

Leonardo Mezzalira

Swamps for cello, accordion and percussion (2025)
composer's note

Swamps is based on a listening and recording session carried out on April 1st, 2025 in Flambro, Virco and Sterpo, three locations in the province of Udine (Friuli-Venezia Giulia, north-eastern Italy) that comprise several wetland environments pertaining to the Natura2000 protected area “ZPS/ZSC IT3320026 Risorgive dello Stella”. The area is acoustically characterized by the joint presence of biophonies (birds, insects and amphibians), geophonies (wind, running water) and a major source of anthropic disturbance: the practice flights carried out at the neighbouring air base of Rivolto by Frece Tricolori, the acrobatic demonstration team of the Italian Air Force and the world's largest aerobatics patrol.

On April 1st, 2025 all acoustic environments were characterized by the vocalizations of the blackcap, which in each of the environments I visited were accompanied by other recurring sounds: the voice of the chaffinch and of the treecreeper and a frog choir in the Flambro swamps; the calls of the long-tailed tit in the woods near Virco; the vocalizations of the chiffchaff, the great tit and the gray wagtail – beside the sound of running water – in Sterpo near the river Stella. Every environment was regularly crossed by the low-altitude practice flights of Frece Tricolori. *Swamps* is conceived as a condensation of that listening session. The correspondence between the sounds employed in the composition and the voices heard in the environment is not a mimic one – it is intended as a functional one. The sounds employed in the composition are supposed to occupy similar acoustic niches and have similar effects on the other voices and on the overall environment as those heard in the environment.

Swamps is part of an artistic research directed to develop new compositional techniques by consciously transferring ecological, bioacoustic and ecoacoustic principles and patterns to instrumental composition. The overall purpose of this research is to interrogate the connection between music and natural sound environments, thus seeking to interrogate our relationship with the non-human and to develop forms of ecological thought.