Flo Menezes

...donde solo las plantas suenan...

(German: ...wo auch nur Pflanzen rauschen...)

July / August 2015

for harp and electronics

Duration: ca. 16'

a Paola Baron, affettuosamente

…donde solo las plantas suenan…

was composed at the CMMAS (Centro Mexicano para la Música y las Artes Sonoras) from Morelia, México,

as a result of a commission given by the International Prize

Programa IBERMÚSICAS 2014

from Ibermúsicas (Organización de los Estados Iberoamericanos)

…donde solo las plantas suenan…

(German: **…wo auch nur Pflanzen rauschen…**)

The title

While conceiving this piece during my stay at CMMAS in Morelia on June/August 2015, supported by the Ibermúsicas Prize, and visiting during that time many archeological places constructed through centuries by ancient Mexican civilizations, I remembered a very poetic statement by Walter Benjamin: "[…] *wo auch nur Pflanzen rauschen, klingt immer eine Klage mit. Weil sie stumm ist, trauert die Natur*" (i.e.: "[…] where only plants sough, it sounds always a complaint. Nature mourns because it is dumb"; in his text "*Über die Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen*", p. 80, in: Walter BENJAMIN, *Medienästhetische Schriften*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2002, pp. 67-82). Benjamin stays for the imponderable necessity of human language overall, pointing out the sadness of things if there is no language at all. Observing those ancestral monuments, I did NOT agree with Benjamin's statement. Among those silent monuments, I heard just plants soughing and no words, but rather only the traces of almost lost civilizations. Nevertheless, my thoughts and feelings were subject of a peaceful and very strong sensation, testifying the force of those ancestral civilizations. That is because I decided to use just the beginning of Benjamin's phrase (and not his conclusion) in my Spanish translation as title for this work: **… donde solo las plantas suenan…**

The title can therefore, and eventually, also be used in German: **…wo auch nur Pflanzen rauschen...**

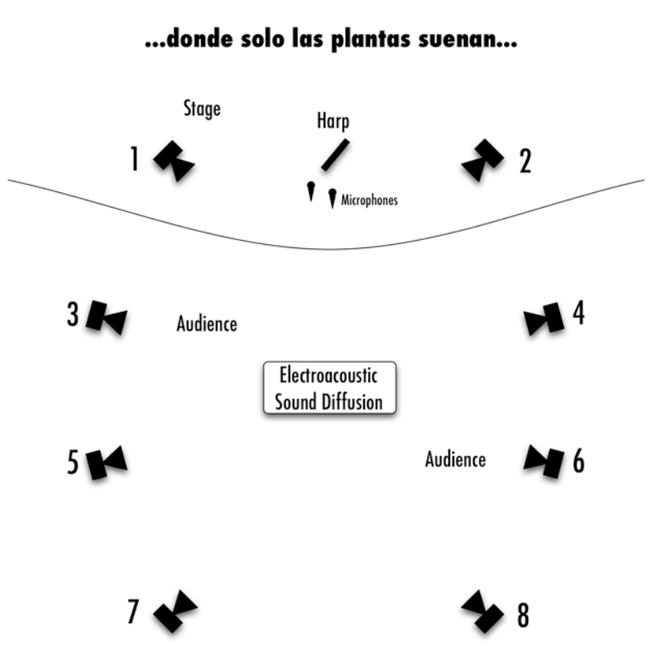
Instructions to the score

The work is written for pedal harp and electronics. The electronics consists of 27 pre-composed octophonic (8-channels) sound layers and live-electronics. The electroacoustic part runs over a Max/MPS patch, which should be requested by the performer either to me or to the Studio PANaroma (Unesp, Brazil), or even to the CMMAS (Centro Mexicano para la Música y las Artes Sonoras) from Morelia, México, where the piece was realized. In the last pages of these Instructions, there is a detailed description of how electronics and Harpist interacts in the piece.

There are no special scenic requirements for this piece: the harp must stay on the middle of the stage and must be considerably amplified with reverb in the whole audience space, so that the instrumental sounds will be well balanced with the electroacoustic ones. Two microphones are recommended to well amplify all the spectrum of the instrument. The reverb must be neutral, so that no frequencies of the harp should be damped.

Both microphones should come into a sound mixer in the middle of the performance hall, and these mics, besides amplifying the harp over the whole audience space, are subsumed into a mono signal to be sent to the Max/MSP patch, which receives them as a unique mono signal for its multichannel electroacoustic processing.

The disposition of loudspeakers as well as their numbering is described in the following figure.



Tuning of the harp and of the strings

No special tuning of the harp is required, which must be tuned with the central **A = 442 Hz**.

The lowest Contra C and D strings must be tuned respectively as C♯ and D♯. The highest G string must be tuned as G♯.

Pedal changes and *Tempi*

Pedal changes are suggested along the piece. In some passages, the changes are so difficult and their amount is so high that the performer will experience a high difficulty level for playing correctly in time all the notes. The performer should try to play as exactly as possible both the rhythmic structures and the *tempi* of those passages as well, specially in the Section B, E and G of the score, but the result may, of course, be approximate regarding the way in which the score is written.

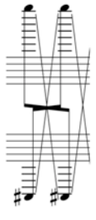
General remarks

- Accidentals: every altered note has necessarily an accidental; notes without any accidental are natural: ♮.
- *Tempi* and indications in minutes/seconds are approximate, but they should be considered as closest (exactly) as possible to their designations.
- Bars are of two types:
  - traditional bars, in which the rhythmic must be played as exactly as possible, but in which the gestural quality of figures should predominate over a strictly precise performance of the rhythmic values; and
  - bars written in proportional durations, which are provided by arrows and an approximate duration value: ⌜ → ?" ← ⌝.
-  = *accelerando* ;  = *ritardando*. Both figures may appear in both types of bars.

Special Signs

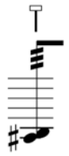
-  = indication (in blue color) for each necessary *bang* inside the Max/MSP-patch for the detailed control of every electroacoustic event in the piece.
-  = indication (in orange color) for the respective *event* in the score corresponding to a given electroacoustic layer (in this example, Event 7), i.e., a pre-composed octophonic electroacoustic sound layer. In view of a timing control over the performance, the exact duration of each event is clearly indicated in the score.
-  = indication (in green color) in the score corresponding to a given *electroacoustic transformation/processing in real time* either of the sounds performed by the harp or of sound synthesis generated during the performance (in this example, Live-electronics 1).
-  = this sign means that the specific timbre over it must be applied to all notes under it.

-  = played (plucked) with plectrum.
-  = *près de la table*.
-  = harmonics with its respective sounding result (always of an Octave).
-  = played (plucked) with the fingernail.
-  = snap *pizzicato* sound: percussive effect in which the string is played *près de la table*, and the same finger slides off the string to snap immediately on the soundboard, all in one motion.



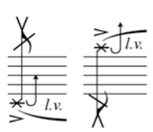
- = multiple cross *glissandi*, simultaneously with the right and the left hand, beginning respectively with the highest note G and the lowest note C♯ of the total range of the harp.
- = buzz effect due to a very strong dynamic value over a lower string, causing a low string noise (bar 75).

- = lower thunder effect (bar 76): an open hand (usually the left one) strikes the strings and bounces off, letting the strings resound.

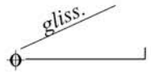


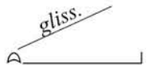
- = *tremolo* with the tuning key between both strings, using the shank (not the handle) of the tuning key.

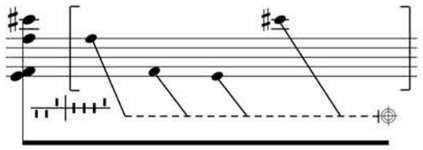
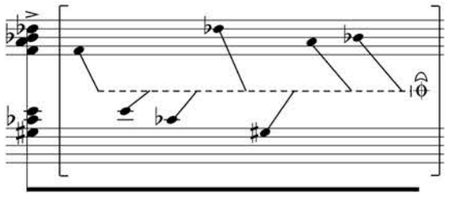
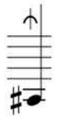
- = irregular scrapes with a shell over a given string.
-  = xylophonic sounds: a kind of muted harmonic obtained by placing the fingers of one hand on the strings to be plucked by the other; the fingers of the muting hand need only to touch the strings lightly with minimum pressure for maximum plucked sounds.



- = whistling sounds obtained by moving the fingernail or a plectrum rapidly, respectively, either upwards (from bottom to top) or downwards (from top to bottom) on designated wire string.

-  = played with a soft bass drum mallet on the lowest strings.
-  = irregular scrapes with a shell between the designated strings.
- 

= muffled *glissando*: effect in which the one hand (usually the left) is placed flat across the top or middle of the strings to muffle the sound, while the other hand executes a glissando over the same strings; if the range is extensive, the left hand must change its position as quick as possible in order to follow the *glissando* gesture of the right hand.
- 

= *glissando* with the fingernail.
-  = normal damp (with finger) of the indicated notes in the described chronological order along the respective bar.
-  = damp with fingernail of the indicated notes in the described chronological order along the respective bar, producing by each damping a buzz of short duration.
-  = quick one-time scrape upwards (from bottom to top) along the string with plectrum.
- 

= *vibrato* produced by plucking the string with the right hand, then alternately pressing and releasing the left thumb against the string just below the tuning pig.
-  = at the very end of the piece: small range *glissandi* upwards or downwards produced by pressing the respective string with the shank of the tuning key just after the attacks of the notes; one can substitute the tuning key by a metal guitar slide: 

Besides all these special signs and timbres, which appear along the score, there are some other additional effects that are played in the four Improvising Moments and that are described below without necessarily using special symbols.

About the four Improvising Moments along Section B of the score

Besides the “normal” score, there are 4 (four) additional relative short improvising and noisy moments to be inserted along the written bars, which interrupt drastically and occasionally the notes to be played.

In order to know how to play these moments, it is necessary to understand how the electronics interact with the live performance at the beginning of the piece.

Along the first Section A, and accordingly to the notes as they are played, the electronics triggers 8 resonances (the first 8 electroacoustic Events). Among these resonances, the first four Events (Ev_1 to Ev_4) have a particularly strident attack.

All the 4 first resonant Events are automatically programmed to be repeated once after having finished to sound, each one with a different delay between the end of its sounds and its repetition.

When these first 4 Events (Ev_1 to Ev_4) come back and both the musician responsible for the electroacoustic sound diffusion and the Harpist listen again to their respective strident attacks, both musicians play respectively and immediately the 4 interrupting moments: while the musician at the sound diffusion plays the respective “bangs” in the Max/MSP patch which cause the reproduction of the following 4 Events (Ev_9 to Ev_12), the Harpist plays accordingly his/her 4 respective Improvising Moments, simultaneously to Ev_9 to Ev_12.

Parallel to each one of the 4 Improvising Moments with their respective Ev_9 to Ev_12, the Improvising Moments are also submitted to the 4 first interventions of live-electronics (Live_1 to Live_4: in this case, we deal with different kinds of convolution between the sounds of the harp and frequencies related to the main Harmonic Entity of the piece). It is indeed highly probable (because of the timing of the delays for the repetition of Ev_1 to Ev_4) that Live_4 occurs *after* the beginning of and *during* Live_5, thus producing a simultaneous live processing of the sounds of the harp.

Nevertheless, one does not have how to know *when* exactly those moments emerge, because they are dependent of the timing with which the Harpist played his/her notes until then. In other words, the electronics here really *interacts* with the performance and between Harpist and electronics there is by no means a one-way relationship.

When the Harpist detects by his/her listening the emergence of the repetition of Events 1 to 4 (independently but at the same time supported also by Ev_9 to Ev_12, which should be triggered/played accordingly), he/she interrupts drastically the score from where it is and plays – ideally by heart – the respective Improvising Moments 1 to 4, as described in the following pages. At the end of each one of these Improvising Moments, the Harpist retakes the score exactly from the point where it was “suspended” and continues to play it from that point on, while each time a fade-out occurs of the live-electronics. These Improvising Moments must be understood as really *interruptions* of the score, as parallel spaces that are suddenly opened and closed.

With exception of the *last* Improvising Moment (number 4), all the first three Improvising Moments have the same duration as the respective electroacoustic Events 9 to 11. For the last one, nevertheless, the Harpist should play only along 34” (thus shorter than Ev_12, which lasts a little more than 1’13”) and should thus come back to the score *before* the end of Ev_12, which is considerably longer than the others. All the Events 9 to 12 finish with a sound signal: an abrupt sound of a closing door (each time a different one), which helps the Harpist to recognize, at Improvising Moments 1 to 3, that he/she must finish with the respective Improving Moment and that he/she must come back to the score. Only the closing door of the last Ev_12 will thus not assume this function, since the Harpist will have already finished the Improvising Moment 4 and will therefore come back to the score before its end.

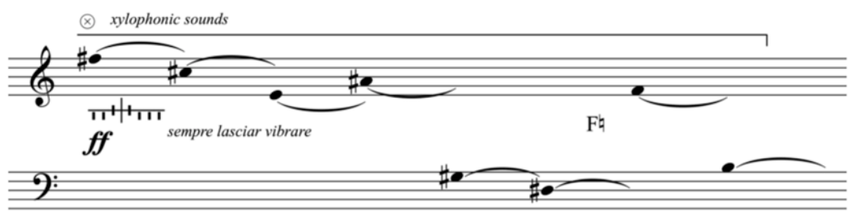
In the next two pages there is a detailed description of each one of the 4 Improvising Moments for the Harpist, which ideally should be played by heart.

A separated document – which can be obtained either through the Studio PANaroma (Unesp, São Paulo) or directly with me – explains the functions of the patch in Max/MSP for the electronics of the piece as well as the way how to use it during the performance, including advises concerning the microphones etc. I am very thankful to my Assistant for Musical Informatics André Perrotta, responsible for the programing of the final patch. Possible upgrades for the electronics should happen over the years and for every performance the musicians should take contact either with the Studio PANaroma or with me in order to obtain the most recent tools for the electronics of the piece.

* * * * *

FLO MENEZES, Morelia (México) – August 2015
(slightly revised in São Paulo, in October 2016 and in October 2017)

The 4 Improvising Moments (which are also submitted to live-electronics)

Electroacoustic Sounds	Harpist
Ev_9 = 19”114ms	**Improvising Moment 1:** Frenetic improvisation of noises ***ff***, intercalating as quickly as possible and – when possible – simultaneously the following effects: • Pedal slides *ad libitum* (at the end, returning back to their original position) • pedal trills *ab libitum* (at the end, returning back to their original position) • rapid friction of a sheet of paper over the strings (possibly with dynamic variation, but mostly ***ff***) • *Aeolian rustling*: drawing so quickly and so strongly as possible the open hand across the strings.
Ev_10 = 8”192ms	**Improvising Moment 2:** • Knead a sheet of paper near the microphones and then scrape it with violent and quick gestures over the strings, damping as most as possible the resonance of the strings.
Ev_11 = 12”261ms	**Improvising Moment 3:** • Along ca. 8”, play once and irregularly in time the following notes (main Harmonic Entity) as *xylophonic sounds*, ***ff***: 

Ev_12 = 1’13”642ms	**Improvising Moment 4:** Play during only 34” (thus not during the whole duration of Ev_12) a frenetic improvisation of noises in a *decrescendo* from ***fff*** to ***ppp***, intercalating as quickly as possible and – when possible – simultaneously the following effects (undetermined pitches): • Tuning pegs scrapes with the shank of the tuning key • quick scrapes with shell over the strings • very quick whistling sounds with fingernails or plectrum • dead-slap: the wire strings are struck with the open hand, but the hand remains against the strings to provide instant damping • tapping and knocking the soundboard of the harp with fingers and fingernails • quick muffled glissandi • all this together with sporadic fricative and sibilant phonemes: / ∫ /, / s / and / f /.

Exceptional version *without* electronics

Under very special circumstances – as for instance during harp meetings, in small rooms without possibility to implement an electroacoustic sound system, in workshops, or in similar situations – **… donde solo las plantas suenan…** could be performed **without electronics**, although the original version ***with*** electronics must be regarded as the preferable version of the piece.

In the case of a performance of the piece without electronics, please observe the following advices:

- The initial *ritornello* must be disregarded, i.e., it should not be made and bars 1 to 4 should be played just once;
- the Improvising Moments 1 to 4 must also be disregarded, i.e., they exist only in the original version with electronics; in the case of a performance just with harp and without electronics, the score should be played continuously, thus without the interruptions caused by the Improvising Moments in the original version;
- the harp should be, if possible, anyway amplified;
- bars 79 and 80 should preferably (but not necessarily) be shortened to around ca. 1', thus to a shorter duration in comparison to the original version with electronics;
- the last bars should decrease the dynamics, "fading-out" *ad libitum* the notes even if there is no electroacoustic sounds.

FLO MENEZES, São Paulo, in November 2017

...donde solo las plantas suenan...

[...wo auch nur Pflanzen rauschen...]

Flo Menezes

A

Calmo, placido, e sempre un po' rubato espressivo

bangs for Events and Live 5 to 11: "Spacebar" key 1

♩ = 58

poco accel. until bar 25 (♩ = 78)

Harp

simile (𝅗𝅥)

I sfz ppp

sfz ppp

sfz ppp

sfz ppp

sfz ppp

sfz ppp

* ⏄ = with plectrum; ⫲ = près-de-la-table (pdlt); ord. = ordinario.

Ev_1 [1'53"758ms]

* For the repetition of electroacoustic **Events from 1 to 4** and their consequent interceptions both of improvising moments in the performance and, respectively, the triggering of electroacoustic **Events 9 to 12** as well, see the **Instructions for the score**.

7

Hp.

sfz ppp

sfz ppp

II sfz ppp

2

sfz ppp

3

sfz ppp sfz ppp

sfz ppp

13

Hp.

III sffz pp

Bb

G♯

4

sfz sffz pp

(non tanto)

5

ord.

(non tanto)

sfz pp

Ev_2 [1'56"617ms]

sffz pp

sffz pp

Gb

Ev_3 [1'54"970ms]

IV sffz pp

F♮

6

ord.

G♯ D♯

sfz

sffz pp

Ev_4 [1'56"848ms]

Ev_5 [1'36"492ms]

Ev_6 [1'33"732ms]

19

Hp.

7

sffz sffz pp

Gb

G♯

sffz pp

Gb

V sffz pp

8

ord.

C♭ sfz A♭ pp

C♯

A♯ sffz pp

B♮ G♯

B♭

sffz pp

C♭ Gb

A♭

bangs for Live 1 to 4: "Return" key

1a (start) 1b (stop)

2a 2b

3a 3b

4a 4b

leave the plectrum

sffz pp

F♯

Ev_7 [1'39"786ms]

Ev_8 [1'41"914ms]

from here on: Events 9 to 12 according to the repetitions of Events 1 to 4 (triggered by the "start" of Live 1 to 4)

Ev_9 [19"114ms] Live_1

Ev_10 [8"192ms] Live_2

Ev_11 [12"261ms] Live_3

Ev_12 [1'13"642ms] Live_4

[Convolutions over sound synthesis]

B **Ogni volta più rubato e irregolare**

25

Hp.

VI

= 78 **molto accel.** until bar 56 (= 120)

[Ev_9 to 12 along the following passage...]

* = *plucked fingernail sound.*

32

Hp.

VII

* = *snap pizzicato sound.*

39

Hp.

VIII

9

Live_5

[Moving freeze]

* Live-electronics independently of the improvising moments that emerge along these bars.
The electronics interferes also into the improvising moments and eventually doubles the live-electronics running over the last improvising moments.

45

Hp.

IX

Presto ma molto rubato e irregolare

♩ = 120

Hp.

52

9/16 ord. E♯ mf sffz B♮ A♯

4/4 E♮ 7:4 E♯ f C♮ F♮ p mf

3/4 ord. sffz p E♮ C♯ F♯

X

7:4 E♯ ff sffz f

4/4 ord. E♮ F♮ p Gb f p 5:4

11/8 7:5 D♯ Ab A♮ p mf ff

9/16 Eb Ab

60

9/16 ord. f A♯ sffz

11/16 E♮ Ab Eb f

4/4 8va 5:4 E♮ F♯ B♭ G♮ ff C♮ F♮ Ab Eb f p

2/4 3:2

3/4 ord. 10

XI G♯ p A♯ E♮ Gb C♯ F♯ ff Ab

Fb Eb F♮ E♮ B♭ 3 ff

fade-out Live_5

66

5/4 ord. 5:3 sffz G♮ mf ff 7:5 A♮ F♮ C♭

11/32 Gb Db Ab Eb ff

7/8 ff Fb

3/4 8va 5:3 E♮ Eb F♮ G♮ C♮ fff 11

con tutta la forza! C♯ fffff

Live OFF

D♮ mf B♮ lasciar vibrare (l.v.)

8vb Ev_13 [1'06"709ms]

C

73 ord. ca. 3" ca. 5"

multiple glissandi

glissandi poco a poco with fingernail

glissando molto ritardando

12 8"

sfffz (low string noise) lasciar vibrare

8vb Ev_14 [22"656ms]

2" sfffz lower thunder effect l.v.

3" bisbigliando 8vb molto crescendo dal niente

ca. 7" attacca fff ppp ff p fff simile ad libitum vary drastically the dynamics ad libitum during 7"

ca. 1'23"

* use the shank (not the handle)

79 **13** **14**

Hp.

8vb D♯ C♮ G♭ A♯

pp *poco* *ppp* *ppp* *ff* *ppp* *f* *pp* *subito* *poco* *ppp* *p* *pp* *molto* *ff*

take the shell

? Ev_16 [1'02"778ms] [at ca. 20" of Ev_15, totally independent of the harpist]

Ev_15 [1'17"557ms] [at ca. 30" of Ev_13 (not of Ev_14!)]

* = with the tuning key between the strings.

* = irregular scrapes with a shell over the designated isolated strings.

80

Hp.

pp *ff* *sempre molto frenetico* *mf* *ff* *p* *ppp* E♭ *fff*

small TACET

[with the end of Ev_16]

15 ca. 1'45" **16** **17** **18** **19** **20**

82 D

Hp.

molto accel. *molto rall.* *mf* *f* *mf* TACET *ad libitum* (ca. 3" to 5") *molto rall.* TACET *simile* (varying the length of the silence) *ff* *poco* *mf* ** *l.v.* *sffz* *upwards* *mf* *ff* *l.v.* *sffz* *downwards* *ppppp* *ff* *p*

* = xylophonic sound. *p* *f*

** Quick whistle sound with the fingernail.

*** = with soft bass drum mallet on the lowest strings.

Live_6 [Clouds of proliferated pitches] Ev_17 [6"240ms] Ev_18 [2"645ms] Ev_19 [8"885ms] Ev_20 [2"741ms] Ev_21 [6"741ms]

21 **22** ca. 9" **23** **24** ca. 28" **25**

91

Hp.

sffz *upwards* *l.v.* *irregolare* *f* *mf* *p* *ff* *pp* *ff* *p* *ff* *mf* *pp* TACET (ca. 5") E♯ *pp* *mf* *simile ad libitum* *ppp* *f* *p* *ff* *vary dynamics ad libitum during 11"* *corto* D♯ *ppppp* *l.v.* *f* *pp* 2/4 *attacca* TACET *ad libitum* (ca. 3")

* = irregular scrapes with a shell between E and F strings.

Ev_22 [3"317ms] Ev_23 [11"392ms] Live_6 OFF Ev_24 [33"177ms] Ev_25 [12"576ms] [at the end of Ev_24]

E **Frenetico, agitato, ma piutosto calmo**

→ **ca. 40"** (with ideal Tempo of ♪ = 55) **to max. 55"**

26

during all this section: try to damp as most as possible the chords and glissandos just after their attacks

98

Hp.

ord.

ord. gliss.

* Pedal diagrams and changes are suggested in this section system by system. Drastic pedal changes may (considerably) affect the general Tempo of the performance (see the **Instructions for the score**). Pedal noises are welcome!

Live_7 [Pitch shifting upwards: 2 octaves; small delay]

102

Hp.

106

27

Hp.

Live_7 OFF + Live_8 [Sound synthesis with harp sounds: trill E/F central]

♪ = 𝅗𝅥 = 55

13:8

2/16

110

Hp.

F♯ D♯ C♮ D♯ A♯ A♮ G♭ C♯ D♯ E♭ E♮ B♭ C♮ B♮ G♮

f *p* *pp* *f* *pp* *p* *mf* *ff* *p*

13:10

5/32

C♯ G♯ D♮ C♮ G♮ A♭ C♯

ffp *fp* *f* *ffp* *fff*

28

1/4

mf *pp*

29

13"

attacca

[Fade-out = last 8" of bar 113]

Live_8 OFF

Live_9 [Sound synthesis with harp sounds: chord of bar 127]

F Quasi contemplativo

→ ca. 1'10"

30

114

Hp.

harmonics: lasciar vibrare as long as possible

mf *mf*

♮ (pdlt)

p *p*

ord.

l.v. (sempre simile)

ppp *pp*

A♮

ff

** 𝅝 = *damping with the fingernail, producing a buzz noise.*

p

Live_10 [Time-stretching transposed upwards, lasting approximately until the end of bar 128 and closing automatically]

* ⊕ = *normal damp.*

119

Hp.

mf *p* *f*

B♮ *mf*

ord.

f *p* *mf*

D♮ *p*

pp

f G♯ B♭ *mf*

125

Hp.

ppp

ord.

pppp *p* *ppp*

damp with fingernail

ff subito

A♯ C♯ B♮

ff *mf*

lasciar morire

31

attacca at the end of the resonances

9/16

Live_9 OFF

Molto agitato, quasi presto

Poco a poco irregolare, rubato

Ancora più rubato

take a little more time for this note!

simile

ca. 25"

ca. 2'25"

muffled gliss.

Ev_26

[41"748ms]

Ev_27

[2'25"359ms]

Ogni volta più lento e irregolare, moltíssimo rubato

equalize gradually all dynamics

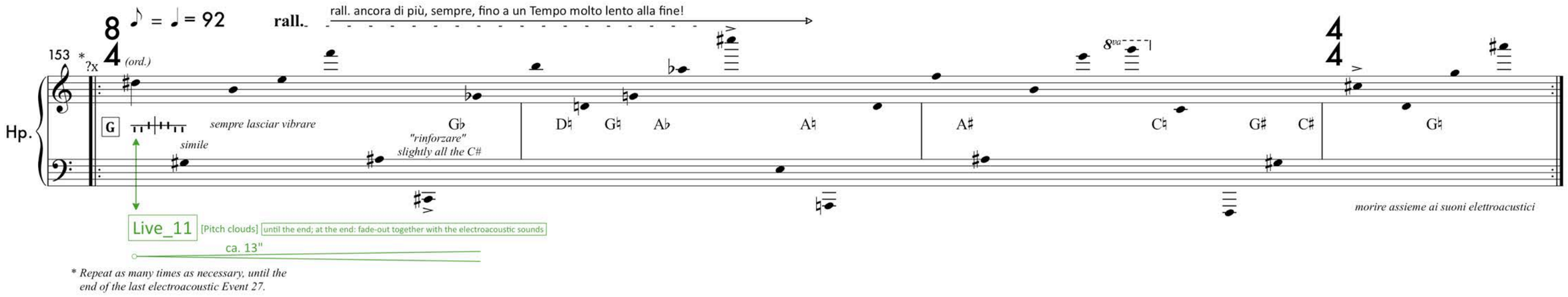
= quick scrape upwards with plectrum.

= vibrato.

34

H

Ogni volta più lento, e sempre molto irregolare e molto rubato



* *Repeat as many times as necessary, until the end of the last electroacoustic Event 27.*

1) From here on: dynamics between ***mf*** and ***pp***, *poco a poco diminuendo al* ***ppppp*** *alla fine*!

2) From the second time on, introduce gradually small *glissandi* from the attacks of the notes, upwards and downwards, using the shank of the tuning key: *use the shank (not the handle) for the small glissandi* or a metal guitar slide:

3) Decrease gradually the general dynamics along the repetitions until the end of the electroacoustic sounds, stopping, at the very end, where it is inside the *Ritornello*.

Morelia (México),
July/ August 2015