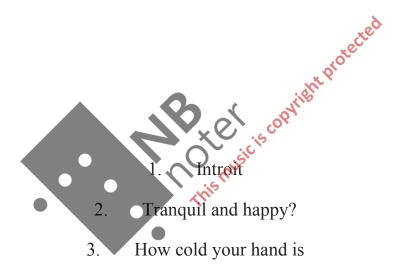
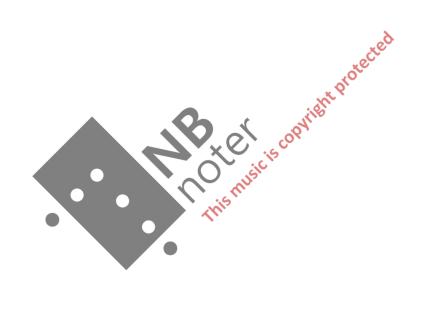
Requiem for Mimì and Other Women Who Died in Opera

for eight singers

Rebecka Sofia Ahvenniemi 2021



- 4. Offertorium
- 5. Mimì and Musetta's Duet
 - 6. Libera me



Requiem for Mimì and Other Women Who Died in Opera

Program notes

The work is a mass for the women characters who have been "killed off" in operas, focussing on Mimì, the main character of *La Bohème* (1896). While Mimì actually dies of sickness in the end of the opera, one may observe that her character projects an idealised form of womanhood of the time, coming across as virtuous, sincere, non-threatening, tranquil, and fond of beautiful things, such as flowers. Thus, her death comes off as a tragedy that the audience may grieve.

Opera as a genre is often said to present us something universally true about being a human being, and thus touch us in ways that exceed a specific historical situation. However, the librettos and the music are largely composed by social groups that consist of white Western males, and women themselves have not been the ones to define the women characters. This Requiem attempts to raise questions about social roles and power of definition. It finds some of its inspiration from the short movie *Thriller* (1980), directed by Sally Potter, where the character Mimì performs a murder investigation on her own death, asking questions about the actual reasons for it.

Requiem for Mimì and Other Women Who Died in Opera is not only a mass for the dead women characters, but the fact that they didn't truly exist in the first place.

Content: 1. Introit: Kyrie eleison, 2. Tranquil and happy? 3. How cold your hand is, 4. Offertorium, 5. Mimì and Musetta's Duet, 6. Libera me

Text

Origins:

The liturgy of the Latin requiem (RQ)

La Bohème in Italian and English (LB)

Slightly altered from the original text (A)

Composed text for this requiem by Rebecka S. Ahvenniemi (

The libretto of the original opera La Bohème was written by Giuseppe Giacosa og Luigi Illica, based on the novel *La Vie de Bohème* by Henri Murger.

1. Introit (RQ)

Kyrie, eleison.

Christe, eleison.

Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine:

et lux perpetua luceat eis.

tequiem acternam aona ets, Domine.

2. Tranquil and happy? (LB, A, CMP)

Or che mi conoscete parlate voi. Deh parlate.

Chi siete? Vi piaccia dir?

Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì, (LB)

Ti (original: mi) chiamano Mimì.

La storia tua (original: mia) è breve.

A tela o a seta

ricamo (original: ricami) in casa e fuori.

Translation:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord,

and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Now that you know me, it's your turn to

speak.

Who are you? Will you tell me?

Yes. They call me Mimì

They call you Mimì.

Your story is brief.

You embroider silk and satin

at home or outside.

Sei tranquilla e lieta,

ed è tuo (original: mio) svago (LB, A)

far gigli e rose. (LB)

Ti (original: mi) piaccion quelle cose (LB, A)

che han sì dolce malia, (LB)

che parlano d'amor, di primavere,

che parlano di sogni e di chimere

quelle cose che han nome poesia...

Non. La storia mia non è breve ma lunga è

complicata

Why do you want me to like roses?

Why do you want me to like gentle magic and roses? (CMP)

You are tranquil and happy,

and your pastime

is making lilies and roses.

You love all things

That have gentle magic,

that talk of love, of spring,

that talk of dreams and fancies

the things called poetry

No. My story is not brief but long and

complicated.

3. How cold your hand is (RQ, LB, CMP)

In memoria æterna erit iustus. (RQ)

Che gelida manina...

Se la lasci riscaldar... (LB)

Quiet! (CMP)

The just shall be in everlasting

remembrance;

How cold your little hand is...

Let me warm it for you...

4. Offertorium (LB, A, RQ)

Mimì is terribly ill!

Mimì è tanto malata! (LB)

Hostias et preces tibi, Domine,

laudis offerimus:

tu suscipe pro animabus illis,

quarum hodie memoriam facimus:

We offer to Thee, O Lord,

This do The

do Thou receive them in behalf of those

souls

of whom we make memorial this day.

Grant them, O Lord, to pass from death to that life. (RQ)

O mia vita è finita. (LB)

O tia (originally: mia) vita è finita. (LB, A)

ac eas, Domine, de morte transire ad vitam.

Ahimè! Morir!

Mimì! (LB)

Quiet! (CMP)

Oh, my life is over Oh, your life is over

Alas! To die!

5. Mimì and Musetta's Duet (CMP)

Musetta, my co-heroine, we never had the chance to properly converse. We need to talk, alone.

This is a very private conversation.

Why did they kill me off? Why did they not kill you, Musetta? You were fabulous. Is that why?

No. I was a bad girl, that's why. I was a bad girl. There's no tragedy in killing of a bad girl.

Musetta, why did they kill me off? Why did they not kill you, Musetta?

You are fabulous. You reveal your ankles and flirt. Is that why?

No! I was a bad girl. That's why. I was a bad girl. There's not tragedy in killing off a bad girl.

Bad, bad, bad, bad, bad...

And they like my boodie.

And that's okay, as long as they, don't kill me off, then that's okay, that's so sweet, and that's okay.

Why did they kill me off? Who did they not kill you, Musetta?

You're the one they loved.

They want to feed you with grapes, and they want to mourn your death.

When you're dying, when you're dead, when you're lying seven feet under, they want to cry.

When you're dead, they want to cry. I don't know why they want to cry.

Hey, Musetta, we should make an opera. We should gang up, and we should make an opera.

Musica lirica.

Who do you want to be?

Let's say goodbye to Mimì and Musetta.

6. Libera me (RQ, CMP)

Libera me, Domine, de morte æterna,

in die illa tremenda.

Quando cæli movendi sunt et terra:

Dum veneris iudicare sæculum per ignem.

Requiem æternam.

Kyrie, eleison. (RQ)

Musica lirica. (CMP)

Deliver me, O Lord, from death eternal

in that awful day.

When the heavens and the earth shall be

moved:

When Thou shalt come to judge the

Lord, have mercy.

Opera with the control of the co

Instructions

General:

The "grain" of the voice: The work engages dialogue with requiem and opera as musical traditions. The singers performing this work ought to be educated in accordance with the Western tradition of classical singing.

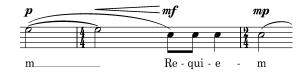
<u>The time signatures</u> are suggestive, not absolute.

Rest over bar line: Freely chosen length.

The lengths of the breaks between the movements: The breaks are not very long. Especially the 2nd and 3rd movement, that begin with a spoken overture, should start almost immediately after the former movement.

On vocal techniques:

Long pitch on consonant "m":



Niente: from sound gradually to no sound:



A small impulse on each consonant, the pitches sounding <u>slightly separate</u> (but not too much): either through impulses from the stomach, or controlling the airflow through the throat:



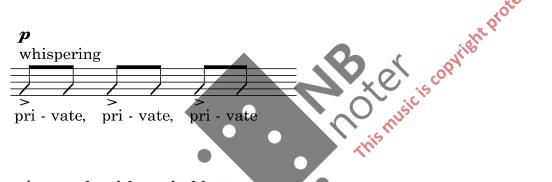
"Rapgesang": Rapping without specific pitch. The intonation can very widely. The voices can also be very different from each other, as long as the timing of the text is correct. Supported from the body in a similar way as singing. Rapping in *legato*.



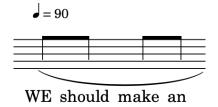
Almost whispering, no specific pitch:



Whispering, no pitch:



Emphasis on the words with capital letters:



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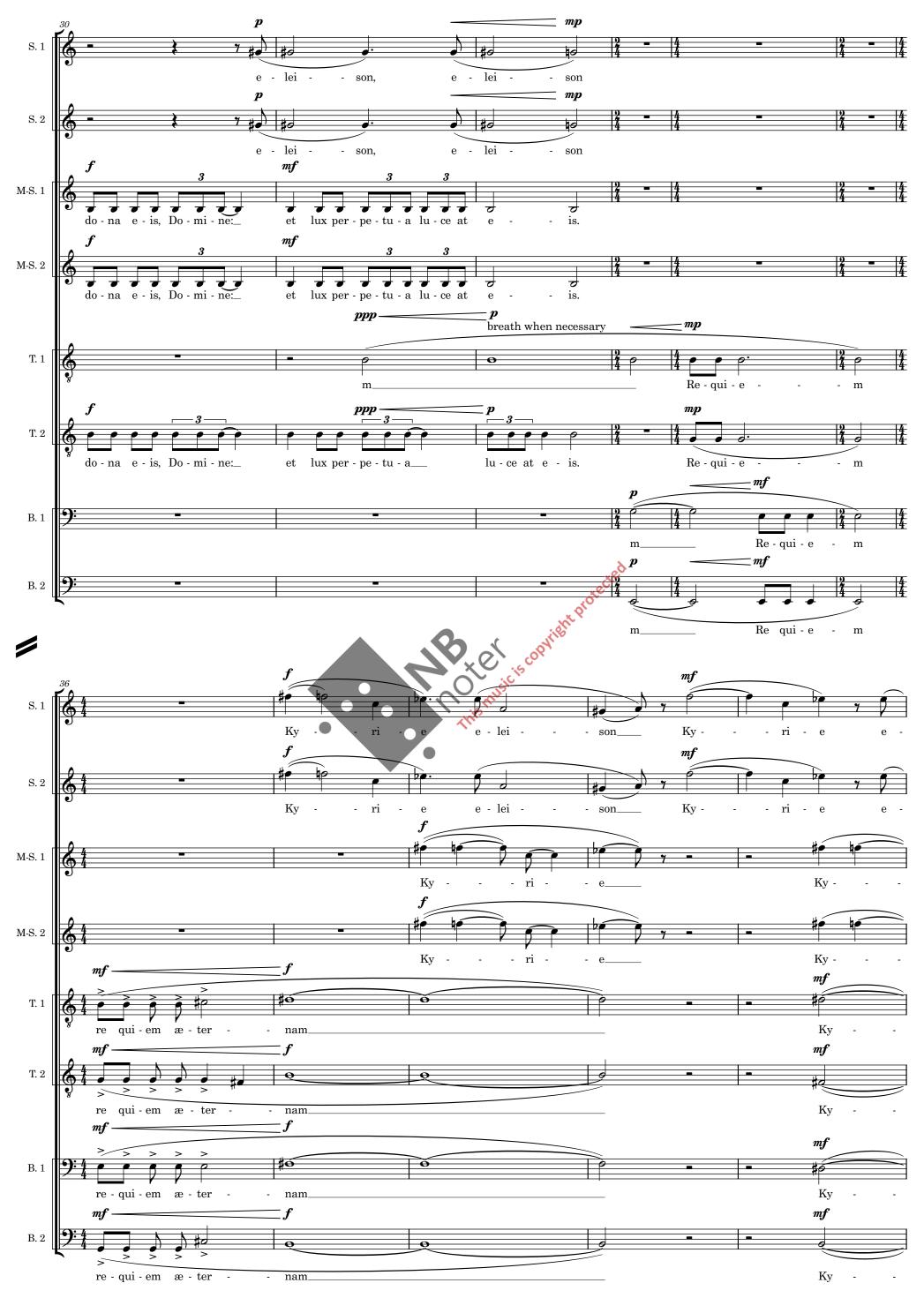
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2 Introit

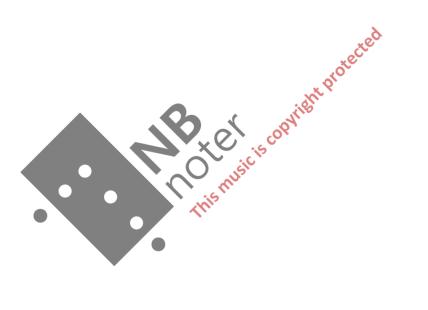


Introit 3

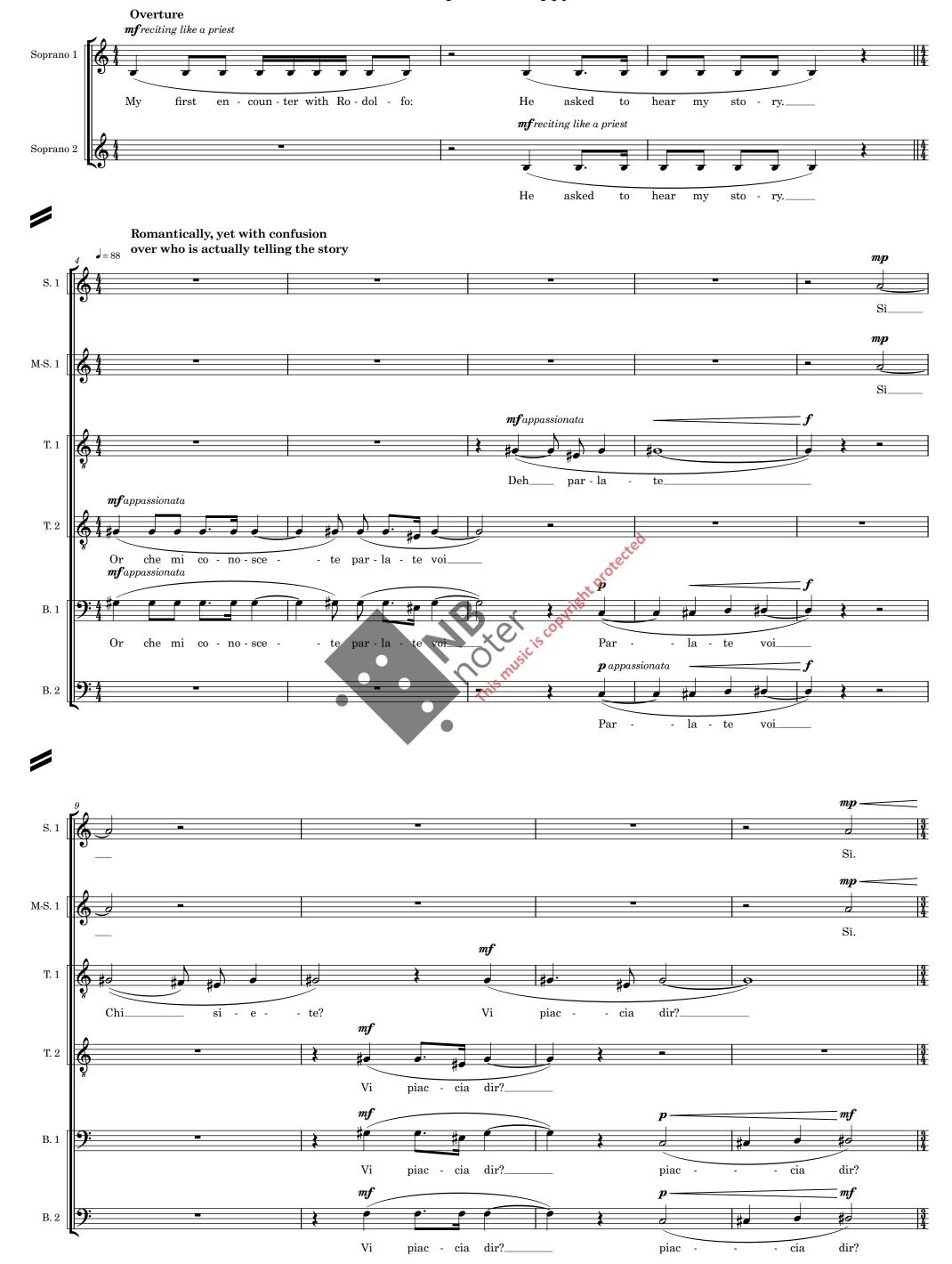


4 Introit

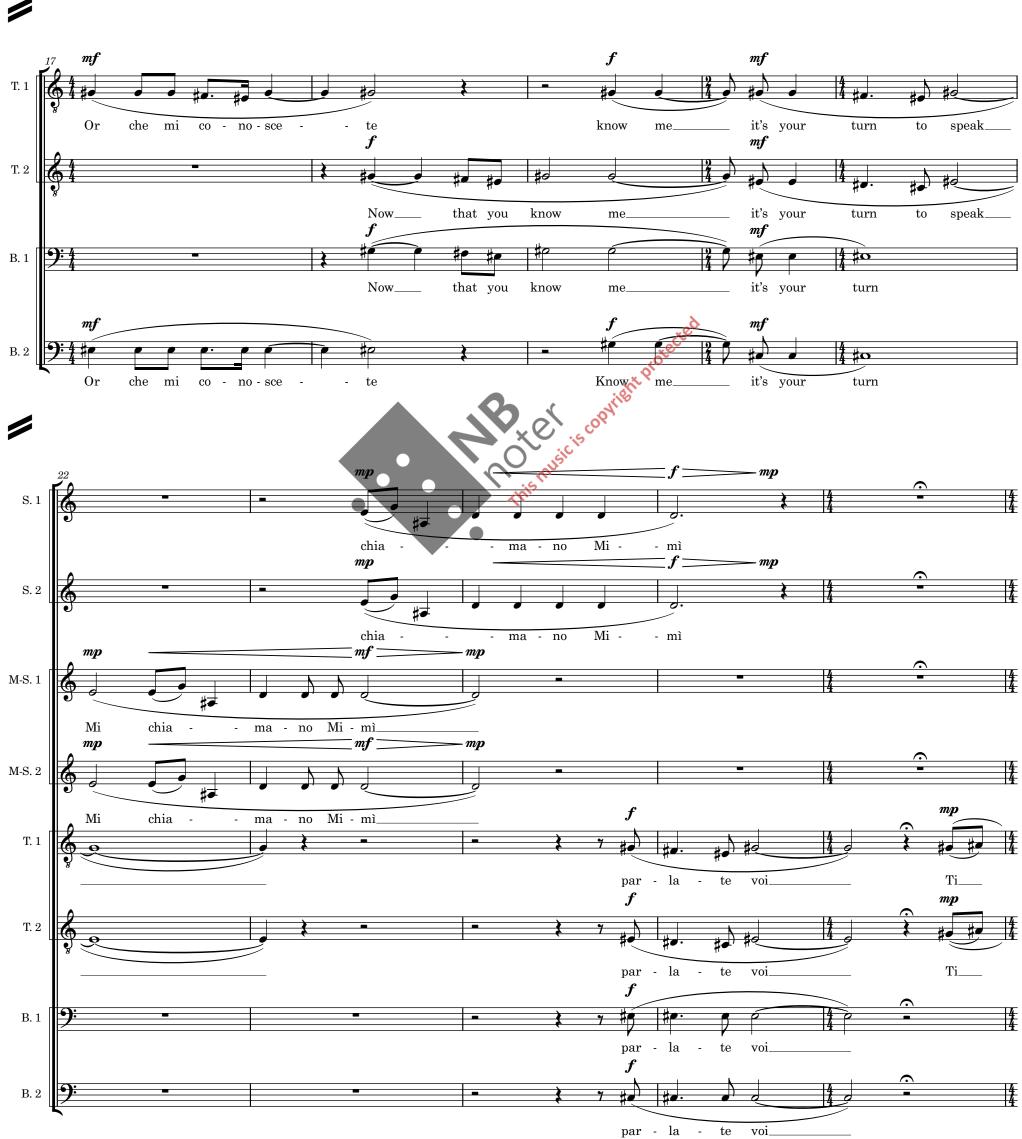


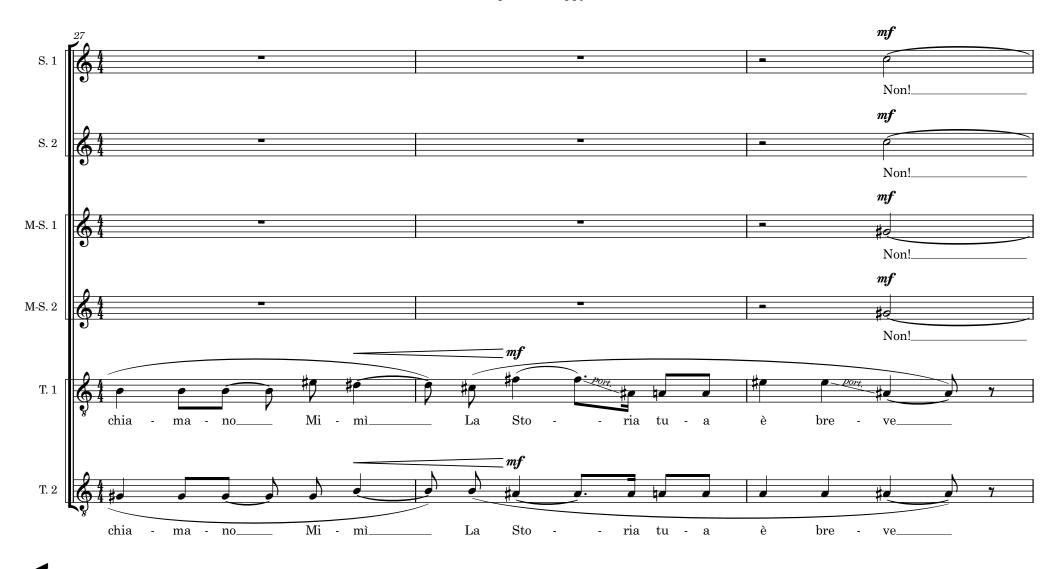


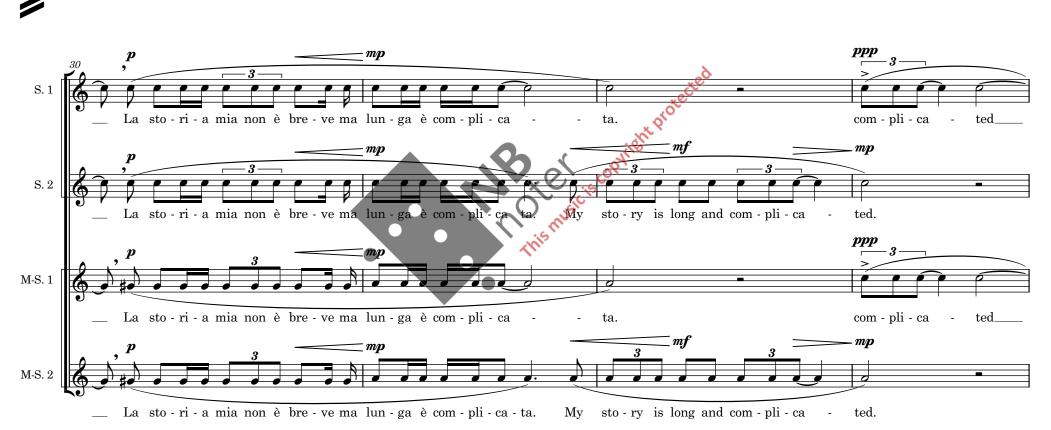
2. Tranquil and happy?

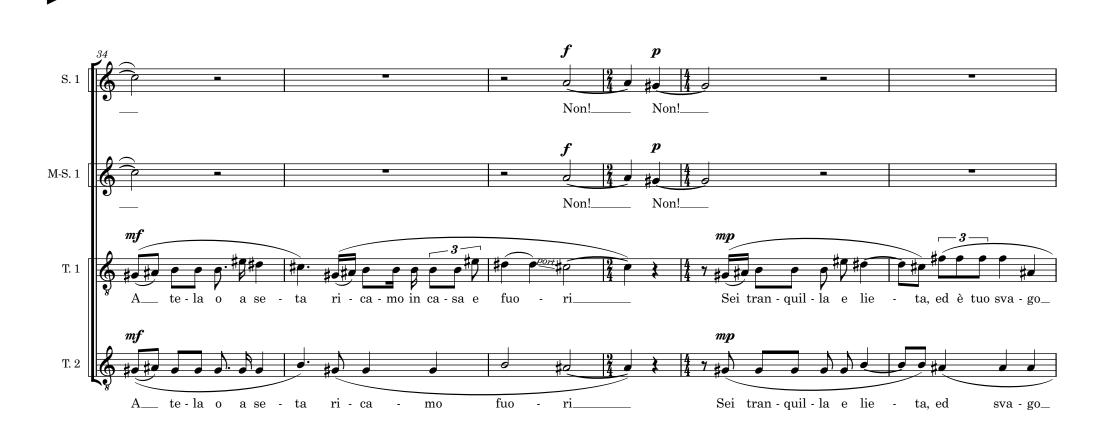
















3. How cold your hand is





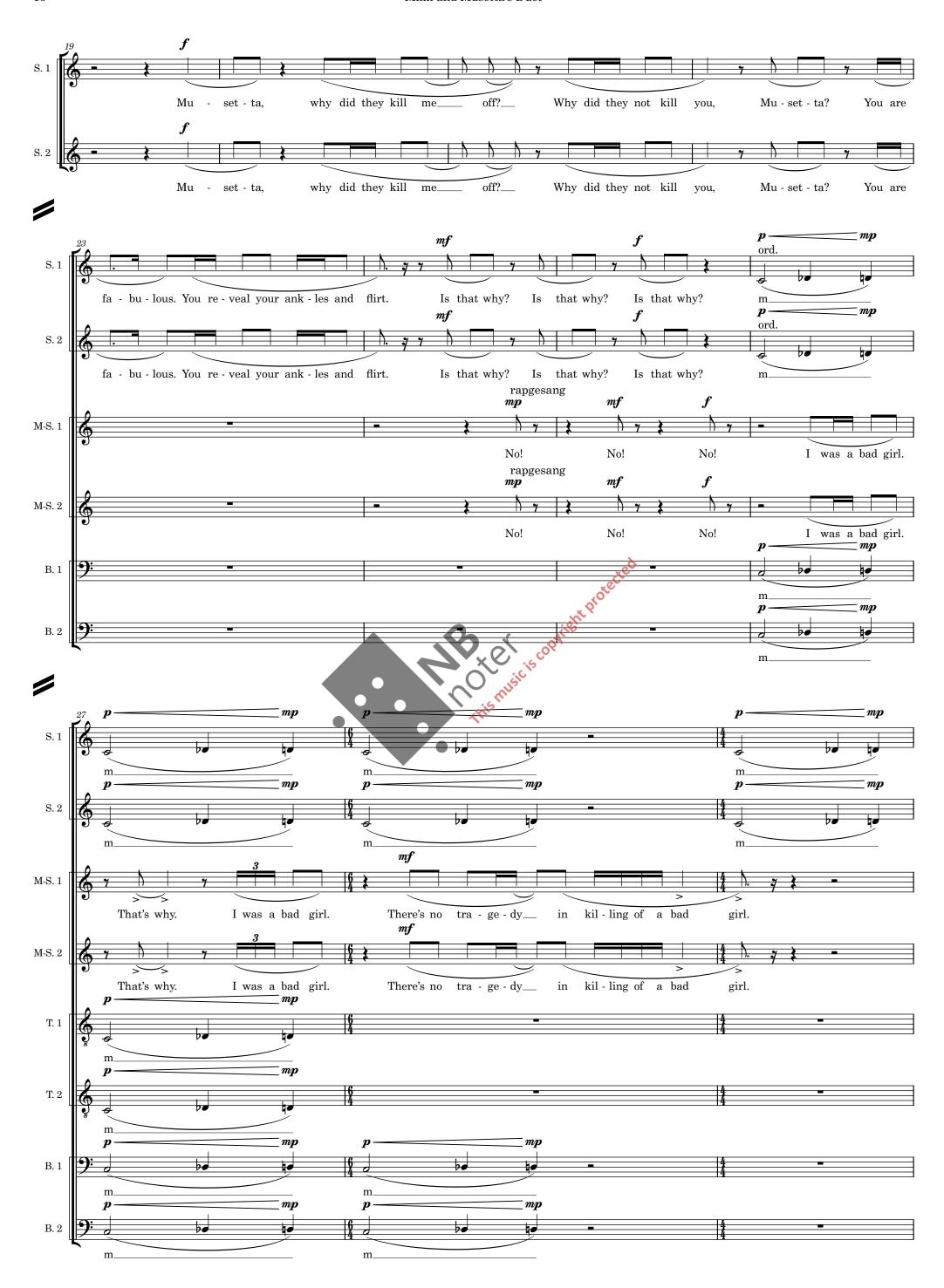




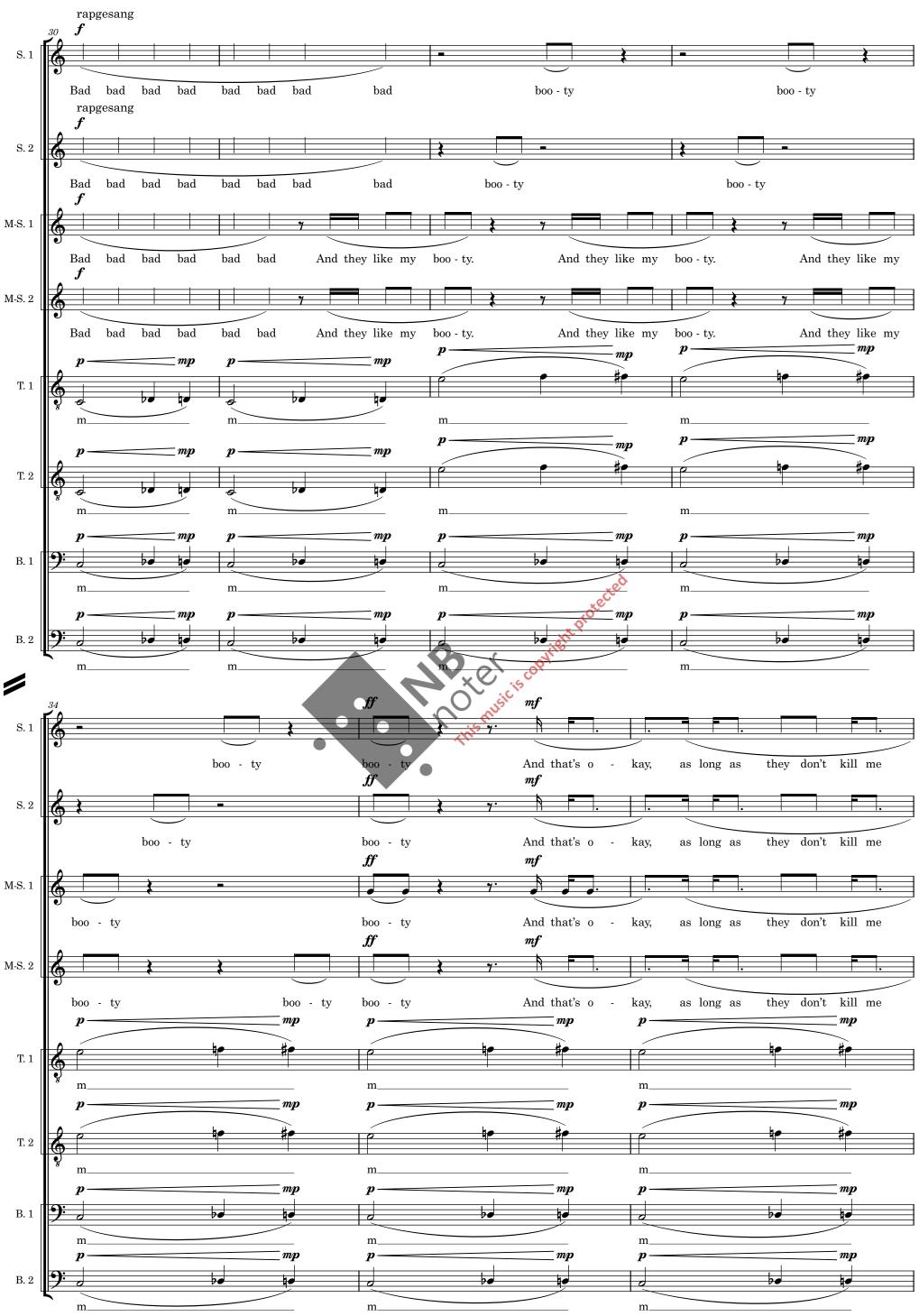
Offertorium Offertorium



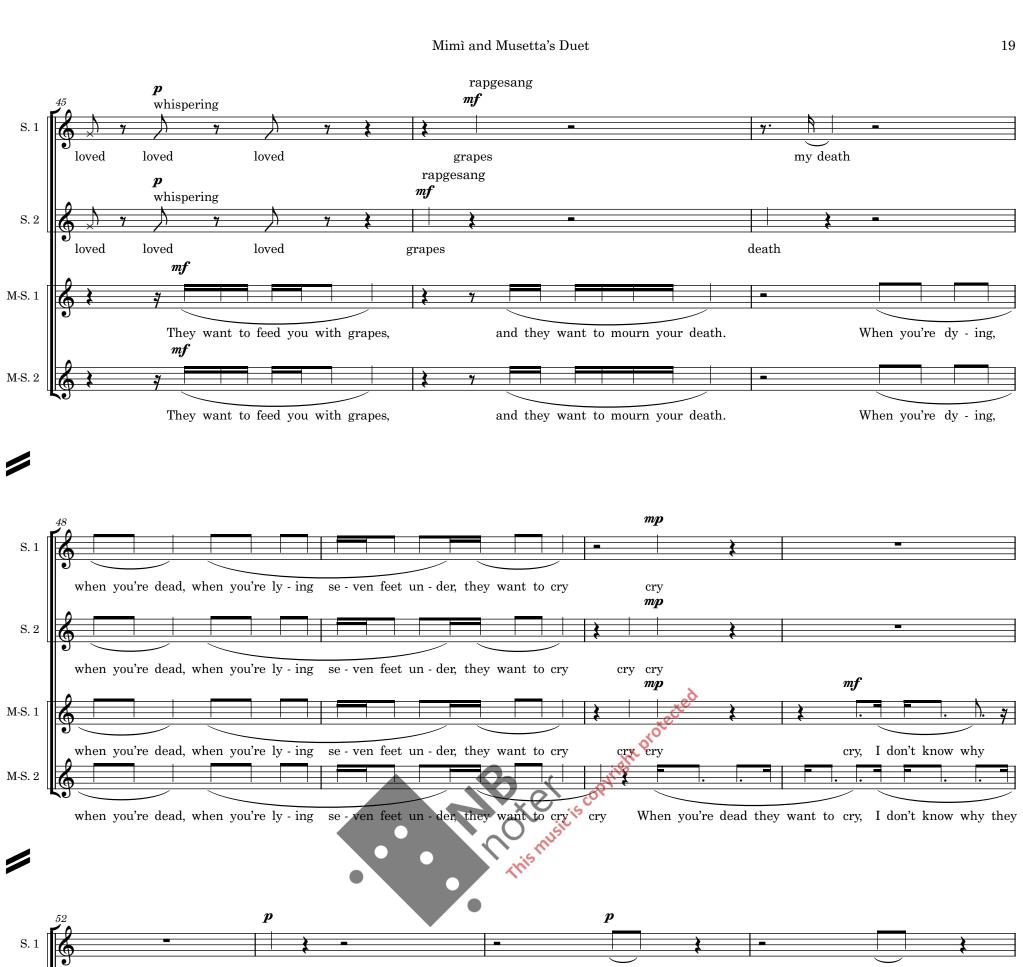




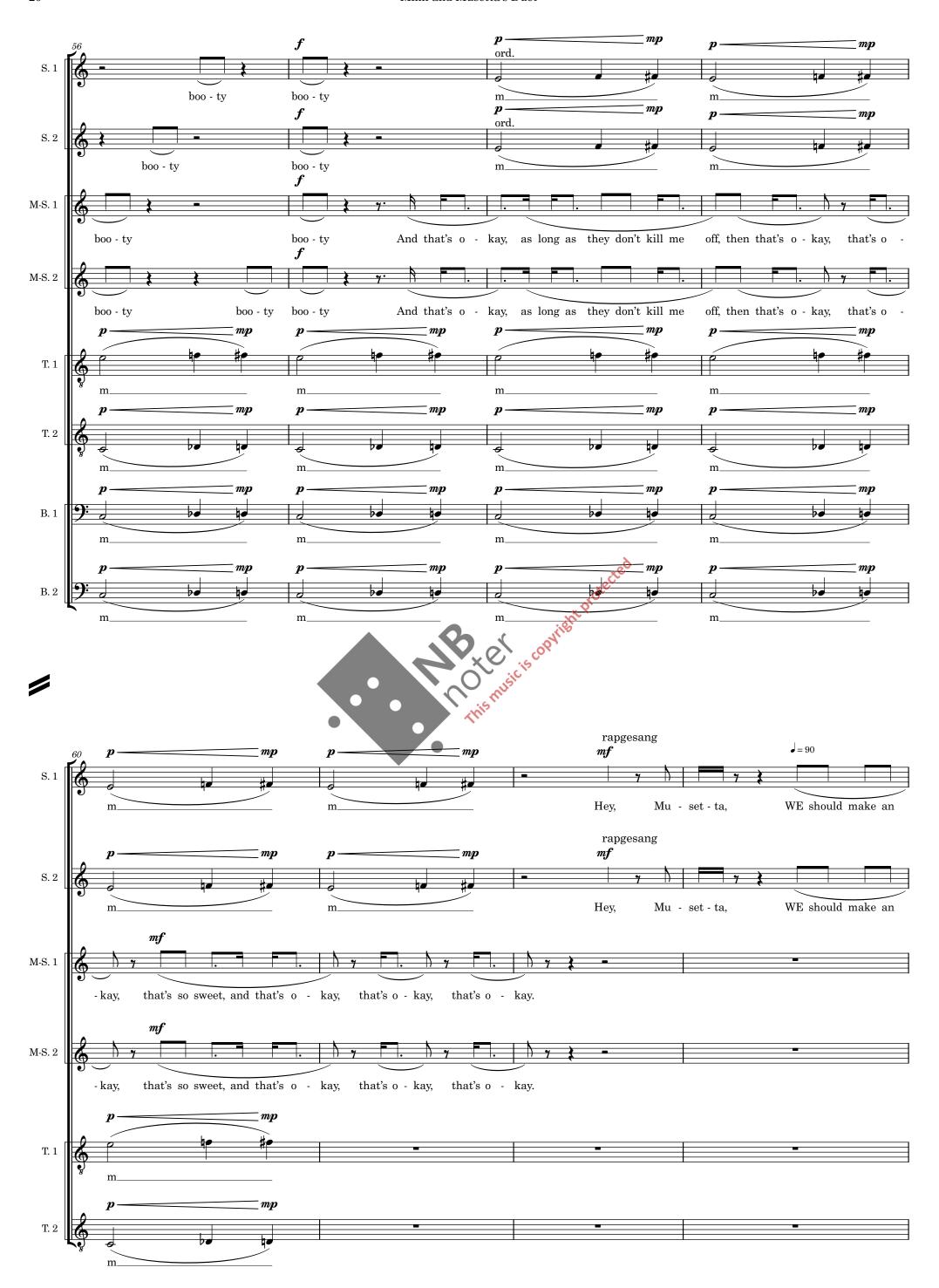
Mimì and Musetta's Duet









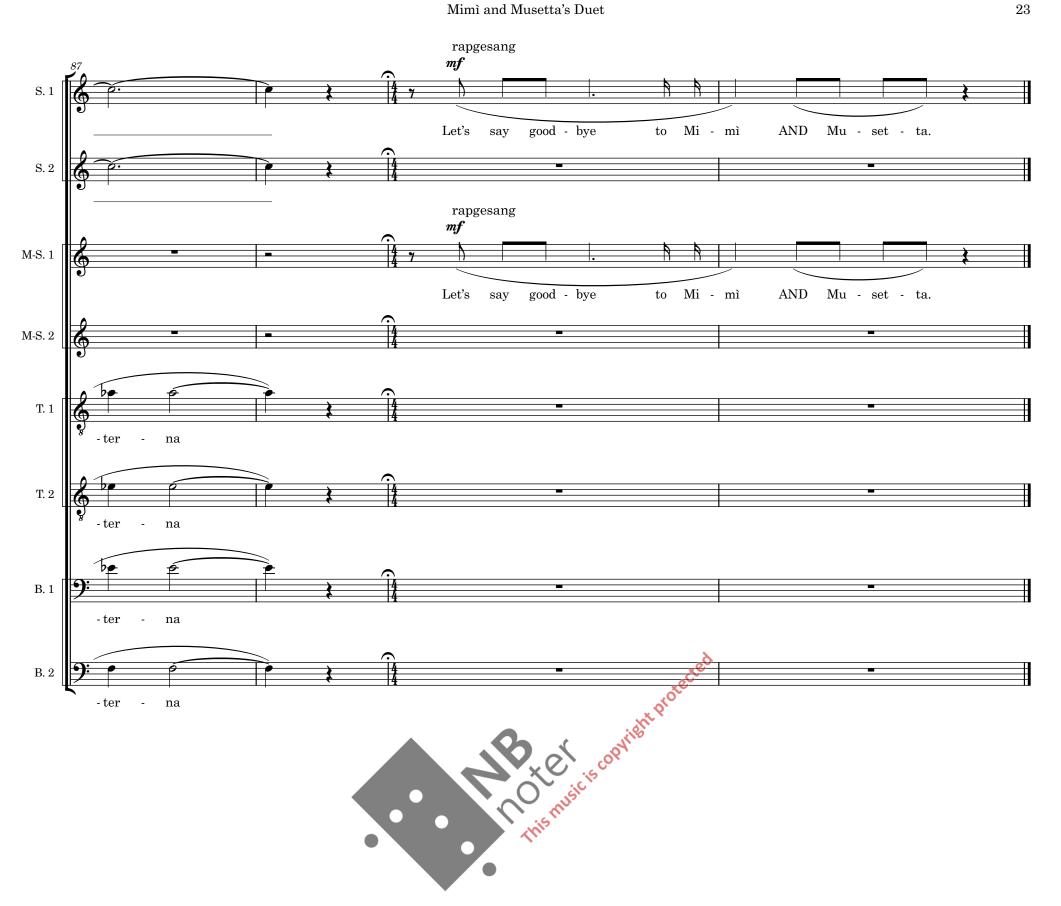


Mimì and Musetta's Duet





Mimì and Musetta's Duet





Libera me 25





