

2025

# EX NIHILO

for Tenor Saxophone, Electric Guitar, Accordion, Tape

Felipe de Almeida Ribeiro

## GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

**EX NIHILO** was written for the Vértice Sonora Ensemble, for tenor saxophone, electric guitar, accordion, and tape. Its title, a Latin expression meaning “from nothing,” reflects the work’s sound world: long, evolving textures, subtle pulsations, and harmonies that hover in stillness. The piece explores immersive sonic spaces where minimal gestures give rise to resonant, unfolding layers.

This an **Action Score**: the notation serves as a starting point to be explored creatively and actively by the performers. Many of the *smorzati*, *tremoli*, and dynamic fluctuations are written in simple rhythmic patterns, as these nuances depend on the acoustics and response of each instrument. That being said, I invite you—as performers—to interact with the materials so that the piece may truly emerge through your interpretation.

**Balance:** Tenor saxophone, electric guitar, and accordion differ greatly in timbre and projection. Balance may be challenging. For example, a low-pitched saxophone at piano may naturally dominate an amplified guitar or accordion. Performers should always listen and adjust. All dynamic markings indicate relative equality.

**Mobile Sound (or suono mobile):** continuously evolving in pitch, timbre, and/or dynamics; the sound should feel fluid, never static.

At **rehearsal mark #8**, a **spatial score** is used for durations. You should engage with the idea of “listen carefully and for a prolonged time”.

Diagram illustrating spatial score notation with various markings: *Ebony*, *p*, *mp*, *full spectrum*, *pp*, *mp*, and *8'+4'*.

**Fermata:** short (Λ) and long (∩).

**Microtone** (descending): ♭♭♭♭ and (ascending): ♯♯♯♯

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACCORDION

**Tremolo:** The tremolo effect is written with a wavy line, showing the duration of the effect. Once the line is ended, back to ordinario playing. Sometimes written with expression indications such as “gentle”, “slow” etc.

Diagram illustrating Tremolo notation on an accordion. The notation shows a wavy line above the staff, labeled *Tremolo* and *(slow)*, indicating the duration of the effect. The dynamic marking *mp* is also present.

**Air sound:** breath-like tone. No pitch.

Diagram illustrating Air sound notation. The notation shows a horizontal line above the staff, labeled *Air sound only*, indicating a breath-like tone without pitch.

**Register** changes are based on “The Techniques of Accordion Playing” by Bettina Buchmann (Bärenreiter).

Diagram illustrating Register changes on an accordion. The notation shows a circle with a horizontal line through it, labeled *dark and soft*, indicating a register change. The dynamic marking *mp* is also present.

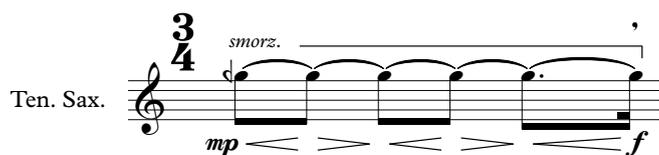
## INSTRUCTIONS FOR SAXOPHONE

**Multiphonics:** In this piece I use the multiphonics charts from “The Techniques of Saxophone Playing” by Marcus Weiss (Bärenreiter).

Diagram illustrating Multiphonics notation on a saxophone. The notation shows a vertical stack of notes, labeled *T/C# -15*, *C#*, and *C*, indicating the specific notes used for multiphonics. The dynamic marking *mf / p* and the term *mobile* are also present.

**Slap tongue:** a percussive technique where the tongue sharply strikes the reed to produce a short, popping sound. Notated with “X” notehead.

**Smorzato:** although rhythm is notated, it is meant to sound as a continuous sound, with slight articulations. Smorzato are always irregular, so feel free to improvise with the given rhythm.



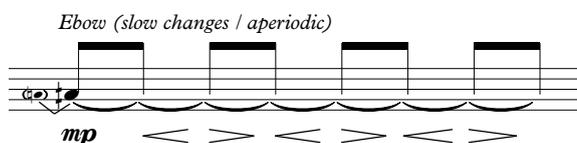
**Bisbigliando:** is a technique that produces a trembling, fluctuating sound by rapidly alternating between two fingerings for the same or nearly the same pitch. It creates a shimmering or wavering timbre rather than a clear pitch change.

**Frullato (or flutter tongue):** is a technique where the player rolls the tip of the tongue (like trilling an "r") or the back of the throat while blowing. It produces a rough, vibrating sound, adding intensity or texture to the tone.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR ELECTRIC GUITAR

**Electric Guitar:** any type. **Amplifier:** any type may be used, with slight saturation (tube/valve amps are preferable) while maintaining a generally clean sound. Use reverb only as needed to blend with the hall and the trio's natural acoustics and resonance.

**Ebow:** a handheld electronic device that uses a magnetic field to vibrate the guitar string continuously, producing a sustained, bow-like tone. It allows smooth dynamic shaping and infinite sustain without the use of a plectrum. Ebow fluctuations may be combined with volume pedal control.

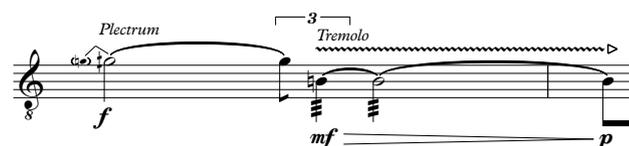


**Ferrous:** a magnetic sustainer for electric guitar, designed by Landscape. It transforms the strings into a feedback instrument, allowing continuous tones and rich harmonic resonance. Ideal for exploring sustained textures and subtle timbral shifts.

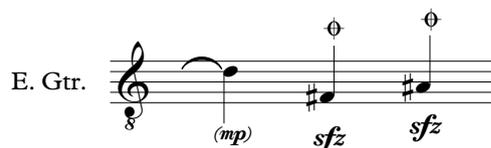
**Volume pedal:** there is no specific notation for this effect, as it is already implied within the notated dynamics. For instance, a *dal niente* crescendo may be achieved with the use of the volume pedal. Certain ebow dynamic fluctuations, however, could be produced solely by the ebow itself, not necessarily in combination with the volume pedal.

**Plectrum** is indicated when *ordinario* electric guitar playing is required. It may also be played with fingers, at the performer's discretion.

**Tremolo pedal:** if possible, use one with *tap tempo* or another way to adjust the rate during performance. The tremolo effect is indicated by a wavy line, showing its duration. When the line ends, return to *ordinario* playing. Traditional tremolo markings indicate the intended rate, but the actual speed should be chosen by the performer in dialogue with the trio's overall sonority.



**Palm Mute  $\Phi$ :** a guitar technique where the side of the picking hand lightly rests on the strings near the bridge, producing a dampened, percussive sound.



**Bend:** a guitar technique where a string is pushed or pulled to raise its pitch. Pre-bend is the starting note for bending, but not to be heard; it is notated in parenthesis.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR ELECTRONICS

If performing **without electronics**, ignore the corresponding markings in the score and play *attacca* between sections.

If performing **with electronics**, ensure a balanced relationship between the tape, the trio, and the venue's acoustics – the tape should never overpower the ensemble. It is recommended to have a dedicated electronic musician operate the part, as two tasks are required: triggering specific files at designated moments and controlling the overall intensity. The performer may use a mixing desk or faders to achieve greater control over sound diffusion. Small loudspeakers are preferred and should be placed close to the trio to achieve a more natural blend between acoustic and electronic sounds.

A Max patch is available if needed:



# EX NIHILO

written for *Vértixe Sonora* ensemble

DE ALMEIDA RIBEIRO

**1** Tape prelude

**2** Blending  
♩ = 40

Musical score for the first section of "EX NIHILO". It features four staves: Tenor Saxophone, Electric Guitar, Accordion, and Tape. The Tenor Saxophone and Accordion parts consist of a few notes in the first measure, followed by rests. The Electric Guitar part has a single note in the first measure, followed by a complex texture of notes in the second and third measures, with a volume pedal marking from *mp* to *p*. The Accordion part has a single note in the first measure, followed by rests, with a volume marking from *mp* to *p*. The Tape part has a box labeled "FILE #1 dur. 1'03\"", followed by a long line with the instruction "Trio starts between 25\" and 45\"". Above the Electric Guitar staff, there are two time signatures:  $\frac{5}{4}$  and  $\frac{4}{4}$ . Above the Accordion staff, there is a note: "Ferrous OR Ebow alternating strings" and "Air sound only". Above the Tape staff, there is a note: "simile".

Musical score for the second section of "EX NIHILO". It features three staves: Tenor Saxophone, Electric Guitar, and Accordion. The Tenor Saxophone part has a few notes in the first measure, followed by rests. The Electric Guitar part has a single note in the first measure, followed by a complex texture of notes in the second and third measures, with a volume marking from *p* to *mp*. The Accordion part has a single note in the first measure, followed by rests, with a volume marking from *p* to *mp*. Above the Electric Guitar staff, there are two time signatures:  $\frac{5}{4}$  and  $\frac{4}{4}$ . Above the Accordion staff, there is a note: "like an oscillator..." and "(slow bend)".

2  $\text{♩} = 40$

**6/4** *senza vibrato*

Ten. Sax. *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *mf*

E. Gtr. *pp* *mp* *mf*

Accord. *f* *mp* *mf*

**5/4** *cresc. out of accordian*

**3+1/4+16**

**3/4**

*dark and soft*

*8'*

**3/4** *smorz.*

Ten. Sax. *mp* *f* *sfp* *p* *f*

E. Gtr. *Plectrum* *f* *sfp* *p* *f*

Accord. *mp* *sfp* *sfp* *f*

**10** **2+1/4+16** **5/16** **3/4**

*Tremolo (slow)* *ord.*

**3 Phrasing**  $\text{♩} = 46$

**5/4** **5/4**

Ten. Sax. *mp*

E. Gtr. *mp* *Ebow, ad libitum* *let vibrate*

Accord. *gentle tremolo* *sfp* *p (sempre)* *soft and round* *pp*

Tape

FILE #2  
dur. 0'37"

(♩ = 46)

**2+1**  
**4 16**

**3**  
**4**

bisb. ~~~~~ **4**  
**4** ord.

Ten. Sax. *sfp* <sup>(p)</sup> *f* *mp*

E. Gtr. *Ebow* *mf* *Tremolo* ord.

Accord. *mp* *sfp* *mf*

**3**  
**4**

**3**  
**4**

**3**  
**4**

Ten. Sax. *sfp* *mf* *mp*

E. Gtr. *no Ebow* *Plectrum* *mf* *mp*

Accord. *Tremolo* ord. *more overtones* *Tremolo* *mf* *mp*

**3**  
**4** ord.

**2+1**  
**4 16** 3

**4**  
**4** *smorz.* (slow and irregular)

Ten. Sax. *(mp)* *mf* *mp*

E. Gtr. *(mp)* *sfz* *sfz* *mf* *mp* *Tremolo*

Accord. *(mp)* *p* *mf* *mp*

4 (♩ = 46)

Out of sync, yet organic

7/4 6/4 4/4

Ten. Sax. *slap sfp sfp f* *smorz. Gently exaggerated mf*

E. Gtr. *sfp mp f* *Tremolo (slow) mf*

Accord. *sfp sfp sfp f* *Tremolo mf*

4 Out of sync, yet organic

♩ = 46

2+1/4+8 3+1/4+16 3/16 3/4

Ten. Sax. *bisb. FAST mf sfz sfz* *bisb. SLOW mp sfz* *bisb. FAST sfz* *bisb. SLOW sfz*

E. Gtr. *mf mp sfz mp* *Tremolo* *Ebow (slow changes)* *Plectrum* *Ebow (slow changes)*

Accord. *mf sfz sfz mp* *8'+4'*

*sempre while in [4] unless ord.*

30 4/4 2+1/4+8 3+1/4+16

Ten. Sax. *smorz. mf sfz mf mp*

E. Gtr. *Ebow (bend) mp simile mf mp*

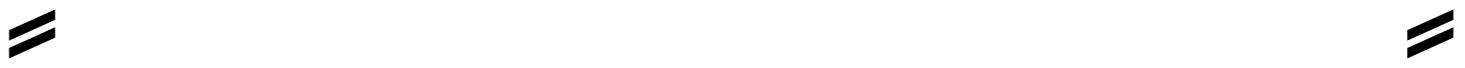
Accord. *mf sfz mp*

(♩ = 46)

Ten. Sax. *bisb. FAST* *slap* **3/16** **3/4** *ord.* *#e.* **1/C# -15** **C# 4/4** *Mobile sound, fluctuating... (Weiss n°41)*  
*sfz* *mf* *mf* *mf / p mobile*

E. Gtr. *Plectrum* *mf* *mf* *mp* *Ebow (slow changes / aperiodic)*

Accord. *ord.* *mf* *mf* *mp* *slow tremolo / aperiodic*



**5 Pulse... Tide...**

♩ = 60

♩ = 76/80

*Constant tone, gently pulsating... slowly fading*

Ten. Sax. **4/4** **5** **23** **8** *mf* *p* *mf*

E. Gtr. *Plectrum* *sfz* *mf* *Constant tone, gently pulsating... slowly fading* *simile*

Accord. *ord.* *sfp* *mf* *Constant tone, gently pulsating... slowly fading* *simile*

40

2/4 *slap* ♩ = 46

3/4

4/4 + 1/8 *smorz.*

Ten. Sax. *sfz mp mf mp*

E. Gtr. *sfz sfz p mf* *Ebow* *(slow bend)*

Accord. *cantabile* *f mp f mp mf mp*

27

8/8 ♩ = 76

Ten. Sax. *mf mf mf*

E. Gtr. *Ebow* *f*

Accord. *mf pp* *simile*

6 Like a resonant choir... one motion

5/4 ♩ = 46

Ten. Sax. *f mf p mf* *smorz.*

E. Gtr. *Plectrum* *f mf p mf* *Tremolo* *ord.*

Accord. *dark and soft* *f mf mp mf* *Tremolo* *ord.*

(♩ = 46) 7

Ten. Sax. *mp* *smorz.* *mf* *pp*

E. Gtr. *mf* *mp* *mp* *mf*

Accord. *mp*

5 *ord.* *smorz.* *mf* *pp* *(slow bend)* 3

**7 Pulsing... Flat... Pulsing... almost nothing**  
♩ = 40

Ten. Sax. *mp* *mf* *mp* *mp*

E. Gtr. *Ferrous OR Ebow* *mp* *mf > mp* *mp* *mp*

Accord. *mp* *mf* *p* *mp* *ord.* *mp*

Tape **FILE #3**  
dur. 1'25"

4/4 *frullato* 3 *ord.* 4+1/16

50 4/4

Ten. Sax. *mf* *mf* *quasi f* *mp*

E. Gtr. *mf* *mf* *quasi f* *mp*

Accord. *mf* *mf* *quasi f* *mp*

3+1/16 4/4

*Tremolo*

(♩ = 40)

T/D-4  
 Mobile sound  
 (Weiss n°17)

Ten. Sax. *frullato*  $\frac{3+1}{4+16}$  *slap*  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{3+1}{4+16}$  *slap*

E. Gtr. *Tremolo* *Plectrum* *f* *sfz* *l.v. Ebow* *mp* *mf* *f* *Plectrum Tremolo*

Accord. *Tremolo* *p* *mf* *sfz* *mf* *mp* *mp* *mf* *f* *Tremolo*

60

Ten. Sax.  $\frac{3+1}{4+16}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{1+4}{16+4}$  *smorz.*  $\frac{4}{4}$

E. Gtr. *Ebow* *mf* *mf* *mf* *(slow bend)* *Plectrum, then Ebow* *mf*

Accord. *ord.* *mp* *mf* *mp* *pp* *mf* *mp* *p*

8 Listen carefully and for a prolonged time ... ad libitum

♩ = 40

5/4

Ten. Sax.

E. Gtr.

Accord.

Tape

FILE #4  
dur. 1'10"

*Ebow*

*p*

*mp*

*pp*

*pp* ————— *mp*

☺ *full spectrum*

♩ 8' + 4'

Ten. Sax.

E. Gtr.

Accord.

*mf* *mp*

*p* *f*

*mf*

*f*

*mf*

*pp* *f*

Ten. Sax.

E. Gtr.

Accord.

*mp* <> <> etc.

*p*

*suono mobile, lungo e ampio*

*mp* <> <> etc.

*p*

*suono mobile, lungo e ampio*

*pp* *mf* *p*

☺ *Look for an imperfect but interesting register combination*