

# Phonurgia

Music theatre for solo bowed stringed instrument,\* voice,  
gramophone & pre-recorded sound  
with choreography & lighting.

Caroline Wilkins 2010

The title takes its origins from *Phonurgia Nova* (1673) by Athanasius Kircher, a publication on methods of sound amplification using horns of different kinds.

\*Although the score is written for viola, transpositions can be made for violin or violoncello.

### Recordings:

Any 78 shellac disc of music for stringed instrument. ie. Casals playing Schumann's *Träumerei*.

Any digital recording (ditto) ie. Schumann's *Märchenbilder IV*.

Any digital recording of a 78 disc / cylinder recording (ditto) ie. Jan Kubelik (vln) playing *Zigeunerweise No.1* by Sarasate.

Pre-mixed recording of several 78 'locked grooves' made by the composer.

**Prelude** – voice (*Nacht und Träume*), entrance of performer (*Märchenbilder IV*)

**Scene I** – performer listens to 78 shellac disc of music (ie. *Träumerei*).

**Scene II** - duo between viola and 'locked groove' of shellac disc.

**Scene III** – duo between viola and gramophone horn.

**Scene IV** – trio between viola, voice & gramophone motor.

**Scene V** – trio between viola, recordings of 78 disc & 'locked grooves'.

Staging: The gramophone, with horn attached, and the stringed instrument are placed on a table centre stage, a chair to the left of them. Three music stands are placed, one to the right of the table, two to L. & R. of downstage, facing inwards, and one centre upstage facing the back wall of the stage, which should be covered with a black curtain. Four loudspeakers are placed around the floor area so that two are behind the audience standing area. An additional horn is placed behind the wing upstage R. for use by the performer.

### Technical requirements:

Sound mixing board, 2 CD players, 4 speakers. Suspended PC Focus Spotlights & Fresnels for centre stage / downstage area. 2 profile spotlight for upstage L. & R., dimmer board. Individual spotlights on the gramophone and chair, different degrees of spotlights, some brighter, some softer, more diffuse, indicating changes of mood from one playing space to the next. A corridor of light from upstage to downstage. Soft backlight upstage R. behind the performer standing in profile.

Choreography: The physical presence of the actor / musician and his / her shifts of mood from one scene to another are integral to the piece. His / her entrance at the opening, operating the gramophone and listening to the record, sets the mood for listening: stillness. Movements and gestures in handling the gramophone and instrument reflect a narrative behind the character to be developed by the performer.

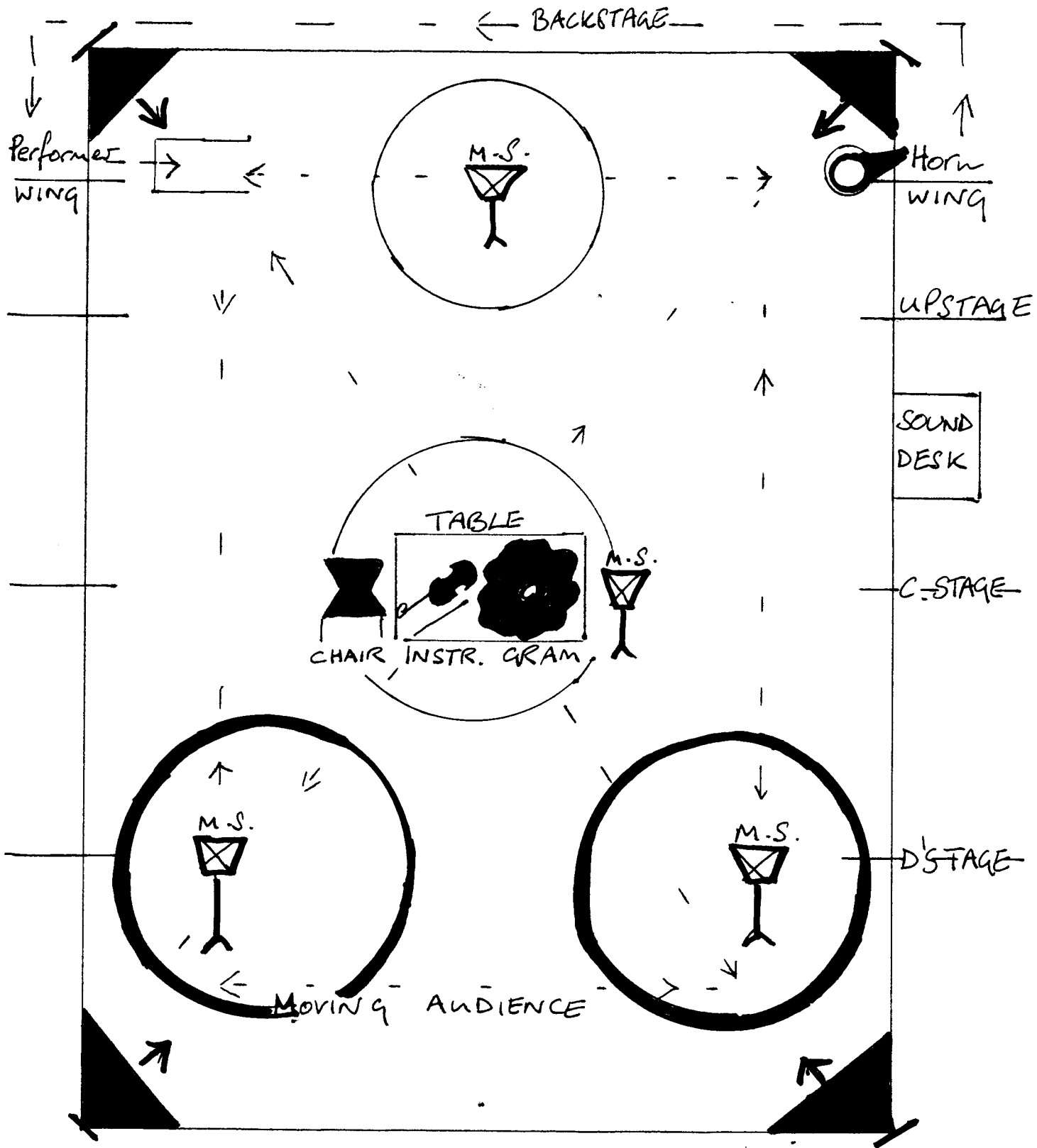
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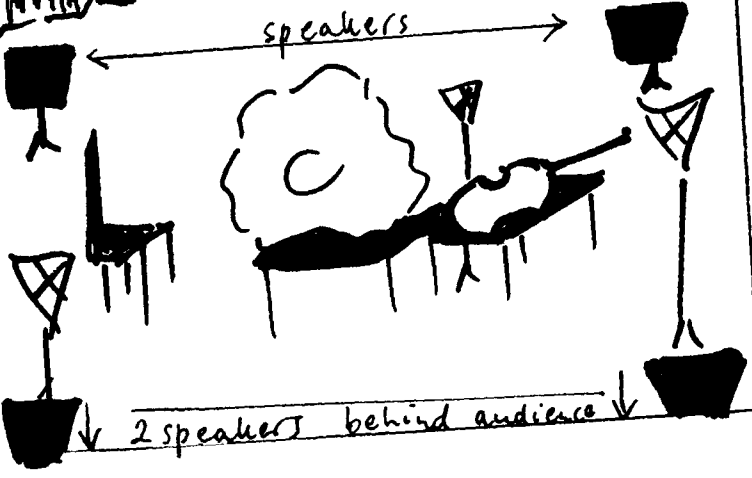
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# 'Phonurgia' - Stage Plan



Caroline Wilkins  
2010

re-entry / Entrance / Prelude



Scenography sketches -

I



II



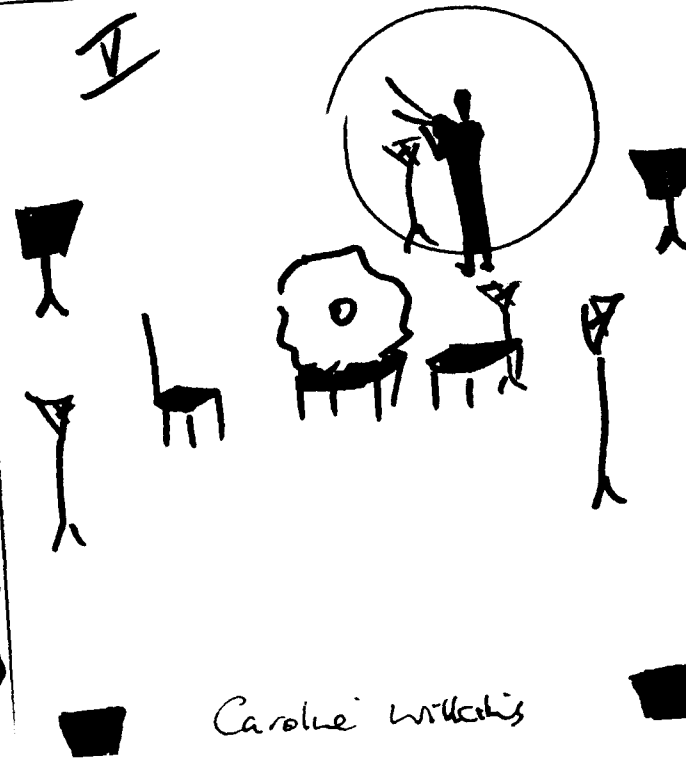
III



IV



V



Caroline Willetts

**Guide to notation : Phonurgia**



Breathy sound, hardly any pitch



With a little pitch (add light bow pressure)



sound + friction



Breathy + squeak (apply more bow pressure)



Double stops played from bottom chord upwards. Sustain top chord



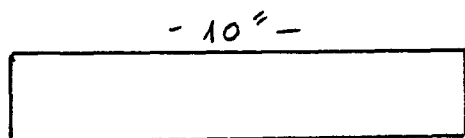
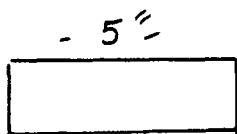
Bow beneath bridge on string indicated



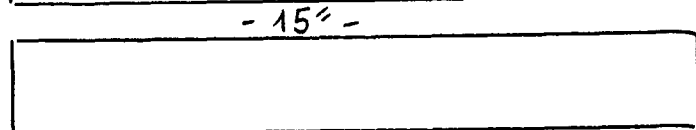
Artificial harmonics notated in the playing position



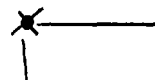
Natural harmonics notated as sounding



Perform fragments in any order as sequences



Percussive sound on gramophone horn with bow (clb)



Bow on edge of bell of horn for pitch approximations



Where indicated one bow plays both horn edge and strings



Upper mordent, accent first note

Guide to Notation : *Phonurgia* (contd.)



Trill with upper note



Small portamento between two pitches



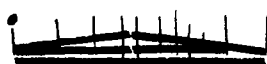
Glissando between two pitches



Bow on scroll of instrument



Play as fast as possible within time indicated



Accelerando / ritardando



Very fast to very slow vibrato



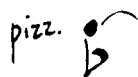
Pizzicato very near bridge



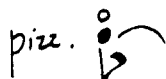
Pizzicato with fingernail / plectrum



Bartok pizzicato



Pizzicato + vibrato

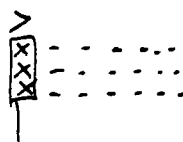


Pizzicato on open string



Let string vibrate against fingernail after plucking

Tone + squeak (much bow pressure)



Bow on three strings using much pressure, frictional stops & starts within movement

# Prelude

BLACKOUT. The performer is behind the wing upstage L. of the performance area. Project the bell of the horn at an angle towards centre stage. SMALL PROFILE SPOTLIGHT on bell.

In a coarse whisper deliver the following text slowly through the horn -

*Heil'ge Nacht, du sinkest nieder;  
Nieder wallen auch die Träume  
Wie dein Mondlicht durch die Räume,  
Durch der Menschen stille Brust.*

*Die belauschen sie mit Lust;  
Rufen, wenn der Tag erwacht:  
Kehre wieder, heil'ge Nacht!  
Holde Träume, kehret wieder!*

*Matthäus von Collin*

BLACKOUT. 1st recorded music (ie. Schumann: *Maerchenbilder IV*) begins softly. Performer moves backstage to wing upstage R. and takes a few steps forward v. slowly, to stand in profile to audience.

Build PROFILE SPOT U.R. gradually as backlight. Performer steps slowly forward to stand in profile to audience. Backlight should light back of shoulders and head, casting a shadow in front. Performer stands motionless during length of music: ca. 2mins.

Begin fading music & BACKLIGHT. Performer moves slowly towards the table and chair as music continues to fade out. Lights on table (centre-stage) and chair (left of table).

Duration: ca. 3'30



# Scene I

The music has stopped. Performer selects a shellac disc from the pile on the table (ie.Schumann – *Träumerei* played by Casals.) and places it on the gramophone turntable, winding the machine and setting it into motion. Turn slowly to sit in chair or stand to one sound to re-wind when necessary.

The music finishes and the disc continues on the ‘locked groove’.

Duration: ca. 3 min.

# SCENE II

The performer re-winds the gramophone continuing on its 'locked groove'.

Picks up the instrument lying next to it and stands to the right of the table in front of a music stand.

Duo between gramophone and instrument.

Duration: ca.4 mins

II

Duo - Vla. + Gramophone

Handwritten musical score for Viola and Gramophone. The score is divided into six systems, each with a Viola staff and a Gramophone staff. The Viola staff contains melodic lines with various performance instructions and dynamics. The Gramophone staff contains rhythmic patterns, often represented by 'l' or 'll' marks.

**System 1:**  
 Viola: *ord.*, *clt.*,  $\frac{1}{2}$  *tratto.*, *ord.*, *con bravura*. Dynamics: *p*, *mf*.  
 Gram.: *lll*

**System 2:**  
 Viola: *s.t. flaut.*, *+ b.p.*, *flaut.*, *increase b.p.*, *flaut. [some pitch]*, *pos. nat.*. Dynamics: *p*, *mf*.  
 Gram.: *ll*

**System 3:**  
 Viola: *s.t. flaut.*, *[some pitch]*, *pos. nat.*. Dynamics: *p*, *mf*.  
 Gram.: *ll*

**System 4:**  
 Viola: *ord.*, *pos. nat.*, *s.t. flaut.*. Dynamics: *p*.  
 Gram.: *llll*

**System 5:**  
 Viola: *clt.*, *ord.*, *pos. nat.*. Dynamics: *mf*.  
 Gram.: *ll*

Measure markings:  $10''$  and  $20'' =$

Handwritten musical score for Violin (Vla.) and Gramophone (Gr.). The score is divided into four systems, each with a Violin staff and a Gramophone staff. The Violin parts include various dynamics (p, mf, f), articulations (accents, slurs), and performance instructions like "molto espress." and "ord.". The Gramophone parts are mostly rests, with some markings like "s.t." and "tb.p.". The score includes several measures with circled numbers (18v) and Roman numerals (II, III, IV) indicating fingerings or positions. A large bracket at the end of the fourth system indicates a final section.

change position in performance space to rewind gramophone.

wait for disc to stop

# SCENE III

The 'locked groove' has come to a halt.

The performer returns to stand very close to the horn, turning it a little to one side. No music stand should be used if possible.

Performer raises the bow to begin playing, landing on the edge of the horn.

Duo for instrument and gramophone horn.

Duration: 4 min. ca.

meccanico, grotesque

III

- 5'' -

- 5'' -

- 5'' -

bow  
on  
Horn

Musical notation for Bow on Horn. The staff shows notes with various articulations. Above the staff, there are markings: "clb.", "ord.", and "pitca". Below the staff, there are markings: "x x x x x x", "(+ high harmonic)", and "(bow pressure - contact of hair, friction)".

Hr.

Musical notation for Hr. The staff shows notes with various articulations. Above the staff, there are markings: "(+ air sound)" and "(+ lower 8ve + 6th)".

Viola

Musical notation for Viola. The staff shows notes with various articulations. Above the staff, there are markings: "marcato", "ord.", "clb", "ord.", "clt", "ord.", "clt", "ord.", "clt", "clb".

Vla.

Musical notation for Vla. The staff shows notes with various articulations. Above the staff, there are markings: "ord.", "clb", "clb", "clb", "clb", "ord.". Below the staff, there is a marking: "espressivo".

Vla.

Musical notation for Vla. The staff shows notes with various articulations. Above the staff, there are markings: "tr", "clb", "ord.", "spicc.", "clt", "clb", "spicc.". Below the staff, there are markings: "p", "s.t.", "spicc.". Above the staff, there are markings: "- 5'' -" and "- 10'' -".

Vla.

Musical notation for Vla. The staff shows notes with various articulations. Above the staff, there are markings: "ord.", "clt", "clb", "ord.", "tr". Below the staff, there are markings: "p", "spicc.", "ff pos. nat.". Above the staff, there are markings: "- 10'' -" and "- 5'' -".

Vla.  
Horn

Musical notation for Vla. and Horn. The staff shows notes with various articulations. Above the staff, there are markings: "clt", "ord.", "clt", "clb", "ord.". Below the staff, there are markings: "mp", "b.p.", "perc. of Vla scroll on horn inside". Above the staff, there are markings: "- 5'' -", "- 5'' -", and "- 5'' -".

Vla  
Hw

- 5° -

- 10° - s.p.

bow touching edge of hair

squeak

\* harmonic

Vla

clt

spicc. clb

ord.  $\frac{1}{2}$  legno

pos. nat.

clt. - 10° - clb.

- 5° -

- 10° -

V.

ord.  $\frac{1}{2}$  legno

clb

p spicc.

ord.  $\frac{1}{2}$  legno

clb

- 10° -

- 5° -

V.

ord.  $\frac{1}{2}$  legno

clb

s.p. pp

- 5° -

- 10° -

V.

ord.  $\frac{1}{2}$  legno

clb

pp pos. nat.

- 5° -

- 15° -

V.

ord.  $\frac{1}{2}$  legno

clb

pp s.t.

pos. nat.

- 15° -

V.

ord.  $\frac{1}{2}$  legno

clb

s.p. pp

- 15° -

Vla

Hw

- 5° -

- 5° -

- 5° -

Springbogen

- 5° -

Vla

Hw

- 5° -

- 10° -

duration: 4'30 ca.

# SCENE IV

Performer sets down instrument and re-winds the gramophone, restoring the horn to its former position. Release the brake mechanism only, producing motor mechanism noise.

LIGHT downstage area, keeping some light on centre stage.

Performer stands at a distance to the gramophone, alternately walking, playing, and whispering fragments from the opening text / humming fragments of music as if practising to himself. The music stands can be used as reference points with parts of the score found on each.

At one point the viola / violin becomes a violoncello as performer sits on chair and plays it between his knees.

Fragments of both the opening recorded music and the pre-recorded shellac recording to be heard later in the work (ie. Schumann's *Maerchenbilder IV* and Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen No. 1*) are played live and interspersed with the score material.

Duration: ca. 7 min.



IV - Trio

10°

optional quotes:  
humann-IV<sup>m</sup> movt.  
Märchenbilder.

Vla 3

Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck pp

Voice (T) - rrrrr - rrräume

loud whisper

V. clb

Voice -10° -10° [20°]

nie-derrr wie-derrr wie wenn walt- wachhhh

V. *veloce* *pp* *molto rit.*

Voice -10° -10°

ge- de- du die dein durchhhh derrrrrrr

V. *f* *al tempo* *molto rit.*

Voice -5° -5° -10°

wal-len stil-Le Licht

[-20°-]

-10°-

Vla.

Voice: Lauschhhh Lust Lichhhht Naaacht

-5°-

V.

Voice: st stil licht

-5°-

V.

Voice: wachht -cht Nacht

-5°-

V.

Voice: Hhhh- Hei- Hol- kehr Ruffff

# SCENE V

The gramophone motor has run down and stopped.

Fade in pre-recordings as performer finishes his 'cello' playing whilst seated.  
CD of 'locked grooves' (pre-mixed) played on 2 speakers downstage.

Performer moves to position upstage in front of music stand (lit). SPOTLIGHT.  
Fade other LIGHTS.

Fade in digital recording of a shellac disc (ie. Sarasate's *Zigeunerwiese No. 1*)  
on 2 speakers upstage one minute after the first recording has started.

Mix: The music upstage should be softer than the music downstage to give the effect  
of more distance.

Performer alternates between sudden stops and starts whilst playing and maintaining a  
'frozen' position, as if in mid-play, when silent. The duration of silence increases until  
complete stillness at the end of the scene.

Pre-recordings fade out gradually.

Fade spotlight to BLACK.

Duration: ca.6 mins.

V - Vla + 'locked groove' recordings  
+ recording of shellac disc.

frenetic 20"

Viola *arco* *f* *18v*

*spicc.* *ord. + b.p.* *clb* *ord. + b.p.* *clb*

$\frac{1}{2}$  tratto.

Viola *spicc.* *clb Springbogen* *ord.* *b.p. Springbogen* *s.t.* *pos. nat. Springbogen*

Viola *+ b.p.* *Springbogen* *clb.* *ord. + b.p.* *clb spicc.* *Springbogen*

Viola *pp*  $\frac{1}{2}$  tratto *f ord. + b.p.* *pp clb*

Viola *Springbogen* *ord.* *s.t. repeat ad lib. rit - - - accel.* *molto legato*

Viola *18v mf* *pp molto vib.* *mf vib. norm.*

*pos. nat. + b.p.* *normal b.p.* *+ b.p.*

IN-4° JESUS (à la française) - 12 portées

20"

Vla B *f* *unch. b.p.* *molto vib. normal b.p.* *pp*

*molto legato* *vib. norm.* *½ leguo* *tratto* *ord.* *½ leguo* *tratto* *repeat ad lib.*

*ord.* *unch. b.p.* *f* *molto legato* *s.t.* *rit.* *accel.* *molto rit.?* *Repeat ad lib.* *one bow, sustained, gritty.*

Vla B *8v s.p.* *f* *rit.* *accel.* *accel.* *molto rit.* *accel.* *pp* *rit.*

Vla B *s.t.* *+ b.p.* *pos. nat.* *molto rit. II III IV \** *a tempo*

Vla B *f s.p.* *8v* *normal b.p.* *accel.* *accel.* *vib.* *senza vib.* *rit. pp* *8v* *f* *a tempo* *molto rit.* *pos. nat.* *dur. 6/ca.*

IN-4° JESUS (à la française) - 12 portées

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