

# La foresta dei violini

*A sound and poetic performance  
in spatialized immersive sound  
by Benoit Bories'*

## Genesis of the project

Initially, there is a documentary sound creation produced by the Radio Suisse Italienne entitled "La foresta dei violini", the release of which is scheduled for autumn 2020. I thus spent the entire month of June 2020 in the Val di Fiemme in the Dolomites with Francesca Bolognesi, the co-author of this documentary creation. We followed the men of this region making sound an endemic species of fir trees in order to choose the essences that will make their future violin instruments. The subject lends itself very well to sensitive sound writing. By surveying the mountain paths for a month, recording the different sound elements of the environmental and social landscape, collecting certain anecdotes of the inhabitant / environment relationship through the sound dimension, it seemed natural to me to propose a more performative sound form. musical, thought as a sound stroll through the Val di Fiemme. "La foresta dei violini", in its performative form, tells about the strong links between the people of a valley and their close environment, through the prism of the sense of hearing.

This is not the first time that I have launched myself in such a form and with such an angle. This writing approach, based on a sound mapping of places crossed and characters encountered in a sound work, is particularly effective when we wish to evoke the link between the inhabitants of a place and their close environment. For example, I tried this experience in Australia in 2018, immersed for two months in a mountain valley of the Kiewa River. The result was a work "Gateway", <https://soundcloud.com/naisa/benoit-bories-gateway?in=naisa/sets/deep-wireless-14>, supported by the French Institute and presented on the occasion several events (Melbourne, Galsgow, Ottawa, Toulouse, Malmö)

This kind of experimentation is all the more relevant if it is possible to perform the piece in concert on the site of its realization with an immersive sound system. It is then possible to make the played piece resonate with the location. However, I am convinced that this piece can very well have its place in an auditorium context offering a spatialized sound system.



## General sound writing principle

“La foresta dei violini”, in its performative form, is experienced like a concert in a spatialized sound system all around the audience. It is a sonic journey made of the musicality of the landscapes of the Val di Fiemme. At times, voices are heard, incorporated into the rhythm of the composition. The didactic, analytical tone is prohibited here. Words always arise to tell an anecdote, an experience evoking the sensitive link of an inhabitant of the region with their close environment via sound. Giuliano, ranger, describes his imitation of the call of the male of the white partridge, when he is in counting operation. Marcello has accompanied a number of luthiers in the region and developed a special sense of hearing in contact with the forest in order to find the best species.

# Sound performative device

The performance is scheduled to last around an hour and a quarter.

## Diffusion system

I play on an octophonic broadcasting system, the spectators being surrounded by an octagon of loudspeakers. It's the most immersive listening system. If it is technically possible to further extend this system, it is interesting to bring other sources diffusing coherent sound patterns (voice, percussive pattern) thus giving the impression of letting the natural elements of the sound express themselves. architecture of the place. We then enter into the design of a sound diffusion device that makes the place resonate.

If technically it is not possible to have a multiphonic system, we can consider a concert under headphones using binaural technology reproducing a listening sensation in three dimensions. I can also offer a system modeled on the installation "Confusions" (described in the document on my artistic approach). The listeners begin and end the performance with the ambient sound of the place of the performance itself, having the effect of confusing the sounds of the real and those of the composition. This device is interesting if the place of diffusion offers a framework that can be linked to the subject of the performance (natural framework).

## A composition thought of as a stroll through eight sound universes of the valley

You can listen to a 4 minute teaser at this link. It will give you a clear idea of the sound writing.

<https://soundcloud.com/user-945903241/la-foresta-dei-violini-teaser>

Or you can listen the whole piece at this private link :

[https://faidosonore.net/sons/notes/La\\_foret\\_des\\_violons\\_mp3.mp3](https://faidosonore.net/sons/notes/La_foret_des_violons_mp3.mp3)

“La foresta dei violini” is composed in such a way as to visit eight distinct places / acoustic spaces specific to Val di Fiemme and to the relationship of its inhabitants with their environment, more specifically the forest.

- **Silence.** A first approach of the zone all in depth with a strong sound dynamic. A bumblebee gathers flowers. In the background, herd bells are ringing. Little by little, a music seems to emerge from the landscape to disappear almost immediately. Certain characters make us enter the place thanks to certain striking sound experiences.
- **Forest.** Marcello lets us hear his technique of finding resonance wood. The musicality of the forest by day unfolds.



- **Wood working.** The artisanal and industrial sounds of wood are gradually organized into a strange symphony.
- **Village.** A return to calm at sunset in the village. The bells then ring the call of the night.
- **Night.** The sleeping village, we return to the forest where a second sound, nocturnal world wakes up. The party ends with a thunderstorm scene in the high mountains.
- **Water.** After the storm. Water is everywhere in the valley. Depending on the geology of the place, its runoff takes on different intonations.
- **Mountain pasture.** Giuliano is often melancholy at the end of summer when he knows that the sounds of bells will die down with the herds descending into the valley. He probably has in mind the memory of rumba rhythms due to the movements of the sheep during the episodes of counting the animals.
- **Mineral world.** We finish a little higher still. In this mineral world, the hissing of groundhogs responds to crows. Stone is everywhere and punctuates the landscape. We end up finding the bumblebee foraging on its flowers. The reverie is over.

## To go a little further

In recent years, I have produced sound works combining a documentary approach and acousmatic and landscape composition. By acousmatic composition I mean music made up of transformed landscape sounds. The musicality of the piece naturally seems to emerge from the landscape. There is therefore no longer an artificialisation effect of music added to a story. The composition is at the service of a narration that makes audible what is not of the order of the speakable while remaining in the suggested. The music thus becomes one with the rest of the piece to form a coherent whole. This sound writing technique promotes the creation of the audience's own mental images and a better appropriation of the unfolding story.

My "sound paw" is described in more depth in the part presenting my artistic approach. I present here some additional aspects necessary for the understanding of the project "The forest of violins". The preponderant element of sound writing lies in the construction of acoustic spaces, of how to think about the interweaving of different sound planes to develop a story and a music of the places. Pierre Schaeffer, the inventor of concrete music, called sound writing "dynemaphony", ie sound juxtaposed in layers by playing on different sound dynamics.

We can analyze the different sound planes in this way:

- Voices of the characters recorded naked and arranged in a recomposed soundscape.
- Voices of the same characters recorded in sequence shots in a natural acoustic space with or without interaction with other characters. These shots allow, among other things, to provoke breaks in rhythm by plunging the listener into a concrete situation.
- Sound environments in stereo. I recompose a landscape by then adding these atmospheres on several planes and by spatializing them on an eight-point space.
- Percussive motifs, whether or not they come from these atmospheres, giving rhythm to the landscape composition. Some patterns are also recorded in the studio in order to have raw

material. It is often convenient to use microswitches that register sound vibratory matter in solids or liquids.

- A series of acousmatic elements bringing out a musicalization of the created soundscapes.

I generally use sound maps to develop my compositions: construction of acoustic spaces with their own rhythms and melodic and harmonic aspects.