Flo Menezes

Contrafacta

March/April 2013

for brass quintet and electronics in real time ad libitum (Trumpet in B_b, Trumpet in C, French Horn in F, Tenor-Trombone in B_b, Tuba in F)

Duration: ca. 13'

commissioned by the Trombone player Carlos Freitas for his CD recording project supported by the PROAC program of the State of São Paulo

Contrafacta

Introduction and general conditions for the performance

The term *contrafactum* (plural: *contrafacta*) refers in the music of the Renaissance to vocal pieces with a substituted text (a sacred one instead of the original secular text, or vice-versa). *Contrafacta* transposes this concept: a musical original source in itself is considered as a "text", and its own facture is "substituted" by another "text", as if I was visiting an old facsimile through the looking glass of a Stravinsky... In this case, the masterpiece *Mille regretz* by Josquin Desprez! *Contrafacta* accomplishes literally a "trans-textualized" re-version of this genial, highly expressive piece by Josquin.

By this way, *Contrafacta* retakes in a given sense my concept of *TransFormants* – musical "formants" which cross the whole time of a given concert – and, although not being a "TransFormante", it interweaves its references along the whole concert in which the piece is inserted: *Contrafacta* should ideally (although not necessarily) be preceded by the transcription I made for brass quartet of Josquin's piece as well as by the "à la Stravinsky" transfigured version of it for brass quintet (both figuring as Appendix to the score). If *Contrafacta* is preceded by those musical references, both of them must necessarily be played in order to perceive the degrees of metamorphosis of the original Josquin's materials until achieving *Contrafacta* itself, and both Appendixes must be well separated along the entire concert and also from *Contrafacta*, which should ideally be performed as the last piece of the recital.

Contrafacta is conceived for brass quintet with electronics in real time (live-electronics), but the piece can eventually be performed without electronics too. The electronics multiplies spatially, harmonically and rhythmically the musical structures and provides the ambience with a reverberation which is typical from liturgical musical contexts, evoking the past of the genre (of the brass ensemble as instrumental ensemble of the sacred ancient works), but I decided also to allow the piece being performed without electronics in order to make possible its performances in different contexts, answering to the request of ensembles of this genre.

Contrafacta signifies indeed a culminating point of my studies on the music of the Renaissance, discovering in those treasures many common points with the contemporary and most radical way of listening to sounds and to music. Many are the principles that link the music of that period to Contrafacta. The first one is this common praxis of borrow the facture from an older music and using it as main material for a new composition, in a high level of referentiality. Another one is the use of rapid, evasive notes in the musical texture, in a rather virtuosic manner (mostly in the Renaissance music figured as downwards figures), which were described by the Latin word currentes (from "running"); it has motivated the very beginning of Contrafacta, besides many passages in which quick notes can be heard as main traces of the texture.

Besides that, the original Spanish concept of "variations", described as diferencias, is also important for the whole conception of the piece: one deals here indeed with three "different" appearances of Josquin's Mille regretz, but always in a harmonically radical transfigured way. My techniques of proportional projections (I decided as a challenge not to use this time my cyclic modules) transform the original material through three distinct pitch ranges in such a way that there is actually no musical quotation, but just slight insights into and reminiscences of the original source. And some of the phrases of the main structure of the piece are themselves varied when they return back to the surface.

Although the score is presented as a "general" score, *Contrafacta* refers also to the common writing praxis of the Renaissance, which seems as an absolutely surprising procedure under our actual point of view: the masters of that period used to write down polyphonic music in *individual* parts rather than having in their hands a general "score" (with simultaneous view of all the musical lines implied)! Either having in mind the already written parts or comparing what they were writing down with the individual parts already composed, the composers used not to write polyphony down into a general musical system of simultaneous staves... Although the timing of the figures was absolutely under control by the Renaissance masters, this procedure gave way to rich metric textures with a given interdependency between the individual voices, and this point led me to try to conceive some of the moments of my piece – specially then those in which the original harmonic fabric would almost overcome to the surface, risking to reveal a greater similarity to the original, modal/tonal texture – rather as individual *tempi*, de-constructing the musical facture and proposing therefore a kind of kaleidoscopic fabric with a rich timing interlacing between the instruments. In such moments, which are written in proportional notation and contrast with the proper "scores" of the "choral" moments (written as traditional notation), the musicians play their figures totally independently from the others.

The origin and original praxis of the brass ensemble are obviously also reflected into my piece. Such ensembles were mostly formed to play transcription of original vocal pieces, as it is the case here. The link with military context is ironically exposed at the very beginning of the piece with its theatrical happening – not to speak of the very end, through which the musicians go out from stage and from the theater while playing synchronously as a kind of transformed, fractionated hymn –, which is drastically opposed both to the religious character of the reverberate sound when played with electronics (referring to cathedrals and therefore to the religious character of ancient music) and even to some "jazz-like" passages as well, which transpire in some moments, in another trans-textualized strategy of the many meanings of *Contrafacta*.

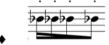
Last but not least, I should mention the intellectual interplay which was so beloved by the ancient masters, even by Josquin, who used his own name to numerically constitute musical structures: along *Contrafacta* a freezing process of pitches (when played with electronics) gradually accumulates five notes, which are summed to the constant five notes chords of the ensemble. Thus from a certain point of the piece we have five constant "fixed" notes (which are done by the live-electronics and can also vary from performance to performance) functioning as pivot-notes of other five constantly varied notes provided by the chords, making together *ten* notes, i.e., the sum of the letters of my own name: FLO MENEZES.

General instructions

•	A:	d t -
•	Accii	dents

- o every altered note is necessarily provided with an accident and every note which is not provided with an accident is natural: ξ; a natural note ξ just after an altered note is to be sure provided with a natural accident in parenthesis: (ξ).
- ♦ In the transposed score, the Trumpet in B♭ sounds a Major Second below, and the French Horn in F sounds a Fifth below than written.
- ♦ The bars are of two types:
 - o traditional bars, in which the figures are precisely played regarding their values and rhythms; these bars are always provided with a character description of their tempi;
 - bars written with proportional notation; such bars have their <u>approximate</u> duration indicated in seconds or minutes: ¬;" ; in these bars, the small notes are "currentes", i.e., quick notes, although they should not be misunderstood as appoggiature, i.e., with extremely rapid notes (which have their own notation as commonly known). The musicians should consider the duration of each one of these bars in order to know how fast the small notes should be played at that particular bar. The phrasing between long notes (if legato or non legato) is free, and each musician plays his/her part in a totally independent way regarding to the other players. Concerning the sequence of notes between all musicians, by no means the general result <u>must</u> be exactly the same of what appears in the general score, which serves therefore just as an example for the performance;
 - there are only two exceptions concerning the bars in proportional notation: 1) in section <u>C</u>, there is a solo of the Trombone (bar 34: a Fibonacci number) with precise values in traditional notation inserted inside a bar in proportional notation;

 2) in bar <u>80</u> every note of a given instrument must succeed the previous one and must be followed by the next one as precisely indicated by the arrows; this in the only case in which the musicians need to care about the sequence of the notes in the whole ensemble, looking at the parts of the other players.



= ritardando with extremely articulated small staccato notes, even if they become slower.



= the appoggiature must be played as quick as possible.

♦ The intervals of the trills are always clearly indicated:



- The glissandi of the Trombone must respect the precise duration as indicated every time it occurs in the score.
- = fermata ad libitum.
- \bullet = fermata lunga, very long, ad libitum.
- fermata molto lunga, extremely long until the end of the air; it occurs once at bar 103 at the end of the piece.

• Mutes: Trumpet 1 and 2 and Trombone make use of mutes. Altogether we have these mutes employed along the piece:

•



From left to right: plunger; cup; harmon; velvet and tow types of straight (optional, but preferably the metal one)

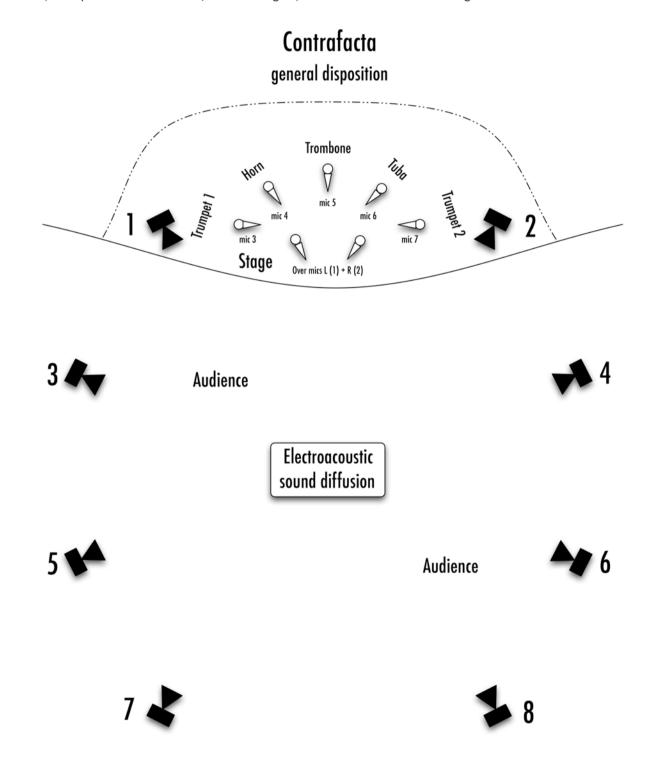
- • with mute.
- • without mute.
- $\rightarrow \Phi$ = put the mute while playing the note.
- \bullet \rightarrow \odot = put away the mute while playing the note.
- The score indicates always which type of mute should be used in that passage with the name of the respective mute below the mute sign.



= this small sign (0000.) below the note means "wawa" opening and closing ad libitum of the respective mute during the indicated duration/value.

General disposition

The Figure below illustrates the general disposition of the musicians as well as of the microphones and loudspeakers in an octophonic sound system when the piece is played with electronics. Although one should prefer this octophonic sound system, the piece can also be performed with a quadraphonic sound system; in this case, loudspeaker 1 is "front left", 2 is "front right".

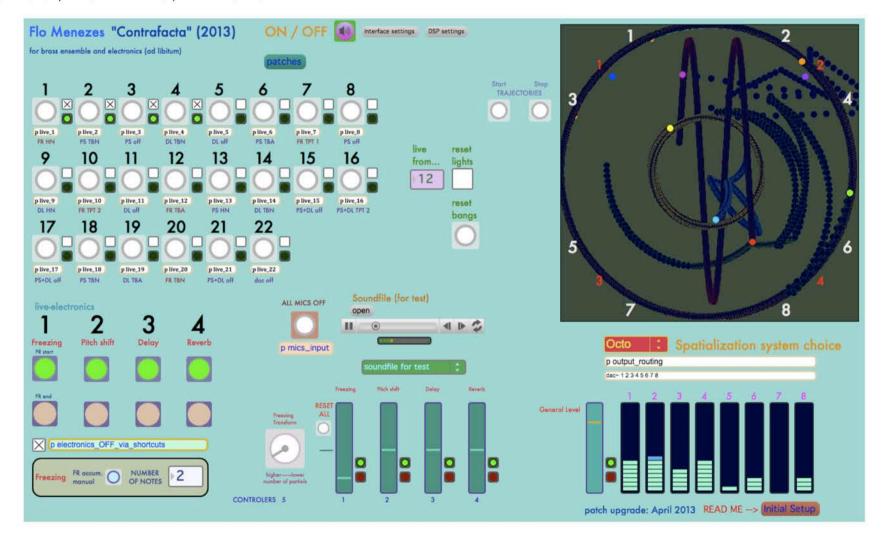


The electronics in real time (live-electronics)

Contrafacta is conceived for brass ensemble and electronics in real time, although it is also allowed to perform the piece without electronics too. For the electronics the piece requires seven (7) microphones: mics 1 & 2 are over mics and should capture the whole ensemble with a clear stereo image, while mics 2 to 7 are used individually for each instrument and should capture just the sounds of their respective instruments.

The electronics for *Contrafacta* multiplies harmonically, spatially and rhythmically the structures of the piece and is fully controlled by the automatic **bang-sequence** along the work given by pressing the **spacebar** at the computer keyboard. In order to make that, the musician responsible for the electroacoustic sound diffusion and for the electronics must carefully follow the score, where each one of the bangs is clearly indicated at the respective moments along the piece.

The patch in its first version (on April 2013, when the composition was finished) is illustrated below:



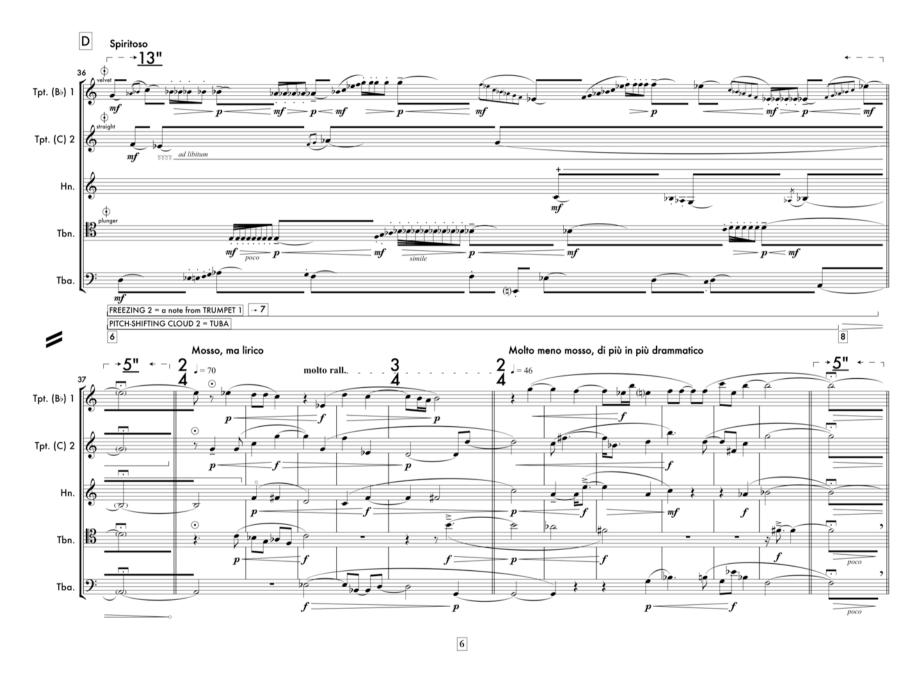
There are basically four types of processing:

- Freezing = accumulation of at least five (5) notes during the performance of the piece, each one of one of the five instruments of the ensemble; one can decide to manually "freeze" more sounds if musically necessary just by clicking the optional "FR accum. manual" bang control, seeing immediately how many notes are already accumulated inside the respective number box (named "number of notes");
- > Pitch shifting cloud (name as "Pendulum" in the respective sub-patch) = multiplications of pitch shifted sounds which happen according the pre-elaborated setups;
- > Delays = layers of delayed sounds which happen according the pre-elaborated setups;
- > Reverb = a general reverberation alluding to the ancient praxis of the brass ensemble when performing in cathedrals or inside similar architectures.

With a MIDI controller one can control the individual level of each one of these effects and the sound quality (amount of partials) of the freezing notes as well.

The most processed instrument is the Trombone, which plays the only solo in the piece as well, since a Trombone player commissioned the work to me.

The exact moments where the electronics occurs are clearly indicated in the score, as the next example (of page 6) shows; fadeouts (although indicated too) are automatically made by the patch and their finals are approximate in the score:



[In this page, we see a Pitch shifting cloud effect of the Tuba notes by pressing the bang 6 on the patch at the very beginning of bar 36 and a Freezing effect as well, which will freeze a note from the Trumpet 1 through bang 7 and which can freely be pressed by the patch-user along the bar 36].

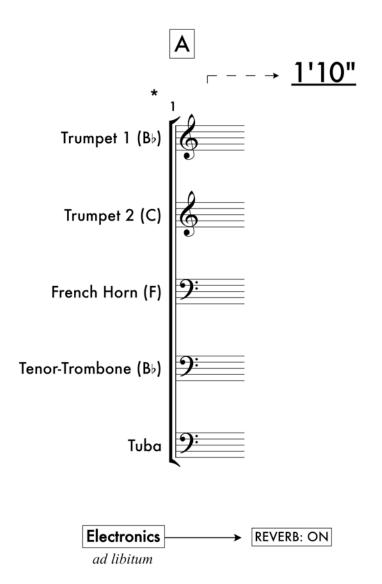
* * * *

FLO MENEZES, April 2013

Contrafacta

Flo Menezes

attacca



The instruments are already in their respective places on stage, but no musician is yet there. The instruments are without their mouthpieces, which are inside the pocket of its respective player. There are no chairs, since all musicians play the whole piece standing in front of the audience in a middle circle and facing the audience (see the Instructions).

Suddenly all the five musicians enter the space of the theater running one after the other as in a military training, in a very periodic rhythm, throughout the audience's space and crying synchronously one with the other and with their own periodic running rhythm:

"Currentes! Currentes! ..." [and so on].

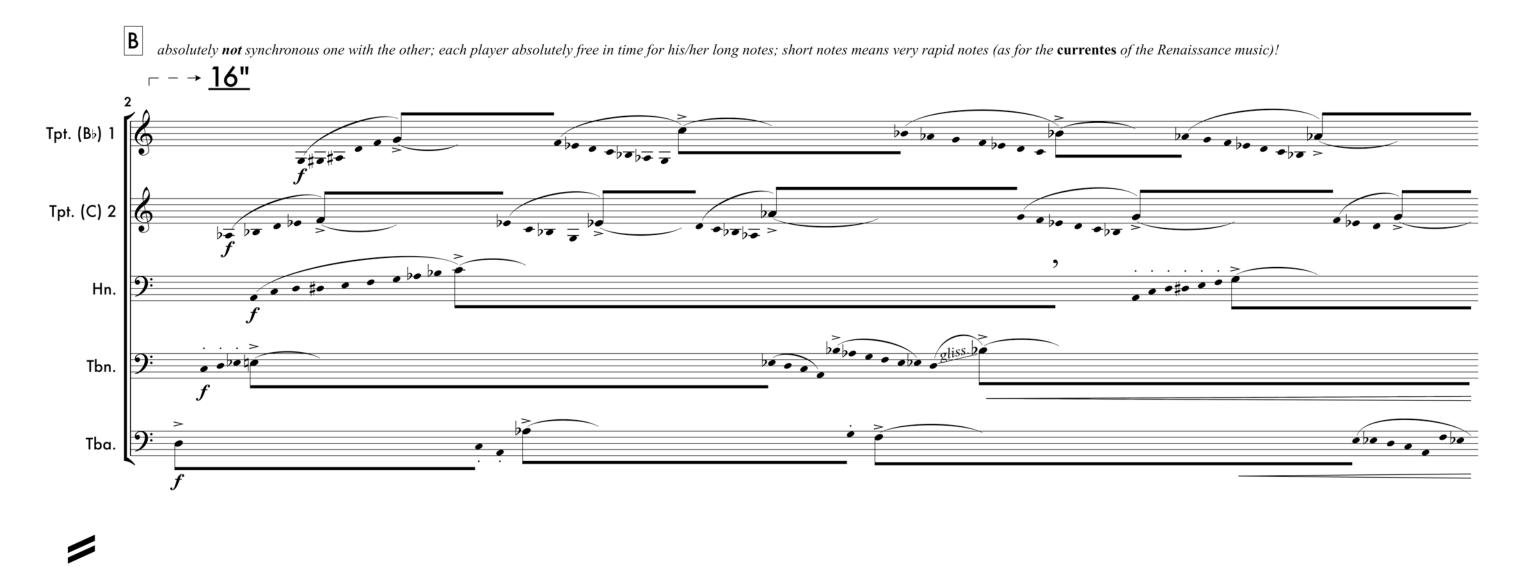
They come to the stage and run in a circle around it about twice, then each one comes to his/her instrument, stops running, takes the mouthpiece on his/her pocket and puts it into the respective instrument, preparing to play.

By putting the mouthpiece into the instrument, each musician sometimes strongly taps the mouthpiece with his/her right hand over it, producing a strong occlusive, short sound.

All musicians should be tired and with excited breathing. While resting in order to retake the normal breathing condition to play, all blow asynchronously as loud as possible into the respective instrument and as many times as necessary, producing the possible lowest sound with their instruments.

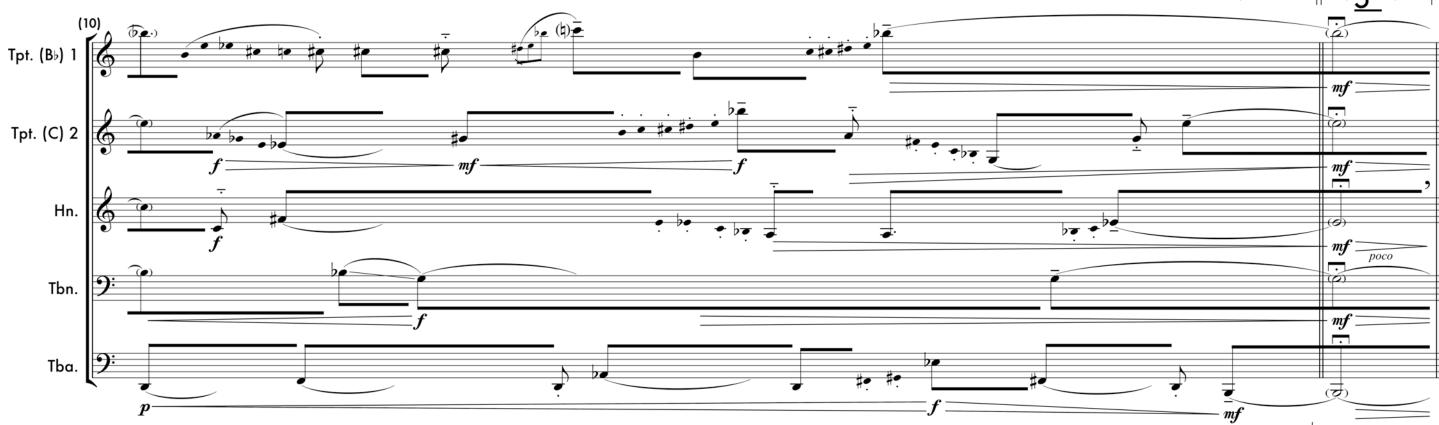
When all are ready, a <u>general sign</u> (normally given along the whole piece by the <u>Trombone</u> standing in the middle of the stage) gives start to the following section <u>B</u>.

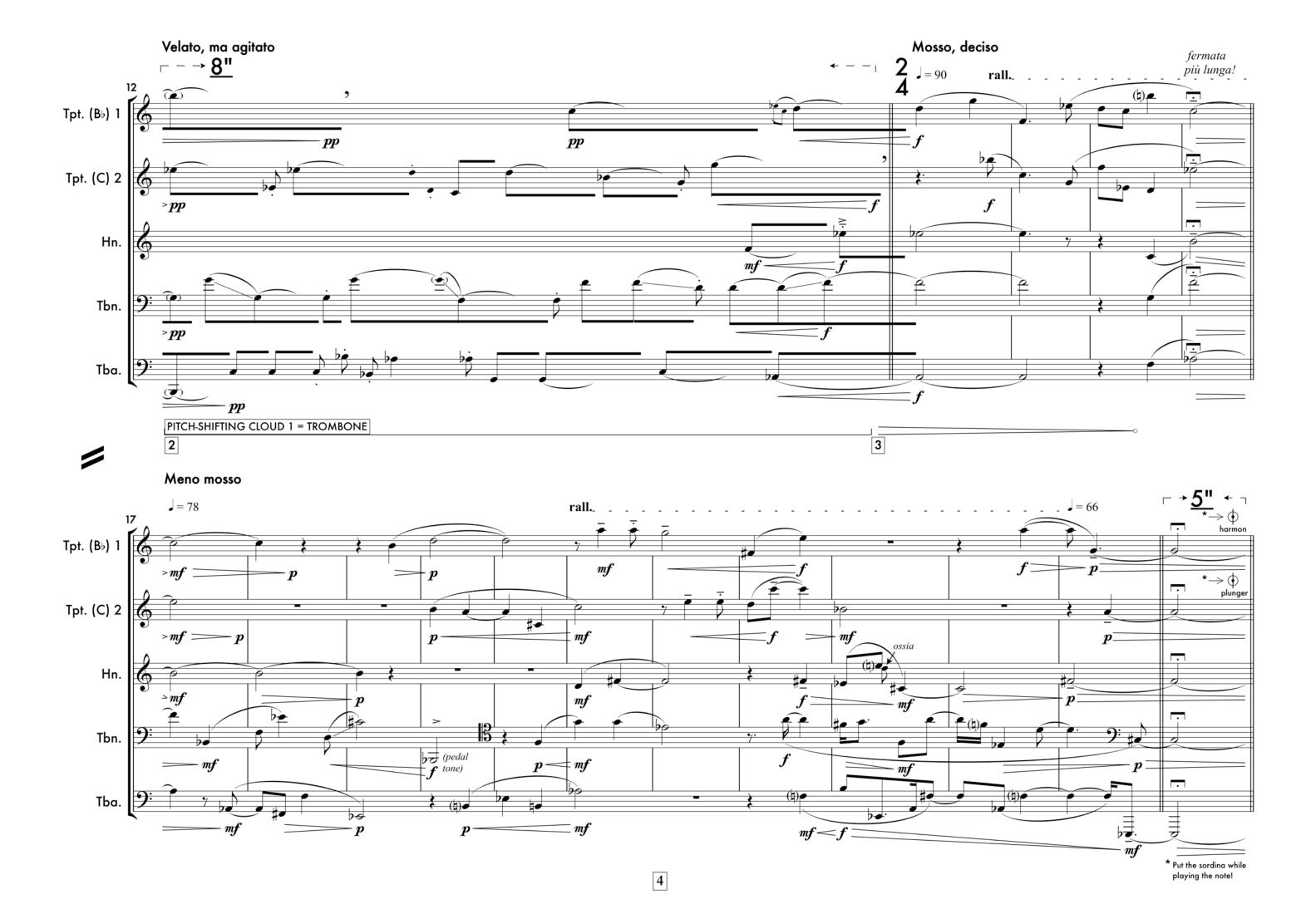
^{*} All notes sound as written.

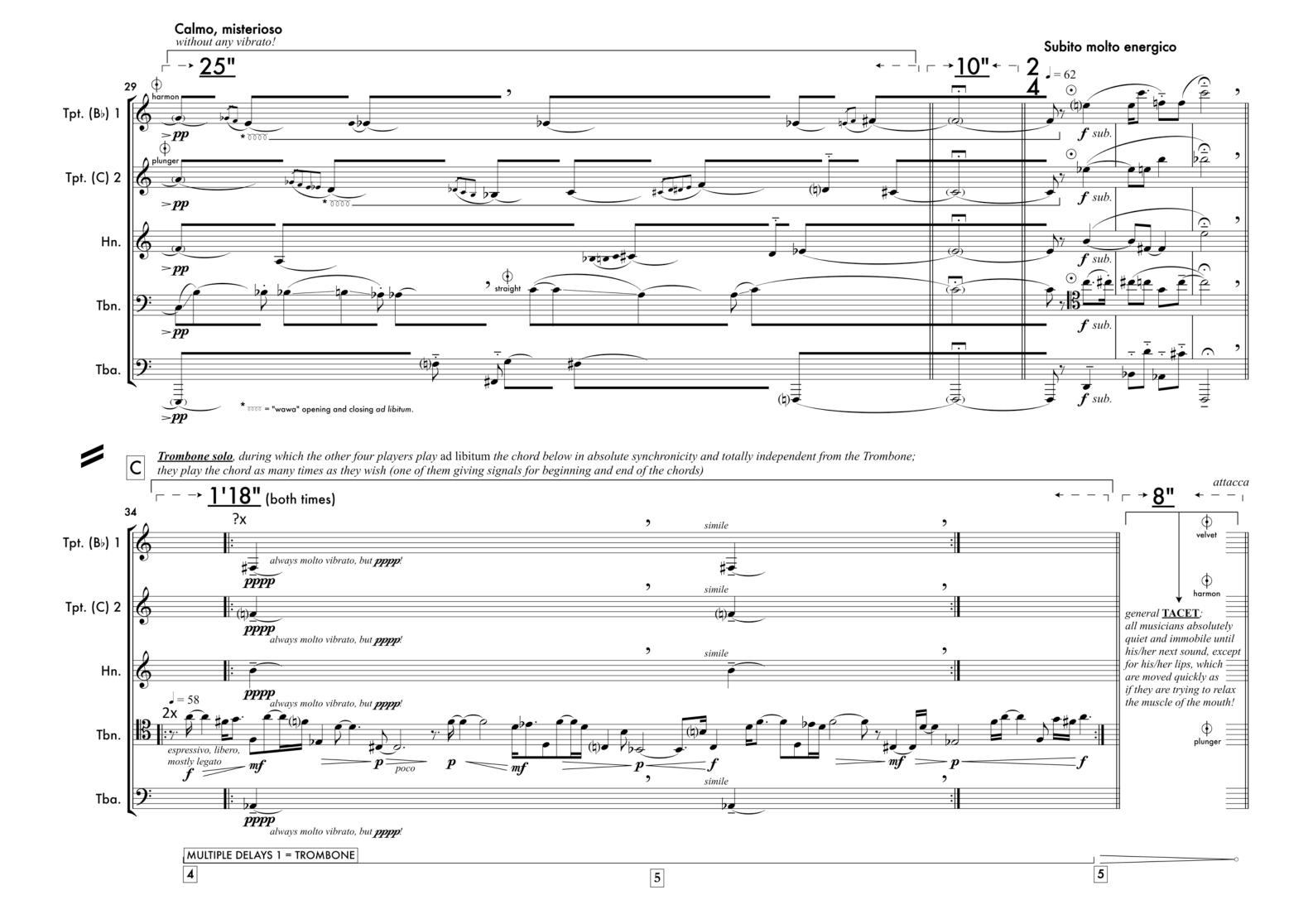


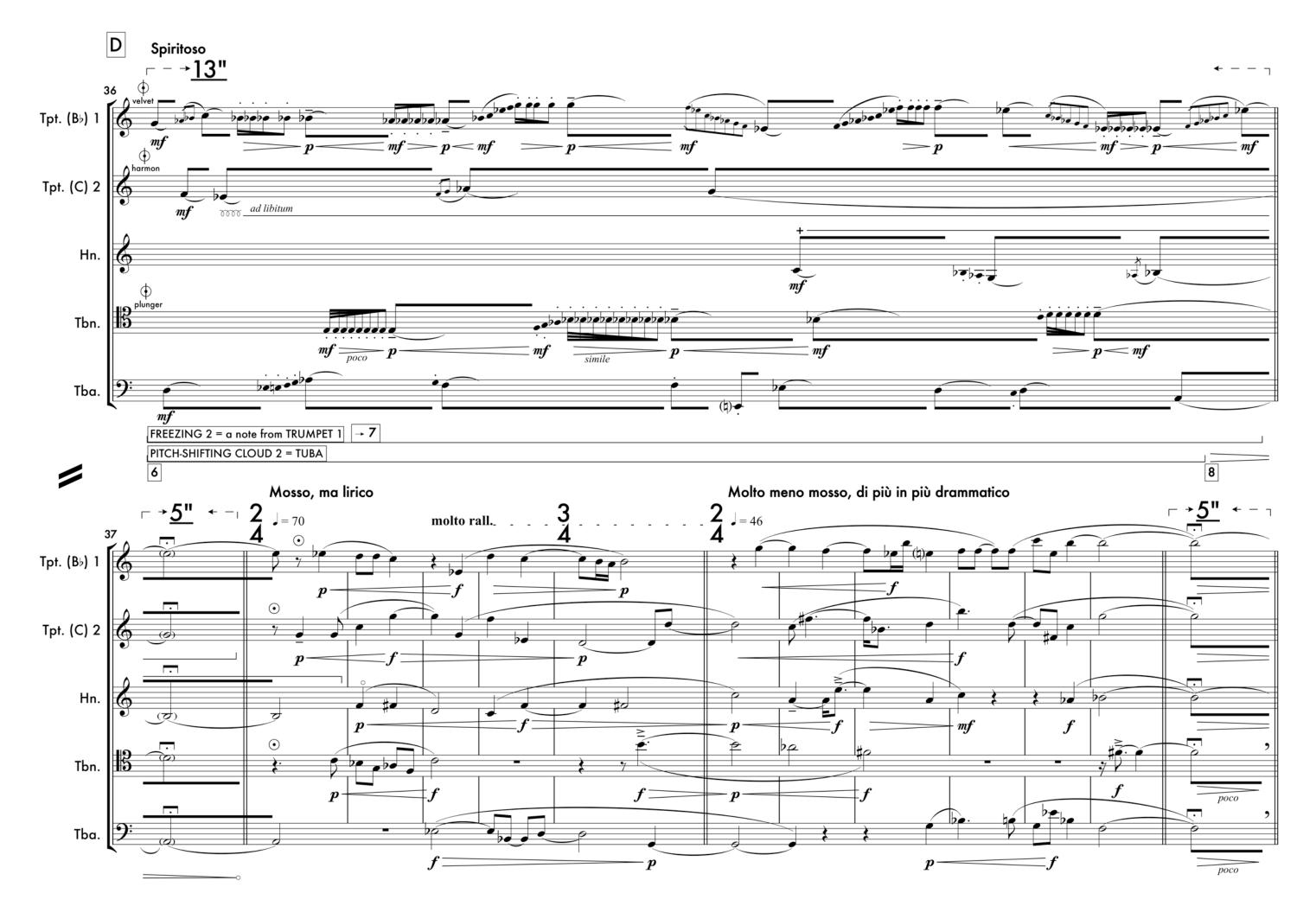


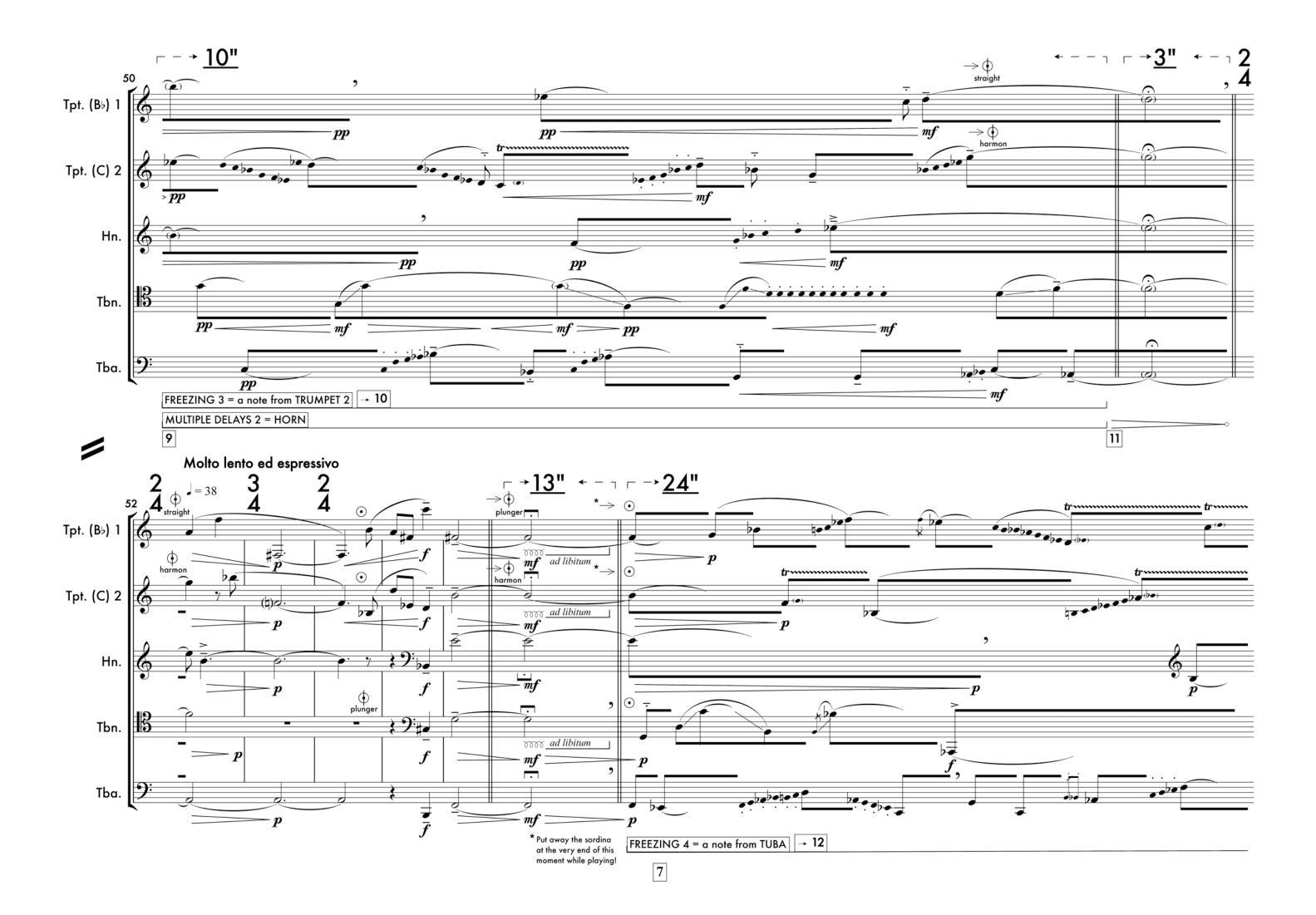






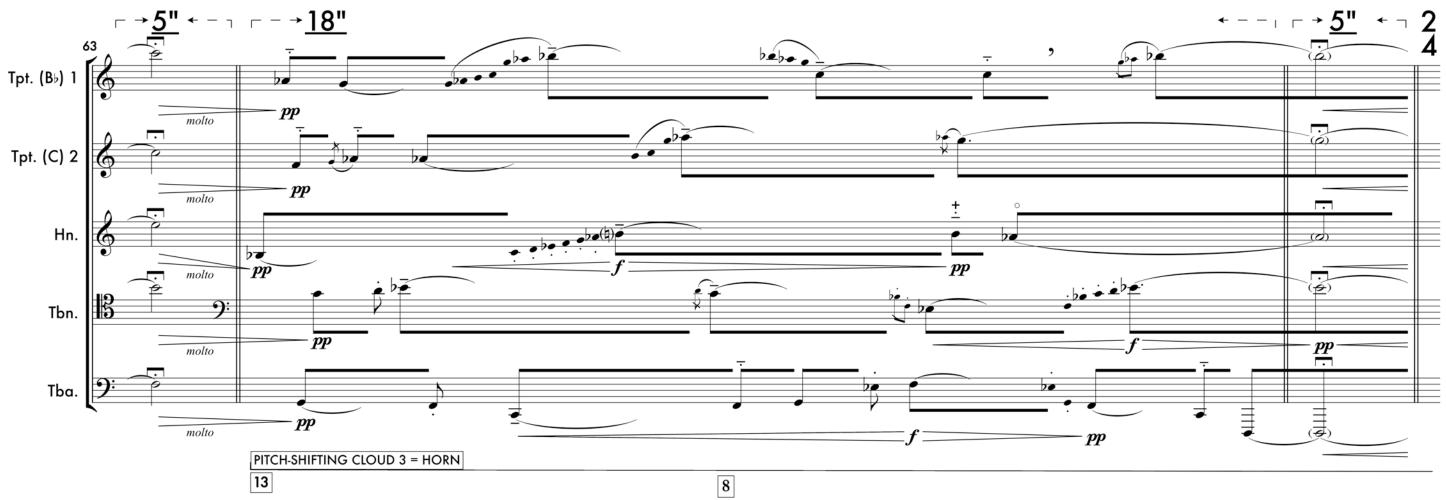


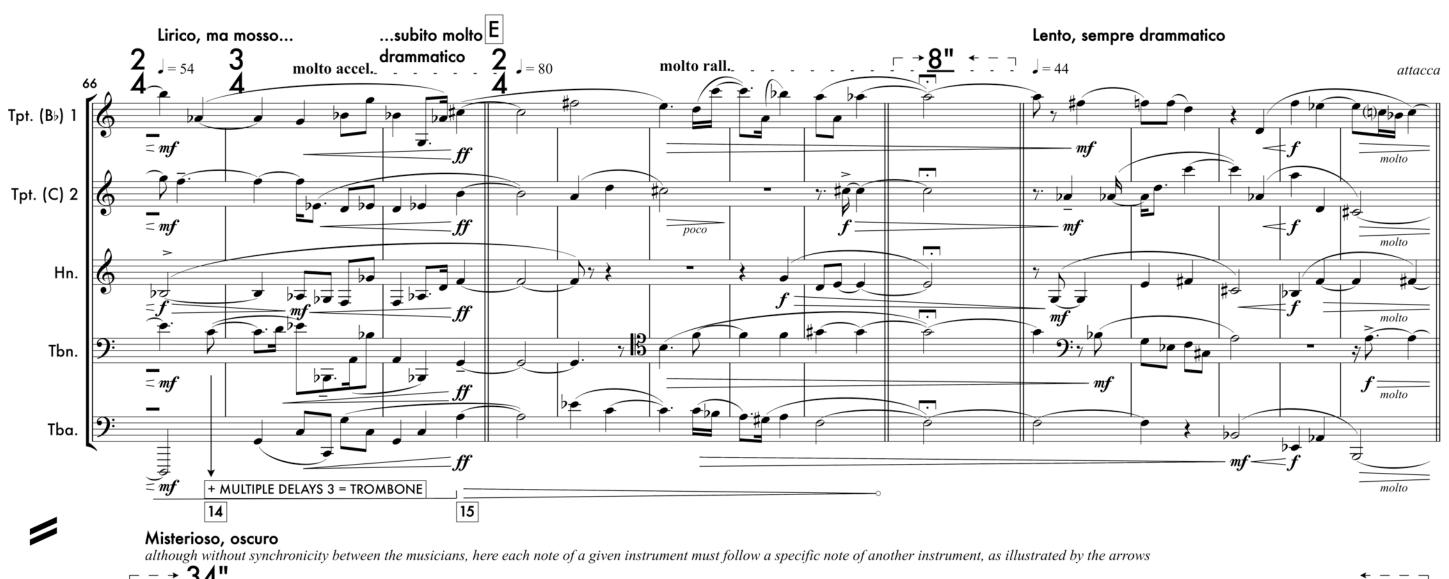












although without synchronicity between the musicians, here each note of a given instrument must follow a specific note of another instrument, as illustrated by the arrows

Tpt. (B) 1

Tpt. (C) 2

Hn.

Ppp

Tbo.

Tbo.

Tbo.

9

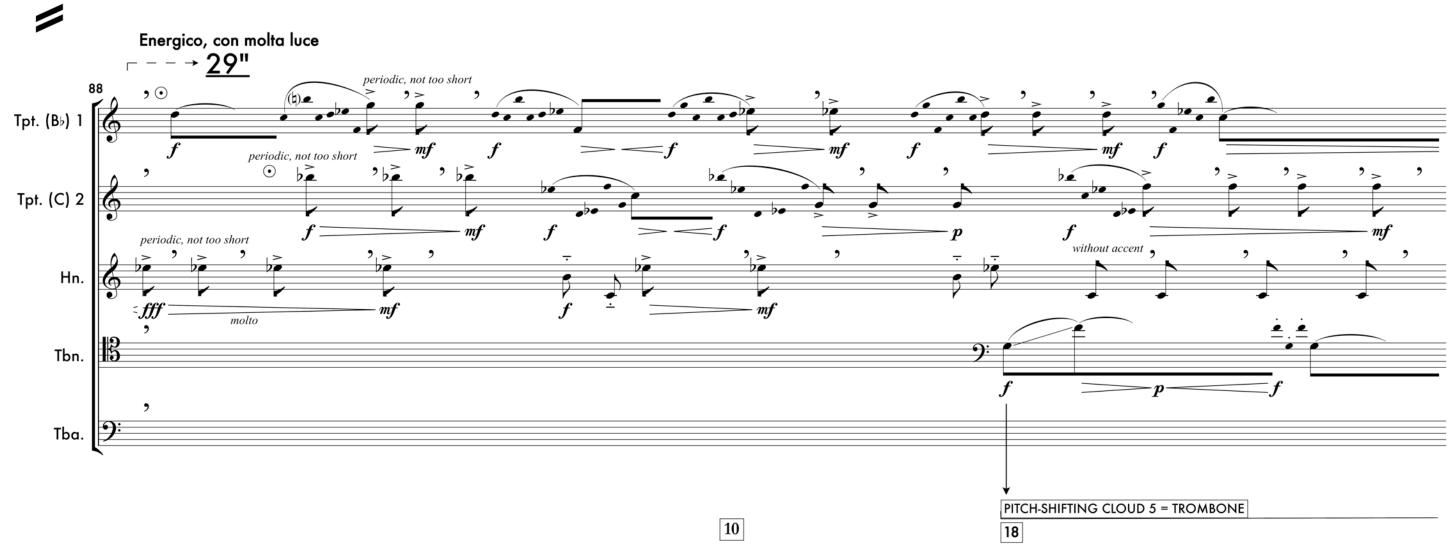
PITCH-SHIFTING CLOUD 4 + MULTIPLE DELAYS 4 = TRUMPET 2

16

at ca. 21"

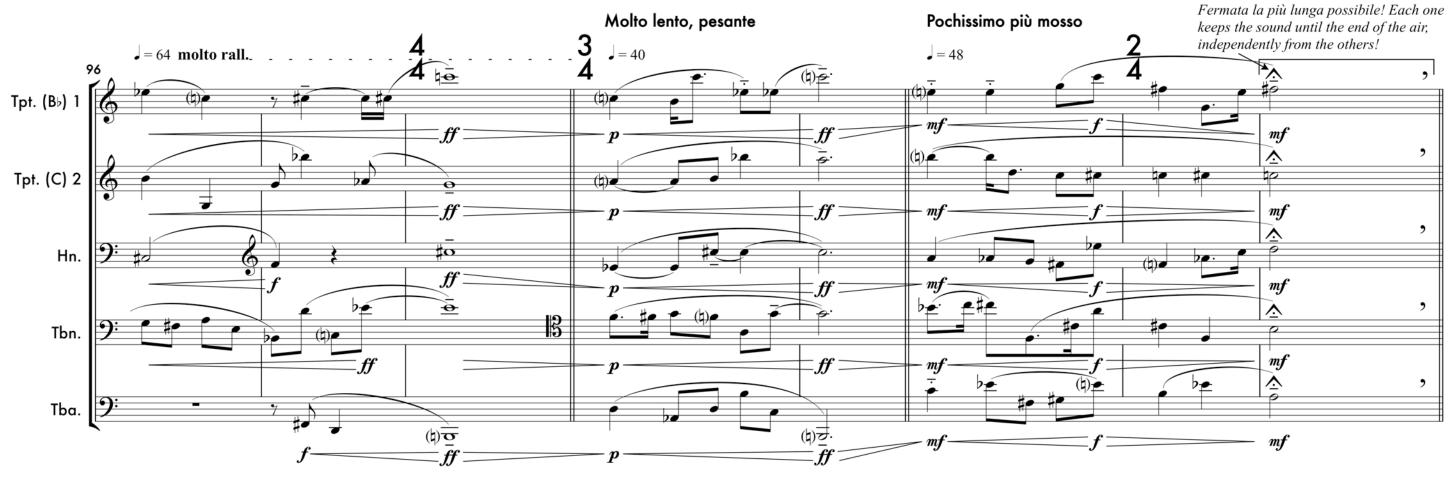
17

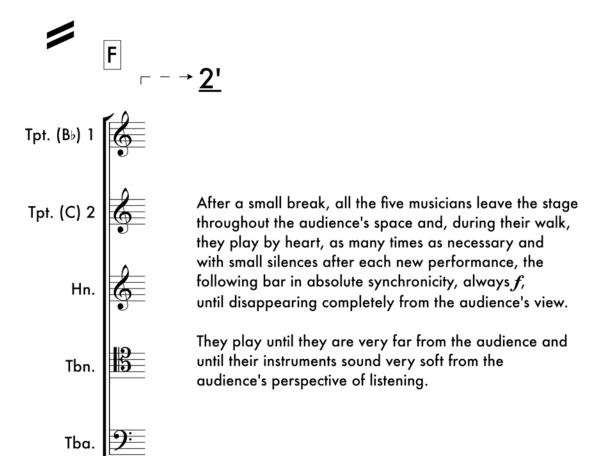


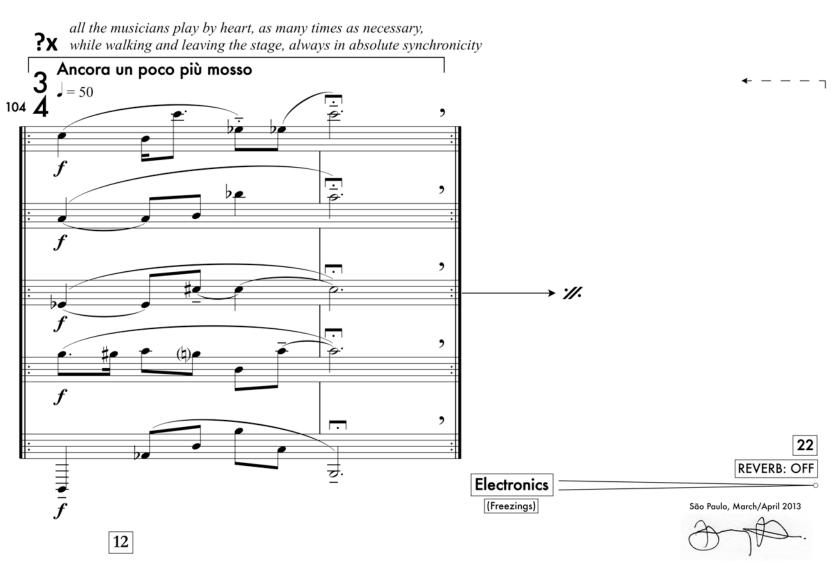


11

21







Flo Menezes

Contrafacta

APPENDIX: to be played before Contrafacta (optional)

1)

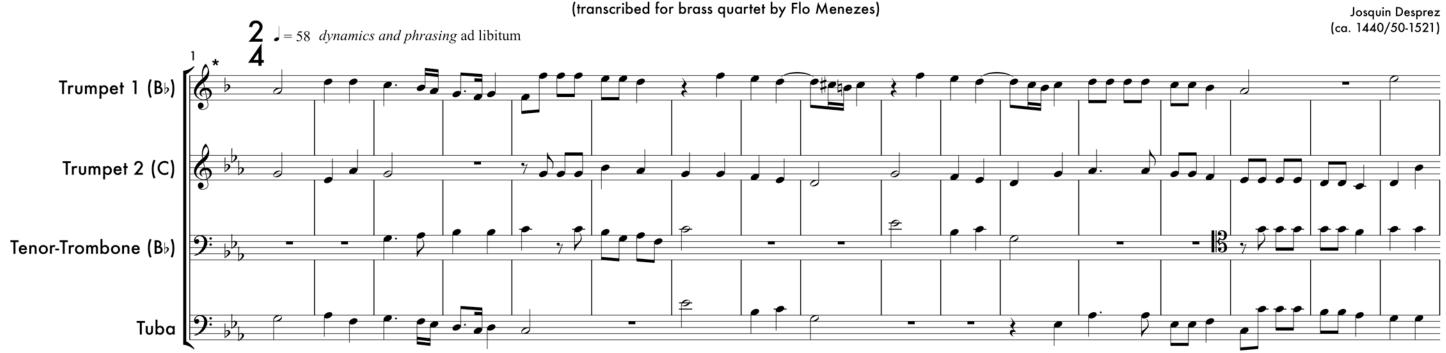
"Mille regretz" by Josquin Desprez, transcribed for brass quartet by Flo Menezes

2)

"Mille regretz" by Desprez-Menezes, transfiguration "à la Stravinsky" for brass quintet of the transcription for brass quartet by Flo Menezes

Mille regretz

(transcribed for brass quartet by Flo Menezes)

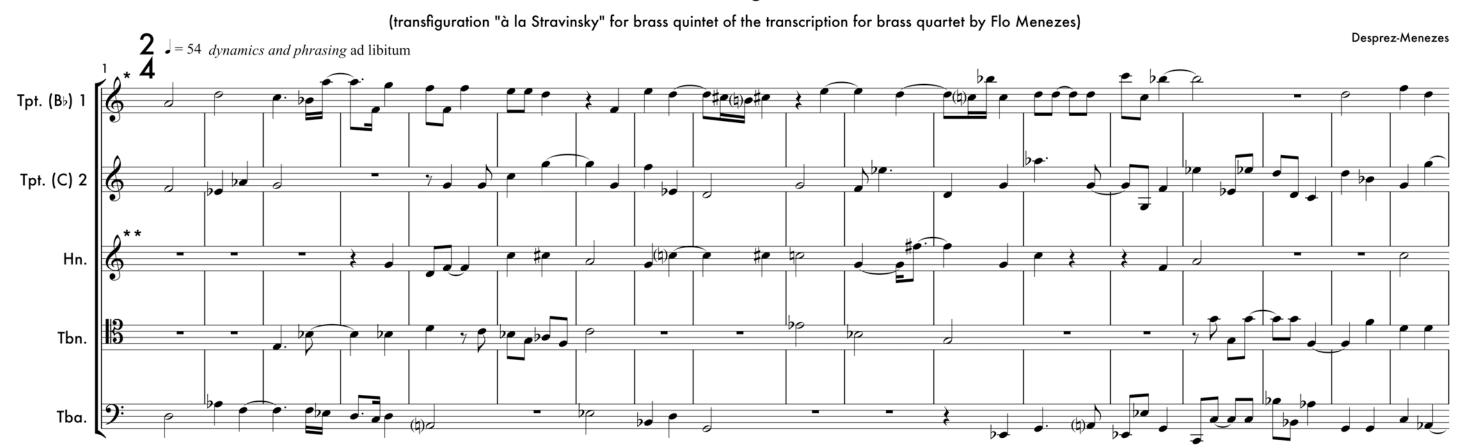


^{*} Sounds one Major Second below.









- * Sounds one Major Second below.
- ** Sounds one Fifth below.

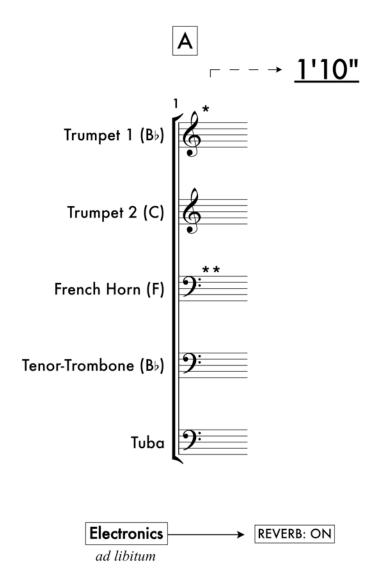






attacca

[Transposed score]



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