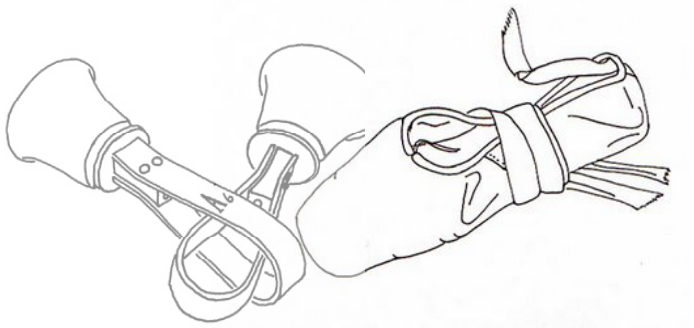
Amazing Grace

by John Newton
Arr: Rima Greer



simple and sweet for
three octaves of bells or chimes

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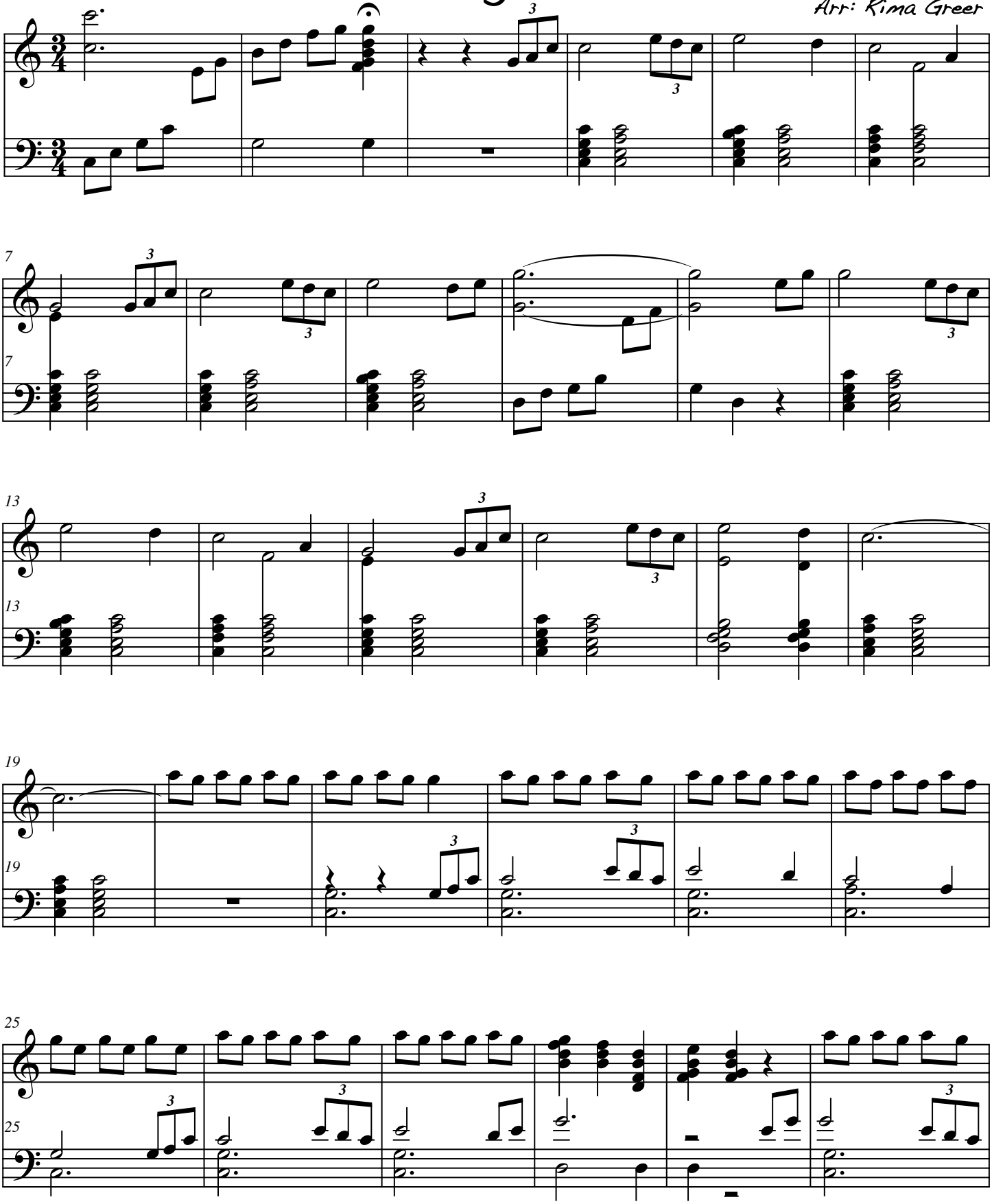

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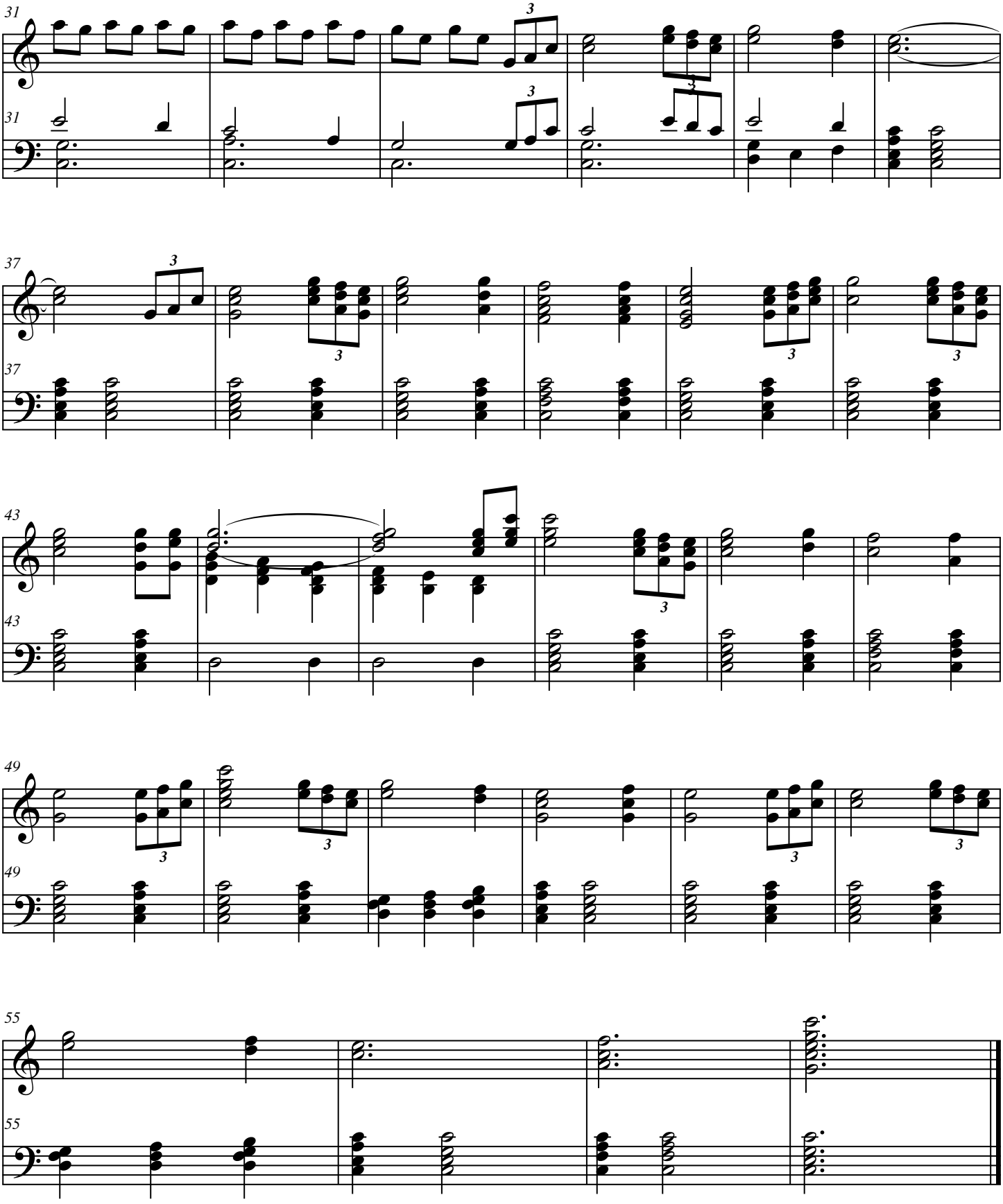
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Amazing Grace
Performance Notes

I wrote this arrangement for a local church bell group that had not played for 3 years. I felt like they needed something sweet and familiar to help ease their way back into ringing.

It was kind of a stretch for me, being a person who's more given to arrange Led Zeppelin than a lovely hymn, but in the end, I found it an incredibly rewarding experience. The melody is so sweet and simple, and it holds up every time.

Because I like to write in linear rather than stacked chord fashion, you might want to look at the layers of descant lines. For example, the bass in measures 4-7 may look like a series of stacked chords, but the G, A, B4s within those chords are actually a descant line, and it'll add a lot if you bring those out a bit throughout those measures and figures like them.

In the measure 20, the melody moves to the bass, and the treble plays an ostinato line. You'll be happier if you make these notes just float lightly above the music. It works especially well if G and A 6 are in the same person's hands. Think about butterflies as you're playing it.

I did manage to drag myself into normal bell-composition land by the measure 38, and write some stacked chords, but think of them more like a gospel choir adding harmony, than chunks of bells ringing together. The C7 becomes a melody note just the way a gospel singer would play with the melody.

Finally, you'll see that I am still completely obstinate about the C5 split, or lack thereof. I'm sorry, but if you play G4 to G5, you will find your notes on both staves. But if you're paying attention to what's melody and what's accompaniment, it'll make a lot of sense to you, and maybe even help you express the piece better.

I hope you enjoy playing this as much as I enjoyed my adventure writing it.

Rima