Richard Barrett

pēktis

2022

solo harp (+ voice)

performance score

pēktis

(2020) for solo harp (+ voice)

commissioned by Milana Zarić

to Brian Ferneyhough on the occasion of his 80th birthday

duration: approximately 9 minutes
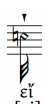
The performer's voice should be amplified using a headset microphone to facillitate freedom of movement. For flexibility in balancing voice and instrument, and so that the overall sound is unified, the harp should also be amplified. If an electroacoustic harp is used, the output may be spread across the stereo panorama so that low sounds appear on the left and high sounds on the right (with the voice in the centre).

The voice and the harp might be thought of as colourations and resonators of one another, rather than one "accompanying" the other. The discontinuities in the voice part aren't brief phrases that begin and end, but are the only remaining fragments of what would originally have been continuous. The voice part is shown throughout in Greek and also in the International Phonetic Alphabet. Glissandi in the vocal part indicate only the beginning and end point of a continuous chage in pitch.
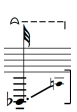
Harp harmonics are of two kinds, using either the second or third partial, and are notated as for bowed string instruments, with the pitch (string) to be played as a diamond-headed note, and the resultant pitch as a small note in brackets.

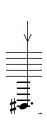


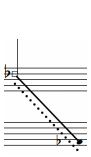
[k] = unpitched sound
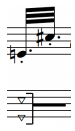


[εi] = (half) whispered sound


= play with fingernail(s) – this is used only for glissandi where the back of the finger- or thumbnail is used.

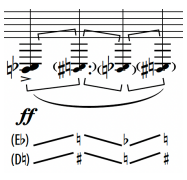

= scrape fingernail down the indicated (wound) string


= damp each string in the glissando *immediately* after plucking it, either with the other hand or with an adjacent finger on the same hand as that playing the glissando The results should be intermediate between a conventional staccato sound and a "xylophonic" sound.
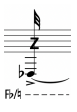
For "xylophonic" sounds, the strings to be damped are shown thus:



] = damp the string(s) to the left of the square bracket



= new pitches generated only by pedal movement, not by plucking the string again


= pedal buzz

= pedal trill

Other notations are explained when they occur in the score.

A large proportion of the surviving poetry of Sappho (c. 630-570 BCE) is preserved in the form of narrow papyrus fragments, resulting from the manuscript being torn into strips for binding mummies in Egypt. The text used in this composition is numbered in the extant works of Sappho as fragments 88a and 88b. Not enough of this poem is preserved for the reader to get an overall idea of its subject matter – not one line is complete, and not all lines contain even a single complete word - and what remains has the quality of disjunct glimpses into intimate secrets, perhaps as if intermittently overheard.

However, the metrical structure of the 28 lines (which may or may not be the complete poem) is known, so that the remaining words and syllables can be fitted into it with a certain degree of accuracy, and this composition is based around these 28 units, each consisting of 16 events (syllables) divided into short and long durations according to the metre, with the fragments of text occurring at their original metrical positions so far as I've been able to work these out. (One complicating factor is that in the metre of this poem, called "acephalus hipponactean with a double choriambic expansion", the first syllable of a line may be short *or* long . . .) The durations of the lines are regular at the beginning and become more irregular as the music continues, and the distinctions within them between "short" and "long" durations undergo more complex evolutions, although both categories generally become longer in the course of each line. Against this framework ,of 28 lines each of 16 events, is placed a repeating series of 32 times 14 diatonic pitches (each diatonic pitch class twice) distributed through the entire range of the harp, whose actual identity at each iteration is "modulated" by gradual changes in pedal settings, which in turn cycle through all the available modes containing both a cluster of three semitones and a cluster of four semitones. Thus the harmonic colour of the music is always changing but at the same time remaining consistent in character. The 16 events in each line are assigned to a sequence of 16 sound-types (harmonic, glissando, chord, counterpoint and so on) although only 8 of the 16 events in each line follow this scheme, a different selection each time, the others being freely realised. The vocal pitches used for the text generally involve taking the harp pitch assigned to the event corresponding to a particular syllable, and transposing it into the range of the voice, taking into account the tonal character of ancient Greek. Silences between the lines grow very gradually shorter towards the centre of the piece and then expand rapidly.

According to ancient tradition, Sappho was the inventor of an instrument by the name of "pēktis", or the first Greek poet to use this instrument which originated in Lydia, seems to have been a kind of lyre, and is mentioned in one of the fragments, although without any kind of description.



(*a*)

] . [
]ν πρ̣ο . . [
]νως πρὸς πότ̣[
] . ατον χάλα[
] . θέλοις . οὐδ̣ν̣[
] . άσδοισ᾽ ὀλιγα[
] . ένα φέρεσθα[ι
] . φι̣α̣ τισ̣ . . . [
] . δ᾽ ἄδιον εἰσορ[
ο]ἶσθα καὔτα·
λέ]λαθ᾽ ἀλλονιά[
] . αν· τιραδ[
]α̣ί τις εἴποι
] . σαν· ἔγω τε γαρ[
]μ᾽ ἃς κεν ἔνηι μ᾽[
]αι μελήσην·
]φίλα φαῖμ᾽ ἐχύρα γέ[νεσθαι
]ενα[.]αις· ἀτ̣[
] . . δ᾽ ὀνιαρ̣[.]σ̣[
] . πίκρος ὔμ[
] . [.]τα . θᾶδ̣[
] . α̣ τόδε δ᾽ ἴσ̣[θ
] . ὤττι σ᾽ ἐ . [
]α φιλήσω[
]τω τι̣ λο[
]σσον γὰρ . [
]σθαι βελέω[ν
] . . [

(*b*)

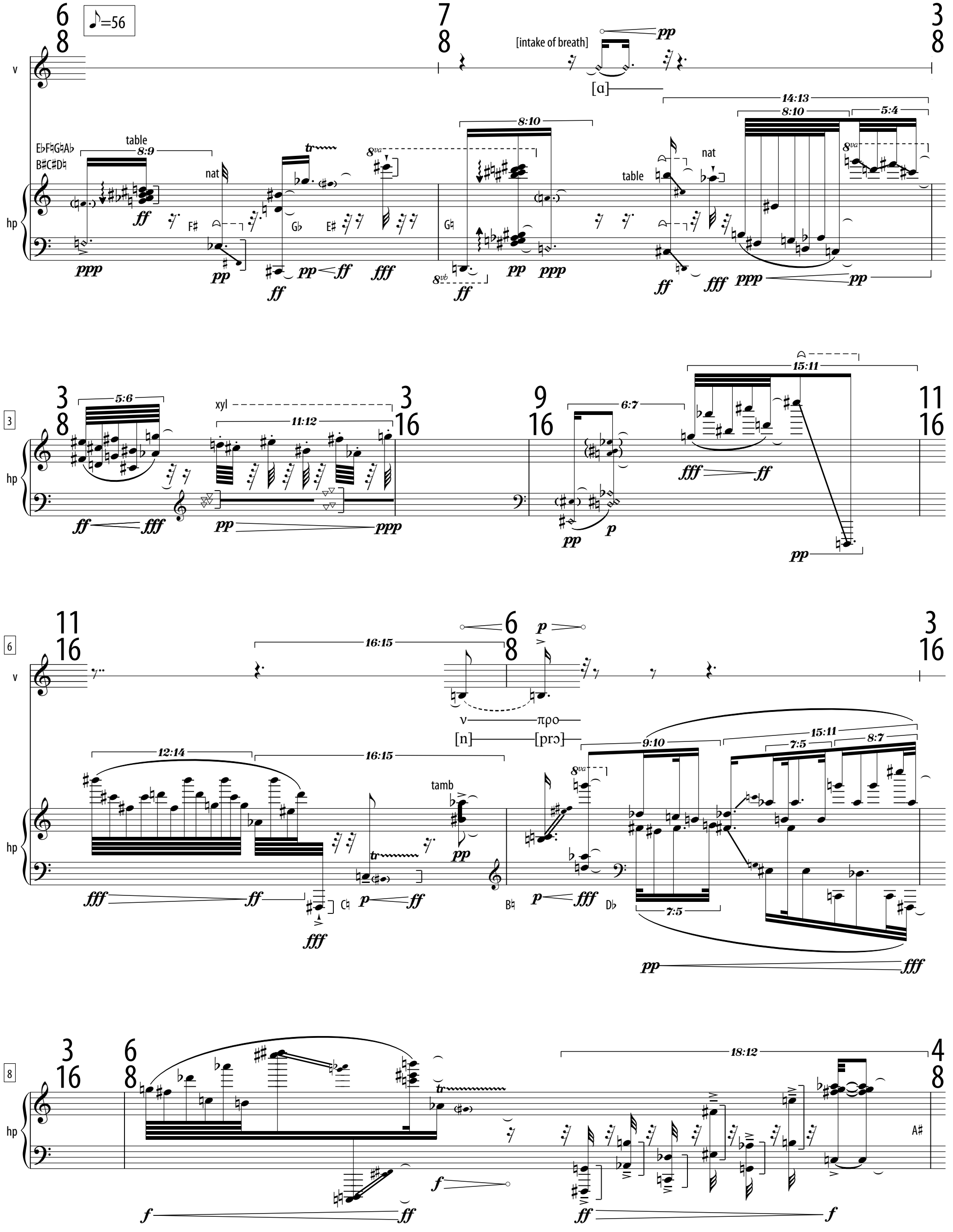
ἐμ[
τοῦ̣[
κ[
σε[
ή[
α[
φιλη[
κᾶλ . [
ἐστ . [
.]χα̣[

A translation of what remains of the text might be something like:

you might wish . . . a little . . . to be carried away . . . sweeter . . . you yourself know . . . forgotten . . . someone might say . . . yes . . . for I shall love as long as there is breath in me . . . and care . . . I say I have been a strong lover . . . grievous . . . bitter . . . but know this . . . I shall love . . . for it is better . . . weapons . . .

pēktis

Richard Barrett



10

v

hp

4/8 6/8 3/16 7/16

pp p

11:13

νως πρὸς πότ

[no] [s] [prɔ] [s] [pɔ] [t]

table

6:4

11:13 17:14

ff

pp p pp

8va

13

7/16 13/16 6/8

f

9:11

α τον

[ɑ] [tɔ] [n]

5:6

6:4

table

19:14

8va

12:9

nat

13:11

p mp p mp p ff p f

15

6/8 3/16 4/8

mp

8:9

χά λα

[xɑ] [lɑ]

(nat)

6:5

(nat)

11:10

table

8:10

fff

mp p ff

17

v

hp

4/8 — 7/16 — 11/16

12:15 — 9:8 — 17:13 — 17:13 — 15:10

ppp — pp — f — ff — ppp — pp — f — fff — ppp — xyl (except E♯ & C) — G♯ — E♯ pp — f

θέ — λοις
[tʰɛ] — [lois]

οὐ
[u]

19

11/16 — 3/8 — 3/16 — 11/16

ppp — 6:7 — δυ — [dy] — 16:15 — 7:5 — (both hands) — fff — f — 6:5 — 5:4 — 4:5 — 11:10 — 16:15 — ff — pp — ppp

22

11/16 — 5/8

mp — 21:24 — 6:7 — 8va — 8:7 — fff — p — mp — pp

ἄσ — δοις’ — ὸ — λι — γα
[a] — [sdɔ] — [is] [ɔ] — [li] — [ga]

24

v

hp

pp mp p ff

mp fff

11:12 5:4 4:5

Ab

9:11 p

é—να— φε—

[ε]—[nα]—[fε]

9:11 5:4 table

8va

ff

mf pp f mf

F♮ F♯ p

27

v

pp

ρεσ θαι

[rɛ] [stʰɑ] [i]

xyl (nat)

8:7 20:22 8:7

D♮ B♯ C♯

pp ff

p mf

17:16 15:16

30

v

φι α τις

[f] [i] [ɑ] [ti]

mp mf

hp

mf 12:10

ff mp mf

11:10

D♯

G♮/♯ B♭/♯

p mp mf

C♯/♮

33

v

[s]

8:9 11:12 8:9 9:8 11:13 9:10

D♭ B♮ 8vb

11:10 9:8

mp ff p

35

v

hp

7/16 5/16 11/16

ppp

13:14 8:7 9:7 11:13

έμ
[ε]—[m]

δ’ἄ—δι—ον εἰ—σορ
[dɑ]—[di]—[ɔn] [ε]---------→[i] [sɔr]

table

nat

10:7 4:5

A♯

ff fff

38

hp

3/16 13/16

9:8 9:10 7:8 11:10

ppp

40

v

hp

13/16 2/8

ff

18:15 10:11

τοῦ
[tu]

o
[ɔ]---------→

8va tr 3:2 7:8 12:11

Bb B♮ E♮ F♮

p ff

pp

41

v

hp

2/8 11/16 1/8 5/8

pp p

ῖ σθα
[i]—[st^{h}ɑ]

καὔ τα
[kɑ]---------→[u][tɑ]

5:6

44

v

κ
[k]

λέ — λαθ'
[lɛ] [lɑ]

ἀλ — λο
[tɑ] [lɔ]

hp

(tap soundboard)

(tap)

table

nat

xyl

D♮ D♯

46

v

νι — ά
[ni] [ɑ]

hp

table

nat

49

v

σέ
[sɛ]

αν — τι
[ɑ] [n] [ti]

hp

table

nat

51

v

ραδ
[rɑ] [d]

table

nat

hp

A♮ C♭

B♭

B♮ C♮

54

v

hp

7/16 13/16 1/8 13/16

f 12:13 p pp ppp

(half-whispered)

αί τις εῖ ποι

[αi] [tis] [ei] [poi]

6:5 15:14

p f

(nat) table

fff

12:13

nat xyl

ff f

A♯

p

tamb

pp

6:7

ppp

57

v

hp

13/16

mp

α

[ʔa]

8va

A♯

fff p f pp mp

16:15

mp

σαν

[sa] [n]

16:15

5:6

ff

D♭

mp

f

58

v

hp

6/8 1/16

14:15

ɛ̆ γω τε

[ɛ] [go] [tɛ]

pp ppp

γαρ

[ga] [r]

14:15

3:2 5:6

table

pp

8va

10:13

5:4

tr

ppp

14:13

C♮

60

v

hp

1/16 7/16 9/8

ppp p

φι λη

[fi] [le]

4:5

ppp p

mf

62

v

hp

9/8

table

12:13 6:7 9:8 6:5

tr

F♯ E♯ G♮

f ppp p f

4/8

mf

14:15

μ’ ἆς

[m] [ɑ] [s]

14:15

pp p mf

F♮/♯

63

4/8 11/16 1/16

f p

12:13

κεν ἔν ηι μ’

[kɛ] [n] [ɛ] [ne] [i] [m]

9:8 12:13

5:4 7:8

table

10:9

(nat)

f p mf ppp

65

1/16 6/8 9/16 3/8

f (spoken)

κᾶλ

[kɑl]

9:10 7:8

nat

xyl

3:2

12:11 3:2

tr

table

f mp pp ff p mf pp f p ff

68

v

hp

3/8 mp 6:4 αι [a] [i]

9/16 p f pp με [mε] λή [le] 7:8 10:9 σην [se] [n]

1/16 13/16

nat 5:4 E♮

mp

6:4

(damp lightly with palm)

p mf

7:8 10:9

f pp

71

v

hp

13/16 mp mf 3:2 ἐστ [ɛs] [t]

3:2 mp mf

mf tr

mp

8:7 D♮

mf mp

17/16

72

v

hp

mf sempre φί [fi] λα [la]

12:11 φαῖμ’ [fa] ἐ [i] [mɛ] 13:15 χύ [xy] ρα [ra]

13:15

D♯

mf sempre

5/8

73

v

hp

(mf) γέ [gɛ] νεσ [nɛ] θαι [st^{h}ai]

1/16 7/16

(mf)

13:14

15:14

mf

mp

75

v

hp

7/16 13/16 1/16

f p 12:11 p f

χα— ε— να— αις— ὰτ—

[x]–[ɑ] [ɛ]—[nɑ] [ɑi]—[s]—[ɑ]–[t]

12:11 3:2 3:2 nat nat table table 3:2 3:2 table

f p f p f p f p p f

(tap on soundboard)

p 14:12 8:9 f 11:9

77

v

hp

1/16 4/8 5/8 7/8

pp 7:8 δ'ὸ νι α ρ σ

[do] [ni] [ɑ] [r] [s]

17:16 7:8 8va xyl 4:3

table nat sim... pp pp ff ff pp

A♮/♯ B♭/♮

80

hp

7/8 1/16 3/8

G♯ pp ff 5:6 16:13 3:2 F♮/♯

pp ff pp ff

82

v

hp

3/8 11/16 6/8

fff ppp 11:9

πίκ— ρος ὕμ—

[pi]—[krɔs] [y]—[m]

11:10 8va 7:8 3:2 5:4 11:9 xyl/table 7:5

ppp fff ppp

84

hp

6/8 11/16

tr

Eb ppp fff

16:13

Db

Fb

ppp fff

Fb/♮

85

hp

11/16 1/8 4/8

16:15

4:3 5:6 8:7 9:7

6:7 10:7

8:6 7:6 16:15

ppp

87

v

hp

4/8 9/16 7/16

mp f

11:10

τα θᾶδ

[tɑ] [tʰɑ] [d]

8va

15:16

6:4 7:8

4:3

11:10 10:7

4:5 3:2

pp mf f p mp ppp mp p table nat mp pp f

(Fb)

ff

(Eb) (Db)

89

hp

7/16 3/16 9/16 7/16

17:14

6:4

8va

table

ppp mf p f pp

mp sempre

9:11

13:11 5:4

p sempre

92

v

hp

10:12

(mp)

(p)

6:5

ff

α

[ʔɑ]

p

11
16

mp

τo

δε

[tɔ]

[dɛ]

10:12

ff

p

6:4

mp

mf

f

15
16

9:10

δ”ΐσ

θι

[di]

[st^{h}i]

9:10

xyl

9:10

6:4

mf

94

hp

15
16

8:10

fff

11:10

mf

mp

Gb

f

table

12:9

11:9

p

ppp

5
16

5
8

96

v

5
8

6
8

ppp

mf

5:4

p

ff

ώτ

τι

[o]

[ti]

σ’έ

[s]

[ε]

8
8

p

ff

fff

mf

ff

mp

6:7

mp

mf

nat

7:6

mf

(A♮)

(B♭)

xyl. (except C♭)

5:4

ppp

mf

p

6:7

7:8

pp

fff

C♯

98

hp

xyl. (except F)

(except D♯)

(exc. E)

(except C♯)

8
8

17:14

4:5

7:5

6:5

14:18

4:3

4:3

3
8

7
16

f

mp

ff

C♮

100

v

hp

table

table

12:11

nat

8va

ff

ppp

fff

pp

p

nat

f

p

mf

mf

9:10

9:10

mf

A♮

α

φι

[a]

[fi]

103

v

(mf)

18:20

5:4

5:4

λή

σω

[le]

[e]

[e]

[e]

[e]

[e]

[e]

[e]

[so]

tr

18:20

7:6

3:2

hp

sim... (random order of the three strings)

p

f

pp

A♮/♯

B♭/♮

(mf)

mf

105

hp

F♯

sim...

sim...

sim...

p

fff

ppp

107

v

f

10:8

(as much like a whisper as possible)

τω τι λο

[to] [ti] [lɔ]

10:8

10:7

3:2

3:2

3:2

6:4

8va

3:2

7:6

7:5

hp

F♮

G♯

f sempre

3:2

F♮/♭

D♯/♮

10:7

109

11/16 5/8 9/16 13/16

v

hp

14:15 14:15 3:2 3:2 13:15 9:10

p sempre p sempre

σσον [s]—[ɔn]

γαρ [gɑ] [r]

tr tr

(F♮) A♭ A♯ A♭ E♭

112

13/16 7/8

hp

10:9 6:7 4:5 7:5 12:10 6:7

(p) D♮

113

7/8 4/8 6/8

v

hp

8va table

p ff ppp pp fff

σ [s]

115

6/8 9/8 15/16

f ff

θαι—βε—λέ ων

[tʰɑi]—[bɛ]-[lɛ][o]—[n]

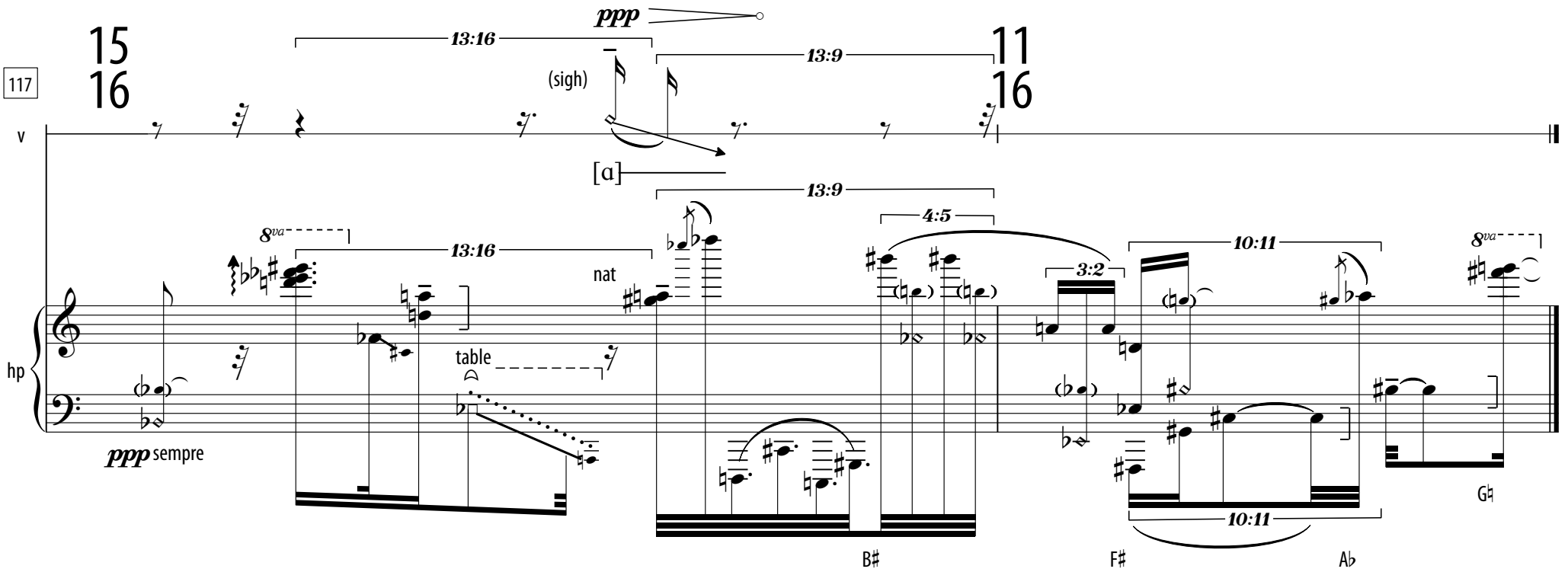
v

hp

8va 15:14 10:8 5:4 5:6 3:2 7:8 5:4

nat xyl

f mf mp ppp mf ff f ppp fff


15
16
13:16
ppp
13:9
11
16
117
v
(sigh)
[a]
13:9
4:5
8va
13:16
nat
10:11
3:2
8va
table
hp
ppp sempre
B♯
F♯
A♭
10:11
G♮