Diminuendi

- Etude, Prelude, Response -

written for Katherine Williams

Alto Saxophone (dbl soprano saxophone) & electronics

Duration c. 8'

A. Keegan-Bole

22.04.15

Programme note:

This music has a starting point in the research interests of performer Dr. Katherine Williams (who commissioned the work), specifically in her work on Duke Ellington's *Diminuendo in Blue*. It is structured in three movements, each of which plays with the idea of a 'diminuendo' - 'to diminish' in Italian. Normally taken as a 'loud to quiet' indication, I have applied it as a 'harsh to soft' principal which structures each phrase and the work as a whole.

The etude starts in the low, honky register of the alto sax, climbing through the register before ending in the softness of the sub-tone soprano sax register (exacerbated by reverb). The prelude begins with short, harsh phrases but ends in a dreamy, nostalgic atmosphere. The response is a reflection on the previously heard musical materials - it sets some of the harmony in a softer light, smoothly explores a wide range and ends the piece serenely - far away from the very first statement.

I am extremely grateful to Katherine who spent countless, complaint-free, hours workshopping myriad ideas in the studios at Bristol.

AKB

Performance Notes

Performer's Interaction with the Electronic Elements

This piece requires the performer to activate a foot pedal whilst playing. The aim is that the performer can feel more in control of the part fo electronics to the extent that synching isn't reliant on matching perfectly with the tape's timings – pacing is malleable and determined by th performer. To further develop this the performer also needs to decide the length of some of the tape cues. These are aleatoric moments in the scor (e.g bars 29 & 30) within bounds the software enables the performer to adjust the length of the tape accompaniment at these sections to match th pacing required. However, be conscious that different durations affects the type of sound produced and so will feedback into the musical decisions Over time these sections may become fixed and so there is space to mark them in the score too.

At points the saxophone sound is manipulated live, the types of manipulation employed are broadly: reverb, granulation and transposition. Thes effects vary over the course of the piece and are combined in different ways. The sound is captured by a microphone in front of the performer i order to make the most expressive use of these electronic manipulations the performer needs-must employ microphone technique – that is movin towards / away from the mic as necessary – exaggerated movements may cause musically satisfying results.

Technical Notes

Software

This piece requires bespoke software created in the MaxMSP environment. The up-to-date software package and details of how to run it can be foun and downloaded at www.arthurkeeganbole.com (follow links to the download page).

To access the software you need to provide the following code in a form at the webpage above:

Sc2DePR7329

Within five days of submitting this code (normally 24 hours) you will receive an automated e-mail with instructions – because it is automated, it may b directed to your junk folder.

There are labeled screenshots of the software interface after these notes. Further details and instructions are included with the download.

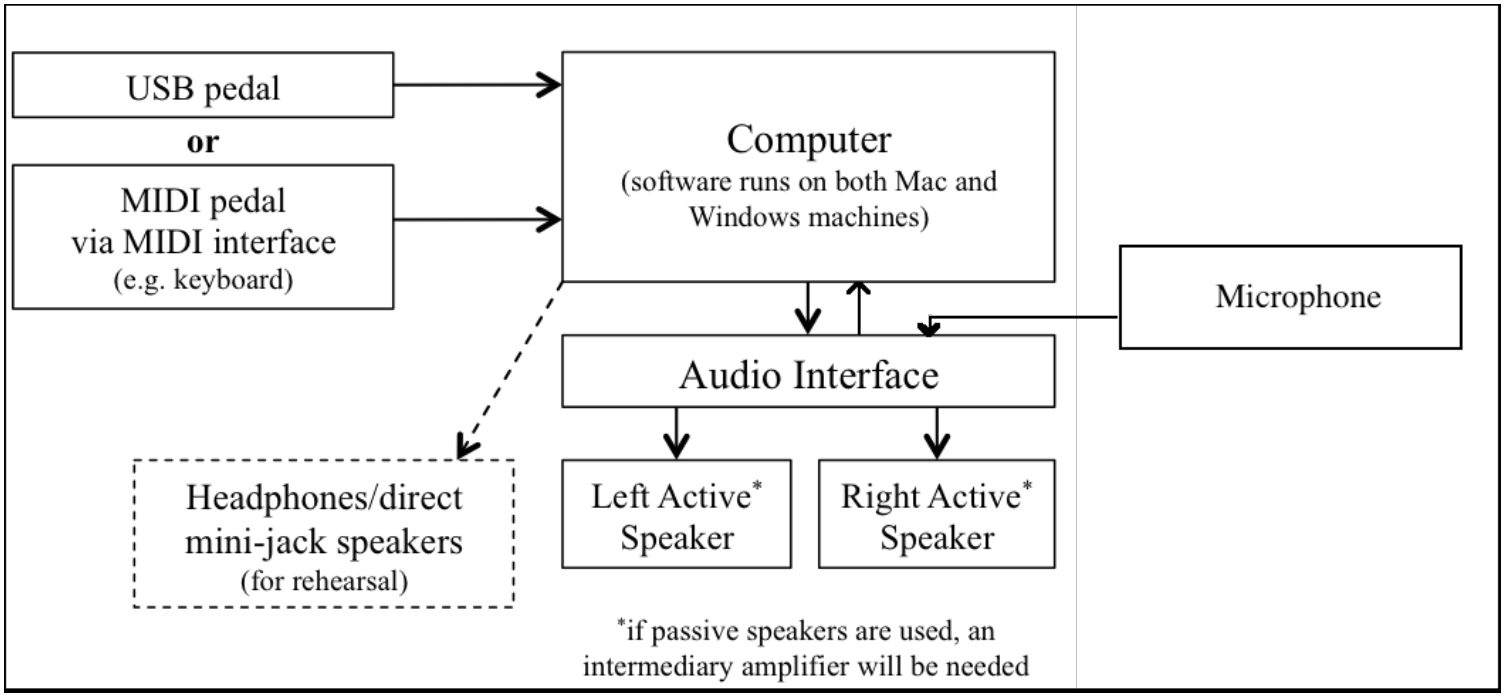
Hardware and sound

The piece requires a pedal connected to the operating computer either by USB or MIDI – instructions for set-up are included in the software. The pedal does not need to be fancy but robust and quiet to operate.

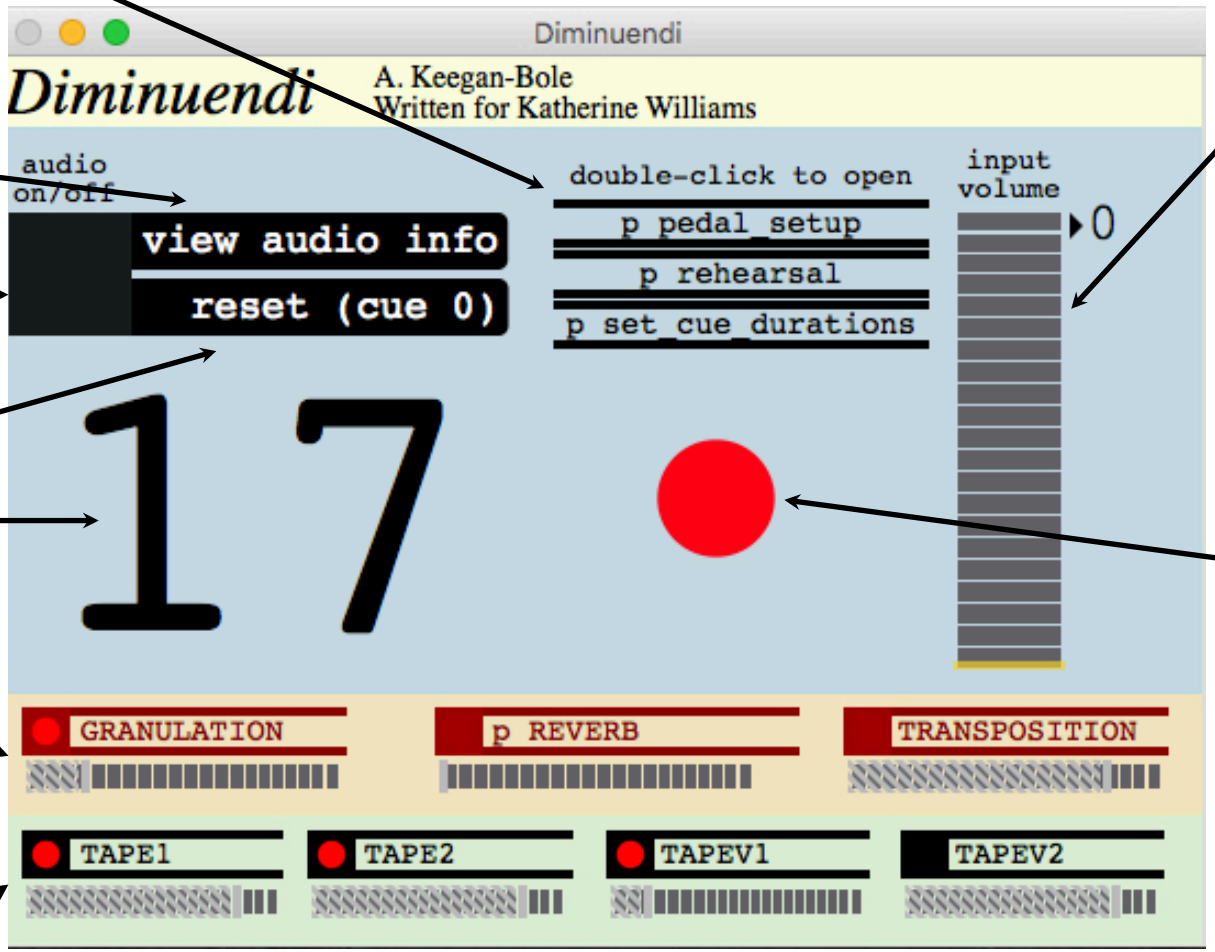
Playback should be via two full range speakers positioned for stereo playback where the performer is at the centre of the stereo image. It is important that the acoustic and electronic parts can meld together, where speaker placement is fixed it may be necessary to add in a little of the saxophone sound to the electronic mix. Speaker placement will have to take into consideration the input microphone to avoid issues with feedback.

The input microphone should have enough space for the performer to feel comfortable and to be able to interact with it physically (see performance notes above). The microphone used in development and for the first performances was a large diaphragm condenser (AKG 414-c). The aim is to get a strong, accurate signal from the saxophone. Whatever microphone used it needs to be shock-mounted to avoid sounds of knocks / vibrations being picked up.

Signal Path and Kit List:



Performance Interface



Double-clicking these boxes opens new windows that aid set-up (outline of each below)

This is a clickable level in (click and drag up for more gain) simultaneously it shows live metering of the signal

audio info shows inputs/outputs, hardware and routing

Click here to turn audio on

Reset the programme ready for performance

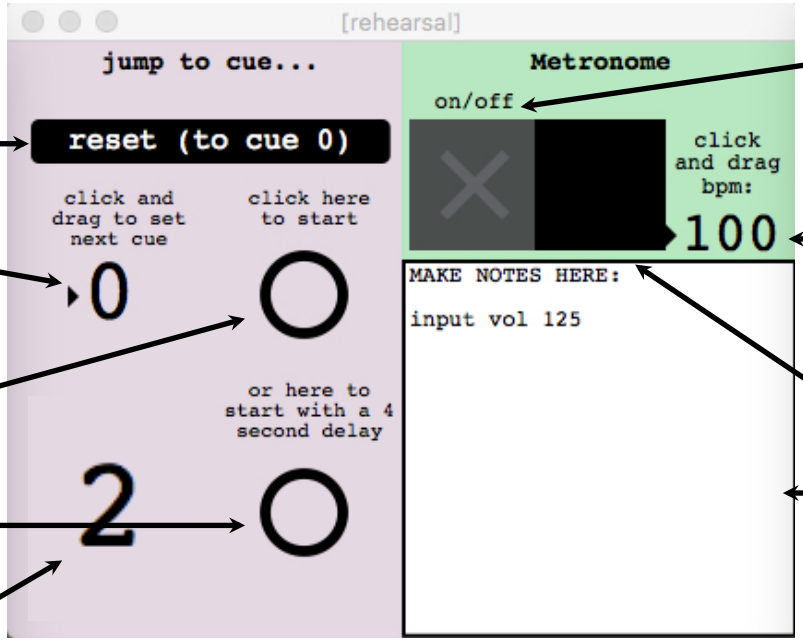
Current cue number

manipulation type (text) on/off (red dot) and level and meter (below red box)

tape file stream (text) on/off (red dot) and level and meter (below black box)

Red light flashes when a cue is activated

Rehearsal interface



Reset the programme ready for performance

click and drag this number to choose a cue you want to start from

once cue number is set click here to start the cue

alternatively click here and it will start after four seconds

countdown from 4 shows here

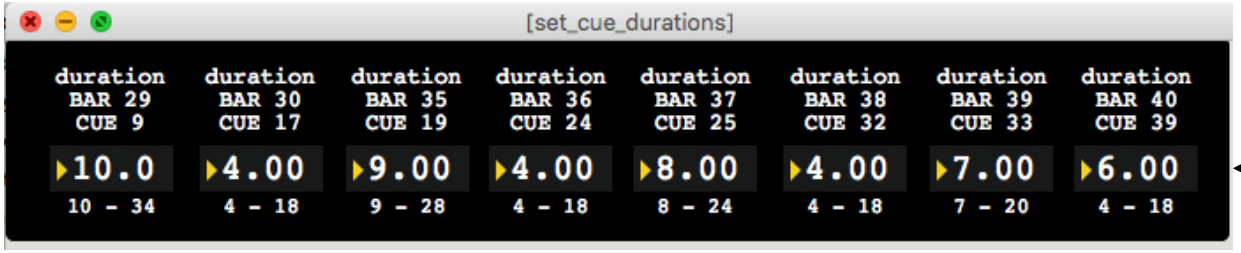
metronome on/off

set bpm of metronome (click and drag number)

when on metronome flash will appear here

text can be written here

Set cue durations (see performance notes)

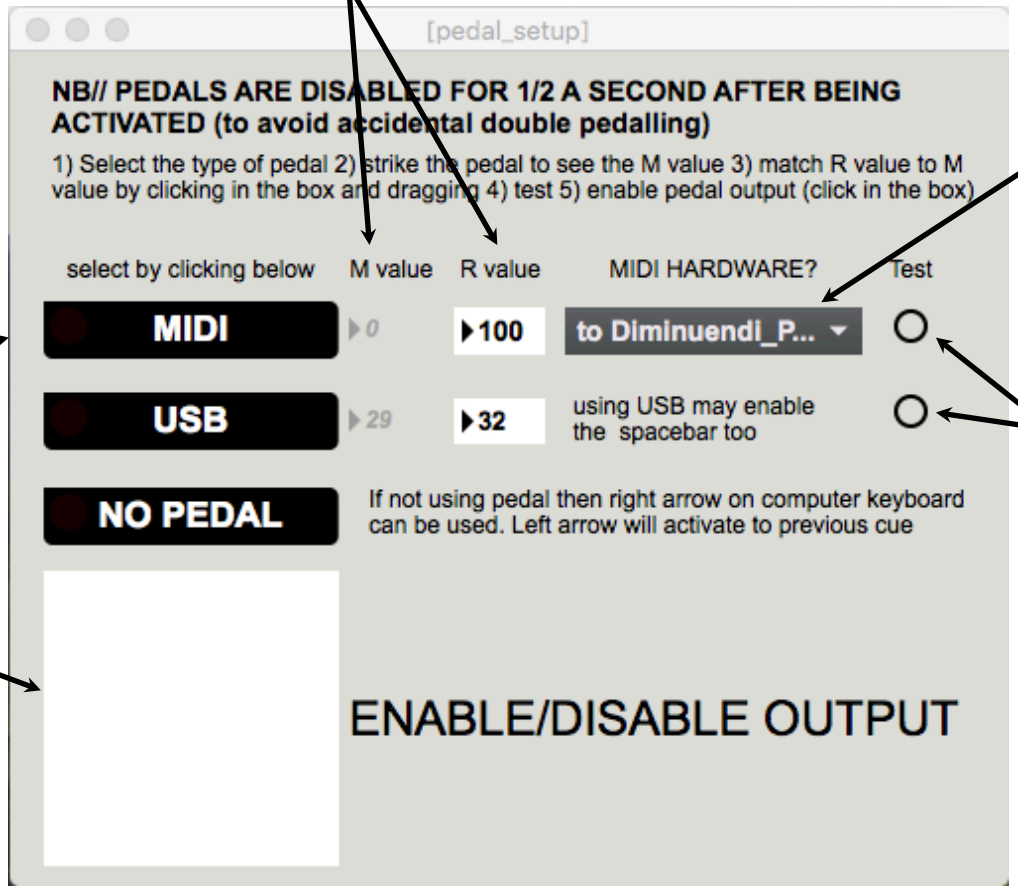


click and drag these numbers to set the cue durations. Using decimal places is fine

Pedal Setup

M & R Value:
When pedal is pressed, the M value appears in grey.
Click and drag the R value number to match the M value.

If using a MIDI pedal, the port that is receiving MIDI data must be set from the drop-down menu before data can be received



Select the type of pedal you are using

Once the R value matches the M value these circles will flash when the pedal is pressed

Click here to enable/ disable pedal output

Diminuendi (Etude, Prelude, Response)

for katherine Williams

A. Keegan-Bole

Etude

♩=76

Alto Sax

flz. ord.

slap tongue or sharp, percussive attack

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

A. Sax.

9

p *mf* *molto* *f* *pp* flz. ord. *ff* *f* *p*

5 5

honky, brassy *dolce* *sim.*

f *mp* *f*

Soprano Saxophone *(change as quickly as possible)*

rit. ♩=76

A. Sax.

16 sub-tones

3 3

p *pp* *p*

gentle, express.
sub-tones where appropriate

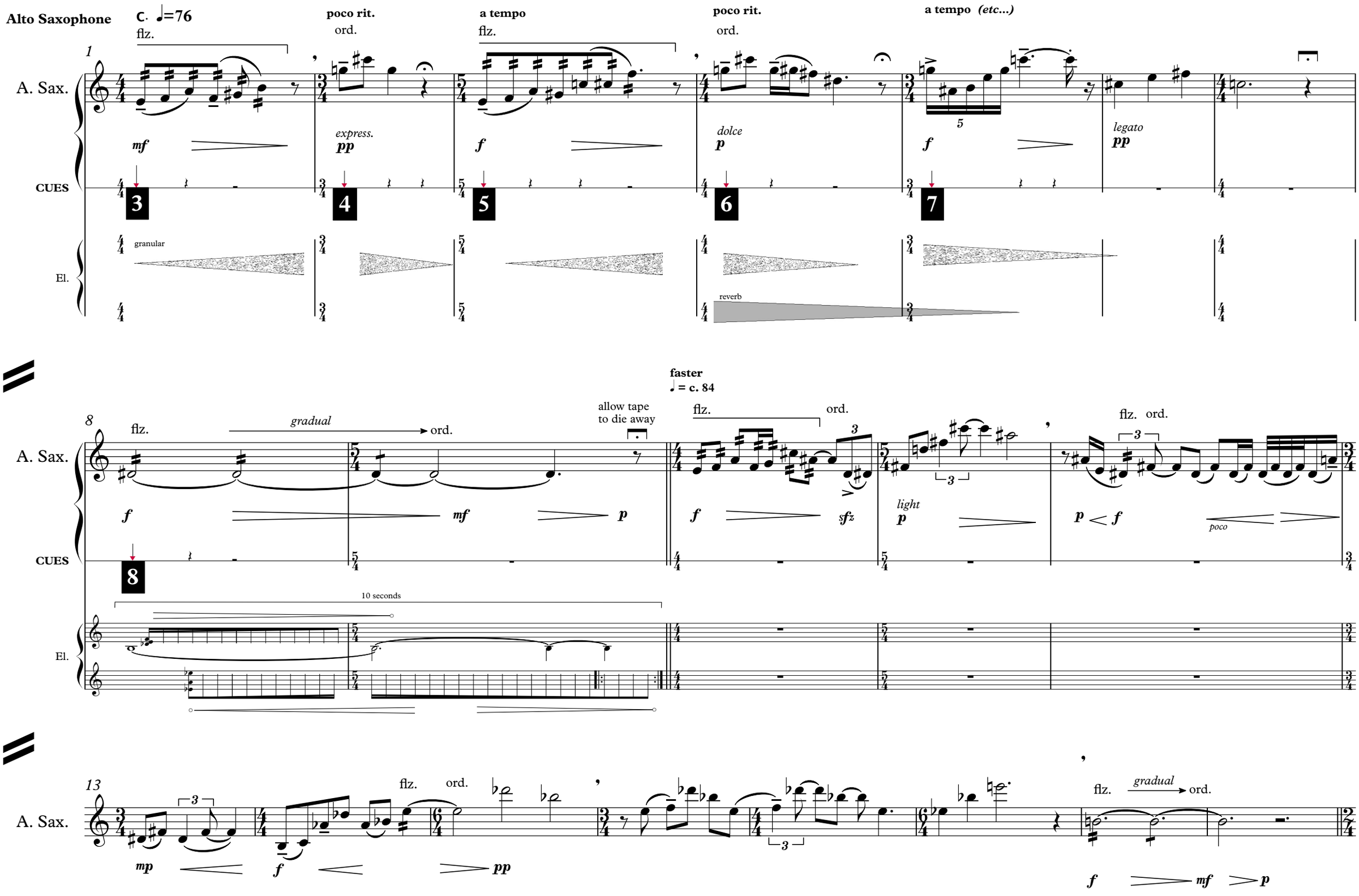
pp

CUES

1 *gentle reverb/delay*

2

Prelude


Alto Saxophone
C. ♩=76
flz.
poco rit.
ord.
a tempo
flz.
poco rit.
ord.
a tempo (etc...)
A. Sax.
mf
express.
pp
f
dolce
p
f
legato
pp
CUES
3
4
5
6
7
El.
granular
reverb
faster
♩ = c. 84
8
flz.
gradual
ord.
allow tape
to die away
flz.
ord.
flz. ord.
f
mf
p
f
sfz
light
p
p
f
poco
10 seconds
13
mp
f
pp
flz.
ord.
flz.
gradual
ord.
f
mf
p

faster

c. ♩= 84

21

A. Sax.

molto rit.

f

exaggeratedly
rhythmic, jazzy

senza misura

breathe/re-articulate as necessary
though entry/re-entry should be soft

[___ seconds *]

[___ seconds *]

29

A. Sax.

mf *(cresc. and dim. in sympathy with live transposition)*

phrasing and timing left to performer - rhythm is **not** **even**
adjust dynamic of blown pitch to support chosen phrasing

CUES

9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

El.

f (relative to sax)

mp

(chord disperses)

c. ♩= 84

molto rit.

f

* tallies with software duration settings, can be adjusted throughout rehearsal process

senza misura

35

[___ seconds * *shorter than bar 29*]

[___ seconds *]

[___ seconds * *longer than bar 35*]

[___ seconds *]

A. Sax.

mf *(cresc. and dim. in sympathy with live transposition)*

mp *(cresc. and dim., sim.)*

phrasing and timing left to performer - rhythm is not even
adjust dynamic of blown pitch to support chosen phrasing

phrasing and timing left to performer - rhythm is not even
adjust dynamic of blown pitch to support chosen phrasing

CUES

19 **20** **21** **22** **23** **24** **25** **26** **27** **28** **29** **30** **31** **32**

El.

f *(relative to sax)*

(chord disperses)

mf *(relative to sax)*

mp

mf

39

[___ seconds * *shorter than bar 37*]

[___ seconds *]

[___ seconds * *shorter than bar 39*]

TO SOP SAX

A. Sax.

sim.

sim.

CUES

33 **34** **35** **36** **37** **38** **39** **40** **41** **42** **43** **44** **45**

ALL OFF

El.

mf *(relative to sax)*

(relative to sax)

* tallies with software duration settings, can be adjusted throughout rehearsal process

Response

Soprano Saxophone

Sop. Sax.

Slow

1

3

p

dolce
express.

poco

legato

molto rall.
senza misura

legato -- staccato -- legato

ppp

barely heard

tempo 1 c. ♩= 76
rubato

6

slow, gentle,
subtle trill *

pp

dolce
express.

poco

* all trills to the semi-tone above

12

poco

p

gentle, express.
sub-tones where appropriate

pp