All Hymns are Not Created Equal

Playing the Difficult Hymns

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Playing “difficult” hymns is exactly the same as playing “easy” hymns, as long as you can find a way to break it down into a series of smaller problems.

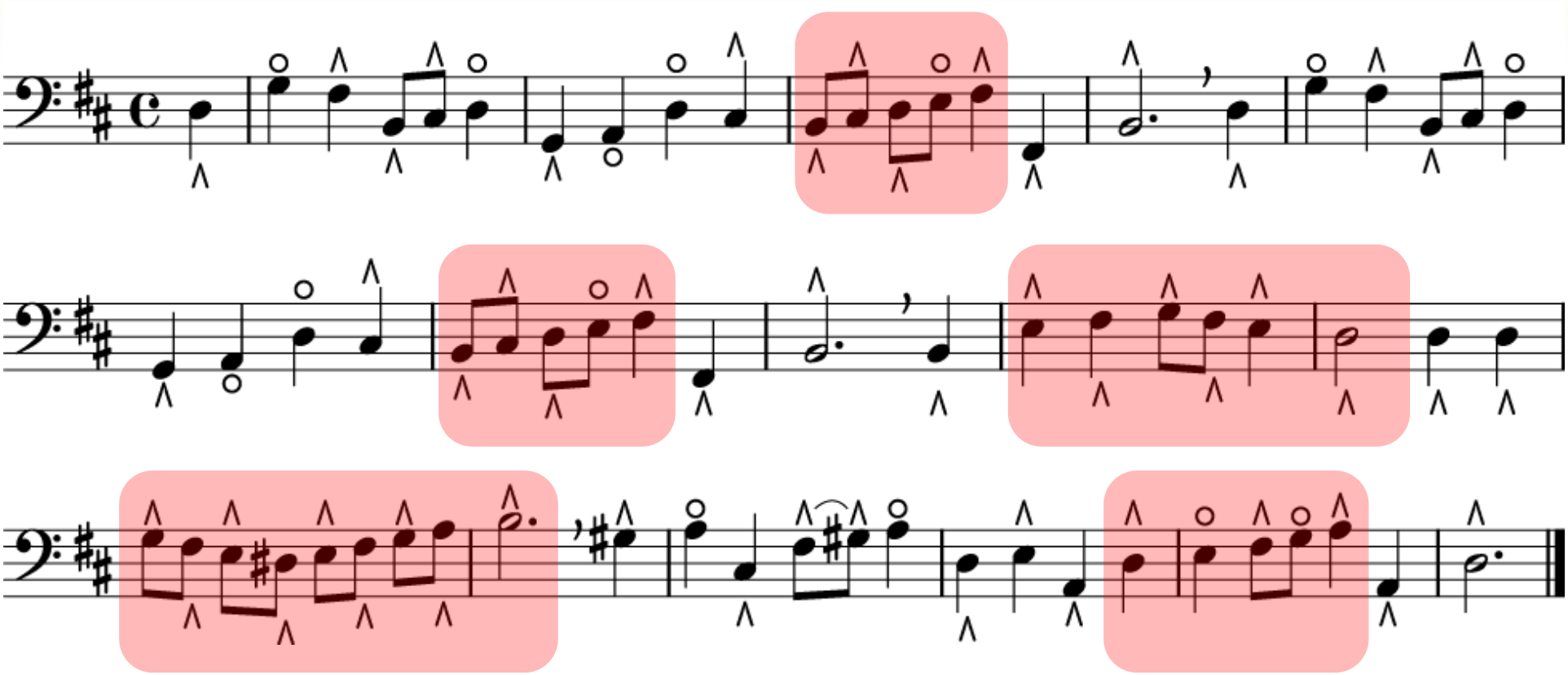
Agenda

- Challenging Pedal Parts
- Meter
- Tacet Phrases
- Repeated Notes and Tying
- Song-Style Hymns
- Other issues?

Challenging Pedal Parts

- Use basic techniques to solve "advanced" problems
- Choose pedaling that effectively solves the problem at hand:
  - Limit motion where possible
  - Use efficient techniques and limit use of less efficient techniques where possible
  - Practice pedal alone until you have *mastered* it (i.e., until it is easy)

Example: *O Savior, Thou Who Wearest a Crown*



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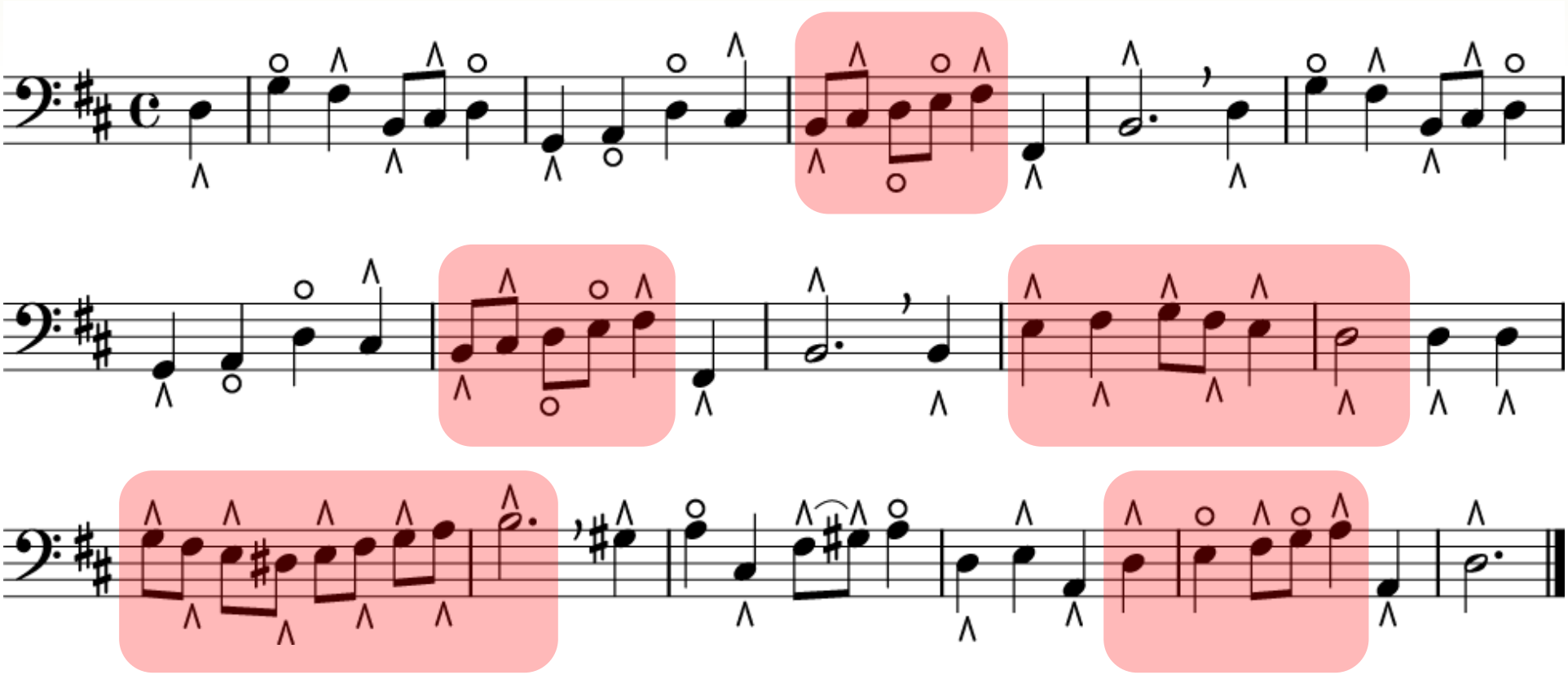

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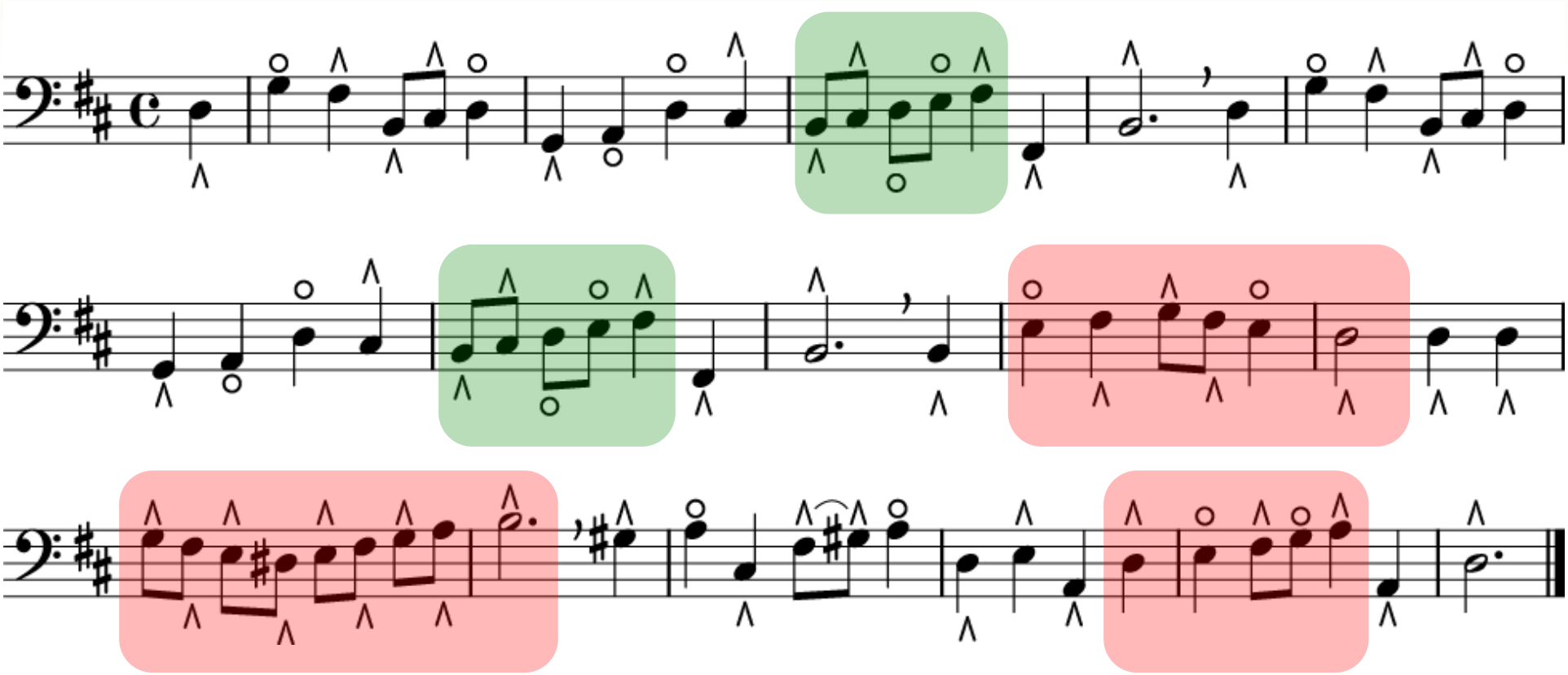

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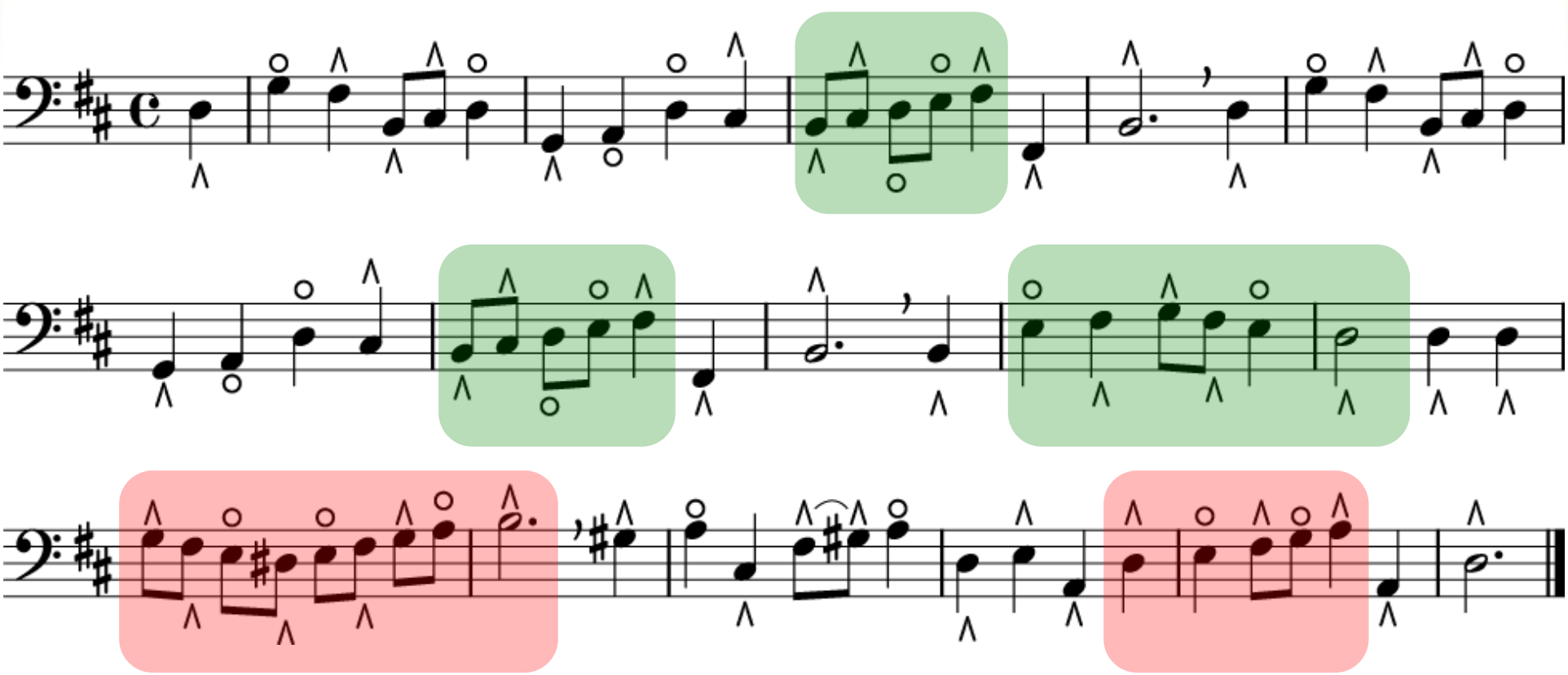

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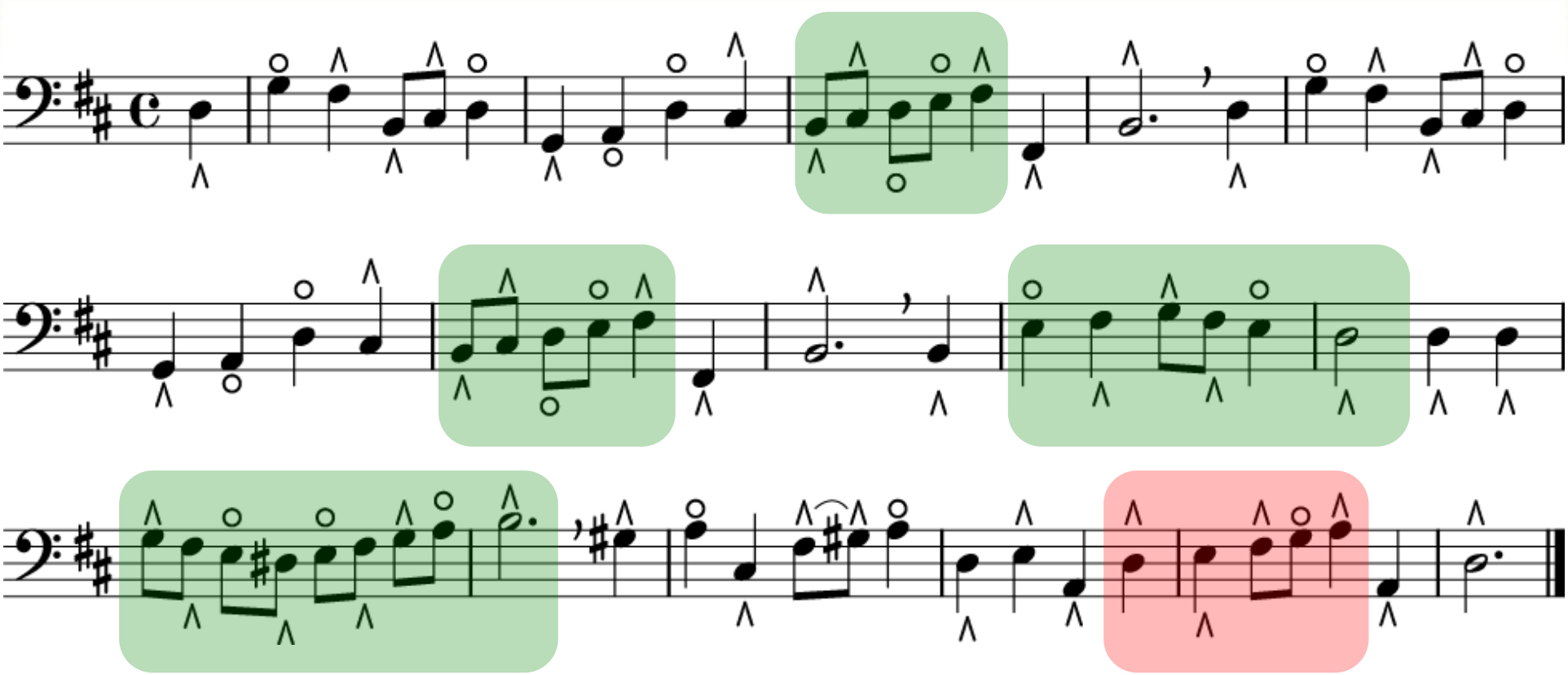


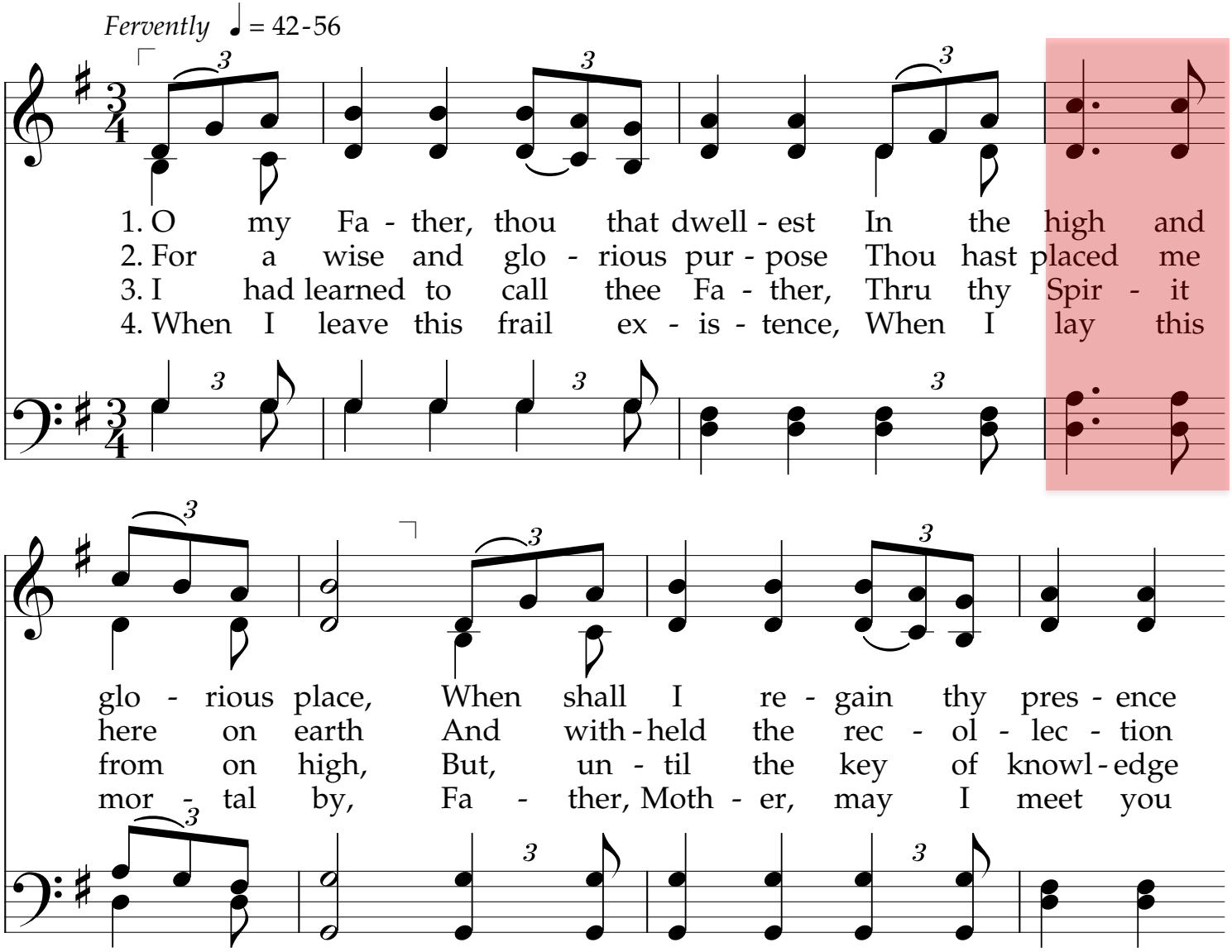
Compound Meters

- Meter: a regular pattern of strong and weak beats
- Simple meter: a meter in which the beat is divided into two equal parts (2/4, 3/4, 4/4)
- Compound meter: a meter in which the beat is divided into three equal parts (Example: 6/8, 9/8, 12/8)

Compound Meters

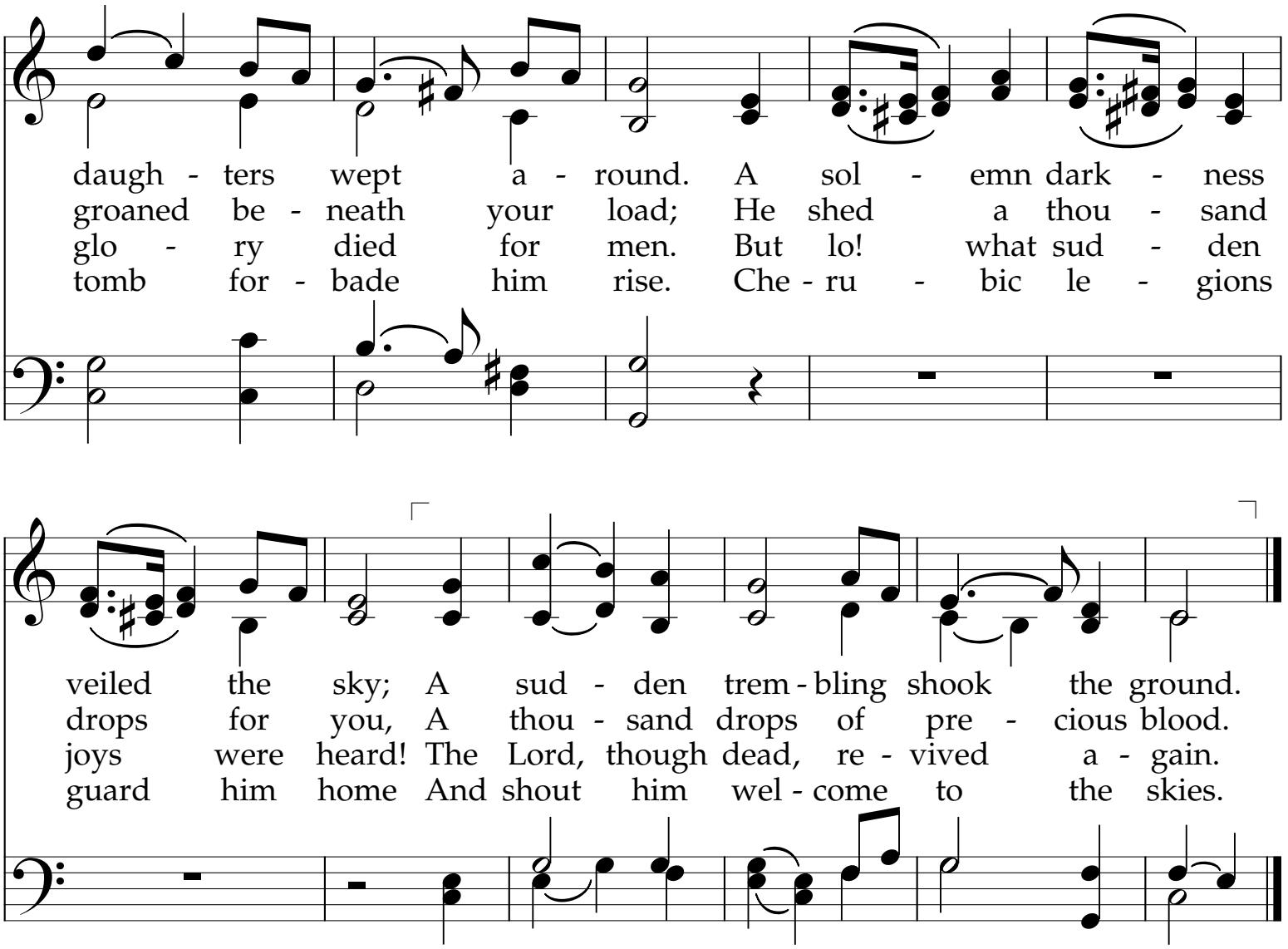
- The 1985 Edition of the Hymnal eliminated almost all use of compound meters
- This changes poses a few interesting (but rare) problems
- Example: *O My Father*

292 O My Father



Tacet Phrases

- Many hymns feature phrases where the lower voices drop out temporarily.
- Since many people sing the melody rather than parts, some organists consider it good practice to double the melody in the left hand to provide support for men singing during these phrases.


daugh - ters wept a - round. A sol - emn dark - ness
groaned be - neath your load; He shed a thou - sand
glo - ry died for men. But lo! what sud - den
tomb for - bade him rise. Che - ru - bic le - gions
veiled the sky; A sud - den trem - bling shook the ground.
drops for you, A thou - sand drops of pre - cious blood.
joys were heard! The Lord, though dead, re - vived a - gain.
guard him home And shout him wel - come to the skies.

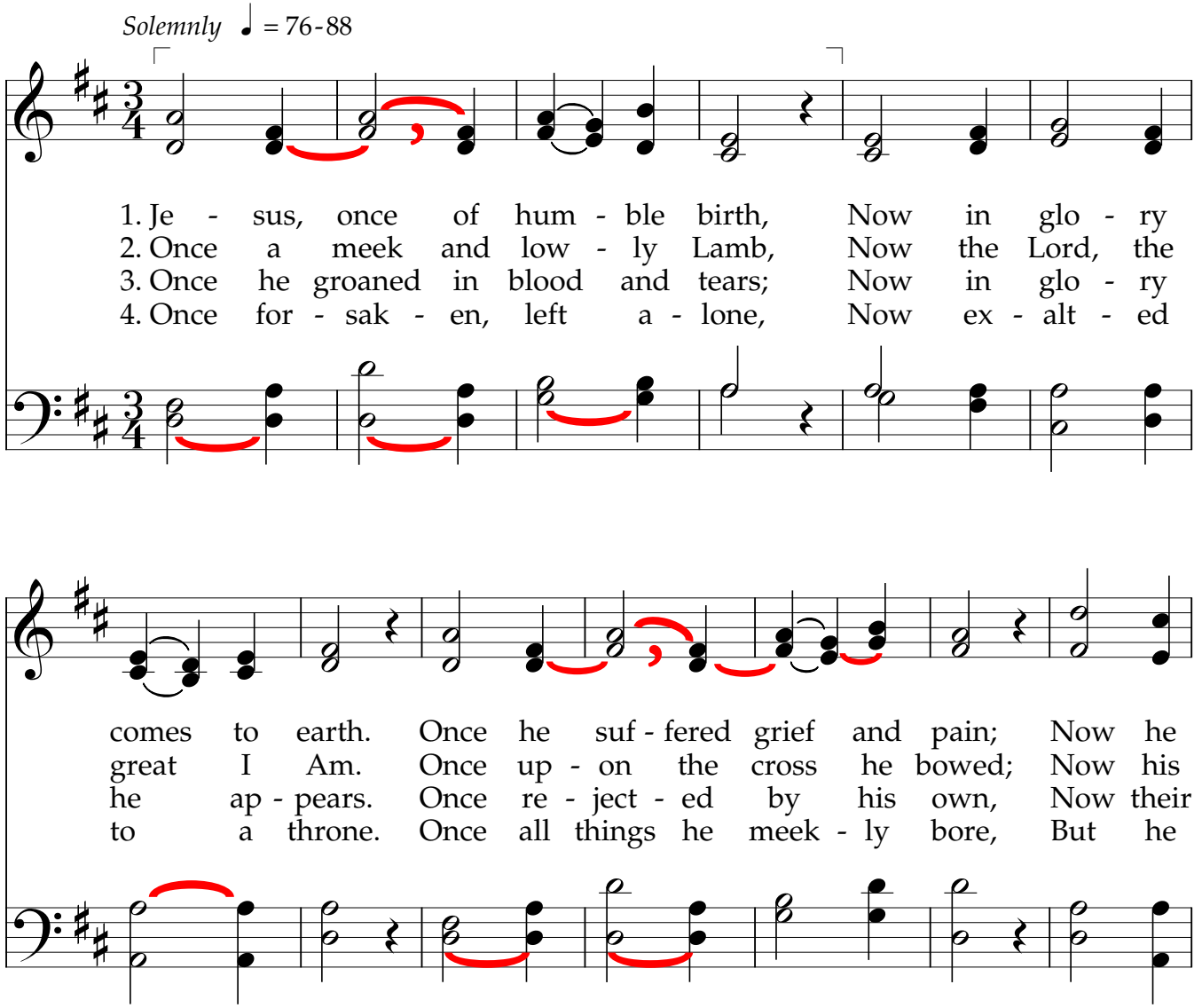
Repeated Notes and Tying

- Problem: Hymns are *vocal* music, and rendering them successfully on the organ requires skillful adaptation
- Solution: Tying *some* repeated notes helps create a sustained, idiomatic organ sound

Repeated Notes and Tying

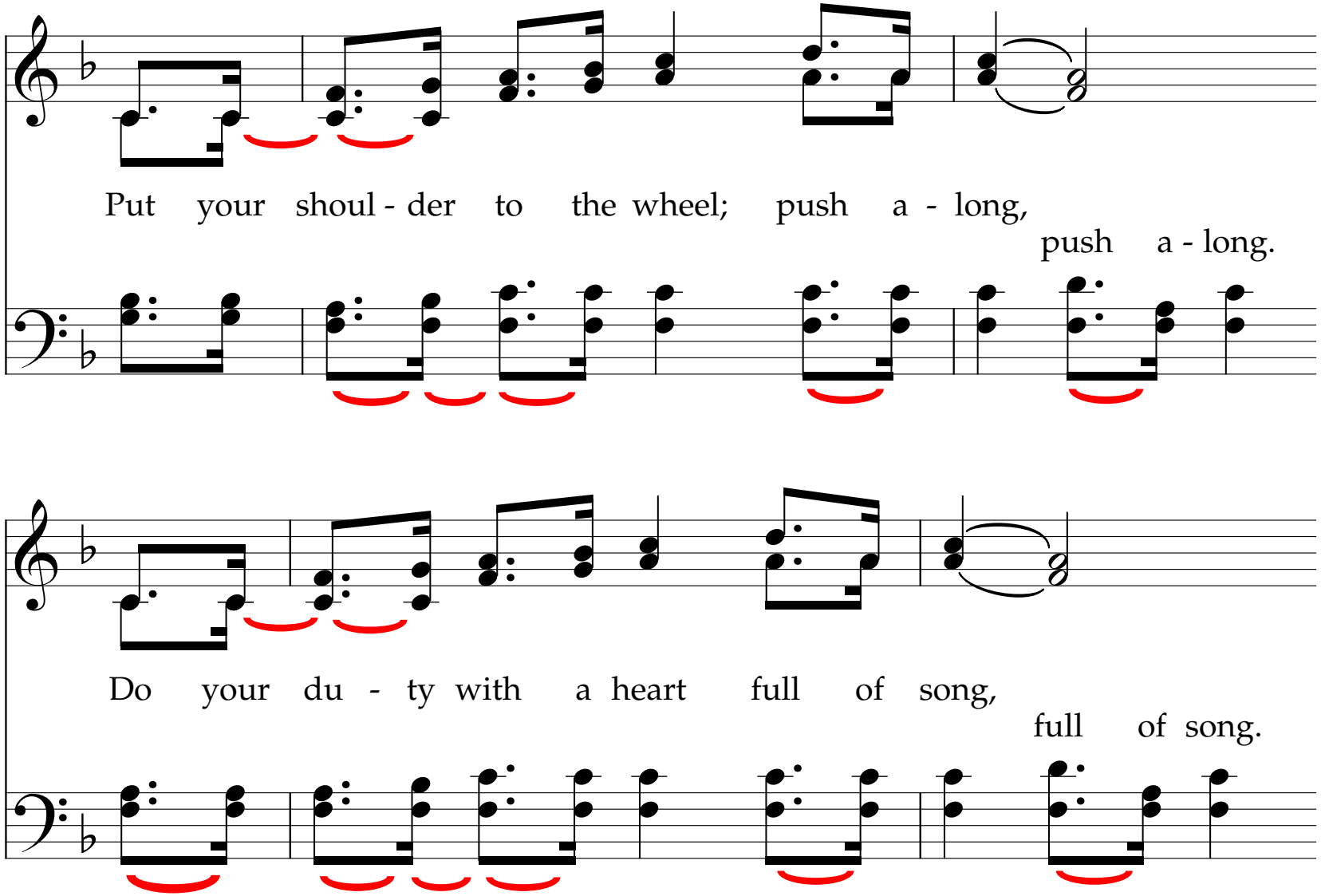
- Don't tie repeated notes in the soprano
  - Exception: Soprano/Alto common tones
- Repeated notes in the lower three voices may be either tied or repeated
- Tie from strong beats into weak beats, rather than weak into strong
- Avoid the "drumbeat" effect by occasionally changing the pattern of ties

Jesus, Once of Humble Birth 196



Song Style

- Song-style hymns present a particular challenge to organists
- These hymns often feature many repeated notes as well as pervasive dotted rhythms
- Rendering these hymns effectively on the organ requires careful thought and preparation


Put your shoul - der to the wheel; push a - long,
push a - long.
Do your du - ty with a heart full of song,
full of song.

Questions?

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