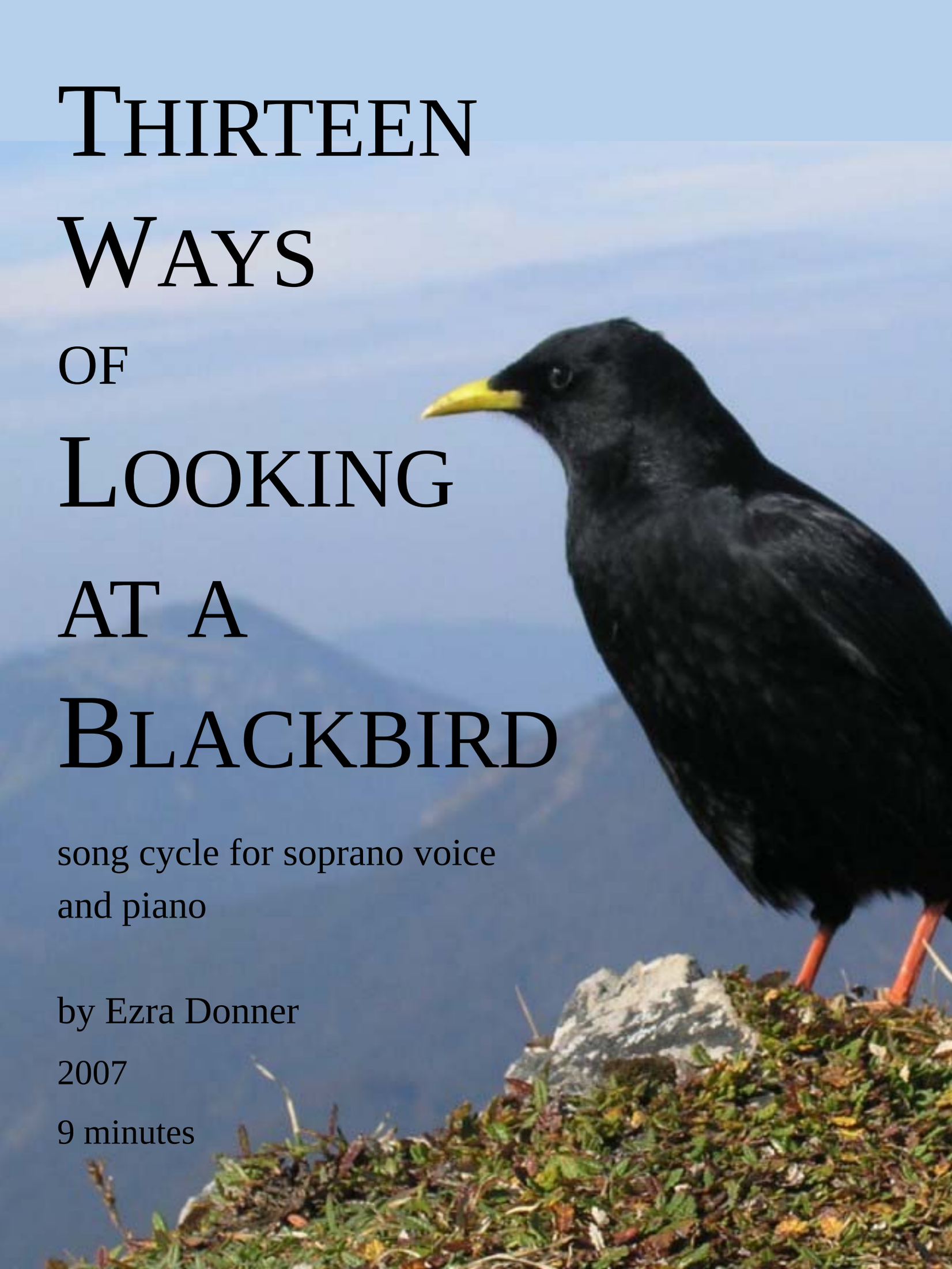
Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird



song cycle for soprano voice
and piano

by Ezra Donner

2007

9 minutes

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird

by Wallace Stevens

I

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

II

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

III

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

IV

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

V

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

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.

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?

VIII

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

IX

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

X

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

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.

XII

The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

XIII

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

THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT A BLACKBIRD

song cycle for soprano voice and piano

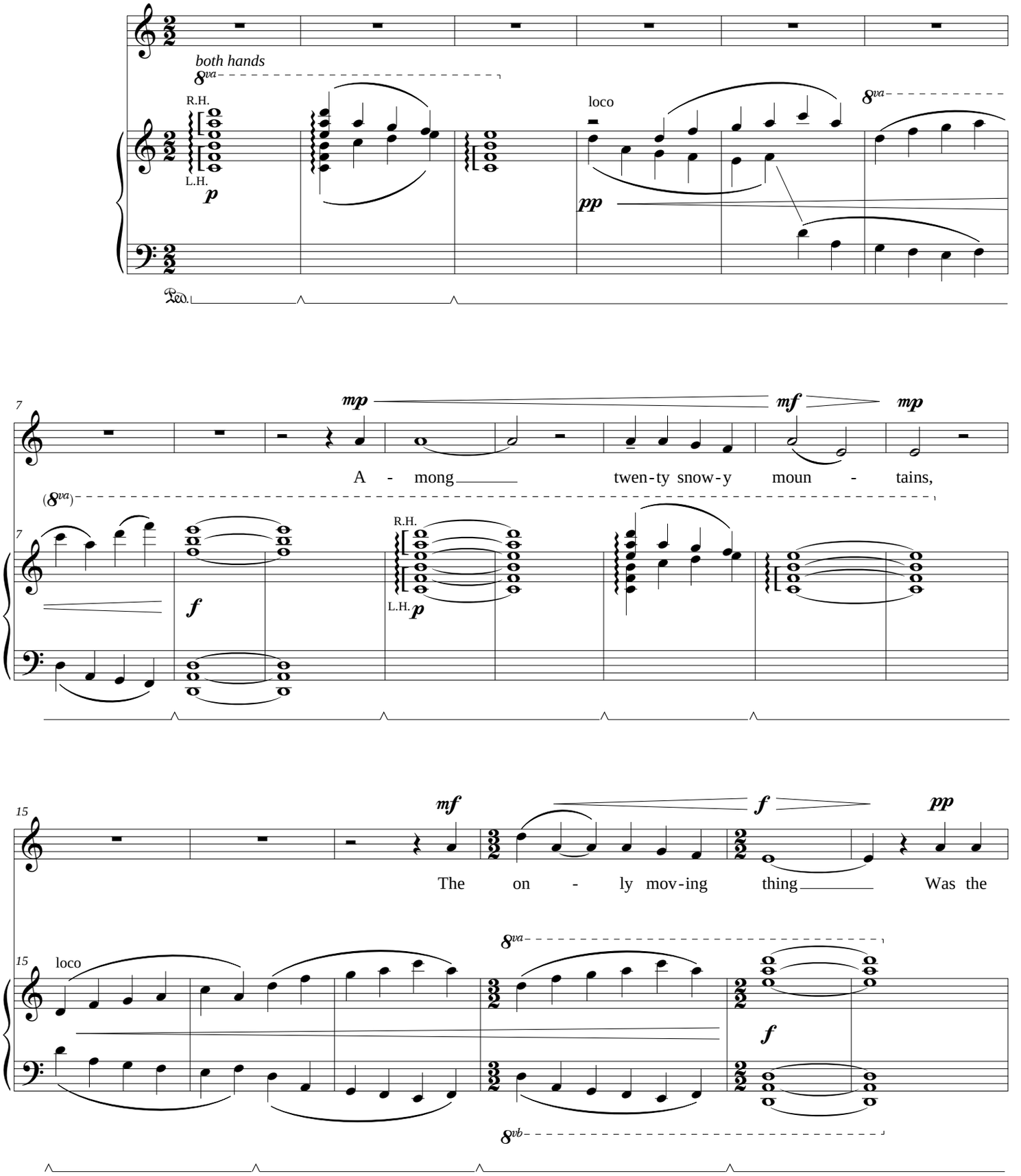
3/14/2013

poem by Wallace Stevens

I

music by Ezra Donner

Serene ♩ = 52



© 2007 by Ezra Donner

21

eye of the black - bird.

8va R.H. L.H. p

B E

Ped.

attacca

II

Frenzied ♩ = 144

8va R.H. R.H. loco

fff L.H. L.H.

sffz

resigned

Ped.

30

mp

I was of three minds

pp

Ped. Ped.

38

Like a tree in which there are three black-birds.

8va

F

Ped.

attacca

III

With momentum ♩. = 80

f

The black - bird

ff

8vb

47

p sub.

whirled in the au - - -

8va

pp sub.

(8vb)

49

f

- tumn winds,

(♪ = ♪)

mp

It was a

(8va)

loco

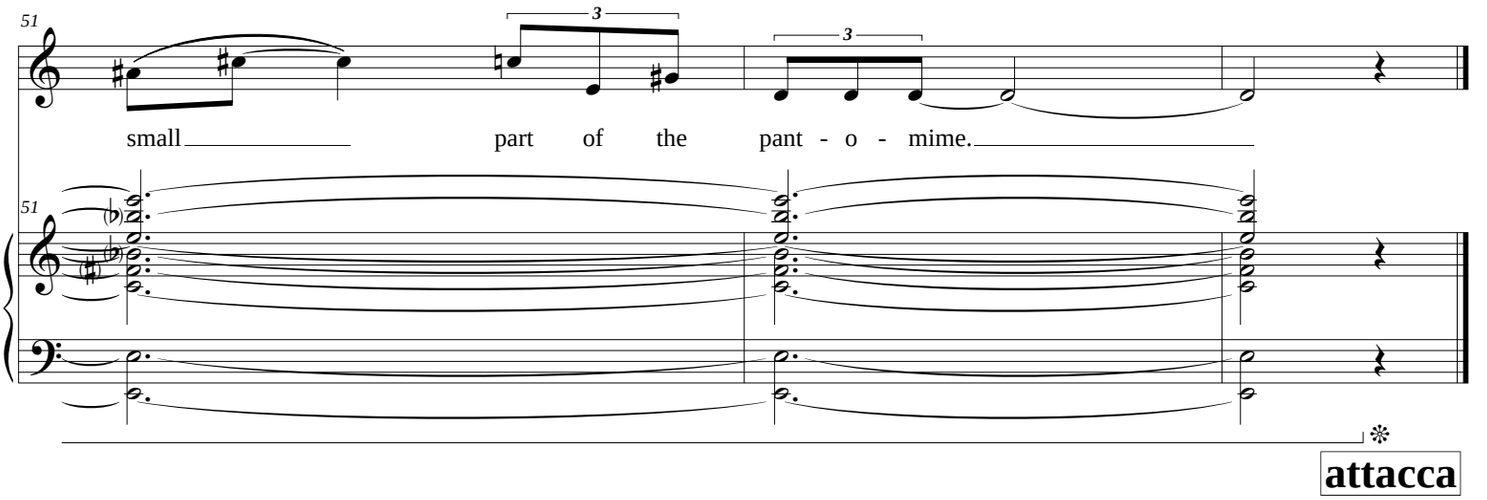
R.H.

L.H

fp

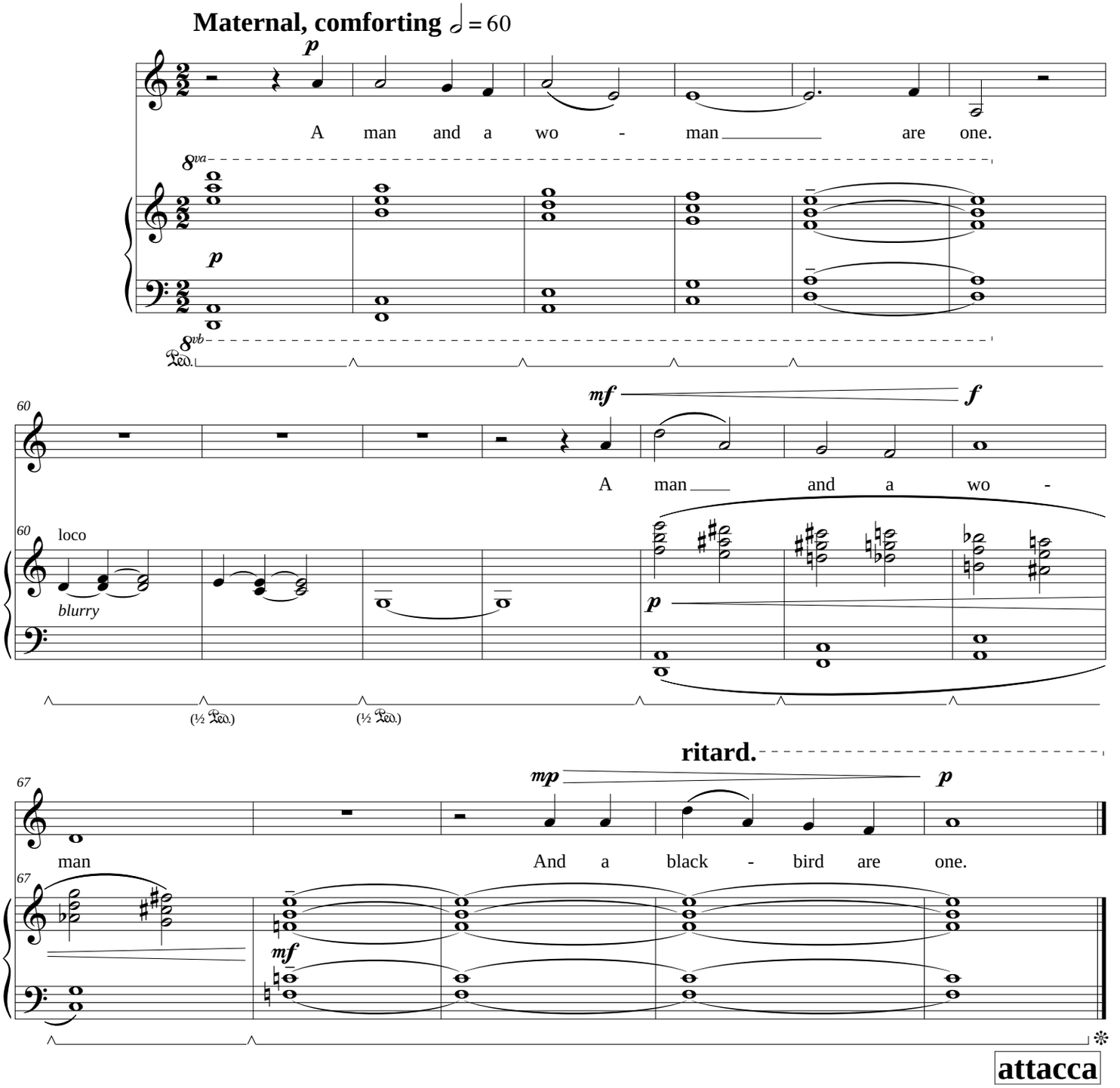
loco

Ped.



attacca

IV



attacca

V

Light-hearted ♩ = 104

mf

Ped.

76

mf parlando

I do not know which to pre - fer The beau - ty of in - flec-tions,

p *mf* *p* *mf*

80

Or the beau - ty of in - nu - en - does,

p *mf*

82

The black - bird whis-tling or just af - ter.

Ped. Ped.

attacca

VI

Frigid ♪ = 108

p

Ic - ic - les filled the long win - dow with bar - - -

15ma

R.H. L.H. R.H. L.H. R.H. L.H. R.H. L.H.

9

pp

Ped.

89

bar - ic glass. The shad - ow

(*15ma*)

89

8vb

(½ Ped.) (½ Ped.)

91

of the black - bird crossed it to and fro.

91

(*8vb*)

(½ Ped.) (½ Ped.) (½ Ped.) (½ Ped.)

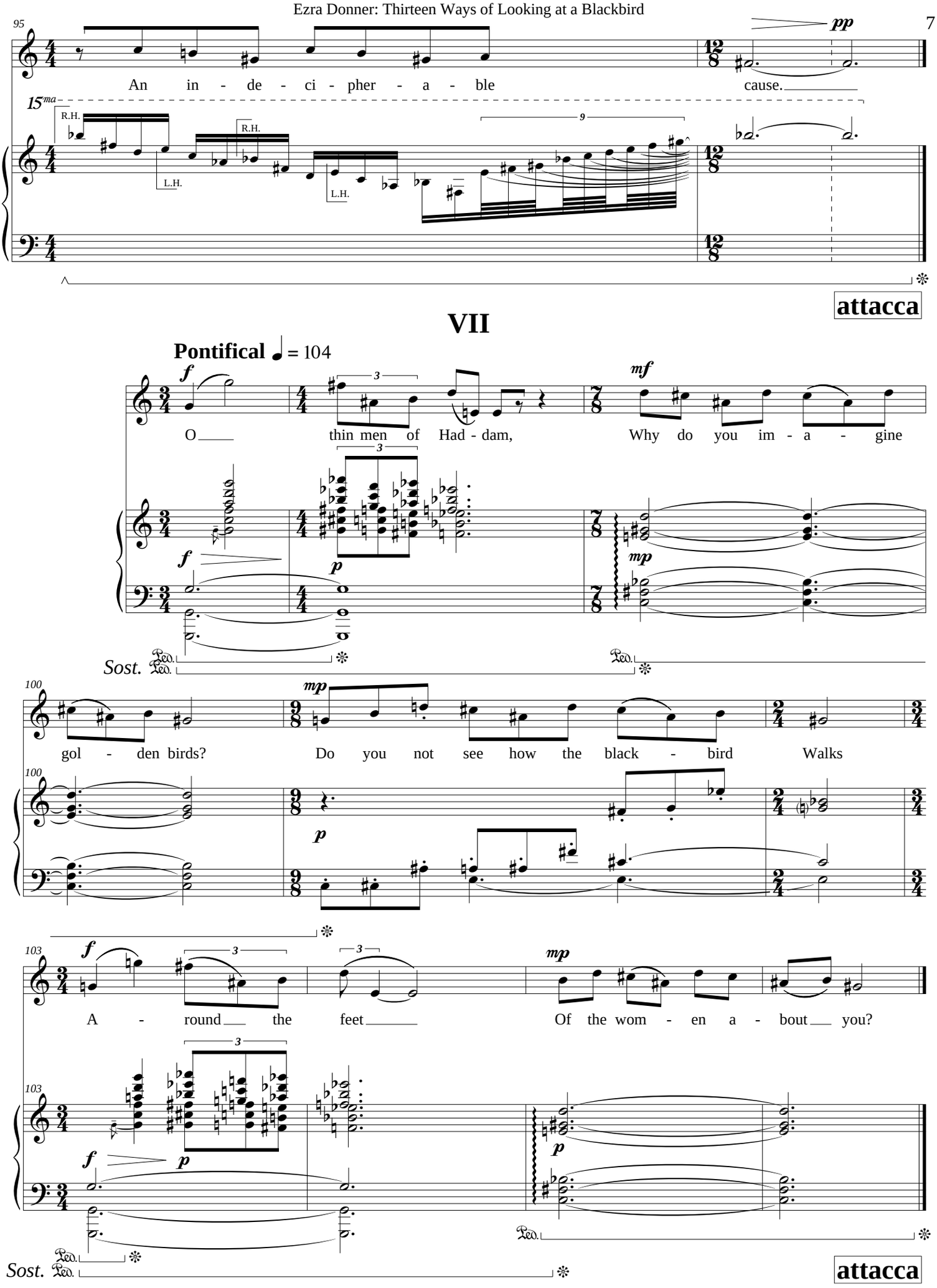
93

The mood traced in the shad - ow

93

pp

(½ Ped.) (½ Ped.) (½ Ped.) (½ Ped.)


95
pp
An in - de - ci - pher - a - ble cause.
15ma
R.H.
L.H.
attacca
VII
Pontifical ♩ = 104
f
mf
O thin men of Had - dam, Why do you im - a - gine
p
mp
Sost.
Ped.
100
gol - den birds? Do you not see how the black - bird Walks
103
A - round the feet Of the wom - en a - bout you?
attacca

VIII

Haughty (bossa nova) ♩ = 84

fff *p sub.* *f*

112 *p flirtatious*

I know

112 *gliss.* *ff* *p*

117 *f*

nob - le ac - cents

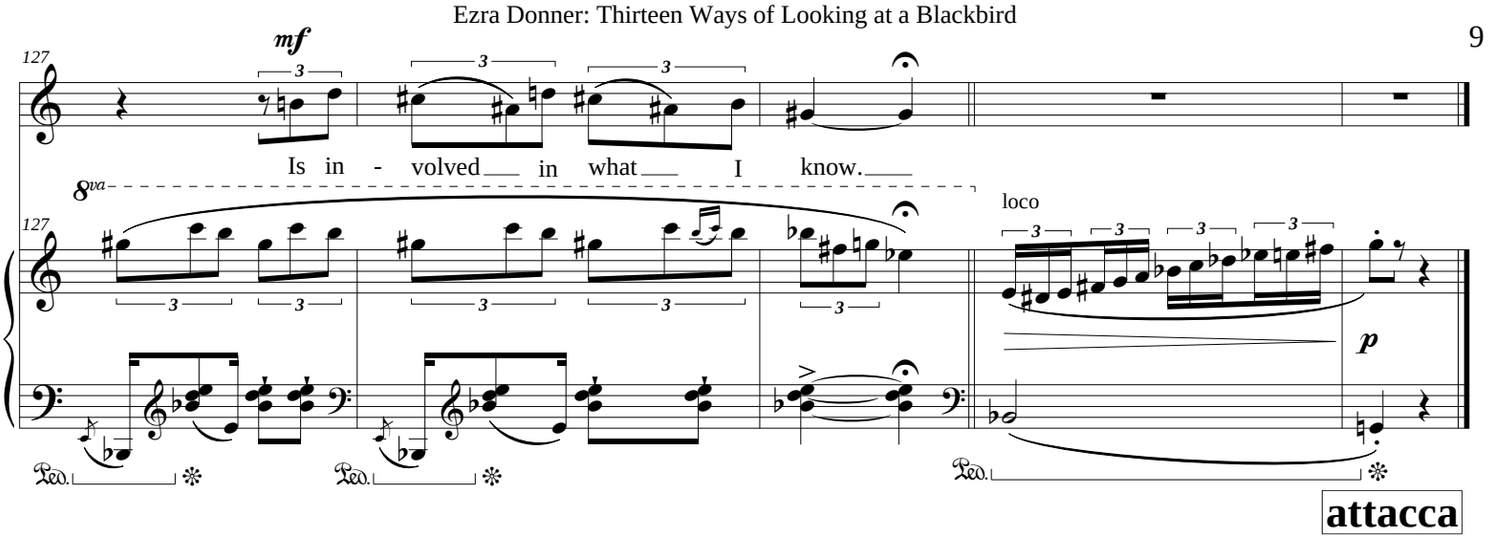
117 *f*

And luc - id in - es - cap - ab - le

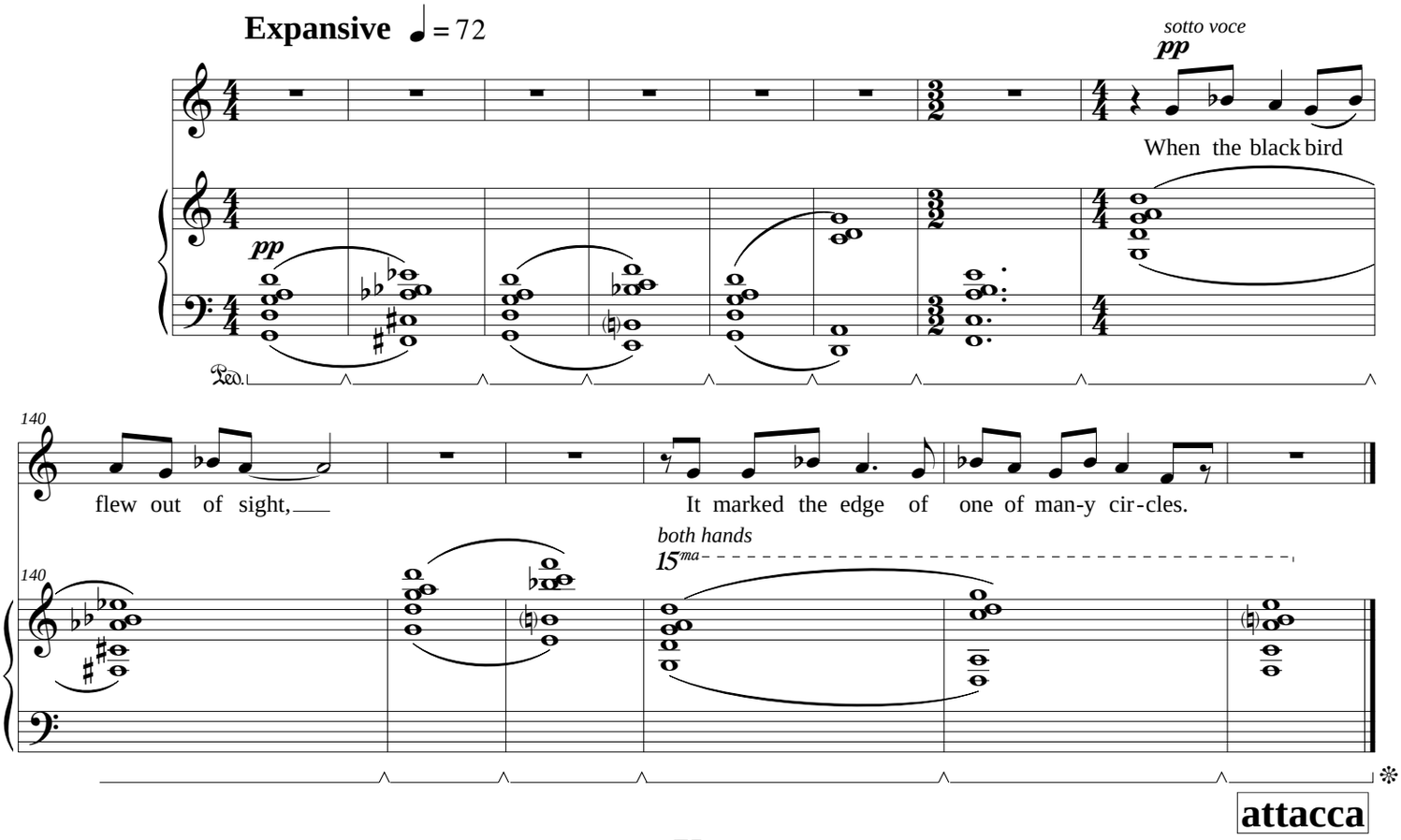
121 *p flirtatious* *f*

rhy-thms, But I know, too, that the black - bird

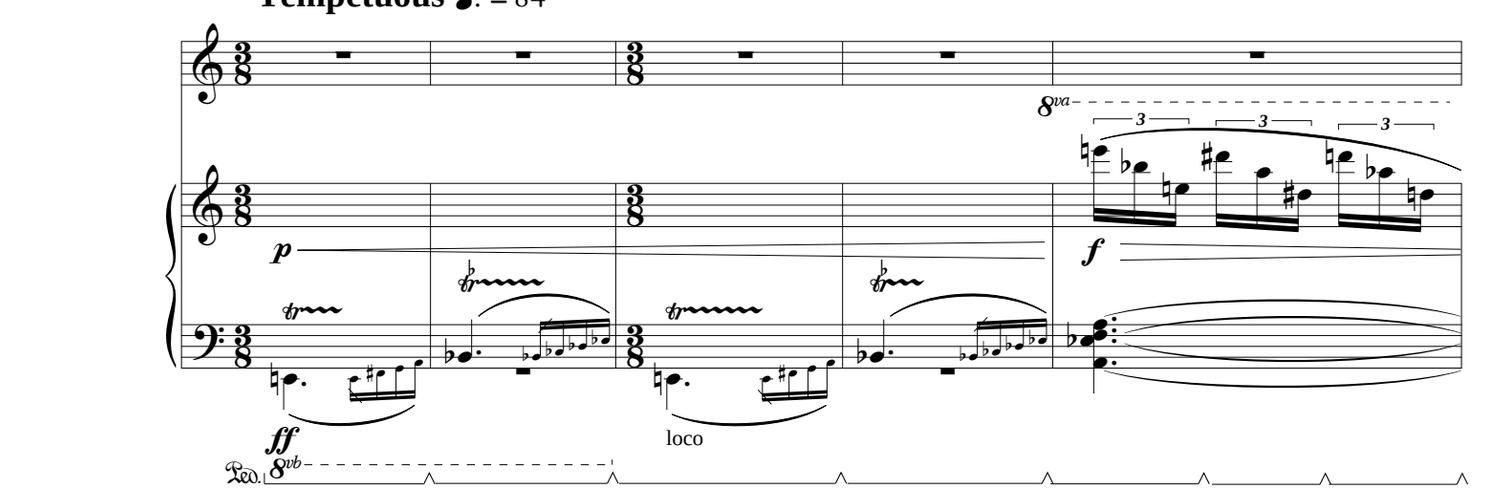
121 *p*

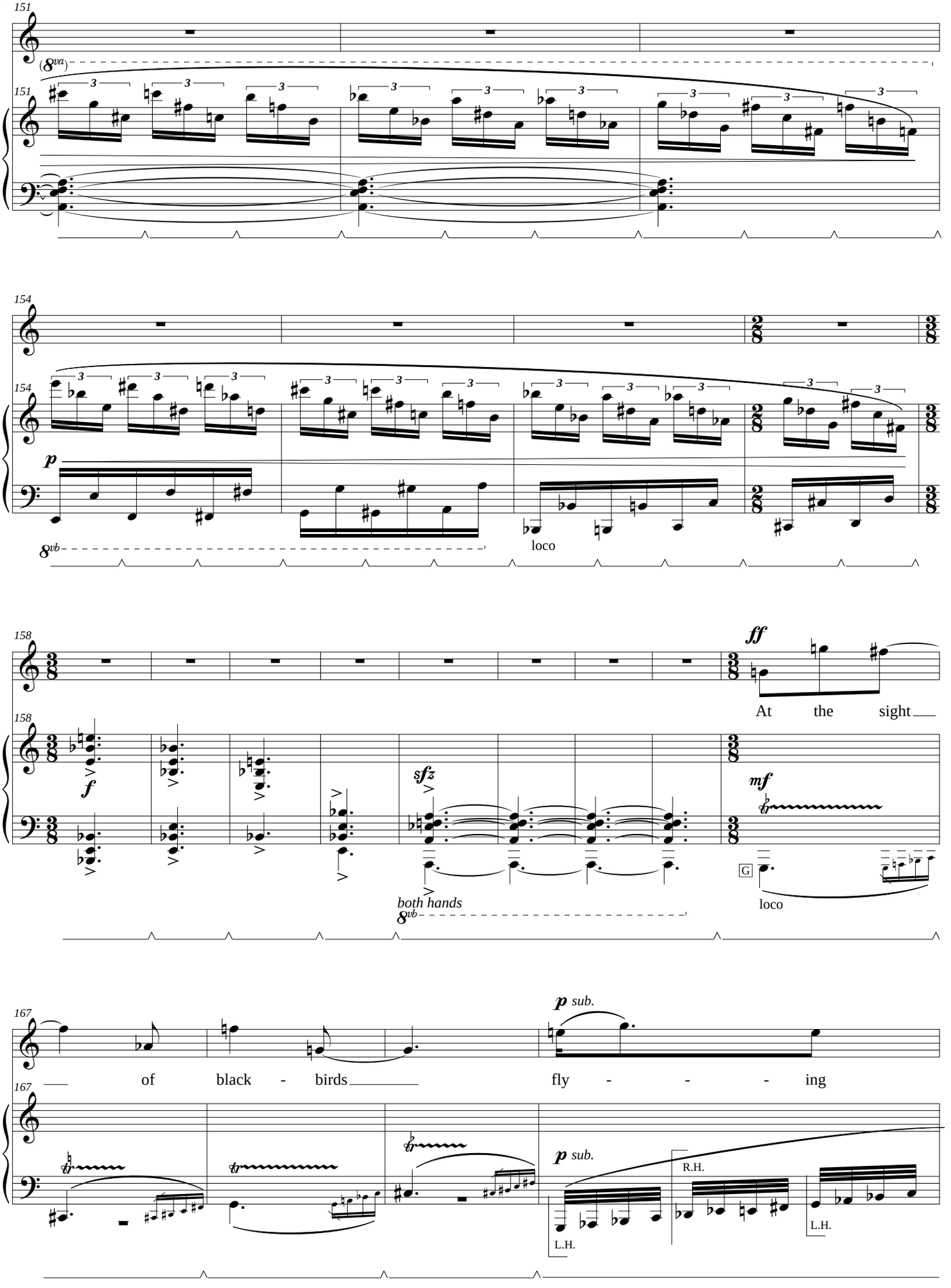

127
mf
Is in - volved in what I know.
8va
loco
p
Ped.
attacca

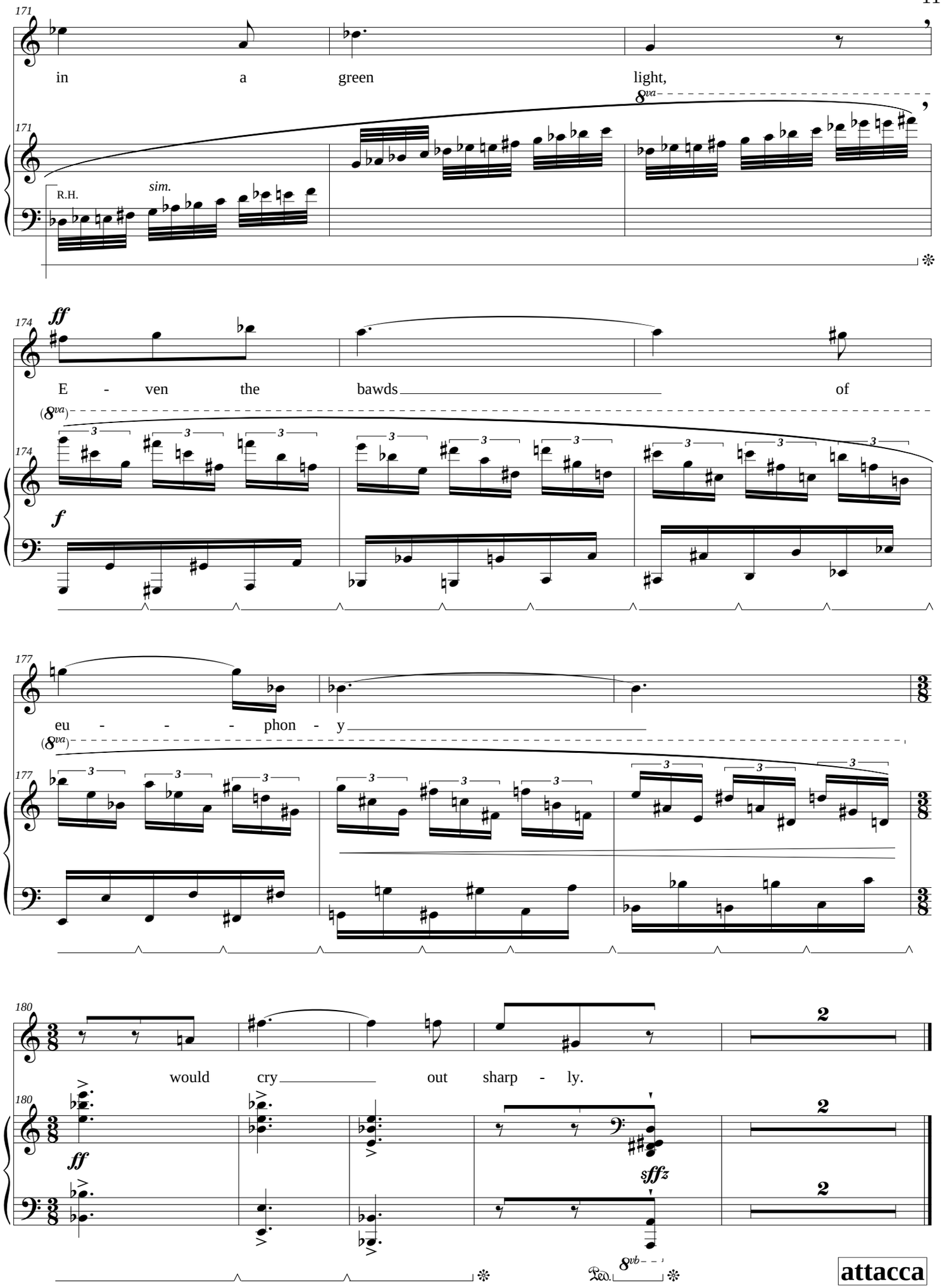
IX


Expansive ♩ = 72
sotto voce
pp
When the black bird
flew out of sight,
It marked the edge of one of man-y cir-cles.
both hands
15ma
Ped.
attacca

X

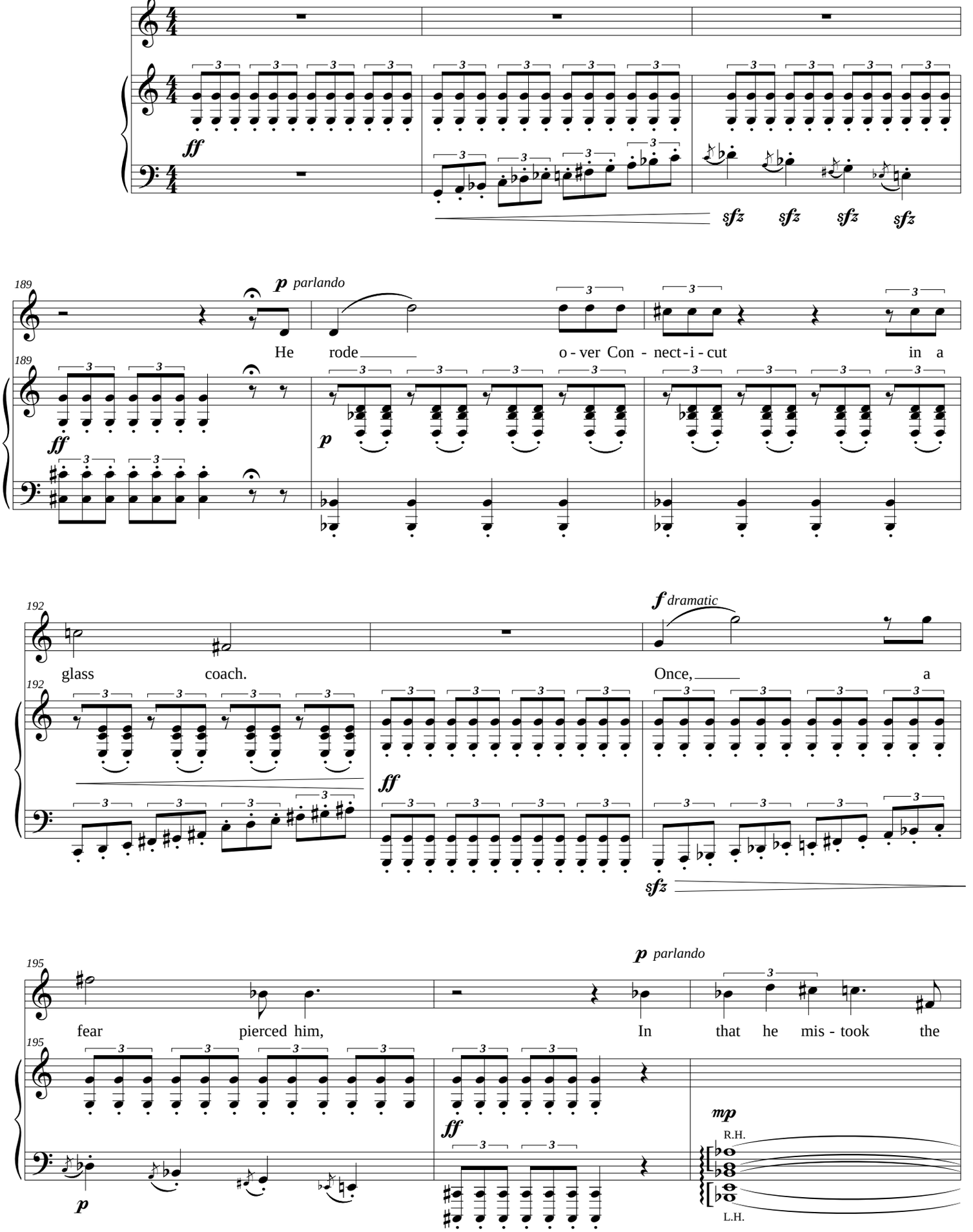

Tempetuous ♩. = 84
8va
p
f
ff
loco
8vb
Ped.

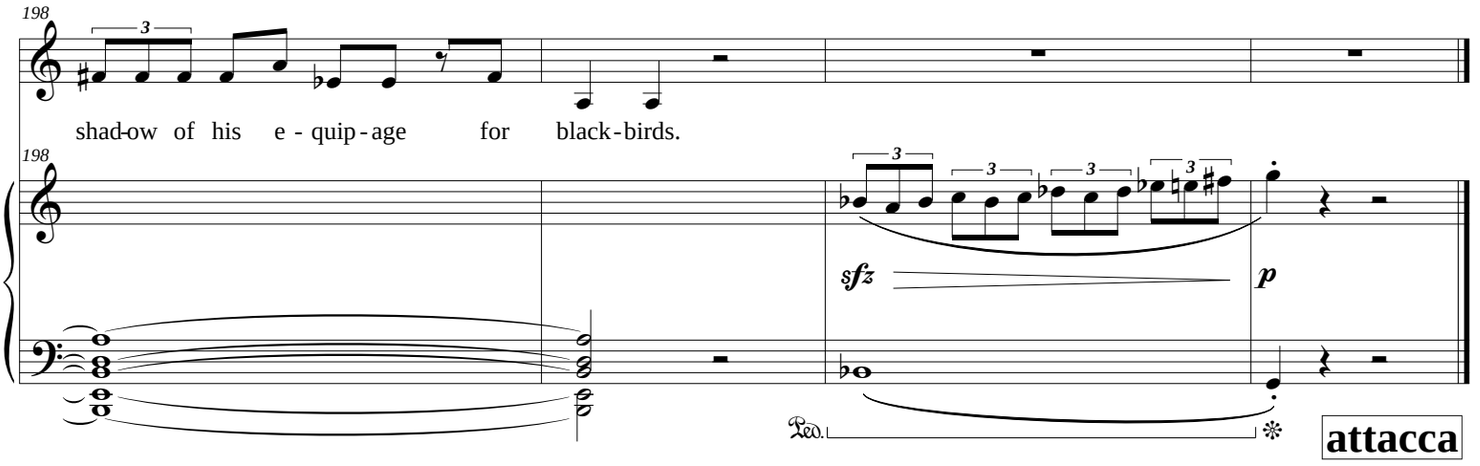

151
(8va)
154
p
8vb
loco
158
ff
At the sight
f
sfz
mf
both hands
8vb
G
loco
167
of black - birds
fly - - - ing
p sub.
p sub.
R.H.
L.H.
L.H.


171
in a green light,
8va
R.H.
sim.
174
ff
E - ven the bawds of
(8va)
f
177
eu - - - phon - y
(8va)
180
would cry out sharp - ly.
2
ff
sffz
8vb
Ped.
attacca

XI

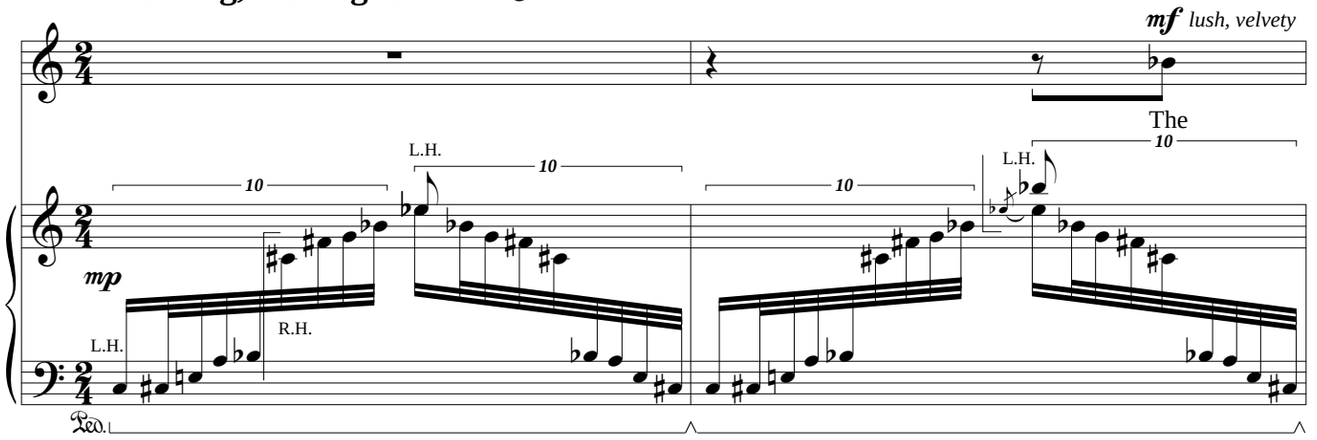
Presto Agitato (Tempo di Erlkönig) ♩ = 84

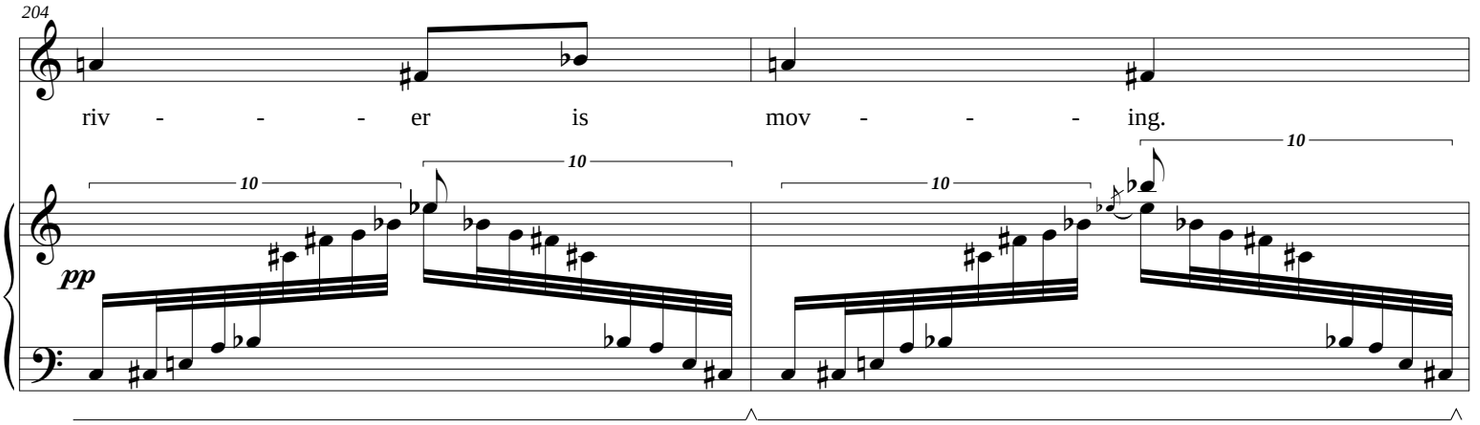


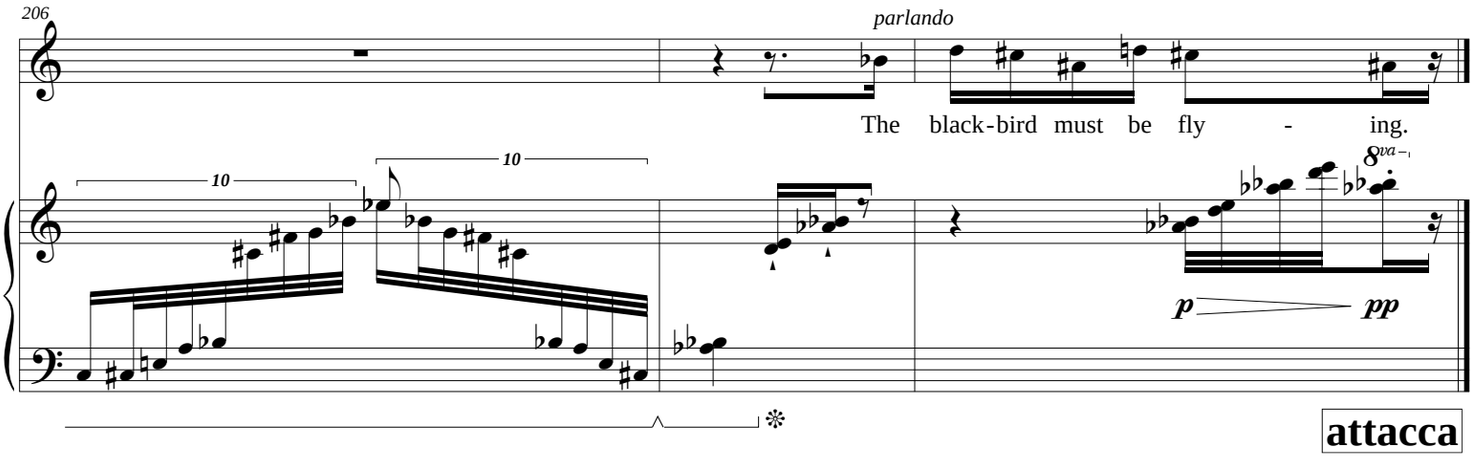


XII

Babbling, moving forward ♩ = 60

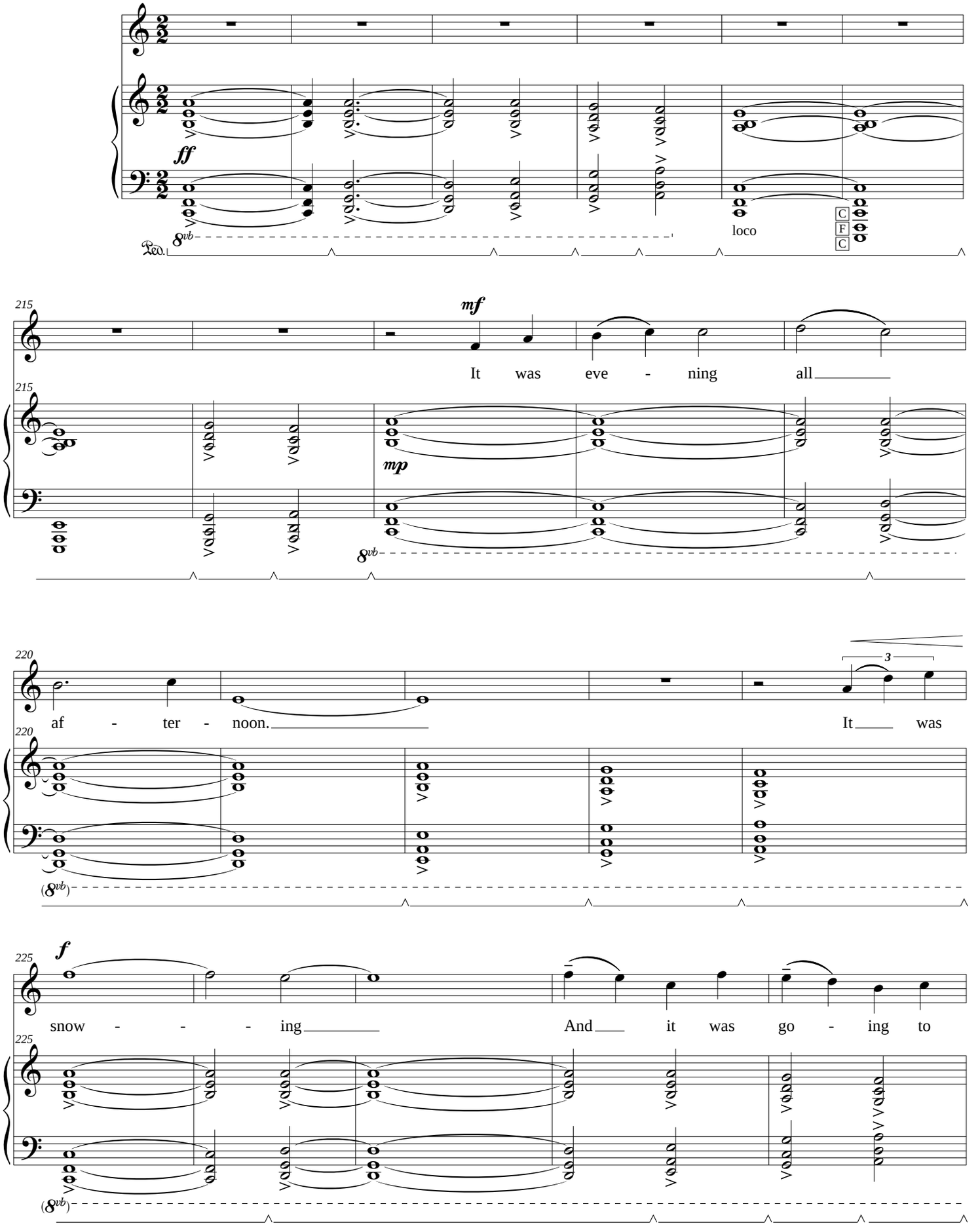


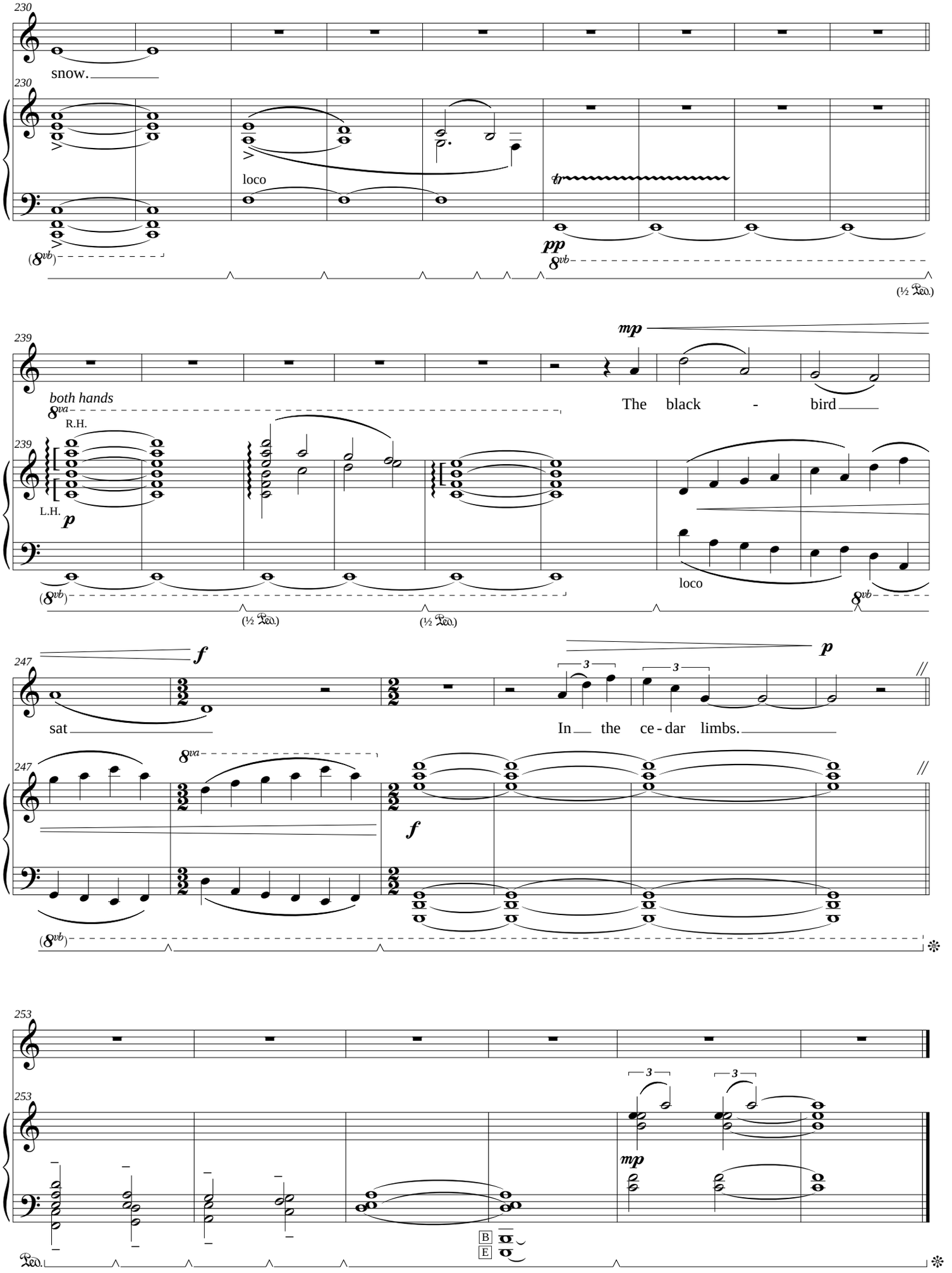




XIII

Ponderous, inevitable ♩ = 60




230
snow.
loco
pp
(½ Ped.)
239
mp
both hands
8va
R.H.
L.H.
p
The black - bird
loco
(½ Ped.)
(½ Ped.)
247
f
sat
p
In the ce - dar limbs.
3
3
253
mp
B
E
Ped.