WHY THE CHIMES RANG

Adapted by Walter Horsley

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Why the Chimes Rang

by RAYMOND MACDONALD ALLEN
adapted by WALTER HORSLEY

CAST OF CHARACTERS

NARRATOR	**ORGANIST**
VILLAGE MAYOR	**QUEEN**
KING	**PEDRO** *(a young boy)*

HANDBELL RINGERS *(possibly three)*

PRODUCTION NOTES

The dramatization of the narrative consists entirely of four (well almost four) processionals down and back the center or side aisle of the nave of the church. The processional action calls for no speaking parts. Each actor and actress must work out the synchronization of movement to the story line with the narrator in rehearsal. Ample rehearsal time with characters, narrator and musician all together is a necessity.

Following is an outline of action interpreting each character's part. Participants may feel free to interject their own creative ideas so long as they support and strengthen the character they portray and not detract from it. A good actor must cause his viewer to see only the personality he is portraying in the story.

The Village Mayor — dressed conservatively in a dark business suit, carries in his hand a cloth moneybag (may be borrowed from a bank) containing play coins, metal washers or something that will jingle like the sound of money when shaken. On cue he walks very confidently down the aisle holding his head high with an air of self-importance. Holding the bag of money high enough for all to see, he jingles it a couple of times en route. He does a quick bow at the altar, then standing sideways, so not to block the view, he drops the moneybag on the altar (communion or re-table) making a noise, then follows the

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action of the narration. He returns back up the aisle slowly and meekly with his eyes glued to the floor in disappointment.

The Queen — is dressed in a long flowing gown possibly with a cape, a rhinestone tiara or small crown can add to the effect, and large bejeweled necklace, bracelets and earrings that can be taken off quickly and gracefully. Do not take off the tiara or crown. On cue the queen walks slowly and gracefully down the aisle in a most regal manner. Upon reaching the altar she bows low and then carefully takes off her bracelets, earrings, and necklace. She places them on the table standing sideways at the table so the viewer can see her actions. She steps back and to the side and looks upward to the bell tower while waiting for the bells to ring. She returns meekly back up the aisle.

The King — is dressed in a royal robe and a large golden crown (can be made from cardboard and sprayed with gold paint). On cue the king processes down the aisle in a most royal manner. Upon reaching the altar the king bows low, then standing sideways to the table, in slow motion, raises his hands above his head, lowers them to his crown, lifts it high, holds it in front of him for a moment, then places it on the altar. He steps back and to the side and gazes upward while waiting his cue from the narrator to start back up the aisle slowly and humbly with his eyes to the floor.

Pedro — dressed in his Sunday best (suit or jacket). Make sure he has a silver dollar in his pocket. Pedro processes — oops, Pedro runs down the aisle very clumsily; he trips on the steps; he does not bow when he reaches the altar, and he slaps the dollar down on one corner of the table making a noise. He then backs up the aisle in an almost skipping-dancing manner, looking upward (towards the bell tower) in recognition of the bell's sounding. Smiling all the way back he may want to spin around at a couple of places in the aisle as part of his excitement.

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The Narrator — a strong voice that speaks clearly, slowly and with the necessary expression to interpret the feeling of the story. The narration must be well enough in mind to allow the narrator an opportunity to be very sensitive to the timing of the processionals, the action at the altar, and the music cues.

The Organist — the organ background music is to support the drama with emotional interest and stimulate the imagination. The organist may want to improvise on each of the eight measures of processional music provided, or keep repeating the phrase until each subject reaches the altar. Take care not to over-registrate; the music should reflect the simplicity of the story. When playing during speech be cautious of volume. Close attention should be given to both suggested registration and metronome markings.

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(After two measures of music the narration begins.)

NARRATOR: Long ago in a faraway country where few people travel, there was a little village nestled high in the snowcapped mountains. The little village was much like any other that you or I might live in. It had small friendly houses grouped together on narrow, friendly streets. It had corner stores where people gathered to buy and to talk. It had small friendly children who ran excitedly through the streets and sang their carols at Christmas time.

But, unlike most other towns, this little village had a very large, grand church. *(Organ plays an "amen.")* It stood on the topmost peak in town and its lovely tower soared off into the heavens so far that sometimes the clouds floated down around it and hid it from view. And then there was something else different, too. High in the tower was a set of beautiful bells which were rung every Christmas Eve. Some said they were the most beautiful bells in the world because a great musician made them and hung them in their place. Others said they sounded so wonderful because the tower was so high and reached up where the air was so pure and clean. Anyway, everyone agreed on one thing — they were the sweetest sounding bells in all the country. "If only they could be heard again!" And herein lies our story.

They were called Christmas Bells because they rang out each Christmas Eve calling all the villagers to worship. Each Christmas Eve all the people brought their gifts to the altar for the Christ Child, and the next day they were given to the poor and the orphans who were hungry and lonely. Then one year the bell-ringer couldn't get the bells to ring — but they rang mysteriously all by themselves when the people brought their gifts to the altar. No one knew exactly what had

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happened to the bells to cause this. In the years to follow, people started giving more and more important gifts to see if they could make the bells ring brighter. They started trying to outdo each other for the sake of hearing the bells and they soon forgot the real spirit of giving. Because of this, one year the bells didn't ring at all.

Every Christmas Eve afterwards each person hoped his gift might make the bells ring again. People gave very expensive gifts and got angry when the bells didn't ring. But for many, many years the bells have remained silent. The bell-ringer says the bells are not broken, they're able to ring — they just don't want to ring.

(Organ plays PEDRO'S theme.) Now in this village lives a little boy named Pedro. Pedro is a poor boy but he's always happy. Pedro, like all the village children, knows all about the church on Christmas Eve, and how beautiful the bells used to sound, and how each year everyone hopes this might be the Christmas Eve the bells will ring again. He's heard that sometimes the King and Queen come to Christmas Eve worship at their village. And each year he begs his Mother and Father to take him, and each year his parents tell him the service is too late at night for such a small boy, but that some year he will be old enough to go. My, how he would like to see the lights in the church, and hear the music, and smell the greens, and if he's lucky, even see a king — and if he's luckier still, it could be the Christmas Eve the bells decided to ring again.

Well, you can imagine how excited Pedro was that Christmas Eve when his Mother and Father told him they thought he was at last old enough to stay up late and go to the service with them. He was so excited when getting dressed to go that he put his

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trousers on backwards and tied his shoes together. But with the help of his Mother, Pedro was finally dressed properly and ready to go to the beautiful Christmas Eve worship he had thought about for so long.

All of a sudden Pedro stopped very still. In all of his excitement he had forgotten the most important thing. He had forgotten his gift to the Christ Child that night. What could he give, he was very poor. Pedro thought and thought. Then he thought about a silver piece he had saved all year in hopes he might be able to add to it some day and buy himself a donkey. He had wanted a donkey so long. Then he thought about children in the village who had less than he, and how his silver piece might buy food for them on Christmas Day. His mind was made up. The donkey would wait. When no one was looking, he would slip the silver piece up onto the altar. Without saying a word to his parents, he slipped the small coin out of its secret hiding place and off he went with his family across the village to the grand church.

As they were walking through the snow, a little donkey came up to Pedro. Oh, how Pedro wished it were his. *(Three "hee-haws" played on the organ pedal.)* But when he tried to pet it, it ran away. Very soon they were close enough to see the tower of the church reaching high in the dark starlit sky on the hill. Pedro took a deep breath when he saw the lights glowing through the beautiful stained glass windows. In another minute he could hear Christmas music coming from the organ inside the church. *("Adeste Fideles" played on organ swell with swell shades closed.)* There were people coming from all over the village now making their way into the church. Finally they had reached the entrance of the grand church and Pedro's father opened the huge door. *(Open swell shades as "Adeste*

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Fideles" continues through the remainder of this paragraph.) Inside it was breath-taking, more glorious than he had ever dreamed. There were huge pillars entwined with ivy, and candles in the windows, and spruce trees in front, and a beautiful wreath over the altar.

As Pedro sang the hymns and prayed the prayers and listened to the minister, he was, more than ever before, sure that God really loved him, and this made him want to love everyone else. And it happened that this was the Christmas Eve that the King and Queen came to worship at the village church. When Pedro found this out he could hardly sit still for trying to watch what the King and Queen were doing.

Now came the time when everyone in the church went forward with their gifts to the altar. Men in their fancy coats and ladies in their beautiful dresses all made their way slowly to the big altar. Each placed his gift on the altar and waited for the bells to ring — but they did not ring.

At the end of the procession of people, Pedro recognized the village Mayor. *(Organ plays MAYOR'S processional.)* Here marched the Mayor with the biggest bag of money Pedro had ever imagined. Everyone knew this much money would surely cause the bells to ring. The Mayor, with quick steps and in a very important manner, made his way to the altar, and with much ceremony placed the big bag of money right in the center for everyone to see. Then he stood back and waited to hear the bells. *(Pause)* Nothing happened. The Mayor shook his fist towards the tower as if to command the bells to ring. There was no ringing. Then sadly, he left the altar and returned to his seat. Everyone shared his disappointment.

Then Pedro overheard someone whisper, "Here

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comes the Queen!" and a hush fell over the congregation. *(Organ plays QUEEN'S fanfare, then processional.)* Sure enough, the Queen in all her grace and dignity marched slowly down the aisle toward the altar. But she carried nothing in her hands and Pedro kept wondering what she could give. When she reached the altar, she curtsied very low and slowly brought herself up tall and straight. Then Pedro's mouth dropped wide open as he watched her remove from around her neck a most beautiful diamond necklace, and golden earrings from her ears, and a silver bracelet from her wrist, and all of her magnificent jewelry she laid on the altar. Then she stepped back and waited for the bells to ring. *(Pause)* Silence filled the big church — and more silence, for the bells did not ring. *(Organ plays QUEEN'S march slowly in minor key.)* Back down the aisle she went with a look of disappointment on her beautiful face.

Then Pedro felt an air of excitement again sweep through the church, and in a moment he knew why. For here, coming down the aisle, was the King, himself. *(Organ plays KING'S fanfare and processional.)* Marching very tall, his head held high, and his eyes glued to the large altar in front of him, the King looked exactly like Pedro thought a king ought to look. As Pedro realized that the King would pass right by him on the aisle, he entertained for a moment the thought of reaching out and touching him. How much fun it would be to tell his friends he had actually touched a king. And then Pedro thought, no . . . not in church. Finally the King reached the altar and Pedro again wondered what his gift would be for he also carried nothing in his hands. Then the King bowed very low and remained that way for a moment. When he straightened up it looked like he towered over the

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big altar. Then slowly he raised his arms, and Pedro's eyes nearly popped right out of his head when he watched the King remove his golden crown and place it on the altar.

Now this golden crown, besides being very costly and filled with jewels, represents the King's authority over his entire kingdom. This crown is about the most valuable thing there is — and the King was giving it away. Pedro was so sure this would make the bells ring he thought he heard them for a moment; *(Pause)* but no, his imagination was playing tricks on him. There was only silence throughout the church. The bells did not ring. *(Organ plays KING'S processional slowly in minor key.)* As the King made his way back to his seat he was very sad, and the people were convinced now that the bells would never be heard again.

If you remember, Pedro was a forgetful little boy, and in all his excitement over seeing a King and Queen, he nearly forgot the gift he had brought. When he put his hand in his pocket it closed on the little silver piece and he remembered. "Is it too late?" he wondered. No! *(Organ plays PEDRO'S running theme.)* And with that, he went running up the church aisle clutching the silver piece in his hand. His Mother and Father were so surprised they just held their breath. Pedro tripped on the top step, but he made it to the altar and reaching way up, he slipped the small coin onto one corner of the altar. He was very awkward looking, and out of breath, and he had forgotten to bow, but after letting go of the coin he backed a little and dropped to his knees and began to pray. Pedro's parents were embarrassed when they heard someone say, "Get that child out of there!" The people who had been so silent for the King and

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Queen began to rustle now wondering how anything so undignified could happen in their church.

As Pedro knelt praying for God to bless his small silver piece, that it might feed some hungry children the next day, he wasn't aware of the hubbub he had caused in the congregation. He wasn't aware either that it had suddenly stopped — for high up in the tower of the church was coming the most beautiful music ever heard. *(Organ or handbells begin playing chime music.)* The bells were ringing! The bells were ringing! It was when Pedro got up to return to his seat that he heard them, and on his way down the aisle he began to realize that it was his small gift of sacrifice that had caused the mysterious bells to ring once more after so many years of silence.

(Stop chimes or go into an extended chime solo selection. When completed segue into PEDRO'S theme.)

(Organ plays PEDRO'S theme.) Pedro's Mother and Father were so proud of him that they didn't even scold him when all the way home he did nothing but chatter, chatter, chatter. He chattered about the beautiful church, about seeing the King and Queen, but most of all about hearing the bells ring.

When they were almost home, Pedro looked up and saw walking beside him the little donkey he saw on the way to church earlier that night. *(Three "hee-haws" played on the organ pedal.)* This time he tried to shoo it away but it would not leave him. "Maybe it needs a warm home," his Mother said. "Do you think he would like to share ours?" asked his Father. Pedro asked, "Can we take him home and see?" His parents smiled and shook their heads yes. Pedro had a very, very happy Christmas. *(Organ plays closing phrase.)*

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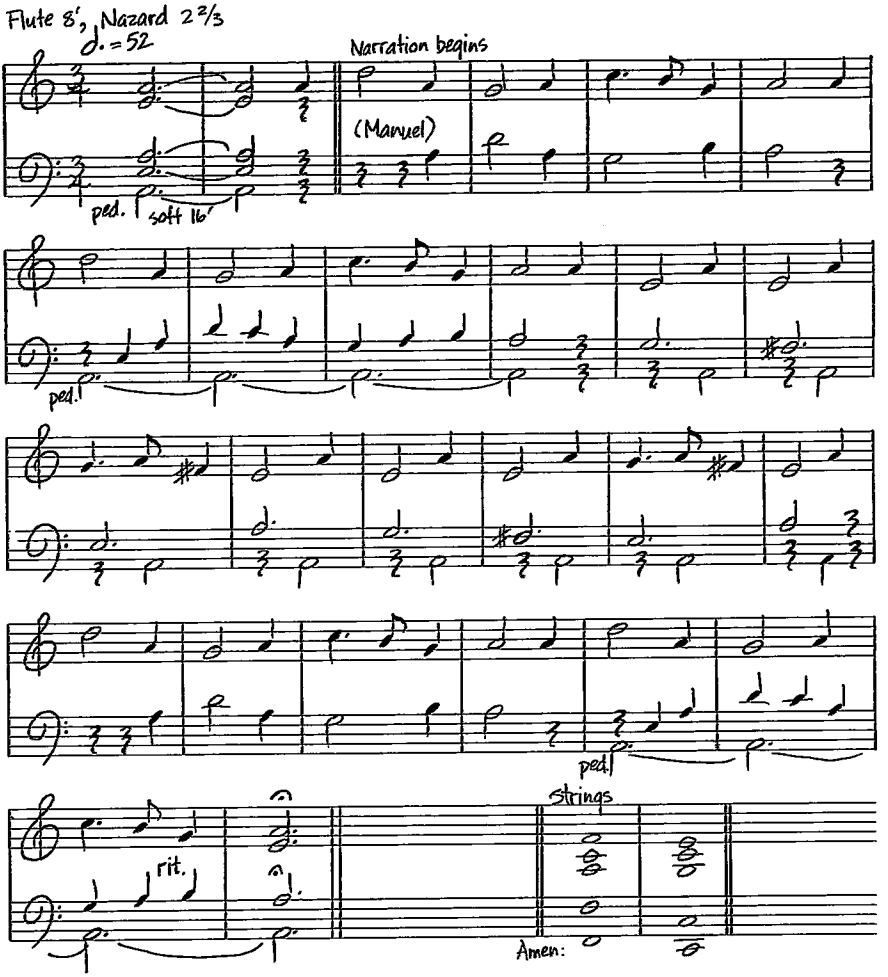
OPENING MUSIC BACKGROUND



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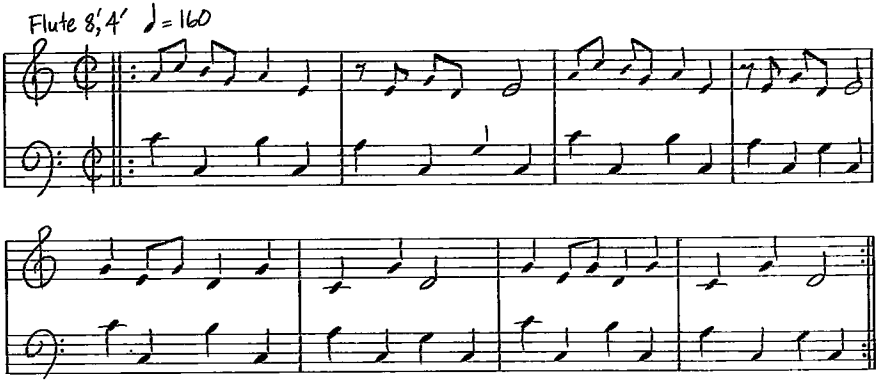
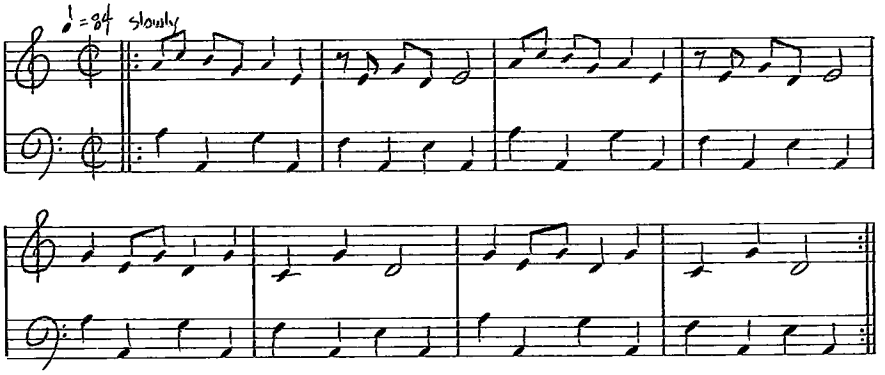
THE MAYOR'S PROCESSIONAL



THE MAYOR'S RECESSIONAL



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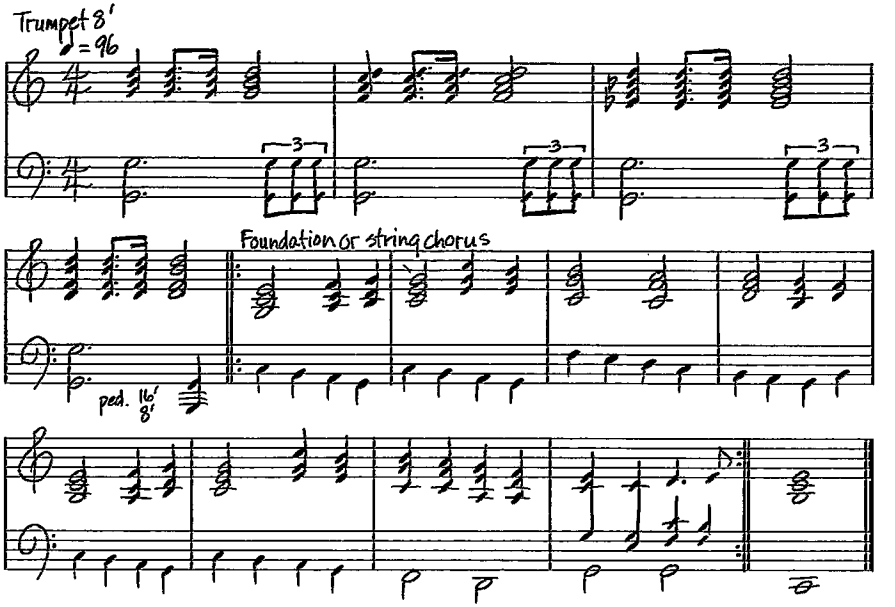
THE QUEEN'S FANFARE AND PROCESSIONAL



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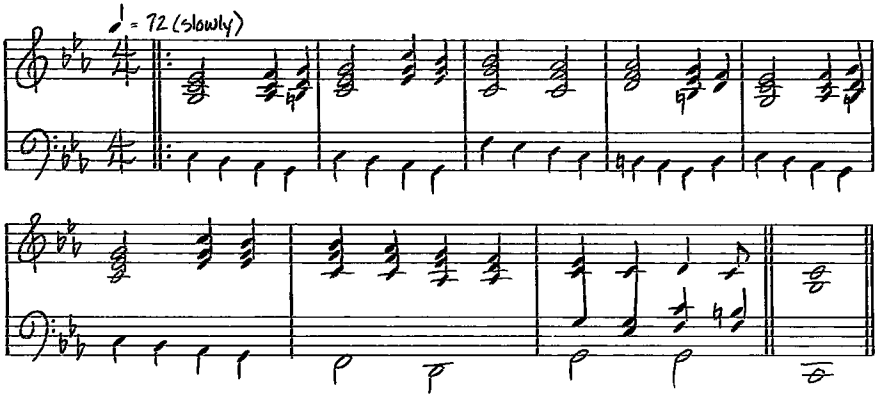

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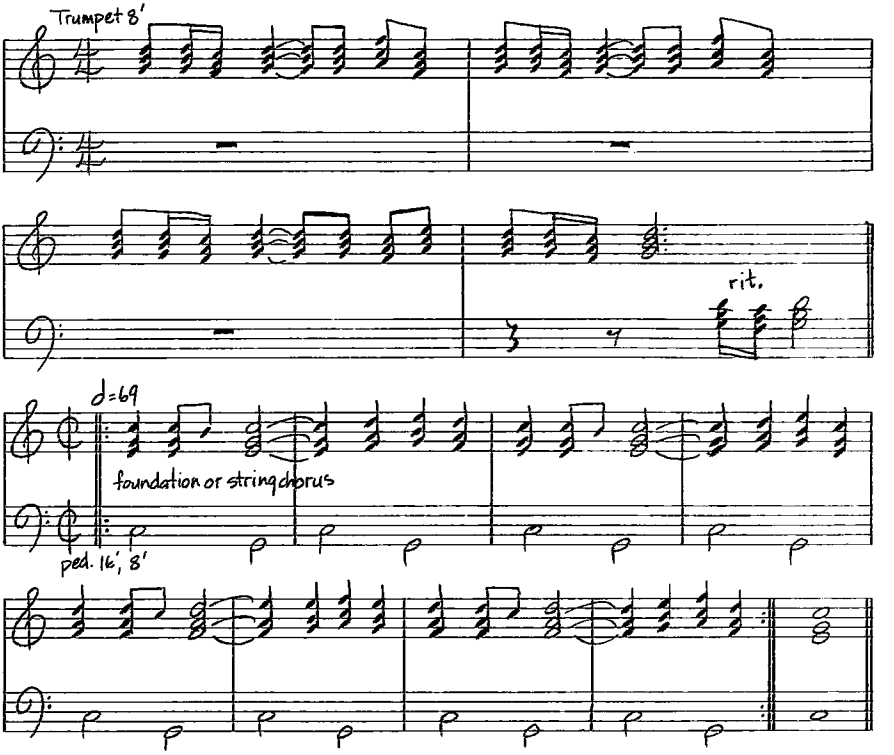
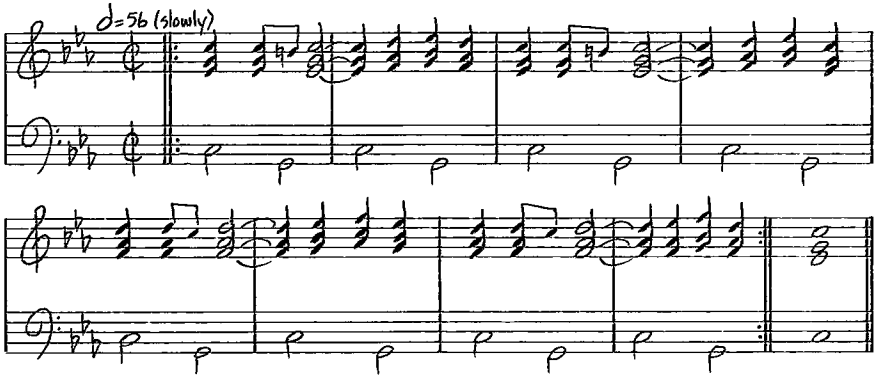
THE KING'S FANFARE AND PROCESSIONAL



THE KING's RECESSIONAL



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