

The accordionist profile in the work *Asas*¹ by Christopher Bochmann

Abstract

The Accordion, portable aerophone invented and patented in 1829 by Cyrill Damian in Austria, emerges in the 21st century as one of the most versatile instruments in the history of music. Several factors contribute to this connection: portability, multi-timbral sound, ability to play melody and accompaniment, possibility of performing counterpoint, independence of hands, among other characteristics. In this context, the second half of the 20th century was crucial for an unprecedented development both in organological, interpretive and compositional terms. The versatility of the Accordion extends today from popular and traditional music to contemporary music, passing through Jazz. In the field of transcribing works, the accordion's features allow you to approach works from the Baroque, Classical, Romantic periods, among others, either solo or in chamber music. *Asas*, a work for Accordion, Soprano Voice, Saxophone, Viola and Cello is a good example of the integration of the Accordion in the panorama of contemporary music and in the performative relationship with other instruments. Is it possible to include an instrument of traditional music patterns in the erudite and serious music field?

Keywords: *Asas*, Christopher Bochmann, Accordion, Analysis, Contemporary Music

Introduction

The work *Asas* was composed by Sir Christopher Bochmann on January 9, 2020, in Lisbon. Originally written for Voice (Soprano), Soprano Saxophone, Accordion, Viola and Cello, the work was commissioned by the contemporary music group Síntese (Guarda). With regard to the general structure, *Asas* is made up of 3 parts, along 34 pages with a duration of approximately 9'. In table 1, information about the structure appears:

Table 1: Structure of the work *Asas*

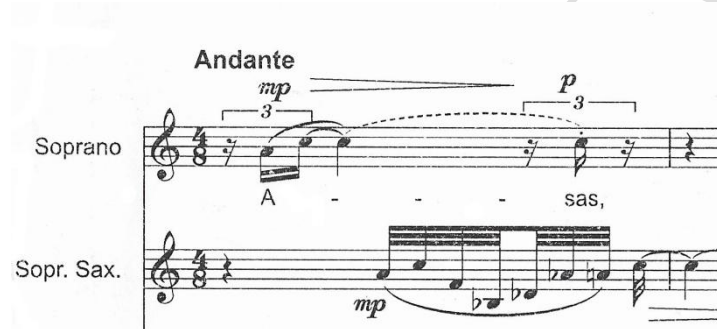
	Movement	n. bars / pages
Part I	Andante	58 bars / 10 pages
Part II	L'istesso tempo	18 bars / 5 pages
Part III	L'istesso tempo	67 bars / 19 pages

¹ wings

Part I

Part *I* appears over 58 bars, in an *Andante tempo* assigned to the instruments soprano voice, soprano saxophone and accordion. The text that appears associated with the voice is the following: “*asas, para que quero asas se em mim mora a alma de um sonhador*” [trad.: wings, why do I want wings if the soul of a dreamer lives in me].

The first movement of *Asas* begins with the soprano voice and the soprano saxophone (bar 1) in a dynamic *mp* and *Andante* tempo. The initial notes (A, C) constitute the beginning of the entry of the soprano voice and also of the saxophone in an undulating movement that always returns to the starting point, the C5 note.



The image shows a musical score for the beginning of the *Andante* section. It features two staves: Soprano and Soprano Saxophone. The Soprano staff starts with a treble clef, a 3/8 time signature, and a tempo marking of *Andante*. The first note is an A, followed by a triplet of notes (A, B, C) marked *mp*. The lyrics "A - - - sas," are written below the notes. The Soprano Saxophone staff starts with a treble clef and a 3/8 time signature, playing a triplet of notes (A, B, C) marked *mp*. The tempo marking *Andante* is also present above the Soprano staff.

Fig. 1 - *Asas* - Beginning of *Andante* section

This first intervention extends to bar 5, when the accordion enters. The chord played by the accordion appears in Bellow shake, in a vertical construction characteristic of Christopher Bochmann's writing with the following interval relationship (minor seventh in the bass, major third, perfect 5th, minor second, minor third). In isobematic language, interval 11, 4, 7, 1, 3.



The image shows a musical score for the Bellow Shake movement. It features two staves: Soprano and Soprano Saxophone. The Soprano staff starts with a treble clef, a 3/8 time signature, and a tempo marking of *mf*. The first note is an A, followed by a triplet of notes (A, B, C) marked *mf*. The lyrics "A - - - sas," are written below the notes. The Soprano Saxophone staff starts with a treble clef and a 3/8 time signature, playing a triplet of notes (A, B, C) marked *mf*. The tempo marking *Andante* is also present above the Soprano staff.

Fig. 2 - *Asas* - Bellow Shake movement

The chord (Eb, D, F#, C#, D, F) emerges in Bellow shake in a total of 11 movements, decelerating, allowing the transition to the next intervention of the soprano saxophone in bar 6. From bar 6 onwards, the saxophone focuses on the E note (the third minor above the C# note) also assuming the main melodic conduction reinforced by accordion in a Bellow shake movement (4

movements) in bar 7 and by the entry of the soprano voice in bar 8.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Soprano (Sopr.), Soprano Saxophone (Sop. Sax.), and Accordion (Accord.). The Soprano part is mostly silent in this section. The Soprano Saxophone part begins in bar 7 with a melodic line starting on a G note, marked with a forte (f) dynamic. It includes a triplet of notes and continues with a melodic phrase marked mezzo-forte (mf) and forte (f). The Accordion part provides harmonic accompaniment, starting in bar 7 with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The score is written in 3/8 time and includes dynamic markings such as f, mf, and f.

Fig. 3 - *Asas* - Interaction between Saxophone and Accordion

From bar 8 onwards, the soprano voice once again takes the lead, developing the material up to the G note that occurs at the canonical entry of bar 9 reinforced by the bellow shake movements on the accordion (7 moves) also decelerating. In bar 9, the motif that precedes the G note on the saxophone will be inverted in the soprano voice (Eb, Ab, F, E).

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Soprano (Sopr.), Soprano Saxophone (Sop. Sax.), and Accordion (Accord.). The Soprano part begins in bar 9 with a melodic line starting on a G note, marked with a decelerando (dim.) dynamic. The Soprano Saxophone part begins in bar 9 with a melodic line starting on a G note, marked with a forte (f) dynamic. It includes a triplet of notes and continues with a melodic phrase. The Accordion part provides harmonic accompaniment, starting in bar 9 with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The score is written in 3/8 time and includes dynamic markings such as dim., f, and mf.

Fig. 4 - *Asas* - Interaction between Voice, Saxophone and Accordion

It should be noted that the musical text attributed to the accordion has a completely idiomatic writing, in the sense that the progression of the chords over the same bass (Eb, D) happens in a gradual way that allows the same fingering on the keyboard. It should also be noted that this entire first part / tempo is performed only by the soprano voice, soprano saxophone and accordion, which assumes the role of accompanying and filling the vertical harmonic texture, sometimes appearing with small melodic interventions.

In bar 10, the accordion begins the exposition complemented by the saxophone and in bar 11 the saxophone extends its speech again to the B note (the third major above the G note). This section ends at bar 12 with a minor seventh interval performed in voice. So far, the text has been the

word “Asas”. Once the thematic exposition is over, bar 13 moves on to the development, the text mentions “para que quero asas” [trad.: why do I want wings].



Fig. 5 - *Asas* - Rhythmic division of the text in the Soprano Voice

In bar 13, the saxophone and the accordion enter simultaneously, opening space for the exposition of the voice (note C#) in a dynamic *mf* and in a rhythmic and melodic discourse that will extend until the note F, originating a motif that will be presented in a fugata between the three instruments.

It should be noted that the accordion sometimes plays the role of two or more different instruments. In bar 16, the soprano voice establishes a major third (A - C#) while the accordion performs a rotation of schematic chords.

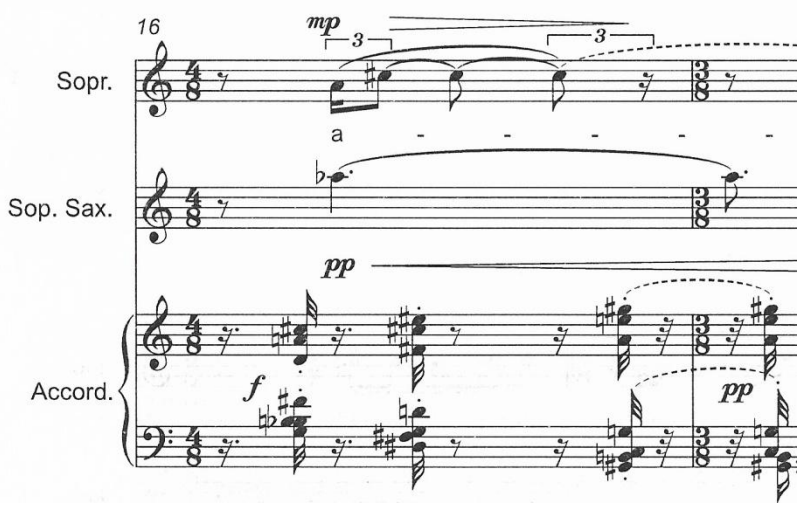


Fig. 6 - *Asas* - Block Chord Rotation on the Accordion

In turn, the alto saxophone performs an inverted movement (bar 17) that originates the canonical entry of the accordion (G#, B, C, G) in bar 18.

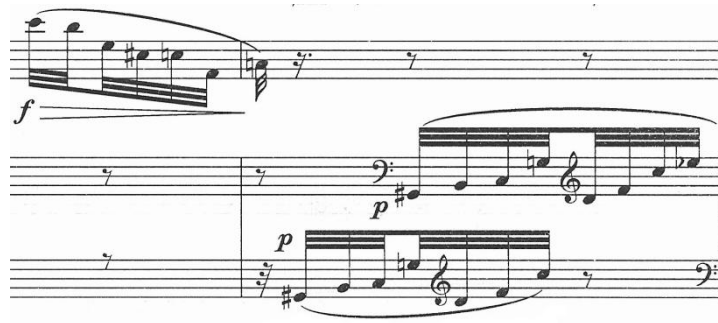


Fig. 7 - *Asas* - Canonical Entry on the Accordion

From bar 19 onwards, an open dialogue emerges between a soprano voice, an alto saxophone and an accordion in a speech that deepens but which highlights all of Christopher Bochmann's compositional mastery. The text reflects the word “Asas”. This small section develops up to bar 24. In bar 25, a new frame appears up to bar 30 and this time the text refers to “se em mim mora a alma” [trad.: if my soul lives in me].



Fig. 8 - *Asas* - Rhythmic division of the text in the Soprano Voice

At this moment, the accordion performs accompaniment functions at the beginning (Bellow Shake movements in *desacelerando*), interacting contrapuntically from the second half on bar 27.

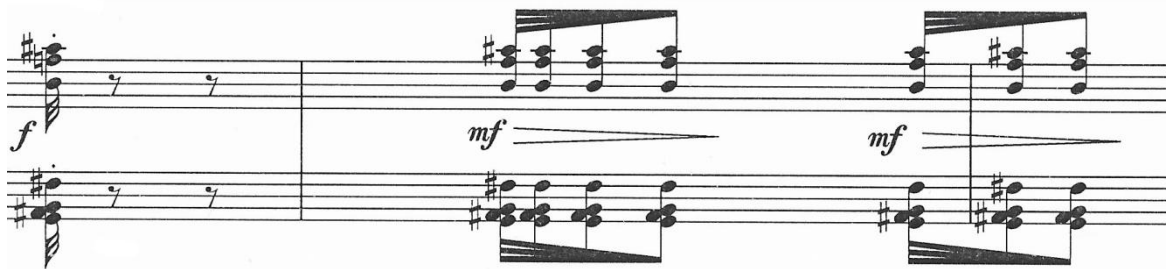


Fig. 9 - *Asas* - Bellow Shake movements on *decelerating*

In bar 28, the dialogue between the voices intensifies, giving rise to a fictitious but proportional canonical relationship between the three instruments, mainly through the motifs (Ab, F, E, Eb) in the voice, (F, E, B) in the saxophone and (G#, E, F#) on the accordion. The bass line, in the accordion, performs a chromatic progression in a descending sense (F#, F, E) which is preceded by an interval inflection of perfect fifth (E, B) juxtaposing this progression with an ascent by minor thirds (A, C, Eb).

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Soprano (Sopr.), Soprano Saxophone (Sop. Sax.), and Accordion (Accord.). The music is in 4/8 time. The Soprano part features a triplet of notes circled in blue, with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Soprano Saxophone part features a triplet of notes circled in red. The Accordion part features a triplet of notes circled in orange, with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The lyrics 'al - - - -' are written below the Soprano staff.

Fig. 10 - *Asas* - Dialogue between the voices

Also at the end of bar 29 / beginning of 30 interesting relationships arise, eg. (B, Bb, F, D) especially the rising fifth and descending third (soprano voice), (E, A, F) rising eleventh, falling third on saxophone and (G, F#, B) on accordion, especially the minor second and diminished fourth.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Soprano (Sopr.), Soprano Saxophone (Sop. Sax.), and Accordion (Accord.). The music is in 4/8 time. The Soprano part features a triplet of notes circled in blue, with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Soprano Saxophone part features a triplet of notes circled in red, with a dynamic marking of *p*. The Accordion part features a triplet of notes circled in orange, with a dynamic marking of *p*. The lyrics 'al - - - - ma' are written below the Soprano staff.

Fig. 11 - *Asas* - Complementary relationship

In the section between bars 31 to 39, it seems to resume development through canonical or fugal relationships between the voices, e.g. G, Eb, D in accordion and saxophone, G, D in soprano voice.

Fig. 12 - *Asas* - Augmentation / decrease canonical relations

From bar 40 to the end of bar 46, the saxophone and the accordion establish a fruitful and accessible dialogue. In this period, the voice appears with a small development starting at bar 42 and ending at bar 45.

From bar 47 onwards, the voice develops and progresses in the text, the saxophone establishes a dialogue with motifs that appear in moments of rest in the voice. The accordion takes on a clearly assumed harmonic texture for the harmonic filling and basic sustain of the voice and saxophone. This relationship will remain until the end of *Part I*.

Fig. 13 - *Asas* - Dialogue between Soprano Voice and Saxophone over pedal chord

At the end of the first part (bar 58) the viola and cello with the notes C and C# respectively (interval 1 – minor 2nd) fade in (pp) establishing the transition to *part II* of the work.

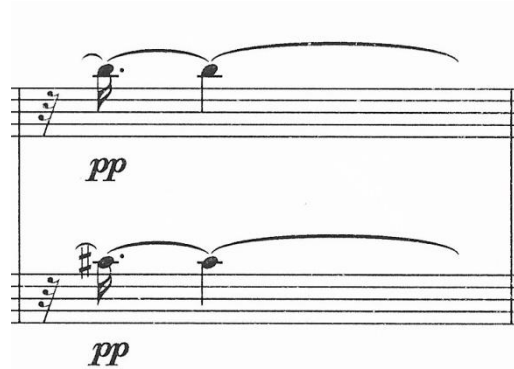


Fig. 14 - *Asas* - End of *Part I* section - passing notes to *Part II* section

The voice ends with the syllable “so”, leaving the word “sonhador” [trad.: dreamer] open. The saxophone plays a small motif (Ab, A, C, B), piano dynamics and legato in ascending motion (minor second, minor third and major seventh). In turn, the accordion ends this first part in a suspended chord consisting of minor seconds at the ends, minor third, perfect fifth and minor seventh in the center.

Part II

The *Part II* section is developed over 18 bars in *L'istesso tempo* for the instruments only (Saxophone, Accordion, Viola and Cello). The voice will have its moment only in the *Part III* section.

In the first bar, 1/8, the viola and the cello play the notes started at the end of *Part I* (last bar) with the intention of continuing the discourse and not exactly stopping between movements.



Fig. 15 - *Asas* - Beginning of *Part II*

From bar 2 to bar 5, the viola and cello develop their text in a homorhythmic language at vertical distance of minor second (bar 2), minor sixth (bar 3), diminished fourth (bar 3), major twelfth (bar 4). The flow of movements is descending in bar 2, ascending in bar 3, and descending in bar 4.

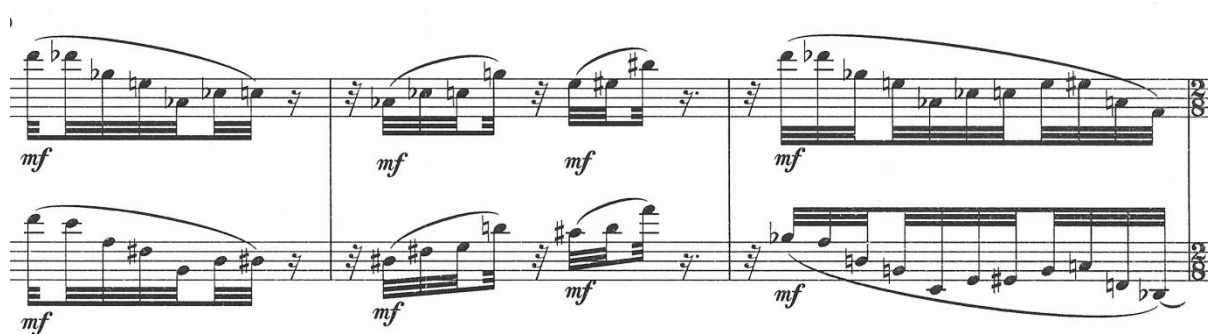


Fig. 16 - *Asas* - Homorhythm between Viola and Cello

From bar 5 onwards, the entry of voices start to be fugata, at a distance of one bar. The saxophone will enter bar 9 and intensify, in a relation of complementarity / extension of the lines, this construction of fugata moments.

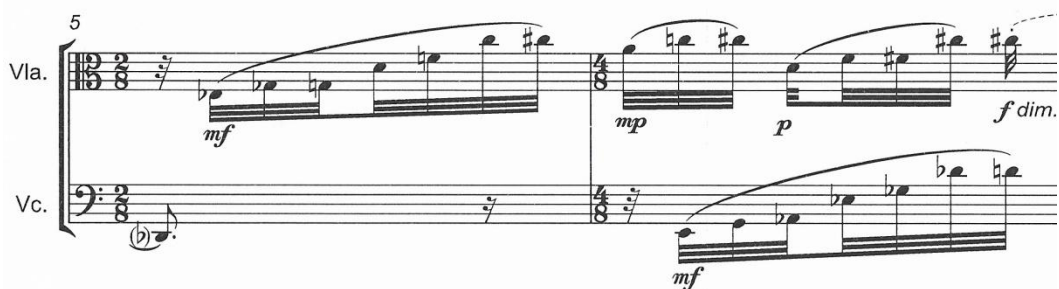


Fig. 17 - *Asas* - Fugata moment

In bar 11, the accordion begins a homorhythmic discourse between the keyboards in permanent dialogue with the saxophone while the strings (viola and cello) develop a kind of harmonic base.

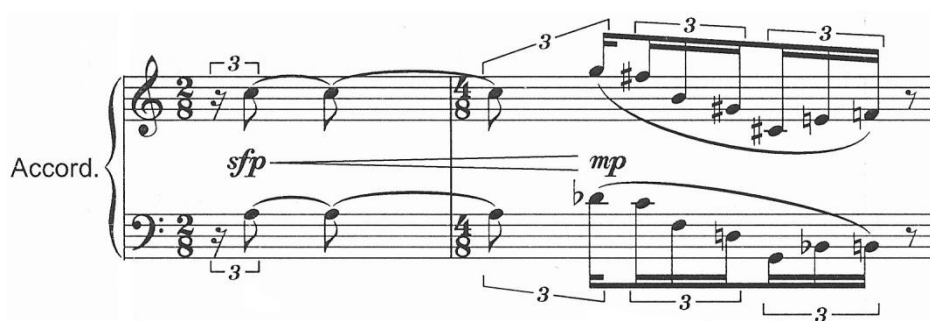


Fig. 18 - *Asas* - Homorhythmic speech

The confrontation between accordion and saxophone appears by overlap in bar 12 and in question-answer in bar 13.

The musical score for Figure 19 consists of three staves. The top staff shows a melody starting with a whole note, followed by eighth notes, with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The middle staff shows a saxophone line with triplets, marked *mp*. The bottom staff shows an accordion line with triplets. A large bracket spans across all three staves, indicating a fugata moment.

Fig. 19 - *Asas* - Fugata moment by augmentation

In bar 14, the accordion enters with a movement in triplets and the saxophone responds with the same motivic design but in a contraction process (32th notes). At the end of bar 16, we witness the fugata entry between the accordion and the saxophone.

The musical score for Figure 20 consists of three staves. The top staff is labeled 'Sop. Sax.' and shows a melody in 32nd notes, marked *mf*. The middle staff is labeled 'Accord.' and shows a melody in triplets, marked *mf dim.*. The bottom staff shows a bass line in triplets. A large bracket spans across all three staves, indicating a fugata moment.

Fig. 20 - *Asas* - Fugata moment by contraction

In bar 17, the rhythmic game (4 by 3) is performed only by the accordion (two keyboards) with interaction between the saxophone and the strings from bar 18 onwards.



Fig. 21 - *Asas* - Intensification of speech

At this moment, the relation between the voices intensifies in a kind of fugue (contrapuntal style) in 5 voices that will establish the transition to Part III.

Part III

Part III is the major part of the work *Asas* by Christopher Bochmann, it is developed in 67 bars in *L' istesso tempo* with the return of the voice with the following text: “alma de um sonhador para que quero asas” [trad.: soul of a dreamer for which I want wings]. In section *part III*, the accordion seems to assume a clear function of the harmonic base (ostinato) although with intertwined and fast motifs.



Fig. 22 - *Asas* - Beginning of Part III - Accordion

In turn, the voice, the saxophone and the strings (viola and cello) sing the melody (C, Ab, A, E) in a homorhythmic design in a single voice although transposed between the different voices.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Soprano (Sopr.), Soprano Saxophone (Sop. Sax.), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). The score is titled "L'istesso tempo" and includes the dynamic marking *mf*. The Soprano part starts with a triplet of eighth notes (C, Ab, A) and is followed by a long melodic line. The Soprano Saxophone part starts with a triplet of eighth notes (C, Ab, A) and is followed by a melodic line. The Viola and Cello parts start with a triplet of eighth notes (C, Ab, A) and are followed by a melodic line. The score is marked with "1" and "a" at the beginning of the Soprano part.

Fig. 23 - *Asas - Part III* - Theme and homorhythmic writing

From bar 3 onwards, the saxophone presents the thematic motif out of phase with the other voices in a sort of deconstruction of the previously exposed material. In bar 5, the fugata entry is evident.

From bar 6 to bar 12, the accordion and strings (viola and cello) play an accompaniment role, while the saxophone interacts with the voice.

In the accordion, the rhythmic base changes slightly in bars 10, 11 and 12. In bar 13, the saxophone appears as a solo instrument in *legato articulation*, *cantabile* and *mp* dynamics on a harmonic base with two overlapping perfect fifths (Bb, F / A, E) performed by viola and cello.

The image shows a musical score for the Saxophone. The score is marked with "mp cant." and "mp". The saxophone part starts with a melodic line and is followed by a long melodic line. The score is marked with "1" and "a" at the beginning of the saxophone part.

Fig. 24 - *Asas - Part III* - Saxophone Phrasing

Next, the accordion enters on bar 19, articulating its speech through a chromatic motif on the right-hand keyboard with repeating patterns that go down the range while the left-hand keyboard repeats a thematic motif (Eb, D, B, Bb, G, G#, A).



Fig. 25 - *Asas - Part III* - Schematic Speech on Accordion

In bar 20, the soprano voice resumes its entry, in the syllable “so”, establishing a dialogue with the saxophone (bar 21). Interval 3 (note Eb on the saxophone) will determine the ascending movement of the voice towards Eb (unison) which will be finished by the descending interval 11 (E) on the saxophone.

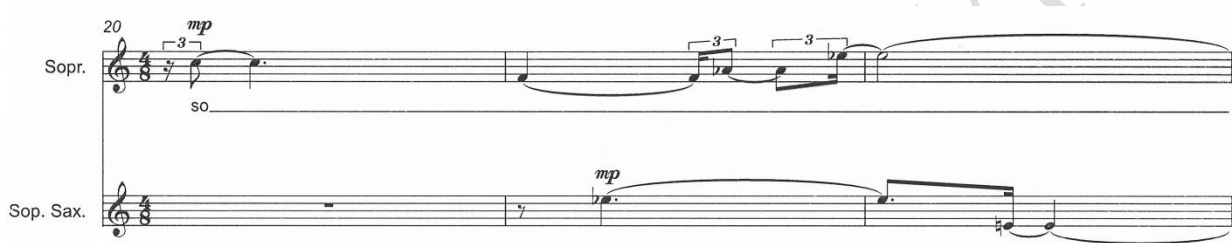


Fig. 26 - *Asas - Part III* - Contrapuntal relationship between Soprano voice and Saxophone

In bar 24, voice, viola and cello come together. The voice develops the melody while the strings establish a pedal chord.

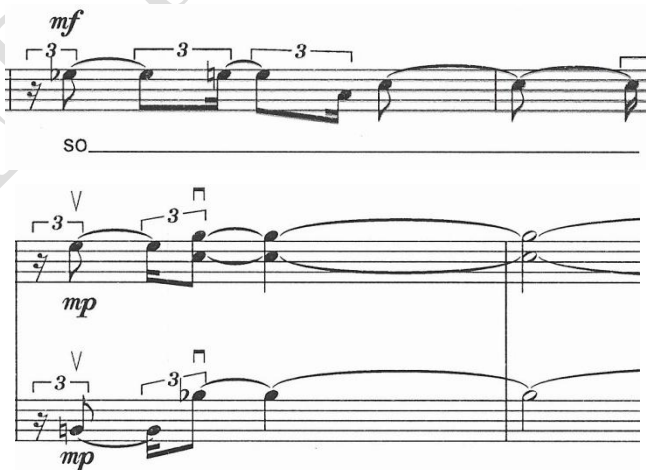


Fig. 27 - *Asas - Part III* - Vertical relationship between Voice, Viola and Cello

From bar 26 onwards, we return to the fugato moment, although the entrance of the voice presents an increased rhythm in relation to the saxophone and the strings have a reduced rhythm (32th note) - bar 28. This section will go up to bar 31.

Fig. 28 - *Asas - Part III* – Fugata entries by augmentation / diminution

From bar 32 onwards, the viola presents its moment as a soloist supported by the cello with a harmonic base, notes with bow and pizzicatos.

Fig. 29 - *Asas - Part III* - Viola soloist moment

In bar 40, the voice appears in a *quasi parlato* register in a dynamic *pp* in *staccato articulation* referring to the text “para que quero” [trad.: what I want]. This moment (bar 40) will serve as a transition to the moment dedicated to the cello, in *cantabile* until bar 48.

Fig. 30 - *Asas - Part III* - Quasi parlato moment - Soprano voice

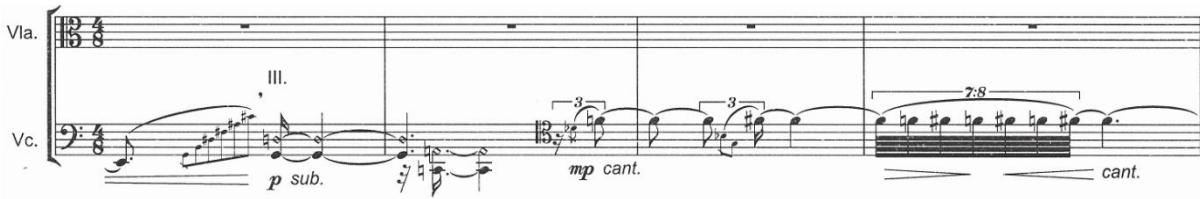


Fig. 31 - *Asas - Part III* - Excerpt from Solo Cello part

From bar 49 onwards, we enter the reexposition (initial theme *Part I*), taken over by the soprano voice. The accordion enters the upturn for bar 49 with the chromatic motif similar to the one performed above overlapped by movements in triplets. The material performed on the accordion serves as a harmonic basis for the fugata voice entries, followed by the saxophone in increased rhythm (bar 50), viola (bar 51) and cello (bar 52) in reduced rhythm (eighth notes).

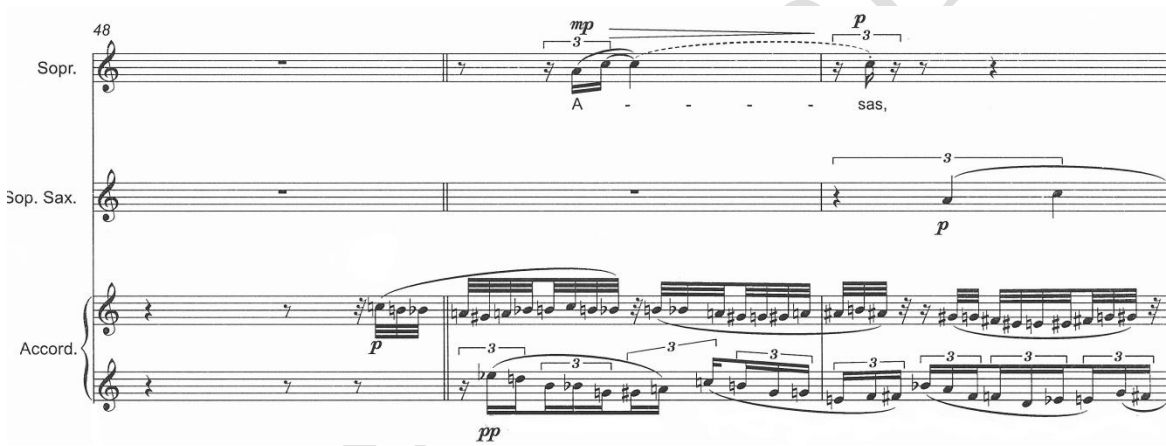


Fig. 32 - *Asas - Part III* - Reexposition

From bar 54 onwards, the texture of the accordion changes (cluster on the right-hand keyboard), the voice focuses on the word “*asas*” [trad.: wings] (bar 55), the saxophone, viola and cello establish a final fugal relationship at the end of the bar 55 and 56, stabilizing the musical discourse with the word “*asas*” (voice entry) in bar 59. The Accordion ends its speech in bar 60.

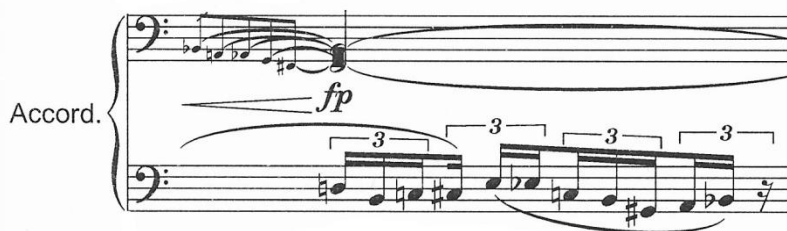


Fig. 33 - *Asas - Part III* - Cluster on the accordion.

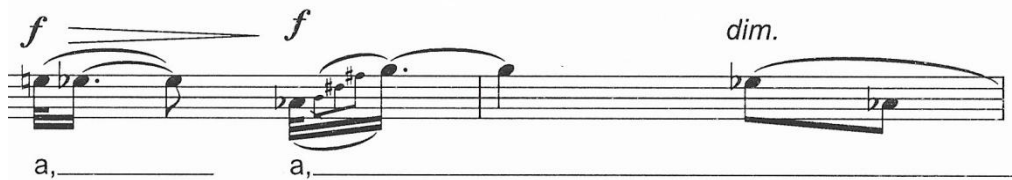


Fig. 34 - *Asas - Part III* - Melisma over the syllable “a” - Soprano Voice

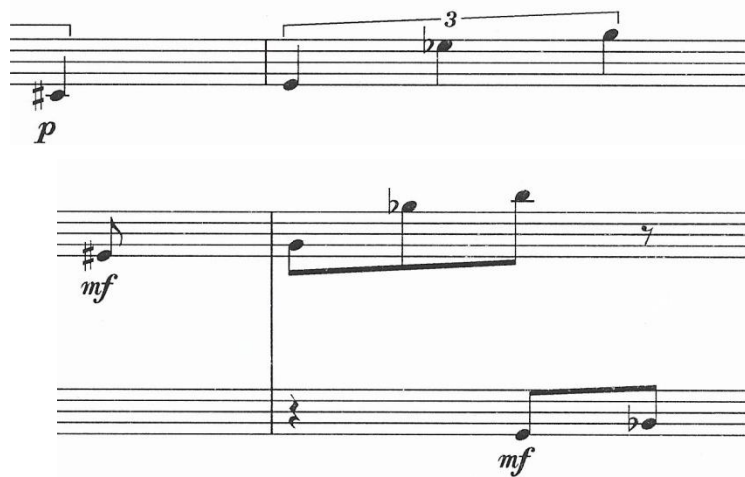


Fig. 35 - *Asas - Part III* - Fugue moment between Saxophone, Viola and Cello

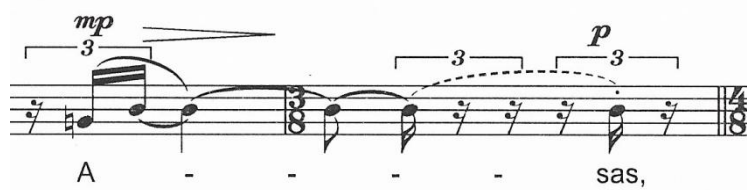


Fig. 36 - *Asas - Part III* - Voice themed entry. bar 59

From bar 61, a small Coda appears marked by the homorhythmic discourse between the saxophone, viola and cello in a dynamic *p*. String instruments play from this time on with *sordina*.

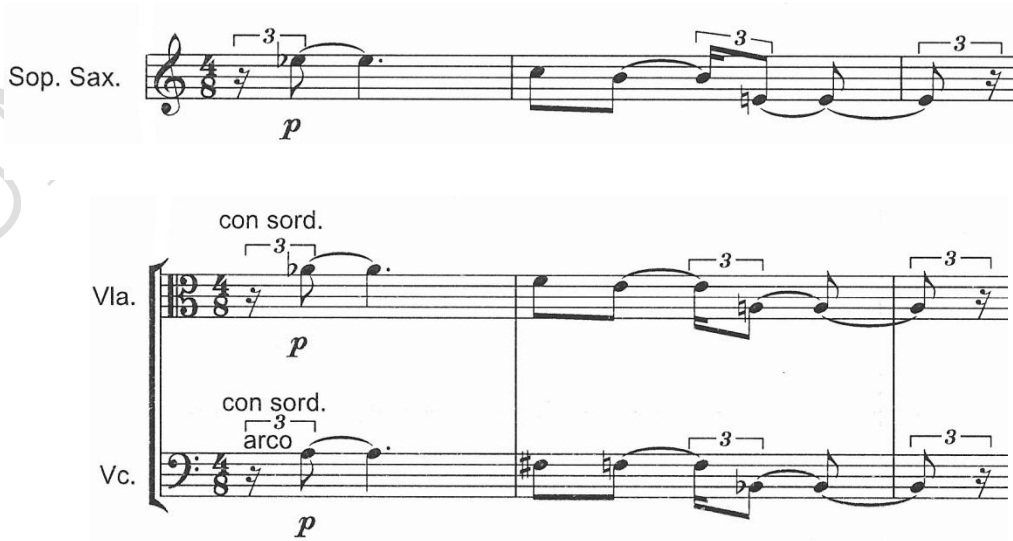


Fig. 37 - *Asas - Part III* - Homorhythmic speech

The soprano voice will appear in bar 62 with a slightly different rhythm but with the same interval relationship (minor 3rd, minor 2nd).



Fig. 38 - *Asas - Part III - Voice themed entry*

The thematic entry of the saxophone (Eb, D, B, E) reinforced by the strings constitute the motto for the entrance of the voice (bar 62) that emphasizes the word “Asas”. The final harmonic construction (saxophone, viola and cello) results in a chord consisting of a major seventh and a perfect fifth (Db, C, G).

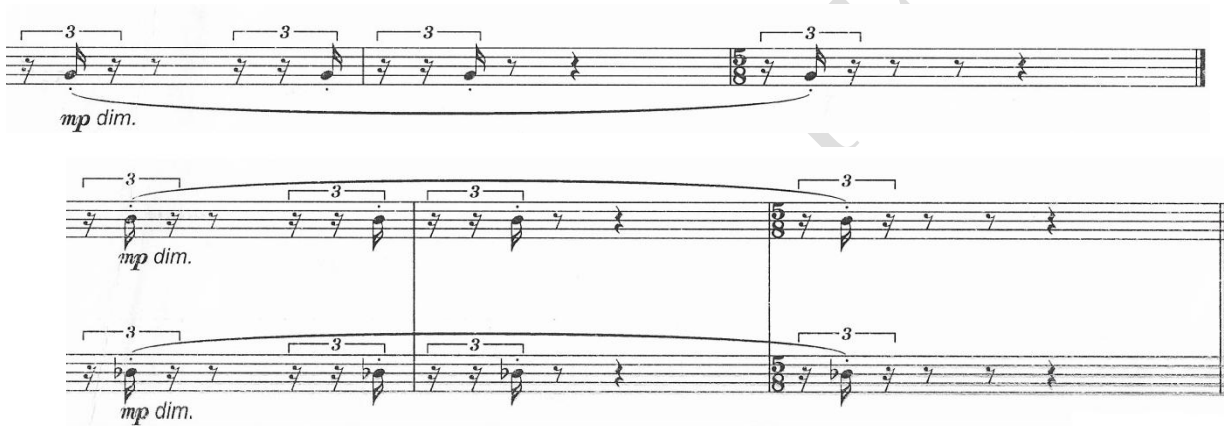


Fig. 39 - *Asas - Part III - Harmonic base - Saxophone, Viola and Cello*

The work ends on an Eb (soprano voice) with the second syllable of the word “Asas”.

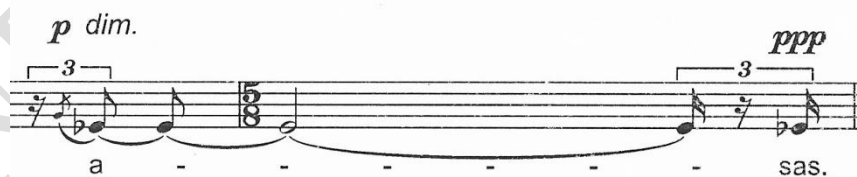


Fig. 40 - *Asas - Part III - Final - Voice themed entry.*

Conclusion

When analyzing the three parts of the work *Asas*, we can see the existing sound, harmonic and melodic beauty, but also the treatment of instrumental writing (sound layers and independent lines) that Christopher Bochmann imprints in his act of composing.

The relationship of the Soprano Voice with the word, the relationship of the instruments that sometimes appear as a complement, sometimes in assumed directions of exposition or musical transition, are essential characteristics that distinguish a language of musical discourse in search of a true intention to express feelings and emotions through music and art in general.

We can undoubtedly conclude that the work *Asas* catapults the instrument (Accordion) to unique levels of musical interpretation and relationship with other instruments, raising prestige and the possibility of finding new stages.

Indeed, with the right registers combination, the perfect pitch and correct bellows balance it's possible to create singular sonorities in the Accordion that allows to play any kind of music with temperanment, charisma, expressivity and ressonance even in the chamber music features.

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