Augur

Ryan Harper

Violin, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass

2009

Augur consists of twelve fragments, each roughly thirty seconds in length, which are to be organized by the performers using the random number generator available at *random.org*. *One crow bad news* should begin the piece and *Twelve crows good day after* should end it, but the sequence of the remaining ten fragments may be determined as follows:

1) In the random number generator, set the minimum value to 2 and the maximum value to 11.
2) Write down the values produced by the generator in the order they appear until all of the fragments have been accounted for.
3) Remove all instances of a value subsequent to its first appearance from the resulting list.

Due to the use of Cage's gamut technique in the composition of ***Augur***, it will be extremely helpful for the performers to be able to see all four parts in a performance (the technique tends to produce a melodic line split among the performers). As such, the score for each performer consists of twelve pages, each page containing one fragment in full score. After each fragment has been played, the performers should dispose of the paper as quickly as possible in one of four ways according to their personal response to the proceeding fragment:

1) Rip the paper in two and let the pieces fall to the ground.
2) Gently drop the paper on the ground.
3) Crumple the paper and throw it on the ground.
4) Lay the paper neatly on the ground.

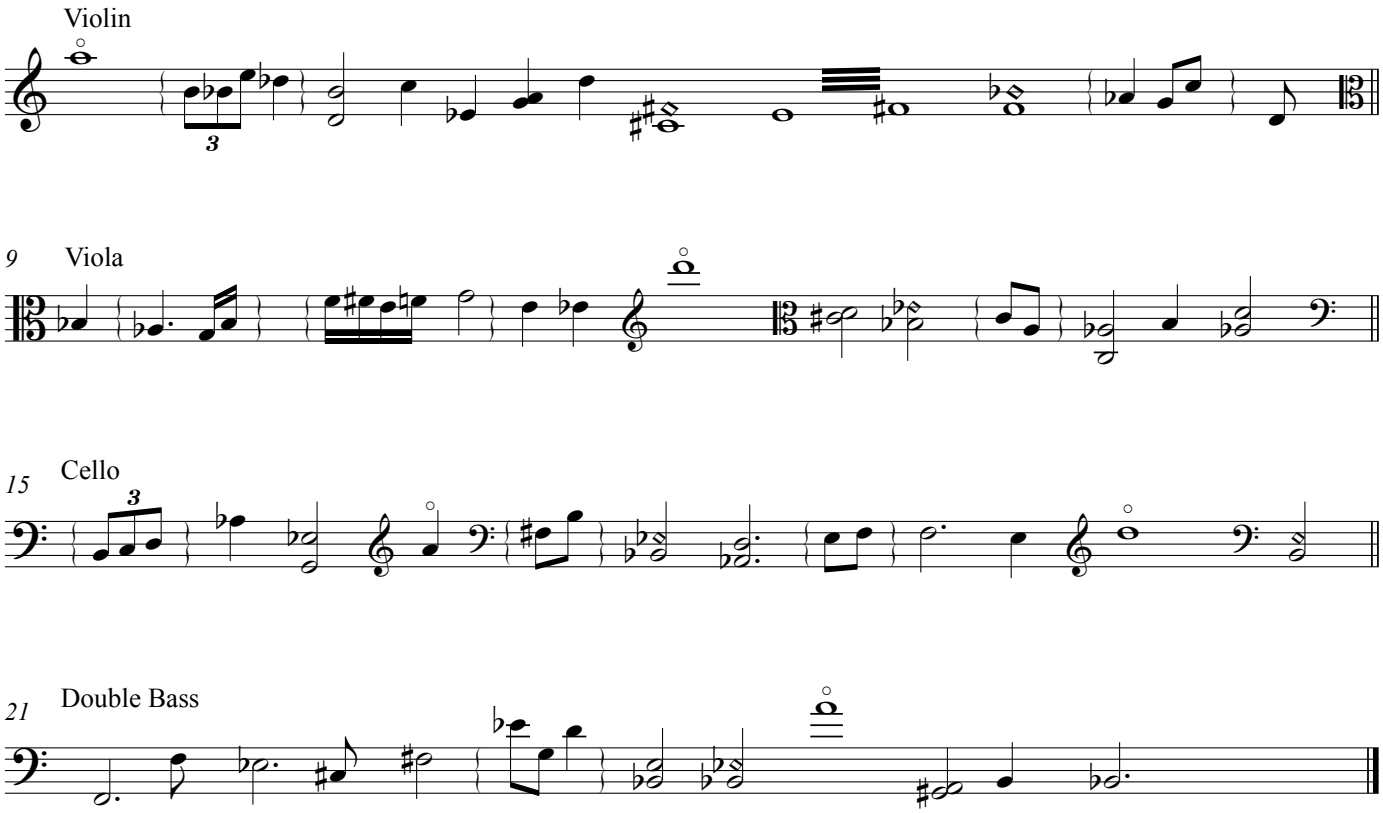
The fragments should be presented with as much contrast as possible; the audience should feel a continual unrest.

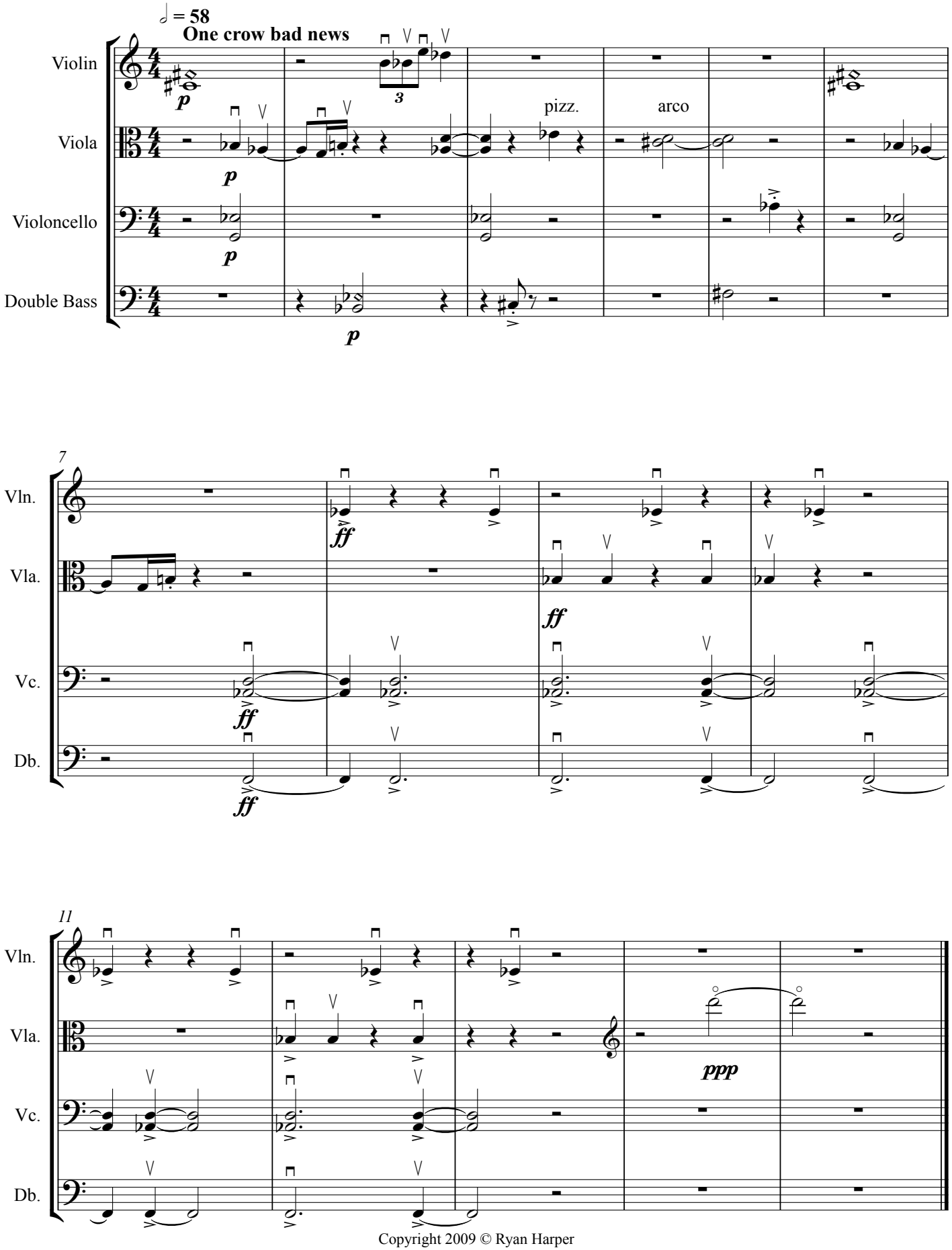
Finally, the tempi should not be treated too literally, but rather as relative to an average tempo of sixty half notes per minute.

Each fragment corresponds to a line of the following anonymous Scottish poem, which details a method of predicting the future based on crow sightings:

One crow bad news
Two crows myrth
Three crows a wedding
Four crows a birth
Five crows for riches
Six crows a thief
Seven crows a journey
Eight crows for grief
Nine crows a secret
Ten crows for sorrow
Eleven crows for love
Twelve crows good day after

Gamut (Not Played)





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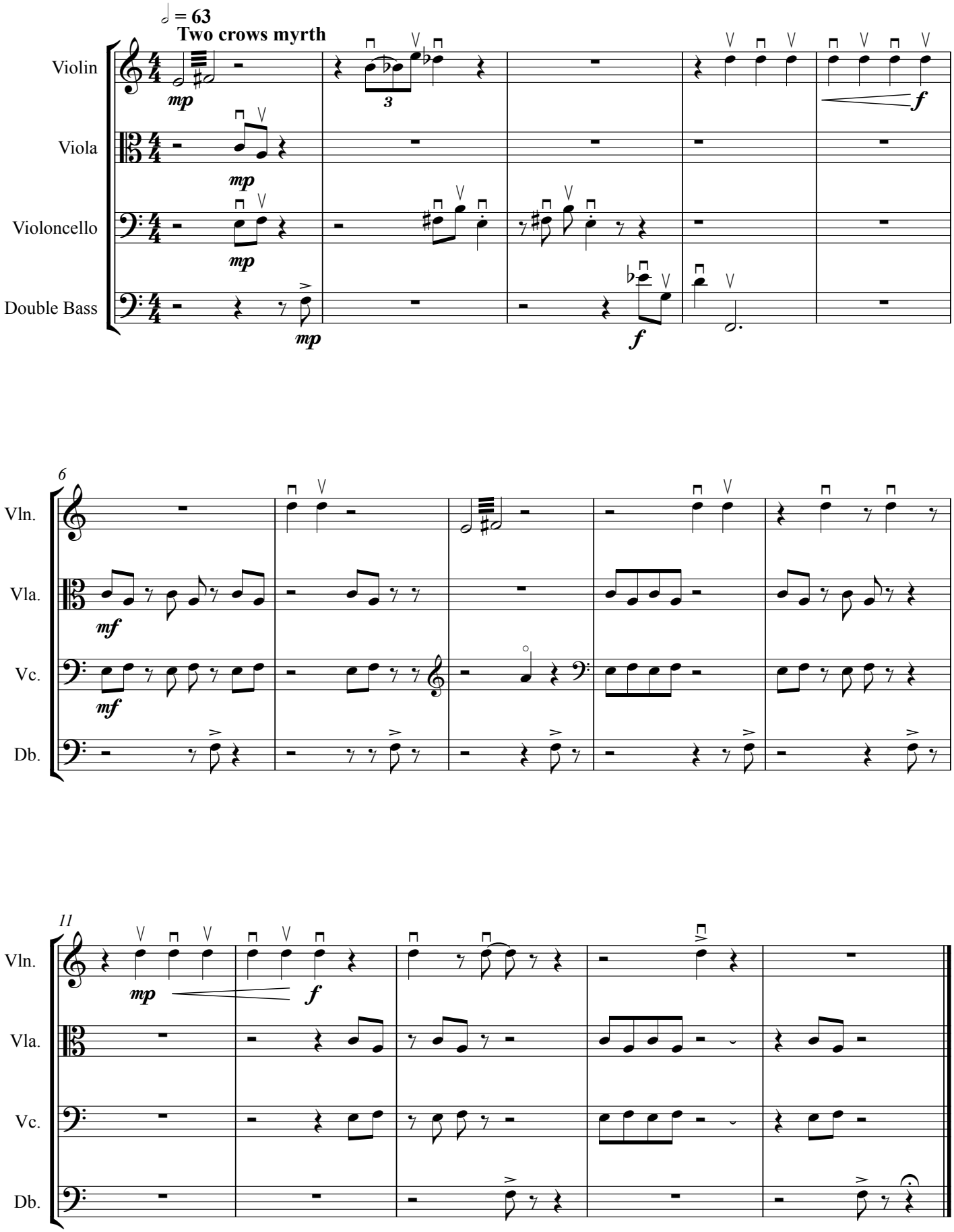
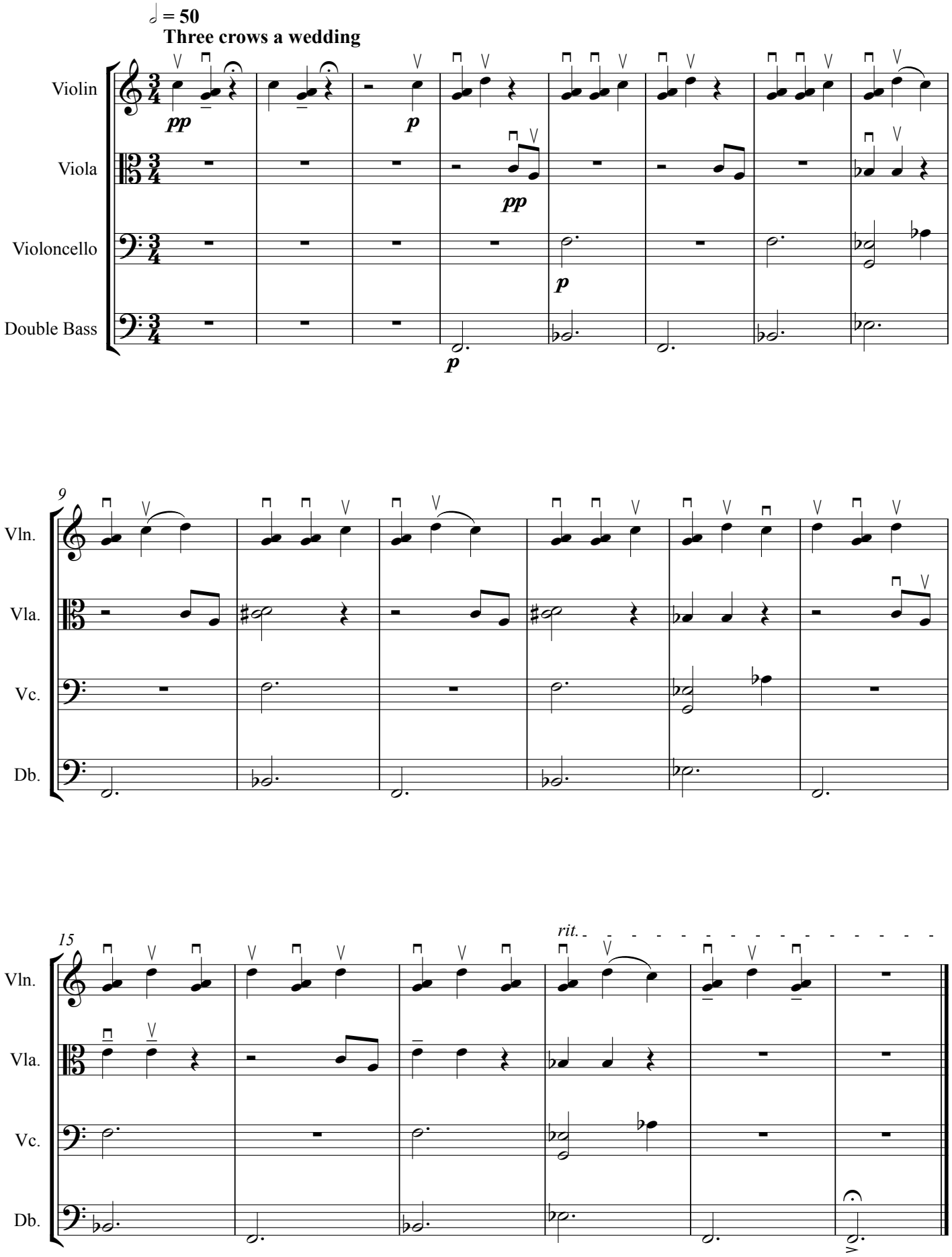
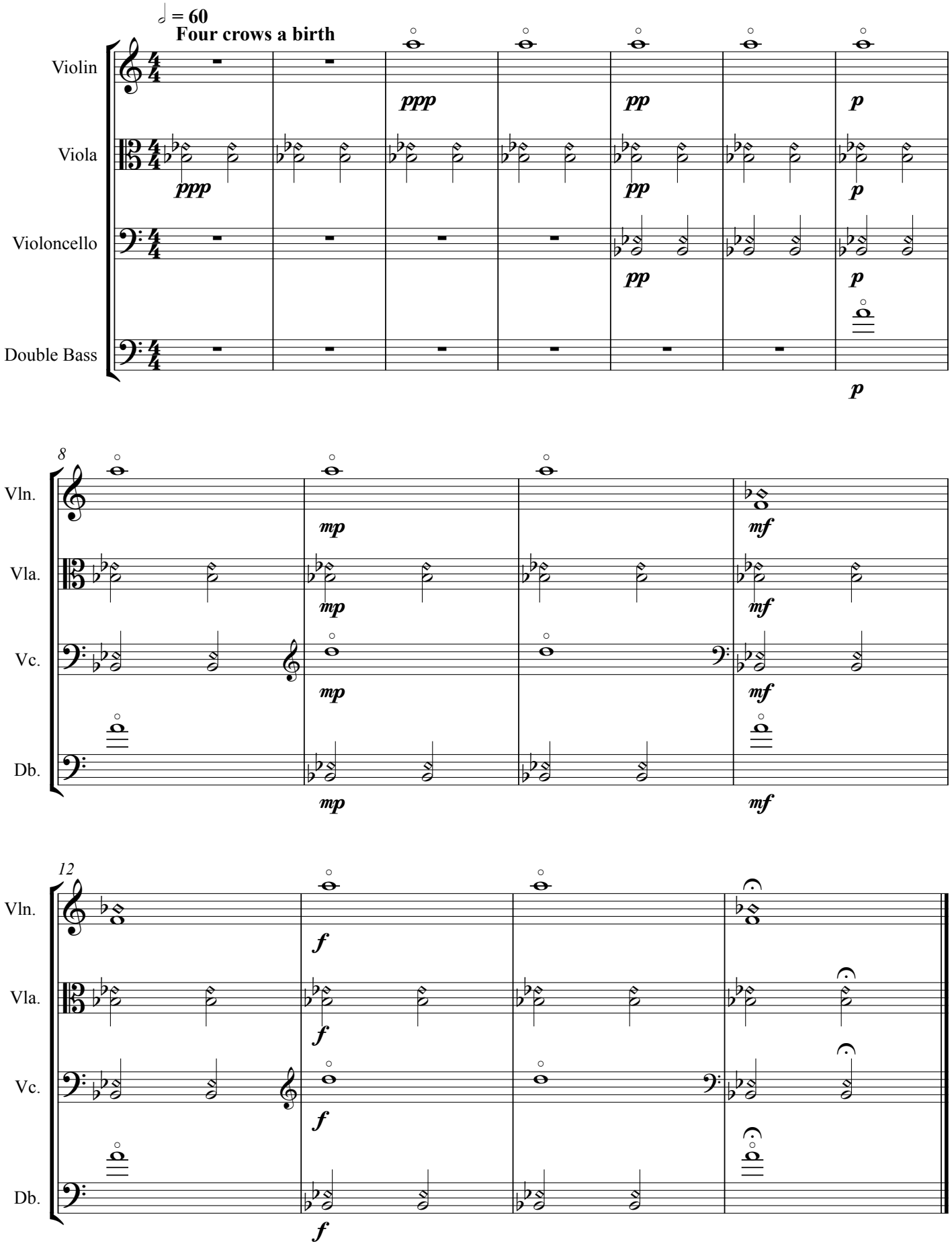
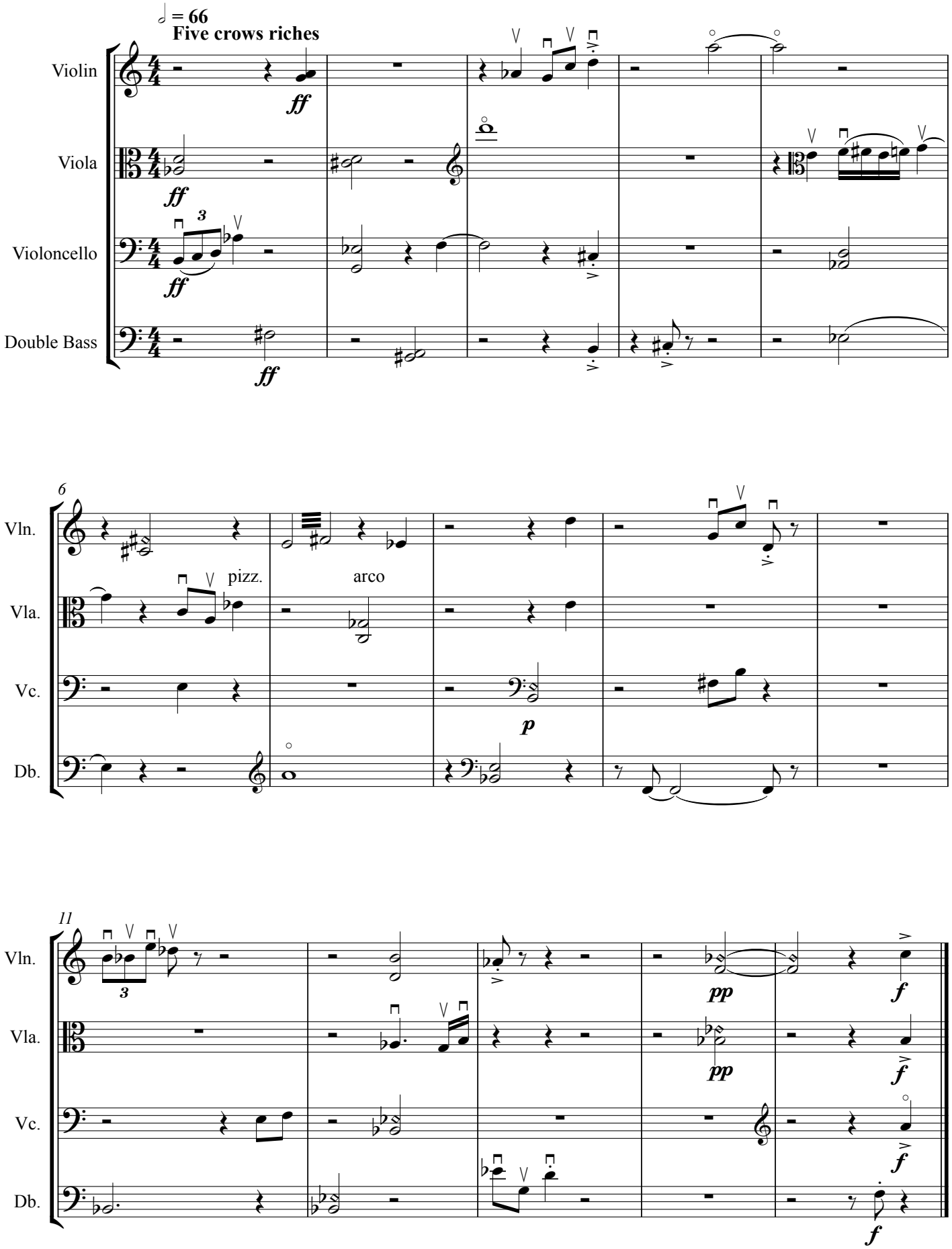
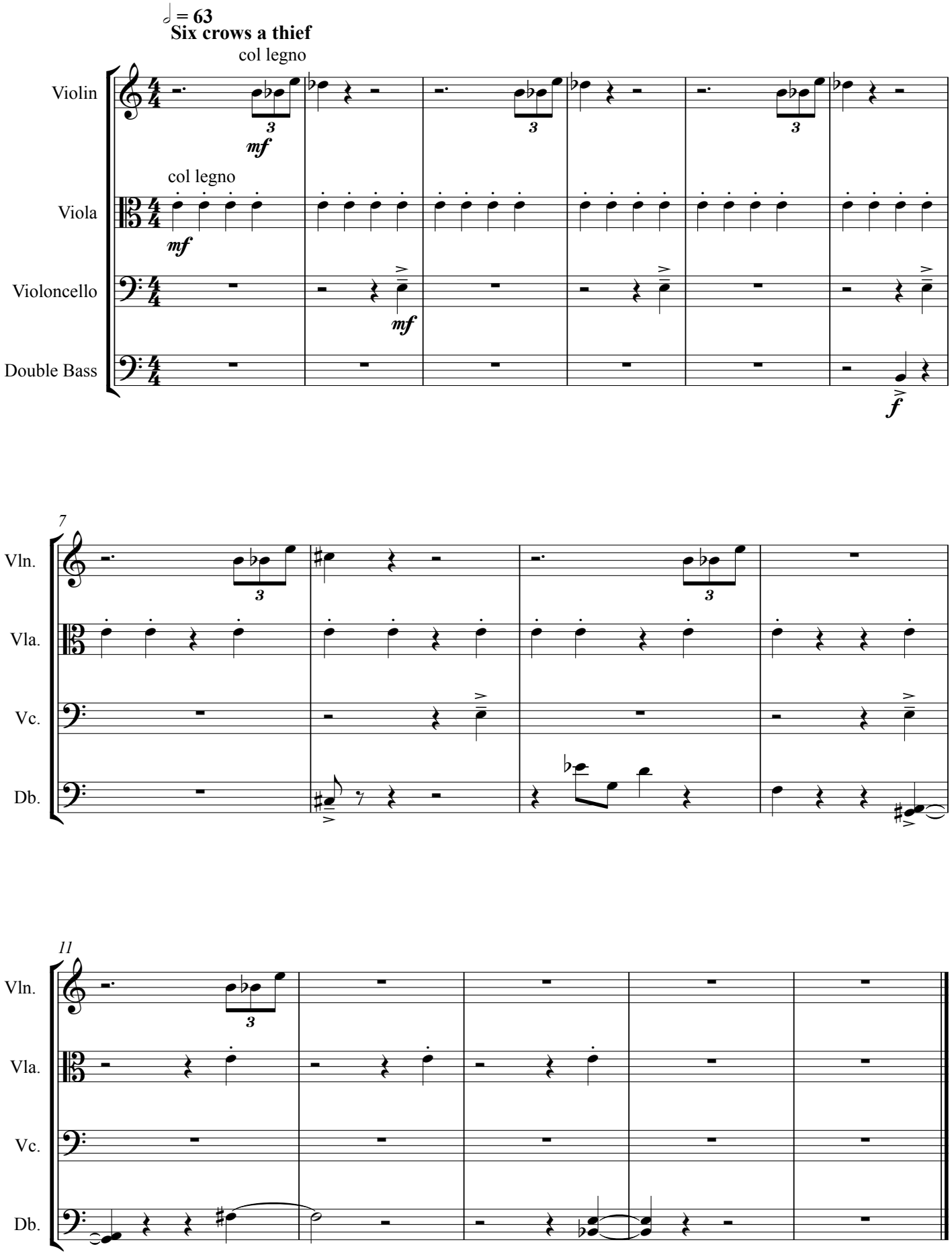
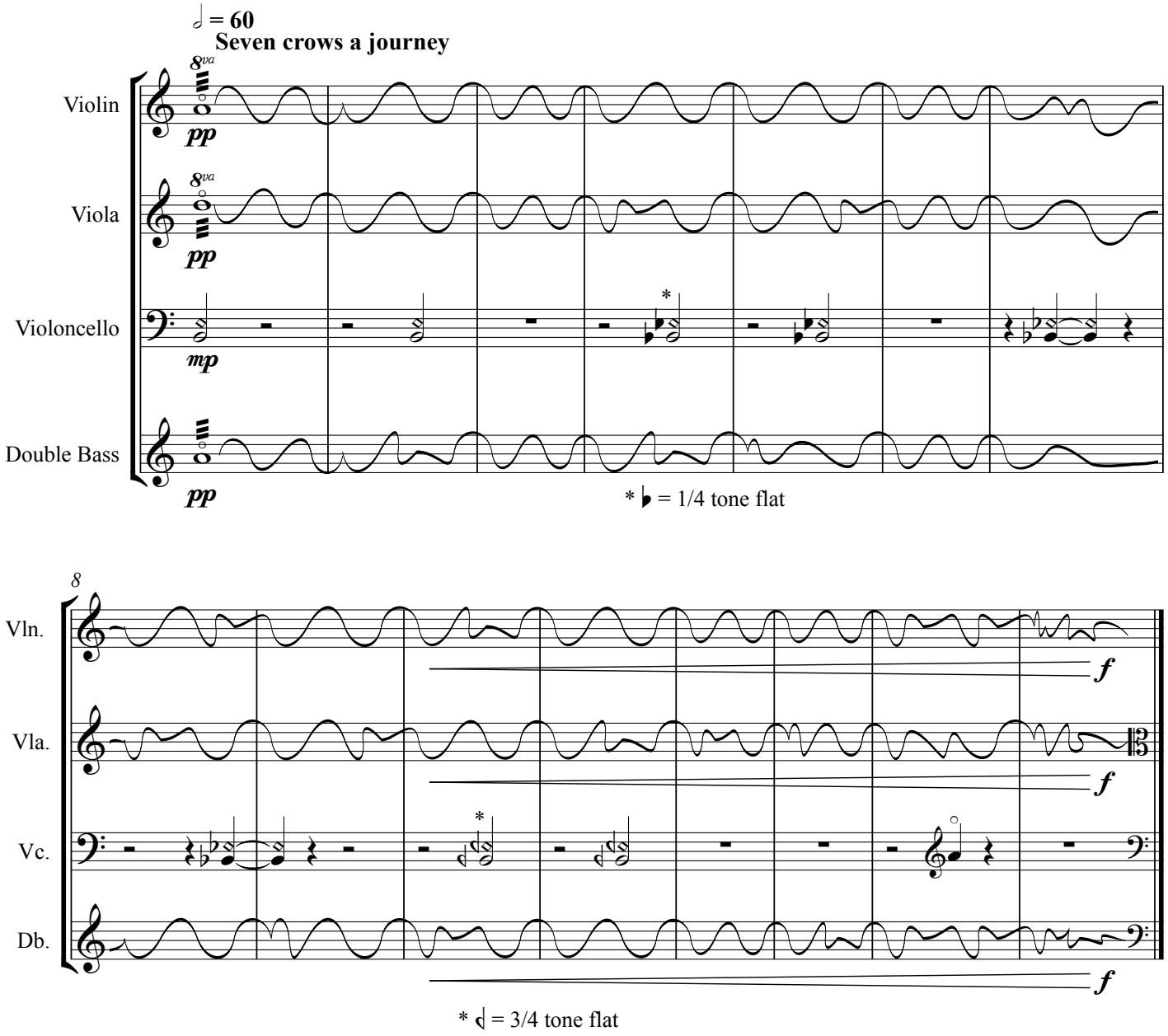

♩ = 63
Two crows myrth
Violin
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass
mp
mp
mp
mp
3
f
6
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
mf
mf
11
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
mp
f

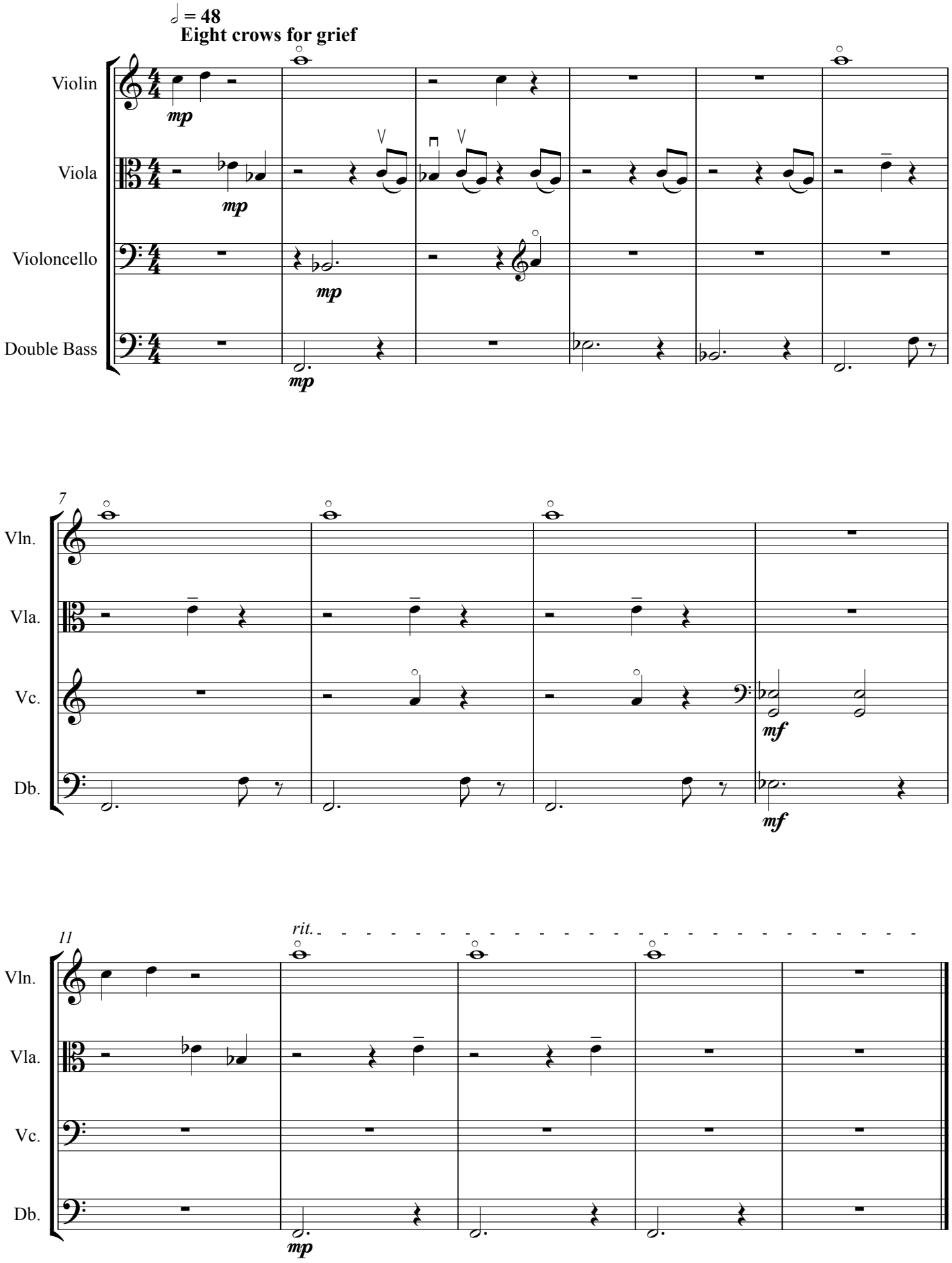

♩ = 50
Three crows a wedding
Violin
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass
pp
p
pp
p
p
9
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
15
rit.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

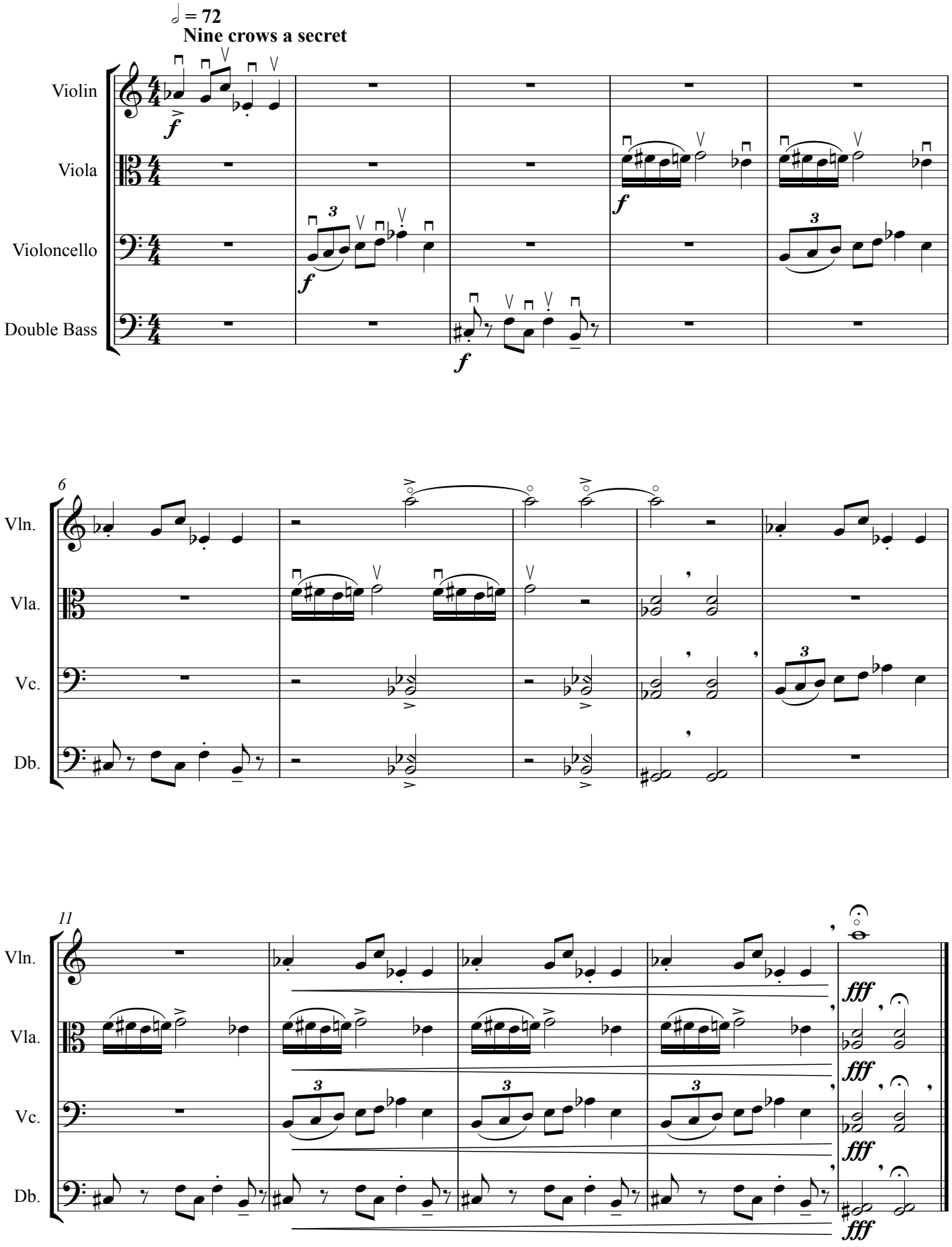

♩ = 60
Four crows a birth
Violin
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass
ppp
pp
p
8
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
mp
mf
12
f

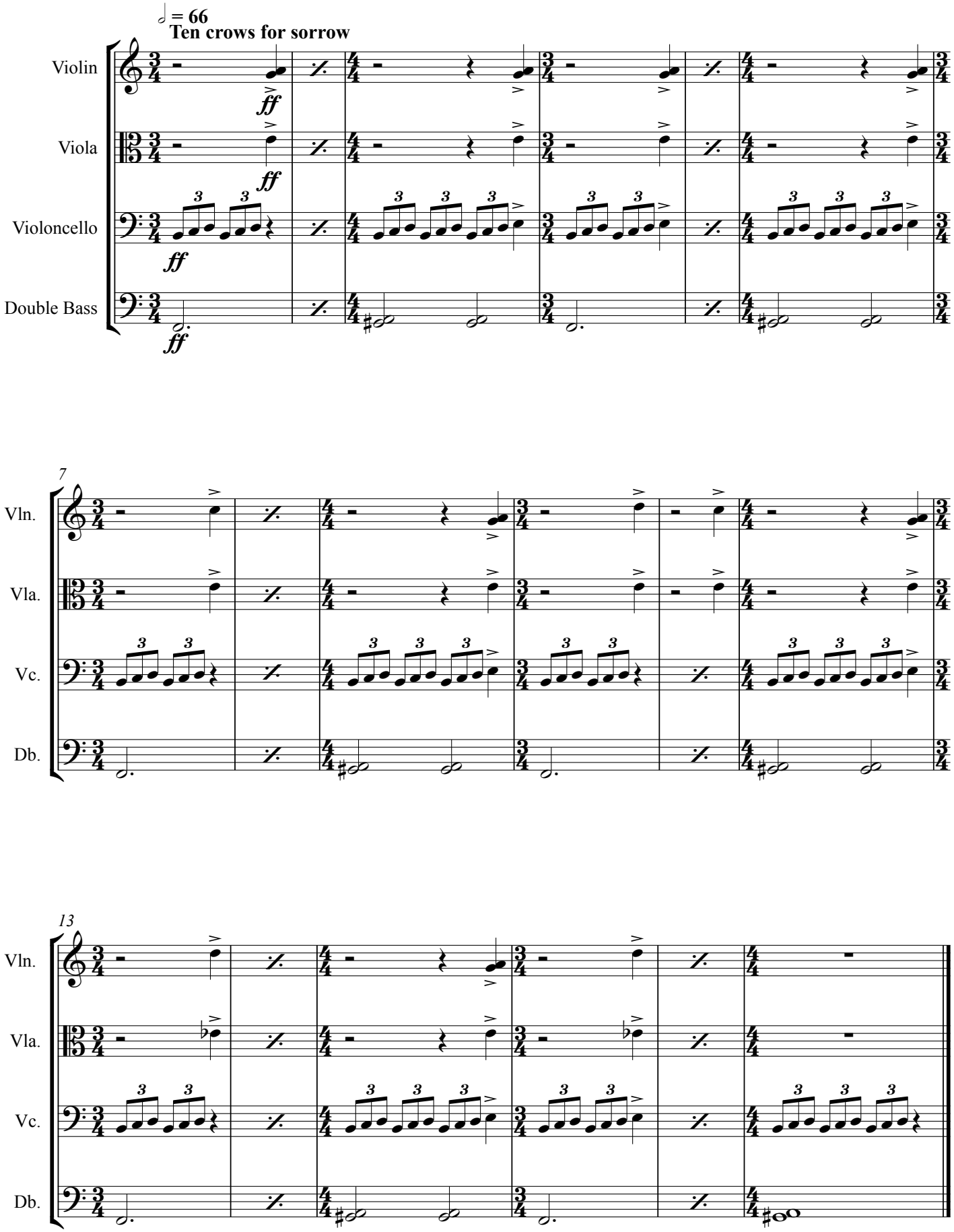

♩ = 66
Five crows riches
Violin
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass
ff
3
6
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
pizz.
arco
p
11
pp
f

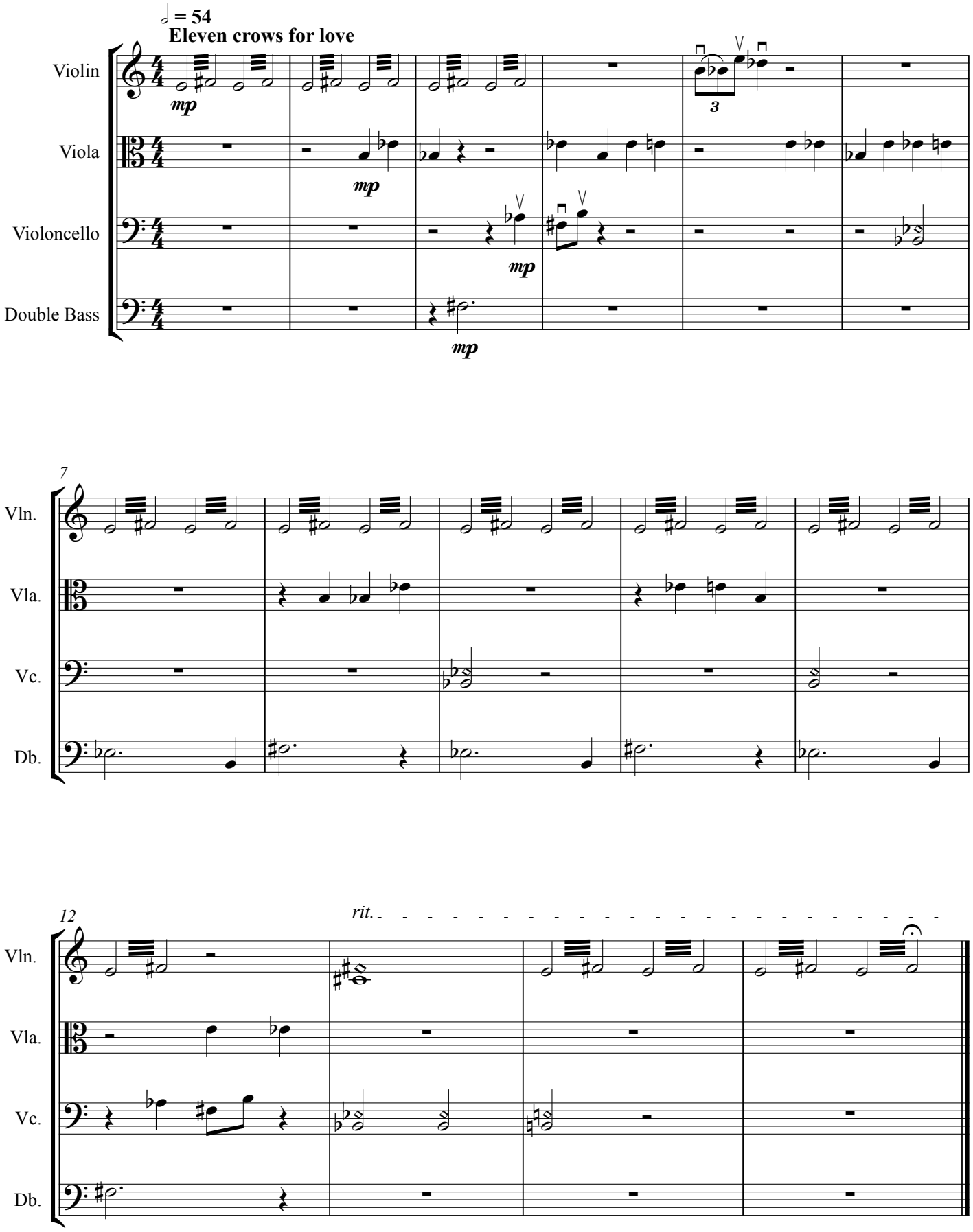

♩ = 63
Six crows a thief
col legno
Violin
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass
mf
f
7
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
11

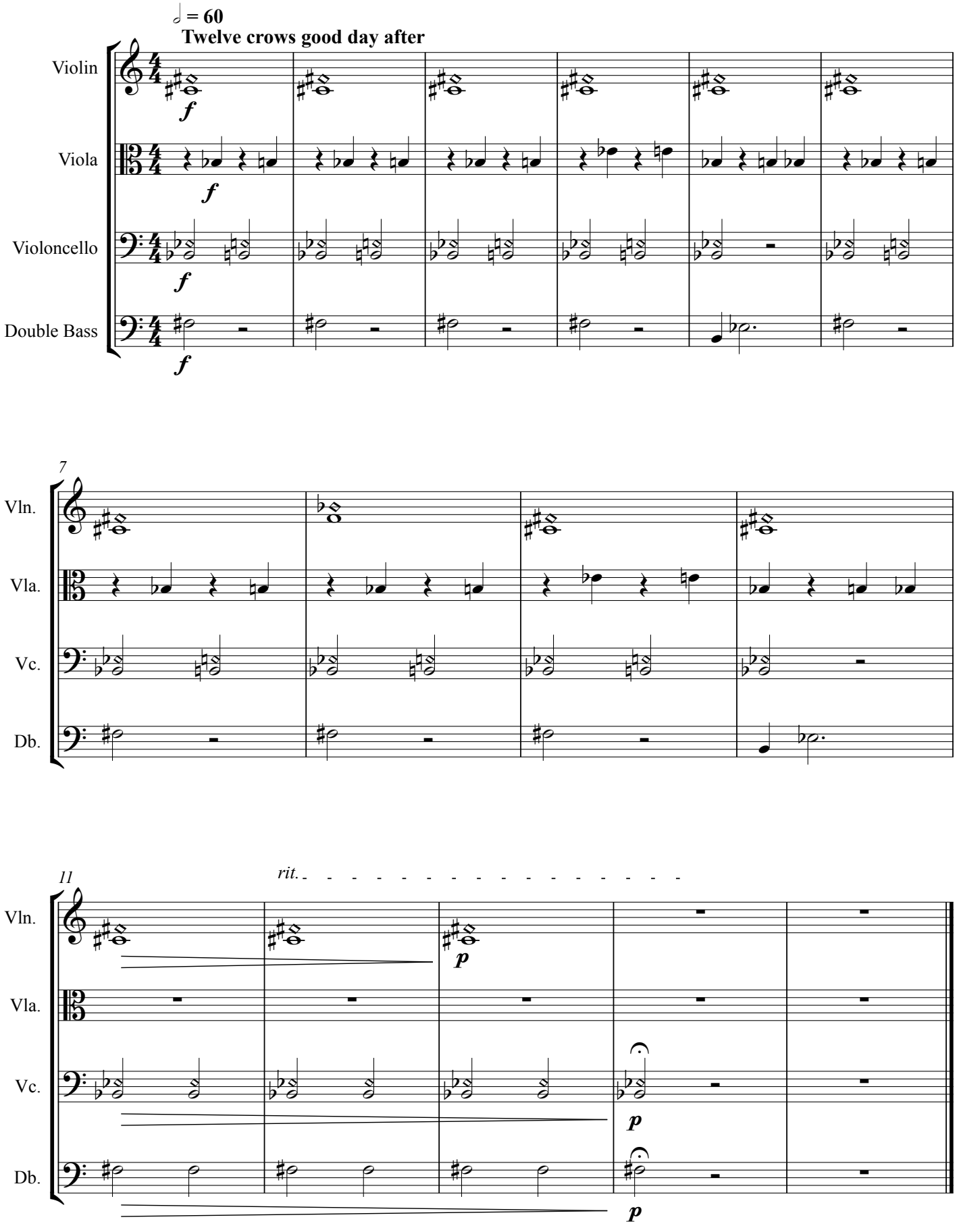

♩ = 60
Seven crows a journey
Violin
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass
8va
pp
mp
*
* 𝄲 = 1/4 tone flat
8
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
f
15
* 𝄳 = 3/4 tone flat


♩ = 48
Eight crows for grief
Violin
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass
mp
mp
mp
mp
7
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
mf
mf
11
rit.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
mp


♩ = 72
Nine crows a secret
Violin
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass
f
6
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
11
fff


♩ = 66
Ten crows for sorrow
Violin
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass
ff
7
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
13
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.


♩ = 54
Eleven crows for love
Violin
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass
mp
3
7
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
12
rit.


♩ = 60
Twelve crows good day after
Violin
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass
f
7
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
11
rit.
p