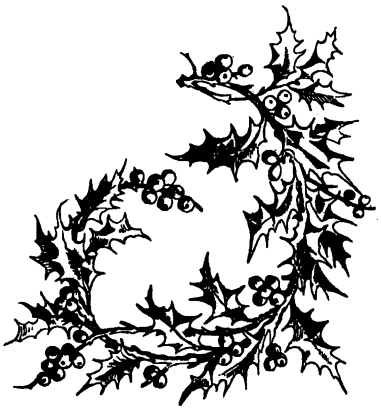
Student Edition

An Early American Christmas

A Revolutionary Holiday Celebration

by

Teresa & Paul Jennings



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An Early American Christmas

A Revolutionary Holiday Celebration

By Teresa & Paul Jennings

Characters:
Contemporary American children (any number, multiple speaking parts)
Early American children (any number, multiple speaking parts)

Time:
Today and the late 1700's

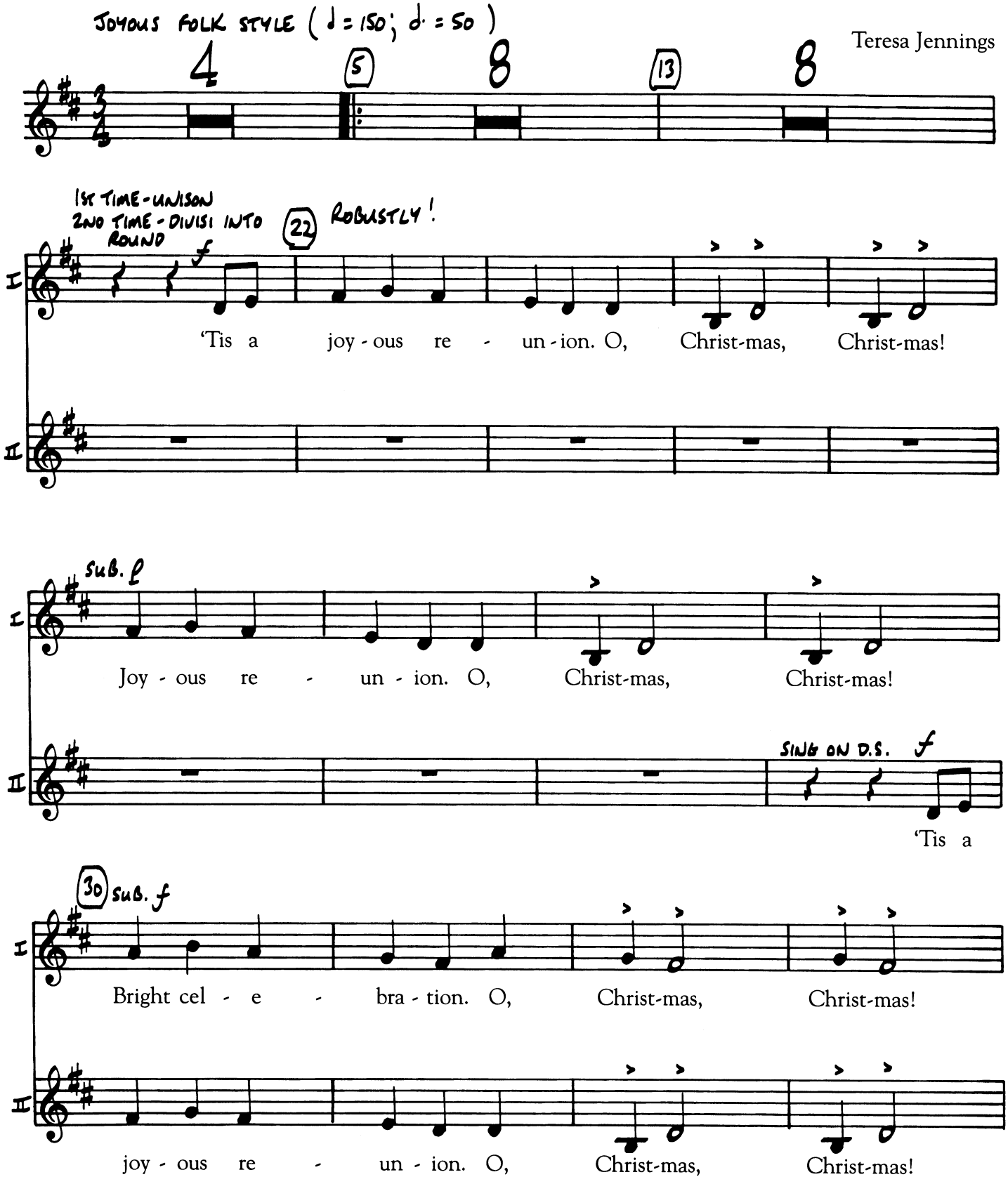
Setting:
America

Sequence 1

Opening Song: "O Christmas, Christmas!"

During the opening song, some contemporary American children (students) are decorating their school's performance area for their Early American Christmas program. They can be playing around with costumes and decorations typical of the era as they sing and even dance.

O CHRISTMAS, CHRISTMAS!



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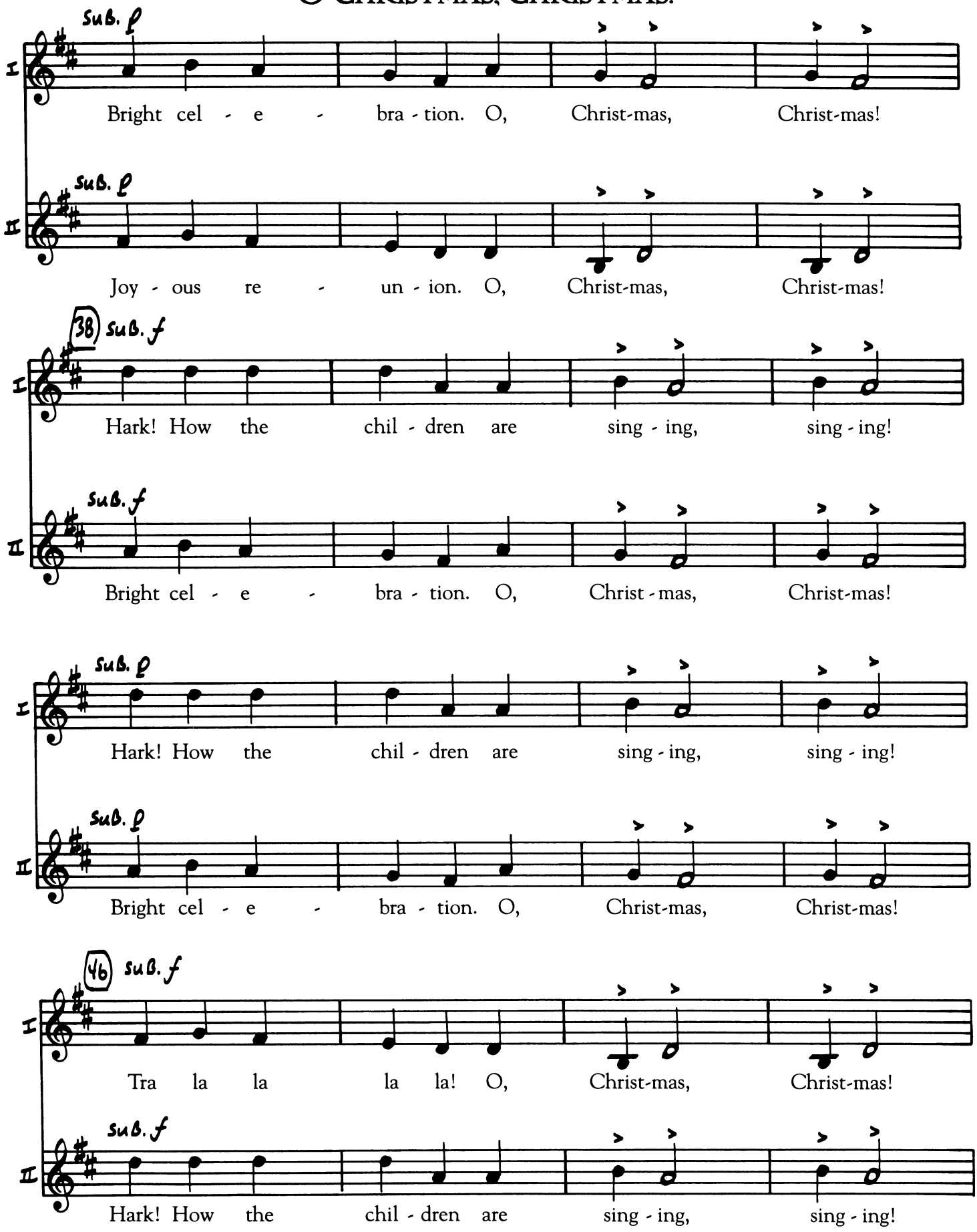
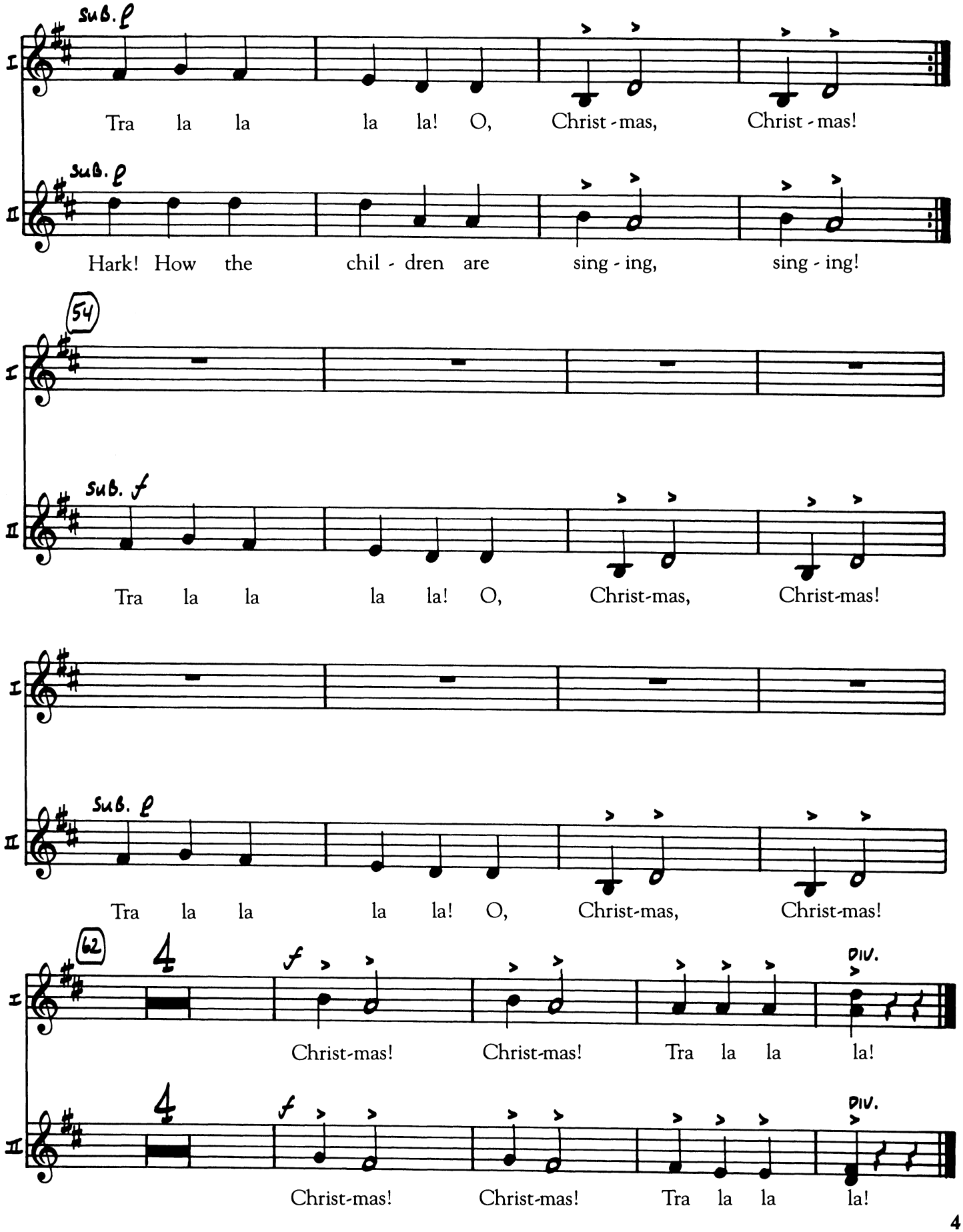
O Christmas, Christmas!



O Christmas, Christmas!



SEQUENCE 2

After the song, the students talk amongst themselves.

Our teacher says that this year we will be celebrating the holiday season the way Americans did when our country was just beginning.

That was more than 200 years ago!

I'll bet it was very different from the way we celebrate today.

Yeah. But we still hear about some of their weird customs today.

You mean like the Yule Log or the Boar's Head?

Yeah. Like that. And what the heck is "figgy pudding"?

I don't know. But I don't think I want any. *(Make yucky face.)*

(Others make similar faces, too)

You know, I think the Yule Log was practically a whole tree. It was <u>really</u> big.

Men that owned lots of land or estates and had big houses - and <u>big</u> fireplaces - burned the Yule Log for the whole Christmas season!

Wow. That must have been a big fire, too!

Can you imagine dragging a whole tree into your fireplace today?

Well, we drag a whole tree into our living rooms! You know – a Christmas tree!

I guess we do! Wonder how these traditions got started in the first place?

I don't know. I guess they're just passed along from person to person.

And from generation to generation.

Our ancestors had customs and beliefs that they practiced and taught their children to practice.

And their children taught their children and so on.

Even so, traditions don't have to be ancient.

That's right! We've started our own traditions since we were little.

You mean like watching Christmas specials on t.v. every year?

Yeah! I'll bet our ancestors didn't do that 200 years ago!

Not only that, but we are always adapting traditions, too. Adding our personal touches.

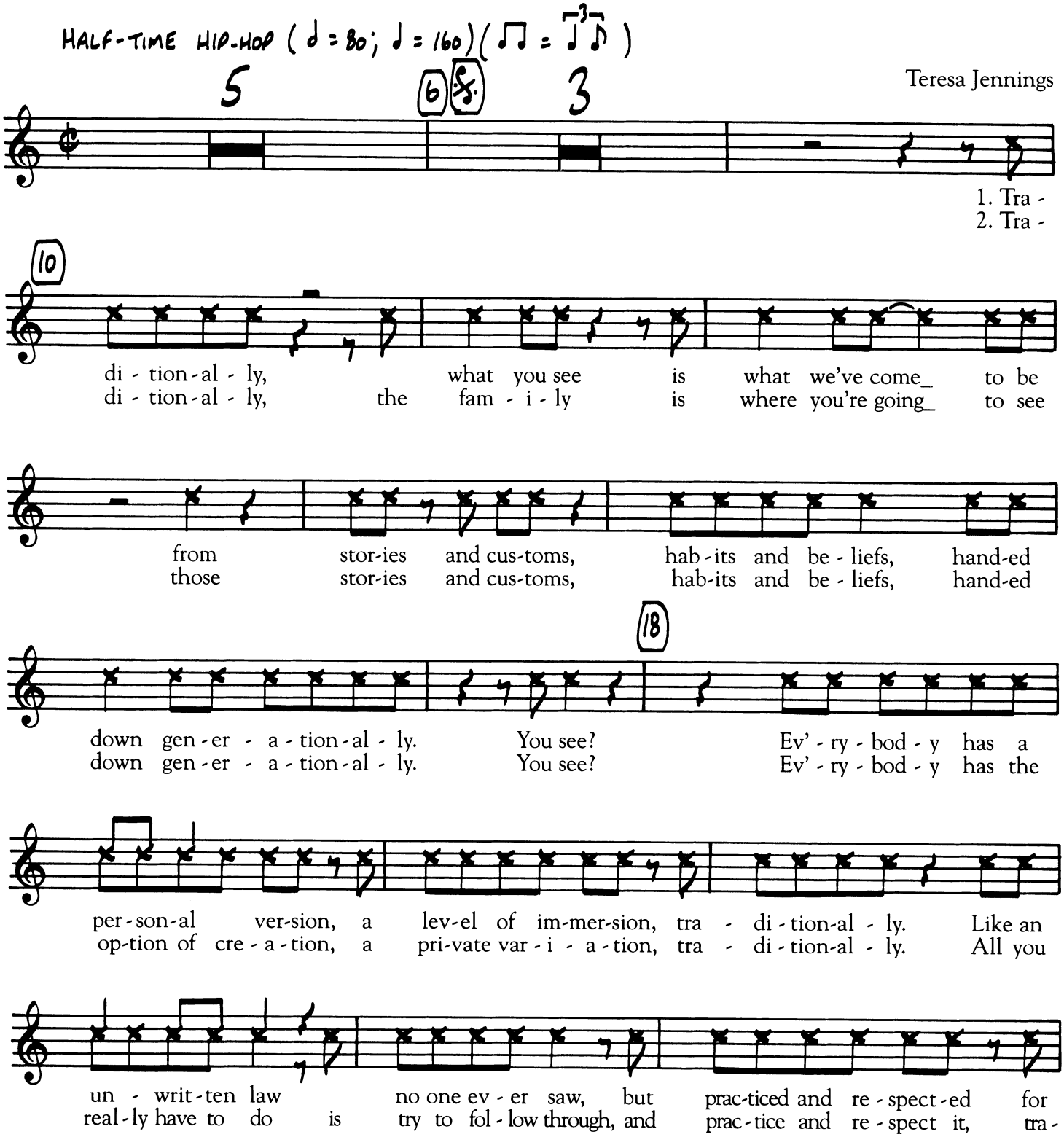
I suppose that means we all have traditions, doesn't it?

Others nod in agreement while song begins. Optional ad libs: Guess so, Yeah, I see your point, Probably so, I know what you mean, *etc.*

SEQUENCE 3

Song: "Traditions"

TRADITIONS



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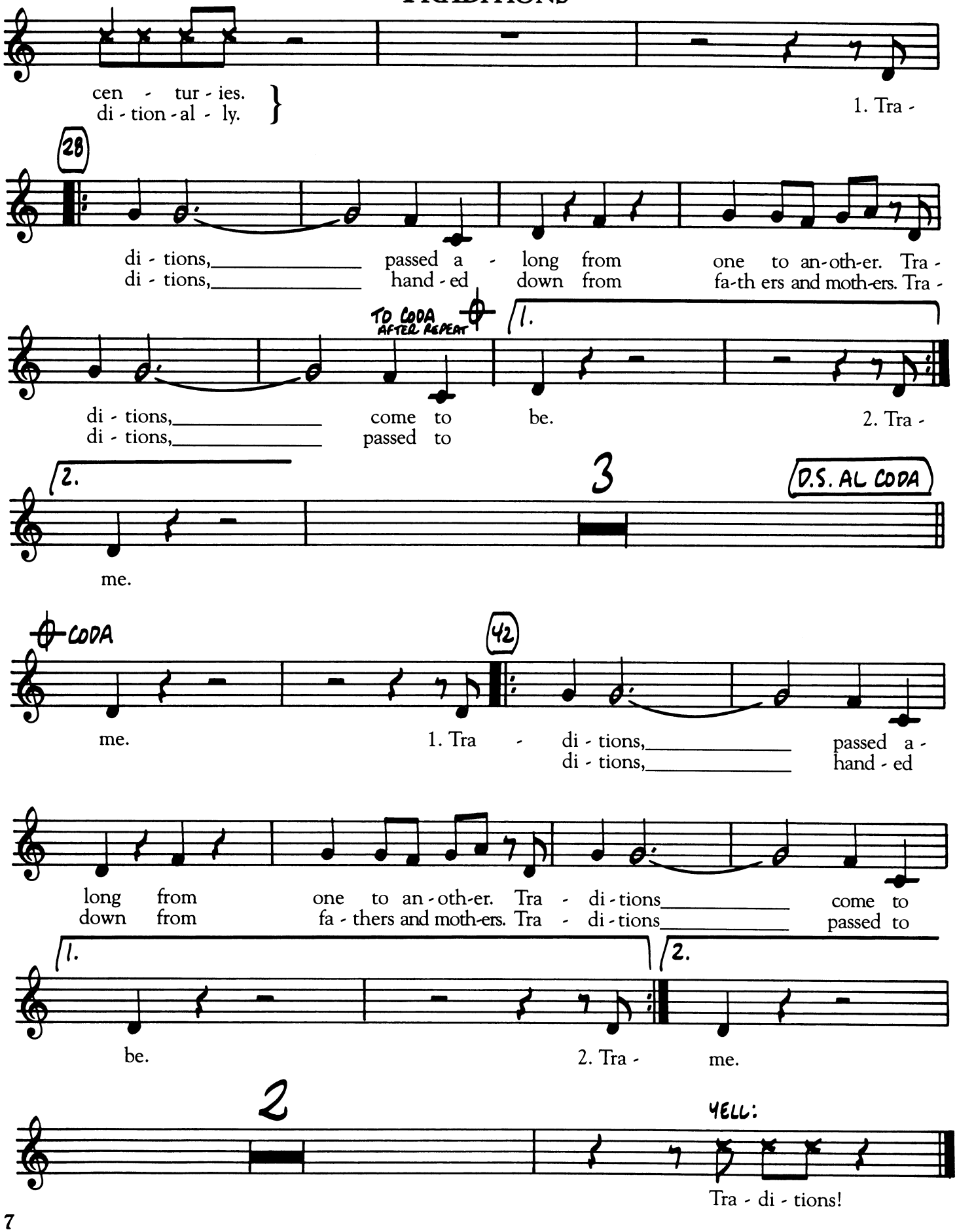
TRADITIONS


cen - tur - ies.
di - tion - al - ly.
1. Tra -
28
di - tions,
di - tions,
passed a - long from one to an - oth - er. Tra -
hand - ed down from fa - th ers and moth - ers. Tra -
TO CODA AFTER REPEAT
1.
di - tions,
di - tions,
come to be.
passed to
2. Tra -
2.
me.
3
D.S. AL CODA
CODA
me.
42
1. Tra - di - tions,
di - tions,
passed a -
hand - ed
long from one to an - oth - er. Tra - di - tions
down from fa - thers and moth - ers. Tra - di - tions
come to
passed to
1.
be.
2.
2. Tra - me.
2
YELL:
Tra - di - tions!

SEQUENCE 4

One of the students holds up a 13 star flag and looks wistfully at it.

I wonder what kind of traditions the kids had a couple of hundred years ago?

Wouldn't it be so cool to go back in time and ask them?

Others nod and ad lib: Wow! That would be awesome! Oh, yeah! Can you imagine?*, etc.*

SEQUENCE 5

The Early American children enter the stage opposite the contemporary children. Spotlight or highlight them somehow, if possible. They speak to the audience and/or the Contemporary kids. The Contemporary kids should turn to face them and react and respond to everything that is said as if they can actually communicate with the Early American children.

Here in our new country, there are people from all over the world.

Some of us are immigrants and some of us were born here.

We live in cities and towns, farms and villages.

We speak many different languages and with many different accents, depending on where we live or where we came from.

We have many different lifestyles, yet we have many things in common, too.

One of the things most of us have in common is the celebration of Christmas.

Many of us and our ancestors came here seeking the freedom to practice our own religions.

And celebrating Christmas is one of those freedoms.

As you might imagine, because we are so diverse, Christmas is celebrated in many different ways.

Some religious groups honor Christmas with quiet dignity and prayer, while others of us are quite exuberant and filled with an outward expression of joy.

In fact, the Father of our Country, George Washington, believed in making very merry at Christmas time.

Well, at least until the war began in 1776.

SEQUENCE 6

Underscore for Narration: "Milford – A Fuguing Tune"

He opened his home at Mount Vernon in Virginia to everyone he knew at Christmas time!

His Christmas celebration went on for days with guests coming and going or staying all along!

His home was decked with grand Christmas decorations and he provided more food and drink than anyone could ever want!

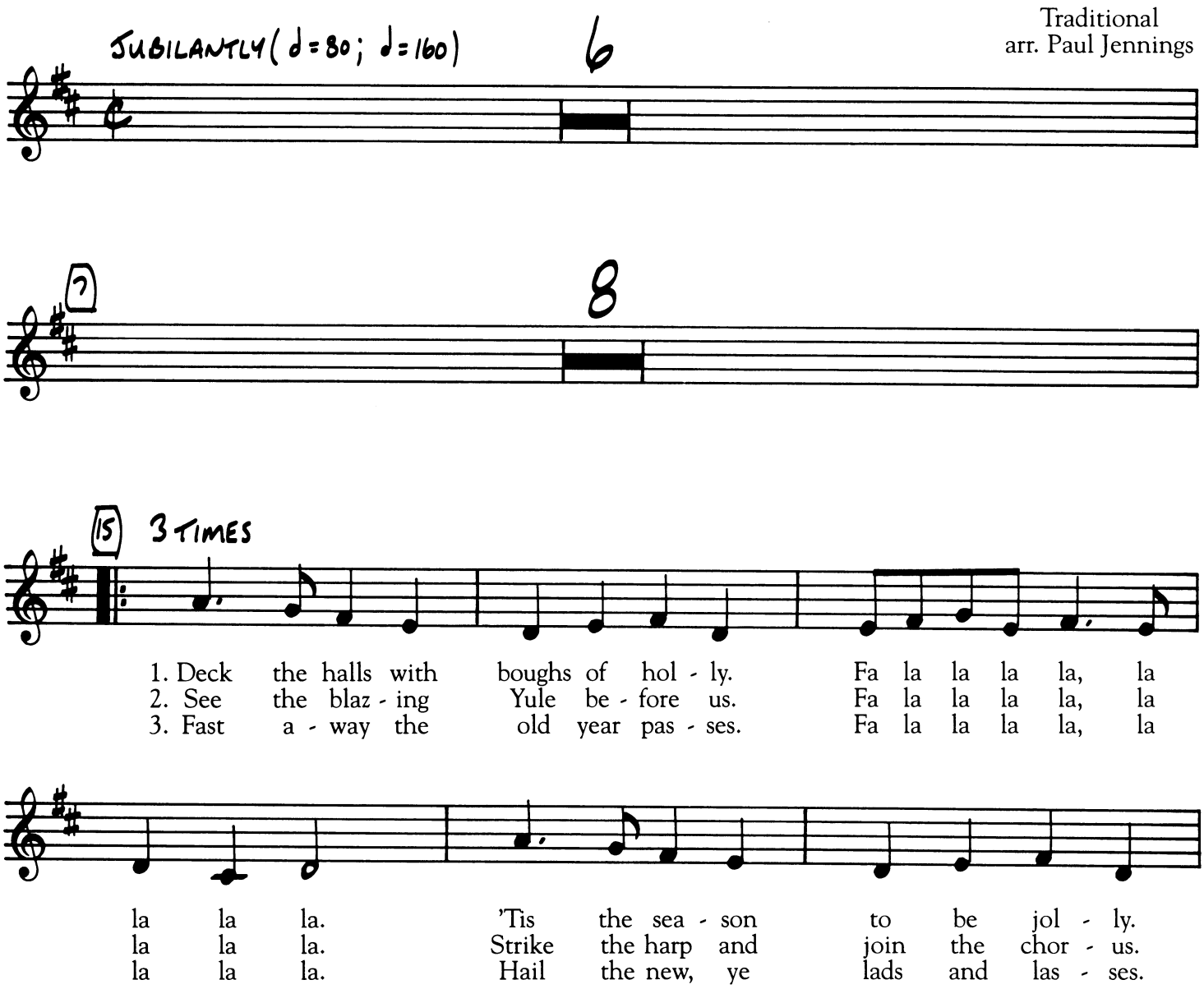
But one of the best parts of the celebrations for George Washington – and for all of us – is the Christmas music!

SEQUENCE 7

Songs: "Deck The Halls"

DECK THE HALLS

Traditional
arr. Paul Jennings



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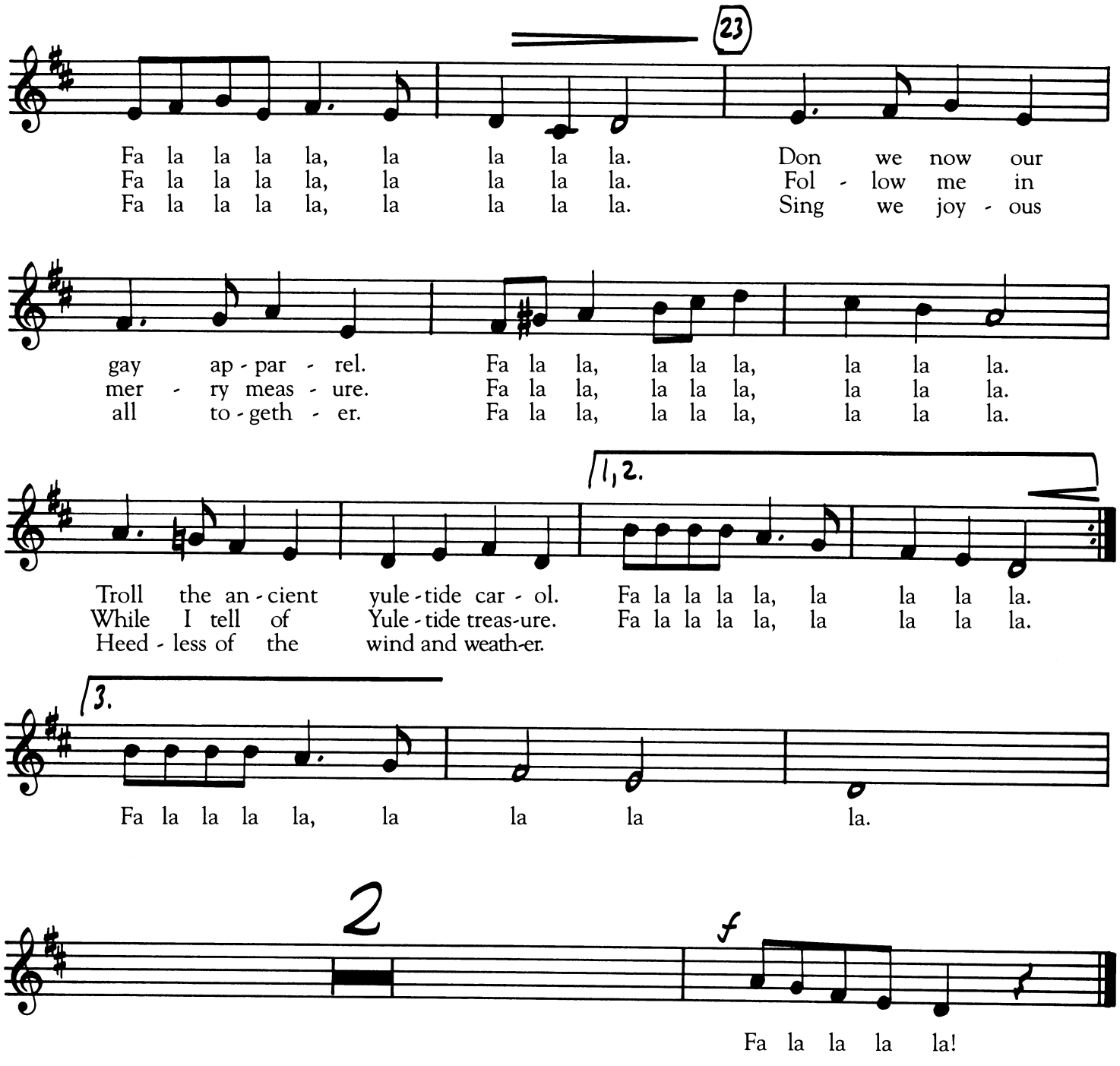
DECK THE HALLS



SEQUENCE 8

Optional: *Add your own cheerful and/or energetic Christmas song(s) here.*

SEQUENCE 9

One of the traditions we have in common is caroling!

We go from house to house in the city!

We knock on our neighbors' doors in the towns!

We go from farm to farm in the country!

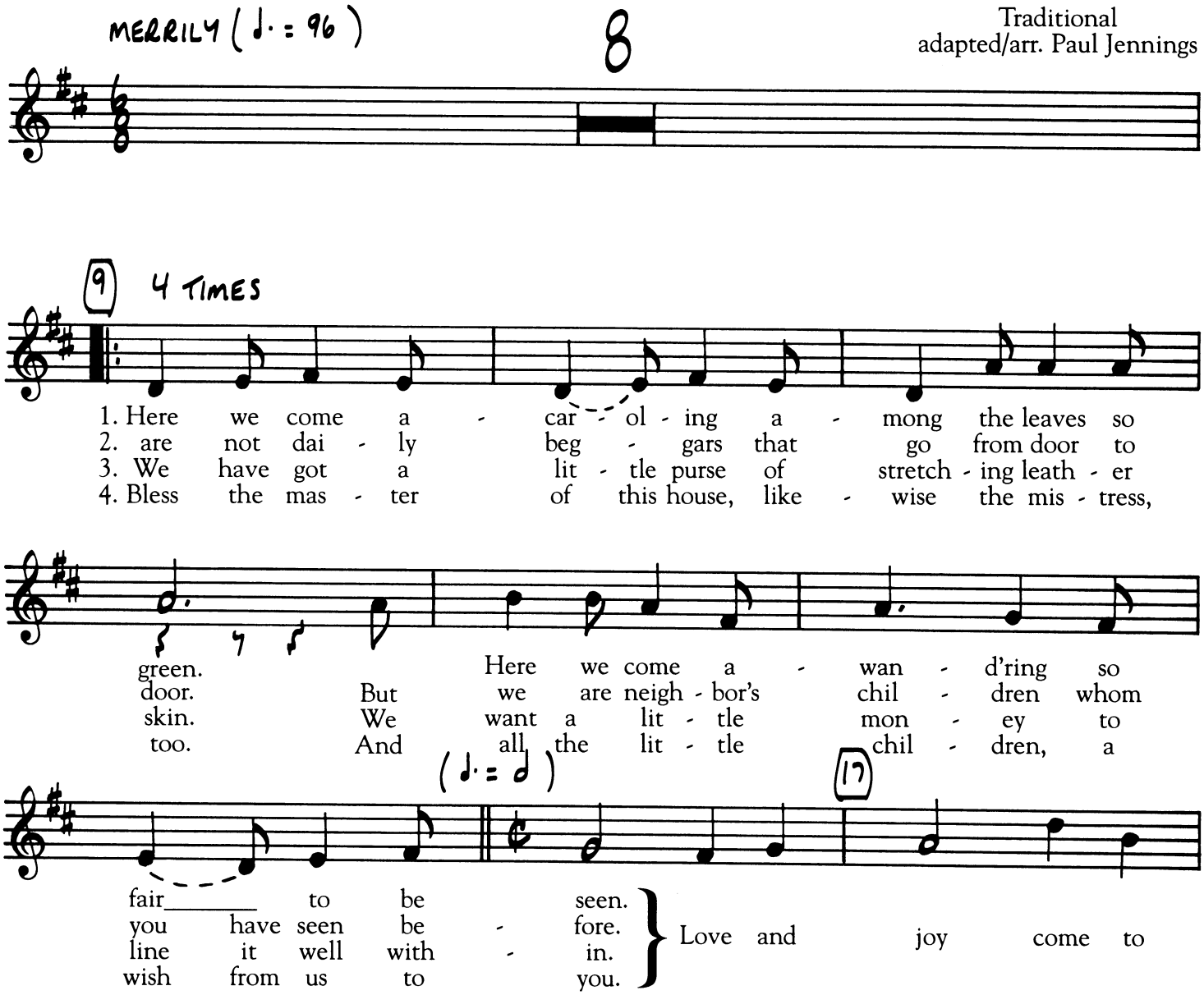
And we share our Christmas spirit in song!

SEQUENCE 10

Song Sequence: "Here We Come A-Caroling"
"The Coventry Carol"
"We Wish You A Merry Christmas"

This section includes songs which can be used entirely, partially or adapted to suit your needs. Consider having groups of children from different sections of the country, e.g., New England, Virginia, or Ohio, perform parts of the sequence. This is also a good time to add any other carols of your choosing.

HERE WE COME A - CAROLING



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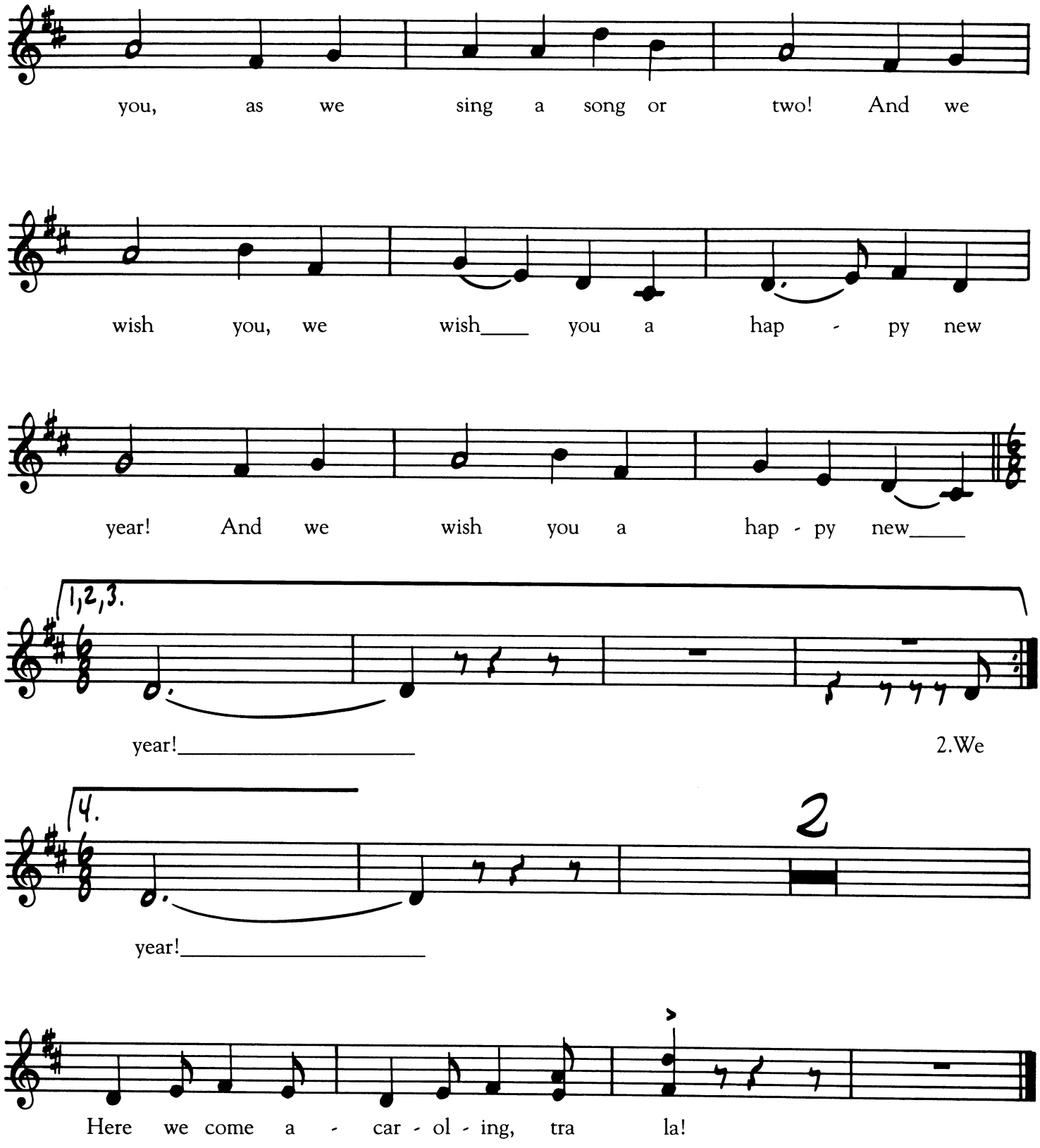
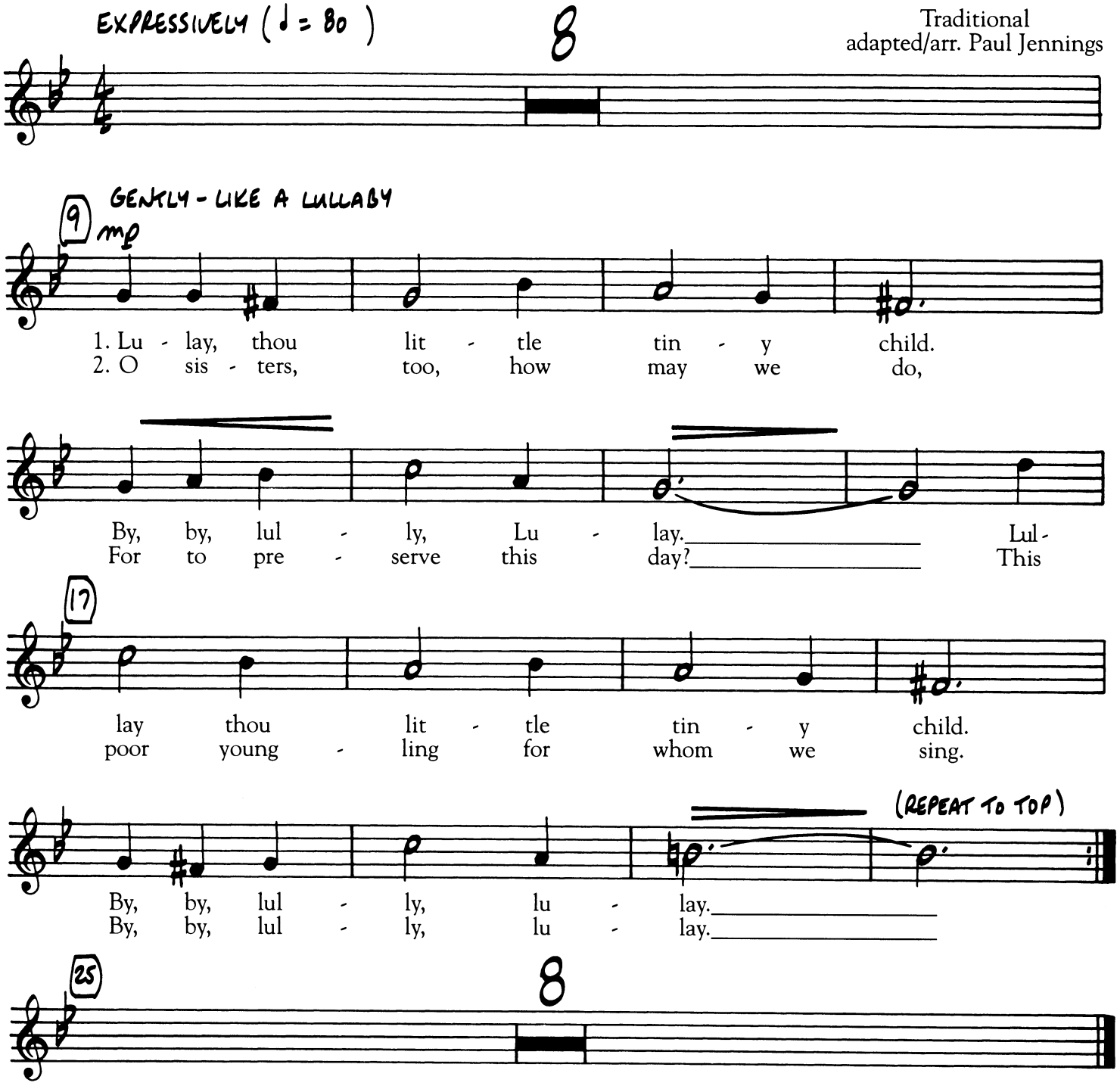
HERE WE COME A - CAROLING



THE COVENTRY CAROL



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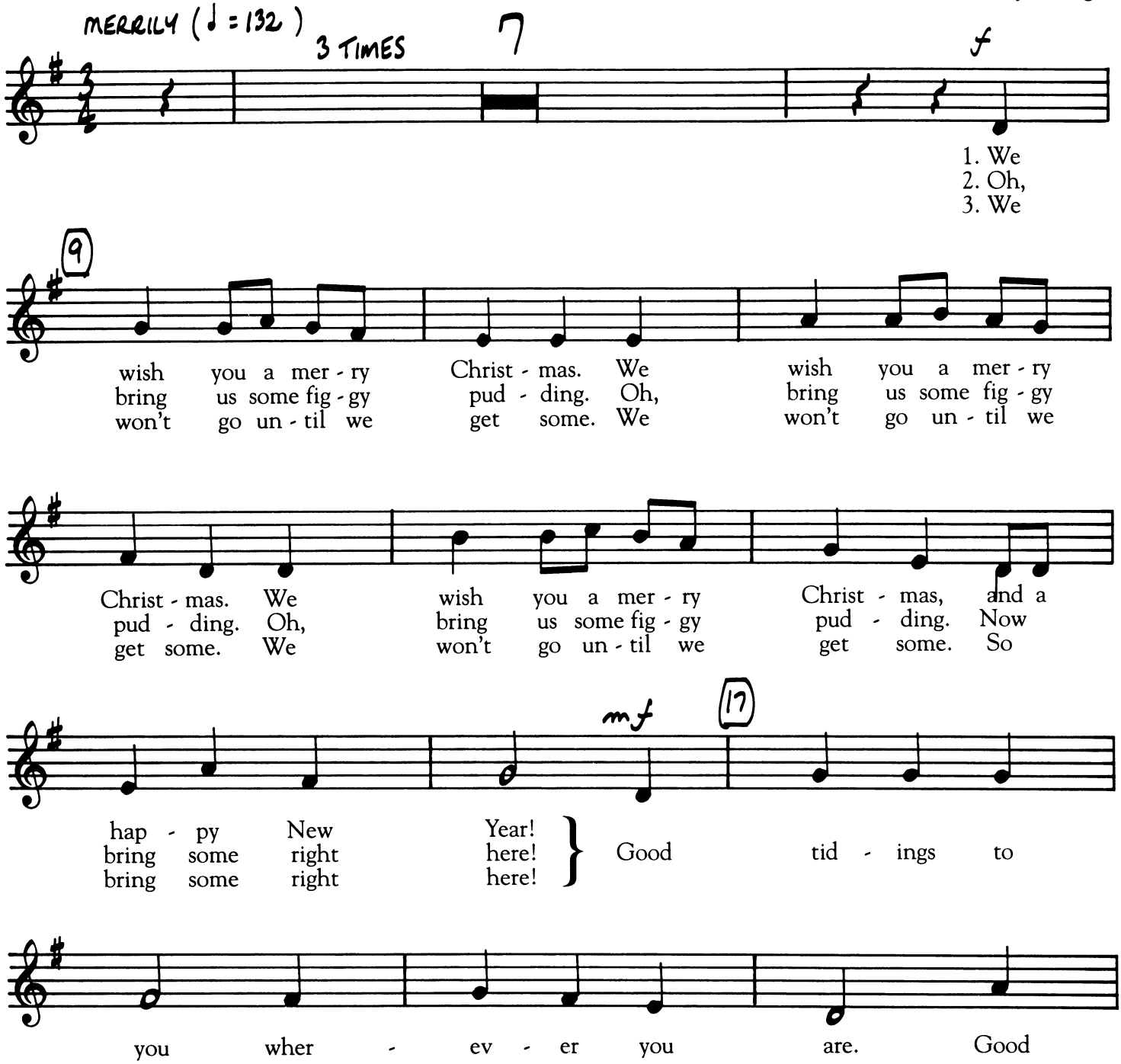
We Wish You A Merry Christmas

Traditional
arr. Paul Jennings



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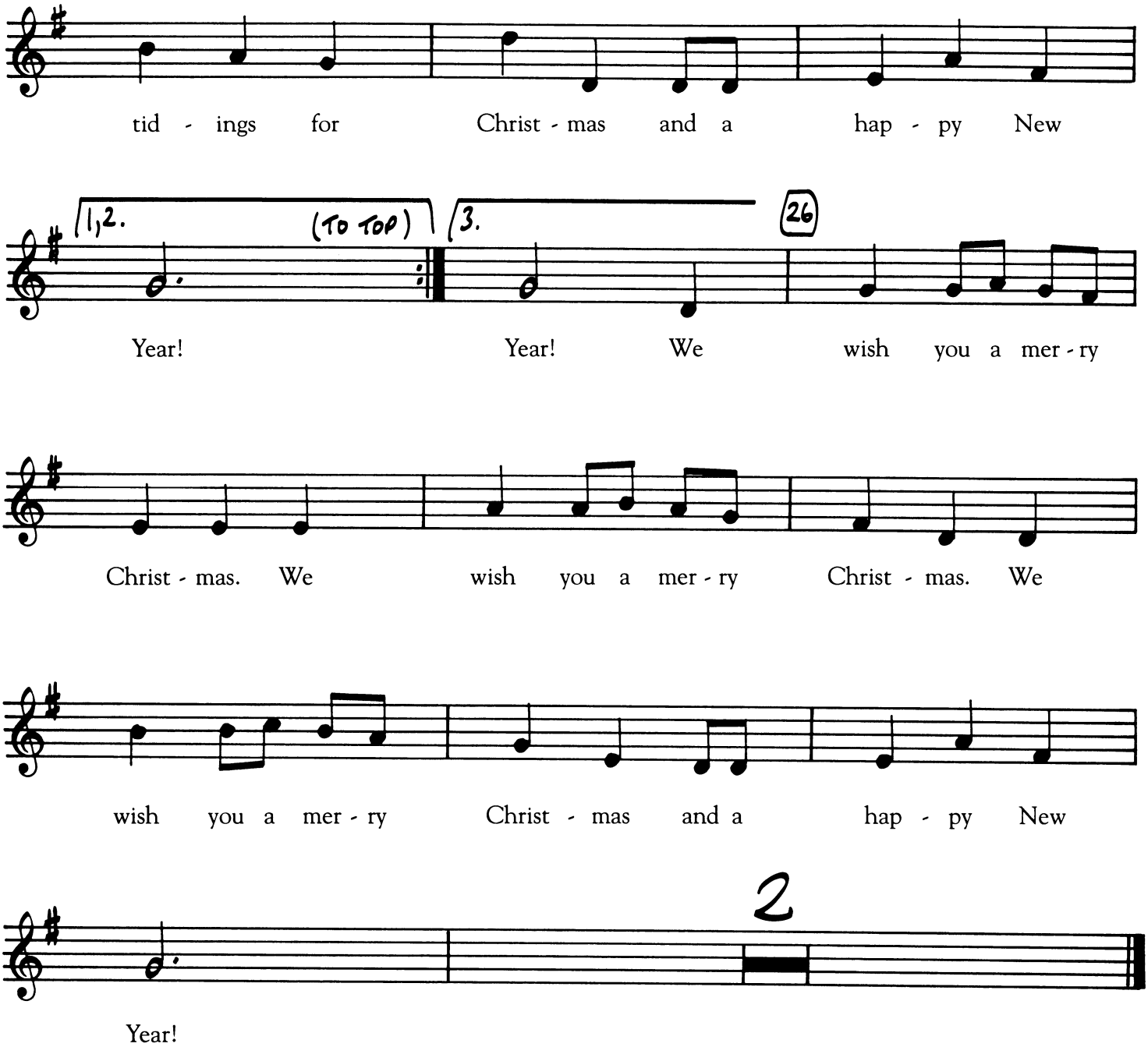
We Wish You A Merry Christmas



SEQUENCE 11

Underscore for Narration: Military drum

Tensions began to mount here in the 1770's.

England wanted to control America as a colony.

But we wanted our freedom.

All the children from the different parts of the country stand next to each other – united.

After the Declaration of Independence was written and signed in 1776, America went to war.

That first Christmas, we were not as joyous as in Christmases past.

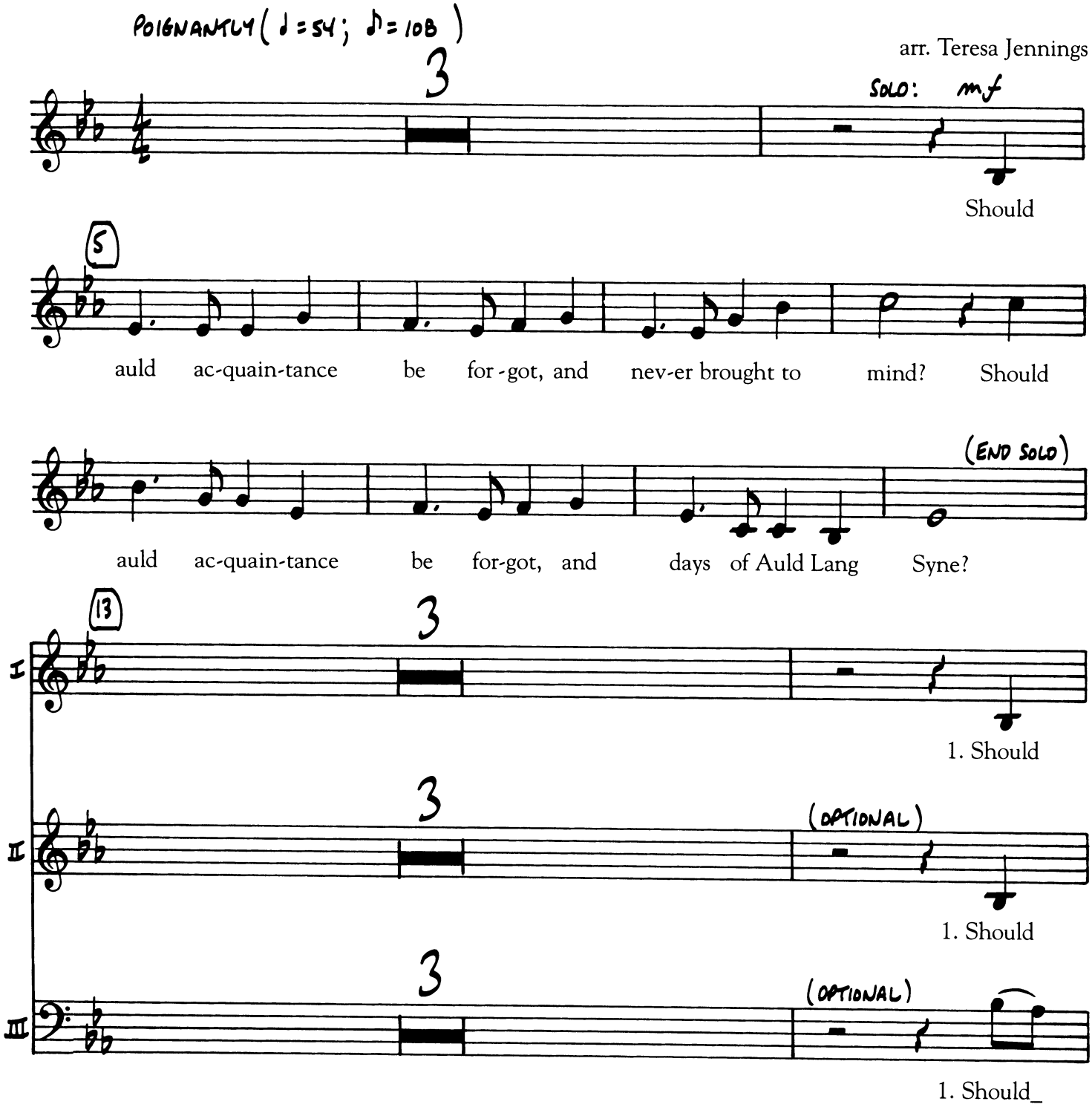
Many men, young and old, were away from home fighting for our freedom and for the freedom of our families.

Still, we sang at Christmas. But our hearts were a bit more melancholy for a time.

SEQUENCE 12

Song: "Auld Lang Syne"

AULD LANG SYNE



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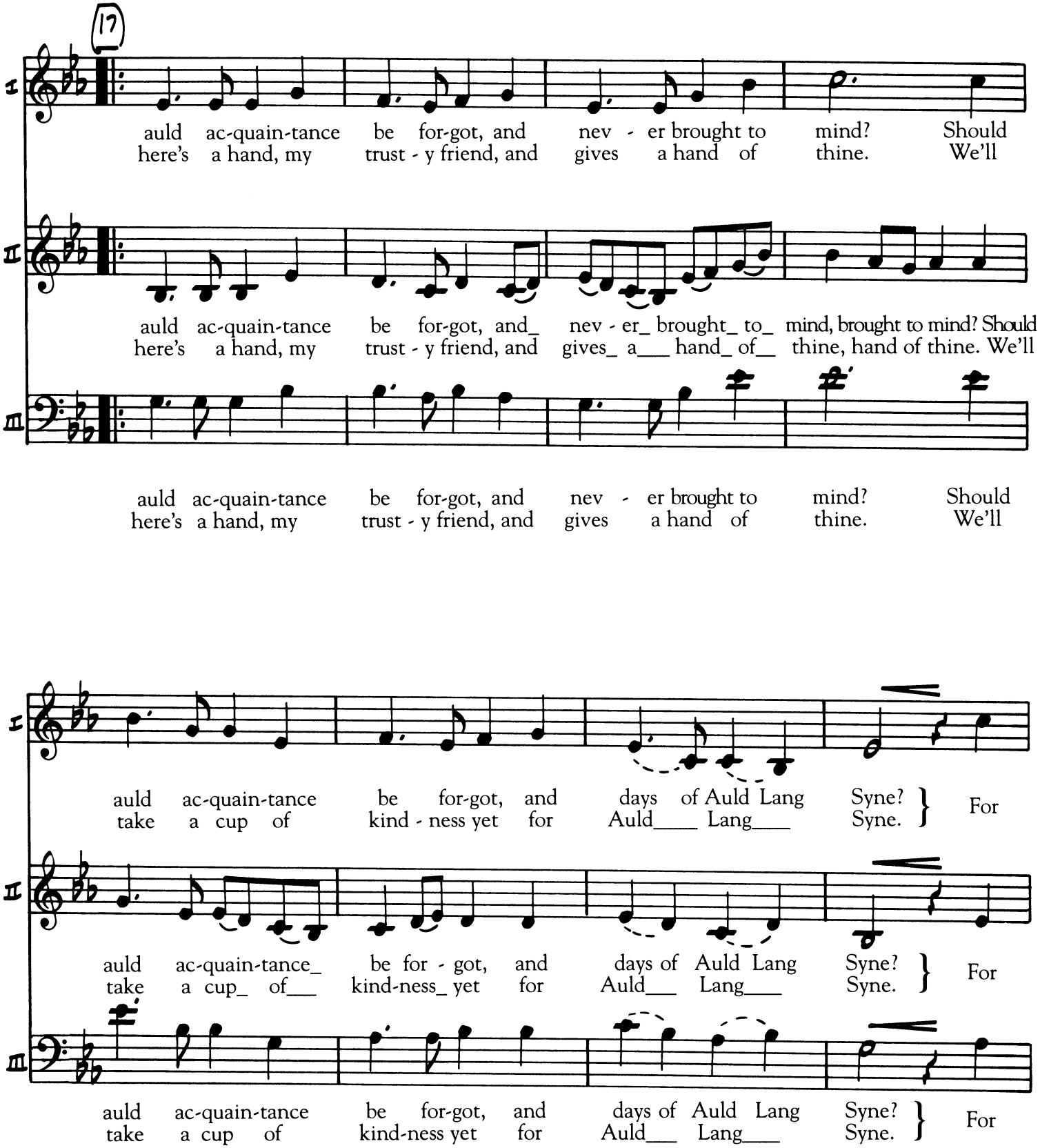
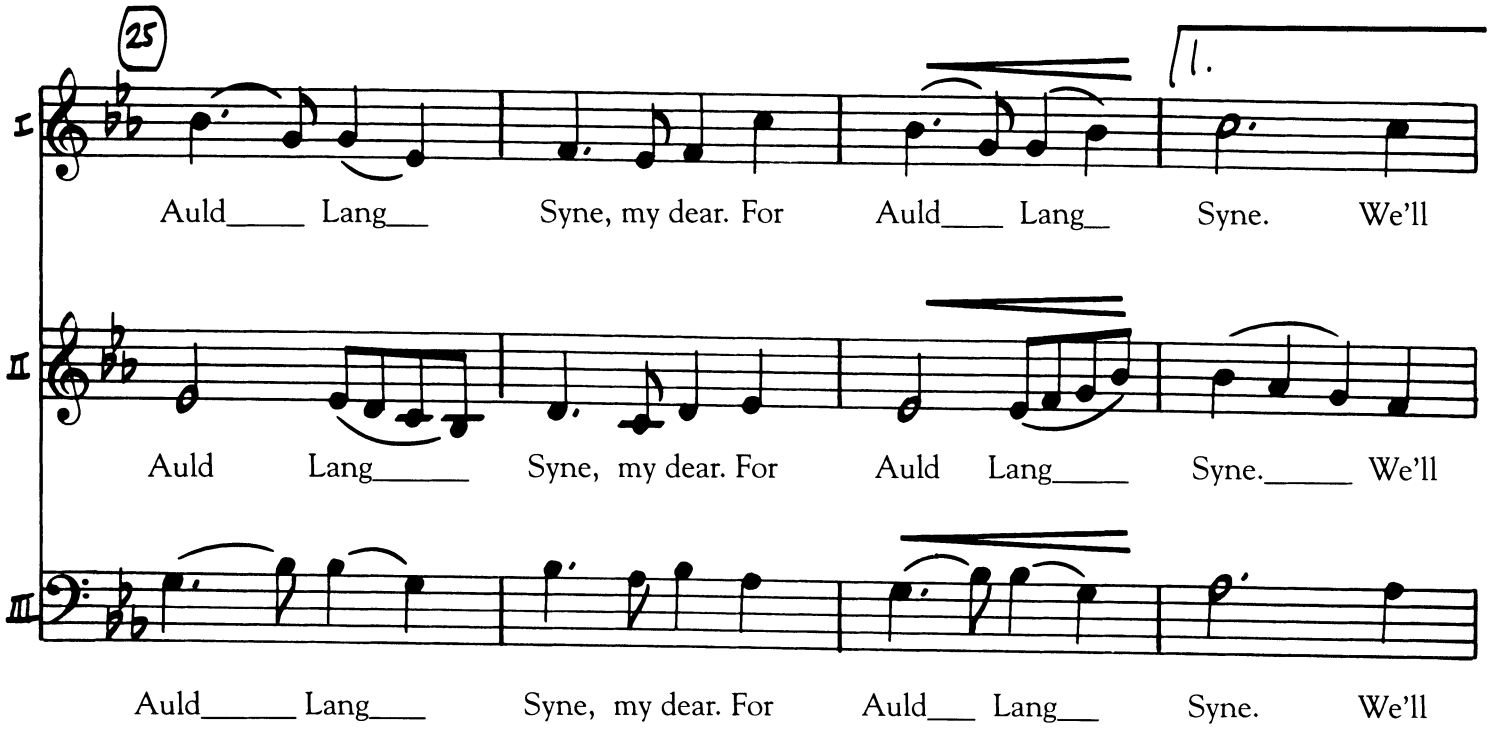
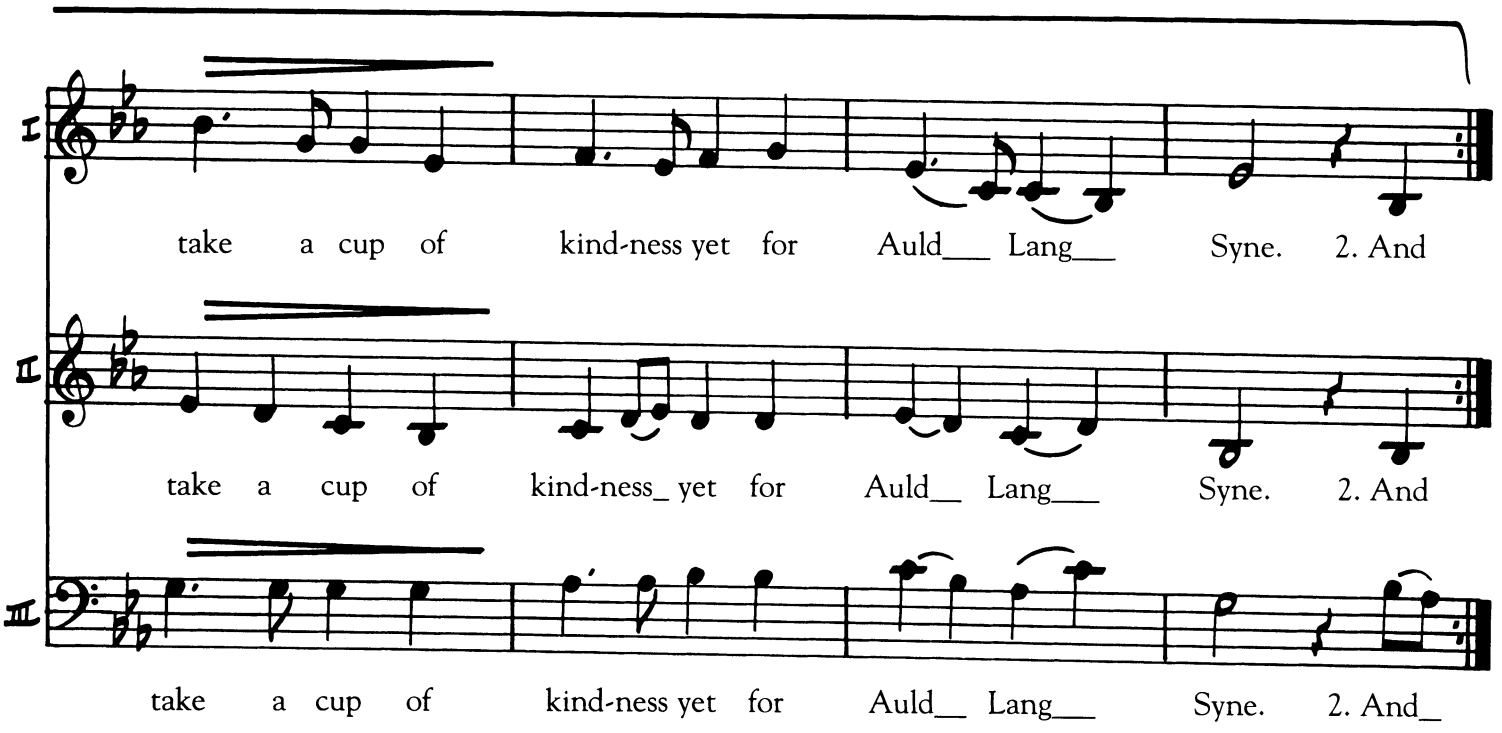
AULD LANG SYNE

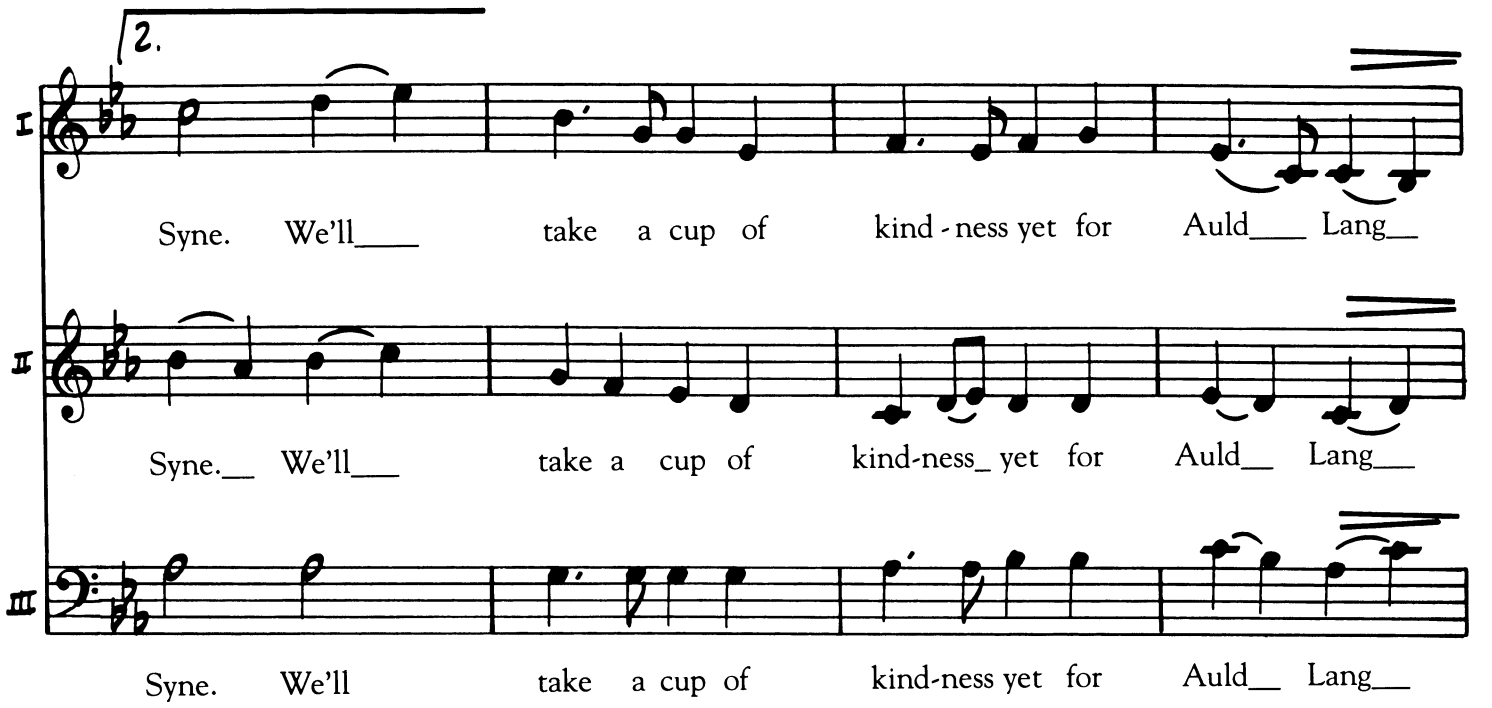


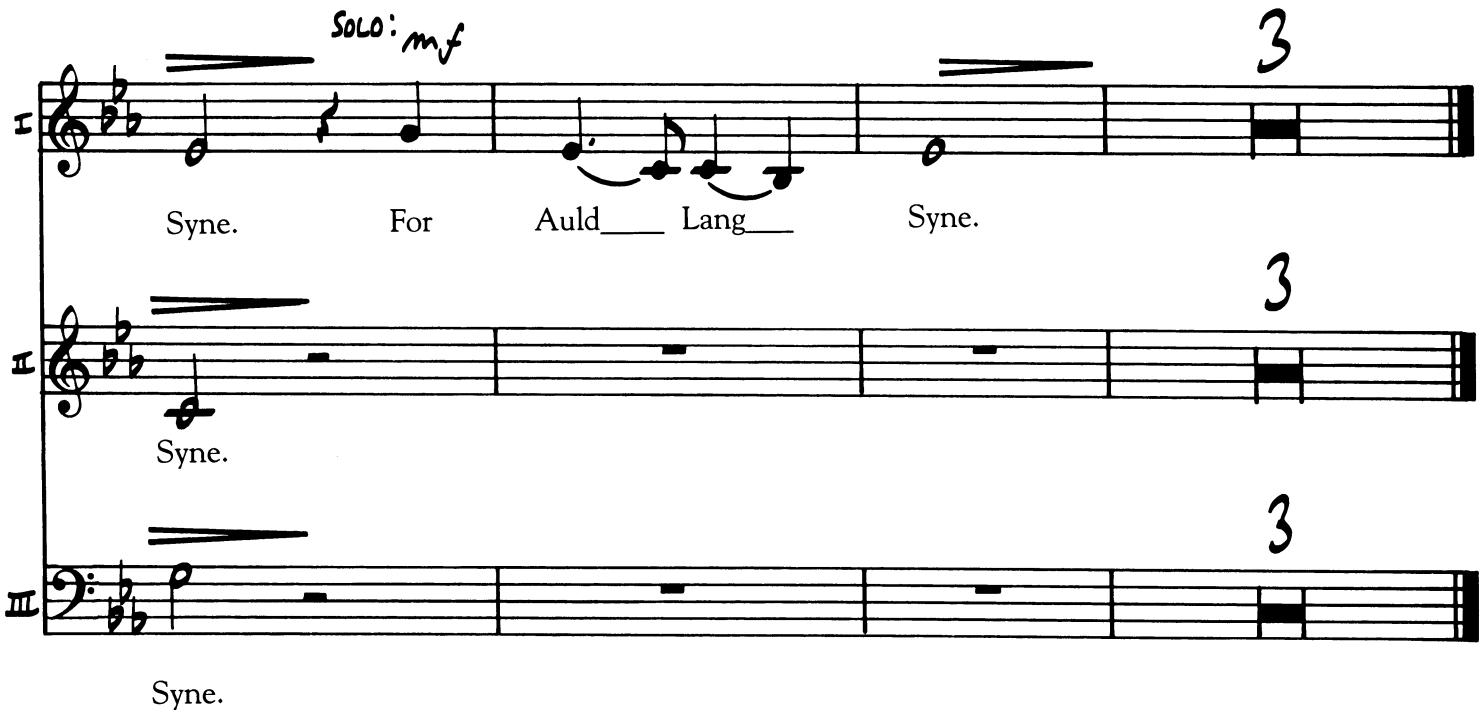
AULD LANG SYNE





AULD LANG SYNE





SEQUENCE 13

Optional: *Add your own slow and/or gentle Christmas/Holiday/Seasonal songs here.*

SEQUENCE 14

Underscore for Narration: "Chester"

America didn't do very well in the beginning of the Revolution.

In December of 1776, we were cold and hungry.

Our soldiers were tired and scared.

But General George Washington was very brave and very smart.

He had an idea, which could have turned out terribly for our young country.

On Christmas night, General Washington led his soldiers across the icy waters of the Delaware River.

The British army was celebrating Christmas on the other side and they were not expecting to fight.

General Washington's strategy paid off. The British army was completely surprised.

It was a victory for the young American army.

It was only one victory, but it was a victory we needed.

We still had a long battle ahead, but now we had hope.

The Revolutionary War lasted for many years.

And even though the British were defeated long before, a peace treaty was not signed until 1783.

And in all that time, we continued to celebrate Christmas each year, even though we waited and prayed for the war to end.

At long last, it did end, and our freedom had been won.

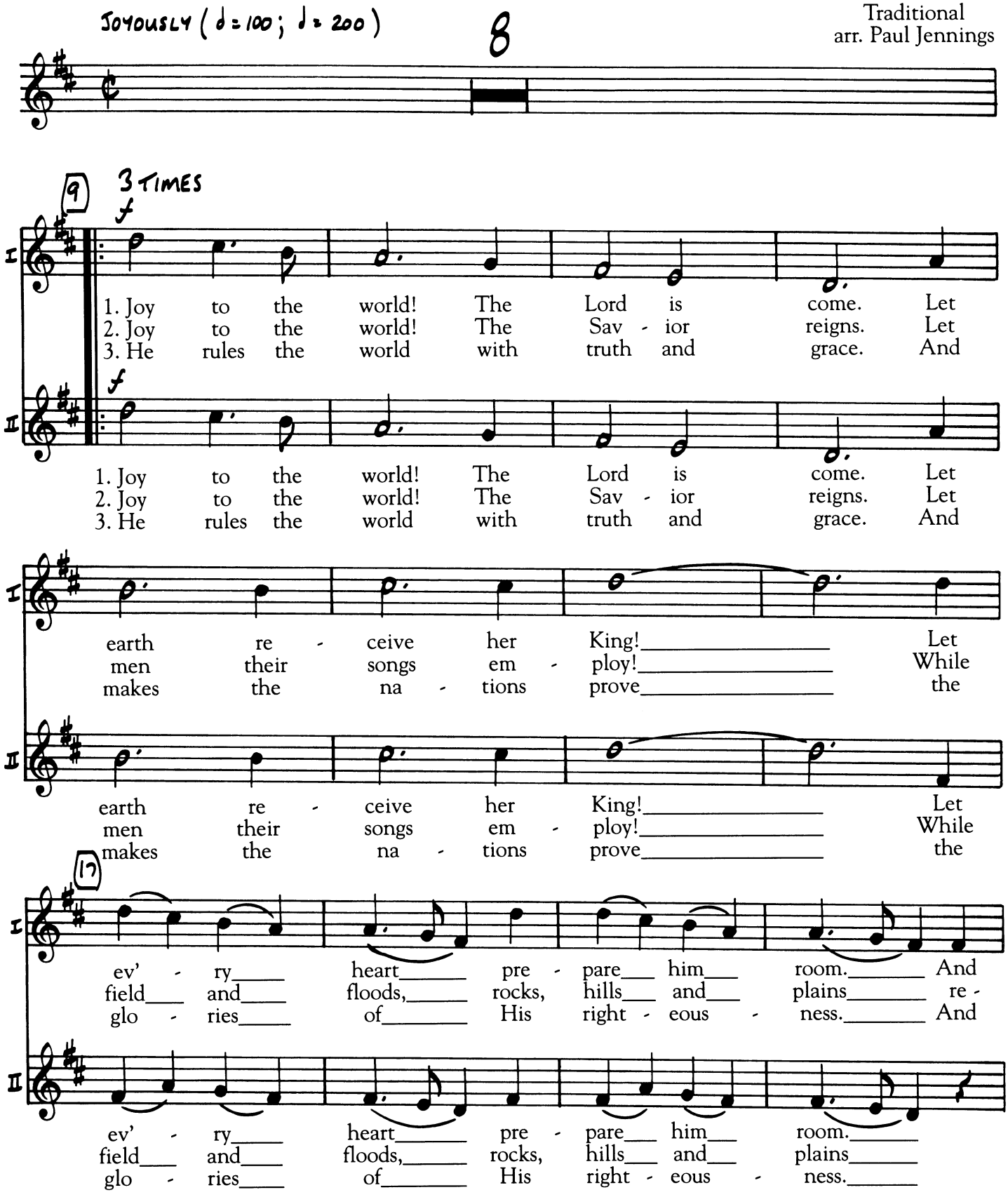
On Christmas Eve night in 1783, General George Washington returned to his beloved Mount Vernon just in time to celebrate once more.

There was, of course, great merriment.

SEQUENCE 15

Song: "Joy To The World"

JOY TO THE WORLD



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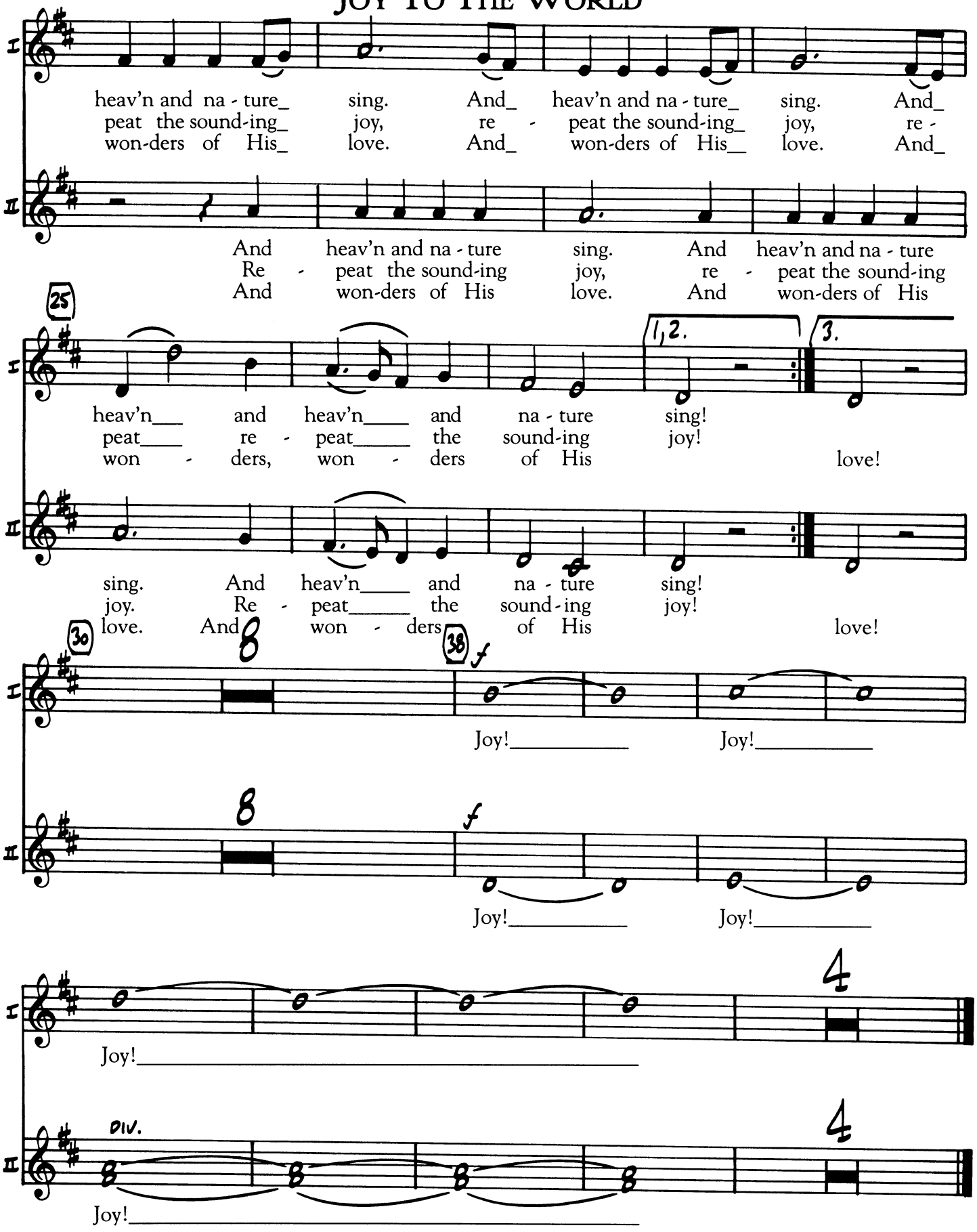
Joy To The World



Sequence 16

Optional: *Add your own joyous songs here.*

Sequence 17

And now we pass our traditions, customs and beliefs down to the future generations of Americans!

Speaker puts arm out toward Contemporary children. All the Early American children turn to face the Contemporary children. Spotlight returns to the Contemporary students, who speak once more.

Sequence 18

You know, I don't think there's that much difference between the way kids celebrated back then and the way we do now.

I know what you mean. Even though there was a war, they continued to celebrate, just like we do today when there is war.

They hoped that the war would end so they could be together again with their loved ones, especially at Christmas.

That's exactly how we feel today.

Their families and friends were part of their spirit, even when they were separated. Just like today.

And they had gatherings and prayers, just like today.

They had big feasts and decorations, too.

They even used evergreens, like pine, spruce and holly, just like we do today.

And of course, music was a huge part of their celebration, too. Just like today!

I guess it's true. Even though 200 years have passed, we're not that different after all.

And now, it's our turn to pass our traditions, customs and beliefs down to future generations of Americans!

We've sure learned a lot from those Early Americans.

Especially how to celebrate An Early American Christmas!

Sequence 19

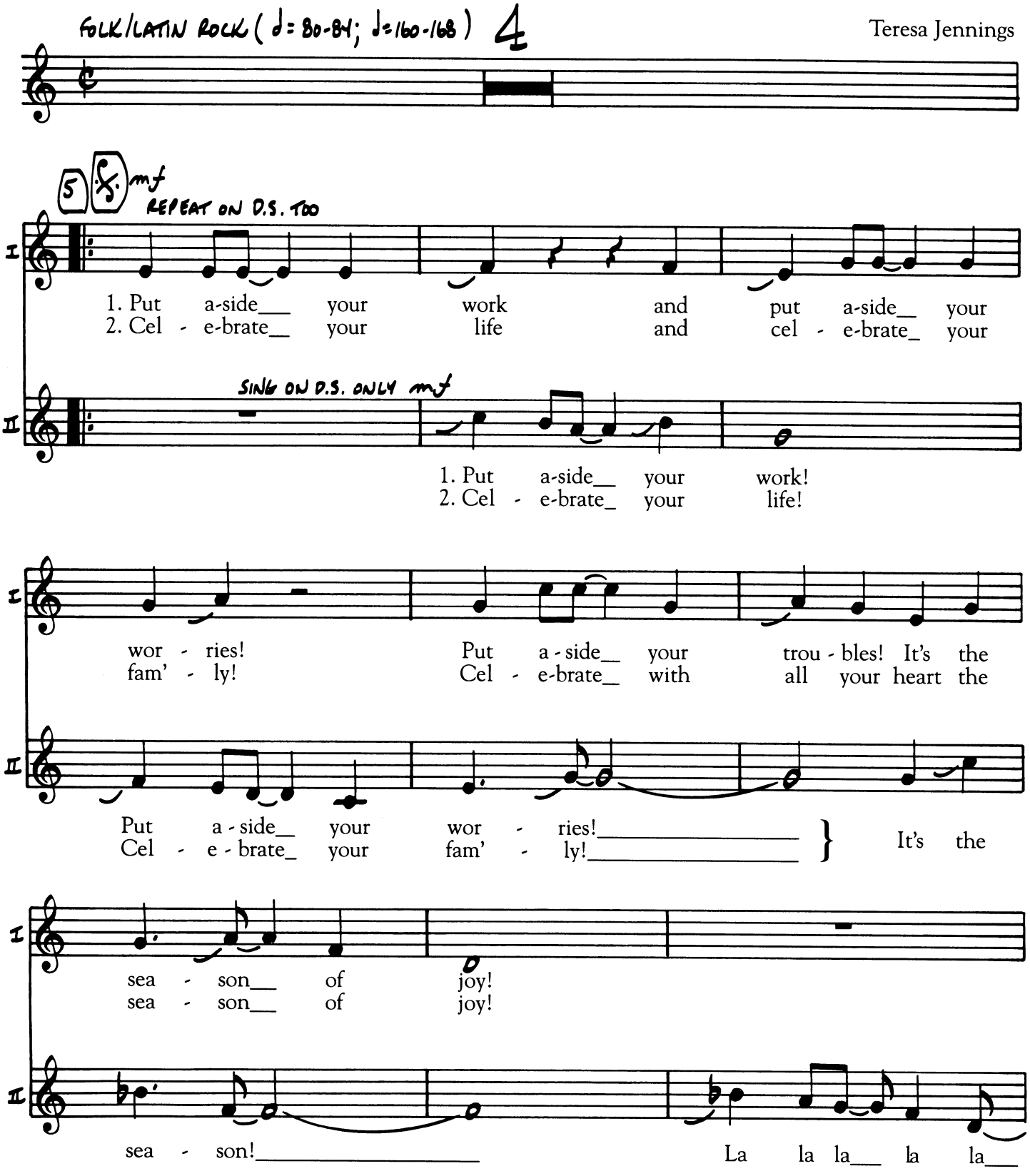
Finale: "Season Of Joy!"

Sequence 20

Bows: "Season Of Joy" Instrumental Version

The End

SEASON OF JOY!



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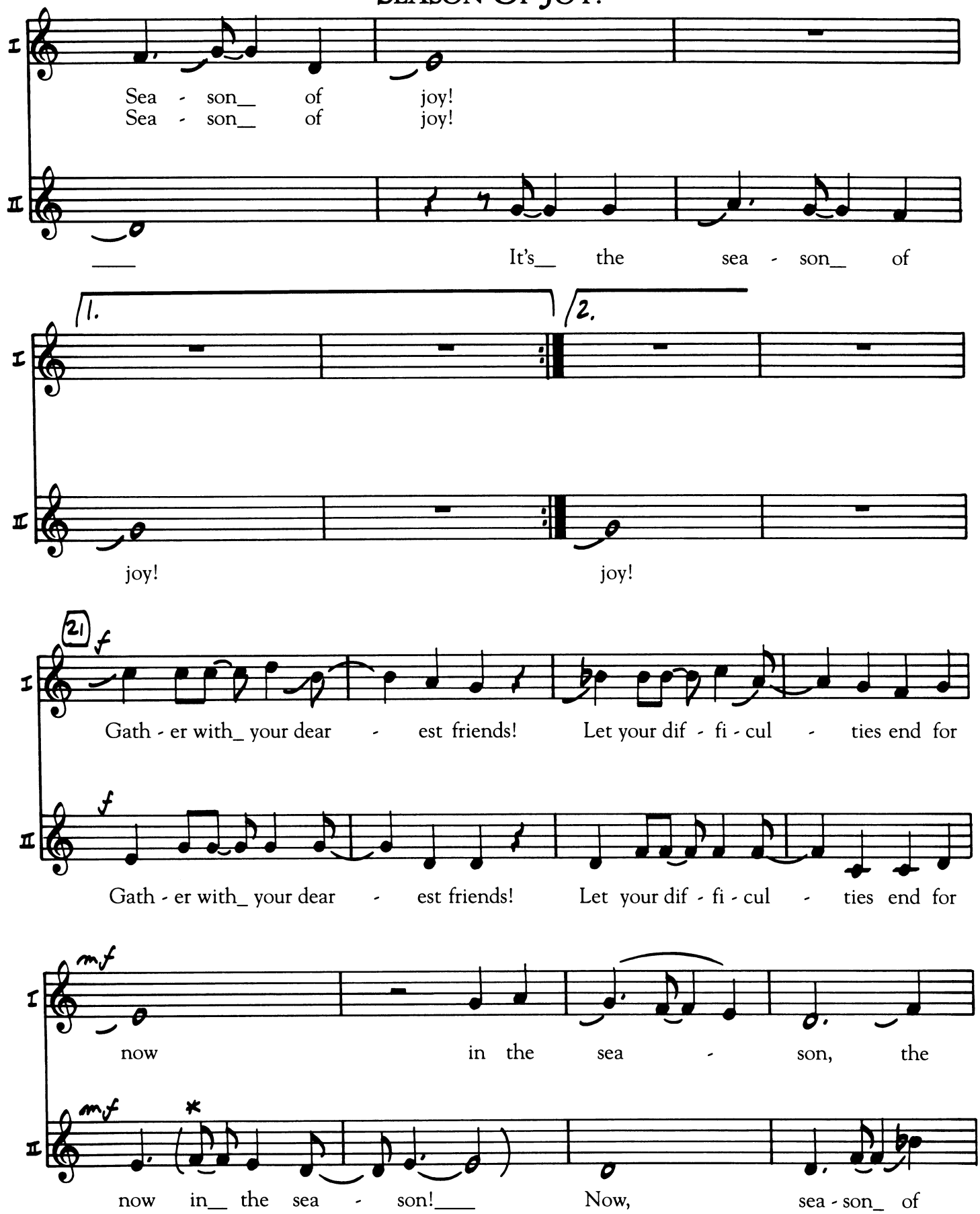
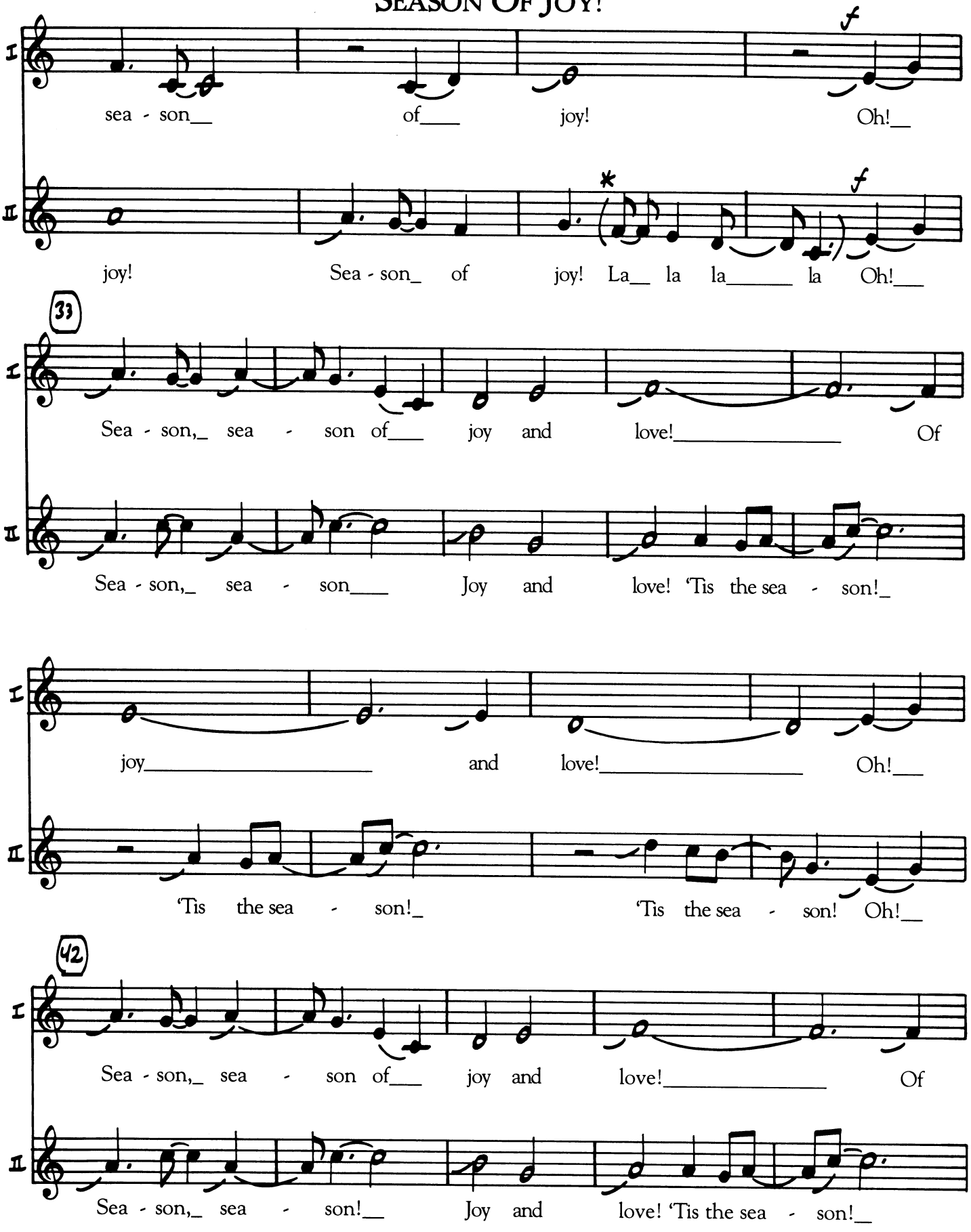
SEASON OF JOY!

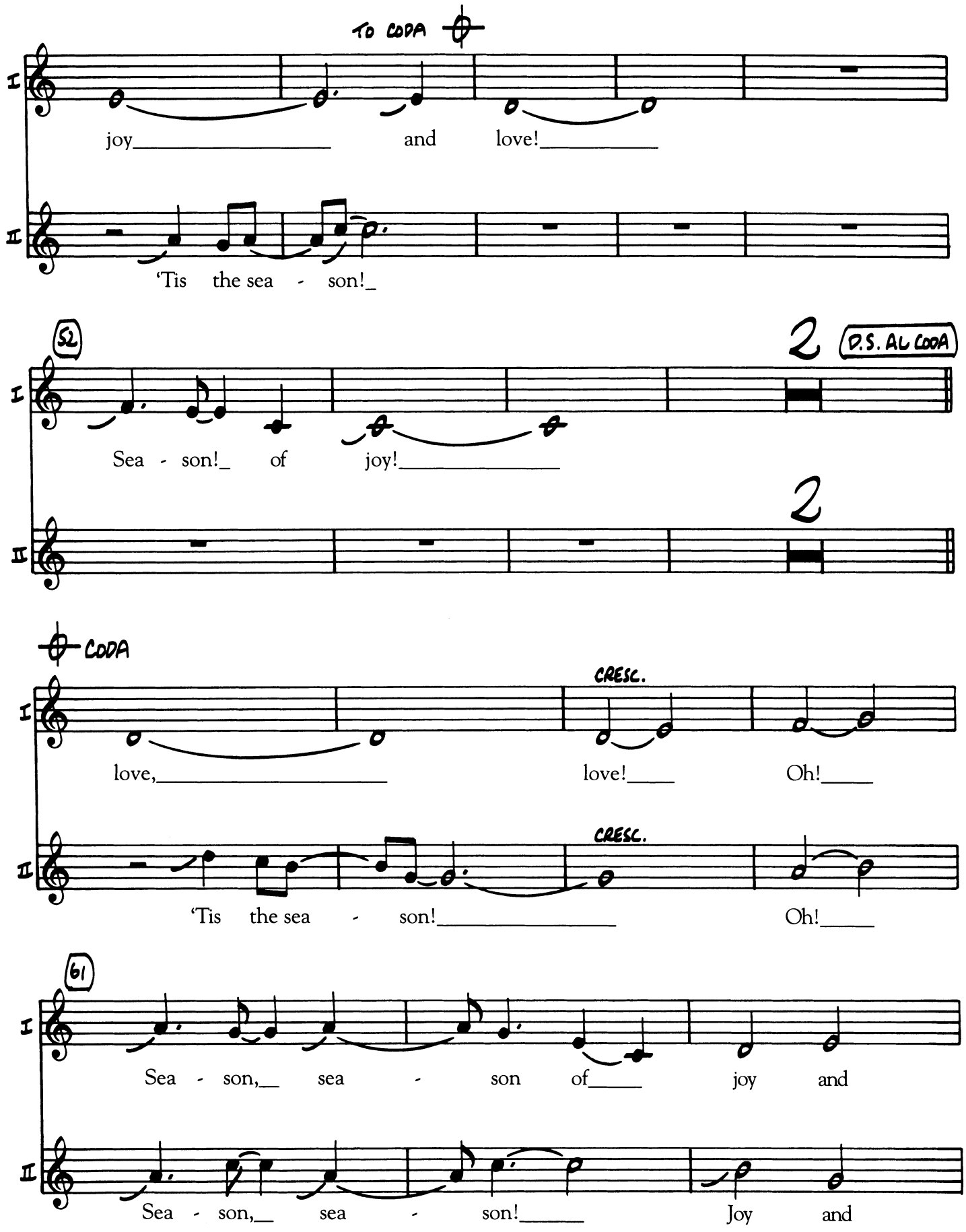


*THESE RHYTHMS MAY BE SIMPLIFIED OR ELIMINATED

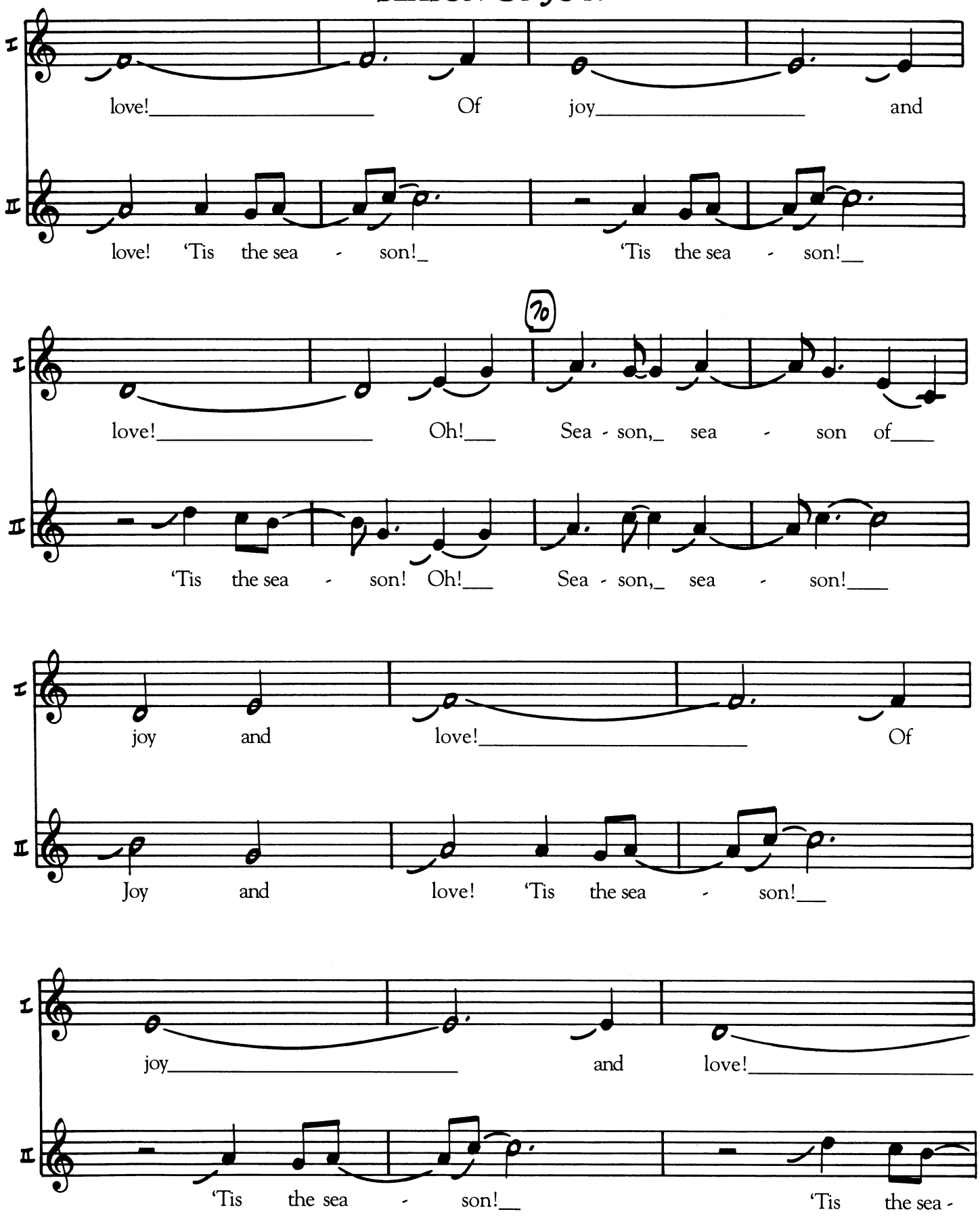
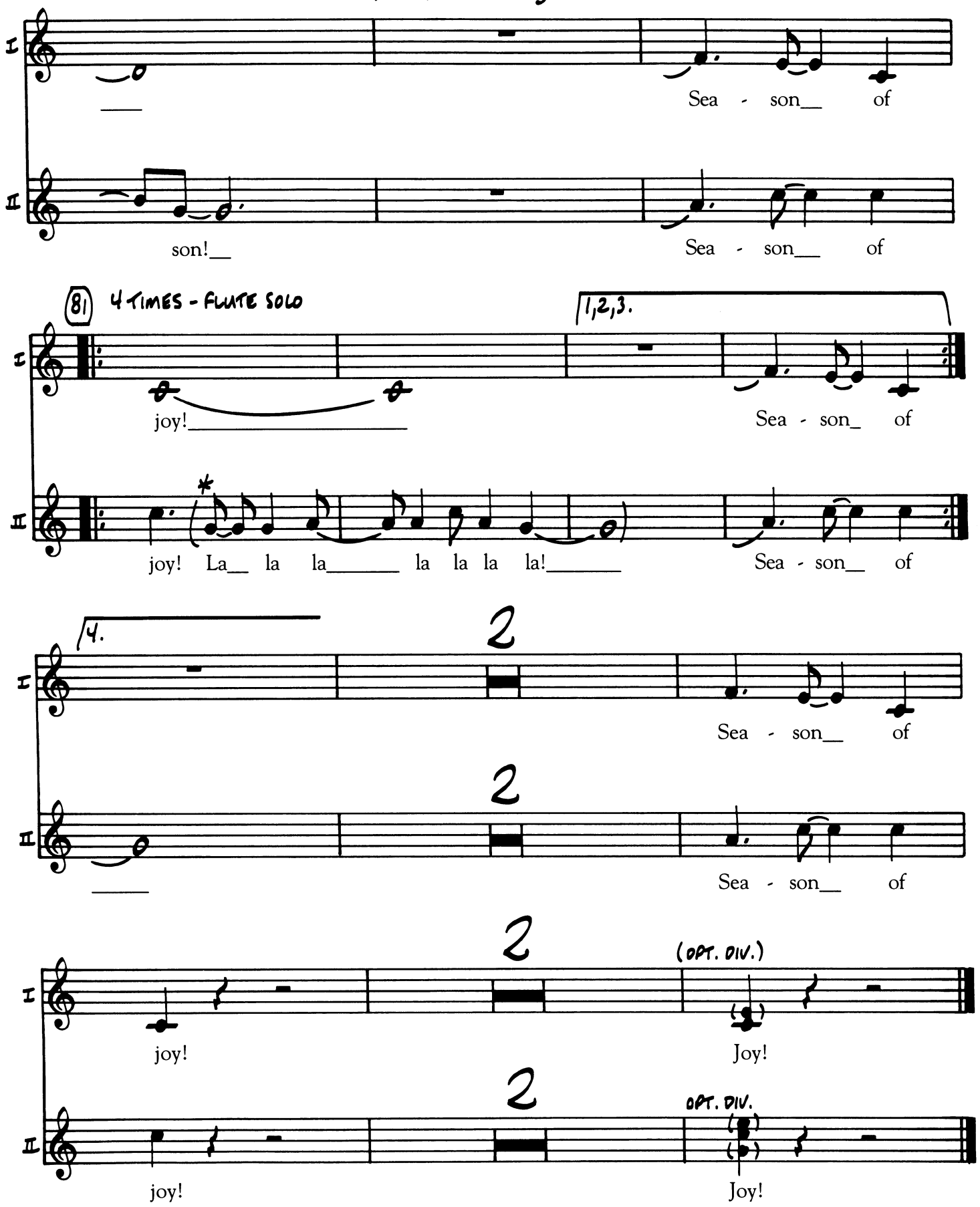
Season Of Joy!



SEASON OF JOY!



Season Of Joy!



SEASON OF JOY!