Undesigning sound: AdriftPM's *Portable Soundscapes*

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In July 2015, Adrift Performance Makers developed the project *Portable Soundscapes: An Acoustic Travelogue*, travelling down from Portsmouth, UK, to Thessaloniki, Greece, through Paris, Munich, Zagreb, and Belgrade. Carrying pre-recorded Southsea sound clips in their luggage, they listened out for unexpected voicings, misplaced soundtracks, fleeting sonic passersby. The project was curated as a series of online responses to inadvertent encounters with unfamiliar sonic environments. AdriftPM developed DIY strategies of aural dramaturgy, such as sonic conflations, sonic invitations, impromptu compositions, short poetic responses, and dubious definitions of sound terminology. This project revealed sound design as the enabling condition of *a* theatre, as the very organizing principle of a performative dramaturgy of listening, therefore effecting a reversal of conventional understandings of theatre sound design, which presuppose theatre as the context and sound as the designed intervention. This article seeks to lend an attentive ear to such unspoken assumptions. What if the complexity of the project posits the listener as both the deviser of the audio project and the spectator of the ongoing process that is the project? What happens when both audience and performance are diffused across a variety of media? What practices of listening, designing and archiving are required when Europe is your stage?

Keywords: Adrift Performance Makers; *Portable Soundscapes: An Acoustic Travelogue*; sound design; soundscape; digital theatre; DIY; unsitely aesthetics; transmedial sonomnesis

In July 2015, in our collaborative partnership as Adrift Performance Makers (AdriftPM), we developed the project *Portable Soundscapes: An Acoustic Travelogue*, travelling from our current base in Portsmouth, UK, to our hometown, Thessaloniki, Greece.[1] A series of local buses, overground and underground trains, trams, taxis, and international coaches brought us to Paris, Munich, Zagreb, and Belgrade. In the period leading up to the realization of the project, we recorded sounds from Portsmouth and Southsea, ranging from seagull cries and seafront waves to the bustle of a local supermarket and the racket of a busy high street. Our eight-day journey through Europe was one of exploration and encounter with voices, noises,

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and urban sounds that contradicted, complemented, echoed or distorted the sound clips we carried in our luggage. In an attempt to bring to dialogue the sonically familiar with the expansive soundscape of European territories we had not visited before, we listened out for unexpected voicings, misplaced soundtracks, and fleeting sonic passersby. The project developed online as a collection of our responses to inadvertent encounters with unfamiliar sound environments. These responses took the form of recordings or short sound compositions, but also of photographs, poetry, and videos. Blending live art with acoustic ethnography, our logs in various public media platforms (Twitter, YouTube, SoundCloud, Instagram) extended an invitation to our online followers to stand at the crossroads of Europe and listen.[2] The purpose of the journey, however, was not to gather and record material for a performance that we would devise at a later stage; it was the act of collecting itself, rendered as an unfolding travelogue, that we proposed as the performance.

As part of a larger practice-as-research enquiry, this co-authored – and unavoidably dialogic – article offers a critical analysis of the collaborative development of *Portable Soundscapes* and the broader questions around the intersections of sound with theatre and performance the project opens up. The first section self-reflexively documents and examines the sound-based dramaturgical techniques we originated and honed in our attempt to account for our experiences of the sonic and its online rendering as performance. Moving away from discussions of the sound designer as a monodisciplinarily conceived professional with delineated expertise within the creation of theatrical projects, this section also interrogates our practices from the perspective of amateur and DIY aesthetics. This type of rethinking, which we understand as the un-designing of sound design, develops into a sustained challenge of how we conceive of sound design for performance in the second part of the article. Here, we take the analysis of *Portable Soundscapes* as a departure point towards a radical questioning of the role of sound in theatre design. Does 'sounding good' mean that

sound design can only support or add to an overall aesthetic project? How can we conceptualize sound that is no longer supplemental or accompanying but takes centre stage as the foundational dramaturgical device of performance? How do we shift our attention from sound *for* performance towards sound *as* performance? The final part of the article expands the discussion further, exploring questions beyond theatre and towards transmedial performance at large. If projects such as *Portable Soundscapes*, and their joint theoretical and practical unpacking, can help us take issue with what theatre sound design *is*, then they can also prompt us to rethink what it *is for*. Is sound design for/as performance a self-contained exercise ending with the culmination of each performance piece? In suggesting sound as synaesthetic and intersensorial, we propose transmedial sonomnesis as a concept of wider applicability and argue that the interweaving of sound with other online media can generate the possibility of sound as ongoing performance and as archive to be used as performance.

The development of the project, and this exegetical piece in particular, is an enterprise speaking interdisciplinarily to concerns around the performativity of the urban context (Bennett 2001; McAuley 2006; McKinnie 2007), the liberatory potential of the artist or intellectual as drifter (Harvie 2009; Whybrow 2014a, 2014b), the participatory possibilities afforded by digital theatre (Causey 2006; Kershaw 2008; Blake 2014), and the reluctant tuning of performance studies scholarship to the aural (Curtin 2014; Home-Cook 2015; Rebstock and Roesner 2012; Roesner 2014; Thomaidis and Macpherson 2015). Our practice took cue from the figure of the drifter, and our nomadic exploration of the urban was understood as performative; however, rather than attributing ocularcentric significance to the cities visited as spectacles, we acted as sound-curious travellers. All sonic encounters occurred in the physical spaces we ephemerally inhabited, but the project unfolded on online platforms as curated digital performance. As theatre practitioner-scholars, we were inspired by recent academic calls to get involved with digital theatre less as an insular practice and

more as a radical rethinking of performance within a broader cultural project (Bay-Cheng 2014, 39–49; Blake 2014, 5); yet again, our practice intended to address the resounding lacuna of critical thinking on the sonic aspects of the digital. Finally, *Portable Soundscapes* built on the critical provocation to examine the 'philosophical, phenomenological and cognitive' links between scenography and sound design (Curtin and Roesner 2015, 108), yet this article provides a complex account of sound design, one dispensing with the necessity of a designated theatre space as the acoustic site and linking the scenographic back to discussions of the public and digital spaces *as theatrical*.

Sound techniques for unsitely dramaturgies

Australian art-maker and researcher Maria Miranda noted: 'Artists are not only finding their own publics, but are *calling forth* publics – "communities of sense" if you will – as they traverse public space; these publics […] may be singular, occurring in minute moments of encounter, as well as through the public space of the internet' (2013, 47, original emphasis). At the same time, Abercombie and Longhurst proposed that 'recent developments in communications technology and the media environment mean that instead of thinking of audiences as "dispersed" (watching a single television programme in separate locations) or "simple" (watching a live event in a single location), we should now think of them as "diffuse"' (quoted in Freshwater 2009, 69). To capture and share our enmeshed encounters with the sonic with our digital audiences, we developed DIY strategies of aural dramaturgy intended to *call forth* an online public, a community whose 'sense' was directed by our proposed techniques for *diffused listening*.

The techniques we fashioned included impromptu compositions, short poetic responses, dubious definitions of sound terminology, sonic conflations, and sonic invitations. Impromptu compositions consisted of a combination of recorded sounds, either modified or

unmodified by sound effects. The compositional logic was impromptu in that it mostly

catalogued in a linear manner arbitrarily defined categories of sonic events. For instance,

during the first day of our travels, we produced a 'Chronicle of Doors,' which paratactically

logged entrance and exit points between Portsmouth and Paris.

The most frequently deployed technique was that of posting short poetic responses to

sonic prompts (or, as will be later unpacked, any stimuli *rendered as* sonic prompts). As a

formal contrivance, the standardized length of the tweet (140 characters) provided the

syllabic parameters of the poetic composition. At times, sharing these short responses was

our chosen design for the sonic encounter, whereas at others, it was necessitated as a strategy

compensating for technological shortcomings: 'Surrounded by improv chorus of dry coughs.

Wish the mic was on' (Thomaidis and Theodoridou 2016).

Along our journey, we attempted to provide, as series of connected tweets, definitions

for each of the four key terms that acted as the scaffolding for our project: 'portable,'

'soundscape,' 'acoustic,' 'travelogue.' However, these attempts took on the quirky, at times

tongue-in-cheek and at others poignant, tone of the project. For example:

> PORTABLE. Definition: Able to be easily carried or moved, esp. because of
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> being a lighter or smaller version than usual.
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> Example: Portable memories.
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> Come in. Careful, don't step on my memories. I know, they're everywhere. I
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> really should consider the new portable ones. (Thomaidis and Theodoridou
>
> 2016)

Furthermore, in exploring the, often widely divergent, dictionary definitions of the terms,

these glimpses into the core notions of the project resonated and summarized our European

sound-'findings' in unexpected ways:

ACOUSTIC /əˈkuːstɪk/ Definition: relating to sound, the sense of hearing, or

the science of sound.

Also, ACOUSTIC MATERIALS: Building materials used to control or

modify sound. E.g. An acoustic tile.

Also, ACOUSTIC WEAPONS: Able to harm using sound. E.g. A threat.

Verbal abuse. An apology.

Also, ACOUSTIC EXPLOSIVES: Detonate upon hearing a voice. E.g. A

command to fire. A fan/groupie. Long-overdue reunions.

Also, ACOUSTIC INSTRUMENTS: Producing sound without electronic

enhancement or amplification. E.g. The body. (Thomaidis and Theodoridou

2016)

As a strategy, sonic conflations start from the notion that each place has its own

acoustic identity, its own distinct sounds from which we recognize it. For our journey, a sonic

conflation was a strategy that helped us explore what would happen if we brought together

these two or three acoustic identities and listened anew to the spaces that surrounded us. In

practical terms, this meant taking our collected sounds from Portsmouth (waves, seagulls,

supermarket checkout, pebbles, an English breakfast fry-up) and playing them over the

soundscapes of other places along our journey across Europe (Figure 1). This complicated the

relationship between acoustic space and physical space (Sterne 2012, 92) and gave rise to the

creative questions that informed the entirety of the project: Do such acoustic geographies

work alongside each other, do they compete with each other, does one overpower the other?

Is, perhaps, a merging of the geographically mapped space with the fluctuating ways it is

conceptualized and lived, i.e. a 'third space' (Soja 1996), born out of this sonic conflation?

Does this 'third space' emerge as 'a heterotopic site or interplay where binaries give way to

hybridity, and where the local is always already globalized' (Lavery 2014, 193)? Or is it simply a way to reinvigorate, to reanimate our sense of listening and go against our habitual way of connecting to place?

Throughout our journey across Europe, we also left behind what we called sonic invitations. We invited people, strangers that would find these leftovers or traces of our project, to engage with questions that we wanted to ask about particular spaces, such as [railway stations](#) and [train coaches](#), a [bench in a park](#), a [shop window](#), or a busy [art gallery foyer](#). On the one hand, this was a significant gesture for us, because it required us to imagine how this person would be entering that place, what they would be listening to and how we wanted them to interact with the space as participating auditors. On the other hand, in line with the playfully ad hoc, unrehearsed and improvisatory character of the project as a whole, we thought of sonic invitations as an informal sharing of our process. The core of our practice was a sustained listening-out for the acoustic identities of spaces; the sonic invitations encouraged audiences to engage in that very same process and methodology, to pause – even if briefly – and to listen. At the same time, sonic invitations evolved to become one of the key ways for us to embrace and capitalize on the paradoxical character of *Portable Soundscapes* as oscillating between our live journey and our diffused audiences. The very act of writing and leaving the sonic invitation was performative in the attention it garnered from bystanders (we recall the curiously suspicious looks of a family on the Munich Bahn, in particular) and, according to the data from our online pages' analytics, the photographs of sonic invitations were frequently engaged with. Yet, despite our intention that passersby in the proximate space would read and react to the invitations via our designated webpages, it was mostly followers from Portsmouth that responded either via private or public messages (see, for instance, the [two](#) penultimate [entries](#) in Thomaidis and Theodoridou 2016). In this way, sonic invitations developed into another tactic of conflation, with Portsmouth-based followers

reacting (eponymously, at least) to prompts left in situ for inhabitants of each newly visited physical location.

There is a certain genealogy to our overall dramaturgical practices and their conceptualization, one that acknowledges the productive symbiosis of wandering/travelling and expanded notions of music, sound, and noise. These intersections relate to the French movement of the Situationists and the well-circulated theorizations of Benjamin (2002), Debord (1994 [1967]), and Lefebvre (1996) around the *flâneur* as a figure of resistance to culturally-constructed versions of moving, and being, within the urban context. Already within his original conceptualization of the soundscape, Murray Schafer invested practices of soundwalking with the pedagogical function of opening one's ears to the specificity of their acoustic environment and the ulterior motive of an ecologically attuned intervention and archaeological preservation of sonic environments (1977, 212–213; 237–241). Shuhei Hosokawa further elaborated such intersections to produce a typology of *musica mobilis*, that is 'music whose source voluntarily or involuntarily moves from one point to another, coordinated by the corporal transportation of the source owner(s)' (2012 [1984], 105). In contrast to Hosokawa, our interests did not lie in simply transferring the recordings from our home base and performing them in proximity to our travelling bodies, but in navigating unfamiliar environments through the principle of attentive listening. In others words, we were not just mobile sound players or sound-bearers, but we were also *mobilized* by sound. This was Hosokawa's *musica mobilis* in reversal (mobilizing sound) and in excess (mobile music encountering other sound): 'an *additional* listening act, as opposed to a *subtractional* one' (Hosokawa 2012 [1984], 113, original emphasis). As the following section will unpack in more detail, our practice did not foreground well-designed, aesthetically pleasing, 'good' sounds, but rather 'good' *listening*, a sustained attention to aurality and everyday sounding.

In addition, Schafer predicated his analysis of the soundscape on the fixed identity of the acoustic designer, a person who is by training and by (ecological, archaeological, musical) aspiration a professional intervening in the acoustic makeup of sonic environments. Such fixity allowed Schafer to propose clear-cut categorizations for the subject positioning of the mobile listener: 'When the soundwalker is instructed to listen to the soundscape, he is audience; when he is asked to participate with it, he becomes composer-performer' (1977, 213). By contrast, our practice placed us in a much more flexible subject position that blended the roles of listener, sound designer, composer, performance-maker and (online) curator, because our project was not simply premised on a musician's journey of sound-collecting. Rather, we were simultaneously occupying the positions of migrants travelling home, individual artists developing a collaborative partnership, theatre-makers/musicians/writers experimenting with sound art, tourists, and practitioner-scholars developing a new intellectual and artistic outlet.

These counterpoints to the genealogy of forms and conceptualizations of peripatetic sonic performance prompt us to bring our practice in dialogue with notions that challenge a set urban environment within which movement unfolds and to locate contemporary artistic practice in the field of what Miranda termed 'unsitely aesthetics' (2013). Confronted with the proliferation of practices taking advantage of the user-friendly and expansive platforms offered by the internet, particularly when such practices allude to the specifics of geographical location but also enable participation beyond geographical fixity, Miranda observed:

> The form that this type of work exhibits and enacts on the internet can be described as, above all, simple (although not simplistic). [...] This sort of working method is often associated with DIY and has a certain anti-professional bent to it, both of which create a distinct sense of intimacy.

Intimacy is a quality strongly associated with both DIY modes of production

and the internet itself. (2013, 39)

Portable Soundscapes blended and integrated the physical locations in which we

phenomenologically immersed ourselves as listener-performers and the online spaces we

activated as curator-performers. When generating sonic invitations, for example, the process

of devising the question directly derived from our own attention to sonic particularities in the

physical space. However, responses to the invitations could only be received via Twitter or

email. In addition, the posting of the sonic invitations as photographic artefacts was also

designed to disentangle the invitation *per se*—and not only its reception and reactions to it—

from its immediate spatial proxemics. 'In part it is this paradoxical multi-sidedness *and*

situatedness of the work and its reception that has prompted the term "unsitely"' (Miranda

2013, 39, original emphasis).

Temporally, the structural logic underpinning the piece was that of eliminating the time

lapse between phenomenologically experiencing sound and making that experience available

online. However, the online curation of the project was contingent on our access to

technology and our developing technical competence. Further, we used free software

addressed to non-specialist users both on personal computers and mobile phones, and our

sound equipment was similarly unsophisticated (tape recorder, digital voice recorders, and

mobile phones). Miranda argued that 'DIY and the figure of the amateur are [...] significant

modes of production and reception for uncertain practices and unsitely aesthetics and, further,

they form the context from which unsitely aesthetics unfolds' (2013, 44). In *Portable*

Soundscapes, the deployment of lo-tech tools had a twofold effect: on the one hand, it

destabilized the hierarchical privileging of the professional listener-performer who makes a

complete, finalized, polished product available for consumption. On the other hand, it did not

conceal the process of making this particular piece; rather, it exposed that very process *as* the

piece and invited online audiences to participate and interact not only through direct invitations and the tools available for engaging with the postings on media platforms (comments, likes, shares), but also, and perhaps primarily, through acknowledging that such processes could be taken up and further developed by participants themselves.

In clarifying her understanding of amateurism and its accompanying DIY modes of art-making, Miranda offered a more eclectic version of the amateur maker: 'Artists engaged in such practices and aesthetics are well-versed in art discourses which give them both a particular history and power' (2013, 45). In this light, our attempt here is to locate the DIY strategies that were developed in the particular context of this project within broader discourses on performance and sound design, while questioning assumptions about what sound design is and what it is for. Our re-listening of the project resonates with a practice-as-research approach, which seeks to document practical methodologies, whilst being aware of its own developing methodology as an analytical discourse.[3] To this end, this article documents and reflects on our practice, but, in an attempt to avoid privileging the exegetic logos over this nascent practice, recognizes that the project is still very much in progress, and that this thinking-through of its first iteration is very much part of its development.

Sounds *good*? Designing for performance / designing as performance

As theatre practitioner-scholars, our processual and emergent approach to making *Portable Soundscapes* questioned our preconceived assumptions about the purpose and aesthetics of sound design for performance. Crucially, it is this questioning that resonates with the broader preoccupation of this special issue with what sounds good – or is perceived to sound good – in theatre and performance design. Scholarly writing on sound design is fast becoming less scarce, but many definitions of its subject matter are still working definitions derived from professionals in the field. When selecting from such textbook sources, Brown invoked an

online manifesto published by sound designer Mic Pool in 1993. Pool defined design as a 'process of organised creativity with defined goals or functions' and noted that it is to be distinguished from fine art in that 'its main role is to serve functional purposes' (quoted in Brown 2010, 43). In a similar vein, John Bracewell asserted that

> [t]he primary difference between art and design in general is that design is art limited by a function other than its own. The designer as an artist is not free to enter into a state of engaged perception with just any set of possibilities in space and time. The focus of perception and insight must adhere to one particular object—the thing to be designed. That object to be designed is usually specified by some function other than the designer's own immediate interests. A designer, therefore, needs to be a person who can easily become actively involved with objects or functions for the immediate challenge that those entities present. (quoted in Brown 2010, 41)

On the basis of what we described above, such definitions of sound design are inadequate for *Portable Soundscapes* in that they propose a treatment of sound as an element of the performance that is additive, supportive of an end result (conceived by someone other than the sound designer), and extricable from the core of the artistic process. The fact that there was no designated sound designer involved in the making of our project did not mean that we considered the role of the sound designer unnecessary or redundant, but, in assuming the role of the sound designer as part of our shifting, malleable, and playful identities, we problematized categorizations which posit sound design as subservient or alternate to the performance. Instead, we proposed a collapse between the categories of functionality and aesthetics. This collapse is evidenced in our playful take on tasks conventionally associated with a sound designer's vocational practices. Among such tasks, Bracewell listed 'the

assemblage of music and/or sounds that will be used to realize the auditory world of the production' (quoted in Brown 2010, 41), and Pool saw technology only as a transparent medium: the sound designer's equipment should 'be able to achieve the transfer of imagery from the mind to the stage. [...] Theatre sound technology is the tool that enables a sound design that exists only in the imagination of the sound designer to be shared with an audience' (quoted in Brown 2010, 44). Our DIY, intentionally amateur, and lo-tech media were not there to be effaced; they were purposefully foregrounded as strategies of participatory intervention, while the activity of sound collection was neither part of an ear-training regime (Schafer) nor a necessary preparatory task (Bracewell). It was the unfolding performance itself. Moreover, in embracing 'a synthesis of the object experience and the subjective perceiver from which a soundscape is conceived and comprehended' (Tan 2012, 42), our process further complicated the construction-cum-reception of the portable soundscapes registered and artistically rendered in our travelogue, through the denying of any stable subjectivity to ourselves as 'perceivers.'

To return briefly to the genealogy of practices mentioned in the previous section, such an amalgamation of subject positions on the part of the artist speaks to the dual understanding of soundscape as posited by a lineage of theorists, including Schafer himself, but also Barry Truax (2001) and Emily Thompson (2002). Thompson aptly captured that duality: 'Like a landscape, a soundscape is simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment; it is both a world and a culture constructed to make sense of that world' (2002, 1). The point can be further expounded if even the notion of 'an environment' is understood as a constructed/perceived one. In our case, the overall shape of the project was defined by the way our physical trajectory was designed. Apart from the underlying impetus of returning home, our itinerary was determined by the same factors that regulate and limit the circulation of both bodies and goods within Europe, as well as the pragmatics of low

budget cross-continental travel and connections between countries. For example, the rail route from Belgrade to Thessaloniki, the final segment of our journey, would not have been possible prior to May 2014, as services had been suspended since 2011 due to the Greek national carrier's financial difficulties.

In shaping our trajectory we also took inspiration from the notional diagonal between London-Berlin-Athens proposed by other Greek-born, UK-based performance scholars whose work mainly focuses on the crisis of neo-liberal capitalism in the European context (Zaroulia and Hager 2015, 1). At the same time, we wished to avoid the conflation of Europe with a few of its major capitals; such a logic would eliminate the in-between places that we were determined to visit during the making of *Portable Soundscapes*. In line with Deleuze and Guattari's idea of 'nomadism,' we understood that 'every point is a relay and exists only as a relay. A path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own. The life of the nomad is the intermezzo' (1980, 380). Further, and taking into account the practical limitations outlined above, we attempted to include in our journey cities that were more peripheral (Portsmouth, Munich, Thessaloniki) or capitals that have not received similar privileged attention within performance studies discourses about Europe (Belgrade, Zagreb). Significantly, these *a priori* inclinations (practical limitations on the one hand and scholarly concerns on the other) were complemented by the surprising psycho-geographical curiosity of ourselves as listening-out *flâneurs*, drifting in places we had never visited before. In this sense, our proposed sound-design-as-performance was realized within an already 'designed' – both *a priori*/externally and inadvertently/psychoacoustically – environment of the European now.

If the pre-planned and emergent parameters of the piece developed in tandem with the sonic design of the project, and if its developing aesthetics embraced DIY and drifting, what

could be defined as *good* design in this case? In other words, if the acoustic context was malleable and shifting and if the designers were 'amateur' ones, what *sounded good* in *Portable Soundscapes*? What transpires as good design in the 'orthodox approach to sound design' (Brown 2010, 47), which permeates models put forward by such writers as Blacewell and Pool, is the subservient functionality of sound as mood enhancing, atmosphere setting, and as facilitating the imaginative creation of a (predominantly dramatic) world. Brown, in later chapters of his *Sound: A Reader in Theatre Practice* (2010), problematized such approaches, and in this section of the article we have already shown the ways in which our project opened up conventional *modi operandi* of sound design to criticism. If theatre sound is designed to 'sound good,' then the processual character of *Portable Soundscapes* destabilized demarcated boundaries of creative subjectivities and prompted us to ask: it sounds good to whom? If the normative aesthetics of sound design operates alongside a continuum one end of which is occupied by the designer and the other by the audience, what happens when both categories are simultaneously collapsed into each other and centrifugally exploded? What if the creator is primarily a listener? And what if the complexity of the project posits the listener as both the deviser of the audio project and the spectator of the ongoing process that is the project? What happens when both audience and performance are diffused across a variety of media? What practices of listening are required when Europe is your stage?

It is worth noting that any (unspoken or explicit) notion of 'goodness' in (theatre) practice is culturally constructed and potentially normalizing. Jen Harvie's broader critique of 'good' theatre practices could be productively extrapolated for the purposes of our discussion. Harvie challenged 'the implicitly assumed attribution of legitimacy and importance – in other words, "goodness" – to the centrally located theatre that claims it' (2009, 27) as 'indicative of important ideological forces' (32). She also pointed out that such

understandings of mainstream theatre practices as 'good' run the risk of 'conflating positive value with neoliberal market priorities and their threat of vicious and social inequality' (32). In extending this resonant critique, we wish to attend to *good* sound design as a concept vested with particular value for a set of (centripetal, mainstream, or normalizing) performance practices. In *Portable Soundscapes*, we were not concerned with transplanting the set of aesthetic criteria applied to 'good' design to the encountered soundscapes; in other words, we did not actively search out for mood-indicating or atmosphere-inducing sounds, or even sounds that, when recorded and/or shared, could act as undeniable markers of geographical location conceptualized as our emerging 'dramatic' world. Rather, we directed our attention to exposing the very *process* of encountering and responding to sound as *constitutive of* the sound. This was not design *for* performance; it was design *as* performance.

In the aesthetic logic of 'good' design, for example, the sound of cash registers was conceived in musico-aesthetic terms by Schafer, who recommended comparing 'the pitches of cash registers' for training purposes (1977, 213). Hosokawa challenged such 'didactic experiments or exercises' but his discourse was still very much an aesthetic one; he doubted the *pleasure* that could be potentially derived from such sounds (2012 [1984], 111). In counterpoint, as our journey progressed, we came to the realization that the sounding of monetary transactions (metallic counting of returned coins in ticket-issuing machine in a Munich Bahn station; bleeping of cash machine in Belgrade café, among others) was recurring in our travelogues and that the process of listening-in to it had significant ideological repercussions. The impromptu composition 'A Chronicle of Transactions' helped us turn our attention to the reliance of our travels on self-funding, our alienation from the Eurozone as UK-based travellers (the leafing-through sound of a currency exchange in Paris) and as visitors of countries with national currencies (transaction at a kiosk in Zagreb), and our uncomfortable positioning as tourists buying food and drinks at a busy restaurant at the

entrance of Dachau. Tuning into such practices as designed sonic phenomena within the context of the ongoing economic crisis proved to be a process of defamiliarization, a strategy of bringing attention to the value placed on transaction, and transactability, beyond Schafer or Hosokawa's aesthetic principles—sounding, and foregrounding the ideological nexus of such sounding, but not necessarily sounding *good*.

In a similar vein, several other moments we rendered as sonic components as part of our acoustic travelogue triggered a sounding-forth of precarious contemporary politics. When attempting to eavesdrop through the half-open door of what seemed like an old warehouse, we were confronted by an armed French soldier hiding behind the gate: 'Recording is not always (seen as) innocent and open spaces aren't always public. / Is a soldier holding a rifle always the promise of a sound?' (Thomaidis and Theodoridou 2016). Just before departing for Munich, a poster using the image of a megaphone to call for antifascist action caught our attention. In response to how unceremoniously the train crossed from France to Germany, we wrote a sonic invitation that asked for a sonic engagement with border-crossing. In contrast, the footsteps of walking to the checkpoint before entering Croatia were a reminder of different conceptualizations of Europeanness. When placing a 'new order' at a Croatian café, a middle-aged waiter laughed at the very mention of such a term: '"New order? Good! Well, in my time, New Order... (Laughs)" / Jokingly spoken ellipses as history' (Thomaidis and Theodoridou 2016). Such chance encounters with the sonic, rather than seen as symbolic of historical and geographic realities, can be more productively unpacked through Augoyard and Torgue's concept of incursion: 'The incursion (*irruption*) effect refers to an unexpected sound event that modifies the climate of a moment and the behaviour of the listener in a characteristic way' (2006, 65, original emphasis). The silent pointing of the rifle, for example, drastically repositioned us—from curious practitioner-scholars to foreigners intruding in a non-designated, military-protected space in a post-Charlie Hebdo Paris.

George Home-Cook borrowed the concept of incursion in order to propose a theory of aural attention in the theatrical space premised on 'attentional accommodation' (2015, 42–43), namely the ability of an audience to register some sounds as interruptive of the sonic design of a theatre piece, whereas other sounds are not registered as such. Returning to the original context of incursion as occurring in the *everyday* sonic, but maintaining Home-Cook's attention to the process of experiencing *performance*, it would be possible to conceive of our journey as an interactive chronicle of serial incursions, especially given that we were in a state of constant alertness to sound and that our behaviour was always-already modified by the expectation of sound. The distinct difference with Home-Cook's model, however, is that our design did not simply invite attentive engagement; our sustained attention to sound *generated* the design of the project itself. This project revealed sound design as the enabling condition of *a* theatre, as the very organizing principle of a performative dramaturgy of listening, therefore effecting a reversal of conventional understandings of theatre sound design, which presuppose theatre as the context and sound as the designed intervention. We did not invite our online followers to attend to the silent rifle or the pedestrian noises of currency exchange as performances; it was the principle of *listening to* the rifle or the transaction as sonic events that invoked the possibility of a performative space where such sounds could reverberate as part of an evolving sound design.

Sounds good? Dramaturgies of sonomnesis

In the previous section, we problematized the notion of sound design within the purview of our project. In this re-listening of *Portable Soundscapes: An Acoustic Travelogue*, it becomes crucial to provide an equally complex account of what constituted *sound* in this process. Did we lend an attentive ear, trying to disentangle significant sounds from their noisy, messy sonic environments? Were we only grabbed by sounds acting as vectors of localized

resonance? Were we merely passive bystanders exposed to the 'survivors' of an acoustic fight for attention? In fact, such preoccupations seem to be missing the point: the project was designed not as a continuous collection of treasured acoustic ephemera, but as an enmeshing of ourselves in the sonic as performance. The project revealed – and became premised upon – the inextricability of (embodied, multimodal, sensuous) encounters between perception and sonic events as inter-playful and mutually constitutive.

Such an understanding of sound resonates with recent scholarly attempts to present aurality in the theatre as generative and intersensorial (see Home-Cook 2015 and Curtin and Roesner 2015, among others). In the same vein, sound in our developing log was not a straightforward process of recording and archiving sound-bites. Rather, we experienced and curated this sound project as a decisively synaesthetic and intersensorial one. As introduced earlier, sounds were translated into poetry, the iconic logic of our photographs was premised on the intersections between sound and architecture, multiple soundscapes were conflated through an excessive performance of simultaneous listenings, and the entire project was permeated by the kinaesthetic, fleshed, affective situatedness of our travelling bodies. Brown asserted that the 'dramaturgy of sound is not only a process of arranging sound, it is also a process of arranging hearing' (2010, 206); our project culminated in re-arranging all senses towards sound.

How was, then, such a proliferative and integrated multi-sensoriality deployed within the project? David Roesner's work (2013) can be of particular relevance in answering this question within the context of *Portable Soundscapes*. Roesner noted that '1. Experimental forms of music and scenic media can be a *fusional phenomenon* that does not necessarily add and mix music, words, gestures, narrative, and so on, but helps them overstep their respective medial boundaries; 2. The resulting intermediality is transformational' (2013, 180–181, emphasis added). Our dynamic intermeshing of soundscaping/acoustic design, curatorial

processes, poetry, DIY photography and composition, travelling-as-performance, sound design, and the digital was proposed precisely as such a fusional phenomenon, culminating in an array of soundings.

Roesner moved on to propose varieties of 'cohesion and amalgamation' (2013, 167) between media, some of which can help illuminate further some of our techniques and treatment of sound in our processes. One such type is the *puzzle*: 'an image within an image that you may see or may not, but whose emergence does not prevent you from seeing the whole. The consequent process is the emerging of something' (Roesner 2013, 167). For example, in our impromptu compositions, the miniscule recorded segments could be heard as individual log entries to our travelogue: one can extricate the tolling bells or the airplane passing over the camp in 'Silent Roll Call (A Dachau Afterthought)' but can also listen sequentially to the succession of sounds as the acoustic trace of one visit to the camp. This dissecting form of listening does not prevent an interaction with the full sequence of sounds as an integrated entity; presented within the context of the composition, each sound is emergent in the same way the composition emerges through a linear listening-through of the sounds as one whole.

Recurrent in our approach was the type of fusion Roesner identified as *liminality*, a state of 'being on a threshold' between media, not of temporarily transitioning between them but of sustaining a 'position between them' (2013, 168). Such an example is offered in the captioned photograph of a plane's vapour trail over Munich: 'Soundless plane trace across Munich sky' (Thomaidis and Theodoridou 2016). Hearing and seeing are co-existent, inhabiting here the same in-between position (Figure 2). The plane trace 'hovers' between aurality and visuality in that its sound(less) presence attracted our attention in the first place, but also in that the text accompanying the resulting picture anchors the iconic message as an aural one (see Barthes 1977, 39).

Roesner's interests lay in (what Schröter coined as) 'transmedial intermediality' and his proposed typology was a means of articulating points and practices of intermedial convergence, for example by noting that in encounters between literature and film, 'narrative can be such a reference point, connecting the two media without being exclusively attributable to either of them' (Roesner 2013, 167). In the examples just outlined, as with the majority of our devised and curated 'artefacts,' sound was the reference point, assigning aural attributes to all senses and media involved. In our complex process of using design as the dramaturgical logic of the piece and relying on strategies of sound dramaturgy to direct the digitally curated outcome, sound was not the (sole) object or essence to be designed; the very process of approaching sound transmedially and intersensorially generated the design. Such a moving away from a sound-based design to a sound-*sympathetic* design necessitates an expansive definition of sound design, one that can account for design not only as functional, but also as an artful dramaturgical device.

Portable Soundscapes situated us as travelling listeners. Simultaneously, our performative travelling led to the online curation of a digital performance that hosted these encounters with the sonic through a fusion of media. This process borrowed from and challenged practices and conceptualizations of design. This article further unpacked this 'un-designing' through a discussion of the possibilities and limitations of sound design within our developing practice. In other words, this discussion facilitated a stepping-back from normalized approaches to sound design that, in turn, reaffirmed its potential to move beyond functionality and play a central role in transmedial, intersensorial dramaturgies. Currently, *Portable Soundscapes* exists both as a proposed methodology for this type of un-designing, and as the online archive of this particular project. Such an archive, always open to further interaction and diffused listenings, can further challenge an essentialized understanding of sound as ephemeral, ethereal, and phenomenologically experienced in the present moment of

immersion. Brown helps us think of the temporal dimension of sound and the sound archive as both expansive and inclusive:

> I am also aware that there is sensation other than acoustic sound within my aural body – the ghosts of sounds and sounds yet to happen. Partly this is *phonomnesis* – imagined or recalled sound [...]. But the sonic ghosts are not only in my head; they are also in my bodily sensations; they are my corporeal imaginings of aural feelings. (2010, 215, original emphasis)

In a parallel move, away from the voice-centric *phono*-mnesis and towards a more sound-oriented conceptualization, we wish to conclude by proposing the content of *Portable Soundscapes: An Acoustic Travelogue* as ripe for engagement through what we understand as *transmedial sonomnesis*: moments of emergent or liminal fusion between sound-sympathetic media, resonating with the past of the performed sonic encounter, the present of each new digital interaction, and the promise of an ongoing listening through online availability.

Notes

1. The full project can be accessed through Storify at https://storify.com/AdriftPM/portable-soundscapes-an-acoustic-travelogue. It has also been published online in the PaR platform *Body, Space & Technology Journal* (Thomaidis and Theodoridou 2016). More information on the company can be accessed at our Creative Lab Associates page at the New Theatre Royal Portsmouth: http://www.newtheatreroyal.com/associate-artist/adrift/.
2. Different types of responses were uploaded in different social media, including our YouTube channel, SoundCloud account, Instagram, and Twitter (@AdriftPM).
3. For critical theorization of aurally-inclined practice-as-research, see Symonds (2013) and Thomaidis (2015).

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Weblinks

http://www.newtheatreroyal.com/associate-artist/adrift/
https://storify.com/AdriftPM/portable-soundscapes-an-acoustic-travelogue

https://twitter.com/adriftpm
https://soundcloud.com/user66297610
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCleaWiQz98CGWUNmq4o6XbQ
https://www.instagram.com/adrift_performance_makers/

Figure Captions
Fig. 1: Sonic Conflation 8: Portsmouth elevator over Belgrade-Thessaloniki train, and Sonic Conflation 3: Père
Lachaise with Palmerston seagulls. Copyright: Adrift Performance Makers, 2015.
Fig. 2: Soundless plane trace over Munich sky. Copyright: Adrift Performance Makers, 2015.