Listening to/with Mar Paradoxo: a collective practice for sharing listenings

Gustavo Branco Germano* (University of São Paulo), Alexandre Marino Fernandez (Faculdade Cásper Libero), Daniel Tápia (Federal University of Espírito Santo), Henrique Souza Lima (University of São Paulo), Lílian Campesato (Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro), Marina Mapurunga (Federal University of Recôncavo da Bahia), Valéria Bonafé (University of São Paulo), Vicente Reis (Federal University of Recôncavo da Bahia) | Brazil

Resumo: Este artigo apresenta uma metodologia experimental desenvolvida pelo coletivo Laura: Lugar de Pesquisas em Auralidade para abordar a escuta como uma experiência compartilhada. Como motivo para a aplicação dessa metodologia, selecionamos o trabalho *Mar Paradoxo* (Raquel Stolf, 2016), entendido como uma proposição que nos permite experimentar múltiplos modos de escuta. Para contextualizar nossa leitura do trabalho de Stolf, nos referimos ao conceito de otografia como um modo de abordar a experiência de escuta como algo que produz e é produzido por traços. Através da criação, compartilhamento e análise de relatos de escuta, delineamos diferentes modos pelos quais nossas escutas navegam. Esses modos nos ajudam a compreender a escuta como uma experiência multimediada e relacional, sempre singular e situada. Ao final, enfatizamos a presença do outro no sujeito de escuta, ressoando a tese de que a atividade de escuta é movida por um desejo de fazer nossa escuta escutada.

Palavras-chave: Escuta, Otografias, Práticas experimentais de pesquisa, Raquel Stolf, *Mar Paradoxo*.

Abstract: This paper presents an experimental methodology developed by the collective Laura: Place for Research on Aurality for approaching listening as a shared experience. As a motif for the application of this methodology, we take the work *Mar Paradoxo* (Raquel Stolf, 2016) as a proposition for experiencing multiple modes of listening. To contextualize our understanding of Stolf's work, we refer to the concept of otography as a way of approaching the listening experience as something that makes and is made out of traces. By means of the production, sharing, and analysis of listening reports, we outline different modes through which our listening navigates. These modes help us understand listening as an experience that is multi-mediated and relational, singular and situated. In the end, we emphasize the presence of the other in the listening subject, resonating the thesis that the listening activity is driven by a desire of making one's listening listened.

Keywords: Listening, Otography, Experimental research practices, Raquel Stolf, *Mar Paradoxo*.

What's the [hidden] noise of listening?
Raquel Stolf, in notas oblíquas [sob uma coleção de silêncios]

T he activity of listening, important to practices as diverse as ethnography, linguistics, medicine, and music, is highly diversified. Not only do different people listen to the same phenomenon in distinct ways, but also one might listen to it differently according to the situation he/she's in or to his/her particular interests in each moment.

In the fields of music and sound studies, a significant amount of works produced since the second half of the 20th century have been concerned with the understanding of this diversity. In some cases, these studies attempt to categorize different listening *modes*, originating typologies that can be broader or narrower in their scope (cf. ADORNO, 1962; CHION, 1994, p. 25-34; TUURI; EEROLA, 2012).

But would it be possible to actually listen to someone else's listening? How to share one's listening? How to register and communicate not only what we're listening to, but also the way we're listening to it?

This article is motivated by an encounter between eight researchers, members of the collective Laura: Place for Research on Aurality, associated with NuSom - Research Centre on Sonology at the University of São Paulo, who share a common interest in the production of critical studies on listening. The text is divided into three main sections. In the first one, which stems from one of the member's master's dissertation (GERMANO, 2020), we investigate the aforementioned questions starting from an incursion into the work *Mar Paradoxo*, by Brazilian sound artist Raquel Stolf. We argue that Stolf employs two distinct strategies in order to register and share her listening: 1) the production of a visual material that she refers to as *listening notes-drawings*; and 2) the creation of phonograms through the practice of field recording. Therefore, we attempt to analyze both of these components of *Mar Paradoxo* as being related to the concept of *otography*. Finally, we observe that Stolf characterizes her sound works as *propositions* that ask for an unfolding, action or response from its listeners.

Assuming the importance of this propositional dimension in Stolf's work, the two remaining sections aim to establish a dialogue with her publication by means of a collective textual production

that, similarly to the strategies employed by the artist, attempts to share our listening of *Mar Paradoxo* with our readers. In section 2, we describe the main stages that composed our listening of Stolf's publication and attempt to characterize our methodology as a *listening protocol*. This method resulted in the production of seven listening reports, one of which has been included at the beginning of section 3.

In the third section, we navigate between the reports produced by the group, reading them as traces of our experiences of listening *with* Stolf's work. We attempt to untangle the different types of information contained in each report and thereby identify what they tell us about our 'listenings'. Following this analysis, we outline three ways by which our listenings approached *Mar Paradoxo*, each described by means of a maritime metaphor: *undulation mode*, *drift mode*, and *hadal mode*. These modes help us to formulate some considerations about listening that have been discussed within our group, such as: the multiple mediations involved in the experience of listening; the many images that populate our listenings; the idea that listening always involves an access to the self; and the idea that listening is itself an interface with the unconscious.

1. *Mar Paradoxo*: fishing for silences

Raquel Stolf is a Brazilian artist whose recent production, both artistic and academic, investigates "relationships between concepts of silence, writing processes and listening situations in the construction of sonic propositions and publications and their unfoldings." (NENDU, 2021). Stolf holds a Doctorate degree in Visual Arts from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) and is an associate professor at the Santa Catarina State University (UDESC). As a researcher, Stolf has written and published several articles about the relationships between silence, listening, writing, and drawing (cf. STOLF, 2015; 2016b; 2018; 2019). Her artistic production has been presented in more than 20 individual exhibitions. Her sound art frequently assumes the form of textual propositions, installations, or publications containing CDs.

Mar Paradoxo [Paradox Sea] (2016) is the fourth of Stolf's publications to be released with an audio CD, having been preceded by *Lista de Coisas Brancas* (2001), *FORA [DO AR]* (2004) and *Assonâncias de Silêncios [coleção]* (2010). It was published in a collaboration between the artist's label

céu da boca and the book publisher *Nave*, from Florianópolis, Brazil. The release follows up with Stolf's project of "recording, proposing, writing-drawing, listening and collecting silences" (STOLF, 2016a), in which the artist has been involved since 2007 and that also includes her previous publication *Assonâncias de Silêncios [coleção].*

Mar Paradoxo contains 100 tracks of field recordings that are described as "coastal silences" (STOLF, 2016a), and one last track, titled *100 silêncios empilhados* [100 silences stacked], in which all of the previous recordings are overlaid. The first 100 tracks are ordered from shortest to longest, the first of them lasting only 11 seconds and the last one being 4 minutes and 37 seconds long. Each of these tracks is titled *silêncio costeiro X* [coastal silence X], in which X is a number between 1 and 100 that does not correspond to the order of the tracks, but to the order in which the recordings were made (personal information[1]). The two CDs are packed in a sheet of rectangular bond paper, that also carries inside the visual and textual part of the project, which includes a typology of "sea bottoms" (STOLF, 2016a), 9 cards with notes/drawings of silences, and a report of a dream.

The recordings contained in the CDs were made around the island of Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, mostly using a hydrophone[2] that was placed close to the sea floor in coastal regions. Similar strategies for capturing sea sounds had previously been employed in some of her earlier works, such as the audiovisual installation *fundo do mar sob ruído de fundo [três silêncios para reverón]* (2010)[3] and in the tracks *fundo do mar and sob ruído de fundo from Assonâncias de Silêncios [coleção]*[4]. In the textual material that accompanies the publication, Stolf suggests an analogy between the act of recording sounds with a hydrophone and the activity of fishing, referring to this practice as "silence fishing" (STOLF, 2016a, author's translation).

By referring to the recordings as "coastal silences", Stolf suggests a particular conception of silence that doesn't limit itself to the absence of acoustic vibrations[5]. For Stolf, a *sounding silence* can be understood as an "audible background" (STOLF, 2015, p. 206, author's translation) that can be

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[1] All personal information was obtained during a video conference with the artist on May 29, 2020.
[2] Hydrophones are transducers projected to be used underwater, performing a function that is analogous to that of the microphone, that is, the conversion of acoustic energy into electrical signals.
[3] The video created for this installation is available at the following link: <https://vimeo.com/67145042>.
[4] In these recordings, Stolf used a waterproof digital camera instead of a hydrophone (personal information).
[5] An extensive investigation into the concept of silence can be found in the artist's doctoral thesis (cf. STOLF, 2011, p. 213-270).

perceived through listening and captured in field recordings. On the other hand, her artistic and theoretical work also investigates the idea of an *acoustic silence*, which might be understood as a void or as an attempt of "listening to a silence without hearing" (STOLF, 2016b, p. 20, author's translation). While the sounding silences may be recorded and reproduced, this doesn't happen with acoustic silences. The latter can only be proposed artistically and conceptually as a phenomenon that, even if physically impossible, motivates the artist's work (cf. STOLF, 2011, p. 232-233).

In the two following sections, we will argue that the recordings and part of the visual material contained in *Mar Paradoxo* can be interpreted as two different instances of the same operation: the making of *otographies*.

1.1 Listening notes-drawings as otographic propositions

The visual component of *Mar Paradoxo* includes nine cards containing what Stolf describes as *notas-desenhos de escuta* [listening notes-drawings] (cf. STOLF, R., 2017): manuscript graphs and words which work as representations of particular silences, receiving titles such as *silêncio salpicado* [speckled silence], *silêncio mergulhante* [diving silence] and *silêncio ruidoso* [noisy silence]. The creation of listening notes-drawings is part of several of Stolf's artistic works, also appearing in her installations *Fundo de mar sob ruído de fundo* (2010) and *60 silêncios empilhados* (2010-2015). Although these drawings suggest a visual analogy with the sonograms that are frequently seen in digital audio workstations (STOLF, 2017, p. 113), the artist describes her notes-drawings as "registers of acoustic *experiences*" (STOLF, 2015, p. 208, author's translation, emphasis added), which distinguishes them from the presumed objectivity of digital audio analysis.

If, on the one hand, the inclusion of graphs might bring an undertone of scientific rigor to the project, on the other hand, this impression is counterbalanced by the graphs' handwriting, which results in crooked lines. Moreover, these graphs present an impossible relationship between two different temporal dimensions – one in the X-axis and the other one in the Y-axis –, both measured in seconds. In *silêncio deserto* [desert silence], for instance, the X-axis represents "time passing", while the Y-axis indicates "time lost" (Figure 1). Meanwhile, in *silêncio ruidoso* [noisy silence], the graph presents a relationship between "time that passes" and "time that doesn't pass" (Figure 2). Therefore,

the graphs contained in these notes-drawings seem to reinforce the idea of a paradox contained in the title of the publication.

FIGURE 1 – *silêncio deserto* [desert silence]. Graphic material from *Mar Paradoxo*, by Raquel Stolf. A manuscript graph crosses "passing time" (axis X) with "lost time" (axis Y), both measured in seconds. Axis X goes from 0 to 60s, while axis Y goes from 0 to 70s. The events represented in the graph are indicated as: "slow breathing / wind vulture / hoarse rumour / chewed rumour / boat motor (on the surface)."
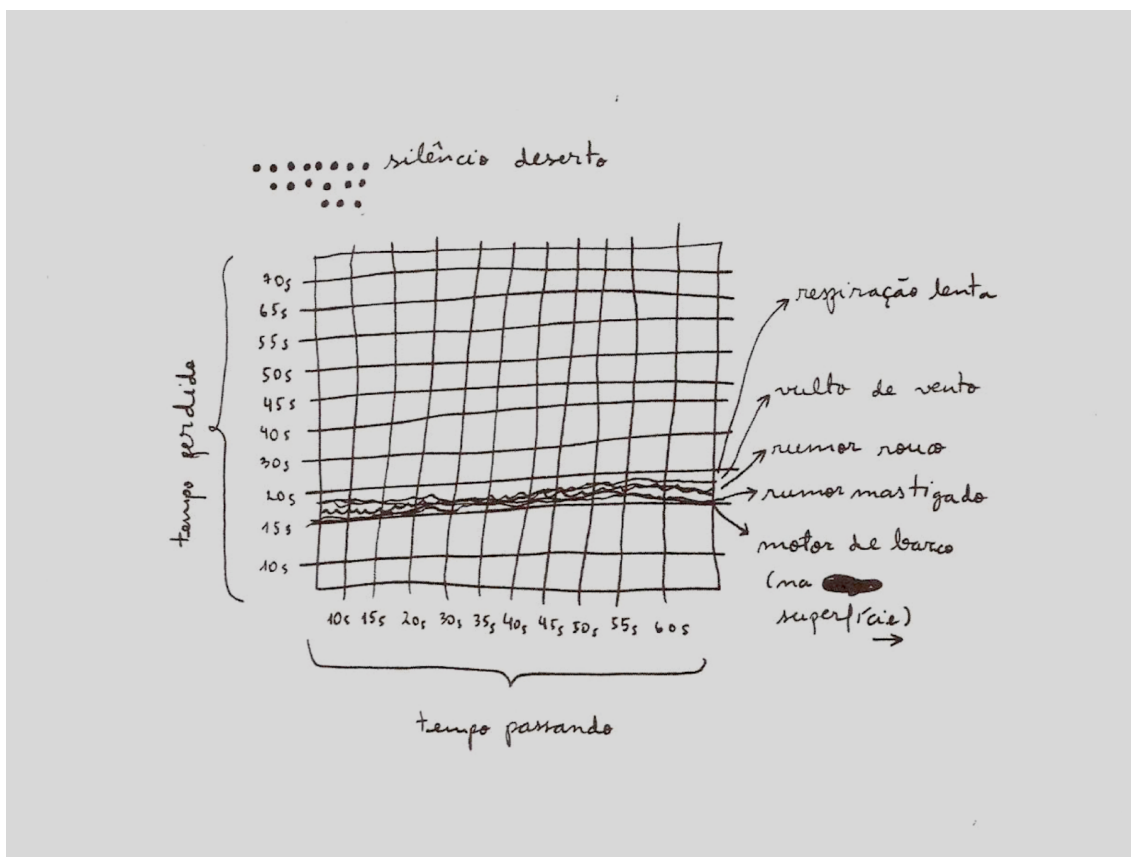
Source: STOLF (2016a).

FIGURE 2 – *silêncio ruidoso* [noisy silence]. Graphic material from *Mar Paradoxo*, by Raquel Stolf. A manuscript graph crosses "time that passes" (axis X) with "time that does not pass" (axis Y), both measured in seconds. Both axes go from 0 to 18s. The events represented in the graph are indicated as: "something imperceptible (high-pitched) / something light (with light) (brief) / backwards wave / liquid chewing (slow and always) / something imperceptible."
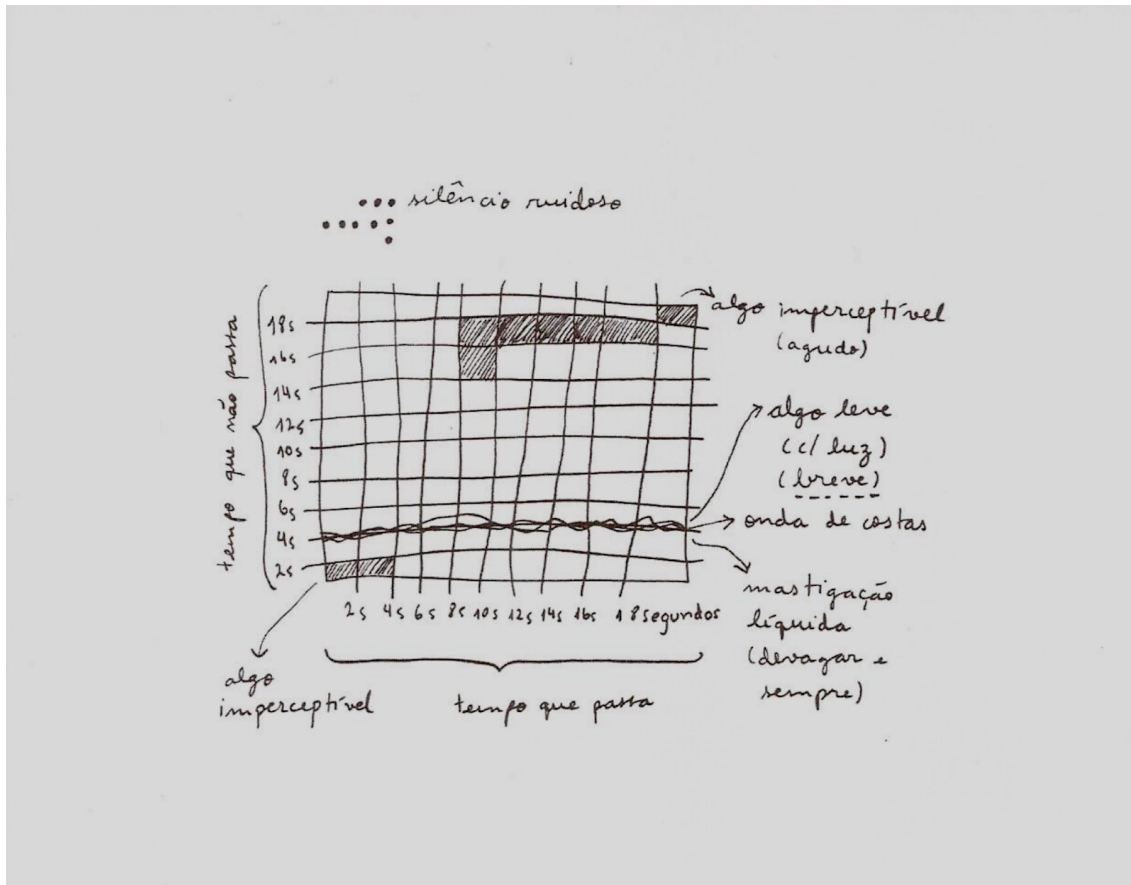
Source: STOLF (2016a).

The production of listening notes-drawings suggests a parallel with the concept of *otography*, which appears in the writings of the French philosopher Peter Szendy (cf. SZENDY; DONIN, 2003; SZENDY, 2007; SZENDY, 2016). This term can be used to refer to the "inscription of listening practices in concrete expressive means" (LIMA, 2018, p. 323, author's translation), resulting in a "translation of listening into a tangible trace" (LIMA, 2018, p. 327, author's translation). Therefore, we'd like to suggest an interpretation of *Mar Paradoxo*'s notes-drawings not only as visual representations of silences but also as visual representations *of the listening to silences*, that is, as *otographies* of silences.

This distinction, apparently subtle, becomes significant if we understand that the making of these notes-drawings is mediated by a particular type of listening that reflects specific interests and

intentions (for example, her quest for *a* silence) which are also inscribed during the otographic process. We should also highlight that one of the aspects of Stolf's artistic research consists in an investigation on "how to register what *and how* one listens" (STOLF, 2019, p. 120, author's translation, emphasis added), making use of the writing process as "a microscope for the ear" (STOLF, 2018, p. 173, author's translation). Therefore, we suggest that one might glimpse, in her notes-drawings, traces of a particular way of listening, one in which the silences are multiple, and each has its own singularity.

Although initially conceived only as documentation of her personal listenings, these notes-drawings would later also be employed as *propositions*[6] for her readers/listeners, being included as part of her artistic projects so that these silences could be "unlimitedly executed in one's listening" (STOLF, 2017, p. 113, author's translation). Listening, in this case, is understood as an internal process that allows the listener to imagine sounds based on what has been drawn/written by the artist. This shift from register to proposition is also indicated in the textual material included in *Mar Paradoxo*, in which the expression "*notas-desenhos de escuta*" [listening notes-drawings], frequently employed in her other writings (cf. STOLF, 2011; STOLF, 2017), is substituted by the variation "*notas-desenhos de/para escuta*" [notes-drawings from/for listening] (STOLF, 2016a).

Engaging with a tradition of Brazilian artists such as Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, and Lygia Pape, Stolf understands that propositional works demand from their viewers some form of participation or dialogue. Therefore, her notes-drawings propose an unfolding, an imaginative action for the reader-listener through which these "mixed *words-scores*" (STOLF, 2017, p. 113, author's translation) can be internally heard.

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[6] Raquel Stolf's Doctoral thesis contains a glossary in which an "artistic proposition" is defined in the following terms: "Thinking of a work as a proposition implies conceiving it as something that isn't dissociated from its process, as something that is situational and that might circulate in a subtle, nearly imperceptible way in some contexts. Sonic propositions might demand participation from the body, physical actions, and might as well ask for 'mental acts', waitings and other situations, such as listening modulations, proposing acoustic experiences." (STOLF, 2011, p. 319, author's translation).

1.2 The phonographic practice as otography

Having presented our understanding of Stolf's notes-drawings as registers of one's listening that also carry the potential to activate other people's listenings, we may as well inquire if the phonographic component of *Mar Paradoxo* could also be interpreted as a form of otography. Would there be a *trace* of Stolf's listening in these recordings? In which ways does her listening mark and inscribes itself in these silences?

Stolf refers to the recordings that she's been making since 2007 as a "collection of silences" (STOLF, 2018). The idea of building a collection – explicitly employed in her previous project *Assonâncias de Silêncios [coleção]* [Assonances of Silences (collection)] – also seems to reveal itself in the artist's choice of ordering the first 100 tracks in *Mar Paradoxo* chronometrically, resembling a collector who exhibits her collection in a shelf, taking great care to arrange the items from small to large.

The analogy with the process of making a collection might lead us to interpret the recordings merely as "found objects", as if they were somewhat similar to a collection of shells gathered from these different beaches. However, we believe that understanding phonography as a form of *capture* (in the word's most literal sense) and storage of sounds that were "found" in the world, so that they may later be *re*-produced in different situations, implies a very questionable neutrality from both the recording agent and the recording process. This conception has been criticized by several authors who recognize recording as a form of representation, therefore assuming a complex relationship between the recorded sound and its original context, passing through the mediation of the recording equipment and of the sound recordist (cf. BORN, 2009; LASTRA, 2000, p. 124-125).

The impression of being in direct, non-mediated contact with the recording's referent might be unsettled through the recognition of the artist's presence in the recorded material (cf. DANTAS, 2019, p. 154-156). This presence might appear explicitly in the recording, such as in the voice-over from Hildegard Westerkamp's *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (1989), or might be recognized through subtle inflections, such as the moving of the microphones through space in Ernst Karel's *Heard Laboratories* (2010). In *Mar Paradoxo*, however, the artist's presence is even less evident. As we shall see in our listening reports, the specific cause for any sound heard in the album is most often

uncertain or ambiguous. Therefore, we can't tell for sure if a certain sound is being produced by the artist's intentional movement of the hydrophone or by a water current that passes over the equipment. Although there is a significant variety of sounds throughout the album, these sounds are, in our listening, mostly *anonymous*.

However, we'd like to argue that this anonymity – this absence of explicit denotation, this silence in our causal listening – is not simply an inevitable characteristic of underwater recordings. As we have seen, *Mar Paradoxo* is part of a larger artistic investigation that aims to capture sounding silences. In order to reach this goal, it was necessary to remove any kind of sound that could appear to one's listening as non-silent: Stolf has deliberately interrupted the recording each time she noticed, for instance, a ship approaching the hydrophone or even the presence of specific types of fish. In some cases, the artist has also edited the recordings in order to exclude these sounds (personal information). Stolf employs sound recording as a strategy for representing sounding silences heard at the bottom of the sea, focusing her listening – and *our* listening – only in that layer that is found behind or between any sounds perceived as non-silent.

According to Szendy (2007, p. 96), the activity of listening, whether it is mediated by phonography or not, always implies a *deaf point* that inscribes itself in what is heard. That is, our listening produces cuts, making some things inaudible while it highlights others. For Szendy, this "otographic signature" (SZENDY, 2007, p. 97), which can be remarked in Stolf's field recordings, is not a particularity of the phonographic process but a necessary condition of the listening activity.

Therefore, we argue that the recordings included in *Mar Paradoxo* result from a specific listening intention: a selective listening that filters particular layers of these sounds in order to avoid "soundmarks" and "silences with defined significations", "passing through a floating listening, a porous listening or one that is assonant with its surroundings" (STOLF, 2011, p. 244, author's translation). Even if we're unable to hear sonic interventions that could indicate the artist's presence during the act of recording, her quiet listening still marks these phonograms. Hearing the recordings otographies, also capable of registering a particular way of listening, we might suggest that the phonographic component of the project is not so different from the notes-drawings that accompany it. They are distinct strategies for representing silences and, in both cases, we understand that a creative act of listening is involved.

Furthermore, Stolf suggests that her sonic publications also share with her notes-drawings the characteristic of being a proposition. In her doctoral thesis, the artist argues that

> the sonic component is thought of as a moldable and malleable element, that in its (exterior and interior) strategies evokes senses, non-senses through sensations, perceptions and thoughts, being enacted in different ways in specific spaces and times. Our starting point is the idea that each proposition can be unfolded, in that it can be displaced, deviated, and ressignified when it is heard and/or executed in other contexts and intersected with other listenings.
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> Therefore, the activity of listening to my records might take place both in a domestic and private space, with a variable duration, continuous or discontinuous, determined by each reader-listener, as well as it might be enacted in public spaces such as the city, the radio, the web, in lectures, conversations, classrooms or even in exhibition spaces, collectively or not. And the spaces and whoever might be/hear/listen/sound there modifies the propositions in different ways and in variable intensities. (STOLF, 2011, p. 287, author's translation).

Similarly, in the booklet for her publication *FORA [DO AR]*, Stolf suggests that "the cd can be heard like someone who opens a book to read it or who closes it to unread. One can read the whole book in a single sitting or revisit it in different times and spaces: one can dose the audition [listen to one track per day, week, month and/or year]." (STOLF, 2011, p. 103-104, author's translation).

In the following pages, we report and analyze a creative and collaborative process grounded in this propositional dimension of Stolf's artistic work. We understand that just as Stolf chooses to organize her collection of silences first by displaying them in chronometrical order and later by superimposing them in a single track (in *100 silêncios empilhados*), in our listenings we might rearrange this collection in different ways and hear it in various contexts. Understood as a proposition, we suggest that the experience of *Mar Paradoxo* isn't limited to passive audition, but demands an interaction, a dialogue.

2. Who listens?

This article was collaboratively written by Laura: Place for Research on Aurality, a group of researchers particularly interested in critical studies on listening. We began working together in May 2019 with the aim of exploring alternative modes of investigation and publication, taking care to maintain a collaborative and collective environment. Our works are concerned with the topic of

listening, focusing on the production of methodologies for thinking and experimenting with this topic in an academic context.

We believe that methodological experimentation oriented towards the sharing of listening experiences is a particularly relevant procedure in the current context of research on listening. A considerable amount of writing dedicated to the activity of listening was produced through the XXth century, most of it grounded in assumptions derived from a mixture of physicalist reductions and a metaphysics of "sound in itself" – as in Cage (1961) – or from the production of typologies of listening that distinguish modes hierarchically – as in Adorno (1962) and Schaeffer (1966). More recently, after a series of critical reviewings of these assumptions (KAHN, 1999; SZENDY, 2001; KIM-COHEN, 2009), the experience of listening has been characterized as a socially shared practice. Meanwhile, the notion of "sound" has been reviewed and conceptualized in works that emphasize its *virtual*[7] dimension instead of its physical and vibrational aspects. Characterizations of sound as an *image* (CAESAR, 2008; KIM-COHEN, 2009) and as a *trace* (BONNET, 2016) take part in the contemporary debate on listening, and this debate focuses on the *multiple layers of virtual mediation* – language, memory, and the symbolic and imaginary dimensions – *that configure listening*.

In this context, we highlight the thesis that human listening is, by its very nature, an activity that is *shared* between listeners through a spectral relationship (SZENDY, 2001; 2003; LIMA, 2018). Stemming from this debate, our methodological proposal for approaching *Mar Paradoxo* was based on the creation of a procedure divided into two stages, assuming the form of a listening "protocol".

2.1 A listening protocol for experiencing *Mar Paradoxo*

Searching for a methodological proposal for group listening that could avoid making this process excessively rigid, we opted for a broader notion of *protocol* that could account for variability and the possibility of renouncing formalism. This conception of protocol is similar to that which has been described by the collective *Ultra-Red*[8] in their 2012 workbook *Five Protocols for Organized*

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[7] Regarding the philosophical concept of the virtual, see Deleuze (1966) and Lévy (1995).
[8] Ultra-Red is a collective of artists and researchers formed in the USA in 1994 by two AIDS activists, Dont Rhine and Marco Larsen. Their actions are developed through sonic research and listening practice.

Listening:

> Rather than promoting specific rules about sound inquiry, the protocols compiled in this workbook remind us instead of the important dialectical rapport between open attentiveness and intentional commitment. Without that dialectic, listening procedures can fall dangerously into rigid formalism or aesthetic experience for its own sake. A protocol is not a formula. Neither is it the procedure itself. Rather, it is a record and a catalyst for collective reflection, analysis, and action to come. It is an idea whose meaning will have been produced at the scene of reception; sound that will have resonated in embodiment. Hence the question, "What did you hear?" becomes itself a protocol — the primary protocol — that choreographs an inquiry. (ULTRA-RED, 2012, p. 4).

This open and fluid conception of *protocol* has similarly guided the development of our own protocol for listening to Stolf's work. Essentially, *Ultra-Red*'s proposal resonates with Laura's interest in fomenting collectivity through practices that produce intersubjectivity. We should also highlight that, for them, "listening is never natural. It requires and generates literacy. Since it puts subjects into relation with each other and with the world, listening has the potential to contribute significantly to the constitution of collectivity" (Ibidem, p. 4).

Having considered the importance of listening as a central element of articulation and sensibilization in Stolf's work, we suggested treating it as a starting point for the generation of research material (LEAVY, 2020, p. 306) that might contribute to the understanding of the processes approached here, including the unfoldings of the subjective listenings produced by the group in the application of our protocol.

Therefore, we decided that each of us should produce some kind of textual material based on our individual listenings, guided by a common listening protocol. Before achieving its final form, a preliminary attempt at textual production was undertaken by proposing, as an experiment, that we should orient our listening and writing towards a series of topics associated with the idea of *apophenic listening* (cf. WRIGHT, 2017, p. 35).

After carefully considering the results obtained from this preliminary stage, we decided to use them only as material that would help us elaborate a less rigid stage of listening and writing, in which we hoped not to restrict the possibility of free associations, considered significantly productive in the generation of textual material.

Therefore, our second listening experience directed towards textual production was structured based on a mix between a common protocol and the possibility of an individual protocol, taking as our main reference the idea of *affective reports from listening* developed by Valéria Bonafé and Lílian Campesato, members of Laura, in a previous article (BONAFÉ; CAMPESATO, 2021). As our common protocol, we established an attempt to associate our listening with our individual momentary situation, including the technical resources that were employed, the environment that surrounded our audition, the ordering of the tracks chosen for the process, and the conceptual ideas that influenced our practice. As an individual protocol, we proposed that each member would produce his/her text by writing and associating freely, but that it should stem from the choice of a particular listening path, as a strategy for exposing different interpretations and producing variety in the resulting material.

The protocol employed in our listening of *Mar Paradoxo* resulted in the production of 7 individual listening reports that portray the associations proposed by our group and produce material for reflection after our contact with Stolf's work. These reports were shared anonymously within the group, as a strategy for valuing the collective and intersubjective aspect of these listenings and stimulating discussion. Finally, in the meeting that followed this second textual production, we proposed an exercise of reading aloud the unidentified reports, promoting different types of listening and various possibilities of comprehension associated with the spoken word.

3. How may listening navigate?

I listen to the first CD, from the first track to the last in sequence. Within that range of silences, I imagine several seas. Those from Baía de Todos os Santos, Rio Vermelho, Iracema, Futuro beach, Meireles, Mucuripe. These silences took me to the coasts, the groynes, took me on the fishermen's boats anchored at the port. I imagine from the little I know of the seas in Florianópolis and I mix it with my closest seas.

At the beginning of listening, there are many shots, many cuts, the silences are very contrasting. I seem to be moving to different surfaces of this and those seas. In one moment, I am at the shallow waters, and then suddenly I'm at the bottom. Sometimes the waves take me, sometimes I hide from them on the groynes, the rocks, or the boats.

Am I the microphone? Or do I try to be Raquel? I try to locate her. Imagine her. Where would I put this microphone? Where did she put it? What is that sound? The silence is now quieter and the noise of the recorder emerges.

The waters resemble bonfires. They pop like fire. My thoughts run in different directions, I can't concentrate on just one sound. I think of the microphone in the water –

the hydrophone –, I think of the water-fire, the waves (whether they would catch me or not), the continuous noises, the depths, the body of the one who captures(ed). Did she capture in or out of the water? Both, I think. I imagined that she would not go into the water. But in the course of listening, I imagine that in some moments she did. The fisherman also enters the water to fish. She fishes, she fishes for silences. These silences, unlike fishes, do not enter through my mouth, but through my ears, at the apartment, in front of my computer, aiming to be the body that captures these sounds that I hear, or to be the hydrophone itself, pushed, pressed, raptured, cherished by the waters.

The shots are gradually becoming "long takes". The scenes are now much longer. I am more relaxed since the next tracks are longer than the previous ones. I arrive at the overlapping silences. The hard cuts are now not so scary as they were on shorter audios. I think I'm already prepared to listen to them in this stack. The "bed" of longer silences also doesn't make hard cuts as clear as before. The stacked silences now do not seem as interesting as listening to the sequence of short shots with the hard cuts.

[report from listening d][9]

In our reports, we proposed to inscribe and share our listening experiences through the textual construction of short narratives. If *Mar Paradoxo* may be understood as a tangible trace of Raquel Stolf's listening experience by the sea, the reports we produced from listening to *Mar Paradoxo* can be read as otographs of our experiences along with Stolf's various seas. In *Mar Paradoxo*, Raquel Stolf offers us sound traces of her listening experience; in our reports, we offer residue from our listenings in text form. In both cases, a desire to share listenings is manifested. From Stolf's phonographic otography, we produced our written otographs and entangled ourselves in an *intersubjective listening network* (BONAFÉ; CAMPESATO, 2021 p. 141).

Our reports show us engaged in recording and telling each other about the environments we were in, what kind of equipment we were using, how we positioned our own bodies, which tracks we selected, in what order we listened to them, for how long we performed the listening action and so on. However, in our sharing efforts, we also find ourselves engaged in transposing more objective descriptions of our listening situations. The proposal to elaborate reports that included the affective dimension of listening led us to be sensitive in our narratives towards a complex set of mediations, including sensations, images, experiences, memories.

Starting from an understanding of listening as *an embodied act of thought* (LIMA et al., 2021, p. 30), we venture in our reports to translate into verbal language what is proper to the lived

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[9] The seven listening reports are available at our website (http://www2.eca.usp.br/nusom/laura-trabalhos). In this article, they are referred to through letters (a, b, c, d, e, f, g). The alphabetic order of the reports follows the sequence in which they were read aloud in our meeting dedicated to sharing our listenings.

experience, incarnated. Therefore, the texts we produce demonstrate, each in its own way, both form and language sliding towards a more liquid, slippery type of writing. The reports are soaked in metaphors and other style and language resources that contribute to the construction of narratives that escape literality and that invite us to dive into a collective imaginative exercise.

FIGURE 3 – *Desjejum psico-sensitivo* [Psycho-sensitive breakfast]. Graphic material from *Mar Paradoxo*, by Raquel Stolf. This rectangular sheet of paper contains the following texts: "(psycho-sensitive breakfast)", written vertically at the top of the page; and "each time the writing slides, the ear sinks", written horizontally at the bottom of the page.
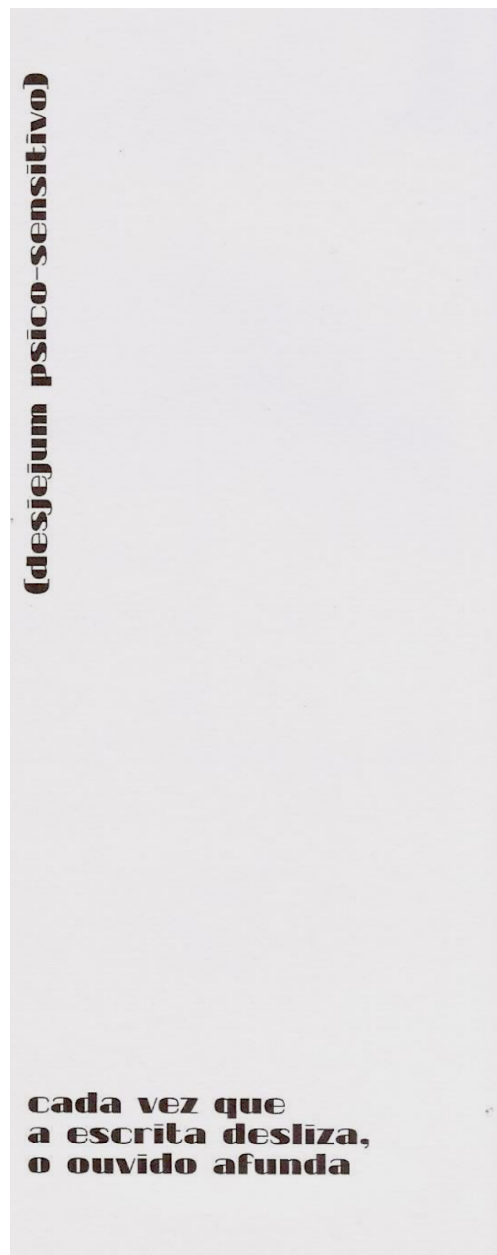
Source: STOLF (2016a).

In listening to the set of reports we produced, we were faced with what we had already sensed: a non-excluding combination between listenings that were as multiple as they were unique. However, given such diversity, we also immediately noticed (or created) some unforeseen approximations between the different reports. In a later and slightly more time-consuming movement of analysis, we moved on to an in-depth comparison between the accounts. Such comparative reading showed us a wide range of categories that helped us to untangle and tabulate the information brought by each report: time, place, equipment, body, environment, memory, sensation, feeling, etc. From this stratification, we arrived at eight possible axes of analysis, entitled: *listening situation, listening mode, listening multimediation, the listening points to, the listening imagines, the listening transports, the listening is multimodal, and the listening is populated*. In the end, the analysis process involved a synthesis effort that led us to outline three ways in which our listeners navigated: *undulation mode, drift mode,* and *hadal mode.*

i. undulation mode

The ways in which listening navigates are as many as the infinite acts of listening, past and future. In our reports, we named and qualified: concentrated listening, floating listening, fragmentary listening, inclusive listening, fugitive listening, stubborn listening, instinctive listening, elaborate listening. But the classification of listening modes is as common as it is insufficient. The interest in the reports is not in synthesizing classes of listening, but rather in sharing narratives that express the uniqueness of listening, always situated and unrepeatable. What is perceived throughout the reports is not the delimitation of modes of listening, but an experience of undulation. The narratives oscillate between focus and defocus, between what is inside and what is outside, between control and non-control. What appears at first glance to be binary, opposing, and even excluding poles, is shown at the listening experience as a multiplicity of possible points between which listening oscillates uninterruptedly. In this wavelike motion, listening does not float without friction. It occurs in friction with words, actions, sensations, memories, things, creatures, noises. Like sound itself, listening is described in our reports as a fundamentally multi-mediated experience (cf. BORN, 2019), constituted through bodily, social, technological, discursive, affective, material and immaterial,

human and non-human mediations.

[report a]
with my eyes closed and trying to concentrate only on listening (that is, without doing any other activity in parallel) {...} as the sensitivity of my legs started to decrease, the sensation of listening to the album became more interesting

[report f]
I listen to the album tracks while solving a bureaucratic problem in my profession {...} there are eight tabs open in the browser {...} my listening is fragmentary {...} floating

[report d]
the noise of the recorder emerges {...} my thoughts run in different directions, I can't concentrate on just one particular sound

[report b]
I try not to hear my thoughts {...} I didn't remember those birds (are they on the record or are they here?)

[report e]
my companion is sitting to my right, and coming from where he is, I hear creaking chair sounds and now and then, whatsapp sound warnings that always take me outside my headphones

[report g]
that bipedal chimera and that female octopus do not leave my mind {...} I struggle to mix the sound of the sea where I am (but I hear it outside, with dry ears) with the sound of the sea where I am not (but in which I seem to have my ears submerged)

[report c]
trying to construct and deconstruct the meanings that emerge from each stage of my listening, sometimes instinctive, sometimes elaborated {...} polyphlóisboio, as my father would remember

ii. drift mode

It is not what is in the sound, but actually what is in the listening. Listening recognizes, makes references, compares, interprets, associates, doubts it, questions, speculates, intends, is frustrated, astonished, realizes, imagines, fictionalize. Our reports show our *apophenic ears* (cf. WRIGHT, 2017, p. 35) in operation and reveal listening as a fundamentally *comprehensive* experience (cf. CAESAR, 2020, p. 304-306). In this experience, the boundaries between perception, sensation, and feeling are continually undone. The scope of listening is also revealed through a permeability between the individual and the collective. In our reports, we conjugate listening in the first person: we say *I* listen.

But our acts of listening are always populated with images that push us outside of ourselves, that make us drift, constructing and deconstructing meaning, always in an addressing relationship.

[report c]
it is as if I heard the sound that other times have {...} would the sound be our bond? maybe I just heard a sound-silent story of time

[report a]
the image of a frame came to me {...} most of the underwater sounds do not recollect any of the Hollywood SFX cliches

[report g]
it is very difficult to imagine that the sea can be something silent {...} a sense of fullness so intense that it borders with silence? {...} we do not know the depths, various creatures {...} what do we hear? what do we not hear?

[report d]
within this range of silences, I imagine several seas {...} I imagine the little I know of the sea at Florianópolis and I mix it with my closest seas {...} where would I place this microphone? {...} what is that sound? {...} I think of the water-fire, the waves (whether they would catch me or not)

[report e]
when I expect them to continue, a cut {...} reminds me of fire crackling and boiling water {...} it is a hydrophone, after all

[report f]
a hiker makes a trail on a stone ground {...} Ligeti's Lux Aeterna {...} the sound is tactile {...} tiny stones hitting each other {...} fictional soundtrack for the horror genre

[report b]
sometimes there is a whisper overhead, like the wind coming in through from a small opening in the window {...} a frog: hm, hm / frying of an egg {...} space is more compressed {...} auto repair silence – quiet silence – sea silence – wind silence

iii. hadal mode

In our reports, listening is described as an experience of displacement: listening as transport to other times and places; listening as a portal for transfigurations, in other beings, in other things; listening as an opening to other senses; listening as an impulse that leads us to transgress the listening action itself. Listening appears exposed as an experience of openness to what is beyond (trans): transport, transfiguration, trans-sensoriality, transgression. Such displacements make us perceive ourselves as embedded in our own listening. We listen to what is outside, on the surface, but in the

face of strangeness proper to the experience of listening, we sink and listen to ourselves (CAMPESATO; BONAFÉ, 2019 p. 67). Every listening provokes (also) the emergence of a self-listening (cf. NANCY, 2007, p. 9), an opening to the unconscious. And from there, in an almost inevitable dive, getting deeper and deeper, sinking in the darkness proper of the depths of the sea, we can perceive ourselves.

[report a]
the feeling, for me, was to be next to a fire pit {...} at some moments it felt like I had my body partly immersed in water {...} I felt the sensation of being in a vehicle floating or flying

[report d]
silences took me to the coasts, the groynes, took me on the fishermen's boats anchored at the port {...} I seem to be moving to different surfaces of this and those seas {...} Am I the microphone? or do I try to be Raquel? {...}, aiming to be the body that captures these sounds that I hear, or to be the hydrophone itself, pushed, pressed, raptured, cherished by the waters.

[report f]
I move my feet or hands in the water {...} I decided to enjoy the sound of my fingers clicking on the buttons on the hand recorder interface {...} cars pass by me while I hitchhike {...} tactile events / I'm alone in my home's kitchen

[report b]
something is lurking, something that spies me out of the frame

[report c]
I make myself subject to other times and silences {...} my time has changed {...} I feel the cold of the water through listening {...} I shiver

[report e]
the filtered sound of a wave flooding me {...} the waves hit my ears {...} a minute is not enough to make me dive

[report g]
I hear, I look, I smell, I feel, I am at the sea {...} I sense the rhythm of my breathing {...} I soon find myself engaged in collecting pieces, fragments, remains, traces of creatures that inhabit the sea {. ..} I get involved in this task until I get tired of this listening-action

Anchoring

The recordings produced by Stolf in *Mar Paradoxo* were understood here as propositions that facilitate different operational modalities of the listening activity. Instead of being configured as a type of documentary record directed to an unequivocal listening, these recordings facilitate a

fictional process performed through the listening process, by mediations that configure the listening of each individual in particular. Instead of presenting themselves as records that evoke a supposedly more faithful interpretation than others, these recordings operate as the *initial motto for singular listening processes*, as can be seen in the records resulting from the listening protocol that we practice in our analysis of the work.

Hence, we understand that Stolf's *Mar Paradoxo* works deliberately with misunderstanding, with continuous variation, and with the flow of dissemination of meaning through the listening performance. In this way, we believe that it is appropriate to try this work by means of a procedure of shared listenings, from which it would be possible to appreciate in a more concrete and objective way the operative multiplicity produced in and by the practice of listening. Our procedure extends and unfolds Peter Szendy's thesis (2001, p. 170) according to which we "are not a community of listeners listening to one single object that joins us together, like that population with mute ears that Wagner seemed to dream of. We are *an infinite addition of singularities that each wants to make itself heard hearing.*" (emphasis added).

In this thesis there are two elements that interest us in particular: the first is that our ears are not "mute", that is, our ears are continually flexing language and marking the content that we listen to. The second point is related to the desire that permeates listening and, in particular, the desire of making what we listen to shareable with other listeners. After all, isn't that what is at stake in a huge variety of works of sound art: the desire to activate listening experiences, and to share new possibilities and powers of listening with people?

In this sense, understanding listening as a *strictu sensu* performance, crossed by mediations and producer of meaning, what we did here was to propose ourselves to listen, not only *to* the work but *with* it. We understand that a creative practice in a wide variety of works of sound art is to *produce listening*, and from this understanding, we relate to the visual and phonographic records that make up *Mar Paradoxo* as being, simultaneously, records of a listening (of the sound-artist Raquel Stolf) and propositions aimed at other listeners. Thus, we try to listen *from* the traces left by Stolf's listening and, through them, produce other traces, addressed to you readers. We believe that this has been a way of relating to this artistic work, emphasizing the desire for listening that guides it.

After all, we understand that in *Mar Paradoxo* a desire to listen operates: a desire that makes

us listeners "this open addition (...) this desire for someone, always one more, to listen to us. I want you to listen to me listening; and we want them to listen to us listening..." (Idem, p. 170). It is to prolong this provocation and this approach to listening as a desiring operation that we elaborated our protocol, that we produced other traces from the traces left by Raquel Stolf, and that we address them to you now. Since the beginning of our listenings to *Mar Paradoxo*, we had you, our reader, in mind. We had you in our ears.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Laura (*Lugar de Pesquisa em Auralidade* – Place for Research on Aurality) is a collective of researchers on sound studies whose interests gravitate around critical studies on aurality from a decolonial ethics of researching. We are especially interested in experimenting with alternative methods and formats of investigation and publication. http://www2.eca.usp.br/nusom/laura. E-mail: laurau@usp.br

Gustavo Branco Germano is a PhD student at the School of Communications and Arts, University of São Paulo (ECA-USP) and holds an MA in Music (2020) and a Bachelor in Music Education (2017) from the same institution. His current research project focuses on the relationships between art and documentation in Brazilian field recordings. In his Master's thesis, he investigated an understanding of listening as a compositional act with particular emphasis on musical works that don't involve the intentional production of sounds. He is a member of NuSom – Research Center on Sonology and of LAURA - Place for Research on Aurality. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4389-0085. E-mail: gustavo.germano@usp.br

Alexandre Marino is a sound artist, teacher, researcher and sound designer. Co-founder of Al Revés netlabel, where he produces sound art projects and works as a recording, mixing and mastering engineer. Works with soundtracks and sound design for audiovisual projects and plays. Master in Musicology at ECA-USP and post-graduate degree in Music Composition in Contemporary Technologies at the Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona - Spain). Works, since 2004, as an educator. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9072-494X. E-mail: alemarino@gmail.com

Daniel Tápia is a brazilian musician, composer and sound artist. He teaches music technology, film music and music education at the Federal University of Espírito Santo, where he also conducts the activities and production of its studio. Composer, classical guitarist, arranger and audio-musician, Daniel is the author of the book "O áudio musical e o áudio musicista" (musical audio and the audio-musician). With intense artistic practice as an audio-musician (mainly recording, mixing and mastering), he was a Latin Grammy Nominee in the year of 2018 and recently released his first album as a composer, called "Contrastes". He is now developing his post-doctoral research at University of São Paulo as part of NuSom, regarding the investigation of the artistic processes and education in audio. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3649-6197. E-mail: danieltpa@gmail.com

Henrique Rocha de Souza Lima received his PhD in Music from the University of São Paulo; MA in Philosophy from the Federal University of Ouro Preto; and his Undergraduation in Music Education from Federal University of Ouro Preto. He is currently a Professor in the course Technologies for Phonographic Production - Music Production, at the Anhembi Morumbi University in São Paulo-Brazil. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0082-2840. E-mail: hrsouzalima@gmail.com

Lílian Campesato (b. 1981) is a Brazilian artist, scholar, and curator. Research Fellow at USP and research affiliate at NuSom since 2012. She works mainly in the following areas: sound studies, experimental music, sound arts, and feminisms. Her texts discuss listening, noise, experimentalism, and counter-hegemonic discourses in these fields. As an artist she explores voice and performance. Since 2017, she has developed the research project "Microfonias: intention and sharing of listening" in partnership with Brazilian composer and scholar Valéria Bonafé. Co-founder of *Sonora: musics and feminisms*, a collective network dedicated to the discussion and expansion of feminist expressions in music and the arts. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9935-3185. E-mail: lilicampesato@gmail.com

Marina Mapurunga de Miranda da Ferreira is a PhD student in Music (Sonology) at the Universidade de São Paulo. She holds an MA in Communication from the Universidade Federal Fluminense. She works as a researcher in areas of sound studies and audiovisual. She is a researcher at NuSom – Research Center on Sonology and an activist in Sonora network – Music and Feminisms. She is a member of the Orquestra Errante. She teaches at Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia (Cachoeira, Bahia), and is coordinator of the SONatório – Laboratory of experimentation in sound. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2668-3981. E-mail: marinamapurunga@ufrb.edu.br

Valéria Bonafé is a composer and researcher. She works in the areas of musical composition, analysis, sound studies and feminisms. BA in Music Composition, MA and PhD in Musicology, she studied at the University of São Paulo and at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart. Since 2017, she has developed the project *Microfonias: Invention and Sharing of Listening* in partnership with Lílian Campesato. Associated researcher at NuSom - Research Center on Sonology at USP, co-founder of Sonora: music and feminisms, and member of Laura - Place for Research on Aurality. Currently she is developing postdoctoral research supported by CNPq. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6105-6591. E-mail: valeriabonafe@valeriabonafe.com

Vicente Reis is a Professor at the Center for Culture, Languages and Applied Technologies (CECULT) at the Federal University of Recôncavo da Bahia (UFRB), he teaches subjects related to audio recording, music production and media art. Master in Communication and Contemporary Culture (UFBA) and PhD student in Music at the University of São Paulo (USP). Acts as a sound designer in electronic games projects. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5763-6737. E-mail: vicentersfa@gmail.com