Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird

for piano solo

Ronald A A MacDonald

Performance Notes

Written for piano solo, this work consists of thirteen movements. They should be performed in the prescribed order, without omission or substitution.

Timings are approximate and are for reference only.

Pedallings are, on occasion, suggested. These should, of course, be used as guidance and adapted depending on performance space.

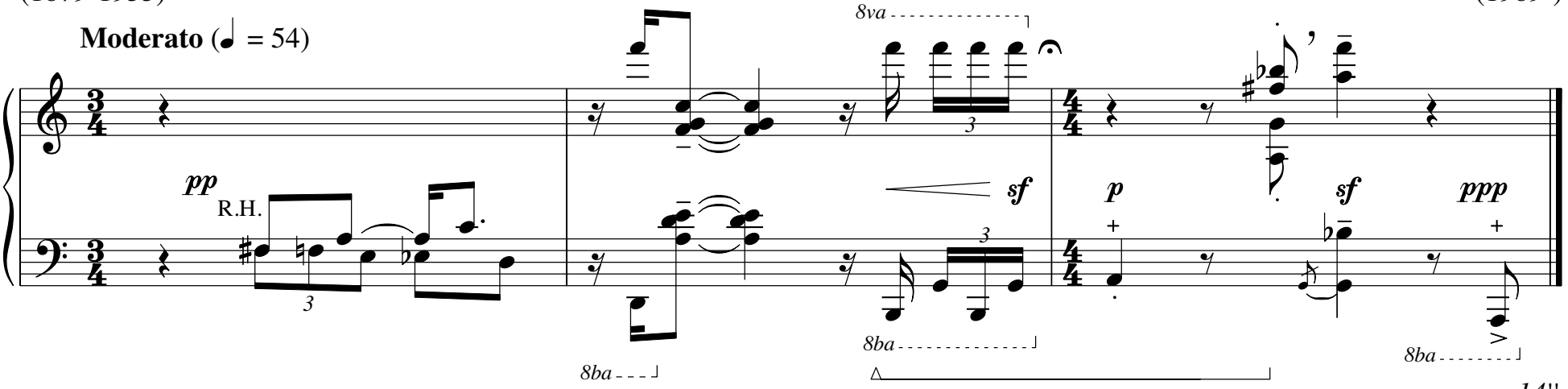
I

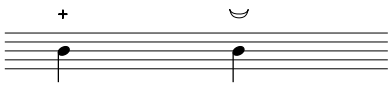
Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

I

Wallace Stevens
(1879-1955)

Ronald MacDonald
(1989-)





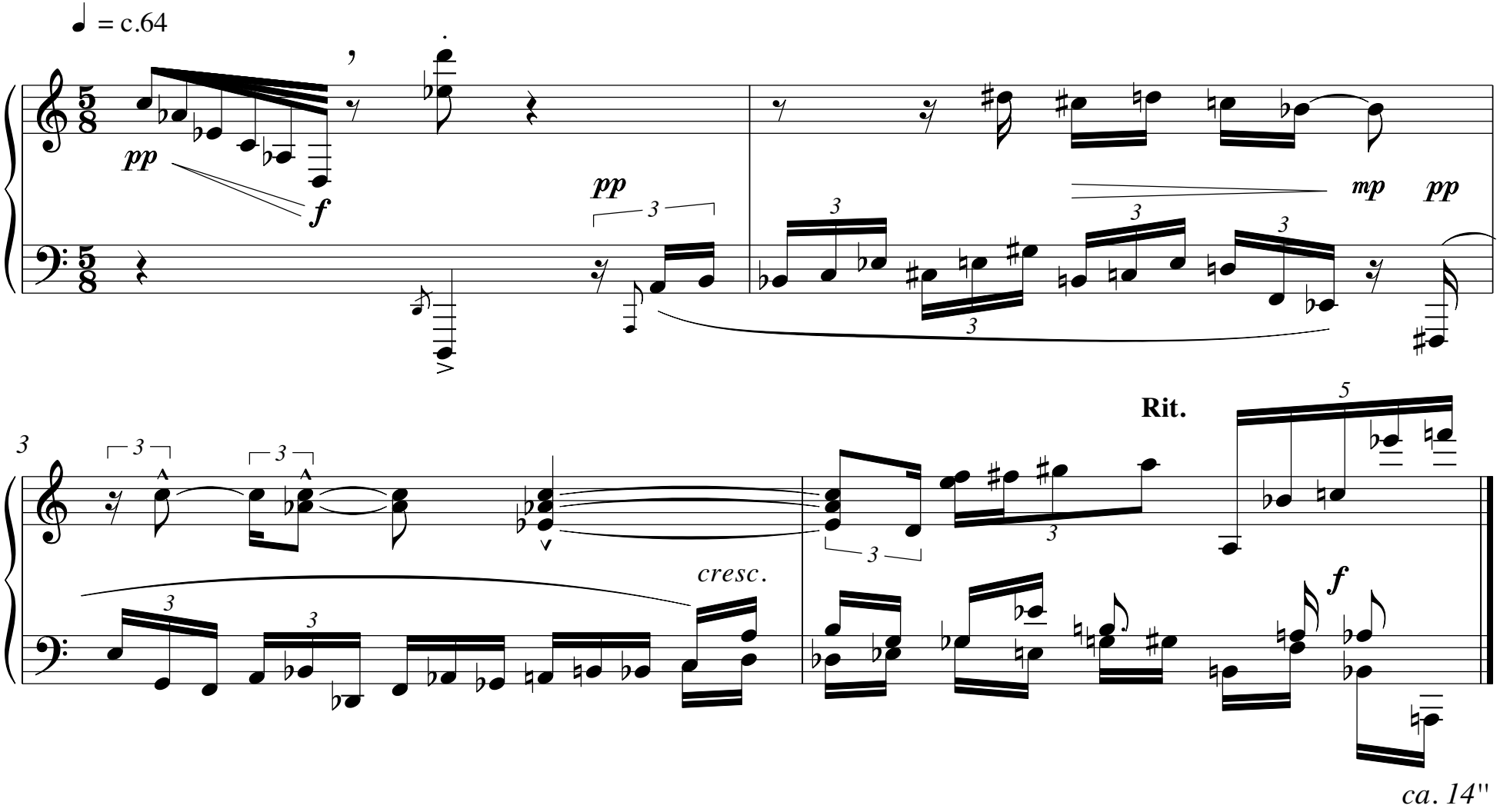
Stop string
with finger
before playing

Pick string
with fingernail

II

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

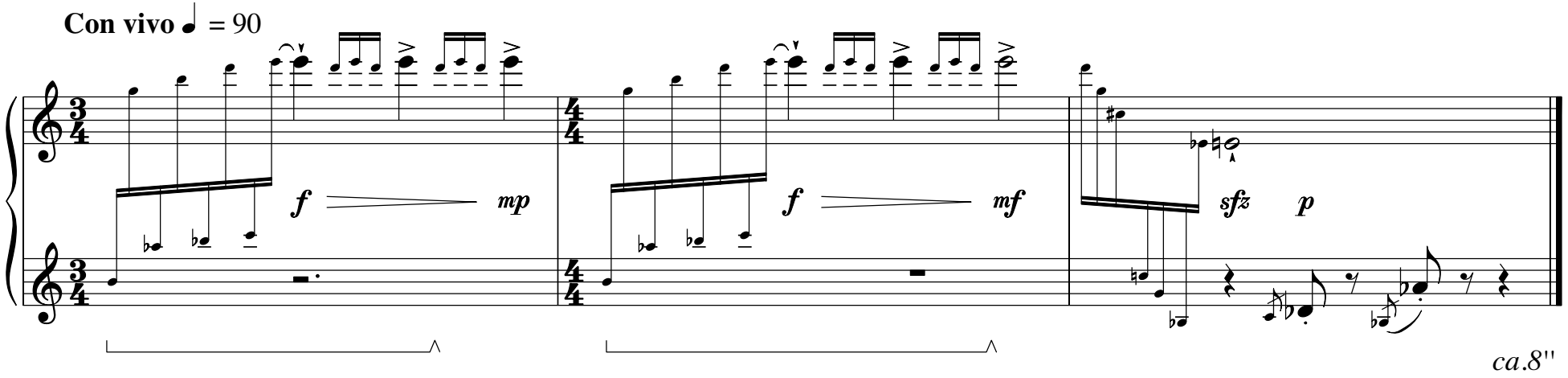
II



III

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

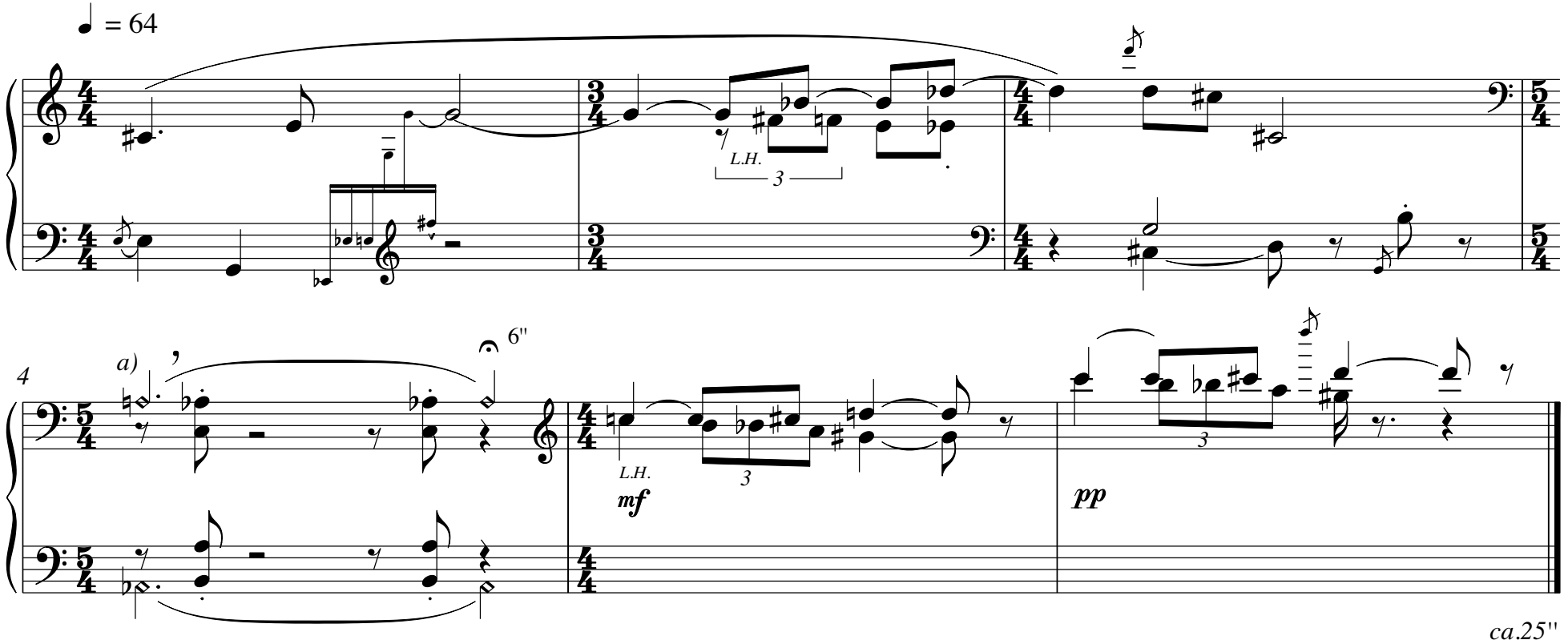
III



IV

A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.

IV

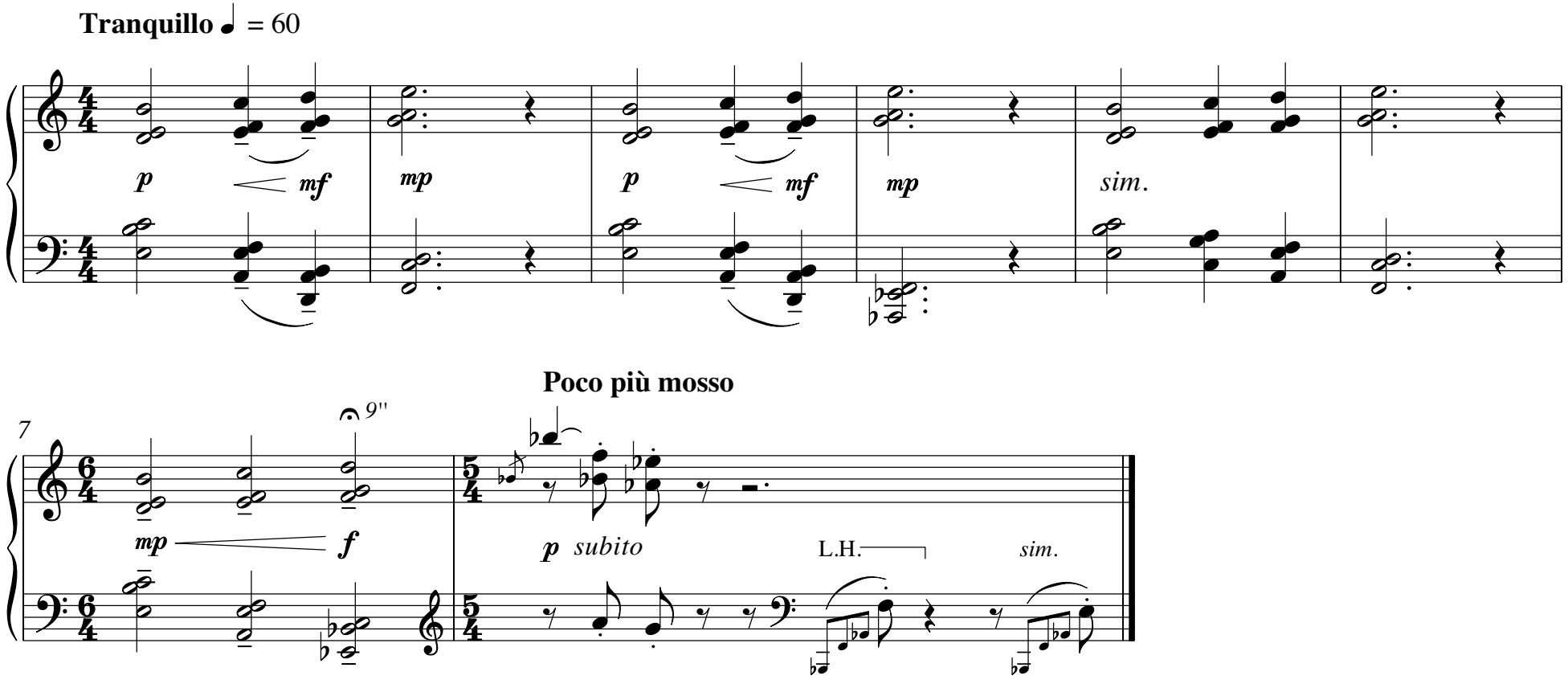


a) Depress silently and hold

V

I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

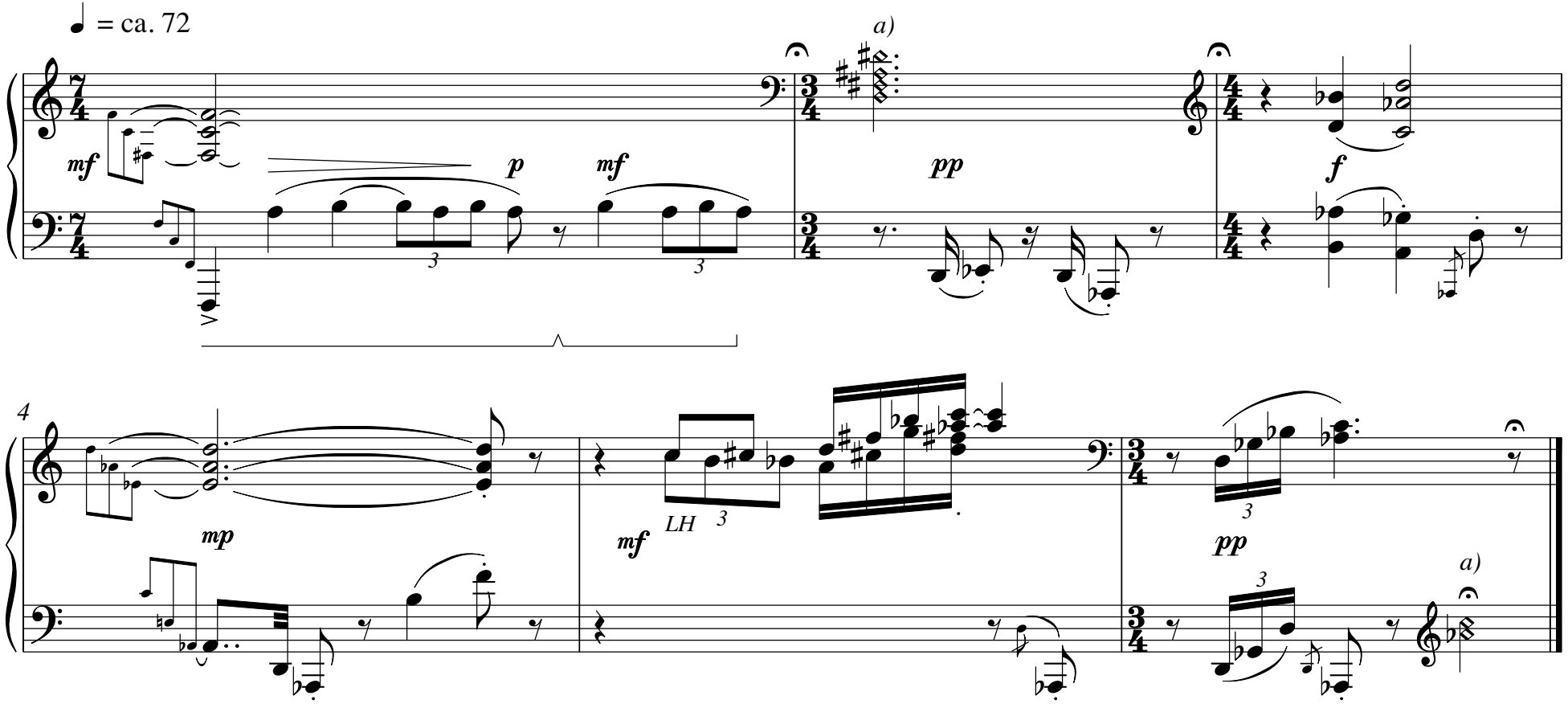
V


Tranquillo ♩ = 60
p
mf
mp
p
mf
mp
sim.
Poco più mosso
7
9"
mp
f
p subito
L.H.
sim.
ca.43"

VI

Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass.
The shadow of the blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro.
The mood
Traced in the shadow
An indecipherable cause.

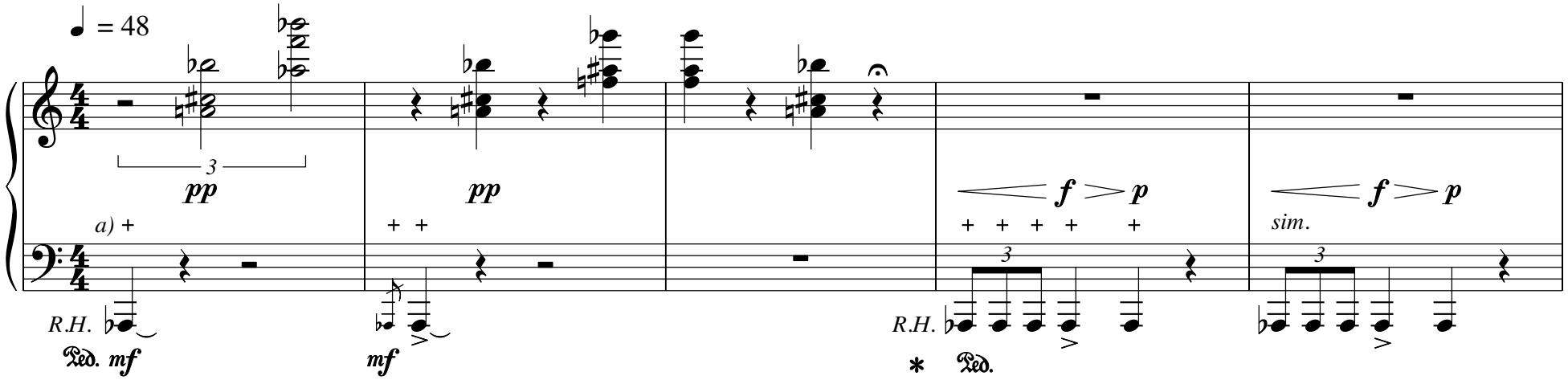
VI



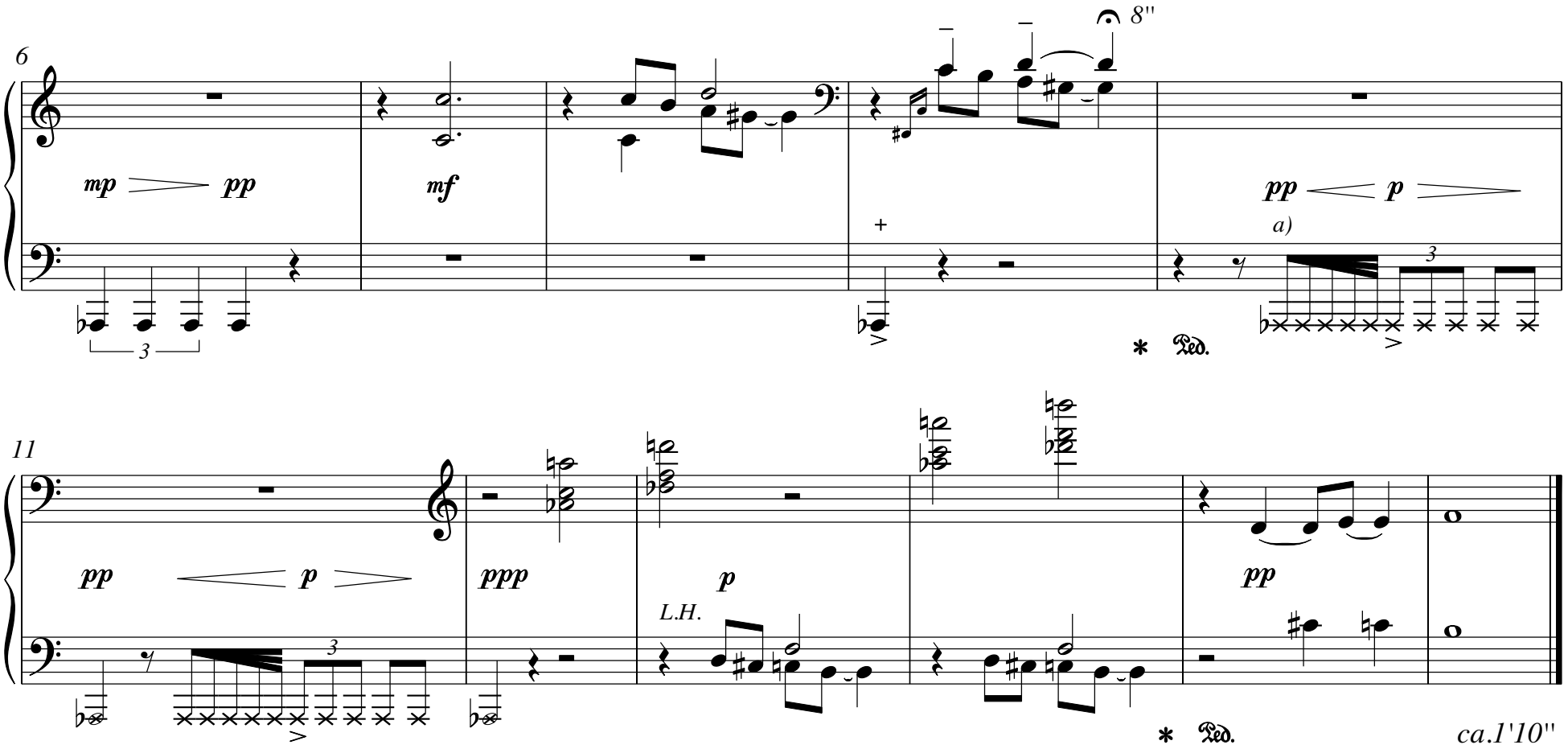
a) Depress silently without sostenuto

VII

O thin men of Haddam,
Why do you imagine golden birds?
Do you not see how the blackbird
Walks around the feet
Of the women about you?



a) Hold LH finger upon string before striking note

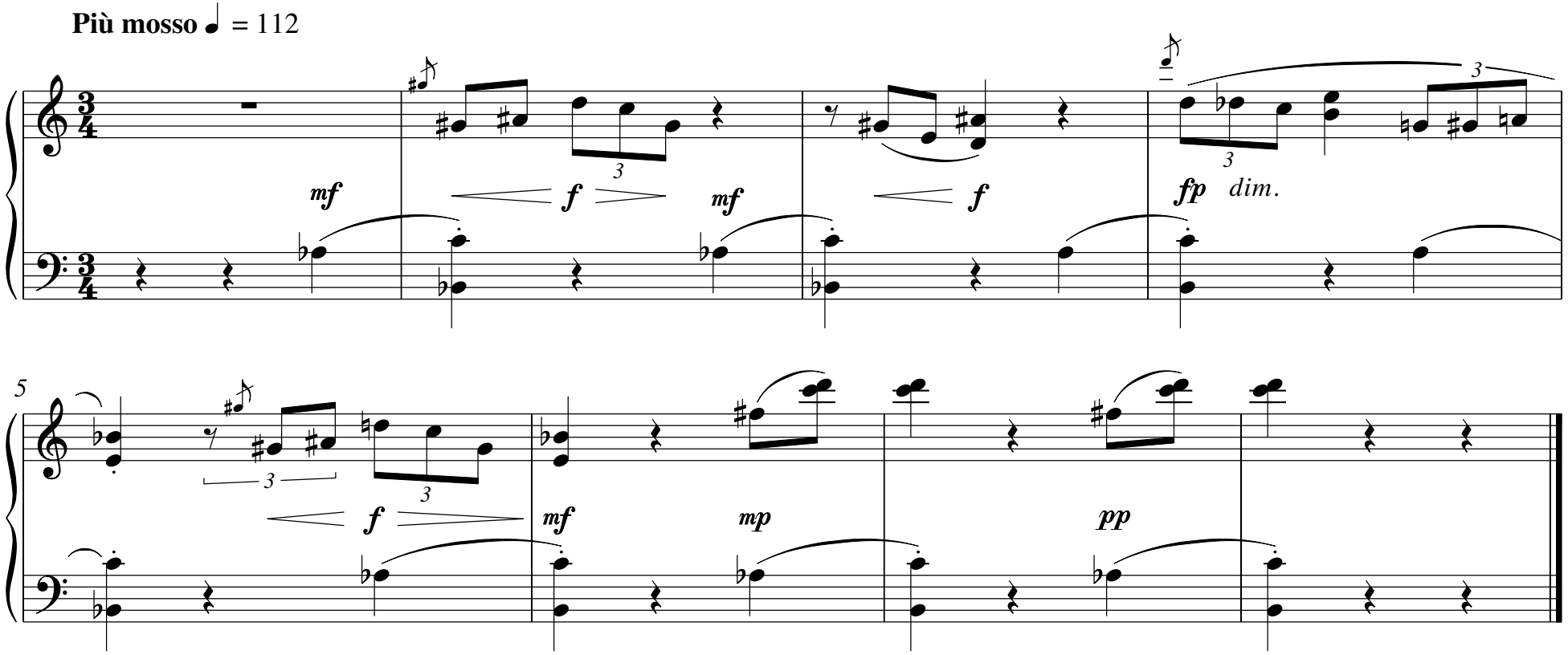


a) Pull fingernail across string winding, one turn per crossed notehead.

VIII

I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

VIII

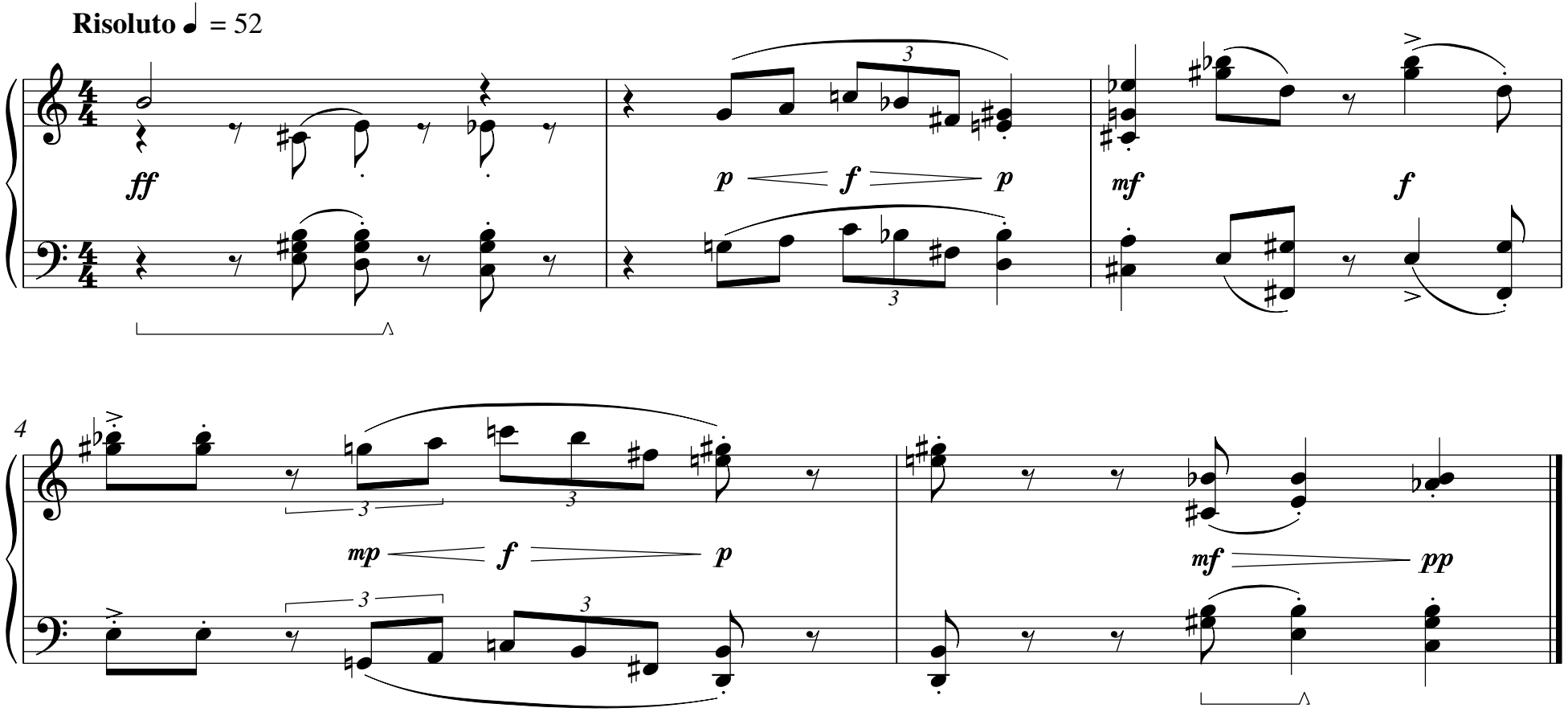


ca.24"

IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

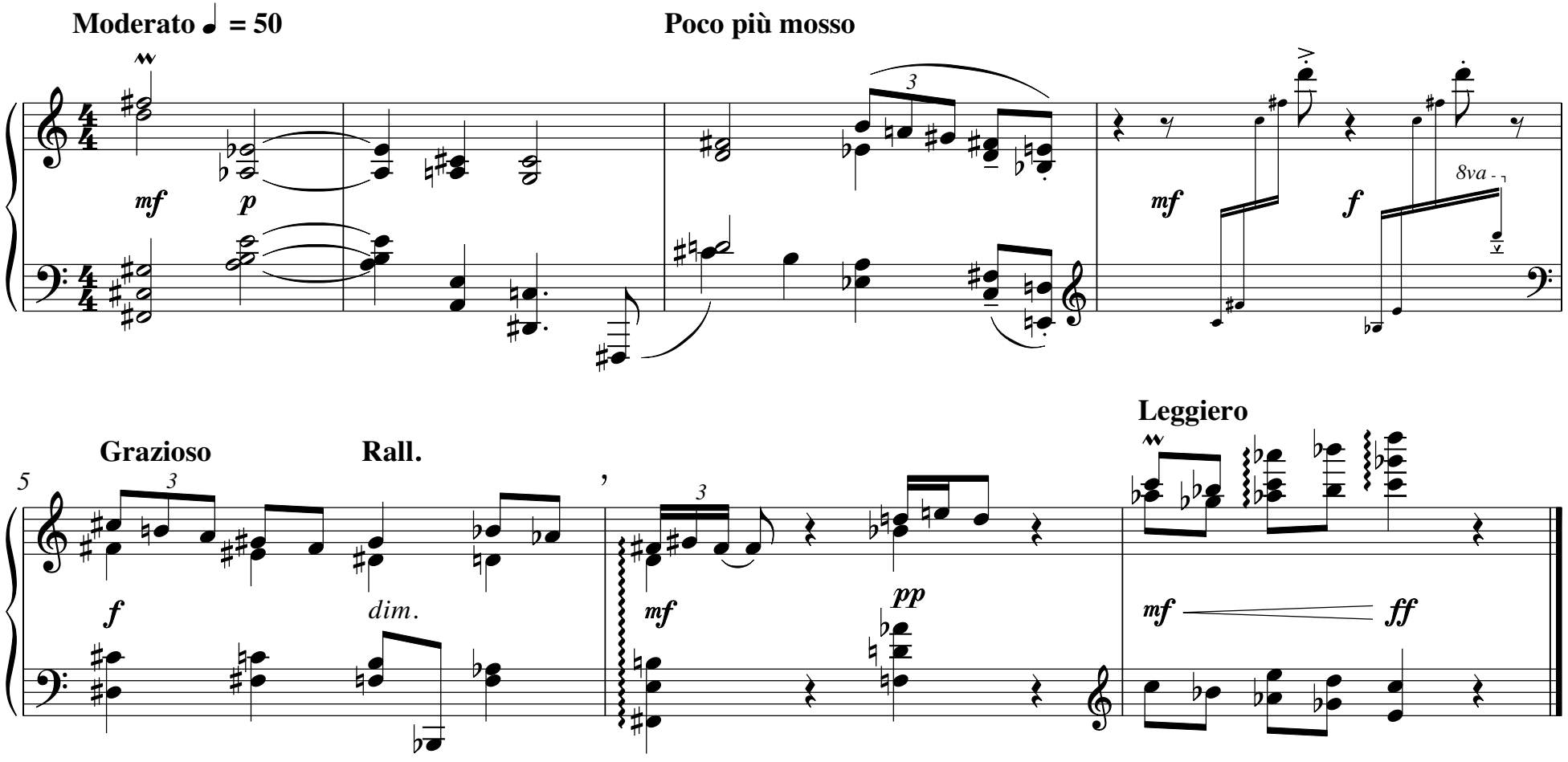
IX



X

At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

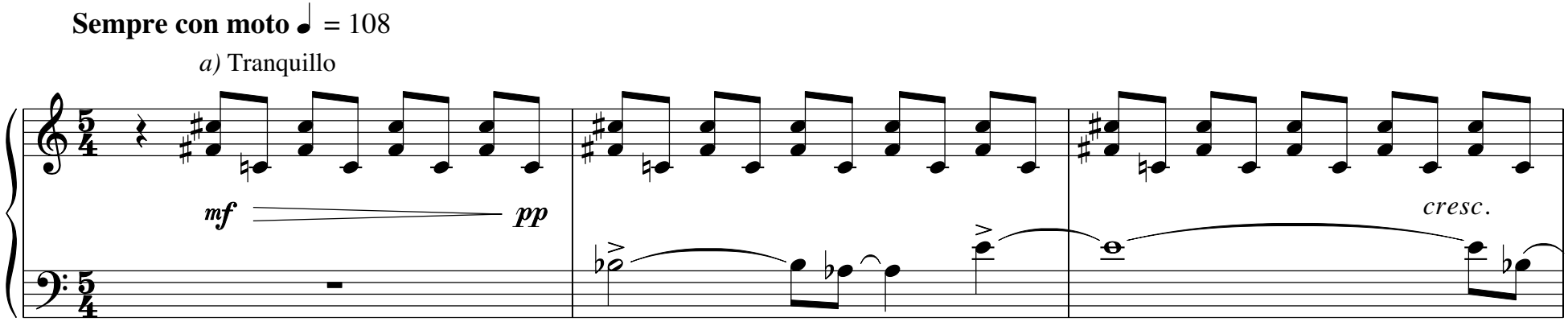
X


Moderato ♩ = 50
Poco più mosso
mf
p
mf
f
8va
Grazioso
Rall.
Leggiero
5
f
dim.
mf
pp
mf
ff
ca.25"

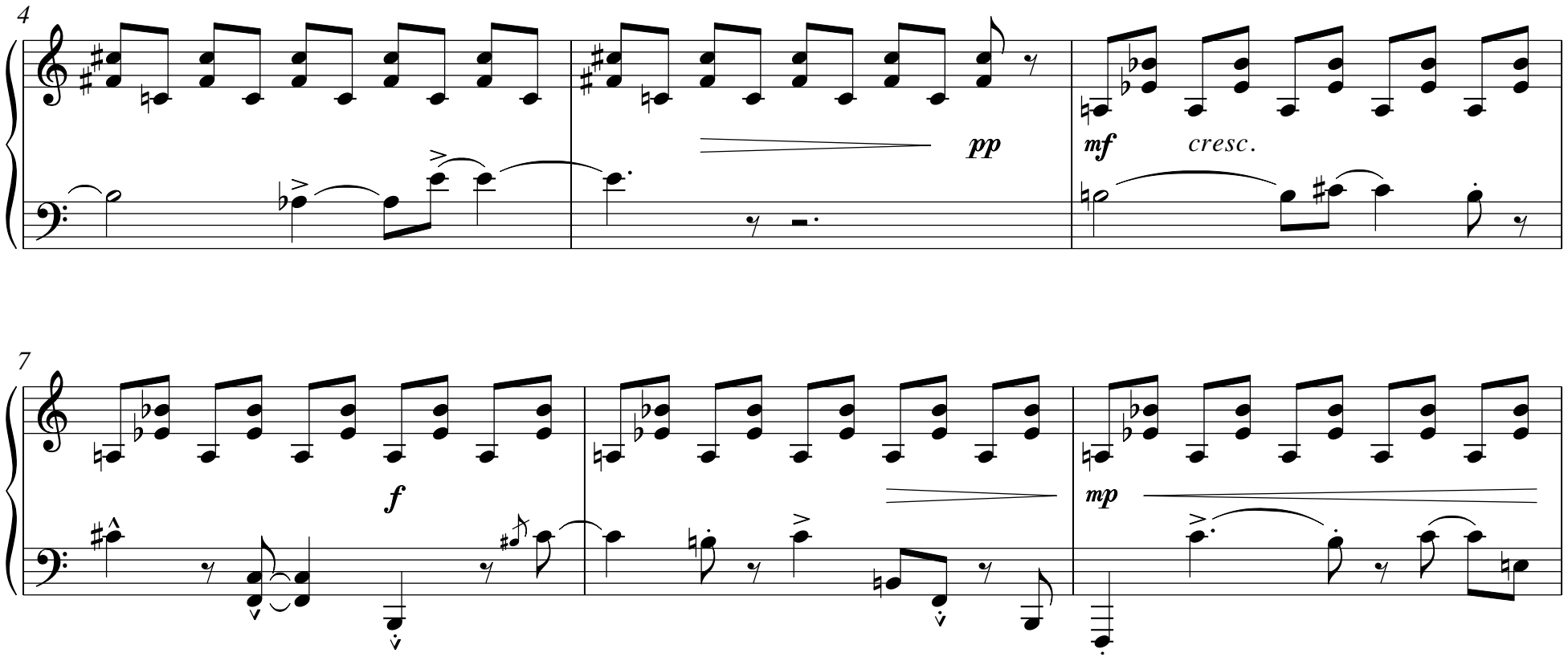
XI

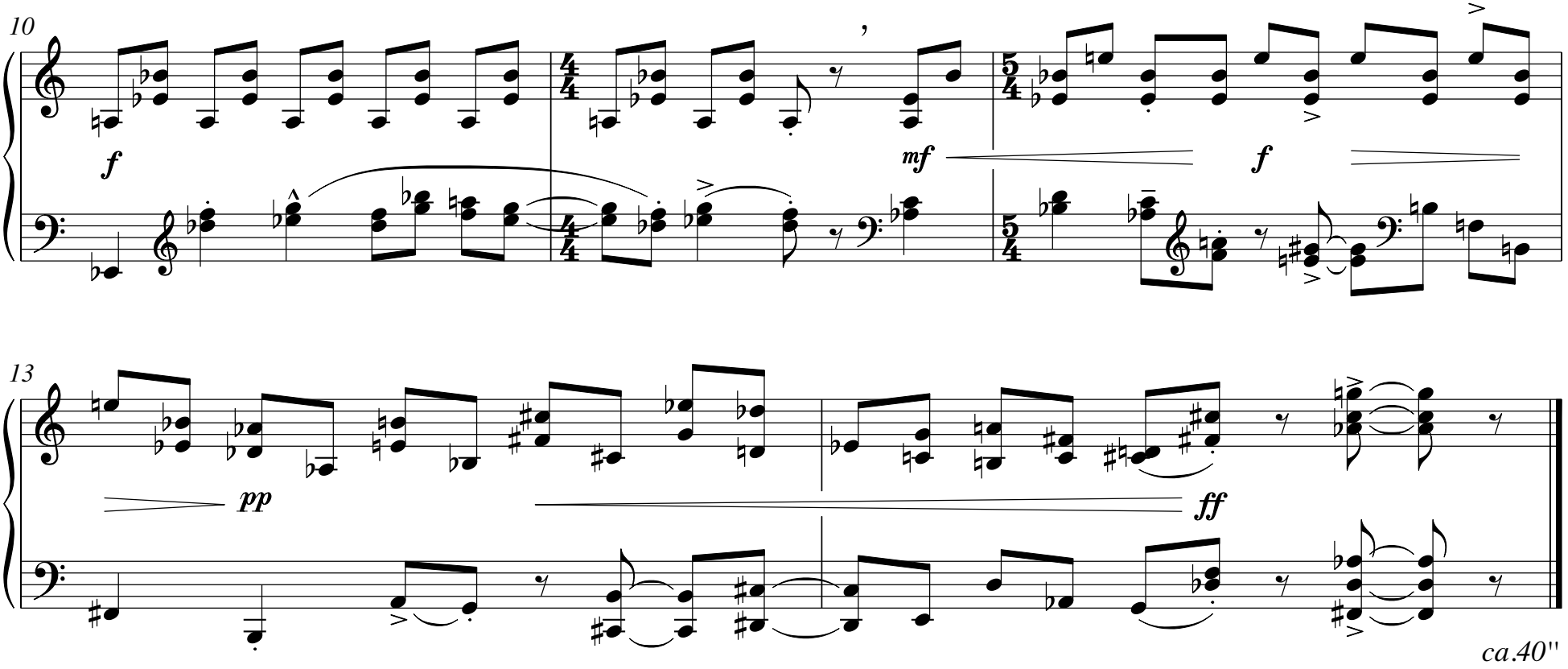
He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

XI



a) Right hand should never be heard 'in front' of left.

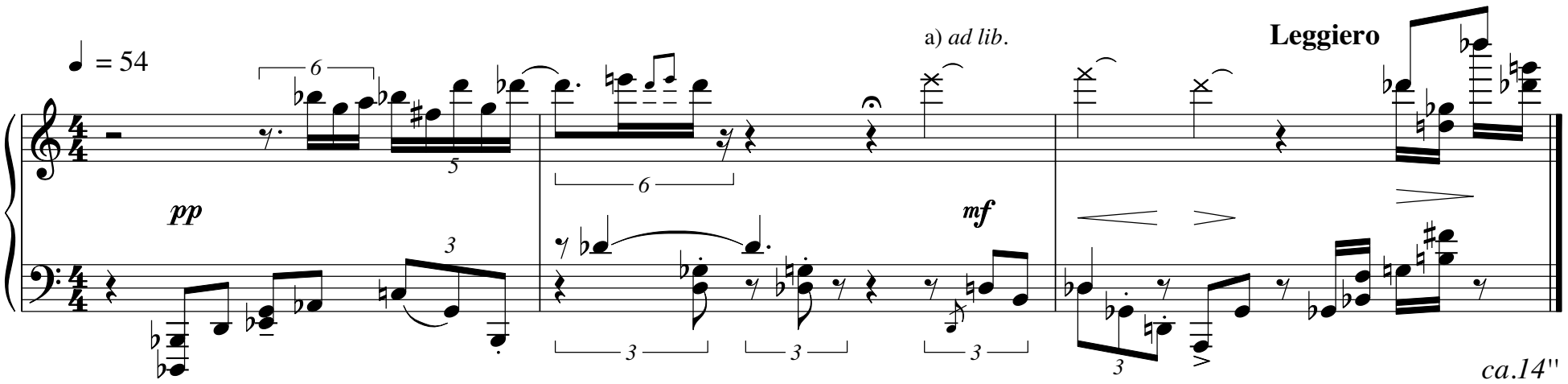

4
pp
mf
cresc.
7
f
mp


10
f
mf
f
13
pp
ff
ca.40"

XII

The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

XII

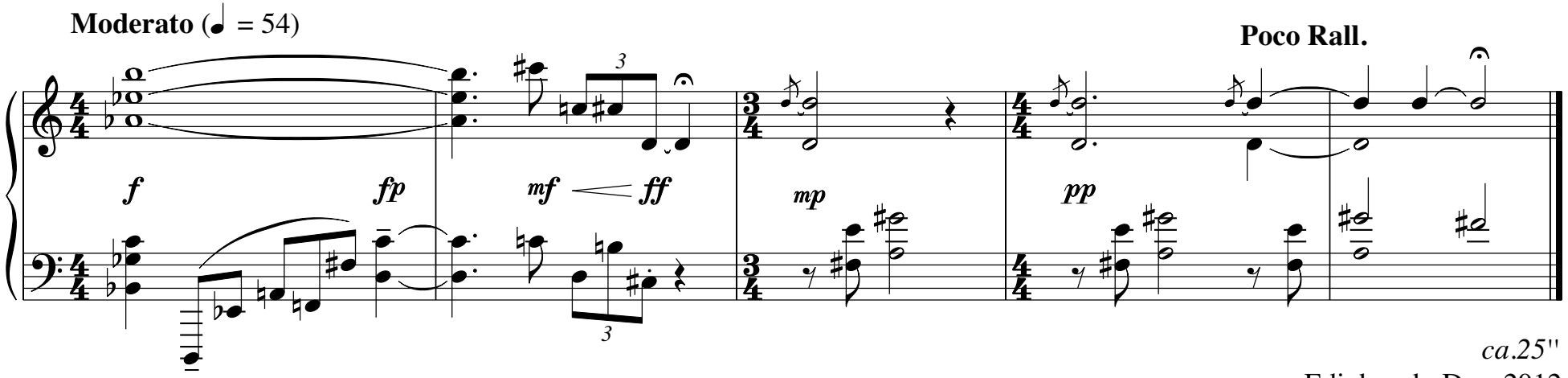


a) Pick strings inside piano with fingernail

XIII

It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.

XIII



ca.25"
Edinburgh, Dec. 2012