Catalog No. 7442

To Donald Kendrick

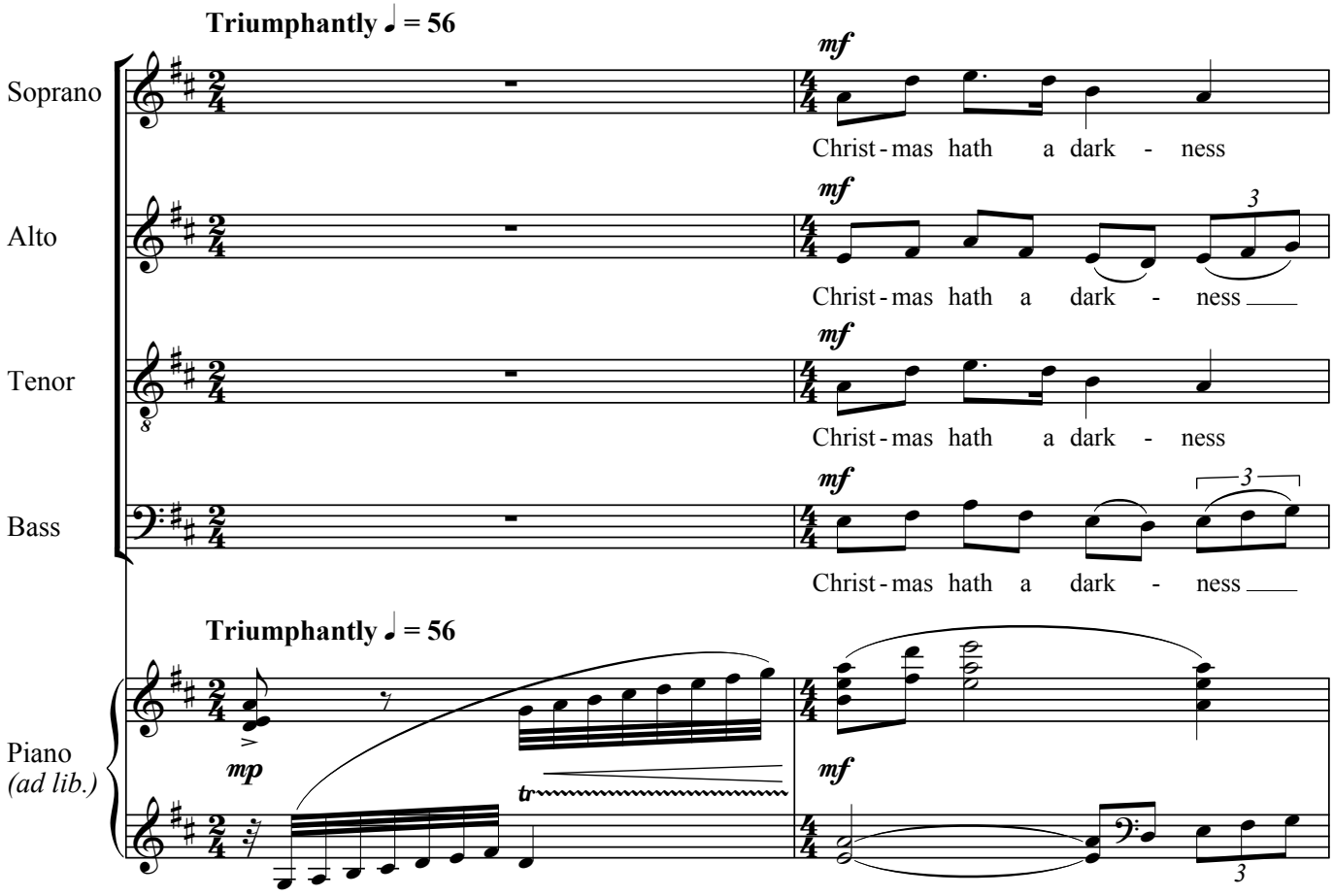
Two Christina Rossetti Carols

for SATB Chorus and Piano (ad lib.)

Christmas Eve — Derek Healey

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

2. Christmas hath a darkness



Composer's Notes

The original ideas for these two carols first came to me during Christmas of 2005 while visiting Oxford, Mississippi. However, they were not completed until the early Spring of 2009 in Brooklyn, New York. Like many other composers, I am often drawn to Christina Rossetti's fresh and imaginative religious and secular poetry.

Before the paling of the stars is gentle and penitential, similar to plainsong, whereas *Christmas hath a darkness* is by contrast both strong and joyful. In both carols, the melody often moves to an inner voice and the words "in relief" appear. The singers should make this voice louder than the surrounding parts. Performers should not exaggerate the *crescendi* and *diminuendi* in the first carol except those at the work's close.

In *Christmas hath a darkness*, singers should perform the verse which begins "Earth strike up your music" with conviction, while the piano part (particularly the right hand) should be strong and evocative of clanging bells. The gradual relaxation of tension in the final two pages should be carefully controlled. Both pieces may be performed unaccompanied, the piano parts being *ad lib.* However, in the second carol, the fast scales are important. All ascending scales should be brilliant and descending, harp-like. I composed these two carols with college choruses in mind, but they are also suitable for liturgical use.

—Derek Healey

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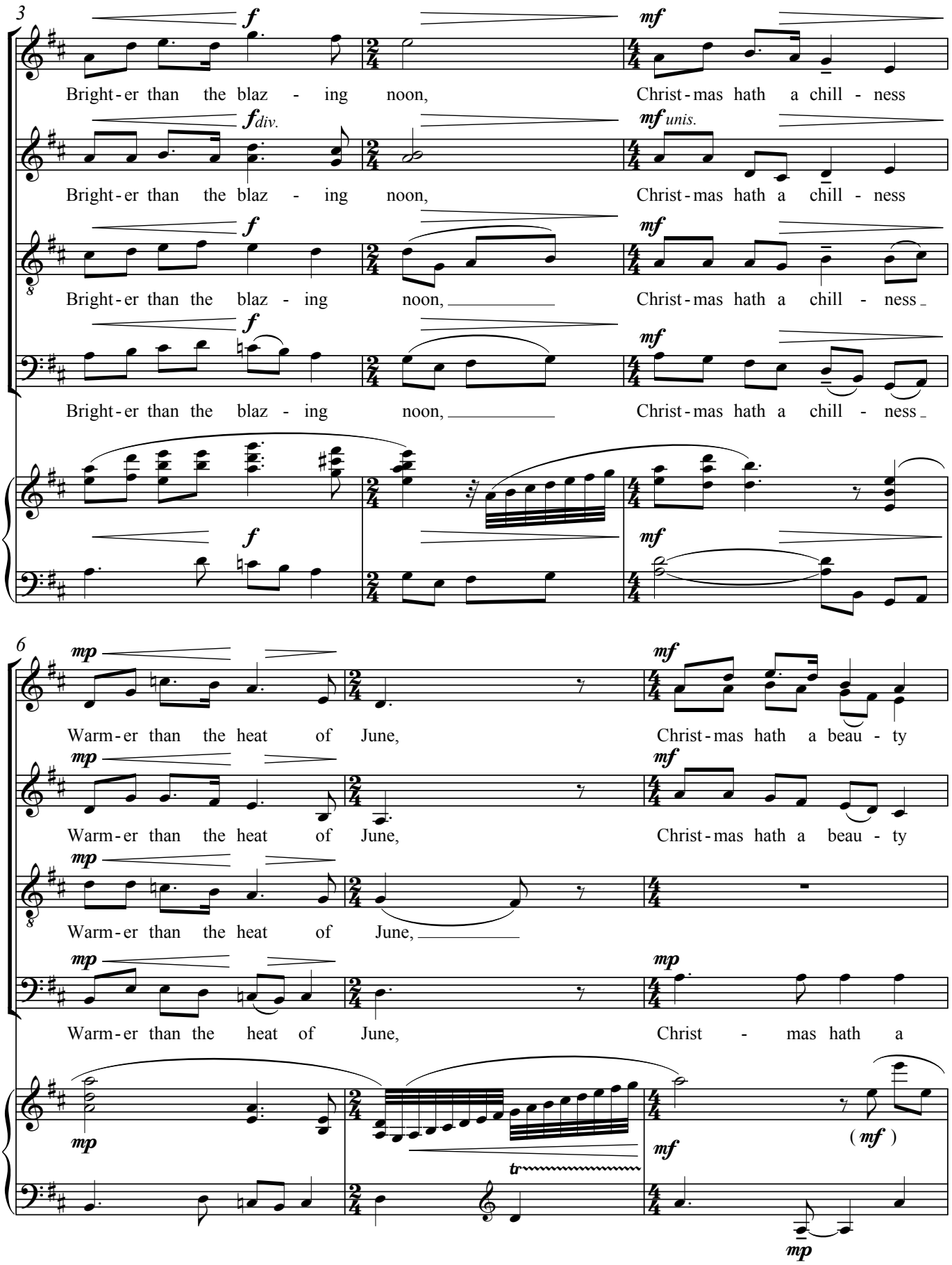
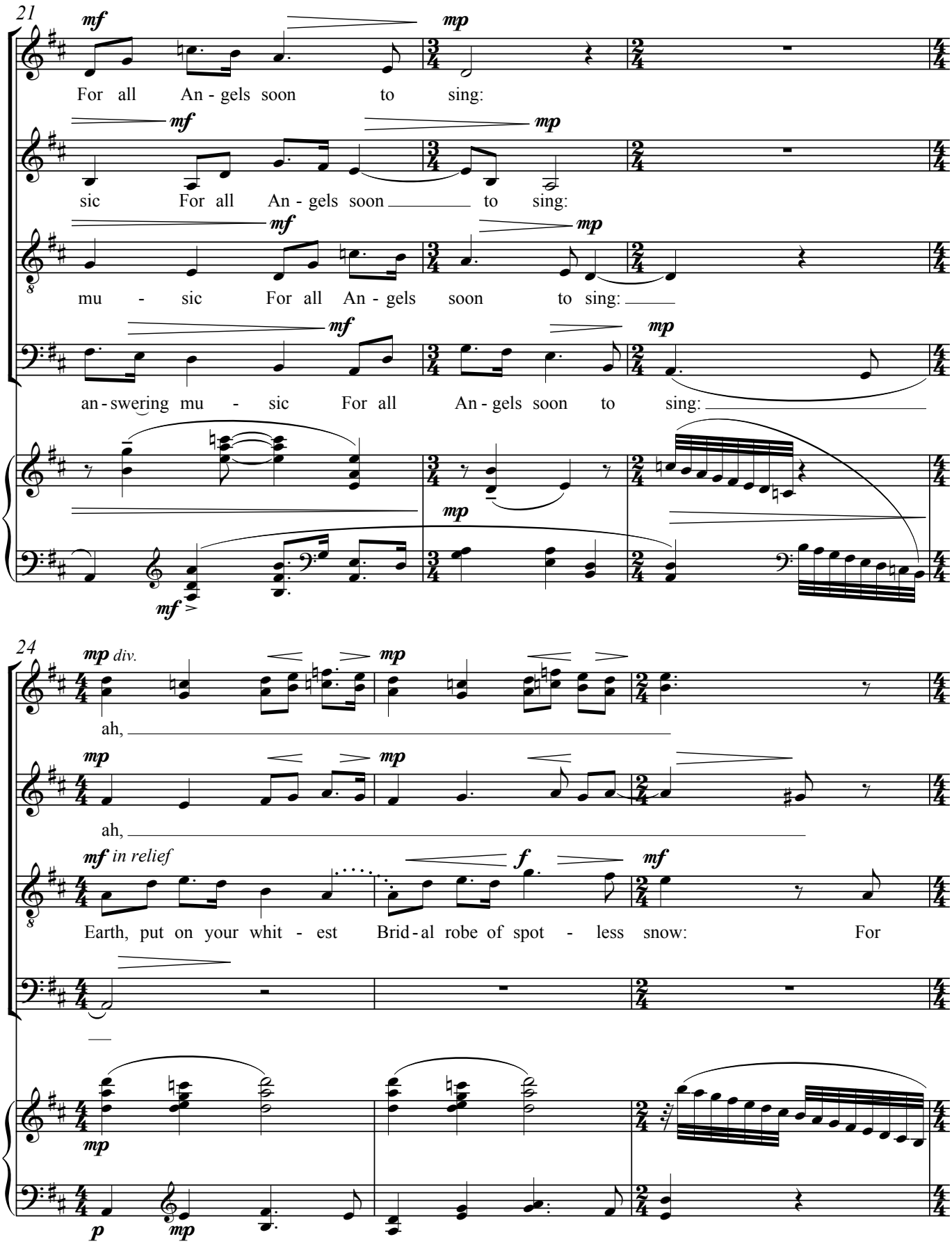

3
f
mf
Bright-er than the blaz - ing noon, Christ-mas hath a chill - ness
f div.
mf unis.
Bright-er than the blaz - ing noon, Christ-mas hath a chill - ness
f
mf
Bright-er than the blaz - ing noon, Christ-mas hath a chill - ness
f
mf
Bright-er than the blaz - ing noon, Christ-mas hath a chill - ness
f
mf
6
mp
mf
Warm-er than the heat of June, Christ-mas hath a beau - ty
mp
mf
Warm-er than the heat of June, Christ-mas hath a beau - ty
mp
Warm-er than the heat of June,
mp
mp
Warm-er than the heat of June, Christ - mas hath a
mp
tr
mf
(mf)
mp


21
mf
mp
For all An - gels soon to sing:
mf
mp
sic For all An - gels soon to sing:
mf
mp
mu - sic For all An - gels soon to sing:
mf
mp
an - swering mu - sic For all An - gels soon to sing:
mp
mf
24
mp div.
mp
ah,
mp
mp
ah,
mf in relief
f
mf
Earth, put on your whit - est Brid - al robe of spot - less snow: For
mp
p
mp

32

p *pp* *n*

so low.

p *pp* *n*

so low.

mf in relief *p* *n*

Brought for us so low.

div. *pp* *n*

low.

p *mp* *p* *pp*

pp

2009
2'10"

Christmas Eve

Christmas hath a darkness
Brighter than the blazing noon,
Christmas hath a chillness
Warmer than the heat of June,
Christmas hath a beauty
Lovelier than the world can show:
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
Brought for us so low.

Earth, strike up your music,
Birds that sing and bells that ring;
Heaven hath answering music
For all Angels soon to sing:
Earth, put on your whitest
Bridal robe of spotless snow:
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
Brought for us so low.

—Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

Derek Healey (b. 1936)

For biographical information about the composer, please visit his Web site. <www.derekhealey.com>

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