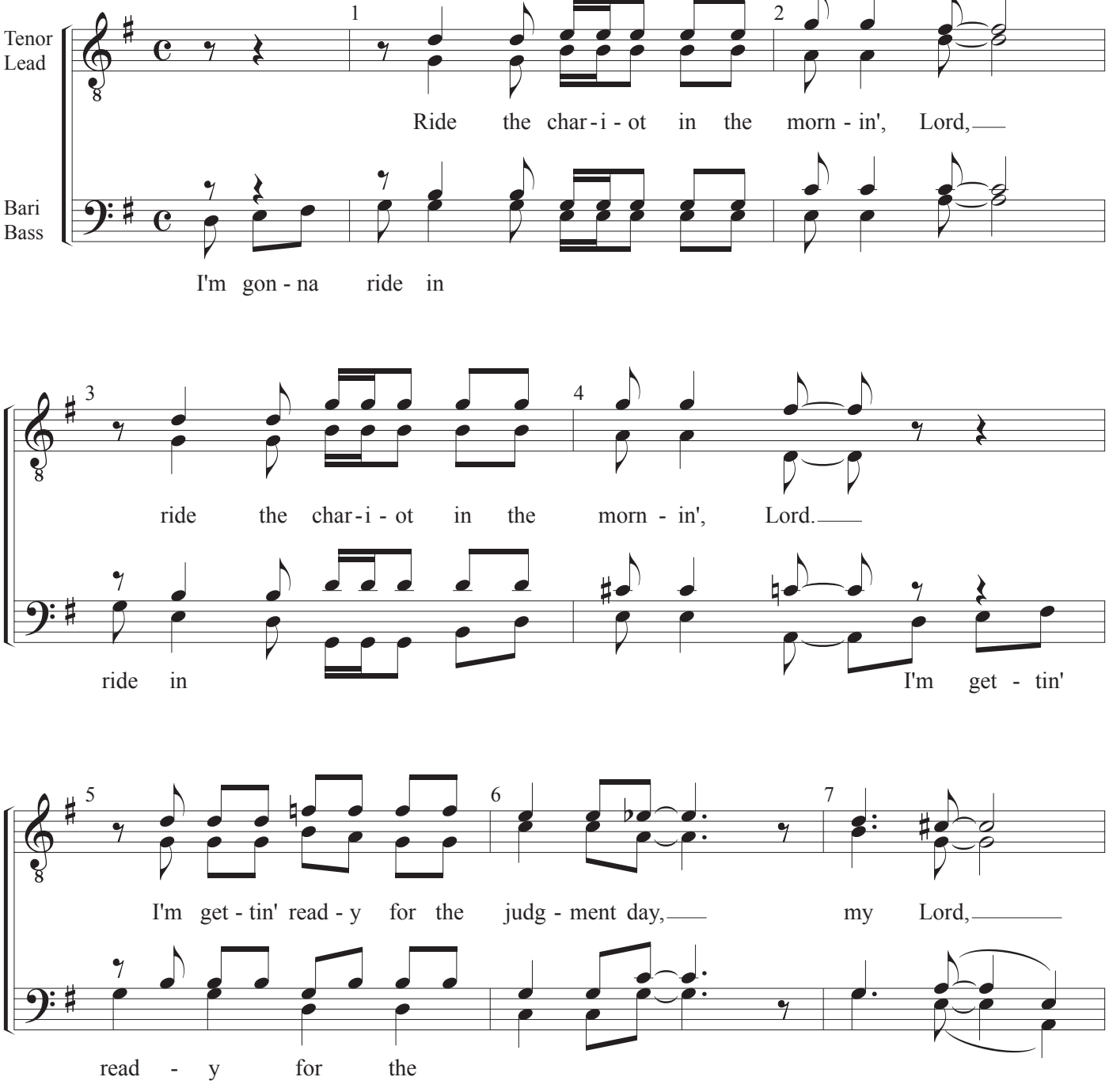
Stock No. 208737

RIDE THE CHARIOT

Traditional Spiritual

Arrangement by the
BARBERSHOP HARMONY SOCIETY

Chorus 1



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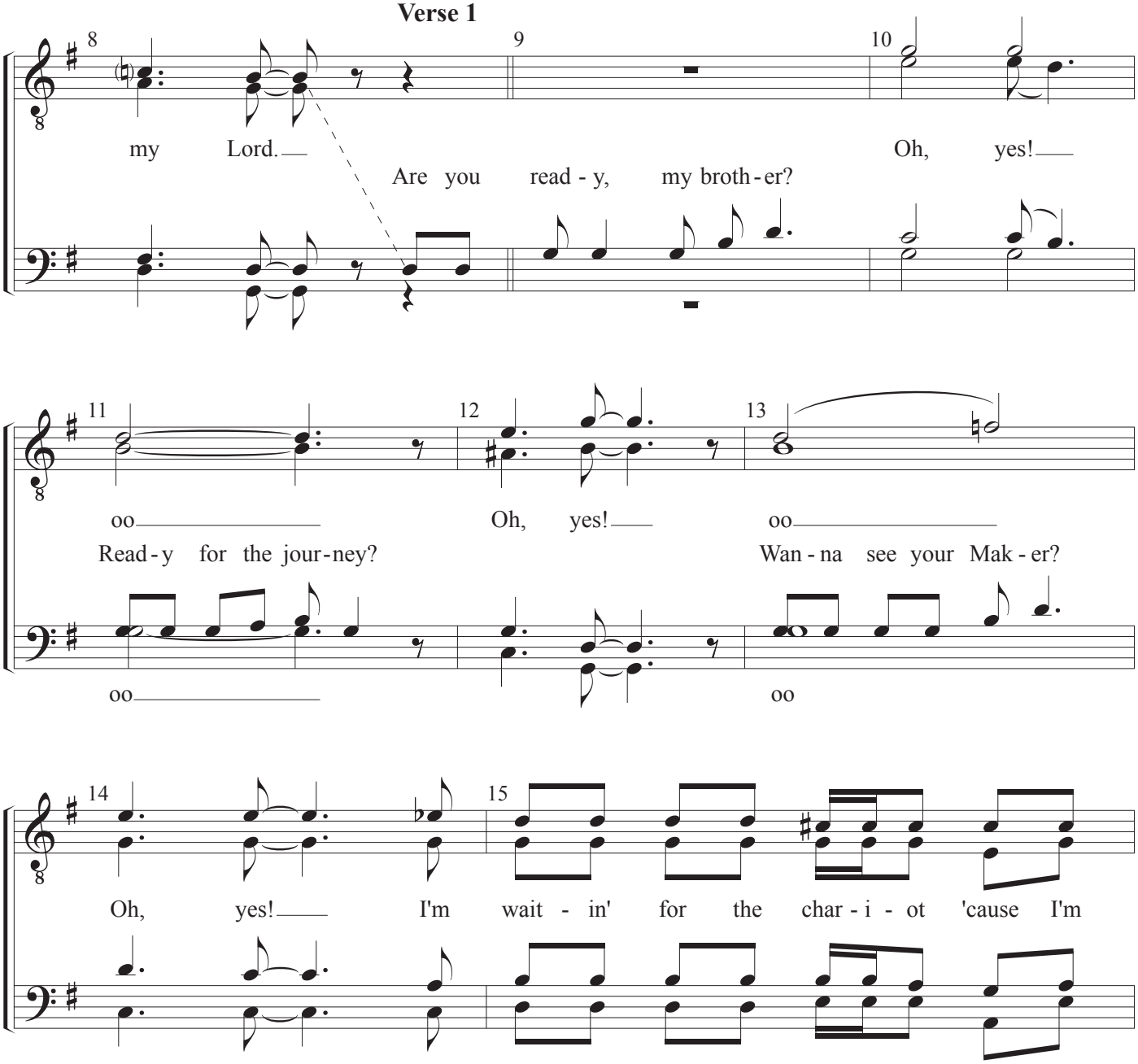
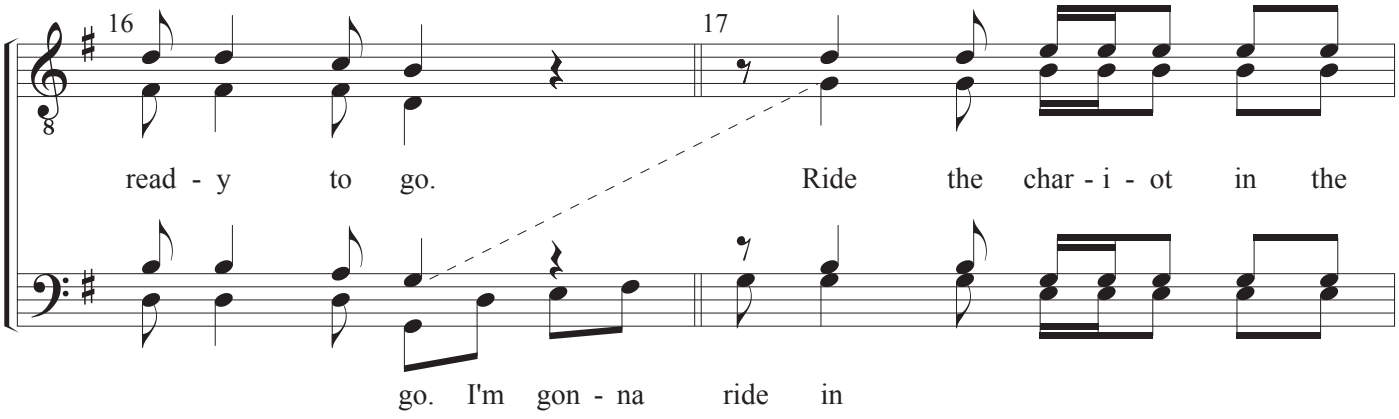
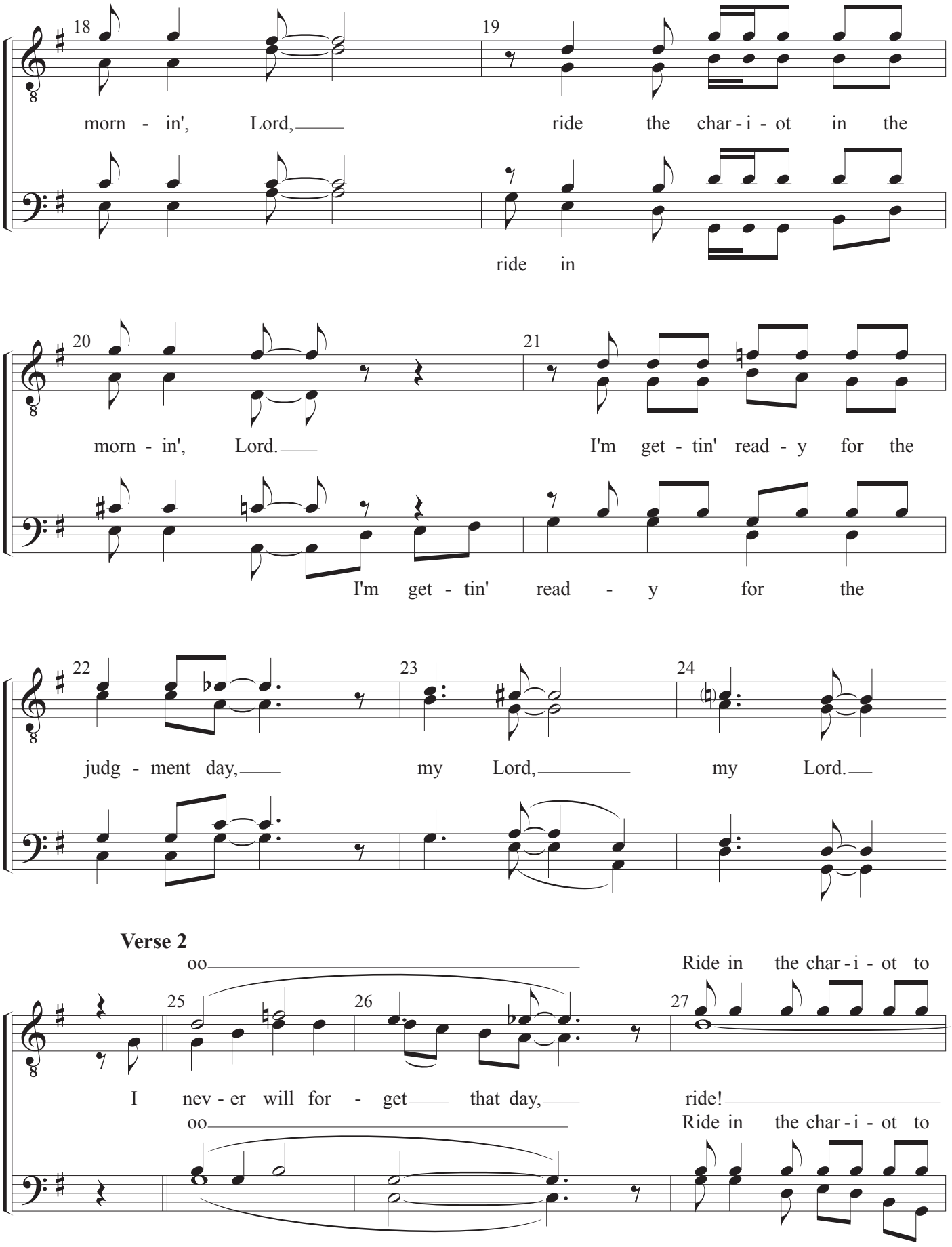
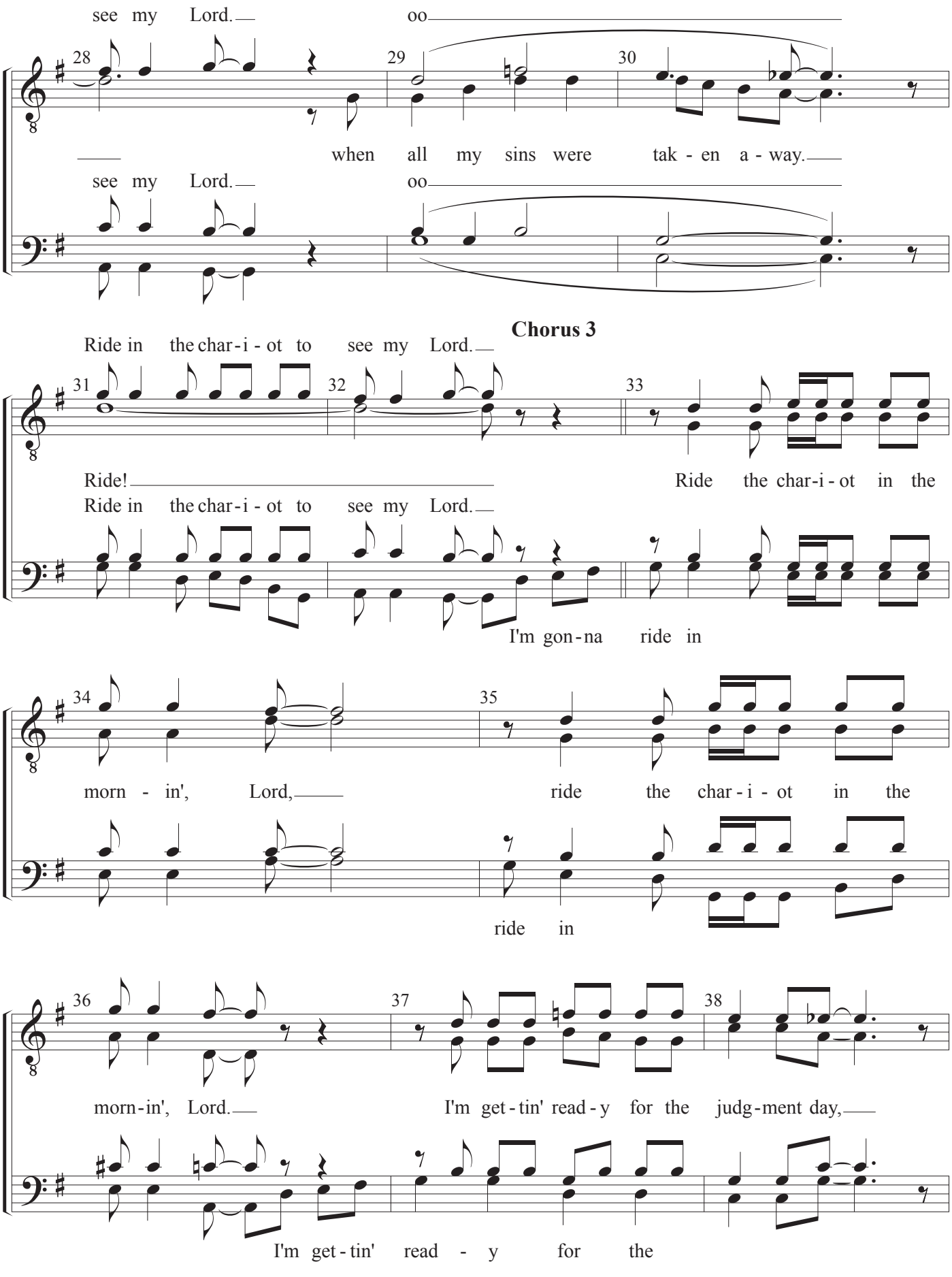
Verse 1



Chorus 2

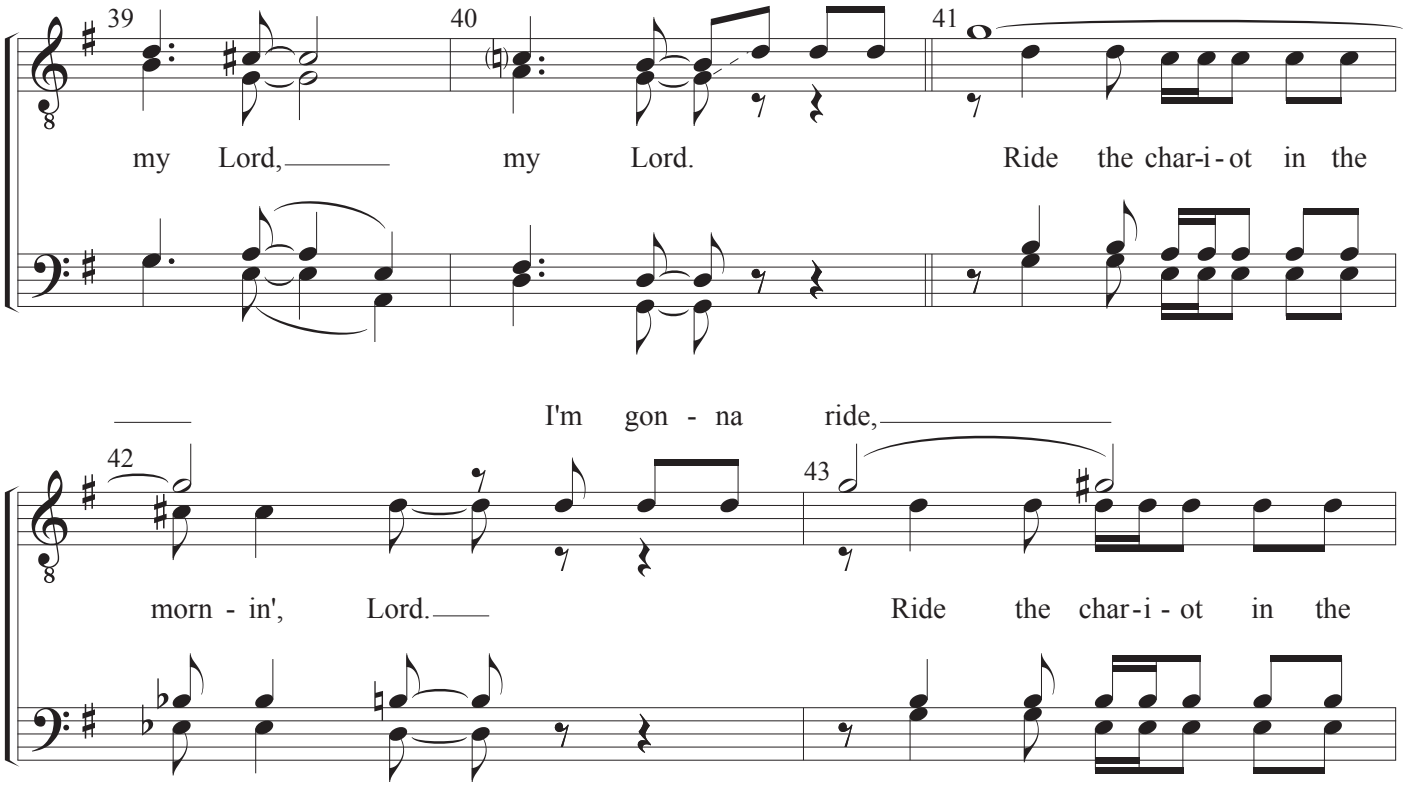



18
19
morn - in', Lord,
ride the char - i - ot in the
ride in
20
21
morn - in', Lord.
I'm get - tin' read - y for the
I'm get - tin' read - y for the
22
23
24
judg - ment day,
my Lord,
my Lord.
Verse 2
oo
Ride in the char - i - ot to
25
26
27
I nev - er will for - get that day,
ride!
oo
Ride in the char - i - ot to

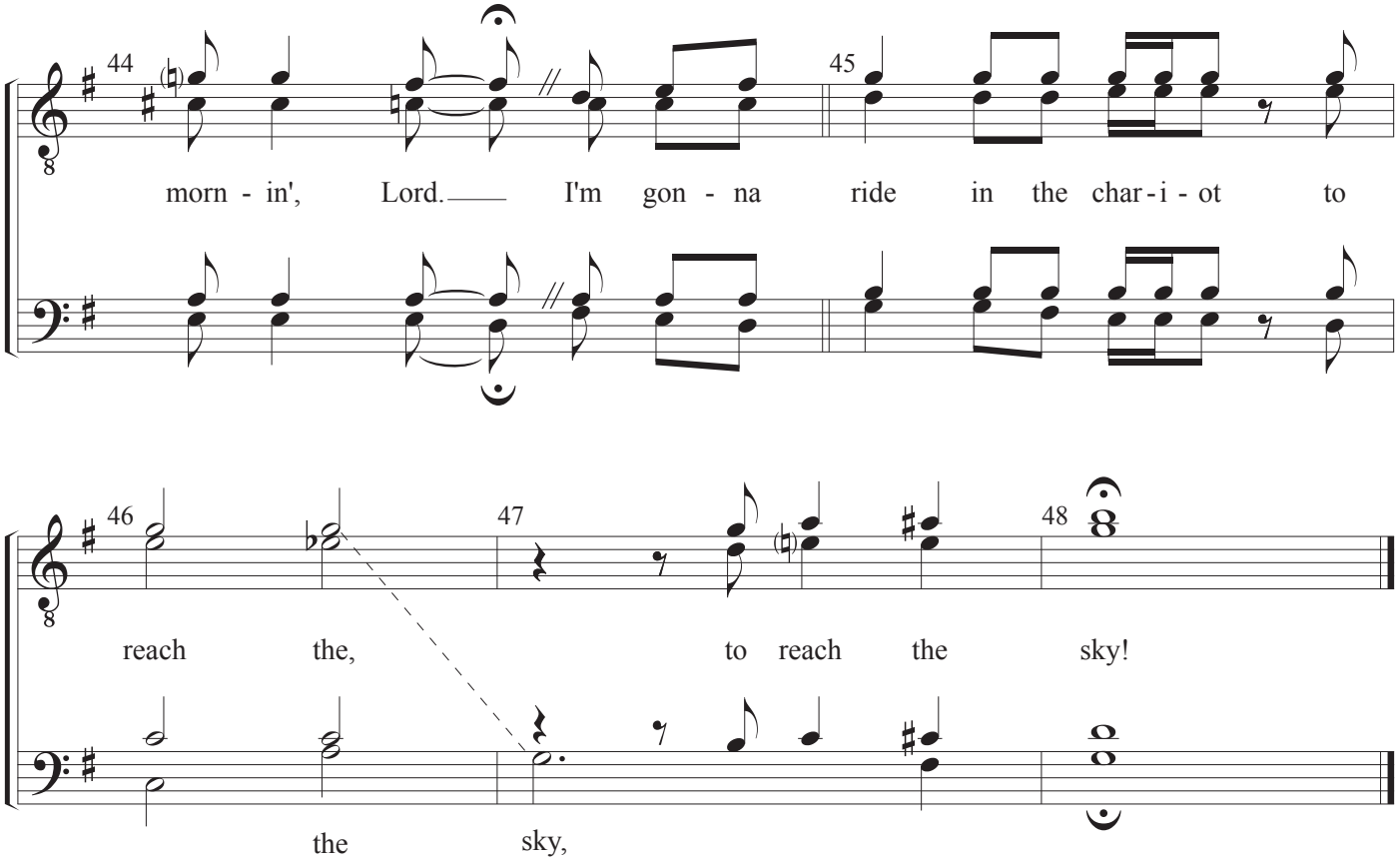

see my Lord. oo
28 29 30
when all my sins were tak - en a - way.
see my Lord. oo
Chorus 3
Ride in the char - i - ot to see my Lord.
31 32 33
Ride! Ride the char-i-ot in the
Ride in the char - i - ot to see my Lord.
I'm gon - na ride in
34 35
morn - in', Lord, ride the char - i - ot in the
ride in
36 37 38
morn-in', Lord. I'm get - tin' read - y for the judg - ment day,
I'm get - tin' read - y for the

Chorus 4

I'm gon - na ride.



rit. **Tag** *freely*



Performance Notes

The chariot was an ancient instrument of war, as well as being an Old Testament symbol of power or glory. The first true chariots were probably developed in Eastern Europe around 2000 B.C. These early examples were fast, light, two-wheeled, open vehicles that were drawn by two or more horses hitched side by side. The car was basically a floor with a waist-high, semicircular guard in front.

While the origins of this traditional African-American spiritual are unclear, its meaning can be taken on two different levels. On the surface the lyrics speak of being prepared to "ride" up to Heaven in the afterlife. After enduring such a wretched lot on earth, slaves could hardly be blamed for focusing on future rewards to compensate them for their suffering.

But many authorities assert that songs such as *Ride the Chariot* were actually about attaining freedom in this lifetime. The Underground Railroad was a network of secret routes and safe houses used by 19th-century slaves to escape to free states and Canada. They were aided in their cause by abolitionists and other sympathetic allies.

Clearly, slaves could not sing openly about escaping bondage, so they created songs with coded references. The Underground Railroad was a "train" or "chariot," the latter being an obvious Christian reference. A network of "conductors" would take the runaways between "stations" or "depots," which were often out-of-the-way places such as barns that were supervised by "station masters." The typically small groups generally traveled by foot or on wagons, though sometimes boats and actual trains were used. Canada was the "Promised Land," and the "River Jordan" was the Ohio River, which marked a large portion of the boundary between the slave states and free states.

No one can say for certain how many tens of thousands of slaves "followed the Drinking Gourd"—the Big Dipper, which includes the North Star—to freedom, but the risks they and their allies took declare them to be true American heroes.

Various similar versions of this arrangement have long been sung in the barbershop and wider musical worlds. This particular chart is much like the one done by the **Far Westerners**, a three-time international quartet medalist in the early 1970s. One can hear the influence of the great Earl Moon, arranger extraordinaire and the group's baritone, on this piece.

However you interpret this song, perform *Ride the Chariot* with the considerable energy and commitment it deserves. The rare baritone solo is a bonus from Earl, but if your bari declines to show off his fine voice, just have the lead switch parts with him.

As a final note: Questions about the contest suitability of this or any other song/arrangement should be directed to the judging community and measured against current contest rules. Ask *before* you sing.

For the North Carolina Harmony Brigade and AXQHB affiliated Brigades.
Edited by Matt Gallagher, AXQHB Notation Editor ~ mattgallaghermd.com
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