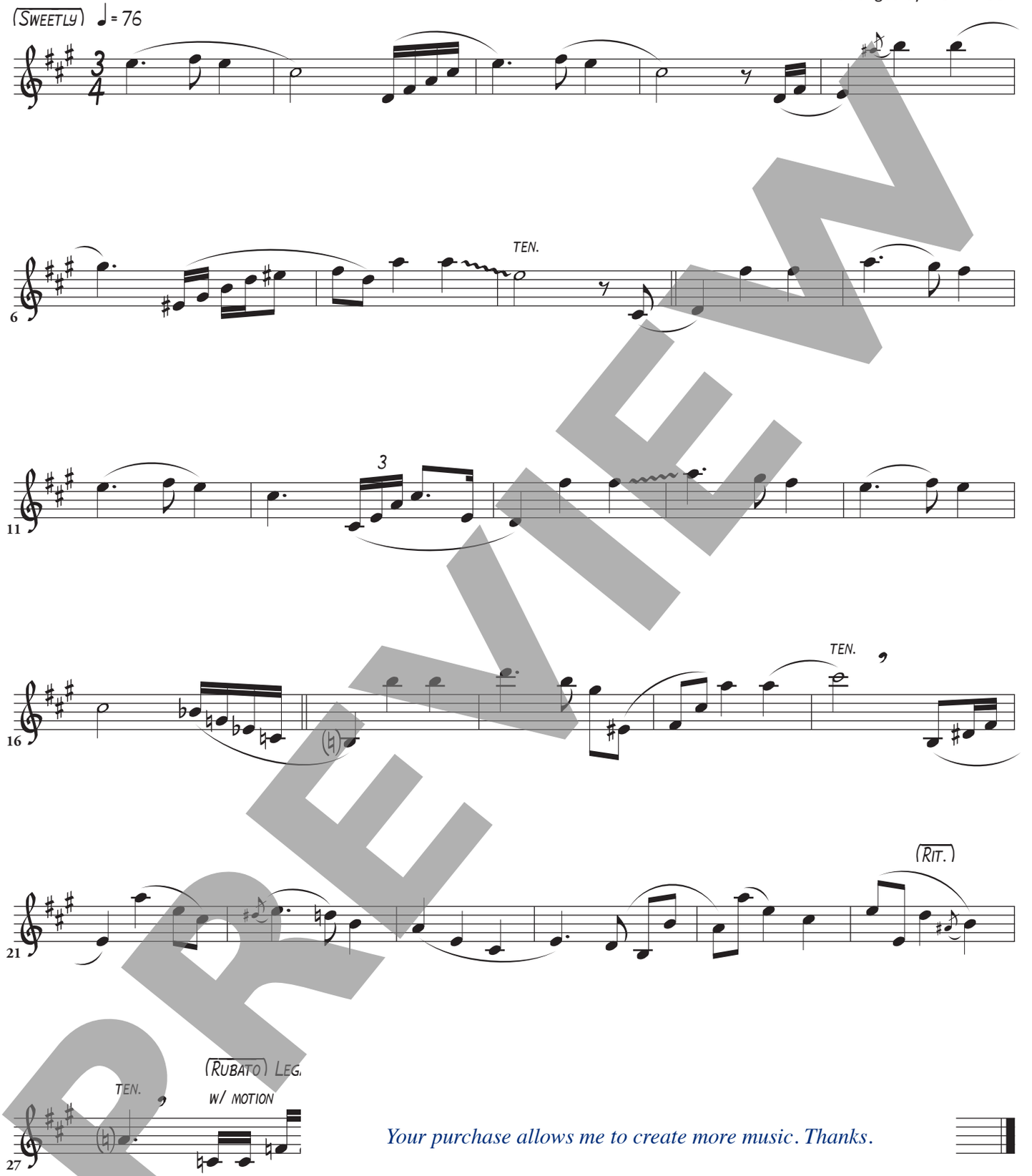
Silent Night

for solo saxophone

Duration 1:20

FRANZ GRUBER
arranged by RICK HIRSCH



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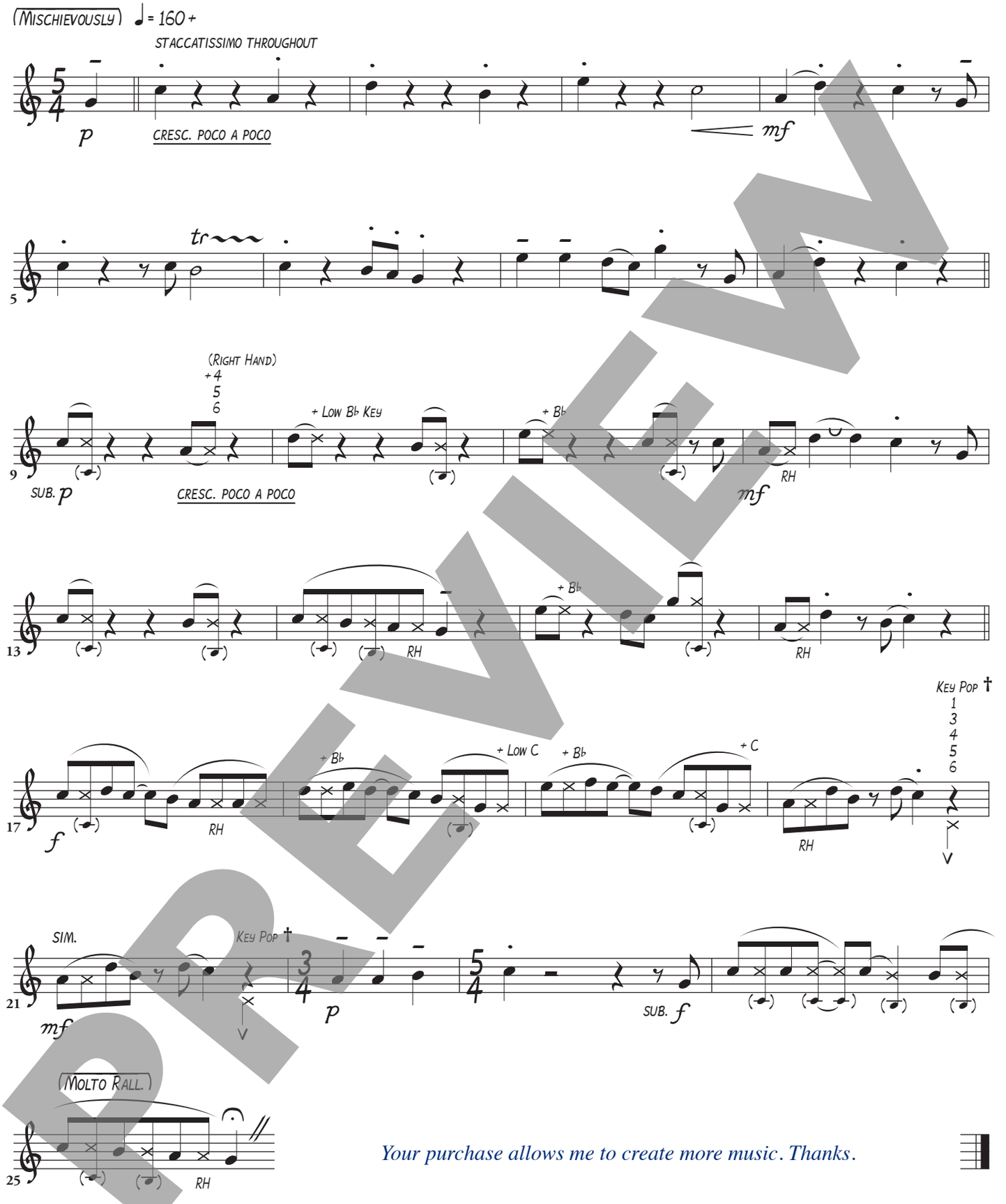
We Wish You a Merry Christmas

for solo saxophone

Duration :55

TRADITIONAL
arranged by RICK HIRSCH



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† **or slap tongue**

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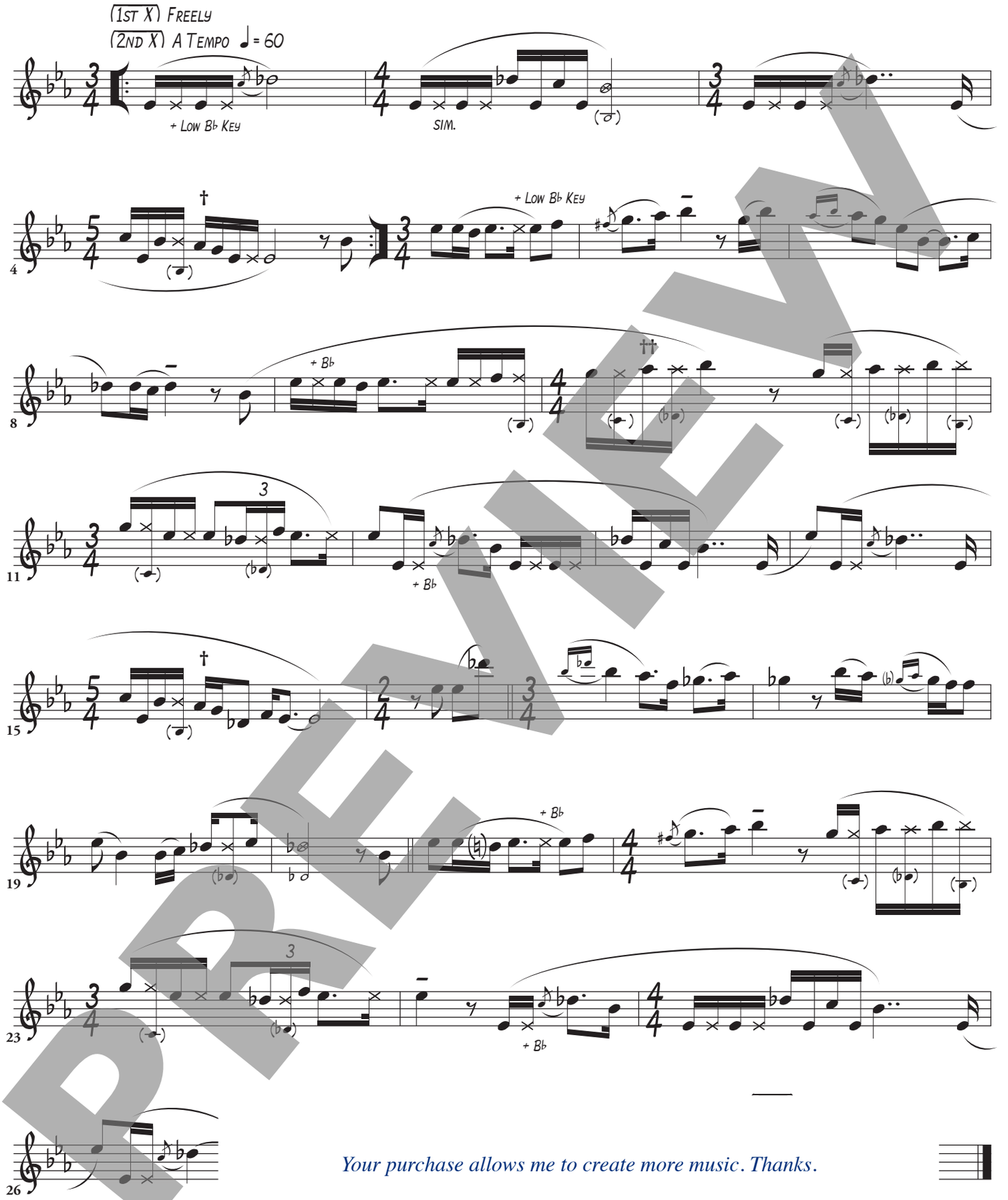
The Wexford Carol

for solo saxophone

TRADITIONAL

arranged by RICK HIRSCH

Duration 2:00



PREVIEW

Your purchase allows me to create more music. Thanks.

† use low Bb key to play Ab

†† use low Db key to play Ab

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