

DIRTY EAR REPORT #2 /
SOUND, MULTIPLICITY, AND RADICAL LISTENING

ERRANT BODIES PRESS

TOWARDS A MANIFESTO FOR
COLLECTIVE LISTENING /

LUCIA FARINATI & CLAUDIA FIRTH

Listen in order to give voice to others

Listen in order to develop empathy

Listen in order to raise consciousness

Listen in order to provide analysis

Listen in order to translate the unspeakable

Listen in order to walk with strangers

Listen in order to feel empowered

Listen in order to distinguish and challenge power relations

Listen in order to free yourself from fear

Listen in order to develop resonance and reciprocity

Listen in order to enhance plurality instead of pluralism

Listen in order to become aware of what you don't know you are yet

Listen in order to practice political therapy

Listen in order to break isolation and individualisation

Listen in order to practice a pedagogy of the ear

Listen in order to reconfigure the private and the public

Listen in order to make the implicit explicit

Listen in order to foster solidarity

Listen in order to recognise the other's desire

Listen in order to engender new acts of exchange

Listen in order to create a potential political space

Listen in order to identify the commons

Listen in order to organise

Listen in order to act collectively

OPEN MEMORY OF A SUSPENDED, ONGOING AND
UNFINISHED MOMENT OF ACTIVATION /
MOMENT THAT IS OR WAS NOT YET TO BECOME,
YET NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN /

TAO G. VRHOVEC SAMBOLEC

It is difficult to say, difficult to write, to think of what it was, or of what it still continues to be.

(Perhaps it hasn't happened yet, and what was lived through is a pre-echo of that, which is still to happen: this suspended moment of a vibrating charge in-between the spoken words, the activation of the reciprocal acts of listening, attention, thought and action).

Not unlike in free improvised music, where a band – individuals forming a group, are each finding their place through sound by initiating, listening and reacting to what is going on, establishing passing relations to all the others and to the common whole that is in perpetual becoming. The articulated sound is being made by, and it is making the players simultaneously. It is vibrating their singular bodies and minds, while sounding outwards and filling the space with presence. Direct and in constant becoming, emerging out of (sweating) bodies that establish and inhabit a moment between “not yet” and “already”. Its fleeting articulations briefly inscribed only in the passing moments of fading memories.

Just that in our case, everything had a much slower pace, being contemplative, reflexive even. Thoughts said, thoughts unsaid, sounds, concepts, objects, images, actions, questions, words, suggestions. A situation proposing passing relations based on attentive forms of listening to each other and to the space around us. A slow and multidimensional improv, prolonging the moment between “not yet” and “already” into a duration of its own temporality.

Paying attention to the invisible and unrepresentable in-betweenness that we all suspect we might already share.

I remember:

Sitting on the edge of the chair, sheer listening to the others speaking, thinking or doing, is triggering the inner stream of overwhelming thoughts, intentions and desires. Some of them already reside in me and have grown roots, others are unknown and seducing.

Is this an affect, a resonance, a transmission, a transduction?

Familiarity and closeness: I know this, yet I hear it coming from somebody else's mouth – with different words, intentions, enunciations – from another body occupying another space. This experience of foreign familiarity dissolves the notion of a single origin, giving way for acknowledging the notion of distributed origin instead, unbound by territory, personality, time or culture. What does this situation suggest regarding identity and commonality?

Finding oneself in hearing the other, Aby Warburg comes to mind.

What do I hear? What do you hear when listening to me?

Where is this sound coming from?

Does it sound from within or from the exterior?

Is it mine, is it yours, is it ours, or is it a foreign intrusion?

Is it active or passive?

Does it really matter?

I feel like we are resonating spheres touching each other and forming a foam-like structure, where parts of our demarcating membranes are merging into one vibrating surface – a shared membrane that is both hearing and sounding at the same time.

Listening that makes sound – sympathetic vibration, empathy, resonance, interference?

The activity of productive listening that is creating an overall atmosphere which is in turn activating the space – a transformative charge of the emptiness in-between, generating purposeless excitement with suspended orientation that makes space and time for movement and transgression, for dance between the self and the unself, between passivity and activity.

Our individualities become suspended, as thoughts and actions transcended them, gaining independence and becoming formative elements of the space they occupy. The activities, words, sounds and objects float and vibrate within this space, traversing from one mouth to another, from one ear to another, in-between and through our bodies, bouncing off the walls and vibrating (in) the liquid materiality of the windows. The gravities of territorial positions, historical origins and destinations of our bodies, thoughts and activities are temporarily suspended through their movement, generating densities of vibrations, occasionally manifesting as a form, a sentence, a signal or an image. This resulting in a space of continuous present, pulsating in the rhythms of our dance-like listening.

We are losing ourselves listening in order to find ourselves dancing.

We are moving ourselves as much as we are being moved.

Each move hollowing a void that is bringing into presence the space in-between. A void that enables the rustle of distributed origins to resonate, to be heard and perhaps to be recognized.

As long as we listen, there is a space.

As long as we pay attention there is presence.

It happened, it is happening, it is perhaps yet to happen.

A moment when the mode of listening materializes into a productive activity – forming each individual and the passing relations between us. Forming atmospheres, spaces, territories and intentions. The modes of listening that are resonating (in) our singular bodies and minds, while sounding outwards and filling the space with presence.

The state of activation, where activity and passivity dissolve into each other.

It was not clear to me when a thought became an action, when an action became a thought or when a thought became a sound that was being listened to.

When an observation materialized into a thing, and when an action of somebody became somebody else's. The distinctions between the self, the other and space were dissolving in the intensity of productive listening that was generating movement, nearness, activity and more attention.

More attention:

Listening to the listenings of the others – how do they sound, how are they being heard?

Can we share our listenings?

Can we share listening to each other's listening?

Lend me your ear, I lend you mine.

Inclusive silence, silence as an invitation – a pause, a gap, a rest, a crack, a rupture. The time in-between, the time of potentiality, the shadow time, the pregnant time, the time of expectation.

An effort to pause a monologue in order to find another way of establishing presence and subjectivity.

The time of the other?

Ricarda said: "Listening is queer"

What did she mean by that?

The thought is ringing in my mind ever since she said it.

Doing, thinking and speaking as a mode of productive listening that sounds – not a monologue, not a claim, not a solid fortress of ideology and beliefs, not a form, not an act of exhibitionism, not a confirmation of identity; a void is always carved into something – into history, into a set of beliefs, into culture, into identity, into desire.

How much do these hollowed entities characterize the carved voids they are giving space to?

How much do spoken words before and after silence inscribe its tone?

What are the differences between the silences of male, female, white, of color, queer, homeless, rich, child, immigrant, straight, stranger, friend?

What about a silence of a crowd – still or moving?

From another point of reference:

A tent as a sail, rather than a tent as a house, suggests Vilem Flusser.

A home as a vibrating membrane being excited by the external forces, producing sound by resisting and at the same time resonating with those forces.

Listening that sounds, resistance that moves, empathy that voices.

A home that is being moved, a home that moves, a home as a sail.

...

The moment that happened, it is difficult to write it down, yet, it stays with me, asking to be articulated, transferred. I can sense it and I think about it often. I can feel its enthusiastic and fragile power, but when asked to say something about it, there is not much I can say.

Perhaps later.

(Even these words here are/were hand written in darkness. I can't see them while writing them. Perhaps this is the closest to the time which was, is, or perhaps will be – resisting to be written down in its entirety, defined, reflected and reproduced. I hear my thoughts and I remember them, I am moving my hand and I feel my hand moving, I hear the sound of pen on paper. And I know that these written words are floating in-between you and me in this uncertain darkness.)

What makes you listen?

INDEX OF NOTES / RICARDA DENZER

Jerry Hunt

the hidden & the unseen
accessing the inaccessible.
with occult

Figure of a Scholar

talk slice
Jerry Hunt

to occult
William James

ALICE BOSTA

WHITE HEAD

THE PROPHECY

Expounded in

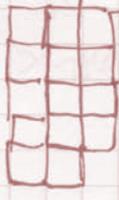
Shan Duvor

the world is not pole
transgressive
translations → mode of coming



midlife
Solitaire

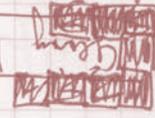
Contingencies



to care is to break

Jerry Hunt

Jerry Hunt - Texas Sand artist



empiric philosopher

William James

Whitehead

Jerry Hunt
for Vice & Translata

Structure
Symbolic Matrix

irradicability
int. the predictable

philosophy
of Metaphysics

when things happen
within subject
logic

Speculative
Realism

Bacon

least next to
Duchamp. ^{creative} Act

sensitivity the dream
flowed
Glossolalia

Involuntary speech

of the voice & speaking

Authorship

Buddhism
antinarrative

Individual voice

speaker ^{Rum} the first how

disposition

Cafe Duchamp

to music



unpredictable

how it is mediated

music with roots in the old

Voice
Body

another
kind of
space

blurring into the
collective

written opera

Ashley Sonic arts union

works everywhere

the I is another

QUIGNARD
Hated & Music

to compose time

What's the setup
and who is the other

territorial confusion

Who is the host
who is the guest

speaking to yourself

transparency of sound-laps
Ashley

Creating music out of
the dream

You can't reflect

to memory
of the body

the undecidable

context

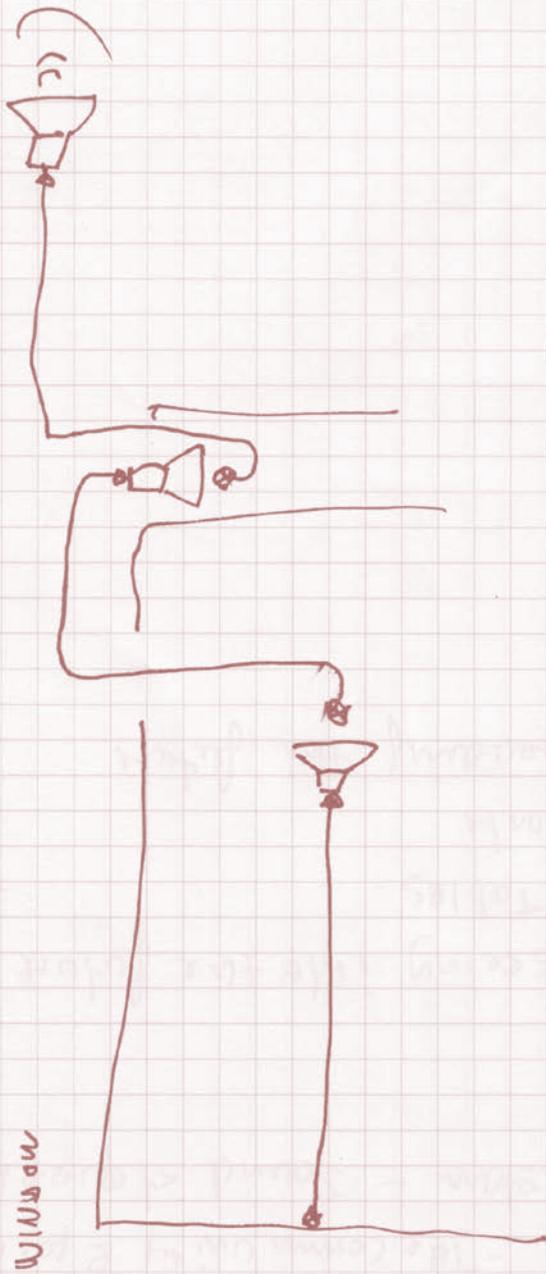
inhospital
to demand
something
to ask for
something

Journal of artistic research

it is embodied

The insoul

Odysses
als 1. Tausend



instigate



in the act of translation X

Janet Oppenheimer
Coppola

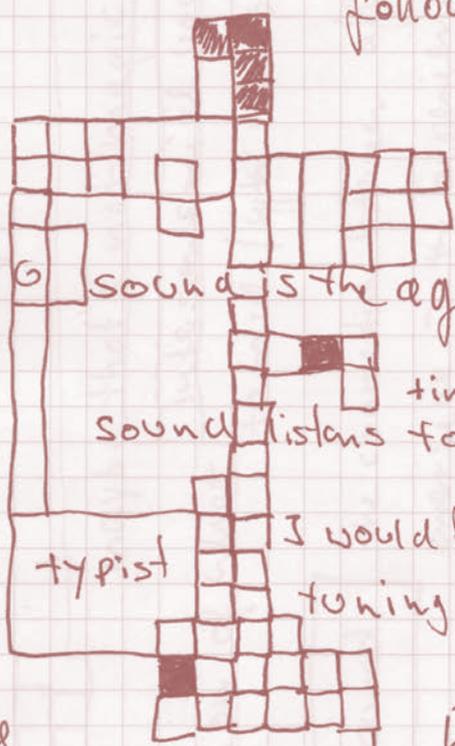
agency / policy of listening

Vito Acconci following piece

G



- the 4th person
- the Stamp



resource as activity of audience

de face out of face

hear

Sound as measure

report & together

the standing time

the ability to resonate

Commotion

the effective rhythm of like events

emotion / commotion

the experience is the
movement - moving together

with movement

what are the political implications

politics of effect!!!

what kind of
enjoyment is
the throat enjoy

Western hierarchy
of the senses
→ the visible →

Machinel

cultural vs written
visual vs - qualitative

TERESA BRENNAN

the transmission of affect

the cultural Politics of
Emotion

Sara Ahmed

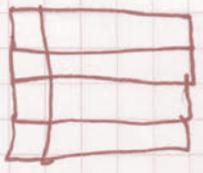
Vera Manter & → Portuguese Choreography

!!! Vera manera } - postu fisisch choreografie

following the lead

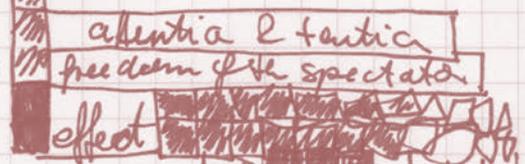


Heterophonie



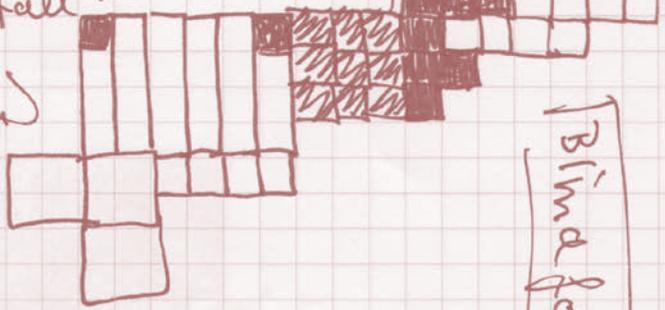
improvisatie - speak and live

a choreography to listen to



Deleuze → [The image moment the fall

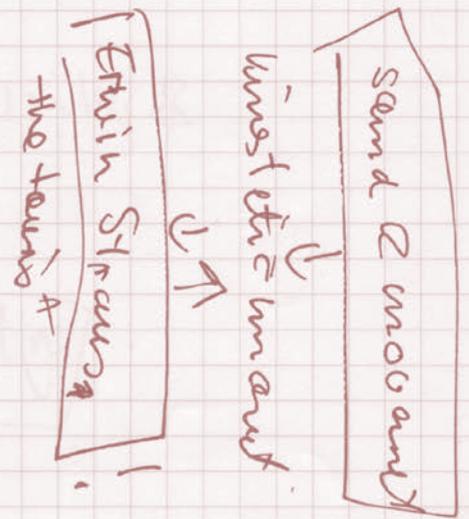
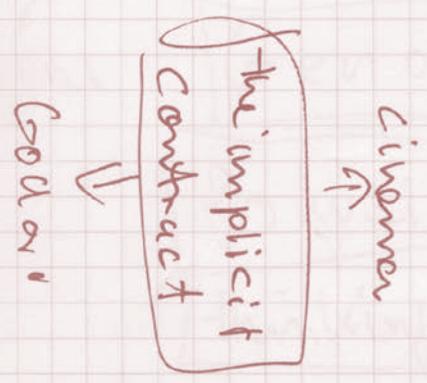
[Deleuzia - entity of time)



Blind fold

emersive?

PUNCH TRUNK - stepnomoo



01

words don't have fixed meanings

space

the inner and the outer space

space as a prolongation of the inner self

spoken language

the voice

voice as a body moving in space

voice as an auditive or acoustic process while thinking

“How shall I know what to think before I hear what I say?” Foster / Auden

“Thinking is searching for the voice in the speech” Agamben

The self and the other

the private and personal inner

& the public, political outer

Stimme als Ereignis

performatives Phänomen mit Akteurin und Rezipienten indem etwas für oder vor anderen aufgeführt wird.

02

Unverfügbarkeit

unavailability

the unavailable

inaccessible

intangible

the non-tactile

ethereal or transient quality of the voice.

Überforderung

Stimme als Schwellenphänomen

Macht

Ohnmacht

unkontrollierbare Eigendynamik

Bachelard:

Die Dialektik von Drinnen und Draussen wandelt sich in unzählige Nuancen und Zwischenmöglichkeiten des Seinszustandes. Die Frage, was Stimme & das Hören in der Vorstellung eines Raumes oder Hauses bedeutet, wenn man das Haus als Verlängerung des eigenen Selbst versteht.

03

Duchamp: creative act

Anti-narrative

individual voice

speaker

Rumi

the guest house

dispositif

Cage

Duchamp

Authorship

now it is mediated

music with roots in the other

blurring into the collective

voice body

another kind of space

blurring into the collective

Robert Ashley

sonic arts union

to compose time

what's the self and what is the other

words everywhere

the I is another

hatred & music

territorial confusion

who is the host?

who is the guest?

inhospitable
context
to demand something
to ask for something
the undecidable
journal of artistic research
creative music out of the time
speaking to yourself
transparency of sound layers – opacity
you can't reflect why it is
flow of glossolalia??
non-voluntary speech
automatic writing
of the voice speaking
turret syndrome
unpredictable

04

Jerry Hunt
Jerry Hunt
for Video Translation
the hidden & the unseen
accessing the inaccessible
with occult
figure of charlatan
talk slice
the occult
William James
Alfred North Whitehead
the pragmatist
experimentation
Process based promise

William James Whitehead

Contingencies

Jerry Hunt

Texas sound art

to core is to break

structure

symbolic matrix

unpredictability

into the predictable

philosophy of relation

where things happen

between subject and object

Speculative realism

Badiou!!

05

illusion machines

uncanny for contemporary art

screaming

screaming action

reading the future

John Dee

seeing into the future

John Dee

Tables

Derrida: Sur Parle

undecidability is the condition of impossibility

difference between moral & ethic

moral is fixed

ethic

generate material

06

Forms of spatiality

spatial Forms

resonating body

reception =/ sensation

non preconception

Suely Rolnik writer – philosopher

Merleau Ponty

the community

sound is queer

Judith Jack Halberstam

07

academy of future science

Duchamp

the audience completes the work

Ikebana

more the line than the color

mixing religion and science

to transform a sound is to name it

James Park photographers

citation

recontextualisation

Orson Welles

the window

Guernica – Picasso

die lange Geschichte des Gemäldes

the object / the concert

audioguide

invisible cities

folksongs

‘enjoy poverty please’

08

Window

09

Jerry Hunt

philosophy of relation

Herman Perez

Nancy

Agamben

the community & parole

Judith Jack Halberstam

sound is queer

Suely Rolnik

Merleau Ponty

John Dee

seeing into the future tables

Derrida – sur parole

screaming – reading the future

10

instigate

in the act of translation

agency / policy of listening

Gene Hackman / Coppola

Vito Acconci following piece

the seventh person

the stranger

sound is the agent

time map

sound listens to sound

I would focus on ...

tuning in

typist
resonance
as activity of audience
the face
out of the face
apart & together
hear
sound as measure
the standing man
the ability to resonate

11

Ana Pais

knowledge of the body
the performance repeats the performance
what were the words / images
or expressions what they feel when they are on stage
sound as a form of innovation
when this exchange arts
the resonance
how sound propagation
propagates through a medium
maybe that's not magic
power relation of what
intersensorial vocabulary
to touch / rhythm metaphors
affect and sound
the connection between affect and sound
immersive – the experience is immersive
there is a rhythmic aspect – frequencies – repetition – intensities –
the two phenomena are invisible
and they are events

a temporal flux
being affected

12

body language to express their experience

onomatopoeia

Ana Pais

to describe it I wanted to use the vocabulary of sound

it has a materiality to it

audience: attention / tension – not through decisions

a sensitive quality / a movement / as exchange

spectator / passiveness / – a mode of tension has an impact

on the performance itself / if it is so actual, why can't we speak about it?

the work of attention / tension

magic field between the two – the encounter might not necessarily be positive

play with rhythm – Julien Henriques – Jamaica / Britain (Goldsmiths) a rhythm

analysis

different layers of rhythm

“the vibrations of affect” ... on a night out ...

the measurement of affect ...?

affects as sound vibrations

repetition & frequency amplitude

a behavior of

it is invasive – it knows no limit

transmission receive

13

sound (space) affect

a sensitive charge that as attached to thoughts to emotions

Daniel Stern – dynamic and synthetics

vital affects Rhythm audio & rhythm

following the rhythm

rhythmic vocabulary
no right or wrong
no measurement but sensation
the perceptual rhythm
micro-sounds
what you feel and what you listen – the whole
politics of affect?
predetermined what you feel
the unpredictable
communicate ... of what you feel
vocabulary
develop a vocabulary as bodily signs for sound

14

commotion
the effect rhythm of live events
emotion / common with movements
the experience is the movement – moving together
what are the political implications
politics of affect!!!
what field ?? of engagement is the theater engaging
western hierarchy of the senses
the visible
Macbeth – aural versus the written
visual versus the auditive
Teresa Brennan
the transmission of affects
the cultural politics of emotion
Sara Ahmed
Vera Mantera – Portuguese Choreographer
following the teacher

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ALEXANDRE ST-ONGE

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LISTENING TO SALT,
OR HOW I BECAME A DIRTY LISTENER /

ANA PAIS

I. Hot sounds

We were asked to remain silent. Other groups around us kept climbing rocks up and down, chatting away. We stood still and listened. We waited. We stood even stiller: our eyes shutting down, bodies relaxing into an attentive inclination, our skin anticipating the sudden cold that would fall on us in a split second. I had no clue of what to expect whatsoever. And then we could hear it.

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Popping and crackling gently from different points on the rock, salt released thermic energy accumulated during the desert hours of the day. Decrepitation, I learn later, is the scientific name for the phenomenon. Minerals such as salt decrepitate when the liquid pressure is released through the influence of heat. Hot sounds, we heard then. It felt like the rock became animated, confiding in us how hard this job was, being under the blazing sun all day (“What a relief,” it mumbled). As we listened, we became a supportive shoulder; people on whom salt could rely for a couple of minutes.

Just before sunset, the rocks of the Valley de la Luna emit subtle sounds to the environment. Most visitors overlooked (or rather, overheard) this, too busy to enjoy the moment or too clenched in the tour schedule. I was lucky to have found a tourist agency that privileged the quality of the experience over profit. Groups were small and there was good food. Orlando, a na-

tive from San Pedro de Atacama, was a gentle guide. He cared for details. He treasured the beauty of his land and its secrets such as listening to rocks as a sonic reminder of the falling and freezing night. The subtle popping sounds signal the sudden transition of temperature and conditions of visibility: from heat to cold, from light to darkness. Indeed, it marks transition, change, and movement. It is a sensorial threshold. Yet, I wouldn't have given much thought about this experience if I hadn't developed a dirty ear.

II. Dirty ear

In March 2014, I was a fortunate participant in the Dirty Ear Forum, at the Bergen Art Academy in Norway. Although I had been interested in sound as event and in the ways we experience it – in particular, the performative features it shares with affective experience – I had never been exposed to such an inspiring listening exploration. Ideas and thoughts shared in Bergen were seeds embedded in my ear. In Southern landscapes, they finally had the appropriate atmosphere to blossom in actual experiences. At the Forum, the concept of collective listening was constantly resurfacing within our ongoing debate. Perhaps we were all interested in thinking about participation, multiplicity and shared spaces. Perhaps we were engaged with the political possibilities of sound worlds and their experience. Being together throughout an experience that does not require the same (feeling and perceiving the same) but instead allows difference to emerge (feeling and perceiving difference) while sharing those worlds of experience – worlds potentiated by sound and affect. In our sessions in Bergen, I came to realize that the possibility for collective listening is likely to happen in many other social gatherings – not just theatre audiences, in which I had been focusing in my own research – for instance, in a guided tour to the Valley de la Luna.

As Brandon LaBelle said elsewhere, a dirty ear is “an ear made sensitive to what it previously could not or would not allow itself to hear.” This is the ground for a theory of listening, LaBelle further suggests, that expands the

borders of proper listening to include impurities of sound, a way of thinking and perceiving that welcomes the yet-to-be-known. My listening experience came into bloom while travelling in South America due to the fact that my ear was made sensitive to sound events that would have remained in the background before. I became easily drawn to seize subtle movements of sound – rhythmic patterns, resonances, sonic interferences, noises. In other words, I became aware of soundscapes and more interested in expanding the notion of landscape. I became more present to what happened in the moment. I became a dirty listener.

This is the more relevant as when one travels to see such profound landscapes. One wants to see the world, that is, to discover it, to know what it's like; one is compelled to embrace the unfamiliar. One takes pictures: holding the camera, one doubles one's eye with a click. One clicks oneself out of the picture. Needless to say, I took my camera with me. What I didn't know beforehand was that I had also taken a new dirty ear to hear the landscape as it materialized before me through sound, through myself. Such an old fashioned gadget used to allow for sounds to be heard sets one in a receptive state: one does not look for the best angle, the best composition, the best smile; one simply does not click. It's the soundscape that clicks us, inviting a deep felt experience of listening, of crackling and popping affective resonances.

Like decrepitate, crackling and popping are onomatopoeic verbs. They try to reproduce sonic actions. Onomatopoeia re-performs sound events through language, making its "poetic possibilities" more salient because it realigns sense and sound in representation (Allen Weiss, *Varieties of Audio Mimesis*, Errant Bodies Press, 2008: 20). Allen Weiss suggests, "onomatopoeia effects a rupture in signification leading to a renewed attention to the sounds themselves" (idem: 26). "Sounds themselves," that is, sound matter as ephemeral events, have an inherent meaning that interweaves the aural and the affective. Thus, it can only be translated to sound-words. Sounds move across the body, they are both heard and felt. Thus, the connection between the aural and the affective is the felt quality of the experience of the world. In his study of audio mimesis, Weiss reinforces the synesthetic aspects of experience one

goes through when present to a landscape: soundscape and landscape are deeply intertwined. With a dirty ear, landscapes became whole-body-blowing. One becomes more present to the experience of actually being there. To be fully present to a landscape is to immerse in its soundscape, to collapse the threshold of vision and listening. In addition, listening to salt in a guided tour also troubled the borders of individual and collective practices of being present and sharing experiences. If soundscapes are immersive, pervasive and unstoppable, so are affective atmospheres.

III. Gift to a friend

Many times during this trip, I wished my best travelling companion were with me. Unfortunately, she could not join me on this quite unexpected South America expedition. Her birthday was coming up and I meant to bring her a present. How to share a trip with someone that was supposed to be there? Surely, I did not want to give her postcards or photos, but could it be possible to share listening potentials of a dirty ear? Clearly, neither the experience nor the competence is likely to be sharable. Yet, would there be a possibility of bringing closer to her a sensation of being there through technological mediation, like a photo? I've collected recordings of soundscapes to give her as a present that would be as immaterial as sound itself (a dropbox file). I had a simple criterion: the soundscape had to make me think of her, or rather, it had to make me think of her feeling in tune with the landscape. I recorded sounds of all the places I imagined she would love and all the places I wanted to share with her: the Pantanal, Iguaçu Falls, Los Cordones Valley, Salar de Uyuni, Macchu Picchu. At the Pantanal, in particular, the sonic experience was overwhelming. All sorts of animals, all sorts of moving, shaking, flapping, chirping, as a constant rhythmic background, different from day to night. Thus, I found myself completely immersed in a landscape that didn't lend itself to seeing so much as to listening. When you are in it you can't really see its uniqueness: the reflections of water covering the earth can only be seen from slightly above whereas sound

is encompassing one's experience at all times. Penetrating and moving. What an amazing example of a place I could share with a recording. Or not?

When I was in the desert, I had already begun collecting soundscapes. However, I was not fast enough to record the crackling and popping of desert salt. It was all too unexpected, too sudden. I wished I could listen to the recording again and again. I wanted to be there again. At the same time, I thought, how would it be possible to be there again through sound? If recorded, sound can be repeated, the body can activate its own memories of the moment, living them once more. Felt sound is, thus, not only haptic vibrations the body can perceive, though not hear, but also the affective atmosphere of our listening experience. Thus, felt sound not only blurs past and present time but also space. Sound takes one to the moments of the event, though in a different place. It merges spatial distances, confusing and multiplying temporal layers. Yet, recorded sound will not take one to the realm of collective listening because, most likely, we are probably alone when we hear it. This feature makes collective listening close to the social phenomenon of the audience in a performance, namely, to its ephemeral and performative qualities.

When listening to salt crackling and popping in the cooling desert of Atacama, I was in a group of people that transformed what could have been my experience if I were to be alone. Regardless of individual impressions and feelings, this act of listening was collectively performed: it was created and simultaneously conditioned by the random group, senders and receivers of affect amongst ourselves (and the rocks). Like sound waves propagating and resonating, affect moved around and informed our experience. (It is important to note that this was a random group gathered for the day. The group itself did not exist before that performative listening.) This is not about personal bonding with the others or with the place (personally, I can't recall anyone except Orlando, with whom I took other guided tours), but about the way we feel both having an influence and being subjected to a collective experience.

I am thinking of affective transmission as resulting from the act of listening itself. Deborah Kapchan defines the felt embodied experience of sound as "sound knowledge": "a non-discursive form of affective transmission result-

ing from acts of listening” (Deborah Kapchan, 2015, forthcoming). Kapchan’s concept foreshadows a production of knowledge through feeling – a specific mode of knowing through listening that is relational, interdependent with the environment, but also performative, active and receptive at the same time. Although the author suggests different genres of listening (transitive, intransitive, tactical, empathic, etc.), they all share a relational quality that is inherent to listening practices. We listen to the world in the world, not outside of it. Whether listening directed to an object or ubiquitous, aiming at producing a pedagogical or political effect or to engage empathically with another, when we listen we engage with an experience of connection or disconnection. The fact that it can be one or the other concerns the performativity of listening acts. They do things; they create worlds. Thus the one who listens is not a passive receptacle of phenomena outside but an active motor of transformation of those phenomena through the body. In this sense, listening provides a mode of embodied knowledge that implies felt experience: the circulation of affect, transmitted and transformed in the moment of the event.

Collective listening adds an important notion to this performative sonic-affective approach. In a group, designated or not as such, sound knowledge emerges from the interconnections that are being performed at the moment of listening. This means that the other is directly implicated in one’s experience and vice-versa. There is no outside or inside: the transmission and circulation of affect result from listening in as much as it performs the act of listening. Unlike sound events, sound knowledge cannot be recorded. It comes from the bodily experience of participating in an act of listening that implies affective transmission, that is, an embodied social experience. This is why sound knowledge emerging from a collective act of listening is both a heightened experience of the transmission of affect and a paradoxical (im)possibility of listening. As felt knowledge both results and determines acts of listening, performing non-repeatable affective constellations, it cannot be recorded. It is, therefore, irreproducible. Collective acts of listening cannot be re-lived or re-felt, just as a theatrical performance is never the same each night. One has to be there.

IV. Listening, resonating, affecting

In my recent research, I approached audience engagement in live performance through the lens of an emergent sound-affect paradigm. Listening and resonance were two key issues in thinking the role of the audience in affecting the felt quality of the performance, therefore, making it unique. I had proposed the concept of “affective resonance” to describe a practice of collective listening in the theatre that feeds back to the performers. I was interested in understanding how the audience participates in live performance either by interacting with the actors or by sitting in the auditorium. While allowing individual differences of feeling and interpretation, affective resonance is a collective state of tension that suspends the performance in a movement of affects as it lends itself to listening. “Affective resonance”, I have suggested, is a mode of tension and attention that allows us to conceive of the audience as an active counterpart in live events.

Likewise, collective listening can be thought of a resonating experience where listening is deeply entangled with how one feels. Individual auditors activate an affective resonance that intensifies the transmission of affect already taking place in the act of listening. The group enhances and excites this circulation, producing a sound knowledge that is unrepeatable and unachievable without it. While listening, each member of the group influences the felt quality of the experience, making it unique. The group performs a sonic-affect world that proceeds from a social gathering but impacts the biology of the body, relating and affecting the sound knowledge that emerges from listening.

I have been writing this text during an exceptionally long period of sunny days, even for a winter in Lisbon. I have come to a local park. From here one can see one of the hills of the city, as well as the center and a fraction of the river. I hear people talking around me, people eating and laughing; I hear the sound of planes about to land; I hear dogs barking; I see a crane crazily whooping and a repetitive jackhammer beat coming from different directions overlapping birds singing; I hear distances; I hear a baby sleeping in its trolley; I hear a man sitting under a black umbrella waiting for the rain. I am inside this textured soundscape, that I see and feel through, sometimes not sure of what comes first.





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THE SONIC AGENT / BRANDON LABELLE

I want to start by posing the idea of a sonic criticality. This is not so much about a notion of critical consciousness, or even critique, developed and nurtured according to sound and the conditions of listening, not only, but also, and more, the question of a sonic agency. Or, what I prefer to think of as “a sonic agent”. I make this distinction – between agency and agent, critique and embodiment – as a way to think through sonic criticality as a figure, or a type of body, a material manifestation that does not solely breathe upon the page, or appear in the folds of discourse and argumentation; but more, as something or someone to contend with, encountered within the social field, in a particular bar, for example, or maybe on the train – a figure, a type of body, an enigmatic potential.

The sonic agent, as I’m interested to pose, is the embodiment of a potentiality for incursion and disobedience, as well as that of care and compassion, based upon a sonic ontology. That is to say, that a sonic agent is one defined by audible behaviors – a becoming set in motion by what sound evokes: an acoustic subjectivity, and one entering the social field: a sonic figure (a figuring) that appears and disappears, gives itself over to a voice, and that we may bump into as it journeys, or overhear on occasion, and quite often.

I pose the sonic agent as a way to begin to think through what a sonic criticality might be, and from which a type of politics of possibility can be nurtured and brought forward onto the current society of crisis (which might be said to appear as the aftermath to the society of the spectacle – and to which sound and listening may offer a critical route). In short, I’m interested to extend a sound studies toward a politics of possibility, and further, toward a potential demonstration of sonic acts, sonorous forces, and auditory resistances – those that may take shape according to gestures of sounded hope.

It is clear that processes of voice and listening are central to forms of public assembly, democratic procedures, and collective gathering, thereby locating an idea of sonic criticality as a main force enabling conditions of public life, so

that we may hear beyond ourselves. Subsequently, might we extend this into a notion of the sonic agent, to give way to a deeper and richer forcefulness, of insurrection as well as compassion? That is, bodies or figures that may certainly vocalize and listen, but that may also deliver and afford trajectories of potent individuation and collectivity shaped by acoustical consciousness and imagination. What I have in mind are sonic agents as forces of social flexibility, bodily shape-shifting, inaudibilities and invisibilities that may effectuate a politics of possibility. To meet on the other side of the spectacle, in the fibers of networks and biopolitics, insecure and therefore prone to finding strength through dissolution within which sound readily gives support.

Potential agents, or powers of the dissolute:

The Invisible /

Might we understand sound as a material that occupies or evokes territories of non-visibility? A physical movement of pressures and molecular agitations that is fundamentally invisible, and that accordingly hovers somewhere between energy and event, transmission and reception? While sound may occur alongside the actions of things, in the stirring of elements or in the thrust of bodies, it nonetheless falls away from these originating events to motion forward, or back, up and around, into so many unseen trajectories. Such invisibility may be considered as a potent condition of sound, enabling a type of undercover insertion into existing situations. A sonic agent of the invisible is suggestive for strategies of secrecy: to hover in the background; to move through certain spaces with covert intent; to give challenge to the powers of ocular arrest, identification, recognition, and visual capture. If the gaze performs to often define certain limits, to point at those who may cross lines or borders, to delimit the permissible within the social field according to what or who appears, and how, sound's unseen character may afford opportunities for not only entering and exiting spaces, but for finding solidarities within the dark, or beyond the threshold of appearance. Accordingly, it may extend

precisely what or who counts, within this space of appearance, widening the sphere of the uncountable and the inexistent.

The Overheard /

The sonic agent is not so much a body or figure that draws its features from what we understand as a person, or even a subject; rather, the figure of a sonic agent is constituted by sound's ontological conditions and capacities – while invisibility produces a sonic agent in tension with the force of the look, and the powers of the gaze, the overheard gives us another trajectory, another cut into the field of social life. There is often that sense of there being more to what I am hearing, at this moment; I may concentrate, I may draw my attention toward this sound here, yet often there is something else: an excess, a remainder, a push of energy that stirs below or around what I hear, and yet which I know, or intuit, as being present. In fact, it is precisely this more which may influence or effect the quality of what I hear by interfering with or supporting the oscillations of this certain sound: particles that touch, meet or push against another, to cancel or dilute the force or signification of what I hear. Sounds upon sounds; the overheard upon the heard. Might a sonic agent of the overheard open up to the conditions of multiplicity, a thrust of continual differentiation? This sonic agent is always forcing its way in; it invades the scene, it demands more. It takes the background and brings it forward, and in so doing collapses the field of perspectives; it rushes in, and yet it may already turn us around and toward the other. I pose the overheard than as a type of dimensional distraction, a pluralizing of space; it is a figure whose agency is founded on the potentiality of interruption, to estrange the heard.

The Migrant /

From secrecy, and ruptures onto the powers of visibility, to spatial interruptions that extend precisely the conditions of singularity, the sonic agent is positioned as a tensing of boundaries and the arresting operations of technologies of capture and fixed architectures. In contrast, a sonic ontology is suggestive for rifts and rendings, agitations that oscillate from the molecular

to the molar, offering vaporous channels by which to invade and interfere as well as group and collect: in listening we enter into that condition of complex mutuality often espoused as a central production of sound. To find each other. Here I'm interested in the sonic agent of the migratory, and am keen to consider how the movements of sound produce a condition of the itinerant. In this regard, the term "movement" is somehow inadequate; sounds certainly move, but they also diffuse, bundle, vibrate, filter, shatter, and penetrate. Thus, movement is more an entire constellation of motions, all of which suggest forms of transience and trespass. Sound, in other words, is always moving on. Leaving so many sources behind, from bodies and objects to things and events, sound picks up and goes, and yet such going is not without its baggage, or consequence. In pushing on sound collects a range of material elements – reflections, absorptions, reverberations ... these are pressed into the body of sound as it oscillates across and over so many surfaces. It is bruised by the environment, marked by the material features of surroundings around which it is shaped, impressed. As a sonic agent, this migratory figure is thus a product of its surroundings, and its endless travels; and what it carries forward is an assemblage of so many interactions. In this regard, it is an agent of the world, a foreigner with multiple languages, embodying the potentiality of a certain cosmopolitanism, a radical form of globalism. Accordingly, the sonic agent of migration crosses multiple borders, and therefore generates connections across a range of locations, communities, voices; it promises a condition of post-nationalism, evading the border patrol and weaving together a diversity of cultural matters.

The Weak /

Movements and propagations, oscillations and trespasses, the force of sound may deliver powerful energies, to annoy and to interfere, to agitate and to violate; yet such agentive promises should be understood to be fundamentally based on a condition of diffusion and dissipation. Sound is always moving away from a source; in traveling and migrating, in brushing up against numerous surfaces, being absorbed and reflected as it moves, it is equally losing

weight. It is thinned out as it goes; as it flies over the field of ocular arrest, as it stitches together communities, forcing strangers and neighbors to meet, and invading any number of territories, to sweep past and through the cracks and crevices of the social field, tickling the skin and making shudder the structures of place, sound does so according to a condition of weakness. It is, as a defining feature, a weak figure; and I might say, it also spreads such weakness – to listen one must pause, even stop what one’s doing; we fix our ears to a certain sound, or we even block them in moments of invasive noise. We are also touched by sound as it brushes past, or burrows deep within, to send us to sleep, to soften the mind, or to fluster and flush the cheeks, or our sanity. We are pushed around by sound, and accordingly, we weaken, lose our energy when faced with the power of sonic experience. Weakness thus runs through sound: particles that move, that diffuse, caught or captured, and then let go, to massage the air and our bodies with its touch; such weakness produces a type of sonic agent, one defined by a horizontal becoming, a connective threading, invisible, overheard, migrating, and weak, to weaken the regimes that hold things in place, that fix them on the ground, that capture according to a politics of control and that attempt to thwart any strategies of the weak: non-violent, empathic, mutually affective, secretive, and disruptive, the rapture of loss and becoming that is listening.

Sonic support

In mapping out a preliminary series of sonic agents, I’m interested to ultimately extend how a sonic criticality might take shape, and more, how it might come to act within the contemporary social and political field. While this entails a certain imaginative thread – which starts from a basic observation onto sound’s physical behavior or conditions, and then is elaborated through a speculative journey, an imagining, a listening in – the sonic agent is posited as a material production in the making: a support structure for the continued engagement and uncertainty any self-determination or collective procedure

requires. I would say, it is just such an interweave – of a sonic materiality with an imagined potential – that the sonic agent may be said to embody, suggesting a broader spectrum of resources for those bodies that struggle, that long for other systems, and that currently search within this society of crisis for new friends. Moving across and through imagination and material, virtual and direct conversation, and within the animate activity of networked culture, we in fact already operate as sonic agents.

Let us turn up the volume and reach into the dark.



NO MICROPHONE RECORDINGS / JAMES WEBB

A protester's bullhorn clears the air of all other distractions.

The detached yawn of the waiting room's air-conditioning.

A washing machine masticating.

The whine of the fish shop's neon sign.

The airy slurp of friends sucking noodles.

Mixed tapes. Someone else's choreographed nostalgia.

Smiles grabbed in voices from home.

The ear stages the scene.

Squelchy motifs.

The purr of waiting taxis.

Students peeing in alleyways.

Dull, mechanical discharges.

Fragrant readings.

Laughter sticks to the tunnel walls like graffiti.

Murmuring cooking pots.

Sighs of completion.

Dreams involving karaoke with pets.

Rain cancels everything.

The Oscar Pistorius trial squirming from inside the car's radio.

A signer waving his hands to fashion a calligraphy of noise.

The storm has entered my head.

Nightingale sneakers.

Stomachs peeling.

Eavesdropping on a hair dresser.

Percolating quietude.

The Adhan stirs everything.

Tell my neighbours to shut the fuck up.

A biker toppled.

Cicadas scorching.

Crows laughing at me.

My 2-year old niece scrambling my name.

Radio Foley like a tired joke.

Segregated morphemes.

The gallerist's confident excuses.

The male lover's dark telephone voice.

The Cardiff / Miller piece sounded better from further away.

The tongue is a hook.

An erased DAT tape.

Agitated air.

BIOGRAPHIES

Ricarda Denzer

a Vienna-based artist, explores the processes of transformation and translation in the specific context of cultural and socio-political landscapes and its impact on recent times. Language, particularly the spoken word, listening and the voice are central to her work. Denzer teaches at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Recently she curated the show “About the House” and has edited the books *Silence Turned Into Objects – W.H. Auden in Kirchstetten* (2014) and *Perplexities* (2013).

Lucia Farinati

(Italy/UK) is an independent curator based in London and the Director of Sound Threshold, an interdisciplinary curatorial project that explores the relationships between site, sound and text. She has collaborated with many sonic art projects and radio initiatives including *bip bop*, *Sound Proof 5*, *Audio Arts*, *Resonance 104.4 FM*, *Radio Papesse* and *Radio Arte Mobile*.

Claudia Firth

(UK) is an artist and essayist. She is currently studying for a PhD in Cultural and Critical Studies at Birkbeck College, University of London writing a short non-linear history of three moments of economic and political crisis, inspired by the novel *The Aesthetics of Resistance*.

Brandon LaBelle

is an artist and writer working with sound culture, voice, and questions of agency. He develops and presents artistic projects and performances within a range of international contexts, often working collaboratively and in public. Recent projects include *The Living School*, *South London Gallery* (2016), and *The Stranger Seminar*, *Liquid Architecture*, *Melbourne* (2015). He is the author of *Lexicon of the Mouth* (2014), and *Diary of an Imaginary Egyptian* (2012), among others.

Ana Pais

was born in 1974, in Lisbon. She has worked as theatre critic in the most distinguished newspapers in Portugal as well as a dramaturg for both theatre and dance projects. She published *Discourse of Complicité. Contemporary Dramaturgies* (Edições Colibri, 2004) and lectured at the Theatre Conservatoire in Lisbon. She holds a PhD in theatre studies from the University of Lisbon entitled *Commotion: affective rhythms in the theatrical event*.

Alexandre St-Onge

is an audio artist, a musician/improviser (bass, voice and electronics) and a sonic performer. Philosophiae doctor (PhD) in art (UQAM, 2015), he is fascinated by creativity as a pragmatic approach to the ungraspable and he has released ten solo albums including *viorupeeeeeihean* (Oral), *Entités* (Oral) and *Kasi Naigo* (squintfuckerpress), amongst others.

Tao G. Vrhovec Sambolec

is an artist and musician working with invisible ephemeral phenomena and the notion of space. His artistic practice is a poetic exploration of relationships between transitory and temporal flows like sound, weather phenomena and human activities and built environment and social spaces they inhabit. He is currently research fellow at the Bergen Academy of Arts and Design (KHIB).

James Webb

is an artist based in Cape Town. His large-scale gallery installations and unannounced interventions in public spaces employ a variety of media, including audio and text, and often make use of ellipsis, displacement and détournement as creative methods. He is particularly interested in the nature of belief and the dynamics of communication in our contemporary world.

The Dirty Ear Forum is an experimental forum for sonic research. Occurring in different locations and settings, it is based on the coming together of a selected group of practitioners to share and exchange research on sound and listening, and to collectively work through a range of sonic concepts. Each Forum is developed through collective decision making in terms of how to focus the process, and how to publicly manifest the work, as a type of concluding action. At the center of the Forum is a desire to bring together individual viewpoints and practices into a shared activity, embracing sound as a conceptual and material platform that may provide creative opportunities for collaborative and pluralistic expressions.

In particular, the project aims to pose sound as a material that allows us to rethink modes of collective work. It considers how sound evades our ability to physically hold onto it, how it moves through an environment and often passes over boundaries, and how the invisibility of sound often eludes description or capture. These dynamic and rather dirty qualities of sound are central to the Forum, and to enabling a sound art attuned to a diversity of situations, and that seeks out the multiplicity of being together.

