

Riccardo Piacentini

Overview on my idea of piano

*Written for the masterclass
at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in Singapore
on October 5th 2010*

Copyright 2010 © by Riccardo Piacentini

Index

1. Space to your ears!

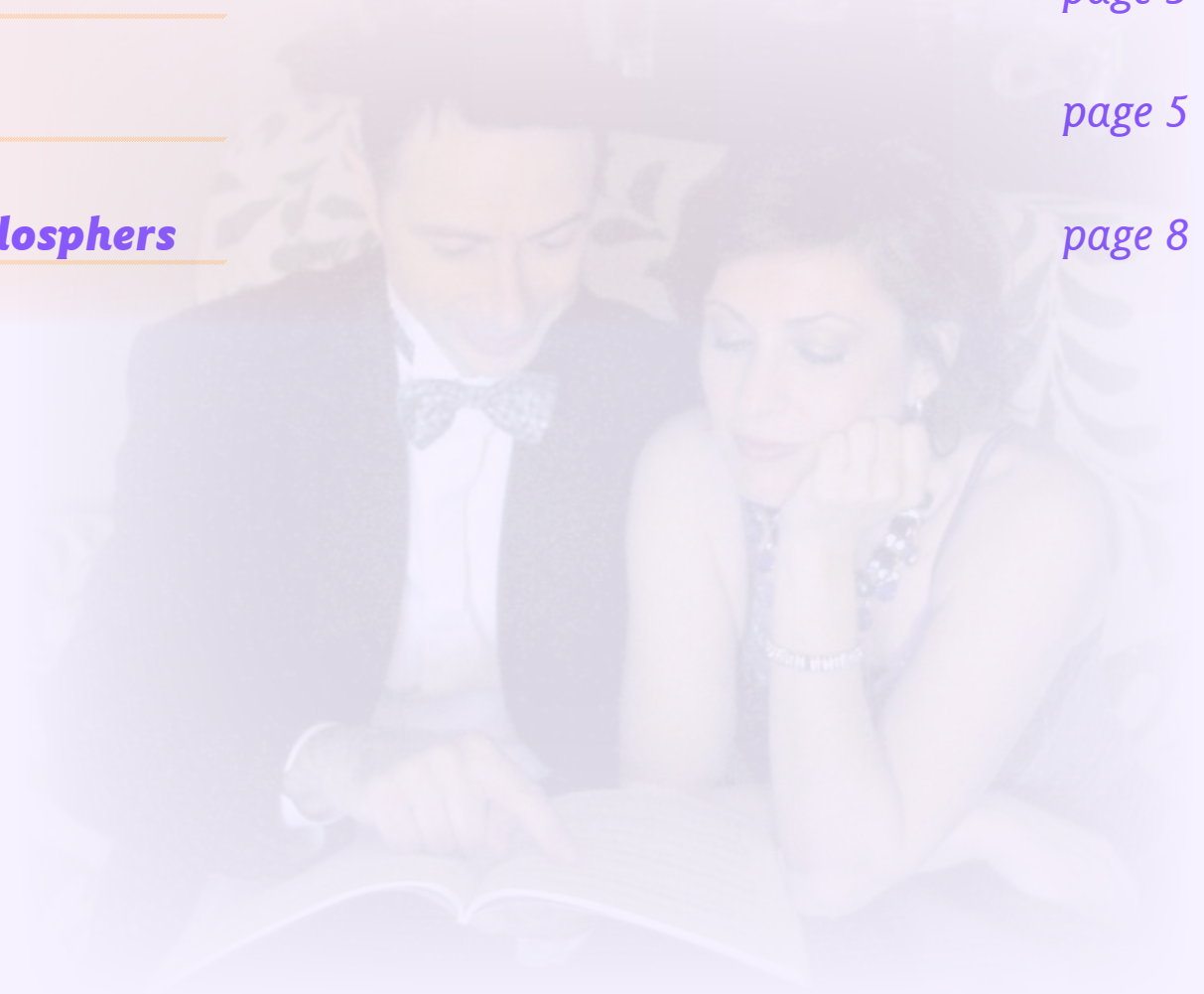
page 3

2. A marble on the strings

page 5

3. Concluding with three great philosophers

page 8



I. Space to your ears!

Foto-suoni delle nuove scienze

per voci su nastro, pianoforte e foto -suoni
(2009)

Riccardo Piacentini (1958)

60

Foto-suoni | 3/4

0'30"

0'35"

ppp

Die decimaseptima,
hora prima,
duæ aderant Stellæ [...]

0'45"

f

mp

Copyright © 2009 by Riccardo Piacentini

from Foto-suoni delle nuove scienze: page 5

I was, I have been, I am in love with **piano**.

And with **composition** too.

This probably makes some difference because I always expect from a piano piece – and generally from music – strong creative suggestions for the performer.

I mean: everytime we play this wonderful instrument, the piano, as a simply “routine instrument”, without creative intentions and passion, without our and others’ surprise, we miss an occasion to help music.

In our History of Music **pianist-composers** are so many from the invention of the piano to today: think to Mozart, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Liszt... and then Debussy, Rachmaninov, Gershwin, Prokofiev...

Also I often say that in every piece there are at least **three composers**.

The second one is the performer, a very special kind of “copilot” even in the most structural music. He will try to make better what the first composer made good or not so good.

It is greatly important that the first composer trusts and learns from his precious copilot, the second composer, and vice versa. This is true in every period of the History of Music.

1'00"

Die decimaoctava,
hora prima,
tres aderant Stellæ [...]

1'15"

1'30"

Copyright © 2009 by Riccardo Piacentini

The third composer is eachone of the people who participates to the performance and actively filters the first two composers. With his ears, his sensibility, his culture and musical intelligence, also his personal sounds (breaths, sighs, cough, etc.) he recomposes every piece during the performance.

Paraphrasing one of my best philosophers, Edmund Husserl the inventor of the **Phemomenology**: «Make space to your ears! Listen to very carefully what you are playing and learn from the phenomenon of every possible sound you are able to create with the piano» and also listen to all people reactions!

This is simple and difficult at the same time.

Simple since as you get used to this **attitude** it will be easy not to leave it and you will be greatly satisfied about.

Difficult since reaching it is a big daily **exercise**, psychological and technical exercise, and takes a lot of time and energy.

Remember: meke space to your **ears!**

And, of course, space to what is between them: your **brain** fed by your **heart**.

2. A marble on the strings

The image displays a musical score for piano, featuring a photograph of the piano's strings. A small, colorful marble is placed on the strings. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *f*, and *mp*. A circled time signature '1'00'' is visible at the top. The photograph shows the strings from a perspective looking down, with the marble resting on them. The score is written on a grand staff with treble and bass clefs.

Copyright © 2009 by Riccardo Piacentini

Jupiter-marble on the strings of my piano

Now look at this **marble on the strings** in the figure: it does not produce any sound till you decide one of the following three actions.

The first one is to move it on the strings (or also out of the strings); the second one is to nip the two strings on which is the marble, or even the adjacent strings; the third action is to press the two piano keys corresponding to the same strings.

So, with all possible gentleness, let us try something of this. Listen, make space to your ears!

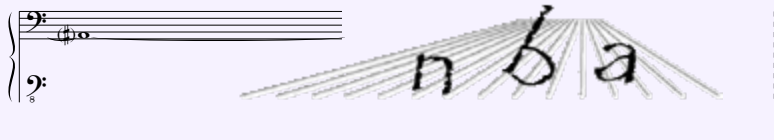
**[1st audioexample
rolling the marble on the strings and other...]**

Another direct interesting contact could be with the “**mute accords**” very used from the American composer Henry Cowell since 20s years of the last century.

You got this, pressing without sound some key and then touching the strings like an harp (a quite famous piece by Cowell is just *Aeolian harp*, simulating the strings stroked by the wind).

**[2nd audioexample
stroking the strings with “mute accords”]**

You can also, with your fingers, kindly **draw letters or other signs on the strings**. For instance, letter “*n*”, or “*b*”, or “*a*”... choosing an aproximative range of pitches.



44"

senza ped.

from Ulaanbaatarin doo: page 6

m. d. piano, m. s. pianissimo

from Foto-suoni delle nuove scienze: page 9

An example could be my *Ulaanbaatarin doo*, written in 2010 for the Ulaan Baatar Opera Theater on an original Mongolian song plus sounding images (“foto-suoni”) from the nature recorded in Palinuro (Italy). This piece is part of a serie of five piano pieces that I wrote on popular materials.

[3rd audioexample

first system of page 6 from my Ulaabaatarin doo (2010) for piano and “foto-suoni” on an original Mongolian song and sounds of nature]

And another example could be, this time directly from the piano keyboard, to use mute accords with the left hand and staccato notes with the right one producing interesting resonances...

[4th audioexample

second system of page 6 from the same Ulaabaatarin doo]

On the keyboard we can find special poetic sounds, just trying to combine elaborated old melodies with modern canons and a refined use of the right pedal.

This is what I tried to do with my piano piece *Foto-suoni delle nuove scienze.*, written in 2009 for the Bata Show Museum in Toronto.

[5th audioexample

three systems from page 6 of my Foto-suoni delle nuove

1'17''

p

mp

f f

mp

mf intenso

f f

f f

1'28''

mp

mf

mf

mp

f

f

mf

Copyright © 2010 by Riccardo Piacentini

scienze (2009)]

The suggestions could be great if you counterpoint western and eastern traditions, as I did, again, in my *Ulaanbaatarin doo*.

[6th audioexample

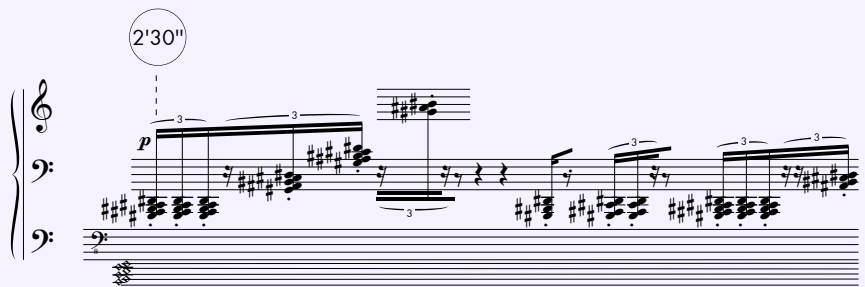
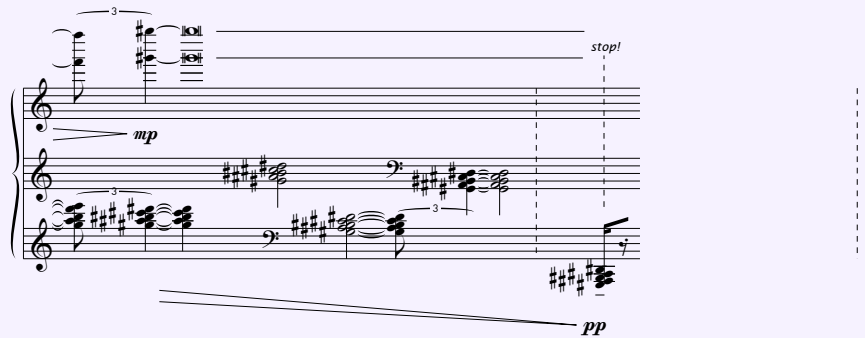
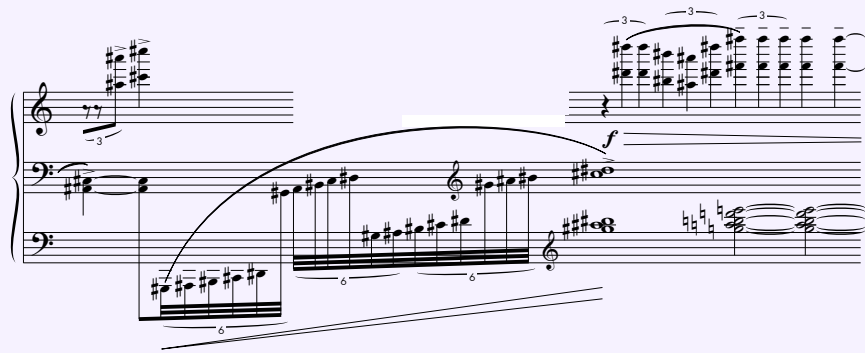
page 7 from *Ulaabaatarin doo*, with the elaboration of a Mongolian song and “foto-suoni”]

These are just some few examples among thousands we can do, but they show you how is possible exploring today the so many and wonderful expressions of the piano.

For this, both composers and performers have to collaborate together. And, if the composer is still living, better for him and the performer!

from *Ulaanbaatarin doo*: page 7

3. Concluding with three great philosophers



I want to conclude with three great philosophers of 20th century.

Ludwig Wittgenstein: «When we think about the future of the world, we always have in mind its being at the place where it would be if it continued to move as we see it moving now».

Richard Rorty: «[There is a big] difference between facts and rules», that is true for all artists and also composers: they have, together with the other “two composers” (performers and people), to make happening new facts despite any human rule!

Of course music cannot be out of its own rules and also social rules. Anyway it has to be always surprising and truly inventive, going ahead without sleeping on comfortable reassuring rules.

Invention is research of unforeseeable facts that generate unforeseeable rules.

For this, again with **Edmund Husserl**, «space to your ears» and to what is between them!