HENRY FLURRY

I WISH
I COULD REMEMBER
THAT FIRST DAY

FOR SATB DIVISI

POEM BY
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

I Wish I Could Remember That First Day

I wish I could remember that first day
by Christina Rossetti (1881)

I wish I could remember that first day,
First hour, first moment of your meeting me,
If bright or dim the season, it might be
Summer or Winter for aught I can say;

So unrecorded did it slip away,
So blind was I to see and to foresee,
So dull to mark the budding of my tree
That would not blossom yet for many a May.

If only I could recollect it, such
A day of days! I let it come and go
As traceless as a thaw of bygone snow;

It seemed to mean so little, meant so much;
If only now I could recall that touch,
First touch of hand in hand – Did one but know!

PROGRAM NOTES

Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830 – 1894) was an English poetess celebrated during her life as the natural successor to Elizabeth Barrett Browning. When I was searching through Christina Rossetti's collected works for a love poem to set to music, I was struck by the poetess' repeated juxtaposition of complex emotions with the subject of love. This poem is no exception. "I wish I could remember" is the second of a sonnet collection entitled *Monna Innominata*, whose poems offer an increasingly complex voice to the typically anonymous woman exalted in the love poems of the male-centric Victorian literary world. To me, the author's strong desire to remember the first meeting of her lover implies a powerful love that permeates both the author's present and past. The slow but strong growth of her passion is only indirectly referenced ("… the budding of my tree / That would not blossom yet for many a May."), but it forms the emotional bedrock upon which the author expresses a mixture of feelings. We sense her regret and anger of not remembering that moment ("So unrecorded did it slip away, / So blind was I to see and to foresee,") and her recognition of the significance of that same moment ("It seemed to mean so little, meant so much;"). Ultimately, Rossetti leaves us with an exclamation of wonder and full appreciation of what initially appeared to be an insignificant moment of human contact ("First touch of hand in hand – Did one but know!").

Heartfelt thanks are offered to Kay Wood and Dennis Houser, who commissioned this work. Prescott Chorale premiered *I Wish I Could Remember That First Day* on February 13, 2016.
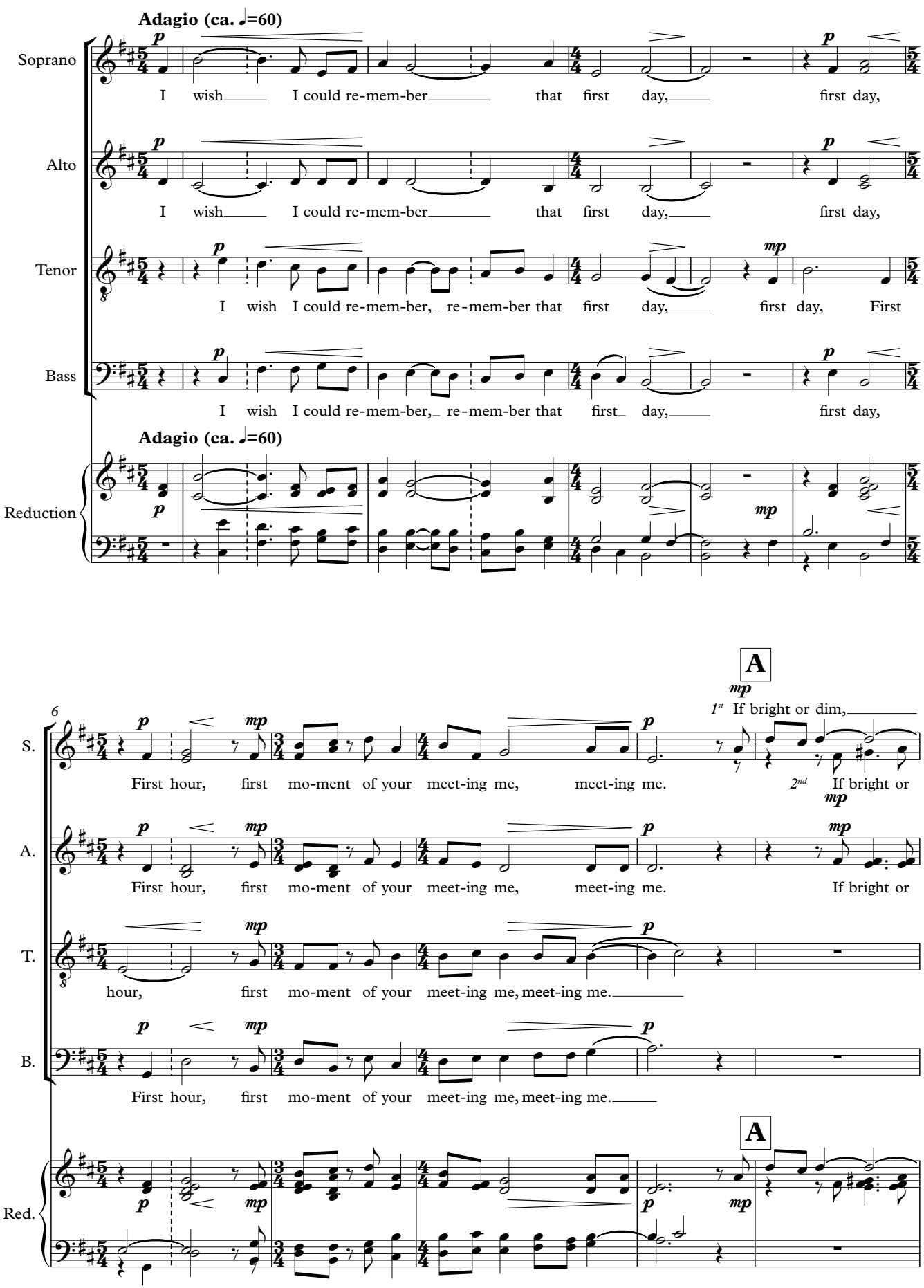
- Henry Flurry, 2016

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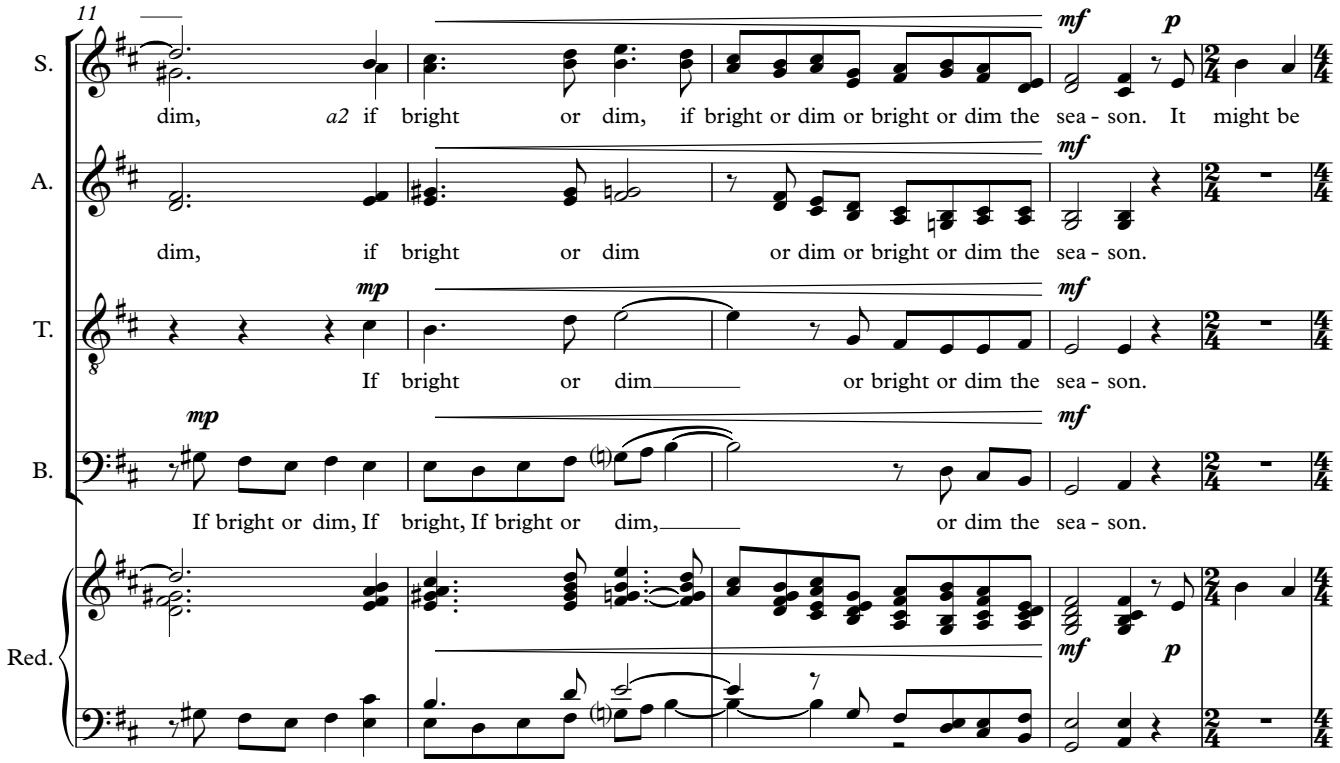
To Kay Wood and Dennis Houser
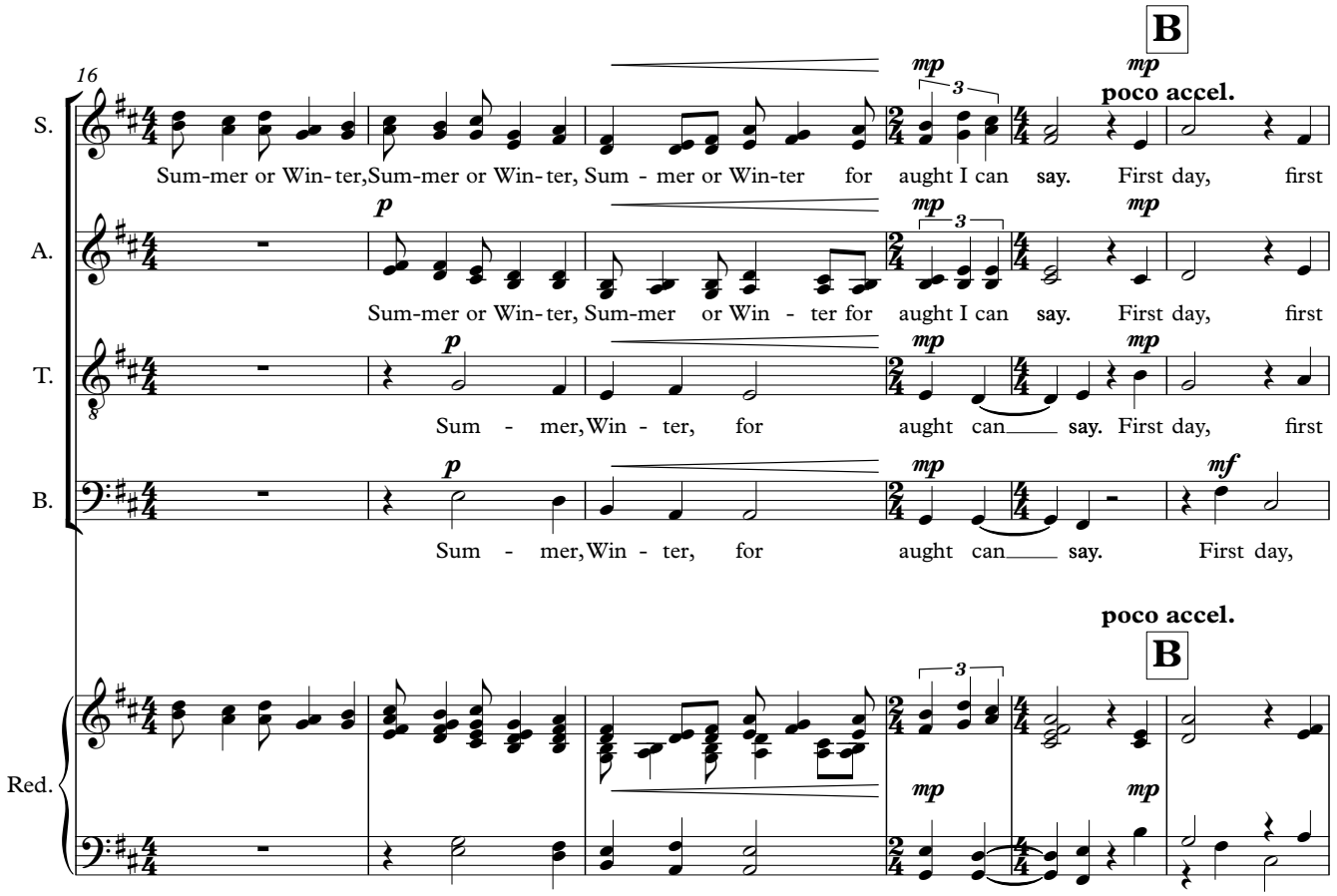
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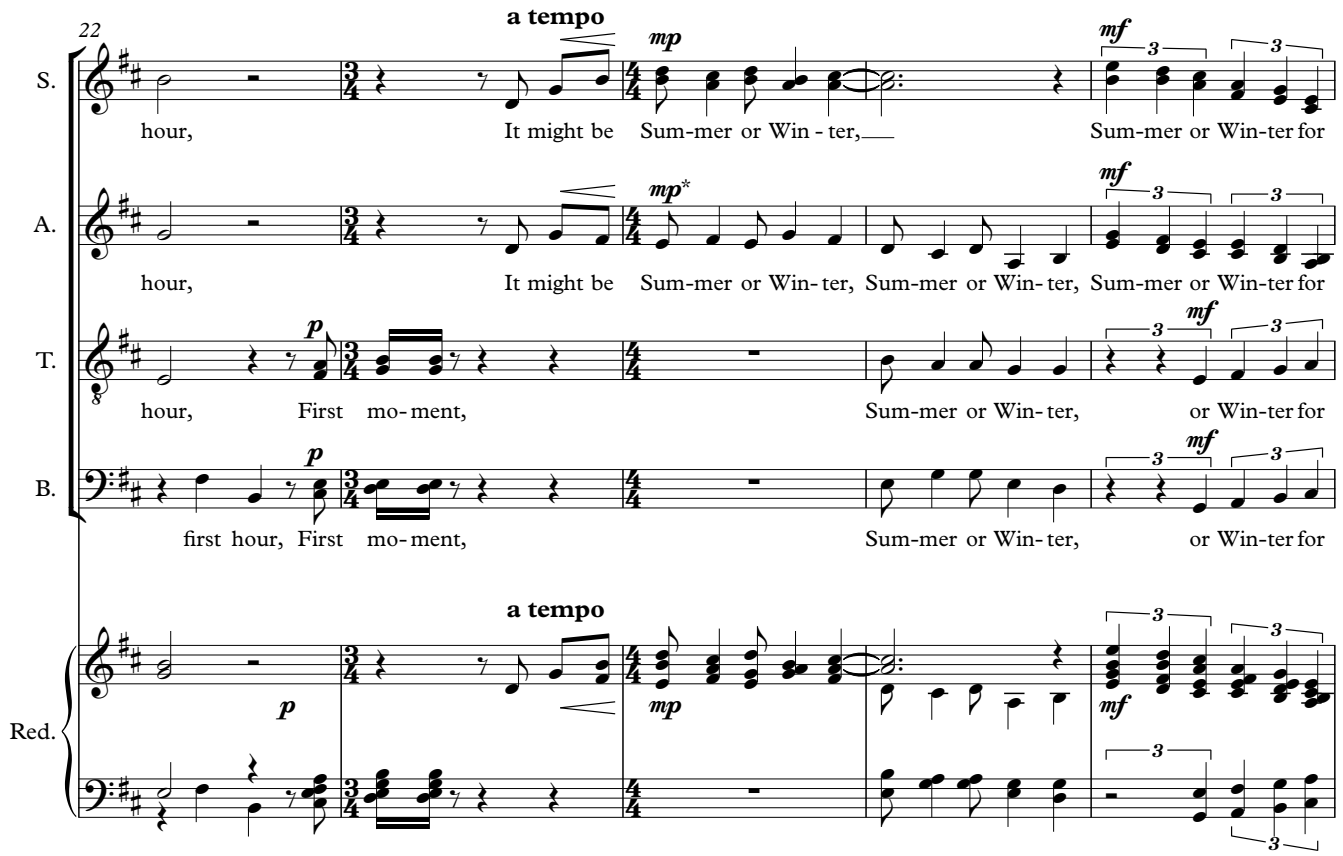
Christina Rossetti — Henry S. Flurry
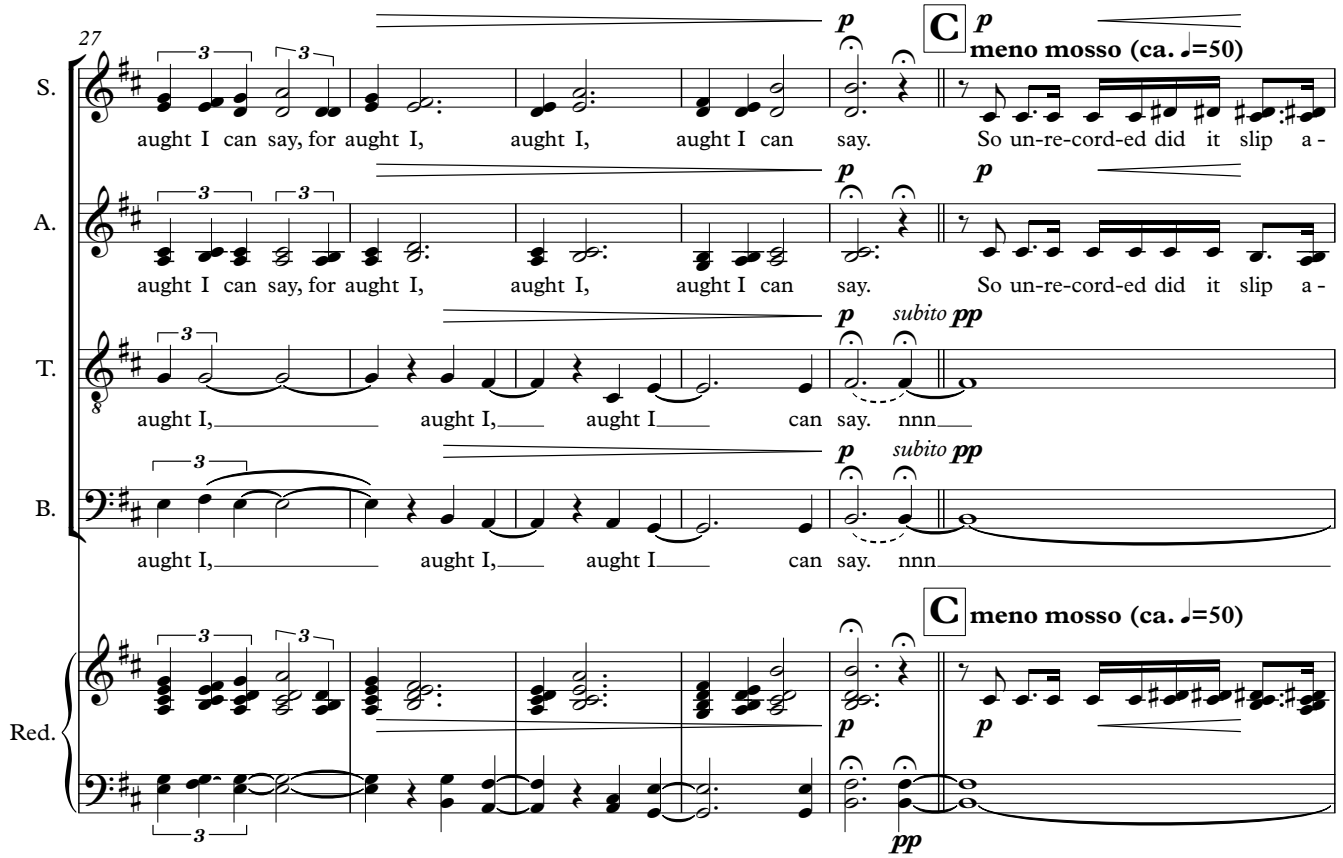


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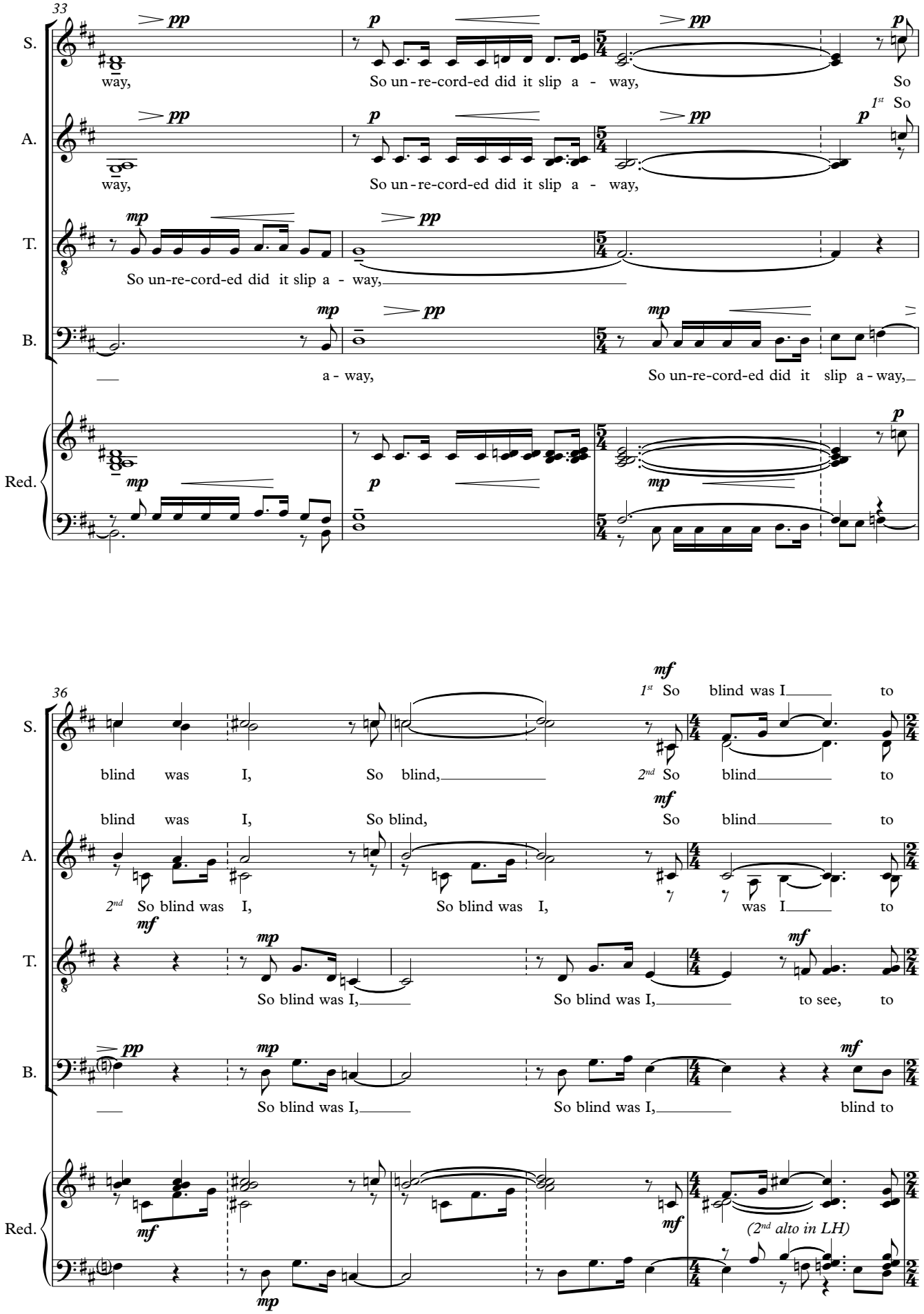

11
S.
A.
T.
B.
Red.
dim, a2 if bright or dim, if bright or dim or bright or dim the sea - son. It might be
dim, if bright or dim or dim or bright or dim the sea - son.
If bright or dim or bright or dim the sea - son.
If bright or dim, If bright, If bright or dim, or dim the sea - son.
mf
p
mp
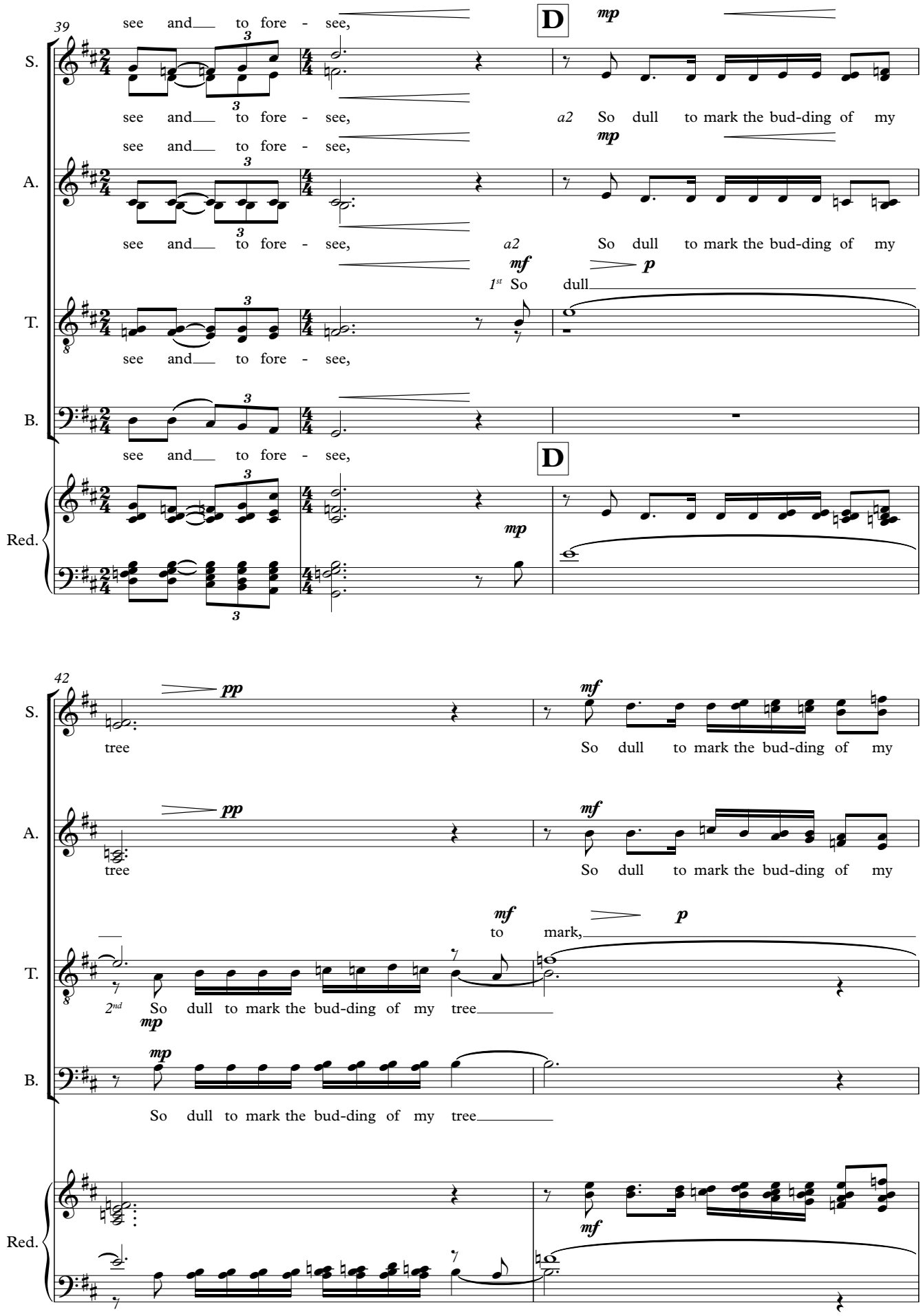

16
B
poco accel.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Red.
Sum-mer or Win- ter, Sum-mer or Win- ter, Sum - mer or Win-ter for aught I can say. First day, first
Sum-mer or Win- ter, Sum-mer or Win - ter for aught I can say. First day, first
Sum - mer, Win - ter, for aught can say. First day, first
Sum - mer, Win - ter, for aught can say. First day,
p
mp
mf
3
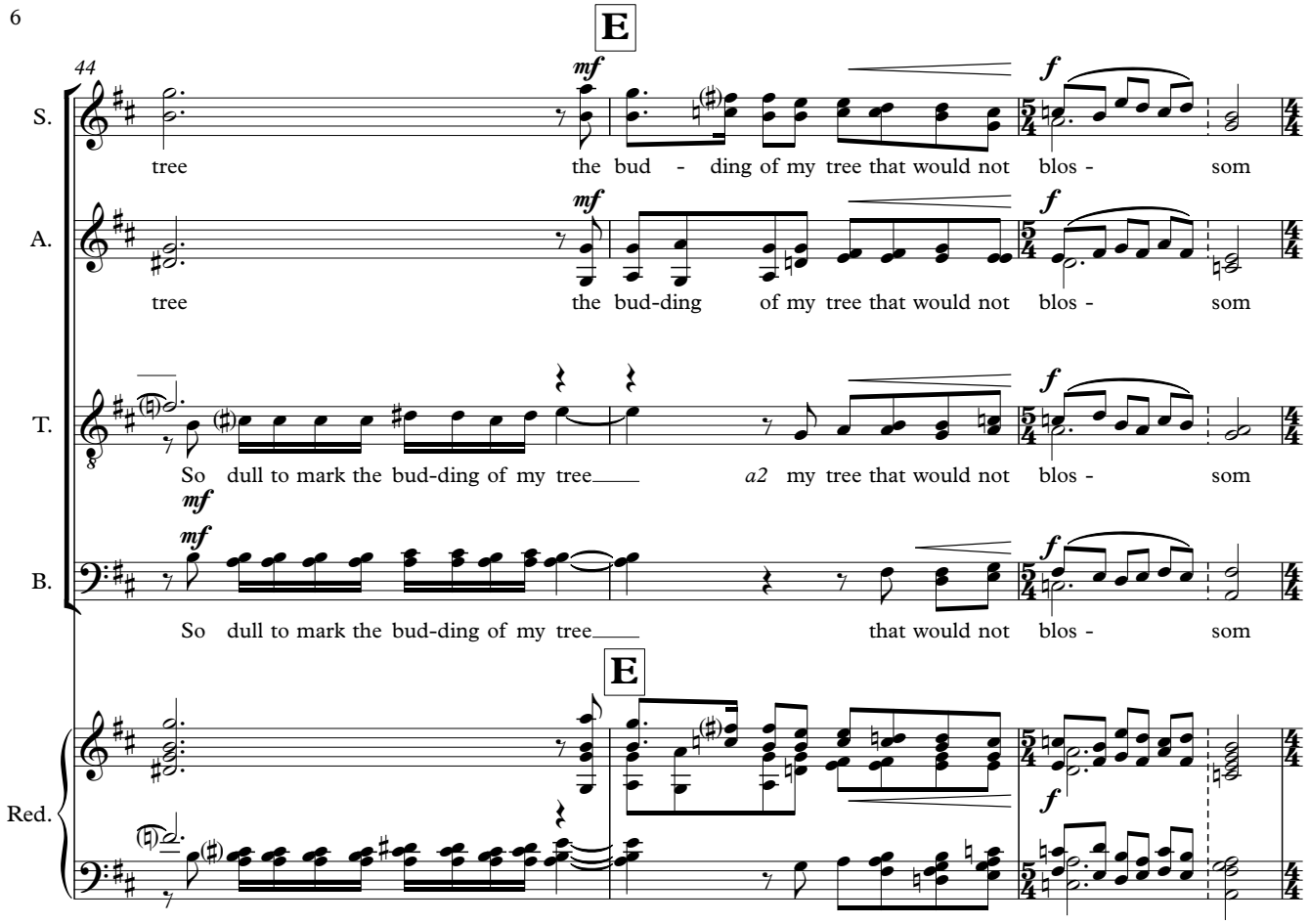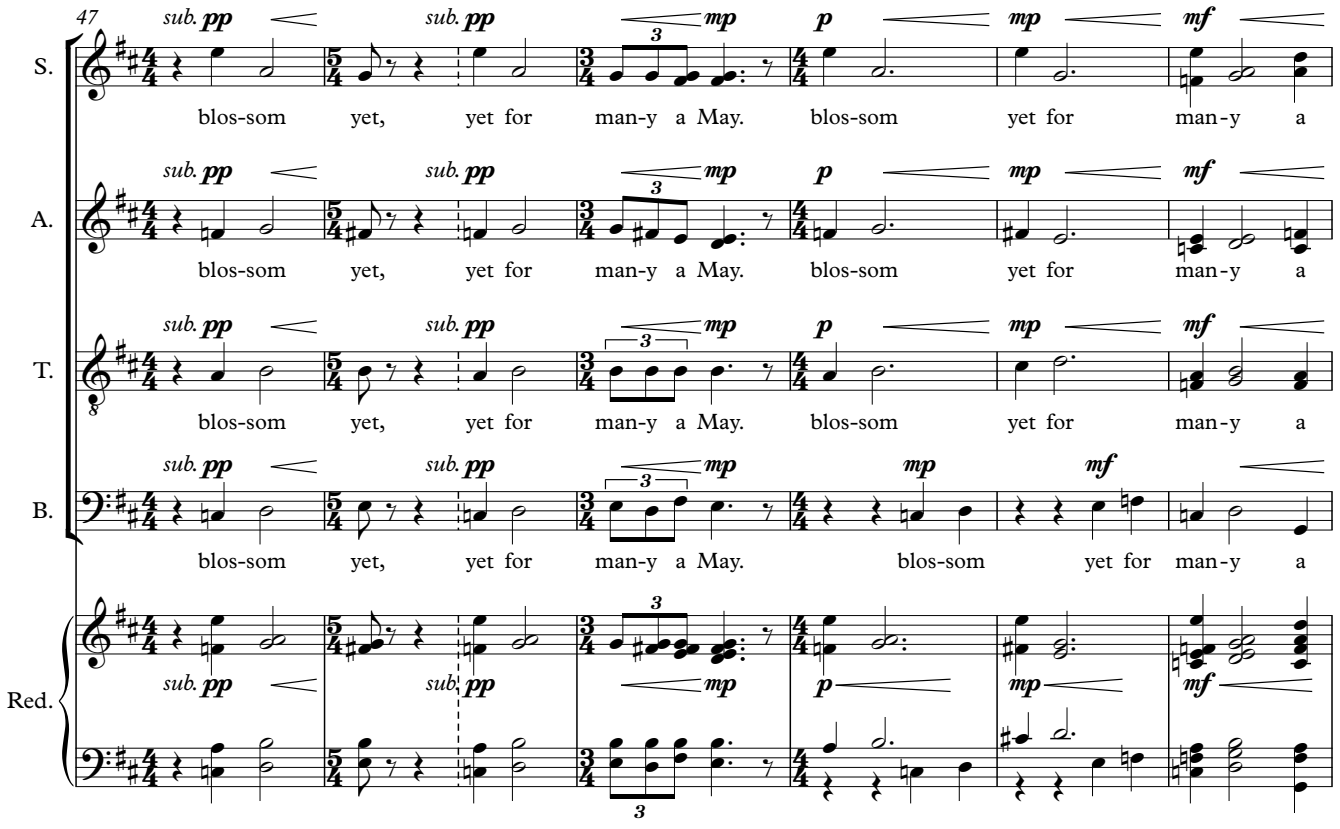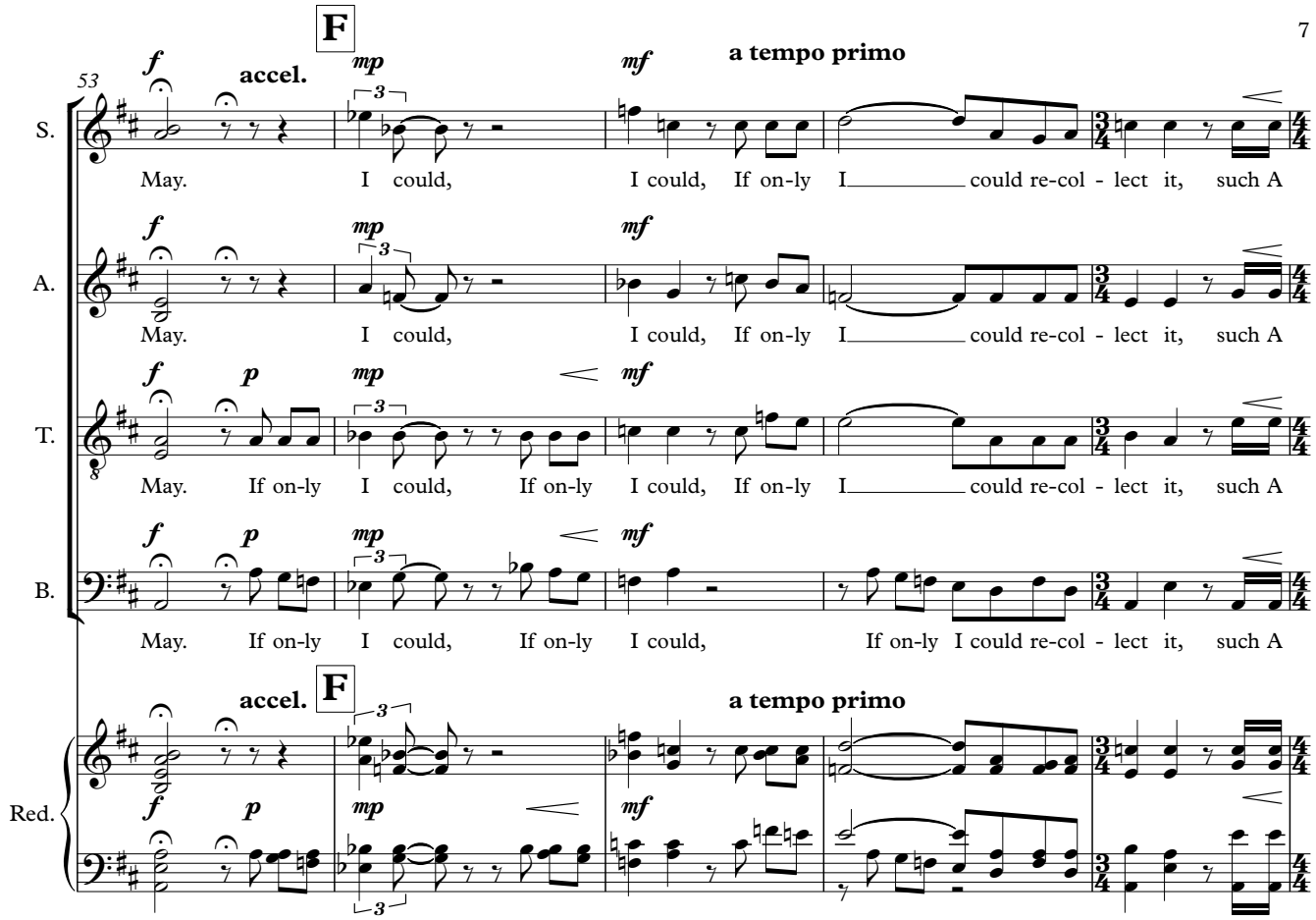




* Balance the dynamics of the altos with the sopranos, and then adjust to balance with the lower voices.
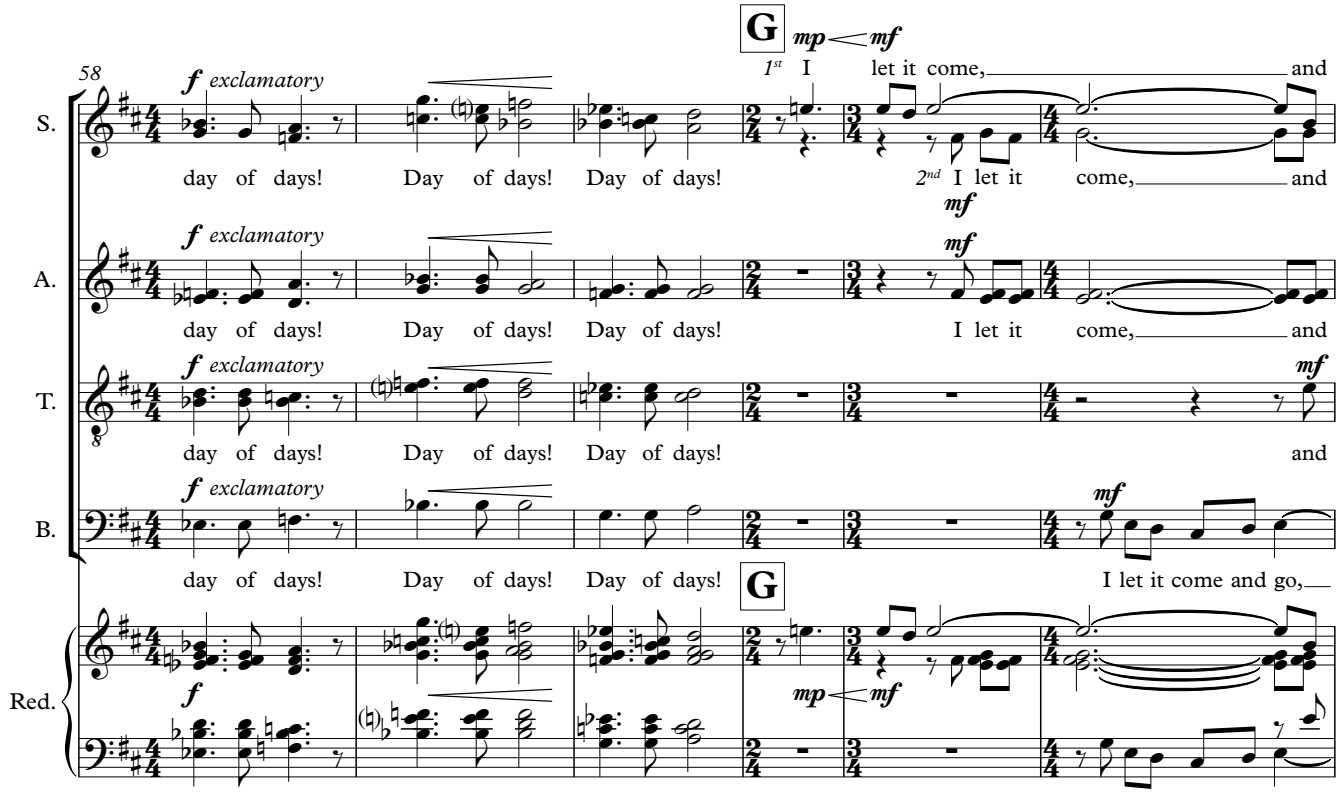

33
S.
A.
T.
B.
Red.
way,
So un-re-cord-ed did it slip a - way,
So
1st So
So un-re-cord-ed did it slip a - way,
a - way,
So un-re-cord-ed did it slip a - way,
36
blind was I, So blind,
2nd So blind
to
So blind was I,
was I
to see, to
blind to
(2nd alto in LH)
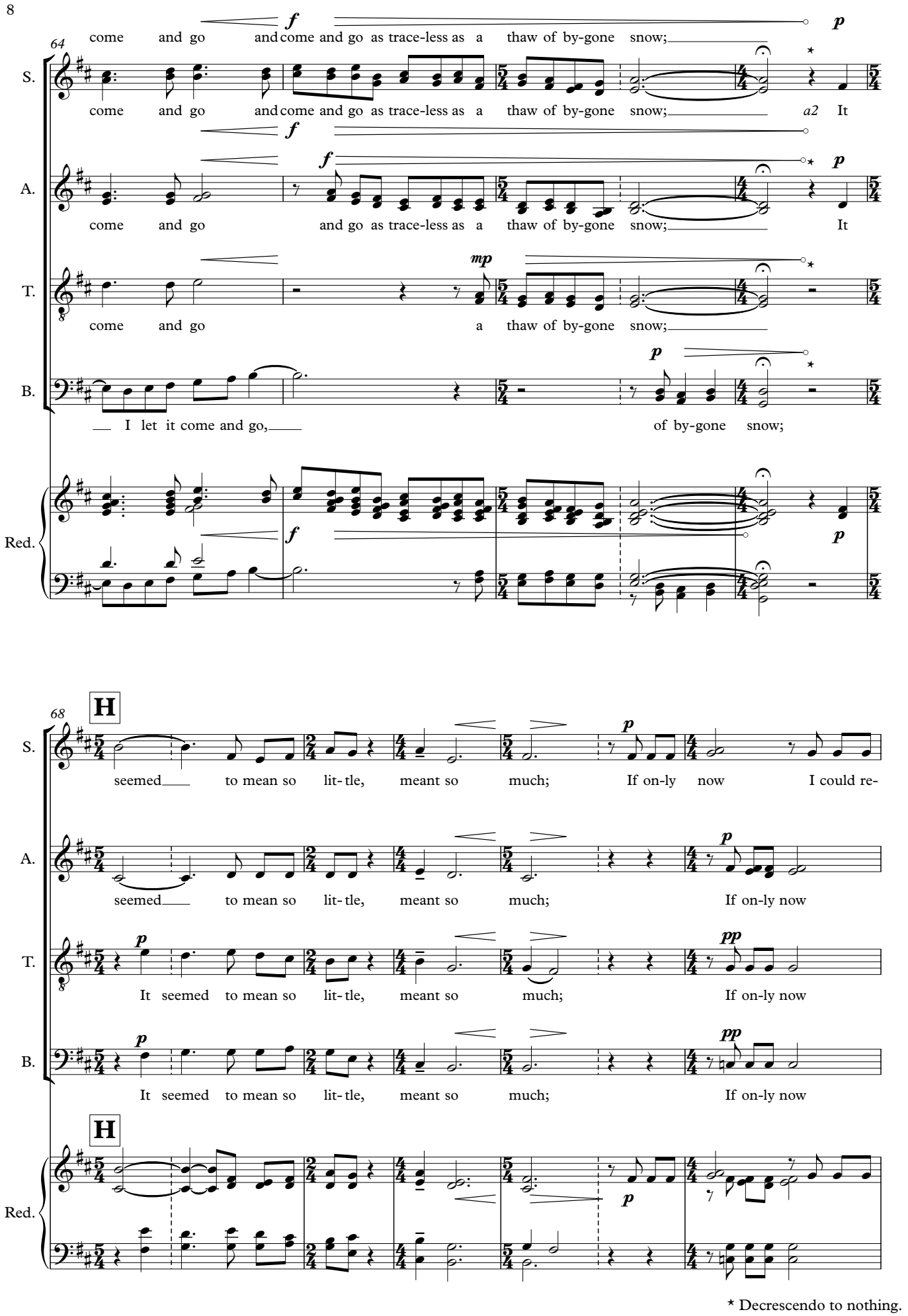

39
S.
see and to fore - see,
D
mp
see and to fore - see,
a2 So dull to mark the bud-ding of my
A.
see and to fore - see,
a2
mf
p
T.
1st So dull
see and to fore - see,
B.
see and to fore - see,
D
Red.
mp
42
pp
tree
mf
So dull to mark the bud-ding of my
mf
to mark,
p
2nd So dull to mark the bud-ding of my tree
mp
So dull to mark the bud-ding of my tree


E
44
S.
A.
T.
B.
Red.
mf
f
tree the bud - ding of my tree that would not blos - som
tree the bud-ding of my tree that would not blos - som
So dull to mark the bud-ding of my tree a2 my tree that would not blos - som
So dull to mark the bud-ding of my tree that would not blos - som
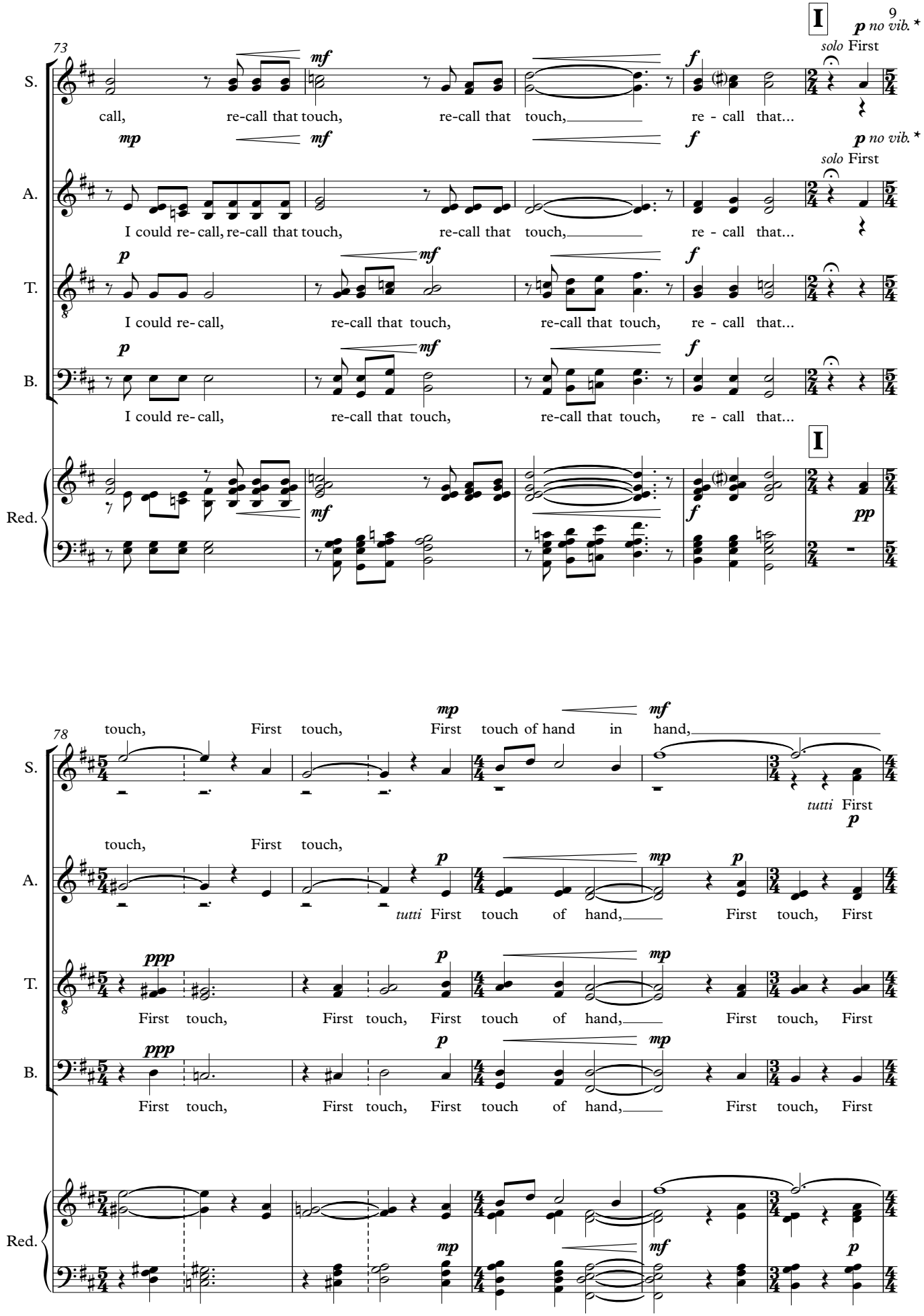

47
sub. pp
mp
p
mf
blos-som yet, yet for man-y a May. blos-som yet for man-y a


F
accel.
a tempo primo
53
S.
A.
T.
B.
Red.
May. I could, I could, If on-ly I could re-col - lect it, such A
May. I could, I could, If on-ly I could re-col - lect it, such A
May. If on-ly I could, If on-ly I could, If on-ly I could re-col - lect it, such A
May. If on-ly I could, If on-ly I could, If on-ly I could re-col - lect it, such A

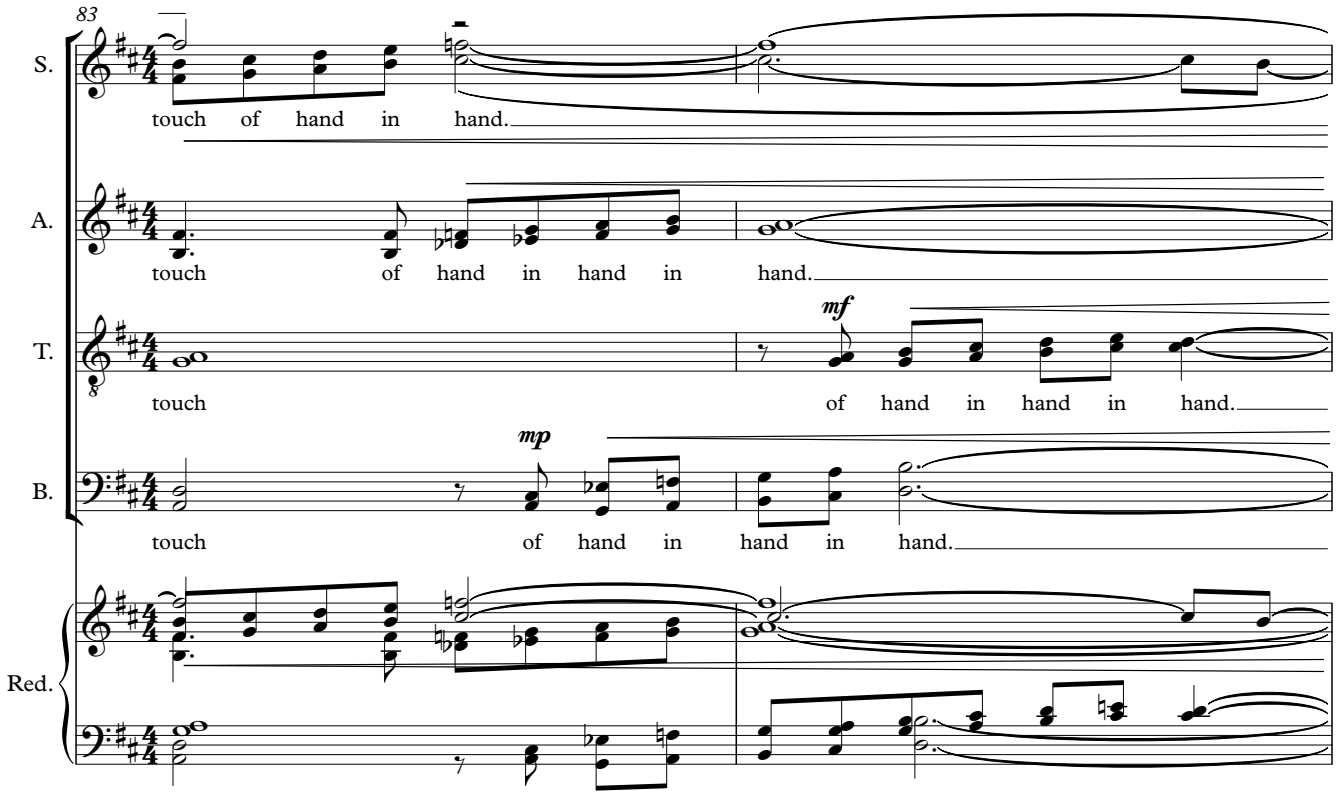

G
58
exclamatory
S.
A.
T.
B.
Red.
day of days! Day of days! Day of days!
1st I let it come, and
2nd I let it come, and
I let it come, and
and
I let it come and go,

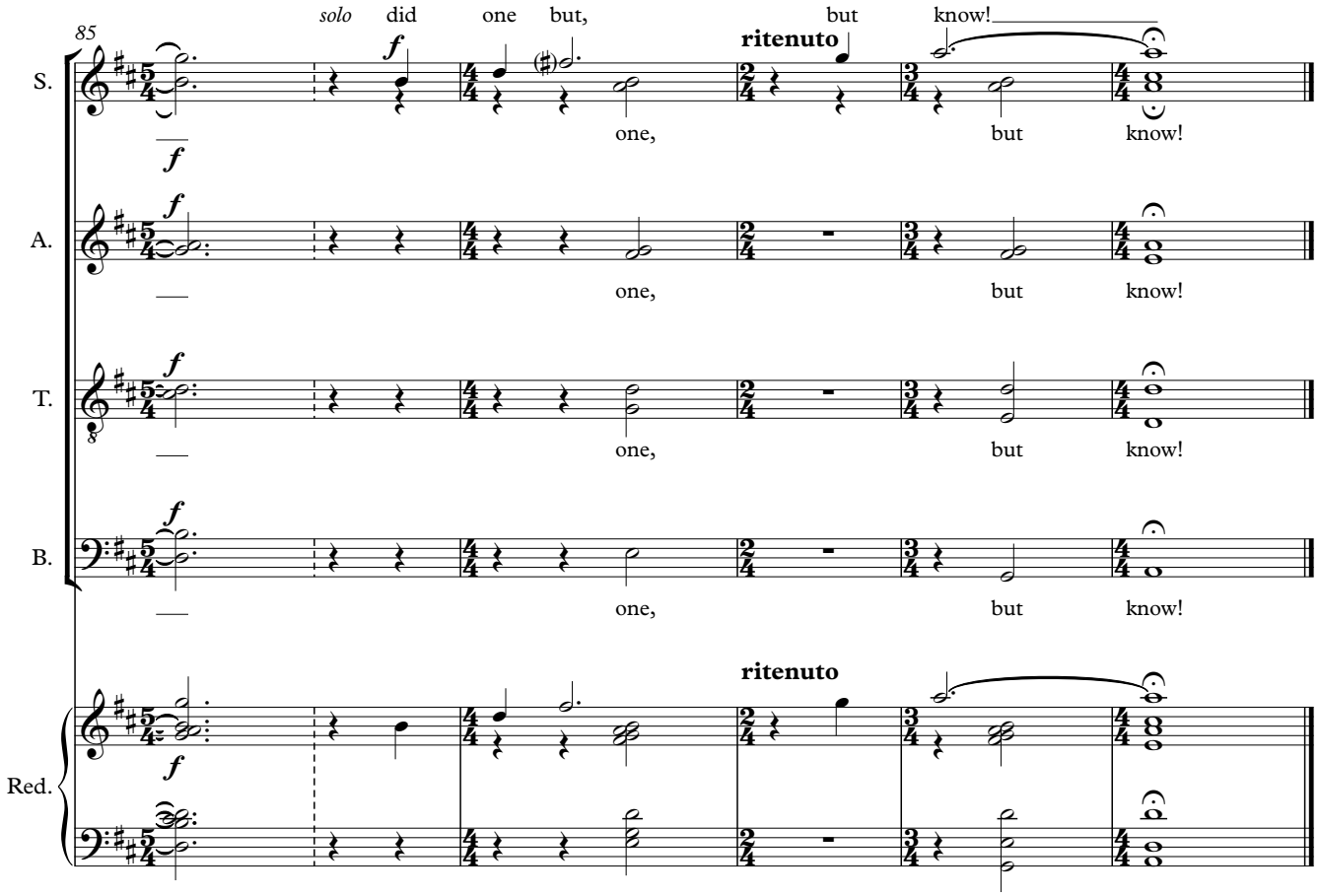


⋆ Decrescendo to nothing.


I
p no vib. *
solo First
73
S.
mf
f
call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re - call that...
mp
mf
f
p no vib. *
solo First
A.
I could re- call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re - call that...
T.
p
mf
f
I could re- call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re - call that...
B.
p
mf
f
I could re- call, re-call that touch, re-call that touch, re - call that...
I
Red.
mf
f
pp
78
touch, First touch, First touch of hand in hand,
mp
mf
tutti First
p
S.
touch, First touch,
tutti First touch of hand, First touch, First
A.
p
mp
p
ppp
p
mp
First touch, First touch, First touch of hand, First touch, First
T.
ppp
p
mp
First touch, First touch, First touch of hand, First touch, First
B.
mp
mf
p
Red.

* No Vibrato


83
S.
touch of hand in hand.
A.
touch of hand in hand in hand.
T.
mf
touch of hand in hand in hand.
B.
mp
touch of hand in hand in hand.
Red.


85
solo did one but, but know!
S.
f
ritenuto
one, but know!
A.
f
one, but know!
T.
f
one, but know!
B.
f
one, but know!
Red.
f
ritenuto