

## **THE RESEARCHER-AS-DRAMATURG: LINGERING IN BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE OR HOW ARTISTIC STRATEGIES ENRICH ACADEMIC RESEARCH. A MANIFESTO TO SWITCH GEAR**

**A INVESTIGADORA-DRAMATURGA: PERSISTIR ENTRE A TEORIA E A PRÁTICA OU COMO AS ESTRATÉGIAS ARTÍSTICAS ENRIQUECEM A INVESTIGAÇÃO ACADÉMICA. UM MANIFESTO PARA MUDAR DE DIREÇÃO**

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What does the notion of the dramaturg add to the position of the researcher? In this manifest I explore the position of the researcher-as-dramaturg as an opening up of methodology with strategies from different fields. I propose the researcher-as-dramaturg as a necessary re-evaluation of the process within the realm of academic research.

**Keywords:** Researcher-as-dramaturg. Intimacy. Sound. Complexidence. Manifest. Listening.

O que é que a noção de dramaturga pode acrescentar à posição de investigadora? Neste manifesto, exploro o lugar da/o investigador/a-dramaturgo/a como uma abertura metodológica com estratégias de diferentes campos. Proponho a/o investigador/a-dramaturgo/a como reavaliação necessária dos processos no campo da investigação académica?

**Palavras-chaves:** Investigador/a-dramaturgo/a. Intimidade. Som. Complexidência. Manifesto. Ouvir.

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## **The Manifest of a researcher-as-dramaturg**

- (1) Define your position**
- (2) Be generous & greedy**
- (3) Create your own methodology while working as a researcher-as-dramaturg to re-evaluate the process**
  - a. Listen, Register & Note**
  - b. Read & Remember**
  - c. Write & Search**
  - d. Make & Think**
- (4) Remind yourself of (the value of) your methodology**
- (5) Be intimate with your own thoughts**
- (6) Slowing down does not equal a withdrawal, but a shifting of gear**
- (7) Don't forget to play**

*Phenomenology, however, does not start with a theory, or with a consideration of theories. It seeks to be critical and non-dogmatic, shunning metaphysical and theoretical prejudices, as much as possible. It seeks to be guided by what is actually experienced rather than by what we expect to find, given our theoretical commitments. It asks us not to let preconceived theories form our experience, but to let our experience inform and guide our theories.*  
(Gallagher & Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*, 11)

*"I enter the studio as a dramaturg  
by running away from the external eye. (...) I enter to find a new body.  
That is the most important task of the dance dramaturg  
– to constantly explore possible sensorial manifestos"*  
(Lepecki, in Delahunta, *Dance Dramaturgy: speculations and reflections*)

## 1. Introduction

The pathway towards this manifest started on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2017, I started working as a PhD scholar at the S:PAM research centre (Studies in Performing & Media Art, Ghent University). As a new scholar with all possibilities still open and in front of me I struggled to locate, define and start my research “The sound of a shared Intimacy. A phenomenological-philosophical research into the heautonomous functioning of Sound in Contemporary Performing arts.” Instead of isolating sound or approaching it as a side effect of the image, I aimed to study the function of sound and the possibilities it generates for artists and audiences by fully acknowledging its particular meaning-making potential in perception. In this struggle, I tackled problems quite intuitively and as a junior researcher I was barely reading ‘theoretical’ texts. This seemed to be a strange phenomenon in comparison with my fellow researchers. Because reading defines precisely what academics at the beginning of their research trajectory do in order to outline a state of affairs and to position themselves theoretically...

But what did I do instead, then? I joined students of EPAS (European Postgraduate in Arts and Sound) in their creative process, I talked with them about that process. I took notes, sketched and visualised sound patterns while listening. I was laying out my notes, ... I gathered thoughts and quotes from fields, which at first glance had nothing to do with performance studies. I ran against deadlines. I wrote applications. Occasionally, I rejoined the artists I worked with as a production manager, for rehearsals and shows. I listened to their questions. I brainstormed with new artists. I moderated. I dialogued. Having become an ‘academic’, I was reluctant to say goodbye to my dwelling place within performance practice. Thus, I lingered.

One of the dialogues gathered fellow researchers at the S:PAM research centre (in Stalpaert *et al.* 2018, pp. 110–155). All of us work with one foot in the field and the other in academia. We all refuse to say goodbye to practice completely, but we hesitate about how to incorporate our practice within the academic realm. We label our in-between research position with the concept of the researcher-as-dramaturg. But what does my research gain from such a concept, what does it mean? And even more important, how does it function? In the search for answers to these questions, I wrote a manifest to myself.

## 2. Why a manifest?

I approach this text as an exploration and legitimation of my way of working as a researcher-as-dramaturg. I chose to write a manifest, because a manifest is something we declare again and again. Sometimes before we have dinner, at other times to start our day. We mutter the manifest on several occasions and once in a while we scream it at the top of our voices. Sometimes we easily go along with it, other times it is a barrier we chance upon or hide behind. According to Johanna E. Vondeling a manifest embeds legitimation as one of its driving forces (2000, p. 128). She pinpoints how manifestos have often been about declaring your identity and your position within a certain field. For her, a manifest is about sharing a “program in order to indicate the more general and wide-ranging declarations, visions or overviews in order to address certain concerns” (*idem*, pp. 128-129).

With this text, I definitely want to outline some of my concerns about working in the academic field of Performance and Theatre Studies. But most of all I aim to legitimate my position, methodology and identity as a researcher-as-dramaturg. Unlike the manifests of the modernist, I don't forbid myself anything with this manifest. It certainly has nothing to do with “policing boundaries between truth and falsity” (*idem*, p. 129).

The format of the manifest enables me to tackle my struggle and gives me some rules of play to work with my newly developed methodology. The manifest of a researcher-as-dramaturg contains the rules I made up to remind myself to play with my thoughts, they define the tools I use to explore and incorporate a process of nuances, hesitations and doubts.

With this manifest I write a wake-up call to myself, to never neglect one of the diverse strategies too long. It stimulates my thoughts to change track. It demands the activation of the in-between. The repetition of diverse methods opens a toolbox in order to climb the mountains in between theory and practice. It helps me to get lost and to find my way in the valley. Maybe some things will get lost or replaced along the way. But when I repeat the manifest I internalise and externalise my methodology at the same time. Thoughts go out and come in. It activates my body and touches my awareness. It puts me at ease when I am nervous and at unease when I am all too comfortable on one track. It draws me closer and keeps me at a distance at the same time. Through the manifest, I become aware of a valuable second-person perspective, created by my way of working. The second-person perspective combines the distance of the researcher with the proximity of the dramaturg. It demands care towards the ‘I’ and the ‘other’.

And although I am definitely not aiming to write an art manifesto, I still want to keep Marinetti's requirements of rigour, verve and style analogies between manifest and work (Danchev 2011, p. XIX) in mind while writing.

### 3. The Manifest of a researcher-as-dramaturg

#### (1) Define your position

My research is situated in the field of Performance and Theatre Studies. I question what happens if we approach performances through sound. Which new concepts, insights and possibilities do sounds generate? Due to that question, I constantly walk on the border between Theatre and Sound Studies, between office and rehearsal studio. It is a daily combination of theory, research and practice. As a result of this movement, I define my position as that of a researcher-as-dramaturg, because a researcher-as-dramaturg incorporates methodological characteristics from the field of academic research and dramaturgy. The overall methodology of my PhD-project combines philosophy with phenomenology.

Thinking about the transfers between artistic and scholarly practices Pil Hansen pinpoints the eclectic combination of theoretical concepts in theatre and dance studies as unique, because “scholars eclectically lift and combine theoretical concepts and methods from multiple disciplines while liberating them from the often-incompatible methodological criteria that qualify them.” (Hansen 2018, pp. 38–39) The figure of the dramaturg embodies this transfer. Without context, one could read this quote as a characterisation of the work of a dramaturg. But what exactly does the addition of dramaturgy then bring to the notion of academic research in the field of theatre and dance studies?

Following Flemish dramaturg Marianne Van Kerkhoven, the dramaturg discovers “the borderland of theory and practice”, while constantly balancing between “leaving something to play for and preservation or registration” (1999, pp. 67–69). How to discover this borderland completely depends on the creation because the “material dictates the tasks and the division of these tasks” among artists, dramaturg, production managers, etc. (*ibidem*). The notion of dramaturgy thus questions the relation of the academic researcher to their object of study. It challenges an outsider position and *objective* distance. It invites the researcher to fluctuate between different fields, positions and strategies (*ibidem*) and enforces the flexibility of the researcher. Next to insurance of multiple experiences and encounters, the notion of dramaturgy opens up what it means to write. Van Kerkhoven stressed the importance of writing for a dramaturg in her text “*The theatre is in the city and the city is in the world and its walls are of skin*” (Van Kerkhoven, 1994a). There she concludes with a quotation from John Berger with the thought that a repeated pattern of writing enforces the intimate dimensions of our relationship with experience (*idem*, p. 3). In other words, repeated writing patterns bring variation to thoughts, they discover and incorporate a process of nuances, hesitations, and doubts.

Because of the importance of such a repeated writing pattern, my work is first and foremost practice-led- and arts-informed-research (Barton 2018, p. 5). Its results can be fully communicated in written documentation (*ibidem*) and although it is not based in the arts it is highly influenced by the arts (MacCallum 2016) and the artists I am working with. My research incorporates multiple and diverse languages. During the process, I fully acknowledge and embed the imaginative qualities of an artistic practice (MacCallum 2016). The use of imaginative qualities closely relates to what Pil Hansen means by

dramaturgy, because these imaginative qualities involve creative strategies that facilitate the process (2015, pp. 124–125). They help me to understand how sound works within a specific performance constellation and they push at and cross the limits of what is possible when listening.

## (2) **Be generous & greedy**

To be generous and greedy at the same time (Persyn 2019) characterises the attitude of a researcher-as-dramaturg. We play the game of give and take. The expression to be generous and greedy underlines the tendency of practice-led researchers to dive in (Lin 2019, 156). It communicates the urge embodied by the work of the researcher-as-dramaturg and immediately lays bare the tensions between the aim of advancing knowledge, generating new understandings (Candy & Edmonds 2018, pp. 63) and the required collaborative openness and curiosity.

This tension is fruitful because it forces the researcher-as-dramaturg to approach knowing as ‘relating to the world around you’ (Ingold 2011, p. 162). You share what you know and you are eager to follow the paths traced by others. You tell and listen, you engage in a dialogue.

## (3) **Create your own methodology while working as a researcher-as-dramaturg to re-evaluate the process**

Based on the thoughts of Marianne Van Kerkhoven, the position of the researcher-as-dramaturg invites the researcher to create his/her own methodology based on his practices and object of study. Just as in practice-based research the process is an integral part of the method (Candy & Edmonds 2018, p. 65).

Looking back on my way of working over the last year and a half, the following method developed:

### a. *Listen, Register & Note:*

The process starts with my listening. Listening defines my main practice, it “provides a new way to understand or describe a situation or interaction” (Carlyle & Lane 2013, p. 9). “The practice of listening can reveal a parallel reality” to the visual analysis within the field of Theatre Studies (*ibidem*). Listening is characterized as active, it creates meaning and drives on the force of the imagination (*idem*, p. 16). Due to these qualities, the listening practice equals a process of doubt, which demand the heard be more than a ghost of the visual (Voegelin 2010, pp. 10-13). Listening demands engagement and time. It is characterised as both subjective and intersubjective at the same time (*idem*, pp. 27-28). It’s a shared practice between artist, researcher, dramaturg and audience member, which joins them in an ongoing and continuous process (*idem*, p. 31).

Field Notes register the listening experience I had during a rehearsal, a talk or a performance. They trace the process and map my path. In the developed

notation system, I compose a translation of the energies, intensities and movements of the encounter. I start with a general description (who, what, where and why) and an impression of the atmosphere. It functions as a kind of introduction, followed by pictures of the sketches I made throughout the encounter. I continue with a detailed description of my listening experience. On the right side of the page, I highlight certain concepts, questions and thoughts. Some of these appeared during the experience, some while writing, others are copies of remarks in after-talks. I conclude the notes by adding quotes from the most diverse fields, in order to interact with some of the highlighted concepts and questions. I don't give answers, but search for textures, I contrast, I hesitate, I reformulate, I stretch thoughts.

b. *Read & Dialogue:*

My field notes generate an amalgam of concepts and questions. In order to feed my own thoughts and the work of the artist, I start reading. The reading takes place across disciplines and in a thematic, associative way. Reading enables me to dialogue with the artist and myself. The dialogue embedded in listening, watching, reading, questioning and talking generates a philosophical becoming (Jurriëns 2009, p. 22) for both artist and researcher.

c. *Make & Think:*

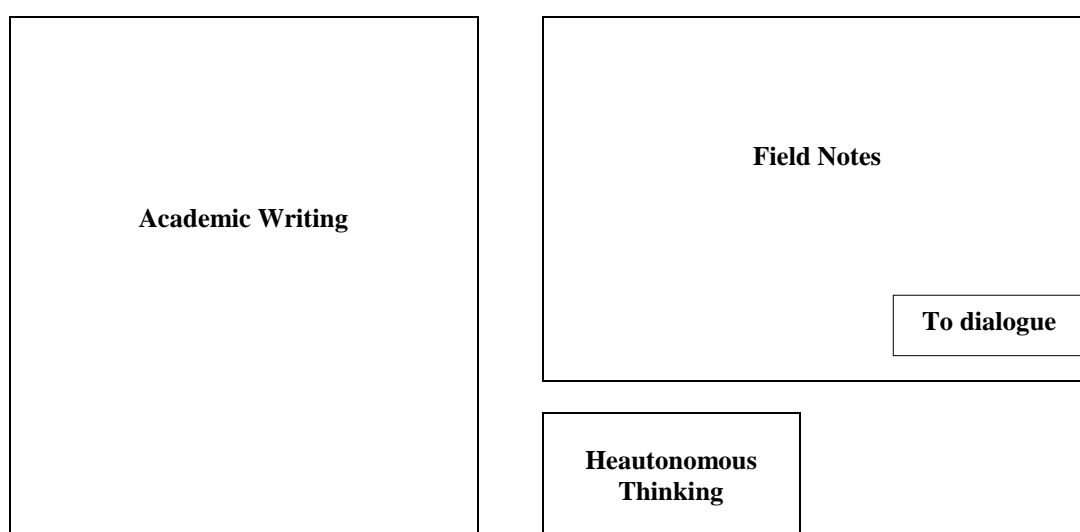
Making and thinking join in what I call 'heautonomous thinking'. The simultaneity of both actions demands the incorporation of artistic strategies in academic research. Heautonomous thinking opens up the spaces between theory and practice. I materialize my listening experiences and my resonating thoughts in objects and drawings. I search for textures, I draw the experience closer again, I digest, I activate. Obstacles are worked through, coloured and ripped apart. I fail. I remake and refine. I feed my thoughts in order to refresh them. If I struggle with a certain concept or question I start doing whilst thinking. I fold, draw, cut, and rearrange the bricks of my listening experience. Even though I don't necessarily have to be aware of what I do, I think while doing. I fall back on a material thinking process that I developed during my training as a visual artist. At the same time, I use these artistic strategies to track down my thinking process. I label the different sensorial explorations and stages of my thinking with exhibition tags like artworks, although they are not. This way of thinking incorporates for me a never disappearing opening up toward unknown territories, thoughts and new questions. It is where I touch the core of my thinking and feel the richness of the tension between theory and practice.

d. *Write & Search:*

In my academic writing, I elaborate on questions developed in my field notes and search for answers based on previous dialogues and my heautonomous thinking (Fig. 1). While writing I try to understand certain concepts. I try to learn from my listening experience and the phenomena that occurred. I develop my own thinking and stretch my critical abilities. I deepen the relation with my listening experience. I analyse performances. I search for resonance. I work and massage the concepts

and questions I encounter myself in the hope of giving back some thoughts to the philosophy I use (and abuse) in my deep reading and hearing of the performances. I take seriously the critique of Pil Hansen about how little theatre and dance studies give back to philosophy (2018, p. 39). I name problems, concepts and questions.

While writing I not only search for answers but also for my own language. Article by article, I discover the language of a researcher-as-dramaturg. Each time, I uncover the possibilities of a poetic language which has the ability to name like storytelling (Ingold 2011, p. 165).

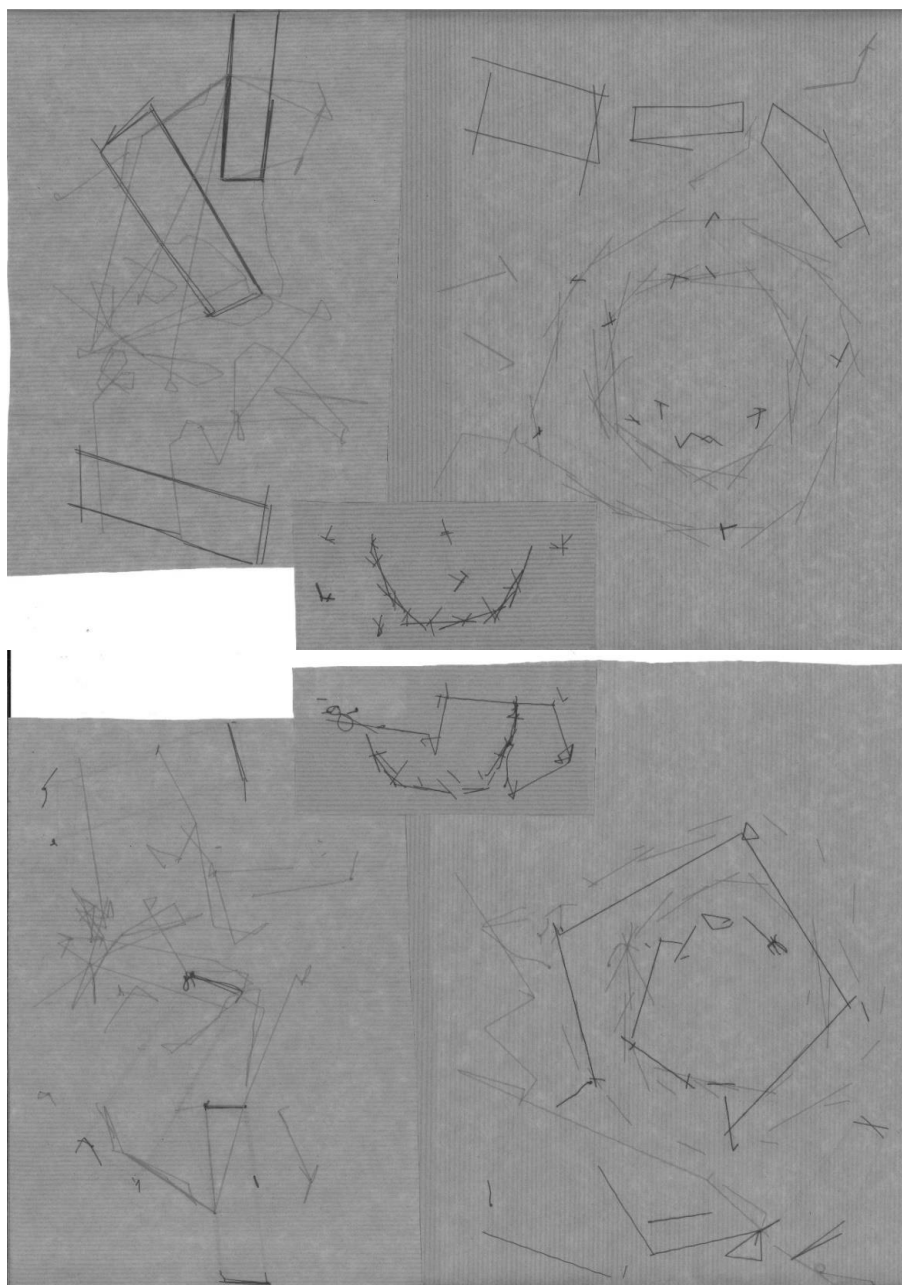


**Figure 1. Heautonomous Thinking, one step in the process of academic research**

Translating the thoughts of Hansen and Van Kerkhoven, I, as researcher-as-dramaturg, work with an eclectic methodology inspired by different fields. Its eclectic character resonates with my object of study, its central concepts and case studies. In order to discover what the possibilities in between theory and practice are, I combine the tasks of a researcher with those of a dramaturg. I engage my brain and my body. Only then, it becomes possible to read, write, look, listen, encounter, rehearse, talk, think, talk again, question, embrace, make choices, etc. My methodology enables questions, thoughts and dialogues, but meanwhile it grounds and registers. I create room in between theory and practice. I recognise the in-between as the place where answers hide. My methodology forces me to allow the unforeseen. It teaches me about resonances and dissonances in between theory and practice by creating mountains and valleys, where it can work and where I get lost. Through my methodology, the far away becomes the nearby, even though they are not the same (Solnit 2006, p. 35). To deal with the complexity of the living field (Van Kerkhoven 1994b) of contemporary performance, working through academic text no longer suffices. Because of that, I value and deploy all my senses in order to deal with the complexity of my research object. All facets of my methodology – academic writing, reading, dialoguing, field notes and heautonomous thinking – claim an equal importance



and value. The answers to my questions lie in between these fields. My methodology is a direct interplay between phenomenology and philosophy, it stimulates a thinking in and through sounds, images and words (Persyn in Stalpaert *et al.* 2018, p. 140). By using academic, dramaturgical and artistic strategies my methodology enables a reevaluation of the process within academic research.



An Improvised Sound Composition

EPAS

3x20"

KASK Zwarte Zaal

LEONIE PERSYN

297 x 420 mm

**Figure 2. An Improvised Sound Composition,**  
(Stalpaert *et al.* 2018, p. 141)

#### (4) Remind yourself of (the value of) your methodology

Creating a bottom-up methodology from the material of study is one thing. Another thing is to stay convinced of the value of that particular method. On a regular basis, you have to remind yourself of your methodology. I thus need to remind myself of the value of phenomenology as a philosophy of experience and presence (Ihde 2007, p. 25), which fully incorporates the practice of listening.

Where do I place the value of phenomenology?

- Phenomenology starts where I as a Theatre scholar start: experience. I experience a performance, a rehearsal.
- A phenomenological methodology gives the opportunity to deal with an ever-changing and ephemeral context.
- Phenomenology enables me to challenge pre-conceived theories and concept within the field of performance studies.
- Phenomenology gives me the freedom to linger
- Phenomenology gives me the framework to get lost, to linger.
- Phenomenology keeps the object of study close and allows new thoughts to remain proximate to the researcher's being in the world.
- The understanding of phenomenology as a philosophy of experience (Ihde 2007, p. 25), enables me to be intimate with my thoughts.

#### (5) Be Intimate with your own thoughts

Being intimation starts when the knot of thoughts becomes too tight and the complexity too dense. Thomas P. Kasulis defines intimation as the most efficient, direct, and effortless form of human communication (Kasulis 2002, p. 29). Intimation combines intimacy with communication. It combines incorporation and sharing (*idem*, pp. 29-41), two movements with opposite directions. Intimation embodies tension and overlap. Therefore, intimation is the language spoken at the in-between of theory and practice. It is the language I use as a researcher-as-dramaturg, because to develop and understand my thoughts, I incorporate, communicate and embody them.

The highest level of intimation in my methodology is located in heautonomous thinking, there where I touch and texturize my thoughts. In other words, intimation manifests itself through an *affective imagination* (*idem*, p. 40) and develops an aesthetic of intensities, a dialogue of energies (Stalpaert 2014, p. 102). When I am intimate with my thoughts, I do not add to the complexity, but I allow it. Such moments of allowance often turn into complexidences, which are moments where incidental insights and understandings emerge. Complexidences are the encounters between our brain and our gut feeling. It's the moment where tensions spark, experience and thoughts are grounded. When complexidences occur, hesitation persists and prevails in the suggestion of an

intimate knowledge. Complexidences do not give answers or solutions. They slow down my (re)search, untangle my process and accelerate my thinking.

#### **(6) Slowing down does not equal a withdrawal, but a shifting of gear**

As a researcher-as-dramaturg I work in between theory and practice. The second-person perspective allows me to communicate without subjection to a unity or totality of theory and practice (Irigaray 2017, p. 46). Intimation is the language at this in-between and hesitation its form of movement (Han 2017, p. 37). When I allow a complexidence to occur, my hesitation peaks and movements of thought accelerate. Because of the (almost too) strong acceleration in an instant of time, meaning dissipates (*ibidem*) and new directions become visible. Complexidences activate my body; they demand I be present. But at the same time, visibilities of new directions make me curious and push me into a new distance. In those moments, I am practicing and theorising at the same time. Complexidences prevent me from getting stuck on one track of my methodology. The new directions, discovered through a hands-on materializing, an unfolding of my hesitation, present me with new questions, topics and concepts to read and write about. If “Both acceleration and the slowing down (...) result from a lack of a rhythmic pace” (Han 2017, p. 26), then complexidences generate rhythms and shifts.

The production of an in-between in my methodology, opens up the position of the researcher dramaturgically. Without such an opening I would persist in certainties in a field without direction. The combination of different strategies acknowledges the body of the researcher and the value of the process. It enables me to re-search, again and again....

#### **(7) Don't forget to play**

The rules of the game only have a function when I play with them. They have been my guideline over six years of research. They need to be tested and sometimes one has to cheat. Rules stated in a manifest enable me to give some air to my research. They prevent me taking myself too seriously as a researcher-as-dramaturg. They enable me to put thing in perspective and context. The rules help me not to get bored with my own PhD-project.

### **4. The manifest in practice: Lingering in between theory and practice**

Writing a manifest is one thing, applying it another. Within the second part of this paper, I want to take you along the path of my re-search on *Hear*. This piece is an auditory choreography made by choreographer Benjamin Vandewalle and musician Yoann Durant in 2016. With a group of 25–40 amateurs, Benjamin and Yoann investigate how movements generate sounds rather than the other way around. They made all artistic decisions based on sound quality. The group of amateurs moves through the blindfolded audience while producing bodily sounds. The aim of Vandewalle and Durant in *Hear* is to install an auditory intimacy, where audience members negotiate reality and imagination. The performance thus unfolds around and in between the audience and

performers in search for the matter of sound; it's being, becoming and existence (Caravan 2016).

In 2016, I joined Yoann and Benjamin during the creation process and first tour of *Hear*. Not as one of the amateurs or a researcher but as production manager. At that time, my dissertation project only existed in a rudimentary form. I had just started the preparation for my application to FWO (Federatie Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek), the Flemish research fund. Amid this first scrambling of thoughts, I was still able to enter the rehearsal space with an open perspective. I was not yet searching for something. But that doesn't mean, I didn't take a critical position towards the performance. One could say that during rehearsals I functioned as a dramaturg.

On the one hand, my unprejudiced attitude triggered some unexpected questions and insights into the functioning of sound. But on the other hand, I now realise how due to this attitude, I lost a lot of my first impressions, questions, agitations and remarks. I was lucky, because due to the fact that in each cultural institution or festival *Hear* is programmed, Benjamin and Yoann, re-make the performance with a new group of local amateurs. This enabled me to re-join the project once I had developed my research method. In April 2018 *Hear* was re-made and performed in STUK, the house for dance, image and sound in Leuven (Belgium). This time, I entered the rehearsal space with a (hidden) agenda, but most of all with a heightened level of awareness.

Up until now, *Hear* is the first production where I fully practiced all the phases of my methodology. In other words, *Hear* helped me to discover the difficulties and possibilities of my methodology in practice. It enabled me to fully embody the position of a researcher-as-dramaturg.

### **(1) Define your position**

Benjamin and Yoann start each new rehearsal and creation process of *Hear* with an introduction to all amateurs. During the first sessions (April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018) of the rehearsals at STUK, they asked each amateur to introduce him- or herself to the others. One by one, the amateurs spoke up and shared their names and motivation for participating in *Hear*. I joined the circle in silence. When it was my turn to speak, I shared my hidden agenda and the past I had with the production up until then. Most importantly, I identified myself as a scholar in Theatre and Performance Studies. I explained how I would join the group without participating. Immediately after I spoke, I took up a position in between visible and invisible. I tried to remain as silent as possible.

### **(2) Be generous & greedy**

This time I was greedy in the first place. Greedy to take notes, to collect information and experiences. My body functioned as a sponge. But the transparency about my history with the project and my agenda made it possible to be generous. Being the only audience member in the rehearsal space, Benjamin and Yoann, often asked me what I heard, what I thought about the sound and its functioning in space. When the group was paired up

during the last warm-up experience, it became clear there was an uneven number of amateurs. I stepped in and helped out the one person remaining. We stared into each other's eyes for 3 minutes.

### **(3) Create your own methodology while working as a researcher-as-dramaturg to re-evaluate the process**

The practice of listening involves listening, thinking, imagining, relating, visualising, reading and writing. It is an active practice, informed by the performances I study and it makes use of artistic strategies. I approach both sound and Image as independent actors with their own grammatical rules. Sounds are what are listened to, images are what I produce to remember, think and understand. I am particularly interested in the field in between both, where they start to dialogue: their heautonomous functioning. Over the different phases of my methodology the balance between phenomenology and philosophy changes.

#### *a. Listen, Register & Note*

As soon as the first rehearsal starts, I listen. I look, I write, I sketch, I concentrate. I try to keep track of my experience without thinking too much about it. My listening experience guides me (Gallagher & Zahavi 2012, p. 11) in taking Field Notes. The difficulty of field notes is how to balance writing and experiencing. In order not to get lost in the taking of the notes, I restrict myself to the use of a ballpoint pen and the paper of my notebook. I never write full sentences. My notes appear as a schematic chaos of words, lines, arrows and colours. Once in a while, a time indication appears. The structure that emerges after a full day is a highly intuitive gathering of movements, sounds, intensities, questions and thoughts.

What I am doing closely relates to what is known in ethnography and anthropology as participant observation, where the researcher takes part in the daily activities and interaction of a group of people (Musante & DeWalt 2002, p. 1). Field notes embed a particular approach to the recording of observations which enhances the quality of the obtained data and the quality of the interpretation. (Musante & Dewalt 2002, pp. 2-8). Participant observation functions both as a collective and an analytical tool, which encourages and stimulates the research process, because each time it generates a new hypothesis and questions. (Musante & Dewalt 2002, p. 8). The history of participant observation in academia gives me confidence about the value of field notes, because it confirms their generative character.

Sharing time with my object of study and keeping track of my experience, incorporates my body in future understandings and shapes future interpretations and analysis. Through my field notes, I will be able to find the body of a researcher-as-dramaturg, which combines past experiences with new insights.

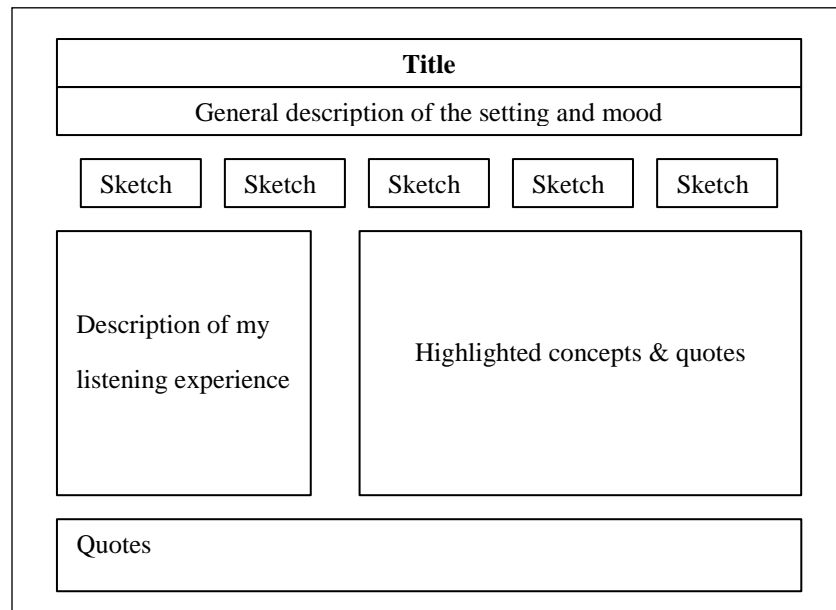
Due to its bodily demand, I feel sweaty after one day of listening and registering. Sounds and impressions fill my body. On account of this, the demand to maintain the same level of attention, awareness and openness throughout a full rehearsal period is impossible. It doesn't leave any room to play. To recreate such a room, for both performers and researcher, it is important to step in and out of the rehearsal

process as a dramaturg would do. The movement of coming together gives the researcher-as-dramaturg a tool to deal with hesitations, without losing its incredible value for the thought process. With *Hear*, leaving the rehearsal space after one day preserves the possibility to still enter the performance as an audience member. It prevents me becoming all too familiar and comfortable with the group, the performance space and the sonic material. It ensures a balance between distance and proximity to my object of study.

The performance of *Hear* in STUK takes place on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018. My field notes start from the moment I leave the house and continue till the moment I leave the performance space. For the validity of my notes it's important to sketch the general feel and mood of the day. Due to the incorporation of these descriptions I will be able in a later moment of the research to deal with the subjectivity of my experience:

I take the train back to Leuven and bike to the Chapel where the performance will take place. I arrive too early. Sun touches my skin: the first scents of spring. I choose a bench in the garden in front of the chapel and wait in silence. I curiously watch the other audience members arrive, some in a group, some individual, duo's and trios. The waiting takes a long time, till finally Benjamin enters the garden. I never take notes during a performance, even when I am not blindfolded. I am one of the last ones to enter the building. I think I know where they place me, but at the end of the performance, I will be surprised about my actual position within the chapel. The performance goes on for about 1 hour. When the performance ends, I try to sneak out as soon as possible, in order to keep my experience as close as possible. I do not want create a bias through too much conversation. On the train back home, I sketch my experience: the sounds, the textures, the movement of air, the spacing, the energy, my imagination, my thought position and my actual position. (Persyn 2018)

With the production of my field notes, a first processing of the information takes place as I transfer them from my notebook to a digital file and fit them into a pre-edited layout. Landscape A4 pages contain a title, a general introduction such as the setting of the situation and the mood, some sketches, the description of my personal listening experience in full sentences, some highlighted concepts and questions and at the end some additional quotes from different fields of study. The quotes function as footnotes to my descriptions, questions and thoughts.



**Figure 3. Field Notes**

I give the notes on *Hear* the title *Hear, thoughts on a learning process*. This time I divide my notes into two main categories: the rehearsals and the performance. I subtitle the different phases of the rehearsals with word combinations that spark my imagination, for example *switching rooms* and *learning how to walk*. The concepts I highlight are a broad range from *professional performers over grounding gravity, a chapel, binocular view, groove, skin, orientation the collective to auditory Intimacy* and *when I slap my face* (Persyn 2018). In the short explanations of these concepts I question, I hesitate, I agree and disagree. Last but not least, I include 39 quotes, confirming, elaborating on or countering my thoughts. Once I finished the transcription the most difficult part begins: digestion.

*b. Read & Remember*

Reading in the context of *Hear*, brought me back to several books I had been reading a few years ago. First of all, the concept of collectivity reminded me of *Together* by Richard Sennett. Through his approach to embodiment and gesture, I started questioning the relationship, similarities and differences between gesture, movement and action. I suddenly arrived at a place where I hadn't expected myself to be during the rehearsals of *Hear*. One could say that Sennett re-introduced me to Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*, while trying to get my head around movement, action and non-professional performers.

The writings of Sennett and Arendt already crossed my path during my Masters Degree, but I couldn't grasp their importance for my research. Due to *Hear*, the thoughts which I stored over the years suddenly find a new path to follow and develop.

I collect the title, some of the most important fragments and concepts of each book in one and the same document titled *Food for thought*.

c. *Make & Think*

Immediately after the performance of *Hear* at STUK in April 2018, I sketched my experience in my notebook. This first sketch is a constellation of blue and red ballpoint lines and position marks. During the digestion weeks after the performance, I copied this sketch several times, by hand. I redefined the forms and colours of the sounds. I enlarged the scale, because the first sketch didn't fit the dimensions of my listening experience and the imagined space. I made a copy in landscape and one in portrait orientation. The first captures the wideness and openness I imagined. The second reproduces the reflection game of the sounds in the dome of the chapel.

The sketches and copies are a means to communicate with my own experience, they relay the thinking that followed from the experience and suggest a tangible form (Edwards 1994, p. 1). The suggestion made for *Hear* distinguishes itself through soft colours and textures, but it lacks volume. The dialogue with my experiences needs to continue. The shortcomings of the series of sketches trigger a translation into three dimensions. I start cutting and folding and instead of capturing the full experience, I focus on some basic spatial elements and contrasting sounds. I construct several objects, but they remain too fragile in comparison to my experience and the first sketch.

I re-focus on the landscape orientation, the totality of the sketch and its textures. I try to give volume to the textures and make small-scale objects for the sounds and movement marks from the original sketch. Once finished, I start to play. I compose an architectural scale model of my listening experience, which results in a colourful, panoramic and decomposable representation. In parallel with the function of an architectural scale model, the idea arises to translate the representation of my experience on a human scale. The model is a stepping-stone towards the concept of an installation through which others can take a position in relation to my personal point of listening.

The concept of this installation triggers new and unexplored thoughts: What is the sonic counterpart of a viewpoint? An earpoint? What does such an earpoint embed? The formulation of this question pinpoints the moment where a complexence occurs. Due to the reworking of the original sketch, my research slowed down. In the re-drawing and re-folding hesitation persisted. The resulting scale model made me understand how an installation, based on my own point of listening, reveals the proximity towards my object of study. It shows how due to the visualisation and modelling of my experience, I enable distance and other perspectives. Although the installation remains a concept, the insight occurred from the complexence and accelerates my thinking. The acceleration is only possible through the engagement of my body and its remembrance of the experience. The complexence make breakthroughs in my thinking tangible.

I incorporate and actualise some of these crucial thoughts in labels that go with each



translation of a sketch. A label resembles an exhibition tag and includes the title of the performance, the name of the artist, a date and its duration, the dimension of the sketch, its materials and a sharply formulated conclusion. The multiple and diverse thoughts triggered by one and the same sketch force me to make several labels for one sketch, in order to memorize the complexity in all their facets and nuances. These complexities are important to remember because they result from the autonomous functioning of sound, image and thought. They improve the philosophical becoming I started while reading, they enable me to create and prolong my own path. Because of that, each sketch with its labels is equally important and relevant for my thinking about an academic article.

During this autonomous work, the process becomes practice-based. The strategy of autonomous thinking (re)evaluates the process within academic research. It makes art-informed research into practice-led research. The making-process generates the academic result. They become inseparable. With the combination of the visual residues of my thinking process and a full body of text, I aim to create an in-between space where academics, artists and laymen can encounter each other.

d. *Write & Search*

Academic writing varies the thoughts gathered and triggered by field notes, readings, sketches and their translations. Because of that, writing academic papers only makes sense when style and content evolve from the process that generated them. In between the lines of an article, the reader should catch a glimpse of my original experience, its textures, volume and imaginations. The language needs to incorporate the different qualities of my research method. It needs to care for the I and the Other. A suitable language respects the original experience of the researcher and gives enough space to the reader without losing its readability.

The search for a suitable language while writing on *Hear* equals a search for balance between artistic, phenomenological and philosophical aspects. This balancing evolves in several steps:

- A non-academic and personal free writing in my field notes gathers loose thoughts and impressions.
- A first attempt towards academic writing raises my language to that of others in order to negotiate with their thoughts. This type of writing occurs when my experiences aren't fully digested. It is a rigid, slow and utterly dense language. But it often brings forth new discoveries. In my first article on *Hear*, the combination of my own thoughts with those of André Lepecki and Bojana Kunst helped me to find and verbalise the key to the performance. In the creation, Benjamin and Yoann inverted sound and movement, because they base their decision on the sound quality. It is no longer the movement that defines the pattern, form and intensity of the choreography but sound.
- Released writing often occurs with themes I didn't expect in the scope of my research. With *Hear*, for example, my field notes brought a lot of question on non-professional performers. Because of the unfamiliarity of the concepts, the writing tackles a new domain of thinking, which makes it both challenging and liberating

at the same time. Released writing gives me the opportunity to dive in to the fragile fields of my thinking and redirect my thoughts and sources.

- The academic process of peer-review generates a reworked writing. It's a slow process, with stretched interval between several versions of the same text. The pace accelerates and decelerates the thinking. The level of pressures changes over time.

In these steps, I diversify my writing patterns and bring variation to my thoughts. The switch between them helps to allow nuances, hesitation and doubts. Writing in all its forms deepens the intimate relationship with my listening experience and object of study. Each step focuses on a different aspect of the language I search for. After reading Laurence Louppe's *Poetics of Contemporary Dance*, it became clear that the language I search for is located between direct, academic and poetic, between first and third person, between objective and affective.

Switching the writing format brings play to the table. The format of a manifest for example embeds freedom of speech. It demands you look back and gives you the opportunity to think about how to work in the future. With each text I produce, I try to balance my language in a different way. I search for a readable language, which leaves space in between the lines for the reader.

#### **(4) Remind yourself of (the value of) your methodology**

To remind myself of the value of my methodology I share it with others who are dealing with sound. To share a methodology and a phenomenological-philosophical framework takes time. But when time is at hand, such moments of sharing are fruitful, because each person dealing with sound accentuates different aspects and highlights other nuances. Through sharing my methodology, it shows me its richness, possibilities and difficulties.

#### **(5) Be Intimate with your own thoughts**

Intimation combines incorporation and sharing (Kasulis 2002, pp. 29-41) which means I dialogue with the other and with myself. These dialogues are characterised by different tempos and themes. The dialogue with myself is situated in a re-working of sketches and translating of field notes. The sharing of my methodology stimulates intimation with others. When I share my methodology, we always start by listening together, because this creates a shared ground to refer to. It prevents the dialogue drifting off into abstract and hollow discussions. It makes talking without judgement easier and helps to allow disagreement and complexity.

Intimation is always situated between theory and practice, between listening, making, thinking and negotiating concepts. It needs both the body and the mind. It involves, artists, performers, researcher, dramaturgs and audience members in academic research.

#### **(6) Slowing down does not equal a withdrawal, but a shifting of gear**

Once in a while, the research process stagnates or gets ahead of itself. At these moments it is good to shift gear, to accelerate or decelerate the thinking. A shifting of gear implies a shifting of strategy, a rebalancing of phenomenology and philosophy. I go from reading to making back to reading. I experience, I listen, I write, I think and write again in ever-changing constellations.

Reading	---- - - -- - - --- -- -
Writing	o ooo o ooooo
Heautonomous	( ) (()) ( )

Figure 4. Rhythmics of the research process

If I don't forget to play, I remain curious, greedy and generous. Playing keeps me close to my object of study, it gives me the opportunity to break the rules I set up. It involves others and pleasure in academic research.

**5. Conclusion**

This manifest remembers I should switch gear once in a while. It shows how the combination of different artistic and academic methods and strategies such as field notes, academic writing and he-autonomous thinking, stimulate a researcher to decelerate and accelerate. Only through these varied tempos and rhythms can a researcher fully allow and acknowledge the process of his/her thinking. In the allowance of varied rhythms in-between and within methodological strategies, the researcher makes room for complexities to emerge. S/he allows himself to play with his thought and spend time with hesitations.

The addition of the notion of the dramaturg to the position of the researcher makes it possible to approach academic research as an embodied practice. It opens up towards a second person perspective, distant but proximate, full of care for the I and the other. It recognizes methodology as a search and re-search, as a process which needs to groove and stutter. The glimpse of my methodology shows how academic research can involve and benefit from strategies, methods and aspects of art-informed, practice-led and practice-based research all at the same time.

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