

DOCTORAL THESIS

Ear Bodies: Acoustic Ecologies in Site-Contingent Performance

Manco, Fabrizio

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Ear Bodies:
Acoustic Ecologies in Site-Contingent Performance

Fabrizio Manco

BA (Hons.), MA, MPhil

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Department of Drama, Theatre and Performance

University of Roehampton, London

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Performance research in the Ugento countryside, 2008. Part of *Klohi* performance research in archaeological and other sites, Salento region, Italy (2005-ongoing).¹
Photo: Fausta Muci.

¹ *Klohi* is a Messapian word which purported to mean listen/hear. The Messapii lived in Salento (Puglia) in Italy, between the VIII and VII century B.C.E. The word provides me with an interesting link in my research into the acoustic-archaeological aspect of site, place and identity. The assonance of this word with 'choclea' is also worth noting.

ABSTRACT

In this thesis I offer a philosophy and a performance practice of the ear. It is a theoretical reflection as well as a discussion on my hearing/listening and performance practice, research and workshops. Here is where sound and the body move and perform by relating to the constantly changing acoustic environment. It is an enquiry into and a corporeal experience of sound as the *ear body*, a bodied experience of sound and listening where the whole body becomes an ear. This is explored through my experience of chronic tinnitus, a criticism of over-determined technology and through a discussion on the trance-dance therapy of Tarantism.

With a focus on environmental awareness, this thesis is an ecophenomenological investigation in my theory of *site contingency*, where I connect my ecophenomenological approach to contingency – contingency intended as a necessary experience of the world – and to acoustic ecology.

It offers a methodology for performance-making, also through workshops. They are a ground for shared mutual experience and contribution, with participants from different backgrounds and abilities, and are also a pedagogical instrument, for students and others, in the form of a ‘training’ practice of the ear. This methodology becomes a basis for what I call *site-contingent* performance, where sound is intended and experienced as relation and as contingency. The kinaesthetics of sound is exemplified in ‘aural choreography,’ a moving by following environmental sounds, and where the experience of contingency is also in the practice of ‘earlines’ drawing; a form of performance and of acoustic documentation.

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To my father Vitantonio Manco (11.01.1931 - 24.12.2015) and my mother Antonia D'Aprile, passing her time in the sole company of an empty resounding cistern.



INTRODUCTION

*Some people love to divide and classify, while
others are bridge-makers weaving relations
that turn a divide into a living contrast, one
whose power is to affect, to produce thinking
and feeling.
But bridge-making is a situated practice.
Isabelle Stengers²*

Our bodies are already in tune with acoustic space as a result of the act of listening, no matter what our level of acoustic awareness. It is this awareness which I seek to investigate, which is of a sonic and constantly auditory dynamic nature.

I write from the position of an artist and lecturer/facilitator, seeing my discoveries of tools for sound and listening in performance practice as a correction of both one-dimensional sound studies and a way to address unawakened ears in performance. In my articulation about the experiencing of sound, I discuss the relation to the distinctiveness of location, and particular structures of relation, those of sound and architectural spaces, a relation between hearers in a shared space, and relations between a particular hearer and one's own auditory experience. I argue that performance, which is always theatre – in the sense of being a 'watching place' (or a 'place for watching') from its Greek etymology *theatron* – is a hearing/listening place (or a place for hearing/listening), and is about many 'auditory glances': they are listening glances, where one also is surrounded by sound which is 'staring' at you.³ I open myself to the life of a theatre which began, begins, continues and ends with sound, constantly resounding in, through and with us. More than being interested in sound, it is the resounding of the many spatial, visual, social, somatic,

² Stengers (2012), "Reclaiming," p. 1.

³ Specifically, this brings us to a later discussion in this thesis on panpsychism in relation to sound and listening.

performative, environmental relationships *through* sound which I explore. It is through sound that I am interested in finding, uncovering and realising the visual medium and performance. It is in my consideration of sound in its ecologies in performance that I realise a constant embodied relation to it, never separated from the body as site and site as body. My body's daily performing with the performance of sound, makes me realise my attempt to frame its overwhelming experience, in an economy of a receiving (as an openness) and a useful insight for a performance art. I argue against a still unarticulated and under-explored corporeal basis and corporeal thinking about audition, and I make aware this in movement and performance practice. My methodology works towards an interrogation of sound and listening within a corporeal understanding of site and sound in performance art and live art. Unfolding through explorations of corporeal thinking and of corporeal experience of sound, my questioning is present where the body thinks, space thinks and sound thinks. Audition is always corporeal, a far more complex and sophisticated experience than any innovative form and application of technology. I introduce technology as an integral part in the problematics of relationality, in order to complicate a current over-reliant relationship to it, which, in my view, it is frequently seen as salvific panacea to the problems of interaction in art. Specifically, in the various and contemporary interpretations of sensorial investment with location and to sonic experience in general, the desire to encapsulate and to reduce sound to either a technological (mediated) or purist (un-mediated) conception betrays a residual dualistic legacy. It is in this specific, critical and non-dualistic respect that I position an interdisciplinary and personal corporeal move to sound within performance studies – and with a particular focus on performance/live art – where I explore this complexity *in* and *for* performance.

Shot through my endeavour is a general philosophy of the paradox, which begins in the ear, becoming a philosophy of the ear. This philosophy of the ear is integral to my practical explorations and for my tools, whose functions I employ as an investigation where the aural aspect is the democratising amplifier of the spatial, the visual and performative. The intent of my work and thesis is the development and the discussion of my ear bodies methodology as widely applicable to different contexts. The tools of such methodology are the somatic awareness of listening and of sound in architectural spaces and landscapes, soundwalks and other walking parameters, movement and aural choreography, improvisation, physical and aural delimitations, drawing and participation. These tools are also to be taken as examples of potential ways of using them in practical research, performances and workshops and in very diverse and specific contexts. This contextualisation will lead us towards the end of the thesis to a more theoretical and speculative discussion which helps to give a frame to my practical performance research and to show its interrelation with it. The aural aspect includes an amplification of the infinitesimal aspects and the quality of a site, where sound activates space and bodies. The aural as a democratising amplifier specifically points towards my use of sound and listening in forms and methods for performance practice, but also for performance/art-making and training, introduced here and embedded throughout this thesis. ‘Training’ is an ambiguous term, which I have also been exploring on a pedagogical performance practice. In this study, training means going through strategies for an ‘auditory performance art’ as a guide to make people re-discover their acoustic knowledge. In this case training also means engaging in auditory perception, function and auditory discrimination.⁴ These aspects are engaged in indoor and outdoor movement and sensorial explorations of different experiential spaces (acoustic, site and environmental spaces)

⁴ I will discuss auditory discrimination in Chapter 2.

and, together with specific preparatory and choreographic exercises, are my pedagogical tools and my methodology.

I have created and articulated a defined methodology and permutation of the different – more noticeable, but also subtle and unperceived – experiential spaces, together with performative interrelationships through sound and listening. Specifically, the aural aspect as ‘amplification,’ explores my concern about a sclerotisation of perception – and specifically auditory perception – in performance. Within my performance, I bring together the spatial, visual and performative quality of a site through providing a framework in which people and spaces, their unique resounding bodies with movement, voices and listening, can intermix, weaving their particular social and cultural aspects with practical and somatic explorations. This interaction between spaces and people can also be extended to inform the understanding of cross-cultural artistic practice – reflecting also on our contemporary increasingly ‘sensorially enclosed’ society – and its ethical/behavioural and cultural aspects. My practical working through and creating of cross-cultural possibilities, also involves a conceptual level. Specifically my ground is the discussion on the body and corporeality in the different contexts of Western philosophy and Japanese thought in the Kyoto School (*Kyōto-gakuha*). The Kyoto School was/is a group of Japanese philosophers who integrated Eastern and Western philosophy, the first philosophical school which has a unique place in the history of world’s metaphysics and history of philosophy for their understanding, interpreting and developing Western philosophy through Japanese (mostly Buddhist) thought and sensibility. This is of substantial importance for me, because of philosophical Japanese interpretations and discussions on the body and corporeality (in Nishida, Kuki, Nishitani, Yuasa), as well as for the Western understanding of the Kyoto School’s philosophy by Western scholars (Boutry-Stadelmann, Maraldo, Perniola), creating cross-cultural relations. These relations

start from considering that there is not a strict separation between the 'The East' and 'The West.' Eastern culture is made of a mosaic of many 'east' and the same is valid with the many 'west.' There is a conceptual construction this false dichotomy which might make one fall into the same discrimination, exoticism (including self-exoticism /orientalism for both 'East' and 'West') which one wants to avoid. Our diverse bodies experience that constitutive connection between thought and practice of life, which is the same in the ancient thought of both East and West. I am looking at these concepts as they are specific to my practice and research, while I am mindful of their underlying complication.

In practice, mine is a continuous artistic questioning of how the ear can become a better way for the body in performance to relate to specific cultural places in human and environmental interactions. When I engage in performative investigations into aurality in connection with architecture (spaces to play within and be played by) and 'the natural' and urban environment (including the natural within the urban), these interactions become an arena for communal and sustained sharing that develops a relationship beyond that which we are already able to experience and hear. This is also a way to speak of artistic and pedagogical means of intervention in site, sound and performance. I am offering performative and drawing parameters as tools that could be of help in facilitating performance, movement and dance, pedagogy and visual art practice, as another way of translating, conveying and communicating how one relates specifically to site through sound. In my artistic practice sonic invisible power has given me an insight into how sound is before, through and after us, a multi-dimensional space which grounds us, feet on earth, in any part of the acoustic spectrum. One is constantly moved, mediated, related and surrounded by this specific, unique and yet vast and unconfined acoustic landscape. This one, now, here and already always there. From my own personal experience and my

perception of my spatial positioning as a member of audience and spectator of performance, this produces particular reflections as a result of being in any type of spatial arrangement.

The deferral of sound towards its inaudible boundary, delays and returns is a phenomenon of how we are performed and subjected by sound's ungraspability.

Through my long experience of symptoms of chronic tinnitus and hyperacusis, I have come to realise how much sound, bodies and their movements are intermingled and mutually generating. From a lost place an auditory layered work, of listening through veils of raucous silence, the sounding folds of the space were enhanced, bridging the impossible. I have then settled down with my invisible and constant 'companion,' searching for a world of acoustic resonance and a 'silent' place. So, sound chose me, in my attempt to live outside my ears and through my ears. And I, with time, chose sound: it was simply a search for the silence that sound is. That search is also an effort in bridging *personal* auditory experience with a sonorous and listening world. Consequently, that which I give attention to in this writing is not specifically sound. My focus is more on performance, movement and art, engaged in sensorial relationships of space and site through embodied sound and listening, in bringing together the strands of my artistic practice and through a philosophy of sound, where often the metaphorical and sensorial aspects coincide.

The research has been developed by working in relation to different acoustic and architectural spaces, and other environments around and outside London and in Europe. This is in order to investigate the relationship and effects of different sound/noise field environments and how they still trigger and stimulate my artistic responses. From my experience, I have described a process intended as a gradual attunement for myself and

for a – sometimes participating – audience, to which I offer a guidance in order to distinguish a sonic diversity and sonic changes, and this thus helps to broaden my and our response to my and our immediate world. Through guided structures of movement, drawing, listening, I have channelled myself and have worked with others to go through and beyond the controlling and manipulating side of representation and its residues, where the revelation of many experiential acoustic landscapes are perceived through veil after veil and process after process. In my work, the already active spaces are further activated by itinerant processes. Each landscape is concealed and embedded in the inside of another, uncovering each time a sonic event that covers another one. Rather than serving the auditory performance, or creating sound works for performance, I use aural interactivity in performance, as the realisation of the place-hearing identity that is profoundly engaged and made by systems of land/sound ecologies. I maintain that in connecting with a site's sounds, we experience a more embedded specific relation to that site, which is less of an anthropocentric imposing of the body on a landscape, because it considers the site's 'voice.' In the considering of a site's voice I gain an insight into silence, stillness and movement as listening, as an embracing activity. In the sense and consideration of a site's voice, I have devised my activities and tools for performance based on embodied responses, as a non-objectifying process, positions and postures in this enveloping world, the 'sonosphere.'⁵ To put it differently: it is a grounding and a surrendering at the same time to a constant coming back, of sound to and from the body, from and to the world.

⁵ According to Pauline Oliveros: "The sonosphere is the sonorous or sonic envelope of the earth. The biospheric layer of the sonosphere is irrevocably interwoven with the technospherical layer of the sonosphere. Humans sense the sonosphere according to the bandwidth and resonant frequencies and mechanics of the ear, skin, bones, meridians, fluids, and other organs and tissues of the body as coupled to the earth and its layers from the core to the magnetic fields as transmitted and perceived by the audio cortex and nervous system." Oliveros (2011), "Auralizing," p. 162.

Then, falling within autographical margins – typical of most art history’s performance art and live art – I perform and reflect on sound and movement by setting up choreographic or improvisational devices. Significant here is a choreographic need to be open-ended, also in relation to ‘improvisation,’ which is firstly dictated by any parameter that a body negotiates with a site. The negotiation between a body and a site is in drawing attention to the intertwined relationship between the hearing and the heard. In the negotiation, sound is fundamentally an enabling experience, and it is made resonant in performance in the space in between where the hearing and the heard meet. Here only this interstitial space creates relationships, which are the experience of that invisible interstice, the audible and inaudible spaces-in-movement.

Overall, the main concern of this thesis is the concept and experience of space and specifically auditory space. This concept and experience is interlaced and explored throughout and therefore in the two chapters. All these aspects come from and are an integral part of my Ear Bodies performance work, teaching and research, where I have developed a methodology in order to facilitate performance, allowing situated physical movements. These movements are those of spatial acoustics affecting the body, which help to define visual and kinaesthetic qualities.

It is in the first chapter that these spaces-in-movement I discuss as those of our ear bodies, where the focus is on embodied listening, intended as the most physical relation to sound in connection to spatial acoustics. The *ear body* is a way of being in an animated acoustic environment in which the whole body becomes an ear. In this chapter, I seek to turn over established theories on embodiment, while being critical of ‘dis-embodiment’ and over-determined technology. I discuss these aspects in relation to my years of experience living with my ear condition of chronic tinnitus – as auditory ghost and phantom – and through a

discussion on the trance dance therapy of Tarantism. Chronic tinnitus makes me radically question what perception is, and becomes an artistic, metaphorical translation and transformation with its sonorous hearing and sonorous silence. I discuss Tarantism, specifically Salentine Tarantism,⁶ in relation to embodied listening, and as trauma in relation to sound, movement and dance. It is part of my specific cultural engagement in this study. This cultural engagement is included in the general discussion, which strives to bridge personal, trans-personal cultural and trans-cultural perception and experience. There is an exchange with different forms of encounter with sites and people through artistic and performative ways. I believe that there is a specific acoustic embodiment in relation to tinnitus and to Tarantism. Trauma and dancing in the case of Tarantism, and acoustic trauma – in the case of tinnitus – are both considered in their connection to sound, its traumatising intrusion, its therapeutic applications, as well as its performative aspects. Tarantism as a *living archive* of somatic knowledge, is where dancing was, and still is, the same as remembering. My experience of chronic tinnitus has, paradoxically, given me insight into the sensorial relation between the acoustic spatial world and the body as listener; a different way of understanding and experiencing space, and site through space.

In the second chapter I discuss contingency in my theory of *site contingency* and practice of *site-contingent* performance. Particularly in this chapter, I discuss space as the main aspect constituting site contingency, where site is generated by and implied in (auditory) space, intended as a tangible, physical experience of sites with their acoustic power. A site is never a backdrop for human intervention. Our ear bodies move as part of a living acoustic environment in all its complexity, with different acoustic layers, rhythmic

⁶ A form and cultural phenomenon of Salento, my place of origin in Puglia, Italy.

components, temporalities, surfaces, architectures. Here I relate and broaden my investigations through acoustic ecology and a philosophical approach to sound through ecophenomenology. I connect my ecophenomenological approach – with its theory in opposition to closure and fixity – with contingency, a contingency intended as a *necessary* experience of the world. The environment, including the acoustic one, is also sentient. It is sentient because of the interrelation with our perception and because of its reversibility – as in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception – it listens and performs with us.

I begin by focussing on contingency in general, and of contingent performative experience specifically. I intertwine these disciplines and concepts which consequently generate my method of *aural choreography*. Aural choreography is then discussed through a section on fields and framing, concerning specific visual and conceptual framings which allow movement improvisations connected to the parameters of aural discrimination (consisting of listening and selecting environmental sounds and moving, according to their relation to architecture and landscape). Aural choreography can also be part of performance (more specifically ‘auditory performance art’) in architectures and landscapes, as it is also part of workshops and can be a development from aerial drawing and earlines drawing, as I will discuss as part of the supplement to chapter 1 (aerial drawing) and of the supplement to chapter 2 (earlines drawing). Aural choreography is also part of my methodology and pedagogical tools, arising from my practical performance research.

To contextualise my chapters, I start the thesis with the discussion of two of my performances, *The Acoustic Vanishing Point* (2009) and *Si prega di non fare silenzio*

[Please, Do Not Be Silent] (2010), where different aspects of my work and research are discussed in relation to the two performances.

Here I will also open up more particular areas of ambiguity in relation to the body and movement in auditory/architectural space, to complicate the notion of ‘improvisation,’ with its link – but, importantly, also its difference – from contingency. My creation of this and other tools offers specific intervention into the world of performance and sound and novel methods for the exploration of performance, site and the body through sound and hearing/listening. They are tools and methods which allow for a greater complexity of approach in respect to sound in performance practice, in favour of a complexity of experience implicit in the practice.

My workshops are a pedagogical instrument to stimulate and inform active and reflexive engagement with a site and a space through intensive physical investigation of the relationship between hearing/listening and movement-based performance. Through specific movement, walking, orienting in space, immediacy of action and drawing parameters, aural perception is developed to enable performance, in order for participants to become open ear instruments. These are also ways of practical exploration involving and stimulating relations to a living site as well as social sensitivity. Through the workshops I facilitate an understanding of what constitutes my concept and practice of site-contingent performance. They usually consist of three to five hour sessions, in order to have time for all the organically connected and connecting processes to unfold, and to facilitate in-situ movement in relation to different indoor and outdoor acoustic spaces.

Here, participants explore my Ear Bodies methods, in pairs and as a group, allowing time for both active observation and participation, involving also improvisation as both individual and group explorations. Listening facilitates the participants in gaining further insights into movement, seeing it on paper in the form of drawing, as well as experiencing

it as performance. A different way of engaging alternative forms of performance practice and also challenging forms, is to involve myself and other participants in those varied and nuanced movements, but also in conditions of specific and contingent loci. This is my navigating and developing performance from a process of continuous testing of ideas and experiences, both as explorations of my performances and practice in the studio, but also as collective practical experiments with different audiences. This diversity of contexts and audiences sometimes included also different auditory potentials, including those of hearing-impaired participants. For instance, in the specific case of a workshop I facilitated at Middlesex University in 2007, a hearing-impaired participant (here unnamed), who suffered from tinnitus, related to the acoustics of the space we were in. Although he was very aware of the different noises existing in the room, at the same time, through the ear bodies methods – specifically those involving positions of the body in the space, enhancing corporeal awareness – helped and strengthened listening, thanks to his moving and still body in relation to walls and other architectural features. The participant managed to relate to the acoustics of the space which included also the most disturbing noises (equalised through his hearing aid) and have a strong relationship to the architectural and aural space.⁷

In terms of theoretical engagement, design, practical testing and re-testing, I am in the world of movement through explored parameters, experiential exercises, images and reflections. Throughout my research, from the solo studio-based practice onwards, I have repeatedly re-designed my approaches once they have been explored in performance. In the exploration, I have translated them, from one geographical, cultural, natural, social, spatial context to another. This is the open field of contingency, which I have realised

⁷ The workshop is documented on the accompanying DVD and in the photographic documentation in this thesis on p. 56 and p. 246. I further discuss corporeal awareness in auditory experience ‘corporeal auditory consciousness’ on p. 83.

through a framing and its continuously shifting its boundaries. It is still a way of opening up to possibilities, freeing myself from a risk of congealment of approaches, by opening up to mutability and being ‘salvaged’ by contingency. Conducting is a way where movement becomes for me an interrelated physical and theoretical articulation, in which the articulations are explored in relation to a more cross-sensory and cross-media artistic approach. I have found ways practically of driving and relating this approach to binaural and spatial hearing, with physical movement and engagement in relation to auditory scansion of various points in space as scansion of the body.

Two performances which condensed these aspects of acoustics and architectural transitions, through walking and other actions, were ‘The Acoustic Vanishing Point,’⁸ and *Si prega di non fare silenzio* [Please, Do Not Be Silent],⁹ which helped to focus my research and were at the same time my testing ground for an auditory performance art. These were performances engrained with places of transitions, performative peripatetic directions in corridors, tunnels, foyers, round rooms, between, in and gravitating around angles and edges, underneath or on stairs, and between stairs and ceilings, cavities, angles between window panes and walls, screens, recesses, edges, curvatures, and under tables. Here, we followed sounds’ decay towards their becoming inaudible where every space is a foyer to another. The foyer is everywhere, it is a constant experiencing of acoustic space. There is layer after layer, and the foyer is constantly delayed, knocking off balance a central auditory positioning. The foyer is an architectural space, a concept and a metaphor, and is a condenser of different sounds in a space, a channeled amalgamation of sounds. A constant attempt in my performance work – and specifically in the above mentioned – is to connect with sound, to find at the same time that balancing as well as that off-balancing act. This means destabilising as moving, moving through gradual

⁸ Performed on 10 December 2009 at the University of Roehampton.

⁹ Performed on 8 August 2010 in Taviano, Italy.

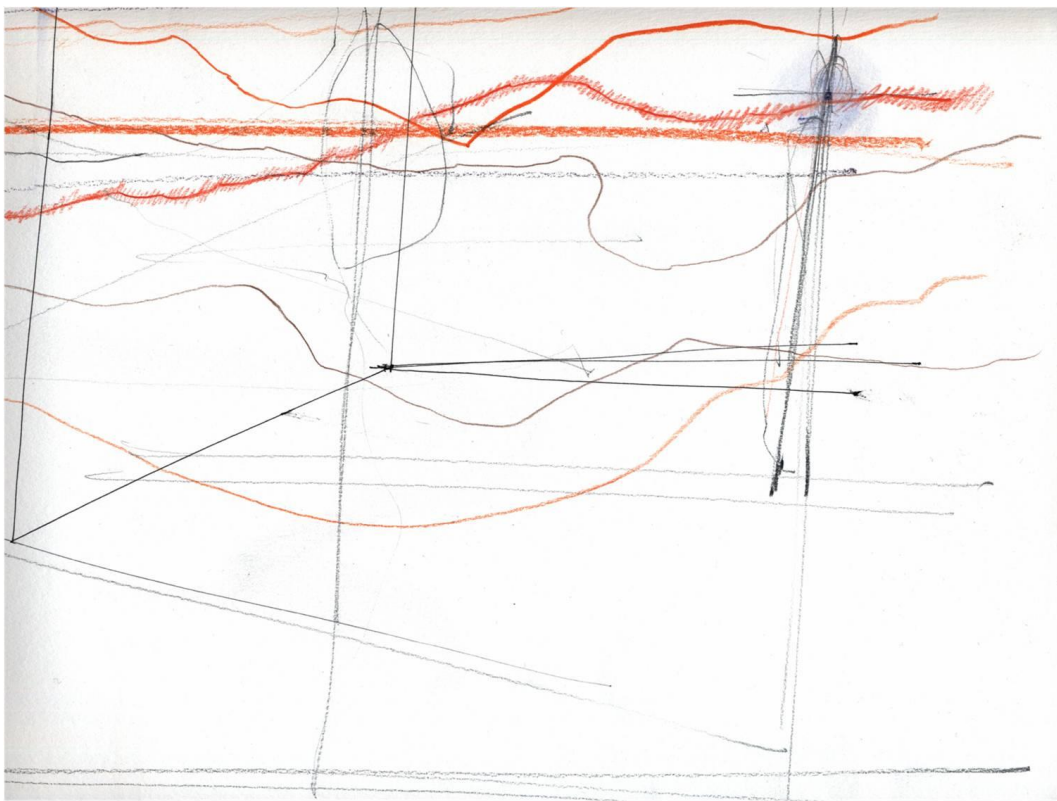
attuning, from foyer to foyer, with an aural space in performance. In these performances what I suggest is a pre-disposition, rather than forcing or even needing all the time an interactive participation. This is because listening is already full participation, as each work, experiment and experience is based on specific aspects, which often are imagined and imaginary. At the same time sonic locations challenge imagination, but also perception, as they do not always come from the sources we perceive.

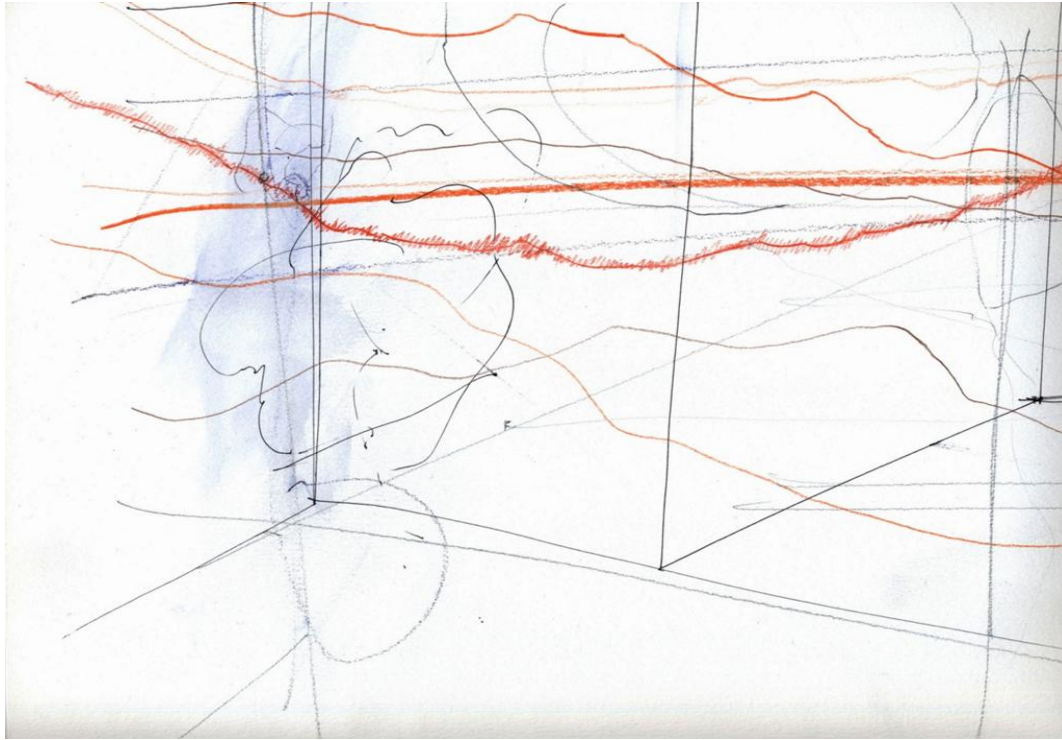
‘The Acoustic Vanishing Point’ was – and invited – a practical reflection and questioning on perception and on how we perceive and where we locate sonic sources. It was a live performance experiment divided in three consecutive parts, involving sound and the audience, listening, drawing, and burnt toast. It reflected specifically on physical impediments and monocular and mono-auditive perspectives, that of the fixed *punto di fuga* and its authority. In the field of visual representation of space, it is through the medium of an absolutely orthodox perspective that we have an imagined physical, supposedly objective, geometrical space in the spectator’s view, taking or being positioned at a distance. This type of art through the instrument of simple analogical figurations imposes a vision of the ‘infinite.’ The gazing mind of the listener-spectator continues the system or finishes it beyond what can be grasped by the senses.

Tautologically, any ‘vanishing point’ is fugitive, it is a way of addressing its impossibility, as it is with sound which is movement and, therefore, can escape from every point of fixity. Arguing that performance manifests its ephemerality in the context of the archive, Rebecca Schneider (2001) in her ‘Performance Remains,’ welcomes Herbert Blau, together with other theorists, and recommends that we “think rigorously about performance as ‘always at the vanishing point.’”¹⁰ In our positioning ourselves in a ‘virtual cube’ of spatial depiction from an Italian Renaissance inheritance, that of

¹⁰ Schneider, “Archives,” in *Performance Research*, p. 100.

theatrical *scenografia*, the constructive elements of a reductive hearing/vision of (architectural) space are embedded in our culture and aprioristically conceived. But Western art history – including non-Western versions of it – shows us that the laws of perspective are always being transgressed, or are ready to be so. In this work I was focussing on the question of a co-existence of these laws and co-ordinates *within* their transgression.





The Acoustic Vanishing Point, drawings 2005-2009.

With ‘the acoustic vanishing point’ I imply that our inherited cultural process of a monocular and mono-aural perspective must measure itself by the imponderable becoming of real experience. This means measuring itself with auditory-sensorial complexities, multiplicities of aural and visual perception in the mobile eyes and mobile ears of the spectators/performers, the field of vision and the field of hearing.¹¹ Ultimately, the acoustic vanishing point is impossible. It is an idea, short-circuited by the perceptual experience of moving sonic locations. One listener develops and completes a work from their own experience, that of relations – as between sound and body and their own feedback interaction – their own point of listening, related to their own local positioning in space. So, the acoustic vanishing point can only exist for a moment. A very short temporary stilling, where position coincides with no position. A unified single point or

¹¹ The term ‘acoustic vanishing point’ came out of a discussion in 2006 with auditory neuroscientist Prof. David McAlpine at the UCL Ear Institute, following my movement and drawing exploratory session of the institute’s spaces.

point of reception is not possible, as site is always plural: a site interrogates our view-point(s); but more radically, our listening-point(s). Through my listening potential of my body of testing and ‘measuring’ the boundaries of a space, I began to perform. This testing and ‘measuring’ of spatial boundaries became the performance, in the sense that in this way, I created the frame for interaction and reception. This frame which also raised a question over the legible and the psychological aspects of our visual, as well as our continuously changing auditory perception and its delimitations. Architect Matteo Barbieri says that:

With our view we never have the possibility of perceiving the object as it is, in its totality and therefore, we employ the perspective display. This gives us the sense of the paradox of our vision and of our way of conceiving space: the object is, but it continuously escapes us.¹²

In the performance ‘The Acoustic Vanishing Point,’ my being responsive to site, including its vanishing, impermanent, sonic and plural dimension, although escaping, created a strong relationship with it.



¹² Barbieri (2001), *Luogo* [Place], my translation.



The Acoustic Vanishing Point, part one and two, University of Roehampton, London 2008. Photo: Helly Minarti.

Following these concepts, in part one of the performance, I invited the audience – which were in a first consecutive corridor divided by a door – to find their acoustic vanishing point/s and then place a sticky red dot on the walls and/or objects where they thought their acoustic vanishing point might have been. In part two – taking place in the second section of the corridor – I was lying down transversally positioned, almost impeding the easy passing of the encountering pedestrian audience. With a board placed on my left ear (where I mostly hear my high pitch tinnitus) and covering my body, except from the limbs, I draw a map of lines of sound coming from that space, from the surrounding audience and from outdoors, trying to listen through and beyond the more dominant noise of a small electricity generator, placed near the ceiling.

During all the parts of the performances, auditory-spatial-movements were maps (and not scores, in the strictest Fluxus sense) which were drawn, sound mapped my body, and my body mapped not sound, but the in-between relation to it, through and beyond visual records and sound recordings. The architectural, structural and auditory features of the corridor were reflected in my labyrinthine ear canals, the metaphorical tympanic canals of corridors, a sort of stage drawing of the ear. I could feel the 'earthquake' sound of a parallel high-pitched tinnitus, signed by my body, a sort of body-seismographer, my graphic ear extension of a hearing hand and body.





The Acoustic Vanishing Point, part three, University of Roehampton, London 2008. Photo: Helly Minarti.

In part three, in a third space, the audience was invited to create a layered composition by making sound by scraping off the burnt surface of toast attached to my body, one after the other until the burnt surface was gone, revealing collaged images underneath the burnt surface of the toast. The black burnt toast was also, metaphorically speaking, a reference in space and body (squares instead of dots), with other forms of ‘vanishing points’ becoming acoustic. The three parts, were also connected through the bodies of the performing/moving audience-participants, which were also remembering bodies. In other words, this involved corporeal and auditory memory, as corporeal listening involves memories, the just remembered sounds, movements, experiences, a realisation that memories also move (and even vanish).



Si prega di non fare silenzio [Please Do Not Be Silent], part one, Taviano, Italy 2010. Photo: Fausta Muci and Paco Santoro.



Si prega di non fare silenzio [Please Do Not Be Silent], part two, Taviano, Italy 2010. Photo: Fausta Muci and Paco Santoro.



Si prega di non fare silenzio [Please Do Not Be Silent], workshop session, Taviano, Italy 2010. Photo: Fausta Muci and Paco Santoro.

With a similar development, the performance and installation *Si prega di non fare silenzio* [Please, Do Not Be Silent] became the distillation of early performance research exploring architectural space, and became the crossing over of auditory research and my personal experience and artistic practice. It was a three hour repeated cycle and installation and, once more, was divided in three connected and consecutive parts, with a final performance workshop involving the audience, where I held the dialogue with that specific community. The workshop facilitated a collective and individual investigation through differences of sounds' qualities, coming from outside and within the architectural spaces, from the piazza and the streets and inside the ear through their interactions. This session had been specifically designed to stimulate and inform active and reflective engagement with different image-guided, contemplative, acoustic and sensory inputs, with framing, objects, time processes and drawing. Aspects of embodied performance include exercises to allow somatic relation to acoustics and sonic inputs, physical movement, incorporating spatial, atmospheric, acoustic and visual qualities. Framing includes architectural space and its delimitations, perception and transformation. Objects are used as functional, metaphoric, sculptural and in relation to the body. Time processes are those of the walking body, of speeds and trajectories of movement, dwelling and explorations of duration and of endurance. Drawing involves individual, physical, visual and spatial lines. The first part of the performance took place in an eighteenth century palazzo and the third part in a bar next to the palazzo on the piazza outside. Connecting the first and second parts, was my travelling action of pushing a 1970's bar trolley bearing many different and clinking glasses, which the audience was invited to follow. In the three spaces I stopped to draw geometric frames with red tape, framing specific acoustic architectural areas reflecting on floors as listening points and moving by following sonic cues. In the workshop, participants were invited to listen to the installation – of one red and one blue

glass hanging from a central string, to recall binaural hearing (in the English binaural system convention, the left ear is blue and the right is red) – and to participate in the tasks and improvisations.¹³ In correspondence to the architecture, I suspended the glasses from a diagonal string stretching from one corner to the other of a high ceiling cloistered entrance, and suspended them from that string individually to reach the ears. In this respect, corners became condensers of ‘acoustic shadows’ and shapes of walls as the different gradations of acoustic interactions. For this reason, in my performances I have been exploring architecture with its resounding features, gaps or ‘empty’ spaces, or muffling roundness and sharp angularity. Part of the workshop session was, also here, the performative exploration of an Acoustic Shadow Walk. The Acoustic Shadow Walk is not only a type of soundwalk, but a perimetral performance and is performed by performers-participants as a line group. In a discussion with Prof. McAlpine on 17 October 2012, became clear that – in showing and describing him this parameter in my work – this type of walk can possibly allow to hear transitions because of the acoustics behind the ears, and therefore of also somebody behind. By keeping a medium-slow pace, with lowered eyes, by attending to the feet, by keeping the same distance and by scanning the close intimate acoustics between ear and walls, participants gained more spatial

¹³ This is a response of a participant to the performance/workshop: “Fabrizio tunes his instruments. In principle they emit strange sounds, incomprehensible, different and discordant sounds [...] Tonight Fabrizio, a waiter in the summer, serves sounds, teaches to his instruments how to play, but even more how to listen, how to be guided by sound waves, how to adjust the strings while orienting in space. [...] He stops to draw spaces, listening points, not at all permanent centres of gravity [...] How to tell the musicians and those people that the instruments which Fabrizio plays are actually them? [...] It means the wonder of something one takes for granted, such as listening to the sounds, it means the discovery of the ability to tune in order to ‘see’ the space with closed eyes, letting oneself be guided by the architectural lines which carry sounds. It means the challenge to the consolidation of perceptions and the disarming question on the reassuring habit of the senses.” [Fabrizio accorda i suoi strumenti. In principio emettono suoni strani, incomprensibili, suoni diversi e discordi. [...] Stasera serve suoni Fabrizio, cameriere d’estate, insegna ai suoi strumenti come suonare ma più ancora come ascoltare, come farsi guidare dalle onde sonore, come regolare le corde orientandosi nello spazio. [...] Si ferma a disegnare spazi, punti di ascolto, centri di gravità per niente permanenti [...] Come dire a quei musicisti e a quella gente che gli strumenti che Fabrizio suona sono proprio loro? [...] Significa la meraviglia di qualcosa che si considera scontato come l’ascolto dei suoni, significa la scoperta della capacità di sintonizzarsi per ‘vedere’ lo spazio ad occhi chiusi lasciandosi guidare dalle linee architettoniche che veicolano i suoni. Significa la sfida al consolidamento delle percezioni ed il disarmante interrogativo sulla rassicurante consuetudine dei sensi]. Caputo (2010), “Assolo” [Solo for a Choir], blog post [my translation].

awareness. This parameter allows us to perceive what Dr. Barry Blesser says is: “the way the wall changes the frequency balance of the background noise,” including corners and all other elements encountered while walking.¹⁴



¹⁴ Blesser (2007), *Spaces Speak*, p. 1.



Si prega di non fare silenzio [Please Do Not Be Silent], part three, Taviano, Italy, 2010. Photo: Fausta Muci and Paco Santoro.

In the third part, taking place in the bar, I interacted with its space and the barman behind the bar, serving me the two glasses with one red and one blue drink. Part of the action included the drinking of the two ‘binaural’ blue and red drinks and then, after drinking them, the attaching of both empty glasses to my ears with surgical tape. Then I moved to the central area of the bar, framed by an existing tiled square on the floor, which I highlighted even more with red tape, performing its sounds.

Specifically, ‘Please Do Not Be Silent’ was a place for me to focus attention on the paradoxical aspect of silence and its relation with the spaces in which we participate and share with or without awareness. The dialectics between silence and noise became

apparent with their specificities, a far more complex question in their reductive dichotomy of ‘objective’ occurring and ‘subjective’ experience. The glasses were the focal and carrying objects, but also ‘cones of confusion.’¹⁵ In addition they served as sounding instruments of listening, the containers of ‘cocktails,’ intended as a mélange of different local sounds and voices. Initially, all the transitions, places and movements related to the Cocktail Party Effect, in order to have ‘cocktail party ears.’



¹⁵ In psychoacoustics the *cone of confusion* is where the perception of the sound within the whole area of a cone next to the ear is equal. In ‘front-back confusion,’ the different ways of perceiving sound sources in a space, result in the difficulty of distinguishing time differences, different places for sounds.



An earlier exploration of the Cocktail Party Effect in *Citizen (2)*, Chisenhale Dance Space, London 2006. Photo: Christian Kipp.



Effetto Cocktail, performance in a private home, Melissano, Italy 2012. Photo: Fausta Muci.

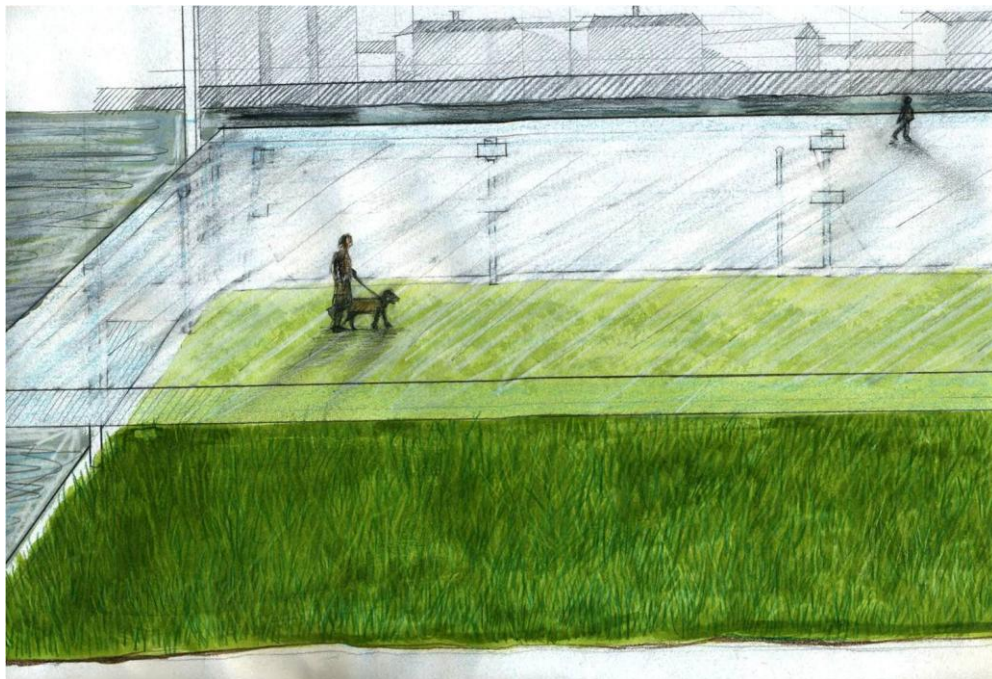
An important element also was the investigation of the Cocktail Party Effect in a metaphorical sense. The drinking glasses are objects which are amplifiers and distorters of environmental sound, serving as potential intrinsic and extrinsic inputs for movement, but also in creating a channel out of acoustic incoherence.¹⁶ This is possible through an interaction with those objects and with other objects in the space. By moving the glasses close and tilting them at different and subtle angles to the ears, the sounds would change and by following these perceived changes with movements, one was moving in connection to those perceived and filtered sounds funnelled in the glasses. They were not embedded prosthetics, but acoustic conductors and directors of movement and embodiment. It is metaphor which becomes completely adherent to the empirical experience of the performance. The participatory glasses installation, was also a way for making ourselves become conductors and directors of sound and movement. Through just the simple use of the glasses, the swishing, distorting, shifting, tinkling, rattling, resounding, tuning of the environmental architectural acoustics in and outside the glasses and ears, we ourselves become sonic tuning glasses, instruments, tuning to spaces and environments. It is an openness, simultaneously to our and to others' felt experience. This is clear in Merleau-Ponty's influence with the experimental phenomenology of perception of visual causality, and the innovative take on Gestalt theory of the psychologist Albert Michotte that Merleau-Ponty looked at. It is specifically so when he says that:

The quality of the sound from a wind instrument bears the mark and the organic rhythm of the breath from which it came, as can be shown by the strange impression received by reversing the normal register of the sounds. Far from

¹⁶ This approach to movement is different from one of moving according to a rhythm or a music, as it has no patterns or repetitions.

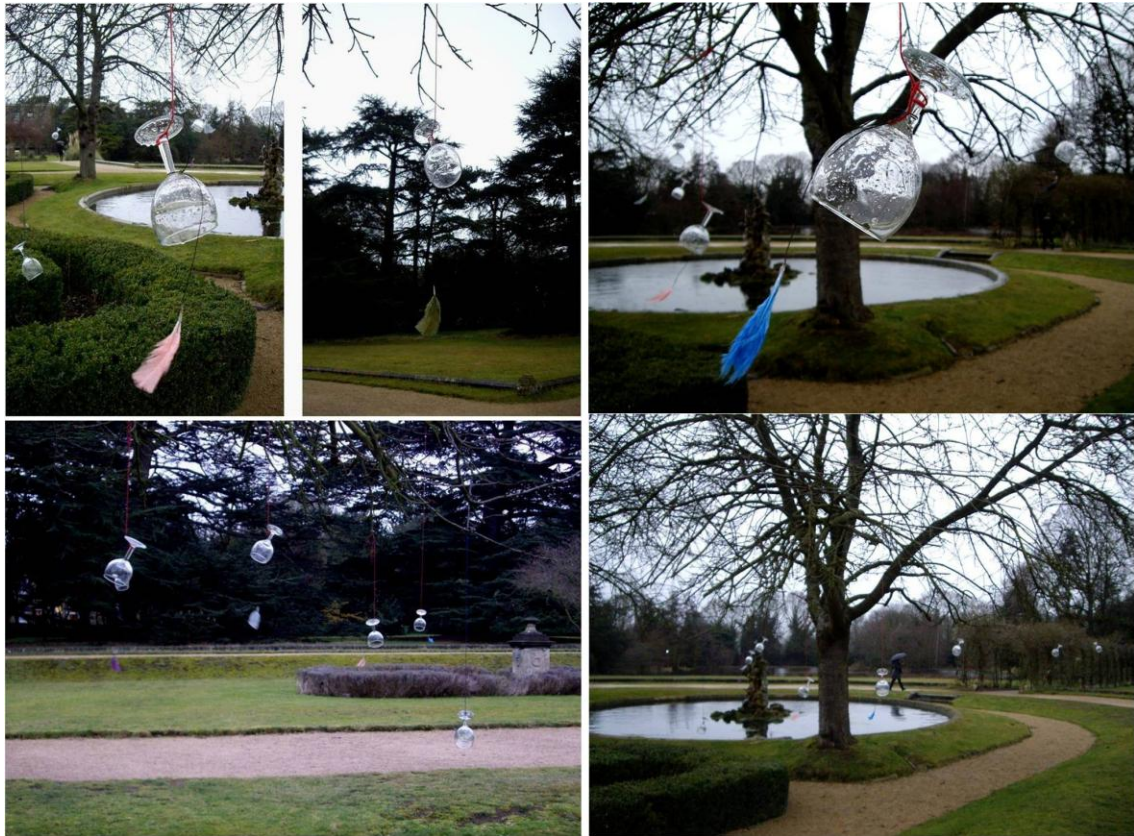
being a simple ‘displacement,’ movement is inscribed in the texture of the shapes or qualities and is, so to speak, the revelation of their being.¹⁷

It became clear to me that a simple way of translating the ‘acoustic texture’ of the objects, the environments, social interaction – but also my complex auditory experience – was to invite an audience to share and to reflect on their listening to the Cocktail Party Effect. Clearly, this was obtained by a simple means, that of simply hanging the two glasses, often of different shape, asymmetrically. The ‘durational’ aspect of the performance was the process from my solo improvisation at the beginning, the travelling path and the cycle connected to the workshop at the end. A listening inclination and predisposition implies the opening up to a place and its people and their specific socio-cultural-architectural milieu. It is an opening up to a plurality of voices and landscapes in relation to objects juxtaposed and layered in the performance, which also reveals formally the sculptural quality of sound interacting with listening within performance.



‘Protected Field,’ sketch for installation *How to Explain a Field to a Dead Magpie (?)*. Fabrizio Manco, 2012.

¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty (1970), *Themes*, p. 6.



How to Explain a Field to a Dead Magpie (?), interactive installation, University of Roehampton, 2012.
Photo: Yukiko Ikehara.



How to Explain a Field to a Dead Magpie (?), performance and installation, University of Roehampton, 2012. Photo: Yukiko Ikehara.

The use of the differently shaped glasses – either suspended from a ceiling or on a trolley or attached to my or participants’ ears (and later also on trees), created somatic tuning. Objects in these performances become transformed ready-mades, which are functional in their specific design, but also empty shells for spatial hearing. Here is an extremely simple and, perhaps, unsophisticated action of de-amplification with unsophisticated ‘technology’ which is meant not to tell anyone how and what to hear/listen to, but instead to incline to an effort. The actual inclination is the performing effort, and is the actual intention and medium of/and performance. Not the sound in itself, but the sonic architectural space and audience are themselves the performing exploration. As I will later discuss in the section “frames of field,” a visually framed action has the role of defining and setting up a concentrated and concentrating space for aural occurrences. In this work, the marked perimeters were to realise and focus on particular areas. Through the specific highlighting of features and surfaces, one can possibly experience the depth of both, the acoustic field of architecture and that of objects. Where surfaces meet they create further spatial, auditory-sculptural dimensions. The moving bodies in auditory dimension become specular and constituent of the architectonic one.

In both performances I had a chance to explore the depth of space and, in particular, of spatial sound fields which are already in the surface and, as Friedrich Nietzsche reminds us, surface is also consciousness: “To become what one is, one must not have the faintest idea what one is [....] The whole surface of consciousness – consciousness is a surface – must be kept clear of all great imperatives.”¹⁸ In the performance and workshop of *Si prega di non fare silenzio* [Please Do Not Be Silent], the hanging and carried glasses on the trolley, created a sensing of surfaces and spaces *as consciousness*, one which, like

¹⁸ Nietzsche in Kaufmann, *The Basic*, p. 710.

empty glasses, is emptied to the world. We reflected on emptying as an emptying of the site, and as an emptying to the site of the ears, empty cocktail glasses to hear the site's sonic cocktail we were in, with whatever was encountered in that found space.

These works made me face and realise a paradox: the tautology of the 'apparent' which 'appears,' or which even emerges to me as the perceptible and welcoming encounter of a difference. It is a networked realisation of both perception of body and site taking place *almost precisely* at the same time. This hints at a very minute unevenness, an almost imperceptible form of an engaged auditory experience. This experience is my experience as a performer, and is that of any other listener becoming performer.

In the two performances and generally in my auditory performance art, I experience coinciding and fitting: the site is the place, the place is a body, a body is an ear, the ear is in an acoustic space, an acoustic space is listening, listening is moving, moving is contingency and contingency becomes performance.

My thesis is a two-chapter PhD, with accompanying supplements at the end of each chapter where I speak in a more direct descriptive-analytical-documentary mode about a selection of practical research, workshops and performances, with further documentation to be found on the accompanying DVD and CD.

Speaking in listening terms: a glossary

Within this thesis – reflecting and interlinking modes of listening within my performance practice and research directed to an audience – there are a number of particular terms that will come up, and here I give some brief explanation which will be developed more fully in the chapters themselves. My terms *ear body/ear bodies* and *ear group, acoustic shadow walk, earlines drawing, site contingency, site-contingent performance, aural choreography* and *auditory performance art*, will be discussed further within the chapters. I introduce here some of these terms, and I will be using other ones which I will also discuss in more depth through the thesis.

Absence-Phantom and Phantom of Absence: An Absence-Phantom is an effect of an absence. I coined and use this term in my discussion on tinnitus as an absence of a proper function of the ear, it is when it becomes an auditory phantom perception.

A Phantom of Absence is also one phantom perception. It is a term I borrow from the neurologist Silas Weir Mitchell (1985), and which is part of the many phantom perceptions he talks about. I adapt his term to aid my discussion on tinnitus. I use the terms absence-phantom and phantom of absence in discussing tinnitus in reference to *The Phantom and The Ghost* (see below). In this context, I give them the function to create a creative connection between auditory phantom perception and the auditory metaphor of ghost.

Acoustic Ecology: This is an interdisciplinary field of study, also known as ecoacoustics. It was delineated in 1977 by the sound theorist, composer and writer R. Murray Schafer in his *The Soundscape. Our Sonic Environment and The Tuning of the World* and, because of its interdisciplinary nature, there is no one agreed definition of it. As Barry

Truax says – with connections and differences shared with the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology (WFAE) – acoustic ecology “refers to the system of relationships between organisms and their sonic environments with particular emphasis on a functional balance or an attention to dysfunctional behaviour.”¹⁹

Ambivalence: This is the philosophy underlying my thesis together with that of the paradox. In the paradox I also imply ambivalence. Ambivalence is a reality that we should recover, because I think it part of everything in our understanding and relationship with the world. I am trying to achieve a conscious understanding not only of the acoustic phenomenon, but also in the discussion on the body as a de-stabiliser of a unilateral or dualistic viewpoint.

Almost-Performance: One’s performativity can also be called ‘almost-performance.’ In the same way our daily movements posses the potential to be considered as performance, in any space and situation so, almost-performance is performativity becoming performance. In this sense, performance begins from when one goes to bed, during sleep, the morning after in the bus or train, the journey, the architecture, other spaces: performance outside the auditorium. They are also unaware acts of somatic performative and choreographic events in landscape locations, in village streets, houses, parking lots, cloakrooms, barns, disused factories, railway stations, on hillsides, in forest clearings, on the scale of civil engineering, or as intimate as a walk.

Amplification: Although it is considered as intensification of sound or gesture, amplification here is to be intended not as an increase in volume, but as *corporeal*

¹⁹ Truax (2012), “Music,” p. 2.

amplification through listening, the amplification of a relationship with a space, a site, a place through sound. This listening is the one of the body. For its destabilising power, sometimes loud amplification can be essential, but at other times the opposite is also important. In the context of my research, amplification is a tool of investigation which I am advocating as a going beyond a distinction between ‘bad’ and ‘good’ acoustics of a space. There is no such thing as bad acoustics, and sound and the body are both ambivalent. Sounds, like the body, are considered and perceived as ‘in themselves’ but also as a result of an interrelationship between the two. Each acoustic space we are in is always potentially a space to engage with and to be functional in favouring performance. For me, amplification is in the effort to listen to a space, and in the effort to perform: it is both listening (which itself performs) and the performance of listening (performing us). I also criticise amplification as over-amplification and over-use in relation to contemporary society and its contemporary use in technology, in favour of a subtle gesture and as a corporeal act. The question of over-amplification in the context of the performing and sonic arts needs to be reconsidered and, indeed, critically.

I discuss the problematics of amplification in the introduction and in relation to technology in section 1.2 *Soundscape as another disembodiment technology*. I include it in this glossary not only as a preamble to my concept of amplification – which I think it would require the writing of a whole book on it – but also to extend and to emphasise its importance in the overall discussion of this thesis.

In the thesis I also talk about the aural aspect as a democratising amplification. By democratising amplification I meant an enhancer of spatial awareness, which includes an enhancement of aural as well as visual perception. In considering the ‘democratic’ and ‘amplification,’ I mean to go beyond physical ability of hearing and/or seeing through corporeal listening. It is not meant to be understood as a position of ableism. The

democratising aspect means the enhancement and the inclusion of all various possibilities and relationships to sound, of all the different nuances of hearing/listening, or of seeing and not seeing, of hearing and not hearing, as well as corporeal listening. It is not meant as an obscuring, which goes beyond and against all ideas of 'ability' or 'disability' with their rigidity and restrictions.

Choreography: my notion of choreography is that of 'aural choreography' where the choreographer is the acoustic environment which, together with our listening to the sounds, creates a choreography, our moving according to the sounds one can perceive, where a performer is affected by that acoustic environment. A performer responds by following and moving with the sounds, and this is also my ecophenomenological concern, in how one relates to an environment through listening within the physical boundaries on an environment. This type of choreography is part of my site-contingent performance methodology and, although following the sounds relies upon one's spontaneous mental/physical response and freedom of movements, it does not purely mean improvisation. It is based upon how the acoustic environment resonates through boundaries. These boundaries can also be natural, physical, architectonic structures, frames, perimeters, they could be also imagined delimitations in different sites.

Cocktail Party Effect: The term 'Cocktail Party Effect' was coined by psychologists E. Colin Cherry and Bruce Sayers in 1953 to indicate what takes place during a conversation with someone in a noisy environment. In psychoacoustics, this specific auditory experience is typical of the tuning capacity that 'normal' hearing and conversing people have in focussing concentration in listening to one person's voice, while immersed in the constant sonic envelope of chattering. Thanks to the surrounding noise of chattering it is

easier to hear better in a social environment, because of the capacity of dealing with, discriminating and choosing sound signals from a spatial noisy background. If comparing the sound of two ears with the noise around in a space, it results as the same, and this effect is part of ‘binaural un-masking’ (in both ears). I have extensively explored the Cocktail Party Effect – and in my personal auditory experience related to chronic tinnitus – in a series of performances in relation to objects (paper cones, drinking glasses, trays, trolleys) indoors and outdoors architecture and audiences’ listening and voices.

Complexity: In my thesis, the word complexity often appears to denote a varied and always differently layered sensorial experience, and in relation to varied multifaceted environments. I use this term because I think it better encapsulates and explains the ground philosophy of ecophenomenology. Ecophenomenology addresses ecology, intended as complexity of systems, and phenomenology, intended also as complexity of experience. Specifically, the experience I talk about is sensorial experience, and sensorial experience is complex. When I consider sound as experience, I also think of the complexity of sound. When I talk about contingency, I think of the experience of contingent temporality. This temporality is complex, in the same way – as I will discuss – it is experienced in site-contingent performance and in aural choreography, where the purpose is that to focus on the acoustic particular, and this acoustic particular is that of listening. Listening – if not even more so – is complex.

Contingency and Specificity: In this thesis contingency is a means, one *of* and *in* performance. I extensively discuss contingency and contingency in relation to performance in Chapter 2. As an entry in this glossary in order to contextualise my discussion, in site-contingent performance and aural choreography, the specific relation to

the unexpected acoustic inputs comes from the acoustic environment and relates to our aware, or unaware, connection with it. Contingency is life, unpredictable, momentary, irreversible, chaotic, dynamic as we live it, as we encounter it, and future possibility of encountering what is yet to come. The methodology I developed helps to realise a connection to a specific site, to perform and move through our becoming the contingency of a site. I see this becoming the contingency of a site as performance, and I call it site-contingent performance. Here, I re-consider contingency as a re-mapping of the site-specific: because of one's ear body becoming a site's contingency, site-contingent performance is more specific than site-specific performance.

My use of the concept of 'contingency' is partly a consideration of and an adaptation from the Italian philosopher of science Telmo Pievani's concept of contingency.

Specifically, his discussion on chance and on uncertainty offer a complementary example, and find a place in my application of contingency to performance in relation to sound.

(The) Ear Body: This is when the whole body becomes an ear. It is a bodied experience of listening and sound, a bodymind attuning through aural perception – also beyond cochlear hearing – and of any acoustic, environmental, architectural, cultural and physical site. It is also my way of questioning established and over-used and over-exploited ideas on embodiment. Moving in a space of moving sounds, an ear body becomes that space of movement, free from restrictions, yet through a relation to physical or imaginary frames.

(The) Ear Group: What I call an *ear group* is a meeting of ear bodies, a meeting through listening of differences and communality. It is an environmentally aware coming together. In a listening and moving group there is co-operation and co-participating between people themselves and, at the same time, with the environment. This means

becoming environmentally aware in a socially shared listening. An ear group opens up to contingency, as future possibilities of performing together.

Ecophenomenology: Ecophenomenology is seen as a contemporary ecological development from phenomenology, including the phenomenology of perception of Merleau-Ponty and it could be considered as a distinct academic discipline within the broader field of environmental philosophy, which is intended as environmental theory. In a sense, it develops phenomenology in a more ecological and contemporary spirit. It is a discipline of slightly counterpoised variations of schools, as evident in the sometimes differently written term as ‘eco-phenomenology’ (e.g. in Wood et al.) and ‘ecophenomenology’ (as in David Abrams). Wood, in his section on Deep Ecology – and its presumed and problematic fascistic tendencies and influences from Martin Heidegger – discusses ecophenomenology, saying that he wants “to argue that the dividing line between benign and pernicious appropriations of the ecological perspective has to do with [these] liminological issues of boundary management which ecophenomenology is in a position to address.”²⁰

Hearing and Listening: In this thesis I discuss ‘applied’ hearing turning into dynamic listening. By this, I do not imply a dichotomy between attention and distraction and, in this sense, I follow the reflection given on this dichotomy by Veit Erlmann.²¹ Listening is not just paying attention and hearing is not a passive or distracted mode, as listening can be already hearing and vice-versa. In the context of my Ear Bodies project, both listening and hearing are an interconnected fluidity, yet, by being fundamentally corporeal, listening can also exist without hearing. For instance, for a hearing-impaired or a deaf

²⁰ Wood (2005), *The Steps*, p. 161.

²¹ Erlmann (2010), *Reason*.

spectator/performer, listening could be a strong and clear corporeal experience as an over-encompassing physical perception.

Hyperacusis: This is a compressive/distorting response of the hair cells in the cochlea. According to audiology scientist David M. Baguley “the term is generally applied to people who experience the sounds of everyday life as intrusively loud, uncomfortable, and sometimes painful [...] usually associated with increased gain (or sensitivity) in the central auditory system (the hearing pathways in the brain).”²² It can often be also accompanied by tinnitus, and can be intensified by it.

(The) Lived Body: I consider the lived body in its original phenomenological concept as non-dualistic experience, the lived body as ‘lived experience.’ It is neither spirit nor nature, neither soul nor body, neither inner nor outer, neither subject nor object. The lived body as lived experience is realised with our awareness in performance.

Non-dualism: A residual legacy is that of classical thinking – and in particular of Plato’s philosophy – which, with its dichotomous approach, has created a distance that we need to occupy. On an ontological level, the undercurrent of this perspective is of a division between real and unreal, as an additive work which creates an illusion of ‘reality’ but, undoubtedly, by referring to a ‘truer’ one, it constructs a schizoid condition. My discourse for non-dualism is the substrate of my thesis, but goes beyond a mere and, by now, extensively explored – and perhaps even ‘embalmed’ – criticism and scholarly discussion on dualism/s. Nonetheless, the problematics of dualism are still – sometimes more, other times less – current in contemporary societies. In his early work Maurice Merleau-Ponty

²² Baguley (2010), “Hyperacusis,” [no pagination].

sought a complete rejection of the Western philosophical tradition, although, ultimately, there is not actually a real distinction between a Western philosophy and a so-called ‘Eastern philosophy’ – by replacing it with a non-dualistic and unique phenomenological system, and I follow him in this project as he also goes beyond Martin Heidegger’s phenomenological thought, by fully bringing forth the presence of the body. A specific example I cite comes from Japanese ‘philosophy’ of the body as a useful reminder of the mischievous effects of the mind-body and other dualisms. Britta Boutry-Stadelmann, gives as an example the Japanese philosopher Yuasa Yasuo’s theory of the body – as one of the many examples of this overcoming – in her addressing of Plato’s thought on perception, saying that: “as well as in Augustinian and Neo-Platonic religious thought, matter was considered as an impediment to true knowledge.”²³

Performance and Performativity: The object of my research is based on performance from an embodied hearing/listening standpoint, where I have been the mover/performer, the philosopher, the facilitator. I distinguish between performance (which encompasses performance art, live art or theatre) for an audience/participant others, and a performance of the ear in daily life intended as performativity. In this thesis performativity is to be intended as ordinary corporeal gestures, ordinary daily rituals, actions, movements of one’s ear body which can be seen as and can themselves even be performance. As well as performance, performativity is related to contingency, it is spontaneous and unplanned.

Phantom and Ghost: In this thesis I weave together the apparent dichotomy and the two concepts, metaphors and experiences of phantom and ghost. They are both auditory illusions, yet perceptions experienced as real. One, the auditory phantom (tinnitus) is

²³ Boutry-Stadelmann (2006), “Yuasa Yasuo,” p. 295.

experienced as endogenous sound (internal origin) and the other, the auditory ghost, is experienced as exogenous sound (external origin). Tinnitus, is usually described as a form of phantom perception, a compensation of the brain to an auditory loss, malfunction or trauma, which generates somatosounds perceptions. According neuroscientist Pavel Jastreboff, somatosounds are related to a “spontaneous activity within the auditory pathways, and there is no external sound corresponding to the tinnitus. In other words, tinnitus is a phantom sound, similar to phantom pain or the phantom limb phenomenon.”²⁴ Subjective tinnitus “is considered to be analogous to phantom limb pain [...] The hearing section of the brain interprets the error signals in the only way it knows how...as sound.”²⁵ I interpret my experience of chronic tinnitus as producing a ‘ghost,’ where its sound is experienced not only internally, but also as a projection (the ghost). This means that tinnitus (the phantom) creates an auditory image (the ghost), as an illusory sound coming from outside. Although they are two different concepts and experiences, I deliberately confuse phantom and ghost, as they are both con-fused experiences of tinnitus, and I explore them as a relationship, from scientific to metaphorical with the artistic practice. They are also performative, possessing creative potential which I explore in performance. The complicating process, is for me a way of translating experience of perception where two terms of comparison are not dialectical, but instead are *always* distinct and inter-exchangeable at the same time. An example of this is a visitation as a return, a projection which then comes back -- as exemplified in the Japanese ghost story of Hōichi the Earless. I give this example in the section 1.4 Tinnitus: *the ghost in the auditory phantom stage* and in the section 1.6 *Noli me tangere (cum sono)*, where I explore the simultaneous identification and differentiation between emissary and listener, reality and illusion in their visual forms through their aural

²⁴ Jastreboff (1993), “A neurophysiological,” p. 231.

²⁵ Baker et al., “Tinnitus,” p. 16.

environment. Importantly, what I am discussing is the concept of ‘ghost’ as different from disembodiment and as an actual entity as such, like one which could live a life in a so-called ‘afterlife’ in this life, or a ‘spirit’ or a ‘soul’ and one which reincarnates. In this writing there is no grounding into exoterism, the paranormal or the supernatural, of a ‘consciousness’ as fixed, a ‘ghost’ which is not to be understood in all its Platonic sense and inheritance, of an either/or dualism.

Place in Place: It is the experience which I sense when I guide myself and facilitate others within an environment and in realising a contingency, through the use of physical or imaginary markings out of specific architectonic and landscape areas. Here I introduce the experience of the performance of place in place. We can think of a body as a place; a place embedded into another place intended as a physical environmental location and which is specular to the body.

Posthumous Ear: In my Ear Bodies project, I introduce a constituting threshold of sonorous silence as a tangible and acoustic liminality. After an acoustic trauma, a body possesses a ‘posthumous ear.’ In my posthumous ear and its narrative, I recall the flattening effect of an apparent acoustic separation with the world and the bringing back of familiar patterns in a contingent world. It is the existent embedded acoustic and ‘stretched’ experience of space and the auditory phantom which became a condition of creating a new context.

(The) Queer Body: The Ear Body is also the Queer Body. In other words, the Queer and Feminist and their political, artistic, philosophical and ethical discourse is kneaded through the whole of this thesis. Indeed, the power which fuels movements and ideologies

such as Feminism and Queer Studies informs me and my work. However, the nature of this project and my main focus here is the exploration of the world and the complexity of listening, sound and site. The theory and the underlying relation to Queer and Feminist studies will be more explicit in a future project. In my own work and research on Tarantism, it remains an important substrate. It is at the same time both, a gender-specific and gender fluid aspect. This latter aspect is to be intended in the specific position of not only women, but also of the place of men had throughout the history of Tarantism. These were and are the queer and ear bodies of women and men in the ‘carnival’ of making themselves strange, in their being subaltern but also powerfully transgressive at the same time, and in their becoming animal or becoming other (also in a Deleuzian sense). I started developing my work and research on Tarantism in my performance research project *[STATES OF]TRANCEformation* in 2005 at the Chisenhale Dance Space in London. One of the different aspects explored was my own and my collaborators’ cultural, Feminist and Queer identities, as well as our specific cultural relation to it.

Site-contingent Performance is my methodology and mine and other participants’ performance. In this performing one identifies with contingency through listening with one’s ear body. The contingency of a site conditions us, then one becomes intrinsically connected to a specific site, one becomes its contingency.

Sound: By sound I mean different things. In my thesis I address one or more of sound’s specific aspects according to what I am discussing in a particular section. This is because I intentionally do not want to reduce sound to only one meaning, a meaning changes, like our perception of sound does. I do not find these different meaning of sound as contradictory. One meaning does not exclude another. I relate sound to the specific

context I am addressing in each specific section of my thesis. So, sound is a subjective experience and perception (either ‘internal’ or ‘external,’ or phantom/illusory), in our individual specific perception of it and as creator of the environment we are in. It is also experienced as silence, as a space-in-between, as the point, but also as the medium of our auditory perception. In the specific (and traumatic/healing) case of tinnitus and Tarantism, sound can also be experienced as material, physical and as interactive event of vibration and reverberation in the body. For instance, in the case of tinnitus, the vibration of the ear’s hair cells’ transduction of the external vibrations of sound to the brain and, in the case of Tarantism, as external vibration which affects the listening body (which could be also one of a hearing-impaired person) of the *tarantati* who become at one with that vibration. An interaction is created between sound and the body, where I consider sound and bodies as both vibrating and interacting (body vibrating interacting with sound as vibration) . This take on sound comes from a personal and subjective experience of its spaces and experience through chronic tinnitus and hyperacusis, through my work as a performer, artist and researcher (which also include my research on Tarantism).

However, the most important consideration of sound in the purpose of my thesis is that of sound as *relation* and sound *in* relation. By relation I mean the event between sounds and one’s corporeal listening, the space-in-between a hearer/listener and the perception of the acoustic environment and its (moving) sounds’ sources. From all the different categories in the analysis of Roberto Casati and Jerome Dokic on sound, I find the one of Relational Event Theory more pertinent here. According to this theory: “[...] sounds are events which involve both the source and the surrounding medium. They are relational rather than ‘monadic’ events.”²⁶ By plurality I mean the plural aspect of sound as *sounds*.

²⁶ Casati and Dokic, “Sounds” [no pagination].

Tarantism: Tarantism was believed to be caused by the supposedly poisonous lycosa tarantula and had as a character the symbolism of the bite and the venom of the *taranta* (as it is called in Salentine dialect, the Italian dialect of the Salento area in Puglia) – and the related animal realm of scorpions, snakes and the basilisk – with the subsequent healing therapy through colours, dance and healing music (or iatromusic, as it was called in the Baroque period). It unfolded itself as a sequence of ‘bite,’ ‘poison,’ ‘crisis,’ ‘cure’ and ‘healing.’ It is an inheritance from the rituals of Bacchus, Cibel (Corybantism) and Orphic spirituality and has been categorised by Ernesto De Martino²⁷ as a form of exorcism inscribed in a psychoanalytic and Christian interpretation. Importantly, De Martino’s interpretation is contradicted by Gilbert Rouget seeing it instead as an identification with the spider and as a “partaking of an alliance,” in other words, as an ‘adorcism,’ which is the opposite of exorcism.²⁸

Tinnitus: The word tinnitus comes from the Latin word *tinnire*, meaning to ring or tinkle-like a bell. It is a ‘head noise,’ or a ringing noise in one’s ears and head that does not go away. This noise, in some cases, can be maddening and it can range in volume from a ring to a roar. Some people hear tinnitus as a buzzing, hissing, roaring, whistling, chirping or clicking instead of – or in addition to – ringing ears. Tinnitus can be intermittent or a constant ringing, with single or multiple tones and its perceived volume can range from subtle to shattering, or it can be in the form of musical hallucinations, it can be very debilitating, causing also sleep disturbance and interference with concentration. Because of the private nature of tinnitus suffering, it is very often difficult to communicate each person’s specific experience and only a few people find it easy to communicate, so they

²⁷ De Martino (1994), *La terra* [The Land].

²⁸ Rouget (1985), p. 164. The term ‘adorcism’ was coined by Luc de Heusch, “Possession and Shamanism” in *Why Marry Her?* (pp. 154-158. This is a shorter version of his original essay, “Cultes de possession et religion initiatiques de salut en Afrique,” in Vol. 2 of *Annales du Centre d’ Étude des Religions*, Brussels, 1962).

often suffer ‘in silence.’ When the tinnitus is of the type called subjective tinnitus, an external person cannot hear the sounds of the tinnitus sufferer. On the contrary, in objective tinnitus a person can actually hear the tinnitus. According to Y-B. Shi Baker et al.: “Objective tinnitus is caused by some mechanical process in the head or neck and can often be heard by the clinician as well as the patient. [...] Subjective tinnitus can only be heard by the individual who has it.”²⁹

Tinnitus is divided into two categories: “1) vibratory, mechanical, exogenous-factual sounds within the body, and 2) non-vibratory, biochemical endogenous-total absence of sound without the body.”³⁰ Also tinnitus can be somatosensorial when the sounds are caused by movements of the jaw or other movements of bones and muscles. Apart from chronic tinnitus, according to R. L. Wegel “people entirely without tinnitus are extremely rare, if such cases exist at all.”³¹

Workshops: Workshops are part of my practice and sharing of my Ear Bodies methodology with participants from different backgrounds, ages and with different physical and hearing abilities, with different cultural, geographic, artistic and academic settings. Sometimes a workshop might follow a performance, or a durational and/or repeated performance might include a workshop or elements of it, in the form of participatory exercises, sometimes leading to an aural choreography. Although a workshop is different from ‘almost-performance,’ performance and performativity (see above on p. 47 for definitions of these) it can include elements of them. The different exercises and parameters take place within various sites and frames. In this sense, workshops and performance have in common the exploration of sensorial experience as well as involving a sharing of my studio and in-situ practical research with the different

²⁹ Baker et al. (2005), “Tinnitus,” pp. 15, 16.

³⁰ Hallowell (ed.) (1947), Hearing, p. 72.

³¹ Wegel, “A Study of Tinnitus,” Arch. Otolaryng. August, 1931, in Bergman and Heller, “Tinnitus,” p. 74.

participants' involvement and contribution. Sometimes, the workshops were also part of the research methodology as well as a way to go beyond my own auditory experience of tinnitus – which, nonetheless, I have for a long while successfully managed – whilst at the same time being a sharing platform. As well as being shared experience the workshops are also pedagogical means of exploring performance in relation to site and sound and in this sense they also engage 'training.' Training is a way of putting thinking into tested practice.

PORTFOLIO STATEMENT

There are different elements to my PhD and they have different functions in the presentation of the whole work. I supplement the thesis with a portfolio of scanned images and drawings in a pdf on a CD, together with a DVD of video works, comprising of selected video documentation of performances, workshops and practical research. I have chosen to place this portfolio statement at this part of the thesis because it might well contextualise its more theoretical aspect. The selection comprising the portfolio is representative of my work and is an exploration, experimentation and application of different theoretical and practical aspects and elements of audiology, choreography, acoustic ecology and ecophenomenology to the performance research, performances and workshops. This selection of performance research, performances and workshops maps out and indicates the thesis, although the thesis itself reflects and extends further on the practice. I also include other images of drawings together with photographic documentation in the body of this thesis, as part of the various examples of the different aspects of my practical work. Altogether, the portfolio of video documentation and images, covers and gives an idea about these different aspects of my artistic practice, performance research, as a workshop facilitator. These aspects are interrelated with my more theoretical research which will be the main part of the two chapters of this thesis, giving way to a discussion augmenting my practice, but which –although born within my practice – develops and goes beyond it theoretically.





Performance research and workshops as part and co-founder member of *InVivo* Collective, London 2007-2008. Photo: InVivo.

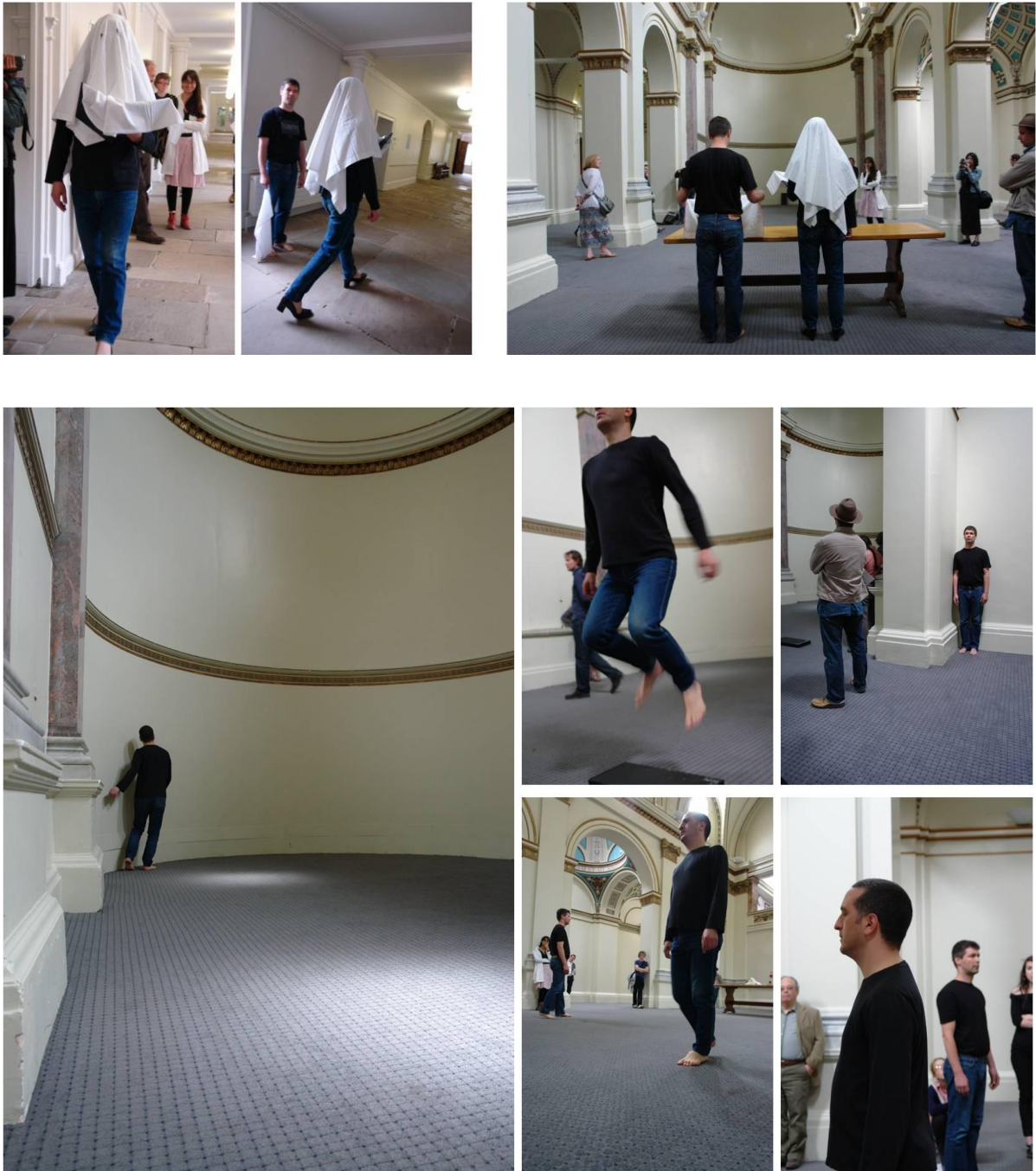
The Ear Bodies methodology is included in workshops and participatory performances, where all the different parameters and exercises include what I call ‘aural choreography.’ This becomes a strengthening of an individual as well as an interpersonal corporeal performative knowledge, to allow a physically aware auditory level of movement and perception – which is usually submerged in the automatism of the everyday – being both, observer-listener and observed-listened to performers. All the different parameters and exercises (preparatory exercises, walking transitions, indoor and outdoor parameters and ‘earlines’ drawing) can help to develop one’s own insights and to investigate one’s specific relationship with a site and its acoustics, to explore sound and site interrelationships, as well as highlighting their intrinsic qualities through strengthening acoustic awareness. The activities are always explored both individually as well as in-pairs, as a way of better engaging binaural hearing, corporeal listening and aural space (landscape and architecture).

In the workshops these parameters and exercises are all usually propaedeutic to the engagement with, and the facilitation of, a final group improvisation.

As part of my practical research, I have been exploring different landscapes as well as different built environments and various architectural spaces. In particular, brutalist, and functionalist 1960's or earlier modernist 1920's and 1950's architecture in London have proved very engaging spaces, and have included the Royal Festival Hall/Southbank Centre, Barbican Centre, Senate House, amongst many others. These explorations varied from simply navigation of architectural spaces and their aural aspects to the actual drawing and mapping of my experience of them, their specific sonic nuances, shifts and variation of sound pitches, which are the result of an interaction between ears and their sounding structural architectures. Their specific features are varied and sonically different. I could say that each architectural age sounds differently. For instance, the acoustic interactions between weather, people, ceilings, corners, corridors and nooks and crannies of the University of Roehampton, the Royal Festival Hall and Senate House, made me explore their 'ghostly' qualities, as part of the performance research as well as the live art performances. In these spaces with their very specific aural architecture, the uncanny was felt through my ears, their aural spatial aspects becoming overwhelming in a cacophony and 'ghostly' presence.







FOYER: here, never, University of Roehampton, Whitelands Campus and Chapel, 2009. Photo: Silvia Gigliodoro.

On 3 June 2009, at the University of Roehampton, I presented *FOYER: here, never*. The connected performances and installations were divided in three parts and took place in the courtyard, the corridor and the ex-chapel of the Whitelands College. This was an initial investigation and interaction with the acoustics of the site and its history and a reflection on the moving acoustic gaze, phantom and deferral of surround sound.



A GHOST is another PHANTOM?, Senate House, London 2009. Photo: Stella Schito.

On the 17th of November 2009, at Senate House (University of London) I presented *A GHOST is another PHANTOM?*, an itinerant performance and paper presentation. This performance was a reflection on acoustic phantom perception. I engaged the audience in an initial pedestrian action as a ‘phantom-ghost,’ by wearing a white sheet with two holes for the eyes. The sheet was folded resembling the pages of a book and attached to the inside of a book cover to make a book with the title ‘Book of Ghosts,’ while also wearing a portable radio tuned to produce a white noise, changing its frequency according to movements. To acoustically activate the space through the transitions in corridors and rooms of the building, I was also wearing black high heel shoes. Later participants were asked to write down their phantom and a personal ghost sound on a piece of paper in envelopes I gave them at the beginning of the performance. These were read as part of a performance lecture at the conclusion of my paper, which followed the performance. The audience were particularly invited to engage and ‘prick up their ears’ and actively listen to the spaces and acoustic changes (and temperatures) of the building.

Again, in the spaces of Senate House on 25 February 2010, I presented *After the Earless*, a three part performance. This time, the Japanese ghost story of Hōichi the Earless, an underlying reference in my previous performance and paper, became more evident. Since the previous November, the anteroom and corridor had changed, and two pendulum clocks had been added. The structural space and the pendulum clocks’ rhythmic sounds enabled the performance, through Butoh movement and with drawing. In the corridor, I explored the auditory space through walking while drawing – on a book placed on a tray which I specifically made for the performance – my experience of the sound I was hearing. In this work I was investigating synchronised and non-synchronised sound, relating tempo, movement and mark-making.

Auditory Performance Art: itinerant listening at a near distance





Mask, Masking, Masker, Chelsea Theatre, London 2008. Photo: Silvia Gigliodoro.





Melissa (Home Bee), Melissano and countryside, Italy 2008. Photo: Fabio Pino.



Vico (corridoio uditivo) [Alley (Auditory Corridor)], Taviano, Italy 2009. Photo: Fausta Muci.



Dal Cielo alla terra [From Sky to Earth], Presicce, Italy, 2009. Photo: Fausta Muci.

‘Auditory performance art’ is my peripatetic performance work, connecting different architectural, landscape, geographical sites and spaces, the performance of personal corporeal listening and shared audition, together becoming performance art.³² Auditory performance, being a site acoustic performance practice, finds links between the moving of sound sources and the movement and participation of the audience and performer’s bodies, through a specifically auditory kinaesthetic sense and itinerant processes. Through these processes and performative parameters I make familiar places become unfamiliar and unfamiliar places become familiar, in my attempt to make perceivable the invisible/unperceived.

³² My itinerant performance work developed in 1997 in Italy (Casarano, Melissano and surrounding areas) when I started working on the project *The Crow (The Saint): the slavery to the image and the slavery of the image*. This was an itinerant performance which – after a performance in Italy as part of the festival ‘I Mangiatori di Fuochi’ in Casarano – took place at the Slade School of Fine Art (UCL) in London. In its different versions, this work was performed in Italy and England in 1997 and in India in 1999. It explored, through painting, drawing, video, film and performance, the relationship between audience involved in ‘processions’ and performer/s, as well as iconography, the body and landscape, the image and its iconoclastic erasure, ritual and agriculture. To see excerpts of the video documentation of the London version of the performance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IENGw7SdfFc>.



Drawing from *Citizen (2)* performance project, 2006.





Citizen (2), Chisenhale Dance Space, London 2006. Photo: Christian Kipp.

In auditory performance art, I often relate my auditory experience metaphorically, through the use of objects, as for instance the use of full and empty tea cups and tinkling tea spoons, stirring all of the sonic teas, with ringing-tinny teaspoons hitting ringing and swishing cups. I recall a sonic cocktail in a cup, or sonic storms in glasses, an effect in a cupped ear, many turbulent seas in the cochlea, in a shell. These cups as well as other objects, became ritualised and designed material forms for translating my relationship with my and others' sounds and listening. Generally, the whole process – from initial personal experience, performance research and development in studio and in-situ, workshops and performances – is itself instilled within each auditory performance art work. Each performance involves myself and sometimes a participatory audience, always moving through routes connecting different spaces and processes. This itinerant involvement is the main generative aspect. It is going through spaces, the sensorial traversing of bodies connecting different sites, and for a long duration. The acoustic spaces of architectures are imbued in these connections, through either specifically designed or mundane objects, focussed on the movements of myself as performer and the

trajectories and movements which were also those of the people I invite to follow me in an itinerary through very different places. In a performance, people find their own time and ways of traversing space in different and possible directions.

The link to art-historical depictions and conceptions of corporeal, visual and aural space, is also often the substrate which becomes gradually more distilled, through the testing of the generative sonic potential of bodies, objects and spaces. The art works are linked to – and sometime also generated by – one or more connected objects and spaces with a specific environment. I often use framing devices in the form of ribbons, threads or coloured tapes onto different floors and areas, which was and still is the means of allowing auditory and visual fields of experience.³³ I guide myself and facilitate others within and in favouring a contingency, through the use of physical or imaginary markings – out of specific architectonic and landscape areas – and I introduce the experience of the performance of *place in place*. The focus here, is not only on the affect of the relational and the sensorial, but also on itinerant and processional performances, where the walking listening is at a near distance. My use of the term ‘relational’ differs with what Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) in 1998 identified as the collective sensitivity to relations between people and the production of relationships with the world, when it does not include the focus on the contingent aspect. It is the passing through transitions of aural environments, different actions of walking, undertaken by both performers and spectators, which enable mutual observers and listeners to know and to test in a *solvitur ambulando*, as the Romans used to say.³⁴ In this way, visible or invisible marrying trails are created which become the actual tangible interstices, linking spaces, between rooms, areas, sites and ear bodies.

³³ I will discuss this in the section 2.9 “Aural Choreography: frames of field.”

³⁴ The Latin expression *solvitur ambulando* means that the problem is solved by walking.

CHAPTER 1

Ear Bodies

In this chapter and the next I reveal the theoretical and philosophical stratum of my thesis, where my research project culminates. Here, notions, approaches, layers of personal, interpersonal and experiential practice intermix with the practised theories of the phenomenology of the lived body and perception. All the writing is based and interlinked with my artistic practice and is the result of it, a practical philosophical training through embodiment.

Embodiment has become a vexed question. In the history of Western philosophy, ultimately, the debate is about the body, but the body of an enclosed and frustrated thinking, a thinking on itself, where the place of the body is reduced to a presumption. By all means, all this needs to be considered, because thinking is always bodied, but what is needed is a reflection on corporality, one which is not of an ascetic or other state, or of a special extra-ordinary experience, but one which is of a very ordinary nature. I have become increasingly aware that the discourse on embodiment has reached a point of saturation, including its place in religious, dance and performance studies. My position on and the use of the general discourse on embodiment is close to that of Francisco Varela.³⁵ Professor of biology Pier Luigi Luisi is particularly clear on this, sharing the same position on embodiment with Varela and in his article says that: “Varela and co-workers [...] use the term ‘embodiment’ to signify that human consciousness has its counterpart in

³⁵ Varela et al. (1991), *The Embodied*.

the organic structure – that there is no consciousness outside the reality of bodily experience.”³⁶ The word ‘embodiment’ in itself seems to contradict bodily experience, at least linguistically, contradicting also an underlying non-dualist element. Since, the prefix ‘em’ implies an incorporation, or incarnation, there is still a dichotomy between body and mind – and also of body and soul – the mind to be, the mind that is incorporated/incarnated and the body which is left, discarded. We need to start from the precept that the mind is already ‘bodied’ and the body is already ‘minded,’ because to have a thought is itself a physical experience.³⁷

Against the reductionist psychosomatic concept of the body, I counterpoise the open space of the knowing body. Very often, the contemporary talking about the body is still the reduction to a psycho-somaticism or to somatisation, giving to the psyche the primacy in influencing the body (as separate and as an object). This is the same criticism of the German psychiatrist, neurologist and phenomenologist Hans Jörg Weitbrecht who in 1955 wrote *Kritik der Psychosomatik* [Critique of Psychosomatics]. Regarding Weitbrecht, Italian psychiatrist Luigi Janiri wrote:

“Still today to write the word ‘psychosomatic’ with or without the separating dash (disjunction?) means to take a definite position in relation to restricted or extended psychosomatic theories, that is to say of a reductive vision, at least a confined one, of the mind-body relationship.”³⁸

Instead, the space of the knowing body is the one which listens to itself as sameness and alterity at the same time. Sound, as alterity, enhances this physical space, but also intrudes

³⁶ Luisi (2003), “Autopoiesis,” p. 55.

³⁷ I nonetheless also consider the notion of disembodiment to be used here, simply for a discursive necessity, either instrumental or theoretical.

³⁸ [Ancora oggi scrivere la parola ‘psicosomatica’ senza o con il tratto di separazione (disgiunzione?) vuol dire prendere una definita posizione nei confronti delle teorie psicosomatiche ristrette o allargate, vale a dire di una visione riduttiva perlomeno confinata del rapporto mente-corpo]. Janiri in Martinotti (2009), *Fenomenologia*, p. 178 [my translation].

on us, traumatises and disturbs us, it territorialises somebody else's space, it pleases, hurts and owns us, but we cannot own sound. Constantly moved, mediated, related and surrounded by this encompassing, always specific, unique and yet vast landscape, we are bodies swimming in the vast sea of sound, and we are made of this sea. Here, there exists our mostly unaware negotiation between our bodies and the sonic spaces and surfaces through our unconsciously selective hearing. When our applied and focussed hearing becomes active listening, it passes through the diaphragms and wide-angles of sound's spatial perception. The physicality I am aware of – and which I call for – is that of sounds and of (engendered) bodies, the physicality of embodied sound. The Italian philosopher Adriana Cavarero within her anti-Platonic stance, points out that:

At this point Western philosophy has already celebrated its glorious triumph over matter. [...] Therefore the mortal body is a prison for the soul [...] Plato emphasizes this by attributing to the body the well-known connotations of jail and prison. [...] and the body is a burden that the soul chooses for some of its specific qualities (voice, agility, etc.) indifferent to species or gender.³⁹

We are social human and non-human listening physical bodies, sentient bodies, and these include also stones, as they also possess life, a life which vibrates, they move in their molecular structures. In an animistic sense, I can say that also a stone has a mind, intended as a living, timely, molecularly moving 'thing.' They are living different bodies, in different shared pluralities and communities, with a plurality in listening. A plurality in and of listening is here another theory of sound. More important is sound's encompassing listening and overwhelming effect on and of our bodies, predisposed to know the world, where sound is never in itself. These are our *ear bodies*, the enquiry in embodied location, where the body is an active listening organism and sound is a further step into the body.

³⁹ Cavarero (1995), *In Spite*, pp. 26-27.

Sound pervades our subjective and plural listening bodies, with incommensurate ways of interacting with our perception. This is embodied sound as listening. It is the physicality of sound in the physicality of one's listening. This means that listening, as I investigate it throughout this thesis, is primarily meant as corporeal listening, with the many different modes of attending to sound which go beyond the hearing 'abled' or 'disabled' restrictive categories. As in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of knowing the world through the body, aided by perception, we know the acoustic world through the body of our ears and the ears of our bodies.⁴⁰ Ear bodies are a listening plurality, they are acoustic embodiment.

My approaches are also tests and notions that come from an experiential reality of embodiment. These aspects and experiences all unfold in a gradual tuning to the acoustic/spatial environment through shifts of movement and transitions.⁴¹

The posthuman body of performance artist Stelarc – like the one of French performance artist Orlan – is an obsolete body. *It* is also a hybrid, and a container of technology, that of prosthetics, technological miniaturisation, implants and grafts, a body to be objectified, repaired, modified strengthened, or even replaced. I argue that the posthuman body – although it is supposed to go beyond the Cartesian conflict between mind and body, in the creation of a so-called new and super body – is the manifestation of that very Cartesian dualism that it attempts to reject. This is especially because of its creating an interface between man and machine. This is specifically dualistic for its transcendental aspect, one of an ultimate escaping from the material body. Any belief in the body as obsolete

⁴⁰ In an interview by Maurice Fleurent (*Carrefour*, no. 92, May 23, 1946), Merleau-Ponty says: "my body is not an object: it is the medium of all my relations with the world. [...] I am not a pure consciousness, but am engaged in the world through this body with the aid of which I perceive." Merleau-Ponty in Toadvine and Lawlor (2007), *The Merleau-Ponty*, pp. 85-86.

⁴¹ 'Tuning' is a word used specifically by sound theorist Murray Schafer in his *The Tuning of the World* (1977). According to Richard Coyne: "Schafer suggested that we should think of the occupants of space as composers and performers [...] Whether or not people aspire to compose or perform, they may at least assume the role of instrument tuners, as if performing, or preparing to perform, in ensembles of players located in place." Coyne (2010), *The Tuning*, p. xvi.

becomes, in the end, a dualist credo for dis-embodiment. Stelarc surgically embedded a recreated ear in his arm with transmitters installed in it “so people listen to what it is hearing online.”⁴² One’s ear body, only apparently, seems to materialise. Yet, one’s ear body and its plurality is already embedded, before being visibly implanted in a man’s arm as a muscular ear, as outer cartilage. But, the ear is outer, middle and inner, more complex than its being an isolated organ and, I would add, ‘subterranean.’ There is a subjectivity of the ear with its role in perceptual auditory organisation, and this is part of the whole body, of an ear body, with very personal and infinitely unique ways of hearing/listening. Leaving aside any posthumanist intervention, practically, hearing means *applied* hearing, which in turn becomes *dynamic* listening where mind and body move together. Veit Erlmann is clear in not wanting to fall into the Cartesian and ‘stodgy’ mind-body dualism or other dichotomies and binary terms when discussing aurality. When it comes to the distinction between hearing and listening, he says that the aural attention-distraction dichotomy has two versions:

There is an anthropological version, according to which attention and distraction are historically invariable and sharply differentiated modes of perception to which we refer whenever we distinguish between listening and hearing. But there is also a critical version that sees the relationship between attentive listening and distracted hearing as having fundamentally been determined by capitalist social relations and the rise of mass cultural consumption.⁴³

Hearing is also attentive and embodied in the same way that embodied time is rooted in listening, hearing and listening go together, also when hearing is absent or impaired, in the sense that hearing is within the experience of embodiment as corporeal listening. This

⁴² Stelarc in *The Guardian*, 14 April 2009.

⁴³ Erlmann, *Reason* (2010), pp. 20-21. He uses the term ‘stodgy’ on p. 306.

listening means moving, yet a moving in slowing-down time. In the slowing-down temporality of embodied listening one can reconnect to the world with all its hyper-mediated reality, and hearing can yet go beyond mediatised alienation. Performance then can mean re-embodiment through hearing/listening as slowing down time.

Auditory and listening experience is that of a vulnerable, carnal but also ‘imperfect’ and temporal body, which is not at all obsolete. Cognitivism, philosophy of mind and in general the cognitive sciences – alas, with a sometimes troubled appropriation for late capitalist and scientific uses – have in the last decade become a strong reference point and have also contributed to misunderstandings, especially in specific connection to the – often reductive – concept and experience of ‘mind’ and embodiment.⁴⁴ For instance, the ontology of Franz Brentano’s philosophy of mind is different. According to Barry Smith and Kevin Mulligan, Brentano’s philosophy “still means, as far as most philosophers are concerned, no more than a peculiarly influential account of intentionality.”⁴⁵ So, mind, embodiment and also listening become intentionality. In Posthumanism, dis-embodiment is often seen as an achieved ‘freedom’ of the mind from the body. Born in the 1990s the movements of *Posthumanism* and *Transhumanism* have similar interests – as for example overthrowing of the human and going beyond the limits of humanity – but not the same roots and prospects. Posthumanism is born from Postmodernism, Transhumanism has its roots in the Enlightenment and implies Humanism. Already in the 1970s, the work of interdisciplinary artist Lynn Leeson Hershman was innovative in the interlinking of the multimedia and the digital in her cyborgs connected to the mutant body. She also showed the other side of technology and has been a unique voice as a pioneer, standing out for her

⁴⁴ Umberto Galimberti talks about Cognitivism and Behaviouralism “as psychologies of conformism. He says that: “in our time, those psychologies of adaptation have become hegemonic, whose implicit invitation is to be less and less ourselves and more congruent to the system.” [Nella nostra epoca sono diventate egemoni quelle psicologie dell’adattamento il cui implicito invito è di essere sempre meno se stessi e sempre più congruenti all’ apparato.] Galimberti (2009), *I vizi* [The Capital], p. 83.

⁴⁵ Smith and Mulligan (1985), “Franz Brentano,” p. 1.

performance and film work which does not exactly fit the Posthumanist discourse. Donna Haraway is in favour of a Cyborg Feminism and declares that: “Neither Marxist nor radical feminist points of view have tended to embrace the status of a partial explanation; both were regularly constituted as totalities. Western explanation has demanded as much; how else could the ‘Western’ author incorporate its others? [...] There was no structural room for race (or for much else) in theory claiming to reveal the construction of the category woman and social group women as a unified or totalizable whole.”⁴⁶

For Haraway, this means the end of dualistic oppositions. Posthumanist and Biotech Art are part of what Robert Pepperell, the author of *The Post-Human Manifesto*, calls for, an eradication of anthropology: “In the posthuman era many beliefs become redundant not least the belief in human beings. [...] Humanists saw themselves as distinct beings in an antagonistic relationship with their surroundings. Posthumans, on the other hand, regard their own being as integrated into, and embodied within, an extended technological world.”⁴⁷ This approach does not involve embodiment. In other words, grafting, implanting a technological device in the human body is not a realisation of embodiment. I think that dis-embodiment is an ultimate impossibility. It is this scientistic approach which still indicates a phallogentric and anthropocentric conception of technology. The prosthetic strategy seems to conjure up a vaporous and deceptive escape from the body, an escape from the environment and sometimes against it or, in the worst scenario, an illusory escape from the world we inhabit. Indeed, there is no escape. We are always enveloped, the planet is our bodies and this is boundless within its bounding surroundings. As I absorb myself in my ear body, I encounter its bounding surroundings, its countless plural dynamic and diverse forms. In other words, this means *bodiment* of

⁴⁶ Haraway (1991), “A Cyborg,” pp. 149-181.

⁴⁷ Pepperell (2003), *The Posthuman*, Appendix II, p. 187.

auditory space, intended as the space of the body, because of the ingrained interrelation of body and mind, more specifically called *bodymind*, in Patrick Curry's terms "this relatively unified bodymind."⁴⁸ The bodymind listens in acoustic embodiment.⁴⁹

1.1 Merleau-Ponty for acoustic embodiment

Acoustic embodiment implies that hearing/listening invests, and already has invested us, this is because hearing/listening is already bodied. In this experience – and therefore not only a concept of embodiment – the vestibular system (as I have introduced earlier and I will resume later) has an important function. According to Alfred Tomatis:

The listening function does not affect only the ear. It mobilises the entire nervous system by means of the vestibular apparatus. By its particular neuronc action, this regulates muscle tensions of the body (both static and dynamic) and relative position of the limbs. The vestibular apparatus controls everything to do with posture and gesture. This explains how the whole body is called upon when a question of listening arises.⁵⁰

Also Annick de Souzaenelle – within her theological, esoteric/Cabbalistic interpretation – considers Tomatis in her discussion on the ear. She says that: "Tomatis overturns the classical concepts of ontogenesis, which gave and still gives the precedence to the nervous system, which, as a consequence, would see attributed to it the sensory functions.

⁴⁸ Curry (2007), "Embodiment," footnote 2, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Although I am critical of the terms 'embodiment' and 'dis-embodiment,' when appropriate, I will nonetheless keep using both throughout this thesis, together with 'bodiment.' More than offering alternative terms, I am interested in challenging presuppositions and through their use I attempt to go beyond them.

⁵⁰ Tomatis (1991), *The Conscious*, p. 206.

According to Tomatis everything is organized around the labyrinth, the central, energetic, and primordial organ of the inner ear.”⁵¹

In listening, a wide – as well as vestibular – investment is an open embrace of sound in, with and through the body. This investment is, first of all, phenomenological.

Specifically, it is a communal but also subjective open embrace of sound through my direct perception, indeed it is phenomenological. Generally, phenomenology, in contemporary discourse, continues to come with a package of ‘accumulated associations,’ as Stanton B. Garner⁵² underlines, as he tries to dissociate it from a reductionist and often misunderstood view of the ‘essence’ question. I am resisting a simplistic historical opposition, by welcoming the useful insights and refinements made by Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception and his inheritance. I refer to Merleau-Ponty where the phenomenological approach to performance is connected with another reclaiming, that of the body.

Merleau-Ponty has been to a large extent explored by other artists and researchers from past and current times, as indeed can be seen in the interest and exploration belonging to past generations (especially those of the 1970’s and 1980’s). Yet, although I share this interest in its contemporary resurgence, a few of the cardinal points in his entire work remain unexplored, and Merleau-Ponty’s work remains a significant and insightful anchor in my writing on acoustic embodiment. My theoretical anchoring is not however completely uncritical, rather I complete it by adding the work of Luce Irigaray. In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* – in the context of her discussion within sexual difference on visibility, perception, sensation and self-affect – Irigaray specifically addresses Merleau-Ponty’s thought as remaining, but only to an extent, in a sort of primal bond:

⁵¹ [Tomatis capovolge i concetti classici dell’ ontogenesi, che davano e danno ancora la precessione al sistema nervoso, che si vedrebbe attribuire di conseguenza le funzioni sensoriali. Secondo Tomatis tutto si organizza attorno al labirinto, organo centrale, energetico e primordiale dell’ orecchio interno]. De Souzaenelle (2004), *Il simbolismo* [The Symbolism], p. 302 [my translation].

⁵² Garner (1994), *Bodied*.

Merleau-Ponty's whole analysis is marked by [this] laby-rinthine solipsism.

Without the other, and above all the other of sexual difference, isn't it impossible to find a way out of this description of the visible, doubled with that of the tactile of the touching hands?⁵³

It is not only because of a possible sensorial and unproblematic broadening of Merleau-Ponty's thought towards a philosophy of sound – which to great extent I do here – but specifically because I believe his thought still remains a unique theory of embodiment, and that this theory offers an acoustic embodiment. Acoustically embodied we are 'tactile,' indeed, with touching sonic hands. In acoustic embodiment, my reclaiming of this self-affective concept and experience is particularly significant. It goes together with Merleau-Ponty's concepts of *the body proper*, of *flesh* and of *chiasm*, as they could make the creation of envelopments and one's enveloping 'acoustic body proper,' and an 'acoustic flesh' and an 'acoustic chiasm;' a knitting together of speaking-listening. Suzanne L. Cataldi and William S. Mamrick suggest that: "Merleau-Ponty articulates that envelopments in terms of what he terms an 'intertwining' and 'chiasm.' That is, flesh has a reversibility such that to see is to be seen, to touch is equally to be touched, and so on."⁵⁴ And, I would add, to listen is equally to be listened to.

Most importantly, from these concepts I reclaim in mine the most vital aspect of ambivalence. Ambivalence is a great loss in contemporary reflection on sensorial experience, so I attempt to recover its value in thought, reflecting specifically on the experience of sound as bodied. This not only recalls again Merleau-Ponty and his philosophy of the body, but also opens up other aspects of his thought which are a substrate to my articulations on our physical perception and sensation of sound as

⁵³ Irigaray (2005), *An Ethics*, p. 131.

⁵⁴ Cataldi and Mamrick (2007), *Merleau-Ponty*, p. 4.

affective and self-affective, as fundamental components of acoustic embodiment. In Merleau-Ponty, these aspects are: ‘the phenomenal field,’ his hyper-dialectic ontology and the reversibility of opposites, which are the main part in the list of what are the key elements for the discourse on embodiment in my acoustic consideration.⁵⁵ Merleau-Ponty’s thought has been important also for the Italian scholar Chiara Zamboni and, particularly, his understanding of the body as ‘opaque:’ “The opacity of the body, [the body’s] non objectification, is the reason of the opacity of sense, which guides us, and which is not representable, for the fact that we are in the situation which we describe.”⁵⁶ In another part of Zamboni’s discussion, the specific criticism of Irigaray on Merleau-Ponty is fundamental, as:

“It should be borne in mind that there are aspects which greatly differentiate Merleau-Ponty from women’s culture regarding the theme of the body. Think for example about sexual difference [...] In his later works he indeed speaks of the body, but sexual difference disappears as a significant situation of symbolic perception. On the contrary, sexual difference is in women’s culture the signifier, which constitutes the first step of exploration of reality.”⁵⁷

For Merleau-Ponty, ‘the body proper,’ as he calls it – and I would add, as also a sexuate body, as Irigaray calls it, as part of a sexuate difference (in other words identities are sexed and different) – has a metaphysical foundation, and this peculiarity, he contends,

⁵⁵ For a contemporary scholarly discussion on these aspects and generally on Merleau-Ponty, see Carbone et al (2001), in *Segni e comprensione* [Signs and Understanding].

⁵⁶ [L’opacità del corpo, la sua non oggettivazione, è il motivo della opacità del senso, che ci guida, e che non è rappresentabile, per il fatto che noi siamo nella situazione che descriviamo].

⁵⁷ [È da tener conto che vi sono aspetti che differenziano notevolmente Merleau-Ponty e la cultura femminile riguardo al tema del corpo. Si pensi ad esempio alla differenza sessuale. [...] Nelle opere successive parla sì di corpo, ma scompare la differenza sessuale come situazione significativa della percezione simbolica. Al contrario la differenza sessuale è nella cultura delle donne il significante, che costituisce il primo passo di esplorazione della realtà]. Zamboni (2011), “Merleau-Ponty,” pp. 63, 60 [my italics and my translation].

exists at the level of lived and relational experience.⁵⁸ Beyond our awareness of the biological constituency of our temporal body, it is important to be at the same time aware of the philosophical implications of our bodies. Yet, the body proper is not just a philosophical concept, an entity, an object or an objectified body, but a living body: a listening temporal body. Interestingly, for Varela, embodiment is based on a particular phenomenological substrate, he defined it as the structural coupling of subject and object.⁵⁹ Yet, when discussing embodiment, and specifically acoustic embodiment, the ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ as well as the ‘external’ and ‘internal’ categories are also somehow misleading aspects and are transcended through a mutual interdiffusion. In acoustic embodiment, the perception and experience of sound of our ear bodies is indeed this interdiffusion.⁶⁰ I think of acoustic embodiment as interdiffusion and in the same way as having an underlying base in Merleau-Ponty’s concept of *flesh*. As he writes in the chapter ‘The Intertwining – The Chiasm’ of his *The Visible and the Invisible*:

What we are calling flesh, this interiorly worked-over mass, has no name in philosophy. As the formative medium of the object and the subject, it is not the atom of being [...]. It is time to emphasize that it is a reversibility always imminent and never realized in fact.⁶¹

In acoustic embodiment there is a reversibility of experiencing both (sonic) world via the body and the other way round, which is also the relationship between sound and the body, and sound and the body interacting in performance *is* this reversibility. Not only as Merleau-Ponty says it is a reversibility of the seeing and the visible, of the touching and

⁵⁸ According to Abigail Rine: “For Irigaray, sexuate difference is ontological in the sense that there is no un-sexed human being. Sexuate difference is not merely biological difference, however, but refers to two distinct, relational identities.” Rine (2013), *Irigaray*, p.16.

⁵⁹ For more on Varela and embodiment see Pievani (2001), “Il soggetto” [The Subject], p. 2.

⁶⁰ I will discuss interdiffusion in the section “Ear Bodies Workshops: Auditory Proxemics.”

⁶¹ Merleau-Ponty (1968), *The Visible*, p. 147. According to Frank Chouraqui, Merleau-Ponty’s *Flesh* is ‘thick,’ in fact “being *qua* flesh is an ‘interiorly worked-over mass [*masse intérieurement travaillée*].” Chouraqui (2011), *Temporal*, p. 407.

the touched, but also one of the hearing and the heard. Beneath the apparent duality of consciousness and object in Merleau-Ponty's thought, consciousness is not the same as the body. This distinction exemplifies a duality even as, at the same time, he acknowledges that consciousness and body are different and nonetheless in a correspondence to each other, but where consciousness is subject to the body. In this sense consciousness is a bodied consciousness. Yet, although it is difficult to define consciousness, his discourse remains on the level of dialectics of body and consciousness. Instead, I believe that for acoustic embodiment (one's ear body), the body *becomes* consciousness. It becomes this realisation through performance, on stage, in the world. When related to our embodied consciousness of the acoustic world, no pure consciousness exists. This means that when one is conscious of sounds, it is indeed a contingent and at the same time a pre-reflective consciousness. This type of consciousness, in Merleau-Ponty, refers to the *tacit cogito*, as a pre-reflective, 'silent' consciousness. This silent consciousness is also a *sonically silent* one and, for that reason, I envisage it as a type of corporeal auditory consciousness, one which appears simultaneously to our consciousness of the (sounding) world. If thought is dependent on perceptible expression grounded in a lived in-listening body, then it is fundamentally temporally and historically conditioned, and it is this which I regard as an ear body. On the same level of corporeal auditory consciousness, an ear body is an acoustic instrument played by the sounds, as a continuous delaying of the 'self,' where 'self' is the same as contingency and contingency the same as the body. The corporeal identity as 'self' is constantly shifting, a sort of non-fixed 'place,' which is always in listening transformation. For an ear body, this means an intangible 'self' as auditory emergence, but only in a momentary formation.

Moving ear bodies in performance mean being aware of this momentary formation, and the way one's body experiences sound in movement. In a continuous rebound what the body hears and how one's body experiences moving sound becomes a twofold experience: the interaction of two spaces, an aware listening body in sonic space and the body listening to its own experiencing of sound in space. It is not just a question of listening to the body, but to realise that the body listens. The space of a listening body does not mean an 'interior' space – in other words, it is not intended in the more commonly understood sense of the so-called 'spiritual,' as the most intimate space, that of the soul – but rather an internal one, a space which is that of the body. For Erlmann there is “one of the most persistent stereotypes clinging to hearing – the cliché that in contrast to vision, which dwells on surfaces, hearing refers us to the interior.”⁶² Sonic space is instead a broader concept and much more ample experience, corresponding through and with the phonosphere, where we are constantly immersed. The sonic environment is conceived as spherical in the phonosphere. There is an apt definition of it that Zinaida Mozheyko explores. He says that: “the phonosphere (that is the active fields of the world of sounds) encompasses [both] fields arising involuntarily and also conscious reception-oriented intoning.”⁶³ Tools facilitating this expansion and auditory-spatial awareness are those which I have been devising during my artistic practice and research. Here, a therapeutic performance system forms only a part of this work, not the main intention or purpose. The focus is to gradually develop a sensitivity to corporeally felt sound as an insight working towards performance making.

In the phonosphere an experience of an ear body is expanded. In response to the aural parameters of sonic space in relation to performance, the set of specificities from the expanded physical perception and reception of sound, are to be specifically understood as

⁶² Erlmann (2010), *Reason*, p. 23.

⁶³ Mozheyko (2009), “The Belarusian Systems of Annual Songs in the World of Temporal Cyclisation,” in Dahlig (ed.), *Traditional*, p. 31.

embodied experience which invest the whole corporeal experience in performance.

Constantly moving listening bodies in various spaces (in a workshop, on a stage, in the world) turn into performance. It happens as moving embodied sound is one's experience with that of a co-participating site, and an audience's plurality of sounding and uttering bodies, that experience of 'meaning' ear bodies. According to linguist Franson Manjali:

Millions of bodies are sensing and meaning. Ascribing an agency – conscious or unconscious – to all these bodies, we can perhaps assume that from every body emanates the utterance: 'We are meaning.'⁶⁴

This breadth is a spontaneous interactivity, an effortless sensorial reciprocity, a sort of mutual trust of the initial moment of acoustic occurrence, a listening trust which is given to alterity, a site which is also a socio-cultural place. On the other hand, in contemporary discourse on listening, as well as on current relational performance practice and aesthetics, the paradigm of 'the social' in general – and, as a result, of the social body – is a type of space which has reached an enclosure. Jean-Luc Nancy, in an ontological understanding, answers by theorising that:

one comes to a dead end because being-social as such – or again, what might be called the *association* [sociation] of *Being* – is instrumentalized, related to something other than itself. On this account the essence of the 'social' is not itself 'social.' As a result, it is never presentable under the heading of the 'social.'⁶⁵

And so, the ear body is an association with environmental, cultural, physical sites, which when socially shared becomes an *ear group*, a co-operating performative site for listening and being listened to. But, ear bodies also means a listening intended as the most radical way of engagement, a disposition to abandon all pre-conceived principles and certainties and to co-participate.

⁶⁴ Manjali (2010), discussing Jean Luc Nancy's *The Sense of the World* (1997), "The Body," p. 100.

⁶⁵ Nancy (2000), *Being*, p. 59.

An ear body is an inclination to untie and to realise this radical openness, not only through the anatomical hearing ear, but also by becoming one. In becoming an ear, the body still remains the best ‘sound archive,’ and still the best technology at hand. Becoming an ear – and therefore an ear body – has got nothing to do with any surgical or android manipulation. Instead it is an actual relationality, neither egotistic, individualistic, nor forcedly inclusive, but a complex fluctuation between polarities and a complex performing and experienced chiasm with the world we sense, feel, encounter.

1.2 Soundscape as another disembodying technology

*Viene il vento recando il suon dell'ora
Dalla torre del borgo. Era conforto
Questo suon, mi rimembra, alle mie notti,
Quando fanciullo, nella buia stanza,
Per assidui terrori io vigilava,
Sospirando il mattin.⁶⁶
Giacomo Leopardi*

There is a parallel – and very often an identification with – the use of technology for sound and disembodiment. In this section I consider disembodiment and reconsider amplification by critically reflecting on technology as manipulation and, in its contemporary use, sometimes misuse, abuse and misunderstanding.⁶⁷

Another disembodying technology, and ultimately anthropocentric representation and concept of location and amplification, is the notion of landscape, intended in the spatial

⁶⁶ [The wind comes bringing the sound of the hour striking from the clock tower. I remember how it used to comfort me when I was a child, in my darkened room, waiting every night, in inexorable terror, for dawn's sighing]. Leopardi, “Le ricordanze,” *Canti*, p. 37. English translation by A. S. Kline (2004), *Giacomo*, p. 111.

⁶⁷ For Erlmann, the seventeenth-century physician, anatomist and architect Claude Perrault “might then have to be regarded as the first thinker to have granted subjective auditory experience an unprecedented embodied primacy. [What he] argued for was a qualitative link between the physics of sounding bodies and the ear.” Erlmann, *Reason*, pp.75, 80.

depiction of auditory experience. In this sense, as well as the pictorial landscape, the notion of acoustic landscape also can still fall into being restrictive and politically exploited. The notion of landscape I investigate here is the one coming from nineteenth-century pictorial depiction and extends all the way to eco-modernism.⁶⁸ We could address contemporary theories and uses of soundscape and over-amplification in a similar way to that of the ‘scarring’ of a landscape. There is no way of addressing landscape, and specifically soundscape, without addressing technology. The creation and notion of landscape being at first a Western technological one, echoes – although landscape is a much broader concept – also that of the soundscape with its technological implications and developments. Yet, although I maintain a critical position on soundscape, I still address it in my work, teaching and workshops, because it is nonetheless an important channel for inviting reflecting on one’s auditory position in relation to an environment.

Anthropologist Stefan Helmreich posits himself against the “otocentrism of sound studies” because, as vibration, sound is also a better help for “pressing hearing scholars to think differently about deaf worlds,”⁶⁹ but also critically addresses the problem with ‘soundscape.’ The social anthropologist Tim Ingold⁷⁰ who in 2007 wrote “Against Soundscape,” is also clearly here standing against the term ‘soundscape’ – preferring ‘transduction’ – as soundscape is both an objectification and subjectification of sound. Criticising R. Murray Schafer’s use and creation of the word ‘soundscape’ – intended as a sonic version of landscape – as romantic and as an object of contemplation, Helmreich says that: “In Schafer’s pastoral conception, soundscape might be judged by the extent to

⁶⁸ In art history this eco-modernism included the usually large-scale landscape modifications – or even scarring – of what in the 1960’s and 1970’s was called Land Art, Earthworks, or the Environmental Art of Robert Morris, James Turrell, Christo and Robert Smithson. It was Smithson who said that: “instead of using a paintbrush to make his art Robert Morris would like to use a bulldozer.” Smithson in Kastner and Wallis (1998), *Land*, p. 19.

⁶⁹ Helmreich (2010), “Listening,” p. 10.

⁷⁰ Ingold, *Lines*.

which noise – primarily for him, mechanical and electric – had been exiled.”⁷¹ And, in asking how it is possible to listen against soundscapes: “contrary to Ingold, the soundscape has become haunted by the notion of immersion – the arrival of listeners at a sense of being at once emplaced in space and at times porously continuous with it.”⁷² Schafer’s original definition of soundscape also comes under fire from Ari Y. Kelman, who suggests that Schafer’s notion is:

lined with ideological and ecological messages about which sounds ‘matter’ and which do not; it is suffused with instructions about how people ought to listen; and, it traces a long dystopian history that descends from harmonious sounds of nature to the cacophonies of modern lives.⁷³

In this context of futile divides between ‘purist’ and ‘anti- purist’ positions, surely a critical discussion on sound technology is inevitable. Although to a great extent I agree with the anti-purist position of Ingold, Helmreich’s criticism of the notion of immersion and Kelman’s critique of the discriminatory ‘ecologism’ of Schafer, I considerably differ in my effort to expand my reflections on acoustic embodiment (and on acoustic embodiment in performance practice). My practical reflecting is based on personal experiential and embodied grounds, which realise what is already emplaced and immersed, and is by no means a rigid form of an ecological view. I stand on the experience that one continuously sensorially – and hence auditorially – discriminates, while not always being aware of this sensorial discrimination.⁷⁴

In this specific case, I find myself agreeing with Schafer’s criticism of the place of technology and amplification in contemporary society and sensorial experience of sound

⁷¹ Helmreich, “Listening,” p. 10.

⁷² Helmreich, “Listening,” p. 10.

⁷³ Kelman (2010), “Rethinking,” p. 214.

⁷⁴ I have been more aware of auditory discrimination since 2005, as part of my project *Ringling Forest*, a Sciart (science and art) research on chronic tinnitus supported by the Wellcome Trust, in collaboration with auditory neuroscientists Prof. Jonathan Ashmore and Prof. David McAlpine of the UCL Ear Institute, and the experimental psychologist Prof. Richard Hallam.

and consider it as far as more complex than just a reduction to a ‘purist’ view. I believe that Schafer’s argument is still and even more pertinent to current uses in sound design and applications, as well as in performance. Yet, the complex discussion and subjective experience of noise – although beyond any purist interpretation – it is still an important issue. Schafer also makes us focus on the fact that noise represents wasted energy.⁷⁵ As the Italian historian Stefano Pivato suggests, we are destined to increasing volume of noise.⁷⁶ In order to confirm one’s right to existence, one needs to make noise.⁷⁷ Overall, sound is always an uncontrollable event, and the term ‘soundscape’ restricts the field. Meanwhile, Barry Blesser says that soundscape is an *eventscape*.⁷⁸ And, indeed, eventscape seems to be more appropriate distillation. Without doubt, mine is not a technophobic stance, but rather a focus on how technology is specifically – or even poetically – used. For instance, in 1963 the New Babylon project, the architectural drawings and models of Situationist artist Constant had – with poetic sensibility – attempted to use a different concept of technology. This has been his techno-nomadic insight, together with the other Situationist revolutionary content and practices: a combination which added a subversive charm leading one to hope that a good and thoughtful use of technology, if free, could emancipate us from the slavery of capitalist consumption.

Being in itself also a mediated, transduced and interrelated ecology, sound constantly complicates assumptions and perceptions themselves, including the assumption of anthropocentric dialectics. So, one finds an unresolved and complicated relation to technology. In this context, I side with ecocriticism with its rejection of ecophobia as opposition to the mythologising of technological ‘progress.’ Specifically in performance,

⁷⁵ See Wrightson (2000), “An Introduction,” p. 13.

⁷⁶ Pivato (2011), *Il secolo* [The Century].

⁷⁷ For an insightful discussion about noise and its historical and contemporary uses, interpretations and passage from silence, see Pivato (2011), *Il secolo* [The Century].

⁷⁸ Blesser (2011), “Eventscape.”

the use of sound and generally sonic technological innovation and ‘progression,’ has resulted in the development and overproduction of a sophisticated machinery of very astonishing sound systems and a very attentive sound design. The ‘techno’ part in the word ‘technology,’ is no longer intended in its etymology of *technê*, alas a lost value in the space of over-conceptualist art, as well as of social network communication. For instance, sound-reproduction technologies and contemporary use of technology in art involves – and still implies – modernistic/futuristic/vitalistic and ultimately simplistic concepts of innovation and interaction or even deification. By this, I mean that the exploring of the so-called ‘physical boundaries’ strictly divide corporeality and virtuality. This includes the effort to engage a pre-supposed audience ‘passivity.’ It is an interrelationship which is already embedded in technology and sensorial and technological mediation, before digital technology and over-technologised interaction. According to Jonathan Stern: “Technologies sometimes enjoy a certain level of deification in social theory and cultural history, where they come to be cast as divine actors.”⁷⁹

In my Ear Bodies research and practice, what has become clear is that I am concerned in approaching sounds *in relation* to the finding of their sources, their objects, bodies and concrete spaces (regardless of the success of the endeavour or not), away from ‘old wishes,’ which I nonetheless still believe are present. For Stern, in discussing sound-reproduction technologies and their early history:

Sound-reproduction technologies represented the promise of science, rationality, and industry and the power of the white man to co-opt and supersede

⁷⁹ Stern (2003), *The Audible*, p. 7.

domains of life that were previously considered to be magical. For their early users, sound technologies were – in a word – modern.⁸⁰

In my approaching sounds as a relation, there is an awareness of the interdependence between body and other (acoustic) environments and systems preceding and going beyond an over-reliance on technology.⁸¹

There has always been a mutual interdependence between technology and art. In this interdependence, new technology improves and corrects past media deficiencies. In the digital age this is called *remediation*, where digital media remediates older technology and often without removing the old one. Remediation is also a technological incorporation of other media and/or representation of one medium through another medium.⁸² Thomas J. Berghuis discusses remediation in the context of Chinese performance art and new media, saying that “Performance becomes part of the discourse of new media through its *inherent* remediation.”⁸³ More than technology per se – even before becoming new media – what I am interested in is this inherent remediation of performance. This means that performance is inherently technological, and that the performing body is already technology. Yet, in contemporary mass media communication and – without generalising and considering many exceptions – new technology used in contemporary interactive art, I see what Italian philosopher Umberto Galimberti means when he states that:

the increasingly massive diffusion of the means of communication,
enhanced by new technologies gradually abolish the need to communicate,
because despite the huge amount of voices spread by the media, or perhaps

⁸⁰ Stern, *The Audible*, p. 9.

⁸¹ Indeed, not a Luddite concern.

⁸² For a discussion on remediation and technology see Bolter, D. and Grusin, R. (2000).

⁸³ Berghuis (2006), *Performance*, p. 132 [my italics].

because of it, society speaks as a whole only with itself [...] the result is a kind of tautological communication, where the listener ends up listening to the same identical things that one could easily say, and the one who speaks says the same things that he/she could hear from anyone. In this sense one can say that the spread of the media, which technology has made exponential, tends to abolish the need for communication.”⁸⁴

I persevere in realising a communication as a listening space for the opening to the sound already existing in (this) space, one escaping any amplification. In spite of all technologised efforts, sound forever – and fortunately always – eludes us. But sound continues as mnemonic corporeal stratification, which is a sophisticated auditory sensory technology, a sensory memory transformed through the flux of life and resonating through time in one’s body. I experience the fleeting and the apparently decaying nature of sound, as that of and in my body. Yet, often we are on a so-called ‘disembodied’ and over-mediated level of understanding of this nature. By ‘understanding,’ I mean a corporeally considered experience beyond categorisation (as well as beyond interpretation) seduced by fetishised and technologised forms of escapism. This act of going ‘beyond’ is already in the world of forms and their transience, the world as it is found already in its flowing state. Here, amplification is infinitesimally felt and is powerful as a corporeal vigilance of space, technology of the body. Mnemonic corporeal stratification is also an archive which does not disperse, but which is auditorially remembered. It is that of an existing body, organically linked with history and the

⁸⁴ [la sempre più massiccia diffusione dei mezzi di comunicazione, potenziati dalle nuove tecnologie, abolisce progressivamente il bisogno di comunicare, perchè nonostante l’ enorme quantità di voci diffuse dai media, o forse proprio per questo, la società parla nel suo insieme solo con se stessa. [...] Il risultato è una sorta di comunicazione tautologica, dove chi ascolta finisce con l’ascoltare le identiche cose che egli stesso potrebbe tranquillamente dire, e chi parla dice le stesse cose che potrebbe ascoltare da chiunque. In questo senso è possibile dire che la diffusione dei mezzi di comunicazione, che la tecnologia ha reso esponenziale, tende ad abolire la necessità della comunicazione]. Galimberti (2009), *I miti* [The Myths], pp. 228-229 [my translation].

everyday, a body which is also consumed and transformed by its performing in life. The archive is one's body, which is not only in recordings of the work for posterity, but in its incessant listening memory, one which creates a listening history.

Within the technology of amplification, how can one acquire a more aware understanding of effect and affect in theatre and performance that risk desensitising our acoustic auditorium? The overloading and over-enlarged sounds have the function of affirming something that cannot be. Instead, amplification could become an act of selfless gesture; a *presentation*. The point of hindrance is only when the presence (of actors, performers, agents) can be an imposition, i.e. when that presence is intended as amplification in high volume. Still – although not always – a more tacit approach could paradoxically amplify sounds and noises, movements, gestures in theatre, dance, performance. The question is about allowing environments to speak, bodies (as other environments) to speak and to listen, through the settings and framings of a space, which then would allow happenings to take place, to be recognised.

The waste and over-use of the technology of soundscape and amplification – this great and ultimate illusion of presence – has become the greatest illusion of theatre and performance. An image of this type of 'desensitising' amplification which comes to mind is that of a mould, a sort of 'digital fungus' that of contemporary digital electrons spreading their 'spores' of amplification, sponging on or encasing the acoustics of sites, and which is also a technological seductive type of 'mycosis.' In opposition, another 'mycotic' example is that of John Cage. His picking of mushrooms was like musical composition. The I Ching of mushroom spreading, the chance and surprising event of development and augmentation, as with the picking of fungi as the picking of sounds from the macro and micro forests of undergrowth, we could also call this an amplification, but of a different, performative type.

The digital chimera has become the condition of cinema (and this condition of cinema is incorporated in theatre and performance), another auditorium and another theatrical deception which could sometimes also fail to be a ‘good deception.’ The reason why this is so is because the digital still brings forth a ‘reality’ which is taking away the reality of our inhabiting through our ear bodies each specific space we live in, perform in, spectate in, in-depth. Very often, the built-up prosthetic artifice used in contemporary performance adds more unnecessary mediation to our already existing physically/cognitively mediated perception of sound. Layer after layer of filters and digital manipulations flatten the world and the stage of our being already affected by sound, in an over-enthusiastic self-indulging machine. Yet, I am aware that a paradox becomes more apparent in contemporary hi-tech digitalised spaces. Although extremely rarely, those spaces of prosthetics and sensors and, in the digitalised reconstruction of sound environs – the hyper-real and virtual artifice – can become even more ‘natural’ and corporeal than a sound itself. Sensors might actively engage the senses in their own specific way together with complex digital interactive programmes, and the rest of what is and what will be the cutting-edge technology, yet they are more and more becoming a surplus. Paradoxically, from this excess of information (the surplus product of a culture of excess?) we risk a sort of sensorial and social aphasia, calling for the need to re-think and to re-question interaction and communication radically, from social to environmental forms in performance and in art in general. In our contemporary society, which is an extremely hectic space with an uninterrupted flood of information, a world full of prosthetic interventions interacting with sensorial mediations, with its excess of information, we no longer need extra-auditory inputs. Whilst, in the worst scenario, this techno chimera has become a Luna Park experience of a ghost train, or an apparatus producing a *spiritus ex machina*.

It is the plurality of our ear bodies which can question the surplus function of sonic technology within performance and art in general. This question should be that of bringing forth acoustic awareness of each site, the specific uniqueness of every corner, nook and cranny, the memory of each wall where a silent testimony dwells, when it is changing with our physical sensibility in specific relation to those features and objects. This is a testimony which is not only ours, but possibly also that of the walls and of any architectural aural and structural space we are immersed in, where we are in ‘acoustic intimacy.’ Furthermore, according to architect Juhani Pallasmaa: “We are not normally aware of the significances of hearing in spatial experience, although sound often provides the temporal continuum in which visual impressions are embedded.”⁸⁵ We can almost hear structures as we can listen to them and to the walls of the built environment with their molecular and embedded sound stored memories, architectures that perform with us performers on a haunted stage, which are performed by them at the same time. Above all, we need to be more aware of our physical interdependence with sound ecologies. The need for bringing the actual body back is one which addresses sensorial complexity. The use of technology in art, theatre and performance may well convey very nuanced, delicate and far more complex natures, reducing the distance – which is only apparent – between the acoustic world and its plurality of bodies and voices. Our experience needs more of *this* body and *this* world.

Regardless of where we are sitting or standing in a hall (or other site) where a sonic event is taking place, it should, supposedly, make it easier for an audience to realise how their listening is already being immersed and mediated. For instance, on a sound walk, our experience is not necessarily less immersed. But a specific time and pacing is necessary for the listening walk that makes it the specific experience. This is not a more ‘authentic’

⁸⁵ Pallasmaa (2012), *The Eyes*, p. 53.

event, yet it is that specific taking time of that specific walking which becomes more significant. What happens when we surrender to our listening, without any extra information? What can we ‘understand’ of a site and of a place? One of the realities of sound is an intersecting reality. Sound is *never* by or in itself. Through our active listening one could become aware of this intersecting reality and ‘understand’ a site and a place. This implies a going beyond a logocentric level in an immanent interconnection and a simple experience of performance and the body: the moving performance of sound together with the environment and the place that the body is. This is possible through going beyond the dialectical separation between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ (proposed by Western metaphysics and semiotics), where an unconditional openness is possible, that of an ear body.

In the different contemporary digital and high definition applications in contemporary theatre, ‘sound art’ and performance, I seek the physical presence of the listening body and radical unconditional openness of both performing audience and auditing performers but, also in a spatial sense, the bridging of the gap between depth of spatial vision and depth of field of sound. I seek a multi-layered spatial depth in performance where an ear body can engage with it, and where one’s awareness of the sensuous nature and properties of sound in space can be enhanced. Through what Schafer⁸⁶ called, the ‘hi-fi’ quality of spaces and their layers of foregrounds and backgrounds, one could become an ear body of space. But depth and surface oscillate continuously, and they identify with each-other. Nancy thinks of the transience of ‘truth itself,’ and listens to “[...] a continual coming and going” asking about ‘truth’ which should be listened instead of being seen: “But isn’t it also in the way that it stops being ‘itself’ and identifiable, and becomes no longer the

⁸⁶ Schafer (1977), *The Tuning*.

naked figure of emerging from the cistern but the resonance of that cistern.”⁸⁷ Instead of recording sound, in my work I facilitate resonance, a moving reflection on the ever increasing ungraspability and spectrality of the sound archive, and the drawing from that ever resonating ‘cistern.’ This experience is a sonic memory which is constantly one we live and physically engage with in the live event. The sensorial experience of the invisible within the visible and audible is a past coming forth to us, as a *present* – from a just passing – *sensing*. In discussing sensing, Brentano, in his phenomenology, talks about the relation between a ‘primary object’ and a ‘secondary object.’ Smith and Mulligan, say that:

where the object of hearing is a tone, the object of the Proteraesthesia (Brentano’s neologism, meaning ‘original association’) is, Brentano tells us, not the past (segments of the) tone but the (just) past sensing (*Empfinden*) of these segments [...] the primary object of the Proteraesthesia is not the primary object of the sensation, but something which belongs to the secondary object thereof, namely, ‘the modified [i.e., past] intentional relation to the primary object.’

Sensation has as its secondary object a present sensing: Proteraesthesia has as its primary object a past sensing.⁸⁸

In this ‘original association’ we sense thanks to a past relation to a tone we just heard. What does remain in our embodiment? From this relation, an auditory sensorial image comes forth and lingers for a while, one which is problematic to outline and to locate. Following this reflection, the dispersion of a use of technology in sound which is not perceptive – either in its transparency, or in its visible presence – has the effect of taking our present sensing bodies away from the already existing interaction of who/what is there, who/what is already embodied. Instead of complicating our listening, often the use

⁸⁷ Nancy (2007), *Listening*, p. 4.

⁸⁸ Smith and Mulligan, “Franz Brentano,” p. 19.

of technology affirms a belief of a fixity, and might take one away from ambivalence of experience and its embodied sensing. This ambivalence is the space-between subjective experience and physical perception which digital sound can erase when it dictates its univocal reality, without leaving space – as Galimberti says – to the *con-fusion of codes*, which I see being that of the ear body. For him, the body possesses an ambivalence which is also a symbolic one, like that in primitive societies, before its Platonic devaluation.⁸⁹

Galimberti notes that the body:

says to be this, *but also* that. As a ‘floating meaning’ the body con-fuses the codes with that symbolic operation which consists in the com-posing (*sym-bállein*) of those disjunctions in which each code articulates itself when it divides the true from the false, good and evil, the beautiful from the ugly, God and the world, spirit and matter, obtaining that *bivalence* where the positive and the negative reflect each-other.⁹⁰

What happens when we really and completely surrender to the performance of our listening? Without any extra information as inputs, what can we ‘understand’ of a place, of a site? An over-reliance on the non-sensing ‘science of sound’ absences the situating quality of environmental sound from physically apprehending its paradox, of being displacing, constantly de-stabilising of any position. Sound is the quintessential movement corresponding with the flux of life. As Tim Ingold writes:

⁸⁹ For more insight on this aspect, also from a psychopathological perspective, see Martinotti (2009).

⁹⁰ [dice di essere questo, ma anche quello. Come ‘significato fluttuante’ il corpo con-fonde i codici con quella operazione simbolica che consiste nel com-porre (*sym-bállein*) quelle disgiunzioni in cui ogni codice si articola quando divide il vero dal falso, il bene e il male, il bello e il brutto, Dio e il mondo, lo spirito e la materia, ottenendo quella bivalenza dove il positivo e il negativo si rispecchiano]. Galimberti (2005), *Il corpo* [The Body], p. 11 [my translation].

To follow sound, that is to listen, is to wander the same paths. [...] the sweep of sound continually endeavours to tear listeners away, causing them to surrender to its movement. It requires an effort to stay in place.⁹¹

To stay in place means, acoustic situatedness, which is not positioning, because it cannot be fixed in a substantiality. This is first of all experiential, beyond or even before to be considered 'spiritual' or theoretical, although the spiritual and the theoretical are both, and also, experiential. In exploring the paradox of this position (which is not position) of the ear body within technology in theatre and performance, the implicit theatricality of technology is particularly that of the sound of the voice as an event of self-affectation, but also of a 'listening voice.' With Galimberti's insight: "*The voice, in fact, listens to itself*, and it is for this reason that muteness and deafness go together; yet it would be a mistake understanding listening as a phenomenon of 'exteriorization.'"⁹² Here, Galimberti refers to the ambiguity of Ferdinand De Saussure's discourse, though he also cites his linking of thought to voice, where: "There are neither materialisation of thoughts, nor spiritualisation of sounds, but only that fact, in a certain mysterious measure, which is the thought-sound."⁹³ An example of this 'listening voice' is when I heard the 'thought-sound' as the voice and its amplification of the Italian actor Carmelo Bene.⁹⁴ This is important for its philosophical understanding of the reverse act of removal of the subject through amplification. In the 1980's Bene's operatic work, the voice and his scientific

⁹¹ Ingold, "Against," in Carlyle (ed.) (2007), *Autumn*, p. 12.

⁹² [*La voce, infatti, si ascolta*, ed è per questo che il mutismo e la sordità vanno di pari passo; ma sarebbe un errore intendere l'ascolto come un fenomeno di 'esteriorizzazione.'] Galimberti, *Il corpo* [The Body], p. 185 [my translation].

⁹³ [Non vi sono nè materializzazione dei pensieri, nè spiritualizzazione dei suoni, ma solo quell fatto, in qualche misura misterioso, che è il *pensiero-suono*]. Galimberti, *Il corpo* [The Body], p. 37 [my translation].

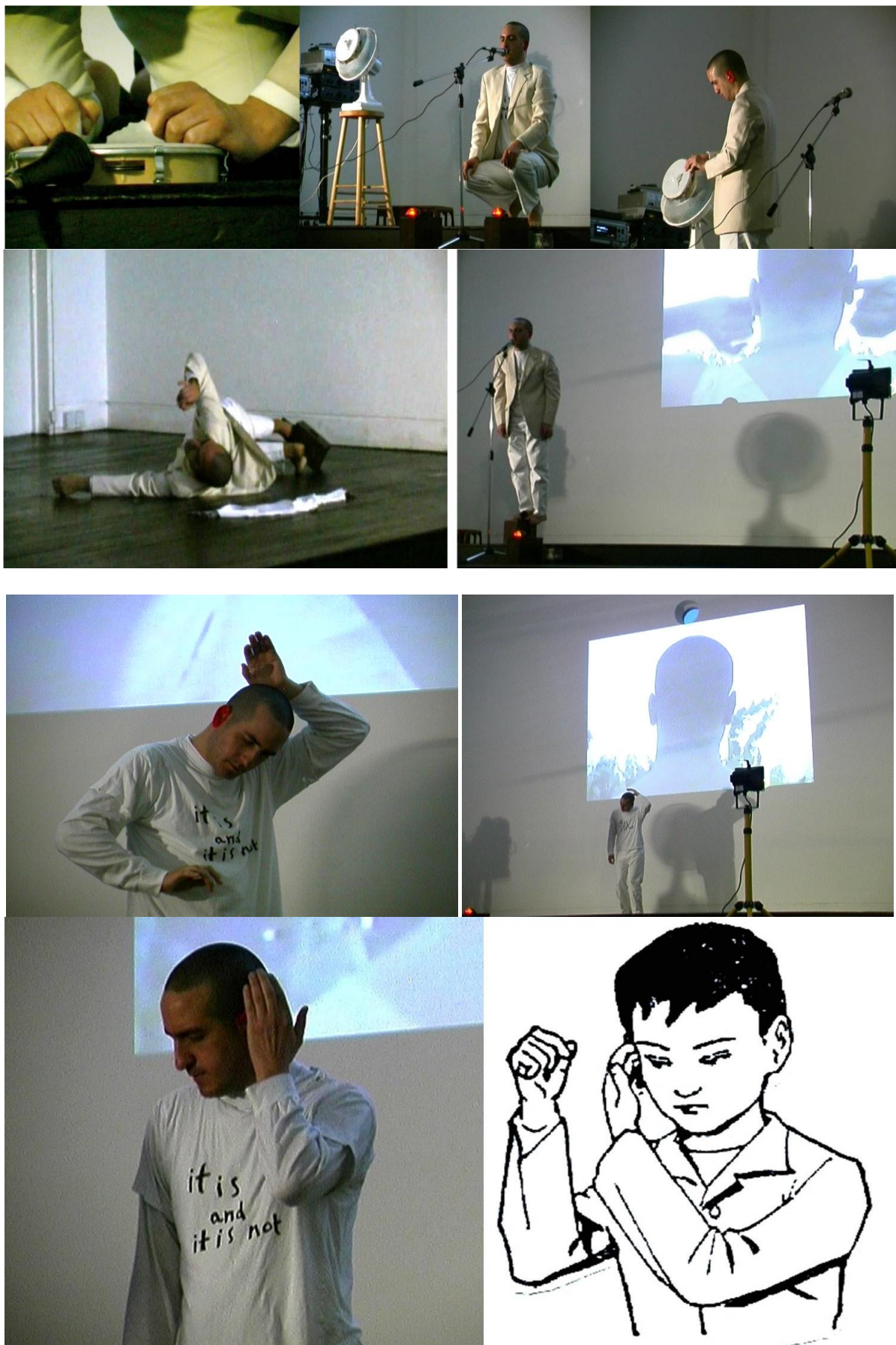
⁹⁴ Later in the 1980s and 1990s Bene concentrated on productions of an operatic scale, where just a reading of a work becomes an all-embracing experience for the spectator. I had some direct experience of this when, in 1993, I assisted in one of his performance-readings of the *Canti Orfici* [Orphic Poems] of the Italian poet Dino Campana. The place was an immense excavated quarry in the area of Cursi, a small town in Salento in Southern Italy, famous for its extractions of *Leccese* stone, as used in Lecce's baroque architecture. The whole landscape resounded with his voice, ab-original sound in an evocative dry countryside. A word- delirium between order and baroque lucubration filled the space.

autopsies of the text were enabled by the latest technology of amplification, paradoxically underlining his approach to a ‘dramaturgy of the absence.’ In this effective use of the technology of amplification, the speech is not the speaker. We are constantly deceiving ourselves of our existence as we act within the machine of theatre, when we are, in point of fact, subjects who are subjected, if not even condemned. When linked through technology, performance should allow this complete ‘surrender’ to acoustic site, finally a shrinking of an ego-techno (*techno ergo sum*). In this sense, amplified voice and sound can still be a short-circuiting device for listening, a paradoxical act of self-shrinking through amplification. It is not an ego-technologically enlarging prosthetic, but a means through which to make one realise a radicality of relationships, including that of a listener. Something more complex defies reduction. Performance is still waiting for what is already there: a sound, an active space, activated by bodies, by walls or landscapes, by silences that have been sounding in spite of us. Silence is a resonance; each silence has its own acoustic specificity, and it constantly vibrates and feeds back. Capturing and controlling sound is a bit like ghost busting: it needs to be reminded that it is already here. We need to be reminded that we are already here.

1.3 Tinnitus: *Susurrus Aurium*



Ear plugs for the performance *Citizen* (1). Fabrizio Manco 2005.



Video stills and image from *Citizen (1)*, Moral Plinth, Beaconsfields, London 2005. Video: Cristina Escoda. Video stills and video editing: Fabrizio Manco.

*Nella testa ho un campanello.*⁹⁵
Angelo Anelli

*Que pandeiretas o silêncio deste quarto!...*⁹⁶
Fernando Pessoa

The bells of tinnitus forever toll. And tinnitus is also:

the buzz, drone, hiss, hum, ring, steam, roar, whistle, click, tap, water, heartbeat, truck, rushing, airplane, singing, insects, crickets, fog horn, musical sounds, machinery, rumble, hollow sound, squeal, echo, surf, pressure, vibration, squeak, throbbing, rustling leaves, stuffiness, tunnels, pulse, rubbing cloth, watch tick, thumping pulsation, zooming-whizzing, shell.⁹⁷ But it is also many more sounds: multi-layered, fluctuating, intersecting, from metallic to organic, continuous rivers of noisy sounds and sonorous noise, adding or giving through subtracting to the world a patina on a painted shaded illusion over another illusion.

In summer, in beholding the woods of my native region (the Salento area of Puglia in Italy), I constantly find myself surrounded and surprised by a thousand cicadas, an experience similar to the image of shimmering light on the surface of the sea, indeed, a sea of noise. A change of sound frequency, a pure tone which is hard to locate, rattling in my ears and body, not quite a white noise, although when in large numbers, the cicadas could sound as if layering their frequencies into pink and other noise colours.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ [I have a bell in my head]. From *L'italiana in Algeri*, Gioachino Rossini (1813), libretto by Angelo Anelli [my translation].

⁹⁶ [What tambourines the silence of this room!...]. Pessoa, *Una sola* [A Single], p. 149 [my translation].

⁹⁷ From Bergman and Heller (2000), "Tinnitus," p. 79.

⁹⁸ In December 2005, while in the countryside, I encountered a herd of sheep with their shepherd. This encounter became the performance video work I called *Jiiiiingle Beells*. The environmental sound of that site being that of the tinkling bells of the herd gradually approaching me. I connected with those surrounding moving sounds (indeed more than an eight-channel surround system) as if I were the shepherd being guided and moved by the sheep. The moving and surrounding herd functioned as a trigger for my dance, in the interaction with my hyperacusis as body orientation and ear/head movement panning, as I became almost like an instrument, a spectrum analyser.

In chronic tinnitus, the somatic place of investment in acoustic embodiment is perceived as an auditory investment in the whole ear body, and a perceptual judgement (I am in your head).⁹⁹ Then, tinnitus makes me question radically what perception is. It is pure perception.¹⁰⁰ The Swedish 18th century scientist-philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg talked about “Mechanical Tremulation, Vibration in the Body,” which appears to me as a form of auditory investment. He writes:

A singing or ringing sound is also noticeable in the ear, when the matres or membranes are diffused and greatly distended with blood by the arteries, whence the tremulation is unduly hastened over everything contiguous.¹⁰¹

It is through tinnitus, as “the accidents of my biography,”¹⁰² that I have come to realise how much sound and movement are intermingled and mutually generating. Tinnitus is felt as investing the whole central nervous system with stronger and vibrating intensity. With time, I have become more aware, more responsive to these corporeal interactions and accommodation of this sensorial investment within performance training, pedagogy and practice, a reflection and a re-listening with an acute ear. I settle with my invisible and constant company, searching for a world of acoustic resonance and an ‘empty’ place. The conditioned and invisible internal experience of somatosounds, together with the

⁹⁹ The onset of my chronic tinnitus and hyperacusis started more than twenty years ago, when I was a fine art student. Sound, to use a Tarantism term – has bitten me. It went from becoming a threat, verging on phonophobia to an artistic interest in sound as a visual and performance artist. Paradoxically, through my work it became my insight into my visual work, movement, choreography and performance. I believe that the ear (including the tinnitus ear) can be trained to open up to inputs that could stimulate its transformative memory.

¹⁰⁰ An expression of Prof. David McAlpine of the UCL Ear Institute in London, during the meeting on 17th October 2012. But it is also a perception of a continuity of a, or many, mono-tones, where I seek to find discontinuity.

¹⁰¹ Swedenborg (1719), *On Mechanical*, chapter VI. Although quite exoteric in its explanation and endeavour, Swedenborg is an important point in this chapter, and specifically in the section on Tarantism.

¹⁰² Cavarero, *In Spite*, p. 4. I also benefit from personal accounts and strategies of masking and other tinnitus management as discussed by hearing therapist Bunty Levene. Regarding personal experience of chronic tinnitus translated and transformed, Levene recalls composer Smetana who “in particular suffered from ‘terrible noises in his head’ which he depicted at the end of his String Quartet in E Minor subtitled ‘From my Life.’” Levene (2012), “A friend,” p. 6.

sonic invisible power of the ‘outside’¹⁰³ acoustic world, makes me aware of how physical sound is.

In the acoustic spectrum I favour a horizontality of non-escape, versus a vertical transcendence of the acoustic landscape, where even a vertical range of sound horizontalises me. Confluent is a susurruration of nature’s and urban sounds to my ear’s originating *susurrus aurium*, one of a continuous persistent auditory phantom.¹⁰⁴ But what has tinnitus got to do with space, site, performance and theatre? It echoes with all the world and all the performing world. The theatre is that of the ear with the performance of phantom perception, where the isolating ‘beehive’ hyperactivity of its piercing insects’ sounds, can risk erasing even the shortest memory. As writer Luke Williams suggests: “[...] as stars are eclipsed by city lights,” for that reason “[...] I must write. Set down on paper. Faithfully record my past before it becomes tinnitus and is lost.”¹⁰⁵ But, even through eclipsing tinnitus, a large amount of sonic information could not be lost. Taking Roland Barthes’ concept, transposing a photographic experience to an auditory one, I am attracted by a ‘particular.’ Particular is a sonic input which modifies me, and Barthes calls this specific particular presence *the punctum*,¹⁰⁶ which in this context becomes a sort of acute ‘sonic punctum’ (or, an ‘acufenic’ puncture).¹⁰⁷ This sharp experience becomes a piercing sonic needle.¹⁰⁸ Tinnitus calls for a relationship to the world as an escape from a sound of an always subjective personal ear in itself, into the external and other sonic

¹⁰³ The ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ dichotomy here are only to be intended as useful terms for the sake of the argument, but also as very weak and deceptive fictional parameters of distinction.

¹⁰⁴ Another medical term for tinnitus is *tinnitus aurium*. Bergman and Heller say that “Kerrison [Kerrison, P. D., *Diseases of the Ear*, J. P. Lippincott Co., 1930, p. 136] enumerated five general groups of sounds: 1) obstructive, 2) circulatory-vascular alterations, 3) labyrinthine-cochlear sounds, 4) neurotic instability of the auditory nerve, 5) cerebral sounds-involvement of the auditory centers.” Bergman and Heller, “Tinnitus,” p. 73.

¹⁰⁵ Williams (2011), *The Echo*, pp. 19, 79.

¹⁰⁶ Barthes (1981), *Camera*.

¹⁰⁷ Tinnitus is the Latin word, *acufene* in Italian.

¹⁰⁸ I explored this aspect in the performance *Earlines* (University of Roehampton, February 2010), with the sound of a needle piercing through a sheet stretched on an embroidery frame. I also recalled binaural hearing through the stitching of the sounds coming from outside through an open window, with blue and red threads on another sheet hanging as a curtain in front of the window.

world. So, the ears have to discriminate in choosing a place to be a bridging locus in a communal, social field of perception, in which I can situate myself, as Paul Dave says: “the *susurr*ation of a world which is discriminately human/non-human [with] the metamorphic, malleable qualities of sound,” while I move responsively to a site, navigating:

the opposition between human world of sound (machinic, linguistic) and the sound of brute, agitated matter in motion, or of meaning and noise, in favour of a common vibrancy.¹⁰⁹

From personal experience, once one – with a great personal effort and ear retraining – has achieved a good degree of management of chronic tinnitus one can, paradoxically, find meaning through tinnitus’ and the world’s noise, as well as the possibility of becoming a way to support intuition and even creativity. In becoming this support, the distorting ‘babel tower’ of tinnitus can offer an insight into the reality of the sonic paradox, one longing for spaciousness, while living through the body in a built or open space. Music writer Nick Coleman, in discussing his amusia (an auditory neurological condition where musical perception is impaired) describes his experience of multi-faceted tinnitus – and the sudden neurosensory hearing loss as longing for spaciousness. To a great extent this echoes the sonic paradox as well as my experience, as he is: “used to hear ‘buildings,’ three dimensional forms of architectural substance and tension, these forms had ‘floors,’ ‘walls,’ ‘roofs,’ ‘windows,’ ‘cellars.’ They expressed volume.”¹¹⁰ Whilst the neuroscientist Oliver Sacks opens his chapter “Amusia and Dysharmonia,” by saying that: “we take our senses for granted. We feel we are given the visual world, for example,

¹⁰⁹ Dave (2011), “Robinson,” p. 21.

¹¹⁰ Coleman (2008), “Life,” p. 8.

complete with depth, colour, movement, form, and meaning all perfectly matched and synchronous.”¹¹¹

The internal physiological space of tinnitus is where the external perception of the world reflects and interrelates its volumes and in the environmental or architectural space, one could indeed experience it as an auditory theatre. It is where the space of the inner ear reverberates and, at the same time, it resonates as if that of a room, the room of the cranium, inhabited by the overwhelming power of sound, and greatly affecting the minuscule hair cells. Concentrating on ‘intrinsic’ space as site, I recall a cochlear world, that of the inner ear and the audio-vestibular site, which includes its ringing side. In the science-fiction film *Fantastic Voyage* (1966), directed by Richard Fleischer there is a metaphorical example of a hyperacute hearing activity. Similar to the miniscule hair cells, miniscule bodies float in liquid space containing them as actor-operators who are careful to maintain ‘absolute silence.’ They are microscopically reduced travellers in their equally microscopic shuttle, and are injected into the body of a dying man with the purpose of reaching his brain, to repair a blood clot. The way this space is depicted is architectural in a psychedelic-futuristic artificiality and an acoustically hallucinated theatre. Here is an incessant performing activity of inner and outer bodies and inner and outer sounds. Yet, the accidental dropping of a pair of scissors on the floor, creates a vast effect in the ear and our minuscule actors are greatly distressed by it. In the film, the half-imagined space of the inner ear is the visual theatre of an acoustic echoing world affected by the clamour and frequencies of life.

The paradox of tinnitus then becomes the sonic paradox of endogenous and exogenous sound. The sonic paradox becomes the one of theatre, as the staging of this paradox.

¹¹¹ Sacks (2007), *Musicophilia*, p. 98.

This paradox is perceptually felt, and could become a transformed experience through noisy fog. It is also a translation of loss and then recuperation of spatial dimensionality in an embodied way as an ear body. A transversing of auditory depth of field, including that of architectural space, and through layers of noisy veils. In different terms, where the control of intensity is the highest, then tinnitus is the amplification of the sound of the brain, the reward of an auditory-physical sense of sounding loss. In the scientific experimental research on the analogy between phantom pain and phantom sound, investigating the relation between ‘incongruence, pain, and tinnitus’ as sensory phantom perception, Dirk De Riddera writes that:

inappropriate cortical representation of proprioception may falsely signal incongruence between motor intention and movement, resulting in pathological pain in the same way that incongruence between vestibular and visual sensation results in motor sickness [...] but not everybody perceives the phantom as aversive or painful.¹¹²

Not by escaping, or equally by masochistically attaching myself to pain, my condition of chronic tinnitus became a realisation of embodied sound and listening. By attempting a reconciliation – with what is never disembodied in the first place – the sensorial perception makes one realise that reconciliation is through embodiment and its relation to pain. The ear performs the performativity of that embodied sound’s perception and its replaced loss, which means performing beyond loss. This is a realisation that an unmediated experience of sound is virtually impossible. One performs through mediation. Due to masking effects of environmental noise, in my experience of tinnitus and in my artistic research, the challenge was to come as close as possible to an understanding of the experience of how people with chronic tinnitus and hyperacusis individually perceive and

¹¹² De Riddera et al. (2011), “Phantom percepts” [no pagination]. Throughout this thesis the references to scientific research mainly function as creative inputs and personal interpretations and speculations. In my creative interpretations and practice, I seek to go beyond any over-embracing reliance on science.

listen to sounds.¹¹³ It is where listening itself becomes sonorous.¹¹⁴ The filtering of endogenous and exogenous sounds and where sound is located, both ‘internally’ and ‘externally’ could convey this very subjective and multifarious experience through performance, not only therapeutically but, at the same time, artistically. In the experience of chronic tinnitus as embodied, various layers of constant and/or fluctuating noises as rhythms are always there, even in the most variable sounding or monotonously constant ringing perception. Rhythms, from the subtlest to the more perceptible – intended as the ones in and of life – are never escapable, even from the smoothest peak-less passages of movement, in order for an experiential performance or dance to emerge; and even an invisible sonic dance on a phantom stage.



¹¹³ Masking sounds – from environmental ones to portable or in the ear wearable devices – make me address silence in its most sonorous nature. Masking intended as the ‘covering up’ noises for the ‘noisy silence’ of tinnitus – as it is used in audiology for rehabilitation after acoustic trauma – can function as a de-sensitising or reducing tool for auditory sensory memory.

¹¹⁴ Nancy asks: “Is even listening itself sonorous?.” Nancy, *Listening*, p. 5.

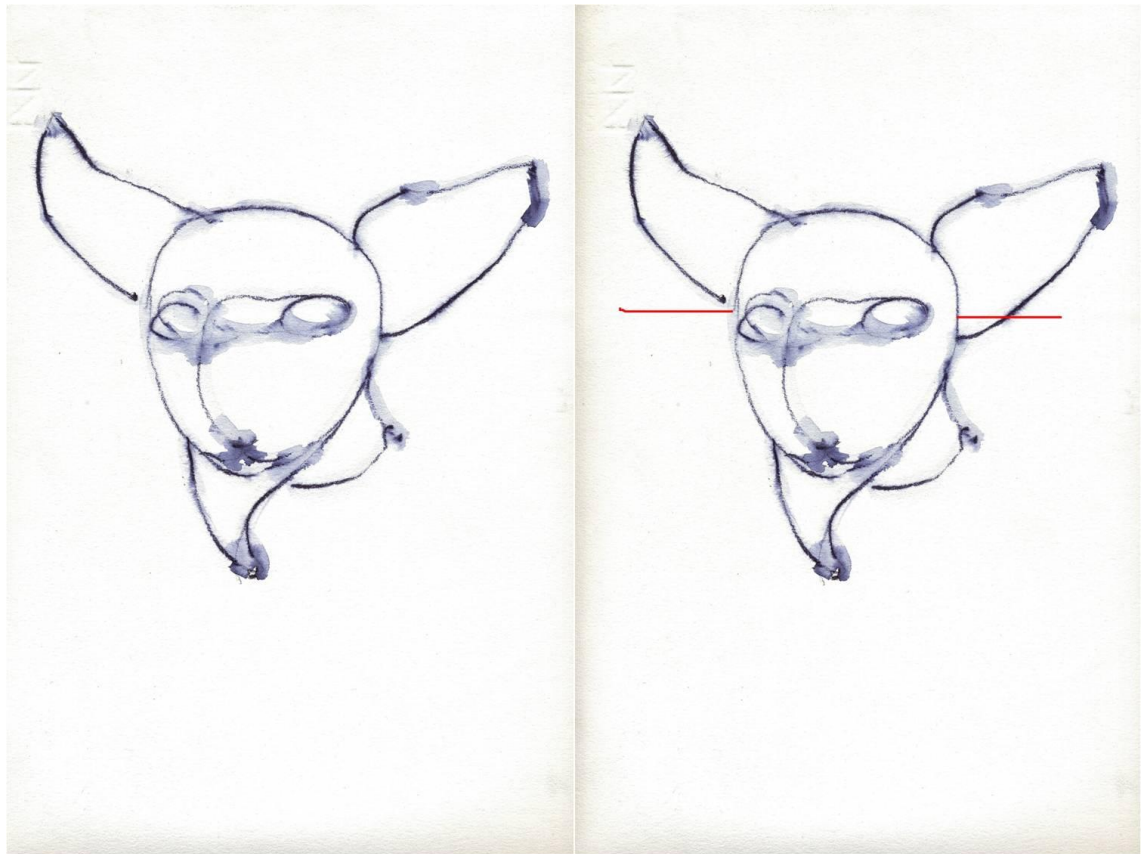


Practical research at the UCL Ear Institute with a conversation with Prof. David McAlpine, London 2005.
Photo: Genista Dunham.

1.4 Tinnitus: *the ghost in the auditory phantom stage*



Tinnitus Bed, Pillow, Sheet, painting and drawing, 1998.

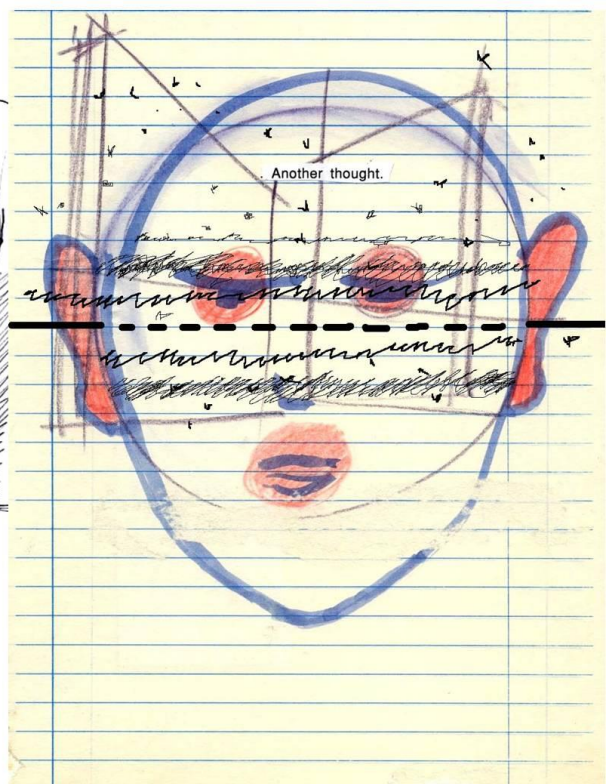


Tinnitus Goat, drawing, 2005.

THE AUDITORY PHANTOM



stage







The Auditory Phantom Stage, paintings and drawings (1998-2010).

*What does not exist super exists.*¹¹⁵
Carmelo Bene

Let the pain become a sound.
Neo-pagan song¹¹⁶

There is an intrinsic correlation between phantasmagorical and ‘concrete reality,’ and the place of this correlation is the ear body. In the history of contemporary Italian theatre, Bene was the first to challenge the performing and the existential presence of a performer on the stage, as well as perception and the authority of the text. In his philosophy, the stage is an illusion, which is the same as the illusion of one’s existence, the stage is therefore phantasmagorical. I find useful Bene’s paradoxical use of a deliberate division between audience and performers which, in my opinion, was paradoxically able to create a more intense relationship between the threshold of divided areas of stage and auditorium, and also between phantasmagorical and ‘concrete reality.’ In his theatre version of *Nostra Signora dei Turchi* (Our Lady of the Turks),¹¹⁷ Bene tried to overcome the domain of text/words, to get to a direct perception of the action. The public could not hear anything because they had to follow the performers’ action through a dividing panel of glass, with only a small window periodically opened. In my hypothesis this ‘proscenium’ of impediment, a diaphragm of glass recalls metaphorically that of tinnitus. Both, the ‘proscenium’ of impediment and, through my ear body performance, also tinnitus, can enable more focus on listening. In spite of what is normally believed or written about and worked as a grounding device for the audience, perceiving through a ghostly surface of vision and hearing is only an apparent division. In a metaphorical and experiential sense, this veil of illusion, covering another illusion – that of theatre – is

¹¹⁵ [Quel che non esiste super esiste] Bene (1998), *Vita*, p. 85 [my translation].

¹¹⁶ Stengers (2013), quoting a ritual song of neo-pagan witches, “Matters,” p. 175.

¹¹⁷ First performed in Rome at the Teatro Beat 72, 1st December 1966.

more engaging and revealing. Life on stage brings forth absence, and in my work what is absent becomes a 'sounding' phantom. For the stage is always negating itself when a performer in acts of dis-illusion at the same time is acted upon by it, by its acoustic space. This is a stage further than any illusory claim or intention of bringing the presence of a so-called 'real' reality and 'real' body. Since the beginning the 1960's, in the work of many artists, the body becomes flesh and hybrid and very important in 'its' transgressive and political use. This is also an imaginary, exhibited, emotional, abused, modified, mystical, abject body, which also contributes to the social body. I think of the bleeding, bruised, pained and ascetic body, part of the history of Performance Art, Body Art and Live Art (like for instance, the visceral and poetical work of Marina Abramović, Orlan's and Franko B). This is also an historical body which makes me question what is the 'real' body.

Our human reality is an apparent ghost as in the baroque paradigm of reality-illusion, it is a 'baroque' consciousness state, veil after veil, the veil of vision – including a 'cataract' or 'maculated' one – as the veil of an impaired audition. A metaphor – but also a very palpable experience – which comes as a sheet concealing the *horror vacui*, that fear of the void of Western and nihilistic heritage, a vacuum which often means 'nothing' to us – and that we try to escape from – but instead is a full vacuum, escaping an *horror pleni*.

According to Gillo Dorfles:

In contrast to the ancient *horror vacui* of prehistoric people, who filled every corner of their cave with self-produced images, today "the horror of the too

full” corresponds to the excess of both visual and auditory “noise” which constitute the opposite of every informative and communicative capacity.¹¹⁸

There is a fullness of the surface and depth which is already implied on the surface, instead of reflecting a depth behind. On this surface, a resonance is also the sonic and sculpting event. I realise that I always perform this ‘deep surface’ which is the one of my ear body, by allowing sound to condition my movements. In this metaphorical, but also experiential sense sound, intended as a constantly changing and travelling acoustic nature (like the baroque spirit), creates what might be called ‘acoustic folds.’¹¹⁹ My ear body involves the mutability of the body in relation to sound, similar to a sheet moving in relation to the wind with its visual and acoustic folds. Constantly moving sound travels in space and in my body creating sound sculpting wave events which are meeting points generating whirlpools, wafts of invisible folds as invisible undulations of acoustic vibrations, compressions, reactions in an acoustic interface of surfaces and densities. This acoustic flux becomes the prerogative of the enhanced sound, where artifice (the ultimate baroque device) takes place, and flux annuls the subject-substance and non-substance dichotomy. Acoustic technology is successful in giving an awareness of embodied interaction to an audience, where amplification is space and an event takes place through very subtle interventions, outside of apparatuses and manipulations. Generally in art, I see this as a futuristic faith in the machine, albeit sophisticated and acoustically elaborated, one which could flatten our experience, one which is ultimately ghostly. The central figure of the auditory

¹¹⁸ [In contrasto con l’antico horror vacui dell’uomo preistorico, che colmava ogni angolo della sua caverna con immagini autoprodotte, oggi “l’orrore del troppo pieno” corrisponde allo eccesso di “rumore” sia visivo che auditivo che costituiscono l’opposto di ogni capacità informativa e comunicativa]. Dorfles (2008), *Horror*, p. 15 [my translation].

¹¹⁹ I have been exploring the metaphor, material and image of the sheet and folds, the folding, the involucre, the shell and the relation between wind, movement and folds since 1990 in my paintings, video work and performances, and in my BA dissertation where I discussed the Baroque in the theatre of Carmelo Bene, through Gilles Deleuze’s concept of The Fold. The material and surface of the sheet recalled the body and when stretched also recalled the perimeter and framing sheet on the floor and the tambourine in the ritual of Tarantism.

phantom perception becoming ghost is to be interpreted through the image of an incessant oscillation between the two terms of phantom and ghost. This contradicts the idea of an incorporation and abandonment of the body as a very heavy garment, implying that the body is represented by a wearable involucre.¹²⁰ The body becomes a wrapped material for ‘the soul,’ or a transcendental ‘self’ which constitutes its shell, and yet gives gravity and weight to the immaterial that wants to be released. Just as an ‘impartial’ ghost as the baroque façade carved into stone displays the dynamism of its spirit, the enveloping sheets of a baroque sculpture function as effectively as translators of dynamics. These dynamics could be seen as sonic ones. Here ghost and auditory perception define each-other mutually, and this concept pertains to an intermingled corporeal and ghostly experience of sound. In the dynamic nature of this baroque acoustic spirit, one could open up a rapport with sonic dichotomy as separation, which is a forced and artificial one, but which could help us reflect on embodiment as embodied listening, giving us ear bodies, whereby the image is sound and the reverse, and the image passes into the sound in a dual and laced aspect. Then, sound resounds as something constantly changing and elusive which I distinguish as sonic consciousness. In embodied listening, consciousness is extended, in one’s ear body as a result of interconnections, including those engaged in perception with this world we are enmeshed in. The performed space can be ghostly as the result of the continuous negotiating of our bodies together with our projections. The acoustic phantom of theatre’s illusion means that this type of phantom is the result of our interaction through auditory perception in and with any theatrical space, or in any other space where a performance is taking place. In other words, auditory perception –

¹²⁰ Another fitting example is Auguste Rodin’s manneristic version of Michaelangelo Buonarroti’s sculpture techniques, with his ‘pseudo-impressionistic’ Balzac wrapped in a dressing gown which almost negates the body. When I visited the Musée Rodin which is located in his Villa des Brillants at Meudon, France, all of this became clear, when looking at his preparatory studies of the dressing gown, Rodin plastered it and left an empty shell consisting of ‘ghostly’ wrap folds.

as well as any other perception – is illusory, not only metaphorically speaking, but also because perceived through mediated physical-cognitive layers. In this sense, the acoustic phantom of theatre’s illusion can tell us more about our reality with our sonic perceptions, a wide spectrum of phantoms, phantoms possessing at the same time our being and not being an alterity.

Performing the experience of tinnitus is performing this acoustic phantom but also the ghost, a timely constituting and tangible condensation between the ghost and the phantom in the perceiving ‘subject’ which can perform. I see in this an oscillation between personal performativity (as almost-performance) and performance practice engaged in the interrelation with the social. Performing ‘the ghost’ becomes performing ‘the real.’ Consequently, we allow our ghost reality to perform in and outside of us, so that eventually we perform to the ghosts.¹²¹



¹²¹ Again, an example is the provocative title of Bene’s autobiography *Sono apparso alla Madonna* [I appeared to the Madonna] (2005), where chronological time appears to be absent, and is a short-circuiting of the conventional notion that one might be visited by an apparition as Bene appearing to the Virgin Mary.



After the Earless, Senate House, London 2010. Photo: Hannes Guðmundsson.

I explored the concept of ‘the ghost performing the real’ – and of performing to the ghosts – in the three performances connecting three consecutive spaces: *FOYER: here, never* (2009), *A GHOST is another PHANTOM?* (2009) and in *After the Earless* (2010).



A still from *Kwaidan* [Ghost Stories], film directed by Masaki Kobayashi, Japan 1964.

In this last performance, I further explored the popular Japanese ghost story of Hōichi the Earless (*Mimi-nashi-Hōichi*), a story of an auditory phenomenon of bewitching popularised by Lafcadio Hearn,¹²² which was also the underlying reference in my previous performance.¹²³ In the story, Hōichi, a poor, blind storyteller and very skilled biwa (Japanese lute) player, living in the Amidajii Buddhist temple, is often visited by the sounds of footsteps and metallic armour, the ghost of a samurai who will take him to the temple's cemetery. The task was to play and chant the heroic battle ‘Tale of the Heike’ in front of the spirits of his emperor (the child Antoku Tennō) and of the clan (the Heike), which had been completely destroyed by the rival clan (the Genji) and, since that mortal

¹²² An Irish-Greek American journalist who went to Japan in 1889 and in 1903 published a collection entitled *Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things*.

¹²³ Since the previous performance in Senate House, the anteroom and corridor had changed, and two pendulum clocks had been added. The structural space and the pendulum clocks' rhythmic sounds enabled the performance, through Butoh inspired movements and with drawing. In the corridor, I explored the auditory space through walking while drawing. In this work I was also investigating synchronised and non-synchronised sound, relating tempo, movement and mark-making.

defeat, the shores of Dan-no-ura were haunted by eerie sounds coming from the sea.¹²⁴ In spite of having been advised by the ghost not to tell of the ethereal visits, Hōichi eventually narrates these occurrences to the priest. As a consequence, the priest and his assistant monk, decide to write on Hōichi's body the *Hannya Haramita Shingyō* (known as the Heart Sutra) with its power to make him invisible to the returning ghost. Hōichi is left on his own after having been advised to sit still without making any sound, so the samurai ghost will not be able to find him. Unfortunately in his rush, the priest had forgotten to write the sutra on Hōichi's ears and, as a result, they were the only parts of his body which were visible, so the ghost, once it reappeared, tore them off his head, and took them to his lord as evidence.

This legend may tell us about the experience of *acouasm*, or auditory hallucinations and auditory phantom perceptions which, though they are different occurrences from ghosts, they correspond. In neuroscientific terms, for instance Oliver Sacks, states that:

Neurological terms are bound to sound reductive in [this] almost mystical context. Yet one might venture to interpret this as a 'release' phenomenon, a spontaneous, almost eruptive arousal of the visual cortex, now deprived of its normal visual input. This is a phenomenon analogous, perhaps, to tinnitus or phantom limbs.¹²⁵

In this reverse, performing to the ghosts is recognising the ghost reality as the ontology of our voices (therefore not as in schizophrenia), and of sounding spaces and architectures.

At this moment I become the performer of this ghost reality, of the story of tinnitus as a phantom. In this story, the relation which I am trying to draw is the one existing between

¹²⁴ In the tale, Hearn gives much acoustic detail: entering the gate of the ghost palace: "sounds of feet hurrying, and screens sliding, rain-doors opening and voices of women in converse," or "the sound of the rustling of silk was like the sound of leaves in a forest [...] a great humming of voices, talking in undertones." In another part of the tale Hōichi makes his biwa: "sound like the straining of oars and the rushing of ships, the whirr and the hissing of arrows, the shouting and trampling of men, the crashing of steel upon helmets, the plunging of the slain in the flood." Hearn (2006), "The story," pp. 28-30.

¹²⁵ Sacks (2003), 'The Mind's Eye' [no pagination].

the brain generated acoustic phantom and its ghostly and haunting presence, which creates an antagonism between tinnitus, seen as a constant visitor/possessor, and the somatic re-identification with it. Could this echo be the illusion of theatrical reality with its sonic machinery? Is the ‘fuzzy visitation’ of tinnitus a ghost coming from an outside location? Where does it come from? The brain is the scientist’s explanation. The physical and mental divide is its result. Hence, the brain, by producing the auditory phantom, produces its phantom image performing in a para-theatrical space. Psychologist Max Velmans puts it differently in terms of perceptual processing of the brain, in saying that:

whether we regard such experienced phenomena as ‘physical’ or ‘mental’ depends on what we judge them to be experiences of, rather than on where the subjective locations of the phenomena are experienced to be.¹²⁶

But the body is the place. A spectral – but nonetheless felt as real – auditory image is created by the hearing brain, persistent and fluctuating in eternity, as an effect from a shock produced ‘entity.’ This entity becomes a phantom which generates what is missing as compensation of a loss-mutilation, the *manqué* of an auditory ‘war wound,’ perceiving some auditory information, yet losing others, but also of hearing the lack as sonorous.¹²⁷ This phantom entity creates its own infolding acoustic illusion a form of a self-generative sonic loop. In the fields of biology and neurophenomenology, Varela and Humberto Maturana talking about the holding of an identity by the self-asserting aspect of ‘machines’ – called as such because they are dynamic living systems – employs a study only through physical factors, where any animistic implication is excluded.¹²⁸ Although this self-generative aspect sounds rather reductively self-enclosed or monistic in

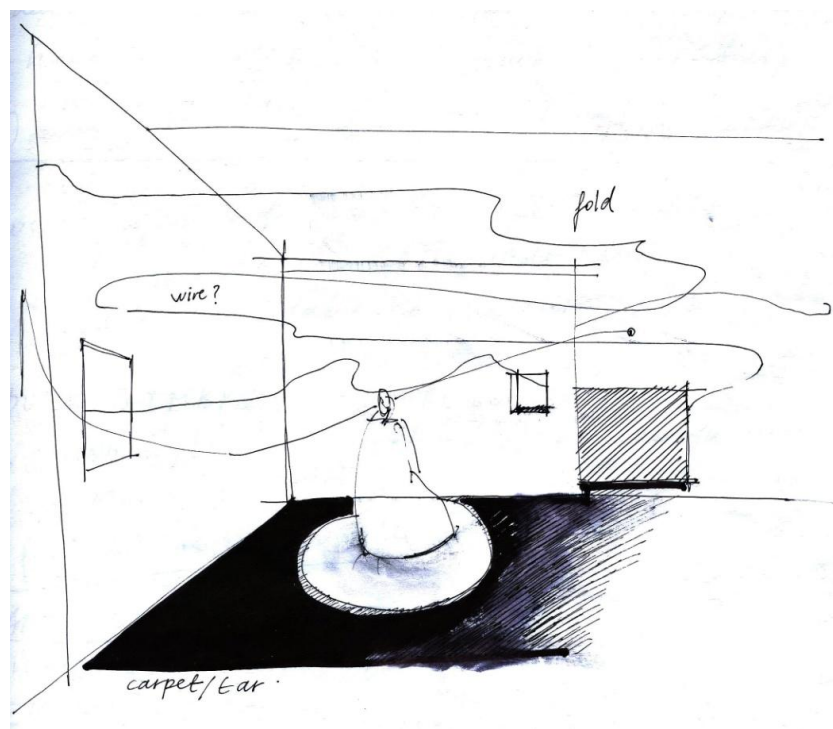
¹²⁶ Velmans (2009), *Understanding*, p. 118.

¹²⁷ Tinnitus was sometimes metaphorically referred to as a ‘war wound,’ as many soldiers in wars suffered – and still are suffering from – acoustic trauma, affected by bombs and other explosions, very loud noises, gun shots and other loud war injuring and auditorially scarring noises.

¹²⁸ Varela and Maturana (1980), *Autopoiesis*. Whereas, in my case, I do wholly welcome the animistic implication (and reject any scientific one).

approach, it is only so in appearance. Instead, it happens to be important if applied to a reading of the acoustic phantom. For its possible equivalent is with autopoietic ‘machines,’ in their being autonomous only in the sense that they keep their individuality – like a ghost (as compensation from a loss) which keeps its individuality, but in relation to an auditory phantom – while being related to each other’s systems. This equivalent is possible, as Varela states, for their “self-asserting capacity of living systems to maintain their identity through the active compensation of deformations.”¹²⁹ To facilitate the fluidity of auditory perception, what is more important is to relate to the already existing sound in a space, and to realise its phantasmatic artifice mixed with one’s perception of what is invisible. An acoustic phantom perception and its virtually becoming a *persistent* ghost – and the relation between the two concepts of phantom and ghost – creates an all-enveloping auditory space.

1.5 Tinnitus: *fluctuations*



Sketch for performance-installation, 2009.

¹²⁹ A definition of the term “autonomy,” from the glossary in Varela, *Autopoiesis*, p. 135.

In my Ear Bodies project – auditory conditions and a comparative mode of the specific etymological and phenomenological distinctions between the terms of comparison of ghost and phantom – I consider as important the difference and relation between the experiences of phantom auditory perception and that of the metaphorical ghost. Most of all, I deliberately complicate them, as the very nature of the subject of discussion is *fluctuations* between terms and experiences.

The term ‘ghost’ is primarily used as a noun, while ‘phantom’ is primarily used descriptively. However, there is an overlap, as the term ‘phantom’ is frequently used as synonym of ‘ghost.’ My attention is specifically drawn to the exchange between those terms and experiences by having as a main reference the very subjective experience of auditory phantom perception. Phantoms are of different sorts, and share with the auditory type a large diversity. According to the neurologist Silas Weir Mitchell, some can be:

strangely ghost-like and unreal [...]; some compellingly, even dangerously, life-like and real; some intensely painful, others (most) quite painless; some photographically exact [...] others grotesquely foreshortened or distorted...as well as ‘negative phantoms,’ or ‘phantom of absence.’¹³⁰

So, there is a phantom of absence, but also an absence-phantom: an absence which is not void, but one which sounds.

As always embodied, our being aware is of our constantly being acted upon by the intrinsic nature and the alterity of sound and, subsequently, its ghosts and phantoms. Sound as otherness at the same time interacts as sameness. One’s listening body interacts with sameness and difference, for listening bodies are spaces for (and of) reflections of both acoustic energy and our auditory projections. Projections as all the phantasmagoria of the illusory space of which we are made – that of sound constantly active and

¹³⁰ Mitchell, in Sacks (1985), *The Man*, p 70.

reflecting – are sensory perceptions which come back to us together with their unreliability as perceptions. The auditory ghost turns into an outside projection of an internalised phantom perception. This ghost returns as an ‘adherence.’¹³¹ Yet, this is not a question of, or from an afterlife, but of life itself. The auditory phantom is the lingering after-effect of sonic events and sonic harrowing ‘fissures’ occurring in resonant spaces filled by a mnemonic acoustic past. A mnemonic body remembers its returns, its feedbacks, its nourishing back with exchanges, with its being affected by the continuous nature of sound and, sometimes, the traumatic erasure of its haunting and ghostly returns. In chronic tinnitus – because it is continuous – a mnemonic auditory history is laced through time-space. This internal audible and external non-audible sounding presence could tell of the immediate, as well as the older, the *decayed and the archived*.

In the invisibility of tinnitus, the physicality of experience of sonic apparition is the constant sonic ghost, which one may imagine and feel as ‘entity,’ and which instead of being covered by the ghostly white or ‘ectoplasmatic’ bed-sheet – the modern representational image/symbol of a ghost – is covered by fluctuating and metallicly rattling frequencies, as well as generating a white or pink noise envelope.¹³² This illusory experience is felt as real in a resonating body, already a testimony of how reverberations are the ghosts, as the phantoms which appear out of alterity.¹³³ In my Ear Bodies project, the alterity within us is beyond its real nature, and the phantom perceived as a ghost, are

¹³¹ In the same way that the spirit of ‘The Dybbuk’ in S. Ansky’s homonymous work is meant to be, an attaching parasitical restless consciousness from ‘another world,’ not excluding, in this specific example, also the gender implication: the possessed woman recalls a question of moral justice and, ultimately, social constructions from illusions.

¹³² Here ‘envelope’ is also a reference to the term ‘spectral-envelope distortion’ a term used in auditory science.

¹³³ Cavarero discusses the split between being and appearance in Plato. She points out that the “distinction lies in the claim that the real of the ‘things that are’ is real and true, while the world of the things ‘close at hand’ is devalued as merely superficial *appearance*, pertaining to the deceptive experience of the senses. The term *reality* is itself an effect of this dualistic schism.” Cavarero, *In Spite*, p. 37.

physical and always performing. This is the performing of ear bodies, when I and we move in a space, a site, a stage. A performing which undoes separations while keeping differences alive, it is a reflection on the nature of theatre (intended also in its broader sense as performance) as illusory. This performing is a simultaneous identification and differentiation with the auditory phantom-ghost and is constantly emerging and coming forth to touch.

1.6 *Noli me tangere (cum sono)*



Fra Angelico, *Annunciation*, 1440-1442. Cell 3 in the Convent of San Marco, Florence, where the *Annunciation* is located. The cell is also reproduced in the fresco.

... and the words which we pronounce have no meaning except through the
silence in which they are bathed.
Maurice Maeterlinck¹³⁴

¹³⁴ In Zajonc (1993), *Catching*, p. 106.

The post-traumatic ear body on the posthumous ghostly stage, in order to speak, has to tread a threshold in order to listen; on an ontological threshold of being alive, it is the emissary, to listen and be listened to. In Jalal Toufic's words: "the dead (as undead); even the ghost, ostensibly a revenant, is not allowed to speak about himself or herself as dead, to fully be his or her own emissary."¹³⁵ The revenant becomes a scarring and eerie phantom return. There are many returns when bathed in silence. It was the symbolist poetical sensibility of Maurice Maeterlinck, which recalls this being bathed in silence. In the particular and personal insight given to me by my chronic tinnitus, it is the sonorous and boisterous silence which searches for a location, where the dichotomy of inner and outer sonic sources are destabilised. In subjective tinnitus the sound is in the ear-head as a noisy patina, and is layered on the heard world. It is of an 'uncertain provenance,' one which is tinnitus as an 'internal acousmatic' sound and an 'internal alterity.' Similarly, according to Adrian Curtin, Maeterlinck, in his plays:

exploits sound's potential strangeness – its seeming intangibility, inscrutability, ambiguity, and *uncertain provenance*, especially when made acousmatically (without visual reference) – to unsettle, thereby introducing a necessary alterity.¹³⁶

In my Ear Bodies project, I introduce a constituting threshold of sonorous silence as a tangible and acoustic liminality. It is the threshold between the ghost/phantom and my perceiving body possessing a 'posthumous ear.' I see in this threshold an oscillation between personal performativity and social interrelation in my performance practice, while, at the same time, keeping difference alive. I draw from Western art history what I think is a suitable example to depict a performativity of inter-relational difference, where emissary and listener keep their distinction but are most of all inter-exchangeable. The example – in its metaphor connected to perception – explains how bodied listening can

¹³⁵ Toufic (2000), *Forthcoming*, p. 58.

¹³⁶ Curtin (2014), *Avant-Garde*, p. 36 [my italics].

make one realise the relationship between the older and the younger – where sound is older than the image – and vocal emission and reception. Vocal emission means being enveloped in relationality. In the words of Cavarero, here: “The other’s ear is in fact able of perceiving all the pleasure that this voice puts in existing: in ‘existing as voice.’ The pleasure of giving one’s own form to sound waves is part of the vocalic self-revelation.”¹³⁷ But it is not only vocal emission, and Cavarero continues:

The confusion between voice and sound, which would be typical of an archaic mystical thought is thus also a horizon of sense which seems, above all, to force the vocal to measure itself with the field of sounds, instead of depending on the system of the word.¹³⁸

It is a sound which is also hidden (acousmatic) or revealed as icon/ic. The only apparent schizoid relationship between a sound and its image, where sound might cry the loss of its image, comes forth. A space-in-between the listener and a source of sound – although importantly and because of being dual – can be a funnelling mediation. Here, the image can mediate its sound and vice-versa.

The art-historical example where I see this funnelling mediation as a silent auditory visitation is in one of the famous ‘Annunciations’ by Guido di Pietro (1395-1455) – the Italian monk-painter known as Fra’ Angelico (or il Beato Angelico).¹³⁹ In the *topoi* of the annunciation, virtually there is distance between the angel and the virgin, implying the vulnerability of the latter. In the space between the two there is no central dividing column, but instead what I would call a central ‘acoustic wall.’ In this depiction the artist

¹³⁷ [l’ orecchio altrui è infatti in grado di percepire tutto il piacere che questa voce mette nell’ esistere: nell’ ‘esistere come voce.’ Il piacere di dare una propria forma alle onde sonore fa parte dell’ autorivelazione vocalica]. Cavarero (2003), *For More* [A più voci], p. 11 [my translation].

¹³⁸ [la confusione tra voce e suono, che sarebbe tipica di un pensiero mistico arcaico è così anche un orizzonte di senso che sembra costringere il vocalico a misurarsi anzitutto con l’ ambito dei suoni invece di andare a dipendere dal sistema della parola]. Cavarero, *For More* [A più voci], p. 27 [my translation], and Cavarero citing Corrado Bologna, *Flatus vocis*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2000, p. 31.

¹³⁹ *The Annunciation in Florence*, fresco (1440-60), Museo di S. Marco, Florence, Italy.

is indicating an acoustic act, or a 'pure word act.'¹⁴⁰ But I see rather than that being the Archangel Gabriel making his announcement, it is the space which speaks, whilst the figures are mute; they echo each other by maintaining their mutual otherness, their two alterities. The eloquent and 'speaking' mute image of this painting, recalls silent cinema. Silent cinema has invented sound. Paradoxically, because of its being mute, the cinema of the beginning was more sonic. Sonic silence is the framing of sound, just like the framed image of a painting. For a viewer, the painted encounter could echo in witnessed sonorous silence. The cell where the fresco is painted is reproduced in the fresco (apart from the later addition of a little window next to the fresco), which, in a sense, reproduces its acoustics as well as echoing the room. The eloquent aspect of the fresco is this acoustic potential, both metaphorically and physically. That painted space is pregnant with silence. It resounds full of (acoustic) possibilities. The architecture, the depicted one as well as the physically experienced one of the cell, is incorporated. In the act of looking, one listens to it, while one is already immersed in the actual space reproduced in the fresco, a full embodiment of that eloquent silence. It is an auratic space, the (golden) aura of speaking silence by reproduction. I would also argue that in this utterance with acoustic interplay, the virgin is also appearing to the angel. All is here taking place in the tension and in that chiasmic gap, between a silently uttering – or, in our case 'sounding apparition' – and a visited witness. Here are two illusions and a white stony 'concrete' sounding wall, a focus of perception as connecting an only apparently empty space-in-between. In an acoustic realm this empty threshold, a space-in-between is full of sound. This white(ish) architectural space-in-between could metaphorically become the white noise, a pure tone curtain of masking noise between a world visiting and a visited one; but please: *do not touch me with a sound.*

¹⁴⁰ Didi-Huberman (1995), *Fra Angelico*, p. 106.

When performing I hear only relationships, which are concrete. This inter-connective space is the experience of the invisible interstice, where audible and inaudible occurrences take place: these are the *foyers* of performance, here the interstice in the fresco, in the reproduced painted cell and the one between viewer and fresco in the actual cell, allows a relationship to exist. The actual listening process of performance in this shared place, is the essential enabler of an acoustic ‘birth,’¹⁴¹ in favour of a fitting liminal tension between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ spaces and so-called ‘virtual’ and ‘real’ ones. It is the mind of the spectator-observer-listener, which at the same time finishes the system of relations with and beyond what can be grasped by the sense of sight and its inherent spatial correlation with hearing, where sound gives sense: the exchanging *sonare*.¹⁴²

My example shows that the exchange between source of sound and a body is affective and that it creates a dance of constant alternation and identification between emission and reception, the visitor and the visited, the possessing and the possessed.

1.7 Tarantism: *in per sona*



¹⁴¹ In his *The Conscious Ear* Tomatis talks about a ‘sonic birth,’ the experience of being born from one acoustic environment to another: “the progress from liquid hearing (the way the foetus listens) to aerial hearing.” Tomatis, *The Conscious*, p. 131.

¹⁴² Nancy says that: “the etymology of *sonare*, in a semantic group of sound or noise, cannot be separated from another onomatopoetic group (where sound gives sense...) of which *susurrus* (‘humming, murmuring’) is the first representative (‘an expressive word,’ Ernout and Meillet write).” Nancy, *Listening*, Notes to Pages 18-22, note 41, p. 45.



Photographs of tarantati, from De Martino's *La Terra Del Rimorso* [The Land of Remorse] (1961) taken by Franco Pinna in 1959. The second photograph on the right is from the *Centro sul Tarantismo e Costumi Salentini* archive, Galatina, Italy.

In letting go through restriction and framing, what is allowed to emerge is the peripheral, where all elements of sound, utterance, lamentation, shouts, music, percussion and movement originate from an obscure source. This 'obscurity' is the source of the archaic phenomenon of Tarantism, which holds an enigmatic violence, where even psychological discourse and analysis find a limit and where reason appears as utter madness. The well of nothingness is that obscurity, which is also located in the conditioned and the *queer body*, or of 'making oneself strange,' a body which sometimes both reflects and rejects social control, and expresses itself spontaneously in many corporeal affects and responses to power(s). In Tarantism, corporeally felt sound occurs when the body achieves a focussed state by a speeding up process, an acceleration of sonic/percussive rhythmic and oscillatory movements or dance. In the case of Tarantism, temporality is in an

increasingly fast emotional folly, which appears as a different experience from slowness and calm flow, but which is nonetheless a tangible experience of the apparent duality of the paradox between fast experience as slow, and vice-versa.¹⁴³

‘Mmela Paccia’¹⁴⁴ was one of the most oneiric, uncanny and earliest memories from my childhood in the 1970’s in the Salento peninsula at the south-eastern limit of Italy.

Regularly, during the hot June nights, Mmela, wearing her white night gown, would come out of her house by the main road and would obsessively and rhythmically walk barefoot up and down on the edge of the narrow pavement, then at times stopping her rhythmic stamping walks and starting to dance, while mumbling to herself a sort of hypnotic incantation. The sound of her bare stamping feet hitting the ground echoed in the empty road, whilst she continued her looped performance of a balancing act on the edge. The edge where two surfaces met, a concrete step before the asphalted road was the boundary to her house and the limiting threshold to her state, which I later realised to be that of a woman on the edge, dancing between architectural, physical, social, economic and environmental constraints: a *tarantata*.¹⁴⁵ The ear body can make these constraints become emancipators of movement, where one can move, dance and creatively do and undo architectural, physical, social economic, environmental restrictions. Mmela is an event still ingrained in my memory, is one of the many stories in the collective one which

¹⁴³ In Tarantism, I believe that the actual moment of the sudden stopping of the rhythm of the accompanying *pizzica tarantata* percussive music used for the healing was the actual dance and the implied healing therapy.

¹⁴⁴ Carmela the Mad Woman, as translated from the Salentine dialect.

¹⁴⁵ *Tarantata* is the Salentine dialectal word for the Italian *tarantolata* (fem.) and *tarantatu/tarantato* for the Italian *tarantolato* (masc.). For practical purposes, I am here using the Italianised version *tarantato* of the dialectal *tarantatu*. The mythic spider of tarantism is called *taranta*, in the Salentine dialect, which is *tarantola* in Italian (English/Latin: tarantula). For the collective plural, I use both gender terms in the dialectal words, as well as the dialectal *tarantati* (Italian: *tarantolati*). The taranta was also many other mythical spiders with their own specific colours, tunes and moods, and this was reflected in the tarantati who identified with their own specific taranta and its specifically loaded bite. It was believed that a particular taranta might communicate lustful behaviour, or assume behaviours of power and glory, as well as those who asked for funereal laments.

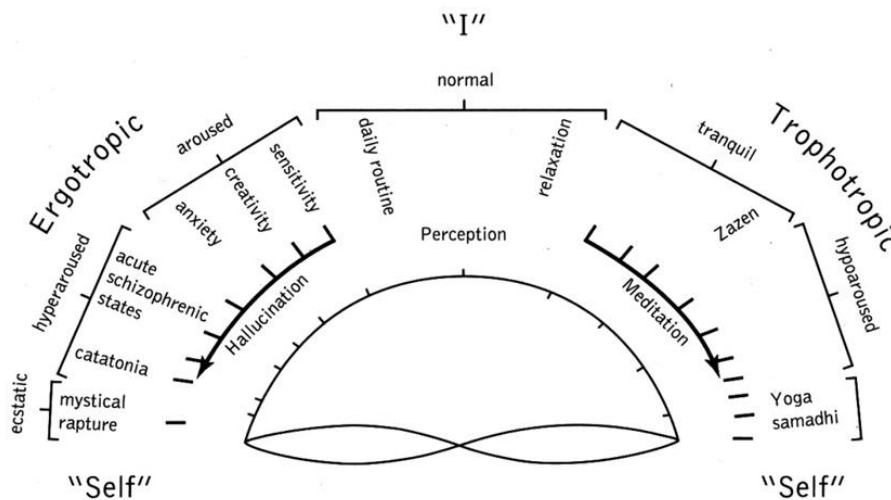
formed the complex stratification of Salentine Tarantism.¹⁴⁶ My own longing for Tarantism is not merely nostalgia, but a call for that culture of the listening body, which is ultimately hybrid and trans-generational. Later, in the echo of those many story-tellings, I started the quest for my re-embodiment of the culture of Salentine Tarantism, from those reliquary aerial traces to the Ear Bodies project of my work.¹⁴⁷ In incorporating the dancing tarantula the tarantati tuned themselves to the percussive music, becoming a musical instrument, vibrating in accordance and in parallel with the sound vibrations of the strings and the tamburello's poly-rhythms and an investment of all the senses. Tarantism becomes for me this amplification of all the senses – and not a 'derangement of all the senses' which Arthur Rimbaud wrote about¹⁴⁸ – but an attuning of all the senses through the embodiment of moving and dancing ear bodies. In this context and discourse on the ear bodies, Tarantism is most of all to be intended as a *living archive* of somatic knowledge, where the body can be a listening entranced focussed state of sonic/rhythmic and oscillatory movement. The tarantati moved continuously in this oscillation of bodymind and can be considered as acoustic embodiment, continuous inner-outer movements from ecstatic (ergotropic) to a relaxation (trophotropic) states.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ My interest in Tarantism began in the late 1980s, becoming a stronger influence in my art practice when I moved to London in 1991, although I continued to return to Salento each summer. These returns were marked by changes in people's growing awareness of their Mediterranean culture, in a sort of political shift by the new generation, which was later to become increasingly critical of globalisation and reflective on questions of identity.

¹⁴⁷ My parents also told me stories they had heard when they went to Pisticci in Basilicata to work in tobacco fields. My grandmother whom I never met (she died in 1952) was struck by lightning whilst sheltering from the rain under an olive tree. It was 'whispered' that she might have been a tarantata. In a strongly patriarchal society the stories about my grandmother – a matriarchal figure within the social confines of the town of Ugento – became for me stories of a meaningful resistance. Tarantism offered me a suitable ground for performance and research, precisely because it was a para-theatrical phenomenon with an historical and ethnographic specificity, and a language of emancipation in ritualistic form.

¹⁴⁸ To be more precise Rimbaud, in his letter to his friend Georges Izambard, which he wrote in 1871, he wanted to reach the *inconnu* (the unknown) through "un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens." [A long, immense and reasoned derangement of all the senses]. From Hackett (1981), *Rimbaud*, p. 14.

¹⁴⁹ For details on ergotropic and trophotropic arousals, see Fischer (1971), pp. 897-904.



A map of the continuum between the states of ergotropic and of trophotropic arousals. From Fischer, "A Cartography," (1971).

Still weaving its real-imaginary textile, Tarantism in new-ancient forms and transforming manifestations becomes a collective world of social and environmental interrelations, by passing on the experiencing of our animal wisdom through the physical earth, where the body is central in its relation to listening and with – but also in contrast to – its environment and boundaries.¹⁵⁰ I offer and reflect on components of somatic listening, rebellion and the negotiation of the environments of body, the ears and the world in the ear bodies of Tarantism.¹⁵¹ The tarantato ear body is one of one and many tremulations and ears, and is the one moving from tension, and from an initial mimesis to a becoming, making an identification with the arachnid. In this identification, listening is that of becoming as close as possible to the corporeal listening of an animal or another insect's body. A cricket's ears just below the knees, or another insect with abdominal ears, creates

¹⁵⁰ The animal realm in Tarantism has also ecological and cultural connotations. Because of its relationship with the earth, the taranta becomes an archetype in this global 'theatre of the spider,' a paradigm and a kaleidoscope of 'others,' multiple manifestations of 'self' and nature. In this 'self' as the field of body consciousness, Tarantism is a somatic language in an extra-ordinary state and performance framing.

¹⁵¹ In this reflection, the emancipation of the body from restriction and isolation (of different kinds: social, economic, environmental, cultural) is pivotal and I also consider it through Tarantism's history. Something can be both ancient and new, but the new has got to be aware of the implication of its heritage.

further adherence to surfaces, when any event of vibration, moved progressively through the body unrests a tarantato/a. The same as it happens with some spiders, responding and ‘dancing’ to the subtlest vibration transmitted through vegetation, surfaces, objects.

The tarantati were a tremor amongst tremulations, ear bodies moving and dancing across the trembling time and space that the percussive sounds of tamburellos created, the being-time and an inaugural healing event of audition. In this event, rhythm made the confines of the body fluctuate within the body, limitless within its confines. This was a phenomenological relationship between the ear body and the body beyond cochlear hearing. The performance of the healing process through sounds and lamentation needed a crisis, where the tarantati were the receivers and creators of distance, where subsequently the subject became its problematising.¹⁵² Their listening body’s adhering to the horizontal stage of their life unsettled and channelled their condition, became urgently attentive in gleaning any subtle vibration, and in affecting the most infinitesimal tremulations. In my research I have seen how this adherence to the horizontal guides one to a non-discriminating attitude of an insular state of being, to those crawling on the earth, where there exists no separation, where abjection can only be understood in relationship with, but not in opposition to, ‘purity.’ It is a problematical term, but here ‘pure’ is intended as something even more encrusted and anamorphic.

The dancing of the *pizzica tarantata* was the manifestation of the intelligence of the body and in the context of my research on the ear body, this is a way of finding a bodymind attuning through aural perception. In the case of Tarantism the ear body of the tarantati

¹⁵² In my research on Tarantism, lamentation is a method and a form of amplification, intended as a release through the voice-body connection. An example of this method was part of the performance research *[STATES OF]TRANCEformation* (Chisenhale Dance Space, London 2005) and can be found on the DVD as part of the portfolio which accompanies this thesis.

attuned through perception via a musical vibration.¹⁵³ In their spontaneous actions, the tarantati could attempt a few recognizable *pizzica-pizzica* steps but, most of all, their performance in the de-sacralized chapel of *Santu Paulu* in Galatina, would be that of a chaotic and less structured movement.¹⁵⁴ In this sense, the body became one which expressed itself beyond any codified form that can be normally identified as dance.¹⁵⁵ Untrained bodies behaved in completely unexpected ways when, for instance, older women and men were able to execute dangerous physical acts of climbing, hanging, twisting, crawling, a theatre of the un-skilled, of the un-trained, sometimes of the un-fit, socially as well as physically. It is a dance imprisoned and relieved by the guiding taranta in charge of ‘giving the thread’ to one’s dance as a life, and a dance of negotiation within oneself of the *exo* and the *endo* limits of oneself in the world, and as a gendered body. But sound also ‘gives the thread’ in its choreo-graphing one’s ear body in performance in relation to one’s perception and position in space.¹⁵⁶

A clear consciousness in a trance was a channel of detachment and a way of entering an intermediated state, by becoming the voice of a diversity through movement and dance. The ‘vocal movement’ is itself also an event that negotiates through action and instinct, and is linked to the gestural. The components of ancient and animistic ritual gestures in Tarantism survived, even if integrated in the cult of *Santu Paulu*, as a cult of possession. A contradictory cultural substrate in the co-existence of contrary parts and cults is fundamental to a sense of identity which is constituted by the very co-existence and dissonance of fragments. The therapeutic ritual, from its most archaic roots in nature rites was itself a visually and acoustically scenographic performance, a combination of

¹⁵³ The *pizzica tarantata* is a form of *pizzica* (a specific type of tarantella) used for the healing therapy.

¹⁵⁴ The *pizzica-pizzica* is another form of *pizzica* used for entertainment. I use the dialect version of *Santu Paulu* instead of the Italian San Paolo (patron saint of Galatina, protecting the town’s citizens from the illness of Tarantism) or English St. Paul, for it is more culturally specific.

¹⁵⁵ If dance as therapy is crucial to Tarantism, likewise in my Ear Bodies project, it is also because of the effect of the general sensory experience through acoustic vibration.

¹⁵⁶ This aspect will be explored further in the section on aural choreography.

movements contained by visual, musical and acoustic-spatial frames. In the domestic therapy, one evident frame was a bed sheet on the floor, delimiting a ritual perimeter.

In this perimeter the dance moved towards an abrupt end, together with its percussive music, to a still point – a sudden rupture – although still vibrating in an inner moving stillness. Stillness and motion, finally resolving the tension with each other, calling out to each other, an intrinsic correlation, where the place of this correlation is the listening body.¹⁵⁷ Visceral polymorphic but also polyphonic moods were achieved in the state of possession, of creating an empty space within, in order to be danced by the spider's dance. The ancient echoes of nature's chthonic divinities became alive in their frenetic dances, in the multiplicity of voices within a trance state, where an antagonism was established, an imposing of one's choreic movements onto the imaginary spider's, obliging one to dance beyond one's will and capacities. Running after the taranta, the tarantati's dance, as possessed victims and as heroes who submit to the force by dancing with it, was performed in the tension and oscillation between becoming the spider and separating from it. Thus, it transcended any dichotomy, within a historically formed consciousness. Yet, the contemporary attitude is not that different from the primordial, when faced with real suffering, or when it feels itself faced with another agent over which it has no control, risking not being oneself, and with no individual choice, in what De Martino calls the experience of *to be-acted-upon*.¹⁵⁸ In dealing with the animistic relation between humans and nonhumans, shamanism is a way of going through ontological limits, and the body in Tarantism is a result of a renovating *becoming* the spider, rather

¹⁵⁷ The choreic cycle was then repeated in the Santu Paulu's chapel, at the end of June, in occasion of the patron saint's festivity in Galatina, connecting this with the rhythms of nature and harvest. It is, of course, the same cyclical rhythm which gave rise to the summer symptoms of the tarantati. Each June, or generally during the summer, the remembering and returning of the symptoms of the bite, implied a constant switch of the time of suffering and remembrance. Therefore the first bite was already a re-bite. For a further discussion on the choreic cycle, see De Martino, *La terra* [The Land], p. 178.

¹⁵⁸ De Martino (2001), *Sud* [South], p. 98 [my translation].

than by mimesis. Here, knowing means becoming. The taranta as a metaphor became a physical metamorphosis through sound.

1.8 Tarantism: *tarantula auris*



Insetto, performance and installation. Butoh-inspired exploration of Tarantism in collaboration with Nicolas Joos, Blackgull Theatre Space, Rome, 2001. Video still: Fabrizio Manco, video documentation: Fausta Muci.



[STATES OF]TRANCEformation, performance research, Chisenhale Dance Space, London 2005. Photo: Patrick Curry.

Before even coming to the question of making sound visible through the entranced body of a tarantoto/a, what I want to make tangible is Tarantism's call for our somatic-auditory attuning, yet not as a privileging of one sense over the others, but as an enhancer of all the senses through auditory aspects of embodiment.

The tarantato/a's was a body renewed by being danced by sound, floored by the difficulty of standing, establishing a friendship with gravity and cornered by the taranta's destabilising power. The power of sonic vibrations through the framework of the rhythmic percussive sounds, and transduction of sound through these bodies, is here intended as channelled perception, as bodied hearing and listening perceived across the 'body-membrane.' The ear becomes body and the body becomes ear.

A double interpretation of spatial experience of the body can be conceived, space as 'object' and space as metaphor. Yet here, space is instead a meeting of moving physical-sensorial experience, between a 'state of mind' and a mind filtered by a complex network of bodied cognitive processes, which have no legal or rational order.

The research carried out by physician Giorgio Baglivi and the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher in the 17th and 18th centuries has been influential in the study of the phenomenon. Most importantly, within the context of Cartesian philosophy and a mechanistic understanding of acoustic transmission through bodies, I return to Swedenborg, who was aware of Baglivi's ideas, iatromechanics and his research in Puglia. He described sound waves flowing with the speed of lightning and augmenting in various degrees in the body, also through bone conduction, the nerves and membranes with his concept of tremulations. A tremulation is the subtlest vibrations in the body so as to recover a lost balance and a factotum to nature, hearing as the living ear body in an effort to recover its balance, it is:

like a ball thrown against the floor which makes smaller and smaller rebounding, until finally it returns out of the balance of motion into an equilibrium which is in

a state of rest [...] a single tremulation may in a moment spread over entire systems, and thus over that whole part or body which is in a state of tension.¹⁵⁹

Thus, physical tension is essential for the event of tremulation, and the body needs to be free from obstructions to enable its reception. A tension is a musical trembling chord, or a tight tamburello's skin, in order to enable the rhythmic quivering alleviation of the tarantati. This is, therefore, somatic tension as a *vital tension* which is in relation to release and, therefore, is here intended positively.

For myself or another performer, becoming an ear body means working with movement through this relation between release and tension by following sound. As an animal or an insect's body in Tarantism, the idea is to create further adherence to surfaces, when any event of vibration, moved progressively through the body. The ear bodies' significance, as the purpose and focus of this chapter, is actualised by the example of the tarantati's struggle to move towards the most important element of sound, rhythm and rupture, where all polarities were radically and continuously realised and annulled at the same time. In struggling to connect to their perceptual reality, the ear body of the victim of the taranta's bite was constantly trying corporally to remember that reality. The habitual, culturally and at the same time physiologically conditioned trance of the tarantati, had to find specific actions in response to habits, even attuning along a *via negativa*. In what appears abject behaviour, one tarantato is described as slowly licking the floor itself, a possible way of digesting the substrate, through literally incorporating it in an animal way.¹⁶⁰ This is almost 'licking' the sound's vibrational surface of the floor. The very moment of becoming a crawling animal ear body obviates the dichotomising process of thought and its related objectification of the animal or the world. Here is a phenomenon

¹⁵⁹ Swedenborg, *On Mechanical* [no pagination].

¹⁶⁰ di Lecce (1994), *La danza* [The Dance], p.132.

which sees the human as animal body in relation to listening to the world. Amongst animals, of course, the somatic listening lesson has always been present. Tarantism left in popular memory a heritage which spoke more than words could do, regarding the infinite ways in which a body and performance can operate within a specific and trans-cultural space, whether historical, economic, political or physical. It manifests a range of distinctive ideas and practices, dis-sonant within its specific somatic and transgressive character. Still weaving its real-imaginary textile, Tarantism in new-ancient forms and transforming manifestations becomes a collective world of social and environmental interrelations, by passing on the experiencing of our animal wisdom through listening to the physical earth. It is the dance of a spirit with an unhinging dynamic vigour in the existential strain against surveillance, the liminality of dancing between madness and grace, between mortification and bliss. Fluctuating in the delirious space of their dispossessed bodies, I invite again the tarantati, as myself, to the audition's floor. Detailed sensations and precise perceptions prevailed through chaos: dancing is listening, dancing is the same as remembering, the beginning of a feverish rhythm which was already a final and sudden sound.

In my theory of ear bodies, Tarantism contributes and represents the therapeutic power not only of rhythms and music, but most specifically of embodied sound and embodied hearing/listening. Making a body an ear body means to radically open up to the world, not only to the world of sounds but also of opening up to a site as a world, which is a site of its many sounds, with all its infinitesimally specific and contingent aspects and features. The performing and performance of an ear body then becomes *site-contingent* performance.

1.9 SUPPLEMENT TO CHAPTER 1: Ear Bodies Workshops

1.9.1 *Walking backwards*

Walking backwards in Ear Bodies is a parameter which reflects that of Body Weather training.¹⁶¹ In this parameter, participants on a line walk backwards while they are guided by another participant in front of the line (swapping at a certain time the role with the next participant) to walking frontally and giving verbal directions while being watchful to prevent injuries to the rest of the participants, by telling them appropriately, and by each participant passing the words to the next, one after the other. Important for the guiding participant and for the working of the experience is the inverting of the left and right, the left becomes right and vice-versa, from the person who is walking backwards. Walking backwards from an outdoor space to an indoor space (or vice-versa) and while listening – with eyes lowered first, and then looking at the horizon – the whole experience becomes intensely spatial, where a landscape or architecture, in its visual and aural aspects, gives the sensation of going through the body, instead of the other way round.

1.9.2 *Aerial drawing*



An ‘aerial drawing’ exercise part of the performance and installations *How to Explain a Field to a Dead Magpie (?)*, University of Roehampton, 22 February 2012. Photo: Yukiko Ikehara.

¹⁶¹ For a note on Body Weather see footnote 305 in the section 2.6 “Aural Choreography: ‘I want to be on time even if I am too late.’”



An 'aerial drawing' exercise part of a workshop at University of Portsmouth, 9 October 2012. Photo: Ross Percy.

After the preparatory session, involving the specific parameters intended also as individual explorations, the 'aerial drawing' flows and is performed in pairs (one drawing in the air, the other one facing and moving together with the drawing partner), and is consecutively connected by the group transition of the 'Acoustic Shadow Walk' (as previously explained) and/or to the walking backwards.

This exercise is another useful tool towards performance. It is similar to other earlines drawing explorations, that I use for research, performance and workshop facilitation, for instance, drawing on a scroll, on a wall and in architectural space or landscape the different sonic cues of speeds, distances, levels, intensities, locations of sounds. While participants draw the same sounds, this exercise brings in evidence the correlation of drawing as movement and movement as drawing, where the movements of the participants are different and at the same time similar, as if they might follow the same

sound cues, where one could also ‘observe’ quite evidently the sounds that each pair were drawing in the air and the directions of movements. This is the observation of drawing and one’s being choreographed and moved by listening to sound, and by the drawing of invisible lines in space. It is where an ‘aural drawing’ and ‘aerial drawing’ meet. This exercise could be also explored indoors, by having the windows and doors opened and always by directing the focus to the listening of outdoor sound cues and qualities.

After choosing a partner, the drawing partner touches the other in between the eyes with the point of a stick or a pencil, then pulls it away about a meter and listens focussed on the sounds coming from outdoor, being guided by those external acoustic inputs. The holder of the stick/pencil draws in the air the experience of the sounds coming from outside. The other follows the end of that spatial drawing stick/pencil and moves accordingly while initially maintaining the distance between the stick/pencil and always the relationship with the other. A consecutive part of the exercise could also be that both partners, after the chosen time duration, *immediately* draw their experience of their mapped drawing, and then compare and discuss them before swapping roles.



‘Aerial drawing,’ part of *How to Explain a Field to a Dead Magpie (?)*, 2012. Photo: Yukiko Ikehara.

1.9.3 Auditory proxemics



An example of 'auditory proxemics,' part of the durational performance *You and You, extending into freedom – freeing from isolation* (with Rainer Knupp), Oxford House, London 2006. Photo: Christian Kipp.

Stimulating and exercising embodied listening means *auditory proxemics*. This is a parameter towards performance and an inter-corporeal listening relationship between two bodies orienting in space on different levels of proximity to each other. It is a form of *interdiffusion*, in this specific case a transferring communication between two bodies while adhering to each other without touching.¹⁶² Here the space in between the backs of two bodies is the enhanced listening, it is that in between tangible space which connects,

¹⁶² I borrow the term 'interdiffusion' from chemistry, bioscience, natural philosophy and Buddhist philosophy. Specifically, in Japanese Buddhist philosophy (that of Kegon) the term used is *Jijimuge*, "The unimpeded interdiffusion of all particulars." For a discussion on *Jijimuge* see Humphreys (ed.) (1990), *The Wisdom*, glossary on p. 271 and chapter on p. 106.

a corporeally felt and moving elastic connection between them. It initiates a performative exploration of movement through hearing/listening, as well as performance. It is a strong form of connection, another way of experiencing proximity by starting from auditory engagement and developing the exercise into a corporeal listening performing in space. Proximity is implied in what the anthropologist Edward Hall in the 1960's called 'proxemics.' Indeed, in his chapter "The Proxemics of the Mediated Voice," Arnt Maasø discusses Hall's neologism, which "[...] sought to emphasize the importance of spatial proximity and physical relationships between subjects in interaction and communication."¹⁶³ As I will discuss later in the thesis, this proximity can also be that of bodies in relation to architecture and its features such as walls, intended not only as surfaces, but also as aural and structural spaces which allow an 'acoustic intimacy' and, consequently, this relation could allow a performance to emerge and develop.¹⁶⁴ We do not need eyes at the back of the head, because we have ears,¹⁶⁵ and in this way, the exercise is experienced as a feeling of having ears on the back of the body. The Auditory proximity could then be expanded – by still keeping the connection between the two bodies – through experimenting with nearer and further distances. Once the listening connection is established through their backs – without looking at each other and without touching – a sort of contactless 'listening contact improvisation' develops. In his first box (1914), Marcel Duchamp writes "one can look at seeing; one can't hear hearing,"¹⁶⁶ yet I think that it is possible for one to listen to one's own and even somebody else's listening. It is this becoming instruments of our ears which can emerge as a self-affecting phenomenology of *listening the listening*, and by connecting through the movement of

¹⁶³ Maasø, in Beck and Grajeda (eds.) (2008), *Lowering*, p. 39.

¹⁶⁴ As discussed in the section 1.2 "Soundscape as another disembodied technology," where I cited Juhani Pallasmaa (2012) using the term 'acoustic intimacy.'

¹⁶⁵ This is what Prof. McAlpine said – during a meeting at the UCL Ear Institute in London on 17 October 2012 – while I was discussing my research and, specifically, 'auditory proxemics.'

¹⁶⁶ Duchamp In Judovitz (2010), *Drawing*, p. 18.

somebody else's body, also the listening of somebody else's listening.

In order to move together, auditory proxemics' focus is a continuous and simultaneous 'negotiating' of the listening from the two bodies' sounds, to those of the indoor space where the exercise is taking place, as well as the sounds coming from outside.

It becomes listening proxemics, especially when wearing ear plugs. In this way, what takes place is the corporeal listening to each other with one's back and the back of the head. In this way, a very subtle and gradual process unfolds, starting from listening to each other's sounds while standing still, to moving constantly with more distance. This could become an intense listening and performative experience, enhanced through auditory or visual occlusion (by wearing earplugs or having the vision occluded with blindfolds). Paradoxically, this auditory or visual occlusion can strengthen further the connection between the two bodies while moving. At other times – after spending some time in establishing the auditory proxemic bond – one could listen to the corporeal presence of the other while moving and listening to both, the sounds of each other, the sounds of the space where the exercise is taking place and even the sounds coming from outdoors. Important in all these negotiations is the one between the two bodies, the unaware/embodied negotiation where both listen and feel who is guiding or not guiding the movement (always without touching each other with their backs). It is a constant active switching of the two roles, who – even for the most infinitesimal amount of time – is leading or who is not, and finally leaving it to the spatial and embodied relationship to decide when and where to move.

CHAPTER 2

Site-Contingent Performance

Lightning and thunder take time.
Friedrich Nietzsche¹⁶⁷

*The Cyclops forge also a type of milder thunder-bolt,
of a less violent heat, less charged with wrath.*
Ovid¹⁶⁸

With site-contingent, I do not intend to define a semantic cluster nor, even less, for it to be a substitute for ‘site-specific’ – or any other definition – as this would entrap it in those very parameters I seek to avoid. Site-specific, as a term and as an artistic practice – and predominantly in performance – has become an ‘applied’ mind-set view. Something is applied as a re-structure – and one like others – instead of a site which performs with performers and which is listened to, listening to the performance of a site. In this sense, the term site-specific has become redundant and, attempting to question the legacy of the ‘site-specific,’ I question altogether the still fixed concept of ‘site’ and what is really ‘specific.’ I argue for a return to the physicality of actual location of both site and body for an environment as a site and the environment of body as site. In performance this is a practical and responsive realisation of both: body as site, and site as a non-anthropocentric environment.

¹⁶⁷ Nietzsche from ‘The Madman,’ in Heller (1988), *The Importance*, p. 4.

¹⁶⁸ “I Ciclopi fanno anche un tipo di fulmine un po’ più leggero, di fiamma meno violenta, meno carica d’ira.” Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso), *The Metamorphoses* (Metamorphoseon Libri XV), in Sermonetti (2014), *Le metamorfosi* [The Metamorphoses], line 305 [my translation].

Being responsive to a site, including its sonic plural dimension, is inhabiting it in a parallel relationship. In other words, our site-sensitivity also considers and physically understands the sensitivity of a site. These are two *sounding* vulnerabilities: the human and the one of a site (as a human construction in relation to non-human nature), while, at the same time, we are already being moved, as our listening and moving body corresponds to space.

In this chapter I articulate the notion of contingency in a series of different approaches to performance practice as my exploration of and proposal for site-contingent performance, reflecting on sound as performing and contingent. My site-contingent proposal comes from an insight through auditory personal experience of auditory conditions or symptoms, which are nonetheless experienced systemically.¹⁶⁹ In other words, they invest somatically the whole body, which unfolds and performs, translates and seeks to bridge an engagement with others while being a testing performative ground. Following this, I set out my question and approaches on contingency and performance which come from my performance practice, where the ear functions as an investigative tool to explore what sort of economies and ecologies it is engaged with in performance. These are acoustic ecologies, many interactions feeding back. These approaches are theoretical, philosophical, practical, and are discussed as site-contingent performance, constituted by concepts of ecophenomenology and acoustic ecology radically grounded in contingency. I also discuss site-contingent performance in terms of temporality and contingency, architecture and acoustic space, movement and *aural choreography*, field and framing. I set out the terms which help me to realise that contingency is always circumscribed. Performative experience, being contingent, is therefore also circumscribed. What I consider to be key generative aspects of site-contingent performance are always

¹⁶⁹ As discussed in the section 1.3 “Tinnitus: *Susurrus Aurium*.”

engagements with the performative process and awareness of physical space and auditory experience as circumscribed, while, at the same time, it is moving and transitory. The general sensory immediacy in the encountering of locations – in the relation between ears, sites and spaces – are experiential chiasms in experiential spaces ingrained in the specifically and personally physical. They include what we call in-between spaces, liminal spaces of sensorial thresholds. Connected to sound, a performer/spectator's auditory perception and awareness is primarily a grounding experience of many in-between spaces. The articulation through site and contingency is at the same time the questioning, and the questioning is the articulation.

With the term site-contingent I question in-situ performance and I do not replace or offer another solution or paradigm, but I question how a performer could move through active listening, and how one relates to the many and different aspects of a site with a tangible experience of space as always a momentary experience. Auditory space specifically – as tangible and physical is one which, like place, escapes encapsulations or supermodern manipulations. Site-contingent performance makes space become site and vice-versa but, most importantly, because of one's experiential performing of space. Contrary to Marc Augé's concept of 'non-space' intended as a project of supermodernity, I envision a concept of space which is not relativised, but instead one which is fundamentally rooted in auditory contingent experience where – although being a 'framed portion,' one taken from a generalised, universalised, amorphous, unspecific concept – it does not become a physical or conceptual constraint. It makes the concept of 'non-space' superfluous for the reason that even 'non-space' is space.¹⁷⁰ The concept and the physical experience of

¹⁷⁰ "What Marc Augé calls 'non-space' results in a profound alteration of awareness. Something we perceive, but only in a partial and incoherent manner." Augé concept of the space of supermodernity: "rests

space I give attention to is that of an open frame, one which is plural and specifically diverse and which is not the one of supermodernity – a synonym of non-differentiation – as, in effect:

the space of supermodernity is inhabited by [this] contradiction: it deals only with individuals (customers, passengers, users, listeners), but they are identified (name, occupation, place of birth, address) only on entering or leaving.¹⁷¹

In in-situ performance practice, physical explorations initiate a process of spatial awareness open to contingency within landscapes and architecture in their historical, specifically aural and visual aspects. In connecting with a site's aural landscape, I am able to experience my already embedded and infinitesimally more detailed relation to a site. This happens when I 'stretch' my listening to an environment and to its many forms, for example to the vicinity of other people and other animals, to the vicinity of plants and other natural structures and/or buildings and architectural features. Furthermore, in my experience as a performer the input for my moving or my creating is given, moved and created by *the how* my listening relates to the distance or proximity of the sounds I perceive, how they are reflected or absorbed by surfaces and bodies, how I place myself near or close to the various surfaces and bodies, how I perceive them and then, according to how my listening body becomes adjusted, I place myself in relation to those structures through the sounds I hear. This does not indicate an anthropocentric imposing of the body on a landscape. It is instead a transverse way of referencing/highlighting a chosen area or structural, spatial, natural element by dwelling in it through listening. In this way, listening becomes active in the consciousness of it and then allows sound to enable

(among other things) on an organization of space that the space of modernity overwhelms and relativizes," Patrick Wright's comment, from the back cover of Augé (1995)'s *Non-Places*, p. 33.

¹⁷¹ Augé, *Non-Places*, p.111. It is important to note that Augé is criticising the attitude of seeing these customers, passengers, users and, in our specific case, also listeners, as homogenised and undifferentiated.

performance and to perform you as you pass through the wide and varied angles of the perception of the space that it creates. The ears initiate their role of dynamisation. In realising the connections that allow environmental and social communication, in this way listening becomes an instrument of performance and is a situated way of enabling a focus and movement.¹⁷²

By focussing on the corporeal thinking and experience of listening, I consider an always mediated, filtered and immediate experience; including that of space. The ecosystems of space and bodies are indeed a continuously augmented and ramified process. Since process is also one of transformation, and transformation is also the process of life, performance and aural experience – as performance practice in process – are grounded in contingency as radical temporality. Contingency is here the key for transformation and movement in performance as pivotal in this discussion, specifically for its understanding as a radical temporality. Contingent temporality is one which – if one understands it also in its intrinsic political and philosophical terms is about the incessantly changing, and it is the result of the encounter of unpredicted momentary formations and transformations. The ‘self’ is always in transformation and is contingent and congruent to context. Context is congruent to experiences of site, of place, and of space. Context as site, place and space which are all contingent. Contingency then questions the nature of any substantiality in specific continuous and unpredictable formations and interactions. It is in the context of interaction and interrelation of environments that I place contingency, and I bring it together with ecophenomenology to performance practice. I think about any interrelation and interaction as situated in horizontal temporality of contingency – and this is also that of listening as horizontal – where time is simultaneously horizontally linear and also

¹⁷² This focus and movement is developed through my corporeal investigations employing drawing, walking/meanderings, body orientation, dwelling, positioning and movement as un-doers of positionality through auditory discrimination, un-mediated and immediate responses, in which I will further discuss in the section on aural choreography.

asynchronous, discontinuous and multiple. Indeed, ‘the vertical’ is already resolved in ‘the horizontal,’ and not vice-versa. Although the terms and concepts of ‘the vertical’ and ‘the horizontal’ can be dichotomous, artificial and reductive, here I specifically use ‘the vertical’ to indicate and to contradict a process of rising, as impetus towards the transcendental high, for instance from earth to heaven. It is where ‘the horizontal’ brings back to the landscape of the Earth and, even for human animals, verticality is always in relation to the horizontality of a land, a landscape (even a high mountainous one), specifically through one's auditory perception, which is mostly of the horizontal acoustic spectrum.

My theory of site-contingent performance offers an opportunity to reflect how it can be explored and realised in performance through corporeal listening. Contingency, the most radical aspect of life, could be everybody's experience of performance, beyond all possible art trends and encapsulations, in favour of complexity. The experience of contingent temporality – as that of life – opens us up to this complexity in and for performance. It is an experience in time-space which contains multiple temporalities of movements and processes, those movements and processes which make us realise that we are time, and not outside of it.

2.1 We are time: the sound of contingency

*per adattarsi alle necessità della contingenza*¹⁷³
Antonio Gramsci

¹⁷³ [in order to adapt itself to the necessities of contingency]. Gramsci (1973), *Scritti Politici I* [Political Writings I], [my translation], p.129.

In discussing contingency in the work of the Japanese philosopher Shūzō Kuki (1888 – 1941), Mario Perniola says that:

Surprise, in the face of contingency, must be based not only on the present. We can give to surprise a basis turned towards the future. Contingency is in fact the tangent of the impossible with the possible. [...] Contingency is an inevitable condition of concrete reality in the realm of theory, but that, in the realm of action, it is possible to bridge the gap of theory, if we give ourselves this order: “Make it so that encounters will not happen in vain.”¹⁷⁴

So, contingency bridges the gap of theory in the realm of action, the present with a possibility, with the future, the impossible with the possible. Kuki’s theory of contingency brings together contingency with necessity. This means that there is a correlation between necessity and contingency: *contingency as necessity*.¹⁷⁵ In this theory of contingency there is a lot of practice. In Kuki this means that his aesthetics is not resolved in the conceptual and the universal which, starting from Plato, imbues so much of Western thought, but on experience. Experience means a specific experience of a context (for instance, a sonic environment), and not of a whole.

¹⁷⁴ La sorpresa davanti alla contingenza non si deve fondare solo sul presente. Possiamo dare alla sorpresa una base volta verso l’avvenire. La contingenza è infatti la tangente dell’impossibile col possibile [...]. La contingenza è una condizione inevitabile della realtà concreta nel dominio della teoria, ma che, nel dominio dell’azione, è forse possibile colmare la lacuna della teoria, se diamo a noi stessi quest’ordine: “Fai in maniera tale che gli incontri non avvengano invano.” Perniola (2003), “Shūzō Kuki,” [no pagination, my translation].

¹⁷⁵ For Laclau, in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, “necessity only exists as a partial limitation of the field of contingency. It is in this terrain, where neither a total interiority nor a total exteriority is possible, that the social is constituted.” Laclau and Mouffe (1985), *Hegemony*, p. 111. Laclau borrows and interprets from Antonio Gramsci’s political thought. This includes the concepts of hegemony and that of absolute historicism – namely that of Marxist socialism – which is different from the idealistic historicism of Benedetto Croce. Along with Chantal Mouffe, Laclau also “outlines a substantially ‘negative’ conception of democracy, and makes contingency the plan for a democratic politics as a radical challenge to oppression.” [delinea una concezione sostanzialmente ‘negativa’ della democrazia, e a fare della contingenza il piano per una politica democratica come sfida radicale all’oppressione]. Grappi (2004), “Liberta” [Freedom], p. 42 [my translation].

Against an all-encompassing logic of the whole as total, I propose a focus on the most locational and collective type of contingency. A shift from the specific to a more infinitesimally particular is needed, where the universal is neither excluded, nor is it muddled in a distorting form of the all-embracing, but where the focus on difference is very necessary. This is neither reducible to a strictly 'localistic' (in a parochial sense), nor a strictly universalistic point of view. Luce Irigaray reminds us, that: "any universal [other than that of the natural economy] is a partial construct and, therefore, authoritarian and unjust."¹⁷⁶ Focussing on the infinitesimally particular and often peripheral ecologies includes those of sound and sound ecologies. Each taxonomy – from animal, social, economic to artistic/aesthetic and performative – needs to be involved and understood in a relation to a complex milieu of systems of environments. Sounds then are understood as human and non-human complex systems. Instead of returning to some sort of phenomenological preoccupation with 'pure presence,' I follow the experience of this contextualised complexity of systems and continuum.

'Contingent' already in its etymology contains possibilities embedded in the word *contingèntem* of the Latin. The particle 'con' indicates a general sense of togetherness and participation, which I envision here as an amity, a tangent, one intended as a sort of accidental 'touching,' of an event-to-come. It is in the event of a site that one is auditorially 'touched': physically situated by this touching, where one is a part of a contiguous life form in relation to a conjunction of bodies and spaces, where everything in between meets, by what appears sounds like chance, but which is instead a series of connected and contingent events.

I think that an historical artistic contextualisation is important at this stage to understand how I view contingency. It begins in the very influential early theatrical experiments,

¹⁷⁶ Irigaray (1991), "How to," p. 205.

provocations, performance art and experiences from post war to 1970's Japan with the Gutai Art Association, Group Ongaku and the rest of the *angura* theatre groups, and in the U.S.A. with Allan Kaprow's happenings, or even before, in the sonic and musical meeting between Luciano Berio and John Cage. Common to these different postwar Japanese art movements was a concern with contingent performativity. According to Miryam Sas: "[Japanese] Postwar artistic works take this ungrounded and contingent performativity outside the confines of the proscenium stage."¹⁷⁷ The works of the Gutai or Bijutsu Kyōkai (Concrete Art Association) were sometimes violent, but often had a ludic attitude, very open to the accident, improvisation and the ephemeral, continuity, process, matter and sensorial aspects. These aspects were particularly experienced in their gestural, concrete-corporeal and automatic action painting, intended as painting as performance and performance as painting, in radical ways of combining the two. Angura (underground) was the postmodernist Japanese theatre of the 1960s and 1970s born at the heart of social unrest, the student protest and civil uprisings and also as a reaction to Shingeki (the 'new drama' of Western influence) with its realism. Angura also had a 'nomadic' itinerant character as a travelling theatre, taking place often outdoor or in tents and, one could say, with a direct relation to contingency. Group Ongaku (Ongaku in Japanese means 'music') used improvisation, accidental sounds, objects and performing action to create their music and live electronic sound works, with shared interests and involvement with Fluxus. Before thinking of sheer musical parameters, also Berio engaged with the sounds reaching the pricked up ear, where they meet with listening. An experimental endeavour is also in the sound works and music of Luigi Nono, where the temporal dimension of sound and sonic silences flow constantly without freezing. Yet it is also where stillness, as an echo of silence, is a flow of specific times which are never the

¹⁷⁷ Sas (2010), *Experimental*, p. 211.

same. Times are always momentary, to the point of risking dispersion and any production of sense-making.¹⁷⁸ Earlier in the history of contingency in art, the fascination for the fleeting and floating world of nature, was characteristic of the paintings and prints of *ukiyo-e* of seventeenth and nineteenth century Japan. This fascination, was also that of nineteenth century Western art (for instance European Japonism and French Impressionism, Post-impressionism and Symbolism), where many artists were, not always unproblematically, fascinated by the exoticised and to a very great extent, the invented and manipulated worlds of ‘the Orient,’ as well as manipulated worlds of nature.¹⁷⁹ This made of contingency a distilled and formalist response to the human relationship between retina and ear and visual and acoustic landscapes, where we participate in contingency.¹⁸⁰ The words of modernity in Charles Baudelaire provide a model for a flowing liberated and ‘relaxed’ participant in contingency. Under the famous guise of the painter Constantin Guys, or the evocation of the woman of the poem *À une passante*, Baudelaire evokes passing-by in the roaring deafening clamour of a road. His modern artist was the embodiment of this urban fleetingness, in the dandy flâneur, but also of contingency becoming associated mainly with the urban landscape. In a contemporary experience of urban architecture,¹⁸¹ and non-urban places, the experience of listening in passing, fleeting and amorphous impermanence remains in one’s body’s sensorial physiology, in a stratified corporeal memory. The nature of this state of contingency can be misunderstood – and here specifically in reference to performance –

¹⁷⁸ In my experimentation on contingency and change, I – as with many – invoke the art of John Cage, particularly when I reconsider what has characterised a great part of 20th century art: indeterminacy.

¹⁷⁹ Later, in post-war Japan, Ankoku Butoh, had its roots in the de-construction of those very Japanese cultural roots which gave rise to it, as well as a reconnection to those roots. This was a result of the destruction (or attempted destruction) of traditional Japanese society under foreign American occupation after 1945 since, until then, the individual was subservient to the Emperor-centred system, which determined his internal moral and aesthetic values. At the same time that Butoh brought its own de-structured ‘oriental’ discourse to the West, it deconstructed that very exoticism.

¹⁸⁰ To some extent, this impressionistic stance involving also the ear, eventually made listening became trapped in a distorted idea of purity of experience.

¹⁸¹ In architecture, space is not an envelope which contains bodies, but a space which traverses bodies through sound.

conceiving it as a flight from one's being environmentally and sonically embedded, as well as our historical, mnemonic actuality of the world of objects and forms, past, present and future. This is why I consider artistic forms and artistic exchanges in time across physical/mental, political and geographical boundaries which were and are a bridging relationship in performance and contingency.

Performance and contingency means that one is inevitably opened to surprise, to the freedom of the yet-unheard, yet-un-experienced, un-perceived, un-predicted and un-born, in different sites with their spatial dimensions of possibilities.

The spatial dimensions unlock our own vulnerability to surprise, as performers and performing audiences in a space where we physically and aurally negotiate distance and our positions in physical – but also as a consequence, in ethical and environmental – navigation of space. This is an ecology intended as fundamental mutuality, which is that of bodies and that of sites and that of bodies *as* sites. By opening up our awareness to even the most tacit mode of listening, there is always a chance for physically understanding a site as an event. We are ingrained in the event of the fluctuation of the world/body/systems/environment as event, which radically conditions and surprises us. For Nancy the event is intended as a disclosure, something taking place and which surprises us “and maybe even that it surprises itself.”¹⁸² The event is a surprising epiphany of moving, performing and the possibility of taking of our own time, the particular contingent time we are. As we are time, the historical is indeed also part of a broad process-based cultural contingency of one's past and interacting body in what is (the) present.¹⁸³

¹⁸² Nancy, *Being*, p. 159.

¹⁸³ ‘Historical’ is here to be intended as a circumstance related to an actual and specific context.

The body is contingent time and one is body-time; inside the body we are time, this temporality of the body, therefore, cannot be distinguished from its ‘occupying’ time and it is, all together, a creator of time.

It is where I take into account this temporality of contingency in partnership with that of nature. On this subject, the Japanese philosopher Kitarô Nishida is useful. He was the founder of the Kyoto School who conceived the concept of expressive, interacting ‘bodies.’ These acting and interacting bodies, are different and performing bodies, and have a discontinuous temporality. In discussing Nishida, John Maraldo notes that:

Insofar as the many historical bodies of the one world differ from each another, they too form a ‘discontinuous continuity.’ Nishida was fond of calling this type of unity, which holds together differences without subsuming them, a ‘self-identity of absolute contradictories.’¹⁸⁴

I suggest Nishida’s concept of time as one of contingency, a concept which I associate with that of a ‘self’ as historically contingent. Nishida’s concept of *basho* (or *topos*), implies that place is intended as this self-identity in contradiction, the conflict of the acting and interactive character of the ‘subject,’ which is a sort of place, one which is presenting itself and at the same time is constantly transient, deferred, always in transformation.¹⁸⁵ In this case I speculate that, in performance, this acting and interactive character of the ‘subject,’ is also presenting itself and at the same time is constantly transient, that is always momentary. Following this extent, I specifically address the sonic contingent body as both sensorially and historically conditioned. As just said, as in the specific case of Nishida, historically conditioned body means contextual to a moment and a place, one as contingent and not universal, and not an idea with racist – often

¹⁸⁴ Maraldo (2010), *Nishida* [no pagination].

¹⁸⁵ After the phenomenological set up of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ as co-emergent, it is indeed only through a trans-dialectical attitude of a non-presupposed and furthest separation between subject and object, that an unconditional and contingent openness is possible.

misinterpreted and manipulated – nationalistic implications or with unfixed characteristics. In this context, Bruce R. Smith's acoustic archaeology provides a discussion of an 'historical phenomenology. Smith notes that: "The qualifier 'historical' affirms that bodily ways of knowing are not universal, as perceptual psychologists are apt to assume, but are shaped by cultural differences."¹⁸⁶ Significantly, difference helps to clarify contingency as a discourse against all absolutism. The historical contingent, non-universal, indeed radically contingent, does not impose any absolute and finite notion of the historical, and therefore of time. It is precisely in this sense of a non-absolute notion of the historical that historical body and historical time are contingency. This, then, is where ethically and practically one could perform the personal, the historical, the particular in their many aspects.¹⁸⁷

A site like contingency is an event where we perform with, and a site – as one's body – has its very specific and temporal contingency. Ultimately, in contingency, it is the actual experience which performs, experience is us together with a site's environment, with our bodies performing in many acoustic ecologies.

2.2 Ecology and acoustic ecology in site-contingent performance

Sound, in its alterity and as an interactive phenomenon of vibration can be understood ecologically, in other words as an interrelation with our perception, our bodies and other systems and environments. At the same time, sound, in this interrelation, needs to be understood as both in itself and in and without the body. These are also the many other smaller and non-human larger environments, which at the same time keep their difference

¹⁸⁶ Smith, "Listening," in Erlmann (2004), *Hearing*, p. 39.

¹⁸⁷ 'Ethically,' specifically here, means an aware respectful and caring relation to an environment, how one – as also a performer – responds to a specificity.

and their network with other environments, including the human.

The ultimately eco-logical question of realising the particular and the interrelation between environments, but also of concepts and experiences, goes beyond the so-called ‘glocal’ economy¹⁸⁸ to an ethical economy intrinsic to social and environmental ecology. Economic reason and ecology can get together, but I suggest we consider ‘the economic’ using the etymological sense of the word ‘ecology,’ which implies and echoes economy. In reference to environmentalism and bio-politics, the economy is not that of profit. In any case, to make ecology and economics live together is still quite difficult. Among ecological culture and economy, there has always been an historical yet difficult link. According to the Italian philosopher Ottavio Marzocca a form of proto-ecological knowledge started from geographical botany – specifically in its contextualising of the presence of plants with places, studying their physical characteristics and relationships together with the nature of the different qualities of soil – to scientific ecology. Geographical botany, has its main interest in agriculture and also, in this sense, is intertwined with agricultural labour, economy and sustainability. Although, and importantly, an interpretation of ‘ecological economics’ is misrepresented, especially in the capitalist interest, which has nothing ecological, and where the word (and world) of ecology is used and exploited for monetary interest.¹⁸⁹ It is important not to allow the manipulation and distortion of the relationship to be used in controlling ways, but contingently, meaning to escape from encapsulations and control. It is important for me to bring into play these concepts – but also experiences of – contingency and ecology, as mutually playing in performance. With an acoustic ecological approach, I suggest that

¹⁸⁸ The term glocal is market-based and described as “economic phenomena that are simultaneously universal and particular [...] originally used in Japan to signify the adaptation of farming techniques to local conditions as also to explain Japanese business.” Sorroub (2010), “Living,” pp. 383-384.

¹⁸⁹ My reflections, following an interview to Marzocca in *Fahrenheit*, programme of Radio Tre, RAI, Italian radio, Spring 2012.

sound, through listening could have the potential power of destabilisation from anthropocentric conceit. In the form of a shifting perception, listening could become an understanding towards ethical concerns, as reflections on sound and the world. As a consequence, when I am concerned with a challenge to an anthropocentric hearing centre or ‘self,’ the question of control and the reality of the uncontrollable emerges. Questions of a destabilisation of an anthropocentric position through the welcoming and allowing of the acoustic uncontrollable can be posed – in an ethical and political sense – as well as in aesthetic and artistic terms. This is when all these considerations meet. The reality remains that all human experience is ultimately human centred, but I seek to establish a more parallel relationship with any environment where ego-centric space does not include the eco-centric one, but where both would be *equally* considered.¹⁹⁰ Sound, in this environmentally and ecologically aware context, is intended beyond any reductionist, essentialist medium or experiential privilege. When I place this reflection in performance, I consider sound ecologies as not just intended as acoustic networks of interactions, but also as environmentally conscious sound ecologies. Our frequent reliance on over-anthropocentric settings can become less of an imposition on a site if the performing body will allow, will trust and will be open to be ‘surprised’ by each of the infinitesimal moments in time. Many are the ways of lessening anthropocentrism, in order to equalise its terms with nature, and this includes acoustic nature. My theory strives for a change in rethinking of the human relationship with any bigger or smaller environment, not only the human and the animal one (considering bodies as also environments), but also with the human ‘balancing act’ of not imposing nor completely – and ultimately impossibly –

¹⁹⁰ Curry adds that “the use of ‘anthropocentrism’ has been criticized, not without reason as too sweeping. After all, there is nothing wrong with a concern for human beings as such, nor is it necessarily inconsistent with a concern for non-human nature.” Curry thinks that: “we should retain ‘anthropocentrism’ to refer to the unjustified privileging of human beings, as such, at the expenses of other forms of life (analogous to such prejudices as racism or sexism) [...] So, neither exclusive anthropocentrism nor exclusive ecocentrism is a defensible, or desirable, option.” Curry (2006), *Ecological*, pp. 43, 45.

dissolving into natural landscapes and architectural sites.¹⁹¹ In these equalising terms we put our ear bodies into action, in site, in performance, while constantly negotiating and balancing aural antropocentrism through the contingent in sonic nature. Sonic nature is just one of the many surprising natures.¹⁹² Where sonic accidents could be triggers of performance, sonic nature is greatly creative through the mediation of the body. An unmediated purism of perception and conception is not possible, it is ultimately indeterminate, problematic and impossible. For Merleau-Ponty, perception is not pure and finds itself in what he calls a ‘centre of indetermination,’ and this is “the price that must be paid for the ‘discernment’ of an articulated perception.”¹⁹³ Nature – intended as also urban nature, uncontrollable nature in urban places – activates the ear, and activates articulated perceptual scales. This activation could make bodies part of immediate ecological sonic happenings and always peripheral sonic events.

Conceptual traps are hidden anywhere – as well as in the space of ecological thought – and this includes acoustic ecology.¹⁹⁴ Based on the starting principle that ecology is a science and a philosophy concerned with interconnectedness of systems, I acknowledge a common ground between a performance aware of its relation to environments and acoustic ecologies. This means that, in this shared common ground, I call attention to in-situ auditory experience as always linked to the particular and minuscule movements of

¹⁹¹ I inhabit a position close to ecofeminism and the whole discourse of this thesis is critical of andropo- and hetero-centrism, as well as theocentrism. Although the word ‘environment’ is itself an anthropocentric and restrictive term, placing at the centre the human who is surrounded, nonetheless I use it here for the sake of my discussion.

¹⁹² Society, culture, nature are all natures, and a so-called ‘natural’ nature is only ‘wild’ in terms of degrees of human control, so all is controlled nature, where ‘the wild’ surely raises vexed questions, but which, nonetheless, also escapes us and exists when it is left untouched. Like reality itself it escapes us as well as happily escapes our control, whilst moments of surprise from the uncontrollable and bigger world of nature, overcome us. In this sense, a protection and ‘sustainability’ of sound-marks, cultural-natural aural landscapes is crucially important.

¹⁹³ Merleau-Ponty, *Themes*, p. 77.

¹⁹⁴ Acoustic ecology becomes environmentally ecological only when sonic events are specifically considered as far as possible distant from an anthropocentric hearing locus.

bodies and sounds.¹⁹⁵ In engaging the moving body on this ground we realise a site-contingent performance.

When I propose site-contingent performance, one of the aspects I put forward is this environmentalist understanding of sound ecology *as* listening. In ecological thinking it is not a belittling of the holistic approach, but rather – and as a reflex – an effort to go beyond any form of monism or holism and their implicit forms of totalitarianism, in order to allow a radical openness. Kyoto School philosopher Nishitani Keiji would say that this openness in its original identity has a standpoint which “is neither a monism nor a dualism of any sort.”¹⁹⁶ Undoubtedly, this is also an alternative to both monism and holism, two reductionist sides of the same coin. My insistence on the need not to fall into the trap of these two viewpoints comes as well from seeing some danger in a presumably ecological ‘fundamentalism’ on the verge of that of eco-capitalism that cannot contend with the idea that, as Curry puts it:

Different considerations can *validly* apply to different cases, and that each case can *properly* be viewed in different ways. Connections must then be made, and decisions taken, on grounds to be argued and established contingently in each case, which is to say (in the broad sense) politically.¹⁹⁷

This taking of decisions contingently, is a political engagement and can also become an ethical one in performance. In other words, the same ethical-political engagement can be the one between performance/art and location. In this performance as an (acoustic) ethical engagement, I find my place in a continuous fluctuation between one polarity and the other on a radical ground, which is not a simplistic or ‘centric’ zone, but a radical liminal

¹⁹⁵ Complexity and stratification of present and past experience is what ecophenomenology gives (and I will discuss it in the next section), in this sense, and to a greater extent, ecophenomenology ‘better’ historical phenomenology and existentialism, from Heidegger through Jean Paul Sartre and even develops further Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy.

¹⁹⁶ Nishitani (1982), *Religion*, p. 107.

¹⁹⁷ Curry, *Ecological*, p. 110.

space which includes and does not exclude polarities. As ecophenomenologist David Wood reminds us: “It is rather to return to a world in which the relation between present experience and the complexity of what is being experienced has always been deeply complex and stratified.”¹⁹⁸

The layers and complexity of experience is the time of contingency, an accidental time. Yet, contingency is not pure chance. In the discourse of this thesis I find the Italian philosopher of science Telmo Pievani’s concept of contingency fitting with my application of contingency to performance and sound. Domenica Bruni, in a review of one of Pievani’s publications discusses this concept: “In reality, we are neither the fruit of pure chance nor of a prearranged plan, but of contingency, which is certainly far more challenging in many respects. Each event has its own significance in the historical process as it brings with itself a causal power. It is possible, therefore, to say that the past was open. And if it was the past, even more so is the future.”¹⁹⁹ And Mario Domina appropriately explains that:

When we say that something is ‘contingent,’ that does not at all mean to attribute to it the state of casuality (and therefore of the absolute unpredictability, indeterminacy, etc..), but rather to highlight its not impossible but improbable circumstantiality.²⁰⁰

Contingency is the time of sound, because sound takes time, but also takes place and takes site. The embodied sound that we are needs time; it needs sound, a circumstance.

¹⁹⁸ Wood, *The Steps*, p. 151.

¹⁹⁹ [In realtà non siamo figli né del puro caso né di un piano preordinato, ma della contingenza che è senz’altro di gran lunga più impegnativa sotto molti punti di vista. Ogni evento ha una sua rilevanza nel processo storico in quanto porta con sé un potere causale. È possibile, dunque, affermare che il passato era aperto. E se lo era il passato a maggior ragione lo è il futuro. Bruni (2012), a review of Pievani (2011), *La vita* [The Unexpected] [no pagination, my translation].

²⁰⁰ [Quando diciamo che qualcosa è ‘contingente,’ non significa affatto attribuirgli lo statuto della casualità (e dunque dell’assoluta imprevedibilità, indeterminatezza, ecc.), quanto piuttosto metterne in luce la sua circostanzialità non impossibile ma improbabile]. Domina (2011), “Filosofia” [Philosophy], in his blog discussing the book *La vita* [The Unexpected] by Pievani [my translation and italics].

2.3 Ecophenomenology, with *repeated cascades of contingency*

Pievani borrows the phrase ‘repeated cascades of contingency’ from Oyama. He states that: “The second radical consequence of the theory of developmental systems is therefore that the constructive game between internal and external factors, in turn perturbed by random influences, gives rise to contingent and *irreducibly unique* identities. We are ‘repeated cascades of contingency.’”²⁰¹

A plunge into the complexity of experience counteracts any reduction and any dissolving into any form of monism but also into holism.²⁰² I put forward site-contingent theory as an alternative to both, monism and holism, by following ecophenomenological terms of the experience of complexity and continuum. With continuum I mean the flux of experience, of life. The flow of life is the flow of movement in time-space as uninterrupted. This flow of movement I experience practically during my performing, or while I lead a group of participants/auditors to plunge and move into the sea of sound. This can facilitate an auditor’s awareness of their experience of complexity and continuum. It is the complexity of experience and relationality which forms the basis of the philosophy of ecophenomenology. Wood explains that ecophenomenology is:

a middle ground of relationality, a space neither governed by simple causality nor by simple intentionality [...] in this space phenomenology can recover from the trauma of its birth in opposition to naturalism [so that ecophenomenology] is the pursuit of the relationalities of worldly engagement, both human and those of other creatures.²⁰³

²⁰¹ [La seconda conseguenza radicale della teoria dei sistemi di sviluppo è dunque che il gioco costruttivo tra fattori interni e fattori esterni, a sua volta perturbato da influenze casuali, dà origine a identità contingenti e *irriducibilmente uniche*. Noi siamo ‘cascate ripetute di contingenza’]. Pievani (2011), “Il soggetto”[The Contingent] [my translation], p. 28.

²⁰² As I have discussed in the section 2.2 “Ecology and acoustic ecology in site-contingent performance.”

²⁰³ Wood (2003), “What is,” p. 213 [and my combination with Wood, *The Steps*, p. 150].

Phenomenology resists naturalism, according to Wood, and he asks: “would not ecophenomenology be the future of a phenomenology that has purged itself of its traumatic gestation in opposition to nature?”²⁰⁴ My speculative bringing together of ecophenomenology and contingency creates the theoretical substrate to my practice of site-contingent performance and, as a result, in relation to sound and listening with regard to ‘boundary management.’

I seek to engage ecological awareness through invisible boundaries, and by going beyond a conception of sound as something in itself. In this sense, I consider acoustic ecology in its plurality, as acoustic ecologies, which is important in bringing into focus our relationship with sound environments²⁰⁵ not only as ‘soundscapes.’ Rather, the question for the practitioner of acoustic ecology is what is behind the discipline’s intention and its application. From an ecological perspective, both ecophenomenology and acoustic ecology are theories based and reflecting on experience. In this sense, they can open one’s perception into the simultaneous unfolding of site, space and place, with their distinct specificities, but also their interrelations and histories of objects, bodies and environments.²⁰⁶ I perform specifically reflecting on the phenomenological relationship to objects, as a human’s adherence to the world, although, and especially because, we are dependent upon the world as vulnerable bodies. Physical vulnerabilities of sites and bodies, events and environments, are an *in-situated* relationship which strengthens, creates and supports their mutual relations. For instance, this could be realised when I am open to the contingent, as a vulnerable body performing in a site, where I can allow an event to take place and to perform with myself and with others. Our aural reception is

²⁰⁴ Wood, *The Steps*, pp. 151- 150.

²⁰⁵ As I discussed in Chapter 1.

²⁰⁶ Importantly, just like ‘place,’ I intend space – and specifically acoustic space – not as abstract and universal, but instead as a very specific, concrete and subjective experience.

then re-affected by our experience of a site, which can augment future possibilities. The possibilities are also those of relations as material for performance-making.

Ecophenomenology is important as a phenomenological – and therefore also a perceptual – experience. In phenomenology form implies an ethical point.²⁰⁷ Alexander Baumgarten's concept of phenomenology as aesthetics is appropriate, as he derived it from *aisthanomai*, the Greek term for perception, particularly because of the senses.²⁰⁸ This perceptual inquiring of the senses is necessary in the reconsideration of contemporary art and performance, inheritance between generations of what is still too often a fixed categorisation of site, used too generally. When considering a site for a performance, I argue that we turn away from the visual as a priority in experience, towards the aesthetic primarily as an acoustic-ecophenomenological preoccupation.²⁰⁹ I am aware, nonetheless, that ecophenomenology might risk becoming enclosed within academic walls. But, Wood clarifies that: "eco-phenomenology, in the double sense of a phenomenological ecology, and ecological phenomenology, is an important part of our vigilance against a certain kind of closure."²¹⁰ It is in the moving outside the limitations of closure and primacy – including perceptual primacy – or hierarchies, that I conceive contingency first as auditory experience, and secondly as ecophenomenological, giving – not only to the visual – but also to the other sensoria parallel importance, and sometimes even enhancement.²¹¹ It is indeed in the place of sensorial focussing of one's attention on the auditory sense, that the visual experiential aspect is to a degree destabilised, but at the same time also heightened. There is not a hierarchy of the senses, but a 'democracy'

²⁰⁷ In this case, also the aesthetical aspect implies the ethical in a phenomenological sense.

²⁰⁸ Budd (2010), *Aesthetics* [no pagination].

²⁰⁹ Indeed, Acoustic Ecology meeting Ecophenomenology.

²¹⁰ Wood, "What is," p. 229.

²¹¹ The enhancement of other senses – and therefore of the visual – is not a question of synaesthesia, but rather a cross-modal effect.

through sound, which realises the visual but rejects ‘visualism.’²¹² An example of congealment into the centrality of the eye is given by Cavarero: “In the transition to the centrality of the eye from that of the ear, a thought is born capable of capturing sound events and of congealing them in abstract and universal images equipped with objectivity, stability and presence, as well as organized into a coherent system. In short, the statute of science is born.”²¹³

Ecophenomenology takes me away from scientism as well as philosophical, aesthetical and past general preoccupations of phenomenology with ‘essence,’ complicating old, redundant and tired dialectic relations, transcending them by going away from dialectical relationships altogether.²¹⁴ Even the agency of the social is trans-dialectical because it is engrained in the texture of a chiasmic acoustic ecological as listening experience. The apparent distinction between ‘object’ and ‘subject,’ the hearing and the heard, finds a constant ‘funambulatory’ oscillation between polarities. This oscillatory and non-dialectical relationship is actually realised corporeally. It is a theory which is an experience, and I realise it because I perform, by my or other participants/performers’ negotiation, corporeal navigating and relating to a site. This oscillation takes place when we are waiting, trusting our being there, finally open to and trusting in what is about to come.

²¹² ‘Visualism’ is explored in the anthropological study of Mariella Combi, stating that: “the prevailing of vision on sound, on tact, on the sense of smell and taste is characteristic of literate and Western cultures [...] While the discursive paradigm of dialogic and interpretive anthropology remains ‘word-centred.’” [il prevalere della vista sul suono, sul tatto, sull’olfatto e sul gusto è caratteristica delle culture occidentali e letterate [...] Mentre il paradigma discorsivo dell’antropologia dialogica e interpretativa rimane ‘verbo-centrico.’] Combi (2000), *Body* [Corpo], p. 144 [my translation].

²¹³ “Nella transizione della centralità dell’orecchio a quella dell’occhio, nasce un pensiero capace di catturare gli eventi sonori e di congelarli in immagini astratte e universali dotate di oggettività, stabilità e presenza, nonché organizzabili in sistema coerente. Nasce, insomma, lo statuto della scienza.” Cavarero, *For More* [A più voci], p. 64 [my translation].

²¹⁴ Linguistically, in the dialectic relation between ‘object’ and ‘subject,’ this means that the subjective does not have also too much of an importance, for the ‘real subject’ is to be found in the immediately speaking and acting subject, in other words in the subject as a predicate. In this sense something cannot have a ‘pure’ objectivity or a ‘pure’ subjectivity.

We meet contingency in a similar parallel when Wood reminds us that ecophenomenology is:

about the arrival of the unexpected, about the unintended consequence, about the ghosts from another time that still haunt us, about blindness about the past, about the failure to move forward, about dreaming of impossible futures etc. And it is especially in its pursuit of four aspects of time that ecophenomenology preserves us against a premature holism, an over-enthusiastic drive to integration.²¹⁵

This constitutes ecophenomenology through contingency. It is through transcending expectations and escaping encapsulations that contingency runs into ecophenomenology. In our relation to contingency, as the unpredictability of a site, we encounter process. Eventually (as with any acoustics), this makes irrelevant my choosing of a particular site to perform together with, because any site is always potentially interesting and potentially engaging. Sites are always ingrained in specific histories and memories, including those of bodies, even ‘placeless’ sites.²¹⁶ We are never actually separated from nature’s fugitive movements. This fugue is another place where ecophenomenology meets contingency. The fugue from nature as ultimately uncontrollable, comes as an adhesive effect in relation to what is usually easy to encapsulate. Creating ‘site-based performance,’ from the position of contingent experience we are always touching base, earthbound. We do not break away from experiential time which is provisory, and from the transiency which is also of the world and the body. Adherence to a site means that the somatic-sensorial is

²¹⁵ Regarding the four aspects of time, Wood divides them into *the invisibility of time, the celebration of finitude, the coordination of rhythms, and the interruption and breakdown of temporal horizons*. Wood, “What is,” p. 8.

²¹⁶ This concept applies also to the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘non-space,’ which are never experientially abstract.

a plurality becoming ‘cascades of contingency.’²¹⁷ The site is an acoustic resonance, one of and in the body, where there are no departures. It is being in relation to the world, one ordinary and grounded in an everyday shared environmental and *eloquent* social communicating experience, with its accidental thereness/hereness, with what cannot never be controlled. In an ordinary – therefore performative – situation, we are ‘ordinary actors,’ speaking, gesturing, communicating agents in an acoustic space of a room, a museum, a gallery, a foyer, a station, waiting and moving and moving while waiting. As moving agents, many relations engage the listening body in site-contingent performance, the open space which allows an awareness of space’s materiality with one’s grounded relation to gravity. In the words of Merleau-Ponty:

In ordinary experience we find a fittingness and a meaningful relationship between the gesture, the smile and the tone of a speaker. But this reciprocal relationship of expression which presents the human body as the outward manifestation of a certain manner of being-in-the-world, had, for mechanistic physiology, to be resolved into a series of casual relations.²¹⁸

Governed by different circumstances, I remain grounded in a physically spatial sense in a progressive engagement with a site. The progression situates one in the dimensionality of sound, whereby one connects to the immediate very specificity and grounding uniqueness of a site as an auditory space. Generally, the notion of auditory space has very often been

²¹⁷ For Pievani this plurality is “an epistemology of the plurality of rhythms, of scales and unities which involve all self-organisational process (with metaphors of constructive interaction; discontinuous emergence, unpredictability and non linearity; irreversibility)” [una epistemologia della pluralità di ritmi, di scale e di unità che coinvolgono tutti i processi di autorganizzazione (con metafore di interazione costruttiva; emergenza discontinua; imprevedibilità e non linearità; irreversibilità)]. Pievani, “Il soggetto” [The Contingent], p. 17 [my translation]. In this case, Pievani is discussing biological laws of self-organisation and evolution with reference to the therapeutic dynamics in the work of the psychoanalyst Stanley R. Palombo. It is clear to me that the epistemology he talks about is the same of contingency.

²¹⁸ Merleau-Ponty (1962), *Phenomenology*, p. 55. I see a difference in the concept of being-in-the-world of Merleau-Ponty, which is different from that of Heidegger: It is a corporeal ‘being’ (and not-being) in a corporeal world.

subordinated to visual space, at least philosophically, since Plato.²¹⁹ A sonic experience is intensely ecological and phenomenological because it is radically relational and it addresses and explores the many layers of the experienced without any sensorial subordination. It is grounding and stratified, as one of space and its relation to – and intermingling with – sites, and it is here I argue that one can create physical and choreographic performance beyond both oculoecentric but also otocentric paradigms. Threaded through the navigation of physical space is my theory of site contingency which includes and becomes a link of ecophenomenology to contingency, and ecophenomenology to acoustic ecology. But also, I find ecophenomenology useful to site contingency because it completes a phenomenological approach to environmental relations. This process gives to acoustic ecology a more environmentalist characteristic, especially when considering that acoustic ecology is not always, necessarily and directly concerned with environmentalism, and especially the one which considers all (acoustic) diversities and, as site-contingent, must be funnelled through movement as the performance of listening.²²⁰

In ecophenomenological terms this means performing my relation to contingency and in its unpredictable dynamic space of qualitative openness. It means being environmentally conditioned in a constant tuning process, where the bodily self-experience is already one of a site, an environment which precedes us and incessantly returns.

²¹⁹ Alfred North Whitehead in his *Process and Reality* famously says that “The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.” Whitehead (1979), *Process*, p. 39.

²²⁰ For Johan Redström: “Ecology forces acoustic ecology to consider the acoustic environments for all species and not just humans. In order to do this, acoustic ecology has to complement its present phenomenological approach based on personal experience [...] Criteria for good soundscapes, such as informative and pleasing sounds, do not seem to hold in an ecological context.” Redström (2007), *Is Acoustic*, p. 3.

2.4 *Site contingency*

The accident, in fact, turns out to be something close to non-being.
Aristotle²²¹

For Pascal Massie (2011):

What we read as ‘contingency’ in most modern translations was for many centuries rendered in latin not as *contingentia*, but as *utrumlibet*. *Utrumlibet* refers to the instability of nature, and more precisely, of its substance: matter.

But contingency escapes. And because it escapes, it should also escape this concept of *utrumlibet* and that of Aristotelian *unity*. Massie also states that: “to recognise contingency is to acknowledge a realm that not only escapes our knowledge, but also grants spontaneity to the world.”²²² This statement reflects on Aristotle’s concept of contingency as “everything of necessity either is or is not.”²²³ Yet that contingency – when we also realise it in performance – is a necessity. Although accidental, contingency is to be intended here as something non-abstract and *playful*. Therefore, contingency is different from Western concepts, in other words, different from Aristotle’s definition of contingency as the opposite of necessity and it is different from Western empirical and rationalist thought. In this sense, I find relevant the German philosopher Thorsten Botz-Bornstein’s discussion of contingency in the writing of Kuki. Botz-Bornstein says that:

Kuki’s idea of contingency is playful. This means that contingency does not exist, abstractly, as the contrary of necessity but that, in order to exist, it needs to be reflected against a world in which necessity and contingency have been

²²¹ [L’accidente, in effetti, risulta essere qualcosa di vicino al non-essere]. My translation from the Italian translation of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. Reale (1993), *Aristotele*, p. 275.

²²² Massie (2011), *Contingency*, p. 128.

²²³ Aristotle (*De. Int.* 19 a28-29) in Massie, specifically discussing Aristotle’s concept of *unity*. Notes, p. 101.

relativized beforehand. [...] Kuki insists, contingency is conditioned by necessity, and necessity is conditioned by contingency.²²⁴

In my theory of site contingency, it means being conditioned by contingency, and that contingency is ultimately a matter of allowing and following an understanding of its escape from all theoretical, conceptual, philosophical encapsulations, and allowing it to take place, specifically through structure and process. A reflection on the conditioning and realisation of contingency is where spontaneity is present and flowing in a sort of underground river flowing through performance, where we are played by sound and by the liveliness of contingency.

It is through sound – as a rethinking and reconsidering of contingency – that site contingency emerges. This is a theory, but it also suggests a method.²²⁵ A method for site-contingent performance complements my discoveries in practice over the years. It is also my movement from my theory of sound, both interdisciplinary and multi-directional. This theory, based on an ecophenomenological substrate, brings into play and seeks a return to Merleau-Ponty (1962)’s theories of lived perception, through the study of his work, still very relevant today. Together with Merleau-Ponty, I broaden my investigation through feminist scholarship with Luce Irigaray (2004)’s reflections on difference and embodiment. In her engaging with Merleau-Ponty’s thinking, Irigaray focuses attention on the contemporary lack of a culture of perception and yet, at the same time, criticises the lack of engagement in Merleau-Ponty’s own writing with difference in relation to intersubjectivity. With this reference, I want to elucidate the multi-directionality as

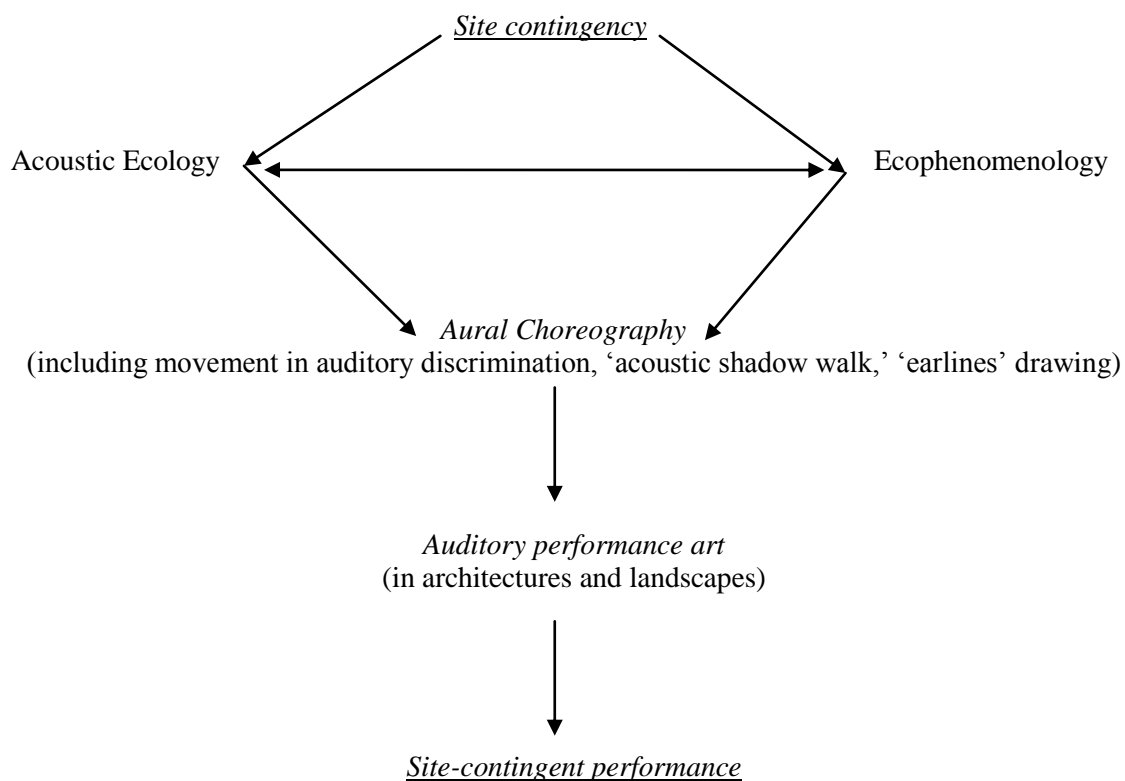
²²⁴ Botz-Bornstein (2004), *Place*, p. 74. According to Heidegger, Kuki “understood western thought better than westerners.” [capiua il pensiero occidentale meglio degli Occidentali]. Zarelli (2012), *Tra Oriente* [Between East], [no pagination, my translation].

²²⁵ This method will be discussed in the section 2.6 “Aural Choreography: ‘I want to be on time even if I am too late.’”

substrate of my work in connection to Merleau-Ponty and the ecophenomenological development of his thought.

The map below shows my coalescing of contingency with ecophenomenology and acoustic ecology in the concept of site contingency. When I relocate them to the performance practice of aural choreography and auditory performance art, I am creating site-contingent performance.

A map of site contingency:



Site contingency is a lived philosophy of sound and listening. It relates to context through the engagement with the auditory transitory and general sensory immediacy of location (architecture and landscape). Site-contingent performance is the practiced theory of site

contingency. Site-contingent performance is the methodology itself and it is during site-contingent performance that one finds a sense of physically pondering on – and identifying with – contingency. This does not mean solely relying on improvisation, but realising an echoing environment through boundaries. These boundaries are any imaginary references that one sets out in order to move within (for instance, an imagined delimitation on a floor, wall, field) or physical structures (architectural, of objects and different landscape framings). They are apparent boundaries, as they are functional in order to allow that mental/physical freedom that contingency can bring. These boundaries could either be pre-set (for instance a framing perimeter before starting to move within) or encountered in the process, while a single or a group of performers move through a space. Paradoxically, in this way we become more connected to a site, where its contingency conditions us and binds us to a site through those very boundaries. Although fictitious, apparent and ever-escaping, those boundaries have a function, facilitating performance in strict relation to a site, to its contingency. Corporeal listening is the fundamental key for this somatic responsive performance. Through a corporeal listening, even to the most tacit event, there is always a meeting with the contingent, a fluctuation of a system/culture /environment, in which we live, which lives in us and which radically conditions us. Contingency and its temporality of the unexpected, eventually displaces any form of theory, ultimately including also any theory on contingency (and, implicitly, even the one that I expose here).

When I consider the concept of ‘place’ in site contingency, corporeal listening frees one from any conceptual encapsulation. The same happens with the concept of ‘site.’ Italian architect Paolo Desideri, summarises a concept of place by following Marc Augé’s notion that “place involves identity, it is relational and historical, [and that] place is space +

identity,” which is – according to both Augé and Desideri – the opposite of non-place. For them, non-place is “a space without identity, in which the *civitas* genetically metamorphosed itself into the homologating civilization of consumption.”²²⁶ Yet, I feel that Casey’s philosophical dimension on place is more pertinent in the context of my thesis. Casey favours *place in practice* and, according to Lineu Castello, he also “illustrates that we are still in an impermanent situation as regards the adoption of a definitive formal structure for defining the concept of *place*.”²²⁷ According to Kevin Thwaites and Ian M. Simkins the distinction between space and place is that space is abstract and “value-free containment” and that place is “something imbued with significance arising from human psychological and behavioural activity.” They continue by discussing the concepts of human psychologist Yi Fu Tuan. For Tuan, “there is another distinction between space and place and this is that space is assumed to be something that allows movement, whereas place is associated with pause.” Instead, the concept that I adhere to is that of the spatial dimension of places and that place, even when it is ‘pause,’ is dynamic. In the very specific case of my discussion, spaces are also places and that space is not the content, but a generator, a generator of performance and a generator of place.²²⁸ For Thwaites and Simkins, the spatial dimension of places is a concept used by architects. They state that it is: “the same as saying the space is a particular kind of place: one that delivers locational sensations to occupiers.”²²⁹

Regarding the concept of site, I use as an example that of the land artist Robert Smithson – which is a rigid conceptualisation – acting as a counter-position to my standpoint. In his

²²⁶ [Il luogo è identitario, relazionale e storico] [Il luogo è spazio + identità] [uno spazio senza identità, nel quale la *civitas* si è geneticamente metamorfizzata nella civiltà omologante dei consumi]. Desideri (Professor of Urban and Architectonic Composition at the Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Italy), “Il concetto” [The concept], [undated, my translation, no pagination].

²²⁷ Castello (2010), *Rethinking*, p. 77.

²²⁸ To paraphrase a title of one of Sun Ra’s 1972 songs: ‘Space is the Place.’

²²⁹ Thwaites and Simkins (2007), *Experiential*, p. xiv.

footnote to his *Spiral Jetty* (1972), Smithson creates a “Dialectic of Site and Non-Site.”²³⁰

According to him, Site is constituted by: Open Limits, A series of Points, Outer Coordinates, Subtraction, and is Indeterminate (Certainty), Scattered (Information), it includes Reflection, Edge, Some Place (Physical), or Many. Being a dialectics, Smithson opposes Non-Site as the opposite of the metaphors he gave to Site. According to him a Non-site has: Closed Limits, An Array of Matter, Inner Coordinates, Addition, and is Determinate (Uncertainty), Contained (Information), it is Mirror, Centre, is abstract and One.²³¹ In order to find a flight from an over-conceptualisation – because I think it does not take into account one’s corporeal experiential reality of a site, and although it is only partially fitting in my theory of site contingency – I find more appropriate Lucy R.

Lippart’s concept of site as non-static. She says that: “Expectations of the site can affect what happens there. So seeing *through* a site is necessity. A site is half-full, half-empty container, its content(s) visible to some and invisible to others.” And she asks: “When is a site not a site? When there is nothing on it? What constitutes ‘nothing’? Something that was or never was? The ripple effect: the best way to know a site is to move out from it in varying radiuses.” In my concept of site contingency, in a site there is always something (even in nothing) and, as well as being defined by its periphery – or as Lippart says, the qualities and quantities of its neighbours – a site is also defined by its own qualities and quantities. But this is what Lippart excludes.²³²

In site contingency, it is in becoming a contingency that the different experiences and concepts of place, site and space – although keeping their conceptual distinctions – become inter-exchangeable in practice, and became specular modes of experience.

²³⁰ Site and Non-Site are his two metaphors and two artistic Land Art practices, that of indoor earthworks (Site) and outdoor earthworks (Non-Sites).

²³¹ From Smithson, “The Spiral Jetty,” in Flam (1996), *Robert Smithson*, pp. 152-153.

²³² Lippart (2005), “Around,” p. 1.

Consequently, I intend site as a relational spatial place. In this performance practice identity is in effect in contradiction, since it is dynamic (as also are the experiences of place, site and space) and in dialogue between the acting and reacting body. A contingent interconnection becomes an experience of moving performance of sound together with the environment and the place (the site, the space, the time) that the body is. In this case, site coincides also with space (coincides, even if remains conceptually distinguishable). This is an experience of space which is different from that concept, as Curry suggests, of those who follow a “determinate effort by both modern science and capitalism to replace places (qualitative, plural, unique) with space, whose units are tendentially quantitative, single and interchangeable.”²³³ This coinciding of site and space is that of an aural sensitivity, which is also meant to be a challenge in performance. The challenge is to go beyond paradigms of site and performance through a rethinking of their physical and spatio-temporal terms, where space is the substantial sea of sounds where we swim, in which we are always immersed. By taking an infinitesimal pluralist approach, site contingency offers a chance to go beyond absolute and universalistic ideas on locus by remaining grounded in an aural and ontic sense.²³⁴ In site contingency, also space is specific and is neither single or universal, nor quantitative. To rediscover the world, through the site contingent, one needs to relate this concept and experience of space as generative and concrete. Also, one needs to relate to alterity through inhabitation of its – albeit temporary – dwelling in a site. Dwelling in the temporality of contingency means a temporality which is constitutive and specific, it means listening to our ‘discrete’ and at the same time unified bodies, which cannot be distinguished from how we ‘occupy’ time. Situating this in the phenomenological context, Wood reminds us that:

²³³ Curry (2006), “Revaluing,” p. 2.

²³⁴ In other words, the word ‘ontic’ indicates the most factual, physical state.

through seeing (and hearing and touching) we differentiate the world into discrete bodies, including ourselves, bodies that occupy distinct places at particular times, and in the case of animate bodies, they are bodies endowed with a mobility that reflects their needs and desires.²³⁵

The temporality of listening and moving bodies is the time of their mobility and experiences of bodies belonging to a specific history and place. Specific histories are those of situated listening as a site for unpredicted events within a, nonetheless, framed setting. Site contingency reflects aural human and non-human architectural scales and their links with occurrences through framed and yet unprepared openness.²³⁶

In forming site contingency I wish then to return to a concept of site conceived in its literalness. It is the concept and experience of a site which is not conceptual, as in the reflections on site-specificity of Miwon Kwon.²³⁷ Her criticism stands against a concept of site as a nostalgic notion (I think that when nostalgia is involved, it is the un-sentimental *nostos*, a return to reconnect) – usually associated with a reactionary stance – and it is not that of site-contingent performance. A site is an invitation to investigate what this physically, and specifically auditory experience has still to offer to performance. Site-contingent performance moves towards literalness and the physical questioning of a site. How specifically does a performer move – and in particular, how does one move through corporeal listening? In this case, listening is finding a way of moving and articulating a relationship. Listening initiates this articulation, which is also a process of theoretical and somatic questioning at the same time. When I practically experience and realise these aspects in performance, contingency acts as a challenge to ego-centric locus. In other

²³⁵ Wood, *The Steps*, p. 147.

²³⁶ This specific concept of framing will be discussed in the section 2.9 “Aural Choreography: frames of field.”

²³⁷ Kwon (1997), “One Place.” It is also a ‘non-minimalist’ notion. This importantly includes, but is also in spite of the fact that, as Nick Kaye states: “In relation to minimalism [...] site-specificity is linked to the incursion of ‘surrounding space,’ ‘literal’ space or ‘real’ space into the viewer’s experience of the artwork.” Kaye (2000), *Site-Specific*, p. 25.

words, through auditory attentiveness, contingency acts as a shift from the ‘self’ to the environment. Sound’s presence beyond ‘our’ presence is significant. David Abram notes that:

Certain rock faces and boulders request from us a kind of auditory attentiveness, and so draw our ears into relation with our eyes as we gaze at them, or with our hands as we touch them – for it is only through a mode of listening that we can begin to sense the interior voluminosity of the boulder, its particular density and depth. There is an *expectancy* to the ears, a kind of patient receptivity that they lend to the other senses whenever we place ourselves in a mode of listening – whether to a stone, or a river, or an abandoned house.²³⁸

Abram’s mode of listening gives us a deeper access to site and the other senses. He suggests a performative way of relating to the visual as well as perception in general. My call for contingent engagement in performance practice, always allows my – and anyone’s ear body with their personal mediated perception – to be opened to those very disclosing and fundamental creative accidents. This is not improvisation, neither is it chance²³⁹ – although improvisation in itself is a very complex contingency – but involves other creative possibilities of listening.

Telmo Pievani, in discussing the position of the psychologist and epistemologist Susan Oyama – from his specialist fields of biology and philosophy of science – offers me a complementary theoretical example for site contingency in relation to uncertainty. He states that (according to Oyama):

the degree of contingency of developmental systems is so strong that, paradoxically, it is their own contingency [...] which produces trajectories that somehow are repeated with a certain reliability! Without such inherent

²³⁸ Abram (1996), *The Spell*, p.130 [my italics].

²³⁹ As I have discussed above in the section 2.2 “Ecology and acoustic ecology in site-contingent performance.”

complexity of elements and without such a dependence on *uncertain terms*, life would not be sufficiently flexible and creative.²⁴⁰

These complexities do teach me about shifting place variations, nuances, changes, trajectories and the many types of silence. In still fresh ways that create possibility, they teach me about our living somatic and uncertain temporality. Instead of considering these ‘demeaned’ complexities, which are indeed often ignored negatively as a ‘reduction’ to contingency, I want to do the reverse, to reclaim the presence of contingency in art in relation to listening. All this gives to the contingent meeting with a site – a central place by addressing it in favour of a knowledge intended as listening empathy, a predisposition beyond ‘shallow’ or ‘deep’ listening.²⁴¹

Practically speaking, in my combining a performance with a workshop – or a process leading to it – time as a sequence of dwelling and pace, becomes crucial for an audience and performer/s, time to discover and establish a contingent relationship with a site. In this plunging into process, one needs to develop a subjective trust and commitment to both, an exercise parameter and a site, and to deeply care for one’s listening. A process is intended here as a gradual attunement through sound, in order to distinguish a sonic diversity and sonic changes, helping to broaden our awareness of our felt immediate world.²⁴² The awareness I gain from my performing in the immediate acoustics of a site

²⁴⁰ [il grado di contigenza dei sistemi di sviluppo è così forte che, paradossalmente, è proprio la loro contigenza [...] a produrre traiettorie che in qualche modo si ripetono con una certa affidabilità! Senza tale intrinseca complessità di elementi e senza tale dipendenza da condizioni incerte, la vita non sarebbe sufficientemente flessibile e creativa]. Pievani, “Il soggetto” [The Contingent], p. 26 [my translation and my italics].

²⁴¹ The phrase deep listening echoes the title of Oliveros’ *Deep Listening*, a book filled with insight. As she says: “Deep Listening helped me to come to this realization in that it raised my consciousness of my immediate environmental soundscape” and also that “the practice is intended to expand consciousness to the whole space/time continuum of sound/silence.” Oliveros (2005), *Deep Listening*, pp. xxiv, 70. Yet, by ‘beyond the deep’ I want to address a type of listening which goes beyond any type of encapsulation or beyond distinctions like that of depth and surface.

²⁴² Some of the synonyms of the infinitive ‘to attune’ are: to “accede; accord; adapt; adjust; allow; correspond; harmonise; melodise; mesh; temper; tune” [My chosen synonyms from Sisson (1969), *Sisson’s*,

and the place where I move with is an *enabling* awareness. This awareness, I consider it a form of knowledge, one I receive from the site, informing me about it, enabling me to connect to it.

A ‘thinking’ sonic space then forms and informs me. This space expresses sentient auditory knowledge, intended also as panpsychic.²⁴³ An ‘auditory panpsychic’ understanding of interactions, might help to elucidate this performative perceptual reciprocity between sonic space, a site and listening in site contingency. Panpsychism, for *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* is:

a doctrine about the nature of spatio-temporal reality. It asserts that each spatio-temporal thing has a mental or ‘inner’ aspect [...] Pantheism is distinguished from panpsychism by the fact that panpsychists, who maintain that everything is psychic in nature, need not also hold that everything is divine.²⁴⁴

My intention is not that of understanding panpsychism as a concern for the divine or the not-divine. In my re-interpretation, panpsychism is ‘psychic,’ but not as a separate reality from the body. It is not to be intended as a theistic, monistic or a Platonic superiority of the ideal, but neither as reductively physicalist. If in panpsychism all is mind, then all is also and always body.²⁴⁵ Environmental philosopher Freya Mathews offers a related – yet distinct, more comfortable term – for panpsychism: *ontopoietics*, stating that what this term wants to express is “the communicative engagement of self with world and world

p. 54]. In Mitchell S. Kossak I read that one of the different definitions of attunement is “a sensorial felt embodied experience that can be individualistic as well as communal, that includes a psychological, emotional, and somatic state of consciousness.” Kossak (2007), *Attunement*, pp. 11, 12. I am interested in attunement as part of acoustic embodiment, and its capacity for sensitivity and empathy towards others (including human and non-human environments).

²⁴³ I am aware that this is a thought which can risk being misunderstood as something ‘paranormally’ special, even outlandish, or even a form of mystic experience of ‘the soul.’ Besides, the risk is also that this thought can be easily reduced to just the parameters of a monistic, Platonic (Anima Mundi), dualistic form of panpsychism.

²⁴⁴ Honderich (ed.) (1995), *Oxford Comp. Phil.*, p. 641.

²⁴⁵ When all is mind, for me it means that all is body as well.

with self, [where] [...] the world is not restricted to cause-and-effect interactions with us but is capable of engaging with us in recognizably meaningful ways.”²⁴⁶

Site-contingent performance becomes ontopoietic, in the sense that is perceptual engagement and involves reciprocity in meaningful ways. Abram also reminds us that perceptual – and I would argue performative – reciprocity is also one of “oneself and one’s actions,” and where:

Each place has its own dynamism, its own patterns of movement, and these patterns engage the senses and relate them in particular ways, instilling particular moods and modes of awareness, so that the unlettered, oral people will rightly say that each place has its own mind, its own personality, its own intelligence.²⁴⁷

So, also in a panpsychic sense, places are dynamic and walls have ears. Places and sites listen. To be re-inscribed into this dynamism, means a relationship with place and space through site contingency.²⁴⁸ In the experience of space as ‘practiced (auditory) place’ – or as Augé interprets Michel de Certeau’s concept of space, as an “intersection of moving bodies”²⁴⁹ – I become a juncture, an intersection, one with a place and a site, a radical contingency which is my performing time. In this time, which is not only immanent but also imminent, I am aware of the paradox of risking this moment, a ‘moment-time’ which is multiple, but also linear and forever short-lived. In this sense, the moment does not really exist, although it is a useful concept functioning in language. The product of consciousness (or mind) is congruous with this fugitive experience made of perceptible expressions rooted in the lived and timely body, where contingency is both radically

²⁴⁶ Matthews (2006), “Introduction,” p. 1.

²⁴⁷ Abram, *The Spell*, pp. 70, 182.

²⁴⁸ In a psychogeographic manner, Michael de Certeau (1994) addresses the relationship and at the same time the difference between ‘place’ and ‘space.’ According to his theory, ‘space’ is always transient, a space which becomes a ‘practiced place,’ achieved through peripatetic movement, transversing of space and trajectory. In accordance with the ecophenomenological inflection of the theoretical research on place, its processing through practice becomes essential.

²⁴⁹ As Augé says, de Certeau “does not oppose ‘place’ and ‘space’ in the way that ‘place’ is opposed to ‘non place.’ Space, for him is a ‘frequented place,’ an intersection of moving bodies.” Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 79.

temporal and historically conditioned, and it is where the historical body meets historical contingency.

Site contingency opens up into the radically temporal and historically conditioned, and the simultaneous unfolding of site, space and place. In this unfolding I re-consider contingency as also a way of re-mapping the site-specific. In other words, by site contingency I offer reflection on and practice of complexities by not participating in an all-encompassing 'siteness.' In my argument I attempt to complicate this 'siteness' where specificity and temporality differ from the site-specific paradigm, although its theorised inheritance of performance linked to environmental ecology is of importance.²⁵⁰ Only a full openness to contingency will disclose specificities of a site. Even the term 'specific,' when inscribed within this discourse no longer serves, becoming rather moribund. We need to strive for a non-anthropocentric approach to in-situ performance not simply in a mimetic sense, but as a more balanced relationship. Site-contingent aspects of in-situ performance are implied in specific experiences of different factors related to a body as co-reflective of an environment, its seasons, its landscapes, its morphologies through sounds, where it becomes a permeable and dynamic concept and becomes itself contingency. What I intend is a neither regressive nor reactionary, nor a trans-historical stance on ecology and site-specific performance, but a realisation that site contingency is more determinant of the specific. It is in the historical-phenomenological context that I attempt to question the art-historical *topoi* and legacy of the site-specific paradigm. First of all, I find it important to undo the fixed concepts of 'site' and its temporal attachment, in order to re-think, re-imagine, and re-listen to it where the apparent and unplanned comes to be understood and welcomed, the perceptible and welcoming difference. Site-contingent performance is that of performers and audiences open to this welcoming. Site

²⁵⁰ Yet, I also realise and consider that even the 'site-specific' paradigm is much broader and, as Mike Pearson says: "Although the search for practicable, encompassing definition of site-specific performance has long claimed scholarly attention, it remains slippery." Pearson (2010), *Site-specific*, p. 7.

contingency then means movements of sensate, gendered and diverse bodies related through what a very singular space tells and gives us. When realising that sites are also bodies, any body is creator of feedbacks, of moving returning listening; an interdependent constant giving interaction, relaxing to the contingency of any encounter, with a site, with another body. Bodies and sites are those of a friendship, indeed of mutual listening, touching us.²⁵¹

2.5 Tangible acoustic space: *something might actually touch*

In discussing the concept of acoustic space in McLuhan, Cavell argues that “the spatial also extended into the ‘oral’ through the concept of acoustic space [...] It was visual space that was static, not the spatial per se. Indeed acoustic space was fundamentally dynamic.”²⁵² On the contrary, I suggest that visual space is also dynamic – because it is always performing through one’s perception – acoustic space is dynamic and most of all physical. Again with Cavell: “space is a physical location, a piece of real estate, and *simultaneously* an existential freedom and a mental expression.”²⁵³ Considering that acoustic space is physical, it is in the interrelation between sound in environments and the activities of the ear in which the contingent takes place.

In architecture, site contingency is sensed and perceived through sound interactions with the moving body, and where bodies’ movements could be visualised as travelling lines, lines of transiency. In speculations on transiency, memory and place, different approaches

²⁵¹ Philosopher A. C. Grayling, talks about friendship and the very important “particularism of the ‘care perspective,’” although “a distinction needs to be drawn between *friendship* as a theatre of caring and other relationships where a familiar difficulty arises: not all, and perhaps not most, caring relationships are mutual.” Grayling (2013), *Friendship*, p. 12.

²⁵² Cavell, *McLuhan*, p. 26.

²⁵³ Cavell, *McLuhan*, p. 29 [my italics].

are implied in corporeal experience, which has been widely discussed and explored.²⁵⁴

Yet, I would argue that ‘space’ – which is a much abused concept in corporate, hegemonic or nationalist ideology – is generally conceived as non-corporeal (but corporate), and when we reflect on contingency, it becomes the experiential paradox of both ‘the concrete’ and the ‘abstract’ ungraspable at the same time.²⁵⁵ Yet, neither concreteness or the abstract exist inherently.²⁵⁶ I also maintain that, ultimately, in all of its forms, the concept of the abstract is superfluous, as it is constantly weighed down by the physicality of experience. Usually, the abstract is believed to exclude mundane sensorial experience. Cavarero, instead, says that:

Similarly, the term ‘direct experience’ should not sound too naive: it is supposed to indicate a perception of the world actuated by the organs of perception, and above all by sight which registers the way in which the world manifests itself through appearances in movement.²⁵⁷

When using the term ‘abstract’ it is always in connection to something which has been rather ‘abstracted’ and which is never absolute, retaining always a relation to the world. It keeps the connection to lived experience, profoundly audible or profoundly inaudible, where space and, specifically, acoustic space, has been abstracted and returns to be concrete.²⁵⁸ Auditory diverse, finite, perceivable (or unperceivable), visible (or invisible)

²⁵⁴ See Casey (1997), *The Fate*.

²⁵⁵ For instance, I think about the philosophy of Giordano Bruno with his theory of *coincidentia oppositorum*, where opposites coincide and, especially, where reality is not measurable. For in-depth discussion see Calcagno (1998), *Giordano*.

²⁵⁶ When I talk of sound as concrete, is concrete to perception as I perceive it physically and as a physical phenomenon.

²⁵⁷ Cavarero, *In Spite*, p. 37.

²⁵⁸ The Italian painter Giorgio Morandi reflected on the paradox of the real. He said: “For me there is nothing abstract: moreover, I feel that there is nothing more surreal, and more abstract than reality.” [Per me non vi è nulla di astratto: per altro ritengo che non vi sia nulla di più surreale, e di più astratto del reale]. Bernardini (2008), *Giorgio*, p. 94 [my translation].

experience is always a contingent particular and an *intensified* concreteness.²⁵⁹

Importantly, Wood notes:

This sense of the infinite in the finite, which is precisely not a spiritual dilution but an intensification of the concrete, can take a number of forms. [...] Here connectedness between individual events generates a kind of depth to every moment through which its very singularity is heightened.²⁶⁰

It is through the experience of this heightened singularity that in site-contingent performance I corporeally feel a concreteness through sound. Its intensification is that of physical locus which intertwines with its virtuality. It is the situated experience which could make a performing body realise the virtual as well as ‘the actual’ as unfixed, also in concrete terms. Virtual (although felt as actual) and physical sounds are the sounds that come forth and touch us and gradually and, apparently, go away. An actual and physical site become the virtual sounds that come forth, touch us and go. Actuality *already* includes virtuality.²⁶¹ Concrete as sound (is not to be intended in terms of *Musique concrète*, but stands in contrast to de-materialisation), is then an invisible and a fluid experience realised in the site-contingent. In this fluid experience we bathe in the tangible. According to Irigaray: “First of all, the tangible is received, perceived prior to the dichotomies of active and passive. It is received like a bath that affects without and within, in fluidity. It is never completely situated in the visible.”²⁶² Although experienced as concrete, we can consider objects as ‘abstractions’ and then we could say that only the relations between them are tangible and constitutive of objects. These are in-between relations and create ‘acoustic space.’ Here is where something might take place. In acoustic place an inherent and indivisible interconnection exists between place and

²⁵⁹ And this is also the case even when concreteness is illusory.

²⁶⁰ Wood, “What is,” p7.

²⁶¹ Questionable is instead the conception of grounded physical location which is understood as a synonym for fixity, as opposed to the paradigm of the ‘virtual’ or ‘discursive.’

²⁶² Irigaray, *An Ethics*, p. 137.

placelessness, between the full and the empty. With this I imply place and placelessness, as both are equally inter-dependent from one another, through their taking place in consciousness and in performance. I also believe that urban places of placelessness, which surround us – in airports, train stations, holiday resorts, shopping malls – but also the communication through the internet overpopulated by information (a sort of negative emptiness) – are places of performance. Social/environmental sound (and its performance) can also be understood as the actual place of any dead, flat, corporate or empty placelessness. Yet, in these places, spatial and locational acoustic occurrences are also originators of site-contingent performance.

These occurrences could give one the chance to move and to stop once more, dotting life with moments of ‘stilling’ in thought and ‘de-stilling’ in motion; once, and once again. So, I have no alternative but to welcome the concurrence of a passing experience: in site contingent performance a hedge, a tree, a line on the floor, a corner, and a sound in that corner become encounters which facilitate and constitute the experience and the performance. Only this passing experience of a sudden encounter with an architectural, visual, sonic feature makes me realise the already existent connection with them. It touches me. It binds me. It binds me into this infinitely spacious corporeality, thanks to those physical, visual, but especially acoustic margins. In this way within a space, stepping, stopping and moving in my itinerary, my stations are my acoustic and listening narration, my moving, my aural choreography.

2.6 Aural Choreography: “*I want to be on time even if I am too late*”²⁶³

In a somatic understanding of movement, in some sense sound is my choreographer, because I am compelled to move by it, from its minuscule to the more manifest type of movements. There is an eloquence in one’s disclosing to sound the choreographer, and situating us in its continuous performing, sound provides the thread. Movement is also the very event that makes hearing take place, the movement of air molecules in space and the hair cells in the cochlea, this physics instigates my movements and trajectories in performative space. My ears are then predisposed to sonic fluctuations and to move my body; when I realise that I am located and moving, moving and choreographing and being choreographed by sound, performing a site, constantly reflective in and outside my ears, a continuous moving in and with a site and its temporality. The identification of this temporality of a site and the body is contingent and this identification can be realised in *aural choreography*. Aural choreography is where the body moves according to the sounds, in time as we listen and move with it, physically responding to a location’s sonic inputs, responses which are never exactly immediate and perfectly synchronised. My aural choreographic parameters are an application of framing, one which allows a realisation of the experience of the aleatory within a site. A site has its own intrinsic qualities, different sonic spatial contexts and values, which can be brought to awareness in aural choreography, in the tension and connections between all the settings, including also the most conventional, the most scenographic and the general planned design of a performance. Altogether these settings need to be predisposed to that important space left for the event of contingency. We can really allow performance to take place in a regenerated and concrete space which includes, but eventually escapes our pre-meditated

²⁶³ Jerzy Ficowski, in Kremer (ed.) (2003), *Holocaust*, p. 345.

plan and also through the non-intentional movement of our perception of sounds. With time, I have started a process of developing and testing aural choreography, in the various relationships between sonic inputs and the immediacy of movement. Here, the auditory aspect enhances a proprioceptive placing of a performer in space, and where the kinaesthetic and the performative emerge through the stimulated auditory perception.

My use of the term ‘performative’ is employed in the same way that P.A. Skantze suggests. In discussing the dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster, Skantze argues that: “when scholars use the term ‘performative,’ they often employ the work of Judith Butler, and the implication of Butler’s work based initially on speech-act theory is that one is looking for a script rather than gestures, sounds, physical exchange that convey meaning.”²⁶⁴ The body is always political, as the political is the performative. Butler discusses utterance as performative, “the action that speech performs” as, for instance, the performative power in political speech to the point that the performative is power.²⁶⁵ But the body *is* already language, and one which does not only and always comprehend speech. I would not only follow Butler’s rethinking of the performative as a social ritual, but also and more appropriately – as the title of her paragraph says – “The Tacit Performativity of Power,” where: “The ‘constructive’ power of the tacit performative is precisely its ability to establish a practical sense for the body [...] how it can or cannot negotiate space.”²⁶⁶ In my case, a body always corporeally negotiates and connects with any space, either when aware of a space or not. In this sense, the performative means a shift from the speech-act and the script to the gestural. The performative is first of all an experience of ordinary corporeal gestures, where virtual and physical location is understood as an already implied discursive body. This gestural shift is performative (the same with a

²⁶⁴ Skantze (2003), *Stillness*, p. 5.

²⁶⁵ See Butler (1997), *Excitable*, p. 73.

²⁶⁶ Butler, *Excitable*, p. 73.

speech-act), it is a physical exchange and ‘almost-performance.’ This means an auditory physical testing, a testing as practice, a practice as a corporeal mapping of space, and this mapping of space as (aural) choreography and one which has specifically found its place in both spontaneous and more structured performance work. I recall the *dérive*, a performative critical drift through the streets, one of the practices which formed one of the methods of psychogeography in Guy Debord, Abdelhafid Khatib and other Situationists’ strategies from the late 1950’s. There are other ways of experiencing the place where one lives, by coming across its hidden geographies and histories and in how its architectural, social, political, environmental spaces affect one. By finding a route gradually in relation to what one experiences (and not on what one knows), the *dérive* could still be important as a practice of de-conditioning, where one is drawn by the features of a place (never neutral) and the encounters one comes across and opens up to the contingent moment. Once we have welcomed the contingent, there are other ways of experiencing a place. In a site-contingent sense all the aspects of a site play in performance, including and especially those who are hidden.

The performance-making process involves the discerning of distinct auditory messages which serve to ‘spatialise’ movement as choreography. In this choreography, different auditory messages do this in their sonic particularities which can enable a very vast range of nuanced movements of the body in the plural quality of sounds facilitating the plural and subtlest quality of movements against generalisation, homogenisation and isolation. Sonic discernment becomes a form of negotiation between auditory-cognitive filtering and grounded corporeal experience. Yet, it is important here to highlight the excessive seduction and over-reliance on cognitivism and its paradigm. This concerns particularly the ‘cognitive turn’ of contemporary dance and performance research, where mind and

cognition are often a synonym of ‘brain,’ although not all cognitivism and especially philosophy of mind is reductive.²⁶⁷ As Pievani says: “Cognition is born in a melting pot of ecological conditions which itself conditions and by which in turn is conditioned: cognition is situated, is embodied, is embraced to a context in transformation, is a dance of self-eco-organization.”²⁶⁸ In aural choreography, the auditory-cognitive discernment means choosing which acoustic cues to follow and to move accordingly. This includes the capacity of a listening body to realise the connection, to listen.

As a performance practitioner attuned with corporeal listening, in the sequential current of events, I am in a process of being sound-choreographed, beginning with the practical and apparent simple task of just orienting myself towards what I perceive as sound sources. Here, one’s attention finds a sonic source for an instant, then the attention flows and wanders, whilst that sonic input lingers on in body and space. Significantly, it is a re-education and a possible pedagogy to reception and participation as sensorial co-habitation, and this through corporeal auditory memory. It is, in the words of Skantze, “learning by the senses” for a “quality of reception between maker” – in this case the maker is sound itself – “and receiver;” and for Skantze, this also means an education of the senses through the body and kinesthesia.²⁶⁹ In this education of the senses, a mutual and co-emerging sensitivity follows. In the co-emerging relation, I argue that contingency – and following it site contingency – just because it could be considered ‘of the immanent moment,’ does not contradict memory and structure but, instead, is facilitated through this

²⁶⁷ According to psychologist Lawrence W. Barsalou, cognition is not a model in the brain, but *embodied cognition* is dependent on states of the body and is part of *grounded cognition*. According to him, grounded cognition is broader than embodied cognition and it is where cognition emerges. He says that: “from the grounded perspective, cognition doesn’t simply reside in a set of cognitive mechanisms. Instead, cognition emerges from these mechanisms as they interact with sensorymotor systems, the body, the physical environment, and the social environment. Rather than being a module in the brain, cognition is an emergent set of phenomena that depend critically on all these domains, being distributed across them.” Barsalou (in press), “Situating,” p. 3.

²⁶⁸ [La cognizione nasce in un crogiolo di condizioni ‘ecologiche’ che essa condiziona e da cui è a sua volta condizionata: la cognizione è situata, è incarnata, è abbracciata a un contesto in trasformazione, è una danza di auto-eco-organizzazione]. Pievani, “Il soggetto” [The Contingent], p. 13 [my translation].

²⁶⁹ Skantze, *Stillness*, p. 1.

learning by the senses. Learning by the senses as performing always includes memory. Also memory, like sound, does not stand still; it moves, as a remembering of present and of past heard/experienced sounds. Alas, this auditory mnemonic experience is not always an enjoyable one, as in the epitaph of “Dr Henry Selwyn,” the first chapter of W.G. Sebald’s *The Emigrants*: “the last remnants memory destroys.”²⁷⁰ In remembering an experienced sound (which one is last?), the ear is a body which remembers and remembers while moving. The body remembers the sounds, those (already) about to take place and those (already) about to move. Aural choreography threads this type of memory with the spatial and performative fabric of mnemonic parameters. This is the fabric of bodies with those of sites but, also, parameters of proximity and intimacy laced in personal histories and experience.

In particular, my concept of aural choreography is a project which aspires to make a body become an ear hair cell. This is an auditory choreographic sense and a way of movement, as well as an insight which I use rather literally from what Schiffman says, when merging auditory perception and sensation. He describes the function of the hair cells, which are “bent by the otoliths in accordance with the extent and direction of linear displacement and bodily position with respect to gravity.”²⁷¹ Bodily position becomes very important in connection to sound. It would require a radical challenge and training in movement linked to auditory attention and displacement with respect to gravity and the vestibular system, for its relation to give balance or unbalance (in the case of its malfunction), to the body. According to Stephen M. Highstein:

“The vestibular system is arguably one of the most ancient vertebrate sensory system. [...] enabling vertebrates to detect and control their own motion in any

²⁷⁰ Sebald (1996), *The Emigrants*, p. 1.

²⁷¹ Schiffman, *Sensation*, p. 34.

environment [...] We, as humans, only become conscious of the vestibular system when it malfunctions [...] somatic and visceral receptors in combination with the vestibular system participate in detecting the position of the body in space.”²⁷²

An integral part of aural choreography are preparatory and choreographic exercises which work towards being moved by focussing on acoustic inputs of direction, speed, volume, tone and binaural cues of location and ‘acoustic colouration.’²⁷³ Orienting oneself to the direction of a sound source, requires immediacy of movement. Auditory discrimination is another working methodology in aural choreography. ‘Discrimination’ – a word which generally comes with its negative implication of prejudice – is used here to encourage the opposite. As a specific audiological term, auditory discrimination becomes significant for addressing a capacity of discerning and somatically ‘choosing’ a wide diversity of sounds. It is a perception of different perceptual stimuli, to discern, to hear and listen openly and accurately, and to value each varied specificity. This picking up of specific sounds from within an eventscape, is fundamental as an individual response. I consider these as means out of isolation. Aural choreography works by responding – as immediately as one can – to orientation, monaural (distance) and binaural (localisation) cues, asymmetry of hearing and the confusion of the localisation of sound, and is a way of moving together with sounds. Once receptive to auditory stimulation – and the meanings associated with this information – we are sensitive to the movement through background noises. This is effort to discern, within the everyday urban din, any background noise, or

²⁷² Highstein (2004), “Anatomy,” pp. 1-6. Also, according to Cohen and Raphan: “The central vestibular system codes the vestibular information in three-dimensional head and body coordinates and in spatial coordinates.” Cohen and Raphan (2004), “The Physiology,” p. 235.

²⁷³ For Wrightson ‘Acoustic colouration’ is “caused by echoes and reverberations that occur as sound is absorbed and reflected from surfaces within the environment, and due to the effects of weather related factors such as temperature, wind and humidity. The resulting colouration offers significant information for the listener, providing cues relating to the physical nature of the environment and expressing its size in relation to the listener.” Wrightson, “An introduction,” p. 11.

any overwhelming passing noise.²⁷⁴ Training in auditory discrimination means distinguishing and choosing sound particularities and making active the sensory physiology of hearing in its biological workings through movement. Importantly, in moving auditory discrimination, the discerning and negotiation of sonic specificities needs to be immediate. Prof. McAlpine calls this negotiation ‘gain control’ and says that: “Essentially, the system listens to what is going on in the brain, it listens to what is going on in the ear and it adjusts its intensity to take account of what the background sound actually is.”²⁷⁵ It becomes clear that within auditory space – and in these aural choreographic parameters perceived within varied sensorial aspects – auditory discrimination has a pivotal role as a discerning through background sound, sound qualities and cues with their characteristics and their movements. This role is, first of all, an unaware and somatic immediate ‘choice,’ played in the stream of sensorial inputs. But, the question is: can it be a choice if that choice is unaware and, if so, who is choosing? It can be an unaware choice if it is the choice to do the choosing. In other words, the listening body chooses, sensorially, without thinking by pondering on that choice, but with immediacy of movement, and that immediacy is the choice. Then, eventually, the possibility of reflecting on that movement’s choice can be explored.

A consistent part of the preparatory activities of my training is walking and movement practices, as individual exploration as well as a group. As part of a specific engagement with aural choreography, the feet are very important, as there is a direct connection between them and the ears, for we also listen through our feet. De Souzaenelle says that:

²⁷⁴ This recalls what John Cage says about T.D. Suzuki, that he “never spoke loudly. When the weather was good the windows were open, and the airplanes leaving LaGuardia flew directly overhead from time to time, drowning out whatever he had to say. He never repeated what had been said during the passage of the airplanes.” Cage (1961), *Silence*, p. 262.

²⁷⁵ McAlpine discussed this in specific reference to tinnitus, and which I find here pertinent to auditory discrimination. From the transcript of the conference Meet the Scientists, Friends’ House, London, 27 March 2007.

“expressing the same symbolic aspect of the feet and kidneys, the ears have the shape of a seed. Equally they summarise the entire body.”²⁷⁶



Ear Ringing Feet. Frida Khalo’s hand earring(s) and my foot earring(s).

The feet slide, beat, or caress floors and the sounds resonate through the body to the head and inner ear. An ear body/ear group is invited to respond and to be receptive to stimulation – and to the meanings associated with this information – to the movement of sound and to discern and locate them from background noises. With regards to our relationship to this perceptual discernment, psychologist Brian C. J. Moore, noticed that: “We are much better at localising sounds in the horizontal dimension than in the vertical dimension. Ambiguities related to the cone of confusion, or to the location of a sound source in the vertical direction, may be resolved by head movements.”²⁷⁷

Movement comes through the physical connection to the specific sensorial input of hearing. It is engaged in relation to listening as a way of observing space with the ears, a

²⁷⁶ [Esprimendo il medesimo aspetto simbolico dei piedi e dei reni, le orecchie hanno la forma di un seme. Ugualmente esse ricapitolano l’intero corpo] de Souzenelle, *Il simbolismo* [The Symbolism], p. 302 [my translation]. De Souzenelle is specifically referring to auriculotherapy, a European form of ear acupuncture developed by the French physician Dr. Paul Nogier.

²⁷⁷ Moore (1982), *Introduction*, p. 157.

way of analysing the acoustic spectrum. Often, moving by using the environmental sounds of different sites – in the interaction with body orientation, ear panning and scanning – I became almost like an instrument, a sort of ‘spectrum analyser’ of the horizontal acoustic spectrum. For instance, a preparatory movement parameter as part of aural choreography is that of moving through a connection to breathing and turning on the spot in a steady and/or slow speed, in this way, one can retain an acoustic embodied awareness. By first turning the ear/head and then the body, one realises the connection between the ears and the head and the rest of the body. This realisation is then put into a deliberate action of contradicting of the intention of one’s movements and directions, as well as the contradicting of intentional head and body directions through immediacy of response. One is then constantly contradicting conscious and premeditated intentions to move, to stop, to turn, and by deliberately inverting these intentions. It is movement which happens between decision and non-decision to move according to an acoustic input, so one decides to move according to an acoustic input, and then to immediately contradict the direction of that movement. The ear initiates the rotating movement, while scanning the acoustic landscape, coming from outdoors while turning on the spot, then the head follows and the rest of the body follows the head. In aural choreography, the process of making a body become an ear hair cell, is also meant as a metaphor for a metamorphosis of the body. In aural choreographic explorations there is a sort of ‘toning’ connection through my body and those of the audiences/participants with spaces and their sounds.²⁷⁸ I feel that these physiological aspects linked to auditory perception, create a radical challenge to fixed concepts of choreography. In this way, in in-situ movement

²⁷⁸ Normal hearing is fifty cycles per second. In my practical research, I have explored this by adding inner ear modifications consisting in breathing with rotational movement as a form of hyper-stimulation of the diaphragm with rhythmical bending of the head, by adding the beating of the feet in slowly increasing acceleration and while turning on the spot and noticing that the frequency gets lower, but also that this action stimulates the vestibular system. I have specifically explored this in relation to body balance, verticality and horizontality in my practical research on Tarantism since 1990 and also applied different methods based on it in my Ear Bodies workshops.

improvisation, only relations, modifications – all complex networks – exist, where perceptual discernment becomes the movements of sound attempting to approach and imagine those of an ear hair cell.

Since each movement is a result of the previous one, it is linked to a corporeal stratification of memory. In aural choreography, ‘improvisation’ is the medium of investigation of this mnemonic layering with contingency. This, together with in-situ performance and movement processes in studio-based research sessions, allow more focus on context, both cultural, environmental and architectural. Velocity, in general, and variation of speeds in particular, are that of sounds, where their relationship with physical movement is fundamental to this practice. Importantly, in aural choreography, the kinetic is behind the auditory, and even the auditory is behind the kinetic; it is the pre-condition for its being. Here, kinaesthesia – before it is implied in movement – is to be firstly intended in spatial terms. More clearly, this is to be understood as the concept of kinaesthesia in Edmund Husserl’s space gained through movement of the body (motor kinaesthesia), from extremely slow to very fast movement.²⁷⁹ The stimulated inner ear captures and relates to internal body temporality, and when it relates to sound, this can generate choreography. An awareness of how this constantly moving choreographing sonic world resides where, immanent to the time of contingency, I meet the time of my and others’ bodies grounded in the earth and moving through the air. I meet a time of a site, which is a specific place of multiple times unfolding: a geological time, an animal time, an infinitesimally vast time and that of buildings with their molecular history, but also – in an urban environment – the speeds of moving objects like airplanes and cars and

²⁷⁹ For Husserl there are two types of kinaesthesia: “First *objectifying kinaesthesia* (KO) functions in the perceptual mode so as to objectify the thing that the touched hand is.” The other category of kinaesthesia “goes back up to the source of our motor intentions and which Husserl calls ‘*motor kinaesthesia*’ (KM).” Jean-Luc Petit, in Gallagher and Shaun (eds.) (2010), *Handbook*, p. 211.

that of moving people. Fugitive, mere and small human perspectives, compared to social and nature's movements, are also fugitive sonic perceptions and they all are participants in the wide-angle of the vast performative potential which sonic awareness offers to choreography and performance. In aural choreography, we realise that sound itself is the ultimate performance and the ultimate enabler of movement.

During aural choreography I am grounded and I move in an oscillation, one between a dispersed awareness and a focalised awareness. This is the sense and material by which I am sculpted. In a sonically aware performance, I feel this sound sculpting. Although constantly transient, it recoils in me. Metaphorically speaking, this 'sculpting' creates a sort of sound encaustic painting with its caustic tone, crafted and recalling that pungent method of warming up a waxy paste and going deep under the surface by a process of melting and burning. It is the pigmented and hot wax of what I can call an 'auditory encaustic painting,' forming a sensorial 'mould,' a sort of invisible, yet toning sonic wax. Questioning the general toning aspect of aural perception, I ponder on distance, once I have momentarily found, yet not fixed, a location with my auditory 'glance' in a specific space or specific landscape. The question is still the actual difficulty and almost impossibility of locating sound, as indeed the fixity of locating is the problem. So, where is my auditory perspective? Where is its place, its site, its space? All the moving points are aimless tails of the ears, extended pinnae, vanishing auditory ends, sonic vibrations. A sonic vibration in its acoustic interrelations is constantly permuted while travelling in and from the body. Although always circulating like dust, sound, because perceived by our bodies, is also perceived as decaying, as ethereal and transient in its physical life as well as our lives. Ultimately, sound is the performing agent in the visual, theatrical, physical performance, which is eventually there to undo all pre-conceived encapsulations and theorisations on its experiencing.

This world is an active performance of bodies which can allow a choreography, which cannot be just a question of centrifugal or centripetal, eccentric or concentric vectors of movement, or simply physical placing. In the choreographic case, sound is the dynamic agent and the dynamic position. Paradoxically it is a position which is not position, because it is always dynamic. Auditory experience defies complete homogenisation, and it has the role of troubling assumptions, preconceptions and thoughts; as indeed thoughts also have sounds. Michael Bull in discussing auditory experience, says that: “Sound shows no respect for [these] divisions; [...] sounds are as close to us as our thoughts. Sound moves through the body and feels amorphous.”²⁸⁰ Indeed, it is a moving-through choreography: the fluctuations between thoughts and movements. Also gender unfolds in fluctuations and in multiple corporeal navigation of sonic context. Skantze, instead of the term ‘performance,’ which is language based, uses Susan Foster’s concept of ‘choreography’ of gender. She emphasizes that “Forster’s theoretical suggestion reminds us to imagine multiple bodies in the process of performing in gesture and sound.”²⁸¹ Away from a question of sensorial primacies, one moves in aural choreography in ‘gesture and sound,’ and can allow a space for contemplation in sound. In this respect, I side with Mathews in her discussion of ‘contemplation,’ one which I prefer to indicate in a very ‘worldly’ sense.²⁸² Invoking contemplation means here invoking observation in movement. It is an observation which is choreographed by contingency, gestures, sounds and actions – including a ‘still movement’ – which is nonetheless ‘observational.’ Moving in choreographic auditory terms is a form of this invoking contemplation in movement. In other words, it focusses on very few chosen acoustic inputs for movement which serve as choreography, observing their differences and qualities, nuances of the sounds coming from outside a building and/or from within it. It is trusting and allowing sounds to move

²⁸⁰ Bull (2006), “Auditory,” p. 112.

²⁸¹ Skantze, *Stillness*, p. 136.

²⁸² ‘Worldly’ is here also to be intended in its most mundane sense.

one's body when movements of listening come from observation through the ears. When, observation is intended as auscultation, not in its medical definition, it becomes a form of aural observation of one's body and that of the world, where contingent listening becomes, as novelist Luke Williams calls it, "an inverse stethoscope" to hear the pulse of the world.²⁸³

A sonic moving interaction is a systemic linking of diverse topologies, including socio-environmentally shared sites. These are mutually generating environments with bodies affected by the performance of the haptic and wider environment, and by general environmental alterations and relations. I see this being a tool *from* and *for* sensing and 'presencing' contingency, and this is already a choreography, a manifestation of each present passing instant ingrained in physical movement. With aural choreography we have another tool for reflecting on contingency, when I reflect on contingency I reflect on immediacy,²⁸⁴ which involves the smallest to the biggest delay of movement responses in the form of acoustic inputs, as they instigate my movements with their trajectories and with my movements' flexibility of response. All parameters of passing instants as movement of sounds, speeds, directions, intensities, distances, vibration, I employ in a choreographic sense. This means investigating and focussing on the sonic relation between input and movement response and the immediacy, or delay, of a movement's relation to the time between thinking and moving. It is still often believed that we can escape thinking if we are in an instant being, in the absorption of the instantaneous moment between an audience and a performer during the so called 'here and now' of performance. This is a pseudo-understanding of the relationship between thinking and not-thinking, as it is believed that if one is 'in the moment' one suspends thinking. The mind – a much bigger concept and dynamic reality than just that of the cognitive and computational

²⁸³ Williams, *The Echo*, p. 5.

²⁸⁴ However, reflecting on immediacy means realising that it is almost completely impossible.

sciences – never stops thinking, as the body is always thinking, and ‘thinking-about-not-thinking’ is still thinking. The body thinks and, when more aware, the bodiment of our condition provokes us to say even that movement thinks.

In aural choreography, thinking and moving means almost-synchronised movement to sound. Immediacy and delay of response between sonic inputs and movements and the transitions, shifts of movements as those of sounds, form connected parts and patterns. In moving and being moved, my aural choreography makes me carefully consider how specifically one can stimulate and inform active and reflexive engagement in performance. Through different image-guided and acoustic inputs, I stimulate this engagement, while I explore degrees of slowness and speeds, as well as different times, dwelling and endurance. It realises that, in any speed of pace and response, a sonic input never actually decays. It keeps its specific quality and intensity and it takes its time: if it is a fast or slow moving sound, it moves us at our own time. This makes me ponder on what is one’s personal time. Now, it is a geological time, now it is an aeon, now it is an arboreal time, now is cellular time. Yet, I like to think that all times are plaited in a linear time experienced as adherent as possible to my moving perception; even when, as we know, the time of experience is process and is multiple, therefore non-linear. Moving sounds have already reached my ears – as the ears of the body – but, their reverberation continues. They have moved me. I feel their distinct differences at the same slow or other velocity of time. For instance – when also in ‘Butoh time’ – movement is not always almost imperceptively slow, but is fast and agitated; it keeps, however, that very slowness of consciousness, where time is realised in multiplicity. It is, then, a question of ‘dropping’ on that specific reception; where one is not different from what one is doing or hearing, where one is time.

Beginning an increasingly slowing down of one of my daily times absorbed in contingent flow, I take the experience of dwelling more and more into my changing body. From autopoiesis to emerging ontogenetic biological processes, ramified time spreads from and into the cells of my changing body.²⁸⁵

I see aural choreography as equal to (sonic) emergence. I am intrigued by the idea of a sonic ground as emergent, one in osmosis with biological and continuing time of the Earth and its various networked sites. I think of a site as my dwelling. Dwelling is that place that I call home – even in the most hostile climate – although no home is lasting. My home emerges and follows me, where home is this body, which I don't occupy, because I do not have a body, I am a body. My moving aural choreography is a search and quest for this dwelling-body-home, as much as possible physically grounded while moving. This means a dwelling-body-home steeped in a moving, breathing, sitting, stopping, speeding, slowing down. In the foreword by Sergio Manghi (2001) to Gregory Bateson's *Mind and Nature* we read this as "the necessity to take care of our *responsiveness* to the pattern which connects," and this is a way:

That is self-reflective and participatory, a way that can reveal to us – by continually placing it in wider perspective – the extraordinary story of what we already know, what we already are, for good as well as for evil, in all its inexhaustible, surprising novelty.²⁸⁶

Whilst Deborah Bird Rose, discusses "Pattern in Honour of Gregory Bateson," importantly, she says that "the spontaneous and contingent can still be formed into complex patterns, and those patterns can connect with the world-creative potential. The

²⁸⁵ Literally, 'autopoiesis' means self-creation. In Varela and Maturana (1991) the use of the word *autopoietic* is applied to biology. In a biological sense, neuroscientist Antonio Damasio discusses Varela and Maturana's definition of autopoiesis as to describe the rebuilding process of living cells. For more on autopoiesis see Damasio (2000), *The Feeling*, end note, p. 347.

²⁸⁶ Manghi, in Bateson (2001), *Mind*, p. xiii [my italics].

enduring and the ephemeral find their most powerful connections by meshing into each other's patterns.”²⁸⁷

In aural choreography what is important is the responsiveness to sounds which includes their patterns. Also being responsive to the moment of suspension, brings forth that ‘surprising novelty,’ one which takes place between an auditory sensory input and physical synchronicity to that input. Precisely, this is an almost-synchronicity with movement. While Rainer Guski and Nikolaus Troje, scientifically experimenting on auditory effects on motion perception – but also on visuality and its link to sound – make us note that: “Temporal contiguity does not necessarily mean exact co-occurrence of the cause and its effect,” and that: “The perceptual systems need a certain amount of time to integrate the (more or less conflicting) information into a unitary concept [...]. A sound may be judged to be synchronous with a visual event or movement even when the sound is less likely to be judged as synchronous.”²⁸⁸ Almost-synchronicity is when I move in a rhythmic world, meaning a multi-audible condition of an acoustic (body) weather, where I seek to find my meteorology²⁸⁹ and where, in the words of the artist Roni Horn: “weather reports you.”²⁹⁰ In this meteorology, I dwell. For a range of moments I am in my relation with the multiple aspects of many acoustic sites, living sites. They have echoed within me so far, in the stimulating closeness of these architectural, landscape and social meetings, of

²⁸⁷ I also find particularly poignant when I connect what Bird Rose says with my discourse of sound and site contingent performance, when she says that: “Inside the ring place we dance the return as well as the coming forth, the unmaking as well as the making, and we dance the connections between them.” Bird Rose (2005), “Pattern,” [no pagination].

²⁸⁸ Guski and Troje (2003), “Audiovisual,” p. 789.

²⁸⁹ I specifically consider here my interest in Body Weather, as well as my way of finding my own (body) weather and practice. Historically, the training practice of Min Tanaka and his Body Weather (developed in his Body Weather Farm, that he founded in the village of Hakushu in Japan in 1985), was an inheritance from Tatsumi Hijikata's *Ankoku Butoh* and a contribution to dance and performance which is in relation to environmental ecology, and with its working, toiling, moving, dancing and becoming life forms in relations to the elements.

²⁹⁰ From literature material part of ‘Roni Horn aka Roni Horn,’ Tate Modern Exhibition, 25 February-25 May 2009.

bodied recollected experiences. I ponder in stillness while moving with sound. Or, rather, I keep constantly in tune with my surrounding sonic movements, in a becoming stillness-in-motion. I dwell with the nuances of a site, then pacing again, and realising the paradox of moving stillness in auditory directions. The same relationship stays with silence and sound. When we physically recognise that silence is sound, the many and infinitesimal sounds of the many and infinitesimal silences. The variations of speeds and movements are so nuanced to give myself the task of reflecting on the experience of performing and choreographing silences.

In an acoustic conditioning, the body becomes environmental. In aural choreography this conditioning is to be understood as somatic contextualising, as the way for directing, developing and performing listening-in-movement. Audition needs to be immediate, developed and navigated in how, for instance, a sonic cue is filtered by the reflective properties of the outer ear with an orientation to certain sounds instead of others. In a sense this is also an ethical discernment. An ethical discernment here means the implication of a somatic choice which becomes an ethical choice, because it includes our caring positioning in respect to a much wider ecological, as well as social concern. Within the context of a performance laboratory – as well as in a performance setting – time as an alternating of dwelling and pace, becomes crucial for participants as audience-performers to discover their relationship with a site, but also between themselves to the site. Auditory orientation is of crucial significance in this spatial storytelling of aural choreography and, mostly, when I consider it as a method for performance. What becomes important is the experience which comes forth: acoustic destabilisation is essential as a form of spatial *disorientation* within orientation, and finding of *orientation* within disorientation. Sound, which is multi-directional – together with a subtle and constant corporeal-auditory

calibration – can have this choreographing function: orienting the body in a perceptual field of a disorienting environment full of sounds and noises. I include also the relationship between sound and noise, or silence as sound and noise. Richard Coyne says that: “Noise might appear to present the converse to a philosophy of fine-tuning, nudges, and increments. But the subtle aspect of noise that I want to relate to the tuning of place here pertains to noise’s relationship with silence.”²⁹¹ I also think that, in site-contingent performance, asymmetric hearing can work to de-stabilise ~~the~~ ego-centric position. This de-stabilisation has an effect on our positioning in natural environments through the embodiment of the environment and an intuitive and immediate response to outdoor sound fields.

I count as choreography this multi-directional orienting of the body to and through sounds as steps of directedness and orientation. It is a somatic sound-field conditioning, and I take account of what Edward Casey says, that “*All oriented places* in one’s experience depend for their intelligibility on the bilaterality of the human body.”²⁹² It is this double-sidedness which is the bilaterality and asymmetric aspects of the body, and also the binaural aspect of hearing, which are involved when I consider my orientation in movement and direction in acoustic space.



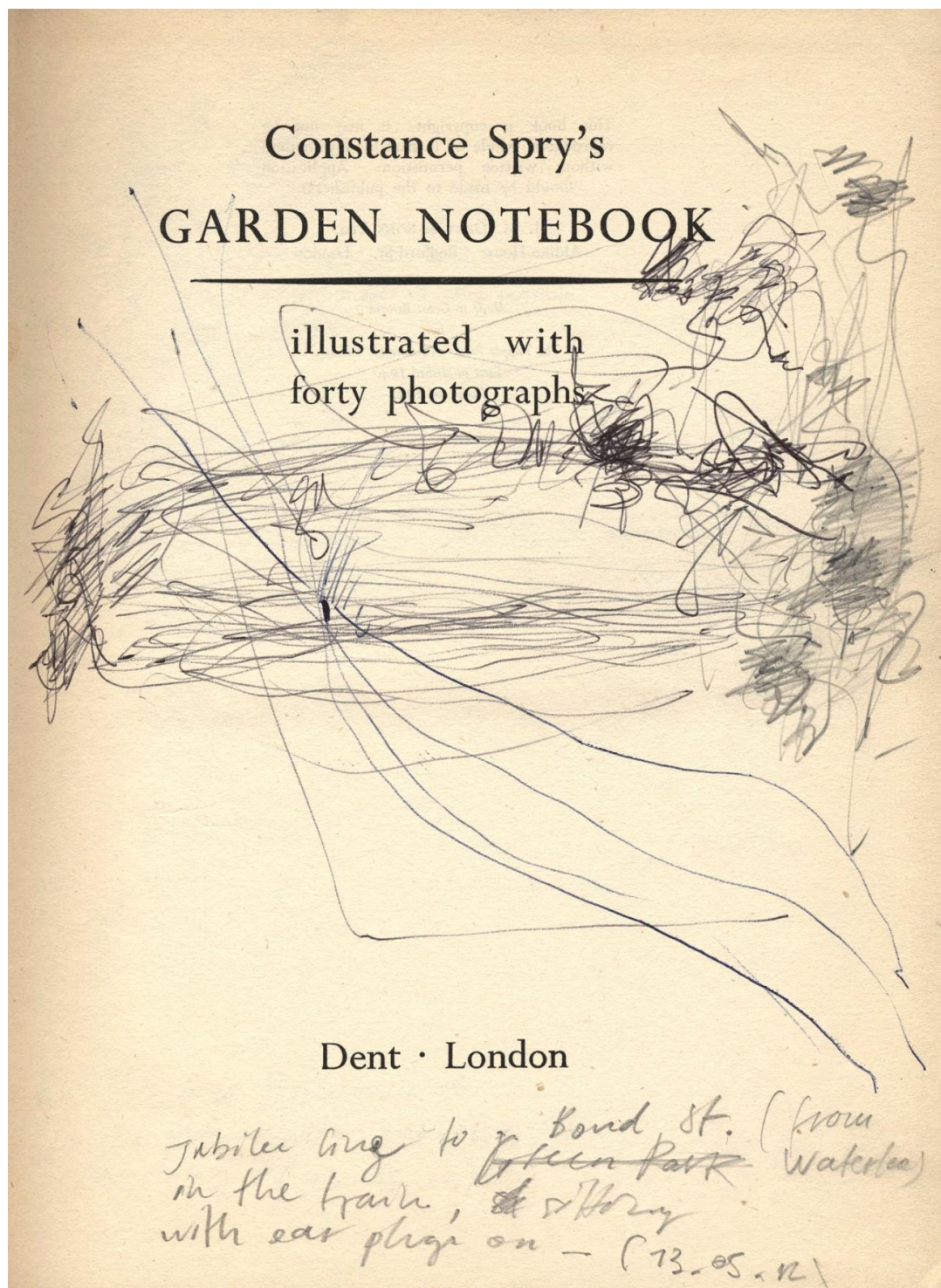
²⁹¹ Coyne, *The Tuning*, p. 208.

²⁹² Casey, *The Fate*, p. 213.

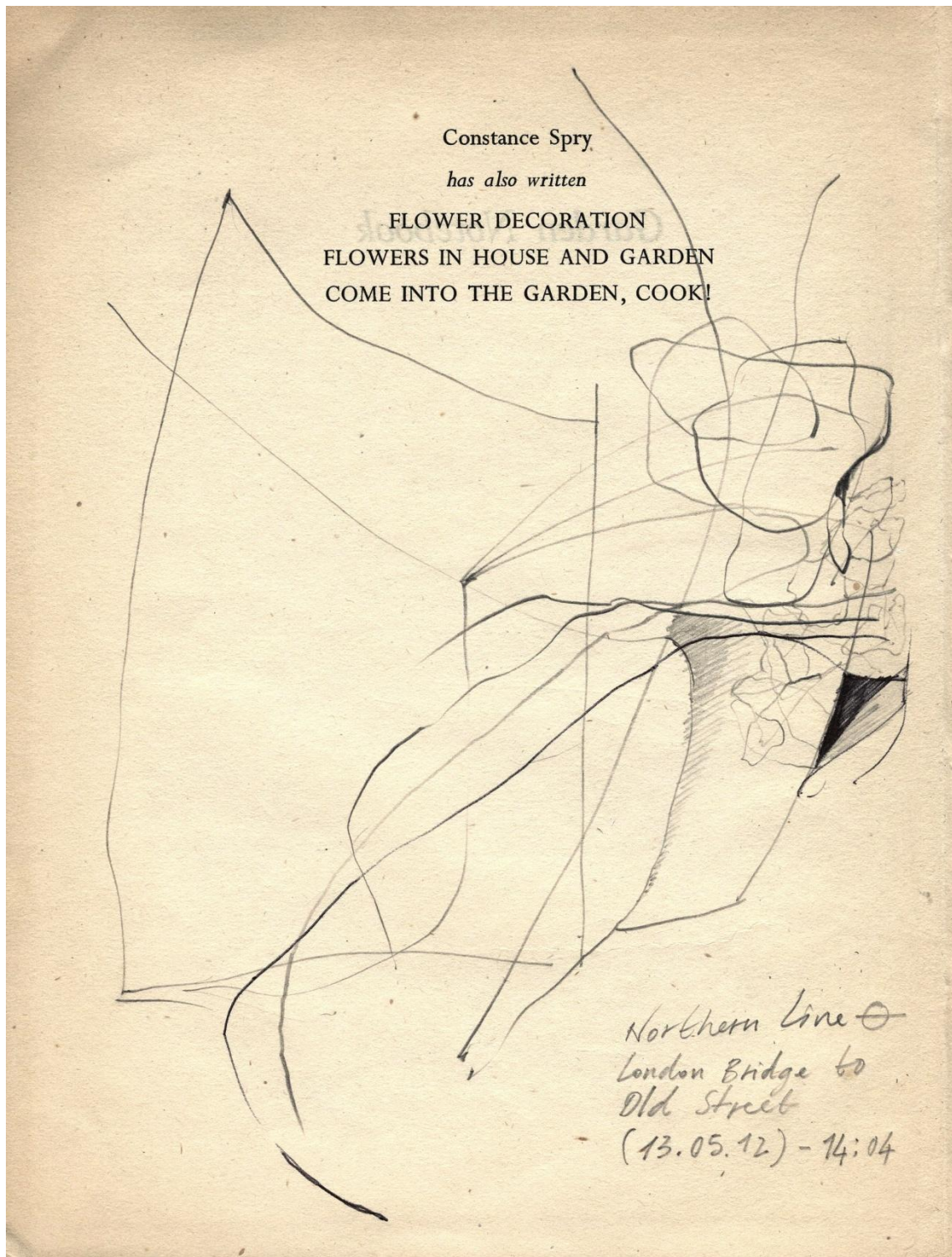


Testing asymmetric hearing, part of Process 4-Intuition Group, research. Middlesex University, Trent Park, London 2007. Photo: Carla Vendramin.

2.7 Aural Choreography: *dissymetry*



Acoustic Ikebana, drawings made in a found book, *Garden Notebook*, Constance Spry, London: Dent, 1940. Drawing 1 (in the Jubilee line train to Bond Street station, sitting with ear plugs on. London 13.05.2012). For the rest of the *Acoustic Ikebana* drawings see the accompanying pdf document of supporting material as part of my PhD portfolio.



Acoustic Ikebana, drawing 2 (in the Northern line train from London Bridge to Old Street station. London 13.05.2012).

In orienting, the slightest asymmetry of bilateral hearing has its importance. For aural choreography, this bilaterality not only as binaural experience of movement, but also as the experience of feeling oneself as a part, as an experience of ‘implacement,’ is significant. In particular, it is to be considered in ‘asymmetric symmetry’ or, following Ikebana masters Marie and Megumi Moriyama, the most appropriate term would be ‘dissymmetry’ as it is: “a small distortion of symmetry, the lack of some elements of symmetry.”²⁹³ This type of ‘imperfection’ ‘distortion’ and ‘dissymmetry’ suggests to me an ‘acoustic ikebana.’ For Moriyama and Moriyama: “Ikebana, which means ‘making flowers live,’ is one of the traditional arts of Japan. Even though ‘flower arrangement’ is used in translation, there is a great contrast with Western style flower arranging. While the former has an asymmetric shape, the latter is based on symmetry.”²⁹⁴ Acoustic ikebana is an experience and image which I have explored also in a series of drawings, including those in an old 1940s book with photographs of Western style flower arrangements. Symmetric flower arrangements evoke the Western inheritance from the ancient Greek ideal of beauty. The notion of ‘perfection’ is very far from this ideal, which I think, later in history, became a notion for symmetry as beauty. The ears have each one a distinct and *imperfectly symmetric*, subjective and unique ways of relating to the world. They are a complex sensorial, physiological, bodied fields of perception where the imperfect balance is also the compensation for what is lacking in an auditory perception. Yet, a balance is achieved through that auditory asymmetry. Aural choreography, through the perceiving of binaural asymmetry – and metaphorically taken from the asymmetry in ikebana – is not a simple issue of location and of placing but of ‘implacing.’ In this respect, I recall Casey who, in discussing Alfred North Whitehead’s Process Philosophy,

²⁹³ In their paper, Marie and Megumi Moriyama mention this term in a footnote, although they continue to use ‘asymmetry’ throughout. They borrow the term ‘dissymmetry’ from Dénes Nagy’s paper “The Western Symmetry and the Japanese Katachi Shake Hands: Interdisciplinary Study of Symmetry and Morphological Science” (Proc. of KUS, 1994, University of Tsukuba, pp. 27-46).

²⁹⁴ Moriyama and Moriyama (1999), ‘A Comparison,’ p. 355.

says that: “What other philosophers (most notably Leibnitz and Nietzsche) would ascribe to the ‘perspective’ of the perceiver, Whitehead attributes to the organic body-as-implaced.”²⁹⁵

This is also what I see in Merleau-Ponty’s concept of ‘open field.’²⁹⁶ Being out-of-one’s ‘self’ is the paradox of what I re-inscribe as implacement. Implacement is actually that of dwelling *in* one’s asymmetric ‘self’ – or rather in one’s being an asymmetric body – as implaced, where the ‘self’ is also intended as an expanded body, the body as expanded field and as an open site of audition. Importantly, ‘implacement’ is not to be perceived as an incorporation, as I understand that incorporation is usually understood to be an ‘atrophied’ concept of embodiment. Finally, this ‘self’ is the historical flow of contingency, and its ungraspability is itself contingency. There is an historical contingency, which Pievani explain as a result of an internal law.²⁹⁷

The experience of the body in aural choreography is one of a moving or walking body through degrees of stillness, a stillness which is not fixity. The moving and walking body is part of variations of speeds and times, trajectories and explorations of duration. A question of reaction to, and effect of, an auditory input becomes significant and, consequently, the significant becomes the ‘if’ and the ‘how to’ of making visible the invisible as well as the asymmetric perception of embodied sounds. In aural choreography, I find the body potentially transformative and mobile even before extrinsic movement takes place. A moment – even before that moment is performed – is already actualised in an intrinsic level: in this sense what seems as chance is always ‘planned’ (yet, ‘contingency plan’ is an oxymoron. In fact, contingency – and specifically in this

²⁹⁵ Casey, *The Fate*, p. 213.

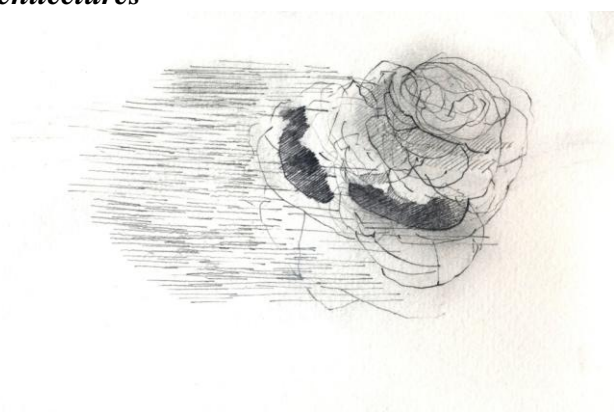
²⁹⁶ I will discuss this concept in the next section.

²⁹⁷ Pievani, “Il soggetto” [The Contingent], p. 24.

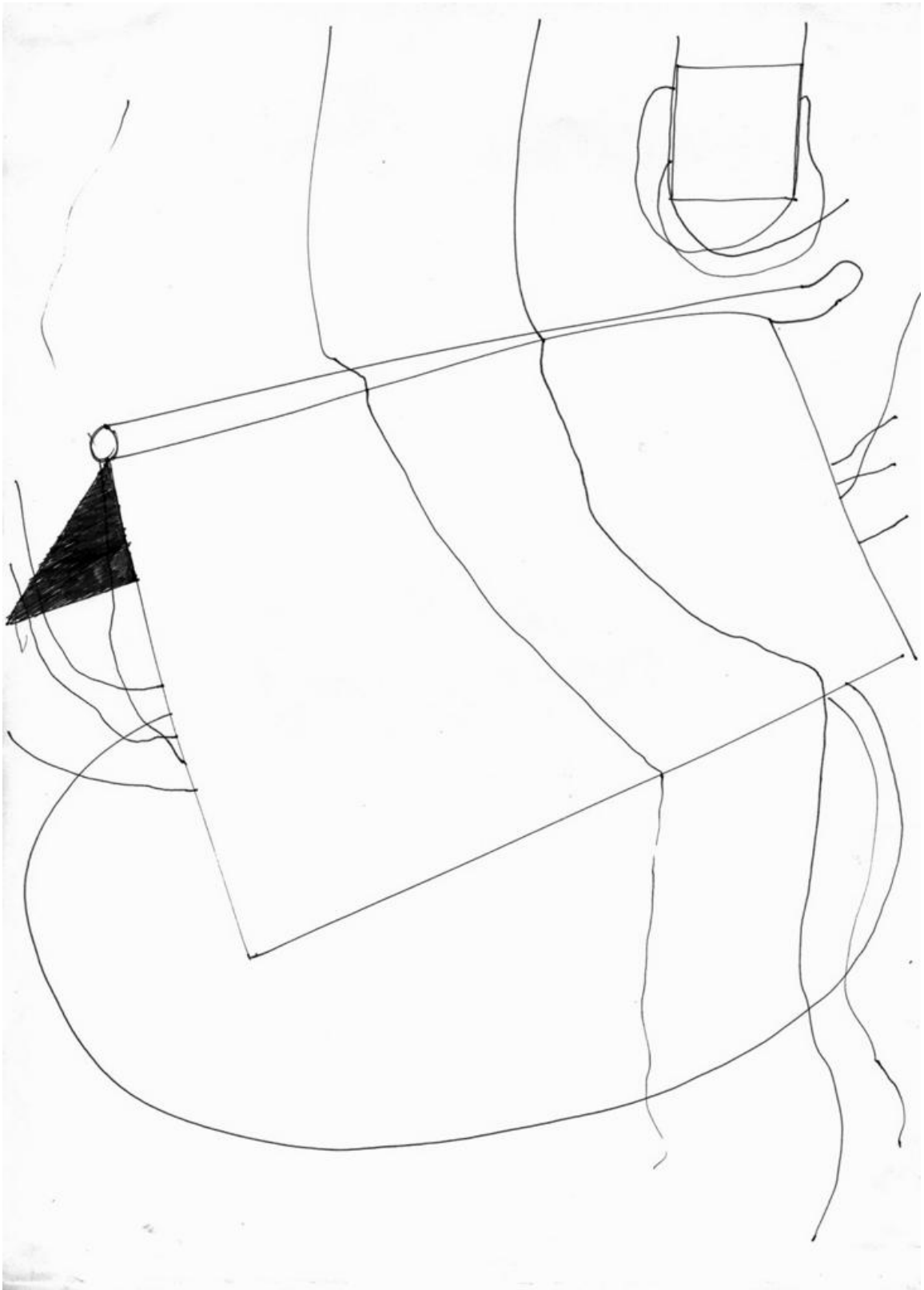
context – cannot be planned). Here, contingency is important where the prediction of auditory stimuli changes, attention against prediction, and all the time this creates a new performative context. This is a ‘moving before moving’ when I, my body, has already decided where to move, seven seconds in advance when I, my body, decided – before actually manifesting an extrinsic movement – what to listen to. These are processes which are unseen and yet are never ‘transparent,’ as they engage with perception and with the ‘lies’ of (aural) perception. There is a lying of our perception which grabs my attention, because an ear body can perceive through the listening body the fleeting world in a very distinct and personally asymmetric way.

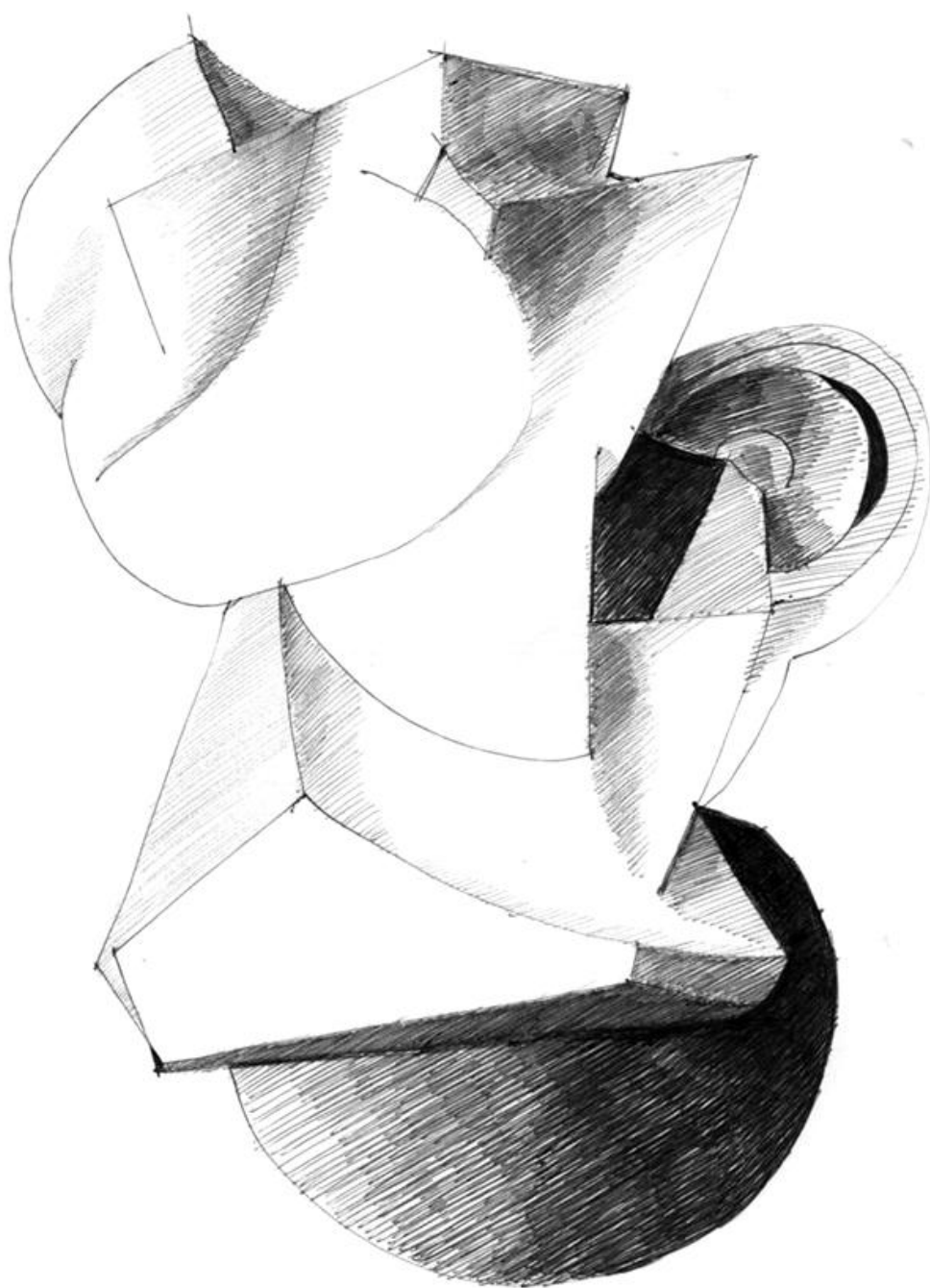
In discussing Oyama’s position to biological systems, Pievani, says that: “*The discriminatory element is the contingent* and constructive character of development processes, whether biological or cognitive,”²⁹⁸ and this is what is constitutive of aural choreography in the application of selective auditory discrimination together with asymmetry in the space of the ears and the world. Sonic choreographies are performed in a diversity of spaces, intended as architectures, those of built-environments and of nature’s architectural spaces. It is in these spaces where I most experience contingency as precarious dwelling, short-lived temporalities.

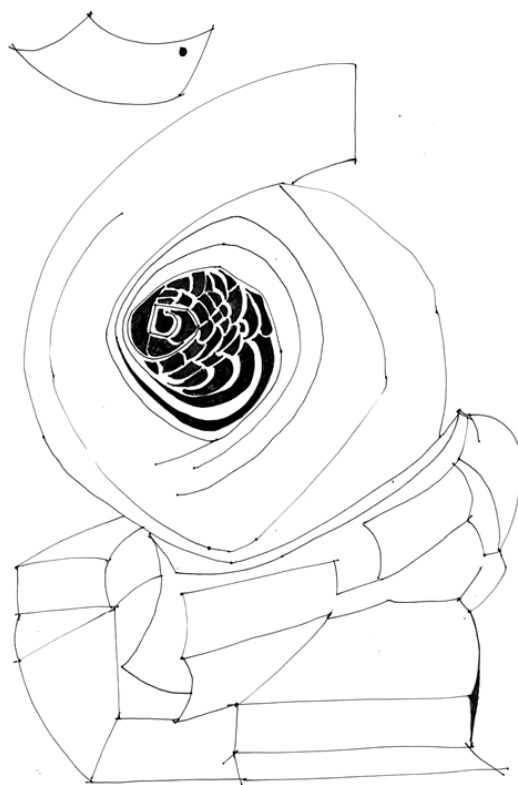
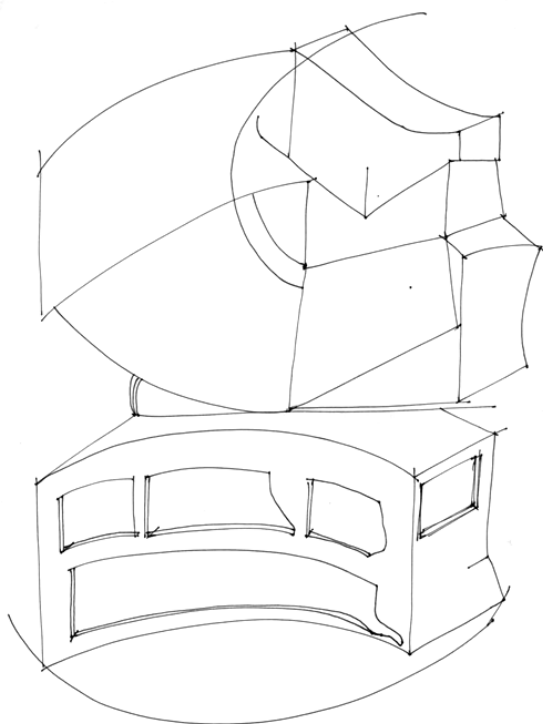
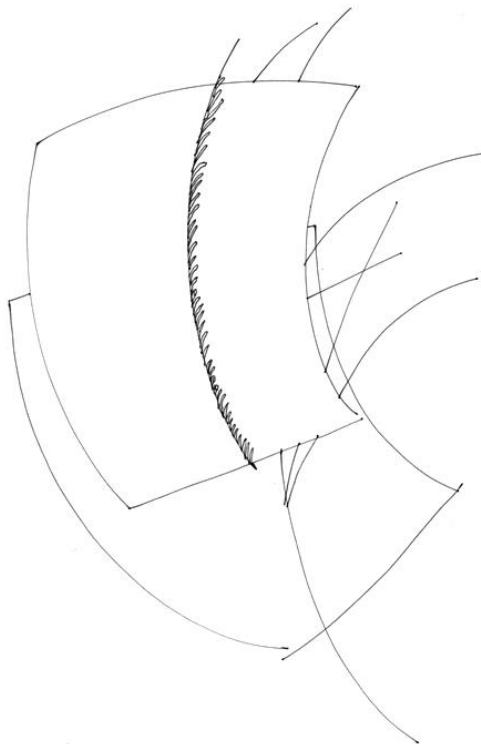
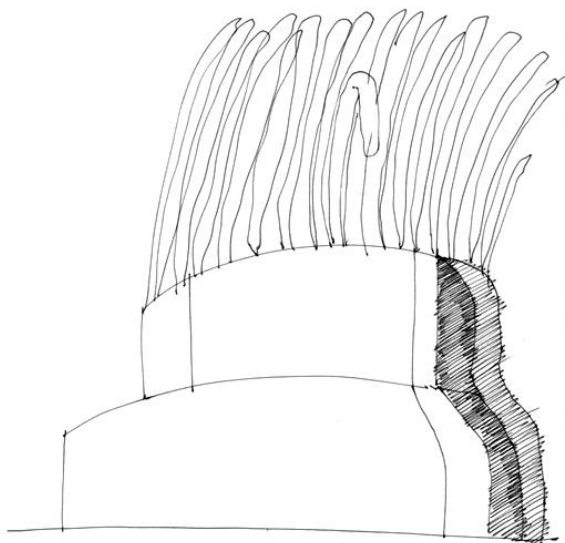
2.8 Aural Choreography: *precarious architectures*

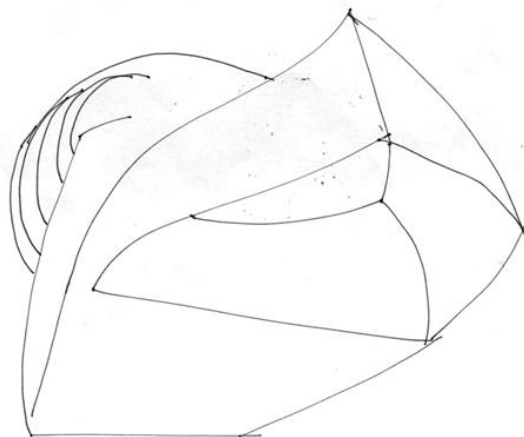


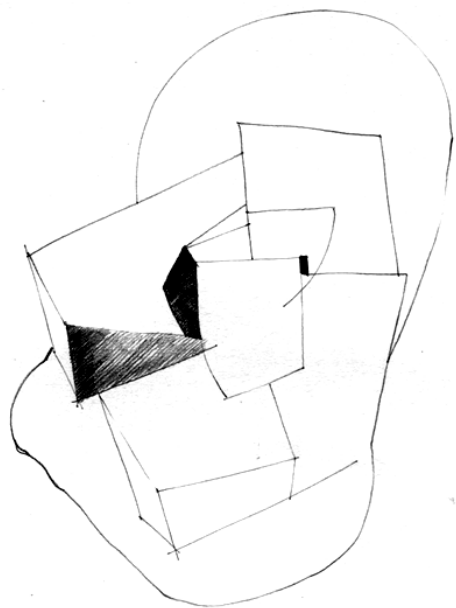
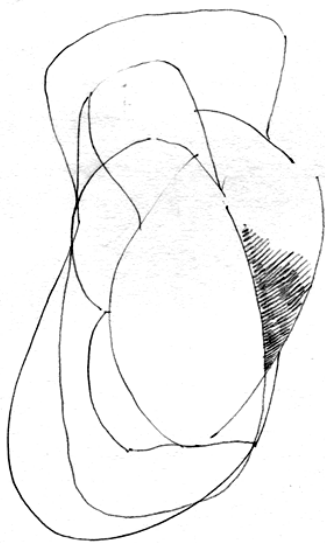
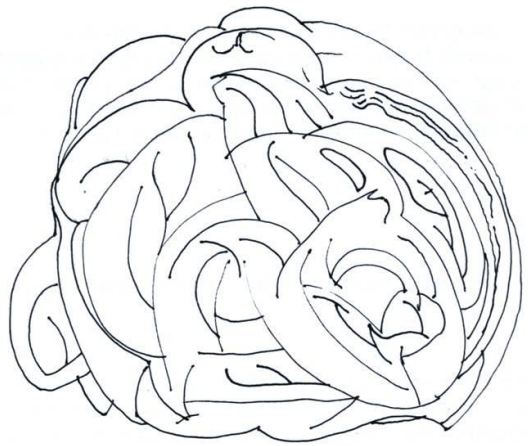
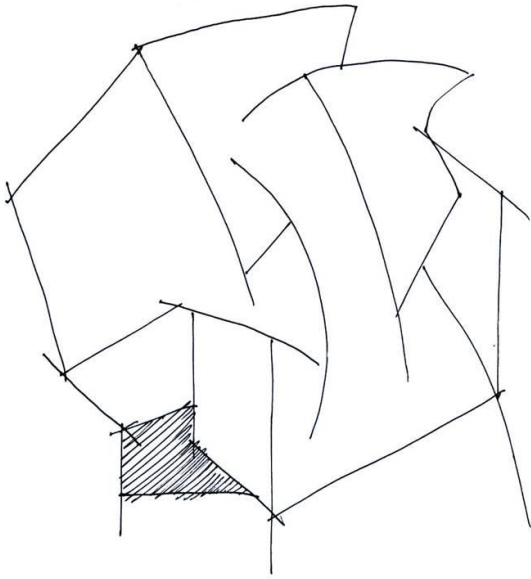
²⁹⁸ Pievani, “Il soggetto” [The Contingent]. [My translation and my italics], p. 24.

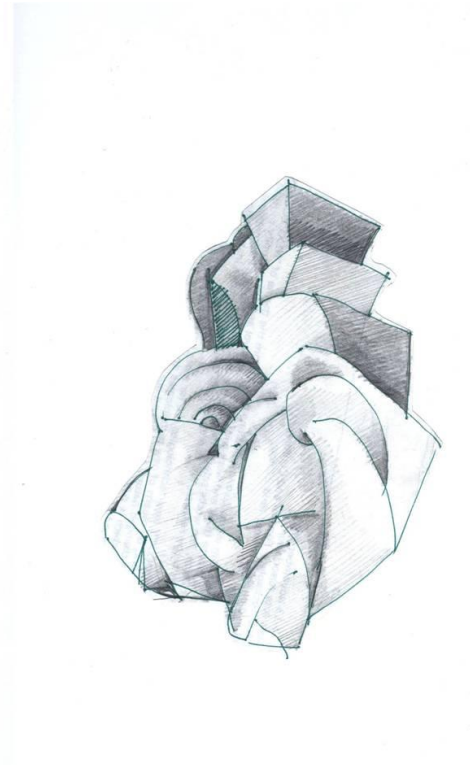
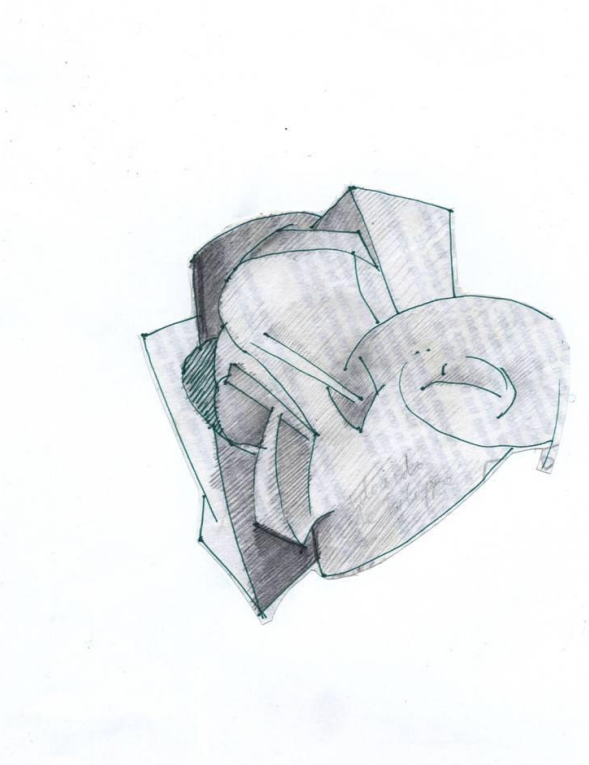




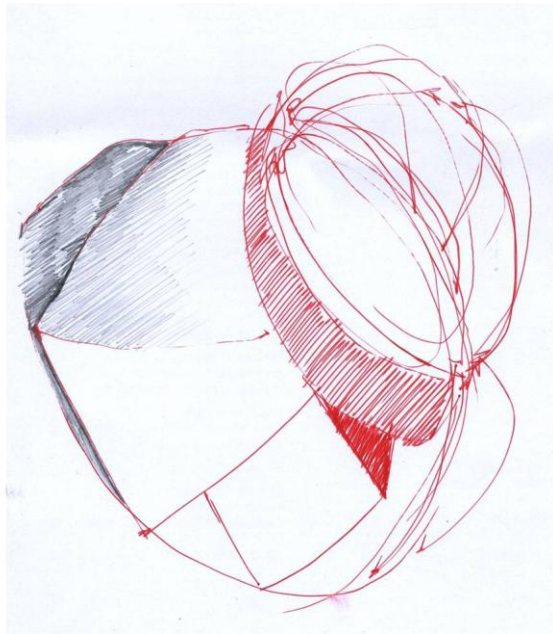


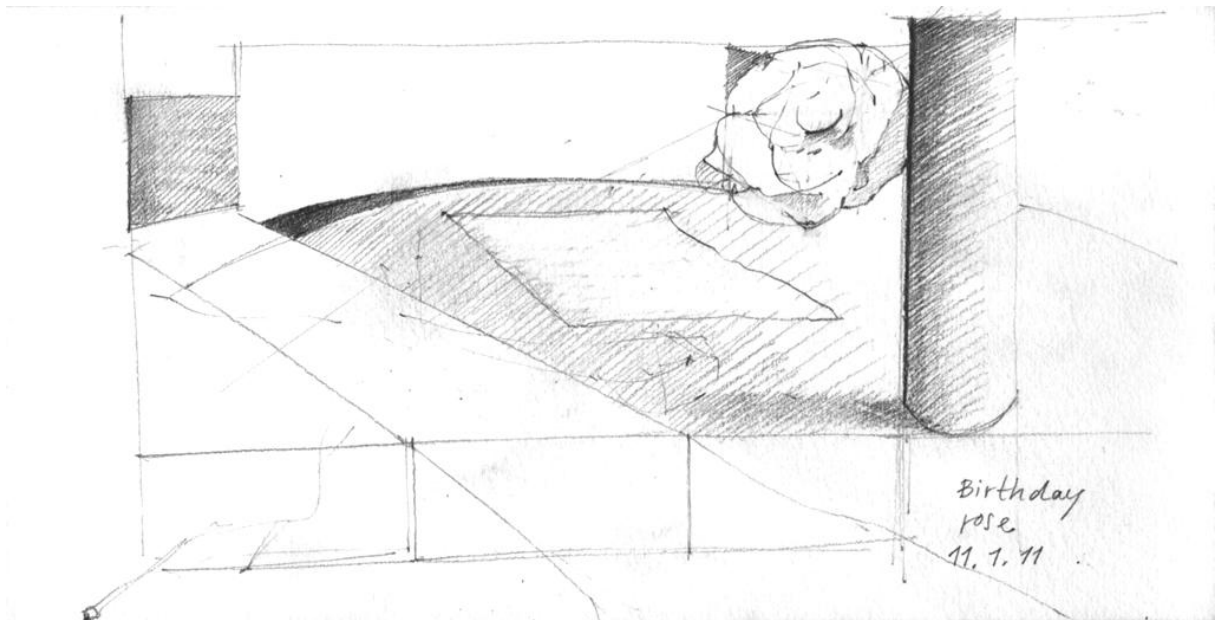
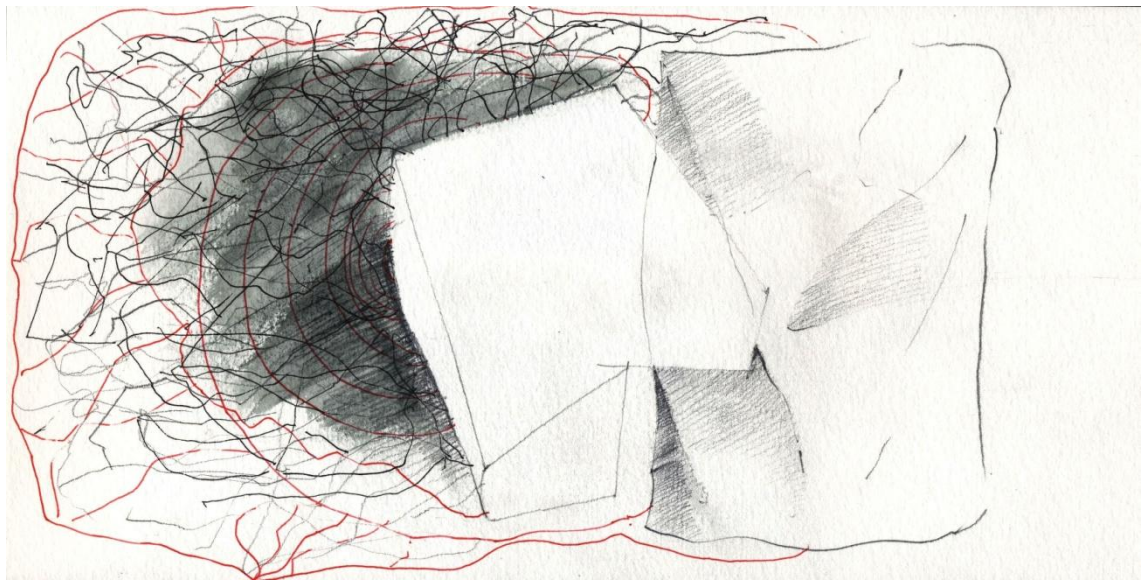




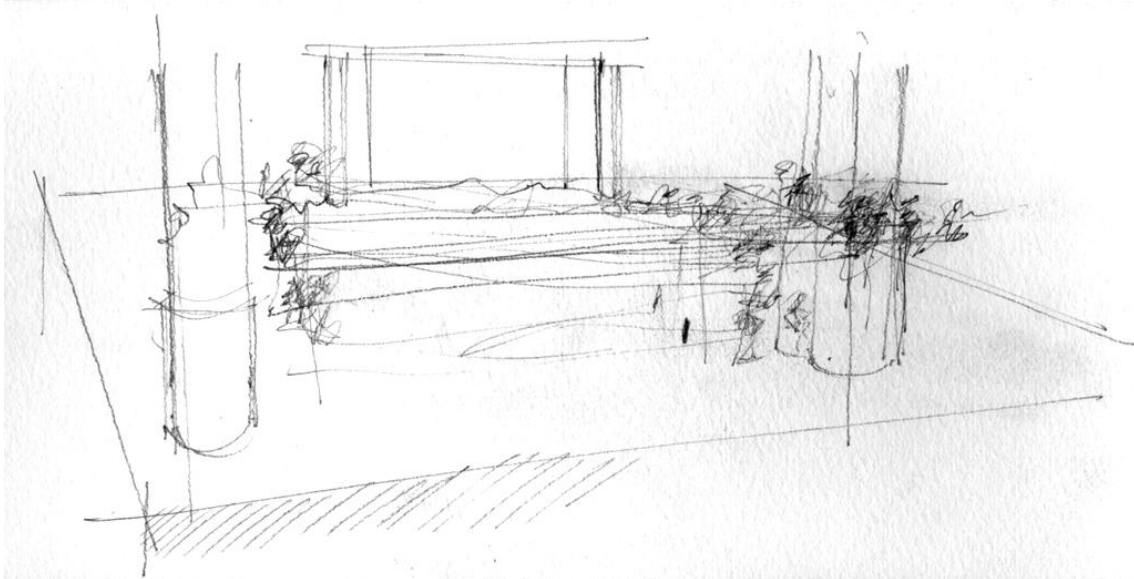
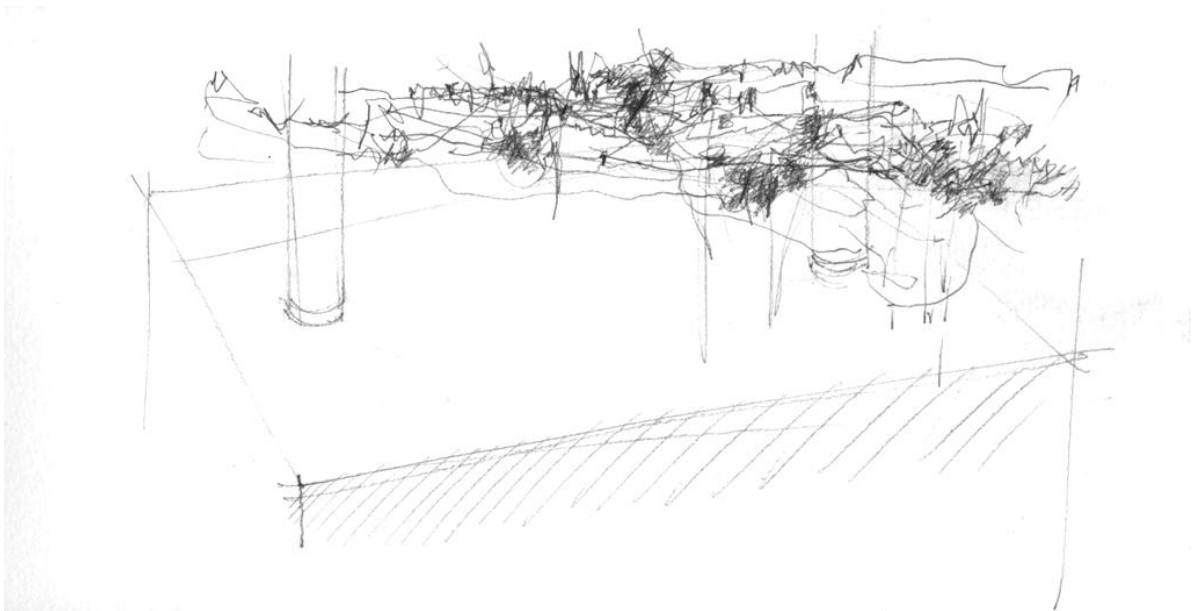
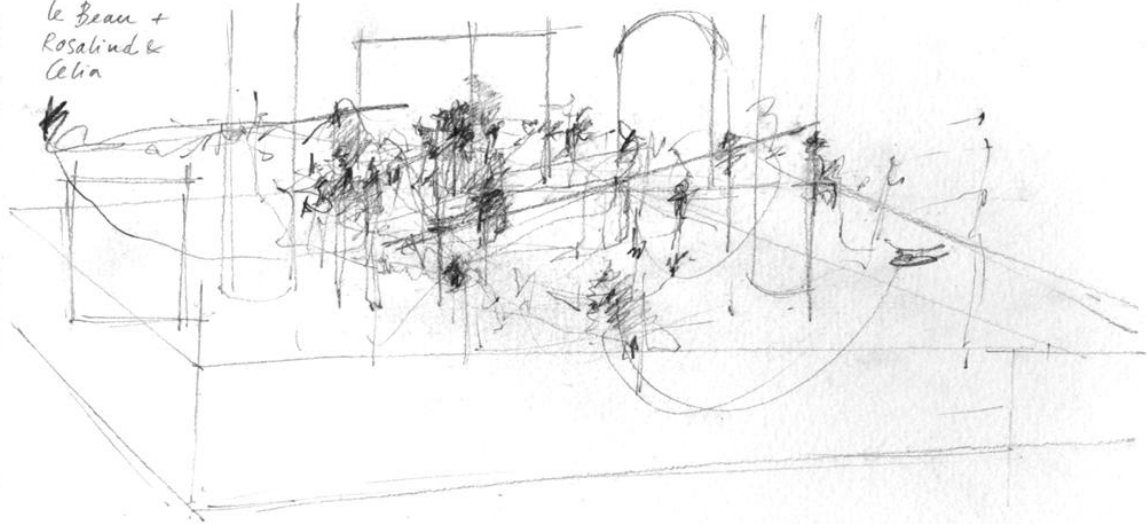


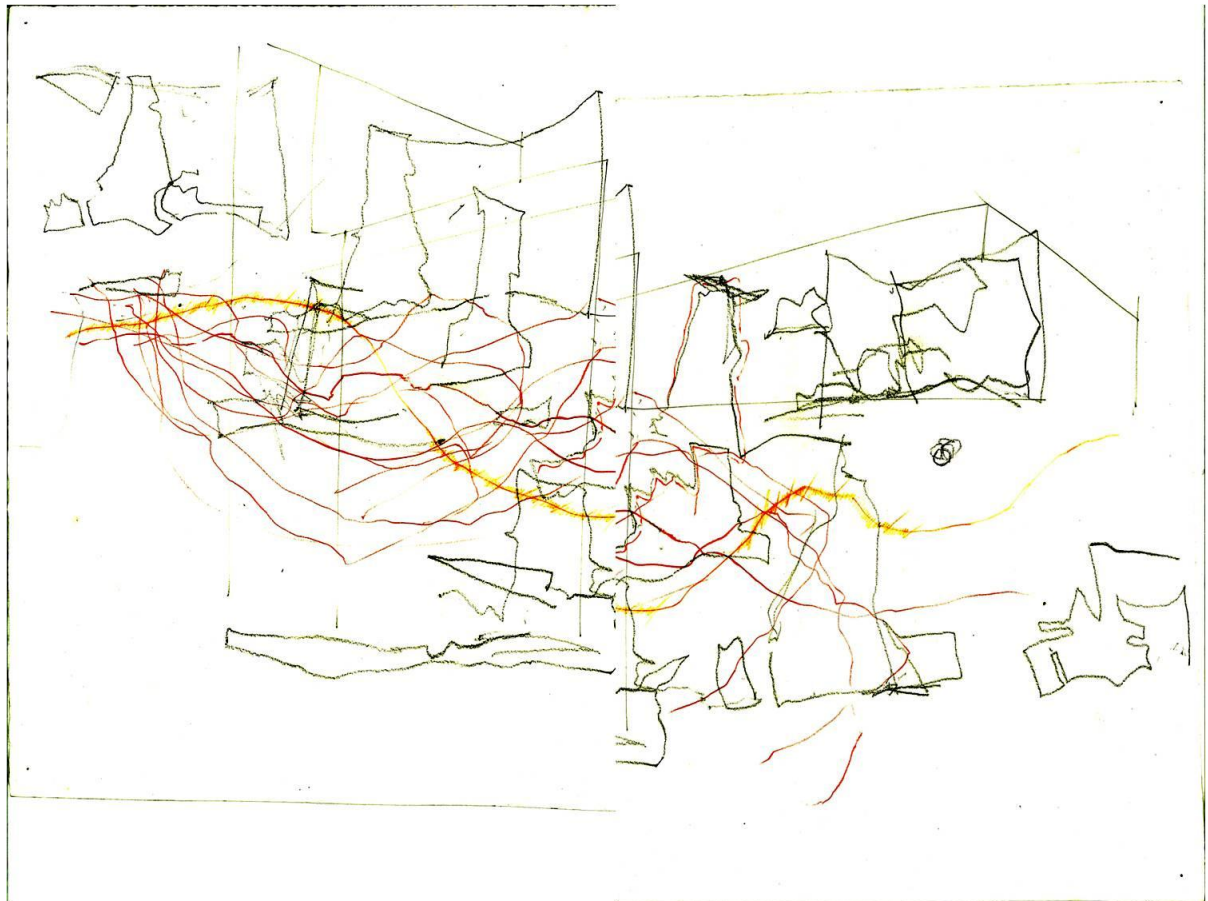
It is with great sadness I forward this information circulated by Dorothy's daughter... Dorothy Heathcote Obituary Dorothy Heathcote MBE, who has died aged 85, was a world-renowned teacher who revolutionised the use of Drama in Education through a variety of pioneering techniques. It is difficult to overstate the impact of the 13-year-old girl who entered a Yorkshire woollen mill to work in 1940, could become a key educational figure in the world of education and drama and yet by the age of 24 she had become a lecturer at the Newcastle-upon-Tyne campus of Durham University, beginning a career that was to span 60 years. In that time she became the inspiration and role model for generations of teachers across the world who recognised in her unique approach the means by which to profoundly engage students and young people with their learning. It was in 1945 that the headlines in the Yorkshire Post announced: 'Weaver Gets Chance of Stage Career' and indeed Dorothy trained as an actress, her love and her by the mill manager. But, much as she enjoyed acting, her vision extended beyond the stage to the use of theatre as an educational construct. She instinctively recognised the natural human predisposition to use drama as a means of exploring and understanding the world and of developing the fundamental life skills needed for it. With that realisation, Dorothy set herself the task of translating her vision into a classroom practice for all ages that continues to be inspirational to millions. Her gift was in being able to touch people and give everything she knew away to those who were interested. Her legacy is that so many were interested and, standing on her shoulders, they continue the work of a genius who, for many, has probably the greatest drama teacher of all. Dorothy remained at Newcastle when it became a university in its own right in 1963. From the School of Education there, word of the charismatic young drama teacher soon began to spread. Her openness of spirit and radical, new pedagogy drew a stream of postgraduate students to Newcastle. She generously welcomed many into her own home and her husband, Raymond, and their daughter, Marianna, became used to sharing the house with an ever-changing group of temporary residents from home and abroad. Dorothy created a whole school of drama practices based around the teacher shifting her pedagogy from that of an instructor to instructor, coach, facilitator and learner, recognising the potency for learning of a co-creative process in which learners are empowered. She created a vocabulary of terminology such as drama for learning, drama conventions, teacher in and out of role, secondary role, Rolling Role, Chamber Theatre, Frame, Signing, Mantle of the Expert and Commissioning that is now in the canon of world-wide dramatic teaching expertise and curriculum models pioneered by her deeply held mission to bring joy and challenge into learning. As her students returned to their places of work, Dorothy's influence was multiplied ten-fold and this precipitated an enduring torrent of requests to work with children, young people, teachers and students across the globe. She accepted them, pioneering the use of drama as a learning process for the world in a wide range of contexts, for example, in townships such as Soweto in South Africa; in New Zealand with Maori communities in the depths of inner cities in the UK; and in numerous countries throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, North America and Australasia. She also worked in hospital institutions in the UK and USA; in residential care homes and learning centres for people with significant disability; in special schools and with those who work with very vulnerable people. Even during her final illness, she found creative ways of continuing, through video-conferencing, for example. However, wherever Dorothy was working in the world she always tried to catch the earliest flight home, and remained 'Dorothy the home-maker'. Her heart was first and foremost with her family; to her neighbours and close friends she was always 'Dorothy the cook, the bread-maker, the seamstress, the gardener'. She was famous for rising early to prepare for the day alongside her favourite cat and the Aga. She always had a book with her wherever she went, and was an avid letter writer. She loved family days out at National Trust properties and going to the theatre, and supported her granddaughter, Anna, in all her theatrical and dance endeavours. In Newcastle, her pioneering methods reached the Medical School where many films focussing on dramatic reconstructing of medical trials were used in the training of medics. Similarly, she became engaged with British Gas senior managers who had become aware of the methods and adopted structures using dramatic contexts to teach their managerial staff new skills for the workplace. This relationship was soon followed by others with Volkswagen, UK, the NHS and more recently with the Crown Prosecution Service and the professional theatre. Dorothy's was an endlessly engaged and enquiring mind and her creativity of thought that enabled her to see the connections between her work and that of others across a spectrum of disciplines. She was never complacent and until very shortly before her death was continuing to develop and refine her practice. This resulted in a richly textured pedagogy with a density of resonance that excited and inspired both the participants in her dramas and





le Beau +
Rosalind &
Celia





Precarious architectures, drawings (2008-ongoing).

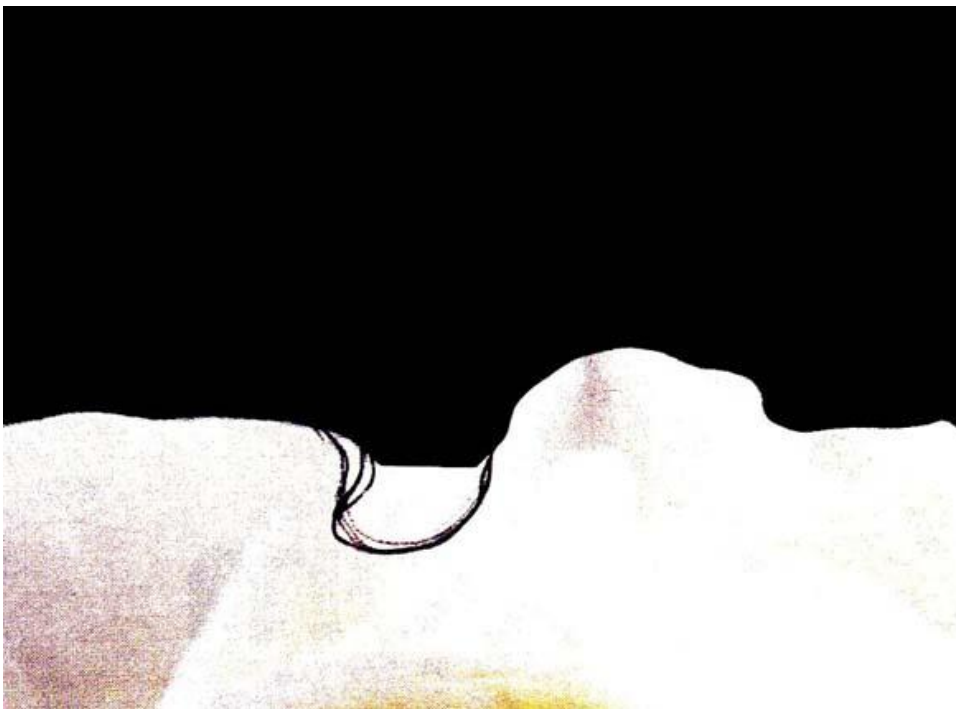
The palace is all whorls, lobes: it is a great ear, whose anatomy and architecture trade names and functions: pavilions, ducts, shells, labyrinths. You are crouched at the bottom, in the innermost zone of the palace-ear, of your own ear.
 Italo Calvino²⁹⁹

The interior of the ear is an architectural theatre, the acoustic shell of a building, as in the ear filled with reflected sounds, those activities in the middle ear are called cochlear echoes, but also reflect the pressure of sonic atmosphere, invisible sonic sculpting and sonic moving.³⁰⁰ Our laced sculptural experience is constituted by random interfaces of sonically sculpted folds with the curves, surfaces and geometries of nature's and human

²⁹⁹ Calvino (1988), *Under*, p. 38.

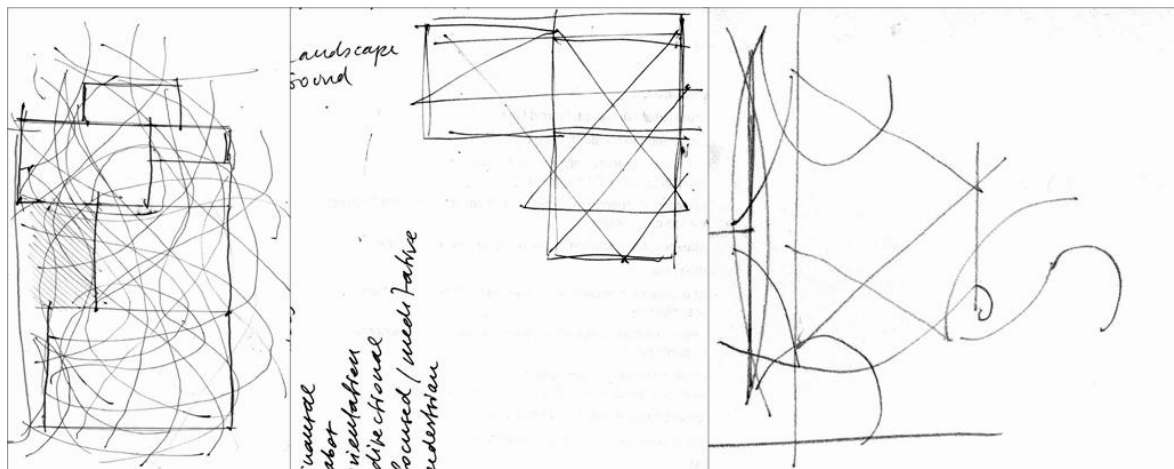
³⁰⁰ Cochlear echoes are "reflected sound [...] These delays are far too long to be attributed to the middle ear, and thus almost certainly result from activity in the cochlea itself." Not to be confused with acoustic otoemissions (as also in the case of tinnitus), in fact, these cochlear echoes "are only observed in ears which are in good physiological conditions [...] The echo is also abolished in ears which have been exposed to intense sounds or ototoxic drugs." Moore, *Introduction*, pp. 260, 261.

built architectures. For instance, when I think about the geometries of nature's architectures, I also think of those of bees and their beehives, but also of their moving and flying. Unfortunately, bees can become 'lost bees' with a lost orientation, a geo-metry of direction. The lines of flying bees, which I can call beelines make me think of a lost sense of home and place, informing me on the still current phenomenon of honeybees going astray and/or dying. As already known, such a problem points to the effect of insecticides used in agriculture and wireless pollution (as well as other forms of pollution) and bees can lose their ability to navigate which is linked to the electromagnetic field of the planet. Bees make me think also of vibrational movement, for example, as the buzzing sound of the bee decreases, a shift is occurring within the vibrational sound-movement through the body which helps the bee activate a suction and obtain the flower's sap. This is also an ear body.



Ear Folds, collage and drawing, 2005.

Lucretius, with his materialistic doctrine in *On the Nature of the Universe*, states that: “nature works through the agency of invisible bodies [and that sound and noise pass] through walls and flies into closed buildings [in the same way that] freezing cold penetrates to the bones.”³⁰¹ For Lucretius, a river, the wind and other elements from nature have a body, although invisible, so these ‘invisible bodies’ or matter ‘seep’ through bodies and move in random motion (recalling that of atoms) through the human and animal bodies and other natures.³⁰² Then what appears solid is fluid, and sound as a sonic invisible and fluid body is part of structures, like the one of vegetable architectures, interacting together with human and other animal-made architectures. Together with sound passing through architectures, our ear bodies as corporeal architectures are also permeated by sound.



Beelines, sketches for a performance-installation, 2008.

When even engaged in ordinary movements of pedestrian directions our ears are never in isolation, but always in proximity to spatial auditory interrelations with architectures which, at the same time, affect our physical proxemic negotiation in a specific time and

³⁰¹ Lucretius (1951), *On the Nature*, p.149.

³⁰² For more on Lucretius, see de May (2009), *Lucretius*.

space. They are inter-corporeal relations and trajectories in and with architectural space. At this point, an echo is that of an architecture, where the urban performance – although is part of a pre-designed interaction – is neither calculated, nor controlled or imposed, but is fluid and specific and provisional, when the project is carried out, and is where also the relation between internal and external spaces is labile. For instance, in my auditory experience in practical research and performance, sound is not only a pretest for exploring its ecological interactions, but particularly my interest in sound in performance is because it allows me to put into discussion what is ‘internal’ and what is ‘external’ and how they are not so separated. This makes me think that the question of one’s ‘separation’ from the environment is not so much in sounds’ frequencies, volumes, but mainly in the quality of one’s relation to it. The architecture I consider here is that of spaces of flow, of time, of transitions, of sonic spatial energy. For Amanda Yates, space, I would add, like sound, is constantly shaped through time, it is an interdisciplinary discourse of durational flows:

Duration is established here as that most irreducible condition of life, the constant unfolding, differentiation and divergence of the new [...] yet Western architectural discourse has spent little time reflecting on temporality.³⁰³

In relational architecture, the organization of spaces is supposed to allow citizens to contribute with their creation. But, when I think of architecture as being an environment which is in relation to other environments (like also that of the body) I think of a deep inter-corporeal and structural relationship through the auditory. These relations can also be understood as something loosely choreographic and compositional, as always rooted in acoustic space, where I realise that I am what I am in a space, I am the space where I am. So, there is no need to be induced, involved, or even ‘coerced’ into becoming relational. I am already relational, as well as architecture and other environments are already

³⁰³ Yates (2012), “Spatial,” p.78.

relational. Gaston Bachelard, the philosopher-poet of space, understood the rootedness of the body as relational in space and, specifically, in architecture. He says: “we have to designate the space of our immobility by making it the space of our being. In *L'état d'ébauche*, Noël Arnaud writes: *Je suis l'espace où je suis* (I am the space where I am).”³⁰⁴ Being the space where one is, is fundamental for aural choreography. In this sense, architectural space and that of the body intersect.



“Dolmen,” 2007. Part of *Klohi*, performance research, Minervino, Italy. Photo: Fabio Pino.

³⁰⁴ Bachelard (1994), *The Poetics*, p. 137.



Performance research in Ugento, 2007. Part of *Klohi*, performance research in archaeological and other sites, Salento region, Italy (2005-ongoing). Photo: Fausta Muci.

The aural experience of an architectural environment could be considered as a stratification of a sonic archaeology. Architectural spaces are sounding spaces of this stratification, if related to our perception, sounding spaces are where not only walls ‘hear’ and ‘remember,’ but also generate our moving and our timing. ‘Remembering’ is here intended as molecular memory, the memory of matter.³⁰⁵ In my performance research architectural spaces – especially those of ancient buildings and archaeological sites, which were constructed by starting from an acoustic concern, an archaeology called archaeoacoustics – are fundamental for my understanding of the mnemonic-corporeal aspect of sites and the immediate experience of any space encountered for the first time.³⁰⁶ In these and in other sites, I experience the architectural sonic surface as a skin, and as such also a human-felt surface, therefore an anthropocentric conception and an artifice, a positioning which can be overcome by allowing myself to be played by sounds, bigger than myself, the environment.³⁰⁷ They are sonic-architectural spaces that human beings have built, and yet, as a consequence, we become ‘built’ or made by them, where sound is an architect.

Within architectural sites, I visualise sound as travelling lines between and through

³⁰⁵ ‘I recall the sonic space and sonorous poetry of the film *L’Avventura* (1960) by Michelangelo Antonioni. I re-hear Monica Vitti, when she voices an empty room of an empty house from its outside, through the perforated blinds of an abandoned house. In a sense, her voice activated the archaeological layers of acoustic space. Here, sound is also that of physical frames, buildings, of opened, closed or semi-closed, ‘blinded’ or perforated windows, like the openings of the ear, oval windows opening to the inner ear.

³⁰⁶ Living in London since 1991, but coming from a different culture, that of Salento (Puglia) in Italy, has put me in contact with different sonic cultures and sites. I have researched and performed internationally, within architectural historical, archaeological and ‘unusual’ sites and landscapes (India, Japan, Croatia, Finland, amongst others), physically attuning to their aural qualities. In Salento (where I often return), I continue to conduct in-situ research and have presented work for many years, exploring its cultures and archaeological sites. These sites include ancient olive oil press (*ipogei*), religious spaces and crypts, caves and towers (*colombaie*), rural traditional stone buildings (*caseddhi/pajare*), quarries, ancient stone walls, megalithic observatory monuments (*specchie*), menhirs and dolmens, as well as industrial archaeological and derelict sites.

³⁰⁷ Luigi Nono, walking in the Basilica of San Marco in Venice, always discovered new spaces, which one, apart from seeing them could also listen to them. He said that: “in the Basilica of San Marco you go in, walk and always discover new areas, yet you hear them, as well as reading them, you also listen to them, even if there is no music” [“Nella basilica di San Marco vai, cammini e scopri spazi sempre nuovi, ma tu li senti, oltre che leggerli li ascolti, anche se non c’è musica”]. Nono’s opening quote in Fiotti (2008), “Multiversi” [Multiverses], p. 2 [my translation].

‘points’ in and of space and bodies, and this becomes a tangible aural topology. This is evident in an example, where architecture – intended here as plastic interactions, between bodies and sonic surfaces – was acoustically tested by the Sicilian architect G. B. Filippo Basile (1825-1891). In his project for the Teatro Massimo (1867/97) in Palermo and specifically its theatre hall, Basile used a detachable model for his acoustic research by pouring inside the model drops of mercury, and then followed the itinerary of the mercury in order to understand the physical behavior of sound waves.³⁰⁸ In a similar way, in my aural choreographic experiments, I endeavored to understand the process and behavior of sound’s resonance in moving ‘mercurial’ human bodies. Movement is here to be understood as vibration. It is a sort of ‘string theory’ of constantly vibrating hair cells and/as bodies.

Sound waves-are mercurial as moving bodies, a continuous process, dynamic as life and in dynamic and shifting space. Indeed space, like sound, generates. In my theory of site-contingency, space is the most important concept and experience. Space creates site and place, as space is a generator of them, all emerges from space.

I came to this realization that space is a generator through my experience of acoustic space. With space, being dynamic, we always have a connection with it even when not aware of it. Through our perception space is a continuous dynamic process of engagement. Dynamic space is in what Abram, discusses as emergent process phenomena. He finds this process in the analysis of spatial concepts by the Navajo people, where pace and:

[S]pace like entities or objects within it, is dynamic. That is, all ‘entities,’ ‘objects,’ or similar units of action and perception must be considered as units that are engaged in continuous process. In the same way, spatial units and spatial

³⁰⁸ For general information on the Teatro Massimo see Gianni Pirrone, *Il Teatro massimo di G.B. Filippo Basile a Palermo, 1867/97*, Officina, Roma, 1984.

relationships are 'qualitative' in this same sense and cannot be considered to be clearly defined, readily quantifiable and static in essence.³⁰⁹

The emergence of cultural particularism gives added significance to the importance of the readily and easily quantifiable, as well as mundane specificities. landscape is, also in this context, to be intended as dynamic architectural space, and therefore not a concept of landscape intended in the static terms of the older nation-states that were the product of the nineteenth century. The contemporary – alas often reductively parochial – emphasis on regional landscape-identity, is perhaps confused in the conservation of sound-marks of an acoustic landscape, which is a caring and protectionist approach for saving the specific bio-diversity of each place. All too often the idealisation of the landscape has a regional functions and acts as a reinforcement of the myth of the unchanging (and of an unchanging landscape architecture), which is at the heart of modern nationalism. For instance, following Andrea Palladio, concepts of landscaped nature and architecture since the sixteenth century have been derived from rigid pre-existing theories, rather than being based on an actual existing and specific landscape. In my performance, landscape is an architectural encounter, a recreated exemplary encounter, one of human and non-human architectures, dynamic structures and natures. Landscape is, in this sense, never strictly the same, it is rather an interlacing of different experiences of space, its architectures, of momentary architectures, and of a persistent unpredictability.

This means that buildings are contingent architectures, too. At times, architecture and the general built-environment with its sonic dimensions – which at the same time could have imposing presence – can emulate unhomely conditions of estrangements in my ears, as uncanny, or *unheimlich* in Freud's articulation. In discussing the architecturally uncanny,

³⁰⁹ Abram, *The Spell*, p. 190; citing Rik Pinxten, Ingrid Van Doren and Frank Harvey, *Antropology of Space: Explorations into the Natural Philosophy and Semantics of the Navajo*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1983, p. 168.

art historian Anthony Vidler talks about the sublime, in tracing “the history of the spatial uncanny as it develops out of the aesthetic of the sublime to its full exploitation in the numerous ‘haunted houses’ of the romantic period,” as well as “the complex and shifting relations between buildings and bodies, structures and sites.” Thus, Freud’s analysis is redolent of “the interpretation of an architectural fragmentation that rejects the traditional embodiment of anthropomorphic projection in built form.”³¹⁰ It is also a double theatre, one of anthropomorphic and anthropocentric performances of power, control and surveillance, architectural theatre used as allure. Yet I consider the ear and its architectural engagement suggesting endless and continuous performative de-stabilising possibilities. Vidler also discusses psychiatrist and philosopher Eugène Minkowski’s term ‘dark space.’ In the analysis of aural experience of architectural space, with its acoustically dark shadows, we could include dark space, as “a living entity, experienced despite its lack of visual depth and visible extension, as deep.”³¹¹ Clearly, in this case, space in its auditory features is deep.

My position in performance strives to challenge architectural anthropocentrism in diminishing as far as possible of its ontology, where aural architecture, history of architecture and performance create simultaneously a moving relation which, in my case, becomes aural choreography. John Palmesino, in discussing architecture in the Anthropocene, argues that:

Architecture is not buildings; buildings are mainly stuff. Architecture is an active connection, a practice which activates a relation between material spaces and their inhabitation; and, it structures that relation, it structures what we call the relation between space and polity, as well as the construction of polities themselves.³¹²

³¹⁰ Vidler (1992), *The Architectural*, p. xi.

³¹¹ Vidler, *The Architectural*, pp. 173, 174.

³¹² In Turpin (ed.) (2013), *Architecture*, p. 16. The term ‘Anthropocene’ comes from the Greek *anthropo* (‘human being’) and *cene* (‘new,’ ‘recent’). Seth Denizen explains that it was independently coined by

In an aural choreographic sense this means a spatial utterance of the constant performance of spaces, when I move through acoustic locations in and as architectural spaces. In this way, a body experiences ‘speaking’ architectural space, where space speaks through architecture and also speaks through our moving in, around and through it. In this way, architecture is a meeting of environmental and social listening. For acoustic theorist Barry Blesser:

Hearing, together with its active complement, listening, is a means by which we sense the events of life, aurally visualize spatial geometry, propagate cultural symbols, stimulate emotions, communicate aural information, experience the movement of time, build social relationships, and retain a memory of experiences. To a significant but underappreciated degree, aural architecture influences all of these functions.³¹³

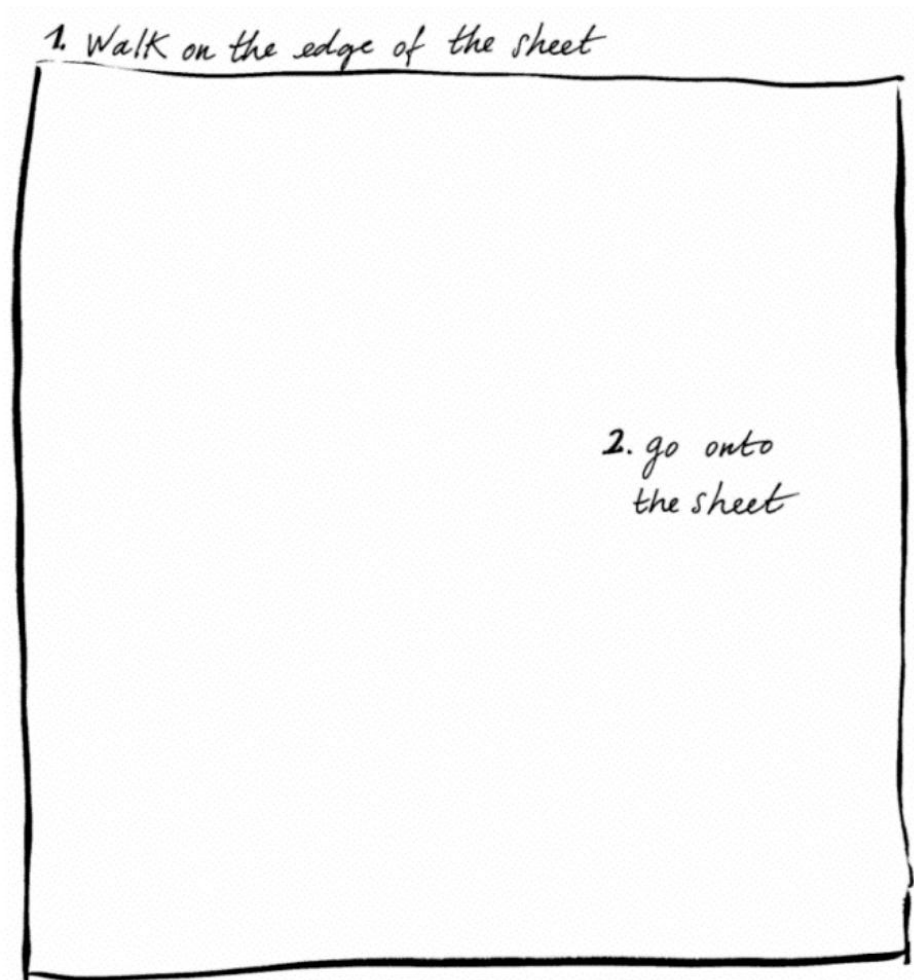
I return to these bio-cultural constructions as architectural environments where aural architecture is the same function of that of the body. When one builds, constructs an architectural or landscaped site, one also performs the site, one also builds, constructs and *performs the performance* of that site. This premise on site and landscape as complex architectures is specifically realised where architecture and performance become sonic sculpting. A vegetable, rock, animal and human construction of the built-environment is constantly sonically invested and affected. For us, a reflection on the diverse meeting points of performance, and then of performance with fragile impermanent architectures. These are precarious architectures and constituted by complex specificities: spatio-

chemist Paul Crutzen and ecologist Eugene Stoermer “to refer to the present – since 1800 CE – as geologically distinct from everything that has happened since the end of the last ice age 11,700 years ago. This geological distinction comes from the global scale of human alteration of the environment, from things like dams, agricultural erosion, ocean acidification, urbanization, and atmospheric change. The formalization of this term by the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS) would mean the end of the current geological epoch, the Holocene.” Denizen (2013), ‘Three Holes,’ Notes, p. 43.

³¹³ Blesser, *Space*, p. 4.

temporal, sensorial, cultural, social, historical, all happening within a context and a framed field, full of potential performative possibilities. An auditory event has its coordinates, and it has its spatial field. This field becomes as such through a frame, or a series of frames, which are frames of field. These frames are devices for navigation in performance and performance research, they allow a connection with a site and they create a *circumnavigation*, which in turn creates an experience of place.³¹⁴

2.9 Aural Choreography: *frames of field*



The sheet on the floor used as a ritual delimitation by the *tarantati*. Drawing, Fabrizio Manco 2011.

³¹⁴ I think that in this context *circumnavigation* is a suitable word. I borrow it from Casey in his discussion on James Joyce's *Ulysses*. He talks about *peri-plus*, which is "the ancient Mediterranean navigational guide used by Phoenicians sailors" and its meaning "brings with it both place-sensitivity (i.e., to particular coasts and islands) and time-awareness (i.e., in the form of the guide's fixed sequence of places to be visited)." Casey (2009), *Getting Back*, footnote 10, p. 388.

Every frame defines an implicit conceptual field. [...] The content of frames also determines the distinguishability of exemplars. [...] Frames readily support the creative combination of information. [...] Frames capture constancy and variability across exemplars in time.
Lawrence W. Barsalou³¹⁵

My contingency does not have a plan, but it depends on frames. Frames create fields of (auditory) perception. One frame comes after another, one frame within another frame in a topological but also physical acoustic and creative space, one which creates relations. Acoustic space aggregates physical events, matter, and creates its numerous manifestations. Its perception and diffusion of sound in theatres relate to a culture and definitions of space which are very complex. A culture sees the human and animal body in relation to hearing/listening to the world which, in human terms, is a geometry, a somatic 'measurement' of perimeters of physical space as site which we hear/listen to beforehand.³¹⁶ The somatic extent in which a body creates ritualistic or liminal perimeters is here the component of a field. The ears are this somatic extent. Sound creates a field but also a somatic world, another field: a world beyond its field, but not beyond this world. It shifts spatially our moving and relating to its space where sometimes we are performed by sound, but, at other times, we recognise this as an interaction through a perceptual and physical delimitation.

Opposite to what is normally thought of contingency, in this case contingency in aural choreography does not oppose projectuality and it is by no means a reality of restriction. Indeed, I would argue, it is the project which creates contingency itself, meaning contingency that, as a creative opportunity, comes out and takes place and is realised within a frame. In aural choreography, for contingency to be realised, structure is needed. This structure could be physical, invisible or visual but, in any case, it is an acoustic frame, the

³¹⁵ Barsalou (1992), "Frames," pp. 61-67.

³¹⁶ Moshe Feldenkrais comes to mind: "When we pay attention to what we see [we] cannot help withdrawing our attention from the better part of the space around us. [...] The ears did just this before their information began to be partially ignored and neglected, and before vision became domineering instead of dominant." Feldenkrais in Beringer (ed.) (2010), *Embodied*, p. 51.

frame which becomes a field. Framing sound is a paradox and, even more so, through visual means of framing acoustics.

Here I bring together all of the notions discussed in the previous sections, by considering them inherent in the concept of field, a field constituted by a frame. For instance, Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'open field' calls my attention to questioning what is a field: "the world is a field, and as such is always open."³¹⁷ But the field is also an experience of space, and as such the field is possible only through sensorial spatial perception, realised through sensorial engagement in performance, and in this sense the field is phenomenal.³¹⁸ Plurally, fields and frames, although delimited, are yet to be intended as devices towards radical openness. Fields and frames are realised in aural choreography through practices of delimitations. These delimitations or framing of areas, elements, the body, are where performance becomes a funnelling bodied perception which might allow transformation.

Transformation is here implied as the chance of finding other ways of moving, which is possible through physically visible and perceivable perimeters. Frames are necessary as improvisational devices, and even if with the present awareness that these frames are completely fabricated, they are nonetheless necessary parameters of corporeal navigations. Through frames, I can allow my senses to perform their movements, and their movements beyond a frame. External sounds and somatosounds affect our exchanges with the acoustic world and its sites. When I move, listening becomes a better way for the body to specifically relate to different locations, through its being a sort of flexible and fluid diaphragm of exchanges. All of these exchanges imply process, where one's ears perceive only the epiphenomenon of acoustic space, but still, the greater vibrational environment can make my spatial responsiveness emerge. Spatial responsiveness could make us ponder on how we, as listening and attending performers,

³¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible*, p. 185.

³¹⁸ As already anticipated in the discussion on Merleau-Ponty and his concepts of perception and sensation in Chapter 1.

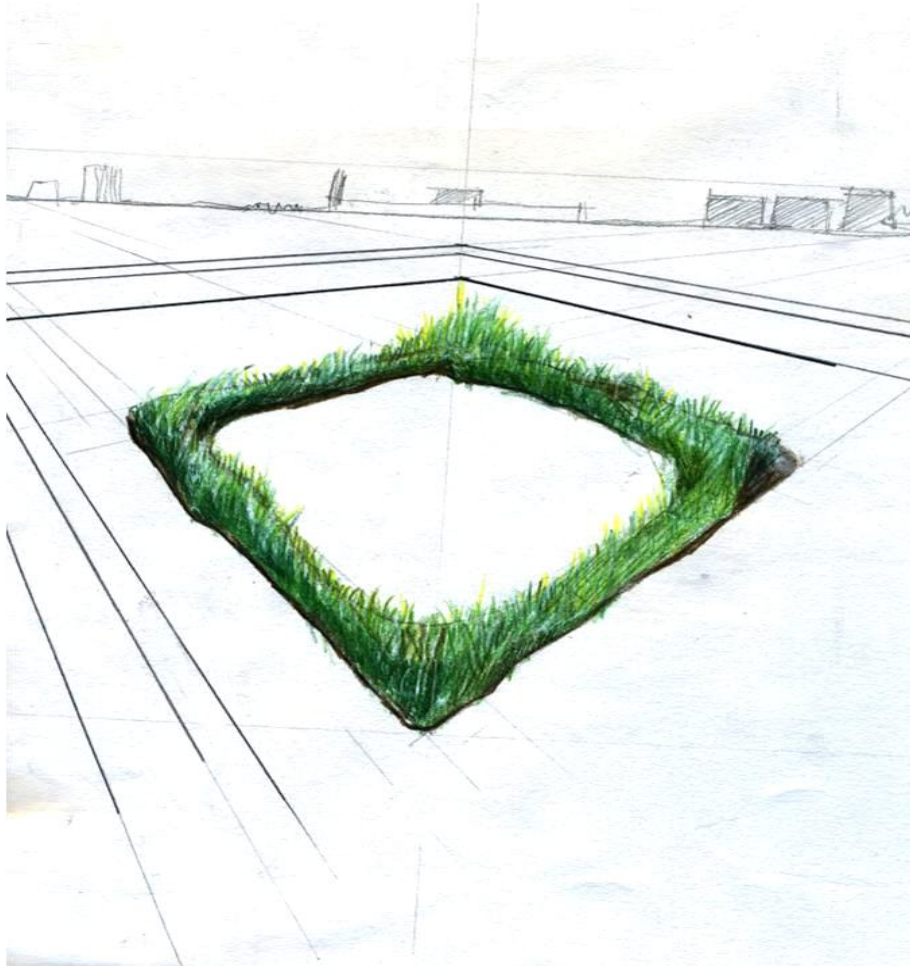
act, move, take responsibility for and become more aware of a delimited site. If I take into consideration the experience of specificity within flux, I move within a flux of pre-existing sound fields, for instance, those sounds which are the distinctive marks of what can only be found in the immediate acoustics of a site. Aural choreography in a site is then realised – using the words of Mathews – through “the wider psychophysical field of existence,”³¹⁹ however not as much as ontological or existential field, but as one’s spatial responsiveness. By existence I do not intend an ontology but a field, one which is never absolute entity, as any monad – even one which has the most widely open windows – is always an enclosure.

As a linguistic term ‘field’ is described in *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* as “a stretch of open land,” as an “area of operation, or investigation; a (wider or narrower) range of opportunities.” Yet, more than any other descriptions, the ones I find here more appropriate are: “an extended surface,” “an expanse” and, most of all, a “groundwork.”³²⁰ In the case of Italo Calvino a field is a lawn. He wrote: “A lawn does not have precise boundaries, there is a border where the grass stops growing but still a few scattered blades sprout farther on, then a thick green clod, then a sparser stretch: are they still part of the lawn, or not? [...] The lawn is a collection of grasses [...] is ‘the lawn’ what we see or do we see one grass plus one grass plus one grass ...?”³²¹

³¹⁹ Mathews (2006), “Introduction,” p. 6.

³²⁰ The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (1993), pp. 942-943.

³²¹ [Un prato non ha confini netti, c’è un orlo dove l’erba cessa di crescere ma ancora qualche filo sparso ne spunta più in là, poi una zolla verde fitta, poi una striscia più rada: fanno ancora parte del prato o no? [...] Il prato è un insieme d’erbe [...] è ‘il prato’ ciò che noi vediamo oppure vediamo un’erba più un’erba più un’erba...?]. Calvino, *Mr Palomar*, pp. 28, 29 [my translation].



'Framed Field,' sketch for installation *How to Explain a Field to a Dead Magpie (?)*. Fabrizio Manco, 2012.

The expanse of a field finds an existence through the action of delimitation, delimitation as groundwork. A delimitation is one limited by our sensorial perception's horizons. The actual perceptual field is the setting of the spatiality of a frame, and this is one of every distinct, single auditory sensation. Merleau-Ponty reminds us that:

Every sensation is spatial [...] because, as primordial contact with being, as the assumption by the sentient subject of a form of existence to which the sensible points, and as the co-existence of sentient and sensible, it is itself constitutive of a setting for co-existence, in other words, of a space.³²²

³²² Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, p. 221.

Every auditory sensation meets and corresponds here with the spatial, the spatial *as* auditory framing of a space, a sound field of co-existence.

In my aural choreography, this framing comes from the imaginary or actual outlines of sonic architectural areas which are marked with different materials, and through drawing. Specifically intended, for its paradoxical and acoustic imaginary character, a field is of something endless because it is framed. Adrian Curtin, explores the acoustic imaginary – in his chapter of the same title – in relation to modernity and avant-garde theatre. Maurice Maeterlinck’s playwriting, steeped into modernist mystical symbolism, appears as poignant when thinking about sound and the imaginary. As Curtin puts it: “Maeterlinck’s use of sound (in this case of speech) as an evocation, a summoning of an acoustic imaginary not literally represented but potentially activated in the minds of the play’s characters, readers, and audience members.”³²³

A field is constituted by an open perimeter, in other words, is not a perimeter for safety and withdrawal, but one which is open to welcome coming events.

One is within a physical mapping which however, at the same time, undoes a territorial concept of a map. A frame is instead a device for easy moving, one coming from immediate experience. A frame creates a field but at the same time frees a field. It emphasises what does not divide. In this case, the map is not the territory, although not in the linguistic sense intended by mathematical philosopher Alfred Korzybski, but neither is it a mental navigation.³²⁴ In my aural choreography framing is instead an act opening a place for transformation through the mapping of sound, of its performative possibilities. I intend the mapping as an exploration of acoustic perimeters and the sounds of vicinities,

³²³ Curtin, *Avant-Garde*, p. 55.

³²⁴ Peter Harries-Jones explains that: “Korzybski summarized his principles of semantics by the memorable expression: ‘the map is not the territory.’ He meant that words are neither outside objects nor are they inner feelings; instead all language can be considered as names for the relations we construct between the objective and verbal world.” Harries-Jones (1995), *A Recursive*, p. 68.

by both applying conceptual and physical restrictions that become a tool for attempting to localise our becoming positions in the space/world. In this way, framing becomes a practical method for sensorial mapping, responsiveness and for enabling moving in context. This moving in context is the relationship with and inside the margin with what is out beyond the margin. What is there at the margins of a frame? And, how loud is a frame? There is another frame. And an act of framing is the performance. This act is the thing which allows ‘acoustic communication.’³²⁵ It is specifically in aural choreography, and generally in performance, that a frame becomes unhinged. In its unhinging, the frame still remains a reference point, and becomes a spatial liaison between body space and its relationship with the environment, the field. It becomes that tangible space-in-between, the *passe-partout* of a relationship. Without sound, there is still listening, but not silence. It is silence which creates our relation to framing and the *passe-partout*. It takes an effort to listen to silence, and silence, indeed, is a result of a sensorial negotiation of the space-in-between us and the world. Periphery is to become a perceptual extension and a continuous deference. I intend it here as a fictional limit which needs be surpassed, because it is in the search for silence that sound exists. These concepts, practically applied to aural choreographic concerns, are in relation to the acoustic cues one decides to follow and to move according to those and in relation to visual, scenographic, architectural, imagined or sensorial delimitations.

³²⁵ Truax applies his term acoustic communication “to the study of how information flows between listeners and their environments, and how sound creates relationships, both personal and social.” Truax, “Music,” p. 2.



Farmers in a field just outside Melissano, Italy.



Nets under olive trees. Photo: Fabrizio Manco.

An example of localisation and position within these delimitations is the actual framings of agricultural fields which I have seen, heard and lived in since my childhood, an exploration of restrictions, of perimeters, of vicinities. By applying imaginary, visual and architectural frames, these delimitations could become a tool for one's situated listening body. An agricultural example is what in Salentine dialect farmers call *finita*. A *finita* is a stone which delimitates an imaginary perimeter. The perimeter is made by four stones connected by imaginary lines, we could say, an image of a field as both finite and infinite. In the instance of agricultural work, the cultivated areas are marked spaces for recognition, as fields, fields where plants are dormant or germinating, where vegetable

happenings are taking place. Then, the site and the marked/drawn field both coincide, and this coinciding event is ‘an always open theatre.’³²⁶ Being always open, the acoustic field is for life, its life, its living and vital voices, which are also listening voices.³²⁷

Performance takes place in delimiting the space in which one operates. These are delimitations into which realise space. Inside these delimitations one toils, composes (also compositions of sounds), practices a ritual (around and in a ritual delimitation). In the metaphor of agriculture, I cultivate – and I have harvested – a field of living and phantom sounds. This ‘cultivation’ is the performativity of moving as researching and vice-versa. In a field, the perception and sensation of sound as decaying and dying, opens me up to the temporality of contingency. As Merleau-Ponty reminds us: “Each sensation, being strictly speaking, the first, last and only one of its kind, is a birth and a death.”³²⁸ Through autobiographical unfolding, my working and interest in an agricultural Southern Italian past, is also that of the specific ways that the peasantry had, and still have, to highlight areas. Tying, harvesting, with the use of materials like ropes, coloured strings, fabrics, nets, ribbons – interacting with the wind – and also paint and other different ranges of materials, created their own earth and sound fields, together with the consequential sonic events of their working; their own *arte povera*. In these devices of framing – and acoustic areas of agrarian sounds and stages of animal and agricultural landscape, hard work and life – I wonder if sound does really die, and if it does, where does it die?³²⁹

³²⁶ I paraphrase the title of a collection of poems by the Italian poet Patrizia Cavalli, *Sempre aperto teatro* [Always Open Theatre], Einaudi, Turin, 1999.

³²⁷ The conjunction between life and vitalism is not fitting. Vitalism is often not a celebration of life. From its modernist and philosophical inception in the 19th century and its ecophobic developments in the 20th century, vitalism is still present in this century as well.

³²⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, p. 216.

³²⁹ John Cage said: “Until I die there will be sounds. And they will continue following my death [...] sounds occur whether intended or not, one turns in the direction of those he does not intend. [...] This psychological turning leads to the world of nature, where, gradually or suddenly, one sees that humanity and nature, not separate, are in this world together; that nothing was lost when everything was given away. In fact, everything is gained.” Cage (1957), *Experimental*, p. 2.



How to Explain a Field to a Dead Magpie (?), installation, University of Roehampton and video stills, 2012. Photo and video: Fabrizio Manco.



How to Explain a Field to a Dead Magpie (?), video stills, 2012. Photo: Fausta Muci, video: Fabrizio Manco and Fausta Muci.

When I think about the disappearing markings of physical animal and human acoustic tones, I retain an after-sound, and I keep recalling and revisiting agricultural fields in the passing years, while noticing and hearing what is present, what is not and what is lost forever. Practices of apparent control and continuous survival, in a sound field and sowed earth.

A field is disclosed through being a site beyond control: *a site which is a field* is living its contingency. The site which is a perceptually experienced field, is for allowing life – or a moving passing reflection on it, life and its passing forms, in an animistic sense, its many living spirits. This spirit is not a spiritualistic essence, but the one that eco-psychologist Adrian Harris appropriately connects to animism, which:

has long been considered as a primitive notion we can ignore, but it can take us beyond subject/object duality [and that] perhaps the genius loci is neither subject nor object, but *emerges* from the way we are enmeshed in place.³³⁰

A site *is* – and not only possesses – its genius loci. Experiences of a site which is a field, connect with that acoustic genius, posited as process, is a simultaneous emerging before and within us. It is in this coincident unfolding, that I co/in-habit through the aural with an environment. In a diffused field of distant, living and passing echoes, sound becomes an ‘image’ which dies (whilst hearing is the last sense disappearing during one’s dying process). Perceived in the air as in the body, sound is living materiality, but an illusory dying one. In this case, human and animal sound is sentient body-sound in a fluid geometry of connections. It is an elastic and fictitious geometry, but it realises infinite ways of moving with unpredictable sound. We approach the illusion of a periphery: the periphery of sound and listening at the periphery of peripheral listening. In this open

³³⁰ Harris, from my invited response given as part of *How to Explain a Field to a Dead Magpie* (?), a performance, outdoor installations, indoor performance installation (which also included my paper presentation) and short workshop activities, which I presented at the University of Roehampton on 22 February 2012. Harris’ response was then published in his blog as a post entitled ‘Performance and the spirit of place,’ posted on 27 February, 2012.

framed space, a disorienting affect takes place. This paradox of restriction and emancipation is what I experience in aural choreography which – when I become attached to a singular sonic information and for a relatively long duration – becomes a too fixed and disorienting experience.

Through listening in a diffused field, a relationship arises with a responsiveness to a focussed, particular feature in a landscape or architecture, and it is already this relationship that implies performance. As a result, aural choreography is realised through a frame and at the same time it facilitates an open field of encounter through minute focus. This could be seen as an education to minute listening, through the ear and gradually to the other senses, and to the rest of the body. Listening is a flowing gradual engagement also with a neighbouring field: a neighbouring body, place, site, and their provisory qualities. A dependence on this aural experiential engagement, also present in an architectural or theatrical ambience, is dependent on one's position in space, which is an intimate and a shared experience of the meeting of sites, a closeness of bodies and places. In the words of Varela:

on the one hand examining experience always takes us a step closer to what seems more intimate, more pertinent, or more existentially close [...] it is this double aspect that is the source of depth (the roots of embodiment go through the entire body and extend out into the large environment), as well as its intimacy (we are situated thanks to the feeling-tone and affect that *places us where we are* and of which the body is the place marker).³³¹

The feeling-tone is the one coming from auditory space which when framed becomes a site. In this way the concepts of space and site, which are conceptually distinct, become experientially the same. They are the body makers of the place where we are and that

³³¹ Varela (2001), "Intimate," p. 2 [my italics]. This also stresses the ambivalence of the body, specifically here that of an organ transplant – in the case of Varela's liver transplant operation – which for him created a further opportunity to reflect on embodiment and alterity.

place that we are, welcoming the ‘external.’ We face another and ultimate paradox – apparent and appearing to us as alterity – the perceptible and welcoming ‘difference,’ where, as Varela says: “the paradox of alterity is a paradox of the timing of hospitality,”³³² a welcoming of sameness and difference through moving in a framed area.

2.10 SUPPLEMENT TO CHAPTER 2:

2.10.1 An experiment with Vito Acconci’s *Association Area*.



Video stills from *Association Area*, Vito Acconci, 1971. From Electronic Arts Intermix archive.

An experiment following a workshop I facilitated in 2013, was loosely based on Vito Acconci’s performance-video *Association Area* (1971).³³³ The purpose of this workshop was to experiment in attempting to realise the concept of frames of field, an experience of becoming ear bodies and an opening to site contingency, in adapting to each aural situation as physical context. The experiment was performed in front of a video camera – where the images were visible on a monitor – with groups of two student participants

³³² Varela, “Intimate,” p. 2.

³³³ The workshop took place on 15 January 2013 at the University of Portsmouth, following my lecture on *Performance Art and Remediation*. The lecture and workshop involved second year BA performing arts students. *Association Area* is a 62-minute black and white film of Acconci with Mel Waterman. Here they explore “mental concentration and intuition as a means of non-visual and non-verbal perception, interaction and communication. Blindfolded and wearing earplugs [...]. Audible only to the audience, an off-camera voice whispers directions and locations to the performers as they move slowly and haltingly around the performance space: Mel, Vito is facing you. Turn around and get into his position. Vito, turn completely around. Mel, Vito is facing your right side.” Acconci, *Association Area* in Electronic Arts Intermix archive.

wearing blindfolds and silicon earplugs. The students were divided into groups of three. They alternated between those who were observing the experiment and those moving at the centre of a designated area of the studio space, while wearing the blindfold and the earplugs. A third participant standing next to the camera had a set time to whisper directions and instruction to the other participants (by also being attentive in preventing that the other two participants from injuring themselves), and then after a set time they would swap the roles. The participants had to attempt to intuit each other's movements, in spite of having their vision occulted and hearing muffled, as in Acconci's work, while moving slowly and stopping around the space. As Acconci said, the aim was "to concentrate on each other so totally that we'd begin to blend together."³³⁴ Part of the aim of the workshop was for the groups of participants to have a practical understanding of remediation and this in relation to historical performance art, aided by the use of video feedback technology and closed-circuit installation. In Acconci's performance for the camera, the documentation is the work on remediation. Remediation, in the specific analysis of Acconci's work – a work not very often performed for a live audience – particularly in *Association Area*, comes in the form of video documentation, but is still reminiscent of a Situationist background. In the experience of the student-participants to the workshop, in watching back the documentation of the experiment, in hearing the voice of the directing one, and seeing the movements of the moving pairs, they could see how they created performance through sensorial perception and inter-corporeal communication as performance. Watching the documentation at the workshop at the end also helped the students to reflect both upon themselves and a viewer's position within that of the electronic media. They realised that remediation in this specific example became the video documentation of our experiment – and also as a further interpretation/

³³⁴ Acconci, *Association Area*, in Electronic Arts Intermix archive.

transformation/adaptation of Acconci's work through my method of aural choreography – in our use of technological means. But the actual experimenting with the auditory aspect was the more important focus. This focus was a pivotal performing experience of sensory spatial awareness: corporeal listening as 'listening proxemics.' It was an unaware corporeal and spatial negotiation initiated by an aware attempt to listen beyond the ears and through the aural input for movement given by the whispering voice of the third person. The participants let themselves move while they could not hear the instructions clearly, although they had some familiarity with the studio space, while increasingly becoming more unfamiliar with it. In spite of the sensory occlusion, once they trusted and entrusted the other participants and the designated area, it became an open physical-auditory navigation. The sensorial semi-deprivation, in most of the participants, enhanced the proxemics and listening-performing experience.

What was important was the fact that, before becoming a question of technological / prosthetic mediatic extension – or remediation – an investigation of the body as the place became the listening. The listening performative relation to a space in this experiment, explored also how to work through a sensorial impairment, questioning how a complete or semi-occlusion of one or two senses, can be somatically amplified to any degree, where the partial occlusion can be somatically augmented and can enable nuanced movement. The embodied ear engaged proprioception, played also an important role in this experiment.³³⁵ All this was a moving together, through the effort to relate to each other and to the space, while trusting and being open to the unpredicted. Some participants appeared to pay no attention to the unclear sounds of the whispered directions, whilst others felt that it was easy to have a sense of what these unclear

³³⁵ According to Glenna Batson, proprioception is: "This inborn 'talent' for body awareness and knowing just where the body is in space [and it comes] from the Latin meaning 'one's own.' Dancers might be more accustomed to related terms to define this sense, such as 'kinaesthesia,' muscle sense, or simply sense of movement. Although slight nuances exist between the meanings of these terms, 'proprioception' is the scientific term for the physical feeling of your moving body." Batson (2008), "Proprioception," p. 1.

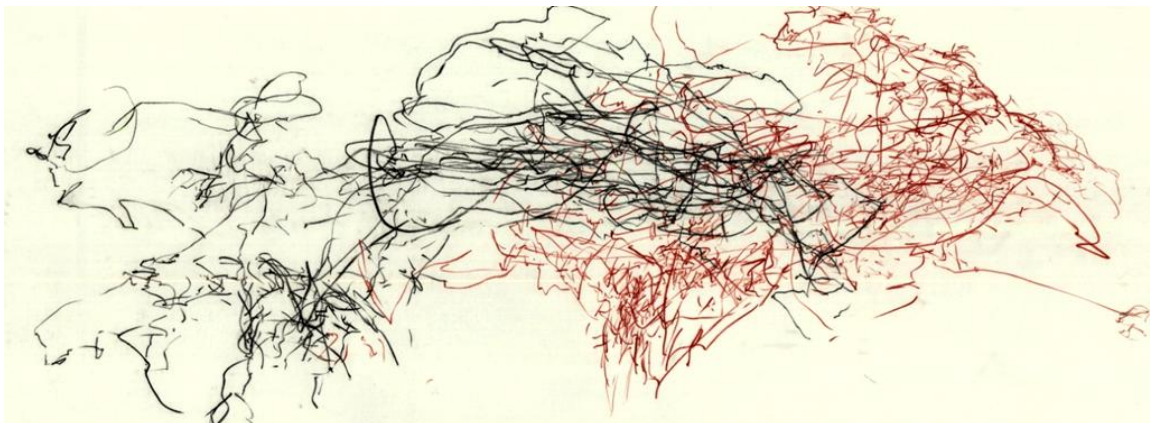
directions could have been. Nonetheless, they experienced the space they were in more intensely – beyond an ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ body experience – with more enhanced awareness and, while avoiding having collisions, they involuntarily moved in corresponding movements.

Our experience of the experiment became the lingering affect of sensed space, a space of aural choreography. Sensorially experienced as a result of the performative interaction between bodies, the students felt freer in their movements, connected through that specific architectural context. In this being aurally situated, moved and choreographed in space, experiences are personal as well as socially and environmentally shared.

2.10.2 Drawing *earlines*



Earlines drawing on a paper scroll, drawn in the Michaelis Dance Studio, University of Roehampton, 2009. Scanned image, actual size: 10m x 56cm.



Detail 1.



Detail 2



Earlines drawing workshop at Middlesex University, London 2007. Photo: Invivo.



Vico (corridoio uditivo) [Alley (auditory corridor)], Taviano, Italy 2009. Photo: Fausta Muci.



Earlines performance, University of Roehampton, 2010, and workshop for London Metropolitan University students, 2012. Photo: Stella Schito, Helen Spackman.

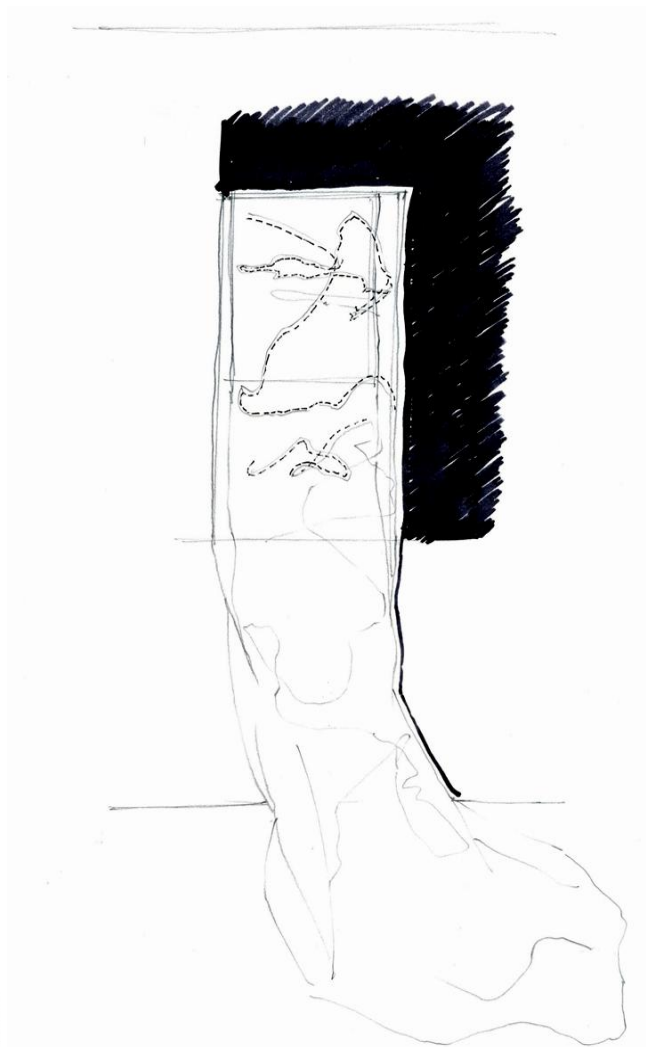
A relationship is called a place. A place is a temporal passing of experience. A passing which leaves traces, markings which eventually will disappear (the troubled and at times unethical action of marking and leaving a trace). In the world and the surfaces where life can discover many hidden lines, those of different times, there is an archaeology where our bodies can listen to, those just passed and already passing sounds, leaving only for a moment acoustic traces in space, on paper or on other surfaces of a moving drawing of sounds: these are *earlines* drawing. The use of earlines drawing (as another form of line-drawing, also often combined with architectural drawing) is the primary media and constitutive element of my research and workshops, and this is because I engage drawing in the exploration of the corporeal experience of sound, where sound is drawn, the body draws and is drawn by the perception of sound.

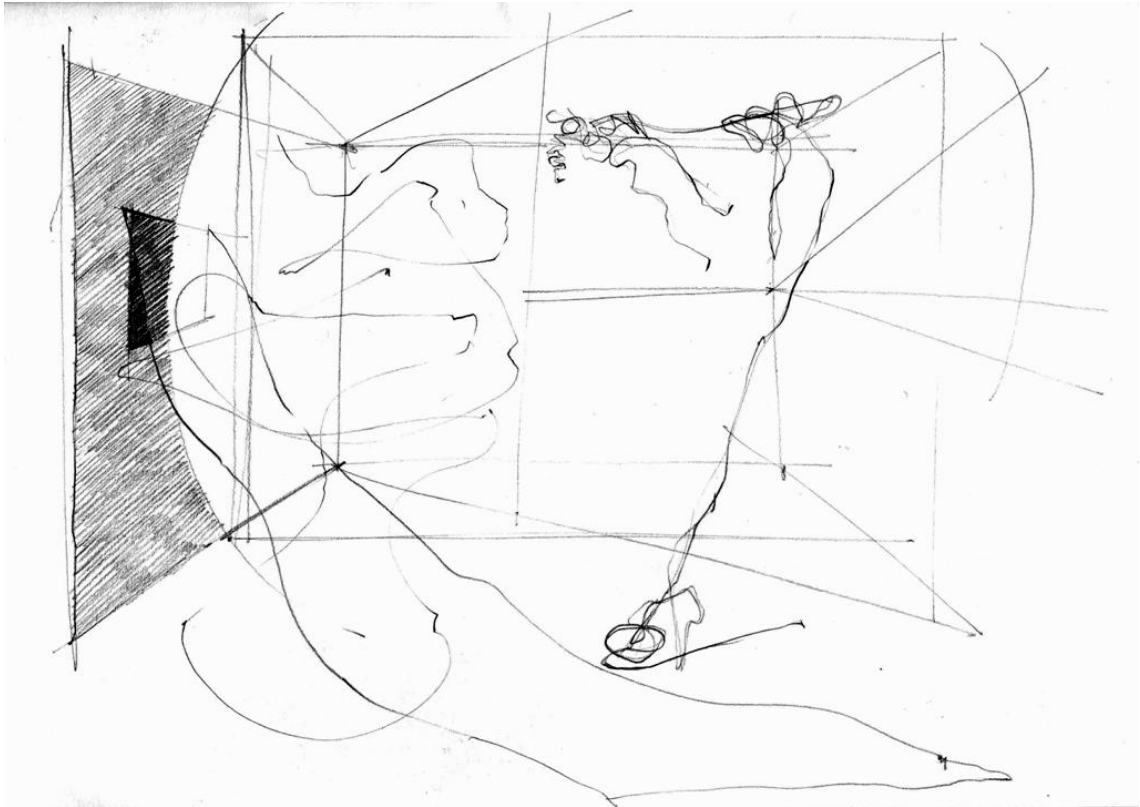
Earlines drawing also functions as pedagogic tool and as a tool for performance as well as performance in itself. In the workshops, with all the different tasks this type of drawing is performed on paper and walls and/or in an indoor or outdoor space, mapping with the body in spatial-auditory terms. In this way, participants develop their own insights and investigate their specific relationship with site acoustics, exploring sound interrelationships with body and site. Participants also engage and participate through group and individual in-situ improvisations, in order – through strengthening acoustic awareness – to establish more embedded and corporeal responses to context or structural architectural elements. Acoustic awareness could also, however, be specifically used as a de-stabiliser of preconceived assumptions and habits in performance.

Part of the workshop tasks are two indoor drawing-mapping activities. The first is a blindfolded mapping drawing. Here, one group follows the other in a prescribed area delimited with tape. One blindfolded partner listens while the other rolls, walks with

different predetermined speeds, and crawls in whatever direction. The other partner listens while following beside making sure no accidents happen and moving in the same way as the blindfolded partner. After a specific set time, the blindfold is removed and both partners immediately do a line mapping drawing on paper placed on the floor, of where they felt they went and then compare and discuss before they swap roles. Earlines drawing can be an enhanced system of immediate as well as gradual attuning realised through individual and group performative line-drawing of sound in space, and on bodies and surfaces. Here, achronic and synchronic time meet in a sort of mapping, in other words the horizontal and linear aspect of time meet with what appear as random lines, marking the time of sound and the time of sound marking you. This ‘temporal’ drawing is also a choreography in itself, as well as being a tool towards choreographic performance as a combination of sound-enabled movements. Earlines drawing is also important for its specific temporality, as both a performative and visual medium.

Practically explored as a drawing performance and as a method, earlines drawing is also part of my performance work. Often, earlines drawing, when it becomes a combination of line-drawing and architectural drawing, explores my perception of the interaction of sound with planes – including a reference to descriptive geometry – line, the spot, the dot and the puncture, the stitching of sound through threads and needle on fabric, using what I am able to hear.





Stitching sound on a curtain, drawings, 2010.





Earlines performance, part three (stitching sound), University of Roehampton, London 2010. Photo: Justin Hunt.

Earlines drawing is the disclosing of an interplay between the topology of sound – as a non-metric and qualitative spatial relationship of listening and drawing in movement – and *direct* and *directed* auditory movement improvisation, emerging from engagement with context.³³⁶ During the drawing/moving according to what one is hearing, a performer stands on a path of precision and concentration. Although apparently unsystematic process, earlines are a ‘scribble’ resulting from an effort towards detail in their tracing, where the effort is invested in being adherent, as much as possible, to the listened sonic sources and their qualities. While we draw, fluid, ‘scribbly’ wavy lines are the place of acoustic actions, the *topos* and the trajectories in landscape and architecture. At this

³³⁶ *Topology* is: “The general mathematical science of non-metric spatial relationships, as of part to whole, or the properties of objects and figures which are not affected by distortion.” Drever (1973), *A Dictionary*, p. 301. Furthermore, Borislav Dimitrov talks about a classic distinction: “There are two notions of Time and two notion of Space in the Ancient Greek concepts of time and space. The two temporal notion of Time are Chronos and Kairos. Chronos is the Quantitative Time and Kairos is the Qualitative Time. And there are two spatial notion of Space – Chora and Topos. Chora is the quantitative abstract notion of space and Topos is the qualitative notion of space.” Dimitrov (2012), *The Topological*, p. 16.

juncture, the fluid lines are of ‘baroque’ directions, which short-circuit and challenge straight temporality. A line at the same time is a storyteller, a linear narration. Following Tim Ingold, I ask: “Why does the very mention of the word ‘line’ or ‘linearity,’ for many contemporary thinkers, conjure up an image of the alleged narrow-mindedness and sterility, as well as the single-track logic, of modern analytical thought?”³³⁷

I reclaim linearity and, with Joan Jonas, I exclaim that “it’s about the line,” but also that “Drawing is about defining space” and that drawing “does draw you in.”³³⁸ Jonas makes me reflect on the nature of (line) drawing as always performative and as performance in itself. For Jonas, performance also means that “drawing involves the body moving in different ways in space,” and, importantly, that “you use your body arm, or hand in relation to drawing.”³³⁹ In tune with her words, I add that, in earlines drawing, you use your body in relation to the sounds you are listening to, the sonic space in which you are embedded in. In their being also performance, performance drawings are also finished works in themselves, and they move and continue in the minds of who is looking at them. Jonas continues: “Performance and performative refer in different ways to action. [...] I am interested in an act and how it becomes a gesture, or in its relationship to the medium. Then it becomes performative.”³⁴⁰ In earlines drawing, line is already performative, it has moved even before its being traced, followed. The activity of listening becomes a performance of drawing sound.

³³⁷ Ingold (2007), *Lines*, p. 2.

³³⁸ Jonas (2014), “Drawing,” p. 56.

³³⁹ Jonas, “Drawing,” p. 40.

³⁴⁰ Jonas, “Drawing,” p. 37.



Ear Bodies workshop, University College Falmouth, Dartington Campus, Totnes, Devon, 15 January 2010.
Photo: Misha Myers.



Earlines drawing, part of a workshop at University of Portsmouth, 9 October 2012. Photo: Ross Percy.

My performance work at times includes also the facilitation of workshops for participating audiences. These also consist of drawing experimentations, tasks and exercises. An earlines drawing is also the one on paper scrolls: a long strip of paper is placed on the floor, parallel and of the same length as windows behind the workshop participants. In performance and in workshops, participants make their own individual time, by choosing to enter and to exit from the performative space, although maintaining the dynamics and alternating shifting of being involved as performers and as spectators at the same time. Movement, site, auditory performance art activities, environmental context, and time as a corporeal experience, all are a reflection on the drawing-performance process itself. This process requires time and fluid transitions between each exploratory performative activity. In my workshops, research and performances – which require drawing and movement preparatory activities – one then gets involved towards very gradually tuning parameters, which are predisposed to changes towards free group (paired or independent) personal explorations. The drawing is produced by listening and focussing on the outdoor sound fields as binaural inputs coming from windows, attempting to go beyond masking noise (what R. Murray Schafer called hi-fi soundscape, to hear each distinct sound frequency).³⁴¹ The sources, speeds, distances, directions, intensities, durations, tones, frequencies and rhythms of the external sounds are immediately drawn using both hands (and a different colour for each hand), each hand corresponding to each ear. A two-minute drawing period is timed, and this is the indication to roll once more onto the next section of paper and to start drawing again until the acoustic experience of the outdoor (or indoor) sonic landscape is drawn onto the whole scroll.

³⁴¹ “Another characteristic of pre-industrial revolution, hi-fi soundscape, is that the ‘acoustic horizon’ may extend for many miles. [...] In lo-fi soundscape, meaningful sounds (and any associated acoustic colouration), can be masked to such an extent that an individual’s ‘aural space’ is reduced.” Wrightson (2000), “An introduction,” p. 11.

Earlines drawing does not mean visualising sound, nor that the sound brings forth an image in perception. An ‘auditory image’ is a different matter, as it has nothing to do with any type of representation, but important is the spatial relationship between moving sounds and drawing lines by bodies with synchronicity to these sounds. It is line-drawing in its most focussed and, as far as possible, ‘precise’ – although in its look may appear chaotic – adherence to the listened sounds. It is the space between sonic sources which becomes evident, their locations and movements towards dispersion, their nature constantly modifying in a continuum. Drawing in a continuum becomes an ‘oto-kinetic’ parameter.³⁴² This is a parameter which follows gravity and speeds of response to an auditory-kinaesthetic form of drawing in the attempt to synchronise with the moving sound. Here, the kinetic (movement) becomes kinaesthetic (movement in relation to position and sensorial perception of the body). In this respect, drawing in relation to what one is able to hear/listen to is somatic time, time relating to movement – of the drawing hands and/or bodies on surfaces – is also a way of testing synchronicity, while moving corporeal acoustic ecologies are drawn with pencils, chalk or other materials on surfaces, or in aerial space in synchronous time.

Being a tool of listening and transformation and as a form of engagement with perception, earlines drawing is also a way towards and out of performance improvisation, by applying conceptual and physical frames, to explore horizontal (sequential) and vertical (spectral) landscape acoustics. In this sense, I see drawing as a directly emerging from context and place. It is only ‘improvisation’ if it is intended in the ambiguous nature of the concept, if it is a way of allowing intuition through guided facilitation in favouring orientation in space. Regarding orientation, Moore writes:

³⁴² The prefix *oto* in ‘oto-kinetic’ indicates the ear and its function in hearing/listening.

Our interpretation of auditory spatial cues is strongly influenced by our perceived visual orientation. Or, more correctly, the highest level of spatial representation involves an integration of information from different senses [...] Thus everyday experience indicates that we combine the information from time and intensity differences to produce a single sound image at a well-defined distance.³⁴³

As a quintessentially performative graphic medium, drawing – and specifically line-drawing in earlines – is a distillation of different intensities of sound as a form of writing, of drawing-writing, of sound writing, of writing sound with chalk, pencil, pen, the body. ‘Graphic’ can also be intended as calligraphy and orthography – where the pressure of the pen or the inked brush on a surface creates light, stronger or nuanced traces – here I intend it in its linear quality, where pressure on a surface is important as a translation and correspondence with the intensity of the sounds perceived. The stronger a sound intensity, the stronger the pressure. I choose the types of paper and surfaces according to their thickness, textures and absorbing qualities and how they facilitate or not the flow of the different drawing materials. The types of paper and surfaces are chosen in relation to the various graphic and pictorial materials (pencils, pastels, chalks, charcoal, graphite, inks, gouaches and brushes) is determined by the qualities of sounds I want to draw. My choice of drawing materials is strictly dependent on the underling image and paper (in Acoustic Ikebana) and on degrees of softness or hardness of the marking materials (in earlines drawing). All the choices of these drawing media depend on their quality of translating my auditory experience in relation to the environments. It is not the sounds which the different drawing materials produce in the process of drawing that I am interested in, but instead the different sound sources of the environments with their acoustic qualities are the main focus and sites of significance in the drawings. The composition is not that of

³⁴³ Moore (1982), *Introduction*, p.180.

the sounds produced by the different material, but how my, or somebody else's body, moves and brings together his/her relationship to sounds, how the bodies and lines move and are drawn in a space or on a surface/paper is the composition (as also in the case of Acoustic Ikebana).

Earlines drawing is not a 'sound image,' but an encompassing translation in lines of what one hears and somatically feels. In talking about hearing in the context of his somatic method, Moshe Feldenkrais says that:

Hearing makes seeing more concrete and easier to remember and, therefore, to understand [...] In general it is the case that we see only a small part of the space around us, even though in hearing we hear from all around us.³⁴⁴

In earlines drawing, the visual aspect is linked, and in a sense 'understood' when also linked to this all around hearing and peripheral space as also peripheral vision in relation to auditory localisation through the body, where I localise myself. For instance, when in an indoor space, I follow the parameter of moving towards perceived directions of sound sources coming from outdoors, a drawing performance is also created. As does Michael Taussig, I also perceive that the act of drawing is "stretching out one's hand" and, I would add, the act of listening as a stretching out of one's ear body.³⁴⁵ This act of auditory-somatic 'stretching' and drawing, makes one's listening wider, and is a result of the physical involvement accompanying the act of listening. The stretching out of one's body allows 'auditory stretching,' and this, in turn, is not a passive listening and can allow unexpected drawing and movement. Thus, drawing and sound share corporeality.

Drawing earlines and being at the same time 'drawn' by sound, share a fluid conversation and a continuous process in movement and listening. In performance, I see this act of

³⁴⁴ Feldenkrais (2010), *Embodied*, p. 46.

³⁴⁵ Taussig, 'I Swear I Saw This,' a talk given at Tate Britain, 27 October 2009.

drawing as a ‘suspension,’ or at least an attempt to reduce the gap between thinking and moving, or not-moving (which is, nonetheless, *still* moving).

The process of hearing and its physiological passage and transformation from outer stimuli to inner ear and brain, becomes an attentive process, when drawing of sound lines is involved. In this sort of auditory drawing performance, instead of simple line-drawing, we have a ‘disordered’ scribble. When I think about the scribble I think of the poetic paintings and drawings of Cy Twombly. Joan Jonas – of the same generation of American artists – is also interested in the scribble, but in relation to music. She discusses this relation when she choreographed Robert Ashley’s *Celestial Excursions*, and she started drawing to his music. She says: “I became interested in scribble drawings. I could just scribble in time to his music.”³⁴⁶ Of course, this can be perceived as resonant with earlines drawing, but at the same time is quite different from it, as sound – in my specific context – is not music (although sound can be considered/ listened to as music), and therefore different from drawing in time with sound.



Earlines drawing on walls, objects and vertical tracing paper scrolls, part of *You and You, extending into freedom – freeing from isolation* (with Rainer Knupp), Oxford House, London 2006. Photo: Christian Kipp.

³⁴⁶ Jonas, “Drawing,” p. 43.

A line, at the same time, tells a story of time, both a linear and a non-linear narration. A line is also at the same time an interface, a tension and a meeting of lines, or an intertwined line of strings. Diverse currents, being drawn from invisible acoustic events are also a sort of subtle amplification augmenting in space-time. Following Lucretius: “Sounds are disseminated in all directions because each one, after its initial splintering into a great many parts, gives birth to others [...] So places out of the direct path are often filled with voices, which surge round every obstacle, one sound being provoked by another.”³⁴⁷ The randomness of this type of line-drawing is only apparent in its being free, yet at the same time precise in its tracing of a line in time, in the flowing and interaction of sounds. These line tracings explore the ‘margins’ of aural space. More clearly, there is a correlation between the abstractness of the lines and combination of them and the concrete experience of the sounds. Massumi in talking about the boundaries of the body points to a kind of abstractness, which is part of it: “that means that the abstract is not the opposite of the concrete, but that they can come together. And that happens in movements.”³⁴⁸ Earlines as drawing of movements, in their ‘quality’ and randomness of line, resemble graphic representations in physics of the random movements of the invisible particles and molecules called ‘Random Walks,’ otherwise known as Brownian Motion. In this respect, Jonah Lehrer writes: “hair cells are sensitive to sounds of atomic dimensions. We can literally hear Brownian motion, the random jostle of atoms.”³⁴⁹ A performer might stand on a demanding path of sensitive precision and concentration in performing a drawing, and a ‘randomness’ is the result of an effort towards detail in its tracing. Indeed, this is only an apparently unsystematic process, where effort is invested in being as adherent as possible to the listened sonic sources and their qualities which are

³⁴⁷ Lucretius (1951), *On the Nature*, p. 149.

³⁴⁸ Massumi (1999), “The Interface,” p. 4.

³⁴⁹ Lehrer (2007), *Proust*, p. 129. Lehrer says that “We can literally hear Brownian motion,” although this means that we can almost believe we hear Brownian motion, but I am also convinced that what he says is an embodied imagination approaching experience.

quickly drawn. I intend here a complex tracing to be both hastily unclear drawing and a sonic activation of aerial space. In a laboratory's special equipment, sound is described as an exact sine curve, which is only a technological visualised simplification whilst, according to Richard H. Schiffman: "most natural sound-producing sources emit sounds that possess a complex waveform [...]. The *complexity* of sound results because vibrating bodies do not do so at a single frequency."³⁵⁰ The sound drawn randomness is the interlacing of this complexity in a tracing of lines. Yet, the scribbled earlines, although complex and 'accidental' in appearance are different from the sounds, which cannot be represented, especially in their complexity, so in the drawing, the evidence of the acoustic changes is not in the actual tracing. In the experience of the drawing there exists a subtle incongruity between the sound which triggers the tracing and the mark left. It is this incongruity, this gap, which I investigate and which I perform. While I investigate and perform, I am testing the shortest moment of thought and the suspension of (conscious/self-conscious) thinking during a moving-performing-drawing action.

The synchronicity between sound input and drawing does not have to work as, when rhythmically dancing with a tempo. The rhythm of the drawing hand or moving body is manifested through the most embodied and infinitesimal tremor in an oscillation between adherence to sounds and their rhythms as well as the discordance to them. As in aural choreography, also in earlines drawing there is always a form of simultaneous response between a sonic input and a physical movement. Also equally important, is when the sonic input can otherwise allow it to be articulated to any degree of temporality. In earlines drawing, this is present and in many subtle or extrinsic ways possible. For instance, externalised in very small or more visible movements and lines, a movement response to sonic input happens in almost-synchronicity. Listening in almost-

³⁵⁰ Schiffman (1990), *Sensation*, p. 53.

synchronicity happens when those movement drawings as performative activities, are done as an activity of collective moving in relation to the experience of different and infinitesimal speeds, intensities, directions and rhythms of the sounds perceived. An architectonic and acoustic space is then explored through what becomes an aware acoustic drawing, in the subsequent turning, moving in relation to directions, origins and trajectories of perceived – or even imagined – acoustic location and, importantly, the impossibility of localising sound. Almost-synchronicity does not mean tempo, no matter how immediate and accurate a drawing movement can be – as thinking comes with it – and reacting to the sonic input with as little as possible cognitive mediation also requires an exercise in considering sensorial perception and misperception, the ‘lies of perception.’³⁵¹ So, a performer could play with time and speed of response while drawing, when, importantly, both performers and sound coincide with their own temporalities in the drawing action. In the drawing of earlines it is always an effort to find a direction or a locus. The ears follow the sonic impulses in the way they specifically have been perceived and processed and the drawing of sound-movement carries something in the process. It carries the end of a trail, the lingering final part, a trace of sound which is dragged along, a ‘coda’ which is drawn. So, one could talk of the ‘tail of the eye’ – from the Italian *coda dell’ occhio* – or, I could say, ‘tail of the ear.’ A tail of the ear, as the corner of the ear is a travelling sound line. In the geometry of reflections of sound and the position of a body – as Roni Horn says – “drawing isn’t a matter of tools but perception – a form of engagement,” where lines of sound converge, diverge and disperse.³⁵² Although contingency is not necessarily improvisation,³⁵³ earlines drawing links both, particularly

³⁵¹ Yet, this lying of the senses is a very important point in my investigation. Because the senses are deceptive, paradoxically, they are more ‘honest,’ as they are related to the world.

³⁵² Horn, from literature material part of ‘Roni Horn aka Roni Horn,’ Tate Modern Exhibition, 25 February-25 May 2009.

³⁵³ As I have discussed above in the section 2.2 “Ecology and acoustic ecology in site-contingent performance.”

for improvisation, as they are both forms of engagement through perception. Importantly, in discussing jazz and drawing, Horn says that:

Improvisation is literally drawing out of place a circumstance – they’re not separate from the making of the sound. The development of my work comes with a similar ear to the complexities of circumstances and how that effects the form and the flow of the piece. So in that sense jazz is a profound influence. It brought me my first awareness of the importance of drawing. Improvisation is drawing.³⁵⁴

The concept of improvisation, being drawing, applies also when we come to address spontaneity and extemporaneity. In this context, improvisation – as also an aspect of spontaneity and extemporaneity – is a way to educate intuition ad lib. I move and draw earlines in relation to the flow of time. In this sense, improvisation and drawing are the same when the perception of sounds ‘playing together’ becomes drawing. Lines make connections through sounds and bodies.

The weaving lines of earlines drawing are that of a listening movement in space as process, one which is, in Alfred Whitehead’s words, “the becoming of experience.”³⁵⁵

This process-based drawing is the visualised experience and tracing of what one perceives, the sonic sources, their locations and movements towards dispersion. With this ‘taking a line for a walk,’ the free movement of a line, in the famous concept of Paul Klee, one can map it, as a sort of ‘stenography’ of sound, because it is related to quick response.

In Ingold’s reference to Klee:

³⁵⁴ Horn, 2009.

³⁵⁵ Whitehead, cited in Craig (2008), *Routledge Encyclopedia*, p. 713.

“The line that develops freely, and in its own time, ‘goes out for a walk’ [...] Whereas the active line on a walk is dynamic, the line that connects adjacent points in series is, according to Klee, ‘the quintessence of the static.’ If the former takes us on a journey that has no obvious beginning or end, the latter presents us with an array of interconnected destinations that can, as on a route-map, be viewed all at once.”³⁵⁶

Line-drawing is not only a link with movement and walking, but is also movement and, specifically, walking. In other words, walking as a performative action or, in the case of earlines, moving by following acoustic parameters, is like drawing invisible ‘walking’ sonic lines moving in space.³⁵⁷

2.10.3 Earlines drawing: *Acoustic Shadow Walking*



An Acoustic Shadow Walk, part of performance *Performance Dark Matter*, Club Row Gallery, London, 2010. Photo: Hugo Glendinning.

³⁵⁶ Ingold, *Lines*, p. 73.

³⁵⁷ Invisible lines of sound can be drawn or can be made visible through drawing. As Merleau-Ponty says: “the visible is secret counterpart of the visible, it appears only within it [...] it is in the line of the visible, it is its virtual focus, it is inscribed within it (in filigree).” He also says that: “meaning is *invisible*, but the invisible is not the contradictory of the visible: the visible itself has an invisible inner framework (menbrure).” Merleau-Ponty, Working Notes, *The Visible*, p. 215.

Line-drawing is the focus of what become an ‘acoustic shadow drawing.’ The term acoustic shadow, which I borrow from psychoacoustics, to form what I call ‘acoustic shadow drawing’ not so much for giving form to sound, to the invisible, but of feeling and performing its reflections, its felt ‘shadows’ as well as its metaphor, where the walking body slides as a listening shadow on the walls.

In psychoacoustics, an ‘acoustic shadow’ is an apparent absence of sound in a specific area where sound waves are not perceived as circulating. So an acoustic ‘obstacle’ creates acoustic shadows. The acoustic shadow drawing becomes an exercise of process, referring also to the actual image of shadowing (in drawing) and sound, and to scansion and flow as, for instance, when also walking very close or inclined to a wall, by following an internal or external perimeter of a building. It becomes a walking of transitions, those from indoor to outdoor spaces and vice-versa which, sometimes, merges with other walks. For instance, from walking backwards – as a line of people or by oneself, using peripheral vision by lowering the eyes and then by looking straight at the horizon – from outside architecture and then back to the inside, and then often continuing, transforming again through the Acoustic Shadow Walk at a pace following specific parameters. In a temporal and poetic sense, this is a ‘becoming shadow walking’ as an acoustic scansion of time is similar to what the Italian writer Antonio Tabucchi (2009) talked about, using a pre-Socratic fragment as an epigraph to his book *Time Gets Old Quickly* [Il tempo invecchia in fretta]. The fragment says that behind or beyond the shadow, time gets older quickly. Yet, Tabucchi preferred to translate this as ‘by following the shadow’ time gets older quickly. This tells me how, by following or engaging and ultimately becoming an acoustic shadow, one radicalises temporality as contingent, and becomes that temporality, a type of time which for Tabucchi – from the many different types of times – is one which does not pass but, instead, a time which decays, gets older or spoiled.

This type of temporal experience is for me a meeting between linear time (as the time of a tracing line) together with the multi-temporality of subjective time. These also meet with environmental sound and the time which relates to the body. For instance, the linear walking along the perimeter of a building, or around a structural element in a landscape, is an activity of peripheral scansion of a neighbouring acoustic world. The scansion takes place between the walls (or structures in a landscape) and the ears, on the focus and connection between them. Also at the same time it attends to the connection between feet and floor/ground. This connection opens acoustic perception in relation to time and surfaces and the acoustic transitions from or to interior architectonic spaces.

Then, acoustic shadow drawing becomes ‘acoustic shadow walk.’ Although conceived for a different context, Ranajit Guha’s reflection on listening is of assistance here, when he says that: “‘hearing,’ we know ‘is constitutive of discourse.’ To listen is already to be open to and existentially disposed towards: one inclines a little on one side in order to listen.”³⁵⁸ This drawing is inclination of listening through the drawing body, it is where line and movement coincide. In following this ‘auditory shadow’ performance of drawing, leaning towards a wall, how is the sound refracted? Does it happen at all? How specific is our moving-drawing and positioning to it? An invisible, yet tangible relationship exists, in this case with the walls of a building, while one’s ear slides and scans the surfaces. Yet, this ‘scanning’ process does not denote a ‘machinistic’ concept, or a robotic type of activity. In describing the scanning image of a sonar (and in defining it as quintessentially twentieth-century), Martin Kemp deals with something that cannot be seen, and talks about this reliance upon something else which is not the visible wavelengths of light.³⁵⁹ Instead, it is a human dynamic activity of scanning of the invisible aural space which is an endeavour, one which tries to sharpen presence (through

³⁵⁸ Guha (2005), “The Small,” pp. 371, 372.

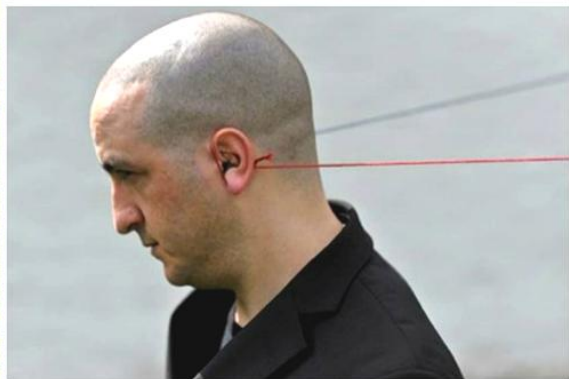
³⁵⁹ Kemp (2006), *Seen/Unseen*, p.55.

an effort, an inclination), with a 'precision' of reception. In this attempt – or its equally important failure – the effort is already in itself the aim of the action. The scope of this experience is not to hear anything necessarily, but instead to be led towards an acoustic embodiment, where each person is in their subjective listening and physically affected by their exploration of the variety of interruptions, nuances, 'shadows' and qualities of sound.

In Acoustic Shadow Walk, personal process and a connecting travelling line at the same time are what connects people and buildings or landscapes. It is not the evidence of the drawing itself, but instead the evidence of the tuned listening drawing body. Drawing as earlines hints at the spatial fourth-dimensionality of sound via a flat bi-dimensionality on a surface, and keeps the drawing parameter as inevitably transient. The viscosity of the marks in the drawing of free lines is never there to be merely a seduction for the eye but, instead, is fundamental for the performative act of drawing. The active performance of listening and that of drawing meet on a correlated level. Here sound interrelates with the image, yet without merging completely with it. This level is that of the movement of the moving sounds in a continuity of perception, where a delay between the input and the movement is of equal importance. The experiential continuum of the drawing performance of sound is not to be reduced to a shortcut, distinguishing or limiting what is an extemporary drawing. Against a solely 'unextended' interpretation of hearing and seeing, sound and drawing are always both, distinct and specific experiences which are in our consciousness, not fixed and self-referential units of experience, but a constant enmeshing of drawing listening experience, constantly changing in transformation. The paradox of movement is implied as line-drawing on and in the surfaces of space, echoing a physical sonic attrition, a sound-trace that cannot be repeated. Repetition is here linked only to constantly changing specifics of environmental relationships; once a trace is

impressed, it is already dispersed.

2.10.4 Earlines drawing: *white shadow*







'White shadow' drawing as part of *Performance Dark Matter*, Club Row Gallery, London 2010. Photo: Hugo Glendinning.

An example of the metaphorical as well as factual disappearance of a trace, a mark, would be the drawing of lines connected to locational sound with white chalk on white walls and other white surfaces, which gives my performing body the prospect of relying on an intermediary and temporary line-tracing.³⁶⁰ This is a trace which leaves almost invisible lines, therefore subtly opaque, a 'white shadow.' White chalk on the white textures of white surfaces translate as my 'white noise' of and on the surrounding world. A dusty, crumbling, velvety chalk trace disappears slowly with the already disappeared moving sonic sources. Pictorially, this makes me visually touch the modernist spatiality of one of the *White on White* (1918) paintings, squares of surfaces, in Kasimir Malevich's Suprematist compositions. I encountered this painting at the Hermitage Museum of St. Petersburg in 2000 and, as with other works by Malevich, I was captivated by its

³⁶⁰ This reflection came before and after *Performance Dark Matter*, an installation and itinerant performance I gave at Club Row Gallery as part of the Performance Laboratory for the launch of the Performance Matters (Performing Idea) project, London 30 April 2010.

architectural positioning in space, which was for him fundamentally important. This reflects on an interaction with the body of a viewer, relating with the painting/s' many spatial aspects, concretely and immanently 'abstract' and certainly 'fully bodied,' in its allowing sensorial interaction with the body of a viewer, feeling textures of paint, almost flat shades of white as deep space. There is juxtaposition of painted surfaces, yet a 'deep' form of spatiality, where the apparently flat painting, together with a subtlety of shades of white brush strokes of painted squares on white canvas, visually opens up the paradox of silence. It is this depth of flat surface that Malevich imbues from Russian icon painting. Marshall McLuhan³⁶¹ in his 'Cybernation and Culture,' looks at Hungarian biophysicist Georg von Békésy – who in 1930 published *The Spatial Attributes of Sound* – and his 'mosaic approach,' which he associates with auditory research. As Richard Cavell puts it:

the world of the flat iconic image, [von Békésy] points out, is as much better guide to the world of sound than three-dimensional and pictorial art. The flat iconic forms of art have much in common with acoustic space because it selects a single moment in the life of a form whereas the flat iconic image gives an integral bounding line or contour that represents not one moment or one aspect of form, but offers instead an inclusive integrated pattern.³⁶²

I hear the painted white pattern and textures, I hear silence as sound of a surface, because silence is a texture of sound. So, nothing is abstract (and nothing abstract in 'abstract art'). This is a lived spatiality also in the flatness of earlines drawing.

³⁶¹ McLuhan (1966), "Cybernation" in Dechert (ed.).

³⁶² Cavell (2002), *McLuhan*, p. 23.

2.10.5 Ear Bodies Workshops: *walking drawing*



An earlines drawing while walking, part of the performance *After the Earless*, Senate House, London 2010. Photo: Hannes Guðmundsson.

The walking body is a form of listening, one which becomes invested in different artistic media and in somatic involvement. Listening – which is already a form of active feedback – questions here experience itself and the body and the space where it takes place. While walking through architecture I realise the corporality and fluidity of space.

Italian architect Renato Bocchi talks about peripatetic architecture (by also looking at Le Corbusier's work). Still within the history of modernist architecture, he talks about Mies van der Rohe's corporeal space of his architecture, saying that:

“The ‘free plan’ of Mies, even more than that of Le Corbusier, does actually free space from structure and, consequently, from the involucre. In this, space

becomes fluid: there is no more correspondence or symbiosis between content (space) and container (involucre). Also for this reason the strict distinction between external and internal has no longer reason to exist. For this reason space is the raw material of the composition [...] space is read and realised as a dynamic space, as a fluid matter.”³⁶³

Walking in the Ear Bodies methodology and workshops is always connected to listening and drawing, as well as listening as drawing through a series of multi-directional walks of different structures and speeds. All the different ways of exploring listening through walking include drawing while walking – sometimes also with the use of trays attached to the body, or walking on wooden boxes attached to the feet (containing tea cups or other objects) – which I constructed and used in performance – and walking backwards, as a transition and connecting practice between indoor and outdoor spaces like corridors, perimeters of a building and enclosed outdoor spaces.

As part of the preparatory movement explorations, walking in different speeds is practiced, and all the different walking parameters follow one another in organic and smooth connections. Important to the movement development is walking towards stopping, the interplay between sudden stopping – in order to listen on the spot – and walking. In another exercise, once stopped, one starts scanning with the ears – by lowering the eyes – the acoustic spectrum of environmental sound coming and interacting with the ears and the room where the exercise is taking place. This is done by very slowly and smoothly turning on the spot and by allowing the right ear to start the movement. I experimented and found out that, in this way, the slow ear panning-scanning by the

³⁶³ [La ‘pianta libera’ di Mies, più ancora di quella di Le Corbusier, di fatto libera lo spazio dalla struttura e conseguentemente dall’involucro. In questo lo spazio diviene fluido: non c’è più corrispondenza o simbiosi tra contenuto (spazio) e contenitore (involucro). Per questo anche non ha più ragione d’essere la distinzione netta fra esterno e interno. Per questo lo spazio è la materia prima della composizione [...] lo spazio è letto e realizzato come uno spazio dinamico, come una materia fluida]. Bocchi (2008), *Spazio* [Space], p. 143.

turning movement process – after walking practices – engages more with binaural hearing, interaural time difference (ITD) of sound (where a sound is perceived as reaching the right ear first) and the vestibular system (in the investment of the inner ear and the body's balance). Neurophysiology tells us that:

A person determines the direction from which sound emanates by two principal mechanisms: (1) by the time lag between the entry of sound into one ear and into the opposite ear and (2) by the difference between the intensities of the sounds in the two ears [and that] some impulses arrive at the cortex well ahead of others even though they might have originated at exactly the same time.³⁶⁴

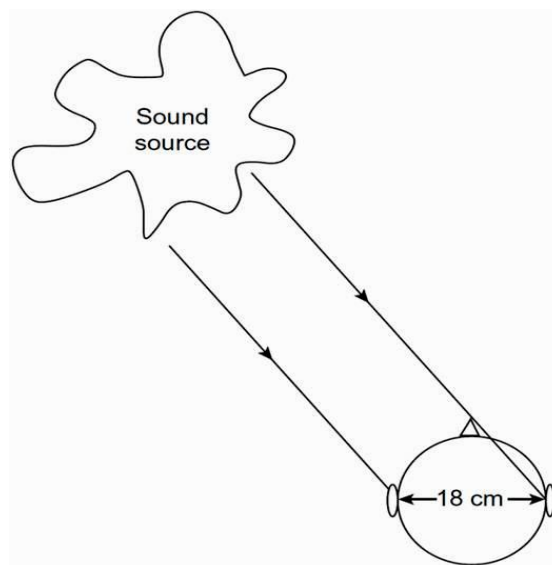


Figure showing examples of a sound source's direction in relation to the head in interaural time difference (ITD). From Howard and Angus, 2009, p. 107.

In the auditory experience of inter-aural deferral, what one personally perceives and interprets as directions and locations of sound sources is also important. The sequential turning is in a spiral motion. After the right ear has initiated the turning, the head follows,

³⁶⁴ Guyton (1981), *Basic*, p. 280, 278.

and gradually the rest of the body, upper body, pelvis, right foot, left foot follow, and the process continues again and in different areas of the space, interspersing walking, stopping and turning on the spot. This is also a preparation for earliners drawing, in space, on the floor or while walking and stopping.

The potential of my research and its methodology could bridge different experiences. Its application could be wide in various contexts and interdisciplinary studies. I see its theoretical, practical and experiential application through a different approach, not only for the visual arts, theatre and performance studies – including dance and choreography – but also for sound studies, acoustic ecology, architecture, archaeoacoustics and ecophenomenology. In the field of medicine and auditory studies it could be of help in giving valuable insights and, with its different approaches offers a field of experience, translation, study, research and therapeutic applications for the hard of hearing and, particularly, for sufferers of chronic tinnitus and hyperacusis and generally for auditory recovery. Indeed, I defined my methods developed in relation to chronic tinnitus and hyperacusis with my personal experience of them and with my specific angle and relationship to sound, which have yet not been thoroughly investigated by artists.

I developed a study of movement and performance in a close dynamic relationship with the environment, having environmental relationships and ethics as a focus through sound and corporeal listening. This is my practice and theory of site-contingent performance. I developed a practical and complex methodology which has the ear body engaged in drawing, performing, sharing. The study and its practical methods manifest an experiential knowledge and theories which show ways of knowing within one's body. By considering and experiencing sound as a relation, I created through sound a connection with environmental, physical, social sites and performative artistic disciplines. My methodology opens and discovers ways of bodied experience in relation to a diversity of

sites. I discussed and discovered how sound and listening can be specifically used to heighten our multi-sensory experience of architectural spaces and landscapes. By questioning the contemporary place and function of amplification and technology in performance and in sound studies, I critically redefined the place of the body in the contemporary information overload. I brought the body back into presence, and through the ear, where I discovered a use of spatial and corporeal resonance, against somewhat ingrained assumptions about sound in performance and in reception. My approach of ecophenomenology redefined contingency in the context of performance in relation to sites and environments. The idea and drawing of earlines, has found an application as part of my method of aural choreography and as contribution to visual art and performance training, practice and education. It is another way of communicating how one specifically performs through sound.

I found out how auditory perception and listening can be stretched and used in performance but also in daily life – and how our movements are performative experience of the ear – in listening, on surfaces, in space, through walking and moving. Incorporating these in my ear bodies working methodology and in site-contingent performance, one's ear body is renewed and becomes a stronger way for performance. My PhD study, linked to my years of practice as a visual and aural performance artist – exploring ritual, site, active listening, the ecology of acoustics – has led to a different approach from established and fixed concepts that restrict the field in terms and definitions of the aural experience. It has led to alternative formations and to this offering of academic and alternative artistic possibilities.

CODA

Floored and Cornered



The following are two written meditations condensing the different components of my performance research practice and in this thesis can be read as a summary. *Floored and Cornered* were part of my performance and installations – in the form of a reading voice recording – as part of my performance of the same title at the University of Roehampton on 23 February 2011.

Floored



I am on the floor.

On the floor I am a listening deaf body, and I leave the point of perpendicularity. I am a renewed body and surprisingly I happened to be put on this track by sound, floored by its de-stabilising power, the power of sound inside my ear, my head (location and correlation: not enough space in the head?), my phantom mind, sound out there, and here, and now there, now. The body of one and many ears adhering to the floor where mechanical events of vibration go through to unrest me. A tremor vents amongst tremulations.

I happened to be a figure of tacit speech and a sonic invisible image coined by plastic space. A cicada which has burst for too much life of one day's singing, but its burst open shell keeps its sonic memory, lingering on in a tonal continuum.

The prelude of performance is my listening receptivity, a welcoming embrace to the unknown and a sounding friend, the coming forth and the already gone, the lost and regained care (if not for a speckle of a savaged moment). It performs in the theatre of the ear, activates my body activating this space, this acoustic space creating tangible space, a

sonic physical genesis of each molecule in the ear touching another. I feel planks of wood, or a cement expanse.

I shudder when I listen, my neurons' occurrence become mind's ears, they listen in a quantum of disappointed science. Percussive nails go through the floor, the quivering is my auditory itch. Transmission through heels, legs, sacrum, the centre of the back of the spine, more on one shoulder, back of the head: listened by the listening. Permeated and permutated; rearranged auditory drumming of buzzing phantom perception. Keep nailing on the floor, as now I am moving, friend of mother gravity, I tune with your gravitational pull: a constant ringing note from ears to toes.

I am floored, spirit-levelled and *ab-surdo*, yet listening, acute trembling membrane trespassed by sonic wind. On the floor, I hear the steps of attrition, keep on walking, moving, the floor changes its acoustic landscape, I tune to the one of your feet on the floor, there is some space connecting them.

My body rings from numerous creative detonations. You are received, however, you are welcomed to contradict my position. I identify with what I listen in every part of the floor, a plane of contingency in a fleeting transmission of immanent time. Weight, plumb line resting on the floor, its remembering molecules of their being-moved by sonorous inaudibility. Shifting weight is my methodology, is this a sounding shift, of perceptual attention and fluid yet grave movements?

We are this audience, invited to the audition's floor. All the moving points are tails of the ears: vanishing auditory ends. In a corridor, reflected in labyrinthine ear canals, the stage drawing of an ear echoing Maurits Escher's words: "Are you really sure that a floor can't

also be a ceiling?”³⁶⁵ I come to just listen to this space, a framed space, a waiting room on the floor of the ground floor: its detailed sound with no source or ending.

There are beating feet, beating sounds, beating bodies which then draw closer to the floor, sometimes in accordance and every now and then in discordance with it. The world is reflecting, a reflecting metaphor of cochlear floors and channels, outside in this room, outside in this forest floor, after sunset, getting darker, painting it sharper.

A high pitch is in the room but, perhaps, through it, I de-centre from it, during and after this performative meeting I have an immediate time to choose. Full ears: full world. Ears full of world, mundane body: mundane ears. Dragging feet, dragging ears, back on the floor: drawing in this theatrical space, where drawing becomes the spatiality of a site and a site the spatiality of drawing; drawing is all the movements of air when resting floored.

Emptied to the world, emptying the world of the ears, empty shells or empty cocktail glasses to hear the world I am already in, found space.

The eyes are horizontal, and mostly horizontal is the perception of our ears, they form illusory perspectival vanishings, acoustic vanishing points. Yet, when and where everything is vanishing, the furtive is in the feet, feet which are shaped – together with the kidneys – like ears. They ground me, and create my choreography, sliding my ears in an ear *suriashi* on the floor and its foundation. This is a method helping an adherence to the heard, to hear things where their space is felt, amplified by resounding architectonic features, vessels. Inner ear windows and vestibular folds, outside in a room, outside in a forest of vegetation and sonic forest of piercing insects’ sounds.

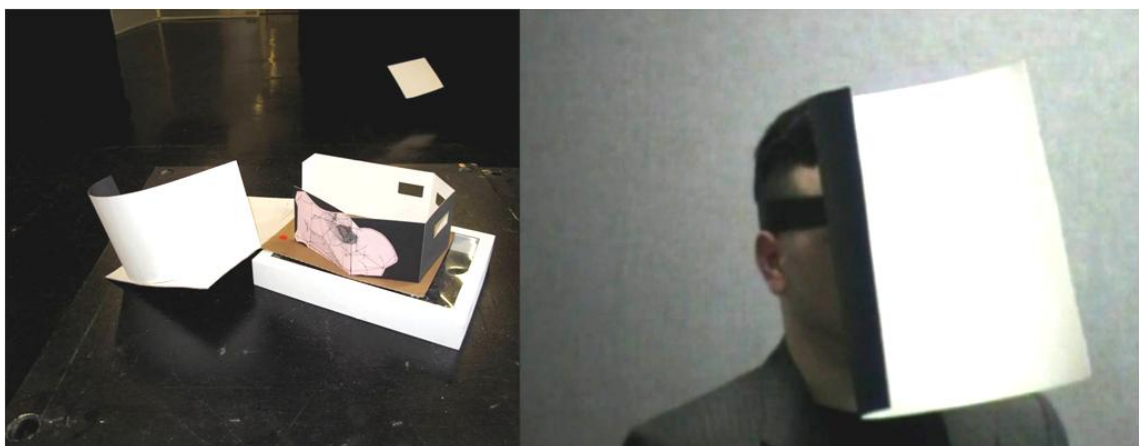
Perhaps, underneath his wooden floor ramp there is still the skeleton of Vito Acconci, the onanistic architect of ‘Seedbed.’³⁶⁶ I slide from his raised ramp on the corner, engaging

³⁶⁵ Caniglia et al. (2011), “The art,” p. 3.

with illusory architectural and illusory spatial perspectival ends, and with an engaged other's corporeal empathy. Solid sounding space. Acconci is now sonic detritus of amplified sculptures and architectures, saying that contingent is the site of the body-space. My swinging sonic choreography continues as a practice of an auditory infinitesimal – and not often amplified – performance art, just by tailing an ear: by listening to the so many ends.

A performing common ground of site contingency where personal and collective bodies reside with their illusory vanishings, preceding or deferring the location with my ears, a constantly moving world. Critically placed between preconceived notions and restrictions with a landscaped environment, I try to find the (sustainable) distance to exist in the haptic closeness with it. This experiencing of tuning is moved by that very space that sound creates.

Cornered



Floored and Cornered, itinerant performance and installation, University of Roehampton, 23.02.2011.
Photo: Ella Finer and Fabrizio Manco.

³⁶⁶ Performed at the Sonnabend Gallery, New York, N.Y., January 15 - 29, 1971.

I am hearing a corner.

John R. Stilgoe, from his 'Foreword to the 1994 edition' of Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* writes:

How accurately must one hear in order to hear the geometry of echoes in an old, peculiarly experienced house? Bachelard writes of hearing by imagination, of filtering, of distorting sound, of lying awake in his city apartment and hearing the roar of Paris the rore of the sea, of hearing what is, and what is not.³⁶⁷

In this writing, Bachelard makes us ponder on personal auditory experience and geometry of hearing in relation to architecture. Yet, I depart from his conceiving of corners as "a symbol of solitude for the imagination," or when he states that:

a corner that is lived in tends to reject and restrain, even to hide life. The corners become a negation of the universe [...] They do not need to have a sullen person in a corner described to them as 'cornered.'³⁶⁸

Instead, in a corner one dwells, listens to a full sounding world, where one can be stilled and moved. In this attempted auditory economy and ecology I make ends meet. Cornered I hear this geometry of meeting corners with echoes in this particularly experienced house as a corporeal understanding, a lived experience. Here, I consider geometry as non-mathematical corporeal measuring of space, one's inevitable anthropocentric measuring, short-circuited by one's awareness of one's relation to the world of things as events.

Acoustic life is the everywhere. A corner of a space contains it. Either domestic or theatrical is an encounter of sonic surfaces. Waves reflected and changing on surfaces,

³⁶⁷ Stilgoe (1994), "Foreword," p. ix.

³⁶⁸ Bachelard, *The Poetics*, p. 136-137. When Bachelard says 'they' he refers mainly to psychologists and specifically to metaphysicians.

indiscriminate in any space encountering another, defined by these encounters, events of sonic as physical nature interrelate with the listener, corners are smothered and rounded by experience. The geometry of walls is opened by walls of windows as ears, spaces which are never window-less. I am facing a corner which is never experientially truly either angular or rounded, because corners do not contradict one another. So, I am cornered, sounded by this meeting of surfaces to its molecular and sounding life, like a rock face, a stone I listen to.

In performing a cornered hearing experience the architectural textures and the sonic surfaces are drawn by your body's meanderings of invisible lines, where sound interweaves while one is interweaved. This world of sound is the imaginary sonic interlacing drawing lines, and is already becoming performance, conditioned by that cornered interface. A performance of becoming a shadow, an acoustic shadow sliding on a wall, sliding shadow of sliding feet, meeting a corner, feet turning cornered. Our feet lead our directionality, small steps creating bigger modifications. I call this the temporality of turning corners, of turning on a spot, or the temporality of just turning. Corners are not sharp angles, neither an angular trap, but reflections, reflections to be considered, to be sensed. Architectures reflect corners, reflecting acoustic life: we move, walk, stop in corners.

In a forest, vegetable architectures remind us of urban symbiotic architectural spaces and vice-versa. Foliage walls and hedges, barks of trees and, on urban floors of asphalt, pavements, uneven stone slabs on the ground, on railings, reflecting around, in and beyond corners. A space with listened animal and human scansions: parallel lives. I am this small, intimate cornered contingency. The body-place and the body-site, the body-space, and the ear-body, opened and very small in many margins.

The destiny of the event is in disappearance to the limit of the audible, to the horizon of hearing, the margins of many peripheries, always insular to oneself.

Cornered, I remember what I have just met. Cornered, I pause in constantly moving stillness to remember moving sound.

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