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MAKING SENSE OF SOUND

TEMPORARY DISCREPANCY: RE-CONTEXTUALIZING SOUND

In order to find out what music is and how musical man is, we need to ask who listens and who plays and sings in any given society, and why. por qué.
// John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (1973)

It is interesting how important sound is in our societies, particularly for actors that are involved in and committed to processes of creation and presentation, not only of music but of the performative arts. But how relevant is sound and music to a general audience, or to a specific audience? Why obsess over the fact that sound does not have its own space, that is, that it is not paid sufficient attention in the broadest context of contemporary art or that it does not hold the interest of curators or critics? When does sound become relevant and take shape in the field of art? To which specific needs does it respond? Adopting a point of view that is outside of the music community helps us analyze the issue, what plays out there, and if it is indeed a pseudo-problem, a problem that is inexistent in the eyes of other disciplines.

From a sociocultural definition, we could say that sound has always surrounded us and that it has been an original element across all cultures. But how has its function and its reception evolved? And how has the historical definition or rejection of music changed, particularly in new types of music? For example, one could question how music that is not well-received in its time is adopted and enjoyed with more flexibility and openness by subsequent generations.

Today, non-assimilated music of the past is being revisited by contemporary artists, like Tarek Atoui, whose practice consists, in part, of rescuing and activating musical archives, whether it is taking traditional Arabic music as his basis, or through his project *The Dahlem / Reverse Sessions*. This latter case seeks to “revive” non-cataloged instruments that do not have an identified use, placing them in the hands of improvisers who generate compositions that, in turn, inspire and inform new instruments, modern instruments imagined by luthiers. It is a conversation between old and new, a

recontextualization of sounds, as much in time (other eras) as in space (performance in an exhibition space), that allows the audience to discover sounds via recent practices and visions.

Recently, various labels, among which Dust-to-Digital stands out, have made an effort to reactivate archives through recording, discovering artists that at their time were unclassifiable or little exhibited. These later editions have also reexamined field recordings—like those of Alan Lomax—or traditional music from various countries and regions, modifying the meaning of the musical object: moving it from sonorous support toward becoming a record. In a similar way, Abraham Cruzvillegas indefatigably navigates between types of music that don't have a stable classification—from folk or traditional to contemporary, especially rock, punk, and Huastec—and like a good anthropologist, he follows his own trajectory of discovery and learning through each project: interacting and collaborating with other musicians makes us rediscover such and such music in a work of art, from another space and time.

Moreover, as Guillermo Santamaria has observed in this conversation, people are less and less concerned with music per se. That is, what is the importance of sound when it is not mediated? Why fight for and insist on its value? From a negative standpoint, our curatorial labor could seem futile, but what happens when we think about it as an organic, spontaneous process, which is only justifiable in the future? Because perhaps—and without any pessimism—the meaning of curatorial work is not within reach in the present. We produce archives for extemporary receptors, for the listening of other times and spaces.

// Eric Namour, Ciudad de México, 2018

PRELUDIO

Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for the beholding. It is for hearing. It is not legible, but audible.// Jacques Attali, 1977

More than legible, or aside from being legible, the world is audible. While sight individualizes, focuses, and isolates, sound unifies, incorporates, collectivizes. Vision is unidirectional and sound, omnidirectional. Whereas sight creates an external space, sound generates a space that is also internal. The ear hosts sound as if it were a snail. Then suddenly, contemporary experience alters the act of listening, and the ear may become a walled-up window.

So, what happens to this audible world in contemporary art, a world usually ruled by sight? Almost a century ago, Jean Cocteau would talk to his mural in Leicester Place: hearing was an essential part of his piece, even though in principle it was a visual piece. How and why are so many artists in the art world interested in working with or incorporating sound, caring for what's sonorous, imagining experience through hearing, and rethinking the many senses of sound within today's context?

Starting from these questions, we invited Abraham Cruzvillegas, Guillermo Santamarina and Tarek Atoui to discuss the possibilities of sound. The conversation spiraled into the very shape of an ear. As with any good discussion, more questions than answers arose. As the Mexican saying goes, "a tree born crooked..." and so our conversation/dérive bifurcated, its knots branching out through these pages. We began speaking in Abraham Cruzvillegas's living room, located in the neighborhood of San Miguel Chapultepec. It was a sunny morning, and all of us sat around the recorder, sharing some spicy chips, when suddenly, Tarek Atoui's specter haunted us. Because Atoui lives in a different country and time zone, his participation was deferred, and Eric and I chatted with him over Skype.

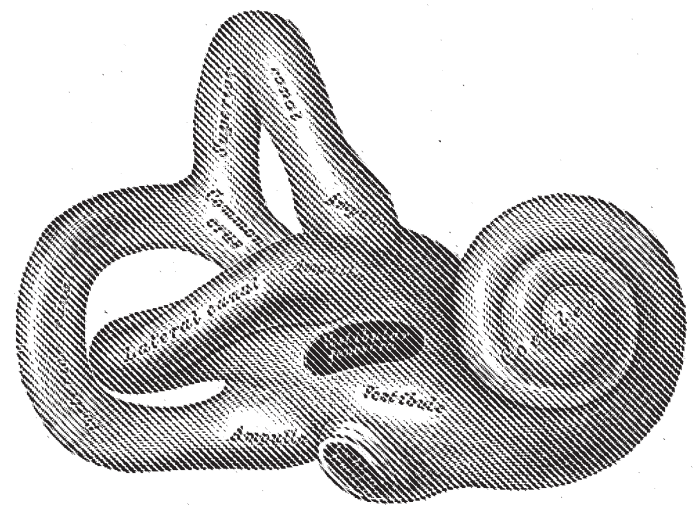
Editing and including all these voices was possible because Tarek replied and continued the conversation with Cruzvillegas and Santamarina, extending the branches of our tree out to new latitudes.

In the context of Contemporary Art, context in which our interlocutors inscribe themselves or are inscribed, one of my concerns was, paradoxically, how to visibilize sound. On the other hand, the methodology of sound, memory, archive, nostalgia, and the will to innovate were other topics springing from Guillermo Santamarina's and Abraham's works, which finally came together around the theme of collaboration and collective labor, one of Atoui's shared concerns.

Thus, the leitmotif of the social function and the anthropological perspectives of sound comes up, as well as the politics of sound and its prophetic character. We addressed all this without neglecting to question the nature of the work itself, and technological innovation vis à vis tradition. Finally, the question of nomenclature reappears: is it dealing with sculpture with sound, sound art, or simply music? Is it necessary to name it, to frame it, or should we just let it be?

The title that came to mind after reading and rereading the conversation: Making sound sense, or even Making sense of sound, alludes not only to what sense(s) sound can make today (does it make sense?), but also to the senses that sound invokes, beyond listening and the ear, i.e. the ways in which sound expands (in) thought through the work of these artists and beyond them, sometimes in similar ways, others divergent, always evocative.

// Gabriela Jauregui, Ciudad de México, 2017



ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS

AC

TAREK ATOUI

TA

GUILLERMO SANTAMARINA

GS

GABRIELA JAUREGUI

GJ

ERIC NAMOUR

EN

AC I want to show you all something: butterfly cocoons with ant nest soil. They're called *tenábaris*. They're from Sonora. It's not mine. This one belongs to Cuácharas, a friend who's a musician with whom I collaborate. You wrap them around your ankle and dance.

GS Have you seen the ones from Ecuador? They might also exist in Peru and Bolivia. They are goat horns used also kind of like a rattle. Where are they from?

AC Sonora.

GI Do you think it's called Sonora because of the way it sounds? This is a great way to start this conversation—with instruments from Sonora.

EN Yes, and we can also pick up the discussion we had a year ago about the importance of sound and the interest around it.

GI Can we talk about sound and its visibility? How do you see it and shape it, and how does it manifest within your musical interests, in your melomania, and in your works in particular? We can talk about specific works and start with where they are at now?

GS Some months ago, at the Carrillo Gil, we had an exhibition which took as a starting point Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*¹, which connects imagery with sensations that certain sounds generate. This is done through metonymy, by a series of connections linked to memory—a much broader memory—almost in the Jungian sense of this nearly genetic relationship with knowledge and its connection to sound.

¹ *Resonancias desde el jardín de las delicias una experiencia aural y de entropía* [Echos from The Garden of Earthly Delights: An Aural and Entropic Experience] (Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, 2016). Curator: Guillermo Santamarina.

I assumed that this exercise, especially for those who work regularly with sound as sound artists and not as musicians, would be much easier than with musicians. That was not the case. Interestingly, the connection that musicians have with these narratives and semantic structures (that could be simpler, resulting in metonymy) is not very common among sound artists. So, the exercise had to be executed as a series of reconsiderations of these imaginative, fantastic associations, towards the graphic, the apparent, and the immediate that is that picture. It was very interesting. Eventually we had to come back to that kind of connection.

Paradoxically, I feel that we are increasingly linked to the sound from our ideology, but we are not aware of it. For example, how does radio work in Mexico? The power that it still has, and yet at the same time, music doesn't have a space beyond a mediated culture. Without approaching what could be a deeper and unmediated understanding of what music is, I feel that what is happening in Mexico is full of paradoxes, these phenomena that apparently are not associated with our minds and our ability to listen.

AC In the deep, epistemological, sense of how language and knowledge are produced, I'm reminded of Antonin Artaud, the poet, and his willingness to generate a methodology consistent with the object of study. If the object of study is delirium and madness, the methodology has to be delirious and crazy, drooling, stupid, inefficient, idiotic, unproductive, and therefore subversive. In that sense, I think that bastard made it. He managed to build a methodology for a language with sound in which there's no representation, but an activation of that language in itself and that, of course, we can't understand. It's something that only he could understand, or maybe not even him. Hitting the table with a hammer and a cane, and hitting and making a metronome for his language. That is how I have sought out sound as a necessity, a constant in everything I do. It's not just a theme, it's present all the time. It's not a representation of an idea, nor is it

- an illustration of that will. I want it to be active and to happen; if someone perceives it, perfect, and if not, then that's ok too.
- gs But a symmetrical participation of language, and the possibility of extending it beyond the narratives is something that I think, isn't happening. We are getting lost in other details. We're approaching music through the mediation of other cultures and not through sounds, not through sound itself.
- ac Of course, the problem is that there is too much didacticism in which the example and the topic are abundant, but not the activation.
- gs There is too much mediation.
- g| Or perhaps that mediation is weak, poorly done, or is ineffective because there is precisely no methodology there.
- gs Or it's oriented towards its being functional.
- g| And there would be no connection with knowledge, as you were saying at the beginning.
- gs Many people think that sound has no function beyond what happens on the radio, like when they give you news or something limited to entertainment, or when it's rock, or something to party to. That's the framework of socialization that I'm referring to.
- g| The social function of sound.
- gs Maybe that would be the most archaic function: how does music coexist with ritual. But there's a moment when music and its history coexist fully in its nature, music and sound too. I loved the example of Artaud because it's connected to the most essential.
- ac At least that's what he intended.
- gs And precisely, towards sublimation – not only what's functional, but also subliminal.

- ac Totally. From a therapeutic, magical, or alchemical perspective, however you see it. What does Maria Sabina have? In Gordon Wasson's first ritualistic notebook accompanying his recordings, there's a description, almost a topographic depiction of the site including where the guy put down the recorder.²
- It's very important. It came from a didactic need. The mediation of having to explain what a recorder is, what Huautla is, who Maria Sabina is, what Oaxaca is, what Mexico is, and almost what it means to be a human. Why? Because they're indispensable explanations. However, on the other hand, it's impossible and unnecessary to explain the repetitive rhythm of Wasson's scoring of Maria Sabina's song where she says to the patient, "You're going to die and I can't cure you, but I'm going to do everything possible to try." In the end, Artaud wanted to get to that, and get rid of that European perspective, that was his intention. He said, "I want to vomit god out of me," which somehow means to vomit Western culture, vomit mediation, vomit didacticism and vomit the explanation. I think that was Artaud's dream.
- gs Yes, and the fact that it's recorded and he was able to record it, completely changes the sense of its function.
- ac Of its permanence, almost, right?
- gs Its permanence yes, because it allows, at that point of the 20th century, to discover genealogies.
- ac Like what Harry Smith did, a genealogy bridge that reaches you, and even me, through his field recordings.
- gs Sure, Harry Smith and Alan Lomax.
- ac I mention Harry Smith because he also had that alchemical will. He was a magician. I think that the inheritance of these recordings is impressive hence their influence and the subsequent genealogy. And in this case, the mediator is a magician, not an ethnographer.
- g| So, in our possible knowledge of sound, this mediation makes all the difference.

² *Mushroom Ceremony Of The Mazatec Indians of Mexico*. Folkways Records 6975, 1957. Recorded by V.P. & R. G. Wasson in Huautla de Jiménez, in the Sierra Mazateca, located in the northern part of the state of Oaxaca, July 21, 1956. Re-edited by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings in 2004.

GS C Of course, and from there stems the rupture between ethnomusicology and the scientific study of music during the 20th century. Once the possibility of understanding sound arose, that knowledge was directed towards a totally scientific study, leaving aside what could be those distractions that have nothing to do directly with the study of music and the relationship with whoever makes it.

This is what happened in the 20th century, and it's impossible for it to have happened earlier, because recording technology didn't exist before then.

AC Before, it was a description.

GI Or a transcription to musical notes.

GS And that's also why a lot of what is created is based on what the recording can be. Benjamin Britten, for example, did not travel. His research is much broader from the recordings, for example, and so are his pieces reexamining Indonesia, China, the folk songs of Brittany, and the Celts. All this from what he could find in the recordings of Cecil Sharp. Before it was through tradition, by what you could do without traveling all the way up the mountain, or what Weber or Wagner did, all those who went straight there.

AC Directly to the source.

GS They got very close. They worked with what was available the most. How could Wagner imagine or integrate the [Indonesian] Gamelan structures? Impossible, right? It had to be done later, with Debussy and all these musicians who were on par with the visual creation side too, those who were experimenting with visual documentation as well.

GI Could you talk more about that? That moment in which sound begins to be linked to this documentation—not only recorded or auditory, but also visual.

AC I think in a different line, that doesn't exactly have to do with musical language, but with the language and discipline of ethnography and anthropology, where Carl Lumholtz, who, during his travels through Mexico found an instrument that is actually a human bone full of notches, and he didn't understand what it was.

So, he drew it. The image is in his book? Suddenly he realizes that at some point, the object is meant to be activated. It's meant to be scratched, because it's actually a güiro, and it has a symbolic or ritual use. It's not played year-round, at any random time, and not everyone plays it. The visual representation itself is a curious object, it's mute, as an instrument, the object is mute. How would you describe the activation? There's an annotation that is the score, before the recording. There's a ton of examples like this; instruments that are impossible to replicate in a more visual sense. The big difference that we have here is that visual artists are interdisciplinary, and their possibility to move from one language to another.

It's not necessary to create representations, but instead to activate the objects, activate that reference and the source from a temporary perspective. One example would be Allora and Calzadilla, who found an eagle or condor bone made into flute in a German museum. They had a flutist figure out what could be done with that bone, as if it were a contemporary instrument. Then they have a damn eagle alive listening to the sound that comes out of the bone.

GS This example is very interesting, because it doesn't derive from the musician's experience. Heterodoxy in music is difficult, and that type of experimentation is rarely allowed. Its assimilation processes are now much slower than they were years ago. Maybe that's why the path of sound art opened up, as a territory that has proved to be more free.

³ Carl Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico* (Mexico: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1981).

AC The obvious twist, of course, is John Cage, right? Yes, there is a breakdown, which again is associated with a perception of the discipline, if not religious, it's definitely a spiritual one.

GS The discipline of thought meditation.

AC [The perception] of a musician, of a composer, who knows the notation, the execution, and their own language so well that they can break with it, just shatter it completely.

GS He was already tired of that—what was left of music and orthodoxy. He had to break with it completely, but not starting from music but from the exercise of meditation and an awareness linked to other types of elements that are not specific to music.

AC Again, the coherence of the methodology with the object of study, which is the need to appeal to chance.

How can you talk about chance without using chance? It would be like Freud talking about the joke being the

least funny person in the universe, right? I think he would have to be funny in order to be coherent. However, coherence as such is also very difficult.

EN You've talked a lot about ritual and activation, a thing present in many of your works, sculptures, and actions, Abraham, where the intervention or the action includes that musical part. I was interested in your last piece, in Nîmes,⁴ because the musicians that performed are musicians who I've seen here in your house. To me, it was almost...

AC Coherent...

EN Or incoherent. Or rather, not in coherence with what there was, but there is a musical element that was integrated during the exhibition for some reason.

AC It was initiated when I invited the guys [from the LIMINAR ensemble] to play pieces by Julián Carrillo. The idea came from the fact that Damían Ortega's sculpture is a tympanum.

GS So, the sound is intrinsic.

AC Totally, it comes from the show itself. There were some peyote in the corners, Damían's tympanum, Gabriel Orozco's resonance box, and Jerónimo's (Dr. Lakra) discs.

GS Even what I did, sweeping pounds of styrofoam. It has to do with the perforated cube in Damían's installation (Landscape 2). But for my focus, aside from opening channels in the material and moving inside it, was to exalt the sound generated, which was very tenuous, almost imperceptible. This was all a part of my request for people standing nearby to participate by listening.

AC Of course. One could realize the microtonality in your exercise. It was perfectly in tune with everything else.

GS S Yes, you could hear it. It wasn't totally imperceptible. Who saw the whole thing? Who could have spotted the presence of each sound? I don't think anyone could.

AC Because it seemed that the sound was not part of [the piece], but curiously, it was in everything.

EN And how did you get the idea to get these types of musicians to activate the Nîmes piece?

AC: In 2002, I was invited to the São Paulo Biennial, and they asked me to choose my curator, so I invited Guillermo. I was brainstorming a project from six different angles, but in the end, the idea was never fully realized. What was left of the work was not really a project. However, one of those exercises was to smash forty *cavaquinhos* with the pretense of learning to play them without going to classes.

It wasn't really a performance because there wasn't an audience, instead it was a part of the piece's dynamics, i.e., to generate forms from the destruction of the instrument, to activate it in an unexpected or incoherent way. It was about generating something in the space that people could perceive as a sculpture. Interestingly, I found out later that to make the scaled model for the Museum of Pop Culture, Frank Gehry put all of his assistants in the office to smash guitars like Pete Townsend. He scanned them in 3D and made a hybrid of all the exercises. Then he

⁴ *Approximating Vibrant Retroflex Self-Construction*, [Autoconstruction approximate vibrante retroflex], Carré d'Art- Nîmes Contemporary Art Museum (14/10/16-19/02/17), Featuring Viridiana Toledo Rivera and Andrés García Nestilla (Cudcharas).

took the 3D model and translated it into the space of the building. It's fucking great.

During this time, I also had that kind of spirit, which came from my punk inclinations, from the self-destructive mode, that DIY mentality of “learning the three chords and make a band.” From that moment on, I've done many other experiments that generate a sculptural dynamic based on approaches to other sites or interlocutors. In the case of Nîmes that you mentioned, I first met a very peculiar dancer named Israel Galván, a gypsy-Jewish dancer, and he impressed me a lot. It was Chantal Crousel who took me to see him because, she said, “you'll love him!”. I fell in love with the guy, very impressive, the highest degree of sublimity.

gs Did he sing?

ac He only danced, but there was certainly a link to singing. Chantal, being smart as she is, knew that I would like this guy who dances on props that he selects, which are sort of regular, everyday objects that don't have a particular meaning. He dances on them and enacts a play about the Holocaust, for example, which then evolves into a story about a clown's life. I was really impressed, and I tried to approach him—we did meet but unfortunately we couldn't collaborate at that moment. It's still pending. So, I thought of my friends Cuácharas and Viri,⁵ who are the pals with whom I drink beer every week. As masters of traditional Mexican dance, why not invite them to collaborate?

So I made a sculpture with materials from demolition sites, which turned out looking like a chorizo the size of three gigantic museum rooms. It's connected to the song *Demoler* [Demolish] by Los Saicos. Back in the day, I had made a sculpture with them for the Jumex Museum: “trying to destroy the Jumex Museum with *zapatazos*.” The

⁵ Aside from García Nestitla (Cuácharas) and Viridiana Toledo, Joel Ramírez (Cocol) and other musicians from the region have collaborated on various pieces with Cruzvillegas since 2014.

intention was to really stomp in there, but we weren't successful. “We tried,” as María Sabina would said.

In this scenario, the point was to dance on the piece and generate a dialogue between the dancers as experts in the language of stomping. First, it was about Huasteco dance: Viri, and Cuácharas stomping from one end to the other, and “talking” to each other through their steps, generating sound on my sculpture.

I told him, “Dude, right here, I'd love for you to bring in a dance from Michoacán.” And his response was, “Which region, man? Do you want the dance of the Cúrpites, the Blacks, the Tares, the Guananchas? Which one do you want?” I was in awe and said “Wow... humm, well... you decide.”

What I'm trying to say with this anecdote is that for me, this kind of approach with an interlocutor and stemming from music—because they are musicians, they never say ‘I'm a dancer,’ it's always, ‘I'm a musician’—implies a high-level of learning. When it comes down to it, this is an educational endeavor, and the person who's learning from it is me.

gs I keep thinking about this one sound artist who has taken a shot at something much broader. His piece is an interpretation of Bach's fugues performed by a chorus of deaf-mutes.

gj Joseph Grigely.

gs That artist is amazing, he's impressive. And it is precisely that, an experience of didactics, of learning.

ac Like the choreographer Jérôme Bel and his work with Thai dancers and Balinese dancers, creating a dialogue with conventions that seem

obvious but are not. He establishes this as an exercise in learning, like having the prima ballerina speak instead of just dancing, it's fantastic.

These shifts, like an earthquake, are another form of language. Like Tarek Atoui's work. I met him while he was executing a live piece about the war in Lebanon.⁶ With him, there is no description, narration, or story in any literal sense. However, what he creates has such impressive energy that it's like an earthquake of language. At least that's how I understood it at the time when I saw it live in Seoul.

To me, the way he plays those machines he designs with the pedals becomes a choreography. I saw him as a kind of praying mantis devouring his partner who is the instrument and at the same time, copulating with the apparatus, with that other living entity, electric, fucking phenomenal.

gJ This goes back to what Guillermo said at the beginning about the link between music and memory, or not music itself but about sound and memory. Precisely, Tarek does

not explicitly talk about the war in Lebanon. However, the historical change of the sounds he employs and deploys embodies that memory and that experience. On the other hand, something that we haven't talked about yet has to do with my question regarding the visibility of sound, is the physical aspect of sound. Let's include Tarek, then, in the conversation.

So, Tarek, your work has to do with both technology and memory. Guillermo is really into the avant-garde and how technology can be used in interesting ways in the context of music and art. Abraham is more interested in recovering traditions from his fathers' side of the family and objects use that are traditionally used to make music. Your work oscillates, juggles, or struggles with both aspects. Do you feel that your art interweaves memory, sound, body and technology, or do you perceive those things as separate elements?

TA No, I don't see them as separate things. There is no distinction between them. It's a continuous line of

⁶ Tarek Atoui, "Un-drum". Performance in Mediacity Seoul, 2010.

progression, the interest in the body, the instrument and technology, and how a concert situation should be. This all poses very important questions of my solo work, including the early works that Abraham saw in 2008.

Those are really articulated, and taught me how to think of the place of the body when you build an instrument. Not just at the level of the instrument, but the concept as a whole and its relationship with technique or technology: out of contact, let's say, with concerts and issues related to visual and contemporary art: the notions of the historic document, the archive, and the old, started to appear in my work.

But actually in the beginning, these were not a source of interest to me. I was interested for the first time in the Tarab project.⁷ For someone that works with sampling, and who has developed these techniques for microsounds, the software I was building and sequencers were enough justification [to start working with the recordings archive].

The intention of the Tarab project was to bypass the music world, the way this performance was built logistically and all these things were coming from

the art world, but the result was similar to a concert situation. Working within the music world, but in relation to the whole. From the beginning I did not want to be in any form of nostalgia, to put it on a pedestal, or try to say how glorious or great it was. Like any political statement, I really hope to look at it as a collection of recordings and music. It had a lot to do with questioning the music and trying to analyze it and understand how it's composed, how it acquires its form, how it's improvised, how it's presented, and making a synthesis of all that, or to question the way in which all this can be reenacted with other genres or bodies of work, or how original ways of working can impact other genres, even traditional music.

gJ Both, the scientific or high-tech side and the spiritual or ritualistic side are present.

gS Right, it's metaphysical, like in Kurt Schwitters's

⁷ In 2011, commissioned by Performa 5 and produced by Sharjah Art Foundation, Atoui began *On and From Tarab*, an investigation and series of performances inspired by classical Arab music and based on an archive of the first recordings of Arab music from the AMAR Foundation.

Merz? Schwitters made sound an essential part of the structure of the *Merzes*. Although we do not know their reach, there are a few

recordings there.

AC Same with Hugo Ball.

GS But I feel that Ball's work was more oriented towards poetics. The *Merz* was a more complex project, in a spatial, ritual, and visibility

sense. Maybe this was the same for Hugo Ball, but I feel that there is

a difference between the poetic experience and the sound experience.

What Abraham was saying earlier on about Artaud, was that his work

was really a function of sound, it did not respond to a poetic or even a

theatrical structure.

AC Yes, but in the end this violent language, which is also self-

destructive, becomes pure sound. With this, I think that [Artaud]

was able to abandon himself in some way. As if destroying what you

believe you are, to stop being your own self in order to be yourself.

This kind of exercise which is neither a visual or aural representation,

is just sound. His recordings are brutal. They give you goosebumps.

GS This reminds me of another very interesting artist. What's the

drummer's name from Los Reynolds? He was the essence of the band.

He had his own distinct kind of nature. His music sounded like rock

or post-rock or even improv.

GI Miguel Tomasín?

GS Yes, Miguel Tomasín. He was the one who created an experience

that was totally like Artaud's, beyond any level of awareness. His

work submitted the outside to something internal. It responded to his

need to shoot off into another dimension.

⁸ *Merz* is a meaningless word invented by the German artist Kurt Schwitters to describe his collage and assembly works based on discarded materials; it is said that he extracted the word of the name Commerzbank that appeared on a piece of paper in one of his collages.

⁹ Argentine band of experimental rock formed in 1983 by Roberto Conlazo, Alan Courts and Christian Dergarabedian, and led by its drummer, Miguel Tomasín, a musician with Down syndrome.

There was an awareness and a consensus of what was happening with

the band. In the end, when he was about to reach a certain level of pop

stardom, they just!poof! Completely vanished. It's an intimate kind

of phenomenon. You can see it with dance, like the dancer you were

talking about a while ago.

GI It's not representative of anything, it's in itself a way of existing in

the world.

GS Exactly, it's a singular language, without technique or structure.

AC That might be recognizable.

GS Recognizable and repeatable, because we're using the music, the

instruments, or the supports that are there, especially in your case,

Abraham. For example, all of these structures related to Mexican

vernacular or folk music. Why is that?

AC For me it has to do with the instability of my identity.

GS It has to do with an aesthetic, right? With something that you

have been working on even earlier on, in your first entirely visual and

graphic exercises.

GI When you say vernacular, do you mean something that is near or

close by?

GS I mean folkloric.

AC Thinking out loud here, but I think there are several issues. At

home, we listen to *Goldberg's Variations*, but also to a lot of music that I

would never call folkloric or vernacular, but rather traditional music.

But that's kind of my purist attitude, which is also attributed to my

education, coming from my father, who was indigenous. Growing up,

he was embarrassed to be indigenous. He had this desire, a drive to

figure out who he was. As he told us, "You've never had your belly button ripped off, man." It was a need to return to where he belonged, which is how all of this became the core of my education. Not looking from the outside, but from within. That's why I would never call it vernacular or folkloric.

When one talks about the kind of places such as the one where I was born and raised, they are often referred to as vernacular architecture, but that's not it either. I don't think it's either architecture or vernacular. Anyways, this would be a point that could lead into a discussion about the sources and raw material used in my ongoing series called *Autoconstrucción*. I'm not going to get into it right now, but it has to do with growing up; going to marches with women in aprons; listening to Alfredo Zitarrosa, Chileans like Violeta Parra, who also deployed traditional music, and groups like Los Folkloristas, those guys were really great ethnographers.

For me, there are another couple of problematic points in what Guillermo was saying. One is the need for

something new, the other is utopia. Why utopia? It's never going to exist. I prefer that things exist, and to let things happen, and avoid this tendency to idealize. I think that in any case, Tarek isn't producing a new technique.

gs I'm not a musician and I don't consider myself to be a sound artist, but nothing I've ever done has had to do with creating something new, surprising, extraordinary, utopic, or unheard of. Unlike what's been happening recently, or what continues to happen in those areas of sound art and music closely linked to technology. Especially at given times when a certain avant-garde was linked to this aesthetic notion of conquering a new technique.

gI Going back to what you mentioned before, Tarek, how do you balance or unbalance tradition and innovation? On the one hand, it was within the technology of this context of music that you started to look at archived material in museums, and also turning to traditional music, perhaps in a different way than Abraham. How does bringing tradition and the archive in a present context affect the

reenactments or move the music to a different place? Could you tell us more about that and how you achieve this without nostalgia? Because when people do archival work or work with traditional elements there is usually a nostalgic element.

TA Maybe what I'm seeking out is how we can improvise in the present if we were to work with the principles of Arab improvisation music. There's no literal meaning to being able to perform the tonalities of the rhythms and the different modes of this music, but rather there's a synthesis to understanding how the temporalities are handled. To try and apply these to the ensembles and musicians of today, that's one thing. It's another to see the notion of being a force to transform the present. If we think about the *Dhalem* project, which is about observing the historic elements and old things, and try to go beyond this, you will create something in your own trajectory. However, at the same time, you use the trajectory as an initial instrument, an unexpected format.

AC For me, I look forward to recognizing myself in what

already exists. I'm talking about not just the language of visual arts or music, but also the pre-existing objects or what's already at hand. I like to wonder what I can do with an ancient object, like a conch or a part of a *teponaztle*, or a piece of a shell or shoe, or whatever.

gI It might be good to go back to the social function of sound and how sound constructs community. Maybe there's something to say about constructing a collaboration or constructing a community through music. I'm thinking about your *Dahlem* and also Tarab projects. In that sense, how do you initiate your collaborations?

EN The social element of your production process, the form that you configure these human entities that make up the whole work.

TA I think that the word collaboration is dishonest. When you ask someone to collaborate, it's under the pretense of a co-authorship. I think it's unfair to the people I invite and unfair to me. For instance, when I ask someone to

create instruments for *Dhalem*¹⁰ or the *Reverse Sessions*, you can't say that it's a collaboration because this person built an instrument in his workshop. They made major decisions and did all of the research for the materials. I'm looking at the sketch, and I'm discussing it with that collaborator. This exchange of ideas can affect the design and the original intention. But I still haven't gotten to the point where I can be a collaborator.

We can also look at this from another angle: someone is building an instrument in his workshop and he is not aware that others are making seven other instruments in their own workshops, or who they are or where they are. The musician at the Dahlem museum is improvising, using his own techniques, and I am directing—so we are not really collaborating. He doesn't know that what is being recorded is going to an instrument maker and that there will be an instrument produced out of his performance.

GJ Almost like it's pretentious to say you're collaborating with these people, because their work is completely their work. It's silly to pretend that they know the bigger picture of the project, that they're participating and have any kind of agency in that.

TA Yes, but what's happening in this process? On one hand, the musician in *Dahlem* takes everyone's recordings, so that sound belongs to the "community" of musicians that participate in the project. The person who made the instrument is introduced, as they have authorship over it as well the opportunity to sell it to other musicians. I would say in this sense; I don't feel like I'm appropriating the work of others. My piece isn't just an act of inviting Axel Döner or Mazen Kerbaj to play a solo in the Dahlem Museum or to participate in a performance, and my piece isn't an instrument made by Léo Maurel in Strasbourg.

¹⁰ In both *Reverse Session* at Kurimanzutto and *Reverse Collection* at the Tate Modern, Tarek worked with the musicians, and the instrument makers Léo Maurel, Thierry Madiot and Vincent Martial to create the instruments/artifacts that are now the works of the piece conceived and built from the Dahlem sessions recordings.

GJ We need to find a different word for this process, instead of collaboration. Maybe it's more along the lines of a collectivization of work and the result of that labor.

TA It's like composing labor which ends up with a music composition or musical piece. From a social situation to a ritualistic situation, with all the social aspects that are withheld in this notion. Maybe we can call it composition of labor or cooperation, sometimes facilitation or invitation, it really depends. Collaboration is a very broad word. Like postcolonial. It's very hard. I've used it at stages of my career but then I felt there was something really inappropriate about it.

EN Mousse's latest publication discusses the project *Reverse Sessions*, and Catherine Wood talks about the model of "cooperation or participation."¹¹ She mentions how complicated and specific it is, rather than just being the mere idea of "relational" participation, in aesthetic terms.

TA Some understand this as facilitating. If my piece allowed Léo Maurel to make an instrument and then sell it, he would be using me as a facilitator for his investigation and the ideas that he wants to explore.

GJ But this isn't the same as collaboration.

TA No, it isn't. And maybe Thierry Madiot, someone who isn't looking to sell his instruments but to deal with them as kind of a challenge, a sonic object or something else specific to the project. My role is similar to that of a commissioner.

EN But thanks to randomness and these meetings, the process of facilitation also allows for something serendipitous to happen. Leo knows Mark Harwood¹², from Penultimate Press, who is fascinated with his *Panrace* project. He published his first recordings and they did a show in London. It seems to me that there are a lot of things

¹¹ Tarek Atoui, *The Reverse Collection / The Reverse Sessions* (Milan Mousse Publishing, 2017).

¹² Leo and Mark met for the first time during the opening week of the *Reverse Collection* performances they took part of at the Tate Modern.

that can develop from here. If you decide to see it as a collective production instead of a collaboration, it can be a collective force in a way, one that recuperates the fascination for improvisation, which, like you mentioned, enters and leaves.

TA You know, it's something that we talked about with Adrián Villar Rojas. We were comparing our own practices, and we realized that we both feel that we've done good work when we've created a project that generates a spirit of community, politically and economically speaking.

I think that in his case, it is the group of people with whom he moves around, in a theatrical sense, to create his sculptures, and all of the social dynamics that come out of this, like the way they participate in the workshop in a city and just these daily life habits.

In my case, it has to do with what Eric says. In good projects the mood generates a movement that eventually gets to a point that you have to let go. It's not necessary to have control, it's not necessary to make exaggerated statements

in that way, like, "Oh, this project is... and now they're doing that..." Today, I see many artists picking up on the smallest event or ripple their project has and magnifying it, as if it were necessary to give it a reason to be.

GJ What if instead of "amplifying" ripples as a career move, we read it as a sound metaphor, a way of working with sound, and also referring to the way nature or a living organism work: it takes something and expands on it, as a form of basic biology. A little bit in the way these communal practices become like living organisms where each one, each person has something to do independently, but also working as part of a broader thing. Sometimes interacting, sometimes not. Like cells in a living organism. This takes us back to the body and technology and other conversations going on in your work. Could you tell us a little more about this idea of you orchestrating this biological thing, which Adrian's work also does, and goes beyond this catch all notion of collaboration?

TA That's a tricky one, something I need to think about.

There's a life form that projects like Dahlem and Reverse, but also *WITHIN*¹³, my big latest project, that is created in these terms. How they are made and how they are built comes from my relationship to improvisation and open forms, you see them in many steps of what I do, from concerts and performances, with structured improvisation taking the input of people and putting it together.

There is also this element of encounter, looking for instrument makers, the plan is not set or pre-written and running on a course. Even the idea of taking the sound and transforming the instruments happened to me with the videos we recorded in Dahlem, seeing them on a laptop in China, messing around by playing several sounds together, doing other stuff on the computer and that's how it happened. I think this relationship to improvisation brings life into the project. It's very different from the recording anyway.

AC The other day we were talking with Gaby about Julián Carrillo: in a movement almost in reverse of a precarious microtonality that comes from profoundly knowing a language, not trying to make a new language, but to break it into micro pieces and push it to its final expression.

Inventing instruments for that purpose would be silly. I would say Carrillo's harps and pianos are sculptures. They're beautiful as sculptures, as objects! They're almost nicer than a pair of Converse, right?

I was telling Gaby that I'm in love with my Huastec friends. And I'm going to have them do Julián Carrillo's exercise but with a machete and a sickle. Then, I'm going to invite Gaby, who is a violinist. Carrillo's fingers were almost as thick as mine, while he used to play this note [he realized that] he was playing all over the string, so he took out a knife [and played with it], and by doing that, you could hear six subtones of the same note. He was like: 'something's off'. So he ended up writing a famous book *Universal Musical Errors*¹⁴—it's a gem. He said: 'geometrically there should be millions of subtones that my ear isn't able to perceive, even if playing with a Gillette'.

¹³ In recent years, Atoui has investigated the relationships between sound as a vibration, the instruments and the bodies of the performer and the audience. This research, encapsulated in his *WITHIN* project, emerged from a residency in 2008 at the Sharjah Art Foundation in the United Arab Emirates, and culminated with his contribution to the 11th Sharjah Biennial in 2013. Throughout his residency, he conducted workshops in the AlAma! School for the Deaf in Sharjah, and in 2012, joined forces with Council (Gregory Castera and Sandra Terdjman), whose TACE 7 project explores how deaf people experience and perceive sound. These different conversations have formed the core of *WITHIN* and have become the basis of its conceptualization.

¹⁴ Julián Carrillo, *Errores universales en música y física musical* (México: Seminario de Cultura Mexicana, 1967).

So, I want to physically see this exercise with musicians that don't know how to read one single note but who are virtuosos, and play with a machete and a sickle instead of a razor. Playing the violin not with a finger, but with a machete, to use the machete as a bow as well. This is what we're going to do now in our world tour. Cocol, Cuáchar, Colibrí, and I are all going to Paris, Tokyo, and Rotterdam with these distinct sculptural mechanisms and using them as pedestals, since actually the sculpture I'm making is a pedestal for musicians.

GS But they're also symbols.

AC Totally, in Japan it will be like Nakagin's tower, with the metabolic capsules.

GI They didn't tear it down?

AC No, they still haven't. I find this really funny because it's actually architects who want to demolish it. It's the internal diatribe of language. Like how Rubén Ortiz [Torres] said that he wanted to tear down the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico because it looks like a fucking amoeba. Yes, it's really ugly just like the Basilica, but you don't just destroy it down! That's like burning a book.

GS It's better to turn into hoarders then.

AC I'll agree with that.

GS Nostalgia drowns and traps us. It's a curious thing that the mantra and the [vinyl] record have the same shape—the structure of thought, of meditation, and the learning experience, or at least of everyday analysis. Each record that exists out there is the potential experience of a mantra, and that's why I break them. It's too much commitment—an overwhelming commitment.

GI Very heavy. But there are also ways of doing this without being nostalgic, like Tarek mentioned earlier.

AC It's like Willem de Rooij's floral arrangements. That's what we are; we're creators, we're reorganizing things in different ways. What do painters do? They mix dust and oil in a way that represents something else and that's what's called painting.

GI So as writers, we would only be words arrangers.

AC The preexistence of everything is an affirmation that we're material instruments or instruments for animism—an animism whereby the horizontality of respect is urgent. Everything is divine, you know this better than me.

EN Many years ago, I went to United Kingdom and I observed a music community within the electronic music milieu. I specifically focused on the act of listening, and I got hooked on the socio-anthropological aspect. In that sense, a book that made an impression was *How Musical Is Man?* by ethnomusicologist John Blacking.¹⁵ It talks about human organizational as groups through music, including the emergence of tribal organization through the creation of music. This was during the 1920s, and he stated that there's no consensus [regarding music] without social organization. I'm very interested in this knowledge, learning, the will to listen, and social participation.

GS For me, we're in an emergency situation, or worse, like when you're extremely sick. Listening is in this situation, a situation in which it has become useless. It's there, it works, it's a medium that receives too much information. Especially because of consumerism and messages that make everything more uniform. There is little reflection on hearing, starting from the act of listening itself.

GI And this explains the presence of sound in visual art?

¹⁵John Blacking, *Hay musica en el hombre?* (Madrid: Alianza, 2006).

AC It's probably one of the reasons.

EN For me, it has been frustrating for a while now, I'm still obsessed with the idea of encouraging the act of listening without being didactic. I also want to find contexts where music is the reason one attends an event. I feel that at least there are signs that trigger other perspectives. Abraham, going back to your piece in Nîmes, I would have loved to see it. I imagine the way spectators went there to discover new music through the medium of a sculpture. It is like an awakening. I feel there are artists thanks to whom people are saying: "Oh, I need to use my sense of hearing too."

AC You know? There's something in the language [that expresses] my intention for the piece I did in Glasgow. This was amazing: the museum director wrote me to say that he had seen a group of African refugees play my sculpture. Unfortunately, no one recorded them, but they listened, they felt the need to listen. The mere fact that they were refugees implies that their determination was much more complex than of a person who just goes to a store to buy a CD.

GA The determination to listen but also to be heard.

AC At least they were listening to each other. Now I'm going to say something radically opposite. I used to go to this *cantina*, right here in the neighborhood, it's called Ardallo and it's terrible, but I really like it. There's this guy who comes by a lot. He's our age, and he's from Neza. He comes in with his guitar and, all of a sudden, he starts playing songs to the others and the ones he comes out with, are from a well-known repertoire. But suddenly, I was so surprised as he started playing *Capri C'est Fini* in French. I stood up, walked up to him, and see that the guy had a little sheet of paper with the lyrics of *Capri C'est Fini* written out phonetically. It was beautiful, you have no idea. Then he started to play *All Shook Up* in English, again completely phoneticized. He then started off on an incredible repertoire. He even played *Sky Pilot*. So, I ask him, "What's up, man, where are you from?" He says: "from Neza". "But why do you come here?", "I grew up here in Tacubaya." I'm like, "well, what's your deal?" And he says, "Well, I used to be in Los Panchos."

So in a way, he is a survivor of his own self. And the way in which he listens socially is very complex, an awareness of marginalization, of authoritarianism, of society's impoverishment and putrefaction; all of this brings him to a very small territory from which he listens.

GS It could be that he is listening from a very precise culture, from this city mainly, that has to do with listening to *Radio Universal*. They are the hits of *Radio Universal*.

AC Of course, *Sky Pilot*, *All Shook Up*, and *Capri c'est fini*. On that station. My dad had an incredible book of album covers called *Album Cover Album*¹⁶ - incredibly beautiful, with some neo-deco script, like The Grateful Dead style.

GS Yeah, it was the Hamlyn edition. It was the first book of album covers.

AC Thanks to that book I got interested in a ton of records that I later got a hold of, and I still have them, but it was because of the cover. I still buy albums because of the cover. I say: "This has to be good," and sometimes it sure is.

GS I would like to do the same with covers of Mexican music. Album covers of what was part of the Mexican music industry. It would be good. There are collections around; it could certainly be done.

GA Tarek, what Abraham and Guillermo mention here is maybe as a place to find an end to the conversation, which does not mean we close it off. Moving away from nostalgia, but remaining in the archive, and how to visualize sound, what you said earlier made me think about symbiosis and ways of working which aren't the common ways that most artists use when working with other people and when working with various materials, both archival and technological, like physical interfaces that actually put the work on separate levels. There's something there that's very specific to what you're doing, as I said, that is both very musical and very biological.

TA Maybe this is just due to - as we say in French - *élan de générosité*, a form of generosity where I want to share things and let go of things, and where you want to really appropriate a lot of things. I want the people I invite to

¹⁶Roger Dean and Howells Higgins (ed.), *The Album Cover Album* (Zürich: Oims, 1977).

benefit from the invitation in one way or another. That's something that drives a lot of the decisions I make. Sometimes what inspires me when I write a compositional situation is making this unique experience with the musician who accepted the invitation. It's not just about my piece and him executing it but giving him something he'll remember and cherish, or at least so s/he can say "I did this in my life, even if it's not that good, it was something really different or something I wouldn't have tried."

GJ And this form of generosity is also present in Abraham's work with musicians, as he said, he ends up learning. Generosity works both ways, and then for the audience as well.

EN I think it goes back to the idea of collaboration and inviting someone to participate. It's not only the musician, as you have a lot of research involved. There are a lot of other people that are a part of the process. Even the porcelain instruments from China¹⁷, how does an artisan relate to a project you haven't been involved in—people benefit from those invitations and not just the musicians. I think that's very generous, it makes new ways of composing labor in that sense.

TA To go back to the body and technology, in a city like this one [Paris], technology is very welcome. It's a friend, it's there when you need it to help, there's no conflict or questioning of the negative or positive effects on us. For instance if we take *WITHIN*, my project on sound and deafness, embracing technology was not an issue. There was a whole debate about embracing cochlear implants and whether deaf people should start adopting them. There is this whole thing in deaf technology and culture, this debate. The first cyborgs are the first people with a cochlear implant, so there is a big resistance from within this community to become cyborgs, on the contrary to others for whom this invention is a salvation. In the context where a debate like this one was very vivid, I didn't really have the possibility for the

¹⁷ These were made in collaboration with Chinese artisans as a new percussion instrument for *The Reverse Session*.

people to work with or without the implants, people could switch them off, tune them or do whatever they wanted with them. The instruments that were built also called upon technology. Everything in this project was about amplification or over-amplification of, let's say, bass frequencies, low-end sounds. But it wasn't at all that technology would have been predominant and its use over-dominant in the project, the attitude was to bring together life and the organic, and make them cohabit and support each other.

GJ This is where I find your work strikes a peculiar balance and finds harmonic relations where it doesn't seem obvious. What you were saying about inviting people for whom the project will be interesting as well as executors, but also as something that interests them. I was reading the text in your Tate book, where the sax player, André Vida, writes about being a fish. Such a beautiful text, almost like a psychedelic experience! This is what this collaboration brought to him and what he is bringing back to the collaboration, in addition to his performance of the instrument is this narration of his experience, which seems so trippy. His experience of it was almost ritualistic. Could be a way to bring back in what we left as a sort of parenthesis, where music or sound is a place where a community is built or that articulates social relations that we were all discussing earlier.

TA If we take a project like *Tarab* or like *WITHIN*, those are projects that created their own form of social coming together. In *Tarab* because there was a big heritage from the past, of how a concert comes together in classical Arabic music. For *WITHIN* we are working with sound and deafness, trying to revisit space, the place of the audience, the relationship between the musicians and working with things like sight because the musicians don't necessarily hear each other. You end up creating a situation where you have so many parameters that they frame the way you deal with things, the way the event is going to happen. Here there is no need to look for any embellishment of this,

on the contrary, stripping down things to the essentials, not adding anything besides what's really needed to execute the sound at this moment.

There's the ritualistic dimension or something sacred that comes out of it, and it is because there is a context, a concept behind things that gives them a value, a feeling of really witnessing something special. Saying "OK, this is not something I would have seen elsewhere, I saw a concert or performance that I wouldn't have seen in a festival or in a museum." Then it takes on a whole different meaning. For *WITHIN*, if you are witnessing a performance where the conductor, who is profoundly deaf, is driving an orchestra of contemporary music mixed with deaf musicians and using sight, body sensation and a set of gestures he's developed to conduct, you would feel you are witnessing a very unique situation. That gives it its value for me. Beyond the sacred—there is nothing sacred about music in the beginning—it becomes sacred while it's happening because of the parameters and the conditions it requires of us for it to happen.

GJ You just discussed witnessing something special but you also used the verb to see, seeing something that you wouldn't see in a museum, when speaking about *WITHIN* and how the musicians have to see each other. This brings us back to where we started: visualizing sound. How to make sound visible? Right now you're talking about a certain visibility of sound even though the sound is not heard: it is visible or how to make it visible? Or is that what could also be considered "visual art"? The intersection of both?

TA Or a performance. How to make sound visible is something I started answering in my early solo works. The answer at that time was the body, using the body as an access point. This concern also came from how can I pass on the message, especially if the work is in places where the history of contemporary music and electroacoustic music is unknown. It became another social and sound levels that get you to understand all the other levels, not necessarily all of them, but to relate to them differently. For the *Dahlem* and *Reverse Sessions* it was more of a spatial display, approaching it by thinking

the base of the instruments and how they work together as a sound installation. And that offered a lot of visible entry points for the audience and the musicians. The way you can circulate around, change perspective, several things that are related to the composition. A sound becomes visual from the sculptural aspect of these instruments. You enter the installation space at the Tate Modern and see these objects, instruments, lying around, and you hear the sounds they supposedly make and you start to associate the foreign object and sound.

GJ This is the most direct way of making sound visible.

TA There are mechanisms, like in ethnomusicology, that can suggest the sound. The third one I would say, as a combination of all of this, is *WITHIN*. The deafness parameters taken into account, where we took sound transmitted through air and the ears and it becomes vibration transmitted to the bones, the body as a visual stimulus transmitted to the eyes and a gesture from sign language. Those become very important ways of visualizing and signifying sound. Sound is not just

vibration in the air understood and conducted by ears.

GJ Speaking of sound that signifies, Jacques Attali's book *Noise, the Political Economy of Music*¹⁸ speaks of music as the mirror for society, he explains that music has annunciative and prophetic power, and anticipates social changes, for better or worse. Do you see sound as a tool for understanding and a way of perceiving the world and the potential for change? If so, how? If not, why?

AC It's maybe a silly one, but my answer would go into a much more subjective and intuitive perspective: in my experience there's no social change that's not pulled forth by music and sound. If you think about all movements in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, there's no way of thinking about uprising and emancipation without a very specific soundtrack, from some 50 or 60 years ago, or even more, as I can only speak from 1968 on. Maybe reality, politics, economy and so didn't change in a positive way, but music's been always there...

¹⁸ Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

es Sound could be a thermometer to assert some clues regarding the paradoxes and complexities flowing around human ears and brains. However, from a different perspective, sound (or music) through its sole nature doesn't necessarily help to rightfully perceive the world and its issues, or even to understand sound in a wider sense. Both the conscious and cognitive phenomena are, at a primal level, connected with the quality of synesthesia spans, and consequently, set the axes of sense and objectivity, within the amplitude of life experience, knowledge, and spirituality.

Sound could also be easily distorted, therefore pushed into a steadfast of ignorance, will all alienation, and a destructive force against human development, as is clearly happening inside a mind-alienating context, like the one Mexicans live in today: as functional deaf people. Its prophetic power—inspired by indiscriminate monitors as the clatter and racket and blare piped through the everyday radio and television—provokes shivers which consequently might trace the breaks of unavoidable entropy and high-pitched catastrophe. But I can also agree with its factor for potential change. But it has to do with the infinite extension of the awareness that follows joy and pleasure: meaningful language scrubbing, cryptic poetic germination, and an off-time-checked sensibility.

gI In a similar vein, Blacking's book mentions that "sonic order" (he uses this to not limit sound to a Western understanding of music) cannot be transmitted or have meaning without associations between people. And not just that, in fact people associate and create meaning in the world through "sonic order". Do you think this sonic order is important today in an art context but also beyond it?

ac I find this a very important question, and maybe we discussed this earlier, but increasingly I think—starting with oral language

as sound—there's a will, a will to communicate, that eventually fails. Art, like music and other cultural manifestations, is nothing but evidence of this failure: we can't communicate. But the will is there. Some other people like to talk about 'expression' instead of 'communication', mainly when the vehicle is an abstraction, but there's always interpretation, hermeneutics, and that's where art exists, when a sound becomes something absolutely and entirely, completely different, and even contradictory to the author's will. Let's talk about Wagner, let's talk about the Zoque Piteiro tradition. Different intentions, same will.

es Synesthesia is an attribute that undoubtedly happens in every fertile and free human organization. Sonic order, as Blacking and you address, could also be understood as a catalyst of a mind wave that gathers precise acquaintance, technical background, lost and found memories, irrepressible fantasies, and the many more spirits (even darkly comic and cynical ones, but not without from an ironic charm, or even fearful ones) refer to mind associations that each thinking individual undoubtedly has. This is still the main force behind Art, and unfortunately it is presently fighting a hazardous battle against the ferocious coups of objectivity, and the obvious flatness of the tyranny of hyper-information.

gI Is this connective potential one of the aspects that your work explores when using sound?

es Yes, I am hopefully devoted to it.

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TAREK ATOUI (Beirut, 1980)

Is an electro-acoustic artist and composer based in Paris who works in the field of sound performance. He studied contemporary and electronic music in the National French Conservatory of Reims. His recent productions and presentations have been held at the Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2016); the Louis Vuitton Foundation, Bois de Boulogne, France (2014); and Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden (2013), among others. Among his most important exhibitions are: *Art of Sound*, Fondazione Prada, *Ca' Corner della Regina*, Venecia, Italia (2014); *WITHIN*, in the 11th Biennial of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (2013); *La Suite*, Serpentine Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2012); *Metastable Circuit, la Lutherie and Dimis Reconnected*, Documenta 13, Kassel, Germany (2012). His work has been part of biennials such as the Biennial of Marrakech, Morocco (2016); the 8th Biennial of Berlin, Berlin, Germany (2014); and the 9th Biennial of Mercosur, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2013). Empty Cans, his pioneer workshop, has been presented in France, Holland, Lebanon, Egypt, and the United States as part of his residence at Museum as Hub, part of the New Museum of New York.

ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS (Mexico City, 1968)

Is an active member of the Sociedad Intergaláctica de Tai Chi Taoísta. As a sculptor, he has developed a body of investigation around the concept of self-construction, which simultaneously involves self-destruction, reconstruction, and self-confusion. His work has been presented in the biennials of Nicaragua in 2016, Sharjah, Gwangju in 2012, and Istanbul in 2011, dOCUMENTA 13 in 2012, Venice in 2003, Havana in 2014, 2009, and 1994. He recently presented the sculpture *Lote baldío* in Turbine Hall of the Tate gallery in London. Last year Harvard University Press published a collection of his texts translated to English entitled 'The Logics of Disorder,' edited by Robin Greeley. In 2015, Sexto Piso published a similar selection in Spanish entitled *La voluntad de los objetos*.

GABRIELA JAUREGUI (Mexico City, 1979)

Is the author of the poetry book *Controlled Decay* (Akashic Press, 2008), and coauthor of the collective creation book *Taller de taquimecanografía* (Tumbona, 2011), as well as the storybook *La memoria de las cosas* (Sexto Piso, 2014), and *Leash Seeks Lost Bitch* (2015), as well as *ManyFiestas* (2017). She has doctorate in comparative literature from the University of Southern California. Jauregui has also collaborated on various cultural publications in Great Britain, the United States, Germany, Australia, and Mexico. She is the co-founder and editor of the collective SUR+ Ediciones.

GUILLERMO SANTAMARINA (Mexico City, 1957)

Is an art critic, curator, and visual artist based in Mexico City. He was the curatorial coordinator in the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC) of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (from 2008 to 2010), and he has served as the director of various cultural institutions such as Ex Teresa Arte Actual and the Museo Experimental El Eco. Since 1981, Santamarina has curated diverse exhibitions for private and public institutions, both in Mexico and internationally. He is currently a professor of Museology and Art Theory at the Escuela Nacional de Pintura, Escultura, y Grabado "La Esmeralda" in Mexico City. As an artist, his works have been included in numerous exhibitions since 1979.

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LIBRETA ELNICHÓ

How to approach the accessibility of new music to new audiences? How to entice people to get closer and discover without preconceptions or reluctance—but rather as a new form of participation and natural listening experience, what is often perceived as difficult music? What is the relationship of this music, if any, with contemporary arts in a way that it may grasp the attention and active involvement of the spectator and/or listener?

In 2016, elnicho and Buró—Buró curated a panel as part of the program “Miércoles de SOMA” in the context of the festival elnicho#5. The topic was the relevance of sound in art and the relationship between them.

From a socio-cultural point of view, sound is all around us and historically it has been a vast territory of exploration. How have anthropological, folkloric, and vernacular elements influenced our listening experiences today? Music that was not assimilated in the past is now being revisited through contemporary practices and, in some way, it is becoming more penetrable because of new ears.

This notebook entitled The Senses of Sound emerged from a discussion that was raised in the SOMA, and the topic that the notebook project addresses concerning accessibility. What is the importance of sound and what are the differences between yesterday and today? Perhaps “new” music is only relevant in its current context?

While musicians and artists must reach out and pull people in, it is also our calling as listeners to brave boundaries of prejudice or fear. We hope that this series of Libretas will open new sound territories to a broader audience.

// Eric Namour, elnicho

elnicho is a small independent organization based in Mexico City dedicated to promote the appreciation of new and experimental music with concerts, presentations, talks, workshops and a festival. Through random micro sessions and editorial projects, elnicho aims to put innovative music on the foreground, combining and reconciling different approaches and contexts to broaden the spectrum of contemporary culture through sound and music.

elnicho.org



Libretas. This publication is a collaboration with elnicho, as part of a series of booklets dedicated to sound and music within the broad context of contemporary culture. *Libretas* is a project of Buró-Buró that aims to share conversations and encounters that contribute meaningful ideas and reflections on contemporary culture.

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