

scores as memory and transmission

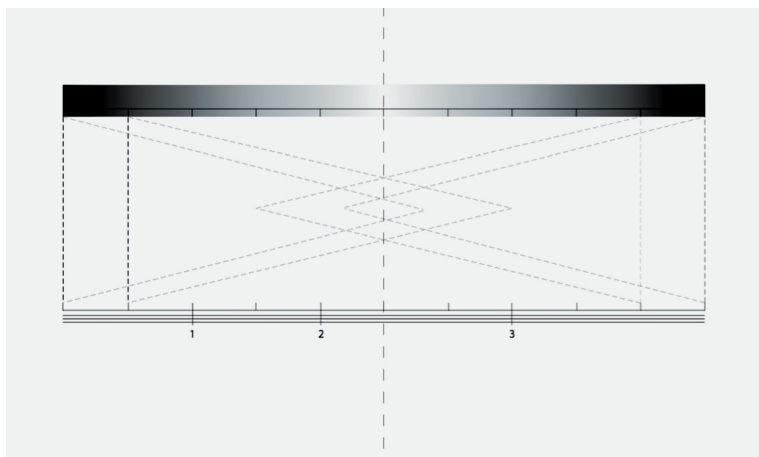
*a conversation between
ana carvalho and marcus bastos*

ac If contemporary audiovisual performances are processual, why do we assist to a big emphasis in the event to the point that almost all the available documents are videos of the performance? There is a possibility that almost all artists performing with audiovisual create structures and construct visual languages with which to engage in conversation within a group or to make sense of an idea for her or himself. Schemes, texts, versions of sounds, leftovers of films, photographs, we generate so much information. Is live audiovisual performance processual only because in preparing a performance we perform (rehearse, improvise) or is it more complex than that? Back in 2010, I started by making a score for a performance titled **Expenditure** before I even thought of its audiovisual contents, to experiment a practical answer to the concerns above. It was an experiment resultant from my research in possibilities in documenting ephemeral pieces and particularly in scores. In my views, scores, as documents, potentially reflect the researching process that lead to a performance and at the same time permits that the information contained in it is used more than once. In Davies terms, as described on the book **The Philosophy of the Performing Arts**, scores permit instances of the same performance to happen.

mb My interest in scores for audiovisual performances was raised when I had the opportunity to work with you — to present an instance of **Refractive Composition for Live Audio and Video** at **Epicentro** — and Wilson Sukorksi — when we performed a telematic version of **Variations**, to celebrate Cage’s centennial. The field of audiovisual performances is intermingled — mixing procedures of happening, body art, visual music, video art and experimental pop, among others — to such an extent that my previous experiences in projects such as **Os Macaco**, **Snerv** and **telemusik** have been mostly based on jamming, rehearsing or recording. After you presented me your score — since my collaboration with Vera Sala and Hideki Matsuka to create **Studies for Nowhere** — I started to explore how creating interfaces, organizing scenes and writing sequences of operational procedures could improve compositional decisions, stabilish criteria for improvisations, and finally result in scores of performatic pieces. The apparent contradiction of creating scores for performances neglects how electroacoustic and contemporary music widened the scope of scores beyond the authoritative, fixed goals they used to have, and also how happenings relied on descriptions that were mixtures of scores and scripts.

ac What graphic notation did for music composition was to open it up to the unexpected, the improvisation and to the creativity of instrumentalists. The active participation in the performance happens while performing as much as before performing. Cardew proposes ways to include improvisation, which he calls “guided improvisation”, into the graphic score. The **Variations** scores are example of this flexibility. Because the graphics that constitute each score are so detached from a strict musical language, therefore interpretation could be through images rather than sound. Its just a speculative possibility. Our contemporary understanding of score is even wider, more than graphic information, scores include all languages from text to code. Resultant form combination of the arts. Along and after Cage composition, performance and technology has seen many forms and ideas, being, perhaps, still the most important the Fluxus group.

mb The happening and the whole Fluxus approach was based on a counterpart between written, authored pieces, and eventual occurrences. In Paik’s **New ontology of music**, for example, he says: “Happening is just one thing in this world, one thing through which you cannot become famous. If you make publicity in advance, invite the critics, sell tickets to snobs, and buy many copies of newspapers having written about it, then it is no more a happening. It is just a concert”. The whole counterculture, anti-establishment, attitude. But the non marketable aspect of that resulted in a difficulty to preserve



Sun

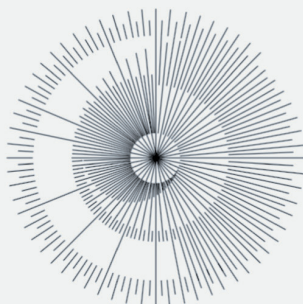
Stare - applying the glorious skills learned by studying exhaustively the catalogue of all possible sources of illumination - until the eyes become crystal balls.

Unity is simultaneously destruction and totalization of the elements through their transmutation.

Sol

Olhar fixamente - utilizando as gloriosas capacidades aprendidas pelo estudo exaustivo do catálogo de todas as possíveis fontes de iluminação - até que os olhos se transformem em bolas de cristal.

Unidade é simultaneamente destruição e totalização dos elementos pela sua transmutação.



Sol

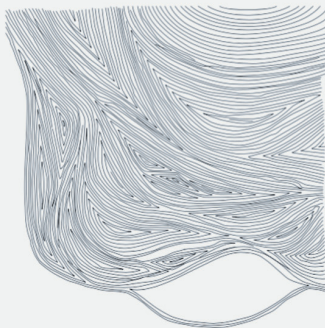
To construct with the skills from the gods of chaos.

To shape a geometrical landscape where multiplicity and unity are complementary.

Solo

Construir com as ferramentas dos deuses do caos.

Moldar uma paisagem geométrica em que multiplicidade e unidade se complementam.



above, pages from Ana Carvalho's **Refractive Composition**
for Live Audio and Video score

and transmit the resulting pieces. The contemporary experimental circuit, that still seeks alternatives to the art market, would benefit from further knowledge of the pieces that inform its attitudes. I admire how the **Electroacoustic Music Biennial**, in São Paulo, offers a balanced program, with older and newer pieces. And the availability of scores, let's say to a piece such as Stockhausen's **Kontakt**, allows contemporary musicians to present it to audiences that would not, otherwise, be exposed to it in a concert situation. It has an important role in forming critical repertoire, as well as informing younger generations beyond naive assumptions that their field is somehow "from scratch" innovative. Also, as Fernando Iazetta develops on **Music and Technological Mediation**, electroacoustic music explored spatialization in ways that turns CDs into superscores of pieces that can only be properly heard in rooms that have precisely set equipments. Maybe this could raise the issue of how installation, to some extent, is also related to pieces of experimental music and audiovisual performance. Not only in terms of its spatialization but also for the site specificity implicit in this idea that each theater — and the architecture that combine material layer of constructed elements and immaterial layer provided by speakers and projectors — result in different instances of a piece.

ac The score titled **Refractive Composition** (short designation for **Refractive Composition for Live Audio and Video**) was performed the second time with you, at **Epicentro**. It is constituted by drawings and texts that result from my research on the phenomena of refraction, transformed into a speculative theme. Similarly to **Expenditure**, the structure is central to the score and the main element for the performance. The score **Refractive Composition** asks more time of preparation than the time to perform. It requires, instead of rehearsals, a process of getting familiar with the ideas of the performance expressed in its elements. This score also includes elements from the two sound artists, Andrea Parkins and Ben Owen, who performed with me the score the first time, at **Experimental Intermedia Foundation**, in New York (December 2012). My main interest in scores and broadly in documents related to process is creative. I am always searching for artists interested in composition and works of composition for audiovisual performance. This related to a wider and longer interest in identity, individual and collective and construction of memory. Some time ago, when digital media was still new media, artists didn't had any interest in leaving traces of their work. Some people making live visuals were not considering themselves as artists. I am thinking mostly on the period between 1970s and the 2004s approximately. We were left with a gap of evidence. This affects the construction of local identities and histories of live audiovisual performance. Why not make something different now, leave traces for

performance to be studied in a different way in the future? This proposal does not imply a return to graphic composition. Instead, proposes new possibilities for the practice that can only exist at this time and by artists. Software code as score, for example, as I think you are proposing with **delayscapes**, is a very interesting proposal.

mb I am not completely satisfied with the format of **delayscape**'s score. I think I will probably print and release updated versions in the future. This is interesting in a way that digital printing allows very small editions, so the processual aspects of a piece like **delayscape** can be perceived on all its instances. An important aspect of creating a score, for me, is research related: it is a way to ask and organize questions about elements of performatic languages that I am researching, but instead of publishing academic articles, performing and creating scores leads to results that written language alone would not render possible. This is why this version of the **delayscape**'s score is a mixture of graphic essay, poetic writing, software manual — the Isadora patch and a companion PDF included in the pen card allows users both to perform an instance of the piece or create their own new performances with the available tools — and documentation. In a way, this refers to a period of digital art in which people were interested in modes and instruments of remixability. But the copy/paste procedures are paradoxically so embedded in contemporary culture and so repressed by an increasingly conservative approach of copyright and distribution, that making materials and tools to people interested in more shared and collaborative formats of art seem to have become restricted to specific circuits, when sometime ago it was reasonable to think they would have become widespread. I do not consider it the main aspect of the piece (which is a research on procedures of real time composition, as I will explain in more detail later), but the patch included in the pen card can be used as a platform through which people can remix the available set of sounds and images, or import their own materials and use the platform to do something completely different. Also, creating it had an important compositional role: programming as an aspect of contemporary languages, the possibilities and syntaxes softwares suggests.

ac The aspect of remixing something other than the resulting sounds or images of your score is very interesting. You propose the possibility of remixing at the stage before resulting audio and sound are performed. There is the source, the structure and the means for making the same or making it different. It is closer to remixing the alphabet rather than remixing the book or the instruments and not the song. Formally, you look at the images that constitute **delayscapes** and both movement and sound are there. They are very expressive and suggestive. I would like

to highlight the connection I establish between the image and sound as I can very clearly imagine the resulting sounds. It makes me very curious about the performance.

mb This is an important aspect to be discussed when thinking in terms of scores for contemporary audiovisual pieces. There is no context, anymore, to return to an authoritative model of precisely determining aspects of a piece. On the other hand, it is interesting to figure out ways of preserving and transmitting the repertoires that are created on a given circuit. Probably live audiovisual pieces, if we consider then as an outcome of the visual music experiments and, later on, a mixture with elements of happenings, video art and experimental pop, is one of the few languages that evolved throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Experimental art is usually structured on the idea of novelty and rupture (which is perversely easy for the market to appropriate, since it generates hype and waves, a lot like fashion or sales trends).

ac I hope we can see audiovisual performative practices change constantly. The flexible nature of its definition is result from the permanent exchange with a wide variety of other artistic fields and also with the sciences. This is the fundamental reason for it to be permanently changing. Audiovisual performance also offers itself to different points of view from where to be studied. For example, from the perspective of cinema studies, performance studies and sound studies, to name a few. The continuity lays in following a unique path constituted by sound, image and performance with the variations from the combination of the above mentioned areas for each performance. Returning to **delayscapes**, I wonder if you find the process of creating this performance different from previous processes, since as result you also have a score.

mb It was not radically different, but there was an important difference: aiming to create a score resulted in more awareness of the creative processes involved in composing the piece. Cycling from programming / producing sound and visuals to rehearsing to writing the score allowed to make more careful decisions about the piece. The concept of **delayscapes** was creating a series of studies on possible relations of sound and abstract visuals — and build up to a piece that was also a constant portrait of an ongoing research. At some point, after having presented it twice, and having to recreate it as the result of an update on my computer OS, as well the newer versions of *Isadora*, I decided to invest on a more structured version of a score and declare that the version I was recreating would be some sort of stable version. Going back and forth from a graphic organization of the piece, written notes about the piece, the scenes available on the three existing *Isadora*

projects — both versions of the piece that were presented and a left-over file — and the new version in the updated software where everything was meant to converge into this so called stable version widened the scope compositional decisions. At this point, I also got convinced of a working hypothesis I have been insisting on: the liveness of audiovisual performances are not necessarily their strongest aspect. The first renderings of audiovisual contemporary performance were focusing too much on liveness without considering other aspects (montage, spatialization or synaesthesia, for example). By publishing the **delayscapes'** score, I am also interested in stressing the less improvisational aspects of contemporary audiovisual performances.

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photo by Danilo Dilettoso

Instance of **Refractive Composition for Live Video and Audio**

performed at the AVAV series, curated by Veruscka Girio:

Ana Carvalho, with Juliana Perdigão and Marcus Bastos at Epicentro

São Paulo, 21th of August, 2014