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Foreword

In 1608 a "Catholic gentleman" called Samuel de Champlain dropped anchor in the shadow of Cape Diamond and Quebec was born. Presently the Jesuits arrived and began that labour which has made their Order so glorious in our annals. With them came the timeless melodies of the Church. A mere ten years after the death of Champlain, the priest who conducted his obsequies wrote this in his journal:

"Quebec, 1645, December 25. The first bell was rung at 11 o'clock, the second a little before the half-hour, and immediately we began to sing two carols, 'Venez, mon Dieu' and 'Chantons Noé', Monsieur de la Ferté playing the bass viol, Saint Martin the violin. We also had a German Flute, but when it got to church we found it could not be played in tune.

We finished carols a little before midnight, and proceeded without delay to the Te Deum; a little after this was done we fired a cannon for the midnight signal and Mass began." Jérôme Lalemant, S. J.

With what tears this little flock must have sung "The Lord's song in a strange land" as they recalled the splendour of the Rite in Notre Dame, the grandeur of Rheims, and Mass in a thousand parish churches at home. Ardently they strove to recreate that loveliness in New France, indeed, we are told of a Bishop who refused to consecrate churches he thought too shabby for God.

Came blood and strife, the flag changed and changed again, but beneath the banner of the Cross, the Church went her steadfast way, singing the Songs of Sion. We do well to remember these things. For our part, anthem and voluntary would soon be forgotten, yea, the organ-builder would utterly fail, did not men go to Church.

Churches there were none in the pathless forest of those days but farms and villages began to fringe our rivers, and bells from many a steeple echoed across the waters. When Quebec fell and New France became Canada, folk from Britain augmented the tide of immigrants and the Parson built his church beside that of the Curé. These churches, whether they owed allegiance to Rome, Canterbury or Edinburgh demanded music. The voice of the choirmaster was heard in the land. We can well imagine the gravity with which the fiddler and the trumpeter played the service —— they who had been the life of the party the night before.

As for organs, surely some keen young fellows from Brittany (or Yorkshire) would make some little "trackers", with a couple of ranks of flute-pipes that *could* be "played in tune". The rest is History! In 1834 a "Harmonious Blacksmith" lost interest in his forge and cast his eye on a forlorn organ from France — mute in a strange land. It sang again.

That was Joseph Casavant. His two sons, bettering his instruction, set up a factory at St. Hyacinthe and began that great series of organs we know today. Other builders arose, organ-pipes from foreign shores lifted up their voices in Canada so that now, we have more fine organs than we have fine organists.

With two exceptions, the pieces in these books are not hard, nor do they demand any great array of stops. They certainly presuppose that intelligent diligence we observe in good singers, violinists and pianists. As with all Canadian Art, there is clear evidence of our two-fold heritage, and some hint of personal allegiances, yet this collection is as native to our soil as the wood and metal in our organ pipes.

I do not compose. Therefore it is not improper for me to commend this selection of other mens' thoughts, in the hope that it will do honour to "The Master of Music and Loveliness". (Aidan Clarke)

Charles Peaker

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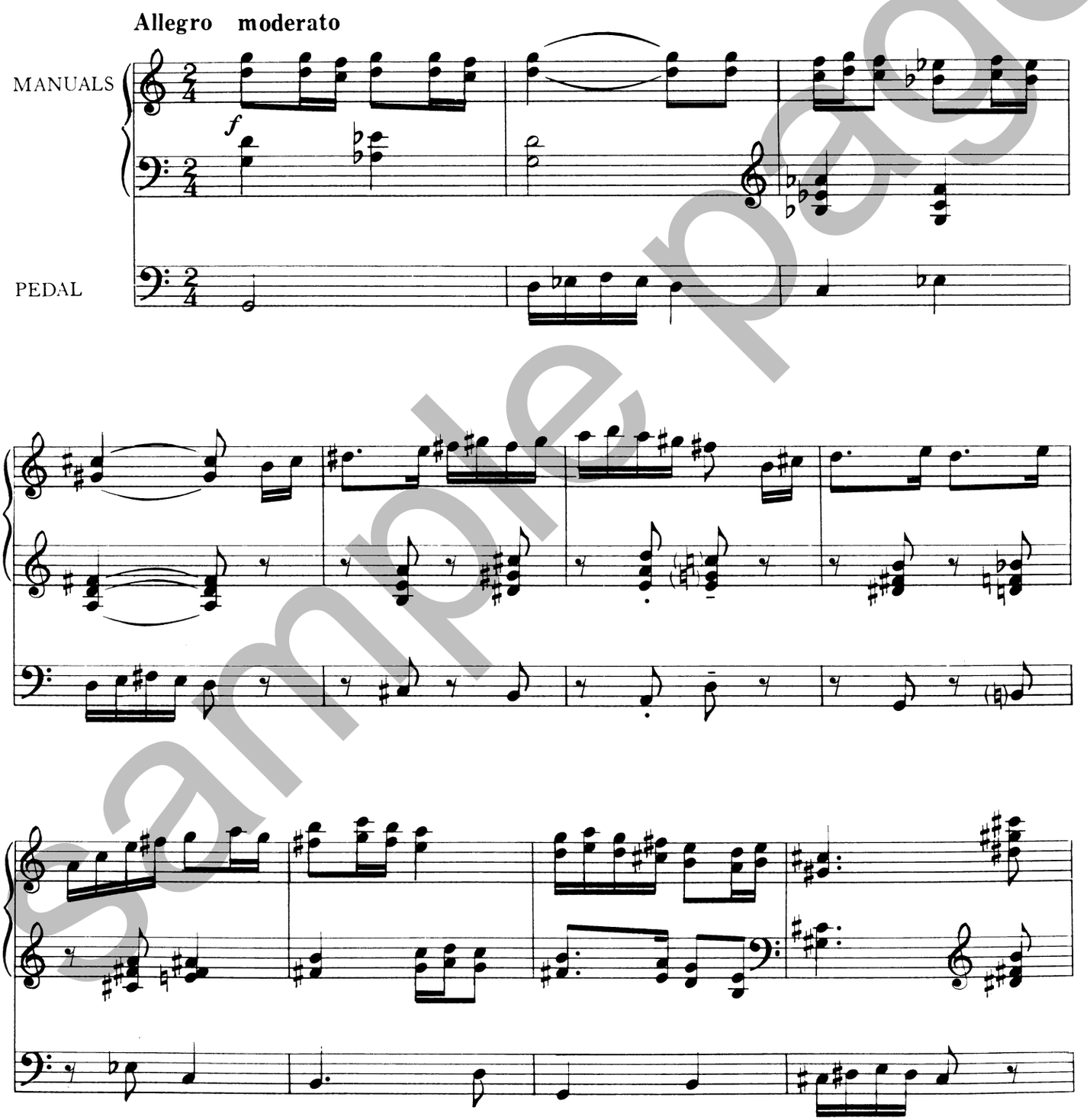
To Dr. Charles Peaker

Petite Suite

I Introduction

GERALD BALES



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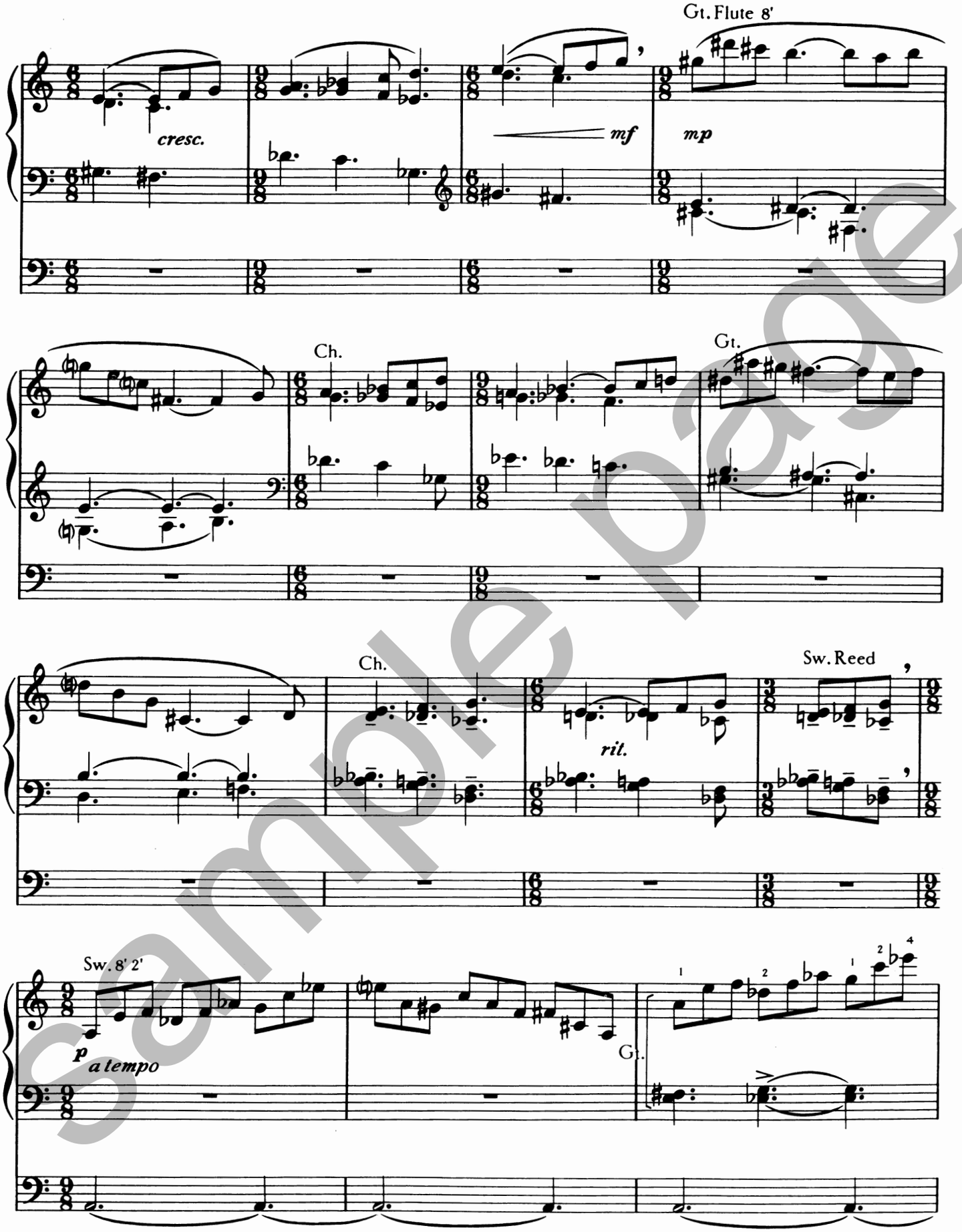

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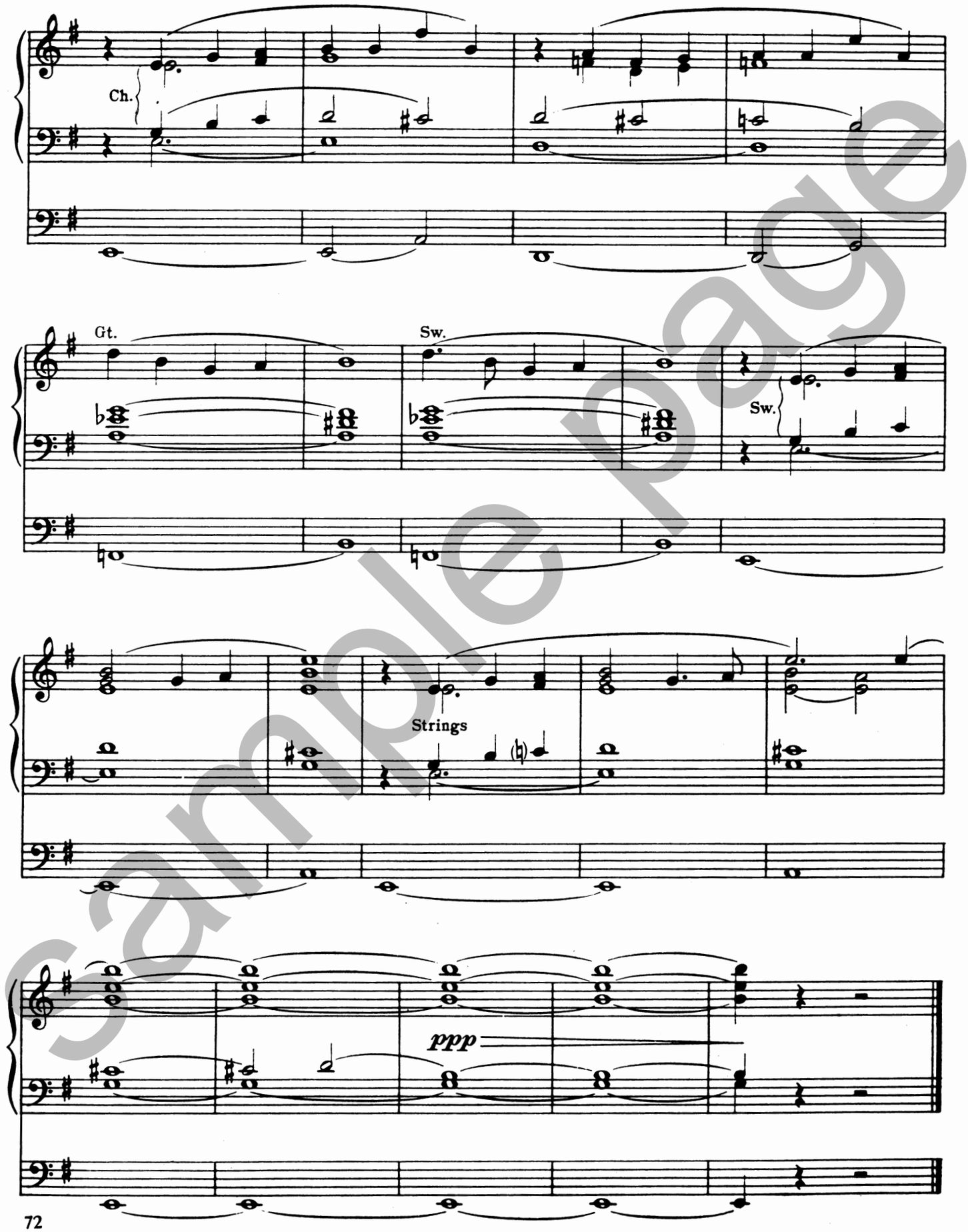

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