AG23057 RINGCRAFT
RING & LET VIBRATE
Catherine McMichael
Scored for Handbells (2-3 Octaves)
2-3
L 1

RingCraft

Building Technique through Music

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R and LV

Ring and Let Vibrate

by Catherine McMichael

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Titles can be learned in any order. They are offered here in the suggested progression.

To accommodate 2- and 3-octave groups, the pieces have been written so that you simply play the bells you have in your ensemble. 2-octave choirs will be playing a satisfying musical piece without the higher or lower notes that 3-octave groups add.

Recommended Bell Assignments

2 Octaves (8 ringers). From low to high, each ringer is assigned 2 consecutive notes; except for the highest ringer, who is assigned only 1 note (G6)

3 Octaves (11 ringers). From low to high, each ringer is assigned 2 consecutive notes.

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General Instructional Guidelines for RingCraft: Ring and LV

Music in this collection is Level 1, indicating no division of the beat. Counting is of paramount importance in bell ringing. Count and clap every piece before playing. Use 1-1-1-1 for four quarter notes, 1-2 for half notes, 1-2-3 for dotted half notes, and 1-2-3-4 for whole notes. Once this is secure, move to 1-2-3-4 counting in each measure.

Rests are equally important. Damp bells precisely on the rest. It is highly recommended to begin with slow practice under the marked tempo and to count out loud. If there are areas that need extra rehearsal, isolate and drill those measures separately.

An elementary level of pitch recognition is essential for ringing handbells. If needed, spend time teaching musicians note names on the music staff. Good ringing begins with music literacy.

This collection introduces voicing: two voices may be placed on the same staff and rung simultaneously. The duration of each voice is determined by stem direction. Durations are not additive, but simultaneous. When specific techniques are indicated above or below a note, the technique impacts only the notes with the same stem direction. Notes with the opposite stem direction are unaffected unless specifically instructed otherwise.

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Primary Technique: Ring/Damp Technique

R, or "ring," implies ringing on the indicated beat and damping at the beginning of the next beat after the written duration (i.e., a half note rung on beat one should be damped on beat three). To avoid "air space" between notes, a quarter note on beat one is damped at the beginning of beat two, not before. Practice this skill by having musicians ring slowly up and down scales, one note at a time, ringing the second note while simultaneously damping the first. This helps develop listening skills and physical coordination for legato ringing from note to note.

LV (**Laissez Vibrer, or Let Vibrate**) functions like regular ring/damp, except the bell is not damped at the end of its notated duration, and rests do not need to be damped. **LV** notes continue and end at the beginning of the next **LV** (damp previous notes and begin the next **LV**) or **R** (ring), which instructs ringers to return to normal damping.

Secondary Focus: Dynamics

Dynamics are essential to musical ringing. To help musicians find differing volume levels, practice slowly, ringing from very loud to very soft, step by step, and back to very loud. Repeat several times, naming the dynamics as you go. Musicians will learn to recognize what is required to achieve the full dynamic range of the bells. This also helps develop crescendo and decrescendo. Next, ask musicians for specific dynamics without the help of a progression.

“Clarion Call”

Clarion Call presents the opportunity to focus on crisp ringing and precise damping. Dynamics are tiered at first to allow musicians to calibrate volume levels. Crescendos are contained within each measure; each beat should be rung louder than the previous one.

“Juba Dance”

Juba Dance builds on Clarion Call with more measures requiring precise damping. Counting notes and rests is paramount. Watch the director for entrances after rests. Sudden dynamic changes add color and drama.

“Garden Stroll”

“Garden Stroll” introduces the 3/4 time signature. Though not difficult, explanation may be helpful. Dotted half notes should be carefully counted to ensure musicians understand their duration. Legato playing with gentle damping will allow the melody to sing. Balance (melody notes louder than others) should be introduced here.

“Peal”

Bell ringing began as change ringing in England. Ringers learned complex note patterns, called “changes,” and wove them into intricate peals. Often performed at royal occasions, peals are resonant and loud. This piece introduces the LV technique used in change ringing. There are also occasional individually rung chords.

“Hallelujah!”

In the tradition of gospel music, there is elementary syncopation. The important first treble note falls on the second beat rather than the first. Harmony supports the downbeat.

This piece employs two voices in the treble staff. Notes with stems up are melodic; stems down are harmonic. They move together in time, following their own written durations within their voice “neighborhood.” Measure one in the treble clef contains only four beats, not seven (if durations were added together). The lower voice rings on beats one and three; the upper voice rings on beats two and four. This is an important concept in reading handbell music.

You can listen to “Juba Dance” and “Peal” by following the QR codes or URL.

“Juba Dance”
bit.ly/ringcraft-juba

“Peal”
bit.ly/ringcraft-peal

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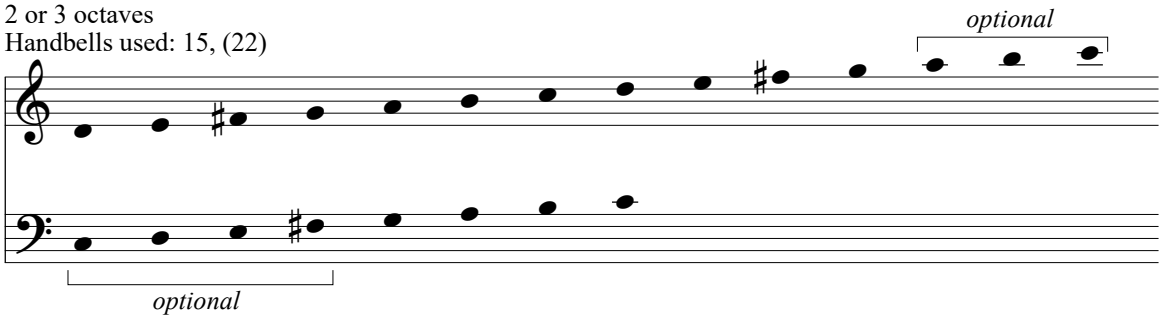
Clarion Call

for Handbells (2 or 3 Octaves)

Focus: Strong snaps will give bright sound without harshness. Damp rests precisely.
Observe dynamics for the special "echo" effect (m. 1, less in m. 2, less in m. 3).

2 or 3 octaves
Handbells used: 15, (22)



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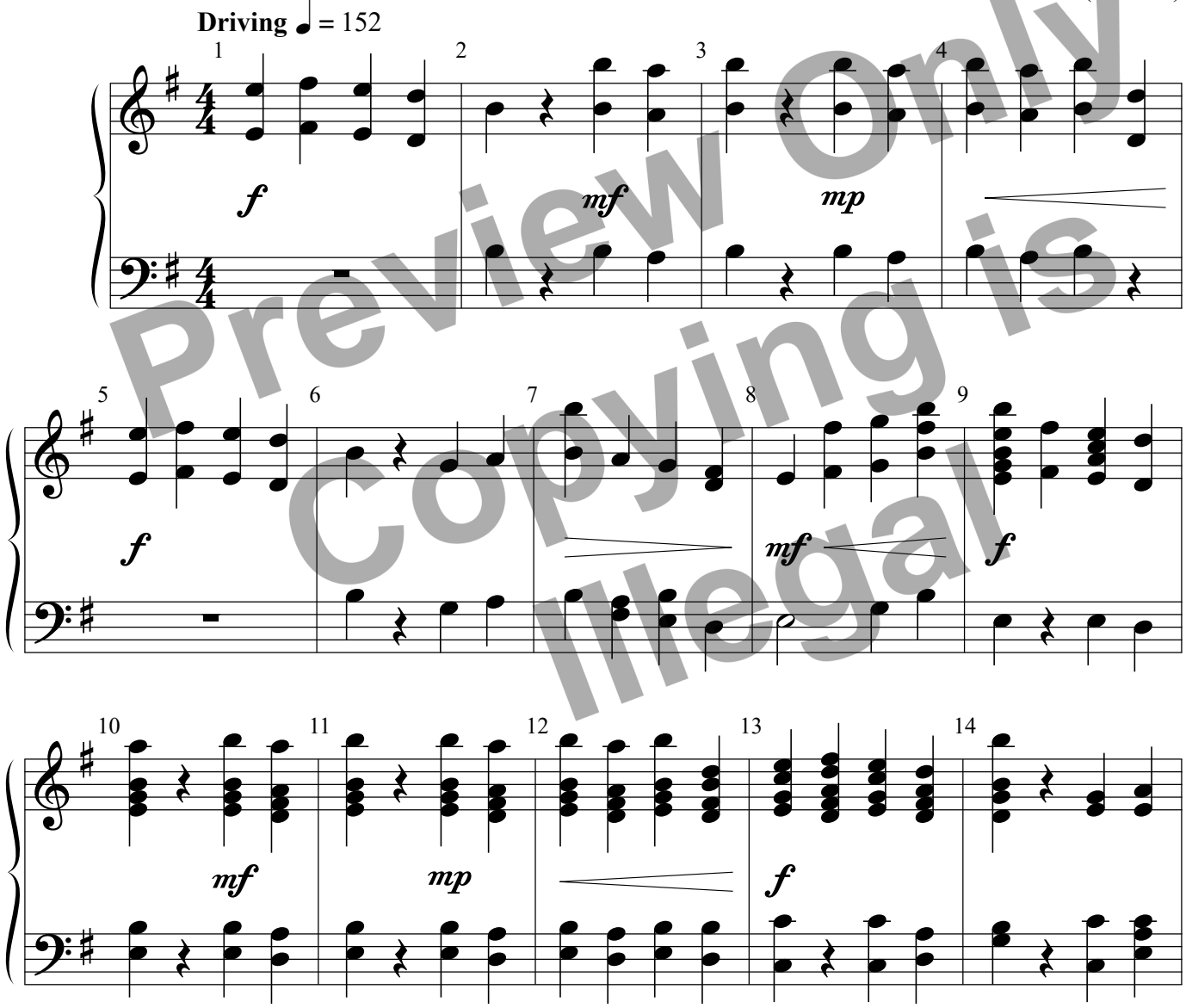

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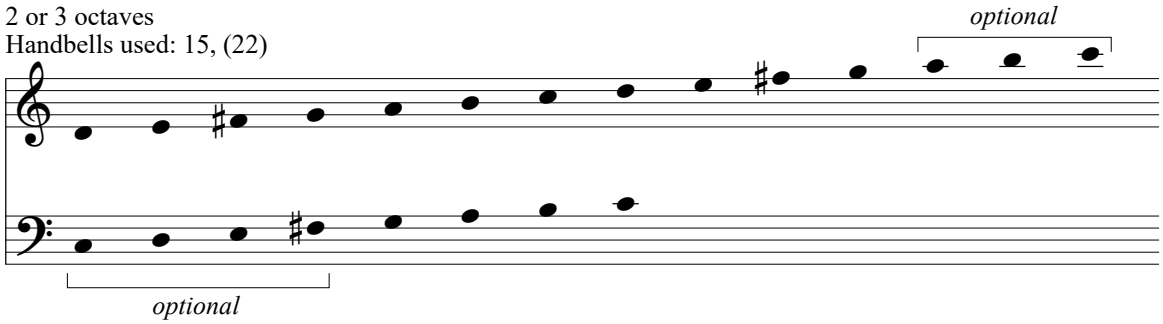
Juba Dance

for Handbells (2 or 3 Octaves)

Focus: Syncopation (strong emphasis on normally weak beats) creates a gospel feel.
In m. 3, 19, and 25 the bass rests, and half notes on beat 2 (m. 11, 13, etc.), all create the jazzy style.

2 or 3 octaves
Handbells used: 15, (22)



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Jump for joy! ♩ = 160

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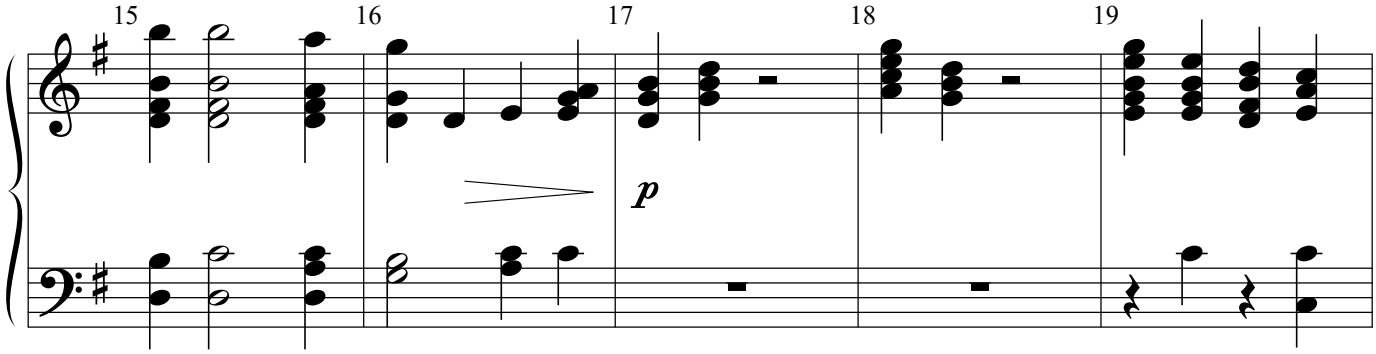

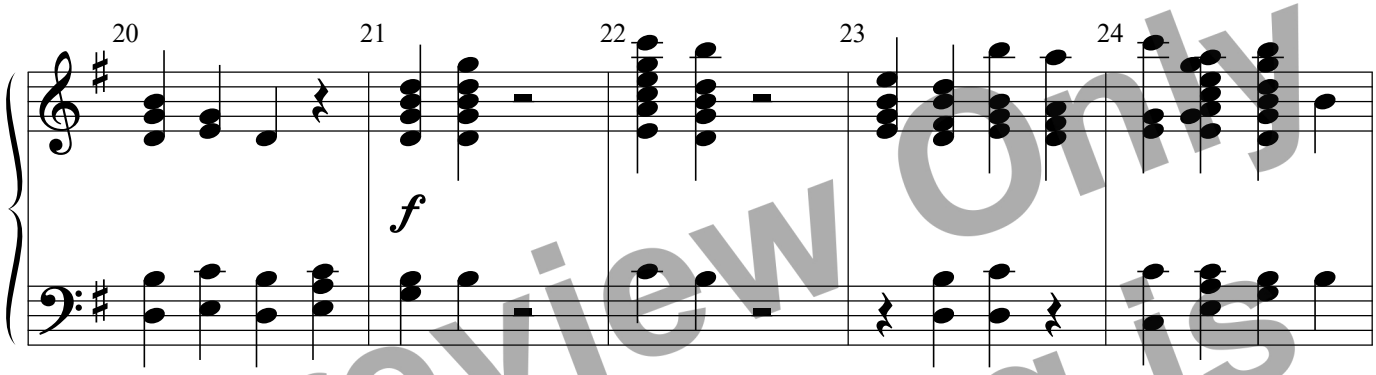

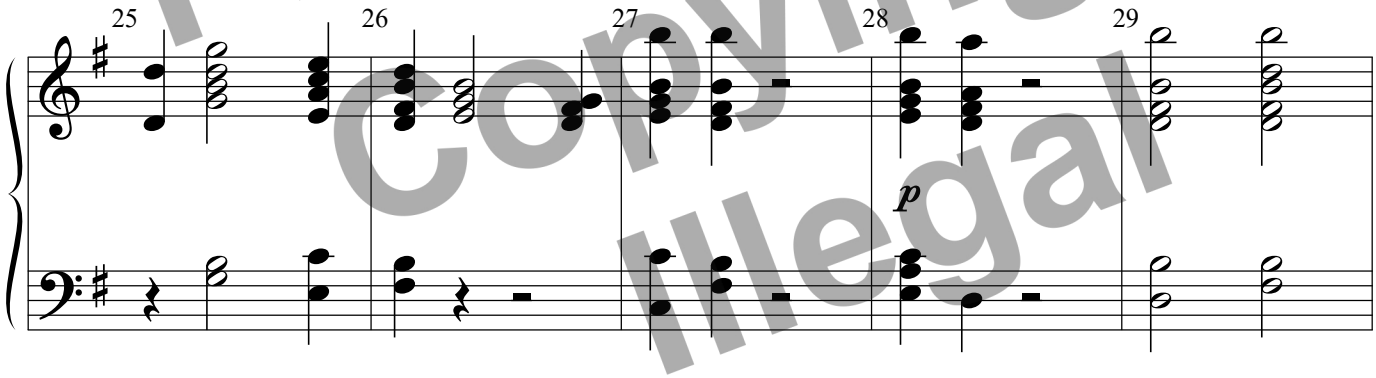

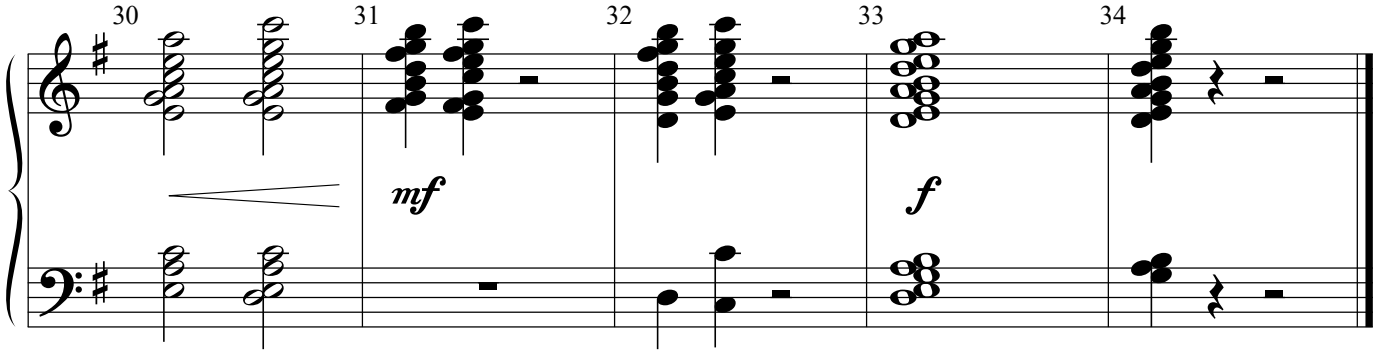

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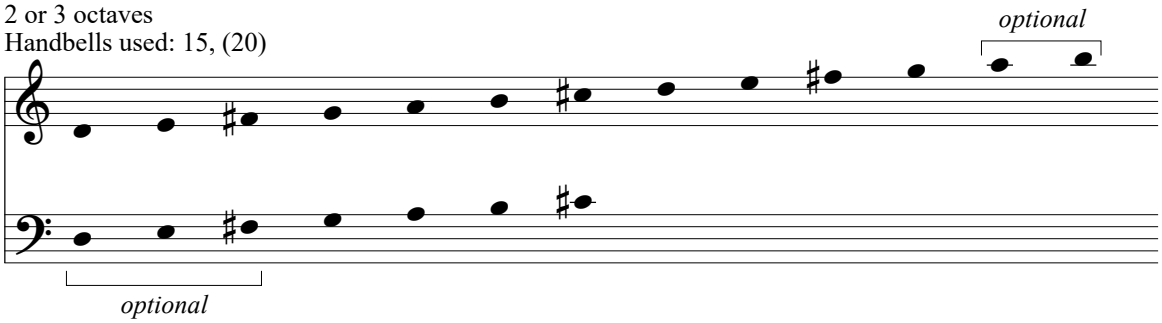
Garden Stroll

for Handbells (2 or 3 Octaves)

Focus: Legato (smooth) melody. Damp gently for maximum smoothness.
Observe dynamic contrasts.

2 or 3 octaves
Handbells used: 15, (20)



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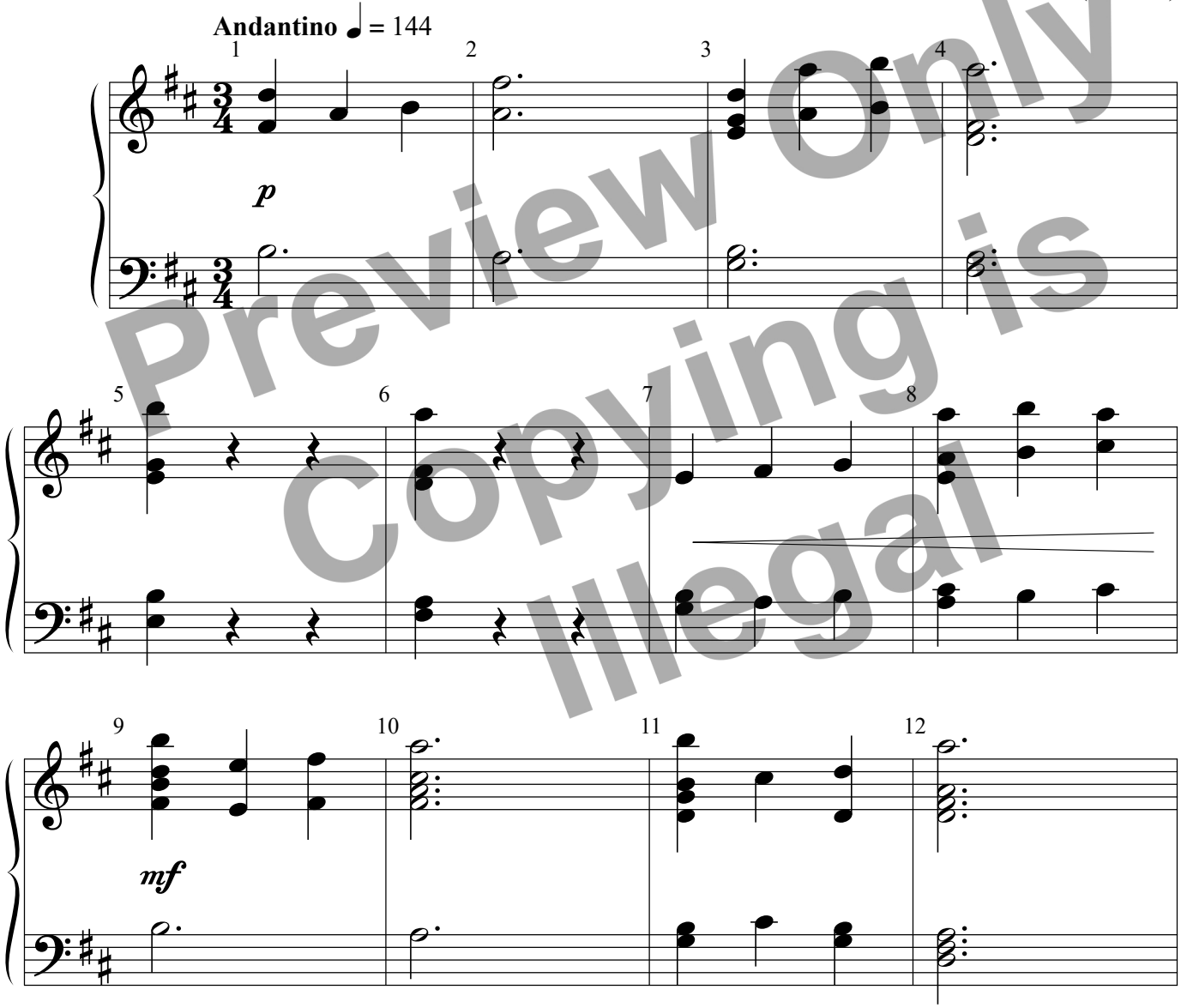

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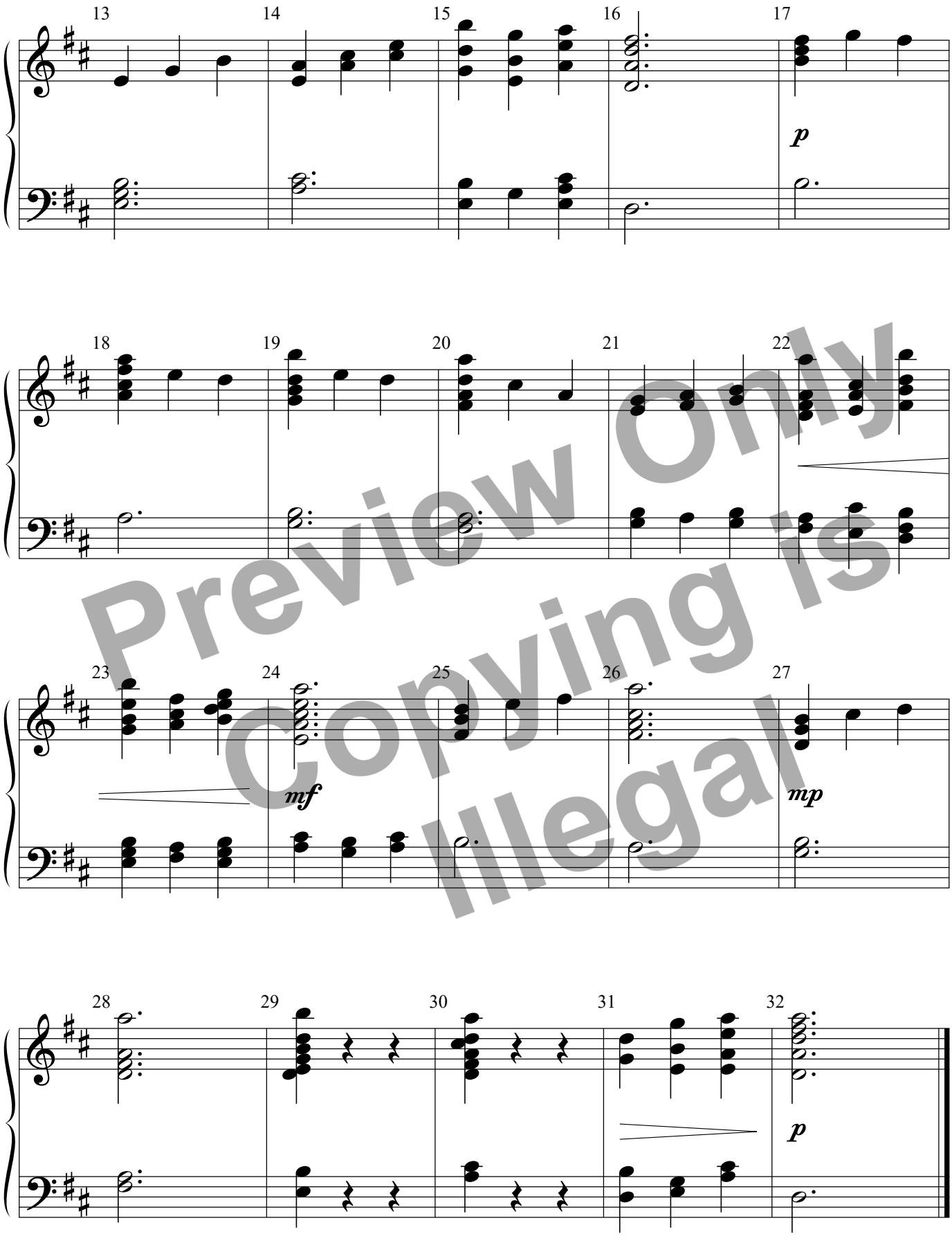

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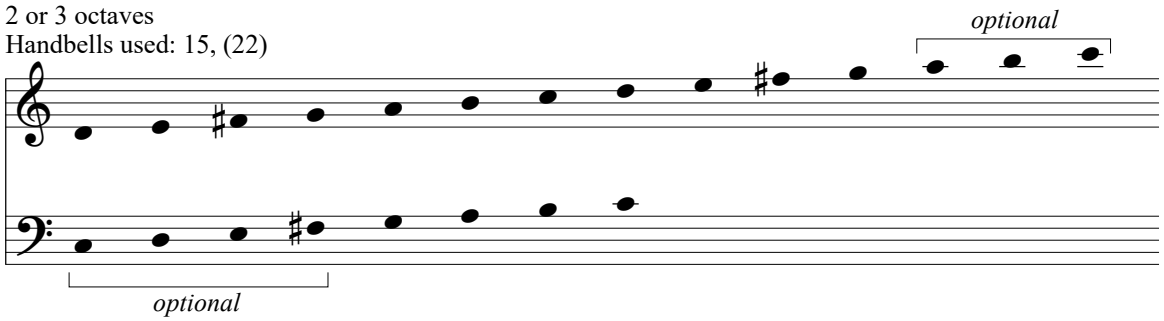
Peal

for Handbells (2 or 3 Octaves)

Focus: Like peals at royal occasions, LV lasts a long time! Damp at each new LV or R.
Dynamics: Loud and loud and loud.



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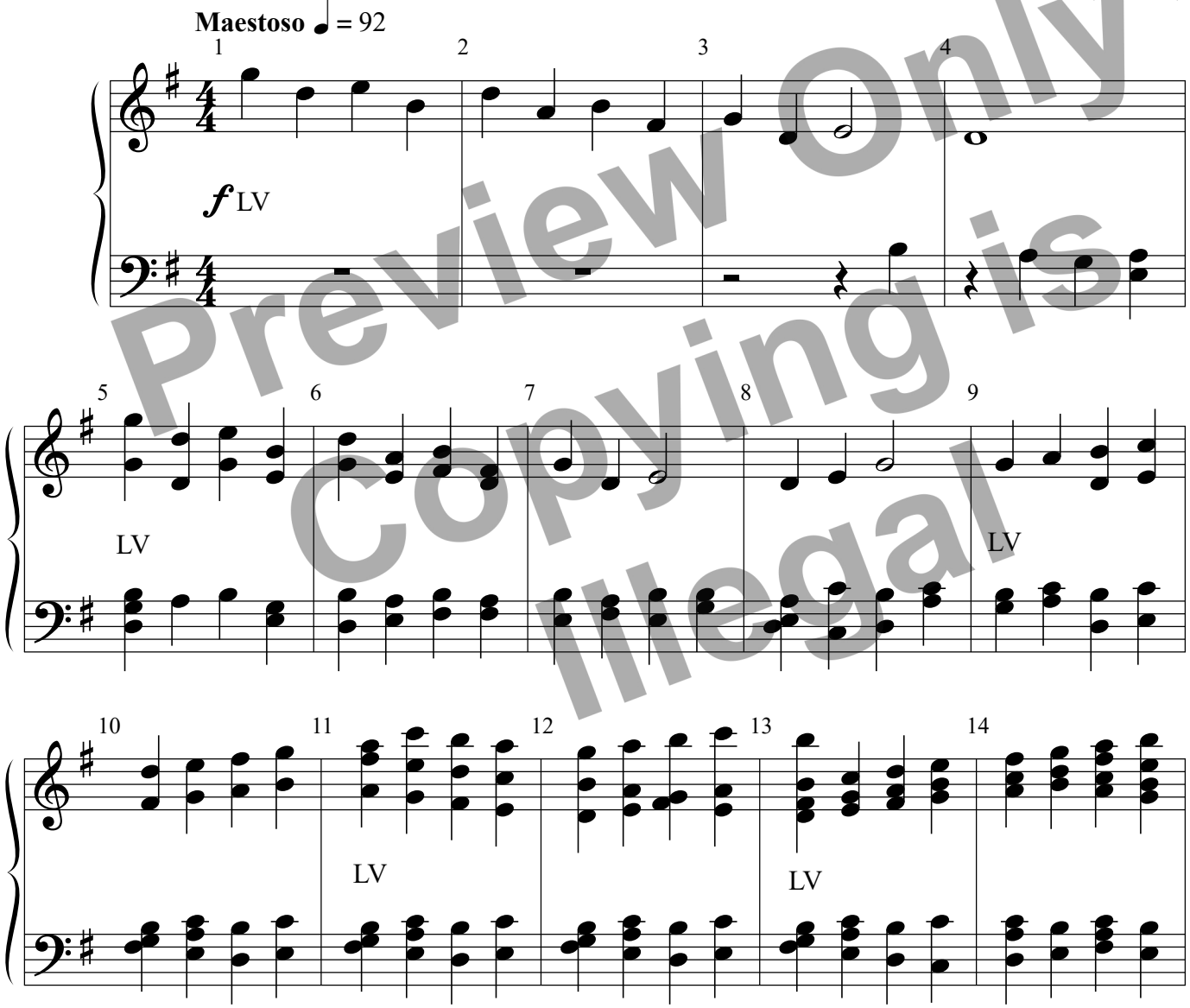

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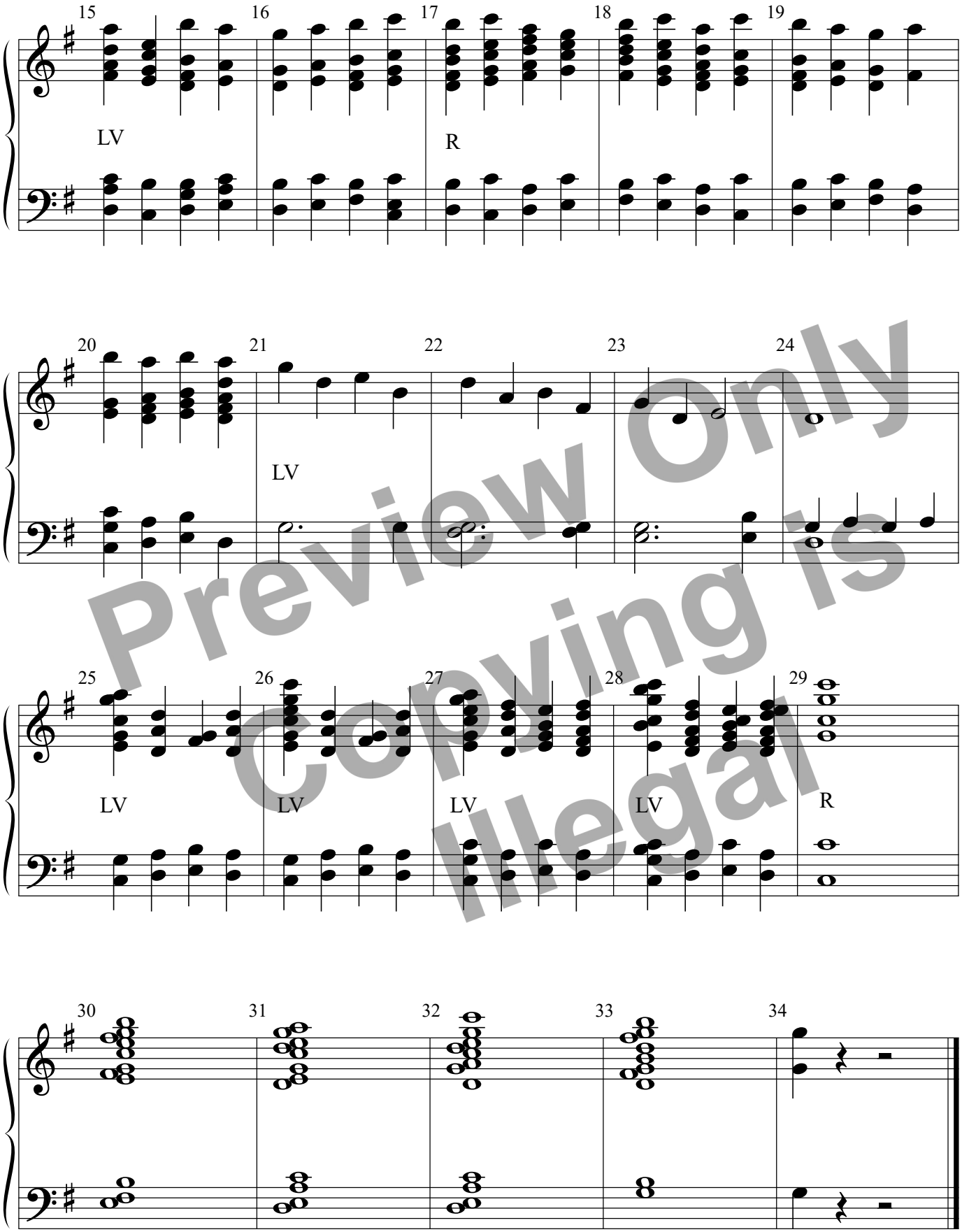

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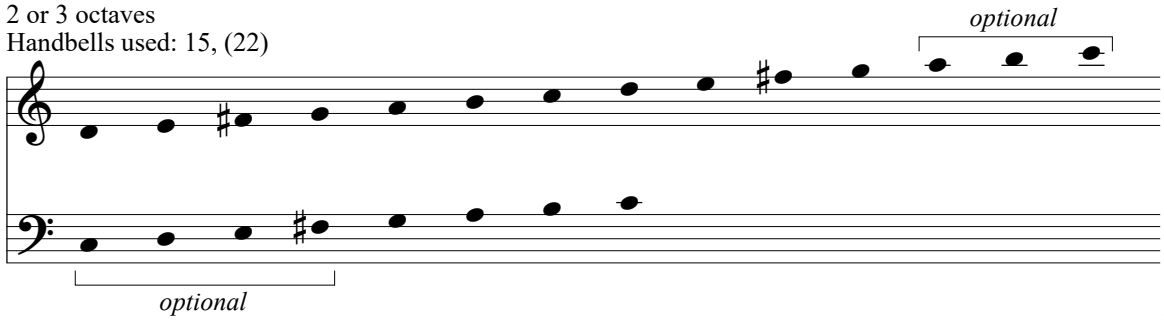
Hallelujah!

for Handbells (2 or 3 Octaves)

Focus: Stem direction determines duration for the upper or lower voice (m. 1-2 and others). Practice dynamic contrast (m. 1 vs. 10, and crescendos). Clean damping on rests, especially m. 4!

2 or 3 octaves
Handbells used: 15, (22)



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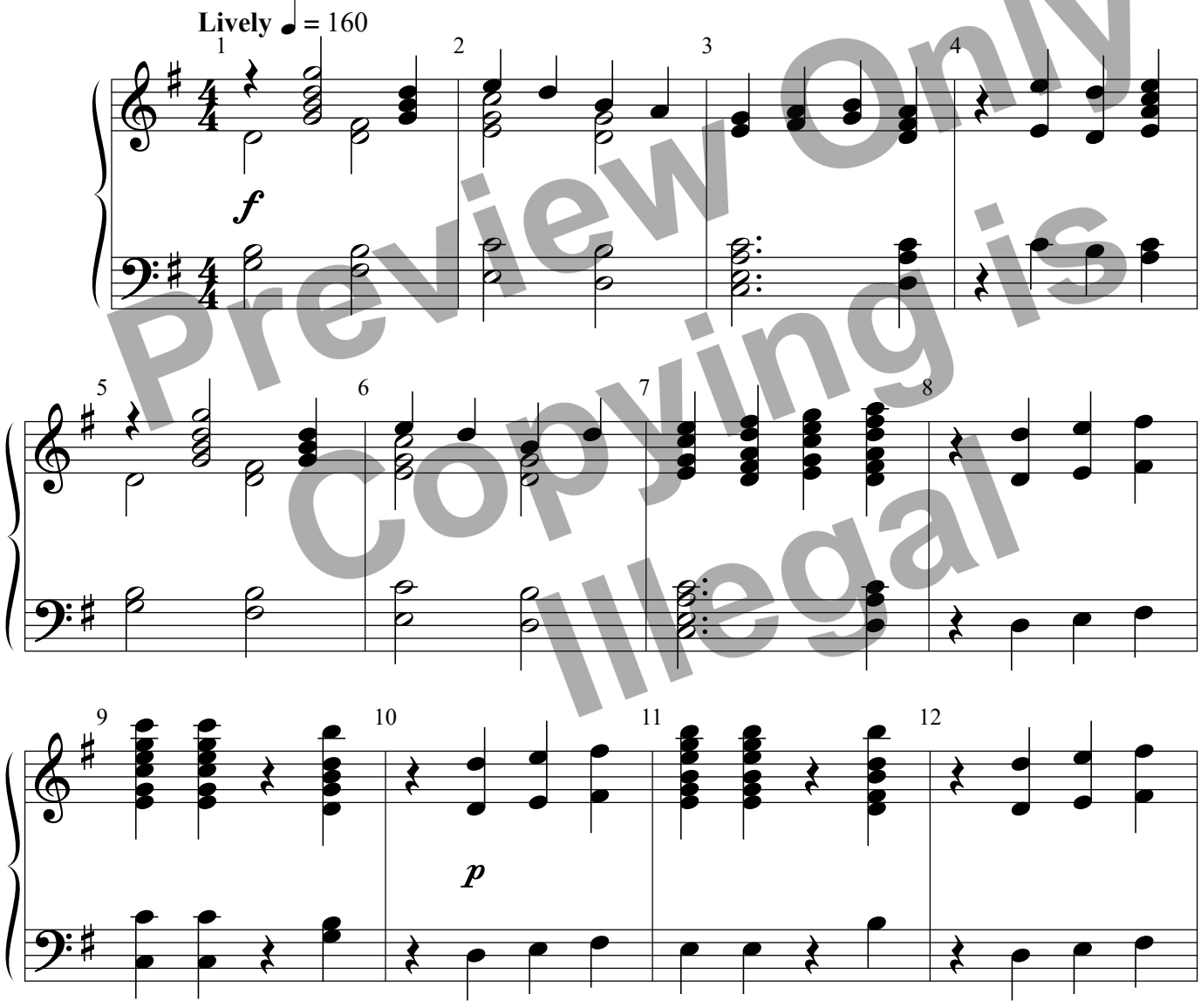

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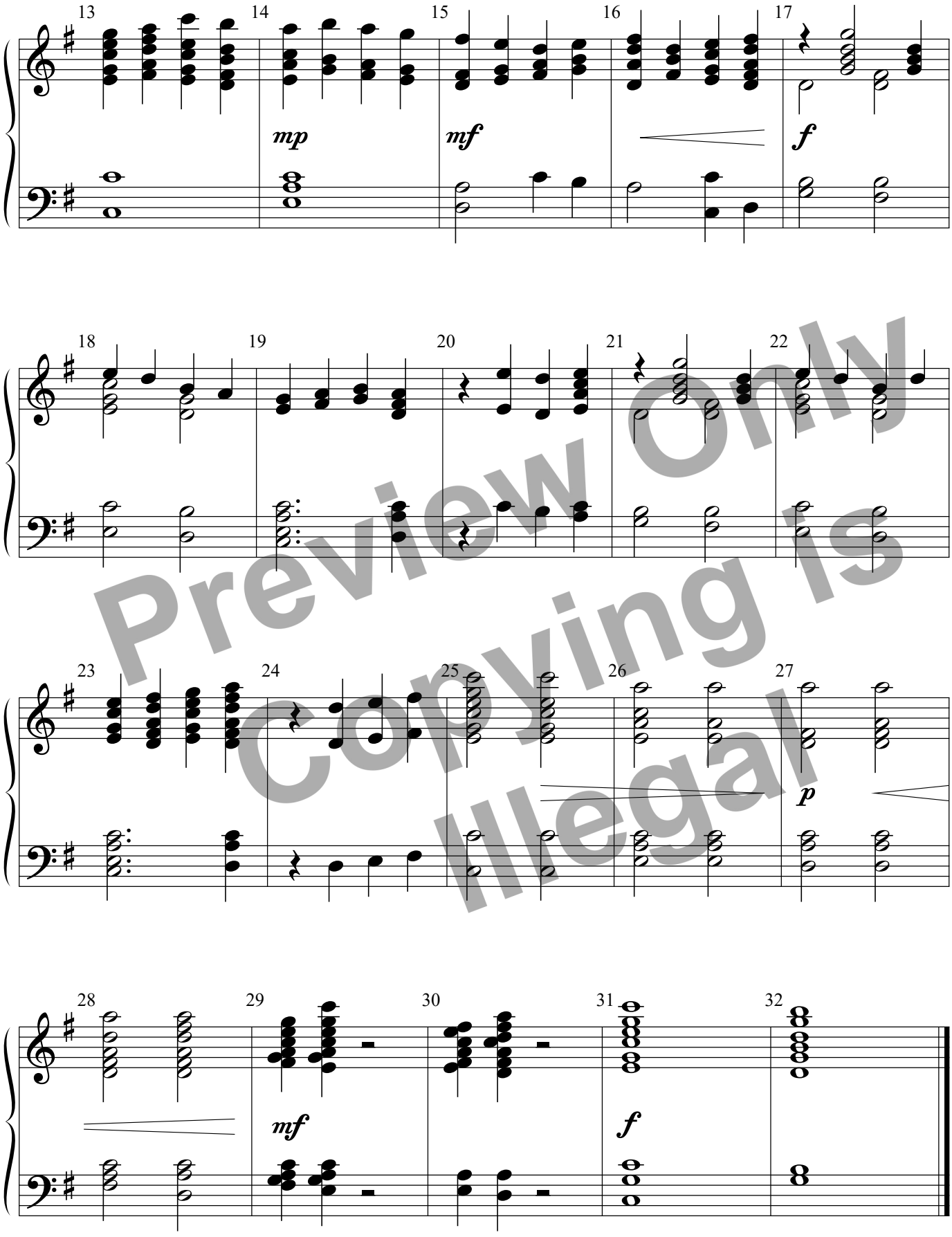

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